



CURATED BY
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2026 EDITION

2026 HR Trends & Priorities

*A cross-publisher analysis of the year's HR
agenda*

10

publishers

20

themes

64

trends mapped





2026 HR Trends & Priorities

		AIHR	BCG	David Green	Deloitte	Gartner	i4cp	McKinsey	McLean	Mercer	SHRM	sources / trends
Broad consensus	1 HR Value & Operating Model	AI	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1		9 / 12
	2 Skills & Workforce Agility	AI	1	1	1	1			2		1	7 / 8
	3 Work Redesign & Human-AI Collaboration	AI			1	2	1			1		5 / 6
Emerging	4 AI Adoption & Transformation	AI	2	1			1				1	4 / 5
	5 People Analytics	AI			1		1		1	1		4 / 4
	6 Leadership & Management Development	AI			2	1			1			3 / 4
	7 Organisational Culture				1	1			2			3 / 4
	8 Talent Acquisition & Mobility	AI					1	1			1	3 / 3
	9 Employee Experience, Engagement & Retention	AI			1			1		1		3 / 3
	10 Workforce Models & Flexibility	AI				1	1				1	3 / 3

Reading: sources = publishers raising the theme (the ranking metric); trends = total statements. Themes 11–20 on the next slide; three themes had no 2026 coverage.



What the Data Says

Three readings of the same evidence — what ten publishers said, why they agree, and what to do with it.

01

THE SIGNAL

What did ten publishers actually say?

AI framing went from 11% to 75% in a single year.

Wellbeing fell out of the top twenty. Four of the WEF's five pillars of good work went quiet.

The story is not what the agenda added. It is what it dropped to make room.

02

THE NOISE

Why do ten publishers all say the same thing?

The tell is displacement — a real shift adds, a fad substitutes.

Engagement sits at 20% (Gallup); 59% are financially stressed (PwC). The problems were not solved.

The reports map the conversation, not the workplace. Useful — until you mistake it for the room.

03

THE FILTER

So what do you do with it?

Four of ten board-approved objectives sat inside the consensus top ten.

Four more fell into the 11–20 band. Two did not appear at all.

The map was half right, and nothing in it said which half.

Full analysis — Select a heading above to read each part.



How we built it



20

themes

64

trends

10

sources

3

themes with no coverage

Method

- 1 Collect each publisher's 2026 HR outlook.
- 2 Extract every trend verbatim, in the source's own order.
- 3 Map each to the 20-theme framework (v2) — borderline calls flagged; trends with no home set aside.
- 4 Treat AI as a cross-cutting lens, flagged per trend — not a separate bucket.
- 5 Rank by breadth; visualise the top 10 as a theme × source heatmap.

Ranking metric

Breadth — distinct sources raising a theme (ties broken by total trends). Frequency shows as cell intensity.

Scope

10 sources assessed; McKinsey HR Monitor 2026 added on publication (June 2026).

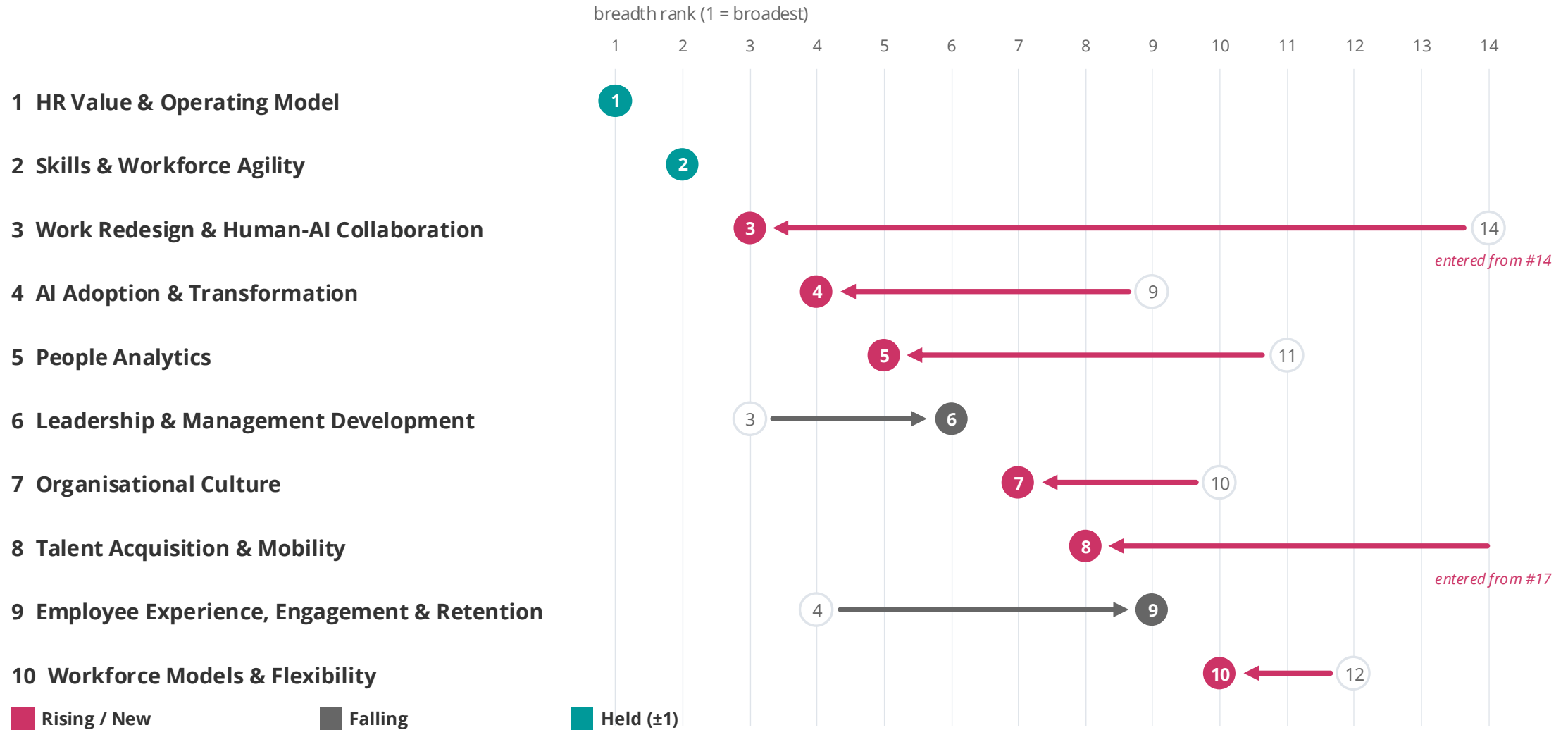
Below the top 10 — the full ranked field

Rank	Theme / topic	sources / trends	Status
11	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	3 / 3	Emerging
12	Strategic Workforce Planning	2 / 2	Emerging
13	Change Management	2 / 2	Emerging
14	Responsible AI, Data & Governance	2 / 2	Emerging
15	Performance Management & Productivity	1 / 1	Single-source
16	Pay, Reward & Benefits	1 / 1	Single-source
17	Sustainability / ESG	1 / 1	Single-source
18	AI in HR	—	No coverage
19	Wellbeing & Resilience	—	No coverage
20	Workforce Demographics & Labour Market	—	No coverage

All 64 trends mapped within the 20-theme framework (v2); ranks 18–20 drew no 2026 coverage. Ties broken by total trends, then framework order.



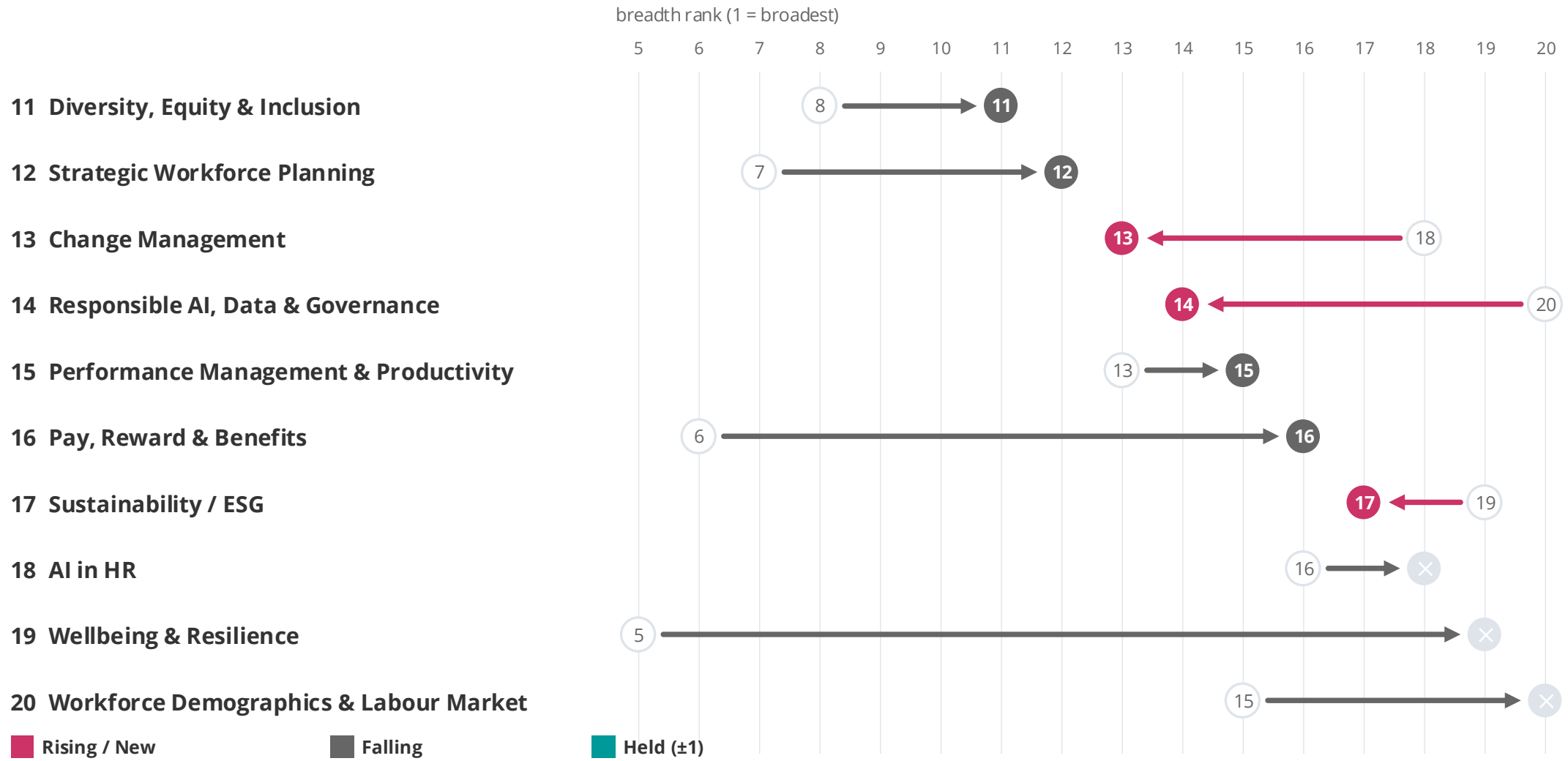
2026 Evolution | Trends 1 to 10



HR Value & Operating Model and Skills hold #1–#2 in both years. Four themes climbed in from outside the 2025 top 10 — Work Redesign (14→3), People Analytics (11→5), Talent Acquisition (17→8) and Workforce Models (12→10) — while EX & Engagement slid (4→9). Ranks are within-year; the 2026 roster adds BCG, so this tracks relative standing, not absolute volume.



2026 Evolution | Trends 11 to 20



The lower half is where the field thinned. Pay, Reward & Benefits fell hardest (6→16) and DEI slipped out of the top 10 (8→11), while Change Management (18→13) and Responsible AI, Data & Governance (20→14) edged up. X marks the three themes with no 2026 coverage at all: AI in HR (from #16), Wellbeing & Resilience (from #5) and Workforce Demographics, Labour Market & Society (from #15). Ranks are within-year; the 2026 roster adds BCG.



Sources



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Methodology Summary

Publisher	Report	Primary Method	Sample Size	Geographies	Respondent Profile
AIHR	AIHR HR Priorities 2026	Secondary synthesis + internal survey	1,500+ HR professionals (internal AI survey); secondary data from multiple external sources	Global (primarily US/European external sources)	HR professionals; secondary data from broader exec surveys
BCG/WFPMA	BCG/WFPMA Creating People Advantage 2026	Proprietary quantitative web survey + regression analysis	n = 7,115	115 countries/administrative regions	HR and business leaders (all seniority levels); 25 industries
Deloitte	Deloitte 2026 Global Human Capital Trends	Quantitative survey (with Oxford Economics) + qualitative interviews	3,000 leaders (core survey); 6,000 workers/managers/executives (supplemental); 50+ executive interviews	15 countries	Business and HR leaders + employees/managers/executives
Gartner	Gartner 2026 Strategic HR Priorities	Annual quantitative CHRO survey	n = 426 CHROs	4 global regions; 23 industries	CHROs exclusively
David Green	David Green 12 Opportunities for HR in 2026	Expert synthesis + community crowdsourcing	N/A (qualitative)	Global	People analytics leaders; CHROs; Digital HR Leaders Podcast network; Insight222 research community
i4cp	i4cp 2026 Priorities & Predictions	Invitation-only executive board input	Not disclosed (C-suite HR leaders)	Global	CHROs, CLTOs, Total Rewards, Talent Acquisition, People Analytics, Future of Work board members
McKinsey	McKinsey HR at a Turning Point / HR Monitor 2026	Annual quantitative benchmark survey	~1,300 HR professionals; ~5,500 employees	10 countries (8 European + US + China)	HR professionals + employees
McLean & Company	McLean & Company HR Trends 2026	Quantitative survey	n = 1,626	Global, multiple industries	HR and leadership respondents
Mercer	Mercer Global Talent Trends 2026	Quantitative multi-stakeholder survey	~12,000 (9,250 employees; 1,650 HR leaders; 825 C-suite; 100 investors)	16 geographies; 16 industries	C-suite executives, HR leaders, employees, investors
SHRM	SHRM 2026 Trends and Predictions	Multiple quantitative surveys (CEO, CHRO, HR professional, worker panels)	116 CEOs; 129 CHROs; 1,856 HR professionals; 2,079 U.S. workers; 2,094 HR professionals (Talent Trends)	Primarily U.S. (global for CHRO survey)	CEOs, CHROs, HR professionals, U.S. workers



WHERE THIS LEAVES YOU

**The trends tell you what everyone
is talking about. Your evidence
*tells you what is true.***

Build on the second; quote the first. The method is in **The Signal, The Noise
and The Filter** — and in the CPO Playbook 2026.

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