

Malt Tech Trends 2026

How Europe's top tech
independent talents are
shaping the tech landscape



Executive Summary

The Operationalization Era: Agentic Maturity, n8n explosion and the rise of FinOps

At Malt, we have always been convinced that freelancers are the pioneers of any workforce transformation. By the very nature of their position, operating at the intersection of multiple industries and tech stacks, independent experts are the early warning system of the global tech landscape. They out-train and out-pace traditional structures because they must; to stay competitive, they build the frameworks and test the tools that will become corporate standards tomorrow.

As we approach our first million registered freelancers, our community of +250,000 tech and data experts is signaling that the “AI excitement” of the past two years has matured into deep operationalization. While AI skills were once the exclusive domain of data scientists, they have now penetrated every industry and job category. AI skills are no longer tech-only, appearing as requirements in marketing, graphic design, and management consulting and now cited as a mandatory or power-user skill in 22% of non-tech briefs. The ongoing AI-powered tech revolution is made visible by freelancers, always three steps ahead.

A Fundamental Skill Redistribution

In 2025, we witnessed a tectonic shift in the very structure of our community. The share of profiles highlighting historically dominant skills—JavaScript, Python, and Java—declined by 20% to 30% in a single year.

This isn't a decline in talent, but a clear redistribution of expertise. While 40% of new registrants highlighted JavaScript in 2024, that figure dropped below 20% in 2025, partially replaced by an explosion of expertise in LLM implementation and production-grade automation. The “Builder Mindset” identified last year has evolved into an “Orchestrator Mindset,” where the value lies not just in writing code, but in directing intelligent systems.

From RAG to AI Agents

The most significant signal in our 2026 data is the evolution of “Agentic Maturity.” In 2024, the industry was focused on RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) to feed LLM with corporate knowledge and data and build company-knowledge AI assistants. Today, we are seeing the continuation of a trend, now moving toward AI Agents—autonomous systems capable of reasoning and interoperating with complex toolsets.

While efficiency gains are the biggest driver, the value lies in the capacity to do more and better through deepened customization, without decreasing satisfaction.

The demand is staggering: the number of briefs for AI Agents has exploded by x60, with searches up x26. This represents a fundamental reordering of priorities. AI is no longer a “bolt-on” feature; it is the new engine of architectural change, moving from static information retrieval to active workflow execution.

Executive Summary

The Decoupling of the Tech Stack

What we observe across millions of keyword searches and thousands of project briefs is a clear decoupling between the agile SMBs and the more established Enterprises.

No longer just for “citizen developers,” low-code tools like n8n have seen x14 growth, now leveling in project volume with Java. Interestingly, 71% of these users are senior technical profiles seeking to bypass traditional bottlenecks. They are choosing speed — 80% of projects — and power without the overhead of traditional tech frameworks. Called AI engineers or automation engineers, they combine solid technical expertise either from data science or software engineering with a builder mindset focusing on impact first.

Simultaneously, Enterprises are prioritizing robust, governed infrastructures. Demand for Azure OpenAI has surged by 500%, as companies seek the procurement ease and compliance-ready environments of established providers to manage their most sensitive workloads.

The FinOps Mandate and the Governance Pivot

This “Deep Operationalization” phase brings a new focus on sustainability—both financial and regulatory.

With AI workloads (GPU instances) often costing 10–20x more than standard compute, FinOps projects have surged by 72%. Infrastructure is no longer just about the cloud; it’s about the specialized management of AI-driven costs and technical debt.

Furthermore, as the EU AI Act moves toward enforcement, compliance is no longer a side conversation. Demand for AI-specific regulation expertise has skyrocketed by +380%.

Companies are finally cleaning their data foundations—with 48% of projects merging AI governance with traditional data governance—to ensure their ambitions are built on a responsible, legal, and stable base.

Rising Interest for Fractional Tech Leadership

In their AI transformation journey, companies are not only seeking experience to structure their approach with AI consultants but also drive their organization with high-level strategic guidance. This has created a new category of “super-connectors.” Interim and Fractional Tech Leadership (CTOs, CDOs) is now the fastest-growing job category (+23%). Companies are looking for experts who can move fluidly across domains, connecting the dots between AI, security, data, and governance.

In 2026, the winners won’t be those who adopt the most AI tools, but those who build the most governable, automated, and cost-efficient ecosystems around them.

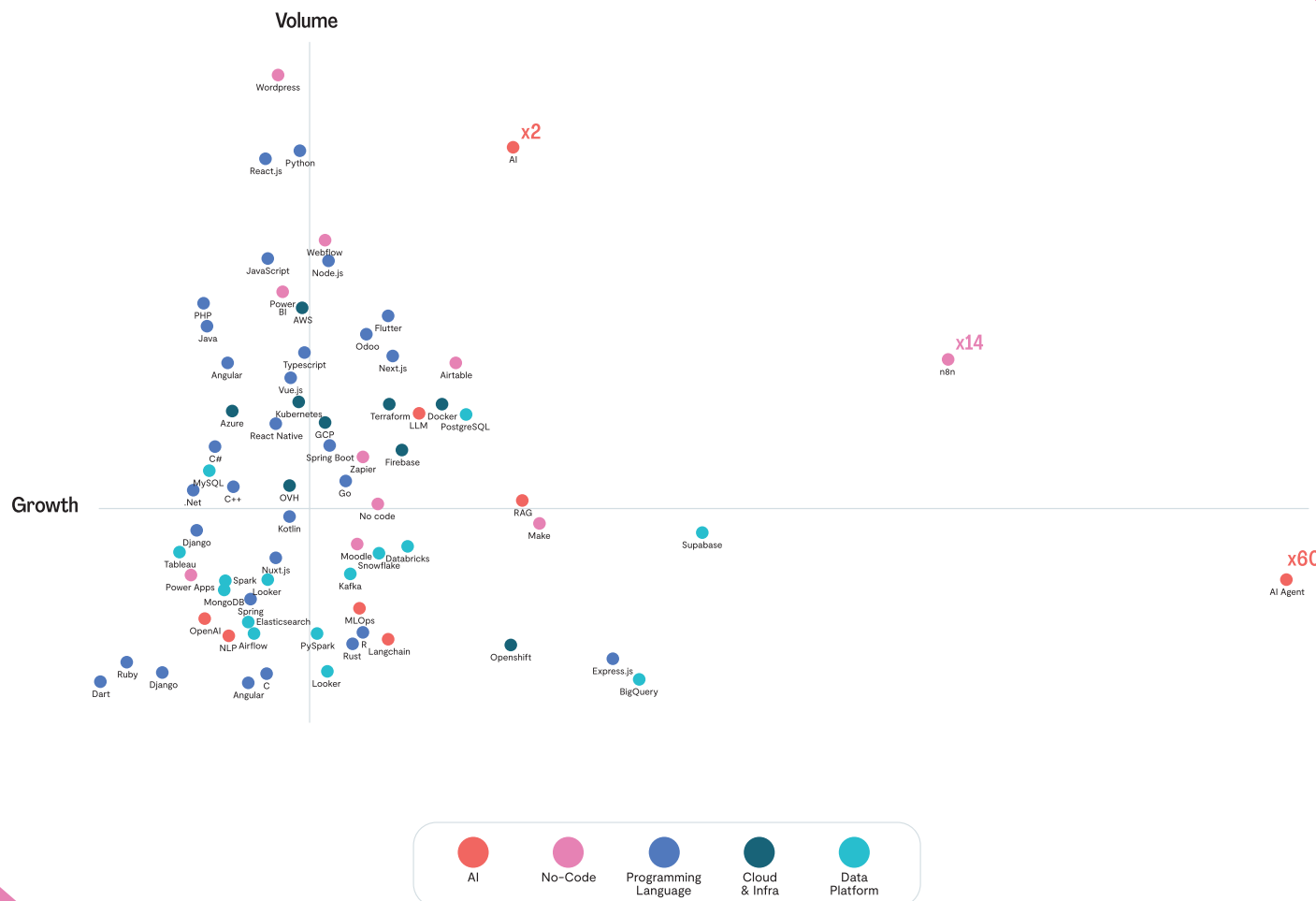
Benoit Guillon

VP of Engineering,
Malt





The Malt Tech Quadrant



AI & low-code automation skills are the fastest growing skills and their volume increased compared to last year.

- AI Agent demand was multiplied by 60 vs 2024 and replaces RAG in its position on the quadrant.
- RAG demand remains stable in terms of volume and still grows (x3) in the same order of magnitude than more established technologies.
- Demand for low-code workflow automation tools (n8n, Zapier, Make) exploded in 2025. n8n is by far the most popular platform on Malt (with a demand level as high as some already very famous programming languages such as Java).
- Demand on established programming languages and frameworks (Java, PHP, JavaScript, C++, C#...) remain high but tend to stagnate or slowly evolve vs the rest of demand.

The Market Experts' View



**Adriana
Kosowski**

Freelance AI
program manager

“Agentic AI is not just a technological shift, but a transformation in how organizations operate. What I often see is that organizations still approach it through isolated use cases, instead of defining a clear vision and investing in the right foundations. The role of AI leaders is no longer to manage delivery, but to build those foundations: skills, processes, and platforms that enable autonomous systems to create value at scale.



Anaïs Ghelfi

Data Platform
Director, **Malt**

“Data platforms are entering a new dimension, and honestly, it's an exciting time. DBT industrialized transformation, Analytics Engineering became a real discipline, and now data platforms are expanding beyond analytics into real-time operations. A strong signal that data platforms have become critical infrastructure, not just for analytics, but for operational use-cases and AI at scale.



**Florent
Edouard**

Global Head of the
Digital Accelerator,
Sanofi

“The question is no more what we will do with AI, but what will not be done through AI. The rise of AI agents is undeniable, as shown in the demand uplift, and their orchestration through new frameworks like n8n is a must for companies to fully benefit from this game changer and not drown in agentic chaos.



Malt Tech Skills index

2025 has solidified a fundamental truth with Artificial Intelligence no longer being an optional add-on but the second most demanded skill across the entire Malt platform, irrespective of company size, industry, or project type. This represents a significant acceleration throughout the past year, as the LLM revolution has transformed AI from a specialized domain into a mandatory technical baseline for all job categories.

Top demanded skills by companies

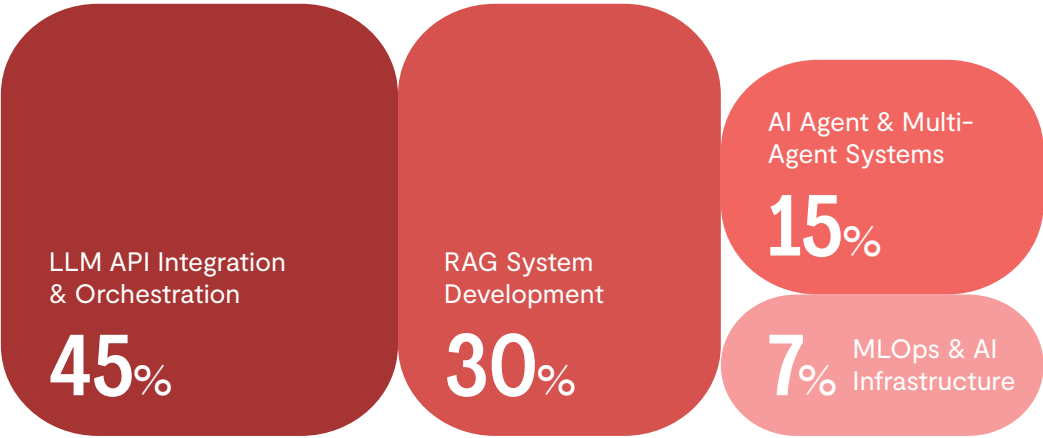
In volume, based on project description

	Skill	Demand Evolution	Supply Evolution
1	Wordpress	-11%	-31%
2	Artificial Intelligence	+125%	+59%
3	Python	-3%	-13%
4	React.js	-16%	-16%
5	Webflow	+4%	-13%
6	JavaScript	-15%	-28%
7	Node.js	+4%	-24%
8	Microsoft Power BI	-1%	-2%
9	PHP	-33%	-33%
10	Flutter	+31%	-13%

In 2023, AI demand was highly siloed, with 70% of projects concentrated within data job categories, primarily for Data Scientists. 2024 saw demand expanding into broader tech roles like Backend and Fullstack Engineers.

Today, we have entered **the era of the AI-integrated Software Engineer**, where 65% of AI skill demand refers to software engineering profiles. While Backend Engineers lead this charge, the requirement has permeated the entire stack, reaching Frontend (6%), Mobile (5%), and even Web Administrators (3%). Adoption speeds vary by organizational scale, but the trajectory is universally upward.

In small and medium companies (SMBs with <1000 employees), the demand for AI-skilled freelancers has more than doubled, whereas larger Enterprises show a steady and robust growth of +25%. This operationalization era relies on four project typologies:



Demand and supply evolution show the actual growth percentage of the market share of the skills amongst the entire marketplace (demand is based on number of project descriptions received by Malt, supply is based on number of freelancers).



Malt Tech Skills index

Top growing skills demanded by companies

Based on project descriptions and corresponding share of supply evolution

	Skill	Demand Evolution	Supply Evolution
1	AI Agent	+5801%	+2420%
2	Zapier	+1545%	+29%
3	n8n	+1191%	+317%
4	Supabase	+352%	+66%
5	BigQuery	+251%	+4%
6	Express.js	+219%	-22%
7	Make.com	+141%	+99%
8	RAG	+129%	+170%
9	OpenShift	+116%	-12%
10	Artificial Intelligence	+115%	+59%

While AI captures attention, the bedrock of the freelance economy remains resilient. **WordPress maintains its position as the most demanded skill** on the overall marketplace, driven by small businesses focusing on site creation or redesign (40%), maintenance (30%), and functional improvements (30%).

Similarly, **Python remains the most demanded programming language** due to its extreme versatility, with its usage distributed across Backend development (48%), Data Science (16%), Data Engineering (14%), Data Analysis (7%), and Cloud (3%). Meanwhile, Node.js continues its year-on-year climb, particularly in Backend and Fullstack contexts (70%), finding its strongest foothold in small and medium tech companies—a direct contrast to the Java and .NET dominance seen in larger corporate environments.

AI & low-code explosion

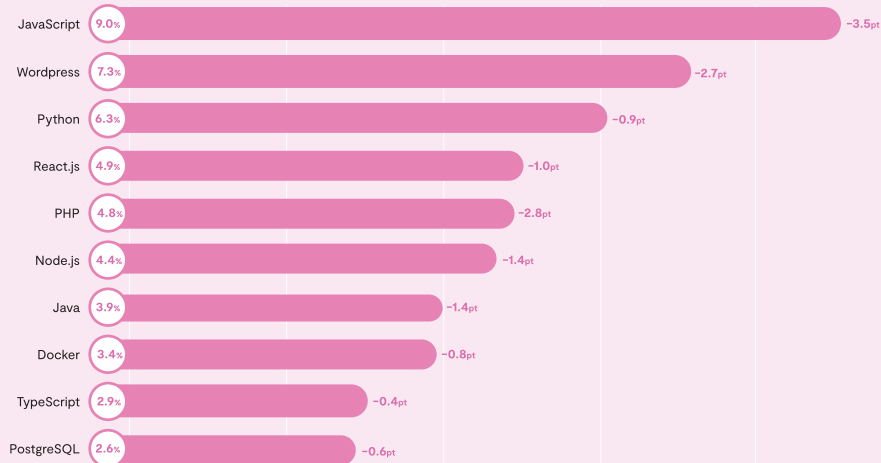
As displayed in the Malt Tech Quadrant, skills related to AI and low-code automations are the ones with the most rapid growth in terms of number of projects. Unsurprisingly, the 3 low-code workflow automation solutions most cited in 2025 are maintaining their position in this top 10.

Due to its growth and its volume of demand and supply, n8n seems to be the category winner. The fact that it is an open-source solution, can be deployed on-premise, and offers simple and powerful integration features with LLMs appears to have won over the small and medium-sized enterprise market.



Malt Tech Skills index

Top skills in volume declared by freelancers



The established and well-known technologies of JavaScript, Wordpress, Python, and React.js maintained their position as the most commonly declared skills among our tech freelancers, showing remarkable stability compared to 2024. Despite this, their overall market share saw a notable decline throughout 2025. This drop is both due to slower growth in the community of freelancers specializing in these areas relative to the overall community, and to freelancers updating their profiles to better align with market trends.

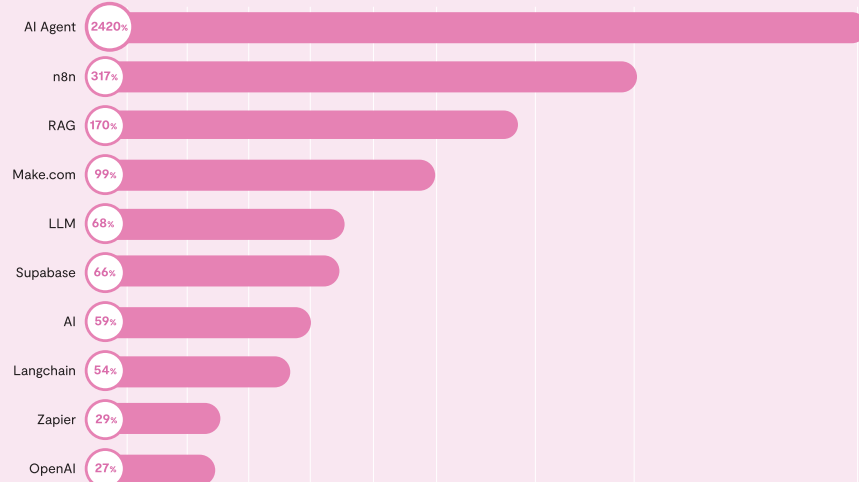
In 2024, about 40% of new tech freelancers highlighted JavaScript when creating their profile. This figure dropped to less than 25% in 2025. In parallel, the share of new freelancers declaring “Artificial Intelligence” in their profile more than tripled between 2024 and 2025.

Freelancers now fully focus on AI-related tech skills

The 2025 ranking of the ten fastest-growing technical skills within our community reveals a singular focus: every single entry is dedicated to the implementation of Artificial Intelligence. This shift highlights a pivot by the Malt freelance community, which spent the year upskilling to meet the surging demand for AI and automation engineering.

The readiness of independent experts to spearhead this transition is evidenced by two striking figures: the share of freelancers specializing in AI Agents multiplied by 24x in a single year, while the overall pool of AI-skilled talent on the platform grew by more than 30% YoY. These metrics confirm that freelancers are not just following the market—they are actively building the capacity to fulfill the most complex corporate AI ambitions of 2026.

Top growing skills declared by freelancers





About Malt

Malt is Europe's leading freelance management platform, co-founded in 2013 by Vincent Huguet (CEO). Over 90,000 companies of all sizes source, contract and manage external talents from Malt's community of more than 950,000 highly qualified independent experts across every field – from tech & data to marketing and communication, to management consulting.

Finding the right freelancer takes just seconds with Malt AI Search, contracting and payment are seamless, with built in reporting and compliance, making Malt an end-to-end solution for freelance management. Operating across 9 countries in Europe and the Middle East, Malt achieved a business volume of over €800 million in 2024.

malt.com

communication@malt.com