The Great Ca Handover

A Data-Backed Analysis of Succession Risk, AI Readiness, and the Value at Stake in India's Chartered Accountancy Profession

Headline estimate: approximately 10,900 of India's 100,138 registered CA firms (≈11%) are at risk of going fully or partially redundant within five years, putting roughly ₹9,000–10,800 crore (US$1.1–1.3 billion) of goodwill and practice value in play.

Prepared as an independent research analysis | September 2026

49 primary sources | ICAI, AICPA, government and industry data

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Abstract

India built the world's largest chartered-accountancy profession almost entirely on single-owner firms: of the 100,138 firms registered with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), roughly 73% are sole proprietorships, and fewer than 400 have more than ten partners[15,20]. This report assembles publicly available data ICAI's own historical membership records, government policy memoranda, AICPA/CPA succession surveys, and current AI-adoption research — to test a specific hypothesis: that the profession's founding generation is ageing out of practice with no successor in place, that AI-driven commoditisation is compounding the risk for the least-prepared firms, and that this combination will push a measurable share of CA firms into redundancy over the next five years.

Because ICAI does not publish member age data, we reconstruct an approximate age distribution from ICAI's own historical membership counts, and validate it against ICAI's public claim that 67% of members are under 40[7]. We then build an explicit, assumption-transparent model rather than a single invented statistic to estimate the number of CA firms likely to become redundant within five years and the value at stake. Under a base-case scenario, approximately 10,900 firms (≈11% of the total) are estimated to be at risk, representing roughly ₹9,000–10,800 crore (US$1.1–1.3 billion) in annual revenue and associated goodwill value. Across a conservative-to-aggressive sensitivity range, the estimate spans roughly 3,600 to 18,100 firms (4–18% of the total) and ₹1,400–35,400 crore (US$0.16–4.2 billion).

The United States offers a preview of an unmanaged version of this problem: an estimated 75% of American CPAs were retirement-eligible by 2024[43], 54% of solo CPA practitioners are already over 55[46], and 177 direct private-equity investments have triggered 875 further roll-up acquisitions of US accounting firms between 2015 and 2025[42]. India shows the same structural ingredients — fragmentation, weak succession planning, and a large AI-adoption gap between small and large firms (29% vs. 78% usage [33]) with early signs of the same consolidation forces beginning to assemble.

1. Introduction

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India was established in 1949 with 1,689 members[6]. By April 2026, active membership had grown to 432,695[3] — a scale that makes India home to the world's largest single chartered-accountancy body. Much of that growth, however, is recent: membership grew 48% in the seven years from 2019 to 2026 alone[3,11], meaning the profession's headline demographics are dominated by a young, fast-growing cohort even as the firms that define the practising side of the profession were mostly built decades earlier by a much smaller, older cohort.

This report investigates a specific, increasingly discussed concern within the profession: that a large share of CA firms - overwhelmingly sole proprietorships and small partnerships are led by ageing practitioners with no identified successor, no mandatory retirement discipline, and limited appetite or capacity to adopt the AI tools now reshaping compliance-heavy accounting work. Anecdotal commentary within the profession describes this directly: "you are still doing your own accounting at 45, still sending your own reminders, and calling it hands-on"[24]. ICAI's own regulatory response - tripling the time window to transfer a deceased proprietor's goodwill from one year to three [29] is itself evidence that succession routinely fails to complete on time.

This report is organised in five analytical sections. Section 3 establishes the base-rate scale and structure of the profession using ICAI's own published statistics. Section 4 examines the succession problem, combining a modeled age-distribution estimate with India-specific and global (primarily United States) succession-planning research. Section 5 quantifies the AI-adoption gap between small and large firms, in India and internationally. Section 6 presents the central contribution of this report: an explicit, assumption-transparent model estimating the number of CA firms likely to become redundant within five years and the associated value at stake, tested across conservative, base-case, and aggressive scenarios. Section 7 discusses which market participants are positioned to capture that value. Section 8 states the report's limitations plainly, and Section 9 concludes.

2. Methodology

This report relies exclusively on publicly available data: ICAI annual reports and statistical bulletins, Indian government (Ministry of Corporate Affairs) policy memoranda, industry and financial press reporting (The Economic Times, The Hindu BusinessLine, TaxGuru, The Finance Story), professional-body survey data (AICPA, Inside Public Accounting, ICAI's own AI Committee), and commercial market-research estimates (Mordor Intelligence, IMARC Group, MarketLine). All 49 sources are listed in the References section with direct URLs.

A critical methodological distinction runs throughout this report: figures are explicitly labeled as either (a) official, directly published statistics, or (b) modeled estimates constructed by this report from published data. ICAI does not publish a breakdown of member ages, nor does any organisation forecast how many CA firms will close, merge, or shrink over a defined period. Rather than presenting a single invented number for either of these, this report:

- reconstructs an approximate age-cohort distribution from ICAI's own historical cumulative membership counts at several points between 1950 and 2026, and cross-validates the result against ICAI's own public statement that 67% of members are under 40[7]; and
- builds an explicit, multi-factor redundancy and value-at-risk model in which every assumption is stated, sourced where possible, and tested across a conservative, base-case, and aggressive scenario rather than collapsed into one unqualified figure.

Currency conversion throughout this report is held at a flat ₹85 per US dollar for internal consistency between INR- and USD-denominated sources; it is not intended to reflect any specific date's spot rate.

3. The Scale and Structure of the Profession

Understanding redundancy risk first requires an accurate picture of how large the profession is, how fast it is growing, and — critically — how the firms within it are actually structured.

3.1 Membership growth, 1950–2026

ICAI membership grew slowly for the profession's first five decades, then accelerated sharply in the last fifteen years:

Year	Active ICAI members	Notes
1950	1,689	Institute founded 1949
1972	~12,000	
2000	~95,000	Crossed 95,000 around 1999-2000
2010	~164,000	61st Annual Report
2011	174,973	As on 4 Aug 2011
2019	291,698	As on 31 Mar 2019
2022	358,524	As on 1 Jun 2022
2024	403,617	As on 1 Apr 2024
2025	423,105	As on 1 Apr 2025
2026	432,695	As on 1 Apr 2026 (active; +66,437 inactive = 499,132 total)

Sources: ***[6] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [3]***

The trajectory is notable: membership took roughly fifty years to cross 95,000, but then nearly tripled over the following sixteen years, and grew 48% in the seven years from 2019 to 2026 alone. This pattern is the primary reason the profession can simultaneously be described as "young" in aggregate — ICAI states that 67% of members are under 40[7] — **while the firms that constitute its practising backbone remain disproportionately controlled by a much smaller, older founding cohort** (Section 4).

3.2 New Chartered Accountants qualified per year

The annual cohort of newly qualified CAs has grown markedly over the past decade, with 2024 producing the largest cohort in ten years:

Year	New CAs qualified
2017	19,755
2018	24,212
2019	28,756
2020	11,067
2021	26,893
2022	25,274
2023	22,080
2024	31,946
2025	25,713

*Source: **[13]**. 2020 reflects pandemic-related exam disruption.*

3.3 How ICAI-registered firms are structured

As of October 2025, ICAI data (reported via ETCFO) placed the total number of registered CA firms at 100,138, broken down by partner count as follows:

Firm type	Number of firms	Share of total	People employed
Sole proprietorship	72,696	72.6%	73,365
2–3 partner firms	21,750	21.7%	51,868
4–5 partner firms	3,563	3.6%	16,931
6+ partner firms	2,129	2.1%	41,478
Total	100,138	100%	183,642

*Source: **[15]**.*

This structure is corroborated across multiple independent sources: a 2025 Ministry of Corporate Affairs memorandum states that of ~95,000 ICAI-registered firms, approximately 70,000 are proprietorships and only 400 firms have more than ten partners[19]; The Hindu BusinessLine similarly reports fewer than 400 firms with more than ten partners out of roughly one lakh total[16]; and a July 2026 Bombay Chartered Accountant Journal analysis notes that only 13 Indian firms have more than 50 partners[18]. Fewer than 1% of Indian accounting firms have more than ten partners [20] - a level of fragmentation with essentially no parallel among mature-market professional services industries of comparable size.

3.4 What ICAI's members actually do

Of ICAI's 423,105 members as on 1 April 2025, only a minority are engaged in practice at all:

Status	Members	Share
Full-time practice	154,552	36.5%
Part-time practice	7,013	1.7%
Not in practice (industry, GCCs, banking, consulting, etc.)	261,539	61.8%
Total	423,105	100%

Source: ***[1,14]***.

In other words, roughly 62% of India's Chartered Accountants have chosen employment, industry, or advisory roles over running or joining a practice [14]. This matters directly for succession: it shrinks the pool of qualified professionals who might otherwise buy into, or take over, an ageing proprietor's firm, since the majority of each new cohort no longer defaults into practice at all.

4. The Succession Problem: An Ageing, Founder-Dependent Base

4.1 A modeled age distribution

ICAI does not publish a breakdown of its membership by age; this was confirmed directly during research for this report. In its absence, this report constructs an approximate cohort-based age distribution using the deltas between ICAI's own published cumulative membership counts at 2000, 2010, 2019, and 2026 (Table in Section 3.1), on the assumption that CAs typically qualify in their mid-twenties. The resulting distribution is shown below and is explicitly a model, not an official ICAI statistic:

Qualification cohort	Approx. age (2026)	Estimated members	Share of total
2019–2026	~24–32 yrs	145,000	33.5%
2010–2019	~33–42 yrs	128,000	29.6%
2000–2010	~43–53 yrs	91,000	21.0%
Before 2000	~54–75+ yrs	68,700	15.9%
Total (modeled)		~432,700	100%

This report's own model, derived from ***[8] [9] [11] [3]****, and cross-checked against ICAI's public claim that 67% of members are under 40* ***[7]*** *(the model implies ~63% are under 42, a close match given the different age cut-offs).*

The model implies that roughly 160,000 active members (the bottom two rows, ~37%) qualified before 2010 and are now aged 43 or older and it is disproportionately this older cohort, not the recent influx of younger members, that spent the 2000s and earlier building today's independent practices. ICAI's own president stated in 2024 that approximately 75,000 firms are proprietorships out of roughly 96,000 total firms at the time[5] practices that, by definition, take years to build a client base and therefore skew toward longer-tenured, older practitioners.

4.2 Direct evidence that succession is failing

- ICAI's Ethical Standards Board tripled the permitted window to transfer a deceased proprietor's goodwill from one year to three years (July 2026), citing the routine practical difficulty legal heirs face completing succession formalities in time[29].
- Industry commentary describes a specific, repeating pattern: CA practitioners who never professionalise beyond a founder-dependent compliance practice, and therefore "never feel the need to hand over anything because [they] have nothing else to hold onto" [24].

- For self-employed proprietors and partners, there is typically no mandatory retirement age at all, so continued practice at an advanced age with attendant risk of cognitive decline is common rather than exceptional [25].
- More than one lakh CA firms existed as of October 2025, of which 72,696 were proprietorships; commentary from **senior practitioner Madhukar Hiregange frames much of this as a "peanut earnings trap" in which comfortable but unscaled income discourages investment in succession, technology, or managerial capacity** [26].

4.3 The broader Indian succession context

The dynamic observed in CA firms mirrors a broader pattern across Indian family and professional businesses. Senior Chartered Accountant R.S. Kalra has publicly warned of an emerging "ownerless" business landscape as successful family enterprises struggle to find successors willing to continue them[27]. Survey data circulated on succession risk in Indian mid-market businesses finds:

- Only approximately 25–35% of Indian family and professional businesses have a formal, written succession plan[28].
- More than 65% of next-generation family members say they would prefer a career outside the family business[28].
- Buyers and private equity funds increasingly discount "founder-dependent" businesses heavily at sale, meaning unmanaged succession risk directly compresses achievable valuation — a dynamic equally applicable to a CA practice's goodwill value[28].

4.4 The United States as a preview: a mature market's version of this problem

India's CA profession skews younger on average than the US CPA profession, largely because of the explosive growth in new entrants over the last decade (Section 3.1–3.2). The US accounting profession, having not experienced a comparable recent influx, shows what an advanced, largely unmanaged version of this same succession dynamic looks like — and it has already become a multi-billion-dollar consolidation event:

Metric	Value
CPAs retirement-eligible by 2024	~75%[43]
Solo CPA practitioners already over age 55	54%[46]
CPAs over age 60	22%[46]
US accounting workforce aged 55+	31%[46]
Multi-owner CPA firms with no mandatory retirement age	65%[44]
Single-owner firm leaders planning to delay full exit past age 70	48%[44]

Single-owner firms with a practice-continuation agreement	7%[44]
Multi-owner firms actively facing a succession crisis today	55%[40]
US firms expected to change hands as owners retire (5-yr horizon)	30,000–40,000[42]
Annual revenue represented by those firms	>$20 billion[42]
Direct PE investments into US accounting platforms, 2015–2025	177[42]
Follow-on roll-up acquisitions triggered by those investments	875[42]

Notable transactions illustrating the scale of this US wave include Blackstone's acquisition of a majority stake in Citrin Cooperman, Apollo's $1.3 billion investment in BDO USA, Warburg Pincus's $300 million backing of the Big-Four-challenger Unity Advisors, TowerBrook's investment in EisnerAmper, and Parthenon Capital's investment in Cherry Bekaert[21]. Typical acquisition multiples range from 0.8x–1.5x revenue for traditional, compliance-heavy practices, rising to 1.5x–2.5x for firms with a strong advisory or client-accounting-services mix[43].

5. The AI Readiness Gap: A Second, Compounding Risk Factor

An ageing, founder-dependent firm with no successor is vulnerable in isolation. **The same firm failing to adopt AI is doubly exposed, because the routine compliance works such firms depend on is precisely what AI tools, and the large firms and platforms that have adopted them are now automating and re-pricing downward.**

5.1 AI adoption in India tracks firm size closely

A structured survey of Indian accounting professionals (conducted January–March 2026, spanning Big 4, mid-sized, and small/sole-practice respondents) found a pronounced adoption gap by firm size:

Firm segment	AI usage
Small firms / sole practice	29%
Mid-sized firms	52%
Big 4 / large firms	78%

Source: ***[33]***.

Separately, ICAI's own AI Committee surveyed approximately 1,100 members and found that nearly half had "rarely or never" used AI for routine tasks, with cost and lack of knowledge cited as the leading barriers though more than half of respondents said they felt "prepared to some extent" to adopt further AI within five years, indicating latent openness rather than outright resistance [32]. ICAI has responded with its own "CA GPT" tool and an AI-certification programme that has reportedly run close to 1,000 batches, with new cohorts filling within hours of opening[35].

5.2 Big firms are moving down-market with AI-enabled pricing

Industry reporting indicates that large firms, including Deloitte, are actively using AI to move down-market with MSME-priced advisory and compliance offerings, targeting exactly the client base and price point that small and mid-sized CA firms have traditionally served[35]. This creates a compounding risk: **firms least likely to have a succession plan are also, on average, least likely to have adopted the technology that would let them defend margins against better-capitalised competitors.**

5.3 What actually blocks adoption is trust, not capability

A review of roughly 80 recorded AI product demonstration conversations with Indian CA firms across 2026 found that adoption objections rarely centred on whether AI could perform the work. Instead, firms consistently raised concerns about data residency ("where does my data go"), vendor durability (whether a young AI vendor will still exist in a year), and wanting to see the tool work on their own, often non-Tally, client data before committing[34]. This suggests the adoption gap is a solvable trust and go-to-market problem rather than an intrinsic unwillingness to modernize, but it remains unresolved today, at the exact moment larger competitors are using AI to compress the price of compliance work.

5.4 A global caveat: "AI adoption" headlines often overstate depth

Marketing-oriented US surveys report very high AI adoption - for example, one 2026 industry survey found 73% of accounting firms had implemented some form of AI automation, with adoption ranging from 68% at small firms (1–10 staff) to 89% at large firms[36], and a Karbon-cited figure of 98% of US accounting professionals using AI "regularly"[38]. However, official statistical-office measures of genuine operational AI use tell a very different story, with far lower adoption overall and a steep size gradient:

Region / measure	Small firms	Large firms
EU (Eurostat, 2025)	17.0%	55.0%
OECD average (2025)	17.4%	52.0%
US small business (Census BTOS)	5.0%	12.0%

Source: ***[39]***.

Even within the higher marketing-survey figures, depth of use is shallow: Intuit's 2026 Accountant Technology Survey found that only 30% of US accounting professionals describe AI as "embedded by default" in their daily work, while 54% use it only "situationally", and just 21% of firms have a formal AI strategy or policy at all[37,38]. This report treats the stricter, official measures as the more reliable proxy for genuine operational readiness, and presents both sets of figures for transparency.

6. The Redundancy and Value-at-Risk Model

No institution - including ICAI, publishes a forecast of how many CA firms will become redundant over a given horizon. Rather than presenting a single invented number, this report constructs an explicit, multi-stage model in which every assumption is stated and can be independently varied. The model below is also implemented as a live, slider-driven calculator in the companion web report; this section presents the same model in static, tabular form across three named scenarios.

6.1 Model structure

The model applies four sequential filters to a base universe of 94,446 "small / solo" CA firms — defined as sole proprietorships plus 2–3 partner firms, or 94.3% of all 100,138 ICAI-registered firms[15]:

- Step 1 — Succession-exposed: the share of the small/solo firm universe led by a principal aged 55 or older with no next-generation partner already in place.
- Step 2 — No credible plan: of those, the share lacking any credible successor or practice-continuation arrangement.
- Step 3 — Redundant within 5 years: of those, the share that actually closes, shrinks to inactive status, or is distress-absorbed (rather than transacting at a fair valuation) within a five-year window.

Separately, the model estimates the fee revenue and goodwill value associated with the resulting firm count by: (i) taking a total India accounting/audit/tax services market-size estimate, (ii) subtracting the revenue held by the "organized" segment (the Big Four plus Grant Thornton Bharat, BDO India, and other firms with more than ten partners), (iii) dividing the remaining "fragmented tail" revenue by the small/solo firm universe to derive an average revenue per firm, and (iv) applying a goodwill/practice valuation multiple (sourced from Indian CA-practice sale benchmarks of 0.8x–1.8x revenue[30,31]) to the revenue implied by the redundant-firm count.

6.2 Scenario assumptions and results

Assumption / Result	Conservative	Base case	Aggressive
Succession-exposed share of small/solo firms	20%	30%	40%
Share of those with no credible plan	55%	70%	80%
Share of those redundant within 5 years	35%	55%	60%
Total India accounting/audit/tax market size	$15.3bn	$18.0bn	$21.2bn
Revenue held by organized segment (Big 4 + GT/BDO + 10+ partner firms)	₹85,000cr	₹75,000cr	₹65,000cr
Goodwill / practice valuation multiple applied	0.8x	1.2x	1.6x

Resulting firms redundant in 5 years —	~3,636	~10,909	~18,133
Share of all 100,138 CA firms —	~3.6%	~10.9%	~18.1%
Annual revenue tied up in those firms —	~₹1,734cr	~₹9,009cr	~₹22,120cr
Goodwill/practice value in play —	~₹1,387cr (~$0.16bn)	~₹10,811cr (~$1.27bn)	~₹35,392cr (~$4.16bn)

Under the base-case scenario, approximately 10,900 CA firms — roughly 11% of all ICAI-registered firms — are estimated to be at risk of full or partial redundancy within five years, representing approximately ₹9,000 crore in annual fee revenue and, at a 1.2x valuation multiple, approximately ₹10,800 crore (roughly US$1.27 billion) of goodwill and practice value. Across the full conservative-to-aggressive range, the estimate spans approximately 3,600 to 18,100 firms (4–18% of the total) and approximately ₹1,400–35,400 crore (US$0.16–4.2 billion) in associated value.

This is a decision-support model, not a prediction.

Every input above is grounded in a cited data point discussed elsewhere in this report, but no organisation publishes the exact share of CA firms with an ageing, successor-less principal, nor a validated forecast of closure rates. This model should be read as a transparent framework for reasoning about the scale of the problem and re-run under your own assumptions rather than as an authoritative forecast.

"Value in play" in this model is not automatically captured by anyone. It is either unlocked, sold, merged, or rolled up at a fair multiple by a successor, aggregator, or platform or destroyed, as the underlying practice quietly shrinks and closes with no buyer, mirroring the "no successor, no energy" exit pathway already well documented among small US CPA firms[43].

7. Discussion: Who Is Positioned to Capture the Value

Four forces are converging on the same five-year window identified in Section 6: regulatory reform pushing toward scale, early capital interest in Indian professional services, a well-documented demographic succession problem, and a measurable AI-adoption gap. This section considers who is best positioned to capture the resulting value.

7.1 The organized segment is already large and growing fast

The Big Four's India operations posted the following core revenue in FY26, collectively estimated at ₹51,000–52,000 crore (over US$6 billion), making them among the fastest-growing units in each firm's respective global network:

Firm	FY26 India revenue
EY India	₹16,000+ crore
Deloitte India	₹14,500 crore
PwC India	₹14,000 crore
KPMG India	₹10,000+ crore

Source: ***[23]***.

7.2 Estimates of the total market vary widely — itself a signal

Research firm	Year	Estimated market size (USD)
Mordor Intelligence	2025	$15.32 billion
MarketLine	2025	$21.2 billion
IMARC Group	2024	$25.76 billion

Sources: ***[47] [49] [48]***.

A 68% spread between the lowest and highest published estimates of the same market reflects how little verified financial disclosure exists across roughly 99,000 predominantly private partnerships and proprietorships. Even at the conservative end, this is a $15 billion-plus industry sitting on top of a highly fragmented ownership structure — the precise combination that private equity has already shown, in the US context, it knows how to consolidate.

7.3 India's consolidation wave is nascent but starting

- Grant Thornton Bharat and BDO India are both reportedly in active discussions to raise private-equity growth capital, with BDO India restructuring from an LLP to a company to facilitate outside investment[21,22].
- Uniqus Consultech raised $20 million, and KNAV received investment reportedly backed by Nikhil Kamath - early evidence that institutional capital is beginning to target Indian professional services specifically [21].
- ICAI itself formed a "Committee for Aggregation of CA Firms" in its 75th Annual Report (FY 2023-24), explicitly intended to help proprietorships and small partnerships combine into larger, globally competitive Indian firms[4].
- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs is actively developing rules for Multi-Disciplinary Partnerships (MDPs) that would let Chartered Accountants, Company Secretaries, lawyers, and cost accountants operate under a single firm structure — explicitly framed as a way for Indian firms to compete for a share of the $240 billion global audit and consultancy market[20].

The core argument

Regulatory reform (MDPs, the ICAI aggregation push, mandatory auditor-rotation rules), early capital availability, and demographic necessity are converging on the same five-year window as India's AI-adoption gap. On the evidence assembled in this report, the value identified in Section 6 is more likely to be captured by whichever platform, aggregator, or firm moves first to acquire, professionalise, and re-tool at-risk small firms — rather than by the retiring proprietors themselves, most of whom currently have no formal plan to realise that value at all.

8. Limitations

- No public dataset cross-tabulates ICAI member age against Certificate-of-Practice status, proprietorship, or firm-leadership role. The age distribution in Section 4.1 is this report's own reconstruction from aggregate membership-growth data, not an official ICAI statistic, and should be read accordingly.
- The "succession-exposed" and "no credible plan" percentages used in the Section 6 model are calibrated against qualitative Indian reporting and quantitative US/global analogs, not a direct India-specific survey of CA firm principals' ages and succession arrangements. Such a survey does not appear to exist in the public domain at the time of writing.
- AI-adoption figures mix vendor-run marketing surveys (which use broad definitions of "AI use" and report high adoption) with stricter official statistical-office measures (which report substantially lower adoption). Both are presented deliberately, rather than selecting whichever number supports a cleaner narrative.
- India market-size estimates for accounting/audit/tax services vary by roughly 68% across three reputable commercial research providers, reflecting the opacity of a largely private, fragmented industry. The Section 6 model treats this disagreement as an input range rather than resolving it to a single figure.
- Currency conversion is held at a flat ₹85 per US dollar throughout for internal consistency and will drift from any specific date's spot exchange rate.
- This report is a research and estimation exercise. It does not constitute investment, actuarial, legal, or professional advice, and should not be relied upon as such.

9. Conclusion

The evidence assembled in this report supports the central hypothesis with which it began: India's Chartered Accountancy profession has built an unusually large, fast-growing membership base on top of an unusually fragmented, ageing, and founder-dependent firm structure. Fewer than 400 of 100,138 registered firms have more than ten partners [15,19]; ICAI's own regulatory response to failed successions (tripling the goodwill-transfer window) is itself an admission that the problem is systemic rather than anecdotal [29]; and AI adoption a tool that could partially offset succession risk by making a smaller team more productive remains concentrated overwhelmingly among the largest firms, at 78% adoption versus 29% for small and sole practices [33].

Under a transparent, adjustable model built from these facts, this report estimates that approximately 10,900 CA firms (≈11% of the total, base case; a defensible range of roughly 4–18% across sensitivity scenarios) are at meaningful risk of full or partial redundancy within five years, carrying an associated ₹9,000–10,800 crore (≈US$1.1–1.3 billion) of goodwill and practice value in the base case, and up to ₹35,400 crore (≈US$4.2 billion) under aggressive assumptions.

The United States' experience a 75%+ retirement-eligible CPA population, a well-documented succession crisis, and over 1,000 private-equity-linked accounting firm transactions in the past decade[42,43] — suggests this is not a uniquely Indian phenomenon but rather a predictable stage in any large, ageing professional-services market once its founding generation nears retirement without adequate succession infrastructure. Early signs — PE interest in Grant Thornton Bharat and BDO India, fresh capital into Uniqus Consultech and KNAV, and ICAI’s and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs’ own reform pushes — suggest India’s version of this consolidation cycle is beginning, not hypothetical. The question this report leaves open is not whether this value will move, but who will capture it: the retiring proprietors who plan ahead, the successors and aggregators who move early, or simply the client relationships and institutional knowledge that are lost when a practice closes with no plan at all.

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All sources were accessed online; URLs are provided for verification. Numbering corresponds to the in-text citation markers used throughout this report.

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