

# 2026 Tech Trends and Priorities



## 2026 WILL BE A PIVOTAL YEAR FOR TECHNOLOGY LEADERS

marked by the rapid rise of AI, mounting cyber threats and a race to modernize legacy systems—all against a backdrop of regulatory complexity and talent shortages. These findings and more are from ISACA’s 2026 Tech Trends and Priorities Global Pulse Poll, which surveyed 2,963 professionals in digital trust fields such as cybersecurity, IT audit, governance, risk and compliance, including 632 in Europe.

Organizations are both excited and anxious for 2026: while AI and generative technologies promise transformation, they also introduce new risks and demand robust governance. The struggle to keep pace with change, secure digital trust and comply with evolving regulations is compounded by resource constraints and a global shortage of skilled professionals. The tech sector’s priorities are shifting from mere adoption to resilience, risk management, and workforce upskilling, as leaders brace for a future where agility and trust are the ultimate competitive advantages.

Read on for 10 things to expect and five ways to prepare, and find more information on the research at [www.isaca.org/tech-trends-and-priorities](http://www.isaca.org/tech-trends-and-priorities).

## 10 Things to Expect in 2026:

**AI DOMINATES THE AGENDA:** Artificial intelligence, including machine learning and generative AI, are the top technology priorities for 2026, with predictive analytics, automation and content/code generation leading the ways it is being used.

**1 SURVEY FINDING:** 61% of respondents identified AI and machine learning as top technology priorities for 2026.

**SURVEY FINDING:** Respondents say the most significant cyber threats for 2026 are AI-driven social engineering (59%), ransomware/extortion attacks (57%), and supply chain attacks (36%).

**2 CYBERSECURITY RISKS INTENSIFY:** Ransomware, AI-driven social engineering, insider threats and vulnerabilities in legacy systems are the most significant cyber threats organizations expect to face.

**PREPAREDNESS GAPS FOR AI RISKS PERSIST:** Only a minority of organizations feel “very prepared” to manage generative AI risks; most are still developing governance, policies, and training, leaving critical gaps.

**3 SURVEY FINDING:** Only 14% say their organization is “very prepared” to manage generative AI risks, while 55% are “somewhat prepared” and 23% “not very prepared.”

**SURVEY FINDING:** An equal share of respondents 64% rank regulatory compliance and business continuity and resilience as “very important” priorities

**4 BUSINESS CONTINUITY, RESILIENCE AND COMPLIANCE ARE TOP PRIORITIES:** Regulatory compliance, business continuity, and managing AI-related risk are rated as “very important” focus areas for 2026, reflecting the pressure to meet new standards and withstand disruptions.

**TALENT SHORTAGES THREATEN PROGRESS:** More than half of organizations expect to hire for digital trust roles like audit, risk and cybersecurity, but many anticipate difficulty finding qualified candidates.

**5 SURVEY FINDING:** 63% expect to hire for digital trust roles, but 51% anticipate difficulty filling them with qualified candidates; only 12% have a strong talent pipeline. 45% say they will be hiring for more digital trust roles in 2026 than they did in 2025.

**SURVEY FINDING:** The second-highest digital trust priority (14%) is modernizing legacy systems, just behind business continuity & resilience and cross-department collaboration (each 15%).

**6 LEGACY SYSTEMS RESTRICT INNOVATION:** Transitioning from legacy systems and modernizing infrastructure is a recurring theme, with many respondents citing outdated technology as a barrier to security and agility.

**REGULATORY COMPLEXITY KEEPS LEADERS UP AT NIGHT:** Global compliance risks, regulatory complexity, and uncertainty around enforcement timelines are major concerns, especially with new regulations like NIS2, DORA, and the EU AI Act on the horizon.

**7 SURVEY FINDING:** 32% say regulatory complexity and global compliance risks will keep them up at night in 2026; fewer than 1 in 5 feel “fully ready” for new regulations like NIS2 (18%), DORA (18%), and the EU AI Act (11%).\*

*\*among European respondents*

**SURVEY FINDING:** 30% say workforce upskilling in data security is “very important.”

**8 WORKFORCE UPSKILLING IS ESSENTIAL:** Upskilling in data security and emerging tech risk management is a top improvement area, with organizations seeking more training, awareness, and role-specific certifications.

**GOVERNMENT ACTION AND STATUTORY GUIDANCE ARE WELCOME:** Many respondents support statutory cybersecurity guidance for high-risk sectors and increased government funding for cyber skills, signaling a desire for more proactive public-private collaboration.

**9 SURVEY FINDING:** 41% support statutory cybersecurity guidance for high-risk sectors, and 18% say increased government funding for cyber skills and workforce development is the most important factor for increasing cybersecurity resilience in their country.

**SURVEY FINDING:** 43% of respondents say cloud migration and security are “very important” focus areas, highlighting the continued shift to cloud and associated risks.

**10 CLOUD SECURITY AND MIGRATION REMAIN CENTRAL:** While this has long been a priority action item, cloud continues to demand mindshare for most organizations.

## FIVE TAKEAWAYS

### for Companies to Prepare for 2026:

- 1 ESTABLISH** robust AI governance and risk frameworks.
- 2 ACCELERATE** workforce upskilling and talent pipeline development, and invest in continuous learning, certifications and internal mobility.
- 3 MODERNIZE** legacy systems and infrastructure to reduce vulnerabilities and improve agility.
- 4 STRENGTHEN** cyber resilience and business continuity planning by developing and regularly testing incident response plans, ransomware recovery strategies and cross-functional crisis management protocols.
- 5 PREPARE** for regulatory complexity and international compliance requirements; monitor regulatory changes, engage with expert communities, and invest in compliance tools and frameworks.

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