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THE FIRST JOB IS CHANGING

AI, Graduate Tasks and Employer Expectations

A multi-country evidence review of the changing tasks, entry-level opportunities and capabilities expected of new graduates

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AI, Graduate Tasks and Employer Expectations

(A multi-country evidence review of the changing tasks, entry-level opportunities and capabilities expected of new graduates)

Markets examined

United States; United Kingdom; European Union (including Germany); India; China; Japan; Singapore; Hong Kong; Australia; Canada; global benchmarks

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About EQSC Global

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About this report

This independent research report examines a changing point of entry into professional work: what graduates are asked to do when generative AI can produce first drafts, analyse information and assist with routine workflows. Evidence is organised around five linked measures: task mix, tool use, skill requirements, role availability and preparation gaps. The aim is to help institutions and employers distinguish demonstrable changes in work from assumptions about the future of graduate employment.

The report draws on 49 numbered public sources, listed in Appendix A. To preserve the distinction between evidence and judgement, EQSC Global identifies five interpretative tools as analyst constructs: the Graduate Task Shift Matrix, the Technical–Judgement–Human balance, the Entry-Market Pressure Scorecard, scenarios for 2027–2030, and a monitoring dashboard. These tools synthesise existing evidence; they should not be mistaken for independently surveyed findings.

Scope and boundaries of the evidence

- This is a desk-based, comparative review of published evidence across ten named markets and global benchmarks. It is intended for higher education leaders, employers, careers services, policymakers and researchers.
- The public report does not contain newly collected interviews, task diaries, licensed vacancy-level datasets or employer-validated scenarios. Findings from third-party studies are attributed to their original researchers, while EQSC Global's interpretations are identified separately.
- Commissioned primary research could extend this evidence base, but such work has not been conducted for this edition and must not be inferred from its findings.

Evidence grading used in this report

Table 1. Evidence grading and use by source quality.

Grade	Type of evidence	Examples	How we use it
A	Official statistics; large administrative or payroll datasets; peer-reviewed or major working papers	NY Fed, Eurostat, NBS China, Statistics Canada, ADP payroll (Stanford), 65m résumés (Harvard)	Headline findings and trend claims
B	Large, documented employer or student surveys with stated samples	ISE (155 employers), WEF (1,000+ employers), HEPI (1,041 students), Gallup (3,465), KPMG/Melbourne (48,000)	Expectations, intentions, perceptions
C	Industry, vendor or press-reported analyses with limited methodological disclosure	SignalFire, Stepstone, Canva, HiBob, press summaries	Corroboration and illustration only; flagged in text

Evidence cut-off: 12 October 2026. Labour-market series and graduate recruitment surveys are frequently revised. In particular, projections for the UK 2025/26 recruitment cycle are identified as forecasts from the 2025 ISE survey, not as confirmed outcomes.

Table of contents

PUBLICATION INFORMATION i
PUBLICATION AND COPYRIGHT NOTICE i
About EQSC Global i
EDITORIAL NOTE ii
About this report ii
Table of contents iii
List of figures v
List of tables vi
Executive summary 1
Key findings: ten findings from the evidence 1
Headline indicators at a glance 2
1. Scope, questions and measurement framework 4
1.1 Why the first job matters 4
1.2 Research questions 4
1.3 Measurement framework 4
1.4 Method 5
2. Role availability: is the first rung disappearing? 6
2.1 The contraction signals 6
2.2 Graduate outcomes: the aggregate picture 7
2.3 The counter-evidence: why AI is not the whole story 7
2.4 Employers' stated intentions 8
3. Task mix: what graduates actually do is changing 10
3.1 How exposed are graduate tasks? 10
3.2 Automation or augmentation? 11
3.3 The Graduate Task Shift Matrix 11
4. Tool use: AI is standard kit before the first day 13
4.1 Students and new graduates 13
4.2 Workplace adoption and the BYOAI problem 13
4.3 Tool use as a hiring signal 14
5. Skill requirements: technical ability, judgement and human interaction 15
5.1 What employers say they want 15

5.2 Why judgement now carries a premium 15
5.3 The Technical–Judgement–Human (T-J-H) balance 16
6. Employer expectations and the new recruitment game 18
6.1 Higher bar, earlier 18
6.2 Recruitment under AI pressure 18
6.3 Sector snapshots 19
7. Preparation gaps 21
8. Country and regional analysis 23
8.1 United States 23
8.2 United Kingdom 23
8.3 European Union (with Germany) 24
8.4 India 25
8.5 China 25
8.6 Japan 25
8.7 Singapore 26
8.8 Hong Kong 26
8.9 Australia 26
8.10 Canada 27
8.11 Entry-Market Pressure Scorecard 27
9. Scenarios for the first job, 2027–2030 29
10. Implications and recommendations 30
10.1 Universities, colleges and careers services 30
10.2 Employers 30
10.3 Policymakers and funders 30
10.4 Students and graduates 30
11. Metrics dashboard: indicators to track 32
Appendix A. Source register 33
Appendix B. Definitions and data notes 39
Appendix C. Rights, use and disclaimer 40

List of figures

Figure 1. Entry-level contraction across five datasets 6
Figure 2. Youth and recent-graduate unemployment 7
Figure 3. Employer intentions for first jobs 9
Figure 4. AI exposure across UK graduate roles 10
Figure 5. AI mentions in US and UK vacancies 14
Figure 6. The productivity compression effect 16
Figure 7. UK graduate hiring changes by sector 20
Figure 8. Big Four intake: 2023 versus 2024 20
Figure 9. Four dimensions of preparation gaps 21
Figure 10. German entry-level vacancy trends 25

List of tables

Table 1. Evidence grading by source quality ii
Table 2. Headline indicators 2
Table 3. Research measurement framework 4
Table 4. Entry-level employment pressure studies 6
Table 5. Graduate Task Shift Matrix 11
Table 6. Student and early-career AI adoption 13
Table 7. Employer and skills survey evidence 15
Table 8. Technical–Judgement–Human balance 16
Table 9. AI and selection processes 18
Table 10. Graduate hiring by sector 19
Table 11. United States 23
Table 12. United Kingdom 23
Table 13. European Union and Germany 24
Table 14. India 25
Table 15. China 25
Table 16. Japan 26
Table 17. Singapore 26
Table 18. Hong Kong 27
Table 19. Australia 27
Table 20. Canada 27
Table 21. Entry-Market Pressure Scorecard 28
Table 22. Graduate work scenarios for 2027–2030 29
Table 23. Metrics dashboard 32
Table 24. Numbered source register 33
Table 25. Definitions and data notes 39

Executive summary

The first graduate job has not disappeared. Its purpose, however, is changing. From 2023 to October 2026, the evidence points to more selective hiring in some AI-exposed occupations, less time spent on routine production tasks and rising expectations for verification, judgement and human interaction. These shifts are not uniform. Country-specific labour conditions and employer practices matter, and credible studies differ on how much of the weakening in junior recruitment can be attributed to AI rather than economic conditions.

Key findings: 10 findings from the evidence

1. Entry-level pressure is concentrated, not universal. In an August 2026 revision, Stanford researchers reported employment among US workers aged 22–25 in highly AI-exposed occupations around 19% below the level implied by trends among similarly aged workers in less-exposed occupations; the corresponding shortfall had been 15% in the earlier data vintage [1]. Harvard working-paper evidence associates GenAI adoption with an approximately 9% relative decline in junior employment after six quarters [2]. Neither estimate alone identifies AI as the sole cause.
2. Reduced recruitment appears more important than dismissal. In the Stanford and Harvard analyses, a weaker intake of younger or junior staff accounts for much of the observed employment difference [1][2]. That makes the hiring decision—not simply the redundancy decision—a useful indicator to monitor.
3. The attribution question remains open. New York Fed job-posting research finds little sign of a separate, economy-wide AI-driven decline in labour demand [5]. Evidence from Yale and the Chicago Fed also cautions against treating the current occupational picture as a generalised collapse [6][7]. AI may be changing particular job pathways without explaining the whole hiring cycle.
4. Graduate-task exposure differs substantially by occupation. The UK GAISI analysis estimates that about 30% of graduate-job activities can be accelerated directly by current chatbots, with a further substantial share potentially affected when these tools are integrated into workplace applications [9]. Exposure is not the same as job loss, nor does it imply equal consequences across disciplines.
5. Students are already using AI widely, but structured preparation is uneven. In the 2025 HEPI survey, 92% of UK undergraduates reported using AI tools and 88% reported using generative AI for assessments. Only 36% said their institution had provided support for developing AI skills [37]. Among early-career developers, 55.5% reported daily use [40].
6. AI-related skills now feature in a growing share of advertised roles. Indeed reported AI mentions in 9.4% of UK vacancies in June 2026 [15], compared with 4.2% of US postings in December 2025 [14]. Lightcast and PwC separately report salary premia associated with AI skills, although their methods and populations differ [33][34].

7. Employers increasingly want evidence of applied capability. Microsoft/LinkedIn surveys report that many leaders favour AI-skilled candidates and expect staff to undertake more complex work earlier [31][32]. At the same time, UK employers identify adaptability, self-awareness and organisational awareness as continuing weaknesses among some graduate recruits [10].
8. Human capability remains central. The WEF identifies analytical thinking as a core requirement for seven in ten surveyed employers [27]. Recruiters in GMAC's 2026 study place communication, problem-solving and adaptability among their leading priorities [30]. Experiments showing larger AI-related gains among novices help explain why employers may place greater weight on judgement and interpersonal work [43].
9. There is a measurable preparation gap. Cengage reports that 48% of surveyed US graduates felt unprepared to apply for entry-level roles in their chosen field [29]. In the HEPI student sample, demand for AI skills exceeded access to training [37]. Research into employee use of AI also raises concerns about weak verification practices [39].
10. The international picture is uneven. Japan reported a graduate employment rate of 98.0% in April 2026 [20], while India's February 2026 fresher-hiring indicator rose 17% year on year [26]. Other markets recorded weaker youth or graduate outcomes, including China, Singapore and the UK [15][19][21]. Differences in definitions, demographics, economic conditions and the structure of graduate recruitment limit direct comparison.

Headline indicators at a glance

Table 2. Headline indicators across the five research measures.

Measure	Indicator	Latest value	Source
Role availability	US recent-graduate unemployment / underemployment	5.6% / 42% (Q2 2026)	NY Fed [4]
Role availability	UK graduate hiring change, 2024/25	−8% (forecast −7% for 2025/26)	ISE [8]
Role availability	Applications per UK graduate vacancy	140 (mean), up 14%	ISE [8]
Task mix	Share of UK graduate-job tasks directly accelerable by chatbots	≈30%	ISE/GAISI [9]
Task mix	Augmentation vs automation in Claude.ai conversations	52% vs 45% (Nov 2025)	Anthropic [35]
Tool use	UK students using any AI tool	92% (2025), up from 66%	HEPI [37]
Tool use	Early-career developers using AI daily	55.5%	Stack Overflow [40]
Skill requirements	Workers' core skills expected to change by 2030	39%	WEF [27]
Skill requirements	US employers using skills-based hiring	≈70%; GPA screens 42% (73% in 2019)	NACE [28]

Measure	Indicator	Latest value	Source
Preparation gap	Students trained in AI by their institution	36%	HEPI [37]
Preparation gap	2025 US grads in degree-related full-time jobs	30% (41% in 2024)	Cengage [29]

1. Scope, questions and measurement framework

1.1 Why the first job matters

A first professional role is both employment and training. It introduces the workplace routines, unwritten practices and practical judgement that later positions require. Generative AI is increasingly capable of assisting with tasks once assigned to new recruits—drafting, first-pass research, coding and reconciliation. The concern is therefore twofold: whether entry opportunities diminish, and whether employers preserve a credible route through which graduates can gain experience.

1.2 Research questions

1. Which graduate tasks are changing with AI, in which direction, and how fast?
2. What new expectations are employers attaching to entry-level roles?
3. How is the balance between technical ability, judgement and human interaction shifting?
4. How do role availability and preparation gaps differ across countries and sectors?

1.3 Measurement framework

The review uses five recurring measures, chosen because each can be represented by evidence that institutions may track over time. Section 11 returns to these measures in a practical monitoring dashboard.

Table 3. The five-measure research framework.

Measure	Definition	Core indicators used here	Principal sources
Task mix	What graduates actually spend time on, and how exposed those tasks are to GenAI	Task-exposure shares; automation vs augmentation; occupation exposure gradients	ISE/GAISI [9]; Anthropic [35]; ILO [36]; JSA/SEEK [23]
Tool use	Adoption and intensity of AI tools among students, graduates and employers	Usage rates; daily use; AI mentions in job ads; policy coverage	HEPI [37]; Gallup [38]; Stack Overflow [40]; Indeed [14][15]
Skill requirements	The capabilities employers screen and pay for	AI-skill postings and premia; core skills rankings; screening criteria	WEF [27]; Lightcast [34]; PwC [33]; NACE [28]; GMAC [30]
Role availability	The volume and accessibility of graduate and entry-level roles	Graduate hires; postings; youth/graduate unemployment; junior employment	Stanford [1]; Harvard [2]; ISE [8]; NY Fed [4]; national statistics
Preparation gaps	Distance between what employers need and what graduates bring	Readiness perceptions; training coverage; underemployment	Cengage [29]; HEPI [37]; KPMG [39]; ISE [10]

1.4 Method

Source selection: The evidence set covers official statistics, central-bank analysis, academic research and documented employer or student surveys published from 2023 to 13 October 2026. Sources are graded for the strength of their data and methodological disclosure. Vendor and press summaries are retained where they add context, but do not carry the same weight as primary administrative evidence.

Synthesis: Reported figures were grouped by market and analytical measure, with reporting dates, sample definitions and denominators retained. Apparent conflicts are discussed rather than averaged together. Where the original register cites a secondary account, the distinction is preserved; primary-source verification remains a priority before unrestricted distribution.

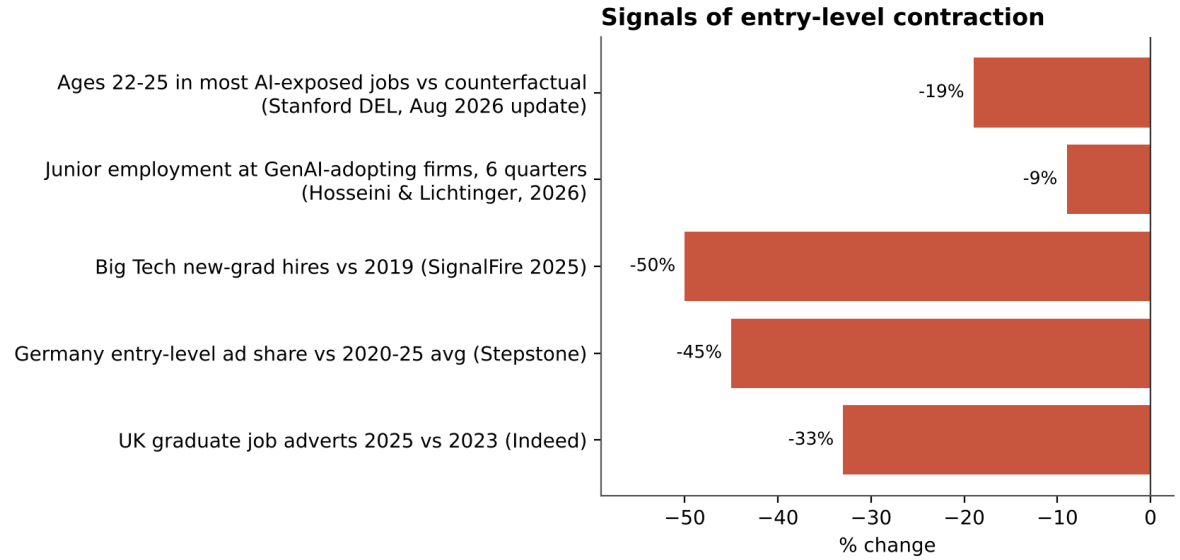
Analytical interpretation: Five original organising frameworks turn the secondary evidence into practical decision aids: the Task Shift Matrix, the T–J–H balance, the country pressure scorecard, three scenarios and a metrics dashboard. Their categories, weights and thresholds are editorial judgements grounded in the cited evidence, not direct observations from a new institutional or employer survey.

Limitations: Definitions vary materially across countries: China's youth unemployment series excludes students, for example, while the New York Fed's recent-graduate measures concern degree holders aged 22–27. Surveys often rely on self-report, job advertisements are not actual hires, and the evidence does not isolate a single causal effect of AI across the labour market.

2. Role availability: is the first rung disappearing?

2.1 The contraction signals

Evidence of entry-level pressure comes from several independent datasets, although they measure different populations and mechanisms. Since 2022, young people in some AI-exposed white-collar occupations have experienced weaker employment or recruitment trends than more experienced colleagues. These findings warrant attention, but should not be treated as a uniform decline across all graduate jobs.



Source: Stanford Digital Economy Lab; Harvard WP (May 2026); SignalFire; Stepstone; Indeed via The Telegraph.

Figure 1. Signals of entry-level contraction across five datasets

Table 4. Selected studies of entry-level employment pressure.

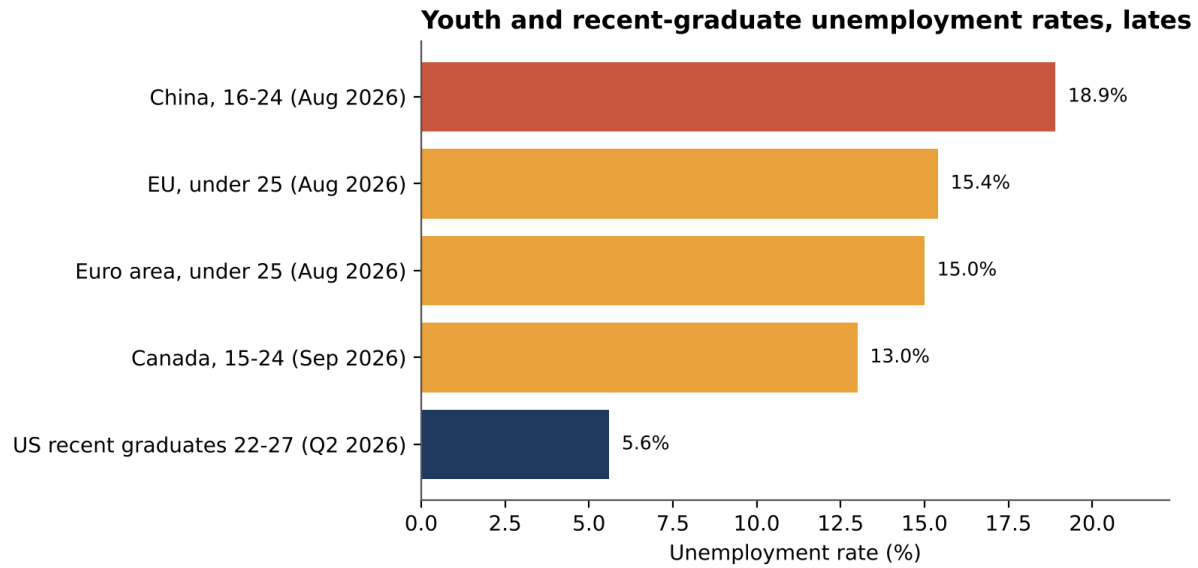
Study / dataset	Population	Key finding	Grade
Stanford Digital Economy Lab, "Canaries in the Coal Mine" (Brynjolfsson, Chandar, Chen), Aug 2026 update [1]	ADP payroll, millions of US workers, tens of thousands of firms	Ages 22–25 in most-exposed occupations: employment ≈19% below counterfactual (15% a year earlier). Older workers in the same occupations stable or rising. Effects concentrated where AI automates rather than augments.	A
Hosseini & Lichtinger, "Generative AI as Seniority-Biased Technological Change", May 2026 [2]	≈65m workers, 280,000+ US firms, 199m postings, 2015–2025	Junior employment at 10,433 adopting firms fell ≈9% vs non-adopters after six quarters; no break for seniors; driven by hiring; mid-tier university graduates hit hardest (U-shape).	A
SignalFire State of Talent 2025 [3]	Tech hiring records	New grads = 7% of Big Tech hires; new-grad hiring −25% vs 2023 and −50%+ vs 2019. Startups: <6% of hires, −30%+ vs 2019.	C
Stepstone (Germany), Aug 2025 [16]	>4m job ads, 2020–2025	Entry-level share in Q1 2025 45% below the 2020–25 average, lower than at the start of COVID-19.	C

Study / dataset	Population	Key finding	Grade
Indeed via The Telegraph (UK), 2025 [12]	UK job adverts	Graduate adverts −33% (2025 vs 2023); accountancy graduate adverts −44%.	C

2.2 Graduate outcomes: the aggregate picture

In the United States, New York Fed measures put recent-graduate unemployment at approximately 5.6% in the second quarter of 2026, with underemployment reaching 42% [4]. Both indicators suggest difficulty translating qualifications into suitable work. The comparison with overall unemployment must be interpreted carefully because the age and education profiles are different [42]. Burning Glass analysis also finds a substantial share of graduates entering work that does not usually require a degree [47].

The UK picture is similarly competitive. Among matched ISE employers, graduate hiring declined by 8% in 2024/25; 42% reduced intake, 33% increased it and 25% were unchanged [8]. The same survey recorded a mean of 140 applications per graduate vacancy. Indeed subsequently reported a lower volume of UK graduate postings in mid-2026 [15]. The ISE estimate of a further 7% decline in 2025/26 was a 2025 forecast, not an observed outcome.



Source: NBS China; Eurostat; Statistics Canada; Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Definitions differ - compare with care.

Figure 2. Youth and recent-graduate unemployment, latest available readings

2.3 The counter-evidence: why AI is not the whole story

A careful reading must also consider evidence that challenges an AI-first explanation:

- **New York Fed (May 2026):** Using Lightcast postings and an exposure index built from O*NET and Anthropic usage data, the authors find the relative decline in postings for highly exposed occupations **began before late 2022**. There is no clear additional break after ChatGPT, and junior and senior postings move broadly in parallel. AI "may be contributing" but is "not the main driver" [5].

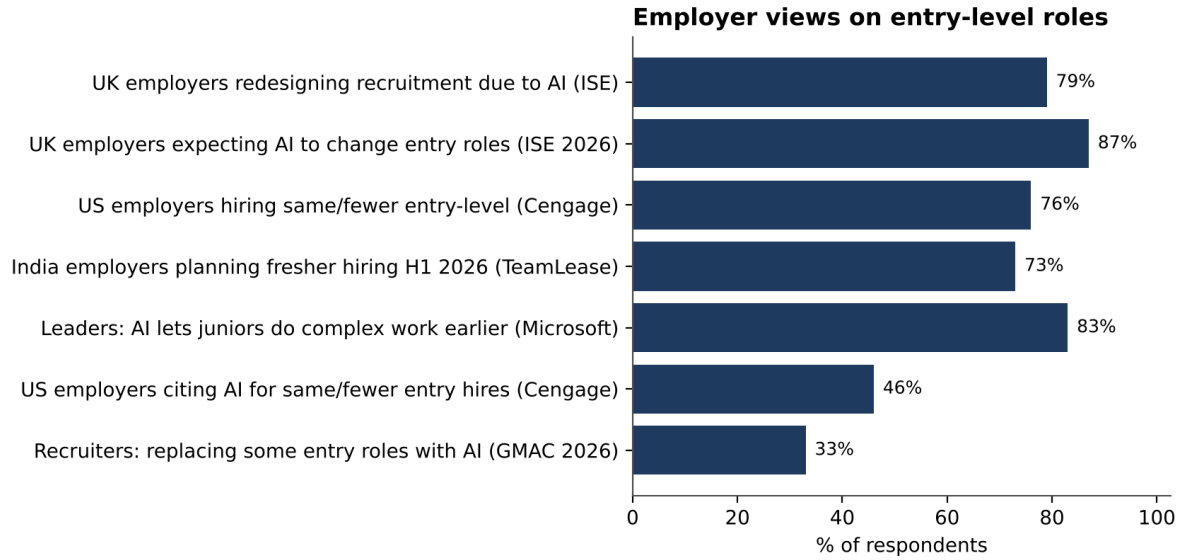
- **Yale Budget Lab (2025–26):** The occupational mix has changed, but not fast enough to signal major disruption. Unemployment duration for high-exposure workers is unchanged [6].
- **Chicago Fed (2026):** Employment in the most AI-exposed occupations **rose 4.05%** from 2019 to 2024, while less-exposed occupations shed payrolls [7].
- **AI-washing:** AI was cited for about 55,000 US job cuts in the first 11 months of 2025, **4.5%** of reported cuts, against about 245,000 attributed to market and economic conditions (Challenger data via Oxford Economics) [6].
- **Macro and policy drivers:** SignalFire points to the end of the 2020–22 low-rate era and over-hiring [3]. UK employers cite higher National Insurance costs (84% report rising employment costs) [11].

Analyst reading: reconciling the evidence

The two bodies of evidence are compatible once **level** is separated from **mechanism**. Aggregate occupational employment has not collapsed, which is the New York Fed, Yale and Chicago Fed result. But **within** exposed occupations, firms that adopt GenAI are hiring fewer juniors than comparable firms, which is the Harvard and Stanford result. That is what you would expect if AI first compresses the junior learning tasks and lets each senior produce more, while the overall labour market is driven by macro conditions.

For institutions, the practical implication is to plan for **a smaller, more selective and differently specified** first rung in AI-exposed fields, not for the end of graduate hiring.

2.4 Employers' stated intentions



Source: ISE 2025/2026; Cengage Group 2025; TeamLease EdTech 2026; Microsoft WTI 2025; GMAC 2026.

Figure 3. Employer intentions on entry-level roles (selected surveys)

Surveys point more clearly to changing job design than to universal elimination of first jobs. In the ISE evidence, most participating UK employers expected AI to affect entry-level roles, but a substantial minority expected no role replacement within three years [10]. Cengage, GMAC and

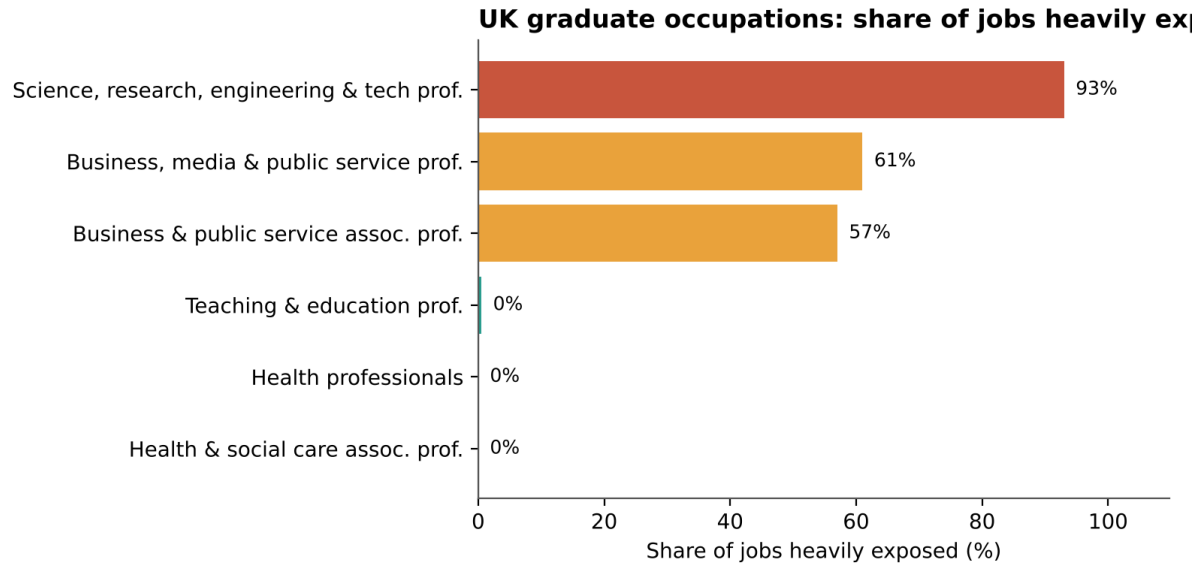
WEF surveys indicate concern about the amount of entry-level work that may be automated, alongside continued intentions to recruit people with relevant skills [27][29][30]. These statements reflect expectations, not completed hiring decisions.

3. Task mix: what graduates actually do is changing

3.1 How exposed are graduate tasks?

The Generative AI Susceptibility Index (GAISI), developed with Cardiff University and reported by the Institute of Student Employers, maps 44 activities from the UK Skills and Employment Survey against language-model capabilities [9]. A task is considered exposed when a chatbot could shorten its completion time by at least one quarter. This measures potential task acceleration rather than displacement of a worker or whole job.

- About **30%** of the tasks in graduate jobs can already be accelerated directly by a chatbot. About **another third** depend on GenAI being integrated into existing tools such as CRM, project-management or coding software [9].
- Across all UK jobs, **40%** of activities in a typical job could be accelerated, but only **about one in eight** jobs is highly exposed (more than half of tasks affected) [9].
- The cognitive bundle most used in Claude conversations (specialist knowledge, complex analysis, solution design, long-form writing) is essential in **about three in ten graduate jobs** but only **one in ten non-graduate roles** [9]. This is why graduates are disproportionately exposed.



Source: ISE / Cardiff University GAISI analysis (Skills & Employment Survey 2024).

Figure 4. Share of UK graduate jobs heavily exposed to GenAI, by occupation group

The ILO's refined global measure suggests that about one quarter of workers are in occupations with some potential GenAI exposure. The reported proportion is higher in high-income than low-income countries, and clerical work remains particularly exposed. Women are over-represented in the most exposed employment categories [36]. The distributional implication matters: equal access to training and transition support cannot be assumed.

3.2 Automation or augmentation?

How AI is used matters as much as whether it is used. Anthropic's Economic Index classifies observed interactions with its products as predominantly collaborative or delegated [35]:

- On the consumer product, **augmentation** (collaborative use) rose to **52%** of conversations in November 2025, while **automation** (delegation) fell to **45%**. The "directive" share, where a task is handed over with minimal back-and-forth, fell from 39% to 32%.
- Through the API, which is how firms embed AI into workflows, about three-quarters of interactions are automation. This pattern warrants monitoring for its potential to automate parts of junior workflows.
- The single most common task on both platforms is **modifying software to correct errors** (≈6% of consumer and ≈10% of API usage). Computer and mathematical tasks account for about a third of consumer and 46% of API traffic. Office and administrative support has risen to 13% of API traffic.
- Tasks covered by AI require an average of **14.4 years** of education, against 13.2 across the economy, which means AI is reaching graduate-level work. Speed-ups are larger for higher-education tasks (≈12x for 16-year tasks against ≈9x for 12-year tasks). Success rates fall slightly as complexity rises (≈70% to 66%).

Anthropic's analysis suggests that, in some occupations, AI is taking on comparatively skilled components of work rather than only routine administration [35]. Other occupational evidence, including SEEK and Jobs and Skills Australia, points to divergent entry-level trends where automation exposure is high versus where human work is augmented [23]. Neither pattern should be generalised across all jobs without further testing.

3.3 The Graduate Task Shift Matrix

Analyst construct. The following matrix combines task-exposure research, observed tool use and field experiments to describe plausible changes in graduate work. The direction shown is an informed judgement about how a graduate's allocation of time may evolve over two to three years. It is not a measured forecast or an employer-validated assessment.

Table 5. Graduate Task Shift Matrix.

Typical graduate task	Example roles	Direction	Evidence basis
First-draft writing (memos, reports, copy, minutes)	Consulting, marketing, policy, comms	▼ Shrinking sharply	Writing time −40%, quality +18% with ChatGPT [45]; long-document writing among top AI uses [9]
Desk research and literature/market scans	Analyst, research assistant, paralegal	▼ Shrinking	Specialist knowledge and analysis = 38% of Claude activities [9]
Routine coding, bug-fixing, test writing	Junior developer, QA	▼ Shrinking	Top AI task: modifying software to correct errors [35]; Copilot 55.8% faster on a coding task [49]
Data cleaning, reconciliation, standard reporting	Audit associate, finance analyst	▼ Shrinking	Big Four cite AI for entry administrative tasks [12]; Office/admin 13% of API use [35]

Typical graduate task	Example roles	Direction	Evidence basis
Tier-1 customer queries and triage	Customer success, support	▼ Shrinking	Stepstone customer-service entry ads −20% [16]; AI on ≈70% of support requests at ReadyTech [24]
Verifying, fact-checking and correcting AI output	All knowledge roles	▲ Growing	66% of employees rely on AI output without evaluating it [39]; 66% of developers frustrated by "almost right" output [40]
Prompting, workflow design, agent supervision	Ops, analyst, developer	▲ Growing (new)	Leaders expect teams to train (41%) and manage (36%) agents within five years [32]
Client and stakeholder interaction	Advisory, sales, account management	▲ Growing	Communication is the top current recruiter priority [30]; people-facing ads rising in Germany [16]
Problem framing and judgement calls	All graduate roles	▲ Growing	Analytical thinking essential for 7 in 10 employers [27]; outside the AI frontier, AI users 19 pts less likely to be correct [44]
Ethics, risk and compliance checks on AI use	Legal, finance, HR, public sector	▲ Growing (new)	Almost half of employees use AI against policy [39]; only 22% of firms have a visible AI strategy [41]
Hands-on care, teaching, skilled physical work	Health, education, trades	► Stable / growing	0% heavy exposure for health professionals [9]; Germany education entry ads +96% [16]

Implication: the apprenticeship problem

The tasks shrinking fastest (drafting, desk research, routine code, reconciliation) are the ones through which juniors traditionally **learned the domain**. The tasks growing fastest (verification, judgement, client work, agent supervision) **assume** that domain knowledge. Employers that remove the first set without redesigning how juniors learn risk a future shortage of mid-level talent. ISE reports that over half of UK employers have already **lengthened professional-skills induction** [10].

4. Tool use: AI is standard kit before the first day

4.1 Students and new graduates

Table 6. Student and early-career AI-tool adoption.

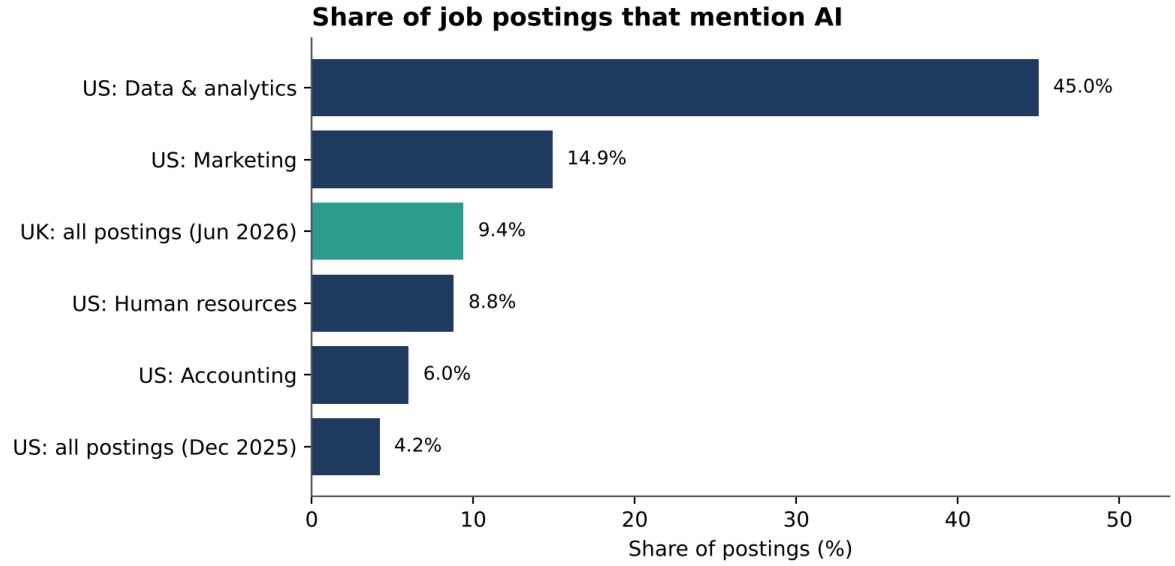
Indicator	Value	Population / date	Source
Students using any AI tool	92% (66% in 2024)	1,041 UK full-time undergraduates, Dec 2024	HEPI/Kortext [37]
Students using GenAI for assessments	88% (53% in 2024)	As above	HEPI [37]
Students saying AI skills are essential	67%	As above	HEPI [37]
US college students using GenAI for coursework	85%	Student Voice Survey 2025	Inside Higher Ed [42]
Gen Z who have used AI / use weekly	79% / 47%	3,465 US Gen Z aged 13–28, Mar 2025	Gallup–Walton [38]
Graduates confident in their AI skills when job-hunting	51%	US 2025 graduates	Cengage [29]
Early-career developers (1–5 yrs) using AI daily	55.5%	6,360 respondents	Stack Overflow 2025 [40]

4.2 Workplace adoption and the BYOAI problem

AI adoption is substantial but not always accompanied by formal oversight. Microsoft/LinkedIn reported that 75% of surveyed knowledge workers used AI at work and that many brought their own tools [31]. In a separate 47-country KPMG–University of Melbourne study, 58% reported intentionally using AI at work, 47% had received training, and 66% acknowledged relying on AI outputs without adequate accuracy checks [39]. Differences between these surveys should not be obscured.

The 2025 Stack Overflow survey adds a useful qualification: although AI use was common among developers, distrust of output accuracy exceeded trust [40]. Graduates are consequently entering organisations in which useful tools may be widely available before robust habits for checking, documenting and governing their use are established.

4.3 Tool use as a hiring signal



Source: Indeed Hiring Lab US (Jan 2026 update) and UK (Aug 2026 update).

Figure 5. Share of job postings mentioning AI, US and UK

- **US:** AI mentions reached a record **4.2%** of postings in December 2025, **134%** above February 2020, even as total tech postings were **34%** below pre-pandemic levels. In marketing, AI mentions rose from 8.4% to **14.9%** of postings in a single year. In HR they rose from 4.4% to **8.8%** [14].
- **UK:** AI was mentioned in a record **9.4%** of postings at end-June 2026, and in almost half of data and analytics postings, even as overall postings sat **32%** below February 2020 [15].
- **Beyond tech:** Lightcast's analysis of 1.3bn+ postings finds **51%** of AI-skill postings are outside IT and computer science, GenAI skill demand up **800%** in non-tech industries since 2022, and a **28%** (≈$18,000) salary premium [34].
- **NACE (US): 13.3%** of jobs and **10.5%** of entry-level postings now require AI skills [28].

5. Skill requirements: technical ability, judgement and human interaction

5.1 What employers say they want

Table 7. Employer expectations and skills evidence.

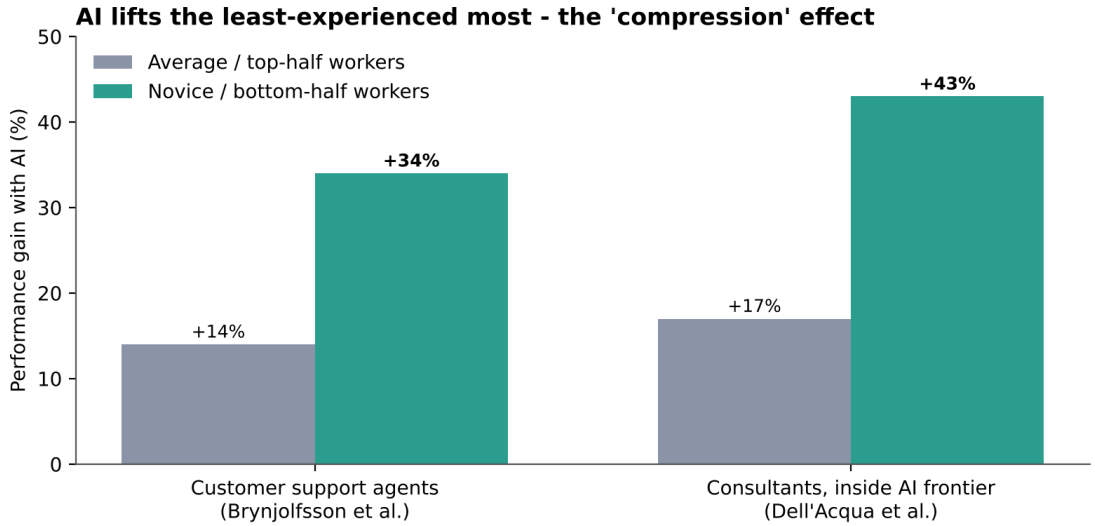
Source	Sample	Key skill signals
WEF Future of Jobs 2025 [27]	1,000+ employers, 14m workers, 55 economies	Analytical thinking is the top core skill (7 in 10 call it essential), followed by resilience/flexibility/agility and leadership/social influence. Fastest-growing: AI & big data, networks & cybersecurity, technological literacy. 39% of core skills to change by 2030.
GMAC Corporate Recruiters 2026 [30]	600+ recruiters, majority Fortune 500	Top current priorities: communication, problem-solving, adaptability. AI proficiency expected to rise sharply in importance over five years.
NACE Job Outlook 2026 [28]	US employers	≈70% use skills-based hiring; only 42% screen by GPA (73% in 2019). Industry internships valued by ≈79%.
Microsoft/LinkedIn WTI 2024 [31]	31,000 people, 31 countries	66% of leaders would not hire someone without AI skills; 71% prefer a less-experienced candidate with AI skills.
PwC AI Jobs Barometer 2025 [33]	≈1bn job ads, six continents	Skills sought are changing 66% faster in the most AI-exposed occupations; 56% wage premium for AI skills; degree requirements falling fastest in AI-exposed roles.
ISE 2026 [10]	UK graduate employers	Critical thinking, judgement, adaptability and communication emphasised; one-third rate graduates below expectations on adaptability, self-awareness and organisational awareness.

5.2 Why judgement now carries a premium

Controlled studies help explain why judgement is becoming a more visible complement to technical execution:

- **The jagged frontier.** Among 758 BCG consultants, AI users completed **12.2%** more tasks, **25.1%** faster, at **40%+** higher quality on tasks inside AI's capability frontier. On a task just outside it, they were **19 percentage points less likely** to reach the correct answer than those without AI [44]. Knowing where the frontier lies is a judgement skill.
- **Compression.** In a Fortune 500 customer-support deployment (5,179 agents), AI raised productivity **14%** on average and **34%** for novice and low-skilled agents, with little effect on the most experienced [43]. Among consultants, below-average performers gained **43%**, top performers **17%** [44].

- **Experienced users are not always faster.** In a randomised trial, experienced open-source developers using early-2025 AI tools took **19% longer** on familiar codebases, although they believed they were faster (METR, 2025) [46].



Source: Brynjolfsson, Li & Raymond (QJE 2025); Dell'Acqua et al. (HBS WP 24-013, 2023). Top-half figure for consultants rounded.

Figure 6. The compression effect: AI lifts less-experienced workers most

For graduates, this productivity effect creates an opportunity and a challenge. AI assistance can help less-experienced staff produce competent work earlier, as customer-service experiments suggest [43]. Yet the ability to generate an acceptable first draft is less distinctive when everyone has access to similar tools. Employers must therefore evaluate whether a candidate can define the problem, recognise mistakes, interpret the evidence and communicate an informed recommendation.

5.3 The Technical–Judgement–Human (T-J-H) balance

Analyst construct. The Technical–Judgement–Human (T–J–H) framework illustrates how the relative importance of three capability families could evolve across six role groups. Both sets of 100-point weightings are editorial assumptions informed by the task and employer evidence above. They are designed to prompt discussion about curriculum and assessment, not presented as measured hiring weights.

Table 8. Technical–Judgement–Human illustrative weightings.

Role family	c.2022 weighting (T / J / H)	c.2026 weighting (T / J / H)	What moved
Software & data	60 / 25 / 15	45 / 35 / 20	Routine code compressed; review, system design and stakeholder translation up
Audit, accounting & finance	50 / 30 / 20	35 / 40 / 25	Reconciliation automated; scepticism, materiality judgement and client contact up
Consulting, policy & research	40 / 35 / 25	25 / 45 / 30	Drafting and desk research compressed; problem framing and synthesis up

Role family	c.2022 weighting (T / J / H)	c.2026 weighting (T / J / H)	What moved
Marketing, comms & HR	35 / 30 / 35	30 / 30 / 40	AI-tool fluency now technical baseline; brand, empathy and persuasion up
Legal (trainee/paralegal)	35 / 40 / 25	25 / 50 / 25	Document review compressed; legal judgement and verification up
Health, education & care	35 / 30 / 35	35 / 30 / 35	Low exposure; AI is mainly admin support; mix broadly unchanged

Reading the T-J-H balance

Technical skill does not disappear. Its content changes, from producing artefacts to **specifying, testing and integrating** AI-produced artefacts. The clearest gains are in **judgement** for professional-services and analytical roles, and in **human interaction** for client-facing roles. Institutions should assess all three explicitly. Many graduate assessment centres still test mainly technical and verbal-reasoning output, which AI can now do well.

6. Employer expectations and the new recruitment game

6.1 Higher bar, earlier

- **Experience paradox.** Companies post junior roles but fill them with more experienced people: "you need experience to get the job, but you need the job to get experience" [3]. HiBob found **73%** of HR professionals hired graduates directly into higher-level roles and **24%** said AI had reduced the experience required [11].
- **Credentials tightening and loosening at once.** In the US, **71%** of employers now require a two- or four-year degree for entry-level roles, up from 55% in 2024 [29]. Yet PwC finds degree requirements falling fastest in AI-exposed roles [33], and NACE finds 70% using skills-based hiring [28]. Degrees work as a filter in a crowded market, while skills evidence decides who gets hired.
- **Placements and internships matter more.** More than **90%** of UK employers say placements contribute significantly to student development [10]. US employers weight industry experience (≈81%) and internships (≈79%) heavily [28]. India's TeamLease highlights applied skills, internships and project portfolios as the fast-track [25].
- **AI fluency tested at interview.** UBS has added AI-fluency questions to graduate interviews [23]. In the UK, Grant Thornton is redesigning its three-year graduate programme "in the age of AI" while raising intake **30%** to 340 [13].

6.2 Recruitment under AI pressure

Table 9. Recruitment assessment and AI-use indicators.

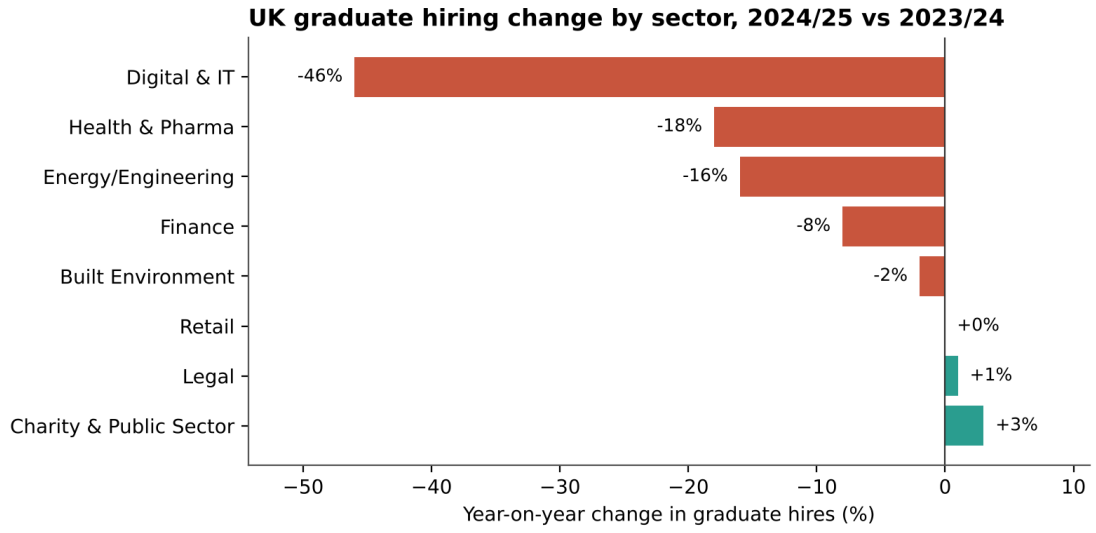
Indicator	Value	Source
UK employers reviewing or redesigning recruitment due to AI	79%	ISE 2025 [8]
UK employers who redesigned selection because of GenAI	33% (23% prior year)	ISE 2025 [8]
Most common misconduct: undisclosed AI use in interviews	Reported by 61%	ISE 2025 [8]
Employers frequently encountering cheating	15% (7% prior year)	ISE 2025 [8]
Employers giving applicants no guidance on AI use	45%	ISE 2025 [8]
Employers concerned AI misrepresents candidate ability	Two-thirds	ISE 2026 [10]
Graduate applications per vacancy (UK; Retail/FMCG peak)	140 mean; 290 in Retail, FMCG & Tourism	ISE 2025 [8]
German graduates: applications per interview; ghosted	Median 40; 74% ghosted	Stepstone 2025 [16]
Employers expecting more automation in selection (5 yrs)	70%	ISE 2025 [8]

Selection is changing on both sides. Applicants can prepare polished materials at speed, while employers are making greater use of automated screening and supervised exercises. The increase in applications makes it harder to infer capability from written submissions alone [8][11]. Institutions can respond by helping students build evidence that stands up to scrutiny: assessed placements, documented projects, portfolios and observed work samples.

6.3 Sector snapshots

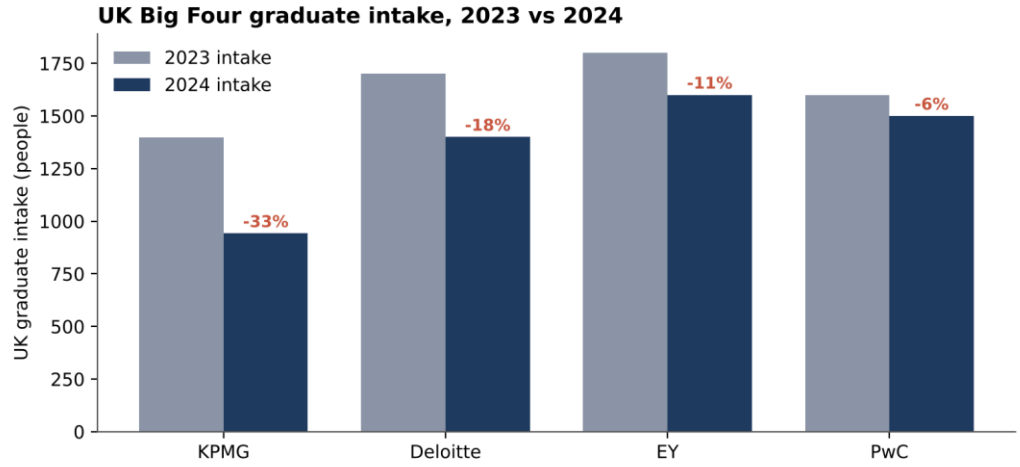
Table 10. Graduate hiring and task-exposure signals by sector.

Sector	What the evidence shows
Technology & software	UK Digital & IT graduate hiring −46% (2024/25) [8]; Big Tech new-grad hires −50% vs 2019 [3]; 40% of tech recruiters say AI replacing entry roles [30]. But India AI/ML hiring +49% YoY (Feb 2026) [26].
Accounting & audit	UK Big Four intake cut 6–29% in 2024 (≈1,100 roles over two years) [12][13]; accountancy graduate ads −44% [12]; counter-trend: Grant Thornton +30% [13].
Financial services	UK finance graduate hiring −8% but school-leaver hiring +24% [8]; finance AI-posting growth 40% [34]; 37% of UK financial firms expect AI headcount reductions (CIPD via FT) [11].
Legal	UK legal graduate hiring +1% [8]; professionals expect AI to free 5 hrs/week (240 hrs/yr) [41].
Marketing, HR & admin	Germany entry ads: Sales −56%, HR −50%, Admin −34% since 2022 [16]; US AI mentions in marketing ads 14.9%, HR 8.8% [14].
Health, education, public sector	Near-zero heavy GAISI exposure [9]; Germany education entry ads +96% [16]; UK charity & public sector graduate hiring +3% [8].



Source: Institute of Student Employers, Student Recruitment Survey 2025 (n=155 employers).

Figure 7. UK graduate hiring change by sector, 2024/25

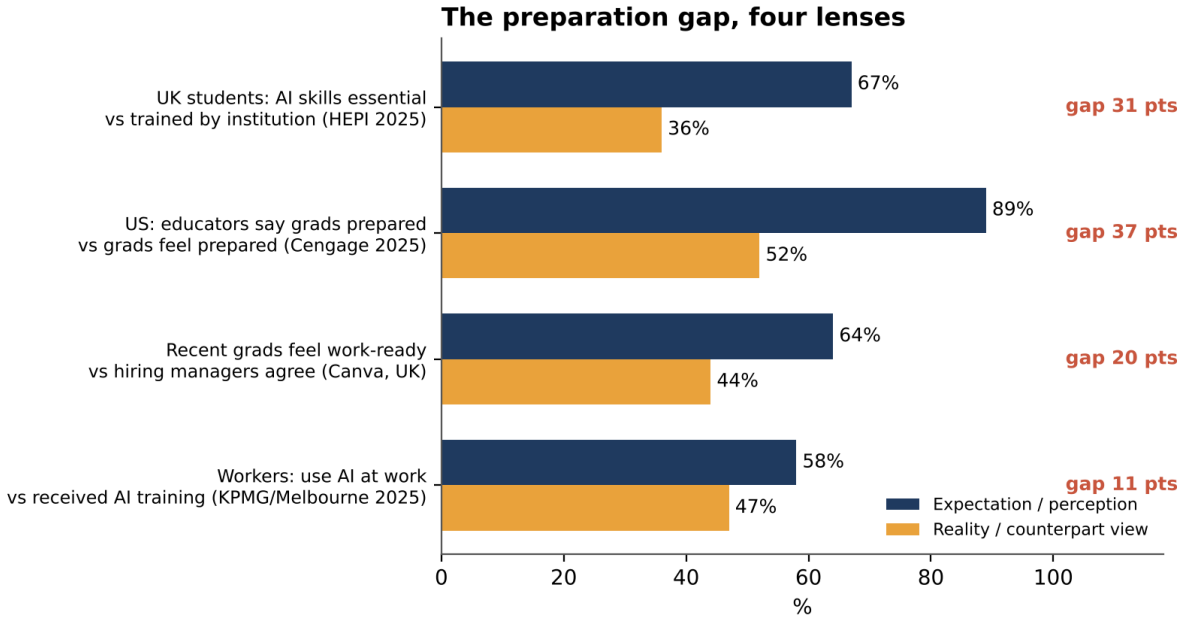


Source: The Telegraph via Scottish Financial News (23 Jun 2025). Rounded firm figures.

Figure 8. UK Big Four graduate intake, 2023 vs 2024

7. Preparation gaps

The evidence points to four distinct readiness gaps. Perception concerns whether educators, graduates and employers agree about preparedness. Training asks whether students have sufficient opportunity to learn and practise with AI. Outcomes concern entry into suitable employment. Confidence captures how graduates judge their own prospects. Each is measured differently and should not be collapsed into one readiness score.



Source: HEPI/Kortext 2025; Cengage Group 2025 (52% = 100% minus 48% unprepared); Canva via techUK; KPMG & Univ. of Melbourne 2025.

Figure 9. The preparation gap seen through four lenses

Perception gap

89% of US educators believe their students are workforce-ready, while **48%** of graduates feel unprepared to apply for entry-level jobs in their field [29]. In the UK, **64%** of graduates feel prepared for work, against **44%** of hiring managers who agree [11]. The Open University found **58%** of leaders see a misalignment between young people's skills and employer expectations [11].

Training gap

Only **36%** of UK students have received AI-skills support from their institution, although 67% call such skills essential. Only **29%** say their institution encourages AI use [37]. In the US, students whose schools allow AI are far more likely to feel prepared to use it after graduation (**57%** against **32%**), yet only **28%** say their school explicitly allows it [38]. Among workers, **47%** have received AI training [39]. In the UK, 66% of businesses report AI productivity gains but only 38% prioritise AI training [11].

Outcome gap

Only **30%** of 2025 US graduates hold full-time jobs related to their degree (41% for 2024), and **33%** are unemployed and seeking work (20% for 2024) [29]. US recent-graduate underemployment

stands at **42%** [4]. Singapore's full-time graduate employment fell from **79.4%** to **74.4%** in a year [21].

Confidence gap

An EAB poll of the class of 2026 found **50%** uncertain about AI's effect on their careers, **32%** concerned, and only **13%** optimistic and **7%** excited [42]. In the UK, around 1 in 10 graduates changed career plans because of AI [11].

Preparation-gap priorities (analyst synthesis)

1. Verification literacy: teach students to test, cite and correct AI output. Two-thirds of workers currently do not [39].

2. Assessed, real-world experience: placements, live briefs and supervised projects that give evidence AI cannot fabricate [8][10].

3. Explicit AI policy and practice in every programme: the 57% vs 32% preparedness gap shows that permission plus guidance works [38].

4. Human-skill assessment: communication, teamwork and adaptability are top recruiter priorities [30] and the areas where one-third of graduates fall short on entry [10].

8. Country and regional analysis

Generative AI is deployed across borders, but the entry-level labour market remains shaped by domestic conditions. Cohort size, labour shortages, sector mix, education systems and recruitment traditions determine how the same technology interacts with early careers. These profiles therefore present each market's indicators on their own terms; they are not a comparable global league table.

8.1 United States

Table 11. United States - selected indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Recent-graduate unemployment / underemployment (Q2 2026)	5.6% / 42%	NY Fed [4]
Ages 22–25 in most-exposed jobs vs counterfactual	≈−19%	Stanford DEL [1]
Junior employment at GenAI adopters (6 quarters)	≈−9%	Harvard WP [2]
Class of 2026 hiring projection (NACE, Nov 2025 → spring update)	+1.6% → +5.6%	NACE [28]
Employers hiring same or fewer entry-level workers	76%	Cengage [29]
Postings mentioning AI (Dec 2025)	4.2%; tech postings −34% vs Feb 2020	Indeed [14]

Interpretation. US research provides detailed evidence of relatively weaker employment among younger workers in certain AI-exposed roles, alongside aggregate findings that do not support a simple economy-wide displacement story [1][2][5]. Institutions should monitor software, administrative and analytical pathways while recognising continued opportunities in other sectors.

8.2 United Kingdom

Table 12. United Kingdom - selected indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Graduate hiring 2024/25; forecast 2025/26	−8%; −7% (≈+1% excluding three large employers)	ISE [8]
School and college leaver hiring 2024/25	+8%	ISE [8]
Applications per graduate vacancy	140 (mean); 97 (median)	ISE [8]
Graduate postings (mid-2026)	≈−7% YoY; lowest since 2020	Indeed [15]
Postings mentioning AI (Jun 2026)	9.4% (record)	Indeed [15]

Indicator	Value	Source
Median graduate starting salary	£33,000 (+2%)	ISE [8]
Big Four graduate intake change 2023→24	−6% to −29%	The Telegraph [12]

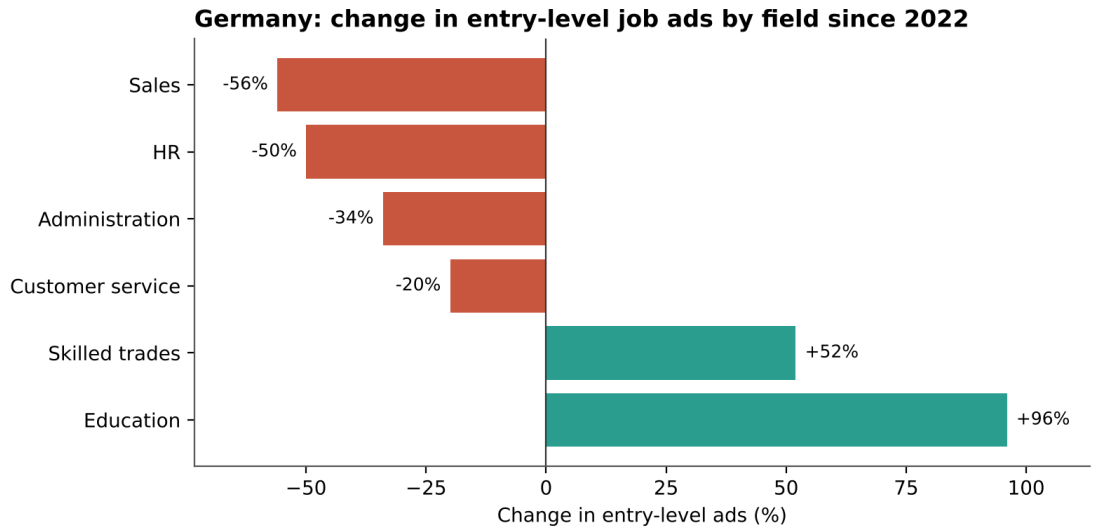
Interpretation. UK graduate recruitment was difficult in 2024/25, with substantial competition for advertised places and greater interest in alternative early-career pathways [8]. The 2025 survey's projection for 2025/26 is historical rather than a confirmed outcome. Any decision about current intake should be based on the newer recruitment release and the latest vacancy data.

8.3 European Union (with Germany)

Table 13. European Union and Germany - selected indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Youth unemployment, under 25 (Aug 2026)	EU 15.4%; euro area 15.0%	Eurostat [17]
Overall unemployment (Aug 2026)	EU 6.1%; euro area 6.4%	Eurostat [17]
Germany entry-level ad share, Q1 2025 vs 2020–25 avg	−45%	Stepstone [16]
Germany entry ads since 2022: Sales / HR / Admin / Customer service	−56% / −50% / −34% / −20%	Stepstone [16]
Germany entry ads since 2022: Education / Skilled trades	+96% / +52%	Stepstone [16]

Interpretation. Germany's occupational evidence highlights contrasting trends: weaker early-career advertisements in sales, administration and HR, alongside stronger demand in education and skilled trades [16]. This is consistent with differentiated exposure to automation, but the underlying analysis does not establish AI as the cause.



Source: Stepstone analysis of >4m ads, Jan 2020-Apr 2025 (published Aug 2025).

Figure 10. Germany: change in entry-level job ads by field since 2022

8.4 India

Table 14. India - fresher hiring and AI/ML demand.

Indicator	Value	Source
Employers planning to hire freshers, H1 2026	73% (+3 pts)	TeamLease, n=1,051 [25]
Fresher intent by sector: Retail / E-commerce & start-ups / IT	91% / 90% / 81%	TeamLease [25]
White-collar hiring, Feb 2026 YoY	+12%	Naukri JobSpeak [26]
Fresher (0–3 yrs) hiring, Feb 2026 YoY	+17% (IT +8%)	Naukri [26]
AI/ML role hiring, Feb 2026 YoY	+49% (Indian MNCs +82%)	Naukri [26]

Interpretation. India stands out in the cited February 2026 Naukri series: fresher hiring increased by 17% year on year and AI/ML vacancies by 49% [26]. Hiring gains across business services, insurance and retail suggest a broader entry market than software alone. A material risk remains in IT services, where routine junior assignments may be redesigned as AI-assisted delivery expands.

8.5 China

Table 15. China - youth employment indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Youth unemployment, 16–24 excluding students (Aug 2026)	18.9% (17.9% in Jul)	NBS via press [19]
Ages 25–29 / 30–59 (Aug 2026)	7.5% / 3.9%	NBS [19]
Graduating cohort 2026	Reported record ≈12.7m	Press reports (Grade C)

Interpretation. China combines a large graduating cohort with a difficult youth employment market [19]. The reported labour-market measures do not isolate AI's contribution from cyclical weakness, changes in cohort size or differences in recruitment practices. Firm conclusions about AI-related graduate displacement are therefore premature.

8.6 Japan

Table 16. Japan - graduate employment indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
University graduate employment rate (1 Apr 2026)	98.0% (second-highest on record)	MHLW/MEXT [20]
By field: humanities & social science / science	98.0% / 98.1%	MHLW/MEXT [20]

Interpretation. Japan's very high graduate employment rate is consistent with a tight labour supply and established cohort-based hiring practices [20]. AI may principally be used to address shortages and improve productivity in some fields, although the available data do not establish that graduate hiring is protected from future change.

8.7 Singapore

Table 17. Singapore - graduate employment outcomes.

Indicator	Value	Source
Graduate overall employment (GES 2025)	83.4% (87.1% in 2024)	GES [21]
Full-time permanent employment	74.4% (79.4% in 2024)	GES [21]
Median gross monthly salary	S$4,500 (flat)	GES [21]

Interpretation. Singapore's 2025 graduate employment survey reported lower overall and full-time permanent employment rates than a year earlier, while the median salary remained unchanged [21]. That points to a tighter entry market, but this survey alone cannot establish whether AI played a significant part.

8.8 Hong Kong

Table 18. Hong Kong - AI-related posting trends.

Indicator	Value	Source
Share of postings requiring AI skills	1.6% → 1.9%	PwC [33]
Information & communication sector AI-skill postings (2021→2024)	6.4% → 7.2%	PwC [33]
Augmented vs automated job postings since 2021	+6% vs −7%	PwC [33]

Interpretation. PwC's Hong Kong analysis distinguishes occupations whose tasks are supported by AI from those more exposed to automation [33]. Its reported posting trends are useful for programme planning, while remaining associative evidence rather than proof that AI caused the changes.

8.9 Australia

Table 19. Australia - employment and AI-exposure indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Undergraduate full-time employment, 3 yrs after graduation (GOS-L 2023)	91.7% (70.3% at graduation)	QILT [22]

Indicator	Value	Source
Early-career ad share: electronics engineers (augmentation-exposed)	+3 pts	SEEK/JSA [23]
Programmers (automation exposure >60%)	Early-career share falling	SEEK/JSA [23]
Economy-wide entry-level roles (JSA, Aug 2025)	Not yet declined; monitor closely	JSA [24]

Interpretation. Australian occupational analysis suggests different entry-level trends in work that AI primarily augments and work that it may automate [23][24]. The conclusion is not that all coding careers will contract, but that the exposure mechanism should be considered alongside overall job demand and the design of junior roles.

8.10 Canada

Table 20. Canada - unemployment indicators.

Indicator	Value	Source
Youth unemployment, 15–24 (Sep 2026)	13.0%	Statistics Canada [18]
Overall unemployment (Sep 2026)	6.5%	Statistics Canada [18]

Interpretation. Canada's September 2026 youth unemployment reading indicates pressure in the broader labour market [18]. Without a comparable measure of AI-related entry-level hiring, it would be misleading to attribute that pressure to technology alone.

8.11 Entry-Market Pressure Scorecard

Analyst construct. This scorecard combines current market conditions, indicative AI-related task exposure and a qualitative 2027–28 outlook. Judgements are deliberately broad, reflecting differences in the age groups, periods and methodologies covered by national indicators. The ratings are not statistically calculated country rankings.

Table 21. Entry-Market Pressure Scorecard.

Market	Volume pressure	AI task pressure	Overall outlook (AI-exposed roles)	Main driver
United States	High	High	Challenging	Hiring freeze in exposed occupations; macro slowdown
United Kingdom	High	Very high	Challenging	Cost increases + AI redesign + shift to apprenticeships
Germany / EU	Moderate–High	Moderate	Mixed	Collapse in office entry roles; growth in people-facing
India	Low	Moderate–High	Favourable (watch IT)	Broad fresher demand; AI/ML surge; IT pyramid risk

Market	Volume pressure	AI task pressure	Overall outlook (AI-exposed roles)	Main driver
China	Very high	Moderate	Challenging	Record cohort; slow economy
Japan	Low	Moderate	Favourable	Labour shortage; cohort hiring
Singapore	Moderate–High	High	Mixed	Selective ICT hiring
Hong Kong	Moderate	Moderate	Mixed	Augmented roles growing, automated shrinking
Australia	Moderate	Moderate	Mixed–Favourable	Augmentation-led; coding entry under pressure
Canada	High	Moderate	Challenging	Cyclical weakness

9. Scenarios for the first job, 2027–2030

Analyst construct. Three scenarios describe plausible ways early-career work could develop between 2027 and 2030. They are based on the studies cited in this report, not on new forecasting models or employer validation. Their observable signposts allow institutions to revisit assumptions as evidence changes. More than one scenario may develop at the same time across different sectors.

Table 22. Three scenarios for graduate work, 2027–2030.

	A. Rebundled apprenticeship	B. Hollowed ladder	C. Augmented expansion
Core story	Graduate volumes broadly stable; roles rebuilt around verification, client work and agent supervision; longer, structured induction	Agentic AI absorbs most codified junior work in exposed occupations; firms hire experienced staff and shrink graduate intakes	AI cuts the cost of making juniors productive; firms hire more graduates because each is productive sooner
Evidence it builds on	87% expect role change but ≈40% expect no replacements [10]; >50% lengthened induction [10]; augmentation 52% of usage [35]	Junior −9% at adopters [2]; 22–25 gap widening 15%→19% [1]; API ≈75% automation [35]; 40% of tech recruiters replacing entry roles [30]	Compression effect (+34% novices) [43]; 83% expect juniors on complex work earlier [32]; Grant Thornton +30% [13]; augmented roles +6% (HK) [33]
Most likely in	Professional services, finance, public sector	Software, customer support, admin-analytical, BPO	Engineering, health-adjacent, sales/advisory, high-growth firms
Signposts to watch	ISE graduate hiring flat ±3%; induction length rising; AI-fluency in graduate assessment	Stanford gap >25%; second consecutive UK graduate decline; falling IT fresher intake in India	Early-career ad share rising in augmentation-exposed occupations; AI-skill entry postings >20%
Implication for institutions	Teach verification, judgement and AI-integrated practice	Diversify routes (apprenticeships, augmentation-led fields); strengthen placements	Scale AI-fluent cohorts quickly; partner with growth employers

On present evidence, the central planning assumption for many professional fields is a redesigned apprenticeship into work rather than the disappearance of graduate hiring. A thinner entry-level ladder remains a material risk where automation removes substantial junior tasks; faster expansion is possible where employers deliberately use AI to increase the productive contribution of new recruits. These are conditional interpretations, not assigned probabilities.

10. Implications and recommendations

10.1 Universities, colleges and careers services

- **Map every programme against the Task Shift Matrix.** Identify which graduate tasks it prepares students for that are shrinking, and rebalance towards verification, judgement and client-facing practice.
- **Make AI policy explicit and permissive-with-guidance.** Students in AI-permitting institutions are almost twice as likely to feel prepared (57% vs 32%) [38]. Close the 67%-vs-36% training gap [37].
- **Build verifiable evidence of capability.** Assessed placements, live employer briefs, supervised practicals and portfolios answer employer concerns about AI-polished applications [8][10].
- **Assess T-J-H explicitly.** Add judgement (for example, "find the error in this AI output") and human-interaction assessment alongside technical work.
- **Track outcomes by exposure.** Monitor graduate destinations by occupational AI exposure, not just by subject, to spot hollowing early.

10.2 Employers

- **Redesign rather than delete junior roles.** Protect the learning function of entry roles: rotate juniors through verification, client and judgement work, with AI handling first drafts.
- **Publish AI-use guidance for applicants.** 45% currently give none [8], which encourages misuse and makes assessment unfair.
- **Invest in training.** Only 47% of workers have had AI training [39], and only 22% of professional firms have a visible AI strategy [41].
- **Watch the pipeline.** Fewer juniors today means fewer experienced managers in five to eight years. Model succession, not just this year's productivity.

10.3 Policymakers and funders

- **Fund the bridge to first experience:** placements, degree apprenticeships and wage-subsidised first roles in exposed occupations.
- **Improve measurement:** publish entry-level vacancy and hiring series by occupational AI exposure, and harmonise graduate-outcome definitions across countries.
- **Target equity risks:** women are over-represented in high-exposure clerical work [36], and mid-tier-university graduates show the largest relative junior declines [2].

10.4 Students and graduates

- Become **demonstrably** AI-fluent, and equally able to show when AI is wrong.
- Prioritise internships, placements and projects with real stakeholders: they are the strongest hiring signals [28].

- Consider augmentation-led fields and alternative entry routes, such as apprenticeships and growth sectors, as well as traditional graduate schemes.

11. Metrics dashboard: indicators to track

Analyst construct. The dashboard proposes a practical set of indicators linked to the report's five measures. Values are the source-specific readings used in this edition; suggested alert thresholds are editorial monitoring triggers, not externally established policy targets. Recheck series definitions and publication dates before using the dashboard in decisions.

Table 23. Metrics dashboard and monitoring thresholds.

Measure	Indicator	Value in this report	Frequency	Alert threshold
Role availability	US recent-grad unemployment (NY Fed)	5.6% (Q2 2026)	Quarterly	>6.0%
Role availability	UK graduate hiring (ISE)	−8% (2024/25)	Annual	Second consecutive fall
Role availability	Indeed UK graduate postings	≈−7% YoY	Monthly	<−10% YoY
Role availability	Stanford 22–25 exposure gap	≈19%	Periodic	>25%
Role availability	EU youth unemployment (Eurostat)	15.4%	Monthly	>16%
Task mix	Augmentation share, Anthropic Index	52%	Semi-annual	<45%
Task mix	API automation share	≈75%	Semi-annual	>80%
Tool use	AI share of postings, UK / US (Indeed)	9.4% / 4.2%	Monthly	Trend direction
Tool use	Students trained in AI (HEPI)	36%	Annual	<50% by 2027
Skill requirements	AI-skill entry postings (NACE)	10.5%	Annual	>20%
Skill requirements	AI-skill wage premium (PwC / Lightcast)	56% / 28%	Annual	Trend direction
Preparation gap	Grads in degree-related jobs (Cengage)	30%	Annual	<30%
Preparation gap	US underemployment (NY Fed)	42%	Quarterly	>43%

Appendix A. Source register

The bracketed source numbers used throughout the report correspond to the 49 entries below. Primary research and official datasets have been distinguished from industry reports and secondary press accounts where disclosed. The register retains original evidence references, including entries requiring source-level checking before external distribution. Source review period: September–13 October 2026.

Table 24. Numbered public source register.

#	Source	URL
1	Brynjolfsson, E., Chandar, B., Chen, R. "Canaries in the Coal Mine? Six Facts about the Recent Employment Effects of AI." Stanford Digital Economy Lab, 2025; August 2026 update (summary: brianheger.com, 19 Aug 2026).	https://digitaleconomy.stanford.edu/publication/canaries-in-the-coal-mine-six-facts-about-the-recent-employment-effects-of-artificial-intelligence/
2	Hosseini, S.M., Lichtinger, G. "Generative AI as Seniority-Biased Technological Change." Working paper, May 2026 version (SSRN 5425555).	https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5425555
3	SignalFire. State of Tech Talent Report 2025.	https://www.signalfire.com/blog/signalfire-state-of-talent-report-2025
4	Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The Labor Market for Recent College Graduates (Q2 2026).	https://www.newyorkfed.org/research/college-labor-market
5	Federal Reserve Bank of New York, Liberty Street Economics. "Do Job Postings Show Early Labor Market Effects of AI?" 14 May 2026.	https://libertystreeteconomics.newyorkfed.org/2026/05/do-job-postings-show-early-labor-market-effects-of-ai/
6	Yale Budget Lab analysis, as reported in Fortune, 2 Feb 2026 (includes Oxford Economics/Challenger data).	https://fortune.com/2026/02/02/ai-labor-market-yale-budget-lab-ai-washing/

#	Source	URL
7	Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago research, as reported by The Ohio Society of CPAs, 24 Jul 2026.	https://ohiocpa.com/get-involved/news/2026/07/24/report--jobs-in-occupations-most-exposed-to-ai-increased-by-4
8	Institute of Student Employers. Student Recruitment Survey 2025.	https://ise.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/reports/student_recruitment_survey_2025.pdf
9	Institute of Student Employers. "How exposed are graduate jobs to AI? Can employers respond?" (GAISI, with Cardiff University).	https://ise.org.uk/knowledge/insights/490/how_exposed_are_graduate_jobs_to_ai_can_employers_respond
10	Institute of Student Employers 2026 survey, as reported by Resultsense, 7 May 2026.	https://www.resultsense.com/news/2026-05-07-ise-graduate-jobs-ai-reshape/
11	techUK. "What's actually happening with entry-level and graduate jobs?" 20 Nov 2025 (compiles CIPD, HiBob, Canva, Open University, Prospects, BSI and others).	https://www.techuk.org/resource/what-s-actually-happening-with-entry-level-and-graduate-jobs.html
12	The Telegraph, via Scottish Financial News, "Big Four slash graduate jobs as AI takes over entry-level tasks", 23 Jun 2025.	https://www.scottishfinancialnews.com/articles/big-four-slash-graduate-jobs-as-ai-takes-over-entry-level-tasks
13	Oman Observer, Grant Thornton UK graduate hiring plan, 3 Jun 2026.	https://www.omanobserver.om/article/1190636/opinion/business/major-accountancy-firm-plans-30-graduate-hiring
14	Indeed Hiring Lab. January 2026 US Labor Market Update: jobs mentioning AI.	https://www.hiringlab.org/2026/01/22/january-labor-market-update-jobs-mentioning-ai-are-growing-amid-broader-hiring-weakness
15	Indeed Hiring Lab UK mid-year update, via Workplace Journal, Aug 2026.	https://workplacejournal.co.uk/2026/08/graduate-job-postings-at-lowest-level-since-pandemic-indeed/

#	Source	URL
16	Stepstone. Entry-level jobs analysis (Germany), 12 Aug 2025, via gettex.	https://www.gettex.de/en/news-overview/newsdetail/stepstone-analysis-fewer-entry-level-jobs-longer-application-processes/
17	Eurostat euro-indicators, August 2026 unemployment, via Cyprus Mail, 2 Oct 2026.	https://cyprus-mail.com/2026/10/02/cyprus-unemployment-rate-rises-for-third-month-running
18	Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey, September 2026, via Todo Canada.	https://www.todocanada.ca/alberta-adds-23000-jobs-as-canada-loses-68000-and-unemployment-rises-to-6-5-in-september/
19	National Bureau of Statistics of China, August 2026 youth unemployment, via Hellenic Shipping News.	https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/china-youth-unemployment-climbs-to-18-9-in-august/
20	Japan MHLW/MEXT graduate employment survey, via Jiji/Adnkronos, 22 May 2026.	https://english.adnkronos.com/2026/05/22/japans-new-univ-graduate-employment-rate-holds-at-98-pct/
21	Singapore Graduate Employment Survey 2025 (MOE and autonomous universities), via Vulcan Post.	https://vulcanpost.com/909817/graduate-employment-singapore-2025/
22	QILT. Graduate Outcomes Survey – Longitudinal (2023).	https://www.qilt.edu.au/qilt-surveys/graduate-employment
23	SEEK data with Jobs and Skills Australia exposure measures, AAP via The Nightly, 10 Sep 2026.	https://thenightly.com.au/australia/seek-data-reveals-ai-boom-could-create-more-entry-level-jobs-in-australia-despite-fears-of-white-collar-apocalypse-c-22848222
24	Jobs and Skills Australia, Generative AI Capacity Study (Aug 2025), via ACS Information Age.	https://ia.acs.org.au/article/2025/-we-hire-fewer-entry-level-engineers---aussie-firms-on-ai-impact.html
25	TeamLease EdTech Career Outlook Report HY1 2026, via Outlook Money.	https://www.outlookmoney.com/news/73-per-cent-employers-plan-to-hire-freshers-in-h1-2026-says-report
26	Naukri JobSpeak, February 2026.	https://www.naukri.com/blog/naukri-jobspeak-it-hiring-shows-meaningful-recovery-and-ai-momentum-continues-white-collar-market-posts-12-yoy-growth-in-february-2026/amp

#	Source	URL
27	World Economic Forum. The Future of Jobs Report 2025.	https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/digest/
28	NACE. Job Outlook 2026 (Nov 2025) and Spring Update, summarised by University of Florida Career Connections Center, 30 Jun 2026.	https://naceweb.org/research/reports/job-outlook/2026/
29	Cengage Group. 2025 Graduate Employability Report, 9 Sep 2025.	https://www.cengagegroup.com/news/press-releases/2025/cengage-group-2025-employability-report/
30	GMAC 2026 Corporate Recruiters Survey, via Fortune, 26 Jun 2026.	https://fortune.com/2026/06/26/gen-z-entry-level-jobs-replaced-by-ai-new-gmac-recruiters-survey-tech-manufacturing-jobs-most-at-risk/
31	Microsoft & LinkedIn. 2024 Work Trend Index Annual Report.	https://news.microsoft.com/en-xm/2024/07/01/microsofts-2024-work-trend-index-report-showcases-increased-appetite-for-ai-at-work-highlights-opportunity-for-leaders-to-transform-enthusiasm-into-productivity-gains/
32	Microsoft. 2025 Work Trend Index: The Frontier Firm Is Born, 23 Apr 2025.	https://blogs.microsoft.com/blog/2025/04/23/the-2025-annual-work-trend-index-the-frontier-firm-is-born/
33	PwC. 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer (incl. Hong Kong release).	https://www.pwchk.com/en/press-room/press-releases/pr-130625.html
34	Lightcast. Beyond the Buzz, 23 Jul 2025.	https://lightcast.io/resources/blog/beyond-the-buzz-press-release-2025-07-23
35	Anthropic. Anthropic Economic Index Report, January 2026.	https://www.anthropic.com/research/anthropic-economic-index-january-2026-report
36	ILO & NASK. Generative AI and Jobs: A Refined Global Index of Occupational Exposure. ILO Working Paper 140, 2025.	https://www.ilo.org/publications/generative-ai-and-jobs-refined-global-index-occupational-exposure
37	HEPI & Kortext. Student Generative AI Survey 2025, 26 Feb 2025.	https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2025/02/26/student-generative-ai-survey-2025/

#	Source	URL
38	Gallup & Walton Family Foundation. Voices of Gen Z: How American Youth View AI, 2025.	https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/about-us/newsroom/gen-z-is-using-ai-but-reports-gaps-in-school-and-workplace-support
39	KPMG & University of Melbourne. Trust, Attitudes and Use of AI: A Global Study 2025.	https://mbs.edu/news/global-study-reveals-trust-of-ai-remains-a-critical-challenge
40	Stack Overflow. 2025 Developer Survey – AI section.	https://survey.stackoverflow.co/2025/ai
41	Thomson Reuters. Future of Professionals Report 2025, via Lawyers Weekly.	https://www.lawyersweekly.com.au/biglaw/42623-ai-to-free-up-240-hours-per-year-for-lawyers-report-says
42	Inside Higher Ed. "The specter of AI haunts the class of 2026" (EAB poll), 21 May 2026.	https://www.insidehighered.com/news/tech-innovation/artificial-intelligence/2026/05/21/specter-ai-haunts-class-2026
43	Brynjolfsson, E., Li, D., Raymond, L. "Generative AI at Work." Quarterly Journal of Economics, 2025.	https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjae044
44	Dell'Acqua, F. et al. "Navigating the Jagged Technological Frontier." Harvard Business School Working Paper 24-013, 2023.	https://www.hbs.edu/faculty/Pages/item.aspx?num=64700
45	Noy, S., Zhang, W. "Experimental evidence on the productivity effects of generative AI." Science 381, 2023.	https://doi.org/10.1126/science.adh2586
46	METR. "Measuring the Impact of Early-2025 AI on Experienced Open-Source Developer Productivity", July 2025.	https://metr.org/blog/2025-07-10-early-2025-ai-experienced-os-dev-study/

#	Source	URL
47	Burning Glass Institute. No Country for Young Grads, 2025 (as summarised by Yale SOM CDO, 17 Oct 2025).	https://cdo.som.yale.edu/blog/2025/10/17/is-ai-killing-the-early-career-job-market-parsing-the-data-from-three-high-profile-studies/
48	Brynjolfsson, Chandar, Chen (2025), original version, as summarised by LeadDev.	https://leaddev.com/hiring/young-devs-steepest-losses-exposed-roles-stanford-study-finds
49	Peng, S. et al. "The Impact of AI on Developer Productivity: Evidence from GitHub Copilot." arXiv 2302.06590, 2023.	https://arxiv.org/abs/2302.06590

Appendix B. Definitions and data notes

Table 25. Definitions and data notes.

Term	Definition used in this report
Entry-level / junior	Roles open to candidates with 0–2 years' experience (0–3 in Indian fresher data); "junior" follows each study's own seniority classification.
Recent graduate (US)	NY Fed: degree holders aged 22–27.
Youth unemployment	EU: under 25; Canada: 15–24; China: 16–24 excluding students. Not directly comparable.
Exposure	Degree to which an occupation's tasks can be performed or accelerated by GenAI. Exposure is not the same as displacement.
Automation vs augmentation	Automation: AI completes a task with minimal human input. Augmentation: AI and human iterate together (Anthropic definitions).
Underemployment	Graduates working in jobs that do not typically require a degree.
Analyst construct	Framework, rating or scenario created by the report authors from cited evidence; not a measured statistic.

Data notes

- The Stanford study's headline has been revised as data accumulated: about 13% relative decline (through July 2025) in the original paper [48], and about 19% below counterfactual in the August 2026 update [1]. We quote the latest.
- NACE's Class of 2026 hiring projection moved from +1.6% (November 2025) to +5.6% (spring update) [28].
- The Cengage "52% feel prepared" figure in Figure 9 is derived as 100% minus the reported 48% who feel unprepared [29].
- Figures are retained from the supplied report's source-based visualisations. The plotted data should be reconciled against the relevant publisher's releases before independent commercial reuse; the diagrams are not new primary datasets.

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