



HRO^{TODAY}

2022 *HRO Today* Annual Top Concerns of CHROs[©]



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introduction

This is the third edition of the *HRO Today* Annual Global CHRO Survey. While there are other studies that examine the perceptions of CEOs, none truly capture the outlook of chief human resources officers (CHROs). Human resources is directly responsible for workforce planning and employee needs, so the insights gained from this analysis are unique and valuable.

The Annual Global CHRO Survey includes insights from 100 top HR executives in North America, EMEA, and APAC. Survey respondents were invited to participate in the study via an email invitation sent out between July 27, 2022, and August 8, 2022. The report quantifies the extent of concerns when planning for future staffing needs and assesses how organizations are training their workforces to meet anticipated needs. Where appropriate, comparisons are made between findings from 2020 and 2021.

Despite the Omicron variant of COVID-19 continuing to keep the pandemic in the news, the threat has subsided in 2022. However, a range of other challenges remain, such as supply chain disruption, demands for remote work, retention, an impending recession, and inflation rates that have not been seen in decades — as well as the geopolitical conflict Russia imposed on Ukraine in February that has destabilized the global economy.

In addition to these challenges, human resources must contend with long-standing issues: workforce planning, meeting the needs of a new workforce, managing the skills gap, and promoting an even more strategic role for HR at the highest levels of leadership. Read on to learn how today's top CHROs are tackling these issues and more to create real impact in their organizations.

This study was sponsored by WilsonHCG.

about the report

Workforce planning continues to pose a major challenge for organizations. In the best of years, workforce planning remains an arduous task. Given the variables faced in 2022, planning was practically impossible to do effectively. Many underestimated the size of the workforce they would need. Nearly one-half (46%) of study participants indicated they expanded their workforce more than planned in 2022; only 40% felt their workforce estimates were accurate. Looking forward, today's HR leaders continue to face great challenges, such as a heated job market, rampant inflation that directly impacts wages, and the threat of recession.

Each year brings new challenges for CHROs when planning staffing needs, while some challenges remain from the prior year as others begin to ebb. CHROs again exhibited a strong concern over retention. Retention was the area of greatest concern for nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents, about the same percentage as in 2021. Concern over the availability of skilled workers rose the most of any concern measured in prior years, up 18 percentage points to 72%. While worker turnover, in part, leads to the demands placed on recruiting, a lack of employee upskilling initiatives also contributes to the need for workers. New areas of concern measured in 2022 are overall inflation and a potential recession. Both are among the major concerns of CHROs, with 65% and 50% concerned, respectively.

Foremost on CHROs' minds is wage inflation, with seven in ten (71%) citing they're extremely/very concerned. Wages and salaries are up over 5% through the first half of 2022. This results in a higher price to recruit employees, while still trying to keep existing pay structures. And don't discount the enormous retention challenges. The reduction of employee stress and mental health remains a major consideration, with nearly two-thirds (64%) expressing concern. Some of the many causes of work-related stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity,

and conflicts with co-workers or bosses — plus the lingering impact of COVID-19. Healthcare organizations have been under tremendous stress for over two and a half years.

Widespread remote work became the new normal during the pandemic, but there are concerns about its long-term impact on company culture. Two-thirds (67%) of CHROs agreed that remote work has reduced employee attachment and loyalty to their company, up from 48% in 2021. While the long-term impact on employee attachment and loyalty is debatable, remote working makes it more challenging to build meaningful relationships with co-workers.

There remains a lack of progress in upskilling workers despite the acknowledged need for skilled talent.

Few CHROs reported that they made significant progress in 2022; only 38% reported even moderate progress, reflecting the same self-assessment made in 2020. Analysts estimate that the need for upskilling will soon reach staggering heights, with as many as 40% of current workers requiring new skills in the next three years. This trend, combined with a marginal confidence in internal training programs, suggests that the talent chasm may only widen in the near term.

CHROs continue to view their role more strategically than that of their department, though that difference in outlook narrowed in 2022. Fewer than half (42%) of CHROs "completely agreed" that they consider themselves to be more of a business executive than an HR manager, though only 18% wished their department thought more like businesspeople than HR policy makers. All representatives of the C-suite must think beyond their immediate area of expertise, but at the same time, they need to be mindful of succession planning and the alignment of objectives within their departments.

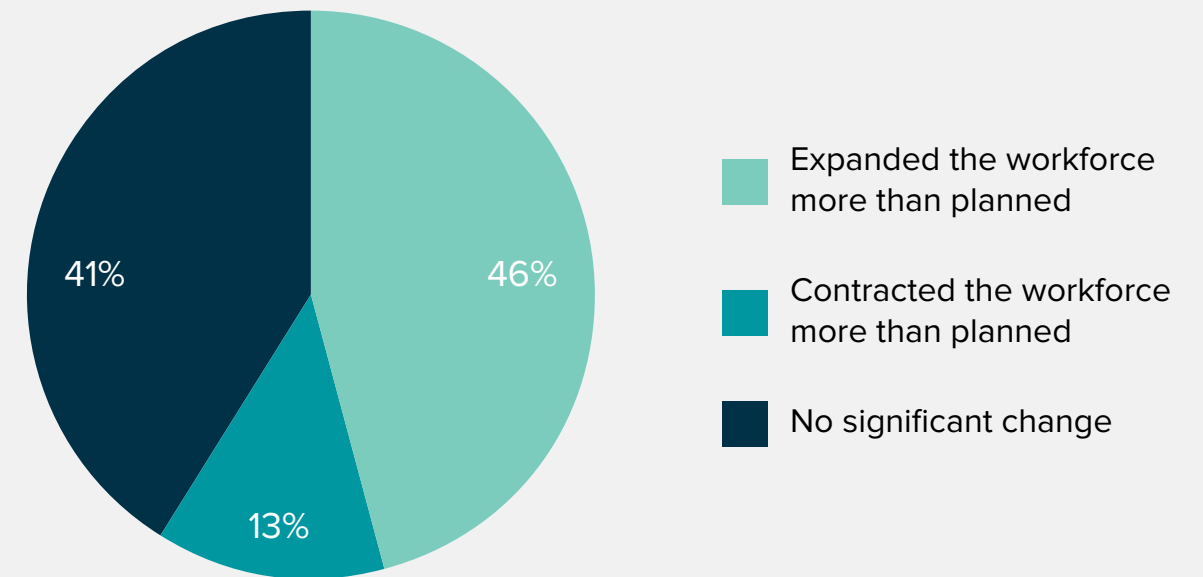
Actual Size of 2022 Workforce Change vs. Plans Made in 2021

How has the size of your workforce in 2022 changed so far compared to the plans made for it in 2021?

When asked how the size of their workforce has changed compared to their 2021 plans, nearly one-half (46%) of respondents indicated that they've expanded their workforce more than planned. Only 13% indicated that their workforce contracted more than planned, and 41% indicated there was no difference between their planned change and workforce size.

Workforce planning is always part science, part crystal ball. But events over the past 30 months have made the task an even greater challenge than before. The workforce planning process includes the composition and content of the workforce that will be required to strategically position the organization to deal with its possible futures and business objectives. It identifies the gaps that exist between the future "model" organization and the existing organization, including any special skills required by possible futures, and it provides the recruiting and training plans for permanent and contingent staff that must be put in place to deal with those gaps.¹

Actual Size of 2022 Workforce Change vs. Plans Made in 2021





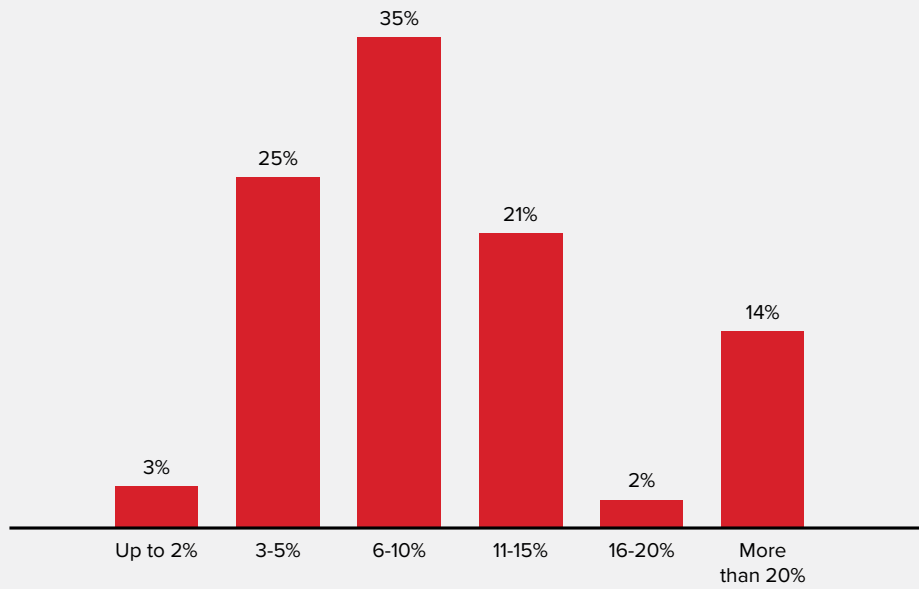
Size of Workforce Increases in 2022

By what percentage has the size of your workforce increased?

The respondents who indicated they increased the size of their workforce more than planned were asked to quantify the extent of the increase. Nearly three-quarters (72%) said their workforce increased by more than 5%, with an average increase of 10.5%. Based upon the size of respondent companies, this amounts to over 13,000 jobs per company.

In the first half of 2022, there were 2.6 million jobs added in the US, 841,000 in South Korea and 654,000 in Germany, to cite job growth statistics for just three countries. The worldwide workforce is expanding rapidly as it recovers from the pandemic. In 2022, there are estimated to be approximately 3.32 billion people employed worldwide.²

Size of Workforce Increases in 2022



Number of Jobs added YTD 2022 per Country

COUNTRY	JOBS ADDED YTD 2022
United States	2.6 million
South Korea	841,000
Germany	654,000
France	301,900
Canada	190,300
United Kingdom	41,200

Source: Trading Economics.



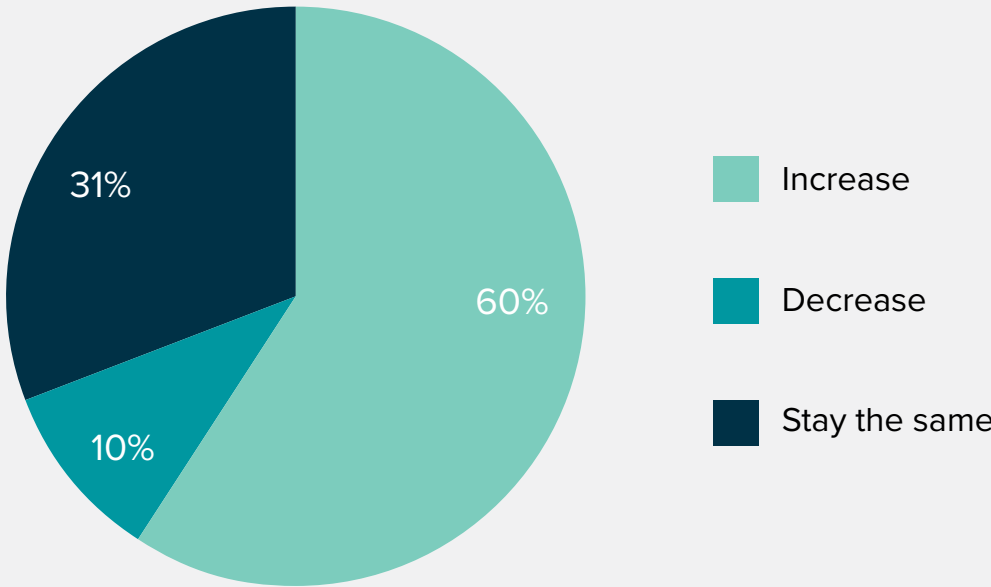
Plans to Change Workforce Size in 2023

What are your plans to change the size of your worldwide workforce in 2023?

When asked how they planned to change the size of their global workforce in 2023, almost two-thirds (60%) of respondents indicated an increase, though that was down from 67% last year.

In the US, employment is projected to increase by 11.9 million jobs from 2020 to 2030, going from 153.5 million to 165.4 million jobs. Pandemic recovery and growth in healthcare-related occupations are expected to account for a large share of projected job growth.³

Plans to Change Workforce Size in 2023





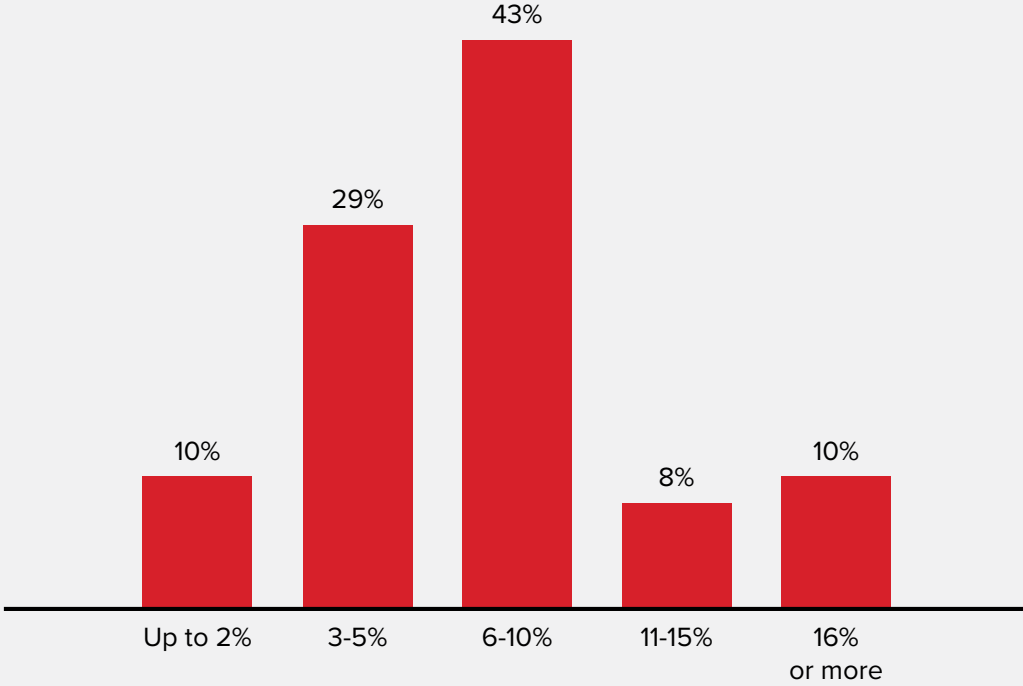
Plans for Workforce Growth in 2023

By what percentage is the size of your workforce planned to increase in 2023?

The respondents who anticipated an increase in workforce size were asked to quantify the size of the planned increase. Six in 10 (61%) indicated planned growth of more than 5%, while the average increase was just under 8%.

Thriving organizations focus on defining the capabilities needed to succeed in their market. Workforce planning involves closely defining future roles and the skills needed to deliver the strategy outlined first. Then the more tactical processes of finding workers, reskilling current employees, and defining a total workforce solution comprised of employees and contingent workers is determined.

Plans for Workforce Growth in 2023



Extent of Concern: Preparing for Future Staffing Needs

How concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following areas that relate to preparing for future staffing needs?

Study participants were asked to indicate their level of concern about 16 priorities related to workforce planning. Overall, six areas declined in concern year-over-year, defined here as either “extremely” or “very” concerned, while four increased. Most of the new areas added in 2022 were among the areas of most concern, illustrating the changing dynamic of staffing concerns.

The foremost concern was, once again, retention. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents felt “extremely” or “very” concerned about this area, with nearly every respondent expressing at least moderate concern. While concern dipped slightly, by four percentage points since 2022, apprehension in this area is still more than double that of 2020.

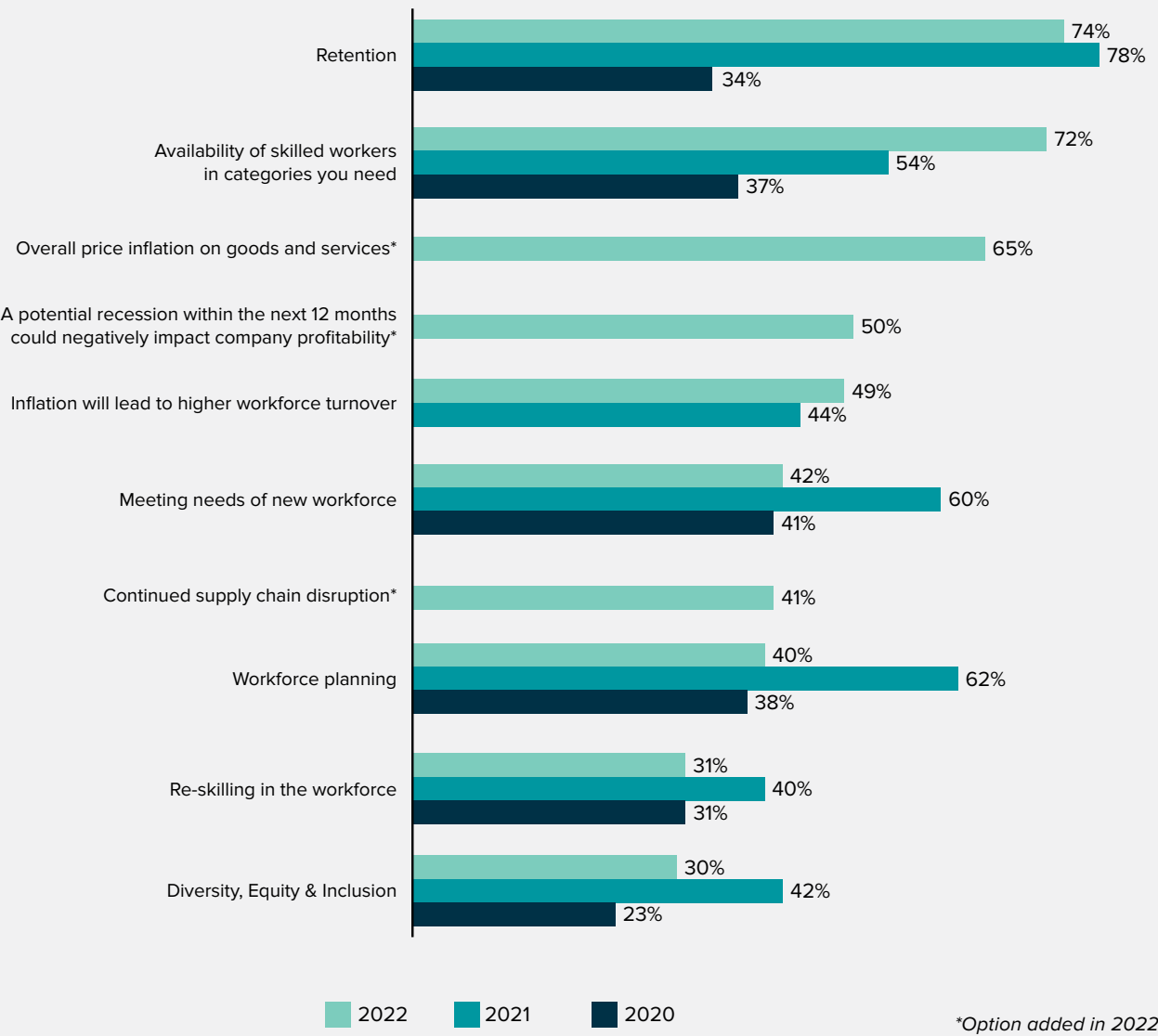
CHRO concern about retention is supported by analyst findings. The Great Resignation is not over, with one in five workers globally planning to quit in 2022, according to PwC’s Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey.⁴

“Availability of skilled workers in categories you need” was the second greatest concern, up to 72% from 54% in 2021 and 37% in 2020. In a recent study by McKinsey, most respondents (58%) indicated that closing skill gaps in their companies’ workforces has become a higher priority since the start of the pandemic.⁵

Inflation has become a widespread concern in the US in 2022, and senior HR executives very much feel the concern extends to staffing. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents selected it, making it the third most common area of concern. Candidates are paying more for goods and services and are, in turn, demanding more compensation from their employers. Higher inflation means the buying power of workers’ take-home pay is shrinking. Real (inflation-adjusted) average hourly earnings fell 3.6%, seasonally adjusted, from June 2021 to June 2022, the BLS separately reported in July.⁶

The other area that had at least one-half (50%) of respondents indicating they were extremely or very concerned was a potential recession within the next 12 months and the impact on company productivity. A recession impacts not just productivity, but company profits, investment, and headcount, which can be devastating to the workforce. However, some economists are lowering the odds of a US recession. According to Bloomberg, equity, credit, and rate markets have assigned a 40% probability to a US recession, down from 50% in June.⁷

Extent of Concern: Preparing for Future Staffing Needs





Extent of Concern: Preparing for Future Staffing Needs (Cont.)

It is worth noting that many of the areas of lesser concern, such as meeting the needs of the new workforce, workforce planning and re-skilling the workforce, are all related to retention. If those areas were being better addressed, retention may not be as much of a concern.

There were several areas where respondents showed less concern than in prior years. One of those was diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Concern fell from 42% in 2021 to 30% in 2022. There is a difference in concern in this area when looking at company size. The organizations with more than 500 employees were more likely to feel DEI was a high concern than those with fewer than 500 employees, 33%. vs. 23%, respectively.

It may be that some companies are experiencing fatigue with their DEI initiatives. Diversity fatigue sets in when companies don't build the skillsets an organization needs to understand the intrinsic benefit of increasing diversity. Diversity is often communicated as a target number or percentage rather than by building a connection between humanity, empathy, and vulnerability. A focus on hiring more diverse employees can make it a numbers issue, rather than a human, or even a bottom-line business priority.⁸

DEI Concern by Company Size

	FEWER THAN 500	MORE THAN 500
Extremely/Very Concerned	23%	33%

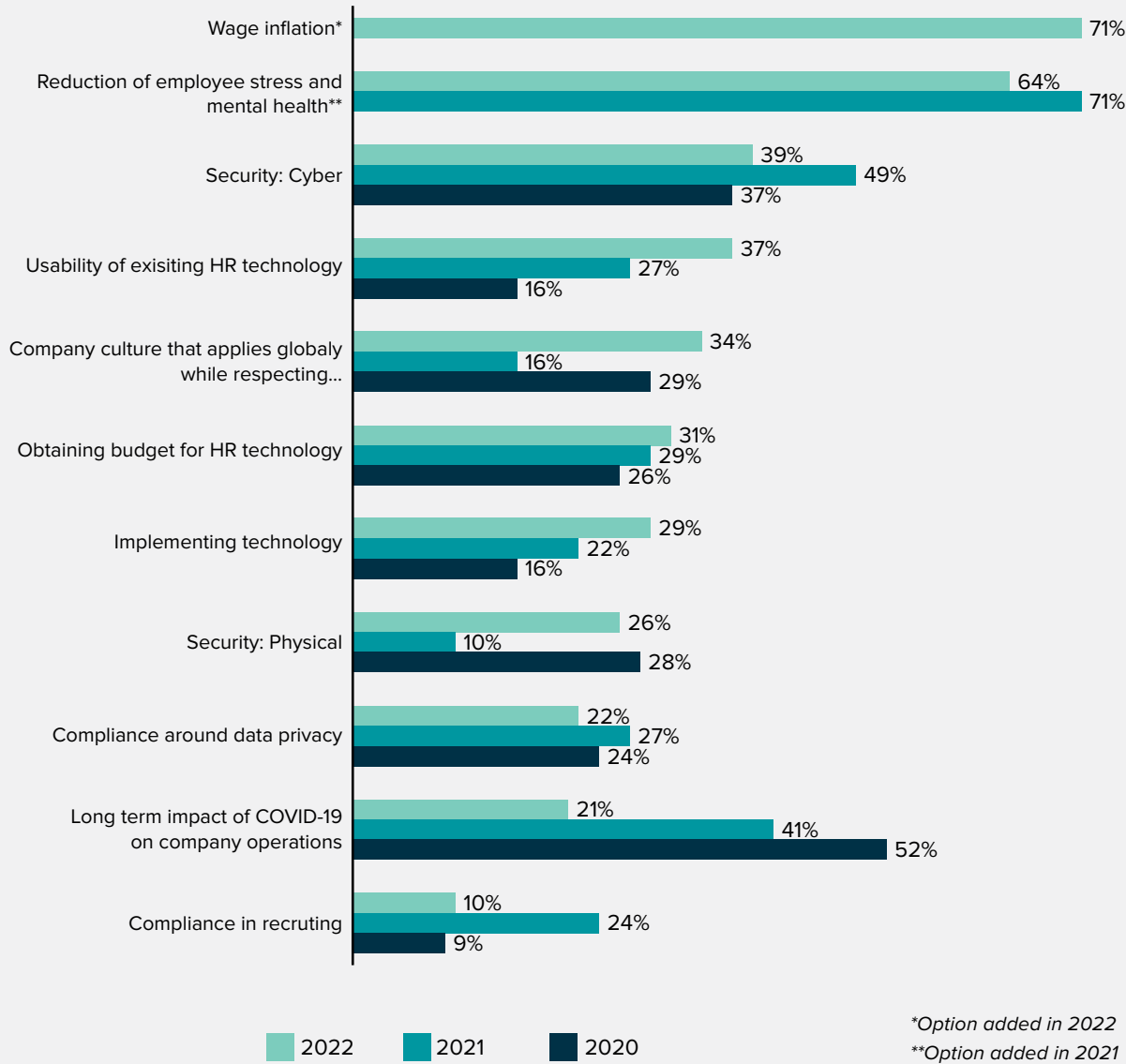


Extent of Concern: HR Responsibilities

How concerned are you about each of the following areas that are included, at least in part, among HR responsibilities?

When study respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their concern about 11 issues falling under HR’s area of responsibility, the overall trend revealed significant anxiety. The year-over-year change in concern was mixed, with five up and five down when compared to those also asked in 2021. Company culture that applies globally while respecting local nuances was up the most (18 percentage points) to 34% being extremely/very concerned, while the long-term impact of COVID-19 on company operations was down the most, falling 20 percentage points to 21%. This change is not surprising given the number and severity of cases reported has markedly fallen since 2021. The CDC reports that the seven-day average of cases is down 40% year-over-year since August 21, 2022.⁹ Further, the decline in cases is also combined with exhaustion of a topic that has dominated for two and a half years.

Extent of Concern: HR Responsibilities





Extent of Concern: HR Responsibilities (Cont.)

Foremost on CHROs' minds is wage inflation, with nearly three-quarters (71%) extremely/very concerned. Wages and salaries for civilian workers increased 5.3% over the year ending in June, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Cost Index, showing swifter growth than in the first quarter.¹⁰ This means that it costs more to recruit employees, and those that remain expect higher compensation or companies face even greater retention issues. PwC's Global Workforce Hopes and Fears study found that more than one-third of respondents plan to ask for a raise in the coming year.¹¹ But while compensation may be higher, inflation erodes the gain. Wages and salaries declined 3.5% over the past year, after adjusting for rising prices.

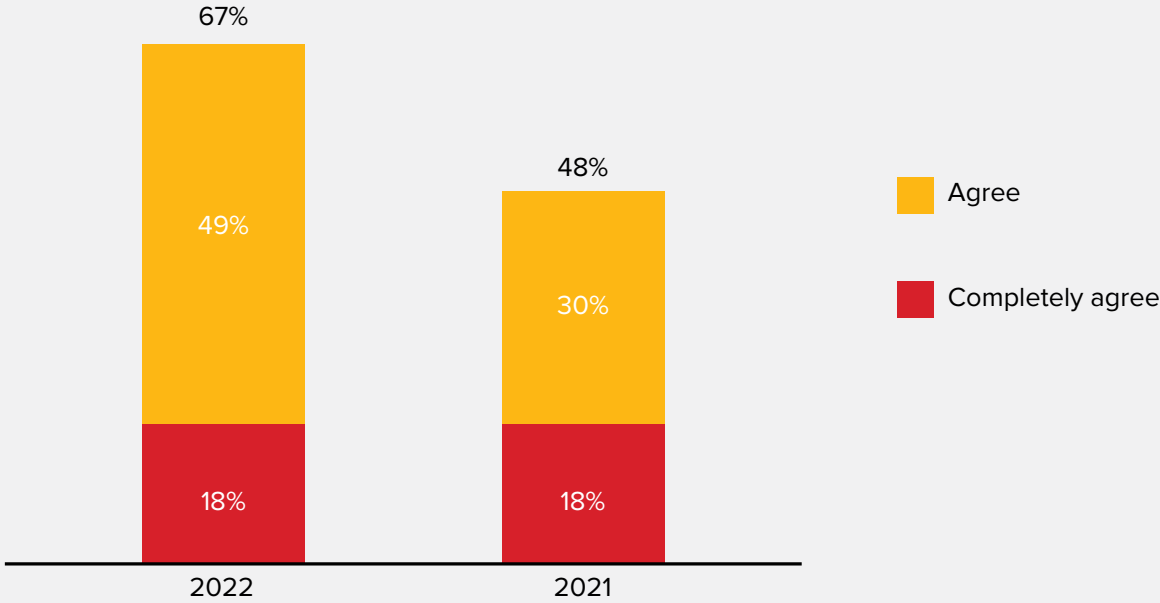
The reduction of employee stress and mental health was again a huge concern, with nearly two-thirds (64%) extremely/very concerned. Some of the many causes of work-related stress include long hours, heavy workload, job insecurity and conflicts with co-workers or bosses, and the lingering impact of COVID-19. Because of this stress, work performance can decline, and retention can again be negatively impacted. In fact, about 60% of employees felt emotionally detached from their jobs last year, while almost a fifth described their time at work as miserable, says Gallup's annual State of the Global Workplace report.¹²

Cyber security was once again another area selected by nearly two in five (39%) respondents as an extreme or very high concern, though that was down from 49% in 2021 (and more in line with findings from 2020 when 37% were concerned). Related to cyber security is compliance around data privacy, selected by nearly one-quarter (22%) as an area of extreme or very high concern.

The usability of existing HR technology was a major concern among 37% of respondents, up from 27% in 2021 and 16% in 2020. New HR technology is arriving at a blistering pace. The worldwide amount invested in funding HR technology in 2021 was nearly \$19 billion, which was almost five times the investment made in 2020.¹³ HR departments that are not investing face being left behind as they try to work with disparate and dated systems.



Extent of Agreement: Remote Work’s Impact on Employee Attachment and Loyalty



Remote Work’s Impact on Employee Attachment and Loyalty

Please indicate your extent of agreement with the following statement: “I am concerned that remote work over an extended period has reduced employee attachment and loyalty to our company.”

Remote work became the new normal during the pandemic, but concerns remain about its long-term impact on company culture. Two-thirds (67%) of CHROs agreed that remote work has reduced employee attachment and loyalty to their company, up from 48% in 2021. Concern in this area is becoming more and more prevalent as candidates increasingly demand remote work options.

The long-term impact on employee attachment and loyalty it still unknown. While there is incredibly high turnover, it’s not known if that’s the result of remote work. Remote working isn’t conducive to building meaningful relationships with co-workers in the same way that working in the office is.¹⁴

A Harvard Business Review concluded that the lack of close contact hinders the formation of trust, connection, and mutual purpose, which are three key ingredients in any effective working relationship. Without them, employee attachment to a company is impeded.¹⁵



Progress in Establishing Upskilling Programs

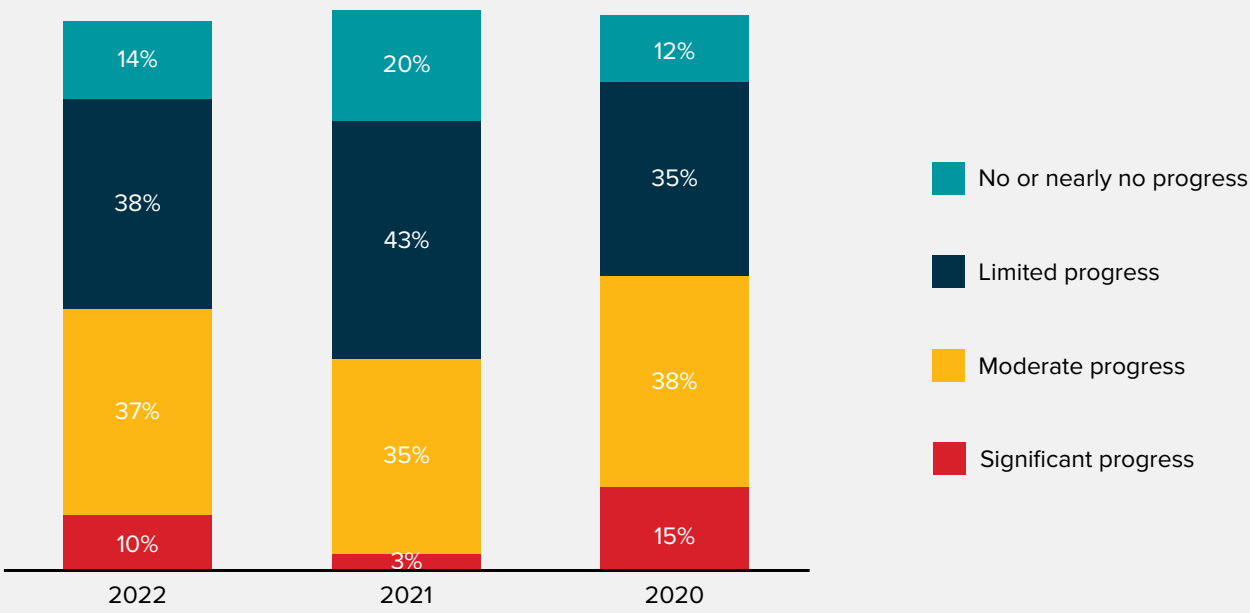
How much progress has your organization made in establishing an upskilling program that develops a mix of soft, technical, and digital skills?

Organizations have made little progress in upskilling since 2020. Only 10% of CHROs reported that they made significant progress in 2022, while 38% reported moderate progress. This self-assessment is very similar to what was reported in 2020, suggesting there is little momentum in this initiative.

PwC's Global Workforce Hopes and Fears Survey 2022 echoes these findings. In the study, only 40% of employees said their company is upskilling, and only 26% said their employer is automating or enhancing work through technology. Both numbers are low enough to imply considerable room for improvement.¹⁶

The need for upskilling cannot be ignored. According to one estimate, 14% of the global workforce may need to change careers by 2030.¹⁷

Progress in Establishing Upskilling Programs





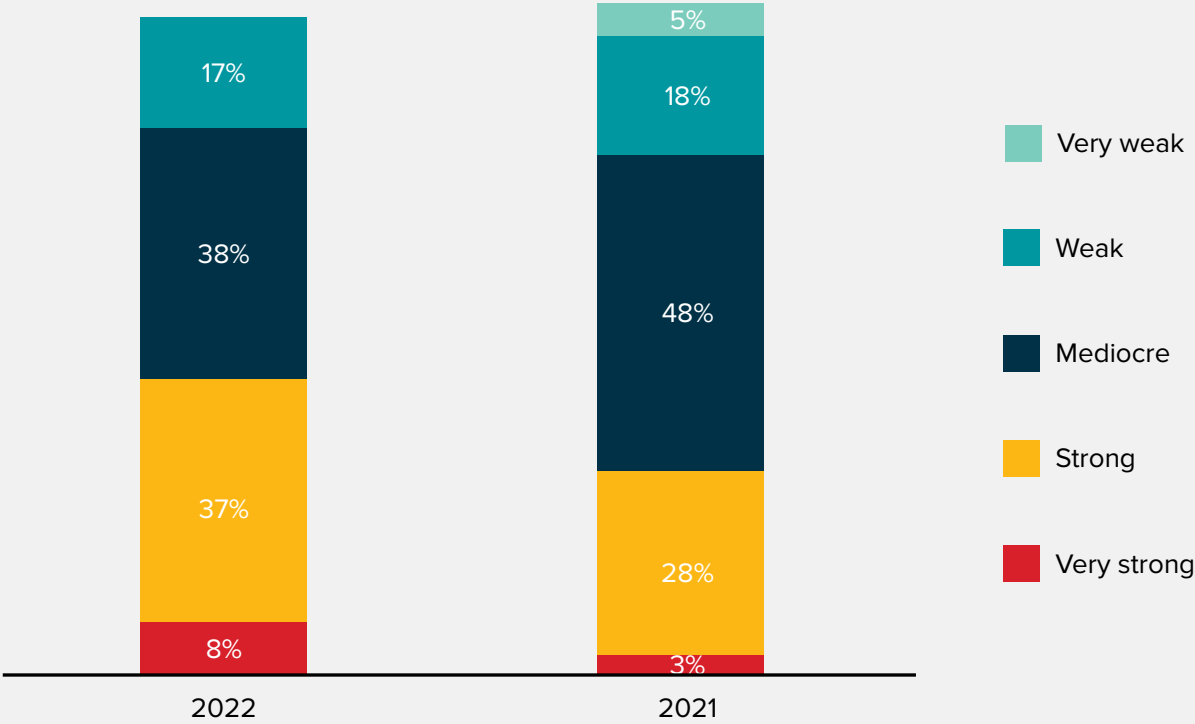
Rating of Company Training and Development Capability

How would you rate your company's training and development capability?

When asked to rate their company's training and development capability, less than one-half (45%) of respondents considered it strong or very strong, though that was up from 30% in 2021. Overall, company training and development capabilities remain pedestrian, with an average score of 3.36 out of 5.00, up from 3.05 in 2021, though the year-over-year increase is encouraging.

Training and development initiatives provide a host of benefits, including enhanced employee performance, boosted employee productivity, reduced employee turnover, and improved company culture. Employee training has recently become a vital business strategy not only to retain employees, but also to create a skilled workforce for the future.¹⁸

Rating of Company Training and Development Capability





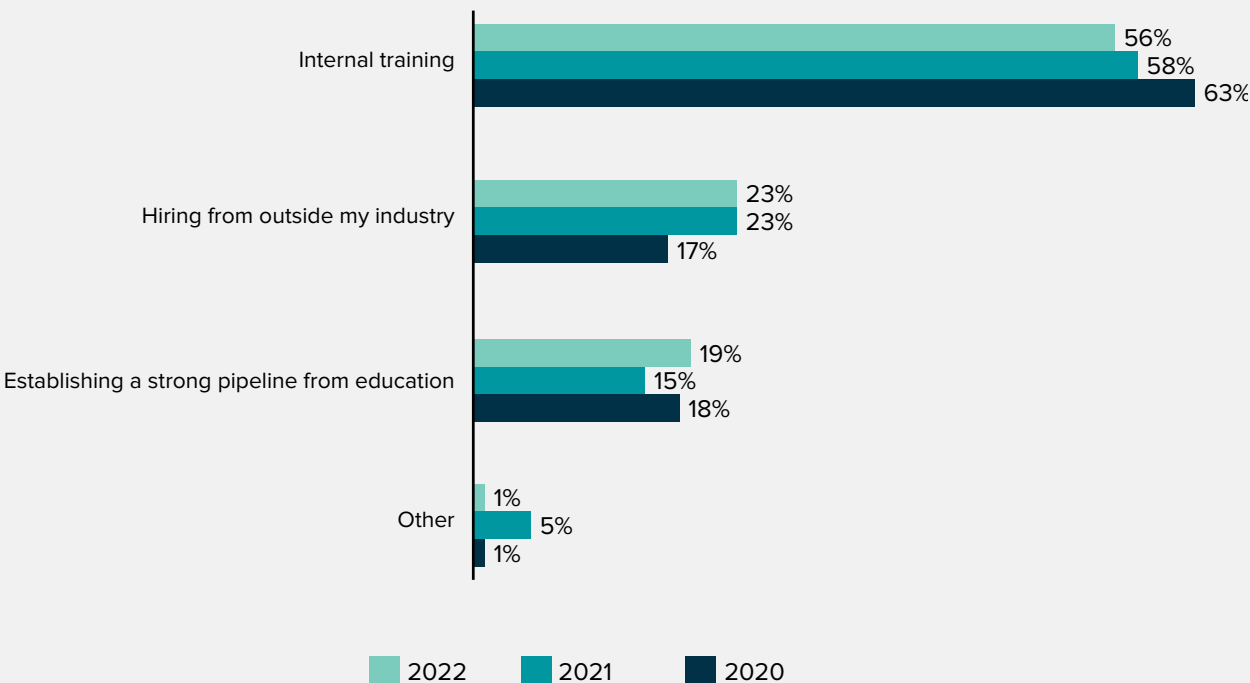
Closing the Skills Gap

Which of the following is the most important for closing a potential skills gap in your organization?

Respondents were asked to identify the most important vehicle to close potential skills gaps in their organization. Overwhelmingly, internal training was the clear choice in 2021, as indicated by over one-half (58%) of respondents, more than twice that of any other area. There was little year-over-year change in this area from 2020.

The concern this raises is that only 28% of CHROs consider their training and development capability strong, and 3% very strong. How can they hope to use internal training when they consider their success in this area to be entirely mediocre? Organizations will have to invest more in internal training if they hope to close the skills gap.

Closing the Skills Gap



Interest in Skills-Related HR Goals

Please rank (1-6) the following skills-related HR goals in order of interest.

Study participants were asked to rank six skills-related HR goals in order of interest. Once again, retaining employees who have been upskilled ranked first. As we have seen, retention is the number one concern of CHROs in 2022 and combining that with employees who have already been upskilled when the need for that is so high means this area is of great interest.

Defining the skills the organization should build is the second highest area of interest, up from fourth in 2021. Given the lack of enthusiasm in progress in establishing upskilling programs, this area would be a solid first step in developing the plans for enhancing upskilling initiatives.

CHROs are also interested in employees’ ability to learn new skills in the future. The pandemic highlighted many reasons why employee agility is essential, and research examining the employee skills gap are causing many HR leaders to consider the ramifications of not upskilling their workers.

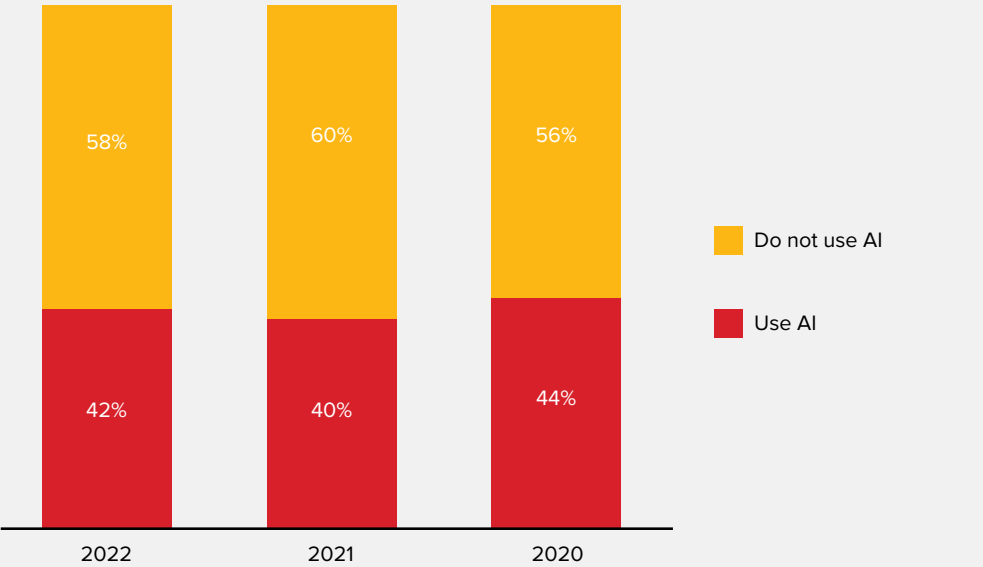
Better managing the disruption of day-to-day business activities fell to fifth, from second in 2021 and first in 2020. As the impact of the pandemic has subsided, organizations are looking more at long-term success.

Rank Interest in Skills-Related HR Goals

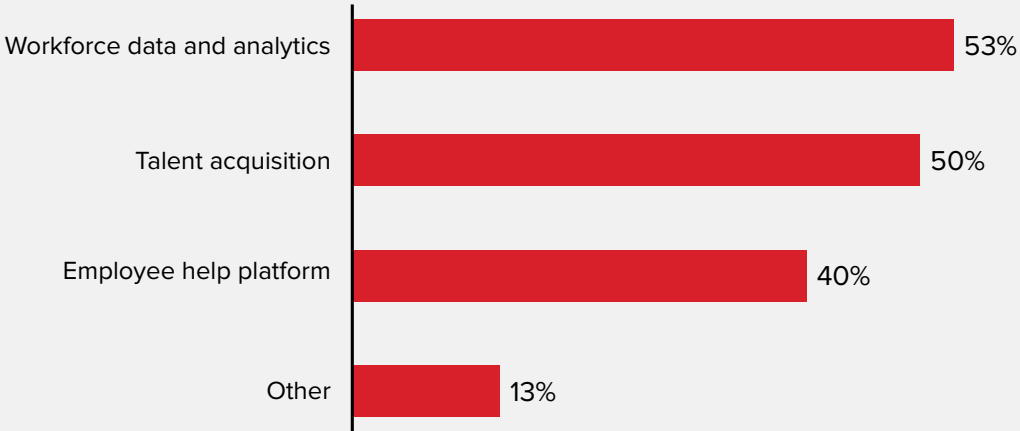
	2022	2021	2020
Retaining employees who have been upskilled	1	1	2
Defining the skills your organization should build	2	4	3
Dedicating additional resources to conduct the upskilling programs we need	3	5	6
Ability of employees to learn new skills needed for the future	4	3	5
Better managing disruption of day-to-day business activities	5	2	1
Measuring the return on investment of our upskilling program	6	6	4



Adoption of AI and Machine Learning in HR



Deployment of AI and Machine Learning



Deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning

Where in your department are you employing use of AI/machine learning?

While AI adoption has become more common in recent years, survey results show that it is not yet widely adopted by the majority of organizations. Fewer than one-half (42%) of HR leaders are currently using AI in HR. In fact, the percentage using AI has not appreciably changed since 2020, suggesting there is little momentum.

Reporting on how AI and machine learning is deployed changes a bit year to year. In 2022, workforce data and analytics was the most common application of AI and machine learning, as indicated by more than half (53%) of respondents. Workforce data can calculate real-time analytics that show the impact of absences, open shifts, and unplanned schedule changes on key performance indicators. Workforce data can also inform employee engagement initiatives, offering deep insights into employee needs and points of drop-off.

AI and machine learning are also often used for talent acquisition, as indicated by half (50%) of respondents. Candidate experience is especially important during a tight labor market, and smart technology can make companies more competitive in the marketplace by allowing recruiters to respond to candidates more quickly and make the entire application process go more smoothly. This improves candidate quality as well as time-to-hire and gives recruiters back time to focus on the business of engaging candidates rather than administrative tasks.

Lastly, AI-powered chatbots are often used to answer routine questions and give immediate responses in employee help platforms. Chatbots have the advantage of being available 24/7. Using these tools can enhance the candidate and employee experience alike.



Working towards HR Business Agility

To what extent are you working toward achieving increased business agility in HR?

Study participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they are working toward achieving business agility in HR, an area that had much discussion prior to the start of the pandemic.

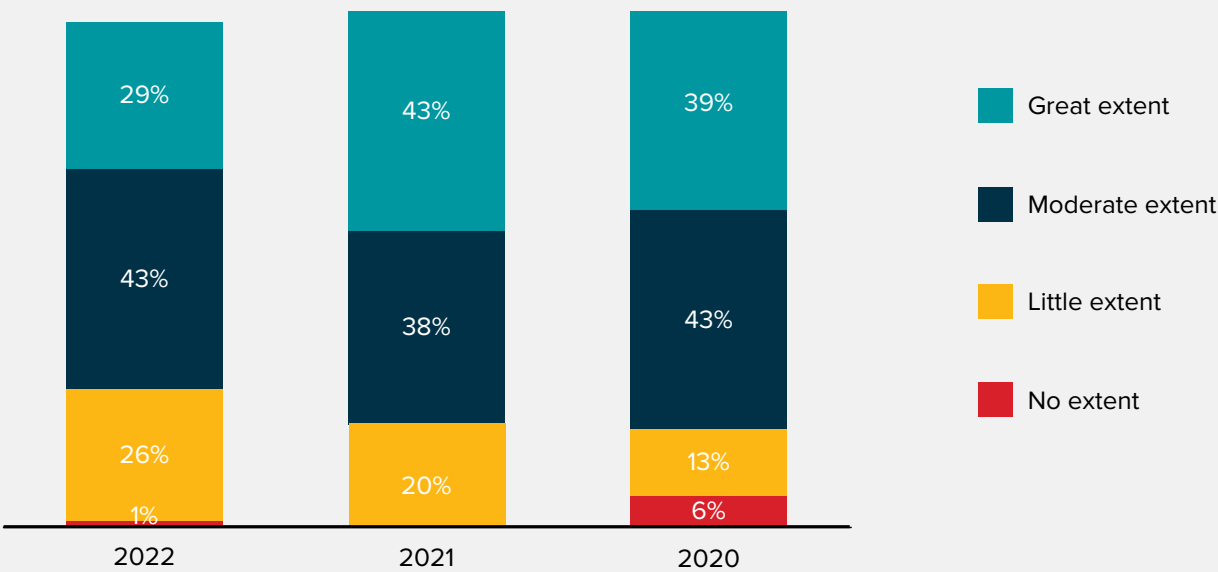
HR agility is the capability of the HR function to respond more quickly and effectively to changing employee expectations, workplace disruptions, and business requirements. However, there is a lurking concern that HR agility is in danger of becoming a trending buzzword in corporate conversations rather than an important concept delivering on its promise.¹⁹

While most respondents (72%) are working toward HR business agility to at least a moderate extent, only just over a quarter (29%) are making it a top priority, compared to 43% in 2021.

A component of HR business agility is DEI, an area which has not had the same amount of focus as it did in 2021 and 2022. Demands placed upon the workforce planning process to include more defined DEI efforts in the organization have forced HR to adapt to changes in the hiring and promotion landscapes.

The reduced focus on DEI may partially explain why there are fewer organizations working toward business agility in 2022 than during the prior two years of this study.

Working towards HR Business Agility





Examining the Strategic Role of HR in the Business

Please indicate the extent of your agreement with both statements below:

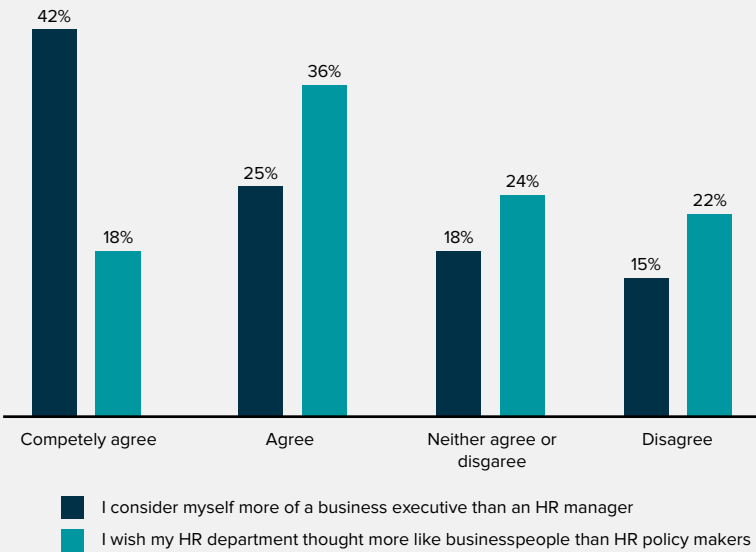
“I consider myself more of a business executive than HR manager.”

“I wish my HR department thought more like businesspeople than HR policy makers.”

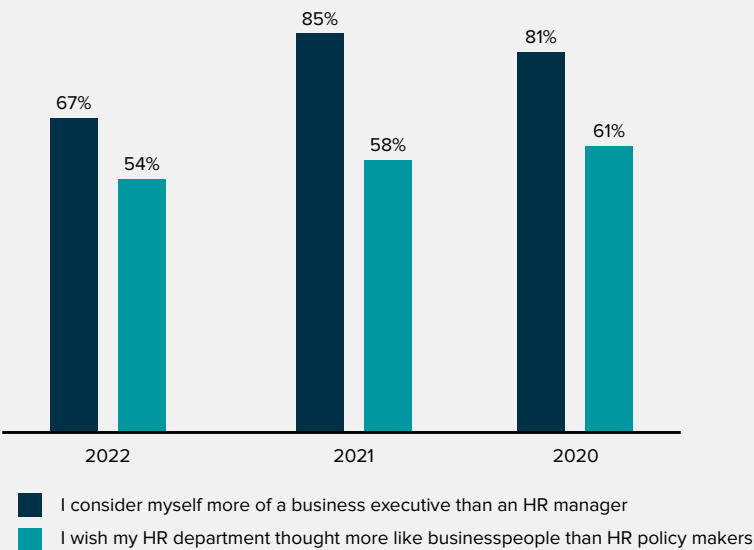
When asked about the strategic role of HR in their organization, 42% of CHROs completely agreed that they consider themselves to be more of a business executive than an HR manager. This contrasts with their opinions about their department, where only 18% completely agreed that they wished their department thought more like businesspeople than HR policy makers.

While CHROs are still much more inclined to think of themselves in a business role as compared to their department, the gap is less in 2022 than prior years. In 2022, the difference between the two views was 13 percentage points vs. 27 percentage points in 2021 and 20 percentage points in 2020.

Strategic Role of HR in the Business



Strategic Role of HR in the Business, Year-over-Year (percentage Agree/Completely agree)



Demographics:

JOB TITLE	
CEO/President/Owner	4%
CHRO	42%
Executive/Senior VP Human Resources	30%
Head of HR	8%
Director of HR	8%
Other	8%

NUMBER OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENTS (FTEs) GLOBALLY	
Fewer than 500	33%
500 – 2,999	35%
3,000 – 9,999	11%
10,000 – 24,999	8%
25,000 – 49,999	3%
50,000 – 99,999	6%
100,000+	4%

PRIMARY INDUSTRY	
Advertising/Sales/Marketing/Communications	3%
Aerospace/Aviation	1%
Biotech/Medical Equipment	3%
Business Services	3%
Construction	3%
Education	4%
Engineering	4%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	11%
Government	3%
Health Care/Health Sciences	18%
Hospitality	3%
IT, Technology, Software	7%
Manufacturing	7%
Media/Entertainment/Hospitality	3%
Non-Profit	10%
Pharmaceuticals	3%
Power, Oil & Energy	3%
Professional Services	1%
Property Management/Maintenance	1%
Retail/Wholesale	3%
Transportation	1%
Other	5%

End Notes

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