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RISK MANAGEMENT FROM RISK CONTROL TO **GROWTH ENGINE**

U.S. REPORT

KEEPING YOUR WORLD OPEN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE UNITED STATES REPRESENTS A STRUCTURALLY MATURE BUT CULTURALLY CONFLICTED RISK ENVIRONMENT, WHERE STRONG GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT COEXIST WITH PERSISTENT BEHAVIORAL BARRIERS THAT LIMIT RISK'S FULL COMMERCIAL IMPACT.

U.S. organizations demonstrate relatively advanced integration of risk into decision-making processes. Risk is embedded early, with **29%** saying this happens at the idea stage and supported by strong leadership alignment (**78%** say leaders balance growth and risk). However, this structural maturity is offset by a more cautious mindset: **57%** agree that saying 'no' is safer than finding a structured 'yes', above the global average **(50%).**

THIS CREATES A DEFINING TENSION IN THE U.S. MARKET: RISK IS PRESENT, EMPOWERED, AND STRUCTURED - BUT NOT ALWAYS ORIENTED TOWARD ENABLING GROWTH.

51%

expect risk and finance to become strategic growth partners in the next **3–5 years,** and demand for predictive, technology-enabled decision-making is high **(80% prioritize AI-driven insights).**

OVERALL, THE U.S. MARKET IS CHARACTERISED BY STRONG FOUNDATIONS AND LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT,

but constrained by a cautious decision-making culture that still leans toward protection over enablement.

STANDOUT STATISTICS FOR US ORGANIZATIONS

Marcos Carias
Coface North America Economist

The U.S. benefits from exceptional geopolitical security (insulated by two oceans and backed by the world's most powerful military), alongside energy independence following the shale revolution. Its deep capital markets, innovation ecosystem, and reserve currency status underpin exceptional growth dynamism. However, the economy's pronounced financialization leaves it acutely vulnerable to asset price corrections, with wealth, consumption, and confidence moving in lockstep with equity markets. It's propensity for creating leverage (including fast-growing opaque private credit markets, and public debt exceeding 120% of GDP) create a propensity for financial instability, while deepening inequality fuels polarization and institutional unpredictability.

42%

see risk today as "trusted guardians protecting the business from downside"

51%

expect risk and finance to become strategic growth partners

29%

say risk is involved at the idea stage

57%

believe saying 'no' is safer than finding a structured 'yes'

33%

cite slow decision-making as the biggest barrier to growth

80%

want AI-driven insights and early warning signals

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR LEADERS

FOR US ORGANIZATIONS, THE CHALLENGE IS NOT STRUCTURAL – IT IS BEHAVIORAL

Risk functions are already embedded, supported, and well-governed. The priority now is unlocking their commercial potential by shifting how decisions are made.

LEADERS SHOULD FOCUS ON:

- Reframing risk from a control function to a commercial enabler, reducing default “no” behaviors
- Accelerating decision-making by simplifying governance and empowering faster risk judgements
- Strengthening incentives and cultural signals that reward growth-enabling risk decisions
- Embedding predictive, forward-looking insight into everyday decision workflows

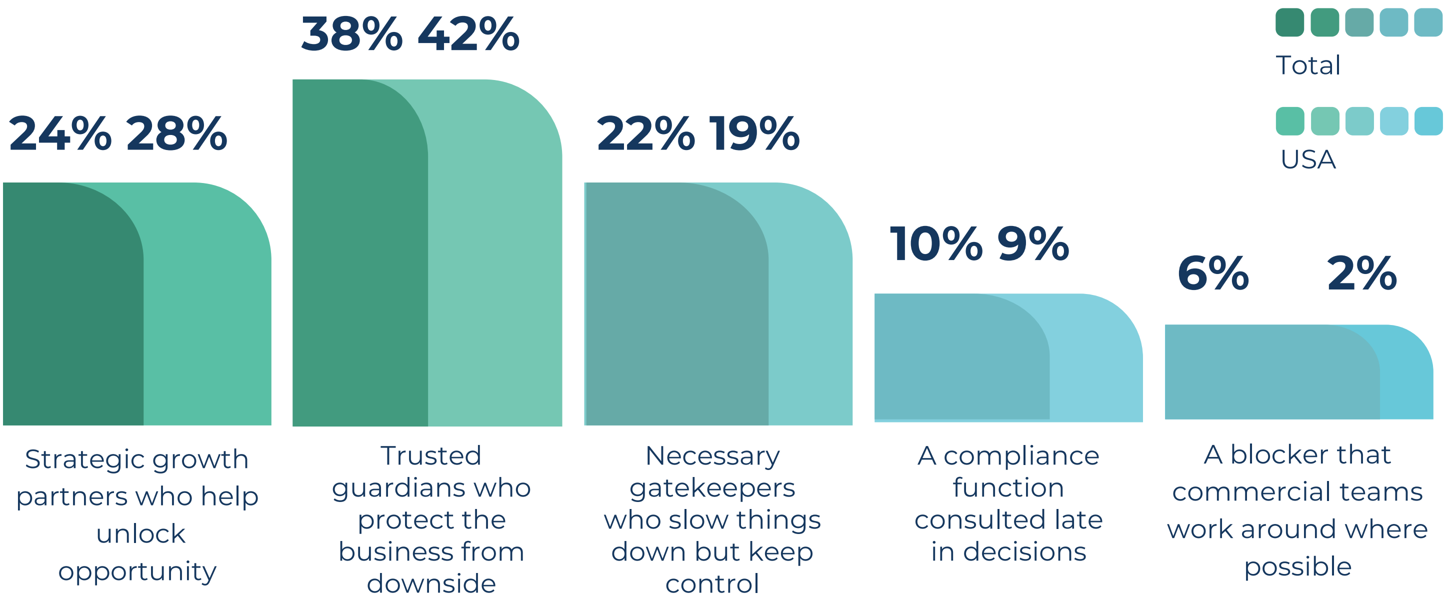
Organizations that succeed will be those that move beyond strong governance toward faster, more confident, growth-oriented decision-making.

THE EVOLUTION OF RISK & FINANCE

U.S. organizations combine strong structural integration with a protection -first mindset

Currently, **42%** of U.S. respondents describe risk as "trusted guardians who protect the business from downside", compared to 38% globally, while only **28%** see them as strategic growth partners.

Fig. 1: 28% currently see risk and finance teams as "strategic growth partners"



Survey Question: Which statement best reflects how risk and finance teams are perceived in your organization today? Global total (1,250) USA (150)

Despite this, expectations are shifting rapidly. Looking ahead, 51% expect risk to become a strategic growth partner, signaling strong momentum toward a more commercially integrated role.

This shift is reinforced by the behaviors organizations prioritize. ***In the U.S.:***

71%
say translating risk into commercial trade-offs is critical

66%
prioritize proactively identifying growth opportunities

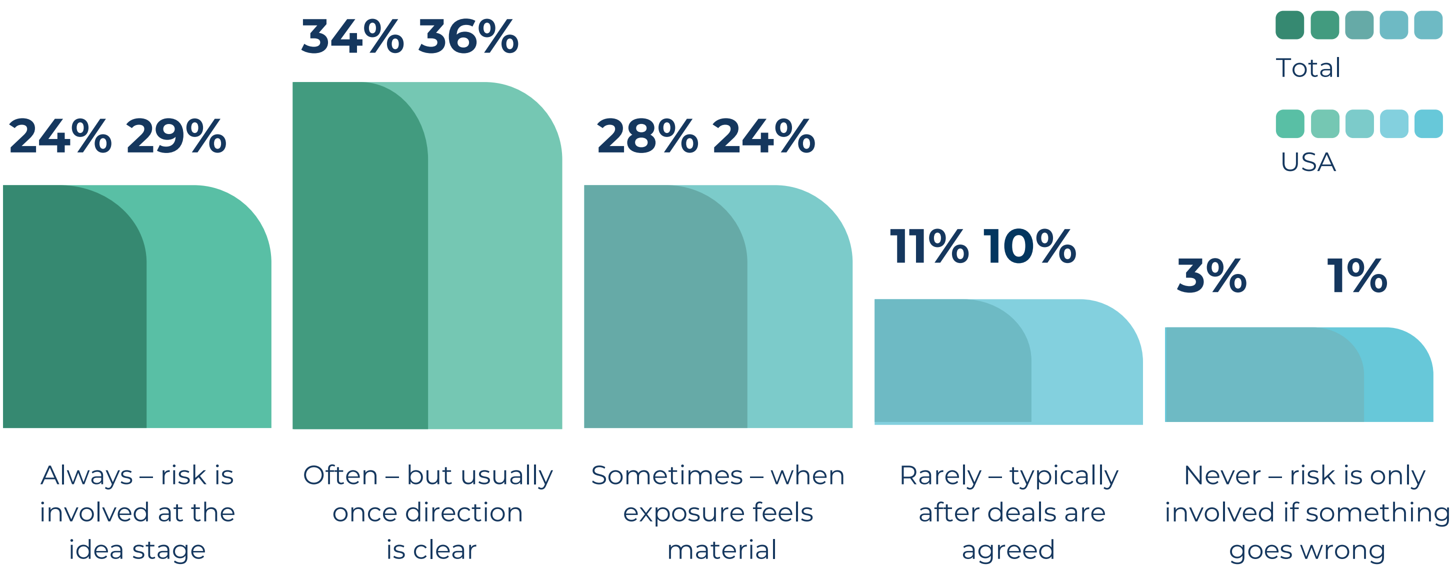
50%
highlight close partnership with commercial teams

> We don't say no every time, but we say, here's the risk, and here's a couple of ways you guys can manage it without losing any opportunity or deadline. Therefore, when people see that you are actually helping them and you are actually protecting the ambition instead of shrinking it, the whole tone of conversation changes.
>
> Risk Director, Retail

These findings suggest that while perception lags, expectations are already aligned with a more growth -oriented future.

Encouragingly, risk is already embedded relatively early in decision-making, with **29%** involved at the idea stage, above the global average **(24%).**

Fig. 2: 29% say risk is involved at the idea stage



Survey Question: How often do commercial teams involve risk early in growth decisions? Global total (1,250) USA (150)

> People don't bring us in at the end of the process or they don't bring us in at the end as a checkpoint anymore, but they bring us into the process very early, almost like a co-pilot stage, and they trust us a lot.
>
> Risk Director, Retail

However, early involvement does not always translate into influence – a pattern that defines the U.S. market.

TURNING EARLY INVOLVEMENT INTO REAL INFLUENCE

The U.S. is structurally advanced in embedding risk – but still evolving in how that involvement shapes outcomes.

While **29%** report early involvement, only **28%** see risk as a strategic growth partner today. This gap highlights a key issue: risk is present in decisions, but not always shaping them commercially.

The next step for U.S. organizations is:

- ensuring that early involvement translates into measurable commercial influence
- enabling risk teams not just to assess decisions, but to actively shape them

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THE GROWTH MINDSET GAP

U.S. organizations exhibit a structurally confident but behaviorally cautious growth mindset

The U.S. market reveals a clear tension between ambition and caution.
On one hand, organizations recognize the importance of balancing risk and growth. **65%** agree that commercial ambition and risk discipline are in tension, slightly above the global average **(62%).**

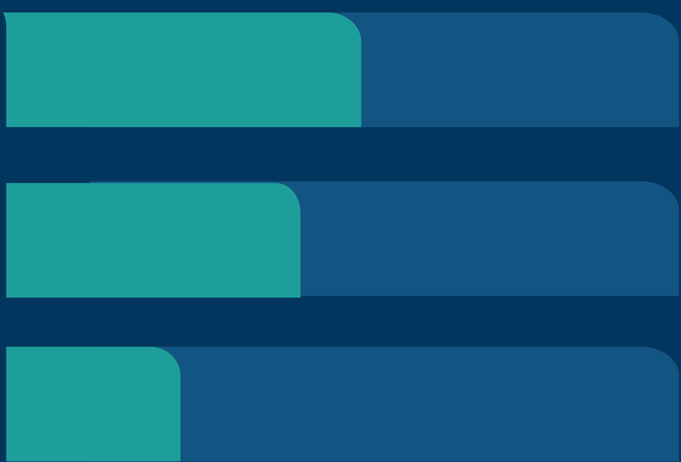
On the other hand, there is a stronger-than-average tendency toward conservative decision-making:

57% agree that saying ‘no’ is safer than finding a structured ‘yes’ (above 50% globally)

33% are comfortable entering new markets with incomplete information

57% agree that saying ‘no’ is safer than finding a structured ‘yes’

WHEN EXPANDING INTO NEW MARKETS, THIS CAUTION IS ALSO EVIDENT:



31% focus on “conditions that must be met”

27% prioritize “what could go wrong”

17% adopt an enabling mindset focused on “how to make this possible safely”

At the same time, barriers to growth are largely internal:

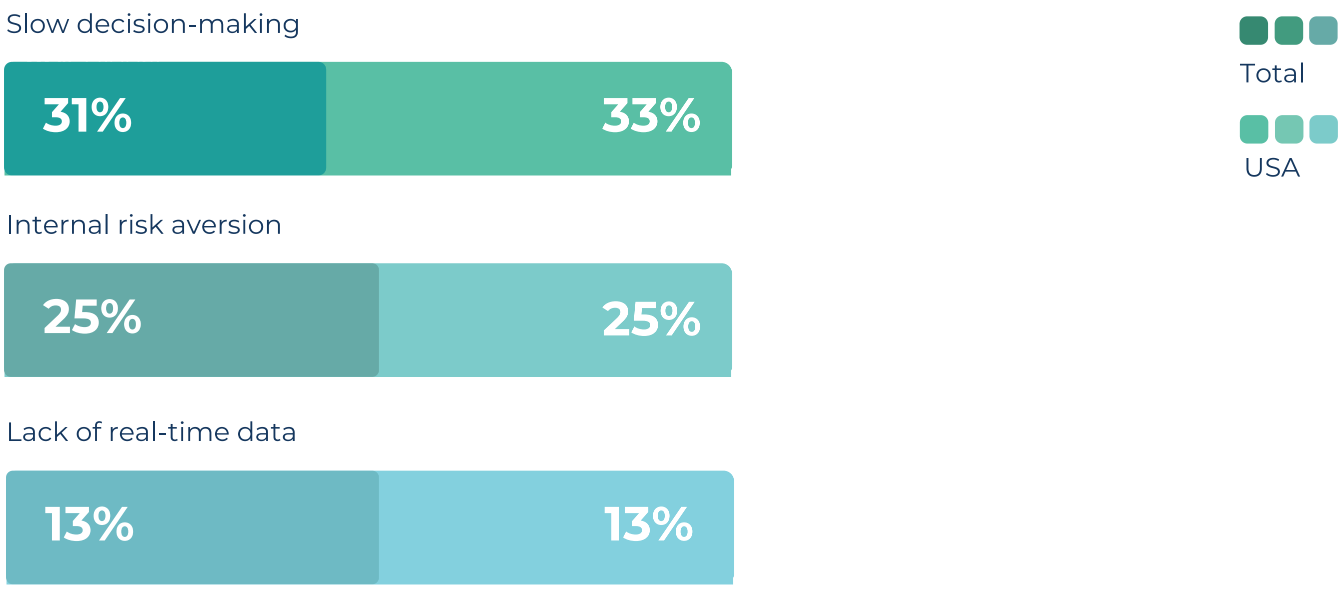
33%
cite slow decision-making

25%
internal risk aversion

13%
lack of real-time data

> My ambition is simple, I want risks to be taken care of easily, so that we can make bigger and smarter bets. With speed and without making the business fragile.
>
> Risk Director, Retail

Fig. 3: 33% cite slow decision-making as the biggest barrier to growth



Survey Question: Which of the following most limits your organization's ability to pursue growth today? Rank 1 Global total (1,250) USA (50)

UNLOCKING GROWTH BY ACCELERATING DECISION-MAKING

For U.S. organizations, the primary constraint is not strategy – but execution speed and decision behavior.

Despite strong governance and leadership alignment, decision-making remains relatively cautious and sometimes slow.

33% identify slow decision-making as the biggest barrier to growth

57% default to conservative decision framing

This suggests that the U.S. challenge is less about capability and more about confidence - particularly in translating structured risk into faster, commercially viable decisions.

Unlocking growth will require:

- Faster decision cycles supported by clear accountability
- Greater confidence in structured risk-taking
- Reduced reliance on overly cautious escalation and control processes

THE GROWTH ENGINE

The U.S. growth engine is structurally strong - but culturally constrained

Strong Governance Foundations Enable Growth

U.S. organizations demonstrate robust structural capabilities:

76% have clear decision rights

71% link risk appetite to growth strategy

64% operate cross-functional decision forums

These foundations indicate a high level of organizational maturity.

76% of U.S. firms report having clear decision rights in place, and 71% link their risk appetite directly to their growth strategy

LEADERSHIP ALIGNMENT IS STRONG - BUT CULTURAL SIGNALS ARE MIXED

Leadership in the U.S. strongly supports balanced risk -taking:

78% say leaders balance growth and risk

62% say leaders visibly support calculated risk-taking

55% say leaders back teams when managed risks don't pay off

54% say leaders involve risk early in strategy

How ever, challenge culture remains constrained:

19% say open debate is encouraged regardless of seniority

33% say challenge is welcomed, but within limits

This limits the extent to which risk can be used as a tool for commercial debate and innovation.

78% say their leaders balance growth and risk effectively

DATA AND TECHNOLOGY ARE ENABLERS – BUT NOT YET FULLY OPTIMISED

While adoption is strong, consistency remains a challenge:

31% say data is highly variable by market

16% it is fully consistent

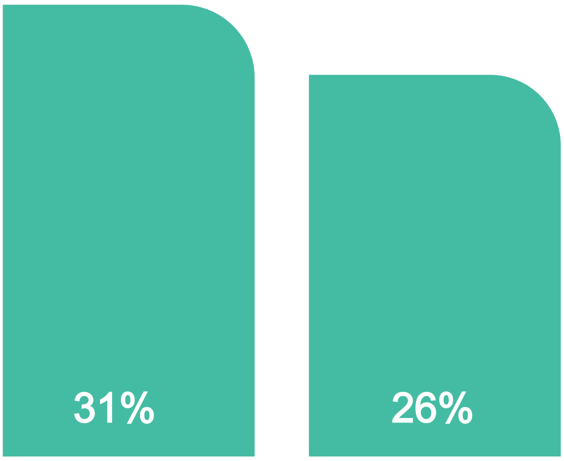
At the same time, demand for advanced capabilities is high:

80% prioritize AI-driven insights

68% want predictive data integrated into workflows

80% are prioritising AI-driven insights and early warning signals to improve decision-making

SUCCESS IS DEFINED BY BALANCE, BUT PROTECTION STILL PLAYS A CENTRAL ROLE



Key capabilities expected from partners include:

- Balancing ambition with disciplined risk-taking **(31%)**
- Enabling growth opportunities **(26%)**

However, protection remains embedded in the definition of success, reinforcing the cautious bias.

> The opportunity isn't more tools. It's tighter integration, clearer explainability, and smarter prioritization of signals. When those improve, decision confidence improves and growth accelerates.
>
> Risk Director, Retail

THE FUTURE & ROLE OF EXTERNAL PARTNERS

U.S. organizations have strong expectations of external partners - particularly in enabling more proactive, confident decisions.

Key expectations include:

74%

want predictive insight to support proactive decision-making

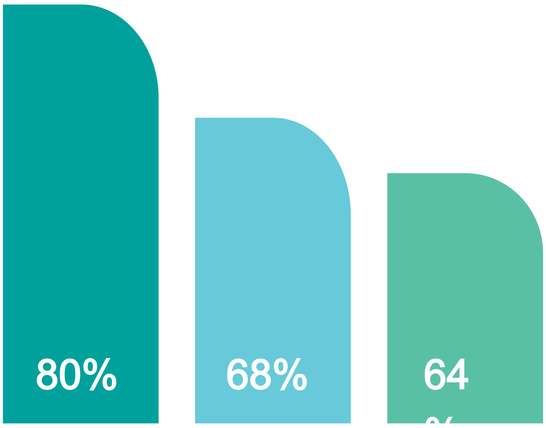
67%

want help saying 'yes' to more opportunities safely

59%

want protection that enables bolder decisions

Technology will be central to delivering this value:



- **80%** prioritize AI-driven insights and early warning signals
- **68%** want predictive data embedded into systems
- **64%** want automated decisioning for low-risk cases

This highlights a clear opportunity: external partners are expected not just to protect, but to actively enable faster and more confident growth decisions.

> When external intelligence is embedded into our systems instead of sitting in a separate report, it becomes actionable. At this scale, growth isn't constrained by ambition. It's constrained by visibility. The better the signal quality, the easier it is for us to say yes confidently.
>
> Risk Director, Retail

CONCLUSION

From Strong Foundations to Faster, Bolder Decisions

The U.S. market is structurally advanced, with strong governance, leadership alignment, and early risk involvement.

However, the key barrier to unlocking growth lies in behavior - particularly a cautious decision-making culture that prioritizes protection over enablement.

The next phase of evolution is clear:

Move from involvement to influence

Accelerate decision-making without compromising discipline

Shift from caution to calculated confidence

Organizations that succeed will be those that combine their strong structural foundations with **faster, more commercially oriented decision-making** - transforming risk into a true engine of growth.

APPENDIX

Firmographics

The U.S. sample comprises 150 respondents. Sector coverage is spread across **Chemicals (17%), ICT (17%), Retail (17%), and Energy (17%), Manufacturing (16%) and Agrifood (16%).**

Organizations are predominantly large enterprises, averaging **10,199 employees and $6.2 billion in revenue.**

Respondents are senior finance and risk leaders, including Finance Directors **(40%), Risk Directors (35%), Chief Financial Officers (17%) and Chief Risk Officers (8%).**

86% say their organization uses a technology platform to monitor and manage risks. Among those with a formal system, **61%** primarily use business or operational risk-focused solutions and **54%** use transaction or credit risk-focused solutions and.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This online survey was conducted by Coleman Parkes in February 2026 among **1,250 business decision-makers in medium to large organizations with revenues of at least $50m across multiple markets and sectors.**