ALTUM
STRATEGY GROUP

# 2026 U.S. Cybersecurity Leaders Survey

**Key Data from Altum Strategy Group's Study of Digital Security Decision-Makers**

Released: December 2025

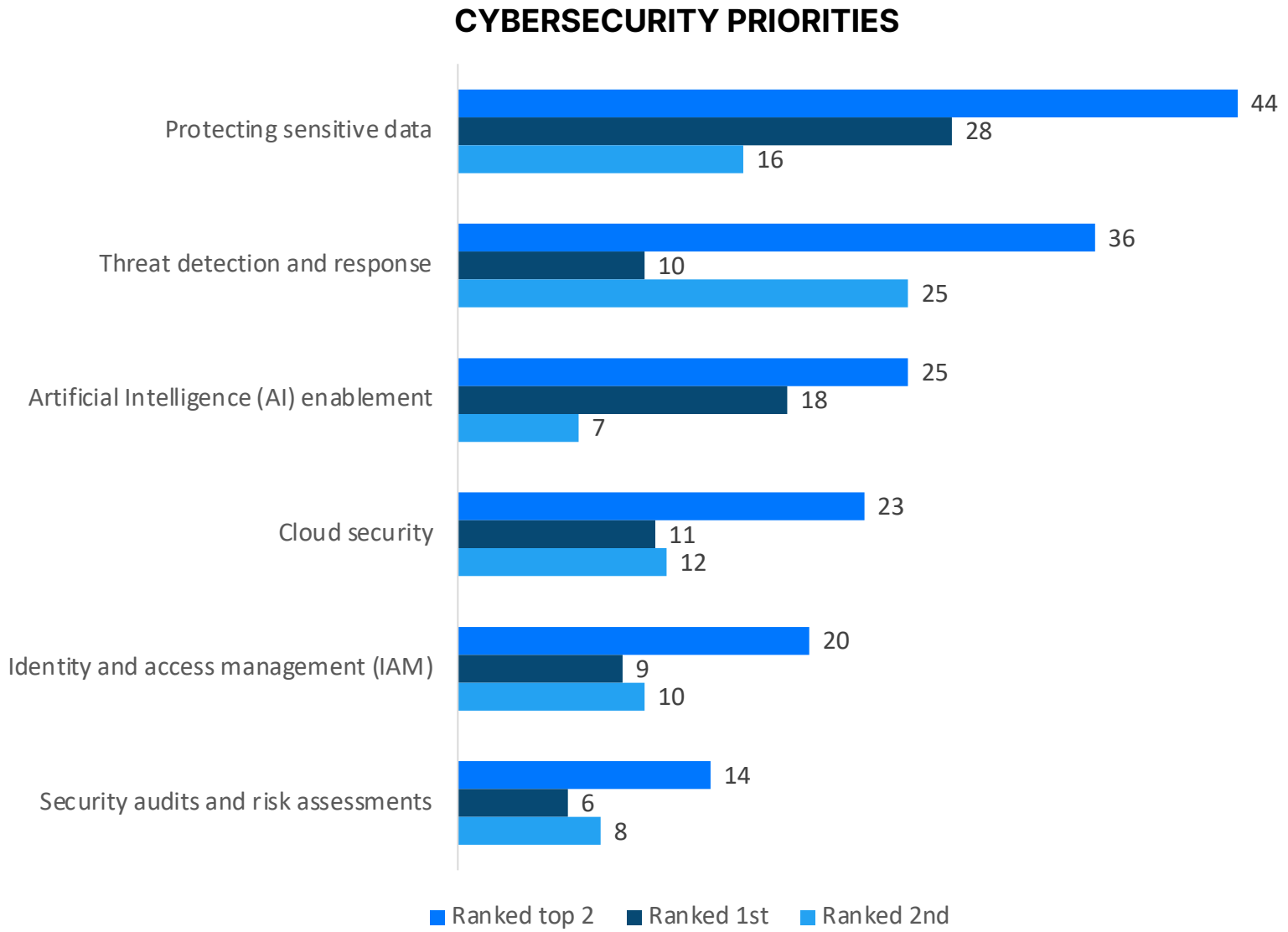
# Protecting Sensitive Data Tops 2026 Cybersecurity Priorities

**Data first, threats next, AI on the horizon.**

Cybersecurity experts rank protecting sensitive data as one of their top two priorities for 2026, with 44% placing it at the forefront. Following closely are threat detection and response (36%) and AI enablement (25%), which round out the leading cybersecurity priorities for the year.

**Q1.** Please rank the following cybersecurity priorities for 2026, with 1 being your highest priority and 10 being your lowest.

*n=163*



## Where Cybersecurity Teams are Investing — and Automating

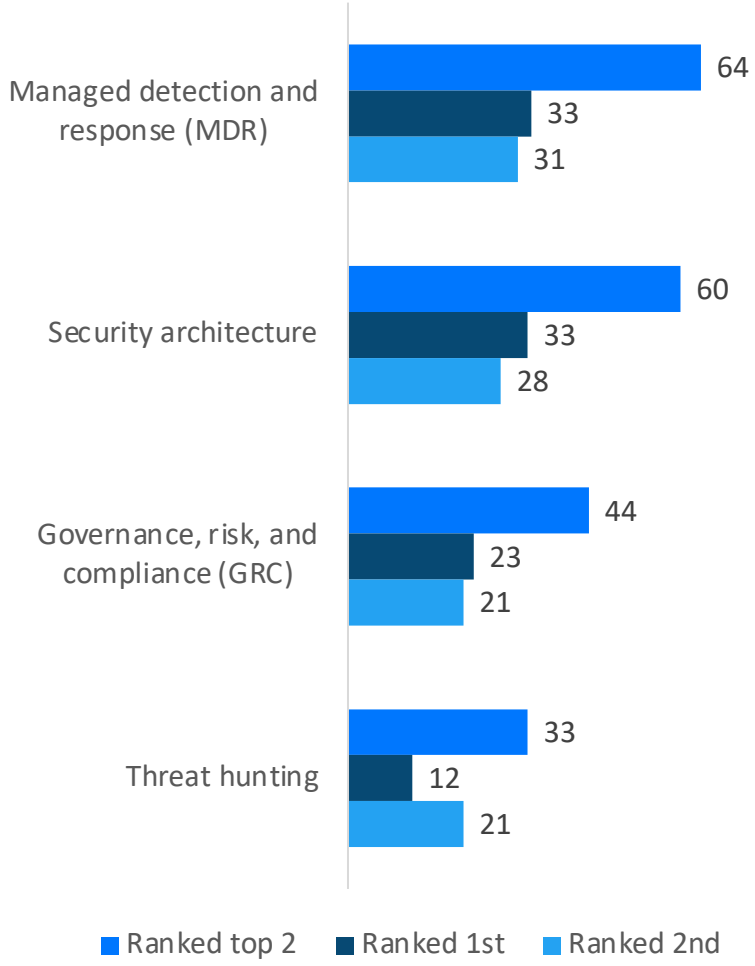
Managed Detection and Response (MDR) takes center stage, ranking as a top priority for both organizational investment and automation efforts. Interestingly, threat hunting tells a different story: while it doesn't command major time or budget, it rises in importance when automation enters the picture.

**Q2.** Which cybersecurity functions are receiving the most time and financial investment in your organization? Rank with 1 being the highest investment priority.

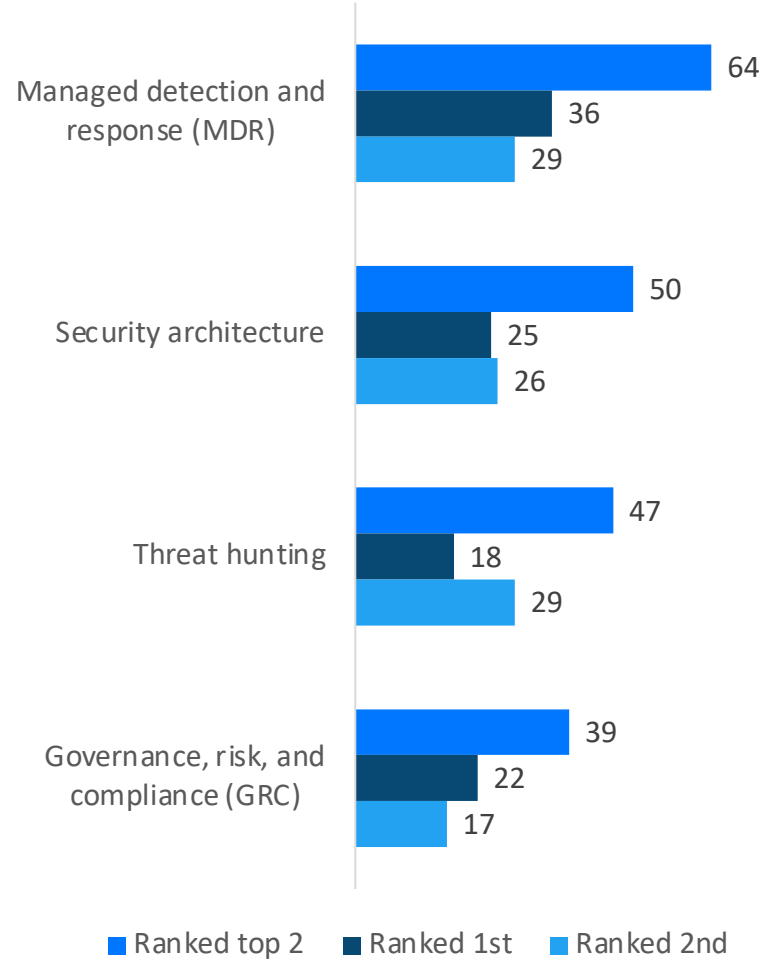
**Q3.** Which cybersecurity functions are you prioritizing for automation? Rank with 1 being the top priority for automation.

*n=163*

### RECEIVING THE MOST TIME/INVESTMENT




### PRIORITIZED FOR AUTOMATION



## Securing Deployments with IaC: Two Clear Leaders

Cybersecurity experts point to two standout Infrastructure as Code (IaC) measures for securing the deployment process: Enforcement of network security rules (36%) and automated security scanning (34%). These approaches lead the pack, emerging as the most trusted methods for strengthening deployment security.

**Q4.** Which Infrastructure as Code (IaC) measures is your organization implementing to secure the deployment process? Please select and rank your top three.

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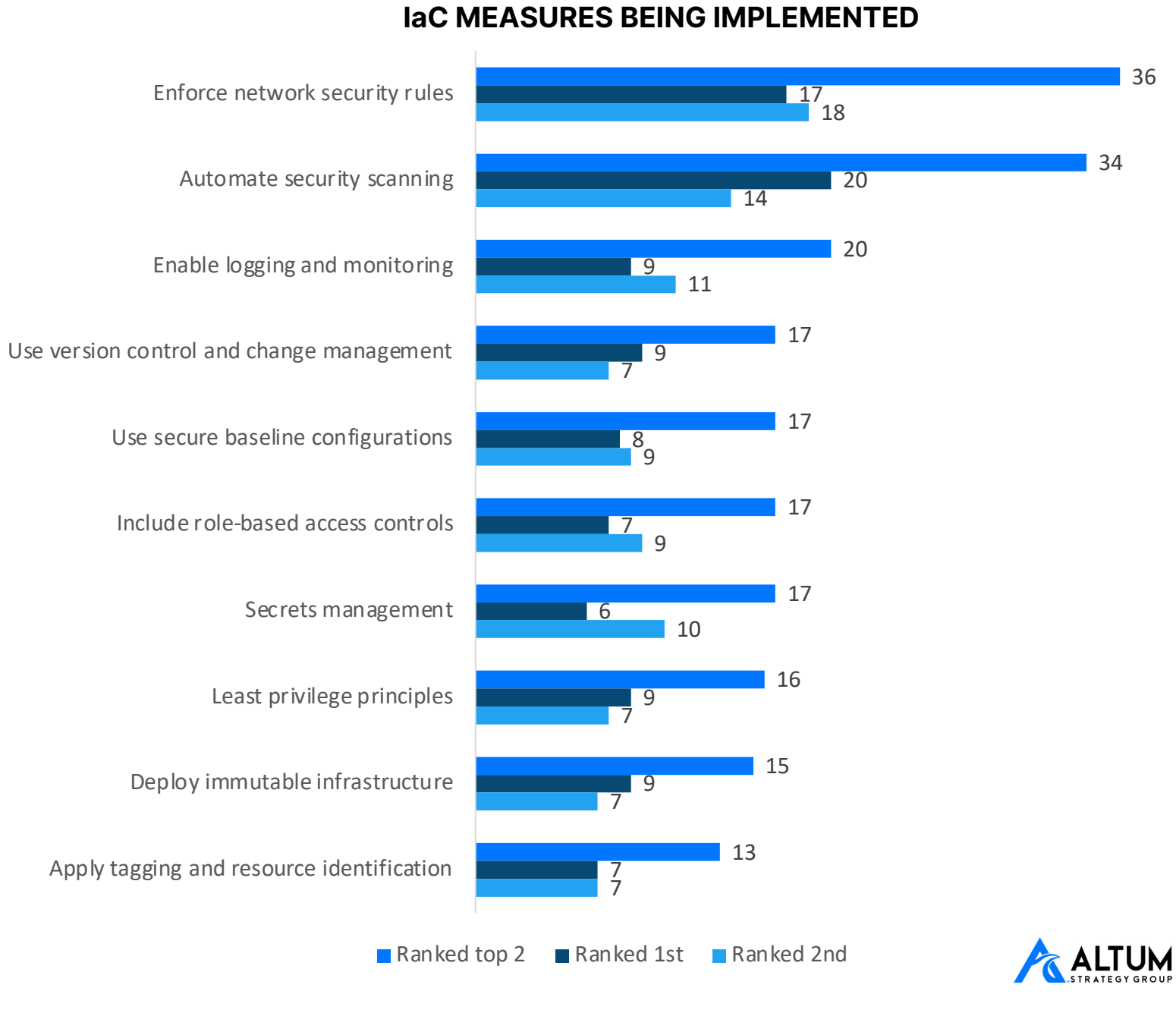
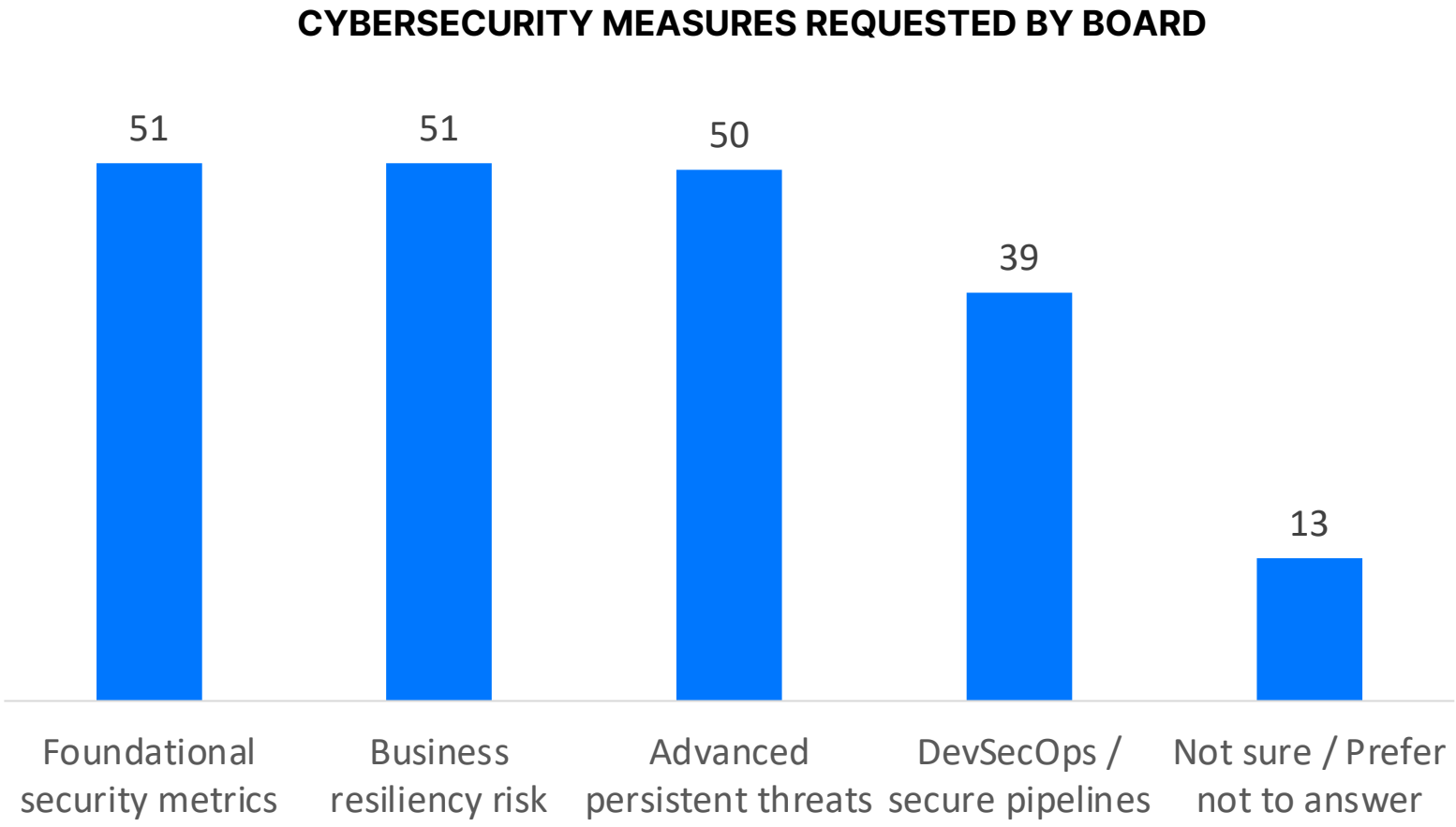


# Boards Want Business-Relevant Cybersecurity Metrics

Boards are demanding metrics that tie cyber risk to business resilience. Over half of respondents say their boards are asking for foundational security metrics (51%), business resiliency risks (51%), and insights on advanced persistent threats (50%).

**Q5.** What cybersecurity metrics is your board asking for? Please select all that apply.

*n=163*



# How Cybersecurity Teams Use Cloud Security Tools

Nearly two in five experts rely primarily on native cloud security tools (39%), while an equal share (39%) use a mix of native and third-party solutions.

Fewer organizations lean heavily on third-party tools alone (15%), and only 6% report not using any dedicated security tooling in their cloud environments.

**Q6.** Which of the following best describes your use of security tooling in your cloud environment? Please select one option that best applies.

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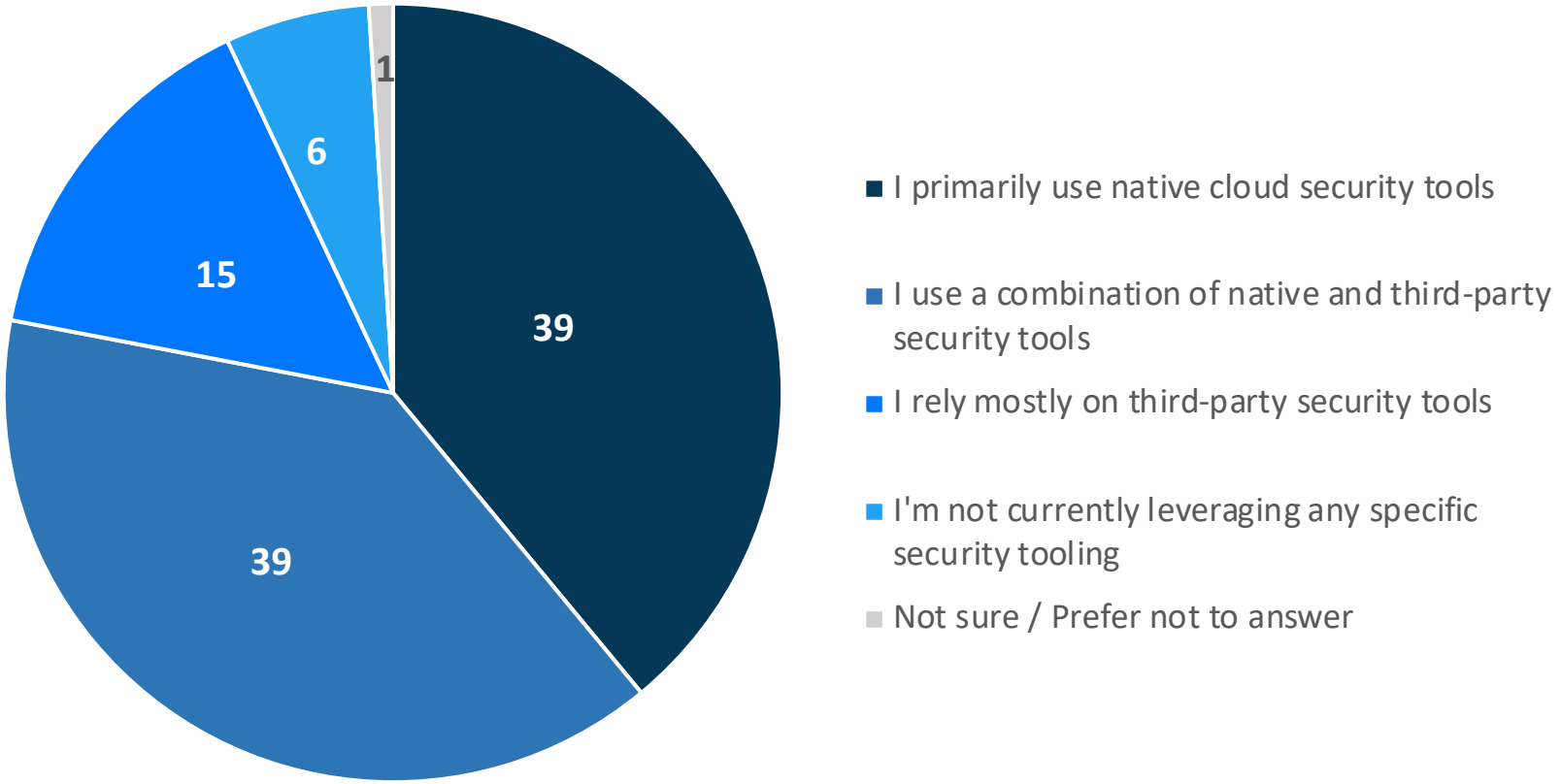
## USE OF SECURITY TOOLING IN CLOUD ENVIRONMENT



## Mobile and Cloud are the Biggest Cybersecurity Blind Spots

Mobile devices prove to be the largest visibility gap, as reported by 51% of cybersecurity professionals. Other major pain points include cloud workloads (40%), BYOD environments (39%), network infrastructure (34%), and SaaS applications (34%).

**Q7.** In which of the following areas do you currently experience visibility gaps within your cybersecurity landscape? Please select all that apply.

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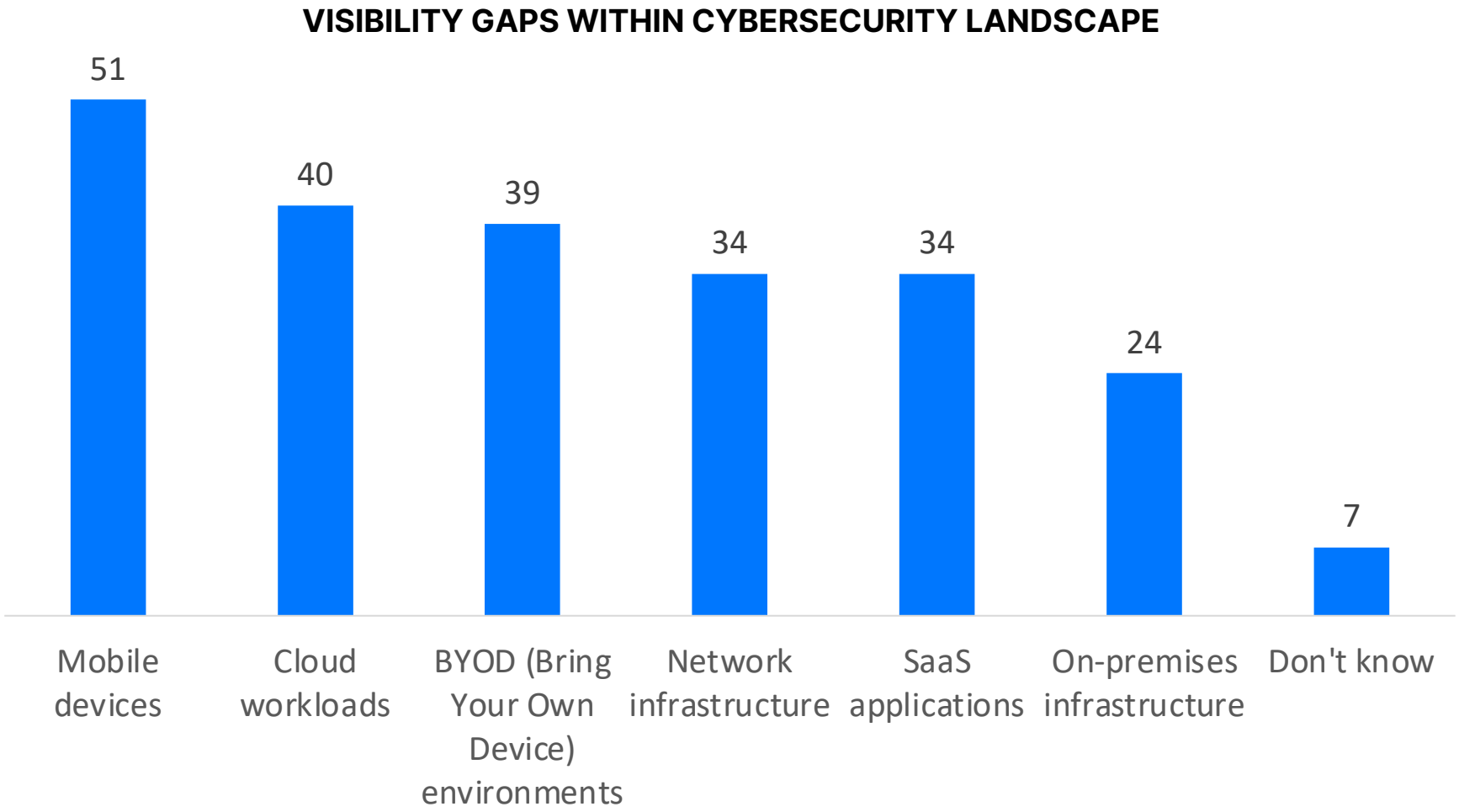

## Automation and Cloud Analytics Lead the Way

To strengthen security posture, six in ten cybersecurity experts (60%) are automating threat detection and response systems to aggregate and analyze data. Close behind, over half (54%) are leveraging cloud-native analytics platforms — highlighting a clear shift toward automation and cloud-driven insights.

**Q8.** How does your organization aggregate and analyze data to improve its security posture? Please select all that apply.

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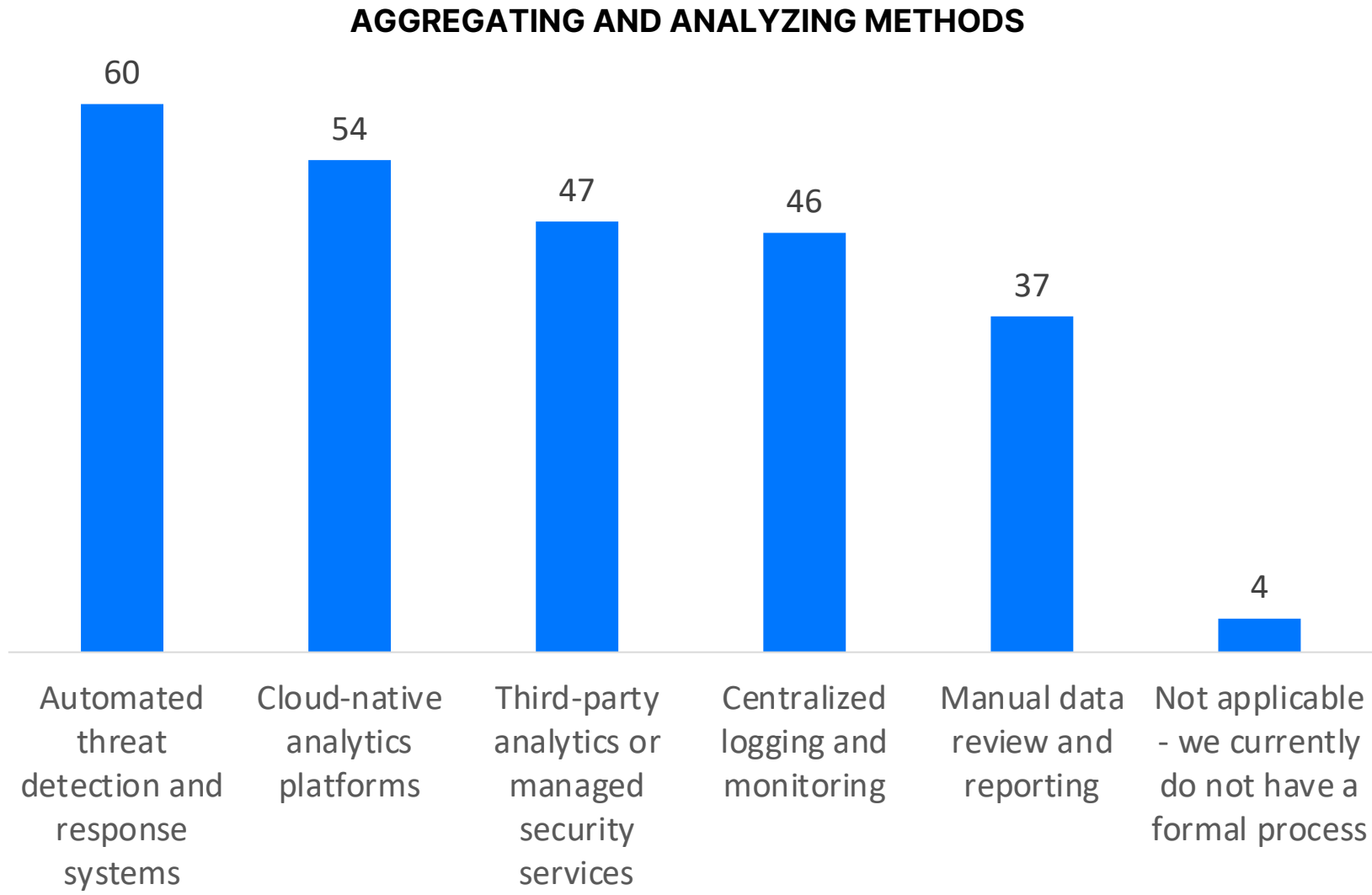

## DevSecOps Integration is Becoming the Norm

Security isn't an afterthought — it's built in: Four out of five cybersecurity experts report that DevSecOps capabilities are integrated into their security practices and policies — 44% say fully integrated, while 36% indicate partial integration. This shows a clear trend toward embedding security deeply into development workflows.

**Q9.** To what extent are security practices and policies integrated into your DevSecOps capability? Please select one option that best applies.

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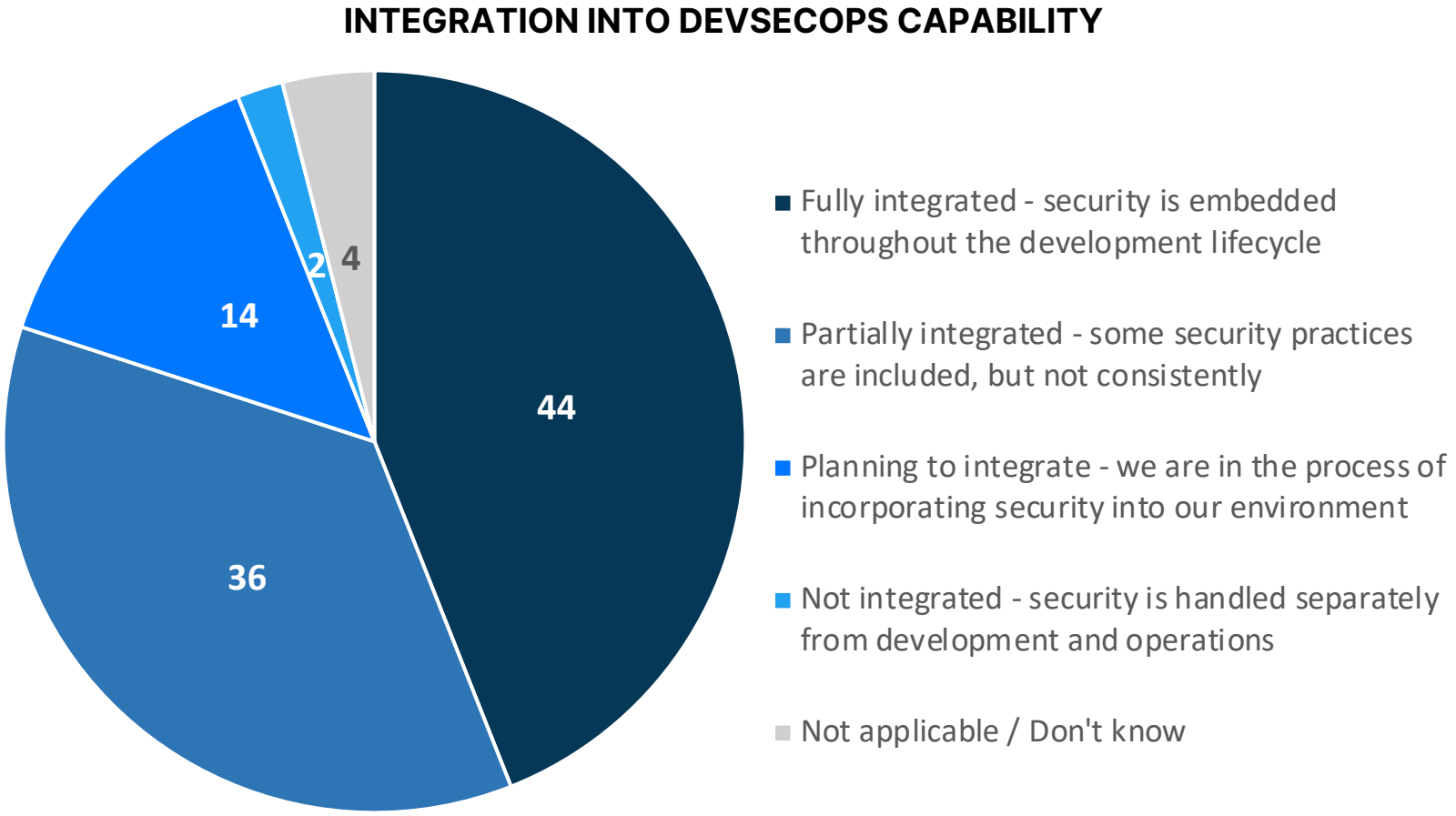

# Managing Cybersecurity Infrastructure: A Hybrid Approach Dominates

Over half of cybersecurity experts (53%) report using a combination of managed and in-house services to manage and monitor their infrastructure and tooling. Nearly one in three (31%) rely solely on in-house teams, while just 15% use exclusively outsourced managed services.

**Q10.** How is your organization currently managing and monitoring its cybersecurity infrastructure and tooling? Please select one option that best applies.

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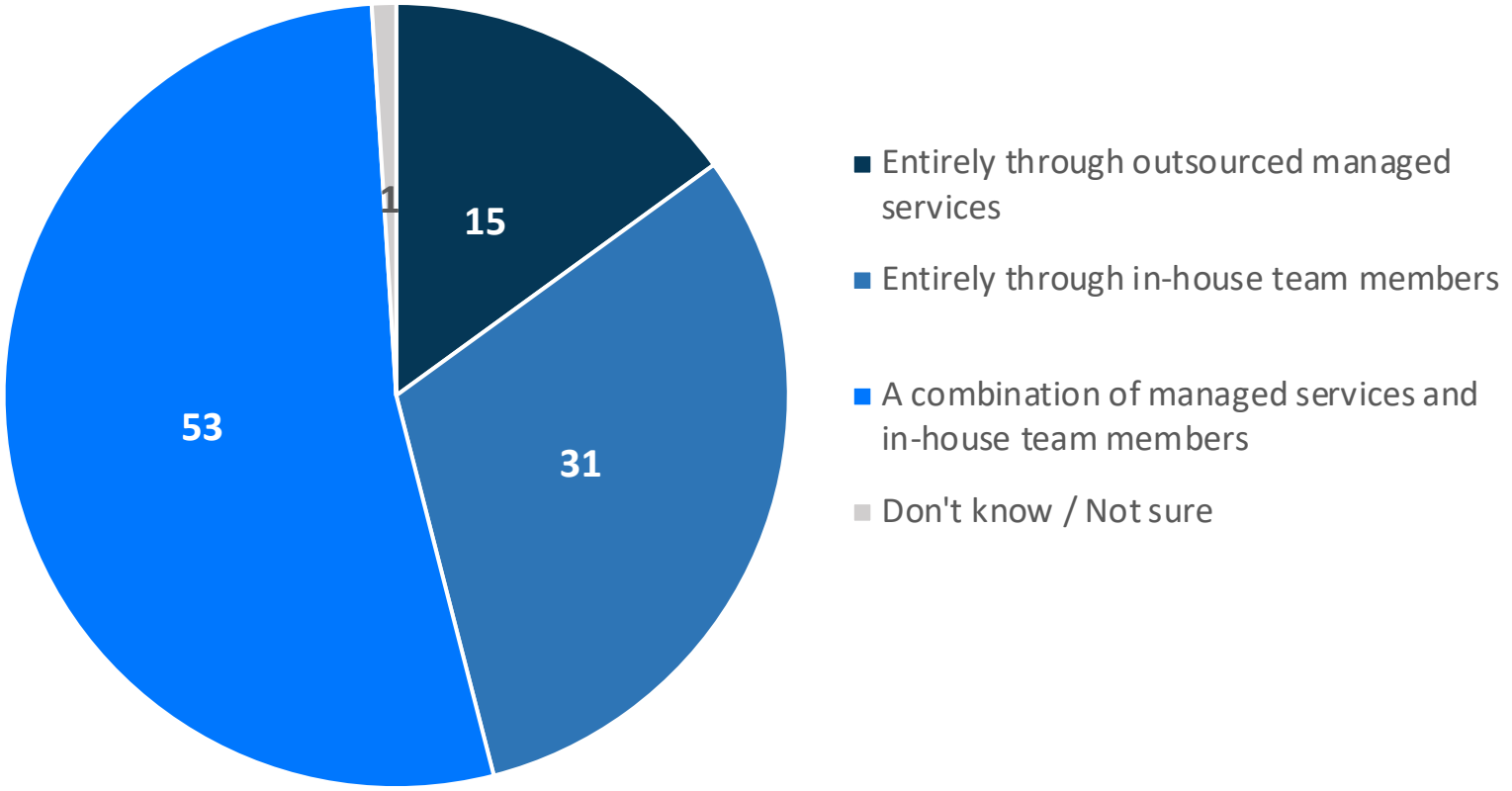
## METHODS TO MANAGE AND MONITOR CYBERSECURITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND TOOLING



# Methodology

- This study was conducted online between **10 October – 16 October 2025.**
- The sample is comprised of **163 cybersecurity experts and professionals** with decision-making responsibility in cybersecurity within their business.
- **Altum Strategy Group and YouGov** designed the questionnaire.
- Statistical significance is reported on **90% confidence or higher.**

# Respondents Represented

This study surveyed U.S. residents who are cybersecurity experts and professionals working in various industries and businesses.

## Included Industries (YouGov Classification)

- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Construction
- Education
- Engineering, Computer Related Design, and Architecture
- Finance, Accounting, and Consulting
- Government
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Insurance
- Law and Legal Services
- Manufacturing
- Media, Communications, and Digital Entertainment
- Mining, Oil and Gas, and Utilities
- Non-profit, Community, Religious and Social Service Organizations
- Other
- Real Estate, Rental, and Leasing
- Research
- Restaurant, Travel, and Lodging
- Retail Trade
- Transportation and Warehousing
- Wholesale Trade

## Cyber Role

| Role | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| CISO / Security Leadership + Security Specialist (SLSS) + Governance, Risk & Compliance (GRC) | 40% | 66 |
| Security Engineer + Security Analyst | 34% | 56 |
| DevSecOps / Cloud Security Specialist | 21% | 34 |
| Other | 4% | 7 |

## Primary Cloud Computing Environment

| Primary | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| Hybrid / Multi-cloud | 29% | 48 |
| Google Cloud Platform | 26% | 43 |
| AWS | 17% | 28 |
| Microsoft Azure | 15% | 25 |
| On-premises only | 8% | 13 |
| Not sure | 4% | 6 |

## Company Size

| Staff total | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| 1-50 | 25% | 41 |
| 51-500 | 33% | 54 |
| 500+ staff | 42% | 68 |

## Company Age

| Age | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| <10 years | 19% | 31 |
| 10-20 years | 23% | 38 |
| 20-50 years | 26% | 42 |
| >50 years | 20% | 32 |
| Don’t know | 12% | 20 |

## Industry Grouped

| Industry | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| Knowledge | 43% | 70 |
| Service | 34% | 55 |
| Asset | 10% | 17 |
| Other | 13% | 21 |

## About the 2026 U.S. Cybersecurity Leaders Survey

The inaugural U.S. Cybersecurity Leaders Survey was conducted online between 10 October and 16 October 2025 in collaboration with YouGov. The sample comprises 163 U.S. cybersecurity experts and professionals with decision-making responsibility for cybersecurity in their organizations. Altum Strategy Group and YouGov designed the questionnaire; significant results are reported at a 90% confidence level or higher.

## About Altum Strategy Group

Altum delivers the next technology wave to clients in a tailored way to empower teams and create value. Thinking boldly, deploying inclusive collaboration and active engagement is how we work. Altum applies our diverse expertise to lead strategy development at all levels, enabling us to incorporate cutting-edge digital solutions and innovative business operations that deliver impactful results. Altum powers our clients and their teams so they can ride the current wave and anticipate the next one. Learn more at **altumstrategy.com**.

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