



Think Ahead

INDIA TALENT TRENDS IN FINANCE 2023



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About ACCA

ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) is the global body for professional accountants.

We're a thriving global community of 241,000 members and 542,000 future members based in 178 countries and regions, who work across a wide range of sectors and industries. We uphold the highest professional and ethical values.

We offer everyone everywhere the opportunity to experience a rewarding career in accountancy, finance and management. Our qualifications and learning opportunities develop strategic business leaders, forward-thinking professionals with the financial, business and digital expertise essential for the creation of sustainable organisations and flourishing societies.

Since 1904, being a force for public good has been embedded in our purpose. In December 2020, we made commitments to the UN Sustainable Development Goals which we are measuring and will report on in our annual integrated report.

We believe that accountancy is a cornerstone profession of society and is vital in helping economies, organisations, and individuals to grow and prosper. It does this by creating robust trusted financial and business management, combating corruption, ensuring organisations are managed ethically, driving sustainability, and providing rewarding career opportunities.

And through our cutting-edge research, we lead the profession by answering today's questions and preparing for the future. We're a not-for-profit organisation.

Find out more at accaglobal.com

FOREWORD

At the heart of ACCA's approach to creating opportunities is the idea of enabling access to the profession for all, whatever their background.

In a continuously changing world, the profession also continues to evolve, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, with workplace trends suggesting unique challenges and opportunities.

ACCA's launch of the annual Global Talent Trends survey seeks to capture these challenges and opportunities for talent in finance and accountancy – thereby shaping the future of the profession globally and locally. With a keen focus on reinforcing our purpose as a force for public good, we will continue to collaborate with our strong network of stakeholders across regions, to deepen our insights and impact at a region- or country-specific level.

The India Talent Trends 2023 report builds on the Global Talent Trends report launched in February 2023 (ACCA 2023). It takes a deep dive into country-specific insights and attitudes captured via India respondents within the global survey of over 8,000 respondents.

The workplace is experiencing some of the biggest transformations in the 21st century so far, and our goal is to support professionals, employers and other key stakeholders in the profession across India through these insights. We will continue to work with employers and our partners, in shaping strategies for finance talent management, adapting and experimenting with new ways of working, as we enable an ever-relevant profession to be ready for the future.



Md. Sajid Khan
Director – India
ACCA

8,405 responses across the world, 148 countries

AFGHANISTAN ALBANIA ANGOLA ARGENTINA ARMENIA
AUSTRALIA AZERBAIJAN BAHAMAS BAHRAIN BANGLADESH
BARBADOS BENIN BERMUDA BOSNIA + HERZEGOVINA
BOTSWANA BRAZIL BRUNEI DARUSSALAM BURKINA FASO
CAMBODIA CAMEROON CANADA CHILE CHINA (MAINLAND)
COLOMBIA COSTA RICA CROATIA CYPRUS DOMINICA EGYPT
ETHIOPIA GAMBIA GEORGIA GERMANY GHANA GREECE
GRENADA GUYANA HAITI HONG KONG SAR OF CHINA HUNGARY
INDIA INDONESIA IRAN IRAQ REPUBLIC OF IRELAND ISLE OF
MAN JAMAICA JAPAN KAZAKHSTAN KENYA REPUBLIC OF
KOSOVO KUWAIT KYRGYZSTAN LEBANON LESOTHO LIBERIA
LIBYA LUXEMBOURG MALAWI MALAYSIA MALTA MAURITIUS
MOLDOVA MONGOLIA MONTSERRAT MOZAMBIQUE MYANMAR
NAMIBIA NEPAL NETHERLANDS NEW ZEALAND NIGERIA OMAN
PAKISTAN PANAMA PHILIPPINES POLAND QATAR ROMANIA
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SRI LANKA ST KITTS & NEVIS ST LUCIA ST VINCENT SUDAN
SWAZILAND SYRIA TAIWAN REGION TANZANIA TRINIDAD &
TOBAGO TURKEY UGANDA UK – ENGLAND UK – NORTHERN
IRELAND UK – SCOTLAND UKRAINE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
USA UZBEKISTAN VIETNAM ZAMBIA ZIMBABWE

At a glance:



#1 Well-being is a key priority

An emphasis on well-being and mental health is equally critical to both the attractiveness of the profession and the attractiveness of an organisation to finance talents in India.



#2 Technology is empowering but concerns prevail

Technology continues to drive productivity, but concerns are looming about the rapid pace of advancement and its capacity to replace jobs in the industry.



#3 Hybrid work opportunities are crucial

Hybrid work opportunities are no longer a luxury. Organisations will not only need to find the right type of hybrid arrangement, but also develop the managerial skills needed to maximise its benefits.



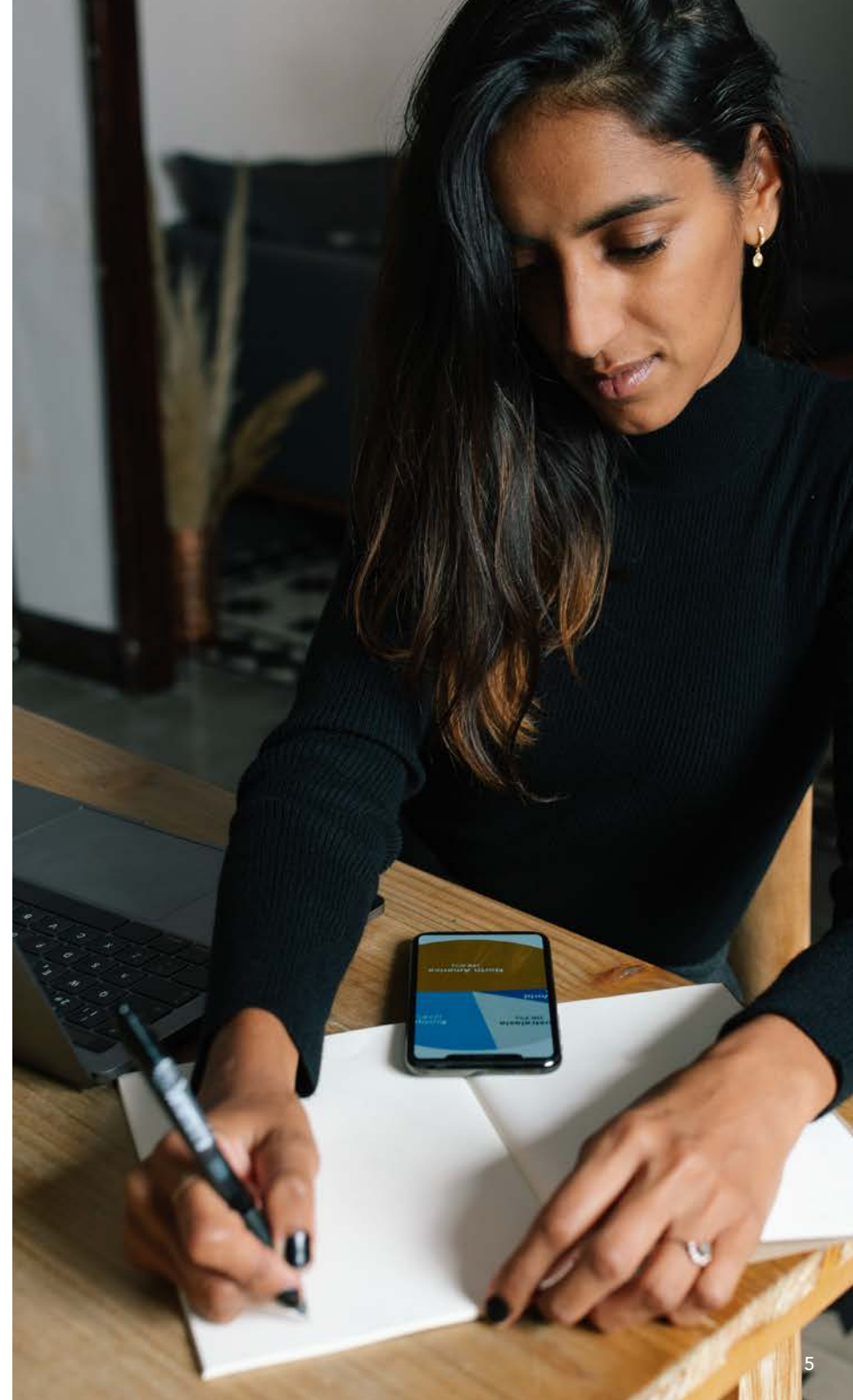
#4 Empowering skills drives satisfaction

Finance talents are more than ever keen on upskilling and reskilling for realising both workplace satisfaction and professional fulfilment.



#5 A more mobile profession is imminent

Mobility in the profession is on the rise and finance talents are moving in the direction of value. Work opportunities that provide more ways of adding value and being valued in return will attract and retain the best talents.



Executive summary

The survey of India's talent trends currently depicts a profession rapidly evolving as it embraces the future of work. Nuanced by the dynamic priorities of a largely young population, there are five key trends in India's accountancy and finance talent pool, which this report captures by drawing from a combination of expert views and a country-specific subset of ACCA's global survey.



#1 Well-being is a key priority

In the global survey, India ranked among the top three countries with the highest concerns about well-being and mental health. In 2019, the World Health Organization predicted economic losses in India worth over US\$1 trillion, owing to mental health conditions, between 2012 and 2030. These important findings make it imperative for the profession in India to play a more significant role in mitigating the impact of this trend in the finance industry.

A holistic approach to well-being is needed among finance professionals and their employers, ranging from the consideration for personal well-being and self-actualisation in the workplace, to social relevance, and physical and physiological safety. Organisations across all sectors need to integrate these factors into corporate priorities and retention strategies, with managers and finance team leads playing an important role in building the requisite level of trust to effect these, especially for employees recruited since the pandemic.



#2 Technology is empowering but concerns prevail

As a major trend in the workplace, technological development is a global phenomenon, albeit with adoption rates and pace of change varying across regions. In line with global responses, over 90% of respondents in India attested to the power of technology in enabling professionals to add value. As expected, almost 90% indicated an appetite for more training and development in this area, from their employers.

The trend is similar for Gen Z respondents in India, with the study showing that most are concerned about technology replacing their jobs. Experts allude to a generation that loves technology, but one gaining more mastery of social engagement tools than core workplace ones. This gap may be fuelling a sense of being overwhelmed in the workplace, with consequent worries about the impact of technology on their (largely operational) roles by driving efficiency and productivity.

The concern is not far-fetched, given the rapidly growing investment in automation and artificial intelligence (AI) in key sectors of the economy, including banking, financial services and insurance. If AI is expected to add US\$500bn to India's GDP by 2025, according to the International Data Corporation (IDC) India, the profession needs to be very well equipped to harness the opportunities while reducing the negative impact on the careers of professionals.



#3 Hybrid work opportunities are crucial

Unlike the global trend towards returning to working fully from the office, judging from our global survey, 70% of Indian professionals either work in hybrid or fully remote conditions and will not have it any other way. Interestingly, many of the 30% who work fully from the office in India also indicated a desire to work at least once a week from home.

A comparative analysis of workplace collaboration globally shows respondents in India having relatively low concerns about an employee's ability to engage and collaborate in hybrid conditions while retaining high productivity.

Hybrid working arrangements are not without challenges in the region, especially given a growing attrition rate in the accountancy and finance industry, alluded to by experts. Nonetheless, the crucial nature of this component means that organisations must consider this when developing policies and engagement strategies.

In addressing attrition in hybrid work environments, three key factors organisations ought to think about are:

1. Lack of trust
2. Weak managerial skills in navigating hybrid work arrangements
3. Wellness concerns specific to the organisation



#4 Empowering skills drives satisfaction

Finance talents in India appear to value highly opportunities for building competence and independence. When asked about the top priorities in decisions about which organisation to work for, 97% cited career development and opportunities to learn and grow. Similar attitudes were echoed when indicating the benefits of a profession in accountancy and finance.

Accountancy and finance professionals are increasingly keen to not only upskill for their current roles, but also to seek opportunities to reskill, empowering them to explore more ways of adding value to an organisation, and to society at large, even beyond national borders.

The topmost benefit of a career in finance and accountancy to professionals in India is the opportunity to gain a professionally recognised qualification, consequently improving prospects of mobility and a long-term career in the industry, which ranked second and third. This trend is expected to increase and organisations that can help professionals balance organisational goals and professional aspirations are more likely to attract and retain the best talents over time.



#5 A more mobile profession is imminent

With professionals increasingly focusing on the balance between the value they create for organisations and the value ascribed to their contribution and expertise, the profession is expected to become increasingly mobile. Over 50% of respondents in India are inclined to move within the calendar year, with majority of these aiming for an external move outside their current organisation.

The changing world of work in the 'fourth industrial revolution', particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, is not the only driver of mobility. Experts we engaged painted a picture with a multiplicity of factors, including the inherent need of professionals to have their work contribute to a greater sense of purpose. Consequently, organisations that provide the opportunity of exploring various ways of maximising expertise, while giving professionals a sense of contributing to the organisation's purpose, will manage the mobility trend better.

India ranks among the top 10 countries with the highest desire of employees to move across borders in the short term, according to the Global Talent Trends survey (ACCA 2023). Industry experts engaged posit that talent is increasingly flowing towards regions where the attractiveness of the profession may be waning, thereby increasing demand and benefits for accountants and finance professionals from India, willing to migrate or work remotely.

Methodology

A combination of descriptive and causal sources of evidence informed our findings for the India Talent Trends report.

With India's data captured as a subset of our Global Talent Trends survey of over 8000 respondents, feedback was gathered from a combination of 20% members and affiliates and 78% students.

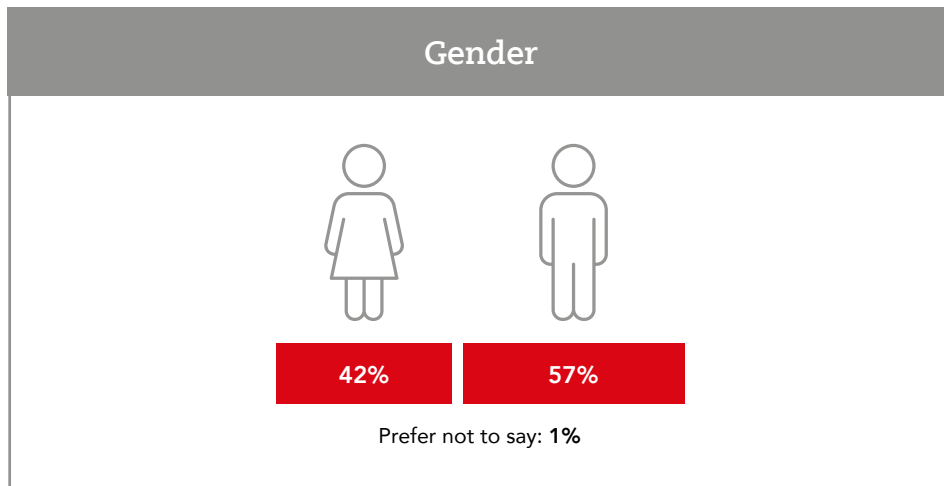
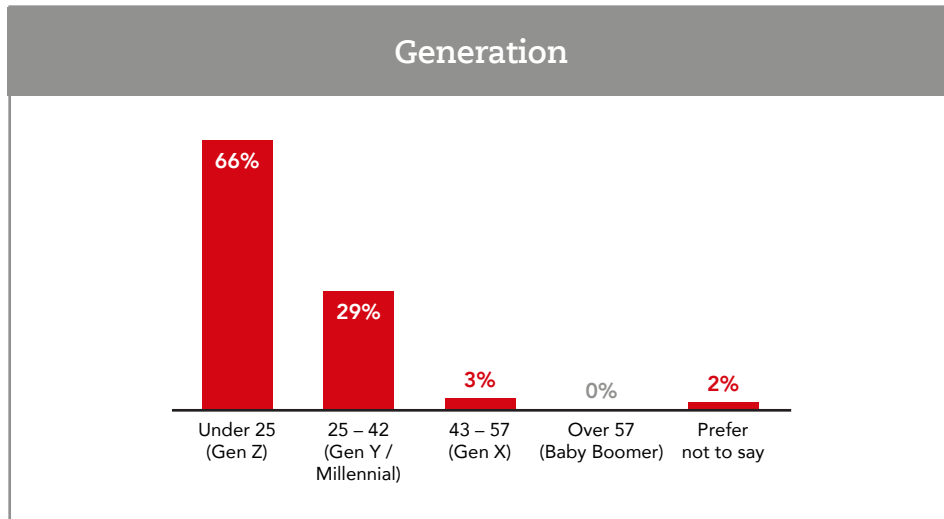
Responses were grouped into employed and unemployed segments, with 52% of employed respondents in India working across at least 10 sectors in the accountancy and finance industry. Attitudes towards workplace trends, such as work patterns, perspectives on well-being, sustainability, and the use of technology in the workplace were captured from employed professionals only.

In capturing further insights into survey results, an India roundtable of industry experts, including talent management and finance leads, was convened.

Data summary

Figures ES1, ES2, ES3, and ES4 summarise the demographic details of the respondent population, in graphical form.

Figure ES1: India respondents' demography, by generation and gender



SECTOR	BIG 4 ACCOUNTING FIRM	MID-TIER ACCOUNTING FIRM	SMALL ACCOUNTING FIRM (SMP) / SOLE PRACTITIONER	PUBLIC SECTOR	FINANCIAL SERVICES	NOT-FOR-PROFIT / CHARITY	LARGE OR MID-SIZED CORPORATE SECTOR FIRM	SMALL TO MEDIUM SIZE ENTERPRISE (SME)	ACADEMIA	NOT CURRENTLY WORKING / CAREER BREAK / FULL-TIME STUDENT	SELF-EMPLOYED	OTHER
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Figure ES2: Sector representation by generation for India

Generation classification

Under 25 (Gen Z)	13%	7%	2%		2%		3%	3%	2%	63%	1%	3%
25 – 42 (Gen Y / Millennial)	24%	12%	10%	2%	5%	1%	20%	5%	2%	17%	2%	1%
43 – 57 (Gen X)		20%		20%	10%		30%	10%			10%	
Over 57 (Baby Boomer)												100%

Figure ES3: Sector representation by gender for India

Gender

Female	14%	7%	4%	1%	2%		6%	3%	1%	58%	1%	3%
Male	16%	10%	5%	1%	4%	1%	10%	4%	3%	41%	2%	2%
Prefer not to say	40%									60%		

Figure ES4: Sector representation by work pattern in India

Current working pattern

Fully office based	12%	23%	17%	5%	5%	2%	15%	10%	7%			5%
Fully remote - home based	29%	18%	7%		5%		16%	11%	2%		5%	5%
Hybrid working	43%	11%	4%	1%	8%	1%	17%	2%	4%		4%	5%

Introduction

With 65% of India's 1.4bn population being under 35 years of age, the nation is home to the world's largest population of Generation Z (Gen Z) and millennials (Deo 2023). This significant demography was well represented by 66% of our respondents from India, as we asked professionals across sectors of the finance and accountancy industry about their work-related concerns and future aspirations.

In assessing key workplace views about well-being, technology adoption and learning needs, among others, the peculiarity of India's population dynamics is seen to significantly shape the trends in India, which differ from those in the rest of the world.

Global trends captured show a profession in workplace transition, with both short- and long-term implications and questions. In India, the foremost concerns about the future of work were well-being and pressures that impaired mental health. This report uncovers well-being-related factors that are key to an organisation's ability to attract talent.

We found technology to be empowering the profession globally, but not without causing concerns in India about its impact on jobs and well-being. Particularly for Gen Z, legitimate concerns about the impact and pace of change of technology were further explored.

Both across the globe and in India, hybrid work presents both opportunities and challenges for employers. While organisations seek the most productive approach to incorporating flexible work, several salient factors were found to be critical to the success of hybrid working arrangements in organisations.

A significantly high appetite for opportunities to upskill and reskill was found in India, which appears consistent with a rapidly growing population, largely made up of Gen Z and millennials.

A similar dynamic is captured for the concept of mobility. Satisfaction gaps captured for India tell us there is more than a sector-sensitive talent war raging, painting a picture of a more purpose-driven desire to move or stay within an organisation.



1. Well-being is a key priority

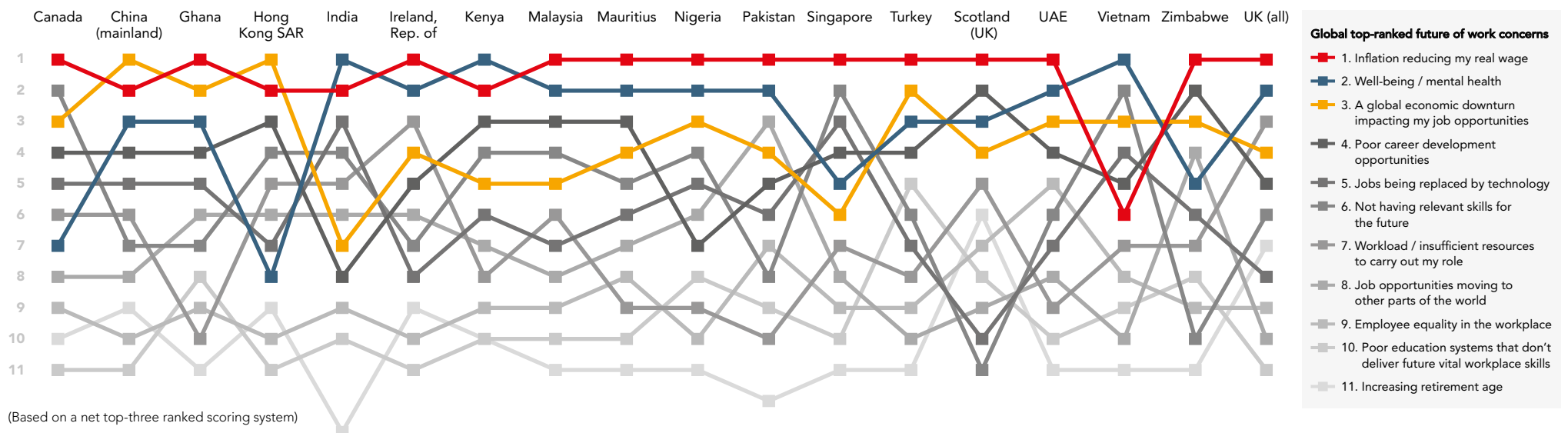




1. Well-being is a key priority

Among the finance professionals surveyed in India, almost 50% highlighted well-being and mental health concerns as the foremost workplace concerns of the future, with close to 80% interested in organisation-led support in managing mental health. Our global survey places India among the top three countries with the highest concern for well-being/mental health (Figure 1.1). This is significant in putting the profession in India in a position where it needs to be more intentional about how it maintains the attractiveness of the profession, while supporting organisations to develop and retain talent.

Figure 1.1: India ranks among top three globally for concerns about well-being/mental health issues



Source: ACCA 2023



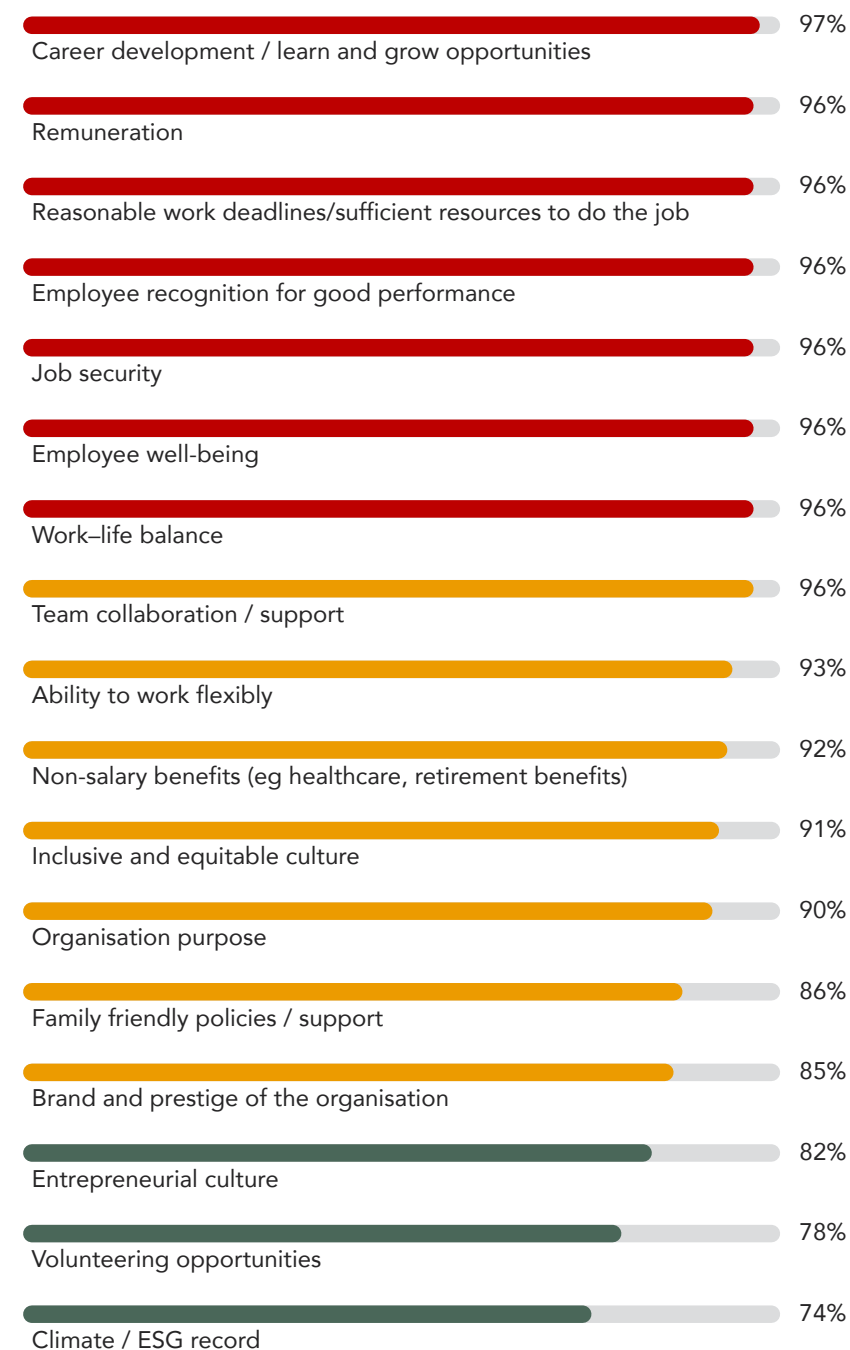
Well-being: A driver of employer attractiveness

In appraising what finance professionals told us they look for when deciding which organisation to work for (Figure 1.2), there is an evident progression of factors, broadly ranging from well-being and self-actualisation needs in the workplace, to an organisation’s considerations for the employee’s social needs and interactions. At the end of this range sits ESG-related considerations as ranked by professionals in India (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Range of employee needs in the workplace

Well-being and self-actualisation needs in the workplace
<p>Professionals are increasingly prioritising their need for personal and professional well-being. Organisations with structures to support these needs will remain on top of the talent crunch</p>
Need for social relevance and interaction
<p>Human interaction may be a social need, but organisations that balance purpose with a structure that enables employees’ meaningful interaction within and outside the workplace will attract the best talent</p>
ESG-related needs
<p>Organisations must not only consider the impact-on or impact-from the company of its ESG policies but also, very importantly, the impact decisions have on employees’ own economic, social, and environmental aspirations</p>

Figure 1.2: Attributes professionals consider in deciding which organisations to work for





Top concerns and aversions to the profession

Globally, the impact of inflation on real wages and salaries is understandably the biggest overall concern for professionals, as organisations battle to balance inflation’s impact on revenue with the consequent rising wage cost. While this is a global challenge, India has managed its rise in inflation to a degree where its impact on earning power is far from being catastrophic. Over the last decade, the inflation rate in India has reportedly averaged 6.04% (Trading Economics 2023).

In reflecting on factors that constituted the most concerns about, and aversions to, a career in finance, professionals in India highlighted well-being and mental health concerns as foremost: greater than the impact of the global inflation crisis and others (Figure 1.4) Indeed, the stressful nature of job roles and long working hours in the industry is a top issue in India and across the globe (Figure 1.5), but wellbeing in India appears on a slippery slope with projected economic loss due to mental health issues amounting to US\$1.03 trillion by 2030, according to the World Health Organization (Birla 2019).

Figure 1.4 : Top five work-related concerns for the future (Global vs India)

Global	India	
Inflation impacting my real wage / salary	Wellbeing / mental health	1 st
Wellbeing / mental health	Inflation impacting my real wage / salary	2 nd
A global economic downturn impacting my job opportunities	Jobs being replaced by technology	3 rd
Poor career development opportunities	Job opportunities moving to other parts of the world	4 th
Jobs being replaced by technology	Workload / insufficient resources to carry out my role	5 th

Figure 1.5 : Top five reasons a career in finance and accountancy may not be appealing (Global vs India)

Global	India
Stressful job roles	Stressful job roles
Long working hours	Long working hours
Perception of finance and accountancy as a boring career	Costs too much
Concerns about technology replacing finance and accounting roles	Concerns about technology replacing finance and accounting roles
Costs too much to gain a professional qualification	Takes too long to gain a professional finance and accounting qualification



Spotlight: Employer intervention strategies for well-being

In 2022, Deloitte's study on mental health in the workplace revealed workplace-related stress accounted for the highest cause of mental health in corporate India, followed by financial stress (Deloitte 2022).

With India accounting for 15% of the world's mental health burden, the need for employers' intervention policies and actions cannot be over-emphasised. Interestingly, workplace resources for dealing with these issues ranked in the bottom three concerns for over 3000 surveyed employees.

The report (Deloitte 2022) aggregates an exhaustive list of interventions and resources provided by a number of employers for supporting employee mental health and well-being in India (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6 : Summary of interventions for mental health and wellbeing in India

THIRD PARTY SERVICES			IN-HOUSE INITIATIVES		
EAP/EFAP	Third party tools	Support system	Awareness activities	Employee benefits	Organisational realignment
Counselling and Therapy Professional counselling sessions for employees and their dependents	Free subscription Free access to self-help content and Apps such as calm, headspace, etc.	Employee check-ins Regular wellness check-ins by management of their direct reports	Materials and Resources Resources containing information on mental health	Leave and Downtime Compassionate leave, sick days associated with mental health distress	Leadership guidance Training of managers and leadership on ways of supporting staff with mental health distress
Self-help resources Self-help resources such as videos, articles mindfulness app, etc. as a part of Employee Assistance Program	Counselling or Helpline number 24x7 helpline number	Peer support groups Option to join peer support groups of own choice	Wellness sessions Virtual activities and wellness sessions for meditation, yoga, etc.	Mental health insurance Coverage of mental health under employee health insurance plan	Tracking & reporting Tracking & reporting performance on mental health KPIs and evaluation of mental health interventions
Peer support groups Option to join peer support groups of own choice		Mental health champions Network of employees available for confidential advice & support for their colleagues			
Wellness webinars Mental health webinars on topics such as stress management					

Source: Deloitte 2022



Role of managers in closing the well-being gap

A study reported in Business Today revealed an alarming level of unease employees in India experienced in expressing concerns or providing feedback to managers about their mental health and well-being. According to the findings of the study, 92% of over 12,000 people surveyed indicated they were more comfortable talking to robots than they were with their managers. The study reportedly highlights the cultural stigma associated with mental health and well-being issues in India which may be contributing to such sentiments. Over 80% also believed robots were better able to support their mental health than humans (Jayaram 2020). In closing the gap on India's well-being challenges in the workplace, it appears managers will have to play a crucial role in helping organisations create the requisite level of trust and psychological safety needed to ensure that investments in employer interventions are worthwhile.

It is also possible that the changing ways of working since the COVID-19 pandemic have contributed to the eroding trust among managers and their teams, especially those recruited and inducted remotely since then. In sharing his observation, Chung Tham, a roundtable participant, noted that: 'We look at people who have joined us in the past, let's say, 6 to 12 months We're seeing a higher attrition there and that's because they've never come to [the] office, they've never really engaged with their team members. That relationship – trust, ... is not being built, whereas people who have been in an organisation for [a] longer period [are] much more open to hybrid working because they have built those relationships'



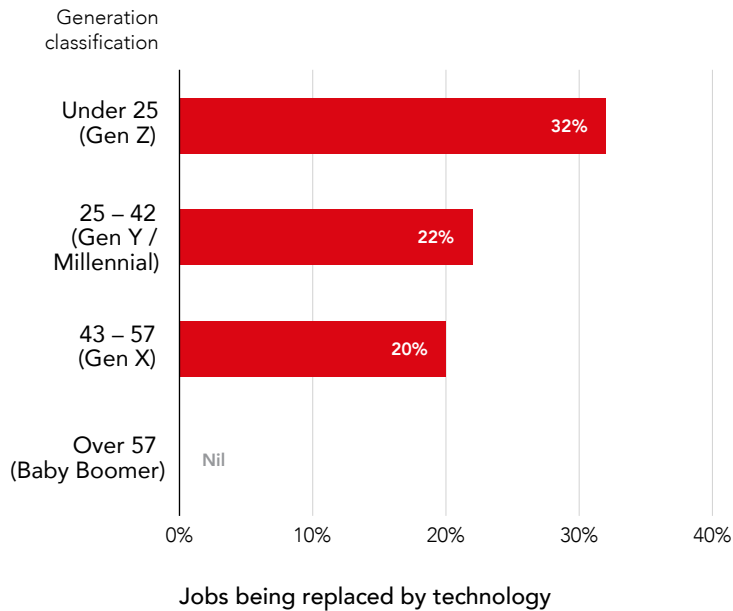


2. Technology is empowering but concerns prevail



FOR GEN Z, IT'S PERSONAL

Figure 2.1: Future concerns around jobs being replaced by technology



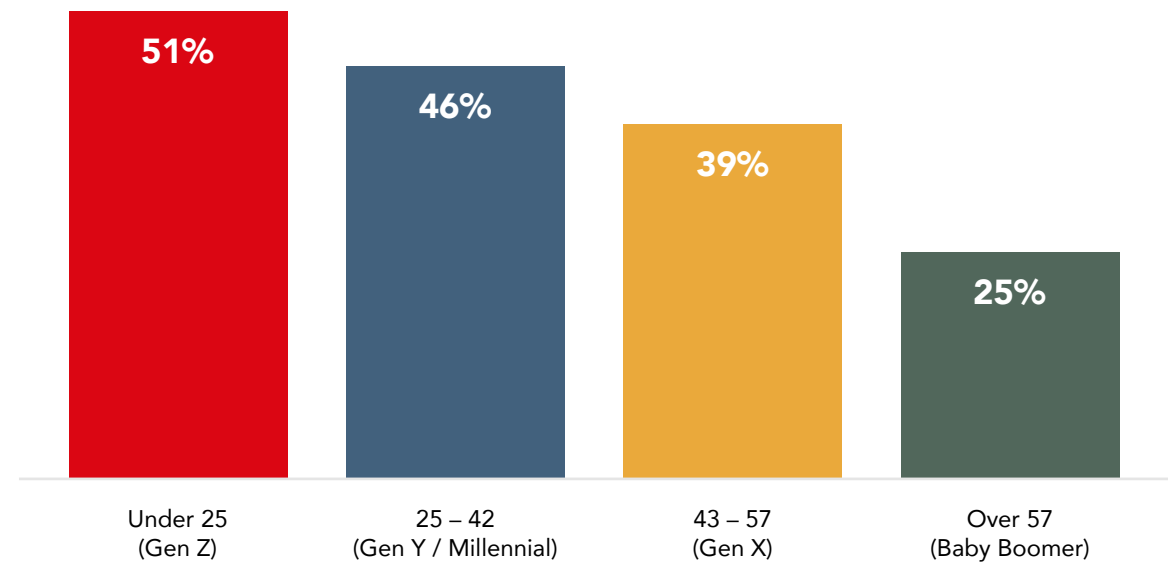
When asked about the potential of technological advancements being a workplace concern for them, specifically in replacing accountancy and finance roles, Gen Z and Gen X appeared slightly more concerned than millennials (Figure 2.1). The interesting question then becomes why Gen Zs, widely regarded as 'digital natives' would have concerns around the use of technology.

Experts theorise a digital skills gap that is generation sensitive, with more young people inclined to possess creative social technology skills than older generations, who are more likely to use digital tools for meeting daily data processing and decision-making needs, in the workplace and beyond.

A roundtable participant, Bharathwaj Ranganathan said: 'they are trying to leverage a portion of technology which is trending...people are getting hooked onto Instagram, people are getting hooked onto Python, Power BI and so on and so forth, but they're not seeing what the end goal is'.

He further explains "That's why you see the trending graph that people are not very, you know, worried as they grow older because they know that they have the influencing skills, the negotiating skills and the orchestrating skills, which are not going to go away very soon". (Figure 2.2)

Figure 2.2 : Concern that technology will replace part or all of my current role





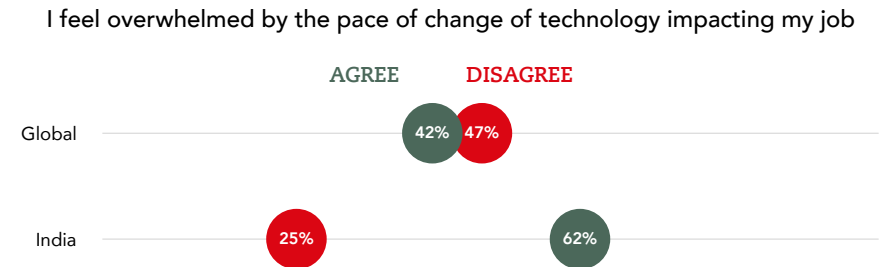
PACE OF INDIA'S TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT IN FINANCE

In 2021, 3million jobs were expected to be slashed in IT companies across India by 2022. This was primarily attributed to the rise of robotic process automation (RPA), with an anticipated potential \$100bn saving in the cost of salaries (Times of India 2021).

While India has experienced tremendous growth in financial technology (fintech), there appears to be a simultaneous growing concern about the pace of change in the 'fourth industrial revolution'.

In our survey, 95% of Indian respondents attested to how technology enabled them add value, with almost 90% keen to gain more knowledge and hone technological skills relevant to their workplaces. Even so, a significant trend, different from the global average of responses, was of professionals being overwhelmed by the pace of technological changes in the accountancy and finance industry (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Beliefs on the impact of the pace of technological changes, global vs India



India's digital transformation adoption has been described as rapidly evolving, with a 17% compound annual growth rate in digital transformation (DX) expenditure. This is projected to rise to as much as US\$23.6bn by 2025. The International Data Corporation (IDC) ascribes the investment growth to the rise of automated customer services in sectors such as banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI), manufacturing, government, communications, retail trade and wholesale, and healthcare services, which are reportedly leading in these sort of investments. Artificial intelligence (AI) adoption is expected to increase India's GDP by US\$500bn by 2025 (TOI Contributor 2023).



Spotlight: AI driving a job crunch in banking and financial services

As far back as 2018, marketing manager Supriyo Ghosh reported on the increasing impact of technology, including AI and machine learning in India's banking and financial services sector.

Following the Central Bank of India's cashless policy, introduced in 2011, the rise and rise of digital banking led to a flurry of investment in technological innovations to support the increased need for digital banking services.

'Major Indian banks are deploying the AI tool to identify human behavior, increase efficiency in banking operations through automation and diminish expenses on insistent [sic] activities' (Ghosh 2018). From HDFC bank's launch of the 'Electronic Virtual Assistant' for customer service interactions to ICICI Bank's launch of 'Software Robotics' to drive 200 of its business processes across its various operations, a picture emerges of a future rise in operational roles in banking and financial services catering for India's 1.4bn population.

Ghosh cited the beliefs of experts from the analytics industry that in future banking branches would concentrate on financial advisory and customer consultation, rather than on banking transactions. They therefore expected a significant decline in India's banking jobs by 2025, following the trend of countries such as the USA and China.



3. Hybrid work opportunities are crucial





Hybrid work opportunities are crucial

Globally, our survey data suggests that many workers have now returned to in-office work post the COVID-19 pandemic, with 57% working fully from the office and only 8% working fully remotely, the remaining 35% being hybrid workers.

In contrast, as many as 42% of workers in India are working in hybrid conditions, in addition to 28% who work fully remotely, bringing all partially or fully remote workers to 70% of professionals surveyed in India. When asked whether they would like to work from home at least once a week, a staggering 92% indicated interest in this, strongly suggesting that a majority of the 30% who currently work fully from the office would appreciate hybrid working opportunities (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Working conditions – global vs India

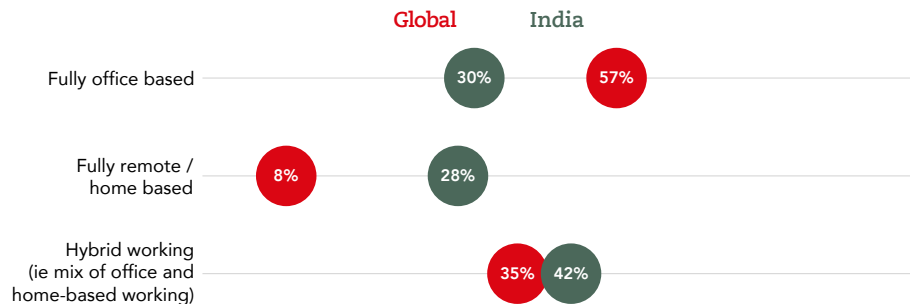
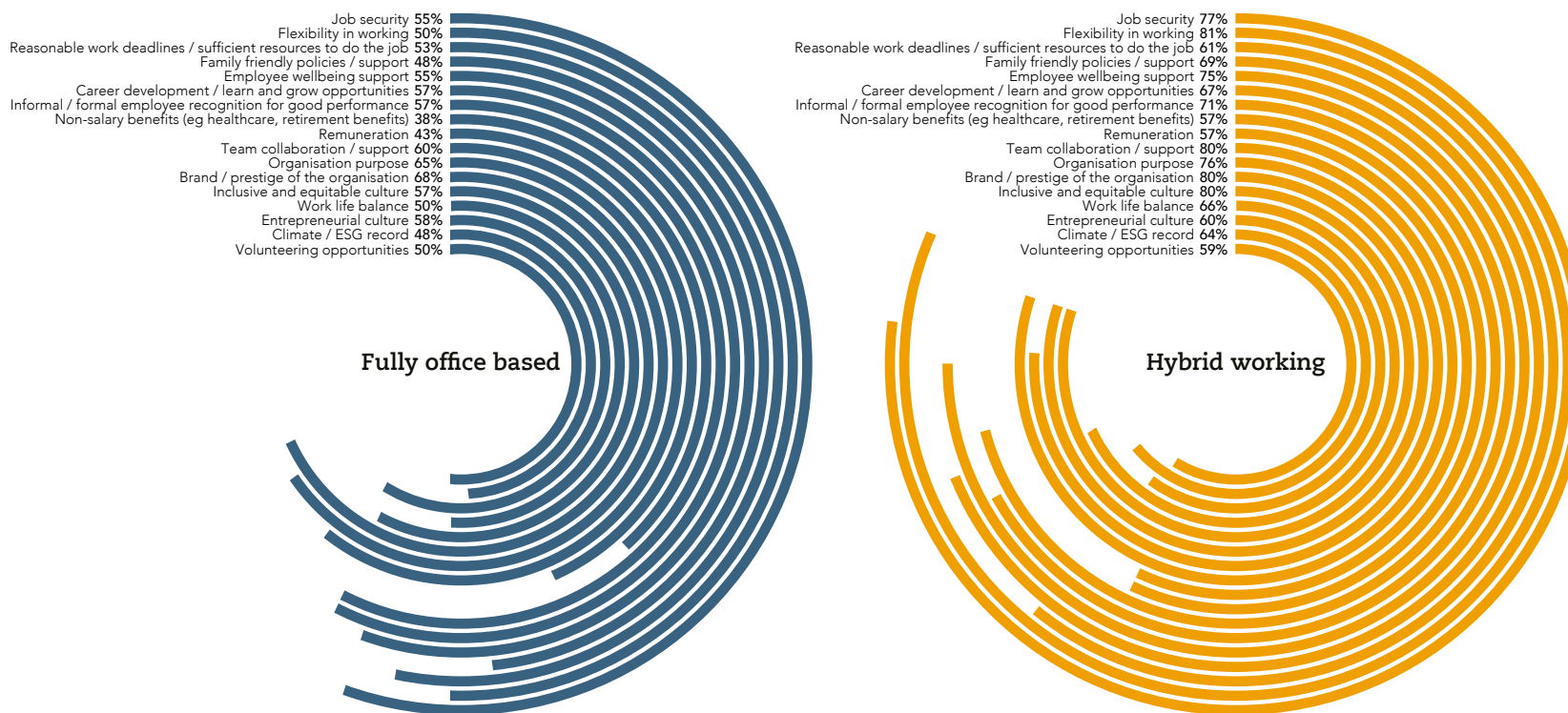


Figure 3.2: Satisfaction with employers across a range of factors in India – fully office based v. hybrid work



‘The hybrid work-style model is here to stay. What we’re seeing in India is that during the pandemic, a lot of people moved back to their hometowns, which could be tier 2 [or] tier 3 cities. So now, large organisations have realised that they need to follow the talent, and they are also setting up their infrastructure in multiple cities. So rather than concentrating in the large metros, now we’re seeing [them] moving out. [This] allows people to work closer to home or they can move to whichever office [is closest] to their hometown’, commented Chung G. Tham, a roundtable participant in the region.

With 71% in India generally indicating that the ability to work flexibly is a key factor in organisational satisfaction, hybrid working in some form ranks among the top 10 features that talents in finance look for in choosing an employer. There were marked differences in the levels of satisfaction experienced by those who worked fully from the office and those working in hybrid conditions, with the latter experiencing higher levels of satisfaction with employers, across a range of factors. (Figure 3.2).



HYBRID WORKING AND ATTRITION IN INDIA – FACTORS ORGANISATIONS MUST BEAR IN MIND

In appraising the upsides and downsides of hybrid working, ACCA's Global Talent Trends report (ACCA 2023) highlights the growing positivity of most hybrid workers about several organisational issues, including mental health. This is not without its challenges, including the impact it has on the dynamics of workplace relationships and the skills required to thrive in the workplace.

Employers have expressed mixed views on the complexities of providing and managing hybrid working opportunities for employees, in a way that works best for their organisation type and employee base. Undeniably, most employers attest to the huge gains of flexibility, including cost savings and flexibility in workforce engagement, as well as more opportunities for assessing wider talent pools.

Nonetheless, India's employers appear to be experiencing an increasing rate of attrition amid growing interest in hybrid working opportunities. In 2022 this attrition rate reportedly stood at 20.3%, following a steady year-on-year rise since 2020 (Kapoor 2022). Engaged experts across the profession highlight three key factors contributing to attrition that organisations must bear in mind.

1. Attrition driven by lack of trust

As we saw in Chapter 1, according to roundtable participant Chung Tham, employee attrition rate appears increased among post-pandemic recruits, who may not have had the opportunity to understand colleagues and build trust within teams, compared with those employed and inducted face to face.

2. Attrition driven by weak managerial skills in navigating hybrid work arrangements

There is also the multiplicity of hybrid work options, which many organisations are struggling to grapple with when seeking the best fit for both their employees and their firms. The onus for negotiating this fit has been left to various managers, and sometimes without specific guidelines to ensure equity and fairness.

According to Surya Prakash Mohapatra: 'There is a challenge for the manager in the differences of preferences among the people he has. So there are some people who always want to work remotely. There are some who would always prefer to work from [the] office, and some who would like to work in a hybrid model. So that is the biggest dilemma for the manager ... how to drive balance and make sure that he or she is able to force the team to a point where there is collaboration and cohesiveness. I think that's a big challenge that the leaders are grappling with today'

3. Attrition driven by well-being concerns

Finally, there is a growing attrition of employees within organisations that are not embracing hybrid working, as employees within the sector are increasingly conscious of their well-being needs. Globally, the study shows that hybrid workers score better on mental health indicators than those working fully from the office.

'On the well-being mental health front, I think post pandemic, as people come out of [that] and get back to normal, there's a big question around the hybrid working and we are seeing that people are actually leaving organisations that are mandating them to come back to work and they're joining organisations giving them more options to work from home, more hybrid', said roundtable contributor Chung Tham.





4. Empowering skills drives satisfaction



Empowering skills drives satisfaction

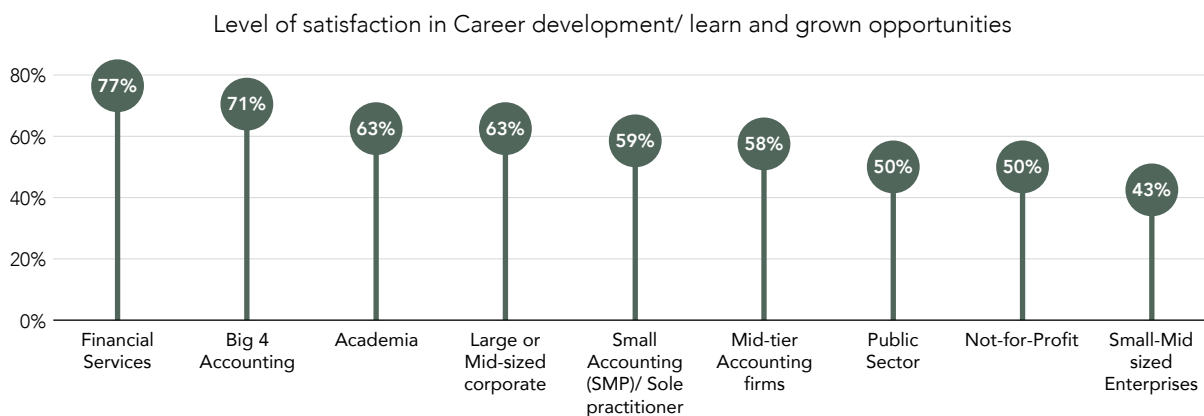
Among respondents in India, the topmost benefit of a career in finance and accountancy is the opportunity to gain professionally recognised qualifications. Similarly, when deciding between employer organisations, professionals in India indicated career development and opportunities to learn and grow were their topmost priority (Figure 4.1)

Figure 4.1: Top ranked attraction factors in the industry (Global vs India)

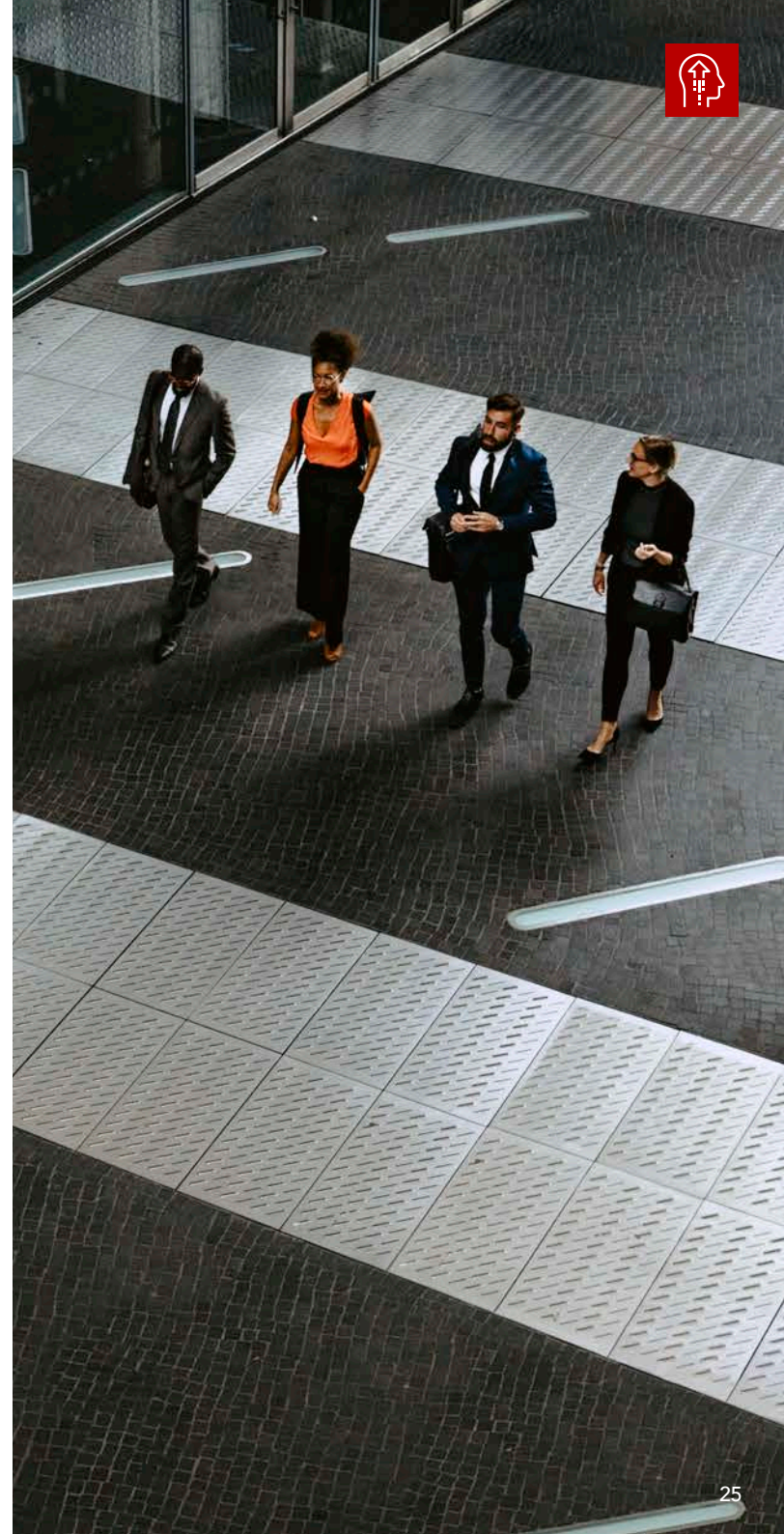
	#1 Global	#1 India
Benefit of a career in finance and accounting	Long term career prospects	Opportunity to gain a professional recognised qualification
Attributes in deciding which organisation to work for	Career development/learn and grown opportunities	Career development/learn and grown opportunities

The survey showed professionals working in small-medium enterprises (SME's) were least satisfied with their current level of development opportunities compared to those in financial services and the Big 4 accountancy firms (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Level of satisfaction in skill development opportunities across sectors



As the profession continues to evolve, this trend is expected to increase. Professional accountancy organisations and educators at large have an opportunity to collaborate with employers in designing tailored learning and development interventions that encourage goal congruence between the organisation's business priorities and the peculiarities of professionals learning needs in that environment.



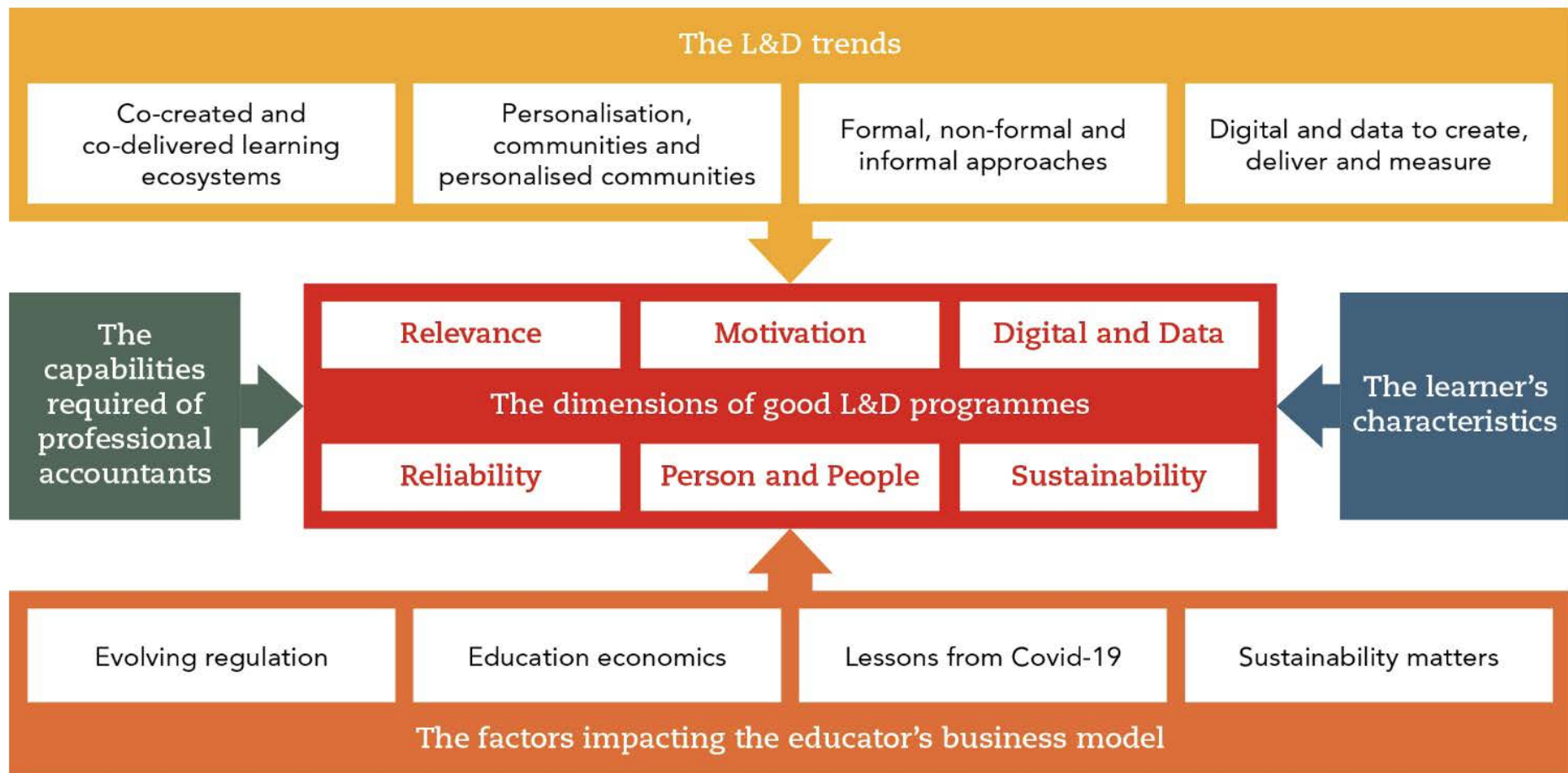


Spotlight: Strategies for developing a purposeful learning and development programme

ACCA’s research report, Developing the Skills of the Sustainable Business and Finance Professional (ACCA 2022) explores why and how learning and development (L&D) programmes should be designed to incorporate:

- the core capabilities required of sustainable business and finance professionals
- the diverse set of learner characteristics
- the trends that are changing L&D design and delivery, and
- the many factors affecting the L&D business model (Figure 4.3)

Figure 4.3 : Trends in learning and development



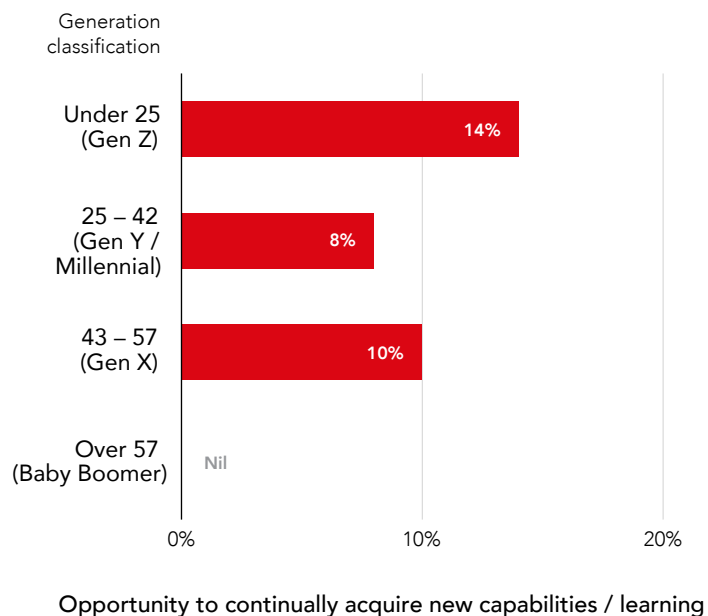
Source: ACCA 2022



DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FOR GEN Z

Gen Z appears more inclined than older ones to continually acquire new capabilities in the workplace (Figure 4.3), seeing it as a key benefit of a career in finance and accountancy

Figure 4.3: Opportunity to continually acquire new capabilities/learning



Spotlight: Strategies for developing Generation Z

ACCA’s India-specific report, Groundbreakers: Gen Z and the Future of Accountancy (ACCA 2021) highlights how employers and employees can meet the generation-sensitive needs for development and growth of future accountancy and finance professionals (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Strategies for firms employing Gen Z, and for Gen Z employees

Ten strategies employers should adopt in harnessing the potential of Gen Z staffers	Ten strategies for Gen Zs when navigating a career in accountancy and finance
#1 Tap into their digital mastery	#1 Bring in your tech know-how
#2 Think ‘intrapreneurship’	#2 Work your brand internally
#3 Use social media to recruit, and recognise the power of peers	#3 Care for your health and build resilience
#4 Be authentic and listen	#4 Remember it’s a team game
#5 Focus on well-being	#5 Disrupt yourself: think ‘sideways’ moves
#6 Marry-up organisational purpose with individual development needs	#6 Seek mentors, find sponsors
#7 Create collaboration opportunities across the workforce	#7 Continuously learn
#8 Reward on outcomes not inputs	#8 Recognise the impact of ‘early years’
#9 Give continual feedback	#9 Build life-long networks
#10 Rethink learning: short and visual	#10 Pursue your dreams



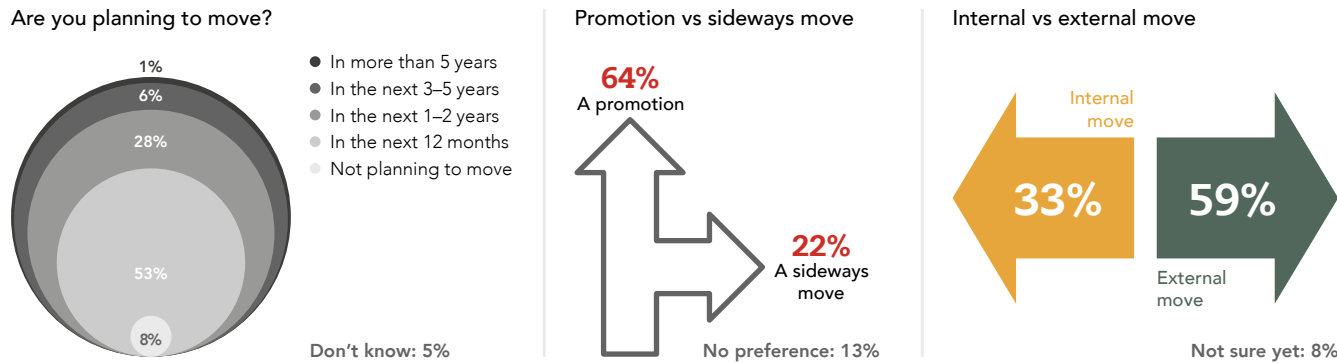
5. A more mobile profession is imminent



A more mobile profession is imminent

Globally, employers are increasingly struggling with retention issues: 44% of respondents across the globe indicated a desire to make some form of move within 12 months of the study. In India, the attitude is similar but enhanced, with more than half the respondents desiring to make such a move (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Desired mobility across the profession in India



A KEY DRIVER FOR MOBILITY – A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Even though the impact of inflation on remuneration is currently a global challenge being faced by many developed and developing nations, triggers for mobility are increasingly becoming value based as against purely the need for more earning power.

While technology and remote working are fast shaping a more mobile career in finance and accountancy, questions about the direction of an organisation and future of a valued career in that organisation appear increasingly important to professionals in India.

'I think it's very important for an organisation to tell their story well...and then with the kind of generation that you are looking at tapping into as a talent, ...using social media effectively becomes very important. Whether it is [a] stressful job, long working hours, I think every job role will demand all of this. But...it becomes very important ... how you tell your story as an organisation to attract [the] right talent' said Almal Rakesh, a contributor to our India roundtable.

Organisations that are better positioned to benefit from the mobility trend may not always be those with the biggest profit or brand, but those that demonstrate best how their purpose not only benefits the environment and society at large but, more so, their people.





Mobility across borders and the attractiveness of the profession

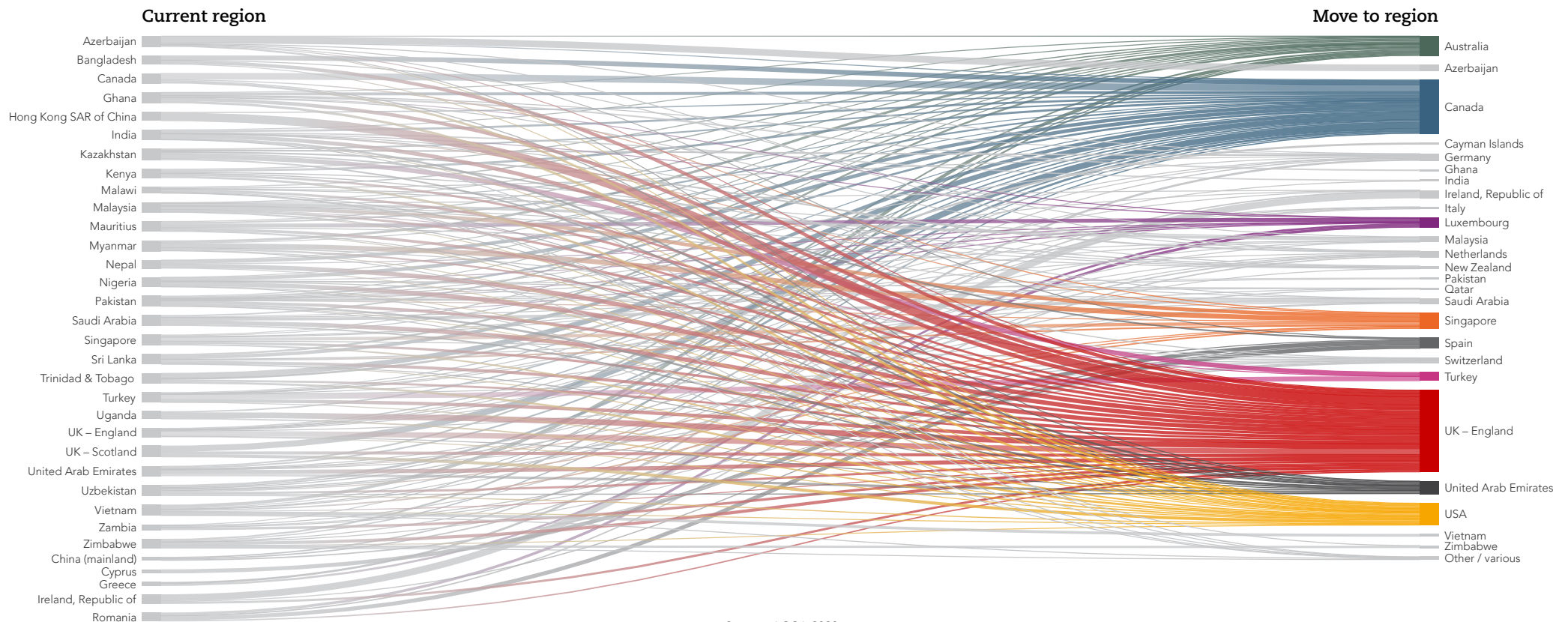
India ranks among the top 10 countries with professionals who are highly desirous of a cross-border move (Figure 5.2). The dynamics of the attractiveness of the profession across regions are considered a key factor in accountants' decisions to move across borders. This indicator also speaks to the purpose-driven nature of mobility, where professionals seek locations where talent is better valued.

'I think you have to look at it country by country. If I look at the more developed countries like the US, UK, Germany, [accountancy] is no longer an attractive career because of all these reasons that you mentioned [see Figure 1.5 above] But if I look at countries like India or the Philippines, it's still a very lucrative career and we're seeing that high attraction across the developed countries, unable to actually rehire because they don't have that kind of workforce, but that's also helping countries like India and the Philippines to use mobility. So with the borders opening up, we have a lot of people who are now relocating either short term or long term or permanently to all these countries to get those opportunities', said roundtable participant, Chung Tham.

Triggers to move are not always one dimensional

According to Bharathwaj Ranganathan: *'It is the ability to adapt to what it is: definitely, people are [asking]... "what's in it for me in this profession? Where can I go because everybody cannot be C-suite". Every accountant cannot become a CFO [chief financial officer], right? So people have to take some twists and turns to make [themselves happy] in a finance career'*

Figure 5.2: Favoured destinations for accountancy talent



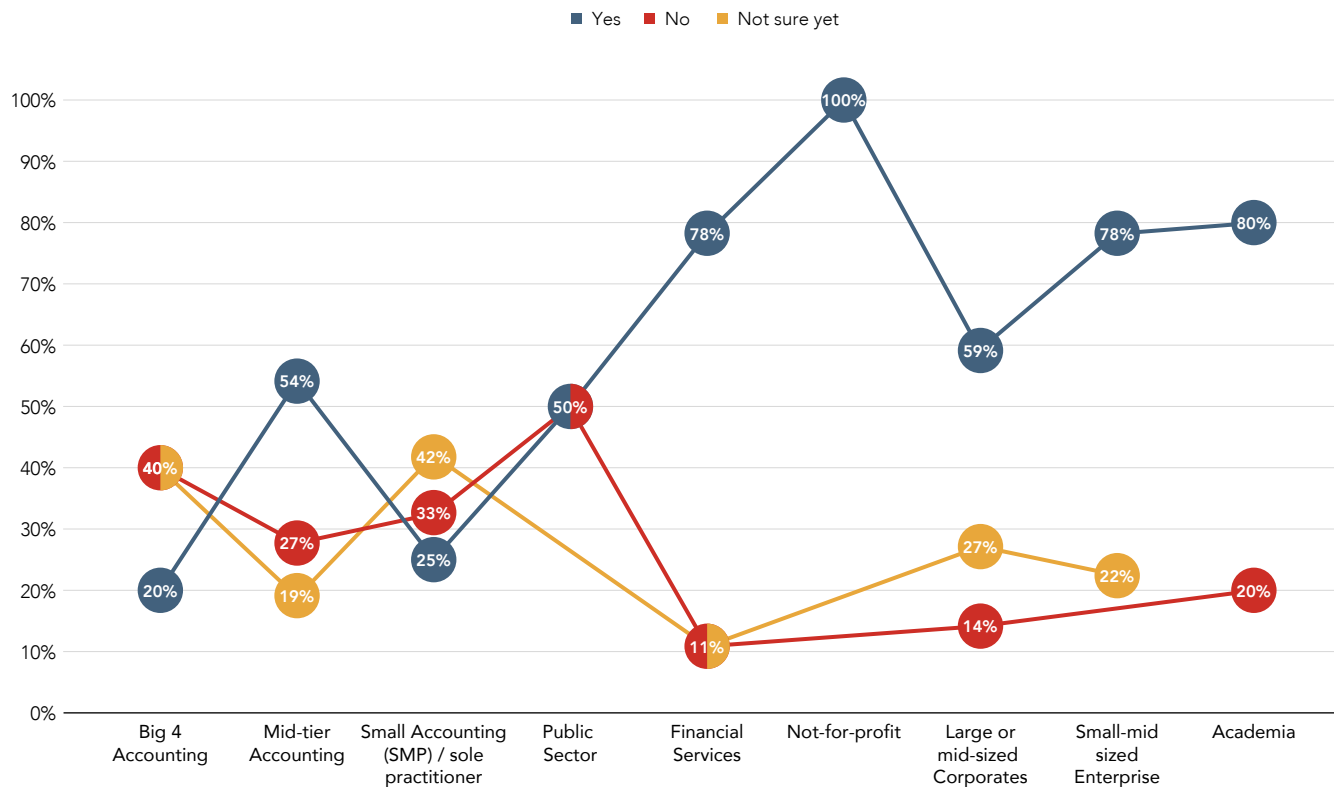
Source: ACCA 2023



Most L&D experts and people managers tend to look at attrition from the viewpoint of what the organisation is or is not doing to trigger moves out of the organisation. Experts like Bharathwaj are suggesting that for accountants and finance professionals, a combination of factors are at play, involving a balance between satisfaction with the organisation and professional fulfilment.

Evidence suggests that low attrition rates may be experienced by sectors with comparatively more opportunities to provide both satisfaction with the organisation and professional fulfilment for finance professionals, such as the big four accounting firms and the public sector in India (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Answers to the question ‘Do you intend to move sector in your next move?’



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Senior Director, IFAO Consulting Practice,
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