accenture

Leapfrog with responsible AI

How APAC business leaders can drive trust and growth

Contents

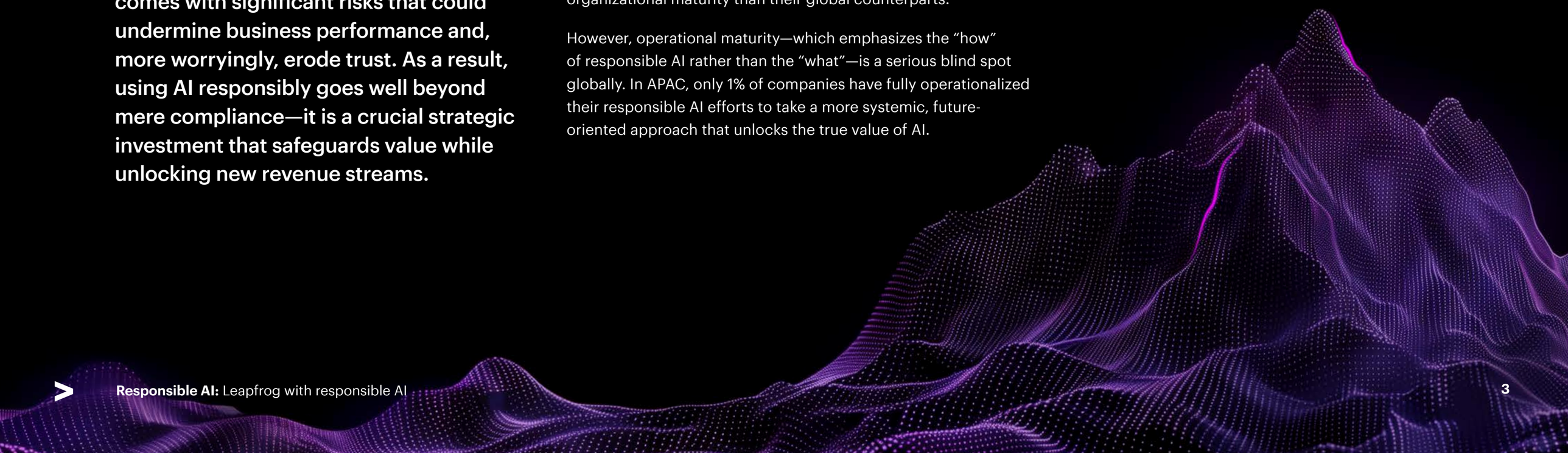
Executive summary:

Rethinking responsible AI—from readiness to value for Asia Pacific businesses

AI promises to electrify economic growth, transforming business models and driving innovation like never before. Yet, this immense opportunity comes with significant risks that could undermine business performance and, more worryingly, erode trust. As a result, using AI responsibly goes well beyond mere compliance—it is a crucial strategic investment that safeguards value while unlocking new revenue streams.

The stakes are particularly high for companies in the Asia Pacific (APAC) region, where 9 out of 10 organizations plan to use agentic AI in the next three years.[1] To prepare for adoption at scale, APAC firms have focused on setting up responsible AI structures and strategic frameworks, scoring higher on organizational maturity than their global counterparts.

However, operational maturity—which emphasizes the "how" of responsible AI rather than the "what"—is a serious blind spot globally. In APAC, only 1% of companies have fully operationalized their responsible AI efforts to take a more systemic, future-oriented approach that unlocks the true value of AI.



Although many factors contribute to the stark disconnect between organizational strength and operational weakness, APAC faces unique challenges due to its complex regulatory landscape, insufficient data infrastructure and a significant talent readiness gap. These factors collectively hinder agile decision-making and the effective deployment of responsible AI.

To unlock real value, responsible AI must move from principles to practice. That means putting the right foundations in place—clear governance, regular risk assessments, robust testing and ongoing oversight. Companies must also prioritize people and resilience by focusing on workforce impact, sustainability, privacy and security. Encouragingly, 51% of APAC executives are already directing generative AI (gen AI) investments toward new products and services. Responsible AI is what turns that ambition into outcomes—helping businesses scale safely, earn trust and deliver lasting value.

Responsible AI 101

What is responsible AI?

Responsible AI implies taking intentional actions to design, deploy and use AI to create value and build trust by protecting against the potential risks of AI.

What is mature responsible AI?

Having fully operationalized responsible AI efforts as a platform to take a more systemic, future-orientated approach that unlocks the true value of AI.

How do you build a responsible AI program?

Our research and work advising clients has shown that all companies can benefit from focusing on these five priorities to improve their maturity and begin to reap the benefits of AI.

01
Establish AI governance and principles

02
Conduct AI risk assessments

03
Systemic enablement for responsible AI testing

04
Ongoing monitoring and compliance

05
Workforce impact, sustainability, privacy, security

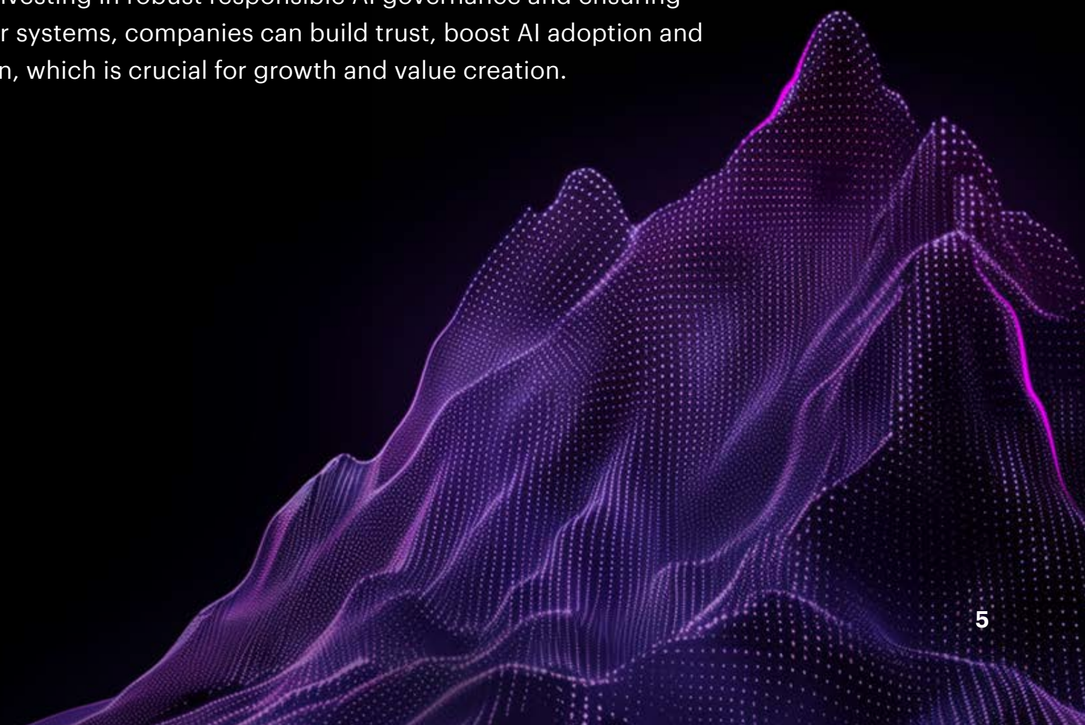
01 The cost of inaction: Lost reputation—and revenue

In pursuit of greater productivity and performance, businesses around the world are actively embracing AI. Having experienced the positive business impact of gen AI in 2024, 87% of C-suite leaders said that they plan to increase their investments in the technology for 2025.[2] The resulting economic impact is immense—in the APAC region alone, gen AI could unlock $4.5 trillion of value by 2038.[3]

Yet our survey found that in APAC, this opportunity comes with considerable risk. A single major, AI-related incident could wipe out an average of 27% of a company's market capitalization. Companies in APAC are more concerned about these risks than their global counterparts. Specifically, risks such as cybersecurity threats and legal and regulatory challenges are reducing the appetite for gen AI, with 61% of executives in APAC saying these risks would slow down their investments in the technology compared to 54% globally.[4]

Failing to act on responsible AI thus cuts both ways: Companies that do not adequately mitigate risk could sustain long-term reputational damage, but those that cautiously sit on the sidelines might miss a once-in-a-generation opportunity. Building trust is essential, not just for compliance, but for creating business value.

Trust is the cornerstone of any AI strategy, fostering adoption, innovation and value. By investing in robust responsible AI governance and ensuring explainable, fair systems, companies can build trust, boost AI adoption and drive innovation, which is crucial for growth and value creation.



02 Redefining maturity: Responsible AI maturity milestones

To manage risks and unlock AI's full potential, companies need more than intent. They need structured progress. That's where responsible AI maturity comes in. It offers a practical way to assess how well an organization is translating its principles into action—and how ready it is to scale AI responsibly and sustainably.

To measure companies' responsible AI maturity, we've defined four milestones—in collaboration with Stanford University—which ultimately lead to being reinvention ready. **Being a pioneer is the North Star for responsible AI maturity, but no company has reached this stage yet.**

Figure 1: Responsible AI maturity milestones

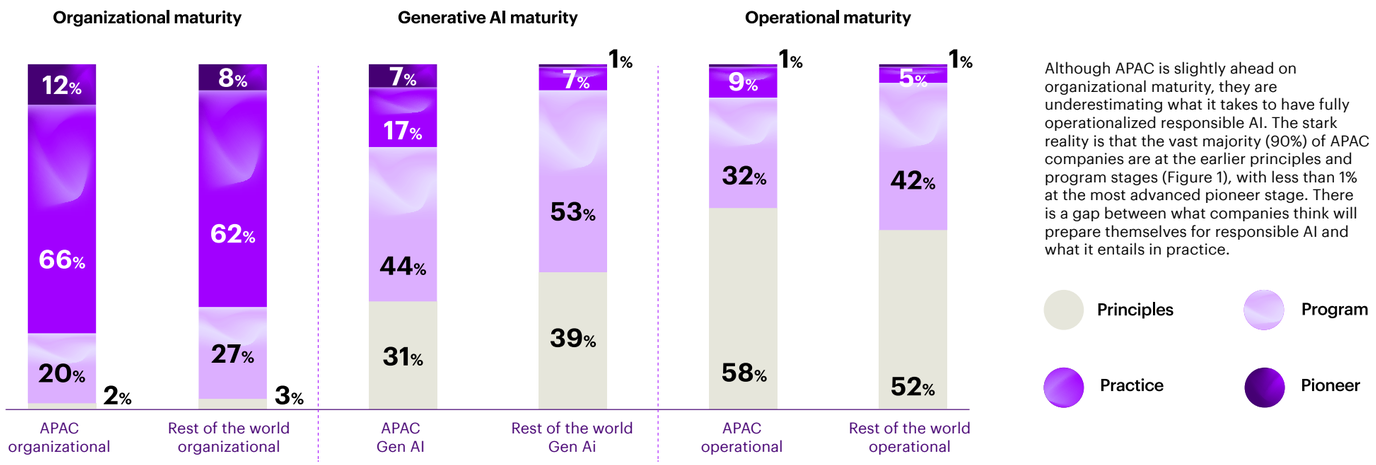
Stage 1 Setting responsible AI principles	Stage 2 Establishing a responsible AI program	Stage 3 Putting responsible AI into practice	Stage 4 Becoming a responsible AI pioneer
The company has some foundational capabilities to develop AI systems, but its responsible AI efforts are ad-hoc.	Following a responsible AI assessment, the organization has put in place a responsible AI strategy, risk management processes and a data and governance operating model, without a more systemic enablement with tools and technology.	The company has systematically implemented and operationalized measures across the organization to help meet the relevant regulatory and legal obligations.	The company has fully operationalized responsible AI efforts as a platform to take a more systemic, future-orientated approach that unlocks the true value of AI. It has adopted an anticipatory approach to its responsible AI efforts, deploying dedicated resources and processes, as well as proactively engaging external stakeholders as the technology and regulatory environment is evolving continuously.

03 Responsibility reality check: How ready are APAC companies for responsible AI?

APAC companies understand the importance of responsible AI, with nearly 50% acknowledging that it is a strategic imperative for AI-related revenue growth. Many have invested in building governance frameworks and made notable progress in **organizational maturity**, with 12% reaching the pioneer stage, ahead of the global average of 8% (Figure 2).

They are also slightly ahead of their global peers when it comes to **gen AI maturity**, which measures the ability of companies to mitigate risks for both developers and users of gen AI specifically. We found that 7% of APAC companies are at the pioneer stage for gen AI maturity, compared to just 1% for the rest of the world.

Figure 2: **APAC leads on responsible AI organizational and generative AI maturity**



Although APAC is slightly ahead on organizational maturity, they are underestimating what it takes to have fully operationalized responsible AI. The stark reality is that the vast majority (90%) of APAC companies are at the earlier principles and program stages (Figure 1), with less than 1% at the most advanced pioneer stage. There is a gap between what companies think will prepare themselves for responsible AI and what it entails in practice.

Operational vs. organizational maturity

Operational maturity assesses a company's adoption of responsible AI measures to mitigate specific risks like privacy, data governance, diversity, reliability, security, human interaction, accountability and environmental impact.

Organizational maturity evaluates the effectiveness of an organization's responsible AI processes and practices, including C-suite sponsorship, governance, risk management, model development, procurement, monitoring, cybersecurity and training.

Decoding APAC's operational challenges

Progressing from organizational maturity to operational maturity—turning intent into action—remains a significant challenge for APAC companies. The majority still lack operational maturity. This is often because of gaps in employee training and the fact that decision-making around AI remains concentrated in leadership, rather than distributed across teams who build and use it. As a result, responsible AI efforts frequently stall in initial stages, leaving companies exposed to risks, compliance pressure and missed opportunities. Most APAC companies (90%) are at the earlier principles and program stages (Figure 2), with less than 1% at the most advanced pioneer stage. This reveals a clear gap between what companies think will prepare themselves for responsible AI and what it means in practice.

So, what explains APAC's operational maturity deficit? Our research reveals four main challenges: Regulations, insufficient data and technology infrastructure, the rapidly evolving AI landscape and talent readiness.

12% of APAC companies have reached the pioneer milestone for organizational maturity, but this drops to less than 1% for operational maturity. When combining organizational and operational maturity, no company is a pioneer yet.

Figure 3: Companies in APAC need to navigate a highly diverse and fragmented regulatory landscape

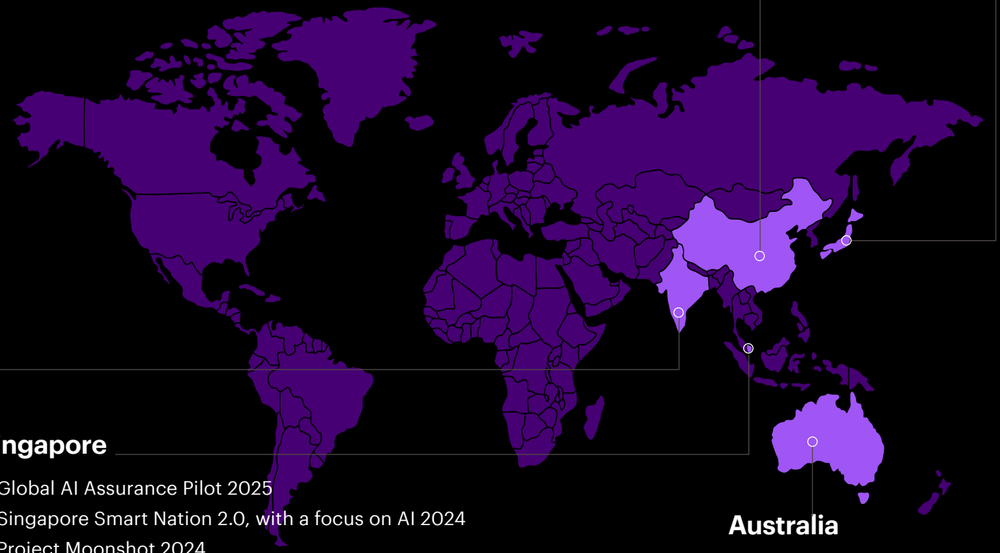
APAC AI regulatory initiatives

China

- China's top legislature plans for 34 new bills, with a focus on AI, data and digital economy in 2025
- The Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) proposes new regulation on labelling AI-generated content in 2024
- Draft Measures for the Management of Generative AI Services 2024
- AI Safety Governance Framework version 1.0 released 2024
- Guidelines for the Construction of a National Comprehensive Standardization System for the Artificial Intelligence Industry 2024
- China's Deep Synthesis Provisions 2023
- Personal Information Protection Law 2022
- Internet Information Service Algorithm 2022
- Recommendation Management Regulations 2022

India

- Advisories on Deepfakes and Generative AI 2024
- Approval of AI tools before public release in 2024
- India AI Mission Framework 2024
- Recommendations on Encouraging Innovative Technologies Through Regulatory Sandbox 2024
- India AI Report 2023
- Digital India Act (2023): A bill to replace the IT Act of 2000 and regulate high-risk AI systems.
- Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023
- Operationalizing principles for responsible AI 2021



Singapore

- Global AI Assurance Pilot 2025
- Singapore Smart Nation 2.0, with a focus on AI 2024
- Project Moonshot 2024
- AI safety labels (proposed) 2024
- Advisory Guidelines on use of Personal Data in AI Recommendation and Decision Systems 2024
- AI funding initiative to power Singapore's economic growth 2024
- Model AI Governance Framework for Generative AI 2024
- Safety Guidelines for Model Developers and App Developers 2024
- Singapore National AI Strategy 2.0 (NAIS 2.0) 2023
- MAS principles to promote FEAT in the use of AI
- A.I. Verify 2022
- AI governance testing framework minimum viable product (MVP) 2021
- AI governance approach + implementation self-assessment guide 2020

Australia

- The National AI Centre (NAIC) launches consultation on Voluntary AI Safety Standard v2.0 2024
- Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation Bill introduced 2024
- Safe and Responsible AI (interim response) 2024
- Voluntary AI Safety Standards 2024
- National Framework for the Assurance of Artificial Intelligence in Government 2024
- Policy for the responsible use of AI in government 2024
- Mandatory guardrails for AI in high-risk settings (proposed) 2024
- Commonwealth AI ethics principles 2019

Japan

- Checklist for AI related contracts 2025
- Bill on the Promotion of Research and Development and Application of Artificial Intelligence-Related Technologies 2025
- Japan AI Safety Institute releases guide on evaluation perspectives on AI safety 2024
- Japan AI Safety Institute 2024
- International framework for regulating and using generative AI 2024
- Guide to Evaluation Perspectives on AI Safety (v1.01) 2024
- AI Guidelines for Business 2024
- AI Strategy Council 2023
- Hiroshima Process 2023
- AI Strategy 2022
- AI governance guidelines 2022

Listed initiatives are non-exhaustive and based on latest available data

01 Fragmented regulatory landscape

Unlike the EU, which has a centralized AI governance framework, APAC's regulatory landscape is highly fragmented (Figure 3). For example, countries like Singapore and Japan have introduced sector-specific guidelines, while other nations rely on broader data protection laws. This lack of standardization complicates compliance for companies operating across borders.

However, this is now changing. Region-specific standards like the ASEAN Guide on AI Governance and Ethics are beginning to emerge. These guidelines offer practical advice for the design, build and use of AI technologies, aiming to ensure that AI operates effectively and responsibly across different countries. However, without widespread adoption, cross-border AI operations remain complex. Companies must still navigate multiple frameworks to ensure compliance and readiness.

02 Absence of a strong digital core

To implement and scale responsible AI applications, businesses need a **robust digital core** powered by the right mix of cloud infrastructure, data and AI, applications and platforms to optimize performance, efficiency and security. However, many APAC companies lack **this strong digital foundation.** Nearly one in three C-suite leaders cite limitations in data or technology infrastructure as the top obstacle to scaling AI applications.[5] Data siloes are prevalent—less than half of APAC companies have security mechanisms for real-time incident detection.

A critical gap is the absence of AI-specific monitoring capabilities. In fact, 37% of APAC companies have yet to implement dedicated monitoring for responsible AI risks, making it difficult to detect bias, security vulnerabilities and unintended consequences. These issues are not just operational; they point to deeper structural weaknesses in the digital core. A robust digital core, built on an integrated data and AI backbone, enables real-time oversight, continuous risk detection and automated responses. It provides the foundation for transparency, accountability and agility—essential for scaling responsible AI. With real-time data flows, intelligent monitoring and integrated systems, organizations can identify and address issues early, respond quickly and build trusted AI systems.

03 Rapidly evolving AI landscape

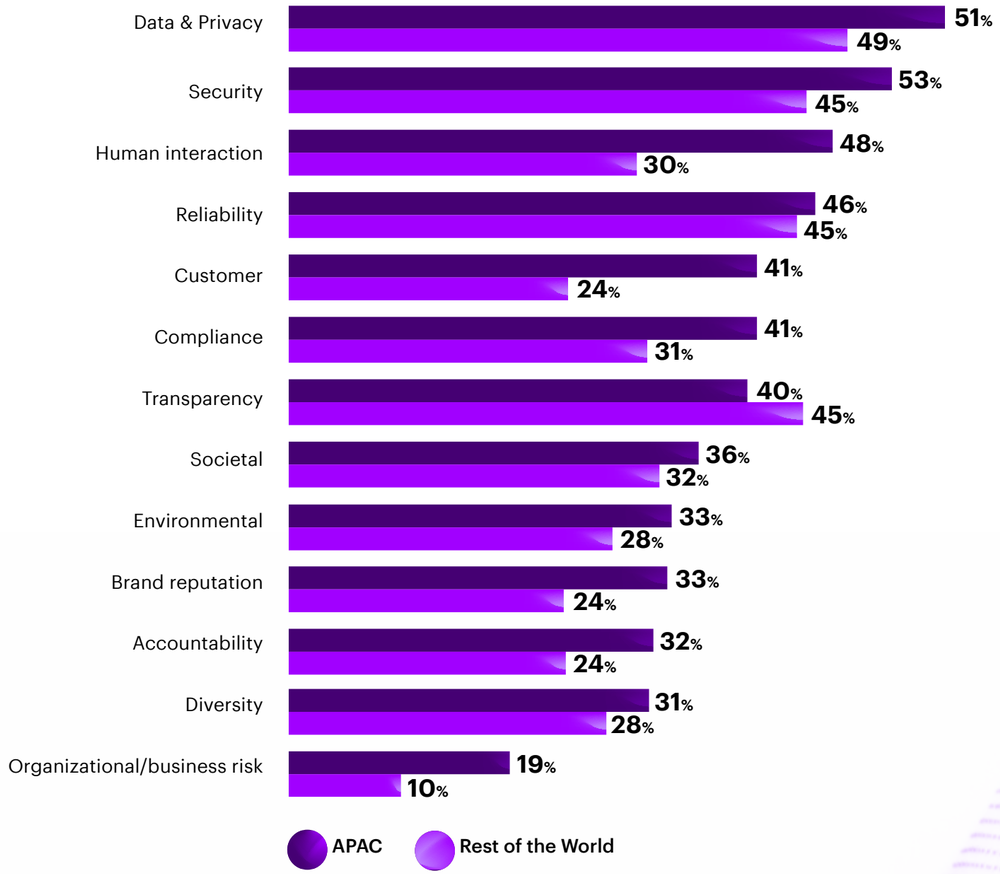
As new and emerging technologies, especially agentic AI, increasingly shape workflows, businesses must adopt new governance methods to ensure responsible usage and oversight. AI agents are already handling tasks like code migration and customer interactions, requiring an evolving approach to monitoring their activities. Companies need to establish clear guardrails to address critical questions: What data are these systems accessing? Who is directing them and what is the quality of their output? How are AI agents making decisions? Transparency is crucial for building employee trust and ensuring alignment with company goals and ethical standards.

As the adoption of AI, generative and agentic AI accelerates, APAC companies are under pressure to balance speed with responsibility. New innovations that make large language models (LLMs) significantly more cost-efficient are lowering entry barriers, making advanced AI more accessible—but also increasing risks. Data privacy, cybersecurity threats and human-AI interaction challenges are top concerns, with 57% of APAC leaders prioritizing data security and 53% citing rushed adoption as a key risk (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Privacy and security are the top concerns worldwide and in APAC

Risks relevant to current and future AI models or systems.

% respondents



04 Workforce readiness gap

A significant gap in **workforce readiness** is hindering progress in APAC. While companies are increasing their investment in gen AI, they are spending three times as much on technology than on their people.[6] This imbalance is more than a resourcing issue—it's a barrier to building responsible AI systems. Without the right skills in place, companies struggle to identify and manage AI risks, apply governance frameworks effectively or ensure ethical use of the technology in daily operations. Our research shows that organizations delivering enterprise-level value scored 88% higher on reshaping the workforce and redefining their ways of working, compared to those with a limited business impact. Clearly, responsible AI cannot succeed without the workforce being equipped to support it—making talent readiness a non-negotiable foundation for impact at scale.

04 Ready, set, grow: Five priorities for responsible AI

Organizations across APAC are at different stages in their responsible AI journey. Some have established foundational principles, while others are working toward embedding AI governance into daily operations. The priorities for a company just beginning its responsible AI efforts will naturally differ from those that have already implemented risk management and compliance frameworks. However, no matter where an organization stands, focusing on five key priorities can help strengthen AI maturity, close the execution gap and unlock AI's full potential in a responsible and scalable way.

01 Establish AI governance and principles	02 Conduct AI risk assessments	03 Enable systemic responsible AI testing
04 Ongoing monitoring and compliance of AI	05 Workforce impact, sustainability, privacy, security	

Priority 1

Establish AI governance and principles

A strong AI governance framework is essential for responsible AI adoption. It ensures that AI is designed, deployed and scaled in alignment with business objectives, regulatory requirements and stakeholder trust.

Our research on global trends shows that companies with fully operationalized AI governance have grown from 31% to 76% in just two years, demonstrating that structured, strategic efforts deliver results.[7] APAC firms must take similar steps by strengthening governance models, ensuring AI oversight is embedded across business functions and reinforcing responsible AI with clear controls. Organizations that take a top-down, cross-functional approach—rather than managing AI risks in an ad-hoc manner—are better positioned to scale AI safely and effectively.

A strong example of governance in action comes from the **Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS)**. As Singapore's central bank and financial regulator, MAS saw both the opportunities and risks of AI in financial services. To guide responsible AI adoption, it established Veritas, an industry consortium, to help financial services institutions evaluate their AI and data analytics solutions against the principles of fairness, ethics, accountability and transparency. A core team within Veritas has since developed a methodology framework to operationalize those principles. This framework enables consortium members to adopt AI responsibly while contributing to a fairer, more transparent future for consumers worldwide.[8]

Priority 2

Conduct AI risk assessments

Understanding risk exposure from an organization's use of AI is a key component of operationalizing responsible AI. Without a clear view of where these vulnerabilities lie, companies cannot put the right safeguards in place to protect themselves.

Our survey revealed that APAC companies are underestimating what it takes to fully identify and mitigate AI risks—worryingly, 51% of companies do not have a systematic risk-identification process currently in place. Responsible AI principles alone do not cover the nuances of an organization's risk profile, nor do they account for the cascading impact of AI failures across interconnected business functions. Conducting regular AI risk assessments and communicating these insights to C-suite leaders is crucial for embedding responsible AI into decision-making at every level.

However, risk assessments cannot be isolated into a single team or department. For AI governance to be effective, risk mitigation strategies must extend across the organization and value chain, ensuring that AI systems remain fair, transparent and accountable from development to deployment.

A **multinational consumer healthcare company** wanted to define a clear policy and vision to scale responsible AI across the enterprise and standardize processes and ways of building and deploying AI. The company did not have an inventory of high-risk AI applications and struggled with the absence of dedicated responsible AI roles and decision-making accountabilities. They worked with Accenture to conduct a global benchmarking and assessment against the regulatory landscape and draft AI principles and policies, as well as a proposed responsible AI operating model. Risk screening was conducted across the company's AI applications. A risk assessment for higher-risk cases ensures their applications align with principles and regulatory requirements. They also worked with a third-party legal counsel to provide a framework for legislation monitoring. The company is now confident in its AI usage, including its risk management and accountability, to the extent that it plans to publish an external position paper on responsible AI.

Priority 3

Systemic enablement for responsible AI testing

To successfully implement responsible AI, organizations must go beyond high-level principles and ensure AI systems are rigorously tested and continuously improved. Comprehensive AI testing requires deploying a broad range of risk mitigation measures across the entire AI lifecycle and value chain, ensuring that AI models remain fair, transparent, accountable and secure.

Only 34% of APAC companies surveyed integrated structured or comprehensive mitigation techniques into their AI development processes, along with proactive research on new advances in risk mitigation. Scaling responsible AI testing beyond isolated efforts is crucial. Organizations must expand AI testing across all business functions, ensuring that risk mitigation is embedded in every AI-driven decision.

For example, **Konica Minolta**, a company in print and imaging technology, software and robotics, recognized key risks in unchecked AI use, such as privacy breaches and ethical violations. They found that their existing AI policy—focused on safety, fairness and transparency—was not effectively integrated into governance. Gaps in evaluation criteria and employee skills were limiting their ability to implement responsible AI at scale.

To address these challenges, Konica Minolta partnered with Accenture to refine its AI governance framework, developing a structured review process and strengthening internal capabilities. This led to the creation of a rapid risk assessment playbook and a flowchart for structured AI evaluation, along with an in-house training program to upskill employees on responsible AI practices. These initiatives are expected to reduce review times for field operators by 50%, improve employee proficiency in AI risk management and embed responsible AI governance into core business operations. The company's proactive approach underscores the importance of structured governance, process consolidation and targeted training in scaling responsible AI effectively.

To comprehensively test and scale responsible AI across the organization, companies need to first develop a reference architecture to seamlessly integrate client and other third-party tools and services to evaluate risks across the full AI lifecycle (consisting of data, model and application). Risk mitigation strategies must also extend to external vendors, partners and third-party AI integrations.

With this framework in place, companies can test, fine-tune, integrate and deploy the architecture across the organization. They should also provide role-based training to enhance employee skills in the latest responsible AI processes and tools.

Priority 4

Ongoing monitoring and compliance

Establishing a dedicated AI monitoring and compliance function is critical to ensuring AI models operate ethically, securely and in line with regulatory expectations. Risks such as bias, hallucinations and intellectual property violations occur more frequently due to the unpredictable nature of these models. Without a structured monitoring framework, companies may struggle to detect and address these risks before they escalate, leading to compliance failures and reputational damage.

A **leading Asia Pacific beauty product company** recognized the need for a stronger AI monitoring framework as it sought to grow its AI capabilities responsibly. The company assessed its responsible AI maturity and developed a roadmap for sustainable AI adoption. The assessment, part of a broader digital core strategy, included benchmarking against industry peers and identifying gaps in organizational maturity across HR, third-party management, legal compliance and technology functions.

As a next step, the company outlined three strategic priorities: Aligning AI initiatives with business goals, fostering a culture of responsible AI and establishing a robust governance framework. It also identified key areas for improvement, such as improving data privacy, enhancing AI model transparency and strengthening third-party vendor management. These proposed actions are intended to help the company build a formal AI monitoring function with well-defined roles, accountability and a structured hierarchy—laying the groundwork for real-time risk monitoring and long-term AI governance across the business.

Priority 5

Workforce impact, sustainability and cybersecurity

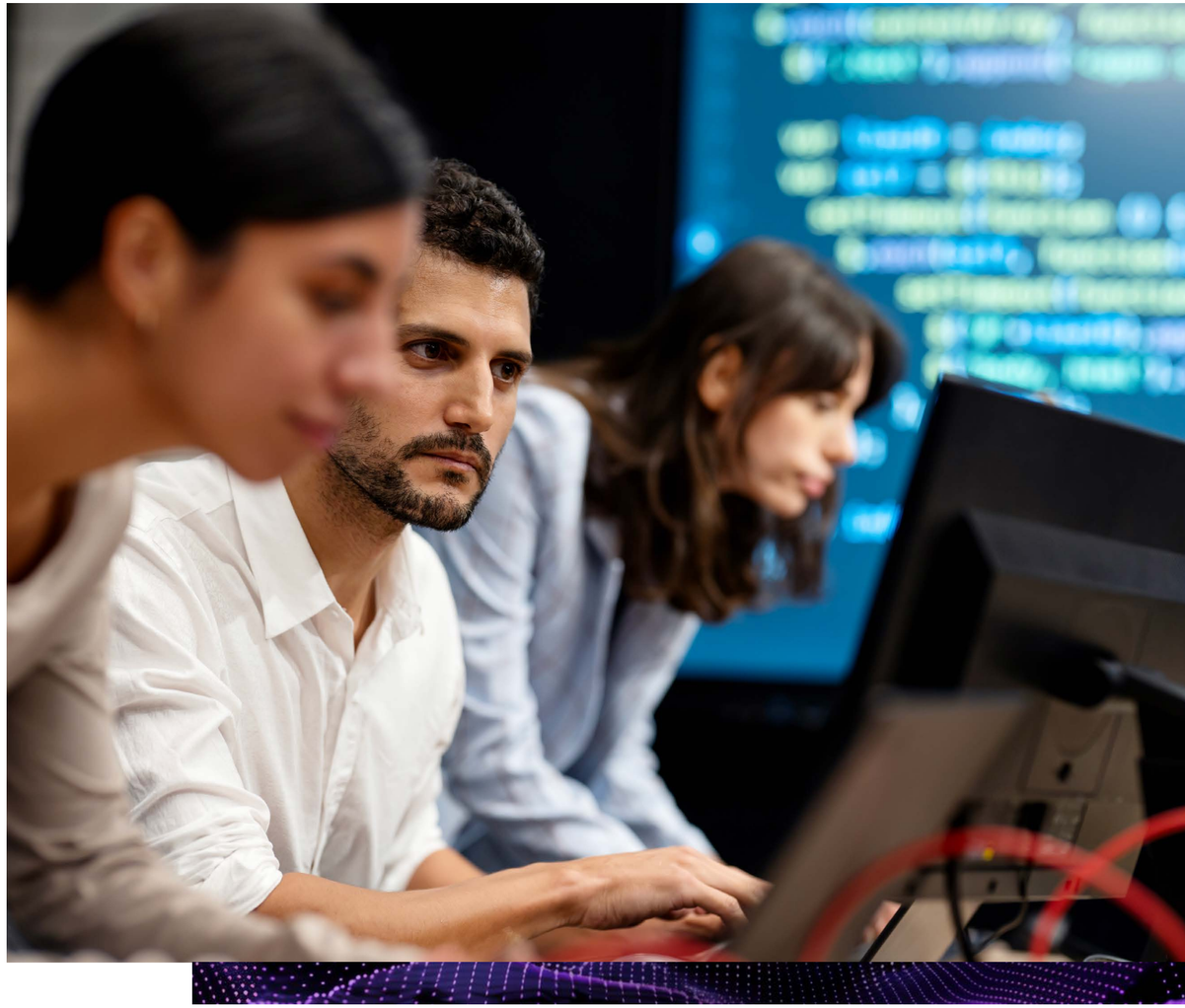
For responsible AI to be truly effective, organizations must take a cross-functional approach that addresses workforce readiness, sustainability, privacy and security across the enterprise. APAC leaders are particularly worried about AI's workforce impact, including workforce displacement and skill gaps that could hinder AI adoption at scale. In the age of gen AI, C-Suite leaders must prioritize talent readiness, ensuring employees have the skills and knowledge to work alongside AI. Workforce readiness is not just about productivity; it is critical for maintaining responsible AI compliance and mitigating risks across the organization.

The key questions are: Are employees prepared? How can companies reskill workers effectively? How do businesses adapt work processes to AI-driven change? Our research suggests that more than half of APAC employees feel that more comprehensive training (59%) and clear guidelines on responsible usage (54%) would enhance comfort levels in using gen AI tools.

A major challenge to AI operational maturity is the development of human interaction capabilities. As Accenture's recent work with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) demonstrates, employees will play a crucial role in risk mitigation and performance optimization in this gen AI era. Yet many companies struggle to integrate AI in a way that complements human decision-making. Organizations must invest in AI governance models that ensure employees can interact with AI systems responsibly, reducing risks related to bias, compliance failures and security vulnerabilities.[9]

While these technologies enhance our lives, they also require significant energy and environmental resources. Companies must address the energy consumption and carbon emissions of AI systems. Alarmingly, only 31% of APAC companies have implemented carbon reduction strategies. Given the climate crisis and growing customer demands, APAC companies must integrate sustainability into their AI practices to advance their corporate citizenship and social license.

Another focus area: Growing risks associated with cybersecurity. A multi-disciplinary approach to AI training and reskilling—combining technical education, behavioral science and responsible AI design—is essential for strengthening AI risk management. While 79% of APAC companies have an AI-focused cybersecurity response plan, only 40% have a dedicated team to act on it during an incident. With deepfake threats and data breaches becoming more sophisticated, organizations must be prepared with proactive monitoring, dedicated security teams and AI-specific compliance protocols to safeguard their systems and stakeholders.



Conclusion:

APAC’s moment: Leapfrog with responsible AI

The opportunity for generative and agentic AI in the APAC region is immense and the momentum behind its adoption is undeniable. However, to fully unlock its potential, businesses must overcome key barriers to operational responsible AI maturity. These barriers include gaps in governance frameworks, inconsistent risk assessments and insufficient workforce readiness, all of which hinder the effective scaling of AI initiatives.

To overcome these barriers and close this gap, companies must act by aligning their efforts with five key priorities: Establish AI governance and principles, conduct AI risk assessment, enable systematic responsible AI testing, prioritize ongoing monitoring and compliance of AI and take a cross-functional approach to ensure workforce readiness, sustainability, privacy and security across the enterprise. By focusing on these priorities, businesses can turn their ambitions into tangible results.

This is an exciting moment for APAC companies to lead the way, embracing responsible AI as the foundation for growth, competition and innovation. By taking decisive action now, they can not only mitigate risk but also unlock AI’s transformative power, driving inclusive and sustainable progress for industries, economies and communities across the region.

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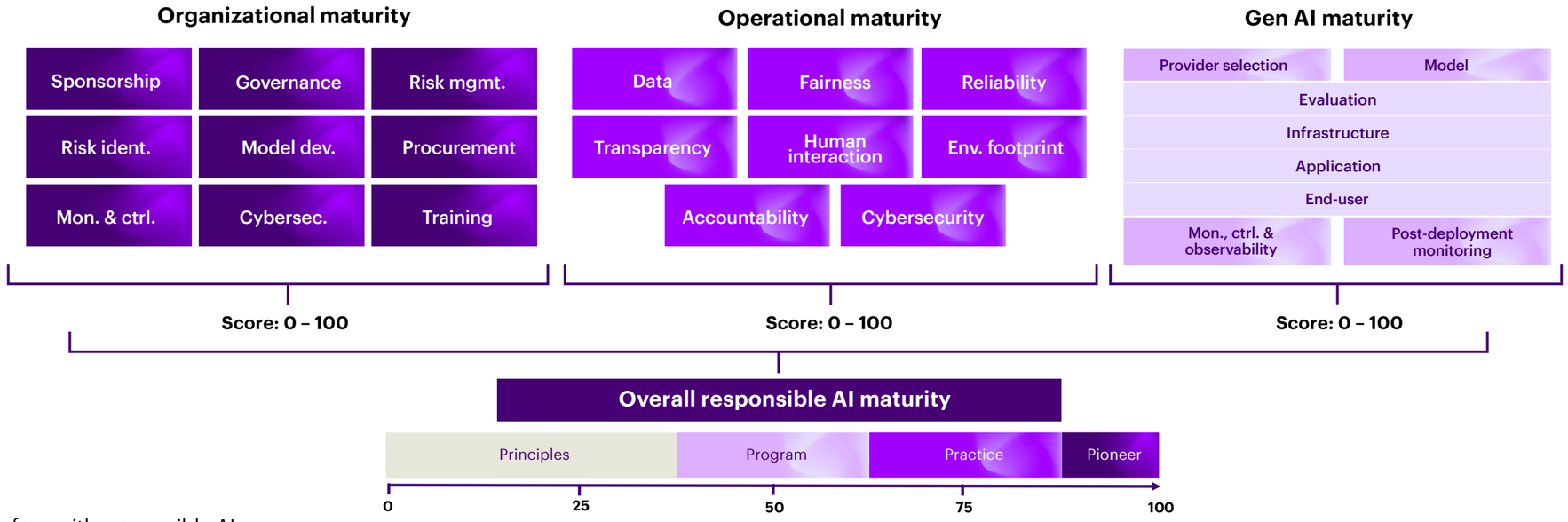
About the Research

From January to March 2024, Accenture surveyed 1,000 companies across 19 industries, headquartered in 22 countries. The sample includes a diverse group of business leaders, including CEOs, C-suite executives, Board members and directors. The questionnaire for the survey was co-developed with Stanford University, enabling a robust and comprehensive approach. The methodology of the responsible AI maturity index is based on three core pillars: Organizational maturity, operational maturity and generative AI maturity. Each of these pillars is assigned equal weight and their combined scores create the overall responsible AI maturity index, offering a holistic view of companies' readiness in the AI landscape.

Region	Sample
North America	27%
Asia	22%
Europe	30%
Central and South America	9%
Rest of the world	12%
TOTAL	**100%**

Industry (grouped)	Sample
Aerospace, Automotive & Transport	16%
Communications, Media & Technology	16%
Financial Services	15%
Healthcare & Life Sciences	10%
Products	16%
Public Services	6%
Resources	21%
TOTAL	**100%**

About the Accenture Stanford responsible AI maturity scoring model



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