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The Data Readiness Index: Defining Readiness in Healthcare

Introduction

Healthcare has consistently been one of the toughest regulatory environments for governing, accessing, and managing data. Data-driven insights can drive better patient outcomes and reduce costs, but Personal Health Information (PHI) is sensitive and private. National and regional policies governing PHI put protecting patient identity, background, and much more as the top priority.

Now, with the explosion of AI models and tools, the degree of complexity is only going up. AI tools have the potential to accelerate even more improvements in healthcare, ranging from more personalized patient engagements to predictive insights that reduce unnecessary readmissions.

Healthcare organizations and providers need a strong foundation of data to bridge the readiness gap and make the most of AI. According to Cloudera's Data Readiness Index 2026 survey, there's still work to be done. In fact, the report found that 45% of healthcare respondents said their data-backed initiatives are hindered because they cannot access 100% of necessary data across environments.

Let's explore how the healthcare industry is approaching data readiness.

The State of Data Readiness in Healthcare

Healthcare organizations sit on vast and highly complex data sets, spanning electronic health records (EHRs), medical imaging, clinical research, and financial and operational systems. As the industry accelerates toward more AI-driven innovation, many are increasing investments in cloud to support scalability and advanced analytics. In fact, more than half (55%) of healthcare organizations surveyed by Cloudera said they planned to increase their cloud spending.

Cloud environments can play a critical role in enabling AI success, particularly in handling the scale and diversity of healthcare data. However, in this industry, expanding cloud architecture can't be treated as a one-size-fits-all solution to data infrastructure. The real differentiator lies in the ability to have complete control of high-quality patient and clinical data to power more accurate and context-rich insights.

As it stands, most healthcare organizations (87%) believe they have complete visibility into where their organization's data resides. In a provider organization, data sprawls a massive number of systems and locations, all with strict compliance and regulatory considerations, making visibility absolutely essential. Without full accounting of data, organizations open systems up to risk. But even with that level of confidence, reality doesn't always line up with those attitudes.

80%

of healthcare organizations said their infrastructure is ready to support structured and unstructured data.

> **"It can be easy to make assumptions about your own data, but even if AI implementations move forward, a flawed architecture will cost valuable ROI later on."**
>
> **RAMEEZ CHATNI**

Roadblocks to Readiness and the Need for Impactful Governance

Even though most respondents said they had visibility into where data resides, just 13% said that all of their data was fully governed. And while roughly half (53%) said almost all data was governed, any gaps in governance could be leaving crucial data exposed or unaccounted for.

Similarly, many healthcare organizations still point to encountering significant roadblocks to fully utilizing data for AI initiatives. Cloudera's survey found that nearly one-in-three (28%) respondents said infrastructure performance had hindered operational initiatives.

Even longstanding and familiar challenges still persist. Another 27% of healthcare organizations surveyed by Cloudera said that siloed data had prevented teams from collaborating, sharing, managing, and using data effectively. And another 45% of respondents also said that complicated access requirements and processes were a barrier to effectively using their data.

45%

of healthcare organizations said their data-backed initiatives had been hindered because they couldn't access 100% of the necessary data.

Who's in Charge? Accountability and Strategic Alignment in Healthcare

Establishing data readiness goes beyond simple technical and solutions-based implementations. Data readiness also encompasses cultural elements like leadership and organizational strategy. Among healthcare respondents, most (76%) believe that their organization has a very well-defined data strategy. However, compared to other industries, Cloudera's survey found that healthcare respondents had the highest level of uncertainty with 24% saying their strategy was just somewhat clearly defined.

However, results proved to be much stronger when it comes to senior leadership. Nearly all (91%) respondents said that their senior leadership understands and prioritizes the necessary data infrastructure to enable AI at scale. There was also clear alignment on who ultimately bears responsibility for data readiness for AI, with 68% saying this fell to the CIO or CTO.

> **"Without the right data architecture, organizations are destined to run into many of the same challenges that have long plagued IT teams. Data Readiness needs complete governance, control, and strategic alignment to be effective—so does AI."**
>
> **RAMEEZ CHATNI**

The Future of Data Readiness in Healthcare

The healthcare industry is primed for AI transformation. And as providers and other organizations move forward, most (86%) feel very confident that their current data infrastructure can support their strategic priorities over the next two to three years.

But actually reaching that point has to start with readiness. Success will be measured less by quickly integrating flashy AI models and instead will be rooted in a strong foundation of control and visibility over all data, wherever it resides.

Learn more about what it takes to achieve data readiness in healthcare and talk to an expert today.

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Cloudera is the only hybrid data and AI platform company that large organizations trust to bring AI to their data anywhere it lives. Unlike other providers, Cloudera delivers a consistent cloud experience that converges public clouds, on-prem data centers, and the edge, leveraging a proven open-source foundation. As the pioneer in big data, Cloudera empowers businesses to apply AI and assert control over 100% of their data, in all forms, improving security, governance, and real-time and predictive insights. The world's largest brands across all industries rely on Cloudera to transform decision-making and ultimately boost bottom lines, safeguard against threats, and save lives.

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