

RESEARCH REPORT — 02 OF 06

FOCUS: CANADA + GLOBAL

15 SOURCES CITED

Preparing Today's Students for Jobs That Don't Yet Exist

By 2030, nearly two in five of a worker's core skills will be outdated. Educators are being asked to build curricula for roles that have not been invented — and the evidence says the winning strategy is skills, not job titles.

AUGUST 2026

THE NUMBER THAT MATTERS

78 million

The net new jobs the World Economic Forum expects globally by 2030 — 170 million created, 92 million displaced. The disruption touches 22% of all jobs, and 39% of existing skill sets are expected to be transformed or outdated by then. ^[1]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 2030 labour market will look different in kind, not just in size: care, education and frontline roles grow fastest alongside AI, data and green-economy specialisms. ^[2]
- Students have already adopted AI faster than institutions have adapted to it — 82–88% of university students in the US, UK and Canada now use generative AI for coursework. ^[6]
- Canada's youth unemployment hit a 15-year high of 14.7% in September 2025, even as employers report the skills gap — not a lack of jobs — as their biggest transformation barrier. ^[5]
- Ottawa's response leads with literacy at scale: 1 million post-secondary students, 3,000+ trained educators, and AI agent access built into the national strategy. ^[8]
- The durable finding across every source: the specific tools change constantly, but curiosity, adaptability and human judgment are the skills that keep transferring across job titles that haven't been invented yet.

DATA DASHBOARD

39%

of workers' core skills are expected to be transformed or outdated by 2030

WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025

170M / 92M

jobs projected to be created vs. displaced globally by 2030 — a net gain of 78 million

WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025

14.7%

Canadian youth unemployment rate, September 2025 — a 15-year high

Future Skills Centre

1,000,000

entry-level post-secondary students Canada aims to reach with AI literacy training

Canada's AI for All strategy, 2026

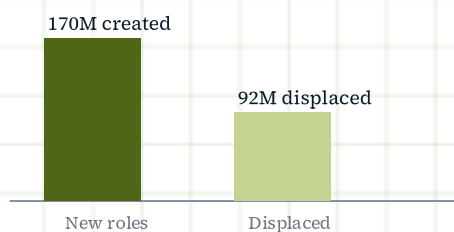
86%

of global executives believe AI will significantly change their business by 2030

WEF, survey of 1,000+ employers

CHART

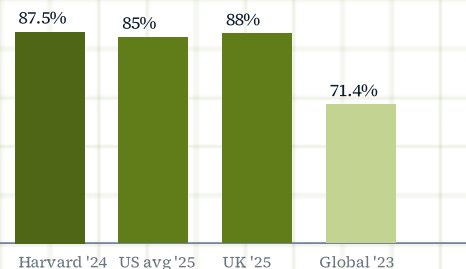
Global jobs churn by 2030



Source: WEF Future of Jobs Report 2025 [1]

CHART

Student generative-AI use for coursework



Sources: Hirabayashi et al. 2024; Inside Higher Ed 2025; Freeman 2025 [6]

01 — THE SHAPE OF 2030

The jobs are not disappearing. Their content is.

The dominant fear about AI and education is that schools are training students for jobs that will not exist. The more accurate — and more useful — framing from the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 is that job titles are more durable than job content: 170 million new roles are expected globally by 2030 against 92 million displaced, a net gain of 78 million, but the disruption still touches 22% of all jobs and 39% of the skills inside those jobs will be transformed or outdated within the decade. ^[1] Surveyed across more than 1,000 employers representing over 14 million workers in 55 economies, 86% of executives expect AI to significantly change their business by 2030. ^[3]

Growth is not concentrated only in obviously technical fields. Frontline sectors — care and education chief among them — are projected for some of the strongest job growth of the decade, alongside the expected AI, data-analysis, cybersecurity and green-economy specialisms. ^[2] That combination matters for curriculum design: the fastest-growing jobs of 2030 split roughly evenly between roles that require deep technical fluency and roles that require deep human judgment, empathy and

physical presence — meaning a purely technical retooling of education would miss half the opportunity.

02 — WHAT ACTUALLY HOLDS UP

Skills-based thinking beats job-title thinking

If nearly 40% of a worker's skill set will be outdated within five years, teaching to today's job titles is a losing strategy — by the time a student graduates into "the job," the job's content will already have shifted under them. The WEF's own guidance for employers facing this problem is skills-based hiring and workforce planning: define the underlying skill, not the credential or title, and hire and train against that. ^[4]

The skills gaining the most strategic weight through 2030 combine two categories that are often taught separately — technological skills like AI and big-data fluency, and human skills like resilience, flexibility, creative thinking and curiosity — with employers now saying the winning profile blends both rather than choosing one. ^[2]

Students, in practice, are already living this shift faster than institutions have caught up to it. At elite and non-elite institutions alike, adoption of generative AI for coursework now sits between 82% and 88% across the US, UK and Canada, up sharply from roughly 56% just two years earlier. ^[6] That is a faster adoption curve than personal computers or the early internet saw among the general population — which means the practical AI fluency employers will expect from new graduates in 2028 or 2030 is, in many cases, already ahead of what formal curricula currently teach or assess.

03 — THE CANADIAN GAP

Canada's skills pipeline is straining before AI even arrives in force

Canada's youth unemployment rate reached 14.7% in September 2025 — its highest level in fifteen years — even as employers across the economy report that the skills gap, not a shortage of positions, is the biggest single barrier to adopting new technology and transforming their operations. ^[5] Only about 3% of Canadian job

postings explicitly required AI skills in 2025, a small but rapidly growing share that signals where hiring demand is heading well before most curricula catch up to it.

[7] The mismatch is structural: Canada is simultaneously short on graduates with applied AI fluency and long on graduates whose training assumed a labour market that is now moving underneath them.

Post-secondary institutions are responding unevenly. Some, like the University of Alberta, are building institution-wide AI literacy roadmaps from established international frameworks; national initiatives like Amii's AI Workforce Readiness program — funded by a \$5 million Google.org grant — aim to embed a common AI-literacy module across 125,000 post-secondary students nationally, spanning nursing, IT and dozens of other disciplines rather than treating AI as a computer-science-only subject. [9] The pattern worth watching is whether these efforts reach community colleges and regional institutions at the same pace as research-intensive universities — historically the group most likely to be left behind in skills-modernization efforts.

04 — THE FEDERAL RESPONSE

Ottawa is betting on scale and access, not just curriculum reform

Canada's AI for All strategy sets some of the most concrete education targets of any G7 AI plan: AI literacy training reaching 1 million entry-level post-secondary students, more than 3,000 educators trained with AI learning kits for their classrooms, and access to trusted AI agents for every post-secondary student, from the arts to STEM to medicine. [8] The strategy also commits to creating up to 90,000 AI-related jobs and work placements for young Canadians — an explicit attempt to convert literacy investment into actual labour-market entry points rather than leaving graduates to find AI-relevant roles on their own. [8]

The strategy's \$50 million modernization of the Job Bank, using AI-powered matching to align jobseekers to roles that fit their existing skills profile, is a direct attempt to operationalize skills-based thinking at national scale — replacing keyword and title matching with something closer to the skills-first hiring logic the WEF recommends to employers. [8] Whether that system can keep pace with a

labour market where 39% of the relevant skills are turning over inside a five-year window is the strategy's central unresolved test.

AT A GLANCE — SKILLS RISING VS. SKILLS DECLINING IN STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE, 2025–2030

RISING	STEADY	DECLINING
AI & big-data fluency	Teamwork & collaboration	Manual dexterity & precision
Creative thinking	Leadership & social influence	Reading, writing & mathematics (baseline)
Resilience, flexibility & agility	Quality control	Rote memory & verbal ability
Curiosity & lifelong learning	Systems thinking	Repetitive-task management
Cybersecurity fluency	Talent management	Basic data entry

Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025 [2][3]

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR POLICYMAKERS

- Fund AI literacy as continuing infrastructure, not a one-time program — the skill set it teaches has a shelf life measured in years, not a decade.
- Extend national AI-agent and literacy access to colleges, polytechnics and regional institutions on the same timeline as research universities.
- Publish AI-skills job-posting data (like the 3% figure) at a sector and regional level so training investment can be targeted, not generic.

FOR EDUCATORS & WORKFORCE BOARDS

- Teach skills and judgment, not tool-specific workflows — the tools will change faster than any curriculum cycle.
- Assess AI-assisted work directly rather than banning it; students are already using it at 82–88% rates regardless of policy.
- Embed AI literacy across disciplines (nursing, trades, business), not only in computer science programs.

FOR BUSINESS & HR LEADERS

- Hire and promote against demonstrated skills and adaptability, not degree titles that describe a labour market that no longer exists.
- Offer structured work placements — the WEF and Canada's own strategy both point to placements, not classroom training alone, as the effective bridge.
- Treat new graduates' AI fluency as an asset to build on, not a shortcut to distrust or discount in hiring decisions.

SOURCES

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