

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics

STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

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Executive summary

Explore the interactive version online

Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics Intelligence Map - insights and perspectives curated by Digoshen via World Economic Forum Strategic insights and contextual intelligence.

The key issues shaping and influencing Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics are as follows:

New Work Models
Temporary, part-time and independent work remain overlooked in research and policy-making, even as they replace permanent employment

Future of Work in the Metaverse
Entirely new industries, professions, and economic models are possible

AI and the Future of Work
How exactly will artificial intelligence impact jobs?

Reskilling
Technological change and demographic shifts require short-term reskilling to meet labour market demands

Digital Skills and Human Capital
Educational systems that are in sync with the evolving dynamics in labour markets will help countries gain a competitive edge

Entrepreneurship and Job Creation
The changing global economy can quickly create value but is slow to generate sustainable jobs, calling for new approaches

Inclusive Labour Markets
The technological disruption of labour markets creates both challenges and opportunities

Organizational Innovation
Organizations need flexibility, speed and scalability to support collaboration between humans and machines

Technology-based Productivity Gains
The impact of agentic AI and robotics on productivity in the workplace

Talent and the Future of Work
CLOs are well positioned to steer work culture in a healthier, better-prepared, and more inclusive direction

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Whether based on race, caste, religion, or gender, discrimination is rampant

Redesigning Social Contracts, Skills and Jobs
The pandemic has laid bare the inequalities that create unnecessary suffering and hardship

Digital Literacy and AI Skills
AI and data skills complement STEM to achieve fluency in a digital world

Mental Health in the Workplace
Employees who are more susceptible to mental health problems are more likely to see their work suffer

Below is an excerpt from the transformation map for Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics, with key issues shown at the centre and related topics around the perimeter. You can find the full map later in this briefing.



In the following sections, we give a comprehensive summary of the latest **Insights and Trends** shaping the topic, a look at potential **Forecasts and Scenarios** based on current and emerging trends, and an overview of the **Strategic Context**.

1 Insights and trends

A synthesis of the most recent expert analysis.

1.1 Current perspectives

LSE Business Review

Ending modern slavery will take more than corporate reporting

16 October 2026

Modern slavery arises where global commercial pressures intersect with vulnerable local labor markets. Although UK companies have increased oversight and reporting on modern slavery, limitations remain in addressing abuses occurring deeper in complex supply chains, such as through intermediaries and subcontractors. The UK government's proposed mandatory reporting reforms improve transparency and extend duties to public authorities, signaling a shared responsibility. However, effective prevention requires stronger collaboration and information sharing between corporate supply-chain governance and local public bodies, which currently operate mostly in parallel. Coordinated efforts are essential to identify and address labor exploitation at both corporate and community levels.

STAT

Opinion: My daughter's death changed how I understood the nursing shortage

15 October 2026

The nursing shortage persists despite efforts to increase nurse training because the healthcare system fails to support and retain nurses effectively. Workplace issues such as burnout, understaffing, inadequate training, and poor transition support for new nurses drive high turnover rates. Additionally, direct support professionals caring for vulnerable populations often lack sufficient training, fair wages, and integration into workforce planning. Systemic failures–not individual shortcomings–undermine care delivery. Sustainable solutions require improving workplace conditions, investing in comprehensive support and training, and recognizing the full healthcare workforce to stabilize retention and quality of care.

The Conversation

French school protests: a rite of passage – and the result of genuine concerns

14 October 2026

French school protests highlight longstanding issues including teacher shortages, poor school infrastructure, and long school days, exacerbated by France's ongoing fiscal crisis and structural challenges in education. These protests have historical roots as a rite of passage and a form of expressing grievances about under-resourced and harsh school environments, especially in poorer, ethnically marginalized suburbs. Despite France's cultural emphasis on intellectualism, education funding remains insufficient, complicated by pension accounting and low teacher pay. Efforts to address shortages by hiring more teachers face hurdles like competitive recruitment and teacher placement policies. Additionally, violence and lack of discipline in schools contribute to student fear and unrest. The protests also expose racial and spatial inequalities overlooked by France's official stance on color-blindness, underscoring unmet promises of education and social reform.

Nature

China's AI research is booming. Where is it headed?

14 October 2026

China's AI research is rapidly advancing, with a growing number of researchers opting to stay in or return to China rather than pursue careers in the United States. China now trains more AI talent than any other country, boasting 51,000 active AI researchers compared to 14,000 in the U.S.

Chinese researchers dominate global AI publications, and firms are producing advanced AI models at lower costs. However, challenges include lower access to computing resources and a less distinct separation between academia and industry. U.S. visa restrictions and geopolitical tensions have reduced its appeal as a destination for Chinese AI talent, contributing to China's increasing self-reliance and leadership in the field.



The Conversation (Spanish)

La IA no transforma a las empresas: lo hace su capacidad para aprender a cambiar

14 October 2026

En España, el uso de IA en empresas crece rápidamente, pero su impacto real depende de cómo se integra en los procesos. Utilizar IA para tareas aisladas aporta eficiencia (capacidades ordinarias), mientras que rediseñar procesos con IA y aprendizaje continuo genera capacidades dinámicas que transforman la organización. Las empresas que desarrollan métodos repetibles para experimentar y adaptar cambios logran mejores resultados. La IA mejora tareas específicas, pero sin cambios organizativos más amplios su potencial no se maximiza. Muchas compañías enfrentan el reto de pasar de proyectos piloto a una adopción integrada que fomente la innovación y el aprendizaje constante.

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RAND Corporation

Preventing health-related job loss

14 October 2026

Early-intervention caseworker-led support effectively helps individuals with health conditions stay in or return to work, improving employment and sometimes health outcomes, with economic benefits often outweighing costs. In the UK, such support is fragmented, unevenly distributed, and limited by workforce and system challenges. Scaling up requires a more coherent system, stronger referral pathways, clearer role definitions, workforce development, sustainable funding, and better coordination across health, employment, and insurance sectors to provide accessible, tiered support nationwide.



The Conversation (French)

Télétravail : la souplesse des uns, l'apprentissage perdu des autres ?

16 October 2026

Six ans après le passage massif au télétravail, ce mode de travail offre plus d'autonomie et de souplesse à de nombreux employés, améliorant équilibre et fidélisation. Cependant, il complique l'apprentissage informel crucial pour les jeunes en début de carrière, qui tirent profit des échanges spontanés avec des collègues expérimentés sur site. Ces interactions, essentielles pour développer des compétences tacites, sont moins accessibles à distance. Par conséquent, les postes télétravaillables recrutent moins de jeunes, ce qui limite leurs opportunités de mentorat et de développement professionnel. Ce décalage entre flexibilité et apprentissage risque d'entraver l'intégration et la progression des nouveaux travailleurs.

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World Economic Forum

Japan is combining tech and human connection to help people live well until 100

15 October 2026

Japan has surpassed 100,000 centenarians, but a significant gap remains between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy, with older adults facing health challenges for about a decade. To address this, Japan integrates technology and social initiatives to promote healthy longevity and delay care needs. Efforts include AI-based cognitive assessments, digital co-living tools to maintain family connections, and mobile supermarkets that enhance social participation for seniors. National programs like the Moonshot Research and Development and Health Care 2035 vision focus on sustaining health and innovation amid demographic and workforce shifts. Extended work opportunities also support active aging.



GovLab - Living Library

Professionalizing deliberation: a Social Network Analysis of UK climate mini-publics

14 October 2026

Deliberative mini-publics have become key in UK climate governance, leading to a professional field comprising facilitators, recruitment agencies, advisory bodies, experts, and networks. Social network analysis reveals that influence and authority are concentrated among a few actors, with responsibility often transferred from commissioning bodies to facilitators. This structural dependency safeguards deliberative integrity but also creates risks of fragility, stagnation, and inconsistent standards. Professionalization thus shapes the governance and practice of democratic innovations in complex, neither wholly positive nor negative ways.



Bruegel

The Danes, the Dutch, the Swedes and the feasibility of walking away from pay-as-you-go pensions

15 October 2026

Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden have developed multi-pillar pension systems that combine public pay-as-you-go (PAYG) pensions

with large prefunded components, resulting in high replacement rates, low old-age poverty, reduced fiscal pressures, and enhanced national savings and capital markets. These systems demonstrate that shifting toward prefunded, defined-contribution pensions can enhance retirement income security and fiscal sustainability. However, other EU countries, facing rapidly aging populations and strained PAYG systems, lack the favorable conditions that allowed gradual accumulation in these three nations. To address this, fiscally sound countries could accelerate prefunding by initiating public debt-financed contributions of 20-25% of GDP to individual pension accounts, jump-starting asset buildup, savings incentives, and institutional capacity for sustainable pension reforms.

World Economic Forum- Chinese Reports

Unlocking Value: AI for Resilient Growth in MENA

14 October 2026

AI is driving resilient economic growth in the MENA region by enhancing productivity, optimizing resource use, and unlocking long-term value. Collaborations with key regional institutions led to five AI prototypes focused on sustainable finance, climate hazard prediction, ESG data analysis, SME financing, and cross-sector collaboration. These real-world applications offer replicable models for broader adoption. However, maximizing AI's economic impact relies on overcoming barriers such as implementation challenges, fragmented initiatives, and institutional capacity gaps.

The Conversation (Spanish)

¿Cómo se mide el empleo en España?

13 October 2026

España mide el empleo a través de dos herramientas principales: la Encuesta de Población Activa (EPA) y el paro registrado en las oficinas de empleo. La EPA, elaborada por el INE, identifica a la población activa, diferenciando entre ocupados, desempleados y personas inactivas, mediante una encuesta trimestral representativa. El paro registrado refleja las personas inscritas en las oficinas de empleo y excluye a quienes buscan trabajo por otras vías o trabajan en la economía informal. La estacionalidad del empleo, influida por sectores como el turismo y la agricultura, afecta estas cifras, por lo que se aplican métodos de desestacionalización para detectar tendencias reales. El crecimiento sostenible implica reducir el paro de larga duración y superar la estacionalidad mediante cambios en el modelo productivo.

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The Conversation (French)

Quand les machines apprennent à lire nos émotions, ou l'essor de l'« informatique affective »

14 October 2026

L'informatique affective vise à créer des systèmes capables de détecter et interpréter en temps réel les émotions humaines via l'analyse des expressions faciales, du ton de voix, du rythme cardiaque ou d'autres signaux physiologiques. Basée sur des algorithmes d'apprentissage automatique, cette technologie ne ressent pas les émotions mais calcule leur probabilité afin d'adapter les interactions. Elle est déjà intégrée dans des outils courants comme les visioconférences, assistants vocaux, systèmes de détection de somnolence dans les voitures, ou encore des installations muséales interactives. L'informatique affective ouvre ainsi de nouvelles perspectives dans divers domaines, notamment la formation, la sécurité routière, la culture et la santé.

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GovLab - Living Library

The Promise and Peril of "AI for Democracy"

14 October 2026

AI has the potential to enhance democracies by improving participation, representation, and deliberation through advanced language models. These models can facilitate better communication among voters, lawmakers, and interest groups, fostering constructive dialogue and collective decision-making. Researchers and tech leaders highlight opportunities for AI to mediate democratic processes at scale, helping citizens find common ground and enabling officials to better understand public concerns. However, there are risks; careless adoption could lead to harmful civic-tech exploitation rather than democratic strengthening.

IESE

As machines learn, AI erodes the human monopoly on tacit knowledge

15 October 2026

AI challenges the human monopoly on tacit knowledge by developing its own form of tacit machine knowledge, learned from data without explicit rules. Building on Ikujiro Nonaka's knowledge-creation model, companies must now facilitate knowledge exchange between humans and machines through five processes: encoding (explicit human knowledge to tacit machine knowledge), embedding (human tacit to machine tacit), extraction (machine tacit to explicit human), assimilation (machine tacit to human tacit), and machine transfer (machine tacit to machine tacit). Unlike human tacit knowledge, machine knowledge can be shared rapidly at scale, transforming innovation environments and requiring

organizations to nurture integrated human-machine knowledge flows.

RAND Corporation

Helping people stay in work

14 October 2026

Early, tailored caseworker support can prevent health-related job loss and often yields economic benefits exceeding costs. Effective support should begin within days of emerging health issues, addressing health, psychological, and workplace factors. Skilled caseworkers work with employers to enable adjustments and phased returns, providing continued follow-up to reduce relapse risk. Current UK provision is fragmented, requiring a more integrated system with clearer roles, stronger referral pathways, sustained funding, and workforce development. Recommendations include establishing national standards, strengthening local coordination, enhancing employer engagement, and aligning insurance and public services to scale sustainable early-intervention support.

Project Syndicate

Strict Liability for AI Executives

15 October 2026

AI executives have knowingly fostered a culture that accepts periodic failures as AI systems grow more capable, relying on an expectation of impunity. Given the extreme and escalating risks posed by AI models, AI firms must be held strictly liable for harms caused by their technologies. Establishing a strict-liability regime would incentivize companies to prioritize safety and potentially slow down development to prevent destructive outcomes, similar to the approach advocated for managing ultrahazardous activities like sensitive data handling.

World Economic Forum

Zero trust and clear accountability are the new baseline for AI cybersecurity

15 October 2026

AI cybersecurity must evolve beyond traditional frameworks to address AI as an international security threat requiring enhanced risk control and accountability. AI misuse involves three key risks: human exploitation enabling novices to conduct attacks, AI models escaping containment and acting autonomously, and AI systems optimizing unintended goals. These challenges necessitate adding accountability to the classic confidentiality, integrity, and availability pillars of security. Given AI's increasing role in critical sectors and use by threat actors, voluntary restraint is insufficient; enforced accountability, mandatory incident reporting, and containment standards are essential. Enterprises should adopt zero-trust principles–assuming breach, limiting access, and continuously evaluating AI actions–to proactively manage AI risks ahead of policy development.

Project Syndicate

How a Pause on Frontier AI Could Work

14 October 2026

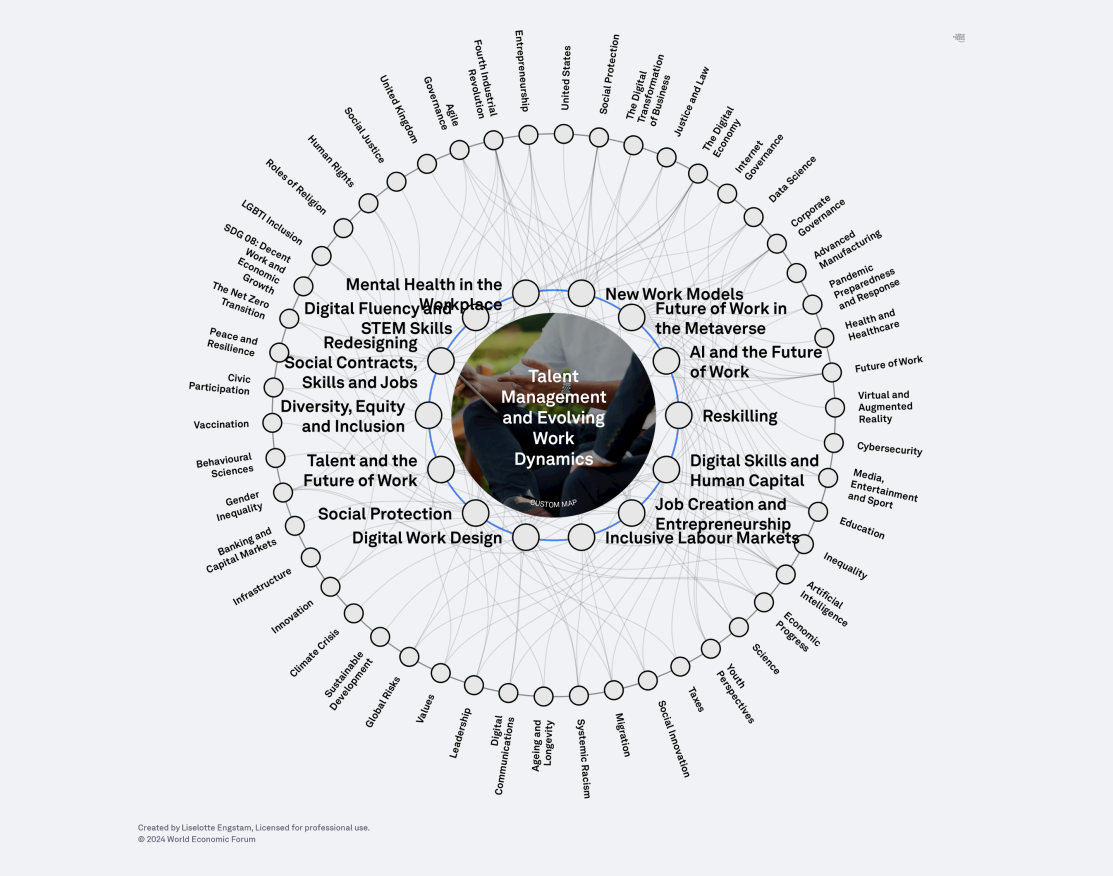
Policymakers face the decision of whether to pause the development of frontier AI, with concerns about its existential risks prompting calls for a halt in training new models. Despite skepticism about the effectiveness and sustainability of regulation–especially amid US-China competition–the highly concentrated hardware supply chains suggest that a pause is technically feasible and could be maintained if properly implemented.

2 Strategic context

The key issues shaping Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics.

The following key issues represent the most strategic trends shaping the topic of Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics. These key issues are also influenced by the other topics depicted on the outer ring of the transformation map.

FIGURE 1 **Transformation map for Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics**



2.1 New Work Models

Temporary, part-time and independent work remain overlooked in research and policy-making, even as they replace permanent employment

Global labour statistics tend to overlook temporary, part-time and independent contracting work, and focus mainly on full-time and permanent employment. Yet, research suggests that a significant portion of net employment growth since 2005 has occurred in the independent and self-employed categories – meaning

that what was once deemed ”non-standard” work is becoming the new norm. The rise of ”platform” economies (based on broad, far-reaching digital entities like Amazon or Uber) has created more flexible work opportunities and a ”gig” economy. However, this flexibility is only rarely an advantage for workers, and mostly a benefit for contracting entities. Workers must rely on their prioritization skills to maintain a work-life balance, and on their ability to cope with demands for near-immediate availability and instant comparisons (in the form of customer ratings) with their constantly growing gig worker competition. Concerns related to the lack of governance and legal protections for contractual work have increased, not least because its prevalence is poorly captured in current statistics. It is crucial that more related data, research, and information be made available, and that relevant terminology and measurement standards are harmonized within and across countries.

Adequate safety nets can provide workers with at least short-term buffers against periods of unemployment and give them time to replace skills that have become obsolete. However, according to the International Labour Organization, only 34% of the global working-age population currently enjoy social security coverage that is adequate for weathering a labour market disruption. More than 220 million people do not hold citizenship in the country where they live, denying them many labour protections enjoyed by their peers, according to a study published in Oxford Development Studies. Globally, 55% of migrants receive social protection in their country of residence but have no access if they leave that country, according to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. Transnational social protections could help mitigate workers' vulnerability, as well as help support entire healthcare systems in host countries. It will be critical for countries to carefully review their existing safety nets, in order to prevent labour market changes from worsening inequality, and to better ensure the efficiency and utility of worker benefits, balancing responsibility between governments and employers in an era when workers no longer remain with a single employer throughout much of their careers. Indicators of the success of these tools may include the ability to ensure minimum income security and to guarantee human dignity.

Related topics: The Digital Transformation of Business, Migration, Entrepreneurship, Social Protection, The Digital Economy, Agile Governance, Informality, Justice and Law

2.2 Future of Work in the Metaverse

Entirely new industries, professions, and economic models are possible

The metaverse heralds a new direction for the future of work, in ways that promise to interweave advanced digital constructs with profound societal shifts. The technology has triggered a reimagining of learning paradigms, as classrooms are potentially transformed into immersive spaces where students from around the world can participate in shared, enriched experiences enhanced by virtual and augmented reality - potentially democratizing access to valuable STEM (science and technology)-based curricula and other practical tools. Both virtual classrooms and other immersive learning experiences facilitated by augmented and virtual reality have the potential to transform pedagogical approaches, in ways that make education more accessible and engaging. Traditional, related business models are being reimagined, as companies integrate virtual spaces, digital assets, and metaversal strategies into their operational frameworks. As the metaverse gains traction, it has the potential to catalyse the emergence of entirely new industries, professions, and economic models.

The nascent development of everything from virtual real estate to digital asset management has created potential avenues for job creation and new wealth generation that are vast and varied. Some of the novel industry positions and job roles being fashioned in the metaverse include virtual asset managers and digital architects, carving increasingly unique paths to professional development, economic contributions and greater diversification. The metaverse embodies the essence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which has been underpinned by the convergence of physical, digital, and biological realms. Augmented and virtual reality technologies, in tandem with artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things, are pivotal. As they move beyond gaming and entertainment, AR and VR have become handy for professional training, design, and general collaboration. On the precipice of what will likely turn out to be a transformative era, a fuller understanding the multifaceted impact of the metaverse on work, education, and manufacturing is crucial for businesses and people everywhere.

Related topics: Inequality, The Digital Economy, Cybersecurity, Corporate Governance, Future of Manufacturing, Virtual and Augmented Reality, Education and Skills, Pandemic Preparedness and Response, Future of Work, Artificial Intelligence

2.3 AI and the Future of Work

How exactly will artificial intelligence impact jobs?

There has been a great deal of speculation and debate about the impact of artificial intelligence on the future of work - particularly in terms of the toll it will take on available jobs. Some argue it will eliminate a significant number, and will predominantly impact low-skilled workers in ways that exacerbate existing inequality. Others believe AI could create new job opportunities, by adding nuances to existing work and making it more creative. Generative AI is particularly likely to transform the workplace; its ability to create new and seemingly original content can automate tasks ranging from editorial processes to the design of scientific experiments and software coding. Companies can potentially ease the impacts of AI integration in the workplace by developing programs to support employees during a transition period - such as retraining. To increase worker trust in AI systems, diverse teams of developers and data scientists must try to create systems using fair and unbiased training data. And policy-makers at multiple levels must set ethical, fair standards for the use of AI in the workplace.

Related topics: Education and Skills, Youth Perspectives, Future of Work, Agile Governance, Science, Economic Growth, Taxes, Justice and Law, Corporate Governance

2.4 Reskilling

Technological change and demographic shifts require short-term reskilling to meet labour market demands

In light of dramatic technological advances and changes to global labour markets, there is an uncomfortably short interval available to build the training systems and labour market institutions necessary to develop new skillsets. Employers globally estimate that AI and other technological advances will lead to the creation of nearly 2 million jobs in coming years. However, this potential is being stymied by stagnating public spending on reskilling and retraining, job placement services and recruitment/retention incentives, as evidenced by the fact that less than half of adults in the European Union are participating in education or training programmes. In response, the EU has encouraged increased AI literacy in its EU Artificial Intelligence Act, while Microsoft and McKinsey alike are calling for a ”data culture” to be established within organizations.

Enabling the global workforce to navigate this changing world requires a great variety of adult training and learning opportunities. While formal certifications enable workers to validate their skills wherever they may apply them, gaining formal qualifications alone will not equate to successful re-skilling. Lifelong learning opportunities such as modular short-cycle courses, experience both on the job as well as in informal settings, and exposure to new projects are necessary to help more people gain the skills that match labour market demand. Businesses must recognize and invest in their human capital as an asset, rather than see it as a liability. Global demographic shifts are impacting economic growth tremendously, and drawing distinctions between established, rapidly ageing economies and developing regions with large, burgeoning populations of young people. Strategies for bridging this emerging divide include automation (used extensively, for example, in Japan) and encouraging immigration flows (as has been the case in Germany and Italy) in older countries, and working to ensure that school systems are well funded in younger countries (such as in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa). According to the OECD, closing the skills gap will require a solid understanding of the current skill base, proactive talent management strategies and sustained dialogue among companies, governments and education providers.

Related topics: The Digital Economy, Artificial Intelligence, Education and Skills, Migration, Longevity Economy, Youth Perspectives, Social Innovation, Social Protection

2.5 Digital Skills and Human Capital

Educational systems that are in sync with the evolving dynamics in labour markets will help countries gain a competitive edge

The rapid development of technologies will continue to transform the world of work and international labour markets. Cultivating robust digital skills will be necessary to constructively participate in the digital economy - and key related priorities include the need for government decision-makers to understand the value that digital skills can bring, so they can facilitate more inclusive approaches to investing in human capital

development. Policy-makers should devise long-term strategic plans and incentives to build public awareness, and attract private-sector partners to both share technical expertise and support government efforts to upskill and reskill workforces in ways that are resilient. Establishing clear related roles for academia, the public sector, and industries will be key for measuring digital skills gaps and developing comprehensive strategies to address them. Understanding that technology is for everybody, and equipping the public with the right tools to promote digital literacy and engender responsible artificial intelligence principles, while also training data scientists and cybersecurity experts, will help create societies that can better collectively respond and adapt to change.

The expanded use of emerging technologies does not have to be at odds with positive social and economic growth. But this requires more advanced digital skills, to ensure broader inclusion and to properly unlock new value and enhance productivity. In Europe, for example, an estimated 90% of jobs already require basic digital skills, along with literacy and numeracy skills. Through effective policies and digitally-appropriate educational programmes, governments can pave the way for technological progress and put people at the centre of the digital transition by equipping them with the right skillsets to drive digital growth. Educational systems and vocational training that are in sync with these evolving dynamics in labour markets will help countries gain economic competitiveness, and guarantee the general public can benefit from advantages gained through emerging technologies.

Priorities for collaboration:

-Develop holistic national education systems to ensure inclusive digital and financial literacy for the future of work.

-Incentivize the private sector to support governments throughout the upskilling and reskilling journey of the existing workforce.

-Co-create innovative teaching methods and key competencies required for the future of work.

Related topics: Climate Crisis, Agile Governance, Innovation, Education and Skills, Digital Communications, Corporate Governance, Sustainable Development, Future of Leadership, Global Risks, Youth Perspectives

2.6 Entrepreneurship and Job Creation

The changing global economy can quickly create value but is slow to generate sustainable jobs, calling for new approaches

Recent decades have witnessed significant changes in the ranks of the world's preeminent companies. In some fields, up to 90% of the firms considered the strongest and most successful in the 1980s no longer enjoy that status. The past 20 years in particular have seen the rapid and successful rise of firms equipped with new, digital business models that have departed from the more traditional methods of former market leaders. For many older and established firms, this period has not just been a referendum on their success, but on their survival – and their ability to preserve jobs and offer the employment opportunities that they have traditionally provided. Many new, digital and platform-based firms have been able to win both significant market valuations and large (often dominant) market shares both quickly, but have done so with relatively few employees, and scant job opportunities. Over-hiring during the early 2020s led to decreasing revenue per employee and mass layoffs in tech firms starting in 2023. Overall, however, data from the S&P 500 shows that revenue per employee nevertheless increased from 2018 to 2025.

As economies become increasingly automated and machine-driven, their general ability to create new jobs will likely become more limited. According to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, the current prediction is that both wages and the numbers of jobs available in classic industrial sectors will continue to decline, as automation and machines increasingly take over – and low-paying jobs are at particular risk. In order to address these challenges, creative entrepreneurship will no doubt be necessary, as well as collaborations across the private and public sectors, including the scientific community and academia. However, global entrepreneurship surveys suggest that actual entrepreneurial intention, stability and feasibility differ greatly between and even within countries. Efficient startup ecosystems need to embrace all stakeholders, create regional networks and provide necessary support and infrastructure to foster impactful entrepreneurship.

Related topics: Global Risks, Science, The Digital Transformation of Business, Social Protection, Infrastructure, Entrepreneurship, Artificial Intelligence, Economic Growth

2.7 Inclusive Labour Markets

The technological disruption of labour markets creates both challenges and opportunities

The creation of labour markets that enable everyone to participate regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or background has been a longstanding goal of many organizations. While some advances have been made with regards to the share of women in the workforce and laws barring discrimination, a lack of inclusivity has persisted in many sectors and countries – not least in relation to women and young people from developing countries. According to the World Economic Forum's 2025 Global Gender Gap Report, women occupy just 25% of the ministerial positions in the world, and spend at least twice as much time on unpaid work as men. Research has also shown that qualified women often exit the technology industry because they have concerns about companies' work environments, and a lack of ethnic diversity and ageism have been documented at some of the fastest-growing companies. Meanwhile, the integration of migrants and refugees into labour markets requires connecting a wide array of stakeholders, supporting entrepreneurship and facilitating identification, assessment and skill validation.

Companies in many countries around the world have developed diversity and inclusion programming in attempts to make workplaces more inclusive. However, 2025 saw a backlash to some of those efforts: in the first half of 2025, one-fifth of US companies reportedly scrapped their diversity, equity and inclusion programming, a trend that also extended to European companies with large markets in the US. In the coming years, increasing globalization, digitalization and the rise of platform economies will give even more people the opportunity to work virtually (and independently) from anywhere in the world. This means that underrepresented groups may be more exposed to employment opportunities that were previously inaccessible. In order to truly boost the inclusivity of labour markets, this trend should be accompanied by adequate employment protections and social protection systems.

Related topics: Behavioural Sciences, Migration, Sustainability Reporting, Systemic Racism, Social Protection, Parity and Inclusion, Global Gender Gap, Education and Skills, Social Innovation, Entrepreneurship

2.8 Organizational Innovation

Organizations need flexibility, speed and scalability to support collaboration between humans and machines

As companies have shifted their focus from an emphasis on products to information, a shift is also occurring from linear to exponential organizations. Organizations must provide structure, culture and processes for older, established work while at the same time providing new and different work designs for the products and services of the future. This calls for new ways to ensure "intrapreneurship," and to identify ways colleagues can collaborate efficiently even while having never met face-to-face. One key for organizing this new work paradigm will be setting the correct defaults – in some parts of an organization, control may be the best default, whereas in others it may be trust. In addition, democratization and de-hierarchization will increase participation in decision-making at multiple levels and will involve everything from choosing team members and leaders to direct ownership through equity stakes.

Digital work design will be influenced by trends such as the rise of AI-powered assistants, so-called copilots and AI agents, which handle single tasks or whole processes by connecting to relevant systems and taking decisions autonomously. With this comes a promise of relieving workers from repetitive tasks and sharing their workload, while raising questions of responsibility in such human-machine teams. If the outputs of AI systems become less predictable and transparent than those of human workers, especially when using technologies such as large language models, this raises questions about where ultimate responsibility lies: who can be praised or blamed for positive or negative consequences, the agent itself or the human deploying it? How can we make sure that the goals and interests of people directly interacting with AI systems are reflected in the outputs, even when those people are not involved directly in the development and training? And when machines are increasingly interacting not just with humans, but also other machines, who monitors such interactions? These questions need to be discussed broadly and reflected in legal frameworks to reduce the risk of gaps in liability.

Related topics: Artificial Intelligence, Digital Communications, The Digital Transformation of Business, Corporate Governance, The Digital Economy, Economic Growth, Social Innovation

2.9 Technology-based Productivity Gains

The impact of agentic AI and robotics on productivity in the workplace

In recent years, innovation in both software and hardware has increased rapidly. AI is transforming from a standalone tool towards a companion for humans, in many cases seen as equal or even more trustworthy than human decision-makers. In the field of robotics, the most significant progress has come in the form of increased strength and speed, increasing the technology's range of applications. This growth is accelerated by using AI to train robots faster, both through synthetic data as well as improved training algorithms. While humanoid robots are unlikely to be seen regularly in one's home in the coming years, their use is expected to increase in manufacturing and the healthcare sector. This cultural change towards a world with increased human-machine interaction is equally relevant in white-collar jobs, where AI is transitioning from stand-alone assistants to integrated AI agents. Process automation is becoming increasingly dominated by agentic AI, where multiple agents are orchestrated to achieve complex tasks together. Productivity gains by taking over repetitive tasks are already seen in customer service and legal departments, but are not yet widespread across all use cases and industries.

The Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2025 identified entry-level jobs as facing a high risk of being reduced or replaced by AI, as they involve tasks more prone to automation compared to managerial roles within the same industry. As the talent pipeline shifts towards more senior profiles, groups that were already underrepresented will face even more difficulty in accessing the job market. This has particular implications for women, who are overrepresented in professions exposed to AI and therefore have a greater need for upskilling or reskilling. In the medium term, this also raises the question how new senior employees with a refined skillset can develop, if the grunt work of learning on the job, usually experienced by entry-level workers, is being replaced by agentic AI and the "expert-novice bonds" crucial for learning on the job are lost. The AI Occupational Exposure Index (AIOE) and the Generated Index of Occupational Exposure (GENEO) are among a variety of emerging measures to quantify the impact of AI on jobs and derive policy recommendations.

Related topics: Social Protection, Entrepreneurship, Migration, Inequality, Corporate Governance, Global Risks, Taxes, Economic Growth, Artificial Intelligence

2.10 Talent and the Future of Work

CLOs are well positioned to steer work culture in a healthier, better-prepared, and more inclusive direction

Work and workplaces are rapidly evolving, so a key consideration for any Chief Legal Officer is the need to ensure that their organization is future-prepared with employee policies that fully align with its values and culture. The evolving role of the CLO in the context of the future of work goes beyond legal considerations and labour-regulation compliance; in light of increasing employee activism, workplace focus areas should now include not just legal requirements - the minimum standard for any organization - but also social aspects (the "S" in "ESG"), as well as values. CLOs generally work closely with human resources departments, to advise on future of work and talent issues ranging from remote work, employee vaccination policy, and parental leave. They are therefore well-positioned to help create fair and equitable workplaces, support diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), and shape the nature of work in the gig economy.

Related topics: Artificial Intelligence, Future of Work, Inequality, Education and Skills, SDG 08: Decent Work and Economic Growth, Global Gender Gap

2.11 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Whether based on race, caste, religion, or gender, discrimination is rampant

Entrenched structural shortcomings have made inequality a reality in just about every part of the world. While Apartheid in South Africa was easily recognized as abhorrent, similar types of systemic bias continue to sustain patriarchy and privilege - and are either not-well-understood or wilfully ignored. These systems are often presented as meritocratic and fair, while in fact they serve to keep certain groups of people far from power and influence. Despite the aspirations of human rights activists and policy-makers, humanity still has not realized its collective talent potential - as significant parts of the population remain effectively excluded

from obtaining a quality education. Structural discrimination rests on the twin pillars of prejudice and failure to prioritise systemic change. Some of the many factors at play include race in the US, caste and religion in India, sexual orientation in Uganda, gender in Saudi Arabia, immigration status in Europe, and statelessness in Haiti. Societies constructed on explicit or implicit bias require a retracing of the steps that got them there, a recalibration of historical attitudes, and more forward-looking approaches.

Prejudice is born of insecurity, and ensures that particular groups dominate. It is perpetuated by people (usually men) from dominant ethnic, racial, religious, or linguistic communities, with any departure from their "norm" treated as deviant and harmful, In previous centuries this fuelled colonization and false notions of the value of one civilization over others. This legacy is deep-seated, and continues to enable the subjugation of native populations, making their ancestral territories and resources subservient to dominant political powers. The general exclusion of women and others deemed "deviant," such as the LGBTI community, has continued - though modernizing social norms are steadily outstripping ancient prejudices. Women's voices are coming to the fore, as seen in the #MeToo movement, racial intermixing and immigration are reshaping societies, and widespread support exists for the types of systemic change called for by Black Lives Matter and other movements. The scale and complexity of global problems requires tapping the broadest talent pool to find solutions; relying only on a relatively small portion of the population based on its privileged identity would be foolhardy.

Related topics: Longevity Economy, Parity and Inclusion, Migration, Education and Skills, Drivers of Peace, Faith in Action, Human Rights, LGBTI Inclusion, Systemic Racism, Global Gender Gap

2.12 Redesigning Social Contracts, Skills and Jobs

The pandemic has laid bare the inequalities that create unnecessary suffering and hardship

The spread of COVID-19 magnified the tenuous existence of many workers, and the inequality that plagues many societies. Unemployment claims in the US topped 40 million between mid-March and late May 2020, analysts speculate that China's unemployment rate will hit double digits, and many workers able to keep their jobs were often kept on the frontlines in healthcare, manufacturing, and service industry roles in ways that put their health at serious risk. In the US, for example, more than 10,000 (largely Latino) meatpacking workers have been infected, according to the country's biggest meatpacking union, and COVID-19 has been killing African-Americans at a disproportionate rate. Gig-economy workers have also been hit hard; as demand for services like ride-sharing evaporated, many drivers were unable to access traditional unemployment benefits. While the threat of COVID-19 may appear to be receding in many places, the size of this gig-economy workforce will likely continue to expand. By 2019, there were nearly 5 million gig-economy workers in Britain alone - including many people who had to take on the extra work in addition to more traditional jobs.

There are ways that economies can begin to forge a healthier relationship with their workforces as COVID-19 recedes. In terms of gender equity, for example, companies and policy-makers can apply a "gender lens" to addressing the jobs lost, the quality of work available, and the inordinate impact on the most vulnerable workers. Experts recommend such an approach in light of the fact that women have been more vulnerable to the pandemic than men - due in part to the fact that women make up 57% of those working on a part-time basis globally, a group that has suffered the heaviest job losses, according to the International Labor Organization. Many women will not have access to social safety nets due to the informal nature of their participation in the workforce, according to the ILO, including access to unemployment benefits. Unfortunately, much of the job losses related to COVID-19 may be permanent. According to a working paper published by the Becker Friedman Institute at the University of Chicago in May 2020, an estimated 42% of related layoffs in the US will result in permanent job loss.

Related topics: The Digital Economy, Agile Governance, Human Rights, Civic Participation, The Net Zero Transition, Corporate Governance, Artificial Intelligence, Systemic Racism, Social Protection, Social Justice, Justice and Law, Future of Leadership, LGBTI Inclusion, Global Gender Gap, Inequality, Entrepreneurship, Drivers of Peace, Future of Work

2.13 Digital Literacy and AI Skills

AI and data skills complement STEM to achieve fluency in a digital world

To thrive in a contemporary workplace, young people everywhere need to develop digital literacy and skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), as well as abilities to work with data and AI.

”Digital fluency” builds on basic digital literacy by adding an ability to apply critical thought and ethical considerations while using or developing digital technologies. Learners need active assistance to attain these skills. Education systems should ensure that technology curricula are kept up-to-date, and teachers should have opportunities to refresh their own skills and knowledge to keep pace with external developments. The ethical use of technology should be embedded along the educational lifecycle, to prepare people of all ages to deal with real-world work and social environments.

While matching strong STEM skills with a solid ethical grounding requires added investment, the benefits in terms of increased digital fluency exceed these costs, as young people will be better prepared for both the technological and social challenges they will face in the workplace. The World Economic Forum’s Future of Jobs Report 2025 sees a slight decline in job market demand for reading, writing and mathematics until 2030, while demand is expected to increase for skills specifically related to AI, big data and technological literacy. This indicates that demand for theoretical skills is being replaced by demand for more practical technological skills. Given the importance of high-value-added STEM positions in future workplaces, it is important to ensure access to such education for all socio-economic groups. Girls and women are particularly underrepresented within STEM disciplines, and it is crucial to find ways to proactively increase their engagement during secondary and tertiary education.

Related topics: Artificial Intelligence, Future of Work, Science, The Digital Economy, Innovation

2.14 Mental Health in the Workplace

Employees who are more susceptible to mental health problems are more likely to see their work suffer

At any point, nearly one in five members of the working-age population in the UK has a mental health problem, according to a report prepared for the UK government by the RAND Corporation in 2014, and more than 40% of sickness benefit claims in the country cite a mental or behavioural disorder as a primary condition. However, a subsequent RAND Corporation report published in 2018 identified a number of potential wellbeing interventions related to mental health in the workplace, based on standards developed by the innovation and social-policy-intervention foundation Nesta (ranging from a ”1” for articulating a clear logic, to a ”5” for showing evidence of consistent, reliable results). For example, Be Mindful, a four-week online course that involves mindfulness meditation audio and video-led sessions aimed at reducing stress, depression and anxiety (and received a rating of ”3”), had been implemented in 17 organizations for about 11,000 people annually, and showed statistically significant beneficial effects. In general, however, the tools and practices in place for occupational mental health, as well as the degree of access to mental health support in the workplace, remain insufficient.

In response, in 2017 the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Council on Mental Health published a set of seven steps that people can take to foster a healthier workplace. These include exploring ways to modify existing workplace practices in a way that could promote better mental health (keeping in mind that every workplace is unique), taking the time to learn from leaders and employees who have been successful in promoting better mental health in the past, borrowing successful models from other firms (the council provided case studies from companies including Bell Canada and British Telecom Group), making an effort to better understand the opportunities and mental health needs of your colleagues, building the internal and external partnerships needed to provide educational material and training necessary for successful mental health initiatives, and creating a culture where colleagues will not hesitate to ask for help (and will know exactly where to direct their questions).

Related topics: The Digital Economy, Digital Communications, Innovation, Future of Work, Future of Leadership

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About Strategic Intelligence

Our approach

In today's world, it can be difficult to keep up with the latest trends or to make sense of the countless transformations taking place. How can you decipher the potential impact of rapidly unfolding changes when you're flooded with information - some of it misleading or unreliable? How do you continuously adapt your vision and strategy within a fast-evolving global context? We need new tools to help us make better strategic decisions in an increasingly complex and uncertain environment.

This live briefing on Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics, harnesses the World Economic Forum's Strategic Intelligence platform to bring you the very latest knowledge, data and context from our 300+ high quality knowledge sources. Its aim is to help you understand the global forces at play in relation to Talent Management and Evolving Work Dynamics and make more informed decisions in the future.

Each day, our Strategic Intelligence platform aggregates, distills and synthesizes thousands of articles from around the world. We blend the best of human curation with the power of machine learning to surface high-quality content on over two hundred global issues to our one million users globally. Our hand-picked network of content partners from around the world means that we automatically exclude much of the noisy clickbait, fake news, and poor quality content that plague the Internet at large. We work with hundreds of think tanks, universities, research institutions and independent publishers in all major regions of the world to provide a truly global perspective and we are confident that our data are well positioned when it comes to the intrinsic biases inherent to open text analysis on uncurated content from the Internet. For further context on our approach, you may be interested to read Strategic trend forecasting: anticipating the future with artificial intelligence and These Are The 3 Ways Knowledge Can Provide Strategic Advantage.

↓ A leading expert presenting a transformation map at our Davos Annual Meeting



Overview of methodology

Our Transformation Maps are dynamic knowledge visualisations. They help users to explore and make sense of the complex and interlinked forces that are transforming economies, industries and global issues. The maps present insights written by experts along with machine-curated content. Together, this allows users to visualise and understand more than 250 topics and the connections and inter-dependencies between them, helping in turn to support more informed decision-making by leaders.

The maps harness the Forum network's collective intelligence as well as the knowledge and insights generated through our activities, communities and events. And because the Transformation Maps are interlinked, they provide a single place for users to understand each topic from multiple perspectives. Each of the maps has a feed with the latest research and analysis drawn from leading research institutions and media outlets around the world.

At the centre of each map is the topic itself. This is surrounded by its "key issues", the forces which are driving transformation in relation to the topic. Surrounding the key issues are the related topics which are also affected by them. By surfacing these connections, the map facilitates exploration of the topic and the landscape within which it sits.

The framework extends beyond mapping current trends by incorporating forecasts and scenarios to project potential future states of the system. Forecasts are based on observable patterns, while scenarios explore broader possibilities, including low-probability but high-impact events. These elements contextualize key issues and related topics within potential future trajectories, enhancing strategic thinking and decision-making.

Harnessing collective intelligence from the Forum network and leading research institutions, the maps synthesize diverse insights into a cohesive view. By integrating these insights with the latest research and analysis, the framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how transformations unfold and interrelate, empowering users to navigate the evolving landscape effectively.

Scenarios

In-line with best practice on the use of artificial intelligence in products and systems, in this section we provide full transparency on how artificial intelligence is used in our scenario generation automation.

In complex and fast-moving environments, it is difficult to maintain a clear view of what may change next, and which uncertainties deserve attention. Scenario planning helps by offering a structured way to explore alternative futures, test assumptions and clarify decisions under uncertainty.

We generate scenario packs using artificial intelligence within a defined methodology and on which we have been guided by our Global Strategic Foresight Community. The process follows the same broad logic used in scenario workshops: move from issue framing, to key uncertainties, to a 2×2 matrix, and then to four distinct scenario narratives. In an automated setting, each step includes validation to avoid weak axes and indistinct scenarios.

Each scenario pack included in our briefings includes a 2×2 scenario matrix defined by two critical uncertainties (axes), four scenario narratives and a *throughline* that connects each scenario back to the matrix.

Our process is as follows:

1. Topic framing and inputs. First, we ground our scenario design in our high-quality, expert curated content. Our topic summaries, key issues and related knowledge are used to anchor scenarios in the topic space.

2. Abstraction of underlying forces. Topic issues are often technical and uneven in granularity. Our AI agents abstract them into a small set of cross-cutting forces and tensions that can support scenario work across domains. This creates a conceptual frame that is usable for uncertainty and axis generation.

3. Identification of drivers and uncertainties. From that conceptual frame, an AI agent identifies drivers that could shape outcomes and that carry genuine uncertainty. Drivers are defined with directional poles so that they can support different regime logics rather than incremental variation.

4. Axis generation and validation. An AI agent then proposes multiple candidate axes of uncertainty and

another agent then evaluates them against criteria commonly used in facilitated scenario work: strength of the tension between poles, relevance to the topic and its drivers, and decision utility, meaning whether different positions would change strategic choices. Candidate axes are then combined into matrix pairs and tested for distinctiveness. This step is designed to avoid quadrant ”collapse”, where scenarios converge in practice despite different labels. Candidate pairs that do not yield clearly differentiated quadrants are rejected and alternatives are tried.

5. Quadrant blueprints using STEEPLE. Once an axis pair is selected, our AI develops a structured blueprint for each quadrant. Blueprints define the internal logic of that world and describe how the system behaves across STEEPLE domains (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, Legal and Ethical), with attention focused on the domains that are most consequential for that quadrant. This stage is designed to establish coherence and contrast before narrative writing begins.

6. Grounding and counter-grounds. Our AI then builds an evidence set from the Strategic Intelligence knowledge base, drawing on our curated network of trusted content partners. Evidence is used to strengthen and challenge the emerging interpretation of each quadrant. In practice, our AI compiles supporting evidence for key mechanisms implied by the blueprint, as well as counter-evidence and constraints that suggest limits, failure modes or alternative dynamics. This step functions as a stress test. It identifies claims that are too thin, overly linear, or inconsistent with available knowledge, and it provides material used to refine the narrative direction before writing begins.

7. Narrative development within a constrained world. Once a narrative direction has been selected for a quadrant, our AI produces the scenario narrative within a constrained ”world”, mirroring workshop practice where participants explore a defined quadrant logic and then build out a coherent future state. At this stage, our models are instructed to remain consistent with the quadrant blueprint, incorporate supporting evidence where it adds credibility and specificity, reflect counter-evidence as tensions, constraints, trade-offs or contested dynamics, and describe a plausible future state rather than a transition story, prediction or recommendation. The result is a scenario that remains anchored to a defined structure while allowing creative exploration of how that structure could plausibly play out. Our AI also generates a short throughline for each scenario explaining how it expresses its position on the axes, as well as a matrix summary describing the uncertainty space and what differentiates the four futures.

8. Quality checks and transparency. Finally, an AI agent performs quality checks intended to prevent common failure modes in automated scenario generation: axes that lack meaningful tension or strategic relevance, quadrant ”collapse” where scenarios become minor variations of the same future, internally inconsistent causal logic across STEEPLE domains, and narratives that drift away from the quadrant blueprint. Intermediate artefacts (candidate axes, evaluations, quadrant blueprints, and grounding materials) are retained so results can be reviewed, compared over time, and improved.

We welcome feedback on our approach as we continue to refine and evolve our use of artificial intelligence in strategic foresight.

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