Lenovo AI Readiness Index Series 2025

Unleash AI with smarter processes.

Ways to help your people trust AI and unlock its full potential.

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Smarter technology for all

Lenovo

Unleash AI with value-focused processes.

Organizations know the potential of AI but must perfect how they release it across operations.

As the engines that enable efficient, safe and effective implementation, processes are central to maximizing value from AI. What do we mean by AI processes?

The way your organization enables and uses AI across operations. Perfecting these AI processes requires a double-handed approach. On the one hand, you must prepare processes for AI, so that workflows, guardrails and mechanisms are primed to maximize AI's potential. On the other, you are improving processes with AI to drive speed, efficiency and value-creation across your business. Both are necessary for your AI strategy to succeed.

But you face challenges. Particularly in integrating AI in operational processes—from prioritizing AI use cases to preparing for Agentic AI. Another issue is compliance—how processes can flex to fast-changing global regulations.

We encountered these issues in the Lenovo AI Readiness Index Series 2025, our global benchmarking survey of 5,000 senior business leaders (C-suite, VP/Directors and Senior Managers) and in-depth interviews with 40 global business and IT leaders across 20 countries. The survey assessed their AI readiness across four pillars: technology, process, people, and security. In this report, we dive into the process pillar and examine how organizations can ensure their processes drive AI value-creation.

Stand-out findings.

1

Weakness remains in AI process integration.

While confidence in integrating AI in operational processes was generally ranked high, issues remain in prioritizing the use cases to pursue. One in seven businesses (15%) admitted low or very low readiness in this area. Also, adopting Agentic AI—the use of AI agents and assistants—is the weakest area in the process pillar, with one in six (16%) businesses struggling to use them to improve current processes. This suggests it's uncharted territory for many.

2

Compliance is a serious issue.

Every leader we interviewed raised issues about compliance. This is adding cost and forcing them to constantly reengineer their processes. One in eight businesses lack confidence in their ability to adapt operational processes to adhere to regulatory requirements and industry standards for AI.

Contents.

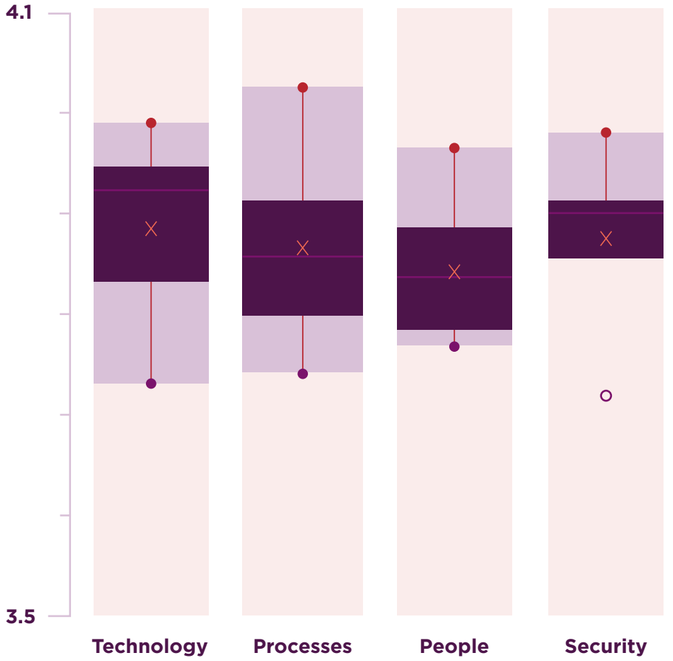
Click to explore how to perfect your AI processes:

Process AI readiness summary

Problems and progress.

It’s a mixed picture. Organizations are confident in ethical implementation but concerned about AI integration and compliance.

Process is one pillar of Lenovo’s AI Readiness Assessment tool, sitting alongside people, technology and security as the key components to successful AI implementation.



Distribution of AI readiness benchmarks across 4 pillars.

Max value **Min value** **Median** **Mean** **Outlier**

(0= no readiness, 5= high readiness)

Of the four pillars, process has the second lowest benchmark for AI readiness, just above people and below technology and security. This is understandable given that, while organizations are more confident in the technology itself, they are less sure about the process behind it all. How can you use AI technology safely and effectively? How can you use AI to improve the way you do business? These questions, alongside issues around people and AI, are less tangible and understandably harder to answer.

Our findings suggest that work still needs to be done, specifically in integrating AI in operational processes and navigating fast-changing compliance—all of which we discuss in this report.

But there were signs of progress. Despite clear concerns about compliance, responsible and ethical AI is a high-confidence area, with 79% reporting high or very high confidence that responsible AI policies and practices are being effectively applied. This was the highest scoring question in the entire benchmarking study of 30 questions across four pillars. The take-out here is that, while businesses are confident right now in how they’re applying their ethical AI policies, this may well change in the future given the fast-changing regulatory landscape.

Doubt also exists about integrating AI agents and assistants to improve processes. As businesses begin to move from Generative to Agentic AI, 16% have low/very low preparedness for integrating AI agents—systems that can make decisions and take actions to achieve specific goals—into business processes.

Integrating AI into processes.

Challenges range from defining use cases to increasing ROI.

Knowing where to start with integrating AI into business processes can be a daunting task, especially in the face of pressure to balance budgets, manage internal resources and prove ROI.

The executives interviewed for this study all raised challenges around defining and prioritizing their AI use cases, making sure they are aligned with business strategy while balancing short- and long-term priorities.

Then, once proof of concepts are underway, they face more challenges: scaling AI to provide greater ROI, often through the introduction of AI agents.

In this section, we dive into detail on how businesses are grappling with the use case conundrum and knowing where to begin in getting AI embedded in their processes.

> “Implementing AI technology involves substantial costs for development and integration. If the appropriate AI use case is not accurately evaluated, the company may face significant losses.”
>
> **VP Marketing, Utilities business, Japan**

Top AI integration challenges.

Click to jump to each section:

1

What are the right use cases?

Businesses struggle with definition and prioritization.

Like most businesses, your first step in adopting AI is likely defining use cases. So it's surprising that the ability to 'consistently prioritize and define the right AI use cases to drive process improvements across different functions' is one of the lowest scoring areas of the process pillar. Indeed, 15% of businesses reported low or very low preparedness in this area.

businesses reported low or very low preparedness for consistently prioritizing and defining the right AI use cases, with the issue felt most acutely in retail (17%) and hospitality (19%).

The retail and hospitality sectors in particular are often impacted more than others by market constraints. This can limit investment in the business, which may well account for our finding that these sectors reported the lowest levels of preparedness: 17% for retail and 19% for hospitality.

Organizations with low or very low preparedness in prioritizing or defining the right AI use cases for process improvements, by sector.

Given the huge potential of AI to transform business processes, it's easy to see why prioritizing use cases is a challenge. How do you choose what to do first? How do you know what to grow and what to let go? Here's a breakdown of potential AI use cases in processes.

Potential AI use cases across processes.

Our research surfaced common use cases that are consistently adopted across industries and geographies.

1 Customer service AI assistants.

Helping customer service representatives by transcribing calls, summarizing cases and recommending actions.

2 Marketing content creation.

Gathering and summarizing information for marketing content, such as solution briefs.

3 Code development.

Supporting software developers to cut development sprint times—by up to 50% in some use cases.

4 IT infrastructure optimization.

Automating maintenance tasks, monitoring system performance and improving data access across fragmented enterprise systems.

5 Data mining.

Collecting data, analyzing reports and generating summaries.

2

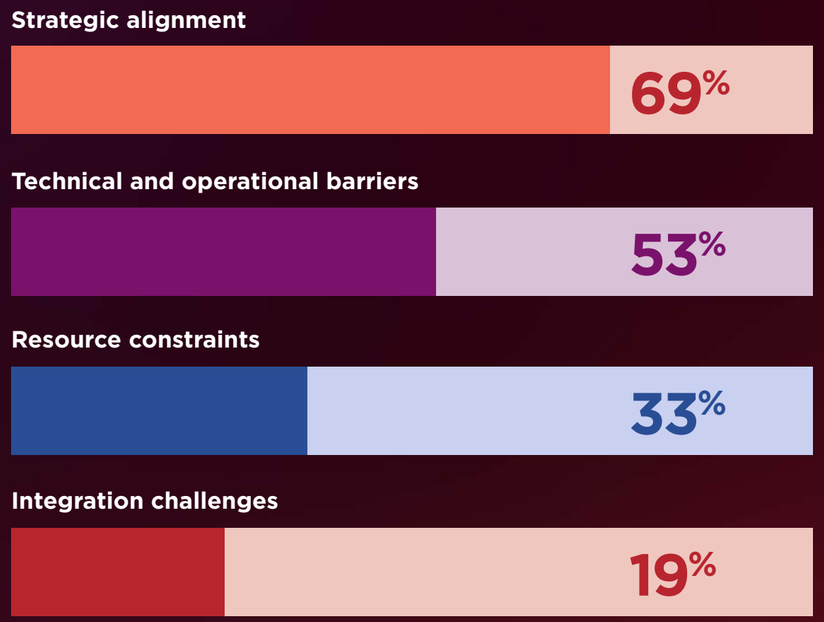
Aligning AI with business strategy.

The challenge of agreeing the biggest problems AI can solve.

While there's pressure to innovate with AI, there's also pressure to balance budgets, manage resources and prove return on investment. In other words, pressure to align AI initiatives with the wider business strategy and the goals that come with it.

Strategic alignment stands out as the top challenge.
Our research highlighted that the primary challenge to AI use-case selection was strategic alignment—agreeing on the biggest problems that AI can solve—which was raised by more than two thirds of interviewees (69%).

Top challenges when prioritizing AI use cases.



Challenges in prioritizing AI use cases to pursue, frequency of mentions in 40 executive interviews.

What executives are saying.

Organizations can struggle with differing AI viewpoints across the business.

> "Different stakeholders had different priorities and levels of understanding about AI's potential, so it was difficult to gain cross-functional approval."
>
> **Director of IT, Manufacturing business, India**

Getting ROI right can also prove challenging.

> "Figuring out which company processes to apply AI technology to was a difficult task. It was also important to determine if using AI in those processes would create more financial value for the company, because not every business process was suitable for AI, and some would have needed too much customization."
>
> **VP of IT, Financial Services business, France**

3

Balancing long- and short-term results.

The difficulties of knowing where to focus.

The research also revealed a tension when choosing where to focus AI efforts. Short-term quick wins—such as chatbots offering recommendations—can provide clear and immediate cost savings. While longer-term, complex projects that require lots of upfront documentation can sap more resources but offer greater potential rewards.

This pressure to demonstrate ROI has also surfaced in other Lenovo research. Our Global CIO Report 2024 revealed that 42% of CIOs don't expect to see ROI on AI investments for at least two years, and 61% find it very/extremely challenging to demonstrate ROI with their tech investments.

And the latest Lenovo/IDC CIO Playbook 2025 showed that while AI spending is set to nearly triple globally in 2025, the biggest barrier is unclear ROI.

What executives are saying.

Organizations report difficulty in justifying resources.

> Deciding which AI projects to focus on is difficult, as we have to balance quick business benefits with our long-term goals. AI tools for detecting fraud can provide tangible benefits by reducing losses, but they also require a lot of resources. At the same time, we must think about long-term projects like using AI to offer more personalized services to customers, which might take longer but have bigger rewards."
>
> **VP Operations, Financial Services business, USA**

Too much complexity can hinder the ability to decide focus.

> Some AI projects, like predictive maintenance, show quick returns, while others, like environmental monitoring, align with long-term sustainability goals but take more time to deliver results. Limited resources and the need to meet both operational and regulatory demands make it tough to decide where to focus first."
>
> **VP Operations, Oil/Gas business, Brazil**

4

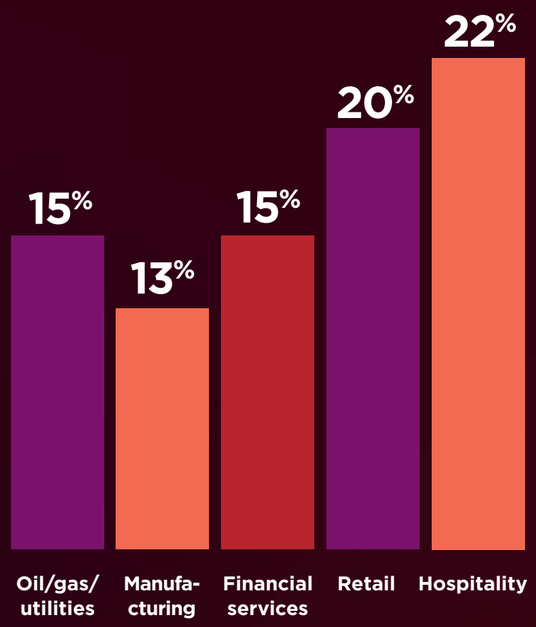
Preparing for Agentic AI.

Readiness is low for this emerging innovation.

Integrating the use of AI agents and assistants to improve processes and human engagement across functions is the weakest area of the process pillar. Given that this is still an emerging area of innovation, this is understandable—but the need to catch up is clear. Our research found that 16% of respondents reported low/very low preparedness, rising to 18% in Latin America.

At a sector level, readiness is lowest in retail and hospitality. This is consistent with the findings in our people pillar report in the Lenovo AI Readiness Index Series 2025: Unleash AI in your workforce.

These industries are highly customer centric and rely heavily on customer experience, which may make it difficult to find the most valuable use cases. One way forward is to consider which steps in the process aren't so reliant on the human-to-human interactions and focus on these first.



Businesses with low/very low readiness at integrating AI assistants and agents to improve processes and human engagement, by sector.

"We often get feedback about how to improve the bot. People want us to process regular updates so it can handle questions better. They also suggest adding new AI tools to make forecasting and decision-making faster."

C-level leader,
Financial Services business, India

What executives are saying.

Organizations crowdsource suggestions for Agentic AI.

"While AI agents appear intelligent, they're still just tools that can help us with business and personal tasks—albeit new and powerful ones. They're there to enhance—not replace—human capabilities, so human oversight is still crucial."

Jim Coleman,
Director of AI Offerings, Lenovo

[2] IDC CIO Playbook 2025 Survey, commissioned by Lenovo

Recommendations for making processes AI-ready.

1

Define and prioritize your use cases.

If you're taking a cautious approach, start with a proof of concept based on a specific use case, prove the value, scale it out and move to your next initiative. Begin with a simple Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) solution, enhancing Large Language Model responses with context from your company documents.

2

Align AI with business strategy.

When moving on from experimenting with AI, the next step is to design infrastructure, capabilities and processes to be AI-first. This momentum to scale faster includes building AI factories—not just rolling out one use case at a time, but creating a platform that allows implementation of multiple AI initiatives, iterating, experimenting and moving from proof of concept to production quickly.

3

Balance long- and short-term results.

The most impactful use cases may not be Gen-AI based, they could be solutions based on computer vision or NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming). Identify the top priorities for your organization and the most feasible use cases, then pick the right tech stack for each use case.

4

Prepare for Agentic AI.

Documenting every stage of your AI processes can enable quicker AI deployment, ensure alignment across functions and facilitate a smoother transition from Gen AI to Agentic AI. It highlights the stages of the process where you can use an agent to execute on because it's so clear which tasks are manual.

Managing compliance and ethics challenges.

Regulatory issues impact all businesses.

Once the use cases are selected, the next important consideration is their impact on regulatory governance and compliance, as well as setting a framework for their ethical application.

This is further complicated for businesses that are operating across multiple regions with different regulatory standards and policies.

All leaders interviewed for this study raised challenges around regulation—from data privacy to specific AI regulations and even environmental issues. This adds cost and forces organizations to constantly reengineer their processes, stalling progress.

> “Our biggest challenge is ensuring that our AI systems comply with data privacy laws, particularly when handling customer data across different countries. Regulations regarding data storage and usage are often unclear or evolving, which creates uncertainty and slows down the launch of new AI tools.”
>
> **C-level IT leader, Retail business, Chile**

Managing compliance and ethics challenges

Different countries, different rules.

Many businesses have low levels of readiness.

One in eight businesses admitted having low/very low levels of preparedness for proactively adapting operational processes to adhere to regulatory requirements and industry standards for AI.

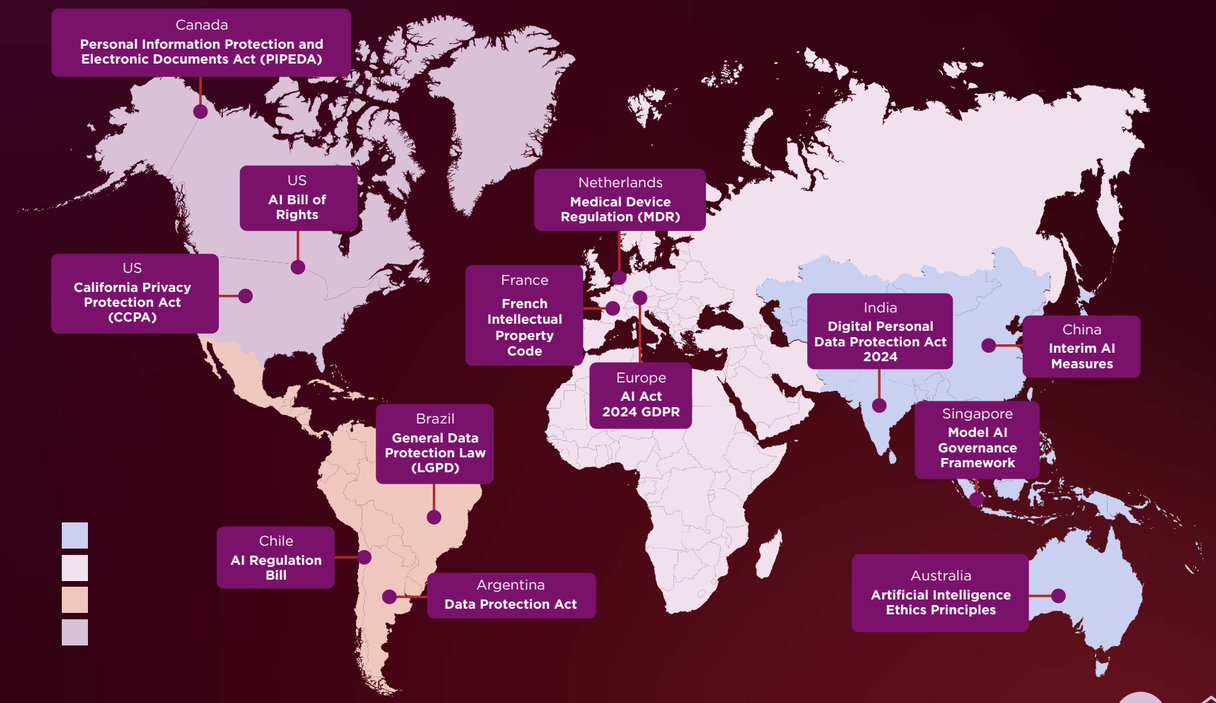
Latin American and US businesses struggled most in this area, with 15% reporting low/very low confidence. This compares with 9% in Asia Pacific. For EMEA, with its robust GDPR regulations, the figure is 12%.

We can see that the AI regulatory landscape varies, with established regulations in place in some jurisdictions but still in development in others.

> “AI is still very new and there’s lot of catching up that needs to be done in different countries. Because the landscape is changing so fast, you need a very flexible infrastructure and process on how to embed AI so you can accommodate the changes that are continuously evolving.”

Sarah Lundgren,
Global Director
AI Center of Excellence, Lenovo

Global regulations impacting AI are at various stages of development and deployment.

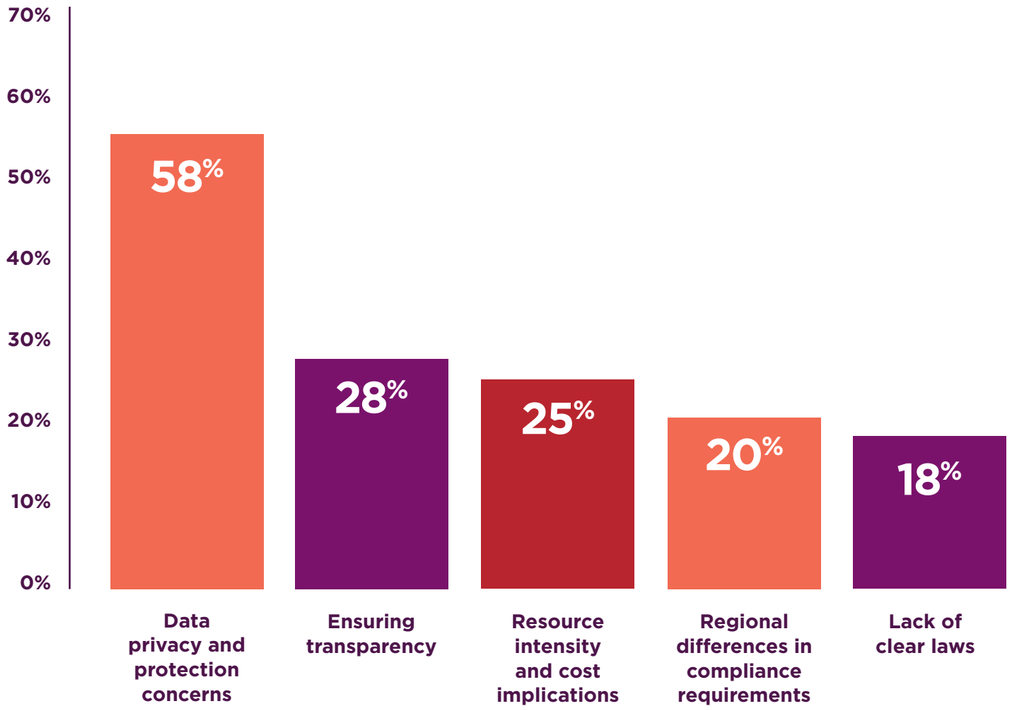


Evolving data privacy rules are problematic.

Data privacy and protection are by far the biggest challenges.

With AI usage, complying with data privacy and protection laws like GDPR and CCPA is always both important and tricky. There are rules about how long you can keep data that you acquired by getting customer consent, and there are rules about how you can use it in different regions. Any breach or misuse of the data by the AI can make a business vulnerable to huge fines and reputational loss.

When executives in our 40 in-depth interviews were asked about the governance and compliance challenges that they're encountering most, 58% mentioned data privacy and protection concerns.

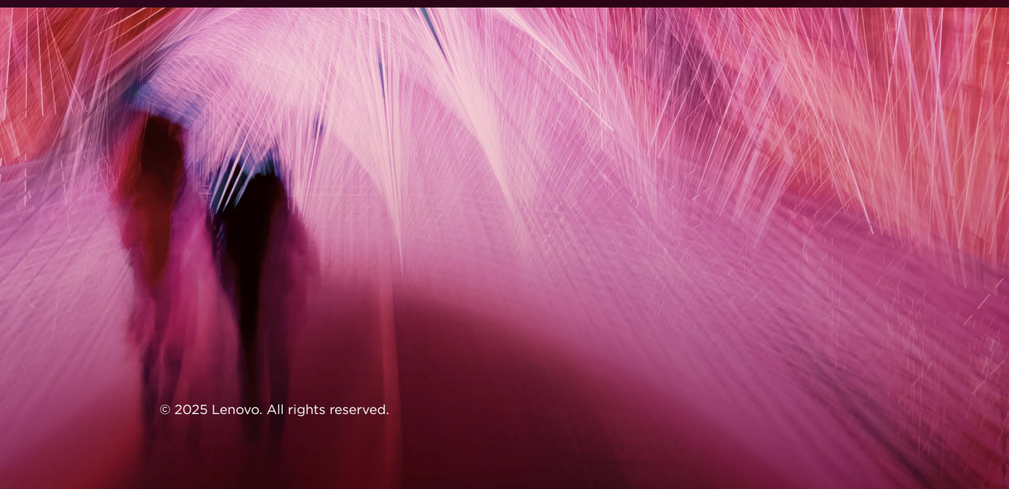


Governance or regulatory compliance challenges encountered most when implementing AI, frequency of mentions in 40 executive interviews.

Managing compliance and ethics challenges

What executives are saying.

Leaders from around the world call for greater clarity and certainty in AI regulation.



Lack of rules in Saudi Arabia.

> There are minimal governance rules to regulate AI adoption in Saudi Arabia, although guidelines have recently been issued. The Saudi Data & AI Authority regulates AI-related data but not having stringent and dedicated regulations as yet is a big problem."
>
> **Director of IT, Oil/Gas business, Saudi Arabia**

Uncertainty an issue in the US.

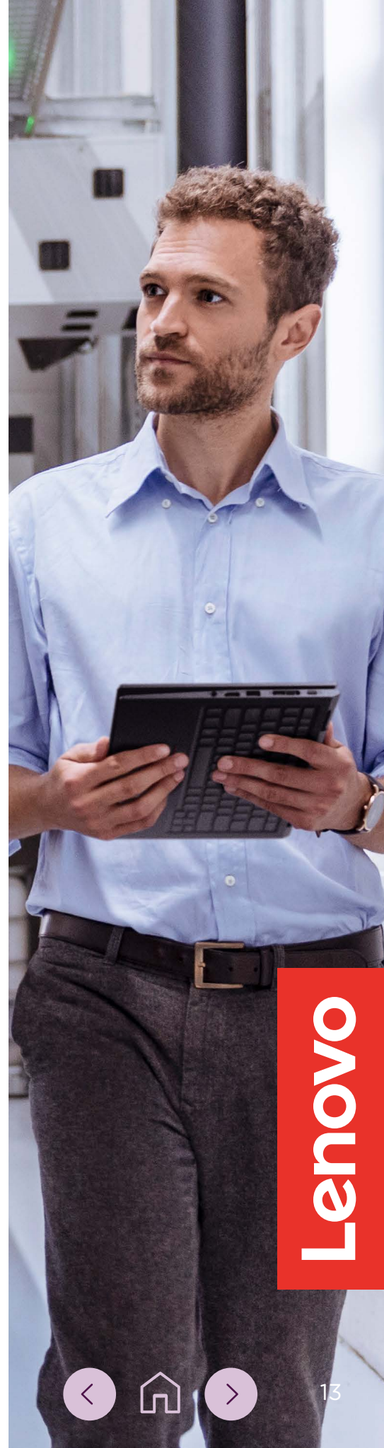
> The lack of a cohesive federal framework governing data privacy and AI usage were core issues. This regulatory uncertainty complicates the development and deployment of AI solutions, and we are navigating various state regulations and industry-specific guidelines which can vary widely and lead to inconsistencies."
>
> **VP of IT, Manufacturing business, United States**

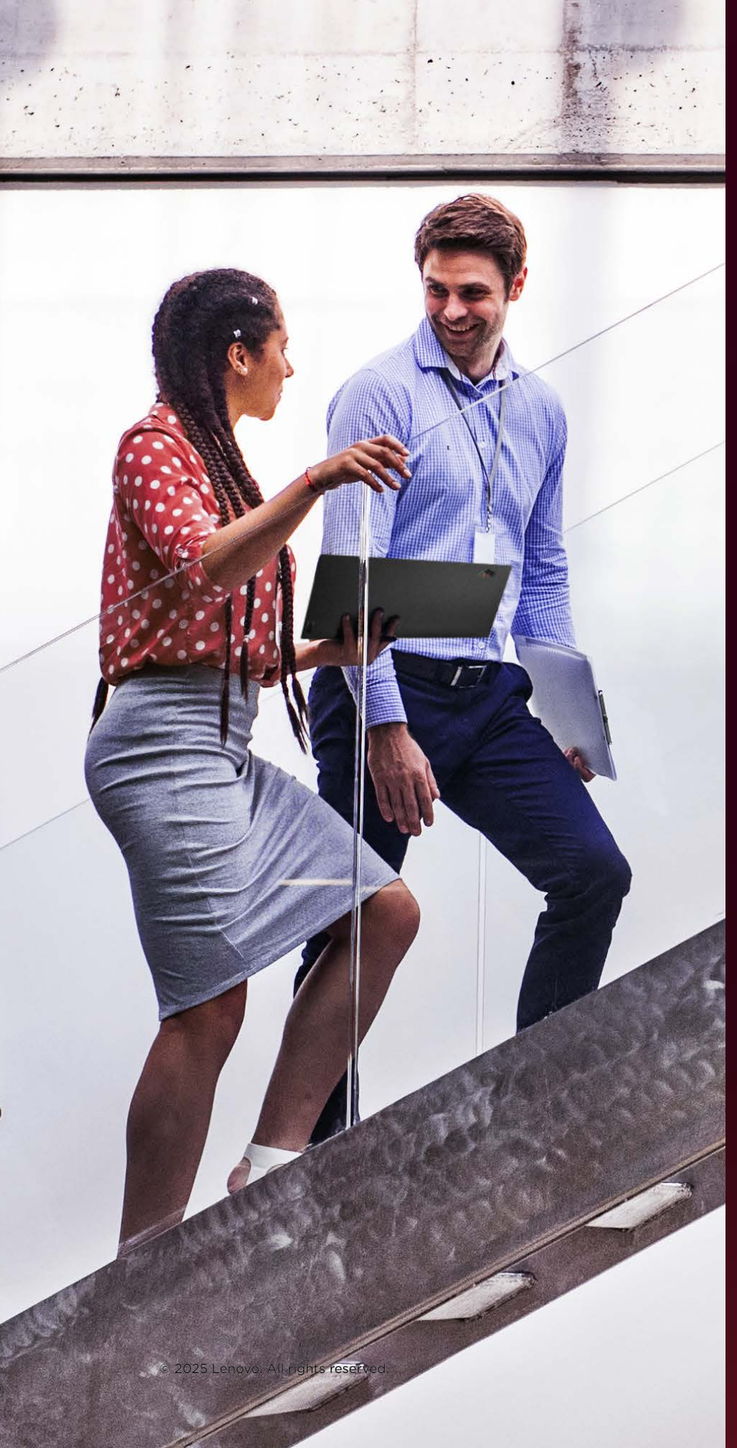
Lack of consistency in India.

> The absence of precise or uniform AI regulations leads to ethical and legal uncertainties, which hinders decision-making, especially related to innovation."
>
> **Director of IT, Manufacturing business, India**

Difficulty operating in multiple jurisdictions.

> The different laws and regulations applicable across countries pose a concern in terms of finding the right strategy suitable for all locations."
>
> **VP IT, Hospitality business, France**





Managing compliance and ethics challenges

Implementing a responsible AI framework.

Confidence is high but executives are vigilant of bias.

Responsible and ethical AI practices—the process of designing, developing and deploying AI systems in ways that prioritize fairness, transparency, accountability and the wellbeing of all stakeholders—emerged as the highest confidence area of the process pillar, as it also did in the people pillar.

Just 9% of respondents had low/very low confidence in this area, dropping to 7% in APAC. This was the highest scoring question in the entire benchmarking study of 30 questions across all four pillars of technology, process, people, and security.

One issue to look out for is subjective programming. When you're programming and feeding data into AI, it's important to avoid a subjective view of the world. You need to make sure that you have diverse teams working on it, an oversight committee and regular audits.

Despite broad confidence levels, interviewees revealed significant concerns around algorithmic transparency and potential biases in AI systems which could inadvertently discriminate against customers or violate ethical standards.

> "The lack of a cohesive federal framework governing data privacy and AI usage were core issues. This regulatory uncertainty complicates the development and deployment of AI solutions, and we are navigating various state regulations and industry-specific guidelines which can vary widely and lead to inconsistencies in compliance efforts."
>
> **VP of IT, Manufacturing business, United States**

Recommendations for keeping AI compliant.

1

Have flexible authorization controls.

In some cases, data can't be shared between different jurisdictions, like China and the US. Create an infrastructure that allows access to be closed off where required, putting measures in place to restrict information around security and authorization.

2

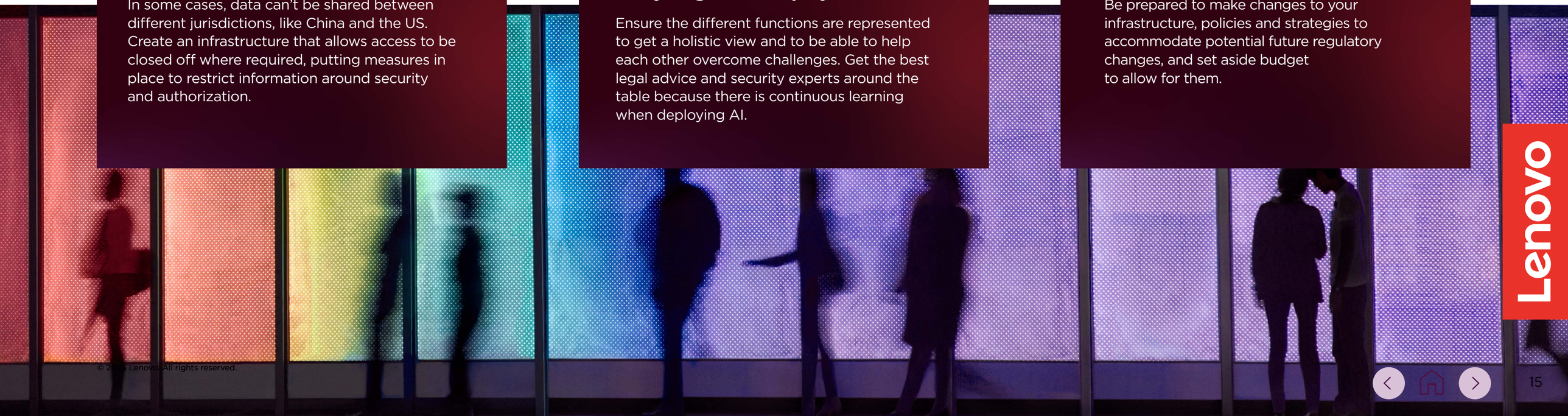
Include legal and security teams at every stage of AI deployment.

Ensure the different functions are represented to get a holistic view and to be able to help each other overcome challenges. Get the best legal advice and security experts around the table because there is continuous learning when deploying AI.

3

Plan and budget for policy change.

Be prepared to make changes to your infrastructure, policies and strategies to accommodate potential future regulatory changes, and set aside budget to allow for them.



Key actions

Perfecting your AI processes.

Key actions to ensure your operations are primed to release AI's potential.

Establish.

Start small and build.

Begin with low-risk, high-return use cases—your low hanging fruit—to prove value and justify further investment in AI initiatives.

Get your source material in order.

Identify the company information that will drive the use case and create a central repository for all documentation that acts as the ultimate source of truth.

Start documenting early.

This simplifies discussions with legal, security, IT and business teams by ensuring everyone speaks the same language, and also provides a single, vetted source of truth that can accelerate your deployment.

Manage.

Leverage AI tools.

Harness AI-powered tools for process documentation and maintenance to ensure efficiency and compliance.

Run a structured change management program.

Clearly communicate the reasons for implementing AI and the potential consequences of not adopting it.

Involve your specialists.

Include AI subject-matter experts as part of the change management group. Being AI-fluent will help them overcome challenges more easily.

Govern.

Keep abreast of regulations.

Monitor closely for developments in AI regulations in all markets your business operates in.

Establish a diverse AI council.

Include representatives from legal, security and other functions to oversee ethical AI deployment and mitigate bias.

Be ready to change fast.

Develop an infrastructure that will let you adapt authorization and data access quickly, if needed.

Ready to unleash AI?

Read the other three reports in the Lenovo AI Readiness Index Series 2025—Technology, People and Security—plus learn how Lenovo can help you perfect your AI processes here.

Discover more AI trends in the Lenovo Global CIO Playbook 2025.

The vision is yours. Get there with Lenovo.

Research methodology

5,000
senior business leaders (C-suite, VP/Directors, and Senior Managers)

40 global business
and IT leaders interviewed in November–December 2024

20 countries
in NAMER, LATAM, EMEA, and APAC in November 2024

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