INSIGHTS 2040 ANNUAL MEETINGS | 16-17 Nov 2026 Singapore

ROUNDTABLE PRIMER



Enabling the next wave of innovation

IS AI PULLING THE LADDER UP? REIMAGINING JOB-READY SKILLS IN THE AI TRANSITION

Tuesday 17 November 2026 | 3.45pm – 5.15pm | Public-private roundtable | Invite-only | Chatham House Rule

> "Normally, [young people] would get into these routine, repetitive jobs and then grow up the ranks. But if they're gone, I don't think any young person wants to be a barista in a coffee shop as [their] professional future."
>
> **Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director, IMF** panel remarks, IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings, Bangkok, 12 October 2026

ROUNDTABLE FOCUS

This roundtable asks policymakers, educators and industry leaders how graduates and mid-career workers in emerging economies should prepare for AI. The discussion will:

1. Examine what "job-ready" now means for graduates and mid-career workers.
2. Identify the policies and employer strategies that support workers through the change.
3. Explore new models of education that can keep pace with a fast-changing job market.

The aim is to chart the responses that keep career pathways open.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

In the US, employment for 22–25-year-olds in the most AI-exposed jobs is about 19% below the path of less-exposed jobs; older workers show no gap. It is a pattern, not proof of cause.

Globally, the ILO reports that jobs which traditionally gave young people a first step into work are shrinking. Youth unemployment rose to 12.4% in 2025.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

The evidence on AI and jobs is still early. Recent research makes four points.

- **Change, not replacement.** Exposure to AI does not mean job loss. The ILO expects most exposed roles to change rather than disappear.
- **The first rung is weakening.** Stanford and Anthropic research points to slower hiring of 22–25-year-olds in AI-exposed jobs, though not to a broad rise in unemployment.
- **Skills are the binding constraint.** The World Bank finds many developing economies lack the skills needed to use AI effectively.
- **Outcomes depend on policy.** India's NITI Aayog warns that by 2031 its technology sector "could lose 1.5 million jobs or create up to 4 million new opportunities".

Open question: If AI absorbs the routine tasks that once trained new graduates, who now provides that training: employers, universities or the state?

12.7M

Jobs in the Philippines with some exposure to generative AI. That is over a quarter of the total.

Source: ILO, August 2026

16.2%

Share of jobs in developing economies that AI could make more productive. By contrast, 4.5% are at risk.

Source: World Bank, World Development Report 2026

~10%

Fall in employer demand for highly AI-exposed jobs, relative to others, across 19 Asian economies since late 2022.

Source: IMF, October 2026

RELATED SESSIONS

Scaling AI-Enabled Financial Services: From Domestic Success to Global Growth
Mon 16 Nov, 1.45pm

Sources. K. Georgieva, IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings, 12 October 2026. IMF, Regional Economic Outlook: Asia and Pacific, October 2026. Stanford Digital Economy Lab, August 2026. Anthropic, "Labor market impacts of AI", March 2026. ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2026; ILO, August 2026. World Bank, World Development Report 2026. NITI Aayog, October 2025.

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