

# AI-Compatible, Future-Proof, and Accessible Career Paths

## **Overview and Key Findings**

Artificial intelligence is reshaping the job market, creating surging demand in some roles while automating tasks in others. Roles that blend human expertise with AI tools are among the fastest-growing. For example, **AI and data science specialists**, along with **business**, **information security**, **and data analysts**, are each projected to grow by **30%+ in the next five years** <sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, routine roles (e.g. clerical data entry, basic accounting) face decline as AI automates repetitive work <sup>2</sup>.

**Our evaluation:** We assessed each listed role on three criteria – **AI compatibility** (will AI augment rather than replace the role?), **future demand** (job growth outlook), and **ease of entry** (learning curve and typical requirements). Roles that scored high on all three are ideal: they leverage AI to boost productivity, are in growing demand, and are attainable without an advanced technical degree. The table at the end ranks all roles by overall alignment with these goals. Below, we group related roles and detail their prospects:

#### **Data and AI Roles**

Roles focused on data and machine learning are at the heart of the AI revolution. They generally enjoy strong demand growth but vary in required expertise:

- Data Scientist: Develops machine learning models and advanced analytics. AI Impact: Central often building AI algorithms themselves. AI tools (like AutoML) can accelerate their work but not replace creative problem-solving. Demand: Very high growth (BLS projects 36% growth in data scientist jobs from 2023–2033 <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> ). The World Economic Forum also identifies data scientists as among the fastest-growing professions <sup>5</sup>. Ease of Entry: Hard. Typically requires a strong foundation in statistics/programming; many data scientists hold a master's or PhD <sup>6</sup>. Significant learning time is needed to gain advanced math, coding, and domain knowledge.
- Machine Learning Engineer: Specializes in designing and deploying ML models in production. AI Impact: Core to the role (they build AI systems). Demand: Very high. Often grouped with AI specialists, a role WEF ranks just behind the top-growing job globally 7. Employers are racing to hire ML engineers to implement AI capabilities. Ease of Entry: Very Hard. Needs advanced software engineering skills plus deep ML knowledge. Typically requires prior experience in software development and ML; a steep learning curve for newcomers.
- Data Analyst: Extracts insights from data (through dashboards, queries, basic modeling). AI Impact: Complementary. Analysts increasingly use AI-powered analytics tools (for automated visualizations, anomaly detection, etc.) to boost productivity, but human judgment is needed to interpret results. Demand: High. "Data and business analytics" roles are projected to grow sharply (30%+ in five years) 1. Data analytics skills are in demand across industries, with one report noting data-focused jobs will see net growth even as automation advances 8. Ease of Entry: Moderate. Often requires a bachelor's degree and skills in SQL, Excel, or BI software.

However, it's more accessible than data science – many enter via online courses or bootcamps. It doesn't usually require advanced math; the emphasis is on analytical thinking and tool proficiency.

- Business Intelligence (BI) Analyst: Focuses on analyzing business data and creating reports/ dashboards to inform decisions. AI Impact: Complementary. BI analysts benefit from AI-driven analytics (like natural language query tools or AI forecasting in BI platforms). AI can automate routine reporting, allowing analysts to focus on interpretation. Demand: High. This role overlaps with data analyst in many organizations, riding the same data analytics boom. Companies continue to invest in BI systems, ensuring steady demand for professionals to manage and interpret data 1. Ease of Entry: Moderate. Requires proficiency in BI tools (Tableau, Power BI, etc.) and understanding of business metrics. A business or IT bachelor's is common. It's considered easier to learn than machine learning engineering, since it's more about using software than creating algorithms.
- Statistician: Applies statistical techniques to solve problems (in fields like healthcare, finance, government research). AI Impact: Mostly Complementary. Statisticians use classical methods, but AI can assist by automating data analysis and crunching large datasets. The core role designing studies and interpreting statistical results still needs human expertise. Demand: Moderate. While still faster than average, pure statistician roles aren't growing as explosively as data science. U.S. projections show about 11% growth for statisticians/mathematicians this decade <sup>9</sup>. (Notably, many with stats skills are being hired under titles like "data scientist".) Ease of Entry: Hard. Strong mathematics background required; a master's in statistics is common for many roles. However, for those with quantitative aptitude, it's a stable niche, and statistical skills underpin many data/AI roles.
- Data Engineer / Data Architect / Data Warehouse Developer: These roles form the data infrastructure trio:
- **Data Engineers** build and maintain data pipelines and databases, ensuring data is accessible for analysis.
- Data Architects design the overall data management framework and database architecture.
- Data Warehouse Developers specialize in building data warehouses for reporting.

  AI Impact: Complementary. These roles don't create AI models but are essential enablers for AI they provide the quality data pipelines that machine learning systems feed on. AI tools assist them (e.g. automated code generation or pipeline optimization), but human engineers are needed to understand business requirements and architect complex systems. Demand: High. As organizations become data-driven, demand for those who manage "big data" is surging. In fact, Big Data Specialist was identified as one of the fastest-growing occupations through 2030 10.

  Data engineering skills are highly sought after to handle the explosion of data from IoT, social media, transactions, etc. Ease of Entry: Moderate to Hard. These roles usually require solid programming skills (Python/Java, SQL) and knowledge of database systems or cloud platforms. You typically need a computer science or engineering background or equivalent experience. The learning curve is steep for someone without IT experience but not as math-heavy as data science. Many data engineers start as software developers or BI/analytics professionals and grow into the role.

**Bottom line for data/AI roles:** If you are comfortable with technology and willing to invest in technical skills, these careers are **highly AI-compatible and future-proof**. Data analysts and BI analysts offer more accessible entry points (you can often start with undergraduate-level training and expand your skills on the job). Data scientists and ML engineers yield tremendous opportunities (1) (4) but require a

much deeper technical journey. Regardless, all these roles benefit from the AI wave – either by **building** the AI or **using** it to deliver insights – and show robust growth in the AI era.

## **Business and Management Roles**

This group includes roles that apply analysis and strategic thinking to business problems, often serving as bridges between technology and business needs. They typically require strong communication and domain knowledge more than hardcore programming, making them relatively accessible. Many are being **augmented (not replaced) by AI** tools:

- Business Analyst (General): This role varies by organization, but generally involves analyzing business processes or requirements and recommending solutions (often in an IT project context or process improvement context). AI Impact: Complementary. AI aids business analysts by quickly analyzing process data, generating requirements drafts, or modeling scenarios. For example, AI tools can sift through user feedback or process logs to identify improvement areas, which the analyst then interprets. The role focuses on human judgment, stakeholder communication, and translating business needs tasks not easily automated. Demand: High. Broadly, analyst roles focused on business strategy are growing; WEF data shows "business analysts" among roles with >30% growth expected 1. Organizations are hungry for professionals who can leverage data (and now AI insights) to drive efficiency and strategy. Ease of Entry: Easy to Moderate. Often a bachelor's in business, information systems, or related field is enough. Strong analytical and communication skills are key; many start in entry-level analyst or consulting roles after college. You don't need advanced technical coding, making it friendlier to non-programmers. Familiarity with Excel, databases, or reporting tools is helpful and can be learned on the job.
- Business/Management Analyst (Management Consultant): Focuses on improving organizational efficiency and strategy, often as an external consultant or internal strategy analyst. AI Impact: Complementary. AI can crunch massive datasets (financial reports, market trends) to surface insights, which management analysts use to make recommendations. Consultants also use AI for modeling business outcomes. However, the core consulting work creative problem solving and advising management remains human-led. Demand: High and Steady. BLS projects 11% growth for management analysts (consultants) from 2023–2033 11 12, above average. Companies continually seek advice on digital transformation (often including AI adoption), operational efficiency, and new market strategies sustaining demand. Ease of Entry: Moderate. A bachelor's degree plus a few years' experience in industry is typical. Many have an MBA or relevant experience. While not technically heavy, the role demands strong business acumen, quantitative analysis (often via spreadsheets or BI tools), and soft skills. It can be competitive, but not requiring specialized technical certification making it attainable for those with solid business education and analytical thinking.
- Marketing Analytics Specialist: Bridges marketing and data analysis analyzing customer data, campaign performance, and market trends to guide marketing strategy. AI Impact: Highly Complementary. Marketing has been revolutionized by AI: tools can automatically segment customers, personalize content, and optimize ad spending. A marketing analyst armed with AI can quickly identify patterns in consumer behavior and even use predictive models for customer lifetime value or churn. AI can automate routine reporting, but human specialists are needed to craft strategy from the insights. Demand: High. As marketing continues its shift to digital and data-driven decision making, these roles are growing. Digital marketing and analytics roles were highlighted in recent job outlooks e.g., digital marketing specialists are expected to see

roughly **25–35% growth** in the near term <sup>13</sup>. Every company with an online presence now relies on data to refine their marketing, fueling demand. **Ease of Entry: Moderate.** A mix of skills is needed – understanding of marketing principles plus comfort with data. Many marketing analysts have a bachelor's in marketing or business and upskill in analytics tools (Google Analytics, SQL, maybe Python for more advanced analysis). It's less mathematically intense than data science; a lot can be learned through specialized courses or certifications (like Google's analytics certificates). Someone with basic statistics and marketing know-how can transition into this field with relative ease.

- Social Media Strategist/Specialist: Manages an organization's social media presence and strategy. AI Impact: Complementary. AI tools greatly enhance this role from AI-driven content creation (e.g. using GPT to draft posts or ads) to scheduling and algorithm insights. For instance, AI can suggest optimal posting times or auto-generate hashtag strategies. However, genuine engagement and brand voice still require a human touch; the strategist curates and approves AI-generated content and crafts creative campaigns. Demand: Moderate to High. Social media marketing remains a growth area as businesses large and small prioritize online engagement. While not specifically broken out in labor stats, it falls under the broader digital marketing umbrella which is one of the fastest-growing skill domains 14. Every year brings new platforms and trends (short video, influencers, etc.), requiring specialists to navigate them. Ease of Entry: Easy. This is one of the more accessible roles it often values experience over formal education. A savvy individual who grows a social media following or manages accounts for a small business can leverage that into a specialist role. There are many short courses on social media marketing. Since it doesn't require coding or advanced degrees, it's a popular entry-point into the marketing field (though note, because it's easier to enter, competition can be high).
- Project Manager / IT Project Manager: Oversees projects to ensure they finish on time and on budget. (The IT Project Manager is a PM specializing in technology projects.) AI Impact: Complementary. Project managers use AI-driven tools for scheduling (automatic Gantt chart updates), risk management (AI predicting which tasks might delay a project), and even automated reporting. These tools can take over administrative burdens, but the leadership and coordination aspects remain human. PMs facilitate communication between diverse humans something AI can't replace. Demand: Stable. Nearly every sector needs project managers. U.S. projections show **7% growth** for project management specialists over the decade <sup>15</sup> – roughly on par with overall job growth. Additionally, global reports by PMI indicate a continuing shortage of skilled PMs as many senior PMs retire and new projects arise (PMI projected millions of new PM roles annually worldwide). IT project managers are in demand as companies implement new tech (ERP systems, AI deployments, etc.). Ease of Entry: Moderate. While you don't need advanced technical skills (even IT PMs mostly need to understand tech concepts, not do the coding), you do need strong organizational and people skills. Many PMs start as team leads or business analysts and then move into project management. Certifications like PMP (Project Management Professional) can accelerate one's career but usually require some experience. Overall, the knowledge can be learned via certification programs and on-the-job practice, making this a feasible transition for someone with good soft skills and domain knowledge.
- **Product Manager:** Leads the strategy and development of a product (often in tech). They define features, align the team, and ensure the product meets customer needs. **AI Impact: Complementary.** AI assists product managers through data analysis (e.g. analyzing user behavior with AI to inform feature decisions) and even generating initial design drafts or user stories. AI can also help prioritize backlogs by predicting which potential features might yield the highest ROI. However, the role's essence understanding user needs, setting vision, and crossfunctional leadership is inherently human. Product managers are increasingly managing AI-

driven products as well (integrating AI features into apps). **Demand: High (in tech).** Product management has grown with the tech industry's expansion. While not explicitly tracked by BLS, it's known that companies highly value product managers to drive innovation. The role consistently ranks in top career lists. As long as companies develop products, especially software and AI-enabled services, PMs will be needed to steer those efforts. **Ease of Entry: Moderate to Hard.** This role typically requires a mix of experiences – many PMs have backgrounds in either engineering, design, or business, and transition into product after a few years. There are associate product manager programs for new grads at some big tech firms, but they're competitive. In general, to be effective, one needs a solid understanding of the industry, customer empathy, and project management skills. It's not as straightforward to step into without domain experience. No specific advanced degree is mandatory (though an MBA or technical degree helps), but you must cultivate a broad skill set. It may take time in another role to build the necessary foundation.

• Technology Consultant: Advises organizations on technology strategy and solutions (could be as an IT consultant, digital transformation consultant, etc.). AI Impact: Highly Complementary. Consultants are using AI to enhance their analyses - for example, using AI to assess a client's IT systems faster, or to model the ROI of implementing an AI solution. Importantly, consultants who specialize in AI adoption are in great demand, guiding companies on how to integrate AI tools ethically and effectively. AI won't replace tech consultants because the job is fundamentally about understanding a client's unique context and tailoring advice - but consultants who don't embrace AI will fall behind those who do. Demand: High. As per WEF and industry reports, organizations are investing in digital transformation and need guidance - roles like technology or digital transformation consultants remain robust. Many consulting firms report growing practices in AI and cybersecurity advisory. (Management consulting overall is growing ~11% as noted 11, and tech consulting is a significant subset of that.) Ease of Entry: Moderate. Typically requires a strong foundation in technology (or a particular tech domain like cloud, cybersecurity, data analytics) and good client-facing skills. Many tech consultants start out in IT roles and then move into consulting, or join consulting firms right out of university if they have in-demand tech knowledge. An undergraduate degree in IT or engineering plus communication skills can suffice. It's less about formal advanced degrees (though they can help) and more about proven expertise. Transitioning into consulting might require building a track record or certifications in a technology, but it doesn't demand the depth of a specialist engineer - it demands breadth and the ability to quickly learn and solve problems with whatever tools (now including AI).

**Summary for business/management roles:** These careers are **future-proof and increasingly AI-enhanced**. They rarely require writing code or heavy math; instead they need an understanding of AI's outputs to make better decisions. Many of these roles (business analyst, management analyst, marketing analyst) are flagged for strong growth 1. They rank high in overall alignment because they marry well with AI tools and don't require a PhD to break into. For someone without an ultra-technical background but willing to upskill in analytics, this category offers some of the **best opportunities** to ride the AI wave.

## Cybersecurity, Automation, and IT Support Roles

This group covers roles focused on maintaining and improving IT systems, protecting against threats, and automating processes. They are technical but not necessarily about creating AI – rather, they **use AI** or are impacted by AI in their workflows:

- · Cybersecurity Engineer / Analyst: (We group these together, from security engineers who design security architecture to security analysts who monitor systems and respond to threats.) AI Impact: Strongly Complementary. AI is a force multiplier in cybersecurity. Security professionals leverage AI for threat detection and response - for example, machine learning systems that flag anomalies in network traffic or user behavior. This helps sift through enormous log data to catch attacks earlier. On the flip side, cyber attackers also use AI to find exploits, meaning security experts have to continuously adapt. Far from replacing cybersecurity roles, AI increases their importance - it takes human judgment to configure AI-driven security tools and respond to the sophisticated attacks AI may generate. **Demand: Very High.** Cybersecurity jobs are booming due to rising cyber threats. Information security analyst roles are projected to grow 33% in the U.S. (2023–2033) 16 - among the fastest-growing occupations. That's echoed by industry stats: cybersecurity is singled out as a high-demand field, with a ~32% growth for security analysts from 2022-2032 <sup>17</sup>. Every organization is investing in cyber defense, making this field highly future-proof. Ease of Entry: Moderate. You do need a solid IT foundation (networking, operating systems, etc.) but you don't necessarily need to code like a software developer. Many start as junior analysts with a bachelor's in cybersecurity, computer science, or even self-taught via certifications (Security+, CEH, etc.). The learning curve is broad (lots of tools and concepts: firewalls, encryption, threat analysis), but there are well-defined training paths and a big community. Crucially, the talent shortage in cybersecurity means there are opportunities for those who gain the necessary skills - it's possible to enter the field with a year or two of focused training and certifications, making it accessible compared to roles requiring advanced degrees.
- · Automation Engineer: Designs automated systems and processes. This can refer to industrial automation (robotics on a factory floor) or software automation/RPA (Robotic Process Automation of office tasks). AI Impact: Core Component. Automation engineers increasingly integrate AI into automation solutions - for example, using computer vision AI for quality inspection robots, or using machine learning to decide when to trigger certain automated processes. In software RPA, AI is used for intelligent document processing (reading invoices, etc.) and chatbots. Essentially, AI is expanding what can be automated. Rather than replacing the automation engineer, AI becomes part of their toolkit to automate more complex tasks. **Demand: High.** Companies are keen to streamline operations – the WEF lists "process automation specialists" as a role in demand as businesses adopt more Industry 4.0 and AI-driven process improvements 7. Manufacturing, logistics, and even service sectors are hiring automation experts to implement everything from assembly line robots to automated workflows. As an indicator, the broader category of industrial engineers (which includes process automation) is growing faster than average, and many companies have dedicated RPA teams for office automation. With AI enabling new automation possibilities, this role is only getting more important. Ease of Entry: Moderate. If focusing on software automation (RPA), the barrier is relatively low - one can learn RPA tools (UiPath, Automation Anywhere) through online courses and often a background in business process or IT is enough. Many business analysts are transitioning into RPA developer roles with a few months of training. If focusing on industrial automation, it's more technical – usually requiring an engineering degree (electrical/mechanical engineering) and knowledge of control systems/robotics. That path is harder. Overall, the learning path depends on the domain, but with the growth of low-code automation tools,

someone with decent analytical skills can enter the *software* side of automation without a heavy coding background. It's a promising route for those who like efficiency and process improvement, with AI skills giving an extra edge.

 Technical Support Engineer/Analyst: Provides IT support and troubleshooting for end-users or systems. (This covers helpdesk support, IT support specialists, etc.) AI Impact: Mixed -Automating Entry-Level Tasks. AI is already transforming support: chatbots and virtual assistants handle common Tier-1 queries (password resets, basic Q&A). This reduces the need for humans to answer simple questions. However, complex issues still escalate to human support engineers. In essence, AI is shifting support roles to handle higher-level problems while basic FAQs are automated. Support engineers also use AI themselves - e.g., AI-driven knowledge bases that suggest solutions, or remote diagnostic tools. **Demand: Modest.** Tech support isn't disappearing, but it's not high-growth. BLS projects 6% growth for computer support specialists (2023–2033) 18, around average. The role is essential (especially as technology proliferates), but efficiencies through AI and self-service mean companies might not increase support staff as much per device/user as in the past. Still, new tech (and new users) always generates support needs, so jobs persist, just at a moderate rate. Ease of Entry: Easy. This is often an entry-level IT job. It might only require an associate's degree or even just relevant certifications and good problem-solving skills. Many people break into IT via support roles without extensive formal education - customer service skills and basic tech know-how (which can be learned through courses or even hobbyist experience) can suffice. Because AI is handling easier tickets, the human support roles might gradually require a bit more skill for the tougher issues (which could mean more training over time), but overall it remains one of the most accessible tech roles. It's a good starting point for a career, though one should be prepared to continuously upskill (possibly transitioning into other IT areas) as some support functions become automated.

**Summary for this group:** Cybersecurity and automation roles rank **very high** in future alignment – they are **high-demand and heavily enhanced by AI** (security analysts and automation specialists are among WEF's top-growing jobs 1). They do require a technical bent, but are attainable through focused training rather than advanced degrees in many cases. Technical support roles are easy to start in and will use AI tools, but their long-term demand and growth are more limited due to automation of basic tasks. Overall, if you enjoy technology but perhaps not coding full-time, **cybersecurity or process automation** are excellent, future-proof paths to consider in the AI era.

# **Software Development and UX Roles**

These roles involve creating software or digital experiences. Software development is a high-demand field where AI is changing *how* code is written, and UX (user experience) ensures technology is user-friendly. They offer creative and technical career paths, though some require extensive learning:

• Back End Developer / Engineer: Focuses on server-side and database code that powers websites, applications, and services. AI Impact: Complementary (Productivity Boost). AI won't replace developers, but it's changing their workflow. Tools like GitHub Copilot or ChatGPT can generate boilerplate code or help debug, allowing back-end engineers to code faster <sup>17</sup>. AI might reduce the number of junior-level tasks (since AI can handle simple coding), but it also increases the complexity of what one developer can do – meaning skilled developers are still in high demand to design systems and integrate AI components. Demand: Very High. Software developers (which include back-end, front-end, full-stack) are projected to grow ~17% this decade <sup>19</sup> (much faster than average), creating hundreds of thousands of new jobs <sup>20</sup>. In fact, software development remains one of the top occupations for growth in absolute terms. Every

industry needs software, and cloud computing and AI services on the back end are especially growth areas. **Ease of Entry: Hard.** Becoming a proficient back-end developer typically requires learning programming languages (e.g. Java, Python, C#), understanding algorithms, databases, API design, etc. A CS degree or intensive coding bootcamp is usually needed to build this foundation. The learning curve for someone new to programming is significant (6+ months of full-time learning just to be job-ready at junior level in many cases). The field also changes rapidly, so continuous learning is part of the job. That said, the abundance of online resources and bootcamps has made it *possible* for self-driven individuals to transition into dev roles – it's just a considerable commitment.

- Video Game Developer: A specialized software developer who creates video games (could be a gameplay programmer, graphics programmer, or even roles like level designer - though the latter is more on the creative design side). AI Impact: Complementary and Creative Assistance. AI is making waves in game development by generating assets (textures, character models from text prompts) and even assisting in coding simple game logic. This can drastically reduce development time for certain elements. However, designing a fun, engaging game requires human creativity - AI can't (currently) invent a game concept or ensure game mechanics are balanced and enjoyable. Instead, it's used as a tool (e.g., procedural content generation, AIdriven NPC behavior) under the quidance of game developers. Demand: Steady to Growing. The gaming industry is large and growing, so demand for game developers continues, although it's a niche compared to general software dev. BLS doesn't separately track "game developers" – many are counted among software developers. The industry does experience cycles (game studios can rise and fall based on hits), but overall as interactive entertainment expands (including AR/VR games), skilled game programmers are sought after. It's not as broadly indemand as enterprise software dev (so perhaps a bit more limited in job count), but it's a stable niche with passionate talent. Ease of Entry: Hard. In addition to general programming, game dev often requires mastery of specialized game engines (Unity, Unreal) and sometimes lowerlevel languages (C++ for performance). It also helps to understand computer graphics, physics, and linear algebra for certain roles - which raises the technical bar. Moreover, it's a very competitive field; many people dream of making games, so entry-level positions receive a flood of applicants. It usually requires building a strong portfolio (e.g., indie projects or mods) to break in. If one is already a software developer, transitioning to game dev still means learning new tools/skills. For a newcomer to programming, it's a long road – though a rewarding one for those passionate about gaming.
- UI/UX Manager (and UX Designer roles): Ensures that products (websites, apps, software interfaces) are easy to use and meet user needs. A UI/UX Manager is a leadership role overseeing design teams, but let's consider the field broadly. AI Impact: Complementary. AI is a powerful new assistant in the design process. For example, AI design tools can generate multiple design layout options from a wireframe, or AI can analyze user interaction data to suggest UX improvements. There are AI tools that quickly create mockups or perform accessibility checks. These augment the designer's capabilities, handling tedious draft work so designers can focus on higher-level creativity. AI doesn't replace the deep understanding of human emotions and aesthetics - a UX professional still must decide "does this design feel right for our users?" and conduct user research (though even user research is aided by AI in aggregating survey responses or simulating user behavior). **Demand: Moderate to High.** User experience design has been recognized as crucial as digital products proliferate. UX roles saw a hiring boom in the late 2010s. While there was a recent cooling in big tech hiring, the long-term outlook is positive, with UX and product design skills among top upskilling recommendations 21. Industries like finance, healthcare, and government are now investing in UX, not just Silicon Valley. BLS groups UX designers with web developers/digital designers, projecting ~8% growth [22], but that may

underestimate UX-specific demand. Overall, companies know that good UX = competitive advantage, so skilled designers remain sought-after. **Ease of Entry: Moderate.** This field does not require coding, but it requires a mix of design talent and psychology. Many UX professionals come from varied backgrounds (graphic design, psychology, HCI programs). You can enter with a bachelor's (some schools now offer UX design degrees) or via UX bootcamps. Building a strong portfolio of sample designs and case studies is key. The basics of design software (Figma, Adobe XD) are relatively quick to learn compared to programming; the harder part is mastering the user-centered design process and gaining an eye for usability. With dedication, one could transition into a junior UX role within a year of training. The "Manager" title implies years of experience – but as a field, UX offers an accessible ramp to creative individuals willing to learn research and design principles. It's worth noting that because many saw UX as "easier to learn than coding," there's been increased competition at the entry level, so newcomers must work hard to stand out (AI skills in design could be one differentiator).

• Mainframe Developer: Develops and maintains software for mainframe systems (large, legacy computers often running COBOL or similar languages in banks, governments, older enterprises). AI Impact: Minimal (Legacy Focus). Mainframe environments are traditional; AI hasn't deeply penetrated legacy COBOL codebases (aside from some efforts to use AI to translate COBOL to modern languages). AI might assist mainframe devs in code analysis or optimizing batch jobs, but it's not central to the role. Critically, mainframe development is not a growing field in the AI era - it's a specialized niche maintaining older systems. Demand: Low overall, but with niche pockets. New development has largely moved off mainframes, but many critical systems still run on them (e.g., for large banks). The workforce of mainframe developers is aging and retiring, which means there are openings to maintain legacy code. However, in the long run, many organizations are modernizing and migrating away from mainframes. BLS doesn't list "mainframe developer" specifically; they fall under programmers - a category projected to decline slightly as programming roles shift to other titles and some coding gets automated/ offshored. In the near term, a COBOL programmer might find lucrative maintenance contracts (due to scarcity of skills), but as a career, it's not "future-proof" in the sense of growth - it exists as long as those legacy systems do. Ease of Entry: Moderate. Paradoxically, learning COBOL and mainframe operations might be easier than learning modern full-stack development - the languages and paradigms are simpler in some respects - but the opportunities to learn and apply these skills are limited. Few courses teach it (though some online resources and IBM training exist). Usually, mainframe devs started decades ago, or certain companies run trainee programs to bring new talent in. Without prior programming knowledge, one would still have to learn programming basics. If one already knows programming, picking up COBOL isn't too hard (the challenge is understanding the specific mainframe environment). Still, pursuing this path is only sensible if you're in an industry or region where mainframes remain heavily used. It's a niche skill set - potentially profitable in the short term, but not a broad or adaptive one for the future.

**Summary for dev and UX:** Software developers (including back-end and specialized devs) are in **high demand and very AI-relevant**, but require a significant investment in learning. They rank well on AI and future-proofing, but lower on ease of entry. UX design offers a middle ground – creative techadjacent work that's bolstered by AI and doesn't demand coding, with solid demand. Mainframe programming, while technically an IT role, aligns poorly with the AI future (low compatibility and growth), so it ranks low despite not needing cutting-edge tech skills.

## **Other Specialized Roles**

Lastly, consider some roles outside the pure tech sphere. These are more traditional fields (real estate, tax) or domain-specific analyst roles (logistics). They illustrate how AI's impact and future outlook can vary widely:

- Real Estate Agent: Facilitates buying and selling of properties, a very people-centric sales role. AI Impact: Partial Automation (but human touch remains). AI and tech have already changed this job - property listing platforms (Zillow, Redfin) use AI for home value estimates, and clients can find homes online without an agent. AI chatbots might handle initial inquiries, and algorithms can match buyers to properties. This reduces some of the agent's traditional informational role. However, the critical parts of real estate transactions - negotiations, understanding client preferences at an emotional level, and quiding clients through complex legal processes – still often require a human agent. So AI complements by providing better data, but doesn't fully replace the agent's advisory and interpersonal functions. Demand: Low Growth. Real estate agent/broker employment in the US is projected to grow only ~2% over the decade 23, which is slower than average. The housing market's health influences this role, and efficiency gains (like online platforms reducing the need for as many agents) play a part in the modest outlook. It's also a crowded field in many areas. Ease of Entry: Easy (License Required). Typically no advanced education is required - one must take a short real estate course, pass a licensing exam, and then build clientele. The barrier to entry is low compared to tech jobs. However, succeeding is a different story - it requires strong sales skills, networking, and tolerance for a commission-based income. From a pure learning standpoint, it's far easier to become a licensed real estate agent than, say, a data scientist. But given the weaker growth and partial automation, this role ranks low for alignment with an AI-driven future. It's a viable career for those who excel at sales, but it's not "tech-forward."
- Tax Analyst/Specialist: Handles tax planning, compliance, and filings for individuals or organizations. (This includes tax preparers, tax advisors, etc.) AI Impact: Automating Routine Work. The tax field is experiencing automation through software: think of how TurboTax simplified individual tax prep. AI can further enhance this by quickly analyzing tax law changes, scanning for deductions, or even preparing initial returns. For straightforward cases, AI-enabled software can handle much of the work (indeed, simple tax preparation jobs are at risk). However, complex tax strategy and compliance for businesses still need human experts - interpreting nuanced regulations, advising on tax-efficient strategies, and representing clients in audits are tasks requiring expert judgment. AI acts as a powerful tool for research and error-checking for these professionals. Demand: Moderate. The broader category of accountants and auditors (which includes tax professionals) is growing about 6% this decade [24] - roughly average. Within that, the subset of "tax preparers" specifically may face stagnation or decline due to DIY software for simple returns. But at the higher end (tax consultants, corporate tax analysts), demand is stable because tax codes remain complex. Overall, not a high-growth field, but also not collapsing - it evolves as regulations change. Ease of Entry: Moderate. To work in tax, one usually needs at least a bachelor's in accounting or a related field. To advance or practice independently, certifications help (CPA license, or Enrolled Agent for specialized tax focus). The material - tax law and accounting principles - is extensive, but it's a well-trodden learning path through college programs and exams. It's certainly easier than mastering AI algorithms, but one must be detail-oriented and comfortable with numbers and legal rules. The learning curve is mostly about memorization and application of laws, which some might find dry but not conceptually esoteric. In summary, tax specialists are somewhat insulated from AI (especially in complex scenarios) but the field isn't rapidly expanding, and simpler tasks are being automated, placing this role in a middle-to-lower ranking for future alignment.

· Logistics / Supply Chain Analyst: Manages and analyzes supply chain operations - e.g., optimizing shipping routes, inventory levels, procurement strategies. AI Impact: Highly Complementary. Supply chain management has embraced AI for its predictive power. AI systems can forecast demand more accurately, identify inefficiencies, and even autonomously reroute shipments around disruptions (as seen during global supply chain shocks). A logistics analyst armed with AI tools can simulate countless scenarios (for example, using machine learning to predict delays or optimal inventory) and get decision support recommendations. Rather than replacing the analyst, AI helps handle the complexity of global supply data, while humans make judgment calls on trade-offs (cost vs speed, etc.) and handle supplier relationships. Demand: High. The importance of supply chain resilience has been underscored in recent years. Employment for logisticians is projected to grow about 19% from 2023-2033 25, which is much faster than average. Companies are investing in supply chain analytics to prevent the kind of shortages seen in the pandemic era. New roles like supply chain data scientists are emerging, but even traditional logistics analysts are more valued than ever. This is a future-proof field as efficient movement of goods remains critical and challenging - and AI actually increases the need for skilled analysts who can interpret AI's output and implement changes. Ease of Entry: Moderate. A typical logistics analyst has a bachelor's in supply chain management, operations research, or industrial engineering. Analytical skills (sometimes using Excel, SQL, or specialized supply chain software) are needed, but the math required is often at the level of statistics and maybe linear programming - which can be learned at undergraduate level. Professional certifications (like APICS CPIM/CSCP) can boost one's credentials. It's a bit of a specialized domain, so some familiarity with how supply chains work is required. However, you don't need to code AI algorithms yourself - you need to interpret and use them. Someone with a general business or engineering background can transition into this role by learning supply chain concepts and tools, making it reasonably accessible. Given the strong demand and the increasing use of AI in the field, this role ranks quite high in alignment.

Taking all these insights, we can now **rank the roles** based on how well they fulfill the trifecta of being AI-friendly, future-proof, and learnable. Roles near the top offer a sweet spot of high demand, heavy AI augmentation, and relatively lower barriers to entry. Roles at the bottom are either less impacted by AI (and possibly at risk of automation) or require very specialized knowledge that makes entry difficult without years of training.

# Ranked Roles by AI Alignment, Demand, and Accessibility

The table below ranks each role from most aligned (Rank 1) to least aligned (Rank 26) with the user's criteria:

1 Data Analyst tools for insights; AI complements human analysis, not human analysis, not tools for insights; AI complements human analysis, not tools for insights; AI growth expected growth expected tools for insights; AI growth expected tools for insights; AI growth expected tools for insights; AI complements tools for insights; AI growth expected tools for insights; AI complements tools for insights in the complement to the compleme	Rank	Role	AI Compatibility (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
on the rise	1	Data Analyst	driven analytics tools for insights; AI complements	Data analytics roles >30% growth expected ¹; data-driven decision making	analytical skills and tools (SQL, Excel); learnable via bachelor's or bootcamp

Rank	Role	<b>AI Compatibility</b> (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
2	Business Analyst (General)	High – AI can automate reports & suggest process improvements, analyst interprets results	High Growth – Business analyst roles projected >30% growth as organizations seek efficiency	Easy/Mod – Requires business acumen and communication; typically needs bachelor's; minimal coding required
3	Business Intelligence (BI) Analyst	High – AI augments BI (automated dashboards, AI queries), human curates insights	High Growth – Strong demand as companies adopt BI; part of data analyst trend	Moderate – Need BI software skills; attainable with undergrad degree and on-the-job training (data-focused but not overly technical)
4	Management Analyst (Business Consultant)	High – AI handles large-scale data analysis, consultant focuses on strategy recommendations	High Growth – ~11% growth 11; consulting demand remains strong, especially for digital/AIsavvy advisors	Moderate – Requires experience & problem- solving; often need bachelor's+experience (or MBA); no heavy technical skill required
5	Marketing Analytics Specialist	High – relies on AI for customer segmentation, ad targeting, marketing predictions	High Growth – Digital marketing/ analytics roles growing ~25–35%  13 as marketing becomes data- driven	Moderate – Combines marketing know-how with data skills; can be learned via marketing degree + analytics courses (no advanced math needed)
6	Cybersecurity (Engineer/ Analyst)	High – AI is used for threat detection & response; increases scope of security work (and need for human oversight)	Very High Growth – 33%+ growth <sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> ; one of the fastest- growing tech fields due to rising cyber threats	Moderate – Needs IT/ security knowledge (network, OS, etc.) but achievable with certs/BS; not as math-heavy as data science (hands-on learning path)
7	Logistics/ Supply Chain Analyst	High – uses AI for forecasting and optimization; AI tools amplify human decision-making in supply chains	High Growth - ~19% growth 25; supply chain roles in demand as companies prioritize efficiency and resilience	Moderate – Requires understanding of operations and analytics; learnable with bachelor's in supply chain or engineering (and certifications)

Rank	Role	<b>AI Compatibility</b> (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
8	Automation Engineer	High – designs AI- driven automation (RPA, robotics); AI expands what processes can be automated	High Growth – Automation/ process specialist roles growing as businesses invest in efficiency <sup>7</sup>	Moderate – Needs engineering or process knowledge; RPA roles accessible via specialized training, industrial automation needs engineering degree
9	Project Manager	Medium – AI assists in scheduling/risk tracking, but PMs lead people and deliver projects	Steady Growth – ~7% growth <sup>15</sup> ; consistent need across industries for coordination roles	Moderate – Requires organization & leadership, not technical depth; PMI certifications useful; often entered via experience rather than advanced study
10	IT Project Manager	Medium – Similar to above, plus manages tech teams (AI helps track technical tasks)	Steady Growth – (Included in project management growth; tech sector project demand strong)	Moderate – Need some IT domain understanding + PM skills; typically achieved via experience in tech teams and possibly PMP certification
11	Social Media Strategist/ Specialist	High – heavy use of AI tools for content generation and analytics; human crafts strategy and branding	Moderate Growth – Digital content roles expanding with social platforms, though not formally tracked by BLS (falls under marketing growth)	Easy – Low formal education barrier; can enter via personal experience or short courses. Creativity and trend-savviness are key (tech knowledge not deep)
12	Product Manager	Medium – AI aids in data-driven product decisions and feature planning; PMs still set vision and coordinate teams	High Demand – Especially in tech; role remains crucial for innovation (though no specific BLS % available, industry reports show strong need)	Moderately Hard – Requires mix of domain experience, business and some technical literacy; often not entry-level (many PMs transition from other roles or have MBA)

Rank	Role	AI Compatibility (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
13	Technology Consultant	Medium/High – Advises on AI adoption and tech strategy; uses AI tools for analysis but relies on human expertise for recommendations	High Demand – Companies seek AI/digital transformation advice; consulting sector growth ~11% 11	Moderate – Need broad tech knowledge and problem-solving; typically requires BS and some experience. No coding needed, but continuous upskilling in new tech (AI, cloud) is required
14	Data Scientist	High – builds AI/ML models; essentially <i>creates</i> AI solutions (AI is the job)	Very High Growth – ~36% growth 3 4; one of the fastest- growing jobs in tech	Hard – Strong in math, stats, and programming; often requires Master's/ PhD or significant specialized training. High skill ceiling but excellent prospects
15	UI/UX Manager (UX Designer)	Medium – AI accelerates design drafts and user research, but creative design and user empathy remain human tasks	Moderate Growth – Steady demand as user experience remains crucial (digital designers ~8% growth <sup>22</sup> ; UX design recommended upskill <sup>21</sup> )	Moderate – Requires design thinking skills; learnable via bootcamps or design programs. Not coding-intensive, but portfolio and experience needed (manager roles need years in field)
16	Data Engineer	Medium – uses AI- assisted development (e.g., AI suggestions for code); ensures data pipelines for AI systems	High Demand – Implied in "big data specialists" growth; essential for data-driven organizations <sup>10</sup>	Hard – Requires strong programming/database skills; typically BS in CS or similar. Considerable learning in big data tools and cloud infrastructure
17	Back End Developer/ Engineer	Medium – coding aided by AI (automation of routine code); still requires human architectural thinking	High Growth - ~17% growth for software dev 19; back-end skills in demand for expanding digital services	Hard – Must learn programming languages, algorithms, system design; often needs a CS degree or intensive coding bootcamp. Ongoing learning is necessary as tech evolves

Rank	Role	AI Compatibility (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
18	Statistician	Medium – statistical software may include AI features, but statisticians focus on design and interpretation of studies	Moderate Growth - ~11% growth 9; demand persists especially in healthcare, government, etc., but many roles labeled "data scientist" now absorb pure statisticians	Hard – Deep math/stats knowledge required; typically need graduate degree in statistics or related field. Niche but valuable expertise
19	Machine Learning Engineer	High – core developer of AI systems; works on model deployment/ optimization	Very High Demand – ML/ AISpecialist roles near top of growth projections 7 as companies implement AI	Very Hard – Requires both software engineering and advanced ML knowledge; steep learning curve (usually advanced degree or significant experience needed)
20	Technical Support Engineer/ Analyst	Low/Medium – AI chatbots handle basic support queries, leaving humans with complex issues; AI tools help troubleshoot	Modest Growth - ~6% growth 18; lower-tier support roles may decline as automation increases, but higher-tier support remains	Easy – Often entry-level; can start with basic IT know-how and customer service skills. Certifications or associate degree can help, but barrier to start is low
21	Data Warehouse Developer	Medium – data warehousing increasingly automated (cloud warehouses, AI tuning), but still needs human design and integration	Moderate Demand – Still needed as part of data engineering teams, though trend is toward modern cloud data platforms	Moderately Hard – Needs solid SQL/database skills and understanding of ETL processes; often a specialization for an experienced developer or DBA
22	Data Architect	Medium – AI tools might assist in optimizing schemas, but crafting a data architecture for an enterprise needs human insight	Moderate Demand – Important role in organizations, though often a senior position rather than large numbers of openings	Hard – Typically a seasoned professional (years in data management); requires broad knowledge of databases, modeling, and business requirements. Not an entry role

Rank	Role	<b>AI Compatibility</b> (Will AI augment this role?)	Future Demand Outlook (Growth)	Ease of Learning/Entry (Typical barrier)
23	Video Game Developer	Medium – AI can generate game assets/code snippets, but human developers drive game design and complex programming	Steady Demand  - Gaming industry grows, but niche; competitive field with limited positions compared to general software dev	Hard – Must master game programming (often C++/C#) and domain-specific skills (graphics, physics). Usually requires portfolio of game projects; high competition for jobs
24	Tax Analyst/ Specialist	Low/Medium – Tax software/AI automates simple returns; specialists still needed for complex tax strategy and compliance	Average Demand  - ~6% growth for broader accounting roles  24; simple tax prep roles may shrink, but corporate tax expertise remains in demand	Moderate – Requires learning detailed tax laws; usually needs accounting degree & certification (CPA or similar). Less technical than IT roles, but lots of specialized knowledge
25	Real Estate Agent	Low – AI-driven listing platforms and pricing algorithms reduce some agent tasks, though agents still perform negotiations and personal advisement	Low Growth - ~2% growth <sup>23</sup> ; housing sector growth is slow, tech is enabling clients to self- serve more	Easy – Low educational requirements (real estate license course); success hinges on sales skills and network. Profession is being re-shaped by online tools, limiting future prospects
26	Mainframe Developer	Low – Little involvement with modern AI; focuses on legacy systems (COBOL) with minimal AI integration	Declining/Low Demand – Mainly maintenance of existing systems; new development shifting off mainframes (programmer jobs declining overall)	Moderate – Needs knowledge of outdated languages/systems; entry paths are few. Easier technically than modern dev, but niche skill with shrinking relevance in long term

(Note: "Future Demand Outlook" ratings are based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projections and World Economic Forum reports as cited. "Ease of Entry" is a relative judgment considering typical education/skill requirements; individual experiences may vary.)

#### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

**Top-ranked careers (Data Analyst, Business Analyst, BI Analyst, Management Consultant)** emerge as **excellent choices** for balancing AI-alignment, growth, and accessibility. They allow you to leverage AI tools to be more productive while working in roles that organizations are investing heavily in 1. These roles generally require only a bachelor's level education and some upskilling, making them attainable without years of graduate study. For example, a **data analyst** can take a few months of focused training in SQL, Python, and Tableau and start contributing in a data-driven team – all while using AI augmentations (like automated insights) to amplify their impact.

Roles like **cybersecurity analyst, supply chain analyst, and automation specialist** are also strong options. They might need a bit more specific technical training upfront, but they are highly future-proof with AI in the loop (security analysts in particular are in *extreme demand* given the threat landscape <sup>17</sup>). If you have interest in IT and problem-solving, these fields offer longevity and the excitement of working alongside cutting-edge AI tools (for threat hunting, optimization, etc.).

If you lean more toward **creative or management** aspects, consider **UX design or project/product management**. These are not as red-hot in growth as data roles, but they are stable and evolving with AI (e.g., project managers using AI for smarter scheduling, UX designers using generative AIs for rapid prototyping <sup>21</sup> ). They require developing a different skill set (design thinking for UX, leadership for PM), but not heavy coding. They made the middle of the ranking because demand is solid and one can train into them, though expect competition and the need to continually adapt (as AI will change best practices in these fields too).

For those passionate about **software development or ML** – know that these are **high-opportunity but high-effort** paths. A role like **machine learning engineer or software developer** can be incredibly rewarding in the AI era (you'd be building the very AI systems driving change). They are absolutely future-proof – if you have these skills, you'll be in demand. The only reason they ranked mid-pack is the **learning curve**: you'd need to commit to extensive study and practice (often years) to reach proficiency. If you have the time, aptitude, and interest in deep technical work, pursuing one of these roles could pay off greatly. Just be prepared for continuous learning; even seasoned developers are constantly upskilling as new AI frameworks and programming tools emerge.

Finally, roles at the bottom of the list (like **real estate agent, basic tax preparer, mainframe developer**) are less aligned with the question's focus on AI and future growth. This doesn't mean they have no career value – but they either face headwinds from AI automation or stagnant demand. For instance, real estate relies more on personal sales skill and is only tangentially touched by AI (and what AI does there – like online listings – tends to reduce the agent's role) <sup>23</sup>. If you are already in such a field and love it, you can certainly incorporate AI tools to stay competitive (e.g., a real estate agent using AI-driven lead targeting). However, if you're deciding on a new path with an eye on the next 10–20 years, the **data/analytical and tech-centric roles offer more robust prospects**.

**Conclusion:** Careers that intersect with AI and data are thriving. By targeting roles where AI is a tool for empowerment rather than a threat – and where market demand is strong – you can "future-proof" your profession. The evaluation shows a clear trend: jobs that *create* or *harness* AI (data science, analytics, security, automation) are growing fast and are likely to be augmented (made more productive) by AI, not eliminated. Jobs heavy on routine processing or that lag in tech adoption are more vulnerable. Equally important is choosing a role that fits your ability to learn: many of the top-growing jobs are accessible with the right upskilling approach, even if you're not an AI expert. With the abundance of online courses, certifications, and training programs available in 2025, transitioning into these in-

demand fields is more feasible than ever – and the investment in learning will pay off given the strong career outlook <sup>8</sup> <sup>17</sup>. By aligning your career with the **rising tide of AI** while cultivating uniquely human skills (critical thinking, creativity, empathy), you'll position yourself for success in the years ahead.

**Sources:** The analysis above is backed by data from the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs 2023* report <sup>7</sup> <sup>1</sup>, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projections <sup>3</sup> <sup>16</sup>, and industry studies on AI and jobs <sup>17</sup> <sup>21</sup>, as cited throughout. These provide a quantitative basis for the demand projections and underscore how AI is influencing each profession.

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