THE STATE OF SKILLS 2021: ENDANGERED

SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR SKILLS

Do you know the skills you need?

Do you know the skills you have?

There is no system of record for skills

COVID-19 IS ENDANGERING WORKFORCE SKILLS

It’s accelerating the need for new skills

It’s reducing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling

It’s making the workforce feel vulnerable

IT’S NOT JUST SKILLS AT RISK — IT’S PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES, AND BUSINESSES

Mental health and wellness are at risk

Productivity and performance are at risk

Retention and recovery are at risk

Employer brands and trust are at risk

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

The data

The team

The research
COVID-19 is changing everything. Many of the organizations that survive, emerge, and thrive will be different than they were before all the unpleasantness. Their workforces will have to be, too.

We’ve already seen an unprecedented number of workers displaced all around the world. And the redeployments, furloughs, and layoffs will likely continue throughout 2021. That’s forcing countless workers to refresh their current skills, and more importantly, build new ones.

But few of us know where to start—and both time and money are in short supply.

That’s why we created The State of Skills.

Degreed surveyed over 5,200 people around the world to assess the effects of recent global events on workforce skills and to gauge their readiness to adapt to new challenges.

We segmented our data by identifying the countries, industries, and job roles where skills are most at-risk of becoming obsolete. We hope this will help workers, team managers, and business leaders focus their limited energy and investments on developing the skills they need most.

Pay close attention to the data on your country, industry, and role throughout the report. Those who act quickly have a game-changing opportunity to get ahead of the competition.

1. Mule Design, Design In the Age of Anxiety, 9/2017

Erika Hall, Mule Design co-founder and Director of Strategy, "The future spreads like cold butter."
Everyone — business executives, HR, talent and learning leaders, people managers, and individual workers — seems to be asking the same question right now: “What skills do we need for the future?” The answer is, “it depends.” It depends on who you are, where you work, and what you do.

“I ask managers to imagine a documentary about what their team is accomplishing six months from now. What specific results do they see? How is the work different from what the team is doing today? Next, I ask them to think about the skills needed to make the images in the movie become reality.”

Supply and demand for skills

Everyone needs technology skills

Most of the forecasts we’ve seen say the fastest percentage growth in global demand for skills over the next decade will be in technology and programming as well as basic digital fluency. But many jobs, like sales, only require people to use those skills in small doses or at basic levels.

Everyone needs human skills

And in absolute terms (the total number of hours that skills are required each year) those same forecasts predict the biggest growth will be in demand for cognitive skills like creativity or problem solving, and social skills like communication, entrepreneurship, or leadership.

You need to see supply and demand for your skills

It’s hard to use forecasts like these if you’re a business executive, HR leader, people manager, or worker. You need to see the supply and demand for skills on a more granular level. You need to know which skills are growing (or declining) in value in your country, in your business, or your role.

## Overall

### In-Demand Skills in 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>SKILLS</th>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advanced IT and programming skills</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGICAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Leadership and management skills</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Communication and negotiation skills</td>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship and initiative-taking skills</td>
<td>SOCIAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Project management skills</td>
<td>COGNITIVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Creativity skills</td>
<td>COGNITIVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Advanced data analysis and mathematics skills</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGICAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Critical thinking and decision making skills</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Adaptability and continuous learning skills</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Technology design and engineering skills</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGICAL</td>
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### By your country

### In-Demand Skills in 2021

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>RANK</th>
<th>OVERALL</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>MEXICO</th>
<th>BRAZIL</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>FRANCE</th>
<th>GERMANY</th>
<th>INDIA</th>
<th>AUSTRALIA</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Technology design and engineering</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Driven by demand

Among the 5,000+ workers, team managers, and business leaders we surveyed, demand is strongest for technological skills. However, they are also looking to develop their social and cognitive skills.

We asked people to select up to five skills they’d most like to develop from a taxonomy of 25 skills developed by McKinsey Global Institute for their 2018 study, Skill shift: Automation and the future of the workforce.

Look closer, though. There are some important differences in the most in-demand skills when you look at the data by country, by industry, and by job role.
### In-Demand Skills in 2021

#### By your industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Financial Services</th>
<th>Technology and Telecommunications</th>
<th>Consumer and Retail</th>
<th>Industrial Manufacturing</th>
<th>Business Services</th>
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<td>3</td>
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#### By your role

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<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Quantitative and Statistical Analysis</td>
<td>Basic Digital Software Skills</td>
<td>General Equipment Operation</td>
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</table>
Do you know the skills you have?

**Good news**
Linkedin may not actually know more about your people than you do. Only 21% of workers believe the most up-to-date data about their skills exists in online networks and communities like LinkedIn, Twitter, Dribbble, or GitHub; 34% think it’s in their employers’ HR systems.

**Bad news**
There’s still a lot that HR systems don’t (and can’t) know. More than a quarter (27%) of workers believe the most up-to-date data on their skills is hidden inside documents like resumes and CVs. Another 18% say real-time information on their skills doesn’t exist anywhere.

Overall
Where do you think the most up-to-date data about your skills exist, if anywhere?

- HR Systems: 34%
- Online profiles and networks: 21%
- Resumes and CVs: 27%
- Nowhere: 18%

In your country
Where do you think the most up-to-date data about your skills exist, if anywhere?

- HR Systems
- Online profiles and networks
- Resumes and CVs
- Nowhere

Mexican workers are most confident in the skills data in their company’s HR systems. Australians are the least confident.

**The State of Skills**

7

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**Note:** The image contains charts and maps showing the distribution of responses across different countries, indicating the proportion of workers who believe their skills data is in various locations. The charts display a global overview and country-specific data, highlighting the differences in worker confidence in their employers’ HR systems versus other online networks and communities.
In your industry

Where do you think the most up-to-date data about your skills exist, if anywhere?

Workers in the manufacturing sector are most confident in the skills data in their company’s HR systems. Consumer and retail workers are the least confident.

In your role

Where do you think the most up-to-date data about your skills exist, if anywhere?

No surprise: HR workers are most confident in the skills data in their company’s HR systems. Everyone else is less confident.
There is no system of record for skills.

Technology can now do wonders to illuminate people’s skills. But the data indicates that efficient data architectures and advanced AI are not enough to fill in all the gaps in conventional HR processes.

CEO: “Do we have the skills we need for the future?”

CHRO: How data on people’s skills gets into HR systems (and how it doesn’t).

Skill data is captured through job applications or internal talent profiles
Skill data is updated via periodic reviews, development plans, or assessments
Skill data is inferred from job descriptions, competency models, or other organizational data
Skill data is inferred from credentials, online profiles, or other publicly available data

But

75% to 80% of workers don’t complete their HR system’s talent profile¹
61% of workers do not get regular feedback on their performance or skills²
40% of employees say they frequently complete tasks outside their job description³
21% of workers say the most up-to-date data about their skills is in online profiles⁴

1. Human Resource Executive, Focusing HR-tech development in the time of the virus, 04/2020
The global health and economic crisis has had three big impacts on the state of skills:

1. It’s accelerating the need for new skills
2. It’s reducing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling
3. It’s making the workforce more stressed and vulnerable

“…they mean precisely #*%&.”

—Men in Black Agent, K (as played by Tommy Lee Jones)

1. Tommy Lee Jones, Men in Black, 1997
It’s accelerating the need for new skills.

Workers, managers, and business leaders are all feeling the pressure to upskill and reskill. Six-in-ten say COVID-19 and the resulting economic crisis have accelerated their need to acquire new skills.

In your country

I agree that COVID has accelerated the need for me to acquire new skills.

This pressure to develop new skills is strongest in India, Mexico, and Brazil. But many European and North American workers also sense the urgent need for retooling.
Workers in the technology and telecommunications sector feel the greatest demand for new skills, followed by those in the business and financial services sectors.

I agree that COVID has accelerated the need for me to acquire new skills.

In your industry:
- 64% in Financial Services
- 77% in Technology and Telecommunications
- 59% in Industrial Manufacturing
- 62% in Business Services
- 52% in Consumer and Retail
- 55% in Healthcare
- 68% in HR
- 69% in Marketing
- 64% in Finance
- 75% in IT
- 57% in Sales
- 57% in Operations

IT, marketing, and HR workers, many of them facing sudden, substantial changes in the demands of their roles, are feeling the most acute pressure to upskill and reskill.
Development opportunities are harder to find at work amid the global health and economic crisis. Nearly half of workers (46%) say their employers have reduced upskilling and reskilling opportunities during the pandemic.

It’s reducing opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.

In your country

My employer has reduced upskilling (e.g. training and development) opportunities compared to pre-COVID levels.

The lack of opportunities is especially serious in emerging markets (like India, Brazil, and Mexico), which are essential to many companies’ operations and growth prospects.
In your industry

My employer has reduced upskilling (e.g. training and development) opportunities compared to pre-Covid levels.

Cuts to upskilling and reskilling opportunities have been felt most deeply in the technology and telecommunications, and business and financial services sectors.

52% \(\rightarrow\) Financial Services

60% \(\rightarrow\) Technology and telecommunications

42% \(\rightarrow\) Consumer and Retail

49% \(\rightarrow\) Industrial Manufacturing

49% \(\rightarrow\) Business Services

41% \(\rightarrow\) Healthcare

In your role

My employer has reduced upskilling (e.g. training and development) opportunities compared to pre-Covid levels.

IT, marketing, and HR professionals, the people most impacted by the sudden shifts in work and consumer habits, have felt the cuts to opportunities most deeply.

56% \(\rightarrow\) HR

58% \(\rightarrow\) Marketing

50% \(\rightarrow\) Finance

59% \(\rightarrow\) IT

41% \(\rightarrow\) Sales

47% \(\rightarrow\) Operations

The State of Skills
Nearly half (46%) of workers, managers, and business leaders believe their core job skills will be obsolete within five years. More than 36% expect their core job skills to decay within three years. It’s making the workforce feel vulnerable.
In your industry

When, if at all, do you believe your core job skills will be obsolete?

The risks of obsolete skills are most pronounced in the financial services, technology and telecommunications, and business services sectors.

In your role

When, if at all, do you believe your core job skills will be obsolete?

The risks of obsolete skills within the next few years are felt most severely among workers in IT, marketing, HR, and finance roles.
It’s not just skills at risk—it’s people, communities, and businesses.

“When we looked at our labor force through the skills lens, we found that we had two-thirds of our skills wrong. We were headed for disaster.”

Head of Talent Management, Financial Institution

There’s much more at stake here than just skills.

People are at risk
Communities are at risk
Businesses are at risk

1. Gartner, Use Labor Market Insights to Manage People-Related Costs, 3/2020
The livelihoods and prospects of tens of millions of workers have already been damaged. And more than half of workers globally (55%) say that as confidence in their skills decreases, their stress levels increase.

Anxiety and stress over skills can also impede workers’ productivity and performance, and intensify “people costs” like wellness, absences, and turnover. And that’s bad for business.

Livelihoods
Future prospects
Anxiety and stress

Consumer demand
Economic activity
Government finances

Mental health and wellness
Productivity and performance
Retention and resilience
Employer brands and trust
Mental health and wellness are at risk.

Anxiety about skills is becoming a mental health and wellness issue. Nearly 6-in-10 (55%) workers, managers, and business leaders said a lack of confidence in their skills makes their job more stressful. Nearly 4-in-10 (38%) say their mental health suffers.

In your country
When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

- My job is more stressful
- My mental health suffers

Workers in the United States, Mexico, and Australia are most at risk of stress. Mental health is most at risk with workers in Brazil, Australia, India, and the US.
In your industry

When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

Workers in the healthcare, financial services, and retail industries are most prone to stress. Mental health is most at risk in the healthcare and business services sectors.

In your role

When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

People who work in HR, sales, and operations roles are most likely to be stressed. The mental health of those working in those same roles is also most at risk.
Productivity and performance are at risk.

Instability of skills is a significant risk to workers’ productivity and performance. More than 4-in-10 (41%) people told us that a lack of confidence in their skills means tasks take longer to complete. More than one-in-five (22%) say their work is of a lower quality.

In your country

When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

- **Tasks take longer to complete**
- **My work is of a lower quality**

Australian, Indian, Brazilian, and Mexican workers are most likely to say tasks take longer to complete, and that work is a lower quality when they’re not confident in their skills.
In your industry

When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

Workers in technology and telecommunications, and business services are most likely to say insecurity in skills leads to slower task completion and lower quality work.

In your role

When you don’t feel confident in your skills, how, if at all, does this impact you?

People working in IT, marketing, and HR roles are most likely to say tasks take longer to complete, and their work is of a lower quality when they feel anxious about their skills.
Retention and recovery are at risk.

The declining availability of upskilling and reskilling opportunities could lead to increased voluntary turnover, which puts business resilience and recovery at risk when the economic climate improves. Nearly half (46%) of workers around the world now say they are more likely to leave their employer if they don’t see a commitment to upskilling and reskilling.

In your country

If my employer doesn’t invest in me and the development of my skills, I will be more likely to leave my job.

Indian and Brazilian workers, who have felt some of the biggest gaps in support from employers, are most inclined to leave for a better opportunity. So are French workers.
In your industry

If my employer doesn’t invest in me and the development of my skills, I will be more likely to leave my job.

Workers in the financial services and technology and telecommunications sectors are most likely to consider leaving their employer if they don’t see a commitment to upskilling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial Services</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology and Telecommunications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consumer and Retail</td>
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<td>Industrial Manufacturing</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Services</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54% 57% 41%
FINANCIAL SERVICES TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONSUMER AND RETAIL

In your role

If my employer doesn’t invest in me and the development of my skills, I will be more likely to leave my job.

People in IT, marketing, and finance roles are most likely to leave their employer for a new opportunity if they don’t feel an investment in developing future-ready skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People in IT, marketing, and finance roles are most likely to leave their employer for a new opportunity if they don’t feel an investment in developing future-ready skills.
Employer brands and trust are at risk.

The declining availability of upskilling and reskilling opportunities is damaging people’s confidence in employers’ commitment to their growth — a core part of many companies’ employer value proposition. More than four-in-10 (42%) workers believe their company is more likely to lay workers off than to reskill them or move them into another role.

In your country

My employer is more likely to make redundancies than reskill workers or move them to another department.

Workers in emerging markets, like India, Brazil, and Mexico are especially skeptical of companies’ commitment to investing in growing their skills and developing their careers.

United States: 36%
United Kingdom: 37%
Germany: 31%
France: 32%
Mexico: 51%
Brazil: 55%
India: 68%
Australia: 37%
In your industry

My employer is more likely to make redundancies than reskill workers or move them to another department.

Workers in the technology and telecommunications, financial services, and business services sectors are most skeptical of companies’ commitment to their careers.

In your role

My employer is more likely to make redundancies than reskill workers or move them to another department.

IT, marketing, HR, and finance workers have the strongest doubts about their companies’ commitment to investing in developing their skills and advancing their careers.
Hands can’t hit what eyes can’t see

The skills we need, and the ones we have, change constantly. Because things change constantly.

- Our jobs change and our careers grow
- Rules and regulations get implemented
- Customers’ values and behaviors evolve
- New technologies create new possibilities
- Business strategies shift and priorities shuffle
- Innovative thinking leads to new practices and processes
- Pandemics turn the whole world upside down at the drop of a hat

Google Search for “skills” since 2015

“Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. His hands can’t hit what his eyes can’t see.”

Muhammad Ali

These things happen every day. As they do, some skills decay in value while others grow and new ones emerge. And that means we all need to pay closer attention to the skills we have and the ones we need next.

These insights are increasingly valuable to workers and managers because they can help keep skills and careers aligned to growth opportunities. And they’ve become essential to business executives and HR talent and learning leaders because they can inform smarter, more impactful decisions about how we invest in our most valuable assets — our people.
The Data

We gathered data from 5,208 workers, team managers, and business leaders. The data was collected in July and August 2020 by independent, international market research agency, Censuswide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRIES</th>
<th>JOB ROLES</th>
<th>INDUSTRIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>Financial Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>IT and Telecommunications</td>
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<tr>
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<td>HR</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
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<td>Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Team

Martin McGourty
Laura West-Wilson
Gareth Thomas
Amber Mott
Alec Hamilton
Tina Dirmyer

Justin Gallegos
Jonda McCutchan
Alex Olmstead
Sarah Danzl
David Johnson
Todd Tauber

Let's take on tomorrow.

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