BARC

# Lessons From the Leading Edge

## Successful Delivery of AI/GenAI

BARC Research Study

Research sponsored by:

Bigeye

# Authors


## Merv Adrian | BARC Fellow

With over 40 years in IT, Merv Adrian has experience as a programmer, marketing and strategy director, IT market analyst, and research executive. As a BARC Fellow, his focus includes mapping the DBMS, big data, and NoSQL landscape. Previously, he managed all technology research at Forrester and served as a research vice president and vendor lead at Gartner, roles that provided him with deep insights into software and cloud-based architectures, which he continues to leverage as an analyst and BARC Fellow.

**Contact**

**Mail**: madrian@barc.com

www.barc.com

**Social Media:**
LinkedIn



## Shawn Rogers | CEO BARC US, BARC Fellow

Shawn has over 28 years of international experience as an industry analyst, thought leader, speaker, author, and instructor on data, business intelligence (BI), analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and cloud technologies. His former analyst roles and executive strategy positions with enterprise software firms give him a unique industry perspective.

Shawn is a published author and has co-written two industry-leading books, “Social Data Analytics” and the latest, “Analytics: How to Win with Intelligence.” He was named one of the Top 50 Global Thought Leaders on Analytics 2023 by Thinkers360.

**Contact**

**Mail**: srogers@barc.com

www.barc.com

**Social Media:**
LinkedIn

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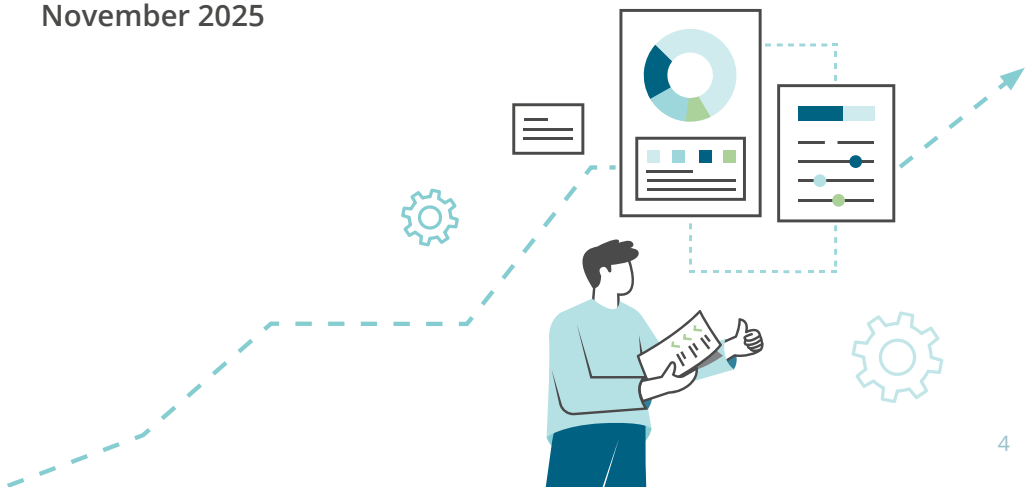
# Foreword

As enterprises accelerate their adoption of AI and GenAI, the need for trustworthy, well-governed data has never been more urgent. Bigeye's focus on accelerating AI Trust by unifying data observability, lineage, and agentic AI governance—aligns directly with what this year's BARC research makes unmistakably clear: AI cannot be effective, safe, or scalable without a foundation of data that enterprises can trust. As AI systems take on more consequential roles in business operations, the integrity, transparency, and governance of the underlying data now represent critical enterprise risks. Trustworthy AI is no longer a vision of maturity; it is the minimum standard for responsible and compliant AI deployment.

This year's research reveals a dramatic shift in organizational experience: data issues have evolved from background concerns to the primary barrier limiting AI impact. Data trust failures such as inconsistent lineage, opaque transformations, and undetected drift now pose greater challenges than skills gaps or high costs. With 44% of global respondents citing data quality–related obstacles as their top impediment, more than double the previous year, the message is clear: when organizations cannot verify the trustworthiness of their data, accuracy degrades, hallucination risks rise, and confidence in AI outcomes quickly erodes. In the AI era, "garbage in, garbage out" becomes more than a warning—it becomes an enterprise exposure amplified at machine scale.

These findings reinforce why enterprises are increasingly turning to platforms that help them create trustworthy data to scale their AI initiatives confidently. Bigeye's AI Trust platform supports this shift by improving the quality of the data that feeds AI models, providing transparent end-to-end lineage, and enforcing runtime governance for agentic AI workflows. As organizations scale AI initiatives into 2026 and beyond, one conclusion stands out: AI systems can only be as reliable as the trustworthiness of the data behind them. Building AI on data that is reliable, transparent and secure from the start is the foundation for confident, compliant, and enterprise-grade AI at scale.

**Bigeye**
**November 2025**



# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

## 1 Highlight – AI leaders accomplished more

In 2024, BARC identified leaders in maturity for AI implementations based on the status of their organizational plans in seven key areas: leadership, policies, oversight, architecture, legal, security, and data access. In 2025, we revisited the maturity of the same issues among organizations with implementations in production. The percentage of respondents qualifying as leaders declined slightly, which was a bit surprising given all the attention on AI, but the value of leadership was dramatically reaffirmed.

Simply put, leaders are demonstrably more effective: they were nearly twice as likely to have more than five projects in production (53% compared to 28% for non-leaders), and three times as likely to have 10 or more (30% to 10%). Responses to detailed questions in multiple categories such as compliance, model bias, and costs showed that 2025 production leaders manifested different behavior from 2024 planners, likely based on their implementation experiences, and BARC believes that these changes improved their effectiveness. Organizations should be focusing on evolving their leadership qualities as quickly as possible.

## 2 Highlight – IT isn't your best partner

Internal IT has traditionally been the go-to partner when technology disruptors create opportunities in the enterprise. It is not surprising the data shows that companies deploying AI projects align with IT almost immediately to deliver these projects.

An insight from this research highlights that as companies go beyond initial/early projects, they begin to engage with outside third-party experts, such as regional and global consulting firms.

The reason for the shift is surprising. Respondents to the survey ranked internal IT teams last in terms of overall satisfaction. 22% of respondents were somewhat or very dissatisfied with their experience using IT as a resource when delivering AI projects.

# Executive Summary

## 3 Highlight – AI costs are a concern

Understanding what "success" means to a leading organization is a useful guide for vendors and users alike. Overall, managing costs was the second-highest-rated measurement of success (cited by 30%) in 2025, rising from 7th place among planners in 2024. Customer satisfaction outpaced costs (36% listed it), rising slightly from 3rd place the prior year. Alignment to business goals retained its position in the top three. None of these is a surprise: delivery drivers change perspective in all project deployments. On-time delivery rose from 12th place to 8th.

One concerning change: Accuracy and trust, the leading issue among planners last year, dropped to 5th place in production responses in 2025. It's important for organizations to maintain their focus on such issues, and encouraging that data protection and auditability has retained its position.

The increased scrutiny on cost is both inevitable and indicative of the growing maturity of AI as a strategic topic: the industry is clearly moving beyond "whatever it takes, get on board" thinking to a more measured approach.

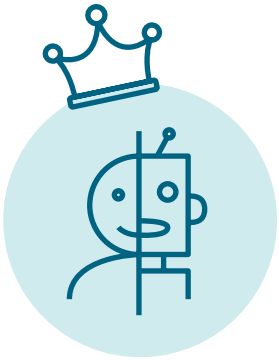
## 4 Highlight – Responsible AI priorities are shifting

As companies deploy greater numbers of projects, responsible AI priorities are evolving. Significant changes are evident—measures of privacy and compliance are rising significantly. However, other issues such as risk management and data bias, along with human-AI collaboration, are declining in importance. This suggests a troubling concern. Organizations may be too focused on immediate delivery considerations while discounting long-term impacts.

# Survey Results

Survey Results

# AI Leadership



# AI Maturity – AI Leaders

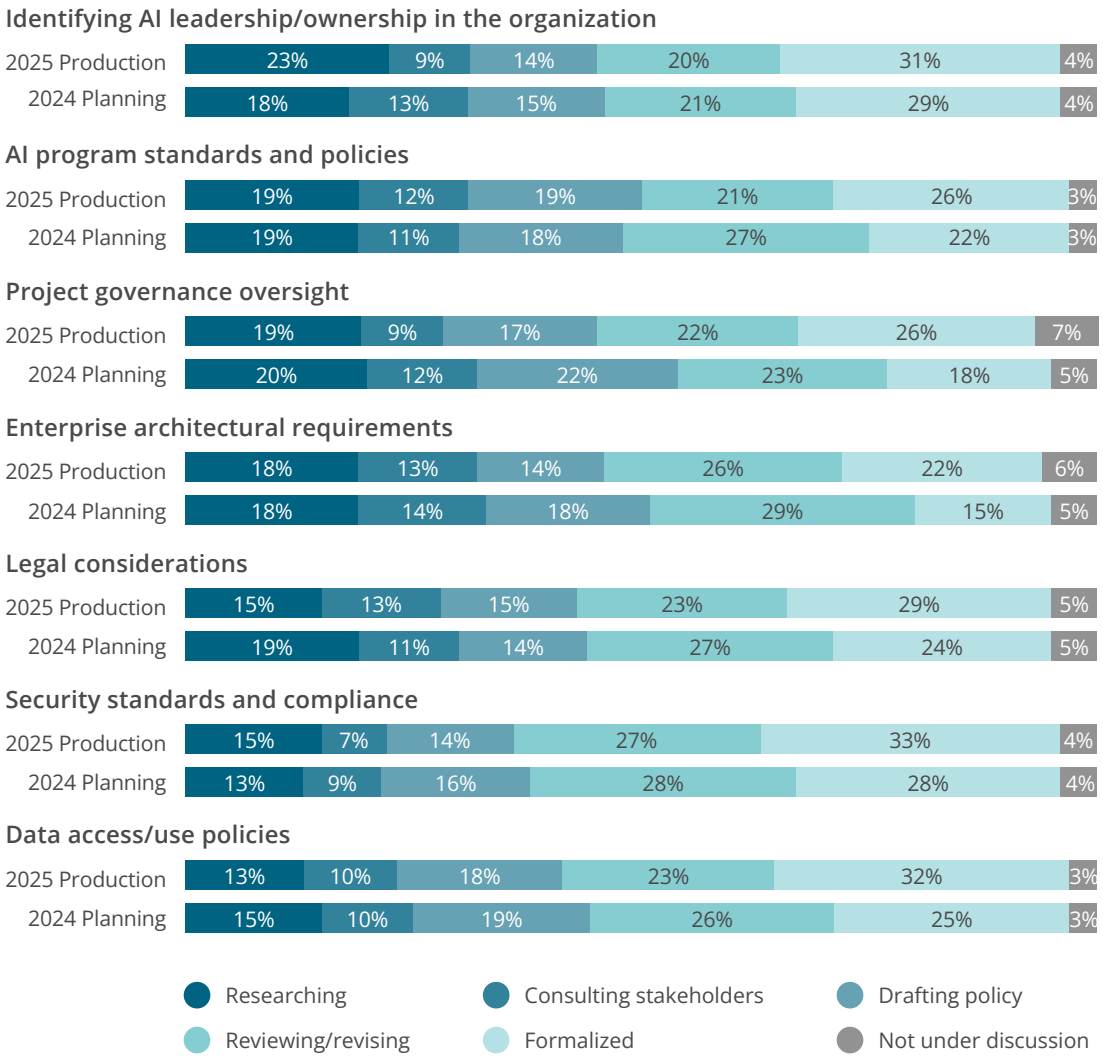



**Figure 1:** At what stage is your organization regarding these critical AI planning/process initiatives? (n=408)

## Viewpoint

BARC began tracking AI leaders in late 2023, highlighting them in the survey *Optimizing Your Architecture for AI Innovation* in March 2024. In that survey, 335 global respondents shared their insights and 20.5% of them qualified as "high readiness," later named "AI leaders" in this year's report.

BARC defines AI leaders as respondents/companies that have formalized or are reviewing/revising programs that support the following seven foundational AI capabilities: Identifying AI leadership/ownership in the organization, AI program standards and policies, project governance oversight, enterprise architecture requirements, legal considerations, security standards and compliance, and data access and use policies.

Survey data illustrates that leaders are doing more projects, going beyond early-stage project challenges, and are often delivering more sophisticated projects.

In BARC's recent research *Preparing and Delivering Data for AI*, published in August 2025, the percentage of leaders stayed nearly the same at 21% with a similar global respondent panel of 331.

For the research discussed here, BARC surveyed 421 global respondents, 19.5% of whom were classed as leaders, indicating that this is less of a maturity issue and more of a strategic one. The roughly 80% of respondents not attaining leadership status was expected to rise over time but, after three surveys it is clear that most companies are rushing into AI without investing in these foundational criteria. BARC's view is that this will curtail advancement in AI, slow innovation, and increase risk.

# Project Deployment Status

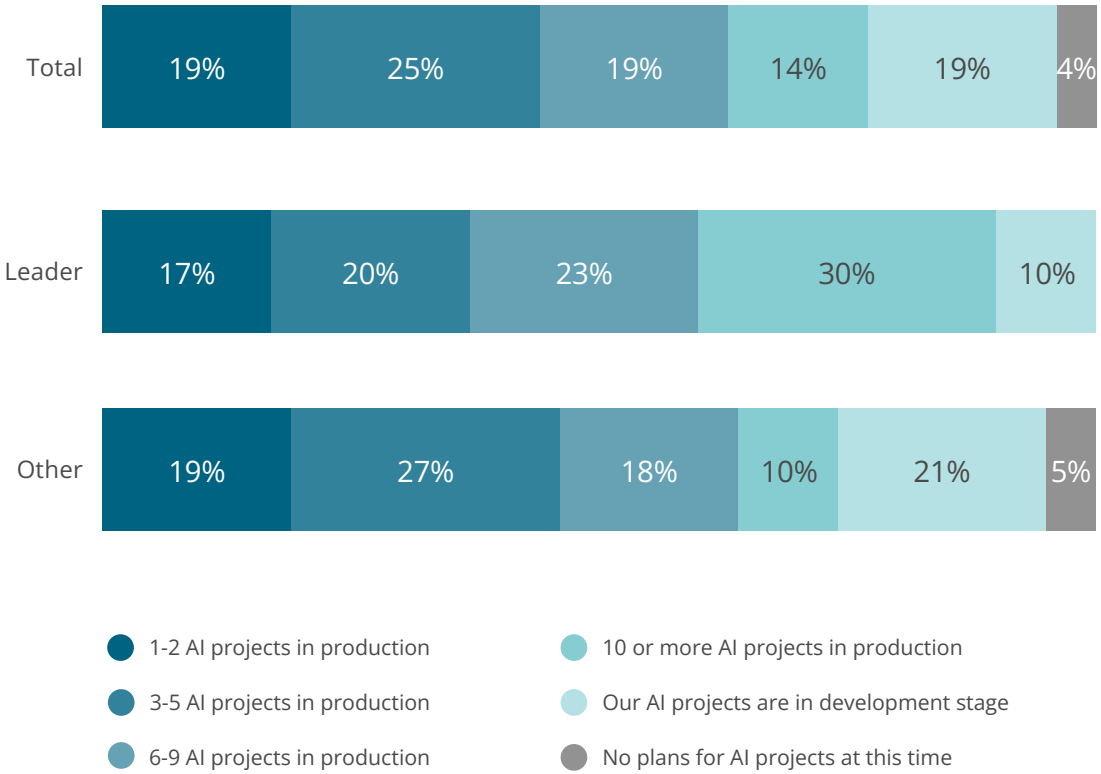



**Figure 2:** Describe the deployment status of your organization´s AI projects. (n=405)

## Viewpoint

The maturity of leaders makes them significantly more productive: they are nearly twice as likely to have more than five projects in production (53% compared to 28% for non-leaders), and three times as likely to have 10 or more (30% to 10%). Leaders manifested different behavior and policy patterns than 2024 planners, likely based on their implementation experiences.

The shifts in attention seen in this study's results to the importance of costs, the type of model usage, delivery resources, and compliance are all tightly linked to effective delivery.

Survey Results

# Lessons Learned

# Measuring Success of AI Projects

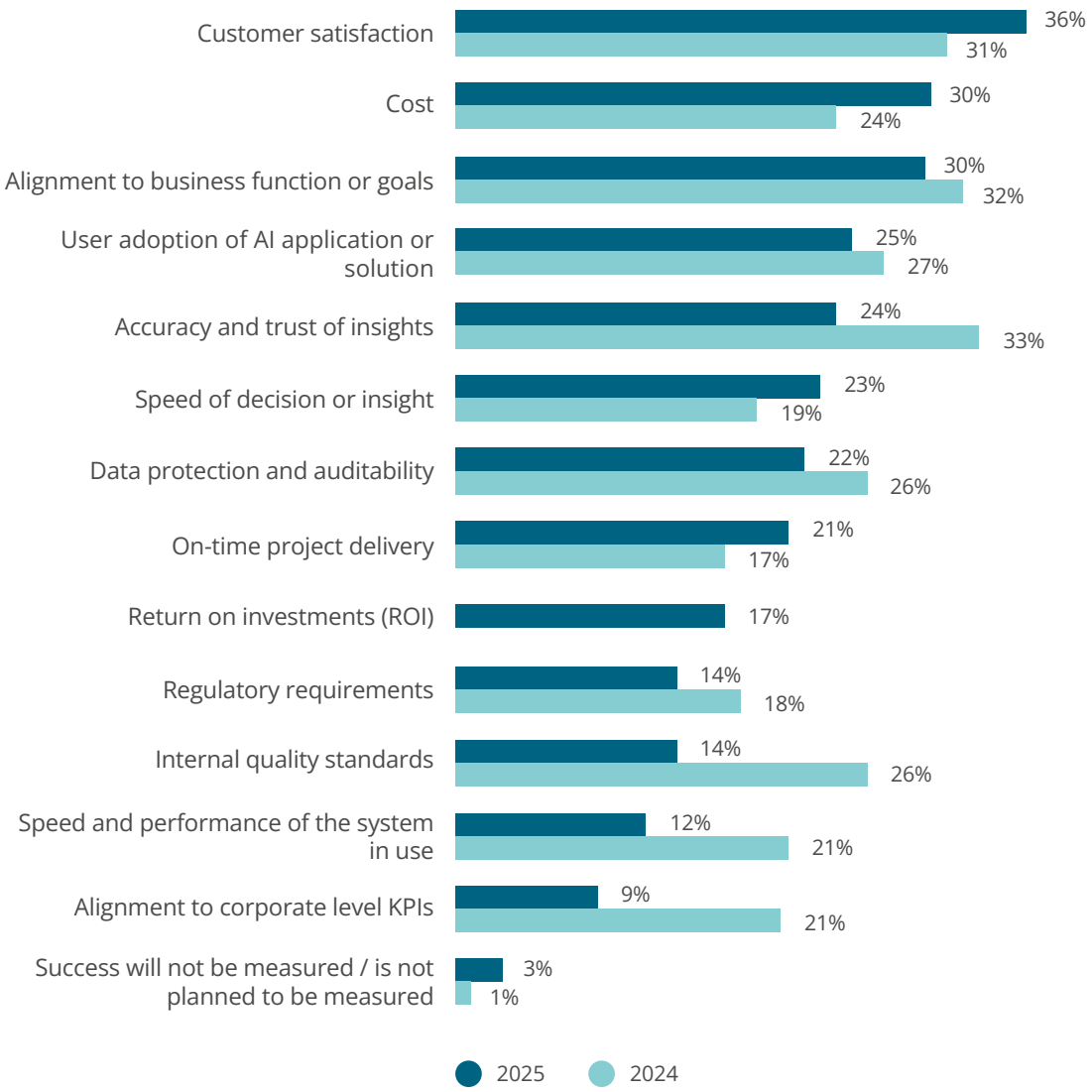



**Figure 3:** How does your organization measure success with AI-driven projects? (n=398)

## Viewpoint

Measuring success is a metric with significant shifts between how respondents intended to measure project success in 2024 versus the top priorities from respondents in 2025.

Accuracy and trust of insights (33%), alignment to business function(s) or goals (32%), and customer satisfaction (31%) were the leading answers in BARC's earlier research: *Optimizing Your Architecture for AI Innovation* published in March 2024. In 2025, customer satisfaction has taken the top spot with 36% of the respondents. Alignment to business function(s) or goals dropped a spot to third but didn't statistically shift, landing at 30% of respondents.

The big change is overall project costs (24% in 2024), which is now ranked second on the list at 30%. As companies advance in their AI journey, rising project costs have become more apparent, making cost management a key success metric and top concern for our respondents.

# Departments Supporting AI Projects

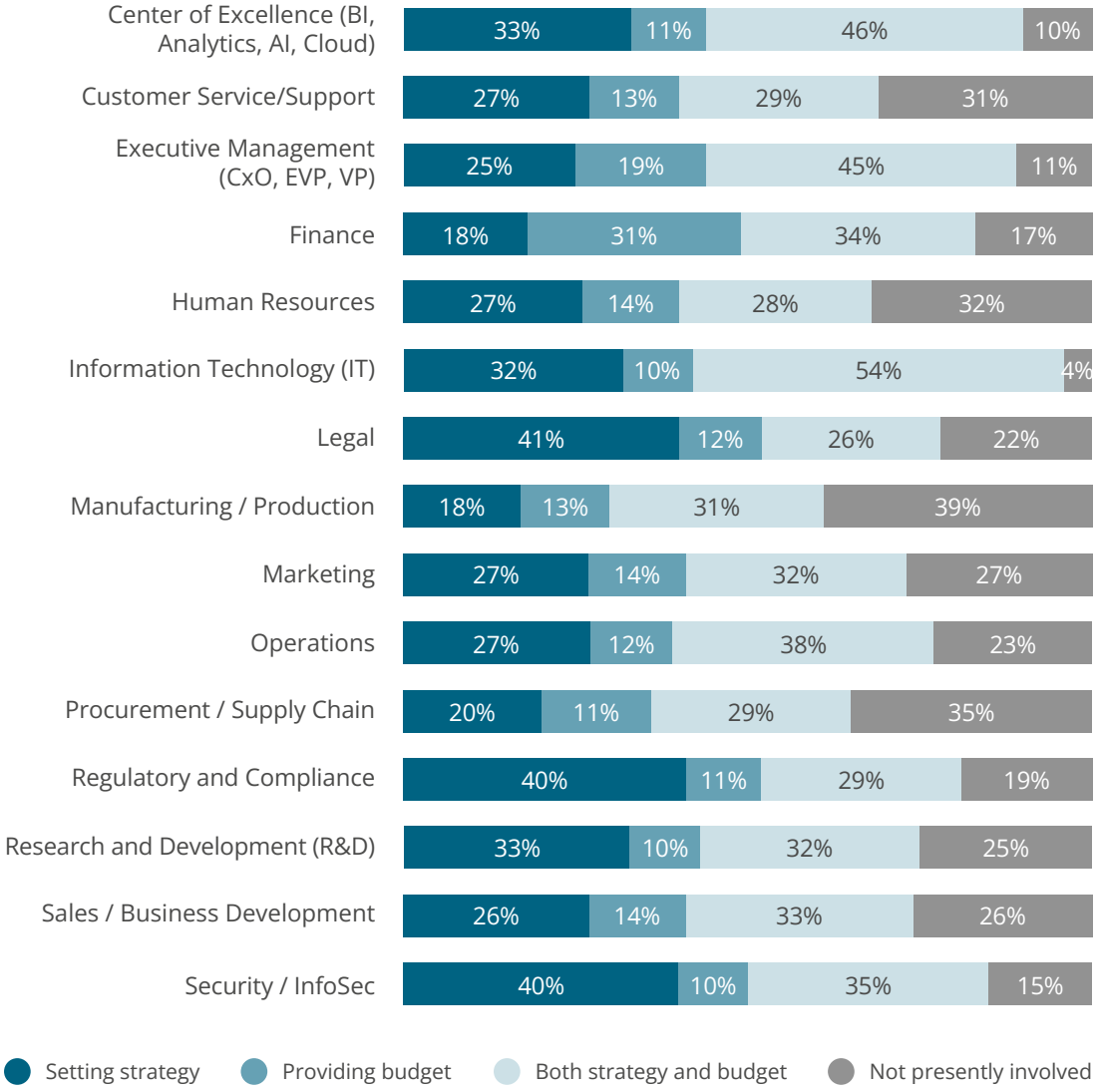



**Figure 4:** Which other department(s) in your organization are involved in AI projects? (n=386)

## Viewpoint

All departments in enterprise-sized companies are interested and engaged with AI projects. Fear of missing out (FOMO), top-down pressure from the executive suite to innovate, along with substantial cost savings through AI have captured everyone's attention.

Understanding where the supporting funds are and which departments are driving projects is important.

Legal (41%), regulatory (40%), and security/infosec (40%) are all nearly tied as departments setting strategy for AI projects.

From a departmental funding perspective, finance (31%) and executive management (19%) are the top departments controlling budgets for AI projects.

The data gets more interesting as you analyze the combined power of strategy coupled with budget control. In this case, IT is leading the combined category with 54%. IT is the default partner for respondents delivering AI projects. Keep reading this report to understand why that may be a problematic strategy.

European (52%) and North American respondents (56%) identified IT in a similar fashion for the combined category of strategy and budget.

# Obstacles to AI Success

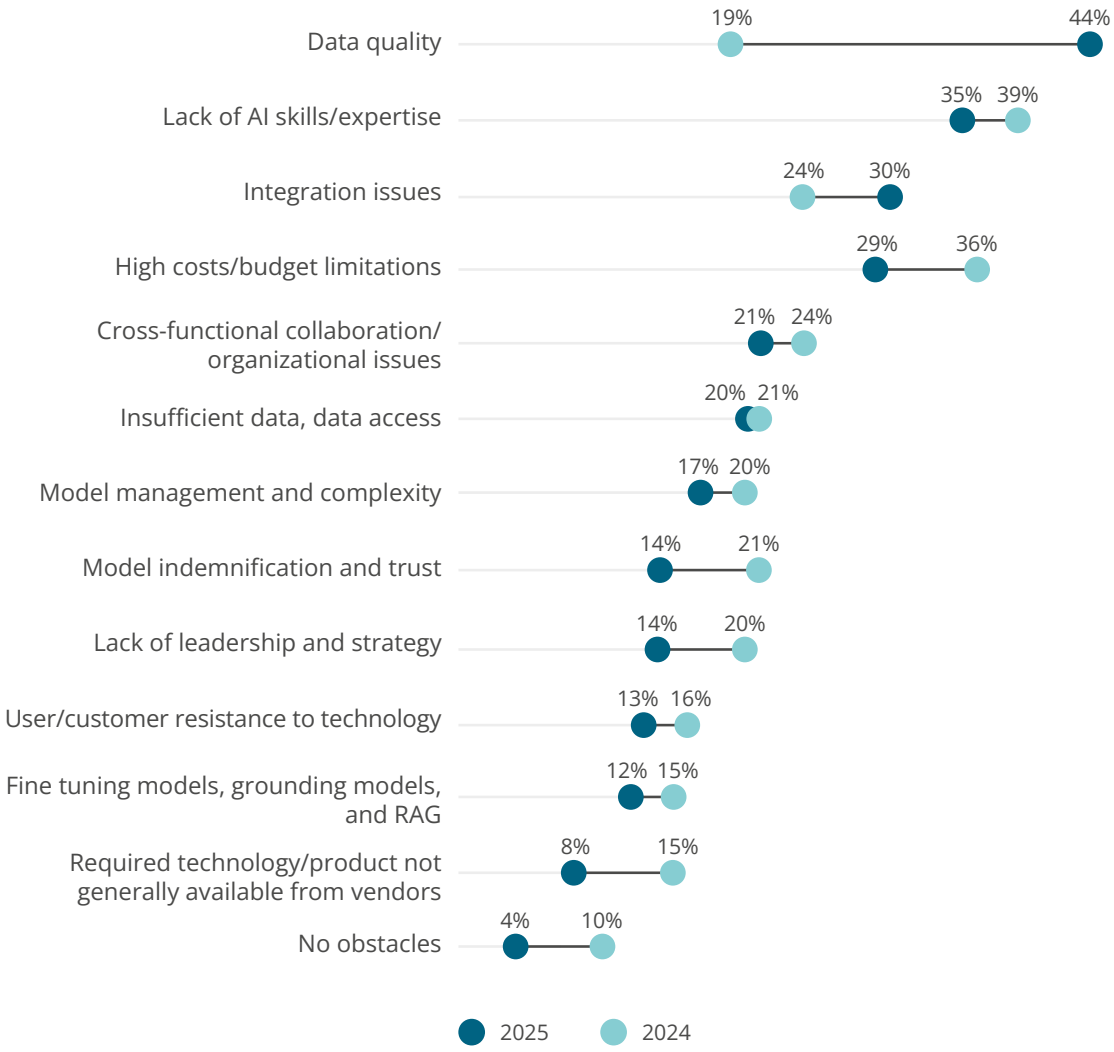



**Figure 5:** What obstacles slowed/stopped your organization from delivering on your AI projects? (n=408)

## Viewpoint

BARC's 2024 research identified lack of AI skills/expertise, high costs/budget limitations, and cross-functional collaboration/ organizational issues as the top obstacles.

In the intervening period, this perspective has changed dramatically. Data quality has jumped ahead of all other obstacles. The 2024 results ranked data quality at 19%, in the bottom third of listed challenges. As more projects were delivered, data quality rose to the number one obstacle in 2025 for success in AI projects with 44% of respondents listing it as the top challenge.

The old adage of "garbage in equals garbage out" holds true for AI just as it does for traditional analytics. Poor data quality impacts context of outputs and certainly accuracy. The lesson here is that failure to address ongoing data quality issues will limit your company's ability to deliver impactful AI projects.

European respondents rank data quality as the top obstacle, 15 percentage points more than their North American peers. North American respondents struggle with integration issues 20 percentage points more than European respondents. Further analysis shows that leaders struggle with data quality at a similar rate to all others.

Data quality as an obstacle should be top of mind for respondents as they move forward to deliver more projects and has become a limiting factor to many in 2025.

# Skill Set Strategy

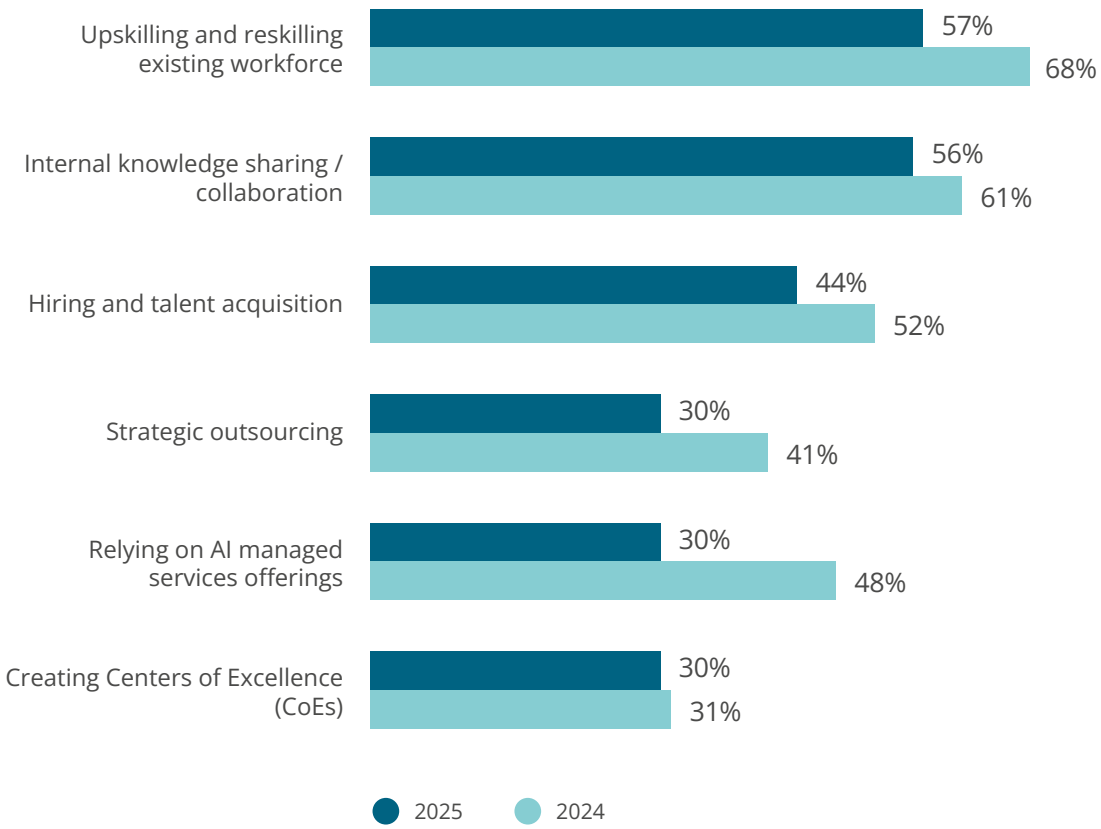



**Figure 6:** Select the top 3 strategies your organization utilized to address the AI skills gap. (n=293)

## Viewpoint

Skills gaps are the perennial challenge in new technology adoption, and upskilling and reskilling employees remains the first choice to meet them among production shops. However, relying on managed services has dropped quite dramatically (from 48% to 30%). It is not clear from these results whether the quality of these services, or simply their (lack of) availability, is the key factor.

In general, European respondents are far more likely to focus on using existing staff, while North American organizations are three times as likely to see hiring new employees as the best path.

Overall, every category dropped between 2024 and 2025, reflecting the fact that plans and delivery are quite different: wherever you look for the skills you need, it is likely to be more challenging than you expect.

# Cost Impact

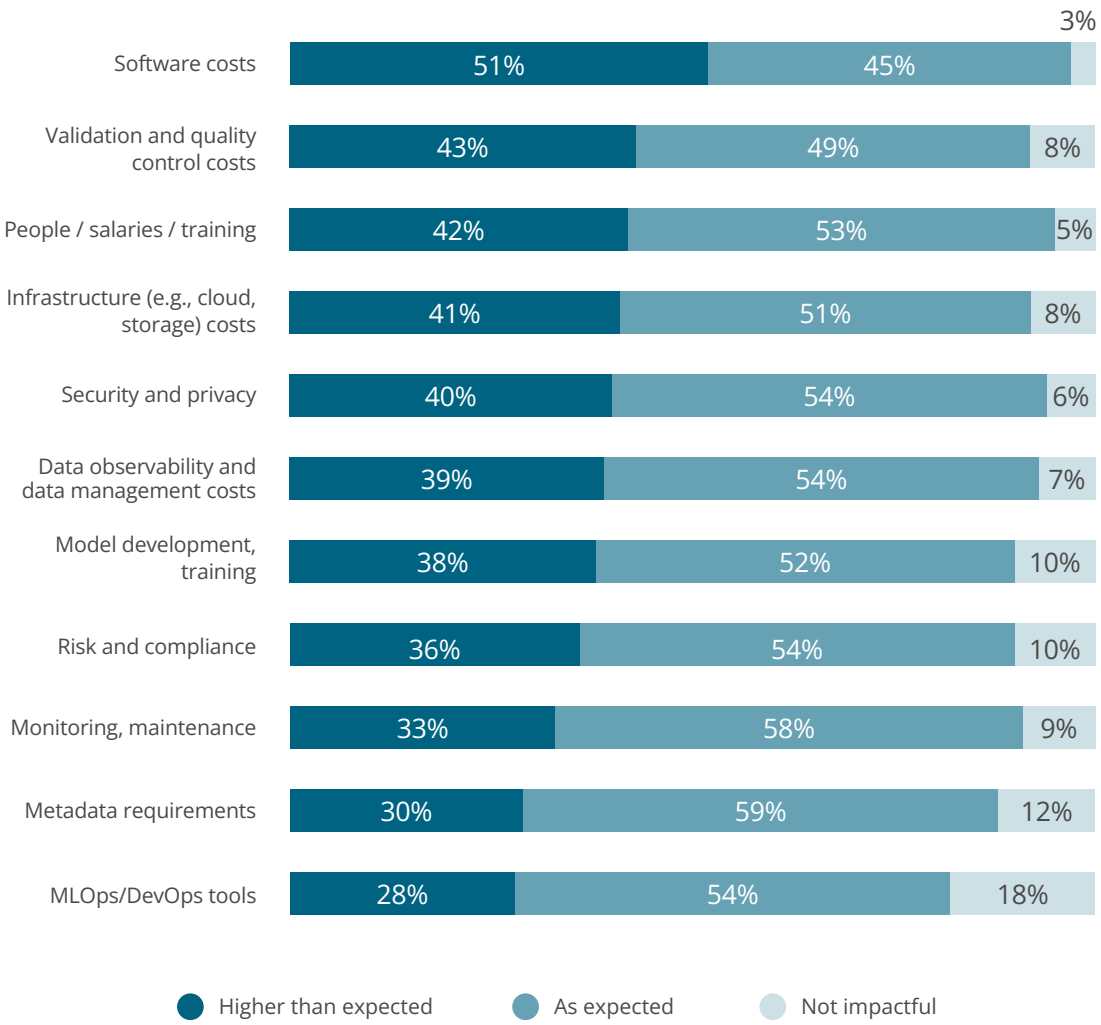



**Figure 7:** You selected high costs / budget limitations as a challenge. How did the following costs impact your projects? (n=309)

## Viewpoint

Cost is a leading challenge to AI projects for a variety of reasons. BARC identified it as a growing concern in our research from March 2024. At that time, AI leaders ranked it as their top challenge while others were still working to overcome skill set challenges.

In this research, we dive deeper into the topic to identify where the costs are and how these costs align with user expectations.

Respondents identified software costs (51%) as having the biggest impact on their projects. Validation and quality control costs (43%) and people/salaries/training (42%) were ranked second and third.

56% of leaders also experienced higher than expected software costs, representing the top unexpected costs for this cohort.

By contrast, MLOps/DevOps tool costs threw up few surprises for respondents deploying projects. 72% stated that these costs were as expected or not impactful for their projects.

North American respondents were twice as likely to face unexpected costs with people/salaries/training compared to their European peers.

# AI Cost Mitigation Strategies

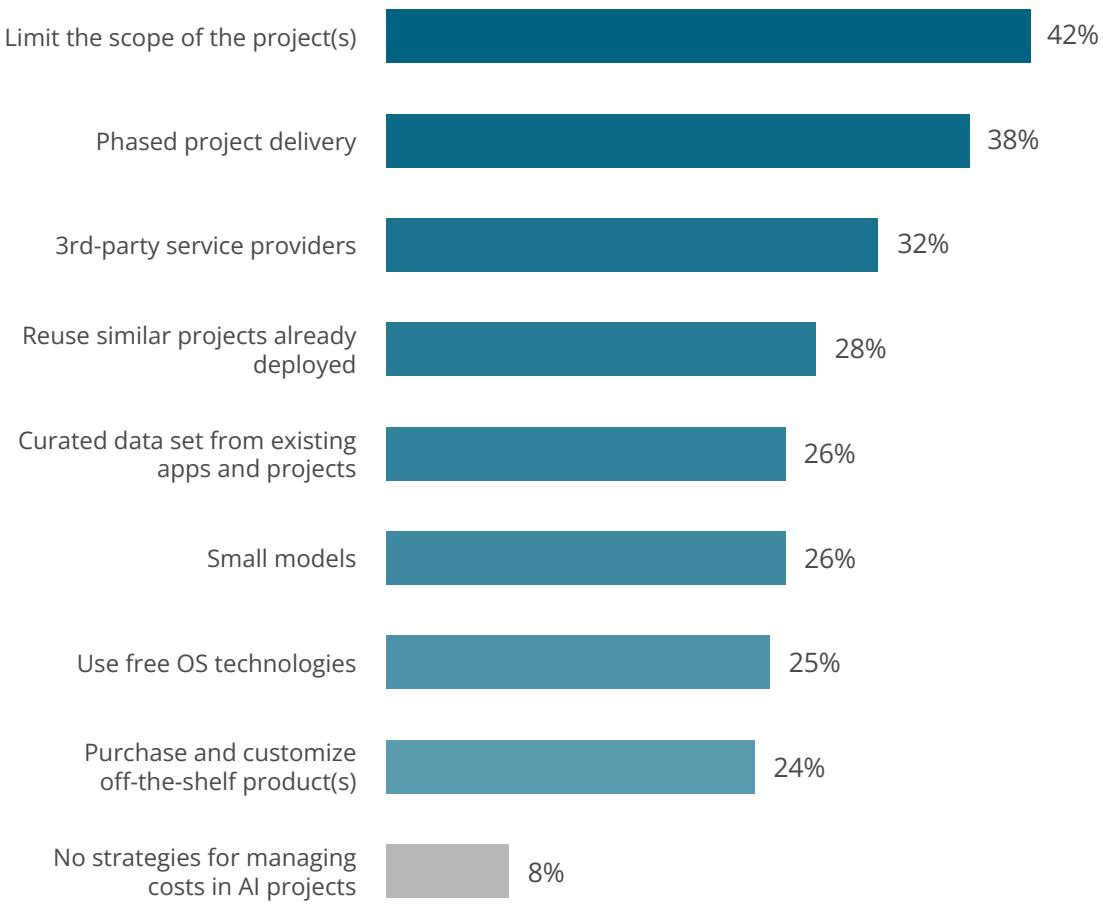



**Figure 8:** Select your organization's top three strategies for managing cost in AI projects. (n=402)

## Viewpoint

The cost of software exceeded expectations for 51% of respondents. No doubt this is one of the reasons for cost becoming more prominent in success measurement. Given how "soft" some of the other choices are, this result—for a component with seemingly known prices and mostly familiar vendors—is a surprise.

In response, cost containment strategies did not focus on the software pricing directly—for example, only 20% said they would opt for free software—but rather on conventional techniques such as limiting project scope, phased delivery, and reuse of existing projects. Using small models, which we discuss below, is one direct software cost approach, but like purchase-and-customize, was well down the list.

Organizations seem to be focused on defining their projects right and hoping that will mitigate software expenses. Leader skills should be well suited to making this work, but our data does not yet show that they have.

Survey Results

# Who Is Doing the Work?

# Primary Resources for AI Projects

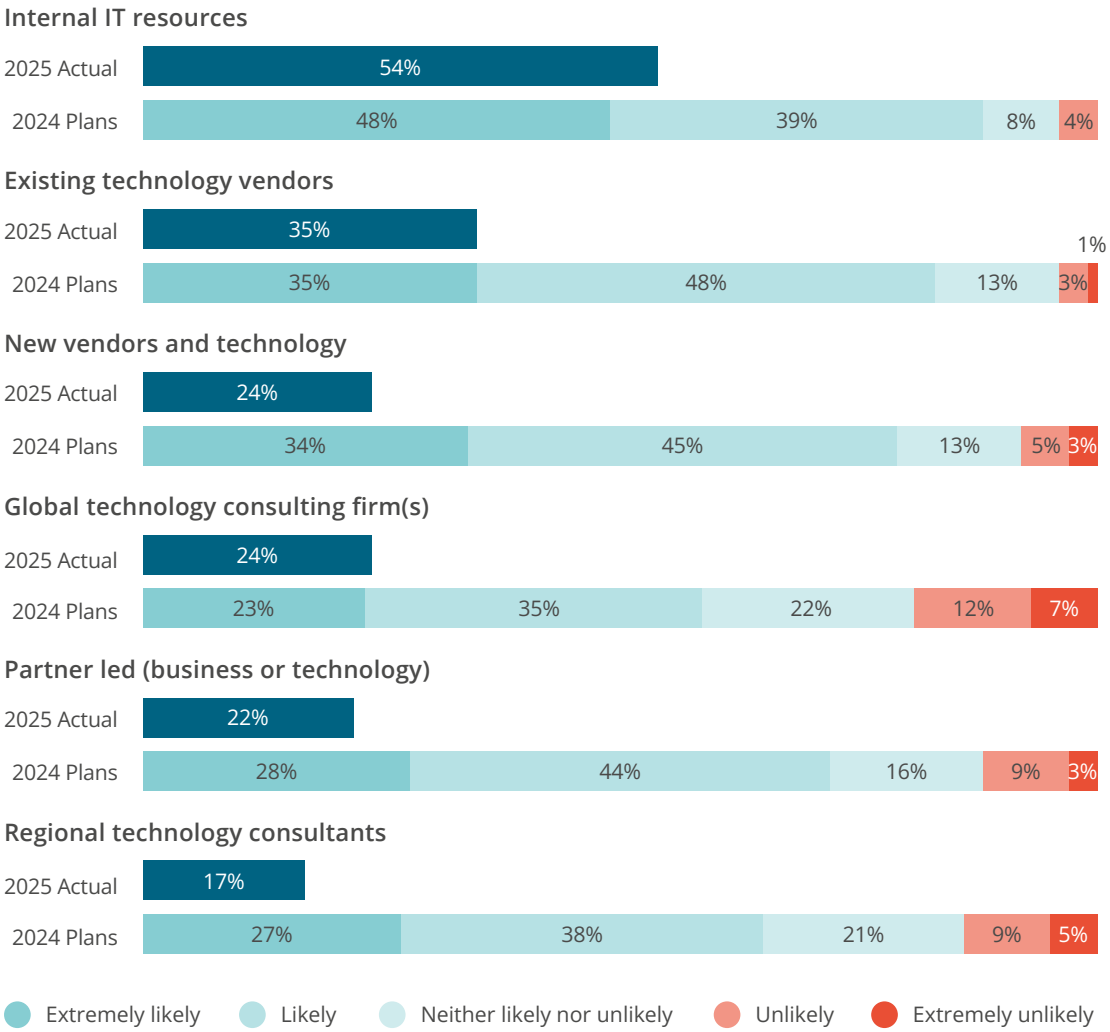



**Figure 9: 2025:** Which of the following resources played the primary role in driving the AI projects your company has deployed? (n=400)

**2024:** Which of the following resources will support/enable your company's AI innovation strategy? (n=335)

## Viewpoint

AI projects often take a village to deploy. In BARC's 2024 research, the "extremely likely" response in this chart was a good indicator of where/who companies expected to rely on for expertise to deploy.

In 2025, we asked respondents who had deployed projects which resources played a primary role in driving AI projects. Internal IT resources ranked first with 54% of respondents, followed by reliance on existing (35%) and new technology vendors (24%).

In BARC's 2024 research study—*Optimizing Your Architecture for AI Innovation*—we identified that customers were willing to wait for their technology vendor partners to assist them with early AI projects as they brought AI technology to the market. The alignment with trusted vendors in this report is an extension of that strategy.

Comparing these results to how AI leaders responded shows that they relied on IT (63%) and existing vendors slightly less at 33%.

European respondents are most heavily reliant on internal IT resources: 72% of respondents ranked IT first as a deployment resource, nearly twice as often as existing technology vendors at 38%.

When comparing these results to respondents who have deployed more than three projects, there is a trend that identifies growth in the use of regional and global systems integrators. This indicates that as companies mature, they are bringing in outside resources to help. We explore how well these strategies work in the following pages.

# Impact From Global SIs

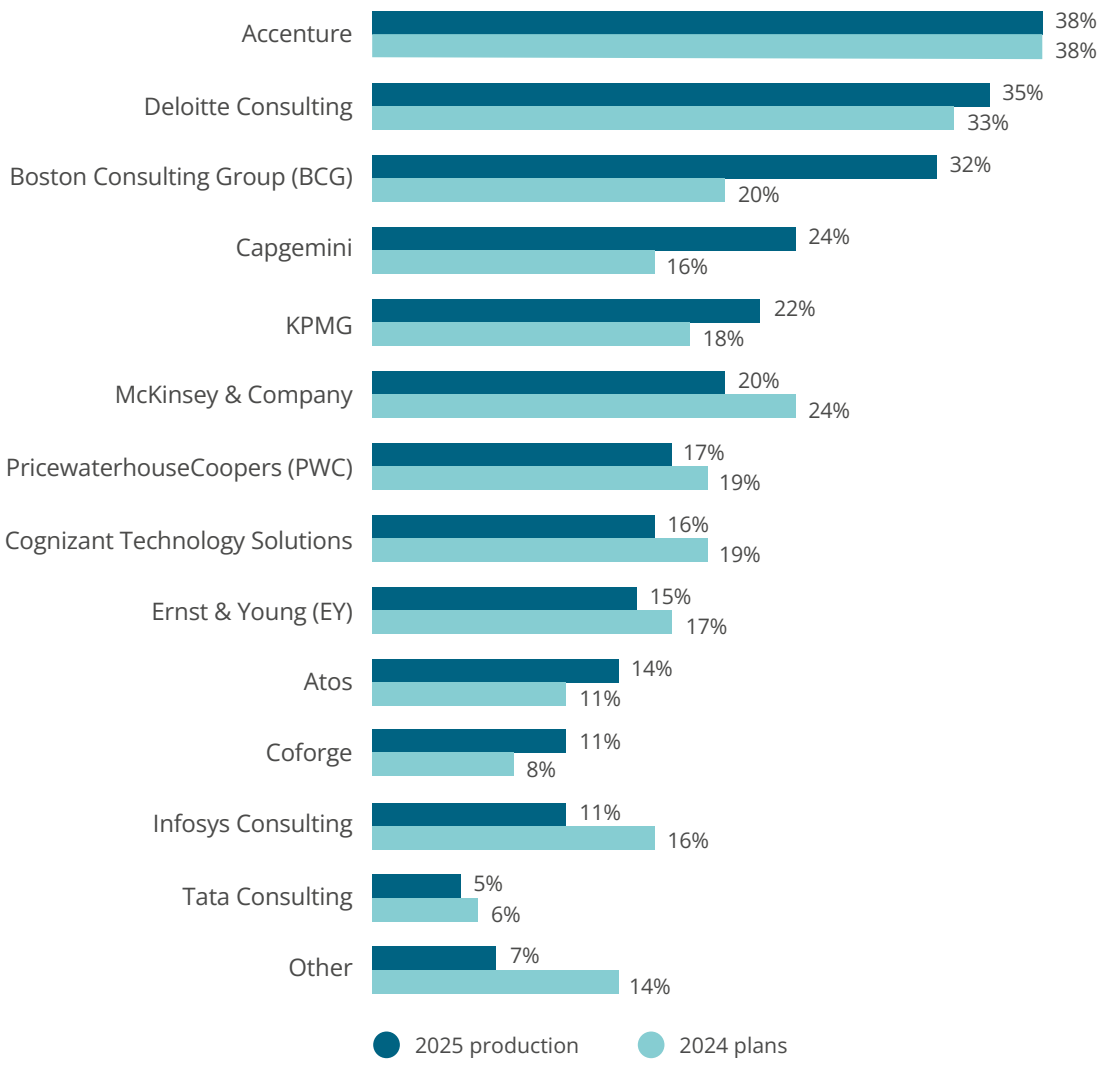



**Figure 10:** Which of the following did your organization work with to design and deploy AI projects? (n=94)

## Viewpoint

Global consulting firms were considered likely or extremely likely primary players in the 2024 plans by 56% of survey respondents. We asked who was on the list and repeated the question for production shops this year.

Global service providers Accenture and Deloitte retained their leads in 2025 among production respondents, helped greatly by strong results in North America. Boston Consulting Group and Capgemini rose dramatically, again based on a strong North American presence.

Scores for most other firms were lower than the plans reported in 2024 suggested, except for KPMG, which saw an uptick.

# Resource Satisfaction

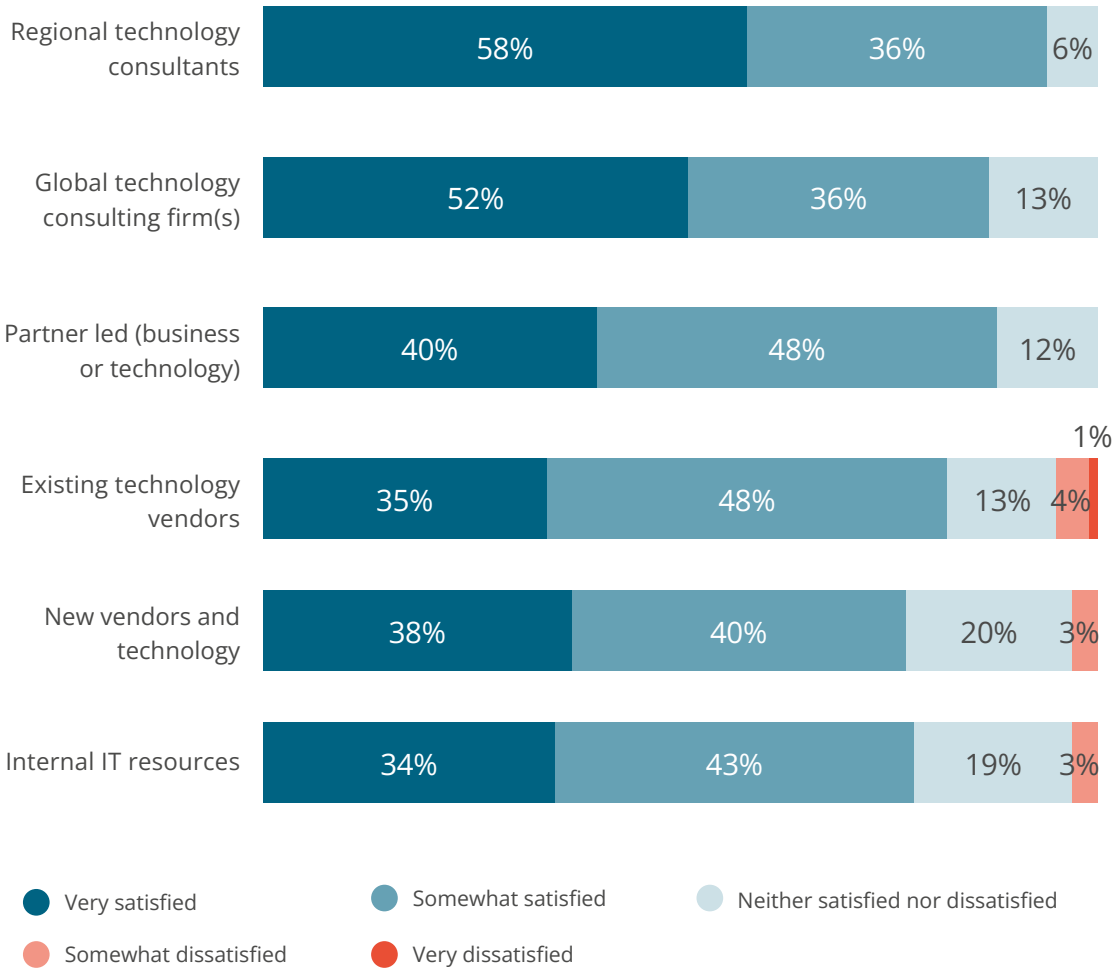



**Figure 11:** How satisfied are you with the vendors' contribution? (n=69)

## Viewpoint

As stated earlier, internal IT resources are relied upon as the primary resource when deploying AI projects. However, when asked about levels of satisfaction with these resources, respondents ranked IT last with 22%, stating they are somewhat or very dissatisfied with IT as a resource partner. The same is true for existing and new technology vendors, the only other resources with negative reviews.

In short, the top three resources used to deploy AI projects are also the three lowest when it comes to satisfaction. This is a significant strategy versus reality lesson.

The other lesson here is that regional technology consultants and global technology consulting firms are delivering the highest level of satisfaction. Regional consulting firms ranked highest in satisfaction followed closely by global consulting firms, achieving "very satisfied" scores of 58% and 52% respectively.

Analyzing European and North American respondents, the data shows that North American respondents were far happier with regional consultants (69% were very satisfied) than European participants (25%).

The data is similar for global consulting firms: 62% of North American respondents were very satisfied versus 11% of European respondents.

Bringing in regional and global consulting firms may trigger cost concerns but it is becoming clear that an outside perspective is important to deploying successful AI projects.

Survey Results

# AI Technology Trends

# AI Technology

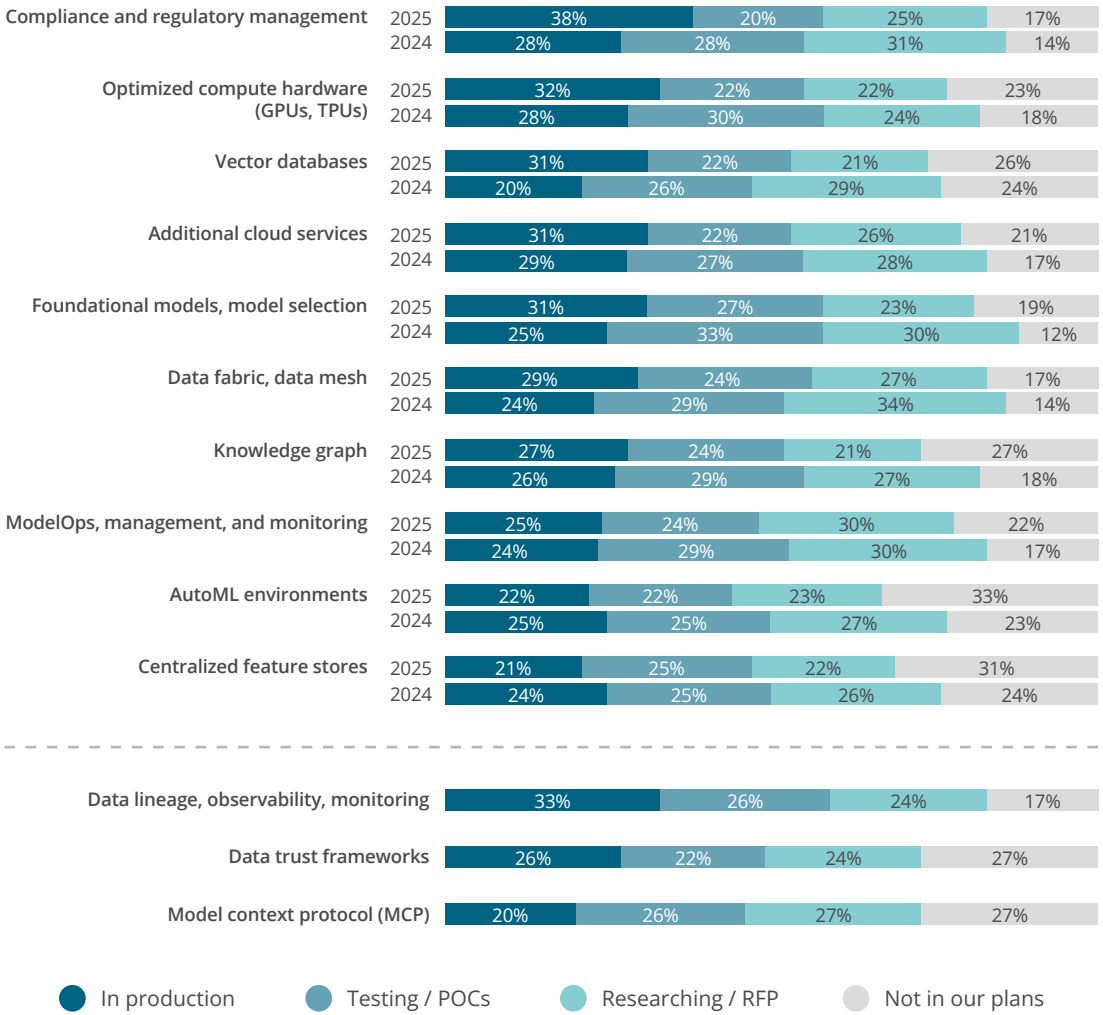



**Figure 12:** What is the status of the following AI technology in your existing environment? (n=323)

## Viewpoint

In 2025, vector databases are deployed or in testing (53%) more than predicted in 2024 (46%), this reflects both their real-world utility in getting the right data to models and their increasing availability from non-specialist data management players, including leading DBMS vendor stacks. We have suggested in the past that "vector databases are a feature, not a market," and experience seems to be bearing this out.

By contrast, AutoML and centralized feature stores fell below their 2024 rankings, as did knowledge graphs and optimized hardware.

Compliance and regulatory management moved strongly into the leading position as a deployed technology, with data lineage, observability, and monitoring close behind. MCP (Model Context Protocol) made a strong showing in its first appearance in the survey, coming in at 20% in production and 26% in testing/POC.

Data trust frameworks were added to our research this year as a fast-growing technology. 26% of respondents have already put it into production. It's clear this number will rise quickly as 22% of respondents are testing or in POC and 24% are researching these solutions. Similarly, data lineage, observability, and monitoring—a new addition to this year's research—is also top of mind. 33% of respondents have this technology in production and 50% are in testing / POCs or researching the technology. Data transparency is a critical strategy for AI.

# AI Architecture Impact

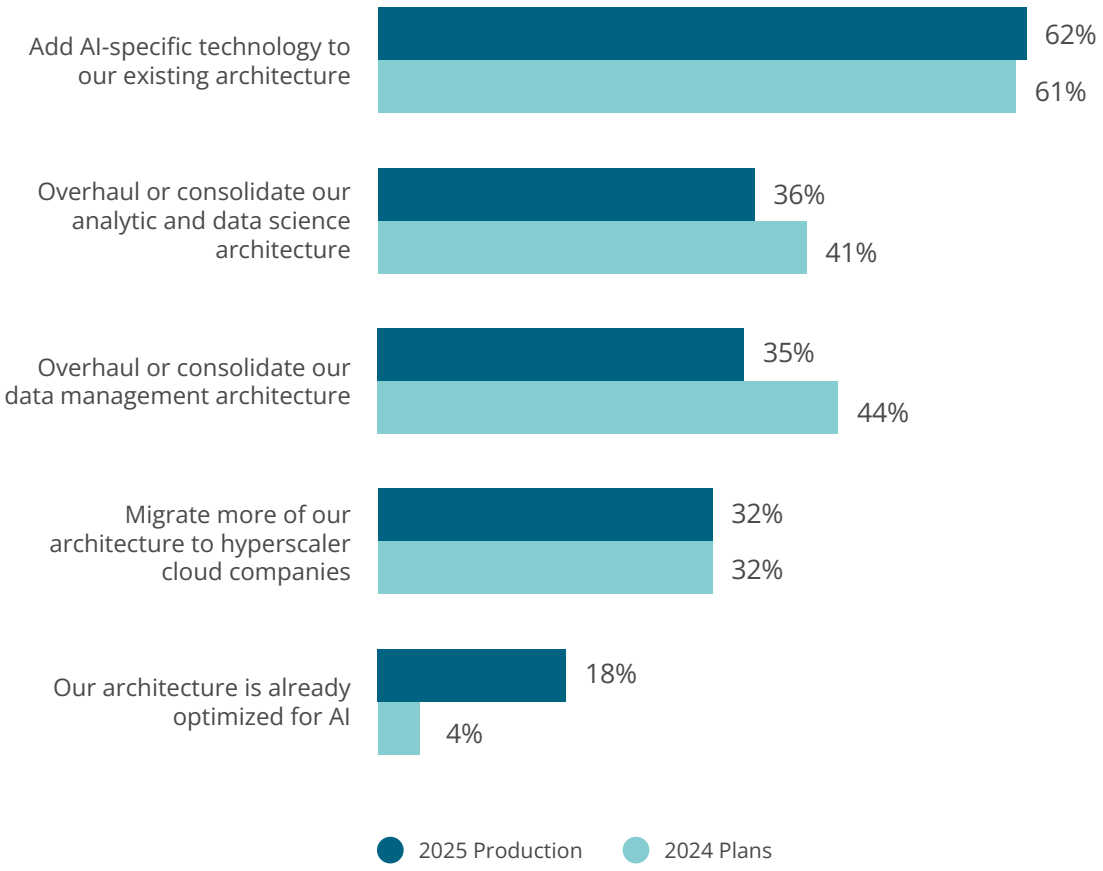



**Figure 13:** How have AI innovation and projects transformed your company´s technology architecture? (n=357)

## Viewpoint

It has been an article of faith among the AI community that a massive architectural transformation is inevitable in the wake of AI deployment, especially for data management. However, among production shops in 2025, “overhaul or consolidate our data management architecture” and “overhaul or consolidate our analytic and data science architecture” dropped significantly as organizations grappled with actual production requirements. At the same time, “our architecture is already optimized” rose by 14 percentage points.

This suggests that the changes encountered in production shops have given rise to a belief that incrementalism may be a more useful tactical approach, if only because it helps with on-time delivery (which moved up in the measures of success ranks).

# Platforms and Cloud

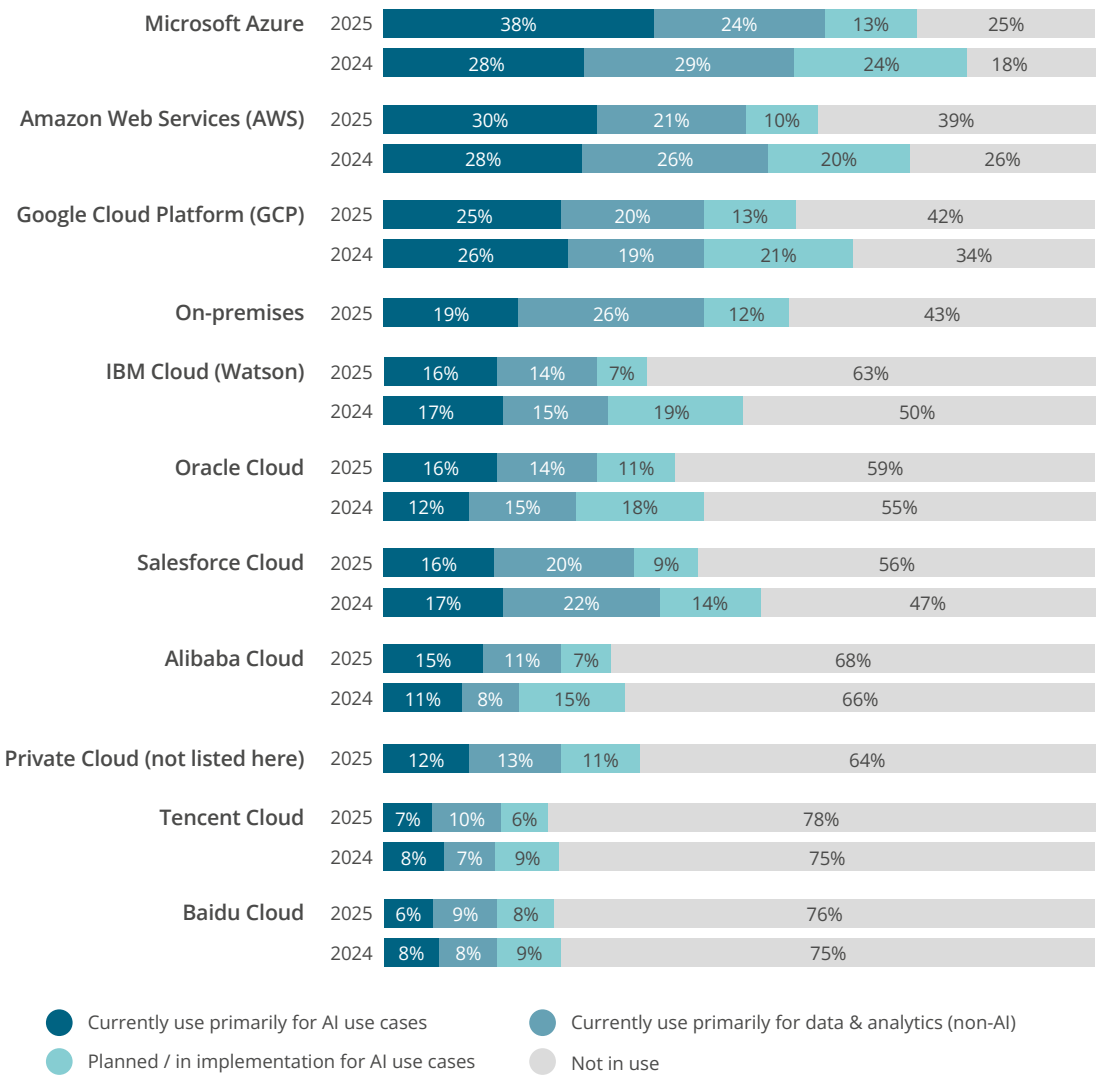



**Figure 14:** Which of the following (cloud) platforms does your company utilize for general data, analytics, and AI use cases? (n=385)

## Viewpoint

In 2024's plans, Microsoft was the leading cloud platform choice and in 2025, its lead for current use has grown. AWS, Google, IBM, and Oracle all declined. In fact, every single other platform had lower results among production shops compared to last year's plans.

These results are even more striking when comparing Europe to North America: Microsoft's share in Europe is 5-10 times greater than that of its rivals. No such dominance occurs in software choices as yet.

Customer preferences for existing vendors are noted elsewhere in this study, suggesting that Microsoft has an opportunity to expand its role in the software stack if it finds a way to leverage its platform dominance.

# AI Data Types

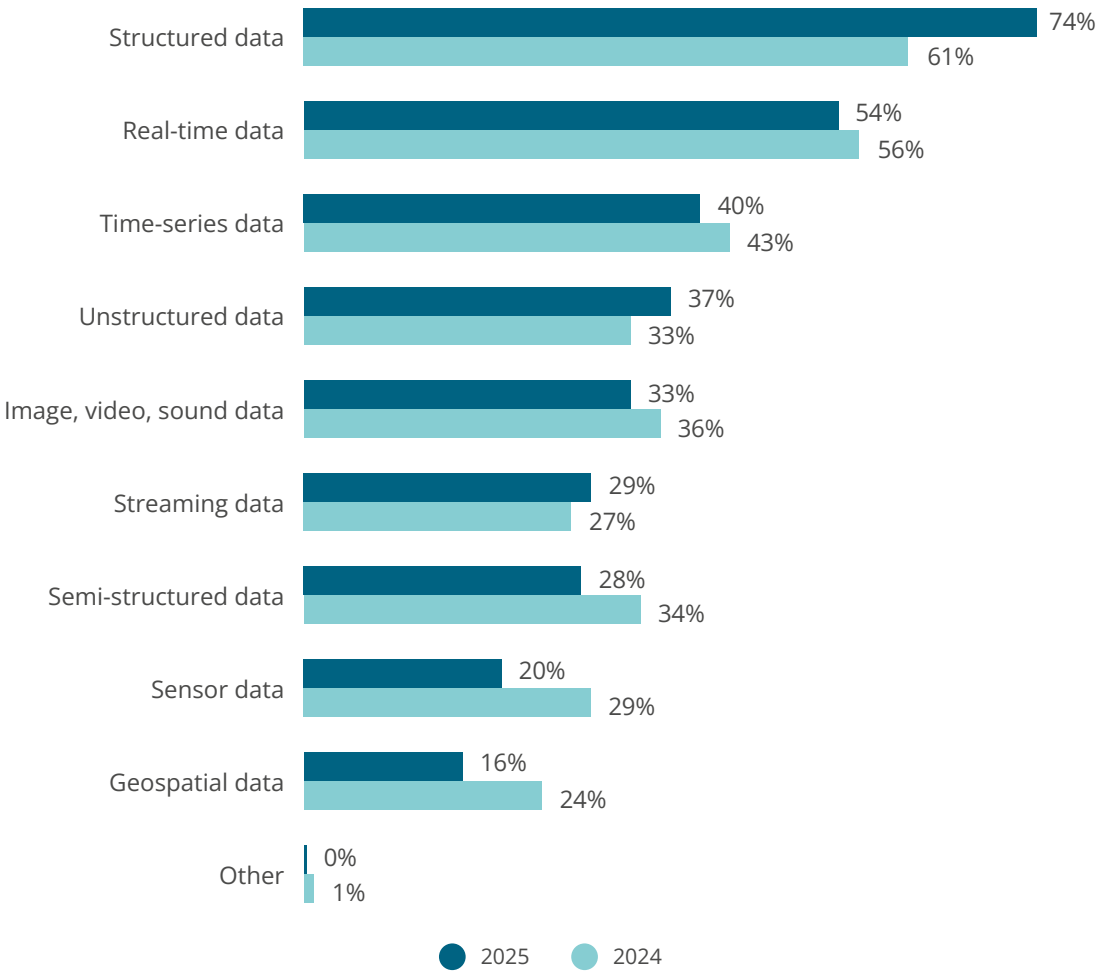



**Figure 15:** What data types are critical to your AI innovation? (n=401)

## Viewpoint

Data is tied directly to AI outputs and is the fuel for these projects. We discussed the importance of quality data earlier in this report as it aligns to project challenges.

Which enterprise data types are leveraged for AI projects is a shifting landscape. Ultimately, with the sophistication of AI models, all data will play a role in AI projects.

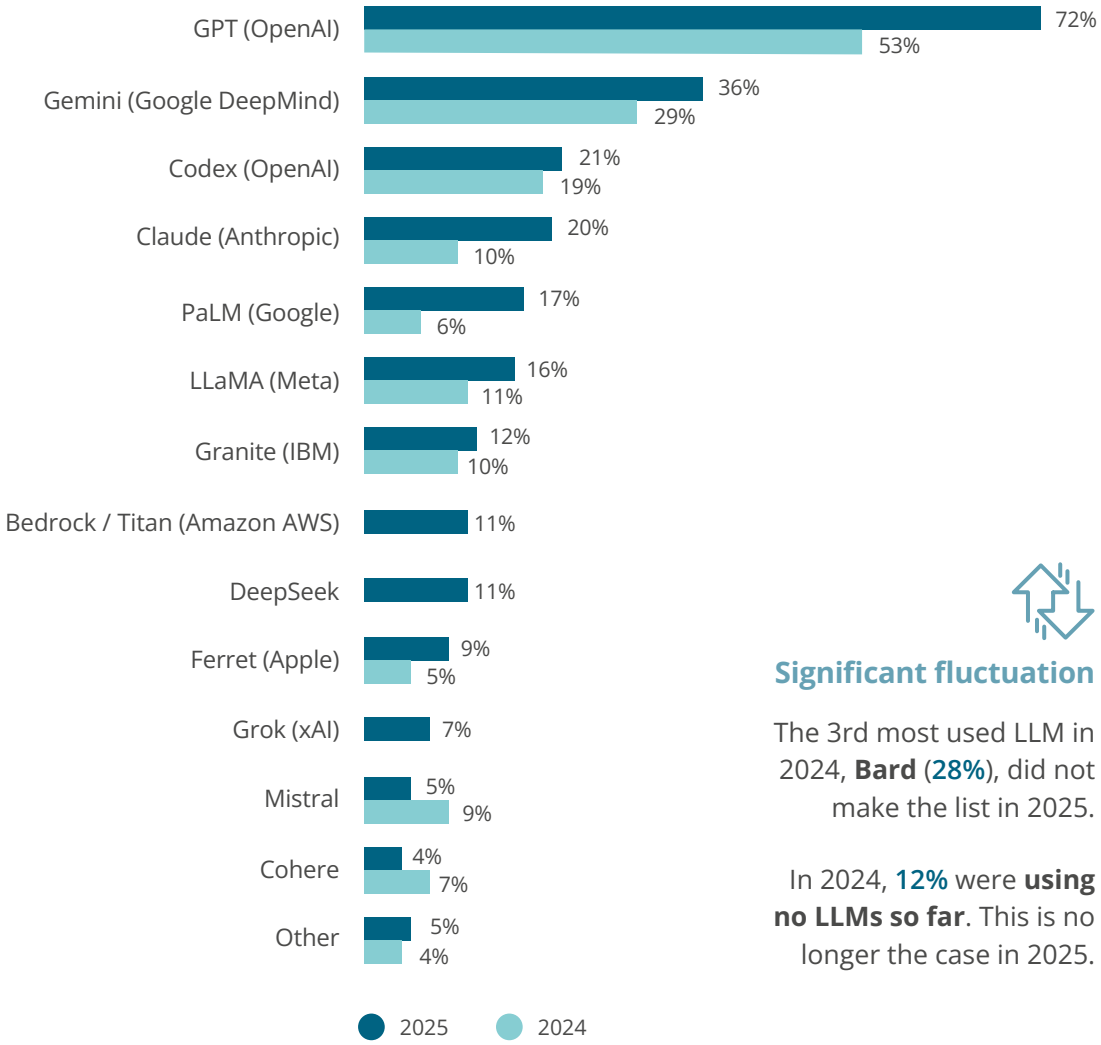
Structured data was unsurprisingly the top data type identified by our 2024 respondents. As they have deployed projects, that number has grown from 61% to 74% of projects utilizing this data type. Unstructured and streaming data both eclipsed 2024 project expectations and grew as respondents deployed projects.

29% of the 2024 survey respondents expected to use sensor data in projects. However, only 20% rated sensor data as critical in 2025.

AI leaders prioritized structured data: 93% ranked it as a critical data type for AI projects. Overall, leaders had a more sophisticated approach to data, rating all data types as more critical versus other users. Being prepared to leverage a wider assortment of data creates more opportunities and drives stronger insights in projects that leaders are designing.

There is a significant outlier in data use when examining data usage from a regional perspective. European respondents are twice as likely to leverage unstructured data (54%) in projects than North American respondents (27%).

# Large Language Models (LLMs) in Production




### Significant fluctuation

The 3rd most used LLM in 2024, **Bard** (**28%**), did not make the list in 2025.

In 2024, **12%** were **using no LLMs so far**. This is no longer the case in 2025.

**Figure 16:** Which of the following large language models (LLMs) and foundational models are part of your company´s AI strategy? (n=392)

## Viewpoint

The LLM battle continues to go strongly in favor of OpenAI. ChatGPT remains in the lead and has moved strongly upward, from 53% to 72%. Open AI's Codex has held its ground in 3rd place, behind Google DeepMind's Gemini (rising from 29% to 36%). Claude has grown from 10% to 20%.

Most others have grown only slightly or declined. IBM's Granite, which has seen strong marketing investment and very broad visibility, shows little progress. Just behind it, AWS's Bedrock/Titan came in with 11%, in the middle of the pack.

# Small Language Models (SLMs) in Production

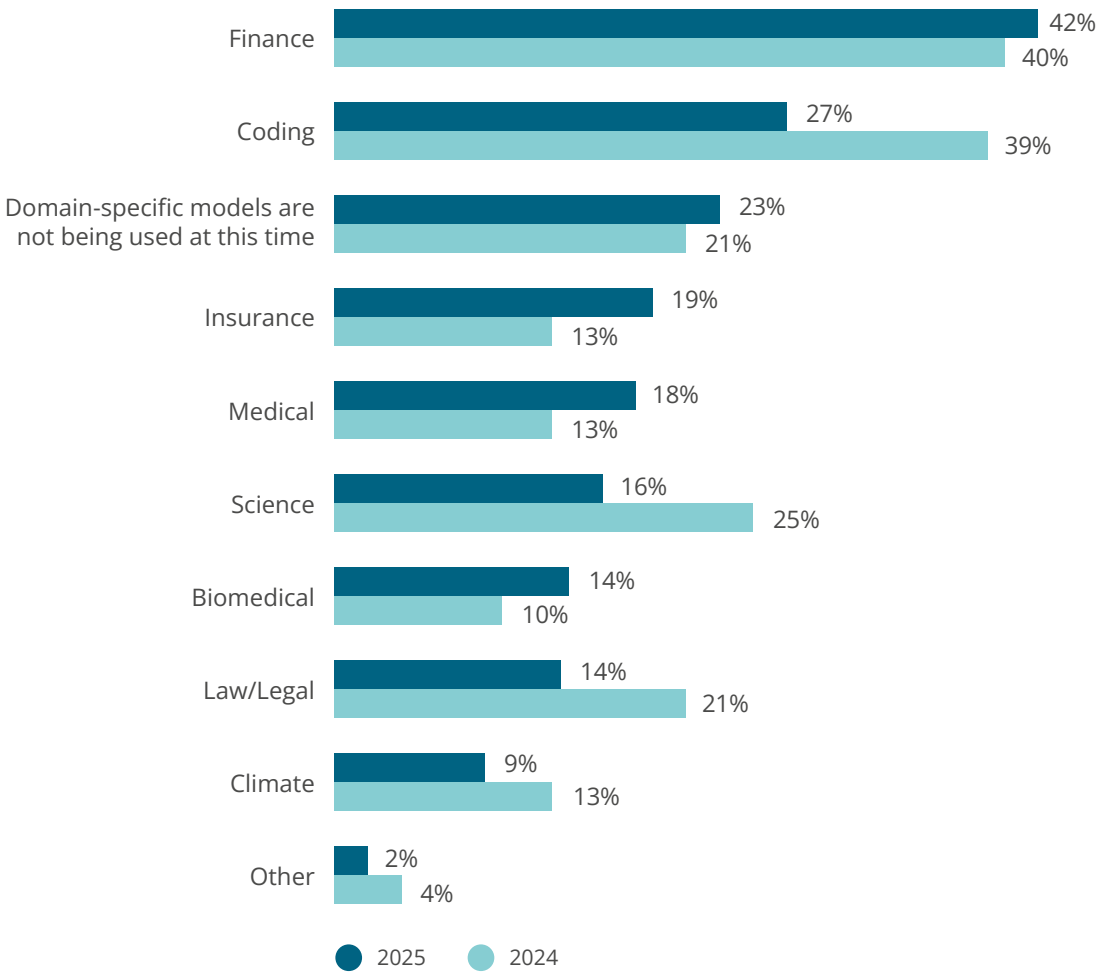



**Figure 17:** Do any of your deployed AI projects include industry or domain-specific models? (n=369)

## Viewpoint

Small language models (SLM), often referred to as domain language models (DLM), are a key component of successful AI strategies. Over 75% of respondents include these models in their AI technology stack. Accuracy and context, reduced costs of operation, and overall speed and performance drive this strategy. Finance and coding models continue to lead the segment this year for deployed projects. Finance model adoption grew slightly to 42% and coding dropped significantly from its planned adoption rate of 39% in 2024 to 27% while maintaining the second highest ranking. Insurance, medical, and biomedical SLMs were leveraged more than expected when projects were deployed in 2025.

AI leaders are more likely to use SLMs in deployments and are using finance and coding models at a greater rate than others.

Model accuracy and context reduce model hallucinations while providing improved context to model outputs. These models are specifically trained and refined. In other words, they are purpose built for specific workloads and business domains. Due to the size and specific nature of the model, refinement and training are quicker and less costly.

The cost factor is growing in importance. As referenced above in this report, project cost is the second most critical measurement for AI project success. Sensitivity to cost is a lesson everyone is learning in the AI age of innovation. The LLM model wars will continue and it is clear we will live in a multi-model world with SLMs playing a key role in performance and cost. For this reason, Software vendors are focused on the agility the bring your own model (BYOM) offers.

# Agentic AI Adoption Trends

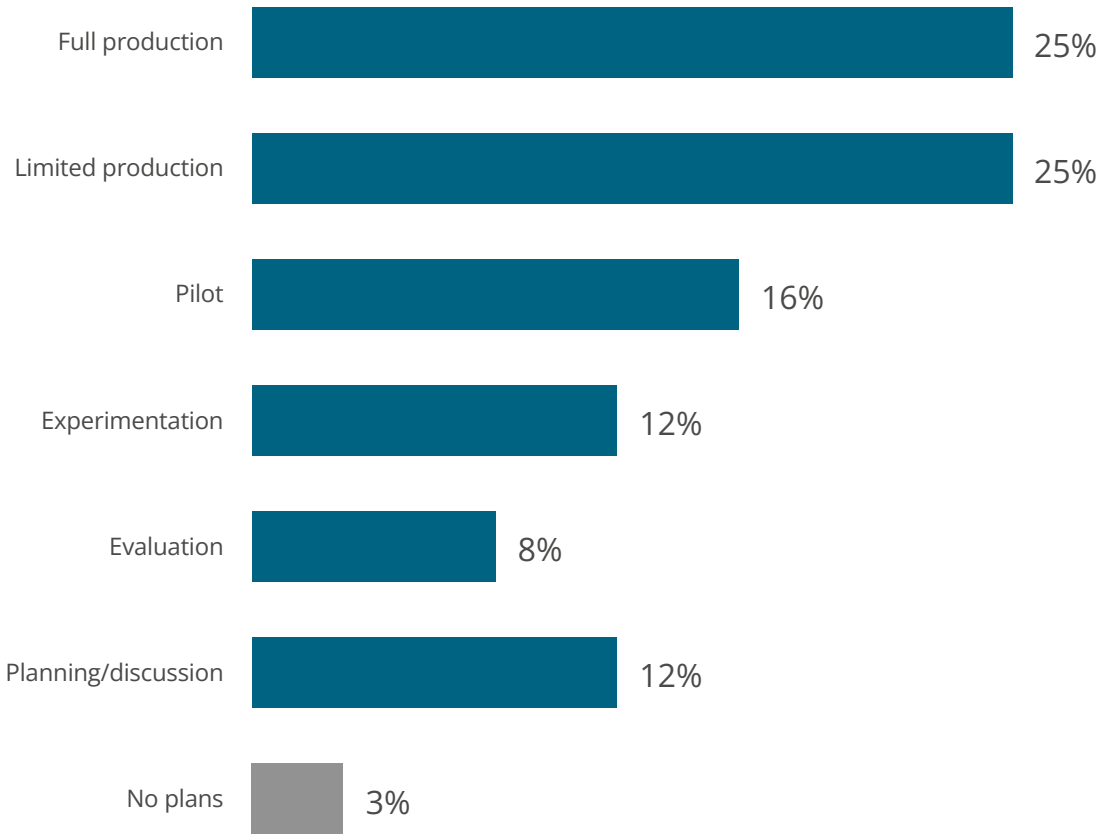



**Figure 18:** Describe how your organization has adopted AI agents / autonomous AI systems. (n=404)

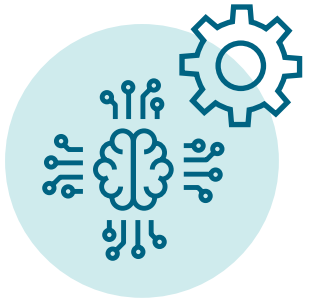
## Viewpoint

Agentic AI seems to be living up to its promise as the hot spot. 50% of respondents say they are in either full or limited production. Another 28% are either piloting or experimenting.

The questions of managing and governing in multi-agent scenarios will no doubt need to be prominent in our next research in this area.

Survey Results

# AI Strategy and Management



# Responsible AI

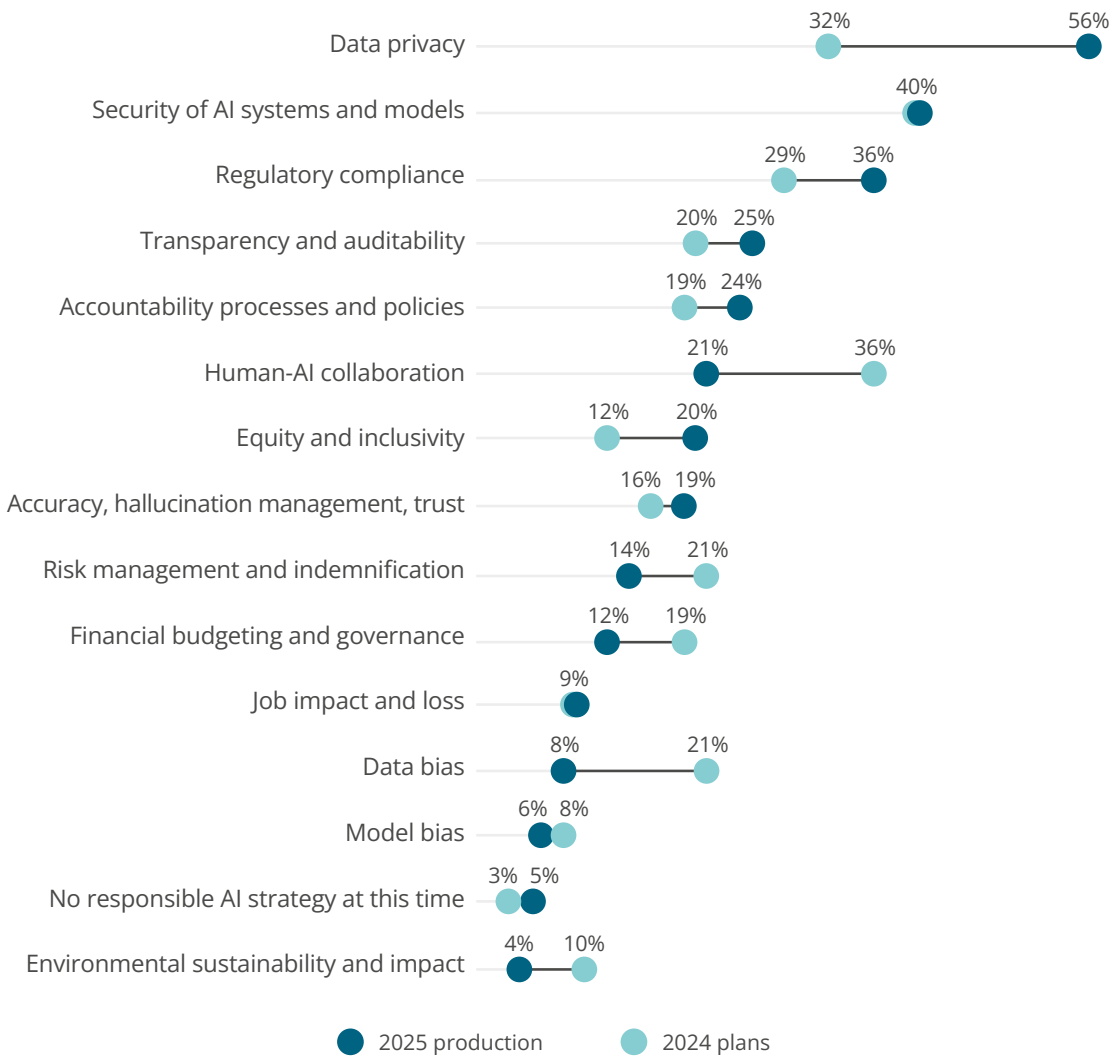



**Figure 19:** What components of responsible AI is your organization prioritizing? (n=415)

## Viewpoint

Responsible AI represents a unique opportunity for companies to chart their own course through the most strategic elements of managing AI from the corporate perspective. All companies' responsible AI priorities are unique but there are leading trends shared by many. A lack of strategy for responsible AI will result in a hard lesson learned that is often accompanied by reputational damage and monetary penalties.

Data privacy was selected by respondents as the top priority in 2024. In 2025, 56% of respondents listed it as the top priority for responsible AI. Security of AI systems and models remained in second spot, nearly identical to 2024 at 40%. This is not surprising: As more projects have been deployed, regulatory and compliance has become a higher priority and has increased from 29% to 36%, remaining as the third highest responsible AI priority.

A notable shift in priority away from human-AI collaboration is evident. It ranked highly in 2024 at 36% but has since dropped to 21%. We feel this may be due to the proliferation of agentic AI projects that rely less on human interaction and collaboration.

Data bias has been deprioritized from 21% to just 8% in 2025: a possible indication that companies are comfortable with the work they have done on this topic or perhaps an indication of significant failures ahead for some firms.

European respondents are more likely to focus on privacy, regulatory, and security than North American respondents. North American respondents prioritize accountability processes and policies 31% to 11% over European respondents, likely due to higher agentic AI adoption.

# General Use Cases Are Led by Document Analysis

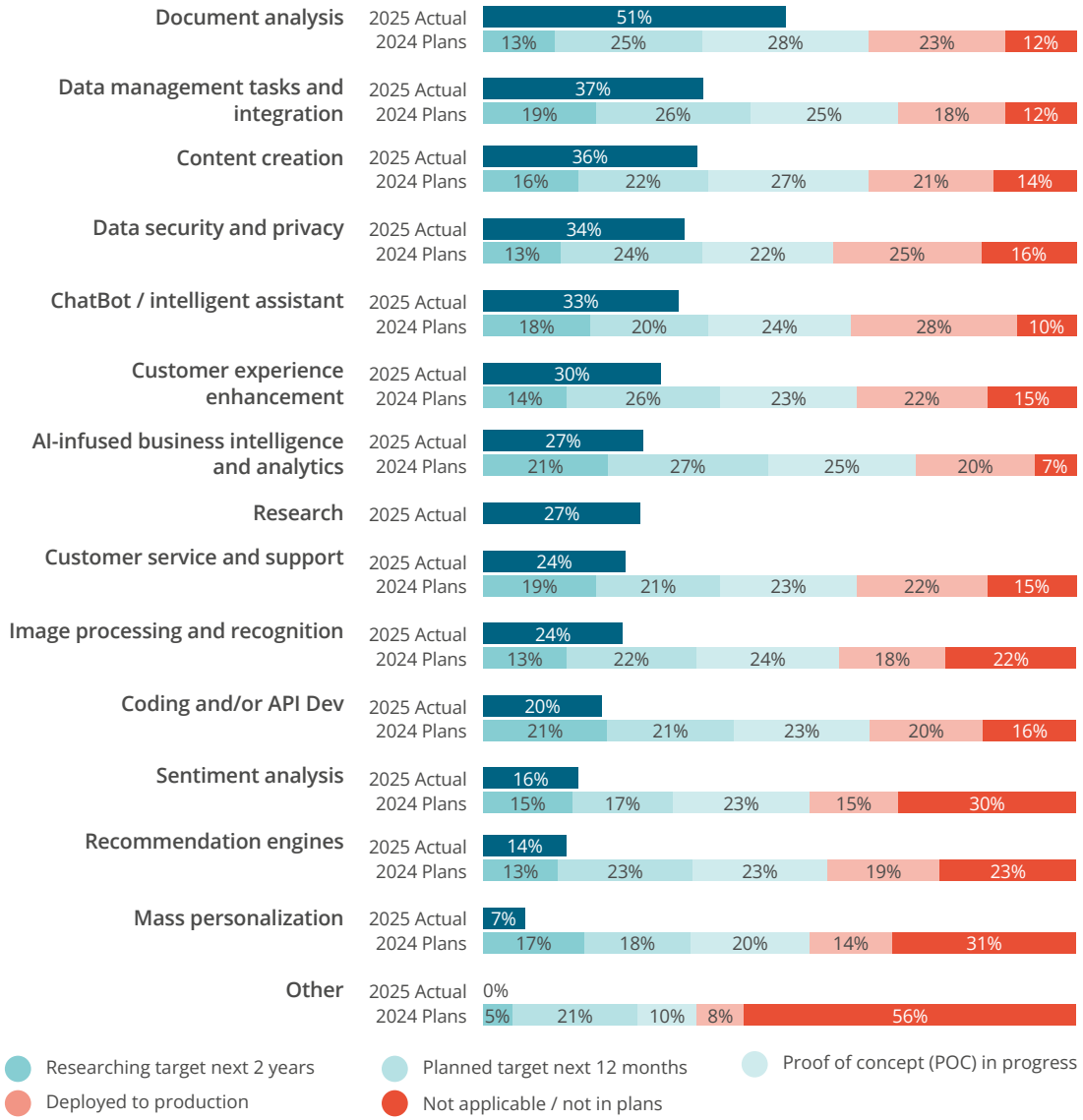



**Figure 20:** Which of the following general AI use cases has your organization deployed? (n=403)

## Viewpoint

23% of our 2024 respondents indicated they had deployed document analysis use cases. In 2025, the figure had more than doubled to 51%, making this use case the most popular among respondents. It was also closest to plans (53% were planning or in POC in 2024).

By contrast, the deployment of AI-infused business intelligence grew only 7 percentage points, from 20% of respondents in 2024 to 27% in 2025. This gap—nearly 25 percentage points compared to expectations—was one of the largest: fully 52% of respondents were planning or in POC in 2024. This is either a striking failure to deliver or a substantial change in plans, or both.

European respondents were more likely to deploy coding and chatbot cases than their North American counterparts. North Americans deployed more data security & privacy, customer experience, and data management & integration. Leaders deployed chatbots at a much higher rate overall.

# Specific Use Cases Lag Plans Throughout

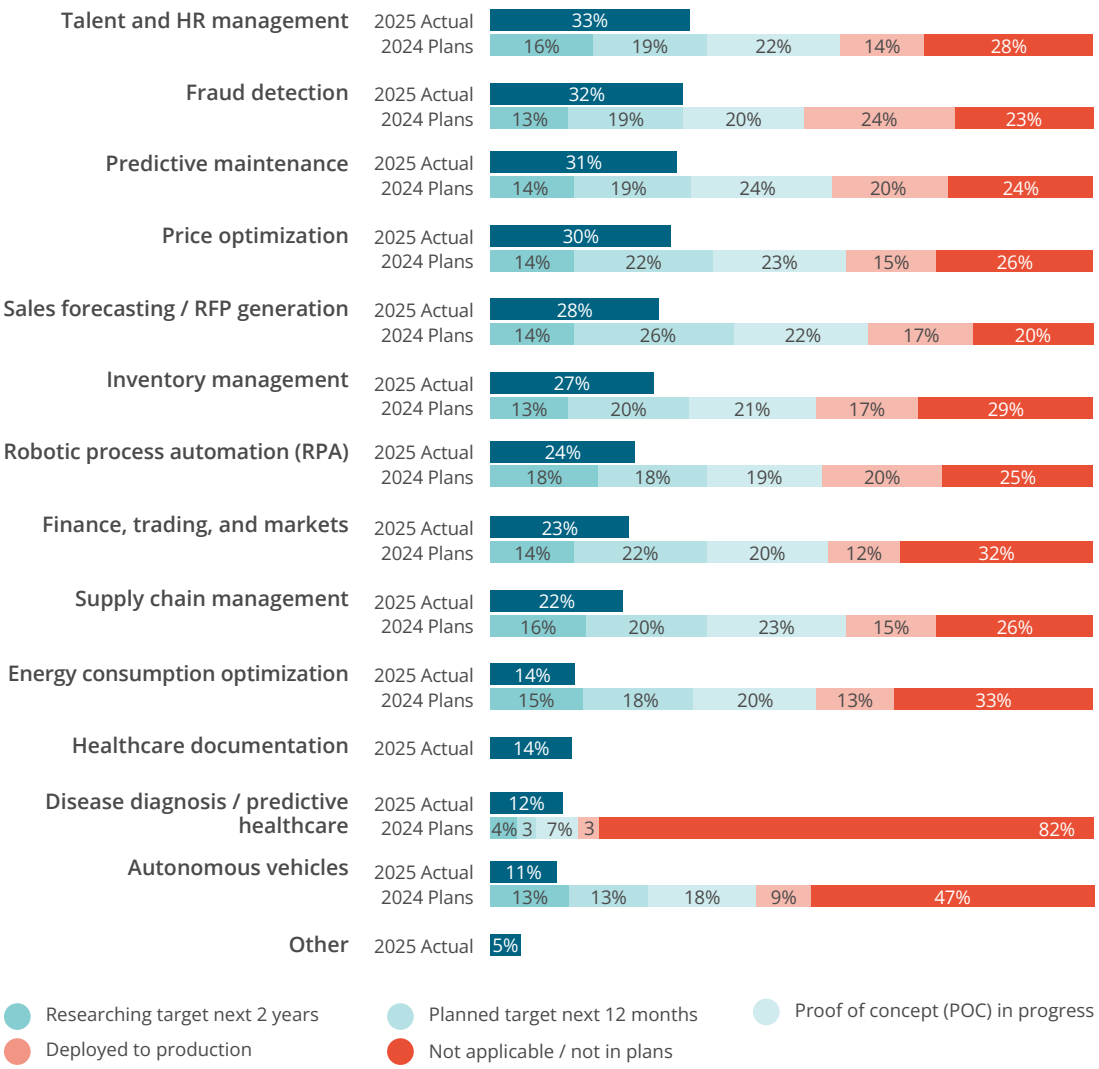



**Figure 21:** Which of the following specialized/industry-specific AI use cases has your organization deployed? (n=360)

## Viewpoint

Moving to production caused substantial changes in the deployment and mix of specific use cases. For example, 14% of our 2024 respondents indicated that they had deployed talent and HR management use cases, a middle-of-the pack result. By 2025, it had moved to the lead, with growth of 19 percentage points to 33%—although this was 8 percentage points lower than the plans plus POCs reported in 2024.

In fact, deployment lagged plans in every category except disease diagnosis, one of the least frequently deployed use cases. The difference was slight. By far the greatest laggards were energy consumption optimization, supply chain management, autonomous vehicles, and sales forecasting/RFP generation. All of these except sales forecasting were in the bottom half of deployed cases.

Geographic differences were significant. Europe led North America (nearly double at 35% to 19%) in robotic process automation. North America led in every other category, with the biggest gaps in talent and HR management (43% to 12%) and inventory management (34% to 13%).

Leaders deployed more fraud detection, robotic process automation, sales forecasting, and finance, trading & markets. They lagged in disease and predictive healthcare—arguably much more industry-specific uses, which may account for their lower rankings.

# Recommendations

# Recommendations

## 1 Pause and build your foundation to align with the qualities of AI leaders.

Ignoring the necessary work that demonstrably enables AI leaders will slow innovation and increase risk for AI projects. In the *AI Maturity – AI Leaders* section above, all seven areas play a clear role in a successful strategy for AI innovation. BARC's research data has clearly shown that *leaders are deploying projects at a greater rate than followers* and enjoying more success. Do not ignore these critical foundational criteria.

## 2 Address data quality issues before going too far down the path of AI.

Research data illustrates a significant change between 2024 and 2025 as *respondents identify data quality as the most significant obstacle to AI project success*. This number more than doubled from 19% to 44%. A company's execution on data quality is tied directly to its ability to deliver on AI. Be comprehensive; allowing data quality to lag will create roadblocks that demand remediation across multiple initiatives.

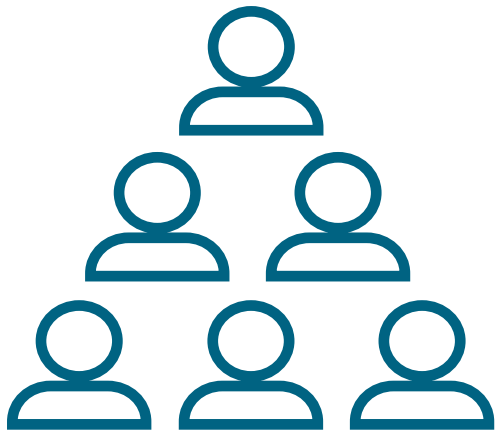
## 3 Partner with trusted third-party experts. Regional and global consultants should both be in your strategy.

This recommendation runs contrary to traditional strategies, especially in times of technology disruption. Although 54% of respondents identified internal IT resources as the top resource for delivering AI projects (a very typical pattern), at the same time, these *respondents ranked internal IT last on satisfaction*. Regional and global consulting firms ranked highest for satisfaction, and regional firms' performance challenged the big names, especially among European respondents. Keep this in mind when planning new AI projects.

## 4 Revisit your AI cost estimates. Leaders identify cost as a significant roadblock.

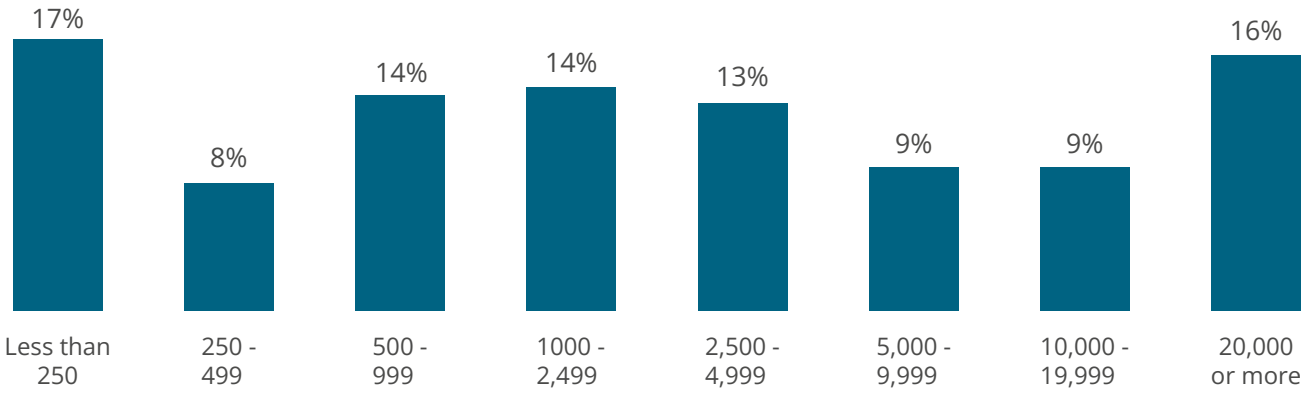
AI leaders ranked costs and budgetary concerns as a top-level challenge in 2024, demonstrating they were moving beyond initial challenges centered on hiring new AI skill sets. In 2025, software costs ranked number one in "more than expected" by 51% of respondents, followed by validation and quality control costs (43%) and people/salaries/training (42%). AI is proving to be expensive, eclipsing budgets, and limiting scope has surfaced as the leading containment strategy, threatening the value of much-hyped initiatives. Consider this in your planning.

# Methodology

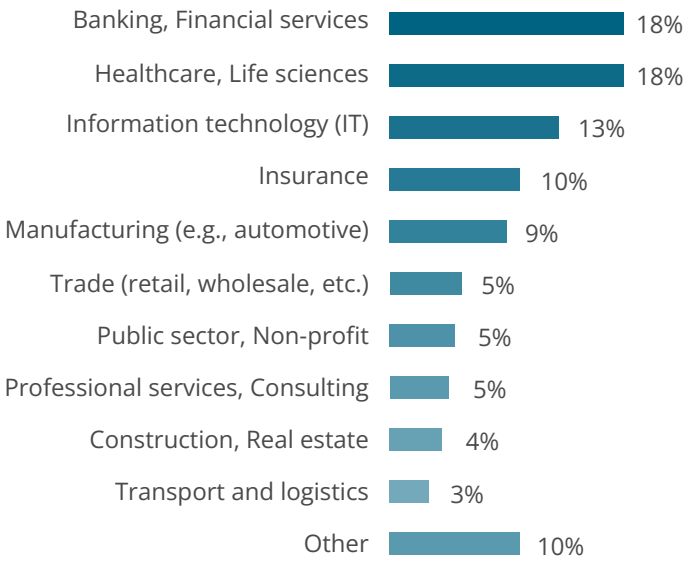


# Demographics

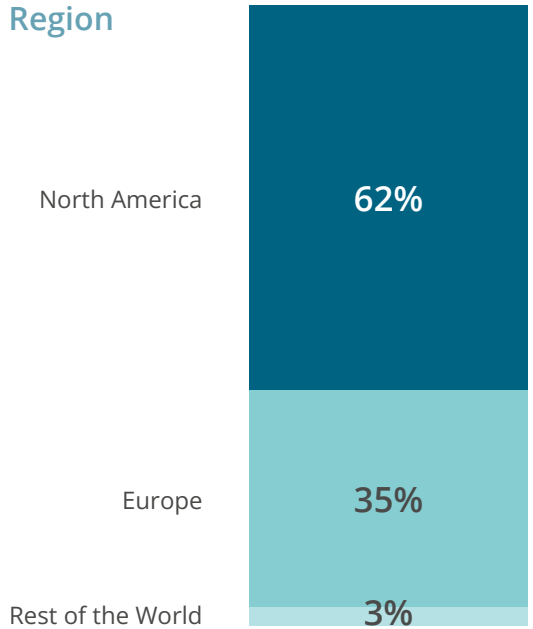
## Number of Employees




## Department




## Region




## Information on the Survey

This research was designed to better understand how AI leaders are deploying projects, how their companies are finding success, and to better understand the unique challenges and strategies leading AI firms are leveraging in the fast-moving and highly disruptive AI segment.

It builds on earlier BARC research—*Optimizing Your Architecture for AI Innovation* by Shawn Rogers and Merv Adrian—published in March 2024 with 335 global respondents.

The respondent population is global with significant European and North American audiences, and a total sample size of 421 completed surveys. Random sampling was used to ensure representation across different job roles, company sizes, and industries. Participants were included based on their involvement in delivering and/or managing AI strategies and projects in their organizations. Those with no project experience were excluded.

The survey was administered online, and data collection took place from July to September 2025. The survey was also quality-tested in the field, with a test phase to refine clarity and ensure response quality.

The survey instrument was designed by Shawn Rogers and Merv Adrian and deployed by BARC GmbH.

### Respondent Panel

Survey results were drawn from business and IT professionals whose job titles included CXO, VP/Director, Managers, Architects, Engineers, and Analysts. These respondents represent a wide variety of industries and company sizes.

# About BARC

# BARC

**BARC** is the leading analyst firm for data & analytics, AI, corporate performance management (CPM), and ESG with a reputation for unbiased and trusted advice. Our expert analysts deliver a wide range of research, events, and consulting services for the data & analytics community. Our innovative research evaluates software, vendors, and service providers rigorously and highlights market trends, delivering insights that enable our customers to innovate with data, analytics, and AI. BARC's 25 years of experience with data strategy & culture, data architecture, organization, and software selection helps clients transform into truly data-driven organizations.

## Research

BARC user surveys, software evaluations, and analyst advisory services along with expert driven content such as research notes, trend analysis, and blogs give organizations the confidence to make the right decisions. Our independent research gets to the heart of market developments, evaluates software, vendors, and service providers thoroughly and gives valuable ideas on how to turn data, analytics, and AI into added value and successfully transform businesses.

## Consulting

The BARC consulting practice is entirely focused on translating companies' requirements into future-proof decisions. The holistic advice we provide helps companies successfully implement their data & analytics strategy and culture as well as their architecture and technology. BARC's research and experience-founded expert input sets organizations on the road to the successful use of data & analytics, from strategy to optimized data-driven business processes.

## Events

At BARC events, leading minds and industry experts come together to share insights and drive innovation. Our conferences, roundtables, and online webinars attract over 10,000 participants annually, offering a unique blend of information, inspiration, and interactivity. These events provide a platform to exchange ideas with peers, explore emerging trends, and gain expert perspectives on market developments. By engaging with thought leaders and industry practitioners, participants discover actionable strategies to enhance their business and stay ahead in the evolving world of data & analytics.


**Germany**

BARC GmbH
Berliner Platz 7
D-97080 Würzburg

info@barc.de
+49 931 880 6510

**Austria**

BARC GmbH
Hirschstettner Straße 19 / I / IS314
A-1220 Wien

info@barc.at
+43 660 6366870

**Switzerland**

BARC Switzerland GmbH
Buchhaldenstrasse 7
CH-5442 Fislisbach

info@barc.ch
+41 76 340 35 16

**USA**

BARC US
13463 Falls Drive
Broomfield, CO 80020

info@barc.com

**www.barc.com**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# Sponsor Profile

# Bigeye

**Bigeye** is the data and AI trust platform for large enterprises. Only Bigeye combines comprehensive data observability, end-to-end lineage, and agentic AI governance to help data teams detect, prioritize, and govern data and AI workflows to improve data visibility and reduce risk.

With Bigeye AI Trust, enterprises can now extend observability into the AI era—ensuring that the data powering agent models is accurate, complete, and reliable by default. Bigeye helps enterprises reduce operational, financial, and compliance risks through runtime agent oversight and policy enforcement, giving teams the transparency and agent management required to deploy and scale AI initiatives confidently.

Bigeye's enterprise platform supports on-premises, cloud, and hybrid architectures and has received both SOC2 Type II and ISO 27001 certifications to meet enterprise security requirements. Leading data-driven enterprises such as USAA, Zoom, Hertz, Cisco, and Freedom Mortgage rely on Bigeye to find and fix data issues, improve trust in their analytics and AI systems, and ensure the data powering their business stays reliable by default.

By unifying data observability with AI Trust, Bigeye gives enterprises a single, scalable platform to keep every decision, dashboard, and model built on data they can depend on.

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