HR PRACTICE NEEDS REPORT 2025

The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership

HR Practice Needs Report 2025:
The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership

Preface

The HR Practice Needs Report 2025 emerges from a rigorous exploration of the evolving dynamics within the HR landscape. As practitioners, scholars, and leaders, we find ourselves at a crossroads where tradition meets innovation, and where strategic foresight becomes a critical asset.

This report highlights the competencies, challenges, and strategic imperatives required for HR professionals to thrive. It accentuates the importance of continuous learning, business acumen, and data-driven decision-making. Equally important are the themes of employee well-being, leadership development, and digital transformation.

This report has drawn significant value from the CIPM Body of Knowledge and Competency Framework. It remains the basis for the recommended competencies required for success for each practice area of need. (See https://cipmnigeria.org/cipm-bok/)

As contributors to this work, we believe in the power of collaboration and evidence-based practice. The findings presented here are not merely observations but actionable insights designed to empower HR professionals to lead with impact.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the CIPM community and all participants who contributed to this survey. Your voices have shaped this report, and your dedication continues to inspire innovation in HR practice.

Together, let us harness these insights to build a future-ready HR profession capable of navigating complexity and driving sustainable organisational growth.

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Foreword

The HR Practice Needs Report 2025 represents a pivotal moment in our collective journey as HR professionals. It is a comprehensive exploration of the trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the future of work. As we navigate a world marked by rapid technological advancement, shifting employee expectations, and global complexities, this report serves as an invaluable compass, guiding our strategic priorities and professional development.

At CIPM, we remain committed to advancing the HR profession by promoting innovation, inclusivity, and adaptability. This report underscores the critical role of HR in steering organisations toward sustainable growth through talent acquisition, leadership development, and the integration of digital tools into everyday practice.

I invite every HR practitioner, business leader, and policymaker to reflect on the insights presented here. By leveraging these findings, we can collectively elevate our profession and create workplaces that are resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

Let us embrace the principles of adaptive HR leadership and drive positive transformation across industries. Together, we will ensure that HR remains a strategic partner in shaping the future of work.

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt appreciation goes to the Research and Publications Committee of our Institute led by Professor Funke Amobi, FCIPM. This publication stands as a testament to the exceptional calibre of professionals within our Institute.

A special recognition goes to the HR Practice Needs Report working group for their intellectual brilliance and dedication. This remarkable team includes Dr. Olumuyiwa Oludayo, MCIPM, Dr Funke Medun, MCIPM, Emmanuel Ogungbuyi, ACIPM, Hauwa Mayana, ACIPM. Your commitment has been invaluable.

I would also like to extend a warm thank you to the headquarters team, led by our Registrar and Chief Executive, Ms. Toyin Naiwo, FCIPM whose strategic leadership has enbaled the success of this work in its second round. I also acknowledge the coordinating capabilities of our Deputy Registrar, Mr. Gbenga Odetunde, ACIPM, whose oversight has enhanced the Professional Standards and Development of our Insitiute. Sincere appreciation to Miss Charity Nwaigbo, MCIPM, Technical Assistant to the Committee, for her pivotal role in bringing this second round of the publication to life.

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Disclaimer

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Executive Summary:
HR Practice Needs Report 2025

As HR professionals gear up for 2025, the insights gleaned from 2024 offer essential guidance for navigating the evolving world of work. The HR Practice Needs Report 2025 sheds light on shifting priorities, emerging competencies, and pressing challenges within the profession.

While performance management, digitalisation, and learning and development (L&D) remain pivotal, there is a growing emphasis on employee well-being, leadership development, and the seamless integration of technology into HR functions.

Continuous improvement, business acumen, and effective communication stand out as critical skills for HR leaders. Equally, HR practitioners must grapple with significant business challenges, including talent acquisition and retention, digital transformation, and encouraging workforce diversity.

This report probes into these evolving trends, identifying the competencies essential for success in this transformative landscape.

Emerging Trends and Competency Shifts
A central theme of this year's survey is the rising importance of employee well-being. Organisations are increasingly investing in mental health initiatives, work-life balance programmes, and holistic wellness strategies.
Leadership development also takes centre stage, with businesses seeking leaders capable of guiding diverse teams through periods of change.
The demand for HR professionals who can seamlessly integrate technology into talent management, payroll, and analytics processes is at an all-time high. This calls for upskilling in digital literacy and data-driven decision-making.

Pressing Business Challenges
Talent acquisition and retention remain top concerns. The competitive labour market requires HR to adopt innovative sourcing strategies and robust employee engagement initiatives.
Diversity and inclusion efforts have become non-negotiable, with organisations striving to create environments that reflect the diverse realities of society.
Digital transformation continues to shape HR practices. Beyond automating administrative functions, technology enables more personalised employee experiences, predictive analytics for workforce planning, and efficient performance tracking.

Recommendations for HR Professionals and Leaders

1. Align HR Strategies with Organisational Goals: HR practitioners must ensure that their initiatives support broader business objectives, enabling an adaptable and sustainable workplace culture.

2. Invest in Leadership Development: Equipping leaders with the skills to manage hybrid teams, drive innovation, and inspire others is essential.

3. Enhance Employee Well-being: Prioritising mental health, flexibility, and holistic wellness will improve engagement and productivity.

4. Embrace Digital Transformation: Upskilling HR teams in technology and analytics will enable data-driven decisions and more efficient operations.

5. Encourage Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belongingnes: Building inclusive cultures where all employees feel valued and empowered is crucial for long-term success.

The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership

The 2025 phase of HR marks the dawn of The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership. This era demands that HR professionals navigate complexity with agility while maintaining a steadfast commitment to inclusivity, ethics, and continuous employee development. By embracing adaptability, organisations can nurture resilient workforces prepared for future challenges.

To empower senior leaders, this report includes a dedicated section on leveraging survey insights to drive organisational transformation. Through proactive engagement, HR can position itself as a strategic partner, guiding businesses towards sustainable growth in a rapidly changing world.

By embracing the principles outlined in this report, HR professionals will be well-equipped to lead their organisations through this transformative period and beyond.

Introduction

The transition from 2024 to 2025 presents HR professionals with a pivotal opportunity to reflect on the past year's challenges and achievements while charting a course for emerging priorities. The HR Practice Needs Report 2025 captures these reflections, offering valuable insights into thematic shifts, essential competencies, and actionable strategies to support HR professionals in navigating the evolving workplace landscape.

Context and Evolving Landscape.
The workplace is transforming at an unprecedented pace, shaped by technological advancements, shifting employee expectations, and global challenges. In 2024, HR professionals faced the dual challenge of addressing immediate operational needs while steering strategic initiatives. These efforts have laid the groundwork for the priorities that will define 2025: promoting employee well-being, leveraging digital transformation, and building resilient, future-ready organisations.

Purpose and Value of the Survey
The annual HR Practice Needs Report is designed to provide data-driven insights that empower HR professionals to make strategic decisions and allocate resources more effectively. By identifying emerging trends and competencies, the survey supports HR practitioners in aligning their strategies with dynamic organisational goals and global best practices.

Key Themes and Emerging Priorities
This report offers a comprehensive analysis of the survey findings, highlighting critical themes that are reshaping HR practice:

- Employee Well-being: The importance of holistic wellness strategies, including mental health support and work-life balance initiatives, continues to rise.

- Digital Transformation: The integration of technology into HR functions is essential for improving operational efficiency and enhancing employee experiences.

- Leadership Development: Building leaders who can navigate complexity and inspire diverse teams is a top priority.

- Workforce Resilience: Organisations are focusing on developing agile, adaptable teams capable of thriving in an uncertain environment.

Significance for Stakeholders
This report serves as a vital resource for HR practitioners, business leaders, and policymakers. It enables stakeholders to benchmark practices, identify competency gaps, and align strategies with evolving workforce trends. By leveraging the insights from this survey, organisations can enhance their HR functions and imspire a culture of continuous improvement.

Structure of the Report
The report is structured into eight sections:
1. Methodology: An overview of the survey approach and data collection process.
2. Key Findings: A summary of significant insights from the survey.
3. Thematic Analysis: Exploration of emerging priorities and competencies.
4. Competency Framework: Detailed examination of the skills required for HR success.
5. Business Challenges: Analysis of pressing organisational issues.
6. Social Issues
7. Recommendations: Practical steps for HR professionals and leaders.
8. Conclusion: Reflections on the path forward.

Looking Ahead

The report introduces the concept of The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership, recognising the transformative nature of this period. By embracing adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation, HR professionals can lead their organisations toward sustainable success.

This comprehensive analysis aims to equip senior HR practitioners with the insights and strategies needed to thrive in 2025 and beyond.

Methodology

Survey Design and Deployment:
The survey employed a mixed-method approach, utilising quantitative and qualitative tools to capture diverse perspectives. It was deployed via digital platforms and distributed through CIPM's member network.

Demographics and Size of Respondents:
There were 1,704 respondents in this survey and they included senior, mid-level, and junior HR practitioners across public and private sectors. The survey also represented geographic diversity within Nigeria.

Data Collection and Analysis:
Data were collected over three months and analysed using statistical tools to ensure accuracy and relevance.

Key Findings

Professional Information
- Respondents exhibited varying experience levels, with a majority representing senior HR roles.
- Sectoral representation highlighted a balance across industries, including manufacturing, technology, and public administration.

Institutional, Sectoral, and Industry Insights
- Workforce sizes ranged from small to large-scale organisations, reflecting diverse operational contexts.
- Organisations with higher revenue classes emphasised HR technology adoption and leadership development.

Current and Anticipated HR Practice Areas
- 2025 Priorities: Performance Management (1st), Learning and Development (2nd), and HR Digitalisation (3rd).
- Notable shifts include the rising importance of HR Digitalisation (from 11th in 2024 to 3rd in 2025).

Behavioural Competencies
- Top-rated competencies: Continuous Improvement, Communication, and Valuing People.
- Emerging focus on Business Acumen and Analytical Perspective.

Business Priorities
- 2024 Challenges: Talent Acquisition, Succession Planning, and Employee Engagement.
- 2025 Anticipations: Technology Transformation rises to 2nd, underscoring digital priorities.

Performance Enablers
- Senior management support remains the primary enabler of HR efficiency.
- Increasing reliance on HR technology tools for decision-making and process optimisation.

Emerging Trends
- Social issues: Work-Life Balance, Technology and Remote Work, and Mental Health Awareness dominate HR strategies.

Value Proposition
- 2024 Initiatives: Employee Well-being programmes led in value.
- 2025 Expectations: HR Technology and Automation emerge as a close second.

Thematic Analysis:
Key Themes and Evolving Practice Priorities

1. ***Performance Management: A Persistent Priority***
    Performance management has maintained its position as the most critical HR practice area in both 2024 and 2025. This consistent focus underscores its pivotal role in aligning individual and team contributions with broader organisational objectives. As the dynamics of work evolve, traditional performance appraisal systems are becoming insufficient. Organisations are increasingly adopting agile performance management approaches that emphasise real-time feedback, personalised development plans, and transparent goal-setting. These changes not only improve employee engagement but also enhance organisational agility.
    To remain competitive, HR leaders must embed continuous feedback loops and ensure that performance metrics are tightly aligned with strategic business priorities. Emphasis should be placed on cultivating meaningful performance conversations, empowering managers to act as coaches, and linking performance outcomes to career progression and reward systems.

2. ***Digital Transformation Accelerates HR Innovation***
    The rapid ascent of HR digitalisation from the 11th priority in 2024 to the 3rd in 2025 signals a decisive shift towards technology-driven HR solutions. This transformation reflects a growing recognition of the need to optimise operations, improve decision-making, and create seamless employee experiences. Digital tools, including artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and advanced analytics, are revolutionising how organisations attract, manage, and retain talent.
    HR professionals must champion the integration of AI-driven recruitment, automated workflows, and data analytics to provide insights that inform workforce strategies. Beyond efficiency, these technologies enable personalised employee experiences and predictive analytics, which can help pre-empt workforce challenges.

3. ***Learning and Development (L&D): Building Future-Ready Talent***
    The move of Learning and Development from 3rd to 2nd place highlights a strategic shift towards prioritising workforce adaptability. Organisations increasingly recognise that addressing skills gaps and equipping employees with the competencies needed for tomorrow's challenges is essential for maintaining a competitive edge.
    HR practitioners are tasked with designing learning ecosystems that blend formal training with experiential learning and on-the-job development. Focus areas include enhancing digital literacy, supporting leadership growth, and creating avenues for innovation and problem-solving. Providing accessible and relevant learning opportunities is crucial for sustaining engagement and preparing employees for evolving roles.

4. ***Globalisation and Cross-Cultural Management***
    The rise of Global HR Management from 14th to 9th position reflects the growing importance of managing diverse, geographically dispersed teams. This shift is driven by international expansion and the continued prevalence of remote and hybrid work models.
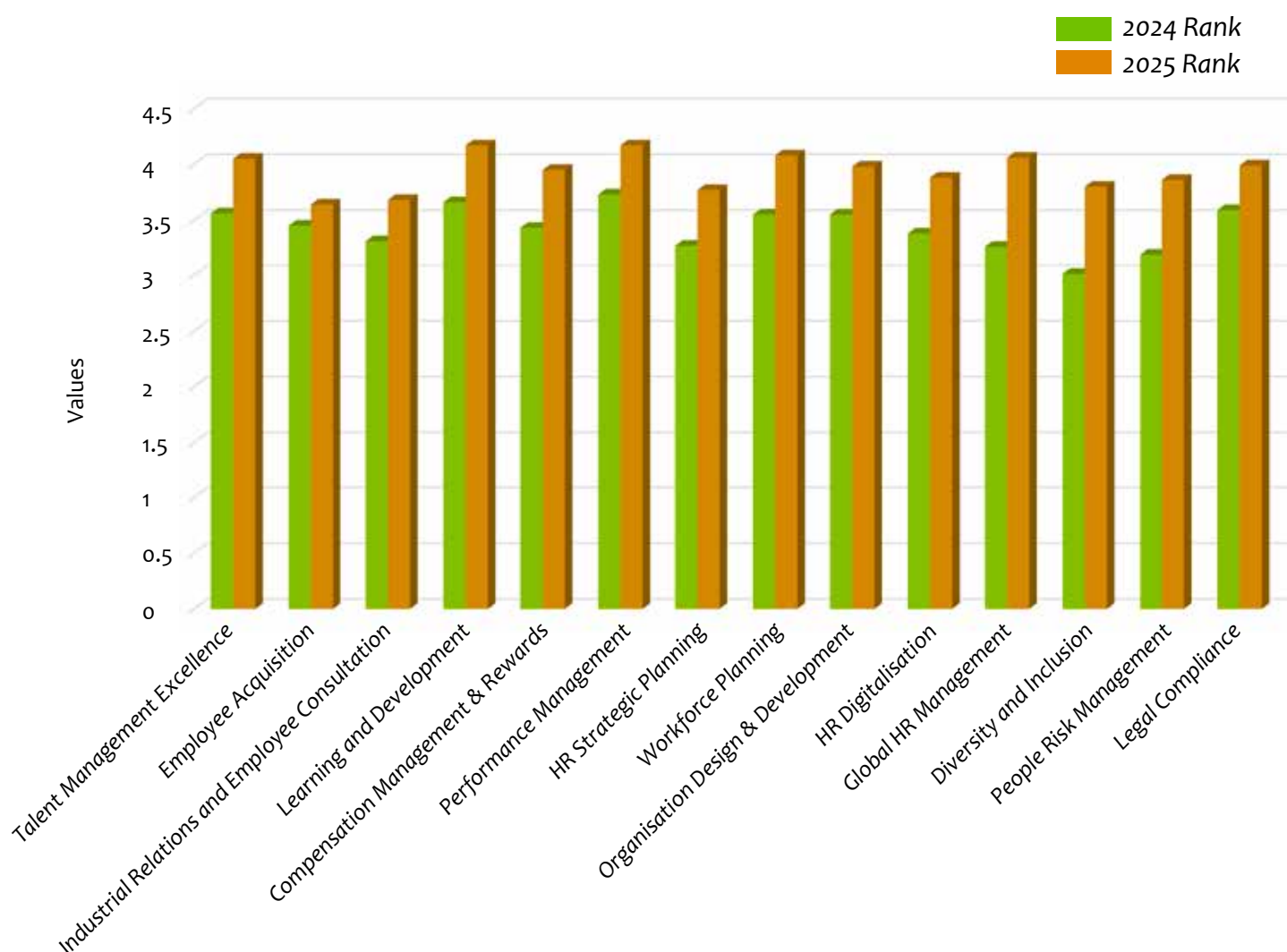   To succeed in this increasingly globalised environment, HR professionals must develop robust strategies for managing cross-border talent, ensuring compliance with international labour laws, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. Building an inclusive culture that respects regional differences while promoting a shared sense of purpose will be vital for organisational cohesion.

5. *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belomgingness: Progress Needed*

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belomgingness (DEI&B) initiatives continue to rank relatively low, indicating that many organisations have yet to fully integrate these principles into their core operations. However, the benefits of prioritising equity and belonging are well-documented—from enhancing creativity and innovation to improving employee engagement and retention.

HR leaders must take deliberate steps to embed (DEI&B) strategies into every aspect of the employee lifecycle, from recruitment to development and promotion. This involves setting measurable goals, holding leaders accountable for progress, and creating safe spaces where diverse voices are heard and valued. By embedding inclusion into organisational culture, businesses can unlock new perspectives and drive sustainable success.

FIG 1: Ranking of HR Practice Areas

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of HR Practices

1. *Performance Management:* Maintains the top priority in both 2024 and 2025, indicating its critical importance to organisations. This could reflect the need for robust systems to evaluate and enhance employee performance amid changing work dynamics.

2. *HR Digitalisation:* Rises significantly from 11th in 2024 to 3rd in 2025. This jump suggests a growing recognition of digital transformation in HR processes, possibly driven by advancements in technology, remote work trends, and the need for data-driven decision-making.

3. *Learning and Development:* Moves from 3rd to 2nd place. This emphasises the increasing focus on upskilling and reskilling employees to adapt to evolving job requirements and industry demands.

4. *Global HR Management:* Climbs from 14th in 2024 to 9th in 2025. This shift could reflect the rising importance of managing global and cross-cultural teams, especially as organisations expand internationally or operate within a globalised economy.

5. *Industrial Relations and Employee Consultation:* Drops from 10th to 14th, indicating a reduced emphasis on traditional labour relations, possibly due to the automation of such functions or a shift towards collaborative and less adversarial employee engagement strategies.

6. *Legal Compliance:* Falls from 2nd in 2024 to 6th in 2025. This could indicate that organisations are streamlining compliance processes or viewing them as less urgent compared to strategic and digital priorities.

7. *Diversity and Inclusion:* Stays relatively low in both years (13th in 2024 and 12th in 2025). This consistency suggests that while important, D&I initiatives may not be receiving as much immediate focus compared to other pressing HR needs.

8. *Employee Acquisition:* Drops from 8th to 13th. This may reflect a shift from hiring new talent to focusing on retaining and developing existing employees, aligning with the increased importance of learning and development.

9. *Broader Implications:*

   - *Shift Towards Strategic and Digital HR:* The prominence of HR Digitalisation and HR Strategic Planning indicates a move towards   leveraging technology and strategic foresight to align HR practices with organisational goals.

   - *Development Over Acquisition:* The rise of Learning and Development and the fall of Employee Acquisition highlight a shift in focus from external talent acquisition to internal capability building.

   - *Global and Cross-Border Focus:* The rise in Global HR Management indicates a growing need to manage geographically dispersed workforces effectively, reflecting globalisation trends.

   - *Deprioritisation of Traditional Areas:* Industrial Relations and Legal Compliance see drops in priority, possibly due to automation, regulatory stability, or a move towards proactive and preventive HR practices.

Competencies for 2025: Strengthening Strategic Capabilities

Continuous Improvement and Business Acumen
Continuous improvement has emerged as the most essential competency for 2025, underscoring the critical need for HR professionals to drive operational efficiency and adapt quickly to changing business environments. This requires building a culture where innovation and iterative progress are embraced across teams and processes.
The rise of business acumen reflects the evolving role of HR as a strategic partner, necessitating a deep understanding of organisational strategy, financial metrics, and market dynamics. HR professionals are increasingly expected to provide insights that shape organisational decisions, moving beyond traditional HR functions.

Communication: A Core Competency
Communication continues to rank as a top priority, highlighting its importance for effective leadership, collaboration, and organisational clarity. HR professionals must develop skills to engage diverse stakeholders, manage complex conversations, and ensure consistent messaging across teams. The strategic use of communication technologies and platforms can further enhance transparency and connection within organisations. By sharpening both verbal and written communication abilities, HR leaders can strengthen relationships and influence organisational culture.

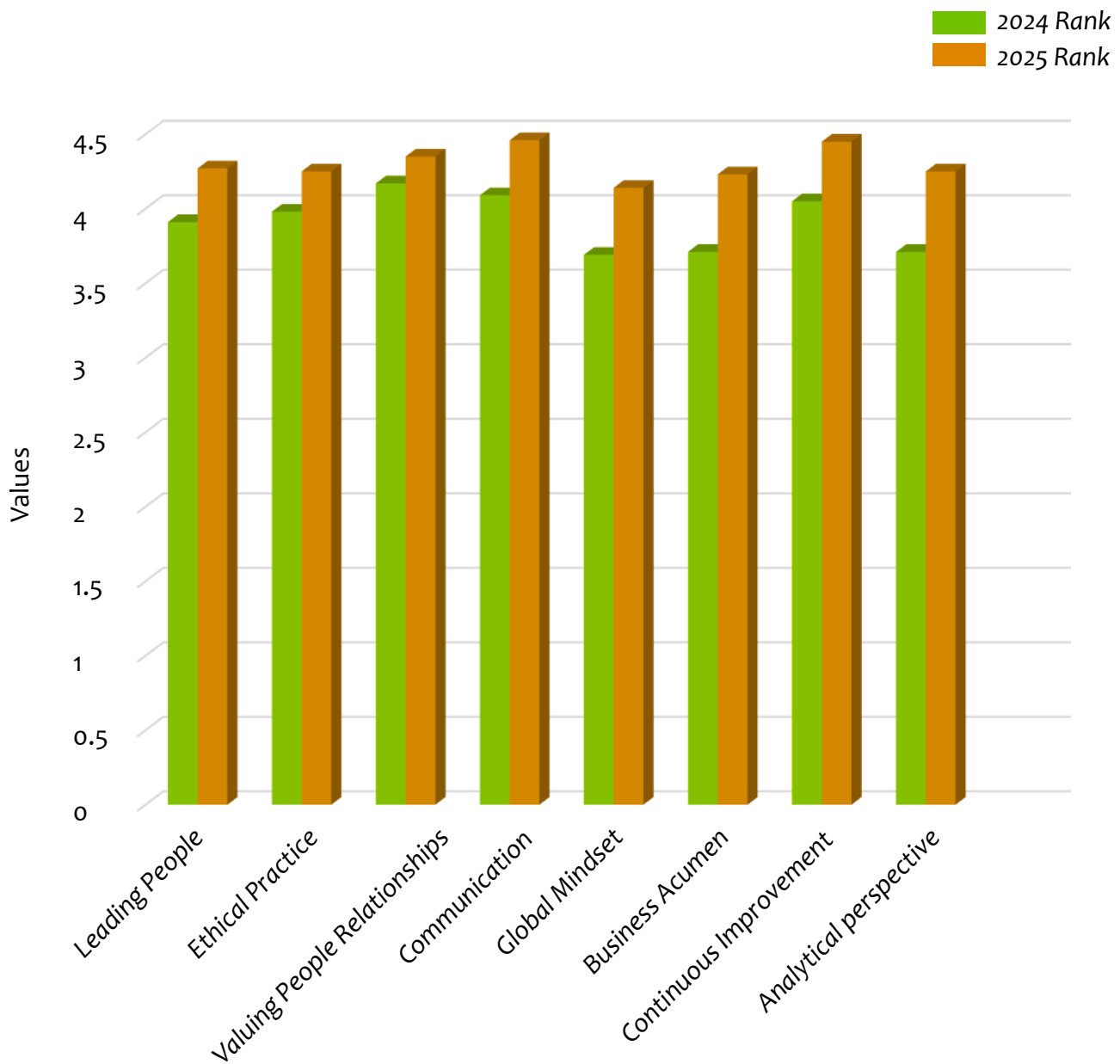*Balancing Analytical and Relational Skills*
The growing importance of analytical skills signals a shift towards data-driven HR practices, where decision-making is informed by trends, workforce analytics, and predictive insights. Yet, maintaining a balance with relational competencies remains crucial.
Understanding and valuing people, building trust, and nurturing positive workplace relationships ensure that organisations do not lose sight of the human element. HR professionals must be adept at interpreting data while maintaining empathy and interpersonal awareness, ensuring that insights are applied thoughtfully.

Addressing Potential Risks
The declining prioritisation of ethical practice and global mindset presents a potential vulnerability for organisations. In an interconnected and increasingly complex global landscape, HR leaders must champion ethical decision-making and cultivate cultural awareness to navigate international operations effectively. Reinforcing these competencies will help organisations mitigate reputational risks, build stakeholder trust, and adapt to global workforce challenges. Ethical leadership and global awareness are not just optional considerations—they are foundational to long-term organisational success.

FIG 2: Ranking of Behavioural Competencies

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of Behavioural Competences

1. *Shift in Priorities:*
   In 2024, Valuing People and Relationships was the top-rated competency, indicating a strong focus on building collaboration and interpersonal connections within organisations.
   In 2025, Continuous Improvement is projected as the most essential, reflecting a shift toward operational efficiency, innovation, and adaptability.

2. *Consistency in Communication:*
   Communication remains a top priority, ranked second in both 2024 and 2025. This highlights its ongoing importance in facilitating collaboration, transparency, and effective leadership.

3. *Emergence of Business Acumen:*
   Business Acumen rises from the lowest rank (8th in 2024) to 5th in 2025. This suggests a growing recognition of the need for HR professionals to align their efforts with organisational financial and strategic goals.

4. *Ethical Practice and Global Mindset Deprioritised:*
   Ethical Practice drops from 4th to 7th, and Global Mindset falls from 6th to 8th. This could indicate that HR professionals believe other competencies are more pressing in the current local or immediate organisational context.

5. *Valuing Relationships Still Significant:*
   While it drops to 3rd in 2025, Valuing People and Relationships remains a critical area, reflecting an enduring emphasis on people-oriented practices despite a growing focus on operational and strategic competencies.

6. *Analytical Perspective Gains Importance:*
   Analytical Perspective moves from 7th to 6th, indicating an increasing emphasis on data-driven decision-making and critical analysis.

Implications for HR Practices:

1. *Adapting to Organisational Needs:*
   The focus on Continuous Improvement and Busines s Acumen suggests that HR professionals are aligning their roles with the strategic and performance-driven priorities of organisations.

2. *Balancing Relationships with Strategy:*
   While relational competencies remain important, there's a clear shift toward strategic and analytical skills, highlighting the dual focus on people and performance.

3. *Communication as a Core Competence:*
   Its consistent ranking reinforces the need for HR professionals to maintain strong communication skills as a foundational competency for all other behaviors.

4. *Potential Risks:*
   The lower prioritisation of Global Mindset and Ethical Practice might be a reaction to immediate priorities but could expose organisations to risks if these areas are neglected.

Emerging Business Challenges

1. ***Talent Acquisition and Retention: The Unyielding Challenge***
   Attracting and retaining top talent continues to be a significant concern for organisations. Beyond offering competitive remuneration, businesses must adopt creative approaches to meet evolving employee expectations. These include implementing flexible work arrangements, designing personalised career development pathways, and creating environments that meaningfully engage employees. Addressing these priorities will be crucial to sustaining a high-performing and motivated workforce.

2. ***Digital Transformation: A Strategic Imperative***
   Digital transformation has moved to the forefront, projected to be the second most pressing priority by 2025. The adoption of advanced HR technologies such as automation, analytics, and artificial intelligence is essential for streamlining HR processes and enabling more strategic decision-making. Organisations must prepare their workforces for these changes by investing in upskilling initiatives.
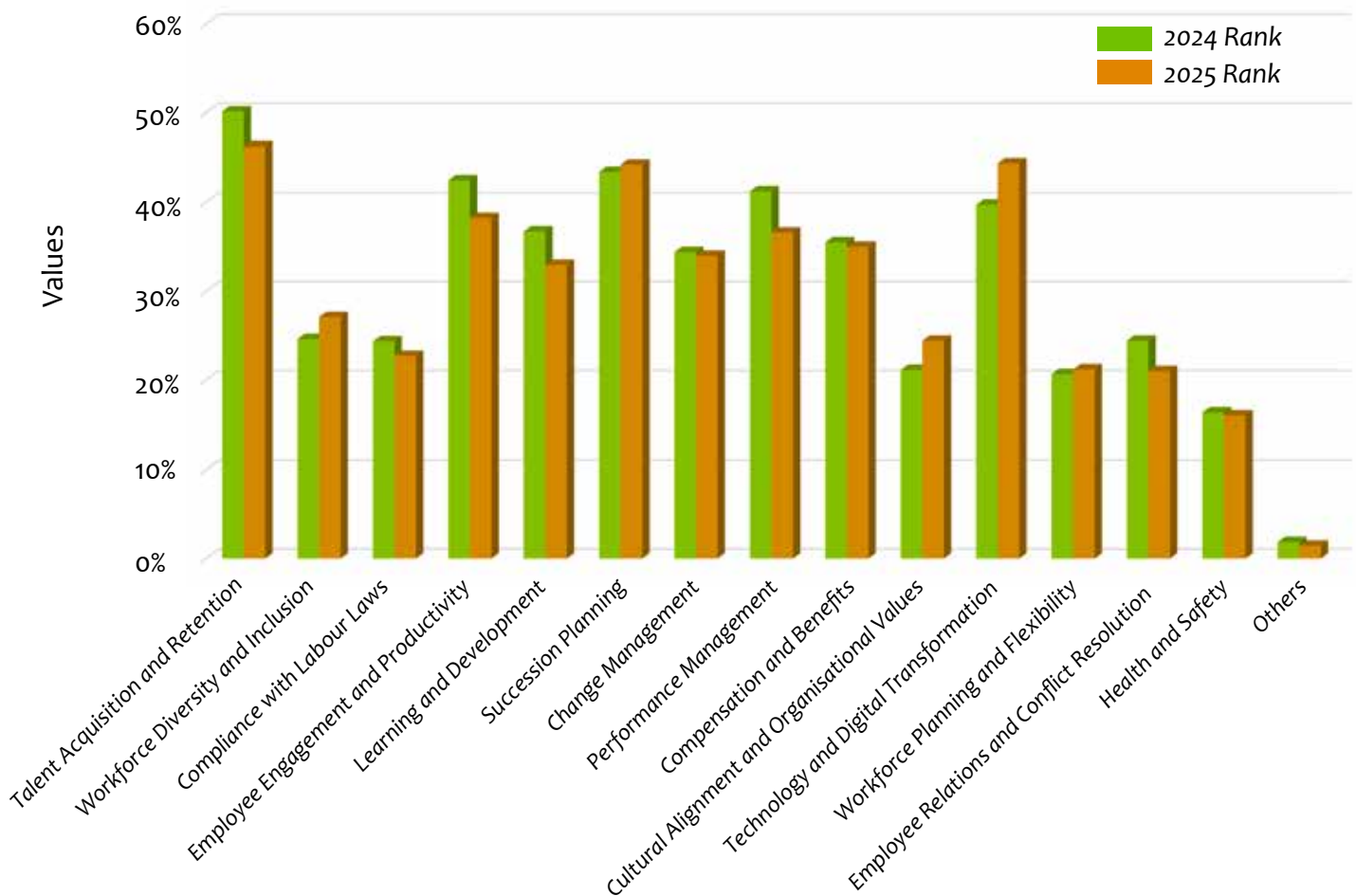
3. ***Leadership Development: Building Organisational Resilience***
   Effective leadership remains a cornerstone of organisational success. Succession planning and leadership development programmes are critical for navigating leadership transitions and maintaining organisational continuity. Targeted development initiatives can help identify high-potential talent and equip future leaders.

4. ***Diversity, Cultural Alignment, and Employee Experience***
   As workforces become increasingly diverse, maintaining cultural cohesion while promoting inclusion is a growing challenge. Organisations that succeed in aligning their culture with inclusive practices will not only enhance employee engagement but also gain a competitive advantage. Embracing diverse perspectives leads to more innovative problem-solving and strengthens the overall employee experience, ensuring people feel valued and empowered in their roles.

FIG 3: Ranking of Business Issues and Challenges

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of Business Issues and Challenges

1. **Consistency of Top Challenges:**
   "Talent Acquisition and Retention" is ranked as the most critical issue for both 2024 and 2025. This highlights a persistent struggle in attracting and retaining skilled talent, likely due to competitive markets, skill shortages, or evolving workforce expectations.

2. **Rising Importance of Technology and Digital Transformation:**
   In 2024, this issue ranked 5th but is projected to rise to 2nd place in 2025. This suggests growing recognition of the need to integrate technology to streamline HR processes, enhance employee experience, and remain competitive in a digitally evolving business environment.

3. **Stable Importance of Succession Planning:**
   "Succession Planning" maintains a high ranking (2nd in 2024 and 3rd in 2025), reflecting ongoing concerns about leadership pipeline readiness and organisational sustainability.

4. **Sustained Focus on Employee Engagement and Productivity:**
   Ranked 3rd and 4th respectively for 2024 and 2025, this issue underscores its continued relevance as organisations aim to boost morale, reduce turnover, and drive performance.

5. **Performance Management and Learning and Development:**
   These issues maintain mid-tier importance, emphasising the need for continuous workforce development and effective mechanisms to evaluate and enhance performance.

6. **Emerging Priority for Change Management:**
   Ranked 8th in both years, "Change Management" signifies its growing role as organisations adapt to rapid changes in technology, workforce dynamics, and market conditions.

7. **Deprioritisation of Some Challenges:**
   Issues like "Employee Relations and Conflict Resolution," "Compliance with Labour Laws," and "Health and Safety" are ranked lower, suggesting these are currently well-managed or perceived as less critical compared to others.

8. **Cultural Alignment and Organisational Values:**
   Its slight rise (from 12th to 10th) in 2025 projections indicates an increasing focus on building a strong organisational culture amidst diverse and remote work settings.

Strategic Implications for HR Professionals:

1. **Talent Strategy:** Organisations need to implement comprehensive strategies, including competitive compensation, flexible work arrangements, and targeted upskilling programmes, to address the persistent talent acquisition and retention challenges.

2. **Digital Readiness:** The growing emphasis on digital transformation requires HR to lead efforts in adopting AI, HR analytics, and digital onboarding tools to enhance efficiency and decision-making.

3. **Succession and Leadership Development:** Structured leadership development programmes should be prioritised to ensure smooth transitions and minimise disruptions caused by leadership gaps.

4. **Employee Experience:** Maintaining a focus on engagement and productivity is vital. HR should explore innovative recognition programmes, wellness initiatives, and career development opportunities.

5. **Change Management Frameworks:** Proactive strategies for managing change—emphasising communication, training, and stakeholder engagement—are essential to help employees adapt to evolving organisational goals.

6. **Workforce Diversity and Inclusion:** Although ranked mid-tier, initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion must remain integral to HR policies to build resilient and innovative teams.

Social Issues Shaping HR Practices

1. ***Prioritising Work-Life Balance and Mental Health***
   Work-life balance and mental health awareness remain the top social concerns, emphasising the importance of employee well-being in enhancing productivity and satisfaction.
   In today's fast-paced work environment, employee well-being has moved to the forefront. Work-life balance is no longer a luxury but a necessity for maintaining productivity, job satisfaction, and retention.
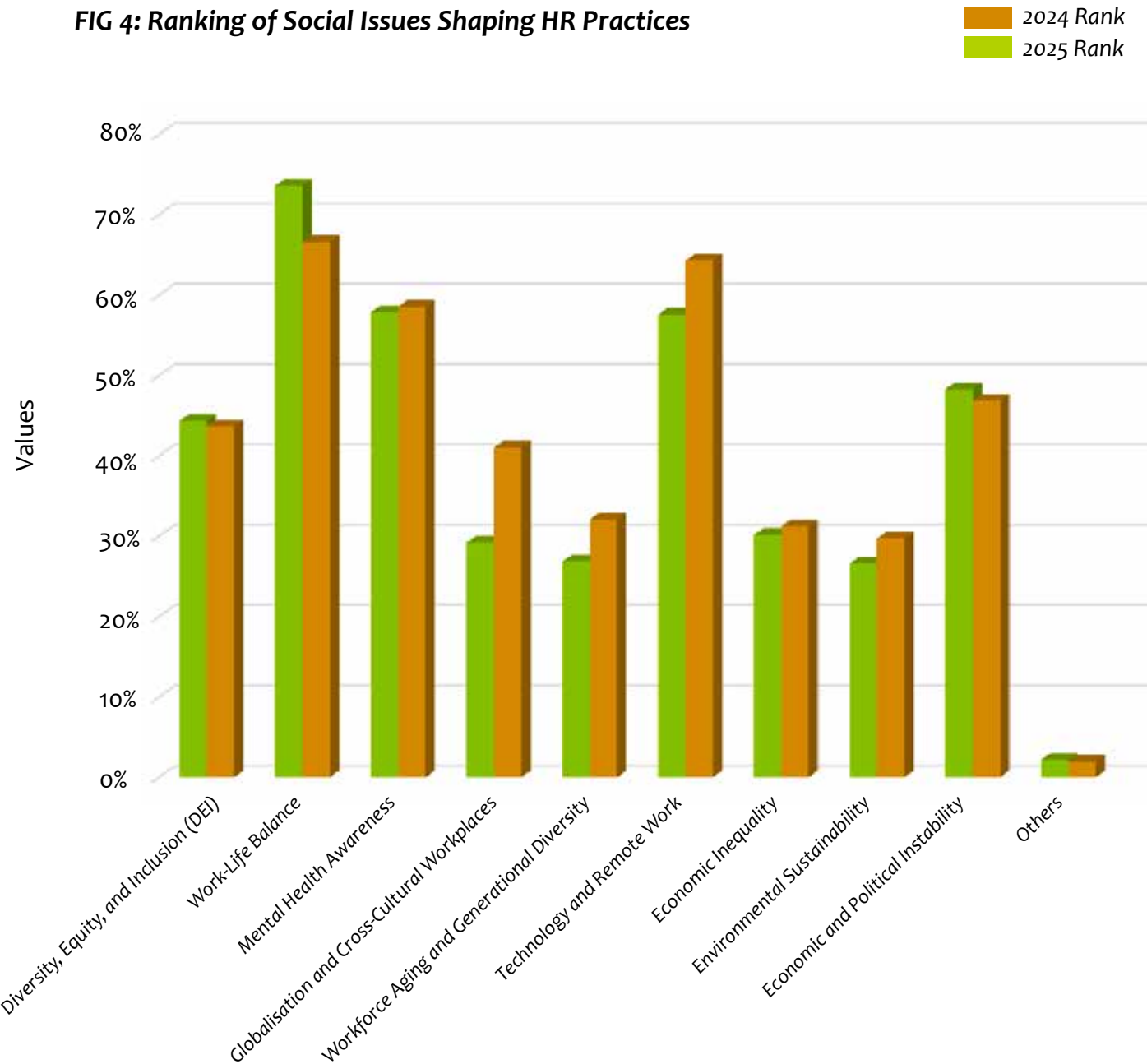
   As work pressures intensify, mental health concerns are also becoming more prominent. HR practices must address this by creating an environment that supports emotional well-being, offering flexibility, and providing resources for mental health. Encouraging open conversations about mental health, while reducing stigma, is crucial. A healthy workforce is not only more engaged but also more resilient and innovative. Therefore, HR's role in creating supportive policies—such as flexible working hours, mental health days, and stress management programmes—is vital to sustaining long-term employee satisfaction and company success.

2. ***Adapting to Technology and Remote Work***
   The rising influence of technology and remote work reflects the evolving nature of workplace dynamics. HR departments are tasked with ensuring that employees, whether remote or hybrid, remain connected, productive, and engaged. Embracing technology is not just about providing employees with the right tools; it's also about reimagining how collaboration and communication take place across teams.

   HR strategies should focus on equipping employees with digital literacy skills and encouraging a culture of accountability. Managers also need support in navigating this transition, including how to lead remote teams effectively. It's not only about remote work tools but also ensuring a sense of community and maintaining the organisation's culture across digital platforms. A well-structured hybrid work model, underpinned by robust digital infrastructure, will drive both productivity and employee satisfaction in this new era.

FIG 4: Ranking of Social Issues Shaping HR Practices

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of Social Issues Shaping HR Practices

1. **Continuity of Key Issues**
   - Work-Life Balance remains the top-ranked social issue influencing HR work, underscoring its continued importance as organisations strive to balance employee well-being with productivity demands.

   - Mental Health Awareness and Technology and Remote Work also hold prominent positions, reflecting ongoing concerns about employee mental health and the evolving workplace dynamics shaped by technological advancements and hybrid work models.

2. **Technology's Increasing Impact**
   - In 2024, Technology and Remote Work ranked third, but HR practitioners foresee its growing significance in 2025, ranking it second. This suggests a deepening integration of technology in workforce management and a need for HR to adapt to the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation.

3. **Stability of Economic and Political Influences**
   - Economic and Political Instability remains a significant concern, ranking fourth in both years. This stability indicates that macroeconomic and political factors continue to impact organisational operations and workforce management, especially in regions facing economic uncertainties or geopolitical shifts.

4. **Evolving Perspectives on Diversity**
   - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) maintains its mid-tier position, suggesting consistent efforts to create inclusive workplaces but potentially indicating that other issues, like work-life balance and mental health, may overshadow it in urgency or visibility.

5. **Economic Inequality and Environmental Sustainability**
   - Economic Inequality and Environmental Sustainability are ranked lower, implying that while important, they might not be perceived as immediate HR priorities. However, these issues could gain prominence as global socio-economic and environmental challenges intensify.

6. **Globalisation and Cross-Cultural Workplaces**
   - The ranking of Globalisation and Cross-Cultural Workplaces remains relatively steady, reflecting the enduring relevance of managing a diverse and dispersed workforce in an increasingly globalised world.

7. **Workforce Aging and Generational Diversity**
   - The consistent ranking of Workforce Aging and Generational Diversity highlights ongoing efforts to address generational differences and prepare for the demographic shifts impacting the workplace.

These trends suggest a need for HR to adopt adaptive strategies that integrate technology, prioritise employee well-being, and address socio-economic changes while championing an inclusive and sustainable workplace culture.

Performance Enablers of HR Practice

Effective HR practices are not simply the result of strategic planning but are heavily influenced by certain performance enablers. These enablers ensure that HR functions are not only efficient but also aligned with organisational goals. Two crucial enablers stand out: senior management support and the increasing reliance on HR technology tools.

1. *Senior Management Support as the Primary Enabler of HR Efficiency*
   The role of senior management in enabling HR efficiency cannot be overstated. Their support provides the foundation upon which HR can drive the organisation's talent strategy, shape its culture, and improve workforce outcomes. When senior leaders prioritise HR initiatives and demonstrate a commitment to human capital management, it sends a strong message to the rest of the organisation about the importance of HR as a strategic function.

   Senior management's involvement starts with understanding the value of HR to the business. This requires more than just allocating resources; it means integrating HR into key business decisions and making HR practices central to organisational objectives. For example, when senior leaders champion leadership development programmes, promote diversity and inclusion, or invest in employee well-being, they directly contribute to the creation of a work environment that attracts and retains talent.

   Support from senior management also ensures that HR is empowered to adopt innovative practices, such as flexible work arrangements or comprehensive performance management systems, without encountering resistance. Furthermore, their backing is crucial when it comes to securing funding for HR initiatives and overcoming any organisational inertia that may hinder progress. When senior management views HR not as a cost centre but as a strategic partner, it paves the way for HR to implement long-term, impactful changes.

2. *Increasing Reliance on HR Technology Tools for Decision-Making and Process Optimisation*
   In the modern workplace, technology plays an indispensable role in shaping HR practices. The reliance on HR technology tools to optimise processes and inform decision-making is accelerating. These tools are enabling HR departments to move beyond traditional, manual methods to more streamlined, data-driven practices.

   HR technology tools, such as AI-powered recruitment platforms, learning management systems, and employee engagement software, help automate routine tasks, reducing administrative burdens. By automating repetitive activities, HR professionals can focus on more strategic activities like talent development and workforce planning. For instance, AI-driven recruitment tools can sift through large volumes of resumes, identify top candidates, and even conduct initial interviews, allowing HR teams to speed up the hiring process while maintaining quality.

   Moreover, HR analytics tools provide real-time insights into employee performance, engagement, and retention. These insights are invaluable for decision-making, as they allow HR leaders to identify trends, measure the effectiveness of programmes, and make data-driven adjustments. For example, if engagement scores drop, HR can quickly identify the root causes and implement targeted interventions. Predictive analytics, another key feature of HR technology, can anticipate future workforce needs, from skills gaps to turnover rates, helping organisations proactively plan for the future.

The integration of technology into HR is not just about increasing efficiency; it's about enabling more strategic, informed decisions. Technology tools create transparency, facilitate communication, and ensure that HR decisions are based on accurate, up-to-date information. For instance, cloud-based HR systems allow employees and managers to access information on performance, benefits, and training opportunities in real-time, creating a more agile and responsive workforce.
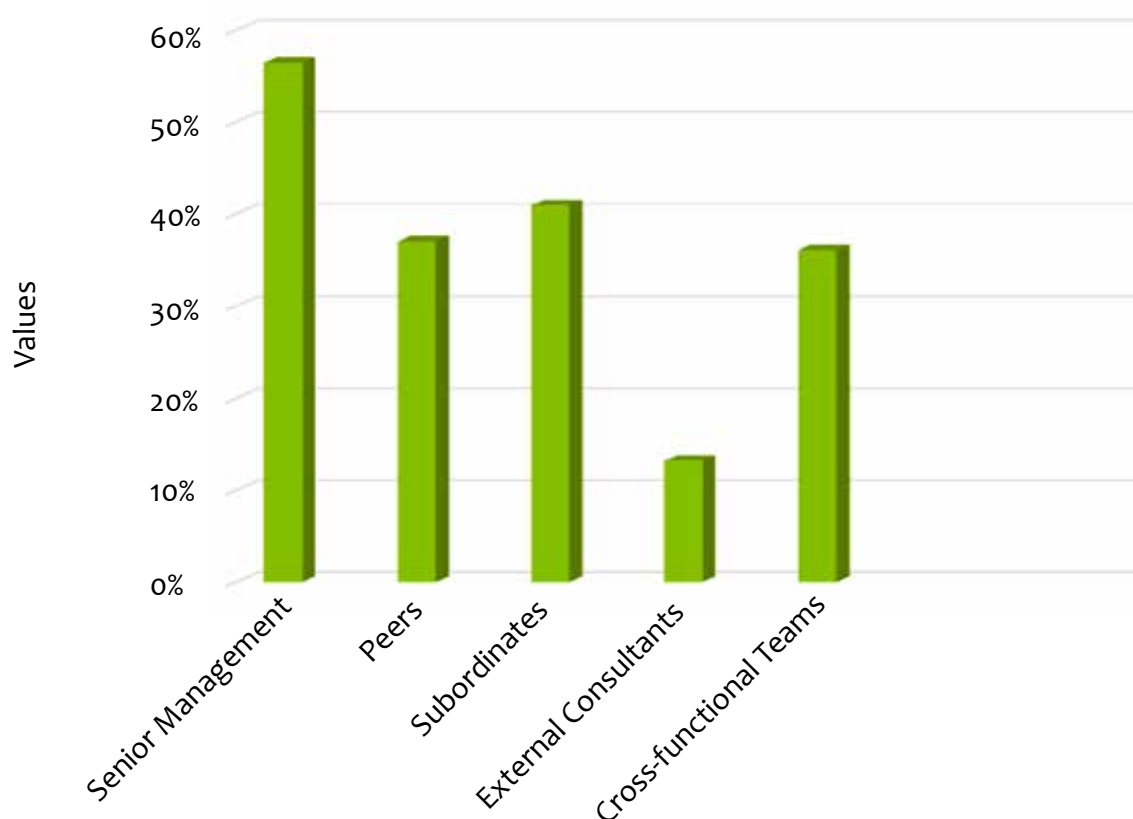
Aligning Both Top Enablers for Maximum Impact
The performance enablers of senior management support and HR technology are not isolated. They work in tandem to drive HR efficiency and effectiveness. Senior management support lays the groundwork for HR to embrace and implement technology solutions, while HR technology tools enable data-driven decision-making and process optimisation that senior leaders can leverage to make informed business decisions.

For example, when senior leaders invest in HR technologies, they demonstrate a commitment to improving HR's capacity to support the business. Similarly, when HR professionals leverage these technologies to optimise talent management and performance processes, they deliver valuable insights to senior management that directly influence strategic planning.

By aligning these two performance enablers—senior management support and the adoption of HR technology—organisations can build a future-ready HR function that drives business outcomes and enables a culture of continuous improvement. These enablers not only improve operational efficiency but also ensure that HR becomes a key driver of organisational success, equipped to respond to the evolving needs of the business and its employees.

FIG 5: Ranking of Performance Enablers of HR Practice in 2024

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of Performance Enablers

1. **Primary Dependence on Senior Management:**
   Senior management is the top-ranked source of professional help for HR professionals in 2024. This reflects the critical role of organisational leadership in shaping HR strategies, providing strategic direction, and enabling resource allocation. It also suggests that HR professionals regard senior management as the primary authority for resolving complex or organisational-level challenges, reinforcing the alignment of HR practices with corporate objectives.

2. **Significant Contributions from Subordinates:**
   Subordinates are ranked second, indicating the growing importance of inclusive leadership within HR functions. This suggests HR professionals value the perspectives and contributions of their team members, which may encourage innovation, enhance team engagement, and provide grassroots-level insights into operational challenges. This reliance on subordinates also underscores the importance of delegation and collaborative problem-solving within HR practice.

3. **Critical Collaboration with Peers:**
   The third-place ranking of peers highlights the importance of horizontal collaboration among HR professionals. Peer networks are often instrumental in sharing knowledge, benchmarking practices, and exchanging experiences to navigate similar challenges. This ranking indicates that HR professionals view peer interaction as a vital resource for professional growth and operational effectiveness.

4. **Supportive Role of Cross-Functional Teams:**
   Cross-functional teams rank fourth, illustrating their supportive but less central role in providing professional assistance. HR professionals likely engage with cross-functional teams for specific projects or initiatives, such as workforce planning, diversity programmes, or organisational change management. While valuable, these interactions may be more situational and less frequent compared to reliance on immediate HR networks or senior leadership.

5. **Limited Reliance on External Consultants:**
   External consultants are the least ranked source of help, which may reflect several factors:

   - **Cost Sensitivity:** Organisations may be prioritising internal resources over the expense of engaging external expertise.

   - **Preference for Institutional Knowledge:** HR professionals might prefer insights from individuals familiar with their organisational culture and dynamics.

   - **Specialised Use of Consultants:** External consultants may be engaged only for high-level strategic initiatives or niche areas where internal expertise is insufficient, making their role supplementary rather than primary.
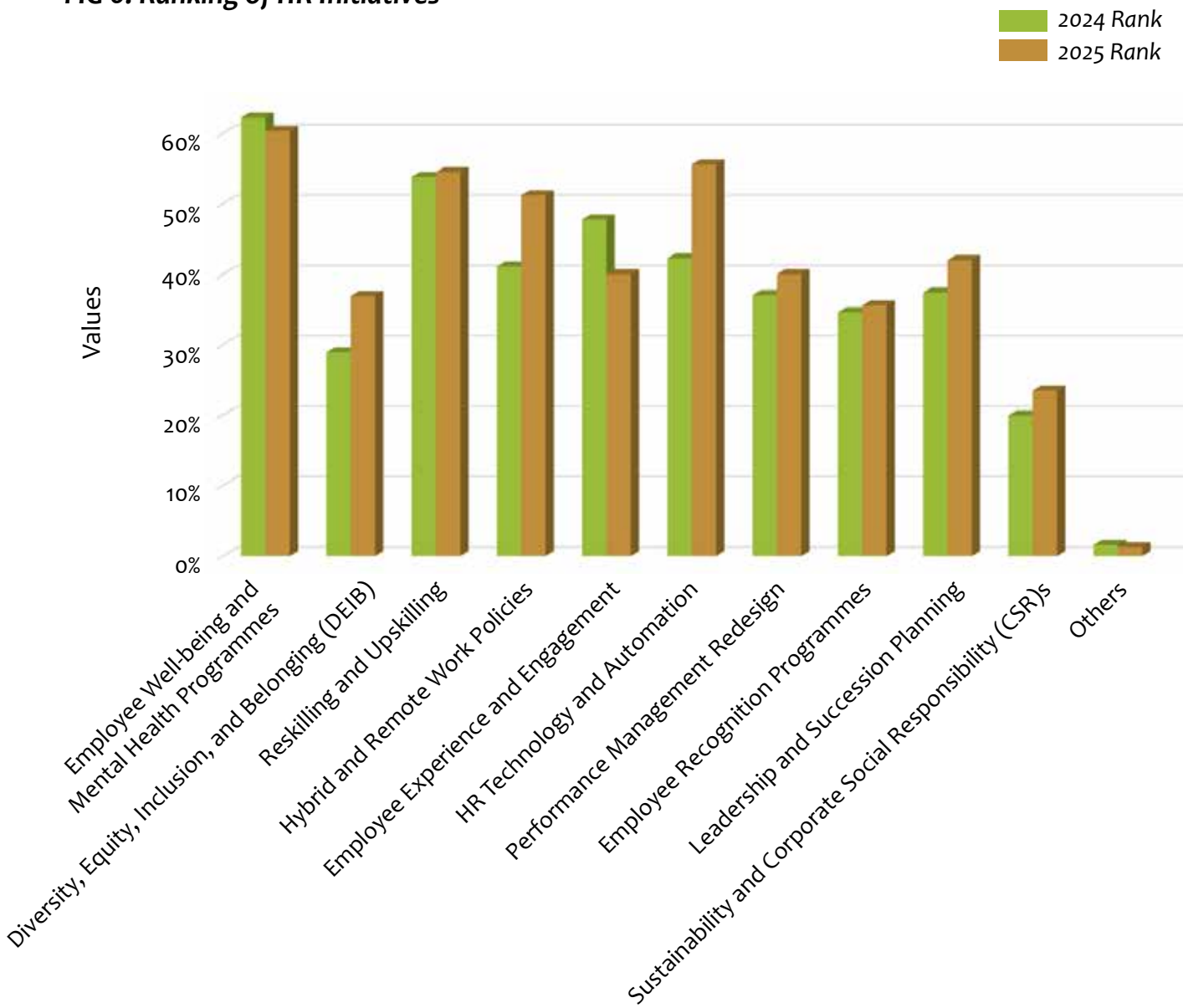
   The survey responses suggest a strong internal focus among HR professionals when seeking professional assistance. Senior management and subordinates form the backbone of their support system, while peers provide essential collaboration and networking opportunities. External consultants, though valuable, appear to serve a more specialised and situational purpose. This reliance on internal stakeholders aligns with a trend toward maximising organisational resources, engendering collaboration, and leveraging institutional knowledge to address HR challenges effectively.

HR Initiatives to Target for 2025

The survey showed that employee well-being, reskilling, and HR technology remain central to HR strategies. Technology, hybrid work, and leadership planning are gaining traction for 2025 while Employee recognition and CSR initiatives are seen as less immediate priorities.

The rankings below reflect a balance between addressing immediate operational needs and preparing for long-term workforce transformations.

FIG 6: Ranking of HR Initiatives

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

Discussion on Ranking of HR Initiatives

The responses provide meaningful insights into the evolving priorities and expectations of HR professionals in Nigeria. Below are key inferences drawn from the data:

1. **Consistency in the Top Priority: Employee Well-being and Mental Health**
   Employee Well-being and Mental Health Programmes ranked #1 in both 2024 and the anticipated 2025 rankings. This highlights a sustained focus on employee wellness, likely driven by the lingering effects of global disruptions (e.g., the pandemic) and growing awareness of mental health's impact on productivity and retention.

2. **Increasing Value of HR Technology and Automation**
   HR Technology and Automation moved up from #4 in 2024 to #2 in anticipated 2025 initiatives. This upward trend suggests organisations are recognising the role of technology in streamlining HR processes, enhancing efficiency, and addressing challenges in a hybrid workforce. It also reflects a push towards digital transformation in the HR landscape.

3. **Continued Emphasis on Reskilling and Upskilling**
   Reskilling and Upskilling maintained its high ranking, moving from #2 in 2024 to #3 in 2025. This underscores the importance of preparing employees for future roles and adapting to technological and market shifts, with a clear emphasis on workforce adaptability.

4. **Employee Experience and Engagement: Lower Priority in 2025**
   Employee Experience and Engagement dropped from #3 in 2024 to #6 in 2025. While still valued, this drop suggests organisations may perceive other initiatives, such as HR technology, hybrid work policies, and leadership planning, as more pressing for the coming year. The shift might also indicate that employee engagement is now integrated into broader organisational strategies.

5. **The Rise of Hybrid and Remote Work Policies**
   Hybrid and Remote Work Policies rose from #5 in 2024 to #4 in 2025. The increase reflects the normalisation and optimisation of hybrid work arrangements as part of long-term HR strategies, signaling a focus on maintaining flexibility and work-life balance.

6. **Leadership and Succession Planning Gains Importance**
   Leadership and Succession Planning climbed one spot, from #6 in 2024 to #5 in 2025. This shift suggests an increased focus on developing strong leadership pipelines, likely influenced by the challenges of navigating volatile business environments and preparing for future organisational needs.

7. **Shift in Priority for DEIB Initiatives**
   Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) moved from #9 in 2024 to #8 in 2025. The modest rise indicates a growing awareness of the importance of DEIB but suggests it is not yet considered as critical as other initiatives like well-being or technology.

8. **Sustainability and CSR Remain a Low Priority**
   Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility consistently ranked #10 in both years. While important, these initiatives appear to be deprioritised in favour of more immediate, operationally impactful strategies. This may indicate a need for greater advocacy or alignment with core business objectives.

9. *Employee Recognition Deprioritised*

   Employee Recognition Programmes dropped from #8 in 2024 to #9 in 2025. This suggests a potential shift away from formal recognition programmes toward broader initiatives that inherently lead to employee satisfaction and engagement, such as hybrid work or well-being programmes.

10. *Performance Management Remains Steady*

    Performance Management Redesign remained at #7 in both years. Organisations continue to value refining performance management systems, though it has not seen the dramatic shifts observed in technology or leadership planning.

Strategic Recommendations for 2025:
HR Practitioners, Executives, and Organisations

1. **Strategic Recommendations for HR Practitioners**

    HR professionals play a pivotal role in driving organisational success by ensuring that the workforce is well-equipped, motivated, and aligned with business goals. To stay ahead, HR must:

    - **Embrace Digital Transformation.** HR professionals should prioritise technology training to ensure effective use of digital tools. Investing in HR technology enhances process efficiency, enables data-driven decision-making, and improves the employee experience. Familiarity with AI-driven recruitment tools, performance management systems, and predictive analytics will empower HR to make informed decisions that align with business objectives.

    - **Drive Employee Well-Being Initiatives.** It is essential to prioritise holistic well-being programmes that address mental health, physical health, and work-life balance. By offering comprehensive support and resources, HR can significantly improve employee engagement and retention. HR should advocate for policies that encourage flexible work arrangements and provide mental health support to help employees maintain a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives.

    - **Develop Strategic Talent Management Frameworks.** To navigate future challenges, HR must develop and implement frameworks for upskilling, reskilling, and performance management. This involves identifying emerging skills in the industry and aligning training programmes to address these needs. Additionally, HR professionals should advocate for leadership development initiatives, ensuring a pipeline of talent ready to step into strategic roles.

2. **Strategic Recommendations for Executives**

    Executives play a critical role in steering the organisation towards sustainable growth and success. By embracing the following strategies, they can ensure the business remains competitive and resilient:

    - **Champion HR Digitalisation.** Executives should invest in advanced HR technologies to automate routine tasks, enhance data insights, and improve the overall employee experience. Technology adoption will streamline processes, allowing HR to focus on more strategic initiatives. Cutting-edge tools such as AI-powered recruitment and predictive analytics will allow executives to make more informed decisions about talent management and performance.

    - **Encourage a Culture of Continuous Improvement**. Executives should embed a growth mindset within the organisation, encouraging innovation, adaptability, and efficiency. By creating an environment where employees are empowered to share ideas, challenge the status quo, and seek constant improvement, organisations will be better equipped to meet future challenges and drive innovation.

    - **Prioritise Employee Well-Being.** Allocating resources to mental health and well-being programmes is a critical investment in the organisation's success. Executives should ensure that wellness initiatives are holistic and inclusive, offering support for both physical and mental health. Flexible work policies, career development opportunities, and employee assistance programmes will help retain top talent and improve engagement.

- **Build Leadership Development Pipelines.** To ensure long-term success, executives should implement structured succession planning and mentorship programmes. Identifying potential leaders early and providing them with tailored development pathways ensures a strong leadership pipeline and smooth transitions during periods of change.

- **Integrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEI&B) into Strategy.** Executives must prioritise the integration of DEI principles into the organisation's culture and strategic objectives. Promoting diversity across all levels strengthens collaboration, sparks innovation, and enhances problem-solving. DEI should be embedded in recruitment, talent management, and employee engagement strategies.

3. *Strategic Recommendations for the Organisation*
For organisations to thrive in 2025 and beyond, they must focus on the following key areas that align with both business needs and employee aspirations:

- **Invest in Digital Tools and Analytics.** Organisations should deploy advanced digital tools to streamline HR processes, such as AI-driven recruitment and real-time performance management systems. Predictive analytics can help HR departments make data-informed decisions, enhance productivity, and improve workforce planning.

- **Enhance Learning and Development Programmes.** Organisations should invest in dynamic training programmes that align with future skills needs and industry demands. This includes upskilling and reskilling efforts, with a particular focus on leadership training and creating a culture of lifelong learning. Developing learning pathways that are adaptable to the fast-evolving business landscape will ensure employees remain competitive.

- **Strengthen Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belongingness (DEI&B) Efforts.** To create a truly equitable workplace, organisations must develop actionable plans that support D&I initiatives. This involves not only recruiting diverse talent but also cultivating an inclusive culture where all employees feel valued and heard. Organisations should set measurable goals for diversity and regularly track progress to ensure meaningful outcomes.

- **Prioritise Employee Well-Being.** Holistic well-being programmes should be at the heart of organisational strategy. This includes offering comprehensive support for mental health, promoting physical wellness, and ensuring that employees have access to work-life balance resources. A focus on well-being will lead to improved engagement, retention, and overall employee satisfaction.

- **Ensure Clear and Effective Communication.** Building robust communication frameworks is essential for promoting transparency, trust, and alignment across all levels of the organisation. Leaders must be trained to communicate effectively, ensuring that they convey clear messages, listen actively to employee concerns, and engage in open dialogue that reinforces the organisation's values and vision.

These strategic recommendations for HR practitioners, executives, and organisations provide a clear roadmap for navigating the challenges and opportunities of 2025. By aligning talent management, digital transformation, leadership development, and employee well-being, organisations can create a resilient, forward-thinking workforce that drives sustainable growth.

Conclusion

As we reflect on the insights presented in the HR Practice Needs Report 2025, it becomes clear that the future of HR lies in adaptability, innovation, and strategic foresight. The profession is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by digitalisation, shifting workforce dynamics, and evolving business challenges.

HR professionals must rise to the occasion by developing new competencies, supporting inclusive workplace cultures, and championing employee well-being. Leadership development, technological integration, and data-driven decision-making will be critical enablers in this journey.

This report calls on HR practitioners to lead with courage and creativity, positioning themselves as strategic partners who drive organisational success. By embracing the principles outlined here, we can build resilient, future-ready organisations that thrive amidst complexity.
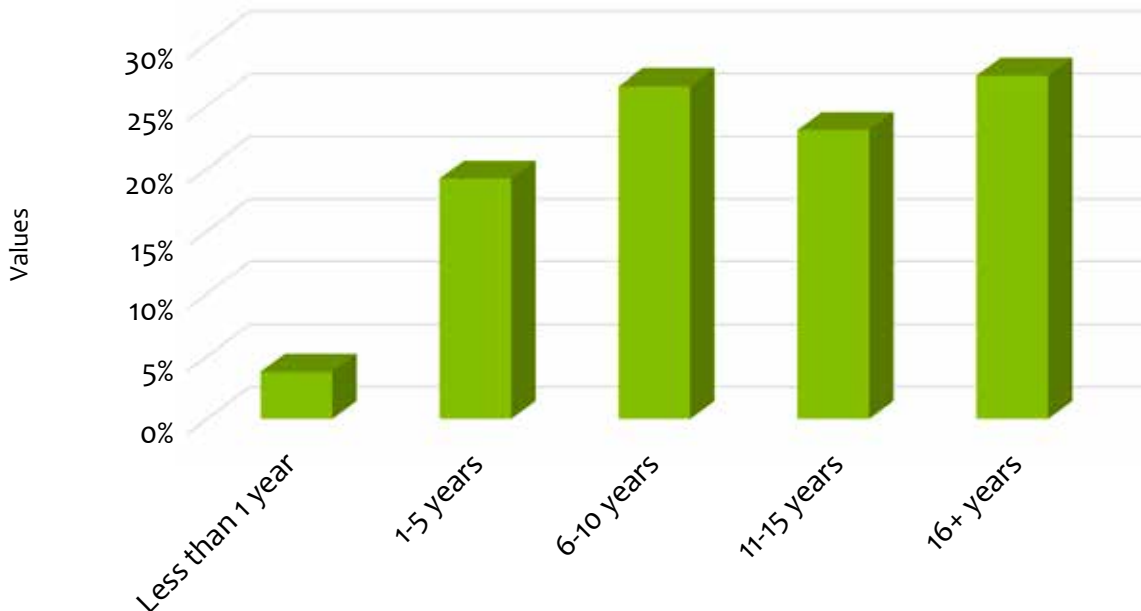
We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all contributors and participants who made this report possible. Your insights and experiences are invaluable to shaping the future of HR practice.

Let us move forward with determination and purpose, united in our mission to create meaningful and impactful workplace experiences.

Appendix A: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

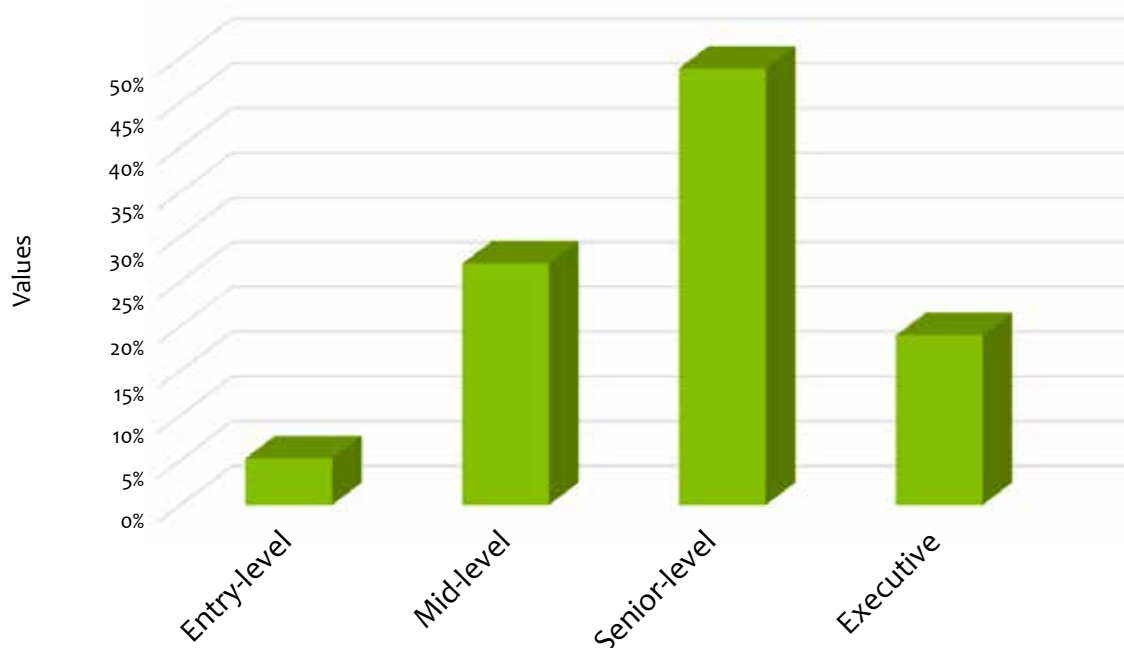*Appendix A1: Years of Experience in HR Practice*

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

This section provides insights into the level of experience among respondents to the survey. The survey had a record of 1,704 respondents in all..

- Highly Experienced Professionals (16+ years): The largest group of respondents, representing 27.41% of the total population reported having spent over 16 years in HR Practice. This strong representation of seasoned professionals suggests that the respondents to this survey possess deep practice knowledge and requisite HR competencies. Their presence indicates that the survey drew an experienced audience, thereby denoting the strategic importance of the eventual report.

- Mid-Career Professionals (6–15 years): Those with 6–10 years of experience made up 26.58% of the respondents, while those with 11–15 years accounted for 23.06%. Combined, these two groups represent about half of the total respondents (49.64%), reflecting a signifcant representation of mid-career HR professionals who are likely in roles involving strategic decision-making and organisational leadership.

- Early-Career Professionals (1–5 years): About 19.19% of the respondents have 1 to 5 years of experience. This category possible include HR professionals in developmental roles or those advancing toward more senior responsibilities.

- Entry-Level Professionals (Less than 1 year): The smallest group, representing only 3.76% of respondents, reported less than one year of HR practice. This most likely includes recent graduates or professionals transitioning into HR from other careers. The Institute needs to deepen connection with this group of professionals.

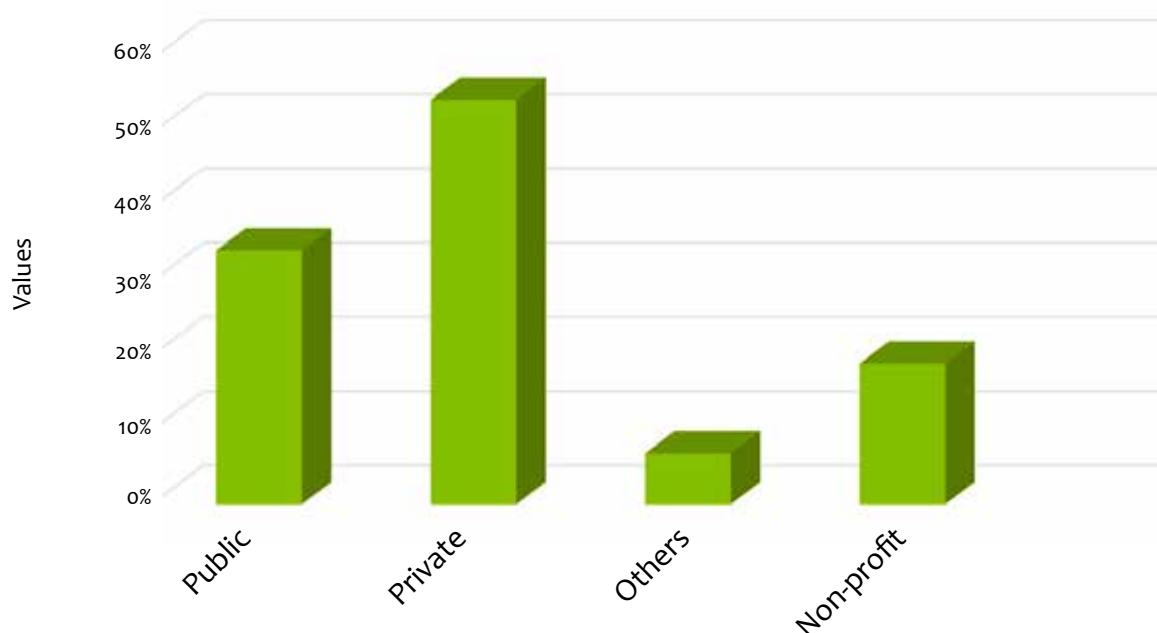*Appendix A2: Current Position within Respondents' Organizations*

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

The dataset here provides insight into the hierarchical distribution of HR professionals who participated in the survey.

- Senior-Level Professionals: The largest proportion of respondents (48.83%) identify as been in senior-level positions. This category of 832 out of the 1704 respondents are likely to be professionals that practice as HR managers, heads of departments, and other top-tier professionals responsible for overseeing significant HR functions and policies. Their dominant participation underscores that the survey was particularly relevant to those in strategic roles who wield a measure of organisational influence.

- Mid-Level Professionals: This group represented 27.00% of the responses (460 practitioners). They are most likely involved in executing HR strategies, managing teams, and liasing between operational and leadership structures. Their substantial participation shows the strength of the survey's relevance for operational execution and middle management perspectives in HR practice.

- Executive-Level Professionals: 18.96% (323 respondents) hold executive positions, with titles of HR Directors and Chief HR Officers. They also presumably serve as members of their organisation's executive leadership team. Their inclusion reflects a strong level of interest and commitment from HR decision-makers at the top of the corporate hierarchy.

- Entry-Level Professionals: The smallest group of respondents (5.22%) falls within the entry-level bracket, comprising 89 individuals. This further validates that there is a relatively limited engagement from early-career professionals or HR assistants. This group may not be participating enough due to perceived relevance of their thoughts.
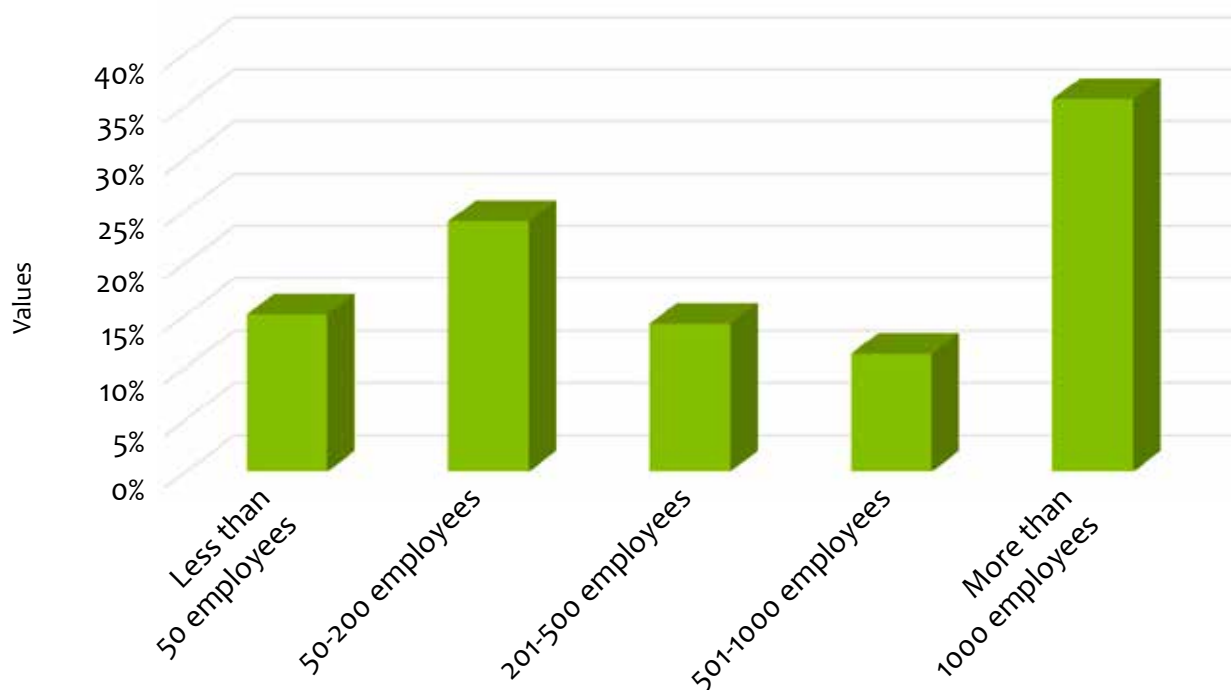
Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

This section captures the distribution of HR professionals across different sectors of the economy.

• Private Sector: The majority of respondents (54.52%)—a total of 929 individuals—work in the private sector. This showcases the strong representation of HR professionals operating within profit-driven organisations, which will encompass multinational companies and SMEs. Their predominance presupposes that private sector HR issues and practices strongly influenced the survey results and insights.

• Public Sector: A significant 34.21% (583 respondents) came from the public sector. This shows a remarkable participation from government ministries, departments, agencies, and parastatals (MDAs). The sizeable input from this sector will support cross-sector policy comparisons.

• Non-Profit Sector: Only 6.87% (117 respondents) identify as working with in non-profit sector. This will include those that work in NGOs, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations and development-focused institutions. This modest representation suggests that while HR is important in this sector, it is still a smaller portion of the professional HR community.

• Other Sectors: An additional 4.40% (75 respondents) selected "Other," possibly showing sectors such as academia, consulting, or hybrid institutions. This category, even though the smallest, brings diversity to the respondent base and introduces alternative organisational contexts in HR practice.

Appendix A4: Size of Workforce in Respondents' Organisations

Source: HR Practice Needs Survey, 2024/2025

This section provides insights into the organisational scale within which HR professionals operate.

- Organisations with More Than 1,000 Employees: The largest group of respondents (35.62%, or 607 individuals) come from organisations with over 1,000 employees. This suggests that a significant portion of HR professionals surveyed are working within complex structures.

- Medium-Sized Organisations (50–200 employees): The second-largest group, comprising 23.94% (408 respondents), work in medium-sized organisations. HR professionals in these organisations will require working to balance formal systems with flexibility, thereby raising a need for practical HR tools and scalable policies.

- Organisations with Fewer than 50 Employees:A notable 15.02% (256 respondents) are employed in small organizations. These HR professionals likely operate in lean environments, often as generalists responsible for a broad scope of HR functions. Their inclusion reflects the growing interest in structured HR practices even within startups or small enterprises.

- Organisations with 201–500 Employees: About 14.14% (241 respondents), work in moderately scaled environments. Here, role specialisation is not evident but may begin to emerge. The prevailing experience of HR professionals in this category will be the importance of flexibility and cross-functional collaboration.

- Organisations with 501–1000 Employees: The smallest segment (11.27%, or 192 respondents) work in organisations within this size band. These organisations are typically in transition between medium and large enterprise operations. HR professionals in these organisations will be dealing with formalising HR systems and policies.

HR PRACTICE NEEDS REPORT 2025

The Era of Adaptive HR Leadership