

Is Security Leadership Contracting? Not Measurably: The Manager Share of Postings Held

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Abstract

US security postings, spring 2024 against 2026, under the same rules in both years: the manager share of postings held, 7.7% and 6.8%. People management read from the posting text shows no measurable change, and senior individual contributor titles rose.

^{*}Written entirely by agents in the Research Factory, within guardrails and controls set by our team. Figures as of 1 October 2026.

1 Introduction

Not measurably. Comparing US security job postings from spring 2024 with postings at US-headquartered companies in September 2026, counted the same way in both years, manager-titled postings were 7.7% of security postings in 2024 and 6.8% in 2026 (likely range of the change -3.0 to $+1.0$ percentage points). Each figure here comes with a range of likely values, and when that range includes zero we can't tell the change from no change. The share of postings for roles that manage people, read from the responsibilities rather than the title, went from 14.6% to 12.4%, with no measurable change. Senior individual-contributor titles rose from 26% to 47%. Executive postings (director, head of, VP, CISO) show no clear change.

A job posting is a request for a hire. Postings do not distinguish flatter teams from fewer backfills or more internal promotion, and this piece answers only what companies ask for.

2 The answer at a glance

Table 1: Findings with their confidence and representativeness ratings, on the scales defined in [1].

Finding	Confidence	Representativeness
The manager share of security postings shows no measurable change, 7.7% and 6.8%	Medium. The headline likely range runs from -3.0 to $+1.0$ points, but other ways of slicing the data reach 6.7 points from zero. Counting each company once, it shows a likely but borderline fall (-5.1 to -0.7). Among postings first seen after the collection widened, it shows a likely but borderline rise ($+0.2$ to $+5.1$).	Medium. Two collection methods, US only, technology-leaning in 2026.
Senior individual-contributor titles rose from 26% to 47%	High. A clear rise (likely range $+16.2$ to $+24.5$).	Medium.
People management read from the posting text went from 14.6% to 12.4%, with no measurable change and no sign that manager roles were renamed as senior titles	Low. Three AI models each read every posting, and the answer at least two agree on shows no clear change (-5.0 to $+0.4$), nor does any single model's answer. Inside senior and individual-contributor titles it shows a likely but borderline fall (-4.9 to -0.6). Two of the models agree at a kappa of 0.93, a score where 1 means perfect agreement.	Medium.
Executive postings show no clear change	Medium. Every way of slicing the data gives a likely range within 9.6 points of zero, though postings first seen after the collection widened show a clear rise ($+3.3$ to $+9.6$).	Medium.
General security leadership held at 3.9% of postings in both years. GRC (governance, risk and compliance) and detection and response leader shares are not measurable	High for the generic title, whose likely range lies within 1.6 points of zero. Low for GRC and detection and response, whose likely ranges each reach 11.5 points from zero.	Medium.
Fewer security managers are employed	Not answerable. Postings measure demand, not headcount.	

3 The numbers by level

Share of security postings by the level implied by the title. IC means individual contributor.

Table 2: The numbers by level.

	Postings	Companies	Executive	Manager	Senior IC	IC	ICs per leader title
2024, US postings	1,038	679	3.8%	7.7%	26.4%	62.1%	7.7
2026, US-headquartered companies	4,587	831	5.3%	6.8%	46.8%	41.1%	7.3
Likely range of the change (95%), percentage points			-0.4 to $+3.8$	-3.0 to $+1.0$	$+16.2$ to $+24.5$		

Source: AKA Security analysis of the public LinkedIn Job Postings dataset (5 to 19 April 2024) and AKA's job-board data (1 October 2026).

4 The manager share did not measurably change in most slices of the data

Table 3: The manager share did not measurably change in most slices of the data.

Slice of the data	Manager share, 2024 → 2026	Manager change, likely range	Executive share, 2024 → 2026	Executive change, likely range
All postings (above)	7.7% → 6.8%		3.8% → 5.3%	
The same 74 companies in both years	8.7% → 8.1%	 -6.7 to +5.2	5.8% → 4.3%	 -6.4 to +2.7
One posting per company and title	7.7% → 6.8%	 -3.0 to +1.0	3.8% → 5.3%	 -0.4 to +3.8
Each company weighted once	8.1% → 5.3%	 -5.1 to -0.7	4.3% → 3.6%	 -2.4 to +0.9
2026 postings first published in the last 30 days	7.7% → 8.3%	 -1.9 to +3.1	3.8% → 7.0%	 +0.6 to +6.4
2026 enterprises only	7.7% → 7.4%	 -2.5 to +1.9	3.8% → 6.1%	 -0.1 to +5.1
2026 postings first seen after the collection widened on 18 September	7.7% → 10.4%	 +0.2 to +5.1	3.8% → 10.0%	 +3.3 to +9.6

Source: AKA Security analysis, same data as the level table. Both years hold one posting per company and title, and that row matches the headline. A cell in bold shows a clear change: its likely range does not include zero.

Bars show each range of likely values against zero (dashed). Solid: the whole range is above or below zero. Grey: it ends at zero. Hollow: it includes zero.

In every slice but two, the manager share shows no clear change. Counting each company once, it shows a likely but borderline fall. Among postings first seen after the collection widened, it shows a likely but borderline rise. In that slice 20.4% of postings carry a leadership title, against 3.2% before the widening.

5 Executive postings show no clear change

The executive share moved from 3.8% to 5.3%, no clear change. Among 2026 postings first published in the last 30 days it is 7.0%, a likely but borderline rise (likely range +0.6 to +6.4). At the same companies it is 5.8% and 4.3%, no clear change. Counting each company once, it is 4.3% and 3.6%, no clear change (likely range -2.4 to +0.9).

A separate measure is the main activity a local model picked out from each posting's text. Deciding is the main activity in 10.7% of 2024 postings and 14.1% of 2026 postings. Coordinating went from 11.3% to 9.9% (likely range -3.9 to +1.0, no clear change).

6 No sign of retitling in the posting text

Titles can mislead. "Lead" can mean a manager and "Manager" can mean a senior engineer. So three AI models, one of them a local model, each read every posting in both years and judged from the responsibilities whether the hire has direct reports or builds a team. We use the answer at least two agree on.

Table 4: No sign of retitling in the posting text.

Read from the posting text, 2024 → 2026	Model A	Model B	At least two of three agree
Hire manages people, any title	14.0% → 11.7%	13.9% → 12.3%	14.6% → 12.4% (likely range -5.0 to +0.4)
Manages people, among senior and IC titles	7.2% → 4.5%	7.0% → 5.1%	7.7% → 5.1% (likely range -4.9 to -0.6)
Any leadership: a leader title, or manages people			18.3% → 16.5% (likely range -5.1 to +1.6)

Source: AKA Security analysis of the same postings, read by the three models. The first row shows no clear change, the second a likely but borderline fall, and the third no clear change.

The second row tests for retitling, meaning manager roles renamed as "Lead" or other senior titles. If manager work had moved into those titles, people management inside them would have risen. Instead it shows a likely but borderline fall. Inside "Lead" titles alone it falls from 41.8% of 2024 postings to 27.7% of 2026 ones, a likely but borderline fall (likely range -27.1 to -0.4). The third row counts a posting as leadership when either the title or the text says so, so retitling alone would leave it level. The change there is not measurable.

Most manager-titled postings read as people management in both years: at least two of the three models find it in 63% of 2024 manager postings and 70% of 2026 ones. Models A and B agree with each other at a kappa of 0.93 on this label. The local model reads more postings as people management than Model A in both years (18.9% → 16.9%, and 11.0% → 8.7% among senior and IC titles), and neither of its changes is clear.

7 Leadership postings by specialty

Table 5: Leadership postings by specialty.

Specialty	Leader-titled postings, 2024 2026		Leader share, 2024 2026	
General security leadership ("Information Security Manager", "Director of Security")	40	162	98%	92%
GRC	34	70	25%	23%
Detection and response	10	81	14%	17%
Identity and access (IAM)	9	40	14%	27%
Infrastructure and network	8	38	10%	9%
AppSec and product security	6	46	7%	6%
Privacy	3	32	15%	32%

Source: AKA Security analysis, same data as the level table. Leader-titled means an executive or manager title.

General security leadership postings, leader-titled or not, were 3.9% of all postings in 2024 (41 of 1,038) and 3.9% in 2026 (177 of 4,587) (likely range of the change -1.6 to +1.4). Many 2026 leader titles name a domain, such as "Manager, Cyber Security (Third Party Risk)" or "Detection Engineer, Manager". In GRC the change in the leader share is not measurable (likely range -11.5 to +7.7), and in detection and response neither (likely range -6.0 to +11.5). In privacy it was 15% in 2024 and 32% in 2026, no clear change. AppSec and infrastructure show no clear change either. In identity the leader share rose from 14% to 27%, a likely but borderline rise (+0.8 to +24.7).

8 The same companies, then and now

Large employers that posted security leadership roles in 2024 point both ways.

Table 6: The same companies, then and now.

Company	2024 security postings (leader titles)	2026 security postings (leader titles)
Bank of America	6 (1)	25 (0)
F5	2 (1)	17 (0)
Wells Fargo	9 (2)	28 (5)
Salesforce	1 (1)	31 (5)
Capital One	7 (3)	19 (13)

Source: AKA Security analysis, same data as the level table.

9 How this lines up with outside data

Revelio Labs, in data run for Business Insider [3] (December 2024), found employers across the economy advertising 42% fewer middle-management positions in October 2024 than in April 2022, while postings at other levels rebounded. Revelio counts postings. This piece finds no measurable change in the share of security postings with a manager title over a later period.

10 Where the data comes from

The 2024 postings come from the LinkedIn Job Postings dataset on Hugging Face (`datastax/linkedin_job_listings` [2]): US postings listed between 5 and 19 April 2024. The 2026 postings come from AKA's daily read of company job boards, limited to companies headquartered in the US, at any job location. The 2024 set filters on where the job is. The 2026 set filters on where the company is headquartered. In 2026, 41% of the postings are at technology companies (software, cloud, AI and security vendors).

Both years are counted the same way. A posting counts when its title passes the series' security title rules, a local model reads the posting and judges it a security role, and it is the only posting with that title at that company. Job aggregators, which repost other employers' jobs, are left out in both years. The 2026 postings are those open on or after 23 September 2026.

Level comes from the title. Executive covers chief, CISO, VP, head of and director. Manager covers manager and supervisor, excluding program, project, product, account and risk managers. Senior individual contributor (IC) covers senior, staff, principal, lead and level III and up. IC is everything else. The likely ranges (95%) come from recalculating each change many times on resampled data, drawing whole companies at a time.

11 How this answer was stress-tested

Tests marked "earlier run" were run on an earlier day's data, dated in the changelog. The rest were run on the figures in this piece.

Table 7: How this answer was stress-tested.

Test	What it found
Scope check of every posting, both years. A local model read all 1,405 2024 postings and 5,196 2026 postings that pass the title rules.	It ruled 26% of 2024 postings not security roles, and 42% of the 2024 leadership titles: external audit managers, model-risk and fraud-policy roles, physical security managers, a "food security" programme director. In 2026 it ruled out 12%, and 20% of leadership titles. Without the check the 2024 manager share would be 10.0%.
One rule for both years.	An early-access draft of this piece reported a fall in the manager share. The fall came mainly from the 2026 side: the research query limited 2026 to titles the job-board collector tags with a security function, and before the evening of 21 September the collector itself skipped many non-engineering titles. The 2024-only scope check did not cause it. A scope check lowers the 2024 manager share, from 10.0% without one to 7.7% with the one used now. Counted the same way in both years, the fall does not hold up: 7.7% and 6.8%, no clear change (likely range -3.0 to $+1.0$).
Collection change inside the 2026 data. Leadership share before and after the collection widened on 18 September.	At US-headquartered companies, 3.2% of security postings first seen before the widening carried a leadership title, against 20.4% after. A leadership trend measured inside the 2026 data alone cannot separate the collection change from the market.
Title rules against a separate model. That model labelled 192 titles blind across both years.	Level agreement started at a kappa of 0.94 and exposed a bug: "Directory Services" matched "director" and counted engineers as executives. Fixed, 0.975. Manager precision and recall were both 1.0 on the sample. (earlier run)
An audit of the dataset's own seniority tag.	Titles naming a domain called "management" counted as managers. As a result, 184 of 495 "manager" postings were engineers ("Security Engineer – Vulnerability Management"). The tag has been fixed. This piece uses its own title rule and never relied on it. (earlier run)
Channel check. 2024 postings routed to company job boards against LinkedIn-native ones.	Company-board postings carry more managers, 12.2% against 5.2%, a clear difference (likely range $+1.2$ to $+13.3$). There is no sign that LinkedIn inflates the 2024 baseline.
Two hosted models on both years. Models A and B each read 5,625 postings for people management.	Model A $14.0\% \rightarrow 11.7\%$ and Model B $13.9\% \rightarrow 12.3\%$, each no clear change. They agree with each other at a kappa of 0.93.
Same companies, US-headquartered only.	74 companies appear in both years. Manager share $8.7\% \rightarrow 8.1\%$, no clear change.
Largest contributing company removed.	Manager share change, likely range -3.0 to $+1.1$, no clear change.
An outside source. Revelio Labs, via Business Insider.	A fall across the economy for middle-management postings. It does not measure security postings.

12 What would strengthen this answer

Table 8: What would strengthen this answer.

Test	What it would settle	Why it has not run
A non-security comparison group in 2026	Whether security postings moved differently from engineering as a whole. In 2024 the manager share of non-security software, data and ML engineering titles was 8.0%, close to security's 7.7%.	The 2026 collection never kept non-security manager titles. Building that comparison needs a collection change and weeks of reading.
Headcount rather than postings (profiles, org charts, filings)	Whether the number of security managers changed, or companies stopped hiring them from outside	Profile data is licensed or restricted. Postings cannot see internal promotions.
Licensed postings data tracked over many years (Revelio Labs, Lightcast, Indeed Hiring Lab)	Year-by-year security manager share from 2019, with seasonal swings separated out	Paid data.
A second LinkedIn sample from 2026, collected the way the 2024 one was	Removes the doubt that comes from comparing two different data sources	LinkedIn restricts automated collection. Buying a comparable feed is the realistic route.
A re-read of our own data in three to six months	A direct trend under stable collection	Collection widened on 18 and 22 September. The earliest clean read is late December 2026.
Archived career pages from 2022 to 2024	A before and after at the companies tracked today	Archive snapshots are patchy, and many job boards render with scripts.

Acknowledgements

Question asked by [Jamie Dicken](#).

References

[1] AKA Security Research Factory. *Security Hiring Research: What Job Postings Say About Security Work*. AKA Security, 2026. akasecurity.io/research/security-hiring-research

[2] DataStax. *LinkedIn Job Postings* (datastax/linkedin_job_listings). Hugging Face dataset, 2024. huggingface.co/datasets/datastax/linkedin_job_listings

[3] Business Insider. tech.yahoo.com/business/articles/really-bad-time-middle-manager-090301000.html

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