Winning AI strategies for data visionaries

The Ataccama Data Trust Report 2025

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Foreword

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The AI gold rush has influenced enterprise technology strategy more than any other breakthrough in recent years. We've now reached the point where AI pioneers are slowing down and refining their approaches, while those in the early stage of AI adoption are learning from the successes and challenges of these trailblazers. This pause and reflect phase is setting the stage for what's next in data management: the focus on achieving data trust for effective AI.

Data trust is not just a compliance checkbox. It's the foundation of successful AI implementation – and for building thriving, future-ready businesses. At Ataccama, we believe that having trustworthy data will enable organizations to address immediate operational demands, create competitive differentiation, and proactively transform external pressures, such as regulatory compliance, into strategic advantages. This is particularly evident when we examine the intersection of data quality and AI adoption, where data trust serves as the cornerstone for success.

The Ataccama Data Trust Report explores how well leaders are able to trust their own organization's data, and the opportunity and conflict this creates within the modern enterprise. With organizations increasingly using AI tools to accelerate business outcomes like operational efficiency, customer service innovation, and competitive differentiation, it's now clear that

the success of these initiatives is fundamentally tied to data trust. In this report, we explore the challenges organizations face in achieving data trust, the differing perspectives of key stakeholders, including CDOs, CTOs, and data strategy primary decision makers, and the immense opportunities available to those who get it right.

Improving data quality and accuracy emerges as a central theme in the report and is the top data management priority for 2025 – and for good reason. Organizations that focus on data quality not only ensure better reporting and decision-making capabilities but also gain a competitive edge from trustworthy AI. That's AI that accelerates desired business outcomes, such as streamlined operations and innovative customer experiences, without introducing ethical, operational, or compliance risks. Indeed, many industries are using AI to reduce negative business outcomes, as we see with insurers requiring accuracy in claims processing, banks tackling financial fraud, or manufacturers improving their supply chain management.

This report highlights that while many organizations are optimistic about AI's potential, they face persistent challenges, including data privacy and security concerns, as regulations like the EU AI Act shape the adoption landscape. Integrating new technologies into legacy systems often

creates bottlenecks for transformation, and the cost of AI implementation and lack of internal skills and expertise can delay adoption and impact ROI. These challenges, however, are not insurmountable. Organizations that invest in robust data governance frameworks upskill their workforce, and build collaborative, cross-functional approaches to data management will find themselves well-positioned to harness AI's full potential.

Our findings underscore the importance of building a data-driven culture – one that prioritizes transparency, collaboration, and continuous improvement. With 81% of respondents recognizing enterprise data as a top business opportunity, the time to act is now. By addressing data trust challenges head-on, organizations can reduce risk, drive innovation, and unlock sustainable growth.

At Ataccama, we're passionate about empowering you to trust your data and use it as a catalyst for business transformation. We hope the insights in this report inspire and equip you to overcome challenges, seize opportunities, and create lasting impact in 2025 and beyond.

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Executive summary

External forces, such as evolving data privacy and security regulations (46%) and rapid technological advancements (34%), are significant drivers of technology and data management challenges in modern enterprises. These pressures compound internal challenges like data privacy and quality, straining teams and budgets while intensifying the need for robust solutions.

Today, half of organizations struggle with data privacy issues (52%) and cybersecurity threats (49%), reflecting a critical need for secure and compliant systems. To address these challenges, organizations are making improving data quality and accuracy their top data management priority for 2025 (51%). This recognizes its foundational role in enabling operational success and creating data trust to accelerate all strategic business initiatives.

What is data trust?

Data trust is the force behind thriving, future-proofed businesses. It is the culmination of strategic technology implementation blended with proactive, holistic data management practices, giving employees the confidence to use quality enterprise data for critical decision-making. This empowers organizations to ensure operational excellence, prepare for external challenges, and maximize opportunities and value from data-driven insights.

Data management teams are at the forefront of these efforts, working to ensure data quality and accuracy (37%) and securing data (34%) – priorities directly linked to external regulatory and technology demands. Data quality and reliability (46%) was also identified as a key driver for data governance strategies, underscoring its importance for ensuring trustworthy systems that can support advanced technologies like AI, which one in four (24%) organizations are actively exploring.

Operational efficiency is the top strategic spending priority for 2025, with 77% of organizations focusing on streamlining operations. For data teams, operational reporting (43%) is a major business priority, illustrating the pivotal role of accurate, trustworthy and reliable data in achieving these goals. Organizations that prioritize data quality can unlock efficiencies and improve reporting outcomes, ultimately driving better business performance.

By drawing a clear connection between improving data quality, achieving operational efficiency, and implementing successful AI projects, organizations can effectively advocate for investments in data management technologies. These investments will address current challenges and also lay the foundation for sustainable growth and innovation in an increasingly data-driven world.

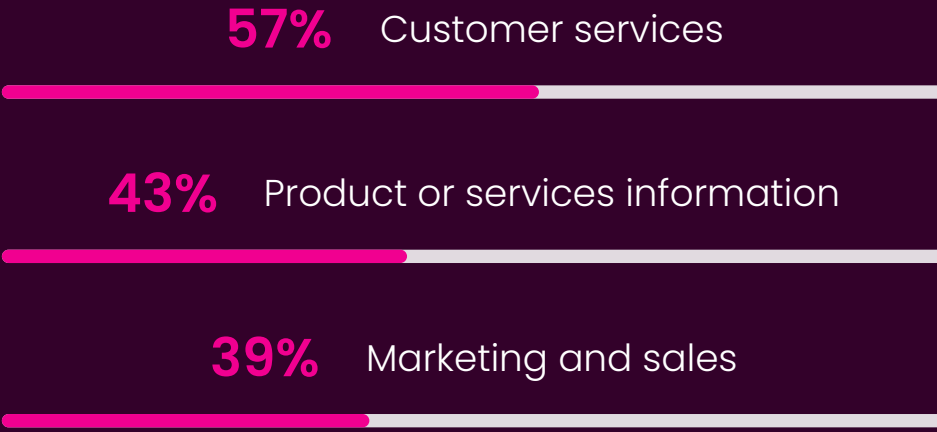ataccama

Focus areas for enterprises in 2025

Top data management priorities

51% Improving data quality and accuracy

43% Enhancing data security and privacy measures

34% Optimizing data processing and performance

Top strategic and spending priorities

77% Increasing operational efficiency

58% Improving customer experience

56% Increasing profits

Areas where AI will be most impactful

57% Customer services

43% Product or services information
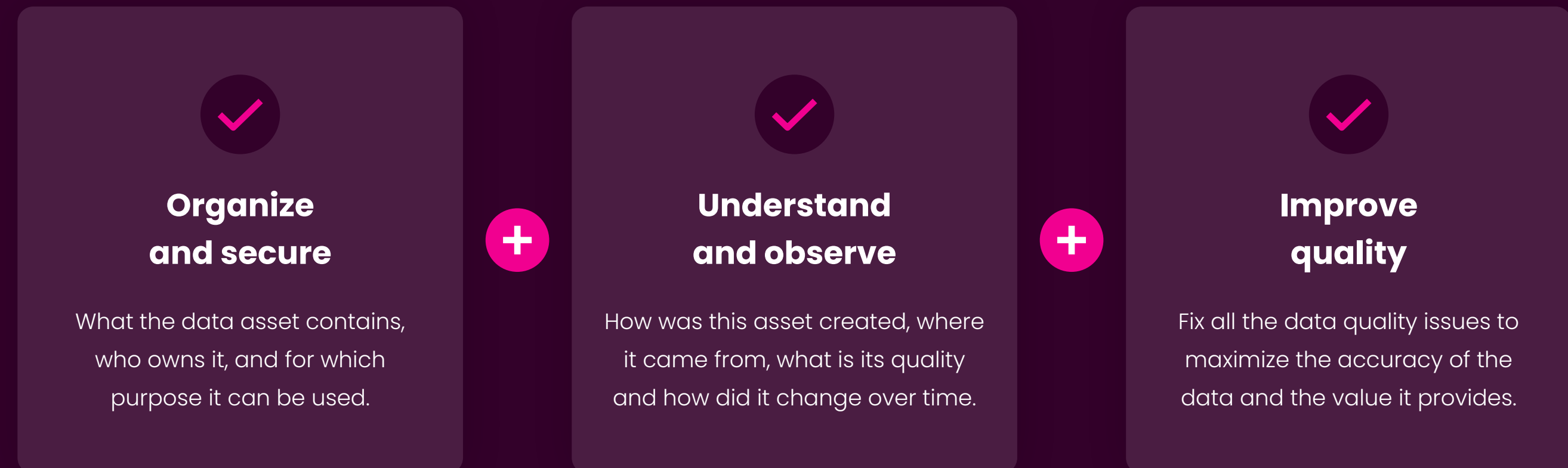
39% Marketing and sales

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What constitutes data trust?

The perception of AI as most transformative in improving customer experience is more prevalent in organizations that have AI integrated into several areas (71%) than for those in early AI adoption stages (40%), suggesting that as organizations mature in AI usage, customer-facing outcomes like personalization and experience gain prominence.

AI adoption is polarizing, indicating a strategic gap between leadership ambitions and broader organizational readiness. Exploring AI is a data management priority for 54% of data strategy primary decision makers and 40% of those working at any level in the data strategy and innovation functions.

Data management teams are at the forefront of these efforts, working to overcome challenges, ensure data quality and accuracy (37%), and secure data (34%) – challenges directly linked to external regulatory and technology demands.

Organize and secure

What the data asset contains, who owns it, and for which purpose it can be used.

+

Understand and observe

How was this asset created, where it came from, what is its quality and how did it change over time.

+

Improve quality

Fix all the data quality issues to maximize the accuracy of the data and the value it provides.

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Chief Data Officers and Chief Technology Officers have equal responsibility for their organization's data

Accountability for data within organizations is far from consistent. Chief Technology Officers (CTOs) and Chief Data Officers (CDOs) share equal responsibility for their company's data, with 69% overseeing their company's data strategy and execution. The balance is similar when it comes to responsibility – specifically for data management, with **70% under CDOs** and **68% under the CTO function**.

Not every organization has a defined CDO role, but where it exists, it is often positioned strategically. **A quarter (25%) of CDOs report to the CTO, another 25% to the CEO, and 21% to the Chief Operating Officer (COO).** This senior-level reporting line highlights the growing recognition of data as a critical business asset.

CDOs and CTOs share overlapping priorities and challenges, particularly bolstering data security, improving quality, and driving operational efficiency. This alignment suggests that close collaboration between technology and data governance could fuel competitive advantage.

The CTO (55%) and CDO (43%) are at the forefront of driving AI initiatives within their organizations. Encouragingly, two-thirds (67%) report no internal resistance to AI adoption, reflecting strong leadership support. While CTO and CDO backing is crucial for AI success, this executive alignment presents a unique opportunity: engaging other departments, such as marketing, customer service, and HR, could help embed AI even deeper across business units, amplifying its impact organization-wide.

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Improving data quality is a key priority for more than half of today's enterprises

Data quality is the top data management priority in the next 12 months as cited by over half of respondents (51%). This focus is more pronounced among data governance teams (59%) and those in the insurance sector (68%).

Organizations that emphasize a data-driven culture or have integrated AI into multiple areas also rank data quality as a key priority for 2025. This likely reflects the growing demand for improved real-time data analysis and reporting (29%) and enhanced data accessibility (33%), which depend on high-quality data to deliver actionable and real-time insights.

However, data quality is also one of the greatest organizational challenges today, identified by 39% of respondents; CDO teams (42%) highlighted this challenge in particular. Data strategy primary decision makers (68%) also rank it as their top concern for CDOs today. This disparity suggests that while data quality is widely acknowledged as important, strategic decision makers see it as an urgent and central issue to address.

Beyond data quality, other technology challenges loom in the next 12 months. Over a quarter (27%) of data strategy primary decision makers identify AI and generative AI adoption as their next significant hurdle. For healthcare organizations, exploring the use of AI is the top priority for 2025 (45%).

68%
of data strategy primary decision makers rank data quality as their top concern for CDOs today

Interestingly, while 40% of respondents highlight data privacy and security as their key concern, only 24% of primary decision makers view it as a top challenge. This discrepancy suggests that leadership could be focused on scaling strategic technologies rather than directly resolving ongoing operational issues.

Regional differences reveal further nuances. In the United Kingdom, 56% of respondents prioritize improving data quality, yet only 38% view current data quality as a pressing issue, which may indicate a proactive approach to mitigating quality-related issues.

Smaller-revenue organizations (500m-$1 billion USD) report heightened concern about maintaining data quality, which is both a current challenge (41% compared to 36% of larger-revenue enterprises) and a priority (54% vs. 49%) for them. This likely reflects the resource constraints smaller organizations face in achieving consistent data accuracy.

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42% of organizations in early AI adoption stages feel underfunded

The perception of data team budgets varies significantly depending on the organization's stage of AI adoption. Nearly half (42%) of organizations in the early stages of exploring AI, and a third (34%) of those with some AI solutions but no widespread implementation, feel their budgets are slightly or significantly underfunded.

Budgetary concerns transcend organizational size. Large organizations with over 20,000 employees (44%) and growth companies with 500-999 employees (42%) both report funding concerns, suggesting that scaling and maintaining AI capabilities pose significant cost challenges across the board. Healthcare organizations were most likely to share a belief that their data teams are underfunded (50%).

Importantly, funding shortfalls are not restricted to early AI exploration or adoption phases. Overall, 28% of respondents believe their departments are underfunded. This sentiment rises sharply among data strategy primary decision makers, 43% of whom describe their budget as slightly or significantly underfunded.

Over a third (38%) felt having the ability to showcase the contribution of data management strategy to business goals would have the most positive impact on the organization in the next 12 months. In particular, this is a huge challenge for 59% of those working in data governance, 42% of data quality practitioners, and 50% of data experts working in the manufacturing industry. However, only a quarter of data strategy decision makers (27%) felt this was important.

This points to a potential disconnect between decision makers, who manage both strategy and execution, and the broader teams, which may lack full visibility into budgetary allocations and measuring ROI. Decision makers' dual focus could give them a deeper understanding of resource constraints and the strategic trade-offs required.

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Only one-third of organizations globally are progressing toward widespread AI adoption

The state of AI adoption across organizations varies widely. Most respondents (41%) have implemented some AI solutions but don't describe them as embedded across the organization. Another 30% report AI integration in several areas, while only 3% describe their organization as heavily reliant on AI. Notably, those organizations with deeper AI integration are significantly more likely to face data volume challenges – 63% cite this as an issue compared to just 30% in the earlier stages of AI adoption.

While most organizations tend not to view AI implementation as a major challenge, they do rank it as a high priority over the next 12 months, despite gaps in funding. Larger enterprises with more than 5,000 employees lead in AI use, integrating AI into multiple business functions.

AI adoption status displays regional variation

Some regional disparity is revealed in AI adoption as a current technology challenge. North American firms are more likely to view handling AI implementation as a significant challenge (33%) than their counterparts in the UK (16%) and Canada (10%). This may explain why AI adoption appears more advanced in the UK, where 40% of respondents have AI integrated into several areas, compared to just 26% in the US.

Organizations with maturing AI integration
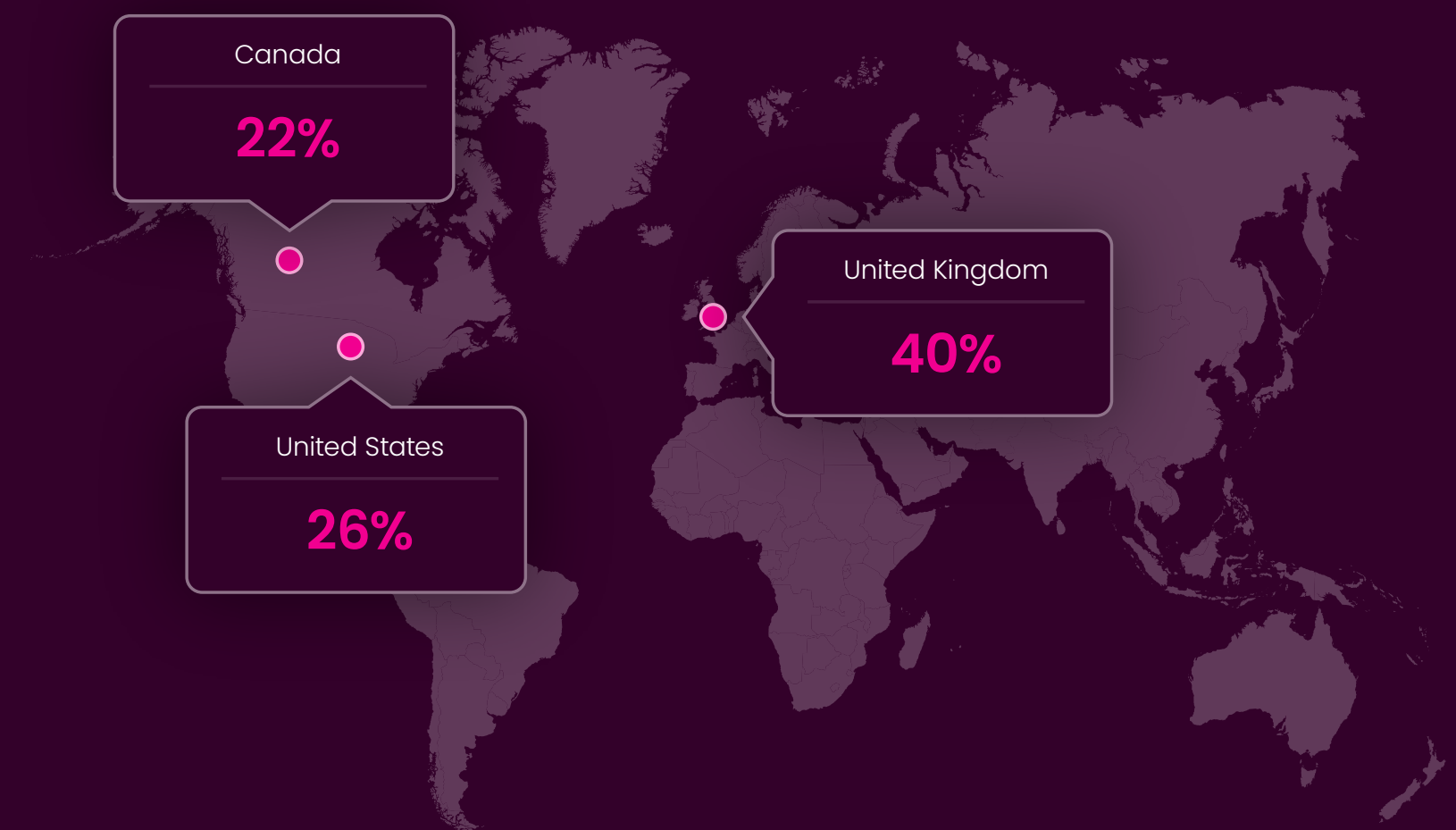
Canada
22%

United Kingdom
40%

United States
26%

Large enterprises face structural challenges that hamper ease of AI adoption

For 32% of large organizations (over 20,000 employees), AI exploration is a top three data management priority for 2025, compared to 24% of all respondents. However, structural barriers are hindering adoption for these organizations, with over half (54%) identifying AI implementation as a top challenge of those in these large businesses, compared to 43% of respondents overall. Other significant hurdles include integrating new technologies with existing systems and overcoming legacy system limitations.

Sector-specific challenges compound these difficulties. Industries like healthcare (63%), manufacturing (52%), and finance and banking (31%) report heightened concerns about legacy systems integration, driven by the critical need for accuracy and compliance. For these well-established sectors, existing technologies and legacy infrastructure present obstacles to embedding AI solutions company-wide and building robust AI governance frameworks.

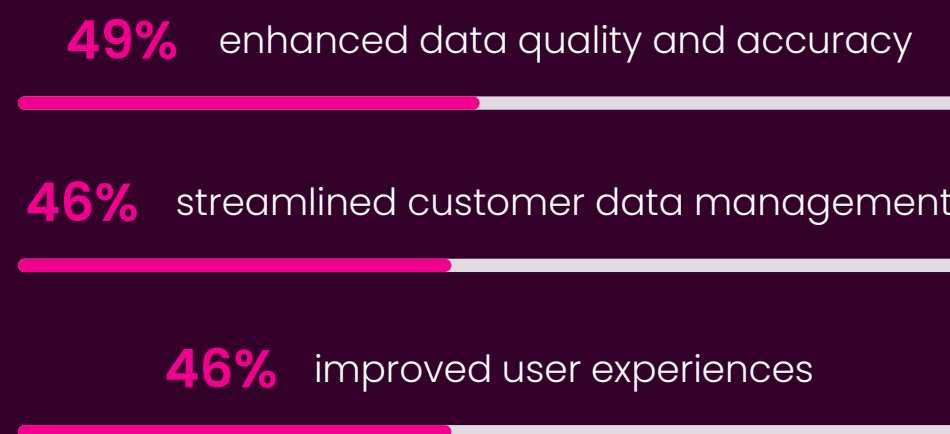## Healthcare organizations are more likely to face AI-related challenges

Healthcare organizations are particularly likely to face AI-related challenges. Nearly half (45%) rank AI implementation as a hurdle, compared to just 20% across other sectors such as finance, manufacturing, retail, and telecommunications. Additionally, 50% of healthcare respondents highlight the struggle to keep pace with rapid technological changes. Despite these barriers, the sector remains optimistic: 58% view AI as a pivotal tool for predictive analytics, enhancing data analysis and decision-making processes.

Across regions, AI is viewed as a useful tool for immediate efficiency gains and a transformative force in customer-facing and innovation areas. The primary drivers of AI adoption are improving operational efficiency (52%) and enhancing decision-making processes (30%).

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Global data leaders believe AI will have the most impact on customer services

Organizations are increasingly turning to AI to enhance efficiency and optimize processes, with many making notable progress in implementation. Encouragingly, the majority (77%) of AI-powered organizations report successful projects to date, underscoring the tangible value of their investment.
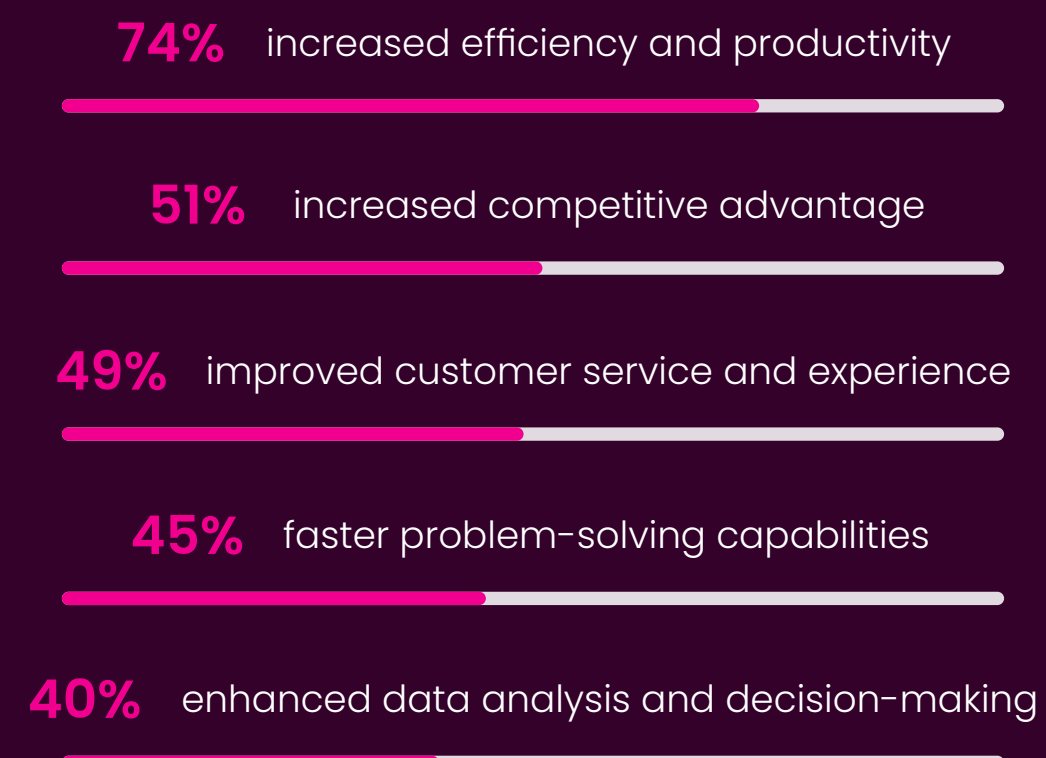
The primary drivers for AI adoption are improved operational efficiency (52%) and enhanced decision-making (42%). Additionally, a quarter (26%) of respondents also cite reducing human error as a key motivation. Efficiency is the top driver in the insurance sector (68%), while innovation is the main goal within healthcare (45%).

How AI will improve data management practices

49% enhanced data quality and accuracy

46% streamlined customer data management

46% improved user experiences

When it comes to anticipated benefits, 65% of respondents expect increased efficiency and productivity, an opportunity that is particularly emphasized in insurance (74%). Other benefits include improved customer service and experience (49%), and enhanced scalability of operations (45%). Nearly half of respondents (44%) also see AI as a means to gain a competitive advantage, a view held most strongly in the insurance sector (51%).

Anticipated benefits of AI in the insurance sector

74% increased efficiency and productivity

51% increased competitive advantage

49% improved customer service and experience

45% faster problem-solving capabilities

40% enhanced data analysis and decision-making

Customer service innovation (57%) emerges as the area where AI's transformative potential is expected to have the greatest impact, with 43% of respondents also highlighting its capacity to revolutionize product and service innovation. While customer service is seen as the area most transformed by AI, the tangible benefits are being realized primarily in operational efficiency and productivity gains. Achieving alignment between expected transformation and realized benefits underscores why AI adoption continues to grow, despite its challenges.

AI has the potential to revolutionize customer service

Smaller enterprises (those with under $1 billion in revenue) are significantly more optimistic (73%) about AI's potential in customer services than larger organizations (49%). This may reflect the pressure for smaller organizations to leverage AI for a competitive advantage, while larger organizations may already have integrated customer service tools and the ability to maximize their value.

Organizations in the early stages of adoption focus less on customer experience (40%), whereas those with AI embedded in areas of the business prioritize it heavily (71%). UK businesses were most likely to use AI to improve the customer experience (62%). In general, responses highlighted a gap between current AI deployment for customer services and its perceived transformative potential, indicating a potential opportunity to scale AI initiatives in this area to realize greater returns.

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Data leaders fear not implementing AI will cost them competitive advantage

In today's global, digital economy, the stakes for staying competitive are higher than ever. Over half (54%) of organizations fear that falling behind the competition is the greatest consequence of not implementing AI, underscoring its role as a critical driver and differentiator for business growth. With its dual capability to both manage data and drive actionable insights, AI's importance to competitiveness is becoming clear.

Data strategy primary decision makers are particularly concerned, with 72% warning that failing to adopt AI could leave their organizations at a significant disadvantage. Sector-specific concerns highlight belief in AI's transformative potential. In retail, 51% fear not implementing AI will hinder customer service innovation, while 47% of insurers believe it will hinder their ability to extract value from data.

Support for AI adoption varies among business leaders

Two-thirds (67%) of organizations report no internal resistance to AI adoption, signaling strong organizational alignment, with CTOs (55%) and CDOs (43%) being the most common champions for AI initiatives.

While most organizations anticipate these significant benefits from AI, not all leaders are fully supportive. Data strategy primary decision makers are most likely to meet with pushback (38%), encountering resistance from roles like the General Counsel (12%) and COO (10%).

In healthcare, resistance appears evenly distributed among CFOs, General Counsel, and CEOs (11% each). Meanwhile, insurance organizations report the most resistance from COOs, Chief Digital Officers, and Chief Analytics Officers (15% each). Despite these challenges, overall support for AI initiatives remains robust, with leaders broadly aligned and actively driving adoption.

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Data privacy and security concerns hinder AI projects

While AI offers transformative benefits, organizations are facing hurdles that slow AI progress. The greatest concern, cited by 43%, is data privacy and security, reflecting the widespread need to protect sensitive information and meet regulatory requirements.
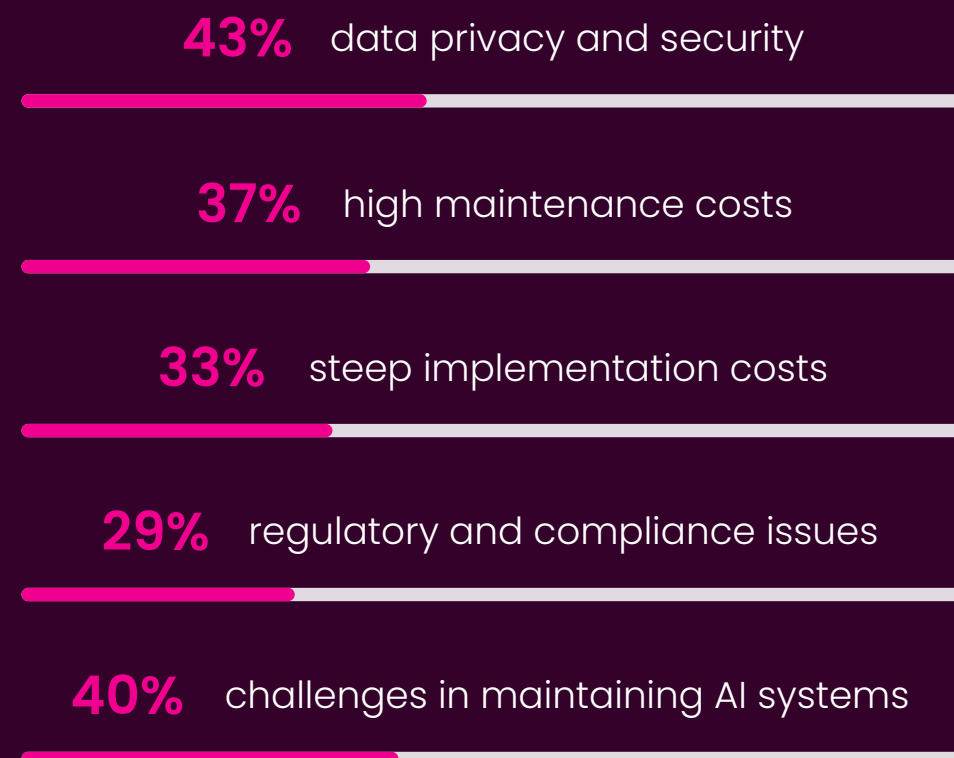
Ethical considerations also emerge as a critical issue that is highlighted by one-fifth (19%) of respondents. In sectors like healthcare, where there is a high volume of sensitive data, this concern rises to 39% among respondents. Similarly, 27% of organizations with AI integrated into multiple areas report heightened ethical concerns, indicating the nuanced challenges to widespread AI implementation.

These barriers to adoption emphasize the delicate balance organizations must strike between unlocking AI's potential to drive innovation and efficiency while addressing the critical privacy, security, cost, and ethical issues that accompany its integration. This underscores the need for data quality to be able to identify sensitive information and treat it appropriately. This will enable data leaders to achieve data trust and overcome these obstacles to effective AI deployment.

**AI regulation: strict frameworks divide data leaders**

AI regulation remains a topic of active debate among organizations. Over half (55%) of respondents agree that some regulation is necessary, recognizing its role in ensuring safety, ethics, and trust in AI systems.

However, over half (55%) perceive most existing regulatory frameworks as overly restrictive, and raise concerns about their potential to stifle innovation and hinder the operationalization of AI solutions. 43% advocate for strict regulation to address critical issues like data security and prevent disinformation.

At the same time, 31% of respondents are concerned that legislators don't understand AI and generative AI, while 39% are less worried and 30% had no opinion either way. This highlights the conflict facing policymakers and industry leaders – the need to mitigate risks associated with AI while enabling its transformative potential to flourish.

The tension between these perspectives underscores the need for balanced, industry-specific AI governance frameworks that address ethical and operational challenges without imposing undue constraints, fostering an environment where innovation and trust coexist.
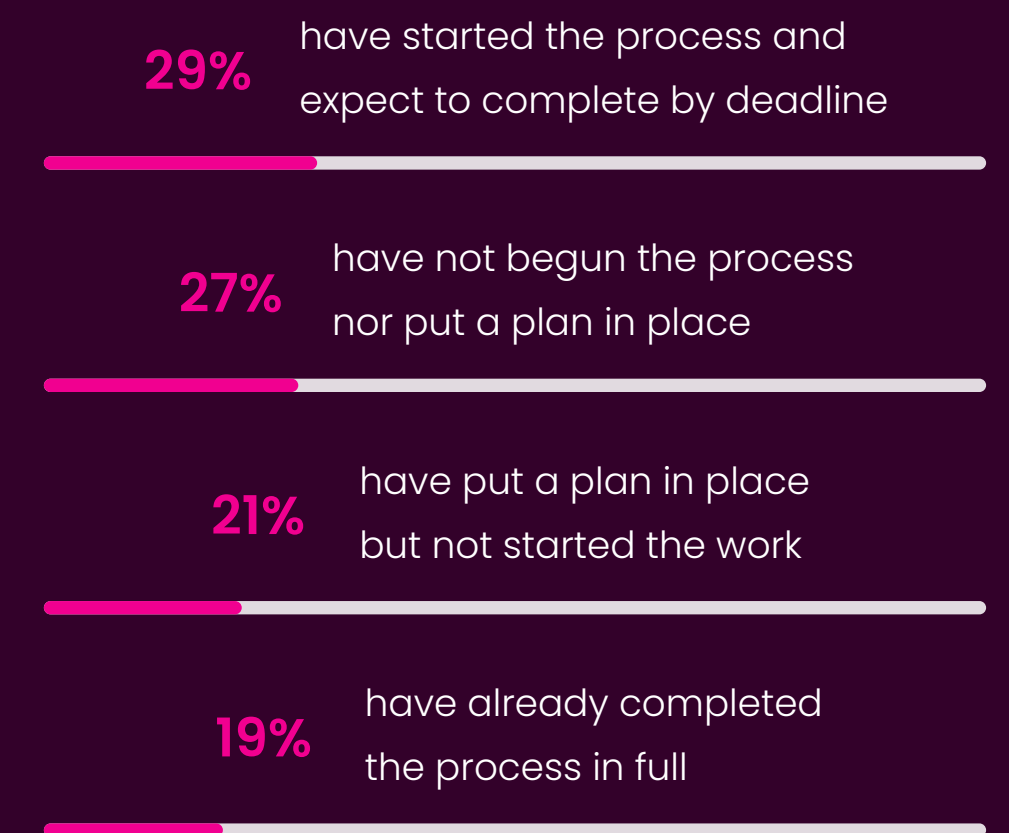
EU AI Act readiness
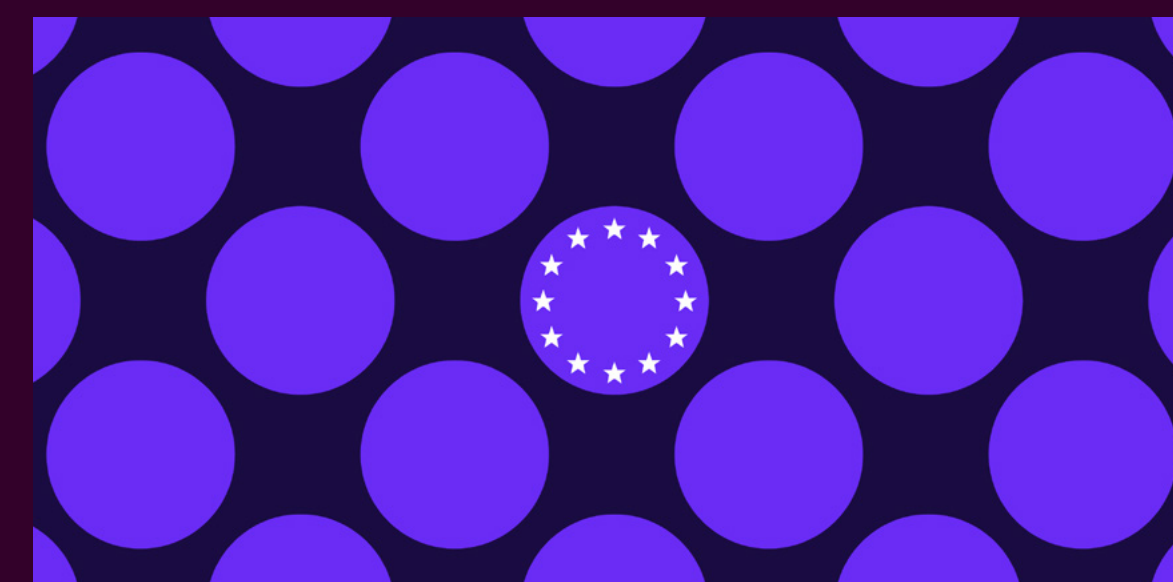
The EU AI Act, set to take effect in February 2025, represents one of the most comprehensive regulatory frameworks targeting AI usage. One critical requirement is the classification and tiering of AI systems by risk level, however, with the deadline fast approaching, just over half (59%)

of affected organizations are on track to comply with its requirements.

Enterprise readiness for EU AI Act

29% have started the process and expect to complete by deadline

27% have not begun the process nor put a plan in place

21% have put a plan in place but not started the work

19% have already completed the process in full

The relatively high rate of intended compliance indicates that organizations recognize the importance of AI governance. However, the significant proportion of organizations without plans are at risk of non-compliance, which could expose them to penalties and competitive disadvantages.

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Nurturing a data-driven culture for trustworthy AI

The rise of AI and advancements in data management are driving significant changes in organizational policies and workforce development programs. Data leaders are focused on democratizing access to trusted, quality data across their organization and encouraging business users to use the data to support their own projects.

90% understand the importance of data quality and data governance for trustworthy AI implementation

Leaders are supporting the creation of an internal culture in several ways:

> 37% offer specialized training in AI and data skills

> 30% use AI for personalized learning experiences

> 30% encourage cross-functional collaboration to bridge knowledge gaps

Developing technical AI and data skills is a priority in finance (42%) and manufacturing (44%). In healthcare, 45% of leaders focus on upskilling employees with both technical and soft skills, and 45% embed AI and data management expertise into job descriptions.

These efforts reflect a growing commitment to fostering an AI-first culture. Nearly all organizations (90%) recognize the critical role of data quality and governance in ensuring trustworthy and robust AI implementation.

One-quarter of organizations have no restrictions on shadow IT

AI governance is built on an organization's data strategy. Encouragingly, three-quarters of organizations (77%) have a policy to restrict employees from applying personal AI programs to their work. Another 78% maintain that their organization has controls in place to track what company data has been entered into personal and unmanaged AI tools, known as shadow IT.

This leaves one-third of organizations without clear governance over existing and new AI tools that employees could use for work purposes. Larger organizations (20K+ employees) face elevated risks with shadow IT (28%) compared to 13% of companies overall, reflecting the complexity of managing security in large-scale infrastructures.

Most organizations recognize the need for workforce and governance adjustments to ensure the responsible and effective use of AI. Expanding training programs, fostering collaboration across teams, and embedding AI governance into everyday workflows will be key to preparing employees to integrate AI seamlessly and securely into their roles.

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Conclusion

This report highlights a growing focus on the anticipated benefits of AI adoption among leadership, contrasted with broader concerns about data quality, operational efficiency, and data privacy and security. The potential of AI is recognized by most business leaders, yet budget restrictions and compliance requirements are among the practical challenges that prevent organizations from seeing AI projects become truly transformative.

Nonetheless, there is still optimism and confidence among data leaders who feel they can progress their AI plans through 2025, and be able to demonstrate valuable business outcomes.

Leaders pursuing a data-driven, trustworthy AI strategy should consider tackling the key challenges that are impeding AI progress internally:

Align priorities across leaders and teams

Bridge the gap between leadership's strategic focus on AI adoption and broader operational priorities like data quality. Ensure all business leaders support all teams in the responsible use of AI for business purposes.

Invest in AI readiness

Address funding gaps and focus resources on scaling infrastructure to manage growing data volumes and AI-driven workflows.

Establish a clear data governance framework

Ensure internal readiness for AI adoption with strict governance and monitoring to mitigate risks posed by shadow IT and maintain data privacy, security and ethics.

Reframe data trust as a strategic opportunity

Data quality plays a critical role in delivering on the promise of AI. Businesses with established data trust will take the lead in using AI to improve customer experience, fuel product innovation, and maximise sales and marketing performance.

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How can we help?

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Unified data trust platform

The Ataccama ONE unified data trust platform is a full-featured, versatile solution that empowers data teams to monitor, manage, and utilize data to enhance security and compliance, and expand their customer value and footprint. Its easy-to-use interface is designed for business and technical users, boosting productivity, strengthening security, and empowering users to derive greater business value from their data assets. **The Forrester Research Total Economic Impact Report** calculated that Ataccama ONE delivers a minimum of 348% ROI over three years.

ONE ✦ AI Agent

The Ataccama ONE AI Agent is the first independent data companion of its kind and a significant leap forward in autonomous AI for data management. The Ataccama ONE AI Agent is part of the Ataccama ONE data trust platform and fundamentally changes and accelerates data management by independently executing complex tasks with minimal guidance. The agent intelligently chooses the best approach for assigned tasks, self-corrects as necessary, manages the complex data requirements independently and delivers transparent outputs for users to review. Gartner has named Ataccama an Emerging Specialist in the **Gartner 2024 Innovative Guide to Generative AI Technologies.**

For more information on data trust and Ataccama solutions, please visit **ataccama.com**

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Research methodology

Senior leaders

All participants were senior leaders or department heads in data-led functions

300 qualified participants

150 in United States, 50 in Canada and 100 in United Kingdom

35+

All respondents were aged 35 and older

Online quantitative research suvey

Undertaken by Hanover Research

$500m + revenue

Participants were employed in organizations generating $500M+ annual revenue

2024

Research survery conducted in September and October, 2024

8 industries represented

> Banking/finance
> Business services
> Healthcare
> Insurance
> Manufacturing
> Retail
> Software
> Telecommunications

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