

# Seniority

Experience, leadership, and the pay inversion

# 3.6×

entry-level gap vs. non-AI

***Not a graduate cohort, a mid-career professional class. A 62 % Analyst+Senior backbone — and a 9 % entry-level floor with a hidden pay inversion at the top.***

**3.09 / 7****9 %****3.6×****€186 K**AI mean seniority  
(2025)Entry-level share  
of AI workforceEntry-level gap  
(AI vs Non-AI)C-suite AI  
median salary

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Austria's AI workforce is not a graduate cohort — it is a mid-career professional class. With a mean seniority of 3.09 on a 7-point scale, the typical AI worker sits between Senior and Manager level, considerably more experienced than the Non-AI average (2.85). Only 9 % of AI professionals are entry-level, compared to 32 % of the Non-AI workforce — a 3.6× gap that reflects AI's status as a skilled, experience-intensive domain rather than an entry point into the labour market. This chapter maps the seniority structure across AI tiers, tracks how experience has evolved since 2018, quantifies the salary returns to seniority, and examines whether brain drain selectively removes the most senior talent. The findings carry direct implications for pipeline design: Austria does not need more generic AI graduates — it needs to retain and develop the mid-career professionals who form the backbone of its AI capability.**

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

**Protect the mid-career core.** 62 % of AI workers are Analyst or Senior level — this is the backbone of Austria's AI capability. Retention instruments should prioritise this cohort: housing support, career-progression frameworks, and competitive compensation that prevents lateral outflow to Germany or Switzerland.

**Expand the entry pipeline without diluting quality.** Only 9 % of AI workers are entry-level — a 3.6× gap versus Non-AI. Austria needs structured pathways (apprenticeships, rotation programmes, university-industry partnerships) that convert STEM graduates into AI-ready professionals within 1–2 years, feeding the mid-career bulge sustainably.

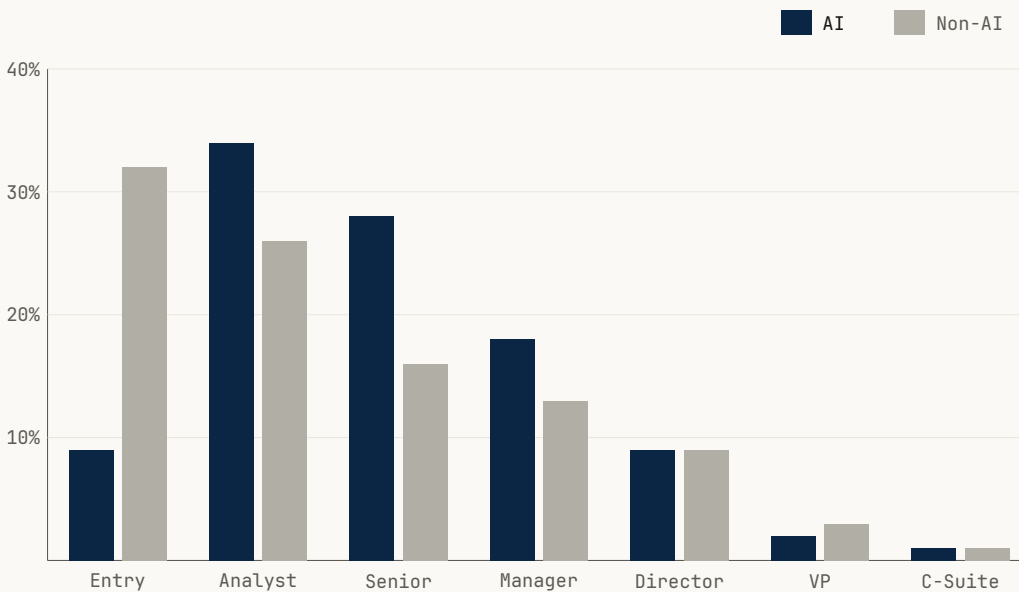
**Fix the senior technical pay gap.** AI Directors earn €99 K vs Non-AI's €108 K; C-suite shows a similar inversion. Firms should adopt dual-track compensation structures that keep senior AI contributors at parity with management equivalents, preventing the best technical leaders from defecting to general management tracks.

**Stem junior brain drain at the 2–5 year mark.** Austria-based AI workers are 0.24 seniority points above those abroad — brain drain skews junior. Interventions should target the 2–5 year experience window: early-career fellowships, employer retention bonuses, and fast-track immigration certainty for international hires in their first role.

EXHIBIT 5.1

## Seniority Distribution — AI vs Non-AI Workforce

The seniority profile of Austria's AI workforce diverges dramatically from the broader labour market. Where the Non-AI economy is bottom-heavy — 32 % entry-level, tapering sharply upward — the AI workforce bulges in the middle. The Analyst (34 %) and Senior (28 %) levels together account for 62 % of all AI workers, compared to just 42 % in Non-AI. At the same time, AI's entry-level share is just 9 % — less than a third of the Non-AI entry rate. This is not a workforce being built from the bottom up; it is one that was assembled through lateral hiring, cross-functional transitions, and international recruitment of already-experienced professionals.



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · austria\_located segment · 2018-2025

### KEY FINDINGS

- The entry-level gap is the single most striking structural feature: 9 % of AI workers are entry-level versus 32 % of Non-AI — a 3.6× ratio. This reflects both the high skill floor for AI roles and the limited pipeline of AI-ready graduates entering directly into specialised positions.
- The mid-career bulge (Analyst 34 % + Senior 28 % = 62 %) confirms that AI in Austria is a conversion economy: most AI professionals did not start in AI but transitioned from adjacent technical or analytical roles after accumulating several years of experience.
- At the top, AI and Non-AI converge: Director (9 % vs 9 %), VP (2 % vs 3 %), and C-suite (1 % vs 1 %) shares are nearly identical. AI has not yet created a disproportionate senior leadership class — the experience premium is concentrated in the middle, not the top.

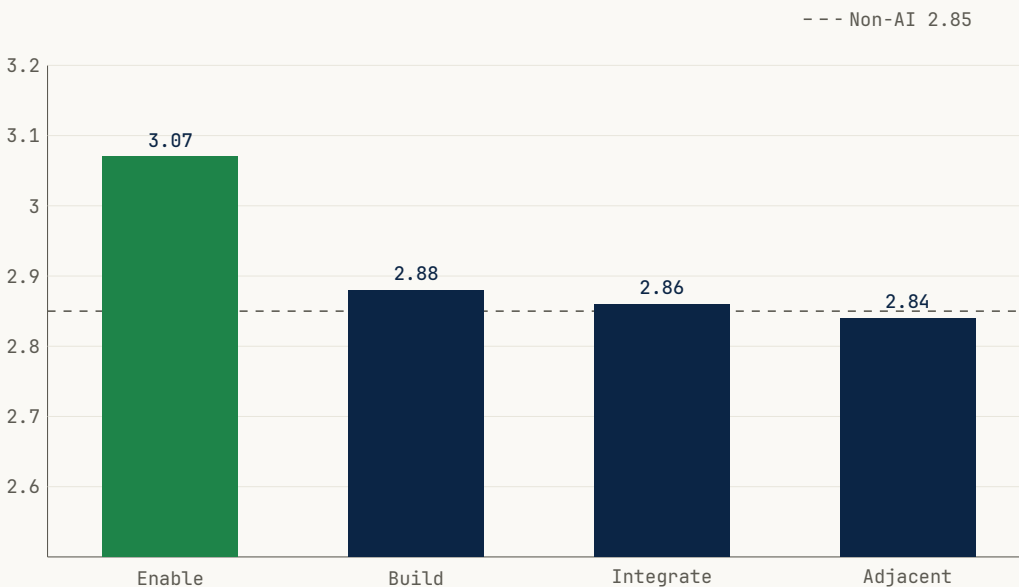
IMPLICATION

***The 9 % entry-level share is both a quality signal and a pipeline warning. Austria should not try to flood AI with junior hires — that would dilute quality. Instead, invest in structured apprenticeship and rotation programmes that accelerate the entry-to-analyst transition, ensuring the pipeline feeds the mid-career bulge sustainably.***

## EXHIBIT 5.2

## Seniority Distribution by AI Tier

**Not all AI tiers have the same experience profile. Enable (mean 3.07) is the most senior tier, reflecting its orientation toward infrastructure, architecture, and enterprise systems roles that reward deep experience. Build (2.88) and Integrate (2.86) are slightly less senior, while Adjacent (2.84) sits lowest. The tier differences are modest in absolute terms but structurally meaningful: Enable's seniority advantage reflects the fact that data engineering and ML infrastructure roles require years of accumulated systems expertise, while Build-tier roles — despite their technical depth — attract younger research talent.**



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · austria\_located segment · 1-7 ordinal scale

### KEY FINDINGS

- Enable leads at 3.07 mean seniority, driven by Manager (21 %) and Director (11 %) shares that exceed all other tiers. These are the senior architects and infrastructure leads who design enterprise-scale AI systems.
- Build's seniority (2.88) is lower despite being the most technically demanding tier — reflecting the influx of younger PhD graduates and research engineers. Build has the highest Senior share (32 %) but fewer Managers (13 %) than Enable (21 %).
- Adjacent (2.84) is the least senior tier, consistent with its role as a transitional layer where professionals are moving toward AI from broader analytics or business functions. The 38 % Analyst concentration suggests many are mid-transition.

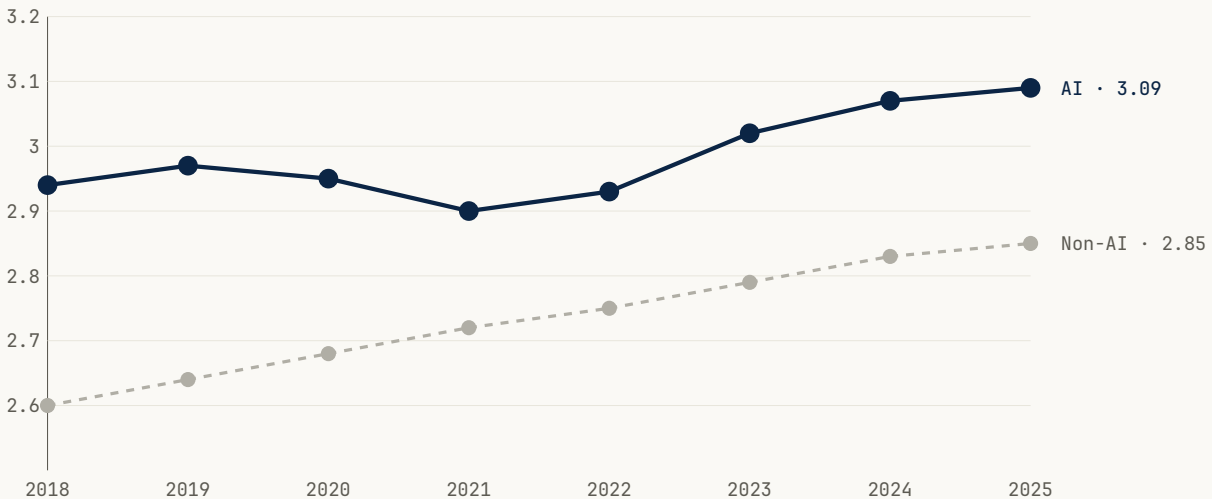
IMPLICATION

***Enable's seniority advantage makes it the tier most vulnerable to brain drain — senior infrastructure professionals are highly portable internationally. Retention instruments should disproportionately target Enable-tier professionals at Manager and Director levels.***

EXHIBIT 5.3

# Mean Seniority Over Time — AI vs Non-AI

**Austria's AI workforce has been steadily maturing. Mean AI seniority rose from 2.94 in 2018 to 3.09 in 2025 — a +0.15 point increase on the 7-point scale. The Non-AI workforce also matured (2.60 to 2.85), but from a lower base. The AI seniority advantage has remained remarkably stable at roughly 0.24–0.34 points throughout the period, indicating that AI's experience premium is structural, not cyclical. The sharpest acceleration occurred in 2022–2023 (+0.09), coinciding with the generative AI wave that drew experienced professionals into AI-labelled roles.**



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · austria\_located segment · 1-7 scale

## KEY FINDINGS

- AI seniority rose steadily from 2.94 (2018) to 3.09 (2025), crossing the 3.0 threshold in 2023. The workforce is now, on average, at the Senior level — a meaningful maturation from the Analyst-level average of 2018.
- The 2021 dip (2.90) followed by sharp recovery (3.02 in 2023, 3.09 in 2025) likely reflects a cohort effect: a wave of junior hires in 2020–2021 that was subsequently absorbed and promoted, raising the mean as those cohorts matured.
- The persistent AI-vs-Non-AI gap (0.24 in 2025) confirms that AI roles systematically attract more experienced professionals. This is not converging — AI continues to draw from the experienced end of the talent pool.

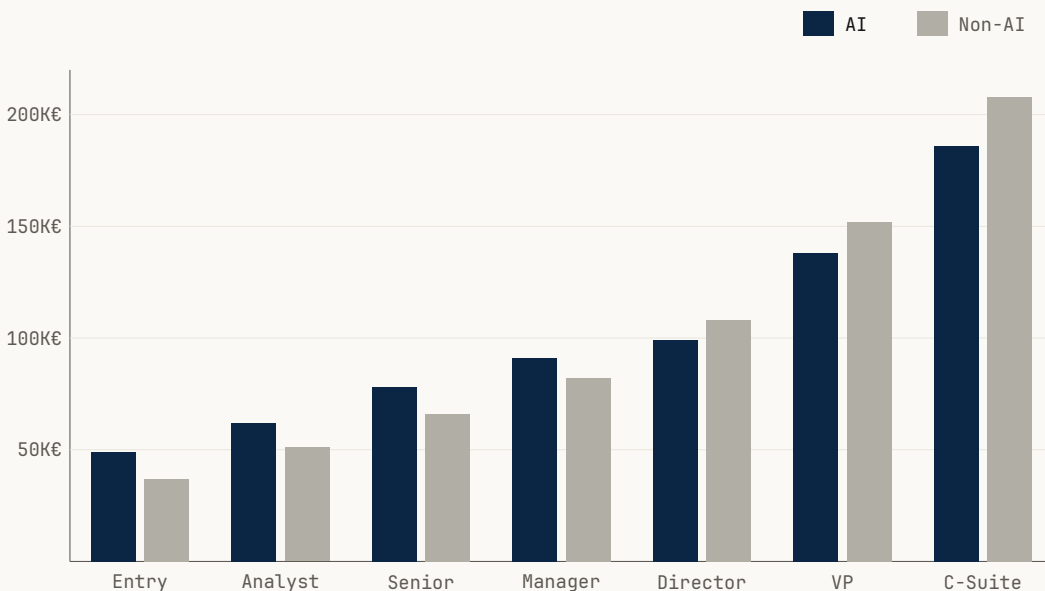
## IMPLICATION

***The rising seniority trend is positive but carries a risk: if entry-level pipeline does not expand, the workforce will age without replacement. Monitor the entry-level share annually; if it falls below 8 %, pipeline interventions become urgent.***

EXHIBIT 5.4

## Median Salary by Seniority Level — AI vs Non-AI

Seniority is the primary driver of AI compensation in Austria, and the returns to experience are substantial. An entry-level AI worker earns a median of €49 K; by C-suite, the median reaches €186 K — a 3.8× multiplier. The AI salary premium over Non-AI is most pronounced at entry level (+32 %, reflecting the scarcity premium for junior AI talent) and narrows progressively through mid-career. At Director level and above, Non-AI salaries actually exceed AI — reflecting the broader corporate compensation structures where general management roles command higher pay than technical specialist tracks.



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · machine-imputed median salary · €K

### KEY FINDINGS

- The entry-level AI premium is 32 % (€49 K vs €37 K) — the largest at any seniority level. This reflects genuine scarcity: few graduates enter directly into AI roles, so those who do command a significant premium.
- The AI premium compresses through mid-career: Analyst (+21 %), Senior (+19 %), Manager (+10 %). By Director level, the premium inverts: Non-AI Directors earn €108 K vs AI's €99 K, reflecting corporate pay structures that reward general management over technical depth.
- C-suite compensation (€186 K AI vs €208 K Non-AI) confirms the technical leadership penalty: AI executives earn 11 % less than their Non-AI counterparts, likely because AI C-suite roles are more common in smaller firms with lower overall compensation bands.

IMPLICATION

***The inverting premium at senior levels is a retention risk: Director-and-above AI professionals earn less than their general management peers, creating an incentive to leave the technical track. Firms should design dual-track compensation that keeps senior AI contributors at parity with management equivalents.***

## EXHIBIT 5.5

## Mean Seniority — Austria-Based vs Working Abroad

**Brain drain does not remove talent uniformly across seniority levels. Austrian-trained AI professionals who remain in Austria have a mean seniority of 2.92, compared to 2.68 for those working abroad — a +0.24 gap. The same pattern holds for Non-AI (2.53 vs 2.38). This suggests that brain drain selectively removes younger, less experienced professionals, while more senior talent tends to stay. The implication is encouraging for Austria's leadership stock but concerning for the pipeline: the junior talent that would eventually mature into senior roles is the cohort most likely to leave.**



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · total segment (Austrian-trained workers) · 1-7 scale

### KEY FINDINGS

- Austria-based AI workers average 2.92 seniority vs 2.68 for those abroad — a +0.24 gap. Austria retains its more experienced AI professionals, likely because mid-career moves are costlier (family, housing, established networks).
- The pattern is consistent across AI and Non-AI: the +0.15 gap for Non-AI workers (2.53 vs 2.38) confirms this is a general labour-market dynamic, not AI-specific. Younger workers are more mobile regardless of field.
- The selective loss of junior talent is a pipeline concern: today's departing Analysts would have been tomorrow's Senior Engineers and Managers. Each junior departure reduces the future mid-career stock by one, compounding over time.

### IMPLICATION

***Retention instruments should target the 2–5 year experience window — the period when professionals are most mobile and most likely to leave Austria. Early-career fellowships, fast-track visa certainty, and employer-linked retention bonuses could reduce outflow at the critical junior-to-mid-career transition.***

# Method, sources, definitions.

**This chapter analyses the seniority structure of Austria's AI workforce using Revelio Labs data via WRDS. Seniority is measured on a 1–7 ordinal scale (Entry/Junior, Analyst/Associate, Senior, Manager, Director, VP, C-suite/Executive) derived from job-title classification. The primary segment is `austria_located` (all AI workers employed in Austria regardless of nationality). Salary data use machine-imputed EUR figures. The Austria-vs-Abroad comparison uses the total segment (all Austrian-educated workers regardless of current location).**

## PARAMETERS

Data source	Revelio Labs via WRDS
Primary segment	<code>austria_located</code> (all workers in Austria)
Seniority scale	1–7 ordinal (Entry to C-suite)
AI mean seniority (2025)	3.09 / 7
Non-AI mean seniority (2025)	2.85 / 7
AI entry-level share	9.0 % (vs 32.3 % Non-AI)
Salary metric	Median imputed salary · EUR
AI tiers	Build · Enable · Integrate · Adjacent
Location comparison	Austria-based vs Working Abroad (total segment)
Time series	2018–2025 · 2025 preliminary