Two Futures for Jobs in an AI era

2026 Global AI Jobs Barometer

UK 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.

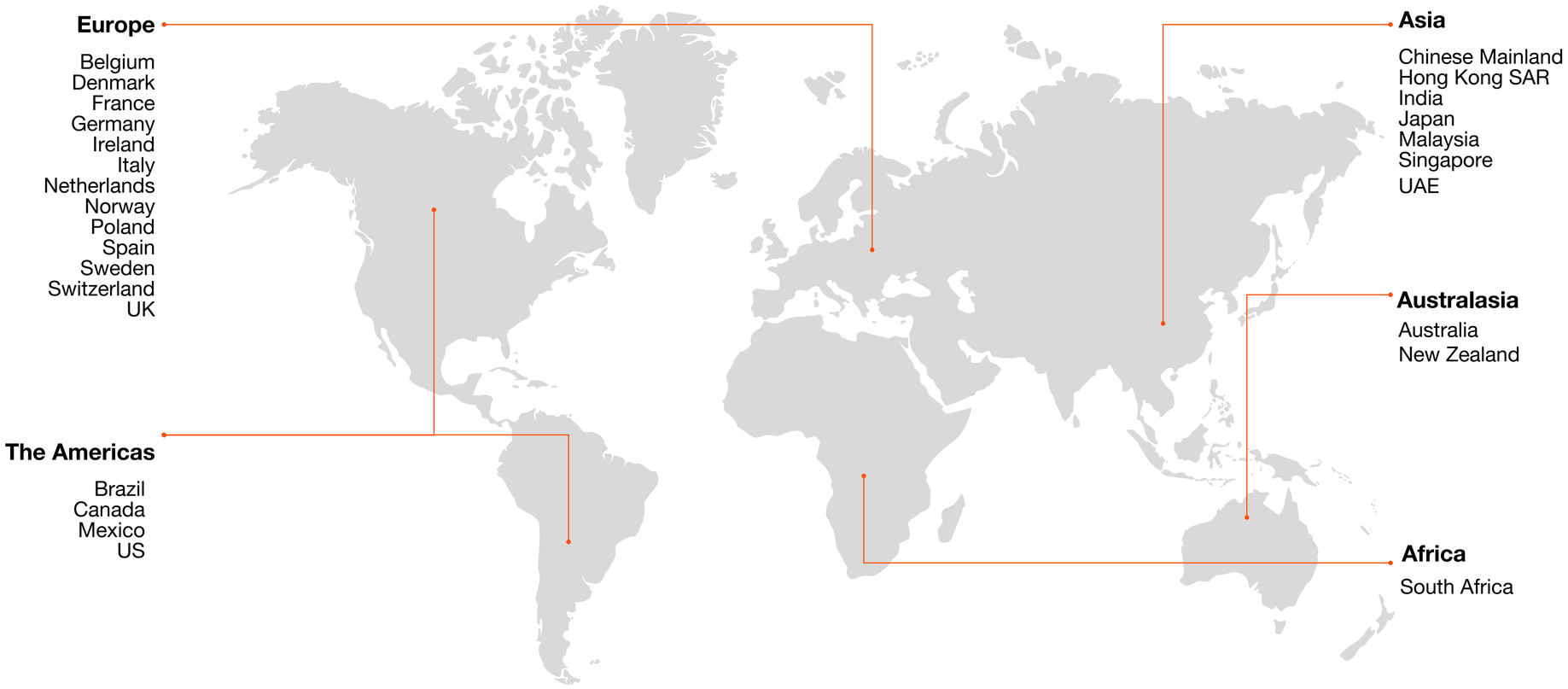
35%

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.

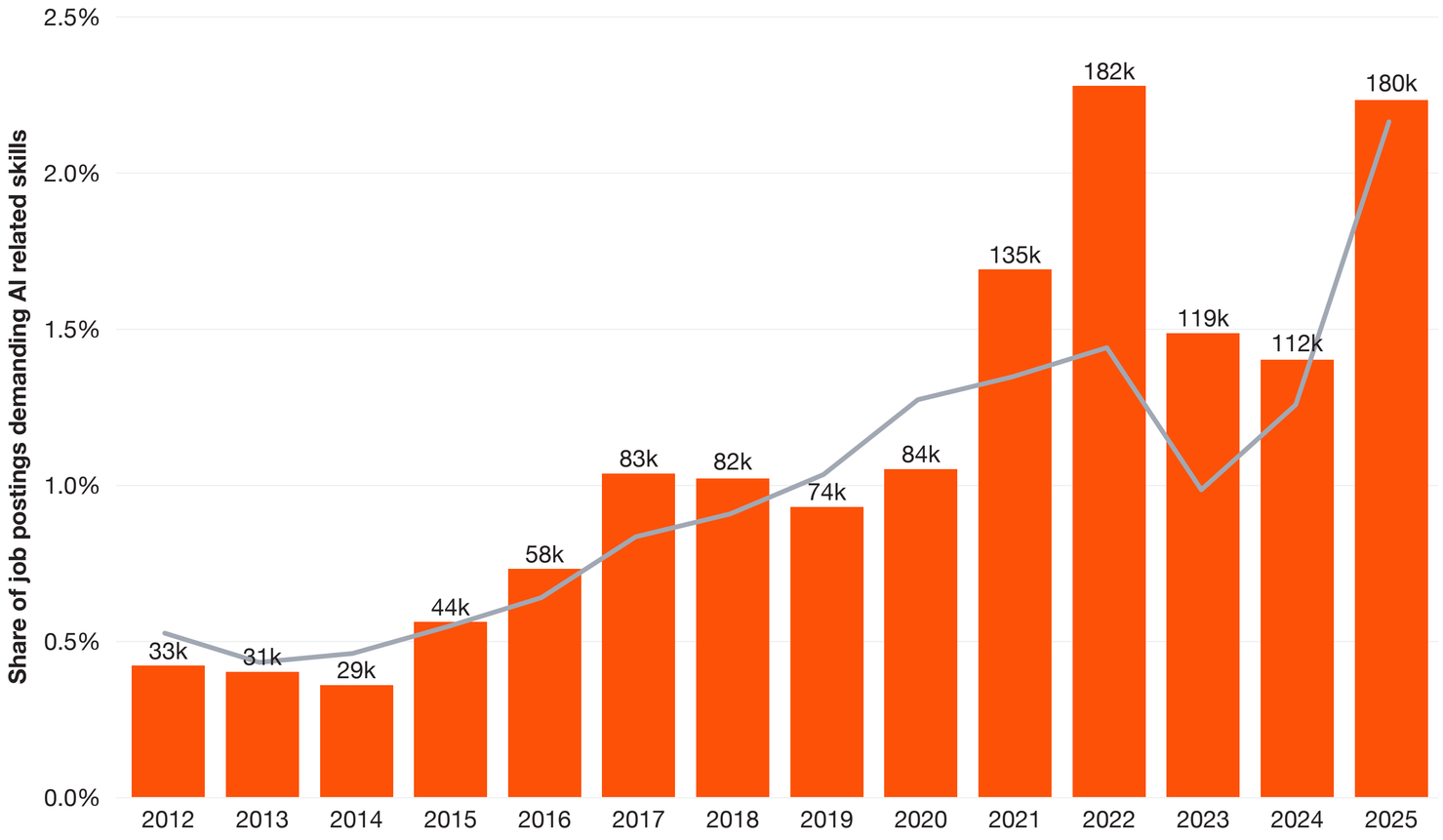
The 2026 AI Jobs Barometer examines over one billion job ads from 6 continents to reveal how AI is affecting jobs, skills, wages, and labour productivity



UK Insights

AI hiring in the UK has rebounded in 2025, returning to 2022 levels after a dip in the previous two years

Total number and share of job postings requiring AI related skills, UK, 2012-2025



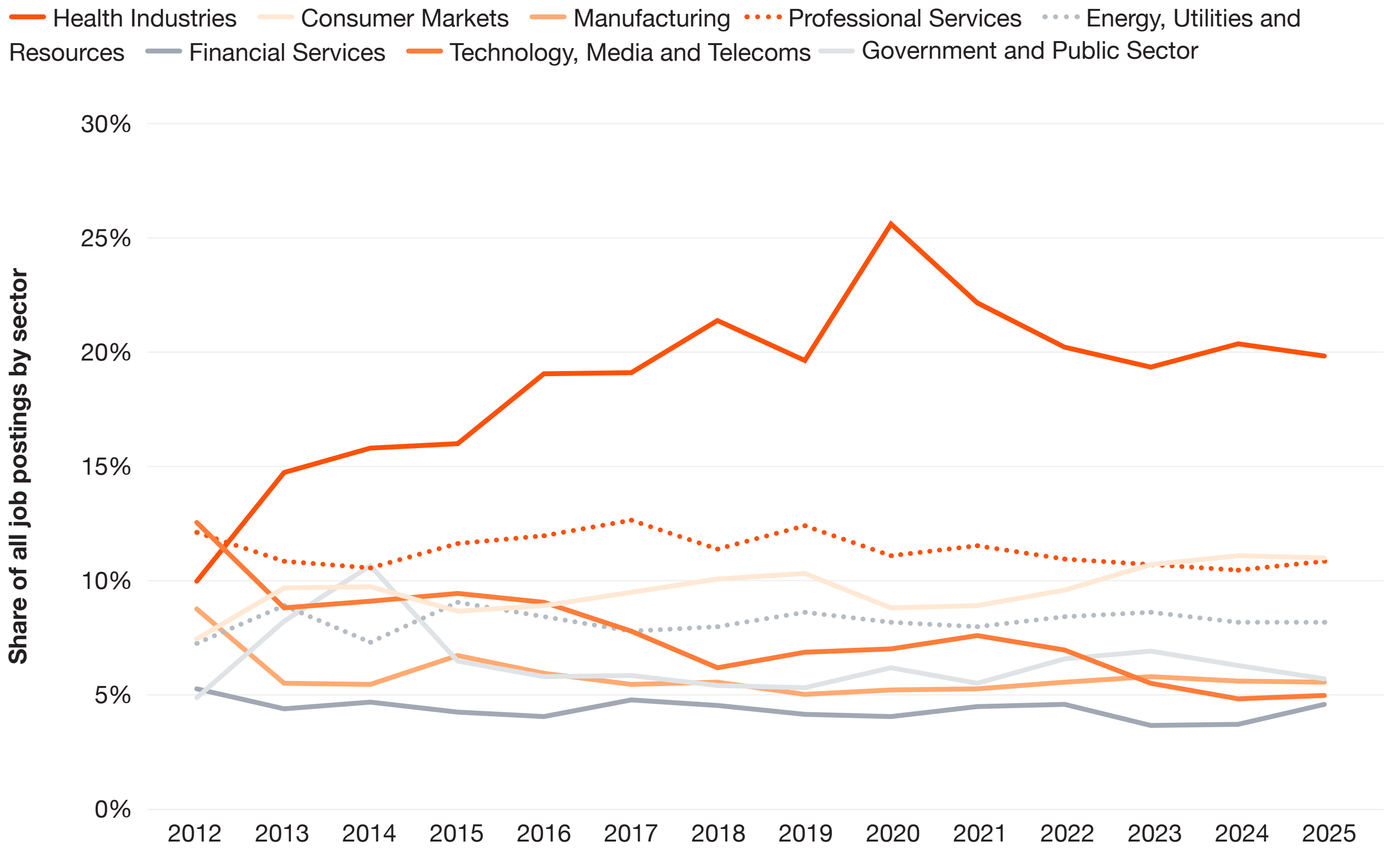
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The number of UK job postings requiring AI skills increased by around 68k in 2025, reversing declines seen in 2023 and 2024.
- This brings AI hiring volumes back to roughly 2022 levels, signalling renewed momentum in demand.
- As a result, in 2025, the share of job postings requiring AI skills reached 2.2%.

Health Industries accounts for the largest share of hiring in the UK labour market

Share of all job postings by sector, UK, 2012-2025



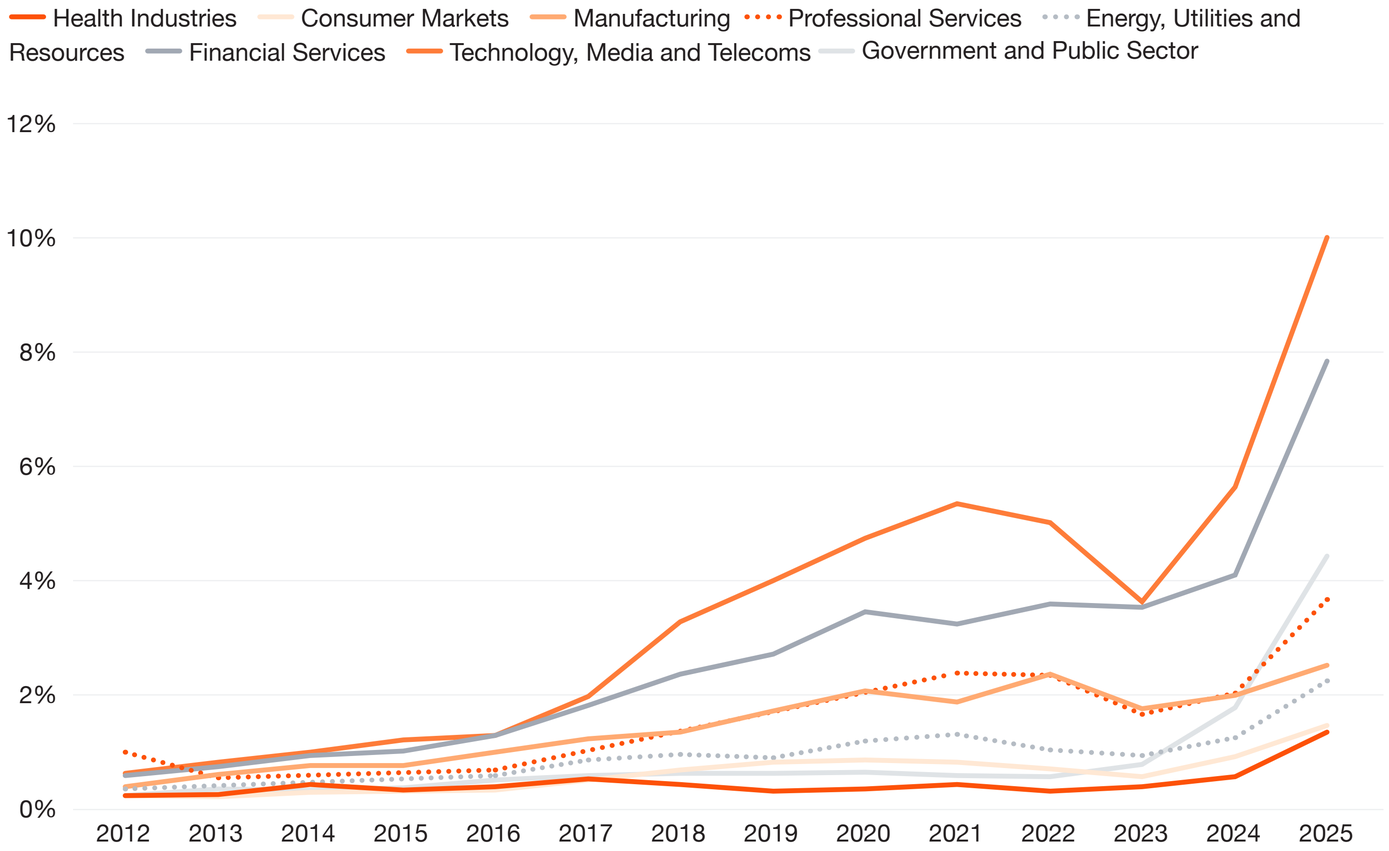
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The Healthcare sector stands out as the largest source of labour demand, accounting for around 20% of total UK job postings.
- This highlights the sector's central role in UK employment and workforce demand.
- Most other key sectors account for between 5–10% of job postings, indicating a relatively balanced distribution of hiring across the rest of the economy.

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

Share of AI job postings within each sector, UK, 2012-2025



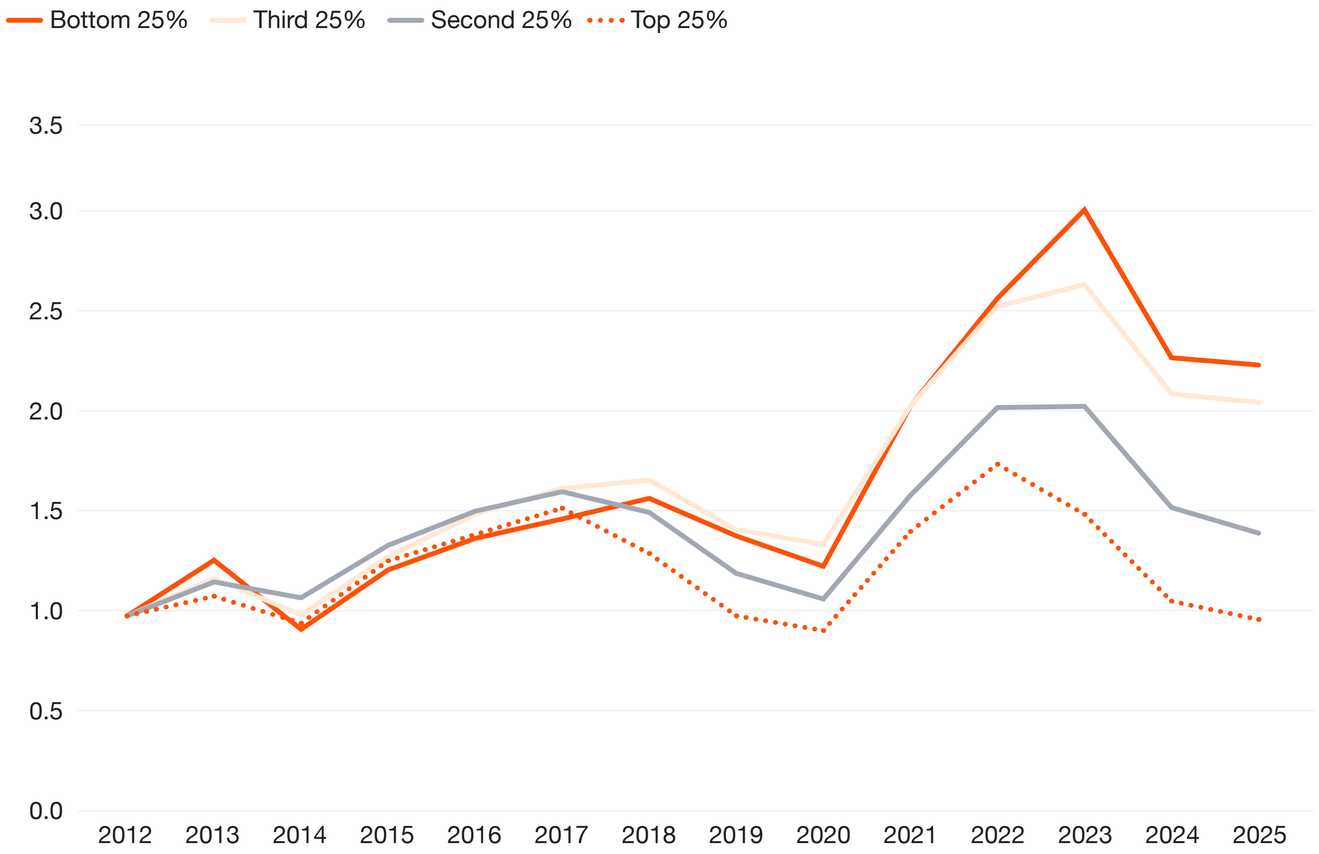
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Technology, Media and Telecoms (TMT) records the highest share of AI job postings in the UK, consistent with its role as the most digitally intensive sector.
- All sectors saw an increase in AI job share in 2025, pointing to broad-based growth in AI hiring.
- This suggests AI adoption in the UK is expanding across the economy, rather than being concentrated in a small set of industries.

Since 2012, job postings growth in the UK has been stronger in less AI-exposed occupations

Number of job postings relative to 2012 by AI exposure quartile, UK, 2012-2025



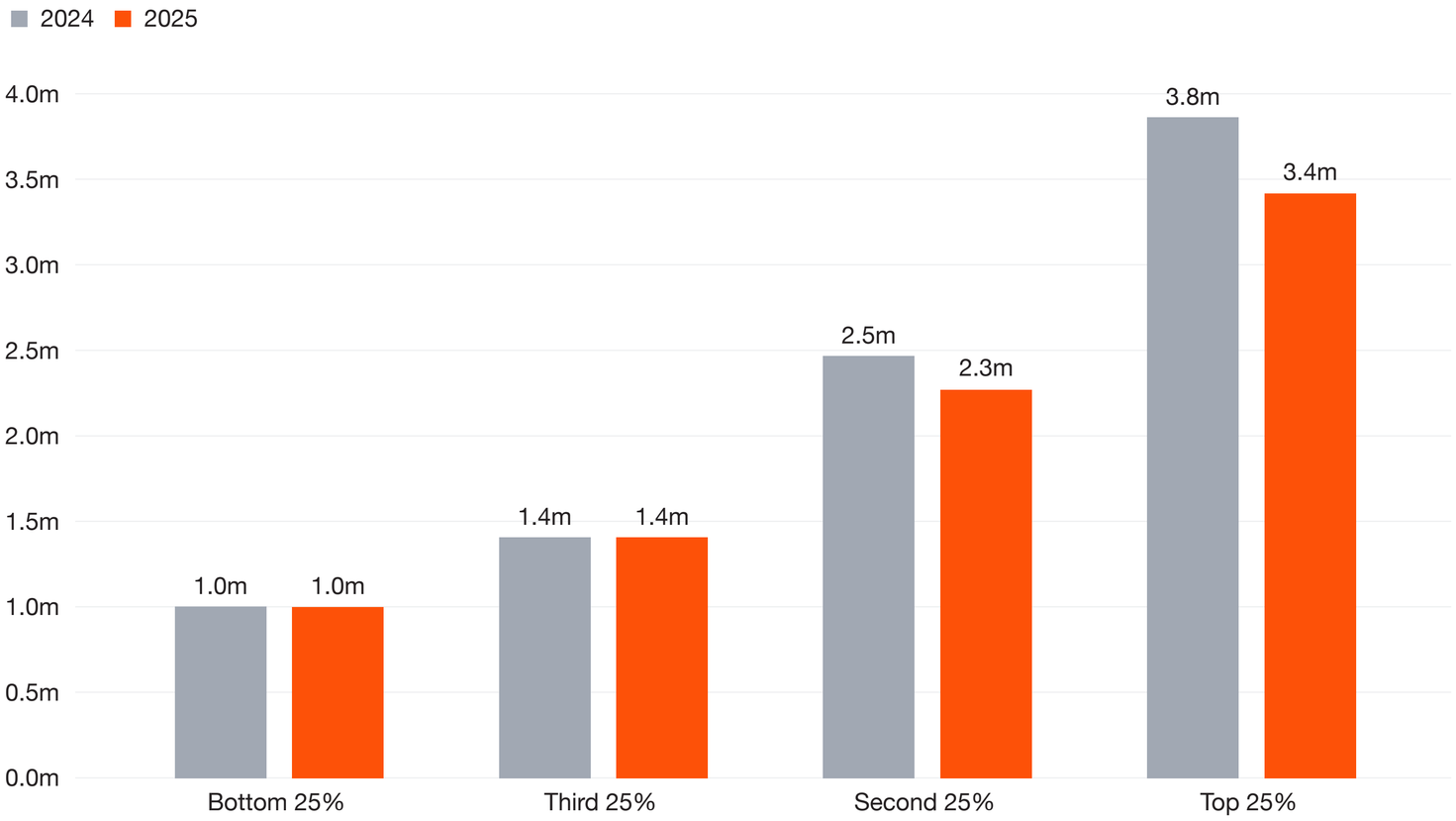
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- When grouped by AI exposure, less exposed occupations show significantly stronger growth in job postings. By 2025, the lowest exposure quartile has around 2.27 postings for every posting in 2012, compared to 0.98 in the highest exposure quartile.
- This points to a clear gradient, with job postings growth strongest in lower AI-exposed occupations.
- However, growth across all quartiles has slowed since the 2023 peak and stabilised in 2025.

Despite slower growth, highly AI-exposed occupations still account for the largest share of job postings in the UK

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



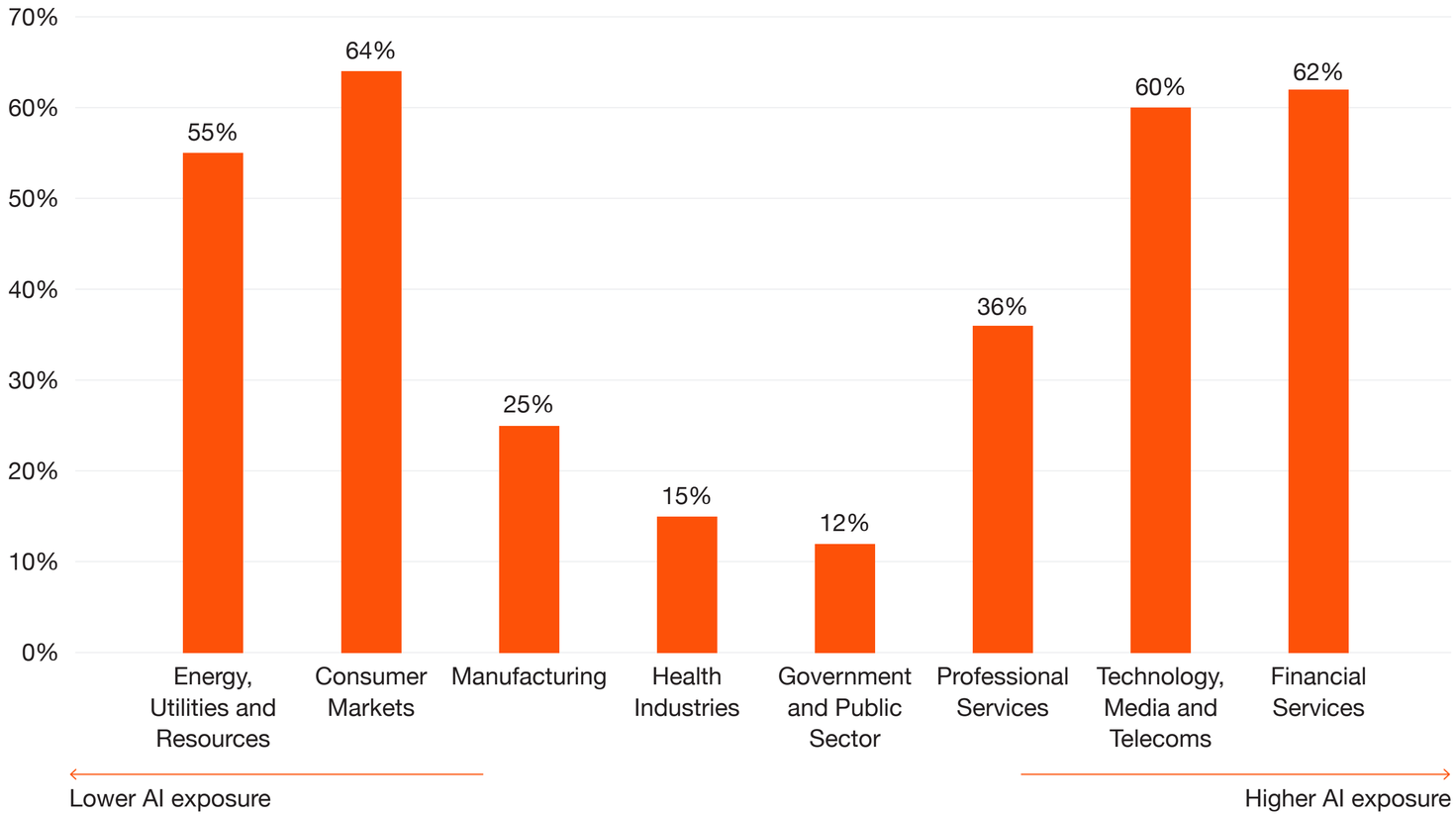
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- While job postings have grown faster in less AI-exposed occupations, highly exposed roles still dominate in absolute terms.
- In 2025, the most AI-exposed quartile recorded around 3.4 million job postings, significantly higher than lower exposure groups.

AI wage premiums follow a U-shaped pattern, highest in both low and high exposure sectors

Wage premium by sector, UK, 2025



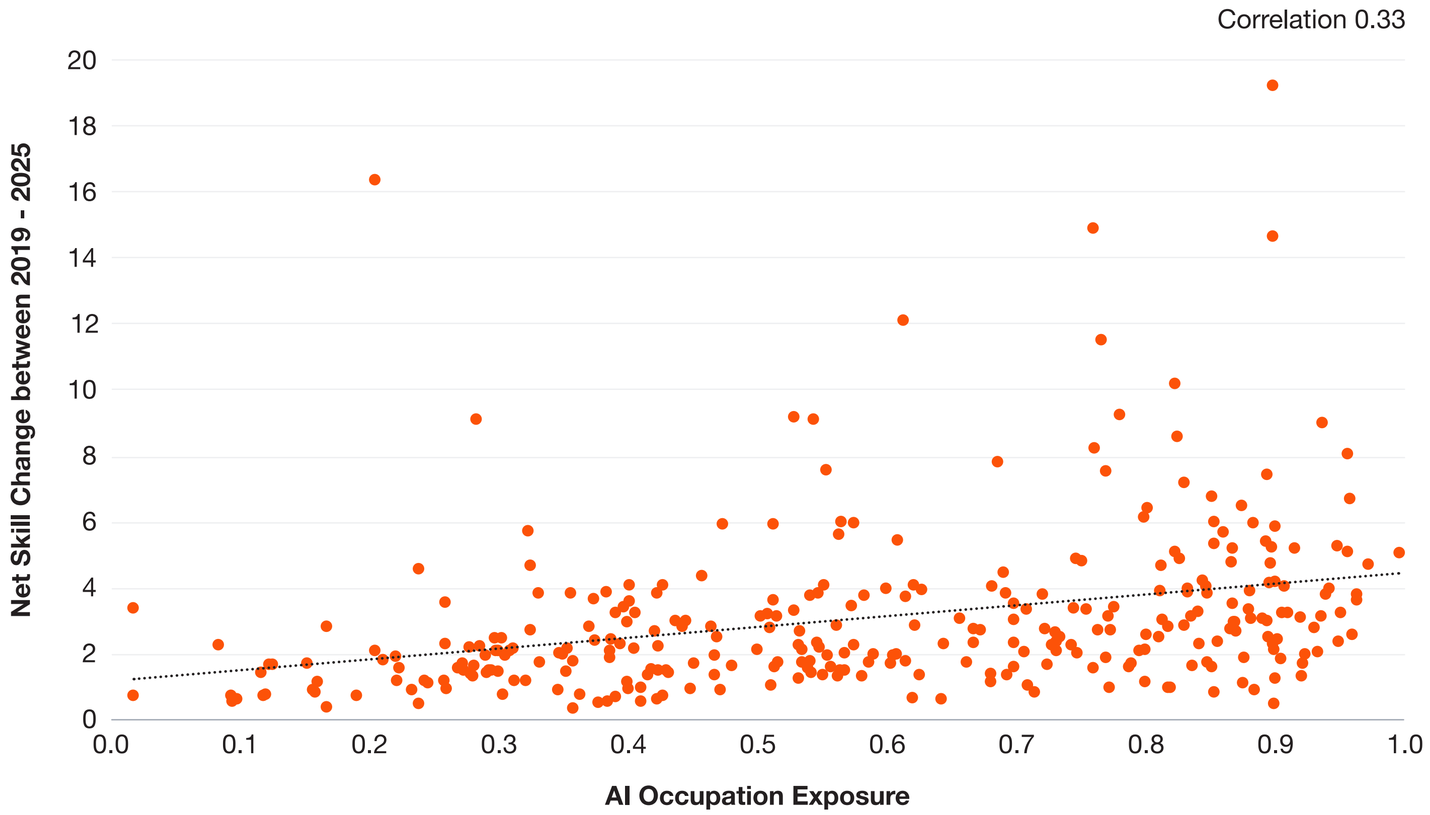
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- Wage premiums exhibit a U-shaped pattern across sectors, with higher premiums observed in both low and high AI exposure industries.
- In lower exposure sectors, such as Energy and Consumer Markets, elevated premiums likely reflect specialised, high-value roles where AI skills are relatively scarce but highly rewarded.
- In higher exposure sectors, premiums are driven by a combination of high value and broader diffusion, where AI skills are widely embedded and strategically important across the workforce.

In the UK, more AI-exposed occupations are experiencing faster rates of skills transformation

Net skill change from 2019 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure, UK



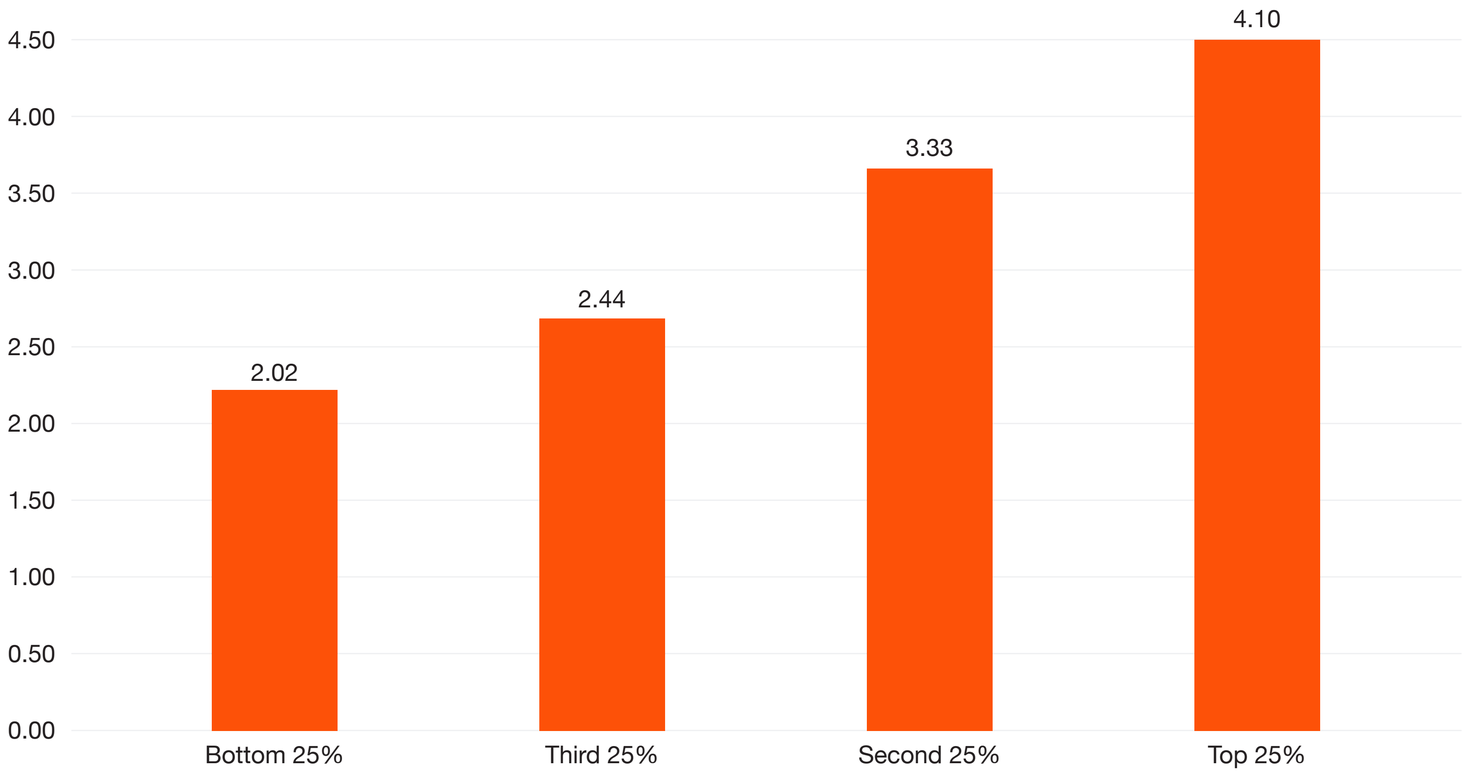
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- There is a positive correlation of 0.33 between AI exposure and net skills change between 2019 and 2025, indicating that more exposed occupations tend to see greater shifts in skill requirements.
- This suggests that AI-exposed roles are adapting more rapidly, with evolving task demands reshaping the capabilities required.

This is evident across exposure quartiles, where the most AI-exposed occupations show the largest skill shifts

Average net skill change from 2019 to 2025 for 4-digit ISCO code occupations by AI occupation exposure quartile, UK



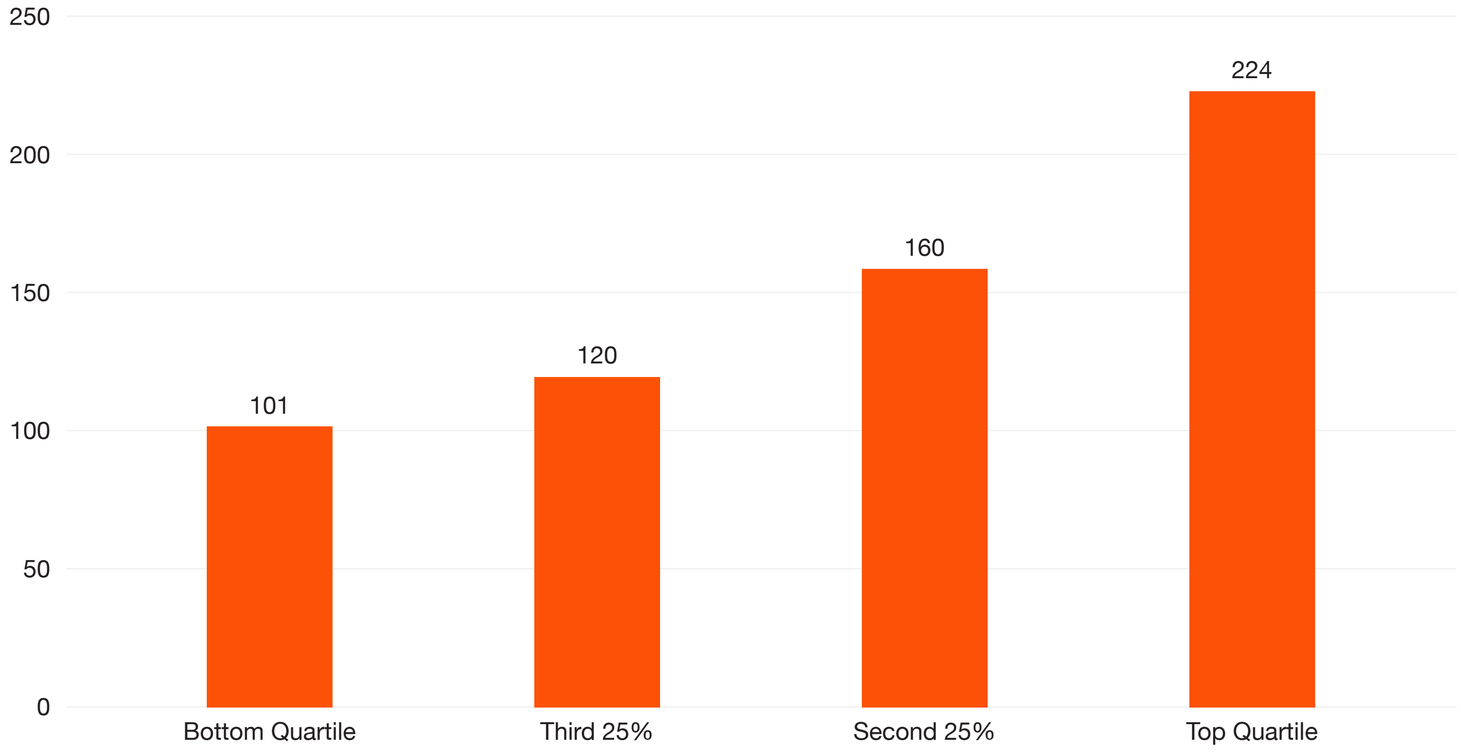
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data

Findings

- The same pattern observed earlier is reflected across exposure quartiles: occupations in the highest AI exposure group show the fastest skills transformation between 2019 and 2025.
- Lower exposure quartiles also follow a gradual upward progression, with each successive quartile seeing higher average net skill change.
- This reinforces the earlier finding of a positive relationship between AI exposure and skills change in the UK, where more exposed occupations tend to evolve faster as task requirements shift.

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, UK, 2025 relative to 2019



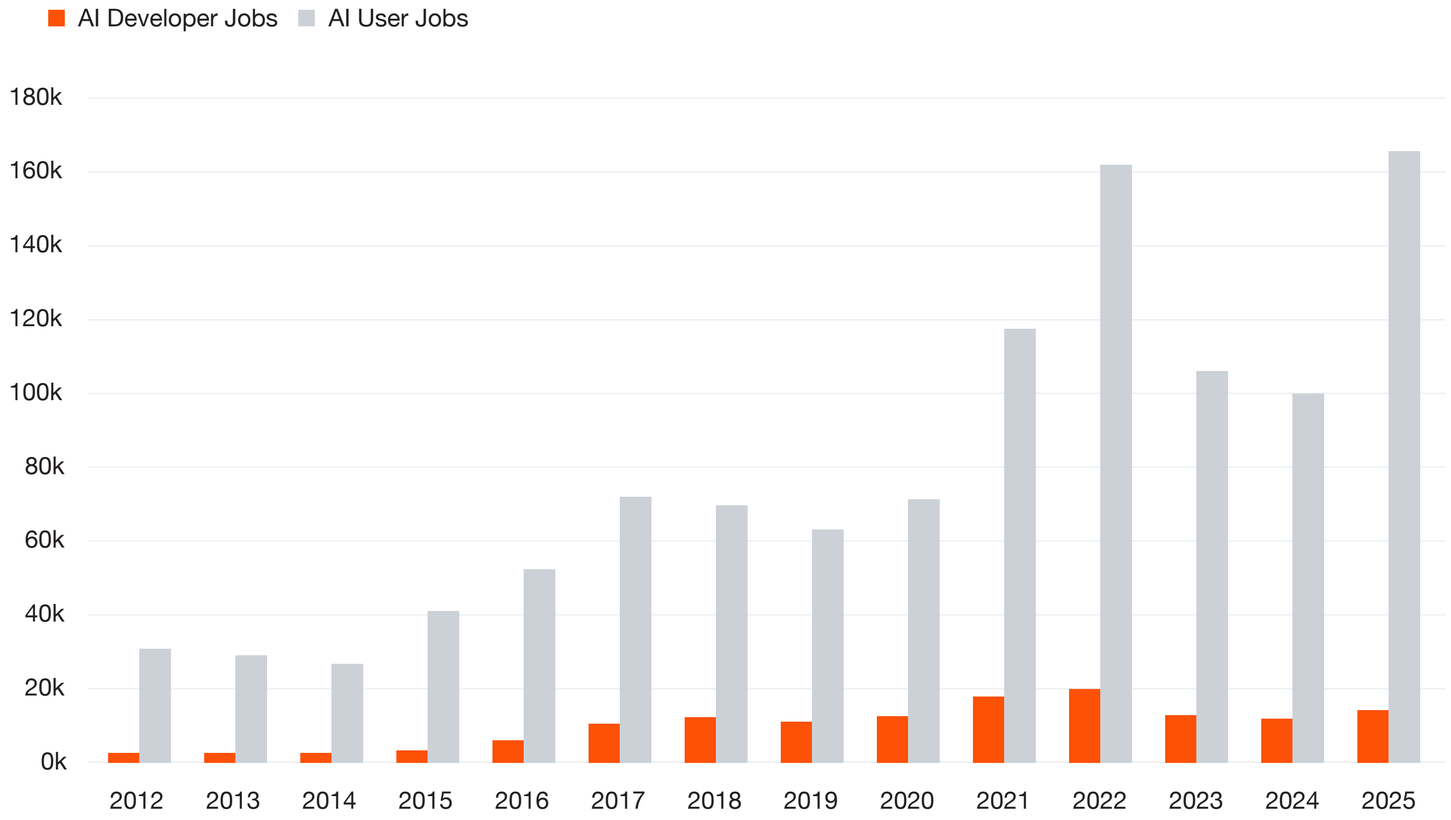
Source: PwC analysis, PwC AI Occupational Exposure Index, Lightcast data
Notes: We define a ‘new skill’ as any skill that has greater than 10 mentions in an occupation in 2025, but five or less mentions in that same occupation in 2019. Across all postings for an occupation in a given country, we count 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 224 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 UK is dominated by user roles, with both user and developer roles growing over time

Total number of AI user and AI developer job roles, UK, 2012-2025



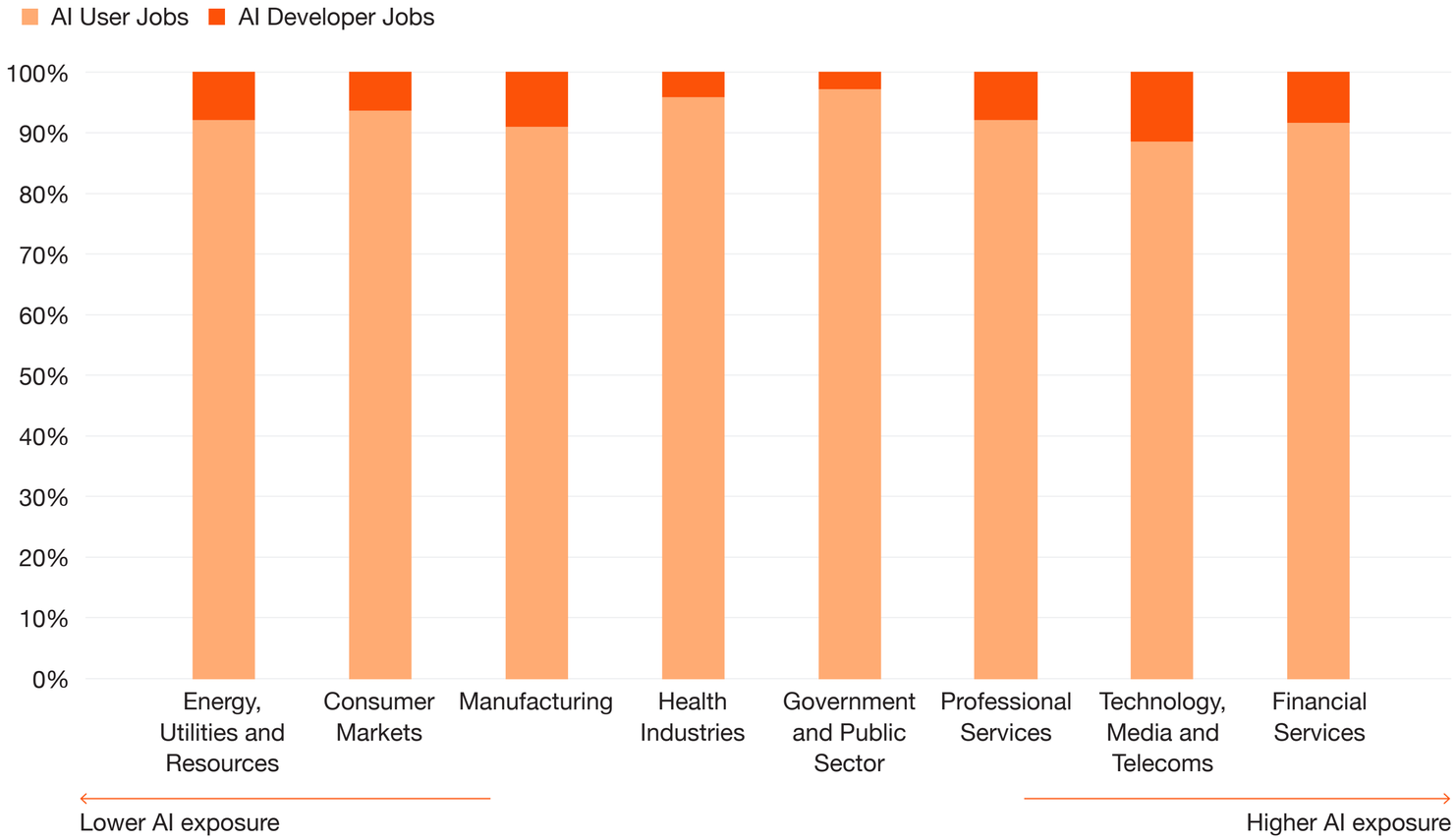
Source: PwC analysis, Lightcast data
Notes: AI user and AI developer job roles are determined as jobs requiring Tier 0 or 1 skills (AI literacy and applied AI skills) for AI user jobs and Tier 2 skills (advanced AI skills) for AI developer jobs. AI developer jobs are tagged as such if there are any skills 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 just under 66k roles** in 2025, following declines in 2023 and 2024.
- AI developer roles remain smaller in volume, but also increased in 2025, **rising by around 2.6k** roles after weaker demand in the previous two years.
- Overall, this points to renewed momentum across both categories in 2025, with AI user roles increasing by **65.8%** and AI developer roles by **21.6%,** indicating continued expansion in both AI adoption and development capabilities.

Across sectors, AI job postings in the UK 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, UK, 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 **(11.3%),** consistent with its role in developing and advancing AI technologies.
- **Government and Public Sector** records the highest share of **AI user** roles **(97.3%),** reflecting broad-based adoption of AI across operational roles rather than in-house development.

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