



# PwC's Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026

AI ambition meets consumer reality:  
What lenders need to know

June 2026



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# AI ambition meets consumer reality: What lenders need to know now

What 4,000+ US consumers think about AI in  
lending—and how their views are evolving

45%

used a generative AI tool  
for a financial question in  
the past year

85%

trust a lender more  
when AI use is disclosed  
upfront

74%

are concerned about AI  
making lending decisions

67%

expect AI to inform their  
next borrowing decision

## Executive summary

AI is quickly transforming how consumers research, compare, and decide on their mortgage, home equity, and auto finance experience. And they certainly expect AI to play a larger role in their next loan than it did in their last one, and the rate of that shift is accelerating.

At the same time, these consumers have signaled where they want lenders to slow down. Roughly three-quarters express concerns about AI making lending decisions, and a clear majority still prefer a person involved at final approval. These views are a snapshot, not a verdict. Comfort levels rise as familiarity grows, and we expect that movement to continue.

For executives at banks, non-bank lenders, and fintechs, the strategic implication is clear. The winning model—for now—is **AI-enabled and people-centered**, with transparency as the connective tissue. The most immediate opportunities lie in streamlining research and administrative workflows through automation, building visibility across AI-driven discovery channels, and creating the trust needed to scale AI adoption over time through transparency about its use.

## Consumer comfort with AI in the lending journey is trending upward

Lenders who plan for tomorrow's borrower while serving today's will compound an advantage



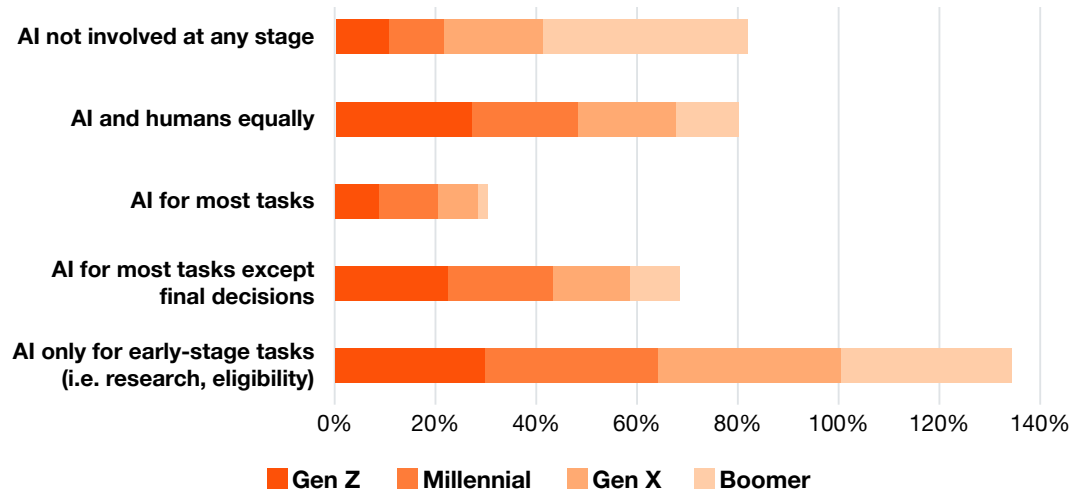
## Start with what every generation is telling you: Be transparent



Nearly nine in 10 consumers agree that lenders should state clearly when AI is being used.

AI comfort in lending varies by generation, by product, and by individual. But the survey is unambiguous on one point across every cohort. Consumers want to know when and how AI is being used.

### Generational views defy easy answers when asking “Where should AI be involved in the lending process?”



Q: Which of the following best describes your preferred level of AI involvement in the lending process?  
Note: respondents selected only one response; responses sum to 100% by generation not by response category  
Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, base = 4,100

## What each generation emphasizes

- **Boomer:** Strongest emphasis on transparency, with clear explanations and good past experiences as supporting drivers of trust.
- **Gen X:** Values transparency, plus external reviews and validation
- **Millennials:** Values transparency, clarity, and customer support, alongside fairness and respect.
- **Gen Z:** Most likely of any generation to emphasize fairness, respect, and ethical alignment.

The top three trust drivers when AI is used in lending:

- Transparency in pricing, fees, and terms — 44%
- Clear explanation of how AI is used — 43%
- Clear explanations about data usage — 40%

## What this means for lenders

Disclosure is your license to expand AI's role tomorrow. Lenders who set the disclosure standard now—plain-language statements about where AI is involved, what data it uses, and where humans review—earn the trust budget they will need as AI takes on more of the lending life cycle. Treat it as consumer-facing messaging, not legal language.



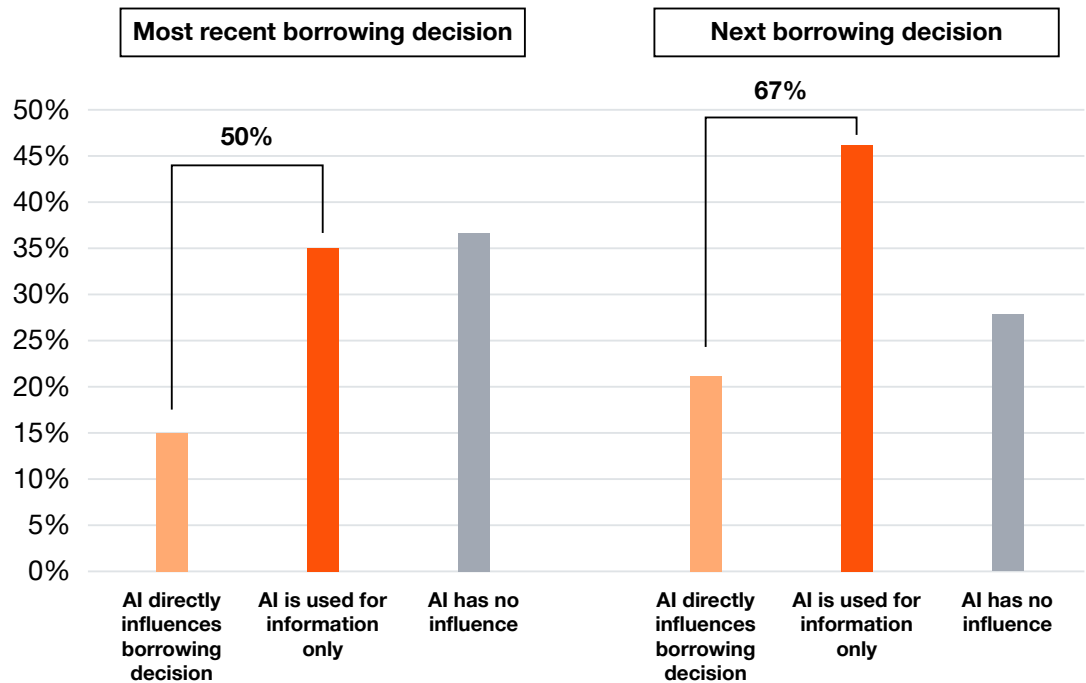
## Agentic commerce is new— and it is changing how borrowers find you

Agentic commerce—where AI agents act on behalf of a user to shop, recommend, and transact—is not a mature channel like search or mobile, but it is an emerging ecosystem evolving along a steep adoption curve. As we covered in another recent publication, [agentic commerce is banking's next digital frontier](#), and the Consumer Lending Radar reinforces that view.

Consumers anticipate greater AI involvement in future borrowing decisions:

50% → 67% most recent loan vs. expected next loan

## Consumers say they will rely more on AI for their next loan decision



Qs: To what extent did AI tools influence your most recent borrowing decision?; To what extent do you expect AI tools to influence your next borrowing decision?

Note: Directly influences category combines 'significantly influenced' and 'primary driver' responses; For information only category combines 'help narrow down choices' and 'provide useful information' responses.

Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, Base = 4,100

Consumer adoption of AI in lending decisions is already meaningful and continues to accelerate across the borrowing journey.

- **45%** of consumers used a generative AI consumer tool in the past year for a financial question or decision.
- **Roughly one in three** rely on AI to help understand and compare loan rates and terms today.
- **21%** expect AI to either significantly influence or be the primary driver of their next home or auto loan—up from 15% on their most recent borrowing decision.
- **28%** anticipate avoiding AI on their next loan—down from 37% who say it played no role in their most recent decision.

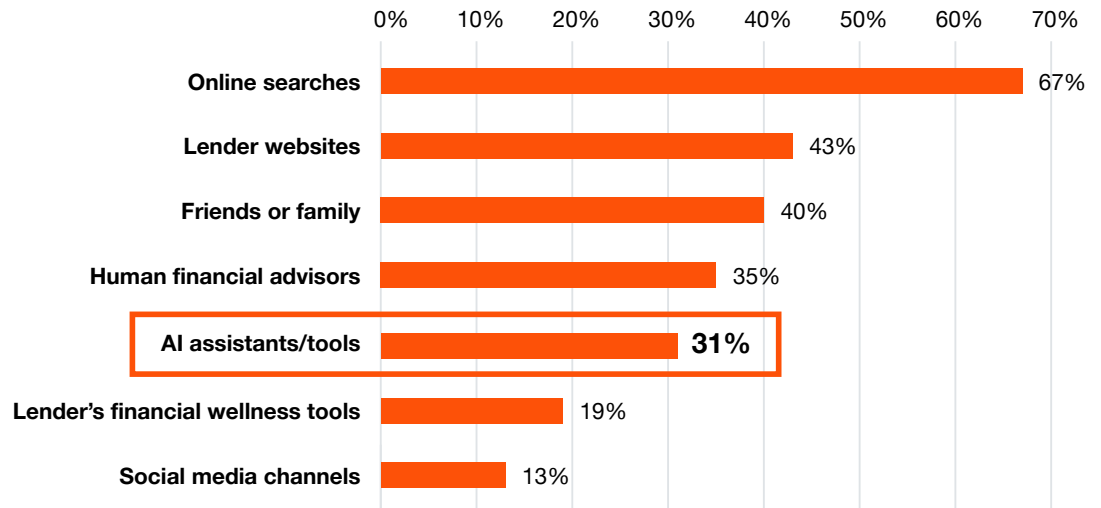
Two trends are particularly interesting: the AI-curious are leaning in further, and the population of skeptics is shrinking. Both directions matter for your discovery strategy.

AI is now a top-five research source.



Our findings will likely understate AI's effects within a matter of months, not years. AI-driven discovery is compounding through three reinforcing channels—direct AI use, AI-blended search, and emerging agentic shopping. Your AEO/GEO posture in 12 months will likely be meaningfully different from your posture today.

## AI increasingly popular compared with family, friends, and financial advisors when researching a loan



Q: Which of the following sources do you typically use when researching loan products? (select all that apply)  
Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, Base = 4,100

Forty-three percent of consumers say they typically use a lender's website to research loan options. That direct relationship is an asset, but an eroding one. Major search engines now place AI-generated answers at the top of the results page—meaning many borrowers use AI for research without realizing it. The 31% who consciously rely on AI to compare rates is almost certainly an undercount.

## What this means for lenders

Treat **answer engine optimization (AEO)** and **generative engine optimization (GEO)** as a board-level discovery question. The strategic goal is to be the source AI assistants cite when borrowers ask about estimated payments, affordability, rate drivers, terms, and disclosures—the most common AI-loan-research use cases in the survey. Take, for example, a car buyer asking an AI assistant “Who has the best auto loan program in Dallas?” If your institution is not in the answer, you might be bypassed before you ever appear on screen.

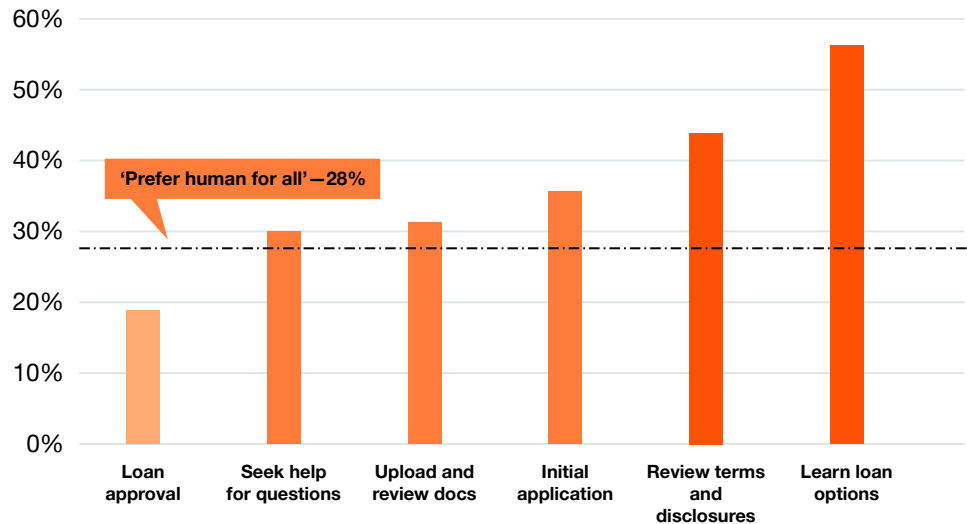
## Speed up the front of the funnel. Slow down at the moment of truth

75%

prefer a person at final loan approval or closing

Borrowers draw a clear line between research and education—where they welcome AI—and decisioning and resolution, where they prefer a person. That gap is the most actionable picture in the survey.

### Comfort with AI is high for loan research and disclosures, not final approval or answering questions



Q: Which parts of the loan process would you be comfortable handling with AI (like a chatbot or automated system) instead of a person? (Multi select, respondents could choose as many as they want)

Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, base = 4,100

## Where consumers are comfortable with AI

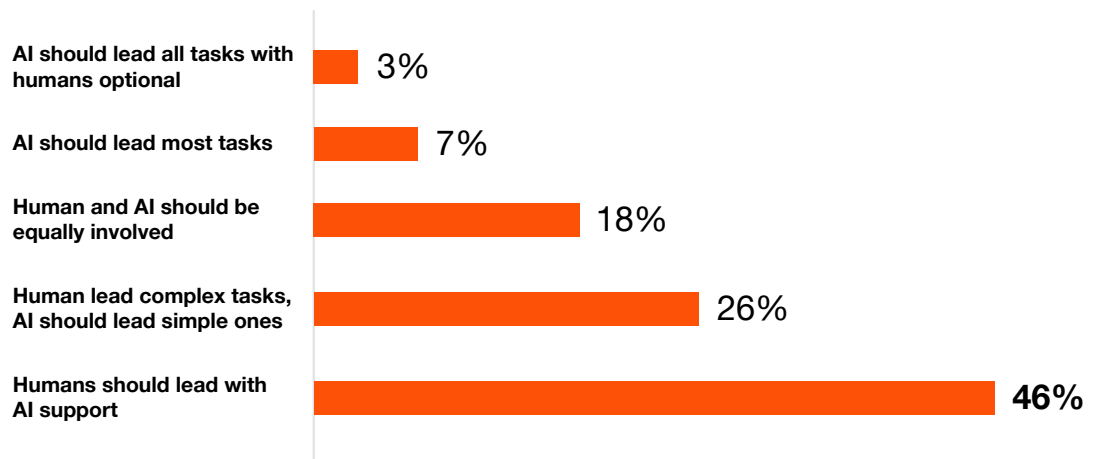
- **56%** are comfortable learning about loan options from AI.
- **43%** are comfortable using AI to understand the terms of different loans.
- **31%** are comfortable with AI uploading and reviewing documents.

## Where they want a person

- **75%** prefer final loan approval and closing to be completed by or with a person.
- **61%** want human customer service when a problem arises during the application.
- **Only 3%** want a loan process with no human contact or oversight at all.

This is the balance that borrowers say they want:

## Lenders race to automate but borrowers still want a human to be deeply involved



Q: Which statement best reflects your desired balance between humans and AI in lending?

Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, base = 4,100

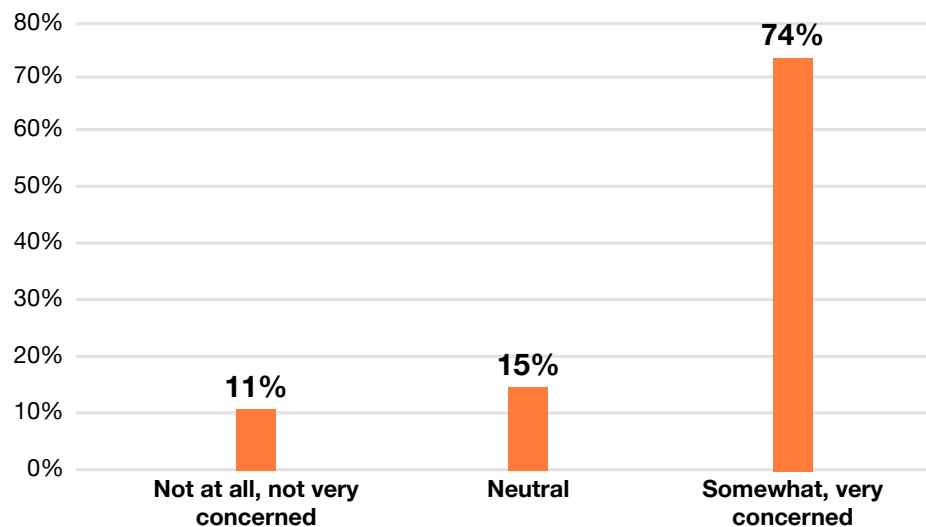
Forty-six percent say humans should lead with AI support during the lending process, and another 26% want humans on complex tasks and AI on simple ones. Combined, nearly three-quarters of borrowers want a human-led process augmented by AI.



**Watch the gap between AI comfort for research (56%) and AI comfort for approvals (19%). As borrowers gain experience with well-designed AI in lower-stakes tasks, willingness to extend it typically follows. Lenders who make early-stage AI feel trustworthy will earn permission to expand AI's role faster.**

That lack of endorsement for AI in the consumer-facing part of the lending process may be driven by two things. One, consumers have yet to experience what a truly end-to-end AI automated lending process is like because lenders are still building it. Perhaps, once that appears, consumers will embrace it wholeheartedly. And two, most borrowers in our survey say they're worried about a lack of transparency and trust when AI is involved.

### **Borrowers today are uncomfortable with AI making lending decisions**



Q: How concerned are you that AI may use inaccurate or incomplete data in a lending decision? (single select); respondents limited to those who used an AI chatbot or tool or voice assistant for a financial question or decision in the last 12 months

Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar 2026, base = 4,100

### **Why concern is high—and what's behind it**

Concerns are concrete. Seventy-four percent are “somewhat” or “very concerned” about AI making lending decisions because it may use inaccurate or incomplete information, hallucinate, or expose personal data—the ‘black box’ problem. Borrowers are sensitive to both real and perceived performance, and the AI failures they see in the news shape both.

## **What this means for lenders**

Deploy AI where it accelerates the experience and keep people visible where they matter most. Proactively address the ‘black box’ problem by making AI-driven decisions more transparent, explainable, and visibly governed by human oversight. **Reengineering your data to feed an AI-powered customization** is foundational.

# Personalize the AI-to-human support mix—by individual, by product

Aggregate data masks the most actionable insight in the survey: AI-comfort differences are individual, not just generational. A large share of baby boomers are uncomfortable with any use of AI in lending, and most Gen Z respondents say AI should be limited to early-stage tasks. But there are boomers who want fully digital experiences, and Gen Z borrowers who want hand-holding throughout. A fixed AI-to-people ratio underserves both ends of every cohort.

## And personalization is a switching trigger

45% of consumers say they would be more likely to choose a lender offering advanced AI tools—personalized loan guidance, affordability simulations, predictive rate insights.

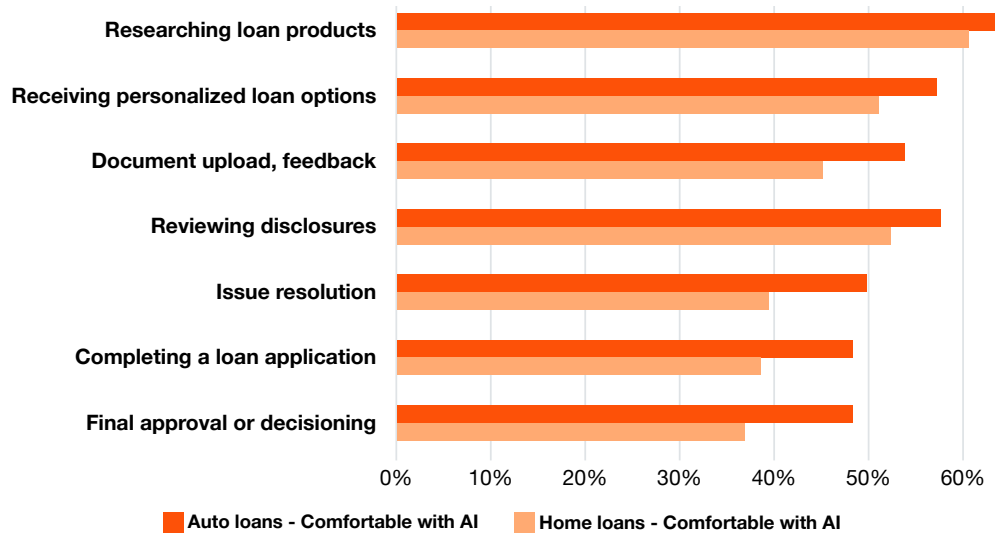
### **Build a preference profile for each borrower**

Capture explicit preferences early. Then observe behavioral signals—channel choice, speed of progression, where the borrower asks for help—to infer comfort with AI versus human interaction. Combined into a preference profile, those signals let the experience adapt in real time. The result is a flexible model that adjusts at every stage, not a one-size-fits-all funnel.

## Auto and home lending seem to require different styles of AI experiences

Comfort with AI is consistently higher across the auto-loan life cycle than for mortgages or HELOCs. The gap widens at exactly the steps where the human touch is presumed to dominate.

### AI comfort in lending is higher for auto vs. home-related borrowing



Q: How comfortable are you using AI tools for each of the following lending activities? (Select one) Note: Percentages are the average of 'somewhat comfortable' and 'very comfortable' responses; home loans include purchase, refinance and equity line of credit while auto loans include purchase and refinance  
Source: PwC, Consumer Lending Radar Survey 2026, base = 4,100

- **Issue resolution:** 50% comfortable with AI for auto vs. 40% for home loans
- **Loan approval:** 49% comfortable with AI for auto vs. 37% for home loans

The drivers of the auto/home lending divide are just what you'd think—smaller dollar amounts, lighter underwriting, shorter loan duration—and they point to a practical rule: calibrate the AI-to-human support mix not just to the consumer but to the product. The same customer may want a near-fully-digital auto experience and a high-touch mortgage experience from the same institution.

Connected experiences require infrastructure reoriented around horizontal speed. In our experience, lenders have the data they need. The problem is that it tends to sit in silos rather than under shared enterprise standards.

## What this means for lenders

Stop treating segments as homogeneous groups of people. The unit of personalization is the individual borrower for this product, at this stage. Investments that pay off compound, including preference layers, an event-driven data backbone, and an experience designer who can compose human-vs.-AI handoffs as a product capability—not a one-time configuration.



# The future of lending isn't a faster process—it's a different one

In the 10-plus years we've been running this survey, the desire for human involvement has been a constant. Every prior wave of digital transformation, whether online banking, mobile, or chatbots, left that desire largely intact. AI is different. Real-time conversational interfaces and emotional responsiveness produce experiences that more closely resemble human interaction than anything before. Still, consumers are not yet ready to fully relinquish a real human in the loop.

That durability reinforces our view that **the workforce of the future may be shaped more like an hourglass**—more frontline staff enabled by AI to deliver personalized service, more senior staff overseeing modernization of the systems that retain human connection in a digital economy, and a thinner middle. As AI capability and borrower comfort both increase, the shape of that hourglass will continue to evolve.

In practice, the future-state lending experience will probably look something like this:

- **From application to anticipation:** AI continuously analyzes borrower data, behaviors, and life events to surface lending needs—often before the borrower starts a formal application—enabling hyper-personalized, right-time engagement.
- **From loan officer to financial advisor:** As AI absorbs administrative and analytical tasks, loan officers shift to higher-value advisory roles, guiding borrowers through complex decisions and deepening long-term relationships.

- **From product selection to intelligent matching:** AI dynamically recommends best-fit loan products by combining borrower-specific inputs with patterns from similar profiles, market conditions, and historical outcomes—and updates as needs change.
- **From static applications to real-time completion:** Documents are ingested, verified, and validated instantly, with AI flagging gaps and inconsistencies, dramatically reducing back-and-forth and accelerating time to decision.
- **From fragmented workflows to autonomous orchestration:** AI agents coordinate across the lending ecosystem—ordering appraisals, verifying income, interacting with third parties, clearing conditions—and intelligently route exceptions and complex cases to human specialists.
- **From manual underwriting to augmented decisioning:** For standard products, AI generates explainable underwriting recommendations grounded in policy frameworks, while human underwriters focus on edge cases, judgment calls, and risk oversight.
- **From reactive communication to continuous engagement:** AI-powered assistants handle routine interactions, proactively update borrowers on status, anticipate questions, and guide next steps—a transparent, always-on experience that does not increase operational burden.



# What you can do now

Lenders that balance technology with thoughtful personal connection will build the kind of trust that compounds. Here are four moves to make based on the survey findings.

## 1. Preserve and enhance human touchpoints

Blend AI efficiency with meaningful human support at the moments that build confidence—and build the data and design capability to shift that balance as borrower comfort evolves.

- Enable seamless escalation from AI interfaces to human support and train customer service staff to handle AI-related questions specifically, bridging the digital-human trust gap.
- Make your balance of AI and human engagement a deliberate, visible point of differentiation.

## 2. Educate and empower consumers

Demystify your process. Show how AI decisions are guided by human judgment and communicate that in plain language. Disclosure is the lever that moves the AI comfort numbers in your favor.

- Publicly state your human-oversight principles, distinguishing yourself from 'black box' competitors.
- Openly disclose when and how AI is used, both in digital channels and in live interactions

## 3. Proactively address data privacy and data quality

Give consumers clarity and control over their data, backed by governance that lowers risk and improves the data AI systems depend on.

- Be explicit about what information is collected, why, who has access, and how it's secured.
- Actively test for bias and embrace independent validation to demonstrate a commitment to **ethical and responsible use of AI**.

#### 4. Align AI capabilities with consumer expectations—and recheck often

Calibrate where and how AI is deployed against what borrowers tell you they want. Then check again in six months. Comfort is evolving quickly.

- Capture borrower preferences early, build a dynamic profile, and adapt the experience to their needs.
- Refine AI use cases based on consumer feedback and observed behavior—not just internal efficiency goals.
- Resurvey, relisten, and retune. The borrower of mid-2027 will not be the borrower of today.

## Trust compounds

Build it now—through transparency, deliberate human moments, and AI that demonstrably works—and you can spend it later, when borrowers are ready to let AI do more.





## About this survey

PwC's Consumer Lending Radar Survey was conducted from February 2 to March 15, 2026, and collected the views of US-based loan decision-makers who either used a mortgage or home equity line of credit or financed the lease or purchase of a vehicle within the past five years—or plan to in the next 12 to 36 months. Total respondents: 4,100.

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