

India

talent trends.

2026



About ACCA.

We are ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), the only truly global professional accountancy body.

Since we were founded in 1904, we've been breaking down barriers to the accountancy profession. Today we proudly support a diverse community of over **257,900** members and **530,100** future members in **180** countries.

We're redefining accountancy. Our cutting-edge qualifications, continuous learning and insights are respected and valued by employers in every sector. They equip individuals with the business and finance expertise and ethical judgement to lead and drive sustainable value in organisations and economies worldwide.

Guided by our purpose and values, we're leading the accountancy profession for a changed world. Partnering with policymakers, standard setters, the donor community, educators and other accountancy bodies, we're strengthening and building a profession that focuses on people, planet and prosperity to create value for all.

Find out more at accaglobal.com

India talent trends 2026.

ACCA's *Global talent trends 2026* report remains the world's largest annual survey of careers, jobs and working life in finance and accounting.

The latest edition highlights the key issues facing finance professionals this year – collecting compelling data, insights and perspectives from over **11,000** respondents across **175** countries, including India, on the evolving world of work.

Our findings identify eight trends shaping the future of finance – driven by economic pressures, AI disruptions, and shifting expectations of work. Together, they show how finance professionals in India are adapting to rapid change while facing new challenges in stability, skills and wellbeing.

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Foreword.

In 2026, India’s finance talent landscape reflects a more grounded form of optimism – shaped by three key factors: economic pressure, AI-related disruptions, and shifting expectations of work.

This year’s findings suggest a workforce that is pragmatic, adaptable and forward-thinking. Finance professionals are increasingly embracing artificial intelligence (AI), favouring time in the office, looking beyond traditional career paths, and choosing employers whose values reflect their own.

Notably, while AI continues to be a defining force, it’s not viewed primarily as a threat, but as a practical tool – with over half of respondents in India (57%) confirming they are already using AI technologies in their current role. At the same time, there’s wider support for formal policies on office presence – with over two thirds (74%) agreeing that organisations should require employees to spend a set number of days in the office. Despite prioritising stable employment, over half (56%) are keen to explore external opportunities beyond accountancy roles – reimagining accountancy and finance as a launchpad to broader career paths. Purpose and social impact remain important – with 85% taking organisations’ social and human rights stance into account while choosing an employer.

Concerns remain around the rising cost of living, the complexity of working across generations, and work-related mental health. Cost of living pressures have emerged as the dominant work-related anxiety among 40% – influencing pay expectations, career choices, and attitudes to job security. Multi-generational workplaces continue to test leadership, culture, and expectations – with 44% finding effective collaboration across generations a challenge.

While those reporting work-related mental health challenges in India is marginally lower than the global average (54%) at 53% – progress has slowed since 2025 (51%) and calls for renewed focus.

The *India talent trends 2026* report – drawing on insights from over 1,000 India-based respondents within ACCA’s [Global talent trends 2026](#) survey of over 11, 000 finance professionals – brings eight interconnected trends together to provide evidence-based insights for finance professionals, employers, educators, and policymakers.

Rooted in ACCA’s global commitment to bridging the skills gap, our report aims to support a finance profession that remains resilient, relevant, and equipped to balance economic realities with innovation, wellbeing, and long-term impact.

With a keen focus on reinforcing our purpose as a force for public good, we continue to collaborate with our powerful network of stakeholders across different regions in shaping strategies for finance talent management. Together, we will adapt and experiment with new ways of working – enabling the profession to stay relevant and ready for the future.

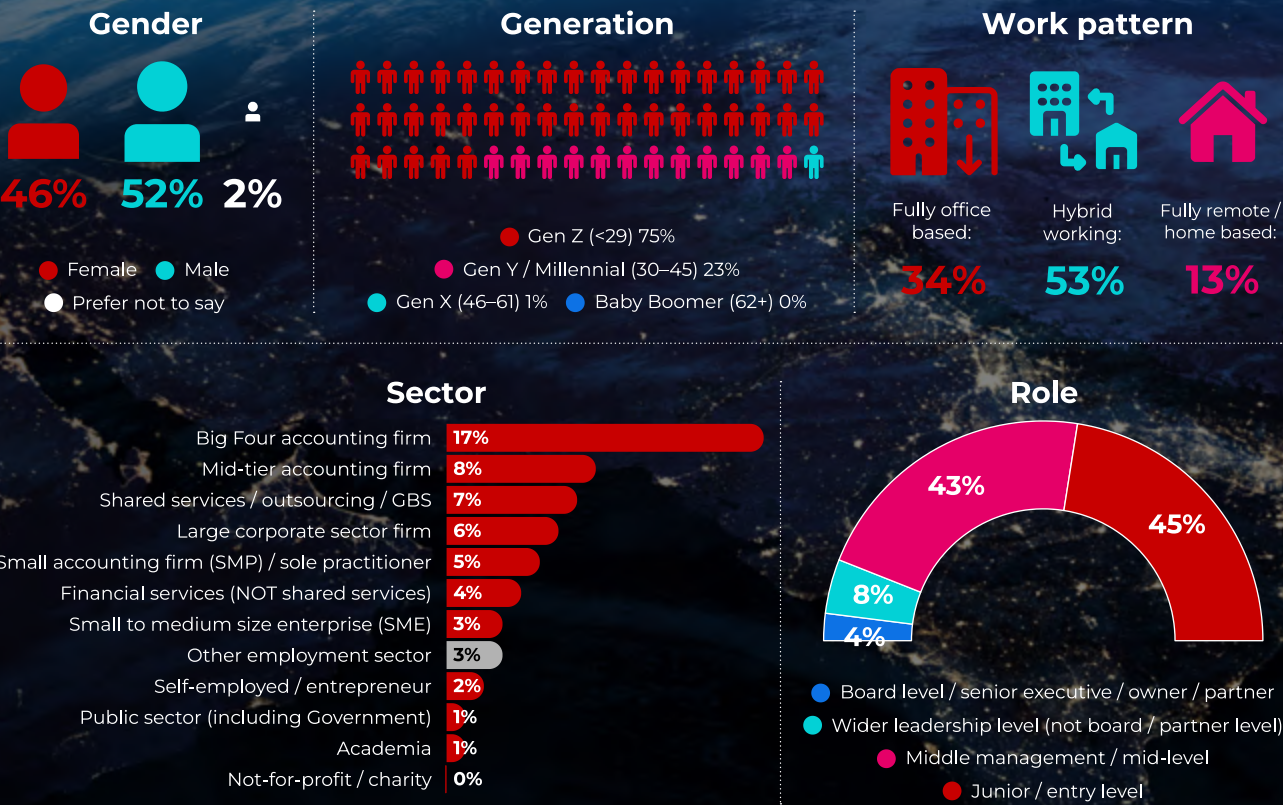


‘This is accountancy – but reimagined for a changing world.’

Md. Sajid Khan, Director – India, ACCA

Demographics.

With India’s data captured as a subset of the *Global talent trends* survey of over 11,000 respondents, 1,077 respondents: 17% members and affiliates and 83% students participated from India, with 75% of those respondents falling into the Gen Z age group.



Methodology.

A combination of descriptive and causal sources of evidence informed the findings of this report – a breakdown of respondents in India:

- Responses were grouped into employed and unemployed segments – with 57% of respondents employed across over 10 sectors in the accountancy and finance industry. Only employed professionals responded to questions on attitudes towards workplace trends, such as work patterns, perspectives on wellbeing, sustainability, and the use of technology in the workplace.
- To add context to survey data, ACCA convened an India roundtable of industry experts – including talent management and finance leads – representing mid and senior-level finance professionals to capture views across the spectrum of employment.

SECTOR (for those indicating full time employment)		Big Four accounting firm	Mid-tier accounting firm	SMP	Public sector	Financial services	Not-for-profit	Large corporate sector firm	Shared services	SME	Academia	Self-employed / entrepreneur	NET: Accounting firms	NET: Large corporates / fin. services	NET: Employed
TOTAL		17%	8%	5%	1%	4%	0%	6%	7%	3%	1%	2%	30%	9%	57%
Generation classification	Gen Z (<29)	18%	7%	4%	0%	3%	0%	3%	4%	2%	1%	2%	30%	6%	49%
	Gen Y (30–45)	14%	11%	7%	2%	6%	1%	12%	18%	6%	1%	3%	32%	17%	84%
	Gen X (46–61)			7%		20%		20%	7%	7%	7%		7%	40%	73%
Current working pattern	Fully office based	17%	20%	17%	1%	5%	1%	13%	7%	10%	2%	1%	55%	18%	
	Fully remote/home based	16%	16%	7%	2%	5%	1%	7%	17%	10%	5%	9%	40%	12%	
	Hybrid working	41%	10%	4%	1%	7%		8%	16%	2%	2%	4%	55%	16%	
Gender	Female	16%	7%	4%	0%	2%	0%	3%	6%	2%	2%	1%	26%	5%	45%
	Male	18%	10%	6%	1%	5%	1%	8%	9%	4%	1%	3%	34%	12%	68%
	NET: Prefer not to say / self-describe	19%				5%		5%		5%	19%		19%	10%	57%

Introduction.

India’s workforce is getting younger yet more diverse, over half of respondents (52%) are comprised of Gen Z and Millennials (compared to global average 47%) – accounting for 20% of the global Gen Z population.¹ With four generations in the workplace, cross-generational collaboration is important.

We ask finance and accountancy professionals from over 10 sectors about their work concerns and future aspirations.

The world of work continues to evolve at a rapid pace. Understanding what motivates and demotivates talent provides insight for building the workplace of the future – one that is inclusive, promotes innovation, prioritises wellbeing, and equates rewards with performance.

‘Our annual *Global talent trends* findings provide regional nuances on talent and workplace trends for accountancy and finance professionals.’

Key trends covered in 2026:

 Cost of living/ pay expectations	 Stability over gig-work	 Future skills, tech and AI	 Accountancy as a springboard	 Environment, social and human rights	 Work patterns	 Cross-generational collaboration	 Stress/ mental health
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Our 2026 survey highlights eight trends that reflect how finance professionals in India are navigating rapid change. These trends converge around three key forces:

- 1. Economic realities:** Rising cost pressures and shifting pay expectations are reshaping how professionals view job security and career stability.
- 2. AI-related disruptions and uncertainties:** AI is creating new possibilities – with over 50% now using AI technologies at work. Questions around skills, relevance, and return on investment remain.
- 3. Shifting expectations of work:** Careers are becoming more fluid and purpose-driven – with multi-generational teams, evolving ESG priorities, and mental health emerging as critical concerns requiring systemic attention.

Who can benefit from these insights?

This report is a part of ACCA’s public value agenda, contributing to insights on workplace trends that are relevant for all stakeholders in the talent ecosystem:

Employers in accountancy and finance industry

- to understand the concerns and preferences of current employees and future workforce
- to gain knowledge into solutions that industry peers are implementing.

Employees, current and future

- to provide a window into the perception, aspirations, needs, and fears of their counterparts
- to highlight future skills and competencies.

Policymakers

- to support with policies and keep up with aspirations of the workforce – eg macro-economic measures to manage cost of living, EDI regulations.

Academics

- to account for changing skill and competency requirements in the revised curriculums.

¹ <https://www.nasscom.in/knowledge-center/publications/gen-z-and-millennials-reshaping-future-workforce?utm_source=chatgpt.com>

Key talent indicators: India vs global.

The core of the *Global talent trends 2026* findings is about navigating AI-driven disruptions, geopolitical uncertainty, and reinventing workplace models to keep in tune with these changes.

	Global	India
 Wage pressure: I will ask my employer for a pay rise in the next 12 months	62%	81%
 Retention indicators: I would like to move to my next role in the next 12 months	38%	47%
 Technology confidence: I feel overwhelmed by the pace of change of technology impacting my job	35%	53%
 Accountancy as a springboard: I'm considering switching to a different profession / career at some point in the future	39%	56%
 Working with purpose: An organisation's stance on social and human rights issues a key factor in deciding to work there	75%	85%
 'Intentional' office presence: Organisations should require employees to spend a set number of days in the office	66%	74%
 Cross-generational collaboration: My organisation experiences challenges in effective collaboration across generations	42%	44%
 Wellbeing at work: I feel my mental health suffers because of work pressures	54%	53%

- **For employers, intentional action is critical** – whether in environment, social and governance (ESG), hybrid work, or mental health. Policies must be deliberate and meaningful to create lasting value.
- **Employees must take charge of their own development** – be valuable to the employers and remain adaptable to change to thrive in the future of work.





8 key findings for India.



1. Cost of living and pay expectations: A key work concern, third year in a row, ranked #1 by **40%** – setting expectations of a higher pay rise →



2. Stability over gig-work: ~**90%** looking for at least one steady job →



3. Future skills, tech and AI: **57%** use AI at work, yet over half feel overwhelmed by pace of change and concerned about impact of AI →



4. Accountancy as a springboard: Over half keen to switch careers and move beyond traditional finance roles →



5. Environment, social and human rights: **80%** prioritise social & human rights reputation in employer choice →



6. Work patterns: Over half working in hybrid mode; nearly three in five support office days →



7. Diversity & collaboration: **44%** cite intergenerational collaboration as a challenge; one in four see EDI decline →



8. Stress/mental health: **53%** feel their mental health suffers because of work pressure; **36%** feel their organisation is not doing enough →

1. Cost of living fears remain the top concern – driving wage pressures.

Although headline inflation has eased in many major economies – the impact of rising living costs continues to shape employee sentiment.

For a third consecutive year, cost of living continues to be a key work concern – with **40%** of respondents in India rating this as their biggest work-related fear for the future.

This explains increased expectations of a higher pay rise compared to their global counterparts – with **81%** of respondents in India planning to ask their employer for a pay rise in the next 12 months (compared to **62%** globally), and **68%** expecting a pay hike of more than 10%.

81% of India respondents planning to ask their employer for a pay rise in the next 12 months



‘Employers recommend focusing on growth opportunities and strengthening employees’ voice as a practical workaround to compensation mismatches – helping staff feel valued.’

Explore in more detail →

2. Most finance professionals prioritise a steady role – boosting retention.

Almost all respondents are seeking job security that’s not affected by uncertainty around AI and the geopolitical climate.

In India, over **90%** of respondents are looking for at least one steady role – with **57%** looking for a consistent role and freelance work, and **36%** content with a single steady role.

This need for stability is evident in the short-term retention indicators – with **47%** of India respondents keen to move roles in the next 12 months (compared to **55%** in 2025).

57% of India respondents are looking for a consistent role and freelance work, and 36% prefer a single steady role



‘Experts identify the geopolitical climate and inflated expectations of AI as the principal drivers of uncertainty, which explains better retention.’

Explore in more detail →

3. AI use is accelerating in hiring and at work – but anxieties remain on impacts.

Confidence in using AI in the workplace and for recruitment is high – but organisations must balance innovation with responsibility.

From the workplace to hiring, AI tools are being used extensively in India – with **57%** of respondents using AI technologies in their current role, and over half (**52%**) confident about using an AI algorithm to support fair and unbiased recruitment.

Most (**86%**) are confident in their ability to learn and apply AI-related skills, but concerns remain. At work, over half (**53%**) feel overwhelmed by the pace of change – while **57%** are concerned about the impact of AI on their role.

57% of India respondents are concerned about the impact of AI technologies on their role



‘In hiring, HR professionals recommend caution against inherent biases in AI models – such as context blindness – given the algorithm’s inability to understand nuanced contexts.’

Explore in more detail →

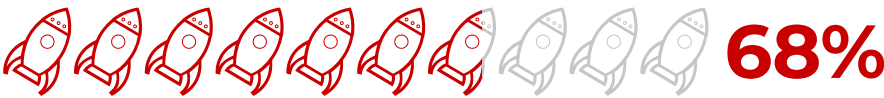
4. Accountancy seen as a launchpad for wider entrepreneurial ambitions.

Finance professionals are *reimagining career pathways* – with raised ambitions uplifting the future of the profession.

Entrepreneurial ambitions remain high – with **68%** of India respondents wanting to become entrepreneurs (compared to the global average of **54%**).

Our India findings show that **56%** are keen to switch careers to outside of traditional accountancy roles within the near and long-term (higher than the global average at **39%**).

68% of India respondents indicated aspirations to become entrepreneurs, compared with **54%** globally



‘Experts see this trend as a reflection of growing ambition and aspiration – and a healthy sign for the future of the profession.’

Explore in more detail →

5. Social and environmental values fuel job ambitions.

Organisational purpose influences employment decisions – employees want to make a difference.

An organisation’s stance on social and human rights issues will be a key factor in deciding to work there for a striking **85%** of respondents. Environmental issues matter as well – with **69%** of respondents in India marking it as a key consideration.

Employees are keen to create social and environmental impact through their work – with **81%** interested in pursuing social impact roles, and **77%** in environmental roles in the future.

85% of India respondents factor an employer’s social impact credentials when deciding to apply for a job, and **69%** say environmental issues would be a key factor



‘Employees are keen to create social and environmental impact through their work.’

Explore in more detail →

6. Hybrid work still preferred – amid strong support for intentional office presence.

Most employees favour a flexible working model even as return to office mandates grow.

In India, **79%** of respondents prefer a hybrid working pattern, and **53%** are already working in a hybrid model. Increasing willingness to be present in the office is evident – with **74%** agreeing to organisations’ requiring employees to spend a set number of days in the office every week. A key driver is the belief that greater office presence improves promotion prospects – cited by **69%**.

79% of India respondents prefer a hybrid working pattern, with **74%** agreeing to a set number of days in the office



‘Employers recommend organisation-wide frameworks with decentralised decision-making – enabling teams to tailor office presence to individual needs.’

Explore in more detail →

7. Four generations in the workplace makes cross-generational collaboration a significant challenge.

Ageing populations and falling fertility rates are changing traditional working life patterns, and increasing the number of generations active in the workplace.

Effective collaboration across generations is a challenge in the workplace for **44%** of respondents in India. Employees feel more work is needed on strengthening the cultural aspects – with over a third (**36%**) feeling their organisation’s culture is becoming less defined. One in four (**25%**) reports that equity, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) initiatives are receiving less emphasis than before.

44% of India respondents find effective collaboration across generations in the workplace challenging



‘Employees see poor collaboration less as a people or generational issue – and more an organisational design challenge that requires specific interventions.’

Explore in more detail →

8. Mental health needs more support – with work-related stress having heavy impact.

Although mental health continues to be a workplace challenge across finance and accountancy roles – improvements have lost momentum.

In 2026, **53%** of India respondents feel their mental health suffers because of work pressure (only a small increase from **51%** in 2025). Similar to last year, Millennials are the most stressed (**55%**), followed by Gen Z (**54%**). Over a third (**36%**) feel their organisation is not doing enough, while **67%** expect greater support for managing mental health.

67% of India respondents expect greater support from their organisations for managing mental health



‘Mental health challenges are systemic rather than individual – calling on organisations to work on reducing avoidable stress, preventing burnout, and strengthening psychological safety.’

Explore in more detail →



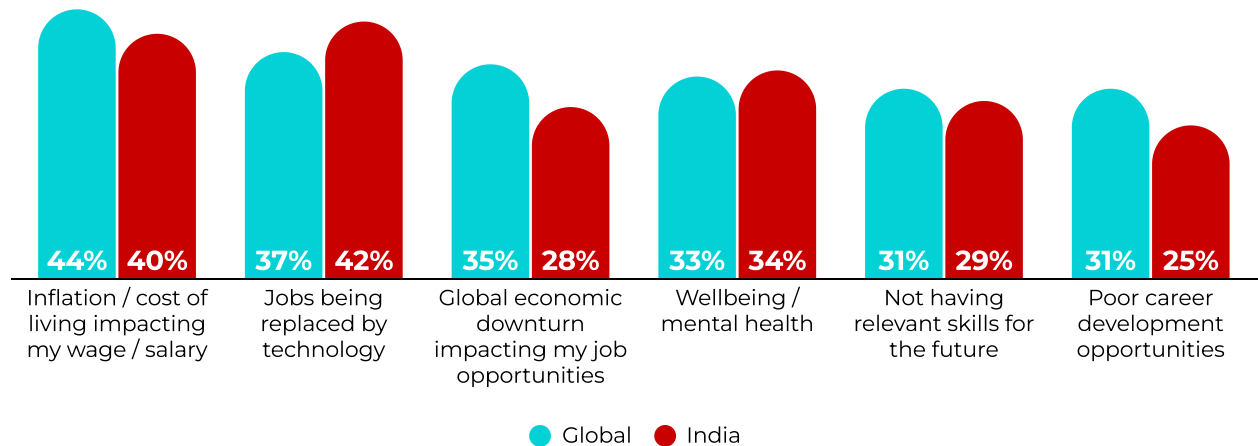


1. Cost of living fears remain the top concern – driving wage pressure on employers.

In 2026, as for the last three years, cost of living continues to top the list of work-related concerns globally. For India, it’s the second highest-rated concern – behind jobs being replaced by technology (see [trend 3](#)).

Concerns around the cost of living are reflected in wage demands. Both globally and in India, the proportion of those seeking to ask for a pay rise has risen since 2025 – with **81%** of respondents in India planning to ask their employer for a pay rise in the next 12 months, higher than the **67%** in 2025 and the 2026 global average (**62%**).

The biggest work related fears for the future – global vs India



Only **29%** of India respondents are satisfied with their pay – compared to **36%** globally. By generation, **90%** of Millennials are seeking to ask for a pay rise in the next 12 months – higher than Gen Z at **77%** and Gen X at **75%**.

In India, **68%** of respondents expect a pay rise greater than 10%, (compared to **37%** globally). Among those expecting hikes above 10% – Gen X (**76%**) have the highest expectations, followed by Gen Z (**60%**) and Millennials (**55%**).

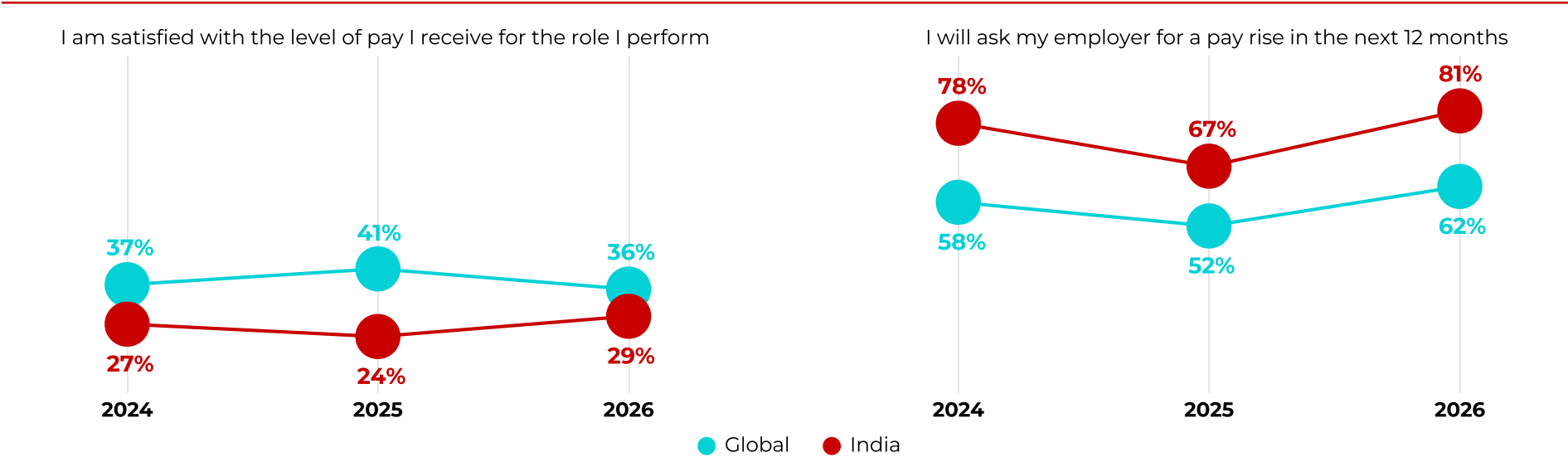
There’s no one size fits all approach as compensation is something very personal, explain the employers. While compensation (with a focus on cash in hand) remains the number one factor – particularly for the younger generation – mid-tenure professionals place remuneration and finding meaning in their work at equal standing, as also evident in the results.

Employers who joined our India roundtable agree that the salary expectation gap is a common challenge, but there are practical workarounds to manage it. To balance these priorities, employers share strategies, or rather questions that organisations need to regularly think through:

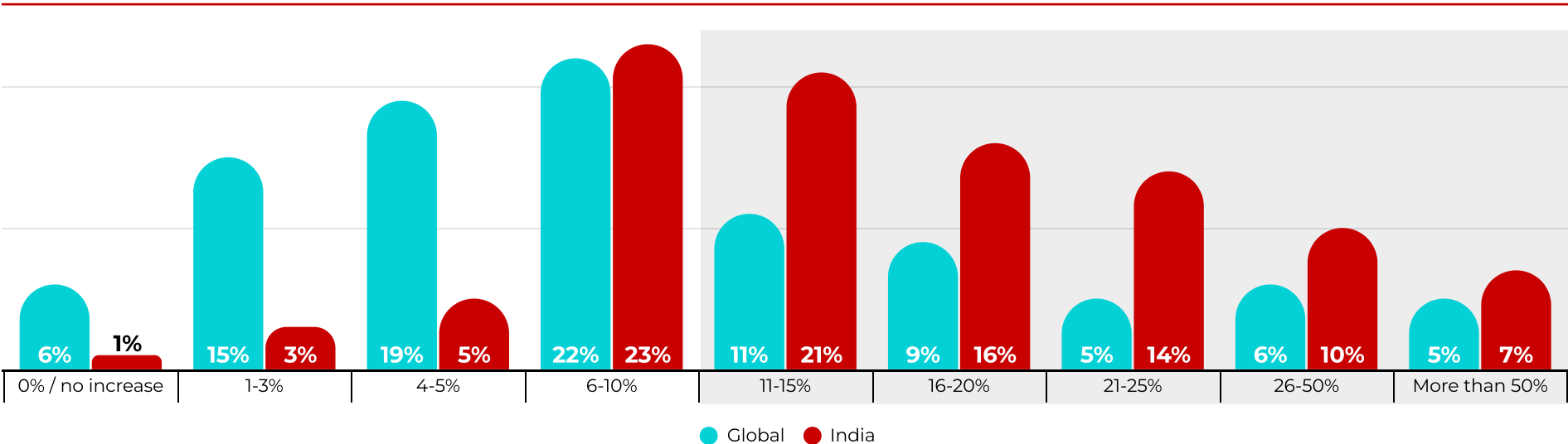
‘How do we provide growth opportunities in the organisation? How do we make sure that we are hearing every voice in the organisation? Are they contributing meaningfully to their jobs, to their role?’

India roundtable participant

Pay expectations: 2024 vs 2025 vs 2026 – global vs India



What is the minimum pay rise you would expect next year from your employer? – global vs India

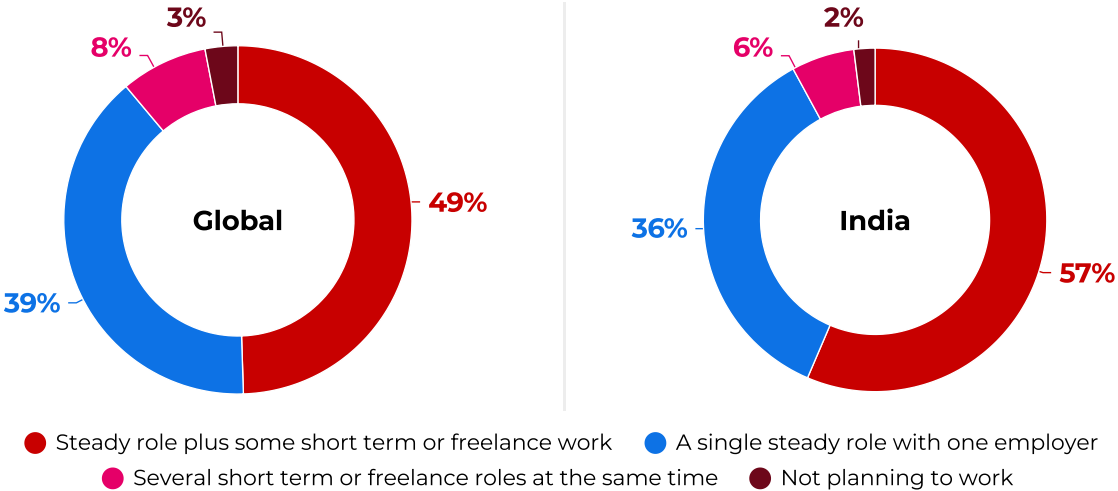


2. Most finance professionals now prioritise a steady role – signalling improved retention.

Over 90% of respondents in India are looking for at least one steady role – with 57% looking for consistent roles as well as some freelance work, and over a third (36%) content with one stable role.

Generationally, a higher percentage of Gen Z (58%) and Gen Y (52%) are looking for steady roles plus some freelance work – while Gen X (53%) are more comfortable with a single role with one employer.

Which type of work would you prefer in the future? – global vs India



Short-term retention indicators have improved for India – **47%** in 2026 are keen to move roles in the next 12 month (compared to **55%** in 2025).

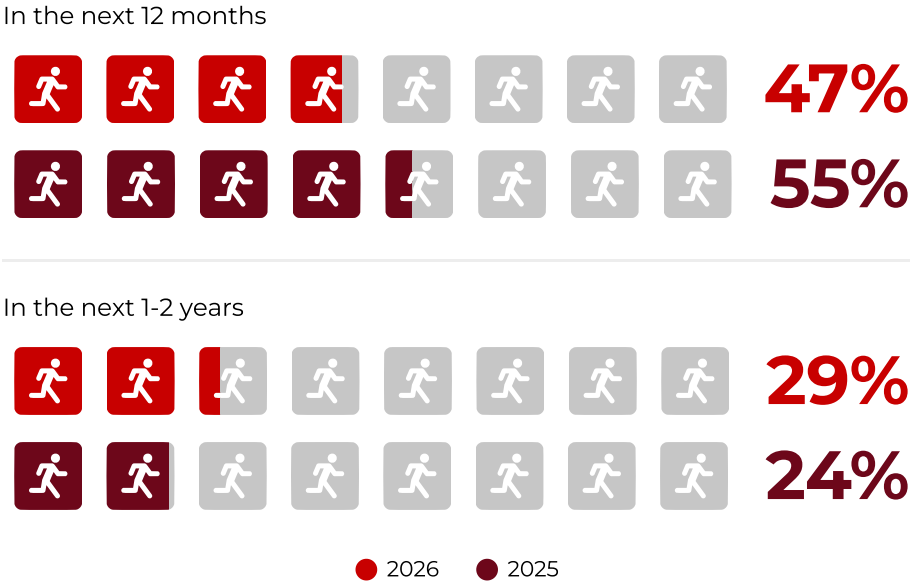
Employers agree that the geopolitical situation and the hype around AI are two influential reasons for uncertainty. Every employee conversation has questions around the impact of these macro trends on job security. People are not confident about finding new jobs in the near term – making them hold on to and even value the roles they already have. The data seems to agree – with **60%** of respondents in India feeling secure in their role (compared to **63%** globally).

Retention is driven by a set of individual goals within organisational goals – the ability to look at the big picture for the organisation, and being able to see a career path for themselves within the big picture for individuals.

Further, organisations are keen on building and retaining the talent that helps them with cost savings and carrying forward institutional knowledge.

‘The future of retention continues to evolve. With uncertainties around geopolitics, the rise of AI, and flatter organisations limiting vertical growth – organisations must be clear about what ‘talent’ and ‘growth’ mean for them. This clarity will guide smarter decisions around roles to prioritise and invest in.’

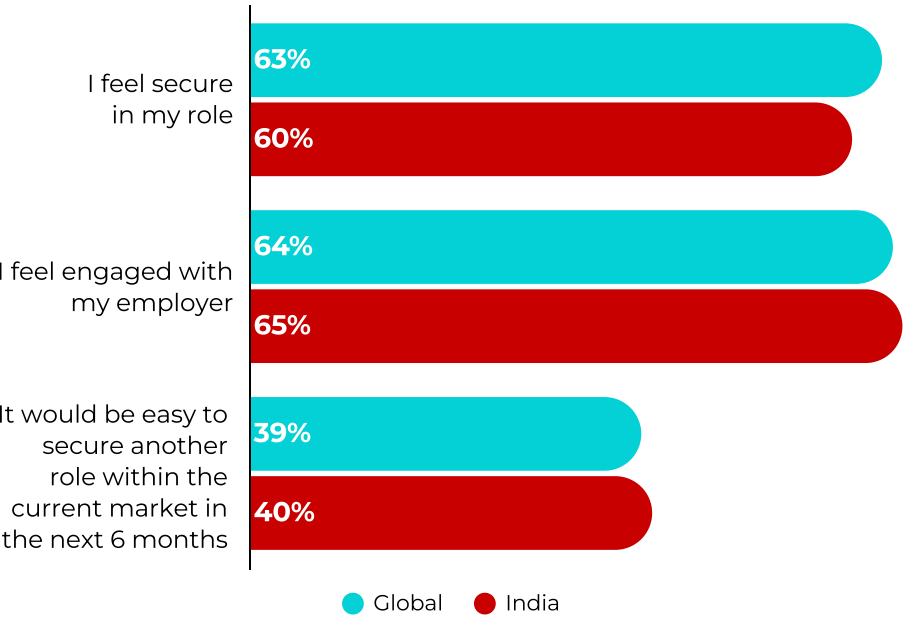
How soon would you like to move to your next role?
– 2025 vs 2026



‘Retention isn’t a one-day programme – it’s the sum of everyday experiences, driven by meaningful work with clear avenues for growth, managers who mentor and coach their mentees, and fairness in compensation and rewards. Together, these build trust in the organisation and constitute the retention strategy.’

Sowmya Narayan, Uniquis Consultech

Job security – global vs India



‘Companies are moving to efficiency-driven models and want to maximise the return/employee. Employees who can reduce the turnaround time or the cost to the company are becoming increasingly valuable – and companies are keen to invest in the development and retention of such profiles.’

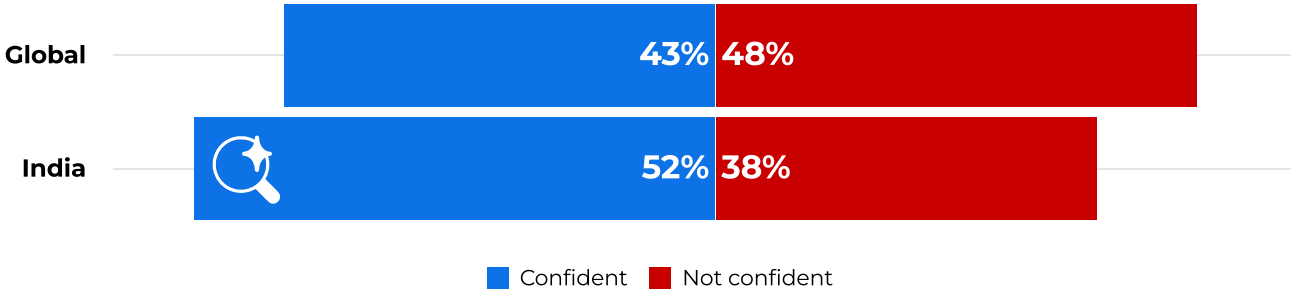
Shiblee Ahmed, London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG)



3. AI use is accelerating in hiring and at work, but anxieties remain on job impacts.

Our survey reports an increasing yet cautious use of AI in hiring. Over half of India respondents (**52%**) are confident using an AI algorithm to support fair and unbiased recruitment – higher than the global average of **43%**.

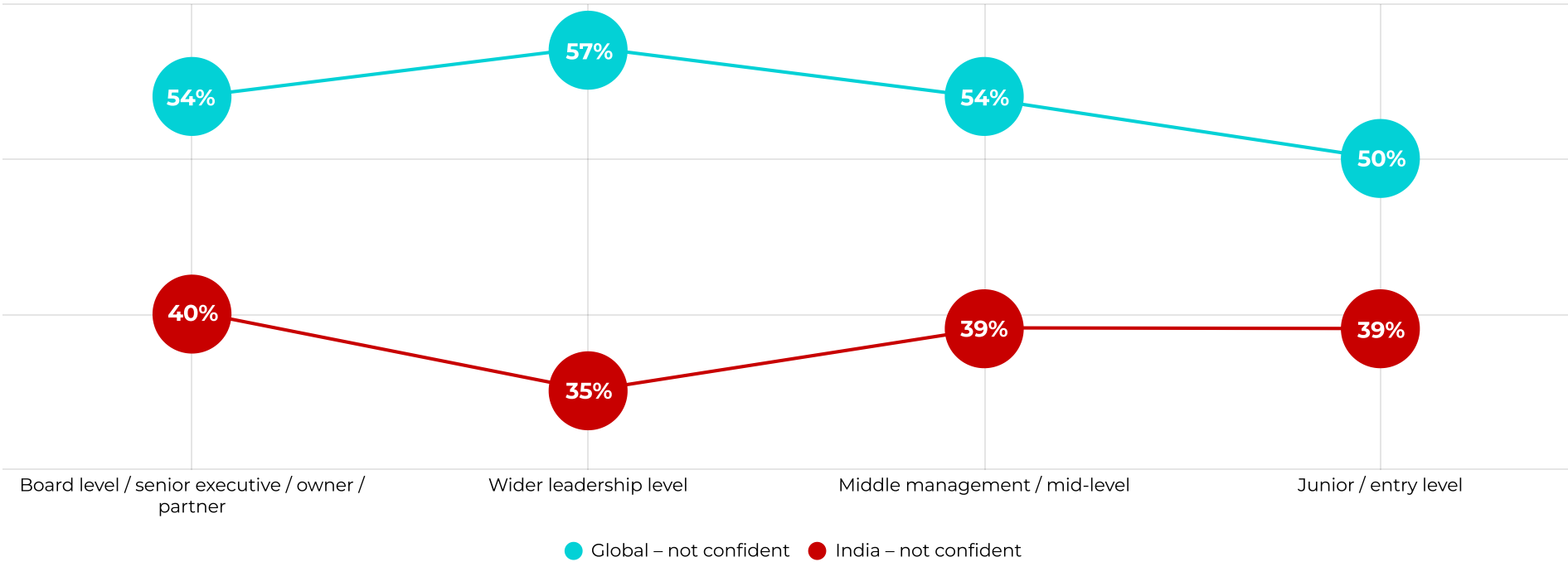
How confident are you in the use of AI algorithms to support fair and unbiased recruitment processes? – global vs India



'Don't knows' remain the balancing figure for each response.

Generationally in India, Gen Z is the most positive about the use of AI to support fair and unbiased recruitment processes – with **54%** confident that it can support fair and unbiased hiring. Gen Y is more balanced – with **48%** showing confidence, while Gen X is wary by comparison – with only **27%** feeling the same. The confidence levels around AI-based hiring in India are higher compared to global figures across different seniority levels.

Confidence levels around AI-based hiring in India are higher compared to global figures across different seniority levels – global vs India



‘While using AI for screening resumes, we’ve lost out on some good resumes that maybe a person looking at it would have passed on to the next stage. In its current capability, we can’t rely on AI without human involvement. It requires a lot more fine-tuning because it’s humans that we’re dealing with at the end of the day.’

A human resource professional

Human resource professionals in India are ‘cautiously confident’ in using AI for recruitment – warning against the inherent biases in AI models: *‘AI is an algorithm and algorithmic does not automatically mean objective or fair,’* explains Sowmya Narayan.

Given the use of historical data for pattern recognition, the application of AI for recruitment would mean repeating the mistakes of the past. Context blindness is another risk – explaining career decisions like career breaks, changes, and growth come with subjectivity and personal stories – something that agentic AI can’t be expected to be mindful about.

Employers who joined the India roundtable conclude that using AI in hiring is proving to be a strong recruitment funnel – helping employers sift through large applicant pools, but it requires human ownership and intervention. However, there are questions around the value addition through AI beyond the existing features, such as SEM (Search Engine Marketing) optimisation.

‘For AI to add value to the recruitment process, it needs the ability to go beyond keywords and identify personal stories that make a candidate fit for a current role.’

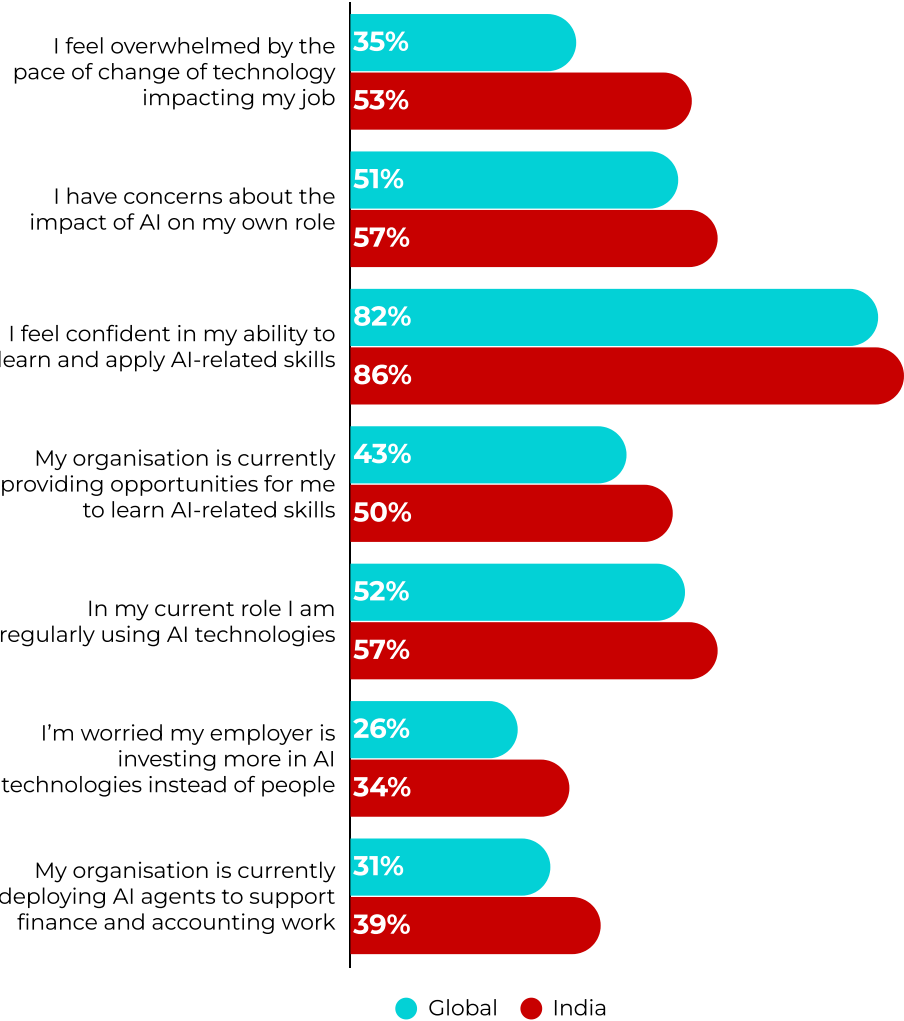
When respondents in India were asked about the use of AI at work – over half (**57%**) confirmed using AI technologies in their current role. This explains the high confidence levels – with **86%** confident in their ability to learn and apply AI-related skills.

More than half of finance professionals surveyed in India (**53%**) feel overwhelmed by the pace of technological change, and are concerned about AI’s impact on their role (**57%**) – both significantly above the global average of **35%** and **51%** respectively.

This suggests that exposure to AI does not automatically translate into confidence. One third (**34%**) feel investment in AI is outpacing investment in people (compared to **26%** globally) – indicating a need for better support structures as adoption accelerates. Encouragingly, organisational efforts to train people appear to be responding – **50%** confirmed their organisation is providing opportunities to learn AI-related skills in 2026, up from **37%** in 2025.

India ranks among the top global contributors to AI research output and possesses a deep pool of technical talent in the field of AI. This is also evident in our survey results – with a higher than global average performance on those using AI in their work and confidence in picking AI-related skills. India also has a highly AI-literate labour force, outranked only by the US as of 2024.²

Respondents were asked about their use of AI at work – global vs India



Employers who joined the India roundtable agree that organisations are investing in technology and AI. ‘We are using automation and AI-supported technologies such as Power BI, Power Automate, ChatGPT to bring efficiency in tasks such as data collection and analytics,’ shares a finance leader. However, concerns such as hallucination and data privacy continue to keep organisations on guard.

Jobs being replaced by technology is the number one concern for India respondents – but experts aren’t as worried. As is famously quoted:

‘They agree that technology will not replace people, but those who adopt it will replace those who don’t.’

India’s Economic Survey 2025-26 also points out: ‘What will differentiate a competent employee from the crowd going forward will be their ability to know what to interrogate, what to discard, and where nuance changes outcomes.’ Upskilling and reskilling are the only way forward. AI expertise and its use in organisations are still evolving. Sowmya Narayan explains how to talent-proof the workplace: ‘The integration of AI is set to fundamentally reshape the nature of work. Operational tasks will increasingly be handled by generative and agentic AI, making it essential for employees to stay aspirational and prepared – by upskilling and learning how to embed AI into their roles to stay relevant. At the same time, employers must redesign roles in a way that routine work is automated, enabling people to focus on more meaningful, high-value contributions.’

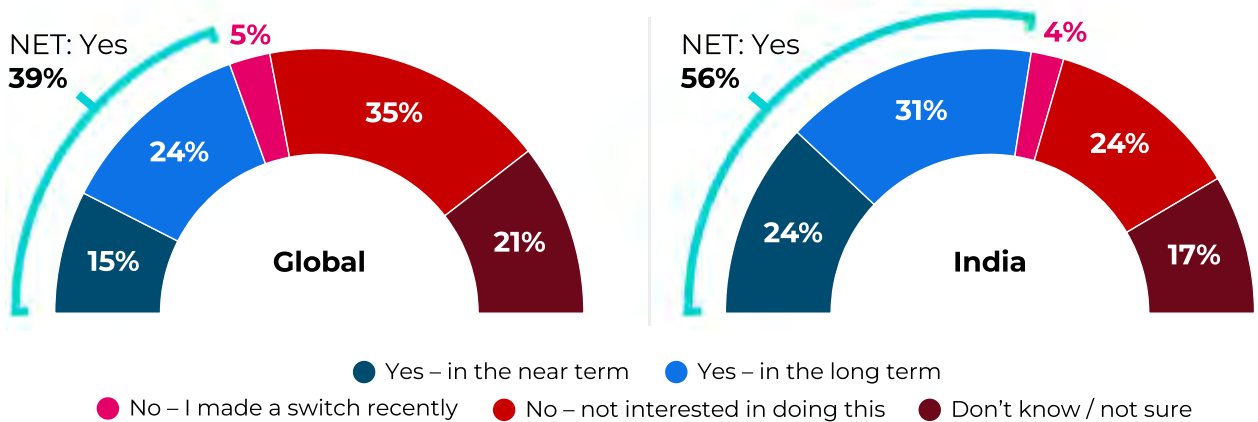
2 <<https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/economicsurvey/doc/eschapter/echap14.pdf>>



4. Accountancy seen as a launchpad for wider entrepreneurial ambitions.

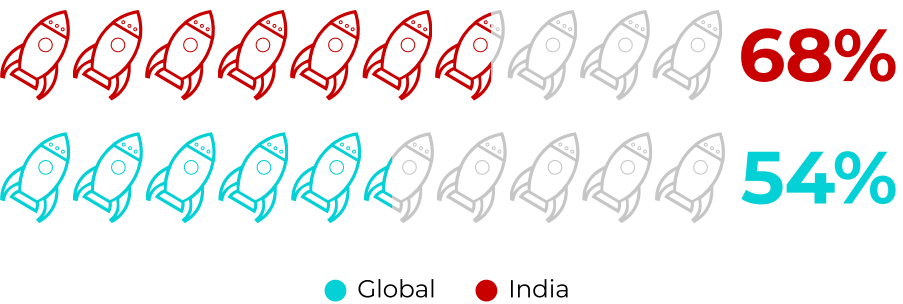
When India respondents were asked whether they are keen to use accountancy as a springboard for wider opportunities and career progression in non-accountant roles – over half (56%) expressed interest in switching within the near and long-term, higher than the global average (39%).

Are you considering switching to a different profession / career at some point in the future? – global vs India



Globally, Gen Z respondents are leading this intention to shift to different careers after gaining a finance education – with **45%** agreeing; while in India, the ambitions are high across generations. As noted in ACCA’s recent report, [Career paths reimagined 2026](#), the opportunity for professionals to broaden their careers outside of traditional accountancy roles is significant too, as jobs will continue to change.

Do you have career ambitions to be an entrepreneur / business owner in the future? – global vs India



Entrepreneurial ambitions continue to remain high in India – **68%** of respondents have ambitions to become entrepreneurs, higher than the global average (**54%**) and an increase from 2025 (**63%**).

These ambitions are led by Gen Z – with **69%** wanting to be entrepreneurs, including **64%** female respondents and **73%** male respondents. As finance professionals have the necessary financial skills to run a business, the extent of entrepreneurial ambitions is not surprising – explore ACCA’s [Founders guide for start-ups and entrepreneurs](#) to understand how finance professionals can own/ support new businesses.

Experts who joined the India roundtable see this as an outcome of aspiration and ambition. Moving to entrepreneurship is a progressive trend for a region like India, where people are conditioned to hold a job right from the initial days and finance is a good launchpad.

‘Finance professionals are typically problem solvers. They solve the problems they are familiar with, and they begin seeking challenges with greater impact. That is where the shift occurs – with each generation, the appetite for taking bigger risks is increasing, and aspirations are reflective of that shift.’

Sowmya Narayan, Uniquis Consultech

Employers do not see this trend as a hiring concern, but it could pose retention challenges that require organisational attention:

‘This willingness to be a non-accountant doesn’t mean that organisations can’t get the right talent. The talent pool in India is huge and there are enough people interested in handling the technicalities that come with accounting roles. Retention, however, could be an issue. Given the options and aspirations, you end up spending time grooming certain people and then they may want to move on. The ideal is to have honest career conversations up front and have a plan in place for the backfills.’

Nisha Srinivasan, Dell Technologies

Vijay Bhaskara, Founder & Managing Partner, Abhijnah CyberFin LLP, and an ACCA member, shares how convenient it has become for accounting professionals to switch roles:

‘With their strong foundation in risk assessment and controls, along with targeted upskilling in cybersecurity – professionals can move into specialised domains, such as cybersecurity audit and consulting.’

Vijay Bhaskara, Abhijnah CyberFin LLP

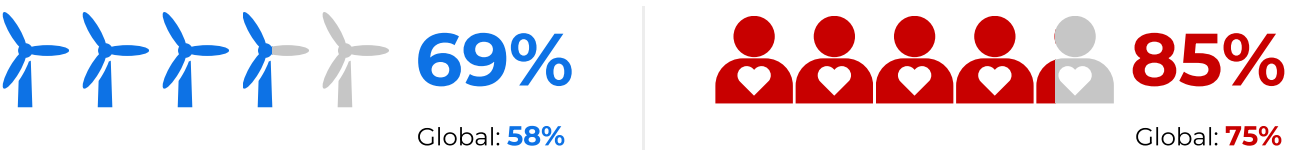


5. Social and environmental values fuel job ambitions.

In India, **85%** of respondents say they prioritise an organisation’s stance on social and human rights when deciding whether they choose to work there – higher than the global average of **75%**.

By generation, Gen Z (**85%**) and Millennials (**88%**), care about social and human rights as a decisive factor. In India, **56%** feel their current role contributes to helping their organisation / clients respond to social impact issues, while **81%** are keen on pursuing roles that focus on social impact issues in the future.

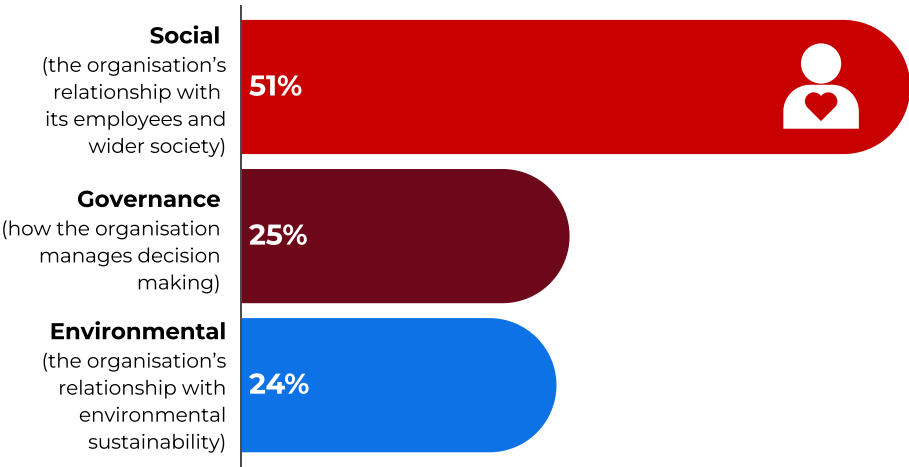
An organisation’s stance on environmental and social/human rights issues would be a key factor in deciding to work there or not



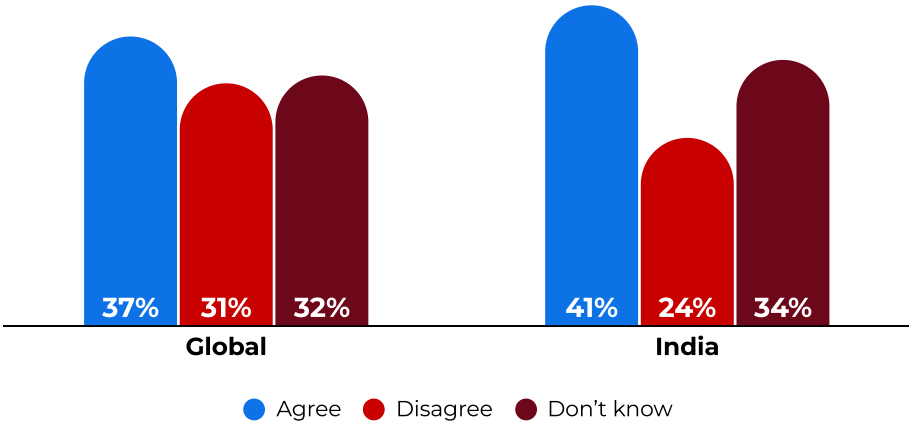
Percentage agreeing that environmental / social impact is key to whether or not they are attracted to an organisation.

Environmental issues score equally high in India – with **69%** marking it as a key consideration. Similar to 2025, demand for sustainability-related careers outstrips supply – although over two thirds (**77%**) are keen to pursue roles focused on environmental issues, only **39%** are in roles where they contribute to helping their organisation / clients respond to environmental and climate change issues.

Which aspect of the ESG agenda matters to you most?



My organisations approach to ESG feels more like a branding exercise than a genuine commitment – global vs India



Close to half (**41%**) feel their organisation’s approach to ESG is more of a branding exercise than real work. And the social agenda, again, is something that takes centre stage – likely because more progress has been made on environmental and governance issues than on social ones in India.

Experts from the India roundtable agree that the current geopolitical agendas are impacting sustainability initiatives. Further, the increased pressure to improve ROIs and reduce margins is adding to the current pushback.

‘Anything to do with the environment is abstract. It is in the distance. It is not happening right now or tomorrow. And we believe it’s going to be a collective impact more than anything else, right? And obviously, we humans tend to prioritise things that impact us personally.’

A human resource professional

Looking ahead, the discussion emphasised that organisations should not treat social and environmental efforts as a ‘box ticking’ exercise just to attract employees – they should align their efforts to the overall strategy.

ESG efforts can be sustainable only if they connect to the ethos of the organisation and its business models. Making such efforts a part of everyday life, and not just CSR initiatives (for example), can have a long-lasting impact.

‘If you claim to be a sustainable organisation, and you have people travelling many hours to be in the office, spending time and money on commuting, it doesn’t add up. Being intentional in your sustainability efforts helps in the long-term.’

A human resource professional

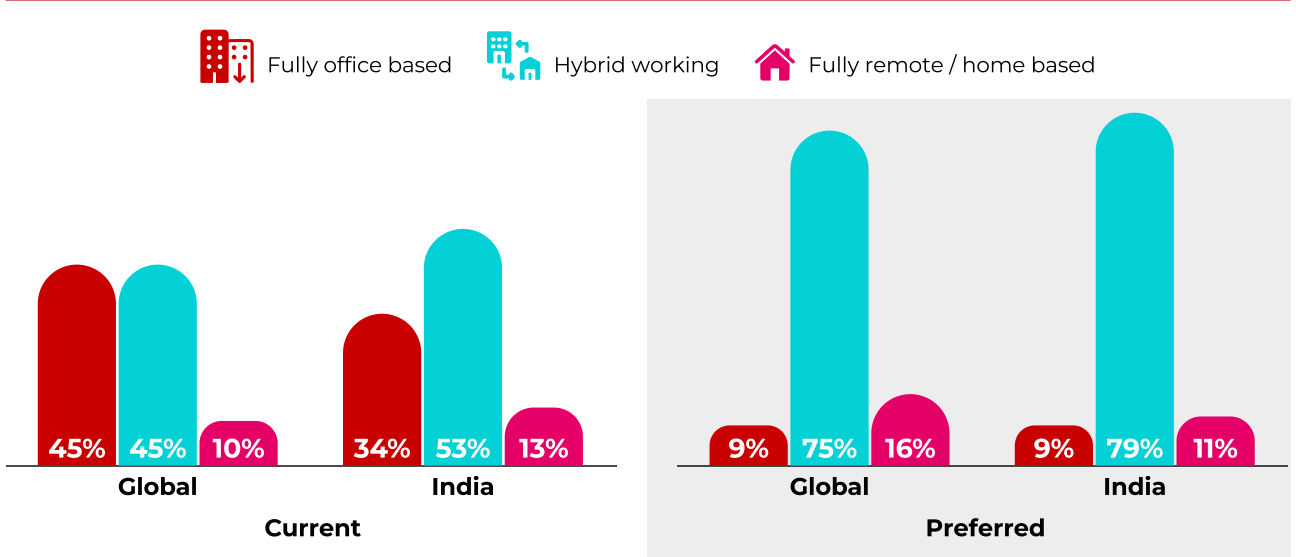


6. Hybrid work still preferred – amid strong support for intentional office presence.

Similar to 2025, more people prefer hybrid work over fully remote or fully office-based work both globally (75%) and in India (79%).

Over half of respondents in India (53%), higher than global average (45%), are already working in a hybrid model, rising from last year (45%) – suggesting that organisations are responding to the preferred work patterns of employees.

Current vs preferred working pattern – global vs India



Experts who joined the India roundtable agree the hybrid model is a more balanced approach as it helps people consider priorities, while also encouraging the collaboration that’s needed. However, as work becomes more global and geographically dispersed, colleagues and managers are often in different locations – meaning mandatory office days may not make sense for everyone.

There’s wide support for more formal policies on office presence among respondents in India, which is also evident in the willingness of employees to be present in the office – with **74%** agreeing to organisations requiring employees to spend a set number of days in the office every week.

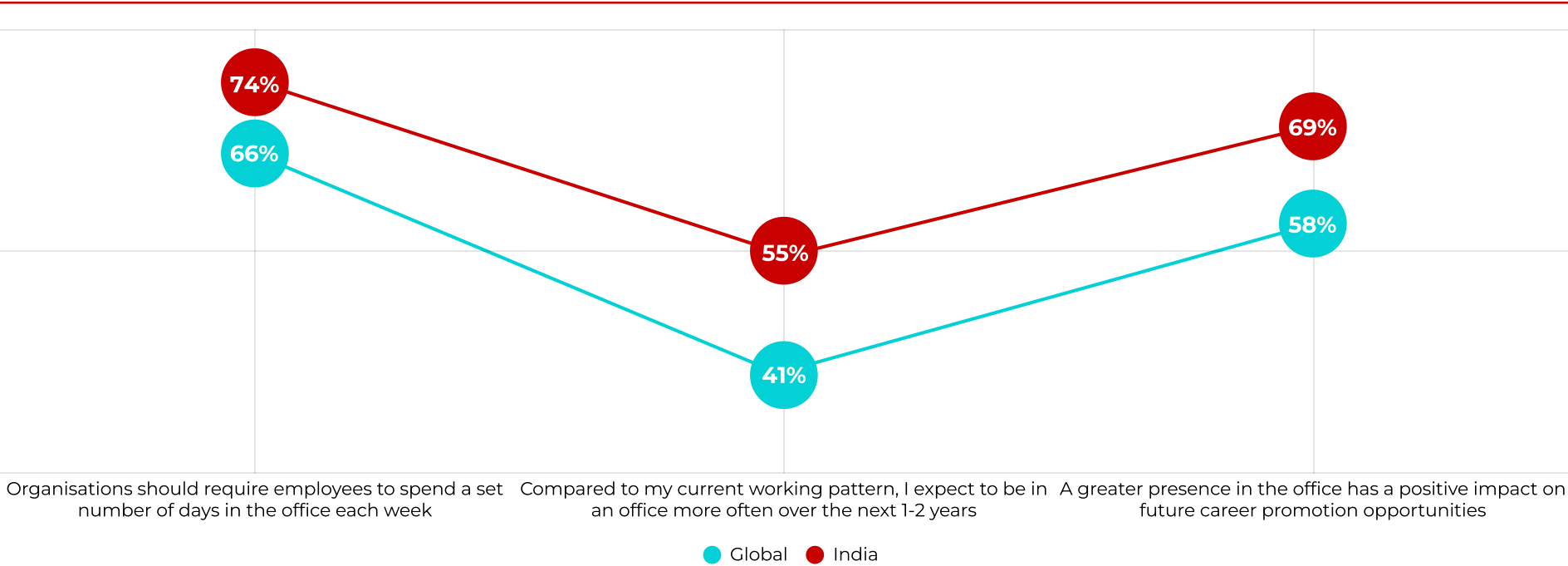
In India, **69%** of respondents believe that a greater presence in the office helps with career progression (compared to **58%** globally). The percentage is even higher among Gen Z – with **72%** agreeing with this (compared to **63%** of Gen Z globally).

Continuing with the logic of working in a globally distributed team, experts say that there are certainly merits in a hybrid working model. They do, however, feel that there is no one size fits all solution and organisations need to work on a balanced approach depending on the industry and the working model.

‘It’s not true that you need to be physically present in front of a person to engage better. To the question of whether it is better to work hybrid than full-time in the office, I think wherever technology permits us to work hybrid, we should.’

Nisha Srinivasan, Dell Technologies

Respondents agreeing to various markers of ‘intentional’ return to office – global vs India



Organisations need to have purposeful and intentional policies in place based on a model that works for their clients, while being agile to individual needs. Making office visits meaningful by not approaching office presence a box ticking exercise – but one that creates opportunities for individuals to contribute on their office days, bringing the teams together to enable as much collaboration as possible. Industry-relevant policies that are driven by organisations are the way forward.

‘A good practice is to have a base framework in place and decentralise some of the decision making to hiring manager/division heads to find a balance between individual and organisational requirements.’

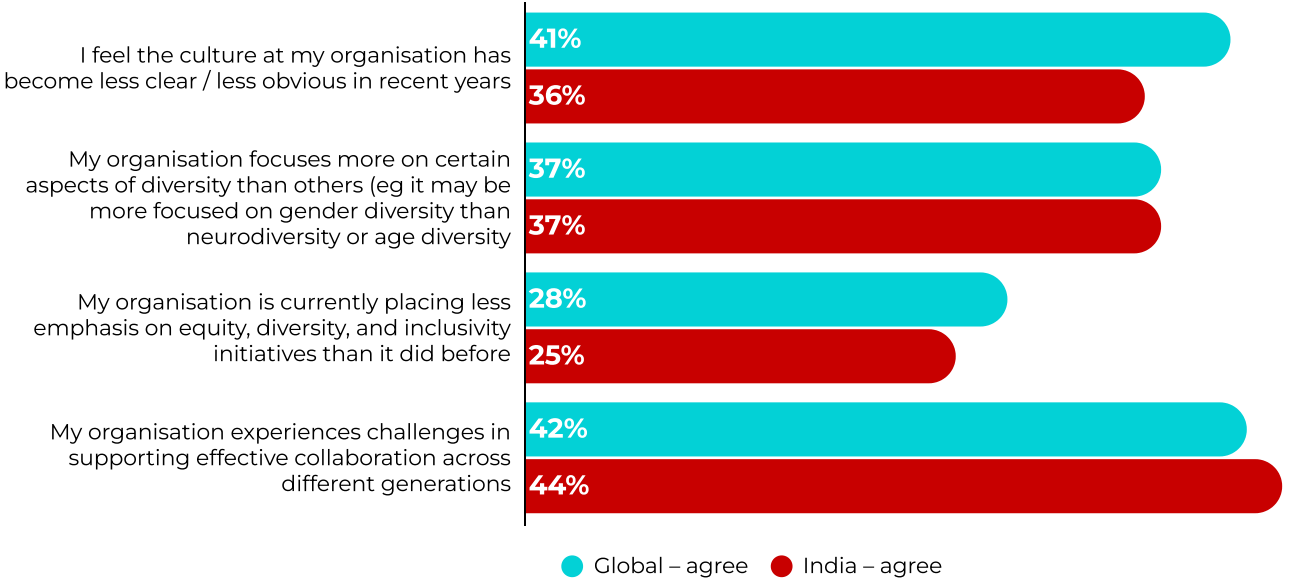
Giridharan R, Grant Thornton Bharat



7. Four generations in the workplace makes collaboration a significant challenge.

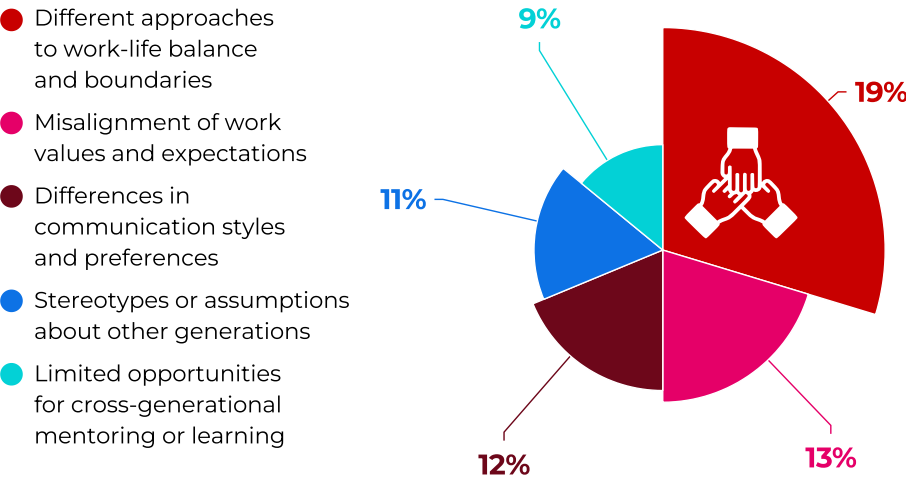
From our survey, **44%** respondents in India find effective collaboration across generations a challenge in the workplace. Generational differences in attitudes toward work-life balance and boundaries are becoming a major factor in how people work.

Performance across different markers of diversity – global vs India



When asked what leads to these challenges, respondents in India reported different approaches to work-life balance and boundaries – close to one fifth of Gen Z and Millennials (**19%**) feel strongly about boundaries being a key challenge. For Gen Z this is also their most cited challenge (**19%**), while for Millennials – misalignment of work values and expectations represents a greater challenge (**21%**).

The top five challenges of enabling effective collaboration across the generations



Experts taking part in the India roundtable agree that cross-generational collaboration will have to come by design. Similar to how organisations worked on integrating gender diversity and ESG into the workplace – enabling cross-generation collaboration requires purposeful efforts organisationally.

‘Reverse mentoring for the generations across the two extremes who are going to find it more difficult to align on thought processes could work as a strategy. The future reality of a large, ageing population requires the creation of multi-generational economic opportunities. Softer aspects – such as introducing empathy in the workplace – particularly for minority groups, are going to become increasingly important.’

The impact of geopolitics on policies also needs to be accounted for: *‘There’s an added pressure where workers in the age bracket of 45-55 are being laid off, and there is an open question around where everybody is going to head to? I don’t think we have the solutions yet, especially from a finance and accountancy perspective. Companies will have to come up with empathy led solutions where the experience of the previous generations can be clubbed with the speed and agility of the younger ones,’* adds a human resource professional.

Breaking mental barriers as individuals also works. Giridharan R shares his experience: *‘As a young leader, I’ve found that curiosity and active listening go a long way in bridging generational gaps. Breaking mental barriers by regularly engaging in open dialogue regardless of hierarchy, solves half the problem. Emerging talent from Gen Z brings fresh and innovative ideas to otherwise traditional solutions that can broaden perspectives and when expectations are set objectively and fairly, practising active listening frequently helps build trust and stronger partnerships.’*

To improve cross-generational collaboration as well as performance on other markers of diversity, employees feel more work is needed on strengthening the cultural aspects. Over one third (**36%**) feel the culture at their organisation is becoming less clear; despite growing expectations, one in four (**25%**) agree that their organisation is placing less emphasis on EDI initiatives than it did before.

A key marker of diversity that stands out every year, is the importance that needs to be given to recognising the value of older employees – cited as the greatest challenge to diversity by **18%** respondents in India. By generation, **75%** of Gen X rank this as their top concern, followed by Gen X (**25%**) and Gen Z (**13%**).

‘Recruitment biases are often unintentional and stem from how hiring managers assess potential and capability, rather than focusing strictly on role fit. This is an area that hiring leaders and managers need to consciously navigate.’

A human resource professional



8. Mental health needs more support – with work-related stress having heavy impact.

For India, performance on mental health indicators has slightly fallen since 2025. Those agreeing that their mental health suffers because of work pressure have risen to **53%** in 2026 – compared to **51%** in 2025 – which is on par with this year’s global average (**54%**).

A higher percentage (**67%**) expect more support from their organisation in managing their mental health, and over one third of respondents (**36%**) feel that their organisation doesn’t consider mental health a priority.

Performance on mental health indicators – 2025 vs 2026



Across the 10 sectors, respondents in financial services are the most stressed – with **67%** agreeing their mental health suffers because of work pressure, and **43%** in this sector feel their organisations don't consider mental health as a priority. This is the highest among all sectors, closely followed by mid-tier accounting at **40%**. Generationally, Millennials are the most stressed at **55%**, followed by Gen Z (**54%**). There is no gender gap: male and female respondents are equally stressed – with **54%** agreeing with work pressure-related mental health concerns.

While considering the role of a manager in addressing work pressure, we asked respondents if their line manager would be effective in supporting mental health challenges in the team, if required – with **62%** agreeing they would. Experts from the India roundtable agree that work-related stress is a systemic issue rather than an individual one. Organisations need to be attentive to individuals' needs to prevent burnout. Sowmya Narayan shares a set of strategies from their work at Uniqus:

'We realise over a period of time that we may not be able to eliminate stress altogether, but we can be far more intentional about how we equip our people to manage it. By reducing unnecessary stress, responding faster, and strengthening psychological safety, organisations can build resilient and sustainable teams.'

Sowmya Narayan, Uniqus Consultech

Identifying trigger points for individuals is also important. If someone is consistently overutilised – organisations need to work with them to reduce their workload before it eventually leads to burnout. Providing regular counselling sessions and equipping managers to be able to identify trigger points, offer appropriate guidance, and direct individuals through the right support channels can help manage stress more effectively.



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