

The Speed of Skill Change

2026 Update



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Jobs Are Changing Faster than Job Titles

The average job's skills have changed 33% since 2022.

The biggest changes in today's labor market are not job creation or job loss, but skill change within the same role.

Roles that appear stable on the surface—defined by familiar titles and long-standing occupational categories.—are being continuously reconfigured as new tools, technologies, regulations, and expectations reshape what it means to perform them well.

Familiar titles and long-standing occupational categories have changed by an average of 33% from 2022 to 2025. Roles that appear stable on the surface have been continuously reconfigured as new tools, technologies, and trends reshape expectations.

This acceleration is visible across the economy. Software roles increasingly emphasize system integration, oversight of AI-generated code, and security considerations over manual coding. Marketing roles now routinely require skills in generative AI tools, data interpretation, and content governance—capabilities that barely registered in postings just a few years ago. In healthcare, clinical roles are being reshaped by growing expectations around data security, digital systems, and specialized compliance, even as patient-facing skills remain essential.

What unites these shifts is that job titles behind lag reality. Titles are static; skills are dynamic. Two workers with the same title today may use very different skill sets depending on industry, employer, or technology adoption. Likewise, the same role in 2022 and 2025 may share a name but little else—the same worker is likely doing significantly different work.

Skills, therefore, offer a more precise lens for understanding how much work is changing, and also how fast. They reveal where new capabilities are emerging, where old ones are fading, and where workers and employers alike face the greatest risk of misalignment. In a labor market defined by constant change, that change can be best measured by skills, not occupations.

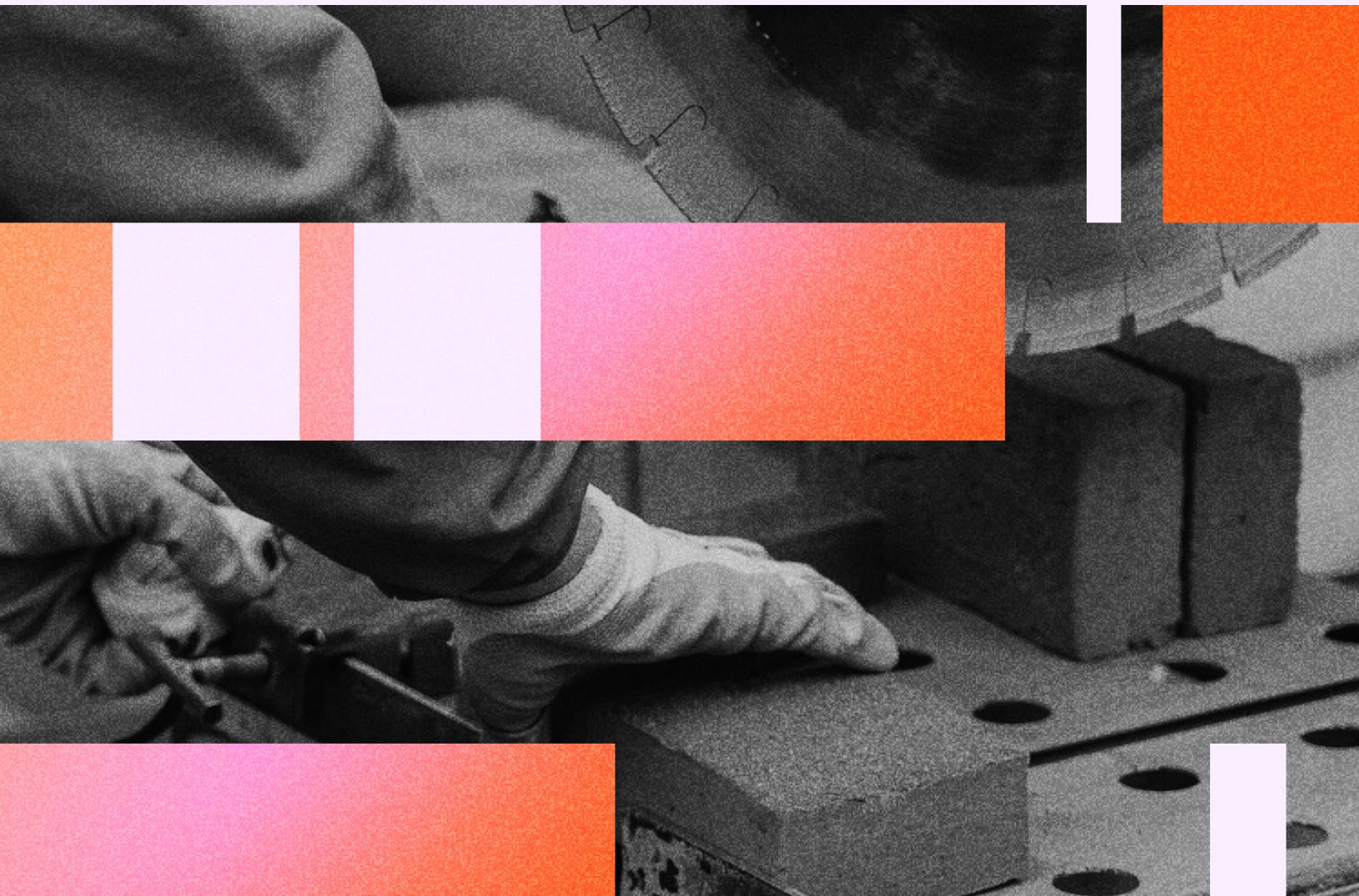
MEASURING THE SPEED OF SKILL CHANGE

Using Lightcast job postings data, which identifies and classifies skills requested across occupations, industries, and employers, we can quantify how much jobs are changing—even when their titles remain constant. By comparing skill requirements over time, it becomes possible to measure the speed of skill change across the labor market.

This analysis compares skill subcategories and how their demand in the marketplace has changed between 2022 and 2025 (expanding on a previous analysis that compared 2021 to 2024). The new data confirms and sharpens a striking finding from earlier years: skill change continues to accelerate. Even without changing roles, workers are increasingly expected to adapt to materially different skill demands in a relatively short span of time.

But this pace of change is not evenly distributed. Some skills and skill subcategories are growing rapidly, signaling rising importance and demand. Others are declining just as quickly, often reflecting automation, technological substitution, or changing business processes.

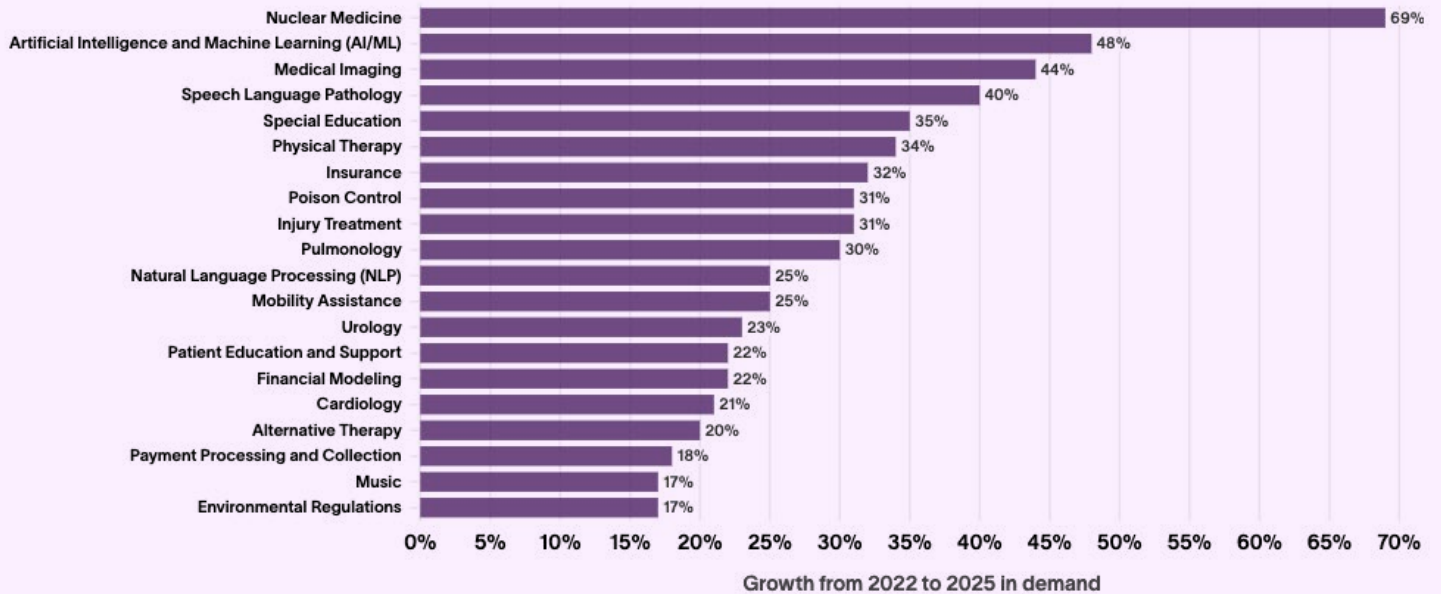
Below, you'll find two high-level overviews on skill change (the skills that are growing the most and also the skills declining the most), then three focused sections that detail specific trends we identified—skill change is particularly dramatic surrounding AI, green technology, and cybersecurity.



Where Skills Are Growing Fastest

Beyond AI, many of the skills that have seen the biggest growth in demand in the past three years are related to healthcare

Fastest growing skill subcategories for demand in the US labor market (2022-2025)



Source: Lightcast, job postings data



When examining all skill subcategories across the labor market, several clear growth patterns emerge between 2022 and 2025.

Unsurprisingly, AI-related skills feature prominently among the fastest-growing subcategories. But they are not alone. Environmental (green) skills also continue to expand rapidly, alongside a notable concentration of health-related skill subcategories. This growth in health skills reflects persistent and structural demand for healthcare workers, driven by demographic change, an aging population, and ongoing capacity constraints across the healthcare system.

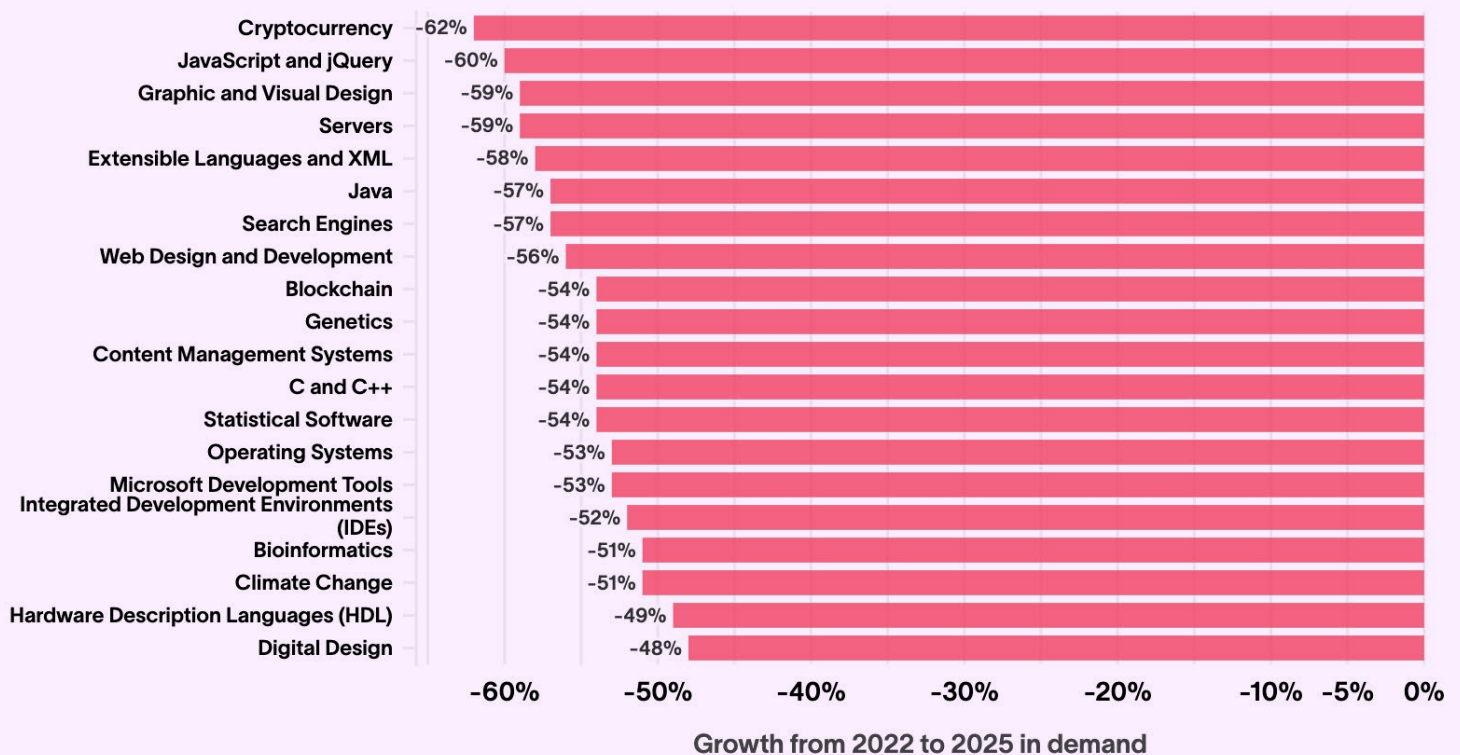
Together, these trends underscore a broader point: skill growth is being driven not only by technological innovation, but by long-term societal needs—health, sustainability, and security—that cut across industries and occupations.

Where Skills Are Declining—and Why

Knowing where skills are growing is just as valuable as knowing where they are declining. Many of the fastest-declining skill subcategories are those most exposed to AI. In particular, certain coding, design, and content-production skills are being reshaped—or partially replaced—by generative AI systems that can perform discrete tasks more quickly or cheaply than humans.

Many of the skills that have declined fastest over the past three years are related to skills AI can do

Fastest declining skill subcategories for demand in the US labor market (2022-2025)



Source: Lightcast, job postings data



NOTE: [YOU CAN EXPLORE SKILL CATEGORIES, SUBCATEGORIES, AND INDIVIDUAL SKILLS](#) IN OUR LIGHTCAST SKILLS TAXONOMY.

This does not mean that software developers or designers are disappearing. Rather, it indicates that the composition of their work is changing. Skills tied to routine implementation or execution are declining, while higher-order skills—such as system design, strategic thinking, creative direction, and ethical oversight—are becoming more important. Declining skills, in this sense, are a signal of transformation rather than obsolescence.

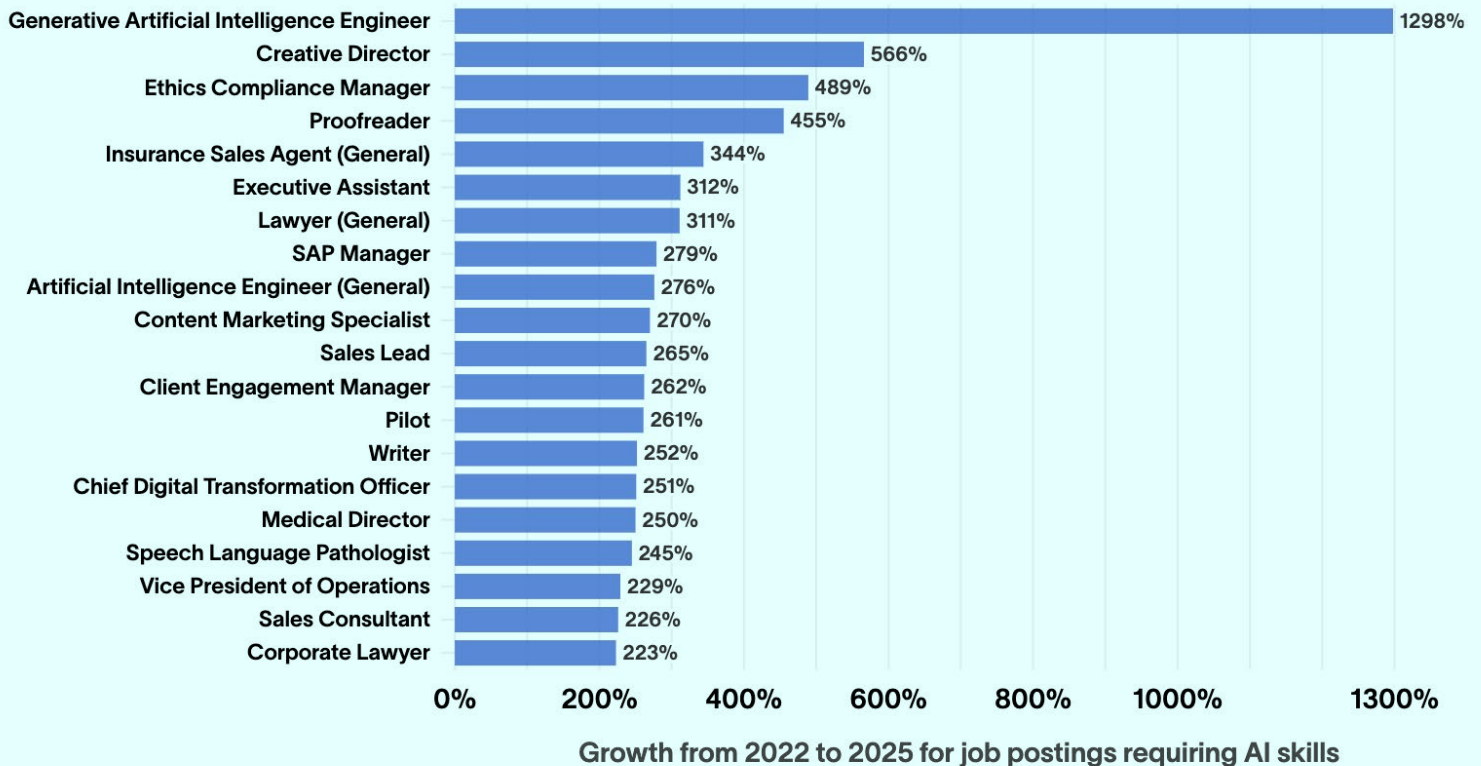


AI SKILLS

From Niche to Near-Universal

Demand for AI skills is rising fast and spreading to occupations in all parts of the labor market

Change in demand for job postings requiring AI skills by occupation (US labor market)



Source: Lightcast, job postings data

AI HAS DRIVEN MORE SKILL CHANGE THAN ANY OTHER SINGLE TREND.

Demand for AI skills among IT professionals has surged, including the emergence of entirely new roles such as Generative AI Engineers. At the same time, AI demand has expanded well beyond technical teams. Marketing and creative roles—from Creative Directors to Content Marketing Specialists—now routinely require AI fluency. What was once experimental has become operational.

Perhaps most striking is the breadth of occupations showing significant AI skill growth. Law and ethics, sales, writing, and healthcare all appear prominently in the data. AI is no longer a specialized capability; it is increasingly a baseline expectation across the labor market.

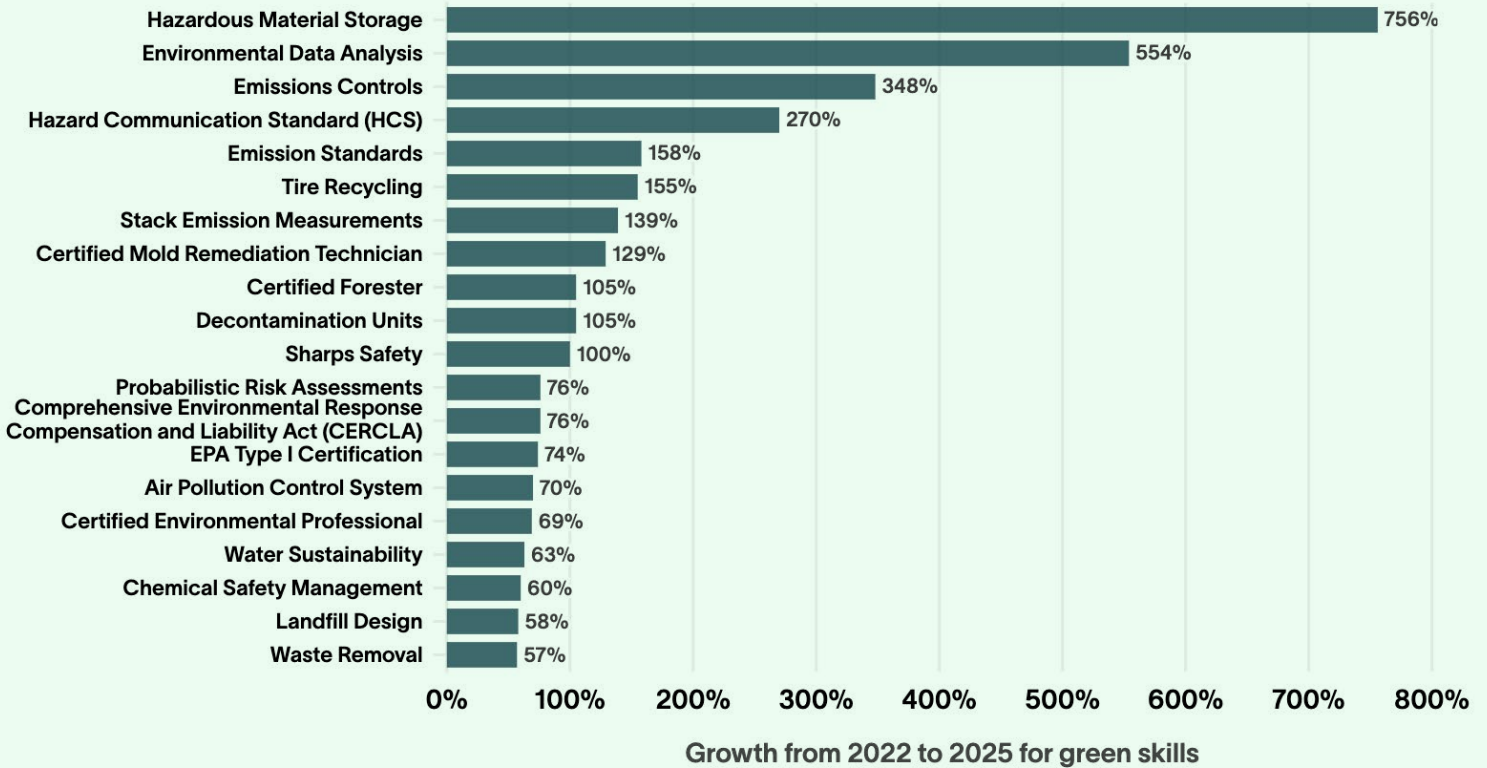


GREEN SKILLS

Evolving, Not Retreating

Many green skills have seen huge growth in the past three years - including environmental data analysis and emission standards

Change in demand for job postings requiring green skills (US labor market)



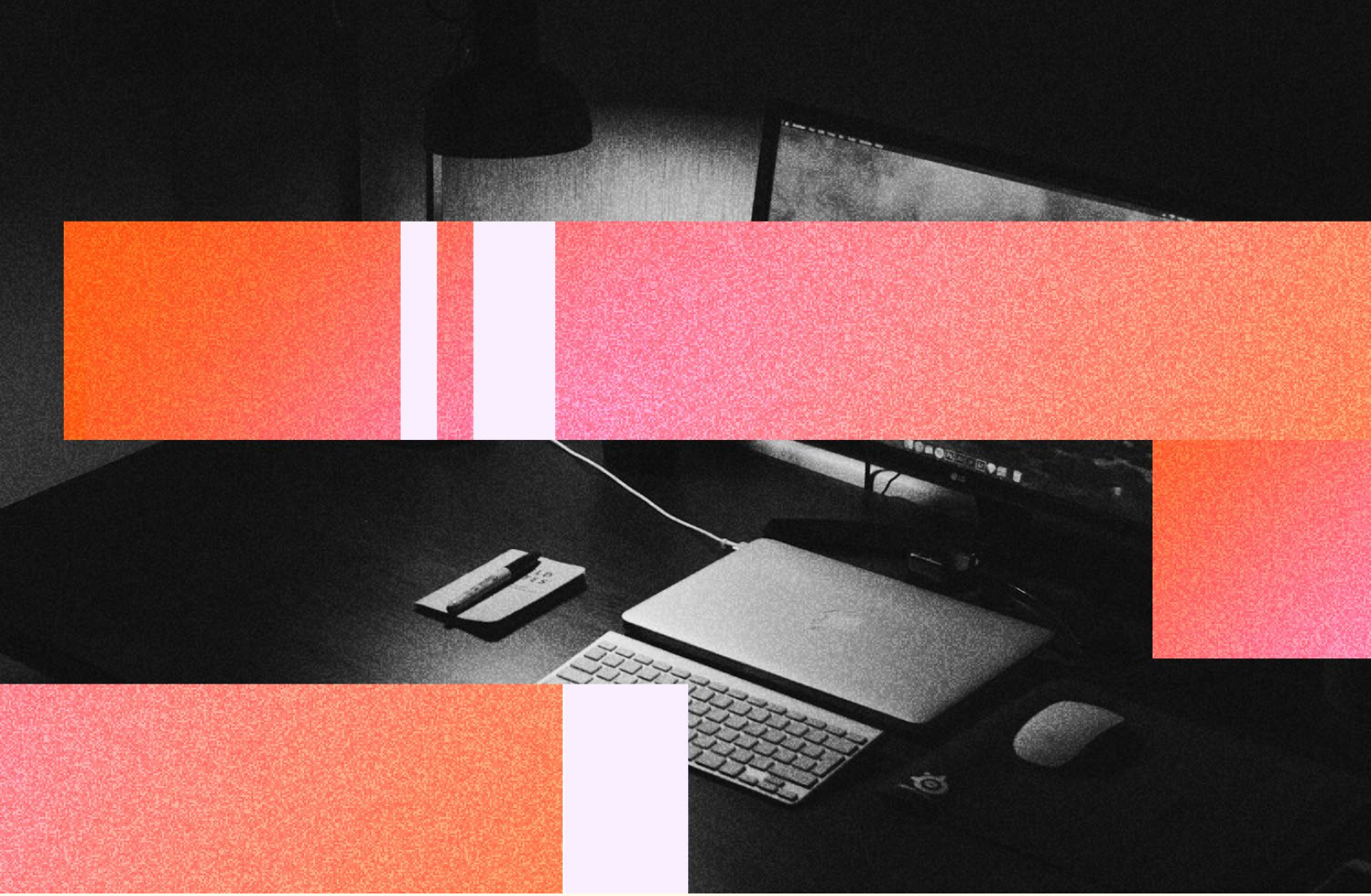
Source: Lightcast, job postings data



Green skills continue to grow in importance, despite political opposition on several fronts. Environmental data analysis remains in particularly high demand, reflecting the need to measure, report, and manage environmental impact across industries.

The composition of green skills, however, has evolved. Skills related to electric vehicles are less prominent than in earlier years, while demand has increased for capabilities tied to emissions standards, recycling, and the handling of hazardous materials. These skills reflect the practical realities of compliance, operations, and risk management as sustainability becomes embedded in day-to-day business functions.

Notably, green skills are increasingly required in roles that are not traditionally considered “green.” This mirrors the diffusion pattern seen with AI: sustainability is becoming a cross-cutting requirement rather than a niche specialization.

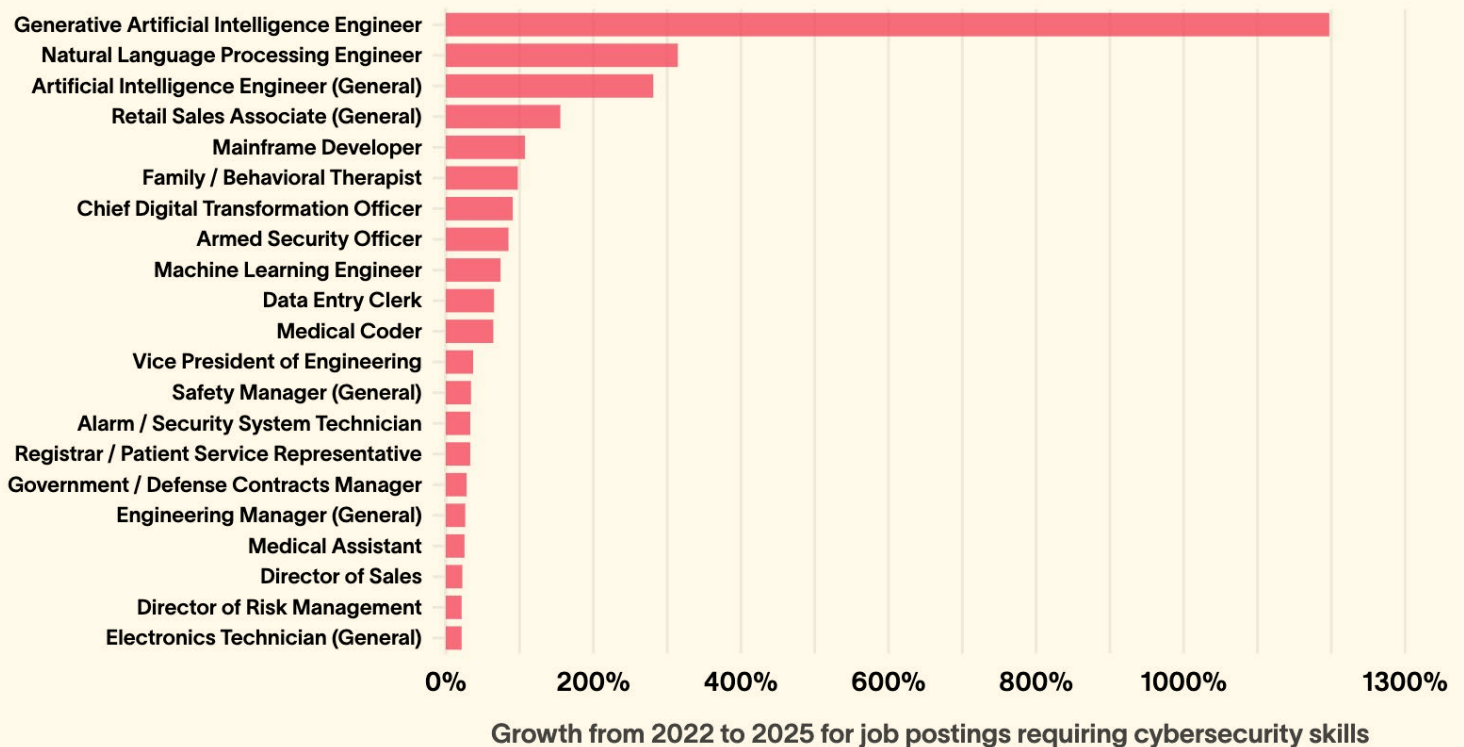


CYBERSECURITY

Accelerating Across the Economy

Many diverse jobs have seen their need for cybersecurity skills rise sharply since 2022

Change in demand for job postings requiring cybersecurity skills by occupation (US labor market)



Source: Lightcast, job postings data



Cybersecurity skill demand has risen sharply—and has even accelerated since our last analysis. The 2025 data suggests that cybersecurity is now among the most sensitive and strategically important skill domains in the labor market.

As with AI and green skills, cybersecurity skills are spreading far beyond jobs specifically focused on it. Health roles, long exposed due to sensitive data and connected devices, continue to show strong growth. But sales roles now also feature prominently, reflecting the growing importance of data protection, trust, and compliance in customer-facing work.

Cybersecurity's parallel rise alongside AI is not accidental. As organizations adopt AI systems at scale, they simultaneously expand their attack surface and risk profile. The result is a reinforcing cycle: **more AI adoption drives more cybersecurity demand**, which in turn reshapes skill requirements across the enterprise.



What the Speed of Skill Change Demands

Skill change is reshaping work from the inside out. Using job loss, job creation, or job titles to understand change is no longer a viable strategy. By the time those trends show up, the underlying skill requirements will have already moved on.

For workers, this means continuous adaptation is vital for any career goal—even if you intend to stay in the same job. For employers, it underscores the urgency of proactive, data-driven workforce strategies grounded in an accurate understanding of current skills, informed projections of future needs, and clear plans to bridge the gaps.

IF YOU'RE LEADING AN ORGANIZATION, OR THE HR FUNCTION WITHIN, CONSIDER THESE STEPS TO HELP PREPARE FOR A SKILLS-POWERED FUTURE:

- 1. Audit internal “skill turnover” as often as possible—every 12 months would be a good target.**
- 2. Shift job descriptions to include long-term objectives and durable skills that are less susceptible to turnover.**
- 3. Invest in “transition training” for roles where execution skills are declining.**

Standing still in a labor market defined by rapid skill change is a reliable way to fall behind. Understanding which skills are evolving, and how fast, is the essential first step toward navigating what comes next.

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