SAP Business Data Cloud

The trust factor: **Data, resilience, and innovation**

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Foreword from Irfan Khan

President and Chief Product Officer, SAP Data and Analytics

Data stands as the bedrock of all modern enterprises. It's the unwavering cornerstone of all digital transformation and the driving force behind AI. At SAP, we believe that establishing trust in data is essential for businesses to adapt, compete, and thrive. This report highlights the latest insights and trends shaping data strategy, illustrating how companies can move beyond incremental improvements to achieve transformational change. We hope these findings inspire you to build a trusted, future-ready data foundation that drives lasting impact across your organization.

Introduction: The trust gap

Today's organizations face a critical challenge. Despite massive investments in data and analytics, only 34% of business leaders report high trust in their data capabilities. This trust deficit has become a major barrier to digital transformation and business resilience.

The implications are significant—without trust in data, organizations struggle to make confident decisions, adapt to market changes, and compete effectively. As one banking executive notes:

> "Data is the heart of any decision-making anywhere. Obviously, in the last decade or so, the tools have changed... Now the focus is changing toward unstructured data. With the advent of Gen AI, the entire landscape is changing."

To investigate this challenge thoroughly, we conducted a global survey of 1,200 IT and business leaders in the second half of 2024. Respondents represent predominantly large organizations, with 70% generating over $500 million in annual revenue and 80% employing more than 1,000 individuals across a diverse range of industries. This survey provides a comprehensive snapshot of evolving data

strategies, capturing insights into goals, priorities, challenges, and best practices that shape future success.

The survey measured respondents across three critical dimensions:

1. Data focus (how central data is to strategy)
2. Success level (outcomes achieved)
3. Trust in data (confidence in data quality and insights)

Our research highlights several key issues where the trust gap manifests most prominently:

- Data quality concerns
- Misalignment between IT and business functions
- Integration challenges across systems

Leaders who can't rely on their data hesitate to innovate, resulting in flawed forecasts, misaligned investments, and reactive—rather than proactive—strategies. This lack of confidence also impedes the adoption of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI).

AI thrives on accurate, well-governed data to deliver actionable and reliable insights. Yet, organizations with low trust in their data struggle to scale AI initiatives effectively. One leader put it very aptly:

> "If the data isn't trusted, the insights AI delivers are questionable."

This hesitation means organizations miss the full potential of AI-powered predictive analytics, automation, and innovation, leaving them at a competitive disadvantage.

A divide in data maturity: The rise of data-oriented leaders

Ultimately, the trust gap stifles both growth and resilience. Organizations lacking trust in their data are slower to identify trends, mitigate risks, and respond to market disruptions. In contrast, the companies prioritizing data in their strategy trust their data more. Figure 1 shows that 48% of companies that prioritize data in their strategies have a high level of trust (n=1200).

They also report higher levels of success, confidence, and innovation.

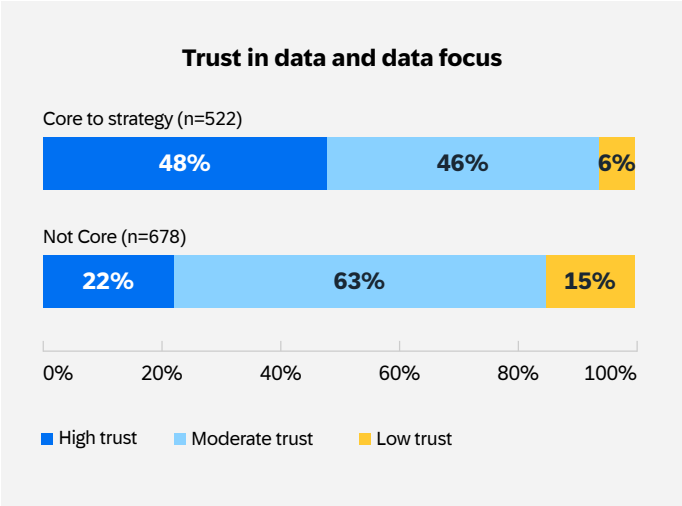

Figure 1: Trust in data and data focus

These companies also report higher levels of success, confidence, and innovation. Figure 2 shows how the level of success differs depending on how central data is to strategy:

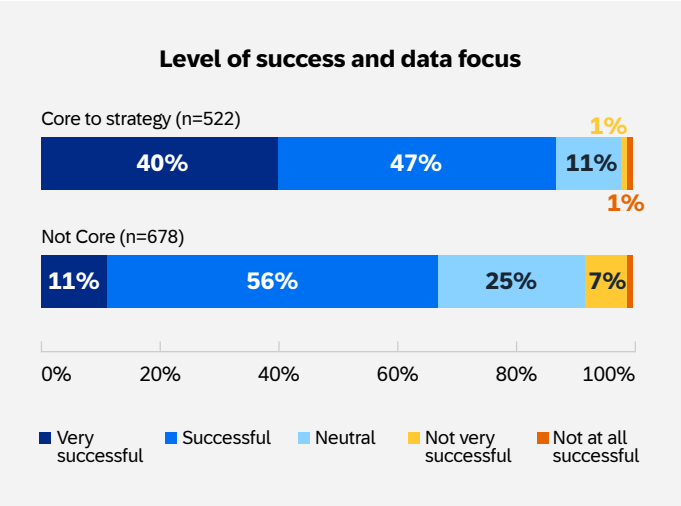

Figure 2: Level of success and data focus

The analysis of survey results reveals two distinct groups that emerge:

1. The **developing** group that's still building foundational capabilities to harness data effectively.
2. The **data-oriented** group that places data at the core of its strategy. This type of organization is better positioned to adapt, compete, and thrive in an uncertain business environment.

As this report demonstrates, addressing the trust gap is not just a strategic choice—it's an imperative for long-term performance and transformation.

In Part 1 of this report, we'll look deeply at the issue of trust, performance, and challenges of business. In Part 2, we'll consider some of the recent technologies that enable a better, more integrated view of business with greater insight.

Part 1: The trust imperative: From data to decision-making

Trust as the cornerstone of data strategy

Figure 3 shows that organizations' strategic goals align around three key themes:

- Operational efficiency
- Revenue growth
- Innovation and transformation

However, a closer look reveals differences between **data-oriented** organizations—those with higher trust in their data—and their **developing** counterparts, who are still building foundational capabilities.

Figure 3: Strategic Goals for data-oriented versus developing companies

Different priorities for different maturities

For **developing** organizations, the immediate priority is revenue growth, with nearly 22% identifying it as their top goal. This reflects a short-term focus on profitability and stability as they work to overcome challenges like data quality and system integration.

By contrast, **data-oriented** organizations—those that trust in their data—are playing the long game. For these companies:

- Innovation and Transformation take center stage, with 19% identifying it as their second most important goal.
- They place greater emphasis on Customer Retention and Loyalty and Brand Reputation, recognizing that trusted data enables them to build lasting relationships and differentiate themselves in the market.

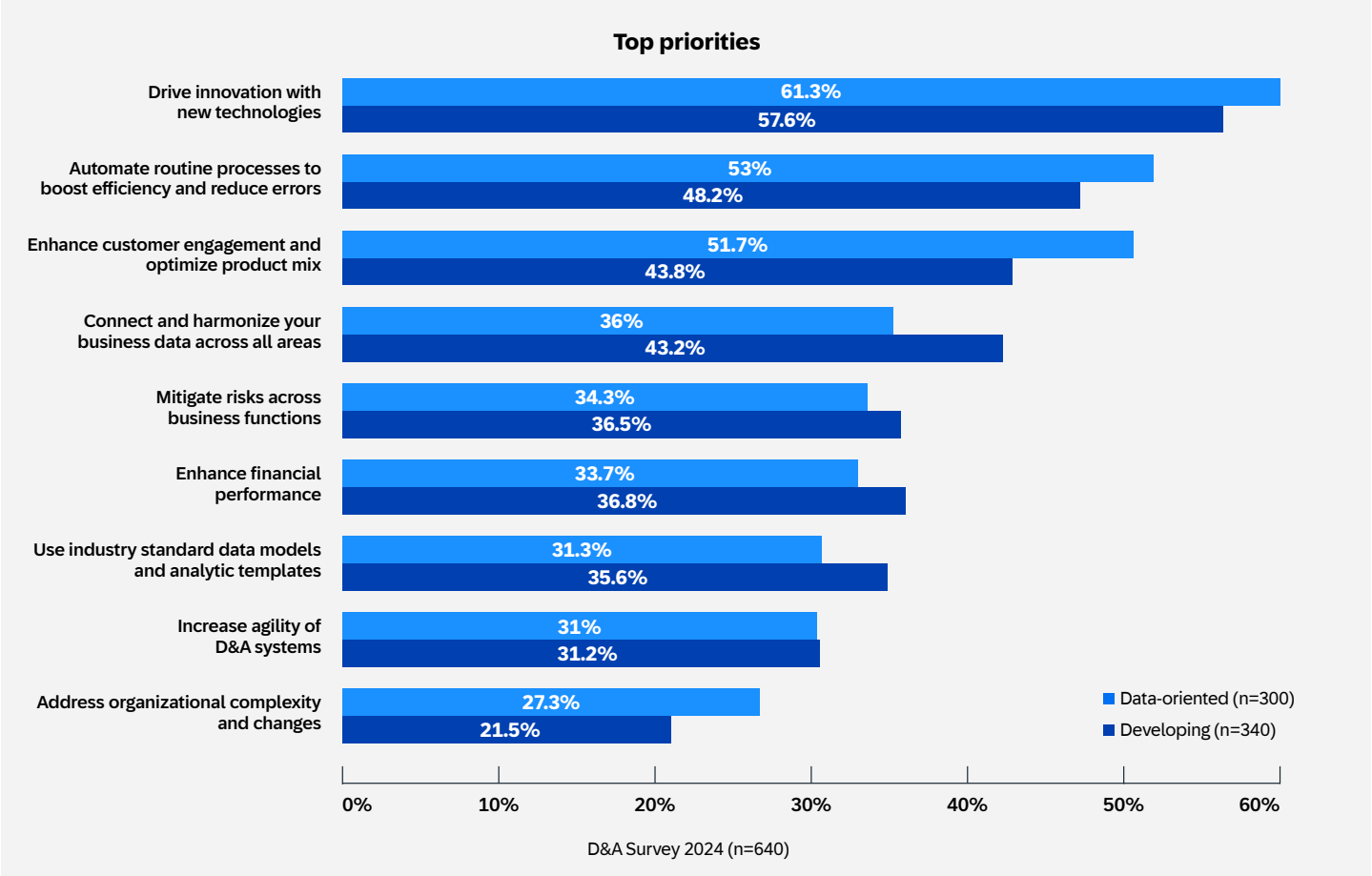

Figure 4: Top priorities for data-oriented versus developing companies

Innovation as the top priority

When priorities are examined at a deeper level, one theme emerges across all organizations: innovation through new technologies. Respondents identified automation and customer engagement as their next most critical priorities.

However, trust in data amplifies the focus on innovation:

- Among companies with high trust in their data, 64% report innovation as their top priority, compared to 61% overall.
- **Data-oriented** leaders concentrate heavily on innovation, automation, and customer engagement, reflecting their ability to move beyond foundational challenges and focus on transformational outcomes.

The **developing** challenge: Building the foundation

For **developing** organizations, the focus shifts to building the necessary groundwork to unlock data's full potential:

- Forty-seven percent of companies with low trust in their data prioritize harmonizing and connecting business data.
- These organizations emphasize leveraging industry standards and analytic templates to enhance their financial performance and lay a foundation for future innovation.

Building trust through governance

Trust in data doesn't happen by accident—it's built through strong governance frameworks that help ensure data is accurate, consistent, and actionable. Without governance, organizations risk poor decisions, fragmented insights, and a lack of confidence in data systems. Our survey and interviews highlight governance as a critical factor in closing the trust gap and enabling **data-oriented** success.

The governance imperative

Data governance is the backbone of trusted data. It establishes ownership, quality controls, and accountability, ensuring that data meets the needs of the business. However, as organizations scale their data strategies, maintaining governance becomes increasingly complex.

Our survey reveals that data quality remains the No. 1 challenge, according to 55% of respondents. Leaders recognize that trust begins with ensuring data is:

- **Accurate**: Free from errors and inconsistencies.
- **Contextual**: Aligned to business needs and specific use cases.
- **Transparent**: Traceable across its lifecycle.

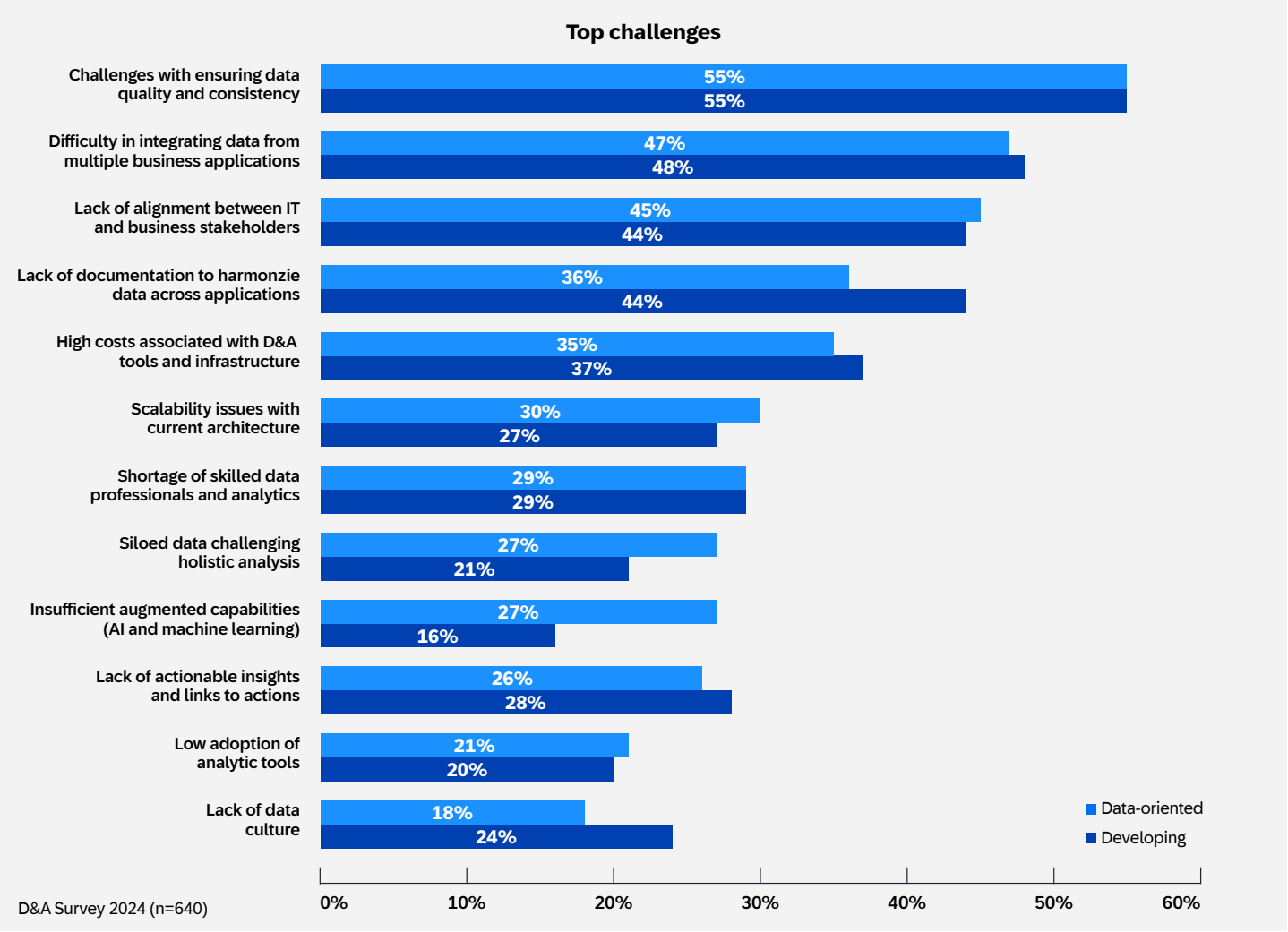

Figure 5: Top challenges for data-oriented versus developing companies

The emphasis on context represents a fundamental shift in how organizations approach data quality. Rather than treating it as a universal standard, leading organizations recognize that quality requirements vary based on the business purpose. As our banking executive explains:

> "Data quality is talked about generically, but it's all about context—what data do you need for the purpose at hand? You can't fix everything at once, but you must focus on what's critical." –VP strategy, banking

This pragmatic approach has profound implications for building trust. Instead of pursuing perfect data quality across all domains—an expensive and often impossible goal—successful organizations:

1. **Prioritize based on impact**: They identify which data elements are most critical for specific business decisions.
2. **Define contextual standards**: Quality requirements are set based on how the data will be used.
3. **Focus resources efficiently**: Investments in data quality align with business priorities.

The same executive elaborates with a practical example:

> "Let's say we're running a marketing campaign. In the past, we would have focused more on the address that we're targeting... if you're doing a marketing campaign through the mail, then our address quality has to be really good. At that point, if we do not have somebody's phone number in our records or in our consumer profile, it's not that important."

This context-driven approach to quality helps organizations build trust more effectively by ensuring that data meets the specific needs of its users, rather than attempting to meet abstract standards that may not align with business reality.

The table below provides more details about challenges faced by companies, based on interviews and the answers to the survey:

Challenge category	Common challenges	Data-oriented organizations	Developing organizations
Data quality and integration	• Data quality and consistency issues with growing data volumes and sources • Integration challenges across multiple business applications	• More complex data quality needs due to larger data volumes • Greater challenges with data silos due to scale	• Lack of documentation for data harmonization • Basic data integration challenges
Organizational alignment	• Misalignment between IT and business stakeholders • Especially prominent in finance functions	• Challenges scaling collaboration across larger user base	• Absence of a data culture • Limited cross-functional collaboration
Technical capabilities	• High costs of data initiatives • Shortage of skilled personnel	• Need for advanced AI/ML capabilities • Architecture scalability issues	• Basic infrastructure challenges • Limited technical capabilities
Business impact	• Difficulty measuring ROI • Challenges in value extraction	• Complex requirements for business simulation • Need for faster insights	• Lack of actionable insights • Limited decision-making impact

It seems that many organizations struggle with fundamental challenges around data quality, integration, and organizational alignment, regardless of their maturity level.

For **developing** organizations, their challenges center on foundational elements:

- Building basic data capabilities.
- Establishing a data culture.
- Creating initial documentation and processes.

In **data-oriented** organizations, challenges reflect more advanced needs:

- Scaling existing capabilities.
- Implementing advanced analytics.
- Managing complex data ecosystems.

Proactive governance practices

Leaders in **data-oriented** organizations have adopted a number of proactive governance practices to build trust and help ensure alignment, as shown in the table below:

Best practice	Impact
Clear ownership and accountability	Define data stewards and owners to oversee quality and compliance. Business functions actively collaborate with IT to set priorities and validate data integrity.
Data profiling and contextual rules	Organizations that succeed in governance focus on profiling data and creating context-specific quality rules.
Automation and data audits	Implement automated tools to profile, validate, and clean data at scale. Regular data audits help ensure compliance and assist businesses with tracking improvements over time.
Integrated governance frameworks	**Data-oriented** organizations embrace governance as part of a holistic strategy, often supported by cloud-based platforms and metadata management tools.

The survey shows that **data-oriented** organizations are significantly ahead in adopting tools like data quality frameworks and regular audits, while **developing** organizations are still catching up.

> "You must test incoming data against thresholds and focus on root causes, not just patching errors." –VP strategy

The cost of poor governance

Where governance is weak, trust erodes. Interviews highlighted that a lack of clarity around ownership, rules, and quality can create significant inefficiencies:

- Decisions are made on fragmented or incomplete data, undermining outcomes.
- Teams waste time resolving inconsistencies instead of focusing on innovation.
- Scaling technologies like AI becomes impossible without clean, well-governed data.

One leader shared how failures in governance contributed to broader business risk:

> "The collapse of SV Bank highlighted what happens when organizations don't analyze their data properly. Risk governance must go hand-in-hand with trusted data." –VP strategy, banking

From governance to trust: A clear path forward

As organizations mature their governance frameworks, they close the trust gap, enabling confident decision-making, innovation, and sustainable growth. Building trust through governance is not a one-time effort; it's an ongoing commitment to quality, transparency, and collaboration.

Organizations that succeed focus on:

- Clear ownership of data assets.
- Automation of data profiling, validation, and monitoring.
- Contextual priorities to help ensure data meets business needs.
- Alignment between business and IT.

IT alignment and best practices

Building trust through governance requires alignment between IT and business stakeholders. It's not enough for IT to manage data infrastructure; business leaders must play an active role in defining what "good" data looks like and where the priorities lie. As one of our interviewees explained:

> "IT brings the data, but business teams must define the rules. It's a handshake—both sides need to collaborate, or the gaps will persist." –VP strategy

The survey findings reinforce this:

- Forty-five percent of respondents cited misalignment between IT and business functions as a key challenge to building trust.
- Among organizations with lower trust, this gap is even more pronounced, resulting in a lack of accountability and fragmented governance processes.

The IT-business alignment challenge affects not just day-to-day operations, but shapes how organizations implement and adopt key data management practices.

> "An IT person, no matter how good they are in the business side, will never be able to understand the intricacies of a loan. There are 100 different loan types. For IT to really understand each and every loan type—and then understand what the value of each attribute should be—is asking too much from the IT team."
>
> –Banking executive

Our research reveals a clear pattern in how different organizations approach this challenge through their choice of tools and processes. **Data-oriented** organizations tend to focus on technical solutions, like quality tools and advanced architectures, while **developing** organizations emphasize human factors such as training and business unit involvement. Despite these different approaches, some practices—particularly cloud infrastructure—have achieved widespread adoption across all organization types, suggesting a common foundation for future alignment efforts.

The following table shows the adoption rates of key data management practices across different organizational maturity levels:

Best practice	Data-oriented organizations	Developing organizations	Key insights
Cloud data warehouses/ lakehouses	63%	64%	Most widely adopted practice across all organizations, reflecting the importance of centralized data management
Data quality tools	50%	36%	Significant gap in adoption reflects different maturity levels in data quality management
User training	44%	48%	Higher priority for **developing** organizations, focusing on building data literacy
Input from lines of business	40%	50%	**Developing** organizations show stronger focus on business unit involvement
Regular data audits	39%	42%	Relatively low adoption suggests room for improvement in data validation
Data Mesh/ Fabric Architecture	25%	19%	Limited but growing adoption of advanced architectures
Metadata Governance	22%	26%	Low adoption across both groups despite importance for AI/analytics

We can make some general observations:

- **Infrastructure**: Cloud-based solutions show consistently high adoption across all organization types.
- **Quality management**: There's a clear maturity gap in data quality tool adoption.
- **Advanced practices**: There's a generally low adoption of newer architectural approaches.

The next generation of best practices doesn't just see data platforms evolve from siloed repositories to unified cloud environments: it fundamentally changes how organizations can build and maintain trust in their data.

The real measure of these technological advances lies in how they translate to business performance and competitive advantage. Organizations that successfully leverage unified data platforms aren't just solving technical challenges—they're creating the foundation for data-driven decision making that drives measurable business results.

In Part 2 of our report, we'll look at the importance of a business cloud and the latest strategies for transformative insights.

Part 2: Trust in action: Enabling the intelligent enterprise

Organizations that successfully build trust in their data don't just solve today's challenges—they unlock transformative opportunities for innovation and growth. As one corporate strategy director explains:

> "When we've been proactive and said, Look, we've run the numbers on X and we can show that this campaign increased all the core metrics by 20% . . . it usually lands very well because, ultimately, we're showing the value of either something the business is doing or helping amplify our relationship with the client."

From reactive to proactive: The advantage of trusted data

When organizations embed analytics into their strategic decision-making processes, they move beyond mere operational efficiency to create a culture of innovation. As one interviewee noted:

←

> "When we've been proactive and said, Look, we've run the numbers on X and we can show that this campaign increased all the core metrics by 20% . . . it usually lands very well because, ultimately, we're showing the value of either something the business is doing or helping amplify our relationship with the client."

This transformation manifests in several key ways:

- **Real-time response**: Users who receive timely signals within their applications can address issues before they escalate. A minor supply chain disruption, caught early, doesn't become a major crisis.
- **Predictive action**: With 59% of data-oriented companies planning to implement AI and analytics insights in the next two years—the top requirement for upcoming investments, as we shall see—organizations are shifting from reactive problem-solving to predictive action.
- **Continuous innovation**: When organizations establish trust in their data, they create a foundation for ongoing transformation. Business users can experiment with confidence, knowing their decisions are based on reliable information. Most importantly, this creates a virtuous cycle—as users see the impact of data-driven decisions, they become more likely to trust and use data in new ways, driving further innovation across the organization.

However, many organizations still face a critical disconnect: Business users must navigate multiple systems, consult separate dashboards, and interpret potentially outdated data before taking action. This fragmentation creates delays and reduces the value of even the highest-quality data. As one technology leader explains:

> "Before working with SAP to solve our reporting issues, it was difficult to compile the company's expansive data into a unified database as it was siloed in different systems throughout various operations. Reliable reporting was equally challenging because we did not have a single, unified view of our business operations."
>
> –Rajeev Taneja, CIO, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd.

The power of integrated insights

Insight applications address this challenge by analyzing data across multiple systems—from sales and finance to human resources and supply chain. These applications serve as bridges between trusted data and business impact, analyzing information across the entire enterprise ecosystem.

What makes insight apps transformative is their ability to create a unified view of the business that maintains trust while delivering insights that can drive decisions. Instead of forcing users to piece together information from multiple sources, insight apps connect departmental activities to strategy. This alignment is crucial for organizations seeking to move beyond siloed decision-making to truly integrated operations.

The applications combine several key elements that build on organizational trust in data:

- Industry best practices embedded directly into the analytics.
- Pre-defined metrics and dashboards that help ensure consistency across the organization.
- Real-time data connections that maintain trust through immediacy.
- Contextual insights that allow users to act without switching between systems.

Perhaps most importantly, these applications come with curated, authoritative datasets and analytical models that extend trust from raw data to business insights. Developed by SAP applications and strategic industry partners, they provide a foundation of trusted analytics that organizations can build upon, avoiding the cost and complexity of developing custom solutions while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to specific business needs.

> "We made the decision to adopt SAP Analytics Cloud for planning because it has multiple layers. It allows data to flow systematically from our ERP and business intelligence systems and provides the functionality for our finance team to perform planning, forecasting, and analytics in one place."
>
> –Kathleen Kuang, Senior Process Manager, Juniper Networks Inc.

The evolution from fragmented data environments to unified platforms represents a fundamental shift in how organizations manage and trust their data. Traditional approaches of separate data warehouses and lakehouses have created artificial divisions between business analysts and data scientists.

The challenges are clear:

- Increased data latency when information leaves its original system.
- Lost context requiring extensive reconciliation.
- Hindered collaboration between business users and analysts.

One executive we interviewed emphasized:

> "Things like data mesh or data fabric, data virtualization... people are adopting some version because everybody is realizing that bringing all the data to a central spot is impossible."

Several trends are reshaping the field of data management:

- **Unified data environments** allow companies to create a central view of their data, where data from different systems is exposed through a harmonized data model.
- **Data fabric architectures** offer a flexible, interconnected framework that simplifies access to distributed data across physical and virtual locations. They provide essential tools like data cataloging, real-time data integration, and automated data governance.
- **Industry cloud systems** combine business processes from ERP, software as a service (SaaS) applications, and third-party platforms on a trusted data foundation.

Introducing SAP Business Data Cloud

SAP Business Data Cloud is designed to preserve data integrity and context through its deep integration with SAP applications, creating a unified, trusted AI foundation. This is achieved through three key components:

- **Curated data products**: Fully managed datasets aligned with SAP One Domain Model semantics, covering all business processes—from finance and supply chain in SAP S/4HANA to human resources and talent data in SAP SuccessFactors. These data products maintain business context, helping ensure trust and consistency, while avoiding the hidden costs of data extraction and maintenance.
- **Insight Apps in SAP Business Data Cloud**: A suite of AI-generated, prebuilt analytical applications that help you uncover hidden insights across all your business functions. Available from SAP and SAP partners, these apps are automatically connected to your data, allowing you to respond to critical business signals as they happen and to make timely decisions.
- **A unified data platform**: This solution delivers fully managed data and AI capabilities. It's an evolution of SAP data and analytics, and brings together SAP Datasphere, SAP Analytics Cloud, SAP Business Warehouse, and SAP Databricks in a single SaaS solution.

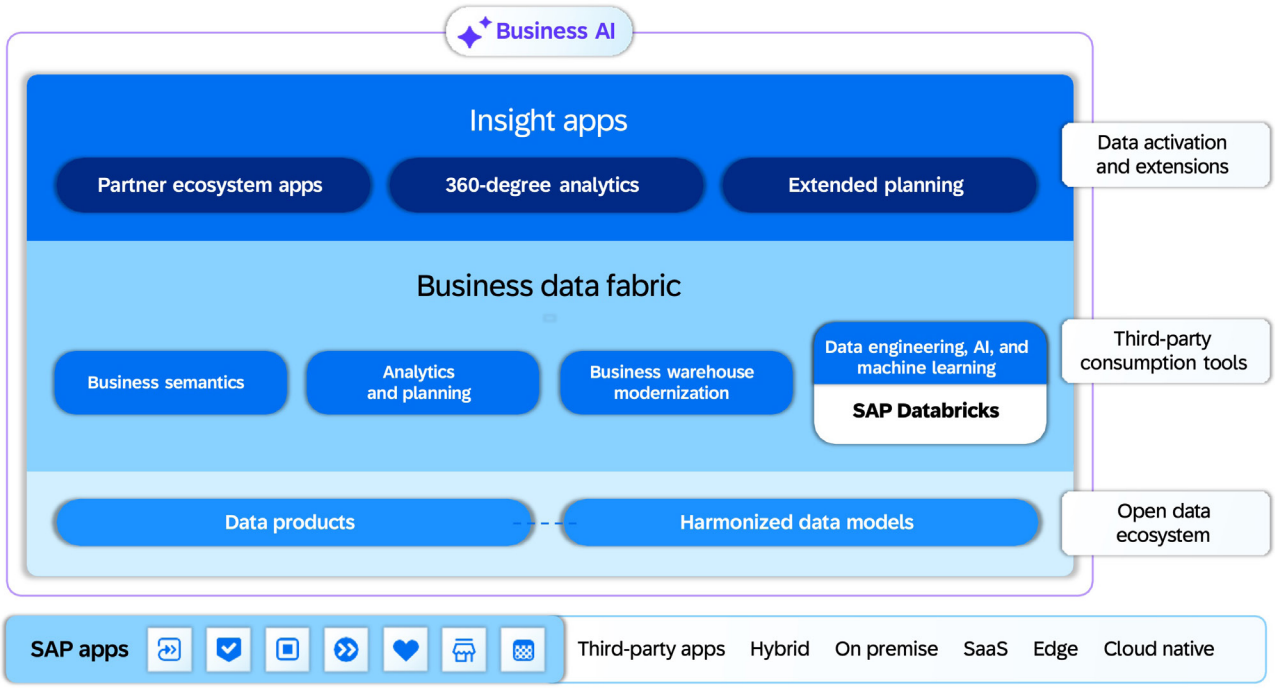

Figure 6: SAP Business Data Cloud

Powered by SAP Datasphere, SAP's business data fabric provides semantic onboarding and modeling to help ensure consistent business context across all data. One customer reflects on the benefits:

> "Our business data fabric architecture on SAP Datasphere allows us to efficiently combine SAP and third-party data sources from cloud and on-premises systems in a single data lake without the need for extensive replication. By breaking data silos in all directions, we're unlocking new possibilities for innovation and strategic decision-making."
>
> –Andreas Hass, Head of Data Strategy and Governance, Freudenberg & Co. KG

So, at its core, SAP Business Data Cloud revolutionizes how organizations maintain trust in their data through several key innovations, described in the following table:

Innovation	Key capabilities	Trust impact
Curated data products	• Predefined data sets exposing all aspects of your transactional data • Fully managed data products across all lines of business • Harmonized data model	• Help ensure consistent, reliable data access • Eliminate governance risks • Reduce costs of data extraction
Insight apps	• AI-powered prebuilt analytics providing tailored insights • Available across all business functions • Built by SAP and partners	• Allow actionable insights at scale • Reduce dependency on complex IT development • Enhance business agility and confident decisions
Unified data platform	• Bidirectional zero-copy data sharing • Knowledge graph, semantic onboarding, and modeling • Clear lineage and audit trail	• Increase trust by providing an up-to-date, holistic business view • Serve the needs of insight apps, AI, and advanced analytics users • Help ensure auditability, compliance, and AI readiness

The power of an open ecosystem

While robust architecture and innovative protocols provide the foundation for trusted data, organizations still need specialized capabilities that extend beyond core platforms—from advanced AI to real-time streaming analytics. This is why SAP has built not just a platform, but an ecosystem of trust, partnering with industry leaders to enhance and extend the capabilities of SAP Business Data Cloud. Through these strategic partnerships, organizations can maintain the trust they've built in their core data while leveraging specialized capabilities for specific business needs.

Here are some of the partners that are already part of this ecosystem:

- **Collibra** future-proofs data governance, privacy, and compliance initiatives.
- **Confluent** sets data in motion with real-time event and streaming data.
- **DataRobot** empowers organizations to leverage augmented intelligence with AutoML, which automates the end-to-end process of managing machine learning models.
- **Google Cloud** unifies data while retaining complete business context, providing analytics and AI insights.

This establishes SAP's data suite as the new industry standard and enables you to capitalize on your data investments.

Building trust in data

Our research reveals a significant trust gap in today's organizations—only 34% of business leaders report high trust in their data and analytics capabilities, while 56% have moderate trust, and 11% report low trust.

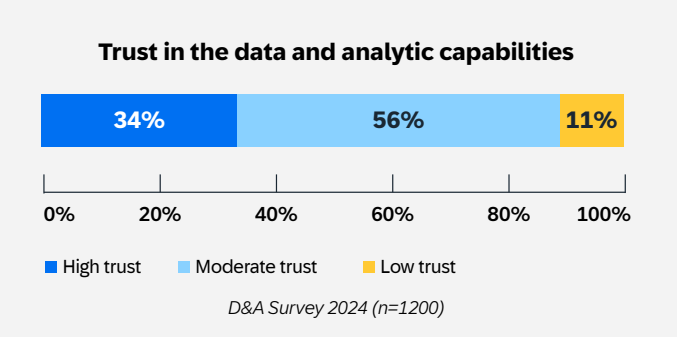

Figure 7: Trust in the Data and Analytics capabilities

But the research also reveals a stark contrast between organizations at various stages of data maturity:

- **Data-oriented** organizations report 81% trust in their capabilities.
- Average companies show 34% trust.
- **Developing** organizations lag at 9%.

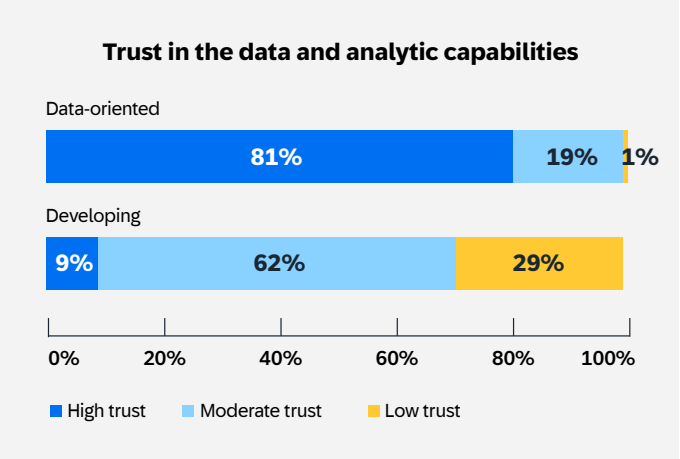

Figure 8: Trust for data-oriented versus developing companies

As we've seen, this trust gap has real consequences.

A new approach to trust

The traditional approach to data management, where IT teams clean and aggregate data in isolation, is failing to build trust. Our survey shows:

- Fifty-five percent of respondents struggle with data quality.
- Forty-five percent face challenges with IT-business alignment

In response, a new paradigm is emerging: treating **data as a product**. This approach views data as a high-quality asset that must meet specific business needs. One executive describes the shift:

> "You have to identify a source and make sure the data quality coming out of that source is good. And then you start, you add other things, you put some controls in that if you want."

Key requirements for trusted data products include:

- **Clear ownership**: Joint accountability between domain and technical experts.
- **Usability**: Easy access and feedback mechanisms.
- **Quality**: Rigorous validation processes.
- **Lineage**: Clear traceability of data from its source systems.
- **Governance**: Strong security and privacy standards.
- **Modularity**: Adaptability to diverse needs.

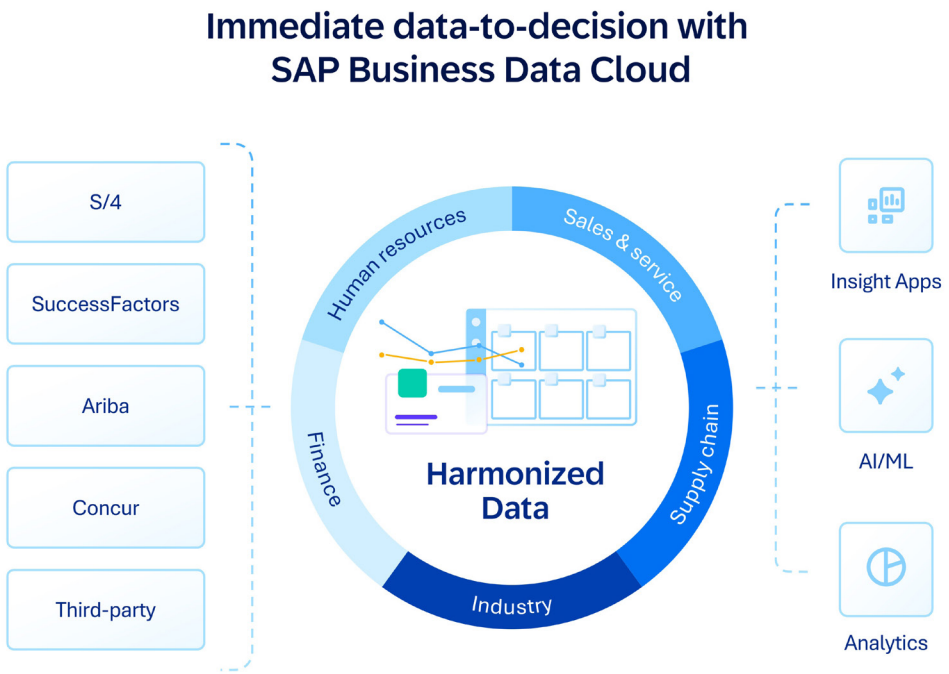

Figure 9: Harmonized data shared through data products

There are several qualities required to build this trust in data and analytic capabilities. Business leaders identified the following top requirements for their upcoming investments:

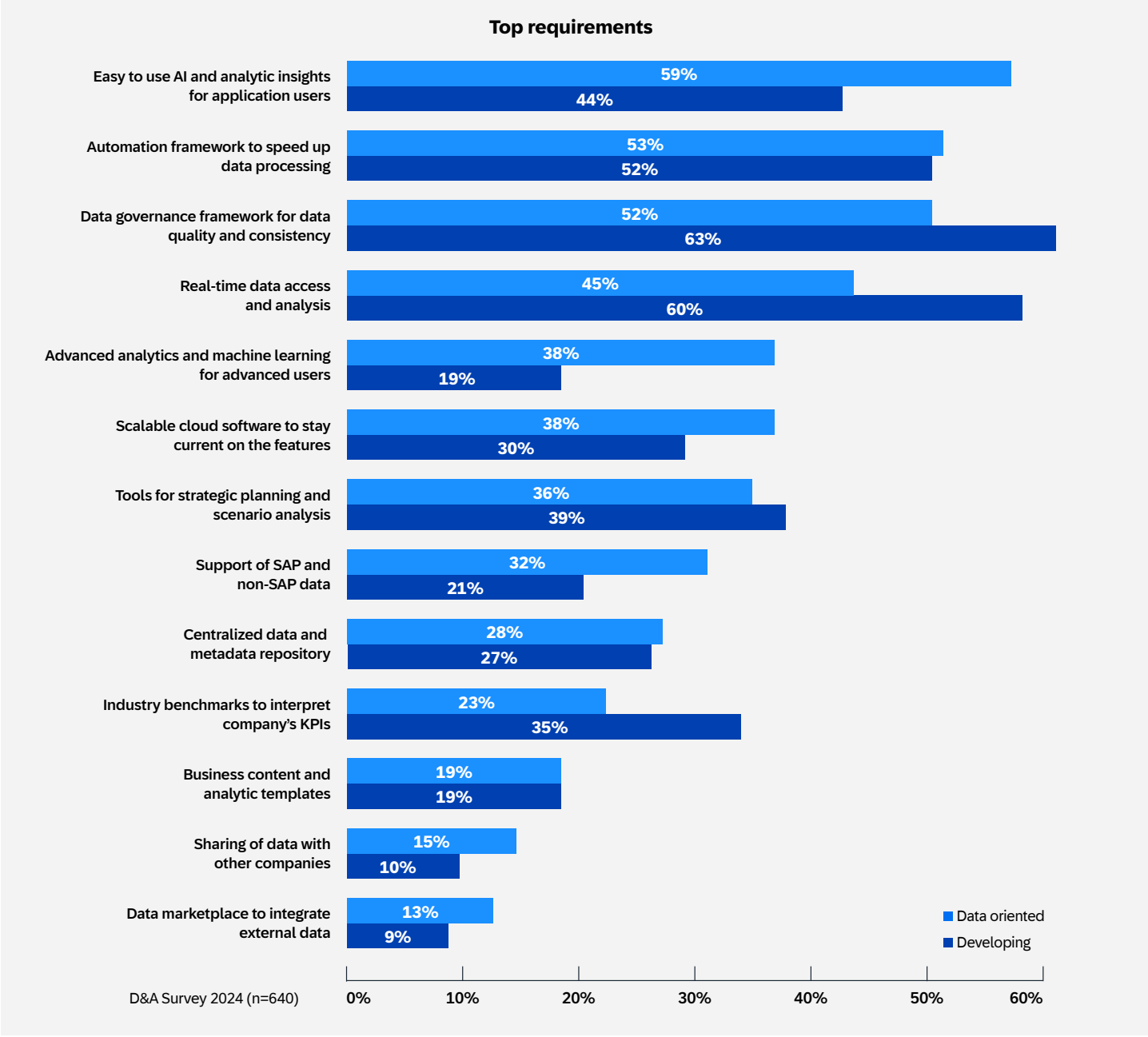

Figure 10: Top requirements for data-oriented versus developing companies

We can summarize this, while making some important observations: **everyone** is prioritizing governance, insights, automation, and real-time access, but **data-oriented** organizations focus on advanced capabilities while **developing** organizations emphasize foundations. The following table adds comments on the reported requirements:

Requirement	Overall priority	Data-oriented organizations	Developing organizations	Key insight
Data governance frameworks	High (Top 4)	52%	63%	Consistent priority across maturity levels
AI and analytics insights	High (Top 4)	59%	44%	Higher priority for **developing** organizations, suggesting mature organizations have already addressed this
Automation	High (Top 4)	Similar across groups	Similar across groups	Significant gap reflecting different maturity levels
Real-time data access	High (Top 4)	45%	60%	Greater focus from **data-oriented** organizations
Advanced ML/analytics	Medium	38%	19%	Reflects more complex integration needs in mature organizations
Scalable cloud software	Medium	38%	30%	**Developing** organizations seek external guidance
SAP/non-SAP data support	Medium	32%	21%	May gain importance as market matures
Industry benchmarks	Medium	23%	35%	Developing organizations seek external guidance
Data sharing/ marketplaces	Low	Limited priority currently	Limited priority currently	May gain importance as market matures

With “easy-to-use AI and analytic insights for applications users” being the top priority, it’s important to understand how we can develop a path to trusted AI. Clearly, it requires a foundation of reliable data. SAP Business Data Cloud includes key elements for fueling AI with trusted data:

- Training on real company data.
- Strong governance frameworks.
- Semantic rich data models and knowledge graphs.
- Automated metadata management.

But ultimately, trust in data is built through people. One interviewee emphasizes:

> “Learn how to talk to senior stakeholders, learn how to communicate data points in a simple way. Know the audience you’re speaking to. It’s not just about mastering the data; it’s understanding how that sits within the wider business context.”

Successful organizations focus on creating centers of excellence for collaboration, while building data literacy across all levels. From this shared experience, communities of practice develop. The path forward requires balancing technical excellence with human understanding. Organizations that succeed combine robust governance with strong user engagement, creating an environment where trust in data becomes self-reinforcing.

Conclusion: Trusted data as the foundation of innovative advantage

The journey to data-driven excellence isn't defined by industry, role, or function—it's shaped by an organization's commitment to building trust in its data. Our research reveals a large "confidence gap" between organizations. While 45% of **data-oriented** companies display high confidence in their business outlook, only 23% of **developing** companies share this optimism, with 19% (14% + 5% in the figure 11 below) expressing active concern about their future.

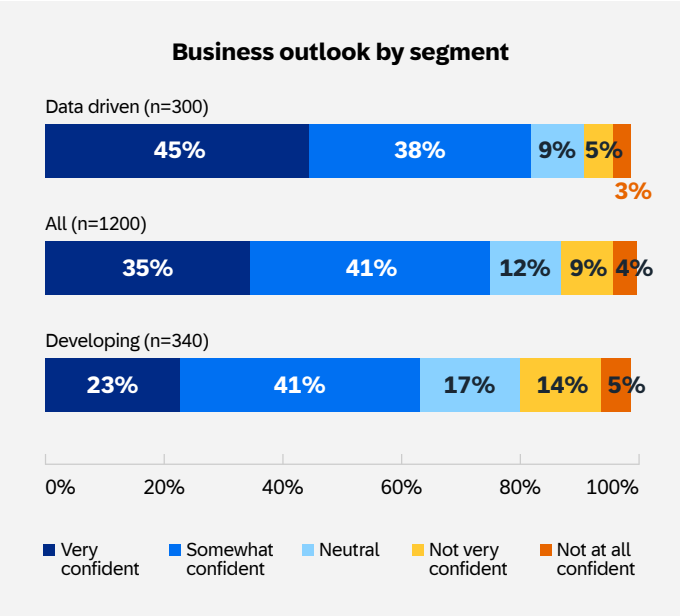

Figure 11: Business outlook for data-oriented versus developing companies

An executive we surveyed reflected:

> "The key is understanding how data helps us achieve goals. Whether forecasting growth areas for investment or identifying cost-saving opportunities, analytics enables us to make decisions we couldn't without this foundation."

This observation cuts to the heart of the challenge—organizations can't transform through technology alone. True competitive advantage emerges from a carefully balanced strategy that weaves together three critical elements:

- Trusted data foundations that enable confident decision-making.
- Human collaboration that bridges technical and business perspectives.
- Continuous innovation that turns insights into action.

The most successful organizations in our study demonstrate that trust in data creates a virtuous cycle. When people trust their data, they use it more frequently and effectively. This increased usage generates better insights, which in turn, builds greater trust. These organizations don't just operate more efficiently—they experiment more boldly, adapt more quickly, and innovate more consistently.

Looking ahead, the message is clear: organizations that build trust in their data today position themselves to lead tomorrow. In a business environment where change is constant and disruption is normal, trusted data isn't just an operational asset—it's the foundation of lasting competitive advantage.

Learn more about SAP Business Data Cloud

For organizations looking to unleash the power of their business data, SAP Business Data Cloud (BDC) connects all your critical data, streamlines data access, improves governance, and enables real-time insights across the enterprise.
sap.com/products/data-cloud.html