Demographic shifts

Growing working-age populations are the macrotrend expected to be the second-biggest driver of global net job creation – with 9 million net additional jobs by 2030 – surpassed only by broadening digital access. Aging and declining working-age populations, meanwhile, are simultaneously expected to be, overall, the third-largest driver of job creation (11 million additional jobs) as well the primary factor in a global reduction in 7 million jobs, making this trend the 5th largest driver of net job creation, on balance, resulting in 4 million net additional jobs by 2030.

These two demographic trends are notably among the top three drivers of growth in roles for Assembly and Factory Workers and Vocational Education Teachers. Aging and declining working-age populations also appear to drive growth in roles for Nurses, Sales and Hospitality professionals as well as being among the largest drivers of growth for shop salespersons, wholesale and manufacturing sales representatives, food and beverage serving workers and food processing and related trades workers. Growing working age populations, meanwhile, are expected to be a key driver of growth for Education roles, including University and Higher Education Teachers and Secondary Education Teachers.

Economic uncertainty

Slower economic growth is the only macrotrend that Future of Jobs Survey respondents expect to drive more job destruction (3 million jobs) than creation (2 million jobs), while rising cost of living and higher prices are expected to drive job creation of 4 million jobs and displacement of 3 million jobs by 2030.

These two trends are both significant contributors to an expected decline in roles for Building Caretakers, Cleaners, and Housekeepers, while slower economic growth is also among the top contributors to job decline in Business Services and Administration Managers, General and Operations Managers, and Sales and Marketing Professionals.

However, slower economic growth is also projected to be a top driver for growth in roles such as Business Development Professionals and Sales Representatives. Growth in roles driven by increasing cost of living is concentrated in jobs associated with finding ways of increasing efficiency, such as AI and Machine Learning Specialists, Business Development Professionals, and Supply Chain and Logistics Specialists.

3 Skills outlook

This chapter presents the results of the Future of Jobs Survey concerning skills, as classified by the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy.[36] It begins by analysing respondents' expectations of skill disruption by 2030, as well as the skills currently required for work and whether employers anticipate these skills will increase or decrease in importance over the next five years. The chapter then assesses the skills expected to become core skills by 2030, based on their current significance and anticipated evolution. It also contrasts the skills required for growing and declining jobs, revealing windows of opportunity for enabling dynamic job transitions. Finally, it offers an overview of the key drivers of skill transformation and concludes with an exploration of anticipated training needs and trends.

3.1 Expected disruptions to skills

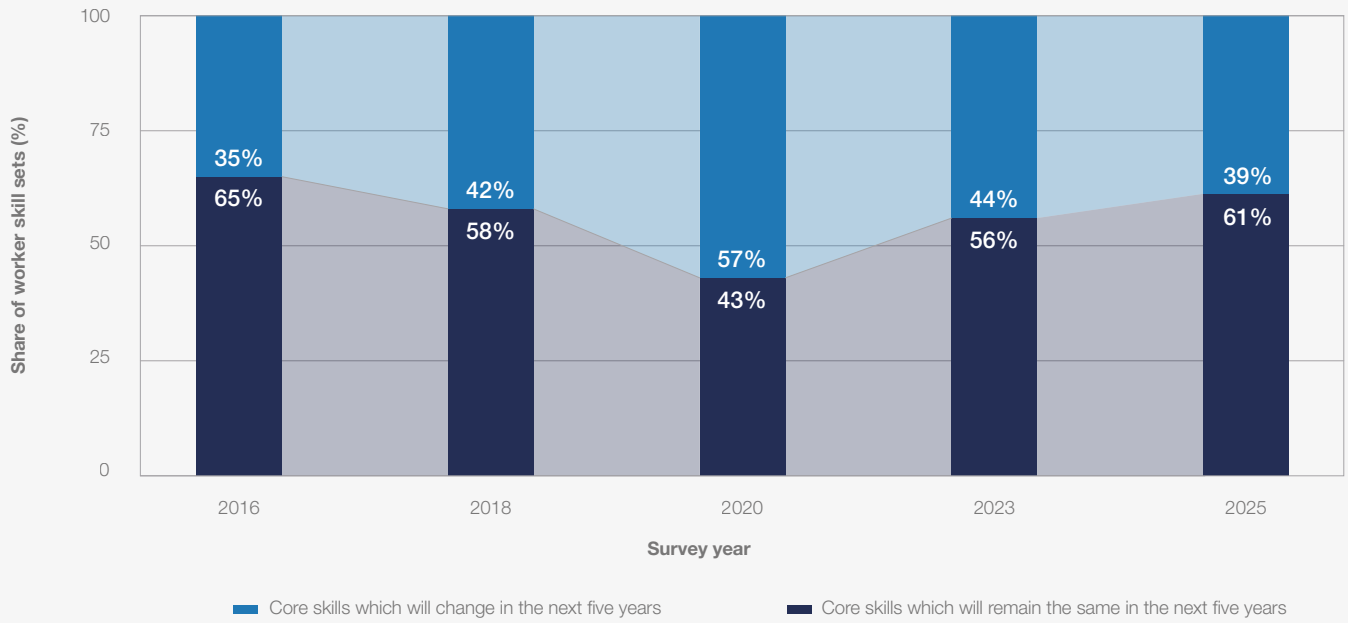
When the Future of Jobs Report was first published in 2016, surveyed employers expected that 35% of workers' skills would face disruption in the coming years. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with rapid advancements in frontier technologies, led to significant disruptions in working life and skills, prompting respondents to predict high levels of skills instability in subsequent editions of the report. The post-pandemic period, however, has seen employers adapt to these changes. The accelerated adoption of digital tools, remote work solutions, and advanced technologies such as machine learning and generative AI provided companies with relevant experience to better understand the critical skills required to navigate rapid technological change.

Despite current uncertainty around the long-term impact of generative AI, the expected ongoing pace of disruption of skills has begun to stabilize, albeit at a high level. Overall, employers expect 39% of workers' core skills to change by 2030 (Figure 3.1). While this represents significant ongoing skill disruption, it is down from 44% in 2023. One element contributing to this finding may be a growing focus on continuous learning, upskilling and reskilling programmes, enabling companies to better anticipate and manage future skill requirements. This is reflected in an increasing share of the workforce (50%) having completing training as part of long-term learning strategies compared to 2023 (41%) – a finding that is consistent across almost all industries. This is discussed further in section 3.3.

FIGURE 3.1

Disruptions to skills

Evolution in the share of workers' core skills expected to change and to remain the same within the next five years, 2016-2025.



Source

World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Surveys 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022 and 2024.

Note

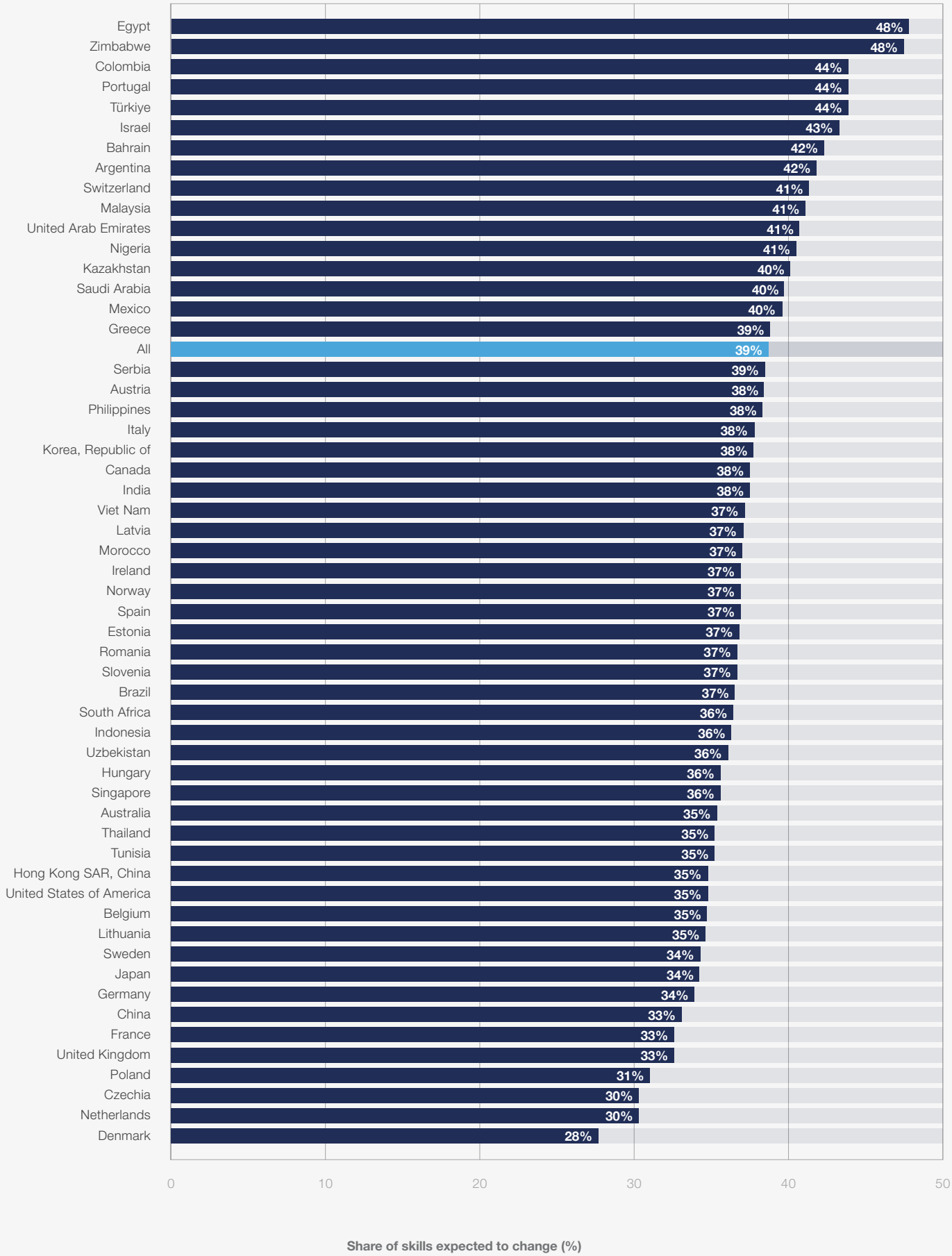
Values reported are the mean skill stability percentages estimated by employers surveyed in each edition of the survey.

However, the extent of skills disruption is not uniform across economies and industries. Lower-middle and upper middle-income economies and those affected by conflict tend to expect greater disruption in workers' skills, while high-income economies foresee less instability (Figure 3.2).

FIGURE 3.2

Disruption to skills 2025-2030, by economy

Share of workers' core skills that will change in the next five years



Source

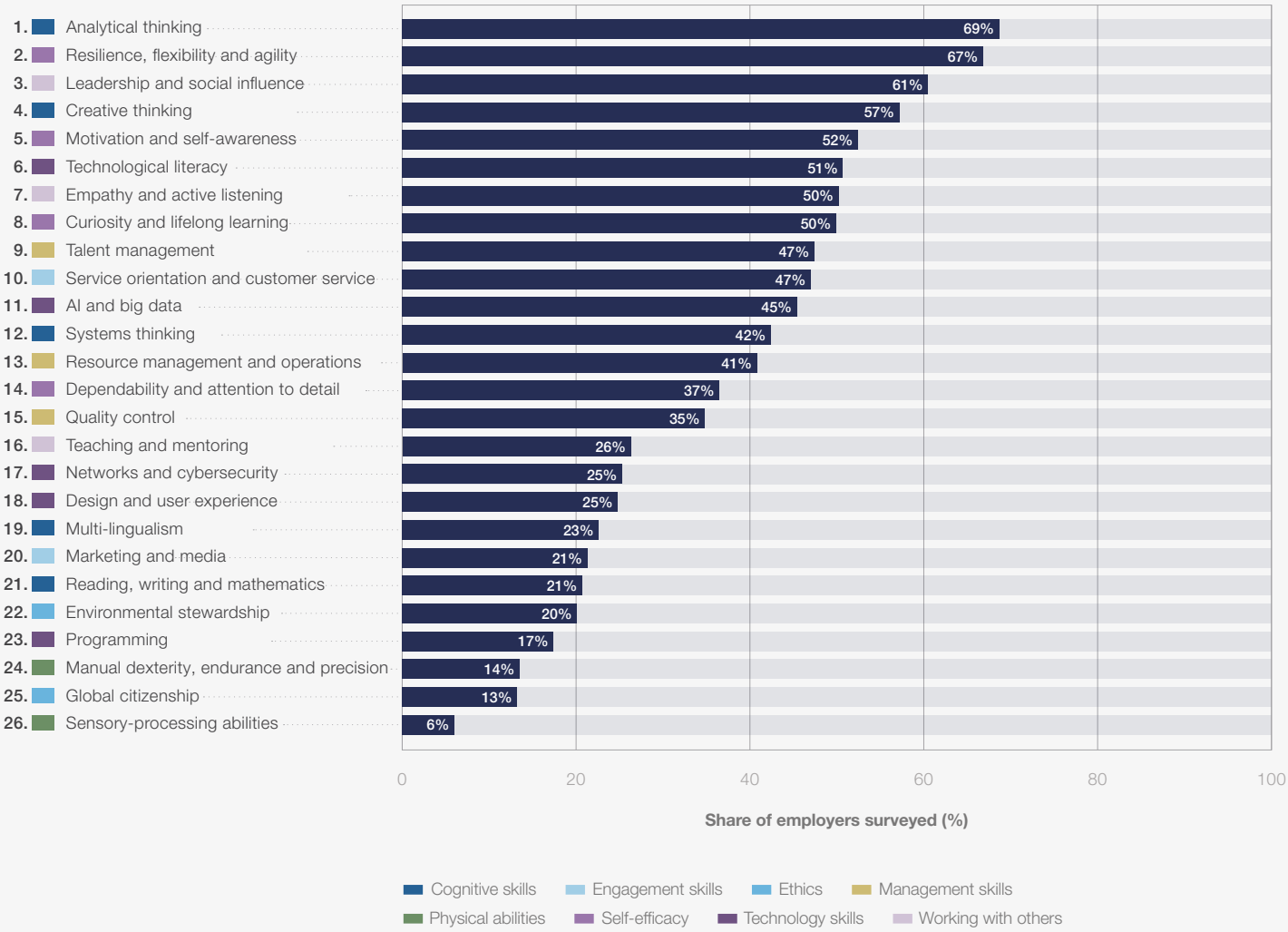
World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Survey 2024.

Note

Values reported are the mean skill stability percentages estimated by organizations surveyed.

FIGURE 3.3 **Core skills in 2025**

Share of employers who consider the stated skills to be core skills for their workforce.



Source

World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Survey 2024.

Note

The Future of Jobs Survey uses the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy.

Core skills

Figure 3.3 shows the core skills Future of Jobs Survey respondents identify as required by workers today. As in the two previous editions of this report, analytical thinking remains the top core skill for employers, with seven out of 10 companies considering it as essential. This is followed by resilience, flexibility and agility, along with leadership and social influence, underscoring the critical role of adaptability and collaboration alongside cognitive skills. Creative thinking and motivation and self-awareness rank fourth and fifth, respectively. This combination of cognitive, self-efficacy and interpersonal skills within the top five emphasizes the importance ascribed by respondents to having an agile, innovative and collaborative workforce, where both problem-solving abilities and personal resilience are critical for success.

The top 10 core skills are complemented by technological literacy, empathy and active listening, curiosity and lifelong learning, talent management, and service orientation and customer service. Skills that reflect the important role of technical proficiency, strong interpersonal abilities, emotional intelligence, and a commitment to continuous learning demonstrate respondents' expectation that workers must balance hard and soft skills to thrive in today's work environments.

While the core skill sets are relatively consistent across broader industries and geographical regions, there are notable distinctions within specific sectors and geographies. For instance, the Insurance and Pensions Management industry places a significantly higher value on curiosity and lifelong learning, with 83% of respondents identifying it as a core skill compared to the global average of 50%. Resilience, flexibility and agility are also considered as especially crucial in this sector, with 94% of respondents emphasizing their importance versus a global average of 67%.

The Mining and Metals industry distinguishes itself with a strong focus on environmental stewardship, as 50% of respondents view it as a core skill – 2.5 times the global average. This emphasis on environmental skills is also evident in the Government and Public Sector, where it is double the global average. Additionally, both the Mining and Metals and Advanced Manufacturing industries place higher importance on manual dexterity, endurance and precision skills compared to other sectors, with roughly 25% of respondents identifying this as a core skill.

The Telecommunications industry stands out for prioritizing design and user experience, networks and cybersecurity, and programming skills, with twice the global average of respondents considering these as core skills in their organizations. Similarly, the Information and Technology Services sector places greater emphasis on programming skills.

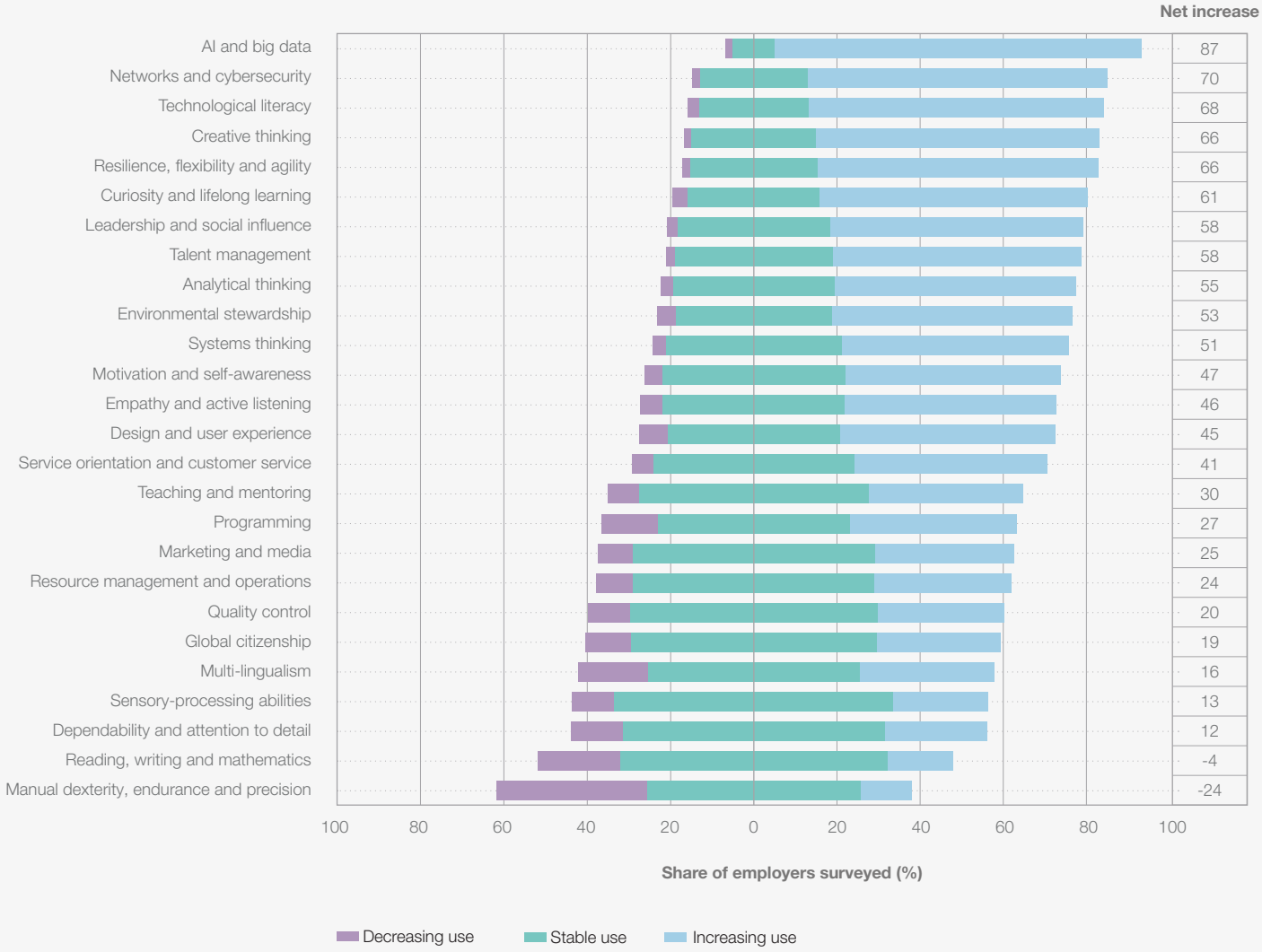
Compared to the 2023 edition of this report, some significant shifts in core skills have emerged. Leadership and social influence, AI and big data, talent management, and service orientation and customer service have all seen marked increases in relevance. Conversely, skills like dependability, attention to detail, and quality control have decreased in importance for organizations compared to the 2023 data.

Overall, leadership and social influence, resilience, flexibility and agility, and AI and big data have seen the most substantial increase in importance, with 22, 17, and 17 percentage-point rises, respectively, in the share of respondents identifying them as core skills compared to the 2023 edition of the report.

FIGURE 3.4

Skills on the rise, 2025-2030

Share of employers that consider skills to be increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable in importance. Skills are ranked based on net increase, which is the difference between the share of employers that consider a skill category to be increasing in use and those that consider it to be decreasing in use.



Source

World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Survey 2024.

Note

The Future of Jobs Survey uses the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy.

Skill evolution

According to employer expectations for the evolution of skills in the next five years, as shown in Figure 3.4, technological skills are projected to grow in importance more rapidly than any other type of skills. Among these, **AI and big data** top the list as the fastest-growing skills, followed closely by **networks and cybersecurity** and **technological literacy**. Complementing these technological skills, creative thinking and two socio-emotional attitudes – **resilience, flexibility, and agility**, along with **curiosity and lifelong learning** – are also seen as rising in importance.

Also ranking among the top 10 skills on the rise are leadership and social influence, talent management, analytical thinking, and environmental stewardship. These skills highlight the need for workers who can lead teams, manage talent effectively and adapt to sustainability and green transitions in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

At the other end of the spectrum, respondents identified sensory-processing abilities; reading, writing and mathematics; dependability and attention to detail; quality control; and global citizenship as among the most stable skills. However, a small net decline is anticipated in reading, writing, and mathematics. Manual

dexterity, endurance, and precision stands out with a notable anticipated net decline, with 24% of respondents foreseeing a decrease in its importance. The declining relevance of physical abilities has been a trend in previous *Future of Jobs Reports*, but this is the first time it has seen a net negative decline.

Comparisons with previous editions of the Future of Jobs Survey reveal a notable shift in skill demands, with technology skills such as AI and big data, networks and cybersecurity, and environmental stewardship showing the largest net increase in the share of respondents identifying them as critical for the next five years. Conversely, skills like reading, writing, and mathematics; manual dexterity, endurance, and precision; and dependability and attention to detail have seen the largest decline in projected future demand.

Figure 3.5 illustrates industry-specific variations in the evolving importance of skills. AI and big data are predicted to see significant growth across nearly all sectors. In the top 10 industries, over 90% of respondents expect this skill to increase in use. The lowest growth shares are observed in Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing (70%) and Accommodation, Food, and lLisure industries (69%). This highlights a broad-based but uneven embrace of advanced technological skills across industries.

Resilience, flexibility and agility are growing in demand more quickly in the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing; Telecommunications; and Information and Technology Services sectors. The Insurance and Pensions Management industry stands out as the industry forecasting the fastest growth in importance in creative thinking skills. This industry, along with Education and Training and Telecommunications forecast fast growth in the importance of curiosity and lifelong learning.

Increasing skill demands in environmental stewardship skills are particularly evident in the Oil and Gas and Chemical and Advanced Materials industries.

Furthermore, the net decline in the demand for manual dexterity, endurance, and precision skills is observed across sectors, with the most significant decreases in Energy Technology and Utilities, Chemicals and Advanced Materials, and Information Technology Services, each experiencing declines exceeding 39%. By contrast, the Accommodation, Food, and Leisure sector and the Automotive and Aerospace industries show the smallest declines, with net reductions below 14%.

FIGURE 3.5

Top 10 industries for increasing skill requirements, 2025-2030

Share of employers considering skills within the corresponding skill category to be growing in importance for their workforce from 2025 to 2030, as opposed to having stable or declining importance. The top 10 industries out of the 22 studied in this report are selected in each case and ranked.

AI and big data

1. Automotive and aerospace	100%
2. Telecommunications	100%
3. Professional services	98%
4. Information and technology services	97%
5. Insurance and pensions management	97%
6. Financial services and capital markets	95%
7. Supply chain and transportation	94%
8. Medical and healthcare services	92%
9. Energy technology and utilities	90%
10. Government and public sector	90%

Networks and cybersecurity

1. Financial services and capital markets	82%
2. Insurance and pensions management	81%
3. Energy technology and utilities	79%
4. Medical and healthcare services	78%
5. Automotive and aerospace	78%
6. Government and public sector	78%
7. Supply chain and transportation	76%
8. Telecommunications	75%
9. Advanced manufacturing	74%
10. Information and technology services	74%

Technological literacy

1. Automotive and aerospace	84%
2. Financial services and capital markets	84%
3. Medical and healthcare services	81%
4. Insurance and pensions management	81%
5. Supply chain and transportation	77%
6. Education and training	76%
7. Oil and gas	76%
8. Professional services	75%
9. Advanced manufacturing	73%
10. Production of consumer goods	72%

Creative thinking

1. Insurance and pensions management	86%
2. Education and training	79%
3. Medical and healthcare services	76%
4. Advanced manufacturing	76%
5. Telecommunications	75%
6. Information and technology services	75%
7. Real estate	73%
8. Professional services	69%
9. Supply chain and transportation	69%
10. Production of consumer goods	69%

Resilience, flexibility and agility

1. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	83%
2. Telecommunications	79%
3. Information and technology services	78%
4. Production of consumer goods	73%
5. Insurance and pensions management	72%
6. Automotive and aerospace	71%
7. Advanced manufacturing	71%
8. Retail and wholesale of consumer goods	69%
9. Financial services and capital markets	68%
10. Electronics	68%

Curiosity and lifelong learning

1. Education and training	79%
2. Insurance and pensions management	77%
3. Telecommunications	75%
4. Real estate	68%
5. Information and technology services	68%
6. Automotive and aerospace	68%
7. Energy technology and utilities	67%
8. Retail and wholesale of consumer goods	67%
9. Oil and gas	64%
10. Medical and healthcare services	64%

Leadership and social influence

1. Automotive and aerospace 71%
2. Telecommunications 69%
3. Education and training 68%
4. Information and technology services 67%
5. Medical and healthcare services 66%
6. Electronics 64%
7. Chemical and advanced materials 63%
8. Accommodation, food, and leisure 63%
9. Energy technology and utilities 62%
10. Production of consumer goods 61%

Talent management

1. Infrastructure 70%
2. Automotive and aerospace 68%
3. Mining and metals 68%
4. Chemical and advanced materials 67%
5. Supply chain and transportation 65%
6. Telecommunications 64%
7. Production of consumer goods 63%
8. Oil and gas 62%
9. Education and training 60%
10. Real estate 59%

Analytical thinking

1. Education and training 70%
2. Supply chain and transportation 70%
3. Automotive and aerospace 68%
4. Telecommunications 67%
5. Production of consumer goods 65%
6. Insurance and pensions management 61%
7. Advanced manufacturing 61%
8. Financial services and capital markets 60%
9. Infrastructure 59%
10. Real estate 59%

Environmental stewardship

1. Oil and gas 80%
2. Chemical and advanced materials 75%
3. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing 71%
4. Automotive and aerospace 70%
5. Mining and metals 68%
6. Supply chain and transportation 68%
7. Infrastructure 67%
8. Production of consumer goods 66%
9. Professional services 63%
10. Energy technology and utilities 60%

Cognitive skills | Ethics | Management skills | Self-efficacy | Technology skills | Working with others

Source

World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Survey 2024.

Note

The Future of Jobs Survey uses the World Economic Forum's Global Skills Taxonomy.

Core skills in 2030

Looking ahead to 2030, Figure 3.6 provides further insights into key priority areas for workforce development for organizations, by comparing core and emerging skills by 2030 based on their relative importance today and their future evolution. The top right quadrant highlights skills that are already core to organizations today and are expected to continue growing rapidly. Skills such as **AI and big data; analytical thinking; creative thinking; resilience, flexibility and agility;** and **technological literacy** are not only considered critical now but are also projected to become even more important. Moreover, **leadership and social influence, curiosity and lifelong learning, systems thinking, talent management,** and **motivation and self-awareness** solidify their importance, emphasizing the continued relevance of human-centric skills amid rapid technological advances.

Meanwhile, **networks and cybersecurity** and **environmental stewardship** – in the top left quadrant of the figure – rank among the top 10 skills expected to increase significantly in use by 2030, yet they are not currently considered core skills for most organizations. These emerging skills represent areas where businesses may need to anticipate growing demands and develop capabilities before they become critical.