Is Security Leadership Contracting Relative to Individual Contributors? A Change in the Manager Share Is Not Measurable

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Abstract

US security job postings, spring 2024 against fall 2026: the manager share went from 7.7% to 6.8%, which is not a measurable change. 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

Too close to call. Manager titles were 7.7% of 1,038 US security job postings in spring 2024. At US-headquartered companies in fall 2026, they were 6.8% of 4,587 postings. The range of likely values for that change, −3.0 to +1.0 points, includes zero.

What did change is the senior individual contributor share. Senior individual contributor titles rose from 26.4% of US security postings in spring 2024 to 46.8% in fall 2026.

Postings measure requests for hires, not headcount. They cannot separate flatter teams from fewer backfills or more internal promotion.

These findings compare two sources: a public dataset of US postings from spring 2024, and AKA's read of company job boards in 2026. They apply best to US-headquartered companies on modern job boards, which lean toward technology, and less to government, staffing and managed-security firms.

2 The answer at a glance

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

Finding	Confidence	Representativeness
Manager and supervisor titles went from 7.7% to 6.8% of security postings. The change is too close to call.	**Medium**. The share barely moved in most slices of the data and stress tests. A few slices point in different directions, so we rated it Medium.	**Medium**. Best fit: US employers that lean toward tech. Less certain for government, staffing and managed-security firms.
Senior individual contributor titles, senior roles that don't manage people, rose from 26.4% to 46.8% of security postings.	**High**. A rise of about 20 points is too large to be chance.	**Medium**. Best fit: US employers that lean toward tech. Less certain for government, staffing and managed-security firms.
Executive titles went from 3.8% to 5.3% of security postings. This is too close to call.	**Medium**. No clear change overall. The data shows a rise as we continue to expand data sources. We'll keep monitoring.	**Medium**. Best fit: US employers that lean toward tech. Less certain for government, staffing and managed-security firms.
Postings asking the hire to manage people went from 14.6% to 12.4% of security postings. This is too close to call.	**Low**. The share dipped, but by too little to be sure. Needs a larger sample.	**Medium**. Best fit: US employers that lean toward tech. Less certain for government, staffing and managed-security firms.
General security leadership titles held at 3.9% of security postings in both years.	**High**. 1.6 points is close enough to no change to call it steady.	**Medium**. Best fit: US employers that lean toward tech. Less certain for government, staffing and managed-security firms.
Whether fewer security managers are employed.	**Not answerable**. Postings show demand for hires, not how many managers are employed. Needs headcount data.	

3 The numbers by level

Table 2: The numbers by level.

	Postings	Companies	Executive	Manager	Senior individual contributor	Individual contributor	Individual contributors per leader title
Spring 2024	1,038	679	3.8%	7.7%	26.4%	62.1%	7.7
Fall 2026	4,587	831	5.3%	6.8%	46.8%	41.1%	7.3
Range of likely values, points			−0.4 to +3.8	−3.0 to +1.0	+16.2 to +24.5		

Source: AKA Security analysis of 1,038 US security postings from a public job-postings dataset (listed 5 to 19 April 2024) and 4,587 postings at US-headquartered companies in AKA's job-board data (open on or after 23 September 2026).

Executive titles are chief, CISO, VP, head of and director. Manager titles are manager and supervisor, leaving out program, project, product, account and risk managers. Individual contributors per leader title counts all individual contributors, senior and other, per executive or manager title. It has no range of likely values, so no direction is stated for it.

4 A change in the manager share is too close to call in most slices of the data

The manager share was tested on five other slices of the data. In three of them, as in the headline, the change is too close to call.

Table 3: A change in the manager share is too close to call 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 (headline)	7.7% → 6.8%	−3.0 to +1.0	3.8% → 5.3%	−0.4 to +3.8
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
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	7.7% → 10.4%	+0.2 to +5.1	3.8% → 10.0%	+3.3 to +9.6

Source: AKA Security analysis of 1,038 US security postings (April 2024) and 4,587 postings at US-headquartered companies (fall 2026).

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.

Two slices point in opposite directions. With each company weighted once, the manager share went from 8.1% to 5.3%, a likely but borderline fall. Among 2026 postings first seen after the collection widened, it went from 7.7% to 10.4%, a likely but borderline rise. With the largest contributing company removed, the range is −3.0 to +1.1 points, still too close to call.

5 Executive postings show no clear change

Executive titles went from 3.8% of US security postings in spring 2024 to 5.3% in fall 2026. The range of likely values, −0.4 to +3.8 points, includes zero.

One slice shows a clear rise. Among 2026 postings first seen after the collection widened, executive titles reached 10.0%, with a range of +3.3 to +9.6 points. That slice is affected by how the collection changed, described below. Among 2026 postings first published in the last 30 days, executive titles reached 7.0%, a likely but borderline rise.

6 No sign of retitling in the posting text

A title can say individual contributor while the job manages people. To test that, AI models read the responsibilities and judged whether the hire has direct reports or builds a team. Two hosted models each read every posting, and a local model read all but one 2026 posting. The answer used is the one at least two of the three agree on.

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

Postings judged to manage people	2024	2026	Range of likely values, points
Any title, three-model answer	14.6%	12.4%	−5.0 to +0.4
Any title, hosted model A	14.0%	11.7%	−5.0 to +0.4
Any title, hosted model B	13.9%	12.3%	−4.2 to +1.0
Senior and individual contributor titles, three-model answer	7.7%	5.1%	−4.9 to −0.6
Lead titles, three-model answer	41.8%	27.7%	−27.1 to −0.4

Source: AKA Security analysis of 1,038 US security postings (April 2024) and 4,587 postings at US-headquartered companies (fall 2026), read by three AI models.

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.

Across all titles, the share of US security postings asking the hire to manage people went from 14.6% in 2024 to 12.4% in 2026, a change too close to call. The two hosted models agree with each other on this label at a kappa of 0.93.

Among senior and individual contributor titles, people management went from 7.7% to 5.1%, a likely but borderline fall. Among lead titles, it went from 41.8% to 27.7%, also a likely but borderline fall. Lead titles number 55 postings in 2024 and 358 in 2026. So the posting text shows no sign that management work moved into individual contributor titles.

7 Leadership postings by specialty

Table 5: Leadership postings by specialty.

Specialty	Postings, 2024 → 2026	Leader-titled postings, 2024 → 2026	Leader share, 2024 → 2026	Range of likely values, points
General security leadership (generic title)	41 → 177	40 → 162	98% → 92%	−12.3 to +1.3
GRC	137 → 309	34 → 70	25% → 23%	−11.5 to +7.7
Detection and response	74 → 484	10 → 81	14% → 17%	−6.0 to +11.5
Identity and access	64 → 148	9 → 40	14% → 27%	+0.8 to +24.7
Infrastructure and network	80 → 413	8 → 38	10% → 9%	−8.3 to +6.3
AppSec and product security	85 → 730	6 → 46	7% → 6%	−6.9 to +4.4
Privacy	20 → 101	3 → 32	15% → 32%	−6.2 to +36.4

Source: AKA Security analysis of 1,038 US security postings (April 2024) and 4,587 postings at US-headquartered companies (fall 2026).

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.

Postings with a general security leadership title were 3.9% of US security postings in both years: 41 of 1,038 in 2024 and 177 of 4,587 in 2026. The range of likely values is −1.6 to +1.4 points.

In GRC and in detection and response, the change in leader share is too close to call, and both ranges reach 11.5 points from zero. Identity and access shows a likely but borderline rise, from 14% to 27% of identity postings.

The table holds 110 of the 119 leader-titled postings in 2024 and 469 of the 555 in 2026. The rest sit in specialties not shown.

8 Where the data comes from

The 2024 postings come from a public job-postings dataset: 1,038 US security postings from 679 companies, listed 5 to 19 April 2024 and filtered on job location. The 2026 postings come from AKA's daily read of company job boards: 4,587 postings from 831 US-headquartered companies, any job location, open on or after 23 September 2026. Technology companies, meaning software, cloud, AI and security vendors, account for 41% of the 2026 postings.

Both years are counted the same way. A posting counts when its title passes the series' security title rules, a local model rules it a security role, and it carries a description. Only one posting per title per company counts. Job aggregators are left out in both years. 74 companies have postings in both years.

Until the evening of 21 September 2026, the job-board collector skipped many non-engineering titles. At US-headquartered companies, 3.2% of security postings first seen before the widening carried a leadership title, against 20.4% of those first seen after. A leadership trend measured inside the 2026 data alone cannot separate that collection change from the market.

Each range of likely values is the 95% range for the change, found by recalculating it many times on resampled data, drawing whole companies at a time. A range that includes zero means the change cannot be told from no change.

9 How this answer was stress-tested

Table 6: How this answer was stress-tested.

Test	What it found
Scope check of every posting. A local model read all 1,405 postings in 2024 and 5,196 in 2026 that pass the title rules.	It ruled 26% of 2024 postings and 12% of 2026 postings not security roles. It ruled out 42% of 2024 leadership titles, such as external audit managers, model-risk and fraud-policy roles and physical security managers, and 20% of 2026 leadership titles. Without the check, the 2024 manager share would be 10.0%, against 7.7% with it.
Collection change inside the 2026 data. Leadership share before and after the collection widened.	At US-headquartered companies, 3.2% of security postings first seen before the widening carry a leadership title, against 20.4% after.
Title rules against a separate model. 192 titles labelled blind across both years.	Level agreement at a kappa of 0.975.
Channel check. The 2024 manager share of postings routed to company job boards, against postings native to the dataset's own board.	Company-board postings carry a higher manager share: 12.2% against 5.2%, a range of +1.2 to +13.3 points.
Two hosted models on both years. Each read all 5,625 postings for people management.	Hosted model A went from 14.0% to 11.7% and hosted model B from 13.9% to 12.3%. Both changes are too close to call. They agree at a kappa of 0.93.
Same companies. The 74 companies with postings in both years.	Manager share 8.7% to 8.1% and executive share 5.8% to 4.3%. Both changes are too close to call.
Largest contributing company removed.	The manager range is −3.0 to +1.1 points, too close to call.
Non-security comparison group, 2024 only.	The manager share of non-security software, data and ML engineering titles was 8.0% in 2024, against 7.7% for security. No 2026 equivalent exists.

10 What would strengthen this answer

Table 7: 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	
Headcount rather than postings: profiles, org charts, filings	Whether the number of security managers changed, or companies stopped hiring them from outside	
Licensed postings data tracked over many years	The year-by-year security manager share from 2019, with seasonal swings separated out	
A second 2026 sample collected the way the 2024 one was	The doubt from comparing two different data sources	
A re-read of the same collection in three to six months	A direct trend under stable collection	
Archived career pages from 2022 to 2024	A before and after at the companies tracked today	

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

Cite as

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