

CNCF TECHNOLOGY RADAR

Workflow Orchestration,
App Delivery, and
Security & Policy Management

/DATA

 **CLOUD NATIVE**
COMPUTING FOUNDATION

MARCH 2026

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REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Helm, Backstage, and kro are the three technologies placed in the 'adopt' position of the application delivery technology radar. [→](#)
- For workflow automation technologies, GitHub Actions, Armada, Buildpacks, Jenkins, and ArgoCD were placed in the 'adopt' position. [→](#)
- Keycloak, Open Policy Agent (OPA) and cert-manager are the three technologies placed in the 'adopt' position of the security and compliance management technology radar. [→](#)
- The most common approach to internal platforms among respondents was having multiple teams collaboratively handle platform capabilities (41%). [→](#)
- When managing AI workflows, most organizations are using a hybrid platform approach (35%). [→](#)
- Organizations with a dedicated internal platform development team were the most likely to be extending their current platform to handle AI workflows over a hybrid approach or a dedicated separate AI workflow platform. [→](#)



INTRODUCTION



01

1. Introduction

In Q1 2026, more than 400 professional developers using technologies associated with cloud native development were asked about their experience and opinions with regard to platform engineering tools for workflow automation, application delivery, and security and compliance management. The technologies shown to developers were selected by CNCF and CNCF's End User Community for relevance and importance. The developers surveyed originate from around the world and have a large range of specialties and areas of focus. A more granular breakdown of the respondents is included in the Methodology section.

The products or tools respondents were familiar with, those that they were either currently or previously using, were rated on their usefulness and maturity, and respondents indicating how likely they were to recommend that technology to other developers. Within the context of this report, usefulness was defined as how well a given technology meets project requirements, and maturity was related to its stability and reliability. The recommendation scale was converted into a net promoter score (NPS) for use during the analysis.

1. Introduction

Based on the usage, usefulness, and maturity ratings, and how likely respondents were to recommend a given technology, we categorized the technologies into three groups: adopt, trial, and assess. 'Adopt' technologies are considered reliable choices by developers and applicable for most use cases. 'Trial' technologies are worth exploring to see if they meet your specific needs, and 'assess' technologies require careful assessment for their relevance, applicability, and performance for specific project needs. This research provides insights into which platform engineering tools are gaining traction among professional developers and helps identify emerging patterns in technology adoption across the cloud native landscape.

Note: These radar positions do not necessarily correlate with the CNCF maturity model (Sandbox, Incubating, and Graduated), which corresponds to the Innovators, Early Adopters, and Early Majority tiers from Geoffrey A. Moore's classic *Crossing the Chasm: Marketing and Selling High-Tech Products to Mainstream Customers*.

Sandbox: Sandbox projects are in their earliest stages, meant for experimentation and foundational growth. They are newer technologies that represent initial concepts and technologies with significant room for evolution. There is no guarantee they graduate.

Incubating: Projects that have a solidified technical vision and a growing contributor base but are still maturing in terms of community adoption, stability and governance.

Graduated: Graduated projects are widely adopted and reliable. They have established a diverse community base supported by mature technical policies and governance.



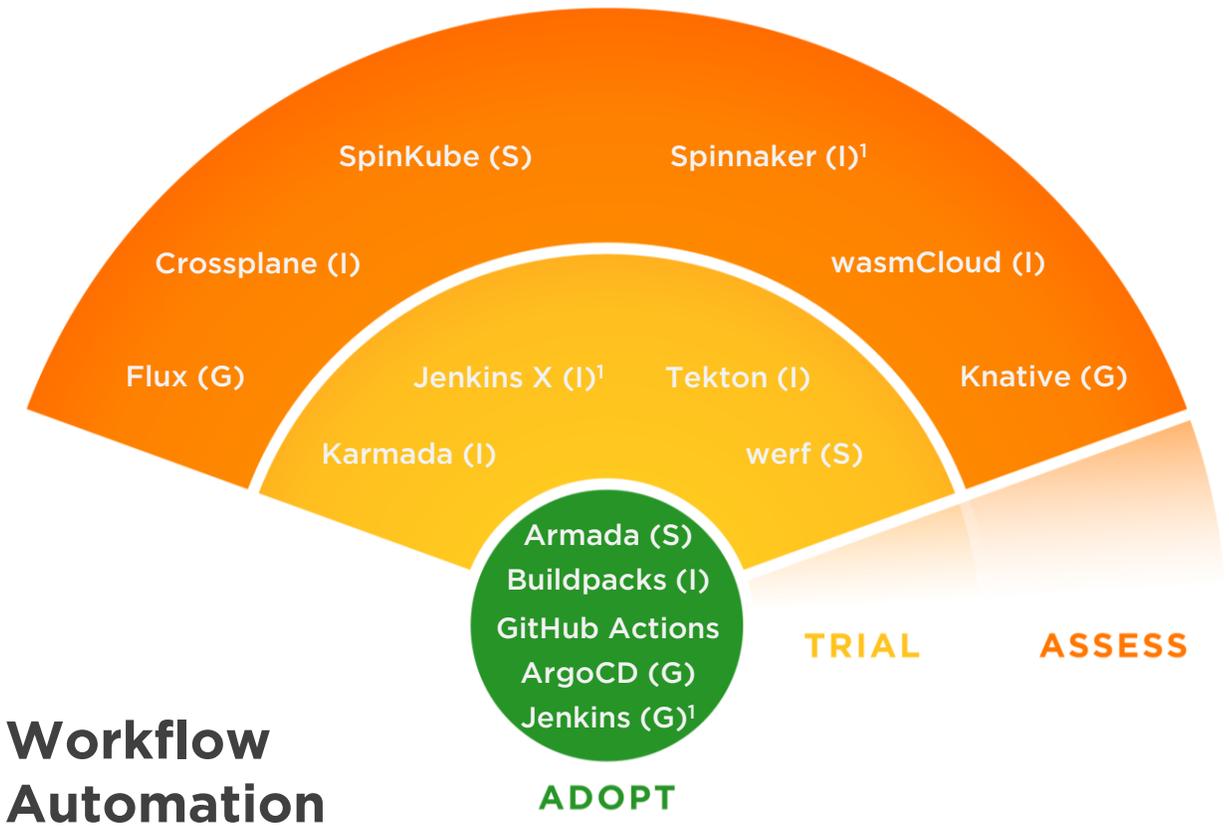
WORKFLOW AUTOMATION



02

2. Workflow Automation

For the workflow automation technologies, we find GitHub Actions, Armada, Buildpacks, Jenkins, and ArgoCD were placed in the 'adopt' position of the technology radar. Receiving slightly less positive results were Karmada, Tekton, Jenkins X, and werf, which ended up in the 'trial' position of the technology radar.



G Graduated **I** Incubating **S** Sandbox

Professional developers working with workflow automation technologies (n=363)

Based on developer perceptions: 'adopt' technologies are considered reliable choices for most use cases, 'trial' technologies are worth exploring to see if they meet your specific needs, and 'assess' technologies require careful evaluation before committing

¹ CD Foundation

2. Workflow Automation

Maturity

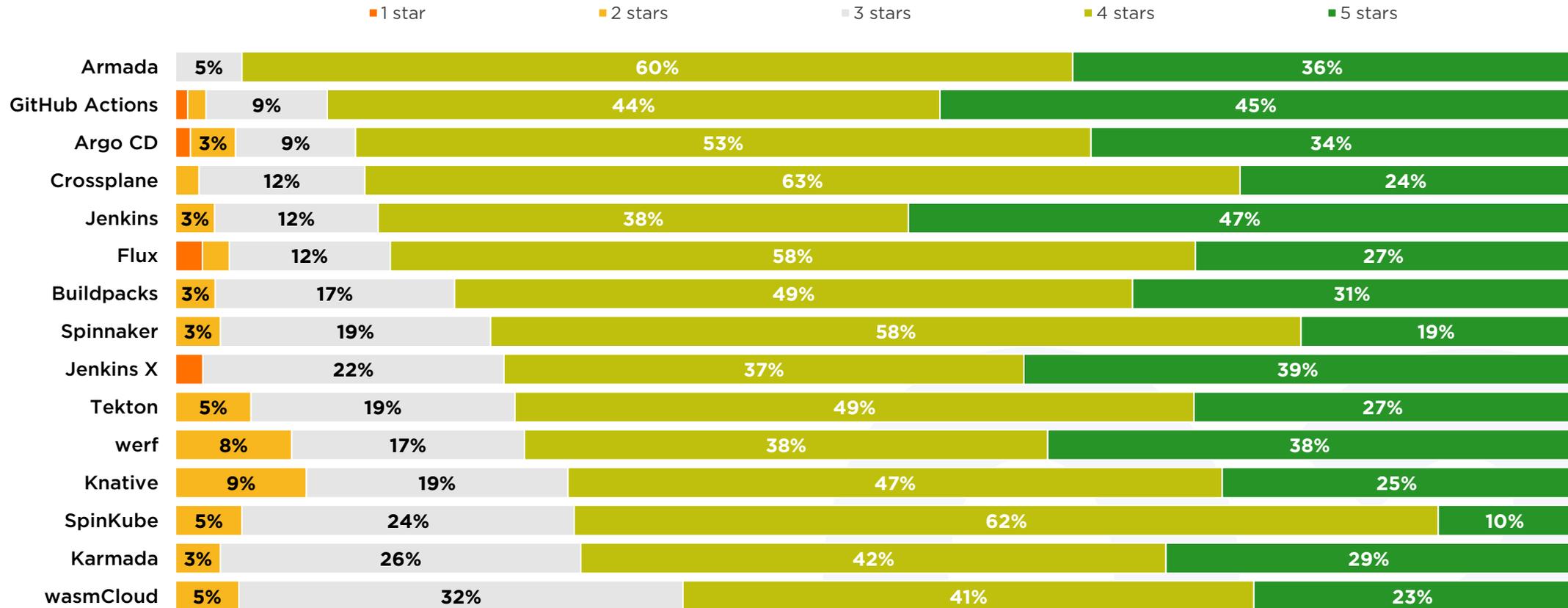
Armada received the highest maturity ratings, with 96% of developers familiar with the technology giving a 4- or 5-star rating, of which 36% were 5-stars. GitHub Actions received the second-highest score (89%) but a higher percentage of 5-star ratings (45%). Outside the top two, Jenkins received the highest proportion of 5-star ratings (47%). Armada is clearly considered a very reliable and stable technology, but GitHub Actions and Jenkins are exceeding expectations for a greater proportion of those familiar with them. Adding even more evidence to the success of Github Actions and Jenkins is that, within the survey, they have a substantially larger user base and also a user base with a much higher tenure than Armada. Taken together, this may suggest that Armada's near-universal high maturity ratings emerge from self-selection for those who use it, as a result of its feature match. Nonetheless, its high maturity ratings are a strong result for supporting its position as an adopt technology.

Outside of the top performers, SpinKube (72%), Karmada (71%), and wasmCloud (64%) received the lowest proportion of 4- and 5-star ratings. Of note is that SpinKube received the lowest proportion of 5-star ratings, at just 10%. So while the majority of those familiar with any of these technologies have favorable perceptions of their maturity, SpinKube currently receives moderate maturity ratings, suggesting the project may still be building broader recognition among developers. Its feature roadmap may lead to more positive perception in the future. Similarly, Karmada and wasmCloud are both still incubated technologies, so developers' experience of their maturity may not have come to fruition yet.

2. Workflow Automation

Maturity Ratings of Workflow Automation Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=352)



Question wording: How would you rate the following Workflow Orchestration tools with respect to these aspects? (Maturity)

2. Workflow Automation

Usefulness

In a distinct reversal from maturity ratings, Karmada leads for usefulness ratings, with 91% of those familiar with it giving a 4- or 5-star rating for its usefulness, of which 52% are 5-stars.

Karmada's position as a multicluster management solution is leading those handling this issue to see genuine utility in the tool, even if they think it is not yet a mature technology. Crossplane is often compared against Karmada and has the reverse pattern, with one of the lowest usefulness ratings (65% of 4- and 5-star ratings) while performing well on maturity. The difference here may be that despite their comparison, they are handling similar tasks in structurally different ways, and Crossplane's infrastructure provisioning strengths may feel less relevant or effective to developers in their day-to-day operations.

The second-highest rated technology for usefulness was Github Actions (86% of 4- and 5-star ratings), which is a significant contributing factor to cementing its position in the adopt category. This is a widely adopted technology with a long-standing user base that developers consider both mature and useful.

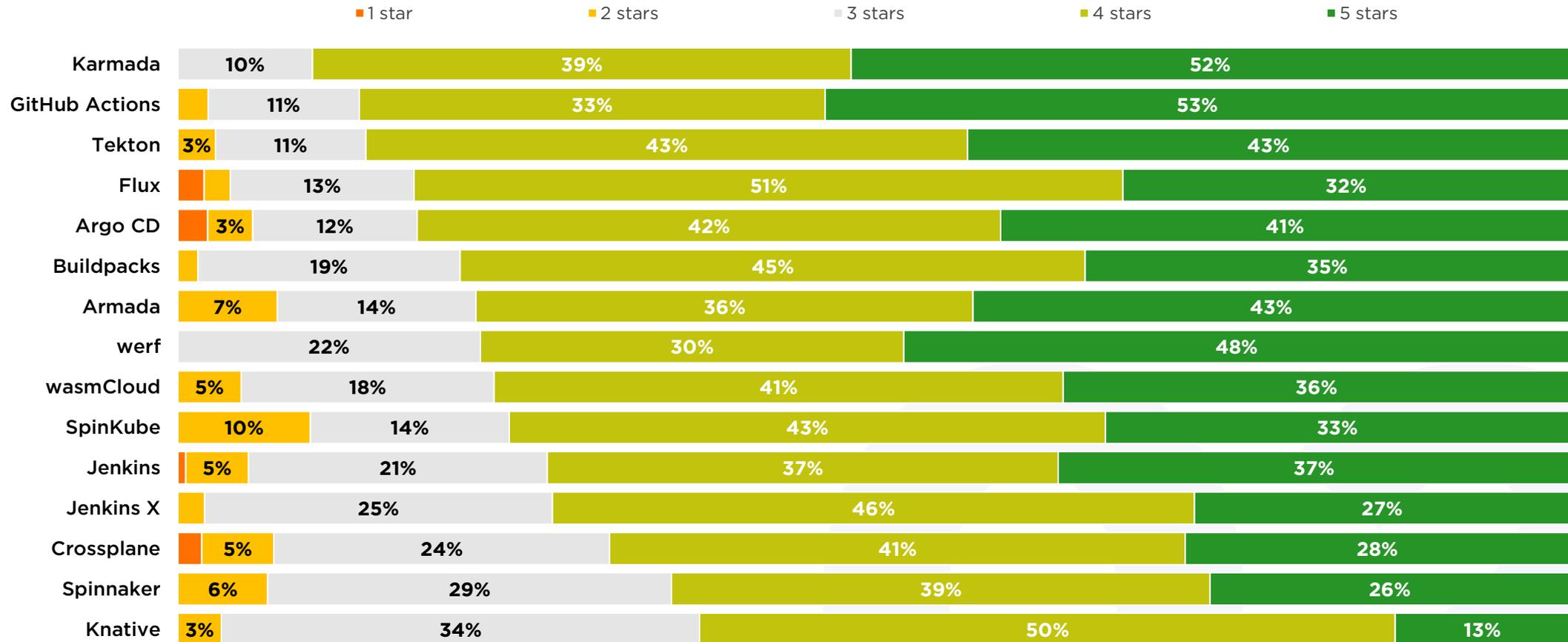
While werf received a middle-of-the-pack ranking for its overall usefulness rating (78%), it received the third-highest proportion of 5-star ratings, 48%, as well as receiving no 1- or 2-star ratings. werf's specific features and capabilities are resonating strongly with almost half of those familiar with it, reflecting a narrowly used but deep tool and supporting its position in the trial position, as it may be highly resonant for those whose workflows it supports well.

Spinnaker and Knative both received the lowest usefulness ratings, with Knative in particular only receiving 13% 5-star ratings. While these tools are capable of solving many technical challenges, developers may be viewing their usefulness in comparison to tools that have adopted similar methods in more intuitive ways. Similarly, other developers may consider them a poor fit for **their** projects, which may not be as demanding or complex as the challenges that Spinnaker and Knative were designed for and envisioned to solve.

2. Workflow Automation

Usefulness Ratings of Workflow Automation Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=352)



Question wording: How would you rate the following Workflow Orchestration tools with respect to these aspects? (Usefulness)

2. Workflow Automation

Recommendations

GitHub Actions sees the highest proportion of recommendations, with 91% of those familiar with it recommending it and more than half (53%) being 'highly likely' to recommend it. Given GitHub Actions' performance on both maturity and usefulness, this is unsurprising and reflects a highly satisfied developer audience.

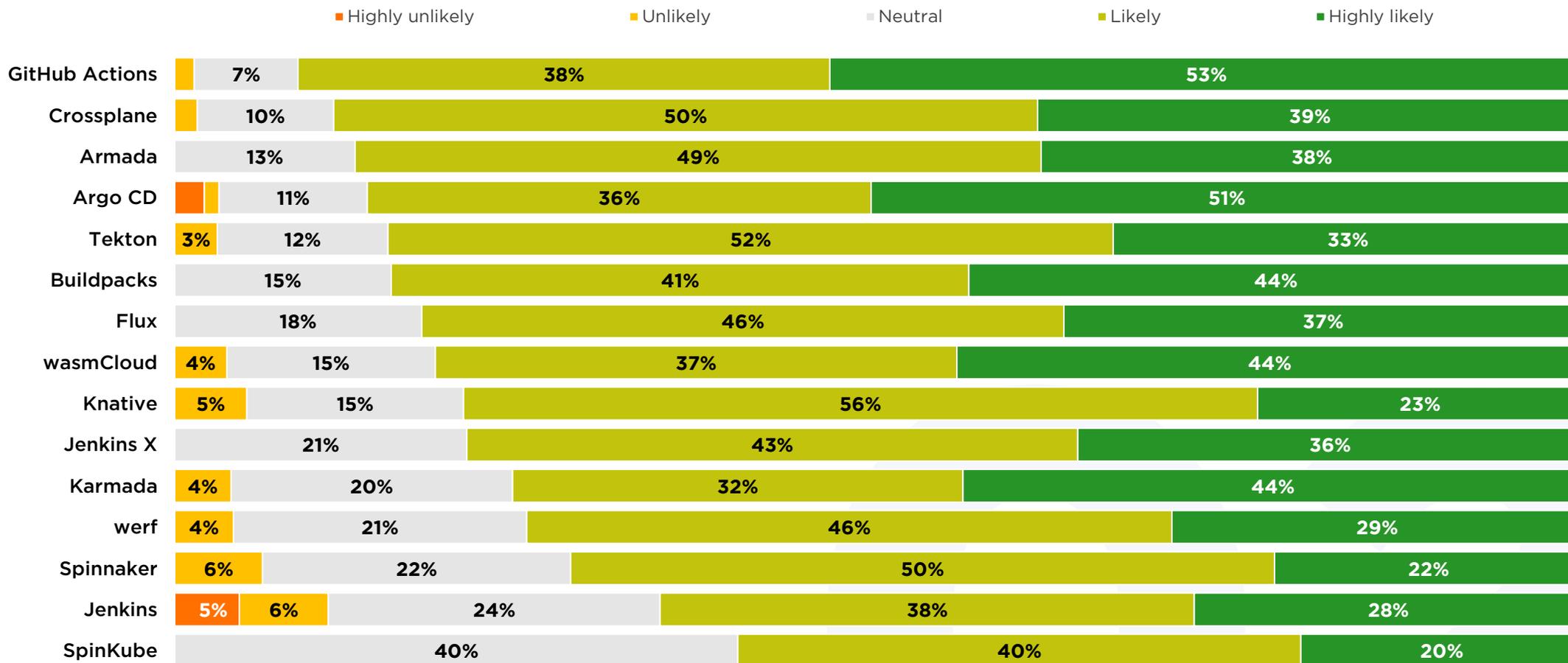
Interestingly, Crossplane receives the second-highest proportion of recommendations. Despite lower ratings on its usefulness, its strong performance on maturity is likely producing a developer community that would recommend it to peers if asked. One way to view this high recommendation is that developers perceive the approaches outlined in the philosophy of using Crossplane – everything can be handled through Kubernetes APIs – as the aspirationally correct approach. As such, when they are considering what they would recommend other developers do, they are indicating a level of support for this development philosophy, rather than specifically the capabilities of Crossplane.

Jenkins, on the other hand, illustrates a counteracting force among developers: older tools are less interesting. Jenkins received high maturity ratings, as expected for a tool with more than a decade of development, and is widely used. However, its usefulness score was less impressive, and overall, developers may look at older tools through their weaknesses or gaps that newer, less developed tools address. In addition, if developers consider the approach of older tools something they intend to move away from, the desire to recommend them will further decrease. As such, even if newer tools have their own issues or shortcomings, developers may still recommend them over more established tooling, even those they continue to rely on.

2. Workflow Automation

Likelihood to Recommend Workflow Automation Tools

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=352)



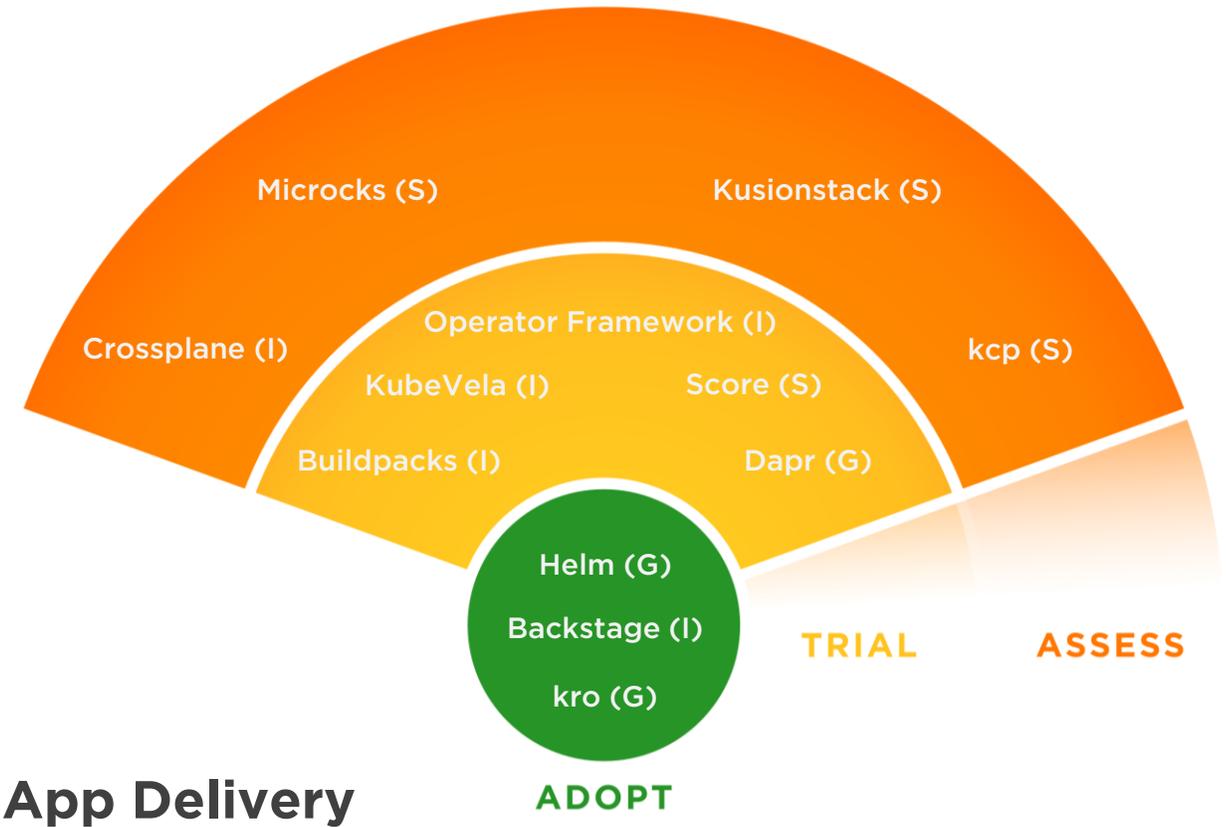
Question wording: How likely are you to recommend the following Workflow Orchestration tools?

**APPLICATION
DELIVERY**

03

3. Application Delivery

Helm, Backstage, and kro are the three technologies placed in the 'adopt' position of the application delivery technology radar. Buildpacks is in the 'trial' position for application delivery, while it is in 'adopt' for workflow automation.



App Delivery

Professional developers working with application delivery technologies (n=308)

Based on developer perceptions: 'adopt' technologies are considered reliable choices for most use cases, 'trial' technologies are worth exploring to see if they meet your specific needs and 'assess' technologies require careful evaluation before committing.

3. Application Delivery

Maturity

For maturity, Helm holds a firm leading position with the greatest number of 4- and 5-star ratings, 94%, as well as for 5-star ratings alone, 49%. Alongside this, Helm is also the most widely adopted technology among the surveyed developers (34% of those using application delivery technologies). This indicates that this maturity is being recognized by a wide range of developers, rather than reflecting the narrower recognition of a specialist tool.

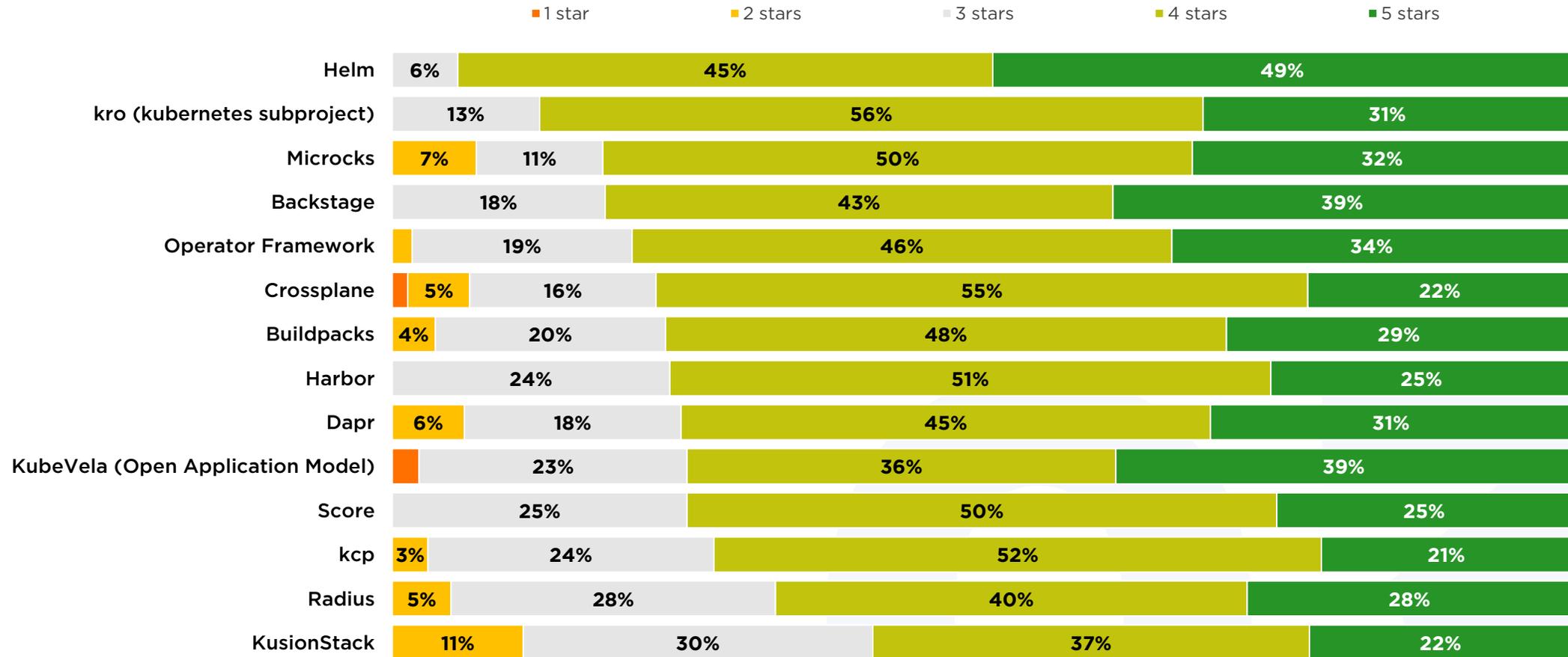
Of particular note is that kro received the second-highest rating for maturity. kro is a relatively new tool, so the high maturity ratings indicate that it is well-designed and well-positioned. Further evidence to support this can be inferred from its strong performance on maturity, being substantially composed of 4-star (56%) rather than 5-star (31%) reviews. Developers are assessing kro as reliable and stable, which is likely due to kro being a part of the Kubernetes project, and in a position to grow even better, but holding off on the 5-star rating until it has further time to establish itself.

KubeVela is placed in the lower half of the rankings for maturity (75%) but has the second-highest proportion of 5-star reviews, behind only Helm and joint with Backstage. Ratings of KubeVela may have additional complexity from its intertwining with Open Application Model (OAM). As such, when developers are considering the reliability and stability of KubeVela, they may also be considering OAM for how stable and reliable they find it. This can lead to a divergent audience, those who consider both OAM and KubeVela mature rating it highly, leading to a much higher proportion of 5-stars than other tools with a similar overall rating level, while those who have issues with either aspect give less mature ratings.

3. Application Delivery

Maturity Ratings of Application Delivery Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=263)



Question wording: How would you rate the following App Delivery technologies with respect to these aspects? (Maturity)

3. Application Delivery

Usefulness

Helm takes the lead for usefulness ratings, with 91% of developers familiar with it providing a 4- or 5-star rating. Given that Helm has the largest number of users among our respondents, this further establishes Helm's standing as a highly effective tool in a wide range of use cases and justifies its positioning as an 'adopt' technology. Backstage and Buildpacks also receive a high proportion of 4- and 5-star ratings for usefulness and are also among the technologies with the largest user base. While they may not have led in maturity, their high adoption rate is driven by continued relevance rather than any historical defaultism or switching-cost inertia.

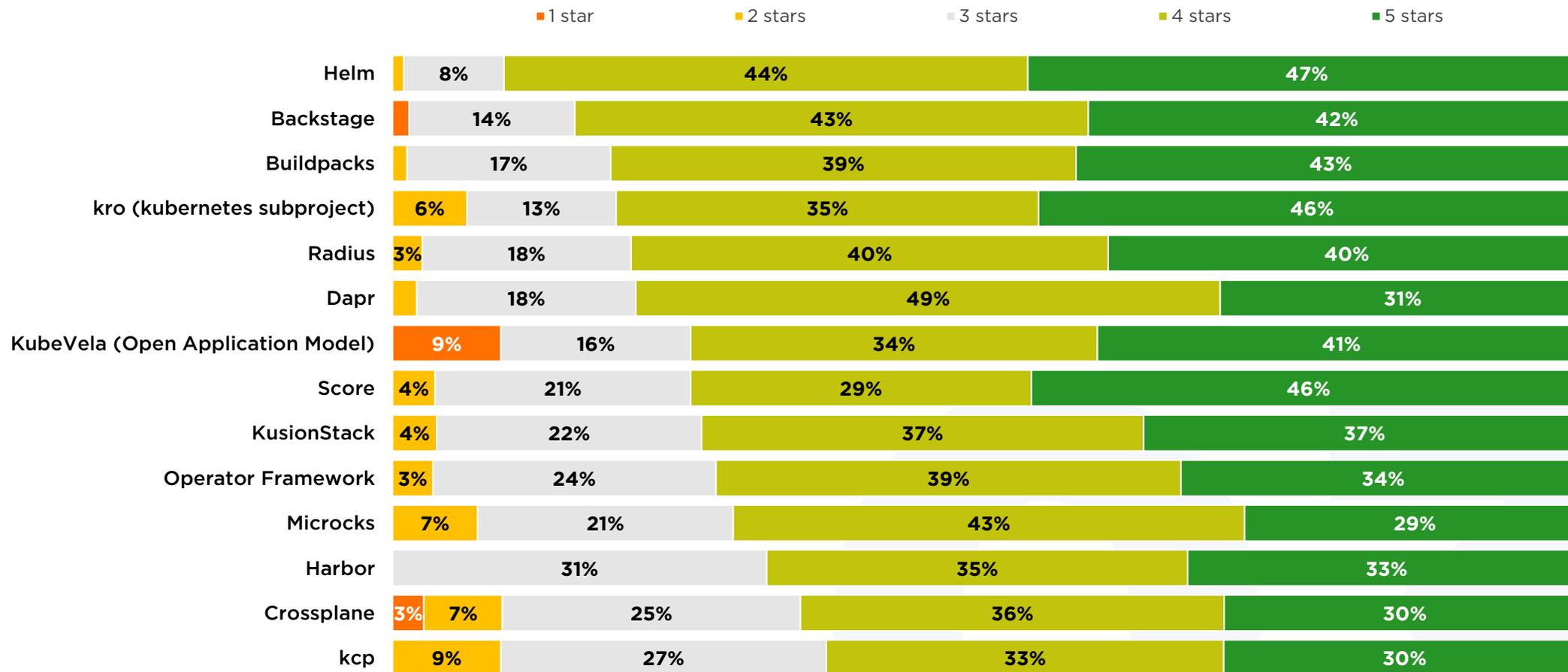
kro is also achieving high usefulness ratings (81%), with almost half of those familiar with it giving a 5-star rating (46%). In comparison to the more cautious maturity ratings, which developers often expect to require time to prove themselves, kro is already demonstrating high levels of utility even at this earlier stage.



3. Application Delivery

Usefulness Ratings of Application Delivery Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=263)



Question wording: How would you rate the following App Delivery technologies with respect to these aspects? (Usefulness)

3. Application Delivery

Recommendations

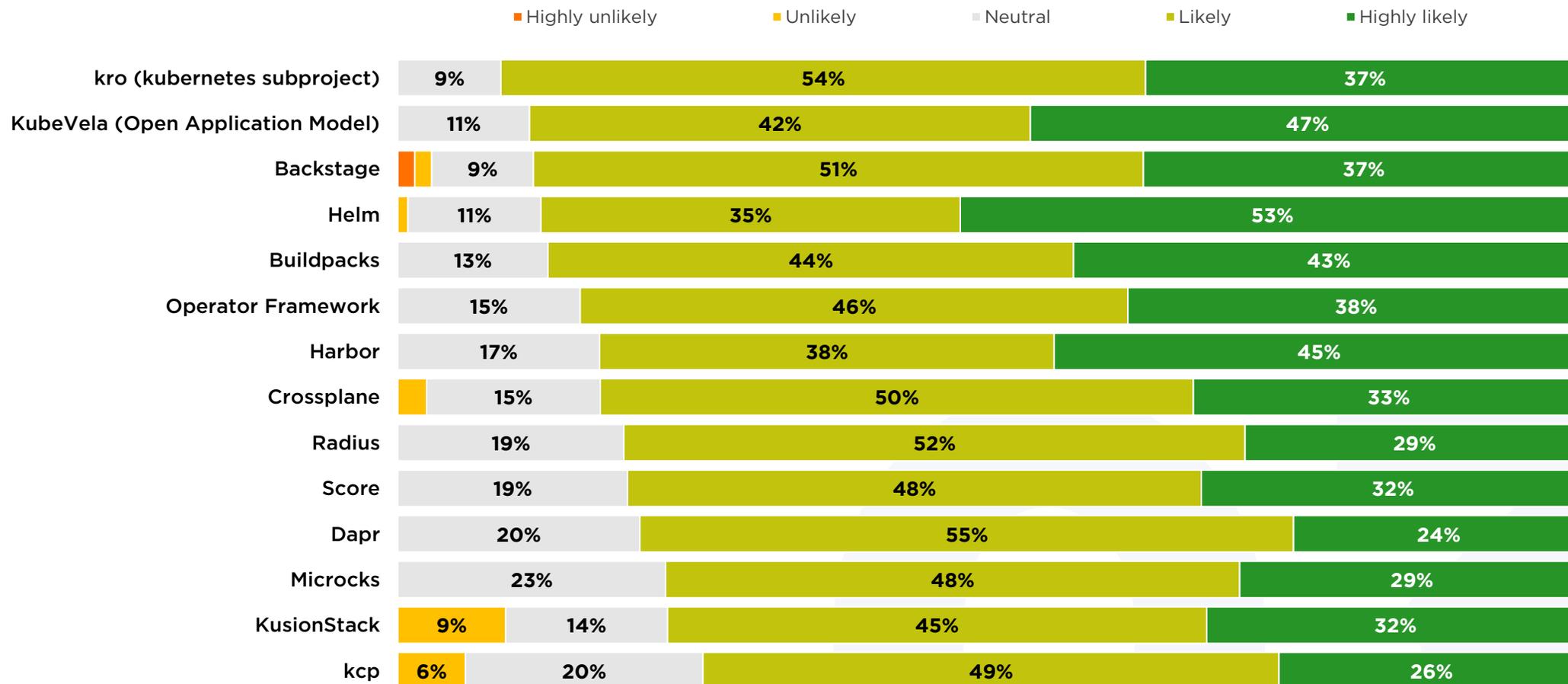
kro has the highest proportion of likely recommendations from those familiar with it, at 91%. Given the strong usefulness and maturity ratings of a new technology, this high level of recommendation seems to further reflect a user base that has a lot of hope and excitement about its future. Much like maturity, a much smaller proportion is in the highly likely group (37%) compared to the likely group (54%), indicating a natural level of caution around the future of the tool. Despite kro being a graduated project, more established tools or those that developers have been using longer are likely to leave developers still practicing some caution before fully committing to a recommendation.

Looking at the recommendation breakdown produces one of the more surprising findings, with KubeVela receiving the second-highest proportion of recommendations (89%). As highlighted previously, KubeVela received middling overall ratings for maturity and usefulness but received a higher proportion of 5-star ratings than technologies with similar levels of combined 4- and 5-star ratings. This may reflect a genuine pain point for developers, for which KubeVela is one of the more purposefully designed solutions, for abstracting Kubernetes complexity away from application developers. This may also explain Backstage receiving the third-highest recommendation proportion (88%), as it is also tackling this challenge, though through a different approach than KubeVela.

3. Application Delivery

Likelihood to Recommend Application Delivery Tools

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=263)



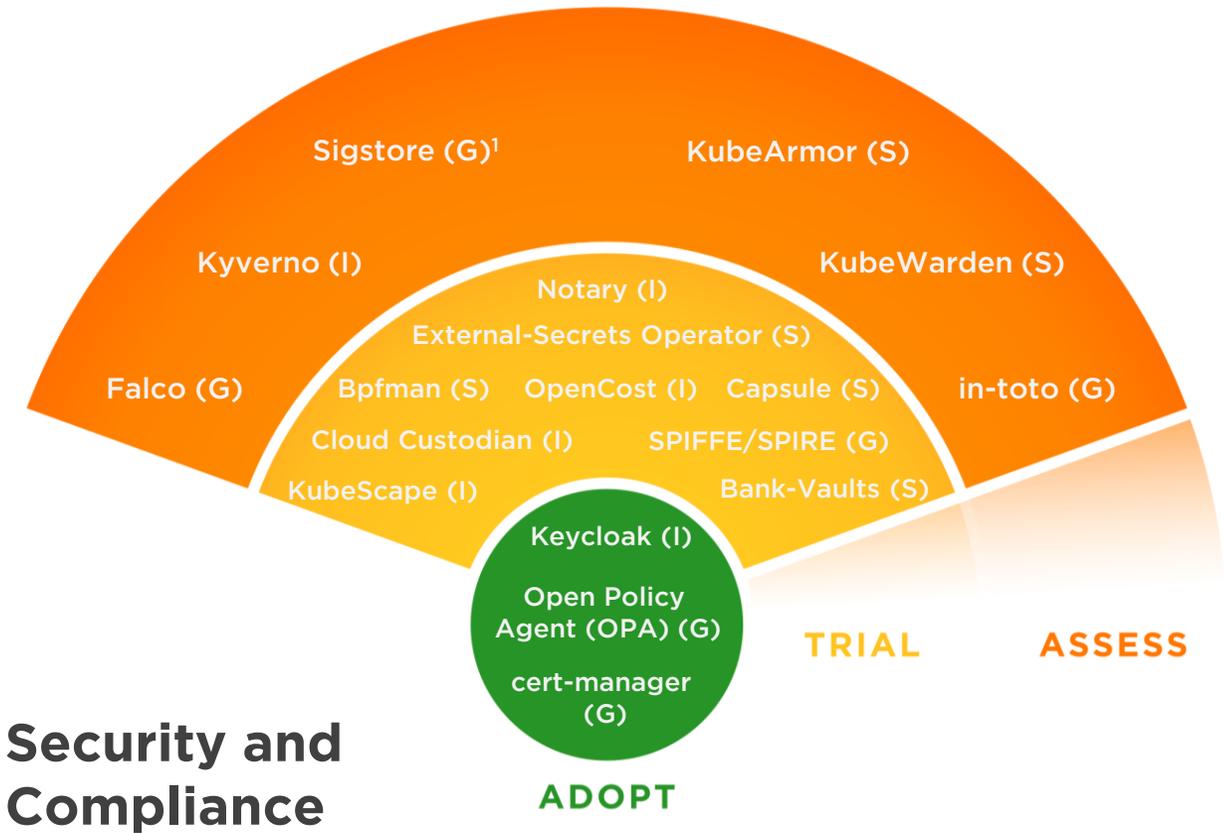
Question wording: How likely are you to recommend the following App Delivery technologies?

**SECURITY AND
COMPLIANCE
MANAGEMENT**

044

4. Security and Compliance Management

Keycloak, Open Policy Agent (OPA) and cert-manager are the three technologies placed in the 'adopt' position of the security and compliance management technology radar.



Professional developers working with security and compliance management technologies (n=288)

Based on developer perceptions: 'adopt' technologies are considered reliable choices for most use cases, 'trial' technologies are worth exploring to see if they meet your specific needs and 'assess' technologies require careful evaluation before committing.

¹ OpenSSF

4. Security and Compliance Management

Maturity

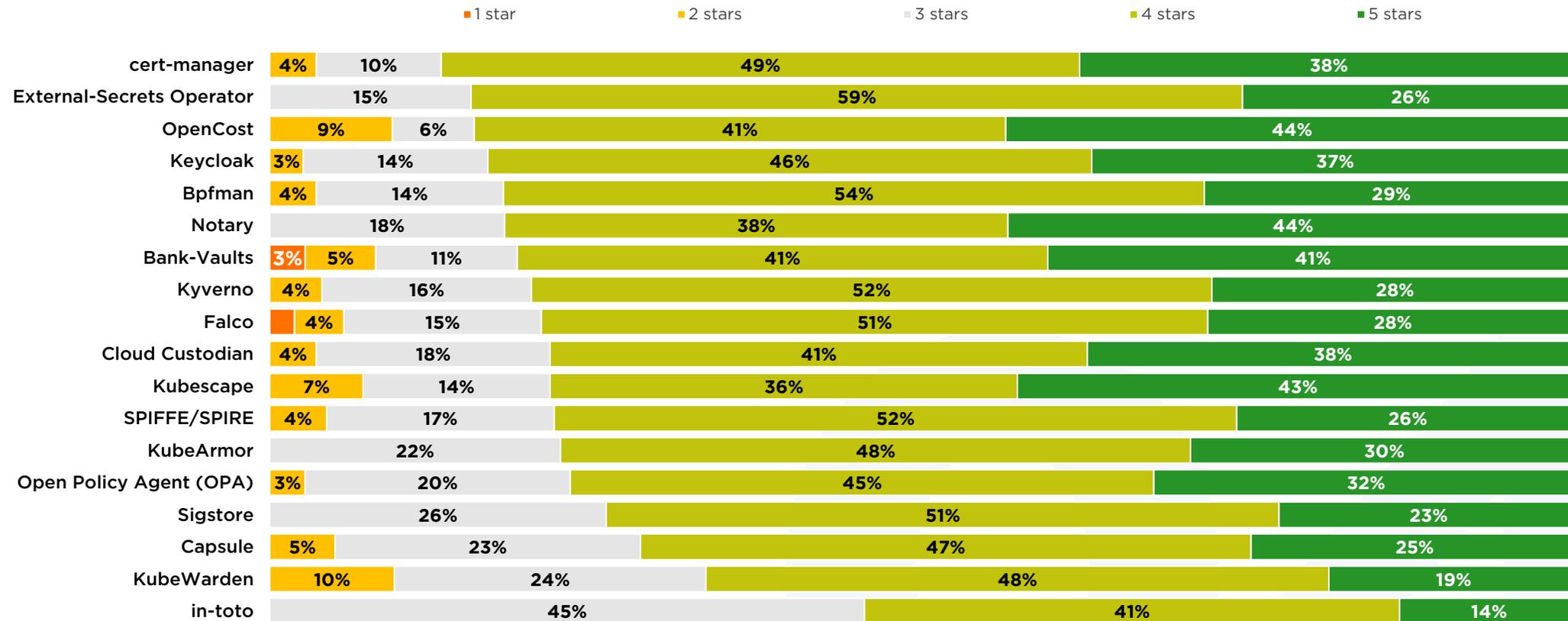
cert-manager leads on maturity ratings, with 87% of those familiar with it providing a 4- or 5-star rating. With respondents having been asked to consider the stability and reliability of the technologies, this suggests that cert-manager is succeeding at its implementation approach, where, once configured, it becomes an invisible but critical infrastructure component.

in-toto ranks last in maturity ratings, with a 55% rating of 4- or 5-stars and only 14% rating it 5 stars. However, it receives no negative ratings and instead has a large proportion of those familiar with it (45%) providing a 3-star rating. This may suggest that, rather than any specific negative perceptions, there is a 'cautious neutrality' around it, which may emerge from implementation requiring deep pipeline integration, such that developers familiar with it may not consider themselves to have enough hands-on experience to accurately assess its stability and reliability. Sigstore, which provides the signing and verification infrastructure that supply-chain integrity tools like in-toto rely on, also receives a similarly low maturity rating but no negative perceptions. Combined, this suggests this area of tooling may be one that, overall, developers are still waiting to prove itself at scale in their operations.

4. Security and Compliance Management

Maturity Ratings of Security and Compliance Management Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=268)



Question wording: How would you rate the following Security & Policy Management tools with respect to these aspects? (Maturity)

4. Security and Compliance Management

Usefulness

SPIFFE/SPIRE leads on usefulness, with 91% of those familiar with it providing 4- or 5-star ratings and 55% rating it 5 stars. Despite having maturity ratings in the lower half of the ranking, SPIFFE/SPIRE's solution to workload identity has few parallels that work as well or as comprehensively, effectively making it a canonical solution and being highly useful to those familiar with it.

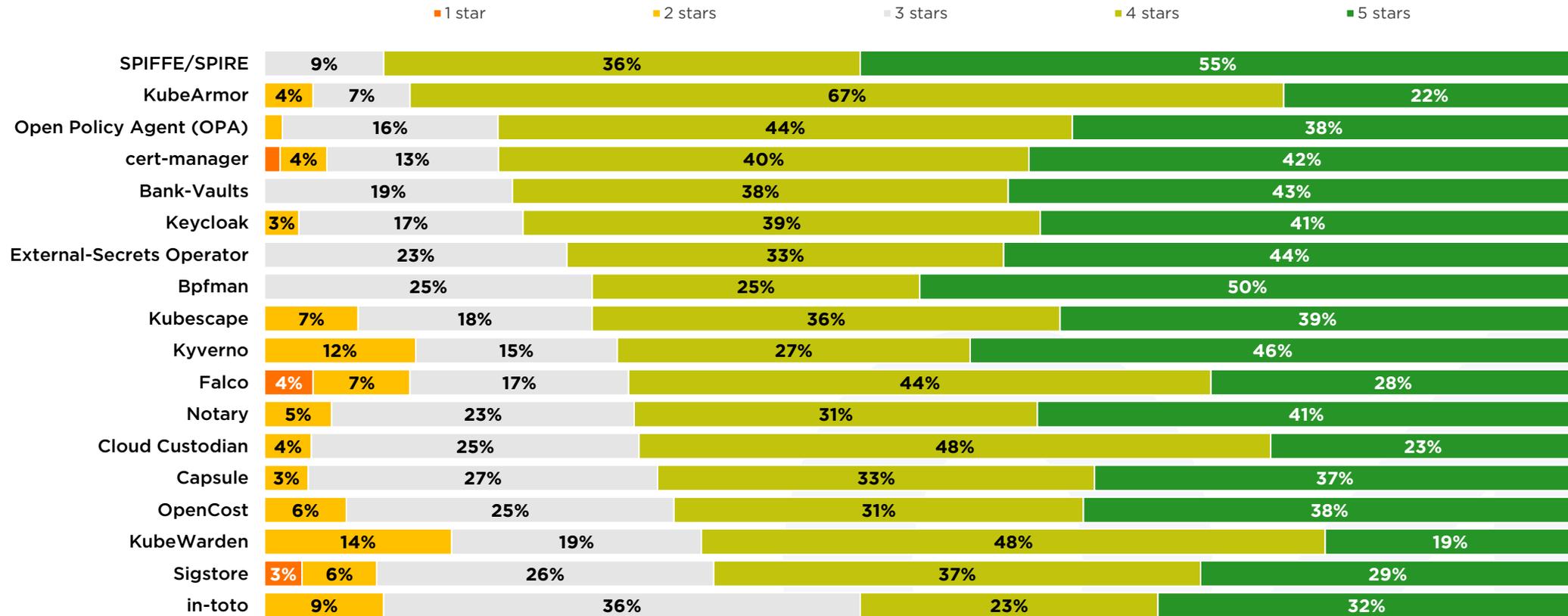
KubeArmor has the second-highest usefulness rating (89%) but one of the lowest proportions of 5-star ratings (22%). This may be a result of KubeArmor being a genuinely effective solution for runtime security enforcement, but operating in a more competitive solution space. As such, its usefulness is being judged against all others, which may lead to certain developers endorsing its usefulness (a 4-star rating) but not elevating it to the highest rating.

Sigstore and in-toto are the lowest ranked for usefulness, 66% and 55%, respectively. As highlighted in the previous section on maturity, the position of these technologies as being embedded deeply in the supply chain may mean developers have either not yet experienced their utility at their scale or find them overly complex for their smaller-scale supply chains. For developers without the same intense scrutiny over supply chain attacks, the usefulness of such tools may be less apparent. However, the introduction of the [EU's Cyber Resilience Act](#) may increase the relevance of these technologies over the next two years.

4. Security and Compliance Management

Usefulness Ratings of Security and Compliance Management Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=268)



Question wording: How would you rate the following Security & Policy Management tools with respect to these aspects? (Usefulness)

4. Security and Compliance Management

Recommendations

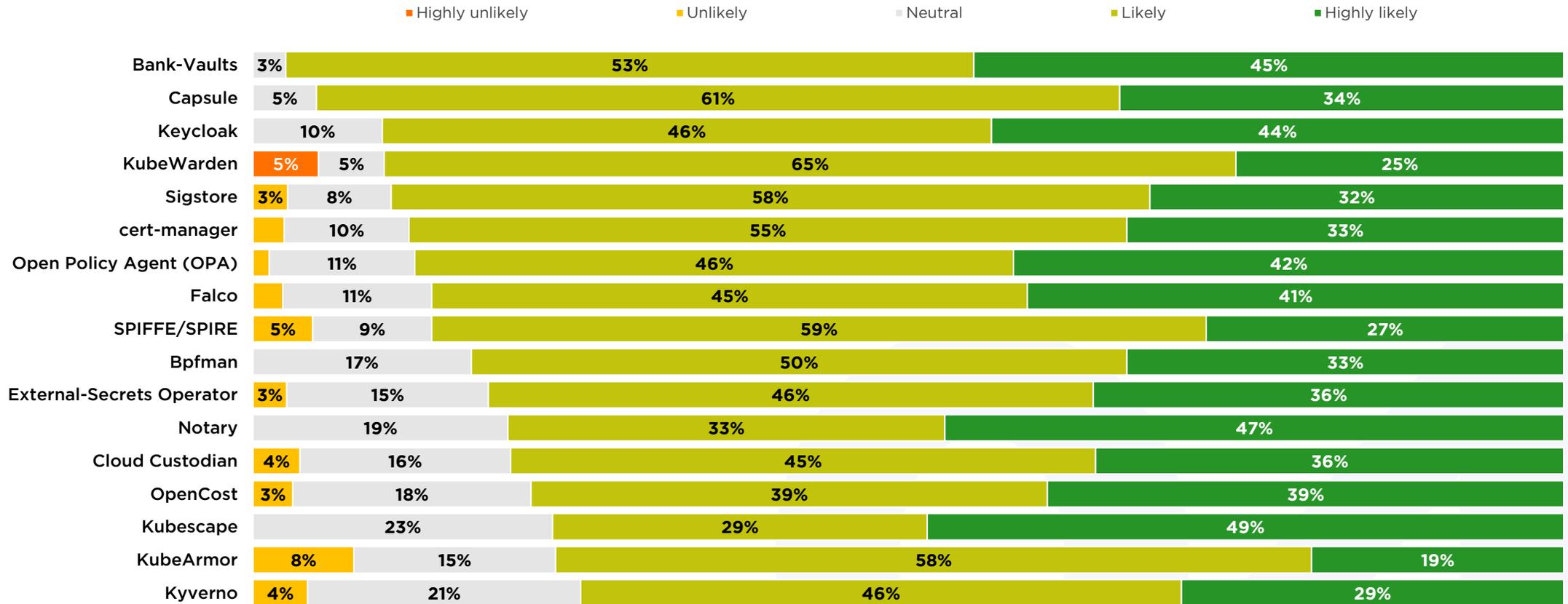
Bank-Vaults is the technology that receives the highest proportion of recommendations from those familiar with it, with 98% being either likely or highly likely to recommend it. Bank-Vaults' high recommendation rate likely reflects its captive audience among HashiCorp Vault users, for whom it is an almost automatic recommendation, given how significantly it simplifies an otherwise complex integration.

Keycloak also sees a very high rate of recommendation, 95%, among those familiar with it. Keycloak has the largest number of users among the respondent developers and is a more established tool, particularly for enterprise solutions, for handling identity and access management both beyond and within Kubernetes environments. Given the wide adoption and utility across environments, developers are seeing many reasons to recommend it to others.

4. Security and Compliance Management

Likelihood to Recommend Security and Compliance Management Technologies

% of developers currently or previously using the technology (n=288)



Question wording: How likely are you to recommend the following Security & Policy Management tools?

4. Security and Compliance Management

Platform Approaches and AI Workflow Platforms

How an organization structures its developer platform has a meaningful influence on how it approaches the integration of AI workflows. Organizations with unified, internally-built platforms appear to make more deliberate and architecturally consistent choices, while organizations with more fragmented or tool-assembling approaches tend toward pragmatic, capability-driven decisions. To explore this, we examined three aspects of the current landscape: the prevalence of different platform ownership models among surveyed developers, the approaches organizations are taking to handle AI workflows within those platforms, and how these two dimensions interact.

Among the respondents to this survey, we find that having multiple teams collaboratively provide platform capabilities, as is the current situation for 41% of developers, is the most common approach. This can likely be seen as a way to achieve organization-wide platform capabilities without committing to a dedicated platform team.

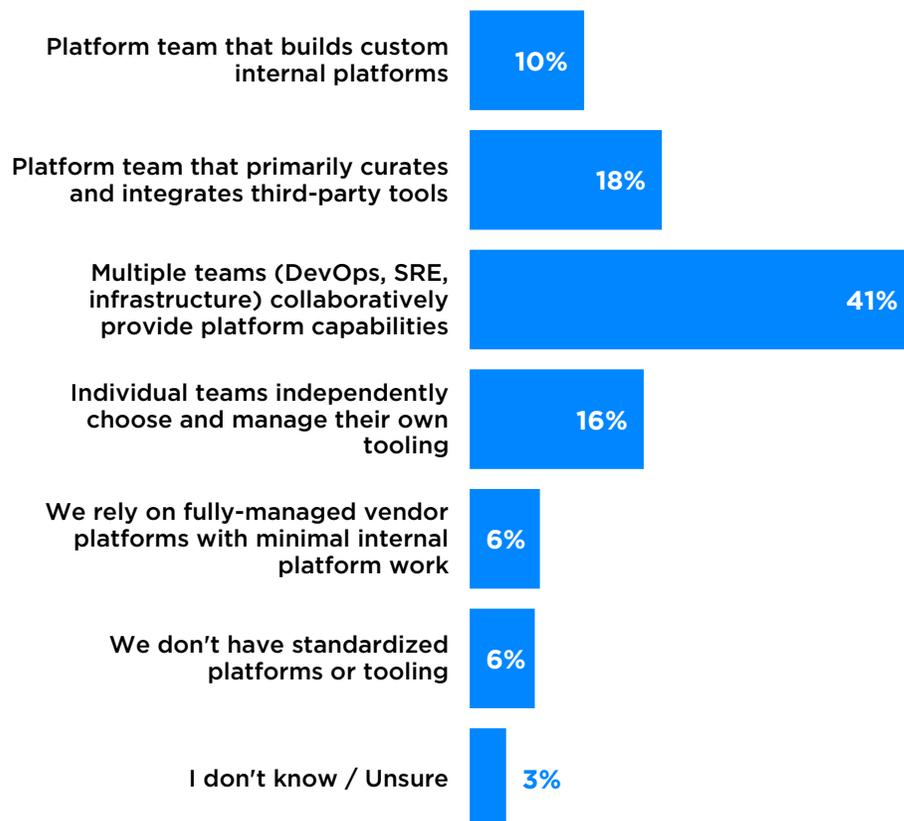
Especially as organizations evolve and adapt to a new space, both AI workflow-heavy and the still relatively new platform engineering, this approach can provide the benefits of developer platforms without investing too heavily in one specific approach or methodology. More than a quarter (28%) of developers report that a platform team handles internal platforms, but the majority (18% vs. 10%) primarily curate and integrate third-party tools.

For AI workflow extensions, some form of hybrid approach is the most commonly reported, adopted by 35% of developers managing AI workflows. This may be seen as an effective compromise between separating AI from certain key areas of their platforms and maintaining a unified production deployment. Only 19% of developers with AI workflows reported having a separate, dedicated platform for AI workflows.

4. Security and Compliance Management

Platform and DevOps Standardization Approaches

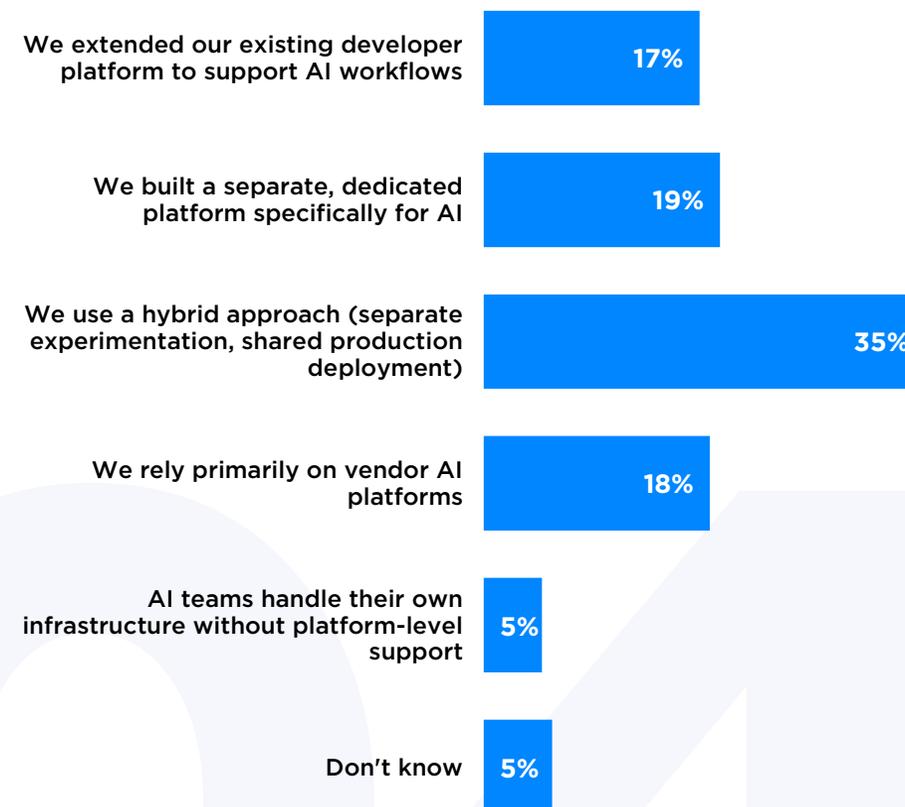
% of developers (n=422)



Question wording: Which of the following best describes how your organization approaches internal development platforms and tooling?

Platform Approaches to AI Workflows

% of developers integrating AI workflows (n=364)



Question wording: Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to AI workflows?

4. Security and Compliance Management

Looking further into the AI workflow platform approaches by how their organization delegates platform responsibilities, we can see some stark differences. While a hybrid approach is popular among all organizations' platform approaches, it is significantly more common (46%) for those who have multiple teams handling their developer platform. A lack of a single unified team may move a hybrid approach from a compromise for various technical reasons to one that is required due to a lack of unified platform ownership.

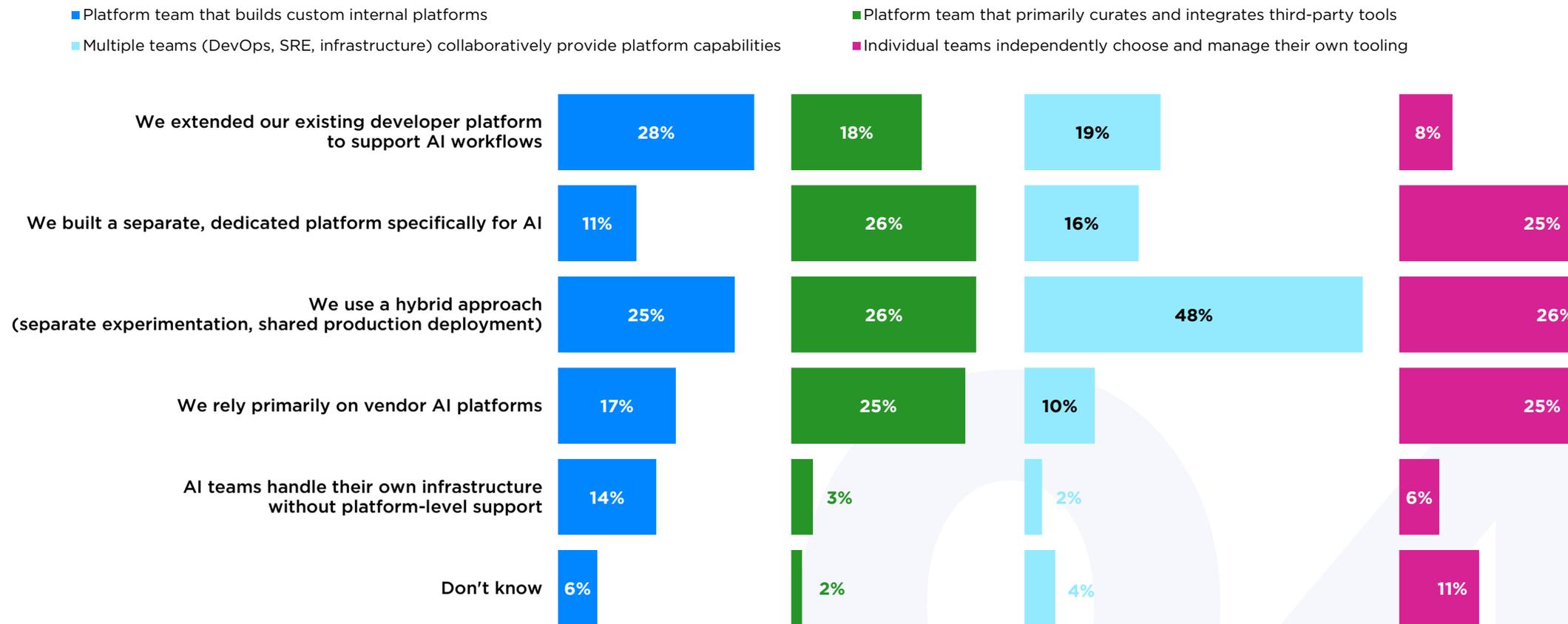
Developers who work at organizations with a platform team that builds internal custom platforms are the only group more likely to have extended their platform to support AI workflows (28%), though it is only a small lead over a hybrid approach (25%). These are the organizations best positioned, with full control and customization over their internal platform, to add the capabilities they see as valuable or necessary, which can include the extension of their platform. These developers, however, are the least likely to have seen their internal team develop a separate dedicated platform specifically for AI (11%). This may be the result of internal platforms seeing the creation of a fully dedicated and separated platform as incongruent with the ideals and motivations for maintaining a custom internal platform.

For those with platform teams who primarily curate third-party tools, we see an almost equal split between separate dedicated platforms, a hybrid approach, and primarily relying on third-party AI platforms. Their higher usage of AI platform vendors follows naturally from an existing orientation toward assembling best-of-breed tools rather than building internally. Notably, organizations where individual teams choose their own tooling show a near-identical distribution, differing by just 1% across approaches. This convergence suggests both groups are being driven by the same underlying dynamic: decisions are made in response to developer requests for specific capabilities rather than guided by a broader philosophy of platform consolidation. This stands in contrast to organizations with internally-built custom platforms, where the platform team's investment in a unified platform philosophy appears to shape how AI workflows are integrated, extending the platform rather than fragmenting it.

4. Security and Compliance Management

Approaches to AI Workflows by Internal Platform Approaches

% of developers integrating AI workflows with each organizational approach to developer platforms (n=364)



Question wording: Which of the following best describes how your organization approaches internal development platforms and tooling? | Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to AI workflows?



METHODOLOGY



Subjective nature of Likert scales

In our research, we employed Likert scales to capture developers' opinions, from 1 to 5 stars, on the maturity and usefulness of the various multicluster application management and batch computing technologies surveyed. While these ratings are inherently subjective, reflecting individual perceptions and experiences, they provide valuable insights into the developer community's views. The nature of our research is centered on investigating developer **perceptions** of these aspects, making the subjective nature of the ratings not only acceptable but also valuable for our analysis. Although the subjective nature of Likert scales may influence the interpretation of results, as different respondents may have varying standards for rating, this variability enriches our understanding of the developer experience.

Despite these nuances, analyzing the distribution of ratings – such as the difference between the number of 5-star ratings and those of 1 and 2 stars – serves as a practical measure for understanding developer sentiments. This approach allows us to identify trends and patterns that can inform decision-making, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for improvement within the surveyed technologies. Thus, we assert that Likert scales are an effective tool for gauging developer perceptions and experiences.

Methodology

Respondent demographics

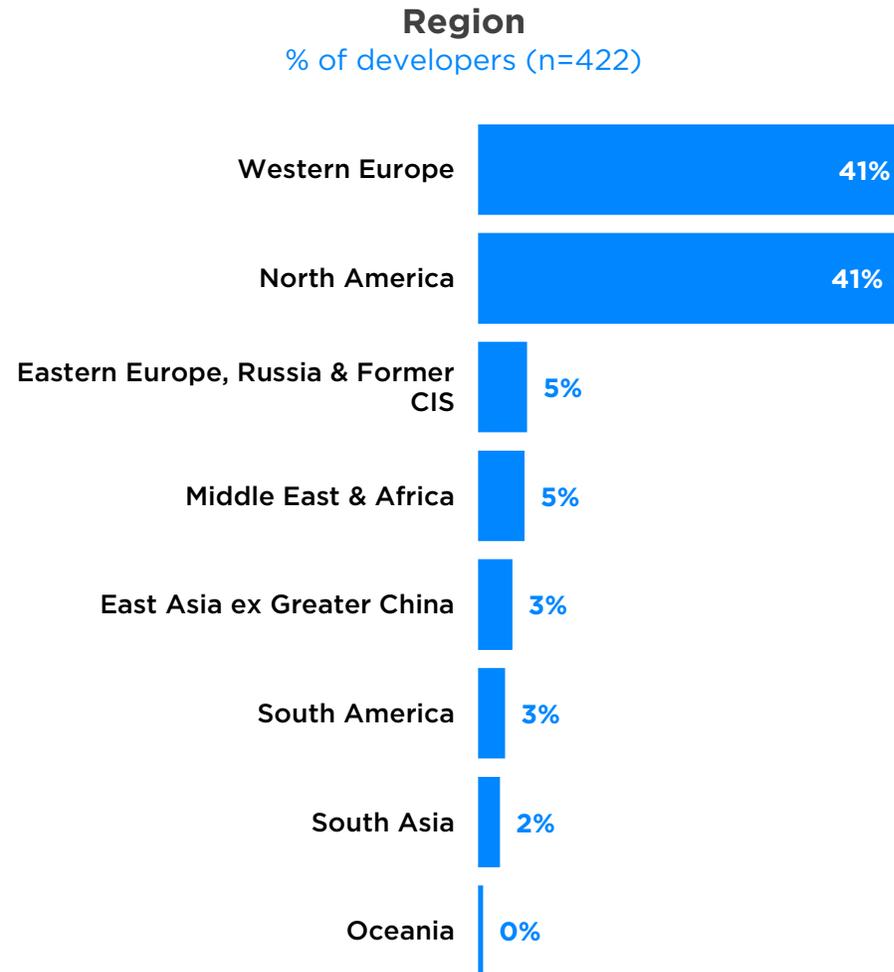
Respondents were initially asked about where their projects ran or were deployed, to identify their position as a 'cloud developer.' Following this, they were asked which technologies they were currently using that we associate with cloud native development approaches, including technologies such as Infrastructure as Code, service meshes, and serverless computing.

Respondents were recruited from third-party panels. For privacy and data minimization purposes, exclusion is based on internal consistency and survey-taking behavior metrics. As such, information on the organization the respondent works for is not carried through to any analysis. This privacy also helps encourage greater honesty from respondents, who do not have concerns that their expressed opinions will be associated with them.

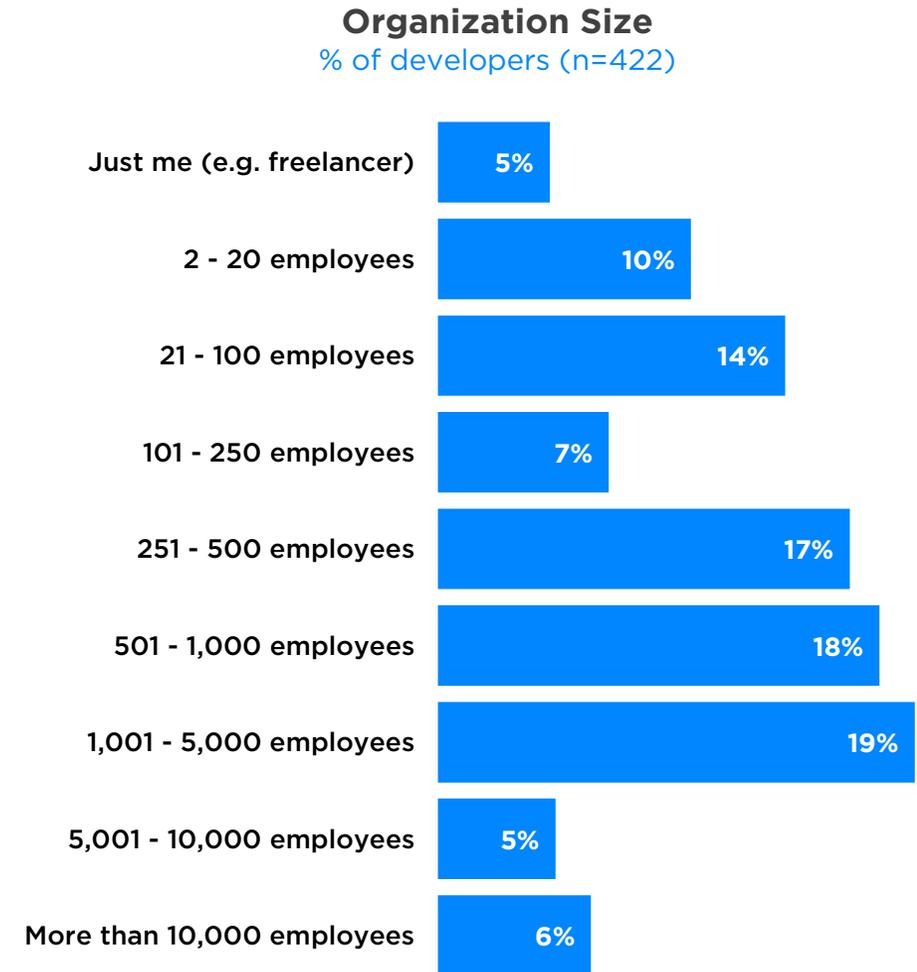
Due to the nature of third-party panels making up the significant majority of respondents, we consider the risk of multiple respondents from the same organization responding to be low and, as such, do not engage in deduping cleanses. However, should more than one individual from the same organization respond to the survey, we do not consider it to impact the validity of the results.

Within the same organization, developers may be using different technologies. Further, while usage was used in the determination of each technology's position on the technology landscape radar, the developer's personal perceptions corresponded to 75% of the score the technology received.

Methodology



Question wording: Which country are you based in?

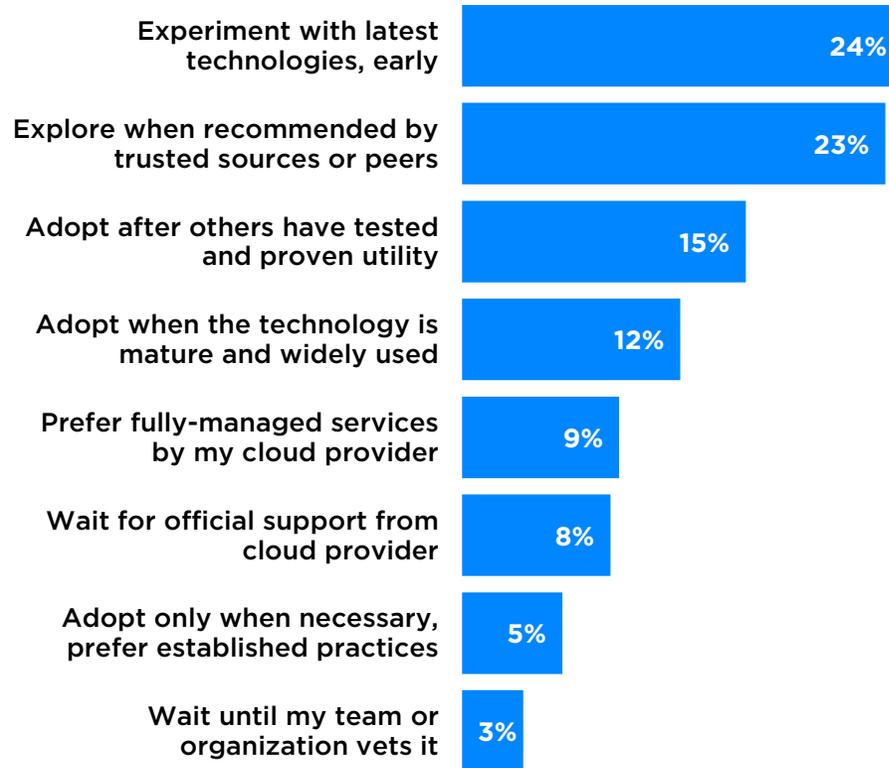


Question wording: What is the size of the organization that you work for?

Methodology

Approach to cloud native technology experimentation and adoption

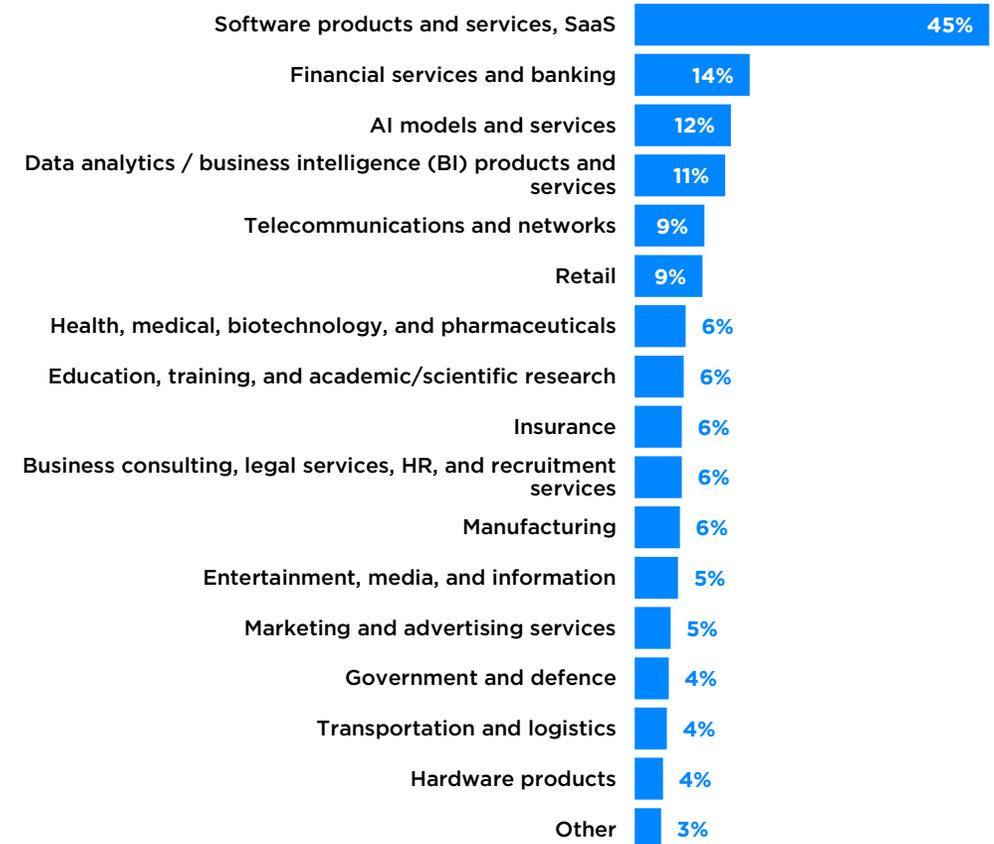
% of developers (n=420)



Question wording: Which of the following best describes how your organization approaches internal development platforms and tooling? | Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to AI workflows?

Industries and sector involvement

% of developers (n=422)



Question wording: Which of the following best describes how your organization approaches internal development platforms and tooling? | Which of the following best describes your organization's approach to AI workflows?



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