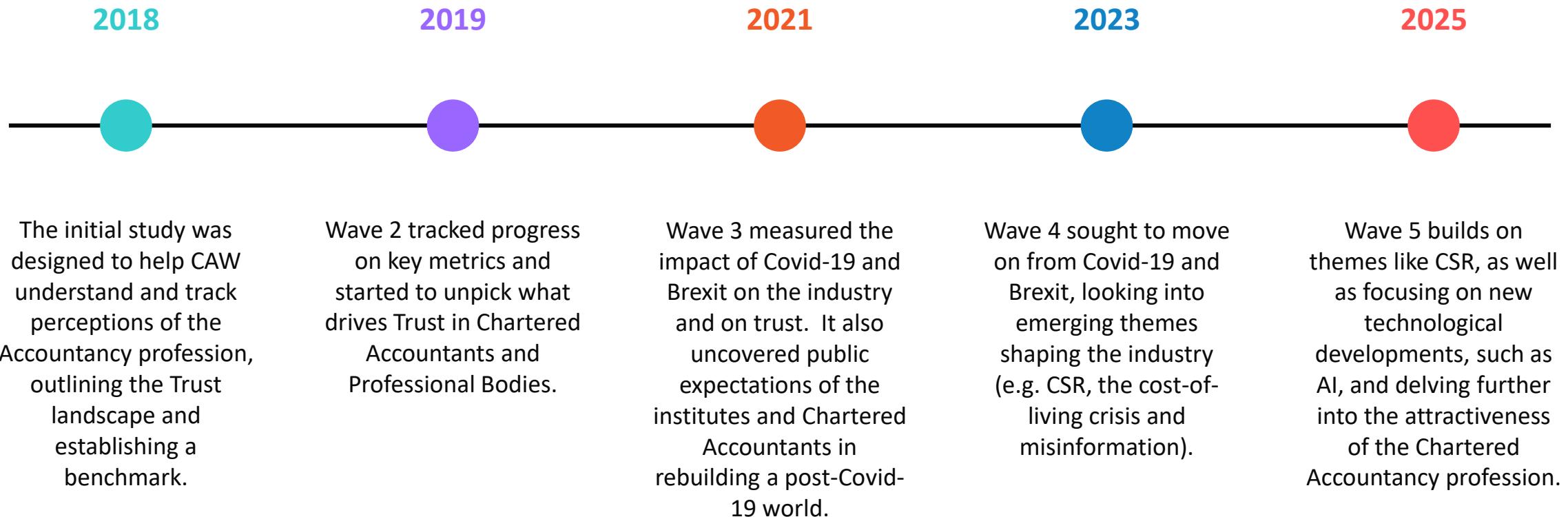


EVALUATING TRUST IN THE ACCOUNTANCY SECTOR FOR CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS

Wave 5 | September 2025



Background



Objectives

Business objectives:

To build Trust in the accountancy industry across key markets

Communication objectives:

To develop a proactive reputation strategy towards business leaders across markets

Research objectives:

- Measure current levels of Trust in the accountancy sector, focusing on Chartered Accountants in particular, amongst business leaders in key markets
- Track any shifts in sentiment in comparison to the four previous waves (2018, 2019, 2021, 2023)
- Understand what is driving Trust and how to build it (in the accountancy industry more broadly and in perceptions of professional bodies operating within the sector)

Methodology

The research was conducted by Edelman Dxi, an independent market research firm, in partnership with CAW.

- **How:** 15-minute online survey
- **Who we spoke to:** Financial decision makers (Director level or above)
- **Where:** England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Rep. Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, [Singapore \[NEW since 2019\]](#), South Africa, [Zimbabwe \[NEW\]](#)
- **When:** Fieldwork was conducted between April and May
- **Sample size:** 1,725 total participants across 10 markets



n=413



n=102



n=159



n=205



n=59



n=129



n=129



n=250



n=204



n=75

Key findings

Trust in Chartered Accountants and Professional Bodies continues to grow

Trust in Chartered Accountants (83%) is stable since 2023, while Accountants (78%) saw a drop of -3pts, suggesting a clear Trust differential between the two, as a 5pt-gap has now developed.

The stability seen in Chartered Accountants is unique among the top trusted professions, as Chartered Accountants secured their position as the third most trusted, moving above Scientists (82%) and closing the gap on Doctors and Engineers (both 85%). However, to ensure growth, better performance on confidentiality, which dropped -5pts, is needed.

Chartered Accountants are reliable partners on guiding businesses through AI adoption and misinformation

After acting as reliable partners during crises over the last four years (Covid-19, Brexit and economic uncertainty), Chartered Accountants are now playing a vital role in guiding businesses to adapt to new challenges (85%), such as misinformation and AI challenges.

In fact, 3 in 4 say their organisation is already relying on Chartered Accountants to ensure data integrity, increasing +6pts since 2023, consolidating Chartered Accountants' position as Data Custodians.

Purpose (ESG) is gaining importance; yet Chartered Accountants, despite improvements, are struggling to keep up

Though not among top expectations, Purpose is growing in importance at a fast rate (+4 vs. 2023) – more so than other dimensions of Trust which are stable. However, as Chartered Accountants' performance on Purpose drivers is growing at a slower rate (+2 vs. 2023), a bigger performance-expectation gap starts to emerge compared to 2023.

Despite this gap, the credibility of Chartered Accountants' voice regarding Purpose issues is undoubted (82%), up +13pts since 2023, signalling both an opportunity and necessity to regain focus.

Despite being held in high esteem, Chartered Accountancy profession is suffering a talent shortage

Not only is Chartered Accountancy viewed as a prestigious profession (86%) that attracts quality candidates (77%), but it is one that financial decision makers would encourage new graduates to enter (81%), only behind Engineers, Science and Technology / FinTech (all 84%).

However, the profession is facing a shortage in talent (70%), which is having profound effects on businesses, including on costs (77%) as well as compliance and financial risks (74%).

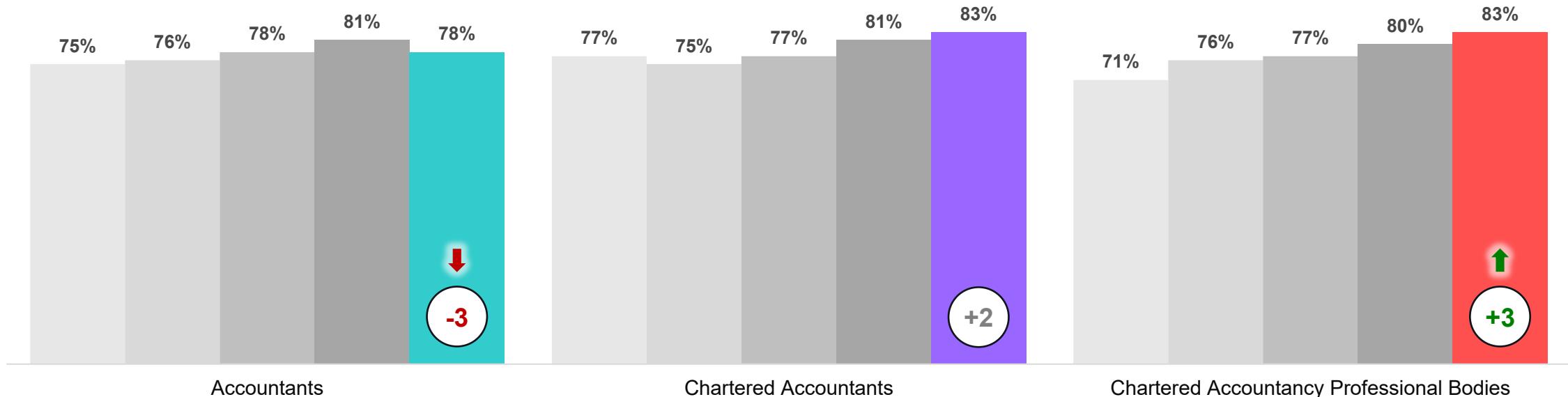
Trust in Chartered Accountants and Professional Bodies show trending growth



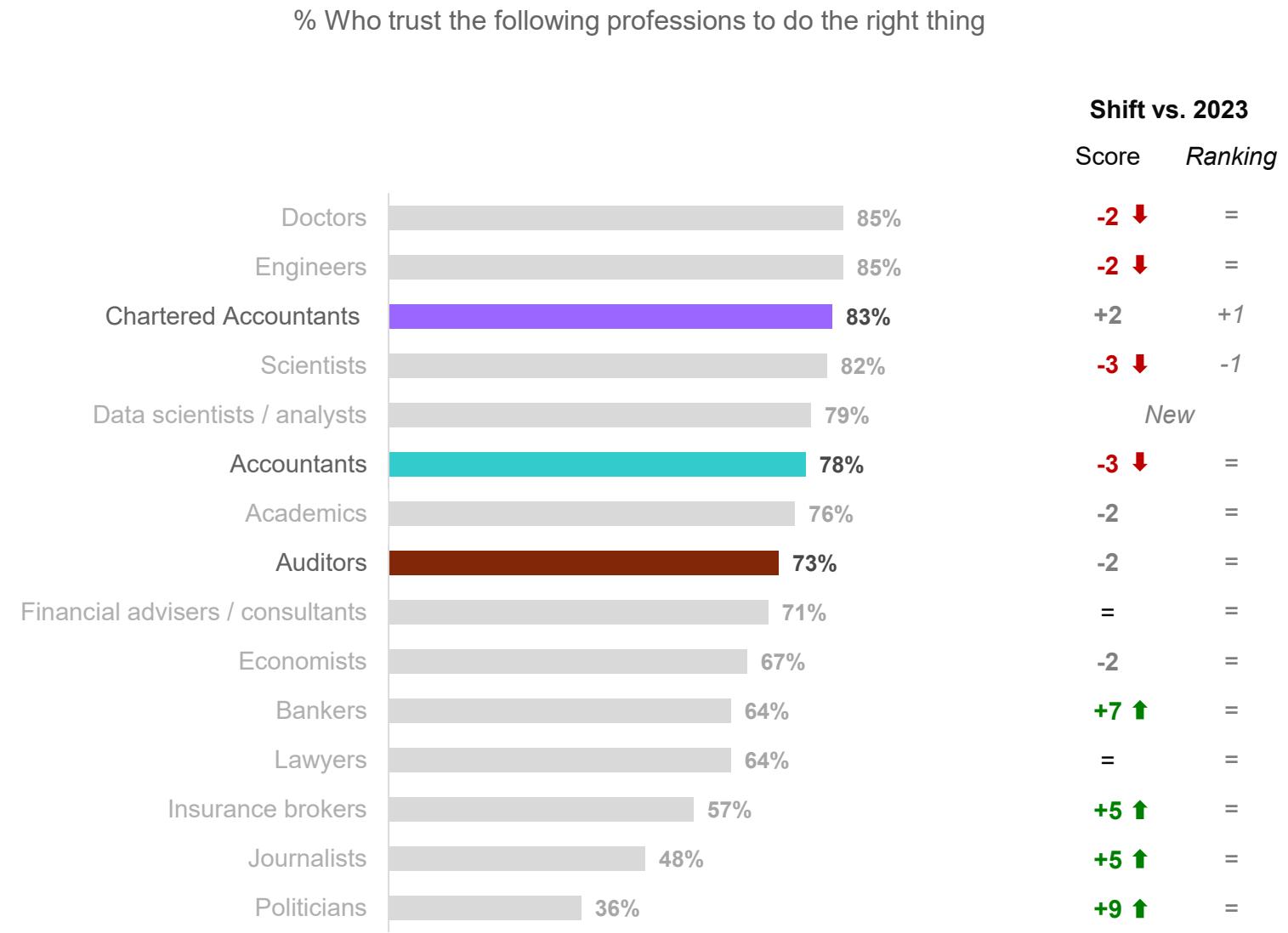
Chartered Accountants develop a 5-pt gap in Trust over Accountants, the biggest since the start of the study

% Who trust the following to do the right thing
(Bubbles denote shift vs. 2023)

■ 2018 ■ 2019 ■ 2021 ■ 2023 ■ 2025



Despite shifts in Trust among several professions, the ranking has remained stable, with only Chartered Accountants rising



SIMILAR PATTERNS AS LAST WAVE
EMERGE REGARDING TRUST DRIVERS,
ALTHOUGH IMPORTANCE OF PURPOSE
(ESG) IS INCREASING

Trust is made up of four strategic dimensions



Ability

Has the skills, competencies, and resources to have influence in some domain (competence, capabilities, expertise)

Good at what they do



Integrity

A believes B adheres to a set of principles that A finds acceptable (fairness, transparency, credibility, honesty)

Is honest



Dependability

A believes B consistently adheres to a set of principles that A finds acceptable (dependability, reliability)

Keeps its promises



Purpose (ESG)

A believes B wants to do good for A (loyalty, caring, non-opportunistic)

Tries hard to have a positive impact on society

Purpose (ESG) is the only dimension to grow in importance, as Dependability and Integrity maintain the lead

% Who say the following are very important in building Trust in Accountants

NET Dependability: 81%

Top behaviours within Dependability

Keeping up to date with developments in professional standards and practice

58%

Being able to rely on them to inform key business decisions

54%

NET Integrity: 80%

Top behaviours within Integrity

Respecting and protecting confidential information

64%

Operating with compliance to laws and regulations

63%

NET Ability: 77%

Top behaviours within Ability

Taking the lead in ensuring the integrity of data in businesses

56%

Demonstrating a track record of helping businesses thrive

55%

NET Purpose (ESG): 67%

Top behaviours within Purpose (ESG)

Balancing commercial and public interest in their work

47% 

Measuring and reporting on businesses' environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance

43% 

Trust drivers' ranking is generally stable since 2023, though ensuring data integrity moves into the top five

% Who say the following are very important in building Trust in Accountants



Opportunity areas for Chartered Accountants to continue to build Trust



Become a reliable partner in making businesses more resilient by becoming an authoritative voice for key issues such as misinformation and AI



Continue to focus on ESG, which is growing in importance at a faster rate than other drivers

We explore these areas throughout the rest of the report

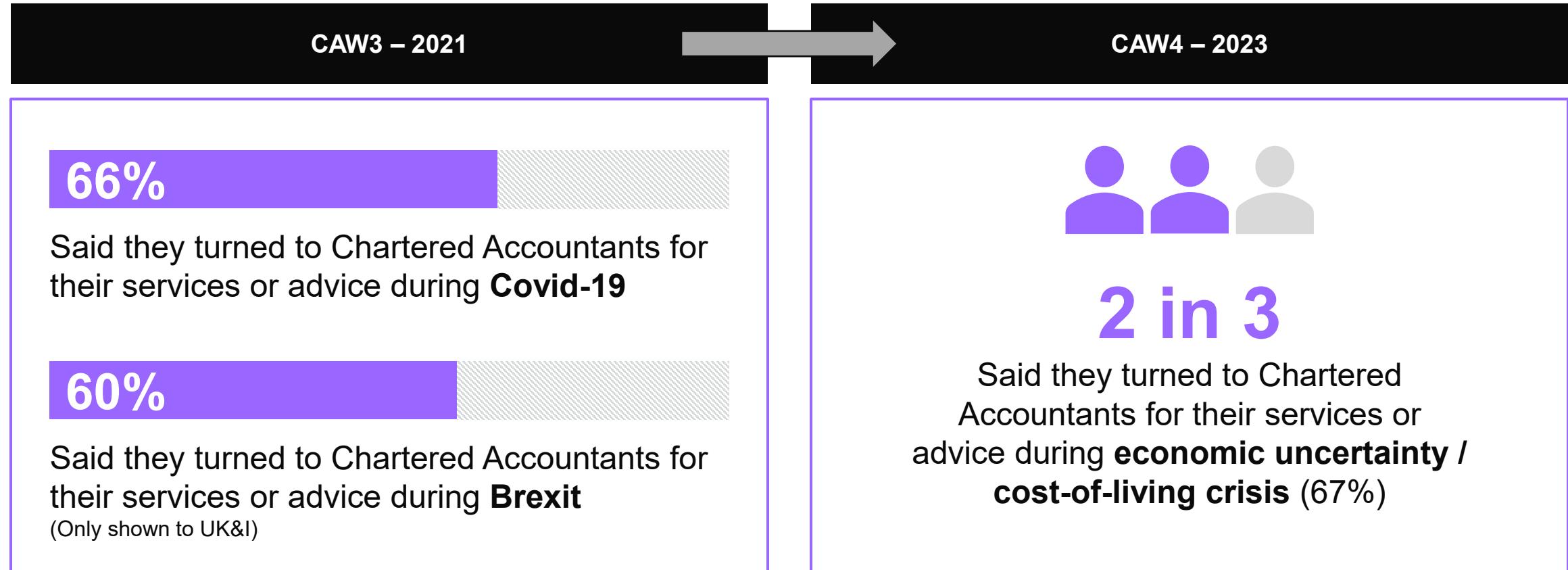
Chartered Accountants are considered reliable partners in guiding businesses through AI adoption and misinformation



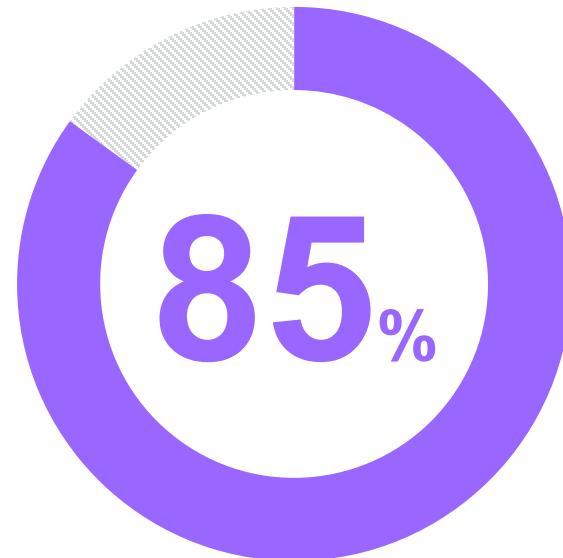


Having played a key role in building resilience previously in the face of Covid-19 and economic uncertainty, Chartered Accountants are now helping to prepare businesses for key digital transformation issues: misinformation and AI utilisation

Over the last four years, Chartered Accountants have been a reliable partner during geopolitical, health and economic issues

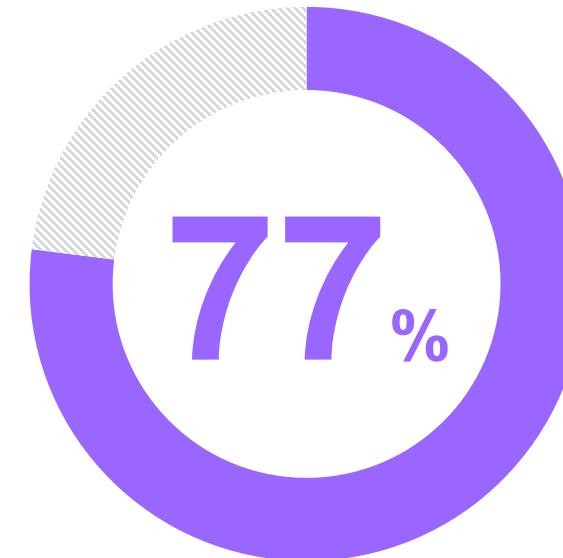


And continue to play a vital role in supporting organisations adapt to a new business environments



Say Chartered Accountants play a vital role in helping businesses adapt to new challenges

+2 vs. 2023



Say their organisation relies on Chartered Accountants for strategic guidance

+5 vs. 2023 ↑

Data accuracy and misinformation is a key challenge in the current business environment and a growing concern for financial decision makers

3 in 4

Challenges relating to data accuracy and misinformation are **key concerns** for my business (76%)

+8 vs. 2023 



Small organisation

68%

(+13 vs. 2023) 



Medium organisation

79%

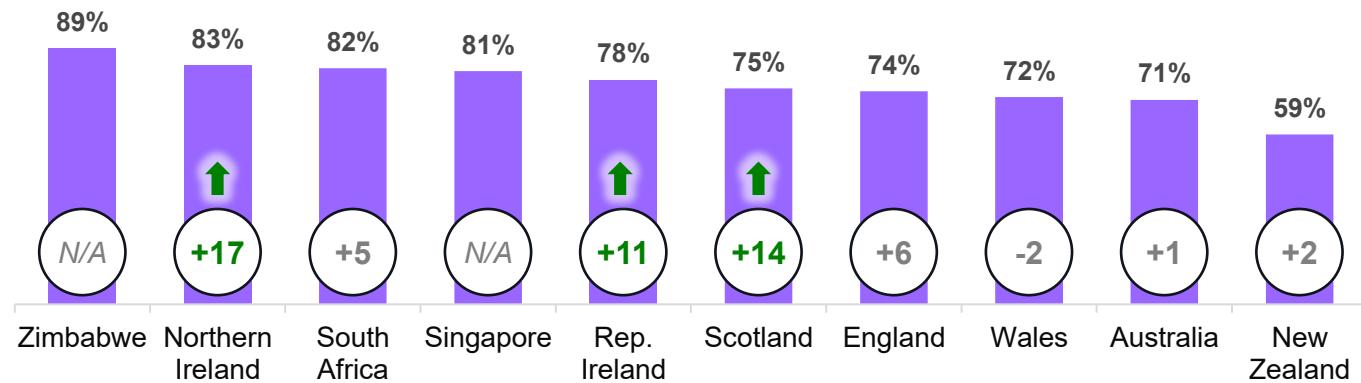
(+4 vs. 2023) 



Large organisation

86%

(+11 vs. 2023) 



And in 2025, Chartered Accountants are playing an important role in how businesses manage misinformation



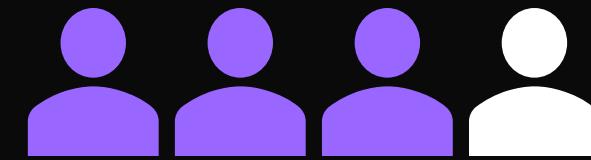
82%

Say that Chartered Accountants are **expected to be custodians for data integrity**
(+1 vs. 2023)



81%

Say that the role of Chartered Accountants is **becoming increasingly important** to businesses given the growth of misinformation
(+6 vs. 2023)



3 in 4

Say that their organisation relies on Chartered Accountants to ensure the integrity of data (75%)

+6 vs. 2023

Northern Ireland and Zimbabwe are the most likely to rely on Chartered Accountants to ensure data integrity

% Who say their organisation relies on Chartered Accountants to ensure the integrity of data



Small organisation

63%

(+9 vs. 2023)



Medium organisation

81%

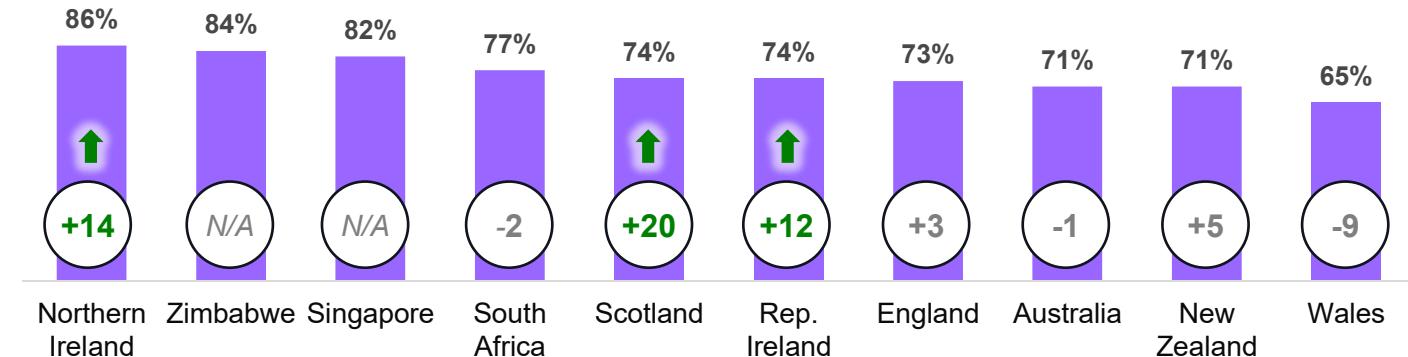
(-2 vs. 2023)



Large organisation

87%

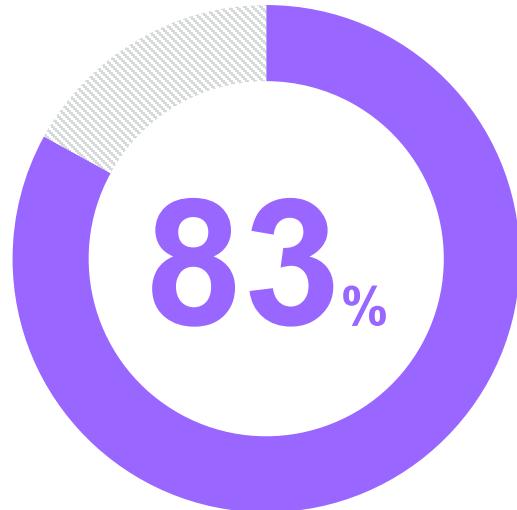
(+4 vs. 2023)



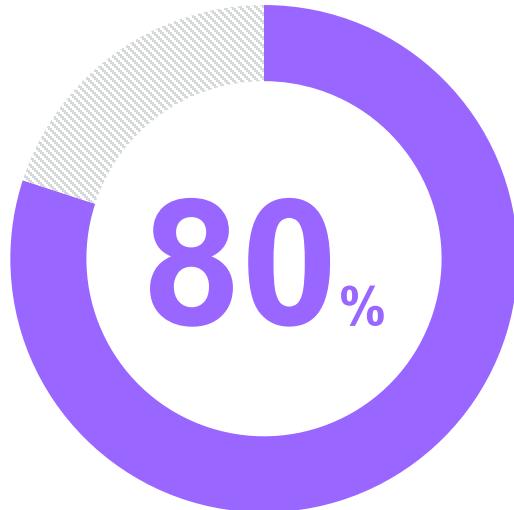
See notes for question text and bases.

Note: Year-on-year global scores are not directly comparable as markets have varied across waves.

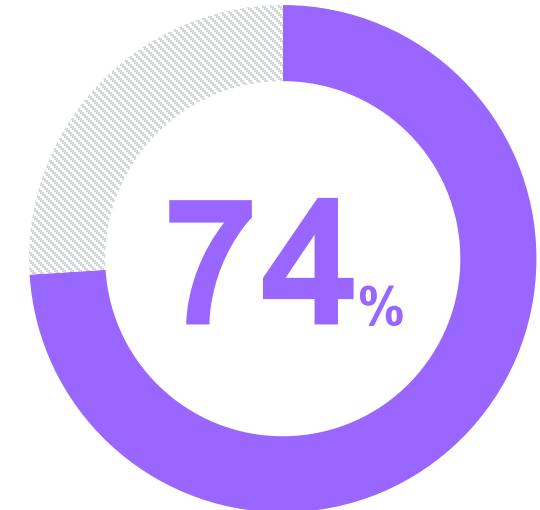
Furthermore, Chartered Accountants are also key in helping businesses navigate the challenges brought on by AI adoption



Say that AI can process data, but Chartered Accountants **provide critical analysis** for informed business decisions



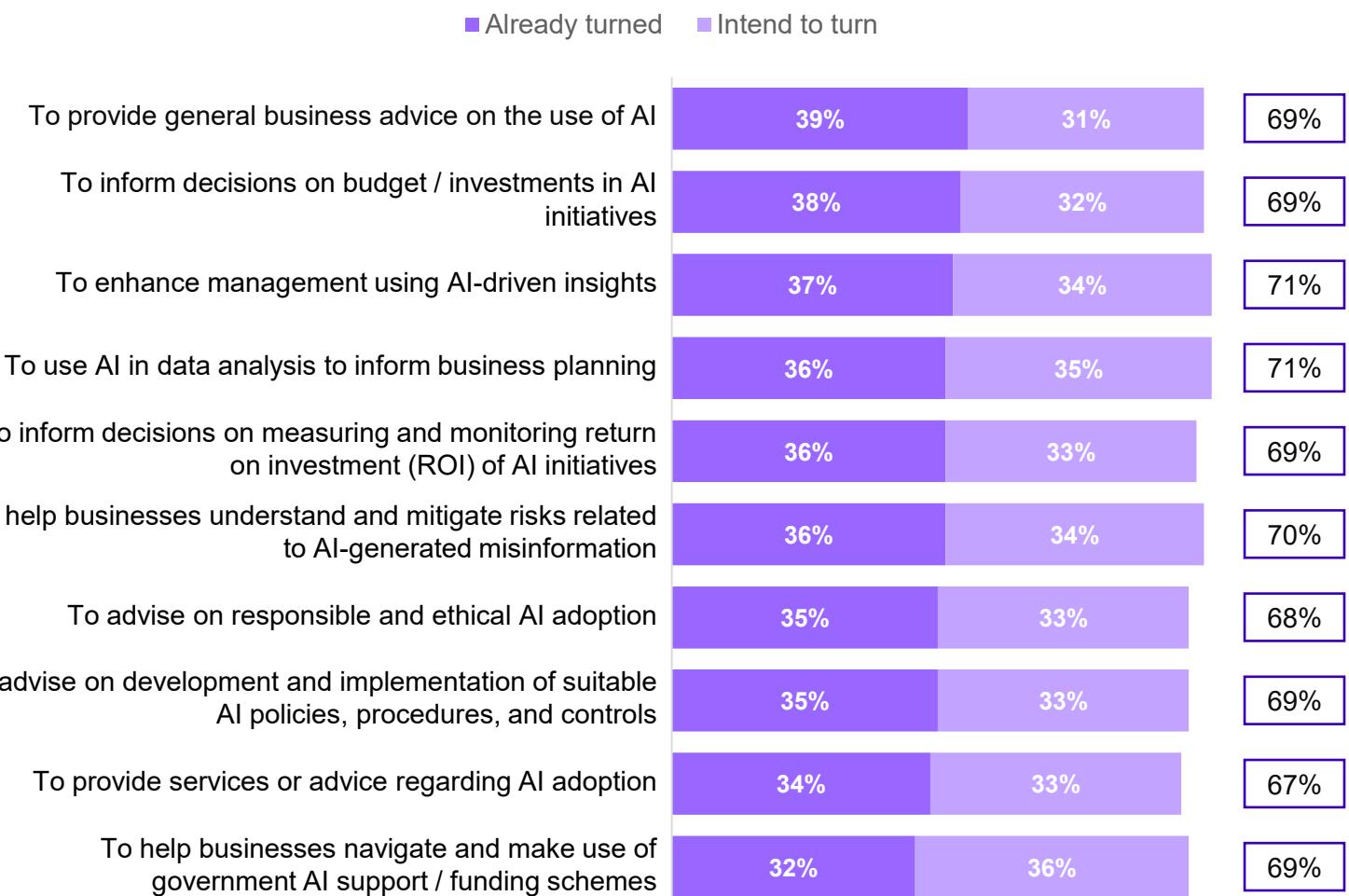
Say Chartered Accountants can play an essential role to businesses in **navigating challenges** arising from AI / automation adoption



Say that Chartered Accountants play a crucial role in **driving business AI investment**

In fact, many organisations have turned or intend to turn to Chartered Accountants for support with AI adoption

% Who have turned or intend to turn to Chartered Accountants regarding AI adoption
(Boxes refer to those who have already turned or intend to turn to Chartered Accountants)



See notes for question text and bases.

Chartered
Accountants'
position
regarding
Purpose (ESG)
is growing in
importance



Purpose (ESG) is growing in importance for businesses and emerges as an area on which Chartered Accountants need to focus to avoid slipping behind

CAW4 – 2023



CAW5 – 2025

In 2023, a performance-expectation gap between Chartered Accountants' performance on Purpose (ESG) was exposed:

63%

Said that Purpose (ESG) is **very important** to build Trust in Accountants

58%

Said that Chartered Accountants are **performing very well** on Purpose (ESG)

Performance-expectation gap: **-5**

Now, the importance of Purpose (ESG) is growing at a faster rate than Chartered Accountants' performance, widening the performance-expectation gap:

67% ↑

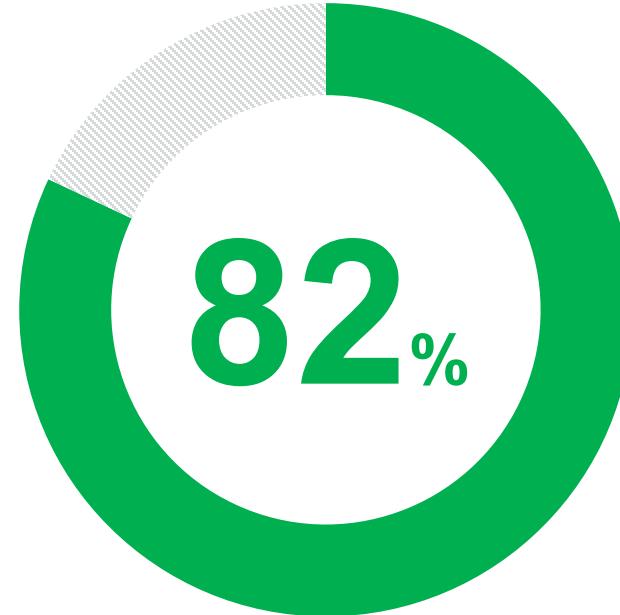
Say that Purpose (ESG) is **very important** to build Trust in Accountants

60%

Say that Chartered Accountants **are performing very well** on Purpose (ESG)

Performance-expectation gap: **-7**

Chartered Accountants' position regarding Purpose (ESG) is growing in importance, as they are widely regarded as a valuable voice on key business issues



Say that Chartered Accountants are credible spokespeople on business issues such as sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion*

+13 vs. 2023 ↑

See notes for question text and bases.

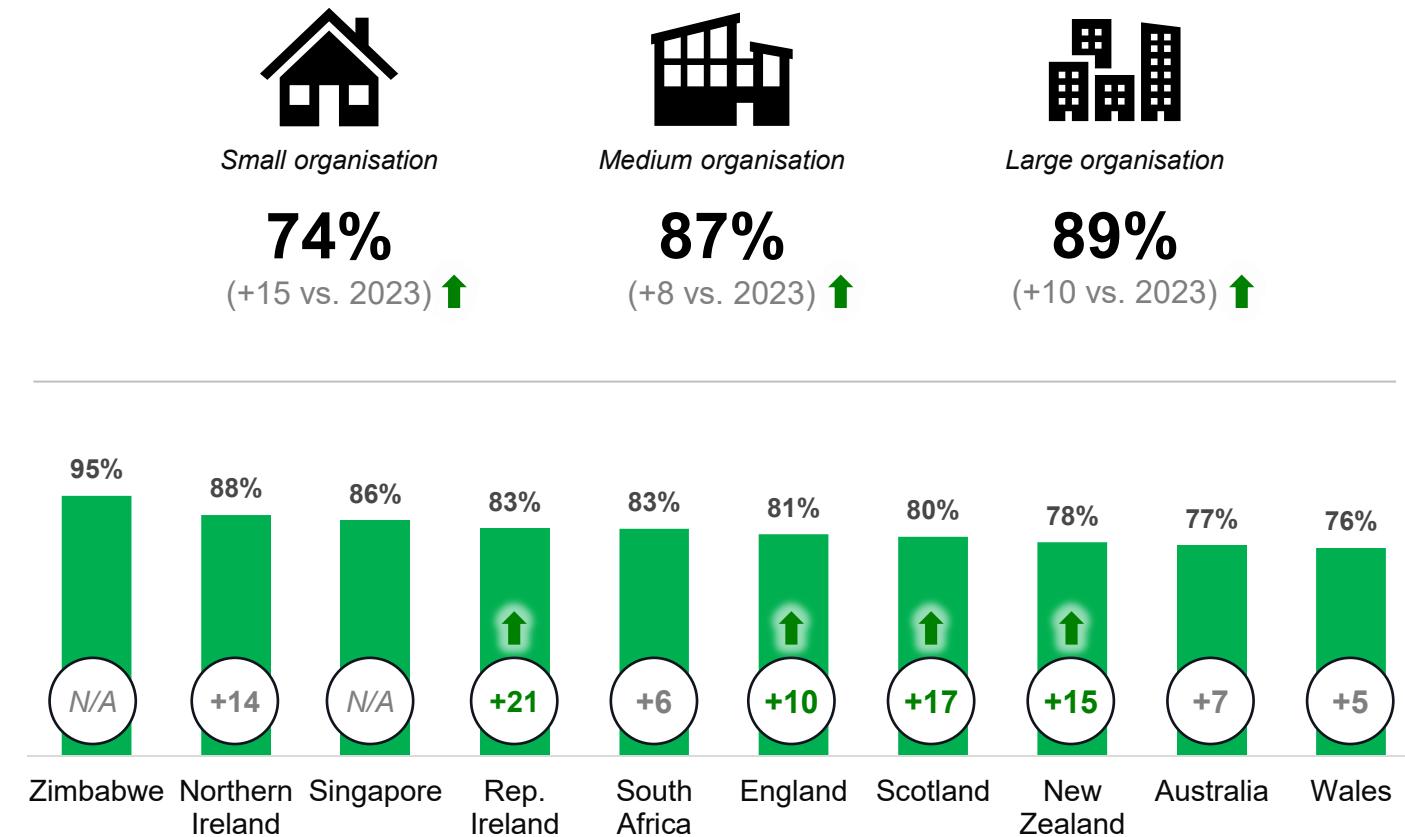
Note: Year-on-year global scores are not directly comparable as markets have varied across waves.

*Previously worded: "They are credible spokespeople on societal issues (e.g. sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion)"

Sig. higher / lower ↑
2025 vs. 2023 ↓

The perception of Chartered Accountants as credible spokespeople is widespread amongst markets, though small organisations are less likely to think so

% Who say that Chartered Accountants are credible spokespeople on business issues such as sustainability, diversity, equity and inclusion



See notes for question text and bases.

Note: Year-on-year global scores are not directly comparable as markets have varied across waves.

Sig. higher / lower
2025 vs. 2023

Despite being held in high esteem, Chartered Accountancy profession is suffering a talent shortage

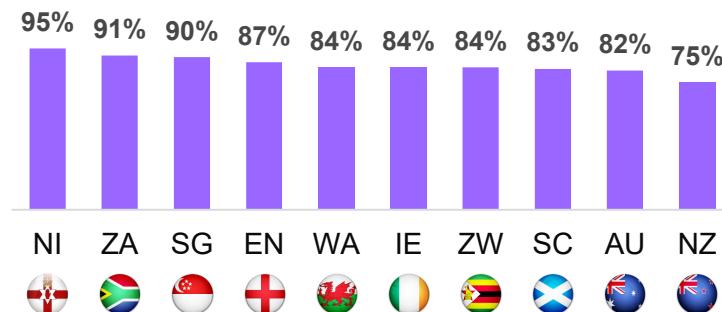


Chartered Accountancy is seen as a highly prestigious profession which, for many, continues to attract top talents



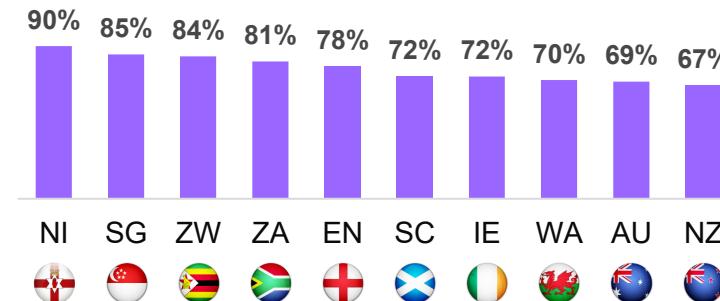
9 in 10

Say Chartered Accountancy
is a **profession with high
prestige** (86%)



8 in 10

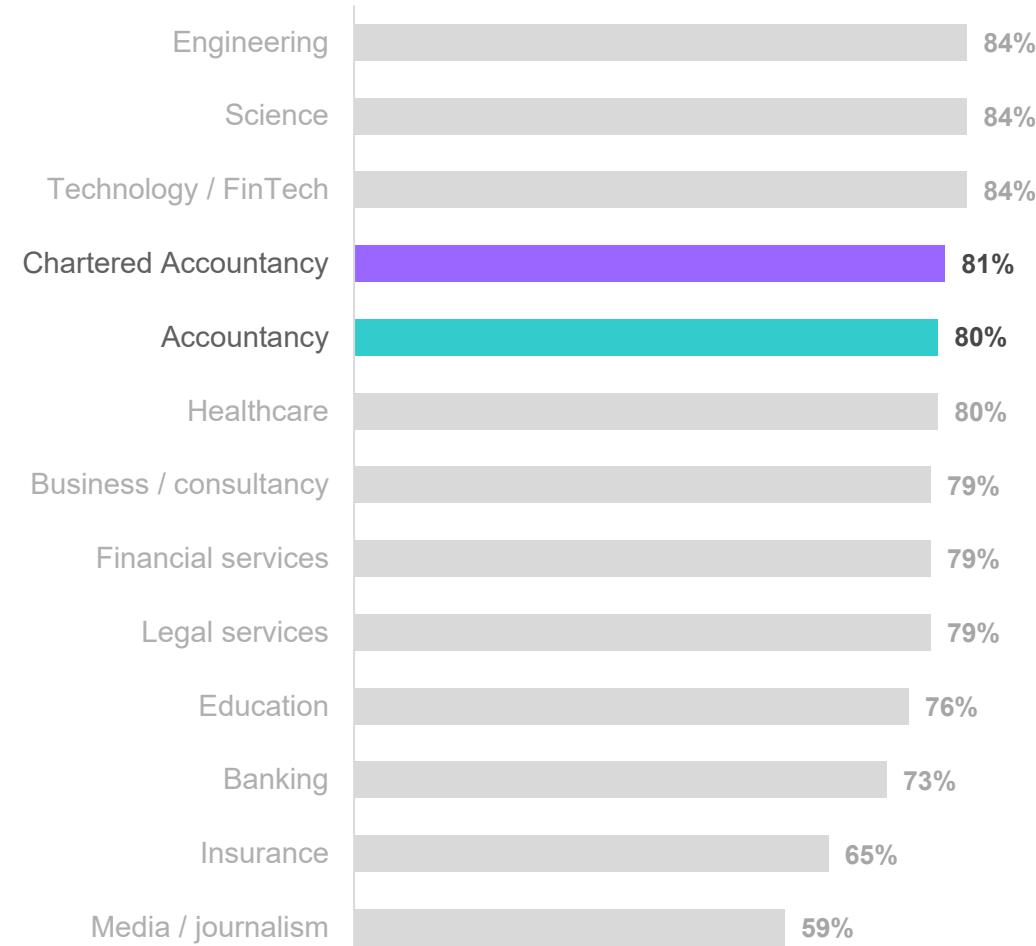
Say Chartered Accountancy
**continues to attract the
most promising
candidates** (77%)



In fact, Chartered Accountancy is among the top professions in which financial decision makers would encourage new graduates to pursue a career

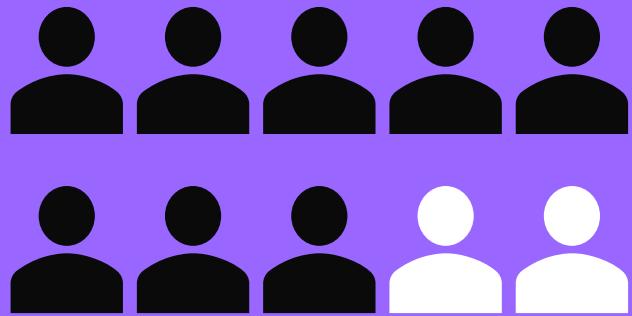


% Who would encourage new graduates to pursue a career in the following professions



See notes for question text and bases.

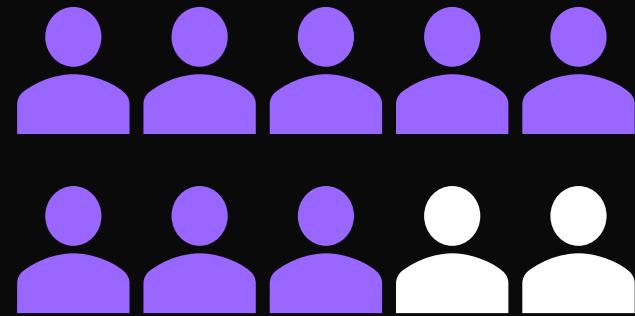
Finally, despite technological developments such as AI and automation, the role of Chartered Accountants will remain as important as ever



8 in 10

Say the value Chartered Accountants provide could not be replaced by automated systems (83%)

+3 vs. 2023



8 in 10

Say that AI can process data, but Chartered Accountants provide critical analysis for informed business decisions (83%)