Data Integrity Trends: Chief Data Officer Perspectives in 2021

How 300+ C-Level Data Executives in the Americas, EMEA and Asia Pacific are Managing Enterprise Data Assets to Fuel Reliable Data-Driven Decision-Making
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Executive Summary

Effective business decision-making depends on providing staff, business intelligence (BI) tools and AI or analytics models with data that’s accurate, consistent and framed with the right context.

We call this ‘data integrity’, and our first Data Integrity Trends survey seeks to measure how effectively enterprises are doing this across the world.

This report summarizes what we discovered to paint a unique picture of how successfully enterprises are establishing and maintaining bases of high-integrity data to fuel their data-driven business transformations.

Our findings suggest that most enterprises believe they have now laid the foundations for data-driven decision-making and automation at least quite successfully, but they also reported significant struggles. There’s still a way to go before staff will trust data-driven insights over their own intuitions.

Currently, 45% of the executives we surveyed are democratizing data to empower staff to self-serve their own data-driven insights. But most have yet to take these projects beyond the ‘early adopter’ phase.

Achieving strategic objectives like this will mean overcoming a range of technical and human challenges. Most of our survey respondents still lack the staffing resources and tools they need to manage their data effectively, while 73% say a lack of technology or services to facilitate data integration is creating challenges for their teams.

However, our research also shines a light on the work top executives are doing to overcome these challenges. Automating data management processes, breaking down data silos, augmenting company data with third-party datasets, leveraging location information for business insights and embracing low-code/no-code environments have emerged as steps enterprises can take to help enhance the integrity of their data.
**Key Findings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40% is the average proportion of their time data teams spend on data cleaning, integration and preparation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88% have started building automation into their data management processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35% of respondents say staff will trust a data-driven insight that conflicts with their own intuitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>82% say data quality concerns represent a barrier to their data integration projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>88% say a lack of staff with the right skills is creating challenges for their data integration projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>80% find it challenging to ensure data is enriched consistently at scale.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Methodology

This representative global survey of 304 data-focused leaders was conducted in April and May 2021. Of these, 60% were from the Americas, 20% were from EMEA and 20% worked in the Asia Pacific region. Respondents were selected from global enterprises with at least 2,500 employees and are responsible for their organizations’ data strategy functions. They have job titles ranging from C-level to SVPs, VPs, directors and heads of department.

Their enterprises operate in the financial services (20%), insurance (15%), retail (15%), telecoms (15%), healthcare or pharmaceutical (10%), transportation or logistics (5%), government or education (5%) and software or technology (5%) sectors. The remaining 10% were selected from other industry verticals.

We asked respondents 15 questions about their organizations’ data integrity strategies, including their approaches to data quality, data integration, location intelligence and enriching company data with data from third-party sources.

Then, we combined our findings with commentary from eight industry experts to put these insights into context and convey the true state of enterprise data integrity in 2021.

Contributors

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Chief Data Architect, Office for National Statistics (UK)

Guy Taylor
Director of Data Science and Interim Director of Experimentation, Booking.com
The State of Global Data Integrity in 2021

**KEY FINDING**

**Leading global enterprises are seeing success with analytics and AI projects. But poor data integrity is hampering data-driven initiatives for many**

When the responsibility for critical decision-making rests at the feet of data and analytics professionals, it is essential that the information they are passing to company stakeholders is wholly reliable.

Our first ever Data Integrity Trends survey of 304 data, analytics and AI executives shows that enterprises today have a range of critical business priorities that require a foundation of trusted data.

First and foremost, 63% say business initiatives geared toward meeting customer experience demands are influencing their 2021 priorities. Meanwhile, 58% say their priorities include launching or scaling AI and advanced analytics initiatives and 49% say the same about meeting compliance and regulatory requirements.

“*There’s a genuine sense of urgency as businesses in all industries and all regions engage in significant digital transformation initiatives*”

Amy O’Connor
Chief Data and Information Officer, Precisely
Data-Driven Investments are Delivering Mixed Results

Please rate your organization’s level of success to date with each of the following data and analytics strategy objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Disappointing Results</th>
<th>Mixed Results</th>
<th>Quite Successful</th>
<th>Very Successful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting data literacy across the organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing and maintaining a base of trusted data for analytics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating insights with business processes and driving analytics adoption</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing an analytics program that reveals valuable insights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automating or augmenting processes or interactions with AI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting a core data management and governance framework in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a high-performing analytics team (i.e. staff recruitment)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021

At the same time, 48% are factoring enabling remote working, facilitating hyper personalization and rationalizing company data following merger or acquisition activities into their 2021 plans.

“There’s a genuine sense of urgency as businesses in all industries and all regions engage in significant digital transformation initiatives,” says Amy O’Connor, Chief Data and Information Officer at data integrity specialist Precisely. “These programs must be built on a foundation of data integrity if they are to be successful.”

‘Data integrity’ is foundational to success in analytics and insight projects. Ensuring that data is recorded correctly and remains accurate when retrieved or used throughout its lifetime is essential for preserving data integrity. However, it’s important that data integrity is not merely another expression for data quality.

Precisely defines data integrity as ensuring a company’s data is accurate, consistent and provides the right context for confident decision-making.

Our research shows that most enterprises still have work to do if they are to meet this standard and establish a base of high-integrity data that company stakeholders genuinely trust to inform their business decisions.

“You need to add another dimension to your data and consider it in context – not only the who and the what, but the when, where, and why”

Amy O’Connor
Chief Data and Information Officer, Precisely
**Data Integrity is Enabling Analytics Success**

Our research suggests that many enterprises believe they’ve successfully laid the foundations for data-driven decision-making and automation.

Of the executives we surveyed, 61% say they have put their core data management and governance frameworks in place at least ‘quite successfully’, with 33% saying they’ve done this ‘very successfully’.

Meanwhile, 55% say they’ve established and are maintaining a base of trusted data for analytics at least ‘quite successfully’. However, 42% report that their attempts to do this have yielded ‘mixed’ or ‘disappointing’ results. In the financial services sector, this figure jumps to 50%.

“We are slowly maturing as an industry,” says Guy Taylor, Director of Data Science and Analytics and Interim Director of Experimentation at online travel company Booking.com.

“We are slowly getting our heads around the kind of capabilities that we need in order to do our jobs better.”

However, the proportion of respondents reporting disappointing or mixed results in these two objectives shows many enterprises still have work to do to ensure the integrity of the data they’re managing.

“From what I’ve seen in my previous roles, [data integrity is] an area that we can all improve on in APAC,” says Gladwin Mendez, Data and Information Security Officer at investment company Fisher Funds.

“From what I’ve seen in my previous roles, [data integrity is] an area that we can all improve on in APAC, with a few notable exceptions, who are typically startups and began with a data-first mindset,” says Gladwin Mendez, Data and Information Security Officer at investment company Fisher Funds.

Putting these ‘data foundations’ in place is essential to the success of initiatives geared toward driving value with a company’s data assets. This may be why 41% say their attempts to establish a value-driving analytics program have yielded ‘mixed’ or ‘disappointing’ results.

Similarly, 42% are struggling to automate or augment processes with AI, drive analytics adoption or integrate insights with business processes, reporting ‘mixed’ or ‘disappointing’ results in all these areas.

The public sector and education sectors are the least mature, when it comes to analytics adoption. A full 73% of respondents in these verticals say their attempts to integrate insights with business processes have yielded ‘mixed’ or ‘disappointing’ results.

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**Tech Companies Lead the Way on Insight Generation**

How successfully have you established an analytics program that reveals valuable insights?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Successful</th>
<th>Quite Successful</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
<th>Mixed Results</th>
<th>Disappointing Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Source:** Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Few Trust Data Over Their Own Intuitions

While many respondents claim to have established trusted data sources staff can use to uncover valuable insights, their comments about how stakeholders use those insights tell a different story.

Only about a third of respondents say their colleagues will trust data-driven insights that run contrary to their own intuitions. Meanwhile, 22% say staff generally don’t trust data-driven insights and 44% report that staff won’t trust insights from data that don’t confirm their ‘gut feels’.

These findings shed light on the true state of data integrity in the world today. When data-driven insights aren’t repeatable and consistent across business units or aren’t presented in the right context for accurate decision-making, staff may feel justified in mistrusting them.

“If people don’t trust the insights, they’re not going to act on them, especially when the insights conflict with their so-called gut reaction,” notes Dan Power, Managing Director of Data Governance, Global Markets for financial services company State Street. “Solving this challenge is partly about trying to work backwards from the statement of, ‘I don’t trust the results.’”

Power argues that poor trust in data can have its roots in questions about the quality of the source data, or mistrust of ‘black box’ algorithms that function in ways staff can’t understand.

“The potential impact of data is orders of magnitude greater than just serving decision-makers’ confirmation bias,” adds O’Connor. “The real value in data is about uncovering hidden connections and unlocking new insights that help a business truly transform and grow.”

Establishing trust in data within an enterprise starts with data integrity. Data that’s used for insight generation must be accurate, consistent and filled with context for business decision-making.

While most enterprises are reporting at least some success with the data integrity basics, our research suggests that they have a way to go if they want to arm staff with valuable, trusted insights at scale.

“If people don’t trust the insights, they’re not going to act on them, especially when the insights conflict with their so-called gut reaction”

Dan Power
MD of Data Governance, Global Markets, State Street
Data Preparation Remains the Top Data Team Task

**KEY FINDING**

*Enterprises are still grappling with a range of data integrity challenges. As a result, data and analytics professionals still spend the lion's share of their time on data preparation.*

### Data Integrity Issues Plague Data Integration Projects

Please evaluate the following potential barriers as they apply to your enterprise’s data integration capabilities.

- **Very Challenging**
- **Quite Challenging**
- **Not Challenging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Not Challenging</th>
<th>Very Challenging</th>
<th>Quite Challenging</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data quality concerns</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of technology or services to facilitate data integration</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty building real-time data pipelines</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of staff with the right skills</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with multiple data sources and complex data formats</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing high volumes of data</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data architecture limitations</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of budget</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data security requirements</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulatory compliance concerns</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to use a scalable ‘design once, deploy anywhere’ approach</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Many Issues Affect Enterprise Data Quality

Please rank the following potential barriers as they apply to your organization’s data quality initiatives.

**Most challenging**

1. Dealing with misfielded data
2. Connecting policies and rules to data
3. Dealing with incomplete data
4. Dealing with inconsistent data definitions
5. Reconciling inconsistent data formats

**Less challenging**

6. Processing high volumes of data
7. Lack of staff with the right skills
8. Managing many sources of data
9. Inadequate data quality management tooling
10. Inefficient processes for measuring data quality

**40%**

The average proportion of their time that data teams spend on data cleaning, integration and preparation.

**80%**

The proportion of their time some respondents spend on data cleaning, integration and preparation.

*Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021*
Data Integrity is Essential for Stewardship and Automation

As the volume, velocity and variety of data enterprises handle increases exponentially, data teams will find assuring data integrity increasingly challenging.

Our 2021 Data Integrity Trends research suggests that the average data team spends 40% of its time cleaning, integrating and preparing data for use in analytics. Some survey respondents report spending as much as 80% of their time on these tasks.

While data processing activities are time consuming, the companies that jump straight to ‘doing analytics’ on their data risk undermining the trust company stakeholders have in data-driven insights.

As a result, enterprises must help their data teams reduce the time they spend on these tasks by optimizing processes in the data lifecycle.

“Data management and data architecture is a slow game,” says Tomas Sanchez, Chief Data Architect at the UK’s Office for National Statistics (ONS). “It takes a long time to plan and even more time to make sure that the data management practices are actually being followed.”

“You need to ensure that you’ve applied the right lenses to qualify your data as ‘fit for purpose’”

Vipul Parmar
Global Head of Data Management, WPP
Top Data Quality Challenges

Data quality is a key component of data integrity, and one that’s vital to the success of any data and analytics strategy. Yet, our research shows that many organizations are still operating without the tools and resources they need to manage the quality of their data effectively.

Of the 300+ executives we surveyed, only 60% agree that they have the staffing resources they need to manage their data effectively.

“There’s a lot of cleaning that goes on, but it’s not always effective,” notes Vipul Parmar, Global Head of Data Management at advertising giant WPP. “People need to have an appreciation of the lenses of data quality. You need to ensure that you’ve applied the right lenses to qualify your data as ‘fit for purpose’.”

Hartnell Ndungi, Chief Data Officer at Absa Bank Kenya, says the complex web of legacy systems that enterprises must deal with makes understanding and managing data all the more labor-intensive.

“Anytime you bring on board a new platform or application, there’s a lot of integration that comes into play,” Ndungi says. “That creates a very complex web of data and systems architecture. Most of the time, you have to create some affordances or work-arounds as to how lineage is achieved.”

As a result of these challenges, 26% of respondents say their teams don’t know what data their enterprises have or where it’s stored, 29% say they lack well-maintained master or reference datasets and 27% say their data governance policies don’t ensure regulatory compliance and data quality.

“[Overcoming data integration challenges is] about knowing where to start, avoiding paralysis from analysis, being pragmatic and getting buy-in from various stakeholders”

Gladwin Mendez
Data and Information Security Officer, Fisher Funds

European Companies Report Spending Most Time Cleaning Data

On average, what percentage of their time do your data teams spend on data cleaning, integration and preparation tasks?

- **41%** Americas
- **42%** EMEA
- **29%** Asia-Pacific

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Two Ways to Enhance Enterprise Data Quality

Our research highlights two steps data leaders must take to improve the quality of their enterprises’ data.

First, data-focused executives must secure buy-in for implementing new processes to fix the issues their teams identify at the source.

Today, just 43% of our survey respondents say they have clear and effective data ownership or stewardship processes in place. Meanwhile, 34% say that they either have not established these processes, or that they do not function effectively.

“You have to have a team of data stewards or data operations people that are responsible for fixing data quality issues,” says Dan Power, MD of Data Governance, Global Markets at State Street. “I’ve seen cases where those exceptions are being written to an exception log and no one ever looks at it!”

“Measuring and identifying data quality issues is the easy part,” agrees Gladwin Mendez, Data and Information Security Officer at Fisher Funds. “Remediating it and getting people on board to remediate it is the real challenge.”

Secondly, enterprises must use automation to streamline data quality processes as much as possible. Our research suggests that many enterprises are investing in this area. A full 88% of survey respondents say they have built some automation into data quality processes, with 37% saying they make extensive use of automated data quality checks.

Building greater automation into these processes will have secondary benefits, such as reducing the amount of staffing resources it takes to manage company data effectively. In turn, this will make it easier for data teams to address the other data integrity challenges they are facing today.

“The biggest killer of data governance programs is lack of automation,” Power concludes. “Data quality tool vendors, whether they’re integrated into a data management catalog or not, need to do better at incorporating AI and ML techniques.”

“The biggest killer of data governance programs is lack of automation”

Dan Power
MD of Data Governance, Global Markets, State Street
Enterprises are Working to Enrich Data Consistently at Scale

**KEY FINDING**

*Companies are enriching their own data with data from third-party sources. But most say doing this consistently at scale is challenging.*

**Executives Use Many Criteria to Evaluate New Data Sources**

When evaluating external data sources, which of the following are important factors to consider?

- Compliance with industry regulations (e.g. GDPR) - 57%
- Whether the data meets internal quality standards - 50%
- Interoperability with existing data architecture - 49%
- Whether the data is updated regularly and consistently - 49%
- Globality of the dataset - 49%
- Format consistency - 46%
- Whether the data is ethically sourced - 38%
- Whether technical support is provided - 37%
- Flexibility in licensing models - 34%
- Overall cost - 33%
- Completeness of the dataset - 23%

**Harnessing Location Intelligence is Challenging**

Please rate the following potential barriers to leveraging location for business processes in your organization:

- Difficulty enriching data consistently or at scale: 50%
- Difficulty deploying accessible location analytics across the enterprise: 48%
- Difficulty making address data fit for purpose: 46%
- Difficulty getting a consistent view across multiple data formats: 32%

**Data Integrity Trends: Chief Data Officer Perspectives in 2021**

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Overcoming Key Data Integration Challenges

Data leaders see shared data platforms and low-code environments as cost-effective ways to address a shortage of data integration resources and talent.
Staff with Data Integration Skills are Scarce

Please rate the challenge a lack of staff with the right skills represents to your enterprise’s data integration capabilities

- Very Challenging
- Quite Challenging
- Not Challenging

The Enterprise Data Integration Skills Shortage

The greatest challenge for enterprise data integration capabilities today is a lack of staff with the right skills. Of the executives we surveyed, 82% say securing the right staffing resources is at least ‘quite challenging’, with 44% describing it as ‘very challenging’.

“Developers are very costly,” notes Power. “They’re scarce and they’re expensive.” At the same time, 77% say processing high volumes of data is at least ‘quite challenging’, while 73% say their teams find dealing with multiple sources of data and complex data formats at least ‘quite challenging’. Similarly, 81% say ensuring the quality of this data as at least ‘quite challenging’.

Mendez says: “We are facing the same challenges most organizations face. For data integration, it’s 1) overcoming legacy issues with processes, technology or data model and data quality, and 2) data in different systems not being synchronized and having different levels of timeliness.”

ONS Chief Data Architect Tomas Sanchez concludes: “It’s no secret that the UK government has been wanting to improve data sharing and data interoperability across departments for a very long time now. Now, there is real momentum towards achieving that ambition.”

“Technology issues, such as affordability or staffing, or sophistication of the tool, mean the trend is definitely toward low-code/no-code”

Dan Power
MD of Data Governance, Global Markets, State Street
Overcoming Barriers to Effective Data Integration

Our research has identified two main strategies for overcoming the barriers to effective data integration enterprises are grappling with today.

On the organizational side, data-focused executives are working to ‘join up’ the data their various business units and teams are looking after. To do this, they’re developing shared data platforms and organizational structures geared toward breaking down data silos.

“We’ve been discussing with our partners across government, and we’ve put forward a specific proposal for how to create a platform to achieve that data sharing,” Sanchez says. “Rather than have departments talking to each other to exchange data for their project needs, we will have a platform to facilitate that sharing of data for specific research projects.”

“WPP has launched a new organization called Choreograph,” adds Vipul Parmar, Global Head of Data Management at WPP. “What it does is draw upon our ‘data giants’, as well as some of our smaller agencies and the pockets of resources that have been effectively working in silos, to support clients by doing the same things.

“This was an important step toward breaking down those silos, bringing those people together under one umbrella organization.”

On the technical side, executives are also investing in technologies that allow non-data scientists to handle some data integration tasks.

“Low-code, no-code means that a savvy business user from one of our business lines can become a configurator,” Power concludes. “It’s not a Nirvana, but it does tend to shorten the cycles. We are looking to embrace low-code/no-code everywhere.”

Further investment in technologies like these may be necessary to address the data integration challenges facing businesses today. Just 58% of our survey respondents agree they have the right tools to access data, process it and put it where it needs to be.

“We are looking to embrace low-code/no-code everywhere. We’re looking to do it for data quality, for data integration and data transformation”

Dan Power
MD of Data Governance, Global Markets, State Street

Enterprises Must Invest in Data Integration Technologies

Please rate the challenge a lack of the right technology or services represents to your enterprise’s data integration capabilities

- Very Challenging
- Quite Challenging
- Not Challenging

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Few Enterprises are Truly Data-Driven

**KEY FINDING**

Enterprises are laying the foundations for data success. But few staff can self-serve data-driven insights and most still trust their intuitions over what the data tells them.

**Many Enterprises Still Have Weak ‘Data Foundations’**

Please rate the following statements about your organization’s current data maturity level.

- **Strongly Agree**
- **Agree**
- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**
- **Disagree**
- **Strongly Disagree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Americas</th>
<th>EMEA</th>
<th>Asia Pacific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We have the optimum data architecture</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have the tools to access data, process it and put it where it needs to be</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our data governance policies ensure regulatory compliance and good data quality</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have enough staffing resources to manage our data effectively</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have well-maintained reference and master datasets</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have clear and effective data ownership or stewardship processes</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We know what data our organization has, where it’s stored</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most Enterprises Struggle with Poor Data Quality**

Please rate the challenge ‘data quality concerns’ represent to your enterprise’s data integration capabilities.

- **Very Challenging**
- **Quite Challenging**
- **Not Challenging**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Very Challenging</th>
<th>Quite Challenging</th>
<th>Not Challenging</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMEA</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia Pacific</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Most Staff Trust Their Guts Over Data-Led Insights**

Staff generally trust data-driven insights, even when they conflict with their own intuitions.

- **34%**

Staff generally don’t trust data-driven insights.

- **22%**

Staff generally trust data-driven insights, unless they conflict with their own intuitions.

- **44%**

Source: Corinium Intelligence, 2021
Data integrity initiatives are firmly at the top of the data and analytics agenda in 2021. Our research shows there is widespread acknowledgement that data strategy success depends on ensuring data is accurate, consistent and provides the right context for effective decision-making.

Of the 304 data-focused executives we surveyed, 60% say breaking down data silos is a top priority for them over the next 12-24 months. Meanwhile, 56% say the same about augmenting company data with location data, making these the top two priorities among our survey respondents.

“We are prioritizing being able to trust our data more and focusing on key strategic pillars like data quality,” says Gladwin Mendez, Data Officer at Fisher Funds. “The board and executives understand that a concerted effort needs to be made if we are to truly be a data-driven organization.”

“Location data is very critical for us,” adds Hartnell Ndungi, Chief Data Officer at Absa Bank Kenya. “We are looking at different hypotheses that will enable us to predict the usage and behavior of our customers, based on the different regions that they consume our products from.”

Other frequently cited strategic goals include creating an enterprise data store, improving metadata management processes and improving data governance or stewardship processes. Respectively, 49%, 46% and 44% cite these as ‘high priorities’ for their organizations.

“Along with most organizations, we are prioritizing being able to trust our data more and focusing on key strategic pillars like data quality”

Gladwin Mendez
Data Officer, Fisher Funds
“When you start looking at different data sources, there are different kinds of correlations that do not mean causation in different use cases,”

Hartnell Ndungi
Chief Data Officer, Absa Bank Kenya
Creating a Truly Data-Driven Enterprise

A truly data-driven business is one where staff and models have access to relevant, high-integrity data and routinely use it to inform their decisions.

Since no enterprise can be staffed exclusively by data scientists, data democratization must play a key role in any company’s data-driven business initiatives. Self-service tools are the best way to get data and insights into the hands of people who can benefit from them.

Yet, our research suggests that just 13% of enterprises with at least 2,500 employees have systems in place that allow most staff to access relevant data using self-service tools. In fact, 55% of respondents say their enterprises have no self-service tools at all and 16% aren’t even providing insights to company stakeholders using dashboards, data visualizations or reports.

“Giving everyone the tools and ability to use and think with data is not the same as getting people to actually do it,” notes Dan Costanza, MD and Chief Data Scientist for Banking, Capital Markets and Advisory at Citi. “That’s why we so heavily focus on individual adopters.”

“Self-service analytics and the democratization of data also calls for training,” agrees Ndungi. “So, we have made sure that we also embed within our data strategy the need to train our business about new and evolving strategies.”

A closer look at the data reveals that software and technology companies are the most likely to report success with their data democratization initiatives. But these projects are most widespread in financial services and telecoms companies, where roughly 55% of respondents say that at least some ‘early adopters’ can now access self-service portals or tools.

These findings show that, at least in some sectors, data democratization will play a key role in the enterprise of the future.

For data leaders in these industries, ensuring the data that feeds into these tools is high-integrity will prove essential for moving beyond the ‘early adopter’ stage and driving business transformations across the enterprise.

“We have made sure that we also embed within our data strategy the need to train our business about new and evolving strategies”

Hartnell Ndungi
Chief Data Officer, Absa Bank Kenya
Conclusion

Our 2021 Data Integrity Trends survey suggests that most large enterprises have a long way to go before they will be truly data-driven.

“Nobody starts from scratch, and the organization continues operating,” says ONS Chief Data Architect Tomas Sanchez. “You can’t stop the clock, do all your transformation and then start the clock again.

“You often integrate these new practices slowly while the operations continue running, and this is complicated.”

Building data integrity must play a role in driving this transformation, and the strategic goals our respondents cite show that there’s widespread acknowledgement of this in the data and analytics community.

Achieving this change will take time. But integrating data to break down data silos, automating data quality processes, implementing data governance programs, leveraging the power of location intelligence and augmenting company data with third-party datasets will increase data-focused executives’ chances of success as they drive toward this goal.

“You often integrate these new practices slowly while the operations continue running, and this is complicated”

Tomas Sanchez
Chief Data Architect, ONS
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About the Editor

Solomon Radley is an experienced editor and reporter with a deep understanding of the data, analytics and CX space and close relationships with many of the sectors’ most prominent C-level executives.

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