

RESPONSIBLE AI IN ASIA

Summary of upcoming report

The following document is a summary of an upcoming regional report for the Global Index on Responsible AI (GIRAI) that focuses on responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Asia region.

The broader report, to be released in April 2025, was authored by Merl Chandana and Sukitha Bandaranayake from LIRNEasia, with the India case study written by Anushka Jain and Aarushi Gupta (of Digital Futures Lab, India). Part II was co-authored by Merl Chandana, Sukitha Bandaranayake, and Ana Florido.

The report is the final output of a Global Center on AI Governance (GCG)-funded project

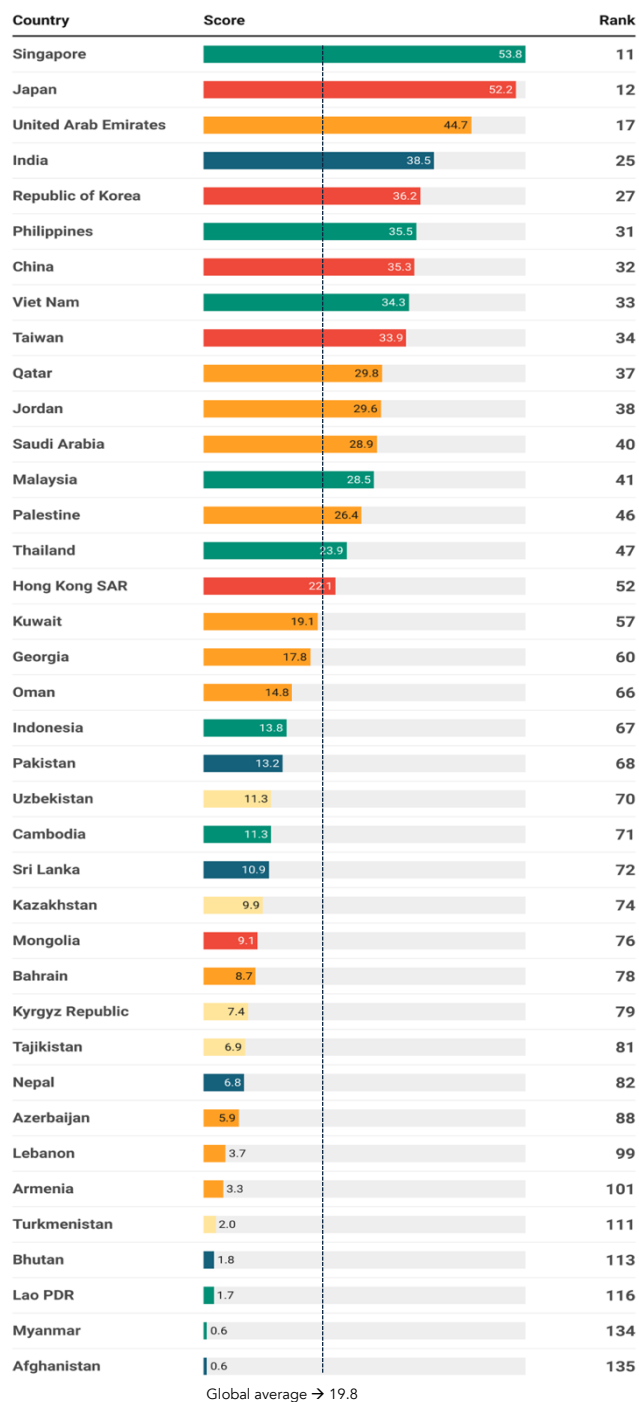
About the Global Index on Responsible AI

AI is evolving rapidly, and **Asia is at the center of this transformation** – not just as a consumer of AI but as a driver of its innovation and governance.

The GIRAI assess country performance in **globally relevant benchmarks for responsible AI** and constitutes the largest global data collection on responsible AI to-date. The first edition of the GIRAI covers **138 countries and jurisdictions**.

The GIRAI has 19 thematic areas clustered into 3 dimensions: **Human Rights and AI, Responsible AI Governance** and **Responsible AI Capacities**

Each thematic area assesses the performance of 3 different pillars of the responsible AI ecosystem: **Government frameworks, Government actions, and Non-state actors' initiatives**. Non-state actors include academia, civil society, and the private sector.



■ South-Eastern Asia
 ■ Eastern Asia
 ■ Western Asia
 ■ Southern Asia
 ■ Central Asia

Our forthcoming report **analyzes GIRAI data** through an Asian lens, explores **five country case studies** to contextualize Responsible AI (including New Zealand as a geographically proximate non-Asian comparator country), and examines **key priorities** likely to shape its future in the short to medium term.

The report containing global findings of the Index can be found [here](#).

What the Data Tells Us About Responsible AI in Asia

Asia vs. rest of world

Asia holds an overall average score of 19.3 (below the global average of 19.8), placing third among the other regions - Oceania, Europe, the Americas, and Africa - but with considerable variation in scores.

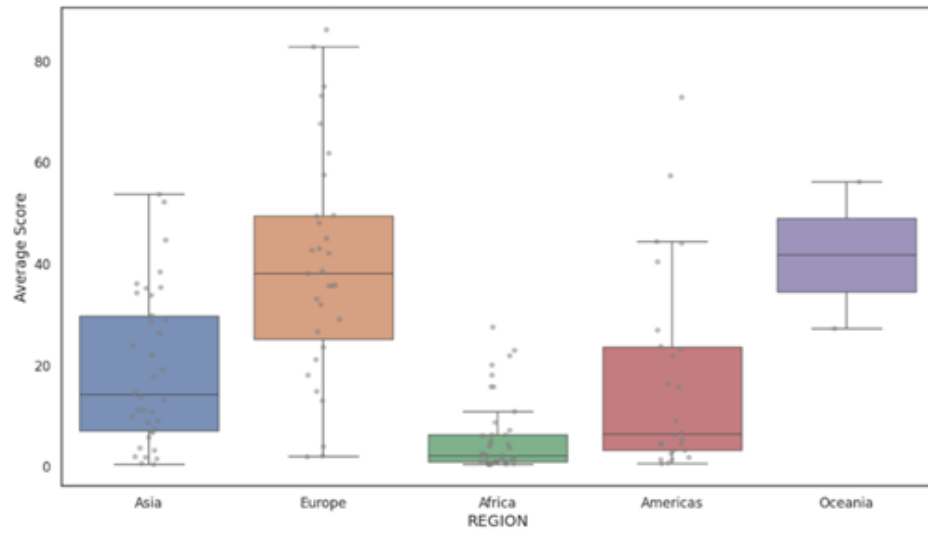


Figure 1: Distribution of GIRAI Overall Scores Across Regions

A pillar-wise analysis places Asia third across Government Frameworks and Government Actions, and fourth on Non-State Actors. It is noteworthy that Government activity is relatively high in Asia, a trend also observed in Oceania.

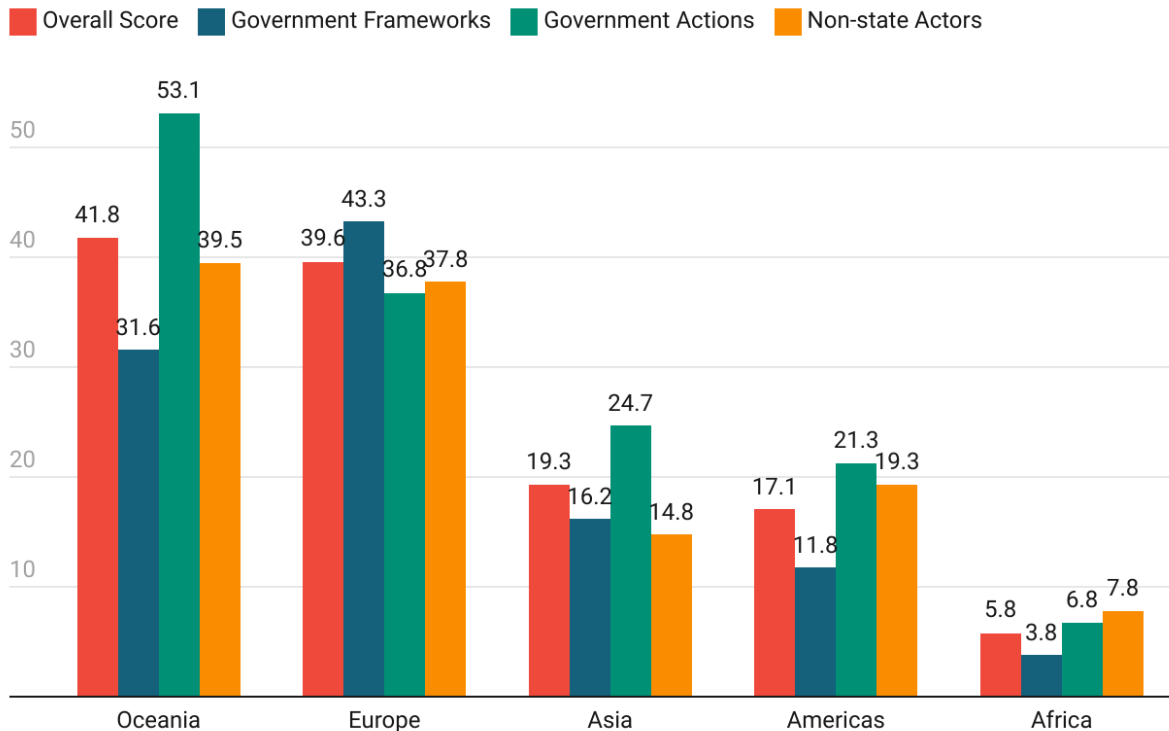


Figure 2: Global Comparison of Pillar-Wise Scores

Regions Within Asia

- There is considerable disparity in scores across subregional levels and individual countries, overall and across the pillars. Singapore leads overall with a score of 53.8, while Afghanistan comes in last at 0.6.
- Eastern Asia leads the continent in RAI overall, with strong performance across pillars (Government actions, 39.2; non-state actors, 29.1; government frameworks, 24.9). Central and Southern Asia lag behind.
- In terms of individual pillars, Western Asia is noteworthy for low non-state actor involvement whereas both Central and Southern Asia having very government frameworks.

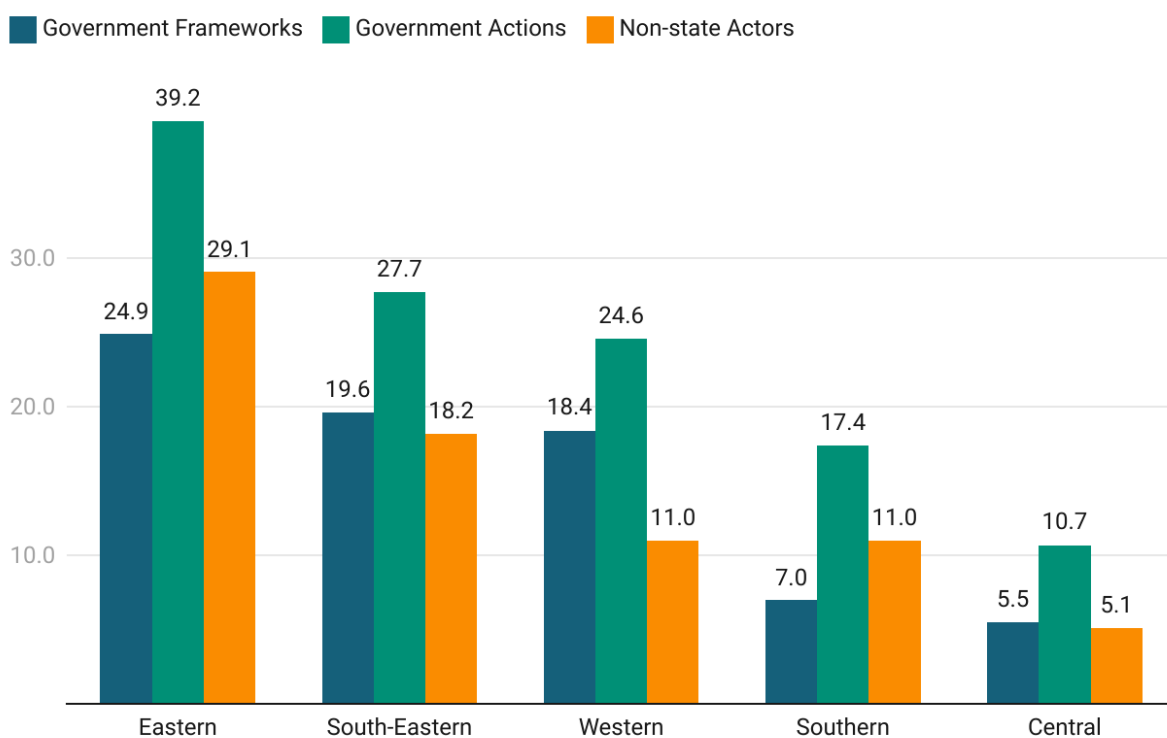


Figure 3: Intra-Asia Comparison Across Pillars

Case Studies

Section three consists of five case studies: Singapore, the Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, and New Zealand, reflecting a range of economic sizes, AI adoption levels, and maturity of Responsible AI practices. New Zealand is included for its strong regional ties and pioneering work in indigenous data sovereignty, offering insights relevant to marginalized communities across Asia. The case studies discuss AI adoption in the respective countries, and RAI initiatives among state and non-state (private sector, industry, civil society) actors, offering a comparative view of how different countries balance innovation, ethics, and regulation in AI development.

Singapore (rank #11 on Index)

Key Takeaways

- Singapore leads the region with a strong, largely government-driven AI and RAI initiatives.
- AI adoption is high among both state and non-state actors; across government functioning and services, business operations, and universities.
- A strong regulatory framework undergirds AI and RAI in Singapore
- Civil society plays a comparatively limited role in RAI.

Pillar Score		
Government Frameworks	Government Actions	Non-state actors
28.42	52.95	29.81

Dimension Score		
Human Rights and AI	Responsible AI Capacities	Responsible AI Governance
28.99	36.05	46.74

RAI initiatives across state and non-state actors

AI Strategy

Singapore's National AI Strategy 2.0 invokes RAI, albeit not explicitly as a concept. The document frames AI as an opportunity creating force for good that limits harmful externalities. AI skilling and AI safeguards are also prominent in the strategy.

Other state initiatives

AI Singapore, the country's AI hub, promotes research and innovation in AI technology, builds AI capabilities, promotes governance and ethics in AI.

Regulation

Singapore takes a "sectoral approach" to AI regulation, with agencies adopting "soft-law" approaches – i.e., "non-binding guidelines and regulations".

Non-state actors

Notable work in Academia (e.g., the Artificial Intelligence Institute, NUS) that invoke RAI. Other bodies release frameworks (e.g., the AI Ethics and Governance Body of Knowledge 2.0) and reports (e.g. the Singapore Academy of Law Report) on RAI.

India (rank #25 on Index)

Key Takeaways

- India sees strong, largely government led RAI performance.
- Despite resource constraints, India sees rapidly increasing AI adoption across sectors like education, healthcare, and finance.
- RAI has a strong data privacy lens. Collaborative RAI initiatives seen from individual government entities; RAI-based tools, guides, and discourse, from non-state actors.

Pillar Score		
Government Frameworks	Government Actions	Non-state actors
28.42	52.95	29.81

Dimension Score		
Human Rights and AI	Responsible AI Capacities	Responsible AI Governance
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RAI initiatives across state and non-state actors

AI Strategy

India's 2018 National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence invokes RAI through its framing of 'AI for All', and calling for the mitigation of AI-related risks and explainability of AI-driven processes.

Other state initiatives

Some examples include: advisory committee to identify AI governance issues in India, a stakeholder consultation with UNESCO on AI ethics and safety.

Regulation

India lacks regulation that directly considers RAI, with the notion that premature regulation may stifle innovation. Currently harms are to be addressed through existing regulation (e.g., Digital Personal Data Protection Act)

Non-state actors

Research, advocacy, and guideline development, observed. Notable entities include the Coalition for Responsible Evolution of AI, The Centre for Responsible AI, Madras, and Aapti Institute.

The Philippines (rank #31 on Index)

Key Takeaways

- Emerging AI and RAI enterprises; nonetheless performs well in the region with a strong, *non-state actor*-driven RAI performance.
- AI adoption within government and non-state enterprises like private sector organizations is modest; but keen interest among stakeholders to increase AI usage.
- No legislation that directly pertains to RAI

Pillar Score		
Government Frameworks	Government Actions	Non-state actors
19.24	40.72	57.36

Dimension Score		
Human Rights and AI	Responsible AI Capacities	Responsible AI Governance
34.87	29.67	37.84

RAI initiatives across state and non-state actors

National AI Strategy

Most noteworthy RAI-related government initiative is the National AI Strategy Roadmap 2.0. It advances RAI through proposing an expert committee in AI ethics; data literacy; and making public data open and available.

AI Hub

The Center for AI Research (CAIR) mostly concerns R&D for AI technological innovation. The RAI angle: AI to tackle social challenges and promote development, with responsible adoption.

Regulation

No legislation directly pertaining to AI, and RAI is largely viewed through a data privacy lens. However, several bills related to artificial intelligence (AI) are currently under consideration in the Philippine House of Representatives.

Non-state actors

Some work in Academia (e.g., 15 Principles for Responsible and Trustworthy AI). Connected Women provides AI-based skilling for women. Civil society is active in research and developing frameworks.

Sri Lanka (rank #72 on Index)

Key Takeaways

- Very nascent AI and RAI enterprises.
- A few notable AI adoption initiatives within government and non-state enterprises
- RAI only recently recognized as a standalone concept with the release of Draft National AI Strategy.
- No legislation that directly pertains to RAI

Pillar Score		
Government Frameworks	Government Actions	Non-state actors
11.56	10.13	11.23

Dimension Score		
Human Rights and AI	Responsible AI Capacities	Responsible AI Governance
9.95	12.83	11.04

RAI initiatives across state and non-state

Draft National AI Strategy

Published after the cutoff for the GIRAI, the strategy contains a dedicated pillar on Creating a Safe & Trustworthy AI Ecosystem (i.e., ethical and governance AI considerations).

Other state initiatives

Some education and capacity building initiatives. For example, AI Clubs in Schools and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's Centre for Banking Studies' course on AI applications aimed at public sector skill development.

Regulation

Lacks regulation directly pertaining to AI The Personal Data Protection Act, No. 9 of 2022 provides some recourse to data subjects who object to *entirely* AI-driven decision-making.

Non-state actors

Some Academic course material related to RAI (e.g., in the University of Moratuwa's Bachelor of Science Honors in AI). Technology/AI experts contributed to the National AI Strategy. Limited civil society.

New Zealand (rank #43 on Index)

Key Takeaways

- Modest progress in AI and RAI
- AI is playing a pivotal role in New Zealand's public service across multiple departments; fairly mature adoption in private sector.
- No RAI strategy; however, guides and frameworks help inform RAI action among both state and non-state actors
- Reasonably active civil society role that the GIRAI score does not necessarily reflect.

RAI initiatives across state and non-state

AI Strategy

While there isn't a single broad RAI strategy, there exist multiple outputs from various government entities that in various ways address RAI – ranging from suggestions of concrete action to brief mentions of AI.

AI "Agency"

Government Chief Digital Officer (GCDO) is tasked with: "leading AI use as the Digital system lead; setting standards; guiding government organizations in adopting and using AI; working with providers of AI technology".

Regulation

Nothing binding. Some government documents that pertain to RAI: cabinet paper "Approach to work on Artificial Intelligence"; Digital Strategy for Aotearoa; Digital Technologies Industry Transformation Plan; National AI Development Checklist

Non-state actors

Reasonable non-state actor RAI work in the form of commitments and dialogues. For example, AI Forum New Zealand, The Christchurch Call Initiative on Algorithmic Outcomes. The think tank Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures does some RAI based research.

Pillar Score

Government Frameworks	Government Actions	Non-state actors
28.49	33.70	12.28

Dimension Score

Human Rights and AI	Responsible AI Capacities	Responsible AI Governance
27.87	11.47	32.20

Outlook for Responsible AI in Asia

As AI adoption accelerates across Asia, governments are grappling with how to govern AI effectively while fostering innovation and inclusion. Section four examines four key areas shaping the future of Responsible AI in the region.

The areas are as follows:

- 1) Responsible AI and misinformation
- 2) AI and data protection in Asia
- 3) Regulating AI in Asia: Guiding Questions and Key Trends
- 4) Responsible AI in Government

RAI and Misinformation



Why this matters

Why is misinformation an RAI issue?

- 1) Misinformation can harm individuals and organizations, social cohesion and democracy.
- 2) Government counter-misinformation initiatives can also be harmful.

What we observe

AI can play the following roles in misinformation:

- 1) Generation (e.g., deepfakes)
- 2) Propagation (e.g., bots)
- 3) Countermeasures (e.g., aiding in fact-checking, journalism)

Key considerations

Principles of RAI can be leveraged to inform counter generation and propagation activities, through the following.

- 1) Contextualized datasets and local partnerships to capture local cultural nuance.
- 2) Foster local research and explore human-AI collaboration for solutions.
- 3) Push for transparency of AI-driven automated detection & moderation.
- 4) Educative initiatives to promote AI literacy.

AI and Data Protection in Asia



Why this matters

- Data – increasingly abundant through data collection + digitization – is a foundational resource for AI systems.
- However, several of the principles of data protection conflict with the requirements of data use for AI.

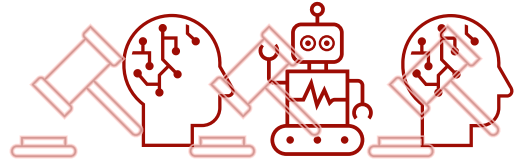
What we observe

- Asia is seeing a surge in
 - Government led digitization (DPI) and use cases of AI for public good.
 - Diverse data protection regulations, the more traditional of which may stifle AI access to data and miss AI-based data challenges.

Key considerations

- Strengthening existing data protection laws by refining statutory definitions, expanding breach notification requirements, and clarifying provisions on automated decision-making.
- Implementing robust enforcement mechanisms, including clear penalties and proactive investigations, to demonstrate genuine commitment to safeguarding personal data.
- Civil society can help educate citizens on data rights and risks; and international collaboration can help share best practices.

Regulating AI in Asia: Guiding Questions and Key Trends



Why this matters

- AI governance must balance innovation, human rights, and societal risks while adapting to contextual differences.
- A structured approach is needed to think about AI regulation in Asia to enjoy benefits while mitigating risks.

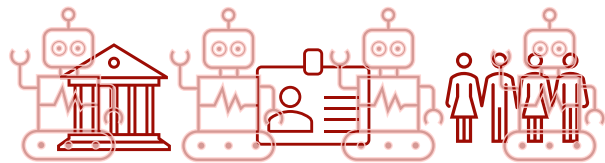
What we observe

- While the EU AI Act provides a global reference, many Asian countries seem to favor flexible industry-driven regulations.
- Diversity of regulatory approaches emerging from Asia; from formal AI laws in South Korea & China to soft law and guidelines in Japan, Singapore & India.

Key considerations

- Agile & adaptive regulation: AI evolves rapidly, so flexible frameworks like sandboxes and testbeds may better refine laws for full implementation.
- Ensuring algorithmic transparency: regulatory guidelines should promote clear disclosure on AI decision-making, especially in sensitive areas like finance, law enforcement & health
- Inclusive policymaking: AI governance and regulation should involve civil society, industry, and marginalized communities through meaningful avenues for participation.

Responsible AI in Government



Why this matters

- Governments across Asia are increasingly adopting AI for social welfare, agriculture, and health.
- Public sector AI must be transparent and accountable to avoid harm and protect vulnerable.

What we observe

There is concern over potential:

- Misuse of AI technologies by authoritarian governments
- Increasing inequality due to digitally illiteracy
- Failures in AI systems could erode public trust in the democratic processes.

Key considerations

- Strengthening capacity: investing in training and institutional expertise to improve AI adoption, oversight & regulation.
- Participatory innovation and adoption: AI used for crucial public services should engage citizens throughout the lifecycles of AI adoption.
- Ensuring accountability: Governments must establish clear roles and governance frameworks to track and audit AI use in government.

About LIRNEasia

LIRNEasia is a pro-poor, pro-market regional policy think tank. Our mission is Catalysing policy change and solutions through research to improve the lives of people in the Asia and Pacific using knowledge, information and technology.

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