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INSIGHTS FROM THE  
FRONTLINES

# NAMIBIA HR TRENDS REPORT

Report prepared by  
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# Executive summary



03



**The 2026 Namibia HR Trends Survey suggests that the HR agenda in Namibia has become more demanding, more operationally complex, and more closely tied to workforce capability.**

In 2023, the survey pointed to recruitment, wellbeing, and broad capability building as the main pressure points. By 2026, those pressures had not eased. They had hardened. Recruitment and retention remained the leading challenge, with 88.2% of respondents rating it as very or extremely important, up from 80.2% in 2023. Employee wellbeing remained close behind at 87.3%, while workforce training and development rose sharply to 86.3%, up from 69.1%.

At the same time, confidence in HR readiness moved in the wrong direction. The proportion of respondents who agreed that their HR teams have the necessary skills to meet current challenges fell from 65.4% in 2023 to 57.6% in 2026. Perceived organisational preparedness slipped from 50.6% to 45.5%, and perceived HR capacity fell from 55.6% to 50.5%. This should be read as a self-assessment by respondents of how ready or capable they believe their HR teams are to deal with current demands, not as an external audit of HR quality. Even so, the direction is clear: expectations are rising faster than perceived readiness.

There is also a more encouraging story in the data. Several core HR competency areas improved materially between 2023 and 2026. Respondents rating organisation development as good or excellent rose from 38.3% to 62.6%. Workforce planning and recruitment rose from 50.6% to 71.0%. Performance management improved from 44.4% to 59.0%, and legal compliance increased from 63.0% to 77.0%. Yet the same pattern of persistent weakness remains visible in HR measurement, change management, and HR systems.

# Executive summary



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In other words, the profession appears to be strengthening its execution base, but it still has not fully closed the analytics and transformation gap.

The 2026 survey also broadens the field of view. New trend items and open-ended operating questions show a profession that is increasingly aware of analytics, digital HR, AI, employee engagement, financial wellbeing, and leadership pipelines.

However, adoption is uneven. Using a practical coding of the open-ended 2026 responses, roughly 61% of respondents reported some level of HR process automation, 56% said their organisations do not offer hybrid or flexible working in any meaningful way, about 65% said no new equity and inclusion initiative had been introduced in the last year, and only around 23% clearly indicated that new equity and inclusion initiatives had been launched.

*The signal is consistent: the conversation is modernising faster than implementation.*



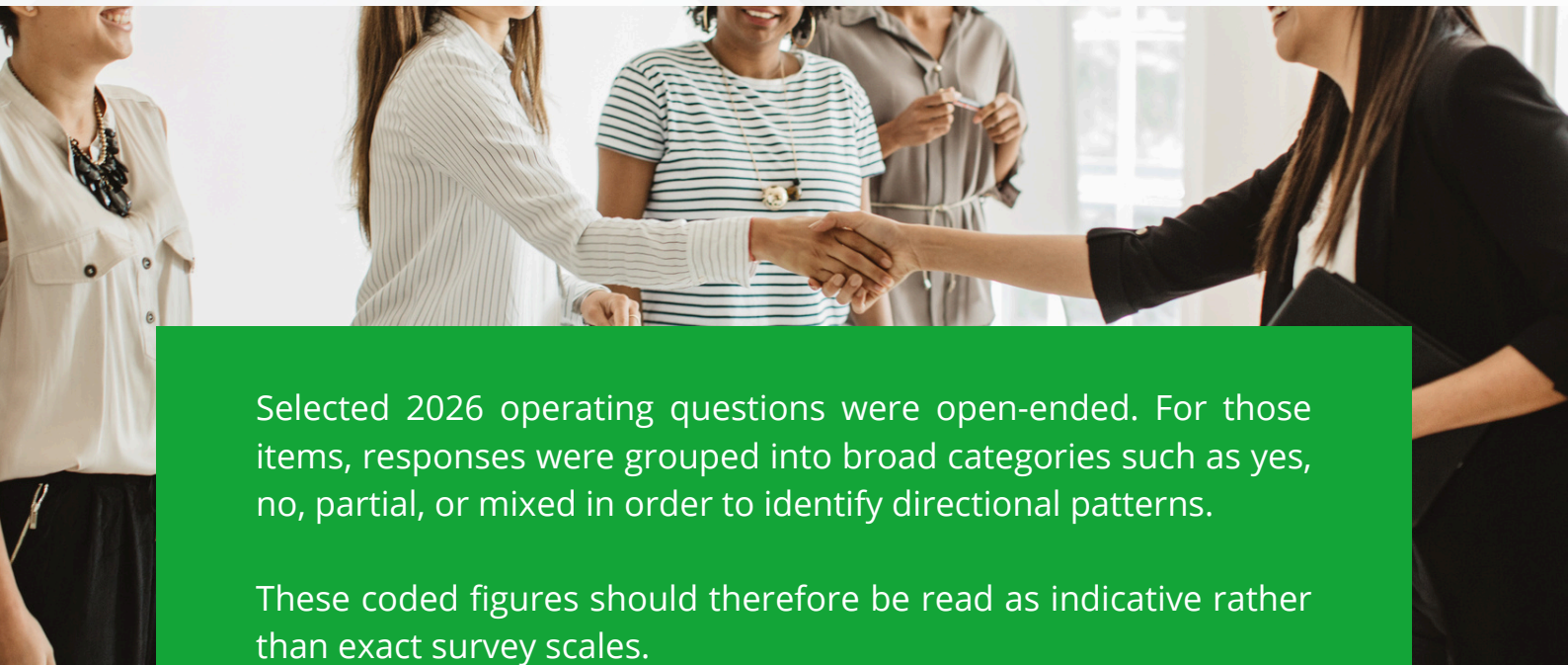


# Introduction & Methodology

This report is based on the 2023 and 2025 surveys, contrasted against the earlier 2023 Namibia HR Trends. The survey data were collected late in 2025 from currently employed Namibian HR professionals.

To make the report more usable for executives, the analysis has been translated into percentages and directional explanations rather than statistical standard deviations.

For comparable closed-ended questions, the report uses practical headline percentages: very or extremely important for priority items, agree or strongly agree for readiness items, good or excellent for competency items, and most of the time or always for work engagement items.



Selected 2026 operating questions were open-ended. For those items, responses were grouped into broad categories such as yes, no, partial, or mixed in order to identify directional patterns.

These coded figures should therefore be read as indicative rather than exact survey scales.



# The respondent base shifted in meaningful ways



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The 2026 survey drew a larger respondent base, rising from 81 to 102 respondents.

The sample remained female-dominated, although the male share increased modestly from 19.8% to 24.5%. The respondent pool also became slightly older and somewhat more private-sector oriented.

The shift in sector participation is especially important when interpreting the year-on-year movement. Private-sector representation rose from 50.6% to 66.3%, while public enterprise participation fell from 42.0% to 22.8%.

That change may partly explain why recruitment pressure, performance pressure, and workforce capability issues appear sharper in 2025.

| Profile indicator             | 2023   | 2025   | Change   |
|-------------------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Female respondents            | 80.20% | 75.50% | -4.8 pp  |
| More than 10 years in HR      | 64.20% | 55%    | -9.2 pp  |
| Age 40 and above              | 38.30% | 43%    | +4.7 pp  |
| Master's degree               | 29.60% | 35.30% | +5.7 pp  |
| Private sector respondents    | 50.60% | 66.30% | +15.7 pp |
| Public enterprise respondents | 42%    | 22.80% | -19.2 pp |

# The pressure points changed, but not in the way HR leaders might have hoped



07

The top of the challenge agenda became more concentrated in 2026. Recruitment and retention remained the single biggest pressure point, while employee wellbeing held its place near the top. The sharpest movement, however, came from workforce training and development, which moved from a strong issue in 2023 to a front-rank issue in 2026.

This suggests that HR leaders are no longer dealing only with attraction and morale. They are increasingly dealing with capability supply: whether the workforce has the skills, speed, and adaptability the business now requires. That makes talent development less of a support function and more of a core business risk.

| Challenge                           | 2023 (% High) | 2025 (% High) | Change   |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| <b>Recruitment &amp; Retention</b>  | 81%           | 88%           | ↑ Crisis |
| <b>Employee Wellbeing</b>           | 83%           | 87%           | ↑ Top    |
| <b>Employment Regulations</b>       | 77%           | 83%           | ↑        |
| <b>Workforce Training</b>           | 69%           | 86%           | ↑        |
| <b>Management Development</b>       | 75%           | 79%           | ↑        |
| <b>Tech Change &amp; Automation</b> | 79%           | 72%           | ↑        |
| <b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b>    | 59%           | 71%           | ↑        |
| <b>Performance Management</b>       | -             | 84%           | New      |
| <b>Sustainability/CSR</b>           | -             | 60%           | New      |

# HR readiness weakened: one of the most important signals in the report



08

In 2023, the survey already showed only moderate confidence in HR and organisational readiness. By 2026, that confidence had weakened across all four readiness questions. The pattern is consistent rather than isolated.

This section should be interpreted carefully. These findings reflect the views of survey respondents on how ready their HR departments are, or how capable they believe their teams are, to deal with current challenges. The results therefore reflect internal confidence levels rather than an objective benchmark. Even so, confidence matters.

When *perceived* readiness declines across skills, capacity, workforce capability, and organisational preparedness at the same time, it usually signals that the operating environment is stretching HR teams faster than those teams are being strengthened.

| Area                          | 2023 (% High) | 2025 (% High) | Change |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------|
| Human Resources Team Skills   | 65%           | 58%           | ↓      |
| Human Resources Team Capacity | 56%           | 51%           | ↓      |
| Organisation Preparedness     | 51%           | 46%           | ↓      |
| Workforce Skills              | 58%           | 56%           | Stable |

### Contrast

Readiness dipped slightly amid growth pressures. Comments: "Understaffed," "HR needs strategic role." Private sector results were stronger.

# Capability improved in several core areas, but the analytics and change gap remains



09

The competency data offers the strongest evidence of progress. Compared with 2023, respondents in 2026 were materially more likely to rate their teams as good or excellent in organisation development, workforce planning and recruitment, performance management, employment relations, legal compliance, and HR policy work.

That said, improvement should not be mistaken for closure. HR measurement remained the weakest competency area in 2026, with only 39% rating it as good or excellent. Change management improved only slightly, reaching 42%. HR information systems reached 53%, better than in 2023 but still not strong enough for a business environment that is increasingly shaped by analytics, digital tools, and speed of decision-making.

| Challenge                 | 2023 (% High) | 2025 (% High) | Change     |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Legal Compliance          | 63%           | 77%           | ↑          |
| Employment Relations      | 59%           | 71%           | ↑          |
| Health, Safety, Wellbeing | 59%           | 61%           | Stable     |
| Organisation Development  | 38%           | 63%           | ↑          |
| Change Management         | 39%           | 42%           | Stable Low |
| HR Measurement Analytics  | 26%           | 39%           | ↑ But Low  |
| Performance Management    | 44%           | 59%           | ↑          |
| Remuneration              | 49%           | 55%           | ↑          |

# What HR professionals say matters most, has stayed stable



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The capability priorities are remarkably stable. Communication skills remained the clearest non-negotiable, with 95.9% rating it very or extremely important in 2026.

Empathy and emotional intelligence, leadership and change management, business acumen, and strategic workforce planning also remained high. This tells leaders that the profession still sees influence, judgment, and relationship skill as central to effective HR.

The development data is more revealing. While trust-building, communication, wellbeing, analytics, and HR technology remain major development needs, there was a visible softening in some of the broader strategic items. Fewer respondents in 2026 prioritised understanding the wider business, generating long-run performance proposals, and inclusion implementation than in 2023.

That may suggest a practical shift: HR teams are under pressure to solve near-term operating issues first, even while strategic ambitions remain important.

| Essential capability                     | 2023 | 2025 | Change (pp) |
|--|------|------|-------------|
| Communication skills                     | 92.6 | 95.9 | 3.3         |
| Leadership and change management         | 90.1 | 89.7 | -0.4        |
| Empathy and emotional intelligence       | 91.4 | 89.7 | -1.7        |
| Business knowledge and commercial acumen | 87.7 | 86.6 | -1.1        |
| Strategic workforce planning             | 91.4 | 85.6 | -5.8        |
| Learning and self-development            | 86.4 | 84.5 | -1.9        |

# What HR professionals say matters most, has stayed stable



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| Development priority   | 2023 | 2025 | Change (pp) |
|--|------|------|-------------|
| Building trust and relationships with stakeholders and decision makers   | 91.4 | 88.7 | -2.7        |
| Communication skills   | 91.4 | 87.8 | -3.6        |
| Understanding how best to enhance employee wellbeing   | 88.8 | 85.7 | -3          |
| Data analysis to inform HR proposals and decisions   | 85.2 | 82.7 | -2.5        |
| Understanding and applying suitable HR technologies  | 81.5 | 82.7 | 1.2         |
| Understanding how to implement better inclusion practices  | 74.1 | 68.4 | -5.7        |
| Understanding how the business works, including customer and supplier relations, finance, and strategic growth | 82.7 | 73.5 | -9.2        |
| Generating proposals to improve the overall performance of the business in the long run                        | 90.1 | 77.6 | -12.6       |

# The trend agenda widened sharply in 2026



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The 2023 trend section was relatively focused, led by leadership, mentorship, purpose, analytics, and skill mapping. By 2026, the picture is broader and more modern. Respondents placed high importance on employee engagement, skill development, employer-employee relationships, talent attraction and retention, wellbeing, recruitment pressure, performance management updates, stress resilience, analytics, equity and inclusion, automation, and digital HR transformation.

This is not just a longer list. It signals a shift in the nature of HR work. The function is increasingly expected to be both a stabiliser and a transformer: protecting relationships, strengthening capability, improving experience, and modernising systems at the same time.

| 2026 trend priority                        | Rated very or extremely important |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Employee engagement                        | 81.00%                            |
| Skill development and learning             | 80.60%                            |
| Quality of employer-employee relationships | 79.80%                            |
| Talent attraction and retention            | 78.80%                            |
| Employee wellbeing and mental health       | 78.60%                            |
| Recruitment and talent planning challenges | 78.40%                            |
| Performance management updates             | 76.30%                            |
| Skills movement and upskilling             | 74.70%                            |
| Creating Purpose-Driven Organizations      | 74.50%                            |
| Stress management and resilience           | 74.20%                            |
| Data analytics in HR                       | 72.70%                            |
| Financial wellbeing programs               | 72.70%                            |

# New 2026 operating questions show the implementation gap



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The 2026 survey introduced a new layer of practical, organisation-level questions. These responses were largely open-ended, so they have been grouped into broad categories for directional analysis. Even with that caution, the pattern is instructive.

A modern HR vocabulary is clearly present in Namibia. Yet in many organisations, implementation still appears partial. Automation is moving, but not universally. Flexible work remains limited.

AI adoption is still early. Skill development is stronger than many other areas, but the overall picture is one of transition rather than maturity.

| 2026 Operating signal                                   | Directional result | What it suggests   |
|---|--------------------|--|
| <b>HR process automation in past 5 years</b>            | About 61%          | Reported clear automation of at least some HR processes          |
| <b>Hybrid or flexible work options</b>                  | About 56%          | Said their organisations do not meaningfully offer these options |
| <b>Mental health or wellbeing support</b>               | About 64%          | Indicated some form of wellbeing or mental health support        |
| <b>Skill development or upskilling in the past year</b> | About 63%          | Indicated that their organisations had run such programmes       |
| <b>Skill mapping to identify gaps</b>                   | About 51%          | Indicated that skill mapping is being used                       |
| <b>Formal mentorship programmes</b>                     | About 40%          | Indicated yes, while about 42% indicated no                      |
| <b>Global recruitment</b>                               | About 36%          | Indicated some recruitment from international markets            |

# Engagement remains fairly solid, but energy appears softer and retention risk is visible



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The work engagement of HR professionals remains broadly positive, but several indicators softened between 2023 and 2026. The share of respondents cognitively engaged fell from 83.8% to 69.4%. The decline is not catastrophic, but it is broad enough to warrant attention.

The 2026 survey also introduced explicit retention-oriented questions. One of the clearest warning signs is that 25.5% of respondents selected the strongest response category when asked how often they had considered leaving their job, while only 16.3% selected never.



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That does not mean a mass exit is imminent, but it does suggest that strain inside the HR profession itself may be increasing.

# Implications for HR leaders and CEOs



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First, the centre of gravity has moved from policy strength to capability execution. Compliance remains strong, but the growth areas in the data are workforce planning, organisation development, and performance management. That is where boards and CEOs should expect more from HR in the next cycle.

Second, perceived readiness is weaker than the business environment requires. This should push organisations to invest in HR team design, capacity, and capability rather than assuming that the current function can simply absorb more complexity. Third, analytics, HR measurement, and digital systems remain the most persistent structural weakness.

The business risk is no longer just administrative inefficiency. It is slower decision-making, weaker workforce insight, and lower ability to anticipate capability gaps before they become commercial problems.

Fourth, the employee agenda remains live. Recruitment, retention, wellbeing, engagement, and relationships all rank highly. The data does not support a narrow cost-control view of HR. It supports a broader workforce effectiveness view in which the quality of employee experience and the quality of leadership are directly tied to execution.

Finally, the profession appears to be entering a more demanding phase. The issues are no longer only about keeping up with global HR language. They are about translating that language into operating capability in Namibia.

The organisations that do this well are likely to be the ones that attract scarce talent, retain critical skills, and adapt faster than their competitors.



# Priority areas for HR focus in Namibia

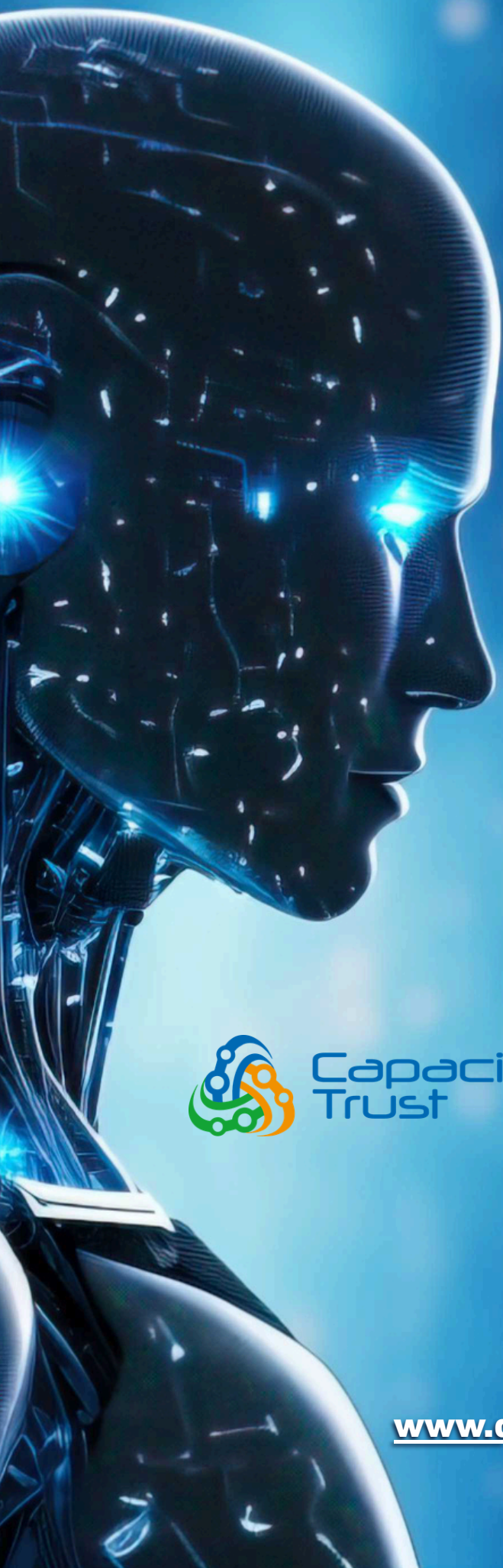


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- Build stronger HR measurement and workforce analytics capability, including scorecards, trend reporting, and decision-quality discipline.
- Treat workforce planning, recruitment, and skills development as integrated business priorities rather than separate HR processes.
- Strengthen change management capability inside HR teams so that digital, structural, and cultural shifts can be implemented more effectively.
- Raise the practical maturity of HR systems, automation, and digital HR processes, particularly where manual work is still slowing execution.
- Monitor the health of the HR function itself through workload, engagement, and retention signals, not only through employee-wide measures.
- Improve the credibility and consistency of equity and inclusion, wellbeing, mentoring, and employee experience initiatives by moving from intent to implementation.



The Namibia HR Trends Report 2026 reveals an intensified evolution in the profession from 2023, with escalating talent crises and employee restlessness driving urgent priorities like recruitment and wellbeing, alongside selective advancements in organizational development and analytics, yet persistent gaps in change management and compliance, calling for strategic investments in data tools, mentorship, and retention to propel Namibia's workforce toward Vision 2030 resilience.



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