

Talent Radar

AI / ML and Agentic AI

April 2026





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— AI/ML & AGENTIC AI · APRIL 2026

A sector read on AI/ML and agentic AI hiring in India, GCCs included.

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The Big Picture

***AI/ML hiring is accelerating fast,
and the talent is scarce.***



Sachith Kumar Rai

Managing Director & Founder,
Recruise Global

For a while the market has sensed that AI and machine learning were pulling ahead of everything else, and the April 2026 numbers confirm it. AI/ML is now the single fastest-growing hiring sector in India, up 37% year-on-year, and it leads every other sector we track. This is no longer an emerging theme; it is the centre of gravity for technical hiring.

Within that, one category stands out. Agentic AI, the work of building systems that can plan and act on their own, is the breakout. Postings for LangChain, CrewAI and agent-orchestration skills have risen by an estimated 300% in just fifteen months. The demand is real, and it is moving faster than the talent can form.

That is the catch. India holds an estimated 12,000 to 18,000 active agentic AI practitioners today, against projected demand of more than 50,000 by 2027. Supply covers only a fraction of what the market will need, and unlike a mature discipline there is no deep senior bench to draw on. The skill itself is barely two years old at any scale.

My advice to the leaders we work with is simple. Do not wait for the perfect profile, because it does not yet exist. Hire for curiosity over credentials, back engineers who learn fast, and invest in their growth while the skill is still forming. The teams that build this capability now, rather than trying to buy it finished later, are the ones that will own the advantage.



Executive Summary

— AI/ML & AGENTIC AI AT A GLANCE

AI/ML hiring surged +37% year-on-year in April 2026, the single fastest-growing sector in India. Agentic AI, LLM engineering and a widening supply gap are driving it.

YOY GROWTH, AI/ML

+37%

Highest of all sectors

AGENTIC AI POSTINGS

+300%

(industry est.)

AI/ML FRESHER HIRING

+22%

Year-on-year

AI DEMAND GROWTH

+32–40%

YoY

INDIA · SHARE OF GLOBAL AI TALENT

16%

BCG

AGENTIC PROS NEEDED BY 2027

50K+

NASSCOM

— WHAT THE QUARTER SHOWS

Demand

A broad surge. AI/ML postings led every sector at +37% YoY. Total AI demand grew ~32–40% YoY.

Agentic AI

The breakout. Postings requiring LangChain, CrewAI or agent-orchestration skills rose +300% between Jan 2025 and Mar 2026. Gartner projects 40% of enterprise apps will embed task-specific AI agents by end-2026, up from under 5% in 2025.

Supply

The constraint. India holds an estimated 12,000 to 18,000 active agentic AI practitioners against 50,000+ projected demand by 2027. The pool is young: most have under 18 months of hands-on experience.

Finding One

AI/ML leads every sector, and agentic AI is the breakout

FINDING ONE

AI/ML leads every sector

FINDING TWO

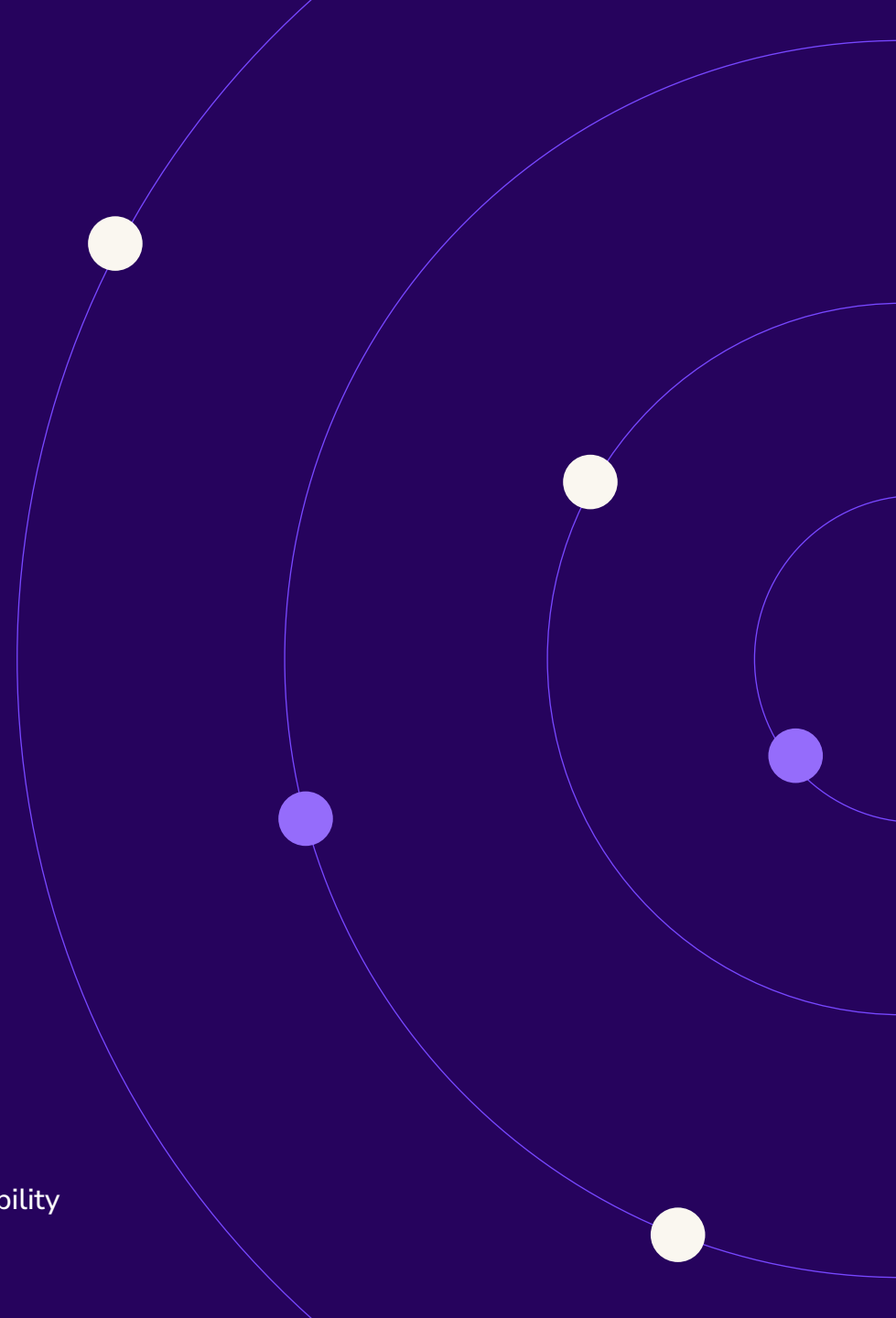
The Supply Gap

FINDING THREE

Pay and the sector spread

THE BOTTOM LINE

Build senior capability





FINDING ONE

AI is the hottest hire in every industry, and 'agentic' AI is leading the surge.

AI/ML is not only growing faster than every other hiring sector; the demand inside it is shifting toward a new frontier. The classic machine-learning stack is now table stakes, and the skills that move an offer have changed with it. Python remains the base, but employers are screening for LangChain and LangGraph, PyTorch (which has overtaken TensorFlow in postings, with TensorFlow holding on mainly in legacy enterprise systems), LLM fine-tuning, RAG pipeline design and multi-agent orchestration. MLOps and vector databases round out what a production-ready profile now looks like.

Two things separate the candidates who clear the first screen. The first is cloud AI: fluency in AWS SageMaker, Google Vertex AI or Azure ML lifts pay by 30 to 40%, the highest-premium combination in the market. The second is public proof. Engineers with open-source work on Hugging Face, LangChain or vector-database projects get interviews faster than those relying on credentials alone.

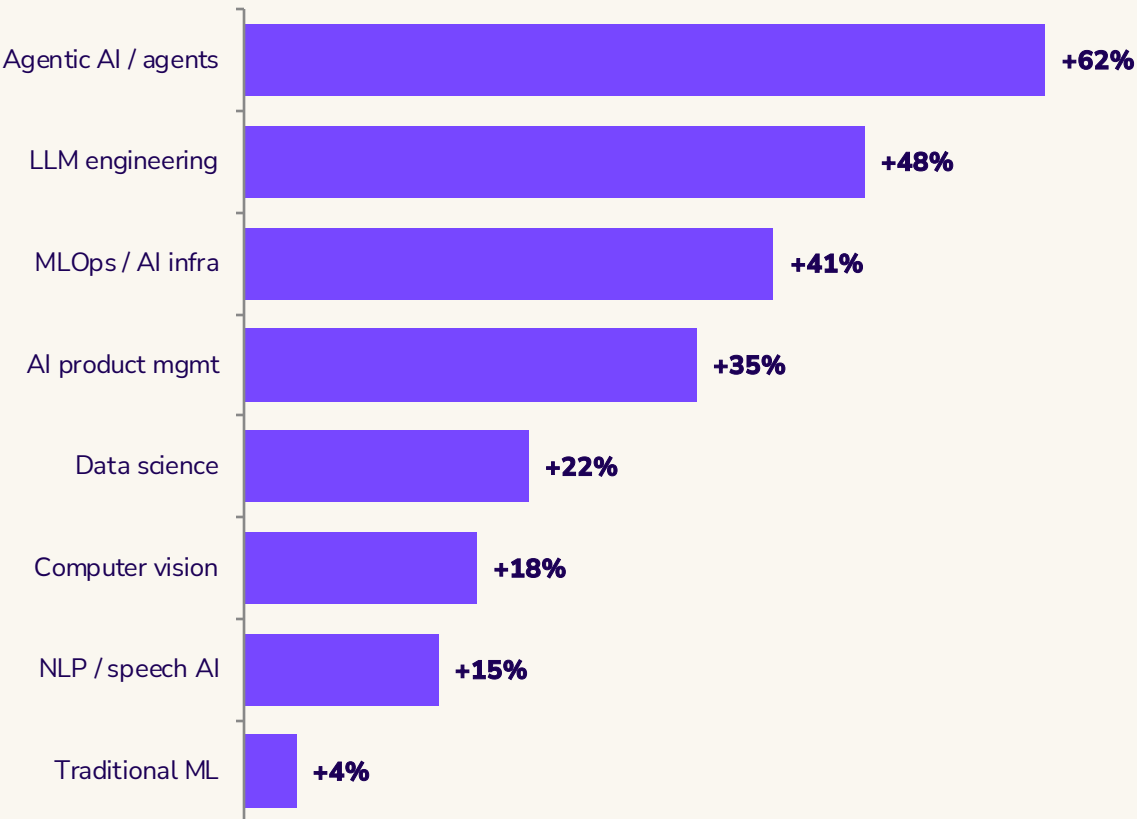
What hiring leaders should act on:

The practical implication is that AI/ML can no longer be hired as a single discipline. Brief each mandate by the specific capability it needs and the band it sits in, and treat agentic AI as its own search, with its own brief, kept separate from a general engineering requisition. The profile, the pay and the proof are all different.



Sub-segment growth and top skills

SUB-SEGMENT HIRING, YOY



TOP SKILLS IN DEMAND

April 2026, AI/ML roles. PyTorch now leads TensorFlow in postings; TensorFlow holds on only in legacy enterprise systems.

Python	LangChain / LangGraph
PyTorch	LLM fine-tuning
RAG pipeline design	Multi-agent orchestration
MLOps	Vector databases
CrewAI / AutoGen	Prompt engineering

Cloud AI commands the premium

AWS SageMaker, Google Vertex AI and Azure ML skills lift pay 30 to 40%, the highest-premium combination in the market.

Public proof beats credentials

Engineers with open-source work on Hugging Face, LangChain or vector-database projects get interviews faster.

Finding Two

Supply covers only a fraction of projected demand

FINDING ONE

AI/ML leads every sector

FINDING TWO

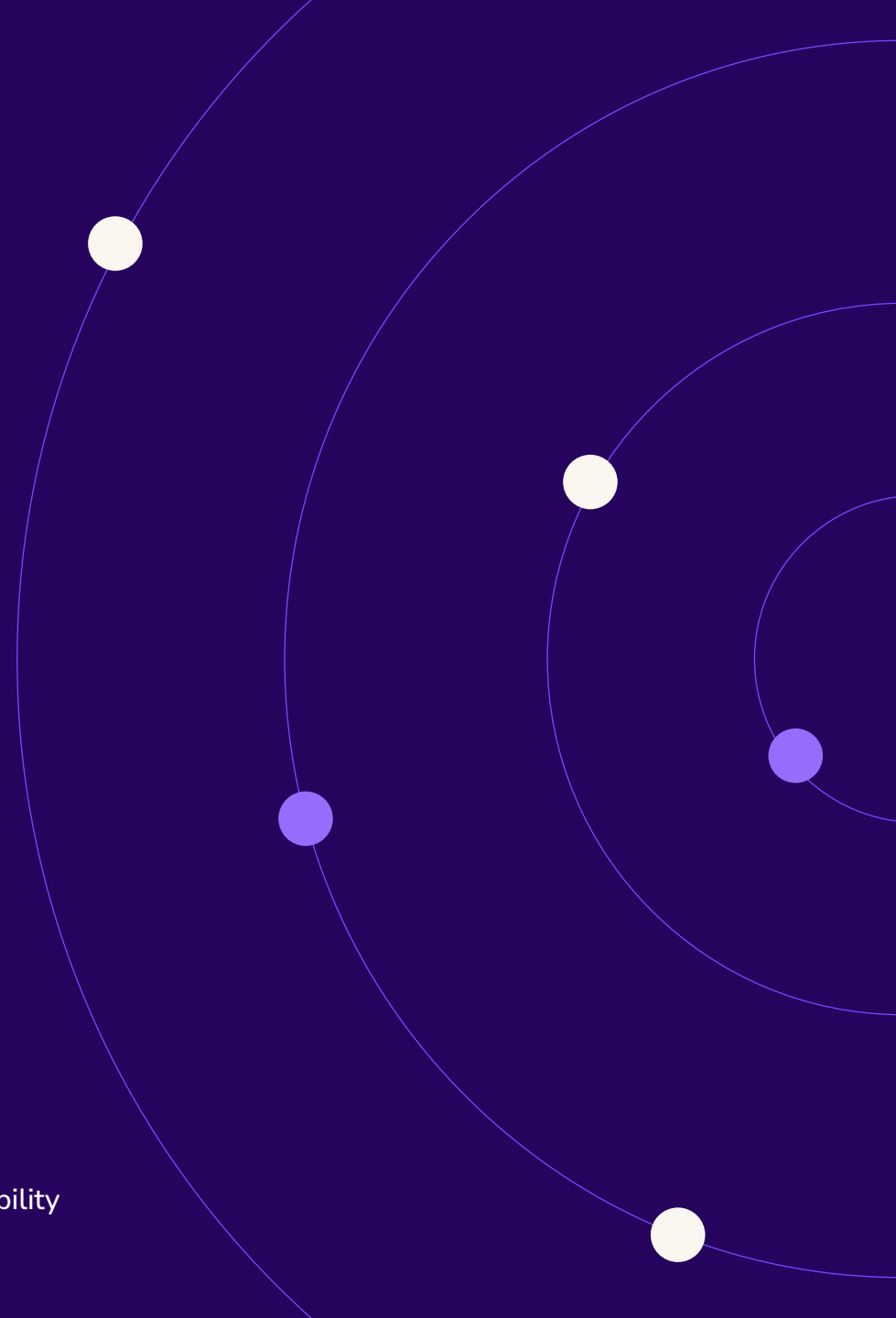
The Supply Gap

FINDING THREE

Pay and the sector spread

THE BOTTOM LINE

Build senior capability





FINDING TWO

Supply covers only a fraction of projected demand.

The demand signal for agentic AI is unmistakable. Open listings for agent-orchestration roles have grown by an estimated 300% year-on-year, and there are roughly 800 to 1,200 active roles in the market at any time. The supply behind them has not kept pace. India has an estimated 12,000 to 18,000 active agentic AI practitioners today, against a widely-cited projection of more than 50,000 needed by 2027. On those numbers, current supply covers only about a third of where demand is heading.

The pool is growing quickly, by an estimated 60 to 70% a year as engineers certify and upskill into the field, but it is young. Most practitioners have under eighteen months of hands-on experience, because the frameworks themselves only went mainstream in early 2024. There is, in other words, almost no deep senior bench to hire from; the finished profile barely exists on the open market yet.

What hiring leaders should act on:

Plan for scarcity rather than wait for the market to catch up. Build the pipeline ahead of the brief, hire for trajectory rather than a complete résumé, and grow the capability internally. The organisations that start building agentic talent now will be the ones that have it when everyone else is still looking.



Talent headcount snapshot, India

— HEADLINE HEADCOUNT NUMBERS

India has an estimated 12,000 to 18,000 active agentic AI practitioners against projected demand of 50,000+ by 2027, a critical gap.



— SUPPLY VS PROJECTED 2027 DEMAND



A young, fast-growing pool

Practitioner supply is growing an estimated 60 to 70% year-on-year through certifications and upskilling, but most practitioners have under 18 months of hands-on experience. The framework only went mainstream in early 2024.

Finding Three

Pay runs high and demand has spread beyond IT

FINDING ONE

AI/ML leads every sector

FINDING TWO

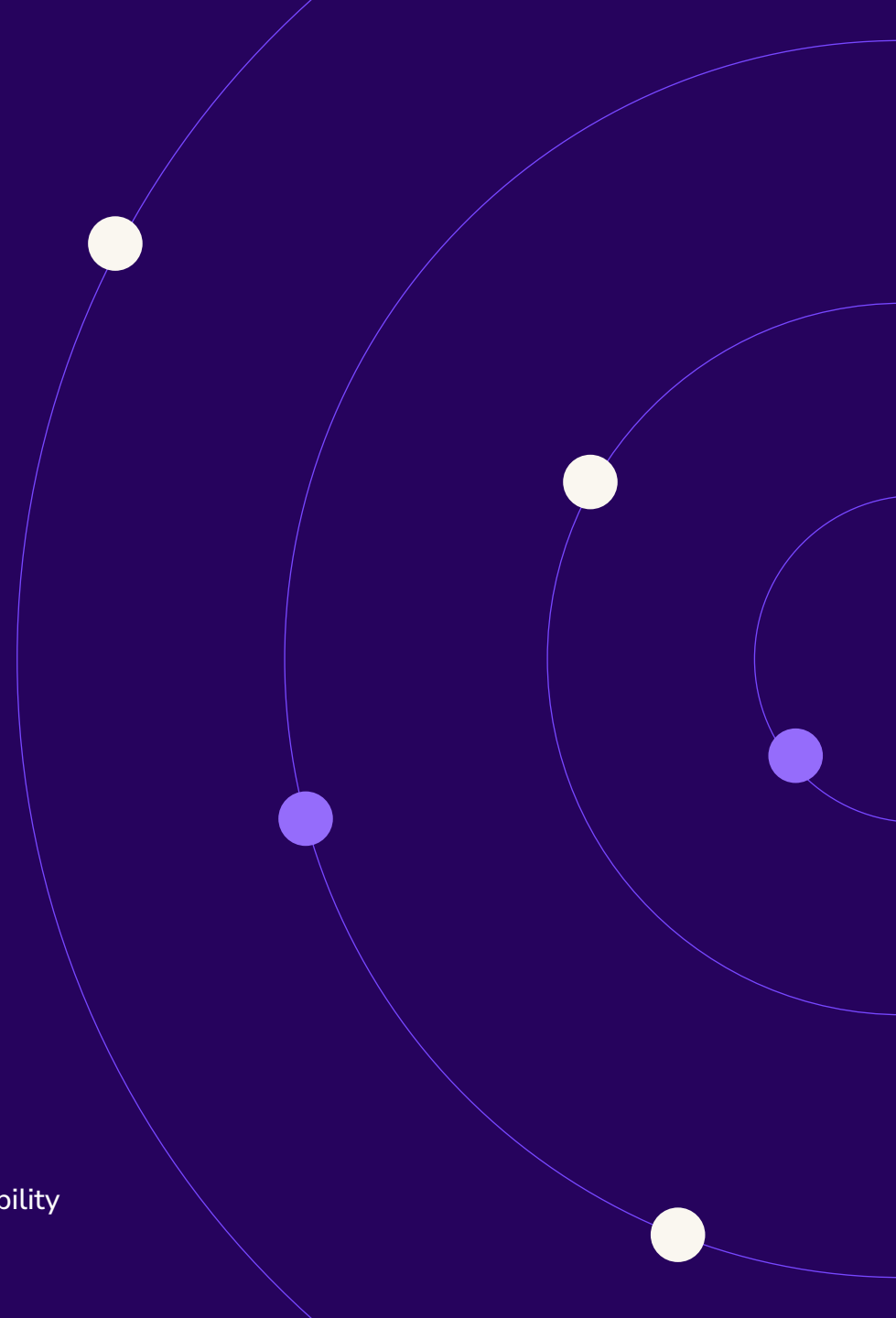
The Supply Gap

FINDING THREE

Pay and the sector spread

THE BOTTOM LINE

Build senior capability





FINDING THREE

Pay runs high and demand has spread beyond IT.

Cloud pay runs high and climbs steeply with seniority. Entry roles sit in the Rs.6 to 11 LPA band, mid-level cloud and DevOps engineers in the low twenties, and senior leadership reaches from Rs.70 LPA to over Rs.1.3 crore for a VP or Head of Cloud Engineering. A certification still moves the number, lifting pay by 20 to 35% over an uncertified profile at the same level and widening at the architect and platform-lead tiers. Salary growth is forecast at 10 to 15% a year through 2030, and SaaS and product firms increasingly compete on equity and RSU refreshers for senior SRE and platform hires who are holding GCC counter-offers.

Demand has spread well beyond core IT. BFSI and the GCCs are the most undersupplied, as RBI cloud-outsourcing norms and DPDP rules drive architect and FinOps demand at the same time. IT and product firms are standing up dedicated platform teams and GCC cloud centres of excellence; e-commerce and SaaS are already cloud-native and compete on scope and equity rather than headline pay; manufacturing is only beginning its edge-to-cloud and IIoT journey; and healthcare and pharma are hiring for the cloud for the first time on the back of DPDP data-residency rules. Bengaluru sets the top pay benchmark, with Hyderabad and Pune close behind on GCC cloud investment.

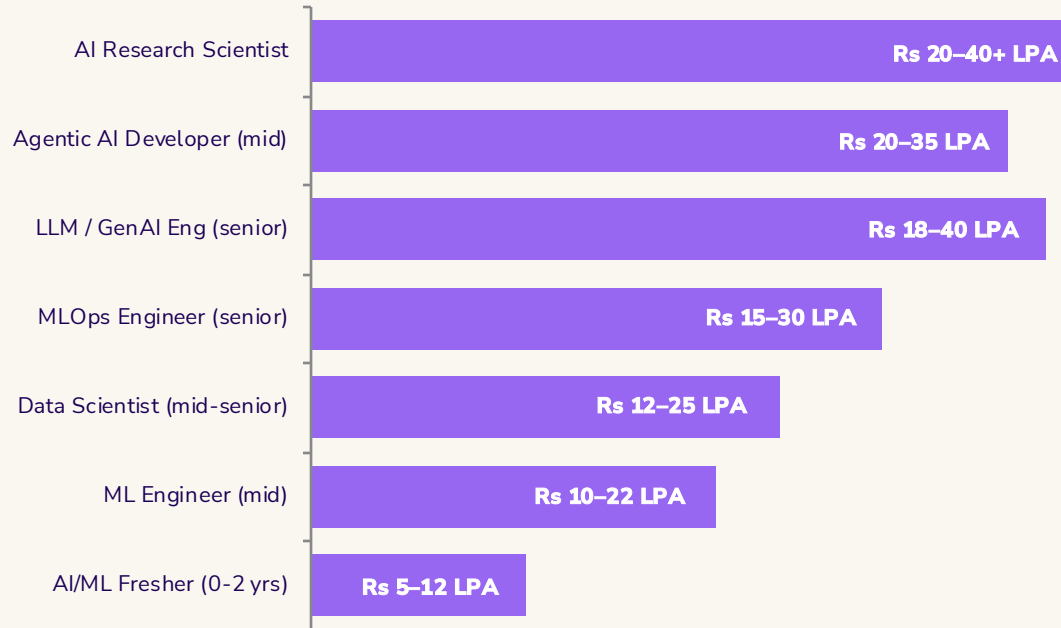
What hiring leaders should act on:

Benchmark every offer against both the role-specific band and a 20 to 35% cloud premium, and move fastest in BFSI and the GCCs, where the regulatory drivers are stacking demand on the thinnest senior pools.



Salary bands and sector demand

SALARY BANDS BY AI/ML ROLE



AI/ML roles carry a 20 to 45% salary premium over equivalent general software roles at the same level. Remote seniors working for US firms earn Rs 60–80 LPA equivalent.

SUPPLY VS DEMAND BY SECTOR

BFSI / GCCs	Severely undersupplied. Highest demand, fewest practitioners.
IT / Product Firms	Undersupplied. Large IT firms building internal teams.
E-commerce / SaaS	Moderate gap. Startups hiring fast, less MNC competition.
Healthcare / Pharma	Emerging demand. Early stage, gap growing fast.
Education / EdTech	Relatively balanced. Practitioners upskilled from EdTech.

Salary growth outpaces supply

AI/ML pay is projected to grow 15 to 20% year-on-year through 2030, with demand rising ~40% against supply growth of only 15 to 20%. Bengaluru alone accounts for ~45% of India's AI job postings, concentrated in R&D centres of Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Salesforce and SAP.



Roles, headcount and city demand

ESTIMATED HEADCOUNT BY ROLE

Role	Est. headcount
Agentic AI / autonomous agents	3,500–5,500
LangChain / LLM engineer	2,500–4,000
AI automation / workflow engineer	2,000–3,500
Multi-agent systems architect	1,000–2,000
AI product manager (agentic)	800–1,500
Prompt / agent behaviour engineer	500–1,000
Total, all agentic AI roles	12,000–18,000

Bengaluru alone accounts for ~45% of India's AI job postings, concentrated in the R&D centres of Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Salesforce and SAP.

CITY DEMAND & AI/ML HIRING

City	Share	YoY hiring
Bengaluru	~45%	+41%
Hyderabad	~18%	+38%
Pune	~10%	+28%
Chennai	~8%	+35%
Delhi NCR	~7%	+17%
Mumbai	~5%	+15%
Tier-2/3 cities	~7%	varies

Where the experience sits

Freshers (0-3 yrs) with AI/ML skills saw a +22% hiring jump as firms invest early in agentic talent pipelines. The 8-12 year band spiked +19% on demand for senior engineers who can architect and deploy production-grade AI at scale.

The Bottom Line

The skill is still forming. Hire the people forming with it.

FINDING ONE

AI/ML leads every sector

FINDING TWO

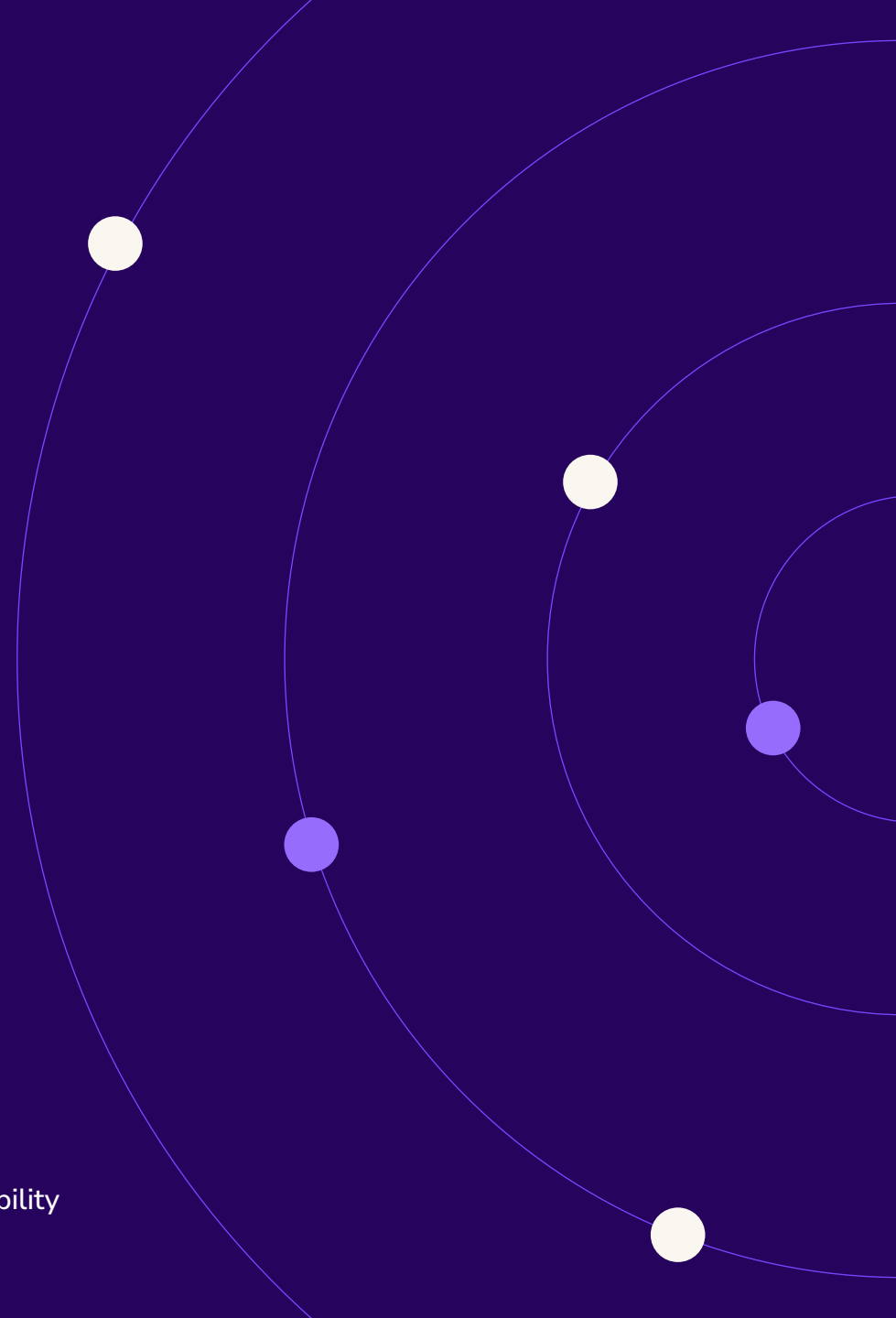
The Supply Gap

FINDING THREE

Pay and the sector spread

THE BOTTOM LINE

Build senior capability





THE BOTTOM LINE

There are hardly ready-made experts to hire, *only potential to back.*

AI and machine learning are now the fastest-growing hire in every sector, with agentic AI the breakout inside that; the talent to meet that demand covers only a fraction of what the market will need, and the pool that exists is young; and the pay runs high and reaches well beyond IT into BFSI, the GCCs, healthcare and beyond. The demand is structural, the supply is early, and neither gap will close on its own.

That points to three moves. First, stop hiring AI/ML as one discipline. Brief each mandate by the specific capability it needs and the band it sits in, and run agentic AI as its own search with its own brief, kept separate from a general engineering requisition. Second, plan for scarcity and hire for trajectory.

Do not wait for the finished profile, because at the frontier it barely exists; hire engineers who learn fast, back them with growth, and build the capability internally while the skill is still forming. Third, benchmark every offer against the role-specific band and a 20 to 45% AI premium, and move fastest in BFSI and the GCCs, where demand is highest and practitioners are fewest.

Do those three consistently and AI hiring stops being a chase for a profile that does not yet exist and becomes a capability you build ahead of the market. That, more than any single hire, is where the advantage will sit.



Want to hire talent that makes a real difference to your organisation?

Cut through the hype to get to what really matters.

About Us

Recruise is a global intelligence-led talent partner for enterprises, with offices in Bengaluru and Austin. For two decades, we have been a trusted partner to Fortune 2000 companies, scaling mid-market global capability centres, and the senior professionals who lead them — across Technology, Pharma, Life Sciences, and BFSI.

We combine deep sector expertise and proprietary hiring intelligence to deliver measurable impact across talent acquisition, executive search, and GCC transformation. Our work is reinforced by industry-leading research, deep market insights, and thought leadership across a wide range of sectors including Digital Services and ER&D, Enterprise Software, Internet of Things, Healthcare, Pharma, Lifesciences, Retail, Automotive, BFSI and Media & Telecom.

From scaling innovation to navigating disruption, global leaders turn to us to build, buy, and grow technology-led businesses that are ready for what's next.



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