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IT and Infosec Collaboration on Vulnerability Patching

IT and infosec teams must work together to patch security vulnerabilities. How do organizations divide responsibility and support cross-functional collaboration?



Majority of respondent organizations have a dedicated team for vulnerability patching

Leaders support effective IT-infosec collaboration with shared responsibilities matrixes and regular meetings

Most say having conflicting priorities between IT and infosec teams is one of the toughest vulnerability patching challenges

Data collection: Nov 25, 2023 - Jan 3, 2024

Respondents: 187 information security and IT leaders at organizations with dedicated security staff, who have visibility into patch management processes

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.

One Minute Insights

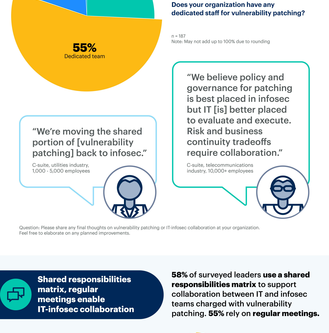
Majority of organizations use a dedicated team for vulnerability patching

The **majority** of respondents (51%) report that **IT is primarily responsible for patching security vulnerabilities**. At 29% of responding organizations, the responsibility is equally shared between IT and infosec.

Which function is primarily responsible for vulnerability patching at your organization?



n = 187



Nearly three-quarters (**74%**) of respondent organizations have one or more **dedicated staff for patching vulnerabilities**, with over half (55%) dedicating a team to this work.

Does your organization have any dedicated staff for vulnerability patching?

n = 187
Note: May not add up to 100% due to rounding

"We're moving the sheet portion of [vulnerability patching] back to infosec."

C-suite, utilities industry, 1,000 - 5,000 employees

"We believe policy and governance for patching is best placed in infosec but IT [is] better placed to evaluate and execute. Risk and business continuity tradeoffs require collaboration."

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

Question: Please share any final thoughts on vulnerability patching or IT-infosec collaboration at your organization. Feel free to elaborate on any planned improvements.

Shared responsibilities matrix, regular meetings enable IT-infosec collaboration

58% of surveyed leaders **use a shared responsibilities matrix** to support collaboration between IT and infosec teams charged with vulnerability patching. **55%** rely on **regular meetings.**

How does your organization support effective collaboration between IT and infosec teams involved in vulnerability patching? Select all that apply.

Designated liaison(s) to coordinate infosec and IT teams **40%** | Regular reporting across infosec and IT teams **36%** | Clear handoff processes **34%** | Centralized communication hub **32%** | Documentation **32%** | Defined communication plans **27%** | Shared dashboards **24%** | Regular training sessions **15%** | Performance review criteria tied to remediation metrics **14%** | Other* **1%** | Not sure **0%**

n = 187
*Other includes: One in the same

58%
Shared responsibilities matrix

55%
Regular meetings between IT and infosec teams

53%
IT and infosec teams have mutual awareness of challenges

"Must tie metrics and incentives to performance while respecting security's role [in] enabling [a] secure business."

Director, finance industry, 10,000+ employees

"Good communication and shared goals are key."

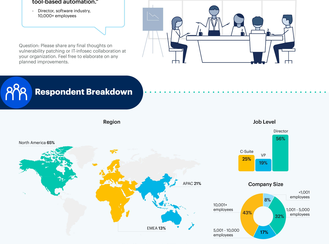
C-suite, healthcare industry, 1,000 - 5,000 employees

Question: Please share any final thoughts on vulnerability patching or IT-infosec collaboration at your organization. Feel free to elaborate on any planned improvements.

Conflicting priorities between IT and infosec is a major challenge for patching

Over half (**52%**) of respondents say **conflicting priorities between infosec and IT teams** is one of their organization's most difficult challenges with vulnerability patching.

41% cite the reluctance to apply patches for fear of negative outcomes among their most difficult hurdles.



What are the most difficult challenges your organization is facing in terms of collaboration between IT and infosec teams involved in vulnerability patching? Select up to 3.

Inconsistent handoff processes between teams **26%** | Inadequate documentation **24%** | Inadequate communication **21%** | Insufficient training on security protocols for IT teams(s) **21%** | Unclear division of responsibilities **16%** | Inadequate reporting **12%** | Other* **3%** | Not sure **2%**

n = 187
*Other includes: Unsupported applications; We are fortunate to have a highly collaborative team between IT & (infosec); Complexity of system downtime on critical apps and servers; Staffing on infosec teams, although it has improved; Other

32% say **mean time to remediation (MTTR)** has improved over the past 12 months, noting decreases in MTTR for actively exploited vulnerabilities. But **40%** say their organization's **MTTR worsened** during this period.

Has the mean time to remediation (MTTR) for actively exploited vulnerabilities at your organization changed over the past 12 months?



n = 187

"Collaboration has improved but the rate of removal on unsupported applications where no patching is possible has slowed due to budget cuts."

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

"Business downtime continues to be our biggest challenge when trying to negotiate windows to apply security patches."

VP, natural resource extraction industry, 10,000+ employees

Question: Please share any final thoughts on vulnerability patching or IT-infosec collaboration at your organization. Feel free to elaborate on any planned improvements.

In their own words...

"Patching for the sake of it doesn't bring much value to the organization."

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

"One key factor is having properly laid processes and monitoring for timely patching. We are also evaluating zero trust architectures/tools to make infra more secure and rugged."

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

"Automating much of the patching has improved the situation for us. While there are situations where patches cause issues, we have preferred to deal with those situations rather than risk not keeping up with the security patching."

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

"We have significantly benefited by aligning cyclic OS patching with [the] rest of the vulnerability remediation and tool-based automation."

- Director, software industry, 10,000+ employees

Question: Please share any final thoughts on vulnerability patching or IT-infosec collaboration at your organization. Feel free to elaborate on any planned improvements.

Respondent Breakdown



Note: May not add up to 100% due to rounding
Respondents: 187 information security and IT leaders at organizations with dedicated security staff, who have visibility into patch management processes

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Source: Gartner Peer Community, Vulnerability Patching: IT-Infosec Collaboration survey

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