



multiverse

The AI skills frontier

Skills Intelligence Report 2025

Second edition

Introduction



Euan Blair
CEO at Multiverse

Success with AI requires people and tech, together.

AI has transformative power, and the belief in it is strong. AI adoption is projected to contribute £79.3 billion to the UK economy by 2035,¹ with analysts predicting it could deliver 40% higher value and 20% faster outputs for businesses.²

But despite the optimism, we're still not close to unleashing AI's full potential. Only half (52%) of leaders are realising value from GenAI investments beyond basic cost reduction.³ While investment soars, real innovation and widespread adoption depends on people.

AI skills are rapidly evolving beyond prompt engineering.

The AI skills frontier has never been more exciting... or daunting. Frequent users are rapidly moving into more native, intuitive use cases. They're using AI agents to automate tasks and effectively using AI as a partner, not just a prop.⁴

These are the employees most likely to understand how AI can enhance their working lives. Employers that effectively nurture this curiosity and enthusiasm will reap the benefits.

Our workforce is still at the AI starting line.

What does this mean for AI skills? Soon, simply knowing the AI basics may not be enough. New analysis from PwC shows that the skills employers seek for AI-exposed roles are changing 66% faster than just a few years ago.⁵ Today's workforce needs to blend creativity, problem-solving, and systems thinking to get the most from AI.⁶ Training needs to keep pace.

Our role providing both skills diagnostics and upskilling solutions for 1,500 employers gives us a unique vantage point into what is really going on. This year's Skills Intelligence report exposes for the first time the scale of both the AI and data skills gap. We found most workers are still stuck at AI 101. Until this is addressed, the true, uncapped value of AI will remain out of reach.

The good news is that people are also ready, willing and waiting for the opportunity to learn.

1. Government Office for Science 2. BCG: Where's the Value in AI? 3. IBM: 2025 CEO study 4. Harvard Business Review: How People Are Really Using Gen AI in 2025
5. PWC: 2025 Global AI Jobs Barometer 6. WEF: Why AI literacy is now a core competency in education

Leaders must act with urgency.

Upskilling employees is key to ensuring they can effectively harness AI tools, and boost the output of their organisations, as well as their own careers.⁷ This isn't just about training, it's about unlocking people's full potential.

One-off AI training won't deliver the level of capability businesses need. Learning needs to be embedded and applied into real work, where teams can spot real opportunities to create impact. Workflows need to be reimaged and processes overhauled to avoid the "faster horses" challenge.


But surface-level training is still what the majority of workers are still getting. Concerningly, our data shows half of all workers have received fewer than five hours of AI training from their organisation, and only a third of the latest FTSE 100 annual reports (34%) even reference AI training for employees.⁸

The path forward is clear.

AI's true potential only springs to life when people and AI work together. So it's more important than ever that leaders understand their workforce skills landscape: what skills exist today, which gaps need closing, and who is ready to learn.

7. [World Economic Forum: Chief Economists Outlook, May 2025](#)

8. [Multiverse: The Boardroom Skills Agenda](#)



About the Skills Intelligence Report

In the second annual edition of the Multiverse Skills Intelligence report, we reveal our original data on the most in-demand AI and data skills, from more than 14,500 workers across 16 industries.⁹

9. 2,402 respondents answered AI-related questions. For more, see Methodology.

Executive summary

Our workforce is stuck at AI 101.

- In our survey, workers estimate they could boost their efficiency by a third (38%) if they could wield AI tools effectively in their roles.
- Despite large reported global users, less than a quarter of employees (23%) said they were currently using AI tools like ChatGPT for work tasks.
- Just 6% of respondents say they're actively looking at ways AI could improve processes in their current role.

We need to fix our data skills foundation.

- Employees are still missing many of the fundamental data skills needed to unlock AI's true potential – including the ability to efficiently analyse, visualise and clean data.
- The data productivity drain is still impacting the bottom line. Nearly 27 working days per person, per year, is lost to inefficient data tasks, costing the UK economy an estimated £61.94b annually.
- A shift towards advanced skills is on the horizon. While 97% of workers rate their current Python skills as “none or basic”, nearly two thirds (63%) expect to need them in the next 18 months.

Different industries, different growth roadblocks.

- Employees across education, healthcare, energy and defence all report that over a third of their time working in data is unproductive.
- Healthcare had the lowest reported data productivity levels, with 41.2% of employee time on data tasks spent ineffectively.

Employees are ready to level up.

- Nine in 10 employees said they wanted to improve their AI skills (91%) and 89% want to upskill in data.
- The most common reasons employees want to upskill in AI are learning how to understand and apply AI (64%), future-proofing their careers (22%), and boosting productivity and efficiency (14%).

Our workforce is stuck at AI 101.

The data productivity drain is impacting the bottom line. Nearly 27 working days per person, per year, is lost to inefficient data tasks, costing the UK economy an estimated £61.94 billion.



We need an AI mindset shift

Imagine what boosting efficiency by a third could do for a business. Our survey reveals this isn't just a lofty goal, it's what employees predict they could realistically achieve - with the right skills.

We found that employees, after considering their current skillset and their potential with further training, estimate they could boost their efficiency by **38%** if they could wield AI tools optimally in their roles.

That's a game-changing opportunity, waiting to be unlocked. But our data shows that without a dedicated focus on skills, it's unlikely to materialise.

Why? Firstly, even the most popular and user-friendly AI tools still face adoption roadblocks in the workplace - despite OpenAI recently estimating its weekly active users at **500 million**,¹⁰ less than a quarter of employees (**23%**) said they're actively using AI tools like ChatGPT to complete tasks in their role. A further **95%** of workers rated themselves as having "no or basic" Microsoft Copilot skills.

Providing training can improve confidence and encourage teams to make better use of tools. But beyond adoption, there's a quieter, more serious challenge growing.

If employees aren't also being empowered and enabled to innovate with new technology, businesses create a ceiling for opportunity - and in our survey, we found that only **6%** of respondents are actively looking at ways AI could improve processes in their role.

38%

Predicted efficiency gains from AI, if employees are equipped with the right skills

6%

of employees are actively exploring how AI can improve work processes

10. [OpenAI funding update](#)

Workers need new skills to drive real AI innovation

To truly seize the opportunity of AI, we need to enable our workforce to think bigger. They need the capability to envision new opportunities with AI, proactively innovate and successfully drive their ideas into existence.

With the rapid pace of change in the working world and growing pressures on workers, employers can't afford to wait and hope that innovation occurs organically. They need to build an environment where innovation can thrive. Our survey found that these essential new skills are missing in action.

41%

of workers lack the skills to identify where AI could add value in their role

Identifying AI opportunities

Workers are struggling to spot opportunities where AI could add business value (**41%**), investigate new use cases (**38%**), and select the right AI tool for the job (**35%**).

Understanding impact and mitigating AI risk

Despite risk factors being a top blocker to AI adoption, according to leaders,¹¹ the second and third largest skills gaps were evaluating the people and process impact of AI solutions, and ensuring fairness in AI algorithms.

Managing AI projects

Over a third of employees lack the skills needed to drive successful AI change initiatives, including mitigation planning for adoption barriers (**34%**), stakeholder communication (**34%**), and testing (**33%**).

Measuring ROI

Leaders point to demonstrating ROI as one of their top three blockers to fully-fledged AI integration,¹² but one in three employees (**29%**) don't know how to measure return on investment (ROI) from new AI solutions implemented.

11. [Multiverse: The ROI of AI](#) 12. [Multiverse: The ROI of AI](#)

41%

Identifying areas where AI could address gaps and add value in an organisation

38%

Implementing practices to ensure fairness, transparency, and accountability in AI algorithms and decisions

38%

Evaluating and documenting AI opportunities based on their impacts to people, processes, technology, and data

38%

Using investigation techniques to identify ways in which AI can create new value for business

36%

Evaluating how well an organisation's data, data infrastructure, and data governance/security policies support AI use cases

Top AI skills gaps reported by workers

35%

Evaluating and choosing the best AI tool to support different AI use cases

34%

Identifying common operational challenges to AI adoption and strategies for overcoming them

34%

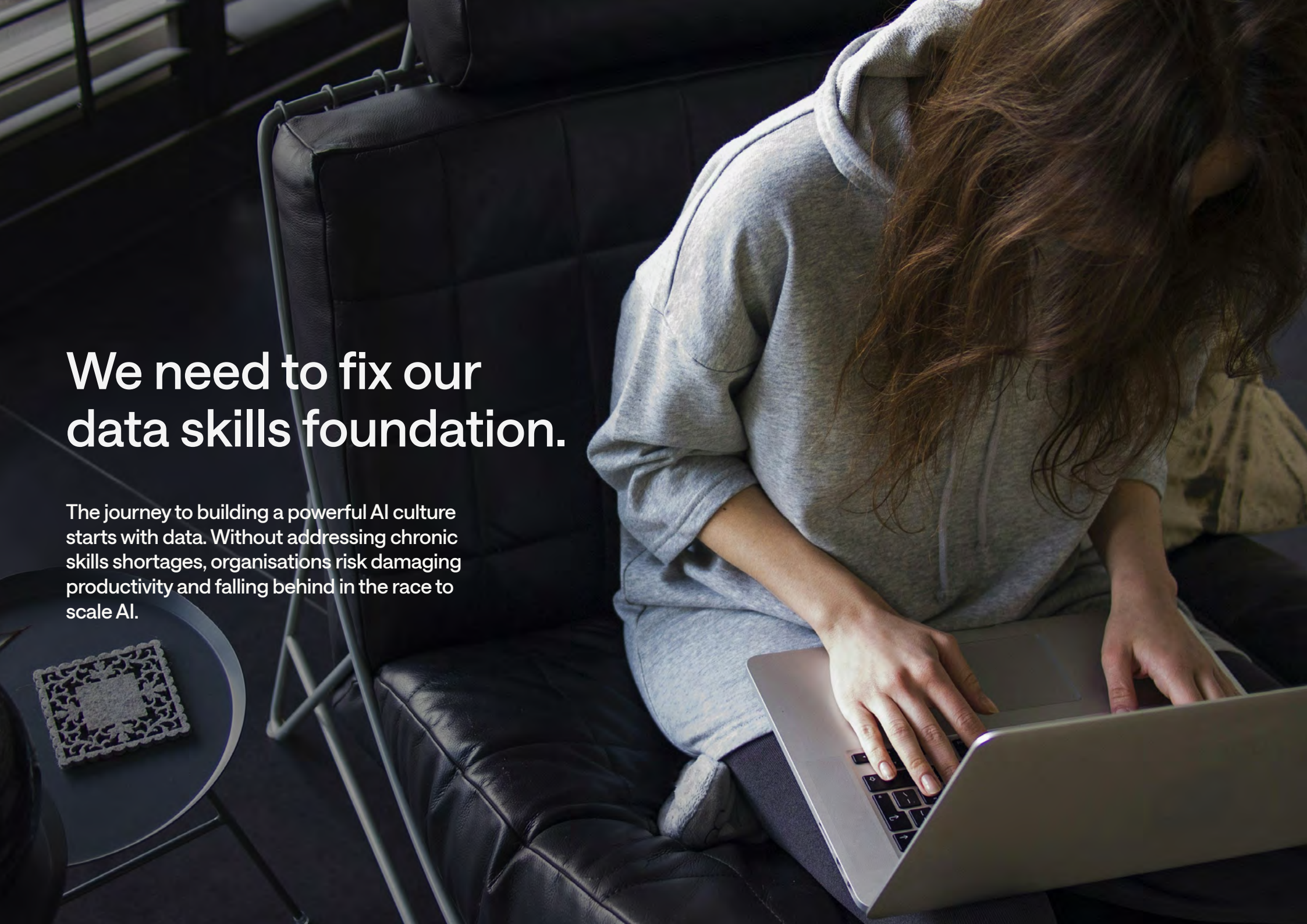
Communicating critical information about AI projects to both technical and non-technical stakeholders

33%

Developing a plan to test changes to ensure an AI project continues to drive towards business goals

29%

Calculating the ROI of AI initiatives



We need to fix our data skills foundation.

The journey to building a powerful AI culture starts with data. Without addressing chronic skills shortages, organisations risk damaging productivity and falling behind in the race to scale AI.

Paying the price of the data productivity drain

The data skills gap continues to create an everyday time sink for teams, leading to a significant loss of economic productivity.

Workers are spending an average of **2.8 hours** per day on data-related tasks, over **13.8%** of their working week.

A staggering **33.9%** of that time is spent ineffectively completing data tasks - adding up to almost **27** lost productive working days per person, per year.

It's causing significant damage to the bottom line, with an estimated financial cost to the UK economy of **£61.94 billion** each year.¹³

13. Based on ONS salary data for knowledge-intensive sectors. See methodology.

13.8%

of the average working week is spent on data tasks

27

Estimated productive working days lost to data skills gaps every year, per employee

£61.94b

Estimated losses to the UK economy each year

It's not a data skills gap, it's a chasm

Strong data infrastructure, internal capability and clean data - they're all required to unleash AI's potential and create effective AI models.¹⁴

So it's concerning that our survey continues to find our workforce facing fundamental data skills shortages, preventing employees from:

- **Working efficiently with data** - over half of workers struggle to make data analysis more efficient (54%) and automate processes (51%).
- **Sharing actionable insights** - essential skills required to communicate data insights are low, such as data visualisation (49%) and storytelling (48%).
- **Working with AI-ready data** - two fifths of employees can't structure, prepare and clean datasets, crucial for accurate AI-powered analysis.
- **Using data to inform strategy** - nearly half of employees are unable to make data-driven decisions, leverage predictive analytics or forecast with data (48%).
- **Working with data stakeholders** - a significant number of workers don't know how to partner effectively with data specialists or manage data projects (42%).

Top 10 data skills gaps reported by workers

- 1 Making analysis more efficient (54%)
- 2 Automating processes/reports (51%)
- 3 Visualising and presenting data (49%)
- 4 Doing predictive analytics, modelling or forecasting (48%)
- 5 Analysing data to make informed, data-driven decisions (48%)
- 6 Using data to help tell a story (48%)
- 7 Structuring, preparing and manipulating data (45%)
- 8 Sourcing and cleaning data (43%)
- 9 Working with data/technical professionals (42%)
- 10 Managing technical/data-driven projects (42%)

14. [World Economic Forum: Chief Economists Outlook, May 2025](#)

Avoiding the data skills cliff

A demand shift towards advanced data skills is on the horizon. As the workforce gears up to integrate AI, the ability to conduct complex data tasks will become a core expectation of many roles.

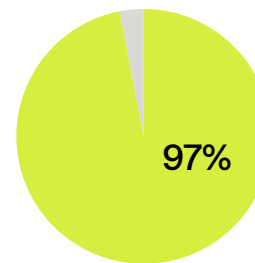
Despite the severe shortage of Python skills, we found that employees anticipate a massive jump in Python usage in the near future: only **2%** currently use it in their work, but nearly two thirds (**63%**) expect this to be part of their role in the next 12-18 months.

Similarly, only **13%** of employees currently use predictive modeling techniques, but **40%** expect to use them soon.

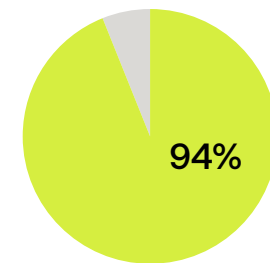
It's creating a moment of reckoning for employee training.

Without acting now to bolster our data skills foundation, businesses risk being unable to meaningfully capitalise on AI's potential in the years to come.

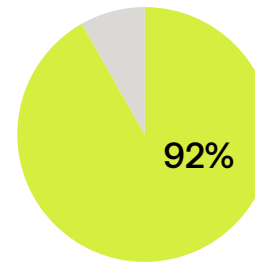
% of workers who rated their technical skill level as “none or basic”



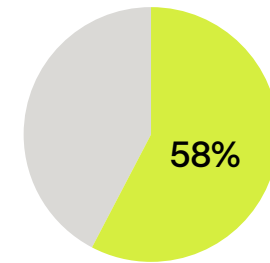
Python



Power BI / Tableau



SQL*



Excel

* AI respondents only

A photograph taken from the driver's perspective inside a car. The windshield is covered in raindrops, creating a textured, reflective surface. Outside, it is nighttime, and the street is wet, reflecting the lights. In the background, there are blurred red and yellow lights, likely from other vehicles or streetlights, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is atmospheric and somewhat somber due to the rain and darkness.

Different industries, different roadblocks.

We take a more detailed look at skills trends across industries, and the capabilities needed to power growth.

A handbrake on global growth

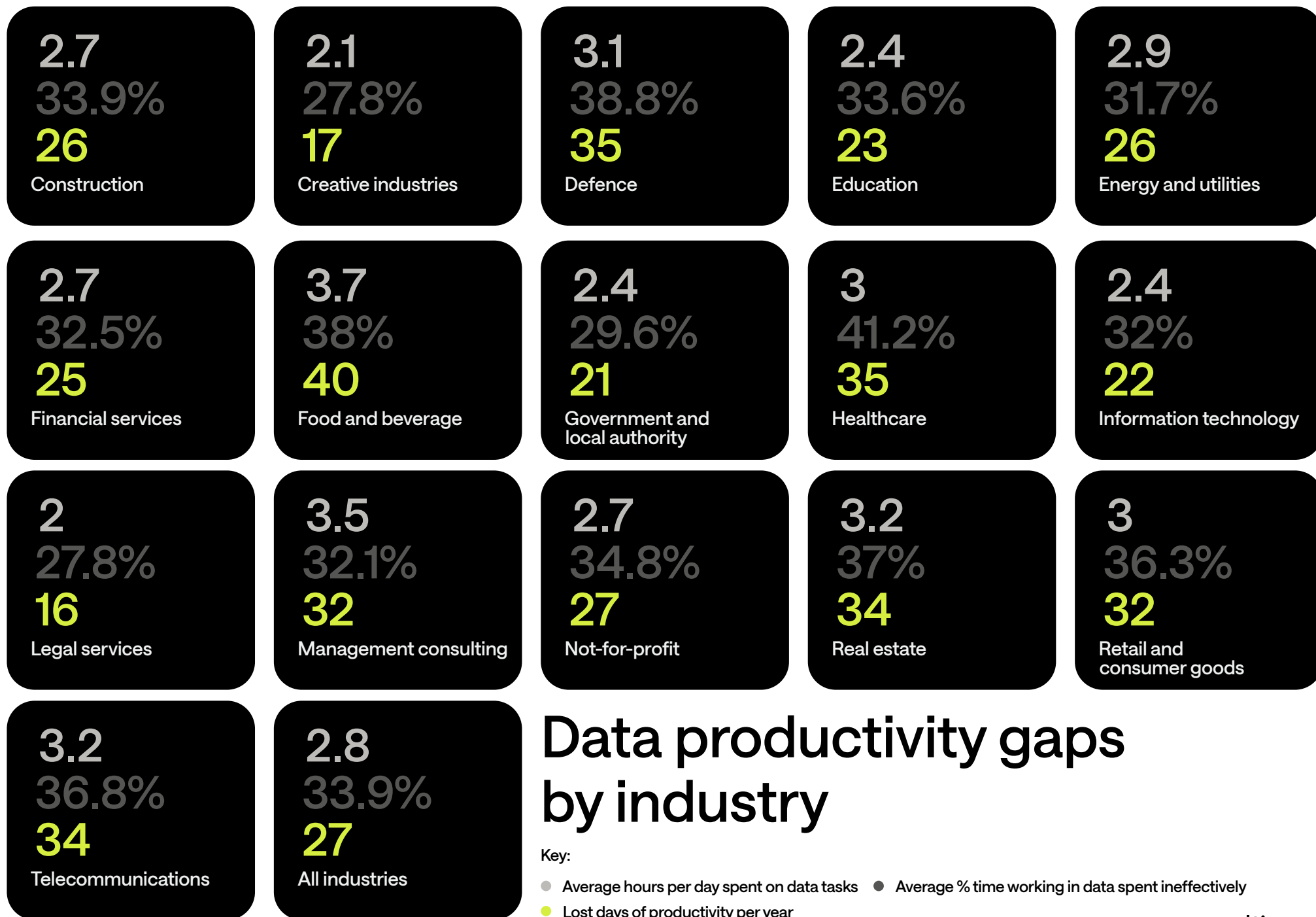
Ambitious economic growth requires as many sectors as possible operating at their full potential, and improving data maturity will be crucial to unlocking future productivity gains.¹⁵ Our survey reveals that the challenge is manifesting differently, sector by sector.

Industries crucial to national infrastructure are some of the hardest hit by a lack of data skills. Employees across education, healthcare, energy, and defence all report that **over a third** of their time working in data is unproductive.

But we're also seeing signs of change emerging, with areas like Legal Services and Creative Industries managing to close the skills gap and drive above-average data efficiencies.

“Data fuels modern business, both as users and producers. There is a huge opportunity for the UK to use its data more strategically, driving innovation and economic growth, including in the growth-driving sectors.”

Department for Business & Trade, Invest 2035 strategy



Healthcare

As we enter a new era for the NHS, building data and digital skills across the workforce will be fundamental to improving patient care, streamlining processes and unlocking cost savings.

But the current skills picture is challenging. Healthcare had the lowest reported data productivity levels, with **41.2%** of time spent ineffectively - leading to workers losing an estimated **35** working days each year to skills gaps, including time that may be spent caring for patients.

A holistic data and AI skills strategy, embedded into every layer of the NHS, will help to improve data maturity and build AI readiness over time.

Local government

Transformation supports local authorities to improve outcomes for staff and communities alike. According to recent analysis from the Local Government Association, a third of councils have already used AI to improve productivity and drive cost savings.¹⁶

Upskilling can act as a cost-effective way for Councils to build essential data and AI capability to improve the resident experience. In our survey, Government and Local Authority respondents had reported below average data skills gaps across the board, including in managing data projects (**34%**) and dealing with data professionals (**36%**).

“[Our] Data and AI Academy allows us to combine data insights with AI capabilities, putting us in a strong position to deliver on our improvement plan. We’re striving to be a council that works more effectively and efficiently for the people of Nottingham, and the skills acquired through our partnership with Multiverse will help us to achieve this goal.”

Sajeeda Rose
Chief Executive, Nottingham City Council

Financial services

In 2025, the financial services sector is embracing AI with remarkable enthusiasm. According to the Bank of England, **75%** of organisations are already using AI, with a further **10%** planning implementation within the next three years.¹⁷

This rapid adoption demonstrates the sector's recognition of AI's transformative potential. According to Multiverse research, **67%** of financial services firms are leveraging AI for process automation and operational efficiencies.¹⁸

But there are challenges that come with adopting AI, including transforming huge volumes of data into strategic insights.

Half of financial services workers said they currently struggle to analyse data efficiently (**52%**) and make data-driven decisions (**50%**), showing there is work to do before the sector's AI vision can become a reality.

46%

of Financial services organisations are heavily investing in AI upskilling, offering frequent and advanced training

43%

provide formal AI training on an annual basis

11%

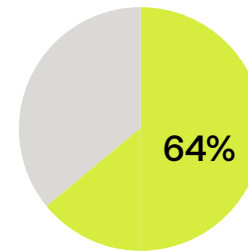
have no AI upskilling initiatives

Retail

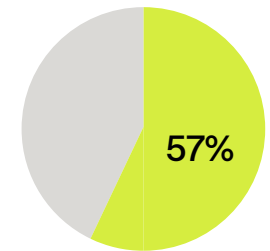
Retail businesses wield huge volumes of data across their entire operation, from tracking sales figures and maintaining extensive customer databases, to managing stock and projecting future trends. Demand for data skills is high, and skills gaps are prevalent as a result.

Retail had the **joint largest skills gap** in our survey in efficient analysis, and above average gaps in other crucial skills needed to build a thriving retail data ecosystem - like the ability to forecast, visualise data insights and create automated reports.

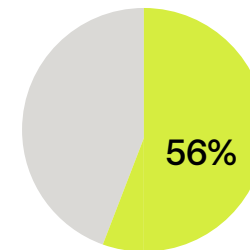
Top 5 data skills gaps: Retail and consumer goods



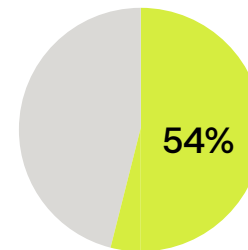
Making analysis more efficient



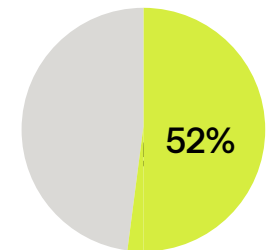
Visualising and presenting data



Automating processes/reports



Predictive analytics, modelling or forecasting

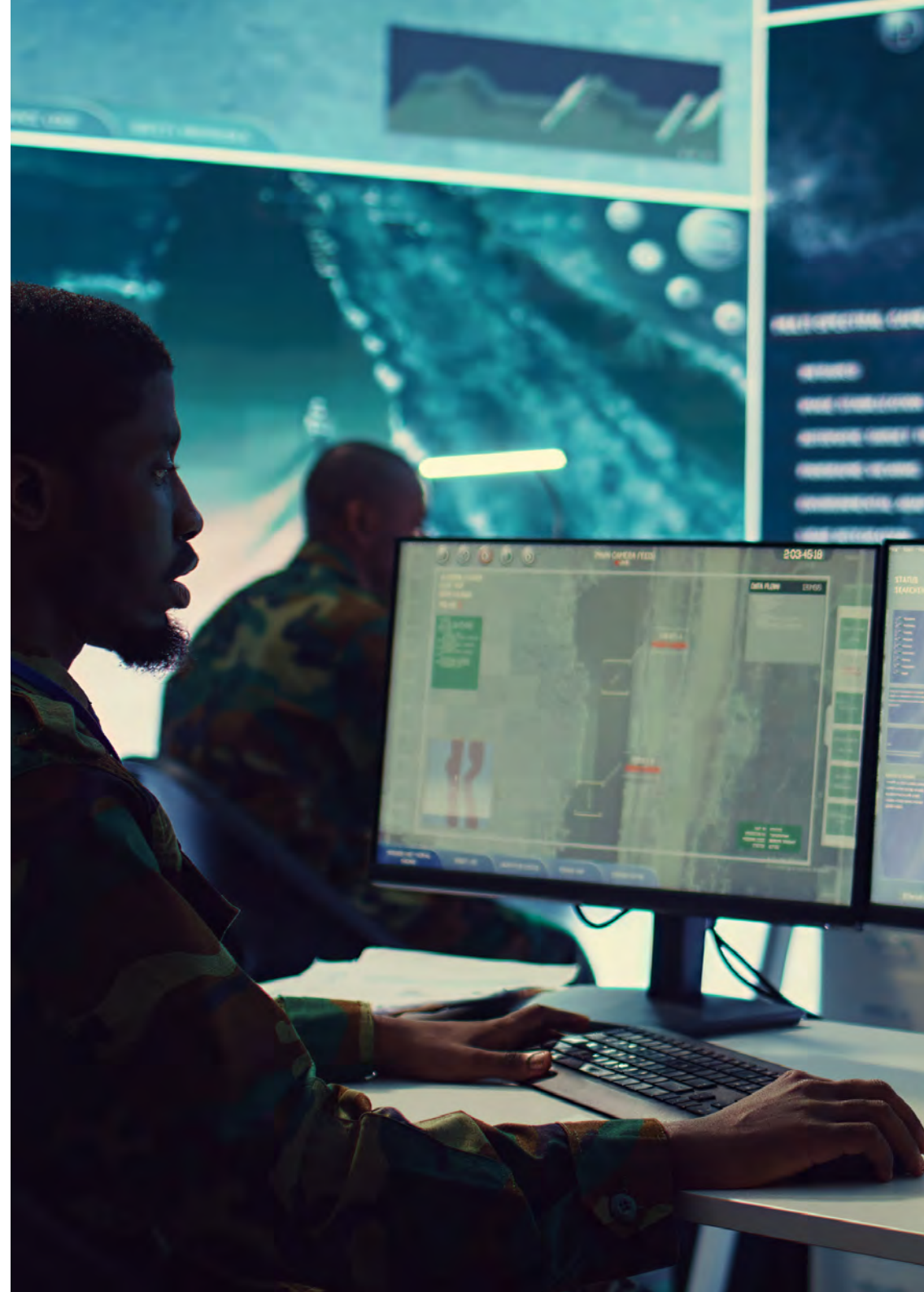


Using data to help tell a story

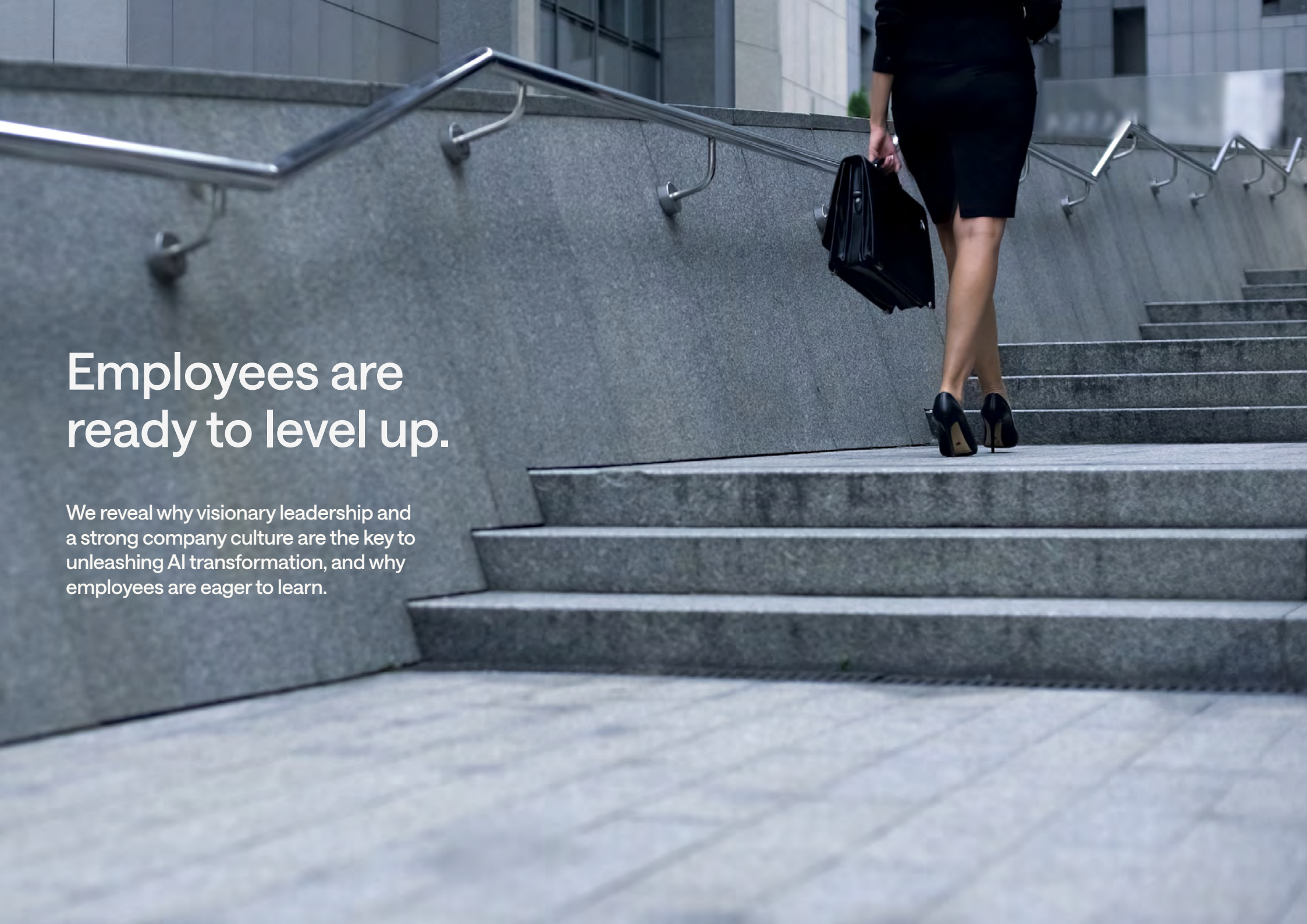
Defence

The UK's defence sector is recognised as a **top priority** in the Government's Invest 2035 industrial strategy.¹⁹ In an era of major shifts in global security, leveraging data and AI as a valuable asset - to support innovation, decision-making and resilience - has never been more crucial.

Defence employees spend above-average time working with data (**3.1 hours per working day**), an indicator of the sheer volume of insight processed and analysed across the sector. But a staggering **38.8%** of that time is ineffective - translating to an estimated **35** lost productive working days each year.



19. [Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy](#)



Employees are ready to level up.

We reveal why visionary leadership and a strong company culture are the key to unleashing AI transformation, and why employees are eager to learn.

True AI transformation starts at the top

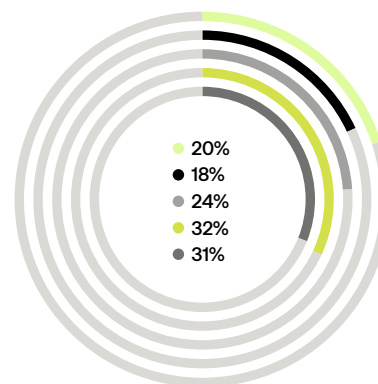
A strong AI culture is embedded across the whole business, from vision and to strategy, to infrastructure and training. Effective leadership is critical - and training senior teams to drive AI strategies will be key to help businesses adapt to change and realise maximum impact.²⁰

We asked employees to rate how well their organisation is doing in their AI implementation efforts.

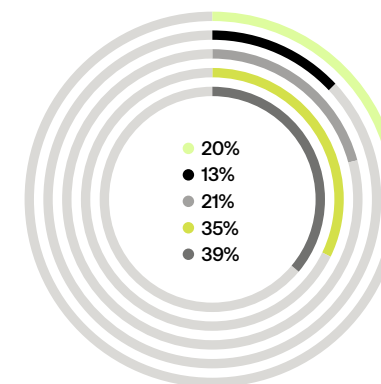
Though a third of employees (**34%**) said they felt strongly that their organisation isn't set up to implement AI effectively, the wider outlook was tentatively positive.

The overwhelming majority believe their leadership is visibly supporting transformation to some extent (**95%**), and four fifths (**87%**) believe their organisation has the right culture to drive change and transformation.

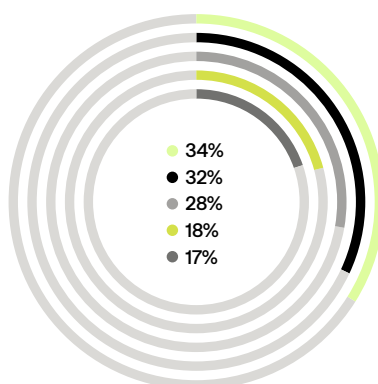
Employees' opinions on organisational AI culture



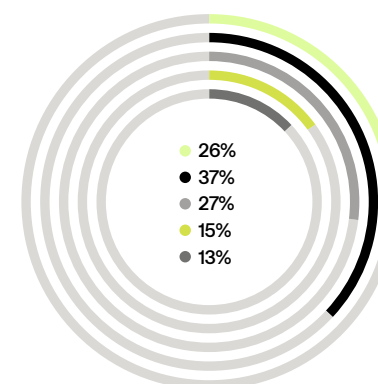
My organisation has the culture needed to successfully drive change and transformation



Leadership are visibly supporting transformation and generating buy-in for change



My organisation is set up to effectively implement AI solutions



My colleagues have the skills needed to successfully drive and deliver AI solutions

Key

● Strongly disagree ● Disagree ● Partially agree ● Agree ● Strongly agree

Our workforce is ready, willing and waiting to learn

Training will be essential for people to succeed in new, more digitally driven roles, as AI reshapes the working world.

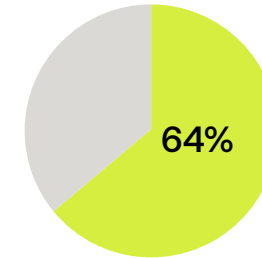
Our data shouts it: employees are eager to proactively upskill. They see the future, and they want to be a part of it. It's a golden opportunity to invest in the workforce.

Nine in 10 employees said they wanted to improve their AI skills (**91%**) and **89%** want to upskill in data. And their motivation is clear: they're looking for pathways to personal and professional growth.

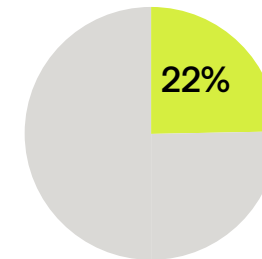
When asked why they want to upskill in AI, two thirds referenced a desire to understand AI better and gain foundational skills (**64%**) and one in 5 said they wanted to ensure their future relevance and career development (**22%**).

But it isn't just about learning for learning's sake; it's about driving tangible business outcomes. Responses also referenced wanting to improve efficiency, productivity and innovation (**14%**).

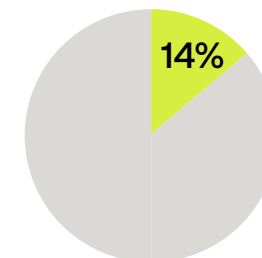
Reasons why employees want to improve their AI skills



Understanding and applying AI



Future relevance and career development



Improving efficiency, productivity and innovation

Insights for employers

When it comes to AI skills, act now and think bigger.

It's already time for workers to move beyond prompt engineering and develop a deeper AI skillset - creativity, problem solving and systems thinking are all becoming crucial to unlock real-world value.

If you haven't already started offering formal AI training, it's better late than never. If you have, review your learning strategy and ensure it's keeping up with the rapid pace of change.

Build a strong foundation of data skills.

With the right training, employees can accelerate growth goals, identify efficiencies and increase productivity, while freeing up bandwidth for data specialists.

Blend upskilling and reskilling to future-proof your teams.

Teams are enthusiastic about developing their AI and data skills. Employers need to match their energy.

Consider how your training strategy can help employees become more effective and productive in their current roles, or give them the opportunity to pivot into a new career path.

Get a clear view on workforce skills gaps.

To craft an AI training strategy that delivers maximum ROI, you first need to know where you stand on skills.

Consider conducting a workforce skills assessment, to learn where capability gaps are preventing progress, identify priority areas for targeted training, and set benchmarks to measure impact.

Get AI-ready skills intelligence from Multiverse

In three simple steps, we'll help you close skills gaps preventing progress today and unlock the future potential of your teams.

Diagnose

Understand which skills gaps are preventing you from hitting your goals with our AI-powered skills assessments, tailored to your team's needs.

Prescribe

Turn insight into action by mapping your teams' skills gaps onto apprenticeships, based on your business goals.

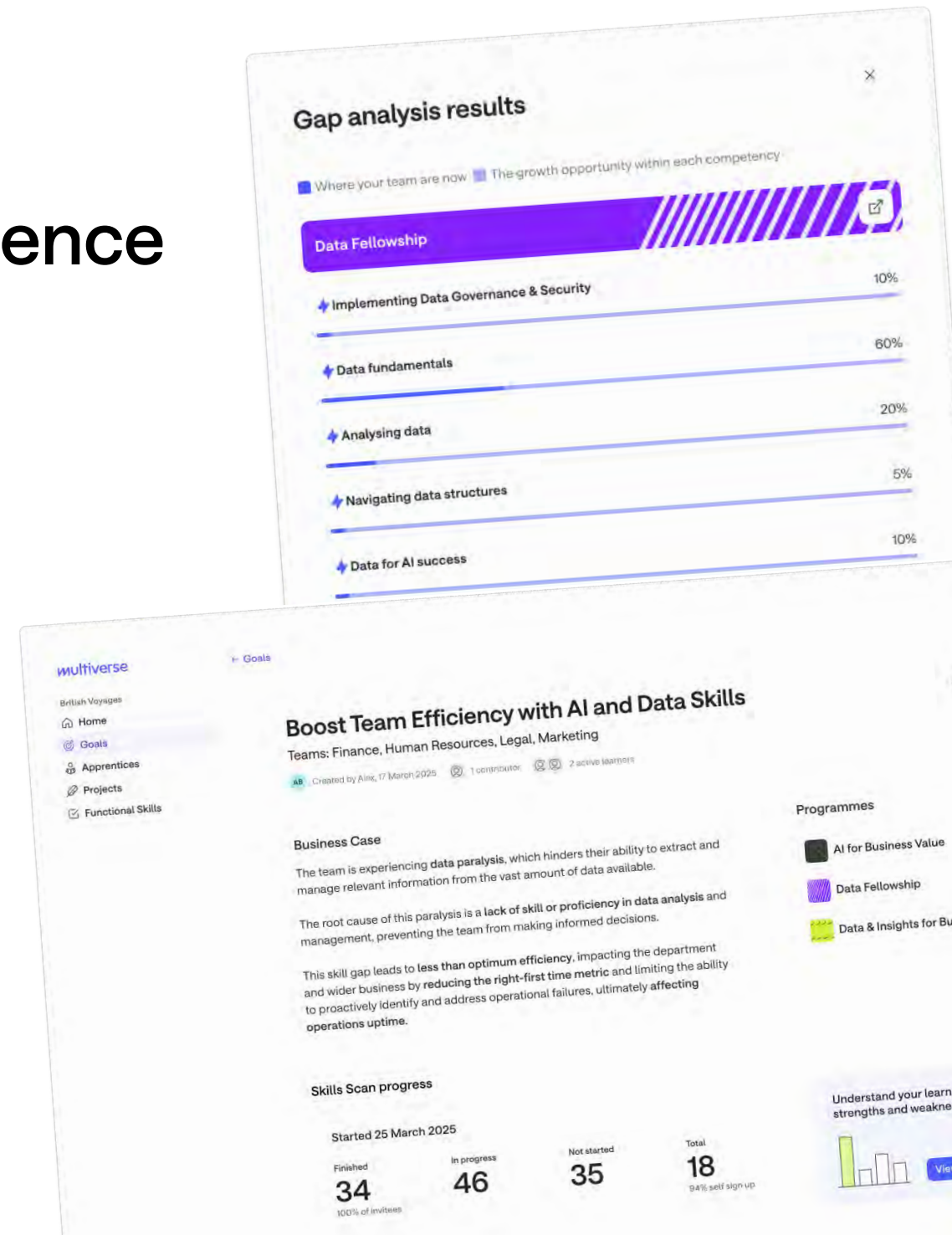
Treat

Your teams develop skills on-the-job through our platform's personalised learning, expert coaching, and AI-assisted guidance - applying skills to real work scenarios.

Get in touch

Speak to a member of our expert team.

Visit multiverse.io



Methodology

Sample

This report presents findings from Multiverse skills assessments completed by employees across the UK, conducted between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025.

A total of 14,508 employees participated in the survey, with 2,402 providing responses to AI-specific questions.

Economic impact of data skills gaps

To arrive at the £61.94 billion figure, we projected the total working days lost annually due to data skills inefficiency across the UK's 8 million knowledge workers. This lost time was then valued using official average salary data for those sectors from the ONS.


Presentation of data

Where relevant to aid presentation and clarity, statistics have been rounded to the nearest whole number or decimal point.

Assessment methodology

To gain insights into workforce capabilities and identify skill gaps, respondents were asked to:

- Detail their current engagement with data and AI tools, alongside their expectations for future utilisation and the criticality of these skills for their roles.
- Quantify daily time spent on data tasks, including ineffective time, and estimate potential efficiency gains from optimal AI tool use.
- Assess their proficiency in key data and AI tools, programmes, and languages (Excel, Power BI/Tableau, Python, SQL and Microsoft Copilot).
- Share their interest in upskilling in data and AI, including underlying motivations and perceived impact on their development, roles, and organisations.
- Provide their perspective on their organisation's AI readiness, covering cultural support, leadership commitment, and current team skill levels.

A full-page background image showing three individuals performing parkour on a large, grey concrete architectural structure. One person is climbing a vertical edge, another is standing on a ledge, and a third is in mid-air, upside down, performing a flip. In the background, a multi-story apartment building is visible under a clear blue sky.

About Multiverse

The upskilling platform for AI and tech adoption.

Multiverse is the end-to-end partner for achieving real business results through critical AI, data and tech skills. We deliver a new kind of learning that boosts productivity and prepares talent for jobs of the future.

multiverse



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Multiverse Skills Intelligence Lead: Imogen Stanley

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