



The future of procurement

How AI, innovation, talent and technology are reshaping procurement

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Executive summary

Data reveals actionable insights into how AI, innovation, talent and technology are reshaping procurement and what it means for leaders.

1 Procurement professionals are driving resilience and digital transformation amid growing uncertainty.

Global business is operating under sustained volatility, with the World Uncertainty Index at record highs. Resilience has emerged as a defining leadership trait, reflected in a sharp rise in conversations among procurement executives. At the same time, AI and digital transformation are redefining operational efficiency, positioning procurement as a driver of agility and innovation.

2 Procurement is transitioning into a distributed capability.

Procurement talent has doubled in the past decade, expanding beyond traditional supply-chain hubs into broader business functions. Yet, digital and strategic skill gaps persist, signalling that transformation may lag behind business demands.

3 Procurement leaders are expanding their influence and impact.

Procurement executives are gaining visibility and influence within organisations. Their representation in the C-suite continues to grow and their networks are substantially larger than their peers', reflecting expanded strategic reach and cross-functional collaboration.

4 Digital potential remains a key lever.

E-procurement systems such as SAP Ariba remain among the top skill shortages despite their critical role in modernisation. Companies investing in these platforms see measurable gains in skill diffusion and overall procurement capacity.

5 AI literacy and people skills will shape the future of procurement.

AI adoption is accelerating rapidly, but AI literacy among procurement professionals remains low. Conversations around AI have surged, while core human skills – adaptability, communication and critical thinking – continue to anchor success.

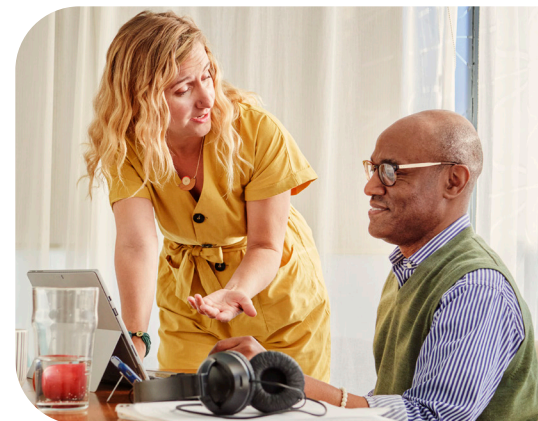
6 Business leaders face opportunity amid uncertainty.

Short term (12–18 months):

- Accelerate digitalisation through e-procurement and data analytics
- Pilot AI literacy training, particularly for junior staff
- Expand development of people skills such as negotiation and collaboration

Medium- to long-term (2–5 years):

- Continue democratising procurement capabilities across business functions
- Embed AI and analytics into the decision-making process
- Build organisational resilience and strengthen the talent pipeline to thrive amid persistent uncertainty



Procurement at a turning point

Global business today is defined by persistent uncertainty. The IMF's World Uncertainty Index shows that volatility has surged to record highs, with 2024–2025 levels nearly five times higher than the long-run average. Financial crises, pandemics and geopolitical disruptions were once seen as exceptional shocks. Now, they recur often enough to be treated as ongoing risks within the global economy.

Key insight

In 2025, global uncertainty surged to nearly five times its long-run average.

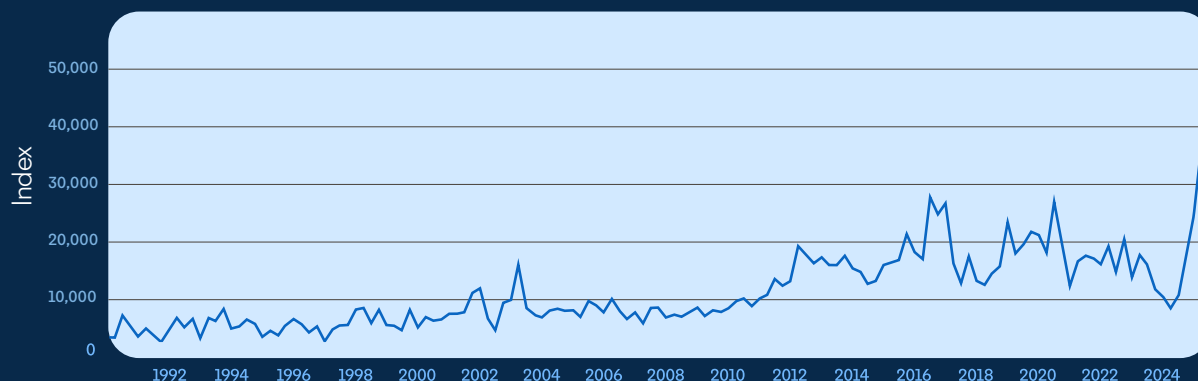
Nowhere is this shift more visible than in global value chains, where supply chains continue to be stress-tested by pandemic aftershocks, geopolitical tensions and shifting trade flows. At the same time, technological change is accelerating. Digital platforms and AI are reshaping how organisations operate, from automating transactions to reimagining decision-making.

This report looks at how these twin forces of uncertainty and innovation are reshaping procurement across industries. Using LinkedIn's global data, it traces how procurement talent, leadership and skills are evolving – and what that means for organisations aiming to strengthen resilience and agility. It highlights how procurement is expanding beyond its traditional boundaries and the capabilities that leaders need to prepare their teams for what comes next.



World Uncertainty Index, 1989–2025:

Global simple average



Source: [FRED](#)

The rise of procurement as a strategic capability

Key takeaways

- Procurement's share of the global workforce has nearly doubled since 2016.
- Traditional supply chain industries still employ the largest share of procurement professionals, although growth is fastest in service-led and knowledge sectors.
- The skills mix is shifting towards e-procurement, analytics and strategic expertise.
- Procurement capabilities are spreading beyond traditional roles, reflecting a function that's broader in scope and more central to organisational resilience.

Key definition

Procurement talent: LinkedIn members who work in a procurement-specific occupation (buyer, procurement specialist, etc.) and/or hold at least two procurement-specific skills (procurement, purchasing processes, e-procurement, etc.).

Procurement steps out of the back office as talent doubles

The global share of procurement talent has more than doubled in less than a decade, rising from around 3% in 2016 to about 7% in 2025. Growth has been broad-based: Germany and Italy now lead at 8.4% and 8.1%, followed by the United States and Canada at roughly 7%. The United Kingdom, France and Spain remain slightly lower, between 6% and 7%, but all have more than doubled since 2016. After years of stability, this sharp rise began after 2022 as companies faced growing uncertainty and turned to procurement to strengthen resilience, manage risk and gain transparency, shifting it from a cost-control function to a strategic driver.



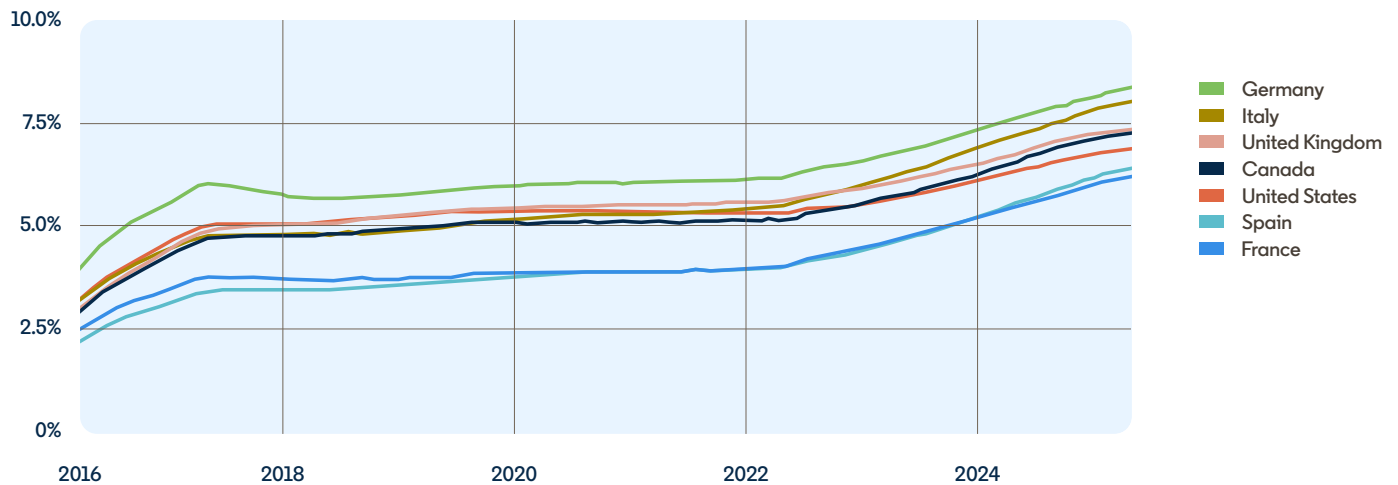
3% to 7%

The share of procurement talent more than doubled: from 3% in 2016 to 7% in 2025

Despite different starting points, every country shows the same trajectory: the prevalence of procurement talent remained relatively stable from 2016 to 2022 and then surged. In a context of growing uncertainty, many organisations began focusing on resilience, reassessing risk management practices and expanding the use of digital platforms to improve transparency and speed in decision-making. Together, these changes elevated procurement from a cost control function to a frontline driver.

Procurement talent more than doubles in major economies

Penetration of procurement talent by country, 2016–2025



Procurement evolves into a distributed capability across the workforce

This rise in procurement talent is redefining the function's boundaries. In 2016, 83% of procurement-skilled professionals worked outside traditional procurement roles; by 2025, that figure reached 92%, showing how procurement expertise now extends across the organisation.

Key insight

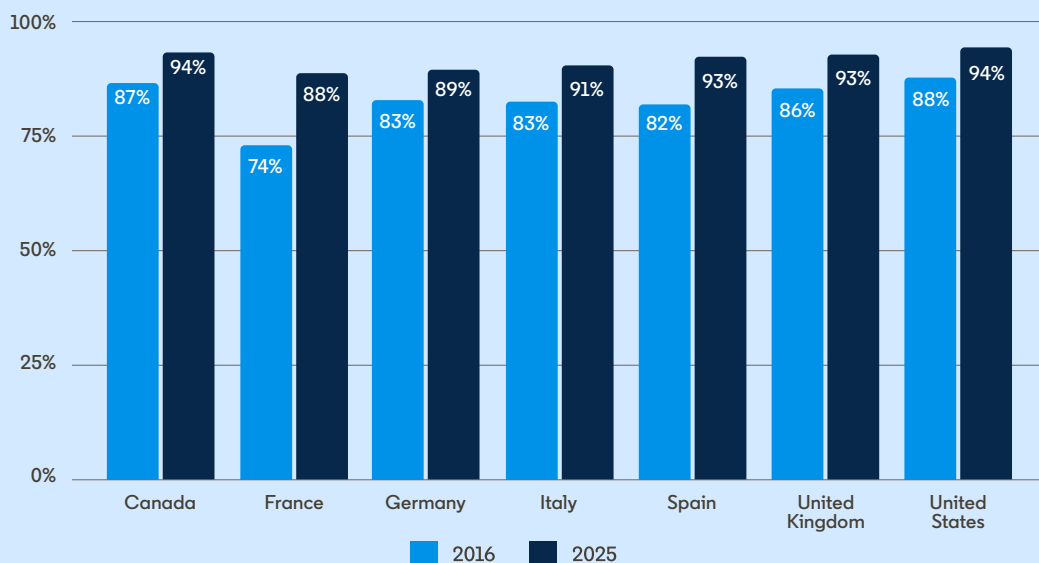
The share of procurement talent outside traditional procurement roles has risen from 83% to 92% since 2016.



This reflects procurement's evolution into a distributed capability, with professionals in operations, finance, supply chain and other functions increasingly taking on procurement-related responsibilities. France shows the steepest shift, increasing from 73.5% to 88.8% but still holding the lowest share. Germany (83.0% to 89.4%) and Italy (82.6% to 90.9%) also remain above the global average, while Spain and the United Kingdom have converged at 92.7%. The model is most widely adopted in North America, with Canada (93.7%) and the United States (94.4%) showing the highest diffusion of procurement skills among non-procurement roles.

Procurement skills increasingly spread beyond procurement roles

Share of procurement talent in non-procurement occupations by country



Procurement capabilities now power a wider range of roles

Moreover, procurement skills are in demand well beyond procurement roles. Our job postings analysis reveals that while core procurement roles still dominate employer demand, with 'buyer' ranking as the most common procurement job posting across most countries, the reach of procurement skills now extends far beyond the function itself.

Supply chain positions such as Managers, Specialists, Analysts and Coordinators continue to anchor demand, reflecting procurement's central place in operational execution. Yet, commercial-facing roles, including Account Managers, Sales Managers and Sales Executives, also increasingly require procurement capabilities, a sign that vendor-side teams are navigating more complex supply chains.

Finance and legal functions are other roles which are increasingly upskilling in procurement, where skills in cost control, compliance and contract review overlap naturally with procurement expertise. Finally, in continental Europe, IT consulting emerges as a notable area of demand, pointing to the growing need for tech sourcing and vendor management skills as digital transformation advances.

Key definition

Procurement occupations include **140+ roles** focused on sourcing and purchasing, such as Buyers, Procurement Managers and Sourcing Specialists.

Service-driven sectors are powering the next wave of procurement talent growth

Procurement talent is no longer confined to its traditional sectors. While the function remains deeply rooted in asset-heavy industries, its centre of gravity is gradually shifting towards more knowledge-intensive and service-driven sectors.

+13%

Service-led sectors are leading procurement talent growth at **+13% annually**.

Traditional hubs

Today, the highest talent concentrations remain in Wholesale (15.5%), Manufacturing (14.2%), Transportation and Logistics (13.7%) and Retail (13.3%). These sectors still form the backbone of procurement, where the function is deeply embedded, but their growth has been relatively modest at around 6% annually.

Fastest growers

By contrast, service-led industries are showing the fastest momentum. Consumer Services, Government, Education and Hospitality all record growth rates above 13% over the past five years, despite procurement penetration levels below 6%. This points to procurement's expansion into areas where it previously played a limited role, reflecting a broader shift in how organisations across sectors view the function's value.

Emerging sectors

A third set of industries highlights procurement's broader transition into the digital and knowledge economy. Finance, Technology and Media, and Professional Services record moderate penetration levels of 5–6%, but growth rates of 11–12%. These sectors sit at the intersection of digital transformation and complex value chains, showing how procurement is evolving beyond its historic base to become a strategic capability that cuts across both traditional and emerging industries.

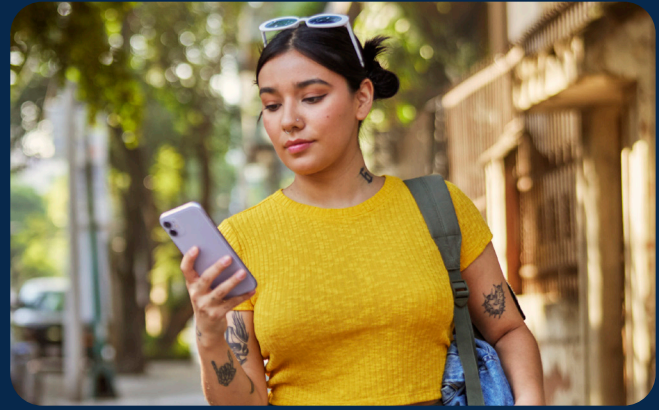
Across countries, procurement talent clusters in production and trade sectors

Share of procurement talent by country and industry

Industry	Canada	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	United Kingdom	United States
Hospitality	6.0%	4.6%	6.4%	7.0%	6.3%	5.4%	5.8%
Consumer services	4.9%	3.7%	4.3%	4.6%	4.0%	4.7%	4.6%
Education	3.1%	3.1%	3.5%	2.7%	2.4%	2.9%	2.8%
Finance	5.3%	3.6%	4.4%	4.3%	4.3%	4.6%	5.6%
Government	4.4%	3.1%	4.0%	3.6%	2.7%	4.2%	4.7%
Healthcare	3.0%	2.3%	2.8%	2.2%	2.2%	2.8%	3.2%
Manufacturing	14.7%	12.1%	15.1%	14.9%	12.5%	14.1%	15.8%
Professional services	6.2%	5.3%	6.1%	5.1%	5.2%	5.6%	6.7%
Retail	13.1%	11.1%	14.4%	16.1%	12.1%	13.1%	13.1%
Technology and media	6.0%	4.3%	6.2%	5.1%	4.9%	5.8%	7.5%
Transportation and logistics	14.4%	10.6%	15.9%	14.8%	13.7%	12.6%	13.8%
Wholesale	17.1%	12.1%	15.6%	17.0%	14.1%	15.2%	17.7%

Procurement professionals are becoming more multidisciplinary

While historically defined by transactional buying, today's procurement talent is broadening its skill sets, reflecting both the growing complexity of global supply chains and the push towards digital and strategic capabilities. Across countries, the fastest-growing procurement skills highlight a dual shift: greater emphasis on digital fluency and analytics and a sustained demand for resilience, strategy and cross-functional collaboration.



Selected fastest-growing procurement skills by country, 2025

References

Negotiation and strategy	Relationship management	Team leadership	Global value chains	Analytics	E-procurement	Supply chain
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	Canada	France	Germany	Italy	Spain	United Kingdom	United States
1	Supply chain optimisation	Contract negotiation	Contract negotiation	Contract negotiation	Contract negotiation	Supplier relationship management	Vendor relations
2	Contract negotiation	Import/export operations	Cross-functional team leadership	Cross-functional team leadership	Supplier relationship management	Supplier management	Supplier relationship management
3	Trend analysis	Cross-functional team leadership	Supply chain optimisation	Supplier management	Cross-functional team leadership	Cross-functional team leadership	Supplier management
4	Customs regulations	Supplier management	Supplier negotiation	Supply chain optimisation	Import/export operations	Import/export operations	Import/export operations
5	Cross-functional team leadership	Strategic sourcing	Supplier development	Import/export operations	Forecasting	Supply chain optimisation	Vendor negotiation
6	Supplier negotiation	Supplier relationship management	International logistics	Supply chain operations	Supply chain optimisation	Contract negotiation	Supply chain consulting
7	International logistics	Pricing strategy	Strategic scoring	Trend analysis	Supplier negotiation	Supplier development	International and domestic shipping
8	Strategic sourcing	Supply chain optimisation	Customs regulations	International logistics	Supply chain operations	Strategic sourcing	Trend analysis
9	Supply chain operations	International logistics	SAP ERP	International shipping	Pricing strategy	Supplier negotiation	Supplier negotiation
10	Pricing strategy	Supplier negotiation	SAP products	Purchasing negotiation	Purchasing negotiation	Trend analysis	NetSuite
11	SAP ERP	Supply chain operations	Supply chain management	Supply chain management	Trend analysis	International logistics	Coupa
12	Supply chain management	Purchasing negotiation	Import/export	Import/export	SAP ERP	Supply chain operations	SAP ERP



Sector-specific expertise remains critical

Execution-oriented skills, such as supply chain operations/optimisation/consulting, inventory management, bid processes and cost control, remain the traditional backbone of procurement professionals across markets. This reflects the deep, specialised procurement needs of both asset-heavy and service-driven industries.

From transactional to digital fluency

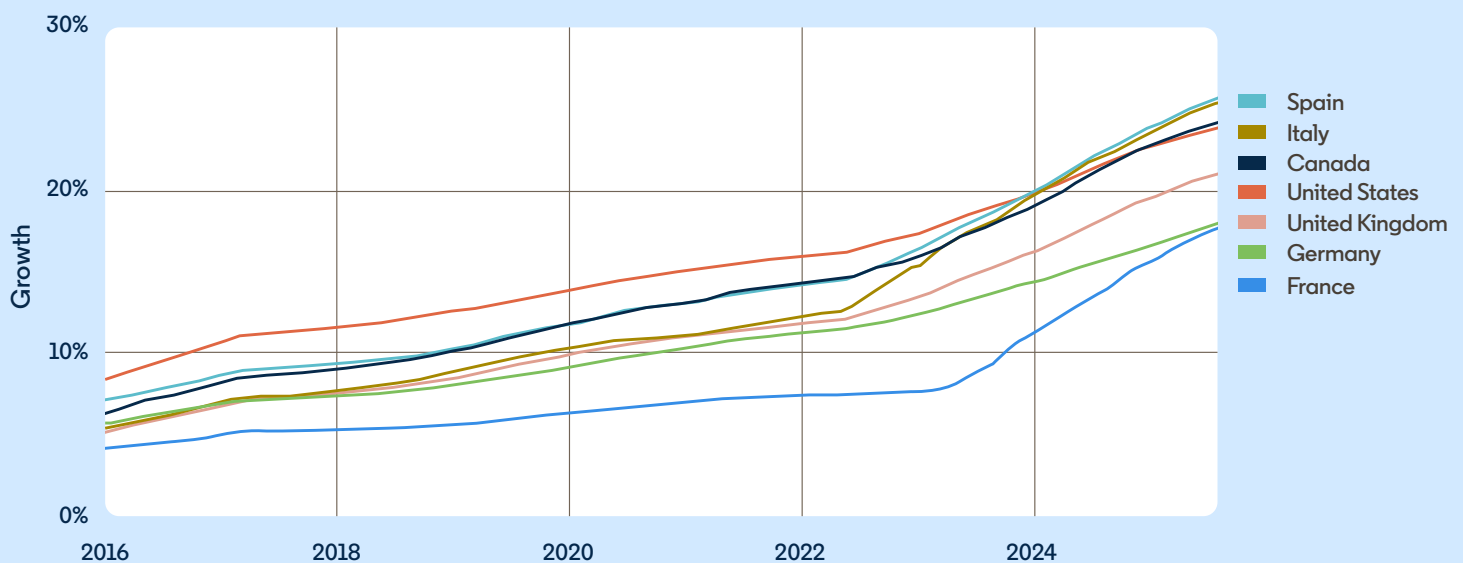
Despite the importance of procurement-specific skills, the fastest-growing skills reflect increased adoption of e-procurement systems (such as SAP Products, NetSuite, Coupa, etc.). Moreover, procurement professionals today are more than twice as likely to list analytics skills (such as trend analysis and forecasting, which are also among the fastest-growing skills) and three times more likely to list AI engineering skills than they were just two years ago, underscoring how quickly the field is moving into next-generation capabilities.

2-3x

Procurement professionals are **two times more likely** to list analytics skills and **three times more likely** to list AI engineering skills than two years ago.

Procurement professionals expand their analytical capabilities

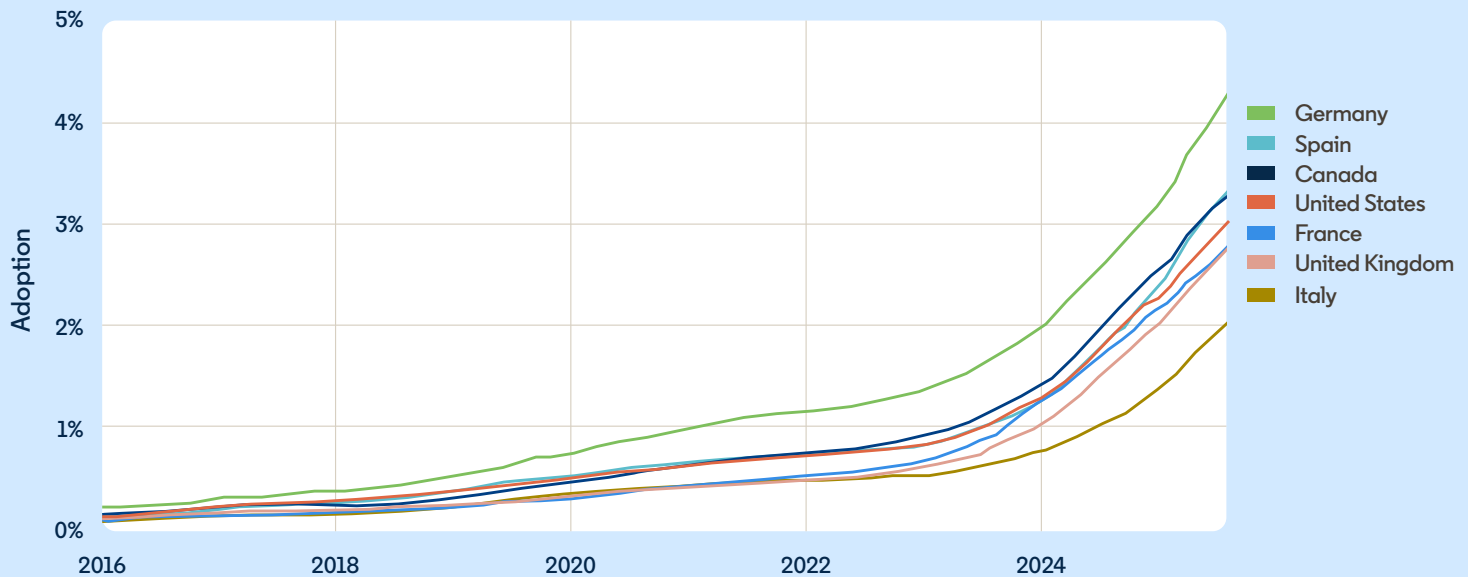
Growth in penetration of analytics skills by country, 2016-2025



Analytics skills include: analytics, statistics, statistical data analysis, data modelling, data visualisation, reporting and analysis, among others.

AI engineering adoption accelerates sharply after 2023

Share of procurement professionals skilled in AI engineering



AI engineering skills include: machine learning, Large Language Models (LLM), Natural Language Processing (NLP), responsible AI, PyTorch, MLOps, among others.

Resilience, strategy and cross-functional collaboration on the rise

Most countries show contract/vendor negotiation, strategic sourcing/pricing, relationship management and international logistics among their fastest-growing skills, underscoring the growing weight of risk management in procurement practice. Moreover, cross-functional team leadership is also at the top for most countries (with the exception of the USA), pointing to a broader mandate for procurement teams to coordinate across business functions and shore up resilience.

Key insight

Procurement's digital shift is visible in every country.

E-procurement and trend analytics now rank among the fastest-growing skills across Europe and North America.



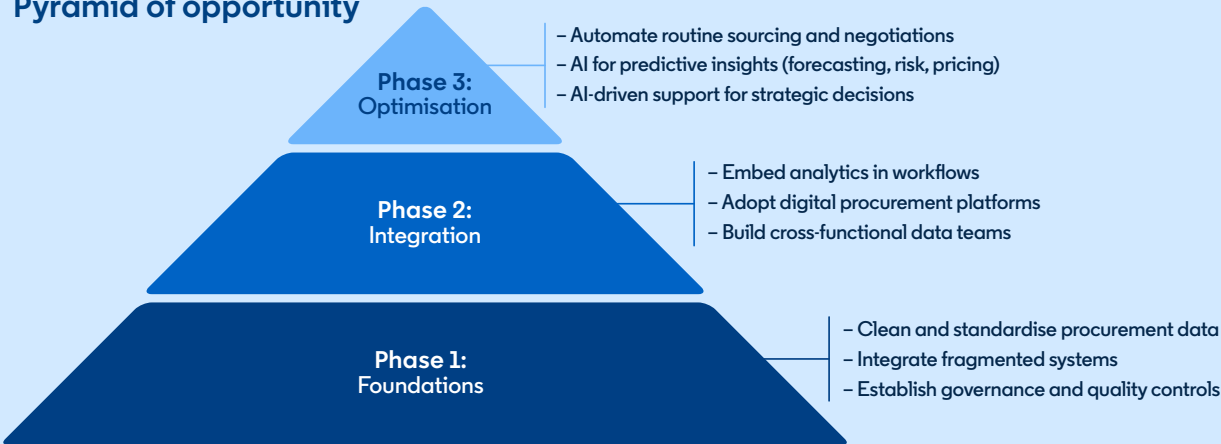
A mismatch in skills reveals uneven progress in procurement digitalisation

Digital readiness: phased path to AI-enabled procurement

LinkedIn data reveals three distinct groups of companies across the countries in the study, each reflecting a different stage of procurement digitalisation and capability development. These stages (Foundations, Integration and Optimisation) illustrate a phased path toward AI-enabled procurement.

Company maturity stage	Penetration of e-procurement	Job postings requiring operational roles and skills	Job postings requiring resilience skills	Job postings requiring AI roles and skills
Foundations (early maturity)	Low	High	Low	Low
Integration (mid maturity)	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low
Optimisation (advanced maturity)	High	Low	High	High

Pyramid of opportunity



Uneven balance across capabilities

Procurement's hiring patterns highlight an uneven balance between operational, digital and strategic capabilities. Across countries, our analysis shows persistent shortages in both fundamental and advanced skills, suggesting that the profession is being stretched in two directions at once.

Digital systems remain the sharpest area of need. Skills such as SAP Ariba, ERP, IT procurement and e-procurement consistently appear among the top shortages for Procurement Managers, Specialists and Sourcing Managers, even as organisations increasingly rely on these tools to anchor digital transformation. LinkedIn data shows the payoff of digital investment: firms with at least 5% penetration in e-procurement skills among procurement professionals see a 1.7% greater spread of procurement skills across the wider workforce and 1.2% faster growth in procurement professionals overall, compared to firms that lag behind.¹

Bridging the gap to strategic impact

Strategic capabilities, including category management, supplier relationship management and indirect purchasing, are also in short supply, underscoring gaps in the function's ability to fully support organisations' shift from transactional buying to strategic value creation.

By contrast, operational skills dominate the surplus in nearly every country. Capabilities such as inventory management, logistics management, supplier negotiation and purchasing processes remain widely available, pointing to a labour pool still concentrated in execution-heavy functions. Yet even here, the fundamentals are not fully secure: skills such as RFQ, cost reduction and purchase requisitions routinely rank among the top shortages, highlighting that basic procurement operations are not consistently met.

This dual pattern signals that procurement professionals are being pulled between the demands of digital and strategic transformation and the need to ensure operational reliability. Importantly, the direction of these mismatches often reflects a company's level of digital maturity. Organisations at earlier stages of adoption face gaps in foundational skills and e-procurement, while those moving towards optimisation are more likely to encounter shortages in strategic capabilities needed to unlock AI-enabled procurement.

Key insight

Core digital systems like SAP Ariba and ERP remain in short supply, but the payoff is clear: firms that invest in e-procurement not only modernise processes but also grow procurement **talent faster** and spread **skills more widely** across their organisations.

¹ Results are derived from a linear regression analysis that accounts for differences across countries and industries. We examined two outcomes:

- 1: Procurement democratisation, measured as the share of procurement skills found outside traditional procurement roles and
- 2: Year-on-year growth in procurement professionals.

Both outcomes were analysed in relation to whether a firm had adopted e-procurement, defined as at least 5% of its procurement professionals having e-procurement skills.

The reported coefficients (+1.7% and +1.2%, respectively) are statistically significant, indicating that, on average, firms with e-procurement adoption show higher levels of procurement democratisation and faster growth in procurement talent than firms without it, after controlling for country and industry factors.

Skill mismatch for top procurement occupations, 2025²

	Skills in shortage	Skills in surplus
Canada	• Purchase requisitions • Quotations • RFx	• Inventory management • Logistics management • Supplier evaluation • Sourcing
France	• Cost reduction • Category management • Indirect purchasing	• Supplier negotiation • Contract negotiation • Contract management • SAP products
Germany	• Category management • Computer literacy • Priority management	• Purchase management • Sourcing • Supplier negotiation • Stock management • Logistics management
Italy	• Indirect purchasing • Cost reduction • E-procurement	• Supplier relationship management • Change management • SAP products
Spain	• Purchasing agents • Project purchasing • Indirect purchasing	• Supplier negotiation • SAP products • Contract negotiation • Supplier development • Purchasing processes • Logistics management
United Kingdom	• Buyer representation • Raw materials • Purchase requisitions • E-procurement	• Logistics management • Data analysis • Purchase management • Supplier evaluation • SAP products
United States	• Category management • Indirect purchasing • Request for quotation • E-procurement	• Purchase management • Logistics management • SAP products • Purchasing negotiation • Supplier negotiation
	• Indirect purchasing • Cost reduction • IT procurement	• Supplier negotiation • Stakeholder management • Contract negotiation • Sourcing • Supplier evaluation • E-procurement
	• Request for quotation • Purchase requisitions • Indirect purchasing • Quotations	• Category management • SAP Ariba • Vendor contracts • Negotiation • SAP products

² Occupations considered: Buyer, Procurement Manager, Procurement Specialist, Purchase Specialist, Sourcing Manager. Taken together, these occupations represent +50% of members in procurement occupations across the countries in the study. The skills are added to the Shortage or Surplus column if they are in the same category in at least two out of the five occupations. Skills can be reported simultaneously in shortage and surplus for different occupations, reflecting potential mismatches in skill supply and skill demand by role.

Procurement leaders are expanding their influence

Key takeaways

- Procurement leaders are expanding their presence in the C-suite, with especially strong momentum across North America and knowledge-intensive sectors.
- Their skill mix – spanning resilience, risk management, operational strategy and data fluency – sets them apart from other executives.
- Their growing influence is reflected in a sharp rise in resilience-focused discussions and broader professional networks that enhance firms' agility in disruption.

Procurement leaders have a rising presence in the C-suite

The presence of procurement leaders is expanding across the globe. On average, the number of leaders in procurement roles grew by around 6% in the past year across the seven countries included in this study.

Key definition

Procurement leaders: Executives in leadership roles (Director, VP, C-suite) who work in a procurement-specific occupation and/or hold at least two procurement-specific skills.



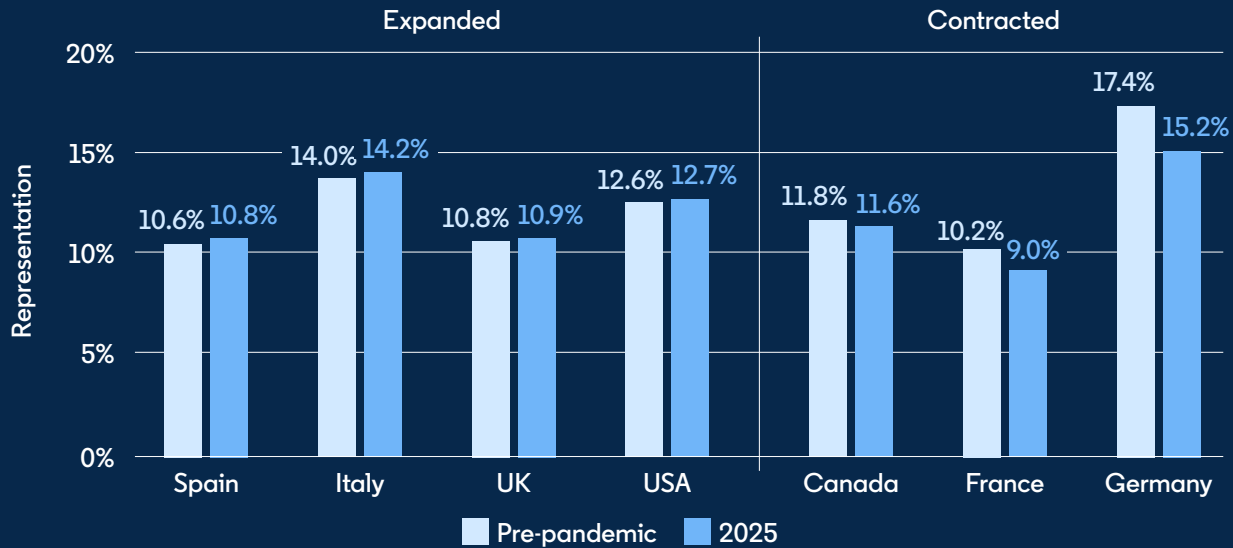
Growth has been particularly strong in Canada, the USA and the UK, where procurement leaders are expanding their footprint faster than in other markets. In several countries, including the USA, UK, Italy and Spain, they have also increased their relative share compared to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting that the shocks of recent years elevated procurement into the leadership spotlight.

6% Procurement leadership grew by 6% on average in the past year, especially in service-driven sectors.

However, the expansion is not evenly distributed across industries. Knowledge-intensive, asset-light sectors, such as technology, professional services and finance, are leading the way. In these environments, procurement leaders are positioned as critical connectors across finance, IT and operations, helping firms navigate disruption whilst enabling growth.

Procurement leadership representation shifts unevenly across markets

Relative presence of procurement leaders among C-suite by country, 2025



They bring a distinctive skill set that differentiates them from other executives

Procurement leaders bring a distinctive set of capabilities that differentiate them from other executives and add unique value in today's context of persistent uncertainty. Their expertise extends well beyond operational execution, positioning them as strategic partners in navigating disruption.

Key insight

Procurement leaders uniquely combine risk management, cross-functional reach and data-driven decision-making.



Resilience and risk management are at the core of their contribution.

Being over-indexed in skills like negotiation, supplier diversification and risk management suggests procurement leaders directly enhance organisational stability in volatile environments.

Equally important are their cross-functional connections.

Positioned at the intersection of supply chain, finance and IT, procurement leaders act as integrators, ensuring that strategies are implementable and grounded in operational realities. This is reflected in their being overindexed in skills like cross-functional team leadership and strategic partnerships.

Finally, procurement leaders strengthen the C-suite with data-driven decision-making.

Their orientation towards data-driven decision-making, shown in skills such as data analysis and forecasting, complements the more high-touch, relational strengths of other executives, ensuring that leadership teams can make faster and more evidence-based choices amid uncertainty.

They shape the strategic agenda driving meaningful conversations

Procurement leaders use LinkedIn to share perspectives on the issues that matter most to them and resilience has become the dominant theme. Over the past year, their conversations centred on strategy, resilience and risk management have grown by more than 50%, reflecting heightened concern amid persistent global uncertainty.

Trending subtopics include strategic recruiting and retention (8% of all posts in this category), digital transformation strategies (5%) and entrepreneurial resilience (3%). These discussions show how leaders are rethinking the function's role in helping organisations absorb shocks and adapt to shifting market conditions.

The focus on resilience spans across industries, but the loudest voices come from Professional Services (31% of share of voice), Technology (16%), Manufacturing (15%), Finance (11%) and Education (8%). Together, they highlight how procurement's agenda is increasingly about building organisational strength, balancing immediate risk management with longer-term agility.



+50%

Conversations on resilience and risk management grew **+50% year-on-year** among procurement leaders.



Procurement leaders invest in relationships

Procurement leaders' networks are on average 39% larger than those of their peers, giving organisations greater flexibility in times of disruption. While size alone does not capture the uniqueness of connections, it is a strong proxy for resilience, offering more options to secure suppliers, navigate regulations or build new partnerships during shocks.

39%

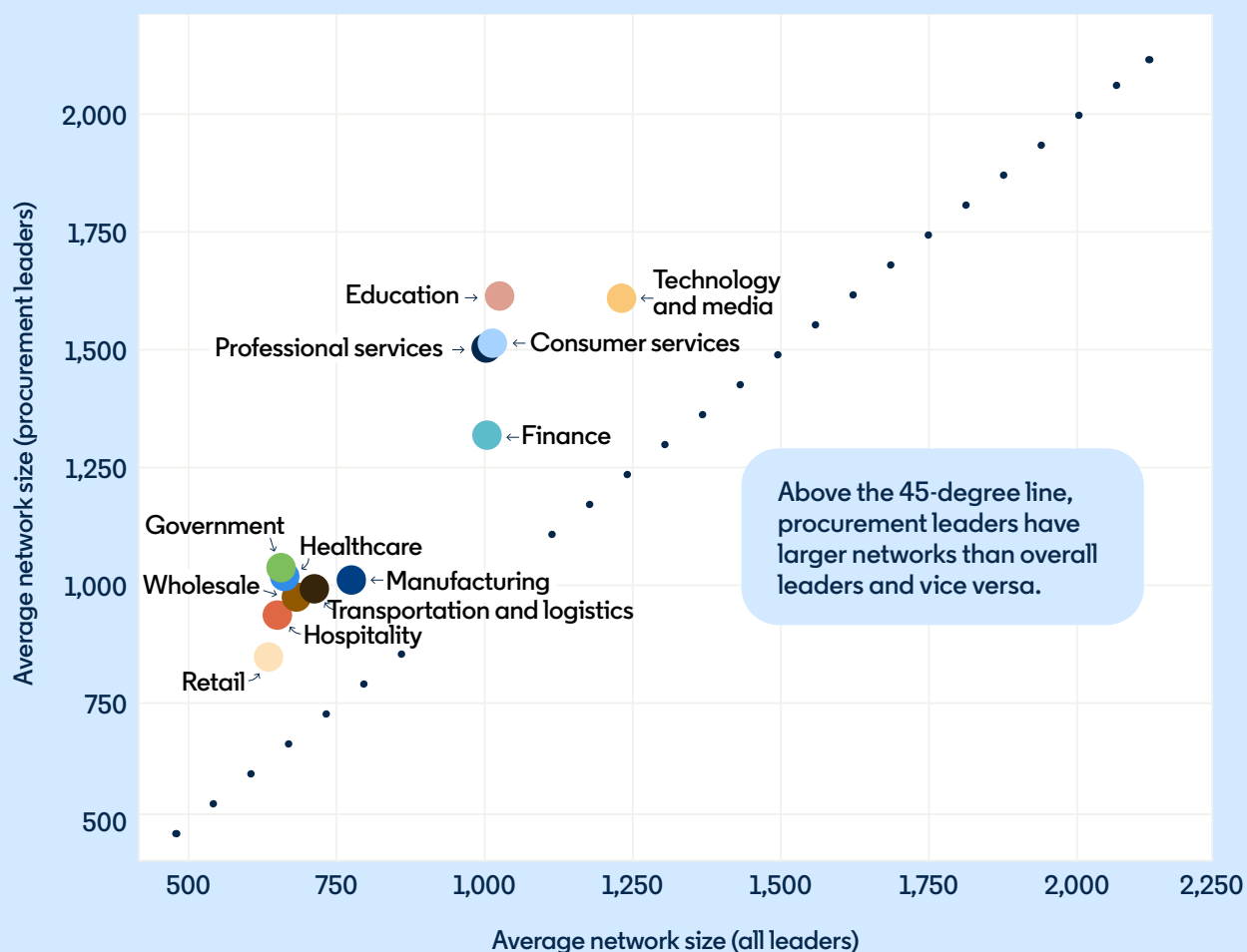
Procurement leaders have networks **39% larger** than their peers.



This advantage appears across all industries, though its shape varies. In knowledge-intensive sectors like Technology, Professional Services and Finance, procurement leaders' gaps are larger than in asset-heavy sectors such as Manufacturing and Wholesale, reflecting the physical nature of supply chains in the latter. Even in regulated fields like Healthcare, Education and Government Administration, procurement leaders hold an edge, enabling more flexibility where compliance and public mandates often constrain choices.

Together, these patterns highlight how procurement leaders bring more than operational expertise to the C-suite: their networks expand resilience options, making them strategic assets in navigating uncertainty.

Procurement leaders vs. all leaders: network size by industry



AI literacy and people skills are at the heart of the future of procurement

Key takeaways

- AI is driving new capabilities in procurement and reshaping roles as automation takes hold.
- Adoption of AI literacy is accelerating rapidly, though penetration remains small for now.
- People skills, such as adaptability and critical thinking, are emerging as essential complements to AI.

AI is top of mind

Conversations about AI among procurement professionals rose 37% year-on-year in 2025, underscoring its growing relevance to the function. The discussion is led by knowledge-intensive industries such as Professional Services (35%) and Technology (26%), which together account for more than half of all AI-related posts. Manufacturing and Education contribute meaningfully at around 10% each, while sectors like Retail, Utilities and Food Services remain marginal, pointing to an uneven pace of engagement across industries.

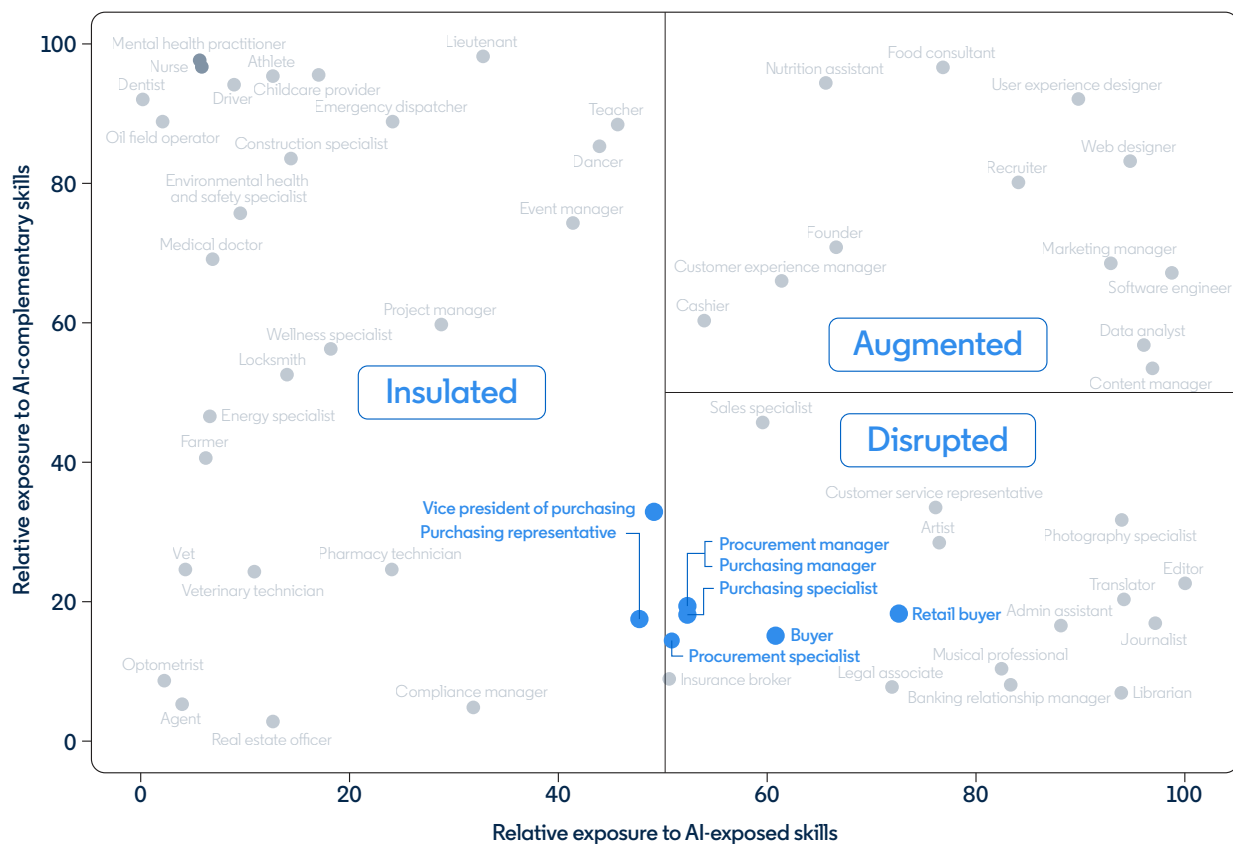


37%

Conversations about AI among procurement professionals rose 37% year-on-year in 2025.

In the United States, AI has become the dominant trending topic for procurement professionals over the past six months. Posts span a wide spectrum: from workplace applications such as Microsoft Copilot, automation and prompt engineering, to sector-specific uses in healthcare, education, legal services, finance, supply chains and recruitment. Alongside these practical applications, professionals are also engaging with broader themes of ethics, governance, data quality and the global race in AI chips and large language models.

Impact of AI on procurement-specific occupations



Note: Adapted from previous [LinkedIn analysis](#).

AI tools stand to transform many procurement occupations

Many procurement occupations rely on skills that can be replicated by AI. This does not mean these roles will be displaced, but it does suggest that their skill composition is likely to evolve more quickly than in other functions. Routine, documentation-heavy and transactional activities such as data entry, reporting, and contract processing are especially exposed. These are precisely the tasks that become more automated as organisations progress up the digitalisation pyramid, moving from foundational data hygiene to integrated platforms and ultimately to AI-enabled optimisation.

The risk can be greatest for entry-level professionals, whose responsibilities are often concentrated in precisely these transactional tasks. Yet this also creates an opportunity: early-career workers are the natural entry point for building AI literacy and AI-complementary skills.



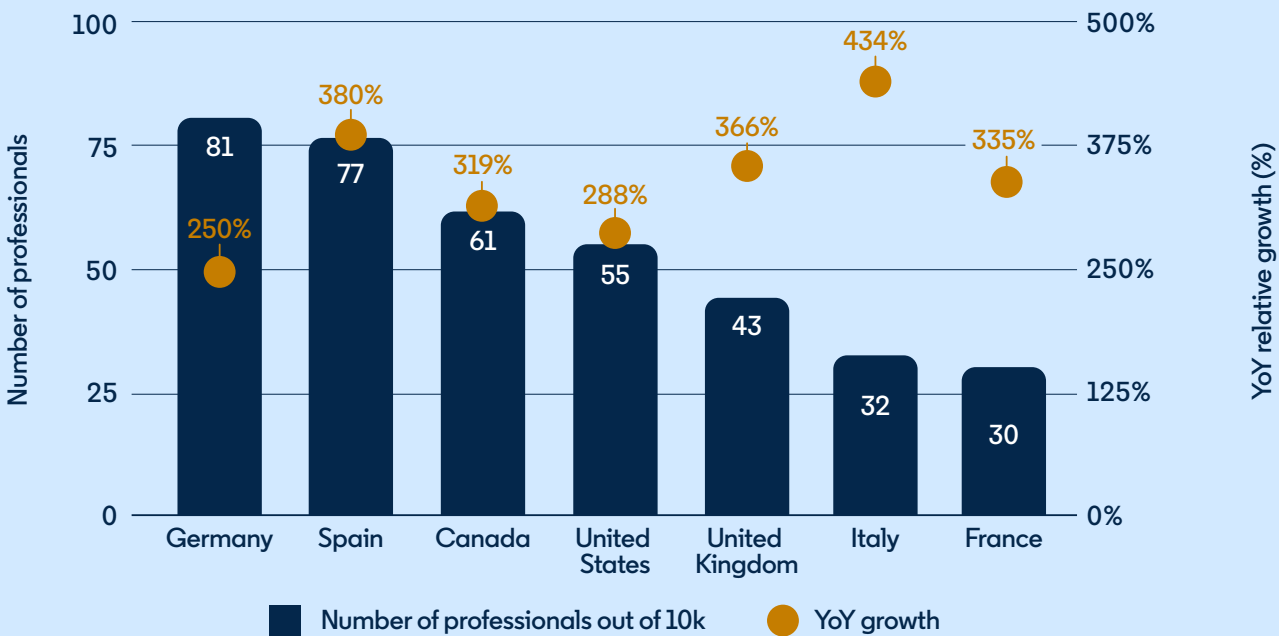
While penetration is still low, AI literacy is spreading fast across procurement professionals

2025 LinkedIn’s Skills on the Rise highlights that the fastest-growing skills broadly across the economy are AI literacy and people skills. This suggests that AI is driving professionals across the board to experiment with AI tools and stretch into tasks and capabilities that cannot be easily replicated by AI.

Key insight

AI literacy grew at least 250% among procurement professionals in the last year.

AI literacy penetration and growth, 2025



People skills can give procurement professionals an edge in the era of AI

As of 2025, people skills remain central to procurement, with 86% of professionals listing them on their profiles. The most common are leadership, problem solving, teamwork, project management and communication, all essential for coordinating complex supply chains and working across functions. But what stands out in the data is the rise of growth mindset and adaptability, which now rank amongst the top 15 skills for procurement professionals. These capabilities, whilst less traditional, are critical for sustaining resilience and advancing digitalisation amid increased disruption and digital transformation.

Yet, despite their prevalence, procurement occupations rank lower than many other functions in the share of AI-complementary skills. This suggests that whilst people skills are widespread within procurement, they may not be as deeply embedded or specialised as in other professions. In other words, procurement has breadth of people skills, but not the same depth relative to roles in areas like consulting, HR or client-facing roles.

This gap matters in the context of digitalisation. In the early stages of digital maturity, basic people skills are sufficient to coordinate processes and connect procurement with adjacent functions. But as firms advance into more advanced stages, the demands shift towards higher-level people capabilities, such as strategic negotiation, adaptability and having a growth mindset, which can complement AI. Without deeper investment in these areas, procurement risks falling behind other functions that are better positioned to balance technical expertise with human judgement. This reflects the same pattern noted earlier: procurement’s people skills are broad but not yet deep, offering an advantage in coverage, but a gap in specialisation.



Top AI-complementary skills added by procurement professionals in 2025	
Ranking	Skill
1	Leadership and people management
2	Problem solving
3	Teamwork and collaboration
4	Project management
5	Communication and presentation
6	Strategic planning
7	Negotiation
8	Stakeholder management
9	Growth mindset
10	Decision-making
11	Critical thinking
12	Adaptability
13	Mentoring and coaching
14	Entrepreneurship
15	Independence

86% of procurement professionals report people skills, with growth mindset and adaptability now ranking among their top 15 skills.

Implications and opportunities for business leaders

From insights to action: Turning procurement's turning point into opportunity

The years ahead will test procurement's ability to balance digital adoption with human capabilities, bridge operational gaps with strategic foresight and turn networks into sources of resilience. Firms that succeed will not only strengthen procurement as a function but embed it as a distributed, organisation-wide capability essential to agility and growth.

Short-term (next 12–18 months)

- 1. Accelerate digitalisation:** As a first step towards AI-readiness, expand adoption of e-procurement tools and analytics to improve transparency, automate routine processes and enable data-driven decision-making.
- 2. Explore AI literacy pilots:** Begin training programmes on AI literacy skills (such as prompt engineering or tools to conduct AI-aided data analysis), with early focus on junior staff to build future-ready capabilities.
- 3. Focus on people skills at scale:** Provide training in stakeholder management, negotiation and collaboration to deepen skills that are both AI complementary and central to resilience.

Medium- to long-term (2–5 years):

- 1. Support the democratisation of procurement:** Expand training for non-procurement roles (such as finance, operations, IT) so procurement expertise continues to be a distributed capability embedded across organisations.
- 2. Rebalance hiring to support digital transformation:** Focus recruitment into digital-savvy roles such as IT sourcing, data analytics and e-procurement management, whilst maintaining a strong pipeline of junior operational roles to sustain execution.
- 3. Cultivate networks for resilience:** Invest in broader and more diverse ecosystems of suppliers, partners and clients, leveraging digital platforms to strengthen optionality and flexibility during crises.
- 4. Strengthen the talent pipeline:** Continue pyramid hiring with a strong base of junior roles to ensure execution capacity and future leadership growth.



Key definitions

Procurement talent

Professionals either working in a procurement-specific occupation (Buyer, Procurement Specialist, etc.) and/or holding at least two procurement-specific skills (procurement, purchasing processes, e-procurement). LinkedIn's taxonomy identifies >140 procurement-specific occupations and >300 procurement-specific skills.

Procurement leaders

Executives in leadership roles (Director, VP, C-suite) who either work in a procurement-specific occupation and/or hold at least two procurement-specific skills.

Procurement occupations

Roles directly tied to procurement execution, such as Buyers, Sourcing Specialists, Procurement Managers or Purchasing Agents.

Procurement skills

Capabilities related to purchasing, supplier management, sourcing, contracting, category management or e-procurement skills (SAP Ariba, Coupa, etc.).

AI literacy skills

The ability to understand, interact with and apply artificial intelligence (AI) tools in daily work. In LinkedIn's taxonomy, this includes general competencies such as prompt engineering and practical applications, such as Microsoft Copilot.



Methodologies

Data and privacy: This body of work represents the world seen through LinkedIn data, drawn from the anonymised and aggregated profile information of LinkedIn's >1 billion members around the world. As such, it is influenced by how members choose to use the platform, which can vary based on professional, social and regional culture, as well as overall site availability and accessibility. In publishing these insights from LinkedIn's Economic Graph, we want to provide accurate statistics whilst ensuring our members' privacy. As a result, all data shows aggregated information for the corresponding period following strict data quality thresholds that prevent the disclosure of any information about specific individuals.

Procurement concentration: For a given country, we calculate the number of members who are procurement talent, divided by the total number of LinkedIn members in that country.

Skills: LinkedIn members self-report their skills on their LinkedIn profiles. Currently, more than 41,000 distinct, standardised skills are identified by LinkedIn. These have been coded and classified by taxonomists at LinkedIn into 250 skill groupings, which are the skill groups represented in the dataset.

- **Skill penetration and growth:** For a given skill group (AI literacy, e-procurement, etc.), we calculate the percentage of procurement talent who list the selected skills in their profiles, out of procurement talent who list any skill. We then proceed to compute compounded annual growth rates (CAGR).
- **Fastest-growing skills:** Most frequently added skills by procurement professionals, as measured by their year-on-year growth rate.
- **Impact of AI on the workforce:** To assess the impact of AI on the procurement workforce, we identify three categories of skills:
 - **AI-replicable skills** are the +500 skills that AI is most likely to be able to replicate. Examples include writing, editing, translation, content creation, data analysis and programming languages.
 - **AI-complementary skills** are the +800 skills that technology cannot yet replicate and are critical to the implementation of AI and other technologies. Examples include leadership, teamwork, negotiation, problem-solving, people management and relationship-building.
 - **AI literacy:** AI literacy pertains to using AI tools and includes skills like prompt engineering, generative art, LLM assistants, etc. More details on this can be found in our [AI Partnerships Technical Note](#).
- **Skills mismatch:** The skills mismatch score captures how closely the supply of skills from workers aligns with the skills demanded by employers. By quantifying the gap between what's listed in job postings and what's found in member profiles, the score provides a structured way to identify where skill shortages or surpluses may exist at the country-occupation level. For more information, refer to our [Skills Mismatch Technical Note](#).

Scope

- **Countries in scope:** Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, United States.
- **Timeframe:** January 2016 to August 2025.



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