DREXEL UNIVERSITY
LeBow College of Business

precisely

2026 State of Data Integrity and AI Readiness

Findings from a survey of global data and analytics leaders

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Executive Summary

A 2025 survey of 505 data and analytics leaders from major global enterprises exposes a surprising truth: Many organizations are prioritizing artificial intelligence (AI) with far less readiness than they believe. An overwhelming number of leaders confidently report having the necessary infrastructure (87%), skills (86%), and data readiness (88%) for AI, but a large proportion also admit infrastructure (42%), skills (41%), and data readiness (43%) are their biggest obstacles. This fundamental gap between confidence and reality threatens to derail AI ambitions across the enterprise landscape.

The disconnect runs deeper than mere overconfidence. According to the survey, 42% of leaders cite technology infrastructure as a challenge, even though most claim it's AI-ready. The reality? "Ready" often means basic capability, not enterprise-scale maturity. That's why 30% of leaders say their greatest missing expertise is the ability to deploy AI at scale in a business environment. Having infrastructure in place doesn't guarantee the ability to operationalize AI at scale.

The survey reveals other critical gaps: 71% report AI is aligned with their overall business goals, but only 31% have actual metrics tied to key performance indicators. Perhaps most interestingly, 32% expect positive ROI from AI in the coming 6-11 months, despite responses from many that show critical shortfalls in governance, skills, and data quality may impact their results. The data points to a clear pattern: enthusiasm for AI is high, but preparedness is not. ▸

This year's survey also revealed that data governance has emerged as a critical success factor. Seventy-one percent of organizations with governance programs report high trust in their data, compared to 50% without governance programs. The winners are those who expanded existing data governance to include AI governance, outperforming those who created separate AI governance programs, or reduced data governance efforts to focus on AI. This is a cautionary tale: organizations that fail to focus on data governance may be shortchanging the very foundation that successful AI initiatives require.

Data quality ranks as the top challenge across most areas of the data landscape

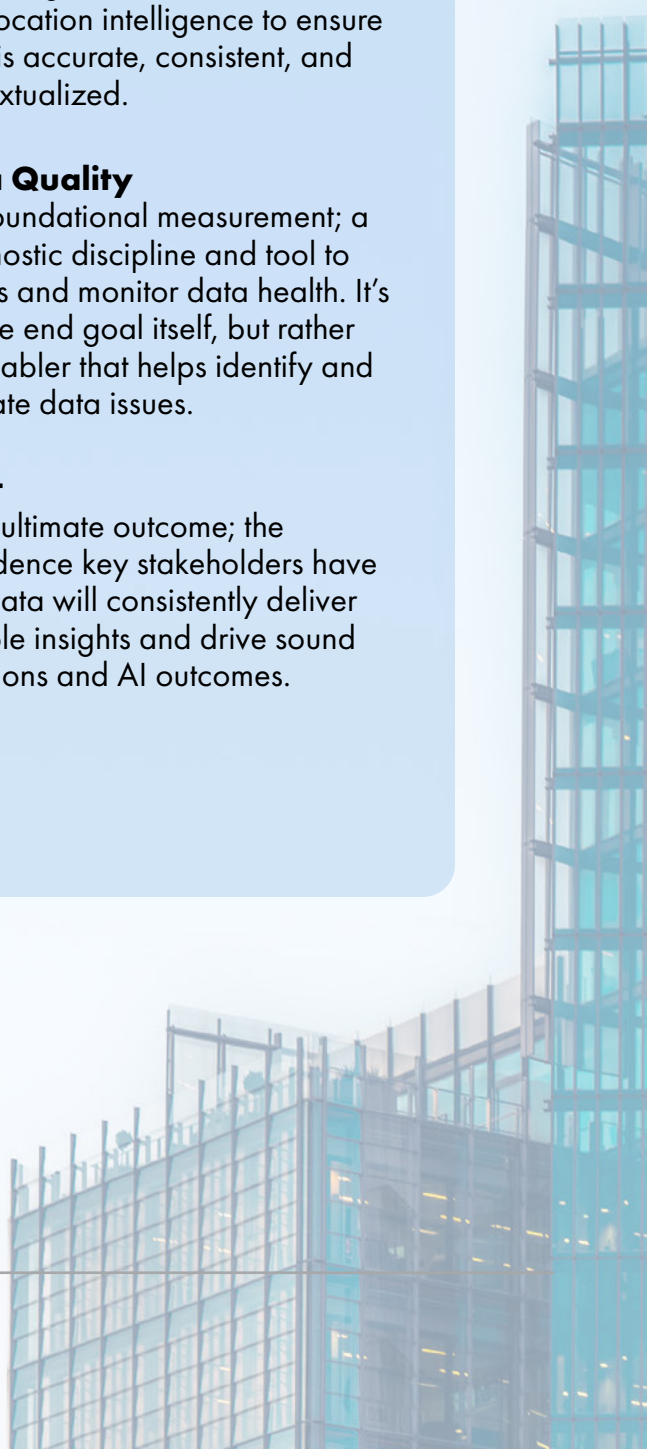
With data quality projected to be the leading data integrity priority in 2026 and 43% of leaders citing data readiness as the most significant barrier to AI alignment, some companies are rapidly advancing AI initiatives despite varied foundations. This data quality debt raises substantial risk if not addressed, as AI's indifference to bad data makes traditional "fix-it-later" approaches untenable. Encouragingly, investments in data governance and data integration consistently yield the most significant improvements in data quality, highlighting a clear path forward: it is imperative to strengthen foundational data practices to enable safer, more effective AI with better business outcomes. ▸

Data Integrity, Data Quality, and Trust

Data Integrity
is the combination of data accuracy, consistency, and context that ensures organizations can rely on their data for every decision, process, and outcome. It is obtained through a combination of data quality, data governance, data integration, data enrichment, and location intelligence to ensure data is accurate, consistent, and contextualized.

Data Quality
is a foundational measurement; a diagnostic discipline and tool to assess and monitor data health. It's not the end goal itself, but rather an enabler that helps identify and mitigate data issues.

Trust
is the ultimate outcome; the confidence key stakeholders have that data will consistently deliver reliable insights and drive sound decisions and AI outcomes.



Context is the competitive edge

Most organizations (96%) are using location intelligence and third-party data enrichment, employing location insights for targeted marketing, address validation and completion, delivery optimization, and risk management initiatives. This combination of data enrichment and spatial intelligence enables organizations to construct a contextual understanding of the real world, transforming raw data into AI-ready insights. Yet even this has its challenges: Those using location intelligence struggle with privacy and security concerns (46%) and integration complexity (44%), while users of third-party data battle quality (37%), data privacy (33%), and compliance (32%) issues.

Data leaders recognize the need to have the right skills in place to be AI-ready, yet significant skills gaps persist

These shortages cut across technical expertise, the ability to translate business needs into AI solutions, and responsible AI practices. This indicates that organizations need a balanced approach to recruiting and developing talent that can work across the full scope of enterprise AI initiatives. ■

Introduction

The 2026 State of Data Integrity and AI Readiness survey is the fourth collaboration between Precisely and the Center for Applied AI and Business Analytics at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business. Notably, this year's survey captured insights exclusively from data and analytics leaders while previous surveys included broader perspectives from data managers, engineers, analysts, and other stakeholders across the IT organization. The goal of this year's research is to reflect the viewpoint of those who oversee data, analytics, and AI programs and infrastructure.

The report uncovers six interconnected themes from the survey that impact successful data integrity and AI outcomes:

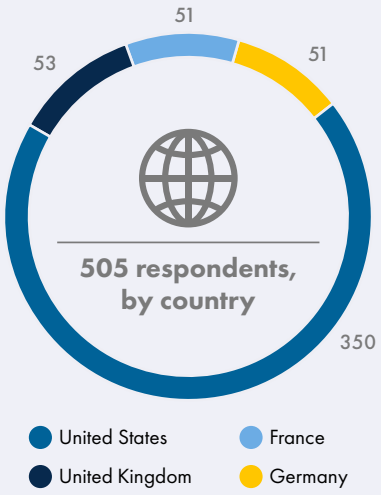
1. AI excitement is dampened by the reality of data and organizational readiness.
2. Most data leaders believe they have the data infrastructure needed for AI, but critical data integrity gaps persist.
3. Data governance is a pivotal factor in driving trusted insights and enabling AI adoption.
4. Organizations face an imperative to address compounding data quality debt.
5. Real-world context enhances business and AI outcomes.
6. Skill shortages are a top barrier to success in data, analytics, and AI.

Methodology

The survey of data and analytics leaders was conducted in the second half of 2025. The online survey was jointly developed by the Center for Applied AI and Business Analytics at Drexel University's LeBow College of Business (LeBow) and Precisely, with results analysis led by Murugan Anandarajan, PhD, Professor and Academic Director at LeBow, in collaboration with Precisely. The survey focused on global data and analytics leaders, with respondents holding a range of senior roles, from managers to C-suite executives (CDO, CIO, CTO), across larger companies with at least 1,000 employees OR with revenues of at least $250M US.

In last year's survey of data and analytics professionals, 53% of responses were from companies with fewer than 1,000 employees, and over half of responses were from non-managerial employees. In contrast, this year's respondent pool represents larger, more complex organizations and more senior roles.

This compositional shift likely accounts for many of the significant year-over-year differences observed in the data. The chart below represents some compelling examples of how perspectives changed with a focus on only data and analytics leaders at larger organizations.

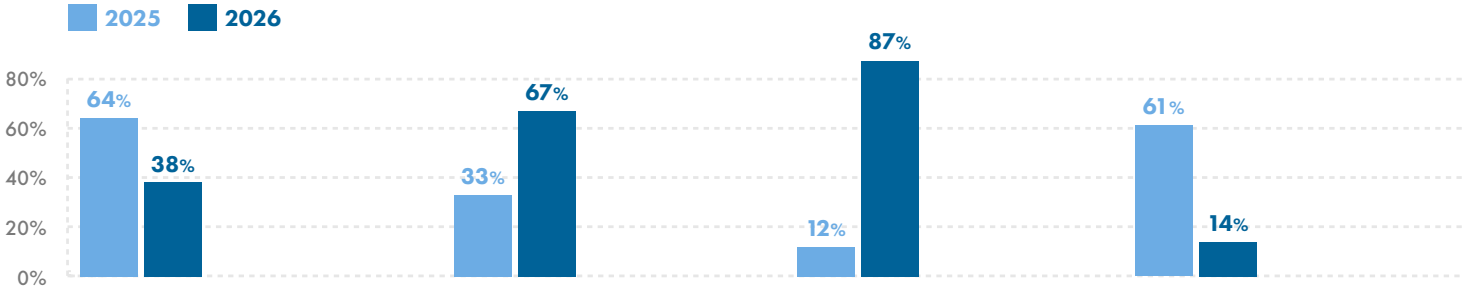


INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED:

28% Technology
14% Manufacturing
10% Financial Services
08% Professional Services
08% Retail & Wholesale

Other industries include Healthcare & Life Sciences, Insurance, Media/ Entertainment, Transportation & Logistics, Public Sector, Real Estate & Construction, Education, Telecommunications, Nonprofit, and Utilities.

Perspectives change when the focus is on data and analytics leaders



Data quality

The 2026 report reflects only 38% of data & analytics leaders calling out data quality as their biggest data integrity issue, compared to 64% reported in the prior year by respondents with both leadership and hands-on roles.

Trust in data

This year, 67% have high trust in the data their organization is using to make decisions versus 33% in the previous year's survey.

AI-ready data

In the current report, 87% of leaders perceive that their data is AI-ready compared to only 12% reported by a mix of leaders and practitioners last year.

Skills & training

In this year's survey, 14% of leaders responded that their organization is not prepared with the skills and training required for AI initiatives, a marked decrease from the prior year where 61% of a broader range of titles reported gaps in skills.

Key Findings

Artificial intelligence has become the primary driver of organizational data strategies, yet a striking paradox has emerged: while most executives claim they have the necessary infrastructure, skills, and data readiness for AI success, a substantial portion identify these same elements as their biggest obstacles. Despite many acknowledging critical gaps in governance, skills, and data quality, positive ROI from AI investments is still expected in the coming year, revealing a potential confidence-reality gap in AI readiness.

Organizations are responding to this challenge, with skills development emerging as the critical priority, cited by more than half of leaders as their top need for AI readiness. Data quality has also become a primary focus, with nearly all organizations investing in data enrichment and most establishing AI governance frameworks. These governance efforts show clear benefits, with organizations reporting significantly higher data trust when formal programs are in place. However, a crucial disconnect remains: while most organizations claim strong alignment between AI initiatives and business goals, only a minority have tied their efforts to measurable key performance indicators, suggesting the path from AI investment to demonstrable business value is more aspirational than operational. ▸

52%

AI DOMINATES DATA STRATEGY

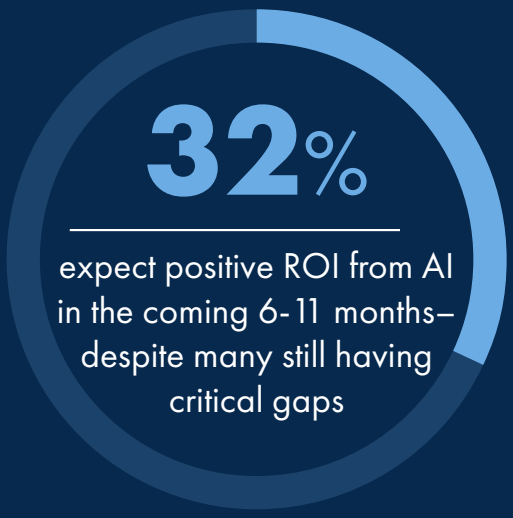
52% of organizations cite AI as the primary influence on their data programs.

41-43%

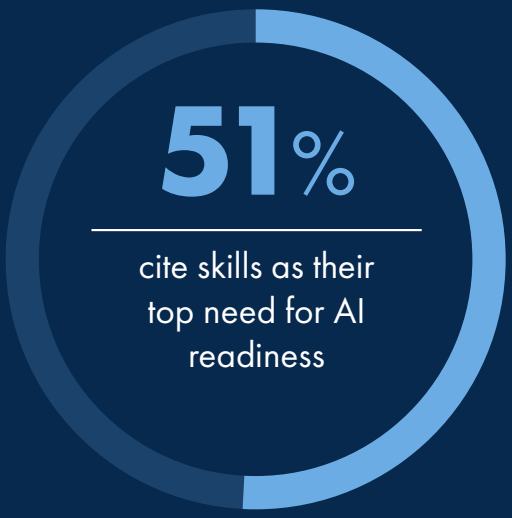
THE CONFIDENCE-REALITY GAP

While most leaders claim they have the necessary infrastructure, skills, and data readiness for AI, 41-43% state these elements are their biggest obstacles.

AGGRESSIVE ROI EXPECTATIONS



CRITICAL SKILLS GAP



DATA GOVERNANCE DRIVES TRUST

71% of organizations with governance programs report high trust in their data, compared to 50% without governance programs.

AI GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION

63% have established some form of AI governance.

DATA READINESS BARRIER FOR AI

43% cite data readiness as the most significant barrier to AI alignment with business objectives.

BUSINESS ALIGNMENT DISCONNECT

31% Most organizations claim they connect AI well with business goals, yet only 31% have actual metrics tied to key performance indicators (KPIs).

DATA QUALITY AS TOP PRIORITY

51% Data quality is the most common data integrity priority for more than half of data and analytics leaders.

NEAR-UNIVERSAL CONTEXT ENHANCEMENT

96% report their organizations invest in location intelligence and third-party data enrichment to add context to their data.

AI excitement is dampened by the reality of data and organizational readiness

KEY FINDING

AI dominated this year's survey results. Over half of data leaders named AI as the primary influence on their data programs, with significant adoption across multiple AI technologies.

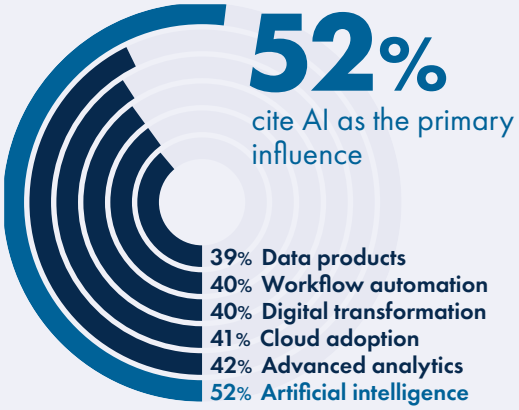
52%

of data leaders named AI as the primary influence on their data programs.

AI emerged as the dominant force in this year's survey findings. More than half of data leaders (52%) identified AI as the chief driver shaping their data initiatives, reflecting widespread adoption of diverse AI technologies: predictive analytics (52%), generative AI (47%), and agentic AI (41%).

Respondents offered a balanced distribution of priorities when sharing the types of AI-driven business problems their organizations are looking to solve in the next 1-3 years. Risk and compliance objectives were top priority, with leaders sharing that fraud and threat detection (34%) and risk management and compliance (33%) were top of mind. But supply chain optimization (33%), software development (32%), and customer service and support chatbots (31%) were not far behind.

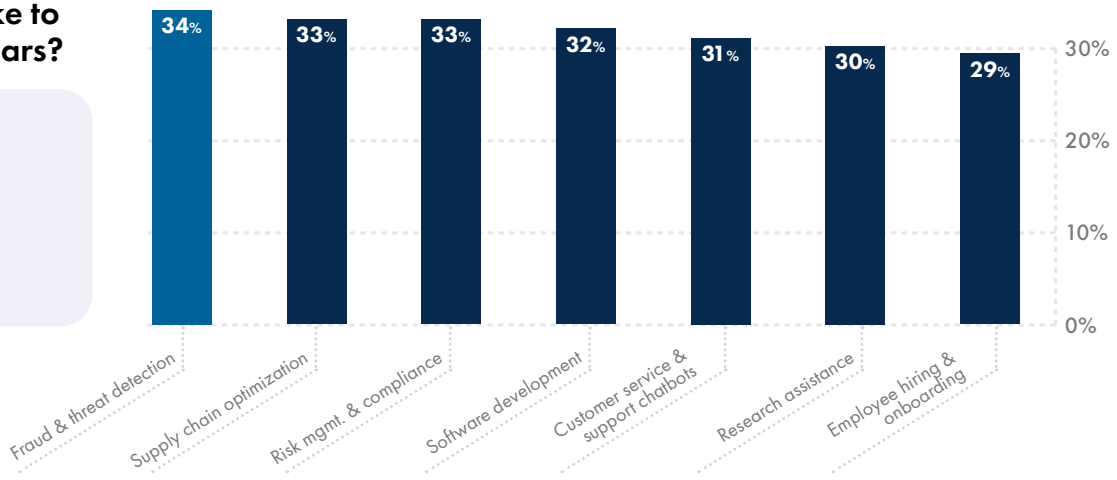
What technology trends are influencing your organization's overall data program?



Data leaders recognize the need for technology infrastructure (54%), skills (51%), financial investment (45%), and directive from leadership (40%) to be AI-ready. Yet, the most striking finding is the contradiction between responses, suggesting a confidence-reality gap. While most respondents claim they have the necessary infrastructure (87%), skills (86%), data readiness (88%), strategy (88%), and governance (87%) for AI, these exact same elements top the list of biggest challenges, with many citing infrastructure (42%), skills (41%), data readiness (43%), strategy (41%), and governance (39%) obstacles. Also, 30% of leaders call out the ability to deploy AI at scale in a business environment as the top skill or expertise most lacking in their AI talent pool, followed by understanding of responsible AI and compliance issues (29%) and the ability to translate business processes into AI ▸

What AI-driven business problems would you like to solve in the next 1-3 years?

34%
cite fraud & threat detection as a top priority.



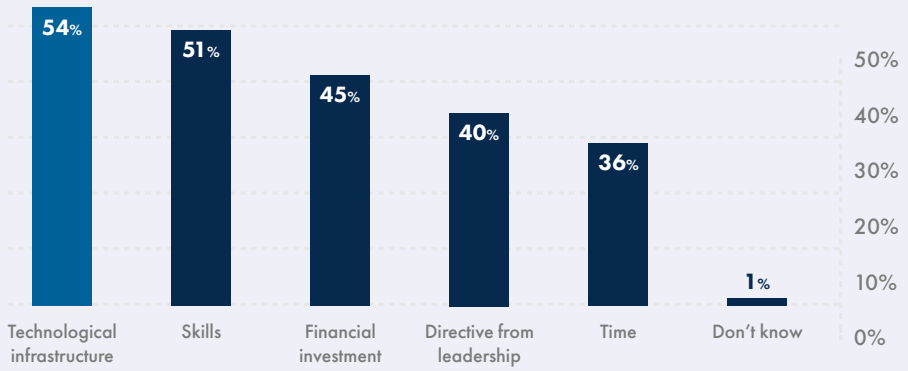
solutions (28%). This raises doubts about whether the infrastructure and skills are truly ready to tackle the most critical business challenges.

Organizations show mixed progress on AI governance. While 63% have established some form of AI governance, either integrated with existing data governance programs (40%) or as a separate initiative (23%), nearly a third (31%) are still planning or have yet to implement any AI governance measures. Of those that have established AI governance programs, only about 34% of those have reached performance monitoring or optimization stages.

The survey reveals varied levels of maturity across criteria required for AI data-readiness. Data privacy and security leads with 39% of organizations monitoring performance or optimizing their strategies. Data quality, bias prevention, and data attribute availability follow similar trajectories with 35-36% monitoring or optimizing and 15 to 16% still in pre-planning phases.

There is also a troubling gap in business alignment. Only 31% of organizations have well-established metrics tied to business KPIs such as revenue growth, cost reduction, or customer satisfaction, while 69% struggle to connect AI performance to business outcomes. This directly contradicts the 71% who claim they connect well with business goals, representing another significant confidence-reality gap. ▸

What does your organization need to be AI-ready?



How do you measure the success of AI initiatives in relation to business outcomes?

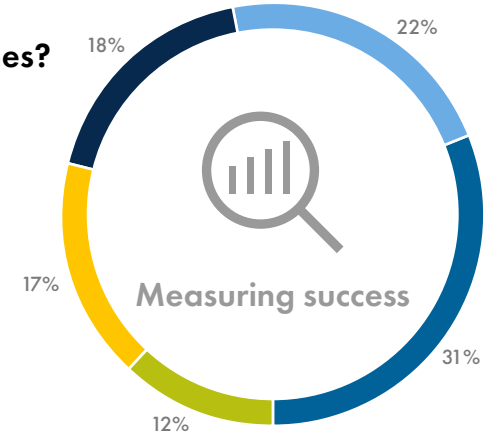
31% We have well-established metrics tied to business KPIs

22% We focus on technical performance/capabilities rather than business outcomes

18% We track AI project success but lack clear connections to business outcomes

17% AI performance is measured, but it's difficult to tie results to business objectives

12% We don't currently have formal metrics for measuring AI impact on business outcomes



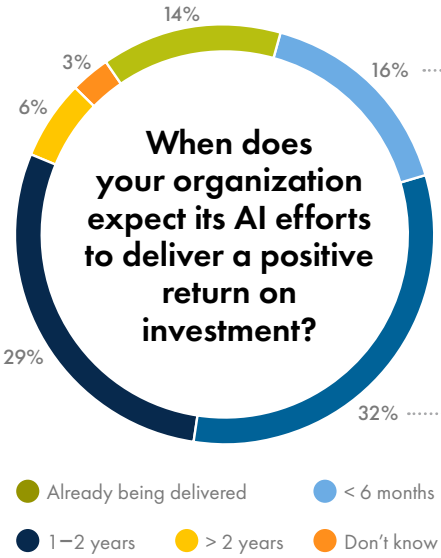
69%

struggle to connect AI performance to business outcomes

This suggests AI investments are aligned with targeted business outcomes, whether it's improving operational efficiencies, reducing risk, or growing the business, but the ability to effectively measure and validate these outcomes still eludes many.

AI initiatives are proving their worth operationally, but enterprises face mounting pressure to justify the significant investments in tools and cloud infrastructure required to scale these solutions. The question isn't whether AI delivers value; it clearly does. Rather, the question is whether the value delivered sufficiently offsets the considerable costs of licensing, compute resources, and integration complexity.

Perhaps most interestingly, 32% expect positive ROI from AI in the coming 6-11 months, and 16% expect positive ROI in in the next 6 months – despite responses from many that show critical shortfalls in governance, skills, and data quality may impact their results.



48%

expect positive ROI from their AI initiatives in the next 11 months.

This suggests another confidence-reality gap: Organizations are enthusiastic and investing in AI, with clear recognition that AI is influencing data programs and a wide range of use cases. However, they're largely unprepared for the complex reality of enterprise AI deployment. While true innovators who have embraced both data strategy and data governance programs will be ready to scale, many others will hit significant roadblocks as they move from pilots to production, particularly around governance, business alignment, and implementation at scale. ■

Most data leaders believe they have the data infrastructure needed for AI, but critical data integrity gaps persist

KEY FINDING

The survey reveals a striking contradiction at the heart of AI readiness. While 87% of data and analytics leaders claim they have the infrastructure to support AI, 42% cite infrastructure as a top AI challenge.

Organizations are pursuing multiple diverse goals through their data programs, with operational efficiency leading at 58%. However, the tight clustering of priorities – revenue generation (54%), cost reduction (54%), customer retention (52%), regulatory compliance (51%), data-driven decision making (51%), risk mitigation (49%), and modernization (43%) – reveals that data programs must simultaneously deliver across business performance, customer outcomes, and compliance.

AI has emerged as the dominant force shaping data strategies, cited by 52% of organizations, a full ten percentage points ahead of any other trend. This isn't surprising given broad industry momentum, but it signals that AI is no longer about emerging capabilities; it's the largest influencer of data programs today, and likely to remain in that position.

A second tier of familiar, yet important technology trends continue to influence data strategies, including advanced analytics (42%), cloud adoption (41%), digital transformation (40%), workflow automation (40%), and data products (39%). This convergence suggests organizations are balancing multiple initiatives rather than singular, focused transformations. IT-led initiatives such as modernization (35%), DataOps (26%), and data mesh/data fabric architectures (24%) show moderate influence on data strategies as well.

Unfortunately, despite lofty AI ambitions, organizations still grapple with fundamental organizational and data management issues. At a data program level, respondents list a lack of effective data management tools (35%), data literacy (34%), and the complexity of data ecosystems (33%) as their top challenges. From a data integrity standpoint, data privacy/security (39%) and data quality (38%) top the list of challenges, followed by data integration (32%) and governance (31%). ▸

of organizations cite AI as the primary influence on their data programs.

What are the goals of your organization's data programs?

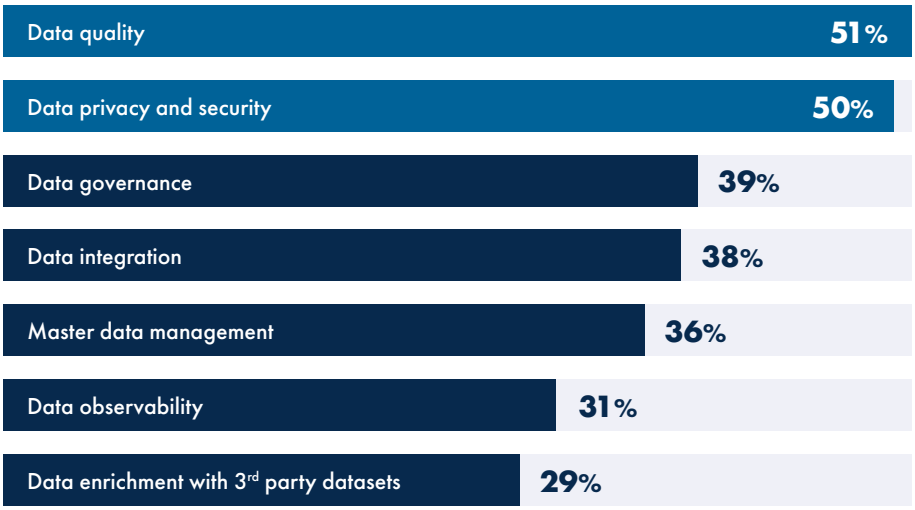
Looking ahead, priorities to improve data integrity in 2026 remain focused on the basics: data quality (51%), data privacy/security (50%), data governance (39%), and data integration (38%).

Also included in 2026 priorities as mid-tier challenges were master data management (28%) and data observability (24%), while adjacent capabilities such as third-party data enrichment (23%), spatial analytics (18%), and data cataloging (17%) were prioritized by smaller subsets.

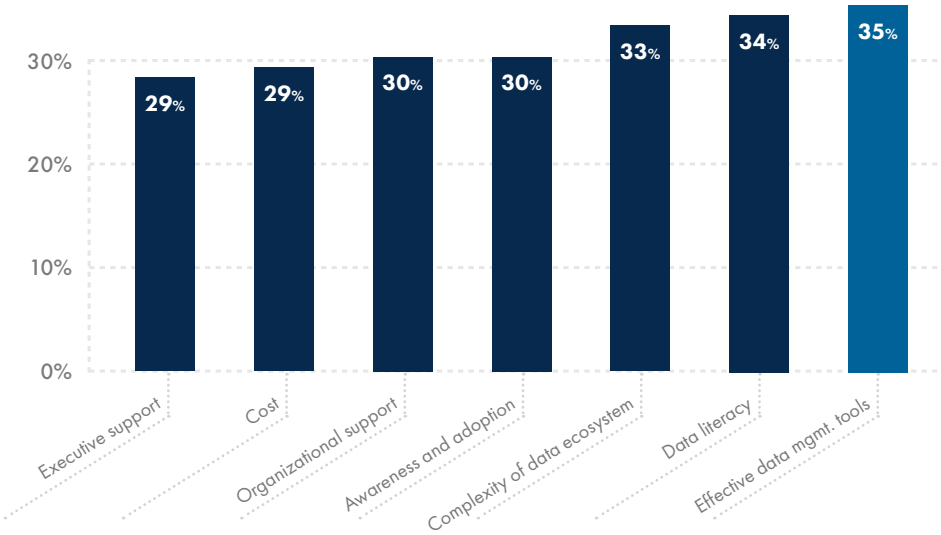
As mentioned above, the survey reveals a striking contradiction at the heart of AI readiness. While 87% of data and analytics leaders claim they have the infrastructure to support AI, 42% cite infrastructure as a top AI challenge. Fifty-four percent acknowledge technology infrastructure is needed for AI readiness, while only 24% cite the lack of appropriate infrastructure as a general data program challenge, and 30% identify the ability to deploy AI at scale as their most lacking skill.

These disconnects suggest infrastructure concerns are understated or, quite possibly, not being considered holistically across siloed data, analytics, and AI initiatives. While organizations may have a level of infrastructure maturity in certain pockets, they lack the proper or sufficient infrastructure to support AI at scale. The infrastructure gap becomes particularly visible when paired with the talent gap - having systems without the expertise to deploy them effectively. ▶

What are you organization's priorities for improving data integrity in 2026?



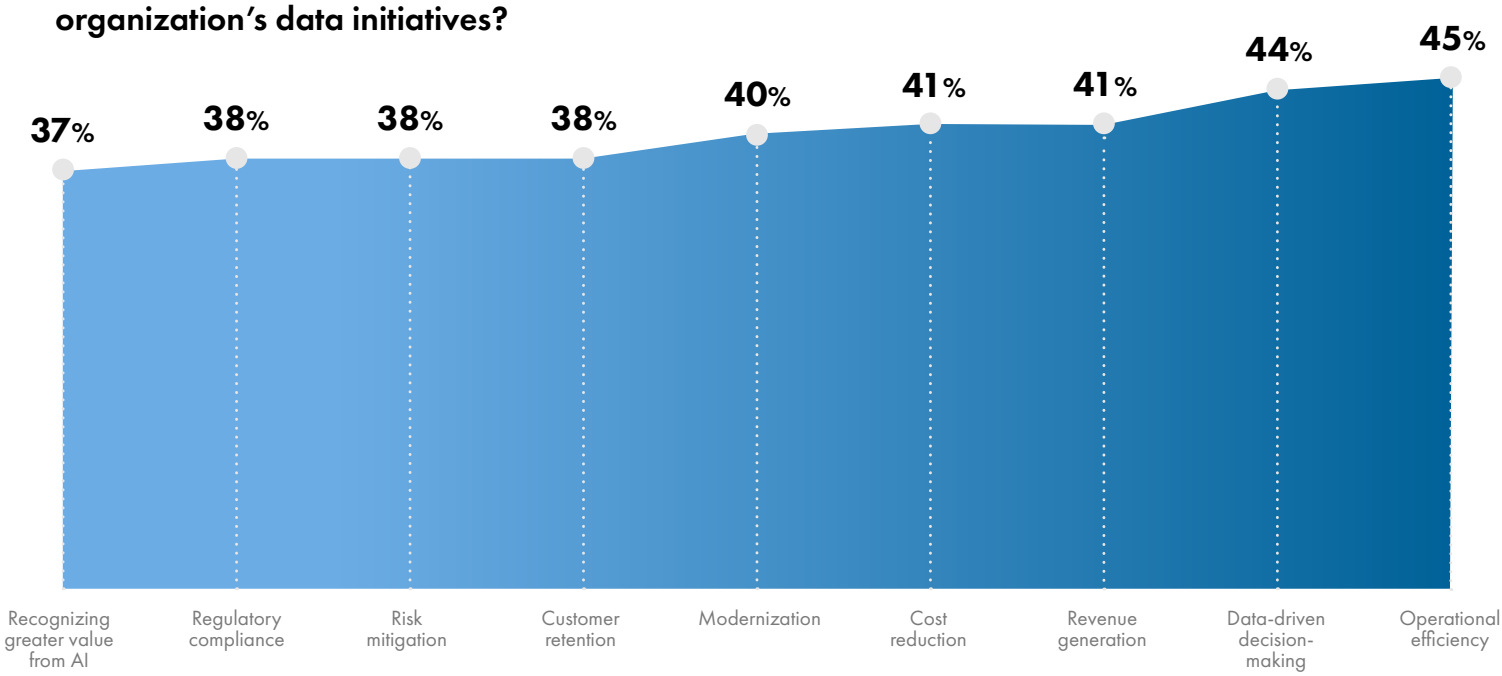
What are the challenges facing the success of your organization's data programs?



This infrastructure challenge extends to efforts to modernize, which understandably becomes relevant across multiple dimensions: as a strategic goal (43% prioritize it), an influencing technology trend (35% are reacting to it), and an outcome of data initiatives (40% are achieving it). This suggests successful organizations view modernization as an ongoing process rather than a one-off project.

This year's survey also indicates that organizations have sought to modernize and increase the efficiency of software licensing for data integrity solutions with 82-85% supporting cloud/SaaS or hybrid licensing over on-premises deployments for critical data management capabilities. This does not negate the importance of on-prem support for some organizations that maintain critical operations in their own data centers, but the move to managing data processes in cloud and hybrid environments has matured greatly. ■

What outcomes have resulted from your organization's data initiatives?



Data governance is a pivotal factor in driving trusted insights and enabling AI adoption

KEY FINDING

Data and analytics leaders view data governance as essential for AI initiatives.

42%

say improved readiness for AI is a top value from data governance programs.

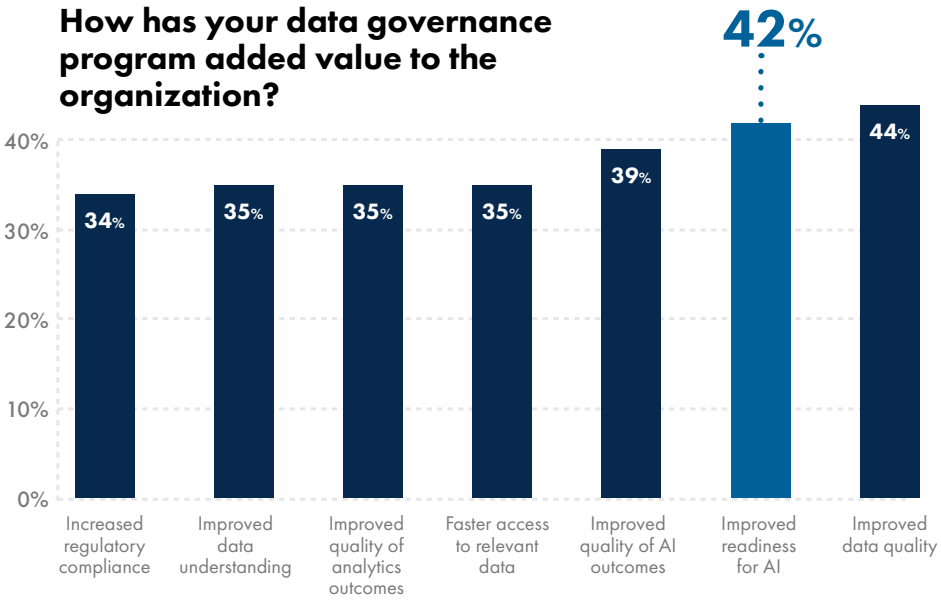
This year's data reveals a clear pattern: Data and analytics leaders view data governance as essential for AI initiatives. Forty-two percent cite "improved readiness for AI" as a top value from data governance programs, while 39% report "improved quality of AI outcomes" as a direct benefit. A striking 87% feel either "very prepared" or "somewhat prepared" for AI initiatives with regards to governance and compliance with legal, privacy, and security regulations and policies, suggesting that successful data governance programs are creating AI-ready environments.

However, there's an interesting tension in the data. Thirty-one percent say data governance is a top data integrity challenge, with 26% calling out the dependency on data governance as an inhibitor to achieving high-quality data, and 39% prioritizing it for improving data integrity.

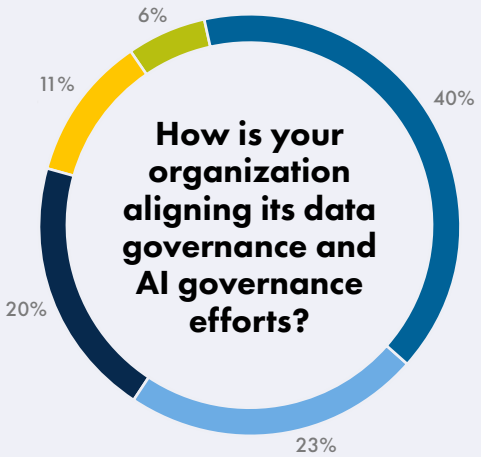
Yet 48% have not yet implemented programs to govern the data used for AI, and governance and compliance remains a challenge (39%) when aligning AI with business objectives. This indicates that even organizations with established governance programs still struggle with the governance requirements introduced by AI, likely due to AI's unique risks around bias, explainability, and evolving regulations.

Another tension point is how organizations are – or are not – aligning their data governance and AI governance efforts. Forty percent have expanded existing data governance to include AI governance, compared to only 23% creating separate AI governance programs. This signals that many organizations recognize AI governance as an extension of data governance principles and have institutional knowledge and frameworks from data governance that can be leveraged. ▸

How has your data governance program added value to the organization?



How is your organization aligning its data governance and AI governance efforts?



- We've expanded our existing data governance effort to include AI governance
- We've initiated an AI governance effort separate from our data governance effort
- We're still in the planning stages for AI governance
- AI governance is not yet on our radar
- We've reduced priority on data governance to focus on AI governance

Analysis of the survey data reveals four organizational types defined by whether they have established a formal data strategy and data governance program.

Innovators

Innovators, who have embraced both data strategy and data governance programs, demonstrate the strongest performance with 72% reporting high levels of organizational trust in data used for decision-making, with only 9% experiencing low trust levels. For these organizations, strategy and data governance reinforce each other to unlock maximum trust dividends. Neither focus alone is sufficient; organizations must develop both a robust data strategy and formal governance frameworks to achieve the trust levels necessary for successful AI implementation.

Experimenters

Experimenters have a data strategy but no formal data governance, which resulted in 61% reporting high trust through strategic maturity. However, without governance mechanisms to enforce consistency, 13% still report low trust, resulting in uneven outcomes.

What do you perceive as your organization's challenges in aligning AI initiatives with business objectives?

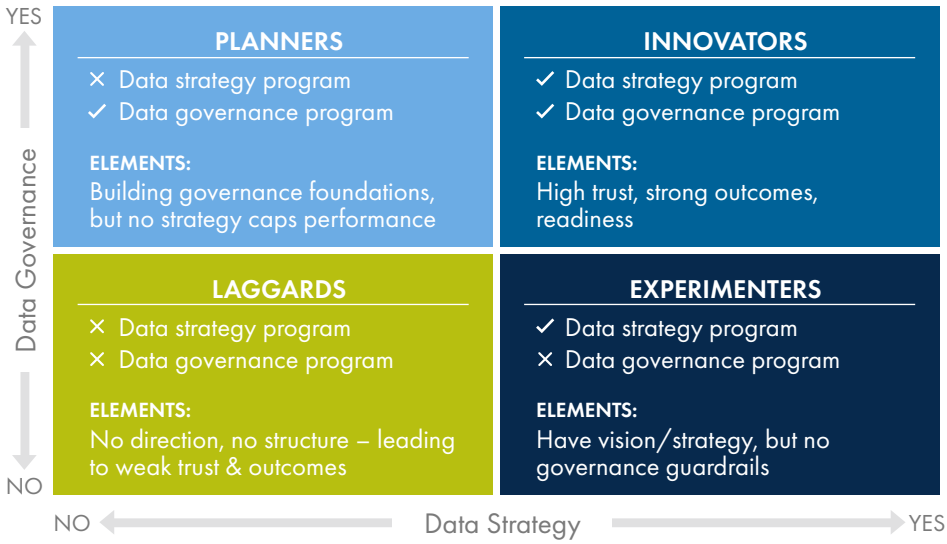
39% Organizational culture & support for AI
39% Governance/compliance with legal, privacy, & security policies
41% Staff skills & training in AI
41% Business strategy & financial support for AI
42% Technology infrastructure to support AI
43% Data readiness for AI

Planners

Planners have data governance but lack a clear data strategy, resulting in a split outcome where 40% experience low trust levels, and 40% rate high trust. While data governance provides some benefits and structure, the absence of a strategy creates fragility and prevents consistent results. This suggests that data governance alone cannot compensate for a lack of strategic direction.

Laggards

Laggards represent the weakest position, having neither strategy nor data governance in place. These organizations achieve 0% high trust, with 73% stuck at average performance and 27% at low trust. The absence of both foundational elements means they receive no trust dividend. ▸



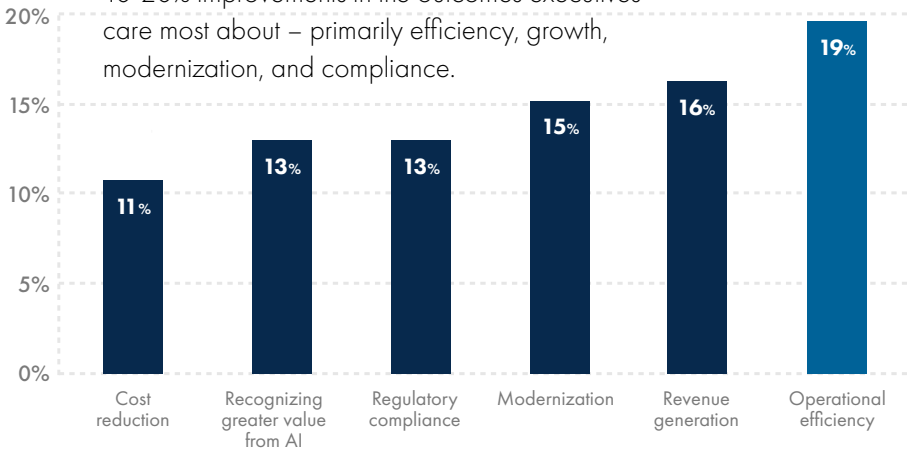
Trust clearly increases as firms progress from Laggards to Innovators, with data governance and strategy maturity reinforcing each other to create a synergistic effect.

The data shows that those who expanded their data governance programs to include AI are consistently delivering the strongest outcomes, while those with separate AI governance programs are coming in second. The weakest performers are those who have reduced data governance efforts to focus on AI.

The fact that 83% have ongoing programs indicates data governance has moved from "nice to have" to standard practice, with programs delivering tangible benefits relatively quickly and early doubts about ROI largely resolved.

Achieving data initiative goals

Data governance is the differentiator that delivers 10-20% improvements in the outcomes executives care most about – primarily efficiency, growth, modernization, and compliance.



There is a clear correlation between data leaders' perception of organizational trust in their data and the presence of an ongoing data governance program: 71% have "high/very high" trust when a governance program is in place, while only 50% have that level of trust without a governance program.

Organizations with data governance programs in place achieve greater value across every targeted business outcome. Respondents with governance programs are seeing the best improvements in operational efficiency, revenue generation, and modernization, with regulatory compliance, recognizing greater value from AI, and cost reduction all showing gains greater than 11%.

83%
have an ongoing data governance program

71%
have high/very high trust in their data when a governance program is in place.

Organizations that invest in robust data governance now are positioning themselves for AI success. The benefits of data quality, access, and compliance are critical for successful AI outcomes, but AI also exposes organizations to new regulatory pressures that require continued evolution of governance programs. ■

Organizations face an imperative to address compounding data quality debt

KEY FINDING

Models trained on flawed data will produce outputs that reflect those same deficiencies.

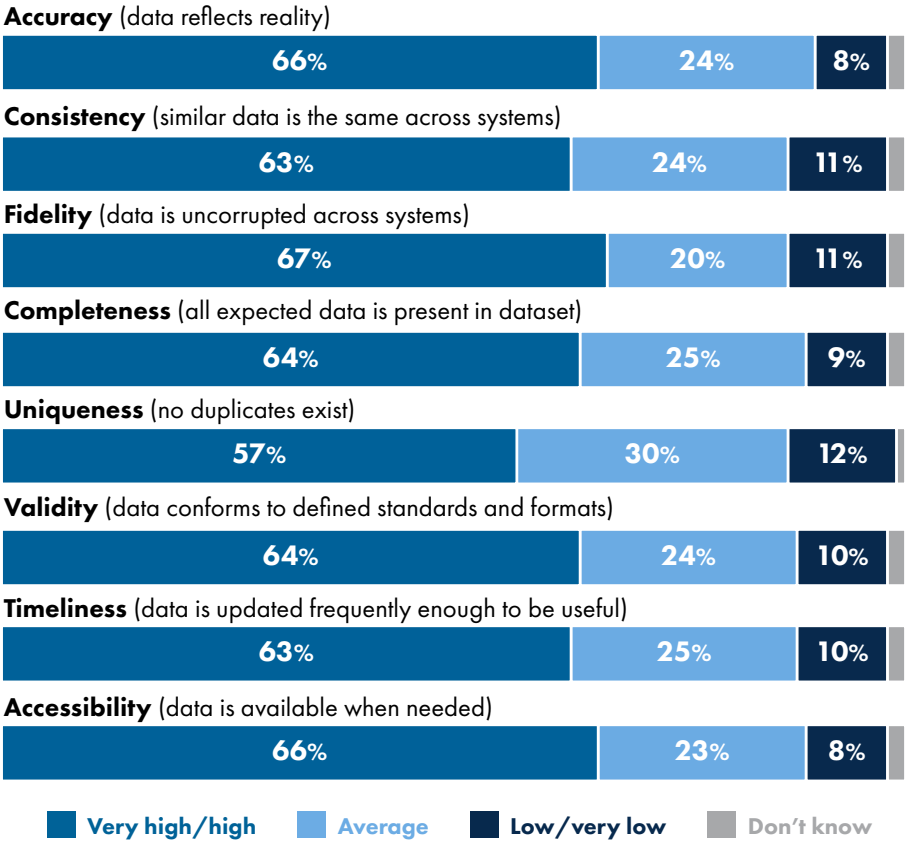
Data quality is the most common data integrity priority for 51% of data and analytics leaders. In addition to the continuing organizational demand for trusted data to support high-priority decision-making, operational efficiency, and cost reduction initiatives, leaders must now support a tsunami of new AI requirements. And they're fully aware that poor data quality undermines AI performance at every level.

Models trained on flawed data will produce outputs that reflect those same deficiencies. This problem becomes critical for organizations betting on the promise of agentic AI, where autonomous agents may be allowed to make decisions without human oversight. Without trustworthy, well-governed data, organizations cannot safely grant agents decision-making authority or autonomy.

51%

cite data quality as the most common data integrity priority.

How would you rate the quality of your organization's data?



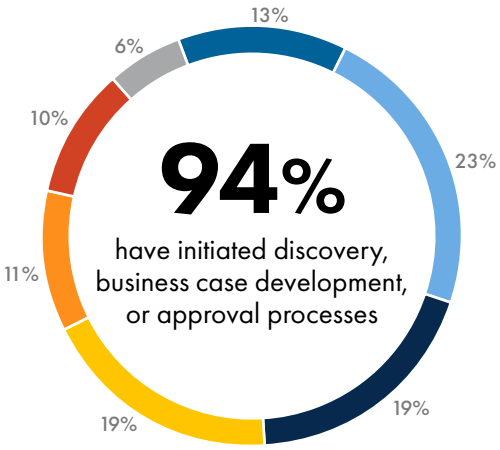
Data quality has been a persistent, underfunded challenge for years — affecting organizations from their earliest data warehouses, through the era of big data, and into today's cloud data lakes and advanced analytics environments. Amid competing priorities, companies have repeatedly deferred investment in foundational data infrastructure, dismissing the decades-old "garbage in, garbage out" truism as a problem to solve later.

This data quality debt is not new; it is the result of decades of deferral that have compounded over time. Addressing it is now imperative to reduce the significant risk poor data quality poses to an organization's ability to realize value from large-scale AI investments. AI has dramatically raised the stakes, making the consequences of poor data quality both more visible and more immediate. ▸

This heightened awareness may finally be creating the organizational momentum and executive support needed to fund long-neglected investments in data quality, governance, and infrastructure. While 55% of respondents report being in the pilot or implementation stage (or beyond) to improve data quality for AI training or inference, 94% — excluding those who have not yet started — say they have at least initiated discovery, business case development, or approval processes to address this challenge.

Yet this same data shows that only 49% of data leaders who have started a data quality-for-AI program report foundational data quality as a 2026 priority. This suggests a perception gap between the standards applied to traditional data quality and the level of quality required to support AI initiatives.

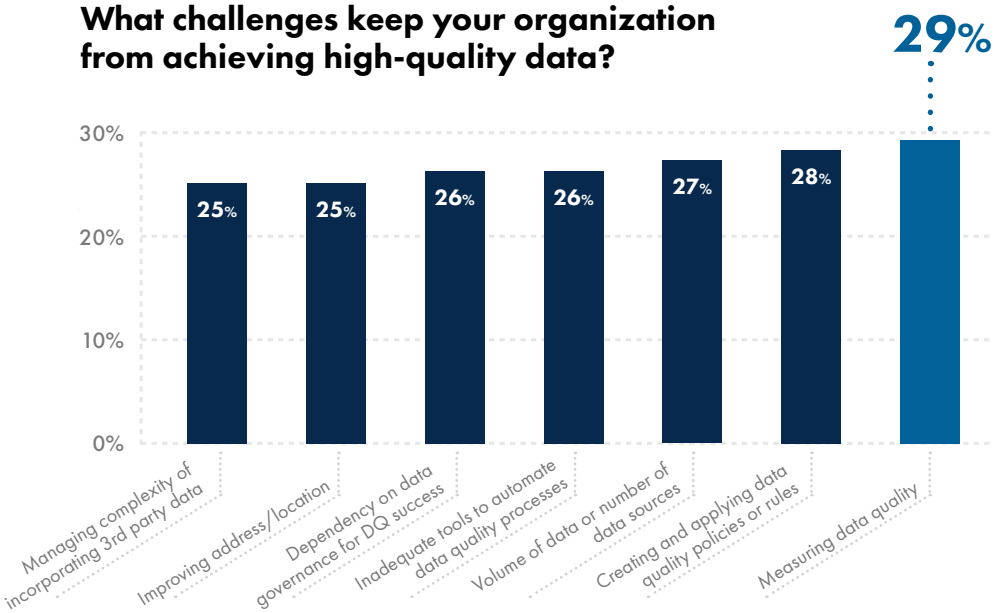
That said, data quality remains the #1 challenge across the data integrity landscape, ranking as the top issue in seven of eight questions covering challenges to data governance, integration, third-party data enrichment, and AI initiatives.



How is your organization progressing toward optimizing the quality of data used for training or inference?

- Not started
- Discovery, business case, & approval
- Solution planning
- Solution evaluation & decision
- Pilot and/or implementation
- Performance monitoring
- Optimization

What challenges keep your organization from achieving high-quality data?



Lack of data quality measurement is also a red flag: Leaders report that their biggest challenge to obtaining high-quality data is the ability to measure data quality effectively (29%), creating a vicious cycle because you can't improve what you can't measure. Companies know quality is poor, but lack frameworks to quantify, monitor, and systematically address it.

The urgency is escalating. AI has elevated data quality from an IT concern to a C-suite priority. Forty-three percent of data leaders cite data readiness as their top challenge when aligning AI with business goals. AI's indifference to poor data has made previously tolerable issues business-critical; organizations can't paper over data quality problems when building agents that make automated decisions.

With pressure growing from boards of directors, investors, and shareholders, organizations are moving forward with initiatives to improve the quality of data used for AI training or inference despite unresolved data quality fundamentals:

16% haven't started (6% not started + 10% in discovery)

30% are planning/evaluating solutions (11% planning + 19% evaluating)

55% are already executing (19% pilots + 23% monitoring + 13% optimizing)

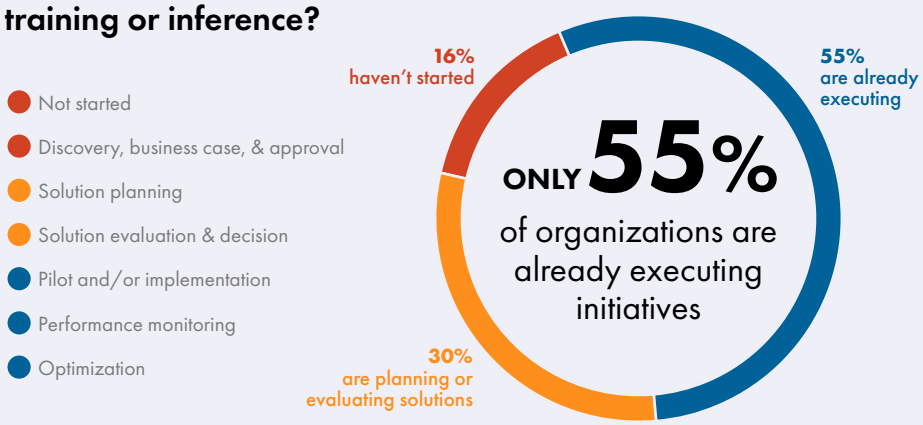
When organizations do invest in multiple data integrity fundamentals such as data integration and data governance, data quality improves as a result:

44% cite improved quality as data governance's top benefit

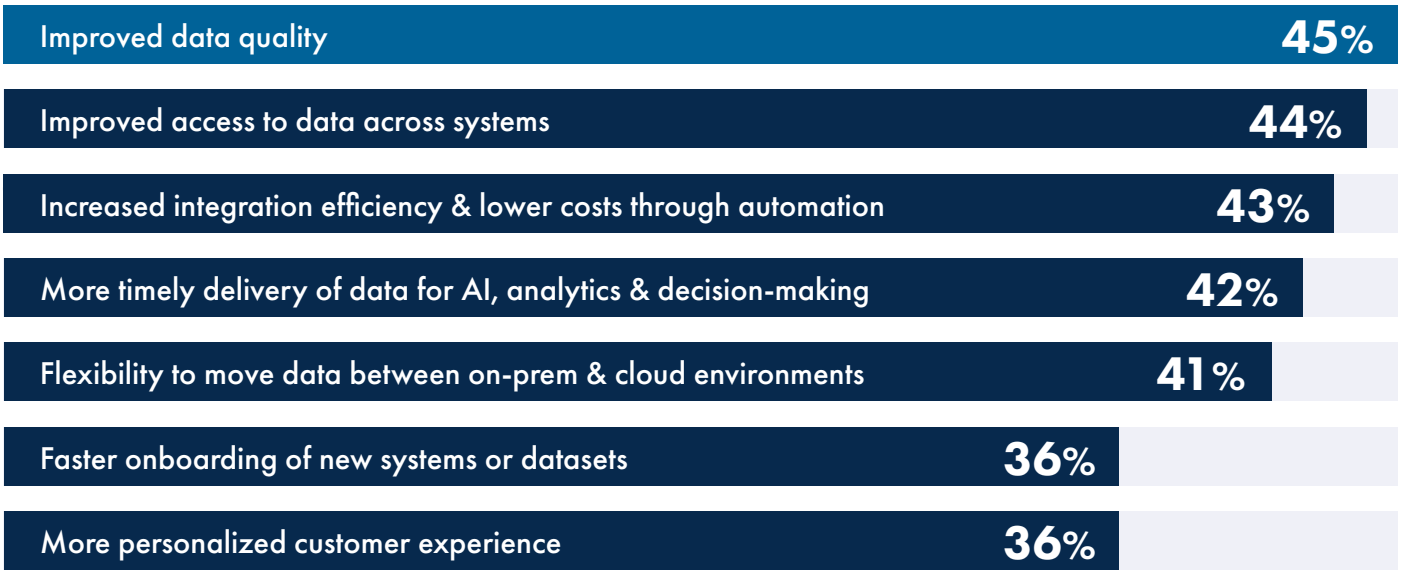
45% cite improved data quality as integration's most significant success

Ironically, data quality is also cited as the biggest challenge to the success of data integration projects, so garbage-in, garbage-out remains a truism that can't be ignored for integration initiatives as well. ■

How is your organization progressing towards improving the quality of data used for AI training or inference?



How has your organization seen success from data integration projects?



Real-world context enhances business and AI outcomes

KEY FINDING

Data and analytics leaders are consistently leveraging real-world context available through third-party data and spatial analysis to support their data strategies.

96%

report their organizations invest in location intelligence and third-party data enrichment.

The data organizations capture about customers, suppliers, and business sites represents only a fraction of what's required to make informed business decisions.

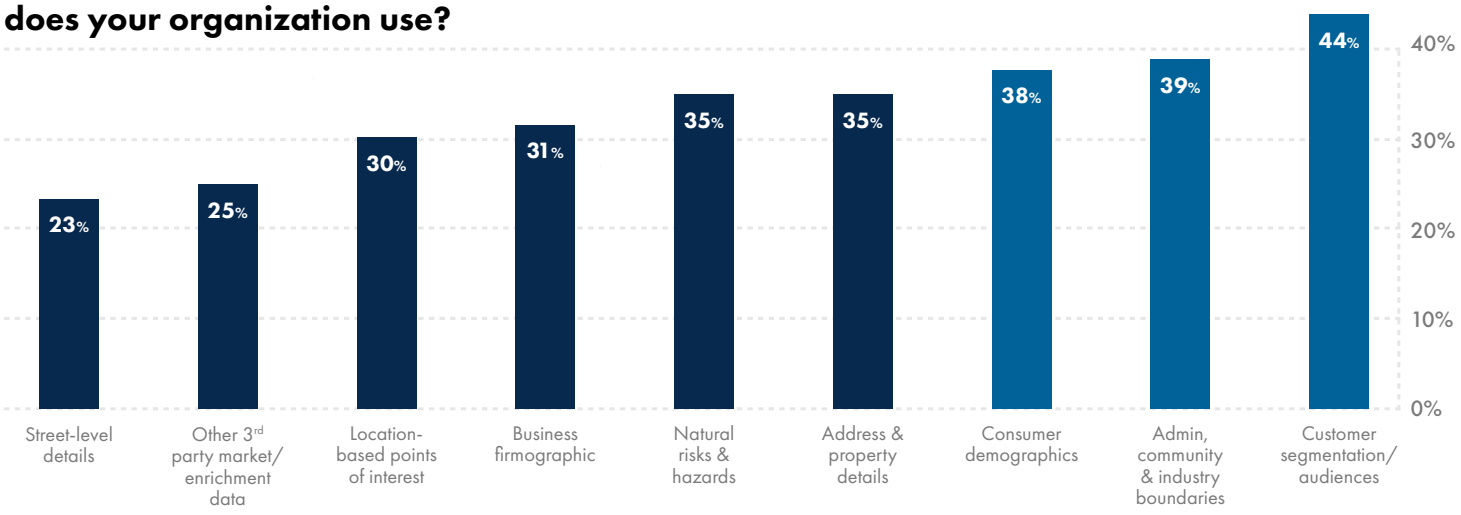
Understanding what's happening in the real world around customers, delivery routes, sites, properties, and networks isn't optional; it's essential. This context, built through location intelligence and data enrichment, transforms raw data into actionable information that drives both customer experience and operational excellence.

Added context powers a wide range of everyday business initiatives. For instance, clean, standardized location data improves the entire product and service delivery chain, from order processing to fulfillment. It reduces failed deliveries, minimizes delays, and boosts customer satisfaction. Whether delivering packages, managing field service teams, or activating new locations, high-integrity location data ensures every step is efficient and reliable.

The same principle applies when evaluating risk. By combining validated location data with contextual information like flood zones, wildfire boundaries, crime rates, and other environmental hazards, organizations can confidently analyze geographic risk at scale. Insurers, financial institutions, and public sector teams rely on this enriched view to underwrite proactively, price risk accurately, detect fraud earlier, and respond effectively to emerging threats. ▸

Adding geographical context to data unlocks deeper insights and more informed decisions. Enriching datasets with location intelligence can reveal spatial relationships and patterns that go beyond traditional analytics, giving AI a real-world foundation for better accuracy, relevance, and outcomes.

What types of third-party data does your organization use?



Location intelligence and data enrichment also strengthen customer-facing initiatives. Clean address data, demographic information, and geographic boundaries enable more accurate audience segmentation, helping organizations reach the right people, in the right places, at the right time. Beyond marketing, real-world, contextual information supports more complex decisions, including network planning and optimization, site selection for new facilities, and accurate tax assessments tied to local jurisdictional boundaries.

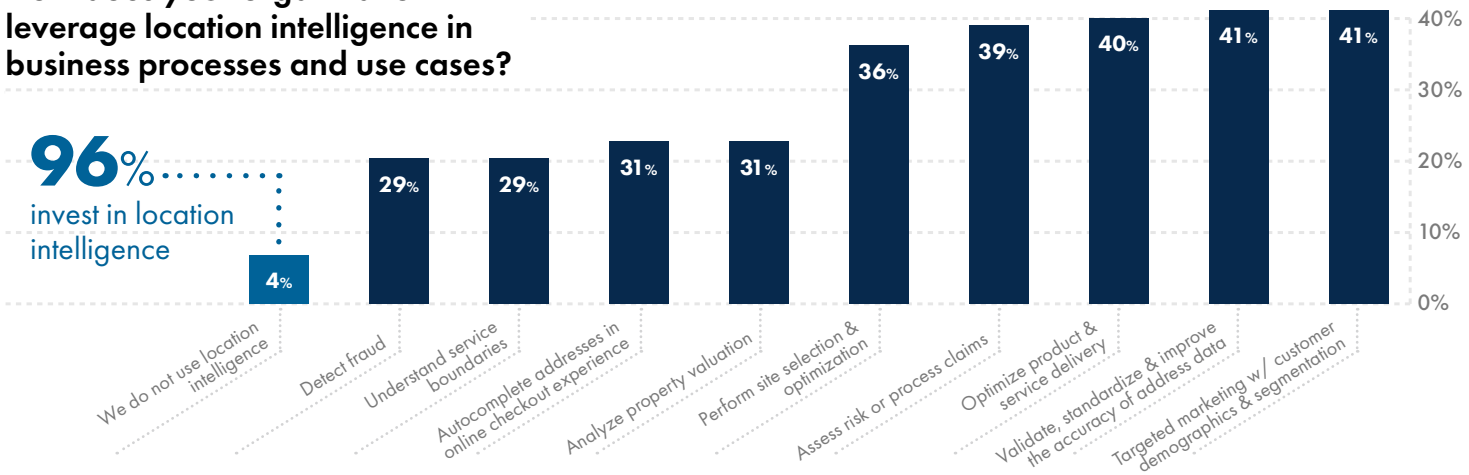
This year's survey demonstrates that data and analytics leaders are consistently leveraging location and third-party datasets in their data strategies. In fact, 96% of leaders report their organizations invest in location intelligence and third-party data enrichment – indicating widespread maturity in leveraging this contextual information.

Organizations deploy location intelligence across critical business functions, with 41% using it for targeted marketing through customer demographics and segmentation, 41% for validating and standardizing address data, 40% for optimizing product/service delivery, and 39% for risk assessment and claims processing. This broad adoption across both customer-facing and operational functions demonstrates that location intelligence has become embedded in core business processes.

Data enrichment serves as the other pillar of contextual understanding, providing deeper insight into customer behaviors, locations, and preferences. Organizations primarily leverage third-party datasets to build this context: 44% use customer segmentation and audience data, 38% invest in consumer demographics, and 39% bring in administrative and community boundaries for demographic context. This focus on data about customers and their locations suggests organizations are building comprehensive customer profiles that feed into predictive models and personalization engines, enabling more effective marketing, support, and service delivery. ▸

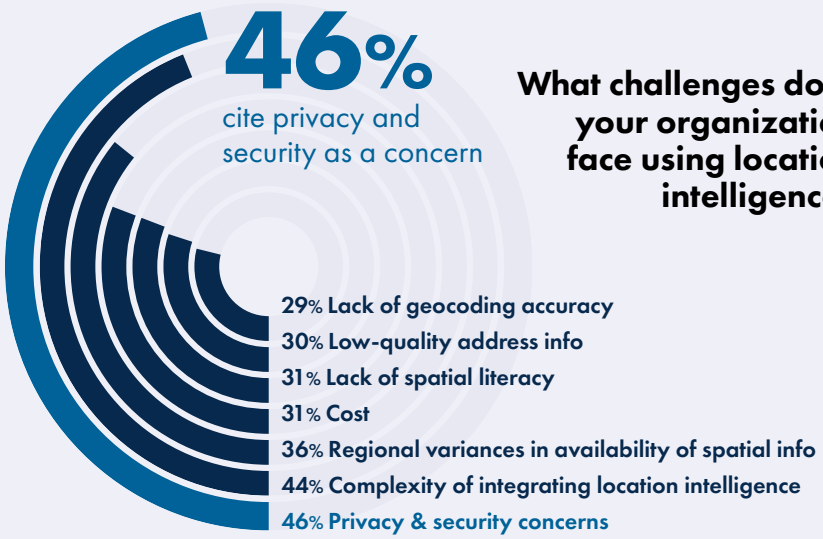
96%
of organizations invest in location intelligence

How does your organization leverage location intelligence in business processes and use cases?

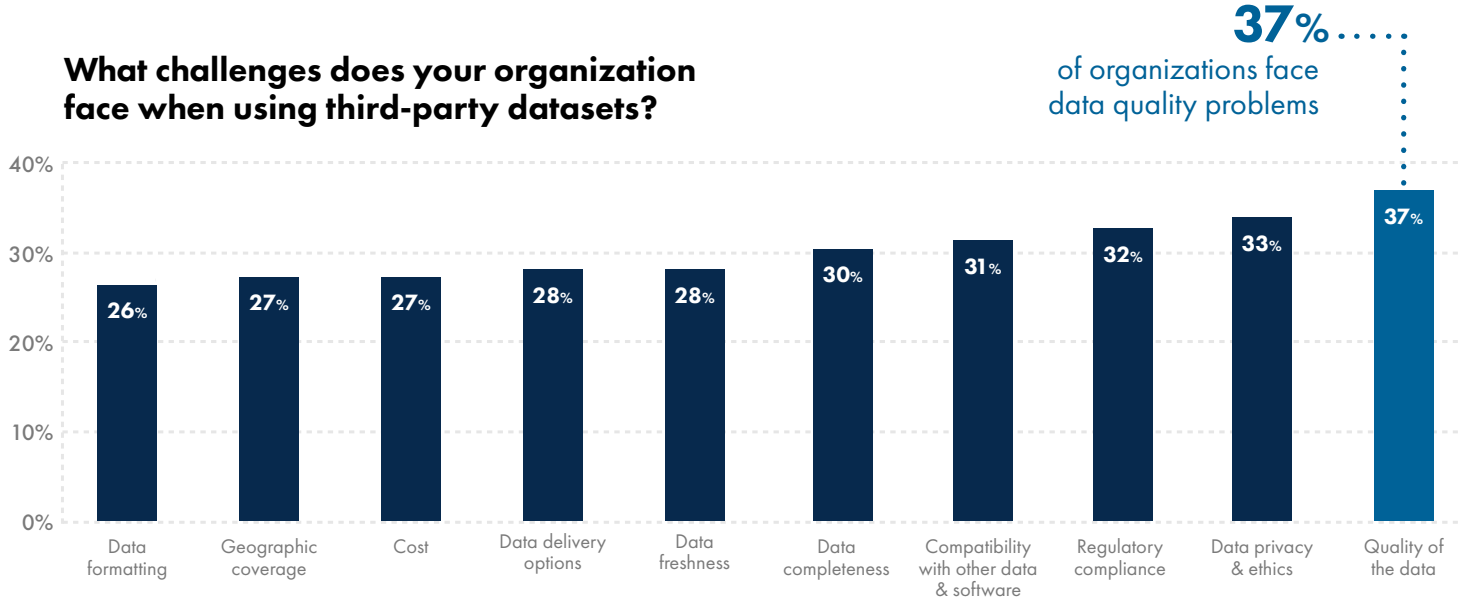


However, building reliable context isn't without obstacles. Both location intelligence and third-party data enrichment face similar challenges that threaten data integrity. For location intelligence, 46% cite privacy and security concerns, and 44% struggle with integration complexity. Third-party data challenges mirror these issues: 37% face data quality problems, 33% grapple with data privacy and ethics, 32% struggle with regulatory compliance, and 31% encounter compatibility issues with existing data and software.

These challenges directly reflect earlier findings that data governance and compliance rank among the top obstacles in aligning AI with business objectives.



The data reveals a transparent dependency chain: Data enrichment and location intelligence, combined with strong data governance, improve both AI readiness and AI outcomes. Organizations that successfully build a reliable, contextual understanding of their business environment while addressing privacy, quality, and integration challenges position themselves to extract maximum value from AI investments. ■



Skill shortages are a top barrier to data, analytics, and AI success

KEY FINDING

More than half of organizations cite skills as a top need for AI readiness.

Twenty-eight percent of data leaders identify a shortage of skills and resources as a key challenge for their data programs. For example, skills gaps impact foundational data integrity projects, with 25% reporting a lack of skills needed to integrate complex legacy data and 23% reporting a lack of skills/staff to deliver high quality data.

When it comes to AI readiness, organizations have made progress investing in platforms, closing gaps in data readiness, and launching initiatives across their operations. Yet survey results reveal a critical challenge to AI readiness isn't technological; it's human. More than half of organizations (51%) cite skills as a top need for AI readiness, while only 38% feel they are "very prepared" with the appropriate staff skills and training in AI.

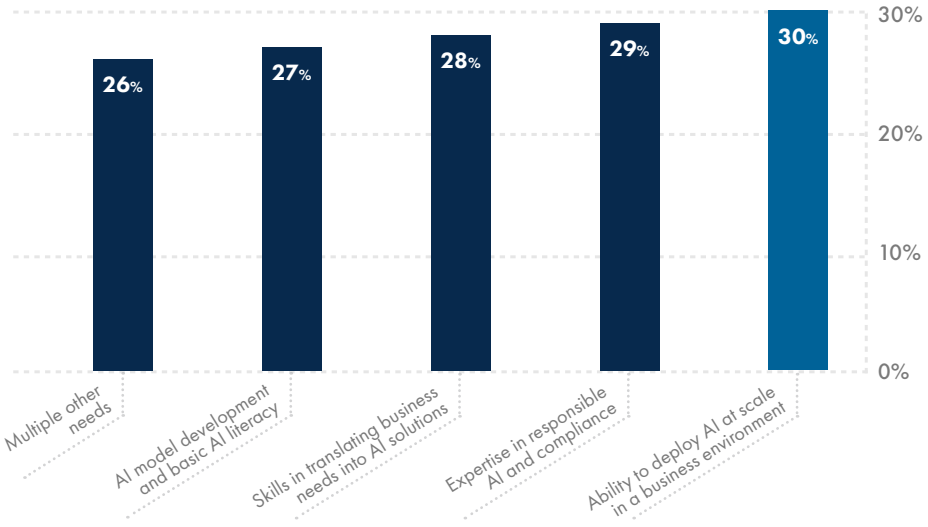
The distribution of AI skillset responses reveals an important insight: no single skill dominates. All nine measured competencies cluster tightly between 25% and 30%, indicating that organizations need a broad, balanced distribution of AI talent rather than specialists.

What does your organization need to be AI-ready?

51% cite skills as a top need for AI readiness

36% Time
40% Directive from leadership
45% Financial investment
51% Skills
54% Technological infrastructure

What skill sets or expertise are most lacking in the AI talent pool?



Key areas where AI skills are lacking include:

30% - ability to deploy AI at scale in a business environment

29% - expertise in responsible AI and compliance

28% - skills in translating business needs into AI solutions

27% - AI model development and basic AI literacy

26% - multiple other needs, including bridging technical and business teams, translating AI findings into actionable strategies, and understanding business processes. ▸

These skills challenges manifest across the data lifecycle. Over a quarter of organizations (28%) identify skills and resource shortages as limiting the success of their data programs. Similar proportions struggle with data quality (23% lack skilled staff), and legacy system integration (25% lack the expertise to work with complex systems).

The consistency of skillset gaps, all falling in the 25-30% range, suggests organizations need a comprehensive approach to talent development to support data, analytics, and AI initiatives. Skillsets play a foundational role in the key elements that drive AI maturity: skilled people to build the foundation, strong infrastructure and governance to scale capabilities, and deep business integration and cultural adoption to reach full potential.

There's a gap between AI readiness needs and business goal attainment

AI readiness needs \ Goal attainment	Not at all	Not well	Somewhat	Well	Very well
Technological infrastructure	**33%**	22%	20%	**24%**	**25%**
Skills	**25%**	20%	**23%**	**23%**	**22%**
Time	8%	15%	17%	16%	15%
Financial investment	17%	17%	**22%**	20%	19%
Directive from leadership	17%	**26%**	18%	16%	20%

The survey also provides insight into how organizations can address the gap between AI readiness and business goal attainment, and the prescription changes dramatically based on that alignment level.

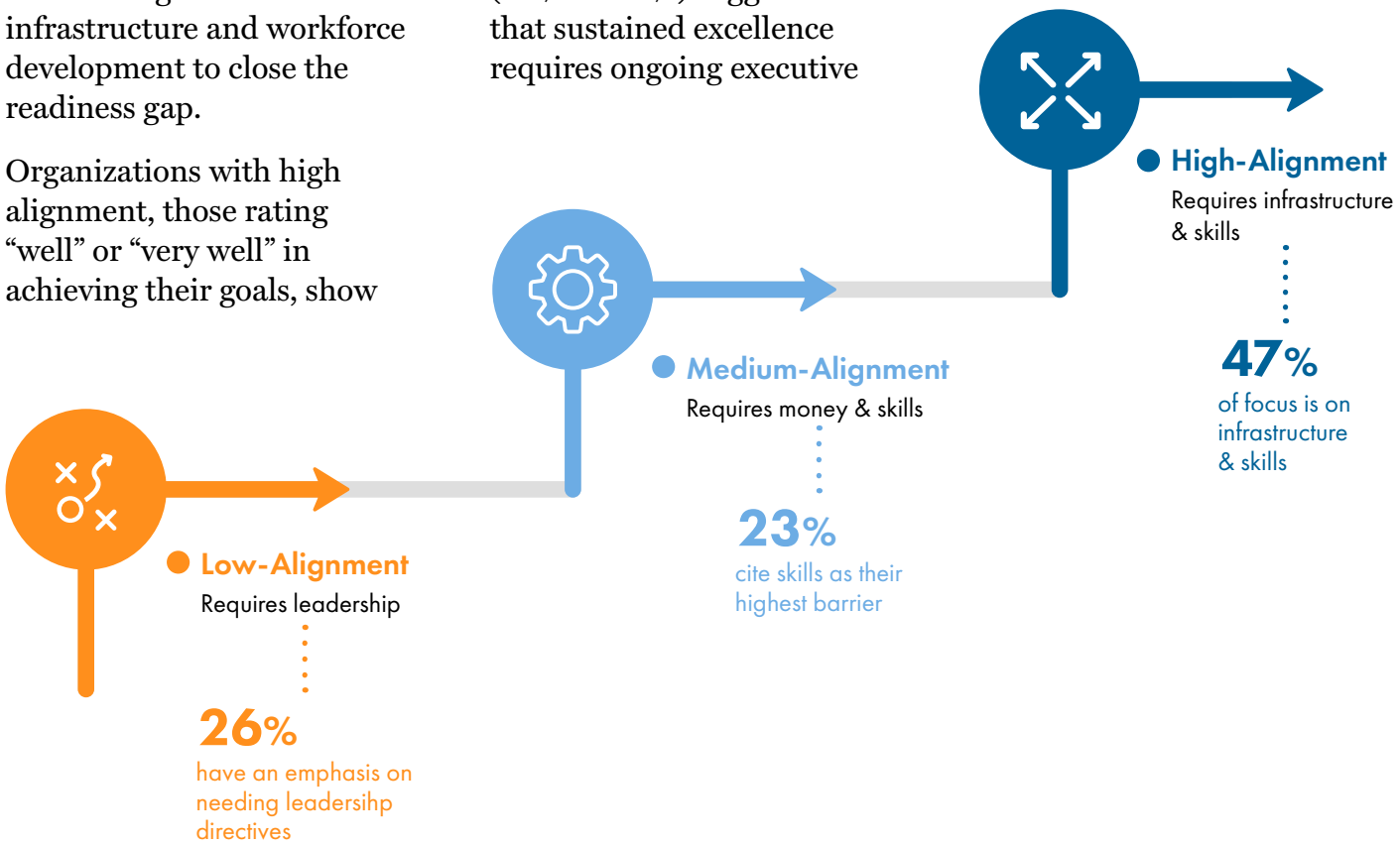
Organizations with low alignment between readiness and goals, those rating "not at all" or "not well" in achieving their objectives, face a leadership challenge rather than a capability challenge. While struggling organizations might think their problems are purely about technology infrastructure (33%) or skills (25%), the data shows something more fundamental: they're treating AI as a capacity issue when it's actually a strategic direction problem. The "not well" group reveals this most clearly with their uniquely high emphasis on needing leadership directives (26%). These organizations have alignment problems that trace directly back to lack of executive mandate and vision. Without leadership stepping in to drive change, investments in infrastructure or training will likely be misallocated or fail to gain traction.

identify skills and resource shortages as limiting the success of their data programs

Organizations in the middle range, those achieving their AI goals "somewhat," present a different picture. These organizations are the most balanced in their needs assessment, but they cite financial investment (22%) and skills (23%) as their highest barriers. This group knows what they need to succeed; they've moved past the strategic confusion phase. Their challenge is execution: they lack the funding to build necessary infrastructure and the talent to implement their vision. For these organizations, the path forward is clear: secure budget and invest in infrastructure and workforce development to close the readiness gap.

Organizations with high alignment, those rating "well" or "very well" in achieving their goals, show a stabilized pattern where infrastructure and skills dominate roughly 47% of their focus, while leadership needs drop to around 16-20%. These organizations have cracked the code on strategic direction and initial implementation. Now their challenge is sustainability and scale. Infrastructure (around 25%) remains the top need even at high performance levels, indicating that as AI initiatives expand, the technical foundation must continuously evolve. The slightly elevated leadership emphasis in "very well" organizations (20% vs. 16%) suggests that sustained excellence requires ongoing executive engagement, not just initial sponsorship. For these high performers, the prescription is to keep strengthening both infrastructure and skills capabilities to maintain momentum and scale AI throughout the enterprise.

The progression is clear: leadership drives transformation, investment in infrastructure and skillsets enables execution, and continuous focus on infrastructure and skills sustains the ability to scale. ■



Conclusion

The 2025 survey reveals that AI enthusiasm has outpaced AI readiness by a concerning margin. The pervasive confidence-reality gap, in which leaders simultaneously claim preparedness yet cite multiple areas of data readiness as major obstacles, signals that many organizations are operating on faith rather than facts. As companies move from pilots to production, those with gaps in data governance or data quality may experience failed implementations, wasted investments, and missed opportunities.

Yet the data also shows a clear path forward. Organizations that are already demonstrating superior outcomes are those that invest in the fundamentals: robust data governance integrated with AI oversight, systematic data quality improvements measured and monitored, and comprehensive talent development across technical and business dimensions. The competitive advantage won't go to those who deploy AI fastest, but to those who build solid foundations while others scramble to retrofit theirs.

Organizations can differentiate by bringing real-world context into their decision systems and AI models. By incorporating information about actual operating conditions, market dynamics, and situational nuances, they transform raw data into actionable intelligence. This contextual layer enables more accurate predictions and recommendations that align with business realities.

The window for honest assessment is now. AI is everywhere, but most companies aren't seeing the ROI they expected. The reason is simple: AI is only as good as the data behind it. Right now, data is often trapped in silos, incomplete, outdated, inconsistent, ungoverned, and expensive to manage. Without fixing these fundamental issues, AI investments will continue to drain resources instead of delivering real business impact.

Data and analytics leaders must trade overconfidence for reality-based planning, leverage resources earmarked for AI projects to prepare the data that is foundational for their success, and recognize that sustainable progress requires solving pervasive data integrity problems now. The winners in this economy will be those who get their data right first. ■

Addressing the AI-Ready Skills Shortage

Drexel University's LeBow College of Business is a top-ranked, AACSB-accredited business school with market-centric undergraduate, graduate and executive programs that prepare students to make an impact at the intersection of business and technology.

LeBow's Center for Applied AI and Business Analytics forms partnerships to benefit current and future practitioners who seek to discover, advance and generate value from the transformational impact of data and AI on business and society. The Center connects leading corporations with faculty, researchers and students – providing access to college expertise, the ability to shape curricula and a talent pipeline for co-ops, internships and employment. From applied research, course projects and thought leadership to STEM youth programs and an engaged community of industry professionals, collaborations benefit organizations and students alike.

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Collaborate Through Applied Research and Partnerships

Explore partnership opportunities with faculty and students through the Center for Applied AI and Business Analytics.

Learn more and connect with us on the LeBow website ▸

Why AI Success Depends on Data Integrity

Organizations are investing heavily in AI, yet many struggle to deliver measurable ROI. The challenge is not ambition or technology—it's data. The data required to power Agentic AI is often hard to access, scattered across hybrid and legacy systems, incomplete or outdated, lacking context, non-compliant, and expensive to manage. This creates blind spots, limits scale, and makes it difficult for systems to make accurate, autonomous decisions. This is the Agentic AI Data Integrity Gap.

As AI, automation, and analytics increasingly operate at enterprise scale, data integrity has evolved from a supporting capability into a strategic driver of business outcomes. As a global leader in data integrity, Precisely helps organizations close the gap and ensure data is accurate, consistent, and contextual, by delivering Agentic-Ready Data that enables AI systems to operate with confidence.

What Is Agentic-Ready Data?

Agentic-Ready Data is purpose-built to support autonomous systems at scale. It is data that is integrated, improved, governed, and enriched—maximizing context and usage while minimizing effort.

How Precisely Delivers Agentic-Ready Data

Software: The interoperable cloud services of the Precisely Data Integrity Suite help organizations deliver Agentic-Ready Data through data integration, governance, observability, quality, enrichment, and location intelligence.

Data: Enriching enterprise data with expertly curated, up-to-date business, location, and consumer datasets gives AI agents the context needed to deliver more accurate, reliable, and relevant outcomes.

Data Strategy Consulting: Expert advisors help organizations define, align, and operationalize enterprise data strategies for AI systems that deliver measurable business outcomes.

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2026 State of Data Integrity and AI Readiness

Findings from a survey of global data and analytics leaders