Accelerating AI skills
Preparing the Workforce for Jobs of the Future

February 2024

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly solidifying its foothold on the tasks that we perform today and is expected to be even more pervasive in the next five years.

To better understand the unfolding of AI technologies in the workspace, Access Partnership collaborated with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to survey over 1,600 employees and 500 organisations in the United Kingdom (UK). Findings show that AI will be a big booster for the UK economy and a disrupter of job tasks, but there is a lack of AI-skilled talent to fully harness this potential.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) leverages the power of computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind, such as visual perception, speech recognition and translation of languages.

Top Takeaways:

1 Nearly every organisation will become an AI business by 2028

85% of employers are optimistic about the impact of AI on their organisations and a similar proportion expect to use AI-powered tools throughout their firms by 2028. Employers expect the Information Technology (IT) department **(83%)** to be the greatest beneficiary of AI solutions-followed by the finance **(79%)**, and research and development departments **(78%).** In addition, **57%** of employers identified task automation to be the top benefit of AI.

2 Generative AI will transform how we work, with over 75% of respondents expecting to use such tools in five years' time
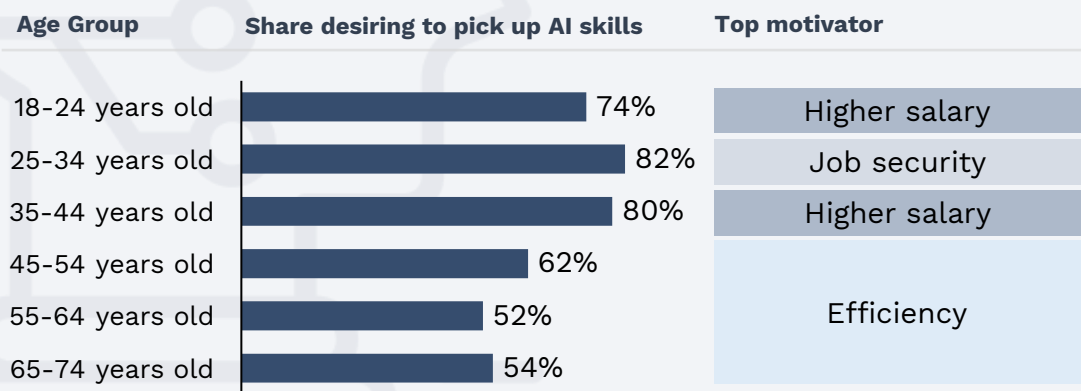
At least **75%** of surveyed employers and employees expect to either "somewhat" or "significantly" use generative AI in their organisations in the next five years. Additionally, at least **80%** of surveyed employers and employees can identify at least one benefit from generative AI, even if they don't plan on using it.

Generative AI refers to a type of AI that can help create new ideas and content in the form of conversations, stories, images, videos, music and more – unlike traditional AI systems which are designed to recognise patterns and make predictions.

3 Acquiring AI skills can boost pay and career benefits

Surveyed employees in the UK feel positively about the impact of AI, and **seven in 10** are keen on developing AI skills for career advancement. Top motivators to pick up AI skills vary slightly across age groups, with older employees (aged between 45 to 74 years old) being most motivated by the desire to increase efficiency, whilst younger employees are more motivated by the desire to increase salaries and job security. Findings suggest that having AI skills can increase salaries for workers, as employers are willing to pay up to **31%** more in salaries for AI-skilled workers.

Share of surveyed employees interested in AI upskilling and motivations, by age

Age Group	Share desiring to pick up AI skills	Top motivator
18-24 years old	74%	Higher salary
25-34 years old	82%	Job security
35-44 years old	80%	Higher salary
45-54 years old	62%	
55-64 years old	52%	Efficiency
65-74 years old	54%	

**4** **The productivity gains from an AI-skilled workforce could be immense**

In our survey, employers in the UK believe that AI can boost productivity by **44%**, while employees believe that AI can make tasks **39%** more efficient. The full extent of AI productivity gains are expected to be felt in 2028, with all levels of tech workers expecting to contribute. In particular, the use of AI tools by non-tech workers is expected to nearly **double** by 2028.

Use of AI tools by non-tech workers expected to nearly double by 2028

Expected share of job tasks completed using AI-powered tools by type of tech workers in 2023 and 2028

	2023	2028	Multiplier
Tech-specialist	34%	45%	1.3x
Tech-adjacent	28%	40%	1.4x
Non-tech	16%	29%	1.8x
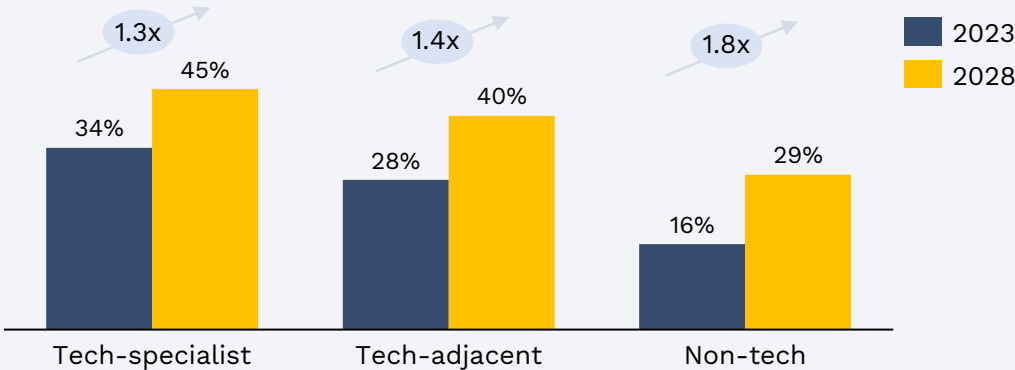
5 **AI skilled talent is scarce, despite high demand from employers**

More than 50% of surveyed employers prioritise hiring AI talent. However, **71%** of them face difficulty in finding skill-ready talent due to challenges that include the lack of complementary skills among the existing workforce, such as critical and creative thinking, which are essential to using AI tools effectively. Other challenges also hinder AI upskilling efforts, such as employers' lack of knowledge on the AI skills required by employees **(74% citing as a top barrier)**, and employees' lack of knowledge on the possible career paths where AI skills would be useful **(73% citing as a top barrier)**.

71% of surveyed employers who prioritise hiring AI talent find it difficult to hire skilled workers

Share of surveyed employers responding to each option

	Hiring priority	Hiring difficulty
Prioritise / Difficult	51%	71%
Do not prioritise / Not difficult	49%	29%
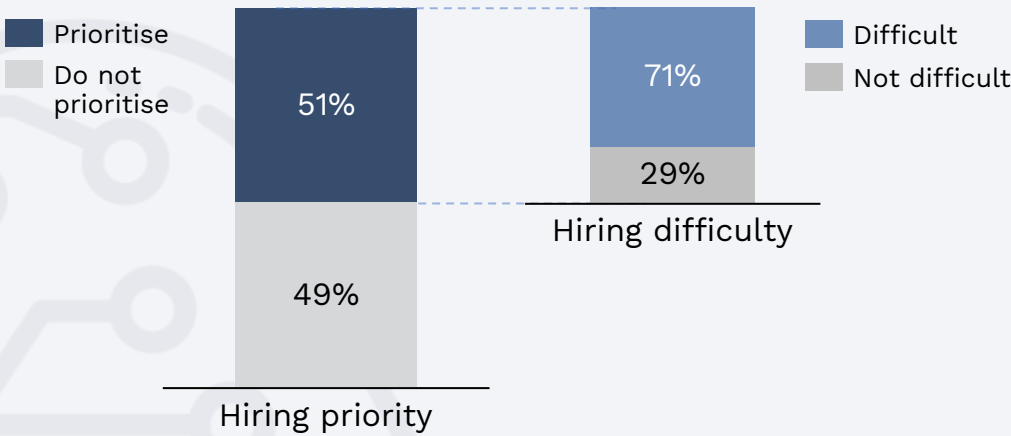
1.   Three types of workers were surveyed: (1) Tech-specialists: employees who develop new technologies and use specialised tech knowledge, (2) Tech-adjacent workers: employees dealing with technological products and services, (3) Non-tech workers: employees who do not require advanced tech knowledge and skills.

SOURCE: Survey of 515 employers and 1,637 employees in the UK; Access Partnership analysis