BARC

Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor 2026

The world's largest survey of data, BI and analytics trends

Research sponsored by:

Strategy TARGIT

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Foreword

Every business is a data business. The primary role of data is to empower decision-makers across all levels with reliable, actionable insights. While using data and AI to automate processes and decisions is an emerging trend, staying competitive requires organizations to continually evolve their data capabilities, transforming raw information into insights that drive decision-making and long-term success.

However, becoming data-driven presents challenges. The BARC Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor 2026 shows that while AI and automation trends are gaining prominence, they do not diminish the continued importance of fundamental data practices like security, quality and governance. In fact, it is becoming increasingly clear that without these foundational elements – alongside fostering a data-driven culture and enhancing data literacy – long-term success in leveraging data & AI cannot be achieved.

With 1,579 participants from across industries and regions, the BARC Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor 2026 reveals how data, BI and analytics professionals prioritize these trends globally. Their input helps distinguish between hype and enduring trends, offering crucial insights for organizations navigating the evolving landscape. Our time series comparisons also show how trends have developed, making it possible to distinguish hype from stable trends.

Dr. Carsten Bange

Würzburg, Germany, November 2025

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Many of the trends shaping data management, BI and analytics in 2026 continue to demonstrate their lasting significance, with a few areas showing notable shifts.

Data quality management has reclaimed the top position, while data security & privacy remains a close second, confirming that the most valued trends are still rooted in strong data foundations. At the same time, AI/ML, generative AI and emerging concepts such as decision intelligence and agentic AI are increasingly shaping discussions on automation and advanced decision-making.

Our survey of 1,579 participants highlights this duality: while innovation around AI is accelerating, organizations continue to prioritize quality, trust, compliance and culture as the basis for success. The high relevance of data-driven culture, governance and data & AI literacy underlines the important balance between human and technological capabilities.

The study further reveals clear differences across regions, industries and company maturity levels. These perspectives are summarized in six hot spots, showcasing the most striking contrasts and ongoing developments in the market.

1 Hot Spot – Industry comparison

In 2026, industry-specific trends highlight distinct priorities across sectors. The **public sector** stands out with the strongest commitment to data **security & privacy**, well ahead of all other industries. It also leads in **data & AI literacy**, reflecting its focus on building trust and digital skills. **Utilities** rate **data quality management** highest, underlining the importance of reliable infrastructures. **Services** score above average in **AI/ML/advanced analytics** and **data quality management**, while **financial services** continue to stress **data security & privacy** to address compliance and risk. **Healthcare** also prioritizes **data security & privacy**, yet lags in **data & AI literacy**, indicating both a strong focus on protecting sensitive patient data and slower adoption of emerging technologies. Across industries, however, **data quality management** and **data security & privacy** remain universal foundations.

2 Hot Spot – Vendors vs. users

The gap between vendors and users continues to be visible in 2026. **Business and IT users** place the highest emphasis on **data quality management**, **data security & privacy** and **data-driven culture**, reflecting their need for trustworthy data and compliance in daily operations. **Vendors**, on the other hand, continue to highlight **cloud for data & analytics**, alongside **AI/ML** and **generative AI**, underlining their push toward future-oriented adoption. Interestingly, **self-service analytics & data discovery** is valued by both groups, though vendors see it as a lever to accelerate market adoption, while users view it as a practical tool for empowerment. The gap shows a familiar pattern: **users focus on strong foundations**, while **vendors emphasize innovation and scalability**.

Executive Summary

3 Hot Spot – Best-in-class companies

In 2026, best-in-class companies continue to distinguish themselves by balancing strong foundations with innovation. They prioritize **data quality management**, a strong **data-driven culture** and **data security & privacy** as indispensable prerequisites for unlocking value from new technologies. **Data & AI governance** and **self-service analytics & data discovery** also remain central to building trust, agility and scalability.

Beyond these fundamentals, best-in-class companies are ahead in adopting emerging trends. They emphasize **advanced analytics/AI/ML, decision intelligence & automation** and **data valuation & monetization**. By emphasizing these trends, best-in-class companies turn innovation into action, empowering users and creating scalable data products that deliver tangible business impact. This integrated approach secures them a competitive advantage over laggards.

4 Hot Spot – Global differences

Regional variations remain striking in 2026, shaping adoption priorities across the globe. **Europe** continues to take a more conservative stance, emphasizing **data quality management** and **data governance**, while assigning lower importance to newer innovations such as **agentic AI**. By contrast, **North America** assigns higher value to **cloud for data & analytics**, **embedded analytics & AI** and **data ops**, reflecting a push for scalable architectures. **Asia and Pacific** consistently rates emerging technologies such as **generative AI** and **decision intelligence & automation** as highly important, signaling strong momentum for AI-driven transformation. These differences underline how regional contexts shape adoption speed and investment focus.

Executive Summary

5 Hot Spot – Top trending topics

In 2026, **data quality management** retains its long-standing position as the number one trend, underlining its critical role in ensuring trustworthy and reliable data across organizations. Close behind, **data security & privacy** reflects continued global attention on regulatory compliance and protection of sensitive information. **Data-driven culture** and **data & AI governance** hold steady in the top four, confirming that cultural and organizational foundations are just as essential as technical measures.

Data & AI literacy has now firmly established itself in fifth place, highlighting the importance of equipping employees with the knowledge to leverage data responsibly. **Self-service analytics & data discovery** remain a consistent priority, enabling greater autonomy and agility for business teams. While **AI/ML and advanced analytics** continue to rank below foundational elements, their growing role as enablers of automation and innovation is evident across industries.

6 Hot Spot – Europe

Within Europe, 2026 continues to reveal diverse regional priorities. **Data quality management** remains a leading focus across all European regions, with particularly strong emphasis in **France**, **BeNeLux** and **DACH**, where high-quality data is seen as the basis for trusted insights and decision-making. **Data security & privacy** also retains a prominent role, especially in **Southern Europe** and the **UK & Ireland**, reflecting persistent concerns around compliance with GDPR and protection of sensitive information.

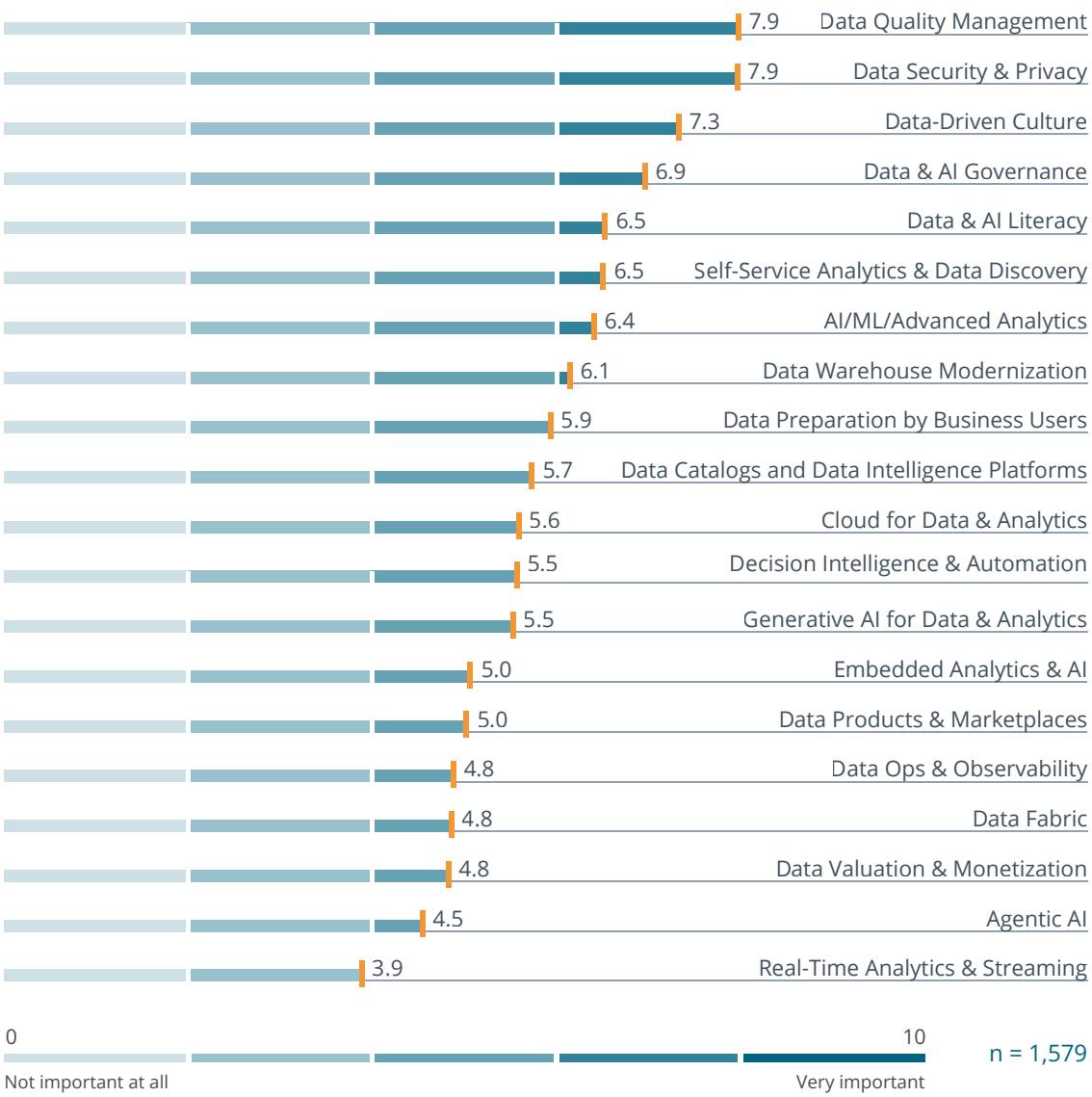
Meanwhile, **Northern Europe**, **UK & Ireland** and **France** show rising interest in **self-service analytics**, signaling a clear move toward data democratization. These differences illustrate how European organizations balance foundational priorities with region-specific approaches to building more agile, data-driven cultures.

Survey Results

Survey Results

Results Overview

Data quality management and data security & privacy remain tied as top priorities in 2026



Viewpoint

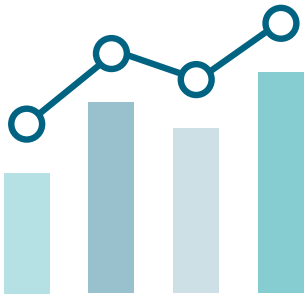
We asked users, consultants and software vendors of BI and data management technology to rate the importance of twenty trending topics that we presented to them.

The 2026 BARC Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor shows a stable picture at the top, with **data quality management** and **data security & privacy** jointly leading the rankings. These results underline that trustworthy, well-governed data remains the foundation for all further innovation. **Data-driven culture** and **data & AI governance** follow closely, reflecting the need for cultural alignment and robust organizational frameworks. **Data & AI literacy** completes the top five, highlighting the importance of equipping employees with the right skills.

While **AI/ML and advanced analytics**, **generative AI** and **decision intelligence** are gaining traction, they continue to rank behind the established basics. This demonstrates that organizations prioritize building strong foundations before scaling advanced use cases. In summary, the top trends – quality, security, culture, governance and literacy – provide the essential basis for leveraging new technologies in a rapidly evolving data landscape.

Survey Results

Trends Development



Some movement this year: Data quality management regains the lead, while agentic AI debuts toward the bottom

Trend not included in Data, BI & Analytics Trend Monitor 2026

n_{2022} = 2,396 | n_{2023} = 1,823 | n_{2024} = 2,398 | n_{2025} = 1,795 | n_{2026} = 1,597

Viewpoint

The 2026 results of our survey reveal many consistently rated topics alongside a few interesting developments.

In the top quartile (the top five of the 20 topics surveyed), it is notable that **data quality management** has reclaimed first place from **data security & privacy**, with its importance for AI success appearing to be a key driver. Just behind it, the very high and stable ratings for the human and organizational prerequisites for data & AI success – culture, governance and literacy – remain firmly established.

Positions 6–10 highlight business-user-focused topics such as **self-service analytics & data discovery** and **data preparation**. While these topics have been less prominent in the broader discussion over recent years, the consistently high ranking of **self-service analytics** (6th place for several years) and the renewed increase in the importance of **data preparation** after a period of decline demonstrate that they continue to be highly relevant.

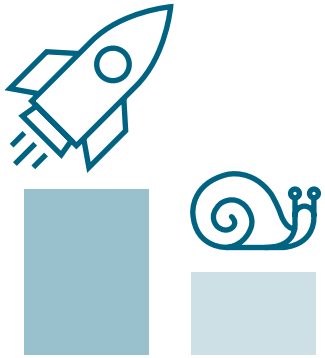
AI/ML/advanced analytics have seen a remarkable rise: from 13th place in 2023, they have held 7th place since 2024, reflecting their transition into mainstream practice, fueled in part by the "ChatGPT effect".

In the third quartile, two rising topics – **generative AI for data & analytics**, now in 13th place, and **embedded analytics & AI**, which has climbed from 17th to 14th place – underscore the growing importance of AI for data and analytics.

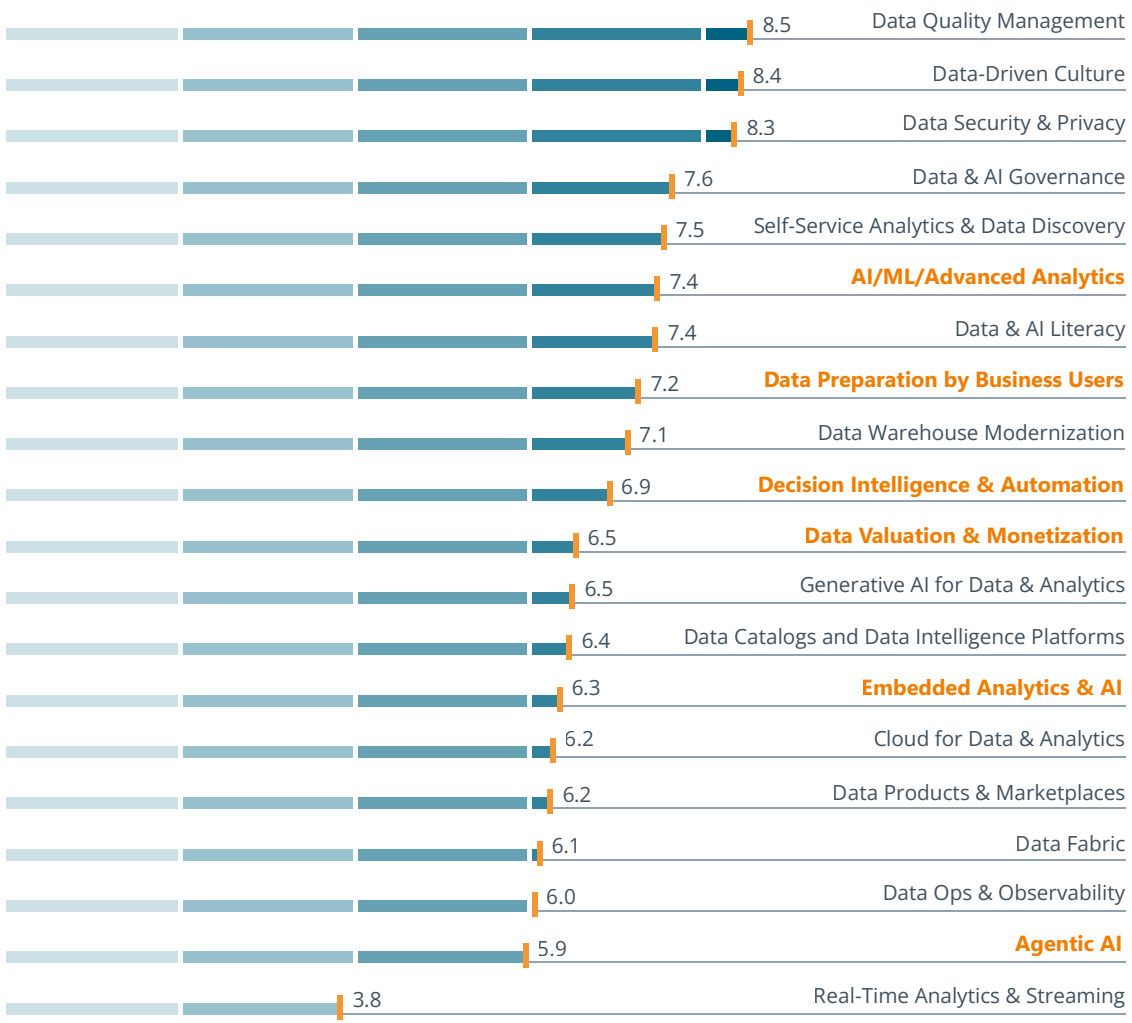
The fourth quartile features topics surveyed for the first time this year: **data fabric**, **data valuation & monetization** and **agentic AI**. These topics have not yet achieved the prominence of others, although **data valuation & monetization** is rated significantly higher by best-in-class companies. **Data Ops** is trending upwards, while **real-time analytics & streaming** continues its long-term decline, now sitting at the bottom of the rankings. We interpret this as a reflection of its status as a "common practice": it has become a standard approach and is therefore no longer rated as particularly critical.

Survey Results

Leaders vs. Laggards



Learning from the best: How best-in-class companies see the trends



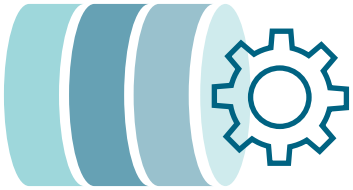
Viewpoint

The 2026 results highlight striking differences between best-in-class companies and laggards. For leaders, **data quality management**, **data-driven culture** and **data security & privacy** form the foundation of their strategy, ensuring trust and organizational alignment. They also place above-average emphasis on **data & AI governance** and **self-service analytics & data discovery**, reflecting a strong commitment to both control and empowerment.

In contrast, laggards still recognize the importance of fundamentals, with **data security & privacy** and **data quality management** at the top of their list. However, they assign far less importance to transformative trends. The gap is particularly pronounced in areas such as **decision intelligence & automation** (6.89 vs. 4.63), **data valuation & monetization** (6.50 vs. 3.36) and **AI/ML/advanced analytics** (7.44 vs. 5.67). These differences illustrate that best-in-class companies not only safeguard data foundations but also actively leverage advanced technologies and governance practices to turn data into a strategic asset, while laggards remain focused on compliance and operational basics.

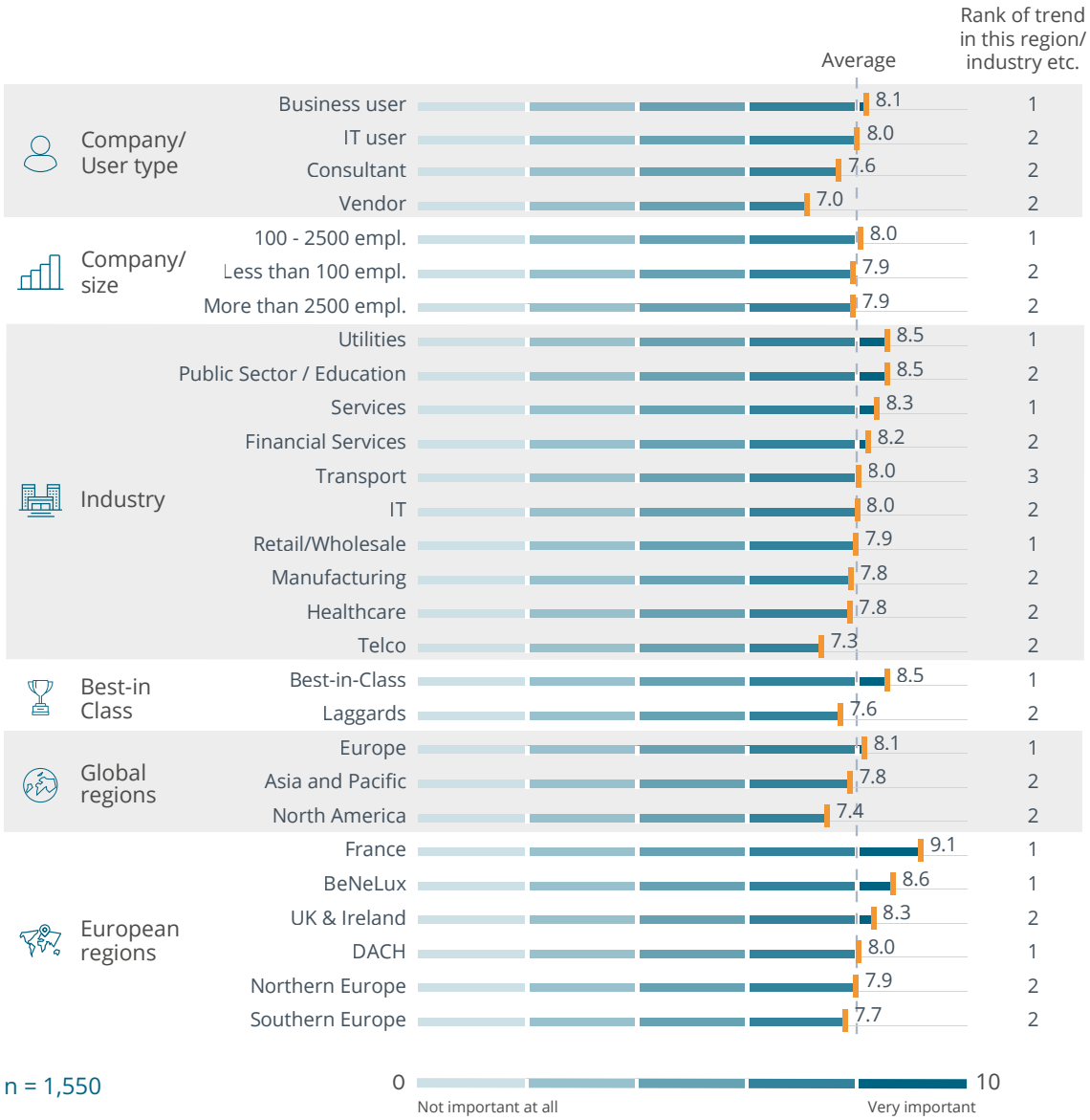
Top 20 Trends in Detail

Top 20 Trends in Detail



Data Quality Management

A major trend in France and among best-in-class companies, but less important in North America and the telecommunications sector



Viewpoint

The importance of data quality can be explained very simply: Correct decisions can only be made on the basis of reliable, consistent data. Models can only deliver accurate predictions and meaningful actions if they are trained and supplied with the correct data. More than that, high data quality standards are essential to increase flexibility for business users and strengthen their trust in data.

For AI and AI agents, high data quality is more important than ever to avoid hallucinations, bias or faulty recommendations. This now includes unstructured data, whose quality and consistency are increasingly decisive for reliable AI outcomes.

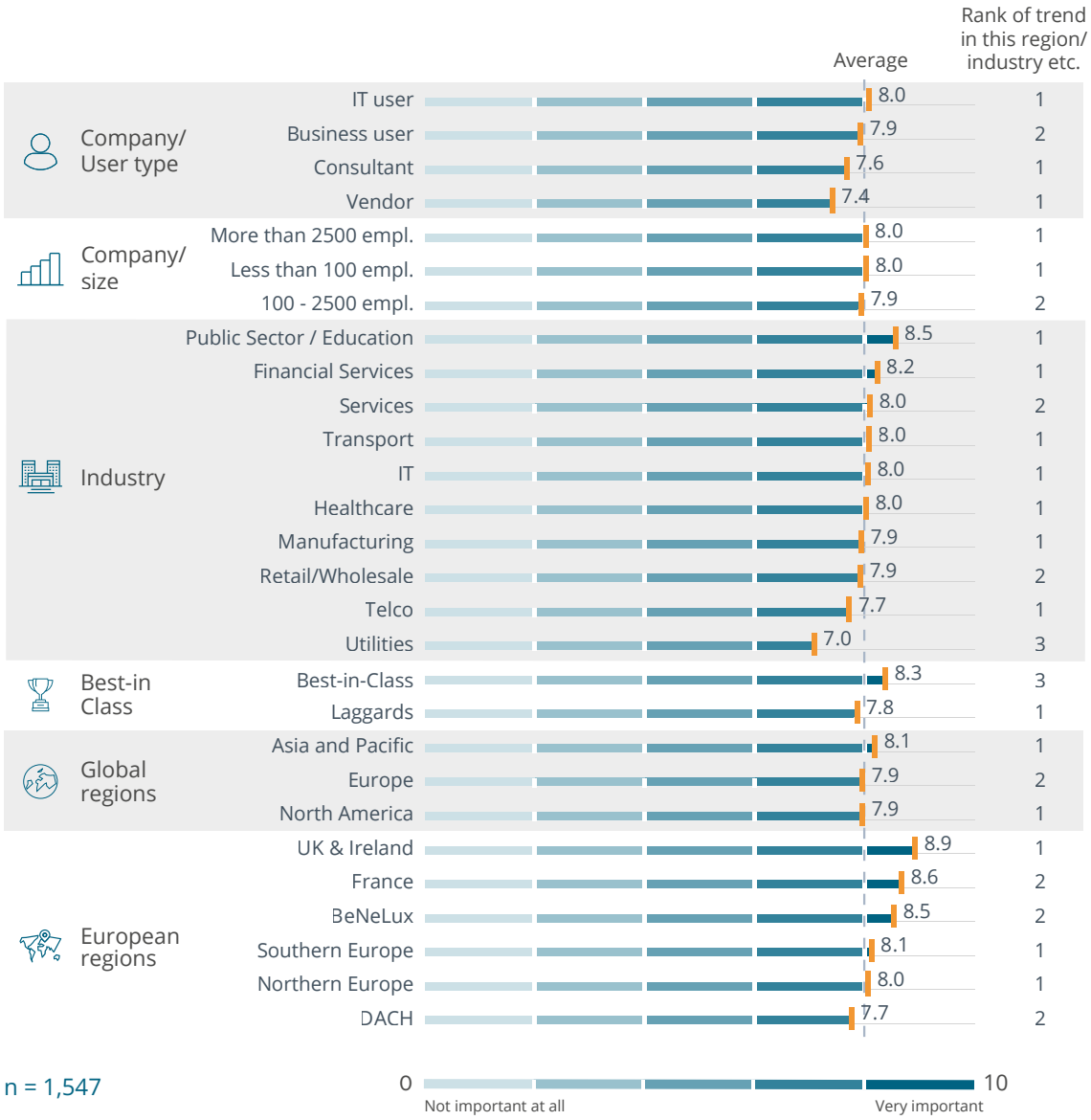
Data quality comprises the continuous definition of data quality metrics and rules, monitoring and alerting, data anomaly detection, standardization and cleansing, and enrichment.

The critical success factors for sustainable high data quality are defined roles and responsibilities, robust assurance processes, continuous monitoring of data health and – most importantly – broad awareness and transparency regarding the impact of poor data quality.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Security & Privacy

Still a top priority worldwide, but slightly less dominant in Europe and the utilities sector



n = 1,547

Viewpoint

Data security is the protection of data against it being stolen, manipulated or destroyed. The professionalism of economically and politically motivated cyber attacks and disruptions has increased significantly over the past year. Protection measures must also be adapted accordingly. However, the reality is often different: risk assessments, emergency plans and protective measures are often not up to date or do not exist at all.

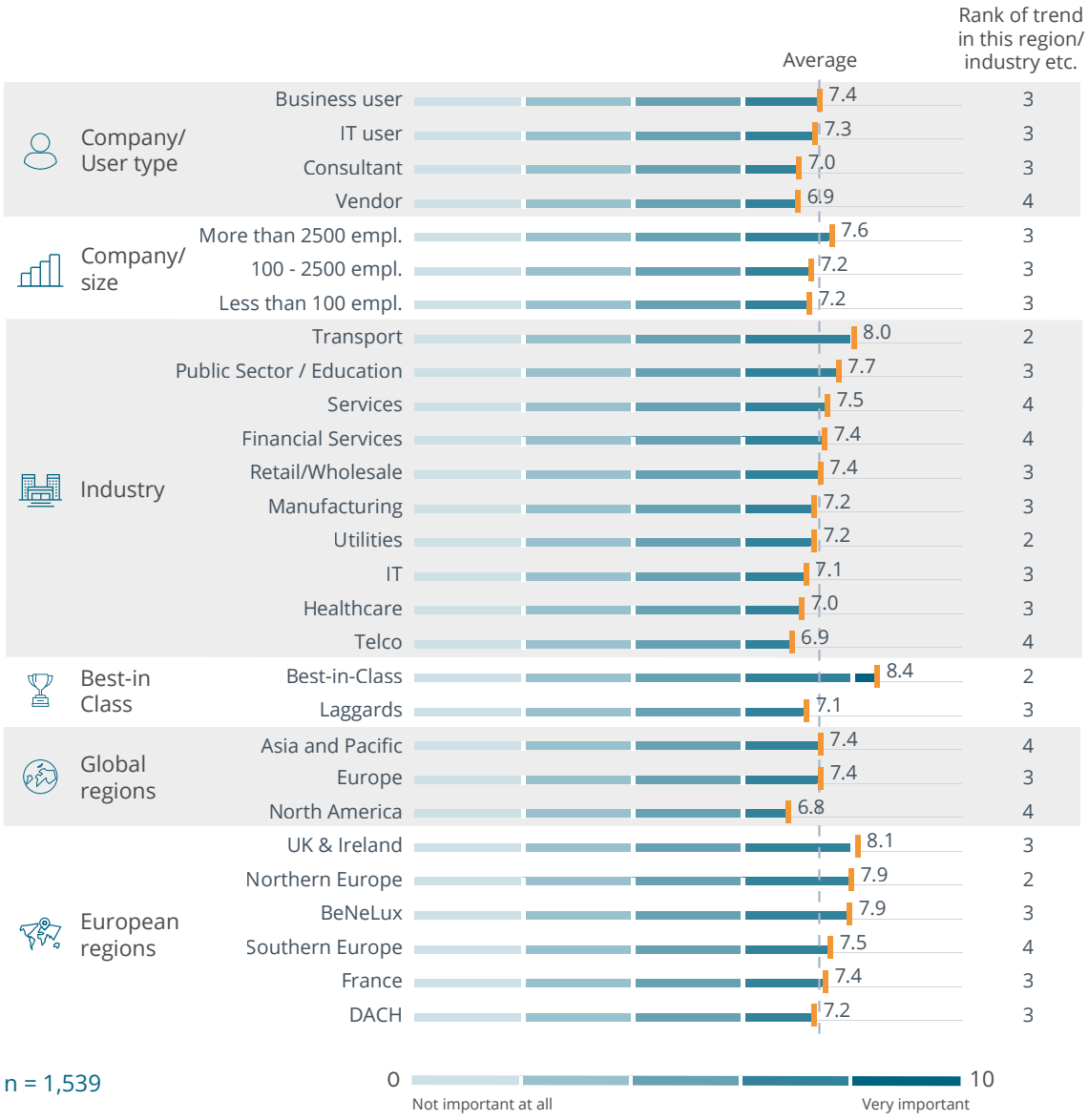
The survey shows a geographically differentiated result. In Europe, data security has moved down to second place, while it is still ranked first in all other geographical regions. This means that the topic has also fallen back one place, even though its absolute score has remained roughly the same.

Data security measures are grouped into three categories: prevention, detection and reaction. Data is protected by access restrictions, encryption and regulations on data transmission and storage. If a data breach does occur, it should be detected as quickly as possible and damage prevented (or at least limited). A solid security concept and emergency plan includes options to detect the attacker, measures to restore the data and clear action and communication processes to limit the financial and non-financial damage. This also includes the obligation to provide information quickly if personal data is affected, in accordance with the applicable data protection laws.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data-Driven Culture

IT and business users emphasize data-driven culture, while telecommunications and North America show lower interest



Viewpoint

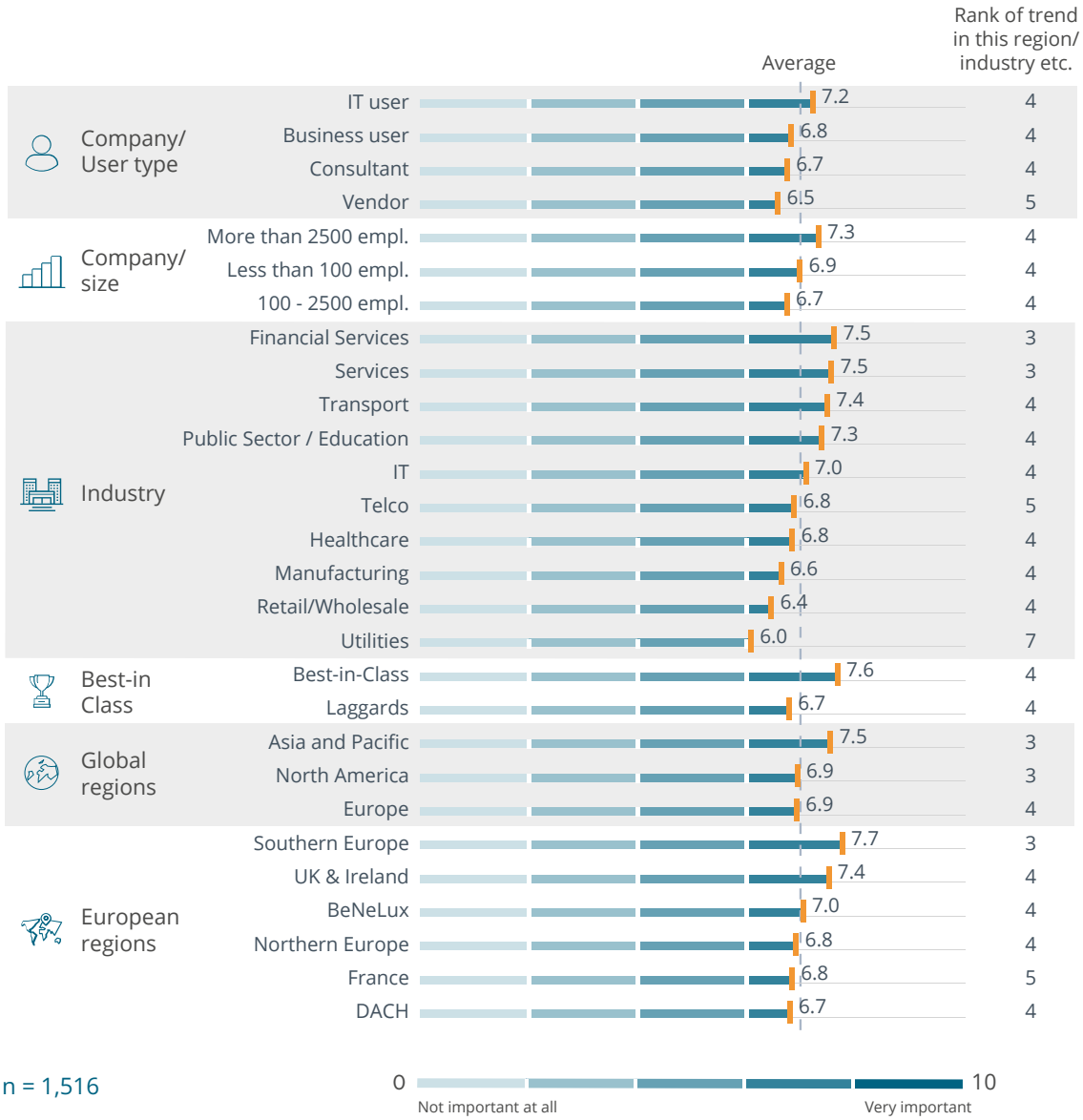
Many organizations continue to strive toward becoming truly data-driven, acknowledging that widespread use of data and analytics remains essential for sustainable success. In 2026, the focus is not only on embedding data into decision-making and processes but also on ensuring that this mindset permeates all levels of the enterprise. A data-driven culture enables companies to make more accurate decisions, increase operational agility and create lasting competitive advantages. Yet, achieving this state requires more than technological progress, it demands a cultural transformation that engages the entire workforce.

The BARC Data Culture Framework continues to provide guidance with its six key action areas: **data strategy**, **leadership**, **governance**, **literacy**, **communication** and **access**. These pillars are closely aligned with today's leading trends. The ongoing emphasis on **data & AI literacy** highlights the need to empower employees with the skills to use data effectively, while **data governance** and **data security & privacy** remain central to building trust. At the same time, modern data access approaches foster openness and transparency, ensuring that data can be applied consistently in daily work, for example, by business users independently, using **self-service analytics** and **data preparation**. Organizations that succeed in connecting these areas establish a culture where data is not only available but actively drives innovation, efficiency and long-term growth.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data & AI Governance

A stronger focus in financial services and Southern Europe, but less important for the utilities sector



n = 1,516

Viewpoint

Unlike BI or analytics governance, which center on preparing and presenting data for analytical use cases, data governance focuses on the data in all systems that are dealing with data. Because business and technical responsibilities are traditionally covered at a 'per system' level, this overarching view of data needs to be specifically addressed. For a long time, this was usually performed by a central body within the organization. With the rise of data product thinking and data mesh, a decentralized and federated approach to data governance is now more prevalent. This requires broader thinking in terms of knowledge, people, organization and technology.

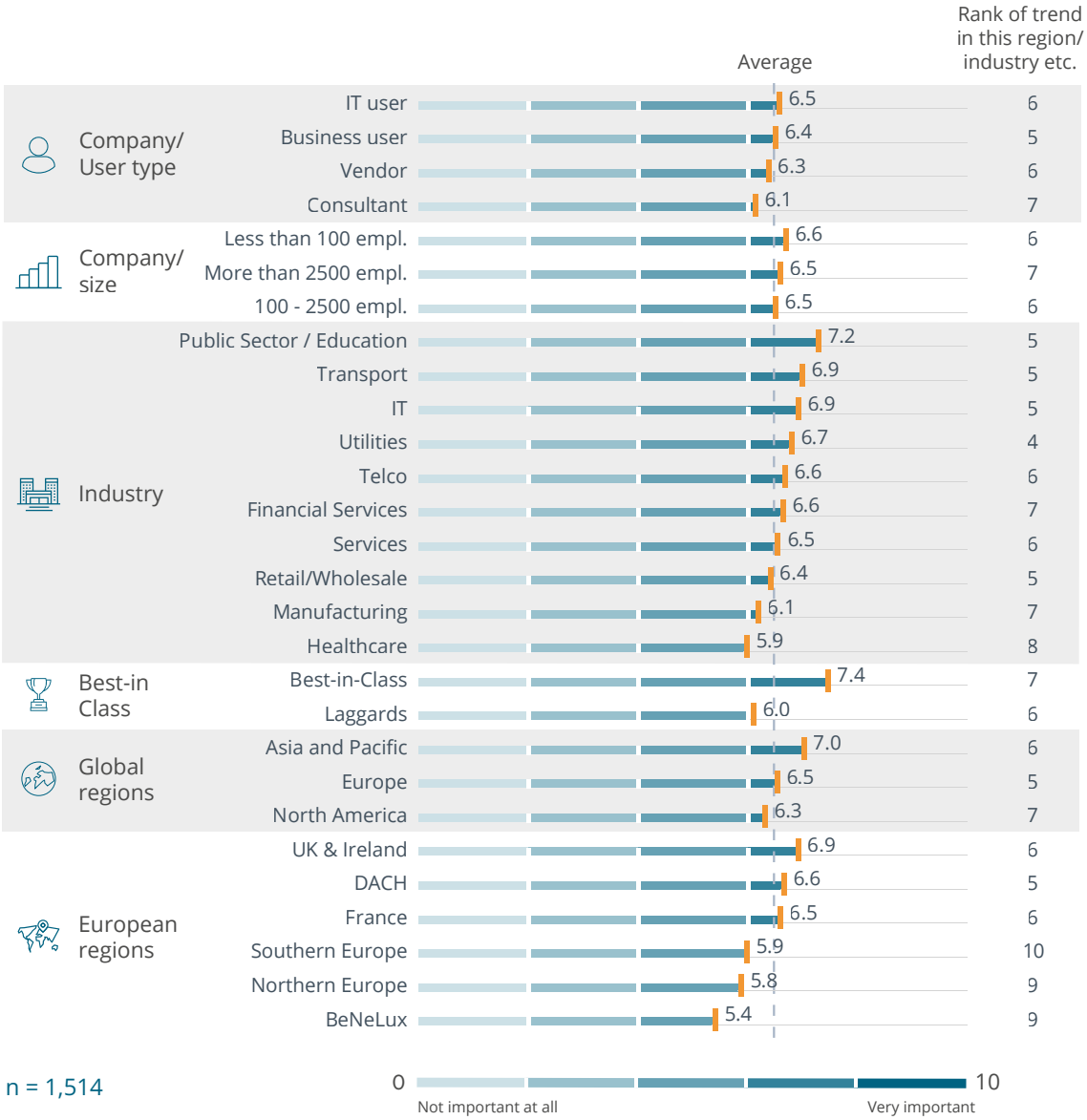
Data governance is needed as the steering mechanism for data strategy. A proper data strategy orchestrates how business strategy is translated into data and analytics. It enables the business to get value from data, for example, by applying data product thinking.

Today, with AI and AI agents becoming integral to decision-making and operations, AI governance extends this foundation. It addresses how AI models are trained, monitored, explained and controlled, ensuring fairness, transparency and accountability. Together, data and AI governance provide the frameworks, policies and safeguards to manage and protect data value, AI assets and their interaction across people, processes and technologies.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data & AI Literacy

Best-in-class companies and the public sector lead the way, while healthcare and BeNeLux lag behind



n = 1,514

Viewpoint

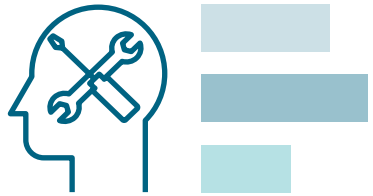
Data & AI literacy is no longer confined to specialists such as data scientists or engineers. In 2026, it has become a critical skill for employees across all roles and industries. BARC defines data & AI literacy as the foundational ability to understand, interpret and work with data and artificial intelligence. It encompasses analytical skills, familiarity with data models and sources and the effective use of tools in collaboration with others to support sound decision-making.

The 2026 survey highlights a clear gap between leaders and laggards. Best-in-class companies rate data & AI literacy at **7.4/10**, well above the overall average of **6.5/10**, while laggards assign it only **6.0/10**. This difference illustrates how leaders recognize the strategic importance of literacy for building trust in data, enabling self-service analytics and driving innovation. By contrast, laggards still struggle to establish the necessary skills broadly across the organization, limiting their ability to turn data into actionable insights.

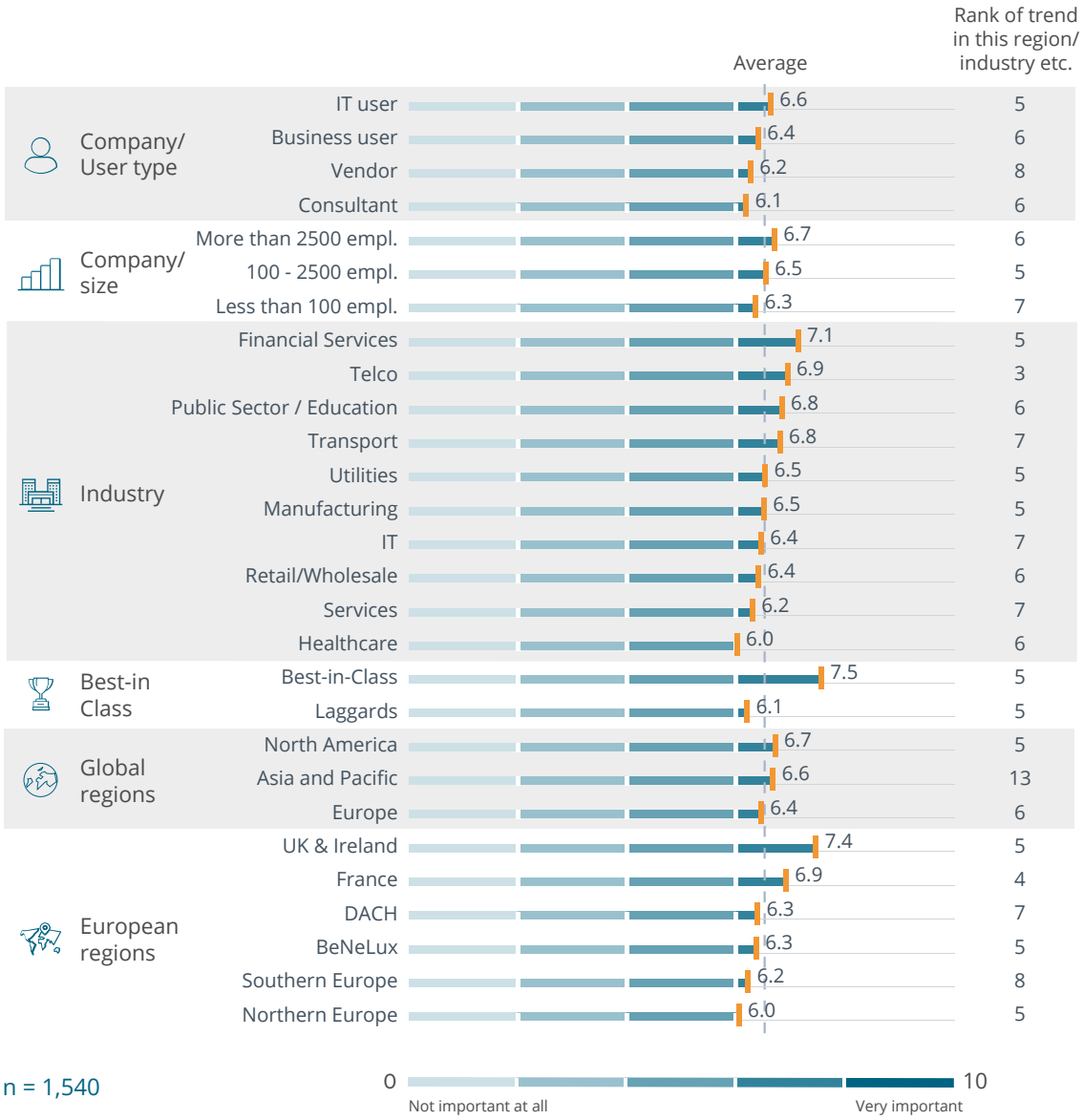
As organizations continue to pursue a data-driven culture, bridging this literacy gap is essential. Empowering employees with the ability to understand and apply data ensures that analytics investments translate into better decisions, operational agility and long-term business value.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Self-Service Analytics & Data Discovery



Strong adoption in financial services and among best-in-class companies, but slower uptake in healthcare and the Asia-Pacific region



n = 1,540

Viewpoint

Self-service BI & analytics, which empowers business users to create their own analyses, remains a stable key trend. Especially best-in-class companies underline its importance in our survey.

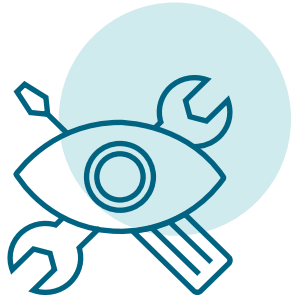
The share of organizations that performs self-service analytics, at least in some areas, is already high. This creates more relevant content that then attracts even more users. Many companies are now moving beyond departmental solutions and aiming for enterprise-wide data democratization. The goal is to achieve more efficient processes and consistent, data-driven decisions across the entire organization.

The rise of generative AI is dramatically accelerating this movement. By lowering the technical barrier to entry, GenAI functions as an intelligent analysis co-pilot. Through natural language interfaces, less technical users can now query data, automatically generate visualizations and uncover complex insights, making the path from question to insight faster and more intuitive.

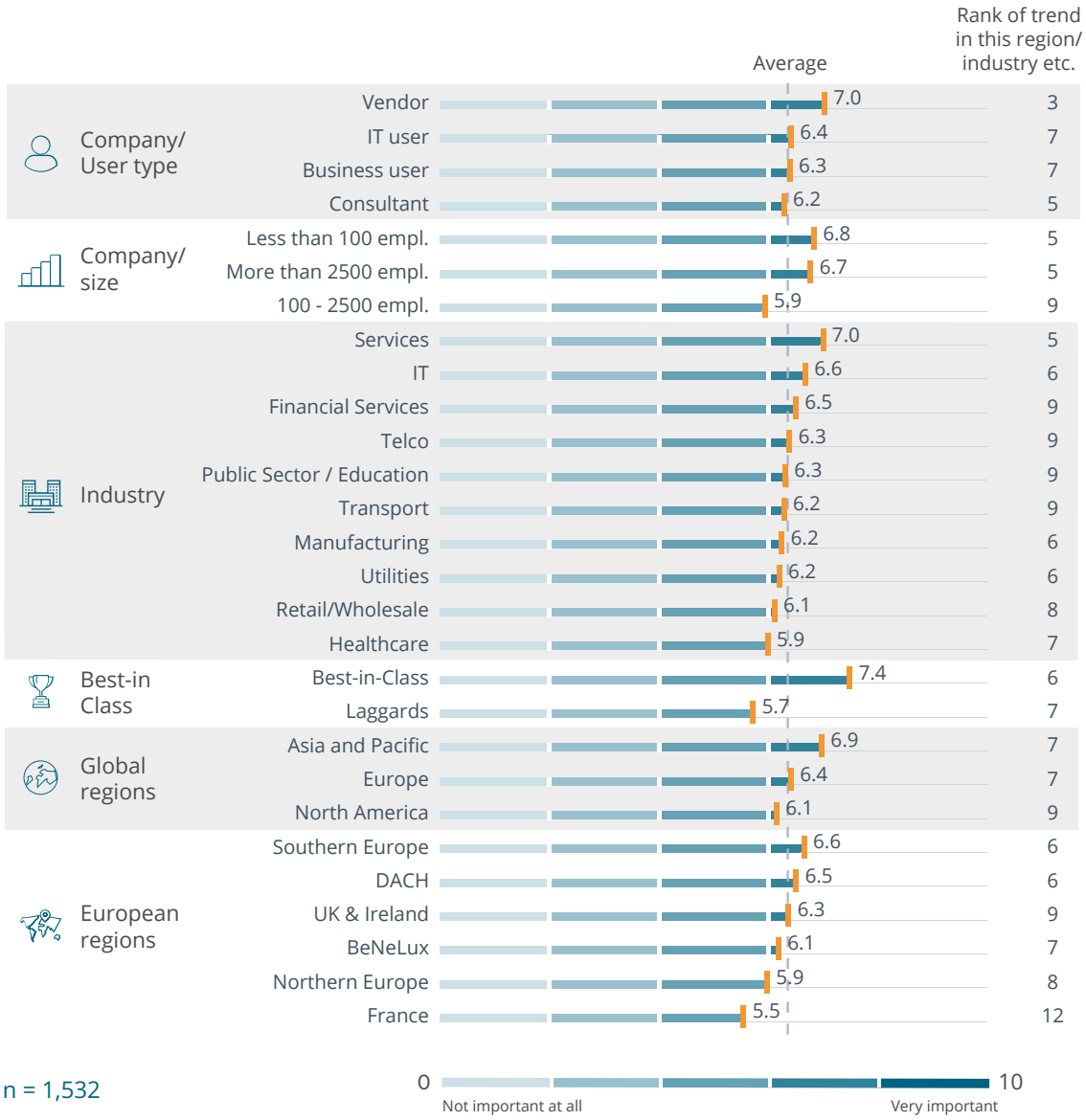
However, this democratization does not eliminate the need for specialists. The role of IT and BI expert teams is evolving and becoming more critical than ever. They are essential for governing these powerful new tools, ensuring data quality and integrity, and maintaining a secure and successful analytics environment for all users.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

AI / ML / Advanced Analytics



A strong focus among vendors and in Asia-Pacific, but less important in healthcare and France



n = 1,532

Viewpoint

Advanced analytics, machine learning and AI are interrelated: Advanced analytics uses techniques like statistical and heuristic modeling to uncover deeper insights, patterns and trends in data beyond basic reporting. Machine learning (ML) is a subset of AI that enables systems to learn from data, identify patterns and make decisions or predictions with minimal human intervention. Artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the broader concept of machines simulating human intelligence, delivering a diverse set of capabilities that ranges from computer vision over making decision recommendations to optimizing processes.

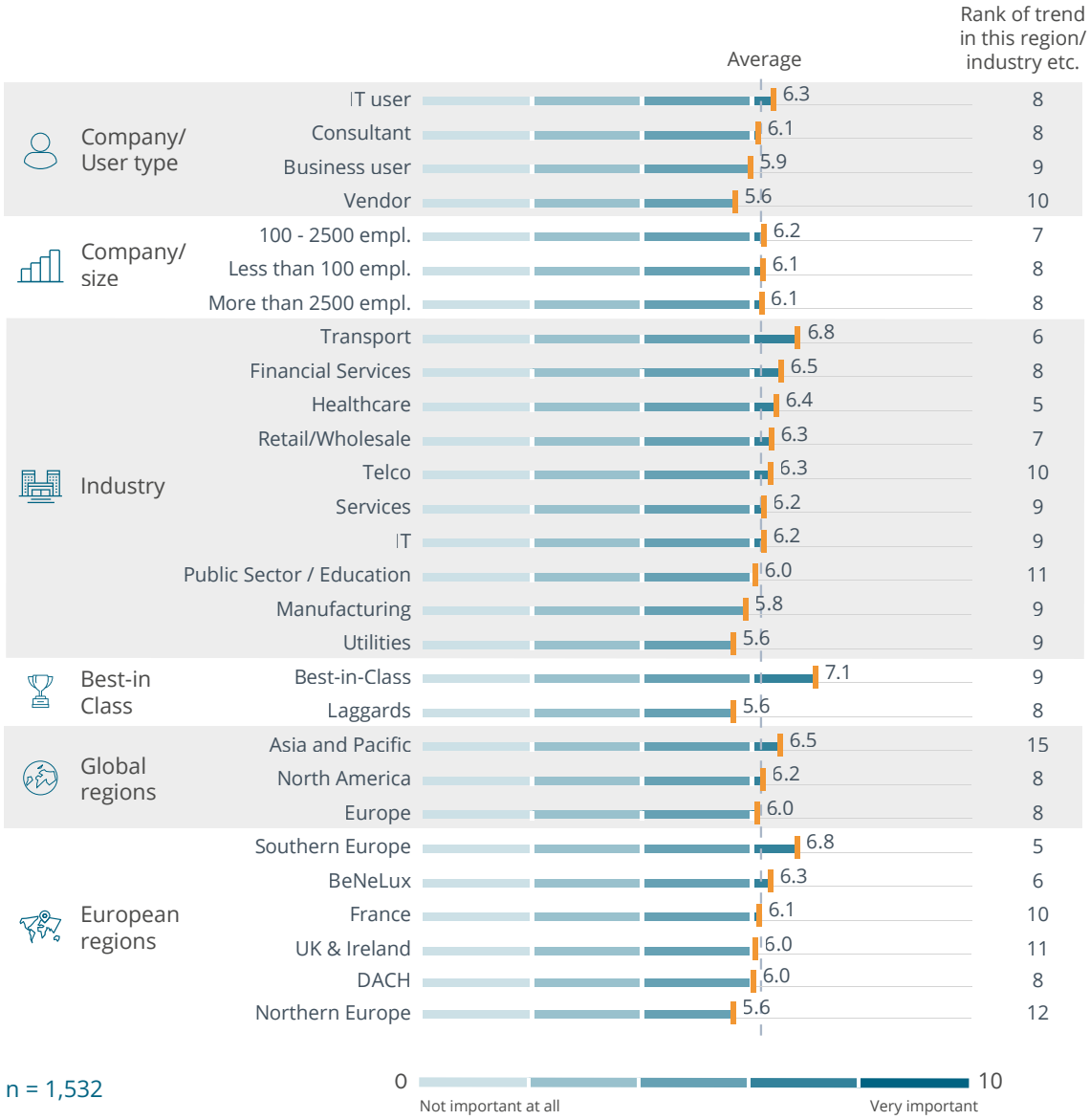
Generative AI is a well-known field of AI referring to large pre-trained AI models designed to create new content such as text, images, audio and video. The impact of GenAI on data analytics is described in a separate chapter.

With the rise of AI, businesses are increasingly focused on automating specific decision processes. For decision-makers, it is crucial to prioritize use cases, evaluate the strategic relevance of advanced analytics and AI, and ensure the right skills and technologies are in place. Addressing bias and ethical considerations, alongside professionalizing through practices like DevOps and MLOps, is essential for successful AI deployment.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Warehouse Modernization

High importance among IT users and in Southern Europe, while Northern Europe remains cautious



n = 1,532

Viewpoint

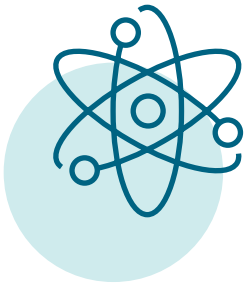
Many data platforms do not cover the needs of their users adequately. One reason for this is that older data warehouse landscapes have become too complex to support agile development or too expensive to have their functionality extended to accommodate modern analytics requirements. Originally optimized for traditional reporting, these environments cannot keep pace with today's demands for operational data usage, AI, advanced analytics and real-time processing in many cases.

As organizations increasingly depend on timely, trustworthy data, they are exploring new architectural paradigms – such as data lakehouse and data fabric, but also in revisiting technology choices, for example, by employing in-memory and cloud-native platforms, as well as automation tools – to bridge the gap. IT leaders must enable rapid adaptation, empower users through extensive self-service, and support hybrid and multi-cloud strategies to avoid the pitfalls of dependency on any single cloud provider.

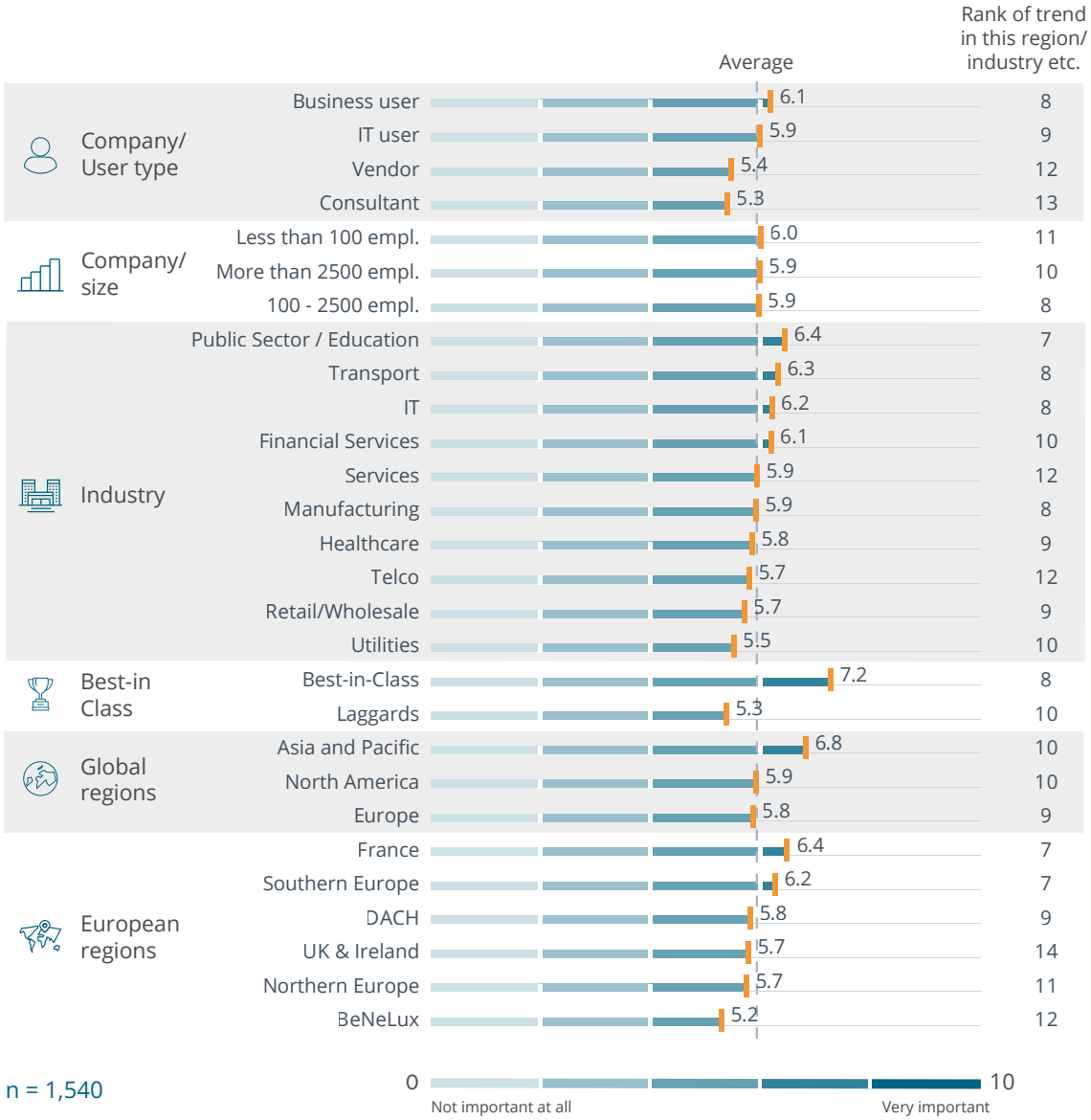
Now is the time to critically assess legacy data warehouses against current and future requirements, and to consider how modern technologies and architectures can simplify operations and unlock greater value.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Preparation by Business Users



A stronger focus in the public sector and among best-in-class companies, but less important in utilities and BeNeLux



n = 1,540

Viewpoint

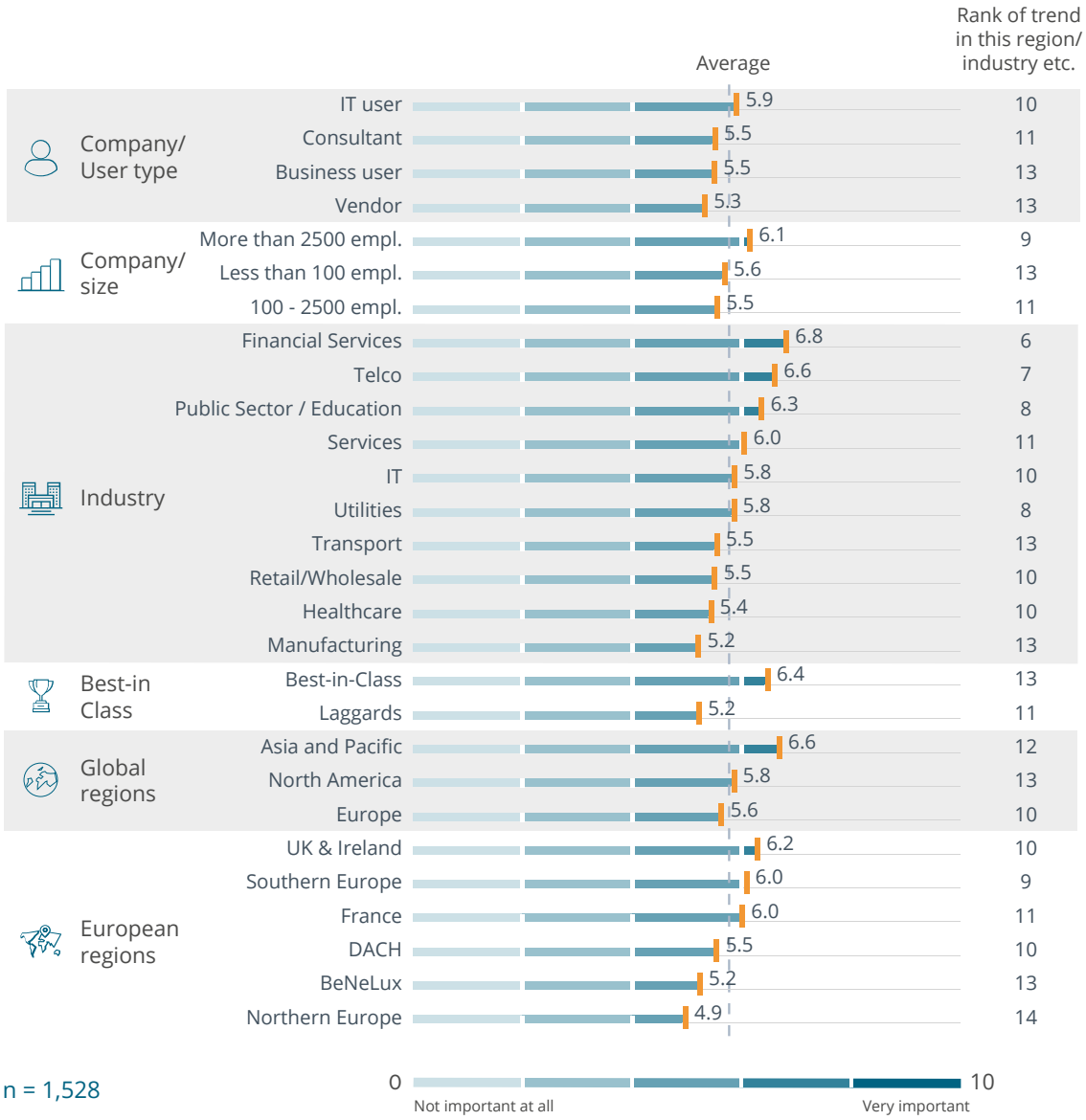
Data preparation encompasses profiling, cleaning, structuring and enriching data by business users for use in analytics. Its goal is to build valuable assets from raw data to help answer business questions through analyses. Achieving agile data preparation at scale is of utmost importance to increase agility in operational decision-making. It enables businesses to leverage enterprise and external data to inform decisions, automate processes and monetize data.

Increased agility is achieved by shifting the task of shaping and enriching data from IT to business users. Easy-to-use and intuitive tools with sophisticated user guidance and automation powered by machine learning are the foundation to infuse efficiency and quality into data preparation efforts. They empower business users to prepare data flexibly and anywhere. The governance of distributed data is therefore of high importance to ensure the quality of results and to avoid pipeline proliferation. Monitoring and collaboration between IT and business are also key elements for a successful data integration and preparation strategy. To promote flexible, democratized access to data, a balance between agility and governance has to be found. However, providing the systems and tools should only be one part of an overarching data access strategy that also needs to align with use case requirements, people and organization.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Catalogs and Data Intelligence Platforms

Very important in financial services, but less important in the manufacturing sector and Northern Europe



n = 1,528

Viewpoint

The biggest challenge for data consumers today is finding, understanding, trusting and using relevant data. Analysts spend a lot of time searching for the right data and analysis and repeating work that has already been done, which impacts their productivity.

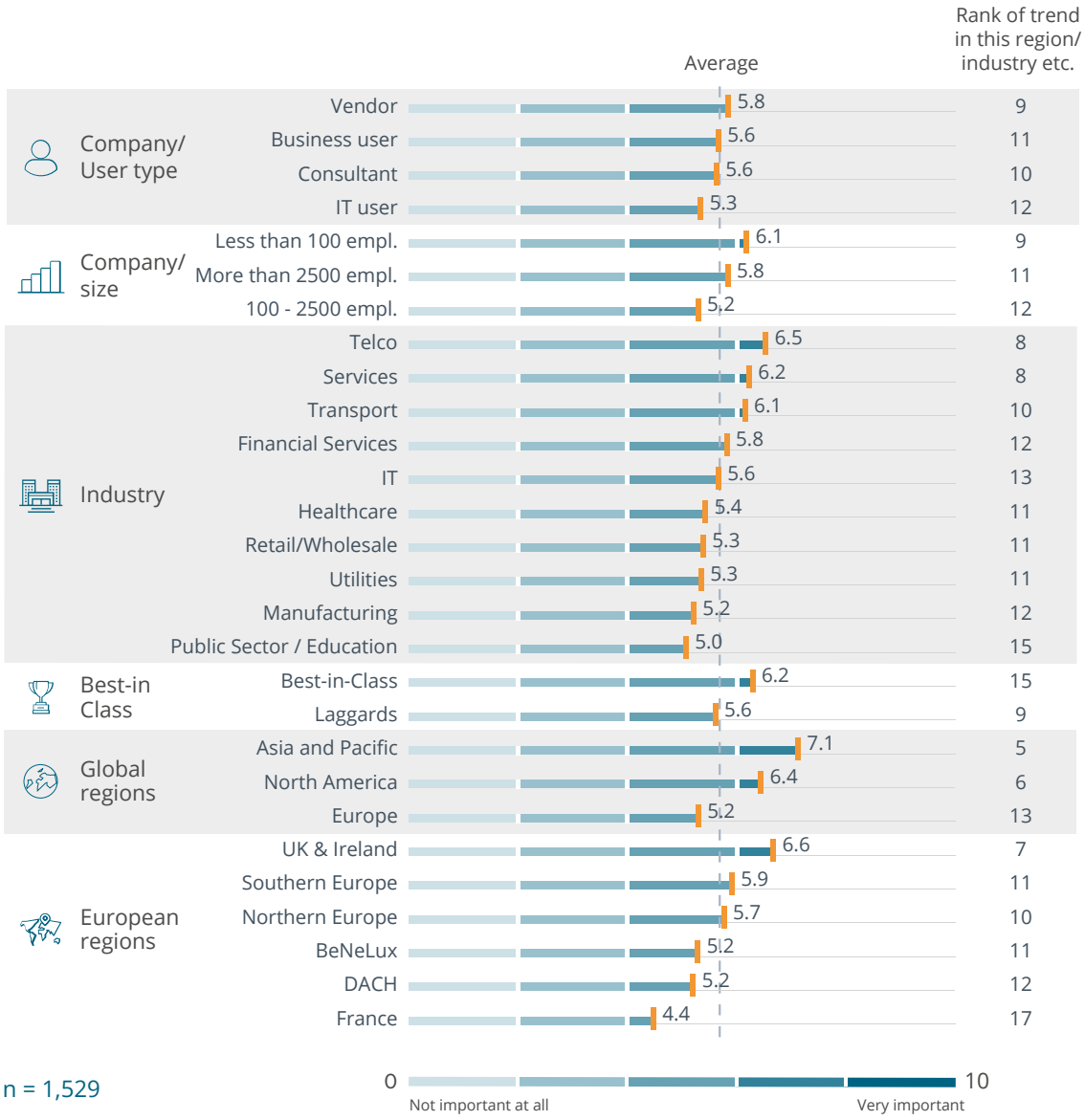
A lack of available documentation and detailed knowledge stands in the way of achieving these goals. Such detailed knowledge is available in the organization in the form of metadata. However, metadata is rarely collected and brought to life. Data cataloging embraces the systematic collection, linking and analysis of metadata with the goal of creating a better understanding of data. The use of a data catalog, however, requires an awareness that data catalogs must be actively maintained. Technology can assist in this process with connectors to different types of sources; workflows, analysis and collaboration functions; as well as the automation of time-consuming tasks such as metadata ingestion, linkage and preparation.

While a data catalog provides access to linked metadata, a data intelligence platform goes a step further and provides additional advanced functionality to activate metadata in different use cases such as data governance applications or to support data product thinking (e.g., by adding marketplace functionality).

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Cloud for Data & Analytics

More relevant in Asia-Pacific and the telecommunications sector, but less important in France



n = 1,529

Viewpoint

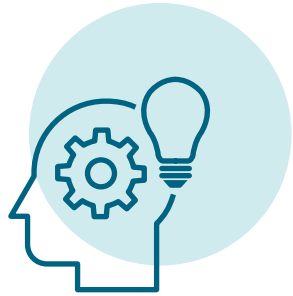
The migration of data and analytics into the cloud, initiated over fifteen years ago by software-as-a-service (SaaS) innovators and later followed by established vendors, has fundamentally reshaped the market. Today, most providers pursue "cloud-first" or "cloud-only" strategies, with cloud products often offering broader functionality than their on-premises equivalents. Despite this strong vendor push, adoption remains uneven, as many organizations continue to weigh the benefits of scalability and agility against concerns over costs, compliance and migration complexity. Growing concerns around data sovereignty are driving organizations to take a more nuanced approach, classifying data by its criticality and keeping highly sensitive data on-premises or in private cloud environments.

Regional differences are particularly striking in 2026. In Asia and Pacific, cloud for data & analytics achieves the highest rating (**7.1/10**), reflecting a strong appetite for flexible and scalable platforms. North America follows with **6.4/10**, underlining the region's focus on innovation and speed. Europe, however, continues to lag significantly at **5.2/10**, highlighting that cloud adoption is influenced not only by technology maturity but also by regulatory frameworks, market structures and risk perceptions in different regions.

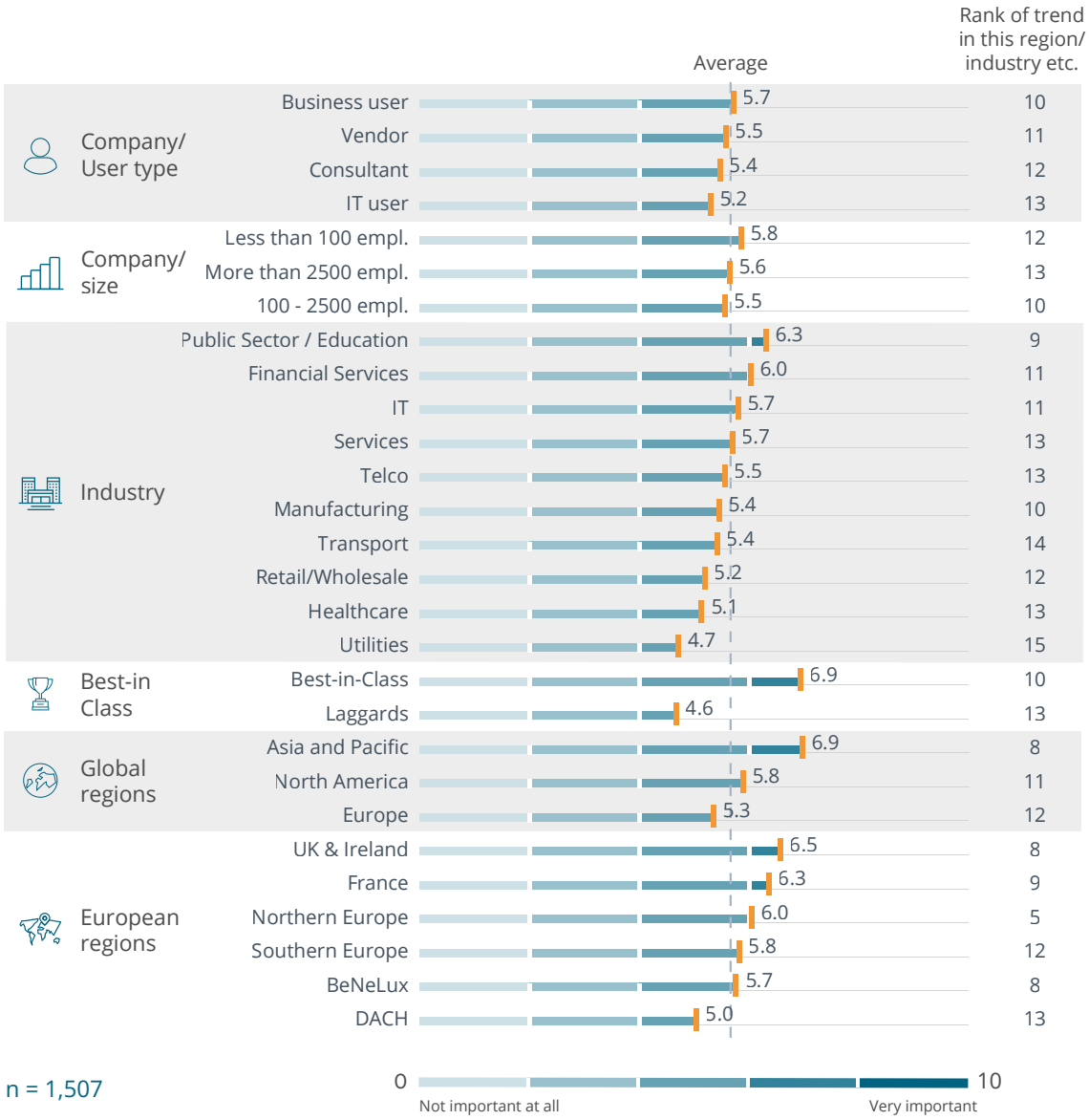
For organizations that succeed in overcoming these barriers, cloud adoption provides a critical foundation for modern data architectures, enabling agility, innovation and long-term competitiveness.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Decision Intelligence & Automation



Strong momentum in Asia-Pacific and among best-in-class companies, but less important in utilities and the DACH region



n = 1,507

Viewpoint

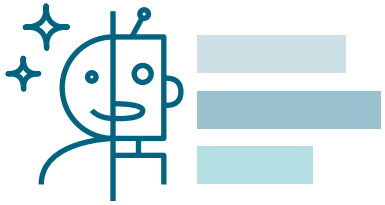
The core purpose of data and analytics is to enable better, more informed decisions. As data volumes and complexity continue to rise, traditional approaches are reaching their limits. Decision intelligence (combining data, analytics, machine learning and automation) has emerged as a way to manage this complexity and scale of decision-making.

The Trend Monitor reflects this development: after ranking 15th in 2024, decision intelligence moved into the top 12 in 2025 and has maintained this position in 2026. This shows that the trend is consolidating, moving beyond hype toward established practice. Initially viewed as an extension of advanced analytics, it is now increasingly recognized for embedding intelligence directly into business processes and automating operational decisions. Examples include fraud detection in financial services, dynamic pricing in retail and predictive planning in logistics.

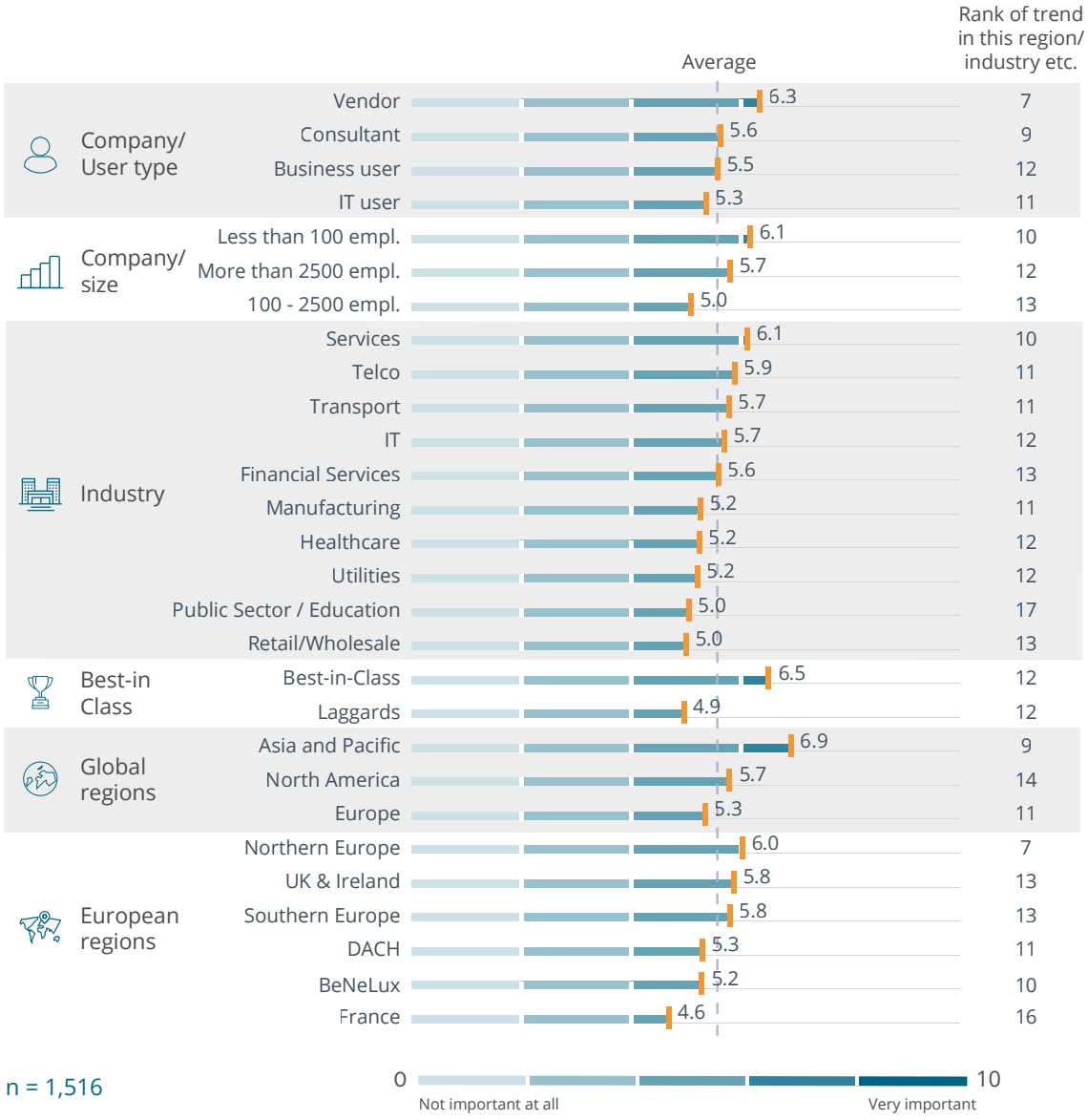
At the same time, the human role is changing. Rather than making every decision, employees are tasked with designing, supervising and refining rules and models. This shift emphasizes the need for transparency and ethics. Decision intelligence therefore represents not only a technology trend but also a broader transformation in how organizations approach decision-making.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Generative AI for Data & Analytics



Gaining traction in Asia-Pacific and among best-in-class companies, but less relevant in Europe and the public sector



n = 1,516

Viewpoint

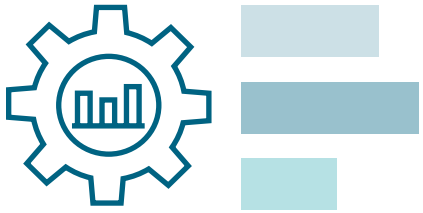
Generative AI is becoming an increasingly important element in modern data and analytics, accelerating automation and making advanced capabilities more accessible. Over the past year, its integration has led to early examples of rising data engineer productivity and greater accessibility of data for business users.

Key use cases include:

- **Conversational Analytics and Decision Support**
  Natural language interfaces based on generative AI enable users to interact with data platforms conversationally, generate reports and access insights faster. Combined with other analytical methods like predictive analytics and real-time recommendation engines, this technology enables both operational and tactical decision-making.
- **Data Engineering and Automation**
  Generative AI automates repetitive tasks such as SQL generation, data pipeline scripting, schema mapping and data cleaning. This reduces manual workload and accelerates project delivery.
- **Synthetic Data**
  The generation of synthetic data supports use cases in testing, privacy preservation and model training where real data may be limited or sensitive.

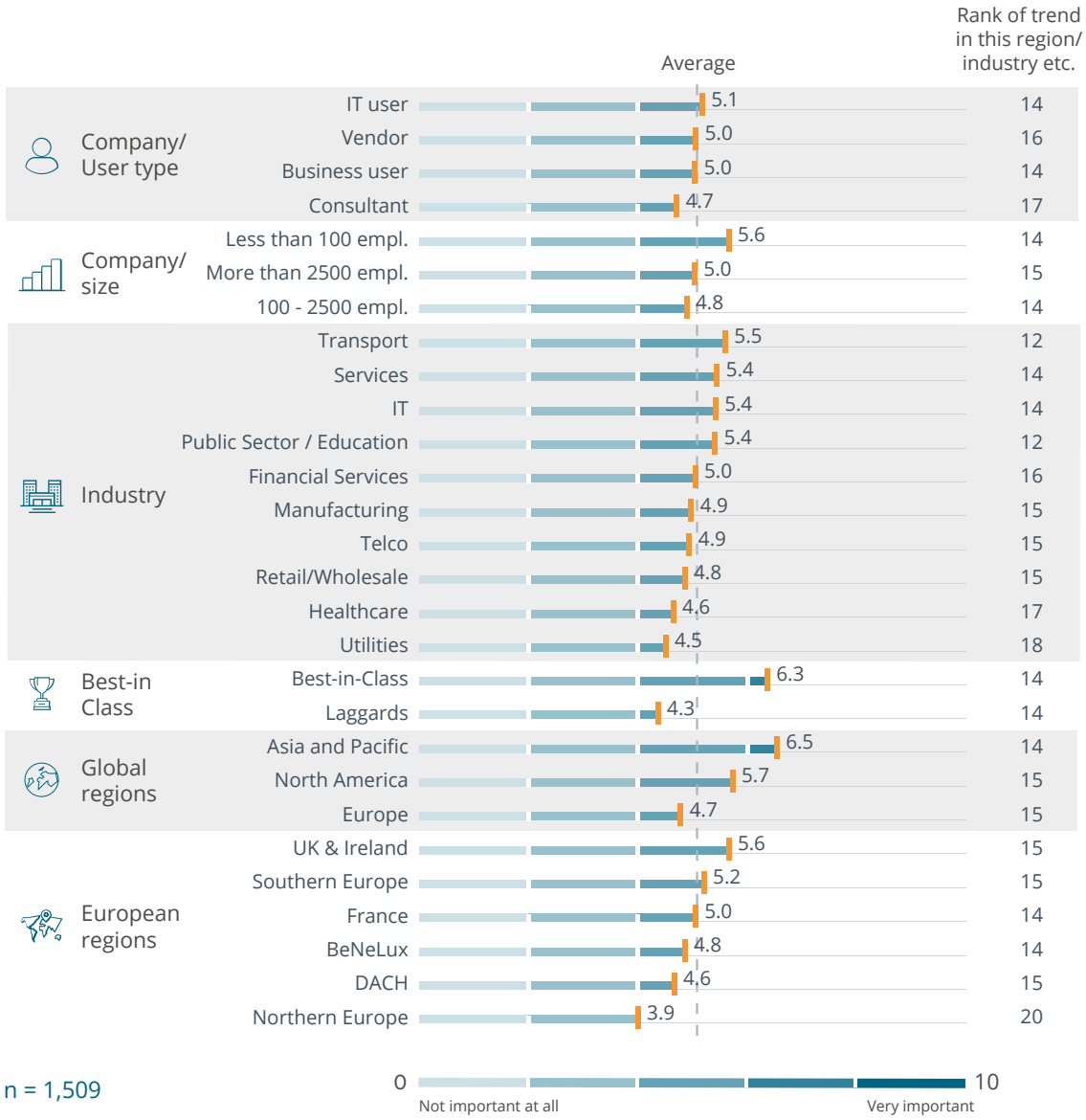
As organizations move from pilot projects to enterprise integration, the focus within GenAI for data & analytics is shifting to robust governance, quality assurance and alignment with business objectives.

Top 20 Trends in Detail



Embedded Analytics & AI

More relevant in the transport industry and for best-in-class companies, but less important in Northern Europe and the utilities sector



Viewpoint

Embedding analytics and AI capabilities directly into business applications continues to expand, moving from a promising niche into widespread practice. Insights from The BI & Analytics Survey 26, based on responses from BI software vendors, show that 65 percent of their customers are already using embedded BI. This reflects a strong vendor-driven push and indicates that embedded functionality has become a core expectation in many analytics projects. By providing insights directly within workflows, ranging from dashboards to predictive and optimization models, embedded analytics empowers employees to make decisions without needing to involve IT departments or power users.

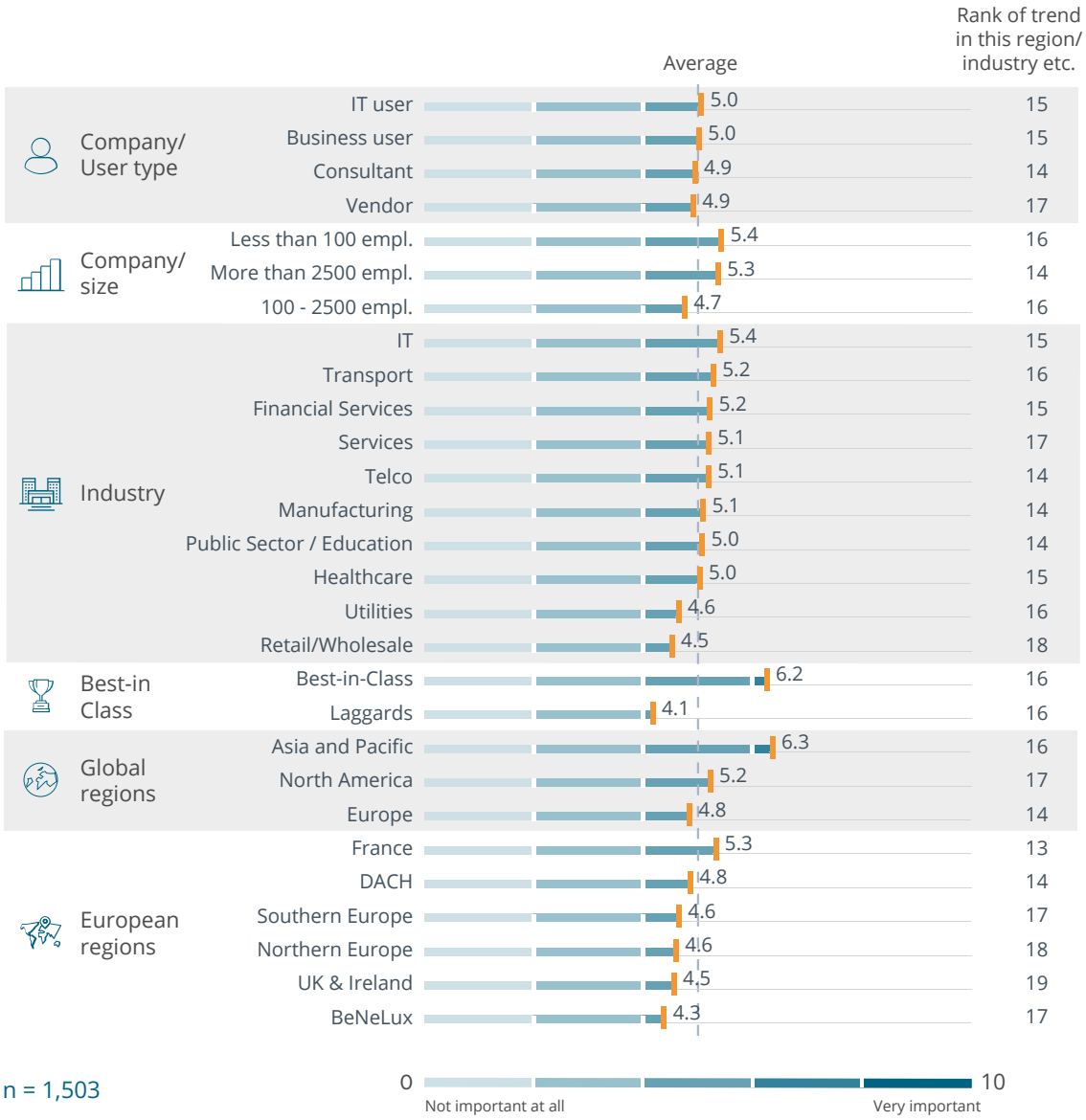
In recent years, this trend has evolved from basic integration to a key enabler of automation. Linking analytics with processes allows data-driven actions to be triggered in real time, with or without human intervention. This accelerates decision-making and closes the loop from information to action.

However, strategic questions remain. Organizations must ensure that embedded BI aligns with their broader data and analytics strategy, clarify the roles of application and analytics teams, and decide between in-house development and vendor-provided functionality. As embedded models mature, balancing automation with human oversight remains a critical success factor.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Products & Marketplaces

Strong in Asia-Pacific and among best-in-class companies, while vendors and the retail sector lag behind



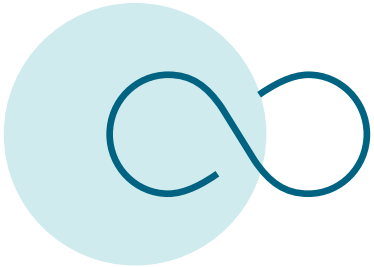
Viewpoint

A data product addresses a core challenge in organizations: turning raw data into valuable, usable assets that directly solve business problems and meet specific needs. By treating data as a tailored product, this approach tackles issues such as poor data quality in relation to the use cases of downstream consumers, unclear ownership and a lack of user focus.

This philosophy champions principles such as data ownership and continuous iteration based on rich interaction with data consumers. Essential attributes that define a data product are its value (utility and relevance), desirability (alignment with user needs) and feasibility (technically and economically viable to create and maintain).

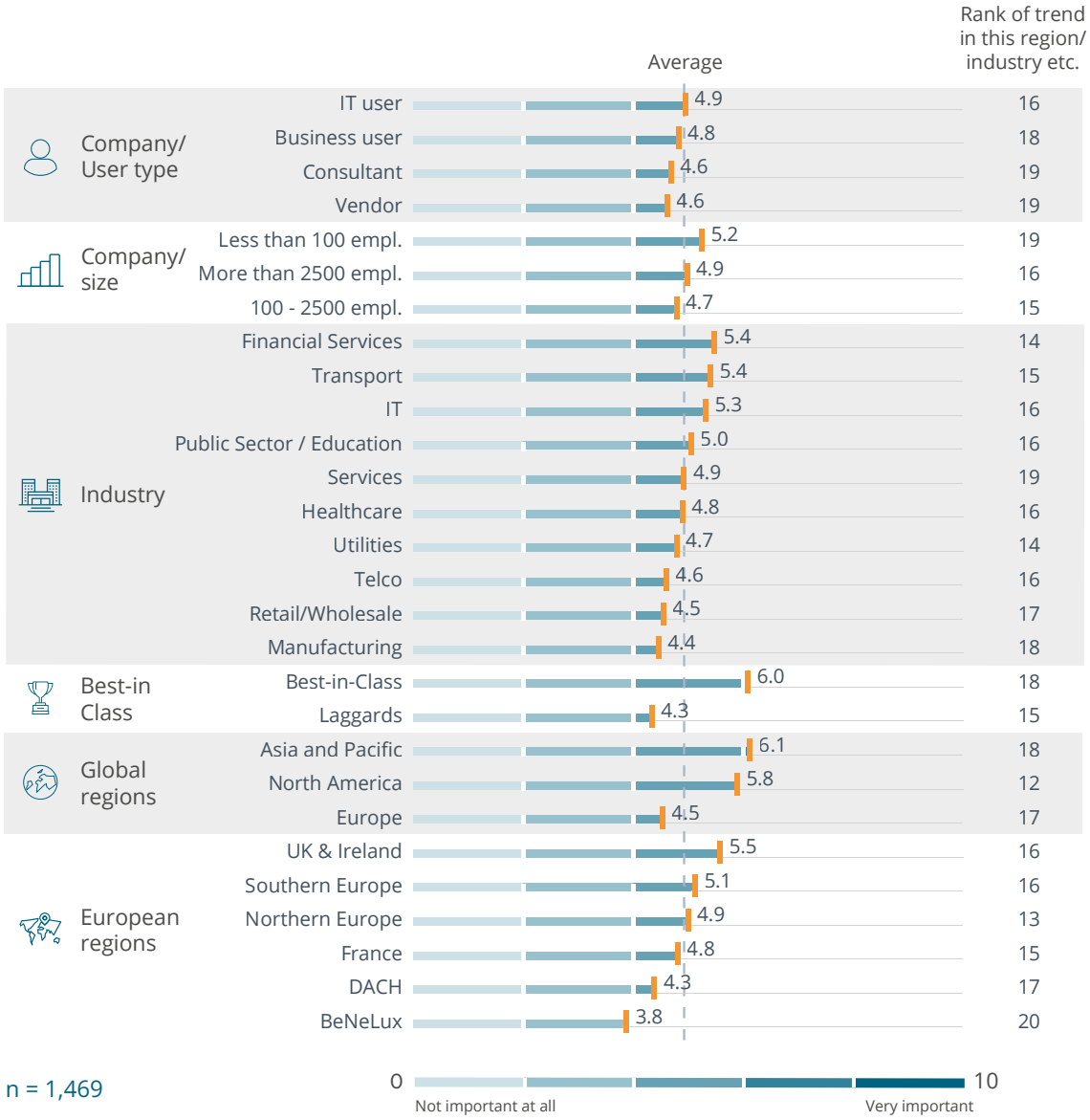
By integrating the lifecycle perspective, data products undergo periodic evaluations and enhancements to stay relevant – or they may be archived in a deliberate end-of-life decision. The data product concept underscores the significance of focusing on user needs throughout this lifecycle, promoting reliable and refined data that fosters informed decision-making and instills trust, thereby amplifying the data's strategic role in an organization.

Top 20 Trends in Detail



Data Ops & Observability

Driven by North America and the financial services sector, while Europe remains cautious



n = 1,469

Viewpoint

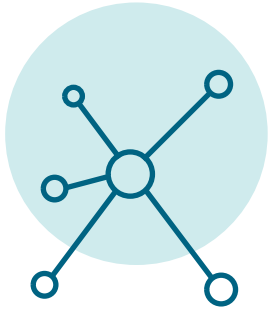
Data Ops is a methodology that combines data engineering and operations to streamline and automate the entire data lifecycle, from data ingestion to analytics. It draws inspiration from Dev Ops practices, applying them to data-related processes. Key principles of Data Ops include collaboration among cross-functional teams, automation of repetitive tasks to reduce manual errors and accelerate data delivery, and agility by allowing rapid changes and iterations based on version control for reproducibility and traceability.

On the other hand, data observability focuses on monitoring and understanding the health of data in motion. It offers insights into data lineage, quality and anomalies, facilitating a transparent view of the lifecycle of data. Primary applications involve quickly diagnosing pipeline issues and tracing data origins as well as transformations.

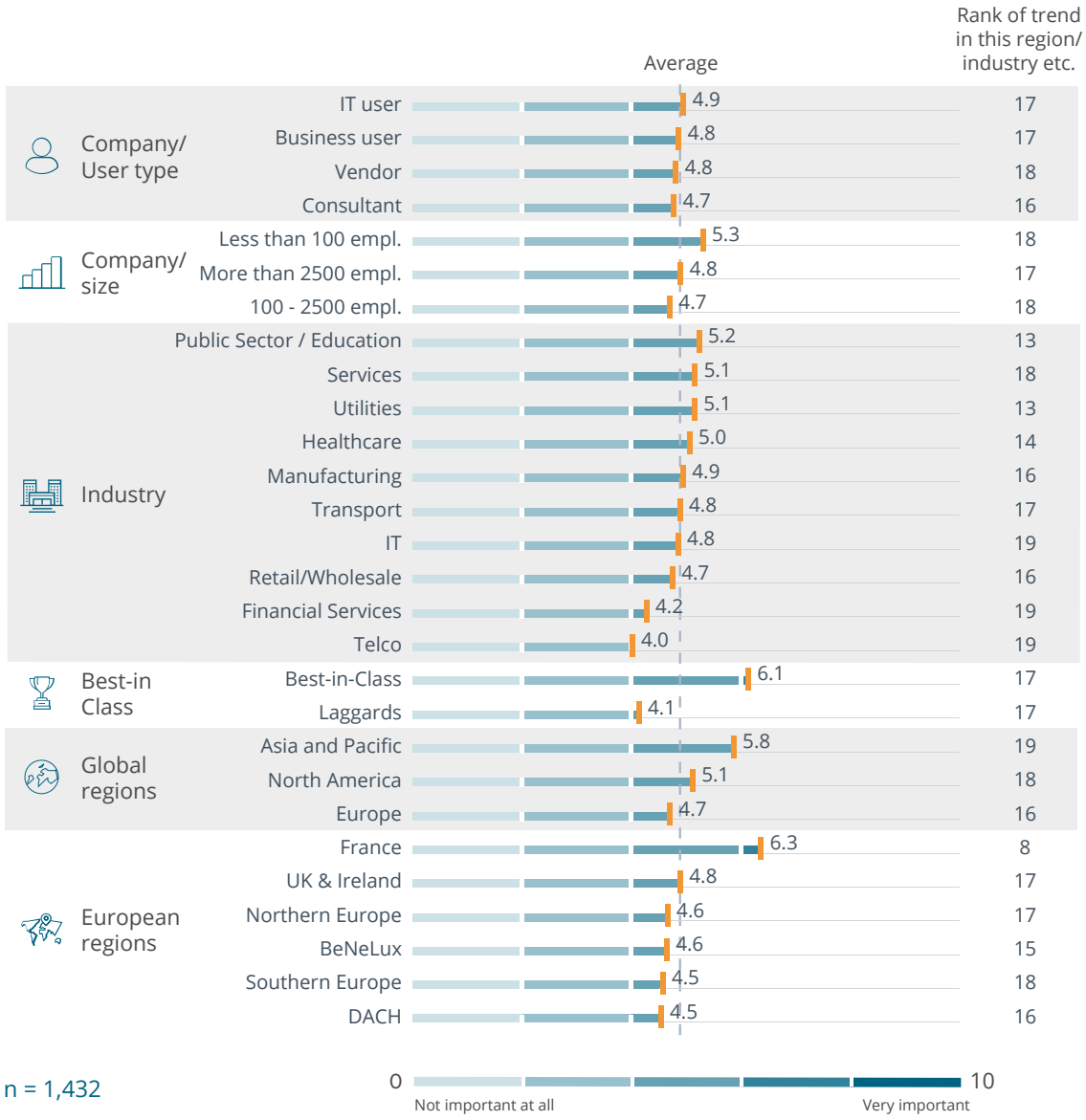
The significance of these concepts lies in their ability to bolster confident data-driven decisions. By adopting Data Ops, organizations can professionalize data processes for faster and reliable insights. With data observability, they gain comprehensive insights into data health, ensuring that decisions are grounded in accurate and timely information. Together, they minimize the business risks of unsound data-driven decisions.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Fabric



Strong in France and the public sector, but less relevant for telecommunications



n = 1,432

Viewpoint

A data fabric connects distributed data sources, applications and users, enabling flexible and scalable use of data across the enterprise. It supports a wide range of application patterns – from traditional analytics to advanced AI – while empowering business teams with greater autonomy in discovering, using and sharing data.

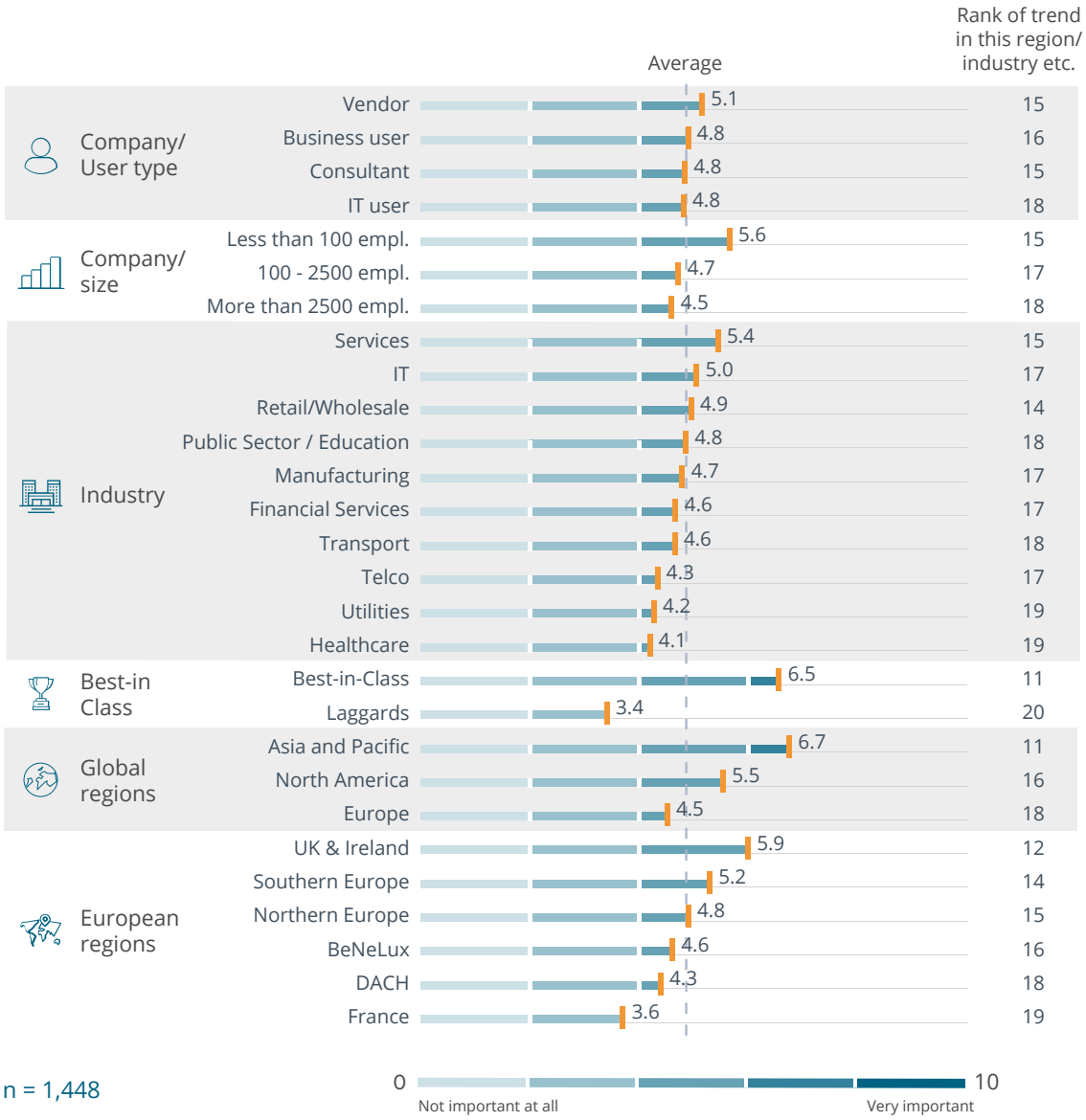
Through self learning, observability and built in trust mechanisms, a data fabric streamlines operations, improves efficiency and embeds governance, security and privacy by design. Metadata forms the digital nervous system of the fabric, making data assets transparent, auditable and reusable.

Its modular and extensible architecture allows organizations to integrate new sources, use cases and technologies quickly, without fundamental architectural changes. By combining agility with governance, a data fabric becomes the strategic foundation for innovation, resilience and data driven agility in the business.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Data Valuation & Monetization

High importance for small and best-in-class companies, while France and laggards remain cautious



n = 1,448

Viewpoint

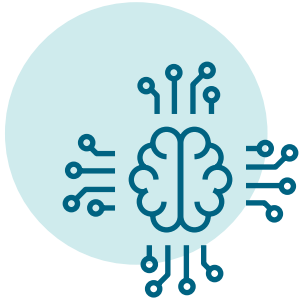
The strategic value of data has long been acknowledged in analytics discussions. This year, we have included data valuation & monetization in our list of trending topics for the first time, underscoring the increasing importance of actively measuring and harnessing the economic potential of data. While companies have invested heavily in managing and governing their data, the next step is to treat it as a true business asset and generate measurable returns from it.

Data valuation involves assessing the worth of data sets in terms of quality, uniqueness and business relevance. Monetization then builds on this by applying data in new revenue-generating contexts, such as data-driven services, marketable data products or the creation of data ecosystems. This perspective encourages organizations to move beyond internal efficiency gains and focus on external value creation.

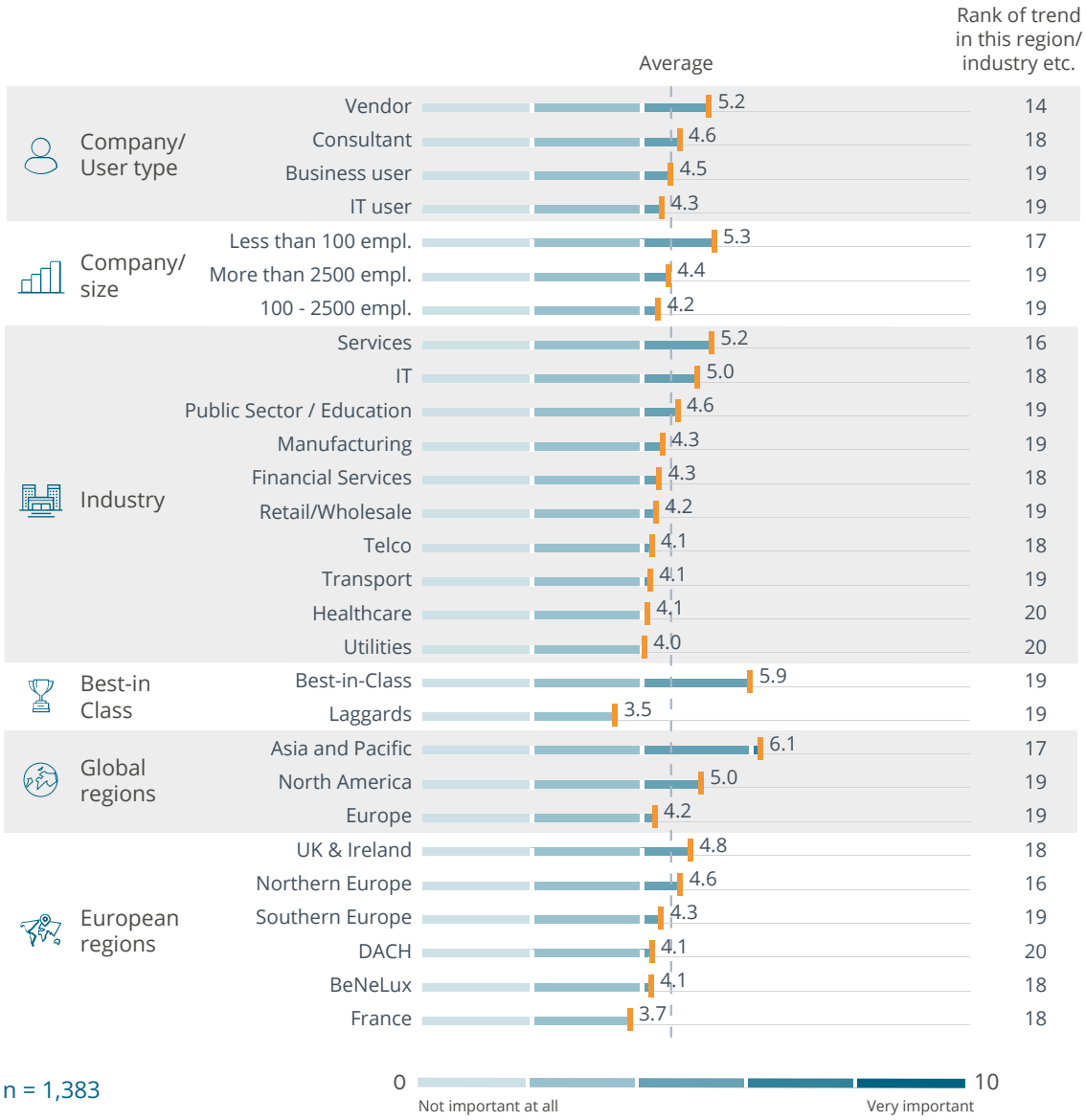
However, implementing such an approach is not without challenges. Clear governance, ethical frameworks and trust in data quality are essential. Furthermore, companies must balance monetization opportunities with privacy, security and compliance requirements. As a result, data valuation & monetization represent both an opportunity and a cultural shift, pushing organizations to rethink how they measure, manage and maximize the value of their data.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Agentic AI



Momentum driven by vendors and Asia-Pacific, while users and the DACH region stay reserved



n = 1,383

Viewpoint

Agentic AI refers to advanced AI systems capable of independently pursuing goals, planning, coordinating tasks, flexibly adapting to changing conditions and continuously improving their performance. Unlike traditional automation, agentic AI embodies a higher degree of autonomy, but also coordination – often realized through multi-agent systems.

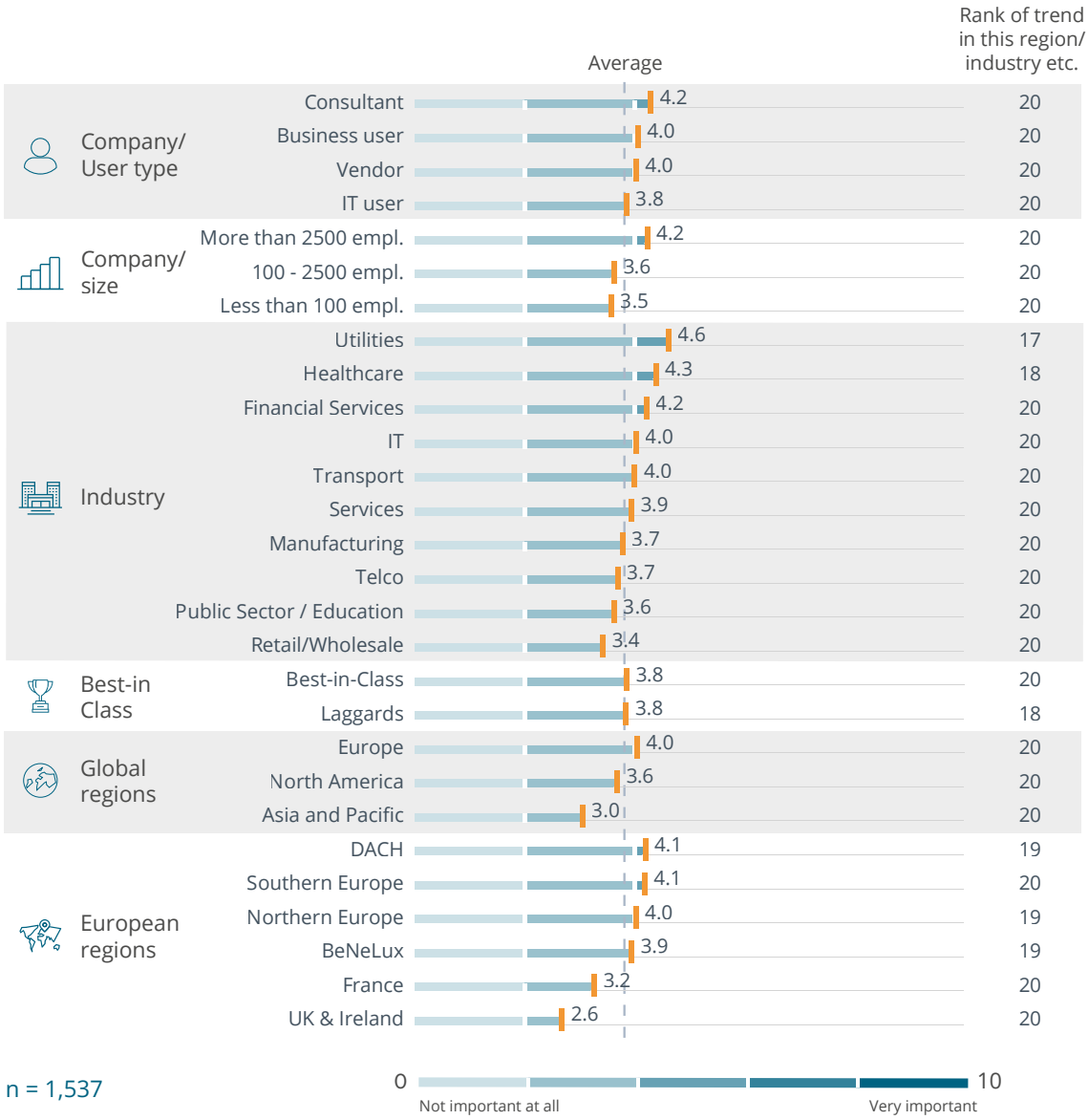
Technologically, agentic AI often builds upon combinations of generative AI (GenAI), large language models (LLMs) and advanced frameworks for planning and task orchestration. To carry out their plans, agents typically perform tasks autonomously, for example, by making API calls. To ground decisions on facts, agents query from databases or even the entire internet.

Within data and analytics, agentic AI holds significant potential by enabling extensive automation and optimization. A practical example is proactive data quality management: agents analyze data profiles and detect anomalies, interpret the resulting signals and decide whether to alert the data owner. A smart agent would also do a root-cause analysis and recommend the next best action to resolve the issue.

Top 20 Trends in Detail

Real-Time Analytics & Streaming

Utilities and healthcare stand out, but overall real-time analytics remains a low priority



n = 1,537

Viewpoint

Real-time analytics transforms operations by processing and analyzing data the moment it is created. Instead of reviewing historical batches, this approach leverages live data streams from sources like IoT sensors, web traffic and financial transactions. The core value lies in identifying critical events as they happen, enabling immediate alerts through operational dashboards and triggering automated responses. For example, an algorithm can detect a quality issue on a production line and instantly recommend or apply a countermeasure.

Analytics with real-time data refers to the near-immediate processing and provision of information about business operations in transactional systems (i.e., streaming). Real-time analytics is about catching events or other new data immediately after their occurrence and processing them for alerting (e.g., in an operational dashboard) or triggering pre-automated events (e.g., an algorithm detects certain problems during the manufacturing process of a given batch and recommends or automatically triggers countermeasures).

This type of data processing requires specific technologies that are capable of connecting to real-time data sources or protocols as well as aggregating the enormous amounts of data points and displaying and offering possibilities to analyze them. Many companies that require real-time data processing have already purchased specialized software focusing on this market trend. Therefore, it is not surprising that our survey respondents have named it as the least important trend this year. This does not mean it is not important, only that this software market addresses a very specific type of scenario.

Recommendations

Recommendations

BI/analytics and data management have remained among the most important IT-related topics in the business world for a long time. The rising importance of many trends in this report supports this observation. With digitalization as a primary strategic initiative for many companies, analyzing and managing data has become even more vital. Data and analytics are at the core of digitizing processes and business models. Based on our survey findings, we present several key recommendations on how to embrace the trends described in this study:

1 Venture into trending topics

The rising influence of **generative AI** and **decision intelligence** is transforming data-driven processes. While **data quality** and **security** remain essential, organizations should also embrace **AI/ML-driven automation** and **self-service analytics**, while paying equal attention to the human dimension: fostering a strong **data culture**, robust **governance** and enhanced **data literacy**. We recommend targeted pilots to unlock measurable benefits in decision-making, efficiency and innovation. Companies combining these trending capabilities with strong foundations and fostering **data & AI literacy** can gain early competitive advantages and prepare for scalable, trustworthy AI adoption.

2 Lay the groundwork for AI success

In recent years, many AI initiatives have been launched with significant investments, and the pressure to demonstrate measurable business impact is growing. It is becoming increasingly clear that a strong data foundation is critical for AI success. Investments in **data quality**, **security and availability**, along with a modern, **scalable infrastructure**, are essential prerequisites for achieving tangible results. Generative AI is expanding the landscape by introducing new use cases and sources of **unstructured data**, while **agentic AI** currently emphasizes the importance of **metadata availability**, providing agents with meaningful context to enhance their effectiveness.

3 Enable your staff

As **data & AI literacy** and a strong **data-driven culture** remain top priorities, organizations must empower employees across all roles to confidently engage with **AI-driven tools**, **decision intelligence** and **self-service analytics**. This not only reduces dependence on specialists but also fosters broader trust and adoption. Since a lack of skills is still among the biggest barriers to success, structured training and cultural initiatives are essential to fully realize the value of data and analytics.

Recommendations

4 Pay attention to data governance

Data governance is increasingly about striking the right balance: organizations need to provide flexible access through **self-service analytics** while safeguarding **data quality**, **security** and **compliance**. Traditional rigid control models are giving way to more collaborative approaches that empower business teams but still ensure oversight. Achieving this balance is essential to maintain trust, support **decision intelligence** and enable reliable, AI-driven decisions across the enterprise.

5 Modernize your information architecture

A modern information architecture is essential to support **cloud for data & analytics**, **data warehouse modernization** and the integration of **AI-driven insights**. With growing complexity, organizations need flexible platforms that combine scalability with governance and enable seamless access to diverse data. Embedding BI and analytics into operational workflows enhances agility, while modernization efforts lay the foundation for **advanced analytics**, **decision intelligence** and real-time responsiveness in increasingly dynamic business environments.

6 Playtime is over! Is it?

Organizations are moving beyond pilots and proofs of concept, focusing on operationalizing **AI/ML**, **decision intelligence**, **generative AI** and **agentic AI**. The shift is toward measurable business impact, with applications such as fraud detection, predictive planning and dynamic pricing becoming part of daily operations. Success now requires scalable architectures, governed data and clear value delivery. The experimental phase is coming to an end and AI initiatives must now prove sustainable impact to secure long-term adoption.

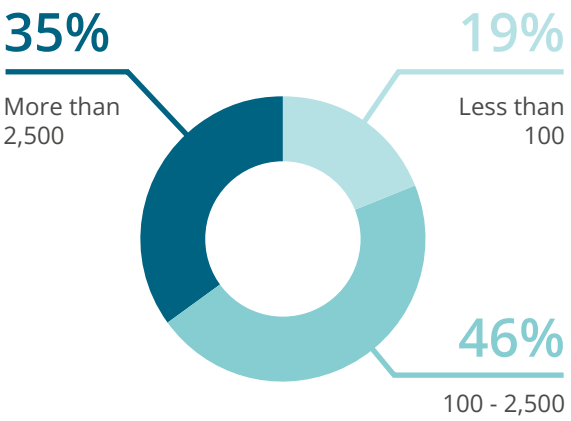
7 Foster a data-driven culture

The pillars of the **BARC Data Culture Framework** remain essential as **data & AI literacy** and **data-driven culture** gain even more importance in 2026. Organizations must embed data and **AI** into everyday operations, enabling employees at all levels to make confident, informed decisions. Overcoming resistance requires leadership, communication and trust. A strong data culture is the foundation for realizing value from **AI**, **decision intelligence** and future innovations.

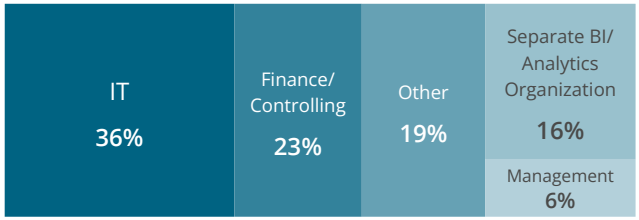
Methodology

1,579 participants in total.
Wide coverage of different industries, company sizes and regions

Number of Employees

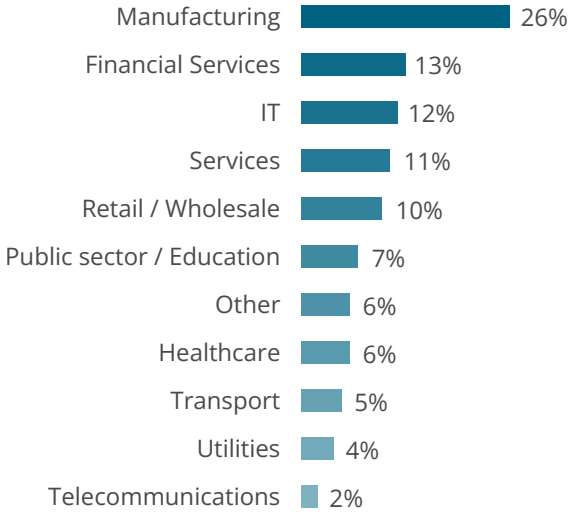


Department

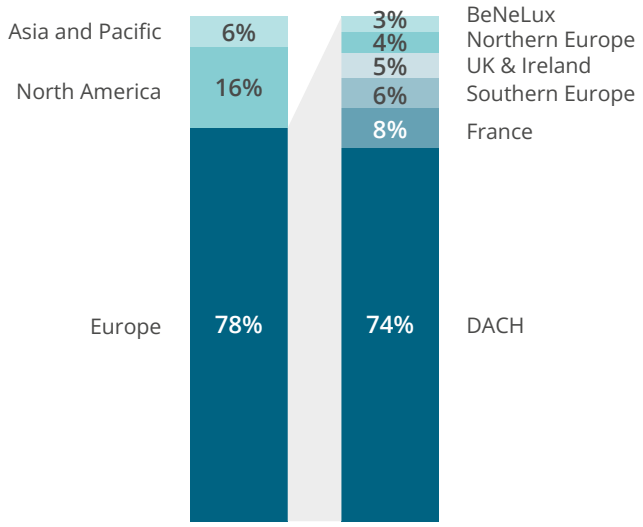


Company type

Industry



Region



Information on the Survey

The data used in the Data, BI and Analytics Trend Monitor 2026 was sourced from an online user survey conducted worldwide in the summer of 2025. BARC promoted this survey on websites, at events and in email newsletters. After data cleaning, a total of 1,579 survey responses remained. Respondents came from a wide range of industries, countries, professional backgrounds, company types and sizes.

Participants were asked to rate each trend on a scale from “very important” (10) to “not important at all” (0). We use a weighted scoring system (from 10 to 0) to derive a composite score for each of the trends based on their level of importance. It is a dimensionless number with an arbitrary value, but as long as the weighting system remains constant it can be used for comparisons between segments of the sample, such as the sample for industries or regions, to name just two.

Every data, BI or analytics project should set out to achieve defined business benefits and goals. We surveyed the extent to which a range of business benefits were achieved and measured the success of projects using the Business Benefits Index (BBI). Among others, the benefits measured included reduced costs, improved customer satisfaction, increased revenues and better decision-making.

This index was used to identify ‘Best-in-Class’ and ‘Laggard’ companies. ‘Best-in-Class’ companies comprise the top 10 percent of companies based on their achievement of business benefits, while ‘Laggards’ are defined as the 10 percent of companies achieving the lowest level of business benefits. This classification enables us to examine which data and analytics trends are more or less important for ‘Best-in-Class’ and ‘Laggard’ companies, and to identify which trends are considered the most important by the most successful organizations.

Glossary

Glossary

AI

In computer science, artificial intelligence aims to replicate intelligent behavior. Initially focused on programming complex rule-based expert systems, it has shifted toward systems autonomously deriving rules from data, predominantly through machine learning, now a central focus in AI research.

Advanced Analytics

Advanced analytics encompasses complex data analyses beyond basic calculations, involving mathematical, statistical processes and algorithms generating new information out of an existing data set. Examples are pattern recognition, data mining, machine learning and predictive analytics. As a tool set, it is a key component of data science.

Cloud for Data & Analytics

Cloud for data & analytics refers to the use of cloud computing technologies in this domain. In particular, the use of highly flexible, scalable and cost-effective cloud solutions (infrastructure, platform, software as a service) allows business users to make optimal use of modern data and big data analytics.

Data Catalogs & Data Intelligence Platforms

A data catalog is an active catalog of data assets for describing and certifying managed data and supporting business use in various forms in the field of analytics. Construction and maintenance are carried out through interactive processes and machine learning.

A data intelligence platform is an integrated solution that combines various data management tools and technologies to enable organizations to unlock the full potential of their data. Such platforms typically include data integration capabilities, data governance, data quality management, advanced analytics and AI-driven insights. They are designed to provide a unified view of data across the organization, support collaboration and automate data-driven processes.

Data Culture

Data culture is part of the company culture and refers to the set of values, beliefs and behaviors within an organization that promotes the effective and ethical use of data for decision-making, process improvement and innovation.

Data Governance

Data governance encompasses roles, processes, technologies and policies to ensure that the organization's data is understandable, accurate, complete, trustworthy, secure and discoverable in order to effectively use, manage and protect the organization's data capital.

Data Lakehouse

A data lakehouse is an architectural concept that combines the scalable storage of a data lake with the data management and analytical capabilities of a data warehouse. Raw data is stored permanently and cost-effectively in the data lake. Only structured data that is required for certain analyses is loaded into the data warehouse. The data lakehouse concept is now recommended by all cloud hyperscalers, albeit under different names.

Data Literacy

Data literacy is the ability of a person or organization to find, evaluate, prepare, analyze and visualize data using suitable tools, as well as to communicate with data and interpret analysis results.

Data Mesh

Data mesh is an organizational approach to decentralized data management. This involves forming cross-functional teams responsible for specific data domains and treating these domains as products. This allows for greater flexibility and scalability in data-driven organizations.

Glossary

Data Preparation

Data preparation refers to the creation of a specific data pipeline designed for processing variously structured (raw) data for advanced analytical purposes.

It is primarily an iterative and interactive process that varies from use case to use case. A sub-process of data preparation, specifically aimed at the application of advanced analytics, is called feature engineering.

Data Product

A data product is a combination of a curated, reusable data set designed to provide trusted data for downstream users and accompanying metadata that makes the data easier to find and use. It is the result of applying the "data as a product" philosophy to data that is designed for a specific purpose. Data products can be pure data products (including their data pipeline) or data-based analytics products and can be broadly categorized into six types:

- raw data ('source-oriented data product')
- aggregated data ('aggregated data product')
- derived data ('consumer-oriented data product')
- decision support tools (i.e., reports, dashboards, pivot tables, etc.)
- algorithms
- automated decision-making

Data Quality Management

Data quality management (DQM) in the context of enterprise data management is a comprehensive process that ensures the accuracy, reliability and validity of data throughout its lifecycle. It includes both technical and organizational measures.

Data Security/Privacy

Data security refers to the measures and tools employed to protect sensitive digital information from unauthorized access, alteration or destruction.

Data privacy refers to the policies, practices and processes dedicated to managing the collection, use and dissemination of personal or sensitive data and information.

Data Warehouse Modernization

Data warehouse modernization refers to the process of evolving and adapting traditional data warehousing architectures and technologies to align with modern data management practices. This involves architectural restructuring, integration into a comprehensive data management strategy and a deliberate choice of the deployment type. The goal is to sustain the value of data warehouses in the face of increasing data volume, data variety and high velocity data delivery while increasing the agility in serving business requirements.

Data Ops & Observability

Data observability is a concept in which data is collected, measured, analyzed and visualized in real time to diagnose and resolve the causes of specific problems. It enables companies to quickly and efficiently identify and resolve problems within systems, to optimize performance and to reduce costs.

The five pillars of data observability are:

Measure: Capturing and measuring data in real time.
Visualize: Converting data into simple charts, graphs and maps.
Analyze: Understanding and analyzing data to identify specific problems and patterns.
Diagnose: Using data to identify the causes of problems.
Fix: Using data to fix problems and improve system performance.

Data Ops (short for Data Operations) is an agile, process-oriented framework that aims to increase the quality and reliability, as well as accelerate the delivery, of current data products. It is based on the idea that data and analytics processes, similar to processes in software development (DevOps), should be continuously improved and automated.

Data Ops brings together people, processes and technology to enable a faster, automated and programmatic approach to data management.

Decision Intelligence

Decision intelligence (DI) is a multi-faceted approach to improving decision-making processes using advanced AI technologies and predictive analytics. It integrates data analysis methods and technology-based tools to optimize decisions across an organization's value chain and departments. Focused on achieving business objectives, DI ranges from assisting with complex decisions to automating routine ones, improving overall business performance through data-driven insights and systematic decision modeling.

Glossary

Embedded BI & Analytics

Embedded analytics and AI refers to the integration of analytics and AI tools as well as capabilities directly into business applications. This approach enables real-time data analysis, reporting and dashboards within the native environment of the application, enhancing decision-making processes by providing immediate, actionable insights without the user needing to work with a separate analytics software.

Generative AI

Generative AI or generative artificial intelligence refers to AI systems that are capable of creating content on their own that did not previously exist, such as text, images, music, speech or other media.

These systems learn from large amounts of example data to create new outputs that match the learned patterns.

Integrated Platforms for Performance Management (PM) & Analytics

Integrated platforms for performance management refer to the consolidation of various performance management processes, such as planning, budgeting, forecasting and predictive analytics, into a single software platform. This integration is crucial for facilitating a closed-loop management cycle, enabling seamless transition from reporting and analyzing process results to prediction and planning, thereby enhancing the adaptation of operational processes.

Similarly, analytics platforms integrate various business intelligence and analytics tasks (e.g., dashboarding, reporting, ad hoc analysis and advanced analytics).

Machine Learning

Machine learning, a major branch of artificial intelligence, automates rule derivation from large data sets. It includes supervised learning, where models train on known outcomes to predict new results, and unsupervised learning, which infers rules from data structures alone. In implementations often equated with data mining, machine learning's techniques are a subset of advanced analytics and the data scientist's skill set.

Real-Time Analytics & Streaming

Real-time analytics transforms operations by processing and analyzing data the moment it is created. Instead of reviewing historical batches, this approach leverages live data streams from sources like IoT sensors, web traffic and financial transactions. The core value lies in identifying critical events as they happen, enabling immediate alerts through operational dashboards or triggering automated responses. For example, an algorithm can detect a quality issue on a production line and instantly recommend or apply a countermeasure.

Self-Service Analytics & Data Discovery

Self-service analytics allows business users to independently answer questions about data. This includes access to data, but also the technical and organizational capability for analysis and visualization by business users.

Data discovery is a user-driven, iterative process of searching for patterns and anomalies in data. The discovery of new findings, the verification of hypotheses and the identification of promising use cases take center stage.

BARC Company Profile

About BARC

Data Decisions. Built on BARC.

BARC is a leading analyst firm for data & analytics and enterprise software with a reputation for unbiased and trusted advice. Our expert analysts deliver a wide range of research, events and advisory services for the data & analytics community. Our innovative research evaluates software and vendors 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 help clients transform into truly data-driven organizations.

Research

BARC user surveys, software tests and analyst assessments in blogs and research notes give you the confidence to make the right decisions. Our independent research gets to the heart of market developments, evaluates software and providers thoroughly and gives you valuable ideas on how to turn data, analytics and AI into added value and successfully transform your business.

Consulting

The BARC Advisory practice is entirely focused on translating your company's requirements into future-proof decisions. The holistic advice we provide will help you successfully implement your data & analytics strategy and culture as well as your architecture and technology. Our goal is not to stay for the long haul. 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

Leading minds and companies come together at our events. BARC conferences, seminars, roundtable meetups and online webinars provide more than 10,000 participants each year with information, inspiration and interactivity. By exchanging ideas with peers and learning about trends and market developments, you gain new impetus for your business.

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Strategy

Strategy (Nasdaq: MSTR) is the world's first and largest Bitcoin Treasury Company.

Our technology solutions provide industry-leading AI-powered enterprise analytics software, advancing our vision of Intelligence Everywhere. We leverage our development capabilities to explore innovation in Bitcoin applications, integrating analytics expertise with our commitment to digital asset growth. We believe our combination of operational excellence, strategic bitcoin reserve, and focus on technological innovation positions us as a leader in both the digital asset and enterprise analytics sectors, offering a unique opportunity for long-term value creation.

Our Treasury strategy is based on adopting bitcoin as our primary treasury reserve asset. By using proceeds from equity and debt financings, as well as cash flows from our operations, we strategically accumulate bitcoin and advocate for its role as digital capital. Our treasury strategy is designed to provide investors varying degrees of economic exposure to bitcoin by offering a range of securities, including equity and fixed-income instruments.

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TARGIT

At **TARGIT**, we help organizations worldwide realize measurable business value from their data. Our specialized business intelligence (BI) accelerators for industries like heavy equipment, manufacturing, automotive dealerships, convenience stores, airports, and more are built to support customers' unique goals and the processes that power their daily operations.

Each pre-defined industry solution includes tailored reports and dashboards for a specific data source. Over the years, we've refined our methodology and implementation processes to help customers save time, unlock strategic insights, and ensure cost-effective deployments.

TARGIT Decision Suite is our all-in-one BI and analytics platform that's intuitive, versatile, and user-friendly. Whether you deploy our standard solution or a pre-defined BI accelerator, the TARGIT platform seamlessly integrates with your operations and continually adapts to your needs, even as your organization grows.

Recognized as a Global Leader in Vendor Credibility by Dresner four years in a row and Leader in BI Excellence by BARC seven years in a row, we leverage continuous innovation and a customer-centric business model to develop solutions that drive lasting value for our customers.

TARGIT is a product of Forterro, an association of software companies that provide innovative IT products to customers in multiple industries and geographies. With decades of combined software experience and strategic global partnerships, Forterro and TARGIT work together to ensure that BI becomes not just an IT tool but a company-wide driver of growth and efficiency.

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