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Accelerating AI skills
Preparing the Workforce for Jobs of the Future

May 2024

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly solidifying its foothold on the tasks that we perform today and is expected to be even more pervasive in the next five years.

To better understand the unfolding of AI technologies in the workspace, Access Partnership collaborated with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to survey over 1,600 employees and 500 organizations in Hong Kong. Findings show that Hong Kong is on track to reap huge productivity gains from AI adoption, and this can be accelerated by increasing awareness on AI skills training.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) leverages the power of computers and machines to mimic the problem-solving and decision-making capabilities of the human mind, such as visual perception, speech recognition and translation of languages.

Top Takeaways:

1 **Nearly every organization will become an AI business by 2028**

84% of employers surveyed use AI-powered tools across their organization in 2023, and this will increase to **94%** of all organizations by 2028. **72%** of employers identified workflow and outcome improvements[1] to be the top benefit of AI. Employers expect the IT **(90%)**, R&D **(85%)**, and the business operations department **(85%)** to be the greatest beneficiaries of AI solutions. Similarly, employers feel positive about the impact of generative AI on their organizations and **94%** of them expect to use such tools by 2028.

Generative AI refers to a type of AI that can help create new ideas and content in the form of conversations, stories, images, videos, music and more – unlike traditional AI systems which are designed to recognize patterns and make predictions.

2 **Across different sectors in Hong Kong, the financial services industry demonstrates the highest level of optimism on the impact of AI**

In Hong Kong, respondents in the financial services sector **(71%)** feel most positively about the impact of AI on their careers and organizations, compared to the manufacturing **(69%)**, ICT **(65%)** and wholesale and retail trade sectors **(57%)**. While **91%** of respondents in the financial services sector use AI tools today, **94%** expect to by 2028. Employees in the financial services sector are well-positioned to reap the benefits of AI. Eight out of 10 **(81%)** of employees in the financial services sector reported "intermediate" or "advanced" AI fluency.

3 **Acquiring AI skills can boost pay and productivity**

Having AI skills could also mean higher salaries for workers. Employers are willing to pay up to **19%-28%** more for AI-skilled workers, with AI-skilled workers in the IT department expected to benefit the most. Employers in Hong Kong also believe that AI can boost productivity by **40%**, while employees believe that AI can make tasks **47%** more efficient. Both employers and employees expect to see the same top three productivity benefits from using AI, which are improving workflow and outcomes, automating repetitive tasks and supporting learning.

Top productivity benefits from using AI
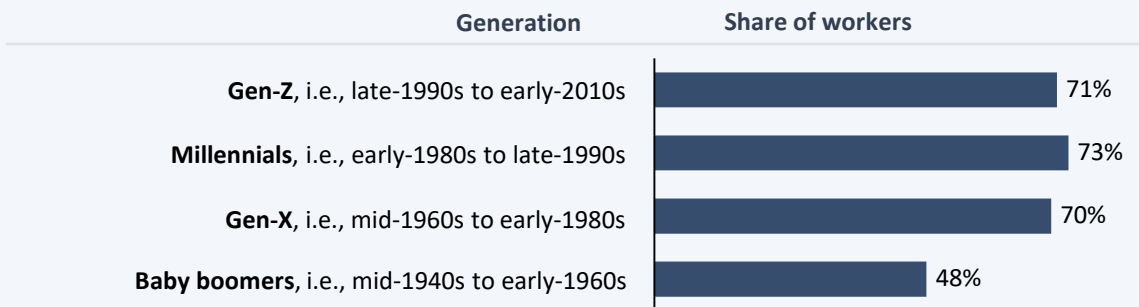Share of employers and employees seeing top productivity benefits in each area

	Employer	Employee
Improving workflow and outcomes	72%	62%
Automating repetitive tasks	66%	60%
Supporting learning	53%	50%
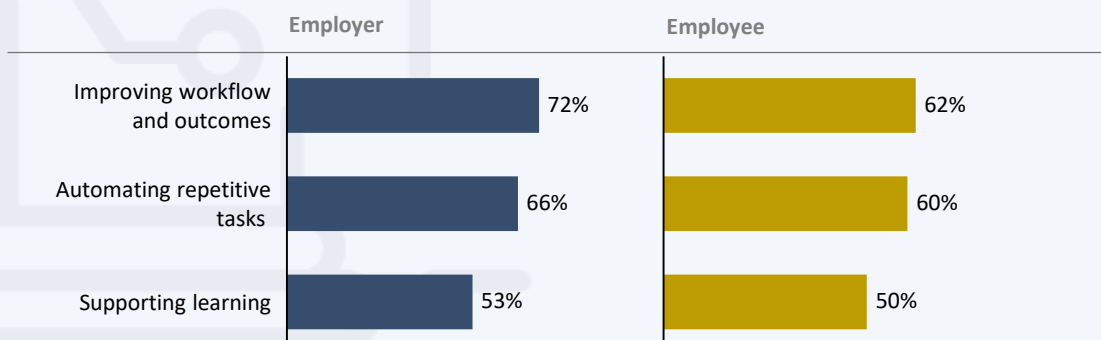
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Regardless of age and gender, Hong Kong employees show strong interest in developing AI skills to advance careers

80% of Hong Kong workers indicated an interest in developing AI skills to accelerate their careers, and this interest transcends generations. While around seven in 10 Gen-Z **(71%)**, millennials **(73%)**, and Gen-X **(70%)** workers want to acquire AI skills, close to half **(48%)** of baby boomers—a demographic usually contemplating retirement—say they would enroll in an AI upskilling course if it was offered. Both male **(81%)** and female **(79%)** employees indicated interest in advancing their careers by learning AI skills.
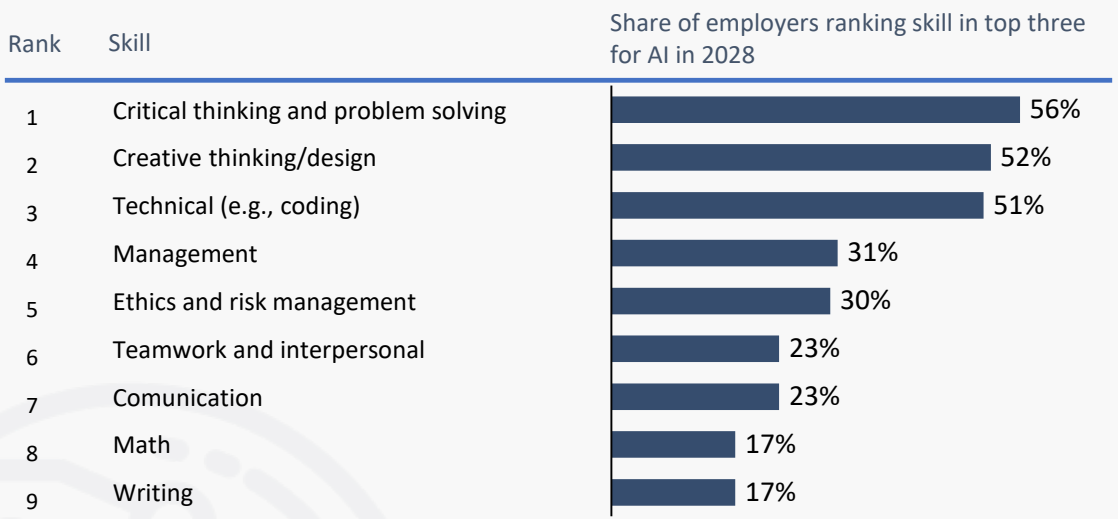
Share of surveyed workers interested in developing AI skills to advance careers, by generation

Generation	Share of workers
Gen-Z, i.e., late-1990s to early-2010s	71%
Millennials, i.e., early-1980s to late-1990s	73%
Gen-X, i.e., mid-1960s to early-1980s	70%
Baby boomers, i.e., mid-1940s to early-1960s	48%

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Soft skills like critical thinking and creative thinking are as important as technical skills to use AI-enabled tools in the future

Employers indicated that soft skills such as critical thinking **(56%)** and creative thinking **(52%)** are important skills that employees should have by 2028, in order to use AI tools. These skills are even more important than technical skills such as coding **(51%)**.

Rank	Skill	Share of employers ranking skill in top three for AI in 2028
1	Critical thinking and problem solving	56%
2	Creative thinking/design	52%
3	Technical (e.g., coding)	51%
4	Management	31%
5	Ethics and risk management	30%
6	Teamwork and interpersonal	23%
7	Comunication	23%
8	Math	17%
9	Writing	17%

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Employers face challenges in hiring AI talent and upskilling employees

Nearly 70% of surveyed employers prioritize hiring AI talent. Out of those who prioritize hiring AI talent, **73%** of them face difficulty in finding skill-ready talent. Some barriers highlighted by employers include the lack of knowledge of how to implement an AI workforce training program **(76%)**, the lack of financial resources to provide employees with AI training **(70%)**, and a lack of time for employees to pursue AI training outside of work responsibilities **(69%)**. In addition, **65%** of employees cited a lack of knowledge of the AI skills training programs available as a top barrier.

1. Examples of how AI can help improve workflow and outcome includes: use of AI tools to identify manufacturing quality issues, detect fraud, and review medical imaging etc.

SOURCE: Survey of 517 employers and 1,634 employees in Hong Kong; Access Partnership analysis