

AI skill demand rises by +62% in Tech job listings, while UK entry-level roles decline by up to -35%

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In the past 12 months, job ads featuring AI skills have grown by +62%, while entry-level positions in professional services across the UK have experienced declines of up to -35%.

AI skills are seeing a boom. But at what risk? New data from global talent solutions provider, [Robert Walters](#) highlights the double-edged sword of AI. While it poses huge strategic potential it simultaneously threatens thousands of tech jobs, particularly early careers roles.

Scrambling for solid infrastructure

The number of IT job postings including skills in AI (+62%) are up on the past 12 months.

With similar upticks recorded on IT jobs featuring data architecture (46%) and privacy (33%) skills as firms simultaneously try to build, scale and protect their AI tools and digital solutions within their businesses.

Big Tech makes up a significant portion of top employers for this talent. Meta boss, Mark Zuckerberg recently announced that he was recruiting a 'super intelligent' AI team, bolstering plans to make AI a priority.

Ben Litvinoff, Associate Director of Robert Walters London, explains: "Most firms, especially across Finance and Technology sectors, are ramping up efforts around both Security and AI projects. Efforts to stay ahead with AI as well as provide enhanced resilience require tech teams working behind the scenes to bring organisational infrastructures up to speed.

“AI projects create demand for skilled tech professionals, but they also lead to job cuts. First, companies’ trim payroll numbers to gather initial funding then further cuts come into play as entry-level roles are replaced by newly optimised or even, automated processes.”

Entry-level & graduate professionals first in the firing line

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei recently sparked controversy with his comments predicting that AI could potentially cut white-collar entry level jobs by 50%.

Indeed, data from Robert Walters’ [Market Intelligence](#) shows that junior and entry-level roles have declined by up to 35% over the past 18 months – with the tech sector registering the steepest declines.

Jonny Bohane, Senior Manager in Robert Walters Market Intelligence comments: “Since early 2023 we’ve seen the growth of graduate and entry-level hiring markets sustain hit-after-hit. Particularly, entry-level technology roles are seeing the steepest declines – due to AI implementations and cost efficiencies.”

Tech transformation projects influence broader skills

Competition among professional services firms is also intensifying when it comes to AI and [tech transformations](#). Digital transformation skills have swelled by over a third (+37%) in the past 12 months across UK job listings.

With top skills in demand across UK professional services now including IT Project & Program Management (+75% YoY increase) and Technology Change Management (+84% YoY increase).

Despite adverse economic conditions, most businesses are forging ahead in transformation projects like adopting new CRMs, scaling their existing tech-optimised services or transitioning from legacy solutions to cloud platforms to store their data.

Ben observes: “It’s clear that strategically [placed technology teams](#) are instrumental in actioning and executing the key digital transformation projects which many businesses are continuing to prioritise.”

Soft skills and strategy will set teams apart

Embracing AI advancements is essential yet rushing into adoption without considering critical soft skills could hinder leaders’ ability to drive these critical projects forward.

Collaboration (+51% YoY), senior stakeholder management (+36% YoY) and strategic communication (+26%YoY) skills still make up essential capabilities.

Ben ends: “While technical AI-ready skills are crucial, they aren’t a single solution. Many professionals possess softer ‘AI resilient’ skills that employers will lose out on when cutting talent too deeply to facilitate short-term cost saving or innovation.

“Streamlining functions or AI enhancements may be top of the agenda now but ongoing large-scale job declines threaten both future talent pipelines and crucial skills, which could impact firms for years to come.”