



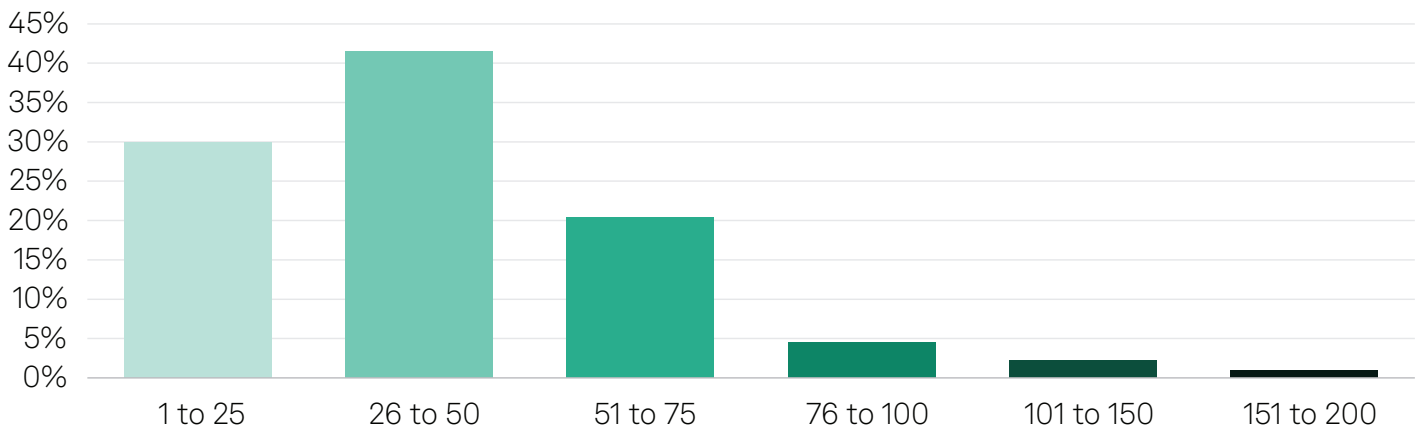
# A unified platform approach to building private clouds for modern workloads

## The Take

There has been a clear shift in enterprise infrastructure strategy. Findings from the Voice of the Enterprise: Cloud, Hosting & Managed Services, Budgets & Outlook 2026 survey show strong anticipated growth in spending among surveyed organizations for both on-premises environments (77%) and hosted private cloud (79%). This growth is driven by rising performance demands from modern containerized and VM-based applications, AI and machine learning initiatives and overall business expansion. On-premises investment often relates to workload repatriation stemming from public cloud and sovereignty concerns, while hosted private cloud adoption reflects the demand for managed infrastructure, financial optimization and migration away from traditional enterprise data centers.

This resurgence of private cloud challenges the notion that public cloud alone can address all enterprise computing needs. As organizations modernize private cloud environments, they rely on a diverse ecosystem of infrastructure, platform, security, networking and operations tools sourced from multiple vendors. Each tool introduces its own management interfaces, data models and workflows, leading to tool sprawl. This fragmentation creates inconsistent visibility and disconnected processes. Because these tools rarely interoperate natively, teams rely on manual integrations, custom scripts and workarounds to manage services. The lack of unified automation and orchestration slows provisioning, complicates troubleshooting, increases operational risk and undermines the agility and efficiency that private cloud architectures aim to deliver. This is especially true as the number of operational tools grows, and 451 data finds that 62% of surveyed organizations are managing 26-75 tools, with the largest segment (42%) operating with 26-50 tools in the infrastructure stack.

## Number of IT tools in use



Q. How many tools does your IT organization use to develop applications and manage IT infrastructure and operations within your enterprise?

Base: All respondents (n=922).

Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence 451 Research IT Automation Platforms and Process Automation custom survey, 2024.

The hidden costs of tool sprawl can be significant. Each tool increases training requirements, integration complexity and maintenance overhead while expanding attack surfaces and compliance gaps. Operational inefficiencies compound as teams switch between interfaces, extending resolution times. License proliferation further strains budgets due to multiple vendors and renewal cycles.

The solution is platform unification — shifting from fragmented point solutions to an integrated platform that consolidates interfaces, orchestration, governance and automation. Organizations adopting this approach reduce operational overhead, improve security through centralized policy enforcement and accelerate troubleshooting with unified observability. While building a unified private cloud for modern workloads can be complex, a simplified approach is emerging based on three strategic themes that form a centralized control plane for orchestrating tools, processes and teams.



## Business impact

**Unified self-service consumption for modern workloads.** This theme focuses on a cloud interface and on-demand consumption via resource catalogs. This model offers ready-to-use self-service private cloud infrastructure services for developers, DevOps teams and data scientists. Users can request VMs, Kubernetes clusters and AI-ready infrastructure, deploying GPU-enabled retrieval-augmented generation workflows. Rather than interacting directly with underlying infrastructure tools, users consume curated services built from reusable templates and blueprints. The result is speed and consistency: Application teams gain a public-cloud experience inside the enterprise while IT ensures that every deployment follows approved architectures, configurations and policies. This reduces friction, shortens time to market and aligns infrastructure delivery with application delivery timelines.

**Operational scalability and life-cycle management.** This theme underpins the platform's operations, supporting a single-source GitOps-based approach to infrastructure as code (IaC), automated orchestration, integration and reusable content management (e.g., data, images). Low-code YAML blueprinting and a visual drag-and-drop canvas enable admins to design infrastructure without learning complex languages. These features democratize IaC, enabling more users to deliver and consume private-cloud infrastructure with existing skills while allowing platform teams to codify best practices, automate complex workflows, and integrate ITSM systems and observability tools. Automation covers Day 0 setup, Day 1 provisioning and Day 2 operations — such as scaling, patching, optimization and retirement — making them repeatable. The result is reduced manual effort, fewer human errors and the ability to run private cloud as a productized platform rather than a ticket-driven service.

**Policy-driven governance and multi-tenant control.** This theme introduces governance policies, multi-tenant and organizational management and built-in controls for cost, security and compliance, ensuring that self-service resources operate within clear guardrails. It employs policy-as-code for automated enforcement and improves resource utilization by segmenting networks into virtual private clouds. This enables safe sharing of infrastructure through role-based access, quotas, approvals, leases and life-cycle rules, using policies to help control consumption, prevent overprovisioning of servers or storage (i.e., underutilization) and reduce the need for excess hardware investments. Moreover, automated utilization tracking prevents “zombie” resources from draining capex budgets. The result is a durable balance: IT maintains oversight and accountability while empowering teams to operate independently, supporting regulated environments and predictable operations at scale.

## Looking ahead

The renewed enterprise focus on private cloud for modern workloads marks a lasting shift, driven by AI's move to production, intensifying data gravity, expanding regulations and the need for cost predictability. Private cloud — whether on-premises or hosted — offers control, performance and governance beyond what public cloud alone can provide, supporting continued investment through the decade. The biggest evolution will occur in the operational model: Early private clouds relied on complex, layered tools, but the next phase will focus on unified automation platforms. These platforms consolidate self-service, orchestration, life-cycle management and governance, becoming more declarative, policy-driven and API-first. This approach aligns with platform engineering, enabling private cloud to be managed as a product. Adoption will likely be steady, led by large enterprises and regulated industries driven by AI, sovereignty and financial discipline. As platforms mature, unified automation will become a baseline expectation for modern IT strategies over the next three to five years.



VMware Cloud Foundation delivers a unified platform engineered for consistent, secure, high performance infrastructure across environments, and its built in automation capabilities streamline how organizations operate a modern private cloud. By replacing manual, ticket driven provisioning with automated, policy driven workflows, VMware Cloud Foundation enables cloud admins to deliver infrastructure on demand while giving developers and application teams fast, reliable access to the resources they need without managing underlying complexity. The result is faster application delivery, improved productivity across IT and development teams, and a more agile foundation for supporting AI, Kubernetes, and traditional VM based workloads—empowering organizations to modernize with confidence and accelerate innovation.