

From Classroom to Career: Navigating the Data & AI Job Market

A student entered the university lecture hall, laptop under arm and curiosity on high. Discussions went around artificial intelligence, and words like neural networks, automation, and data science. The future looked exciting and interesting.

Then, there were questions bubbling under the surface:

What jobs exist in the world of data and AI?

Can we get entry-level people in fast-moving fields?

Can remote work be practical for hands-on, technical jobs such as machine learning?

This report is an attempt to answer those very questions, using real-world data from the AI job market between 2020 and 2025. Through visual storytelling and trend analysis, we chart the evolution of AI roles, remote work, salary growth, and what it takes to break in as a new graduate.

Can I work in AI? And if so, how, where, and doing what?

Artificial Intelligence and Data Science are often referred to as the twin engines of the modern technological revolution, and they are changing the way we diagnose diseases, predict market fluctuations, increase supply chain efficiencies, and even communicate with our smart appliances. For students and job seekers, however, they mean a little more than smart devices; it generally means potential and a bright career path ahead. Salaries have skyrocketed, job titles have multiplied, and most importantly, remote working has practically reshaped who can work remotely and where they choose to work from. This can leave anyone starting in this field with both new and exciting opportunities and a completely foreign environment to navigate.

This shift isn't just providing us with new opportunities - it's also changing how we consider building careers in technology. Many industries are adopting AI and data, which are creating new opportunities from diverse backgrounds; whether you're a student or job seeker looking for a new role, or just someone enthusiastic about the field, it's important to understand how the entire market is shifting. This report offers a clear vision of that shift; it frames data and AI, not as simple vehicles of innovation, but as highways to opportunity.

The Trending Data and AI Jobs

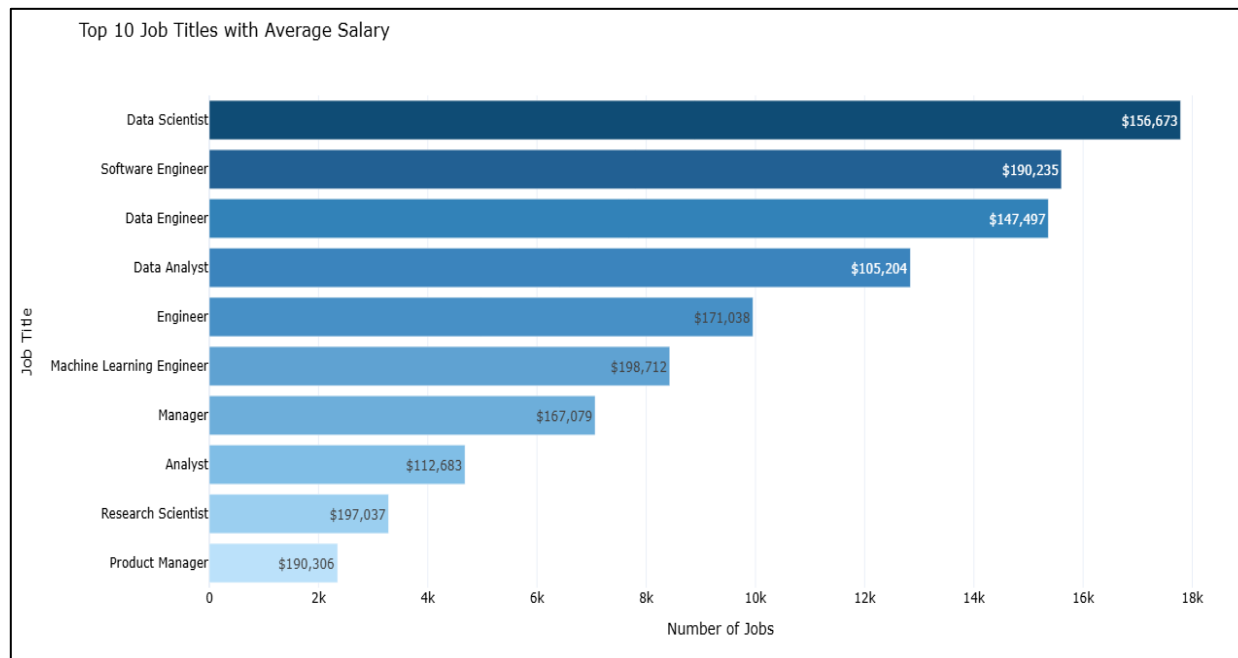


Figure 1: Top10 Job titles with average salary

Over the past few years, job roles in data and AI have grown exponentially across industries. Roles like Data Scientists, Software Engineers, and Machine Learning Engineers are particularly valuable because of their technical and analytical skills. There are also less prevalent roles, such as Product Managers and Research Scientists, that remain attractive because of their niche skill set. In any case, the job market shows a strong link between advanced skills in data and AI and high compensation.

Decoding Hiring Patterns in Data & AI

The changing data and AI job market continues to show distinct patterns around varying levels of experience: entry, mid, senior, and executive. Most roles are primarily on-site, especially at the entry level. Entry-level jobs are fundamentally designed to provide active, hands-on learning, continuous monitoring, and collaborative problem-solving. Mid-level jobs follow a similar pattern, but the data shows a modest but upward trend in remote work options, which indicates a slow stage of flexibility in the roles for people with years of experience.

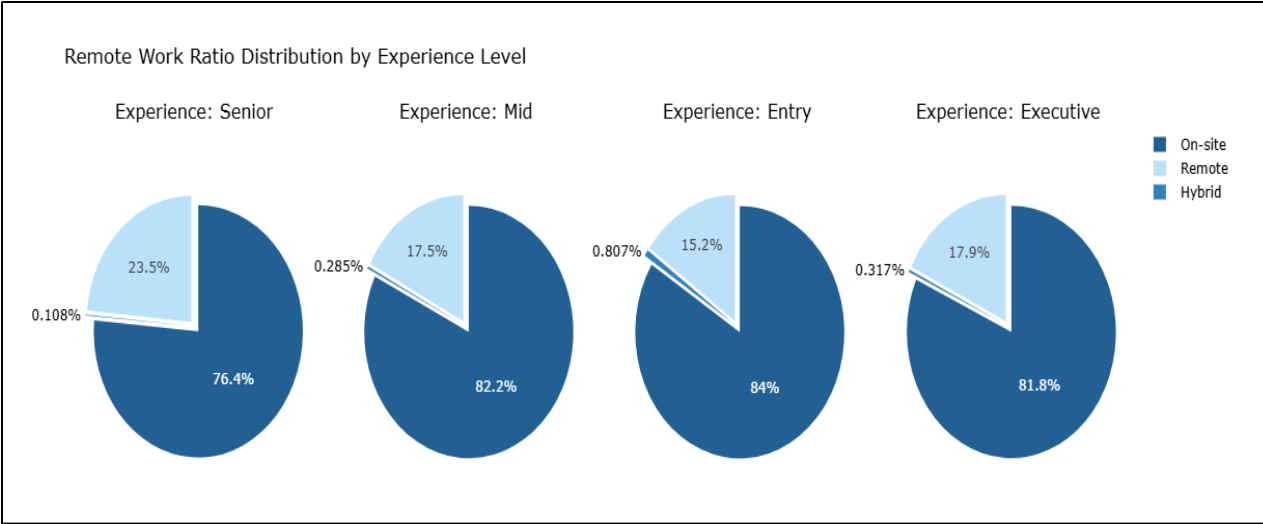


Figure 2: Remote work distribution by experience level

The shift toward remote work is more pronounced at the senior level, where job responsibilities often allow for greater flexibility. Remote work is also a possibility for executive roles, while on-site roles still remain prevalent. Hybrid format, where positions and occupations have remote work and in-person work combined are the least prevalent across all levels of experience and are infrequently mentioned in job postings.

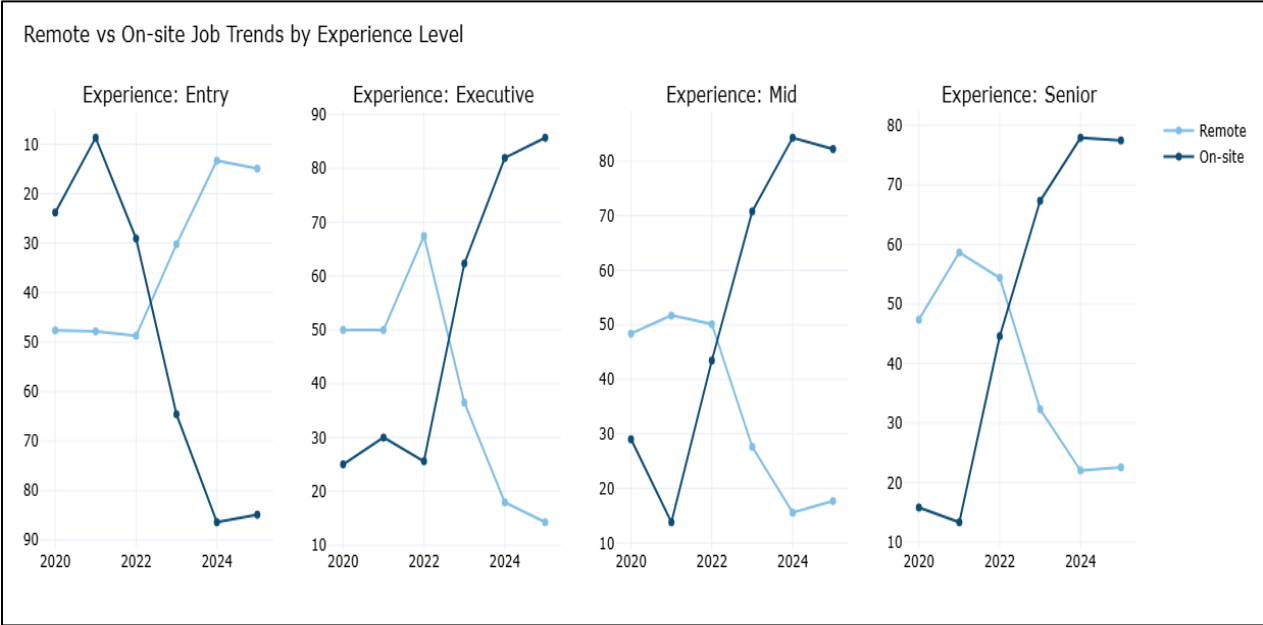


Figure 3: Remote vs On-Site trends by experience level

This trend towards remote work became a lot clearer in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic period, when companies had to make changes to their work arrangements in inconsistent and varied ways by adopting flexible working arrangements. Many of those initial changes were driven somewhat reactively rather than strategically, but those changes have influenced how companies hire for at least some roles that do function independently or asynchronously for certain parts of the work day/week. Still, the structure of the job market is characterised and shaped by clear job formats, primarily on-site positions, especially for someone just starting their career. Understanding these shifting patterns is important for job seekers aspiring to work in the data and AI space to consider both upward mobility and where they want to work.

Are big-level companies hiring freshers?

The hiring trends of companies aligned based on size demonstrate where opportunities lie for new entrants into the data and AI job market. Medium-sized enterprises represent the vast majority of freshers hiring, perhaps due to their ability to invest in scale and develop future talent. Larger businesses, despite having the resources to hire a fresher, likely have specific hiring programs or tend to take a risk-averse approach and hire only from those with experience. Small businesses hire the least amount of freshers, either because the hiring capacity is limited, or there is an expectation of specialised knowledge in some of the roles they offer.

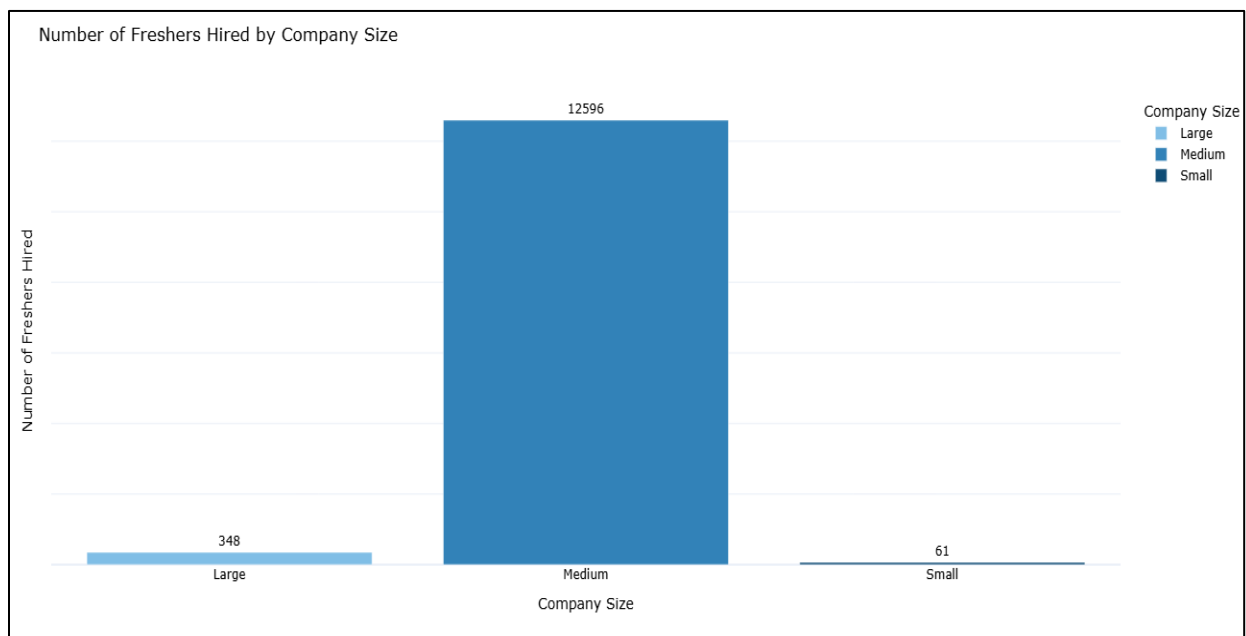


Figure 4: Number of freshers hired by company size

This demonstrates that medium-sized businesses provide opportunities that represent viable entry points for individuals entering the early stages of their careers. For students and graduates, medium-sized businesses may offer the best balance of opportunity, hands-on skills, and a growth platform. Knowing this trend may assist professionals in their search for jobs with a more targeted approach.

The Geography of Jobs

The averages for salary levels in the data and AI job market differ by region, due to local economies, industry and demand for technical talent. Developed countries tend to pay more, including in lauded positions like machine learning, data science and software engineering, particularly when those professions are more mature in the tech ecosystem, because of relatively large presences of global company headquarters in those markets, which ultimately allow increasing competitive salaries and a supported career development infrastructure.

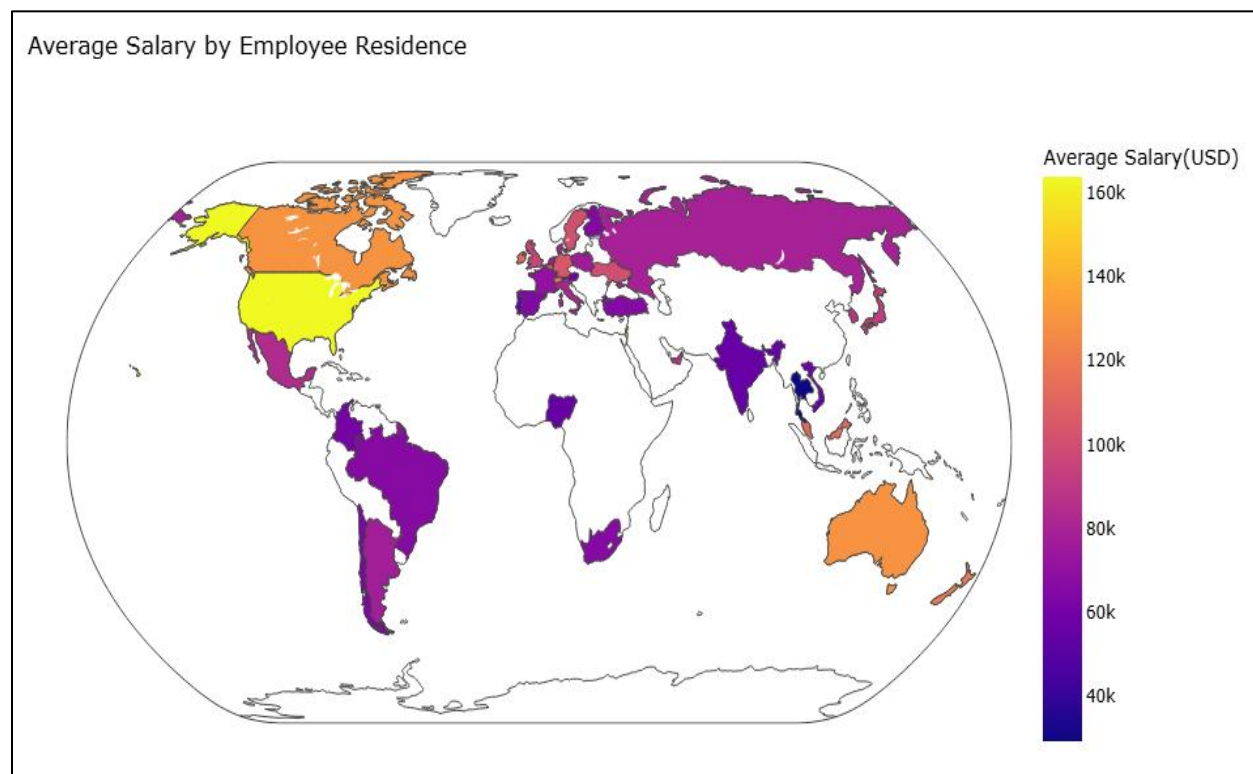


Figure 5: Average salary by employee residence

At the same time, emerging economies are increasingly significant to the global workforce because they sometimes produce large volumes of skilled professionals in IT services, software development, and analytics. Even though these roles might not necessarily pay as well, many of these emerging economies are integrally related to the global workforce and have evolved into important locations for remote or outsourced work.

Clearly, this expansion of the market on a global level shows a trend towards a more interconnected and skill-based job economy. While location still matters when it comes to salaries and compensation, companies increasingly are concerned with capabilities, allowing talent to emerge from anywhere in the world, with access to meaningful jobs and career opportunities in the areas of data and AI.

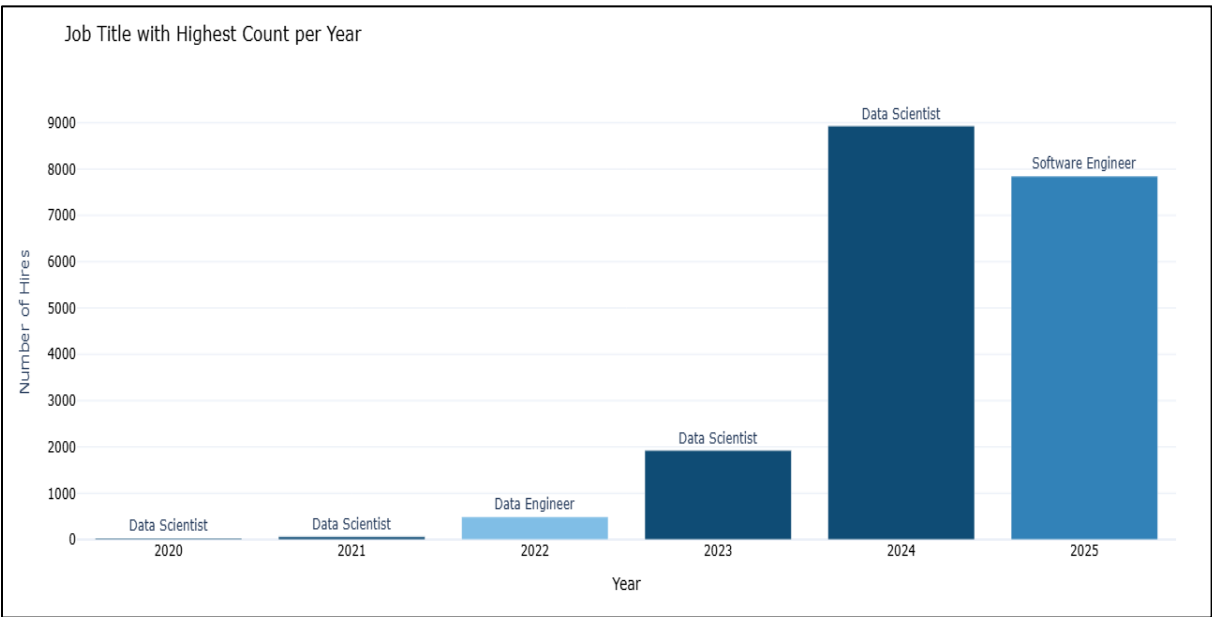


Figure 6: Job title with highest count per year

Trending Job Titles Among Fresh Hires

Entry-level opportunities in the data and AI job market are shaped by a noticeable demand for roles that blend analytical skills with foundational technical knowledge. Positions focused on interpreting and managing data appear to be the most accessible starting points for fresh graduates. Alongside these, there are emerging openings in more specialised areas like engineering and research, suggesting a growing willingness among employers to invest in early talent for advanced functions.

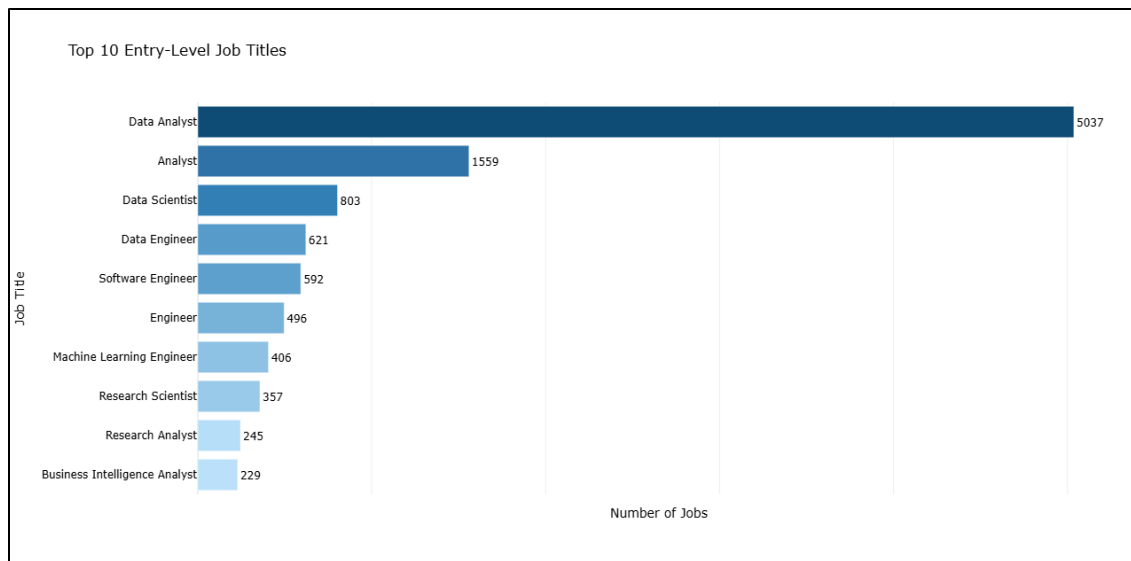


Figure 7: Top 10 Entry-Level Job Titles

This distribution of opportunities more broadly reflects the trends within the industry that are leaning towards requiring broader skill sets that allow for growth into specialised or technical/strategic related positions to further advancement. The various opportunities for entry-level seekers denote the ability to develop transferable skills and an openness to different entry points into the profession.

Conclusion

The data and AI job market is booming with opportunities, particularly for recent graduates. It is a large market with many positions, and pay continues to rise along with demand across the spectrum of industries. Mid-sized businesses are providing the most opportunities for entry-level positions, remote work is easier to attain than ever before, and the job market is no longer dominated by programmers; analysts and career changers have a place too. Remote positions still have geographical constraints in some areas, such as the U.S., and employers hiring people from other countries remain low, which suggests untapped prospects for global diversity. Many entry-level jobs still require experience or specialised technical skills, with a tension between education and job specs, they are filling the gaps. However, the arrow is in the right direction: with the right mentality, flexibility, and understanding of industry progress, students entering this field can build meaningful, flexible and dynamic careers. The connection between classroom learning and working in the AI job market is, and has always been, indirect, but today, more than ever, there is an opportunity.