GPAI ASSOCIATED PROJECT

AI@Work Labs: A bottom-up approach to shaping AI policy and practice

The 2025 annual report of the Network of Labs

January 2026

Inria
CENTRE OF THE GPAI EXPERT COMMUNITY

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A core part of the OECD/GPAI expert community, the Expert Support Centres are nationally funded AI-focused entities in three countries: Canada (CEIMIA), France (Inria) and Japan (NICT).

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Anaya Kumar, project lead of the AI@work Labs Network at Inria.

We would like to sincerely thank the members of the AI@work labs network: Laboria, IFOW, Obvia, IIA, and NASK, for their active engagement and valuable contributions in the development of this report.

We are grateful to Inria's Centre of Expertise for International Cooperation on AI for their thorough review and constructive feedback.

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Executive Summary

In a context marked by rapid technological change and increasing uncertainty, artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping work and employment at an unprecedented pace. While a growing body of research has examined these transformations through macroeconomic modelling, labour market projections, or technical and regulatory analyses, there remains a persistent need for empirically grounded, qualitative, and interdisciplinary approaches capable of capturing how AI is experienced, adopted, and negotiated in concrete work settings.

This report presents the formation, objectives, and strategic trajectory of the AI@work labs network. This is an initiative designed to advance qualitative research, embedded in real-world contexts, on how AI is reshaping work and employment. By bringing together local and regional labs from around the world, the network aims to generate context-sensitive knowledge capable of informing both policy and practice at a global scale. A core ambition of the network is to give analytical visibility to perspectives that remain underrepresented in AI debates, particularly those of non-managerial workers and employees. In doing so, it contributes to an evidence-based public dialogue attentive to lived realities.

The network of labs is a first-tier member of the Network of Observatories, which was launched at the AI Action Summit 2025 and operated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in the United-Nations (UN) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This institutional anchoring situates the network within broader international efforts to promote inclusive, responsible, and socially grounded approaches to AI governance and the future of work.

The report opens by presenting the rationales behind the creation of the AI@work lab network (or the network of labs) was created. It then presents the five pioneer labs.

The subsequent chapter situates the emergence of the network by establishing the broader research context in which it takes shape. It maps the current research landscape on AI and work, revealing persistent blind spots. While existing studies have predominantly focused on macro-level trends and technical evaluations of policy frameworks, comparatively fewer studies investigate the lived experiences of workers, organizational contexts through which AI is adopted, or cross-regional variation that shape these dynamics. The network of labs is uniquely equipped to address these gaps by integrating multidisciplinary expertise, local contextual knowledge, and qualitative insights.

Drawing on an internal survey conducted across the pioneer labs, the report then provides a detailed overview of their institutional configurations, research orientations, and thematic priorities. The findings reveal significant alignment in key research topics, such as AI's impact on employees and the quality of work, AI skills development and training, and AI governance, creating strong opportunities for collaboration. The report ends by defining the research avenues through which the network will contribute to the overall research ecosystem.

1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a pervasive force across industries, fundamentally reshaping the nature of work and employment. Organisations around the world are accelerating their adoption of AI-driven systems, leading to significant changes in how tasks are performed, managed, and experienced. This transformation calls for comprehensive and holistic analyses detecting emerging trends and patterns, enabling stakeholders to anticipate and navigate the changes.

To respond to this need, the AI Action Summit 2025 in Paris marked the launch of an institutional initiative: the Collaborative Network of AI Observatories on the Future of Work. This voluntary platform for knowledge exchange, capacity-building, and dialogue brings together publicly funded observatories, private-sector partners, and non-profit organizations to jointly monitor and analyse the impact of AI and algorithmic management on the world of work. The Network fosters collaboration, aligns methodologies, and provides evidence-based insights into AI's transformative effects. By addressing critical issues such as job quality, working conditions, inclusion, and the digital divide, it promotes socially responsible and trustworthy AI development, grounded in the principles of decent work and social justice, while supporting global capacity-building and innovation. The network of observatories is currently operated by the ILO and the OECD.

The Network of AI Observatories on the Future of Work aims to:

- Foster collaboration, awareness, and coherence across national and regional observatories
- Strengthen evidence generation and methodological alignment to support comparative analyses
- Address the digital divide by promoting inclusive and equitable access to AI-driven opportunities.

1.2. About the AI@work labs network

Recognising both the opportunities and risks of AI's growing influence on work and employment, AI@Work Labs acts as a multidisciplinary network dedicated to exploring how AI shapes labour practices, job quality, and organisational structures. The AI@work labs network is a first-tier member of the network of observatories, contributing a distinct and complementary perspective within this broader international ecosystem (displayed in figure 1).

While the network of observatories primarily addresses AI's socioeconomic implications through quantitative and policy-focused perspectives, AI@Work Labs complements these efforts by grounding research in real-world instances of AI use at work (or use-cases). It brings together actors engaged in research and field-based projects, emphasising collaboration, knowledge exchange, and methodological alignment. This enables the labs to capture qualitative insights from practice and translate them into actionable knowledge for policymakers, organisations, and researchers. An AI@work lab is defined as:

A durable interdisciplinary research structure that focuses on work and employment instrumented by AI, by conducting projects based on real-life use-cases. It offers qualitative insights of this evolution and is willing to carry action-research projects that enlighten public decision making.

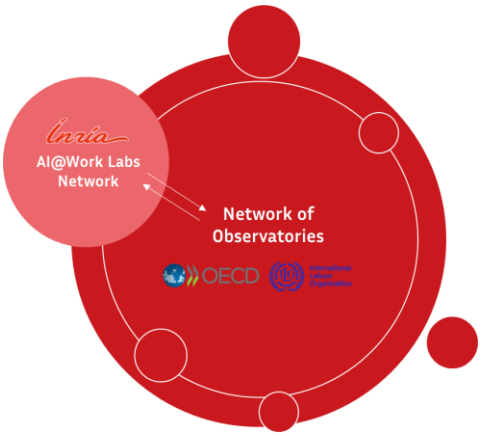

Figure 1: AI@work labs network and the Network of Observatories

1.3. The Network's objectives

The AI@work labs network aims to create and sustain a globally impactful research ecosystem that accelerates innovation, and enables the pooling and mobilisation of shared resources to achieve more than it could independently. This overarching mission is operationalised through two core objectives:

- **Amplify individual projects:** By integrating each lab's individual projects, the network enhances the impact of locally grounded research. Member labs have the opportunity to scale up their initiatives, connect with complementary work across the network, and situate their findings in the broader international debates. This shared infrastructure allows locally focused labs to extend their impact beyond their immediate context and ensure that their insights contribute to the global discussions on AI and work.
- **Foster new collaborative Initiatives:** By adopting a bottom-up approach, the network catalyses new joint initiatives grounded in local and sectoral experiences. These initiatives can take the form of collaborative projects that draw on the diverse disciplinary, methodological, and institutional expertise of participating labs, enabling richer, multidimensional analyses of AI's impact on work.

Overall, the network of labs unites sectoral and local labs engaged in field-based investigations of AI adoption in work and employment. By linking these multidisciplinary labs, the network cultivates a space that brings together diverse perspectives and encourages dialogue among scientific experts, leading to deeper insights and shared projects that support a global, practice-informed research ecosystem. In contrast to most international federating initiatives, such as the network of observatories, which often adopts a top-down approach and primarily produce consolidated statistical analyses, the network of labs will contribute a bottom-up approach. This positioning enables the network to create a continuum of knowledge that spans from ground-level research to institutional analysis and policy-relevant insights, tracking AI's impacts on workers, organizations, and the evolving nature of work.

1.4. The Pioneer Labs

There are currently five labs that are the “pioneer members” of the network of labs. These labs have been involved since the outset in February 2024, and have played a key role in shaping the network through their contributions to its design and implementation. The labs are described below:

Laboria (France) is an action research laboratory inaugurated in November 2021 by the French Ministry of Labour and Inria. Its mission is to understand, analyse, and experiment with the impacts of artificial intelligence technologies on work, employment, skills, vocational training, and social dialogue. The lab studies transformations induced by AI to provide evidence-based recommendations. LaborIA operates as a public research initiative co-piloted by Inria and the Ministry of Labour, including social partners, and designed to produce actionable insights for both public policy and organisations. Its central research objective is to promote “capacitating AI,” meaning AI systems that enrich working conditions, skills development, and quality of working life.

IFOW (UK) was established in 2019 following a parliamentary inquiry into the future of work which ran between 2016-2018. This brought together economists, technologists, sociologists, lawyers and philosophers. In the wake of this, the need for a new independent body to ensure the sharpest evidence was brought to parliament and wider decision makers led to the founding of IFOW. The lab has had a range of funders, from global philanthropic foundations to national philanthropic trusts, government departments such as the AI Security Institute, the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, and funding from the UKRI Research Council.

OBVIA (Canada) was established in 2018 and funded by the Quebec Research Funds (FRQ). It is hosted by Université Laval and operates as an independent, interdisciplinary hub for research, dialogue, and action on the ethical and societal dimensions of digital innovation. Obvia is a research network that brings together the expertise of over 260 researchers in the Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Engineering, and Health sectors, from Quebec, Canada and abroad. Through critical interrogation, Obvia's mission is to identify the societal challenges of AI and digital technologies, and to contribute to the development of solutions that place living beings and the biosphere at the centre of their development and use cycle. Obvia's research community, collaborating with civil society, public sector stakeholders, industry and developers, generates open knowledge and supports the empowerment of individuals and communities. One of their research hubs, called Industry 4.0, work and employment is the participating lab within the AI@work lab network.

The AI Institute of LNCC (IIA) (Brazil) was created in December 2023. It was commissioned by the Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI), through its Coordination of Digital Transformation. The IIA conducts research on Artificial Intelligence and its impact on society. The Institute represents the MCTI in AI research forums, such as the Global Partnership on AI, and fosters the participation of the Brazilian AI community in conferences and technical meetings. Moreover, the IIA is engaged in research on the Future of Work and Responsible AI.

The AI Social Impact Lab (Poland) is established within the National Research Institute (NASK) as part of a project commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Digital Affairs. It was launched in early 2025, and it's research focus is Generational AI's impact on the labour market.

2. Emerging Trends & Insights

This section presents a brief literature review that was undertaken in order to get an overview of the current landscape of the work being done on AI's impact on work and employment. This review synthesises key contributions across institutional and academic sources, highlighting thematic areas of inquiry, methodological approaches, and central findings. It also identifies important gaps, laying the foundation for how AI@Work Labs can position itself within this landscape as a unique hub for advancing knowledge and practice on the human experience of AI at work. This review focuses on literature published from 2021 onward. The year 2021 marks a distinct turning point in the evolution of AI at work, as it saw the emergence of AI-augmented work tools that positioned AI not just as an automation technology but as a collaborator embedded in employees' daily workflows.

The two main bodies of literature reviewed are: academic publications and institutional reports. Within academic research, our focus was on the domains of social sciences and management sciences, as these fields provide the most comprehensive perspectives on how technological change intersects with human and organisational dynamics. Unlike technical or computational disciplines that primarily examine AI's design and functionality, social and management sciences foreground the social, organizational, and institutional dimensions of technology use. This focus is particularly relevant for understanding AI's impact on work, as it captures how employees interpret, adapt to, and are shaped by AI systems within complex organisational and societal contexts. The second body of work comprised institutional publications from sources such as the OECD and ILO, as well as the European Commission and UK Government (labelled as international institutions), which offer policy-oriented insights into the economic, labour, and regulatory implications of AI adoption. Figure 2 displays a map created to portray the current landscape of research on AI's impact on work.

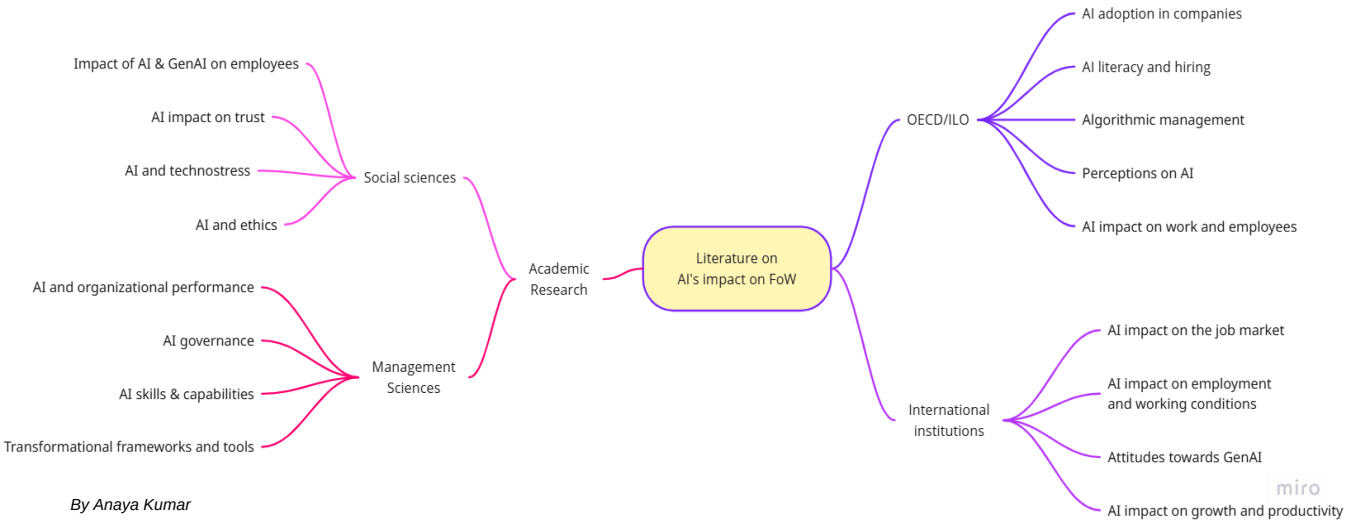

Figure 2: Current discussions on AI's impact on work

2.1. Social science sources

2.1.1. Impact of AI and GenAI on employees

In the domain of social sciences, a prominent theme concerns AI and GenAI's influence on employees' work experiences. Recent studies have examined AI's effects on employee well-being, including job satisfaction, work overload, and pro-environmental behaviours, drawing on frameworks such as the Job Demands–Resources model to explain these dynamics (Chuang et al., 2025; Kim & Kim, 2025). Other work explores the organisational mechanisms that shape employees' willingness to adopt GenAI, such as organisational listening practices (Dong et al., 2024), as well as initiatives designed to ensure technological readiness (Uren & Edwards, 2023). These studies provide substantial insight into micro-level organisational consequences of AI, yet they largely focus on individual outcomes and short-term adaptation processes. Broader questions about the long-term evolution of employee roles, identity changes, and reconfiguration of work practices remain underexplored.

2.1.2. Trust

Trust-related studies in the AI context focus on how employees form confidence in AI systems and AI-supported decision-making within organisational settings. Research in this stream discusses trust in relation to AI agency, reliability, system transparency, and the perceived fairness of AI-driven decisions, particularly when AI is used in performance evaluations or strategic decision-making processes (Seifdar & Amiri, 2025; Vanneste & Puranam, 2025). Studies have also found that knowledge and experience with AI help shift employees' attitudes towards trust, as well as the importance of perceived trustworthiness in the dynamics between Human-AI collaborations (Daly et al., 2025; Georganta & Ulfert, 2024).

2.1.3. Technostress

Technostress has emerged as a recurring concept in research addressing employee reactions to AI and GenAI implementation. Drawing on well-established stressor-strain models, scholars discuss how

AI-induced work changes can result in stress through increased workload, constant connectivity, or fear of job displacement (Chuang et al., 2025). Recent work adds nuance by showing that AI-driven technostress can both hinder and promote AI adoption, depending on employees' affective reactions and technical self-efficacy (Chang et al., 2024). Moreover, employees often develop defensive routines as coping mechanisms, with digital leadership and goal orientation helping to alleviate stress (Yang et al., 2025).

2.1.4. AI and ethics

A growing body of research addresses the ethical and societal implications of AI deployment in organizations, focusing on transparency, accountability, and fairness (Bar-Gil et al., 2024; Chin et al., 2025). Studies have begun to develop and institutionalize AI ethics by linking business ethics and governance practices, and proposing an AI ethics maturity model that offers a structured, holistic approach to embedding ethical data science practices within organizational processes (Krijger et al., 2023; Schultz & Seele, 2023).

Across these four themes, existing research offers valuable insights into the employee-level implications of AI and GenAI, yet there are areas of research that could be expanded upon. Much of the literature adopts a predominantly individual-level and cross-sectional perspective, offering a limited understanding of how employees' responses to AI, whether in terms of well-being, trust, stress, or ethical awareness, evolve over time or within broader organisational structures. While this body of work enriches understanding of psychological mechanisms, future research could benefit from linking these micro-level findings with broader organisational and institutional factors such as culture, power relations, and identity dynamics. These gaps point to the need for more integrative, longitudinal, and multi-level explorations of how AI reshapes experiences at work.

2.2. Management science sources

2.2.1. AI and organisational performance

Within management sciences, a central stream of research examines how AI and GenAI shape organisational performance and competitiveness. Studies highlight that AI adoption enhances decision-making quality and process efficiency through strategic planning, comprehensive training, and addressing ethical, data security, and privacy considerations (Aramali et al., 2025). Other research further emphasizes the importance of organizational support to leverage AI effectively (Ma et al., 2024). Research further emphasises the role of explainable AI and dynamic capabilities in facilitating adaptability and sustained performance advantages (Chaudhary et al., 2025; Wong & Ngai, 2025). Some studies have also discussed negative outcomes such as organisational dehumanisation and reducing organisational citizenship behaviour (Bai & Zhang, 2025; Shin et al., 2025).

2.2.2. AI governance

Another prominent theme in management research concerns the governance of AI systems within organisational and public-sector contexts. Scholars explore how governance frameworks, policies, and oversight mechanisms can ensure the responsible and ethical use of AI, particularly in public organisations (de Almeida & dos Santos Júnior, 2025). Recent conceptual and review papers have sought to clarify the definition and scope of organisational AI governance, outlining its multidimensional nature across ethical, technical, and managerial domains (Batool et al., 2025;

Mäntymäki et al., 2022). These studies underscore the need for accountability, transparency, and regulatory compliance in managing AI systems across different organisational settings.

2.2.3. AI skills and capabilities

Research on AI skills and capabilities emphasizes their critical role in enabling organizations to adapt to technological change. Studies show that both technical and managerial AI skills drive innovation and sustainability, particularly when supported by digital literacy and an enabling organizational culture (Ali et al., 2025; An et al., 2024; Mikalef et al., 2023). Extending this perspective, Przegalinska et al., (2025) highlight that collaborative AI systems enhance task performance and creativity when human expertise complements AI-driven capabilities.

2.2.4. Transformation frameworks and tools

Management research increasingly examines frameworks and tools that conceptualize AI-driven transformation across organisational contexts. Studies highlight AI's role in reshaping innovation ecosystems, organisational processes, and public administrations, emphasising shifts in collaboration, knowledge flows, and sociotechnical structures (Holmström & Magnusson, 2025; Secundo et al., 2025; Tangi et al., 2025). Others address the "AI-productivity paradox," showing that productivity gains from AI implementation often emerge unevenly across organisational levels (Khalil et al., 2025).

Across these research streams, several gaps remain. Much of the current literature is outcome-oriented, emphasising performance metrics, structural mechanisms, or policy frameworks, while offering limited insight into the lived and evolving dynamics of AI transformation. There is insufficient understanding of how AI reshapes organizational culture and power relations, or how governance and ethical principles are enacted in everyday practices. Moreover, studies tend to focus on organisational-level capabilities, overlooking the role of individual skill development, cross-functional collaboration, and learning routines in sustaining technological change. Finally, empirical research tracing how AI-enabled transformations unfold and embed over time remains scarce, leaving the long-term organisational implications of AI integration underexplored.

2.3. Institutional sources

2.3.1. AI adoption and skills

Institutional reports have examined how AI is currently being adopted across organisations and the role of governments in facilitating this transition. These studies emphasise the importance of policy interventions that ensure workers are equipped with the necessary skills to adapt to AI-driven transformations and highlight varying degrees of AI integration into service delivery (Brioscú, A., 2024; European Commission, 2024; OECD, 2024a; Wouter Simons et al., 2024). Furthermore, one report stresses the need for stronger collaboration between public sector entities and industry partners to co-develop relevant training materials. Tailored training programs, aligned with sector-specific needs, are viewed as critical for effective adoption. In particular, hands-on training grounded in real-world projects and exposure to domain-relevant AI systems and datasets have been identified as especially beneficial in preparing the workforce for AI-enabled work environments (OECD/BCG/INSEAD, 2025).

2.3.2. The job market and hiring

Studies have increasingly focused on how AI is reshaping labour markets, workforce composition, and hiring practices. These reports examine both the emergence of AI-related occupations and the evolving skill sets required across industries. Evidence from Canada and the UK state that job postings are increasingly demanding for AI-related skills, but remains concentrated within specific sectors and occupational clusters (Eslava et al., 2025; Schmidt, J. et al., 2024). Similarly, studies on European working conditions indicate that digital, green, and demographic transitions are transforming a considerable number of occupations, with many expected to experience stable employment conditions despite ongoing AI disruption (Parent-Thirion et al., 2025). Complementing these insights, recent analytical tools have sought to classify and measure occupational exposure to AI. One study developed a global index of occupational exposure to generative AI, identifying clerical and digitized professional roles as most affected, with notable gender and income disparities (Gmyrek et al., 2025). Research in the United Kingdom further identifies professional and clerical roles, particularly in finance, law, and business management, as being most exposed to AI-driven change, especially among highly qualified employees (GOV.UK & Department of Science, Innovation, & Technology, 2025).

2.3.3. Perceptions on AI

Institutional reports increasingly capture employees' perspectives on AI's impact at work, emphasizing both opportunities and emerging risks. EU-wide surveys suggest that while many workers report enhanced performance and positive experiences with AI, persistent concerns remain around job displacement, insufficient training, and eroding trust between employers and employees (European Commission, 2025b; OECD, 2024b). Other studies highlight the importance of social dialogue and collective worker representation, noting that unions play a critical role in ensuring socially sustainable AI adoption (Doellgast et al., 2025; Óscar Molina et al., 2024). Sector-specific analyses, particularly in healthcare and the public sector, identify recurring challenges related to data accessibility, digital literacy, ethical responsibility, and liability (Almyranti, M et al., 2024; European Commission, 2025a).

2.3.4. AI impact on employees

Studies examining AI's impact on employees highlight diverse effects across gender and managerial contexts. Evidence shows that the diffusion of AI-enabled technologies benefits female employment, especially in countries where women have higher levels of education and work experience (Stefania Albanesi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, research on AI-based worker management systems identifies negative psychosocial implications, including heightened stress and diminished autonomy (Óscar Molina et al., 2024). Studies on algorithmic management tools reveal that while managers report improvements in decision quality and job satisfaction, they also express concerns regarding transparency, accountability, and worker protection (Milanez et al., 2025). To resolve this, one study developed a methodology that enables consultations between workers, managers, and worker representatives to co-design AI systems that balance productivity with job quality (Milanez, 2025).

Despite the growing attention on AI's impact on work, much of the institutional literature is largely descriptive and normative. Studies tend to emphasize macro-level trends rather than providing empirical evidence on how AI adoption unfolds within organizations. Moreover, comparative approaches across regions, industries, and sectors remain underdeveloped. Thus, there is limited understanding of how collaborations between governments, industries, and workers translate into sustained skills development or improved job quality.

Following the literature review, which provided a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape of AI's impact on work and identified areas requiring further attention, the next section presents the findings from the survey and interviews conducted with each lab. These results, which illustrate the lab's current practices and expectations from the network, when combined with insights from the literature review, offer a holistic understanding of the network's value proposition and positioning within the broader research ecosystem.

3. Value and Position in the Industry

3.1. Survey & Results

The next step in the analysis was to develop a deeper understanding of who the pioneer labs are, what they contribute, and how they are positioned within their respective ecosystems. To achieve this, a survey was administered to all the labs in order to capture information such as their institutional structures, operational processes, methodologies, ongoing projects, and expectations from the network. These insights were further enriched through semi-structured interviews, which provided a more nuanced understanding of the labs' current practices, strategic orientations, and the ways in which they envision their role within the global research landscape.

3.1.1. Institutional Structure

The first section of the survey provides an overview of the lab's institutional structures, modes of operation, and affiliations. The results reveal that the all of the labs are either embedded within or collaborate closely with the public sector. Further information regarding the institutional structures of the pioneer labs is summarized in Table 1.

Each lab maintains a diverse set of affiliations within its respective sector, including policymakers, academics and practitioners. This enables the network to access a wide spectrum of stakeholders that they could engage with on research, practice, and policy. The labs demonstrate a broad range of disciplinary expertise, spanning sociology, law, and economics, with sociology emerging as a common disciplinary anchor. This shared foundation offers opportunities for collaboration on projects oriented around sociology, while the diversity of expertise allows for interdisciplinary research initiatives across the network. The labs' typical deliverables include research reports, policy recommendations, scientific publications, and practical interventions. This diversity of outputs enhances the network's collective capacity, allowing labs to learn from one another's practices and seek guidance from labs experienced in producing new forms of deliverables.

Labs	Affiliations	Expertise	Research Recipients	Deliverables and outcomes
Laboria	France Travail, DARES, DGEFP, DGT, and partners from the ecosystem of employment, training, and social dialogue.	Sociology of work and organizations, human resources and management sciences, ergonomics and psychology of work, public policy and social dialogue studies	Public authorities (Ministry of Labour, other ministries, France Travail), social partners, professional branches, and organizations experimenting with AI.	- Reports and field monographs -Policy recommendations and methodological guides (e.g., guide for AI deployment, inclusion-oriented toolkits) - Practical tools for organizations, such as the LaborIA Model Canvas, ExplorIA cards, or auto-diagnostic frameworks - Publications and events to raise awareness and foster dialogue
Obvia	Université Laval (Lead and Host institution); Université de Montréal; Université de Sherbrooke; HEC Montréal; McGill University, 15 more institutions within Quebec	Management, employment relations, human resources management, sociology, political science, economics, engineering, and computer science	Public sector institutions and policymakers, civil society organizations, industry actors, and citizens.	Scientific papers, scientific communications, interdisciplinary research reports, policy briefs, public consultations, training programs, events, and open-access publications.
IFOW	- UK Universities, as a formal partner of the UKRI funded DIGIT group; and via research fellow network. - Parliamentarians, via the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Future of Work.	Law, computer science, economics, sociology, human resource management, industrial relations, socio-technical systems theory, innovation theory, regulation theory, political economy, and philosophy.	Local Communities, Businesses, Regulators, Government departments, Unions, Member Organizations, Workers	Multi-disciplinary and participatory research; peer reviewed papers, policy reports, practical toolkits, guidance, software as a product of research, and multi-stakeholder forums
IIA (LNCC)	The National Laboratory of Scientific Computing	Computer science, computational modelling, biology, mathematics, and engineering	Brazilian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation	Research reports and software (as a by-product of research)

AI Social Impact Lab (NASK)	Office for Analysis and Research within the organizational structure of NASK	Sociology and law	Officials, employees of the Ministry of Digital Affairs, and scientists.	Research reports and scientific articles

Table 1: Description of the labs' institutional structures

3.1.2. Topics of research

To effectively visualise the range as well as convergence of research topics across the pioneer labs, a cluster map format was adopted. By grouping related topics based on their conceptual proximity, this method highlights areas of thematic concentration as well as cross-cutting linkages between labs. As presented in Figure 3, an analysis of the labs' research topics reveals several areas of overlap, indicating strong potential for collaboration within the network. The cluster map visualizes these topics by positioning closely related themes near one another, resulting in three distinct clusters. These clusters reflect: AI's impact on employees and the quality of work (cluster 1), AI skills development and training (cluster 2), and AI governance and social dialogue (cluster 3). Further details of the research topics are provided in Table A in the Annex.

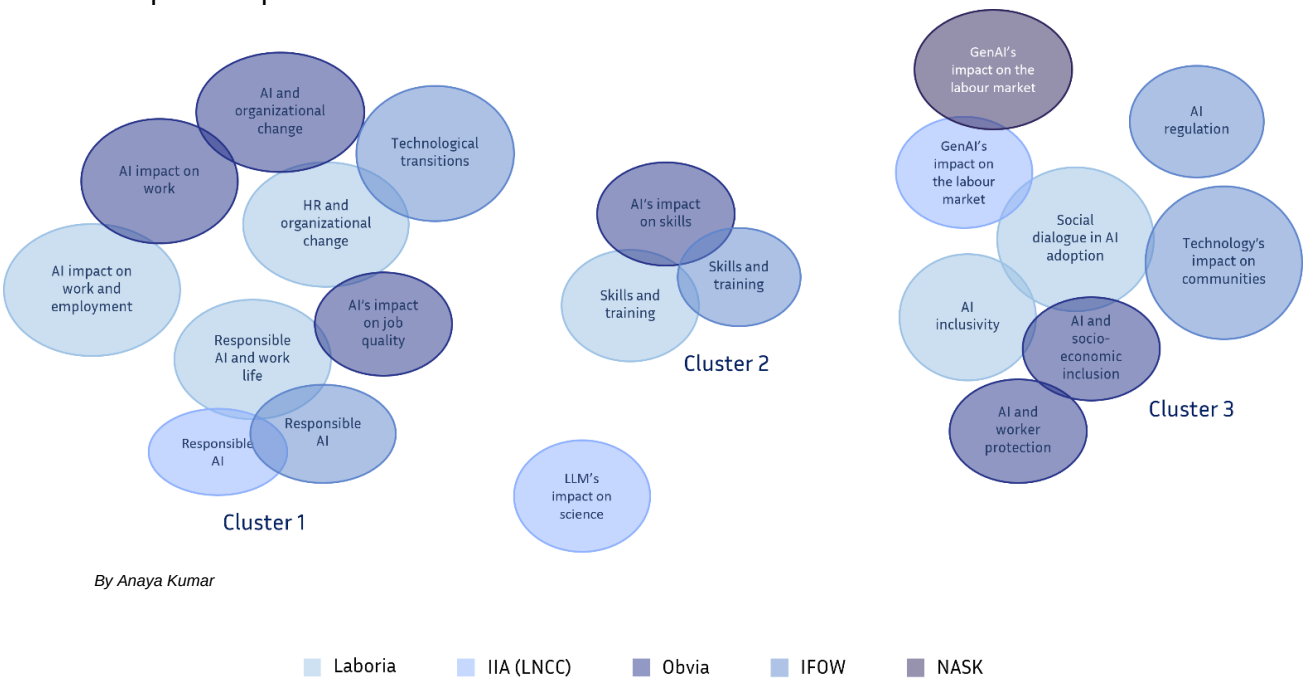

Figure 3: Cluster map of the topics researched by Pioneer labs

The first cluster, focusing on AI's impact on employees and the quality of work, represents research topics shared across several labs, including AI's impact on work and employment. Both Laboria and Obvia examine these issues. LaborIA is examining the impact of AI systems on recruitment and employment through a qualitative, field-based study that analyses AI's contributions, benefits, and limitations across the different stages of the hiring process. Obvia has produced research that discusses the importance of assembling an 'AI team' that can ensure the smooth execution of AI

projects (Mosconi & Gagnon, 2024). Another topic in common concerns organisational and sectoral transformation driven by AI adoption. A study by Obvia proposed a framework illustrating how AI resources and capabilities play a key role in the growth of start-ups and demonstrates the extent of AI's impact on the transformation of business models (Tanev et al., 2024). IFOW, through their project called the Pissarides Review, has published a report examining how AI technologies in the workplace impact worker quality of life and well-being, and how these effects are distributed across socio-demographic groups and geographical communities in the UK (Soffia et al., 2024). Laboria has a project that explores how AI impacts the working conditions within the industrial sector, with a focus on logistics and predictive maintenance activities, and/or potentially those using generative AI. Furthermore, Laboria, IIA, and IFOW contribute to the growing body of work on responsible AI in the workplace. For example, IFOW reports that while AI technologies offer many benefits, they also pose challenges occupational health and safety benefits, urging the need for conscious management to ensure ethical and responsible AI implementation (Moore et al., 2024). Similarly, in their project, Laboria is looking into characterizing work situations by highlighting the issues related to well-being at work, meaning of work, and capacity-building organizations.

The second cluster discusses the importance of skills and training in the context of AI adoption. Laboria studies the skills and training challenges arising from AI adoption among industrial operators in logistics and production, contributing to the assessment of vocational training needs related to AI integration, management practices, and social dialogue. Meanwhile, Obvia has published work proposing a framework to guide training strategies and develop both AI project management skills and other soft skills (Psyché et al., 2024). Obvia has also identified the types of HR tasks impacted by AI, such as mechanical, intellectual and, emotional, and emphasized the need to develop appropriate skill sets (Registre & Saba, 2024). Similarly, IFOW, through the Pissarides Review, investigated the evolution of skills requirements in the UK, documenting a rapid change toward technology-related skills (Costa et al., 2024).

The third cluster focuses on AI governance and social dialogue. Both NASK and IIA have conducted studies looking into the effects of GenAI on labour markets. NASK, in collaboration with the ILO, has published a paper where they created an index to measure GenAI’s impact on labour markets (Gmyrek et al., 2025). At the same time, IIA administered a study to analyse the impact of GenAI on the Brazilian labour market. This study covers five countries in the region: Mexico, Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and Costa Rica.

Laboria also has ongoing projects on AI inclusivity and the role of social dialogue in AI adoption. For example, a recently completed project by Laboria examines how AI influences cultural and creative industries, specifically how GenAI is being integrated into higher art education. The findings highlight the importance of using AI not as a substitute but as a lever for creativity. Likewise, IFOW conducted a study on GenAI’s impact on creative industries and reported the importance of regulatory safeguards for AI firms (Institute for the Future of Work, 2025a).

Regarding AI inclusivity, IFOW has published a report drawing on an extensive literature review and workshops with young people, showing how lessons in motivation could help individuals from low-income backgrounds access better-quality work amid AI-driven market disruption (J. Halstead et al., 2025). Laboria also has projects that aim to highlight the opportunities and conditions for professional inclusion offered by AI that can benefit those furthest removed from the labour market (due to significant difficulties and social barriers), those with disabilities, or those seeking to combat

discrimination. Another paper on social inclusion, by Obvia, discusses the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) opportunities and challenges associated with implementing the metaverse through AI in the workplace (Marabelli, M & Lirio, P., 2024). Obvia has additionally published research proposing inclusive governance processes to ensure fair and equitable AI adoption within workplaces (Lévesque et al., 2024). It has also developed a guide to support negotiations on the introduction of AI (Pasquier et al., 2023), and a team of three researchers, Garneau, Parent-Rocheleau, and Pasquier, is conducting action research with twelve trade unions to strengthen their capacity-building initiatives for addressing the challenges posed by AI.

In relation to AI and worker protection, Obvia has a study on the importance of trust in the design of AI systems to ensure ethical values are integrated into these technologies (Braunschweig et al., 2024). IFOW also studies how AI transforms communities, evidenced by their 'Good Work Time Series', which monitors trends in access to 'good work' across local communities in the UK (Institute for the Future of Work, 2025b).

These shared interests not only create opportunities for joint projects but also directly correspond to many of the gaps identified in the literature review. The alignment between the labs' current research agendas and the areas where evidence remains limited suggests that joint efforts within the network could contribute to advancing the field. These gaps are described in the following section.

3.1.3. Methodologies

The survey also gathered information on the diverse methodologies that are currently employed by the labs. This enables a comprehensive understanding of the methodological strengths and specialization that exist within the network. By identifying these proficiencies, the network can facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among labs, encouraging those with specific methodological capabilities to support others seeking to enhance their research approaches. Such exchanges between labs not only promote capacity building but also foster methodological advancement, leading to more rigorous and impactful research outcomes across the network. The work of the labs aims to capture in-depth, contextualized insights into workers' experiences with AI and the organizational dynamics surrounding its adoption. By moving beyond aggregate statistical measures or verbatim accounts, this approach helps to open the "black box" of AI at work and more effectively capture the complexity of sociotechnical change. Anchored in context, the labs' research examines multiple levels of analysis, such as sectors, organizational types, occupational roles, specific technologies, and broader cultural and legal environments. These insights are generated through recognized scientific methods, notably qualitative and mixed-method approaches including interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, case studies, and longitudinal research designs- as reflected in the findings and outlined in Table 2.

Labs	Methodologies	
Laboria	- Field observations - Interviews - Ethnographic methods - Case studies	- Surveys - Demographic studies - Impact assessments

Obvia	- Systematic literature review - Interviews - Focus groups	- Case studies - Grey literature review - Surveys
IFOW	- Case studies - Survey design - RCTs - Extended case method - Action research - Interviews - Participatory and foresight methodologies	- Design thinking - Integrated dataset analysis (e.g. Good work monitor) - Indexes development (e.g. Disruption index) - Community research - Design research methods - Policy analysis
IIA (LNCC)	- Interviews - Surveys	- Data driven
AI Social Impact Lab (NASK)	- Interviews - Surveys	- Content analysis using NLP tools

Table 2: Methodologies used across labs

3.1.4. Challenges and expectations

The survey also inquired about the key challenges faced by the pioneer labs to better understand how the network can provide targeted support. Common challenges reported across the labs include limited resources and capacity, and difficulties in accessing international collaboration opportunities. Several labs also highlighted barriers to engaging with public and private organisations as research partners, which can limit the scope and applicability of their work. Other challenges that were shared by some labs were difficulties in securing sustainable funding and the need for support in translating research findings into practical outputs, such as toolkits, to help social partners and connect with the 'real-world'.

3.2. Contribution to the current discussions

After reviewing the existing literature on AI's impact on work across different domains within the research landscape, the analysis determined areas where studies remain limited. Much of the existing literature focuses on macro-level analyses or policy frameworks, resulting in important questions about workers' experiences, organizational adoption, and cross-regional variation being insufficiently examined. These gaps highlight the need for coordinated, interdisciplinary research that can connect micro-level realities with broader governance and societal considerations.

The network of labs is uniquely positioned at the nexus of the key domains identified in the literature review, while also strengthening the existing but underdeveloped links between them. By bringing together diverse disciplinary perspectives, methodological strengths, and institutional affiliations, the network is able to address research gaps that individual labs cannot tackle alone. Through collaboration, the labs can collectively advance research in three key areas where evidence remains limited, described below.

3.2.1. Understanding AI's impact on worker experience

The network of labs provides significant added value by advancing research on how AI transforms the lived experiences of workers and moving beyond the macro-level adoption of AI. Through qualitative, bottom-up, and longitudinal studies, the network will generate nuanced, micro-level insights into how AI shapes everyday work practices, employee well-being, and how AI perceptions evolve over time. These kinds of studies also inform how AI impacts professional identities, empower workers, and how questions of AI sovereignty emerge and are addressed within the workplace. By studying the employee experience, the network aims to fill a critical gap in a research landscape that mostly consists of technical and managerial perspectives, thus ensuring human-centred evidence informs both organizational decision-making and broader policy discussions.

3.2.2. Building AI skills, literacy, and capabilities

Another area where the network contributes unique value is understanding how best to strengthen AI skills, literacy, and capabilities across different stages of AI adoption. By enabling comparative studies across regions and countries, the network could highlight how differences in digital infrastructure shape the distribution of AI-related opportunities and risks. This research would pay particular attention to impacts on marginalized groups, issues of inclusivity, and the explicability & explainability of AI systems, ensuring that emerging technologies carry more benefits than disadvantages. Therefore, the network offers a global perspective that supports equitable approaches to AI adoption and helps policymakers and organizations design interventions that build accessible and socially responsible AI capabilities.

3.2.3. Connecting AI policy and real-world implementation

The network also plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between government policy and actual AI practices in workplaces, industries, and public institutions. Through comparative research on how different countries design and implement AI-related policies, the network identifies effective governance models and contextual factors that shape policy outcomes. A key element involves examining multi-level AI governance, the interplay between strategies at the national, regional, sectoral, and organisational levels. Understanding how these layers reinforce or contradict one another is essential for designing governance mechanisms that are both coherent and actionable. It further facilitates structured dialogue between policymakers, employers, and workers, creating a space where regulatory intent and on-the-ground realities can be discussed together. This positioning enables the network to act as a trusted intermediary, supporting the development of more coherent, evidence-based AI strategies that reflect both societal expectations and operational constraints.

4. Conclusion

The Network of Observatories seeks to federate research efforts across institutions and countries in order to generate and share scientific knowledge on the sociotechnical transformations shaping work, organizations, and society. Within this broader ecosystem, a growing need has emerged to "open the black box" of AI, not only in terms of its technical adoption, but also in understanding how AI is embedded in organizational practices, power relations, and everyday work experiences. It is within this context that the AI@work labs network positions itself.

The literature review conducted for this report highlights a persistent gap between practice (anchored in knowledge produced within organizations) and the public policies designed to govern AI. Much existing research remains either macro-level or normative, offering limited insight into how AI systems are negotiated, contested, and operationalized on the ground. By mobilizing in-depth, qualitative, and interdisciplinary research, the labs within the network contribute science-based evidence that informs social dialogue on AI's impact on work, including issues such as worker representation, collective bargaining, skills development, and job quality.

Looking ahead, the network's north star for 2026 is to serve as a trusted bridge between workers' lived realities, organizational adaptive capacities, and public governance of AI. To achieve this, the network aims to deepen and expand its collective efforts by onboarding new labs that represent a broader diversity of regions, institutional contexts, and perspectives, particularly across underrepresented continents. The network seeks to support and study spaces for dialogue and cooperation between workers, management, policymakers, and technology developers. By examining how concrete solutions are designed, implemented, and evaluated in real-world settings, the AI@work Labs Network will generate actionable insights that can inform both practice and policy. Through the systematic sharing of these insights at national and international levels, the network aims to contribute to more inclusive, coherent, and evidence-based standards for governing AI at work.

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ANNEX

Labs	Research Topics
Laboria	• Transformation of work and employment through AI • Skills development and vocational training • Human resources and organizational change • Social dialogue and collective bargaining in the context of AI adoption • Inclusion, diversity, and prevention of bias in AI systems • Responsible AI that enriches working life
Obvia	• Transformation of work through AI and digital technologies • Addressing challenges related to job quality, skills, worker protection, organizational change and socio-economic inclusion

IFOW	• People-centered technology: organisational-level transformation and instrumental impact, exploring and modelling the good practice and regulation of AI to protect human agency and promote sustainable growth. • Good transitions: individual-level transitions and conceptual impacts, helping people to navigate technological transitions, and improve how they are managed. • Flourishing places: systems-level change and instrumental impact, by partnering with and empowering communities to shape their own futures and build the conditions for good work.
IIA(LNCC)	• Future of Work • Responsible AI • AI applied to science
AI Social Impact Lab (NASK)	• GenAI's impact on the labour market (joint research with ILO and NASK-PIB)

Table A: AI@work labs research topics