Seniority

Experience, leadership, and the pay inversion

3.8×

entry-level gap vs. non-AI

Not a graduate cohort, a mid-career professional class. A 60 % Analyst+Manager backbone — and a 6 % entry-level floor with a hidden pay inversion at the top.

3.11 / 7	6 %	3.8×	€127 K
AI mean seniority (2025)	Entry-level share of AI workforce	Entry-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 3.11 / 7, the typical AI worker is materially more experienced than the Non-AI average (2.85). Only 6 % of AI professionals are entry-level, compared to 23 % of the Non-AI workforce — a 3.8× 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. 60 % of AI workers are Analyst or Manager 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 6 % of AI workers are entry-level — a 3.8× 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.

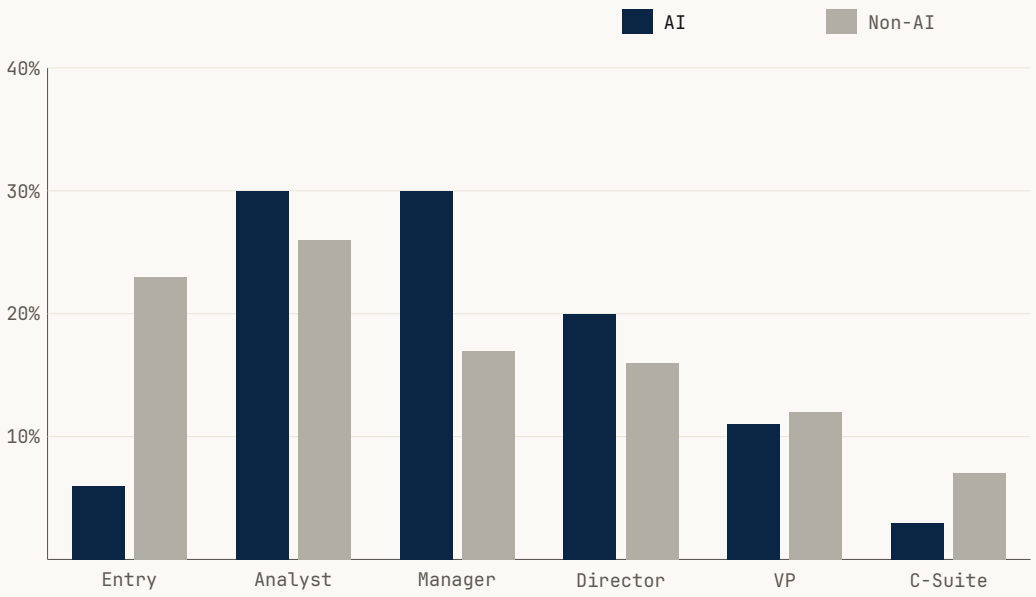
Fix the senior technical pay gap. AI VPs earn €111 K vs Non-AI's €103 K (+8 %), at near-parity. The premium inverts mildly at C-suite (€127 K AI vs €134 K Non-AI, −5 %). Firms should adopt dual-track compensation structures that keep senior AI contributors at parity with management equivalents, preventing 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 — 23 % entry-level, tapering sharply upward — the AI workforce bulges in the middle. The Analyst (30 %) and Manager (30 %) levels together account for 60 % of all AI workers, compared to just 43 % in Non-AI. At the same time, AI's entry-level share is just 6 % — about a quarter 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 · 6 levels (Entry → C-suite)

KEY FINDINGS

- The entry-level gap is the single most striking structural feature: 6 % of AI workers are entry-level versus 23 % of Non-AI — a 3.8× 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 30 % + Manager 30 % = 60 %) 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.
- AI is also disproportionately senior: Director (20 % vs 16 %) and VP (11 % vs 12 %) shares meet or trail Non-AI, while C-suite (3 % vs 7 %) sits clearly below. AI has not yet created a disproportionate top-leadership class, but the upper-mid tiers carry visibly more weight than they do in the broader workforce.

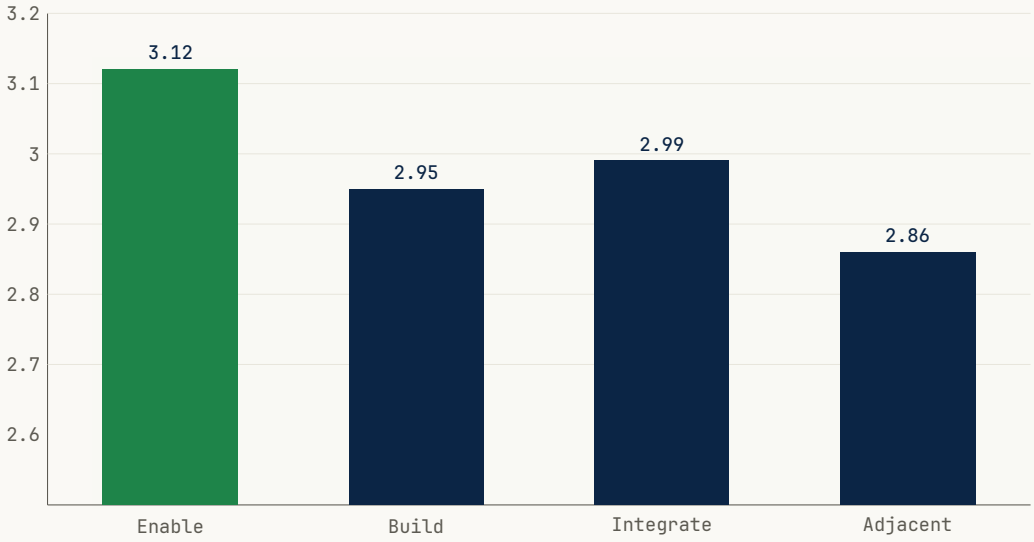
IMPLICATION

The 6 % 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 3.12) is the most senior tier, reflecting its orientation toward infrastructure, architecture, and enterprise systems roles that reward deep experience. Build (2.95) and Integrate (2.99) are slightly less senior, while Adjacent (2.86) 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 · Lifetime mean on 7-pt source scale

KEY FINDINGS

- Enable leads at 3.12 mean seniority — the senior architects and infrastructure leads who design enterprise-scale AI systems sit deepest in the cohort.
- Build's seniority (2.95) is lower despite being the most technically demanding tier — reflecting the influx of younger PhD graduates and research engineers who join Austria's frontier roles.
- Adjacent (2.86) 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.

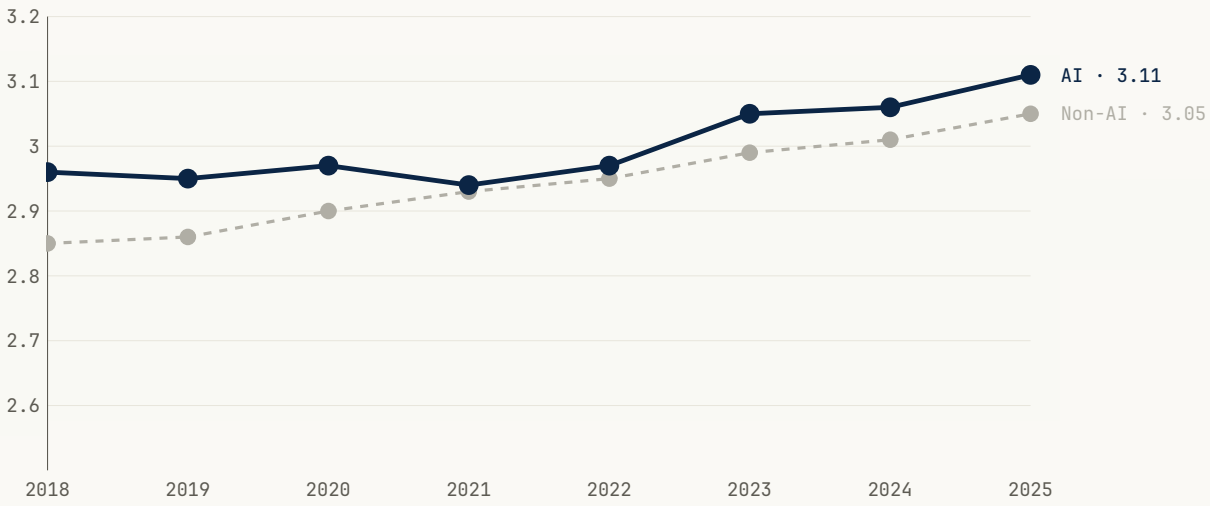
IMPLICATION

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 2.96 in 2018 to 3.11 in 2025 — a +0.15 point increase on the 7-point scale. The Non-AI workforce matured nearly in parallel (2.85 to 3.05), so AI's experience edge is now small — 0.11 points in 2018, 0.06 in 2025. The maturation itself, not the gap, is the story. The sharpest acceleration occurred in 2022–2023 (+0.08), 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 2.96 (2018) to 3.11 (2025), crossing the 3.0 threshold in 2023. The workforce now sits, on average, just past the Manager mark on the reporting scale — a meaningful maturation from the early-Analyst baseline of 2018.
- The 2021 dip (2.94) followed by sharp recovery (3.05 in 2023, 3.11 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 AI-vs-Non-AI gap has compressed from 0.11 (2018) to 0.06 (2025) — non-AI has caught up as the base broadens. AI still attracts experienced professionals, but its seniority edge is no longer a structural differentiator.

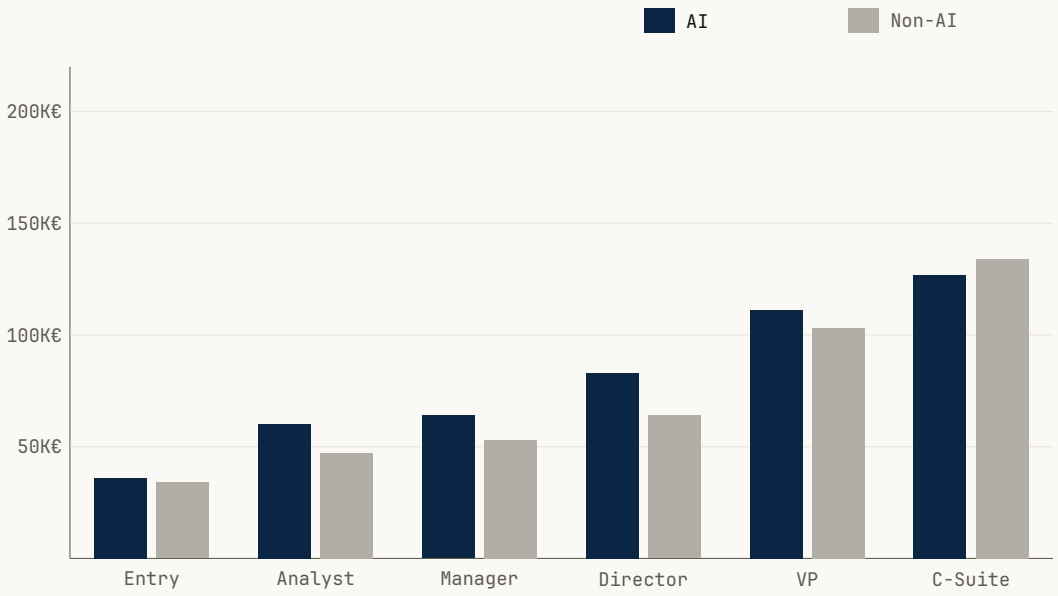
IMPLICATION

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 €36 K; by C-suite, the median reaches €127 K — a 3.5× multiplier. The AI salary premium over Non-AI peaks at Director (+31 %) rather than at entry, and inverts mildly at C-suite (-5 %). VP-level salaries are roughly at parity (+8 %); the Director-to-VP step is where the technical premium compresses.



Source: Revelio Labs via WRDS · machine-imputed median salary · €K · 6 levels

KEY FINDINGS

- The entry-level AI premium is +6 % (€36 K vs €34 K) — modest, reflecting that entry-level AI roles draw from a similar pool to entry-level non-AI tech jobs.
- The premium widens steeply through mid-career: Analyst (+29 %), Manager (+20 %), Director (+31 %). The Director step is where AI compensation pulls clearly ahead.
- VP and C-suite compress and invert: VP €111 K AI vs €103 K Non-AI (+8 %, near-parity); C-suite €127 K AI vs €134 K Non-AI (−5 %). General-management track edges ahead at the very top.

IMPLICATION

The mild C-suite inversion is a retention risk: senior AI professionals earn slightly 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 working abroad have a mean seniority of 3.32, compared to 3.09 for those based in Austria — a 0.23-point diaspora premium. For Non-AI the pattern reverses (3.25 at home vs 3.18 abroad), making the senior diaspora effect AI-specific. Brain drain concentrates experience: the professionals abroad are, on average, exactly the senior profiles Austria's ecosystem needs to lead projects and train the next cohort. The diaspora is thus not only a loss channel — it is a reservoir of senior AI capability.

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

KEY FINDINGS

- Austrian-trained AI professionals abroad average 3.32 seniority vs 3.09 for those based in Austria — a 0.23-point gap. Brain drain concentrates at the senior end: it is the experienced professionals who sit abroad today.
- For Non-AI the pattern reverses: Austria-based workers are slightly senior-er (3.25 vs 3.18). The senior diaspora effect is specific to AI — consistent with international demand concentrating on experienced AI profiles.
- The seniority of the diaspora compounds the leadership problem: the experience that would anchor projects and train juniors sits abroad, while AI at home has not yet built a senior leadership class (3 % C-Suite share).

IMPLICATION

Pair front-loaded retention with senior re-attraction. The diaspora's seniority profile makes returnee channels — senior fellowships, leadership roles in scale-ups, dual appointments with universities — a direct lever on Austria's experience stock, alongside the early-career retention instruments of Chapter 03.

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 at source (Entry/Junior, Analyst/Associate, Senior, Manager, Director, VP, C-suite/Executive). Per the 2026 audit (Decision #6), reporting uses 6 collapsed levels — Entry, Analyst, Manager, Director, VP, C-suite — since the Revelio scale's third level (Senior) was a Site labelling artefact with no exact source-level counterpart in Austria's reporting. 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	austria_located (all workers in Austria)
Seniority scale	Source 1–7; reporting 6 levels (Entry → C-suite)
AI mean seniority (2025)	3.11 / 7
Non-AI mean seniority (2025)	2.85 / 7
AI entry-level share	6.3 % (vs 22.7 % Non-AI)
Salary metric	Median imputed salary · EUR (×0.92 USD-EUR)
AI tiers	Build · Enable · Integrate · Adjacent
Location comparison	Austria-based vs Working Abroad (total segment)
Time series	2018–2025 · 2025 preliminary

SOURCE: REVELIO LABS VIA WRDS · AUSTRIA_LOCATED + TOTAL SEGMENTS · 2018–2025

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