



KPMG 2025 India CEO Outlook

Adapting for the future: building
resilience, embracing AI responsibly and
transforming workforce strategies

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Foreword

In a world where change is the only constant, CEOs in India are demonstrating remarkable resilience and visionary thinking. Faced with rapid evolution of AI, escalating cybersecurity risks, economic headwinds, evolving workforce needs and pressing demands of sustainability, they're not just reacting—they're rethinking what it means to lead. Their confidence today isn't just about optimism; it's about leaning into uncertainty with clear focus, innovation, investing in future-ready skills and leading with purpose. This shift signals not just strategic intent, but a profound commitment to shaping resilient, future-ready organisations.

Staying resilient while navigating business complexities:

In today's dynamic global business environment, business leaders are facing a diverse mix of challenges, right from the rapid integration of AI and escalating cyber threats to persistent inflationary pressures and economic uncertainty. Yet, it is encouraging to observe that 83 per cent CEOs in India, compared to 79 per cent CEOs globally, remain confident of their organisation's growth trajectory over the next three years, reflecting the resilience they have cultivated in response to multifaceted disruption.

Evolving leadership capabilities for a changing future:

This confidence of CEOs, however, is not without its demands. As businesses adapt to a shifting global environment, CEOs in India feel that their roles have significantly evolved and become more complex. They acknowledge that certain capabilities such as greater agility, regulatory acumen, and digital literacy are now critical to drive organisational success.

Unlocking potential of artificial intelligence (AI) while managing associated risks:

CEOs are focused on embracing AI, with 65 per cent in India and 71 per cent globally considering it as their topmost investment priority. This optimism is reflected in the belief of 86 per cent CEOs in India, who feel their organisations are equipped to successfully navigate the adoption of AI. However, despite this confidence, business leaders are acutely aware that the journey is not without its challenges.

As concerns around ethical issues and lack of regulations persist, CEOs both in India and globally, are actively exploring strategies to overcome these hurdles.

Cybersecurity remains a continued concern:

Alongside AI adoption, CEOs in India have cited cybersecurity as one their top challenges impacting short-term decision making. In response to this, in India, 42 per cent of the CEOs have bolstered their cybersecurity investments to strengthen digital resilience.

Evaluating workforce strategy in response to tech-driven disruption:

The rapid advancement and deployment of AI has triggered a pressing need for CEOs in India to build a workforce capable of driving this transformation. Meanwhile, the integration of AI has exposed several challenges related to workforce roles, with 74 per cent CEOs in India highlighting that the readiness of an AI workforce could significantly impact their organisation's prosperity over the next three years.

To address these challenges, CEOs are focused on retaining and re-training high-potential talent and are redesigning roles to reflect collaboration with AI. Reflecting a long-term view, most of the CEOs in India acknowledge that continued investment in skill development is essential to safeguard access to future talent.

Propelling confidence in achieving ESG goals: The growing emphasis on ESG has coincided with a notable rise in CEO confidence in India — increasing from 36 per cent in 2024 to 56 per cent in 2025 — in their organisation's ability to meet net zero commitments by 2030. However, CEOs in India are aware that lack of requisite skills and regulatory uncertainties can pose considerable challenges. Consequently, they are prioritising compliance standards, engaging with policymakers and recognising the potential of AI to successfully achieve their ESG-related goals.

As business leaders adapt to the evolving market scenario and rising stakeholder expectations, their vision and leadership will be crucial in shaping the future of their organisations — carving pathways to innovate with resilience and confidence amidst global uncertainty.



Yezdi Nagporewalla

Chief Executive Officer
KPMG in India

Key themes



Risk and resilience

CEOs in India are confident about their company's outlook, prioritising cybersecurity, AI investments and adaptive leadership to address issues.

Resilience and optimism in the face of global economic pressure

- Despite economic complexities, CEOs' confidence in their companies' growth prospects climbed to 83 per cent in India and 79 per cent globally—up from 68 per cent and 76 per cent, respectively, in 2024.

Evolving risk landscape

- Cybercrime is a key trend impacting their firm's prosperity. This is closely followed by a majority share of CEOs in India citing AI workforce readiness and AI integration as critical factors.

Identifying investment priorities to mitigate risks

- Cybersecurity and AI integration are emerging as key areas where CEOs in India and globally are increasing investments.

Changing leadership capabilities amidst uncertainty

- Nearly 31 per cent CEOs in India compared to 26 per cent CEOs globally cite rapid decision-making as a key leadership skill.



Technology and AI

CEOs globally and in India view AI as a key investment priority despite regulatory and cybersecurity challenges.

Optimism meets obstacles

- About 86 per cent CEOs in India believe their board is equipped to navigate the adoption of AI. However, concerns persist.
- Nearly 62 per cent CEOs in India cite ethical challenges as a concern for implementing AI, while 76 per cent CEOs in India believe that the pace of progress of AI regulations, can act as barrier to their organisation's success.

AI continues to drive business growth

- AI is a key investment priority for CEOs, with 65 per cent in India and 71 per cent globally emphasising its strategic value—especially for decision-making and data analysis.

Risks to cybersecurity escalate, but CEOs focus on digital resilience

- Nearly 75 per cent CEOs in India cite that cybercrime can impact their organisations' prosperity.
- Considering the rising risks, 42 per cent CEOs in India have increased investments in the space.



Talent

CEOs in India and globally are driving workforce transformation by re-skilling talent and redesigning roles to enable effective AI adoption, amidst skill gap challenges.

Reshaping roles and talent to unlock AI potential amid skill gaps

- About 74 per cent of CEOs in India and 77 per cent CEOs globally believe that AI workforce readiness will impact their organizations' prosperity over the next three years.
- Nearly 73 per cent CEOs in India compared to 79 per cent CEOs globally cite that AI integration, has made them rethink on how to train their employees.
- In response to AI-led disruption, 70 per cent CEOs in India and 71 per cent CEOs globally are focusing on retaining and re-training high-potential talent.

ESG requirements demand expertise

- With the growing demand for ESG relevant skills, 91 per cent of CEOs in India and 84 per cent globally believe that organisations should invest in skill development to ensure continued access to future talent.



ESG and sustainability

CEOs are increasingly becoming confident of meeting net-zero goals, with AI emerging as a key enabler for achieving sustainability goals.

ESG readiness fuels CEO confidence in net zero targets

- CEOs' confidence in India in achieving net zero by 2030 has risen significantly from 36 per cent to 56 per cent in India between 2024 and 2025, as 94 per cent CEOs in India and 89 per cent CEOs globally express confidence in their ability to navigate complex regulatory environments.

Growing potential of AI in enabling ESG initiatives

- About 77 per cent CEOs in India compared to 78 per cent CEOs globally, view AI as instrumental in reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency.
- To expedite energy transition, CEOs are adopting diverse strategies. Nearly 54 per cent CEOs in India are focusing on collaboration to drive innovation, while 50 per cent CEOs in India are engaging with policymakers to stay ahead of potential regulatory changes.

Risk and resilience

Resilience and optimism in the face of global economic pressure

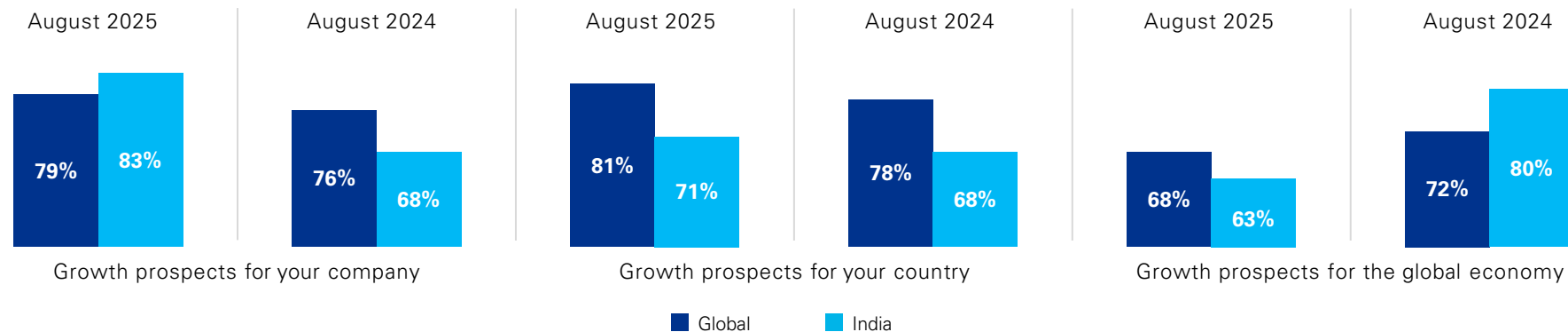
Business leaders bet big on company's growth despite economic turbulence

The KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook surveyed CEOs globally and in India on their three-year outlook on the business and economic landscapes. The confidence of CEOs in India in terms of growth prospects of the global economy has seen a decline, falling from 80 per cent in 2024 to 63 per cent in 2025. This marks the lowest level of confidence observed since 2023, reflecting the growing uncertainty in the current global environment, which is increasingly being shaped by regulatory pressures, concerns around technology disruption and cybersecurity, and challenges associated with AI integration.

Although confidence in the outlook of the global economy has dipped, CEOs in India and globally continue to express optimism about their company's growth prospects. The confidence of CEOs in India in the outlook for their organisations improved to 83 per cent in 2025 from 68 per cent in 2024, while that of CEOs globally increased to 79 per cent in 2025 from 76 per cent in 2024. This renewed optimism of CEOs in India and globally demonstrates strong resilience to navigate the uncertain environment. Moreover, confidence in the country's outlook reinforces the willingness of CEOs, both in India and globally, to pursue inorganic growth opportunities.

Keeping up with the trend, the level of confidence of CEOs in India in their country's growth prospects witnessed a slight improvement in 2025 from 2024 levels, indicating their continued belief in the potential of the domestic economy.

Confidence levels in growth prospects



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook and KPMG 2024 CEO Outlook

Shifting risk landscape and growth headwinds

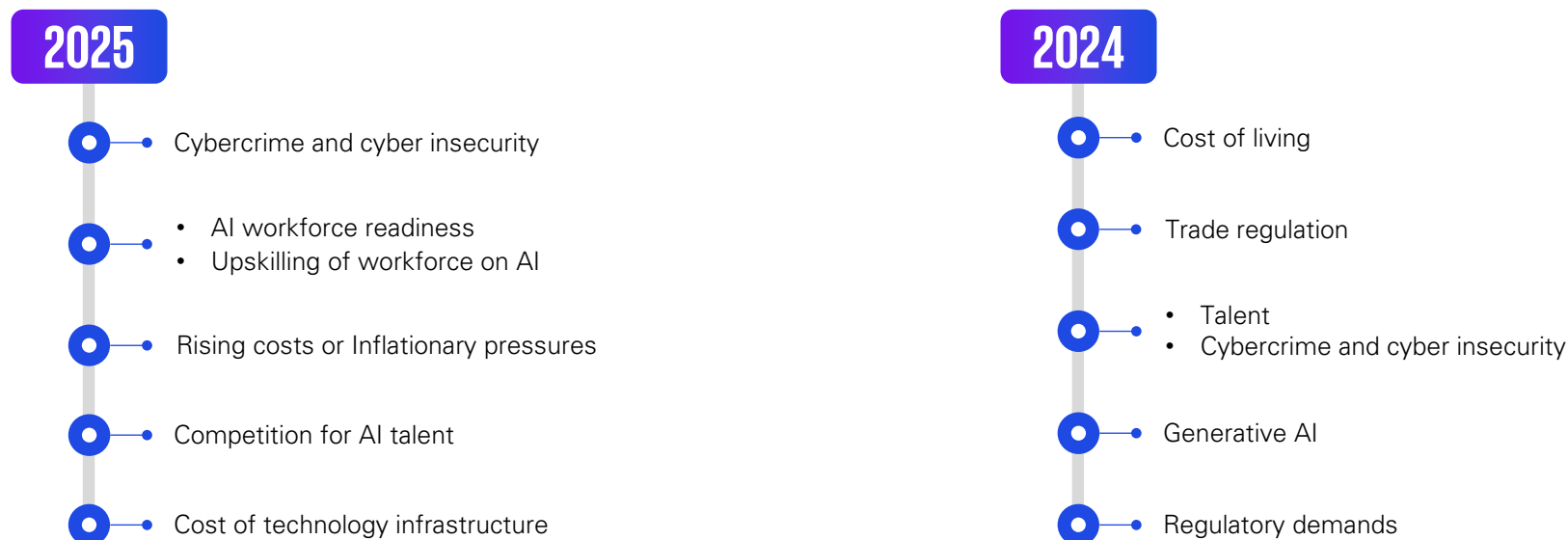
As advanced technologies continue to evolve, the imperative to assess and mitigate associated risks is becoming increasingly critical. This is evident from insights shared by CEOs in India, who note that four out of the top five trends influencing organisational prosperity over the next three-years are technology-driven. These include cybercrime and cyber insecurity, AI workforce readiness, successful integration of AI into business processes, and competition for AI talent.

Moreover, a significant share of CEOs in India identifies the integration of AI into organisational processes and systems as their most pressing challenge shaping short-term decision-making. This concern resonates globally as well, where technology-related factors—such as cybercrime, AI workforce readiness, and successful AI integration—consistently rank among the top factors impacting an organisation's three-year growth.

This finding marks a subtle shift from 2024's top five trends, when most CEOs in India believed that cost of living and trade regulations would significantly impact organisational growth over the next three years. In contrast, fewer CEOs in India then had cited cybercrime and generative AI to have a major impact on their organisations.

In 2025, beyond technology, CEOs in India and globally identify rising costs and inflationary pressures as key impediments to their organisation's growth prospects. Meanwhile, global economic uncertainty and regulatory pressures continue to pose significant challenges, impacting short-term decision making.

YOY change of trends impacting organisation's prosperity over the next three years for CEOs in India



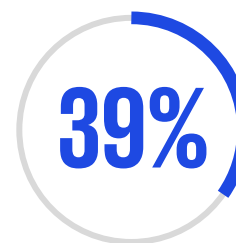
Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook and KPMG 2024 CEO Outlook

Identifying investment priorities to mitigate risks

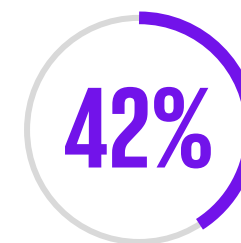
In response to the intensifying pressures posed by advanced and emerging technologies, CEOs in India and globally have identified a few strategic investments and operational priorities aimed at mitigating business risks over the next three years. Cybersecurity and digital risks resilience has emerged as the foremost investment priority, cited by 42 per cent of CEOs in India and 39 per cent CEOs globally, underscoring the growing imperative to safeguard digital infrastructure and ensure operational continuity. The integration of AI into operations follows closely with 32 per cent CEOs in India and 34 per cent CEOs globally prioritising it.

Investments in regulatory compliance also hold prominence, highlighted by 31 per cent CEOs in India and 36 per cent CEOs globally, reflecting the increasing complexity of regulatory landscapes and the need for robust governance frameworks. Collectively, these priorities signal a strategic shift toward building resilient and compliant organisations, capable of navigating the evolving technological and regulatory environment.

Notably, investments in exploring or activating onshoring, prioritised by 22 per cent CEOs in India (compared to 10 per cent of CEOs globally) are unique to the Indian investment priority. This reflects a strategic shift towards self-reliance and localised supply chain resilience, distinguishing India's approach from global counterparts who do not rank these among their top five investment focus areas.



CEOs globally



CEOs in India

cite that their organisations have increased investments in cybersecurity and digital risks resilience to mitigate pressing business risks over the next three years

Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



For small and mid-sized banks, AI is a powerful enabler — reshaping risk management, redefining workforce skills, and deepening customer engagement. Our focus must remain on sustainable adoption, resilience, and building trust as we navigate this transformative era.



Pralay Mondal
MD & CEO
CSB Bank Ltd

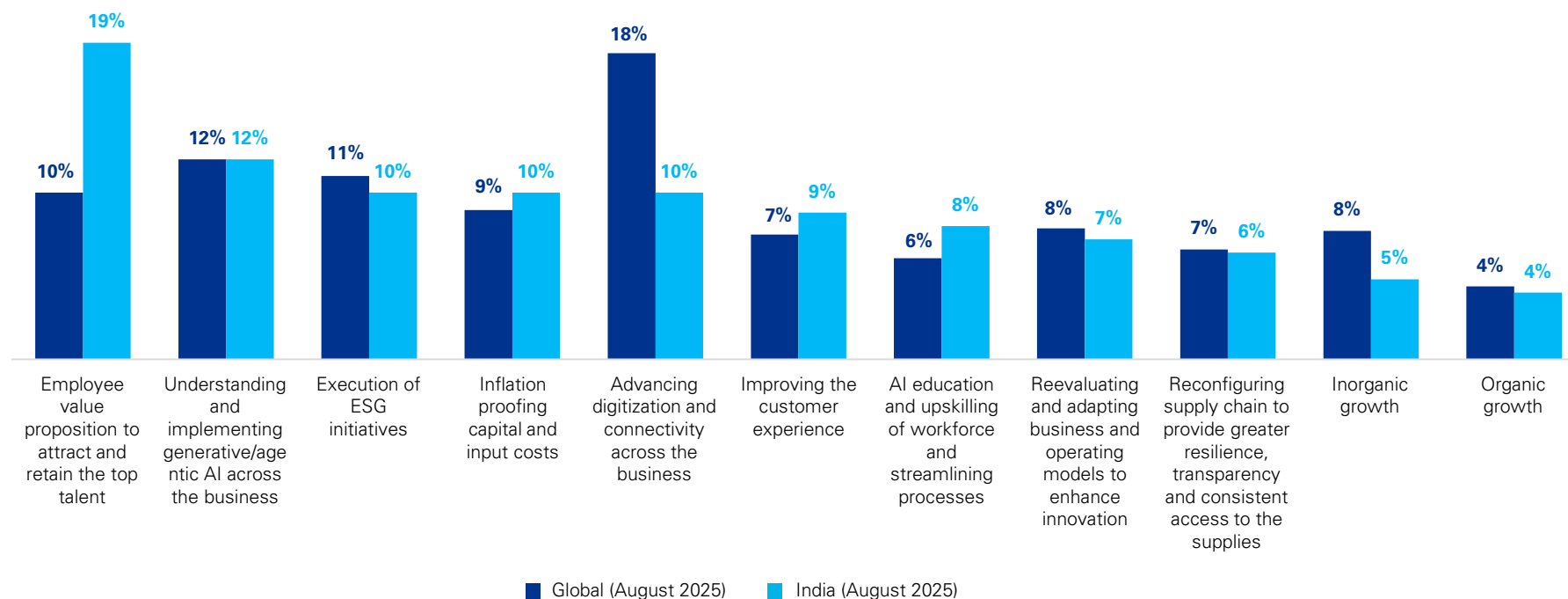
Key operational focus areas to drive growth

Most of the operational priorities of CEOs, both India and globally, reflect alignment with their investment focus areas. Implementing generative/agentic AI across their businesses and advancing digitisation remain prominent priorities for CEOs, both in India and globally —signalling a continued emphasis on innovation.

Apart from technology, CEOs, both India and globally, are also prioritising workforce related strategies. For instance, 19 per cent CEOs in India compared to 10 per cent CEOs globally consider employee value proposition to attract and retain top talent as the foremost operational priority to achieve growth objectives over the next three years.



Top operational priorities to achieve growth objectives over the next three years for CEOs globally and in India



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook

Changing leadership capabilities amidst uncertainty

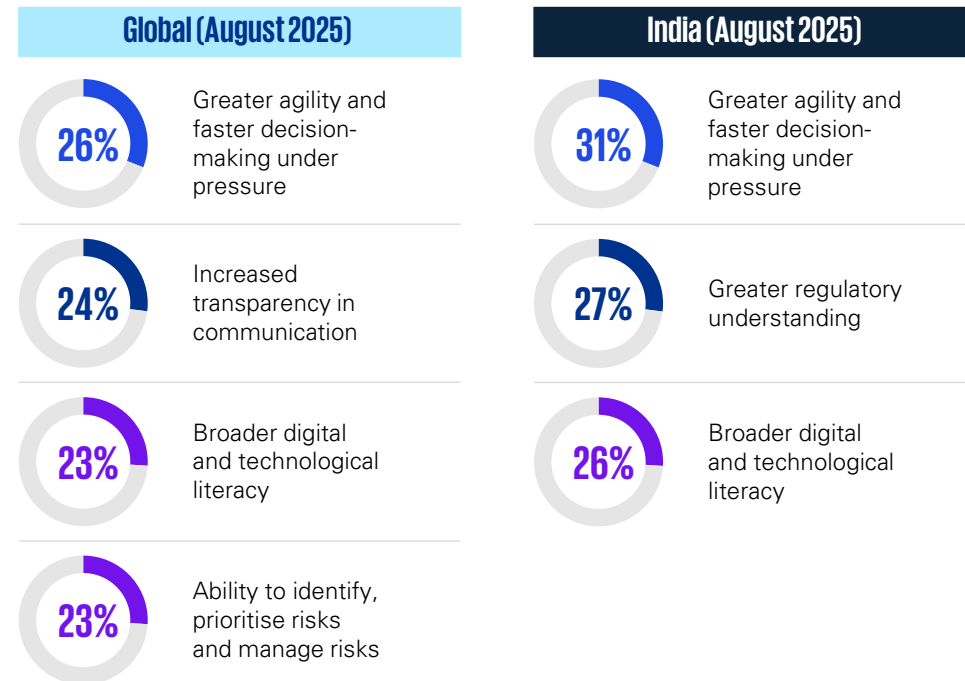
Owing to the emerging risks, it is evident that navigating today's complex business landscape requires more than technological preparedness and CEOs, both India and globally, believe that there are a few leadership capabilities that are critical in the current prevailing unpredictable environment.

While there is no clear consensus on any single most critical leadership skill, 31 per cent of CEOs in India, compared to 26 per cent CEOs globally, emphasise greater agility and faster decision-making under pressure as one of the key leadership capabilities.

Furthermore, CEOs in India identify greater regulatory understanding as the second most critical leadership capability, compared to it being ranked fourth globally. This highlights the relatively higher emphasis placed by CEOs in India on regulatory acumen, suggesting the need to stay attuned with evolving compliance requirements.

Meanwhile, CEOs globally (24 per cent) have placed relatively higher emphasis on increased transparency in communication compared to 18 per cent CEOs in India, underscoring the value of open dialogue in fostering trust and alignment across increasingly distributed and diverse teams.

View of CEOs globally and in India on the leadership skills required in the current unpredictable environment



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



In today's climate of uncertainty and mounting global risks, businesses are operating in increasingly unpredictable environments. CEOs must rethink their priorities not only to maintain operational stability but also to stay ahead of change. Placing bold bets on technology is essential to building more adaptable organisations. Yet resilience goes beyond systems, and it demands leadership. CEOs should embed agility into their leadership approach, accelerate strategic technology investments, and foster a culture of adaptability to ensure that their organisations remain resilient and future ready.



Hemant Jhahria
Head of Consulting
KPMG in India

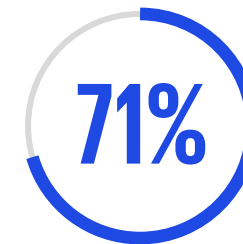
Technology and AI

Balancing promise and prudence in the age of AI adoption

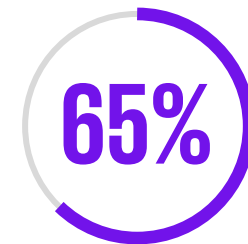
AI continues to be a growth engine fuelling insight and action

As technological disruption accelerates, CEOs are placing AI at the forefront of their strategic priorities. Accordingly, a majority of CEOs in India and globally have highlighted that AI is a key investment priority for their organisation. The sustained importance of AI is further underscored by the fact that about 57 per cent CEOs in India, compared to 69 per cent of CEOs globally are planning to allocate 10–20 per cent of their budgets to AI over the upcoming 12 months. Supporting this investment outlook, a majority of CEOs (73 per cent CEOs in India compared to 67 per cent CEOs globally) believe that returns on investment (ROI) from AI will materialise within one to three years.

This strategic focus is driven by the tangible benefits AI is expected to deliver. CEOs in India and globally view enhanced decision-making and data analysis capabilities as the most valuable advantages of AI adoption. Reflecting this sentiment, 23 per cent CEOs in India and 19 per cent of CEOs globally identify these capabilities as the top benefits of implementing AI within their organisations. Other benefits such as increased efficiency and productivity through automating routine operations, improved fraud detection, and enhanced cyber-attack response are also considered important by business leaders both India and globally.



CEOs globally



CEOs in India

cite that despite economic uncertainty, AI is a top investment priority for their organization

Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



AI continues to evolve rapidly, becoming a cornerstone of innovation across industries. As CEOs gain confidence from measurable returns and the rise of scalable AI agents, investments are shifting from experimentation to core strategy. At the same time, ethical and regulatory demands make human oversight essential. Business leaders must balance two responsibilities: they need to champion AI investments that build future-ready capabilities, while also ensuring those investments are backed by quality data, workforce readiness, and governance frameworks that foster trust and agility. The goal is clear—deliver tangible returns that meet investor expectations.



Akhilesh Tuteja
Partner and Head
Clients and Markets
KPMG in India

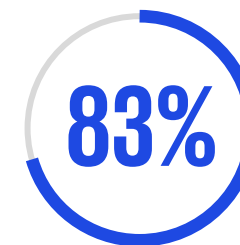


CEOs in India confident about readiness to embrace AI

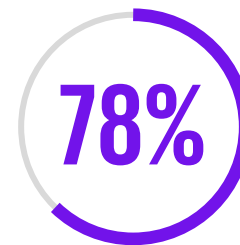
Reflecting the optimism in AI's potential, leadership teams are demonstrating strong strategic readiness. Nearly 78 per cent of CEOs in India compared to 83 per cent CEOs globally are confident of their leadership teams' clarity on the benefits of AI and the competitive edge it renders.

Additionally, 78 per cent CEOs in India and 79 per cent CEOs globally cite that their leadership has a clear view on how AI will disrupt their business models and create new opportunities.

Furthermore, 86 per cent of CEOs in India and 89 per cent CEOs globally believe their boards are well-equipped to navigate the adoption of advanced technologies, including leveraging data and AI to drive sustainable business growth.



CEOs globally



CEOs in India

Are confident of their leadership teams' clarity on the benefits of AI and the competitive edge it renders.

Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



As the global landscape evolves rapidly, it is essential for businesses to stay nimble. India's strong macroeconomic fundamentals, digital ecosystem, and deep talent pool offer a unique advantage. Looking ahead, CEOs must continue to upskill their workforce and balance innovation with risk management as they prepare their organizations for a future shaped by emerging technologies.



Arun Kohli
Managing Director and
Country Head for India,
Morgan Stanley

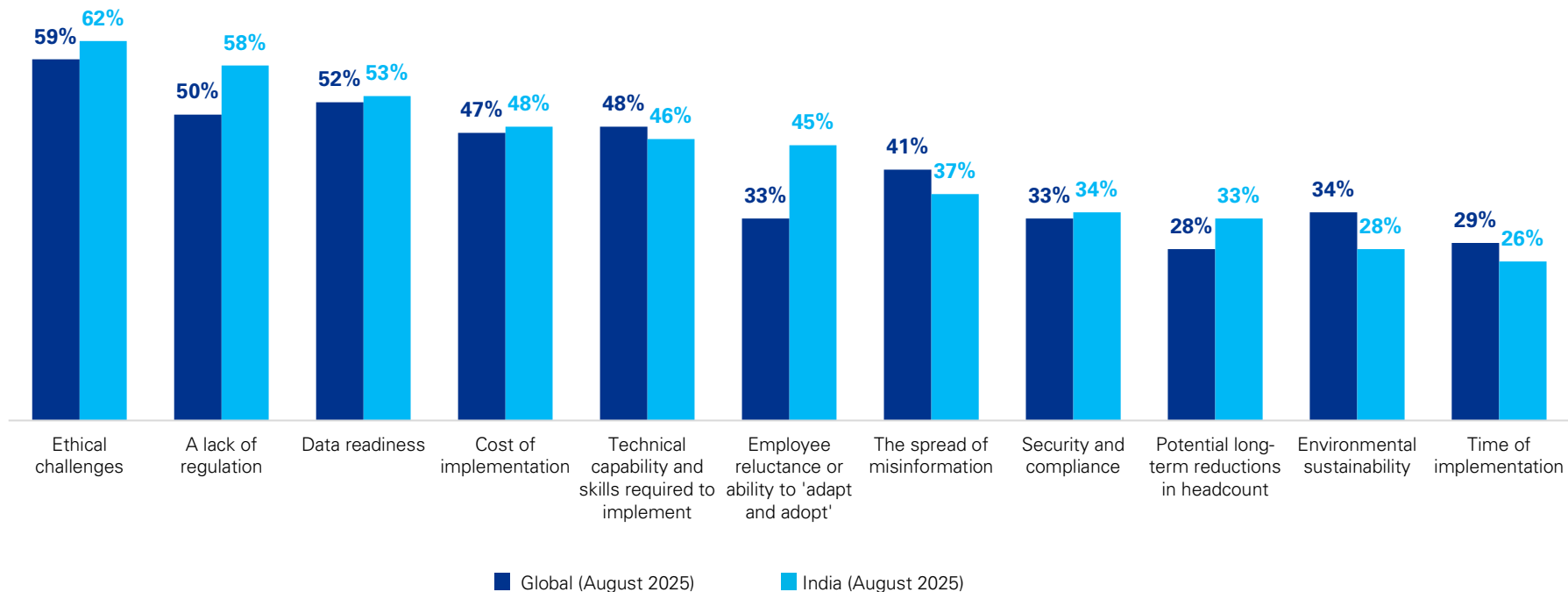
Despite readiness, the implementation of AI and its regulatory aspects remain a concern

Despite the benefits and preparedness of CEOs in deploying AI, CEOs in India like their global counterparts highlight that implementing AI presents significant challenges.

Among these, ethical concerns stand out as one of the most pressing issues, with 62 per cent of CEOs in India, compared to 59 per cent globally, identifying it as a major barrier to successful AI adoption. The lack of clear AI regulations further exacerbates these challenges. This is reflected in the fact that 76 per cent of CEOs in India, alongside 69 per cent CEOs globally, express apprehension about the pace at which AI regulations are evolving.

In addition to ethical and regulatory challenges, CEOs in India point to technical barriers such as insufficient data readiness (53 per cent CEOs in India compared to 52 per cent CEOs globally) and the lack of technical skills and capabilities (46 per cent CEOs in India compared to 48 per cent CEOs globally) to implement AI as other critical challenges.

Comparison of CEOs globally and in India on key challenges in implementation of AI in organisations



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook

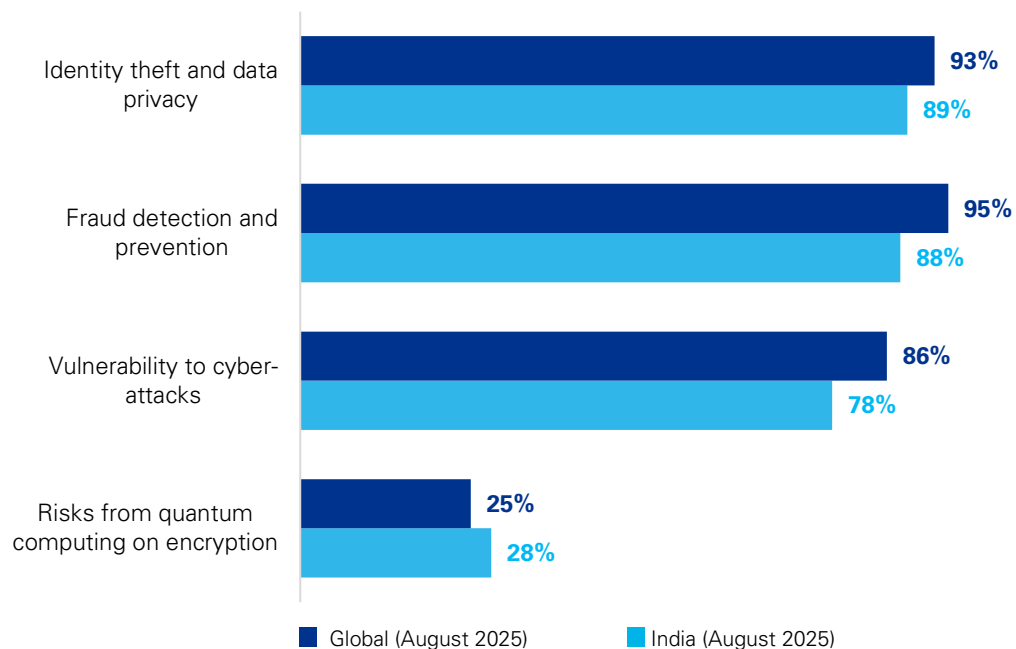
Risks to cybersecurity escalate, but CEOs in India focus on long-term digital resilience

Cybersecurity has emerged as a critical concern for CEOs in India, significantly influencing their short-term strategic decision making, as highlighted by 29 per cent CEOs in India and 23 per cent CEOs globally. Additionally, 75 per cent CEOs in India and 79 per cent CEOs globally believe cybercrime and cyber insecurity to impact their organisation's prosperity over the next three years.

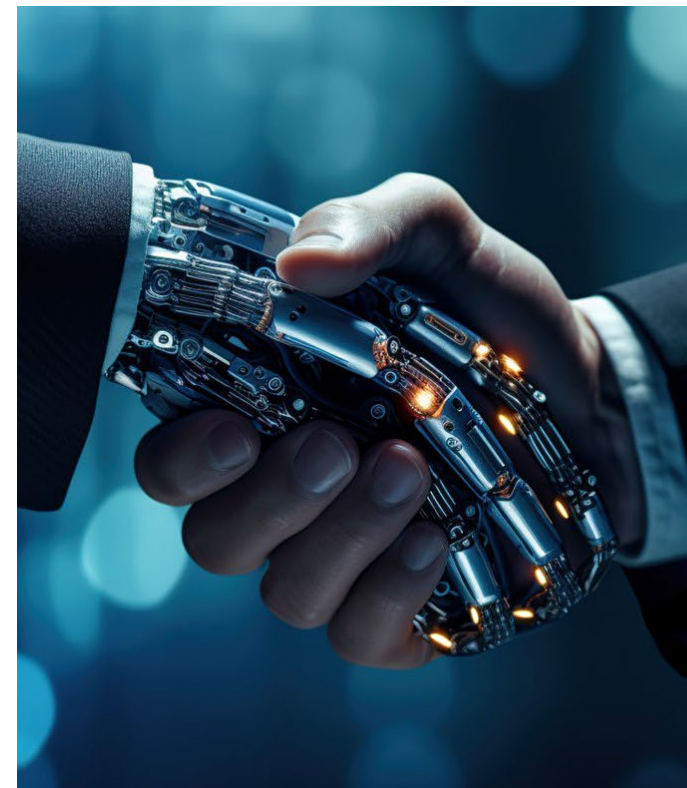
This concern is further coupled with a broad range of technological risks that are increasingly threatening cybersecurity within their organisations. Among these risks, identity theft and data privacy stand out as the most pressing risks, recognised by 89 per cent of CEOs in India and 93 per cent of CEOs globally.

In response to these growing cybersecurity risks, CEOs in India are emphasising the urgent need to build resilient digital defences. Reflecting this priority, a significant share of CEOs in India and globally have increased their investments in cybersecurity to effectively mitigate these threats.

Comparison of the level of concern among CEOs globally and in India regarding technological risks impacting cybersecurity within their organisations



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



Evolving workforce needs amid tech disruption

Adopting workforce strategies with emerging business needs

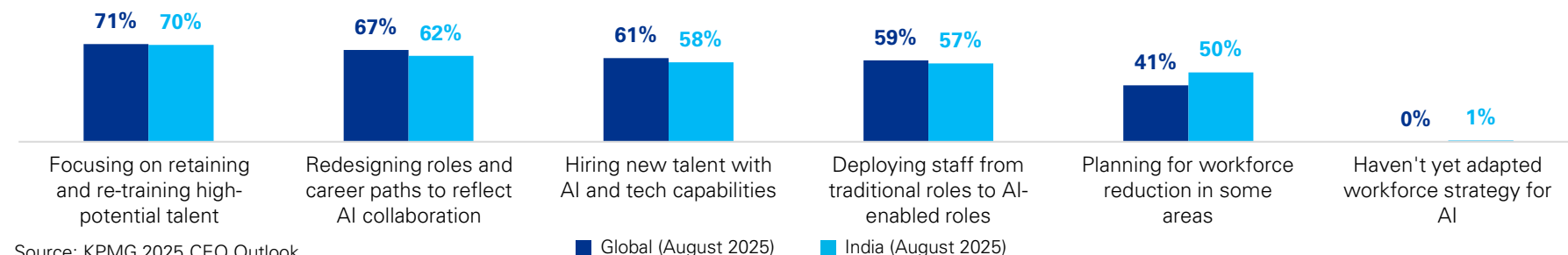
CEOs in India reshape roles and talent to unlock AI potential amid skill gaps

As organisations increasingly embed AI into their operations, its impact on the workforce has come to the forefront. A significant majority, 74 per cent CEOs in India and 77 per cent CEOs globally, recognise that AI workforce readiness is expected to significantly influence their organisation's prosperity over the next three years. At the same time, 68 per cent CEOs in India, compared to 70 per cent CEOs globally, agree that competition for AI talent could constrain their company's future prosperity.

However, building a future-ready workforce presents notable challenges. 34 per cent CEOs in India compared to 32 per cent CEOs globally identify bridging the gap between existing workforce skills and the capabilities required for AI adoption as a major hurdle in attracting and retaining digital talent. Additionally, 26 per cent CEOs in India compared to 27 per cent CEOs globally cite difficulty in finding candidates with the right mix of technical proficiency and collaborative skills, both essential for successful AI implementation. Meanwhile, the integration of AI is prompting a strategic rethink in employee training, with 73 per cent CEOs in India and 79 CEOs globally acknowledging the need to reassess how they train their employees. Additionally, 81 per cent CEOs in India cite that the integration of AI has made them rethink the skills required for entry-level roles - a significant surge from the 66 per cent observed in 2024.

To navigate the disruptions and uncertainties caused by these challenges, CEOs in India and globally are adopting diverse approaches to build a workforce capable of effectively adopting AI. These include, investing in reskilling and upskilling programmes for impacted roles, redeploying employees into new AI-supported positions and openly communicating with employees about the potential impact of AI on their roles. CEOs both in India and globally are actively modifying their long-term workforce strategy to align with AI requirements. Retaining and re-training high-potential talent, along with redesigning roles and career paths to foster effective human-AI collaboration, are among the top strategic workforce priorities.

Comparison of CEOs globally and in India on how their organisations' long-term workforce strategies are changing in response to AI

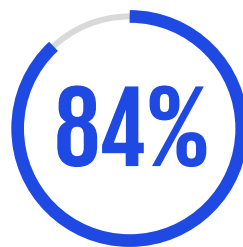


Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook

ESG and climate change requirements demand relevant expertise

Beyond technological advancements, the rising urgency around sustainability and net-zero goals is reshaping workforce and skill priorities. As a result, organisations are now confronting critical questions about workforce readiness and skill gaps. Notably, 20 per cent CEOs in India and 21 per cent of CEOs globally, believe that a lack of skills and expertise to successfully implement climate solutions, is one of the most significant barriers to achieving their climate ambitions.

To address these challenges, 91 per cent CEOs in India and 84 per cent CEOs globally believe that organisations should invest in skill development and lifelong learning in communities to safeguard access to future talent.



CEOs globally



CEOs in India

cite that organisations should invest in skill development and lifelong learning in communities to safeguard access to future talent.

Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook



In the evolving capital market landscape, leveraging emerging technologies and investing in future-ready skills will be pivotal in strengthening India's capital market ecosystem and enhancing investor trust. We view AI readiness, technological innovation, and skill development as critical enablers of a resilient and future-driven capital market.



Vijay Chandok

MD & CEO

National Securities Depository Limited

ESG and sustainability

Leadership exhibit preparedness in embracing ESG

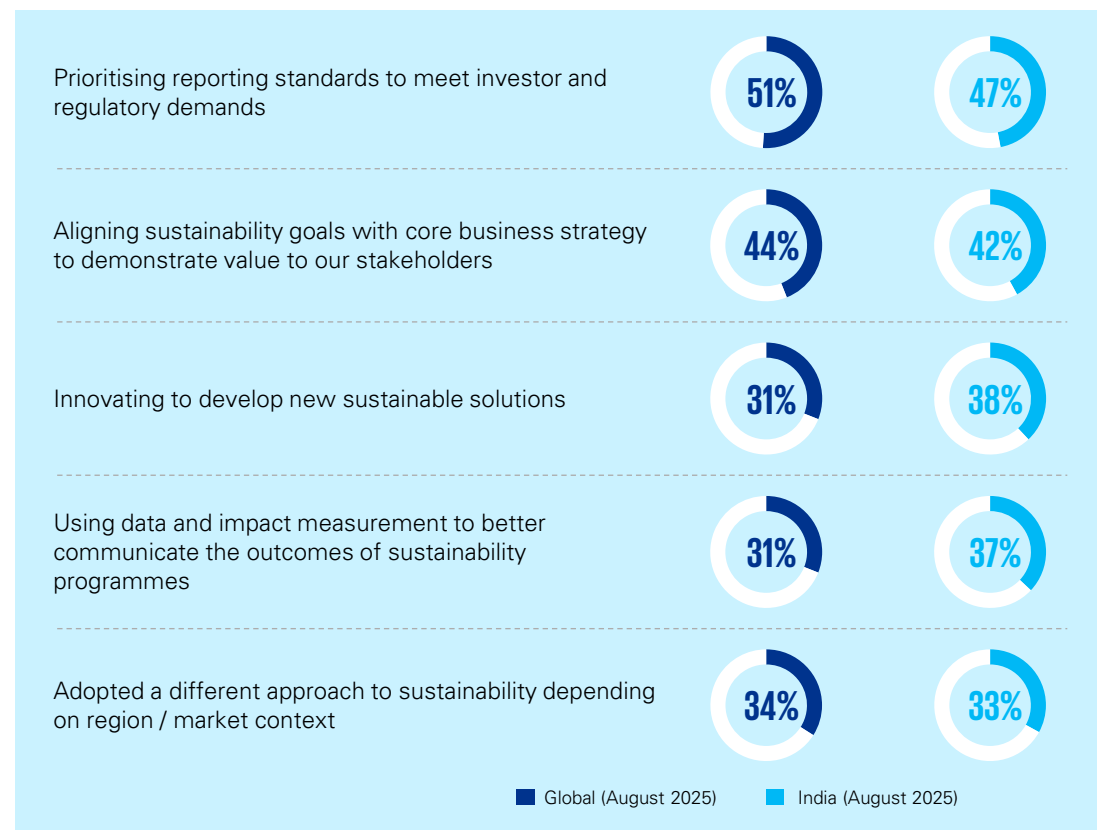
ESG readiness fuels CEO confidence in net zero targets

As ESG gains momentum across boardrooms, CEOs are closely observing their organisations' readiness to deliver on sustainability commitments. This includes evaluating their ability to navigate complex regulatory and political environments, an area where 94 per cent CEOs in India and 89 per cent CEOs globally express confidence.

Building on this optimism, CEOs in India are now re-evaluating their approach to ESG amid prevailing geopolitical and regulatory complexities, as well as internal challenges. CEOs, both India and globally cite prioritising compliance and reporting standards to meet evolving regulatory demands (47 per cent CEOs in India compared to 51 per cent CEOs globally), along with aligning sustainability goals with core business strategy (42 per cent CEOs in India compared to 44 per cent globally), as their commonly preferred approaches.

This proactive stance towards ESG has likely contributed to the growing confidence among CEOs in achieving net zero targets by 2030, as evident in a significant surge from last year both across India and globally. In India, optimism among CEOs has risen from 36 per cent in 2024 to 56 per cent in 2025, while confidence of CEOs globally has grown from 51 per cent in 2024 to 61 per cent over the same period.

Comparison of CEOs globally and in India on the impact of current geopolitical landscape or internal challenges on key ESG approaches



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook

Boosting the potential of AI to drive the impact of ESG initiatives

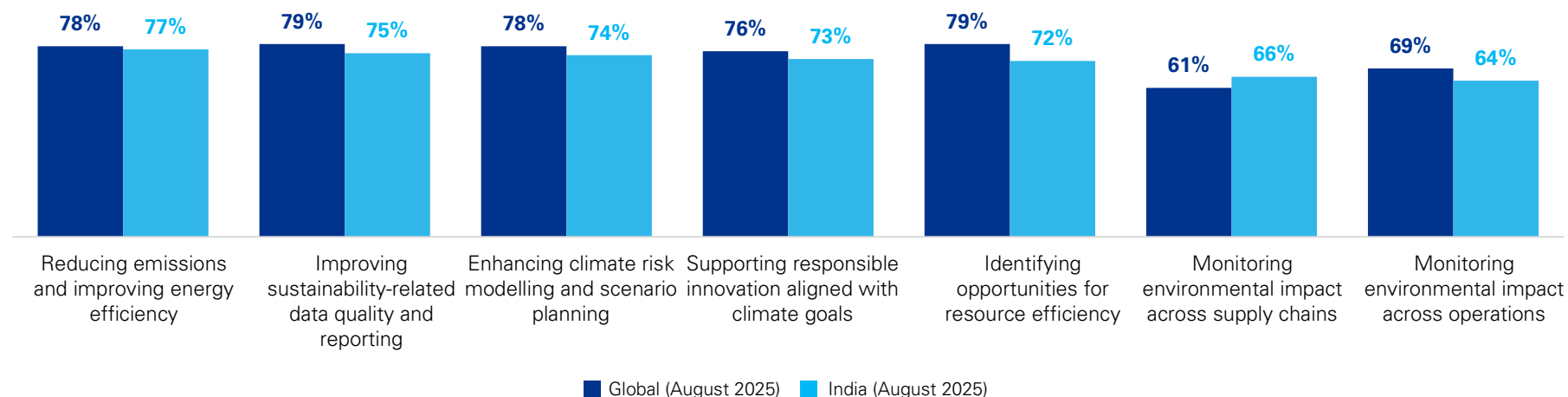
AI is increasingly being recognised not just as a tool, but as an enabler of sustainable growth. This transformation is evident in the recent survey insights. Nearly 77 per cent CEOs in India, in alignment with 78 per cent CEOs globally, consider AI instrumental in reducing emissions and enhancing energy efficiency.

Beyond operational efficiency, AI is being recognised for its role in improving the quality of sustainability-related data and its reporting, a critical factor to track progress and enable informed decision-making. About 75 per cent CEOs in India, compared to 79 per cent CEOs globally, agree that AI can support their organisations in this area.

Therefore, to expedite energy transition, business leaders are approaching innovation in diverse ways. In India, 54 per cent CEOs, compared to 49 per cent CEOs globally, mention that they are focused on collaborating and forming partnerships to drive innovation in the sustainability space while adhering to regulatory requirements. Meanwhile, 50 per cent CEOs in India compared to 53 per cent CEOs globally cite that they are engaging with policymakers to stay ahead of potential regulatory changes affecting their innovation strategies.

In contrast to the strategies outlined above, 50 per cent of CEOs in India and 39 per cent of CEOs globally have indicated a preference for a conservative approach to innovation, opting to wait for greater regulatory clarity. This blend of perspectives suggests that CEOs — both in India and worldwide — are approaching innovation opportunities with deliberate caution, prioritising regulatory alignment before making bold moves.

Comparison of CEOs globally and in India on the potential of AI to support their organisation's efforts in different climate and sustainability areas



Source: KPMG 2025 CEO Outlook

Exploring opportunities for growth



Emerging technology

- **AI unlocks opportunities; however, being conscious and prepared for challenges is essential:** CEOs in India view AI as a key investment priority, leveraging it to improve decision-making, enhance efficiency and ensure cyber security. However, the risks and challenges associated with its adoption should be cautiously evaluated to ensure preparedness for effective implementation of the technology.
- **Strengthening digital resilience by managing cybersecurity risks:** Building resilient cybersecurity frameworks has emerged as a critical need for CEOs in India. Investing in safeguards to enhance protection against identity theft, data privacy risks, and fraud can help organisations protect critical assets and reinforce long-term digital resilience.



Talent

- **Redefining workforce strategy to address skill gaps amid rapid AI adoption:** As CEOs in India increasingly embed AI into their operations, they are encountering several workforce and skill challenges. Reevaluating their strategies by investing in reskilling and upskilling programmes, redeploying employees into new AI-supported roles, retaining and re-training high-potential talent, and redesigning roles to foster effective human-AI collaboration can help them navigate these barriers more effectively.
- **Sustainability requirements emphasize skill development:** The urgency around climate goals has brought the lack of ESG-relevant skills to the forefront. Considering this, continuous investment in skill development should be prioritised to ensure sustained access to the talent needed for the future.



ESG

- **Moving towards ESG targets with strategic readiness:** CEOs in India demonstrate confidence in achieving net-zero goals. By prioritising compliance and reporting standards, aligning sustainability goals with core business strategies and innovating to develop sustainable solutions, they are focused on staying abreast of evolving regulatory and geopolitical complexities.
- **While AI powers innovation, regulatory alignment remains essential:** AI is being embraced as a strategic enabler in India, helping organisations reduce emissions, improve energy efficiency, and enhance sustainability data. However, caution can be exercised to remain aware and prepared for regulatory changes.

Methodology

The eleventh edition of KPMG CEO Outlook, conducted with 1,350 CEOs of which 125 were from India, between 05 August 2025 and 10 September 2025, provides unique insights into the mindset, strategies, and planning tactics of CEOs.

All respondents have annual revenues of over USD500 million and one third of the companies surveyed have more than USD10 billion in annual revenue. The survey included leaders from eleven markets (Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Spain, UK, and US) and eleven key industry sectors (asset management, automotive, banking, consumer and retail, energy, infrastructure, insurance, life sciences, manufacturing, technology, and telecommunications).

NOTE: Some figures may not add up to one hundred per cent due to rounding.

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