

Cybersecurity Leader Burnout: Causes and Resources

Cybersecurity leaders face unique work-related stresses that increase their risk of burnout. Are their organizations providing the necessary support to mitigate this risk?

Most cite extended work hours among the biggest cultural contributors to their experience with burnout

Likewise, having too many responsibilities is the top-reported organizational factor driving respondents' burnout

Nearly half of respondents say their organization's resources to cope with or prevent burnout are inadequate

Data collection: Jun 29 - Jul 13, 2023

Respondents: 178 IT and information security leaders primarily responsible for cybersecurity

About Gartner Peer Community One-Minute Insights:

Gartner Peer Community is for technology and business leaders to engage in discussions with peers and share knowledge in real time.

Surveys are designed by Gartner Peer Community editors and appear on the Gartner Peer Community platform. Once the respondent threshold is met, survey results are summarized in a One-Minute Insight.

The results of this summary are representative of the respondents that participated in the survey. It is not market representative.



Pressure to work long hours is the most common cultural factor driving burnout

62% of surveyed leaders who have experienced burnout (n = 111) report that pressure to work late nights or weekends has been one of the biggest contributing cultural factors.

From your perspective, which of the following cultural factors have been the biggest contributors to your experience(s) with burnout? Select up to 3.¹

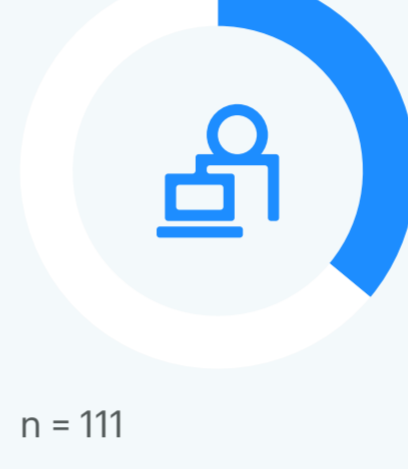
Risk of security incidents negatively impacting my reputation/career **32%** | Low morale among cybersecurity team(s) **32%** | Executive leadership doesn't view cybersecurity as critical to business success **26%** | No cybersecurity champions among executive leaders/board **23%** | Security function blamed if business goals aren't achieved **23%** | Security leader lacks authority among executive leadership **16%** | Factor(s) not listed here **6%** | Not sure **1%** | Other **0%**



62% Pressure to work late nights and/or weekends



37% Unrealistic expectations of security function and/or leader



36% Feelings of isolation

n = 111

"There is a tremendous amount of (constant) pressure on cybersecurity leaders. Blame/pointing fingers, in the case of a security event, is always on your mind... Easing that fear is critical for an organization to reduce the level of burnout."

Director, finance industry, 10,000+ employees

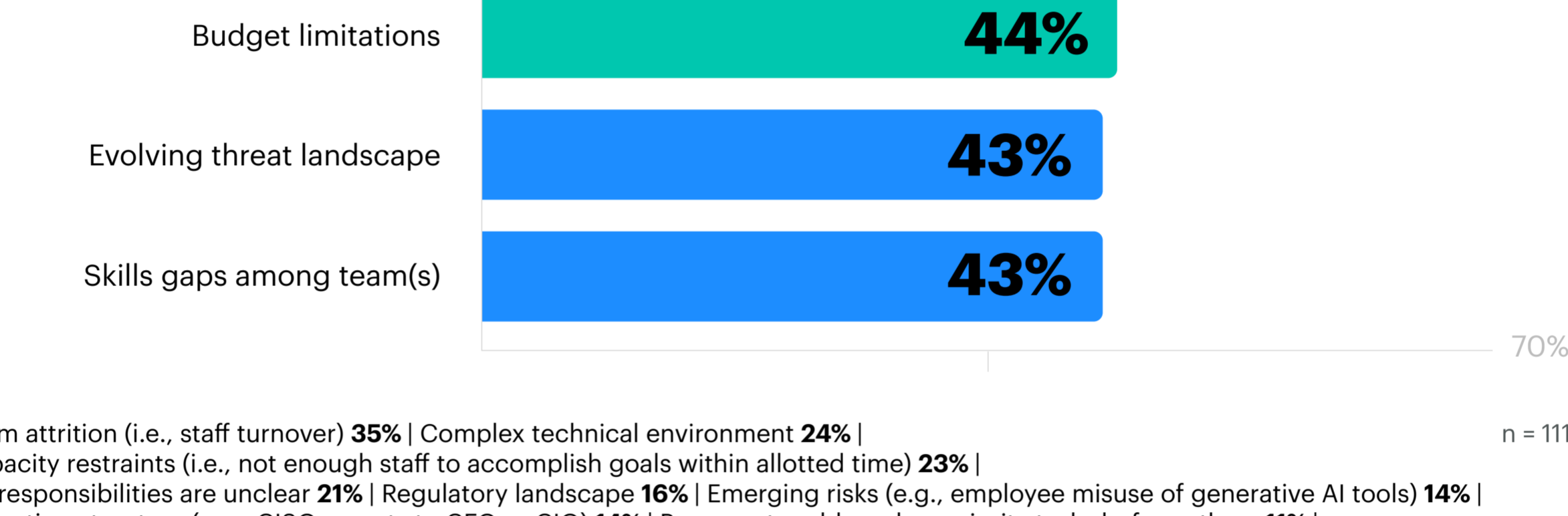


Question: Please share any final thoughts on burnout among cybersecurity leaders.

Excessive responsibilities cited as major organizational factor driving burnout

Among the same group, nearly two-thirds (65%) say that having too many responsibilities has been one of the biggest contributors to their burnout in terms of organizational or technical factors.

From your perspective, which of the following organizational and/or technical factors have been the biggest contributors to your experience(s) with burnout? Select up to 3.¹



Team attrition (i.e., staff turnover) **35%** | Complex technical environment **24%** | Capacity restraints (i.e., not enough staff to accomplish goals within allotted time) **23%** | My responsibilities are unclear **21%** | Regulatory landscape **16%** | Emerging risks (e.g., employee misuse of generative AI tools) **14%** | Reporting structure (e.g., CISO reports to CFO or CIO) **14%** | Pressure to address low-priority tasks before others **11%** | Remote/hybrid working issues (e.g., BYOD policies) **10%** | Factor(s) not listed here **1%** | Not sure **0%** | Other **0%**

n = 111

"From my perspective, there is a gap between the number of people needed to implement security systems and the number that are needed to handle an active incident. During incidents, the burden on the team can become unbearable, with no way to reduce it."

C-suite, finance industry, <1,000 employees

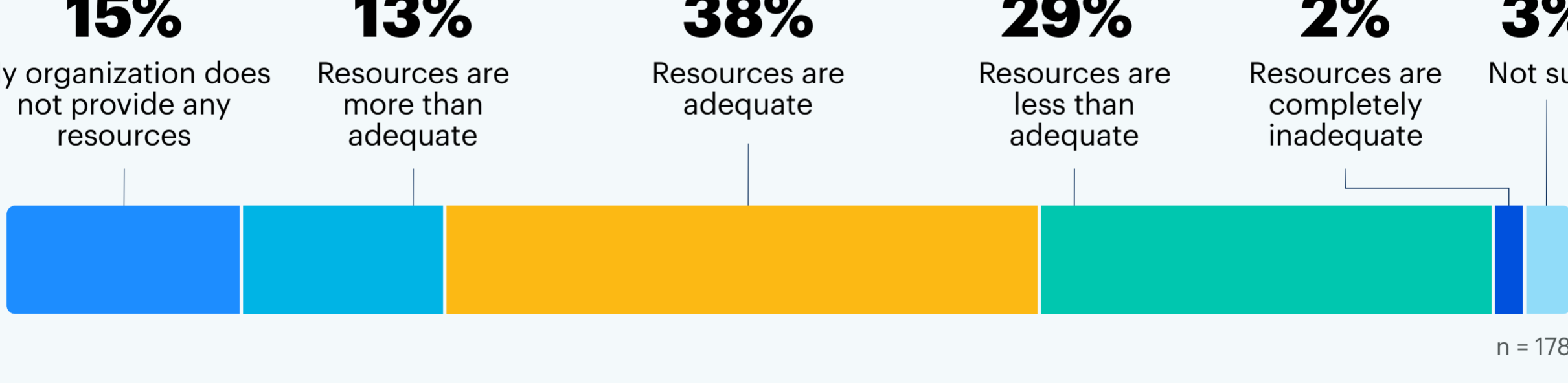


Question: Please share any final thoughts on burnout among cybersecurity leaders.

Almost half say organizational resources for burnout are lacking

Over half (51%) of all respondents (n = 178) indicate their organization provides adequate resources to address burnout, but 46% say these resources are either inadequate or unavailable at their organization.

From your perspective, does your organization provide adequate resources to cope with or reduce the risk of burnout (e.g., benefits related to mental and physical wellness)?²



n = 178

"I believe resources like quicker access to company-endorsed therapy and lounging areas are nominal at best; in order to deal with frequent burnout, the 'rushed' culture of the company needs to change and employee welfare needs to be considered."

C-suite, finance industry, <1,000 employees



Question: Please share one or more example(s) of resources you would like your organization to provide that would help cybersecurity leaders cope with and/or reduce the risk of burnout.³

In their own words...

"I think that providing the appropriate segregation of duties between normal keep-the-lights-on activities and net new project work needs to occur. If we have our same resources that are working the day-to-day function and then also doing projects, that is where burnout occurs."

- VP, telecommunications industry, 1,000 - 5,000 employees

"We have [an] unlimited vacation policy but it is clear they don't want you to use it at all. I'd prefer to go back to standard policy so there's less stigma in taking time off."

- Director, healthcare industry, 1,000 - 5,000 employees

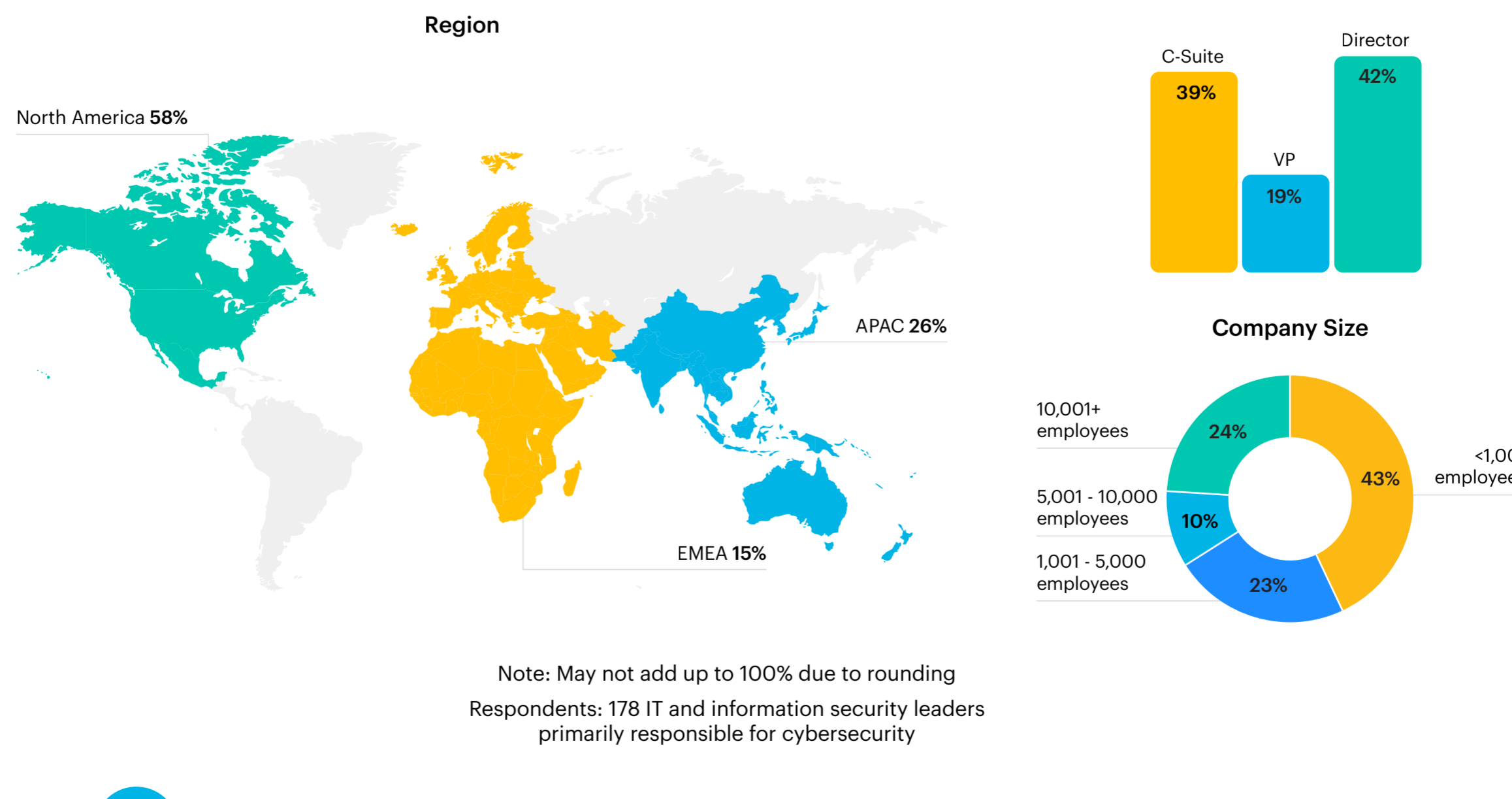
"We basically need more resources."

- C-suite, utilities industry, 10,000+ employees

Question: Please share one or more example(s) of resources you would like your organization to provide that would help cybersecurity leaders cope with and/or reduce the risk of burnout.³



Respondent Breakdown



Note: May not add up to 100% due to rounding
Respondents: 178 IT and information security leaders primarily responsible for cybersecurity

Want more insights like this from leaders like yourself?

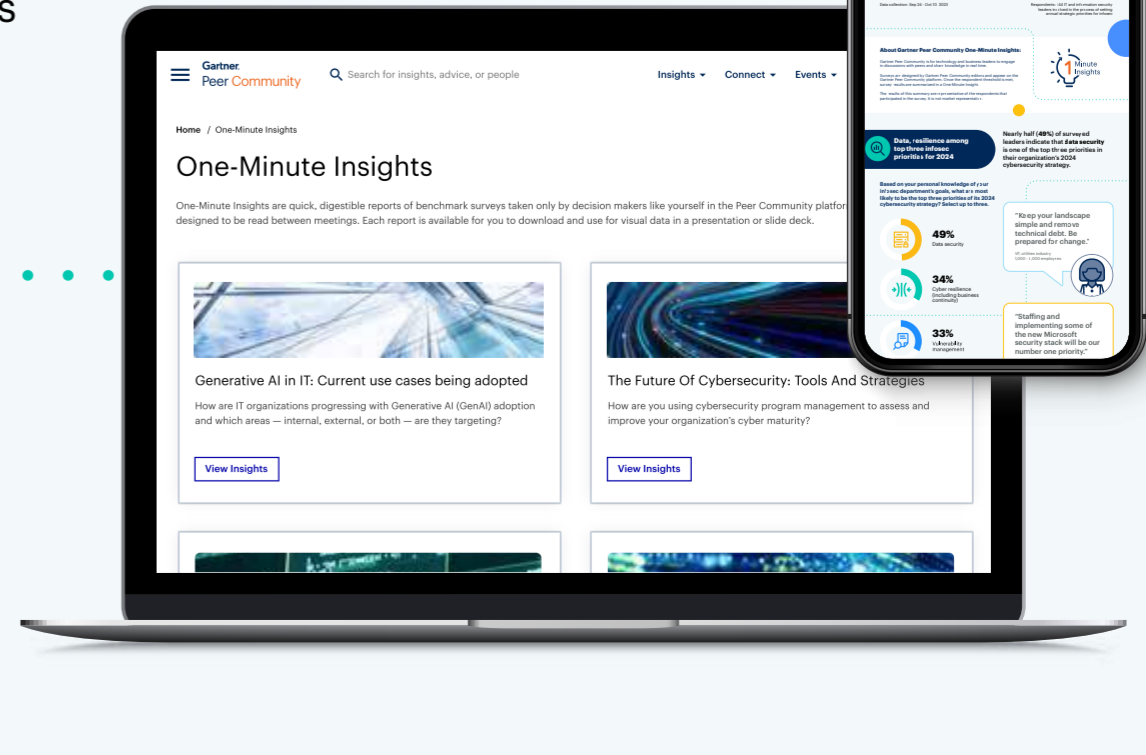
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Source: Gartner Peer Community, Burnout Among Cybersecurity Leaders: Causes and Resources survey

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¹ Question shown only to respondents who answered "Yes, once" or "Yes, multiple times" to "Burnout in the workplace refers to a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion caused by chronic work-related stress. Have you personally experienced burnout in the past 24 months?"

² Question shown only to respondents who answered "Yes, once", "Yes, multiple times", "No, but my team and/or colleagues have" or "No, but I'm concerned about burnout among cybersecurity leaders" to "Burnout in the workplace refers to a state of physical, mental and emotional exhaustion caused by chronic work-related stress. Have you personally experienced burnout in the past 24 months?" Respondents who answered "No" were eliminated from the survey.

³ Question shown only to respondents who answered "My organization does not provide any resources," "Resources are less than adequate" or "Resources are completely inadequate" to "From your perspective, does your organization provide adequate resources to cope with or reduce the risk of burnout (e.g., benefits related to mental and physical wellness)?"