TDWI | State of Research

The State of Data and AI Governance 2026



Fern Halper, Ph.D.
TDWI VP Research

TDWI Research

Copyright TDWI 2026

SPONSORS





FERN HALPER

Fern Halper, Ph.D.
TDWI VP Research

Today’s Discussion

- Top line findings
- Why data and AI governance matter in 2026
- Data governance maturity: what changed and what did not
- AI governance: adoption, practices, and gaps
- Enabling technologies and investment priorities
- Panel Discussion

Copyright TDWI 2026

Top Line Findings for 2026

1

AI is increasing the urgency for governance

78% say generative AI and new analytics have increased the need for stronger data and AI governance.

2

Data governance maturity remains mid-range

The maturity model still shows gaps in communication, standards, metadata, stewardship, and collaboration.

3

AI governance is still early

48% are in early-stage AI governance programs; only 37% have formal frameworks.

4

Data quality, metadata, and diverse data are foundational

AI readiness increasingly depends on governed data, context, semantics, lineage, and access controls.

5

Investment is accelerating

AI governance tools are the top planned purchase category in the next 12 months.

Copyright TDWI 2026

1 Why Data and AI Governance Matter in 2026

AI is expanding the governance surface

- AI is moving from experimentation to enterprise use
- The data used for AI is expanding; structured, unstructured, internal, external, and increasingly real-time
- Governance must cover both risk and value: trust, quality, privacy, permitted use, and business context

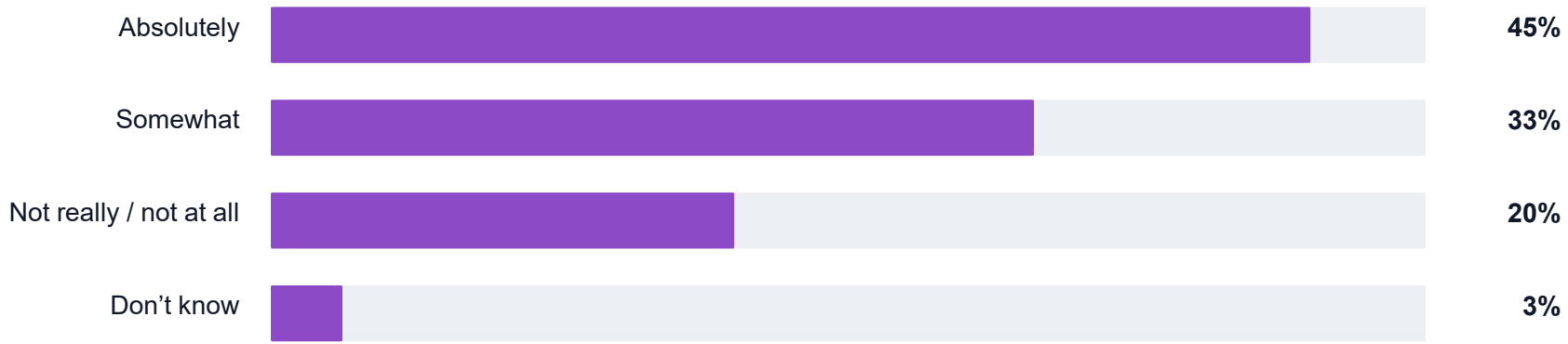
Governance is no longer only about protecting data. It is about making data safe, trusted, and usable for AI

Copyright TDWI 2026

AI Is Increasing the Urgency for Governance

78%

say generative AI and new analytics have increased the need for stronger data and AI governance. Agentic AI will further the need.



The urgency is not only about compliance. It is the need to govern data, context, AI outputs, and increasingly AI actions.

Source: TDWI 2026 Data and Analytics Survey, n=187

Copyright TDWI 2026

2 Data Governance Maturity: What Changed?

Overall maturity remains mid-range

The past-year cohort is somewhat lower, but 2026-only responses return to the prior 60/100 level.



Bottom line: not a clean improvement story. Operational gaps persist.

Sources: TDWI 2024/2025 and 2025-2026 Data Governance Maturity Model, n>100 each

Copyright TDWI 2026

What Has Changed: Strengths Persist, But Operational Gaps Remain

Continued strengths (median = 4)

- Funding and commitment to fund governance
- Recognition of the value of data
- Regulatory compliance
- Data sovereignty compliance

Persistent gaps (median = 2)

- Strategy communicated across the organization
- Data stewards as defined roles
- Standards announced and instituted
- Retention and archiving policies
- Collaborative data curation
- Metadata integrated into the lifecycle

The hard part is still operationalization, not recognition of importance

Source: TDWI Data Governance Maturity Model

Copyright TDWI 2026

3 AI Governance: Adoption, Practices, and Gaps

Programs exist, but operational maturity is still catching up.

48% **characterize AI governance as early-stage**

37% **have a formal AI governance framework**

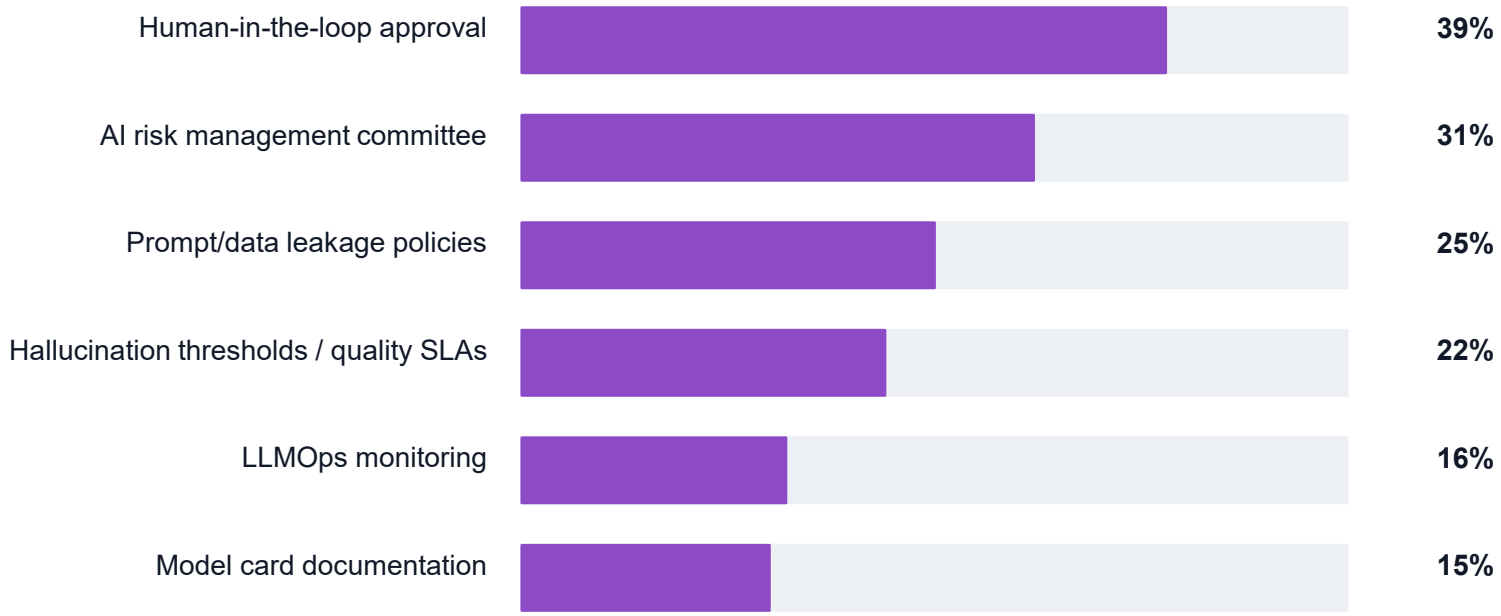
- Programs exist,but are often early.
- Policies are ahead of operational controls.
- AI governance is moving from policy to runtime oversight.

And, data is becoming more diverse – TDWI sees a 20% gap in trusting unstructured data

Source: TDWI 2026 Data and Analytics Survey, n=187

Copyright TDWI 2026

The Gap: Governance Structures Are Ahead of Operational Controls



2026 implication

As AI systems use more enterprise and external data, governance must become continuous, observable, and enforceable in workflows

Less than 40% have formal AI governance practices in place

Source: TDWI 2026 Data and Analytics Survey, n=187

Copyright TDWI 2026

4 Data Governance Foundational for AI Governance

AI-ready data is governed, contextualized, and fit for purpose.

Data quality → **Metadata + semantics** → **Lineage + provenance** → **Access + permitted use** → **AI-ready data**

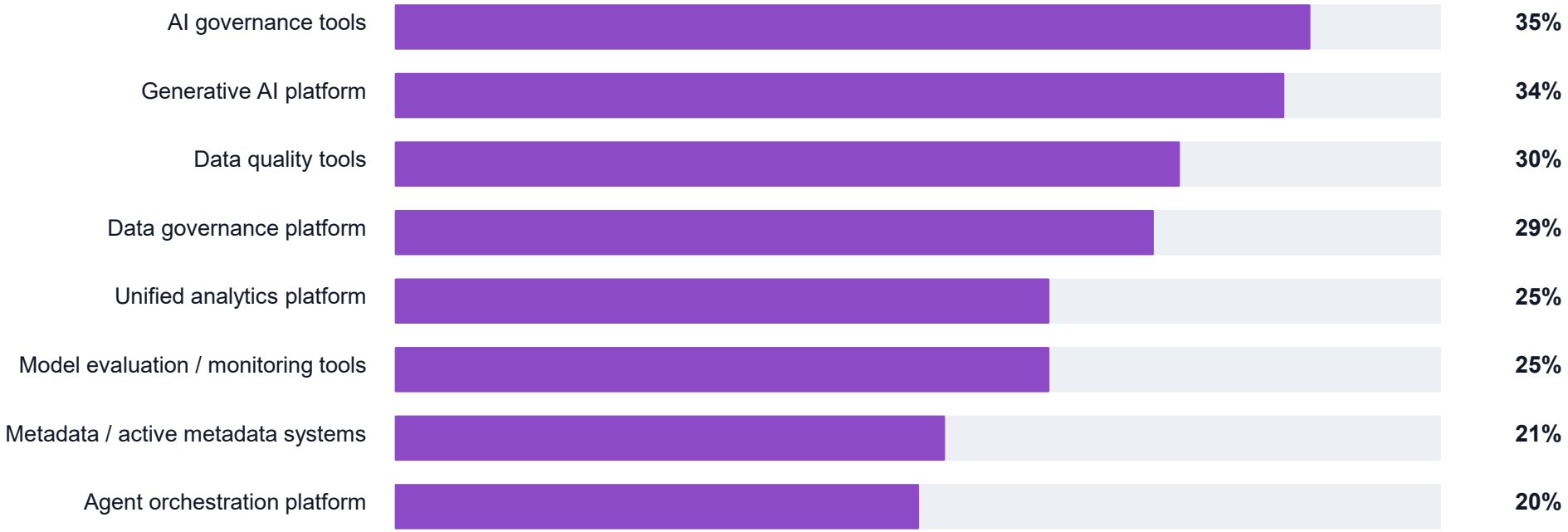


Sources: TDWI 2026 Data Foundations for AI and Data and Analytics Surveys

Copyright TDWI 2026

5 Enabling Technologies and Investment Priorities

Organizations are beginning to fund governance and adjacent controls.



The market is not just buying AI. It is buying the governance, quality, metadata, and monitoring capabilities needed to help use AI safely.

Source: TDWI 2026 Data and Analytics Survey

Copyright TDWI 2026

Key Takeaways for 2026

1 Governance must expand

Govern diverse data across its lifecycle — from source and derived data to AI use and outcomes. It must also include context.

2 Operationalize governance

Move beyond policies and committees to controls embedded in data, analytics, and AI workflows.

3 Connect data and AI governance

Data quality, metadata, lineage, privacy, access, and permitted use are important for successful AI governance

4 Prepare for agents

Govern what AI can access, what it can decide, what it can do, and when humans must intervene.

2026 message: the governance mandate is changing faster than governance maturity.

Copyright TDWI 2026



Fireside Chat

tdwi
Transforming Data With Intelligence™



JOSEPH SANTOS

Sr. Director of Data Advisory
ZoomInfo

TDWI research shows that data governance maturity remains mid-range, even as AI is making governance more urgent. Did this surprise you? From what you're seeing with customers, why is it still so difficult for organizations to operationalize data governance?

Copyright TDWI 2026

One of the persistent gaps in our research is metadata, along with communicating standards and establishing ownership. As organizations bring more data into AI applications, what does good governance need to look like at the data level?

Copyright TDWI 2026

AI is expanding the range of data organizations need to govern; structured and unstructured, internal and external. What additional governance challenges arise when organizations incorporate external or third-party data into AI?

Copyright TDWI 2026

TDWI research suggests that AI governance programs are emerging, but policies are ahead of operational controls. How do organizations move from having governance policies to actually enforcing them as data flows into AI applications?

Copyright TDWI 2026

Organizations view a strong data governance framework as at least as critical to AI success as a strong AI governance framework. Where should data governance end and AI governance begin, and where do the two need to come together?

Copyright TDWI 2026

Data quality remains a major investment priority, but AI raises the bar for what 'quality' means. Beyond traditional accuracy and completeness, what should organizations be evaluating before data is trusted for AI?

Copyright TDWI 2026

Looking ahead to agentic AI, how should organizations think about governing data access and permitted use when AI agents may be acting on that data rather than simply analyzing it?

Copyright TDWI 2026



Interactive Q&A

tdwi
Transforming Data With Intelligence™

SPONSORS



TDWI Webinars

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

zoominfo

For more questions, reach out:



Fern Halper, Ph.D.
TDWI VP Research
fhalper@tdwi.org



Joseph Santos
Sr. Director of Data Advisory
ZoomInfo
joseph.santos@zoominfo.com

TDWI Team Training & Enablement

Building Organizational Capability Across the Full Digital Spectrum

Leadership & Practitioner Courses

- AI, Machine Learning & Data Science
- BI, Analytics & Data Literacy
- Data Governance & Quality
- Data & Dimensional Modeling
- Platforms & Architecture
- Strategy & Methods
- Intensive 3-Day Workshops

Organizational Enablement

Ask your TDWI Client Advisor about elevating training to organic capability building by experiencing the messy realities of org implementation on vetted projects to expand skills, improve strategy, scale outcomes, and monetize training investment.

TDWI's Client Advisor

Eric A. King
+1 (818) 230-2100
eking@tdwi.org



THANK YOU!

We hope to see you soon at another TDWI event. **Visit www.tdwi.org!**



TDWI Online
Virtual events and research on-demand



TDWI Team Training
Build critical data & AI capabilities