

Risks of Accumulating Technical Debt

What are the most pressing risks of technical debt accumulation, and how do software engineering leaders feel about their current level of technical debt?



High maintenance costs and low developer productivity are among the top risks of accumulating tech debt

Most leaders feel comfortable with their organization's current tech debt level

Data collection: Feb 8 - Apr 23, 2024

Respondents: 102 software engineering leaders with visibility into technical debt

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.

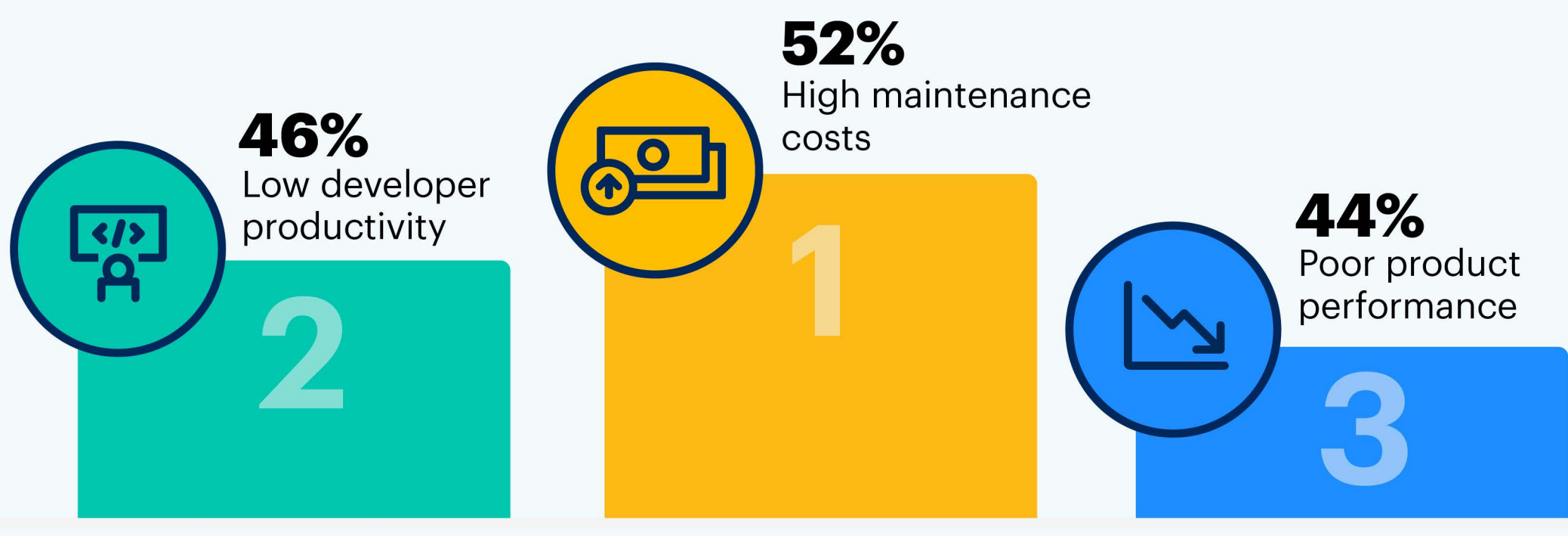
The results of this summary are representative of the respondents that participated in the survey. It is not market representative.



High maintenance costs are among top risks of accumulating tech debt

High maintenance costs (52%), low developer productivity (46%) and poor product performance (44%) are among the most significant risks incurred by accumulating too much technical debt.

What are the most significant risks of accumulating too much technical debt? Select up to three.



Decreased ability to deliver new features **42%** | Cybersecurity issues **39%** | User dissatisfaction **33%** | Bugs **31%** | System downtime/outages **29%** | Negative staff morale **25%** | Employee turnover **12%** | Other **0%** | Not sure **0%**

n = 102

“Technical debt should always be addressed prior to building out a shiny new feature. Without having a plan to address the debt, it will continue to accumulate to a point where it’s unmanageable and will decrease productivity to engineering teams.”

Manager, software industry, 1,000 - 5,000 employees

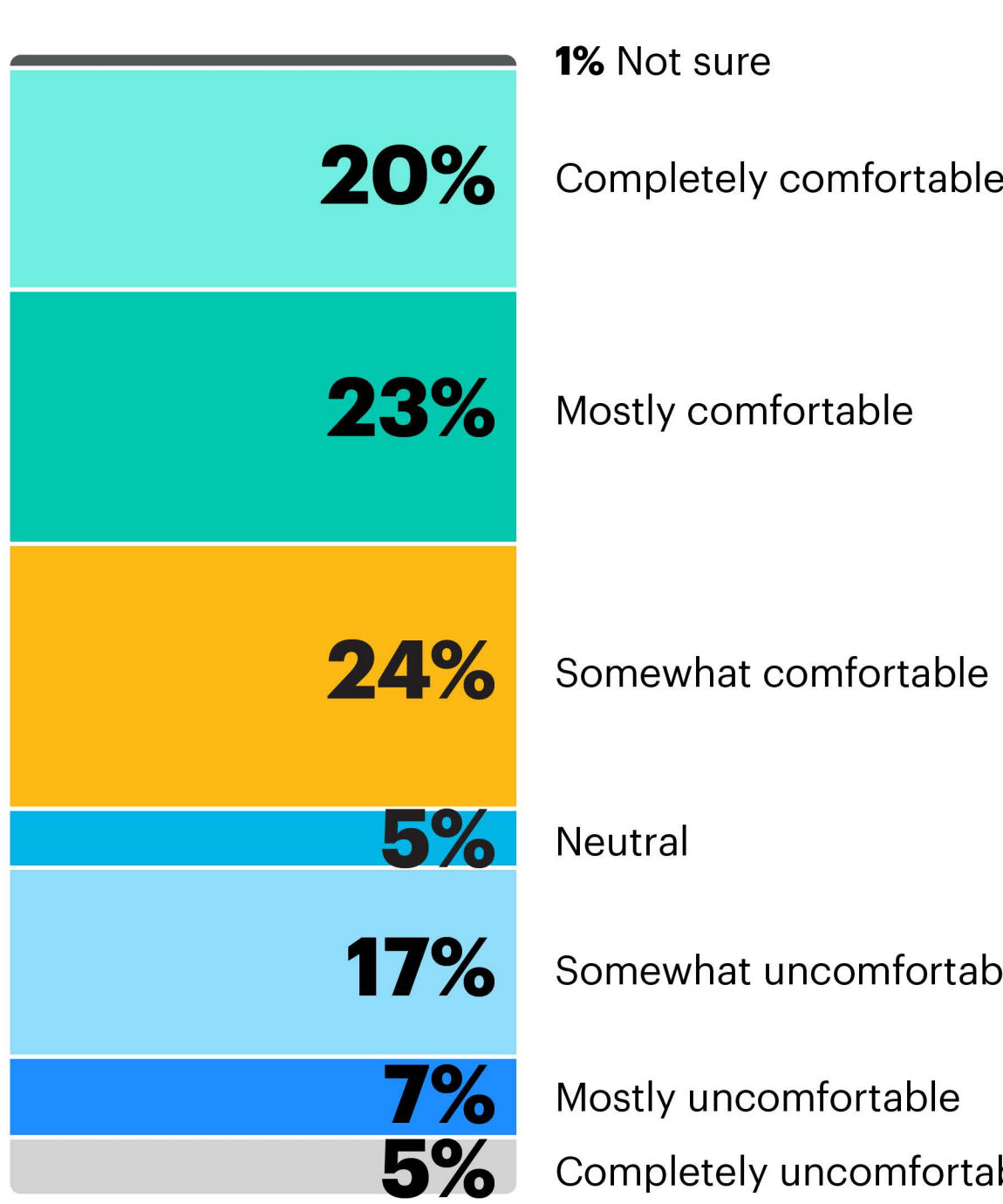


Question: What are your final thoughts on addressing technical debt?

Most leaders feel comfortable with their organization’s current tech debt level

More than two-thirds (67%) feel comfortable with their organization’s current amount of technical debt — 29% do not.

How comfortable are you with the amount of technical debt at your organization?



“We book as part of [our] yearly delivery plan strict projects to tackle technical debt. This way it is supported and transparent for the business where time is invested in.”

Director, telecommunications industry, <1,000 employees



Question: What are your final thoughts on addressing technical debt?

In their own words...

“M&A activities tend to create overlapping tech stack issues, inherently impacting technical debt. However, executing consolidation projects to cure the overlap can create additional, often unpredictable costs, exacerbating the problem. The challenge is balancing the costs of consolidation against the costs of poor user experiences.”

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

“Always be intentional about incurring a technical debt and make plans to pay it off when a certain criteria is triggered. It is important to reflect the plan to tackle technical debt in the delivery roadmaps.”

- VP, professional services industry, 10,000+ employees

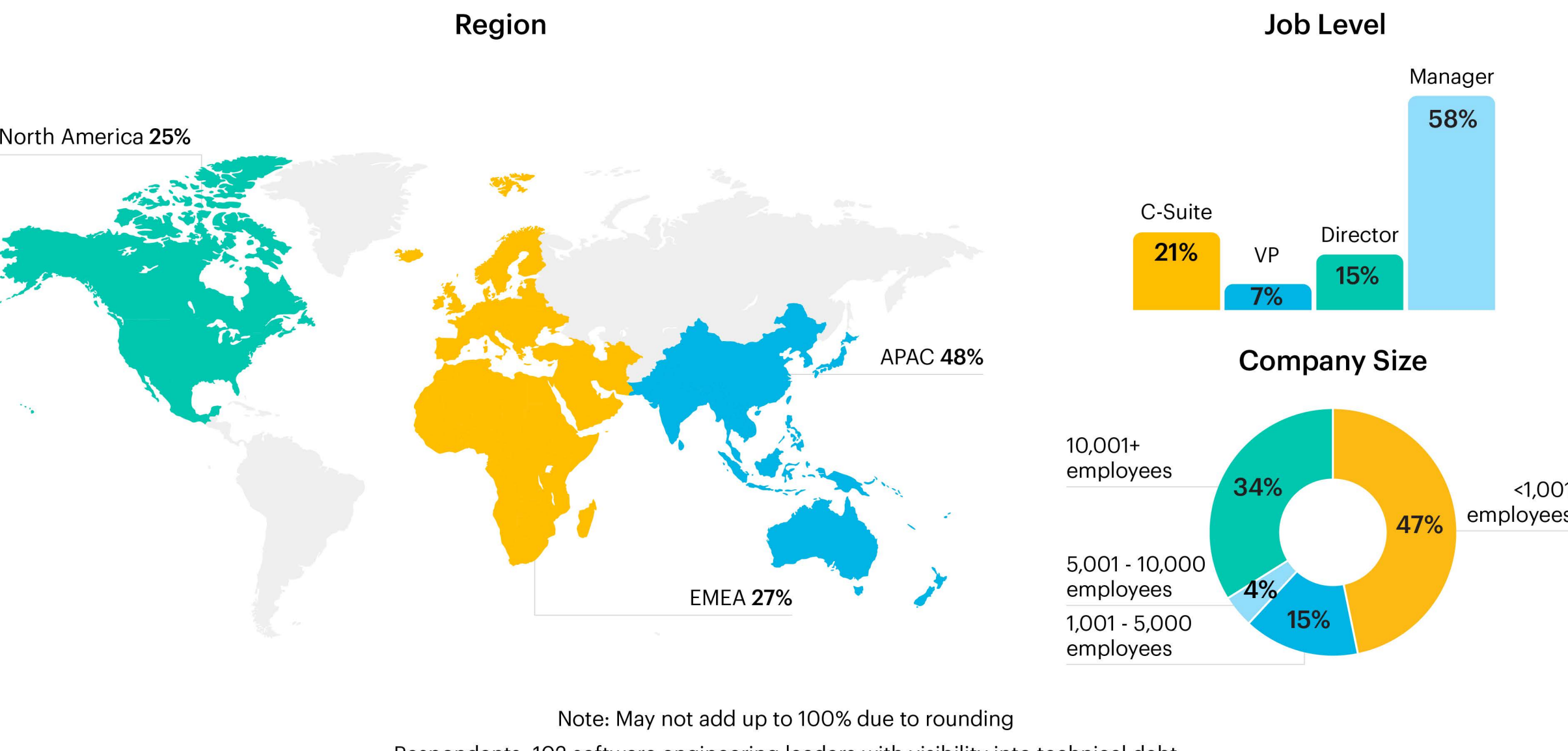
“In the upcoming era of AI and high-end advancements, it will become very important to address the technical debt in the software engineering development department. We need to take important decisions on prioritising refactoring and improvement efforts, communicating openly about the status of the technical debt and adopting a mindset of continuous improvement.”

- Manager, transportation industry, 10,000+ employees

Question: What are your final thoughts on addressing technical debt?



Respondent Breakdown



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Source: Gartner Peer Community, Technical Debt: When to Accumulate and When to Address It survey

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