

2024 STATE OF MARKETING TO ENGINEERS

THE QUEST FOR TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS
AND THE INFLUENCE OF AI

TREW MARKETING

GlobalSpec





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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2024 State of Marketing to Engineers Report. This marks the seventh consecutive year GlobalSpec and TREW Marketing have partnered to better understand the buying behaviors and communication preferences of engineers and technical buyers.

Our survey contains a mix of popular topics we've asked about consistently to monitor trends, along with fresh questions that take a deeper dive into buying behaviors. This year's research touches on attitudes toward artificial intelligence (AI), content preferences (and how they vary) between hardware and software purchases, and popular social media channels for work needs versus personal use.

The State of Marketing to Engineers Report is designed to:

Help you better understand the information needs of technical buyers

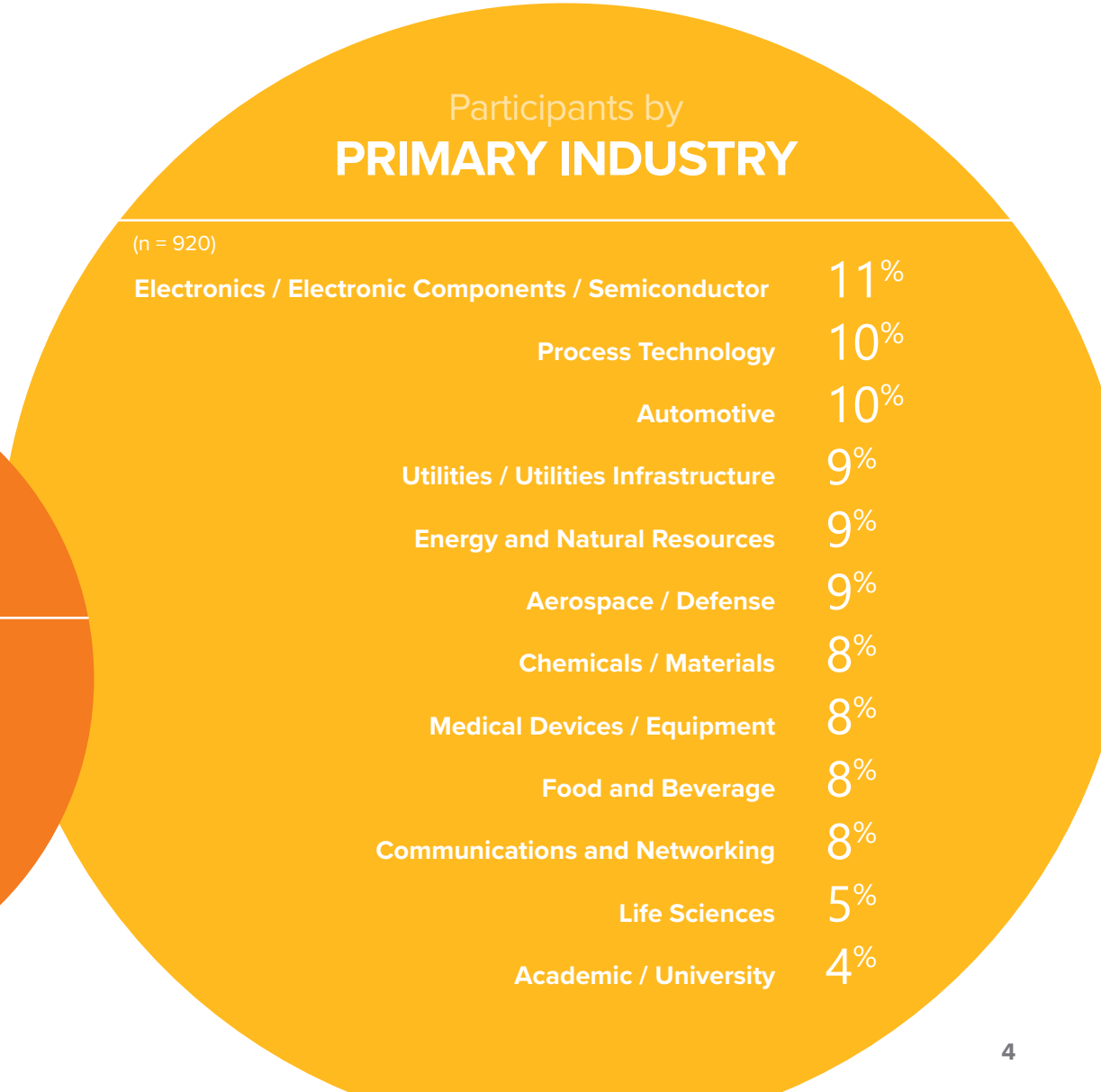
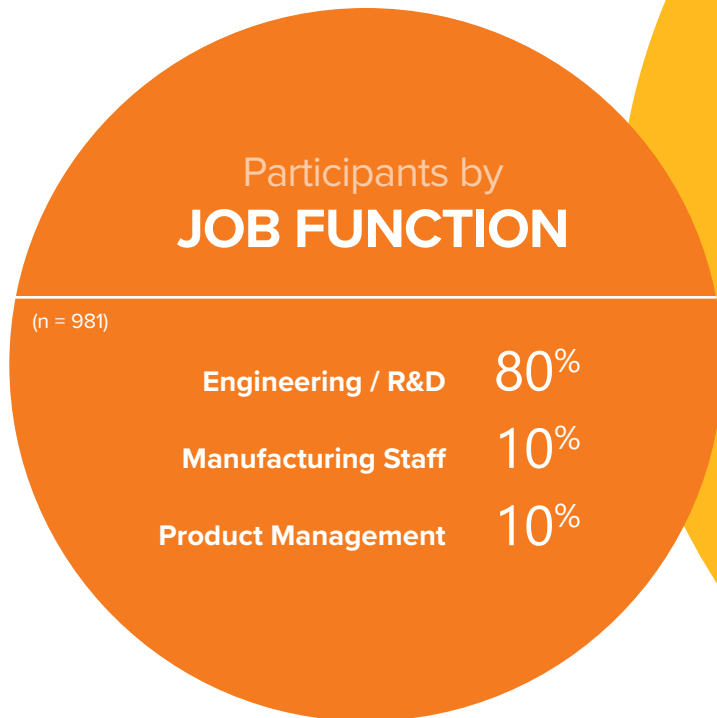
Provide critical insights to guide your marketing plans

Educate and forge alignment with your leadership and sales organizations

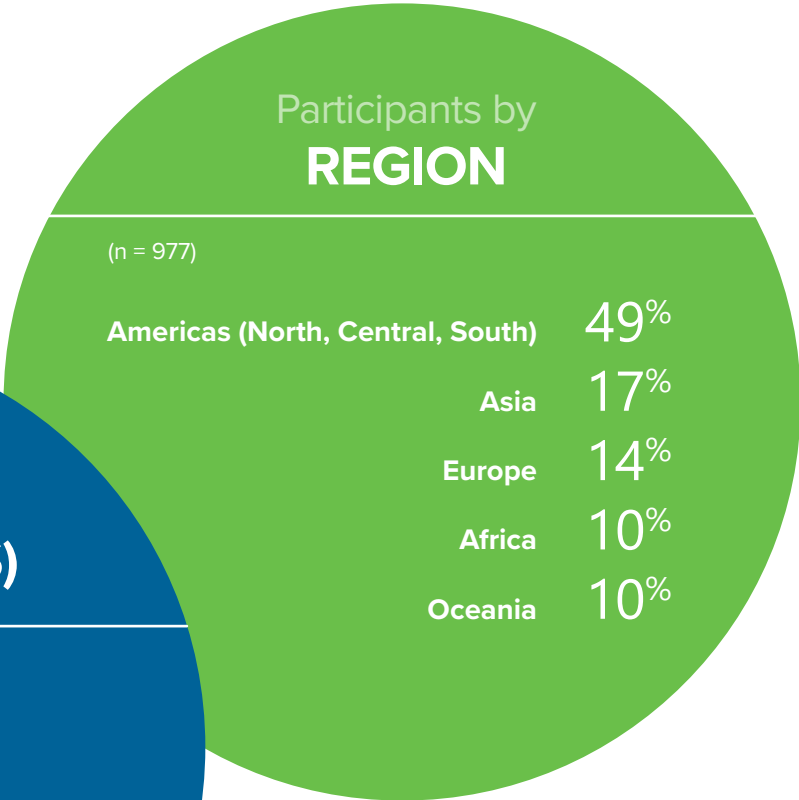
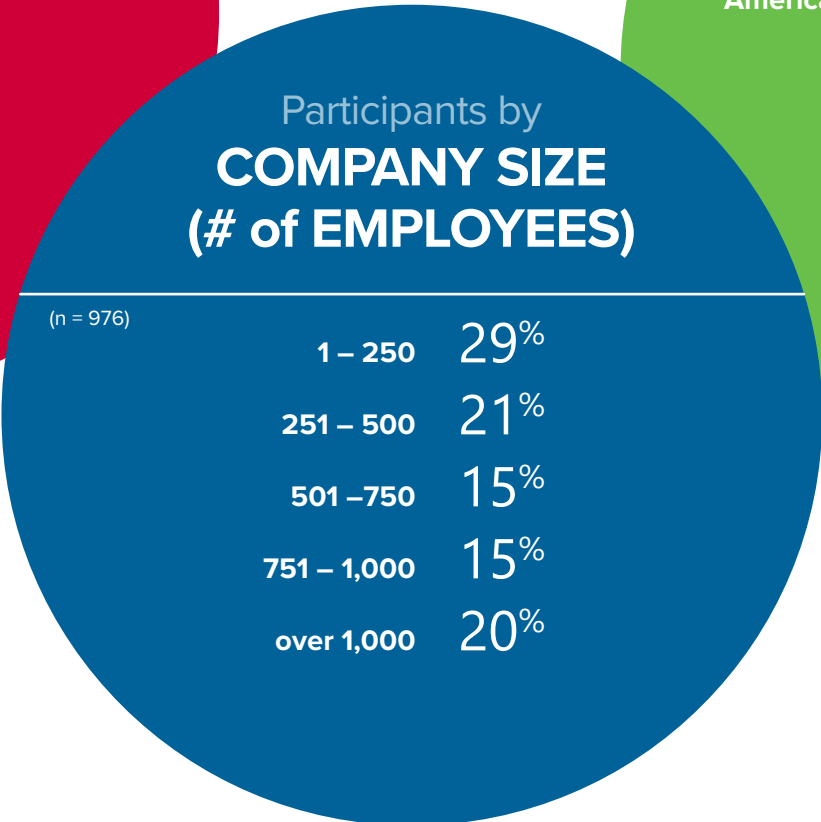
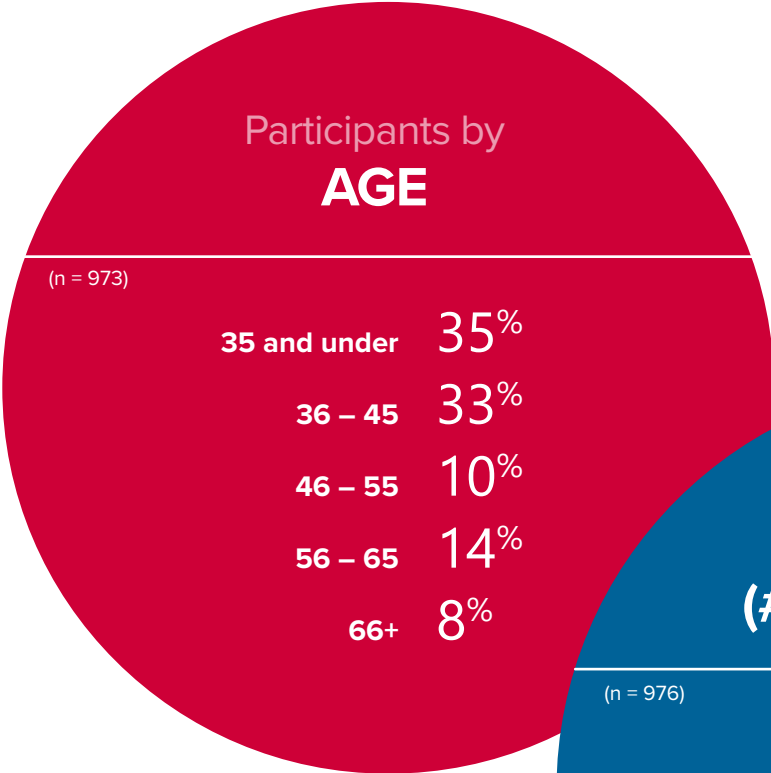
ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Over 900 qualified engineers and technical professionals across the globe responded to our most recent survey.

Participants were not required to answer each and every question, so sample sizes vary slightly question-to-question and are noted throughout for clarity. In some cases, we make comparisons to data from previous year(s) when the question was asked.



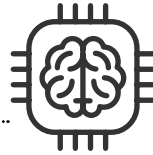
ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS, CONTINUED



KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR INDUSTRIAL MARKETERS



On average, technical buyers spend **66%** of the buying process online.



63% of technical buyers use AI tools for work

Technical buyers continue to find



to be the most valuable social media platforms for work



41% of technical buyers turn to vendor websites for information on a regular basis, followed by **37%** for online technical publications

51% of technical buyers use YouTube in their personal lives.



90% of technical buyers listen to work-related podcasts, **73%** in 2023

89% of technical buyers plan to attend at least one in-person industry event in 2024



98% of technical buyers subscribe to newsletters, and **81%** subscribe to LinkedIn newsletters



SURVEY FINDINGS

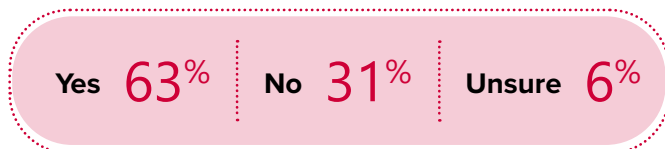
- ▶ **Artificial Intelligence**
- ▶ **Information Sources**
- ▶ **Social Media**
- ▶ **Events**
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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Sixty-three percent of technical buyers regularly use AI-based tools for work. Technical buyers use AI-based tools for a variety of purposes including content creation and distribution, sales enablement, programming, and data analysis, among others.

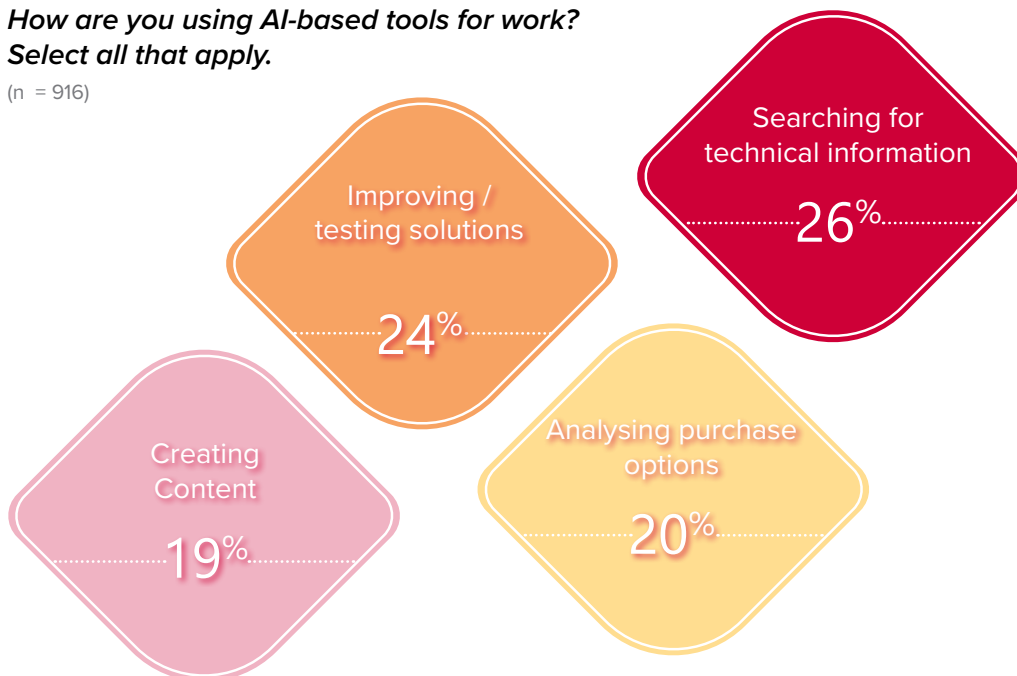
Are you regularly using AI-based tools for work?

(n = 926)



How are you using AI-based tools for work?
Select all that apply.

(n = 916)



“Technical buyers experimenting with LLMs to research a topic are increasingly frustrated by the need to validate or refute the information presented. As more search tools move to a generative search experience (looking at you, Google), it will be key to provide links to credible sources which supported the provided answer.”

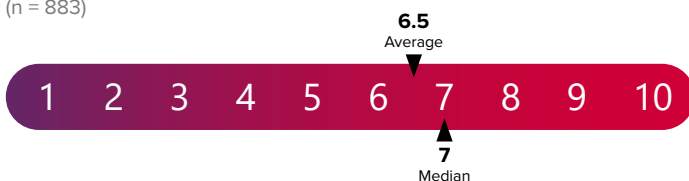
-- Wendy Covey
CEO and Co-Founder, TREW Marketing

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Overall, the jury's still out on AI-based tools. Most technical buyers don't consider themselves particularly trusting or distrusting of them, but they're somewhere in the middle. While **thirty-five percent** of respondents are curious about AI-based tools, they're feelings are mixed.

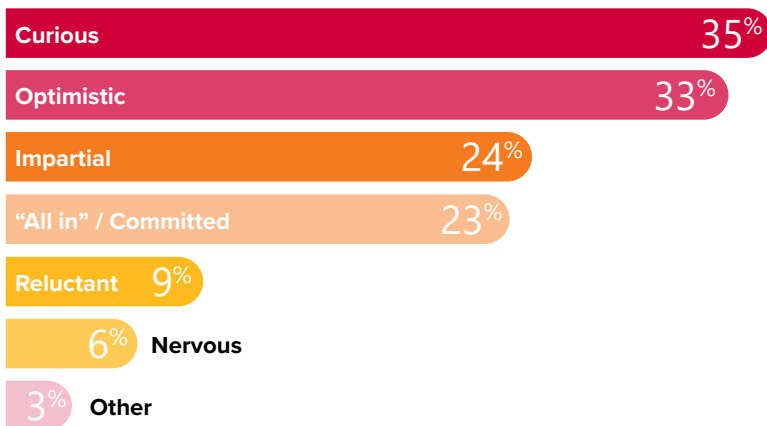
On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 is complete trust, and 1 is a complete lack of trust, to what extent do you trust answers from AI-based tools?

(n = 883)



Which adjective(s) best describe how you feel about the future of AI-based tools?

(n = 890)



Perspectives shared by respondents...

"In chemical engineering, AI tools expedite simulations and assist in designing novel processes. They optimize reaction pathways and improve product development."

- **"All in" / Committed, Curious**

"AI-based tools are likely to play a key role in healthcare, contributing to diagnostics, drug discovery, personalized medicine, and overall healthcare management. The potential for AI to improve patient outcomes and streamline healthcare processes is enormous." - **Optimistic**

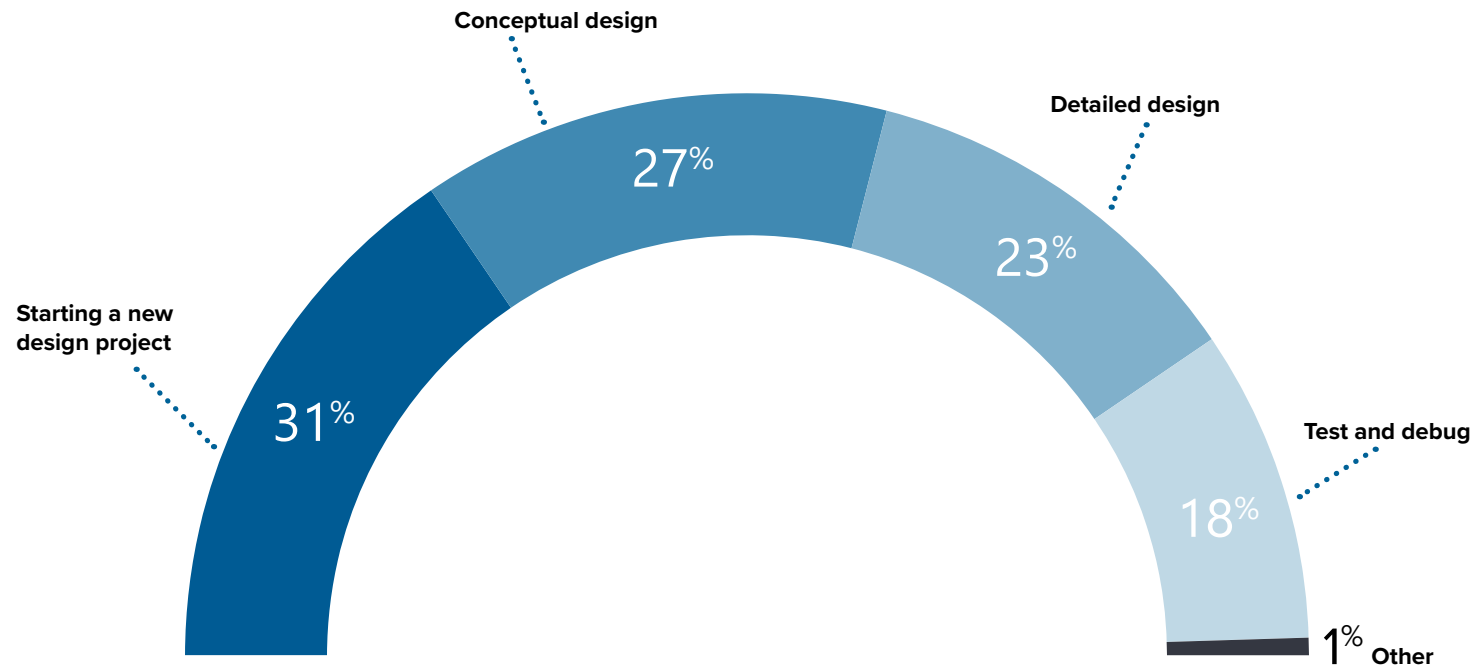
"I don't trust the output of the AI very much. It's only as good as its programmer and adaptive learning algorithm. Some are better than others." - **Reluctant**

"As a licensed [Professional Engineer (PE)] I have an ethical responsibility to my clients. Any information presented by AI-based tools should be verified and checked for accuracy. The additional time involved in verifying the accuracy of AI-generated information greatly reduces the benefit (time saving) of using AI-based tools for technical material. AI-based tools make much more sense when liability is less of an issue or where generalities can be applied." - **Curious, Impartial, Reluctant**

INFORMATION SOURCES

While more research happens at the beginning stages of design and development, it continues throughout the process. Nearly **twenty percent** of technical buyers say they do the most research on products and services in the test and debug stage.

At what stage of design and development do you find yourself doing the most research on products and services? (n = 925)

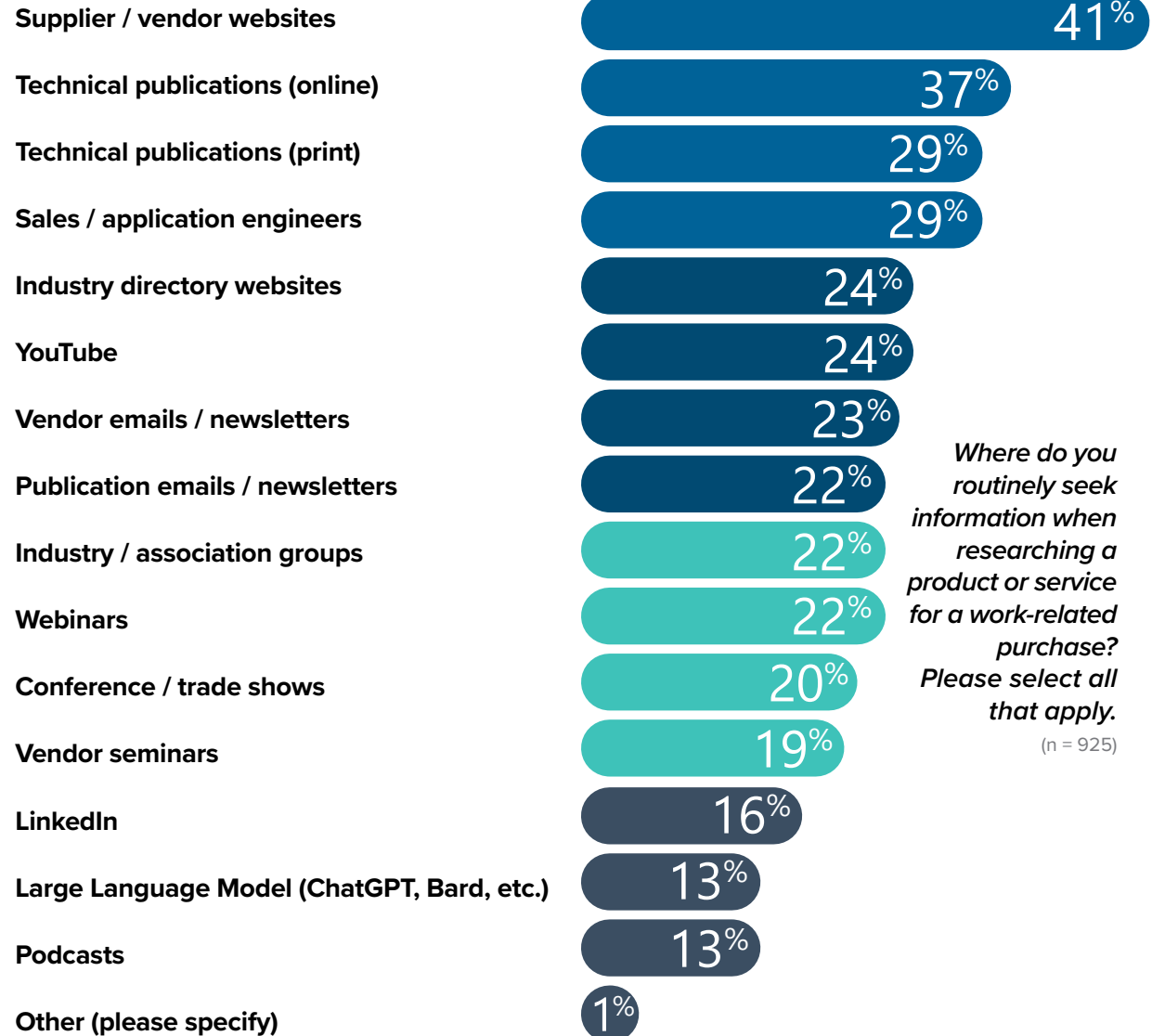


INFORMATION SOURCES

Consistent with years past, most technical buyers turn to supplier / vendor websites when looking for information about products and services. Trade publications, both online and print, are also popular information resources. New this year, respondents were given the option to select “Sales / Application Engineers” and “Large Language Model (ChatGPT, Bard, etc.)” **Twenty-nine percent** selected Sales / Applications Engineers as a resource in their most recent purchasing process.

“Trade publications are a valuable resource because they offer educational content and product information from many companies in one place. They can cut through the clutter and marketing noise to offer more unbiased information than company websites, and our editors and technical review board are industry experts who understand the technology and the best way to present it to engineers.”

*-- Patrick Hindle
Editor, Microwave Journal*

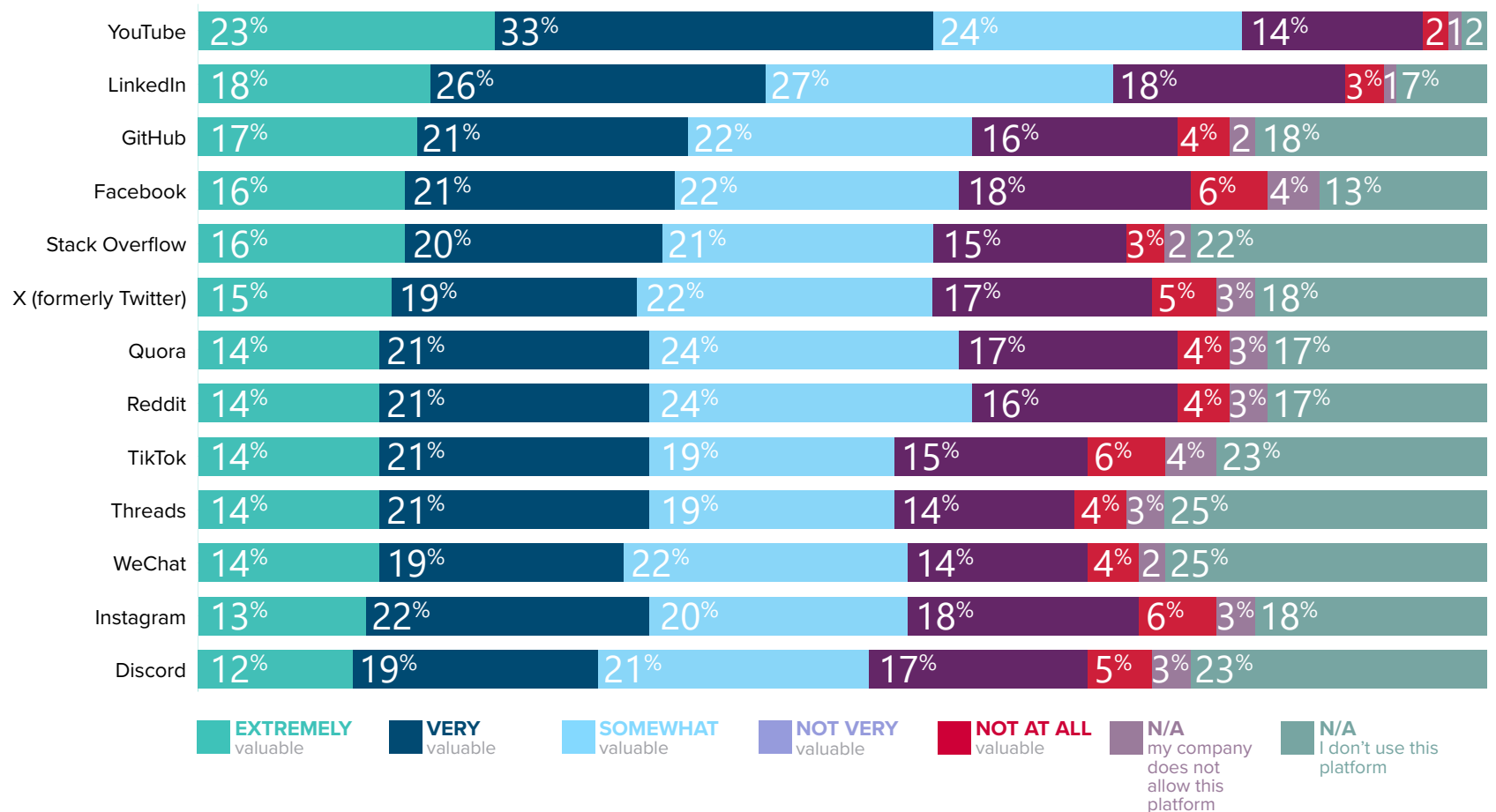


SOCIAL MEDIA

Similar to years past, YouTube, LinkedIn, and GitHub are most helpful for technical buyers looking for work-related information. “Threads,” “WeChat,” and “Discord” were new additions to our research in 2024.

How valuable are each of the following social media platforms when seeking information for work?

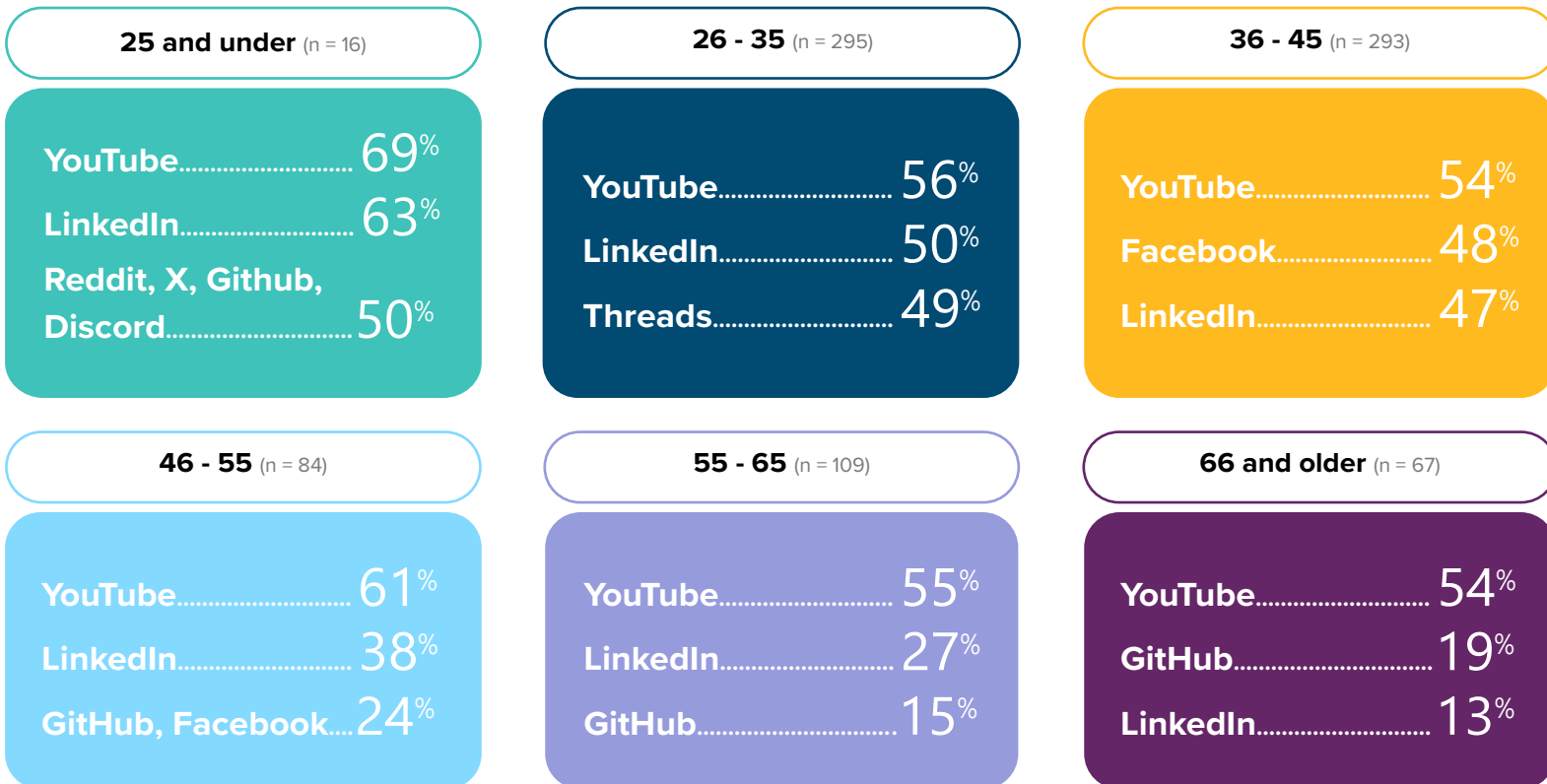
(n = 866)



SOCIAL MEDIA

When isolating the top two social media platforms that were cited as “extremely” and “very valuable” by age, YouTube and LinkedIn hold most of the top spots. With Facebook and GitHub holding more value by the 36-45 and the 66 and older age groups.

Most Valuable Social Media Platforms For Work (T2B*)

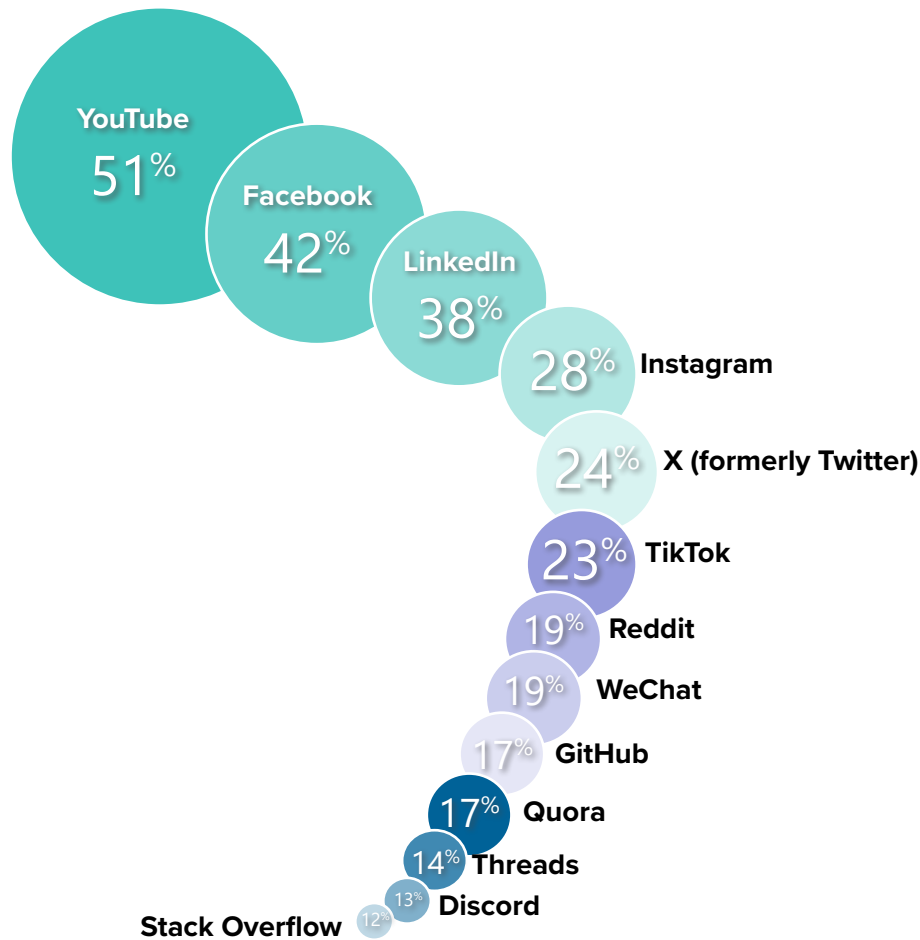


*Top 2 Box (T2B) = “Extremely” and “Very” valuable

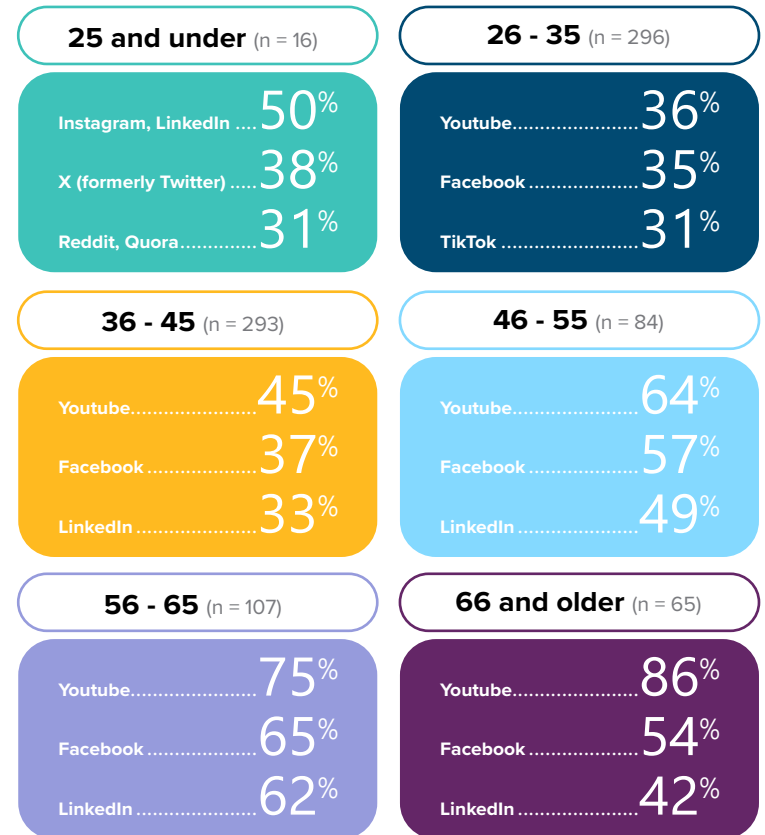
SOCIAL MEDIA

In their personal time, **fifty-one percent** of technical buyers are still on YouTube and **thirty-eight percent** are still using LinkedIn.

Which of the following social media platforms do you use in your personal life? (n = 863)



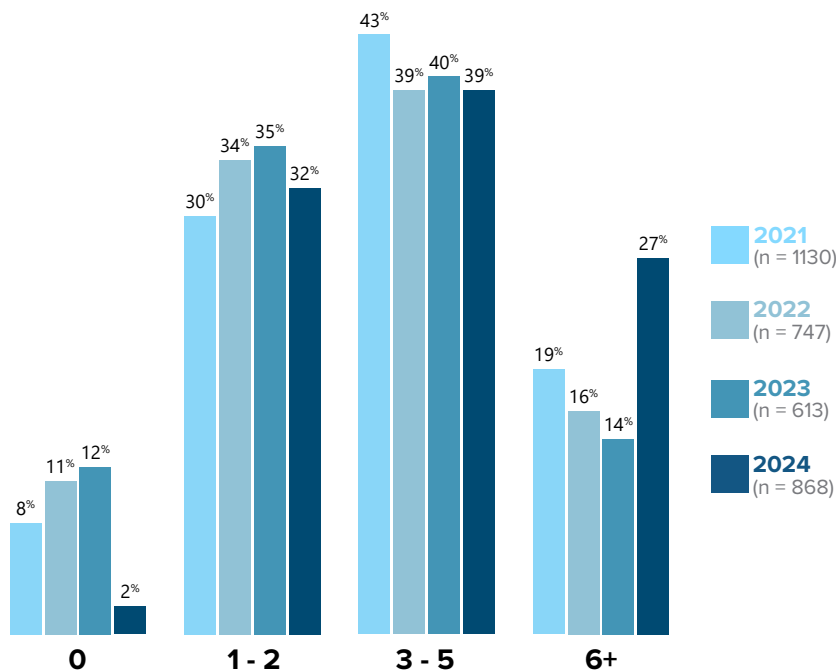
Most used social media platform (personal) by age



NEWSLETTERS

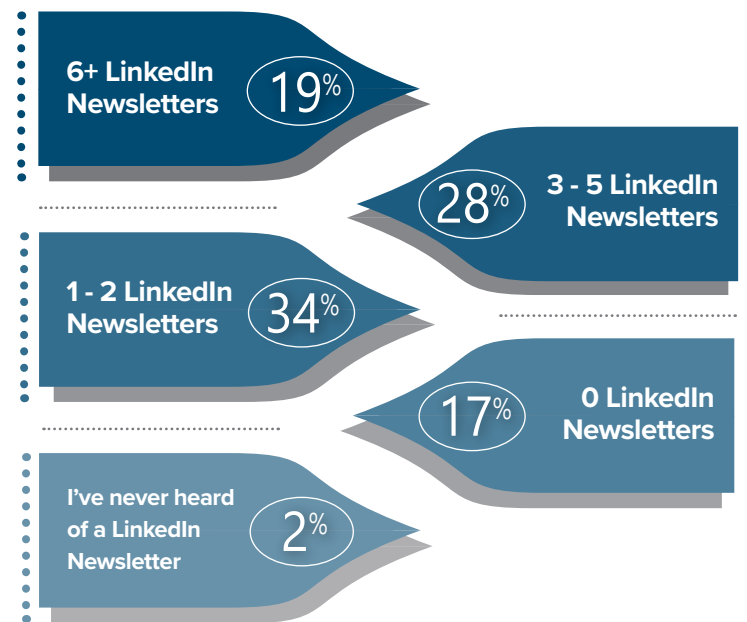
Ninety-eight percent of technical buyers subscribe to at least one newsletter, while **sixty-six percent** subscribe to at least three newsletters.

Approximately how many work-related email newsletters do you subscribe to?



Eighty-one percent of technical buyers say they specifically subscribe to LinkedIn newsletters. Of the subscribers, **seventy-nine percent** are between the ages of 26 and 45.

Approximately how many LinkedIn newsletters do you subscribe to? (n = 868)



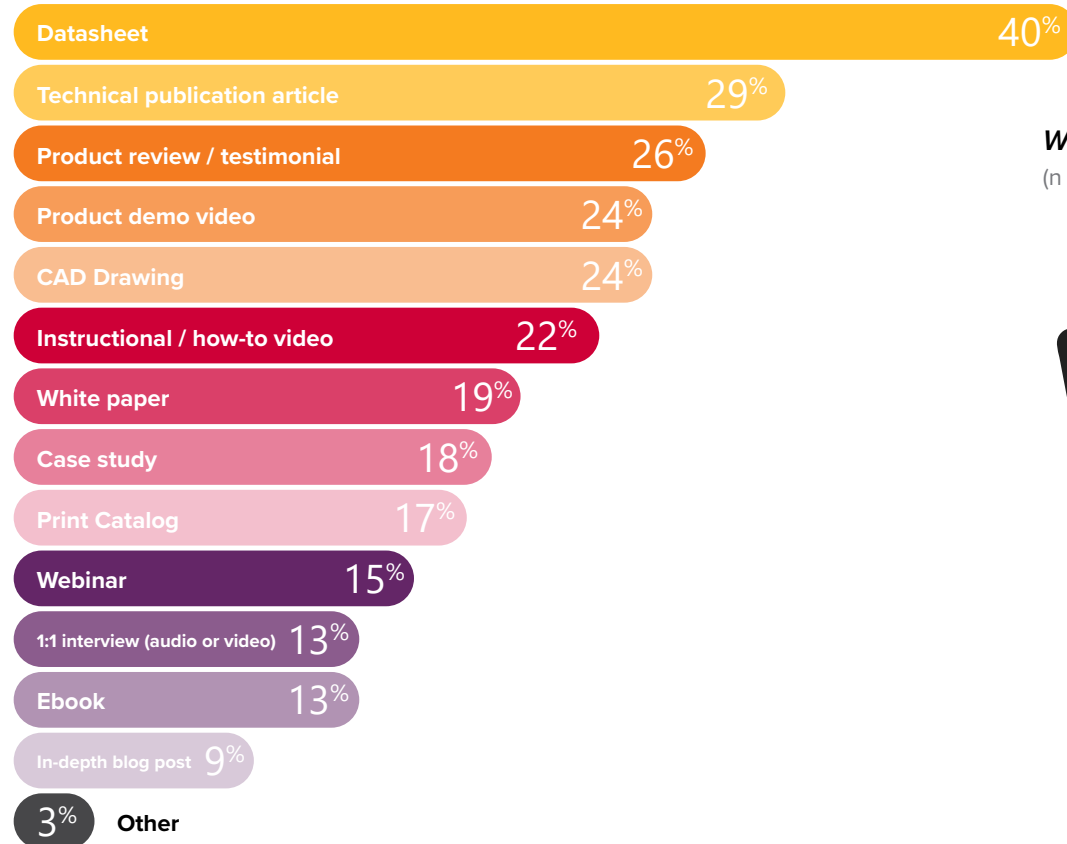
“Engineers are constantly looking for reliable sources of data and information, and their interest in newsletters is no exception. The strong uptick in subscriptions demonstrates an unwavering curiosity and desire to learn about new technologies and product applications.”

-- Tina Streett, Newsletters Product Manager, GlobalSpec

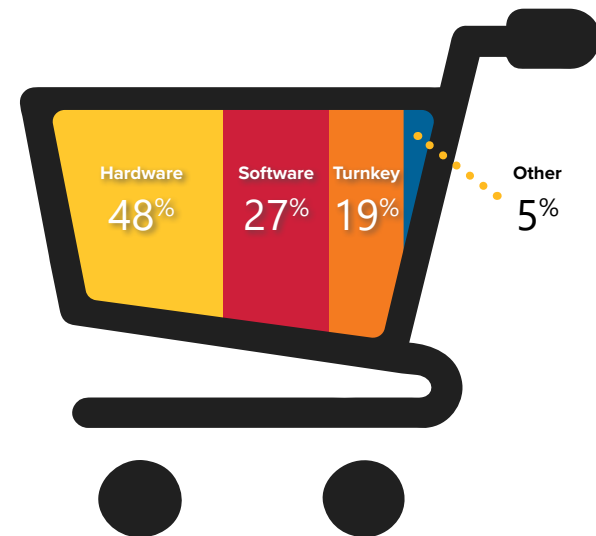
CONTENT PREFERENCES

While datasheets presenting the facts about a product or service are important across the board, those seeking software and turnkey solutions found reviews, testimonials, and demos useful in their decision-making too. For hardware purchases, CAD drawings were among the most valued forms of content.

In thinking of that purchase, what form(s) of content do you find most valuable when researching to make a significant purchase for work? Please select all that apply. (n = 927)



What was your most recent major purchase?
(n = 925)



CONTENT PREFERENCES

Consistent with years past, technical buyers find content with specific technical detail (e.g., datasheets) to be the most valuable in their decision-making processes. They also find value in technical publication articles and demonstrative content (e.g., testimonials, demo videos, how-to videos).

Most Valuable Forms of Content (Top 3)

Hardware (n = 448)

Datasheets.....	56%
Technical Publication Article.....	37%
CAD Drawing.....	31%

Software (n = 252)

Product review / testimonial	24%
Product demo video....	23%
Datasheet.....	23%

Turnkey (n = 176)

Datasheets.....	18%
Product review / testimonial	17%
Technical publication article.....	16%

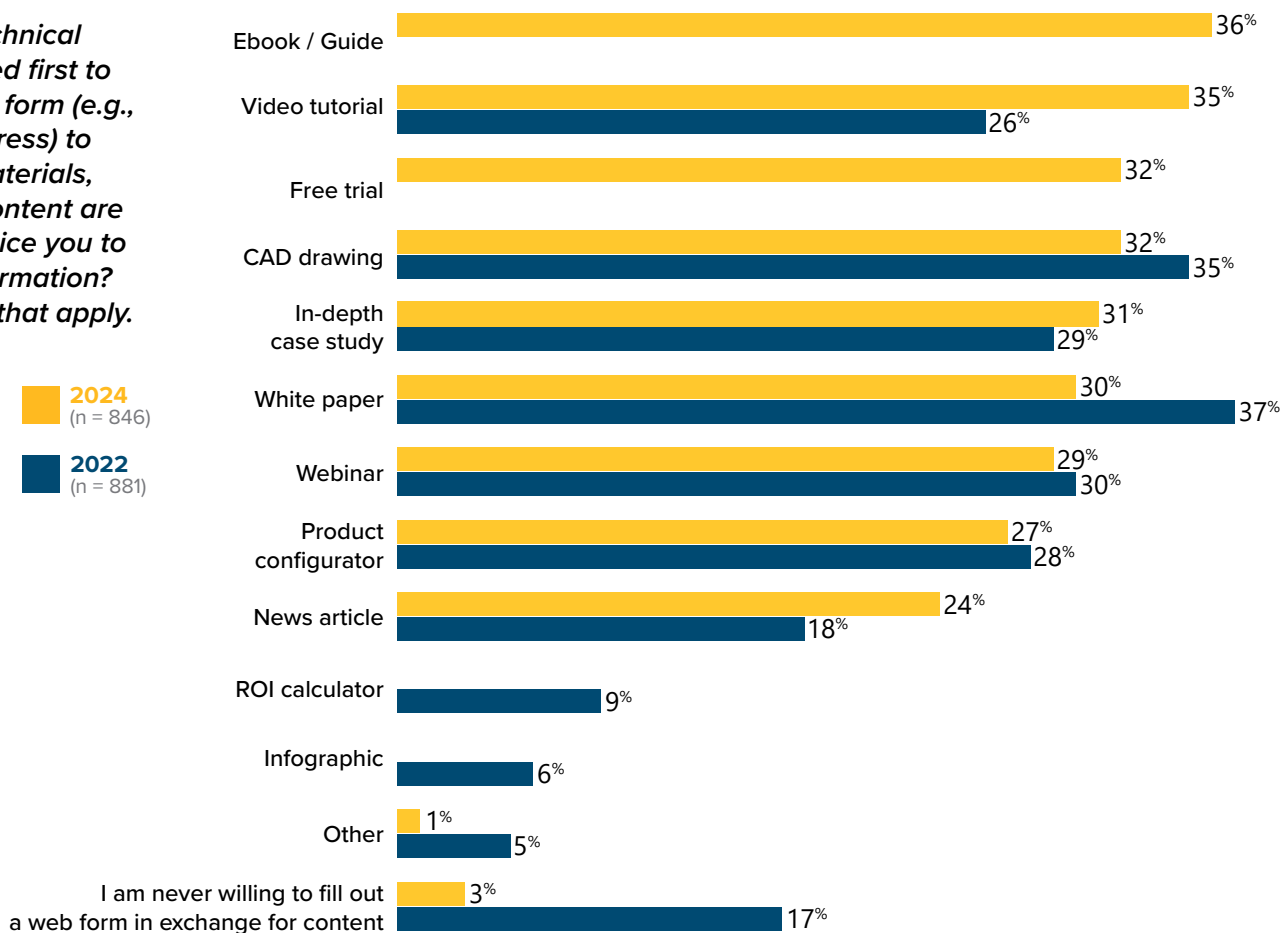
“Many different types of content are valued by technical buyers. Be original, technical, and choose a content form factor that best showcases the material on channels where your prospects go to seek information.”

*-- Lee Chapman
President, TREW Marketing*

CONTENT PREFERENCES

Gated content (content that requires the completion of a form) is a popular and effective way to generate web leads. **Ninety-seven percent** of technical buyers are willing to provide their information for technical content they find valuable (e.g., tutorials, trials).

When offered technical content, but asked first to complete a short form (e.g., name, email address) to download the materials, which types of content are most likely to entice you to provide your information? Please select all that apply.

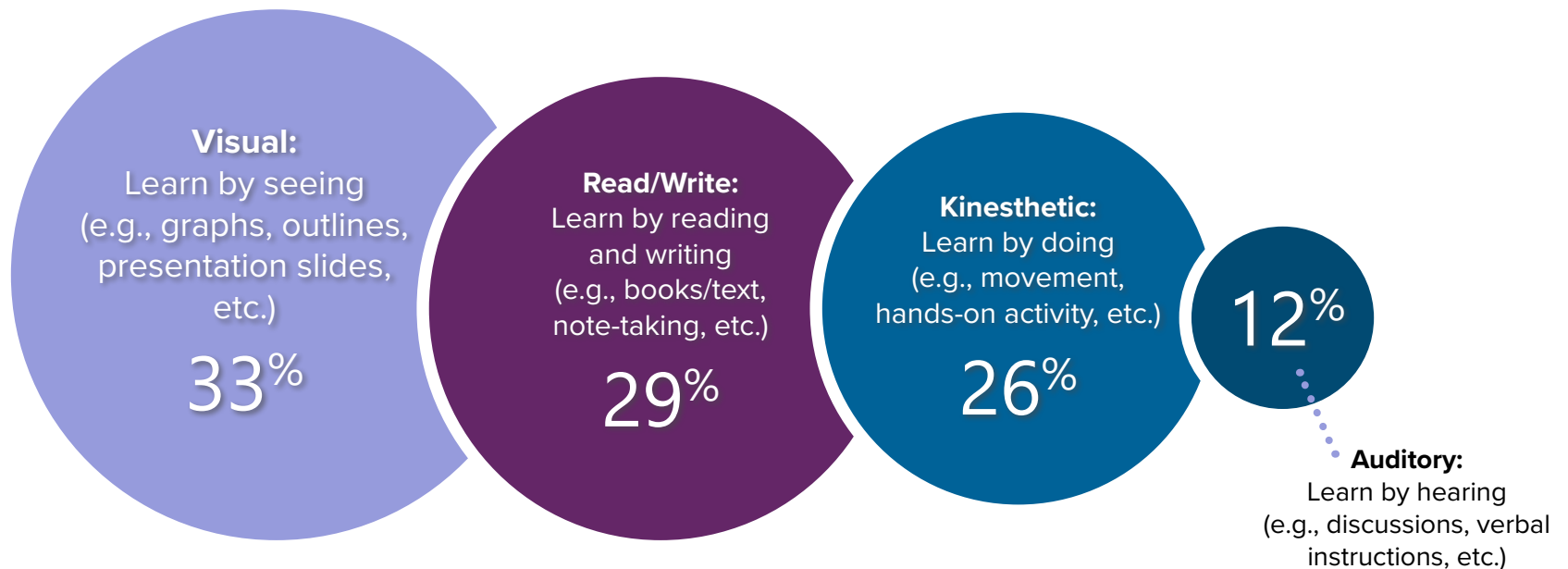


PODCASTS & VIDEO

While technical buyers have a reputation for being hands-on professionals, they represent a variety of learning styles. **Thirty-three percent** consider themselves visual learners, **twenty-nine percent** consider themselves read/write learners, and **twenty-six percent** consider themselves kinesthetic learners.

What learning style do you identify with the most?

(n = 865)

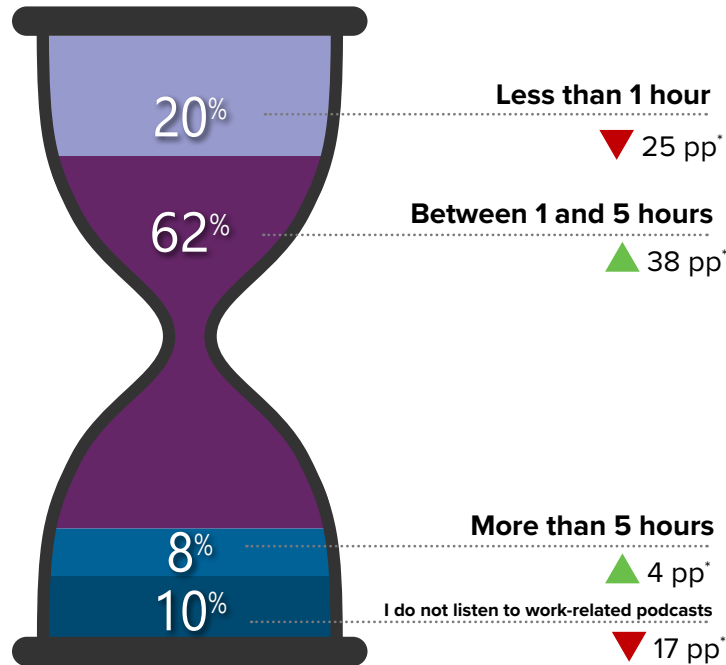


PODCASTS & VIDEO

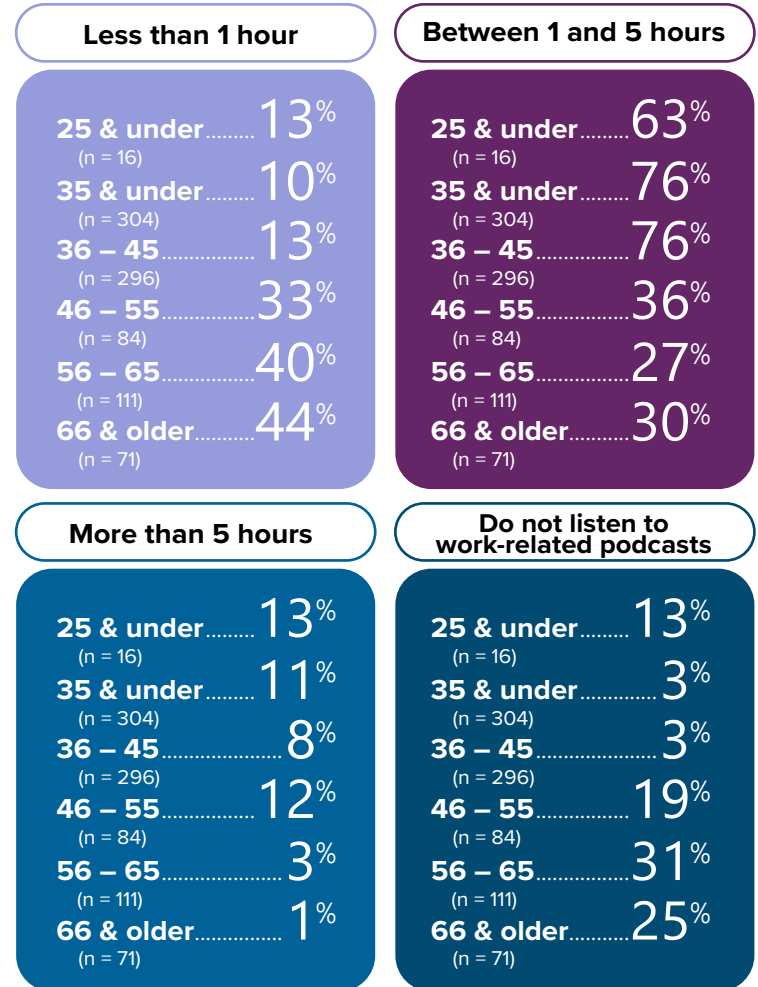
Nintey percent of technical buyers listen to work-related podcasts, compared to **seventy-three percent** in 2023. **Twenty percent** spend less than an hour per week listening to podcasts, while **seventy percent** listen for an hour or more.

Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work related podcasts?

(n = 885) *percentage point (pp) change from '23



Approximately how much time per week do you spend listening to work-related podcasts?



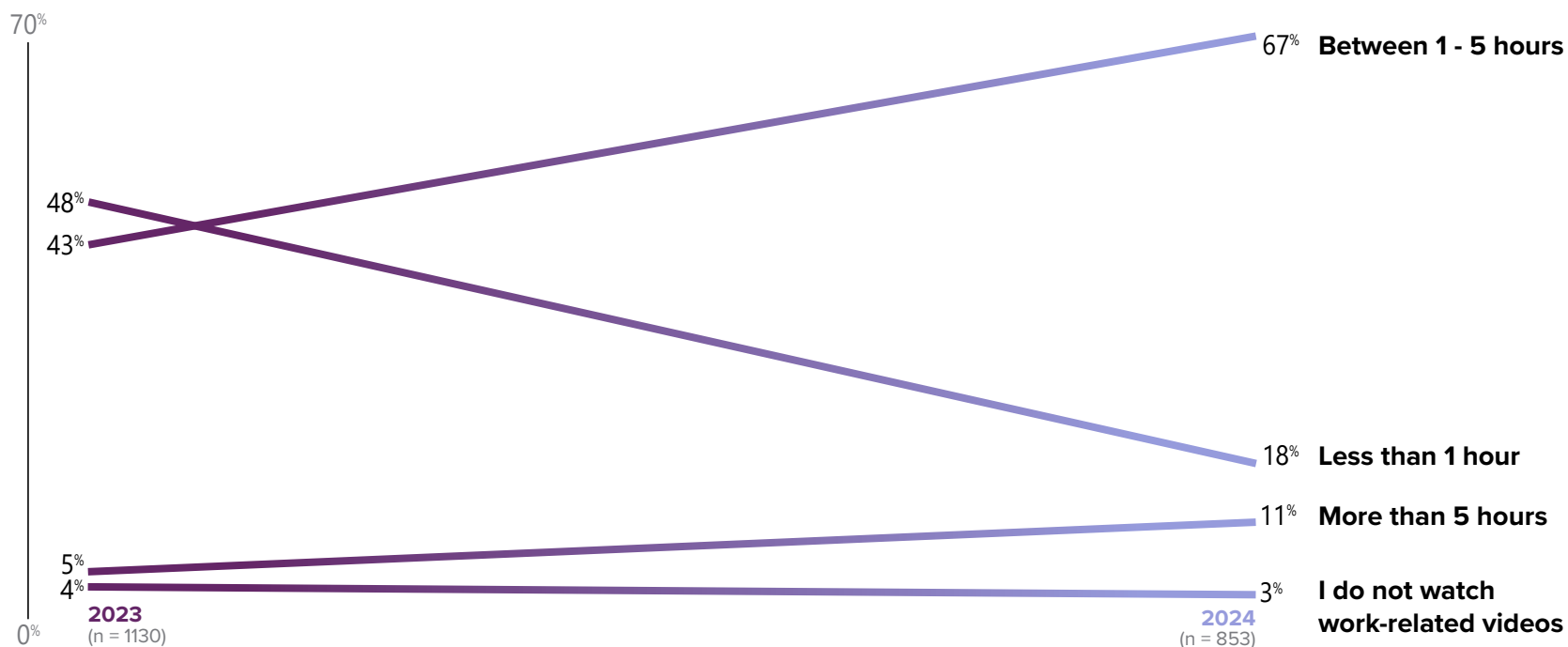
“As podcast listenership continues to rise, technical audiences demand greater frequency of episodes rather than longer durations. We recommend weekly or even twice-weekly episodes at 30 minutes in duration, which is the sweet spot that corresponds with the average American commute”

-- Eric Singer, Executive Producer, Coupe Studios Music + Sound Design

PODCASTS & VIDEO

Similar to 2021, when we last asked this question, **ninety-seven percent** of technical buyers watch work-related videos, but the amount of time they're spending has increased. **Seventy-eight percent** spend an hour or more of their week watching work-related videos, while **eighteen percent** spend less than an hour.

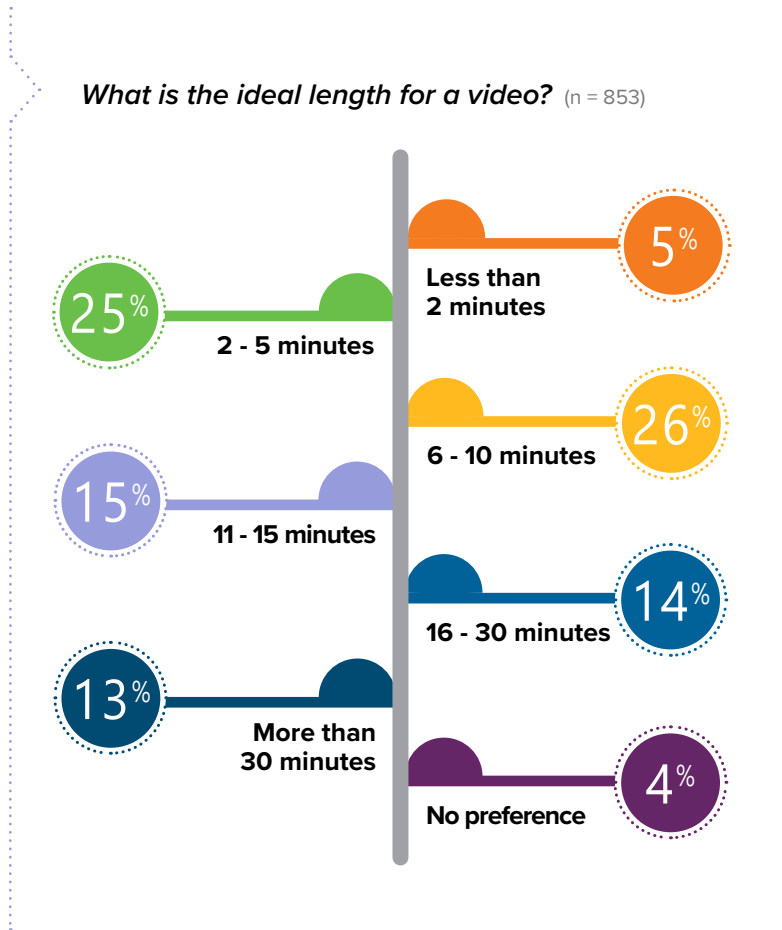
Approximately how much time per week do you spend watching work-related videos?



“B2B audiences engage with video to learn about products and services -- but also to learn about the people who use them -- and the people behind them. Prospects want a human connection -- and video offers that. Videos, especially short form, are more prevalent everywhere these days, which helps explain why time engaging has increased; however, long videos certainly have their place. It all depends on your goals for each video.” -- Lisa Murton Beets, Research Director, Content Marketing Institute

PODCASTS & VIDEO

Fifty-six percent of technical buyers prefer videos that are 10 minutes or less, and another forty-two percent prefer longer.



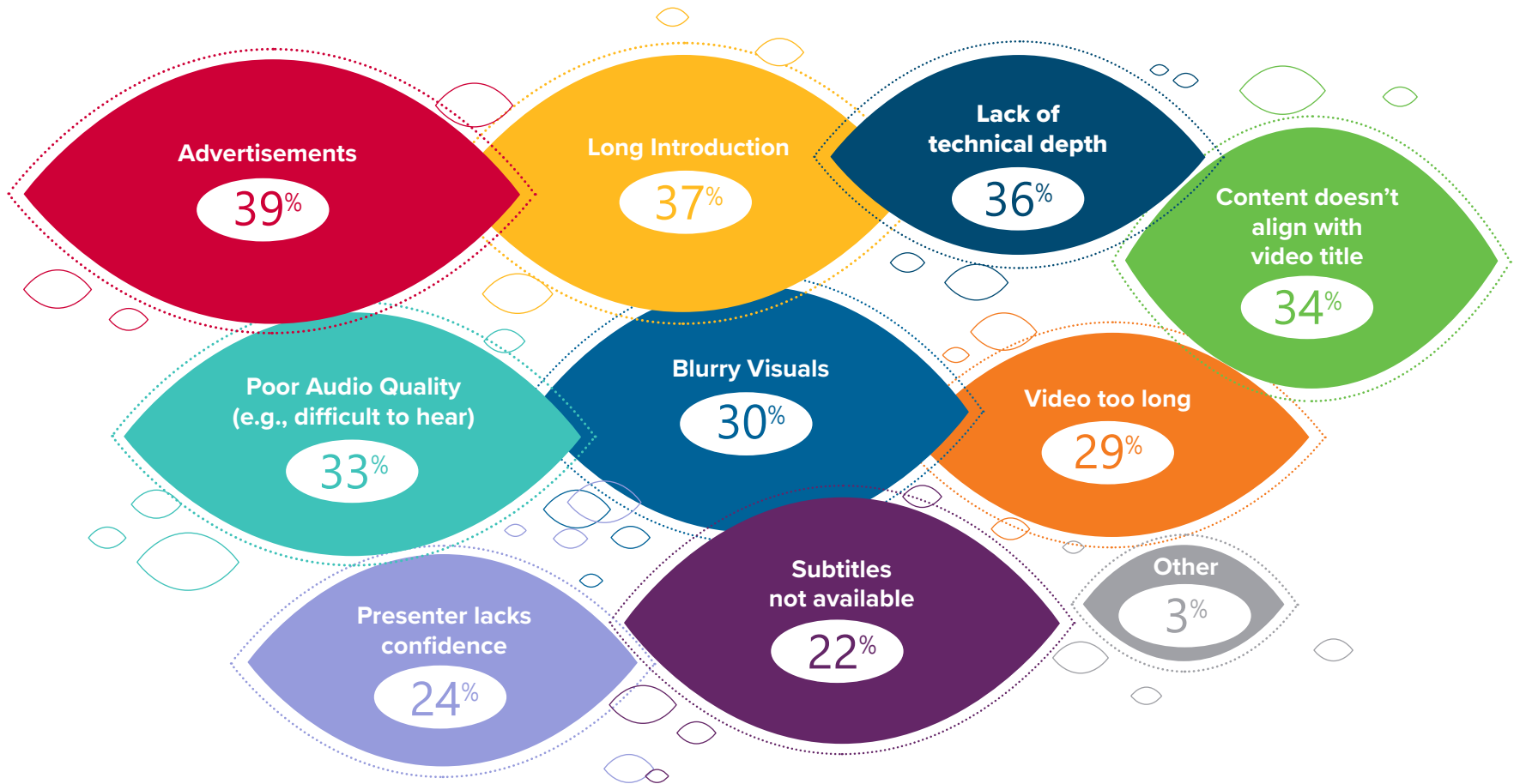
Ideal Video Length by Age

	Less than 2 minutes	2 - 5 minutes	6 - 10 minutes	11 - 15 minutes	16 - 30 minutes	More than 30 minutes	No preference
25 and under (n = 16)	13%	25%	25%	13%	0%	13%	13%
26 - 35 (n = 299)	4%	24%	24%	17%	13%	15%	2%
36 - 45 (n = 294)	4%	20%	25%	14%	17%	18%	2%
46 - 55 (n = 78)	6%	32%	21%	13%	14%	5%	9%
56 - 65 (n = 99)	5%	31%	32%	14%	9%	1%	7%
66+ (n = 63)	6%	29%	32%	8%	16%	2%	8%

PODCASTS & VIDEO

When it comes to video content, technical buyers are most annoyed by ads, long introductions, and lack of technical depth. Video quality matters less if the content is sufficiently technical and direct.

When watching a video for work, which do you find to be the most annoying? (n = 851)



INTERACTING WITH SALES

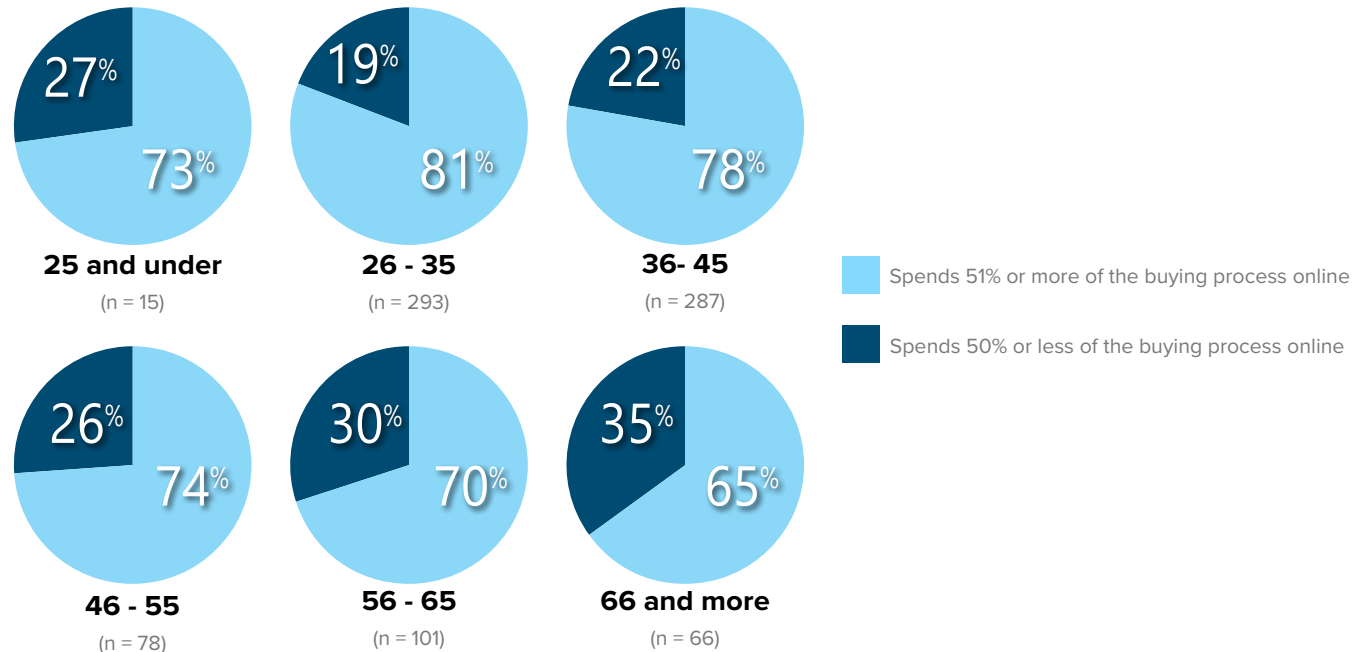
On average, technical buyers spend **sixty-six percent** of the buying process online. **Seventy-seven percent** spend at least half of the buying process online before choosing to speak to someone at the company.

In thinking about the entire buying process for significant work-related purchases, from early research to the final purchase decision, how much of the process happens online before you choose to speak to someone at the company? (n = 842)

Average **66%** | Median **68%**

Younger technical buyers spend more of the buying process online than their older counterparts.

Percent of the Buying Process That Happens Online, by Age





ABOUT **GlobalSpec**

GlobalSpec is a provider of data-driven industrial marketing solutions designed to help companies promote their products and grow their businesses.

Our audience of engineers and technical professionals relies on the GlobalSpec family of brands as a trusted resource for content, community, and engagement at all stages of the research, design, and purchasing process. Our clients count on us to deliver deep industry intelligence, customized marketing programs, and measurable campaign performance.

For more information, visit globalspec.com/advertising.

ABOUT **TREWMARKETING**

TREW Marketing partners with engineering and technology companies to elevate their brand, engage their audiences, and generate new opportunities through insightful research and unrivaled industry expertise. TREW's strategy-driven marketing services include branding, content marketing, digital campaigns and sales enablement.

For more information, visit trewmarketing.com.