

Hey! What's New? 2026-18

Is Accounting Still an Attractive Career?

The accountancy profession is changing – fast. Technology, sustainability reporting, data analytics, and new ways of working are transforming what accountants do and how they add value. A key question explored by recent research is whether students and future professionals are aware of – and attracted to – these changes.

IFAC, the International Association for Accounting Education and Research (IAAER) and the University of Western Australia conducted a global study in 2025 to explore how attractive the accountancy profession is today, drawing on the views of educators, employers, career advisors and professional accountancy organizations. The study identified a number of challenges, alongside opportunities that stakeholders believe could help strengthen and future-proof the profession.

It found that “many countries are concerned about stagnant or declining interest in accounting careers. This study looks at where perceptions are formed, what is holding students back and what could make the profession more appealing, especially to a broader and more diverse group of future accountants. The findings suggest that perceptions of accounting are often outdated – and that these perceptions start early, long before students make career-defining choices.”

According to the study, “where accounting is part of the school curriculum, it is often introduced too late to influence students’ subject and career choices. Teachers and career advisors stressed the need for earlier, more engaging exposure. Participants indicated that when students see accounting as relevant and purposeful early on, interest increases.”

The findings also point “to a clear gap between how the profession sees itself and how it is often described to students. Employers, PAOs and faculty see accounting as evolving – more strategic, technology-enabled, and connected to sustainability and decision-making. Teachers and career advisors, however, often still present accounting as boring or repetitive, heavily focused on math, at risk of automation, and a traditional ‘9–5’ career. According to the study, many students remain unconvinced that accounting is an exciting or future-focused choice.”

University faculty reported that accounting enrolments have stagnated or declined in many regions, partly because teachers often lack accounting qualifications. university educators may have limited industry experience, and career advice tends to focus on job security and skills, rather than purpose, impact or innovation. As well, emerging career options – such as roles in sustainability, data analytics, and technology – are not always visible to students.”

Employers and PAOs highlighted growing demand for skills in data analytics and technology, Artificial Intelligence, sustainability reporting and assurance, as well as forensic and investigative work. Yet, “many school and university curricula still focus heavily on traditional content. Educators noted that curriculum change can be slow, particularly where there is limited exposure to current industry practice.” As a result, participants reported that employers often need to provide additional training after hiring to bridge skills gaps.

Employers reported placing high value on technical and digital skills, academic performance, and data capabilities. “However, *they perceived* that many job applicants are motivated more by: purpose and meaningful work, opportunities to develop skills and flexibility and work-life balance.” The study also highlighted broader shifts, including fewer traditional entry-level roles, more hybrid work and a wider range of career pathways.

Across all stakeholder groups, “there was strong agreement that behavioral and transferable skills are critical. Commonly valued skills included: communication, critical thinking, problem solving, accountability and teamwork and adaptability.” According to the study, “participants consistently emphasized that these skills are increasingly seen as just as important as technical knowledge – and essential for success in a changing profession.”

The study also highlighted a need for coordinated action across education providers, employers and professional bodies. “Opportunities identified by participants included: reaching students earlier with engaging and realistic insights into modern accounting careers, refreshing curricula to embed sustainability, technology, AI and data analytics, supporting educators and career advisors with up-to-date professional development, strengthening partnerships between universities, employers and PAOs, and expanding access and diversity through scholarships, apprenticeships and alternative pathways.”

Finally, the study suggests that “when students are exposed to the strategic, technological and socially relevant sides of accounting, interest tends to increase.”

For considerably more, see [Enhancing the Appeal of the Accounting Profession: A New Multi-Stakeholder Study Seeks Insights | IFAC](#).