

CONTENT PREFERENCES SURVEY REPORT

B2B Buyers Crave
Concise, Research-
Based Content To Inform
Purchasing Process



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While content has always been an important part of a strong marketing strategy, it became invaluable during the pandemic. Amidst stay-at-home orders and cancelled events, B2B buyers became reliant on online content to stay connected and research potential purchases – and it's a trend that's here to stay.

According to new research from Demand Gen Report, 55% of buyers say they now rely more on content to research and make purchasing decisions than they did a year ago. But digital channels are growing more crowded each day, and breaking through the noise requires an adept content strategy carefully crafted with buyer needs and preferences in mind.

The *2022 Content Preferences Survey Report* explores how the content consumption and engagement practices of B2B buyers have evolved over the past year, including the growing demand for webinars and research-based content. The report also examines how vendors can improve content quality and better organize the content displayed on their websites.

Other topics covered include:

- The most valuable content formats to B2B buyers in the early, mid and late stages of the purchasing process;
- The time buyers spend on reviewing content;
- Key criteria that makes content memorable and triggers buyers to take a sales call; and
- The top drivers to creating shareable content and the platforms buyers share them on.

WEBINARS, RESEARCH TOP CONTENT PICKS FOR B2B BUYERS

The survey findings show that content consumption is on the rise. A majority of B2B buyers (62%) said they engage with three to seven pieces of content before connecting with a salesperson, and 11% said they typically consume more than seven pieces of content. Only 28% said they engage with less than three pieces of content on average.

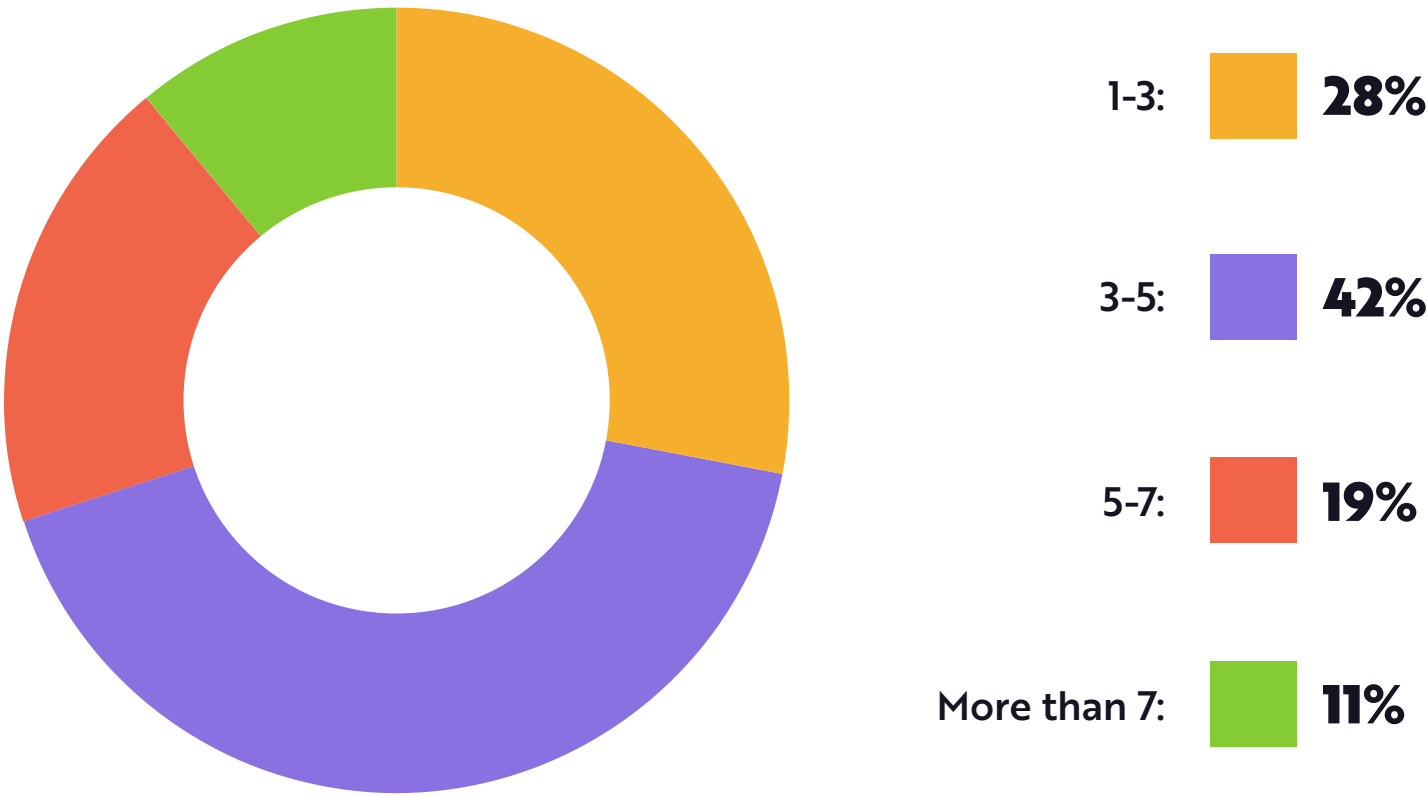
When asked about the types of content they consume, the most popular response was webinars. Just over two-thirds of the buyers polled (67%) said they had engaged with webinars over the past 12 months – a significant increase from last year's 57%. Research/survey reports also ranked high at 55%, compared to 52% in 2021.

Other popular content formats include E-books (56%), blogs (54%), white papers (52%) and case studies (49%). Respondents also noted that they are consuming more community-based sources, such as industry newsletters (increased from 34% to 41%) and third-party analyst reports (up from 29% to 31%).

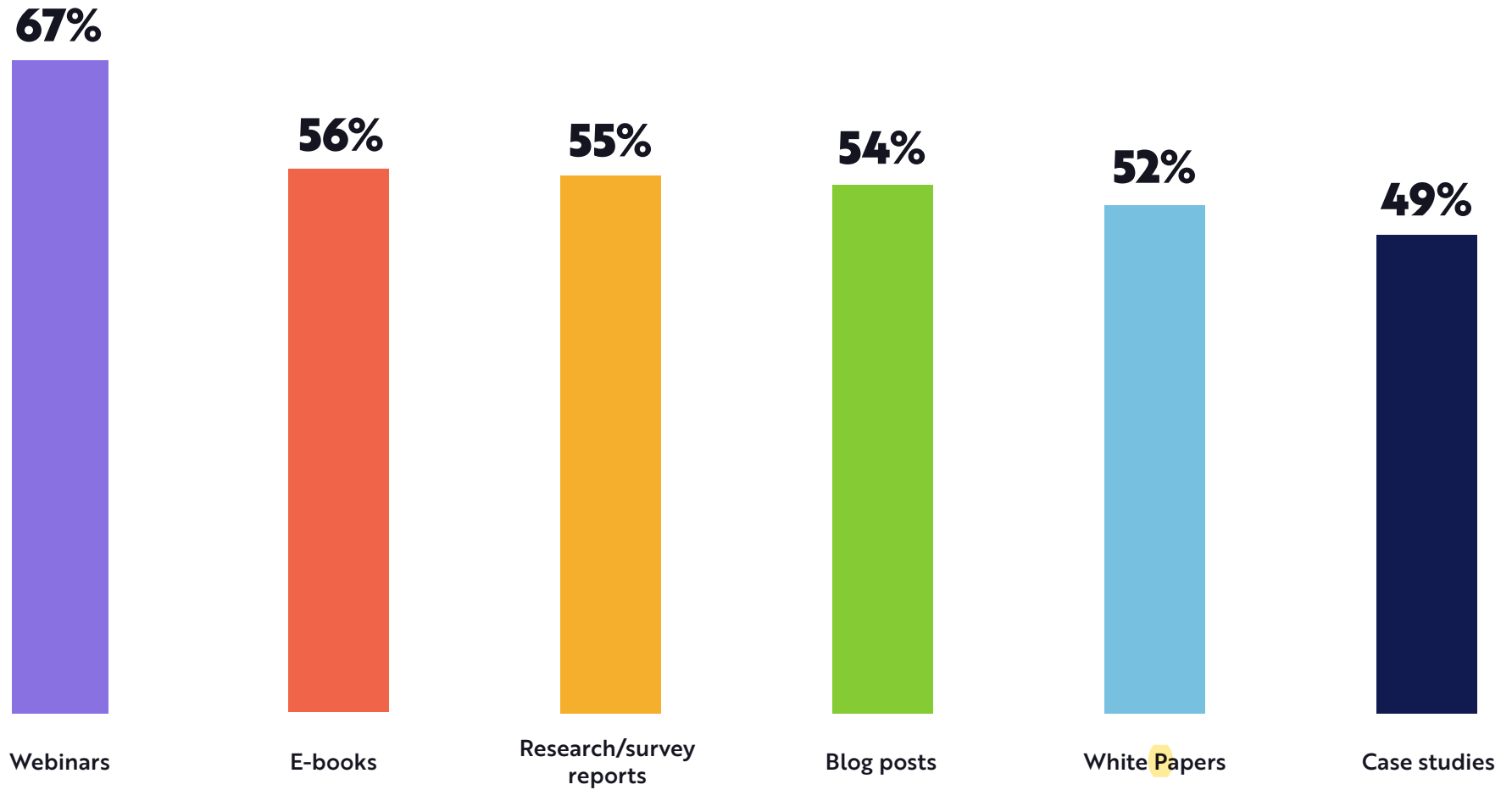
When it came to conducting research for a purchasing decision, B2B buyers selected research/survey reports as the most valuable content source (43%). This was closely followed by webinars and case studies, both of which were cited by 40% of respondents.

Another interesting discovery is that most buyers typically spend between five to 30 minutes reviewing nearly all content formats. The only exception is webinars, where 53% said they are willing to invest 30 to 60 minutes watching a webinar and an additional 19% said they are willing to spend more than 60 minutes with a webinar.

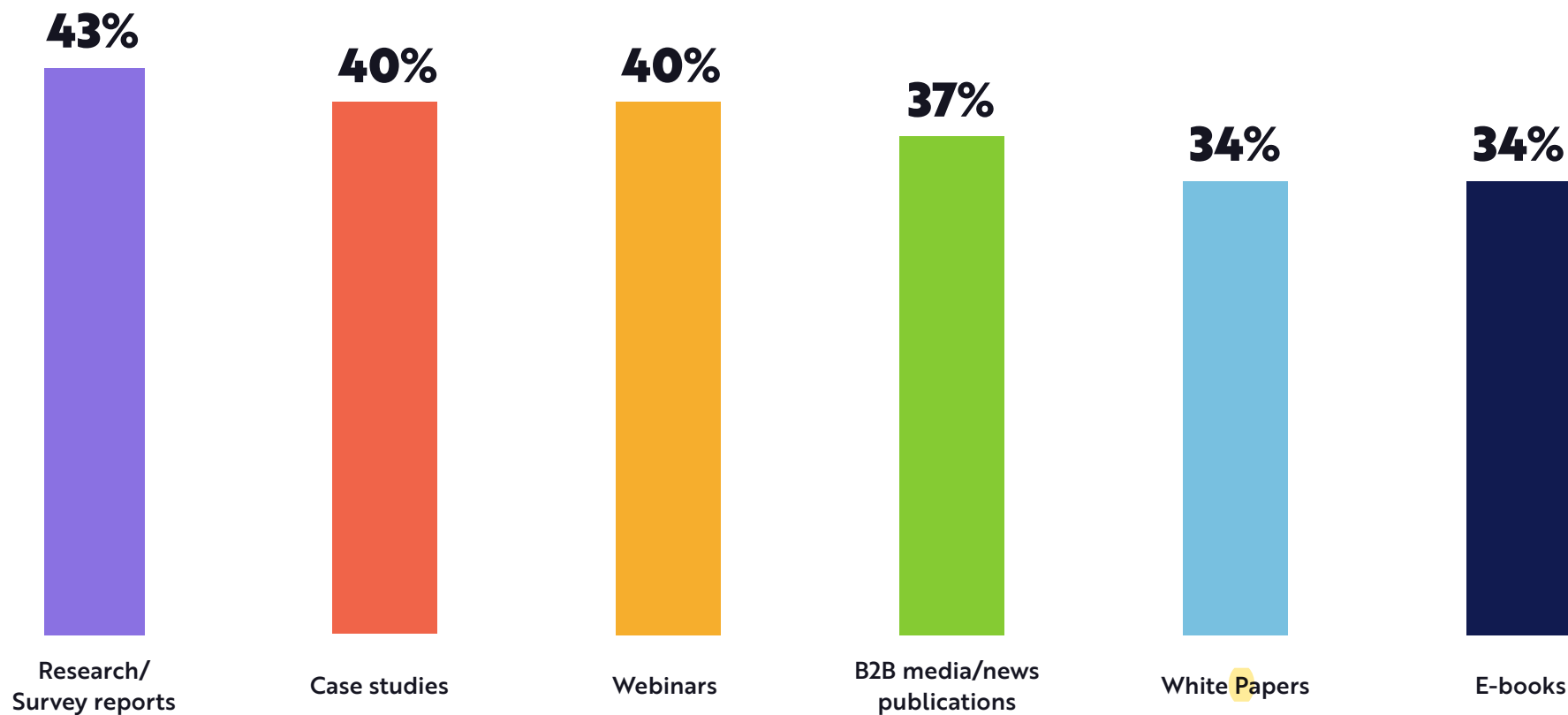
HOW MANY PIECES OF CONTENT HAVE YOU TYPICALLY CONSUMED BEFORE ENGAGING WITH A SALESPERSON WHEN YOU ARE MAKING A PURCHASE DECISION?



WHICH FORMS OF CONTENT HAVE YOU CONSUMED DURING THE PAST YEAR?



WHAT ARE THE MOST VALUABLE CONTENT FORMATS AND SOURCES FOR RESEARCHING YOUR B2B PURCHASES?



BUYERS MORE RELIANT ON CONTENT IN THE EARLY- TO MID-STAGES OF THEIR JOURNEY

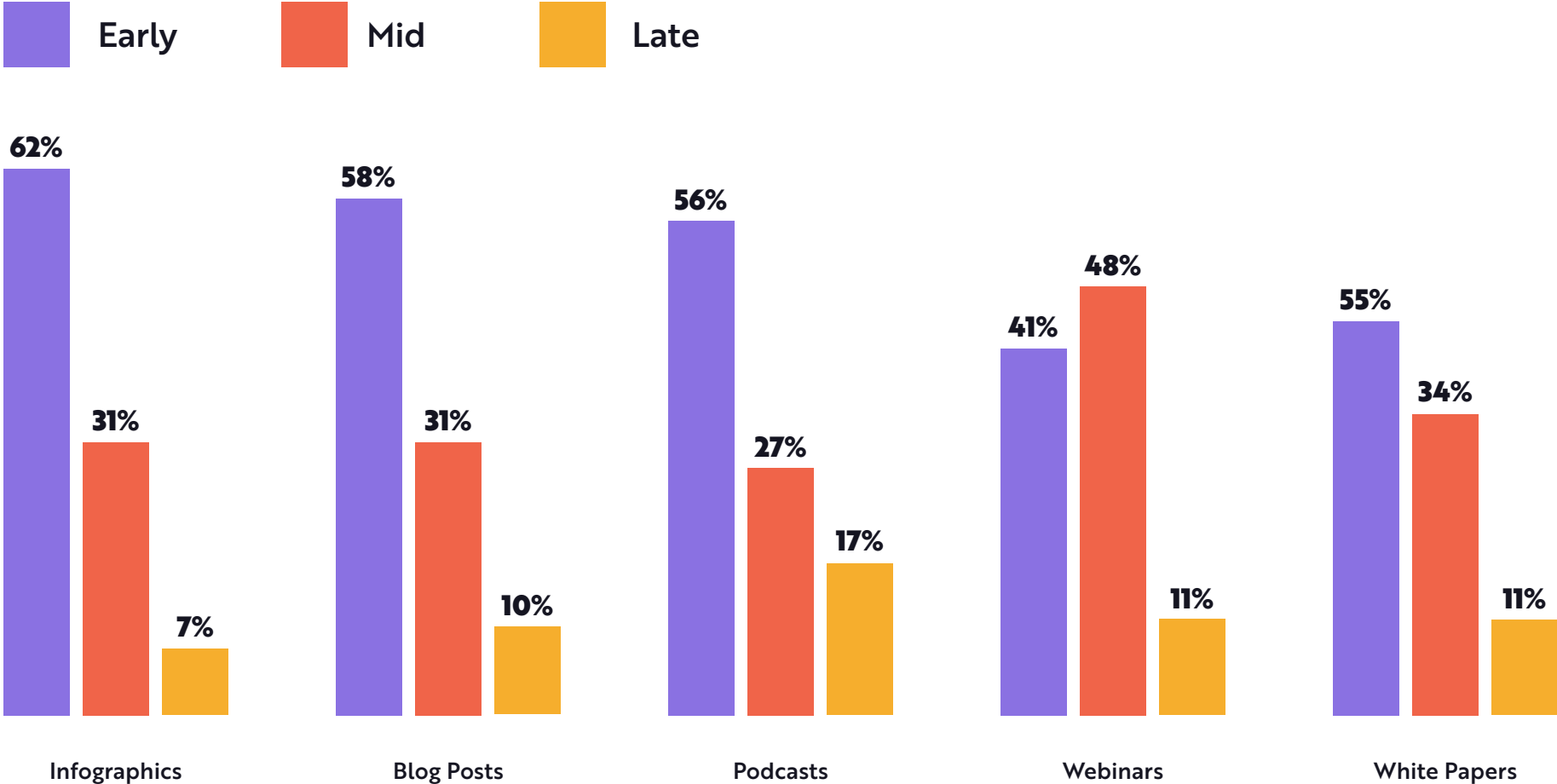
Of the 16 content formats included in the survey, all had the highest engagement in the early- or mid-stages of the buyer's journey. Among the most popular content formats for early-stage research were infographics (62%), blogs (58%) and podcasts (56%). Meanwhile, assessments (49%), webinars (48%) and case studies (44%) dominated the mid-stage. For late-stage research, buyers cited user reviews (29%), third-party analyst reports (29%) and ROI calculators (26%) as the most useful.

Of course, not all content is created equal. When asked what makes a piece of content memorable and triggers buyers to take a sales call, respondents again voiced the importance of research. More than half (51%) said the content should use data and research to support its claims, while 41% said the content itself should be research-based.

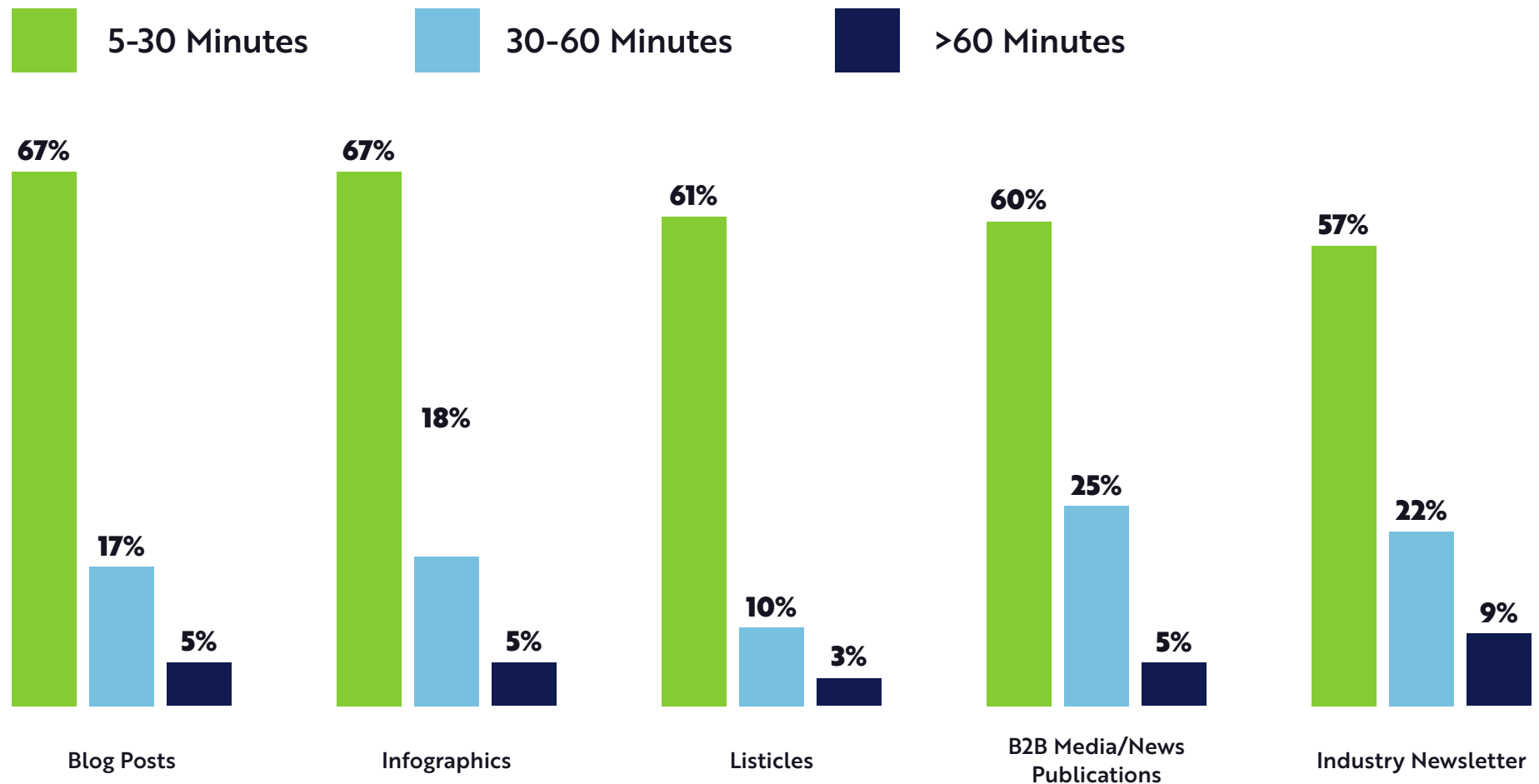
Another common theme was the desire to share the content with the buying team. A staggering 49% of respondents said the content must tell a strong story that resonates with their buying committee, and 41% said the content should be packed with shareable stats and quick-hitting insights.



OF THE FOLLOWING CONTENT FORMATS, WHICH DO YOU FIND MOST VALUABLE FOR EARLY, MID AND LATE STAGES OF THE BUYING PROCESS?



WHEN RESEARCHING A B2B PURCHASE, HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU TYPICALLY SPEND REVIEWING CONTENT IN THE FOLLOWING FORMATS?



BUYING COMMITTEE MEMBERS FOCUSED ON FINDING SHARE-WORTHY CONTENT

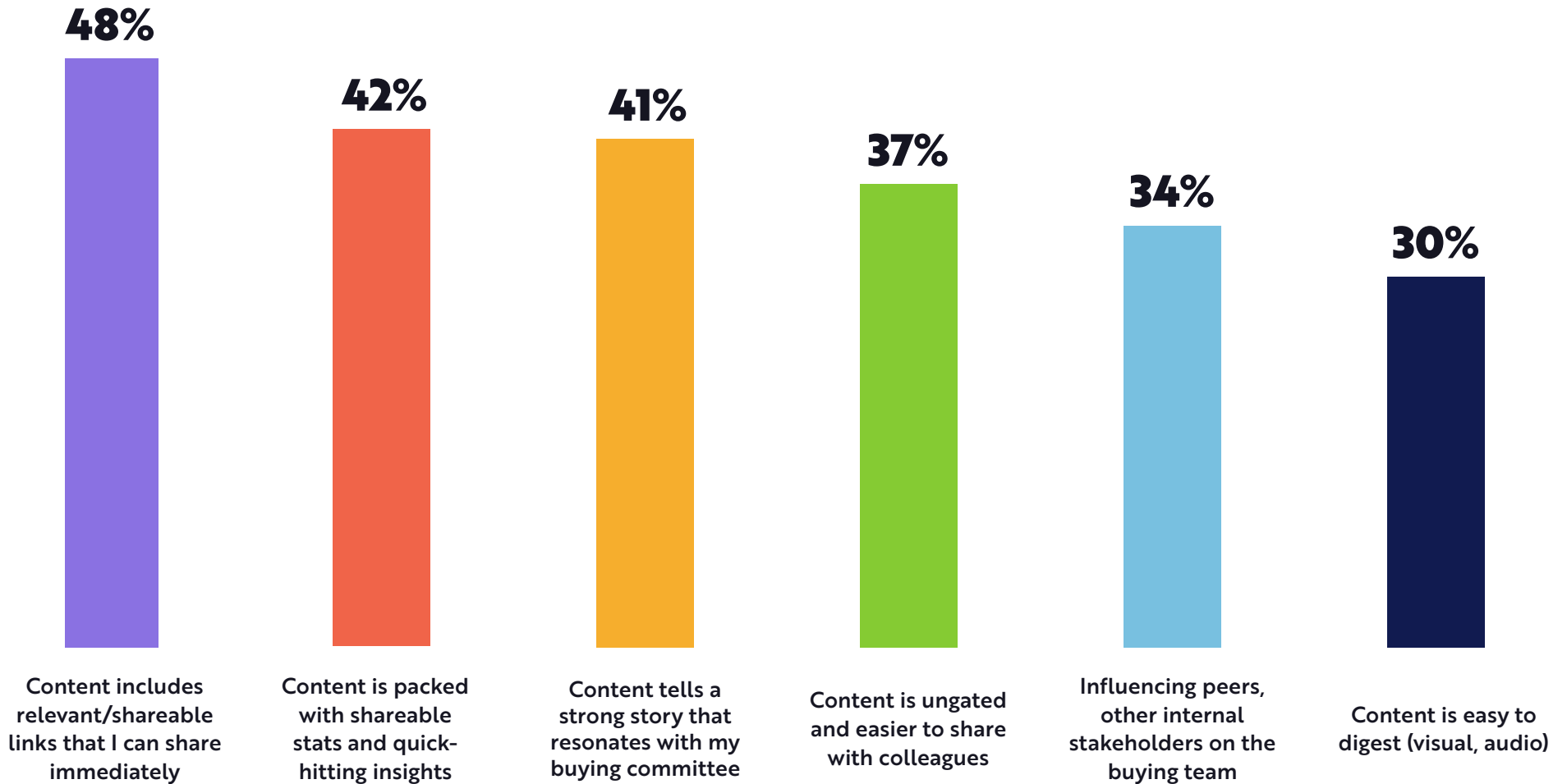
As buying committees expand, B2B executives are increasingly seeking out content that they can share with other members to drive alignment around purchasing goals and decisions. According to the survey results, the top content formats that buyers share with their colleagues include research/survey reports (45%), E-books (43%), webinars (42%) and case studies (40%).

When asked about the key drivers for sharing content, respondents said it is important that the content:

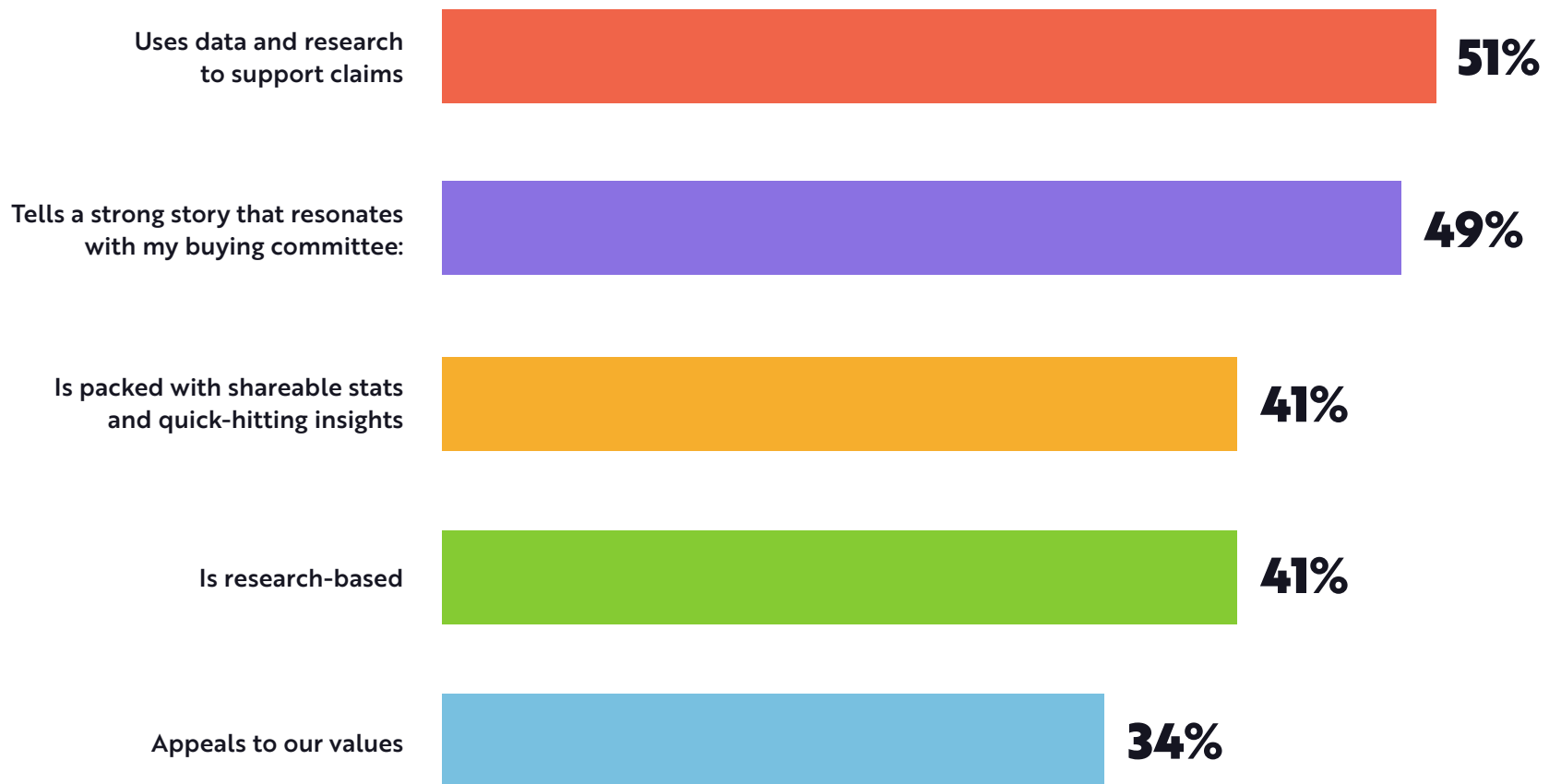
- Includes relevant/shareable links that can be shared immediately (48%);
- Is packed with shareable stats and quick-hitting insights (42%);
- Tells a strong story that resonates with the buying committee (41%);
- Is ungated and easy to share with colleagues (37%); and
- Will influence peers/other internal stakeholders on the buying team (34%).

Among content-sharing platforms, LinkedIn was cited as the most popular for sending relevant content to colleagues or other members of the buying committee, with usage up from 71% last year to 76% in 2022. Email closely followed, jumping from 66% to 71%. Internal collaboration platforms, like Slack and Microsoft Teams, also rose in popularity, climbing from 40% in 2021 to 45% in 2022. Meanwhile, content sharing declined on both Twitter (43% to 39%) and Facebook (43% to 36%).

WHAT ARE YOUR KEY DRIVERS FOR SHARING CONTENT?



WHAT MAKES CONTENT MEMORABLE AND TRIGGERS YOU TO TAKE A SALES CALL?



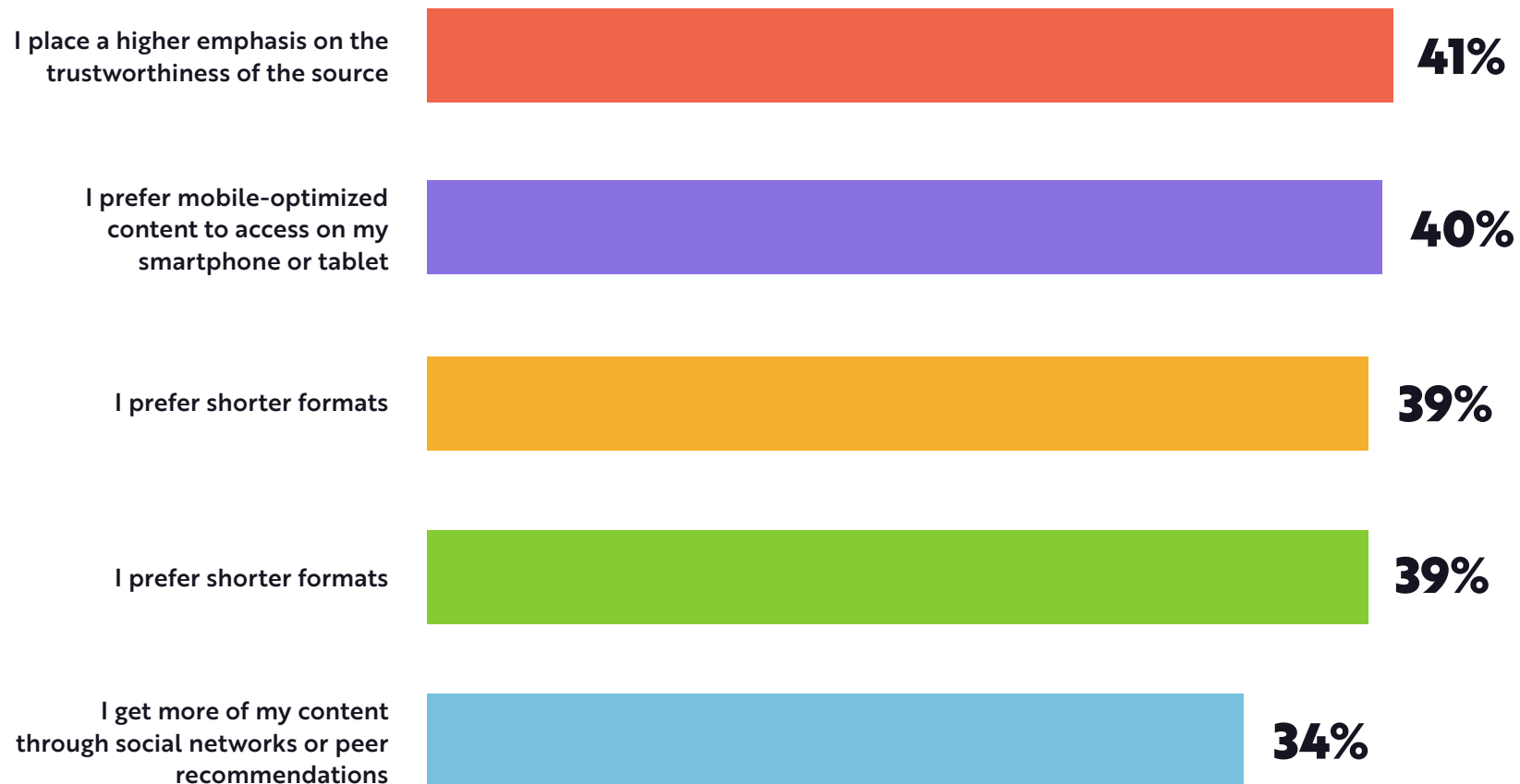
CONCISE, MOBILE-OPTIMIZED CONTENT MUST-HAVES FOR MEETING MODERN BUYER EXPECTATIONS

Best-in-class B2B teams must not only create the content that buyers want, but also deliver it how they want it. Results from the 2022 Content Preferences Survey Report show today's buyers crave content that is concise, credible and accessible on the go.

When asked how their content consumption preferences have changed over the past year, 40% said they prefer content that can be easily accessed on a mobile or tablet device. Shorter attention spans are also shaping buyer expectations, as 39% said they want shorter-form content. Credibility was another common theme: 41% said they place a higher emphasis on the trustworthiness of the source and 39% said they prefer credible content from industry influencers.



WHAT ARE YOUR COMPANY'S PLANS REGARDING THE NUMBER OF PARTNERS IN YOU CHANNEL ECOSYSTEM?



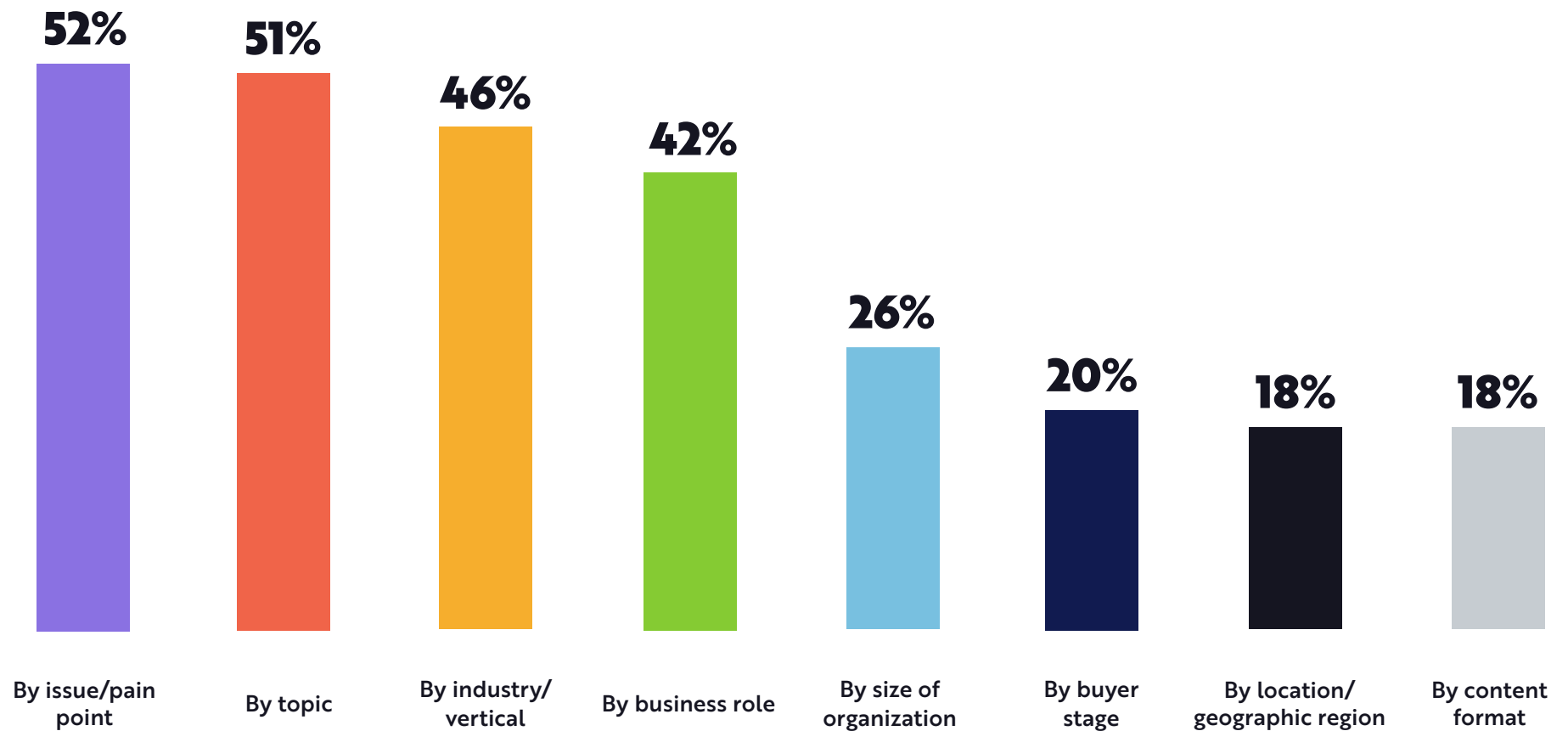
In terms of presentation, respondents said they would like to see vendors organize content on their website by issue/pain point (52%), topic (51%), industry/vertical (46%) or business role (42%) over the traditional classification by content format (18%).

Other top recommendations buyers shared for improving content quality include:

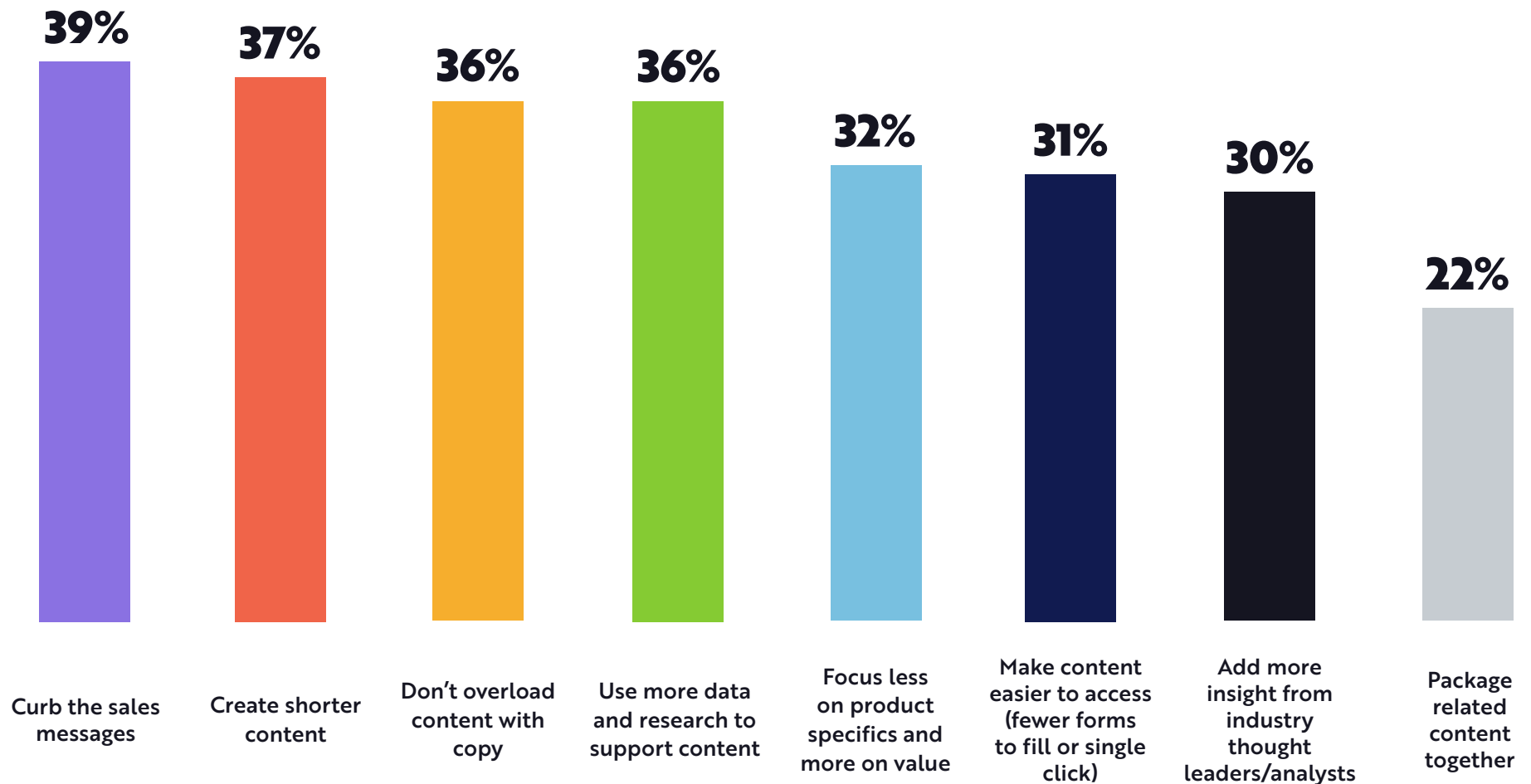
- Curb the sales messages (39%);
- Create shorter content (37%);
- Use more data and research to support content (36%);
- Don't overload content with copy (36%);
- Make content easier to access (31%); and
- Add more insights from industry thought leaders/analysts (30%).



HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE B2B VENDORS ORGANIZE THE CONTENT ON THEIR WEBSITES?



WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD YOU MAKE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE CONTENT CREATED/PROVIDED BY B2B VENDORS?



CONCLUSION

An effective content marketing strategy requires much more than just getting the message right. B2B marketers must also be tuned into changing buyer expectations regarding content format, length and style.

The *2022 Content Preferences Survey Report* reveals that today's buyers crave high-quality, easy-to-access content that is backed by data and filled with quick-hitting insights, with webinars and research reports among the most popular content formats right now. Credibility and relevance are also key to creating the types of content that buyers will not only want to consume, but also share with the rest of their buying committee, bringing vendors one step closer to conversion.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The *2022 Content Preferences Survey Report* includes responses from 174 B2B executives, representing a well-balanced mix of titles, industries and company sizes. Nearly one-third of respondents (30%) work in C-level roles, 28% are managers, 21% are at the director level and 12% are VPs.

The respondents hail from a variety of industries, including high tech (27%), professional services (17%), business services (14%), media/entertainment (11%) and financial services (9%). In terms of annual revenue, about half (47%) reported that their organization makes less than \$25 million, 17% bring in between \$25-\$50 million, 14% make \$50-\$100 million, and 22% achieve an annual revenue of \$100 million or more.



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