THE AGE OF ALGORITHMS

UNLOCKING
CREATIVE
INDEPENDENCE
IN THE AGE OF
ALGORITHMS

A data-driven deep dive into how creators can still find creative independence in an increasingly volatile, algorithm-driven world
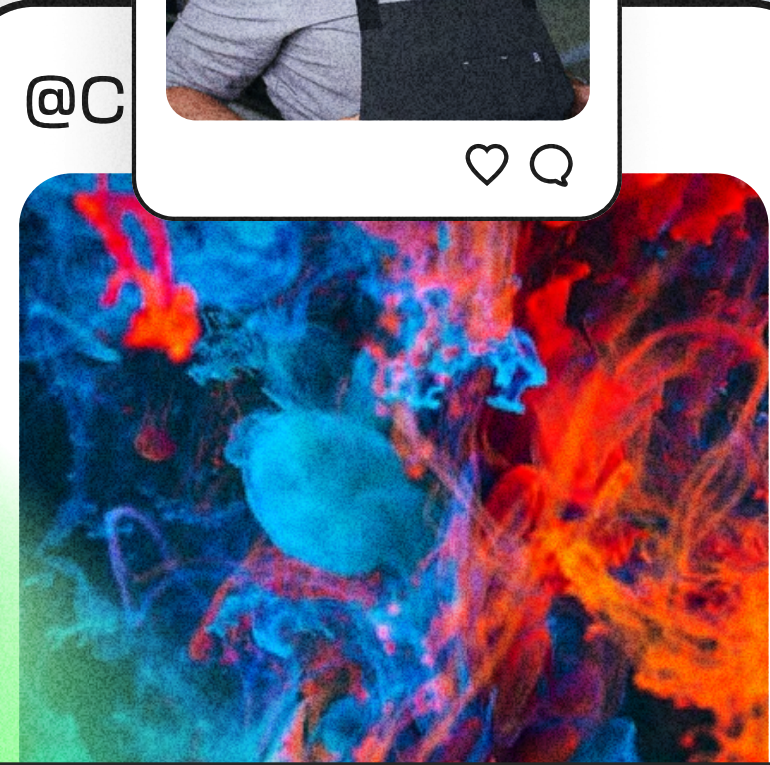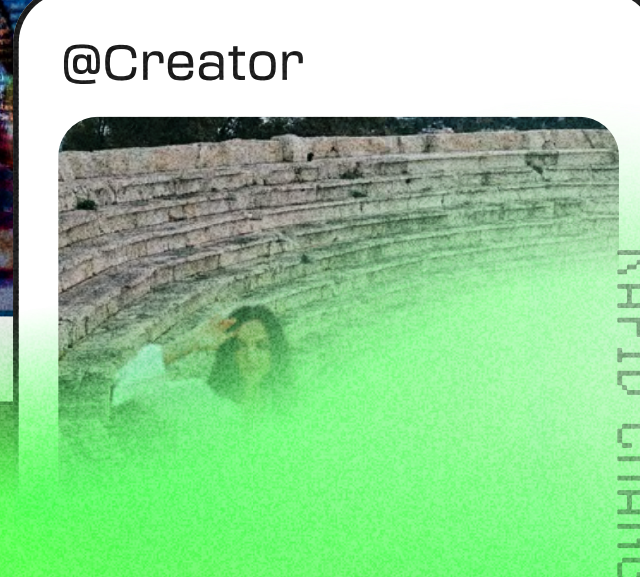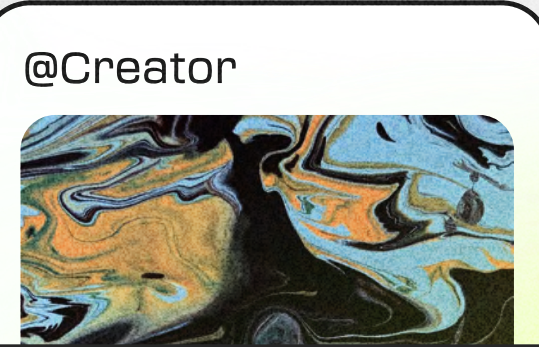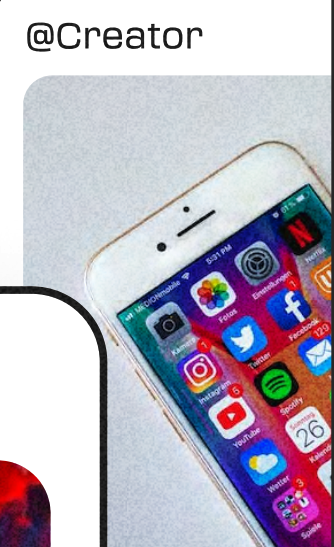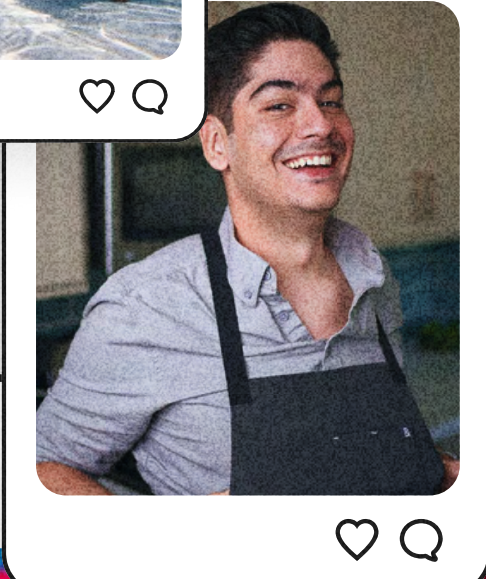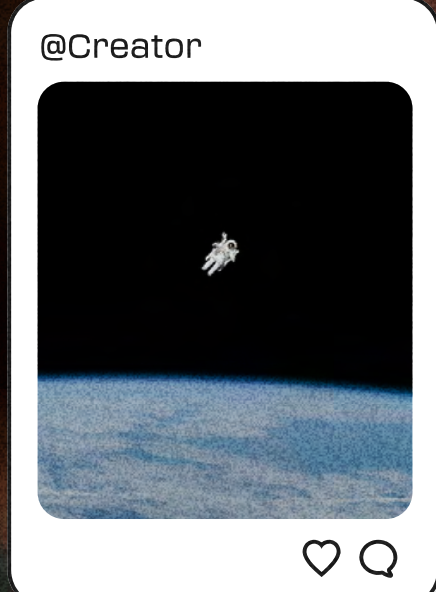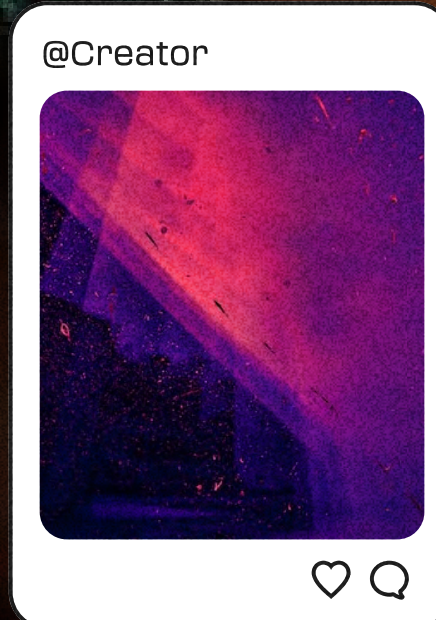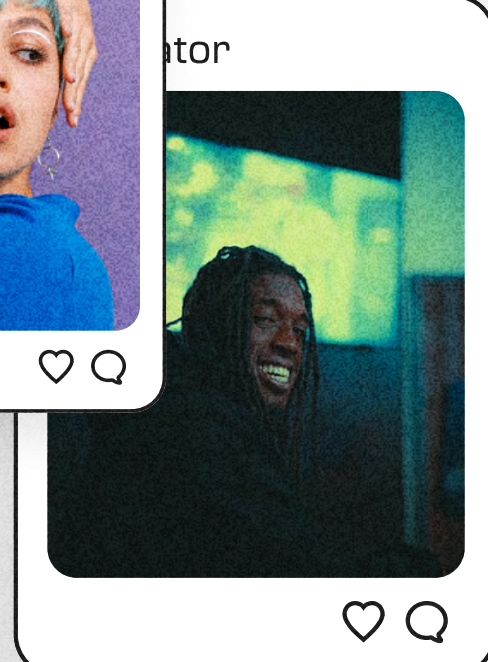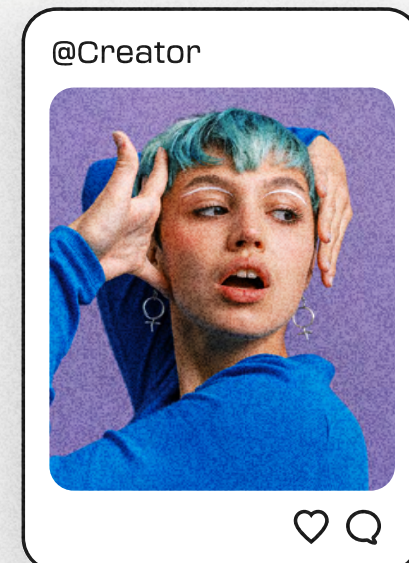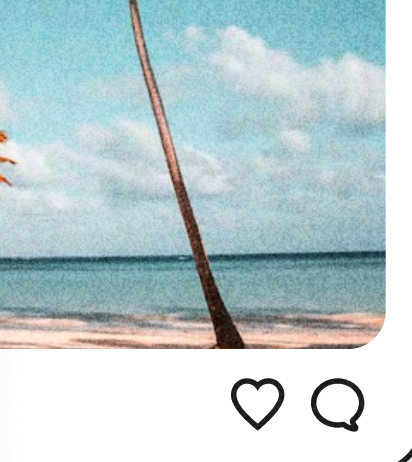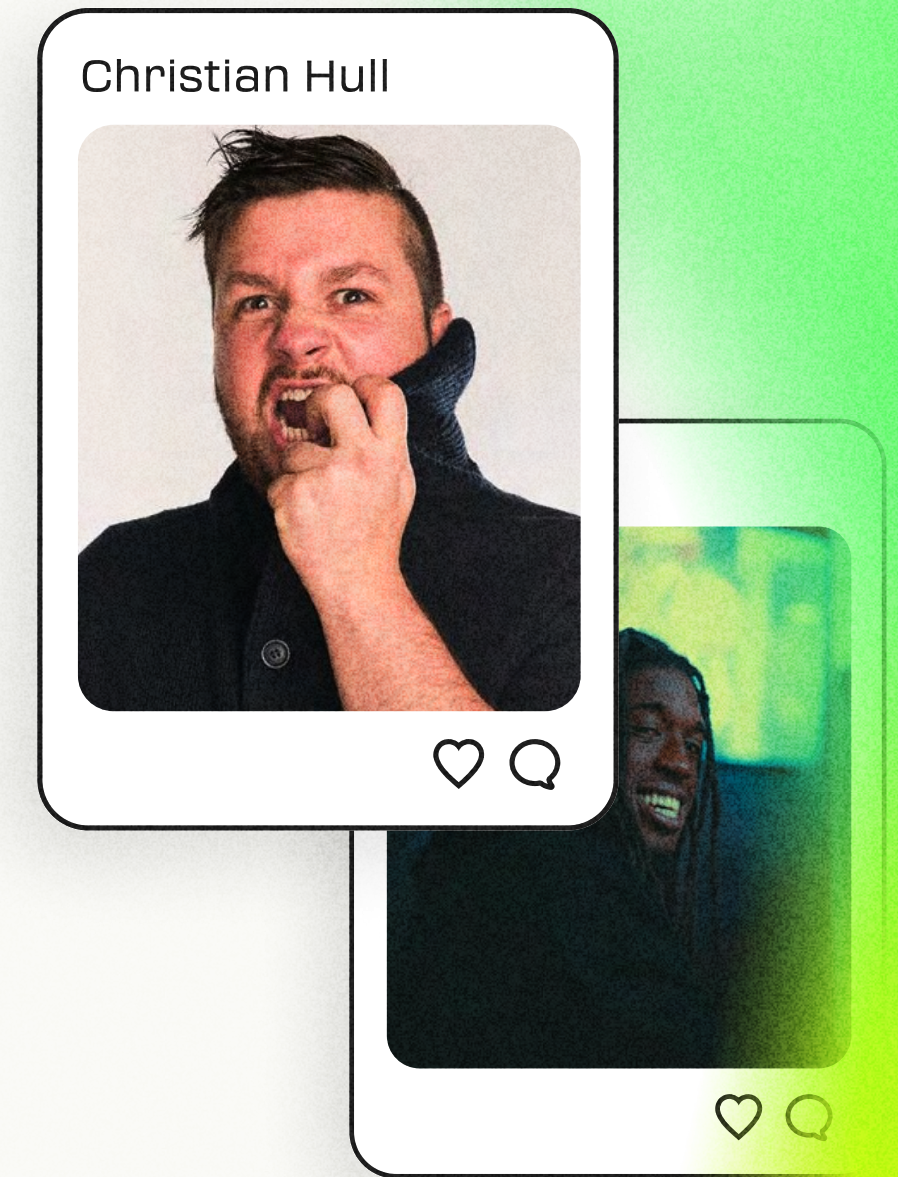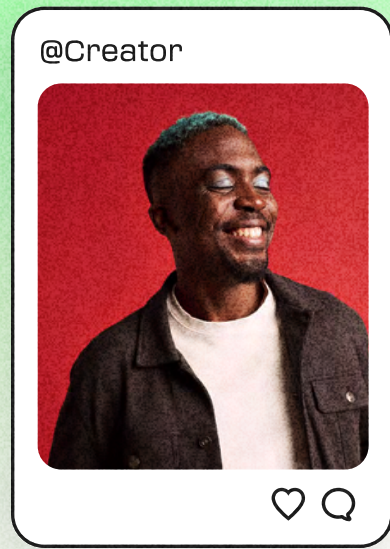
Patreon worked with a third-party company, MarketCast, to conduct a multi-phased global study from September to December of 2021. To better understand the creator and fan experience, we reviewed over 7 billion social conversations, interviewed 54 individual creators on and off Patreon, and surveyed over 1,644 creators and 4,027 fans in 10 countries.

Here's an in-depth look at how creators responded to our questions about algorithms, platforms, and more.
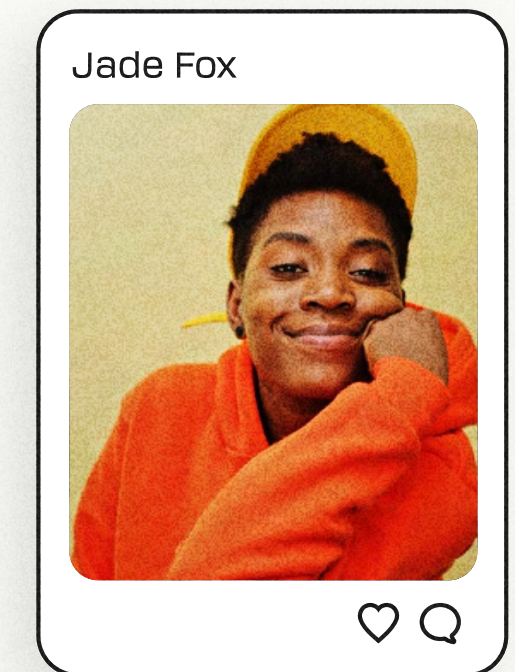
WHAT ARE CREATORS' ATTITUDES TOWARD BIG TECH?

On a scale from 1-6, with 1 being "totally disagree" and a 6 being "totally agree," select how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

"Creators are getting screwed by big tech platforms."

KEY

TOTALLY AGREE

6
5
4
3
2
1

TOTALLY DISAGREE

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Rating	Count	Percent
1	81	4.9%
2	142	8.5%
3	281	16.9%
4	424	25.5%
5	362	21.8%
6	372	22.4%

SPLIT BY REVENUE

$100 TO $499
- 25.4%
- 15.5%
- 31%
- 14.1%
- 7%
- 7%

$500 TO $999
- 23.4%
- 22.4%
- 26.6%
- 16.1%
- 8.3%
- 3.1%

$1000 TO $4999
- 19.4%
- 21.3%
- 25%
- 20%
- 8.8%
- 5.6%

$5000 TO $9999
- 18.8%
- 22.8%
- 27.7%
- 15.6%
- 11.2%
- 4

$10K TO $24.9K
- 22.6%
- 21.2%
- 26.9%
- 17.3%
- 7.8%
- 4.2%

$25K TO $49.9K
- 19.2%
- 22.6%
- 25.4%
- 16.9%
- 9%
- 6.8%

$50K TO $99.9K
- 34.4%
- 28.1%
- 18.8%
- 11.7%
- 3.9%
- 3.1%

>$100K
- 31.6%
- 18.9%
- 20%
- 14.7%
- 8.4%
- 6.3%

SPLIT BY JOURNEY

STARTING OFF
- 14.1%
- 24.9%
- 29.7%
- 14.6%
- 9.2%
- 7.6%

FINDING RELEVANCE
- 19.5%
- 21.1%
- 27.4%
- 18.9%
- 9.1%
- 4.1%

PROFESSIONALIZING
- 24.8%
- 22.2%
- 23.4%
- 16.5%
- 8.9%
- 4.3%

GOING FULL TIME
- 20.2%
- 26.1%
- 29.1%
- 14.8%
- 6.4%
- 3.4%

ESTABLISHED
- 29.4%
- 16.9%
- 21%
- 16.9%
- 8.5%
- 7.3%

SOMETHING ELSE
- 6 – 42.3%
- 5 – 19.2%
- 4 – 15.4%
- 3 – 19.2%
- 2 – 3.8%
- 1 – 0%

WHICH PLATFORMS DO CREATORS RELY ON MOST?

"Of the platforms that you are currently using, which one do you rely on the most to showcase your creative work?" Select one.

Platform	Count	Percentage
NULL	46	2.8%
BANDCAMP	5	0.3%
CAMEO	3	0.2%
CAMPFIRE	1	0.1%
CLASS 101	1	0.1%
DEVIANT ART	12	0.7%
DISCORD	20	1.2%
ETSY	24	1.4%
FACEBOOK	166	10%
FANTIA	1	0.1%
GETNEXT:10	2	0.1%
INSTAGRAM	337	20.3%
KICKSTARTER	2	0.1%
MASTERCLASS	1	0.1%
MEDIUM	4	0.2%
MEMBERFUL	2	0.1%
MIGHTY NETWORKS	1	0.1%
ONLYFANS	5	0.3%
PATREON	100	6%
PODCAST NETWORKS	9	0.5%
REDDIT	15	0.9%
SOUNDCLOUD	11	0.7%
SPOTIFY	38	2.3%
STARTSEED.COM	1	0.1%
STARTNEXT	1	0.1%
STEADY	1	0.1%
SUBSTACK	1	0.1%
TIKTOK	94	5.7%
TIPEEE	3	0.2%
TUMBLR	3	0.2%
TWITCH	73	4.4%
TWITTER	118	7.1%
WEVERSE	1	0.1%
YOUTUBE	558	33.6%

DO ALGORITHMS INFLUENCE CREATORS' WORK?

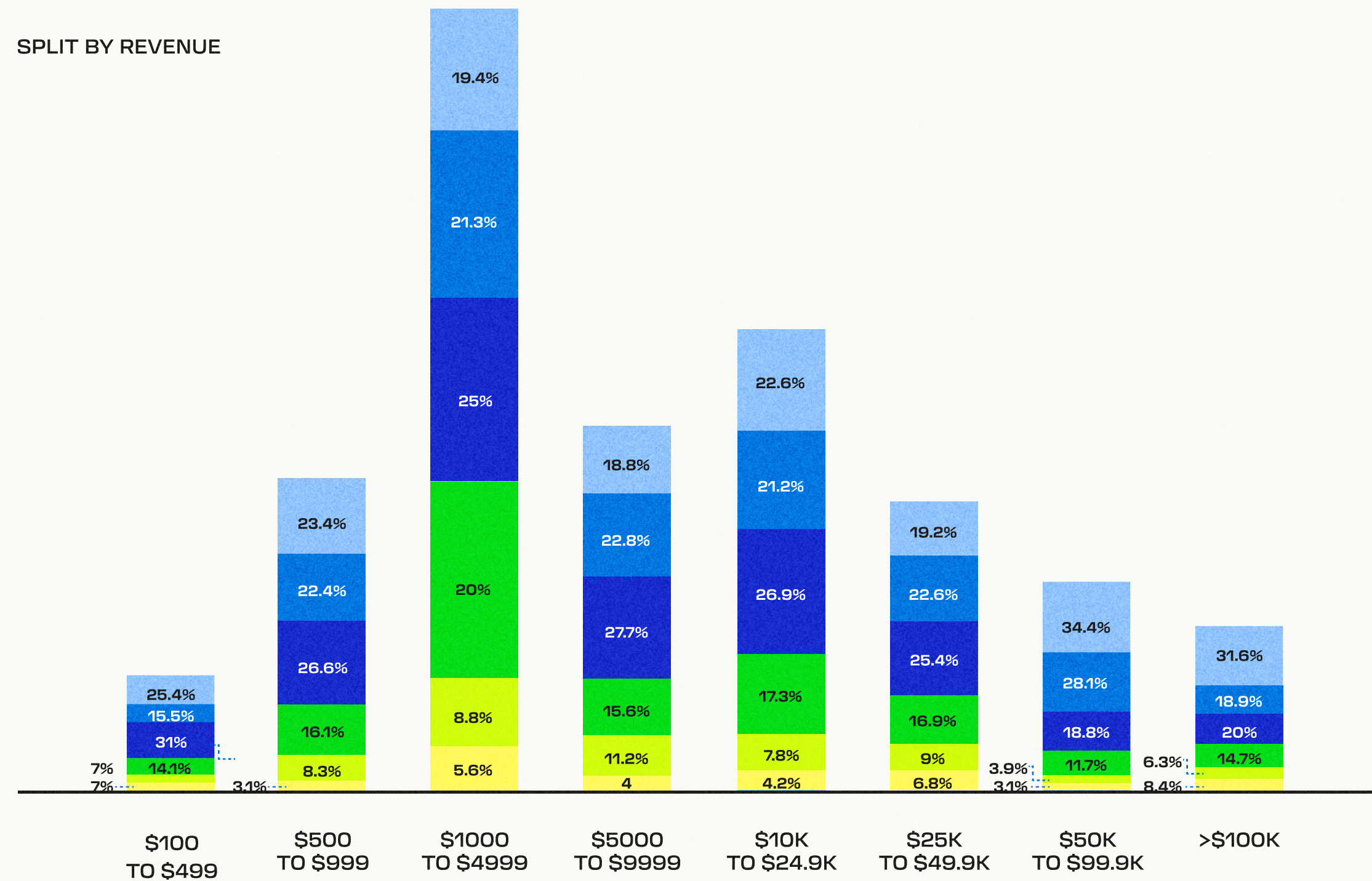On a scale from 1-6, with 1 being "totally disagree" and a 6 being "totally agree," select how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:
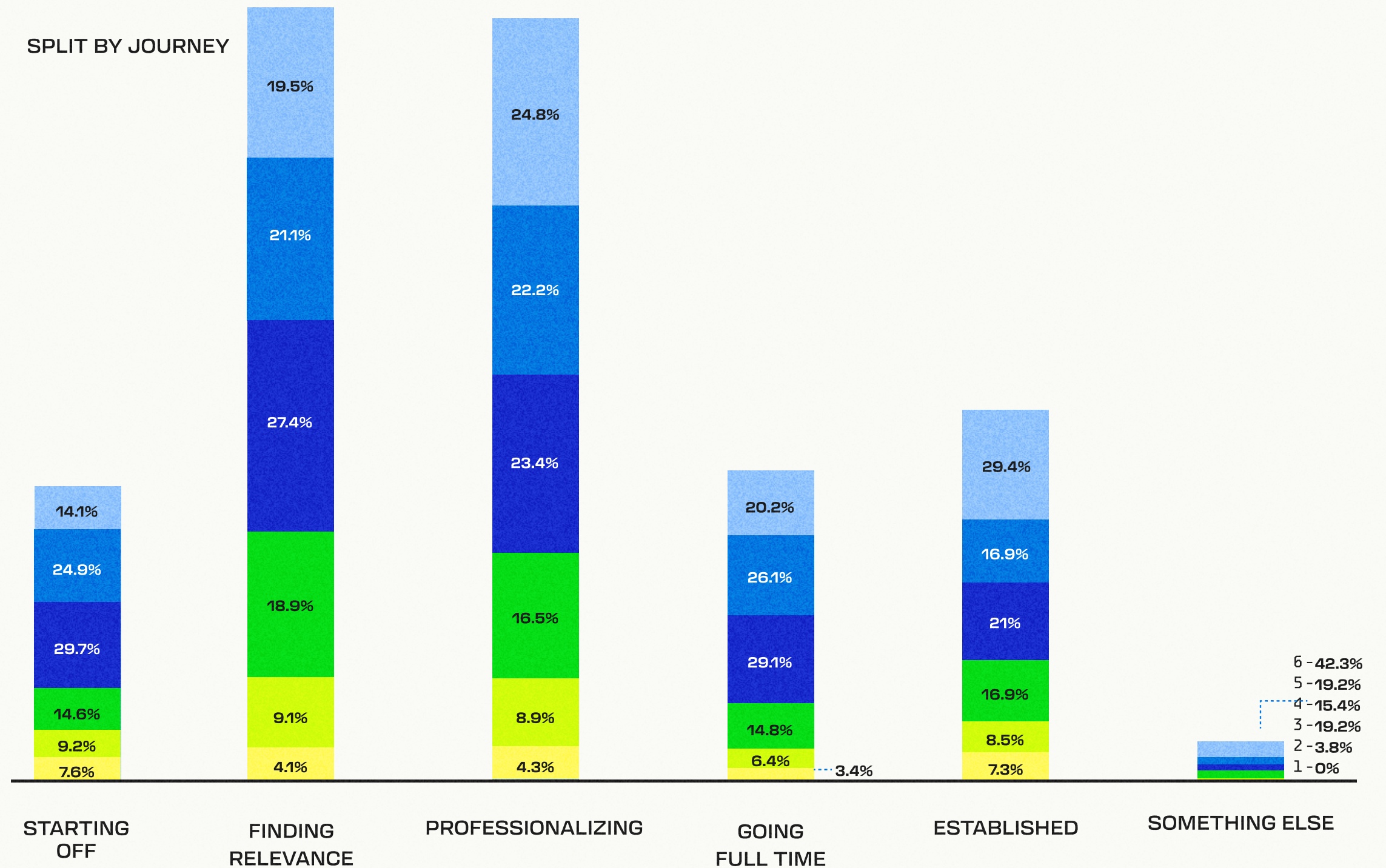
"I don't like that algorithms affect the work I put out."

KEY

TOTALLY AGREE

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Scale	
6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

TOTALLY DISAGREE

1	2	3	4	5	6
71 4.3%	117 7.0%	262 15.8%	369 22.2%	351 21.1%	492 29.6%

SPLIT BY REVENUE

	$100 TO $499	$500 TO $999	$1000 TO $4999	$5000 TO $9999	$10K TO $24.9K	$25K TO $49.9K	$50K TO $99.9K	>$100K
6	22.5%	27.6%	28.1%	26.8%	31.8%	27.1%	41.4%	34.7%
5	26.8%	19.8%	22.1%	19.6%	20.8%	22.0%	16.4%	23.2%
4	21.1%	25.0%	20.4%	23.7%	26.1%	20.3%	21.9%	15.8%
3	18.3%	16.7%	16.9%	19.6%	13.1%	15.3%	10.2%	13.7%
2		7.3%	8.3%	6.3%	4.9%	10.2%	5.5%	6.3%
1	11.3%	3.6%	4.2%	4.0%	3.2%	5.1%	4.7%	6.3%

SPLIT BY JOURNEY

	STARTING OFF	FINDING RELEVANCE	PROFESSIONALIZING	GOING FULL TIME	ESTABLISHED	SOMETHING ELSE
6	20.0%	23.0%	32.1%	29.6%	42.3%	57.7%
5	22.7%	23.6%	19.7%	23.6%	15.7%	19.2%
4	27.0%	23.6%	22.6%	20.7%	17.7%	7.7%
3	19.5%	18.7%	13.6%	12.8%	13.7%	15.4%
2	7.0%	7.9%	7.7%	7.9%	4.0%	0%
1	3.8%	3.1%	4.3%	5.4%	6.5%	0%

DO CREATORS FEEL PRESSURE TO "FEED" ALGORITHMS?

On a scale from 1-6, with 1 being "totally disagree" and a 6 being "totally agree," select how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

"Algorithms punish creators who aren't constantly publishing content."
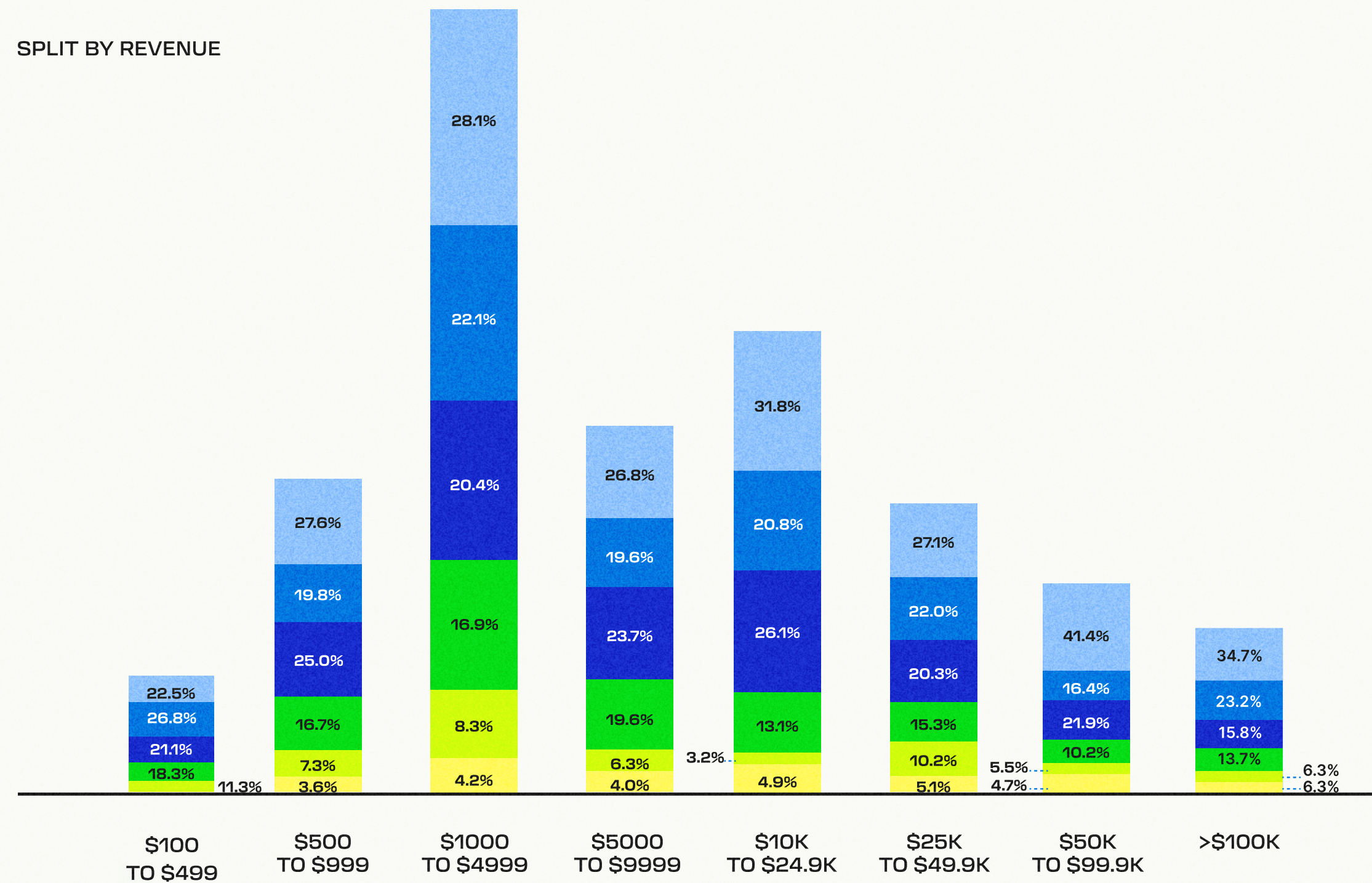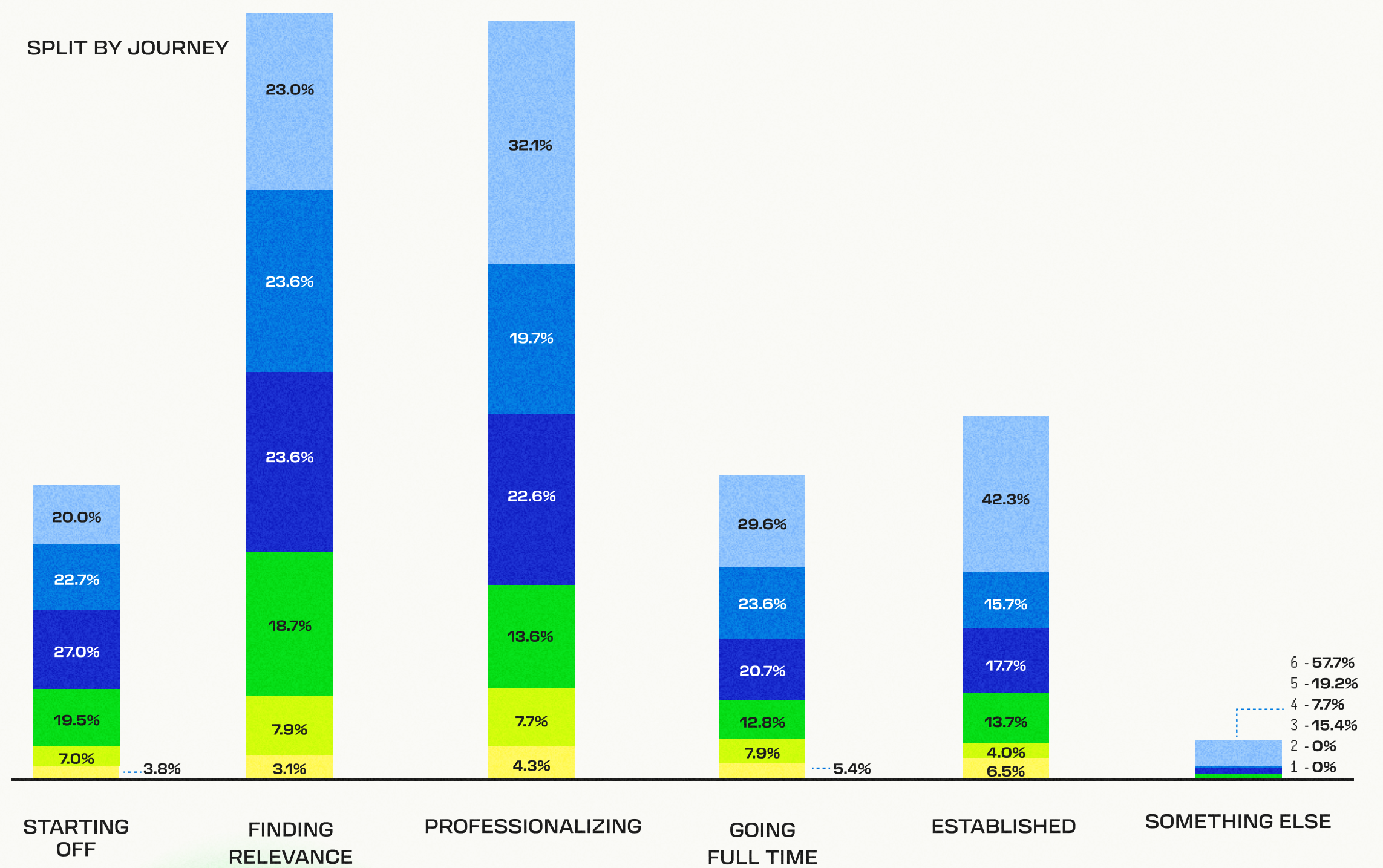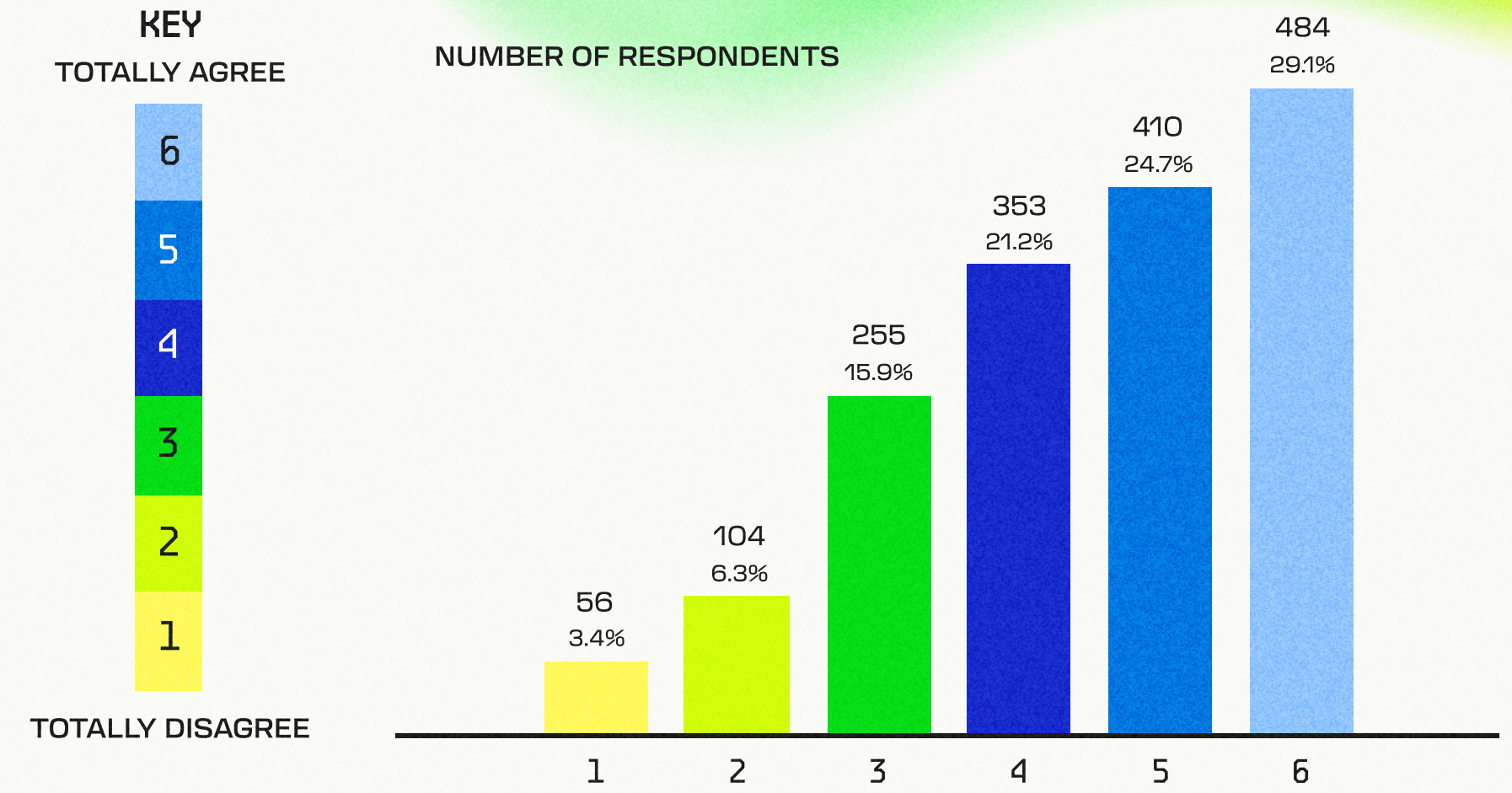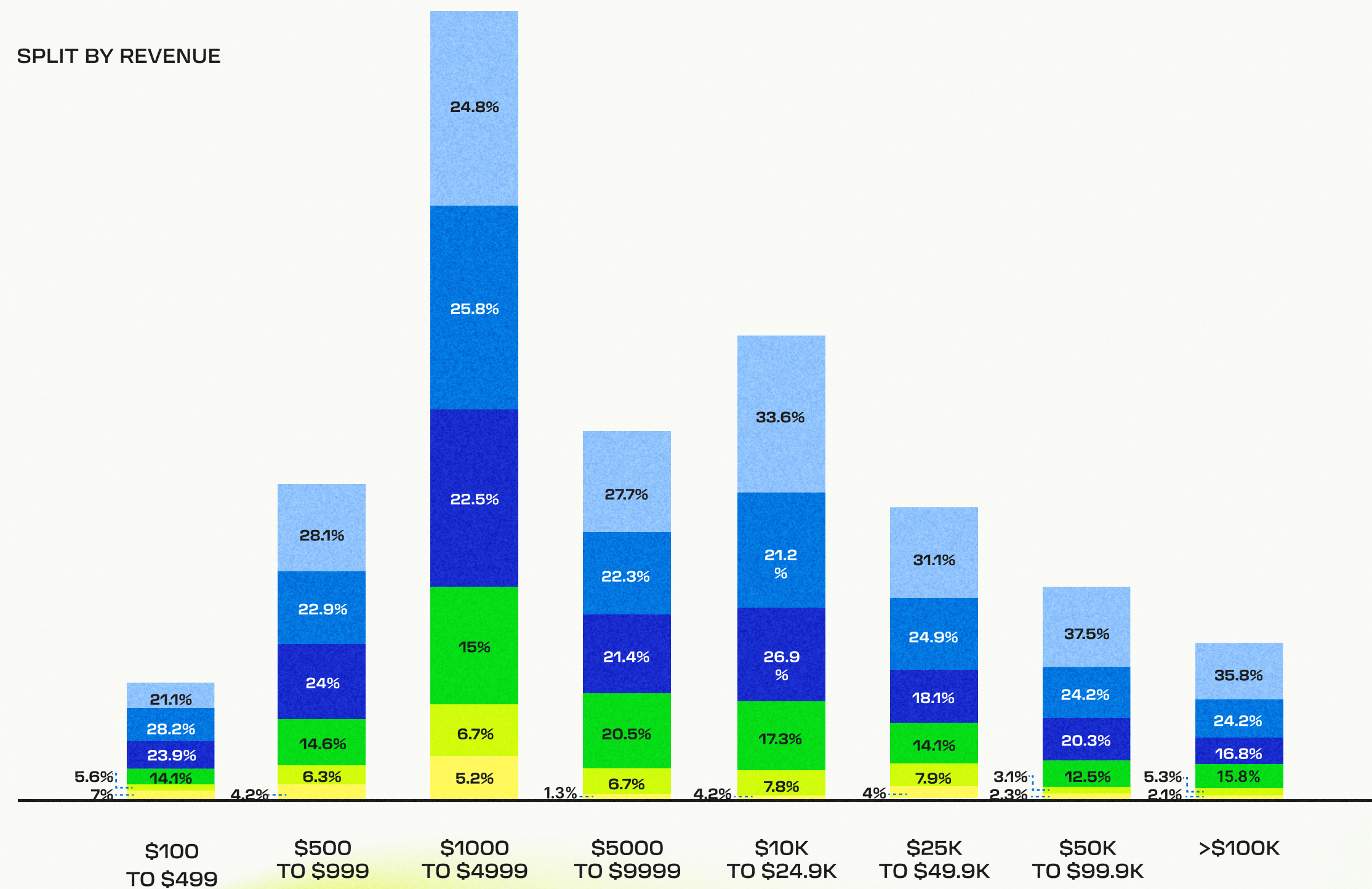
KEY

TOTALLY AGREE

6
5
4
3
2
1

TOTALLY DISAGREE

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Rating	Count	Percent
1	56	3.4%
2	104	6.3%
3	255	15.9%
4	353	21.2%
5	410	24.7%
6	484	29.1%

SPLIT BY REVENUE

$100 TO $499: 7%, 14.1%, 23.9%, 28.2%, 21.1%, 5.6%
$500 TO $999: 4.2%, 6.3%, 14.6%, 24%, 22.9%, 28.1%
$1000 TO $4999: 5.2%, 6.7%, 15%, 22.5%, 25.8%, 24.8%
$5000 TO $9999: 1.3%, 6.7%, 20.5%, 21.4%, 22.3%, 27.7%
$10K TO $24.9K: 4.2%, 7.8%, 17.3%, 26.9%, 21.2%, 33.6%
$25K TO $49.9K: 4%, 7.9%, 14.1%, 18.1%, 24.9%, 31.1%
$50K TO $99.9K: 2.3%, 3.1%, 12.5%, 20.3%, 24.2%, 37.5%
>$100K: 2.1%, 5.3%, 15.8%, 16.8%, 24.2%, 35.8%

SPLIT BY JOURNEY

STARTING OFF: 2.7%, 9.7%, 17.3%, 27%, 24.9%, 14.1%
FINDING RELEVANCE: 3.7%, 5.9%, 18.9%, 27.4%, 21.1%, 19.5%
PROFESSIONALIZING: 3.5%, 6.7%, 11%, 20.7%, 23.8%, 34.3%
GOING FULL TIME: 3%, 3.9%, 11.8%, 24.6%, 27.6%, 20.2%
ESTABLISHED: 3.2%, 5.6%, 15.7%, 16.5%, 20.2%, 38.7%
SOMETHING ELSE: 1 - 3.8%, 2 - 3.8%, 3 - 15.4%, 4 - 11.5%, 5 - 3.8%, 61.5%

DO CREATORS FEEL BOXED IN?

On a scale from 1-6, with 1 being "totally disagree" and a 6 being "totally agree," select how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:
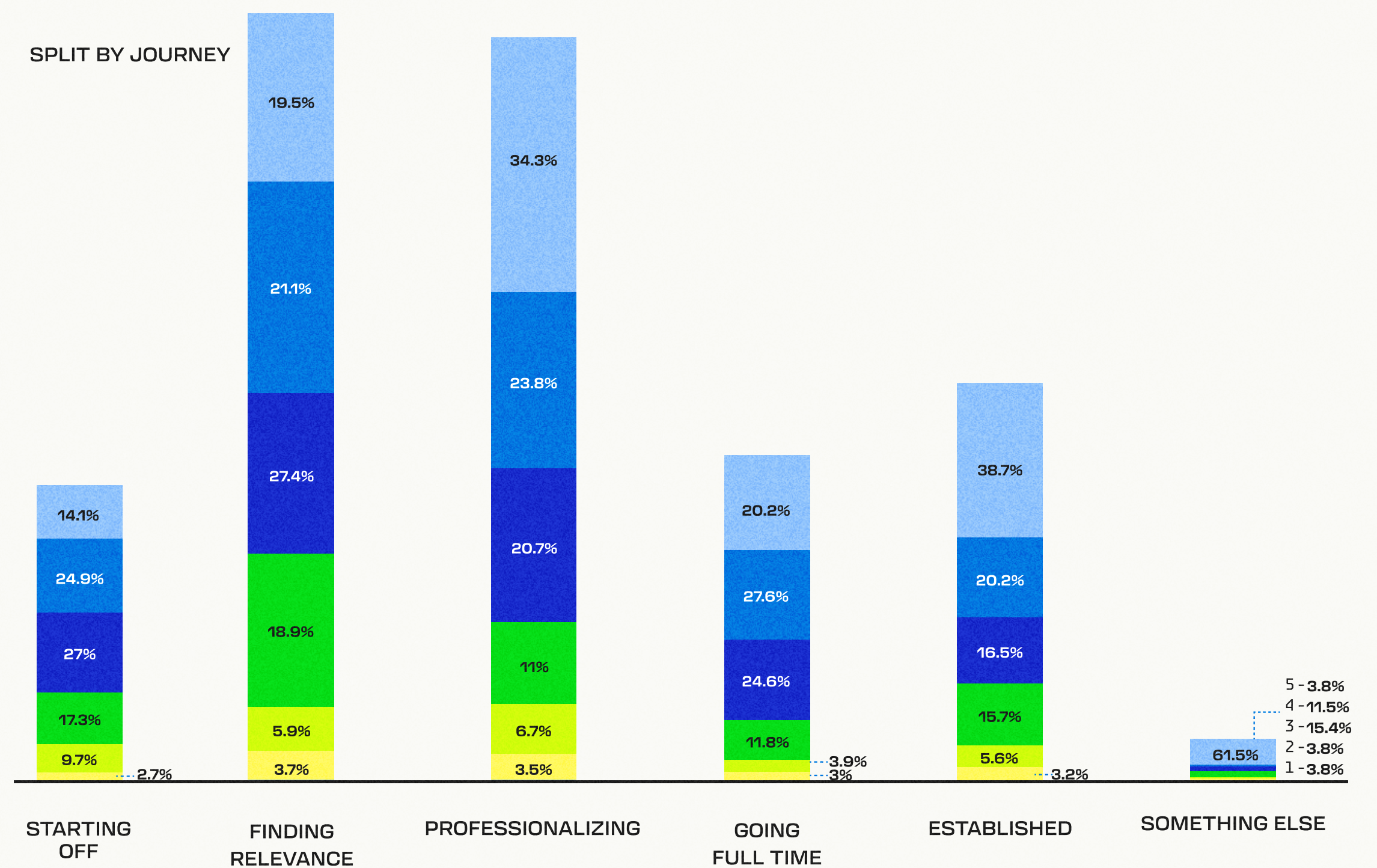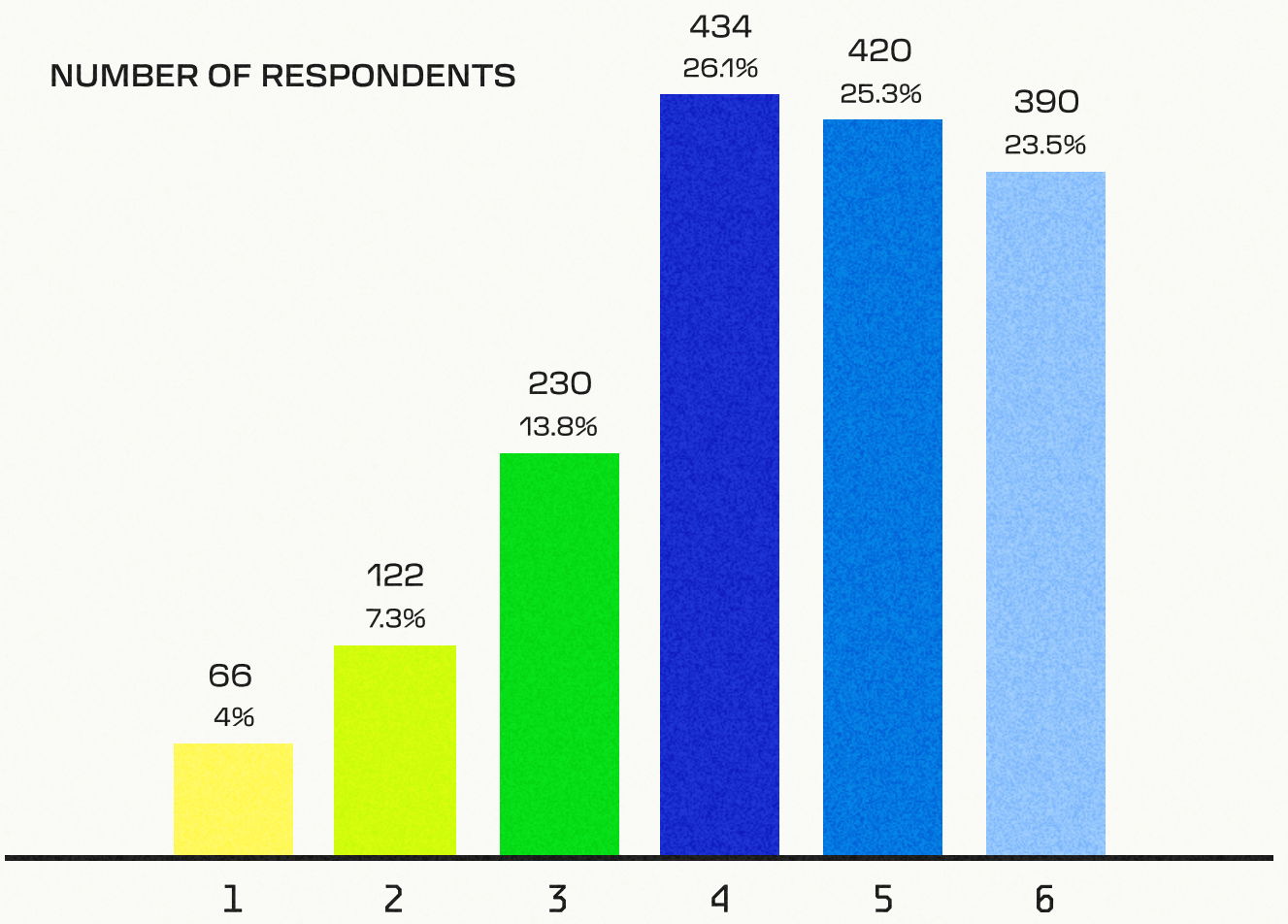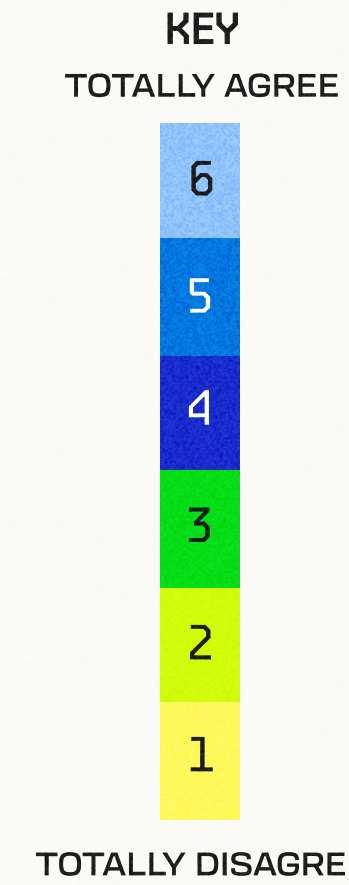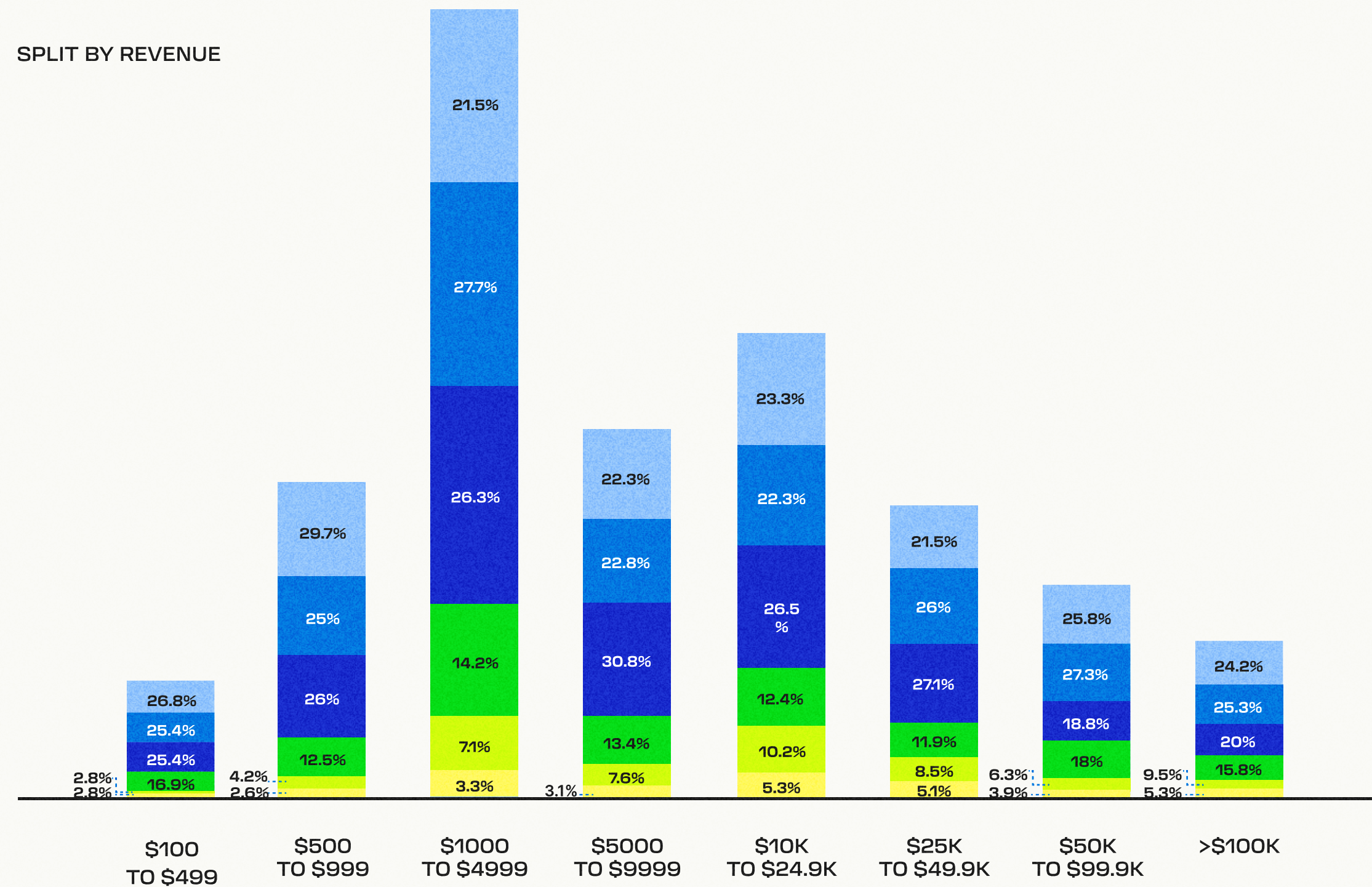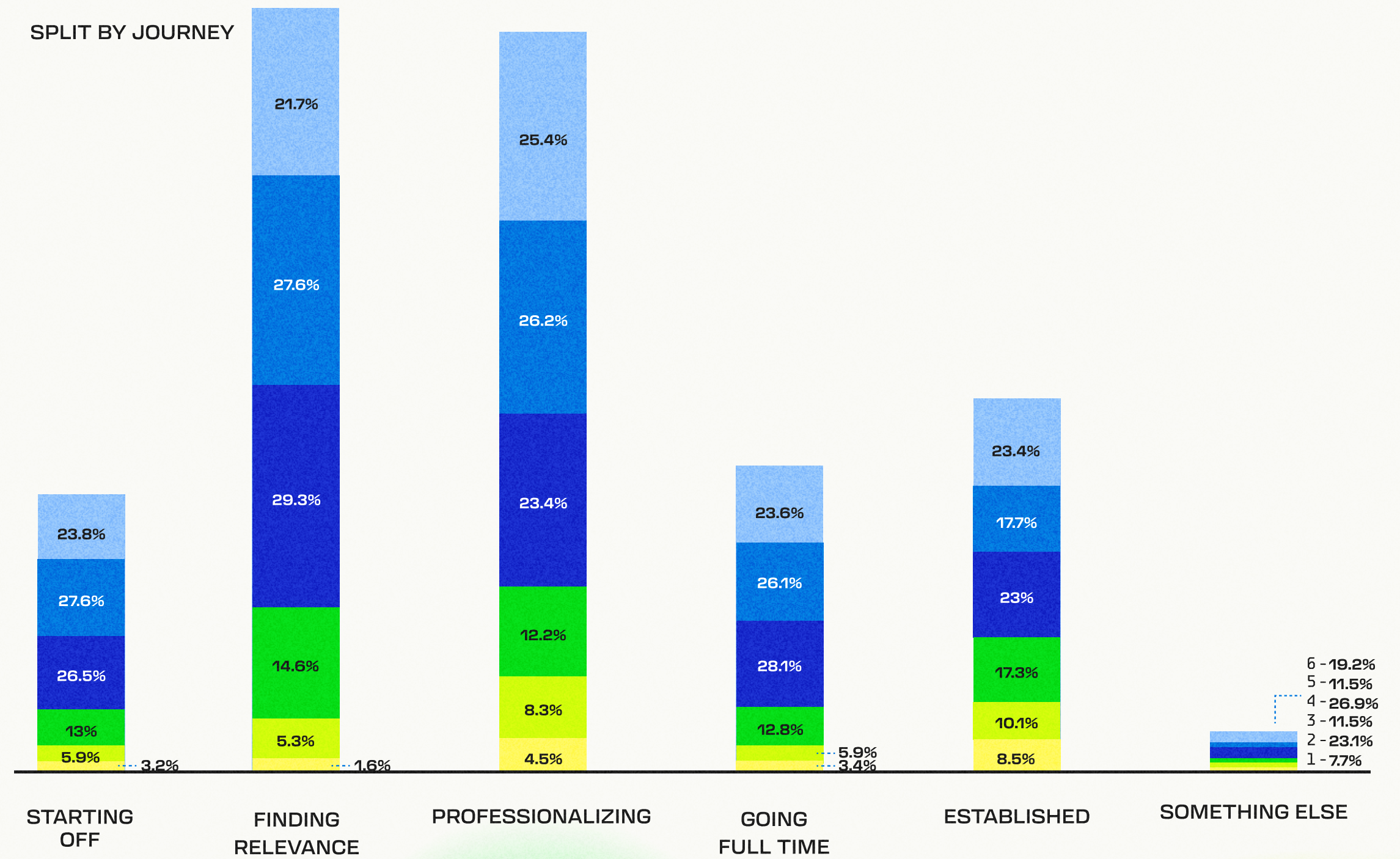
"I wish there was a way for me to create more diverse content."

KEY

TOTALLY AGREE

6
5
4
3
2
1

TOTALLY DISAGREE

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Rating	Count	Percent
1	66	4%
2	122	7.3%
3	230	13.8%
4	434	26.1%
5	420	25.3%
6	390	23.5%

SPLIT BY REVENUE

	$100 TO $499	$500 TO $999	$1000 TO $4999	$5000 TO $9999	$10K TO $24.9K	$25K TO $49.9K	$50K TO $99.9K	>$100K
6	26.8%	29.7%	21.5%	22.3%	23.3%	21.5%	25.8%	24.2%
5	25.4%	25%	27.7%	22.8%	22.3%	26%	27.3%	25.3%
4	25.4%	26%	26.3%	30.8%	26.5%	27.1%	18.8%	20%
3	16.9%	12.5%	14.2%	13.4%	12.4%	11.9%	18%	15.8%
2	2.8%	4.2%	7.1%	7.6%	10.2%	8.5%	6.3%	9.5%
1	2.8%	2.6%	3.3%	3.1%	5.3%	5.1%	3.9%	5.3%

SPLIT BY JOURNEY

	STARTING OFF	FINDING RELEVANCE	PROFESSIONALIZING	GOING FULL TIME	ESTABLISHED	SOMETHING ELSE
6	23.8%	21.7%	25.4%	23.6%	23.4%	19.2%
5	27.6%	27.6%	26.2%	26.1%	17.7%	11.5%
4	26.5%	29.3%	23.4%	28.1%	23%	26.9%
3	13%	14.6%	12.2%	12.8%	17.3%	11.5%
2	5.9%	5.3%	8.3%	5.9%	10.1%	23.1%
1	3.2%	1.6%	4.5%	3.4%	8.5%	7.7%

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RESEARCH?

CONTACT US AT PRESS@PATREON.COM

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