BARC Data Culture Survey 23
How to liberalize data access to empower data users

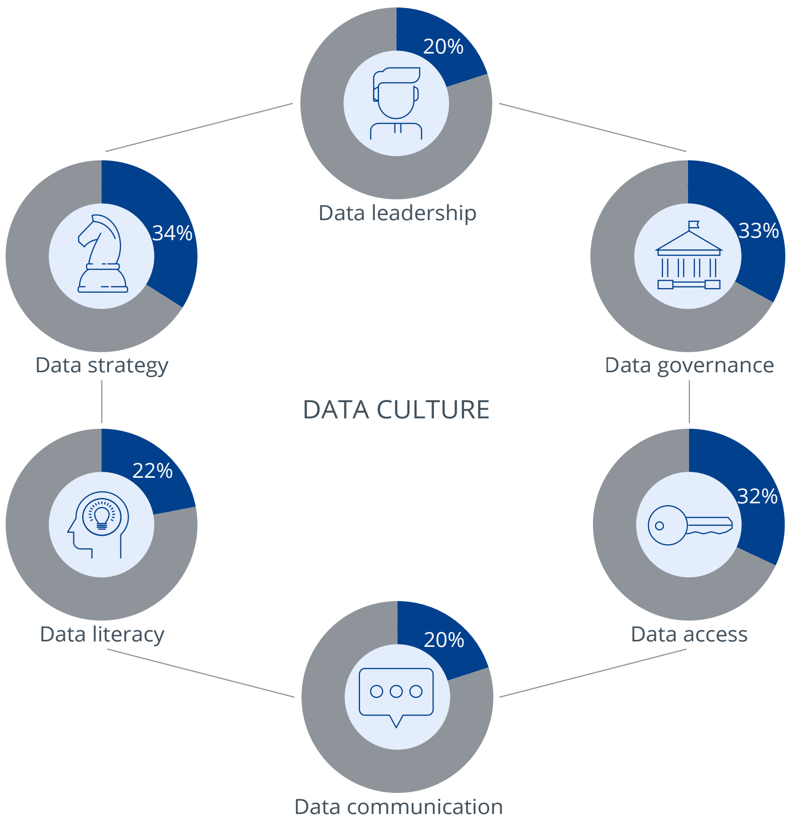
"Data culture eats data strategy for breakfast" has become a popular saying among data and analytics managers and executives. Even the best data strategy cannot fulfill its potential if the data culture in the company does not match it. Ultimately, it is the people in the company who have to change their behavior and mindset in order to benefit from the ever-increasing amount of data available to them.

This infographic depicts key highlights of this global survey of 384 participants.

How can companies improve their data culture?

To help companies focus their attention in the right places, the BARC Data Culture Framework identifies the six most important action areas: data strategy, data leadership, data governance, data access, data literacy and data communication.

Data culture initiatives: percentage of 'relevant and being implemented'

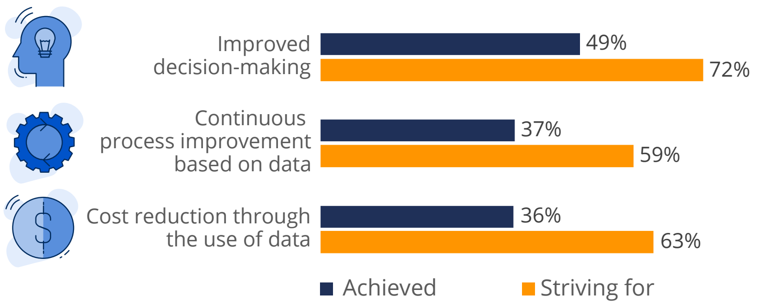


Data strategy, data governance and data access are the three most commonly implemented types of data culture initiatives. Compared to 2021, a higher percentage of companies recognize data culture initiatives as relevant in each of the six aspects of the BARC Data Culture Framework.

Data culture pays off!

Data culture initiatives are paying off, as shown by the positive effects of a data-driven culture that have been achieved.

Top 3 positive effects of a data-driven culture

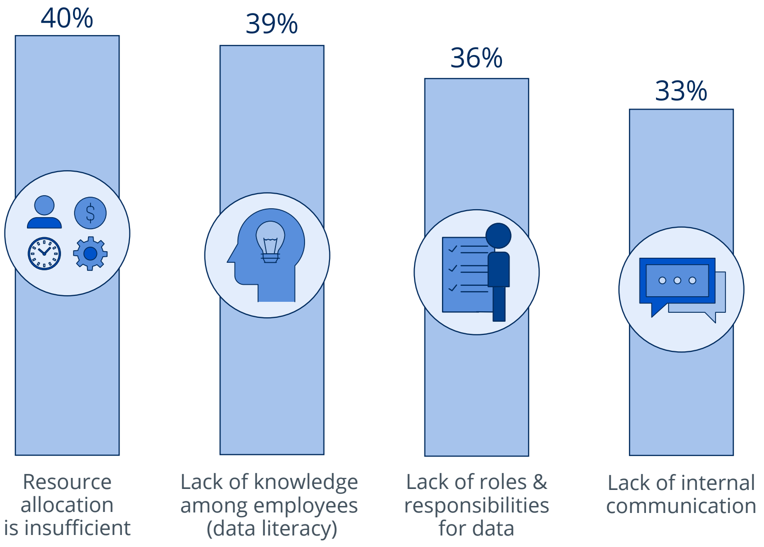


Almost half of the companies surveyed count improved decision-making among the goals they have achieved, and more than a third have achieved continuous process improvements and cost reductions through the use of data. However, expectations are much higher and more diverse.

Companies’ initiatives do not tackle the biggest obstacles

It is striking that the biggest obstacles to data culture are the least frequently addressed in concrete initiatives: Showing data leadership by allocating more resources to data & analytics, data literacy and data communication are the most common roadblocks to data culture and should be prioritized.

The 4 main obstacles to implementing or initially establishing a data culture



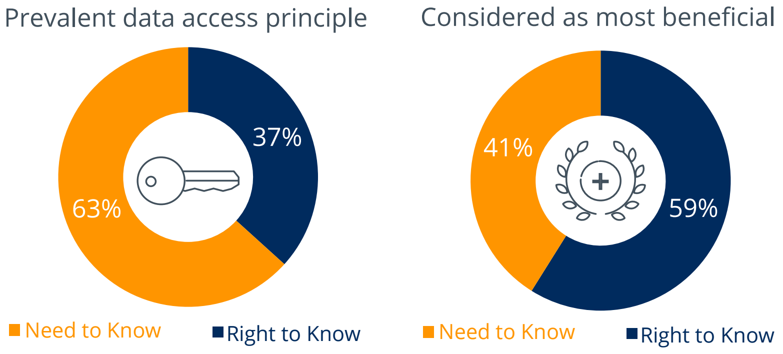
The biggest reported obstacles to implementing a data culture are a lack of resources, a lack of knowledge, a lack of roles and responsibilities, and inadequate communication. This is where companies should take action and seize the initiative if they are serious about becoming data-driven.

The value of liberalizing data access

Opening up the use of data for all employees starts with making data available as widely and openly as possible. Data access is considered the most relevant of the data culture initiatives*. Trying to move from a ‘need to know’ to a ‘right to know’ data access principle seems to be an important task in this area.

* Data access is considered relevant by 96% of respondents

'Right to know' vs 'need to know ' principle

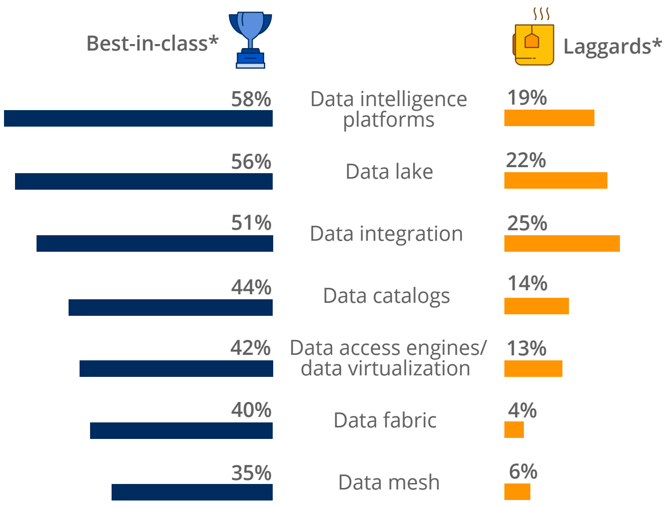


Companies today still predominantly follow the ‘need to know’ principle, which means data access is only granted on request. 59 percent of respondents see greater advantages in the more liberal ’right to know’ approach. 37 percent have already adopted this principle and believe they are more successful with it. The majority of best-in-class companies (53 percent) already rely on ‘right to know’ and see the benefits of greater freedom in the use of data. By contrast, only 24 percent of laggards concur.

Modern technologies promote data access

The increasing complexity of system and data landscapes and the technologies used require a rethink of the technological support for data access. Best-in-class companiesseem to have recognized this development.

Which technologies/concepts are used for data access in companies?



*Participants who consider themselves to be much better in terms of data culture are referred to as 'best-in-class', while those who perceive themselves as slightly worse or much worse are classed as 'laggards'.

Best-in-class companies use technologies and concepts beyond 'classic' business intelligence tools significantly more frequently than laggards. These include tools for metadata management (e.g., data catalogs, data intelligence platforms), organizational concepts (e.g., data mesh) and architectural concepts and principles such as data fabric leveraging, for example tools for data virtualization. Knowledge about data, technologies and concepts is a key competency that often needs to be developed in the workforce.

BARC recommendations

1. **Take a holistic and long-term approach to data**
   Changing the data culture in a company takes time – a change of mindset and a shift in behavior cannot come overnight. BARC's model for systematizing the starting points for changing a data culture – the BARC Data Culture Framework – can help to structure and prioritize initiatives.

2. **Track your progress**
   In each of the six pillars of the BARC Data Culture Framework, it is worthwhile to regularly measure progress. It makes sense to obtain the broadest possible amount of feedback from within the company.

3. **Rethink the openness in handling data**
   Consider to what extent a 'right to know' data access principle can be implemented and driven forward. Concerns about data security should be taken seriously but must not block a transformation to data access that is open in principle and has as few hurdles as possible.

4. **Better data access demands data knowledge**
   Knowledge about data creates transparency and helps people to find, understand, evaluate and use data. A lack of documentation is one of the main challenges to data access. Knowledge about data already exists explicitly in the form of metadata. Learn how to extract metadata, expose knowledge from it and promote transparency with data intelligence.

5. **Build competence – invest in data literacy**
   Lack of knowledge and competence reduces success in data and analytics and lowers the chances of leveraging the full potential of data. Invest specifically in the development of competencies through education, training, communities, etc. Data literacy is not just about understanding data, but also about building competencies for establishing business context, mastering technologies for accessing and preparing data, and analyzing and communicating with data.

6. **Consider modern technologies**
   New concepts such as data fabric and data virtualization can help provide data more flexibly. Data knowledge in the form of metadata is also scattered across numerous applications. Tool support (e.g., in the form of modern data catalogs) helps to organize integration more efficiently and simplify access.

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