



Evolve or Fall Behind:

The AI Readiness Guide for HR Leaders

SHL.

Why AI readiness matters now

AI is reshaping work at extraordinary speed. Tools are advancing, employees are experimenting, and organizations are investing heavily. Yet many are struggling to turn AI adoption into real business value. And the challenge isn't the technology, it's whether people are ready for it.

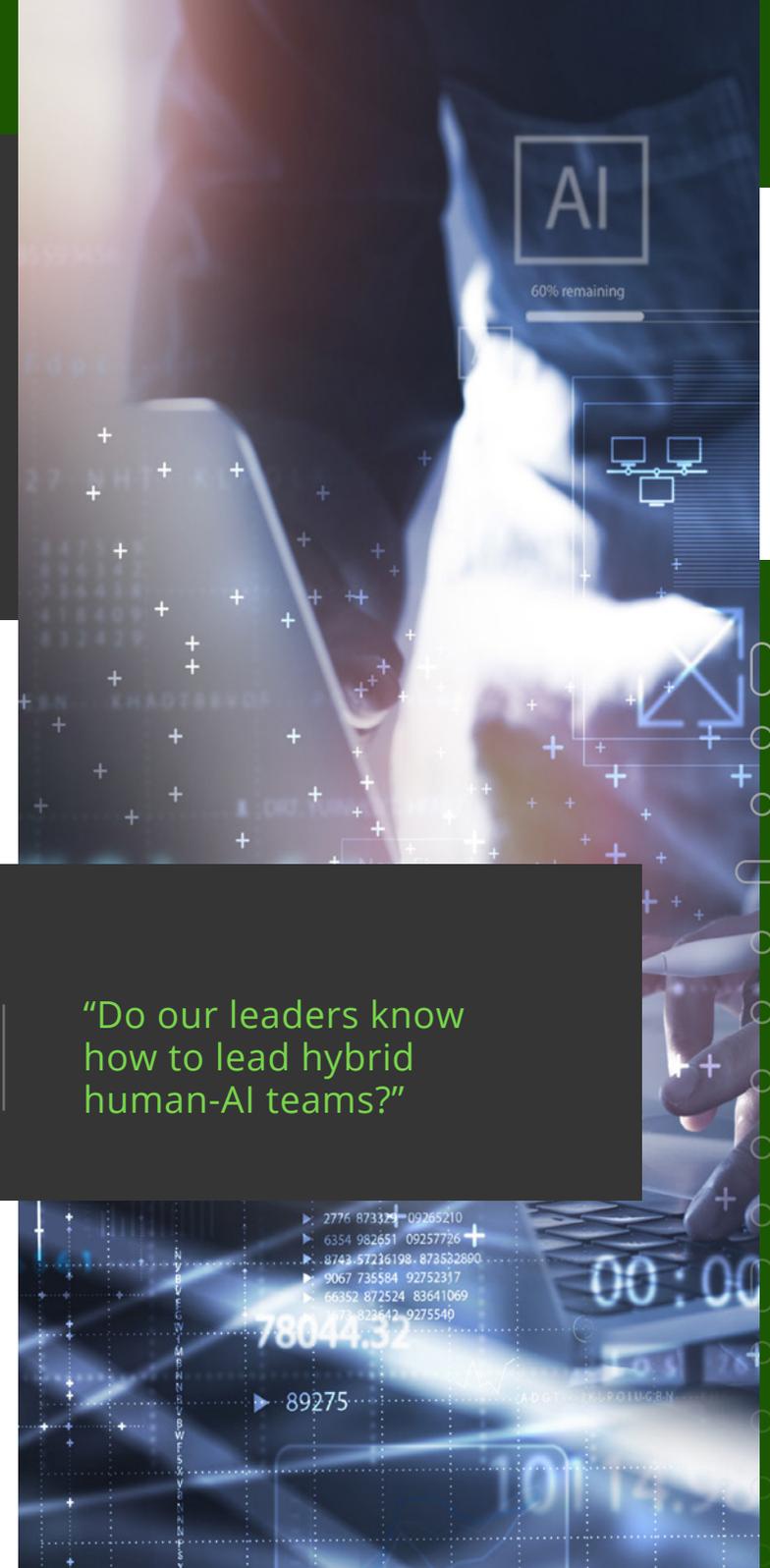
That's why CEOs are asking big questions of HR:

"Do we have the skills to execute our AI strategy, or just a vision deck?"

"Are we building AI capabilities faster than our competitors?"

"Do our leaders know how to lead hybrid human-AI teams?"

This guide explores what AI readiness really means, and how to build it across your workforce and your leaders.



The two AI readiness problems facing organizations

Organizations are facing two critical readiness challenges: workforce readiness, and leader readiness.

Challenge #1

Workforce readiness

Do employees have the skills to work effectively with AI today?

For many, confidence, capability, and trust are still low. And that's slowing progress.

Challenge #2

Leader readiness

Are today's leaders equipped for an AI-driven organization?

For many, the capabilities that built their success are losing relevance. And that's putting future performance at risk.

Most organizations can't yet see the size or shape of these gaps. Without that clarity, AI progress slows. This guide shows how to identify both gaps and develop the capability to close them.

Your AI tools are ready. Are your people?

Workforce AI readiness determines whether AI investment translates into performance impact. It's not primarily about technical expertise, but about the human capabilities that enable people to think critically, adapt quickly, and work confidently alongside AI.

The challenge isn't just building these capabilities. It's knowing where they exist, where they don't, and how they link to performance. Without that visibility, organizations are left making assumptions about readiness rather than managing it.



Stop guessing. Start measuring.

“You can’t manage what you can’t measure. We’ve defined the critical skills and behaviors that set AI-ready employees and their performance apart. These skills can be measured with great accuracy, and our research shows they can be developed.”



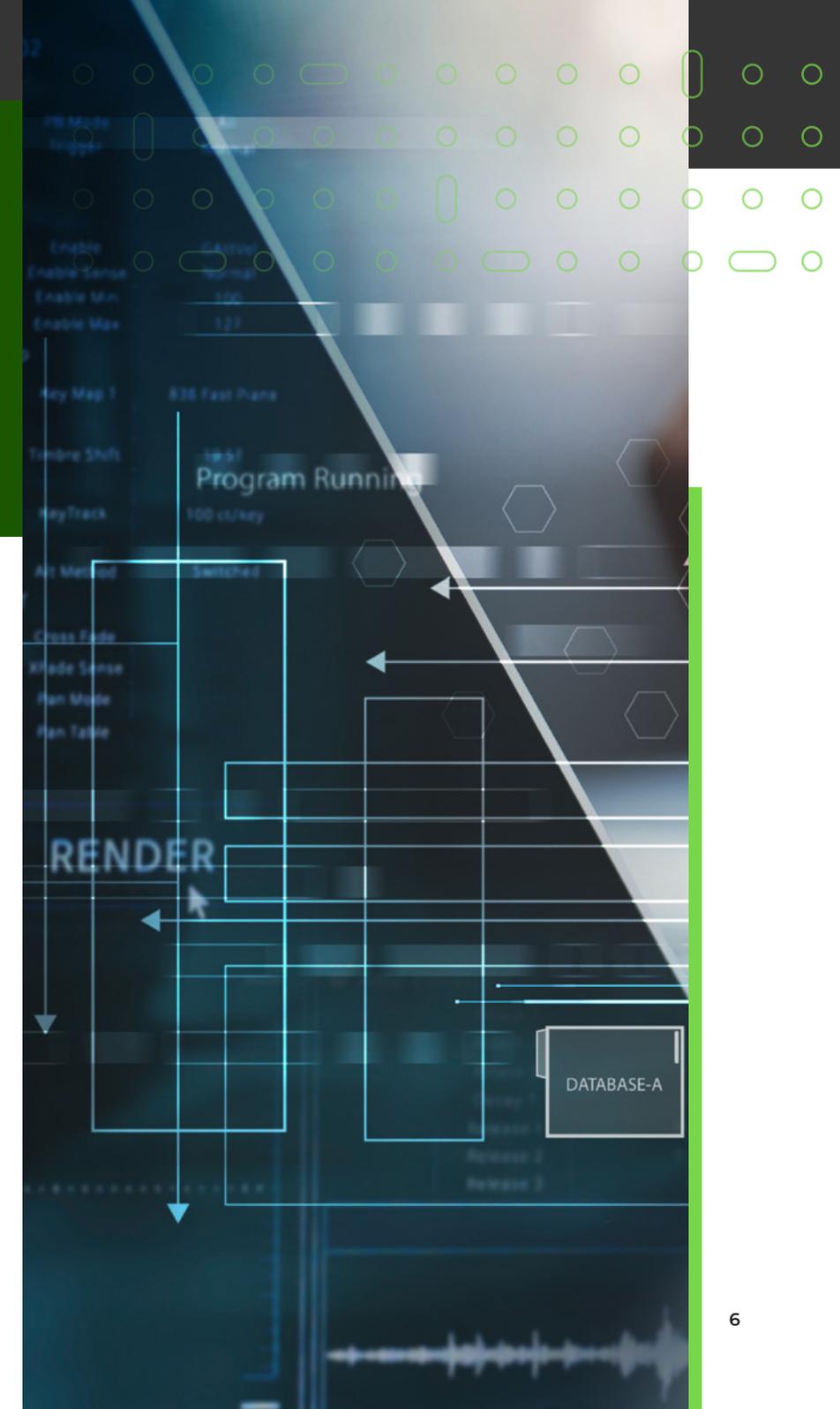
Sara Gutierrez,
Chief Science Officer, SHL

The SHL AI Readiness Profile: Preparing your workforce for AI-powered work

The SHL AI Readiness Profile makes AI readiness measurable at scale. Grounded in SHL's Universal Competency Framework, it captures the behaviors that predict success in human-AI collaboration, focusing on potential, not just past experience.

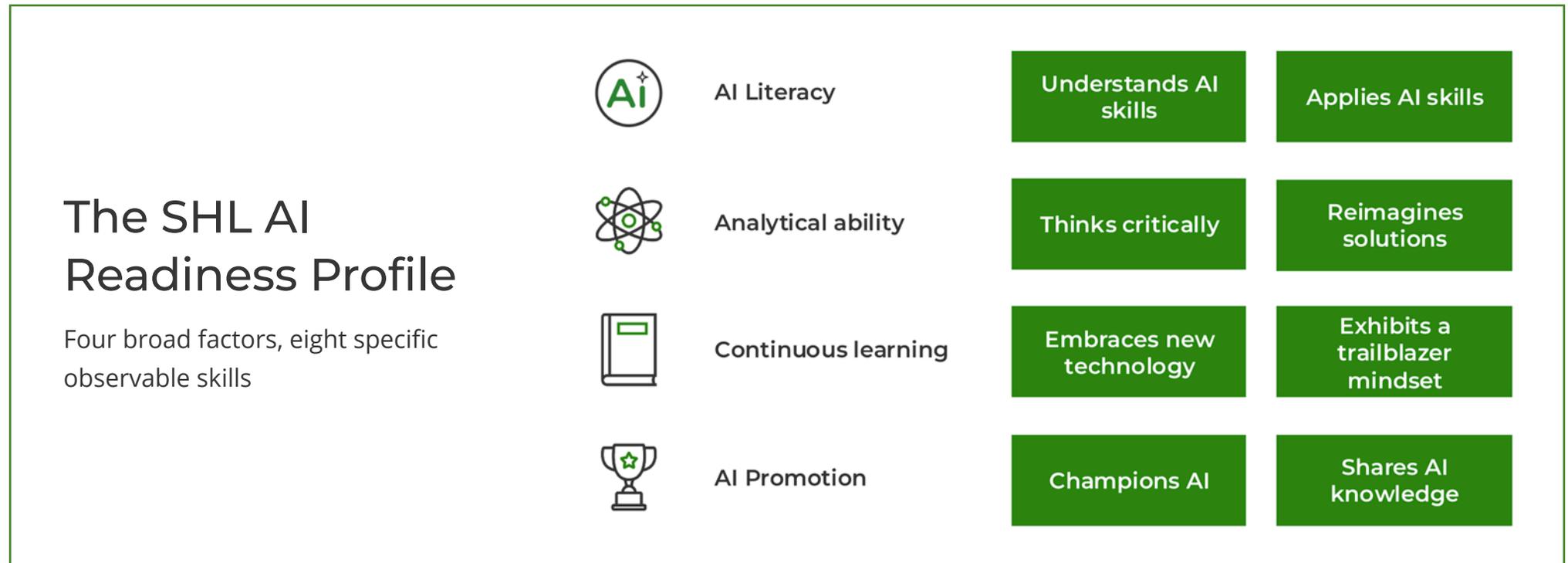
It measures four core areas: **AI Literacy**, **Analytical Ability**, **Continuous Learning**, and **AI Promotion**, each tracking two observable skills that drive effective AI-enabled work.

By highlighting strengths and development areas, the profile turns AI readiness from a buzzword into actionable insight, helping organizations build capabilities that scale and unlock real business impact.



The profile that predicts success in human-AI collaboration

The model breaks down the key skills that enable people to work effectively with AI.



Is your workforce ready for AI? The numbers say no

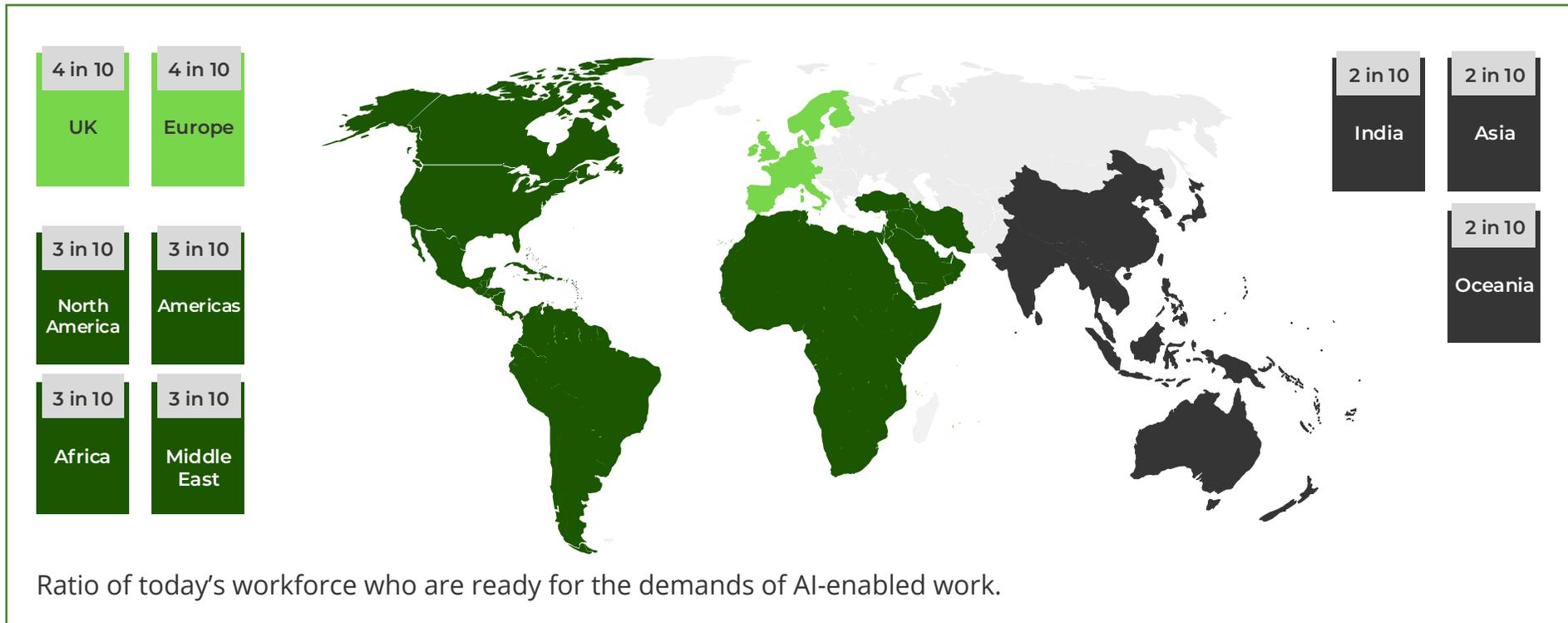
Drawing on validated, objective results from SHL's Global Skills Assessment, our analysis of nearly one million people across regions, industries, and job levels shows that readiness gaps are widespread.



Source: SHL (2025) Superworker skills research program analysis

No region has cracked AI readiness yet

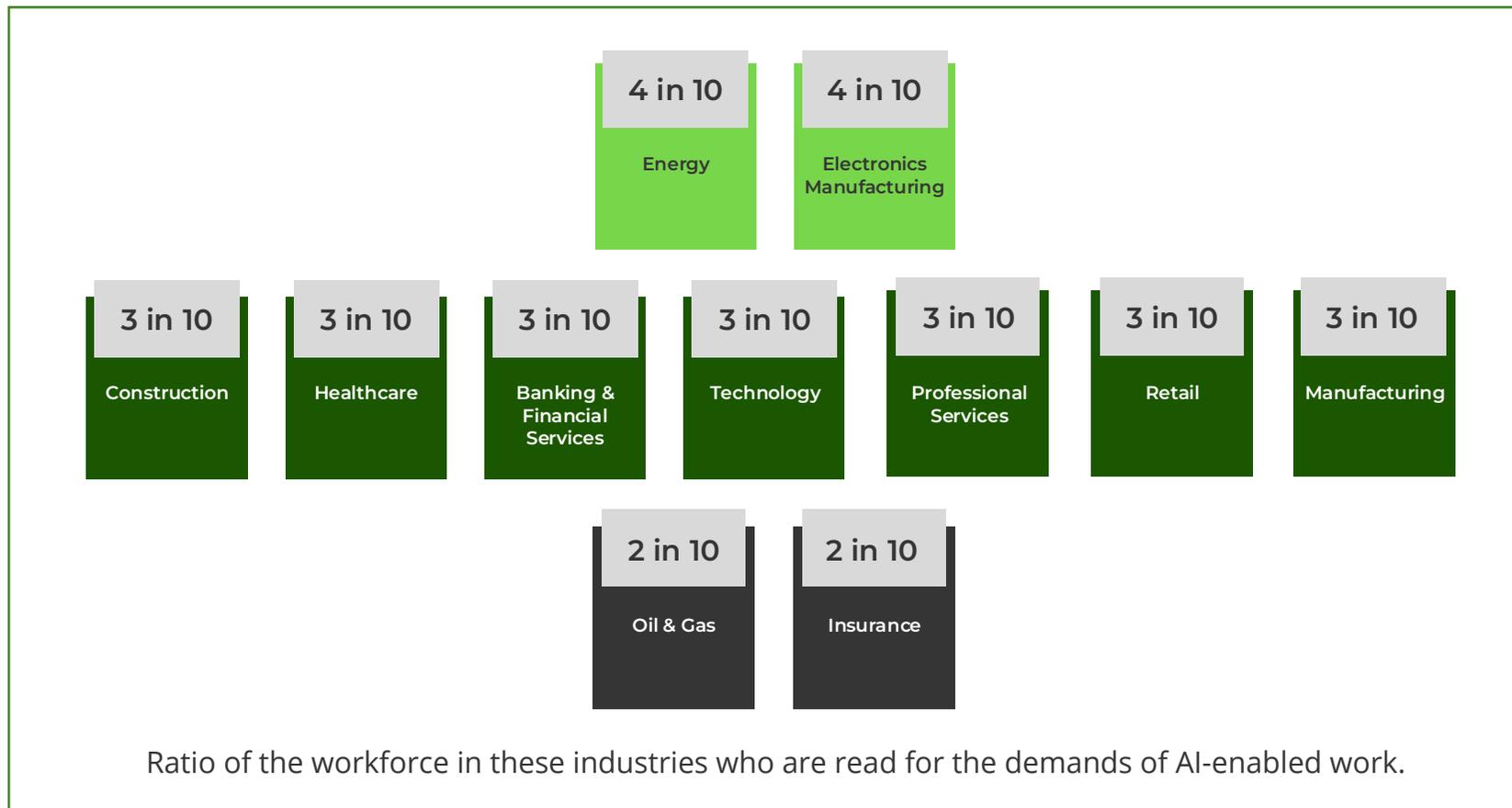
Even the strongest regions fall short on the skills that drive AI-enabled performance.



Source: SHL (2025) Superworker skills research program analysis

A mixed picture across industries

Surprising gaps emerge when comparing who is truly AI-ready, highlighting opportunities for targeted development.



Source: SHL (2025) Superworker skills research program analysis

How SHL helps you build an AI-ready workforce

We give organizations the clarity they need to accelerate with AI. Using science-backed assessment data, we help you see where your people are ready, where development is needed, and how to align talent with your AI strategy.

We help you:

Make smarter hiring decisions

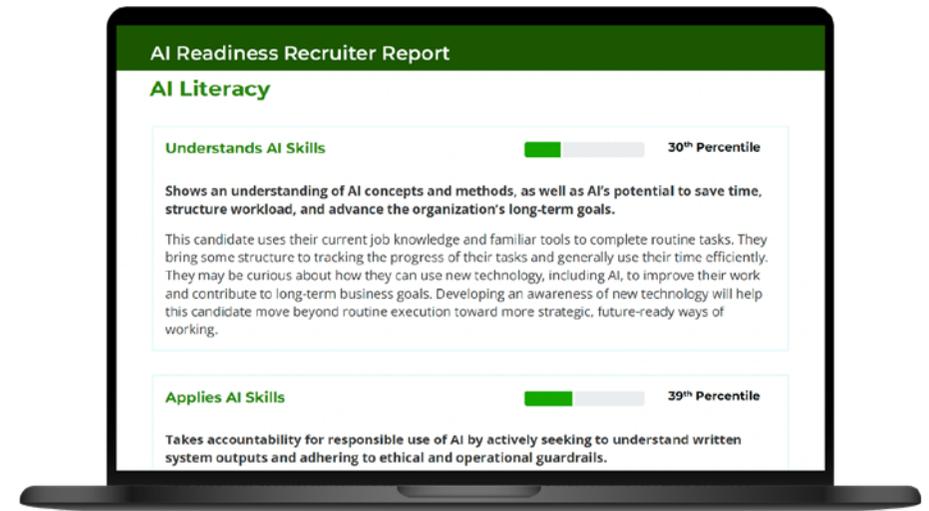
Use AI readiness data alongside traditional hiring information to identify candidates who align with your AI strategy and have the potential to thrive in AI-enabled roles.

Focus development where it matters most

Target learning, reskilling, and onboarding to build capabilities that drive AI adoption and business impact.

Align workforce strategy with business goals

Understand readiness across teams and the organization to inform talent planning, mobility, and deployment.



With objective measurement and focused development, organizations can build AI-ready talent at scale.

[Contact us](#)

AI will expose your leadership gaps faster than you think

Leadership AI readiness is the behavioral capability leaders need to guide teams through AI-enabled work. It's not only about understanding the technology, it's about navigating ambiguity, making decisions with AI-driven insight, empowering experimentation, and reshaping roles as work evolves.

Many leaders feel confident in traditional skills, but AI is changing what matters. The routine aspects of leadership are disappearing, leaving the human aspect of the role such as adaptability, judgment, and influence as the true differentiators. When these capabilities lag, transformation slows, teams lose confidence, and AI impact falls short.



The hardest parts of leadership are now the most important

“AI is removing the routine elements of leadership. What’s left will expose which leaders can truly drive performance in an AI-shaped organization.”



Sara Gutierrez,
Chief Science Officer, SHL

AI will change how we lead

The best AI-era leaders treat AI as a capability that amplifies their impact, while leaning even harder into the human strengths such as wisdom, empathy, and creativity that make leadership real.

AI and human leaders must develop a symbiotic relationship

- AI capabilities complement human qualities
- AI replaces more routine tasks
- AI allows leaders to focus more on high-level strategy and interpersonal connections

Characteristics of successful leaders in the future

- Understand and leverage the benefits of AI
- Embrace and improve on their uniquely human qualities
- Engage and enable team members to commit to a vision and improve their own performance

The leadership profile built for a future you can't ignore

The SHL AI Leadership Profile defines the behaviors leaders need to succeed in an AI-enabled organization. Grounded in science, it focuses on what truly drives performance as AI reshapes work.

The profile centers on four core areas: **People Leadership**, **Forward Thinking**, **Decision Making**, and **AI Collaboration**.

Each area captures the behaviors that help leaders guide teams, anticipate change, make sound decisions, and enable collaboration across evolving workflows.

It builds on familiar leadership models, but with a critical shift: highlighting the behaviors that will grow in importance as AI takes on routine tasks and dialing back those that will matter less.

The result is a framework that prepares leaders not for yesterday's success, but for the AI-driven demands of tomorrow.



The SHL AI Leadership Profile: What tomorrow's leaders need today

Leadership fundamentals still matter, but AI is reshaping what great looks like. SHL's AI Leadership Profile, validated using a dataset of more than 1,600 leaders across different industries, functions and regions, identifies four capabilities and eight behaviors that define success in the AI era.



Is your leadership ready for AI-powered work? The signs say no

Based on the SHL AI Leadership Profile, our analysis of 40,000 leaders across regions, industries and job levels shows the gaps are real.



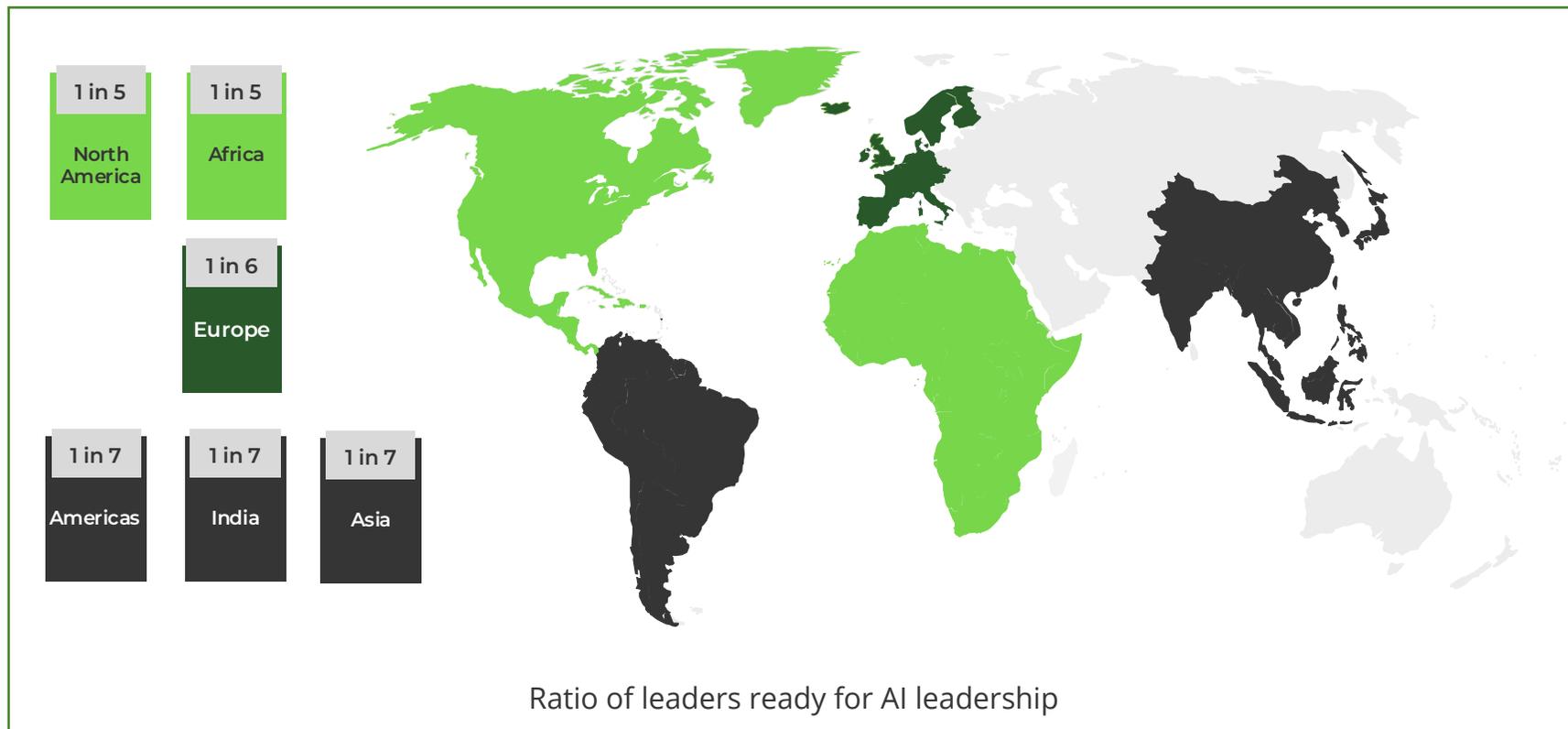
1 IN 5
leaders are AI-ready
today



3 IN 5
leaders need immediate
development

AI is outpacing leaders everywhere

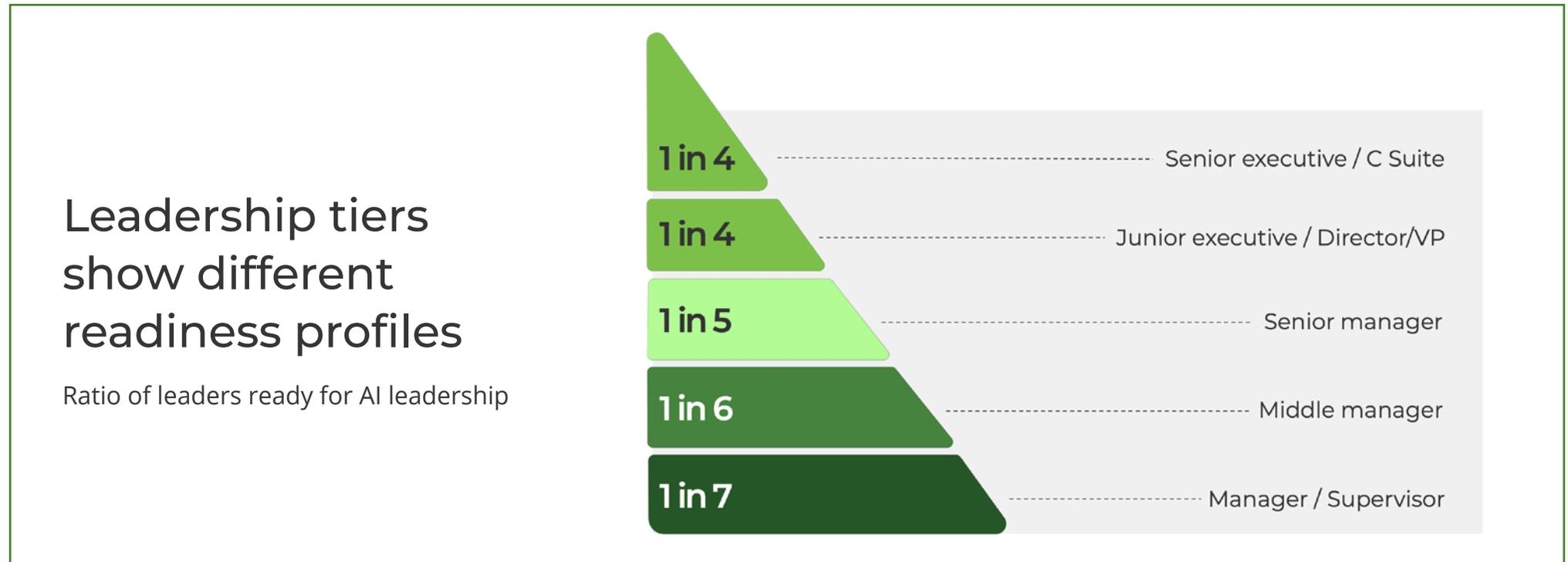
No region is immune. Even the strongest performers struggle to meet the behavioral demands of AI-enabled leadership.



Source: SHL (2026), Occupational Personality Questionnaire analysis

AI-ready leadership is rare at every level

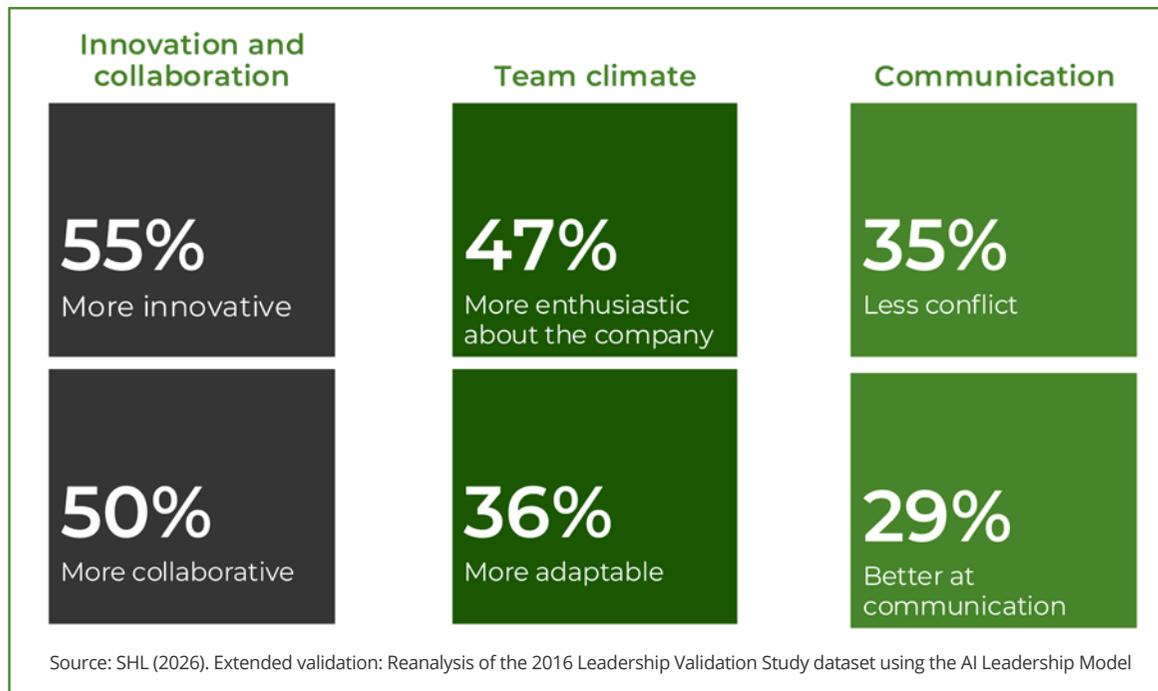
From the C-suite to frontline managers, only a small fraction are equipped to lead in AI-powered work, putting transformation and performance at risk.



Source: SHL (2026), Occupational Personality Questionnaire analysis

The performance impact of AI ready leaders

The impact of leadership readiness is measurable. Compared to other teams, those who meet the SHL AI Leadership Profile demonstrate increased performance.



These aren't marginal gains. They're the performance differences that determine whether organizations accelerate with AI or fall behind.

How SHL helps you build an AI ready leadership bench

We give organizations the clarity and capability they need to accelerate with AI.

For your current and future leaders we:

Measure AI readiness with scientific accuracy

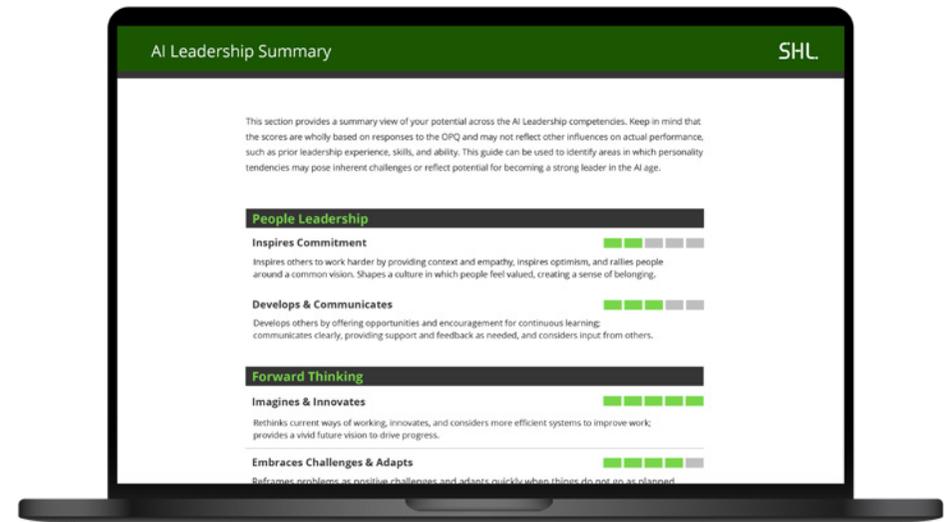
Our assessments pinpoint the behaviors that predict leadership success in the AI age, showing exactly where strengths and gaps sit across your current and future leadership teams.

Develop the skills that matter most

Our insights translate directly into targeted development pathways that build confidence, adaptability, critical thinking, and the leadership behaviors needed for AI driven change.

Make better talent decisions at every level

From hiring to reskilling to succession, we help you place the right people in the right roles, and prepare them for the roles AI will create next.



With objective measurement and focused development, organizations can build AI ready talent at scale.

[Contact us](#)

Start here or fall behind: the moves HR must make now

AI readiness doesn't happen by accident. It happens through intentional, evidence based action. HR is the function that sets that momentum.

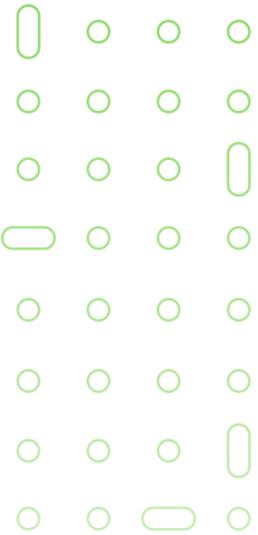
Your AI readiness roadmap



AI will keep evolving. The organizations that win will be the ones that build the human capability to evolve with it.

**Ready to understand your organization's true starting point?
Let's measure your AI readiness and build the capability to accelerate.**

Get started today



SHL brings powerful and transparent AI technology, data science, and objectivity to help companies attract, develop, and grow the workforce they need to succeed in the digital era.

We empower talent strategies to unlock the full potential of your greatest asset—people.