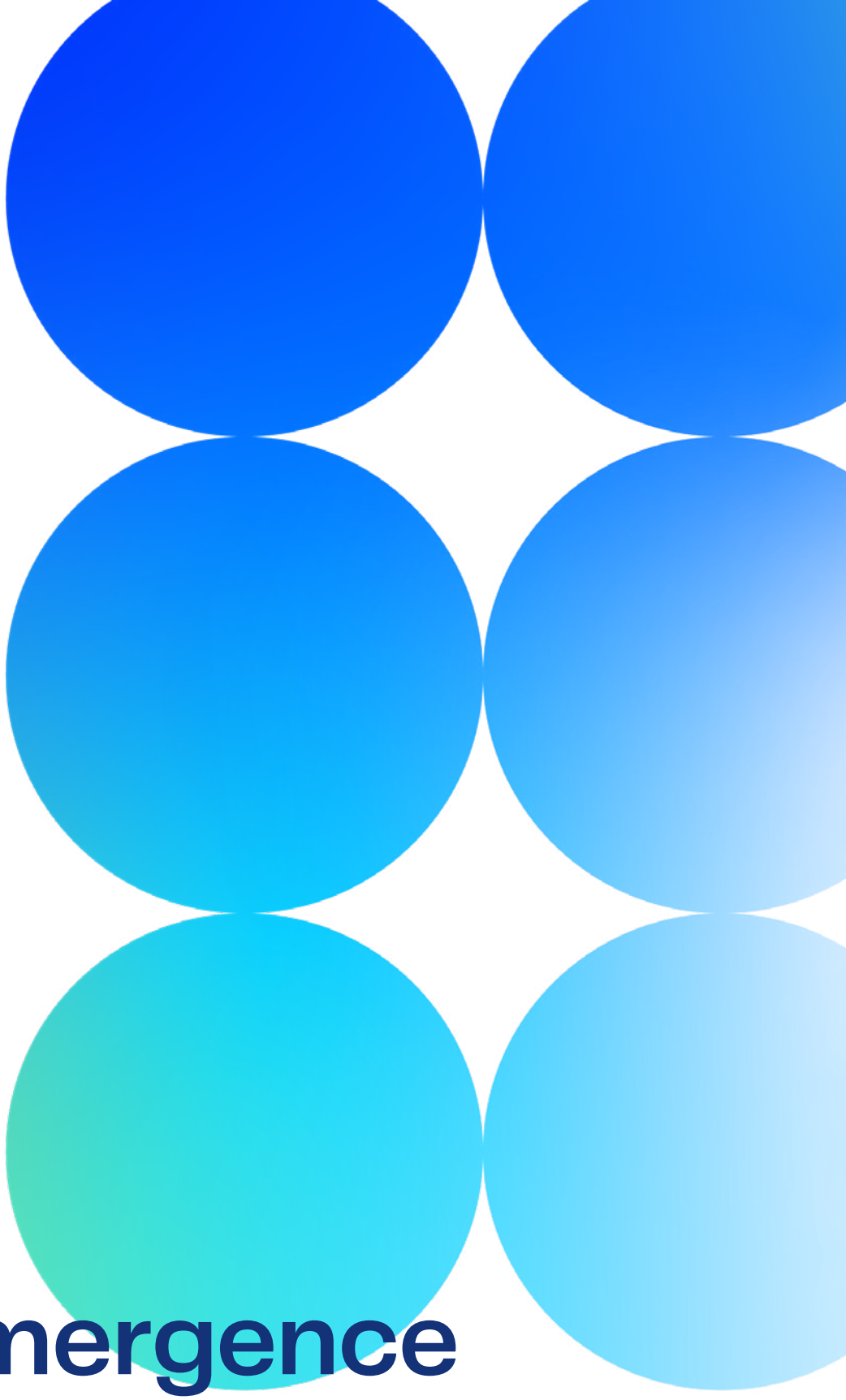
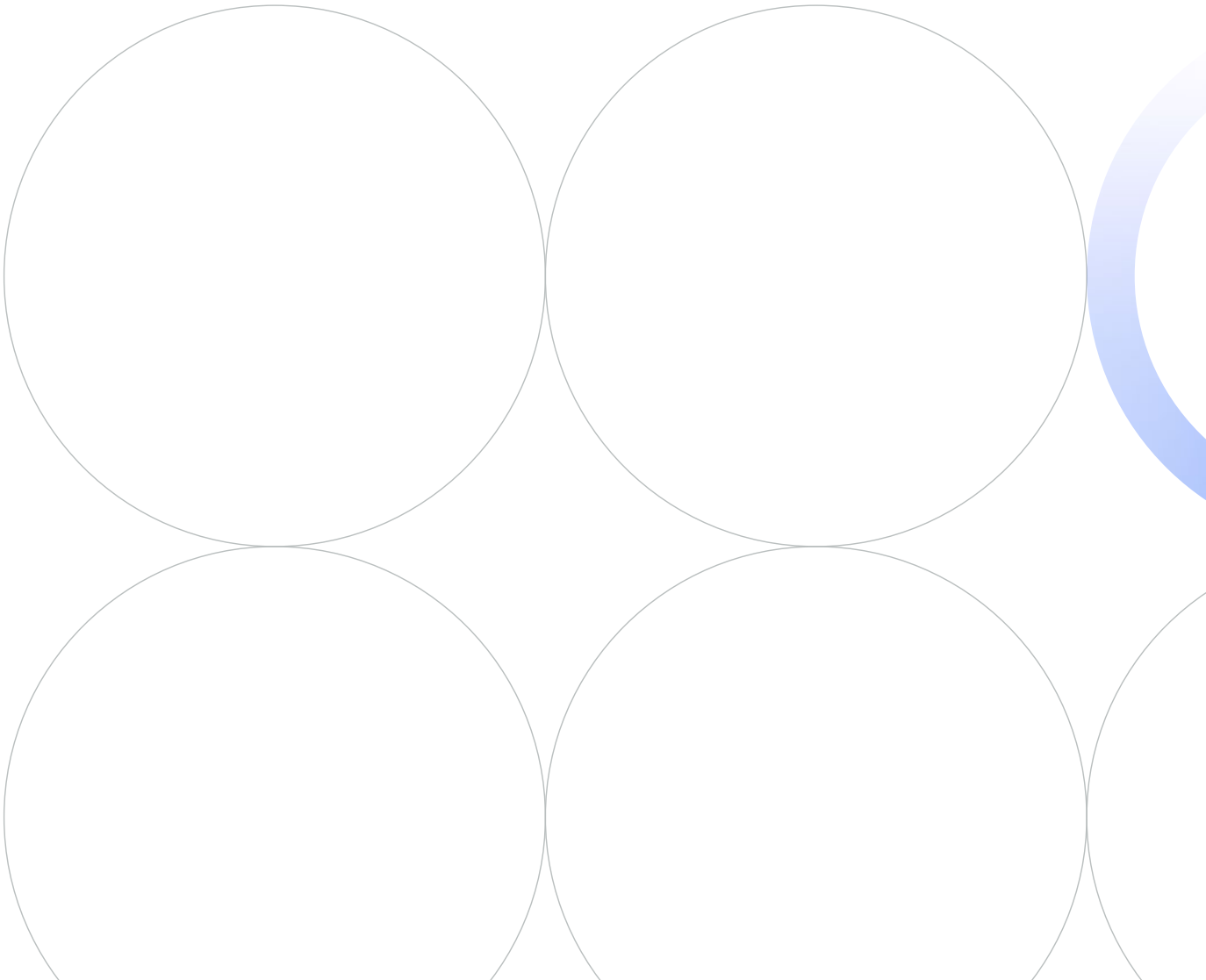


# The Emergence of the Augmented Workforce Economy

The future of jobs in the US



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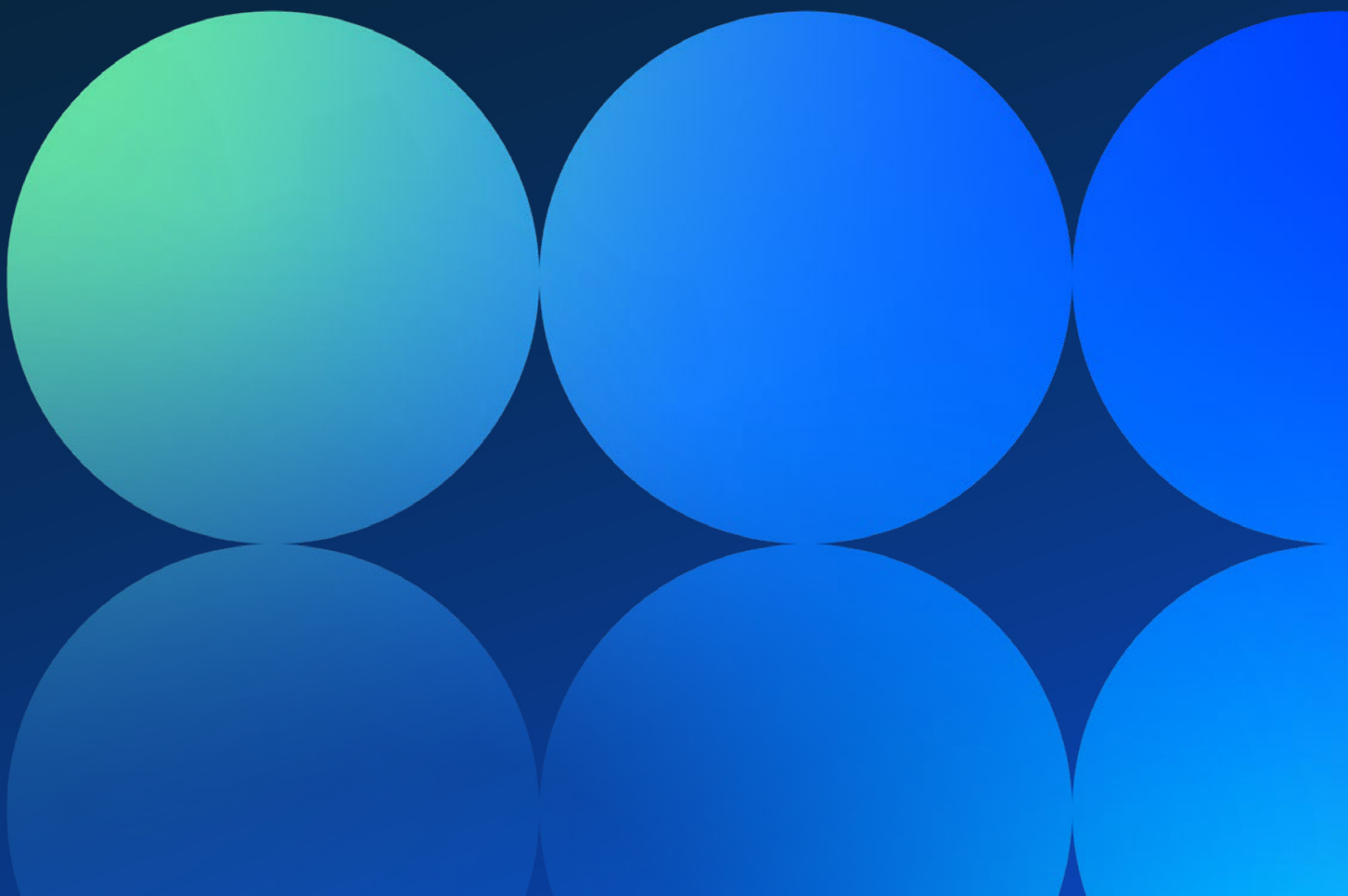


# Introduction

Generative AI is already transforming the US's economy and labor force. Much has been said about its potential impact on the size of the workforce; after initial concern that many jobs would be eradicated, there is growing consensus that the reality will be a mix of some jobs being reshaped by AI, others being created, and, yes, some becoming redundant. But which jobs? Who stands to gain, and who won't benefit from an AI augmented future?

QS has undergone a two-year analysis on these questions, drawing heavily from the QS World Future Skills Index and QS's proprietary Labour Market Intelligence data, which spans 1,870 occupations and 50,000 skills. Our data presents a nuanced picture and enables us to look at the sectors, job families and core skills that are seeing the greatest combined evolution through a combination of AI automation and augmentation.

This whitepaper maps where AI is creating the most significant shifts across the US labor market, identifying the sectors, occupations and skills under the greatest pressure to adapt. It offers a clearer view of where demand is growing, where tasks are most exposed to automation, and where human capability will become more valuable. Understand which roles are being redefined, where the strongest opportunities are emerging, and how QS Labour Market Intelligence can help you respond with confidence.

**Nunzio Quacquarelli**
President and Chair of the Board
QS Quacquarelli Symonds

# The Macro View

| Job Demand Category | Count | % of Total | Median Wage | Average Augmentation Score | Average Automation Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Strong Growth** | 255 | 13.6% | $112,374 | 3.44 | 2.10 |
| **Growth** | 911 | 48.7% | $98,863 | 3.21 | 2.08 |
| **Stable** | 484 | 25.9% | $87,997 | 3.12 | 2.08 |
| **Decline** | 199 | 10.6% | $72,357 | 2.96 | 2.35 |
| **Strong Decline** | 20 | 1.1% | $49,311 | 3.04 | 3.31 |

QS Labour Market Intelligence shows that the US labor market is growing but is concentrated in roles where AI complements human capability. Over 60% of roles in our dataset of 1,870 different jobs are seeing growth of some sort through to 2030, and these high growth roles are the most likely to be augmented by AI. The inverse also holds – the roles with declining demand are at higher risk of automation.

Automation risk is concentrated in routine, rule-based work, which is also where wages are lowest (Figure 2). Task complexity drives a low automation score and higher median wages (Figure 1). Lower paid occupations, such as cashier ($32.4k median compensation) and fast-food worker ($31.7k) have high automation scores of 3.5/5 or higher. Higher-paid professions, such as financial manager ($133.3k) and IT project manager ($119.9k) show low or moderate automation scores.

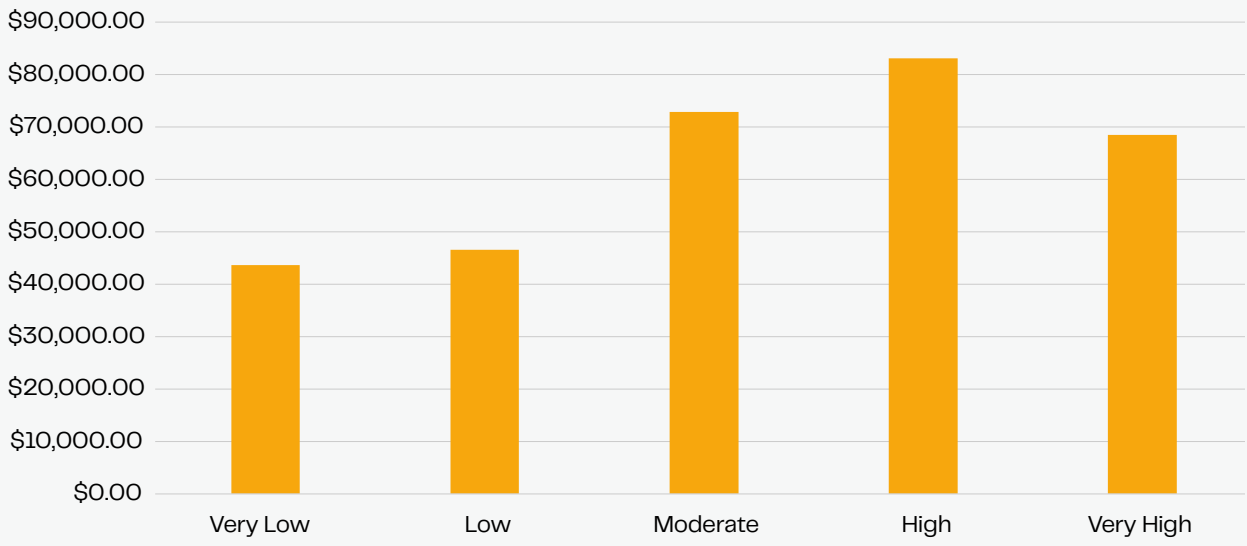
The relationship between AI exposure and growth is not perfectly linear. Automation scores are broadly similar across stable and growing occupations, suggesting that lower automation risk alone does not drive stronger demand. Instead, the clearest divide is between occupations in decline and those with stable or rising demand, pointing to a threshold effect. Once roles move beyond a certain level of automation risk, factors such as skill scarcity, productivity gains from augmentation and wider market demand become more important in shaping growth outcomes.

Growth will concentrate in cross-functional, AI-augmented roles, not traditional industries. Business intelligence analysts, marketing analysts and project management analysts are not beholden to individual industry performance, and show strong growth, high augmentation and mid-to-high median wages. With this in mind, it becomes imperative to produce adaptive, systems-level thinkers.

Some roles – graphic designers, content editors, or logistic analysts – have both a high propensity for augmentation and automation. The routine elements of these jobs are at risk of automation, but the creative, interpersonal and judgement-based work can be augmented. It's here that re-skilling matters most, where displacement can be avoided by integrating AI into workflows.
In effect, AI has the potential to enhance returns on human capability. The more a role depends on interpretation, creativity, or systems thinking, the more it stands to benefit from augmentation, and the more it is rewarded in the labor market.

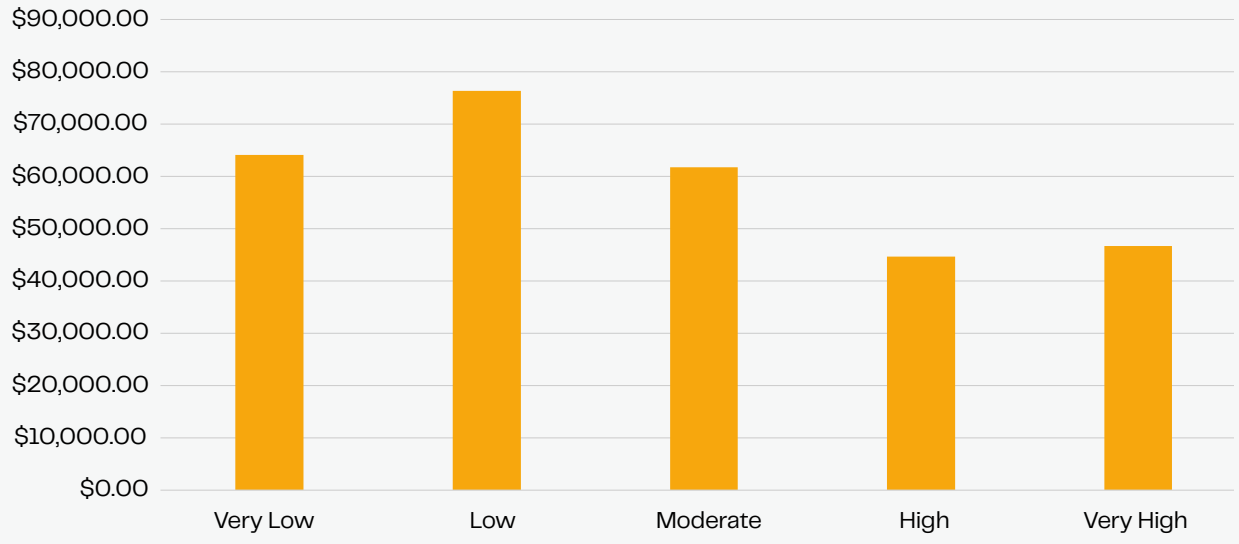
For Figures 1,2,3 and 4 we have weighted the data to minimize the impact of small-headcount roles – such as Head of State – to show a more accurate reflection of the overall workforces' propensity for augmentation or automation.

## Figure 1. Employment-Weighted Average Median Wage By Augmentation Propensity




Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

## Figure 2. Employment-Weighted Average Median Wage By Automation Propensity



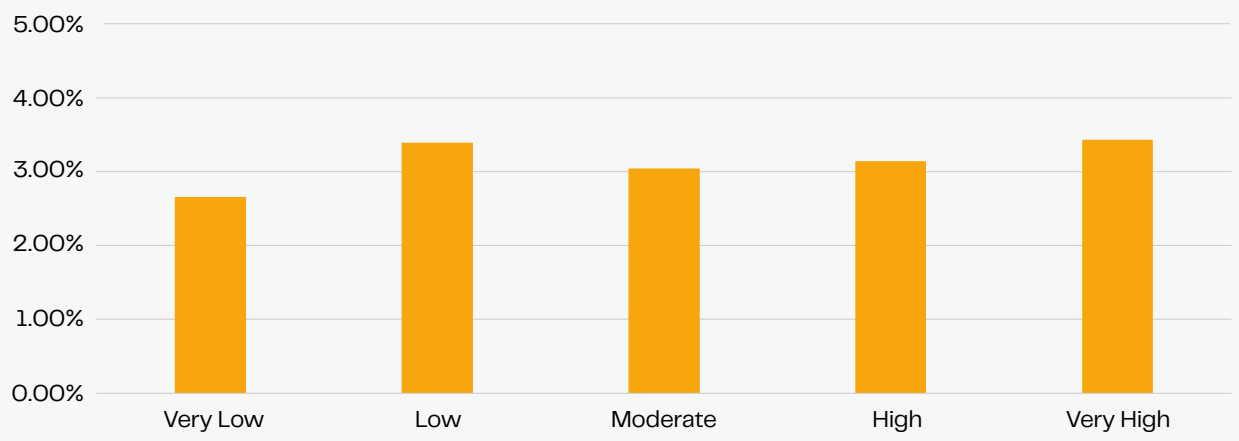

Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

Very highly automatable roles are set to decline by 2030, and growth is focused on roles where automation propensity is low (Figure 4). AI augmentation, on the other hand, is unlikely to cause workforce displacement, instead AI will be making them more productive. Whether your job can be heavily augmented by AI or barely touched by it, the demand for your role grows at roughly similar rates.

Augmentation may be a rising tide lifting all boats. Very high augmentation roles like Data Scientists and AI Engineers, are growing alongside everyone else, albeit at the highest rate of any bucket. This suggests AI tools are expanding what's possible rather than narrowing who's needed.

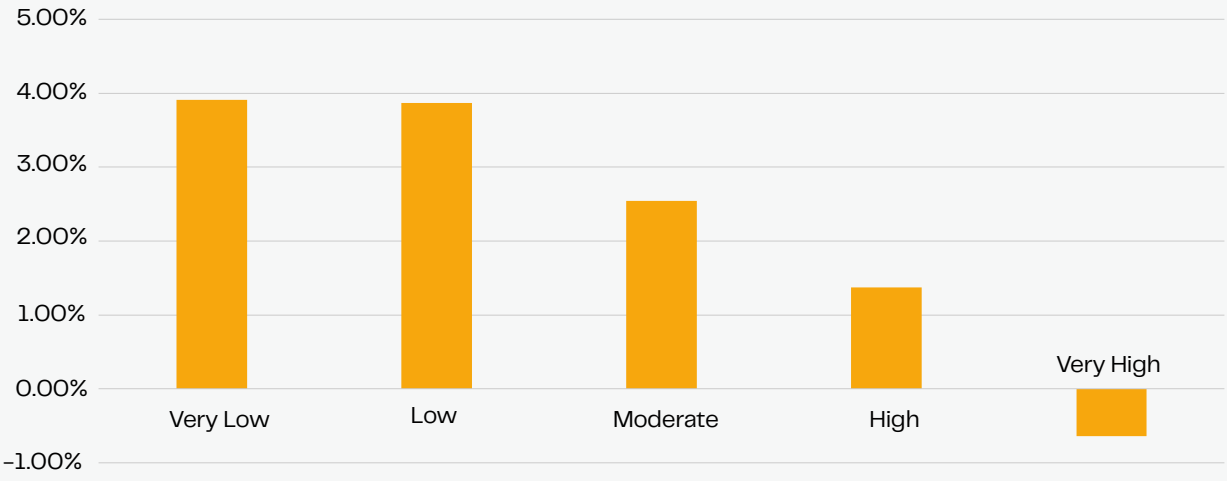
Very low augmentation roles (Figure 3) are often jobs where AI has minimal applicability, such as personal care aids. Their slower growth likely reflects sector-specific constraints (funding, demographics) rather than AI competition.

## Figure 3. Volume-Weighted Growth Rates By Augmentation Propensity




Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

## Figure 4. Volume-Weighted Growth Rates by Automation Propensity



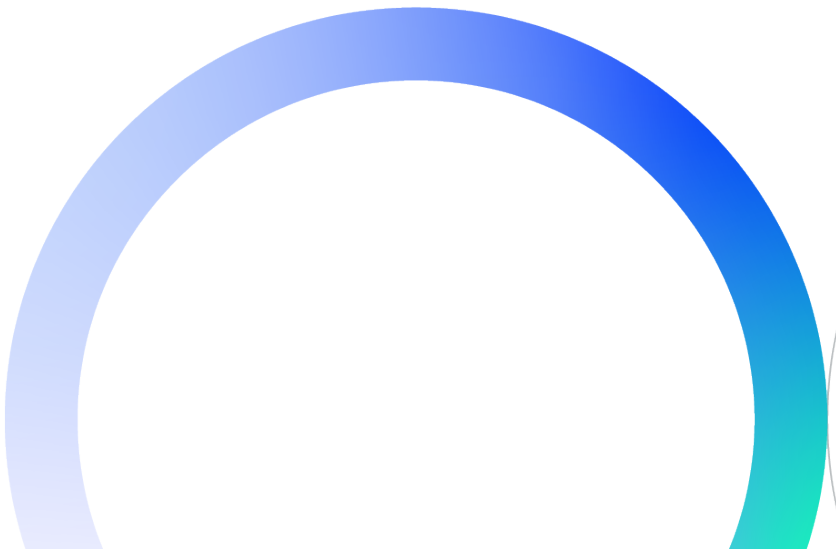

Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

# Sector Growth Increasingly Reflects AI Readiness

Technology, healthcare, and advanced business services continue to expand, supported by roles that can use AI to raise productivity without reducing reliance on human expertise. More transactional and labor-intensive sectors face greater pressure. Retail, customer service, and administrative functions remain large employers, but their growth is constrained by the ease with which routine tasks can be automated.

Interestingly, three industries rank the highest for both AI automation and augmentation: Business, Technology and Finance. These, together, represent an estimated 57.5 million current occupations in the US, and, by 2030, QS forecasts these industries to employ 58.9 million people. These industries all have an average Augmentation score of over 3.0, meaning a large swathe of the US job market stands to dramatically transform. Training providers and employers who focus on this particular subset will have a significant impact on the US economy and be in a prime position in the future of work.

| QS Industry | Average Augmentation Score | Average Automation Score | 2025 Employment | 2030 Employment | Delta (2025–2030) | % Growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Business** | 3.09 | 2.74 | 47,629,540 | 48,623,283 | 993,743 | 2.1% |
| **Technology** | 3.80 | 2.5 | 4,996,219 | 5,288,869 | 292,650 | 5.9% |
| **Finance** | 3.56 | 3.03 | 4,901,682 | 5,036,828 | 135,146 | 2.8% |
| **Total** | | | 57,527,441 | 58,948,980 | 1,421,539 | **2.47%** |



# Variation within sectors is wide

Outcomes differ within the same sector. Administrative or legacy roles see decline, and high automation pressure, even when the wider sector is set to grow. Demand is concentrating in roles that translate data into insight or manage complex systems.

## Technology Occupations

| Category | Occupation | Growth | Median Wage | Augmentation Score | Automation Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Top Performers** | AI Research Scientist | 4.15% | $134,575 | 3.75 | 1.75 |
| | AI Trainer | 3.87% | $122,700 | 4.25 | 1.75 |
| | AI Solutions Architect | 3.87% | $204,958 | 3.75 | 1.75 |
| **Declining** | Robotics Software Engineer | -0.29% | $106,769 | 4.25 | 2.75 |
| | DevOps Engineer | -0.29% | $136,393 | 3.50 | 2.25 |
| | Software Performance Engineer | -0.29% | $86,846 | 4.00 | 2.25 |

## Business Occupations

| Category | Occupation | Growth | Median Wage | Augmentation Score | Automation Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Top Performers** | Data Analyst | 3.27% | $89,088 | 3.75 | 3.25 |
| | Data Scientist | 3.27% | $121,910 | 4.25 | 2.75 |
| | Data Specialist | 3.27% | $92,699 | 4.50 | 2.25 |
| **Declining** | Copywriter | -4.04% | $54,482 | 4.50 | 5.00 |
| | Typist | -4.03% | $46,725 | 3.00 | 4.75 |
| | Transcriber | -4.03% | $46,725 | 3.75 | 4.25 |

## Finance Occupations

| Category | Occupation | Growth | Median Wage | Augmentation Score | Automation Score |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Top Performers** | Actuary | 2.32% | $136,935 | 4.25 | 3.00 |
| | Catastrophe Risk Modeler | 2.32% | $104,588 | 4.00 | 2.75 |
| | Financial Compliance Audit Analyst | 2.05% | $85,600 | 4.00 | 4.50 |
| **Declining** | Head Teller | -1.04% | $47,555 | 2.50 | 3.00 |
| | Teller | -1.04% | $40,867 | 1.50 | 4.00 |
| | Debt Collections Analyst | -0.77% | $79,040 | 2.50 | 3.00 |

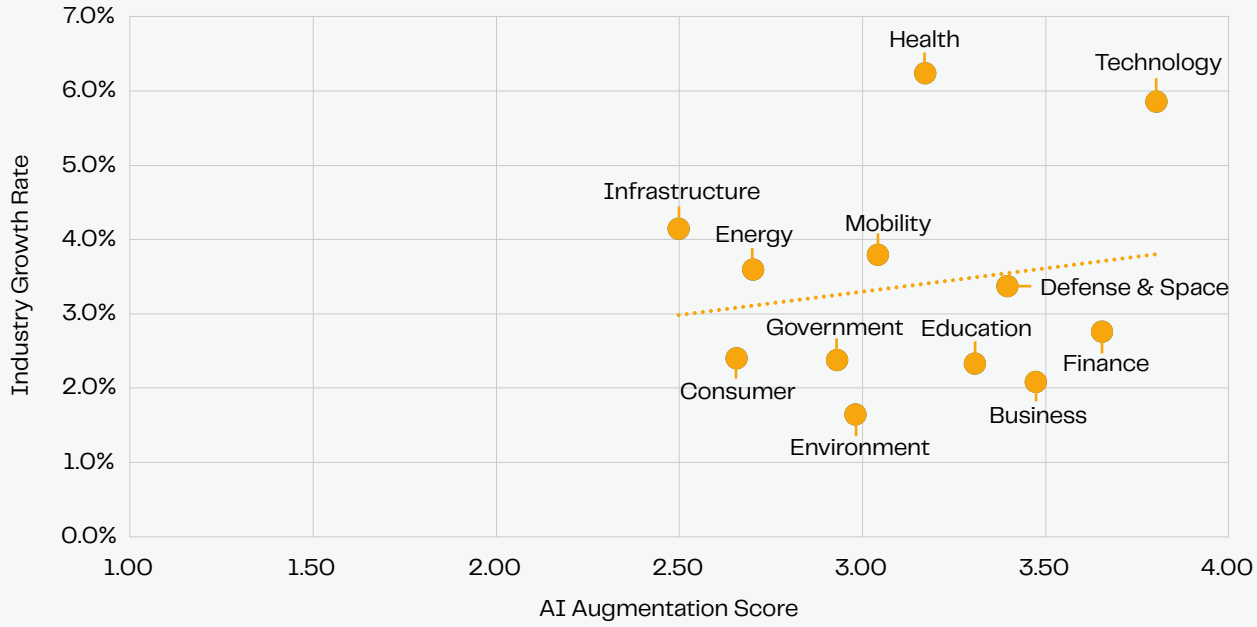
*Growth and AI augmentation and AI automation scores are applied to occupational groups.

| Sector | Top Performers Growth (Average of top 3 growth roles) | Declining Roles Growth (Average of bottom 3 growth roles) | Variance |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Technology** | 3.97% | -0.29% | 4.25% |
| **Business** | 3.27% | -4.03% | 7.30% |
| **Finance** | 2.23% | -0.95% | 3.18% |

# Demand Is Concentrated in Augmentable Sectors

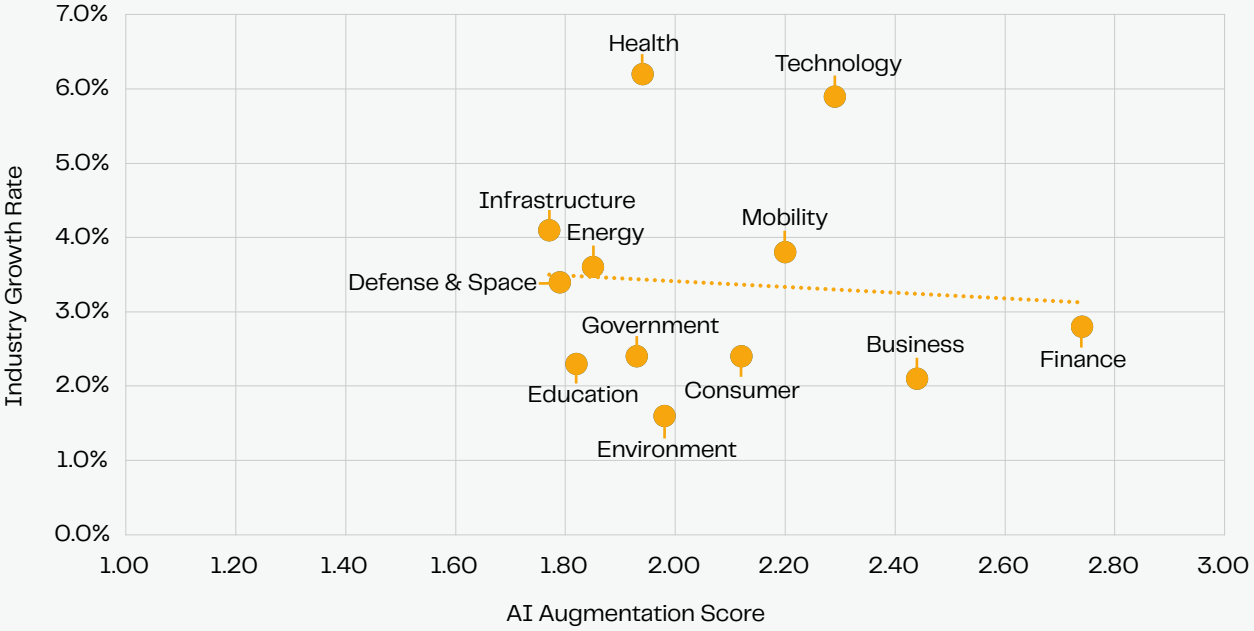
Overall demand remains positive, with no sector shrinking, but growth trends towards industries with higher augmentation, and is focused in sectors and roles that can absorb AI effectively. The focus, therefore, shifts to role design. Sector positioning matters, but the ability to restructure work around AI will determine where growth is sustained.

## Figure 5. AI Augmentation Score vs Overall Industry Growth Rate




Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

## Figure 6. AI Automation Score vs Overall Industry Growth Rate




Source: QS Labour Market Intelligence

# Conclusion

## Higher Education

The labor market is shifting toward roles that combine expertise with the ability to work alongside AI. Growth is strongest in occupations that require interpretation, systems-level thinking, and cross-functional application, rather than narrow technical specialization or routine execution. This places pressure on curricula to move beyond static knowledge delivery toward adaptive capabilities, embedding data literacy, problem framing, and interdisciplinary learning across programs. It also elevates the importance of continuous reskilling pathways, particularly for roles where augmentation and automation overlap, and where workers must actively integrate AI into their workflows to remain relevant. Institutions that can tighten the feedback loop between emerging skills demand and educational provision will be best positioned to produce graduates aligned with future growth areas.

## Employers

Workforce strategy is now defined by how effectively roles are redesigned to incorporate AI. Growth is concentrated in positions where AI enhances productivity without replacing human judgement, while routine, rule-based functions face greater automation risk. This creates a clear imperative to restructure work: separating automatable tasks from higher-value activities, and equipping employees to operate in augmented environments. The strongest returns will come from investing in hybrid roles – those that translate data into decisions or coordinate complex systems – rather than relying on traditional job definitions. Organizations that actively redesign roles and embed AI into workflows will capture productivity gains while mitigating displacement risks, particularly in roles where augmentation and automation pressures coexist.

# Intelligence for the decisions that shape what comes next

QS skills datasets give universities, employers and policymakers a more sophisticated view of how skills demand is evolving. Drawing on large-scale labor market data, employer validation and forward-looking analysis, it reveals where capability is gaining value, where disruption is accelerating, and where strategic investment will matter most.

Whether shaping curriculum, informing workforce strategy or guiding institutional investment, QS provides the intelligence to act with clarity and confidence. Discover how our skills datasets can help you anticipate change and lead through it.

Learn more

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