RESEARCH REPORT

The connected finance function: Visibility, control and AI readiness

NTN National Technology News

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Insights from

402

finance, treasury and accounting leaders.
201 UK | 201 US

Introduction

AI is rapidly evolving and becoming a key business priority. Executive leadership increasingly expects finance functions to identify AI opportunities to automate routine processes, improve forecasting and strengthen financial control. However, organisations are also recognising that AI alone cannot overcome longstanding operational challenges. Delivering meaningful value depends on the quality of the data, governance and workflows that support it.

To explore how finance leaders are responding to these challenges, National Technology News and Bottomline surveyed finance, treasury and accounting leaders across the UK and the US. The research examines how organisations are managing cash visibility, forecasting, finance controls and workflow integration, while also exploring the maturity of AI adoption, the operational barriers limiting progress and the technology priorities shaping future investment.

The findings provide insight into the growing importance of connected finance operations, highlighting the relationship between visibility, control, automation and AI readiness. They also demonstrate why many organisations are moving beyond isolated technology projects towards more integrated operating models capable of supporting a more resilient, efficient and intelligent Office of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO).

Methodology

National Technology News and Bottomline surveyed 402 people, comprising 201 respondents based in the UK and 201 respondents based in the US, working in finance, treasury and accounting roles across a range of organisations, including retailers, universities and manufacturers.

The survey examined how these organisations are managing increasing complexity across finance operations, including cash visibility, forecasting, controls and workflow integration. The research also explored how finance teams are approaching AI adoption within the Office of the CFO, the operational challenges limiting progress, and the governance, visibility and control requirements shaping the future of finance operations.

Unless otherwise stated, the figures presented at the beginning of each section represent the combined results from UK and US respondents. The analysis also examines differences between the two markets where relevant.

Please note: Percentages may not total 100 per cent due to rounding or multiple-choice questions.

Key Findings

48%

name forecast confidence as a top priority

Forecasting confidence takes precedence as the primary strategic priority. Increasing confidence in short- and medium-term cash forecasts is the leading CFO priority for the next 12 to 18 months, as finance shifts from routine reporting towards forward-looking intelligence for board-level decisions.

UK 45% | US 51%

27%

have near real-time or strong cash visibility

Widespread process fragmentation limits cash visibility and weakens forecast accuracy. Only 27 per cent report near real-time or strong cash visibility across banks and entities, and just 40 per cent rate their four-week cash forecasts as highly reliable or reliable enough.

UK 28% | US 26%

67%

spend over a quarter of finance time on manual work

Disconnected systems force finance teams to act as a manual integration layer. Over two-thirds spend more than a quarter of finance operations time on manual reconciliations, exception handling and workarounds, and 41 per cent spend more than two-fifths.

UK 64% | US 70%

41%

face a mandate or strong expectation to implement AI

Four in ten face a mandate or strong leadership expectation to deploy AI within 12 to 24 months, yet only 22 per cent have embedded it in daily finance operations. **Nearly 60 per cent are still piloting, exploring or not using AI.**

Mandate or strong expectation: UK 41% | US 40%.

Embedded: UK 22% | US 22%

64%

see reconciliation as AI's greatest value

Data quality, governance and workflow integration dictate real-world AI readiness. Reconciliation (64 per cent) and cash forecasting (49 per cent) are seen as AI's greatest value, but fragmented or poor-quality data (61 per cent) and the risk of inaccurate outputs (60 per cent) are the main barriers.

Reconciliation: UK 64% | US 65%.
Poor data: UK 62% | US 60%

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Strategic priorities for the Office of the CFO

The survey shows that forecasting confidence is emerging as a higher priority than reducing manual work. While reducing manual effort and cutting operational costs remain important, the most pressing priorities centre on improving the quality of financial insight, strengthening control and enabling better decision-making across the Office of the CFO.

Increasing confidence in short- and medium-term cash forecasts emerged as the leading priority, selected by 45 per cent of UK respondents and 51 per cent of those in the US. This highlights the growing importance of accurate, timely forecasting in an environment characterised by economic uncertainty, fluctuating interest rates and increasingly complex global operations. Finance teams are expected to provide reliable forward-looking intelligence that supports strategic decisions around investment, liquidity and risk instead of just reporting historical performance.

Many of the next highest priorities all relate to the same underlying issue. Some 42 per cent of UK finance leaders identified strengthening controls, compliance and audit readiness as a key objective, while 37 per cent want to reduce manual effort and 35 per cent are focused on improving end-to-end cash visibility across Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury and Payments. A further 34 per cent highlighted improving integration across finance systems and banking relationships.

When viewed together, these choices paint a picture of a finance function attempting to overcome disconnected processes, fragmented data and operational silos. Forecasting confidence is strongly influenced by the quality, completeness and timeliness of the information flowing into it. If cash positions, receivables, payments and treasury data remain disconnected, finance teams are forced to rely on manual reconciliation, delayed information and incomplete visibility, limiting confidence in every forecast they produce.

While US respondents placed more emphasis on forecasting confidence, UK organisations attached greater importance to controls, compliance and governance with 42 per cent choosing this option in the UK and 34 per cent in the US. This suggests the two markets are approaching the same issue from different directions. US organisations appear to be focused primarily on improving financial performance, while UK organisations recognise that stronger governance, integration and operational control are the foundations that make better forecasting possible.

Some 38 per cent of respondents said that accelerating cash inflows and reducing Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) were important priorities for the next year. Many organisations are under pressure to optimise working capital while also strengthening governance in response to rising fraud risks and regulatory scrutiny. Improving cash generation and improving financial control both contribute directly to organisational resilience.

A similar number said reducing manual effort across finance processes and scaling operations as business complexity increases are areas of focus. This suggests that many organisations recognise existing operating models are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain. As companies expand across multiple banking relationships, legal entities and technology platforms, manual processes become a barrier not only to efficiency but also to maintaining consistency, control and visibility.

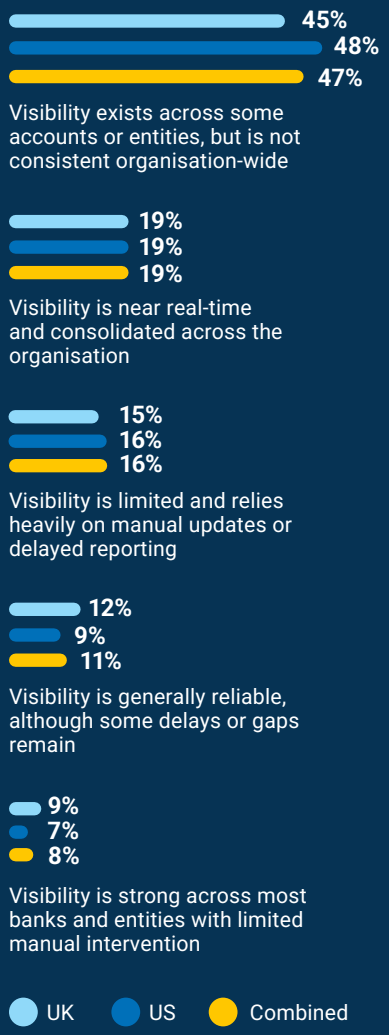
Those working in the Office of the CFO need to prioritise building a connected finance function capable of delivering trusted data, stronger governance and greater operational agility. This places integration, visibility and financial confidence at the centre of finance transformation, creating the foundations required for more advanced automation and AI adoption in the years ahead.

Question 1

Over the next 12 – 18 months, what are your top priorities across the Office of the CFO *(Select up to three)*

Question 2

How would you describe your organisation's current visibility into cash positions across banks and entities?
(Select one)



27%

report near real-time or strong cash visibility across banks and entities. ***UK 28% | US 26%***

Cash visibility across the finance function

The survey reveals a significant gap between what finance leaders want to achieve and the operational reality of their organisations. **While improving cash visibility ranks among the top priorities for the Office of the CFO, relatively few companies have achieved a comprehensive, real-time view of cash across their business.**

Only 19 per cent of UK organisations report having near real-time, consolidated visibility across banks and entities, while a further nine per cent have strong visibility with only limited manual intervention. In other words, just over a quarter of finance leaders report levels of visibility that could support faster, data-driven decision-making. By contrast, almost three in five said visibility is either inconsistent across the organisation or relies heavily on manual updates and delayed reporting. The US results paint an almost identical picture, with only 26 per cent reporting near real-time or largely automated visibility and 64 per cent still lacking consistent organisation-wide visibility.

These findings indicate that many finance functions are operating with partial visibility rather than a complete view of organisational liquidity. Despite years of investment in digital finance systems, relatively few organisations have succeeded in creating a single, consolidated view of cash across banks, business units and legal entities. Although information is available, it often resides across multiple banking portals, enterprise systems and business units, making it difficult to establish a single, trusted source of organisational cash positions. As organisations expand internationally, add new banking relationships or grow through acquisition, this complexity only increases.

Without a consistent and structured approach to cash management, finance teams may need to consolidate information across multiple banking portals, ERP platforms and treasury systems, increasing manual effort and making it harder to maintain confidence in the accuracy and timeliness of the information they rely on.

The implications extend well beyond treasury. Limited cash visibility restricts an organisation's ability to make timely decisions about liquidity, investment and working capital. It also increases dependence on manual processes to consolidate information, delaying insight and introducing unnecessary operational risk. As economic conditions become more volatile, these delays can make it harder for organisations to respond quickly to changing market conditions or unexpected cash flow pressures.

Reliable forecasts cannot exist without reliable operational data. If finance teams cannot consistently see current cash positions across the organisation, confidence in future cash positions is likely to suffer. **Cash visibility and forecasting should therefore be viewed as part of the same transformation journey rather than separate initiatives.** When organisations combine an accurate opening cash position with global visibility of expected cash inflows and outflows from ERP systems, forecasting becomes significantly more reliable. Fast reconciliation of prior-day actuals not only improves forecast accuracy but also creates the foundation for automated, AI-driven processes such as DSO dunning and collections management, helping organisations improve cash conversion as well as financial insight.

The results demonstrate that digital transformation alone has not solved the problem. Many organisations have modernised individual finance systems, yet relatively few have connected them into a single operational view of cash. The findings suggest that investment in individual technologies does not necessarily remove fragmentation between finance processes.

Cash visibility underpins a variety of capabilities including forecasting, governance and automation. Finance leaders need to make sure they have the right technology that can provide them with near real-time cash visibility across the Office of the CFO.

Confidence in cash forecasting

The findings reveal that forecasting is both a major strategic priority and a significant operational challenge for the finance function. While improving forecast confidence emerged as the highest priority in Question 1, relatively few organisations believe they can currently produce consistently reliable short-term forecasts.

Just over a third, or 37 per cent, of UK finance leaders said their forecasts are either highly reliable or reliable enough to support operational and liquidity decisions. However, almost half report either limited confidence due to inconsistent data and disconnected processes or forecasts that require significant manual adjustment.

The US results present a similarly mixed picture. Although a larger proportion report reliable forecasting overall, they are also more likely to say forecasts are frequently unreliable, suggesting that organisations continue to experience different levels of confidence in their forecasting processes.

The contrast between the UK and US is particularly revealing. UK respondents are twice as likely as their US counterparts to attribute weak forecasting directly to inconsistent data or disconnected processes **(30 per cent compared with 15 per cent)**. This reinforces the broader narrative emerging throughout the survey that UK organisations increasingly recognise fragmentation across the Office of the CFO as the underlying barrier to better financial insight. In contrast, US organisations appear less likely to identify disconnected processes as the cause, yet appear more likely to experience forecasts that require substantial manual correction. This finding highlights the continued role of manual intervention in forecasting, particularly where finance processes and data remain disconnected.

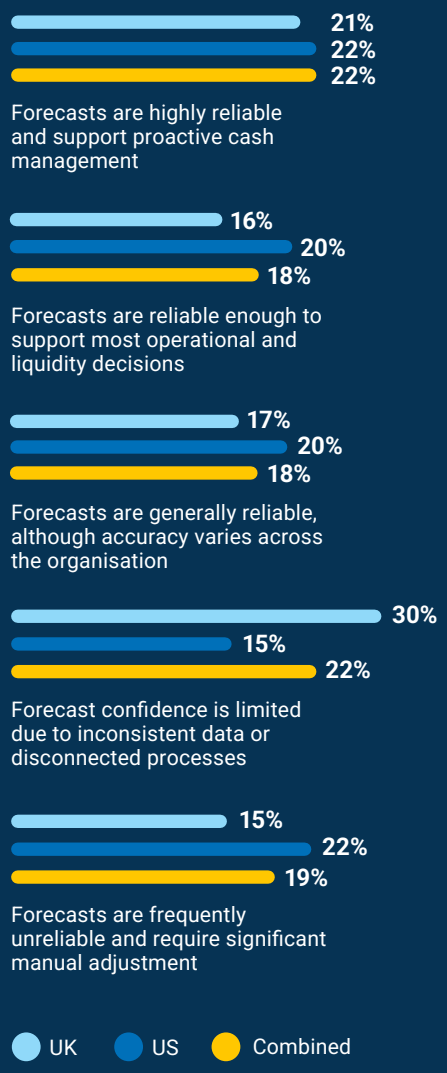
One contributing factor may be the way organisations adjust cash inflow forecasts to reflect actual customer payment behaviour. While finance teams know when invoices are issued and the agreed payment terms, forecasts do not always account for customers consistently paying earlier or, more commonly, later than expected. AI has the potential to analyse large volumes of historic payment data, identify these behavioural patterns and continuously refine cash flow forecasts. Rather than producing a single deterministic forecast, this approach can improve confidence by assigning probability-based outcomes that strengthen liquidity planning and contingency decision-making.

Better models and more sophisticated analysis cannot compensate for poor-quality operational data. The quality of forecasting is determined by the quality of the operational data used. If cash positions, receivables, payments and treasury information remain fragmented across multiple systems, there is a risk that teams will have to spend considerable time consolidating incomplete information instead of analysing trusted data.

This also explains why cash visibility ranked so highly in the previous question. Organisations cannot confidently predict tomorrow's liquidity if they cannot consistently understand today's position. **Finance teams need to prioritise creating a connected finance ecosystem that can continuously capture accurate operational data across Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury and Payments.**

Question 3

How would you describe your organisation's confidence in short-term cash forecasting over the next four weeks?
(Select one)



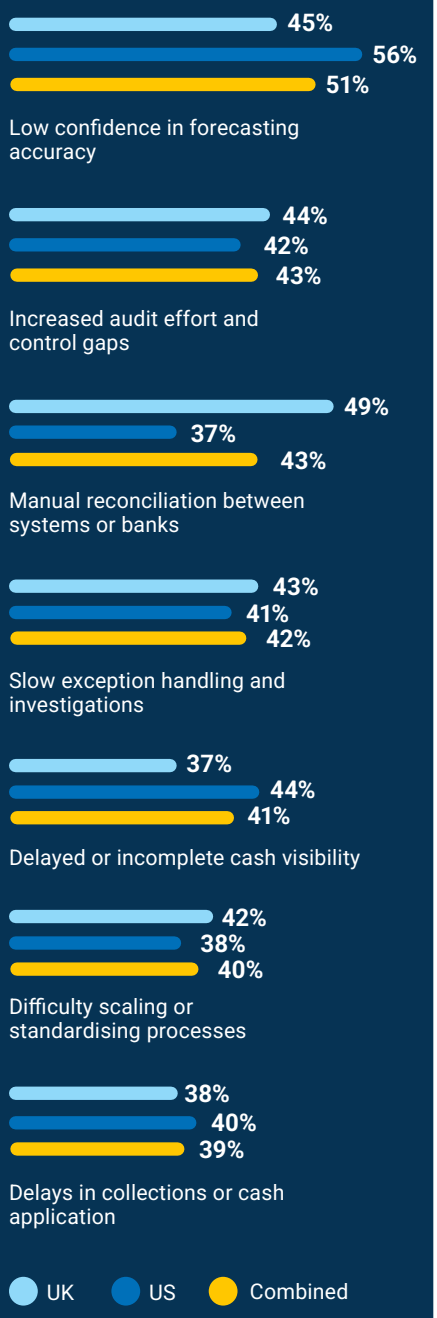
30% vs 15%

UK vs US: forecast confidence limited by inconsistent data or disconnected processes.

rate four-week cash forecasts as highly reliable or reliable enough.
UK 37% | US 42%

Question 4

Where does a lack of connection between finance processes create the greatest challenges today? *(Select up to three)*



The impact of disconnected finance processes

Low confidence in forecasting accuracy emerged as the most significant challenge facing finance leaders today, selected by 45 per cent of UK respondents and an even higher 56 per cent in the US. This indicates that organisations recognise forecasting is only as reliable as the quality and completeness of the operational data that underpins it. When Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury and Payments operate in isolation, finance teams can find it harder to produce forecasts they can trust.

Beyond forecasting, more than four in ten organisations reported increased audit effort and control gaps, manual reconciliation between systems, slow exception handling and delayed cash visibility as major challenges. **When information does not flow seamlessly between systems, finance teams spend more time validating transactions, resolving discrepancies and piecing together data than analysing it.**

The differences between the UK and US provide further insight into how these challenges are experienced. UK organisations were considerably more likely to identify manual reconciliation between systems or banks as a major obstacle **(49 per cent compared with 37 per cent in the US)**, suggesting they continue to feel the operational burden of managing fragmented banking relationships and finance platforms. In contrast, US respondents placed greater emphasis on low forecasting confidence **(56 per cent versus 45 per cent)** and delayed cash visibility (44 per cent versus 37 per cent), indicating a stronger focus on the strategic consequences of disconnected processes rather than the operational symptoms themselves.

While the survey cannot determine the underlying reasons for this difference, it may also reflect the operating environments of respondents. US organisations may benefit from greater standardisation around US dollar cash flows, with some multinational businesses encouraging suppliers to transact in US dollars to reduce foreign exchange exposure. Where fewer currencies and exchange rate movements need to be managed, operational reconciliation may become less complex, allowing finance teams to focus more heavily on forecasting accuracy and cash visibility.

Whether organisations are struggling with forecasting, reconciliation, audit readiness, collections or cash visibility, fragmentation emerges as a common underlying challenge. **Fragmented systems create fragmented decision-making.** Many finance transformation programmes have focused on improving individual functions rather than connecting them. Automating isolated processes delivers incremental efficiency gains, but it may do little to eliminate the friction created when information must still move between disconnected systems. Sustainable improvement requires a connected operating model in which data flows seamlessly across all finance departments, creating a single operational view of the cash lifecycle.

Connecting finance processes through cash management solutions or agentic AI systems reduces manual effort, strengthens governance and improves forecasting confidence.

51% **cite low confidence in forecasting accuracy as a top challenge.**
UK 45% | US 56%

The hidden cost of manual finance operations

The results illustrate the hidden cost of disconnected finance operations. More than two-thirds of organisations reported spending over a quarter of their finance operations time on manual reconciliations, exception handling and workaround processes, while 41 per cent of organisations spend more than 40 per cent of their time on these activities. If these daily processes were automated, more time could be spent on higher-value activities.

These finance teams are effectively acting as an integration layer between fragmented systems, manually validating data and resolving inconsistencies that could potentially be addressed through greater automation. This time could be devoted to forecasting, liquidity planning, risk management or strategic decision-making. **As organisations expand across multiple legal entities, banking relationships and ERP environments, this manual effort becomes increasingly difficult to sustain, limiting finance's ability to scale alongside the business.**

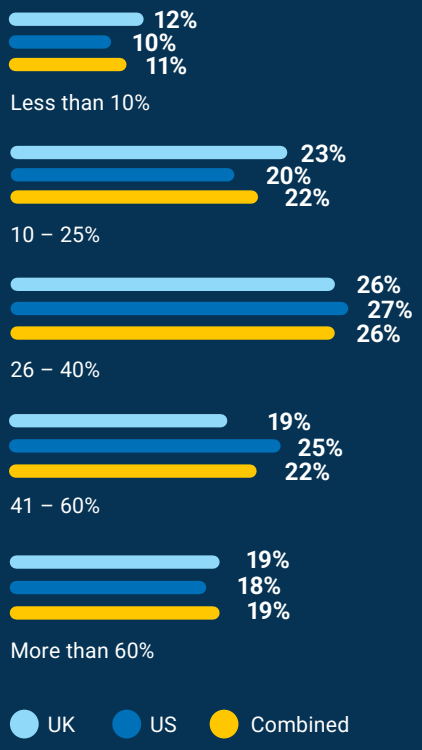
Organisations have invested heavily in digitising individual finance processes, yet large amounts of manual work remain because the underlying workflows are still disconnected. Automation applied to isolated activities removes individual tasks, but it does not solve data inconsistencies and reconciliation effort created by fragmented operating models.

To reduce manual effort, finance leaders need to establish a solid foundation around a single source of trusted financial data that can be used to support automation efforts and AI implementation. With access to consistent, connected financial data, AI models can automatically retrieve and match information across purchase orders, goods received notes, sales invoices and remittance advice, reducing the manual effort required to reconcile transactions. Rather than replacing finance professionals, AI can identify anomalies and trigger intelligent workflows that direct human attention only to transactions requiring investigation. Configurable thresholds allow organisations to align these exception processes with their own governance, risk and control requirements, enabling greater automation while maintaining appropriate financial oversight.

These finance teams are effectively acting as an integration layer between fragmented systems.

Question 5

Approximately how much finance operations time is currently spent on manual reconciliations, exception handling, and workaround processes? *(Select one)*

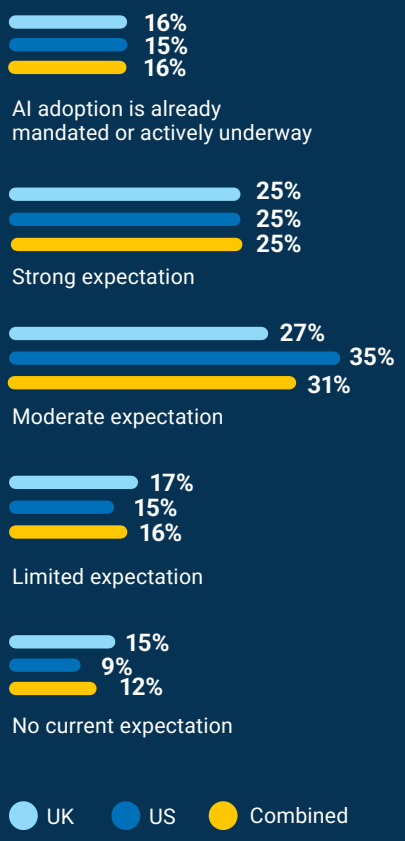


67% spend more than a quarter of finance operations time on manual work. *UK 64% | US 70%*

41% spend more than two-fifths of their finance operations time on manual work. *UK 38% | US 43%*

Question 6

How strong is the expectation from executive leadership or the board that finance will implement AI-enabled capabilities over the next 12–24 months?
(Select one)



Board expectations for AI adoption

The results show that AI has moved beyond being an emerging technology discussion and has become a significant priority for executive leadership and boards. Over 70 per cent of respondents said there was at least a moderate expectation around AI implementation, or that it was already underway. Four in ten (41 per cent) reported a mandate or strong expectation. This indicates that finance leaders are expected to demonstrate tangible results from using AI instead of theorising about its potential capabilities.

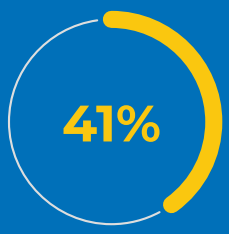
While US organisations report slightly stronger overall expectations, the results are consistent with those from UK organisations. This shows that the need to modernise is being driven by business priorities instead of regional differences. The findings suggest that AI is increasingly being viewed as a strategic capability within finance, with potential to improve operational resilience, strengthen decision-making and help finance functions manage growing organisational complexity.

It is worth noting, however, that AI was not explicitly defined within the survey. As a result, some respondents may have interpreted AI to include existing automation or workflow technologies alongside more advanced AI capabilities. In practice, many organisations are likely to be progressing along a continuum, beginning with the automation of repetitive tasks, moving towards machine learning models that adapt to changing operational conditions, and ultimately adopting AI systems capable of pursuing defined business objectives within established governance frameworks and data boundaries.

Organisations should be wary of deploying AI for its own sake. The previous sections of this survey have shown that many organisations continue to struggle with fragmented processes, inconsistent cash visibility and significant manual workloads. These operational weaknesses limit the value AI can deliver. Organisations that attempt to layer AI onto disconnected processes may struggle to realise its full value if the underlying data and workflows remain inconsistent.

Organisations should approach AI implementation as the next stage of their transformation journey and work on setting up connected workflows and consistent governance. This will ensure AI can be deployed successfully across multiple finance functions to give a clear overview of all positions in one place. Those organisations that delay investment or continue operating fragmented finance environments risk falling further behind as competitors increasingly automate routine work and free finance teams to focus on strategic decision-making.

Organisations should be wary of deploying AI for its own sake.



face a mandate or strong leadership expectation to deploy AI within 12–24 months.
UK 41% | US 40%

AI maturity across the Office of the CFO

While the previous section of the survey demonstrated that C-suite executives are keen to implement AI systems, the results of this question indicate that a majority of organisations are still in the early stages of applying AI to their finance processes. **This shows a large mismatch between expectations and execution.**

Just 22 per cent of respondents said AI is fully embedded within finance operations, while a further 18 per cent have deployed it across multiple use cases. In contrast, almost 60 per cent remain in the pilot, evaluation or non-adoption stages.

The gap between executive ambition and operational maturity is substantial. Organisations understand the strategic importance of AI, but many have yet to build the operational foundations needed to deploy it at scale.

The UK and US results are similar, indicating that finance functions on both sides of the Atlantic are progressing at a comparable pace. Neither market has established a clear lead, suggesting that AI adoption across the Office of the CFO is a universal issue.

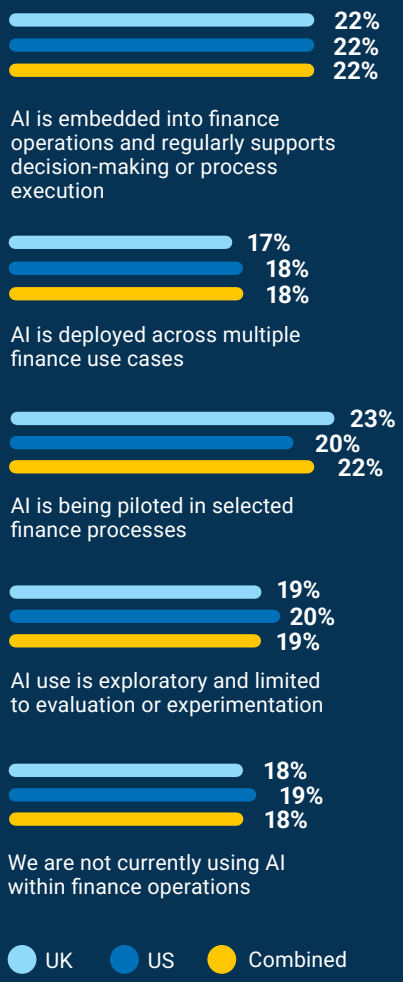
Encouragingly, the data also indicates that organisations are taking a measured approach. Most finance leaders appear to be piloting AI in targeted processes before expanding deployment more broadly. Given the governance, audit and data quality requirements previously highlighted, this cautious rollout is likely to deliver more sustainable long-term outcomes than attempting rapid, large-scale implementation. It also reflects growing recognition that AI adoption brings new financial considerations. As AI usage expands, organisations are increasingly monitoring the cost of token consumption and other AI-related operating expenses, prompting finance leaders to establish clear AI usage policies, governance frameworks and cost controls to ensure adoption remains both responsible and commercially sustainable.

Organisations that have already embedded AI are beginning to build experience and refine their approaches to governance and implementation, potentially putting them in a stronger position as adoption expands. Organisations that have yet to adopt AI may find themselves under increasing pressure to match competitors as AI-enabled finance capabilities become more widespread.

Organisations with connected finance processes, trusted data and strong governance are significantly better placed to move beyond isolated pilots and deploy AI as an integrated capability across forecasting, reconciliation, cash management and financial control. Finance leaders no longer need to prove that AI can work, but they do need to create a good foundation to implement it and ensure that it can deliver value at scale.

Question 7

How would you describe your organisation's maturity in using AI within finance operations? *(Select one)*



41% vs 22%

41% face a mandate or strong expectation; only 22% have AI embedded in daily operations. ***(UK 22% | US 22%)***

are still piloting, exploring or not using AI. ***UK 60% | US 59%***

Question 8

Where do you believe AI could deliver the greatest operational value within finance, assuming appropriate governance and controls are in place?
(Select up to three)

Where AI can deliver the greatest value

It is encouraging to see that finance leaders have moved beyond asking whether AI has a role within the Office of the CFO and are instead identifying where it can deliver the greatest operational value. The results show that those taking the survey are currently prioritising operational challenges over more experimental use cases.

Improving matching and reconciliation accuracy was identified as the leading opportunity, selected by 64 per cent of respondents overall. This reflects the significant amount of time finance teams currently spend manually validating transactions, resolving discrepancies and moving information between disconnected systems. AI can remove the repetitive operational work that finance teams face on a daily basis, freeing them to focus on higher-value work such as strategic decision-making and analysis.

Around half of respondents identified enhancing cash forecasting and scenario analysis, identifying risks or anomalies across transactions and prioritising exceptions and investigations as the areas where AI could deliver the greatest value. These capabilities all depend on having access to complete, trusted and connected operational data. AI cannot generate reliable forecasts, identify meaningful anomalies or prioritise the right exceptions if the underlying finance processes remain fragmented.

The UK and US results are consistent with one another, suggesting that finance leaders across both markets share a common view of where AI will deliver the greatest return. UK organisations placed slightly greater emphasis on prioritising exceptions and investigations, while US respondents showed stronger interest in supporting collections and dispute resolution. These differences are relatively small and indicate variations in operational priorities rather than fundamentally different AI strategies.

Perhaps most significantly, the highest-ranked use cases focus on applying AI within existing finance processes rather than treating it as a standalone capability. Better reconciliation improves data quality, better data quality improves cash visibility, and better visibility strengthens forecasting. More accurate forecasting enables better financial decisions.

Executives working in the Office of the CFO will see the greatest benefit from AI when it is embedded into connected finance processes where it has access to consistent, high-quality data across Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury and Payments. Organisations that establish these foundations will be best positioned to scale AI beyond individual pilots and deliver measurable improvements in productivity, forecasting accuracy, operational resilience and financial control.

see improving matching and reconciliation accuracy as AI's greatest operational value. ***UK 64% | US 65%***

Barriers to AI adoption in core finance workflows

The results demonstrate that finance executives have significant concerns about using AI in core workflows and are aware there are certain challenges around the implementation of AI before they can successfully integrate it into their daily workflows.

Fragmented, incomplete or poor-quality data emerged as the biggest concern, selected by 62 per cent of UK respondents and 60 per cent in the US. Closely behind was the risk of inaccurate or misleading outputs, highlighted by 59 per cent of UK organisations and 61 per cent in the US. **The finding reinforces the importance finance leaders place on the quality of the underlying data used by AI systems. If finance data remains fragmented across Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury, Payments and multiple banking relationships, AI may process inconsistent information more quickly, but this does not necessarily result in better outcomes.**

Security and access risks involving sensitive financial data were also identified by around half of respondents, alongside compliance, governance and regulatory requirements. These concerns reflect the highly regulated nature of finance operations, where every recommendation, forecast or automated action must be explainable, auditable and compliant with internal controls. **As AI becomes increasingly embedded within critical financial workflows, governance needs to be integrated into each stage of implementation as early as possible.** Although AI can identify patterns, model probabilities and recommend actions at a speed beyond human capability, it does not replace professional judgement. Finance leaders will continue to play a critical role in providing oversight, validating outcomes and maintaining accountability for decisions made within AI-enabled processes.

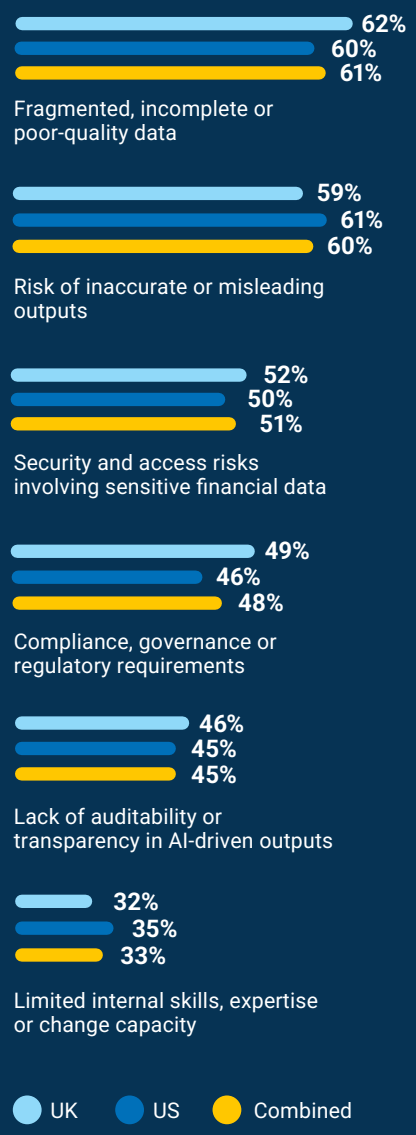
The results from UK and US respondents were broadly similar, suggesting that finance leaders in both markets face many of the same barriers to AI adoption. Finance leaders on both sides of the Atlantic should concentrate on creating a dynamic operational environment that can deliver reliable outcomes.

Interestingly, limited internal skills and change capacity ranked noticeably lower than concerns around data quality, accuracy and governance. While developing AI expertise remains important, those taking the survey recognise that technology skills alone cannot overcome fragmented operating models. **Building AI workflows from scratch without the required expertise can be difficult and risky without the necessary guardrails in place and many firms lack the confidence to do so. Finance leaders should look to work with third parties to overcome this hurdle.**

61% **cite fragmented or poor-quality data as a top concern.**
UK 62% | US 60%

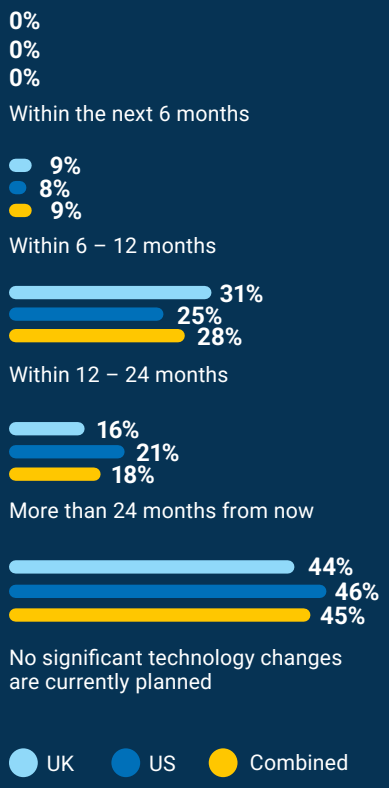
Question 9

What are your biggest concerns about using AI in core finance workflows?
(Select up to three)



Question 10

When does your organisation expect to make a significant technology decision relating to cash visibility, finance controls, or automation?
(Select one)



Those that act now will be significantly better positioned to build a more connected, resilient and AI-ready Office of the CFO.

Readiness to invest in finance transformation

Throughout the research, finance leaders consistently identified fragmented processes, poor cash visibility, low forecasting confidence and manual reconciliation as major operational challenges. They also recognised the potential of AI and automation to address many of these issues. Yet almost half of organisations in both the UK and US reported that they have no significant technology changes currently planned.

This suggests that while finance executives recognise the need for transformation, many organisations have yet to commit to significant technology investment. **Finance leaders are operating in an environment of competing business priorities, constrained budgets and increasing pressure to demonstrate measurable returns on technology investment. As a result, many organisations understand the problems they need to solve but remain hesitant to commit to large-scale transformation programmes.**

Encouragingly, there are clear signs that momentum is building. Around a third of UK organisations and a quarter of US organisations expect to make significant technology decisions within the next 12 to 24 months. This indicates that many finance leaders are taking steps to evaluate the next generation of finance technologies capable of addressing the challenges they currently face.

According to the results, UK organisations appear slightly more likely to expect technology decisions over the medium term, while US organisations are marginally more likely to delay decisions beyond two years or have no current plans. This shows that finance teams view transformation as an ongoing journey rather than a one-off process which can be completed by a certain date. The findings suggest that finance transformation is likely to be an ongoing process, with organisations making technology decisions at different stages as their needs evolve.

Demonstrating measurable value is likely to be important in securing support for further technology investment. Finance leaders are increasingly expected to justify technology decisions through measurable business value rather than technical capability alone. Finance executives need to have confidence that the new technology they are implementing will strengthen forecasting, improve governance and reduce manual effort, ultimately delivering tangible operational returns. Organisations that can clearly demonstrate this value are likely to find it easier to secure backing from the board and accelerate adoption.

Finance leaders need to build a compelling business case centred on operational outcomes using the support of trusted third-party experts. For many organisations, the findings also suggest a degree of 'wait and see' around AI adoption, with finance teams looking for greater evidence of value before committing to significant transformation programmes. Successfully overcoming this hesitation is likely to require strong cross-functional leadership rather than isolated departmental initiatives. **As AI capabilities become more sophisticated, experienced finance professionals will continue to play a critical role in defining requirements, setting governance frameworks and validating outcomes, while technology specialists develop and deploy the underlying models. Many organisations may therefore benefit from a coordinated AI transformation function that brings together finance, technology, security, risk and compliance expertise to ensure AI is implemented consistently and with appropriate oversight across the business.**

With the right implementation approach and appropriate governance, organisations can introduce connected finance capabilities in a controlled, incremental manner, demonstrating value at each stage before expanding adoption. This coordinated approach can help reduce the operational risks associated with fragmented AI deployments while building confidence in the technology over time.

Those that act now will be significantly better positioned to build a more connected, resilient and AI-ready Office of the CFO.

Conclusion

The findings throughout this research point to a finance function at an important stage of its transformation. Finance leaders recognise the need to improve forecasting, strengthen governance, increase cash visibility and reduce manual effort, while also preparing their organisations for wider adoption of AI. However, the survey also demonstrates that these priorities cannot be addressed in isolation. Many of these issues are linked to fragmented finance operations, which remain a significant challenge for finance executives.

Across both the UK and the US, organisations continue to rely on disconnected systems, manual reconciliation and inconsistent operational data. These issues reduce confidence in forecasting, limit visibility across cash positions and create unnecessary operational effort. Although many organisations have invested in digital finance applications, relatively few have connected these technologies into a single operational environment capable of delivering trusted, real-time financial insight.

The research also shows that AI has become a strategic priority for boards and executive teams. Finance leaders increasingly understand where AI can deliver value, particularly through improving reconciliation, forecasting and operational efficiency. Equally encouraging is the recognition that successful AI depends on high-quality data, strong governance and connected finance processes. Key decision-makers are increasingly considering how to implement AI responsibly and at scale as they assess its potential value to their business.

Finance leaders need to translate these findings into practical action, particularly where gaps in skills, resources or investment are limiting progress. Many organisations remain constrained by competing investment priorities, limited budgets and the need to demonstrate measurable returns before committing to significant transformation programmes. Yet delaying investment carries its own risks. Organisations that continue operating fragmented finance environments may find it harder to improve forecasting confidence, reduce manual effort and realise the full value of automation and AI. Organisations that invest in visibility, integration and trusted data today will be best positioned.

The findings point towards a more connected operating model spanning Accounts Receivable, Accounts Payable, Treasury and Payments, rather than treating each area as a separate transformation project. By establishing a single source of trusted financial data, organisations can strengthen governance, improve operational resilience and provide the reliable information needed for better decision-making.

Ultimately, connected finance is becoming the foundation upon which the future Office of the CFO will be built. Organisations that improve visibility and integration while establishing trusted, high-quality data are likely to be better positioned to realise the benefits of automation and AI.

> ***Ultimately, connected finance is becoming the foundation upon which the future Office of the CFO will be built.***

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