

AI Reaches Near Universal Adoption in the Legal Industry Finds 2026 Secretariat and ACEDS Artificial Intelligence Report

Secretariat and ACEDS' 2026 AI Report reveals how AI is transforming the legal industry, from adoption and workflows to governance, risks, and opportunities.

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, July 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The 2026 Artificial Intelligence Report, conducted by Secretariat in collaboration with ACEDS, reveals AI has reached near universal adoption across the legal industry. No longer is the question whether AI is being used, but rather which AI technologies are being used, how they are being integrated into everyday legal workflows, and what risks must be addressed to ensure use is accurate, defensible, and aligned with professional and ethical responsibilities.



Secretariat Logo



ACEDS logo

Now in Secretariat's second year conducting the study alongside ACEDS, the survey highlights an industry moving rapidly from experimentation to operational adoption. Generative AI has become an increasingly common part of legal practice, with respondents reporting growing use across document drafting, legal research, web search, document review, document summarization, eDiscovery, and other core legal activities.

Key findings from the report include:

- 91% of respondents used Generative AI in the past year, demonstrating a major shift from experimentation to everyday use
- Data privacy and confidentiality remain the leading barrier to AI adoption (57%), with hallucinations rising sharply (46%) to become the second-highest barrier ahead of cost (40%)
- 64% of respondents expect their organization's investment in AI to increase over the next 12 months, reflecting continued momentum in adoption and deployment

The findings also underscore that accelerated adoption brings both rewards and risks. As organizations realize gains in speed and efficiency, they are also navigating growing concerns around privacy, confidentiality, trust, and defensibility.

Secretariat Managing Director Richard Finkelman comments, “We are seeing a clear acceleration in the adoption of commercial GenAI tools within traditional eDiscovery workflows, with these technologies now being actively used across core discovery processes. At the same time, recent cases are bringing the risks into sharper focus, particularly around hallucinations and data privacy. Expert discovery is now the next frontier, and while adoption today remains nascent, we expect it to shift rapidly toward more mainstream use over the next 12 months.”

“AI has moved from a future-facing conversation to a day-to-day reality for legal teams. What our legal community wants now is not hype, but practical guidance: which tools are being used, where they fit into workflows, and how to adopt them responsibly without compromising confidentiality, accuracy, or defensibility,” said Maribel Rivera, VP of Strategy and Client Engagement at ACEDS. “This report makes clear that education and governance have to keep pace with adoption. As GenAI becomes part of document drafting, review, research, and emerging expert discovery workflows, legal professionals need the skills to ask better questions, validate outputs, and keep human oversight at the center of every process.”

The 2026 Secretariat and ACEDS Artificial Intelligence Report provides valuable insights for legal professionals and organizations looking to stay ahead of AI trends and tackle the challenges of AI adoption head-on.

[Click here to download a copy of the report.](#)

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