



Abdulla Al Ghurair
Foundation

The Abdulla Al Ghurair UAE Skills Pulse Report 2025

Aligning Talent with Tomorrow



Changing Demand and Potential Gaps: The State of the UAE's Skills Economy 2025

Insights & Trends Shaping the UAE's Future Workforce – powered by Massar Al Ghurair

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1. Navigating the Skills Economy: Global Trends Shaping the UAE's Future

Rapid technological advances are reshaping labor markets around the world, creating new opportunities while rendering some skills obsolete. In response, the UAE has placed skills development at the heart of its national priorities, notably through the vision set out in **We the UAE 2031**, the UAE Centennial 2071, and the UAE National Employment Strategy 2031, among others¹.

Achieving the country's ambitious human capital goals will require a deeper understanding of how job skills are evolving, along with bold and coordinated action to close existing and emerging skills gaps. This shift will have significant implications for all stakeholders in the UAE's labor market: employers, workers/learners, educators, and the government.

Several global forces are accelerating the shift toward a skills-based economy:

- **Nearly 4 in 10 (39%)** of core job skills will change within five years, driven by **digital adoption** that is both creating new roles and reshaping existing ones².
- The global economy is increasingly built on intangible assets like intellectual property, knowledge, and skills, with

leading companies investing over **2.5 times** more in intangibles than in physical assets.

- The rise of AI is further speeding up these transformations. Industry consensus is that AI is more likely to **complement human work** than replace it, which will increase demand for new skill sets.

These trends are also playing out in the UAE, shaped by its own unique regional dynamics. Massar al Ghurair, the new career enablement platform for Emirati and Arab youth developed by the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation in partnership with SkyHive by Cornerstone, will play a key role in enabling skills adaptation and development.

The Skills Economy: Why Capabilities, Not Just Jobs, Matter

In today's economy, jobs are no longer the most accurate lens for understanding workforce readiness. The real currency is skills and more importantly, how adaptable, transferable, and future-proof those skills are.

This shift demands a new mindset: instead of asking "**How many jobs are available?**", we must ask

Do people have the skills needed to thrive in those jobs, and the ones yet to emerge?

Focusing on skills allows governments, educators, and employers to design systems that are more responsive to change. It also ensures that workers remain relevant, even as roles evolve.

This mindset is central to the UAE's strategic direction. The UAE 2031 vision calls for lifelong learning and future-ready talent. The Emiratization goal of **75,000** private sector placements will only be achieved by investing in the right capabilities, not just credentials.

The skills economy focuses on intangible assets (skills, knowledge, intellectual property) essential to thriving in a fast-changing global labor market.

Economies that prioritize skill development outperform those relying solely on traditional assets.

1. We the UAE 2031, UAE Centennial 2071, UAE National Employment Strategy 2031, UAE National AI Strategy 2031, Skill Up Academy.

2. World Economic Forum. (2025). Future of Jobs Report 2025

2. What UAE Employers Need Today and Tomorrow

The UAE labor market is evolving quickly, and employer priorities are shifting accordingly. As the country pursues economic diversification and digitization, demand is growing for a blend of human, technical, and future-facing skills, especially in AI and sustainability-related sectors.

2.1. The Fastest-growing Skills in the UAE

Rising demand for specific skills provides a clear view into shifting employer expectations. In the UAE, employers increasingly value workers who understand customers, navigate data, and demonstrate resilience. Client interaction tops the list of the fastest-growing skills in demand for 2023-24, while professional courage ranks third, suggesting that these will be critical needs for employers in the coming years.

This underscores the importance of human skills in a fast-paced evolving technological landscape. Discussions are often centered around “**hard skills**”, yet that is only part of the story. Few roles are purely technical; most rely on collaboration, adaptability, problem-solving, and advancing shared goals.

In the UAE, and globally, job postings and employers are reflecting this balance.

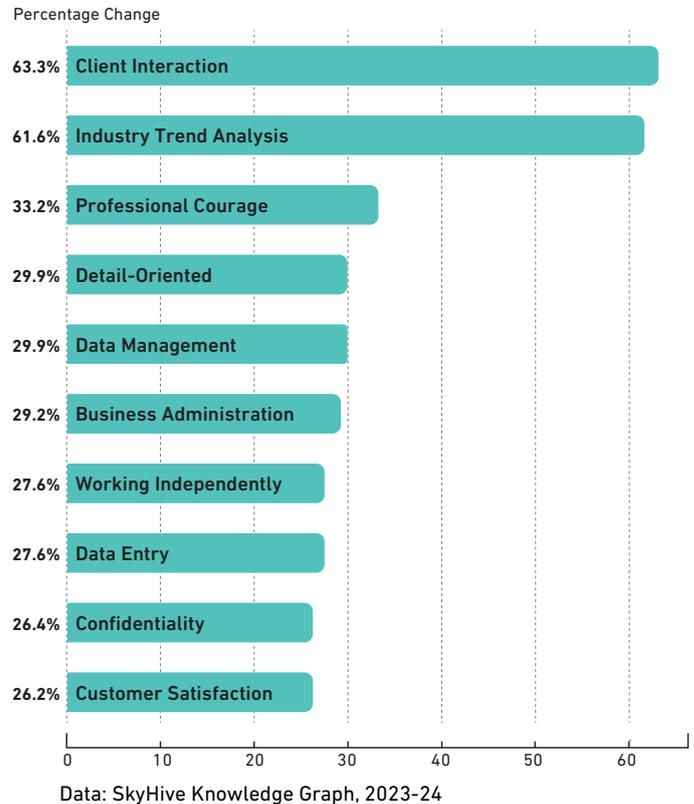
In 2024, 59% of the skills cited in UAE job postings were human skills compared to 41% technical skills.



Communication, management, teamwork, and accountability consistently rank among the most sought-after skills in demand. While technical

requirements vary by sector, human capabilities and transferable skills remain the foundation of a competitive economy transcending specific sectors (See Appendix: Most Requested Skills in the UAE, by Industry).

Figure 1: Fastest-growing skills in demand in the UAE, 2023-4



2.2. AI in the UAE: Small but Growing Demand

Globally, technology is driving skill change, and the same trend can be seen in the UAE. Over the past five years, technologies like AI, blockchain, cloud computing, and sustainable development have seen significant rises in global demand.

Over 2023-24, demand for AI skills by UAE employers has soared, but other digital skills in demand show how key technologies have become important.

Figure 2: Year-over-Year Growth in Digital Skills Demand in the UAE (2023-2024)

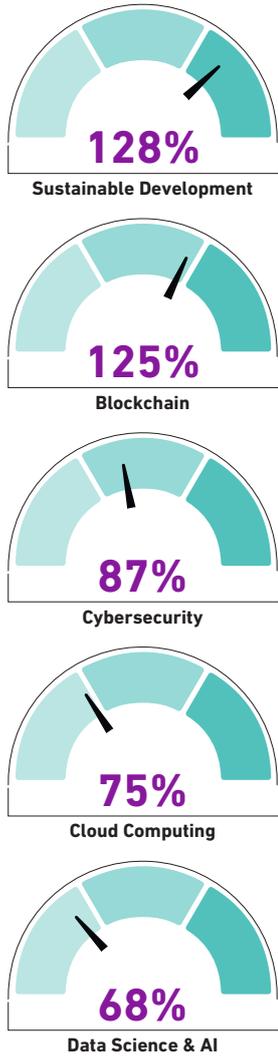
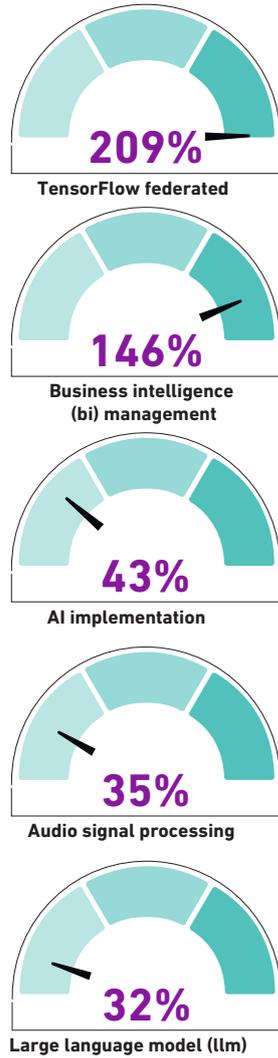


Figure 3: Percentage Growth of Top AI-Related Skills in the UAE



Data: SkyHive Knowledge Graph, 2023-24

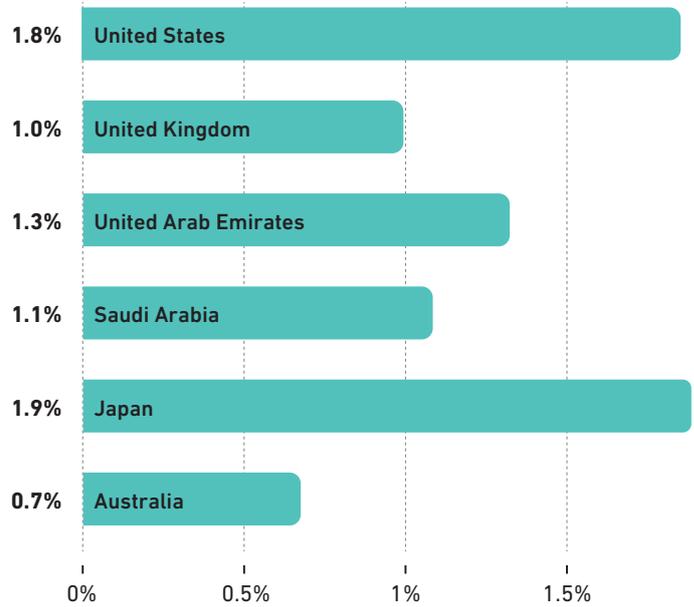
While the UAE's AI talent pool remains small in absolute terms, both demand and supply are competitive in percentage terms. While only **4.1% of UAE job seekers listed AI skills** on their profiles in 2023, AI-related certifications increased by **483%** over the past two years, a sign of strong momentum.

Table 4: Share of Talent with AI Skills Across Countries, 2023

UAE	4.12%
United States	4.01%
United Kingdom	3.83%
Australia	2.69%
Japan	0.39%

Notably, the UAE shows **higher demand for AI and machine learning skills** than the UK, Saudi Arabia, or Australia but less than the United States or Japan, while leading all of them in demand for generative AI skills.

Figure 4: Share of Demand on AI and Machine Learning Skills since 2024



Data: SkyHive Knowledge Graph, global, 2024

2.3. Green Skills: UAE Demand Increases

Global demand for green and sustainability-related skills has grown steadily up to

76% over the past five years.

Countries like Spain, New Zealand, and Germany currently lead in green hiring, but the UAE is accelerating, particularly in sectors tied to infrastructure and regulation.

In the UAE, the fastest-growing green skills include environmental health and safety, quality inspection, and industry standard adherence. Green skills related to construction are in particular demand, given the robust infrastructure investment in the UAE.

Figure 5: Global Share of Job Postings in Sustainability

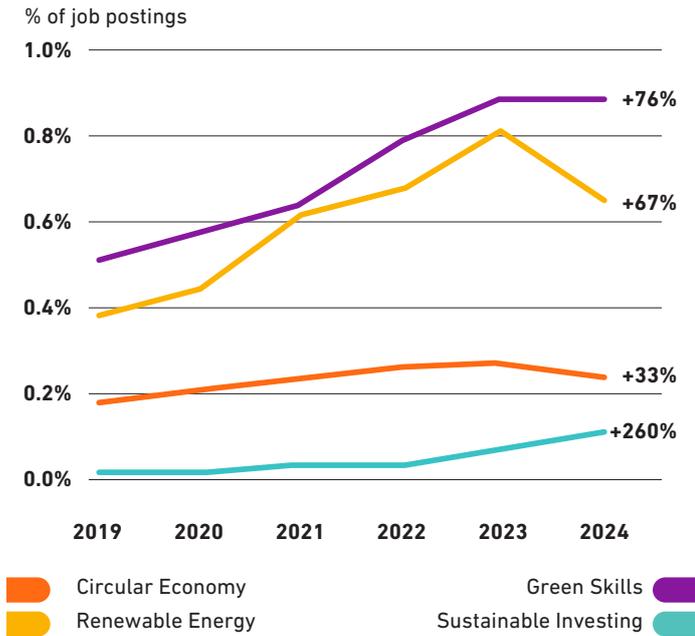


Table 5: Fastest-growing skills in demand

Green Skill	2023-24 percentage growth
Environmental Health and Safety	84.29
Quality Inspection	68.09
Industry Standard Adherence	67.15
Building Regulations	59.8
Engineering Design	51.67
Product Lifecycle Management	48.37
Process Optimization	45.15
Environmental Regulation	41.36
Design Specifications	41.28
Construction Methods	35.4
Waste Minimization	33.11

Data: SkyHive Knowledge Graph, 2024

Despite this growing demand, talent supply remains limited. Only **2.1% of UAE job seekers list green skills** on their profiles. While this is a competitive rate globally, it is still far below what's needed to support the UAE's transition to a green economy.

Table 6: Percentage of Job Profiles Citing Green Skills, Selected Countries, 2023

UAE	2.14%
United Kingdom	2.33%
United States	1.52%
Australia	1.69%
Japan	0.22%

Data: SkyHive Knowledge Graph, global, 2024

3. Equipping Emirati and Arab Youth for Tomorrow's Economy

Young people in the UAE are key to shaping a future-ready workforce. To contribute meaningfully to national goals like Emiratization and economic diversification, they must build the ability to learn, adapt, and collaborate in a fast-changing landscape. A stable, adaptable talent pipeline is essential.

Two strategies will be critical to making it a reality:

- Equipping Arab youth with skills that complement AI
- Empowering Arab Youth to Showcase Essential Human Skills

3.1 Equipping Arab youth with skills that complement AI

Across industries, leaders mostly agree that AI is more likely to augment human work than replace it. Those who can effectively use AI tools, will have a clear advantage in the evolving job market. Employers are already responding by seeking candidates who

combine technical fluency with real-world application skills, a powerful mix often listed alongside AI in job postings.

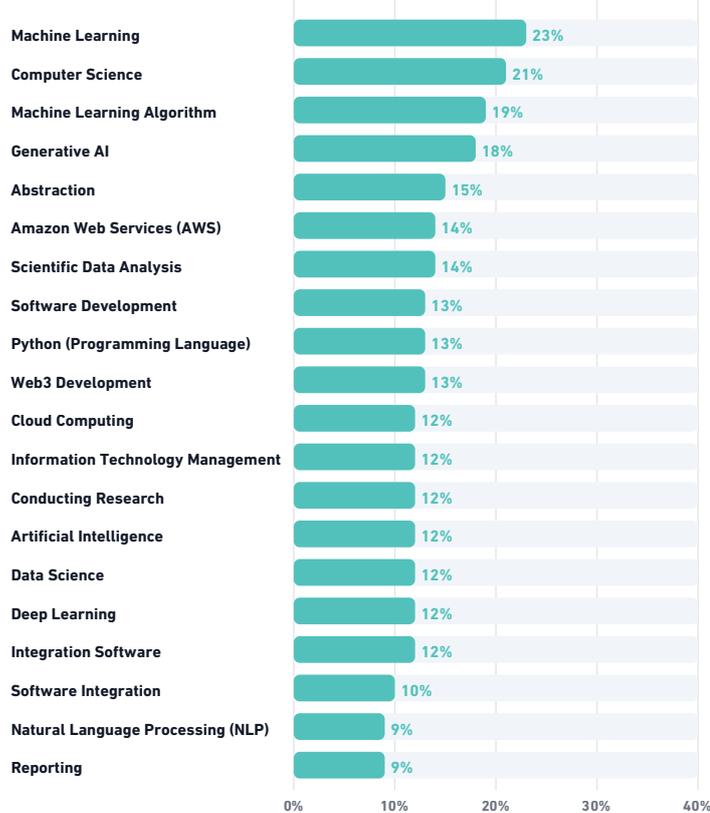
These complementary skills fall into three critical categories:

- **Technical skills:** Using, building, or maintaining software, engineering, or cloud computing systems, among others.
- **Functional skills:** Core to running organizations, such as, project management or sales.
- **Human skills:** Timeless enablers of teamwork like communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

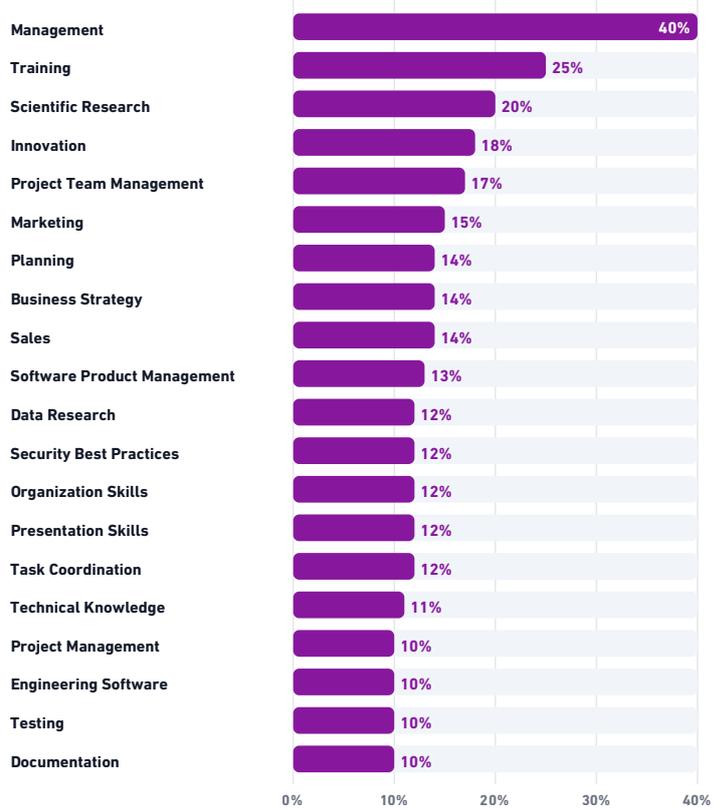
Together, these skills enable youth to thrive in tech-integrated roles. In the UAE, top in-demand complementary skills for 2023–24 included python, machine learning, cloud computing, and computer science.

Figure 6: Top Complementary skills to GenAI

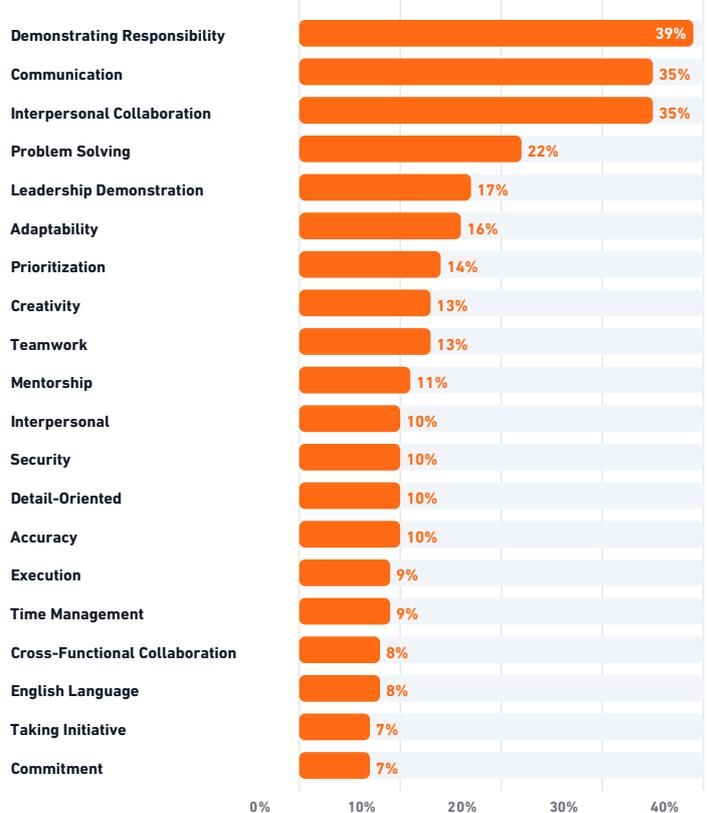
Technical



Functional



Human



3.2. Empowering Arab Youth to Showcase Essential Human Skills:

Human skills are timeless, essential not only for working with AI, but also for collaborating effectively with people anywhere in the world. Yet, in the race to acquire technical skills, they are often overlooked.

Employers globally are **2.5 times more likely to seek human skills than digital ones**, and in the UAE, it's **three times as likely**. Yet, there seems to be two significant gaps between employers and workers:

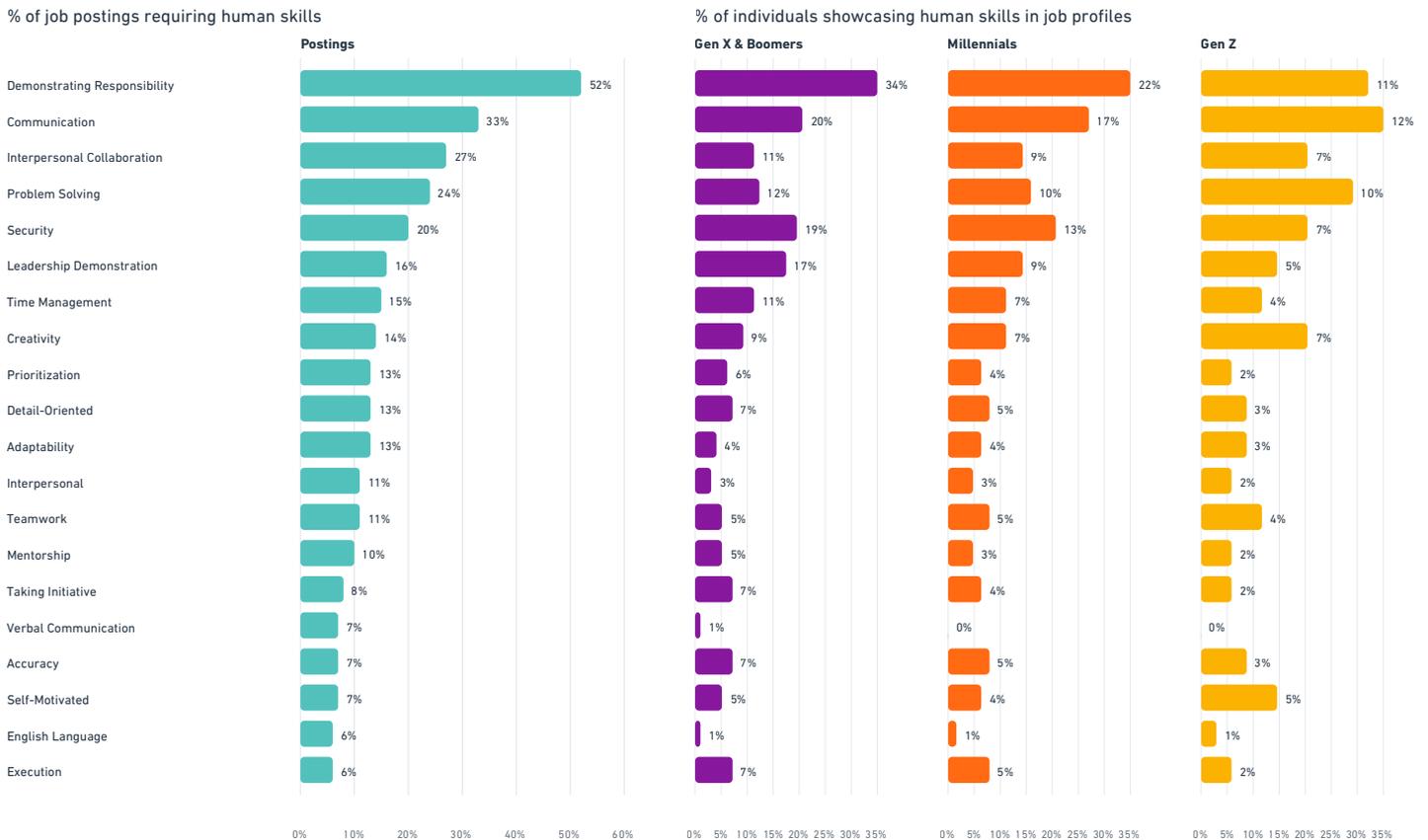
- Employers are more likely to emphasize these skills in job ads than workers do in CVs.
- Younger workers are less likely to cite them than older ones.

33% of global job postings demand communication skills, while only **12%** of Gen Z workers list them, compared to **20%** of Gen X and Boomers.

Many may see these abilities as too basic to mention but not naming them can mean missed opportunities, especially as automated systems screen CVs for exact matches.

For Arab youth, cultivating and clearly showcasing these skills is **essential** to staying competitive.

Figure 7: Generational Differences in Human Skills



4. Massar Al Ghurair: A Model for Workforce Development

Massar Al Ghurair directly supports the UAE's national push to build a modern, agile, and skills-driven workforce. Aligned with the vision of We the UAE 2031, the platform uses AI and real-time labor market data to personalize learning and job-matching for youth, bridging gaps between talent supply and evolving demand.

Targeting Emiratis aged 18–35, Massar Al Ghurair offers individualized learning-to-earning journeys. In real time, it maps current skills, identifies gaps based on market needs, connects users to relevant upskilling opportunities, and matches them with aligned job openings. By bringing learners, employers, and educators onto a single digital platform, it reduces inefficiencies and increases the precision of talent development.

Employers benefit from real-time insights that align hiring strategies with fast-changing market trends. For educators and learners, the platform offers clear signals on where to focus and invest for the future.

Massar Al Ghurair aims to serve up to 45,000 young Emirati talent contributing to a more resilient and future-ready national workforce. Through this effort, the Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation seeks to strengthen the Emirati talent pipeline, support employer access to qualified candidates, and contribute to broader national objectives related to economic growth and labor market sustainability.

Learn more here: <https://www.alghurairfoundation.org/massar-al-ghurair/>

5. Methodology

This report is based on insights from SkyHive by Cornerstone's robust workforce intelligence platform, which analyzes over 28 terabytes of real-time global labor market data daily, including millions of job postings, professional profiles, and skills data. Leveraging advanced machine learning algorithms and extensive data coverage of 200+ countries, including specific datasets for the UAE, SkyHive provides precise, timely insights into skill trends, demand fluctuations, and workforce dynamics essential for strategic workforce planning. The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation contributes regional interpretation, grounding these findings in the UAE's context and highlighting their implications for future skills planning.

6. About Us

Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation

The Abdulla Al Ghurair Foundation is the largest privately funded philanthropy in the Arab region dedicated to education. Established in 2015, it is dedicated to empowering Emirati and Arab youth to

thrive and drive sustainable development through innovative education solutions and meaningful partnerships.

In 2023, the Foundation began scaling its successful UAE initiatives across the region, bringing impactful programs to Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia to help youth contribute more fully to their communities. From the outset, the Foundation has embraced a Nexus approach, advancing multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 4, 5, 8, and 17, to promote inclusive, quality education that raises living standards for all.

For more information, visit www.alghurairfoundation.org

SkyHive by Cornerstone

A leading provider of labor market intelligence and AI skills technology for organizations and communities worldwide, SkyHive by Cornerstone creates a more inclusive economy where skills become pathways to success. SkyHive by Cornerstone has enabled over 100 organizations across 200 countries and territories to transition from jobs to skills. We have been recognized for our innovation and best practices in ethical AI by Fast Company, Forbes, the World Economic Forum, and Gartner.

For more information, visit www.skyhive.ai

7. Appendix: Most Requested Skills in the UAE

Across Industries

■ Human Skills
 ■ Technical Skills



Financial Services

Human Skills	Technical Skills
Communication	Co-Creation
Management	Heuristic Analysis
Team Player	Organizational Capability
Accountability	Implementation
Reporting	Documentation
Problem Solving	Safety/Security
Finance	Microsoft Office
Verbal Communication	Microsoft Excel
Regulatory Compliance	Administration
Interpersonal Communication	Presenting Exhibition

Hospitals and Health Care

Human Skills	Technical Skills
Communication	Co-Creation
Management	Safety Security
Accountability	Documentation
Team Player	Organizational Capability
Reporting	Heuristic Analysis
Interpersonal Communication	Implementation
Verbal Communication	Patient Care
Problem Solving	Microsoft Office
Rigor	Administration
Evaluation	Engaging Leadership

Oil and Gas

Human Skills	Technical Skills
Communication	Safety Security
Management	Co-Creation
Accountability	Documentation
Team Player	Organizational Capability
Reporting	Implementation
Verbal Communication	Heuristic Analysis
Planning	Microsoft Office
Problem Solving	Microsoft Excel
Task Coordination	Engaging Leadership
Regulatory Compliance	Administration

Real Estate

Human Skills	Technical Skills
Communication	Real Estate
Management	Organizational Capability
Team Player	Co-Creation
Accountability	Documentation
Reporting	Microsoft Office
Negotiation	Heuristic Analysis
Interpersonal Communication	Implementation
Marketing	Safety Security
Problem Solving	Market Trends
Verbal Communication	Administration

Transportation, Logistics, Supply Chain and Storage

Human Skills	Technical Skills
Communication	Safety/Security
Management	Co-Creation
Team Player	Microsoft Office
Accountability	Organizational Capability
Reporting	Documentation
Verbal Communication	Heuristic Analysis
Problem Solving	Implementation
Task Coordination	Microsoft Excel
Planning	Engaging Leadership
Interpersonal Communication	Administration



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