

## Dev Barometer Q2 2026:

### The AI Career Reset — How AI Is Rewriting the Path to a Software Engineering Career

The Dev Barometer is BairesDev's quarterly global survey of software developers, with prior editions discussed at World Economic Forum programming in Davos and covered by outlets including VentureBeat. In April 2026, the Q2 edition surveyed 1,569 software developers across 77 countries, 1,059 junior and 510 senior engineers responding simultaneously, to examine a question now central to the industry's media and hiring agenda: what actually makes a junior developer hireable in the AI era?

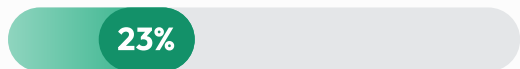
The answer is redefining what early-career engineers are expected to know, do, and own. The central finding of this edition is a significant perception gap between how juniors assess their own AI-era readiness and how senior engineers observe it in practice, with structural implications for how the next generation of technical talent is being developed.

#### What Senior Developers Say About Juniors' Understanding of AI-Generated Code

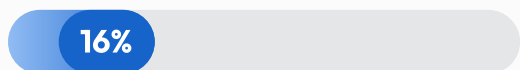
Understand it to some extent



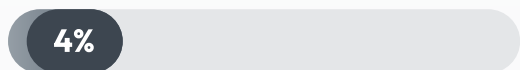
Rarely understand it



Fully understand it



Not understand it



#### Junior Devs Say AI Improved Their Understanding of Software Development. Seniors Disagree.

85% of junior developers say AI tools have improved their understanding of software development. Senior engineers tell a different story: only 16% say juniors fully understand the AI-generated code they submit. 57% say juniors understand it to some extent, and 23% say they rarely do.

Other data points suggest a root cause: 24% of junior developers identify writing code from scratch as the task they feel least confident performing without AI assistance, with only 5% considering it a critical skill for getting hired today. Juniors aren't just uncertain about foundational coding; they've largely concluded it isn't crucial.

## Problem-Solving and Analytical Thinking Are the Most Relevant Hiring Credentials

Junior and senior developers converge on one point. AI tool proficiency alone does not define a job-ready engineer. Almost half (48%) of junior developers rank problem-solving and analytical thinking as the most important hiring credential, nearly three times the 18% who cite AI tool proficiency.

Senior developers reinforce this. 72% of them rank critical thinking as the most important capability for junior engineers to develop over the next three years, ahead of AI tool proficiency entirely.

They also point to practical exposure as the strongest signal of readiness today: 70% identify real-world project experience as the top indicator that a junior developer is ready to contribute, followed by internships (56%) and strong performance in practical coding tasks (53%). The skills that will define the next generation of engineers are the ones AI cannot substitute.

### Top 3 Skills for Getting Hired, According to Juniors

Problem-solving and analytical thinking

48%

AI tool proficiency and prompt engineering

18%

Understanding how systems work

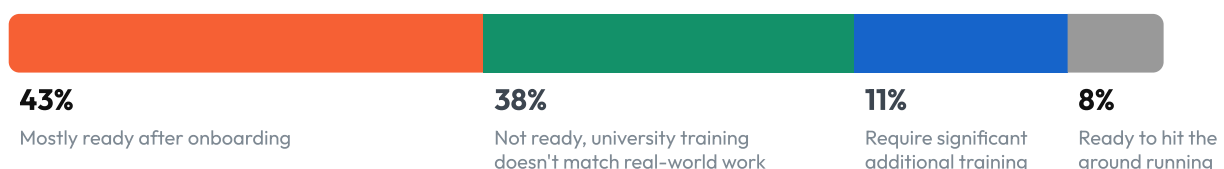
11%

## Academic Preparation and Industry Expectations Remain Out of Step

When senior developers assess graduate readiness, 43% say graduates are mostly ready, with onboarding bridging small gaps, while 11% say they require significant additional training before contributing meaningfully. That divide has an expected source, with 38% of senior developers pointing to a persistent disconnect between what academic programs teach and what the industry requires. Half of junior developers echo this, saying their education should have provided more real-world project experience.

### Graduates' Readiness to Contribute to a Software Team from Day One.

Seniors believe juniors are:



Francisco Anello, director of the Master in Business and Technology at Universidad de San Andrés, sees the same pattern in his academic analysis of the Q2 2026 findings. The gaps juniors and seniors describe don't require changing what is being taught. They are applications of knowledge training programs already provide, but in conditions of scale, ambiguity, and complexity the classroom can rarely replicate. The gap, in his framing, is one of format and exposure, not of content.

That format gap matters now in ways it didn't before. The bar for employers has moved. The question is whether junior developers can evaluate AI-generated output, improve it, and take responsibility for how it performs in production.

"The next generation of developers is learning to produce output without fully owning it. If we don't close that gap now, we have a real problem: where are the senior engineers, architects, and technical leaders of 2035 going to come from? The seniors of the future are the juniors of today. And right now, the people closest to the work are telling us the foundation isn't there yet. "

**Nacho De Marco, CEO and co-founder,  
BairesDev**

As previous editions of the Dev Barometer have reported, engineers are adapting to a new role as auditors and orchestrators of AI-generated work. Seniority itself is being rewritten, because the work is changing at every level. Beyond the technical skills required for a tech job, the energy, creativity, and questioning spirit that junior developers bring will continue to shape the first stages of a world-shaping career.

Dev Barometer Q2 2026, BairesDev. Respondent base = 1,569 developers (1,059 juniors, 510 seniors) across 77 countries.



## About the Dev Barometer Survey

The Dev Barometer is BairesDev's quarterly global survey of software developers. Since 2025, the initiative has collected responses from 4,000+ engineers across 70+ countries. Prior editions have been discussed at World Economic Forum programming in Davos (2026) and covered by outlets including VentureBeat.

For additional information about the Dev Barometer or to request interviews, contact [press@bairesdev.com](mailto:press@bairesdev.com)

The Q2 2026 edition surveyed 1,569 developers — 1,059 juniors and 510 seniors — across 77 countries, examining the gap between university preparation and industry expectations in the AI era. Full methodology available upon request.

## About BairesDev

BairesDev provides nearshore software development services to some of the world's largest and most respected companies, like Abbott, Adobe, Coca-Cola, eBay, Google, HP, and Rolls-Royce. Backed by 4,000+ engineers across LATAM, BairesDev has delivered high-quality software in over 130 industries.

