



**MITRE**



**The Harris Poll**  
Harris Insights & Analytics, A Stagwell LLC Company

# MITRE-Harris Poll Public Perceptions on Securing Critical Infrastructure

March 13, 2024

# U.S. Public Is **Worried about Security** of Critical Infrastructure

The U.S. public agrees, almost universally, that protecting critical infrastructure is essential to our daily lives, national security, and having a global advantage. Critical infrastructure in this context is defined as “the systems, facilities, and services that are vital for the functioning of our society and economy such as energy, water, transportation, communications, healthcare, and financial systems.”

With temporary failures of critical infrastructure on the rise in recent years, 8-in-10 U.S. residents are worried about how secure our critical infrastructure may be. In particular, the MITRE-Harris Poll survey revealed:

- Across all regions of the country, the U.S. public is concerned for our critical infrastructure, but homeowners, urban residents, and people over the age of 27 are the most concerned.
- Cyberattacks, terrorism, and aging/failing infrastructure are considered the greatest risks to our critical infrastructure.
- The U.S. public is evenly split on its confidence that we have the systems and resources to recover if our critical infrastructure gets attacked.
- 78% believe the federal government bears full or partial responsibility for fortifying our critical infrastructure. 49% say it's the responsibility of both public and private entities to fix and fortify our critical infrastructure, while 29% believe the federal government is solely responsible.

# Threats to Critical Infrastructure Are **Unequivocal** and **Tangible**



Threats to our nation's critical infrastructure have heightened dramatically as the Chinese Communist Party and others have accelerated their capacity to conduct cyber attacks on our systems. The MITRE-Harris Poll shows that the public is worried about these threats to the vital services we depend on every day, and MITRE is in a unique position to connect government and critical infrastructure providers to **take steps now** to secure them.



[Charles Clancy Ph.D.](#)

Senior Vice President, Chief Technology Officer, MITRE

# Research Method

This survey was conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of MITRE via its Harris On Demand omnibus product.



**Sample Size:**  
n=2,046



**Mode:**  
Online survey



**Field Dates:**  
February 13-15, 2024



**Qualification Criteria:**  
U.S. residents  
Adults ages 18+



**Weighting:**  
Data weighted to ensure  
results are projectable  
to U.S. adults ages 18+



**In tables and charts:**  
Percentages may not add up to  
100% due to weighting, computer  
rounding, and/or the acceptance of  
multiple responses.

# The Time to **Prepare** Is Now



The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and other government agencies have been beating the drum to wake up critical infrastructure operators and Congress as to the potential threats on our energy, water, communications, and transportation systems. CISA offers numerous resources to help operators prepare for attacks, but more support is needed to counter the increased frequency and sophistication of these threats. Our poll shows that the **public deems these services crucial** to our daily lives and national security.



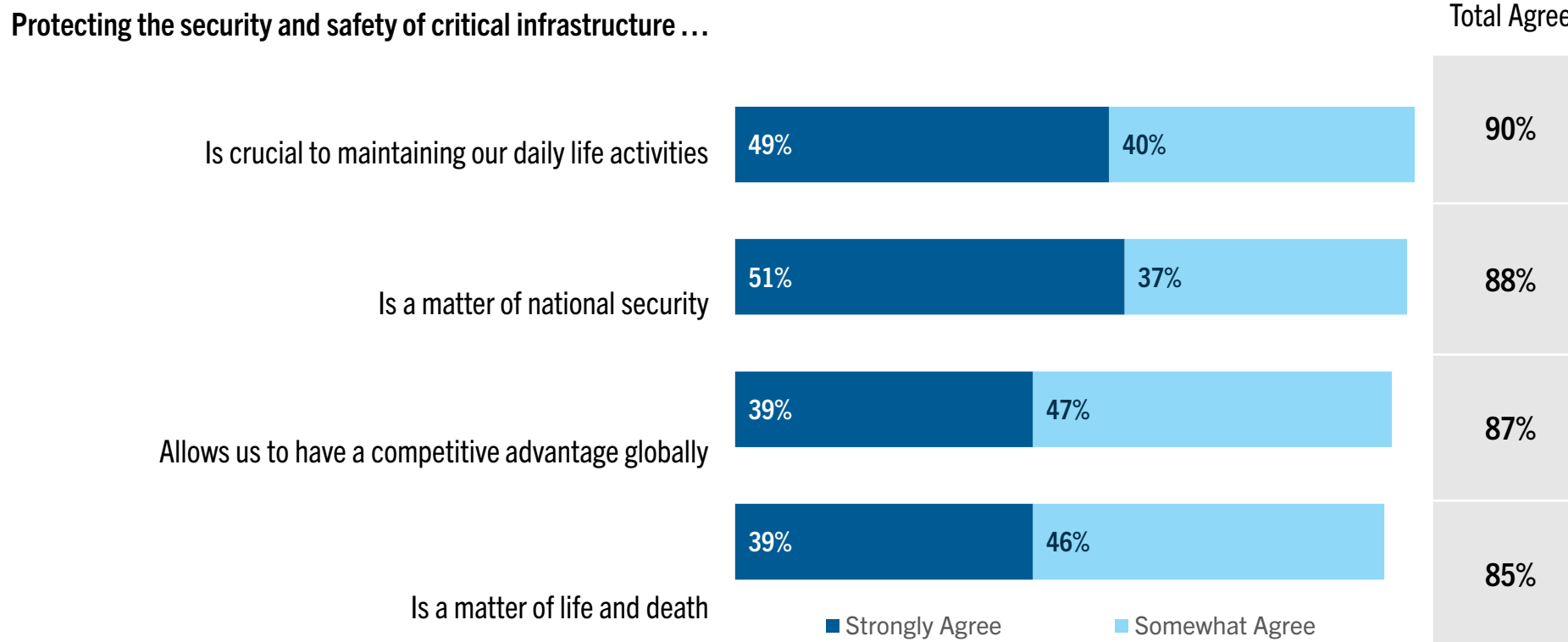
[Yosry Barsoum](#)

Vice President, MITRE

Director, Center for Homeland Security

# The U.S. public agrees, almost universally, that protecting critical infrastructure is essential to our daily lives, national security, and our ability to maintain a global advantage.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

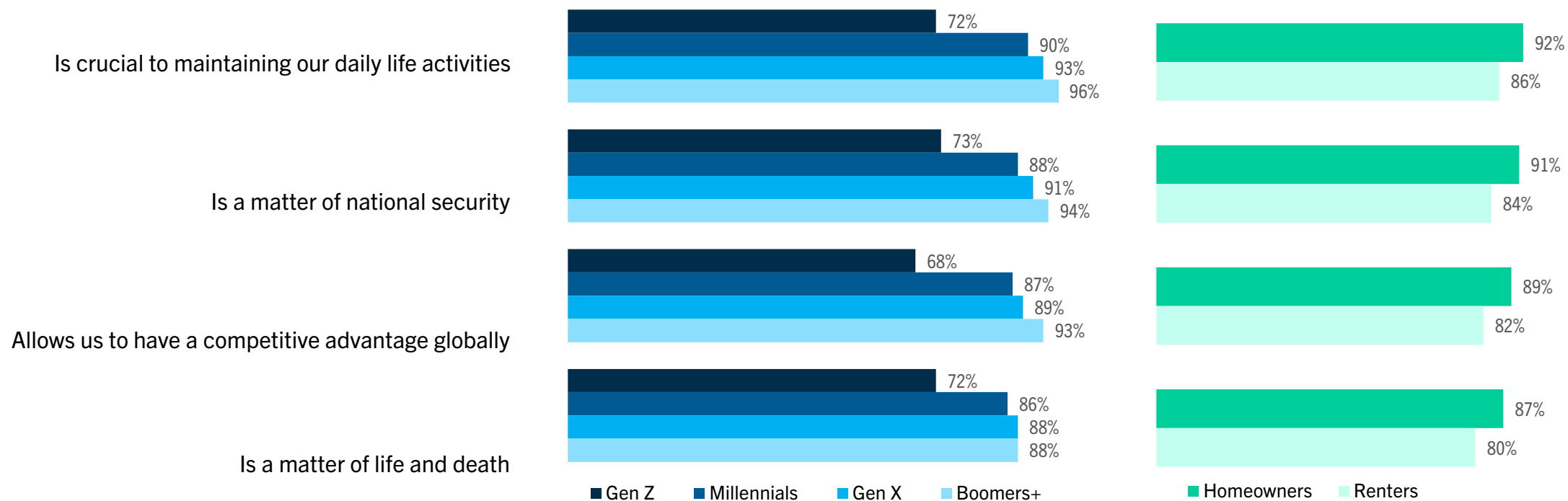
Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?

# Homeowners feel greater urgency to protect our critical infrastructure. Gen Z is less concerned than older generations.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?

Protecting the security and safety of critical infrastructure ...

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure  
BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

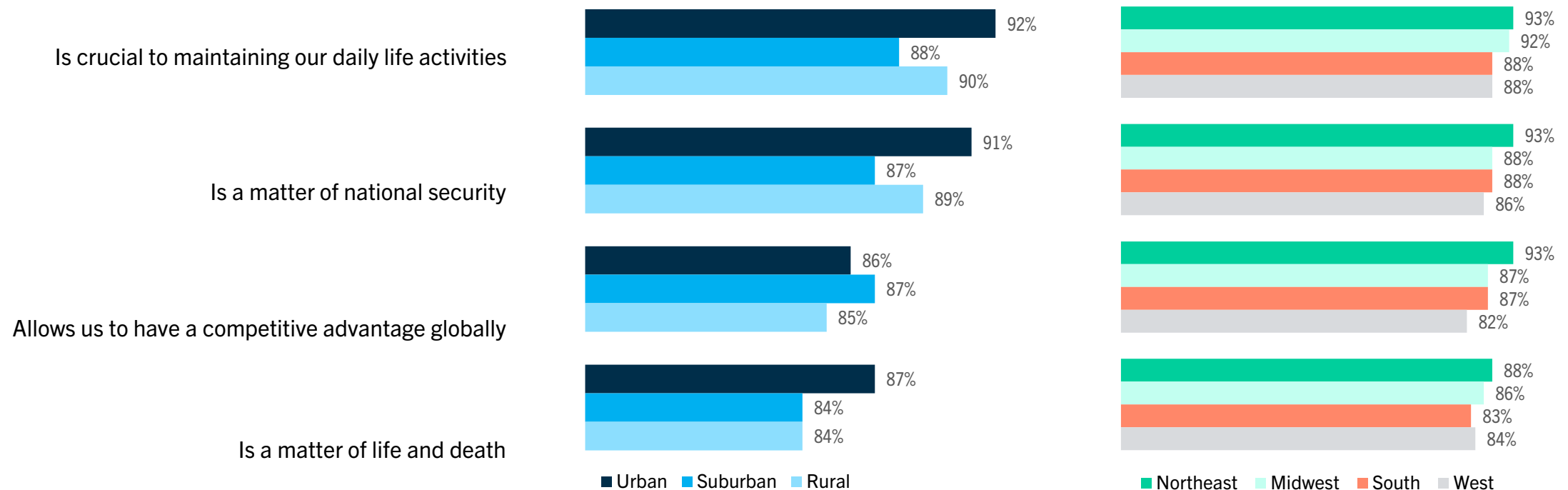
Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?

# Urban residents and those in the Northeast feel more strongly than others about the urgency to protect our critical infrastructure.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?

## Protecting the security and safety of critical infrastructure ...

% Agree (Strongly/Somewhat)



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?



# Gen Z **Differs** with Other Generations on their Concern



**In this poll, Gen Z stands out based on substantially lower levels of concerns about security and safety of critical infrastructure vs. any other demographic group.**

**This insight is key reinforcement of Gen Z's ambivalence to many cybersecurity issues. Although, and likely because, Gen Z are digital natives, they treat privacy and security threats much more lightly than other generations.**

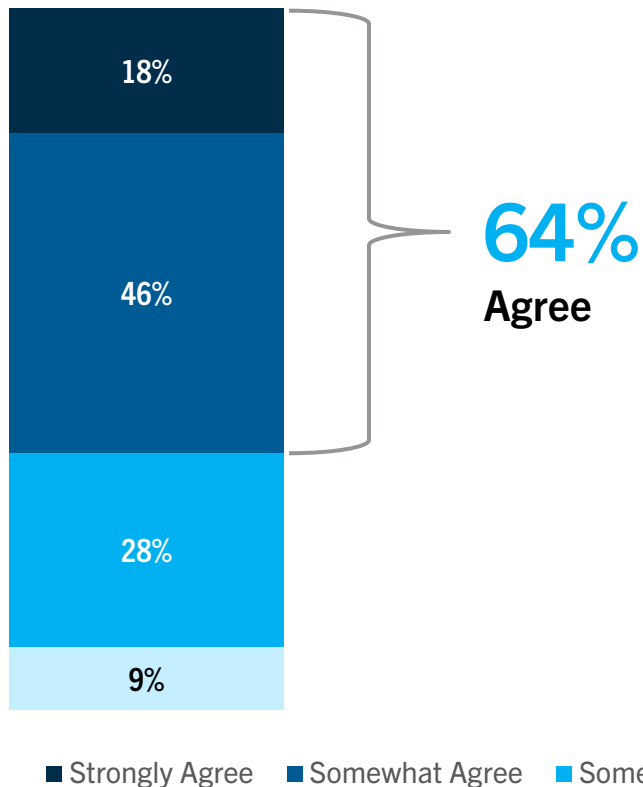


[Rob Jekielek](#)

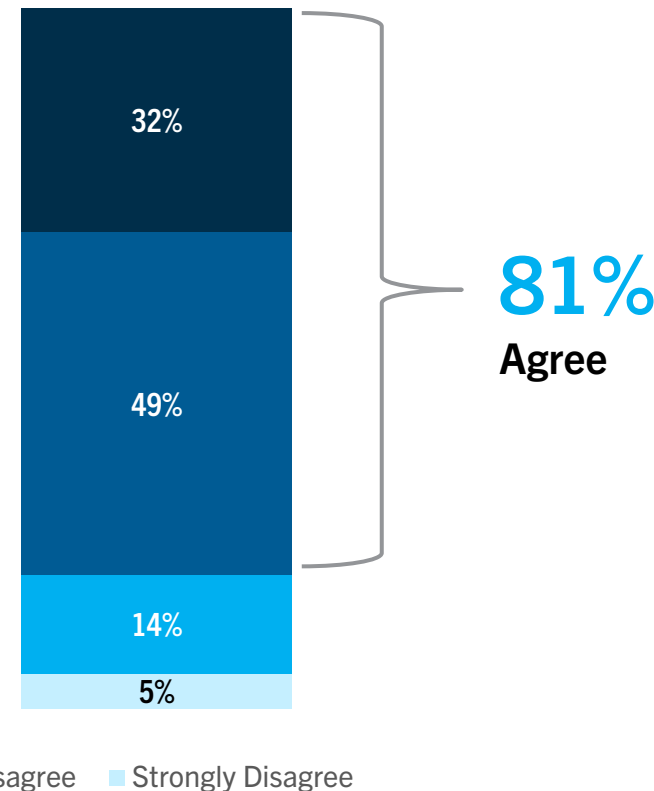
Managing Director, The Harris Poll

# Even though most residents believe that the U.S. has one of the safest and most secure critical infrastructure in the world, 81% are still worried about its safety and security.

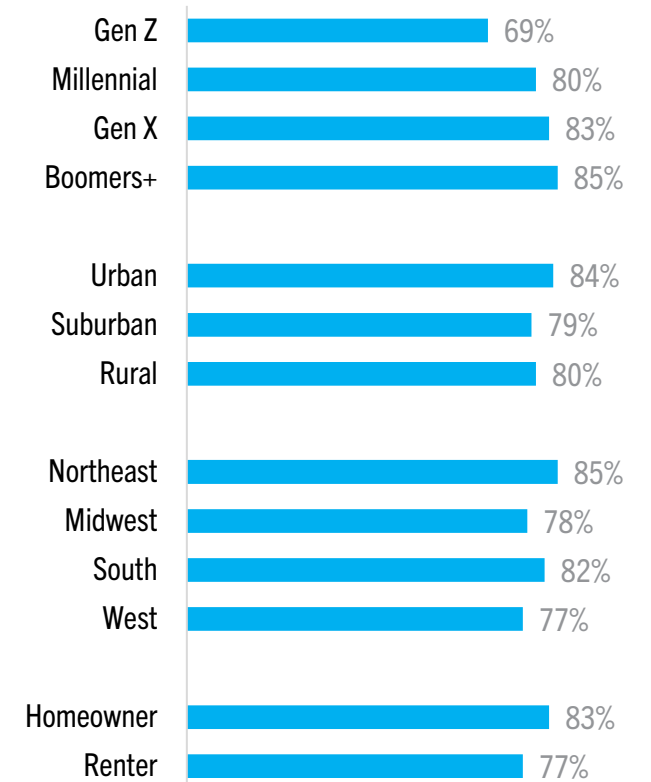
The United States has one of the most safe and secure critical infrastructures in the world



I am worried about the safety and security of our critical infrastructure in the United States.



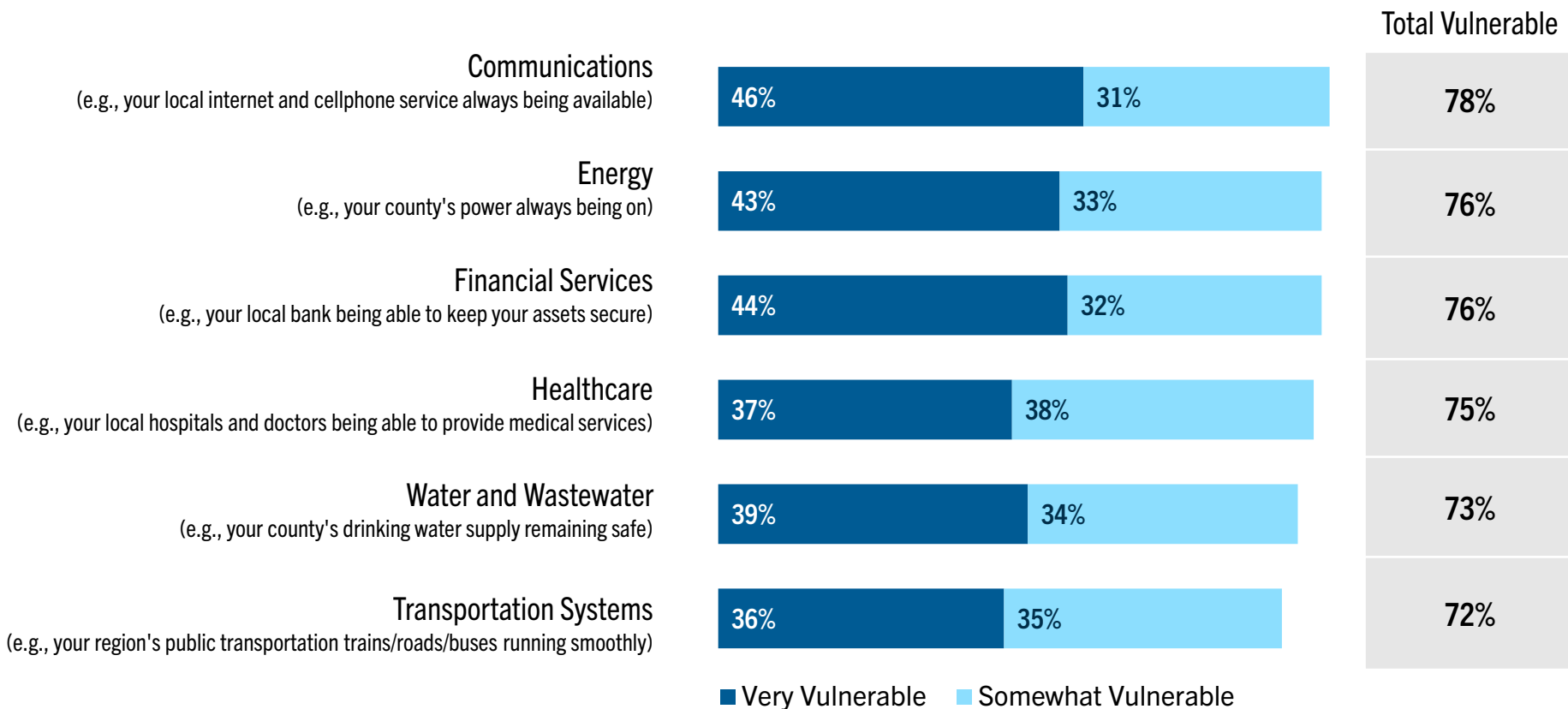
% Agree That They Are Worried



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure  
 BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)  
 Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the security and safety of critical infrastructure in the United States?

# Roughly 3-in-4 believe each major critical infrastructure sector is vulnerable to cyberattack, but communications, energy, and financial services are considered the most vulnerable.

How vulnerable to cyberattack do you believe each of the following are?



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure  
 BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)  
 Q4. How vulnerable to a cyberattack do you believe each of the following are, if at all?

# Planning and **Practicing** Can Thwart Adversaries



According to our poll, the public considers cyberattacks to be of the greatest risk to critical infrastructure, and 51% believe we may not be able to recover from an attack. MITRE is working across and with critical infrastructure sectors to **test, identify, and remedy their cyber vulnerabilities**. But there are hundreds of those organizations, and they all need to evaluate and fortify their emergency plans for cyberattacks, much like they do for natural disaster planning. A **well-exercised emergency plan**, coupled with **effective detection, indication and warning**, can thwart even the most sophisticated adversary.

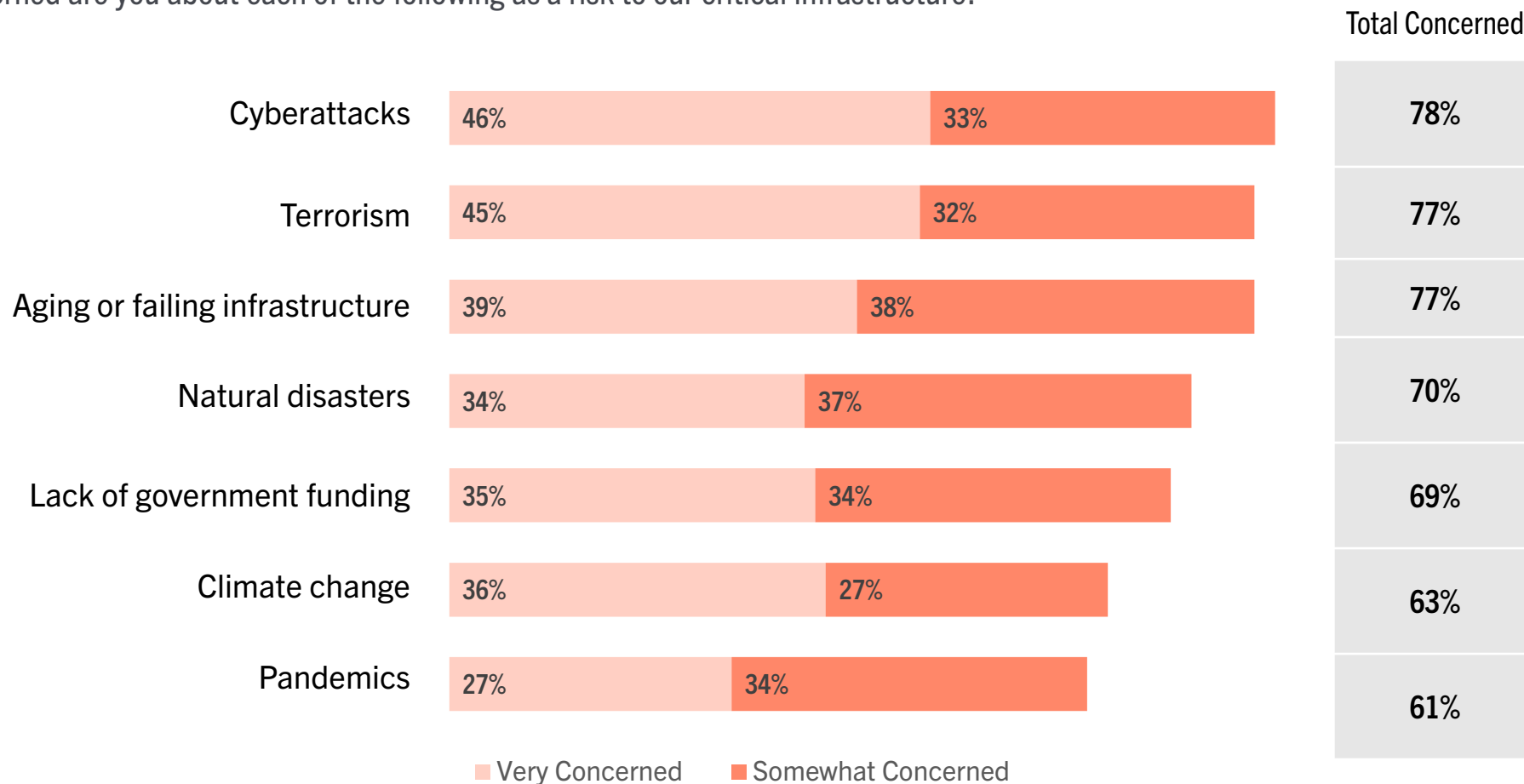


[Chuck Lewis](#)

Managing Director, Homeland Security Enterprise, MITRE

# Cyberattacks, terrorism and aging/failing infrastructure are considered the greatest risks to our critical infrastructure.

How concerned are you about each of the following as a risk to our critical infrastructure?

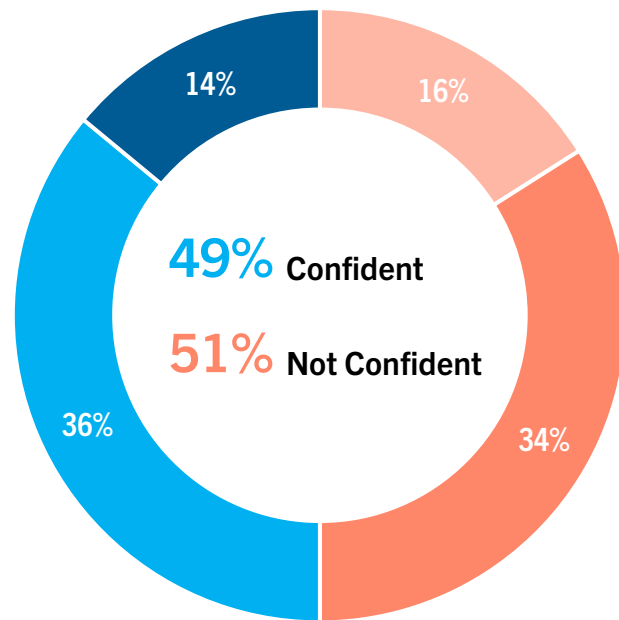


Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure  
 BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

Q3. How concerned are you, if at all, about each of the following as a risk to our critical infrastructure?

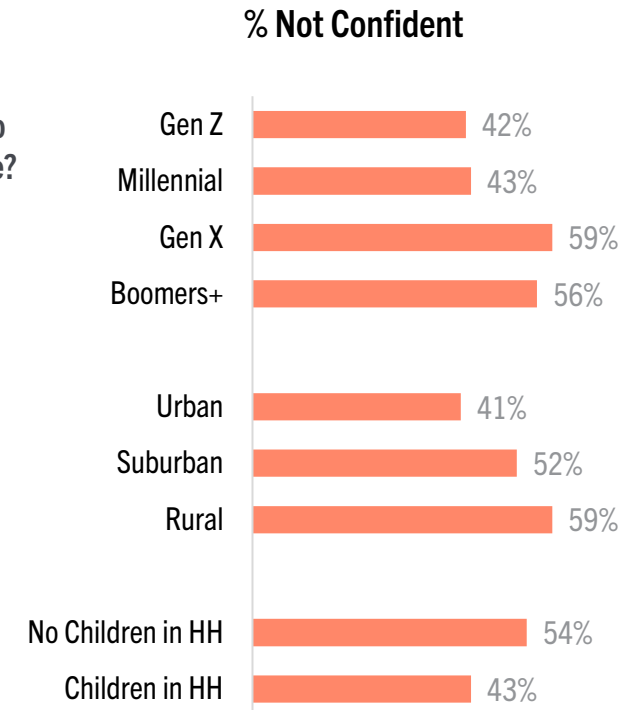
# The U.S. public is evenly split on whether they have confidence that we have the systems and resources to recover if our critical infrastructure is attacked.

Older generations, suburban and rural residents, and those without children are less confident in our ability to recover.



■ Not at all confident    ■ A little confident  
■ Somewhat confident    ■ Very confident

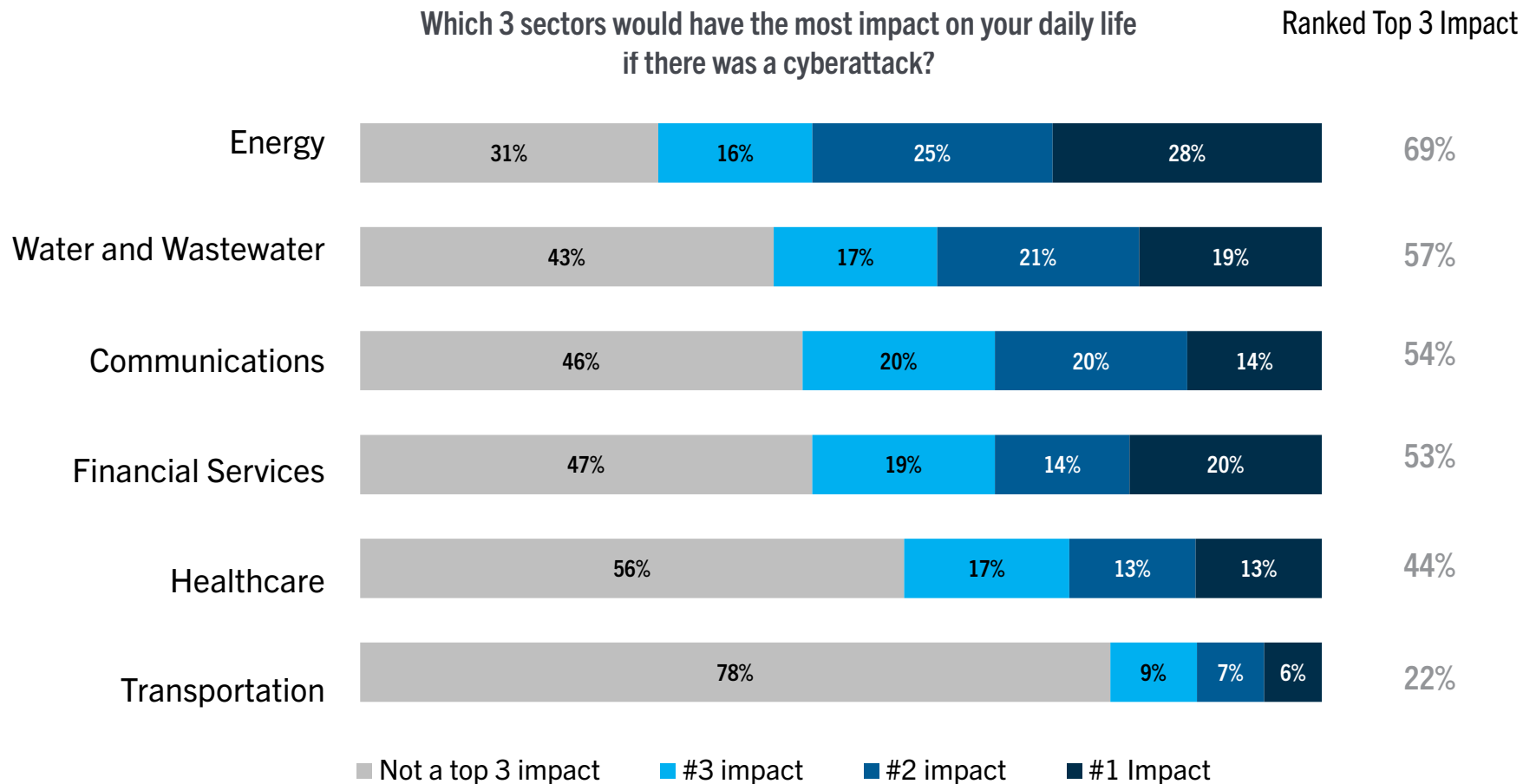
How confident are you that we have systems/resources to recover if there was an attack on our critical infrastructure?



Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure  
 BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

Q5. How confident are you that we have the systems and resources in place to quickly recover if there was an attack on our critical infrastructure? HH = Household

# The U.S. public says a disruption in energy due to cyberattack would have the most impact on their daily life, followed by a disruption in water and wastewater.



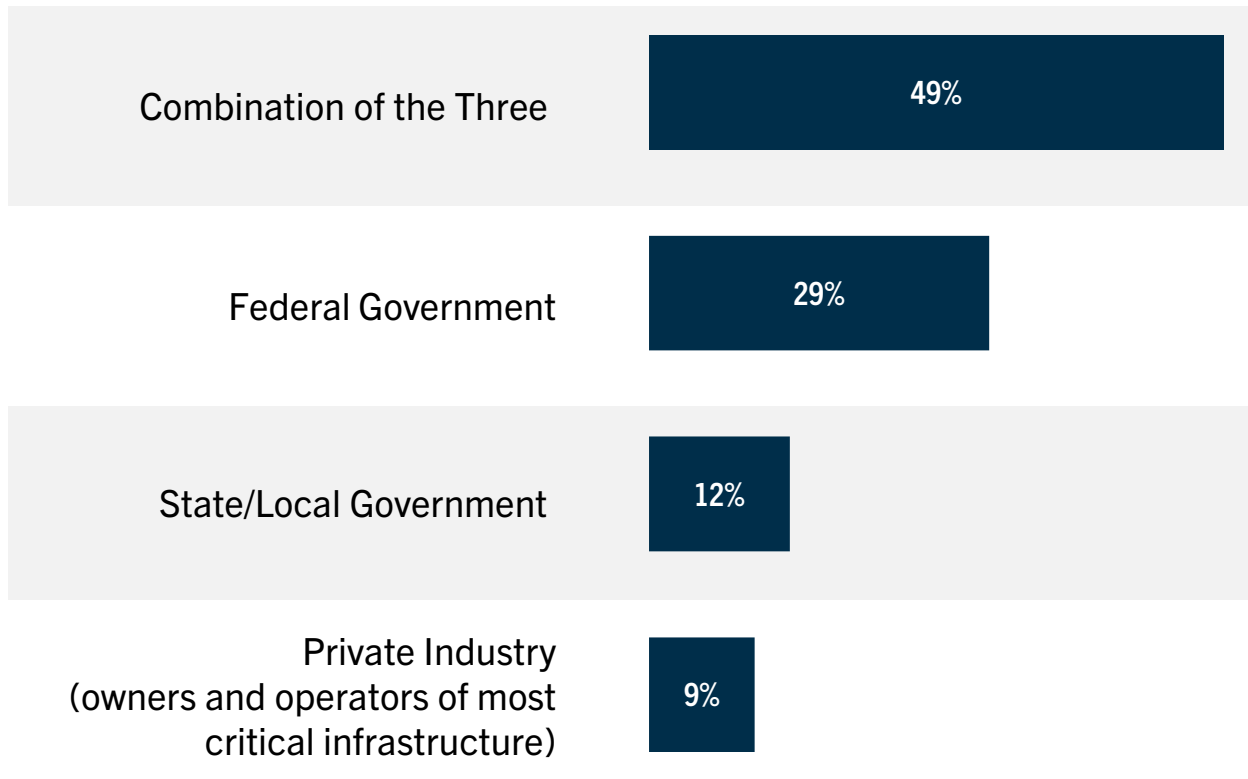
Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

Q6. Which would have the most impact on your daily life if there was a cyberattack that compromised the security and safety of our critical infrastructure?

# 78% believe the federal government bears full or partial responsibility for fortifying our critical infrastructure.

Who should be responsible for fixing and fortifying our critical infrastructure in the U.S.?



	Gen Z (18-27)	Millennials (28-43)	Gen X (44-59)	Boomers+ (60+)	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Combination of the Three	29% ↓	45%	55%	60%	42% ↓	52%	54%
Federal Government	32%	29%	30%	28%	35% ↑	28%	26%
State/Local Government	20% ↑	17%	8%	7%	14% ↑	12%	11%
Private Industry (owners and operators of most critical infrastructure)	19% ↑	9%	7%	5%	9%	9%	9%

↑ ↓ Significantly higher or lower than other groups

Source: MITRE-Harris Poll 2024 Securing Critical Infrastructure

BASE: ALL RESPONDENTS (n=2046)

Q7. Who do you think should be responsible for fixing and fortifying critical infrastructure in the United States? Rep = Republicans; Dem = Democrats; Ind = Independents



# The U.S. Public **Can Do Their Part**



Our adversaries want us to panic if, and when, they attack our critical infrastructure. Just as we prepare for storms and other natural disasters, we must take on a mindset to prepare for attacks on our critical infrastructure. While funding for fixing and fortifying our critical infrastructure is determined, we can all do our part by being **resilient in the face of emergencies**.



[Mark Bristow](#)

Director, Cyber Infrastructure Protection Innovation Center, MITRE

**MITRE**



**Thank you**

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