Audit Committee Survey Insights 2026

Table of content

This report presents insights from Danish audit committees (ACs) in a year characterised by increasing complexity and heightened requirements for governance, risk management and reporting.

Introduction

The report highlights ACs' priorities, challenges and new trends, as well as the competencies and structures considered necessary to strengthen oversight in a time marked by growing complexity. The report is based on PwC's 2026 Audit Committee Survey, conducted among Danish ACs across sectors and company sizes. Data was collected from 27 November 2025 to 30 January 2026 through an online questionnaire completed by audit committee chairs and audit committee members.

Emerging risks as the main challenge

The survey results show that Danish ACs face a shifting risk landscape where classic core areas remain significant, yet new types of risks are rapidly surfacing.

Emerging risks are seen as the largest challenge by 89% of respondents, while 21% feel very well equipped to handle them.

This signals a notable gap between the pace of risk development and the committees' current capabilities as well as their monitoring and decision-making frameworks. While governance structures are considered strong by all participants, it is particularly the forward-looking and technology-driven risks that challenge the current level of maturity. The complexity of risks – geopolitics, AI, data ethics, cybersecurity risks and third – party dependencies-creates pressure for greater agility and more specialised insight in ACs' work.

The survey also shows that classic core areas remain solid: Financial reporting is rated as important or very important by 95%, and both cybersecurity risks and internal controls are very important by 89%. The disciplines that have traditionally formed the foundation of AC work thus remain central, but the risk picture is moving towards more technological and operational challenges, requiring a broader competence profile. The development suggests that ACs are taking on a broader role, maintaining high quality in classic areas while also strengthening their insight into new and complex risks.

Finally, the data highlights a clear need to strengthen both risk reporting and competencies. 47% point to improved risk reporting as the most important enhancement, while 35% request more training and another 35% call for greater use of external experts. This indicates that the challenge is not the volume of information – most ACs already receive 100-200 pages per meeting – but rather its relevance and focus. The insights suggest that the growing demand for specialised expertise is concentrated in areas such as cybersecurity risks, AI, and regulatory developments where external experts can help create greater clarity and progress.

47%

point to improved risk reporting as the most important enhancement, while 35% request more training and another 35% call for greater use of external experts.

100%

of respondents assess their governance framework as strong.

It is particularly noteworthy that although 100% of respondents assess their governance framework as strong, it is not perceived as sufficient to handle these new types of risks. This indicates that the challenge does not lie in the committees' process discipline but in a risk landscape that is evolving far more rapidly than the existing structures were built to accommodate. A reasonable assumption is that ACs have primarily been designed to oversee known, relatively stable risks while areas such as AI, cybersecurity risks, data quality, geopolitics and disruption to supply chains are now changing the dynamics and increasing the level of unpredictability. Several respondents also point out that complex regulations (37%) add further pressure on the ACs' risk oversight. As risk complexity grows alongside reporting volumes, the risk of missing critical trends and early warning signals increases.

Interestingly, only 20% of ACs identify ESG and sustainability reporting as a current challenge, while 50% consider ESG important for the year ahead. Considering that ESG is still a relatively new and evolving area for many committees, this low share of challenge-perception may suggest that the early operational hurdles are beginning to stabilise, yet ESG remains a significant and established part of the agenda. The need going forward is therefore not for more ESG focus in general, but for sharper and more value-creating ESG discussions. This shift highlights the importance of linking ESG reporting more clearly to the company's risk profile to strengthen monitoring and decision-making and support more integrated governance.

What are the biggest challenges your audit committee faces today? (Select up to three)

Challenge	Percentage
Keeping up with emerging risks	89 %
Understanding complex regulations	37 %
Technology adoption and data analysis	31 %
Access to timely and relevant information	29 %
ESG/sustainability reporting	20 %
Other	17 %
Succession planning of the finance function	9 %
Audit committee succession planning	6 %
Ensuring internal audit independence	3 %
Workforce diversity, equity and inclusion	3 %

Priorities for 2026:
What will matter most

ACs enter 2026 with clear priorities for the areas that must ensure stability and trust in reporting in the coming year. Across sectors, classic control areas and technology-related risks are high on the agenda, showing a distinct focus on strengthening both operational reliability and resilience.

Financial reporting continues to serve as the most central and stable foundation of the ACs. A full 95% consider it important or very important, underscoring the essential role that reporting quality and the integrity of financial information play in the committee's mandate. At the same time, 89% rate cybersecurity risks and internal controls as highly prioritised areas.

Additionally, Enterprise Risk Management (86%) and IT/ITGC (83%) are also highly prioritised, showing that ACs are increasingly integrating risk management and technology as core elements in their oversight activities.

95%
of ACs see financial reporting as core

It is likely that the coming years will bring greater demands for understanding technological risks, data management and AI, not as niche areas but as fixed parts of ACs' core tasks.

See the 2025 Annual Corporate Directors Survey

pwc.com/us/acds

This finding resonates with a broader global trend: PwC's 2025 Annual Corporate Directors Survey found that only 35% of boards have incorporated AI into their oversight roles, with 43% citing the pace of AI development as their top concern — underscoring that the competency gap identified by Danish ACs is not unique but reflects a widespread governance challenge.
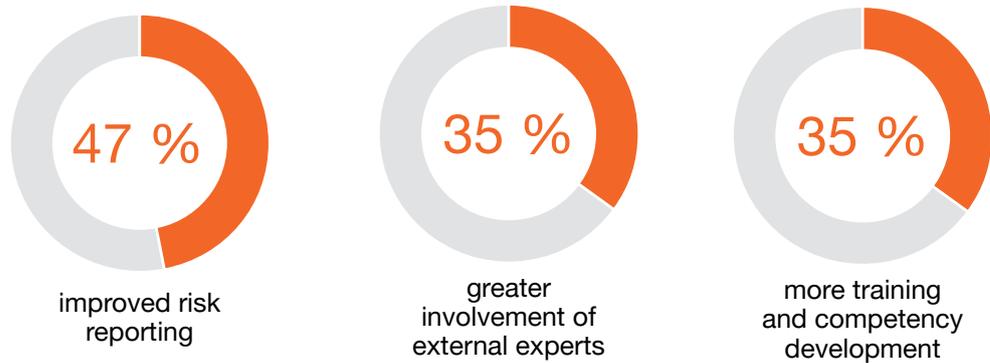
Please rate the importance of the following topics for your audit committee over the next 12 months (Important + Very important)

Topic	%
Financial reporting accuracy and compliance	95%
Cybersecurity risks and controls	89 %
Internal controls	89 %
External audit	86 %
Enterprise Risk Management	86 %
Technology, IT general controls and other IT	83 %
Quarterly reports and guidance/ outlook	70 %
Geopolitical risk, including supply chain risks	70 %
Fraud detection and prevention	59 %
Regulatory compliance (e.g., SOX, GDPR, etc.)	53 %
ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) / Sustainability reporting	50 %
Internal audit	36 %
Talent and succession planning for audit function	28 %

Means to strengthen the effectiveness of the Audit Committee

When ACs assess what will strengthen their effectiveness most, they clearly point to three areas:

47 %	**35 %**	**35 %**
improved risk reporting	greater involvement of external experts	more training and competency development

These figures reveal a consistent theme: ACs are not requesting more meetings, additional materials, or expanded membership — but rather stronger foundations for monitoring and decision-making in a rapidly changing risk landscape.

The high demand for better risk reporting highlights that ACs need sharper, more targeted presentations of risks. In a context where many AC members (39%) receive 150-200 pages per meeting, heavy reporting packages risk distracting from the most critical risks. This paints a picture of ACs finding the greatest value in risk reporting that clearly prioritises and assesses the development of the most critical risks.

The fact that 35% are seeking additional training highlights a wish to enhance their competencies, especially within technological and regulatory risk areas. Emerging risks such as AI, cybersecurity risks, geopolitical uncertainty and data quality issues are moving at a pace where traditional governance competencies cannot always keep up.
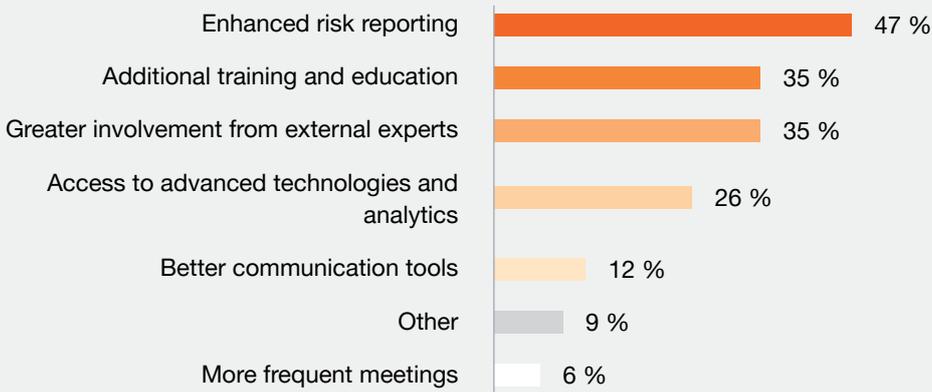
See the 2025 Annual
Corporate Directors Survey

pwc.com/us/acds

Globally, PwC's 2025 Annual Corporate Directors Survey similarly found that 45% of directors identify additional education and training as the most impactful personal action they can take to strengthen board effectiveness — reinforcing the Danish ACs' call for targeted competency development.

The desire for greater involvement of external experts, also from 35% of respondents, points in the same direction. This indicates that ACs see value in supplementing their own competencies with deep expertise from a specialist. When the complexity of risks increases, an external sounding board can become a necessary part of effective oversight.

What would help improve your audit committee's effectiveness? (Select all that apply)

Enhanced risk reporting	47 %
Additional training and education	35 %
Greater involvement from external experts	35 %
Access to advanced technologies and analytics	26 %
Better communication tools	12 %
Other	9 %
More frequent meetings	6 %

Complex working rhythm and high demands

50%

of respondents receive over 150 pages in preparation for each meeting.
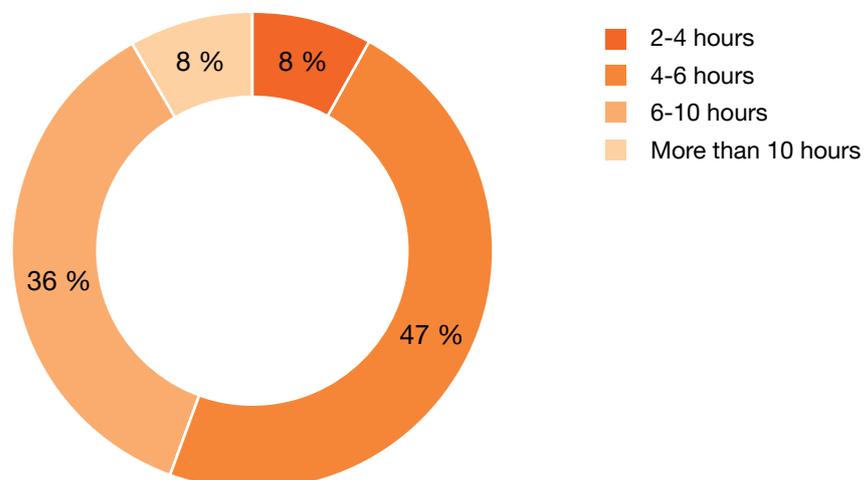
See the 2025 Annual Corporate Directors Survey

pwc.com/us/acds

The survey clearly shows that the workload has become a central condition of ACs work where both time, document volume and meeting frequency play a significant role for the committees' effectiveness. The workload of Danish ACs is significant and characterised by both a demanding pace and large volumes of materials.
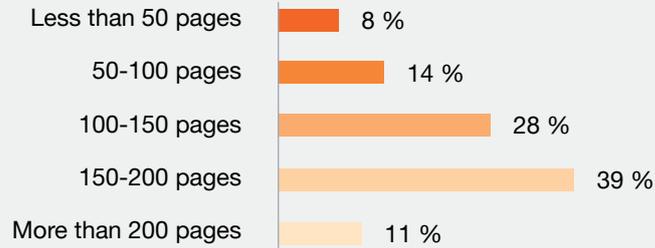
Additionally, pre-read material is often extensive: 39% receive 150-200 pages, and another 28% receive 100-150 pages before each meeting. This places significant demands on ACs' ability to navigate complex materials and quickly identify what is essential.

This challenge is not unique to Denmark. PwC's 2025 Annual Corporate Directors Survey explicitly highlights the need for boards to move away from voluminous reporting packages toward more targeted, decision-useful materials — framing concise, strategically focused content as a prerequisite for effective oversight.

How much time do you on average spend on preparation and participation per audit committee?


- 2-4 hours — 8 %
- 4-6 hours — 47 %
- 6-10 hours — 36 %
- More than 10 hours — 8 %

On average, how much material is pre-read to each audit committee meeting?

Less than 50 pages	8 %
50-100 pages	14 %
100-150 pages	28 %
150-200 pages	39 %
More than 200 pages	11 %

Despite the volume, 94% of respondents consider the amount of documentation to be appropriate. This suggests that the challenge is not necessarily about having too much material but that there may be a need for better structure, prioritisation and relevance. The meeting frequency is typically 4-6 meetings a year, providing a suitable cadence for follow-up, monitoring and decision-making, while reinforcing the need for well-structured, focused meetings. When time is limited, the quality of the monitoring and decision-making basis becomes crucial. The combination of a large amount of time spent on AC work, extensive materials and increasing complexity is likely a central reason for ACs' demand for better risk reporting and development of competencies.

How many audit committee meetings are held on a yearly basis of the largest AC you serve?

6 %	25 %	56 %	14 %

- Less than 4 meeting
- 4 meetings
- 4-6 meetings
- More than 6 meetings
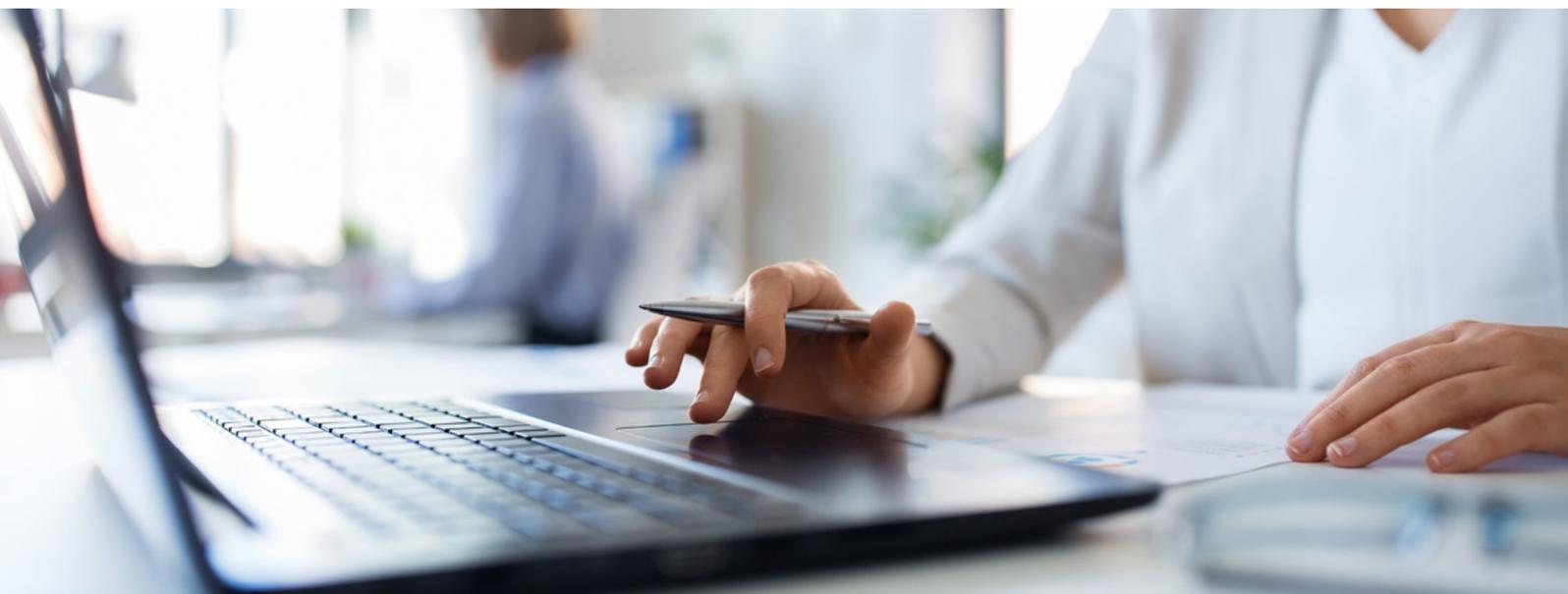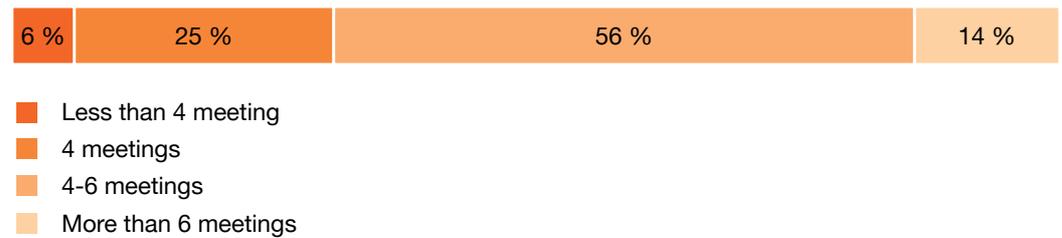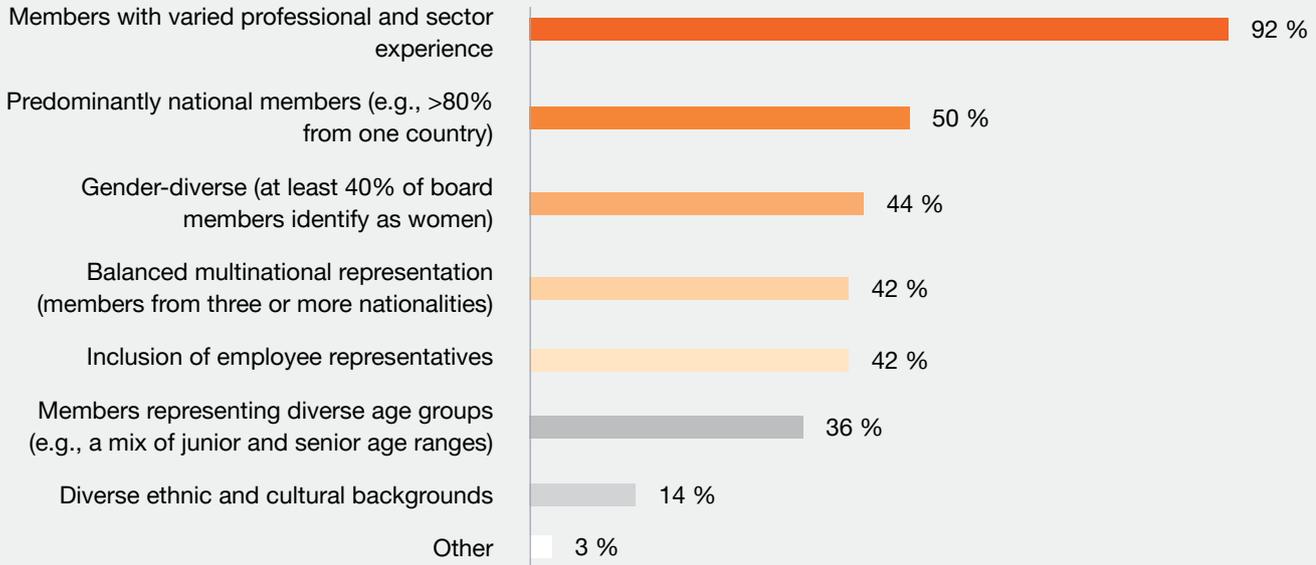
The composition of the audit committee

92%

indicating that members have varied professional experience.

The composition of ACs plays a central role in the quality of the committee's oversight. Data shows that committees are built on broad professional experience, but there are areas where diversity in perspectives and competencies can be strengthened. This gives a nuanced picture of ACs' capacity and the structures supporting their work.

The ACs' composition shows that committees have high professional breadth, with 92% indicating that members have varied professional experience. At the same time, data shows that 50% of ACs are primarily made up of national members.

How would you describe the composition of your board in terms of the following diversity aspects? (Select all that apply)

| Diversity aspect	%
Members with varied professional and sector experience	92 %
Predominantly national members (e.g., >80% from one country)	50 %
Gender-diverse (at least 40% of board members identify as women)	44 %
Balanced multinational representation (members from three or more nationalities)	42 %
Inclusion of employee representatives	42 %
Members representing diverse age groups (e.g., a mix of junior and senior age ranges)	36 %
Diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds	14 %
Other	3 %

58%

serve on two or more audit committees

The survey also shows that audit committee members bring a broad range of experience levels. A majority of respondents (53%) have served on an audit committee for more than six years, while only 14% have less than one year of experience. Additionally, most respondents serve on more than one committee: 58% serve on two or more audit committees. This indicates a high degree of accumulated practical experience, which may support stronger oversight and a more mature approach to governance across committees.
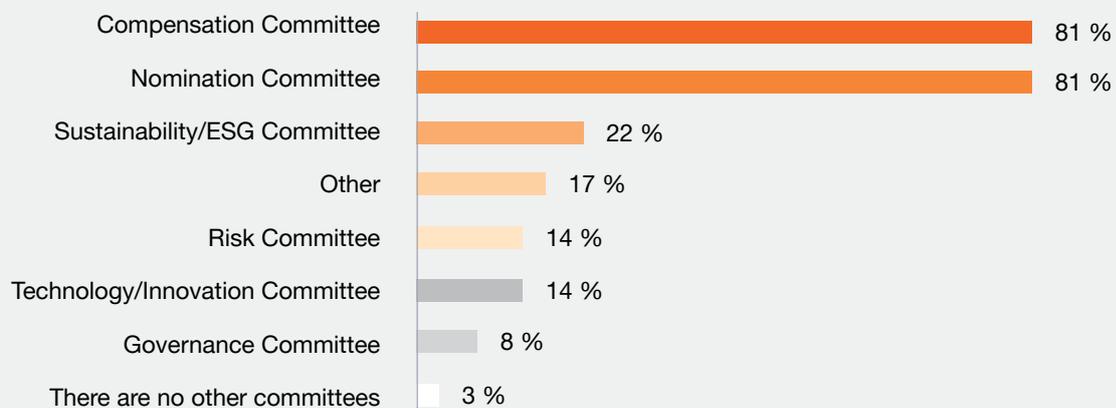
How long have you served on an audit committee?

Duration	%
Less than 1 year	14 %
1-3 years	22 %
4-6 years	11 %
More than 6 years	53 %
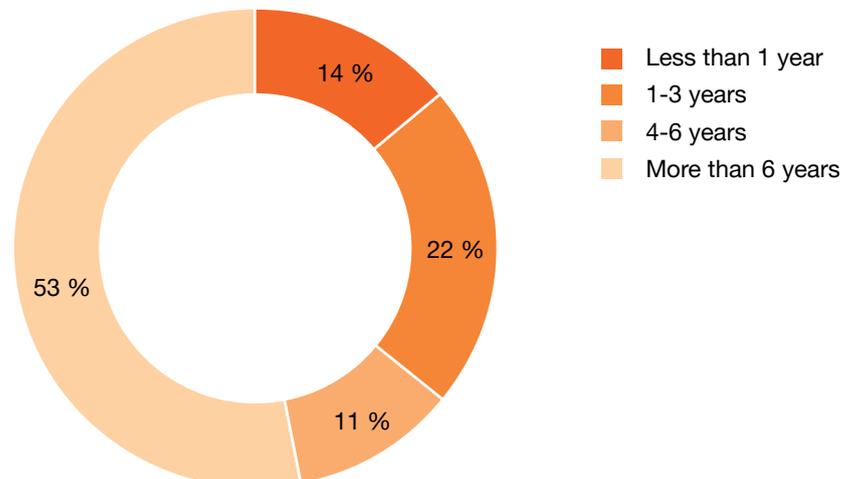
Many companies have expanded their board structure with other specialist committees: 81% have a compensation committee, 81% a nomination committee and 22% an ESG committee. This indicates that establishing more specialist committees, as seen in a large proportion of companies, reflects a need to separate complex oversight areas to ensure greater professional depth.

Besides the Board of Directors and the audit committee, does your organization have any other committees? (Select all that apply)

Committee	Percentage
Compensation Committee	81 %
Nomination Committee	81 %
Sustainability/ESG Committee	22 %
Other	17 %
Risk Committee	14 %
Technology/Innovation Committee	14 %
Governance Committee	8 %
There are no other committees	3 %

Key governance themes

The survey provides a nuanced picture of how ACs perceive their role in a more complex risk environment. Many express a need for stronger governance structures, particularly in light of rising complexity and international requirements. Several also highlight the importance of broader diversity of perspectives, including technological, cultural and experiential breadth, as a prerequisite for better monitoring and decisions. Data shows that expectations for the AC role are expanding, requiring the ability to combine strategic perspectives with operational insight, increasing the need for varied competencies. Additionally, many highlight the need for simplification and efficiency improvements of reporting and processes. Respondents particularly point out that current reporting packages are often heavy and difficult to use as a basis for forward-looking risk assessments. There is also a desire for more frequent and dynamic reporting from management, so the ACs can better follow risk developments between meetings.

# Five actions to strengthen and streamline audit committee work

Across the survey results, several clear areas for improvement emerge, which ACs themselves see as crucial for strengthening their future work. The recommendations below summarise the most important insights and point to where ACs can most effectively enhance governance, reporting and risk management in the coming years:

01 **Enhance risk reporting through more frequent and dynamic insights**
Make it more focused and forward-looking. 47% of ACs see improved risk reporting as the most important area in which to strengthen AC effectiveness.

02 **Strengthen AC competencies through targeted training**
Training, especially in emerging risks, AI, technology, cybersecurity risks and complex regulation. The focus should be on competencies that enable ACs to challenge management and understand technological risks.

03 **Involve external expertise to handle rising complexity**
35% want to increase the use of external experts, particularly in areas with rapidly evolving risks, e.g. cybersecurity risks, IT controls, geopolitics, AI and complex regulation.

04 **Sharper and more value-creating ESG discussions**
ESG and CSRD are significant in AC work due to increased complexity and regulation. To strengthen oversight, ACs should prioritise ESG areas with clear risk relevance and greatest impact on reporting quality. A clear link between ESG reporting and the company's overall risk profile will strengthen the monitoring and decisions-making basis and ensure that ESG is an integrated part of governance work.

05 **Simplifying materials and better meeting discipline**
With 100-200+ pages per meeting, there is a need for strict content prioritisation. Fewer appendices, more focus and clearer risk hierarchy will strengthen ACs' monitoring and decision-making ability.

About the survey

The Audit Committee Survey 2026 examines the priorities, challenges, and trends that form the work of audit committees in Denmark. The survey describes how audit committees address regulatory requirements, risk management, governance, and reporting. Data was collected from 27 November 2025 to 30 January 2026 through an online questionnaire completed by audit committee chairs and audit committee members.

What is your current role?
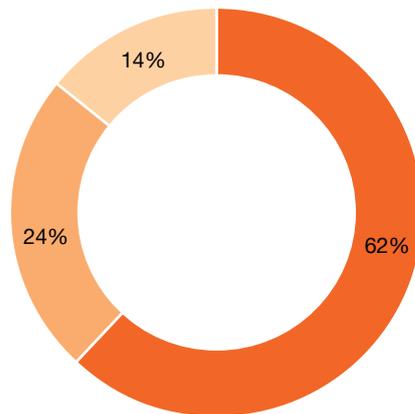
- Audit Committee Chair — 62%
- Audit Committee Member — 24%
- Other — 14%

What type of organization do you primarily work with?*
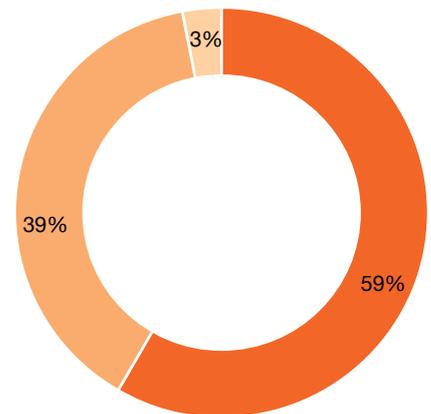
- Publicly listed company — 59%
- Audit Committee Member — 39%
- Other — 3%

Which of the following best describes the industry of the largest AC you serve? (Select only one)**

Industry	Percentage
Other	24 %
Industrial products	19 %
Pharma and health industries	19 %
Energy, utilities and resources	14 %
Technology, media and telecommunications	11 %
Consumer markets	11 %
Financial services	3 %
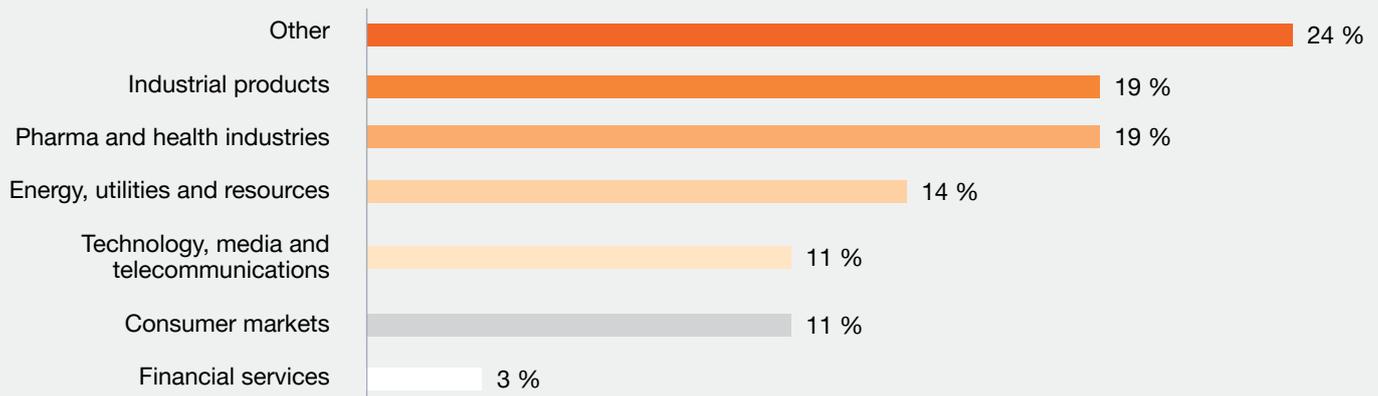
*Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

What is the format of your meetings?*

- Physical — 42 %
- Virtual — 6 %
- A combination — 53 %
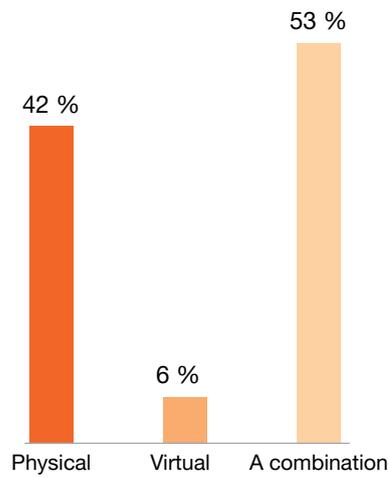
How many audit committees do you serve?
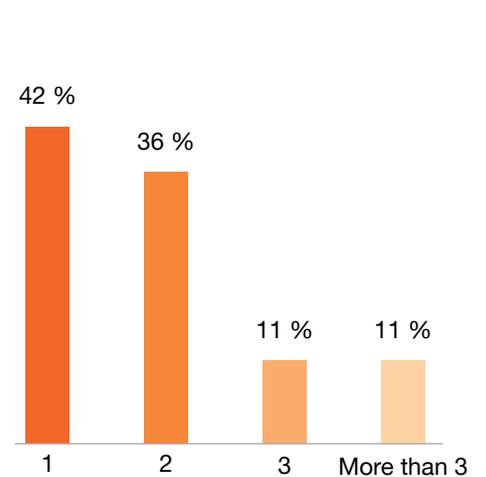
- 1 — 42 %
- 2 — 36 %
- 3 — 11 %
- More than 3 — 11 %

How long have you served on an audit committee?

- Less than 1 year — 14 %
- 1-3 years — 22 %
- 4-6 years — 11 %
- More than 6 years — 53 %
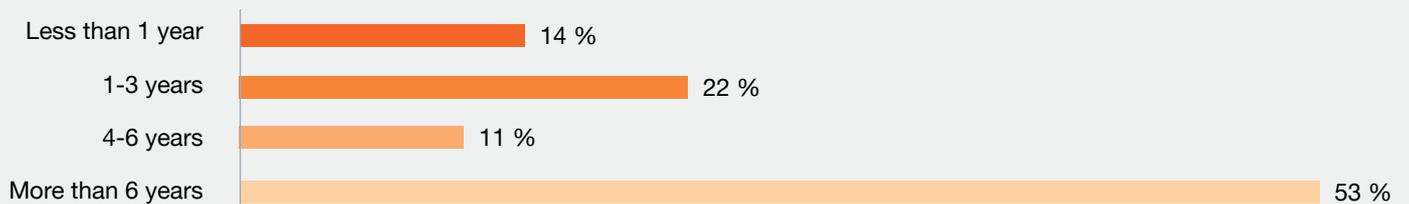
*Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

Hours, preparation, and composition of board

Time spent on audit committee work

How much time do you on average spend on preparation and participation per audit committee?*

- 2-4 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 6-10 hours
- More than 10 hours

8 %
47 %
36 %
8 %
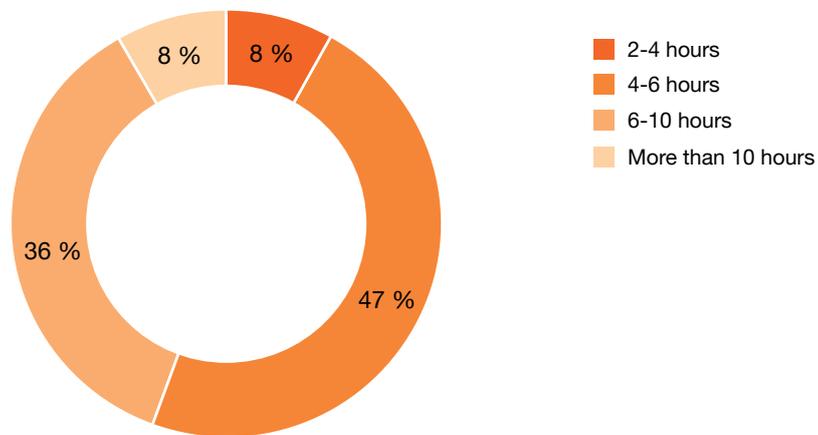
*Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

Compared to previous years, how has the total number of hours spent in audit committee meetings per year changed during the following periods?

Fewer hours	About the same	More hours
3 %	61 %	36 %
9 %	54 %	37 %

- Over the past 3 years
- Over the past 5 years
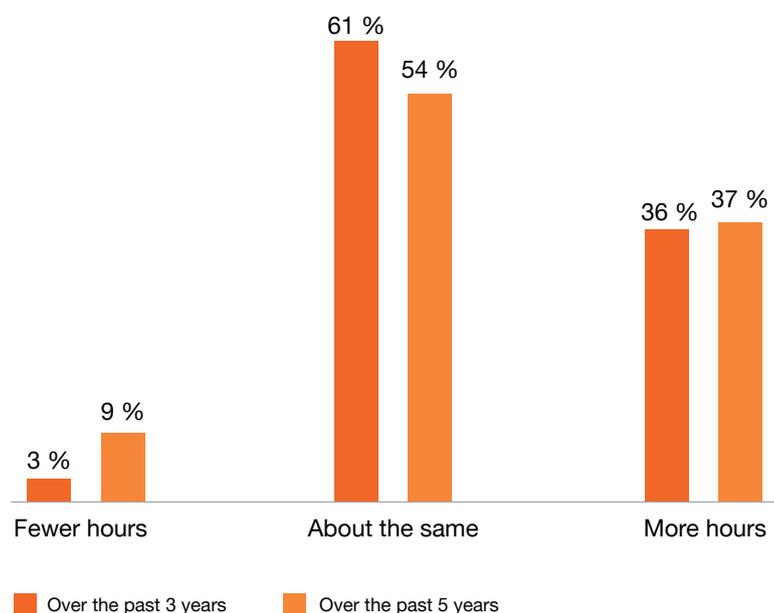
Preparation and participation

How many audit committee meetings are held on a yearly basis of the largest AC you serve?*

- Less than 4 meeting
- 4 meetings
- 4-6 meetings
- More than 6 meetings

6 %
25 %
56 %
14 %
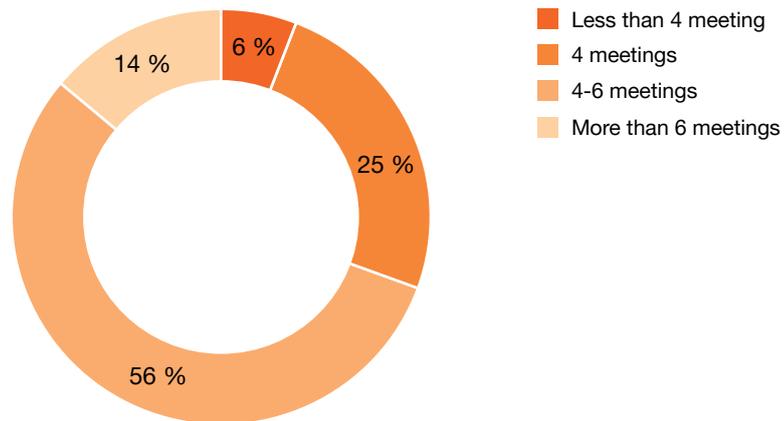
*Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

Do you find the level of material/documentation provided ahead of the meeting sufficient?

94%

Yes   No

On average, how much material is pre-read to each audit committee meeting?

Less than 50 pages	50-100 pages	100-150 pages	150-200 pages	More than 200 pages
8 %	14 %	28 %	39 %	11 %

Composition of board and other committees

How would you describe the composition of your board in terms of the following diversity aspects? (Select all that apply)

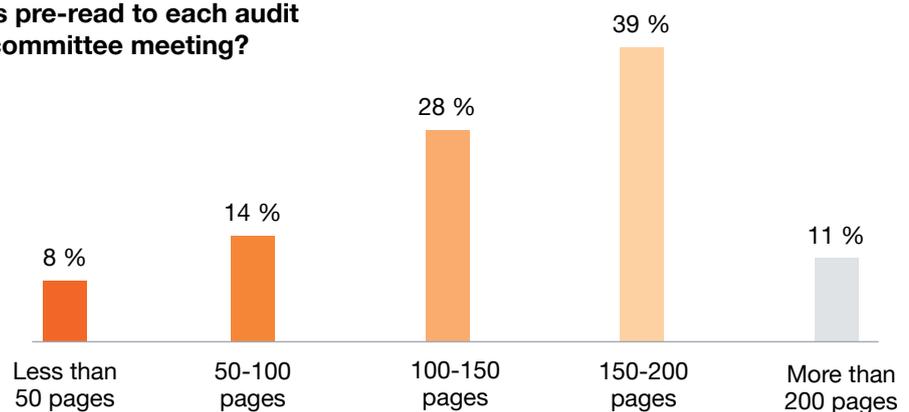|	
Members with varied professional and sector	92 %
Predominantly national members (e.g., >80% from one country)	50 %
Gender-diverse (at least 40% of board members identify as women)	44 %
Balanced multinational representation (members from three or more nationalities)	42 %
Inclusion of employee representatives	42 %
Members representing diverse age groups (e.g., a mix of junior and senior age ranges)	36 %
Diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds	14 %
Other	3 %

Besides the Board of Directors and the audit committee, does your organization have any other committees? (Select all that apply)*

Compensation Committee	81 %
Nomination Committee	81 %
Sustainability/ESG Committee	22 %
Other	17 %
Risk Committee	14 %
Technology/Innovation Committee	14 %
Governance Committee	8 %
There are no other committees	3 %

*Responses in "Other" include Nomination/Compensation Combined, Science and Technology, Transaction Committee, Health and Safety and M&A.

Committee operations, focus areas and risk outlook

Effectiveness and engagement

What would help improve your audit committee's effectiveness? (Select all that apply)*

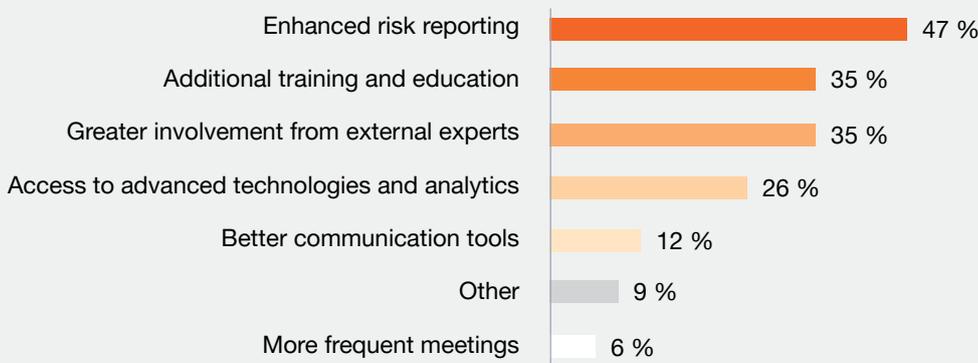|	
Enhanced risk reporting	47 %
Additional training and education	35 %
Greater involvement from external experts	35 %
Access to advanced technologies and analytics	26 %
Better communication tools	12 %
Other	9 %
More frequent meetings	6 %

How frequently does your audit committee engage with the following stakeholders?**

	Never	Monthly	Quarterly	Annually
Risk management function	3 %	6 %	65 %	26 %
Compliance officers	3 %	9 %	71 %	18 %
External auditors		9 %	79 %	12 %
Senior management		29 %	59 %	12 %
The Company's finance organisation		18 %	74 %	9 %
Internal audit/controlling team	15 %	6 %	71 %	9 %

Never Monthly Quarterly Annually
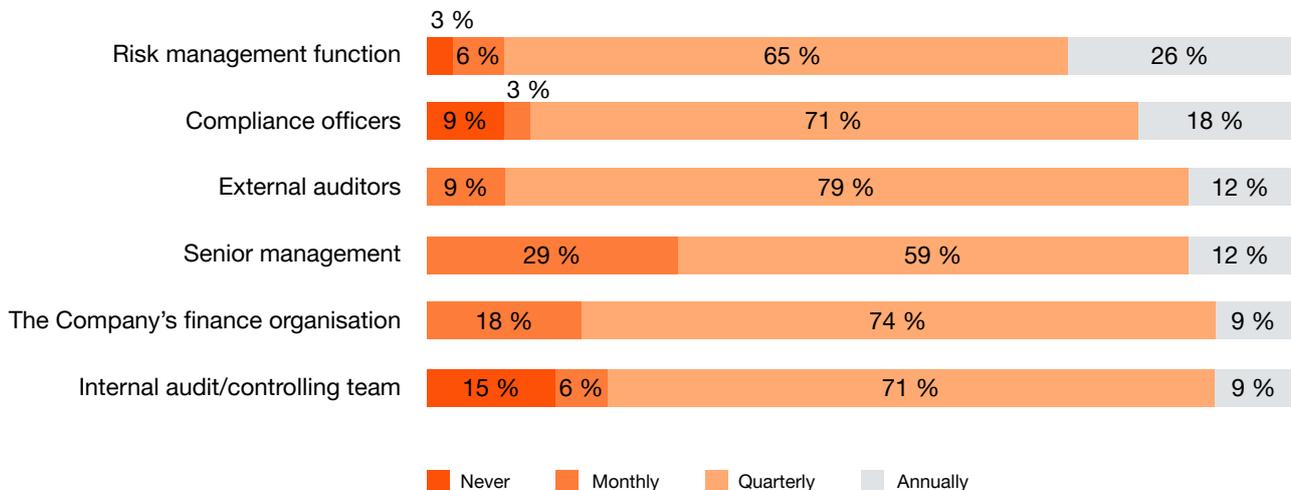
*Responses in "Other" relate to improved geopolitical risk insight, strengthened financial reporting and enhanced independent discussions with key stakeholders.

**Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

Importance and time allocation

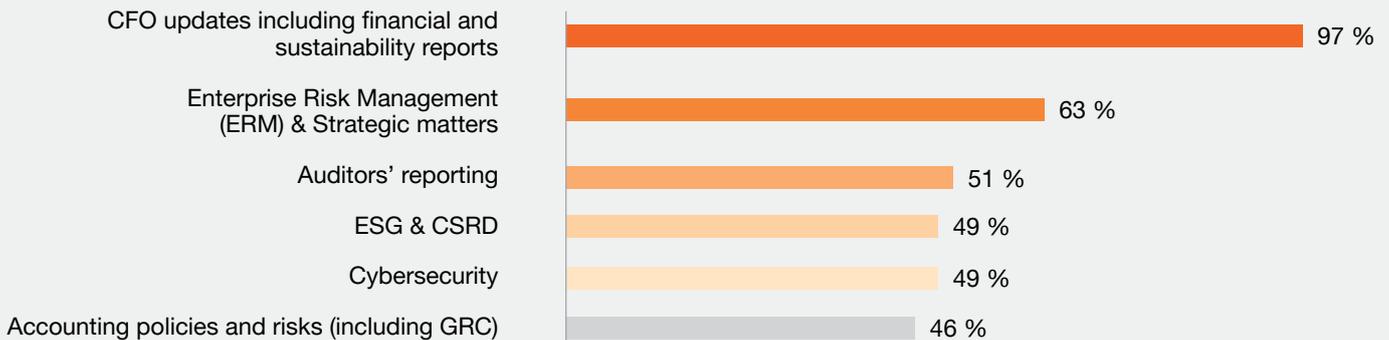**Please rate the importance of the following topics for your audit committee over the next 12 months**
(Showing only Important + Very important)

Topic	%
Financial reporting accuracy and compliance	95 %
Cybersecurity risks and controls	89 %
Internal controls	89 %
External audit	86 %
Enterprise Risk Management	86 %
Technology, IT general controls and other IT	83 %
Quarterly reports and guidance/ outlook	70 %
Geopolitical risk, including supply chain risks	70 %
Fraud detection and prevention	59 %
Regulatory compliance (e.g., SOX, GDPR, etc.)	53 %
ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance)	50 %
Internal audit	36 %
Talent and succession planning for audit function	28 %

Which three areas take up the most time in your audit committee/board meetings? (Top 6)

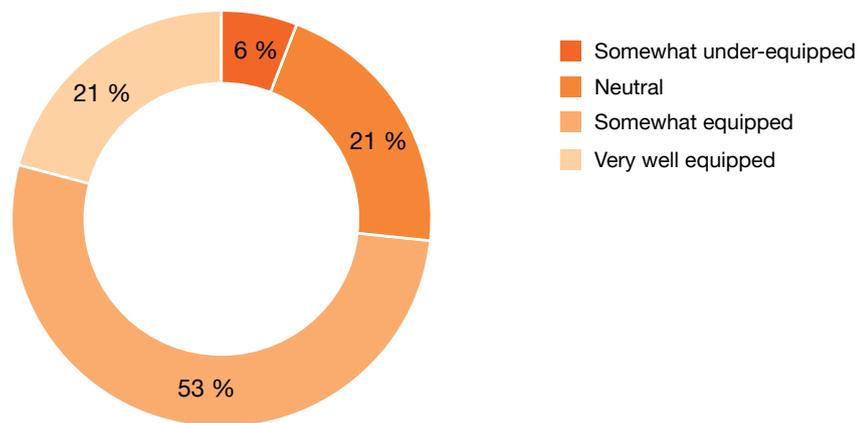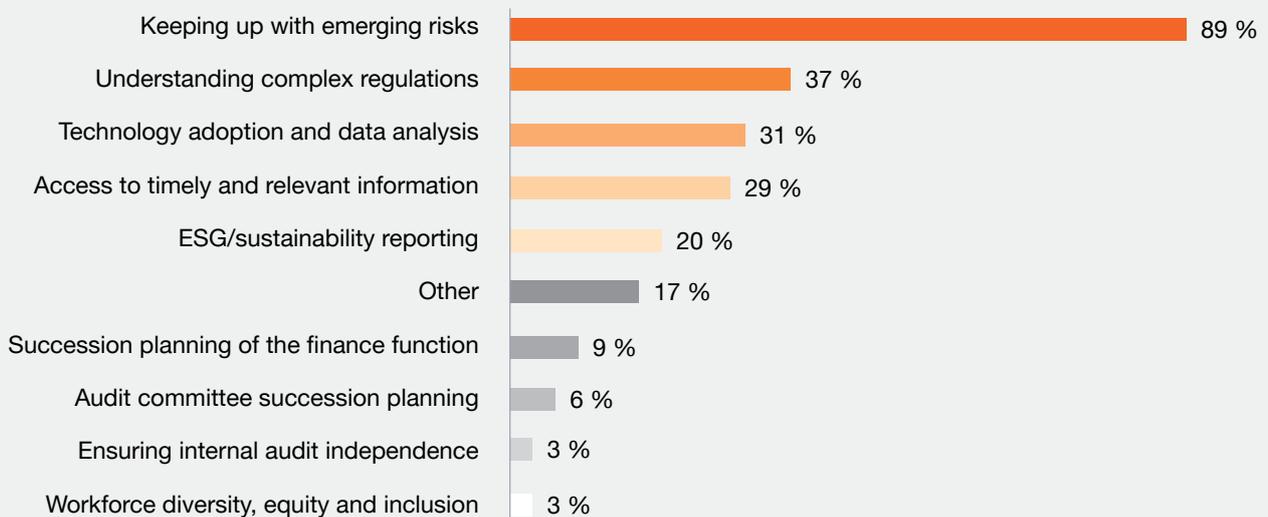| Area	%
CFO updates including financial and sustainability reports	97 %
Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) & Strategic matters	63 %
Auditors' reporting	51 %
ESG & CSRD	49 %
Cybersecurity	49 %
Accounting policies and risks (including GRC)	46 %

Biggest challenges and risks

How confident are you that the current audit committee governance framework at your organization effectively supports the audit committee's roles and responsibilities?

47% 53%

| Confident | Very confident |

How well equipped do you feel your audit committee is to handle emerging risks such as geopolitical risk, technological disruption, third party and supply chain risks etc.?**

6 %
21 %
21 %
53 %

- Somewhat under-equipped
- Neutral
- Somewhat equipped
- Very well equipped

What are the biggest challenges your audit committee faces today? (Select up to three)*

Challenge	%
Keeping up with emerging risks	89 %
Understanding complex regulations	37 %
Technology adoption and data analysis	31 %
Access to timely and relevant information	29 %
ESG/sustainability reporting	20 %
Other	17 %
Succession planning of the finance function	9 %
Audit committee succession planning	6 %
Ensuring internal audit independence	3 %
Workforce diversity, equity and inclusion	3 %

*Responses in "Other" includes business-related challenges such as forecasting, budgeting, system implementations and transaction-driven activities.

**Variations in totals are attributable to rounding.

Future governance and emerging focus areas

Governance improvements audit committees would like to see

What governance improvements would you like to see implemented?

Governance, Structure & Competencies

→ External candidates as member or adviser

→ More diversity of mind in the committee

→ Certification for audit committee chairs and members

→ Minimum requirement of an active member

→ Need for continued maturity of internal controls and risk management

→ Positive progress over last two years

→ Preparing governance structures for increased complexity and potential international listing

ESG, Technology & Emerging Risks

→ Lighter ESG reporting requirements

→ ESG reporting taking up too much time

→ Use of AI and associated cyber risks

→ Greater focus on resilience and preparedness for unexpected events

Reporting, Workload & Efficiency

→ Simplification of processes and reporting

→ Monthly vs. quarterly reporting

→ Desire for more efficient processes

→ Improved ERM reporting

Emerging topics for the next 3–5 years

Looking ahead, what emerging topics or risks do you believe will become critical for audit committees in the next 3-5 years?

Geopolitical Instability & Macroeconomic Risks

→ Rising geopolitical tensions, global uncertainty and political shifts

→ Impact of international policies, tariffs, and regional conflicts

Cybersecurity & Data-Related Risks

→ Increasing Cybersecurity risks threats and IT security vulnerabilities

→ Growing challenges around data protection and digital compliance

AI Governance & Technology Impact

→ Oversight of AI use and emerging AI-related risks

→ Effects of AI on financial reporting, auditing, and internal controls

Regulatory & ESG Developments

→ Expanding regulatory requirements

→ Determining the appropriate level of ESG reporting

Increasing Business Complexity

→ More complex risk landscape as companies scale and internationalise

Authors

Lars Baungaard
CEO and Senior Partner

Trine Vestengen Hopkins
Partner
M.: 5215 0003
E.: trine.vestengen.hopkins@pwc.com

Søren Ørjan Jensen
Partner
M.: 3038 0284
E.: soren.orjan.jensen@pwc.com