



The Changing Role of the CISO

Today's Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) is an architect and business leader.



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In This InfoBrief

IDC sought to understand the CISO's role in today's digitally transformed organizations.

- ▶ What are their top priorities when working with IT?
- ▶ What are their key challenges?
- ▶ How do they spend their time?
- ▶ How has the role evolved?

Research Overview

- ✓ IDC conducted a survey of 847 decision makers in 17 countries on tech and cybersecurity products.
- ✓ Respondents were director level and above and worked at organizations with 500 or more employees.
- ✓ IDC focused on CIOs and CISOs.
- ✓ IDC also conducted several in-depth interviews to gather qualitative insights.

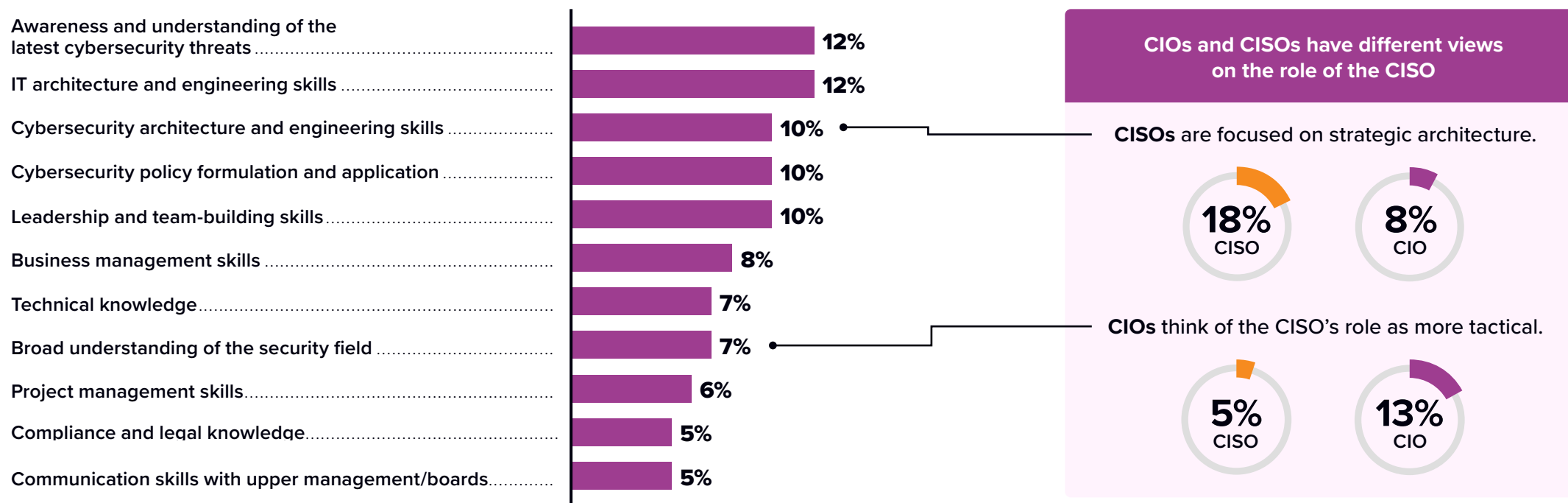
Key Findings

- ✓ The CISO's role is different to what most think.
- ✓ CISOs are concerned with both strategy and tactics.
- ✓ CIOs and CISOs aren't always aligned.
- ✓ CISOs need to continuously evolve their skills to meet the strategic nature of their role.

The Reality of a CISO's Role is Different than Most Think

Everyone agrees that a CISO is more than just a cybersecurity person. The role also needs a mix of IT architecture, people, business, and communication skills.

Thinking about strengths and skills that a CISO should possess, which of the following are most important?



n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs), n = 847; Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

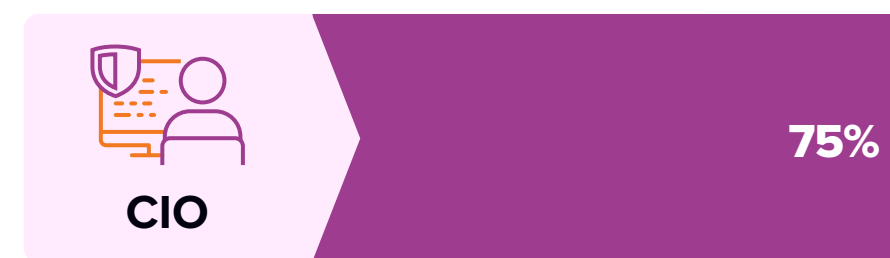
CISOs Hold Themselves to a High Standard

Organizations have more confidence in their CISOs than CISOs do of themselves.

Overall, how satisfied are you with how your current CISO meets and achieves their role functions?



How satisfied are you with your CISO's response to the recent breach?



Overall, how satisfied are you with your ability to achieve the role functions of CISO?



How satisfied are you with your response as CISO to the recent breach?

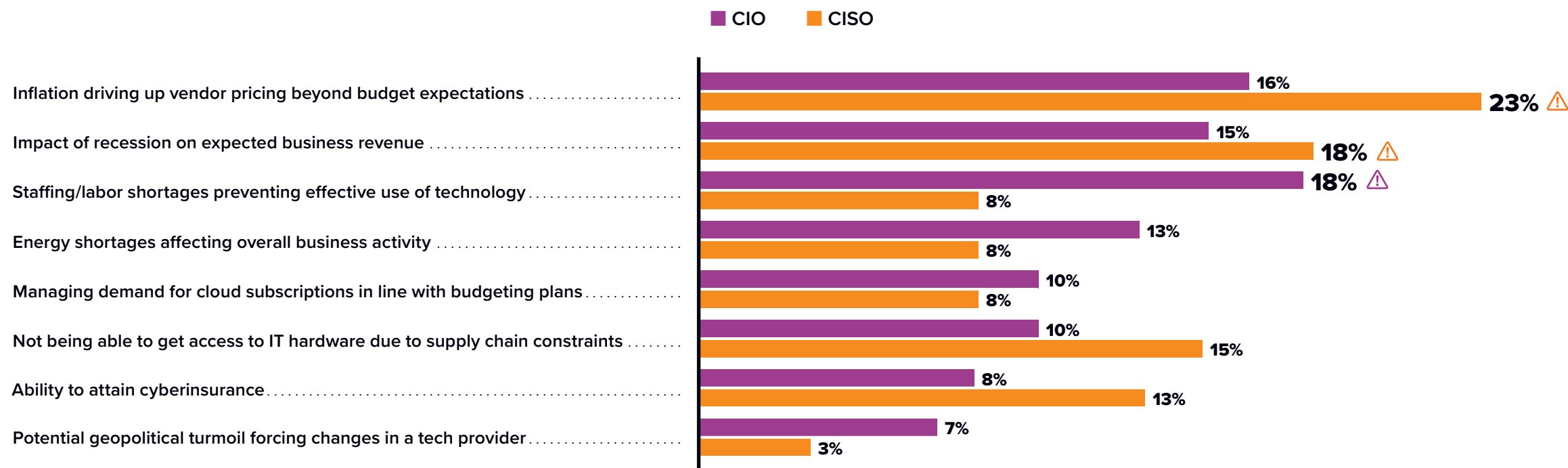


n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

Despite Being in a Strategic Role, CISOs Have Tactical Concerns

CISOs are most concerned with inflation’s impact on budget and the impact of recession on expected business revenue, while CIOs are most concerned with staffing shortages.

Which of the following risk factors related to your organization’s tech spending for the next 12 months concern you the most?



n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC’s CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023 | For an accessible version of the data in these figures, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

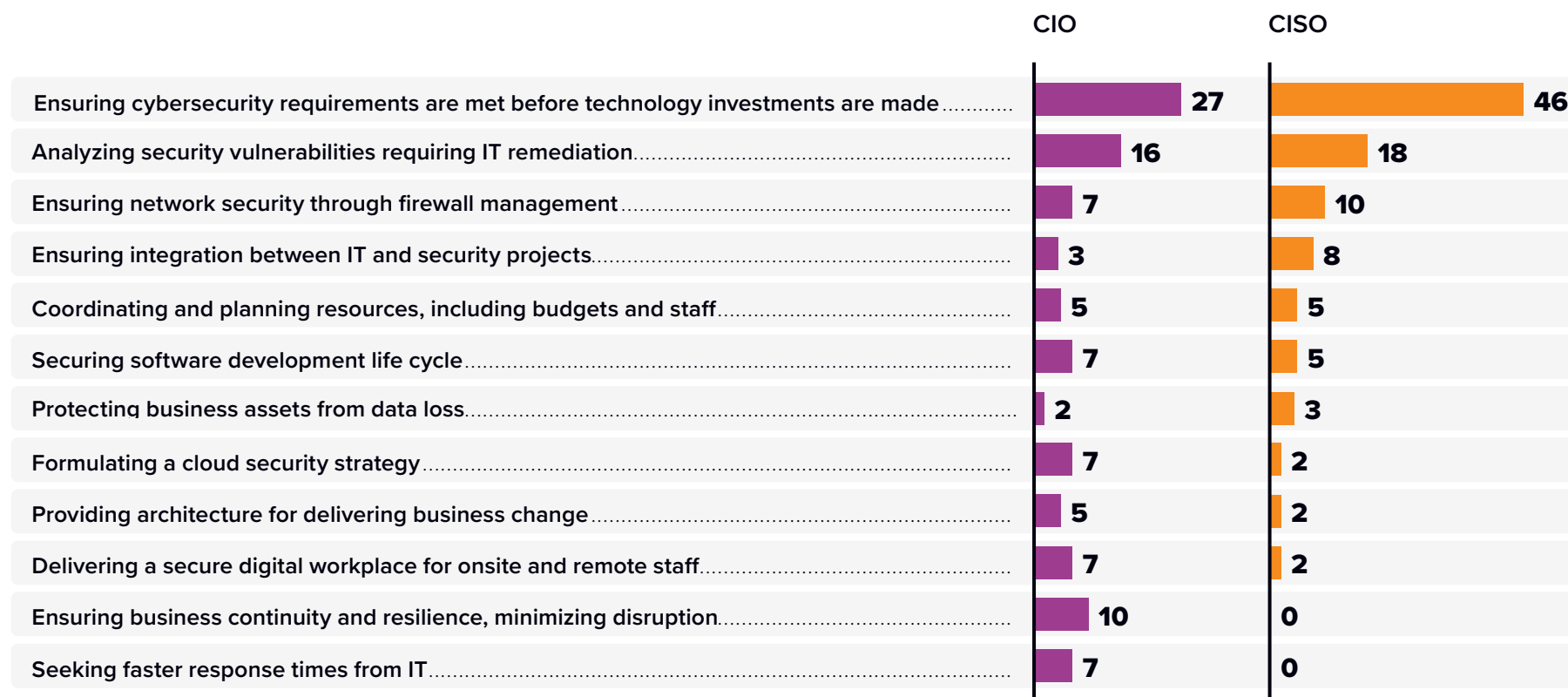
CIO and CISO Priorities Are Not Aligned

Competing expectations about the CISO’s role in business resiliency may hamper their effectiveness.

What are the CIO’s areas of top priority in working with cybersecurity?
 What are the CISO’s areas of top priority in working with IT?



CISOs are most focused on cybersecurity and vulnerabilities. **CIOs** are focused on seeking faster response times from IT and ensuring business continuity and resilience, minimizing disruption, which aren’t on CISOs’ radar.

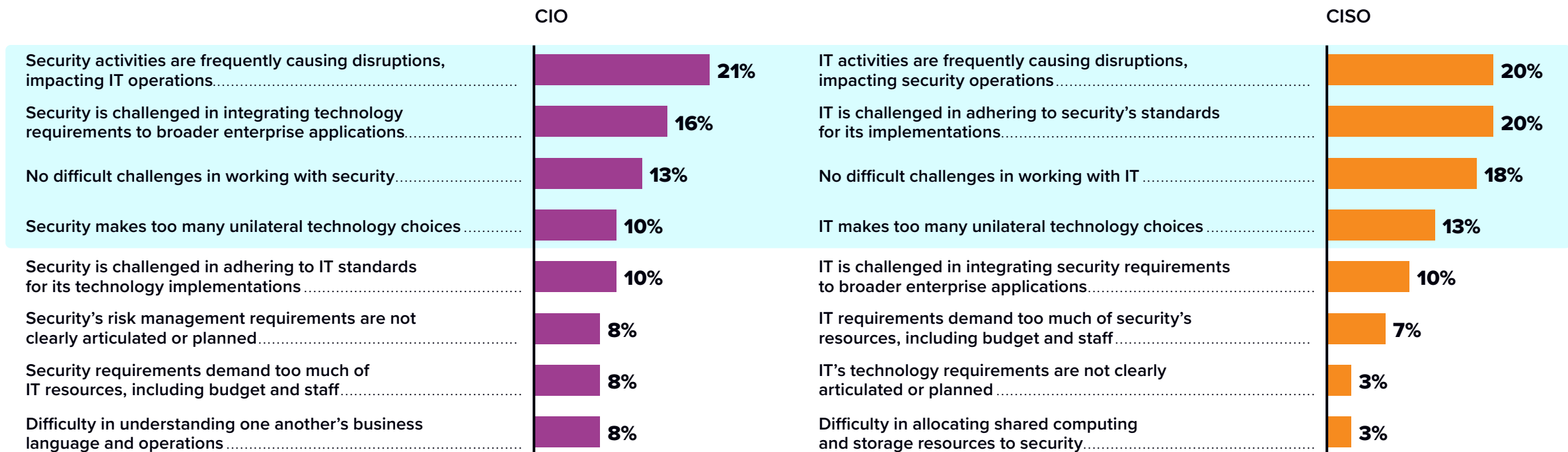


n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC’s CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023 | For an accessible version of the data in these figures, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

CIOs and CISOs Each See the Other as a Source of Friction

CIOs cite security activities frequently causing disruptions, impacting IT operations as the top challenge, while CISOs say the same about IT activities.

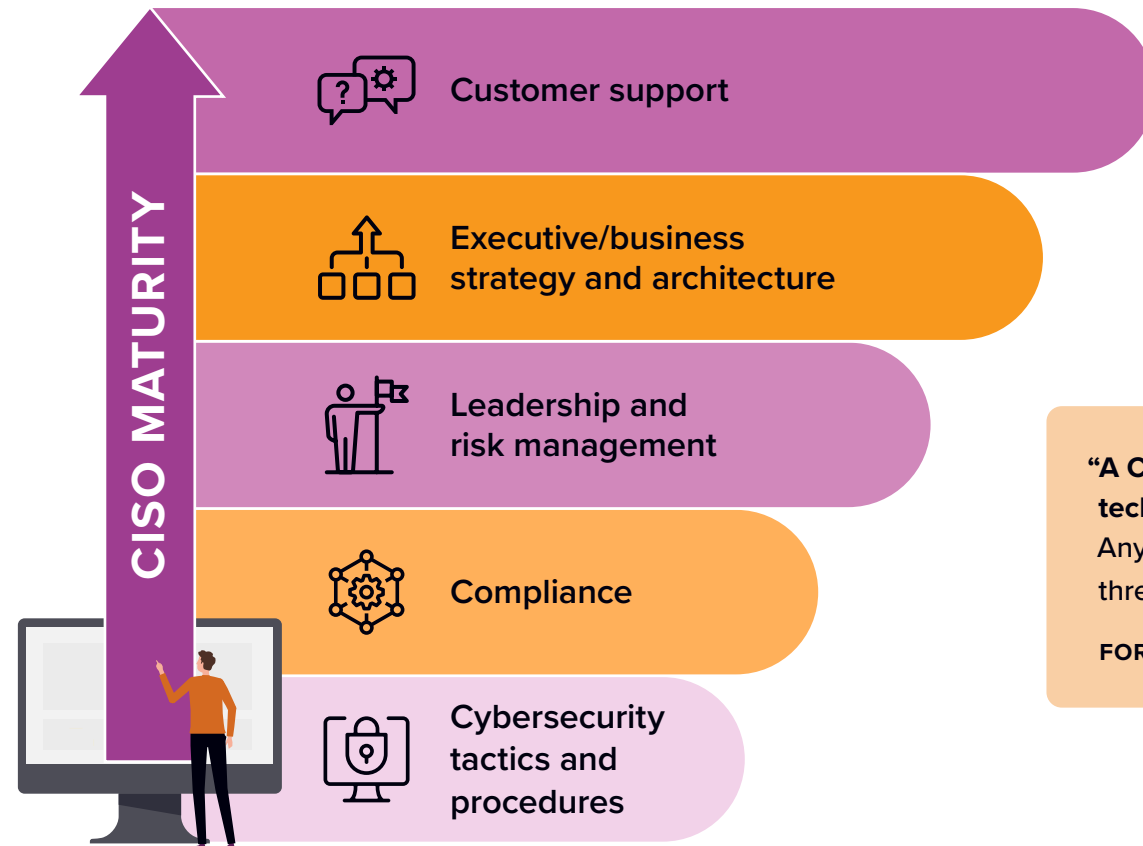
Which area of focus has proven most challenging in working with security?



n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

More Tenured CISOs Focus on Customer Support and Business Strategy

How CISOs Spend Their Time



“There is growing need for customer support as the customer’s compliance requirements grow, and so the CISO has to help. The CISO also has to be involved in new sales. **Any new customer wants to meet with the CISO and understand your security measures.** So as you look at that, you can clearly see security is part of their mantra.”

CIO OF MIDSIZE BANK

“A CISO has to be able to articulate **technical risk in a business-friendly manner.** Any executive is trying to understand what threats mean to the business.”

FORTUNE 500 INSURANCE CIO

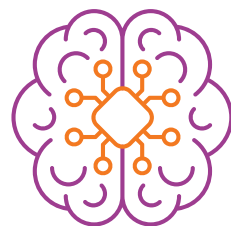


The Security Mindset Transitions from Fear to Hypergrowth Mode

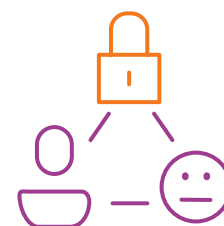
CISOs must balance the real fears of sophisticated cyberattacks and an economic downturn with supporting growth initiatives to create new revenue streams and boost efficiency.



99%
of CEOs lead or support
digital initiatives.



Investing in emerging
technology areas
(e.g, generative AI,
predictive AI, machine
learning, blockchain)
is the most common
technology priority.



Security leaders coming
from a place of fear over
numerous risk concerns is
a huge internal challenge
to accomplishing digital
initiatives.



Delays in security teams
adopting a growth mindset
prompts business leaders to
pinpoint security holding back
key growth initiatives.

n = 847; Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

Security Executives Are Looking to Drive Business Initiatives

What is the most important way you see your role evolving over the next 12–24 months?



n = 89; Source: IDC's Worldwide C-Suite Tech Survey, August 2023 | For an accessible version of the data in these figures, see [Supplemental Data](#) in the Appendix.

Key Takeaway

CISOs need to build their skills to become more strategic.

As security practitioners move higher up in the organization, their skills and knowledge must evolve. CISOs must develop their executive abilities to have an impact across the most senior leadership to improve business outcomes.

CISOs should consult and coordinate with the following stakeholders:

- ✓ **Compliance:** to assist in achieving and reporting compliance
- ✓ **Risk management:** to aid in understanding the company's risk posture and to make necessary policy and technology changes
- ✓ **Line of business or other functional areas:** to coach and improve security and impact ongoing strategy
- ✓ **Overall leadership:** to develop cybersecurity function across the entire organization and not just IT
- ✓ **Customers:** to consult with customers to help them achieve compliance and understand customer pain points in order to best address



Appendix: Supplemental Data

The table in this appendix provides an accessible version of the data for the complex figures in this document. Click “Return to original figure” below this table to get back to the original data figure.

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 6

Which of the following risk factors related to your organization’s tech spending for the next 12 months concern you the most?

	CISO	CIO
Inflation driving up vendor pricing beyond budget expectations	23%	16%
Impact of recession on expected business revenue	18%	15%
Not being able to get access to IT hardware (e.g., PCs, peripherals, datacenter infrastructure) due to supply chain constraints	15%	10%
Ability to attain cyber insurance	13%	8%
Managing demand for cloud subscriptions in line with budgeting plans	8%	10%
Energy shortages affecting overall business activity	8%	13%
Staffing/labor shortages preventing effective use of technology	8%	18%
Potential geopolitical turmoil forcing changes in a tech provider	3%	6%

n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

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Appendix: Supplemental Data (continued)

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 7

What are the CISO's areas of top priority in working with IT? What are the CIO's areas of top priority in working with cybersecurity?

	CISO	CIO
Ensuring cybersecurity requirements are met before technology investments are made	46%	27%
Analyzing security vulnerabilities requiring IT remediation	18%	16%
Ensuring network security through firewall management	10%	7%
Ensuring integration between IT and security projects	8%	3%
Seeking faster response times from IT	0%	7%
Coordinating and planning resources, including budgets and staff	5%	5%
Formulating a cloud security strategy	2%	7%
Providing architecture for delivering business change	2%	5%
Delivering a secure digital workplace for onsite and remote staff	2%	7%
Protecting business assets from data loss	3%	2%
Securing software development life cycle	5%	7%
Ensuring business continuity and resilience, minimizing disruption	0%	10%

n = 61 (CISOs), n = 62 (CIOs); Source: IDC's CIO/CISO Thought Leadership Survey, November 2023

[Return to original figure](#)

Appendix: Supplemental Data (continued)

SUPPLEMENTAL DATA FROM PAGE 10

What is the most important way you see your role evolving over the next 12–24 months?

	Percentage
Continue to focus on traditional security responsibilities	39%
Move into a more business-focused role in the C-suite (e.g., COO, CMO)	5%
Take on a different technology leadership role (e.g., CTO, CDO)	7%
Develop into a broader CIO role	16%
Broaden role to be a business leader in the area of trust (including security, risk, and compliance)	33%

n = 89; Source: IDC's *Worldwide C-Suite Tech Survey*, August 2023

[Return to original figure](#)

About the IDC Analysts



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Frank leads the team that delivers compelling research in the areas of Network Security; Endpoint Security; Cybersecurity Analytics, Intelligence, Response, and Orchestration (AIRO); Identity & Digital Trust; Legal, Risk & Compliance; Data Security; IoT Security; and Cloud Security. Typically, he provides thought leadership and guidance for clients on a wide range of security products including endpoint security, identity and access management, authentication, threat analytics, and emerging products designed to protect transforming architectures and business models.

[More about Frank Dickson](#)

Message from the Sponsor



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