# Audit committee survey insights

## Middle East 2025

KPMG Middle East Board Leadership Centre

KPMG. Make the Difference.

November 2025

# Foreword

We are pleased to share the key findings from KPMG in the Middle East Audit Committee Survey, with participation from over 26 audit committee members across the Middle East, in particular from Saudi Arabia, UAE and Oman.

The survey provides valuable perspectives on some of the top concerns, evolving risk priorities, and shifting oversight responsibilities facing audit committees in today's dynamic business environment.

As audit committees respond to rising macroeconomic uncertainty, regulatory change, and complex risks—ranging from cybersecurity and AI to supply chains and ESG—the findings offer a window into how boards are reshaping their focus and processes to stay ahead. In a world of fractured alliances and real-time threats, we believe that the audit committees must now interpret risks that are dynamic, intersecting, and deeply strategic.
We hope this snapshot of views from Middle Eastern audit committee members helps inform your discussions and decision-making.

Please feel free to reach out if you'd like to explore these insights further.

**Abdullah Akbar**
Partner, Audit &
Head of Board Leadership Centre
KPMG Middle East

# Key takeaways

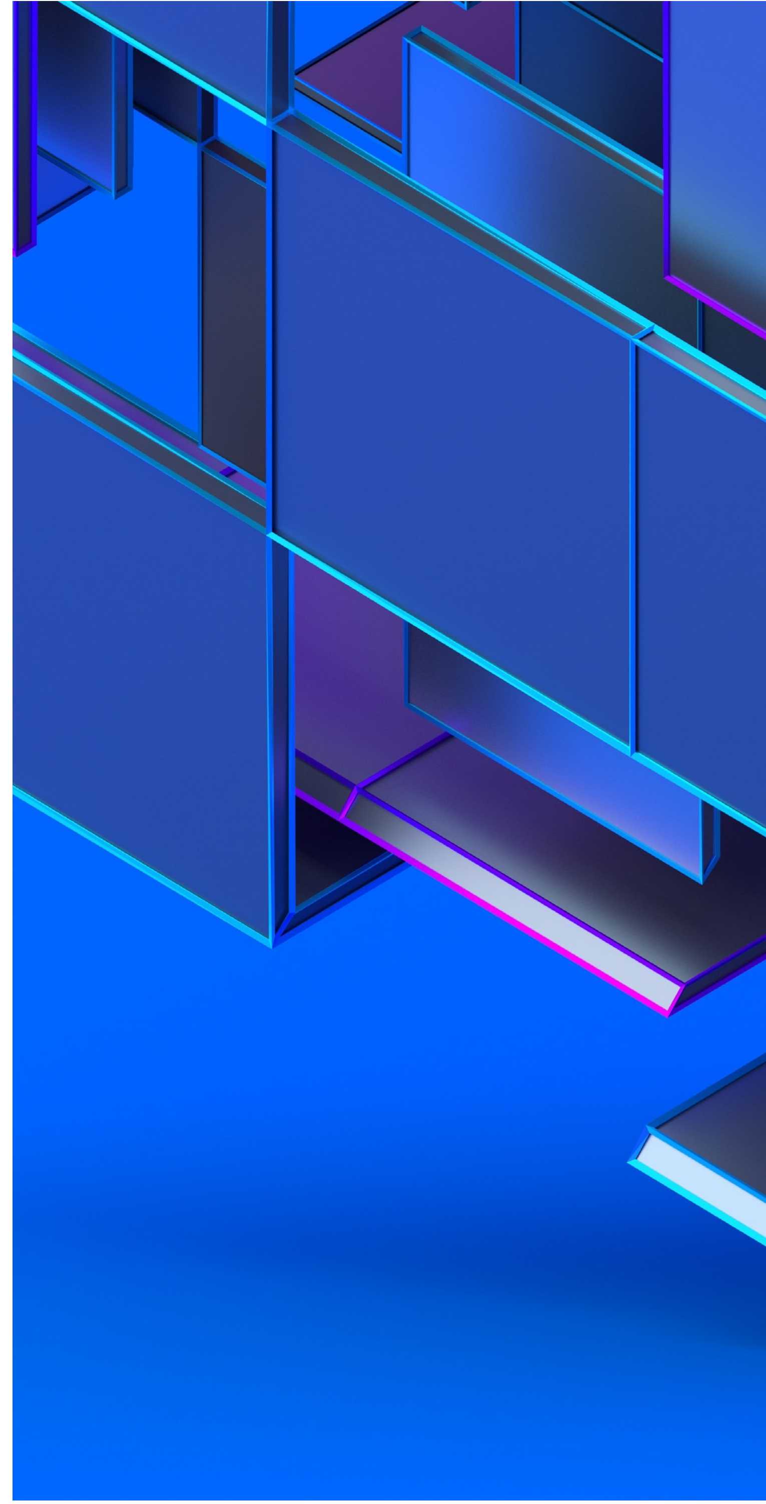
To gain a better understanding of the key challenges, concerns, and priorities impacting audit committee agendas in 2025, the KPMG Board Leadership Centre (BLC) surveyed 26 Middle East audit committee members and chairs as part of a global survey conducted February–May 2025.

Two macro trends—**the increased complexity of the business and risk environment, and talent issues**—are top of mind.

The number of companies with **sophisticated risk management** is still a minority, but many are keeping pace.

Most audit committees continue to shoulder **heavy risk agendas;** some are reassessing oversight responsibilities.

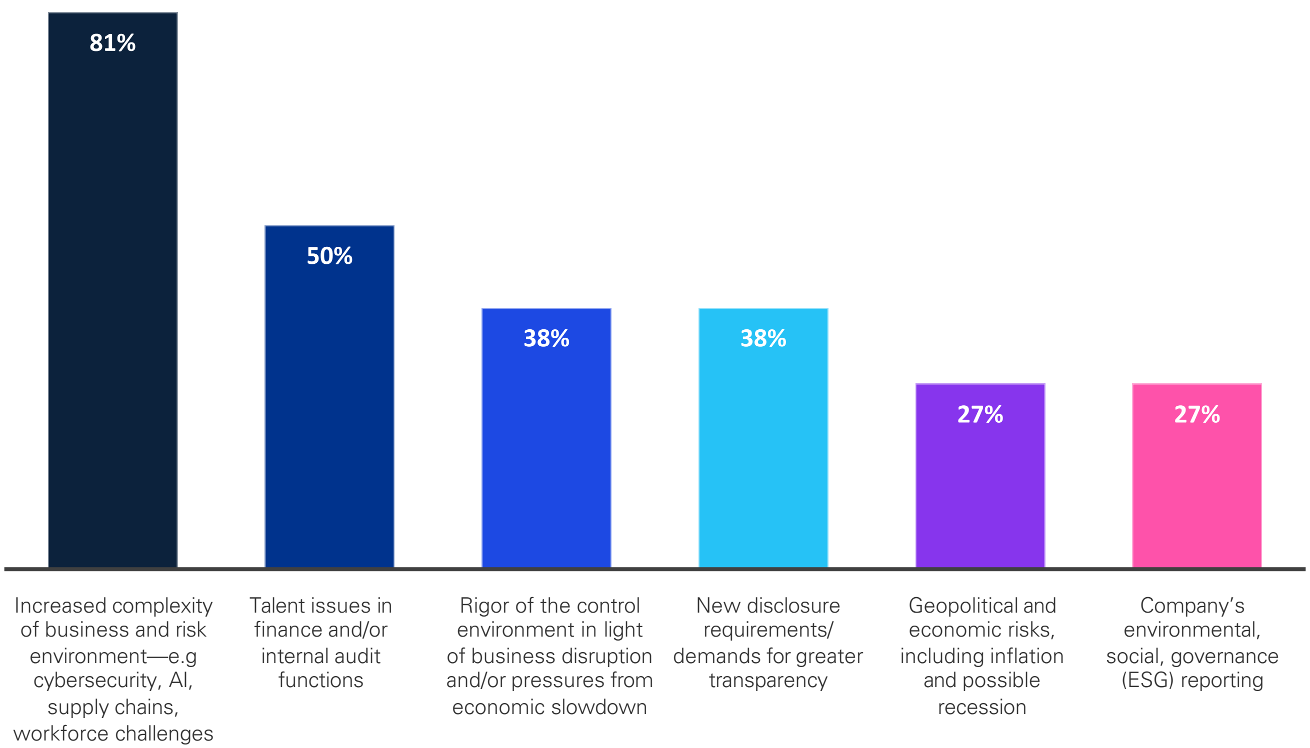
Of the risks related to the company's **digital activities, cybersecurity, data privacy, and reputational risks** are viewed as top challenges.



# Two macro trends—the increased complexity of the business and risk environment, and talent issues—are top of mind.

Cybersecurity, AI, supply chain disruptions, and workforce issues, along with talent issues are likely to have the greatest impact on the audit committee's agenda in the coming months. In light of business disruption and the economic slowdown, the rigor of the control environment is also a top concern, following the new disclosure requirements/demands for greater transparency.

**Which macro trends will have the greatest impact on your audit committee's focus and agenda in the months ahead?**



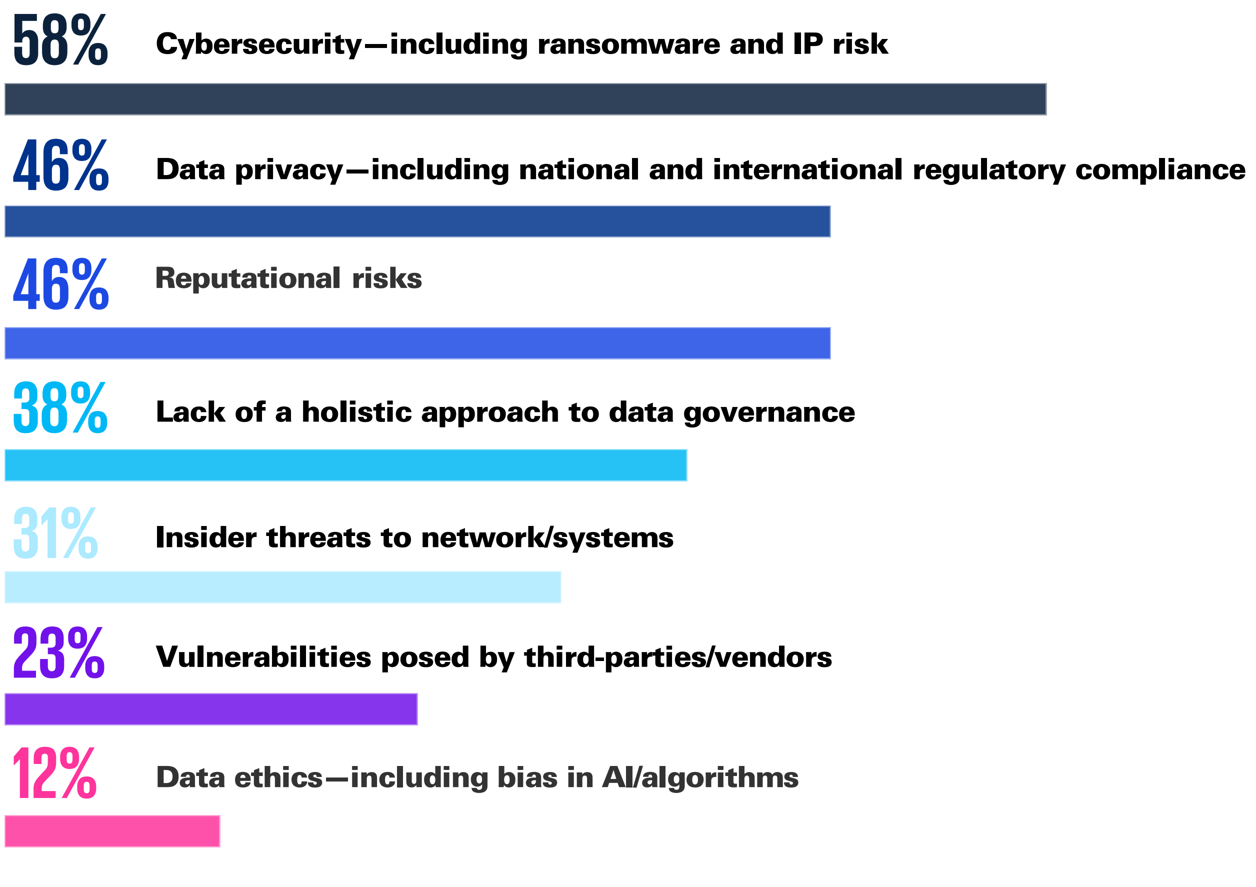

> **Focusing on the financial reporting, accounting, and disclosure obligations posed by the current geopolitical, macroeconomic, and risk landscape will continue to be top priorities and major undertakings for audit committees in 2025.**

**Muhammad Tariq**
Partner, Head of Audit
KPMG Middle East

# Of the risks related to the company's digital activities, cybersecurity, data privacy, and reputational risks are viewed as top challenges.

Ransomware, IP risk, and data privacy (including national and international regulatory compliance) are particularly concerning for boards, as is reputational risk. Cybersecurity and data privacy risks related to the company's use of GenAI, including the need for employee training in AI, are generating significant audit committee discussion.

**Of the risks posed by the company's data/digital activities, which elements are particularly concerning or challenging from the audit committee's oversight perspective?**




> "Audit committees in the region are inducting tech-fluent members with expertise in data ethics and AI. Their agendas include integrating cyber and privacy oversight into enterprise risk management frameworks and using tabletop exercises to stress-test digital resilience. Furthermore, there should be more focus on elevating third-party and eco system-level digital scrutiny."

**Tim Wood**
Partner, Head of Cybersecurity
KPMG Middle East

**What risks associated with the company's use of GenAI are generating significant discussion in audit committee meetings?**

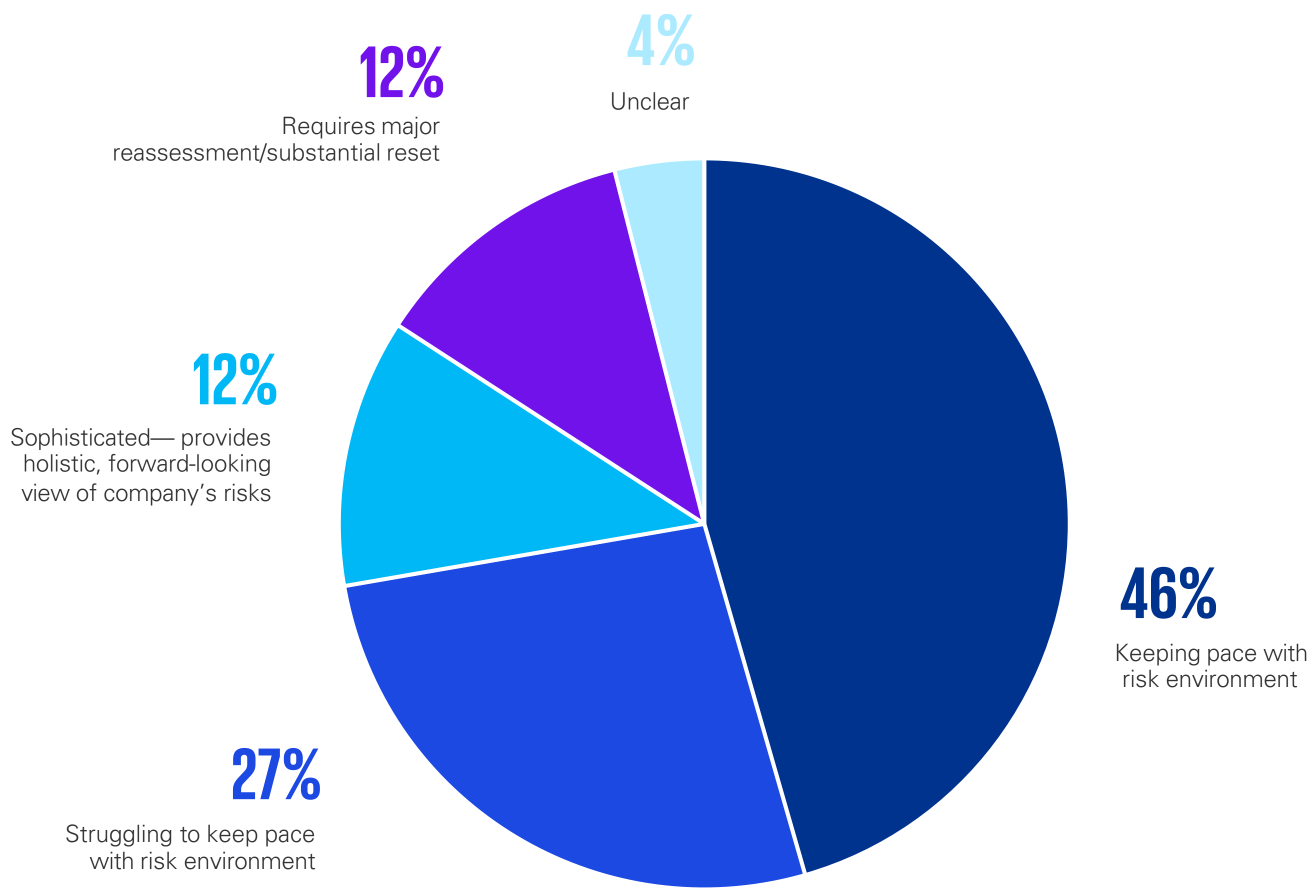

> **"As AI becomes more integrated into business operations, the need for clearer ownership and governance frameworks—beyond traditional oversight domains—will become critical. We recommend that the board of directors should build tech-fluent boards with expertise in data ethics and AI."**

**Maz Hussain**
Partner, Head of AI

# The number of companies with sophisticated risk management is still a minority, but many are keeping pace.

Respondents also express less confidence that there is a clear understanding of the company's mission critical risks by management and the board; that C-suite executives are effectively coordinating and aligning their responsibilities for risk, internal controls, value creation, and related communications and reporting; and that the company is maintaining critical alignments (strategy, risk, culture, controls and incentives).

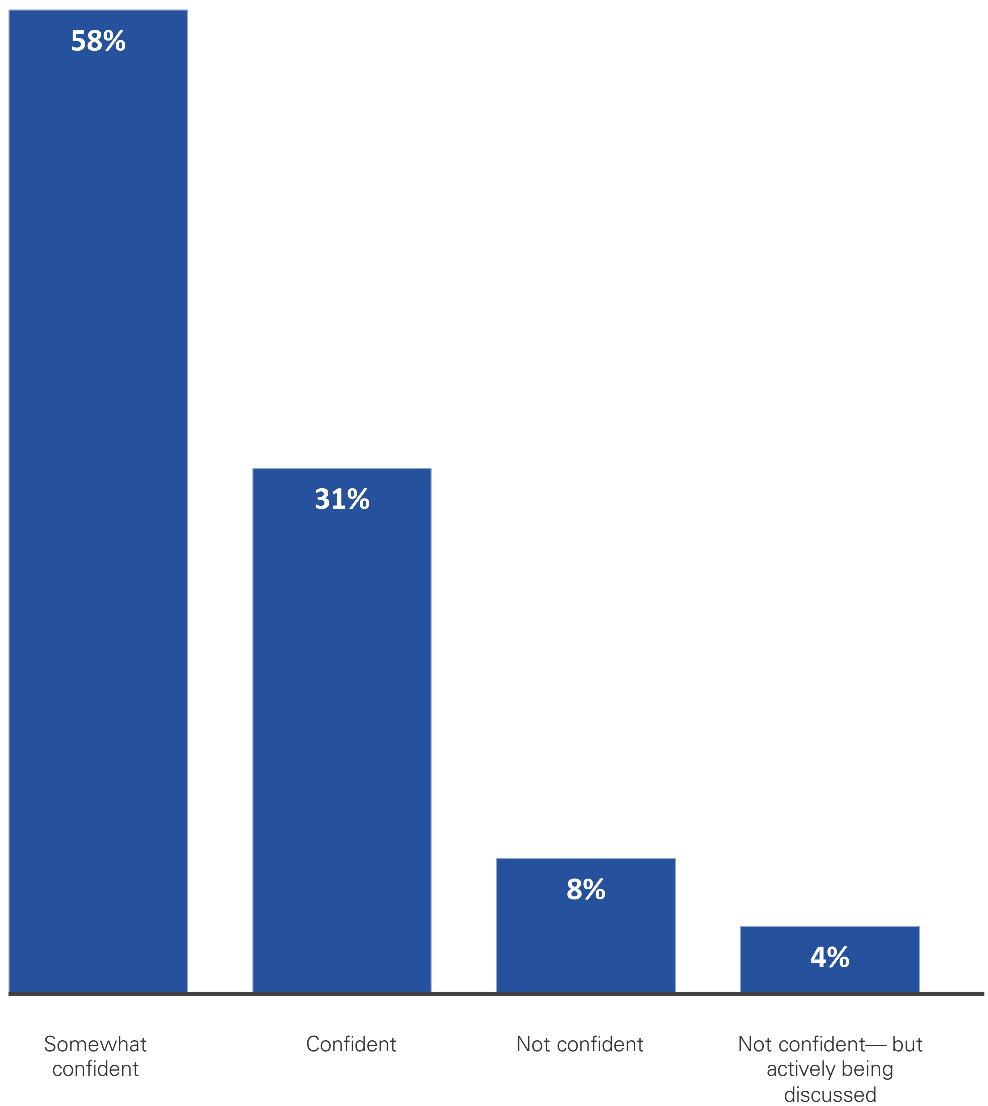
**How would you describe the company's risk management and reporting capability?**



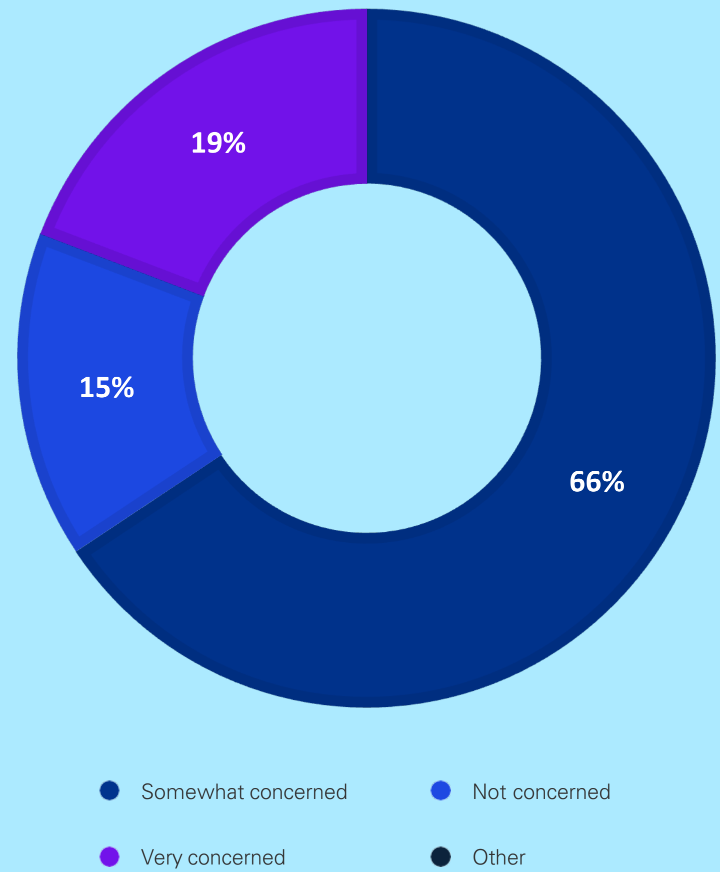

> **"There is clearly an opportunity to reframe board dashboards to enhance focus on integrated risk signals, along with a drive for more cultural alignment on risk integration and awareness. The improvement opportunity lies within deeper board management interactions on resilience planning and greater linkages between risk oversight and value creation levers."**

**Craig Wright**
Partner, Head of Enterprise Risk Services
KPMG Middle East

**How confident are you that there is a clear, common understanding—across the board and management—of what the company's key/mission-critical risks are?**




**How concerned are you about the company's ability to maintain critical alignments—culture and purpose, strategy and risk, compliance and controls, incentives, performance metrics, and people—given the disruptions and complexities of the business and risk landscape?**




**Note:** Does not equal 100% due to rounding

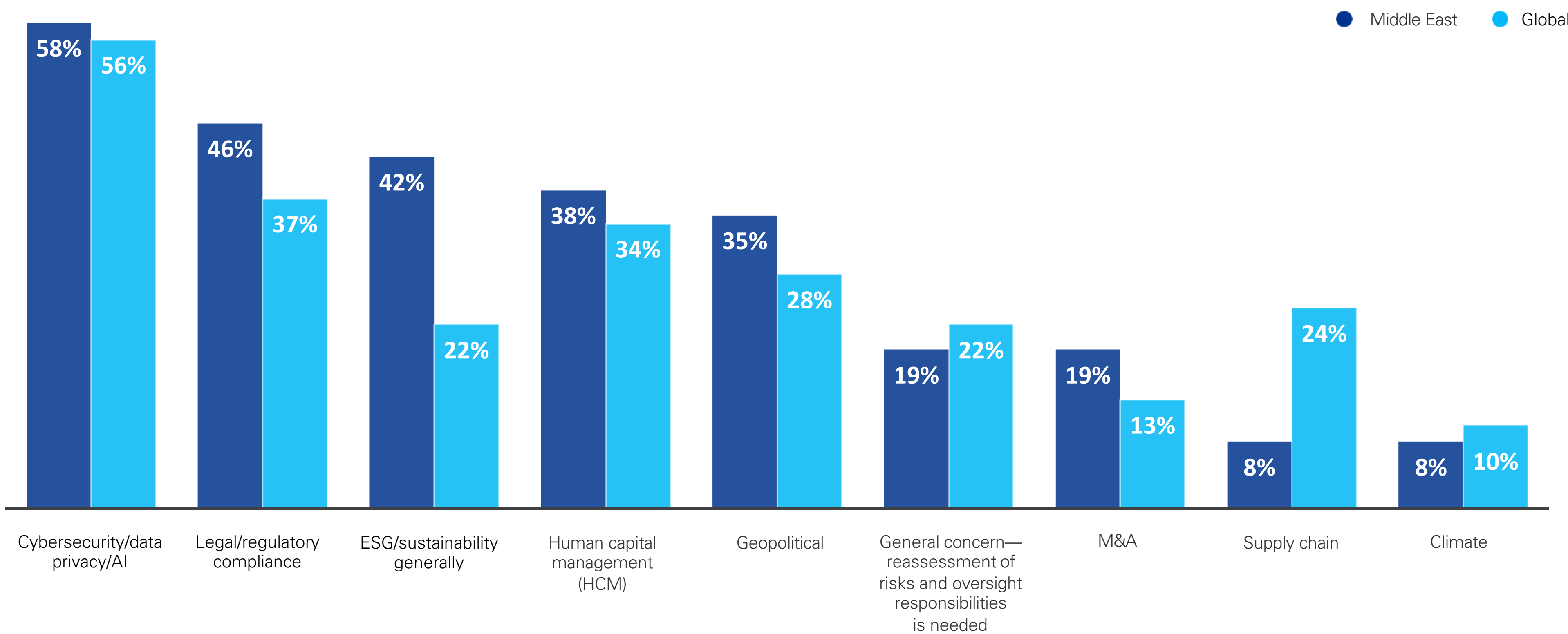
# Potential oversight gaps—particularly around cybersecurity, data privacy, and AI—in critical areas of risk are a growing concern.

Audit committees are most concerned about potential gaps in board and committee oversight of cybersecurity, data privacy, AI, and legal/regulatory compliance. Interestingly, ESG and sustainability rank far higher in Middle East boards (42 percent) compared to the global 22 percent, highlighting how environmental and governance topics are becoming increasingly central to regional corporate oversight.

Additionally, only 19 percent of respondents cited the need to reassess board/committee oversight responsibilities for risk.

Concerns around supply chain risk are lower in the Middle East than in global (8 percent versus 24 percent). Suggesting that organizations in the region feel less immediate vulnerability in this area.

**Of the various enterprise risks under the purview of multiple board committees, which ones are you most concerned about in terms of potential oversight gaps?**

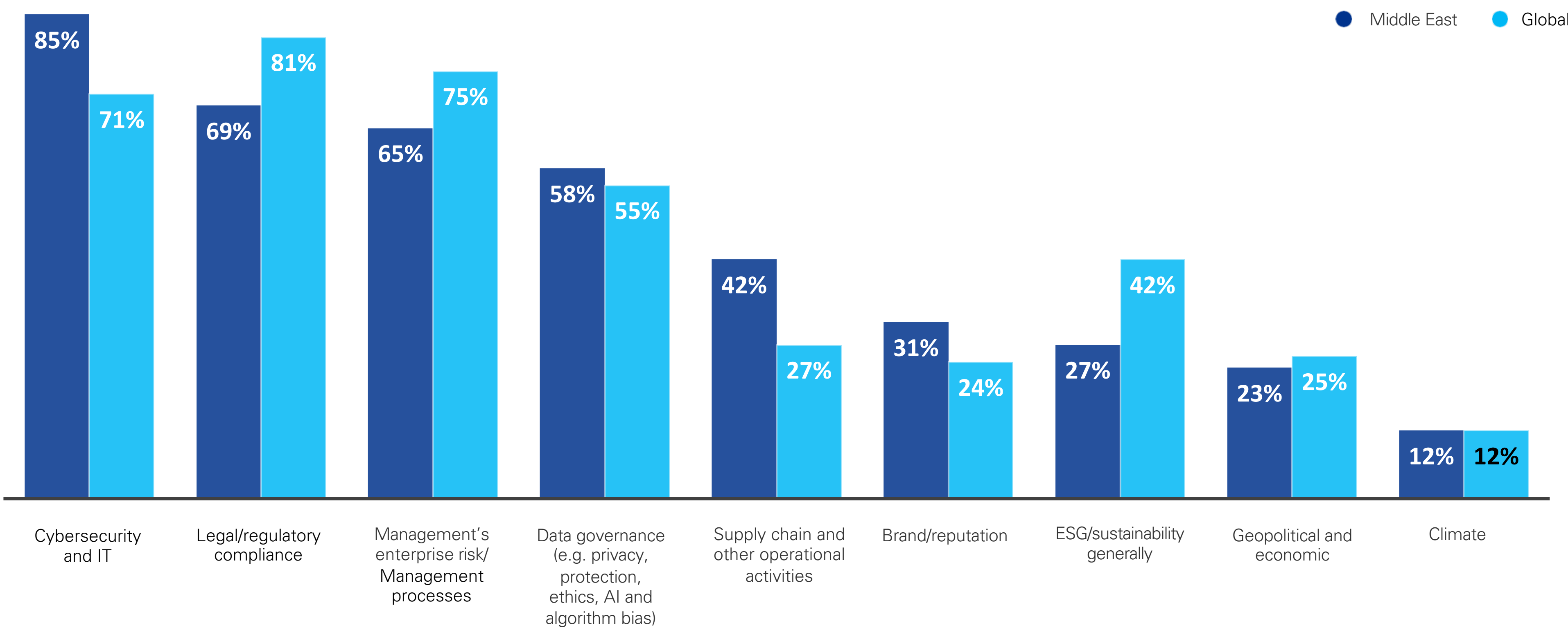


# Most audit committees continue to shoulder heavy risk agendas; some are reassessing oversight responsibilities.

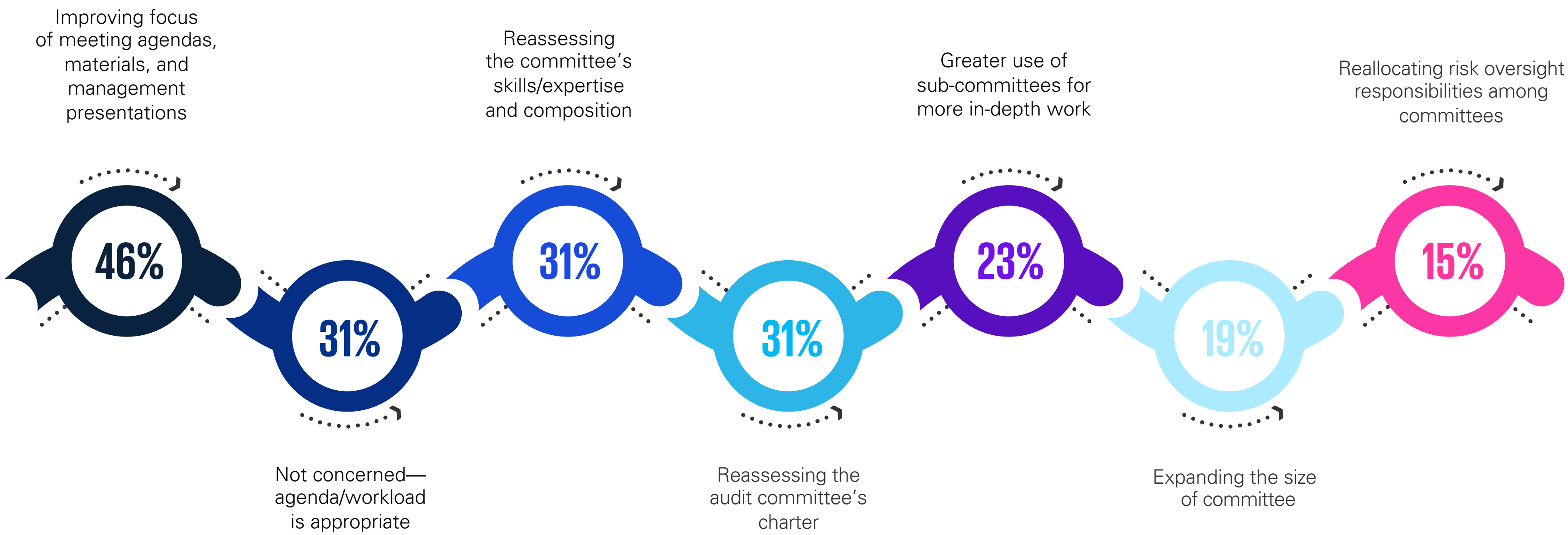
In addition to financial reporting and related control risks, audit committees have significant oversight responsibilities over a broad range of critical risks, including cybersecurity and IT, management's ERM processes, legal/regulatory compliance, and data governance. Some also have significant oversight responsibilities for supply chain, brand, reputation, and sustainability risks.

While boards in the Middle East previously reported fewer concerns about supply chain oversight gaps, they also assign far greater responsibility for it to their audit committees (42 versus 27 percent in global). This shows that the supply chain is not seen as a blind spot but as a priority already embedded into audit committee mandates.

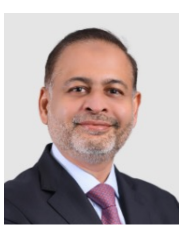
**In addition to financial reporting and related control risks, for which risks does your audit committee have significant oversight responsibilities?**



**How is your audit committee addressing concerns about the committee's workload?**

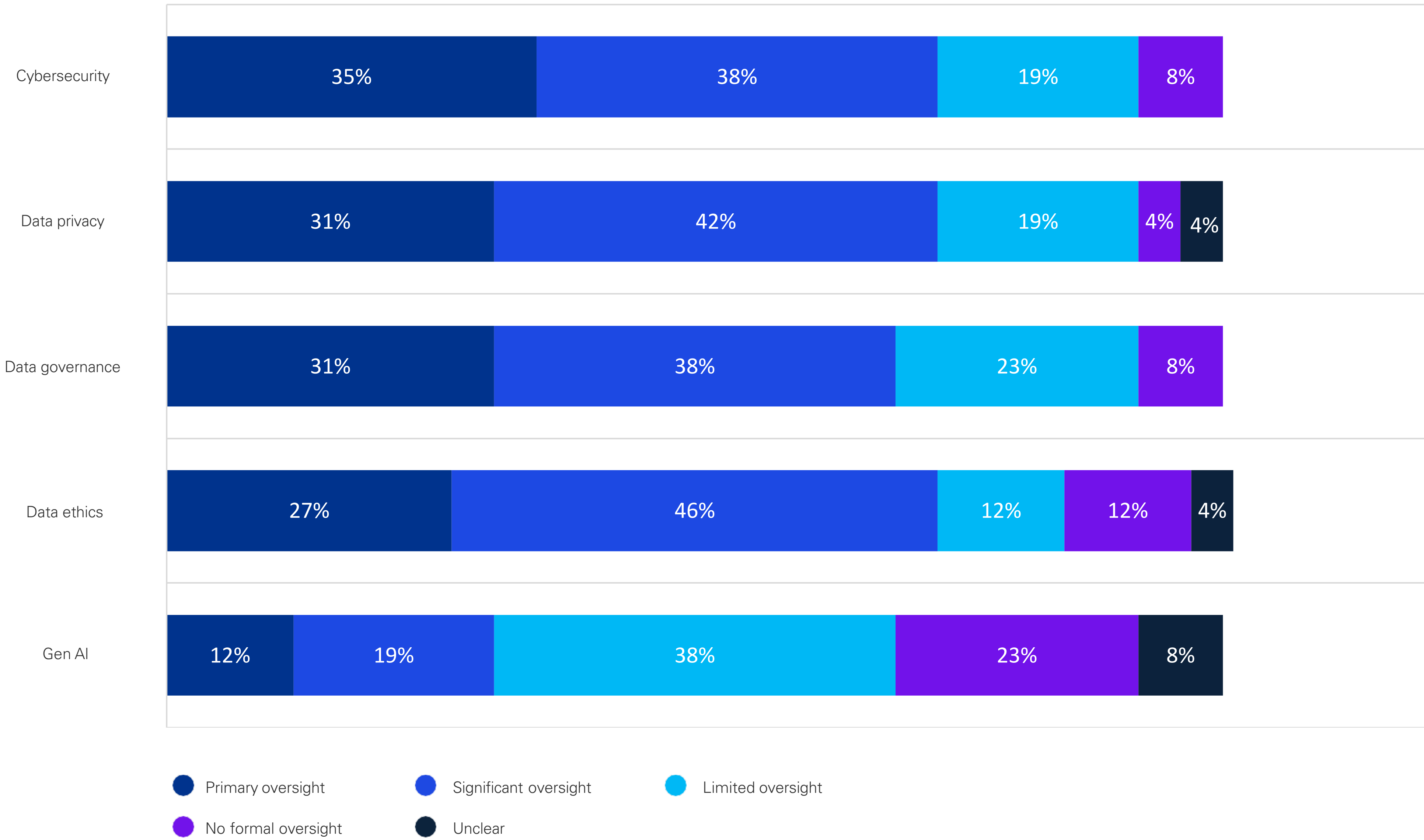



> **"The audit committee chairs should continue to strengthen strategic coherence with the chair of board and other subcommittees. The boards should enhance board-management calibration and embed cross-functional accountability as a KPI. The boards should leverage audit committees as alignment catalysts."**



**Abdullah Akbar**
Partner, Head of Board Leadership Centre
KPMG Middle East

## What is the scope of the audit committee's oversight responsibility for each of the following areas?

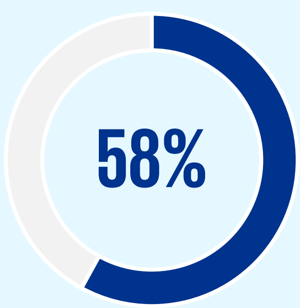



**Note:** Does not equal 100% due to rounding

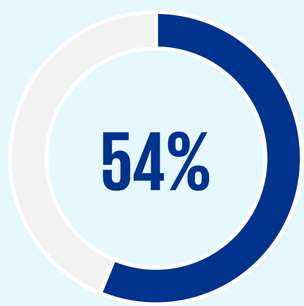
# Audit committees are growing more concerned about the increased complexity of the business and risk environment, as well as the impact of digital disruption on the finance organization.

Specific concerns include the finance organization’s ability to attract and retain talent, provide strategic thinking and leadership, and manage digital disruption/transformation.

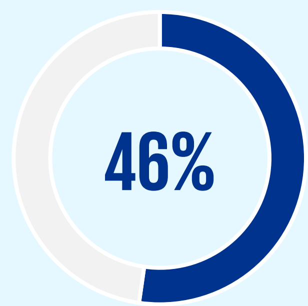
**In your view, what are the top challenges facing the finance organization?**



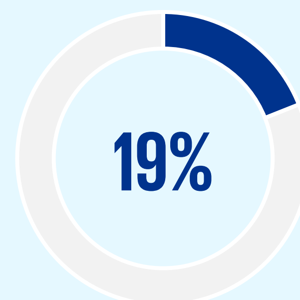

Attracting and retaining talent




Managing digital disruption/ transformation



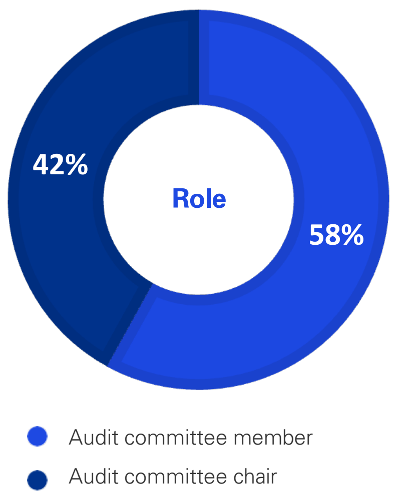

Strategic thinking and leadership

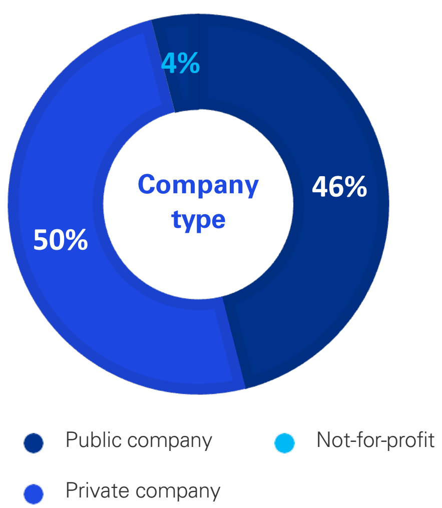



Preparing for new regulatory disclosures on climate, cybersecurity, HCM, and other ESG-related issues

# Middle East survey respondents

Results are based on a survey of 26 Middle East audit committee members and chairs, conducted February–May 2025.

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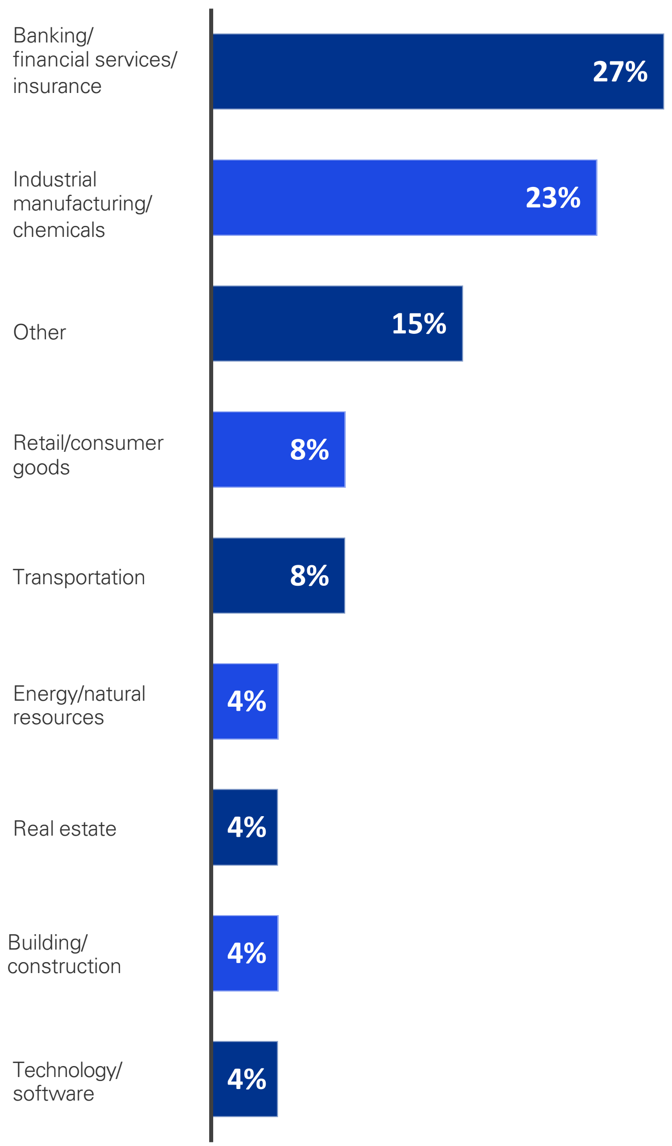


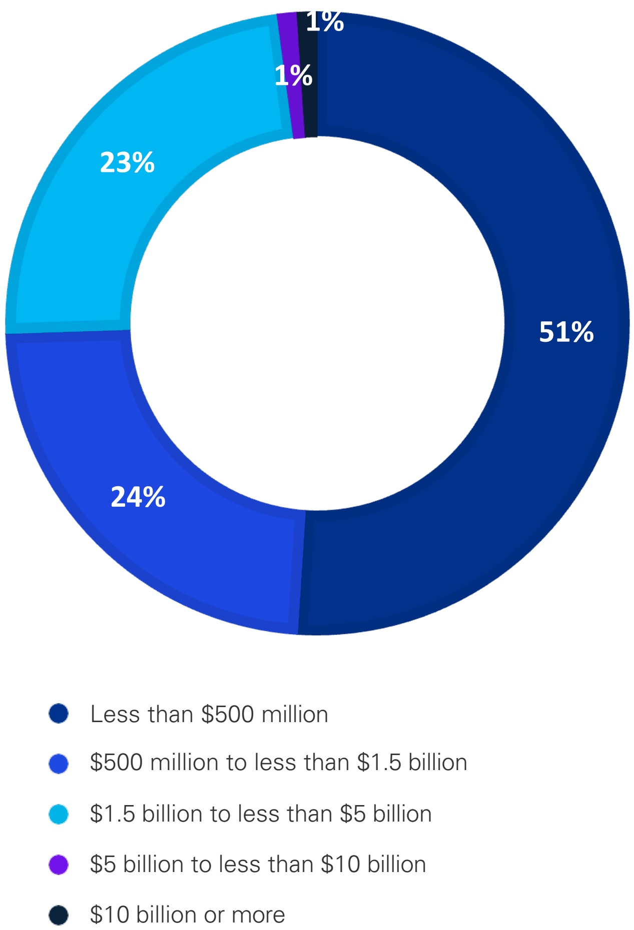

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## Board Leadership Centre

The KPMG Board Leadership Centre offers support and guidance to non-executive directors, whether managing a portfolio non-executive career or embarking on a first appointment. We aim to equip you with the tools you need to be highly effective in your role, enabling you to focus on the issues that really matter to you and your business.

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