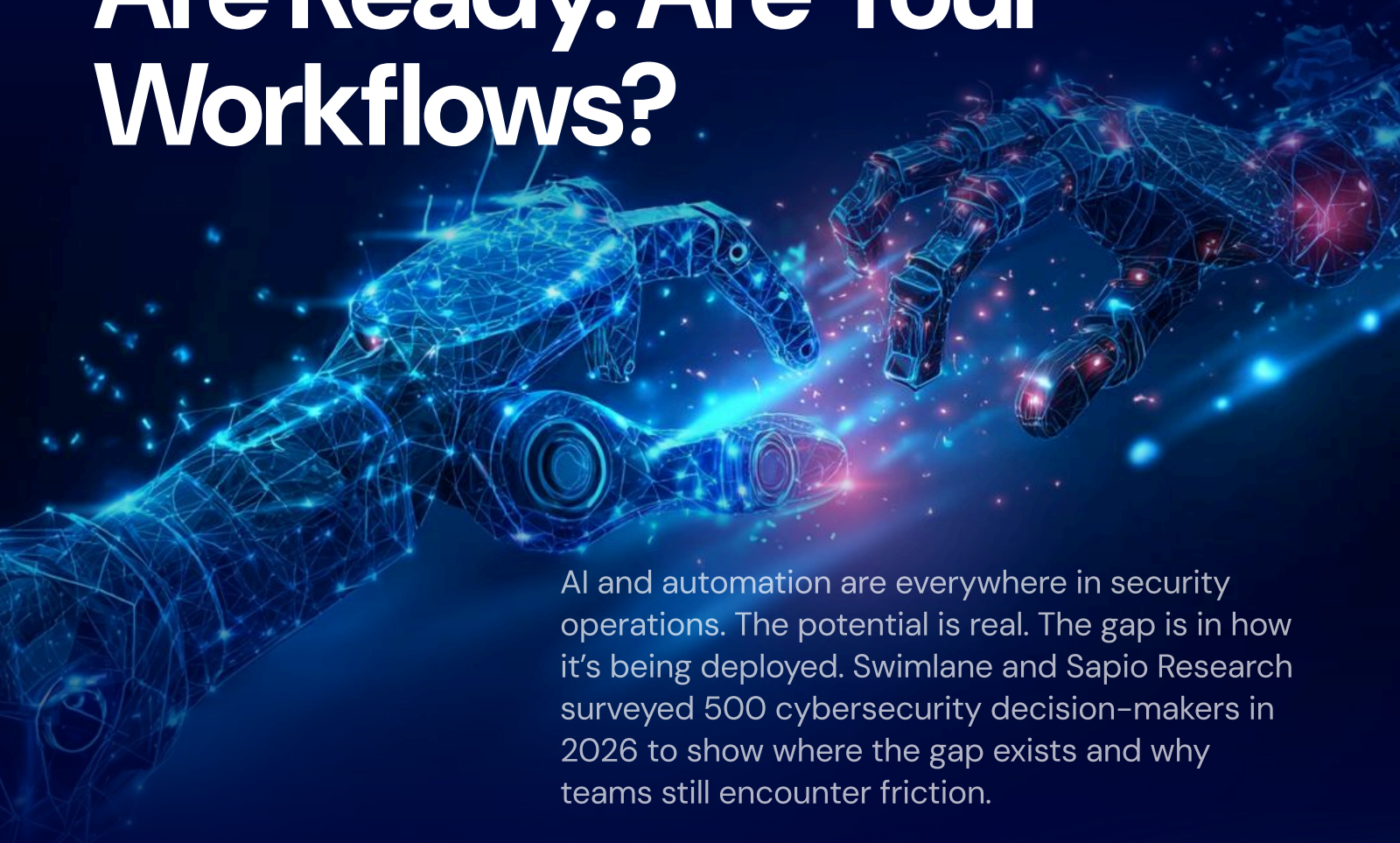


AI & Automation Are Ready. Are Your Workflows?



AI and automation are everywhere in security operations. The potential is real. The gap is in how it's being deployed. Swimlane and Sapio Research surveyed 500 cybersecurity decision-makers in 2026 to show where the gap exists and why teams still encounter friction.

The Setup

Adoption is nearly universal. Strategy is next.

87%

87% have deployed AI and automation

32%

Only 32% use them for clearly different roles

The Perception Gap

Leaders see the investment. Practitioners feel the gaps in the workflow.

67%

67% of executives are very confident in AI outputs

21%

21% of managers are very confident in AI outputs

52%

52% of executives say AI exceeded expectations

17%

17% of managers say the same

The gap is not about trust in AI. It comes from how it performs in real workflows. Executives see improvement. Practitioners deal with the friction.

Where Execution Breaks Down

The tools are in place. The friction remains.



91%

91% still experience workflow delays

Top Bottlenecks for AI & Automation

44%

44% cite decision making and approvals as the top bottleneck

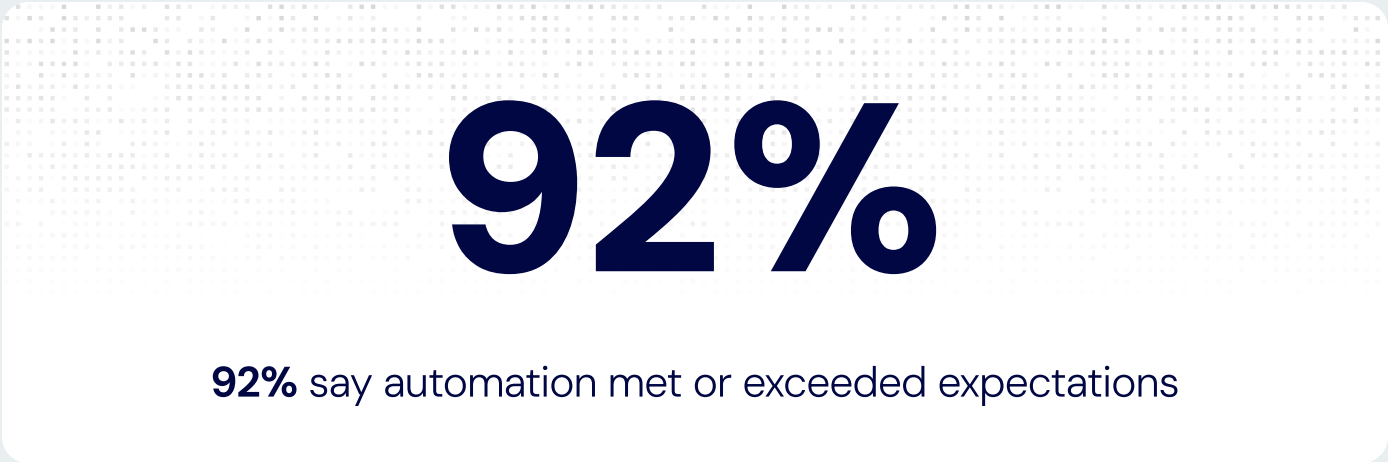
39%

39% cite investigation and analysis

These are human-in-the-loop stages where strategy and ownership matter most.

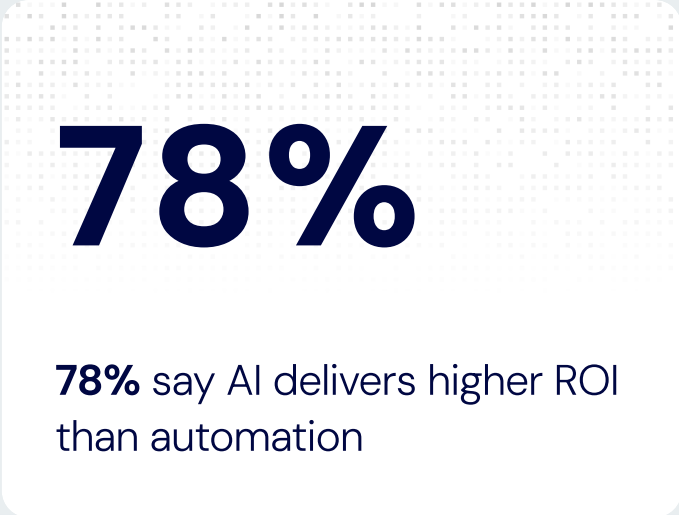
AI vs Automation Reality

Automation works because teams understand where it fits. AI is still being figured out.

A white rectangular card with a light gray dotted background pattern. It features a large, bold, dark blue percentage '92%' in the center. Below the percentage, the text '92% say automation met or exceeded expectations' is written in a smaller, dark blue font.

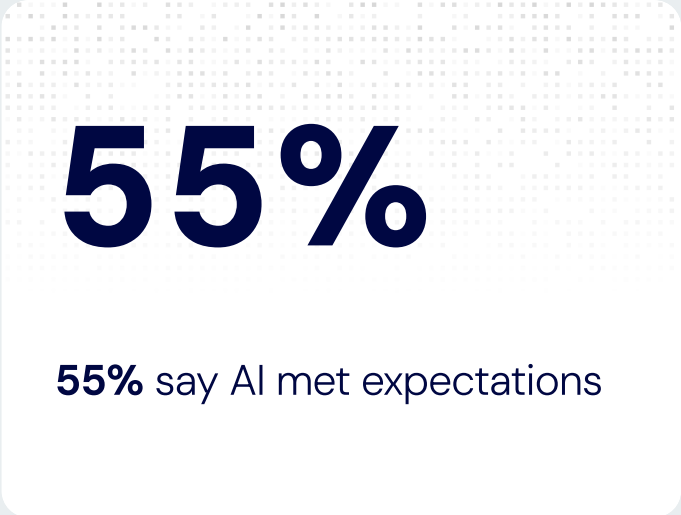
92%

92% say automation met or exceeded expectations

A white rectangular card with a light gray dotted background pattern. It features a large, bold, dark blue percentage '78%' in the center. Below the percentage, the text '78% say AI delivers higher ROI than automation' is written in a smaller, dark blue font.

78%

78% say AI delivers higher ROI than automation

A white rectangular card with a light gray dotted background pattern. It features a large, bold, dark blue percentage '55%' in the center. Below the percentage, the text '55% say AI met expectations' is written in a smaller, dark blue font.

55%

55% say AI met expectations

Teams see the value in AI, but many have not defined how to use it in day-to-day workflows.

The Takeaway

Even strong tools fail when the workflow is unclear.

AI and automation struggle when ownership is unclear, roles overlap, and handoffs slow everything down.

The real gains come from how the workflow is designed. Automation handles execution. AI supports decision making. Each step is connected and owned.

That is where teams start to see meaningful results.

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