TECHCENTRAL

TECHCENTRAL SURVEY · FINAL RESULTS

The Cloud Reckoning

What South Africa's CIOs, CTOs and CISOs Are Doing Today and Whether It Will Be Enough by 2028

100 senior technology leaders surveyed

30 July 2026

Sponsored by Altron Digital Business

Executive summary

South Africa's senior technology leaders are operating in a cloud environment that is broadly functional but unevenly mature. Nearly half of organisations run deliberate hybrid architectures, and almost two-thirds report being on track with their cloud strategy, yet significant execution gaps persist across security, legacy integration, skills, and cost governance. The next 18 months will be defined by a sharp pivot toward AI and data workloads, with 55% of respondents actively planning AI and ML cloud migrations, even as only 26% say their infrastructure is production-ready for those workloads today. Data sovereignty and compliance obligations are rising as structural forces, with 47% having already rearchitected for requirements such as POPIA, but a material share remain unverified or inactive. By 2028, the confluence of AI-driven workload change, regulatory pressure, and a persistent skills shortage will force organisations to make harder choices about where they operate, with whom, and at what level of internal capability.

48%	55%	26%	63%
Hybrid hosting dominant	AI workloads planned	AI in production today	Strategy matches reality

Key findings

55%

AI and ML workloads top the 18-month migration agenda, yet only 26% of organisations are running AI in production today, exposing a sharp gap between intent and infrastructure readiness.

48%

Hybrid cloud is the dominant architecture, reflecting a deliberate rather than transitional posture as organisations balance cloud economics with on-premises control.

42%

Legacy integration is the single biggest source of operational friction, ahead of security gaps, cost overruns and skills shortages, all of which cluster closely behind.

37%

Only a minority operate a mature FinOps practice, while 28% still rely primarily on provider billing dashboards, leaving most organisations flying partially blind on cloud spend.

47%

Nearly half have formally reviewed and updated their architecture for compliance with POPIA and related obligations, but one in five believe they are compliant without having verified it.

THE HEADLINE FINDING

The AI Ambition Gap

55% of organisations plan to move AI and ML workloads to the cloud in the next 18 months, yet only 26% are running AI in production today.

THE GAP IN ONE VIEW

55%	26%
Plan AI workloads in 18 months	Running AI in production now

THE TAKEAWAY

The distance between stated AI intent and production-grade infrastructure readiness is where the immediate commercial opportunity sits for partners who can accelerate that transition safely.

METHODOLOGY

Who responded

100 verified senior leaders responded, with 103 unique respondents in total. Industry and company size are taken from each respondent's company record.

BY SENIORITY

Specialist · Architect · Engineer · Other	68%
CIO / CTO / CISO / CEO / Founder / MD / Executive	19%
Head of IT / Technology · Director · VP	9%
IT / Operations / Governance Manager · Team Lead	4%

BY COMPANY SIZE

- **SME** 50% · 1-200 staff
- **Mid-market** 28% · 201-5 000
- **Enterprise** 21% · 5 000+
- **Not specified** 1% · company size not on file

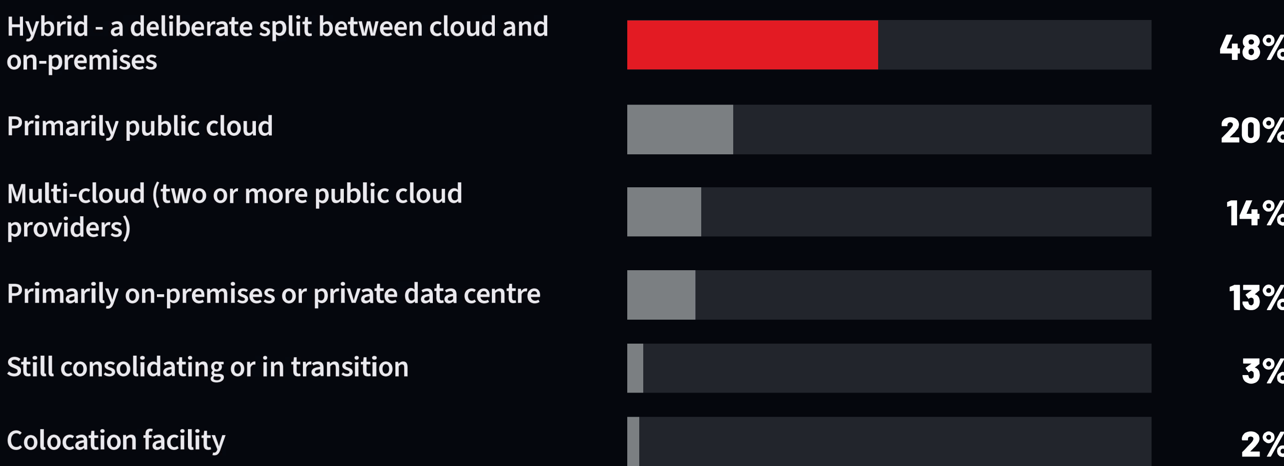
LEADING SECTORS

Technology	16%
Financial Services	13%
Technology l Reseller	8%
Consulting	6%
Insurance	5%
Other	5%
Healthcare	5%
Telecommunications	5%

01 · THE CLOUD LANDSCAPE

48%

Hybrid architecture



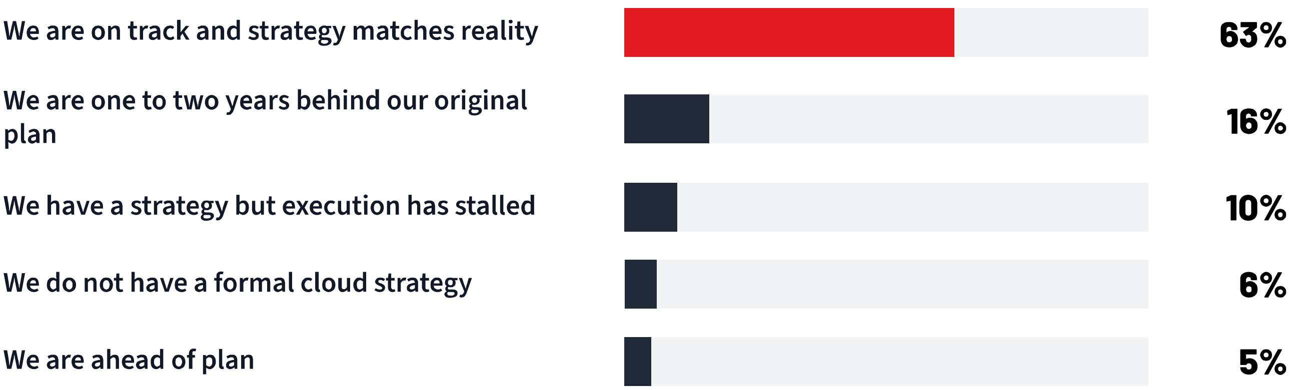
WHAT IT MEANS

Hybrid is not a waypoint for most South African enterprises, it is the destination. Any cloud strategy that ignores the on-premises side of the equation will miss how the majority of production workloads actually run.

02 · THE CLOUD LANDSCAPE

A majority say strategy and execution are aligned, but the 26% who are stalled, behind, or operating without a formal strategy at all represent a material cohort where plans have not translated into progress.

63%
On track



03 · WORKLOAD PRIORITIES

55%

AI and ML top the list

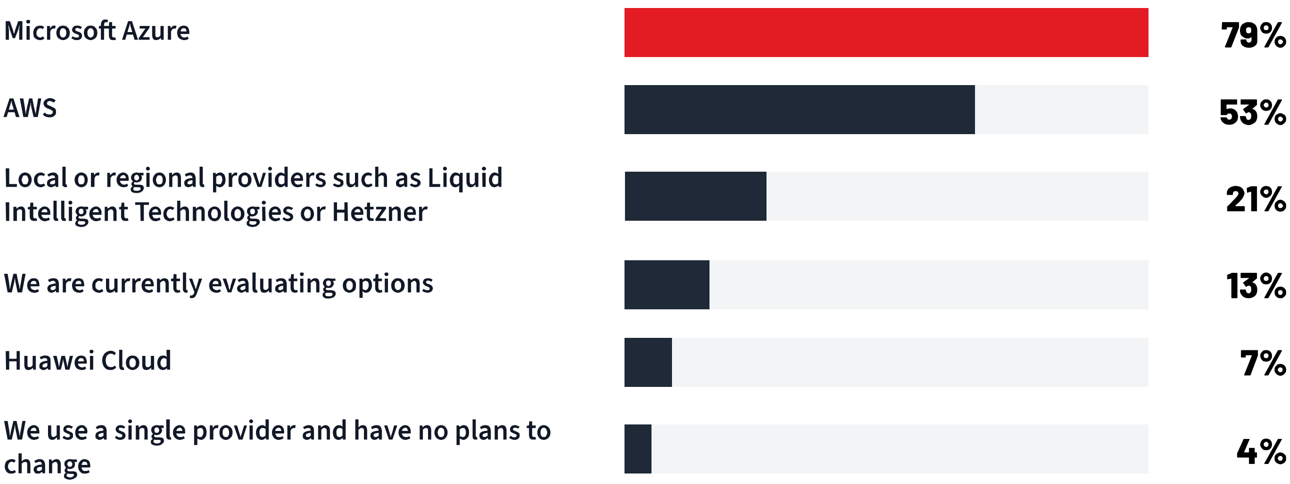
WHAT IT MEANS

AI has displaced traditional workload migration as the primary forcing function for cloud investment. Organisations that have not assessed their infrastructure readiness for AI workloads are already behind the planning curve.

04 · THE CLOUD LANDSCAPE

Azure's commanding lead over AWS reflects the Microsoft-heavy enterprise software landscape in South Africa, while one in five organisations are also considering local and regional providers, likely driven by data sovereignty and latency concerns.

79%
Azure dominant



05 · COST AND GOVERNANCE

The majority of organisations either rely on provider dashboards, struggle to allocate costs accurately, or have outsourced cost management entirely, meaning cloud spend discipline remains an aspiration for most.

37%
Mature FinOps practice

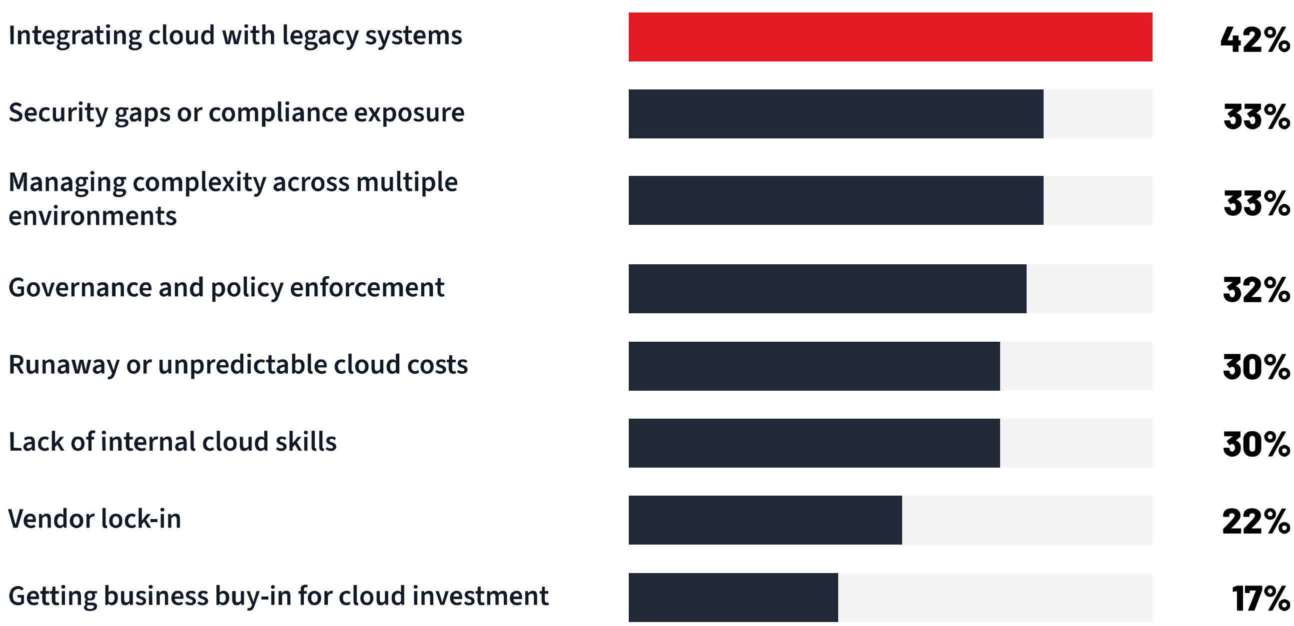
We have a mature FinOps practice with dedicated resources and tooling	37%
We rely primarily on provider billing dashboards	28%
We track spend but struggle to optimise or allocate costs accurately	18%
Cloud costs are managed by a third party on our behalf	10%
We have limited visibility into cloud costs	7%

06 · FRICTION AND CHALLENGES

Legacy integration friction outpaces every other challenge, but the tight clustering of security, complexity, governance and cost concerns below it indicates that most organisations are fighting on multiple fronts simultaneously.

42%

Legacy integration tops friction



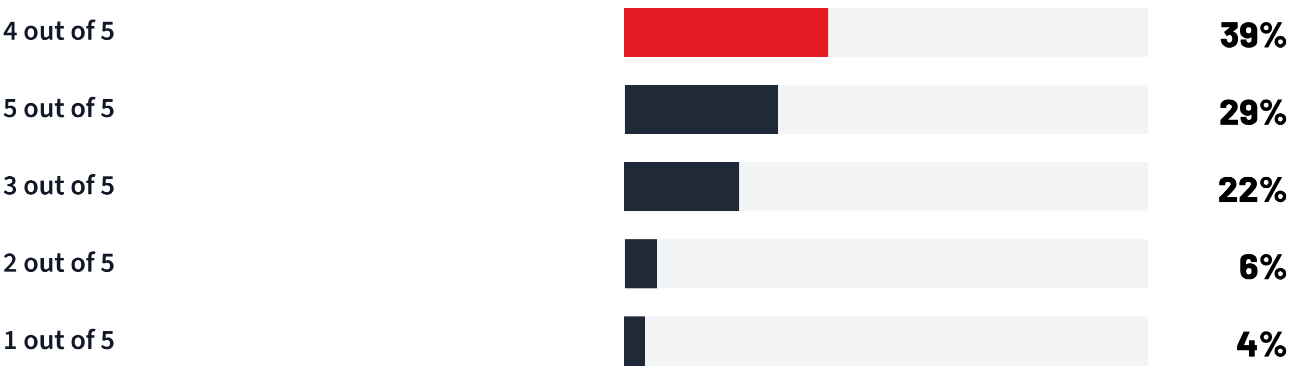
101 RESPONSES · MULTIPLE ANSWERS ALLOWED

07 · SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE

While confidence levels are broadly high, nearly a third of respondents rated themselves at 3 out of 5 or lower, a non-trivial proportion given that misunderstanding shared responsibility is a leading cause of cloud security incidents.

68%

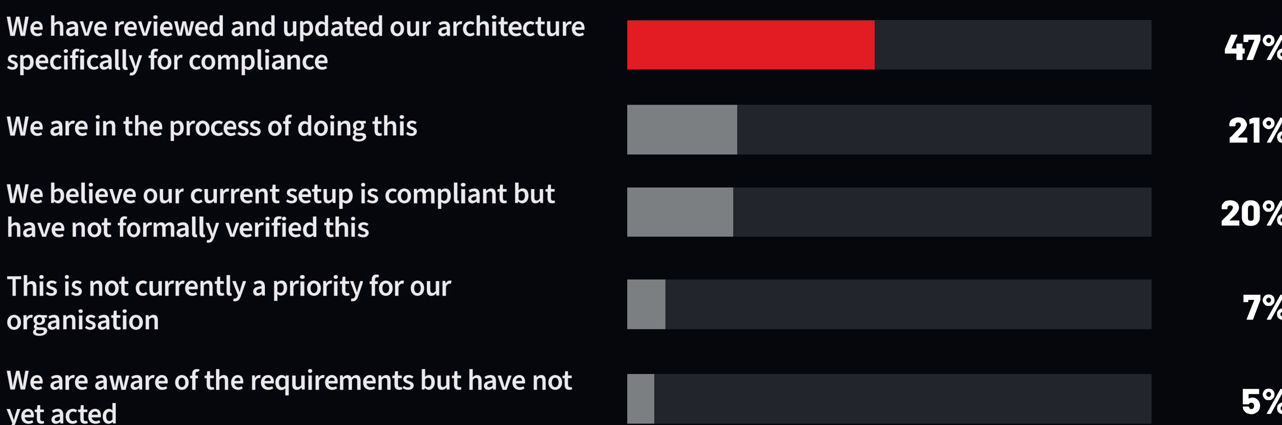
Rated 4 or 5 out of 5



08 · SECURITY AND COMPLIANCE

47%

Architecture formally updated



WHAT IT MEANS

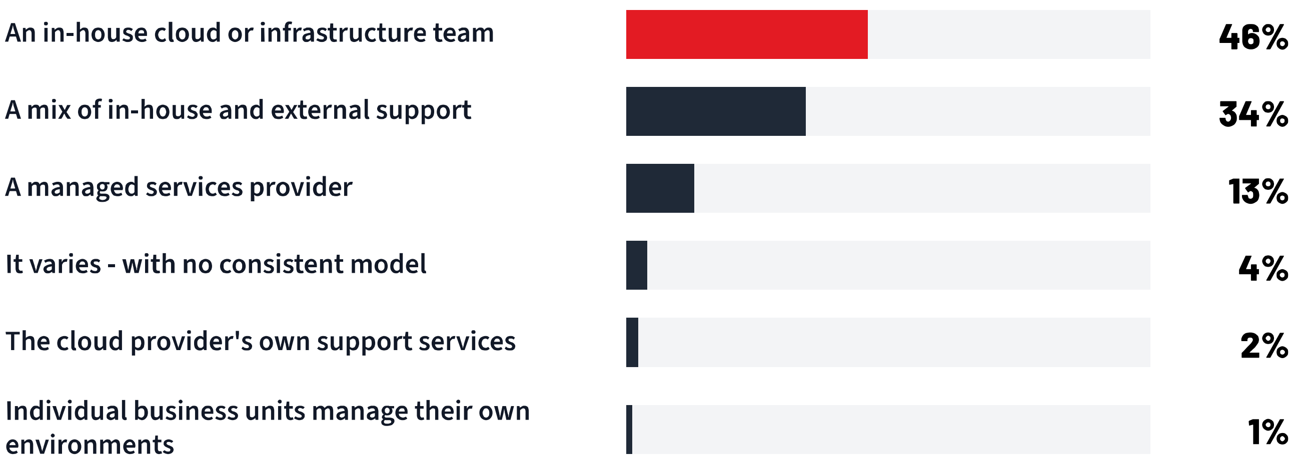
Assumed compliance without verification is a governance liability. As POPIA enforcement matures and sector-specific regulations tighten, organisations that have not formally tested their architecture against the rules face real exposure.

09 · OPERATING MODEL

Nearly half rely entirely on internal teams, but a combined 34% use a blended model, reflecting the skills pressure that makes pure in-house management increasingly difficult to sustain at scale.

46%

In-house teams dominant

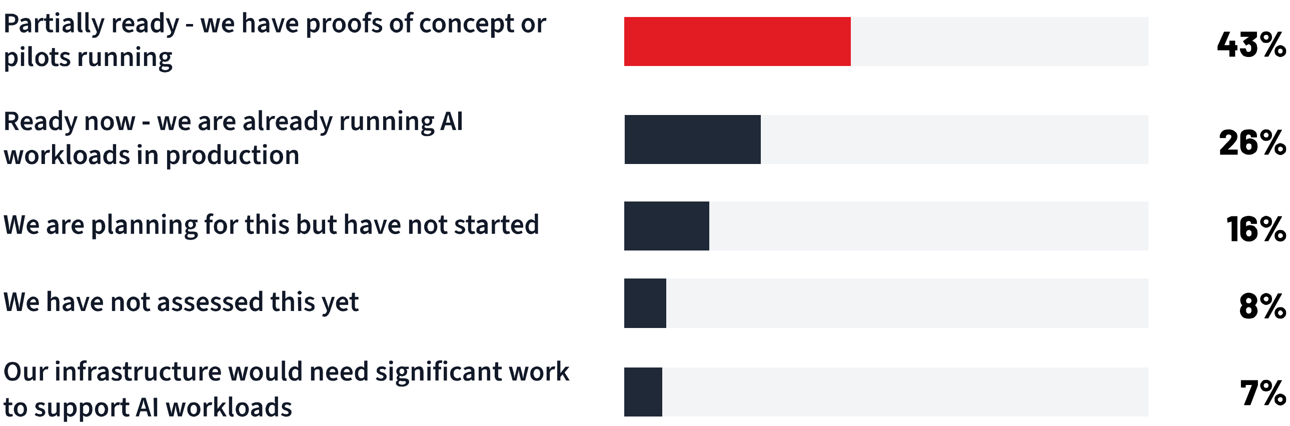


10 · AI READINESS

The largest group sits in a proof-of-concept phase, with genuine production AI deployments representing just over a quarter of respondents, confirming that AI ambition is running well ahead of infrastructure maturity.

43%

Pilots only, not production



11 · INVESTMENT PRIORITIES

Security and compliance edges out AI infrastructure as the top investment priority, suggesting that governance concerns are acting as a co-equal driver alongside AI ambition rather than a constraint on it.

60%
Security and compliance first

Security and compliance	60%
AI and ML infrastructure	55%
Data platform and analytics	44%
Application modernisation and legacy migration	37%
Cost optimisation and FinOps	34%
Disaster recovery and resilience	26%
Skills development and training	19%
Cloud governance and architecture	17%
Sustainability and green cloud	7%

12 · LOOKING TO 2028

Nearly half believe AI will fundamentally alter workload architecture and cloud economics, dwarfing every other factor including data sovereignty, the skills shortage and regulatory pressure.

48%

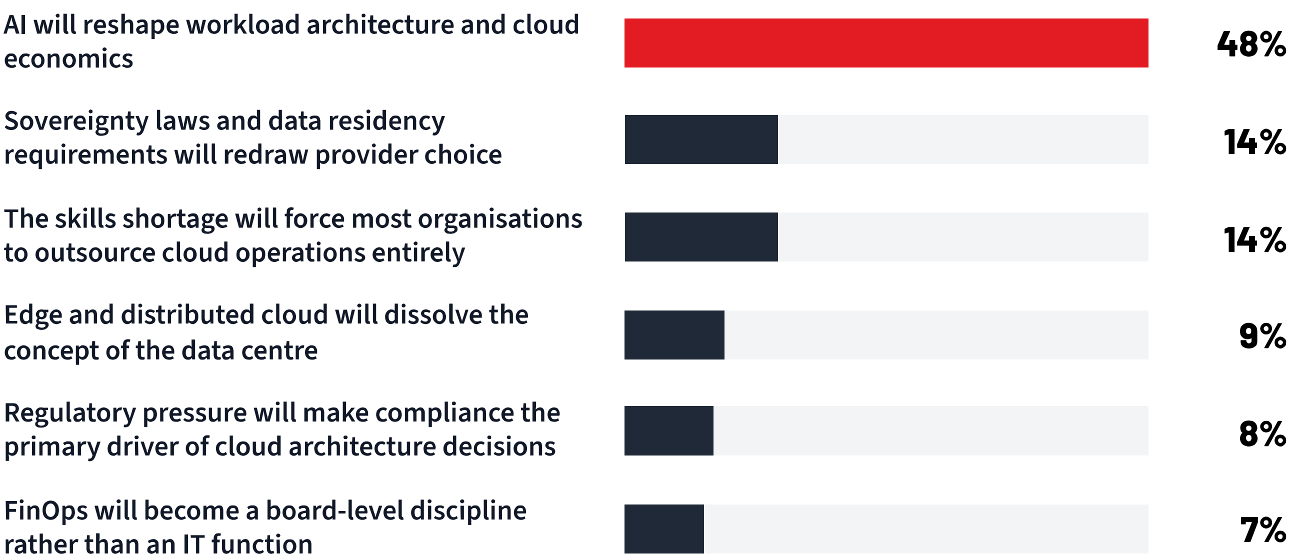
AI reshapes cloud economics

AI will reshape workload architecture and cloud economics	48%
Sovereignty laws and data residency requirements will redraw provider choice	14%
The skills shortage will force most organisations to outsource cloud operations entirely	14%
Edge and distributed cloud will dissolve the concept of the data centre	9%
Regulatory pressure will make compliance the primary driver of cloud architecture decisions	8%
FinOps will become a board-level discipline rather than an IT function	7%

THE FORWARD VIEW

How 2028 Looks From Here

When asked to name the single development that will most fundamentally change how South African organisations use cloud by 2028, respondents returned a clear verdict: AI will reshape workload architecture and cloud economics above all other forces. Data sovereignty and the skills shortage tied as the second and third most cited factors, suggesting the future is shaped by both technological and regulatory pressure.



THE CONSENSUS

Organisations that treat AI infrastructure planning as a 2026 or 2027 problem are already behind the strategic cycle that peers are running now.

What this data is telling us

- Hybrid cloud is the settled architecture for most South African enterprises, not a transition state, and cloud strategies must be designed around that reality.
- AI and ML lead the 18-month workload agenda but production deployments are still the minority, meaning infrastructure readiness is the critical near-term constraint.
- Assumed POPIA compliance without formal architectural verification is a growing liability as enforcement matures and sector regulators sharpen their focus.
- Legacy integration remains the dominant source of day-to-day friction, ahead of cost, skills and security, and it will intensify as AI workloads demand cleaner data pipelines.
- Security and compliance have matched AI as the top investment priority heading into 2027, signalling that governance is a strategic driver in its own right, not just a cost of doing business.

METHODOLOGY

How the survey was run

SAMPLE

103 unique respondents, of whom 100 are verified senior leaders (executive or head / lead level). Seniority and sector are classified from each respondent's job title and company record, not self-reported survey fields.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork ran online via TechCentral, closing 30 June 2026. Results are final.

DATA INTEGRITY

Responses are de-duplicated by email; test and incomplete entries are removed before analysis. Percentages are calculated on those answering each question.

EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

Survey design, fieldwork and analysis were run by TechCentral and Publishared. Altron Digital Business sponsored the research; editorial control of the findings rests with TechCentral.