

Empowering the future of work with employable skills



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Glossary

Foreword

We are delighted to present India's Graduate Skill Index 2023, a comprehensive report by Mercer | Mettl on employability of Indian graduates. As the world of work undergoes a transformative shift driven by technological advancements and the integration of AI, the dynamics of demand and supply are changing globally. Amidst these changes, India faces certain challenges, including a hiring slump, increased time to hire, diminishing quality, and a widening skill gap.

The evolving job market has transformed traditional roles into more dynamic ones, integrating finite, gig, and automated tasks, along with AI applications. Organizations are now prioritizing performance abilities over mere credentials or prior experience, recognizing the value of diverse talent. Moreover, the global focus on sustainability is creating new job opportunities in environmentally conscious practices and technologies.

This report sheds light on the state of employability skills among the latest graduating class of learners in India, exploring their job readiness. While the employability numbers provide valuable insights into graduates' performance concerning in-demand skills, the widening skill gap necessitates a collaborative effort between academia and corporates to bridge this talent divide.

This is a golden opportunity for academia to equip learners with the relevant skills of the future, aligning them with industry needs. The report also offers concise recommendations on fostering an industry-led learning ecosystem, positively impacting employability. The Mercer | Mettl Community is a transformative initiative aimed at empowering learners to upskill themselves and prepare for success in the job market by offering them the opportunity to practice and assess their employable skills through community hackathons or other interactive mediums.

As we embark on this transformative journey, let us stride confidently into the future, empowering today's learners with the employable skills they need to succeed. Thank you for joining us in this remarkable pursuit of progress and growth.



Siddhartha Gupta Chief Executive Officer Mercer | Mettl

1. Key findings

45%

of Indian graduates who apply for jobs are employable

In the Indian job market, 45% of graduates demonstrate the readiness to meet the industry's ever-changing demands. The transformative job landscape has prompted companies to prioritize hiring growth-oriented talent with the potential to learn and adapt. Upskilling and reskilling have emerged as essential pillars for individuals and organizations to adapt and thrive.

48%

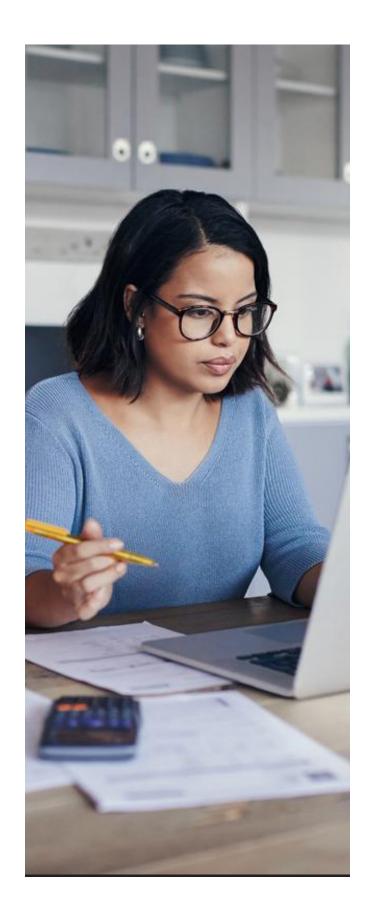
of graduates applying for artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) roles are job-ready

Indian graduates showcase a commendable employability rate of 48% in artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) roles. A remarkable 72% of learners are employable in applied mathematics, one of the key skills needed for these roles.

57%

of learners in Tier 3 colleges have employability in non-technical skills

Learners in Tier 3 colleges have the highest employability at 57% in non-technical skills, which ranks above all college tiers. In addition, learners from Tier 3 colleges are most employable in critical thinking skills, one of the most in-demand non-technical skills across industries.



2. Introduction: The changing nature of work

The future of work is undergoing rapid and transformative changes, reshaping our understanding of work itself. Advancements in technology, particularly with the advent of AI, are revolutionizing industries and the way tasks are accomplished. As automation and AI-driven solutions become more prevalent, the traditional job landscape is shifting, and new opportunities are emerging.

The macro trends shaping these changes are:

Automation

The rising prevalence of automation is rendering many jobs and skills obsolete, necessitating a need for skill updates beyond conventional degrees¹.

New job opportunities

The integration of AI is creating opportunities for humans to collaborate with technology, paving the way for fresh avenues in employment.

Talent pool expansion

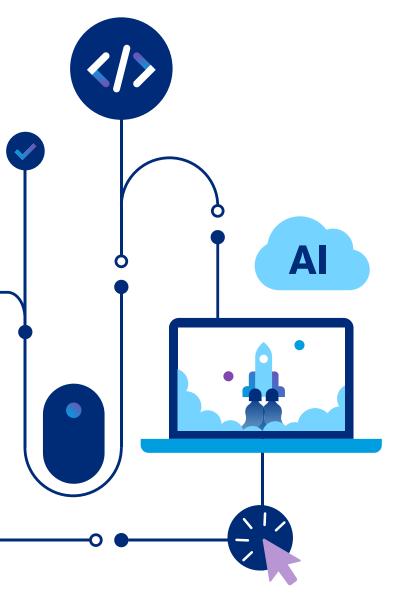
Organizations are prioritizing diverse talent, emphasizing candidates' performance ²ability over credentials and prior experience.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Companies are recognizing the importance of fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce, enabling them to harness the collective strengths of individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives.

Green transition

As the world moves towards sustainability and environmental consciousness, businesses are adapting themselves to integrate environment-friendly practices and technologies, creating new job opportunities³.



¹Degrees. https://hbr.org/2021/06/you-need-a-skills-based-approach-to-hiring-and-developing-talent ²Ability. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_CNES_Putting_Skills_First_2023.pdf

Opportunity. https://www.corporateknights.com/workplace/ai-threatens-jobs-green-gigs-surging/

In recent times, jobs have undergone a significant transition, moving away from static and rigid roles with limited tasks to more fluid and dynamic positions encompassing a combination of finite, gig, and automated tasks, along with AI integration.

With the advent of AI, some skill sets are becoming redundant, while others are transforming into AI-assisted roles, necessitating the development of complementary skills⁵.

Skill gaps are widening globally, coupled with fluctuating market talent demand; the demand-supply equation is becoming increasingly unpredictable, making it more crucial for individuals and organizations to proactively address talent mismatches and skill shortages⁴.

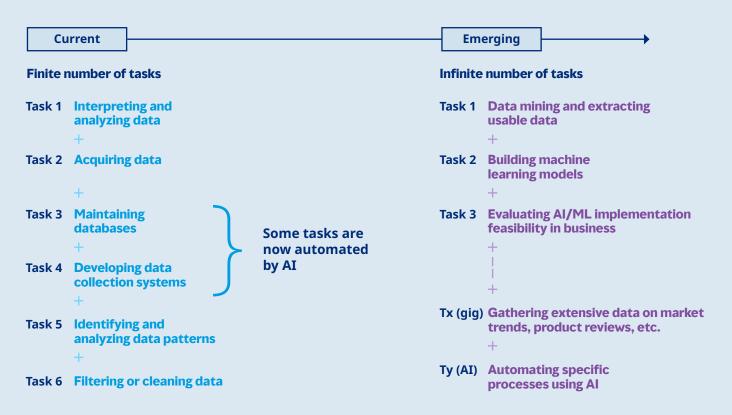
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This shifting skill mix calls for continuous upgrades and reconfiguration to adapt to the evolving job landscape. ⁶Below is an example on how the role of a data analyst is evolving with the changing nature of tasks.

Evolving nature of jobs centered around skills



Data analyst



With the continued proliferation of automation and artificial intelligence, businesses will seek professionals who can contribute to innovation, problem-solving, and strategic decision-making. Jobs and skills in the fields of AI and big data will be in high demand, driven by the disruptive potential of Generative AI technology.

In addition, skills related to robotics design, creative thinking, business acumen, and a deep understanding of AI technologies will gain higher significance⁷.

Anticipated job and skill trends that will significantly impact workplaces in the future



Current roles and skills

Technical roles

- · Data analyst
- Customer care executive
- Data entry roles
- · Data scientist
- Front-end and back-end developer roles

Technical skills

- Data center operations
- Legacy IT-skill
- Physical machine management
- Quality assurance
- · Data science
- · Core Java, SQL
- Data structures

Non-technical skills

Content creator

Non-technical

Cashier

roles

- Financial analyst
- Business analyst
- Sales and business executive
- Inventory tracking
- Payment collection
- Proof-reading
- Translating
- · Logical reasoning
- · Leadership skills
- Critical and analytical thinking

Skills such as Core Java, Structured Query Language (SQL) etc., are expected to decline in the coming years.



Emerging roles and skills

Technical roles

- AI consultant/ Creative director
- · Deep learning engineer
- · Robotics engineer
- AI architect
- · AI safety engineer

Technical skills

- TensorFlow
- PyTorch
- Python
- Robotics design
- Deep understanding of AI technologies
- · Systems thinking

Non-technical roles

- AI ethics consultant
- AI explainability consultant
- AI auditor
- AI product/Project manager
- Conversation and manual writers
- Conversation designers

Non-technical skills

- Interdisciplinary knowledge
- Business ethics,
 Business acumen
- Strong communication
- Commitment to social responsibility
- Creative thinking
- Empathy

Cognitive skills are gaining prominence in the workplace, particularly in areas of complex problem-solving and creative thinking.

3. Methodology

Mercer | Mettl conducted a comprehensive analysis to assess the skill readiness of young India by examining data from 2500+ campuses and 440,000+ learners. The study's main objective was to compare the top skills demanded by companies with the readiness of fresh graduates in the country. The analysis covered a wide geographical spread, including data from campuses across 30+ states and union territories in India based on college tiers (Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3) according to the National Institute of Ranking Framework by the Ministry of Education.

The study conducted an in-depth evaluation of more than 2,800 specific skills and sub-skills. The performance of candidates was then compared against skill benchmarks, represented by the 'Skill employability %,' indicating the percentage of candidates scoring above the employability level for each specific skill.

The study provides valuable insights into the employability landscape by setting these benchmarks based on the employability level.

Mercer | Mettl data universe

(Based on data from 2020-2022)

2.5K+

campuses across 30+ states and union territories in India

15+

content type combinations/ blueprints tested 440K+

campus learners' assessment data

100K

candidates from 66 Tier 1 colleges

1900+

unique assessments analyzed

2.8K+

skills & sub-skills tested

What is employability?



Number of test-takers scoring above the required benchmark in the skill

Employability =



Number of test-takers attempting the skill

4. Employability landscape for Indian graduates

The employability landscape for Indian graduates is evolving rapidly, with certain roles and skills witnessing high demand across diverse industries. This chapter delves into the skill index of Indian graduates, evaluating their proficiency in top roles and skills that companies are actively seeking. Forty-five percent of India's graduates exhibit employability for top job roles and skills.

Employability prospects for Indian graduates exhibit distinct variations between technical and non-technical skills. Skills such as numerical ability, critical thinking, analytical ability, and C programming demonstrate average employability rates.

45%

Indian graduates are employable for top in-demand jobs and skills

Among the various functions, graduates demonstrate proficiency in areas such as human resources, data science, and roles requiring expertise in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), among others.



53%

of Indian graduates are employable for top non-technical jobs

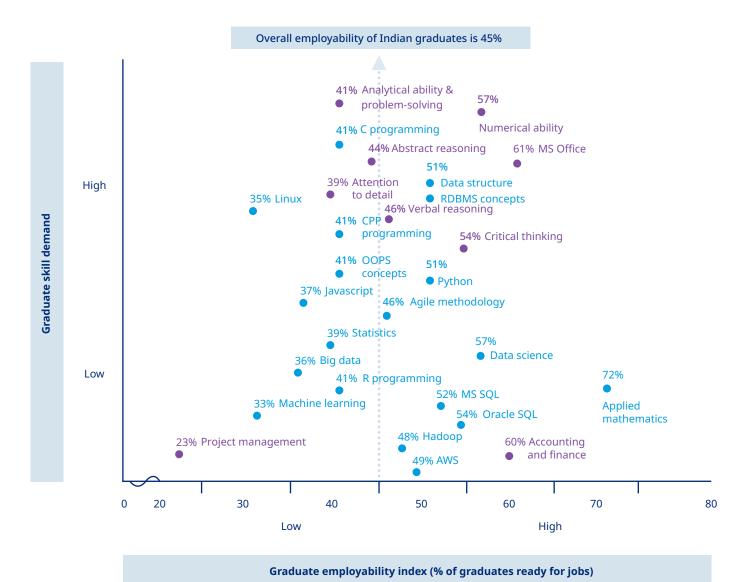
44%

of Indian graduates are employable for top technical jobs

Employability of Indian graduates on top skills in demand

Figure 1.1 Graduate skill demand and corresponding employability skill distribution

- Non-technical skills
- Technical skills



Non-technical skills (53% employability)

Non-technical skills are more in demand, with relatively higher employability

Graduates are most employable in MS office (61%) and numerical ability (57%)

Graduates are least employable in project management skill (23%)

Technical skills (44% employability)

Technical skills in demand are diverse, but individual skill demand is low

Limited talent pool for applied mathematics skill despite high employability (72%)

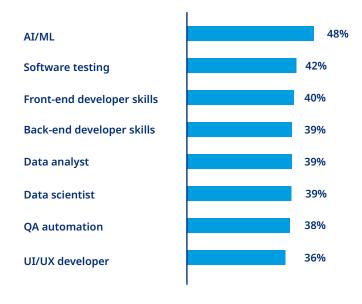
Big data (36%) and machine learning (33%) skills have low employability and less demand

4.1 Employability for technical roles

In the dynamic technology job market, companies are actively seeking graduates with diverse skill sets, creating a distinct advantage for those who possess expertise in these roles. As the demand for technology professionals continues to surge, aligning skill development with these trends becomes imperative for aspiring graduates seeking to thrive in the competitive talent landscape.

Among the top in-demand technical roles, back-end developers, data scientists, and data analyst roles share an employability rate of 39%.

Figure 1.2 Employability of Indian graduates on top job roles in demand



48%

Indian graduates exhibit the highest employability in Al and machine learning roles

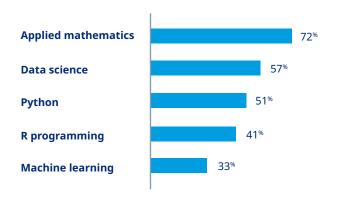
UI/UX developer roles showcase an employability rate of 36%, emphasizing the rising significance of user-centric design and the pivotal role designers play in crafting visually appealing and intuitive interfaces. Software testing roles closely follow with an employability rate of 42%, while front-end developer roles have an employability rate of 40%.



4.2 Top 3 upcoming technical roles and employability of their top 5 skills

AI/ ML roles

Figure 1.3 Top 5 skills for AI/ML roles & their employability

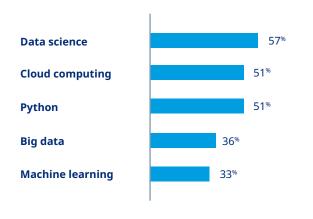


The employability rate for machine learning skills is lowest at 33%.

In the evaluation of skills required for AI/ML roles, employability for applied mathematics skills stand out at 72%. Following closely, employability for data science skills is at 57%, Python at 51% and R programming at 41%.

Data scientist

Figure 1.4 Top 5 skills for data scientist roles & their employability

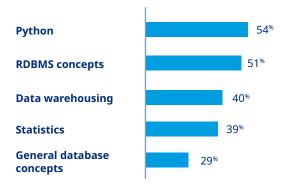


The employability for data science skills is at 57%.

For data scientist roles, the employability for big data and machine learning skills are 36% and 33%, respectively. Employability for cloud computing and Python skills is equal at 51%.

Data analyst

Figure 1.5 Top 5 skills for data analyst roles & their employability



The employability for skills like statistics and general database concepts are at 39% and 29%, respectively.

Amongst the skills assessed for data analyst roles, the employability rate for Python, RDBMS concepts and data warehousing skills are at 54%, 51% and 40%.

4.3 Employability for non-technical roles

Figure 1.6 Employability of Indian graduates in non-technical roles



37%

are employable for sales and business development roles

The data presented here highlights the employability of Indian graduates for non-technical roles that are most sought after by organizations. The financial analyst role exhibits an employability rate of 45%, closely followed by human resources associates at 44%.

4.4 Employability for non-technical skills

Figure 1.7 Employability of Indian graduates in non-technical skills



54%

of learners demonstrate employability in critical thinking, a highly sought-after soft skill by organizations today

Skills such as MS Office, accounting, and numerical ability showcase higher employability, reflecting the strengths of Indian graduates in office software and financial competencies. On the other hand, crucial skills like project management and data interpretation exhibit lower employability, indicating areas for improvement.

5. Employability by tier of colleges

The influence of college tiers on the employability of graduates is a widely recognized phenomenon. This chapter sheds light on the significant variance in employability based on the tier of the college attended by the learners.

Generally, colleges and universities are categorized into different tiers based on various factors, including academic reputation, faculty qualifications, infrastructure, placement records, and accreditation.

The employability figures for learners from different college tiers indicate 46% employability for Tier 1 colleges, with a marginal drop to 44% for Tier 2 and 43% for Tier 3 colleges.

It is interesting to note that employability for learners in non-technical roles and skills is higher across all college tiers in comparison to that for technical roles.

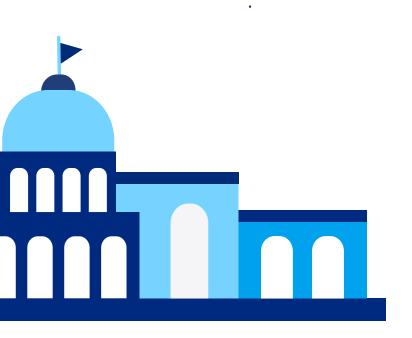


Figure 2.1 Overall employability of graduates across college tiers

Employability		College rank*
46% Tier 1 colleges	}	1 - 100
44% Tier 2 colleges	}	101 - 200
43% Tier 3 colleges	}	200 - beyond

*(As per the National Institutional Ranking Framework, GOI)

Figure 2.2 Overall employability across college tiers for technical and non-technical roles

Non-technical	
53%	
Tier 1 colleges	
51%	
Tier 2 colleges	
57%	
Tier 3 colleges	

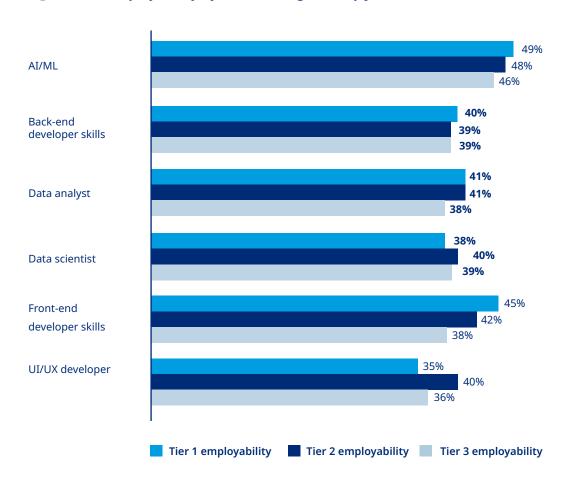
5.1 Employability by tier of college for technical roles & skills

It has been observed that the employability of graduates in emerging job roles such as back-end developer, data scientist, data analyst, and QA automation shows a similar range across tiers of colleges.

This trend suggests that learners from different tiers of colleges have relatively equal opportunities to acquire these skill sets, potentially through self-learning and access to online courses. 46%

of learners in Tier 3 colleges are employable in AI/ML roles, establishing them at par with Tier 2 (49%) and Tier 1 (48%) counterparts

Figure 2.3 Employability by tier of college for top jobs in-demand



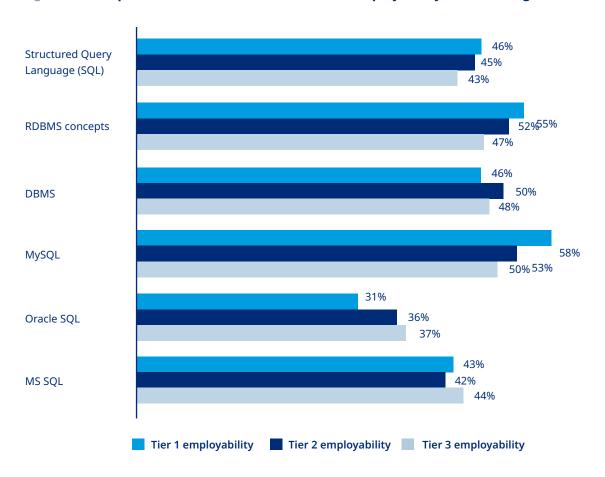
The narrowing gap in employability for emerging job roles and skills indicates a positive trend in the democratization of education.

However, it is important to note that Tier 1 colleges still exhibit higher employability in traditional tech roles. This advantage can be attributed to their emphasis on curricula tailored to the demands of the job market, access to better infrastructure, industry collaborations, and more experienced faculty.

Python, as an emerging skill, exhibits similar employability across Tier 1 and Tier 2 colleges. Tier 2 colleges show higher employability in areas such as ata structures and programming languages like C and Python. Overall, the data indicates a consistent trend of similar employability across all tiers for most skill groups, which is a positive sign for graduates from all types of colleges.

Database

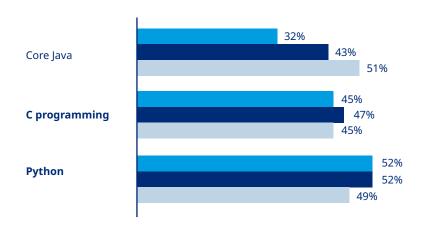
Figure 2.4 Top 6 skills for database roles & their employability across college tiers



Tier 1 colleges exhibit higher employability in traditional technical roles

Programming languages

Figure 2.5 Top 3 skills for programning languages roles & their employability across college tiers



The employability for Python is higher in Tier 1 and Tier 2 colleges

Software development

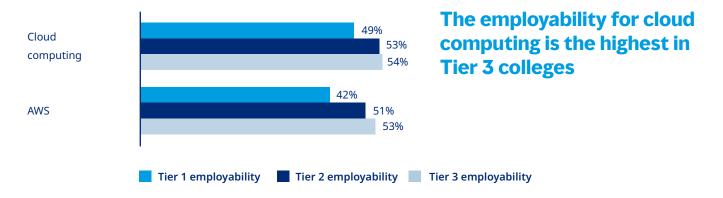
Figure 2.6 Top 2 skills for software development roles & their employability across college tiers



The employability for SDLC and agile methodology is lower in Tier 1 colleges

Cloud computing

Figure 2.7 Top 2 skills for cloud computing roles & their employability across college tiers



As the availability of online courses and resources continues to grow, learners from various educational backgrounds can equip themselves with the skills required for these new roles. It, therefore, becomes easier for companies to hire quality talent from diverse academic institutions across the country.

5.3 Employability by tier of college for non-technical roles and skills

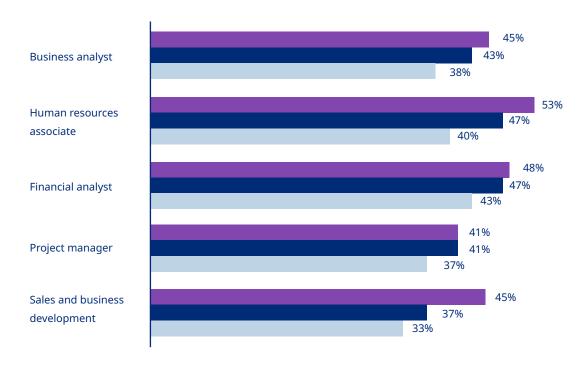
Tier 1 colleges also show the highest employability for cognitive skills. These skills involve the ability to think critically, solve problems, and make informed decisions, which are highly valued in various industries.

Surprisingly, critical thinking, which is the objective analysis and evaluation of issues to form judgments, has the highest employability rate of 57% across Tier 3 institutions. This suggests that Tier 3 graduates have developed strong critical thinking abilities, making them attractive candidates for certain non-tech roles.

Tier 1 colleges exhibit higher employability in specific conventional functional skills, such as computer fundamentals, electronics and communication engineering, accounting and finance, and electronics engineering skills.

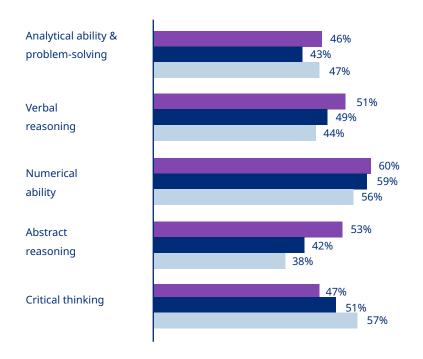
Tier 1 colleges
display the highest
employability
numbers across
all traditional
non-technical roles.





Cognition skills

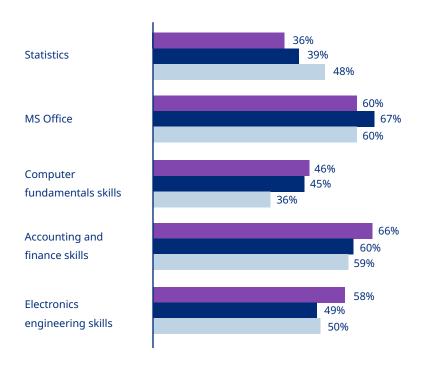
Figure 2.9 Employability of Indian graduates for non-technical skills across college tiers



57% of learners in Tier 3 colleges are employable in critical thinking skills.

Functional skills

Figure 2.10 Employability of Indian graduates for non-technical skills across college tiers



On-the-job skills, such as statistics and MS Office proficiency, show similar employability rates across all tiers of colleges.

6. Bridging the skills gap: Collaborative opportunities for industry and academia

The ever-widening skill gap between educational curricula and industry demands is now more pronounced than ever. As job roles evolve from static routines to dynamic and versatile responsibilities, the value of adaptable skills has reached a critical level. Interestingly, the comparable employability of new-age skills and onthe-job skills across different college tiers suggests that learners are increasingly supplementing their traditional college education with online courses and degrees, seeking to acquire relevant expertise beyond what is provided by the curriculum.

This is an opportunity for industry to hire talent with the right potential from across different tiers of colleges and train them in preferred skill sets. This paradigm shift also underscores the importance of embracing alternative learning pathways to ensure graduates are well-prepared for the demands of today's job market.



6.1 For industry



Expand your talent pool by approaching Tier 3 colleges

India's graduate Skill Index 2023 reveals comparable employability of graduates from different tiers of colleges. It presents a unique opportunity for organizations to broaden their talent pool, unlock fresh perspectives and untapped potential. Employers no longer need to exclusively recruit from top-tier institutions. Instead, they can now cast a wider net and consider graduates from a broader range of colleges.



Strengthen industry-academia collaboration for effective hiring

Employers should collaborate with educational institutions to bridge the talent gaps effectively. This could include offering internships, workshops, and industry-specific projects to students, providing them with practical experience and insight into the challenges they may encounter in their careers.



Assess learning agility to hire trainable graduate talent

The proliferation of online courses and educational resources has greatly enhanced the learning agility of today's graduates. Employers can capitalize on this advantage by assessing candidates based on their ability to learn and adapt swiftly. Organizations should prioritize potential and a growth mindset over specific technical skills.

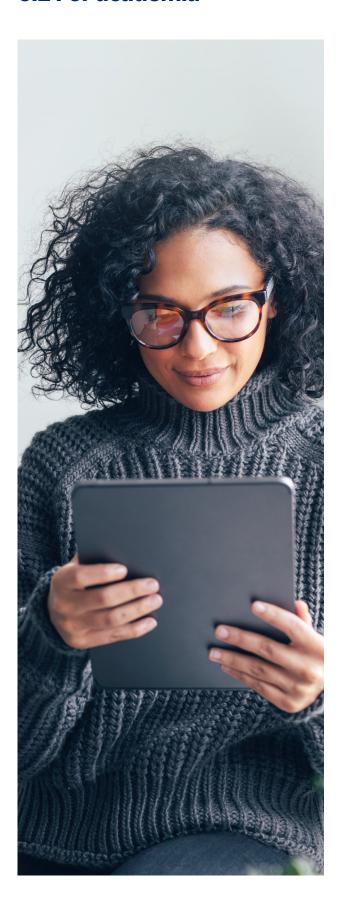
By hiring trainable talent, organizations can cultivate a dynamic and versatile workforce that excels at tackling new challenges and staying ahead in the ever-evolving business landscape.



Hire graduates who are high on aptitude skills

In the age of AI, it is crucial for organizations to prioritize hiring individuals with high aptitude skills that align with the demands of the technological revolution. While experience and qualifications remain valuable, aptitude skills such as critical thinking, creativity, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and analytical prowess are increasingly essential. These high aptitude individuals possess a natural ability to learn, innovate, and excel in dynamic roles that AI cannot replicate. By embracing aptitude-based hiring, businesses can ensure they have the right talent to navigate the AI landscape successfully and drive innovation in an ever-changing world.

6.2 For academia



Adapting the curriculum to industry demands to empower job-ready graduates

Industry academia collaborations enable valuable knowledge sharing, providing learners with real-world insights and practical experience. Educational institutions adapt curricula to meet job market demands, equipping graduates with relevant skills. Companies benefit from job-ready talent, fostering innovation and empowering the future workforce.

Learning powered by objective assessments of skills

Learning powered by objective assessment of skills, enables educational institutions to optimize their curricula through models that objectively assess learners on real-world competencies. By utilizing scientific frameworks, students gain valuable insights into their strengths and interests, equipping them with skill sets that precisely align with industry demands. This empowers students to develop industry-ready capabilities, maximizing their potential and preparing them for a successful transition into the workforce. Emphasizing on the development of employable skills addresses the rising demand from top companies for jobready talent, ensuring graduates possess relevant expertise aligned with current job market needs.

Focus on developing a learning mindset

Education institutions must focus on developing a mindset of continuous learning to enable learners to stay relevant in the ever-changing job market and adapt to new challenges presented by emerging technologies like AI, automation, and digitalization. By cultivating a hunger for knowledge and skills development, individuals can proactively seek out learning opportunities, upskill or reskill as needed, and stay ahead of industry trends.

6.3 Mercer | Mettl Community: empowering learners with employable skills

The Mercer | Mettl Community is a transformative initiative, empowering learners to upskill themselves and prepare for success in the job market. With the objective of fostering an industry-led learning ecosystem, the community offers learners the opportunity to practice and assess their employable skills through community hackathons or other interactive mediums. By learning, growing, and thriving alongside a supportive community of fellow learners, individuals actively build the skill sets necessary to excel in their careers.

user base of

1.2 million

vast network of colleges

3000+

With an impressive user base of 1.2 million and a vast network of 3000+ colleges, this dynamic community provides a powerful platform for learners to shape their future, unleash their career potential, and confidently embrace the professional world.

Mercer | Mettl's campus champions, selected ambassadors across colleges, serve as influencers, guiding their fellow learners to participate in the community and leverage its potential for individual growth. Together, they create a thriving ecosystem that fuels personal and professional development.



Glossary

Tier of college

The ranking brackets of the National Institutional Ranking Framework, Ministry of Education, GOI have been used for tier segregation. The engineering, management and overall college ranking frameworks have been used to calculate the employability of roles and skills.

Tier 1

Overall, colleges from the rank 1- 100 have been included in the Tier 1 framework, with the engineering colleges ranking 1-150 and management colleges with ranks between 1-125.

Tier 2

Overall, colleges from the rank 101-200 and engineering colleges from ranks 151-300 have been included in the Tier 2 colleges.

Tier 3

Rankings apart from the above (as indicated in Tier 1 and Tier 2) have been tagged as Tier 3.

Type of skills

Technical roles and skills

Technical job roles and skills refer to positions and capabilities that involve specialized knowledge, expertise, and proficiency in areas related to technology, computers, and specific tools. These roles and skills are often associated with industries such as information technology (IT), software development, and other technology-driven sectors

Non-technical roles and skills

Non-technical job roles and skills refer to positions and abilities that do not require specialized knowledge in technology, computers, or specific technical tools. Non-technical roles often involve tasks that are more focused on interpersonal, administrative, managerial, or creative aspects of a business or organization. Non-technical skills are further categorized as below:

Personality/Behavior skills

Refers to interpersonal or social skills like teamwork, communication, empathy, problem-solving, conflict resolution and emotional intelligence.

Cognition skills

An individual's capacity to think logically and their ability to analyze any given situation and derive logical conclusions.

Functional skills

Refers to the specialized knowledge and expertise required to perform specific tasks and use specific tools and programs in real-world situations.



Non-technical skills

Analytical ability and problem-solving

Demonstrating the ability to analyze the given information from different perspectives by breaking it down into simple components and by structuring the information in a logical order to arrive at a solution.

Verbal reasoning

Demonstrating the ability to read, process, retain and synthesize large amounts of data in a workplace.

Numerical ability

Demonstrating the ability to perceive and process numbers and related symbols to perform basic arithmetic operations.

Data interpretation

Demonstrating the ability to structure and analyze numeric data obtained from different sources.

Abstract reasoning

Demonstrating the ability to analyze information, detect patterns and relationships, solve complex and intangible problems and perform well in a new/novel situation.

Attention to details

Demonstrating thoroughness and accuracy in accomplishing a task and capturing every minute detail, anywhere, at any point in time.

Critical thinking

Demonstrating the ability to use rational thinking and critically assess the given information to identify assumptions, draw inferences and evaluate arguments.

Technical skills

Data structures

Organization and storage of data for efficient access and manipulation

Structured Query Language (SQL)

Programming language used for managing and manipulating relational databases

C programming

General purpose low-level programming language

RDBMS concepts

Principles and techniques used in designing, creating, and managing relational databases

DBMS

Software system that allows users to create, manipulate, and manage databases

Core Java

Fundamentals of the Java programming language

Software testing basics

Process of verifying and validating software to ensure its quality and reliability

Python

High-level dynamically typed programming language

MS SQL

Open-source relational database management system developed by Microsoft

SDLC

Framework that outlines the process of planning, writing, modifying, and maintaining software

Agile methodology

Project management approach that involves breaking the project into phases and emphasizes continuous collaboration and improvement

HTML5

HTML5 is a markup language used for structuring and presenting content on the World Wide Web.

Cloud computing

On-demand availability of computer system resources, especially data storage and computing power, without direct active management by the user over the internet

AWS

Comprehensive cloud computing platform by Amazon

MySQL

Open-source relational database management system

Hadoop

Open-source framework for distributed storage and processing of large datasets across clusters of computers

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About us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions across two key areas: acquisition and development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with more than 6,000 corporates, 31 sector skills councils/government departments and 500+ educational institutions across more than 100 countries.



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