THE RESHUFFLE

AI is moving through the British workforce. This report shows where the work is today, what the machines can now do, which jobs carry the risk, and which jobs hold protected ground. It ends with the moves a working person can make. Every figure links to its source.

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Founder & CEO, Get Licensed · Get Licensed Research · September 2026

IN WORK	VACANCIES	AI CODING SCORE	SIA LICENCES	MARTYN'S LAW SITES
34.5m	707k	2% → 81%	510,839	178,900

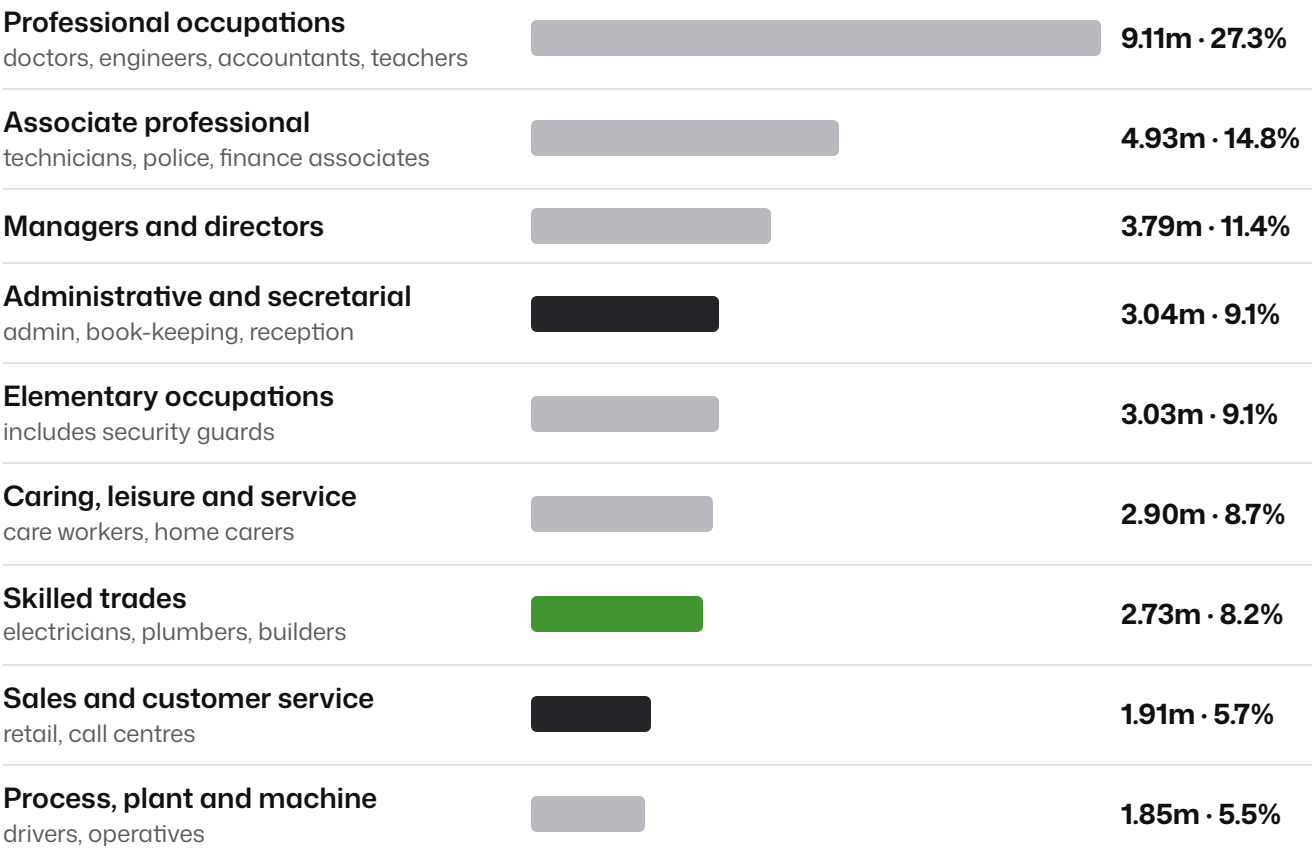
CHAPTER 1

The workforce today

Start with the baseline. 34.5 million people are in work in the UK.[53] Nine occupation groups hold them. The chart below is the single most useful picture in this report: everything that follows is about which of these bars AI reaches first.

Where 34.5 million working people sit

All in employment aged 16 and over, by SOC 2020 major group, April 2025 to March 2026. Dark bars mark the groups where the advert data already shows the sharpest falls. Green marks the skilled trades.



Source: ONS Annual Population Survey via Nomis.[5] Shares of all in employment; a small share state no occupation.

Three facts about this picture matter for everything that follows.

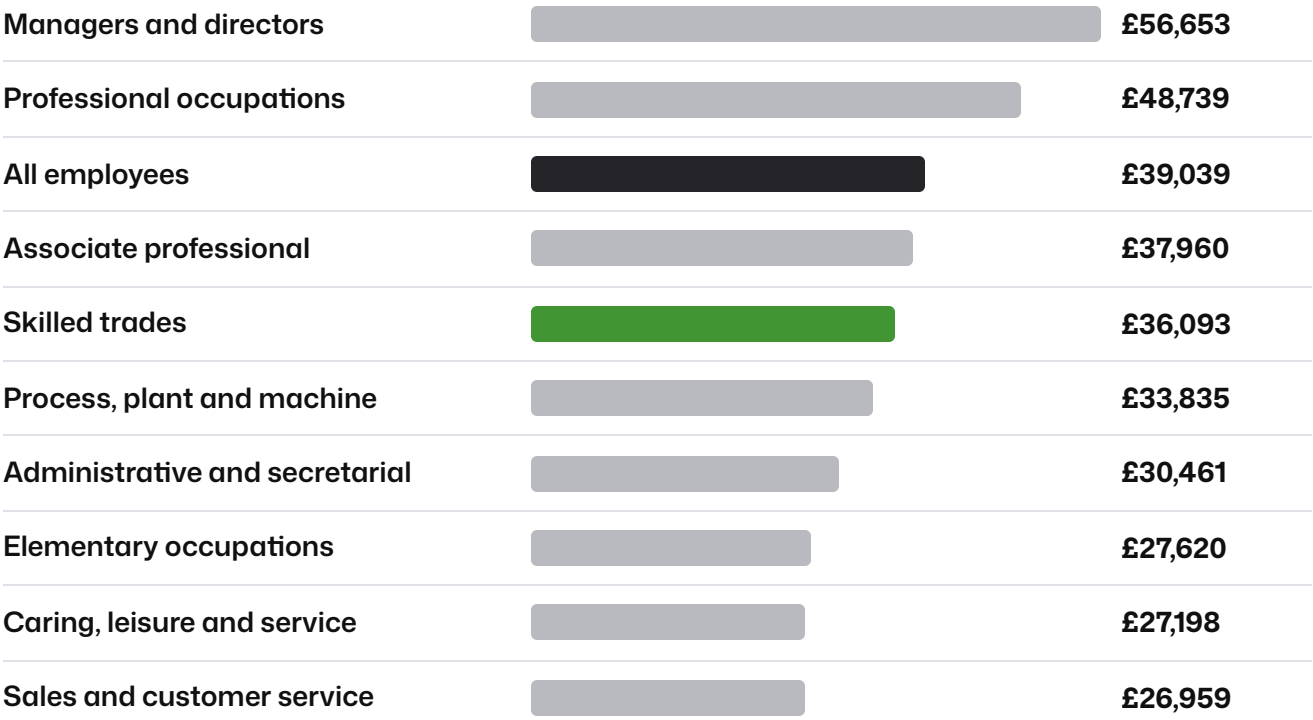
First, Britain is a desk economy. Managers, professionals and associate professionals are 53.5% of all employment. Add administrative, secretarial, sales and customer service work and roughly two thirds of British jobs are done at a desk, a counter or a phone.[5]

Second, the physical economy is smaller than people think. Skilled trades are 8.2% of employment. Caring and other service work is 8.7%. These jobs happen in buildings, streets and homes, with tools and with people.

Third, pay follows the desk. The desk groups out-earn the physical groups on median pay. That ordering was built over decades. This report shows why parts of it are now in question.

What each group earns

Median gross annual pay, full-time employees, April 2025.



Source: ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2025 provisional.[6] Employees only; the self-employed sit outside ASHE, which understates trades earnings.

The occupations this report tracks

The report follows nine specific occupations through every chapter: the exposed desk roles on one side, the protected physical roles on the other.

OCCUPATION	SOC 2020	PEOPLE	MEDIAN PAY (FULL-TIME)	CHAPTER 8 VERDICT
Customer service occupations	721	413,500	£28,036	Exposed
Book-keepers, payroll and wages clerks	4122	378,700	£31,560	Exposed
Other administrative occupations	4159	554,000	£28,294	Exposed
Receptionists	4216	149,000	£24,678	Exposed
Sales and retail assistants	7111	831,800	£25,056	Pressured

OCCUPATION	SOC 2020	PEOPLE	MEDIAN PAY (FULL-TIME)	CHAPTER 8 VERDICT
Care workers and home carers	6135	894,400	£27,468	Protected
Security guards and related	9231	158,600	£33,832	Protected, licensed
Plumbers and heating engineers	5315	153,700	£37,881	Protected, certificated
Electricians and electrical fitters	5241	193,000	£39,647	Protected, certificated

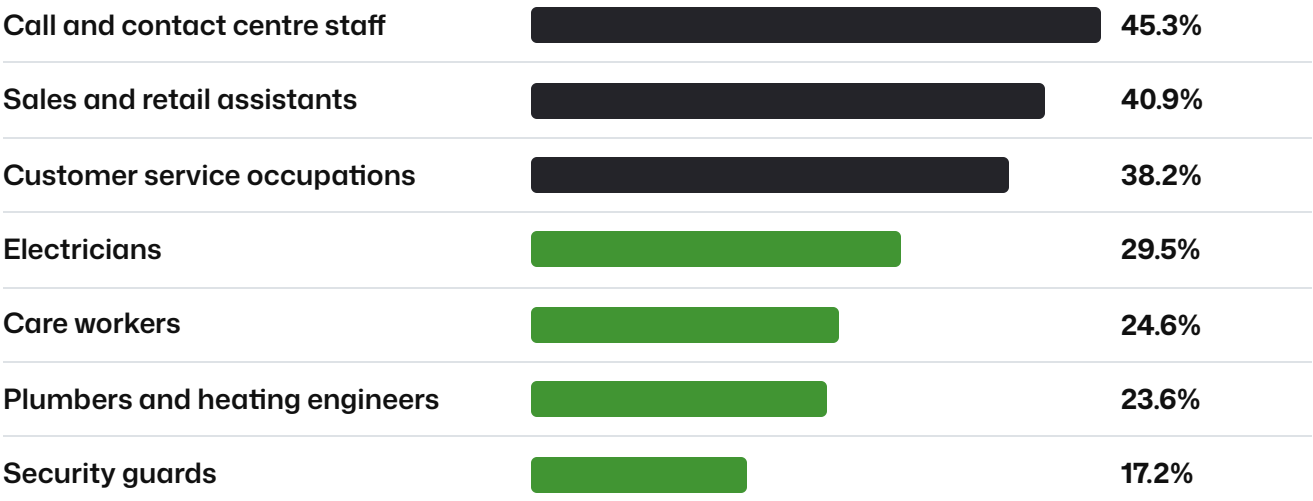
Employment: Annual Population Survey, April 2025 to March 2026.[5] Pay: ASHE 2025 provisional, median gross annual, full-time.[6] The verdicts are argued in chapter 8, with the counter-evidence shown.

Who sits in the exposed seats

Age decides who feels the reshuffle first. The occupations with the youngest workforces are the ones the advert data shows shrinking. The protected occupations skew older, which creates openings.

Share of workers under 30

Census 2021, England and Wales, selected occupations. Dark bars are exposed desk and counter roles. Green bars are the protected trades and security.



Source: ONS Census 2021, occupation by age.[9] Security guards: 17.2% under 30, 39.3% over 50.

Nearly half of call centre staff are under 30. Two in five retail assistants are under 30. In security, fewer than one in five are. The young are concentrated in exactly the work the

next chapters show under pressure, and the protected occupations have room at the young end.

Geography points the same way. In London, the three most exposed desk groups are 66.6% of all employment, against 53.5% nationally. The trades, care and security are spread across the whole country.[5]

The gig economy cuts across the picture

Platform work sits over these occupation groups, and its size depends entirely on the definition. On the strict count (people whose gig work runs through a platform), about 463,600 people.[44] On the broad count (anyone doing platform work at least weekly), 4.4 million in England and Wales by 2021, nearly triple the 2016 share.[45] England holds a record 417,300 taxi and private-hire driver licences, up 9% in two years.[41]

Two facts frame the gig chapters of this report. The algorithm already manages this work: an Oxford study of 1.5 million UK Uber trips found driver pay fell and became less predictable once algorithmic pricing arrived.[43] And the law is moving slower than the apps: the Supreme Court made platform drivers workers with minimum-wage rights, while the 2025 Employment Rights Act left self-employed riders largely outside its new protections.[42][46] Where gig workers can go sits in the role checker **here** and in chapter 10.

> **Two thirds of British work is done at a desk, a counter or a phone. The rest is done with hands, in rooms, on streets. Hold that split. The whole report turns on it.**

CHAPTER 2

What the machines can now do

In November 2022 a chatbot could draft a passable email. In 2026 frontier systems complete real professional tasks at expert level, run for hours without supervision, and cost pennies. This chapter shows the climb with numbers, then states what is coming in the next 24 months.

The releases that moved the line

NOV 2022

ChatGPT

100 million users in two months. The era starts.[54]

MAR 2023

GPT-4

Passes the bar exam in the top 10% of human takers.[55]

SEP 2024

o1: reasoning models

Models that think before answering. PhD-level science accuracy passes human experts.[56]

OCT 2024

Computer use

A frontier model operates a computer the way a person does: screen, cursor, keyboard.[57]

JAN 2025

DeepSeek R1

Open-weight reasoning at a fraction of the training cost. A trillion dollars leaves US tech stocks in a day.[58]

2025

The agent year

Claude Code, Operator, ChatGPT agent: models stop answering questions and start completing jobs of work.[59]

NOV 2025

The 80% line

Claude Opus 4.5 becomes the first model past 80% on real GitHub engineering tasks. Gemini 3 scores 91.9% on PhD-level science.[60] [61]

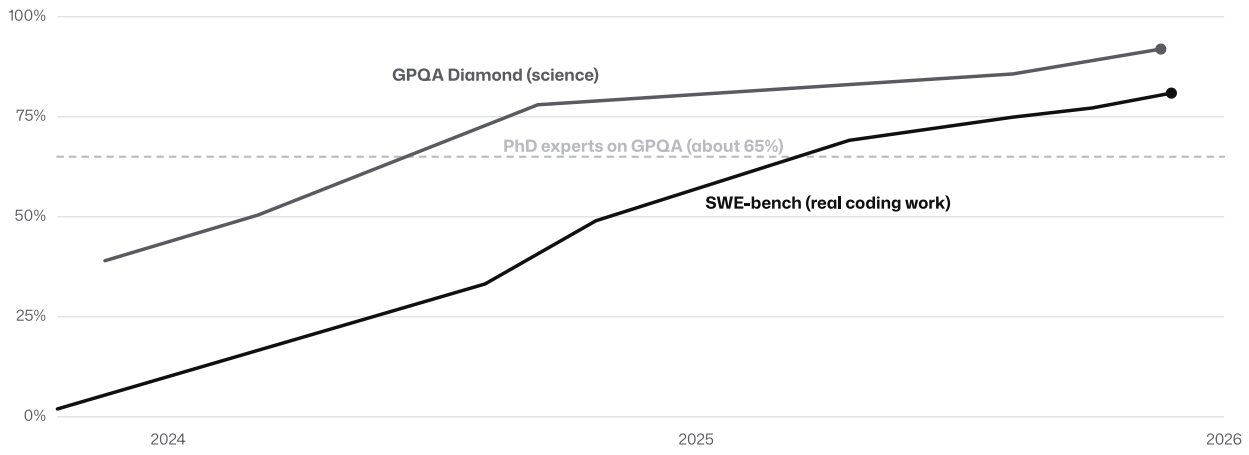
JUN TO JUL 2026

The frontier tier

Claude Fable 5, GPT-5.6 and Claude Opus 5 arrive. Governments now test frontier models before release.[62]

The capability climb, measured

SWE-bench scores models on real software engineering tasks from GitHub. GPQA Diamond asks PhD-level science questions. Human PhD experts score about 65% on GPQA.



Sources: benchmark papers and model announcement pages.[63] [64] [60] [61] Coding went from 1.96% to 80.9% in 25 months.

Benchmarks can feel abstract. Three measures translate the climb into working terms.

310x

Fall in the price of matched AI capability in 21 months, March 2023 to December 2024. Frontier work now costs pennies per task.

Epoch AI[65]

12 hours

Length of human-professional task that frontier agents now complete unsupervised half the time. The doubling time shrank from 7 months to 4.

METR[66] [67]

47.6%

Share of real professional deliverables, set by experts across 44 occupations, where the best model matched or beat the human expert.

OpenAI GDPval, Sep 2025[68]

1 in 5

UK firms using or planning to use AI. Large firms 36%, micro firms 14%. The adoption gap is the lag in the whole system.

DSIT, Jan 2026[12]

The money and the compute

What is announced, with money committed: OpenAI's Stargate programme has over $400 billion committed to roughly 7 gigawatts of US compute, with most capacity landing 2027 and 2028.[69] Anthropic is building $50 billion of US data centres, first sites live in 2026.[70] Anthropic's chief executive says systems he describes as "a country of geniuses in a data centre" may arrive within one to two years.[71] DeepMind's chief executive puts AGI around 2029 or 2030.[72] Treat the dates as claims by interested parties. Treat the compute as fact: the buildings are going up.

What this means in plain terms: the capability curve in the chart above has committed fuel through 2028. Model releases reported but unconfirmed (Grok 5, Gemini 3.5 Pro, GPT-6) are labelled as such in the sources and carry no weight in this report's reasoning.

The exception: hands

One capability is moving slowly: physical work in unpredictable places. The pattern has a name, Moravec's paradox. Skills that feel effortless to humans, such as picking things up and moving through a cluttered room, took evolution millions of years to build. They are far harder to engineer than the abstract reasoning that feels difficult to us.[73]

The state of the robots makes the point. Tesla's chief executive admitted in January 2026 that zero Optimus robots were doing useful factory work.[74] Figure has delivered a few hundred humanoids to controlled sites.[75] The veteran roboticist Rodney Brooks calls human-level dexterity from today's approaches "pure fantasy thinking", and expects deployable dexterity to stay far behind humans beyond 2036.[76] McKinsey's task data made the same split a decade ago: predictable physical activities are about 81% automatable with known technology, unpredictable physical work about 25%.[27]

> **Language, analysis and screen work: advancing fast, getting cheap, with committed fuel to 2028. Hands, doors and streets: advancing slowly. That gap decides who is exposed in the next chapters.**

CHAPTER 3

What productivity actually means

Productivity is output per person. When a tool raises output per person, a firm faces a choice: make the same output with fewer people, or make more output with the same people. Everything in the AI and jobs debate is that one sentence playing out across 34 million jobs.

Which way a firm jumps depends on demand. When the cost of a piece of work falls, buyers sometimes buy much more of it. Cheaper software has meant more software and more software jobs for forty years. When buyers want no more of the output than before, cheaper work means fewer people producing it. Customer support is the live example: no company wants more support tickets because handling them got cheaper.

This is why the same technology grows some jobs and shrinks others, and why the honest answer to "will AI cut jobs" is: it depends on what happens to demand for each job's output. That test runs through every verdict in this report.

What happened last time

The last automation scare gives the base rate. In 2013, researchers scored 47% of US jobs at high risk of computerisation.[77] The OECD went back a decade later to see what happened. Its finding, quoted exactly: "There is no support for net job destruction at the broad country level. All countries experienced employment growth over the past decade. Within countries, however, employment growth has been much lower in jobs at high risk of automation (6%) than in jobs at low risk (18%)."[78]

So the jobs did not vanish. They grew three times slower. In the UK, the Resolution Foundation found jobs rated highly automatable actually grew between 2013 and 2019, car washers by 38%.[79] Hiring slows in the exposed jobs while growth pools elsewhere: that is what a technology wave does to a labour market. Hold that shape; the live data in chapter 5 matches it.

The productivity evidence this time

The early gains are real and measured. In the industries most exposed to AI, productivity growth nearly quadrupled: 7% across 2018 to 2022, then 27% across 2018 to 2024. Revenue per employee grew 27% in the most exposed industries against 9% in the least exposed.[4] One worker, more output. That is the "fewer people doing more work" engine, running.

What the employers say, and what they did

Executives now say it in memos. The table separates the claim from the verified outcome, because three of the loudest early claims partly reversed.

COMPANY	THE CLAIM	WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED
Amazon	June 2025 memo: AI agents mean "we will need fewer people doing some of the jobs that are being done today".[80]	About 14,000 corporate roles cut in October 2025, with more signalled for 2026. AI named as one driver among several.[81]
Salesforce	September 2025: support cut from about 9,000 to about 5,000 heads, AI handling half of conversations.[11]	Cuts executed. Hundreds redeployed to sales and services. Company claim, unaudited.
BT	May 2023: up to 55,000 fewer jobs by 2030, around 10,000 replaced by AI.[82]	Plan standing. The next chief executive said in 2025 that AI could allow deeper cuts.[83] The largest UK case on record.

COMPANY	THE CLAIM	WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED
Klarna	February 2024: its AI assistant did the work of 700 customer service agents.[84]	May 2025: hiring humans again after the chief executive admitted the AI-led service meant lower quality.[10]
IBM	May 2023: hiring pause on about 7,800 back-office roles AI could replace.[85]	By 2025: a few hundred HR roles automated, total employment up, savings spent on programmers and sales.[15]
UK Civil Service	March 2025: job cuts with AI adoption, savings target above £2 billion a year by 2030.[20]	Around 10,000 back-office roles flagged. Programme in progress.

Read the table as an economist and the pattern is clear. The cuts that stuck sit where demand for the output is fixed: support tickets, back-office processing, coordination. The reversals happened where quality is the product and buyers noticed the difference. In 2025, 17% of UK employers said they expected AI to reduce their headcount within a year; 6% expected an increase.[86]

> **Productivity means fewer people for the same output. Jobs survive where demand for the output grows, or where the machine has no reach. The next chapter maps where the machine's reach actually is.**

CHAPTER 4

What the exposure studies find

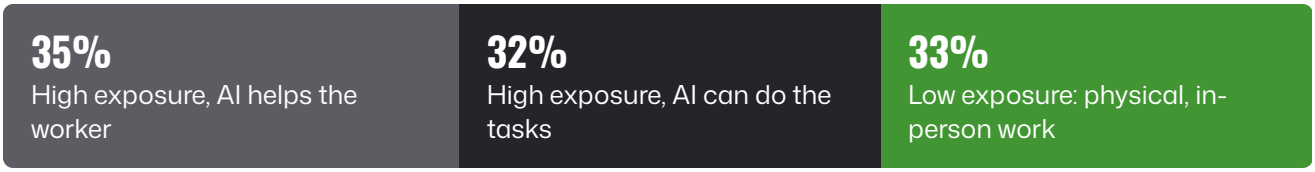
Every serious institution has now measured which jobs overlap with what AI can do. The studies disagree on size. They agree on direction, and they agree on who sits where.

STUDY	HEADLINE FINDING
IMF, Jan 2024[87]	60% of jobs in advanced economies are exposed to AI. Roughly half of those may benefit; for the other half, AI can execute key tasks, lowering demand for the person.
Goldman Sachs, 2023[88]	The equivalent of 300 million full-time jobs exposed to automation globally; two thirds of US occupations partially exposed; a 7% lift to global GDP.

STUDY	HEADLINE FINDING
Department for Education, 2023[1]	The UK occupation ranking. Most exposed: clerical professional work in finance, law and business management. Least exposed: technically difficult manual work in unpredictable places.
DSIT and AI Security Institute, Jan 2026[12]	About 70% of UK workers are in occupations with tasks AI could perform. A third of the workforce sits in the high-exposure, low-complementarity cohort.
Microsoft Research, 2025[17]	200,000 real Copilot conversations mapped to occupations. Top overlap: translators, writers, customer service. Bottom: roofers, machine operators, physical trades, all scoring near zero.
Anthropic Economic Index, 2025 to 2026[16 21]	Real usage data. Augmentation and automation trade the lead on the consumer side; business API usage runs 77% automation. Usage concentrates in mid-to-high wage desk occupations.
WEF employer survey, 2025[2]	Employers expect 170 million jobs created and 92 million displaced by 2030, net +78 million, with clerical roles declining fastest.
Acemoglu, 2024[89]	The sceptical anchor: existing task estimates justify at most a 0.66% productivity gain over ten years. If he is right, the whole reshuffle runs slower.

The UK workforce, split three ways

UK government assessment of AI exposure, January 2026. The middle bar is the cohort this report calls exposed: high task overlap, low complementarity.



Source: DSIT and AI Security Institute, using the IMF method.[12] The same assessment reports task-level productivity gains of 59% on writing tasks and 56% on software development.

The gradient reversed

The 2013 automation literature found risk concentrated in low-wage routine work; wages and education correlated negatively with risk.[77] The AI-era studies find the opposite. The Department for Education is explicit: employees with more advanced qualifications are typically in jobs more exposed to AI, and the least exposed jobs are manual, technically difficult, and done in unpredictable environments.[1] London and the South East carry the highest exposure of any UK region.[1]

A degree was the shelter in the last wave. In this wave the shelter moved to the physical world, and to the licence.

Exposure is a measure of tasks, and displacement is a market outcome

Every study above carries the same warning, and this report keeps it. Microsoft's researchers, on their own findings: "our study does not draw any conclusions about jobs being eliminated", and "A job is far more than the collection of tasks that make it up."[90] The exposure scores say where the machine's reach is. Whether reach becomes replacement depends on demand, on quality, on liability, and on law. Chapters 5, 8 and 9 test each of those against live data.

> **Every study points the same way: the reach of AI covers the desk, and stops at work done with hands in unpredictable places. A third of the UK workforce sits in the high-exposure, low-complementarity cohort.**

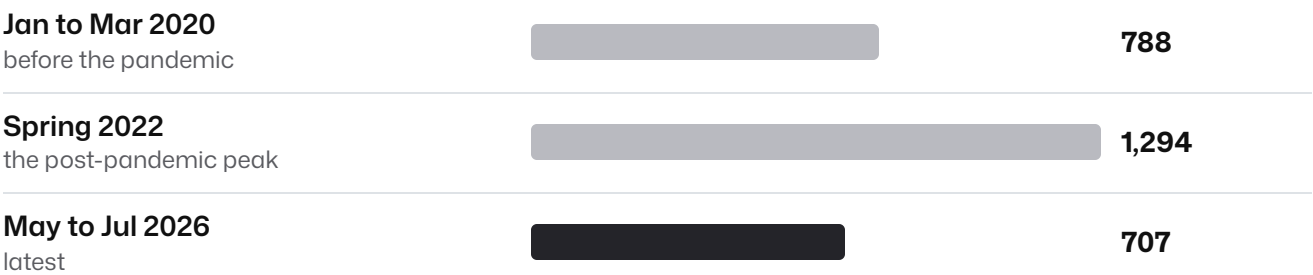
CHAPTER 5

What the job market is already saying

Forecasts argue. Adverts count. This chapter reads the live hiring data, and it shows the reshuffle arriving exactly where the exposure studies said it would: at the entry level of desk work.

The vacancy market has halved from its peak

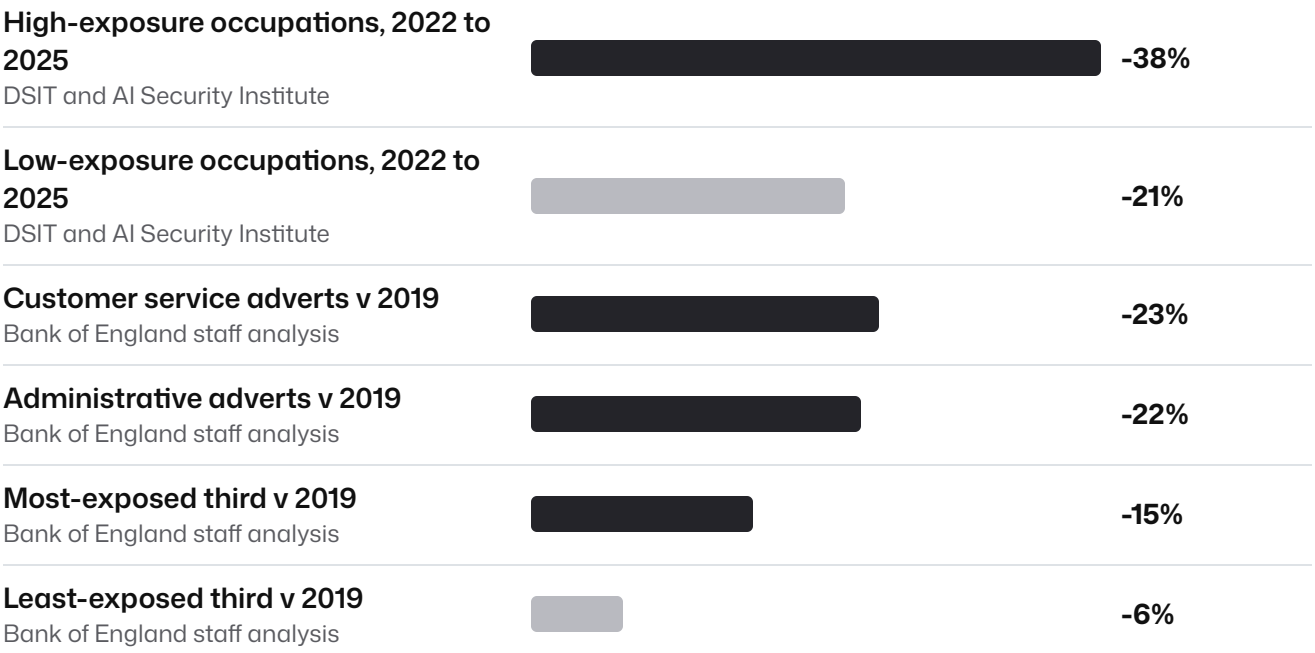
UK job vacancies, thousands, ONS employer survey. The latest reading is the lowest outside the pandemic since 2014.



Source: ONS Vacancy Survey, August 2026 release.[91] The pre-pandemic bar is derived from the ONS statement that vacancies sit 10.3% below the January to March 2020 level. ONS attributes the fall mainly to labour costs and weak demand. AI is one force inside a bigger slowdown, and this report does not claim otherwise.

The fall is steepest where AI exposure is highest

Change in job adverts, grouped by the AI exposure of the occupation. Two official analyses, different baselines, same gradient.



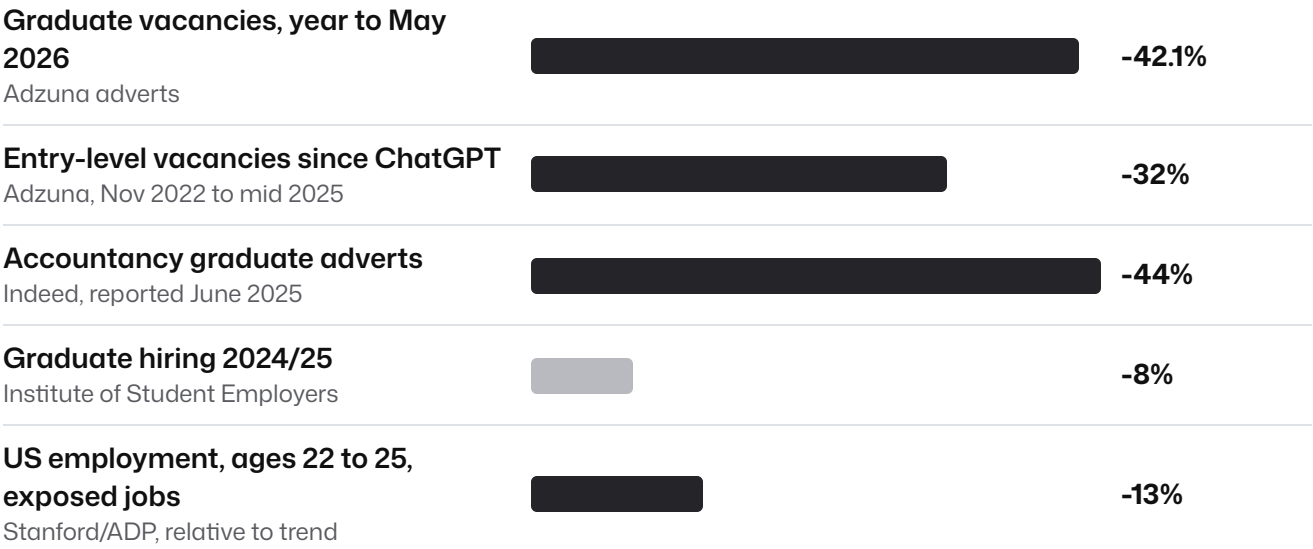
Sources: DSIT and AI Security Institute (2022 to 2025)[12]; Bank of England staff analysis of ONS advert data against a 2019 baseline.[8] Both authors caution that confident attribution to AI remains premature: the pandemic unwind, labour costs and the cycle all landed together. The gradient is the signal to watch.

The entry level is where it bites

Under the totals, one cohort is taking the hit: people trying to get their first desk job.

Early-career hiring, measured five ways

Each bar is a different dataset and period; the message is one message.



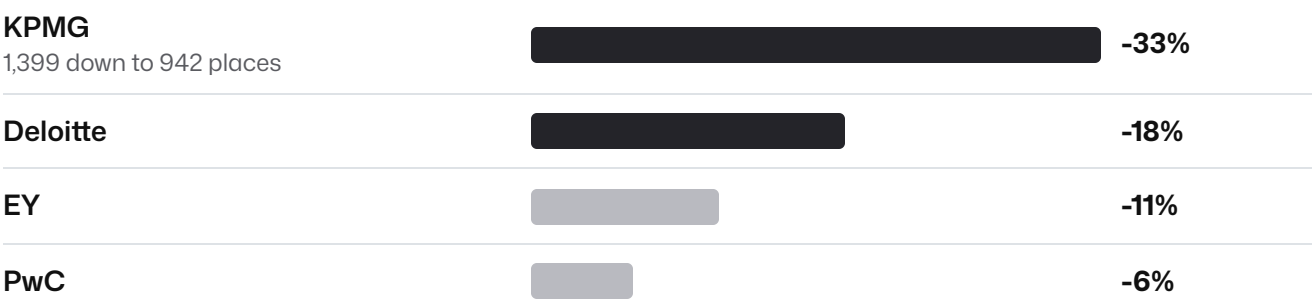
Sources: Adzuna[19][49], Indeed via City AM[3], Institute of Student Employers[48], Stanford Digital Economy Lab (US payroll data).[7]

The Stanford result deserves its own sentence, because it is the cleanest causal-style evidence anywhere. In US payroll records, workers aged 22 to 25 in the most AI-exposed occupations, software development and customer service above all, fell about 13% against trend since late 2022, while older workers in the same occupations held steady or grew. The mechanism was reduced hiring, with few redundancies.[7] By June 2026 the gap had widened to about 19%.[18] The doors close before anyone is marched out of them.

Britain's graduate market shows the same shape. 140 applications now chase each graduate vacancy, against 38 in 2003.[48] The Big 4 accountancy firms, historically the largest graduate employers, cut their intakes while a recruiter working with them said openly that AI now replicates junior work more cheaply.[3]

Big 4 graduate intakes, two years to 2025

KPMG's published numbers: 1,399 places down to 942.



Source: reported figures, City AM, June 2025.[3] The firms did not attribute the cuts to AI. The attribution is a named recruiter's, and it is labelled as such.

16.2%

Youth unemployment, ages 16 to 24, April to June 2026. 739,000 young people. The highest in over a decade.

ONS via Youth Employment UK[50]

1.01m

16 to 24 year olds not in education, employment or training. Above one million for the first time since 2013.

ONS NEET estimates, reported[92]

+26.6%

Trade and construction vacancies, year to May 2026. One of only four categories growing. Teaching grew 28.5%.

Adzuna[19]

56%

Average wage premium for AI skills, doubled in a year. AI-skill postings rose 7.5% while total postings fell 11.3%.

PwC AI Jobs Barometer 2025[4]

Hiring falls hardest at the entry level of exposed desk work, while trades vacancies grow and AI skills carry a 56% pay premium. The reshuffle is visible in the adverts.

CHAPTER 6

The risk ladder

Pull the evidence of chapters 4 and 5 into one ranking. The bar lengths order risk; the evidence for each rung is stated on the row. This ladder is this report's assessment, and each rung cites its data.

Entry-level desk roles graduate schemes, junior analysts, call centres	**Highest risk.** Entry-level postings down 32% since ChatGPT; US early-career employment in exposed jobs 13% below trend and widening.[4][9][7]
Administrative and secretarial 3.04m people	**High risk.** Adverts down 22% against 2019; admin roles top the WEF declining list.[8][2]
Customer service and sales support 413,500 in customer service alone	**High risk.** Adverts down 23% against 2019; the first roles named in every chief executive statement.[8][11]
Junior professional work accountancy, law, consulting, finance	**High risk at the entry rung.** Big 4 intakes cut; these occupations top the DfE exposure ranking.[3][1]
Middle management coordination and reporting layers	**The squeeze.** No UK dataset isolates it yet; the mechanism is reasoned in chapter 7 and flagged as such.

Senior judgement and relationship roles owners of risk, clients and people	**Lower risk.** Older, experienced workers in exposed occupations held steady in the US payroll data.[7]
Licensed physical work security, electrical, plumbing, care	**Lowest risk.** Lowest exposure scores, a legal licence required, demand rising. The full case is chapter 8.

Two readings of the ladder matter. For an individual: risk concentrates where work is screen-based, junior, and measurable. For the country: the top two rungs alone hold roughly five million jobs, and the people on them are disproportionately young and female. The Department for Education found high-exposure work concentrated among the higher qualified[1]; the earlier ONS automation work found 70% of high-risk roles held by women.[35]

> **Risk is highest exactly where British parents pushed their children for thirty years: the junior rungs of office careers. The ladder's safe end is physical and licensed.**

CHAPTER 7

The compressed organisation

Inside firms, the reshuffle has a shape: the org chart gets shorter and thinner in the middle. This chapter states the mechanism plainly and shows where the evidence already supports it.

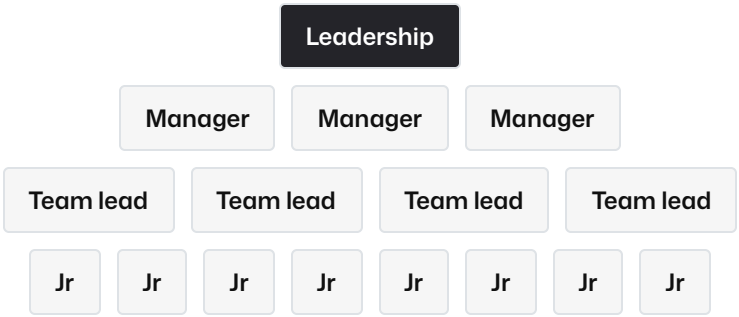
A company is layers of delegation. Work is broken into tasks, tasks are given to juniors, juniors are coordinated by managers, managers report upward. AI agents attack the two middle links at once. Execution: business API usage of AI already runs 77% automation, firms buying completed tasks far more than advice.[21] Coordination: when a team of ten

becomes a team of four with agents, the manager of ten has nothing left to manage, and the layer above absorbs the role.

The honest caveat first: no UK dataset isolates middle-management postings yet, and this report will not invent one. What the data does show is every surrounding wall moving. Amazon cut 14,000 corporate, coordination-heavy roles.[81] Salesforce cut support headcount by four thousand while redeploying hundreds outward to clients.[11] The civil service is removing around 10,000 back-office roles.[20] The pattern in each case: fewer people in the middle of the building, and money moved to the edges, where the firm touches customers, product and risk.

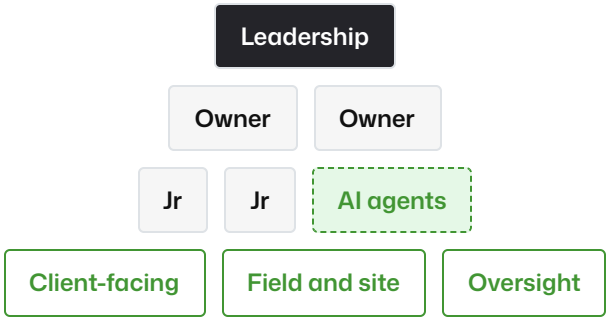
The firm, 2022

Wide junior base, thick coordination middle.



The firm, 2028

Short chart, agents in the base, people at the edges.



The diagrams are schematic. The direction they show is evidenced above; the proportions are illustrative and claim nothing.

What compresses, what grows

COMPRESSING INSIDE ORGANISATIONS	GROWING INSIDE ORGANISATIONS
Back-office processing and administration (civil service, IBM's HR case)	Client-facing and relationship roles (Salesforce redeployment target)
Tiered customer support (Salesforce, Klarna's first move)	AI operations: people who run, check and correct the agents (56% pay premium on AI skills)
Junior analysis and drafting layers (Big 4 intakes)	Oversight, quality and liability ownership (the Klarna reversal is the demand signal)
Coordination and reporting management (reasoned, unmeasured; flagged as such)	Field, site and premises roles the machine cannot reach (chapters 8 and 9)

> **Organisations are keeping their edges and thinning their middles. The safest seats are where the firm touches the physical world, the customer, or the law.**

CHAPTER 8

Protected work, for now

Some jobs sit behind three walls at once: the machine's physical limits, the law, and the nature of the product. Security, electrical work and plumbing sit behind all three. This chapter states each wall, and it shows the counter-evidence rather than hiding it.

Wall one: the machine's hands

Chapter 2 showed the split. Predictable physical activity is about 81% automatable with known technology; unpredictable physical work is about 25%.[27] A boiler in a 1930s loft, a fuse board behind a hoarder's wardrobe, a fight outside a venue at 1am: this is the least predictable work there is. The cross-study convergence is striking: roofers sit at the bottom of both the UK exposure ranking and Microsoft's analysis of 200,000 real AI conversations, scoring 0.01 out of 1 for AI applicability.[1 17] Plumbers and electricians appear on neither most-exposed list.

Wall two: the licence

Parliament has made parts of this work legally human. Front-line contracted security work without an SIA licence is a criminal offence under the Private Security Industry Act 2001.[23] Notifiable domestic electrical work requires a registered competent person under Part P of the Building Regulations.[30] Gas work requires Gas Safe registration under the 1998 regulations.[33] A licence regime does two things at once: it holds a person accountable in law, and it meters entry into the trade. Software cannot hold a licence, and it cannot go to prison.

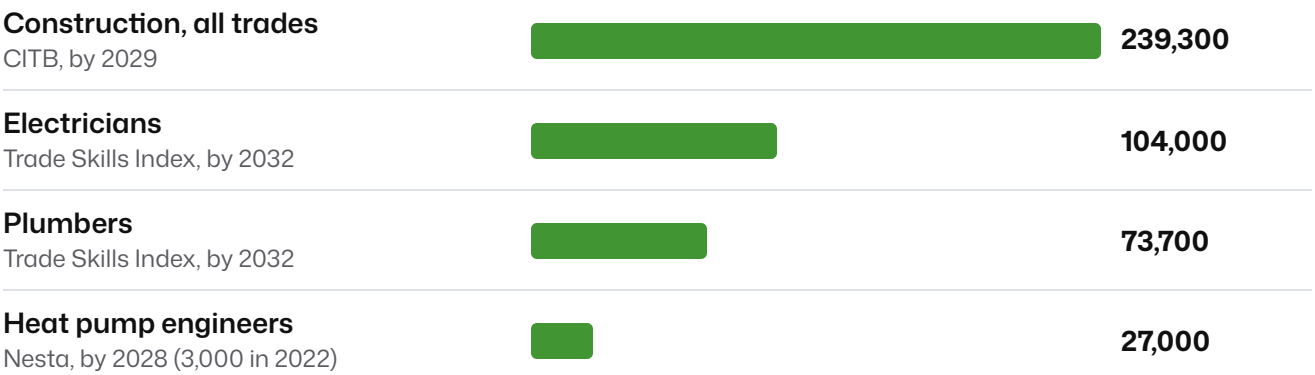
Wall three: presence is the product

A camera can watch. Only a person can stand in a doorway, de-escalate, detain, comfort, and carry legal responsibility for what happens next. Klarna's reversal in chapter 3 is the same economics in a softer setting: when the human quality is the product, removing the human degrades the product and the customer notices.[10] Deterrence works the same way. The deterrent value of a guard is the fact that a capable person is present.

The demand side: the gaps are already here

Extra workers the physical trades need

Published gap estimates, each with its horizon. The electrician gap is the largest of any UK trade.



Sources: CITB Construction Workforce Outlook 2025 to 2029[34]; UK Trade Skills Index 2023[29 31]; Nesta heat pump analysis.[32]

The drivers are structural. Heat pumps, EV charging and grid work pull electrician demand; the government target of 600,000 heat pump installations a year by 2028 stands against roughly 3,000 trained installers in 2022.[32] Care demand rises with the

age of the population: 894,400 care workers today and a workforce already short. And full-time median pay for electricians, £39,647, now clears the all-employee median.[6]

Security: the honest case

This report is published by a security training business, so the security claim gets the strictest treatment of all. Two pieces of evidence point against it, and they go on the record first. The Department for Education's exposure study names security guards as the exception among low-skill occupations, with elevated AI exposure from video monitoring and patrol robots.[1] And the World Economic Forum's employer survey places security guards among the largest-declining jobs to 2030 in absolute terms.[2]

Now the rest of the evidence. The exposed part of security work is the watching: screens, monitoring, detection. That slice is 13.2% of active licences, the CCTV specialism.[22] The core of the job is the walls above: a licensed person, present, accountable, able to intervene. On the demand side every driver points one way. Active SIA licences grew 25% between December 2020 and December 2025.[24] From spring 2027, Martyn's Law places statutory protect duties on 178,900 premises, regulated by the SIA.[25] Police numbers are 4.1% below their 2010 peak while the population has grown.[26] Retail violence and abuse run at roughly 3.5 times pre-pandemic levels.[93] Even the flattest official forecast anywhere, the US one, expects around 157,200 security guard openings every year through 2035, because a high-churn workforce must be continuously replaced.[94]

Weigh both sides and the conclusion is specific. AI will take tasks inside security, starting with the screens. The licensed presence at the door is protected by law, by physics, and by rising demand. Chapter 9 puts numbers on it.

"For now" is part of this chapter's title on purpose. The protection is a moving line. The robot evidence in chapter 2 says the line moves slowly for work like this, and the most credible sceptic puts useful dexterity beyond 2036.[76] This report treats that as a horizon to re-check yearly, and never as a guarantee.

> **Protected work sits behind three walls: hands the machines lack, licences the law requires, and presence the customer is paying for. Security, electrical and plumbing sit behind all three at once.**

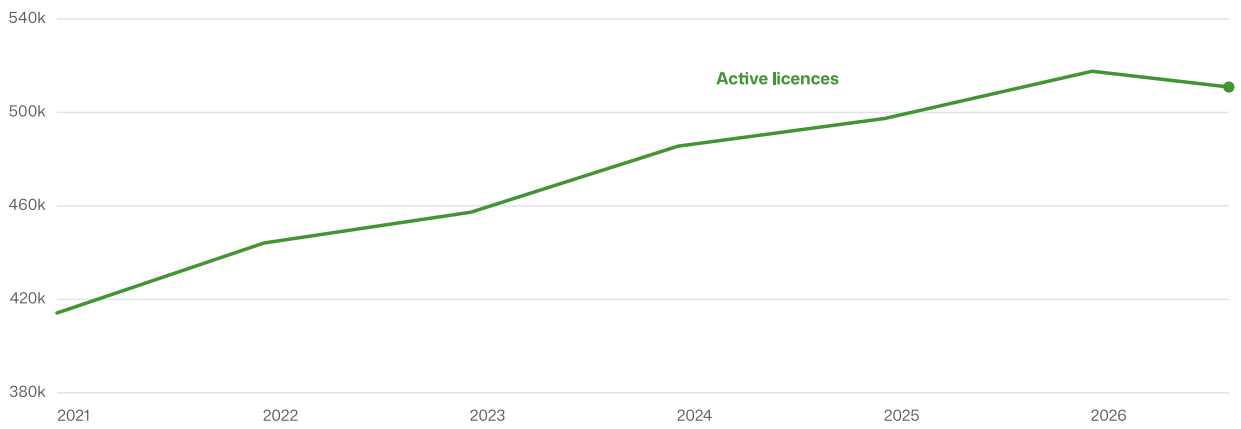
CHAPTER 9

The security line

The reader was promised a line they can see rising, with the logic shown. Here is the recorded line, the drivers, and a projection with every assumption stated. Anyone with the sources can recompute it.

The recorded line: SIA active licences

Official monthly series, December of each year, plus the latest reading. One person can hold more than one licence.



Source: SIA licence statistics, official data files.[24] Axis starts at 380,000. The 2026 dip tracks a 16% fall in first-time applications during 2025.[95]

510,839

Active SIA licences, August 2026, held by 450,364 people. Median age 37; 30% under 30.

SIA, official[22]

£33,832

Median full-time annual pay for security guards, April 2025. The advertised frontline median is £13.33 an hour.

ASHE 2025[6]; GL Pay Index[96]

178,900

Premises acquiring statutory protect duties under Martyn's Law, expected in force from spring 2027, regulated by the SIA.

Home Office impact assessment[25]

~50%

Annual staff turnover reported for the security sector, against 38% across the private sector. Churn is demand: leavers must be replaced.

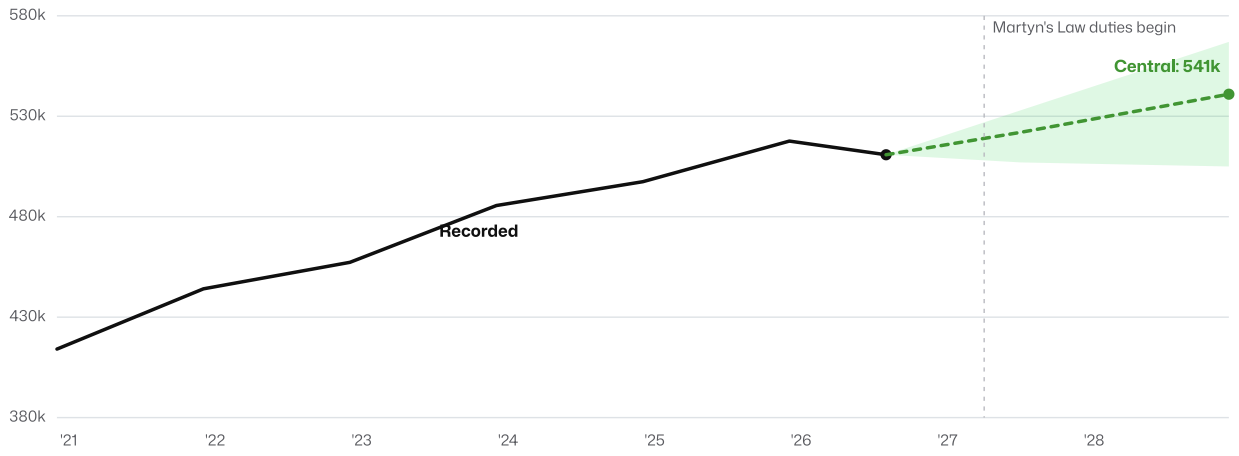
Industry benchmark, secondary[97]

The projection, with the working shown

A projection is only as good as its stated assumptions. These are the three used below. Low: the 2025 dip in new applications persists and the line drifts to about 505,000. Central: growth resumes at 2.5% a year, roughly half the recorded 2020 to 2025 rate, reaching about 541,000 by end 2028. High: the recorded compound rate of 4.6% a year returns as Martyn's Law duties land, reaching about 567,000. If AI automates the CCTV slice faster than expected, the low path captures it.

Where the line goes next

Recorded series to August 2026, then the three scenarios as a band. The central path is drawn.



Projection by Get Licensed Research from the SIA series.[24] Assumptions stated above; this is a reasoned range, and it carries no more authority than its inputs.

Why the central and high paths are more likely than the low one: Martyn's Law is a statutory demand floor arriving on a known date[28]; the police gap and retail crime push private demand upward[26][93]; and replacement churn alone generates tens of thousands of openings a year regardless of net growth.[94] Why the low path stays on the chart: 2025 applications fell 16%, and the exposed CCTV slice is real. An honest chart shows the whole range.

> **Security demand has a statutory floor from spring 2027 and a five-year record of growth. The reasoned range for end 2028 is 505,000 to 567,000 active licences, with the balance of drivers pointing to the upper half.**

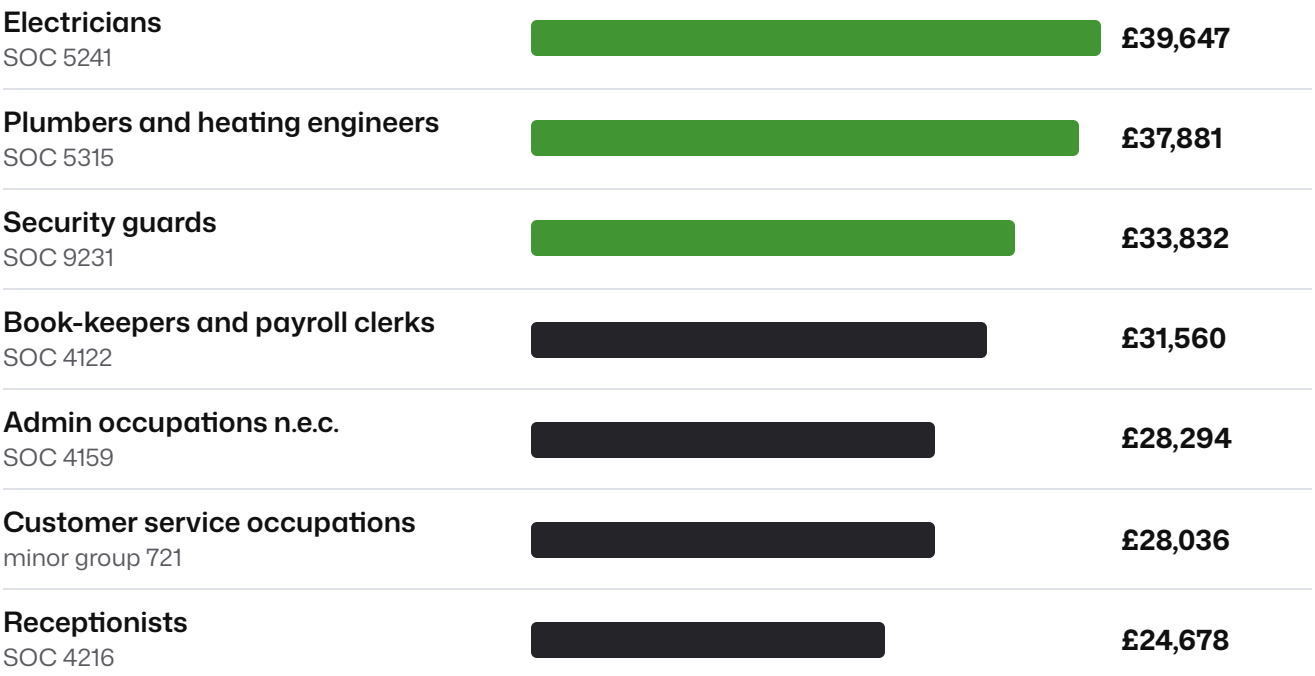
CHAPTER 10

Where to move

For a person on the exposed rungs, the question is practical: which door, what does it cost, what does it pay. The principle first, then the doors. Move towards work with a licence, a presence, or accountability attached. Learn to run the machines, and keep the tasks they cannot do.

The pay case for moving

Median full-time annual pay, April 2025. Dark bars are exposed desk roles. Green bars are the protected destinations.



Source: ASHE 2025 provisional.[6] Employees only. Self-employed trade earnings sit above these figures.

From customer service · £28,036

↓ MOVE TO

Security officer · £33,832

The skills transfer directly: reading people, staying calm, handling conflict in words. Median full-time pay is £5,800 higher.

Route: licence-linked training takes about a week, then the SIA licence application. Working within weeks.[47]

From retail · £25,056

↓ MOVE TO

Retail security · £13.60/hr advertised

Same shop floor, protected side of it. Retailers spent £5.5 billion on crime prevention in five years while shop violence runs at 3.5 times 2019 levels.[14]

Route: door supervision or security guarding licence; retail security is the second-largest advertised security role.[96]

From admin and book-keeping · £28,294

↓ MOVE TO

The AI-operations seat in your own firm

Every firm automating its admin needs people who run, check and correct the machines. AI skills carry a 56% average wage premium.[4]

Route: free government short courses now exist for exactly this.[13] Become the person who operates the system that replaced the task.

From a stalled graduate search

↓ MOVE TO

Electrician apprenticeship · £39,647 at median

140 applications chase each graduate vacancy.[48] The electrician gap is 104,000 by 2032, the largest of any trade, and median full-time pay beats the national median.[29]

Route: a four-year apprenticeship, earning throughout. Security work is a common way to earn while applying.

From driving and operative work · £33,835

↓ MOVE TO

Plumbing and heating · £37,881

73,700 more plumbers needed by 2032; the heat pump target needs nine times the 2022 installer base by 2028.[31][32]

Route: adult retraining courses and apprenticeships; gas work needs Gas Safe registration.[33]

From any exposed desk role

↓ MOVE TO

Stay, and own the machine

Staying can be the right move. Older, experienced workers in exposed occupations held their ground in the US data; the doors closed on new entrants.[7] Experience plus AI fluency is the strongest desk position there is.

Route: be the one who tests the tools, sets the checks, and owns the output. The 56% premium is paid for that seat.[4]

Pay figures are medians for full-time employees, April 2025.[6] Advertised hourly rates for security are live Get Licensed Pay Index readings from real adverts.[96] Hourly and annual figures answer different questions; both are shown where they exist.

The protected ground is open

Get Licensed has trained security professionals since 2007. Licence-linked training runs every week across the UK, and the demand evidence is the chapter you just read.

CHAPTER 11

The government plan

There is a funded government plan for AI. It is a plan for adoption and skills. For workers displaced by AI there is no dedicated programme, and this chapter shows exactly what exists instead.

JAN 2025

AI Opportunities Action Plan

All 50 recommendations accepted: 20x public compute by 2030, AI Growth Zones, a National Data Library.[98]

JUN 2025

TechFirst, £187 million

School, undergraduate and PhD AI skills; an industry pledge to train 7.5 million workers by 2030.[99]

JAN 2026

AI Skills Boost

Free short courses for all adults; target raised to 10 million workers trained by 2030; one million completions recorded.[13]

JAN 2026

The government's own exposure assessment

DSIT and the AI Security Institute publish the 70% exposure figure and the 32% displacement-risk cohort, with the caveat that causality is unproven.[12]

JUN 2026

Early Careers Jobs Alliance, £20 million

Maps how entry-level work is changing; AI bootcamp pilots for school leavers; a 2027 jobs-guarantee pilot in the North East.[100]

THROUGH 2026

Parliament examines the gap

The Business and Trade Committee runs an inquiry into AI and the future of the workforce. The Bank of England governor warns publicly about entry-level roles and the talent pipeline.[101]

The direct answer

Does the UK have a funded plan for workers whose jobs AI removes? No. The funded programmes train people in AI skills and help young people enter work. There is no statutory transition duty, no displacement fund, and no employment-service programme specific to AI displacement. The chancellor's stated goal is the opposite direction of travel: the fastest AI adoption in the G7, with an OECD estimate that AI could add 0.4 to 1.3 percentage points to UK productivity growth each year over the decade.[102]

One country has built the thing the UK has yet to build. Singapore gives every citizen aged 40 and over a S$4,000 retraining credit, a training allowance of up to 24 months, and up to 90% fee subsidies on approved courses.[103] An individual entitlement that follows the worker through a transition. The UK think-tank estimates of displacement, one to three million jobs over the coming years on the central Tony Blair Institute view, up to eight million in IPPR's worst case, are exactly the scale such a scheme exists for.[104][105]

The practical reading for a worker: the state will fund your course. It will not fund your transition. The moves in chapter 10 are self-service.

> **The government plan funds adoption and courses. Displacement is being studied, and it is unfunded. Workers should plan on that basis.**

CHAPTER 12

The next 24 months

How this unfolds through 2027 and 2028, stated as three scenarios with the evidence that would confirm each, and the six numbers to watch.

Three things are locked in regardless of scenario. The compute is committed: hundreds of billions of dollars of capacity lands through 2028.[69][70] The capability trend has run at a doubling every four to seven months for years.[66] And the robots stay slow: the physical trades' protection holds through this window on every credible timeline.[76]

SCENARIO	WHAT HAPPENS TO JOBS	WHAT YOU WOULD SEE FIRST
Slower The sceptics are right[89]	Productivity gains stay modest. Hiring freezes thaw. The entry-level squeeze eases but the trades gaps remain.	Graduate vacancies recover through 2027; the Bank Underground gradient flattens.
Central The current data extends	The freeze spreads up the ladder by attrition. Entry-level desk hiring stays shut, organisations compress without mass redundancy, protected demand grows.	Youth unemployment stays high while total unemployment barely moves; SIA licences climb toward the central path.
Faster The lab warnings land[106]	Up to half of entry-level white-collar roles gone within one to five years on the strongest stated warning; unemployment reaches levels that force a displacement policy.	Visible redundancy waves in professional services; a displacement fund enters the Budget debate.

The mechanism to expect in every scenario is the one already measured: doors close before anyone is marched out of them. Hiring slows first, headcount falls by attrition, and the people affected are the ones who never got in.[7]

Six numbers that settle the argument as they land

WATCH	WHERE	WHAT IT TELLS YOU
UK vacancies, monthly	ONS Vacancy Survey[91]	The overall temperature of hiring.
Entry-level and graduate postings	Adzuna and Indeed reports[19]	The leading edge of the reshuffle.
Adverts by AI exposure	Bank Underground updates[8]	Whether the gradient steepens or flattens.
The government's annual assessment	DSIT and AI Security Institute[12]	The official displacement-risk cohort, updated.
SIA active licences, monthly	SIA statistics[24]	The security line against chapter 9's range.
Martyn's Law commencement	Home Office[28]	The statutory demand floor's exact start date.

> **The fuel is committed, the gradient is visible, and the robots stay slow. Expect the central path: a quiet reshuffle through hiring, compressing organisations from the middle, with the protected ground growing underneath.**

STRAIGHT ANSWERS

Questions people actually ask

Will AI take my job?

AI takes tasks, and a job is a bundle of tasks. Whether your job goes depends on how many of its tasks the machine can do, whether demand for the output grows when it gets cheaper, and whether law or physical presence requires a person. Chapters 4 and 8 give the test; the ladder in chapter 6 gives the ranking. If you are early-career in desk work, the risk is real now, and it arrives as doors that fail to open. **The move list in chapter 10 exists for exactly that case.**

Is security about to be automated by cameras and robots?

The watching is automating; the standing is protected. AI already helps monitor video, and that slice of the industry, 13.2% of licences, is genuinely exposed. The licensed person at the door is protected three ways: robots lack the dexterity and judgement for unpredictable physical work, the law requires a licensed human for front-line duties, and from spring 2027 Martyn's Law adds statutory duties across 178,900 premises. **The recorded demand line grew 25% in five years.**

Should my child still go to university?

For medicine, engineering and work with statutory registration, yes. For a general degree aimed at a generic office job, the maths has changed: 140 applications per graduate vacancy, intakes cut at the biggest graduate employers, and the exposure studies put clerical professional work at the top of the risk table. A trade apprenticeship now pays above the national median at the electrician's rate, with a six-figure worker gap behind it. **The honest answer is: check what the specific degree buys, against what the specific trade pays.**

I am 45 and in an exposed job. Too late to move?

The data says the opposite. Experienced workers in exposed occupations held their ground in the US payroll data; the squeeze is on new entrants. That gives you time, and two live options: become the person in your firm who runs the AI, or take the licence route into protected work, where the security workforce already has a median age of 37 and takes career changers every week.

What should I do in the next 90 days?

Three actions. First, test your own job against chapter 8's three walls: physical unpredictability, licence, presence. Second, learn the tools doing your tasks; the free government courses exist and the AI-skills premium is 56%. Third, if you are on the top rungs of the ladder, price a move: a week of licence-linked training opens security; an apprenticeship opens the trades. **Start now.**

EVERY CLAIM TRACED

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