

# 2024

## RISK IN FOCUS

Survey  
Results

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GLOBAL SUMMARY

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# ABOUT RISK IN FOCUS

**Risk in Focus provides practical, data-driven research to help internal auditors and their stakeholders understand today's risk environment and prepare audit plans for the year ahead.**

Reports are based on a worldwide survey to identify current and emerging risks for each region, followed up with roundtables and interviews to discover leading practices for internal auditors.

Two reports are created for each region:

- **Hot Topics for Internal Auditors** – Detailed reports based on the survey, roundtables, and interviews.
- **Board Briefing** – Summary reports for internal auditors to share with stakeholders.

Risk in Focus Global is a collaborative partnership facilitated by the [Internal Audit Foundation](#) with

generous support from IIA regional bodies, IIA Institutes, and corporate sponsors. 2024 marks the first year the project was conducted worldwide.

The Risk in Focus methodology was originally created in 2016 by the European Institutes Research Group (EIRG), which continues to publish it in Europe through the European Confederation of Institutes of Internal Auditing (ECIIA).

Reports are available free to the public at The IIA's [Risk in Focus resource page](#) and at the websites for IIA regional groups: [ACIIA](#) (Asia Pacific), [AFIIA](#) (Africa), [ARABCIIA](#) (Middle East), [ECIIA](#) (Europe), [FLAI](#) (Latin America).



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# INTRODUCTION

## Global survey results

The worldwide participation in the Risk in Focus survey provides a rare opportunity to compare risk levels and internal audit planning between different regions.

The strong consensus about risk and audit effort in many areas is a testament to the strength of the shared standards of the internal audit profession. However, the specific differences between regions show that internal audit leaders recognize and respond to the risks unique to their organizations.

This global summary report shows worldwide results for the survey conducted for Risk in Focus 2024 and is a valuable tool for high-level benchmarking.

For leading practices related to the highest risks in each region, please download regional reports from the [Risk in Focus resource page](#).

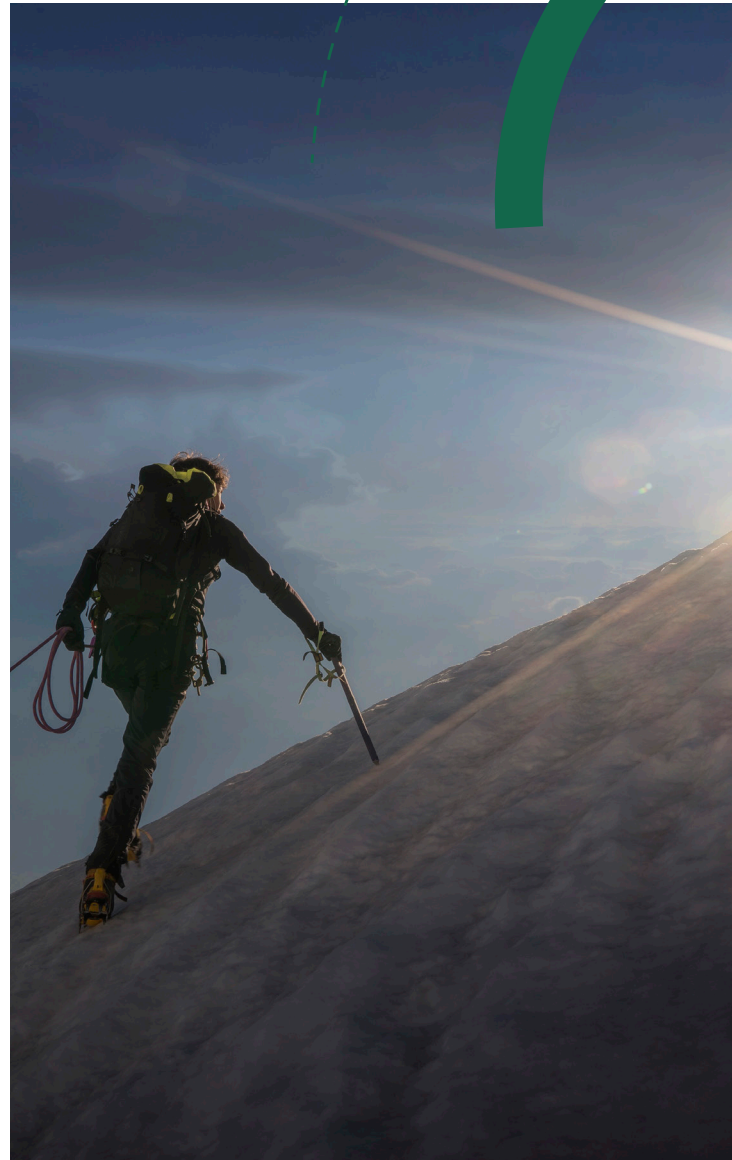


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### Survey Responses Per Region

Africa	808
Asia Pacific	1,035
Latin America (& Caribbean)	956
Europe	799
North America	442
Middle East	167
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,207</b>



# RISK PERSPECTIVES

## Current risk

**The three highest risks worldwide are cybersecurity, human capital, and business continuity.**

There is broad consensus worldwide that the three areas of highest risk for the organizations participating in the survey were:

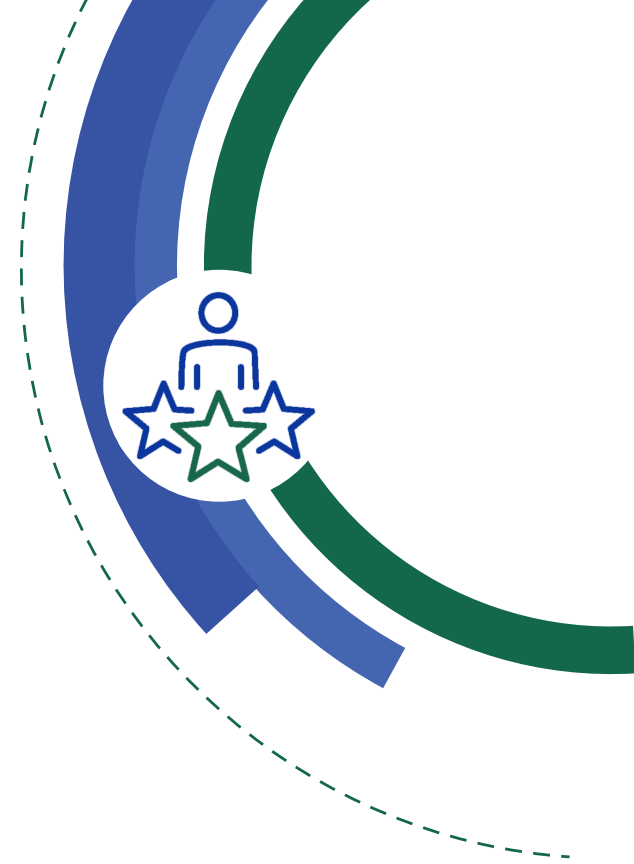
1. Cybersecurity
2. Human capital
3. Business continuity

For most regions, regulatory change also ranks as a top 5 highest risk, with the exception of Africa and Middle East, where financial liquidity is more of a concern. Reflecting current events and future concerns, geopolitical instability rounded out the list for Latin America and Europe. Market changes were considered a top risk for Asia Pacific and North America, but not in other regions. Finally, Africa was the only region with fraud as a top 5 concern, while the Middle East was unique for having governance/corporate reporting in their top 5. (See Figure 1.)

## Future risk

**Digital disruption and climate change risks are expected to increase.**

There is consensus worldwide that risk levels will rise in the next three years for digital disruption and climate change. Both areas saw increases of about 20 percentage points between current and future risk levels. Even more remarkable is the increase in ranking for climate change, which leaped from fourteenth place to fifth. (See Figure 2.)



# RISK PERSPECTIVES

## Regional risk differences

### Each region has distinct areas of concern.

Another way to look at the data is to consider which region had the highest risk within each audit area. For example, climate change risks were rated highest in Europe, compared to other regions. Some notable points about highest ratings per audit area include:

- North American respondents gave cybersecurity (85%) and human capital (65%) the highest risk ratings compared to other regions.
- For Europe, while cybersecurity was nearly as high as for North America (84%), the other areas of high concern were geopolitical uncertainty (43%) and climate change (31%). Europe was the only region where climate change was higher than 30%.
- Latin America shared Europe's concern about geopolitical uncertainty (42%), but also reported high risk for regulatory change (48%) and digital disruption (38%).

- Asia Pacific was particularly concerned with business continuity (61%) and market changes (47%), compared to other regions.
- The Middle East had much higher risk levels for governance/corporate reporting (45%) than other regions and was also slightly higher for communications/reputation (28%).
- Finally, Africa had a unique mix of risks that were higher than other regions, including financial liquidity (47%), fraud (46%), and organizational culture (34%). (See Figure 1.)



Figure 1:

## Top 5 highest risks per region

- There is broad consensus worldwide that the three areas of highest risk are cybersecurity, human capital, and business continuity.

What are the top 5 risks your organization currently faces?

Audit area	Average of all regions	Asia Pacific	Latin America	Africa	North America	Middle East	Europe
Cybersecurity	73%	66%	75%	58%	85%	70%	84%
Human capital	51%	59%	44%	39%	65%	47%	50%
Business continuity	47%	61%	47%	52%	36%	53%	35%
Regulatory change	39%	35%	48%	32%	43%	33%	43%
Digital disruption	34%	30%	38%	33%	36%	32%	33%
Financial liquidity	32%	21%	33%	47%	28%	38%	26%
Market changes	32%	47%	26%	21%	41%	26%	30%
Geopolitical uncertainty	30%	28%	42%	25%	28%	16%	43%
Governance/corporate reporting	27%	24%	18%	36%	16%	45%	22%
Supply chain and outsourcing	26%	27%	16%	19%	36%	28%	30%
Organizational culture	26%	23%	26%	34%	21%	30%	20%
Fraud	24%	22%	30%	46%	9%	26%	13%
Communications/reputation	21%	18%	22%	27%	21%	28%	12%
Climate change	19%	22%	22%	19%	12%	10%	31%
Health and safety	11%	12%	8%	10%	17%	9%	13%
Mergers and acquisitions	6%	4%	3%	3%	8%	10%	8%

Note: The IIA's Risk in Focus Global Survey, n = 4,207. Percentages show who ranked the area as one of their top 5 for risk level. Dark blue shading indicates the 5 areas of highest risk for that region.



## Figure 2: Expected risk change in 3 years

■ Climate change risks are expected to increase dramatically from fourteenth to fifth place.

What are the top 5 risks your organization currently faces?

What are the top 5 risks your organization will face 3 years from now?

1. Cybersecurity	73%	1. Cybersecurity	67%
2. Human capital	51%	2. <b>Digital disruption</b>	<b>55%</b>
3. Business continuity	47%	3. Human capital	46%
4. Regulatory change	39%	4. Business continuity	41%
5. <b>Digital disruption</b>	<b>34%</b>	5. <b>Climate change</b>	<b>39%</b>
6. Financial liquidity	32%	6. Regulatory change	39%
7. Market changes	32%	7. Geopolitical uncertainty	34%
8. Geopolitical uncertainty	30%	8. Market changes	33%
9. Governance/corporate reporting	27%	9. Supply chain and outsourcing	25%
10. Supply chain and outsourcing	26%	10. Financial liquidity	23%
11. Organizational culture	26%	11. Organizational culture	21%
12. Fraud	24%	12. Governance/corporate reporting	20%
13. Communications/reputation	21%	13. Fraud	20%
14. <b>Climate change</b>	<b>19%</b>	14. Communications/reputation	15%
15. Health and safety	11%	15. Health and safety	11%
16. Mergers and acquisitions	6%	16. Mergers and acquisitions	11%

Note: The IIA's Risk in Focus Global Survey, n = 4,207. Percentage who ranked the area as one of their organization's top 5 highest risks.



# AUDIT EFFORT PERSPECTIVES

## Current audit effort

Although risk levels may vary from region to region, the areas of highest effort for internal audit are remarkably similar.

The top areas of audit effort, worldwide, were generally in this order:

1. Cybersecurity
2. Governance/corporate reporting
3. Business continuity
4. Regulatory change
5. Financial liquidity
6. Fraud

Nevertheless, the differences in risk landscape between regions led to notable differences for audit effort in a few areas:

- Africa (35%) and Middle East (35%) had lower percentages for regulatory change as a top 5 effort compared to other regions, which were at 50% or higher.

- Asia Pacific had a lower percentage for financial liquidity (35%) than the global average (45%).
- Latin America was lower than other regions for effort toward governance/corporate reporting (46% for Latin America vs. 55% global average).
- North America was much lower than the global average for fraud effort (26% for North America vs. 42% global average). (See Figure 3.)





# AUDIT EFFORT PERSPECTIVES

## Future audit effort

**Audit effort is expected to increase for digital disruption and climate change.**

With risk levels expected to rise for digital disruption and climate change, so is the amount of time and effort internal audit expects to spend in these areas. The percentage expecting digital disruption to be top 5 for audit effort more than doubled – from 22% to 52%. Equally remarkable, the percentage for climate change more than tripled, from 11% to 34%. (See Figure 4.)

## Regional differences

**Regional risk differences affect audit effort.**

Another way to look at the data is to consider which region had the highest audit effort within each audit area. In many audit areas, the difference in effort

between regions was small. But there were some audit areas where differences were notable:

- North America (84%) and Europe (79%) were much more broadly involved in cybersecurity than other regions (which ranged between 54% and 66%).
- Africa has more functions putting top 5 effort toward fraud (57%) and financial liquidity (53%) than other regions.
- Europe has almost double the percentage who say climate change is top 5 for audit effort (19%) compared to the global average (11%). (See Figure 3.)



Figure 3:

## Top 5 audit effort per region

■ The areas of highest audit effort across regions are remarkably similar.

What are the top 5 risks on which internal audit spends the most time and effort?

Audit area	Average of all regions	Asia Pacific	Latin America	Africa	North America	Middle East	Europe
Cybersecurity	68%	66%	66%	54%	84%	61%	79%
Governance/corporate reporting	55%	54%	46%	52%	55%	64%	61%
Business continuity	54%	59%	53%	56%	53%	53%	50%
Regulatory change	46%	56%	50%	35%	53%	35%	50%
Financial liquidity	45%	35%	50%	53%	46%	44%	45%
Fraud	42%	42%	47%	57%	26%	43%	36%
Supply chain and outsourcing	34%	33%	28%	32%	38%	39%	36%
Human capital	30%	33%	28%	33%	26%	35%	26%
Organizational culture	24%	23%	29%	27%	17%	27%	21%
Digital disruption	22%	19%	24%	24%	25%	20%	21%
Communications/reputation	20%	21%	23%	25%	20%	23%	11%
Health and safety	17%	18%	12%	13%	21%	16%	19%
Market changes	16%	23%	17%	15%	14%	16%	10%
Climate change	11%	10%	8%	11%	9%	7%	19%
Geopolitical uncertainty	9%	6%	13%	12%	4%	8%	8%
Mergers and acquisitions	6%	3%	5%	2%	10%	8%	9%

Note: The IIA's Risk in Focus Global Survey, n = 4,207. Percentages show who ranked the area as one of their top 5 for audit time and effort. Dark green shading indicates the 5 areas of highest audit effort areas for that region.



Figure 4:

## Expected audit effort change in 3 years

Steep rises are expected for internal audit activity related to digital disruption and climate change.

What are the top 5 risks on which internal audit spends the most time and effort?

What are the top 5 risks you expect internal audit to spend the most time and effort addressing 3 years from now?



Note: The IIA's Risk in Focus Global Survey, n = 4,207. Percentages show who ranked the area as one of their top 5 for audit effort.

# METHODOLOGY

The Risk in Focus methodology starts with a survey of CAEs and heads of internal audit to identify current and emerging risks for each region. The top risks identified in the survey are used in follow-up roundtables and interviews with CAEs, academics, and other industry experts.

The survey presents 16 risk categories, shown below. Respondents are asked to choose the top 5 highest for risk level and the top 5 highest for internal audit time and effort – both for now and three years in the future. In reports, the categories are referenced by their shortened names.

For the Risk in Focus 2024 project worldwide, survey responses were received from 4,207 CAEs and directors in 111 countries/territories from February 15 to July 12, 2023. Eighteen roundtables were conducted with 152 participants, followed by 40 in-depth interviews.

### Risk in Focus 2024 Risk Categories

Risk Topic	Risk Description Used in the Survey
Business continuity	Business continuity, operational resilience, crisis management, and disaster response
Climate change	Climate change, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability
Communications/reputation	Communications, reputation, and stakeholder relationships
Cybersecurity	Cybersecurity and data security
Digital disruption	Digital disruption, new technology, and AI
Financial liquidity	Financial, liquidity, and insolvency risks
Fraud	Fraud, bribery, and the criminal exploitation of disruption
Geopolitical uncertainty	Macroeconomic and geopolitical uncertainty
Governance/corporate reporting	Organizational governance and corporate reporting
Health and safety	Health, safety, and security
Human capital	Human capital, diversity, and talent management and retention
Market changes	Market changes/competition and customer behavior
Mergers and acquisitions	Mergers and acquisitions
Organizational culture	Organizational culture
Regulatory change	Change in laws and regulations
Supply chain and outsourcing	Supply chain, outsourcing, and 'nth' party risk



111 countries/territories

4,207 survey responses from CAEs

18 roundtables with 152 participants

40 in-depth interviews

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