



# Future of Professionals Report – Asia & Emerging Markets Edition

How AI is empowering purpose-driven professionals

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## Foreword

AI is transforming the world of work across professions and regions. The Asia and Emerging Markets are change agents and beneficiaries of this evolution.

Faced with nuance regulatory, ethical, and social issues that require careful consideration, the region is diverse and dynamic. Our customers are innovating and experimenting with AI to improve client service and capture new opportunities.

AI is clearly a once-in-a-career opportunity impacting the growth of firms and companies around the world. I personally believe that AI will benefit the future of the workforce. AI can in fact be leveraged to mitigate the biggest fears of employees. It will help to reduce the risks, the admin, and the less enjoyable parts of working life while allowing professionals to generate more meaningful impact.

I am proud to introduce you to the Future of Professions Report - Asia & Emerging Markets Edition. We examine how professionals hope to benefit from AI, and the fears they have about the future. We also observe key differences between our regional findings with last year's report.

We trust that our report will provide valuable insights for organisations and policymakers actively shaping the future of work. My hope is to foster dialogue and learning among our diverse markets. We believe that sharing local nuances across markets of professionals can benefit everyone in the global professional community.

“AI is clearly a once-in-a-career opportunity impacting the growth of firms and companies around the world.”



**Jackie Rhodes**  
Managing Director – Asia & Emerging Markets  
for Thomson Reuters

# Introduction

Professionals are reshaping the future of work with the power of AI. The revolutionary technology has been a catalyst for transformation and growth in recent years. At the heart of the digital transformation underway are the professionals augmenting their skill sets and work output.

As technology adoption accelerates, organisations are developing ethical frameworks and principles to govern AI and data. Professionals are also cognisant of what matters to them the most, such as helping others and financial security.

Thomson Reuters has long been a supporter of trusted AI and technology solutions. These solutions enable human expertise, judgement, and creativity. Our purpose is to 'Inform the Way Forward'. We value serving our customers with integrity, advancing justice, and upholding truth and transparency.

As technologies evolve, professionals are looking for clarity and guidance in navigating complex situations. Thomson Reuters aims to surface the hopes and aspirations of professionals during this transformative period for the professions. Doing so will enable our customers to thrive with greater purpose and precision.

Exploring the landscape of reinvention, we surveyed 1,000 professionals in legal, tax and accounting, global trade, risk, and compliance. These individuals work in various organisations in the Asia and emerging markets region.

Our report builds on the inaugural Future of Professionals Report released by Thomson Reuters in August 2023. The Future of Professionals Report - Asia & Emerging Markets Edition explores the regional trends affecting professionals.

Stand-out themes comprise the impact of AI on the future of professionals, with insights such as:

- How professionals pin their hopes for generative AI on liberating their time for higher level work. They also have high hopes for AI to provide greater productivity. Purpose-built legal AI holds significance. At Thomson Reuters, we believe huge strides towards this goal will be made in the next five years.
- How professionals view their organisations' priorities, including a focus on improving internal collaboration, increasing the efficiency of internal processes, and digital transformation.
- How professionals are concerned about Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) issues and working with purpose. We believe that harnessing a highly motivated workforce will help to drive further progress.
- How professionals believe AI and large language models will be transformative to the profession. However, mixed feelings indicate continuing uncertainty. Professionals foresee huge potential for growth in recruitment, training and career paths.

Many are concerned about irresponsible AI usage and widespread job losses. These issues may be symptomatic of the current economic climate and the relative infancy of generative AI in professions.

Our view at Thomson Reuters is that AI ethics and education will be transformative. Sharing AI knowledge will both boost the internal perception of AI and provide clarity around opportunities and career growth.

The report contains additional commentary around the data that draws from our deep market expertise. We trust that our research will help you navigate the complexities of tomorrow.

SECTION 1: THE PRODUCTIVITY QUESTION

# How can AI help professionals attain their goals?

## Macro predictions and professional goals

Generative AI is a significant catalyst for transformation. Since the launch of OpenAI’s ChatGPT in November 2022, many workplaces have experimented with conversational AI for productivity gains.

Professionals anticipate that large language models will play a vital role in their future. They regard it as the most influential macroeconomic trend that will shape their work environment.

In the next five years, 64% of professionals expect that artificial intelligence will be transformative or have a high impact on their profession.

They also foresee that economic pressures will significantly affect their profession. An economic recession and the cost-of-living crisis, as well as an explosion in data volumes are predicted to be transformative or have a high impact on professions, at 65% and 56% respectively.

An increasing focus on Environmental, Social and Governance issues and working with purpose has also intensified. Over half (52%) believe such issues will have a transformative or high impact on their profession in the next five years.

The impact of ESG and working with purpose varies by region. Professionals based in Southeast Asia, Australia and Japan were more likely to rate it as having a higher impact on their profession. Conversely, only 28% responded the same in the Future of Professionals Report released by Thomson Reuters in August 2023.

Since that time, ESG pressures have become more prominent worldwide. For instance, the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) released its first voluntary global sustainability disclosure standards in June 2023.

Regulatory activity has also given rise to companies increasing their focus on ESG issues in the Asia Pacific. In January 2024, the Australian Federal Government released draft legislation for consultation. It proposes to establish an internationally aligned, mandatory climate-related reporting regime for heavy emitters and qualifying institutions. Over time, the global push for a more sustainable world is likely to intensify.

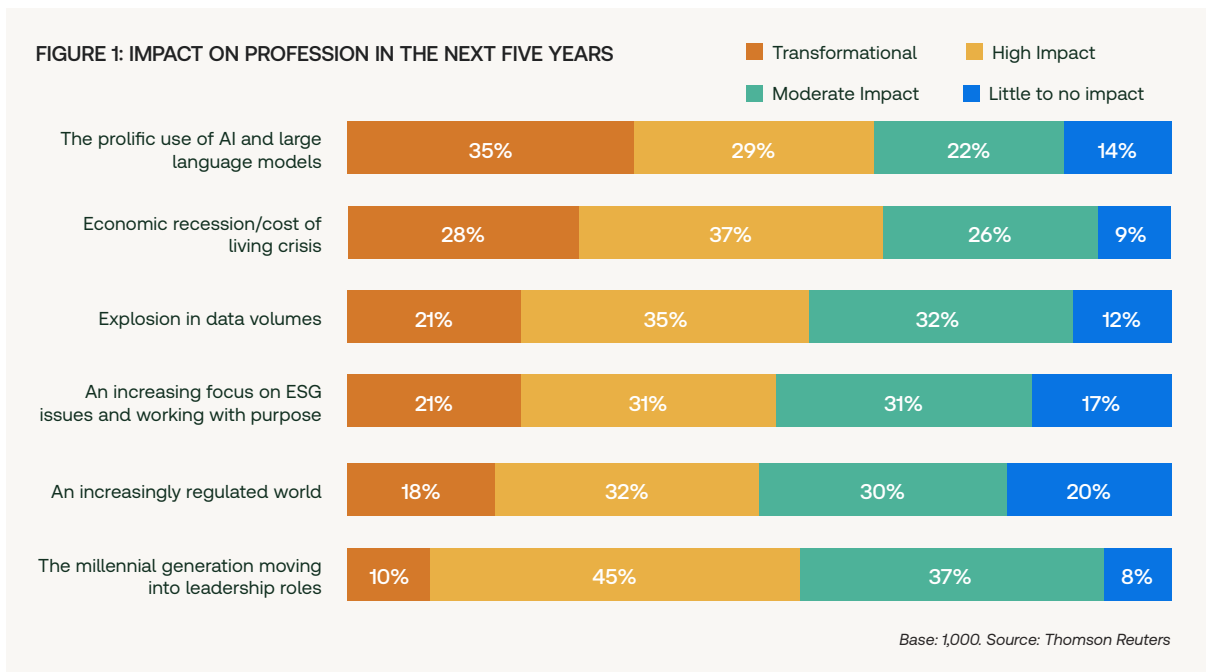


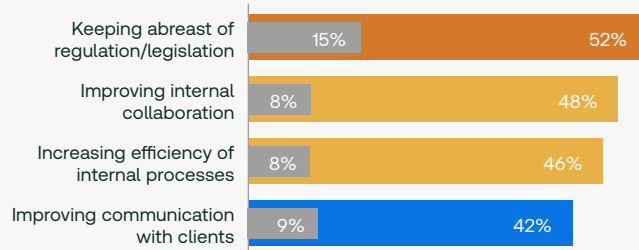
FIGURE 2: TOP PRIORITIES FOR FIRMS AND DEPARTMENTS

Priorities vary from firm to firm and department to department. However, overall, the survey shows that five themes stand out.

- **Operations** Boost productivity, and reduce internal inefficiency, external spend
- **Client Service** Client communication and internal client service
- **Business growth** Expansion into new markets and enabling company growth
- **Protect business** Keeping abreast of regulation and legislation, and risk identification and mitigation

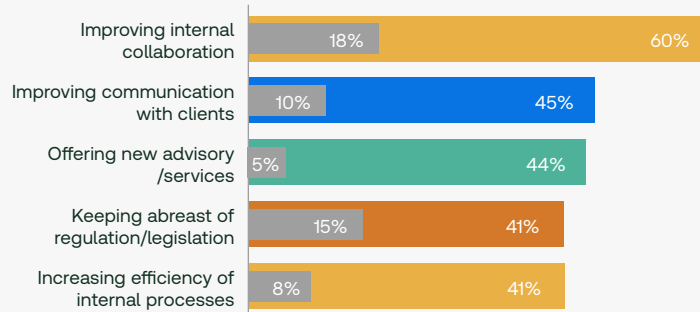
■ AI will be used to support this priority

**LAW FIRM**



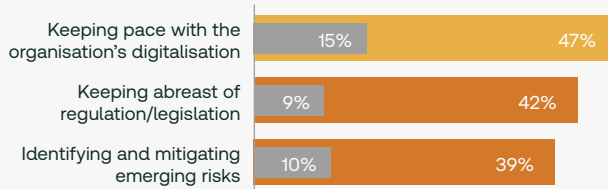
Base: 350. Source: Thomson Reuters

**TAX/ACCOUNTING FIRM**



Base: 80. Source: Thomson Reuters

**CORPORATE LEGAL**



Base: 163. Source: Thomson Reuters

## Priorities universally comprise operational improvements, collaboration

For firms, operational improvements were most important across the professions: Improving internal collaboration was a top priority cited by 48% of law firm professionals and 60% of tax and accounting professionals. Similarly, 46% of employees at law firms and 41% of tax and accounting professionals selected increasing efficiency of internal processes as one of their top priorities.

For in-house legal departments, digital transformation is high on the agenda: Nearly half of corporate legal professionals (47%) selected keeping pace with the organisation’s digitalisation as a top priority. The Tech & the Law 2023 Report by Thomson Reuters issued in August 2023 showed similar results.

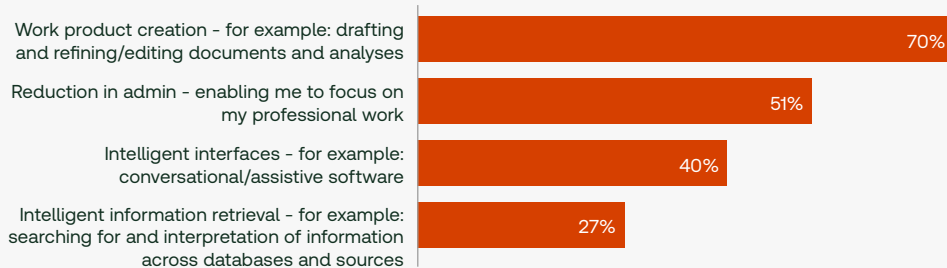
### AI’s connection to daily work

Technologies in workplaces are traditionally used to solve problems that professionals are facing. We asked professionals what they want AI to help them with day to day. The overwhelming majority (70%) said they want AI to help them with work product creation.

Despite how advanced the modern workplace is today; professionals still experience administration obstructing higher-level work. We see a desire to reduce administrative work in just over half of professionals (51%) surveyed. Overall, most professionals are receptive to bringing AI into their workflows.

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:  
 Generative AI is a fast-growing technology that gets better with experimentation. Professionals who use AI to drive innovation may discover ways to use it they never imagined possible.

FIGURE 3: WHAT DO PROFESSIONALS WANT AI TO HELP THEM WITH IN THE DAY TO DAY?

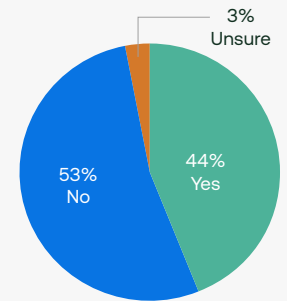


Base: 877 (excludes technologists and operations roles). Source: Thomson Reuters

Professionals' sentiment towards AI appears to be slightly more positive than negative. Our survey has found that over half of professionals (53%) believe AI won't bring new pressures and challenges to their organisation, or their profession more widely. However, over two in five participants surveyed (44%) said it would. The results show that professionals are divided in opinion on the matter.

FIGURE 4: ANTICIPATED PRESSURES AI MIGHT BRING

Will the emergence of AI bring any new pressures or challenges for your firm/department, or for your profession more widely?



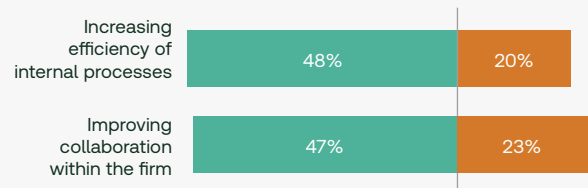
Base: 1,000 . Source: Thomson Reuters

### Where AI may influence growth

Nearly half of all law firm professionals we surveyed believe that AI can help deliver growth in two specific areas for their firm. These are a) increasing efficiency of internal processes (48%) and b) improving collaboration within the firm (47%).

FIGURE 5: HOW AI MAY IMPACT GROWTH AT LAW FIRMS

■ One of the top five areas where AI can help  
 ■ AI will make more challenging



Base: 350. Source: Thomson Reuters

One in four corporate professionals (25%) think that AI will make it more difficult to prevent or detect fraudulent behaviour.

A notable finding from the survey among corporate professionals is concern over fraudulent risks. One in four corporate professionals (25%) think that AI will make it more difficult to prevent or detect fraudulent behaviour. Their worry may stem from the rise in cyberattacks around the world. AI, machine learning and data governance controls are more sophisticated today than ever. In parallel, criminals are also becoming more advanced at exploiting AI for financial gain.

FIGURE 6: WHAT MAY BECOME MORE CHALLENGING FOR CORPORATE PROFESSIONALS BECAUSE OF AI?



Base: 370. Source: Thomson Reuters

This highlights the need for organisations to ensure they have appropriate technologies and teams in place to manage risks.



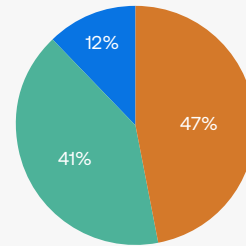
**Will the public sector win the AI race?**

Are government departments as agile as private institutions about digital transformation? Arguably, they do not have the same funding sources and are also subject to different regulations.

We explored this idea by asking our participants who work in government roles to evaluate how fast their organisation would adopt AI compared to corporations. Nearly half of the professionals surveyed (47%) think that AI adoption will be more sluggish, while over two in five professionals (41%) said the pace of adoption would be the same. Risk aversion was put forward as the main barrier to adopting AI within government.

**FIGURE 7: HOW QUICKLY DO YOU THINK AI WILL BE ADOPTED WITHIN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES/DEPARTMENTS IN COMPARISON TO CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS?**

- AI will be adopted less quickly within Government agencies/departments
- Pace of adoption will be similar
- AI will be adopted more quickly

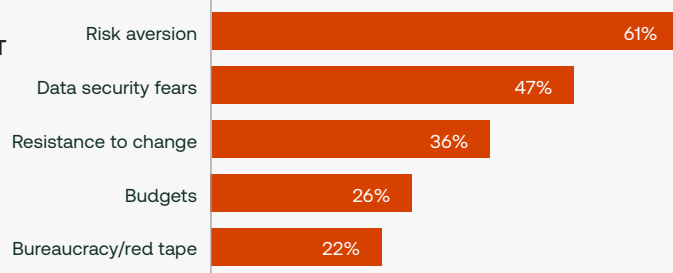


Base: 200 Source: Thomson Reuters

In Asia and emerging markets, many governments have recognised areas for improvement. Japanese government agencies are moving towards a digitalised economy under the ‘Society 5.0’ program. Administrative processes will become more user friendly and less reliant on paper. Recently, Japan’s Immigration Services Agency introduced its awaited ‘Digital Nomad Visa’ to attract foreign workers to address skills gaps. The Singaporean Government is pursuing a digital vision of a ‘Smart Nation’, while the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia are speeding up their smart city ambitions.

**FIGURE 8: MAIN BARRIERS TO AI ADOPTION WITHIN GOVERNMENT**

(according to those who believe the government will be late adopters)

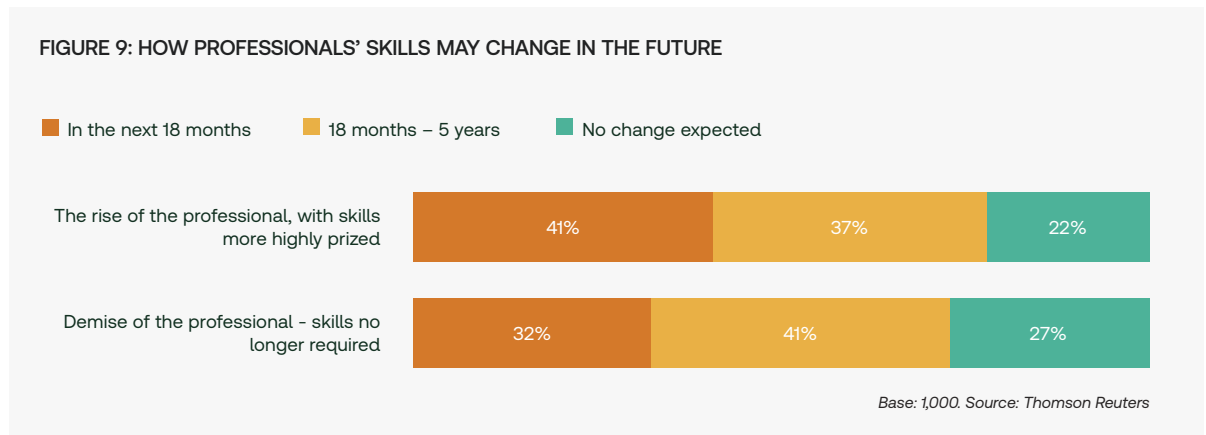


Base: 94. Source: Thomson Reuters

## The future of professional skills

Our research shows that professionals have different views on how their current competencies will be valued in the future. Over two in five professionals surveyed (41%) predict their skills will be more sought-after in the next year and a half. Conversely, almost one third are predicting the end of their profession entirely.

The results reveal professionals' mixed feelings about AI. They are confident in their abilities, but envision a future where AI can replace professional skills.



## Concerns: Many fear that AI may be used irresponsibly

The survey also asked professionals about their worst fears regarding AI in their profession. The most common fear is that AI will be used irresponsibly (29%). Professionals are also worried about future widespread loss of jobs (19%).

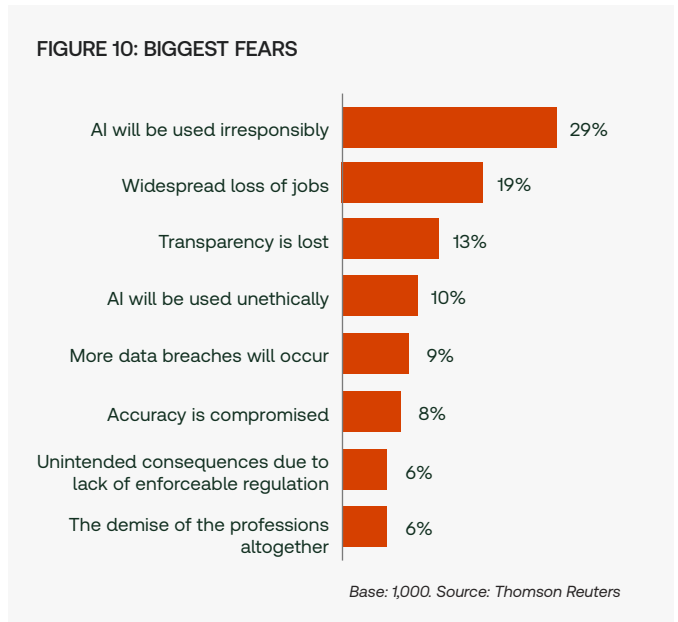
Other concerns include the loss of transparency (13%), and that AI will be used unethically (10%). These results indicate that it is common for professionals to have ethical and social concerns about AI's increasing presence.

Professionals' fears about AI are being taken into account by governments worldwide. Twenty eight countries signed the Bletchley Declaration (the Declaration) on 1 November, including several regions represented in this survey - Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. The Declaration is the outcome of a Global AI Safety Summit and is a world-first agreement, establishing a shared understanding of the opportunities and risks associated with AI.

On 17 January 2024, the Australian Government also provided an interim response to safe and responsible AI off the back of a consultation process which assessed over 500 submissions. AI regulations, policies and governance frameworks continue to evolve in real time.

**Global comparisons:** In the August 2023 Future of Professionals Report by Thomson Reuters, one in four individuals surveyed (25%) feared that AI would compromise accuracy. Conversely, the results from this year's Asia & Emerging Markets Edition show a departure from this fear. A mere 8% are concerned by the risk of AI compromising accuracy.

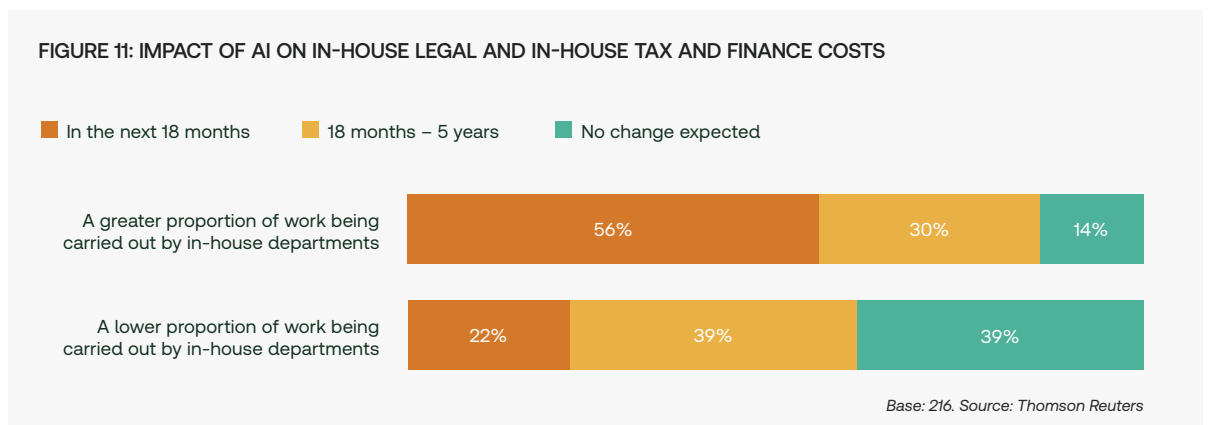
Time may help to explain these changes. Since the inaugural survey was conducted, technology companies have increasingly educated the market about aspects of AI that can help reduce risks of hallucinations, such as retrieval augmented generation (RAG) models. These models only pull information from contained environments, such as internal databases and content sets managed by the technology provider.



### Association between rise of AI and self sufficiency

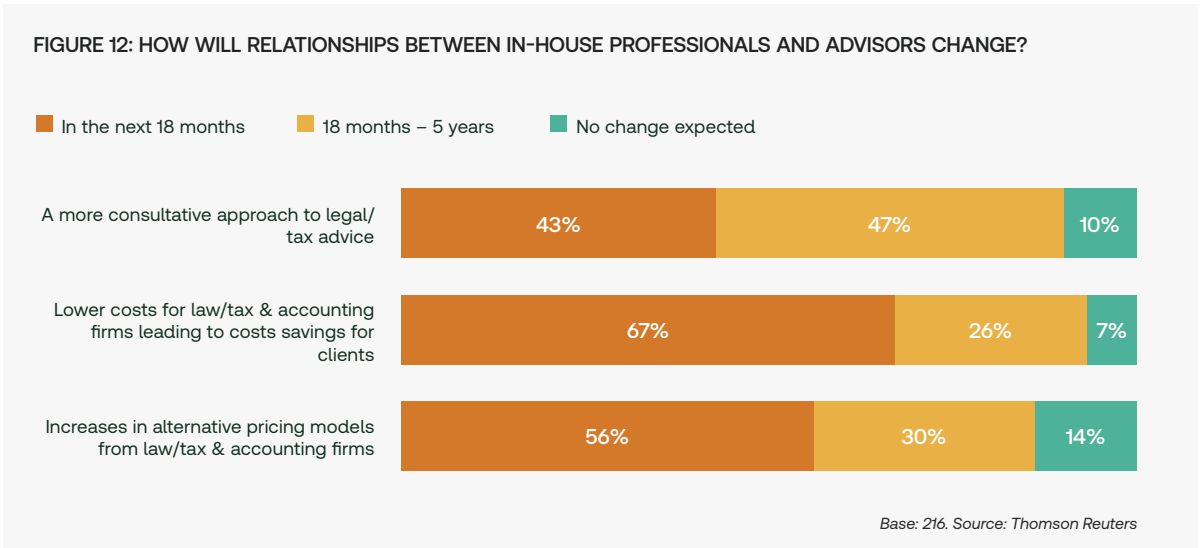
Our research suggests that a greater proportion of work will be carried out by in-house departments in the next 18 months. AI adoption is on the rise and the pressure to reduce spending on external advisory services continues. Therefore it may be the case that the professionals we surveyed believe their departments will be more self-sufficient because of the operational efficiency improvements AI is expected to deliver.

**Global comparisons:** The Future of Professionals Report by Thomson Reuters released in August 2023 showed similar results to our Asia & Emerging Markets Edition. The key difference is that this year's findings are more pronounced. In last year's report, close to one in three professionals (32%) said the next 18 months will involve more work being done in-house, whereas this year's research has nearly three in five (56%) reporting the same.



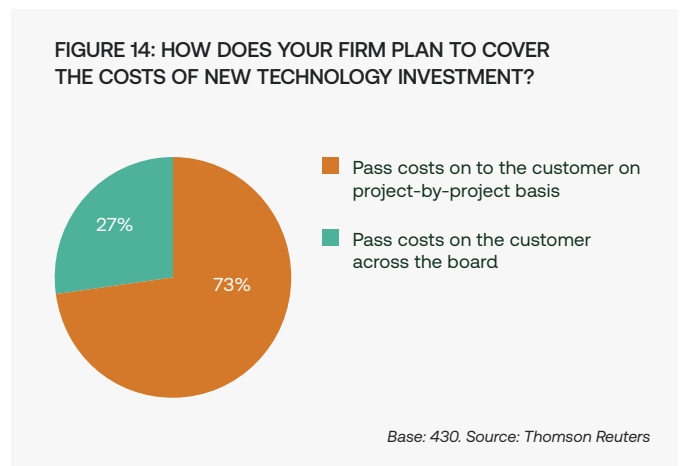
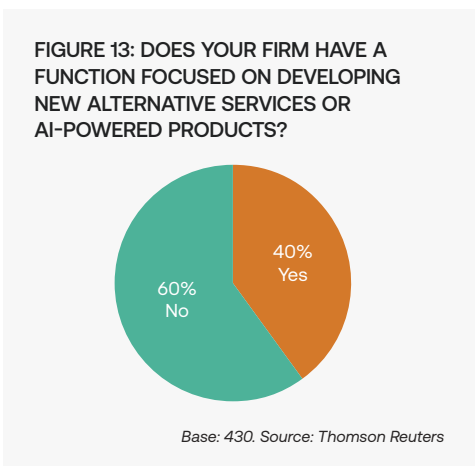
## THE WAY FORWARD: Future of firm pricing and service delivery

Value based pricing and other commercial pricing models are on the agenda for many firms. AI-assisted work can be charged on a fixed-fee basis, which poses a threat to the billable hour. Indeed, a vast majority of professionals surveyed (86%) believe there will be a rise in new pricing models over the next five years. Similarly, in last year's Future of Professionals Report, 75% of participants in the U.S, UK and Latin America believed alternative pricing models would increase over the next five years.



Our latest survey also asked professionals whether their firm has a function focusing on developing new alternative services or AI-powered products. Two in five professionals surveyed (40%) said yes. The findings underscore how firms' service delivery models are evolving to facilitate growth.

Firms are also assessing the value of their technology investments and how the customer benefits from these. We asked professionals working at firms how their firm plans to cover the costs of new technology investment. Nearly three in four professionals (73%) said they would pass on the costs on a project-by-project basis. The remaining participants said the cost would be distributed across the board instead.



## SECTION 2: THE NEW VALUE PROPOSITION

## Augmenting service delivery with AI

AI unlocks gains in productivity and streamlines internal processes. It enables more effective client communication and strategic business guidance. However, it is crucial to recognise that these opportunities merely set the stage for what lies ahead.

To usher in the era of Professional 2.0, visionary leadership is needed to drive structural and organisational changes. This includes empowering teams to upskill and reimagine a client-advisor relationship that delivers unprecedented value.

### THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

Beyond merely liberating professionals from mundane tasks, automation frees up valuable time for higher-level work. Yet, the true opportunity lies in unlocking AI's creative potential to deliver value that transcends our current imagination.

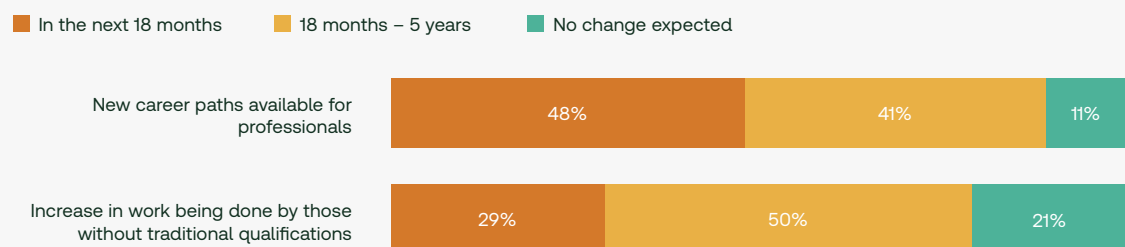
### Navigating the AI frontier to transform professional roles

As AI becomes more integrated into workplaces, it marks a significant shift in the talent landscape. Professionals will have more time to focus on higher value work, such as giving strategic advice to clients.

Insights from our survey reveal how roles will evolve in the wake of AI's arrival. In fact, nearly half of the professionals surveyed (48%) anticipate the emergence of new career pathways within the next 18 months.

Many professionals foresee the rise of unconventional job roles not reliant on typical legal or tax qualifications. Half of the participants surveyed (50%) believe that these changes will occur between 18 months to five years.

FIGURE 15: CHANGES IN ROLES WITH AI



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

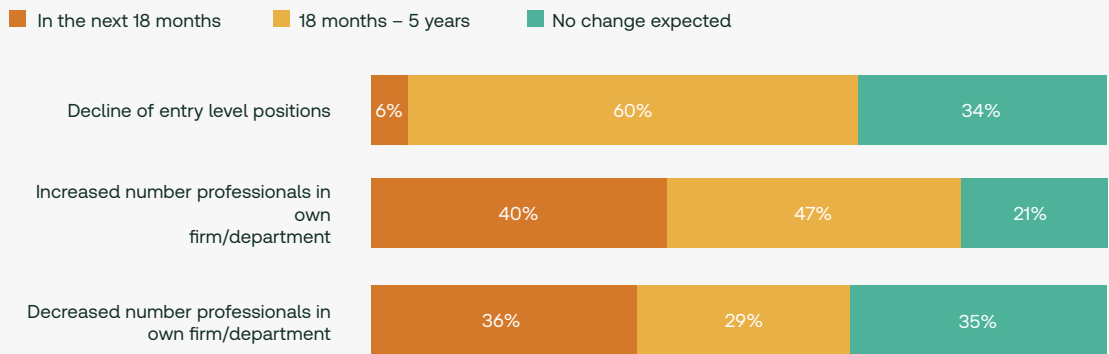
Professionals armed with AI tools will revolutionise the delivery of advice and value to both internal and external clients through innovative approaches.

History teaches us that whenever new technologies emerge, human creativity kicks into gear. We find novel ways to enhance our abilities using these tools. Just think about how drastically the day-to-day work of professionals across all industries changed once computers became available. Technology laggards risk being left behind in the AI revolution.

Many professionals are bracing for significant changes to the mix of entry-level and experienced professionals within firms/departments. In the next 18 months, 6% of professionals believe that entry-level positions are expected to decline. However, after the 18-month mark, three in five professionals (60%) anticipate a significant decrease in entry-level positions.

Professionals are divided on whether professional roles will decline in the immediate term. Two in five participants (40%) anticipate an increase in the number of professionals working within a firm or department in the next 18 months. Interestingly, a similar number (36%) anticipate a decline over the same period.

FIGURE 16: CHANGES PREDICTED IN MIX OF ENTRY-LEVEL AND EXPERIENCED PROFESSIONALS



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

## Shaping tomorrow’s professionals: Training and development in the AI era

As the professional landscape evolves, so will the way we train and develop our talent. Emerging shifts in shaping tomorrow’s professionals include:

- **Revamping junior training.** In the next 18 months, over half of the professionals surveyed (51%) expect changes in how they will train junior employees.

The traditional playbook is getting an upgrade with more adaptive and tailored approaches to nurturing talent. We can expect to see more dynamic learning experiences, mentorship programs and hands-on exposure to AI tools.

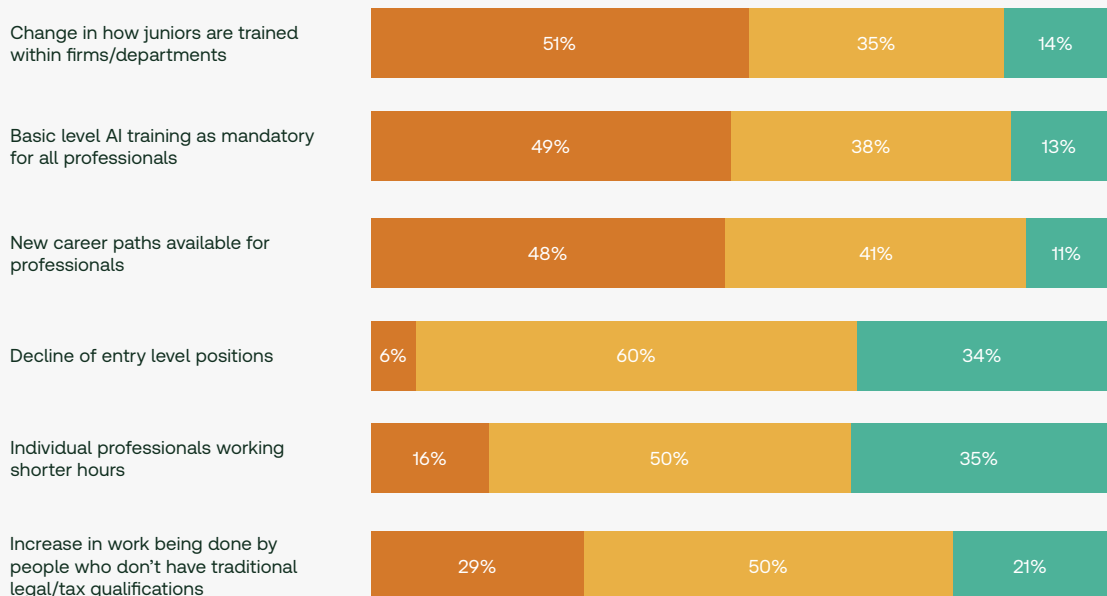
- **AI training becomes essential.** Almost half the professionals surveyed (49%) foresee basic-level AI training becoming mandatory within the next 18 months. This underscores a crucial shift towards AI as a core competency.

Professionals need to equip themselves with the necessary skills to navigate and leverage AI technologies effectively. Professionals will learn to define use cases with AI systems, which will augment their capabilities and enhance decision-making. The future belongs to those who embrace AI literacy.

FIGURE 17: HOW WILL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CHANGE?

Which of the following changes do you expect to see to professional roles in the industry?

■ In the next 18 months    ■ 18 months – 5 years    ■ No change expected



Base: 1,000 Source: Thomson Reuters

Despite their desire for AI to liberate their time, most professionals do not believe they will work less hours in the near future. Only a fraction of professionals (16%) predict shorter working hours in the next 18 months. However, half of the professionals surveyed (50%) expect this trend to kick in from 18 months to five years. To maintain the health and wellbeing of staff, employers should ensure the workplace promotes sustainable work patterns.

### Overcoming obstacles: Barriers to change

Professionals encounter several barriers hindering the pace of change within their respective industries. Risk aversion and fear of change are ranked in the top three barriers for over three in five professionals (64%). Their apprehension may stem from the uncertainty surrounding the outcomes of adopting new technologies or altering established practices, impeding the willingness to embrace innovation.

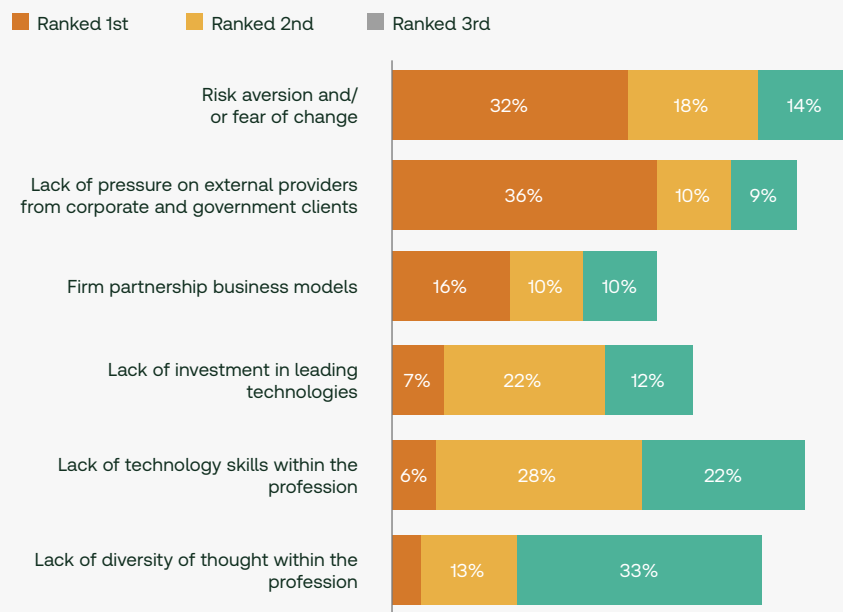
Another significant challenge is the lack of pressure on external providers from corporate and government clients. More than half of the professionals surveyed (55%) selected this as a top three barrier. Without outside support, people may resist change and stick to old ways. This can hinder progress and innovation.

**THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:**

The career journey into firms or departments is no longer a one-size-fits-all approach. As the professional landscape evolves, so will the pathway to entry.

Universities and colleges will need to revamp courses, blending traditional knowledge and AI literacy. Professionals must learn to leverage AI effectively. Graduate programs are poised to be more prominent, particularly in specialist roles that merge traditional professional skills with emerging client service requirements.

**FIGURE 18: MAIN BARRIERS TO CHANGE IN YOUR PROFESSION**



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters



Nearly three in five professionals surveyed (56%) believed a lack of technology skills within the profession was the top barrier to change. Over two in five (41%) considered lack of investment in leading technologies as hindering change. The challenges to digital transformation at both ends of the implementation phase are a concern.

To reap the promised benefits of AI, organisations must seek out purpose-built technology to gain or defend competitive advantage. Then, once the technology is in place, adequately upskilling teams is key to ensuring success.

## **THE WAY FORWARD: Fostering a culture of learning and innovation**

The integration of AI into professions promises to revolutionise professional landscapes, unlocking unprecedented productivity and value. Yet, it is imperative to recognise that technology evolution is an ongoing process.

Organisational leaders ought to ensure their employees are empowered and future ready. They can do this by fostering ongoing learning and innovation.

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

### **Don't let fear hamper innovation**

As humans we can approach change with caution. For those who are hesitant about implementing AI – consider that a 'wait and see' approach may exacerbate future challenges. The best way to get ready for the future is to deploy trusted and ethical technology, and actively advance AI use cases across industries.

## SECTION 3: BUILDING RESPONSIBLY

## Fulfilling AI's promise with purpose

The intersection of AI and talent remains complex. As with any period of great transformation, caution is to be expected. Understanding both the perceived potential and pain points of AI in the workplace is key to fostering affinity with the technology.

However, survey results paint a compelling picture for the potential of AI to meet professionals' goals and needs in the workplace. For instance, professionals are highly motivated to improve operational efficiency (54% selected it a top goal) and assign the 'fear of making errors or missing an important detail' (52%) as a significant negative influence on their working life.

AI provides relief for legal professionals experiencing high workloads. It can also liberate legal professionals to focus on strategic work, which, as the survey shows, is also professionals' greatest hope for the technology.

Governmental guidelines and regulations are increasingly promoting responsible and 'ethical' use cases of AI technologies. Ethical AI seeks to ensure that AI systems are built and operate for the betterment of humanity, society, and the natural world by addressing 'emerging harms' such as privacy, algorithmic discrimination, and automation bias.

The movement is gaining traction. As mentioned in Section One, signatories of the Bletchley Declaration are committed to creating legal frameworks to safeguard against the above-mentioned emerging harms of AI.

Though many organisations have created ethical AI principles, for both internal and external purposes, 55% of survey participants said their organisations do not have such measures in place. Belief in existing regulation is currently low, with support dwindling at only 4% across the professions. Both are cues for the professions to place greater focus on AI governance, invest in AI responsibly, and go beyond compliance by self-regulating.

## Motivations in the workplace align with AI's promises

Our research indicated that improving operational efficiency was the top professional goal, cited by 54% professionals. Following closely behind were three equally-valued goals: improving equitable access to truth, justice and transparency, continuing to develop knowledge and skills, and providing high quality advice to my clients (cited by 47% of survey participants.).

By comparison, last year's report saw producing high quality advice to clients as the top motivator with 67% of respondents. The third-ranked goal by professionals was ensuring my company/my clients behave ethically (44%). Interestingly only 35% of participants selected a healthy work-life balance, compared to 63% in last years' report.

FIGURE 19: TOP FIVE PROFESSIONAL GOALS



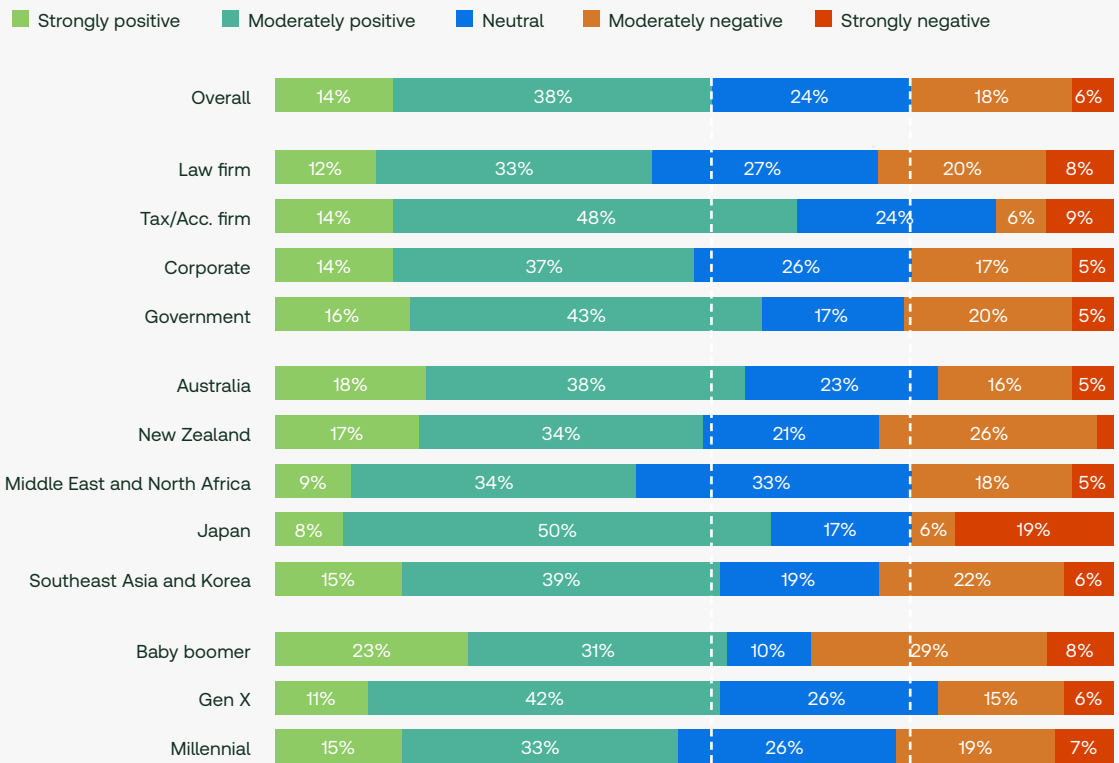
Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

## Prioritising job satisfaction is key to transformation

Many professionals, such as the legal profession, is known for long hours and high-pressure working environments. However, the majority of professionals said that the overall impact of work on their mental health and wellbeing was ‘moderately positive.’ Of this subset, professionals from tax and accounting firms were most likely to agree with this sentiment (48%), followed by professionals working in government (43%).

Of the regions, Japan had the highest rates of positive impact at 50%, followed by Southeast Asia and Korea at 39% and Australian at 38%. Observing generational trends, Gen Z were the most likely to give a ‘moderately positive’ (42%) rating to the overall impact of work on their mental health and wellbeing.

FIGURE 20: OVERALL IMPACT OF YOUR WORK ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

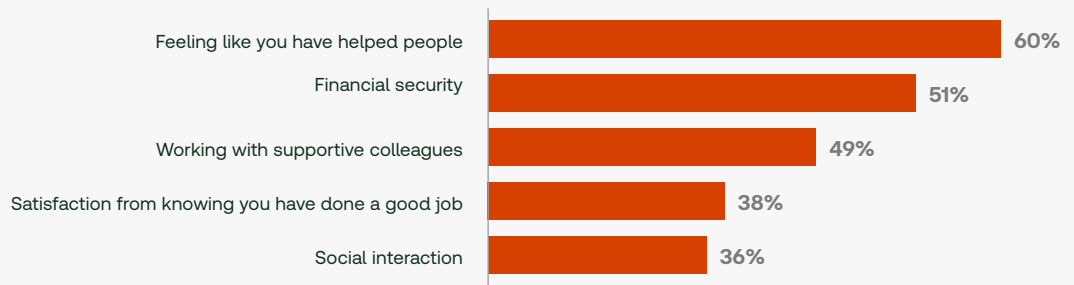


Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

Further questions paint a more detailed picture of the most influential factors that shape working life sentiment. The majority of professionals said ‘feeling like you have helped people’ had the strongest positive impact (60%) on their working life, followed by financial security (51%) and working with supportive colleagues (49%).

On the other hand, many professionals attributed the fear of making errors or missing an important detail (52%) and lack of job security/financial situation (51%) as negatively impacting their working life. The remaining negatives – unrealistic expectations of you, lack of leadership and support, and bullying, harassment or differential treatment came in at 43%, 42%, and 41% respectively.

FIGURE 21: ASPECTS OF WORKING LIFE WITH THE STRONGEST POSITIVE IMPACT



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

FIGURE 22: ASPECTS OF WORKING LIFE WITH THE MOST NEGATIVE IMPACT



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

## AI has the power to boost job satisfaction – but only if you empower your team with training

The benefits of AI enhance the most positive aspects of working life cited by professionals, whilst alleviating aspects of the negative. With AI taking care of more menial tasks and providing unparalleled insight and access to information, professionals are positioned, more than ever, to achieve their top-ranked positive influence (feeling that they have helped people, at 60%). Likewise, with AI removing the risk of human error, the top-ranked negative – a fear of making errors or missing an important detail – will be greatly reduced.

That said, professionals’ fears surrounding job and financial security cannot be ignored. To use the legal profession as an example, AI cannot replace lawyers. AI output must be overseen by lawyers with their unique training, insight, and moral judgement. Through the process of upskilling, professionals can greatly grow their own potential. The key is to empower professionals through training and a clear set of AI ethics principles within the organisation.

### AI governance must accelerate

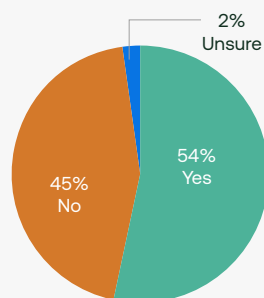
Successfully implementing a technology as disruptive as AI requires a considered strategy. With generative AI only growing in potential, principles of ethical AI development and usage has become widespread, with government bodies and organisations alike publicising AI principles and guidelines. Many of these provide interim guidance in regions without AI-specific legislation, or where the pace of amendments may have fallen behind AI’s rate of innovation.

To the backdrop of these macro developments, not all professionals have faith in their organisation’s vision. Only a little over half the professionals (54%) agreed that their firm/organisation had a clearly defined purpose and set of values driving its decision making, whilst 45% believed they did not.

A significant proportion of professionals surveyed also believe their organisation’s AI governance could be improved. Over half of survey participants (55%) said their firm/organisation did not have a clearly defined set of principles to help govern the ethical and responsible use of data and AI.

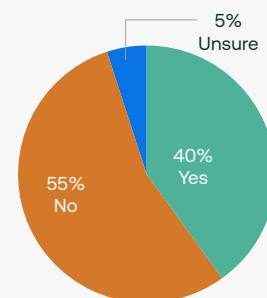
On the contrary, two in five professionals surveyed (40%) said their organisation had a clearly defined set of principles to help govern the ethical and responsible use of data.

FIGURE 23: DOES YOUR FIRM/ORGANISATION HAVE A CLEARLY DEFINED PURPOSE AND SET OF VALUES DRIVING ITS DECISION-MAKING?



Base: 1,000 . Source: Thomson Reuters

FIGURE 24: DOES YOUR FIRM/ORGANISATION HAVE A CLEARLY DEFINED SET OF PRINCIPLES TO HELP GOVERN THE ETHICAL AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF DATA AND AI?



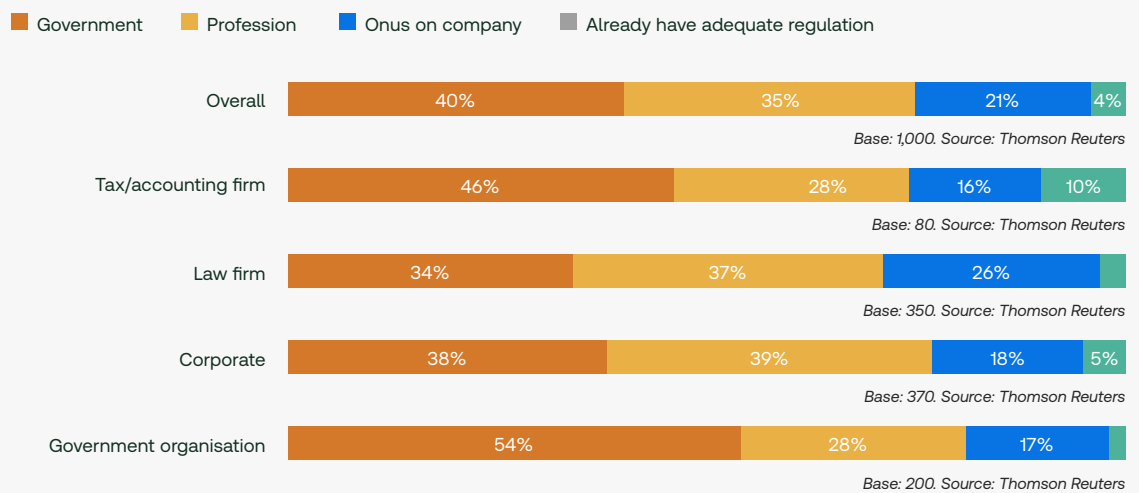
Base: 1,000 . Source: Thomson Reuters

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

## Professionals must be proactive about AI

AI will change the way organisations work and deliver services to their clients. Organisations that aspire to lead on ethical and responsible AI seek feedback from internal and external stakeholders when developing internal policies.

FIGURE 25: WHO SHOULD REGULATE HOW YOUR PROFESSION USES AI?



### Professionals believe current AI regulations are inadequate

Two in five professionals (40%) said the government should control how their profession uses AI, but this varies by industry. More tax/accounting (46%) and government (54%) professionals want government oversight. In contrast, most law firm (37%) and corporate (39%) professionals preferred self regulation by the profession. Only a few professionals overall think companies should self-regulate AI (21%), but more law firm professionals (26%) agreed with this. Generally, only a small number of professionals are happy with the current AI regulation in the profession.

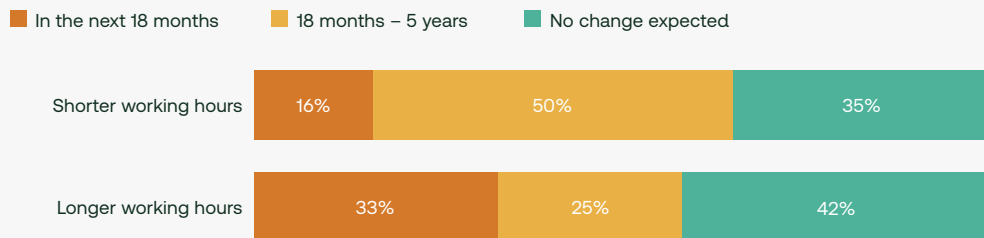
**Global comparisons:** In the Future of Professionals Report, issued in August 2023, more than half the participants (52%) said they would rather their profession regulate AI, compared to just 35% in this survey. This may show that organisations increasingly want the government to administer AI regulation, or that in the Asia and emerging markets region, professionals have a greater preference towards government AI regulation than their global counterparts.

THOMSON REUTERS VIEW:

## Organisations should use AI use cases to help shape future change

As governments seek to promote the use of AI while at the same time ensuring regulations are adequate, businesses with first-hand experience either developing or deploying the tools can offer valuable insight into any gaps in regulation. This is especially true for organisations already adhering to internal AI governance frameworks. In some regions, governments have called upon the industry for insight into managing growth and risks. This presents huge potential for organisations to help shape the responsible usage of AI and become future-proofed industry leaders.

FIGURE 26: IMPACT OF AI ON WORKING HOURS



Base: 1000. Source: Thomson Reuters

Opinions among survey participants on AI’s impact on working hours are divided. Only 16% see potential for working hours to be reduced in the next 18 months as opposed to 33%, who see it contributing to longer working hours. A large percentage (50%) believe that AI will shorten working hours in the next 18 months to five years – which is a significant rise from last years’ 29%.

The mixed nature of the results could be caused by a lack of clarity, as indicated by the considerable number who expect no change to working hours.



## THE WAY FORWARD – To build on positive momentum, lead with values

When asked what they most hoped AI could bring to their profession, nearly one in three professionals (31%) cited liberation of time for higher level work. This was followed by increased productivity (22%), evolution of new business models and service offerings (19%), and transforming client service (16%).

Though the overall support behind these top two hopes has dropped from last year (increased productivity ranked highest at 45% while liberation of time for higher level work sat at 38%), this year's results could indicate greater understanding of AI's potential, with the addition of 'the evolution of new business models' receiving considerable interest.

AI may well live up to its promise. Automation is set to take care of routine tasks and streamline work, giving professionals more time for value-driving strategic work that puts their expertise to use.

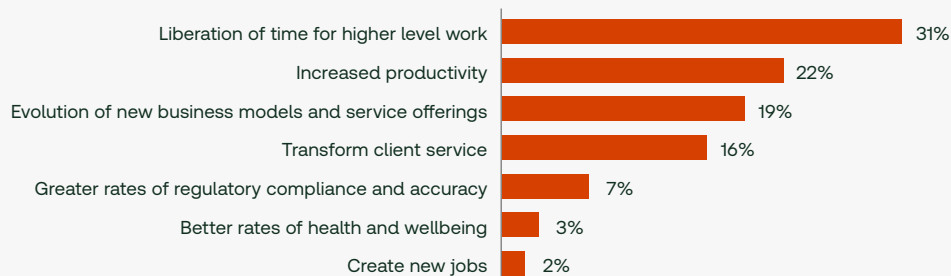
Meanwhile, hopes for greater rates of regulatory compliance and accuracy (7%), health and wellbeing (3%) and creating new jobs (2%), were very low. To improve trust, compliance and accuracy, organisations must choose purpose-built, responsible technology that can serve their unique needs – and ensure employees are adequately trained.

Concerns about job security referenced earlier (see figure 21) may explain the low levels of confidence in the creation of new jobs. We are still in the early days of transformation, but novel job opportunities, such as the rise in prompt engineering and other technology-focused roles, suggests that further growth could be expected.

“When asked what they most hoped AI could bring to their profession, nearly one in three professionals (31%) cited liberation of time for higher level work.”

FIGURE 27: BIGGEST HOPES

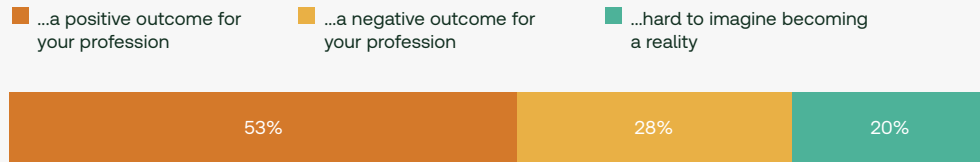
What is your biggest hope that AI will bring to your profession?



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

**FIGURE 28: IMAGINING AN AI-POWERED FUTURE**

Imagine that in five years' time, AI will have become ubiquitous in your profession. For you, this would be...



Base: 1,000. Source: Thomson Reuters

When asked to picture a future in which AI usage was ubiquitous in their profession, over half (53%) the professionals surveyed viewed an AI-powered future with positivity. Meanwhile, less than one in three (28%) believed it would have a negative outcome and two in five (20%) said it was hard to imagine it becoming a reality.

For AI to be embraced among professionals – both to boost efficiency and trust in the technology – there must be a continued focus on upskilling, governance and regulation.

## Conclusion

Take it from the professionals themselves: in the next five years, the prolific use of artificial intelligence and large language models will have a significant, if not transformative, impact on the profession. Professionals are cautiously optimistic – over half feel positively about AI becoming ubiquitous in the workplace in five years' time.

There is significant opportunity for AI to deliver the change professionals seek – greater efficiency in the workplace. The survey found a desire amongst participants for AI technology to ease the burden of administrative tasks. This corresponds to professional's greatest hope for AI, which is to liberate their time for higher level work – and paints a positive outlook for the future.

This, of course, doesn't mean professionals are without reservations. The most prominent fears are irresponsible use of AI and widespread job loss. But despite the latter, survey participants admit to seeing the potential of AI to transform professions.

To reinforce principles of trust in changing times, one of the greatest commitments an organisation can make is to invest in their workforce capabilities and talent. Equally, organisations must prioritise developing human-centric AI ethics principles and governance to boost morale and build trust. Our survey showed a sense of uncertainty among many organisations – with more than half of the participants saying their organisation did not have a clear set of guidelines to help them use data and AI ethically and responsibly.

These concerns correspond with the values held throughout the workforce. Altruism and integrity motivate many of the professionals surveyed. The study revealed that the strongest positive impact on their working life is the feeling that they had helped others, ahead even of financial security for some.

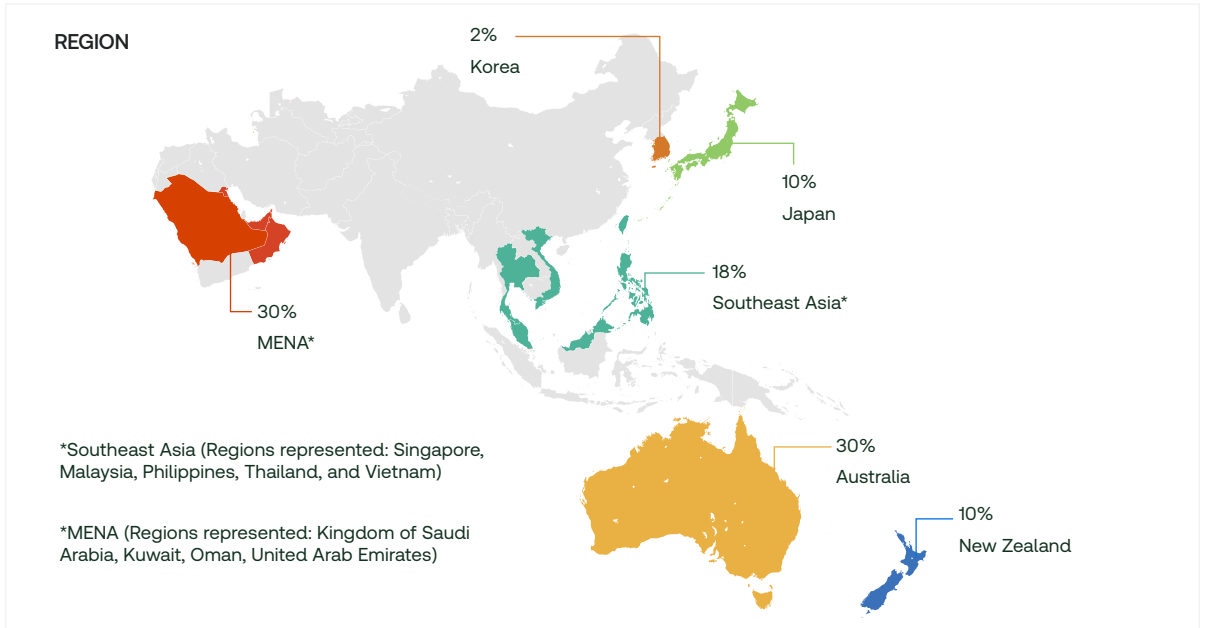
Beyond the impact of AI, the survey records an increasing focus on ESG. Over half of professionals believe such issues will have a transformative or high impact on their profession in the next five years. This presents an opportunity for professions to drive positive change and become leaders in responsible conduct.

The overriding sentiment of the study is the considerable value professionals place on meaningful work and AI's influential role in the future.

# Appendix: Methodology

The Future of Professionals Report - Asia & Emerging Markets Edition survey draws on quantitative insights from a survey of 1,000 professionals. The survey was conducted by iResearch Services for Thomson Reuters in December 2023 and January and February, 2024.

Here is a breakdown of the demographics:



### ORGANISATION TYPE

- 37%** Business or corporation
- 35%** Law firm
- 20%** Government
- 8%** Tax/accounting



### JOB FUNCTIONS

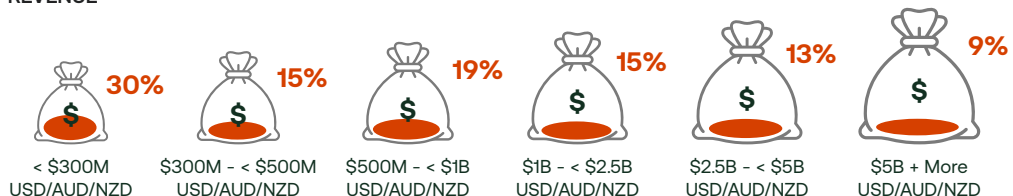
- 44%** Legal
- 24%** Risk
- 16%** Compliance
- 14%** Tax
- 3%** Global trade



### ROLES

- 38%** Legal professional roles
- 16%** Partner roles
- 15%** Risk and compliance roles
- 13%** Director and manager roles
- 8%** Technology roles
- 5%** C-Suite/ Executive leadership roles
- 5%** Tax professional and finance roles

### REVENUE



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