

Data Center Knowledge's 2024 Salary Report

Our survey of 316 full-time data center professionals reveals industry trends around compensation, benefits, training, job satisfaction, work-life-balance, diversity, and the rise of AI. Read on to discover what matters most to data center pros – and assess how you stack up against your peers.



By Drew Robb and Wendy Schuchart

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Executive Summary

The 2024 Data Center Knowledge Salary Survey, conducted in March 2024, unearthed plenty of positives. Seventy-seven percent of respondents saw an increase in their salaries in 2023. Data center personnel are keen to work on innovative or challenging technical projects. Thirty-one percent believe AI is a critical job skills requirement.

However, there are a few downsides. Our survey respondents indicated that data center industry salaries are struggling to keep up with inflation, as median compensation rates remain identical to the previous year. In addition, data center managers now supervise three more people than they did a year ago on average. This is a sign that tech layoffs are taking their toll on data center management and team management positions. In tandem, technical data center employees are increasingly being asked to take on more non-IT functions such as business development, marketing, finance, and sustainability.

One worrying trend cropped up: While the attention on AI is merited, the intense hype around the subject may be deflecting attention away from vital areas. Survey responses revealed that the development of skills in collaboration was down 7%, with similar results being reported in the management of network, system, and desktop infrastructure (down 8%), and securing data and applications (down 11%). Amid the surging interest in AI, it is crucial that data center professionals develop their skills in this sector but without compromising their vital expertise in cybersecurity, management, and infrastructure maintenance.





Research Synopsis

Survey Name: 2024 Data Center Knowledge US IT Salary Survey

Survey Date: March 2024

Region: United States

Number of Respondents: 316 full-time information technology (IT) professionals employed in the U.S. The margin of error for the total respondent base (N=316) is +/- 5.0 percentage points.

Methodology: Data Center Knowledge surveyed full-time IT professionals employed in the United States with questions related to salaries, benefits, and other career issues. Ninety-three percent are full-time employees, 3% are full-time contract workers, and 4% are full-time consultants. The survey was conducted online, and respondents were recruited via email invitations containing an embedded link to the survey. The emails were sent to a select group of Data Center Knowledge's audience. Half (48%) are from enterprises with more than 1,000 employees, just under one-third (29%) are from mid-size companies of 101 to 1,000 employees, and 21% are from small companies of 100 employees or fewer. Respondents represent dozens of industries including healthcare, consulting, manufacturing, financial services, banking, education, and utilities/energy, to name a few. Fifty-two percent of respondents were from eight states: New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, California, Florida, Illinois, and Texas.

Informa Tech, the parent group of Data Center Knowledge, was responsible for all survey design, administration, data collection, and data analysis. These procedures were carried out in strict accordance with standard market research practices and existing U.S. privacy laws.





Introduction

The data center industry is at a pivotal juncture, with rapid technological advancements, shifting workforce dynamics, and a strong focus on innovation offering both challenges and opportunities. To understand how these changes are impacting the people who keep data centers running, the *2024 Data Center Knowledge Salary Report* gathers insights from more than 300 full-time professionals across the industry. The results shed light on compensation trends, evolving job roles, and the challenges facing today's data center workforce.

In an industry where innovation is crucial, it's no surprise that data center professionals are eager to work on challenging technical projects. According to the survey, 77% of respondents experienced salary increases in 2023, reflecting a growing demand for their expertise. However, these increases are tempered by inflation, leaving many professionals feeling that their compensation hasn't kept pace with rising costs. Additionally, the survey reveals that data center managers are being asked to do more with less, supervising larger teams than they did just a year ago. This trend highlights the impact of recent tech layoffs, which have left remaining employees with heavier workloads.

As the industry evolves, so do the skill sets required of its professionals. A third of respondents identified AI as a critical job skill, underscoring the importance of staying current with emerging technologies. However, the focus on AI is not without its challenges. The survey indicates a worrying decline in other vital areas of expertise. Collaboration skills development is down 7%, while management of network, system, and desktop infrastructure has dropped 8%. Most concerning is an 11% decrease in skills related to securing data and applications, a critical area in today's threat landscape.

While the rise of AI offers exciting opportunities for data center professionals, it also serves as a reminder that balancing new technologies with core competencies is essential. Data center teams are increasingly expected to take on non-technical roles such as business development, marketing, finance, and sustainability, blurring the lines between traditional IT and business functions. This shift demands a reevaluation of both skills and resources, as professionals strive to meet the evolving needs of the industry.

Data Center Knowledge's *2024 Salary Report* offers a detailed snapshot of the current state of the data center workforce. It provides valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges that professionals face today, helping business leaders and employees alike navigate the future of this dynamic industry.



Inflation vs. Salary and Benefits

We'll start with the good news: Most salaries got a boost this past year. Similar to the 2023 Data Center Knowledge Salary Report, 77% of respondents received a pay increase in 2023. Overall, there were fewer swings in salary increases and decreases in 2024, compared to the previous year.

In 2024, 12% of respondents saw an increase of 10% or more, compared to 14% of respondents in 2023. Almost half of those receiving any kind of pay increase received only 1% to 4% ([Figures 1 & 2](#)). Median compensation rates across the respondents remained flat at \$130,000 annual base salary, identical to the previous year. Similarly, fewer people reported getting salary decreases in 2024 than the previous year – 3% in 2024 reported a salary decrease while 5% reported decreases in 2023.

While salary volatility is decreasing, other forms of compensation are squeezed. For instance, 7% fewer respondents in 2024 reported 401(k) matching. Additionally, the data suggests companies are cutting benefits in day care subsidies, reimbursement of home internet access, and opportunities for further training ([Figure 3](#)).

With inflation rates for IT equipment, data center construction materials, housing, vehicles, and insurance often averaging 5-10% per year ([used car prices](#), for example, are up 35% over the past three

Figure 1

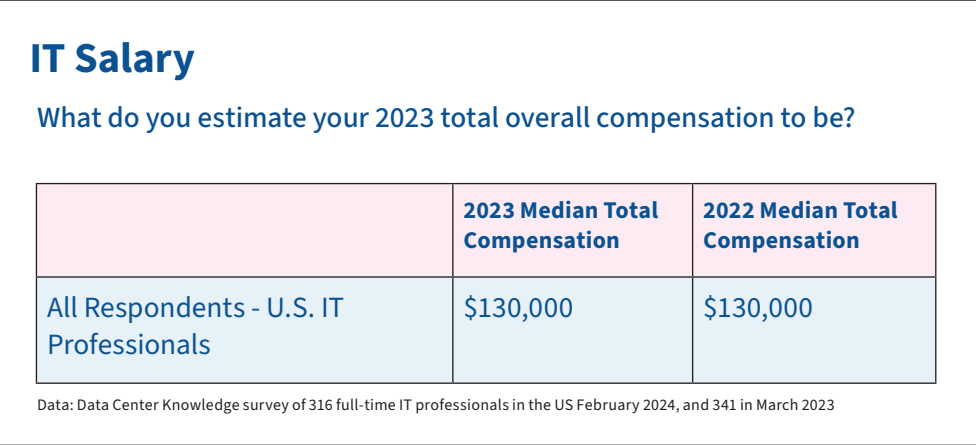


Figure 2

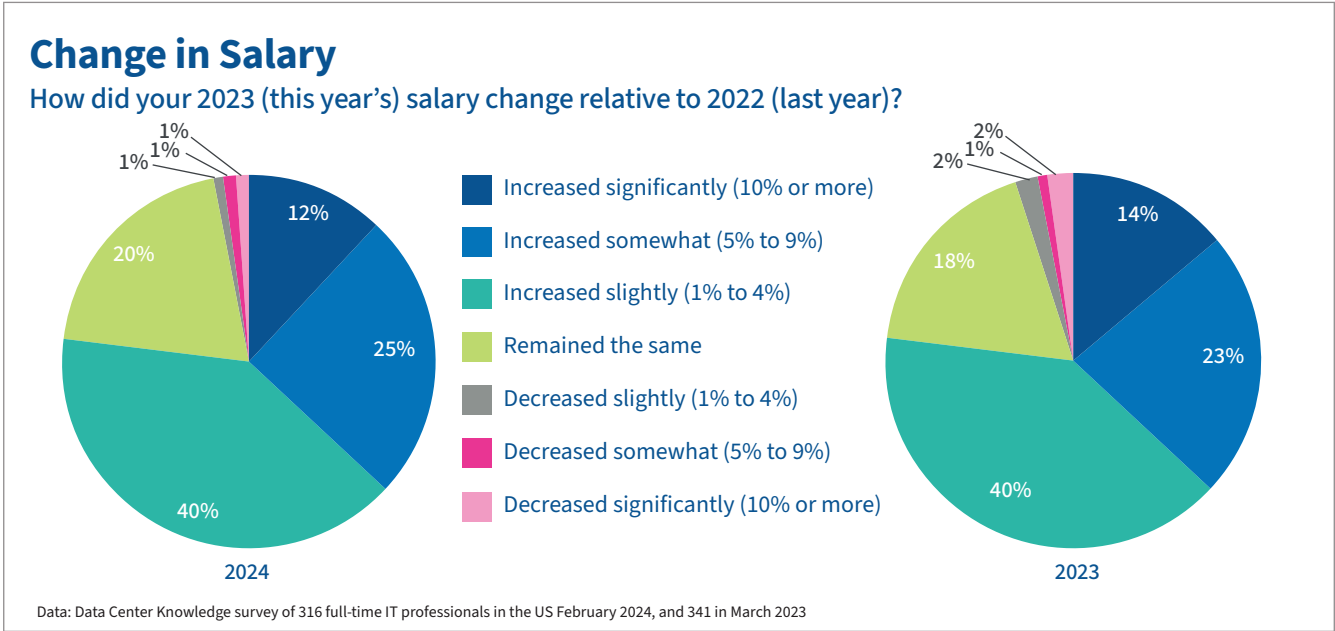
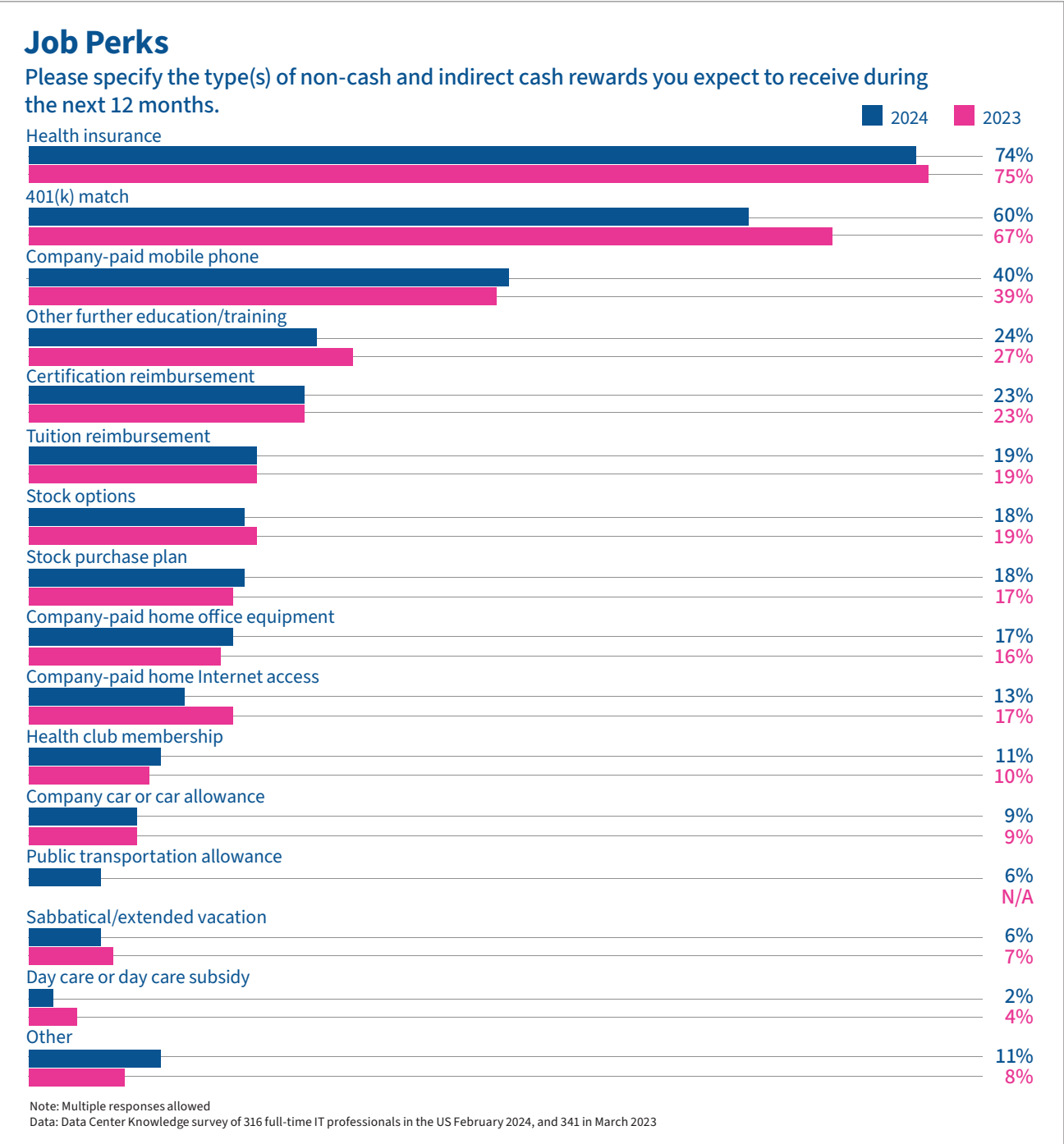


Figure 3



years), it looks like salaries are failing to keep up with the rate of inflation and the high cost of living.

Paycheck Satisfaction

Further, satisfaction with total compensation rankings signal an undercurrent of unhappiness. Compensation satisfaction is down 10% compared to 2023.

To compare average salaries by job title, see [Figure 4](#).

An IT director from a Texas-based healthcare organization said: “I worked for \$50K a year the first year. The second year, I was leaving so they bumped me to \$85K. So, I stayed, and things have gotten worse with insurance coverage and premiums to the point they’re not affordable except for the employee. Some people are paying their whole paycheck towards insurance premiums for their families. Working for insurance is all they’re doing here.”

“I have not seen any salary increases or bonuses since March 2020,” said a director of IT and software development at a software company. He now manages 10% more staff than he managed two years ago. “My responsibilities have increased drastically.”

A critical operations tech in a data center for an enterprise in Virginia reports a similar

story. “I know I am getting underpaid for what the market is,” he said, stating that he held a bachelor’s degree, and his 2024 total compensation package was between \$80-90,000 annually.

While most of the study’s respondents did receive some kind of compensation increase in 2023, 20% of respondents received no increase this year over last, which is slightly more than respondents from last year’s report (18%). Additionally, fewer of this year’s 316 respondents received a significant increase of 10% or higher in compensation in 2023 than did last year’s 341 respondents (12% in 2023 versus 14% in 2022).

Overall compensation satisfaction took a huge backstep this year. In our previous salary report, published in early 2023, 64% of the 341 respondents said they were either “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with their compensation package. This year, although more than half of the respondents said they were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied,” that percentage has dropped to 54% – a full 10 points down year over year ([Figure 5](#)). Even more significantly, 15% of data center professionals said they were currently either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied” with their compensation, compared to 9% the year before.

Compensation and benefits are crucial to job satisfaction, according to data center professionals surveyed. When asked, “What matters most to you about your job?” and presented with 29 different potential factors, such as “prestige/reputation of the company,” “commute distance,” and “working with highly talented peers,” respondents overwhelmingly valued tangible assets like benefits (44%) and base pay (44%) ([Figure 6](#)).

Similarly, when we asked those who were likely to seek another job in the next 12 months what they would be targeting, the most common response was that they were seeking higher compensation (66%).

“If pay rates fail to keep pace with inflation, people may start looking for other jobs,” said Keatron Evans, vice president of portfolio and strategy at career advancement firm InfoSec Institute. “But we are probably some years away from that happening.”

Or maybe not. According to this year’s poll, more than a third of our respondents (36%) are either “likely” or “highly likely” to seek employment at another organization by 2025, up 11% over last year ([Figure 7](#)). More than half (58%) were “unlikely” or “highly unlikely” to seek another employer in 2024, but only 6% were uncertain about the next steps they were

taking. Compared to 2023’s results (11% were uncertain last year), half of the uncertain respondents have galvanized their certainty.

Even more interesting, when asked what would influence them to accept a lessertitle or position, a whopping 60% would do so for higher pay, which was the number one determining factor for leaving their current position, almost twice as alluring as the second and third most popular reasons for job jumping – better benefits (38%) and the ability to work remotely (36%).

“I feel like I may have hit the top salary range for my type of position and feel that adding

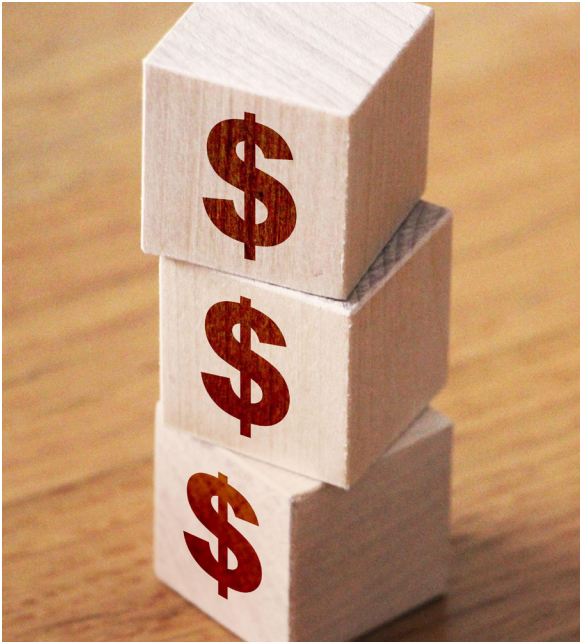


Figure 4

Average Salaries By Job Title				
	Lowest	Highest	Average	Mode
CEO/president/owner/GM	\$35,000	\$5,000,000	\$343,329	\$25K - \$49K
CIO/CTO or other IT executive	\$55,000	\$450,000	\$311,949	\$200K - \$249K
Consultant (non IT)	\$35,000	\$380,000	\$157,750	\$25K - \$49K
Consultant/SI/VAR (IT)	\$60,000	\$285,000	\$129,426	\$50K - \$79K
Data center consultant	\$55,000	\$135,000	\$94,250	No mode
Data center facilities	\$50,000	\$160,000	\$121,833	No mode
Data center IT operations	\$60,000	\$160,000	\$283,000	\$50K - \$79K
Database administrator	\$40,000	\$200,000	\$135,143	\$100K - \$125K
DevOps/development/apps	\$95,000	\$200,000	\$156,250	\$100K - \$125K
Engineer/QA	\$40,000	\$170,000	\$105,778	No mode
Engineer/systems engineer	\$70,000	\$440,000	\$141,243	\$100K - \$125K
IT director	\$45,000	\$700,000	\$149,336	\$100K - \$125K
IT operations	\$50,000	\$700,000	\$140,958	\$50K - \$79K
IT purchasing	\$60,000	\$60,000	\$60,000	No mode
Software/Web developer	\$60,000	\$240,000	\$141,092	\$150K - \$174K
Systems analyst/systems admin	\$35,000	\$195,000	\$99,688	\$75K - \$99K
Technical staff	\$50,000	\$170,000	\$92,524	\$50K - \$79K
Technology architect	\$50,000	\$375,000	\$154,428	\$200K - \$249K
Telecomm specialist	\$70,000	\$95,000	\$77,999	No mode

Data: Data Center Knowledge survey of 316 full-time IT professionals in the US, February 2024

management responsibilities is the only path to a higher salary,” said one data center professional in this year’s poll. “I’m a little bummed about that, but on the other hand, I’ve always had some managerial responsibilities but without the title or commensurate salary.”

And even among the entire 316 respondents, including people who said they were unlikely or highly unlikely to seek another job in 2025, the most common thing that would get our respondents to jump ship? As mentioned earlier, higher compensation (66%) was the most likely motivator, but pay was followed by more interesting work (33%), unhappy with the present organization’s management (32%), and seeking more personal fulfillment (32%) ([Figure 8](#)).

A word to employers: It may be later than you think, at least in regard to how long quality talent will continue to accept base pay that has not kept up with the cost of living.

One respondent said: “I’m told I am at the higher end of my peers by my organization, but it’s untrue based on every survey I see. This has been true my entire employment.”

Another respondent offered what is a popular solution to this conundrum: “It seems that the main way to get a pay raise is to leave my current job and start another at a different

company. You are able to receive the ‘market’ rate because employers have competition.”

Non-Cash and Indirect Cash Compensation

The most common form of indirect or non-cash compensation remains health insurance for 74% of our respondents, followed by 401(k) matching for 60%. More than a third retain a company-paid mobile phone (40%), perhaps further supporting the blurred lines between work and home life, as well as the “always on” facet of data center professional life. The least common benefits were day care or day care subsidy, reported by only six of our respondents (2%), followed by sabbatical/extended vacations (6%) and public transportation allowance (6%).

Doing More with Less – Yet Again

Doing more with less has been the tech industry mantra for a couple of decades. As technology evolves and management and maintenance techniques advance, the trend has always been to have fewer and fewer people take on more and more duties. This year’s report indicates that data center managers are once again being asked to do more with less – in this case, they are managing more people due to having slightly fewer sub-managers and team managers

Figure 5

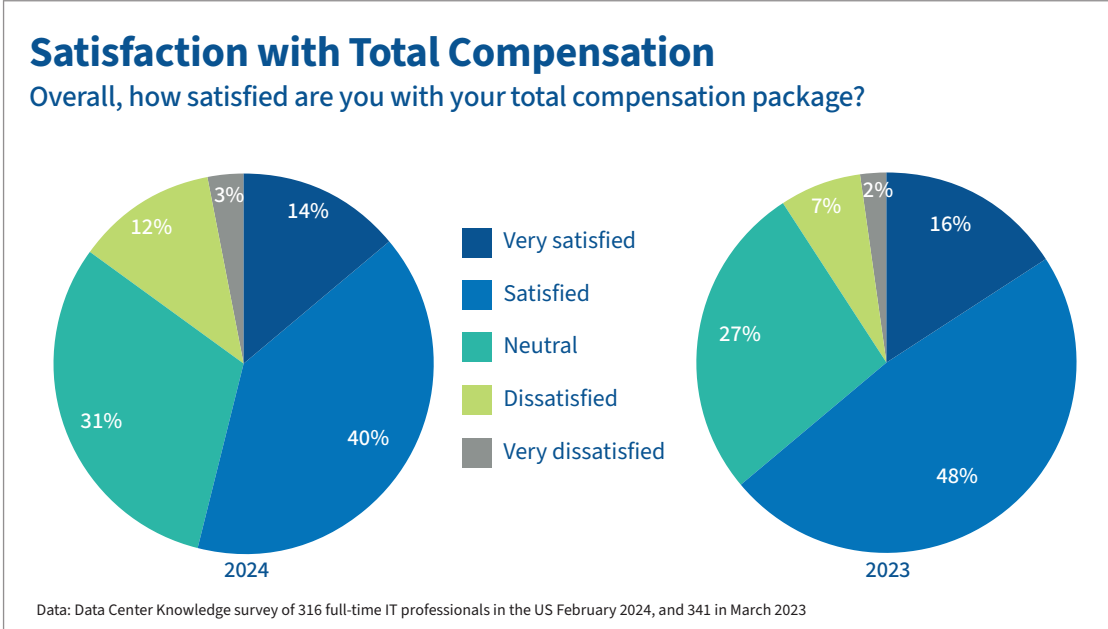
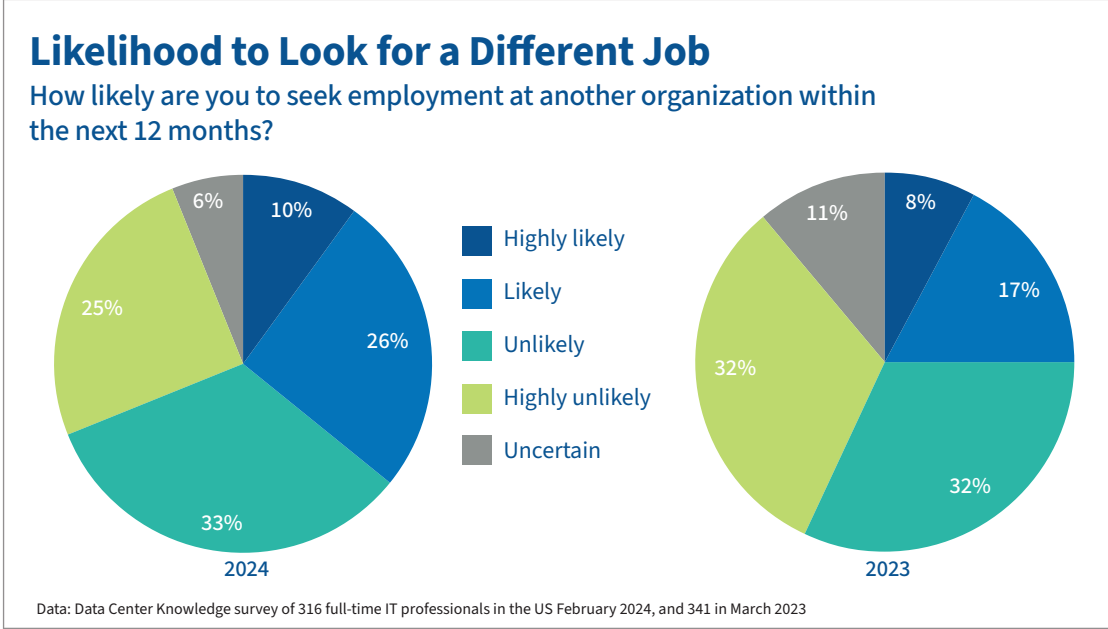


Figure 7



beneath them: The number of people being managed is up almost 15% on the previous year ([Figures 9 & 10](#)). On average, data center managers are supervising three more people than they were in 2023.

While tech layoffs have been felt across many sectors , many thought the data center segment had largely escaped any serious workforce losses. However, while the data center industry has largely avoided any major headlines when it comes to mass layoffs, management positions were either reduced or losses due to attrition were left unfilled. Result: Data center managers take up the slack by looking after more people without increased compensation and more.

Of the 316 data center professionals we polled,

41% indicated that feeling overworked had a negative impact on their mental health. Almost as many indicated that they are working long hours (38%) and are dealing with understaffing issues (33%) and a lack of support (38%). See [Figure 11](#).

To help senior data center industry professionals cope with their added list of responsibilities due to reduced team numbers, Vladimir Galabov, head of the cloud and data center research practice with [Omdia](#), suggested that data centers may be able to cope by using AI-based tools to enhance monitoring and cybersecurity. He suggests that Data Center Infrastructure Management (DCIM) is an obvious place to start.

“By enriching DCIM with AI, we can minimize

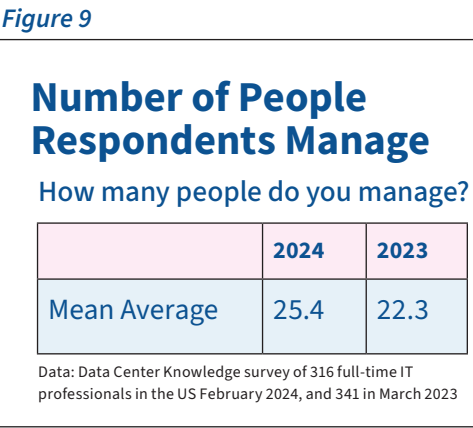
the impact of staff shortages and evolve ways to further improve efficiency and sustainability, both at the IT and the physical infrastructure level,” said Galabov.

Shifting Workloads

When the cloud burst onto the scene, the hope was that shifting some workloads out of the data center would reduce the burden on overworked data center staff. That hasn’t turned out to be the case.

At first, cloud migration was viewed as a cost-cutting endeavor: Offloading applications to the cloud resulted in a lowering of the internal headcount. But staffing has been so lean for so long that further labor reductions are unrealistic.

This year’s survey data reveals the kind of work required in the data center isn’t decreasing the burden. [Figure 12](#) shows that some respondents are tackling more non-IT work functions. Only 45% of our respondents reported that their responsibilities were only focused in IT this year, versus 51% in 2023, a 6% decrease year over year. The functions they are inheriting are primarily in business development (21%), engineering (19%), research and development (18%), and marketing and sales (15%). Respondents could select more than one response, but the only real decrease overall in



these overclocked employees were in the areas of operations/supply chain/manufacturing (down 2% from 12% in 2023) and logistics (down 2% from 8% in 2023). Don’t expect this trend to diminish any time soon.

This year, 155 (51%) respondents had previously held full-time positions outside of IT, a narrow majority. This reverses the scales seen in the previous year, where 54% had held positions outside of tech. In 2024, the most common non-IT role was generic non-IT support functions, with almost a quarter (24%) of those respondents. The most common answer in 2023 was “Engineering” (24%) and while it was still strongly represented, it decreased by 4% this year.

Work-Life Balancing Act



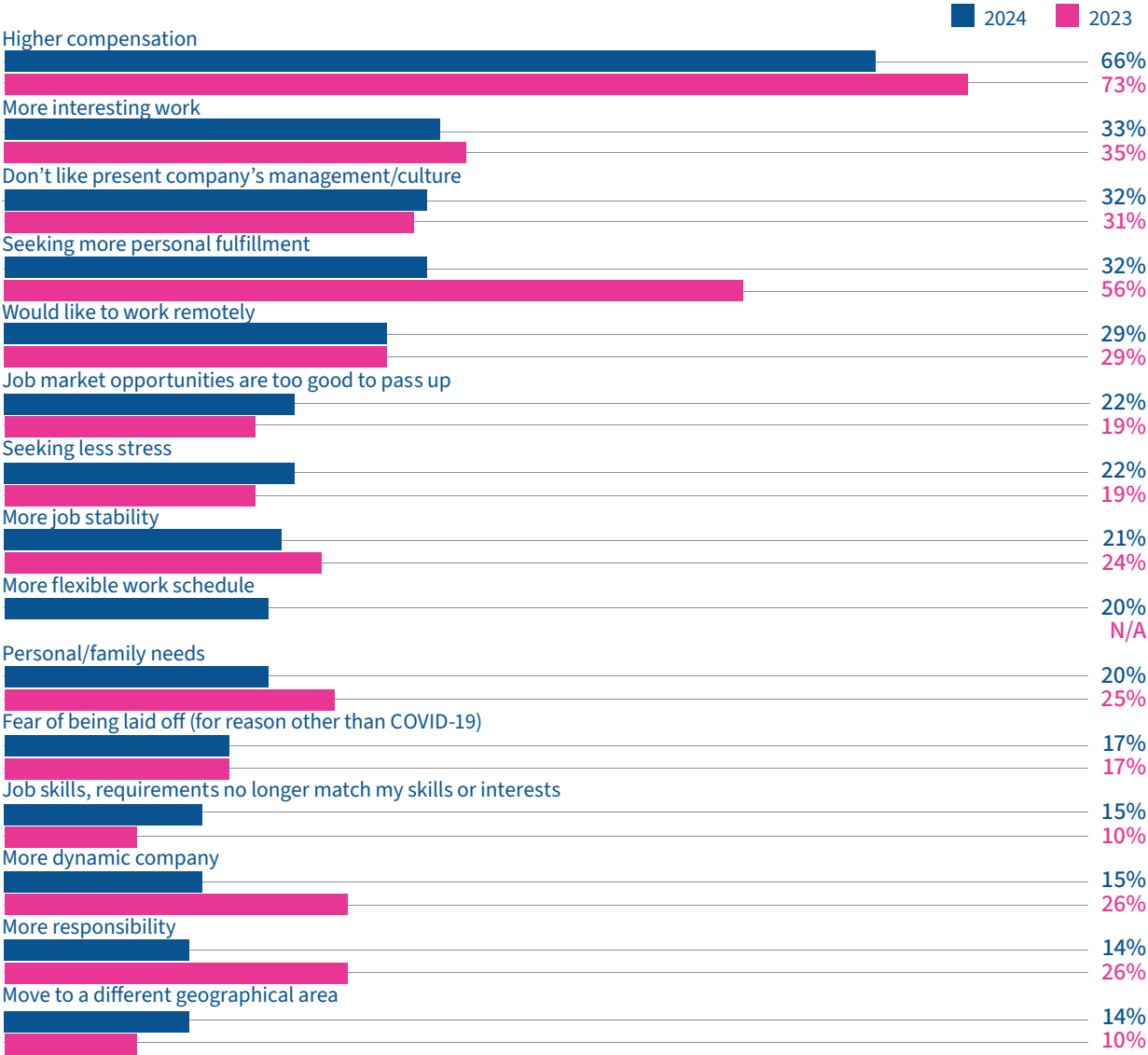
“The trend in technology employment is that the company thinks they own you. They give lip service to work/life balance, but in reality they want you to dedicate one’s full life to their cause.”

***— Engineer,
Government-Federal sector***

Figure 8

Reasons for Seeking New Job

Why might you seek a new job?



Base: 113 and 85 respondents who are likely to seek a new job
Note: Multiple responses allowed
Data: Data Center Knowledge survey of 316 full-time IT professionals in the US February 2024, and 341 in March 2023

A striking trend this year is finding value and innovation, perhaps spurred on by the generative AI disruption over the past few years. The COVID-19 era signified greater emphasis on employee wellbeing. Major workforce trends emerged such as people opting out of the big city commute and heading for rural or slower-paced environments. Movements like the Great Resignation, “Quiet Quitting” and Work-From-Home (WFH) came to the fore.

Back in March 2023, we asked 346 data center professionals what mattered most to them about their jobs, and almost half (46%) said overall work-life balance was one of their most important criteria, the top answer in 2023. However, in 2024, our 316 respondents had quite a different vibe check – only a quarter (25%) chose work-life balance as one of their seven most important criteria, out of 28 possible choices. In 2024, it’s all about the bottom line – benefits and base pay tied for first choice with 44% each, up 7% and 2% respectively over the previous year.

“We’ve experienced a lot of turnover,” wrote one respondent. “Staff employees have either retired or left their positions for better paying jobs with different companies. Our employer does not hire replacements, leaving work to be divided or ‘assigned’ to current employees ([Figure 13](#)). ‘Other duties as assigned’ seems to

be the motto – without any compensation for taking on additional responsibilities whether they are within their job descriptions or not.”

Many respondents depicted similar stories. “While the job itself is rewarding, I work far too many hours for the level of compensation provided and have to do the CEO’s job for him as well, as he doesn’t have time to focus on the business, instead working on his pet projects,” said one. Another data center professional echoed these sentiments with simply “Not enough resources to complete all the projects we are asked to complete.”

Several data center professionals seemed resigned to their fate. One respondent told *Data Center Knowledge*: “The trend in technology employment is that the company thinks they own you. They give lip service to work/life balance, but in reality, they want you to dedicate [your] full life to their cause.”

The third most popular choice this year was the ability to work on creating “new” innovative IT solutions, with over a third of respondents (36%) choosing this option, almost double that from the previous year (19%). The minds of data center personnel have shifted from their level of happiness and satisfaction at work and in life onto how keen they are to work on important tech breakthroughs

Figure 13

Respondents Sound Off

We asked survey respondents to tell us why they’re dissatisfied with their job, in their own words. Their responses are both enlightening and almost universally familiar.

<i>“No 401K, PTO or US Holidays”</i>
<i>“Does not pay high. Not treated well.”</i>
<i>“I know I’m getting underpaid for what the market is.”</i>
<i>“Lack of job/responsibility growth”</i>
<i>“Little to no recognition; no chance for advancement, no training program”</i>
<i>“Workload is way too high”</i>
<i>“Salary low”</i>
<i>“Stress level”</i>
<i>“Not enough staff to complete projects efficiently.”</i>
<i>“Stress, no breaks, no vacation, no time away”</i>
<i>“The administration doesn’t fully appreciate my skillset or what IT does to protect the organization and make things run smoothly. Compensation and benefits are also under par.”</i>
<i>“My company had to downsize due to lack of sales. They are not offering 401K matching, no travel reimbursement, and they offer terrible healthcare plan benefits.”</i>
<i>“Inept leadership comprised of friends group from their prior positions elsewhere.”</i>
<i>“My organization restricts access to cloud-based technology. My team is not deemed to require such access and I feel that our technical skills are not aging well.”</i>
<i>“No upward mobility... Executives treat non-executives very poorly. Bonuses based on performance on Sales group, not my performance.”</i>
<i>“There is little room for advancement and I have been passed up for promotions in the past.”</i>
<i>“The whole job sucks secondary to a corporate culture which continues to be rudderless.”</i>
<i>“We’ve experienced a lot of turnover. Staff employees have either retired or left their positions for better paying jobs with different companies. Our employer does not hire replacements, leaving the work to be divided or ‘assigned’ to current employees within the department. ‘Other duties as assigned’ seems to be the motto without any compensation for taking on additional responsibilities whether they are within their job descriptions or not.”</i>

Data: Data Center Knowledge survey of 316 full-time IT professionals in the US, February 2024

or figure out the best ways to harness the latest technologies. Interest in innovation has replaced work-life balance as a data center priority – and it’s not just coming from the top. The average data center employee wants to be part of a challenging, productive, and successful workplace far more than they want to know that management cares about them.

“AI is exciting the workforce in a way that hasn’t occurred for a generation,” said Evans. “People see improvement and opportunity and want to be part of data center evolution and innovation.”

When asked what types of training would be most valuable to develop their career, almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) said “training on new technologies,” further signifying an increased interest in being on the leading edge of development trends, such as generative AI and other leading technologies relevant to data center professionals, such as quantum storage ([Figure 14](#)). The second most popular answer, from over a third of the respondents, was “certification courses,” which again indicated that respondents are thinking about demonstrating qualifications for that next opportunity. Risk and cybersecurity training was the third most common response (31%), followed by project management training (22%).

The idea of work-life balance shifting may be

due to an increase in work hours expected by formal or informal pressures.

In 2024, 28% of respondents said they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I can get my work done in a normal 40-to-45-hour work week” – up from 23% in 2023 ([Figure 15](#)). However, about 5% more people in 2024 agreed with that statement than in 2023 (62% in 2024, 58% in 2023).

Similarly, the importance of flexible work schedules is down 5%, job stability fell by 3%, working at home by 4%, a good work atmosphere by 10%, and the importance of vacation time is down by 10%.

“The idea of wellbeing being separate from business results is fading,” said Melinda Ferguson, VP and GM at Digital.ai. “Workplaces should focus more on purpose and true priorities beyond the balance sheet. Employee well-being is also part of business performance, and leaders should model the right behaviors (e.g., Zoom-free Fridays and email-free weekends).”

“Train your leaders to lead people they don’t see every day rather than scheduling endless video calls that take away from their productivity,” said Howard Holton, an analyst with GigaOM.

Spotlight: AI Skills in High Demand

Over the last few years, the most prized data center skills and certifications have been in cybersecurity, leadership/management, and cloud implementation. Those most in demand in the labor market are people with the ability to marry the needs of IT and cybersecurity, those who can foster collaboration among disparate teams within the data center and the enterprise, and those who can skillfully manage the transition of some workloads to the cloud.

The 2024 survey reveals, however, that AI now trumps cybersecurity, leadership, and other skills. The hype around ChatGPT and other GenAI engines is unrelenting. ChatGPT took only five days to reach a million users and now boasts almost [200 million users globally](#). There has been almost half a trillion dollars in [investment into AI startups](#) over the past 10 years, and a lot more is coming. There is no stopping the AI juggernaut, and data centers must prepare. No wonder 31% of data center respondents said that AI is a critical job skills requirement ([Figure 16](#)). Research from [Foote Partners](#) found the highest paying non-certified skills included AIOps, MLOps, and other AI skills in general.

“All skills add average cash pay premiums equivalent to between 7% to 21% of base

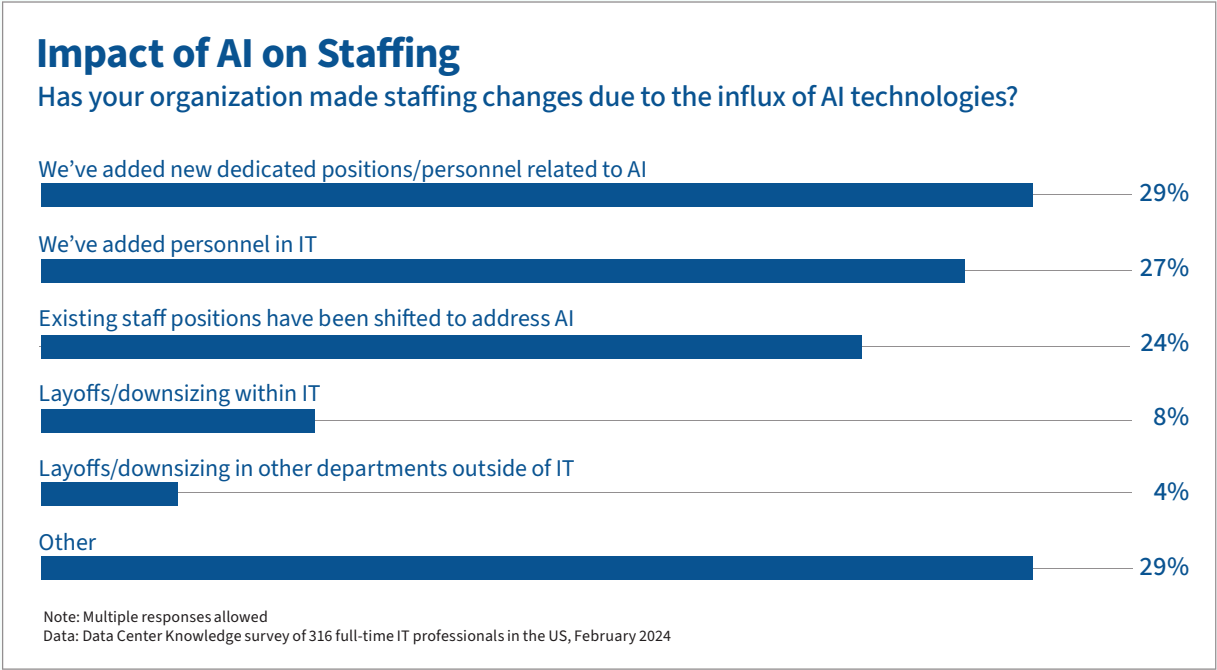
salary,” said David Foote, chief analyst at [Foote Partners](#).

“AI skills are very hot right now.”

What skills is AI replacing – or at least moving lower on the priority list? Fostering internal collaboration dropped 7% over the previous year, managing vendors and building vendor relationships each dipped 2%. Even more surprising, managing network and system infrastructure fell 8%, supporting desktops and users went down 8%, and securing data and applications crashed by 11%. Even sustainability, a topic that is very much on the minds of top management, went down by 5%. These skills remain integral to data center success. But the scramble to add AI and generative AI (GenAI) is so great that other areas are suffering from diminished attention.

[Figure 17](#) highlights the fact that AI staffing is now top of mind: 29% have added dedicated positions and personnel related to AI, and 24% have shifted people around to better address AI needs. Expect those numbers to ramp up further during 2024. But don’t forget about other mission critical data center tasks and skills – or take your eye off the cybersecurity ball. By all means train data center personnel

Figure 17



on AI and GenAI. But ensure they are educated on the many new threat vectors AI represents. And don’t let up on the importance of cybersecurity and leadership skills.

“Managers should identify the leaders among their teams and invest more in enhancing those leadership skills,” said Howard Holton, an analyst with GigaOM.

“AI may eliminate many IT jobs (probably including mine) in the next five to ten years,” said one respondent who identified themselves as a database administrator with more

than 20 years’ experience in information technology.

Another respondent added: “While AI and automation are expected to displace some jobs, they will also create new opportunities in areas like design, development and management. Professionals need to be aware of these trends and prepare for a future where human and machine collaboration is essential.”

This suggests that the corporate trend of placing a high emphasis on employee well-being may be ending.

Is DEI Progress Faltering?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has gained prominence in recent years. But this year's survey shows that momentum may be faltering. While 44% of those surveyed a year ago said gender salary inequity was a thing of the past, that number has fallen to 25% in 2024.

These results suggest one of two possibilities – either gender salary equality is getting better, or there is less awareness of what we know was a problem very recently.

Bill Kleyman, CEO and Co-founder of Apolo and AFCOM Data Center World Program Chair, sees this as a positive evolution. “There has been a concentrated effort from the data center community to improve equity and diversity within our industry. These efforts have resulted in more Women in Technology-type of conferences, events, and meet-ups. For example, at AFCOM Data Center World, we hold a Women in Tech networking event to recognize the brilliant and amazing women contributors to

the technology landscape. It wasn't overnight, but we have steadily made progress in creating a more accessible and equitable industry.”

The respondents may have been basing their answers on intuition versus true understanding of their peers' salaries. Only a quarter (24.5%) of our survey participants who identified themselves as male said they knew what their comparable peers earned, while our female-identified respondents were even less likely to know their peers' salaries – just one in five (20.5%) could confidently assess their standing among their peers.

Fifty-seven percent of respondents last year believed that salary parity and equality of ethnicity was the case in their organizations ([Figure 18](#)). In 2024, we are down to 45%. Further unsettling figures: The number of organizations working on eliminating inequalities is down 5% from 20% to 15%, the number that believe they don't have any salary inequities is down 8% from 36% to 28%, and the number of companies trying to better support employees of color is down 3% from 41%

to 38% ([Figures 19 & 20](#)). The bottom line is that more emphasis needs to be placed on DEI. Its profile has been raised in organizations in recent years, but momentum must be maintained, or other priorities may take hold.

“DEI and related programs may have become normalized,” said Evans. “These initiatives remain strong in organizations, but the focus may have diminished slightly.”

“With a new generation of data center leaders emerging, I'm confident that more groups will be represented in the technology space,” said Kleyman.

Mental Health Imbalance

Along with DEI, plenty of work remains to be done to promote employee mental health. The good news is that more than two-thirds of organizations (68%) report that their employers now offer services or help for mental health ([Figure 21](#)).

However, work-related stress levels continue to remain high. A quarter of the respondents considered their stress level at an 8 out of 10 or higher ([Figure 22](#)). More than half (54%) rated their stress levels as greater than 6 out of 10.



“Benefits have gone to crap at most companies I’ve spoken to. The biggest thing is medical insurance has gone up so much in cost that we have people that work full-time just to have medical insurance for their families.”

— IT Director, Healthcare/HMO/Pharmaceutical industry

They like operating remotely and 62% believe it contributes positively to mental health, which was the highest ranking of all contributing factors listed (Figure 23). The second most common answer was feeling supported and working with a competent team, both with 53% of the responses. Corporate culture was less important to respondents, contrary to what many enterprise leaders suppose will matter to staff happiness. Respondents also offered a few personal suggestions to support positive mental health, such as “flex hours,” “working, when possible, with older technology,” “positive employees,” and “meditation.”

We also asked our respondents the flip side on what had a negative impact upon their

mental health (Figure 11). Unsurprisingly, feeling overworked (41%) and working long hours (38%) were top of the list, along with lack of support (38%), poor leadership (36%), and insufficient pay/compensation (34%). Respondents did not hold back on their reactions to this question.

A common theme was an ineffective direct supervisor. “A bad boss is a nightmare,” “lack of mentoring, directive” and “vindictive manager” were mentioned in the freeform text. One respondent said, “Turnkey projects that look good on paper but costs more due to vendors solutions not working, requiring post startup rework.”

Conclusion

These are both opportune and worrying times for data centers. On the one hand, excitement is high about being able to work in IT innovation and the potential of AI in the data center. On the other hand, salaries may not be keeping up with inflation, DEI progress may be slowing,

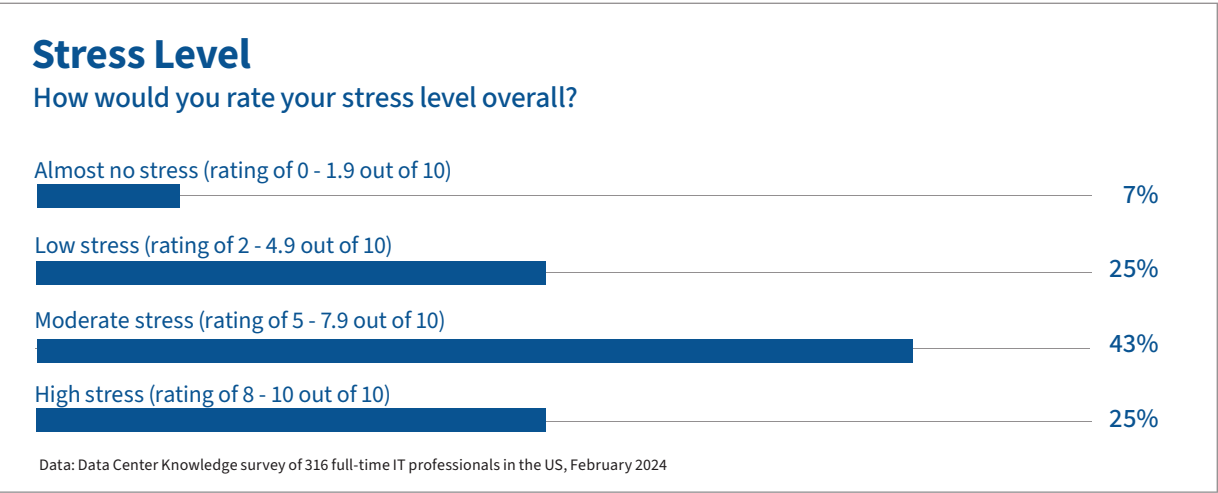
and the work-life balance may be tipping slightly in the wrong direction.

What is certain is that the next 12 months will be interesting for the data center. Let’s see how the AI frenzy impacts things in the real world and whether salaries will head upward to keep pace with inflation.

“There is a lot of uncertainty in the IT sector thanks to the massive layoffs...I personally know many people that have lost their positions and not been able to find anything. It has been a very difficult year for staffing.”

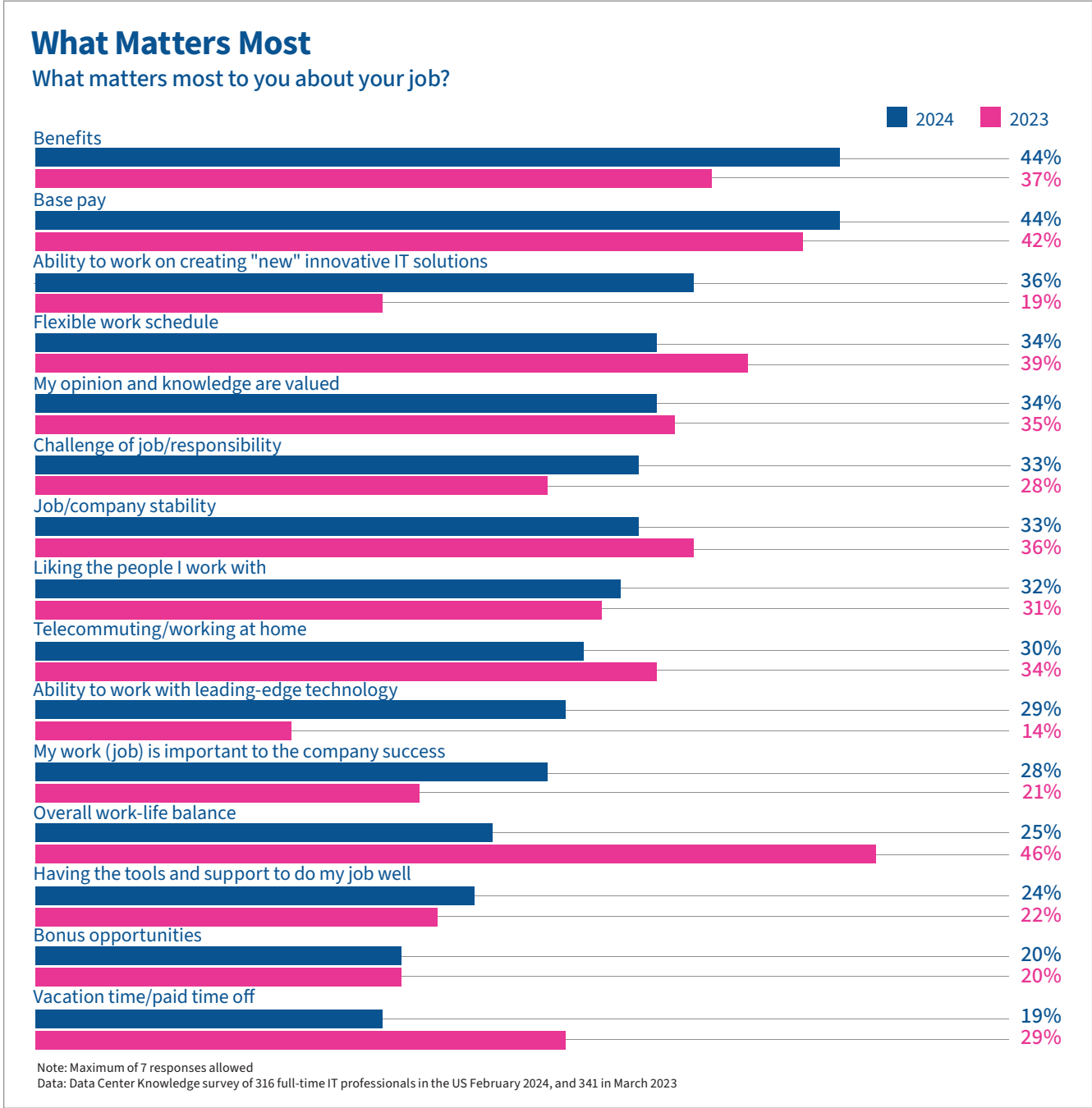
— IT Director, Retail sector

Figure 22



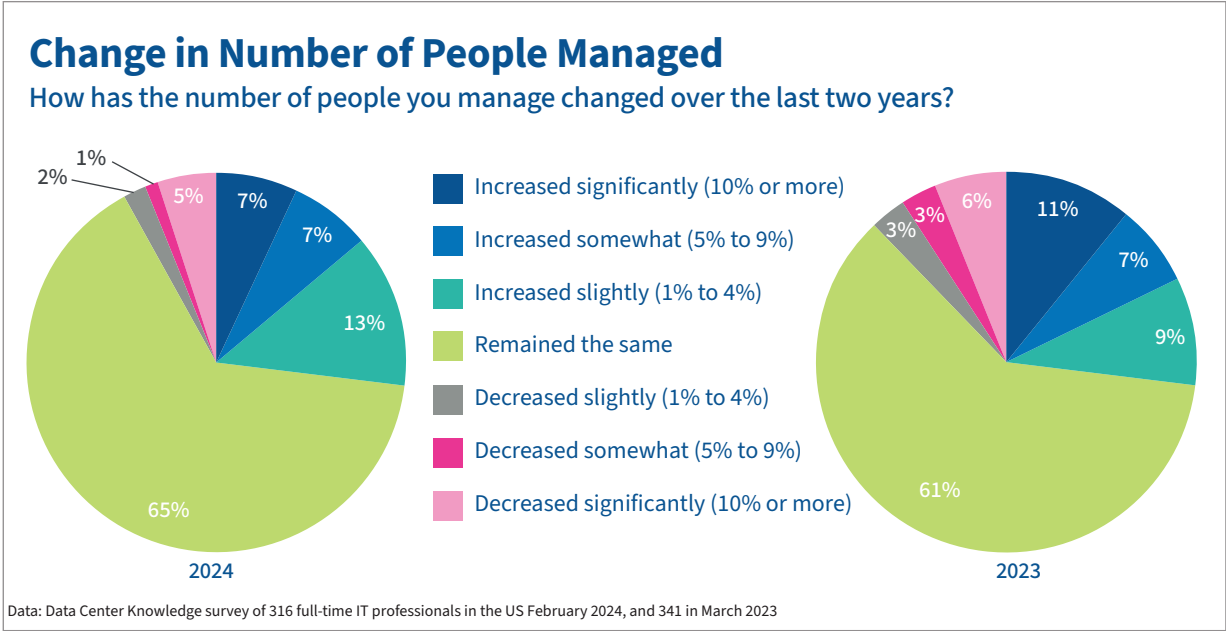
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Figure 6



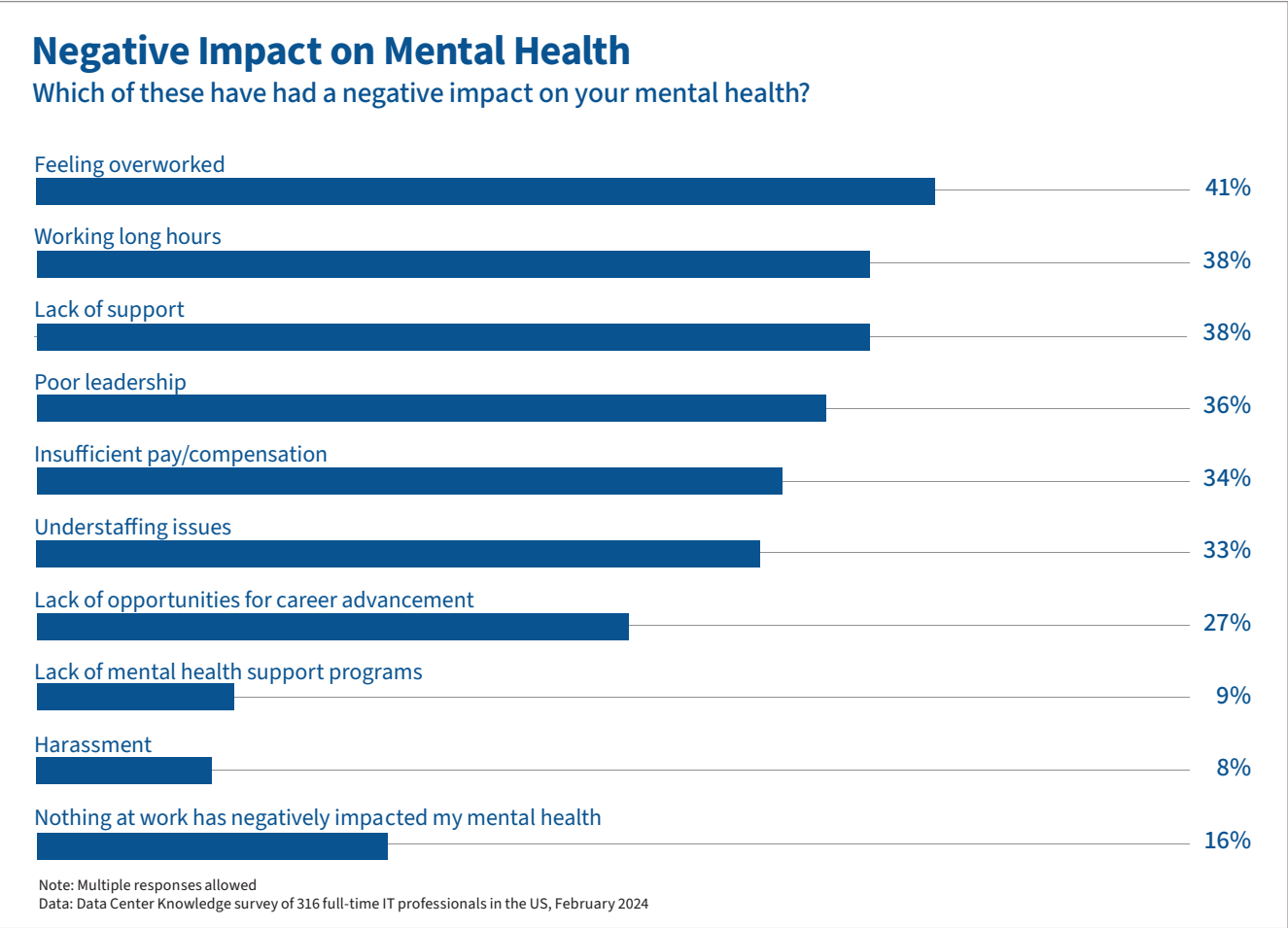
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Figure 10



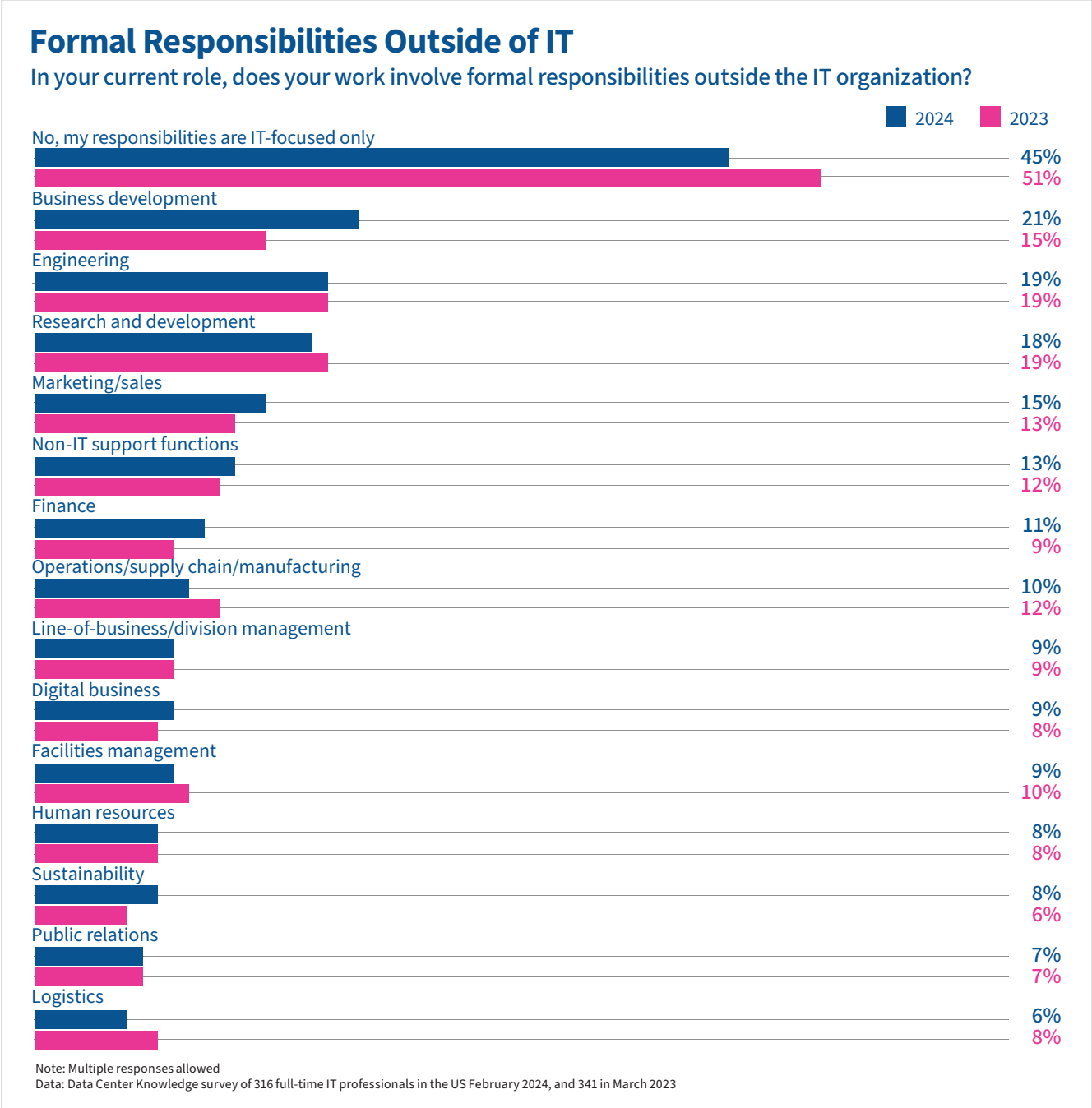
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Figure 11



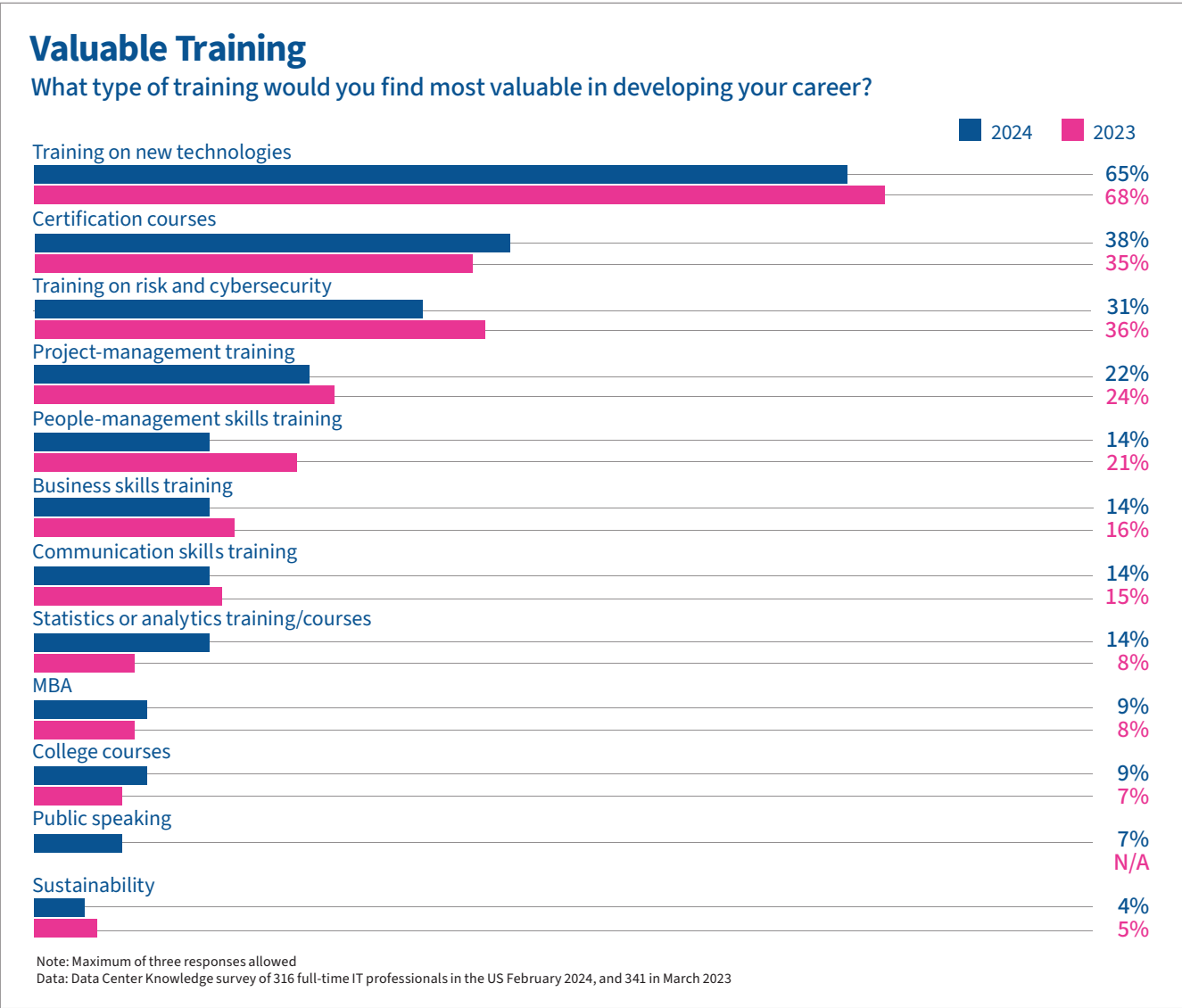
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Figure 12



Appendix

Figure 14



Appendix

Figure 15

Feelings About Current Position

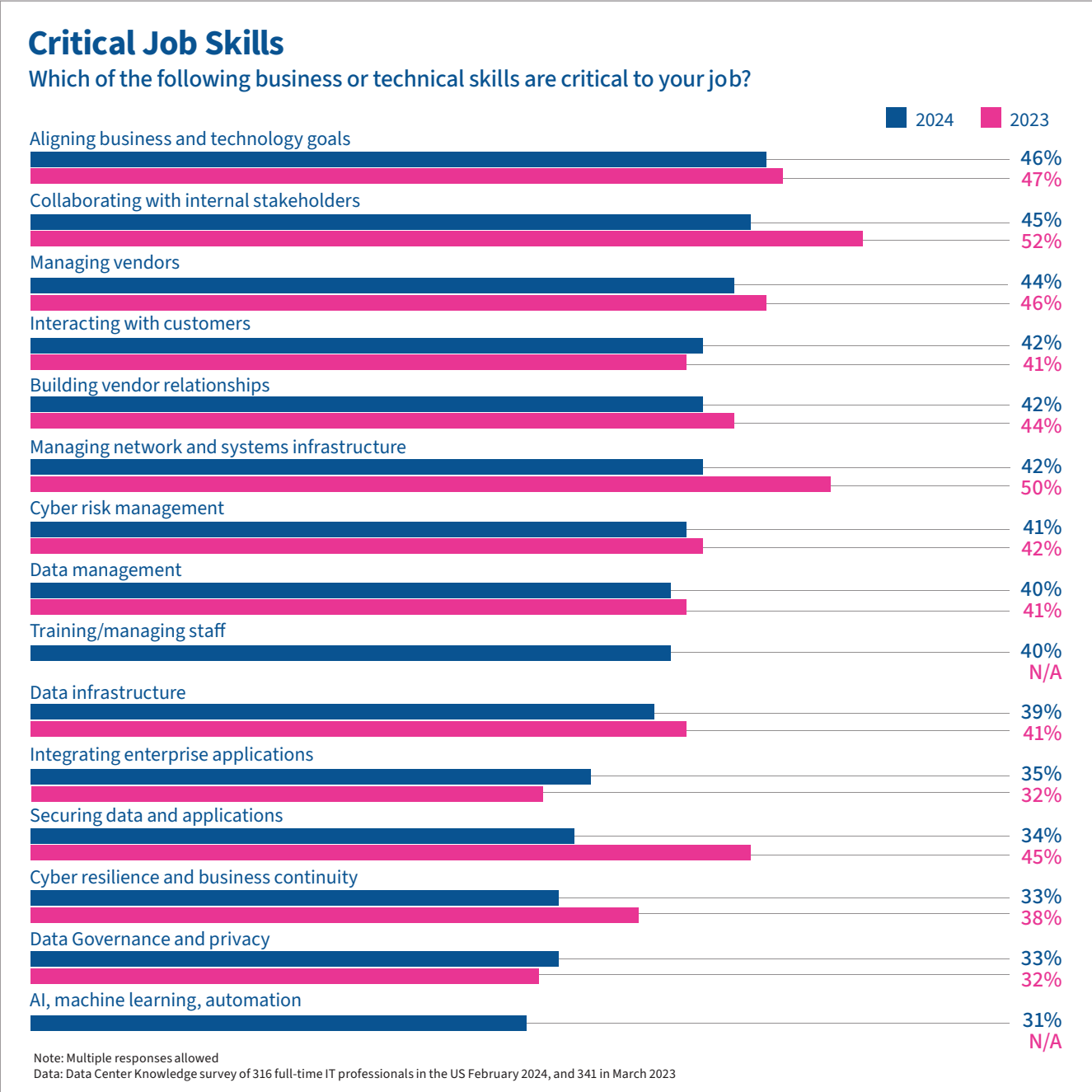
How would you rate your feelings about your current position?

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
What I do is very important to my employer's success.	1%	3%	10%	33%	53%
I'd recommend a career in technology or IT to a relative or other young adult starting their career.	4%	7%	13%	37%	39%
I love my current job.	4%	10%	16%	41%	29%
I can get my work done a normal 40 to 45 hour work week.	10%	18%	10%	35%	27%
I have all the tools I need to do my job well.	5%	14%	16%	42%	23%
I have all the training I need to do a good job.	7%	17%	20%	38%	18%

Data: Data Center Knowledge survey of 316 full-time IT professionals in the US, February 2024

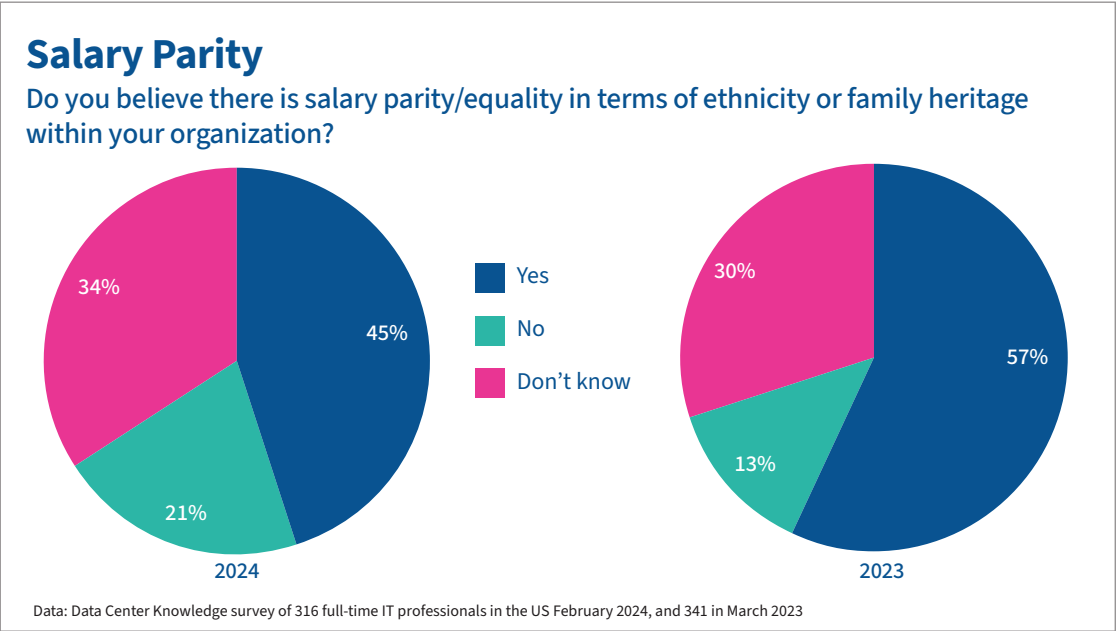
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Figure 16



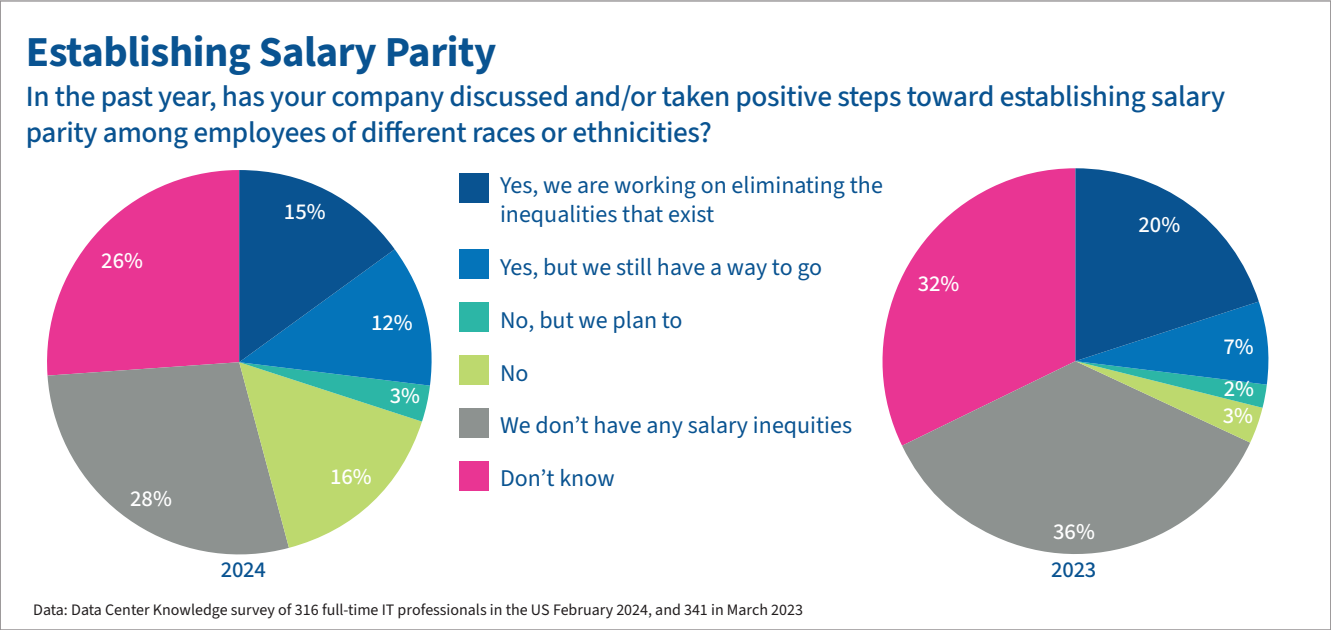
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Figure 18



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Figure 19



Appendix

Figure 20

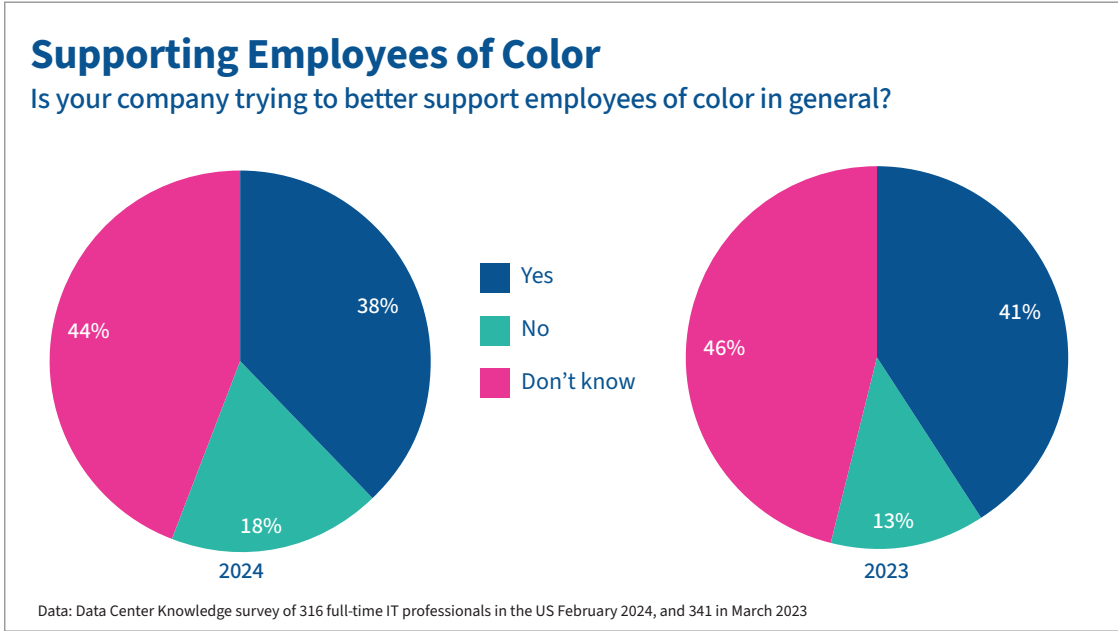
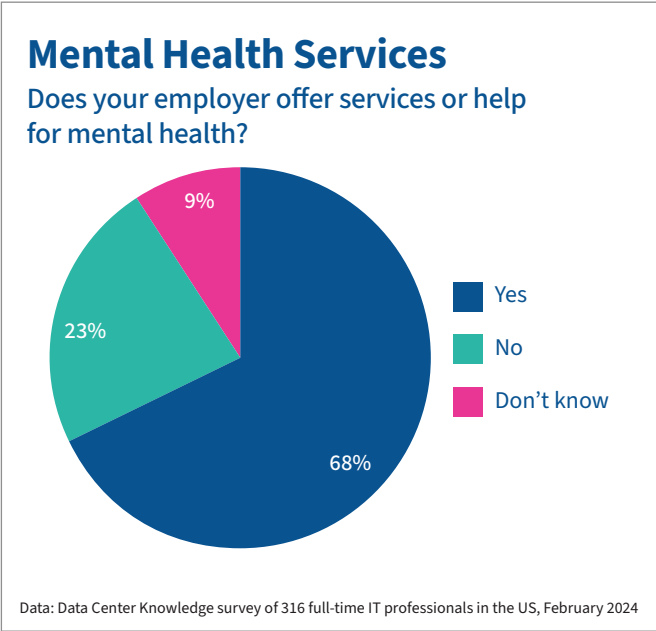
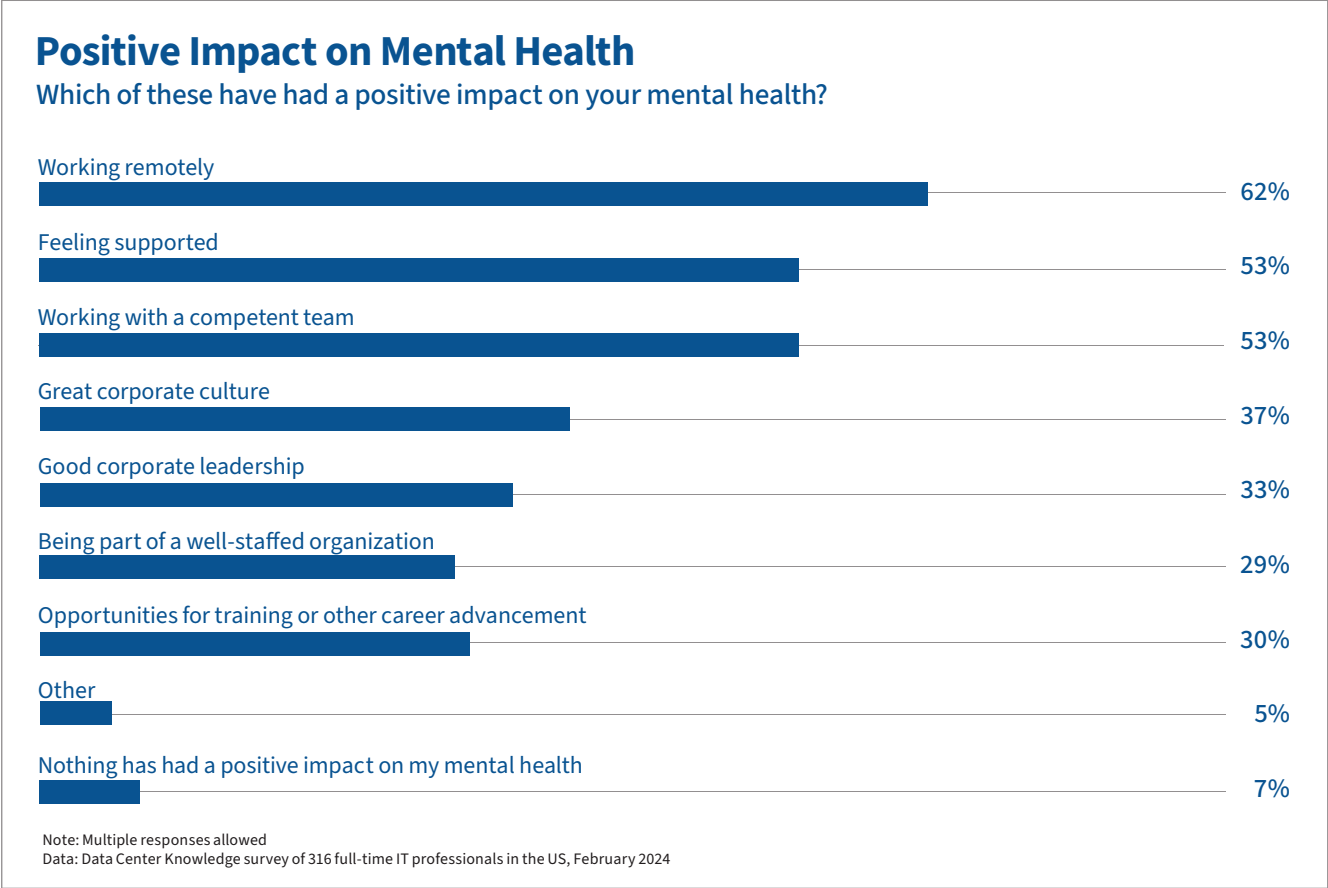


Figure 21



Appendix

Figure 23



Appendix

Figure 24

Past Job Experience

Data center professionals come from all types of life experiences. Here are just some of the roles our survey respondents held before they worked in data centers.

Customer service
Dental industry professional
Fire/EMS
Bartender
Cataloging/Meta data technician
Farmer
Cook
Chemist
Mover
Performing artist
Technical trainer
Restaurant manager
Radio station program director
Truck driver and emergency management
Underwriter
Writer/editor
Video producer
Spanish teacher and academic advisor
Economist
Lawyer
Patient access manager
Textile product development manager
Transcriptionist



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