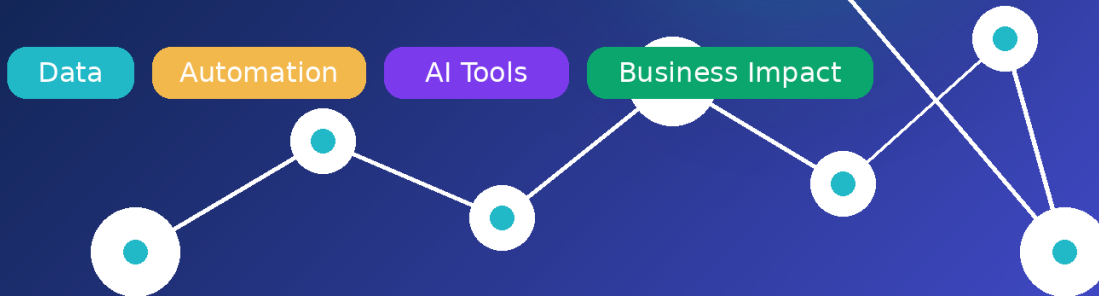


AI & Automation Career Opportunities in the UK

A practical report for learners, career switchers and working professionals



AI & Automation in the UK: Career Opportunities Report

Explore how AI is transforming roles and where new opportunities are emerging.

A practical report for beginners, career switchers and working professionals who want to understand how data skills, AI tools and automation can create career opportunities in the UK.

3.9m	97%	5,862	16%
Projected jobs directly involving AI activities by 2035	Surveyed respondents identifying at least one AI skills gap	UK AI companies in the 2024 sector study	Businesses currently using at least one AI technology

Important note

This report is designed for career guidance. Figures are based on publicly available UK government and ONS sources. Salaries, hiring demand and role requirements vary by employer, region, seniority and industry.

Source: Brit Institute research summary, 2026

AI is creating new career pathways, not only advanced engineering roles

Artificial intelligence is moving from specialist teams into everyday business workflows. This creates opportunities for people who can combine data literacy, workflow thinking, AI tools and communication. For many learners, the most realistic entry point is not deep AI research, but practical AI implementation in business, reporting, customer support, operations, marketing and analytics.

AI Experts

Build AI models, machine learning systems, infrastructure and advanced technical products.

AI Specialists

Apply AI inside analytical or technical roles such as data analysis, automation, business intelligence and product analytics.

AI Implementers

Use AI tools inside business functions to improve productivity, reporting, support, content, administration and workflows.

Key report findings

- AI opportunity in the UK is wider than machine learning engineering. Business teams need AI-ready people who understand data, process improvement, responsible use and clear communication.
- Many roles will not be entirely new job titles. Existing jobs are expected to gain AI responsibilities, making AI literacy valuable for analysts, operations staff, marketers, finance teams, HR teams and customer support professionals.
- The employability advantage comes from combining data skills with automation thinking: Excel, SQL, dashboards, workflow mapping, AI tools, output validation and portfolio projects.
- Responsible AI matters. Professionals must understand data privacy, quality checks, human review and limits of automated outputs.

Report quote

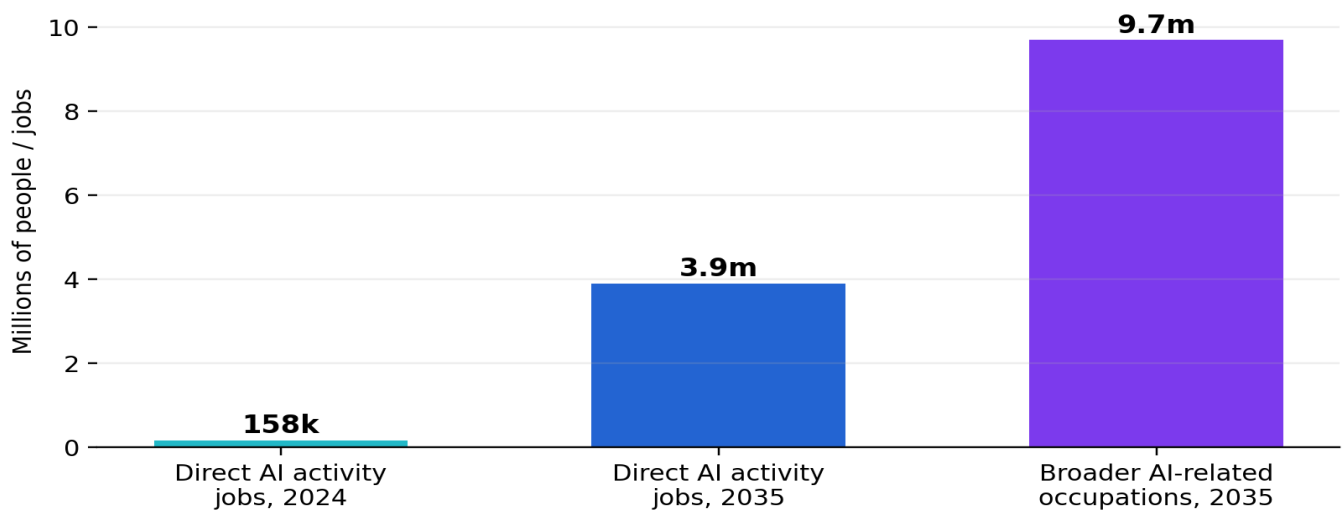
GOV.UK projects direct AI activity jobs could rise from 158,000 in 2024 to 3.9 million by 2035.

Source: GOV.UK, AI Skills for Life and Work labour market and skills projections, 2026

The UK AI opportunity is becoming a workforce issue

Government projections suggest that AI-related work is likely to expand substantially, but much of this change will involve existing roles gaining AI responsibilities. That means career preparation should focus not only on coding, but also on practical adoption: identifying use cases, improving workflows, analysing data, checking outputs and explaining results.

Projected expansion of AI-related work in the UK



Source: GOV.UK, AI Skills for Life and Work labour market and skills projections, 2026

What this means for learners

- Do not wait until you are an advanced AI engineer to start building AI skills
- Start with business problems, data foundations, workflow mapping and automation
- Build a portfolio that shows practical AI-assisted reporting, automation and data analysis
- Learn to communicate how AI improves productivity without ignoring the risks

Evidence note

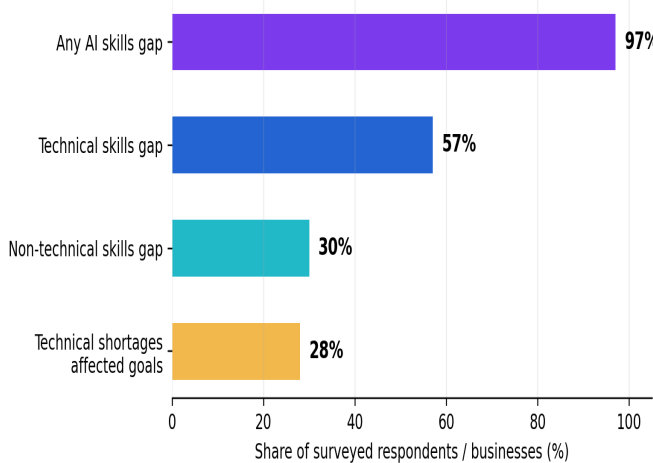
A broader group of 9.7 million people may be in AI-related occupations by 2035

Source: GOV.UK, AI Skills for Life and Work summary report, 2026

Demand is rising, but skills remain a barrier

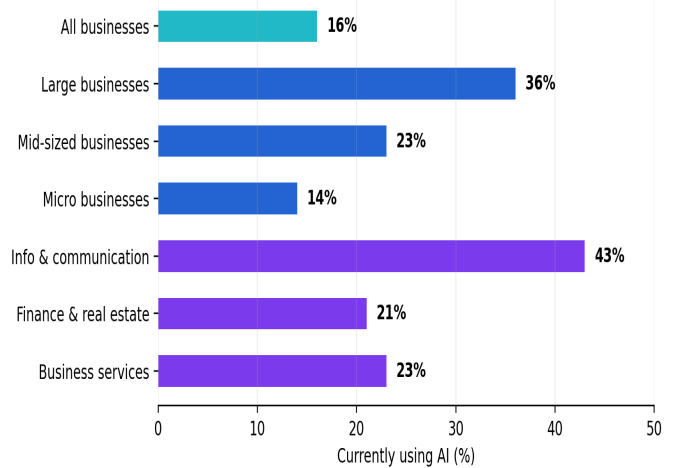
AI adoption is still uneven. Some organisations are already using AI, while many others are still evaluating use cases, risk and skills. This creates an opportunity for learners who can make AI practical for business teams.

AI labour market skills gaps reported in the UK



Source: GOV.UK, AI Labour Market Survey 2025 executive summary, 2026

AI adoption varies by size and sector



Source: GOV.UK, AI Adoption Research, 2026

Report quote

The AI labour market survey found skills gaps in both technical tools, business judgement and communication.

Source: GOV.UK, AI Labour Market Survey 2025 executive summary

Report quote

AI Adoption Research found 16% of businesses currently using AI, with businesses.

Source: GOV.UK, AI Adoption Research, 2026

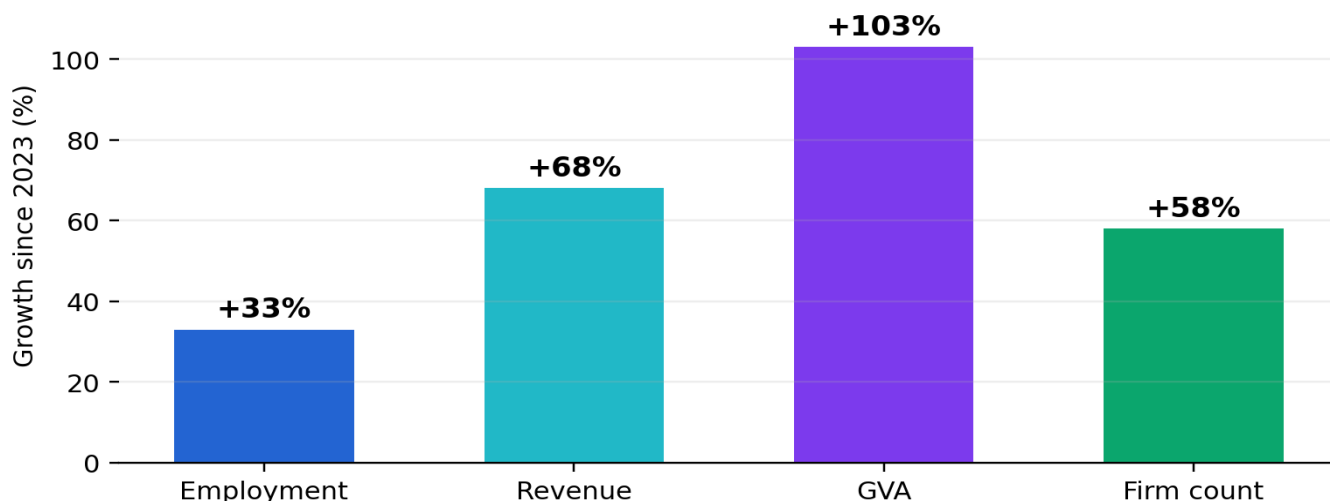
Practical interpretation

The skills gap is not only about advanced modelling. Organisations also need people who can understand AI use cases, apply tools responsibly, validate outputs, document workflows and help business teams adopt new ways of working.

AI is becoming part of the wider UK economy

The UK AI sector study shows fast growth across firm count, employment, revenue and contribution to economic activity. For learners, this matters because AI demand is not confined to one job title or one industry.

UK AI sector growth, 2024 vs 2023



Source: GOV.UK, Artificial Intelligence sector study 2024, published 2025

Metric	2024 value	Why it matters for careers
AI companies	5,862 firms	More firms building or applying AI increases demand for technical and implementation skills.
Employment	86,139 roles	Growth in AI sector employment strengthens the need for practical AI and data talent.
Revenue	GBP 23.9bn	Rising revenue shows AI is becoming a commercial market, not only research activity.
GVA	GBP 11.8bn	Economic contribution supports wider adoption across sectors.

Source: GOV.UK, Artificial Intelligence sector study 2024, published 2025.

Three ways to build a career around AI and automation

Three AI career lanes

Learners can start with practical AI use and grow towards specialist or expert roles.

Build AI

- ML Engineer
- AI Engineer
- Data Scientist
- MLOps Engineer

Apply AI

- AI Automation Specialist
- AI Business Analyst
- Data Analyst with AI
- Product Analyst

Use AI in Business

- AI Tools Executive
- Marketing Automation
- Customer Support Automation
- Operations Automation

The most accessible path for many beginners is the apply/use side of AI. These roles focus on practical implementation: reporting, workflow automation, chatbot design, customer support processes, marketing automation, AI-assisted analytics and business productivity.

Most realistic entry points

- AI Tools Executive
- Automation Assistant
- Data Support Analyst
- Junior Data Analyst with AI skills
- Customer Support Automation Assistant
- Marketing Automation Executive

Growth-oriented roles

- AI Automation Specialist
- AI Business Analyst
- AI Product Analyst
- Business Intelligence Analyst
- Operations Automation Specialist
- AI Consultant

Emerging roles and what they actually do

AI Automation Specialist

Designs workflows that reduce repetitive work using AI tools, spreadsheets, APIs, forms, CRMs and automation platforms.

Useful skills: Excel, automation tools, workflow mapping, APIs basics, prompt design, documentation

Data Analyst with AI Skills

Uses AI to speed up cleaning, SQL drafting, analysis planning, documentation and report summaries while validating the outputs.

Useful skills: Excel, SQL, Power BI, data cleaning, AI-assisted reporting, business KPIs

AI Business Analyst

Identifies where AI can support a process, gathers requirements, documents use cases and supports adoption with business teams.

Useful skills: Business analysis, process mapping, stakeholder communication, AI awareness, risk awareness

AI Product Analyst

Analyses how users interact with AI-enabled products, dashboards and digital experiences.

Useful skills: SQL, product analytics, funnels, dashboards, experimentation basics, user behaviour

Customer Support Automation Specialist

Improves support workflows using ticket analysis, chatbot flows, FAQs, routing rules and quality checks.

Useful skills: Support operations, chatbot tools, data analysis basics, customer experience

Marketing Automation & AI Analytics

Uses campaign data, AI content workflows and automation to improve lead management, reporting and customer segmentation.

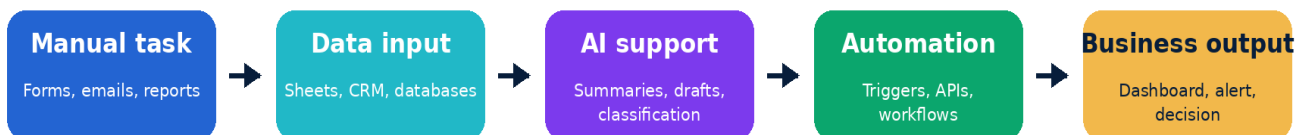
Useful skills: Campaign analytics, CRM basics, AI tools, dashboards, email automation

Where AI and automation opportunities are emerging

AI opportunities are appearing across finance, healthcare, retail, professional services, manufacturing, logistics, education and the public sector. The common pattern is simple: teams want faster reporting, better decisions, lower manual effort and more consistent customer or operational workflows.

From manual process to AI-assisted workflow

The opportunity is to understand the task, apply the right tool and validate the output.



Human judgement
checks accuracy and context

Responsible AI
protects privacy and quality

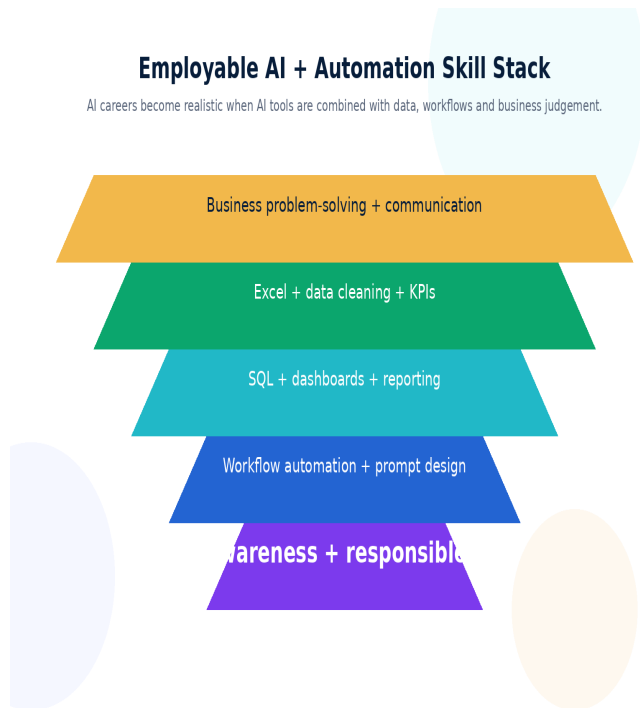
Documentation
makes the workflow repeatable

Financial services Fraud detection, risk reporting, customer support automation, compliance monitoring and forecasting.	Retail and e-commerce Stock forecasting, product recommendations, pricing analysis, campaign reporting and chatbots.
Healthcare and life sciences Operational reporting, appointment workflows, research support and administrative automation.	Professional services Document summaries, client reports, workflow automation, research support and business intelligence.
Manufacturing and logistics Inventory optimisation, predictive maintenance, delivery tracking and performance dashboards.	Education and training Student progress tracking, personalised support, admin automation and learner analytics.

The most valuable skill combination is AI plus data plus business judgement

Employable AI + Automation Skill Stack

AI careers become realistic when AI tools are combined with data, workflows and business judgement.



A strong beginner stack

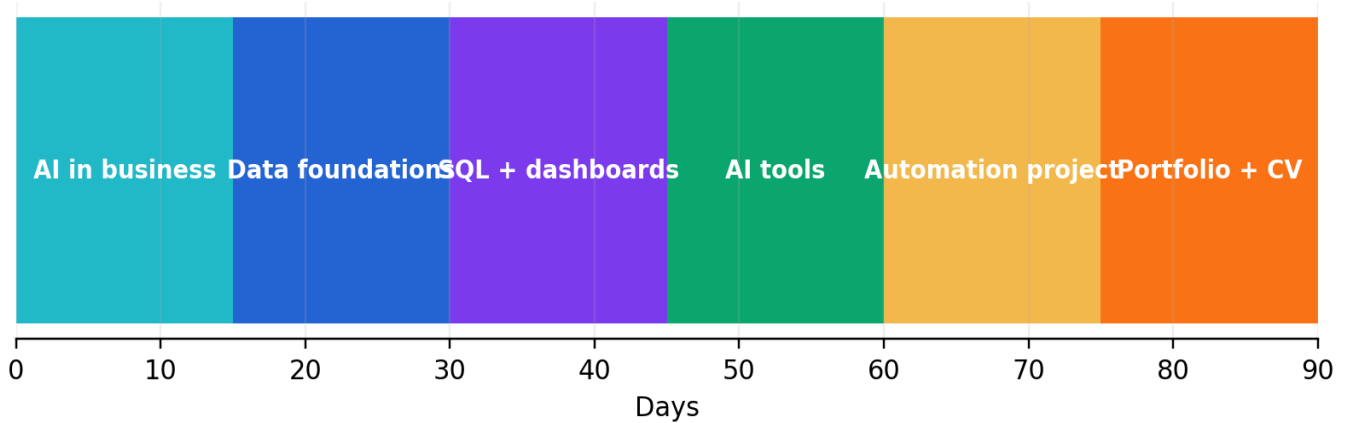
- Excel for data cleaning and quick analysis
- SQL for extracting and joining business data
- Power BI for dashboards and executive reporting
- AI tools for summarising, drafting and workflow support
- Prompt design for better outputs and repeatability
- Automation workflows for reducing manual effort
- Responsible AI habits for privacy, accuracy and human review

Beginner-friendly portfolio projects

Project	What it demonstrates
AI-assisted sales reporting workflow	Clean sales data, update a dashboard and generate management-ready insight notes.
Support ticket analysis and chatbot plan	Analyse repeated issues, categorise tickets and design a basic FAQ or chatbot improvement plan.
Marketing campaign automation	Create campaign reporting and automate lead follow-up based on engagement level.
Finance report automation	Prepare a monthly expense report workflow with checks and AI-assisted summaries.
Operations delay dashboard	Analyse delays and create alerts or dashboard views for management review.

A practical sequence for beginners and career switchers

90-day AI and automation career roadmap



A practical sequence: understand business use cases, build data skills, then add AI and automation projects.

1-15	Understand AI in business	Know where AI helps: reports, support, marketing, operations and admin workflows.
16-30	Build data foundations	Use Excel, cleaning methods, KPIs and basic statistics confidently.
31-45	Learn SQL and dashboards	Extract, filter and summarise data; build simple Power BI dashboards.
46-60	Practise AI tools	Use AI for summaries, SQL drafts, documentation, ideas and productivity with validation.
61-75	Build automation project	Create a practical workflow: reporting, follow-up, support ticket routing or data prep.
76-90	Portfolio and career profile	Document projects, update CV and LinkedIn, practise interview explanations.

Roadmap principle

Start with business use cases and data foundations. AI becomes more valuable when you understand what the data means, how work currently happens and where automation will genuinely help.

Source: Brit Institute career guidance framework

Responsible AI is now a career skill

AI and automation careers require more than tool familiarity. Professionals must be able to protect sensitive data, validate outputs, document assumptions and know when human review is needed.

Responsible AI checklist

- Do not upload sensitive business or personal data without approval.
- Check AI outputs against the source data and business context.
- Document prompts, assumptions and workflow steps.
- Keep humans involved in decisions that affect people, finance, compliance or safety.
- Review bias, errors, hallucinations and data quality issues.
- Escalate high-risk use cases instead of automating blindly.

Interview questions to prepare

- How would you identify a task suitable for automation?
- How would you check whether an AI output is reliable?
- What risks exist when using AI with business data?
- How would you ensure compliance or safety?
- How would you document an AI workflow?
- How would you measure whether automation was successful?

Report quote

ONS found difficulty identifying AI use cases was the most common barrier to AI adoption among firms in 2023.

Source: ONS, Management practices and the adoption of technology and AI in UK firms, 2025

What makes a candidate stand out

A strong candidate can explain the business problem, map the manual process, choose a practical tool, validate the AI output, document the workflow and explain the business benefit. This is more powerful than simply saying, "I know AI tools."

Build practical AI and automation capability with a data foundation

Brit Institute helps learners move from tool awareness to practical career readiness. The focus is on building confidence with data, dashboards, AI tools, workflow automation and portfolio projects that can be explained in interviews.

Learning area	Practical outcome
Data foundation	Excel, data cleaning, SQL, business KPIs and reporting fundamentals.
Dashboard skills	Power BI dashboards, KPI cards, slicers, trend analysis and business storytelling.
AI productivity	Prompting, AI-assisted summaries, SQL drafts, documentation and output validation.
Automation mindset	Workflow mapping, trigger/action logic, forms, spreadsheets, email and CRM processes.
Portfolio readiness	Projects that show business problem, process before/after, tools used, output and impact.
Career preparation	CV guidance, LinkedIn improvement, interview practice and project explanation.

Start Your AI and Automation Journey

[Explore Data Analytics and AI Programmes](#) | [Book a Free Career Guidance Call](#) | [Download Curriculum](#) | [Speak to a Career Advisor](#)

Final career insight

The biggest opportunity for many beginners is not to compete immediately for advanced AI research roles. It is to become the person who can help a business use AI and automation practically, safely and effectively.

Evidence base and source notes

This report uses public sources to support UK market context, skills gap claims, AI sector growth and adoption data. The career guidance interpretation is provided by Brit Institute for learner education and should not be treated as a guarantee of employment, salary or visa outcome.

Source	How it supports the report
GOV.UK - AI Skills for Life and Work: Labour market and skills projections	Used for projections on jobs directly involving AI activities and broader AI-related occupations by 2035.
GOV.UK - AI Skills for Life and Work: Summary report	Used for the interpretation that many existing roles may gain AI responsibilities rather than all growth being new AI-only roles.
GOV.UK - AI Labour Market Survey 2025 executive summary	Used for AI skills gap figures: 97% identifying at least one gap, 57% technical skills gap, 30% non-technical skills gap.
GOV.UK - Artificial Intelligence sector study 2024	Used for 2024 AI sector metrics including company count, employment, revenue and GVA.
GOV.UK - AI Adoption Research	Used for business AI adoption figures by size and sector, including 16% overall current adoption.
Office for National Statistics - Management practices and the adoption of technology and artificial intelligence in UK firms	Used for AI adoption context, barriers to adoption and the link between advanced technology adoption and productivity measures.
GOV.UK - AI Opportunities Action Plan: One Year On	Used for context on AI adoption across priority UK sectors such as digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, financial services and life sciences.

Disclaimer

The report is for general education and career guidance. AI adoption, hiring demand and role requirements can vary by employer, sector, region and economic conditions. Learners should use this report alongside direct job research, portfolio development and personalised career advice.

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