# 2017 STATE OF CONVERSION OPTIMIZATION REPORT

CXL, a data-driven conversion optimization agency that offers digital analytics and CRO training for marketers, and Sentient Ascend, a conversion rate optimization solution that uses evolutionary algorithms to accelerate your testing, asked 333 optimization people 26 questions to determine the state of the conversion rate optimization (CRO) industry in 2017. Here are the results we found.
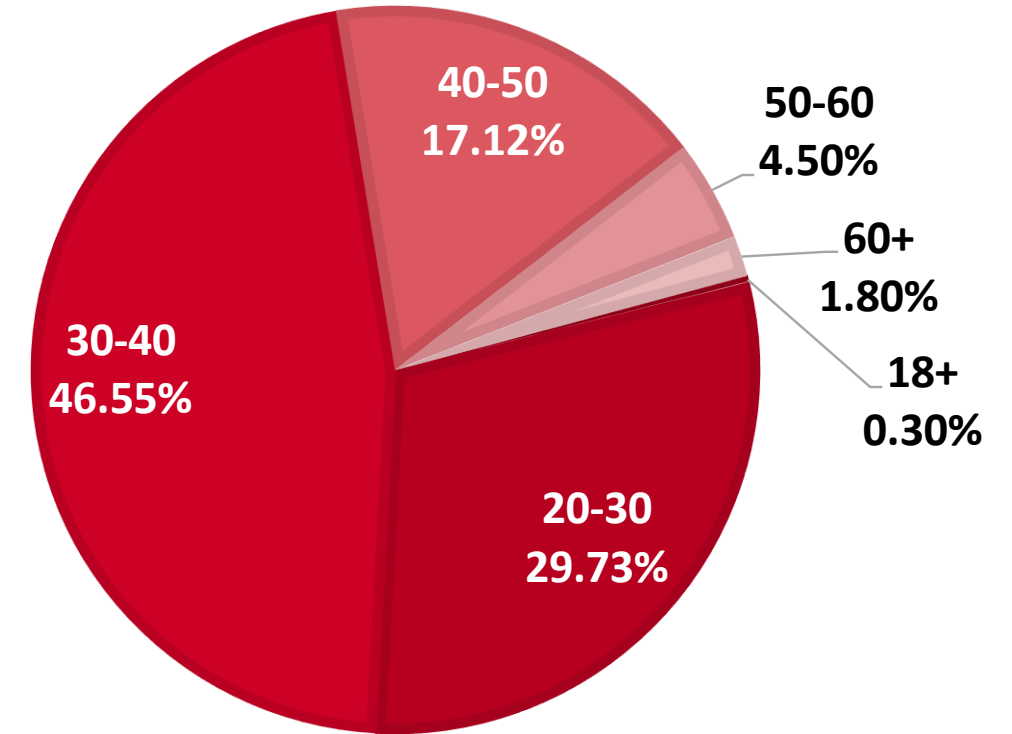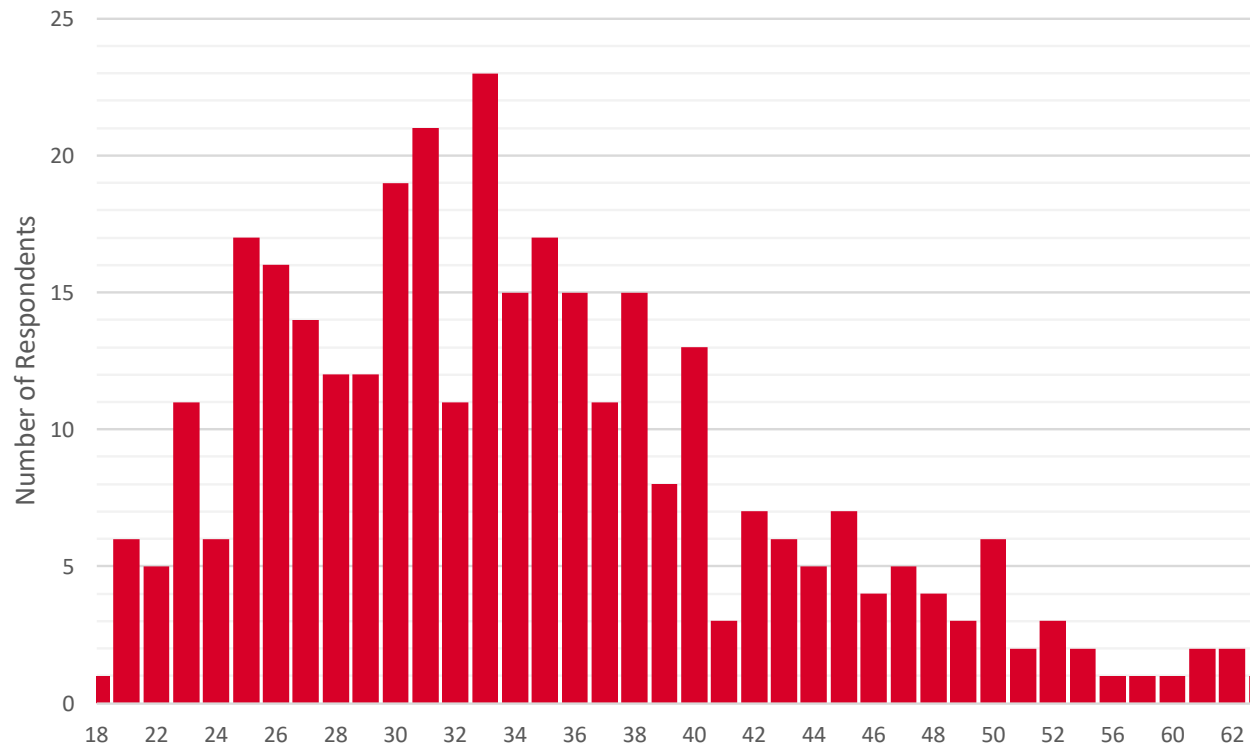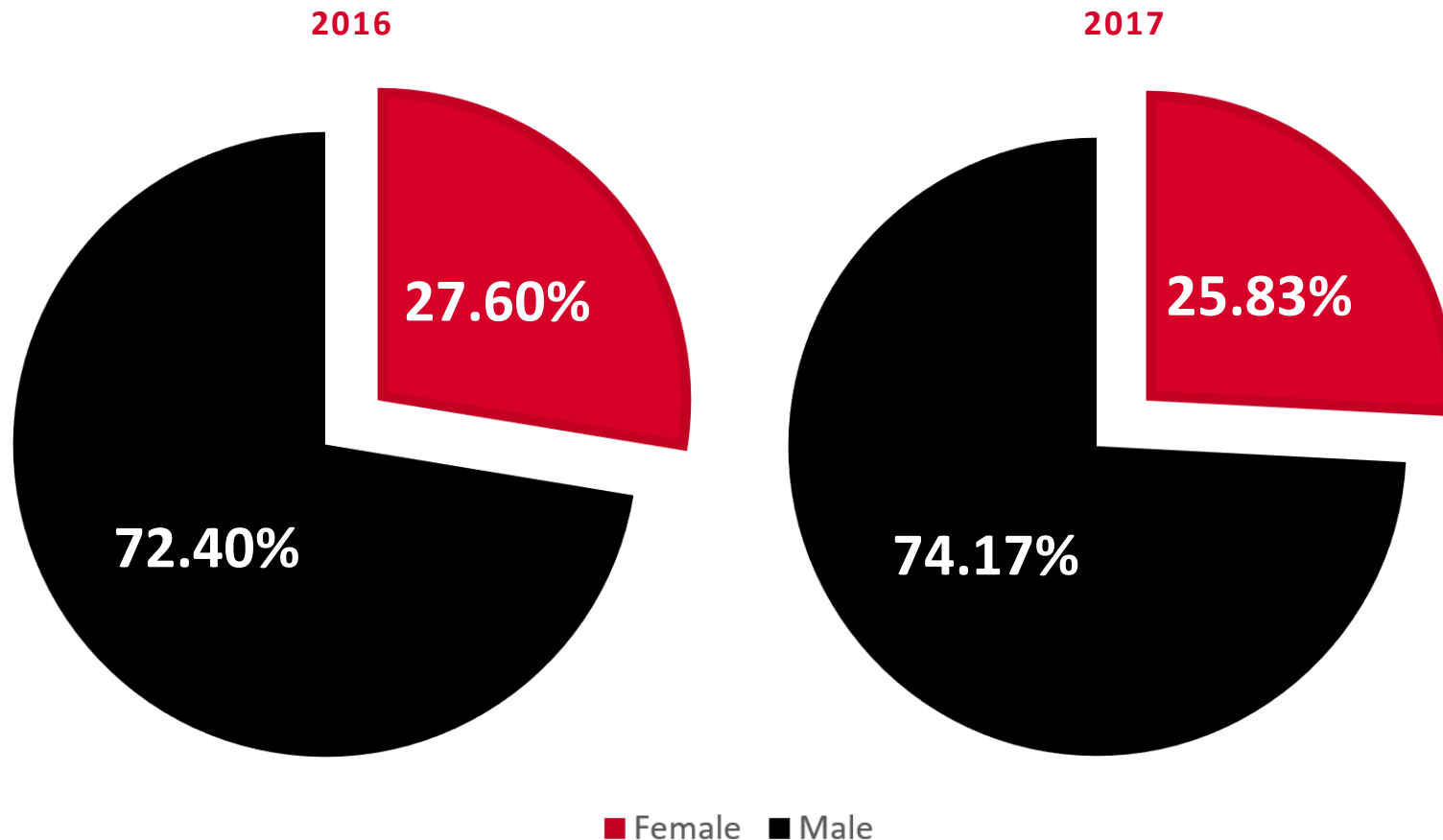
DEMOGRAPHICS: GENDER
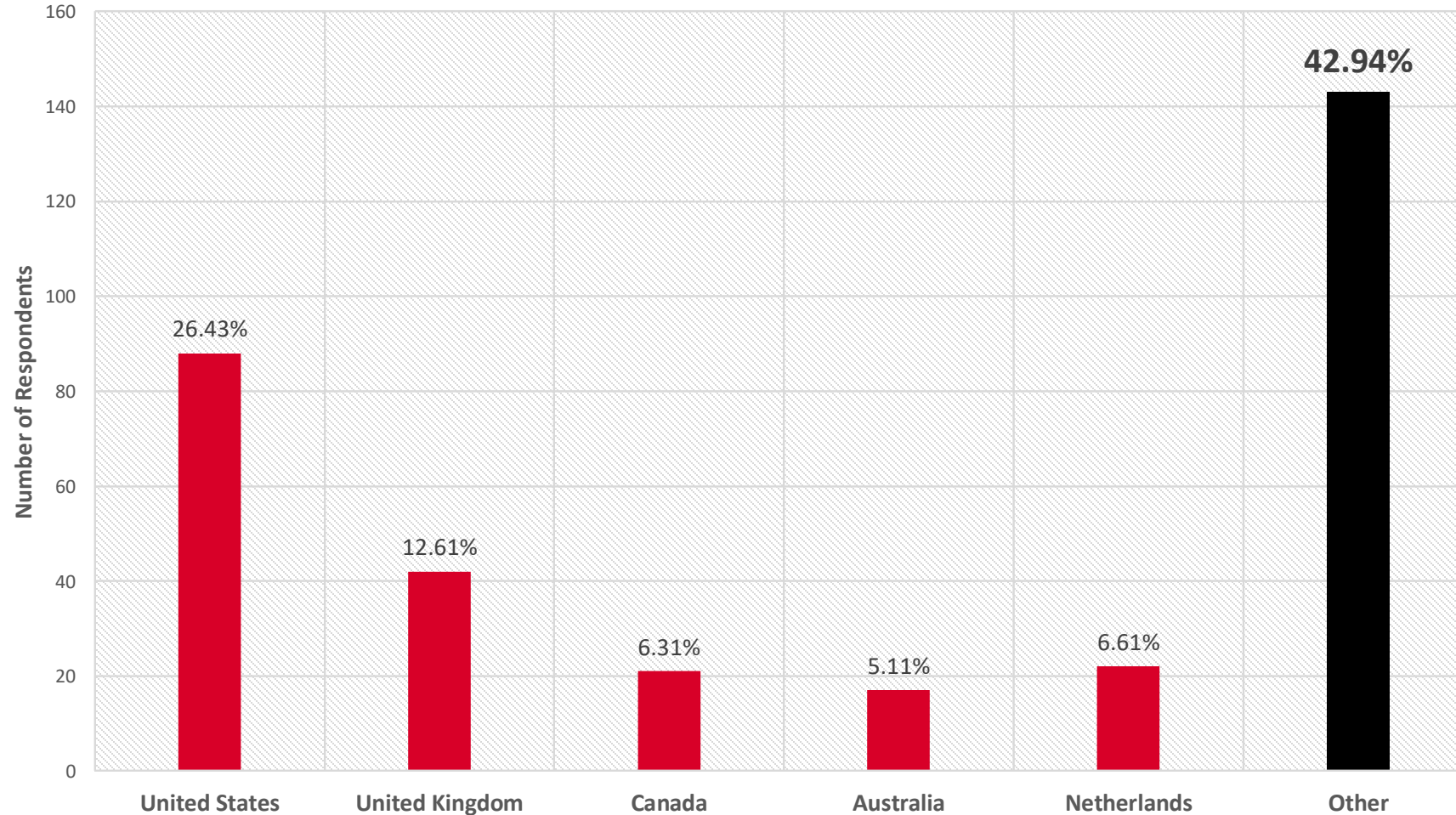
2016

27.60%

72.40%

2017

25.83%

74.17%

KEY TAKEAWAY

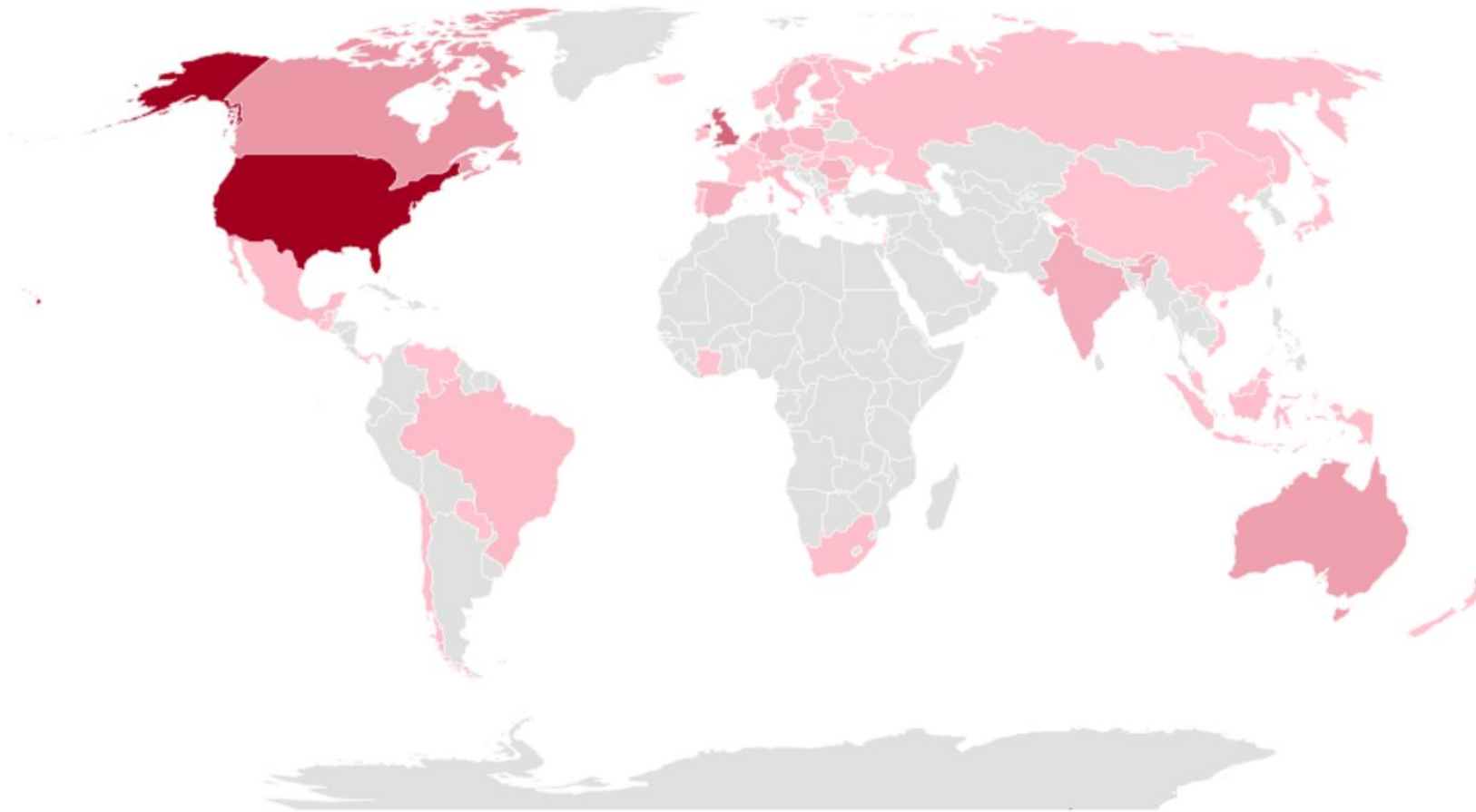The percentage of women in CRO has **decreased** from 2016 and the industry continues to be **predominantly male**.

■ Female ■ Male

CXL ✛ sentient

DEMOGRAPHICS: LOCATION

DEMOGRAPHICS: LOCATION

Number of Respondents

1   88

WHAT TYPE OF **COMPANY** DO YOU WORK FOR?
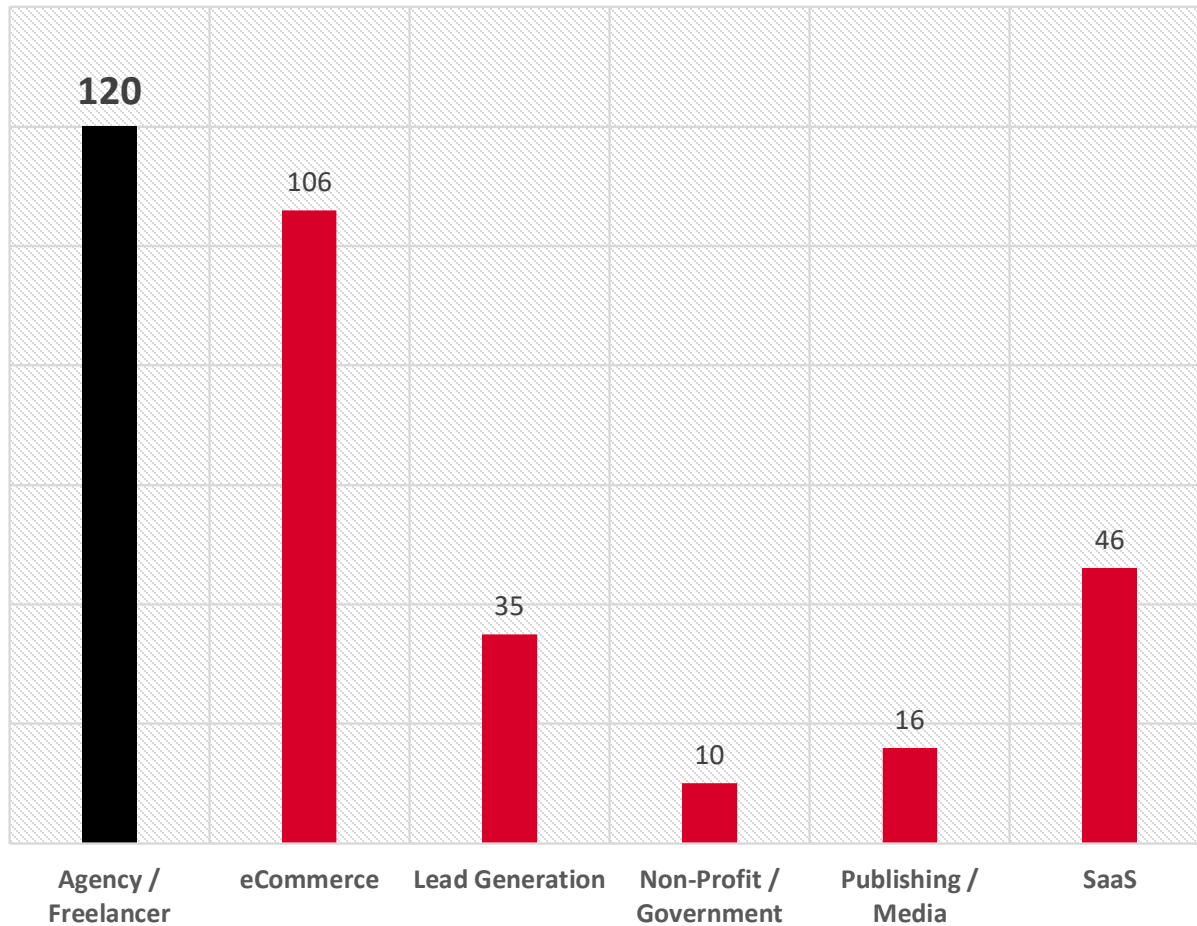
OUT OF 333 RESPONDENTS…

36% of optimizers work in an **agency** or as a **freelancer**

32% of optimizers work in **eCommerce**

32% of optimizers work for **other types** of companies

Bar chart values:
- Agency / Freelancer: 120
- eCommerce: 106
- Lead Generation: 35
- Non-Profit / Government: 10
- Publishing / Media: 16
- SaaS: 46

Pie chart:
- Agency / Freelancer 36%
- eCommerce 32%
- Lead Generation 10%
- Non-Profit / Government 3%
- Publishing / Media 5%
- SaaS 14%
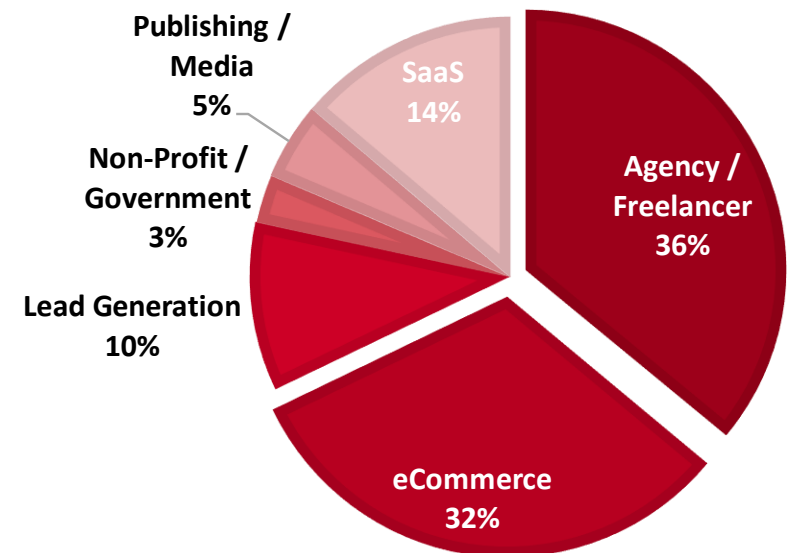
HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN A CRO ROLE?

Years

10+	5.11%
9	0.30%
8	1.20%
7	1.80%
6	3.60%
5	7.51%
4	7.21%
3	14.71%
2	22.52%
1	15.62%
0-1	20.42%

Number of Respondents
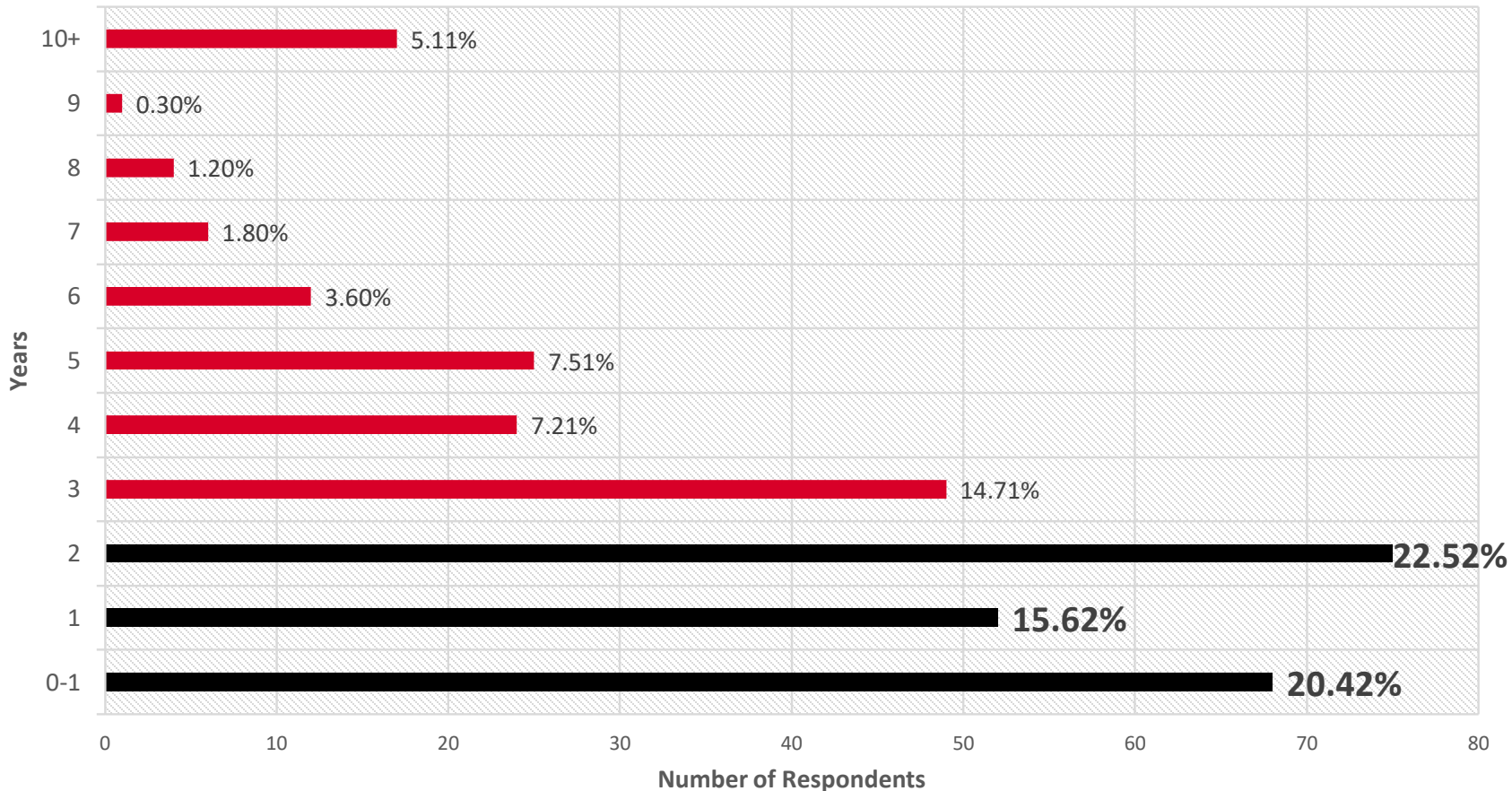
KEY TAKEAWAY

58% of optimizers have only been in CRO roles for **0-2 years**. The industry is still relatively *young* and *gaining momentum*.
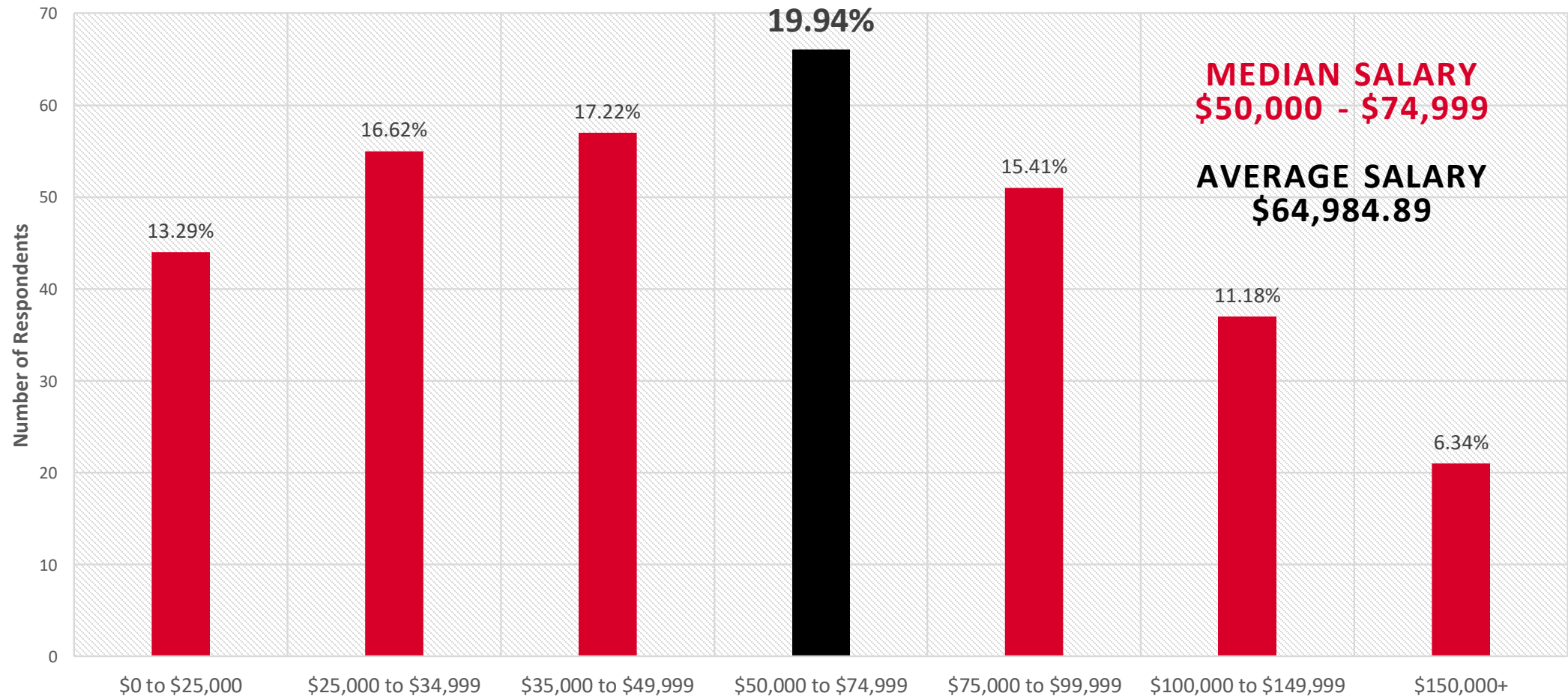
CXL   sentient
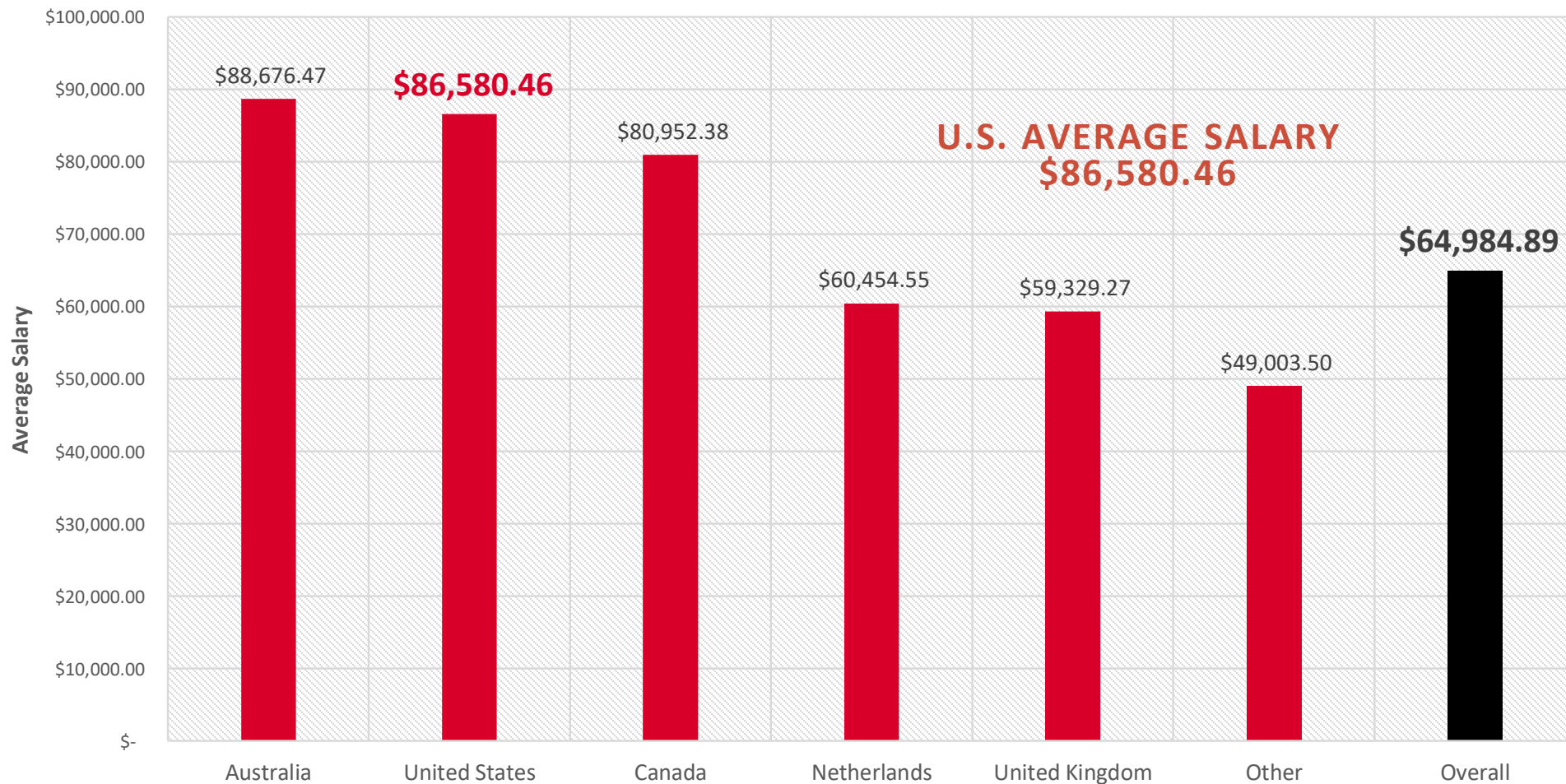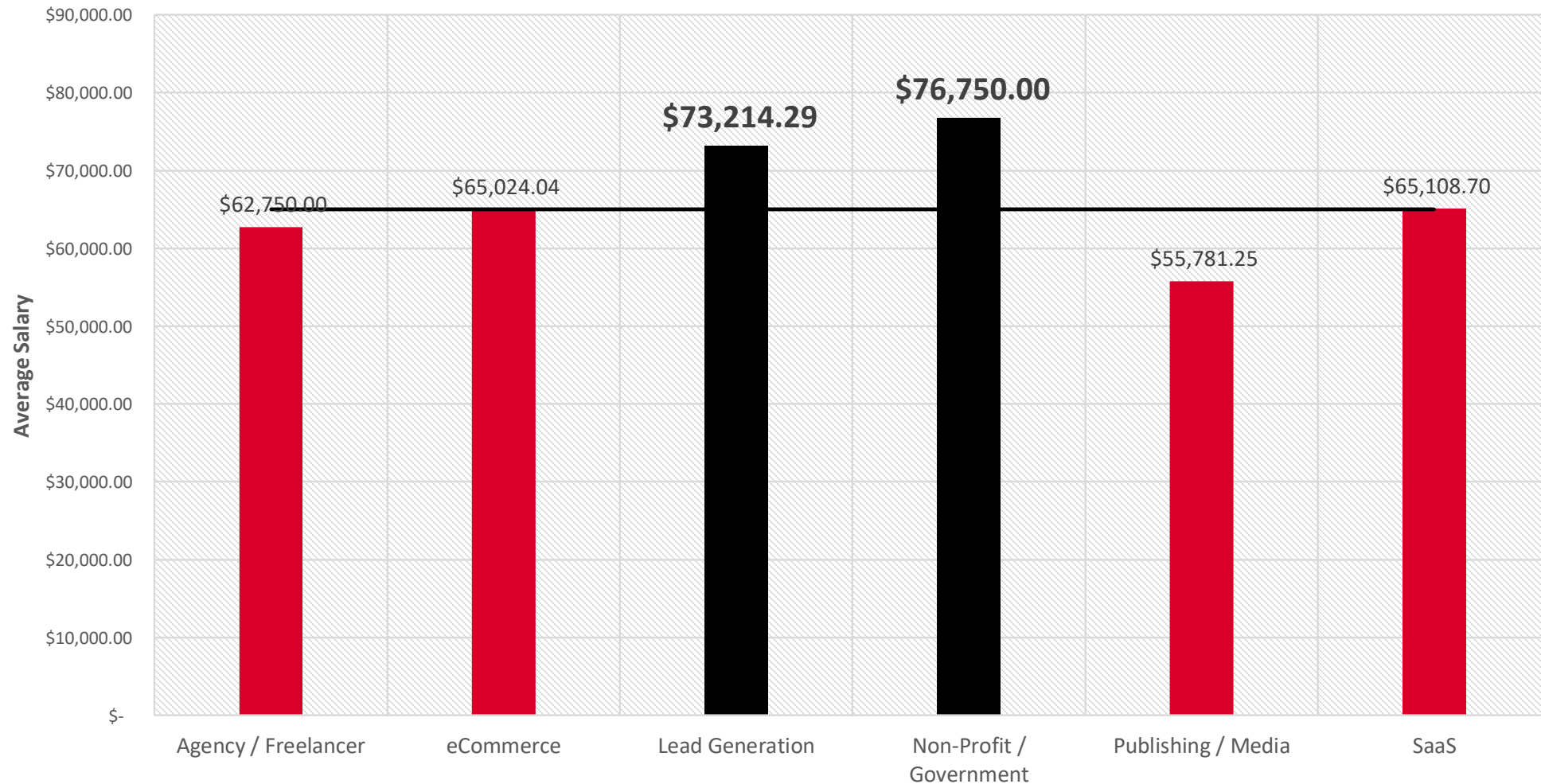
CRO IN ACTION: BUDGET

Does CRO have its own budget?	
No, CRO is not mentioned specifically in the budget.	156
Yes, it's part of the marketing budget.	91
Yes, it's part of the overall budget.	33
Yes.	53

★ CRO is increasingly allocated its own budget and seen as **vital** to company development. However, **47%** of optimizers still work at companies where CRO is not in the budget.

Yes, it's part of the overall budget. 10%

Yes. 16%

No, CRO is not mentioned specifically in the budget. 47%

Yes, it's part of the marketing budget. 27%

CXL sentient
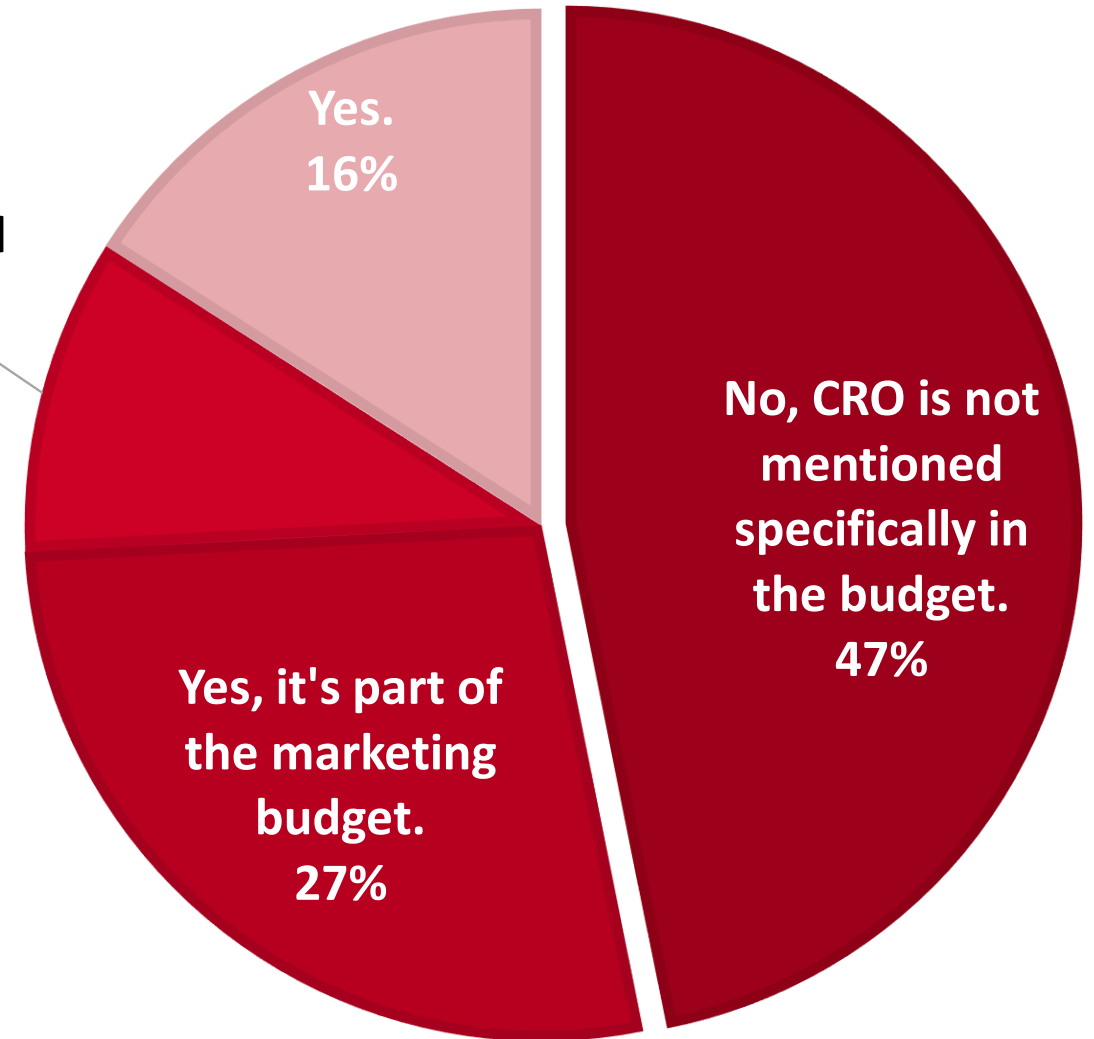
CRO IN ACTION: PROCESS

Does your team have a conversion optimization process that you follow?	
No.	83
Yes, but it isn't documented/structured.	130
Yes, it is documented/structured.	120

★ Most optimizers follow a **conversion optimization process** (**75%**). However, a majority of processes aren't documented or structured.

No.
25%

Yes, it is documented/ structured. 36%

Yes, but it isn't documented/ structured. 39%

CXL ✚ sentient
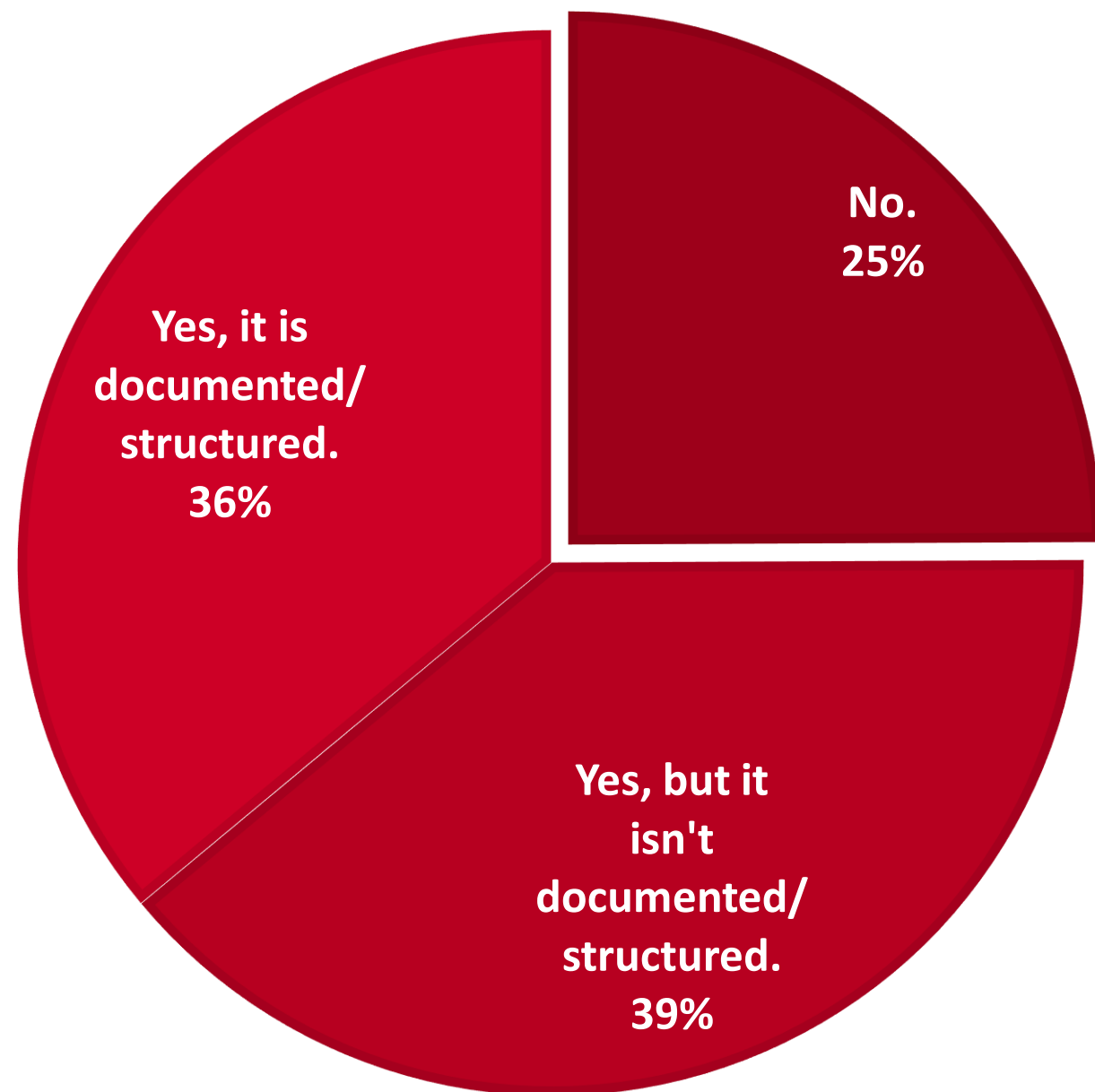
CRO IN ACTION:
TASK DIVISION

Who does optimization in your organization?		
A single dedicated person.	*101*	*30.33%*
A specific team of people.	96	28.83%
Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility.	78	23.42%
People across teams.	58	17.42%

★ Most optimization is done by a **single person** and **specific teams of people**. People working in teams meet more often than those working alone, however, most optimizers meet **only when necessary** (**29.73%**).

How often do you meet with others on your optimization team to discuss CRO?

Number of Respondents

- Daily: 15.62%
- Weekly: 25.83%
- Bi-weekly: 12.01%
- Monthly: 13.21%
- Quarterly: 3.60%
- Only when necessary: 29.73%

- A specific team of people.
- People across teams.
- A single dedicated person.
- Optimization is nobody's primary job responsibility.

Daily Weekly Bi-weekly Monthly Quarterly Only when necessary.

CXL sentient
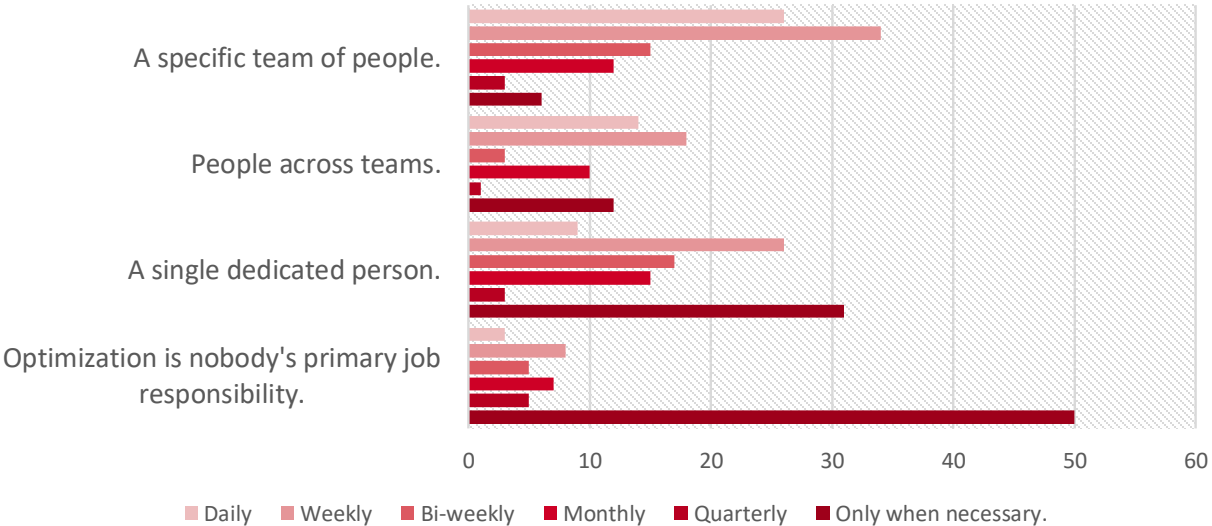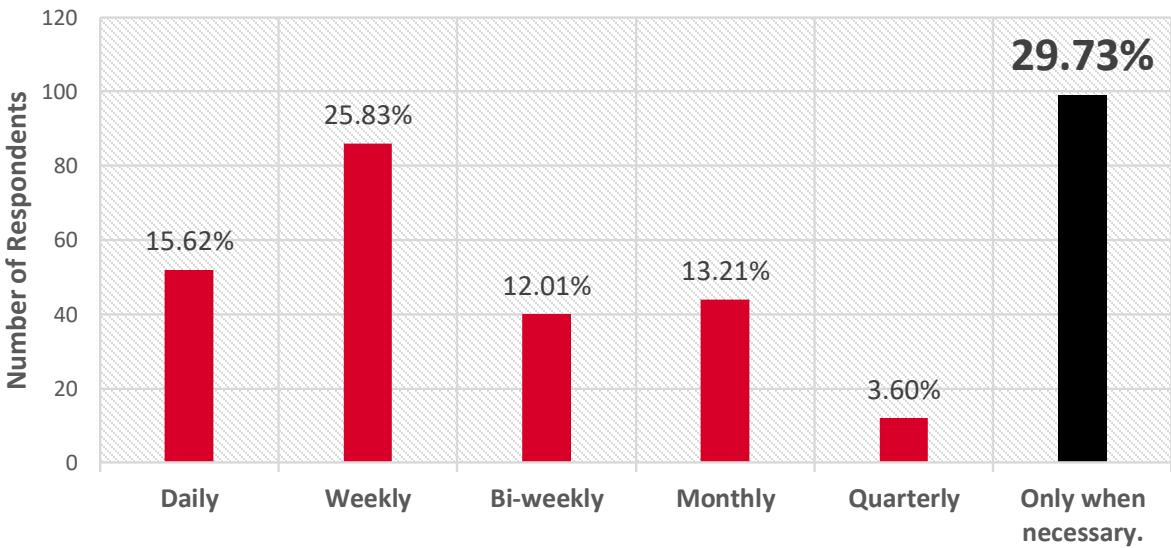
CRO IN ACTION: RESEARCH

Do you have a formal conversion / user research process you use for extracting insights?		
No, we just wing it.	54	16%
No.	74	22%
Yes, we have created our own process.	107	32%
Yes, we use ResearchXL.	38	11%
Yes, we use some other process we found / borrowed.	60	18%

★

61% of optimizers use some type of **formal conversion / user research process**. However, almost **50% of in-house CRO** work is done **without** a formal process for extracting insights.

In-house
- 15.91%
- 7.39%
- 27.27%
- 28.98%
- 20.45%

Agency / Freelance
- 20.38%
- 15.92%
- 37.58%
- 14.65%
- 11.46%

■ Yes, we use some other process we found / borrowed.
■ Yes, we use ResearchXL.
■ Yes, we have created our own process.
■ No.
■ No, we just wing it.

CXL ✛ sentient
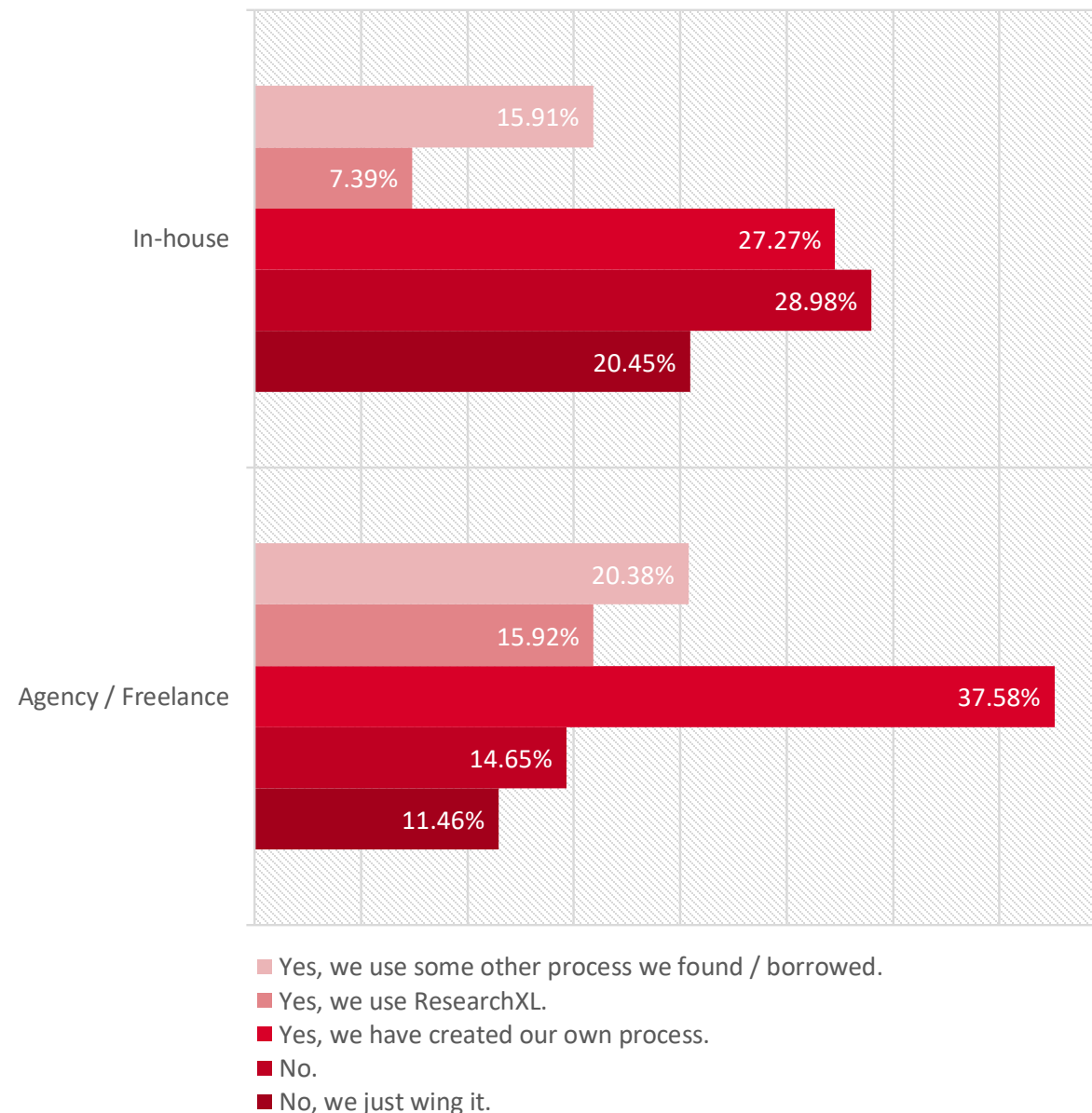
CRO IN ACTION: PLATFORMS

Which of the following platforms does your team optimize?		
Desktop Websites	317	95%
Mobile Websites	275	83%
Mobile Applications	57	17%
Other	27	8%

★ **95%** of optimizers optimize **desktop websites** and **83%** also optimize **mobile websites**. However, relatively few optimizers optimize mobile applications.

Bar chart — Number of Respondents:
- Desktop Websites: 95.20%
- Mobile Websites: 82.58%
- Mobile Applications: 17.12%
- Other: 8.11%
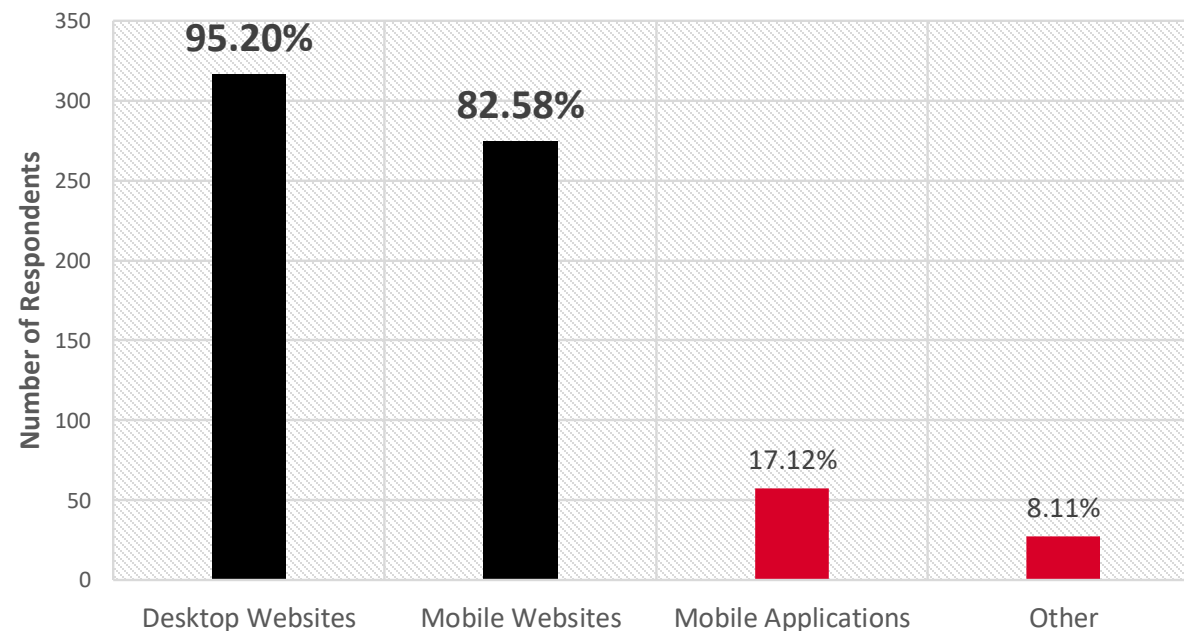
Do you use any kind of website personalization?

Pie chart:
- No 45%
- Yes 55%

CXL sentient
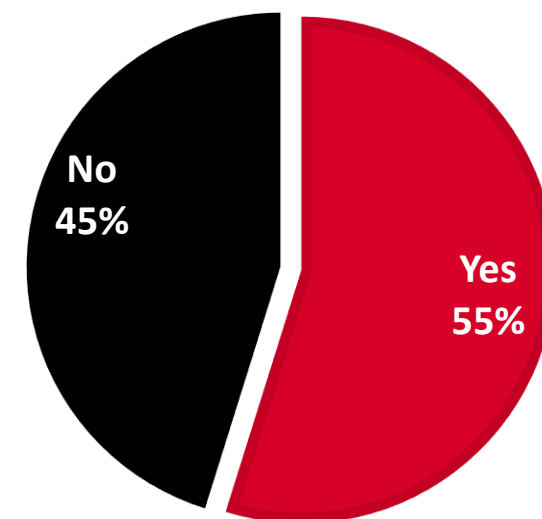
TESTING: TYPE OF TEST

Which of the following tests do your optimization team use?

Bandit 11%

A/B/n 90%

MVT 31%

■ Use ■ Don't Use
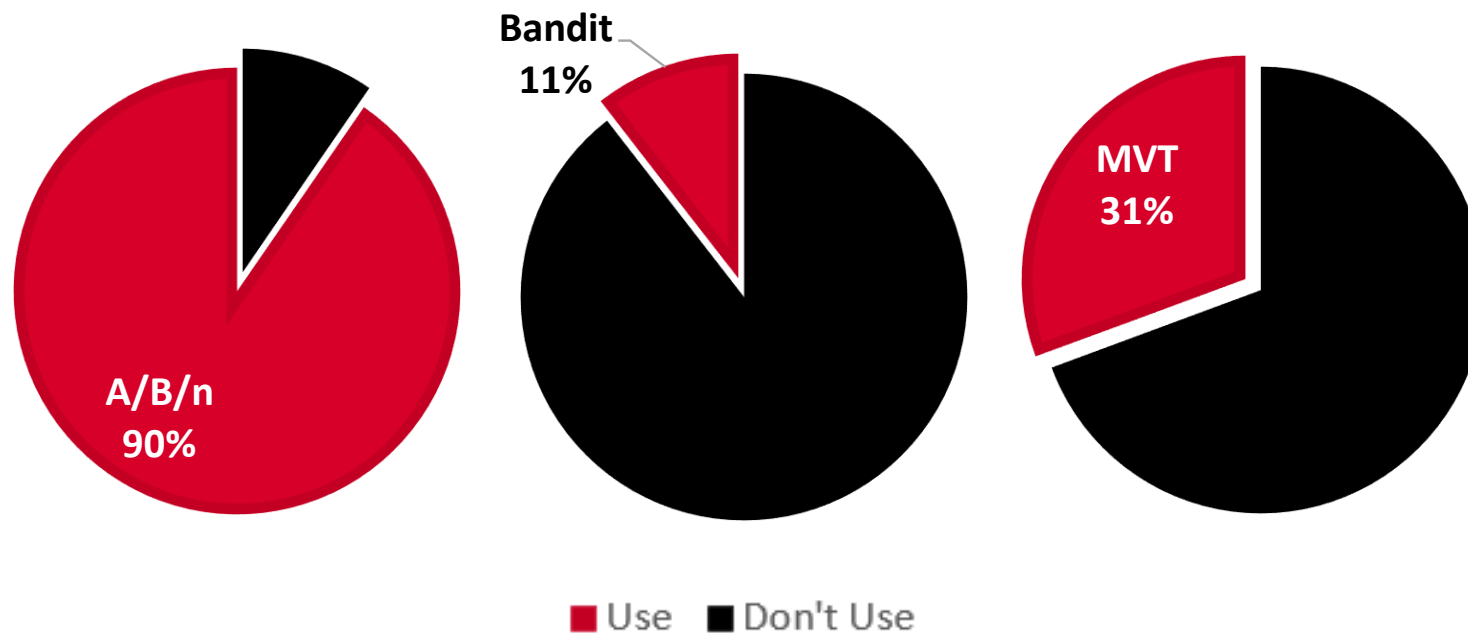
TESTING: TEST FREQUENCY

How many online tests does your team run every month?

20+	7.08%
11-19	3.69%
5-10	16.00%
3-4	24.92%
1-2	**48.31%**
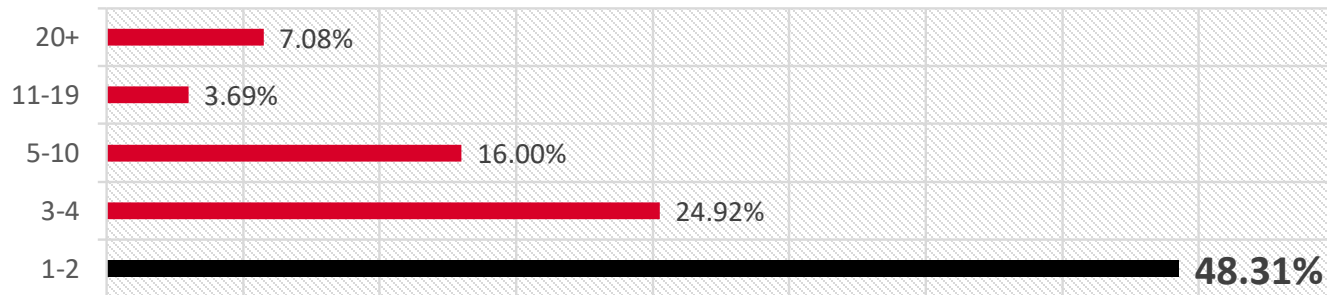
Do you have a test prioritization framework that you follow?

Yes, we use PXL.	11.93%
Yes, we use PIE.	10.40%
Yes, we use ICE.	3.67%
Yes, we have created our own.	26.91%
No, we just wing it.	**47.09%**
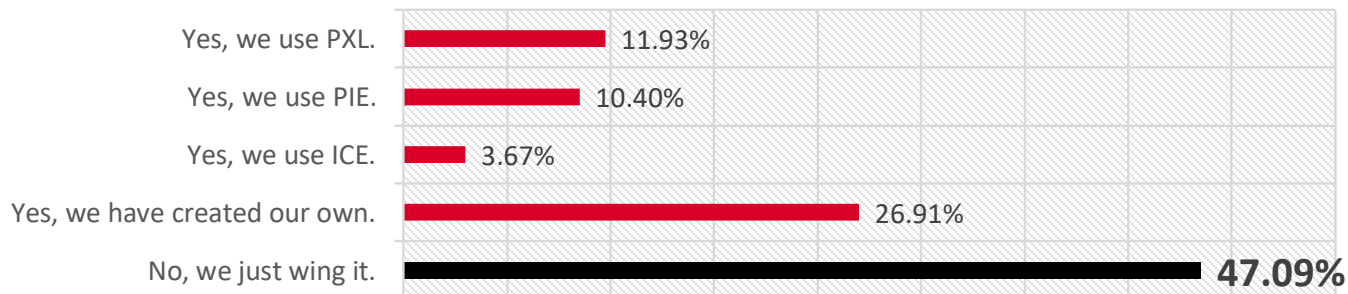
KEY TAKEAWAY

Optimizers running **more tests** are more likely to use a **prioritization framework**.

Tests per Month

- No, we just wing it.
- Yes, we use ICE.
- Yes, we use PXL.
- Yes, we have created our own.
- Yes, we use PIE.

CXL sentient
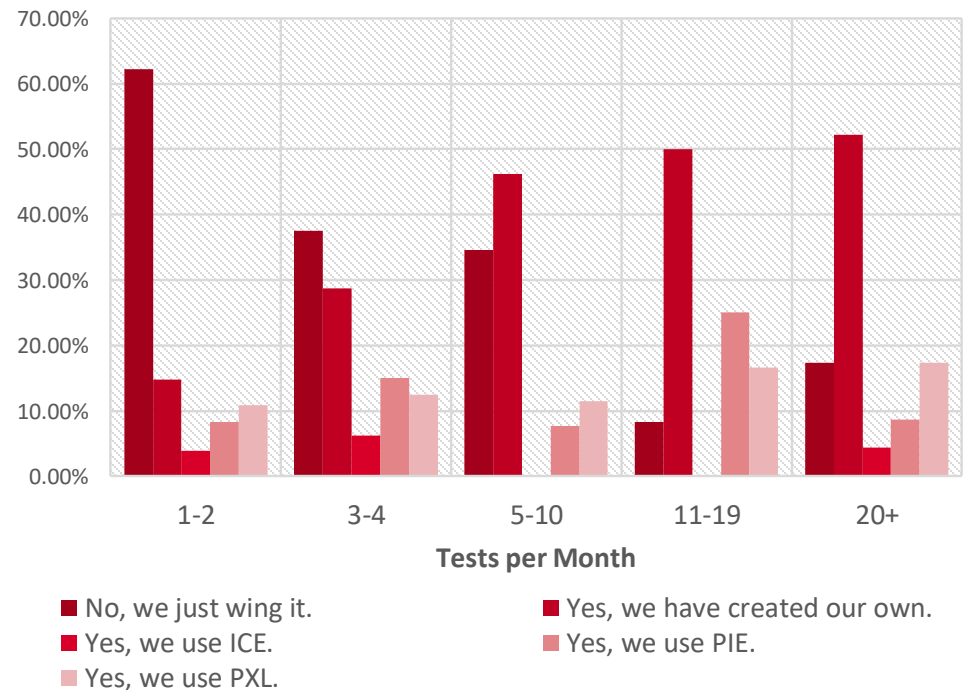
TESTING: TRACKING

Does your optimization team have a standardized stopping point for A/B tests?

- 51.21% (Yes)
- 48.79% (No)
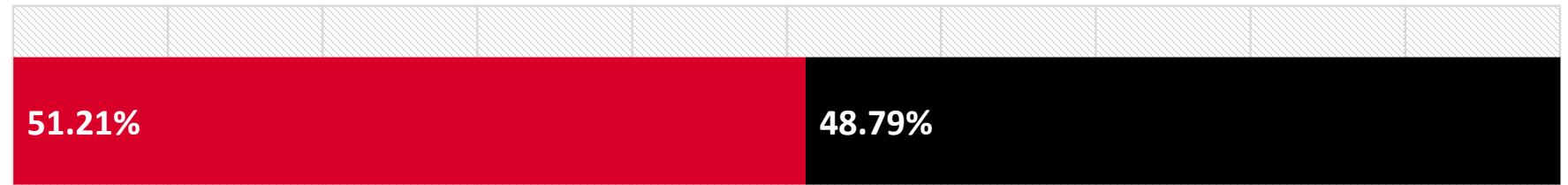
Is the percentage of winning tests tracked?

- 63.83% (Yes)
- 36.17% (No)

Is the average lift per test tracked?

- 66.35% (Yes)
- 33.65% (No)

■ Yes ■ No

CXL • sentient

TESTING: RESULTS

	Yes	No
Results are not archived at all.	57.14%	42.86%
Results are archived in the testing tool.	73.91%	26.09%
We use a dedicated testing workflow tool for that.	73.08%	26.92%
Results are exported out (full data + variation screenshots), and kept in a central repository.	93.48%	6.52%
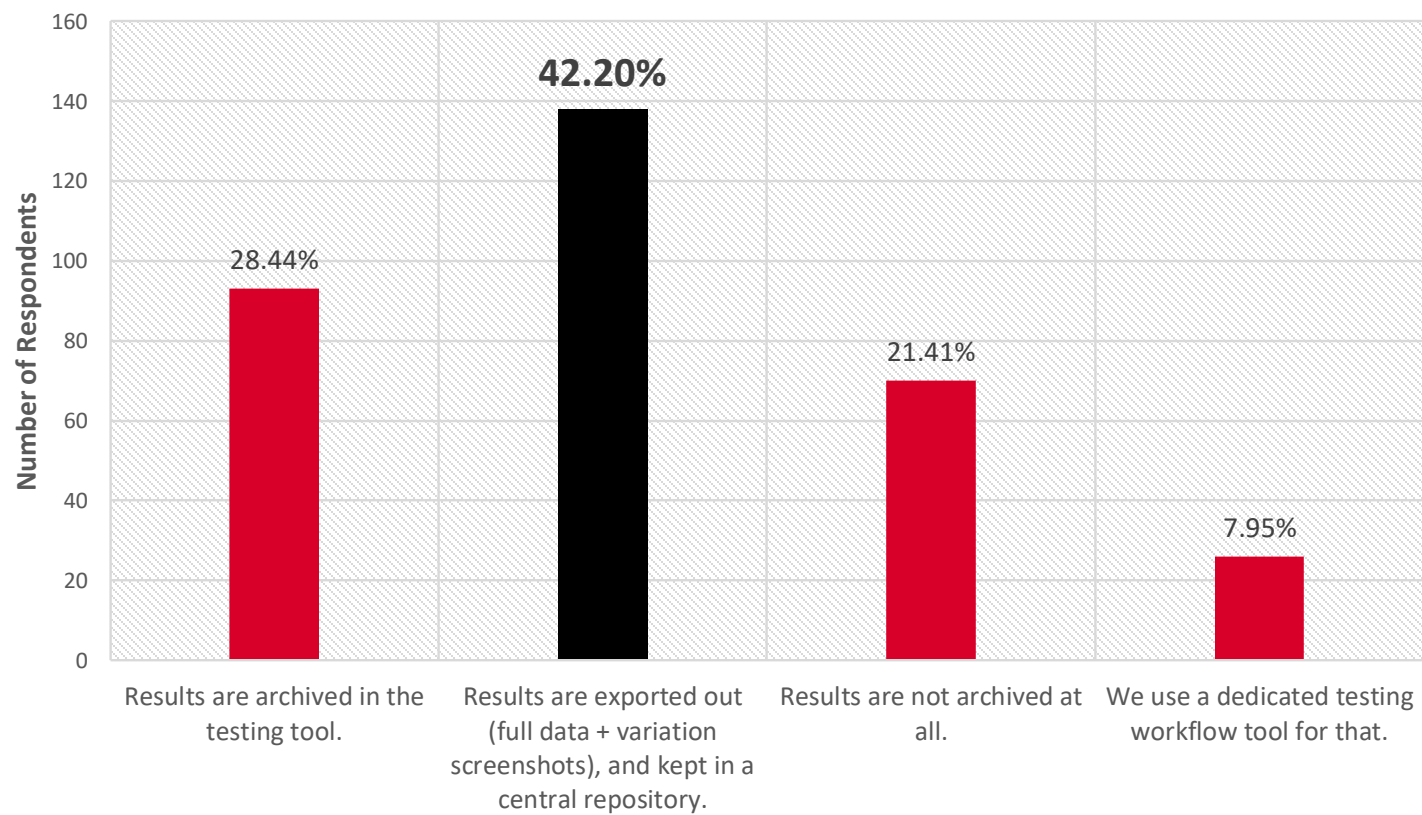
Are CRO test results shared across your team? ■ Yes ■ No

CXL ✦ sentient

A/B TESTING

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **A/B TESTING**:

Pie chart:
- 1: 7%
- 2: 13%
- 3: 20%
- 4: 27%
- 5: 33%

Bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

X-axis: 0.00%, 20.00%, 40.00%, 60.00%, 80.00%, 100.00%

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful
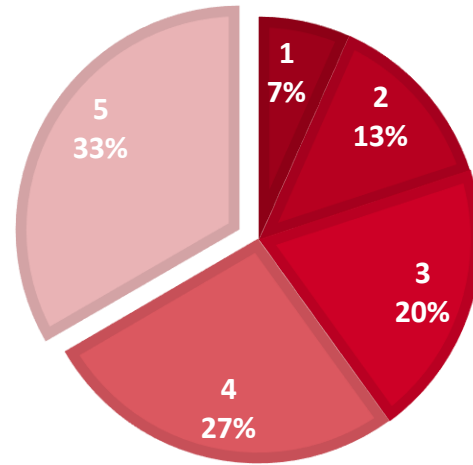
A/B TESTING
308 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 4.15
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	6
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	8
3.	NEUTRAL	48
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	116
5.	VERY USEFUL	129

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PSYCHOLOGY / PERSUASION

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **PSYCHOLOGY / PERSUASION**:

Pie chart:
- 1 — 4%
- 2 — 11%
- 3 — 22%
- 4 — 30%
- 5 — 33%

Bar chart categories: SaaS, Publishing / Media, Non-Profit / Government, Lead Generation, eCommerce, Agency / Freelancer

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful
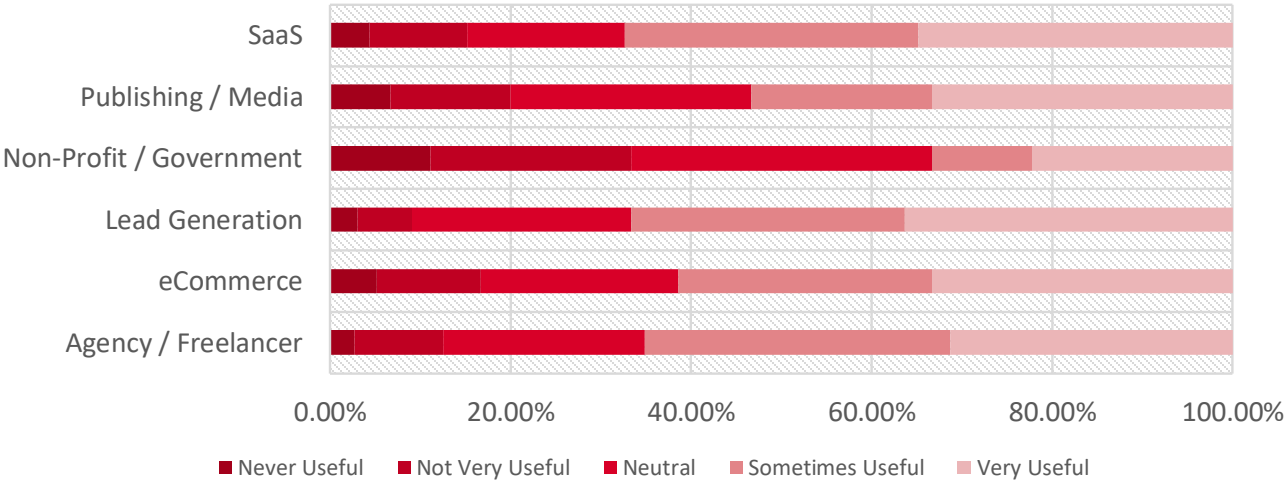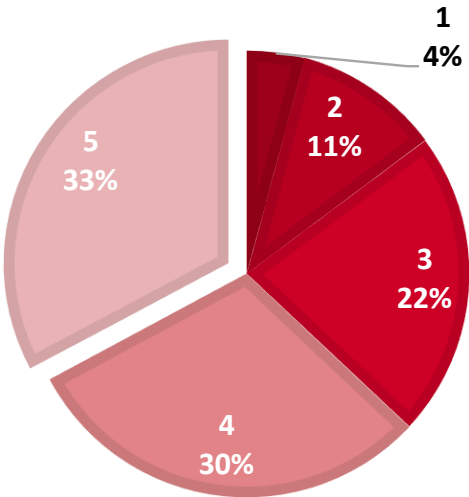
PSYCHOLOGY / PERSUASION
311 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 3.77
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	13
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	33
3.	NEUTRAL	69
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	94
5.	VERY USEFUL	102

23

CONVERSIONXL

UX / DESIGN
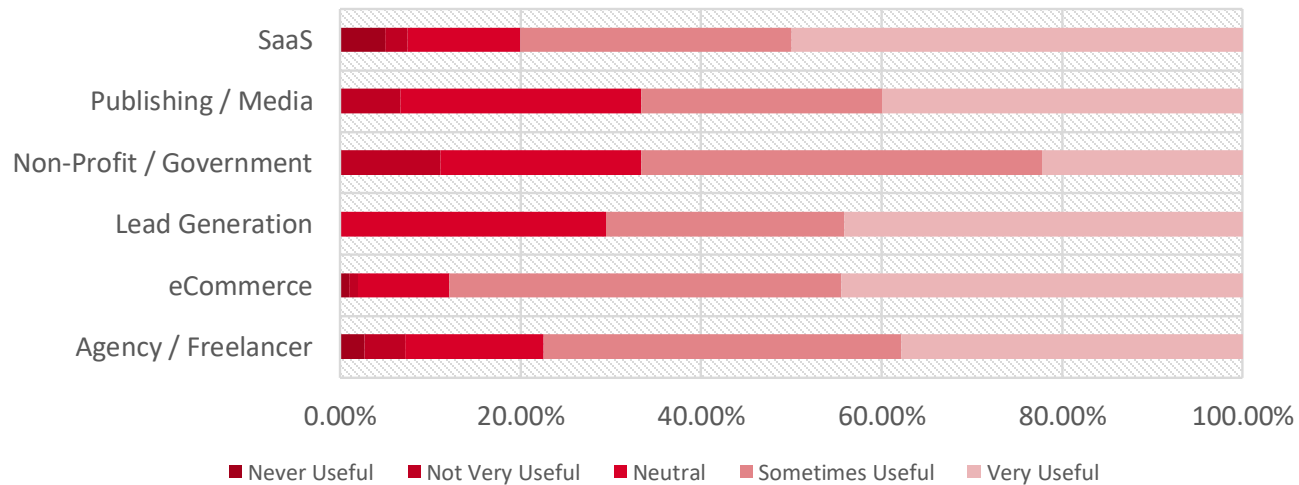
In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **UX / DESIGN**:

Pie chart:
- 1: 1%
- 2: 5%
- 3: 20%
- 4: 40%
- 5: 34%

Bar chart categories: SaaS, Publishing / Media, Non-Profit / Government, Lead Generation, eCommerce, Agency / Freelancer

Legend: ■ Never Useful ■ Not Very Useful ■ Neutral ■ Sometimes Useful ■ Very Useful
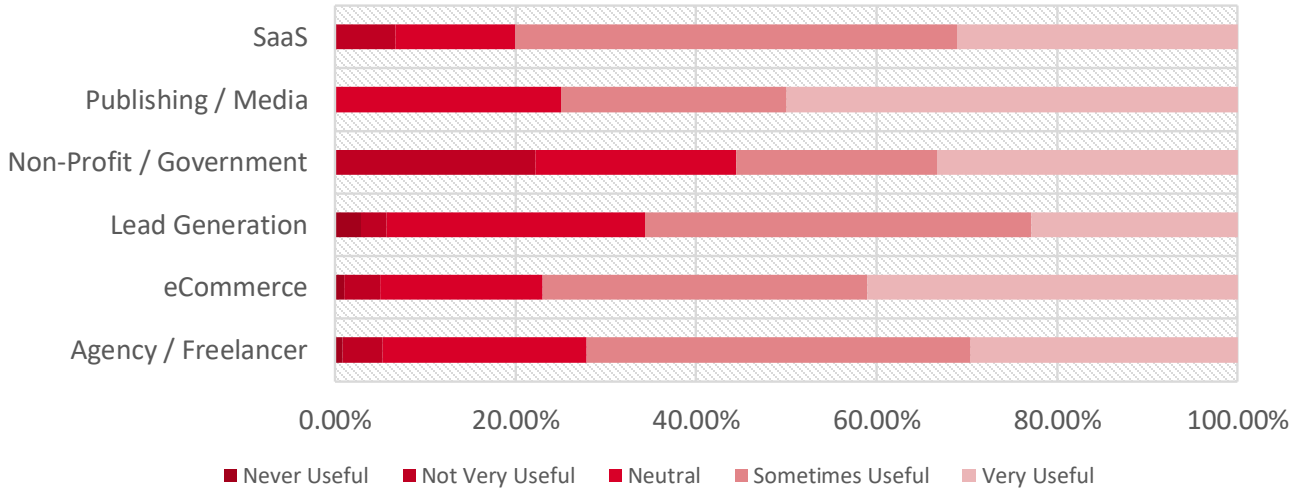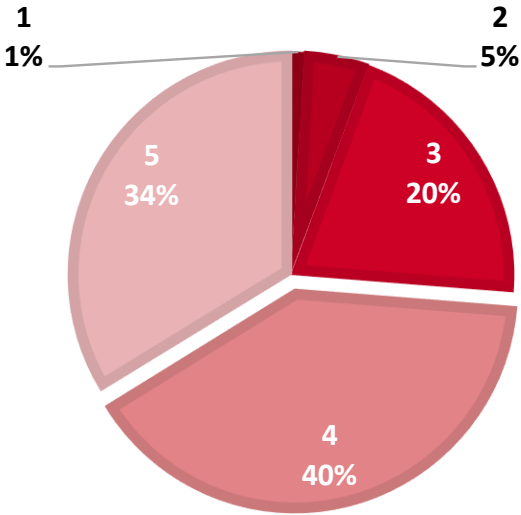
UX / DESIGN
320 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 4.01
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	3
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	15
3.	NEUTRAL	66
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	128
5.	VERY USEFUL	108

24

COPYWRITING

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **COPYWRITING**:

Pie chart:
- 1: 2%
- 2: 10%
- 3: 16%
- 4: 36%
- 5: 36%

Bar chart by industry (SaaS, Publishing / Media, Non-Profit / Government, Lead Generation, eCommerce, Agency / Freelancer) showing distribution from 0.00% to 100.00%.

Legend: ■ Never Useful ■ Not Very Useful ■ Neutral ■ Sometimes Useful ■ Very Useful
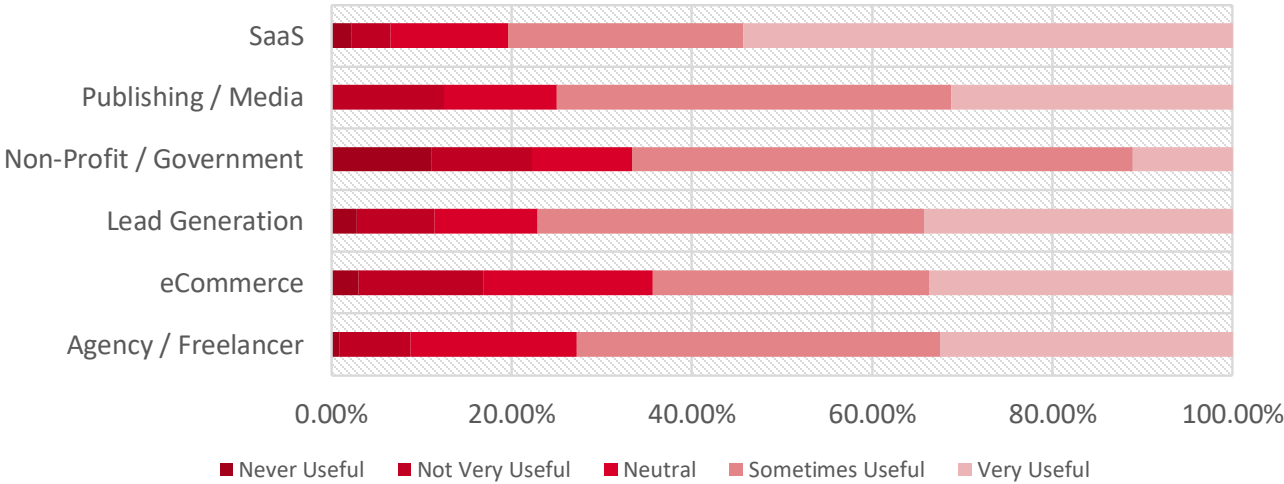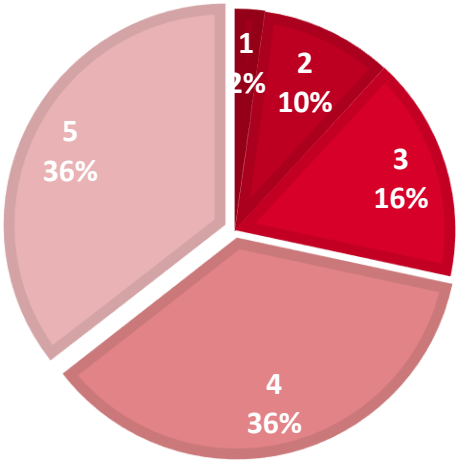
COPYWRITING
321 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 3.93
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	7
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	31
3.	NEUTRAL	53
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	116
5.	VERY USEFUL	114

CONVERSIONXL

DIGITAL ANALYTICS

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **DIGITAL ANALYTICS**:

Pie chart:
- 1 — 1%
- 2 — 2%
- 3 — 9%
- 4 — 32%
- 5 — 56%

Bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

Axis: 0.00% 20.00% 40.00% 60.00% 80.00% 100.00%

Legend: Never Useful | Not Very Useful | Neutral | Sometimes Useful | Very Useful

DIGITAL ANALYTICS
326 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 4.40
MEDIAN RATING: 5

1.	NEVER USEFUL	2
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	7
3.	NEUTRAL	31
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	105
5.	VERY USEFUL	181

CONVERSIONXL

PERSONALIZATION

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **PERSONALIZATION**:
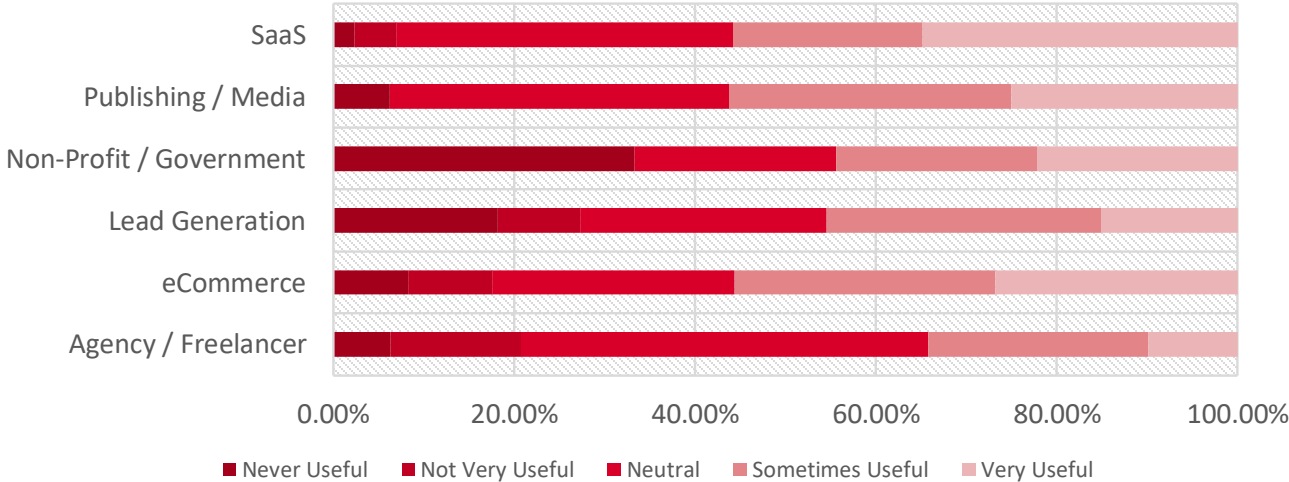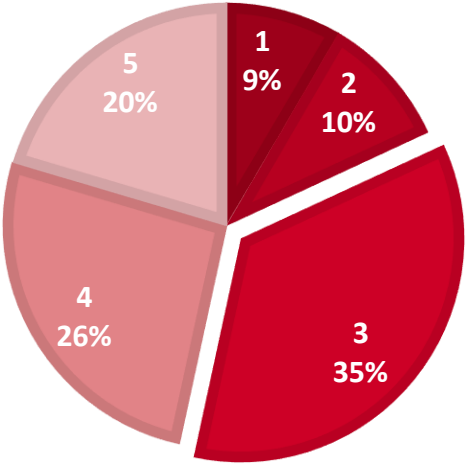
PERSONALIZATION
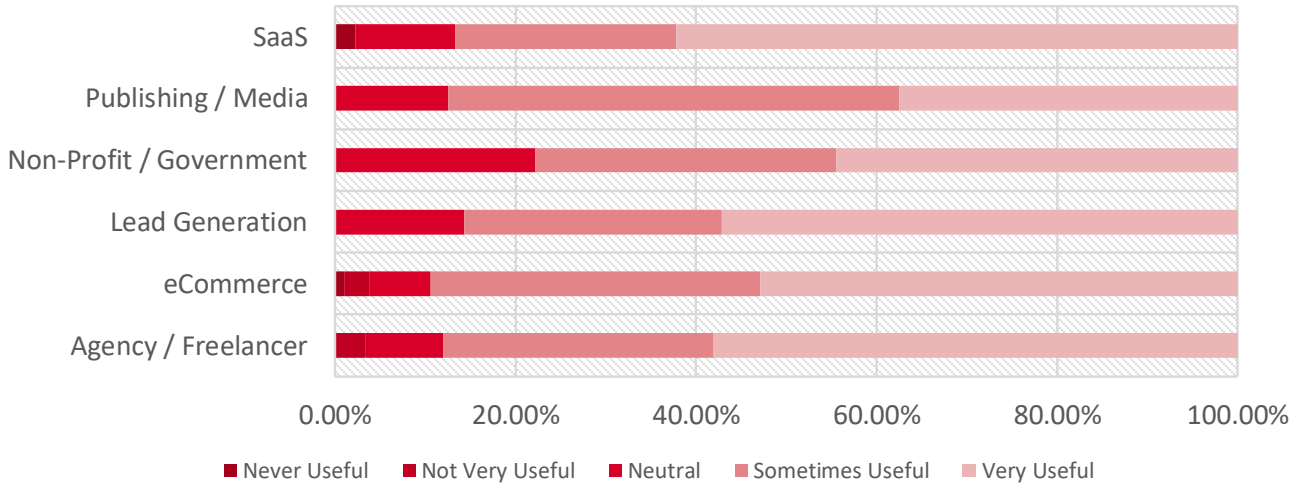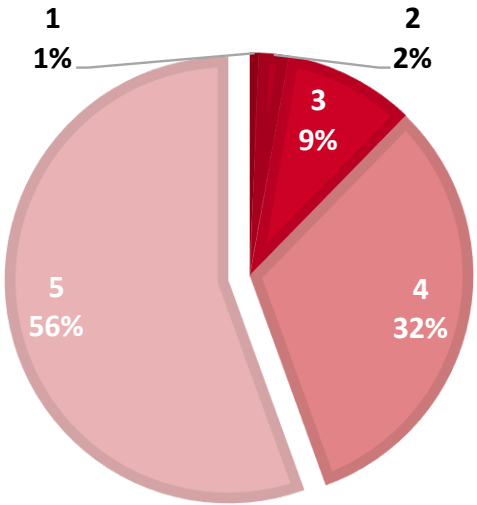**309 RESPONDENTS**

MEAN RATING: 3.40
MEDIAN RATING: 3

1.	NEVER USEFUL	**26**
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	**30**
3.	NEUTRAL	**109**
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	**81**
5.	VERY USEFUL	**63**

Legend (bar chart): ■ Never Useful ■ Not Very Useful ■ Neutral ■ Sometimes Useful ■ Very Useful

Bar chart categories: SaaS, Publishing / Media, Non-Profit / Government, Lead Generation, eCommerce, Agency / Freelancer

CONVERSIONXL

CUSTOMER SURVEYS

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **CUSTOMER SURVEYS**:

Pie chart:
- 1: 8%
- 2: 13%
- 3: 22%
- 4: 34%
- 5: 23%

Bar chart categories: SaaS, Publishing / Media, Non-Profit / Government, Lead Generation, eCommerce, Agency / Freelancer

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful
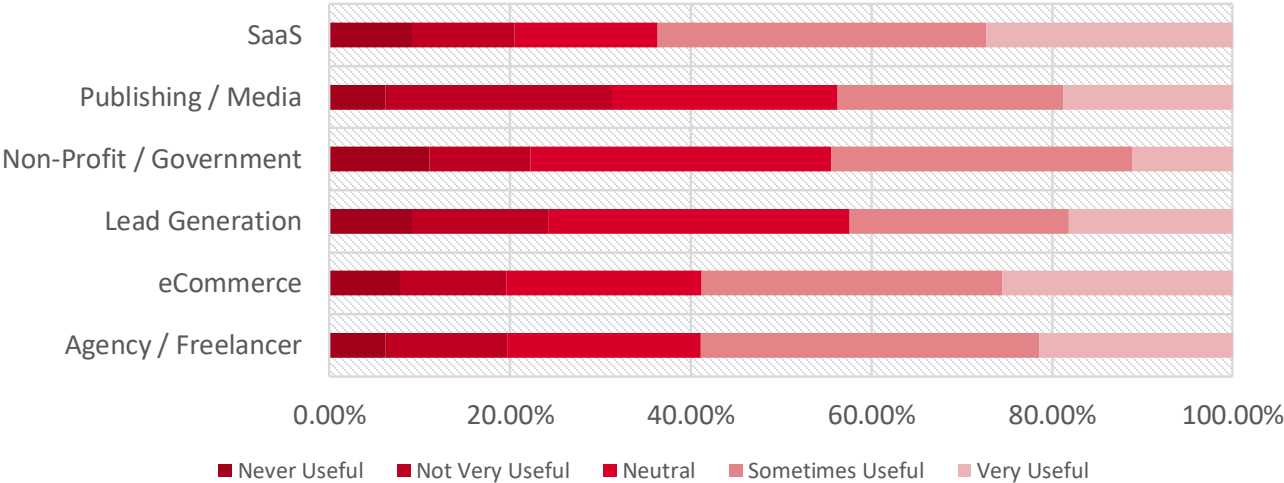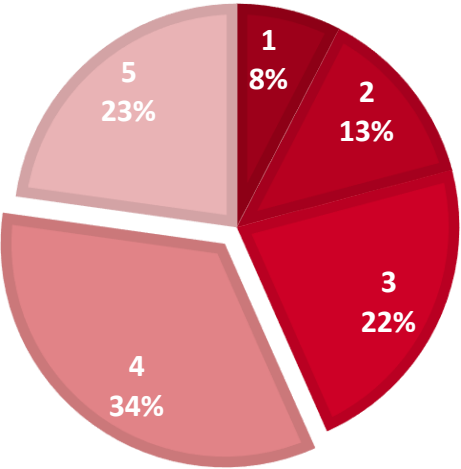
CUSTOMER SURVEYS
316 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 3.51
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	24
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	42
3.	NEUTRAL	71
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	107
5.	VERY USEFUL	72

CONVERSIONXL

WEBSITE POLLS

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **WEBSITE POLLS**:

Pie chart:
- 1: 16%
- 2: 20%
- 3: 29%
- 4: 21%
- 5: 14%

Bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful
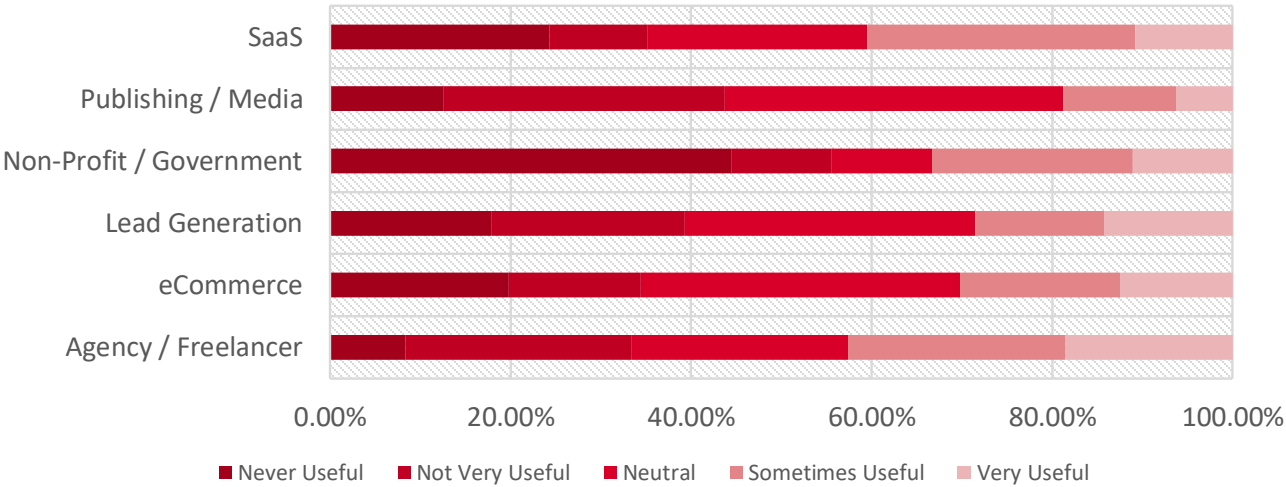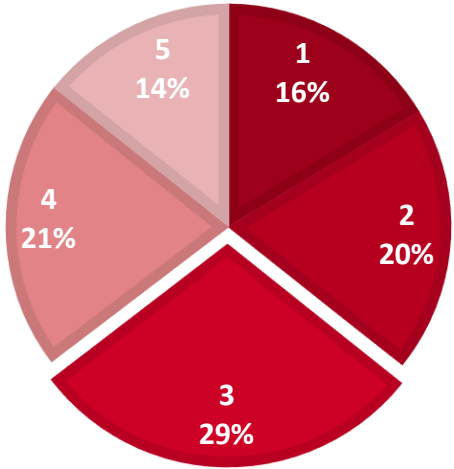
WEBSITE POLLS
294 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 2.98
MEDIAN RATING: 3

1.	NEVER USEFUL	48
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	57
3.	NEUTRAL	85
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	62
5.	VERY USEFUL	42

CONVERSIONXL

CLICK/SCROLL/MOUSE MAPS

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **CLICK/SCROLL/ MOUSE MAPS**:
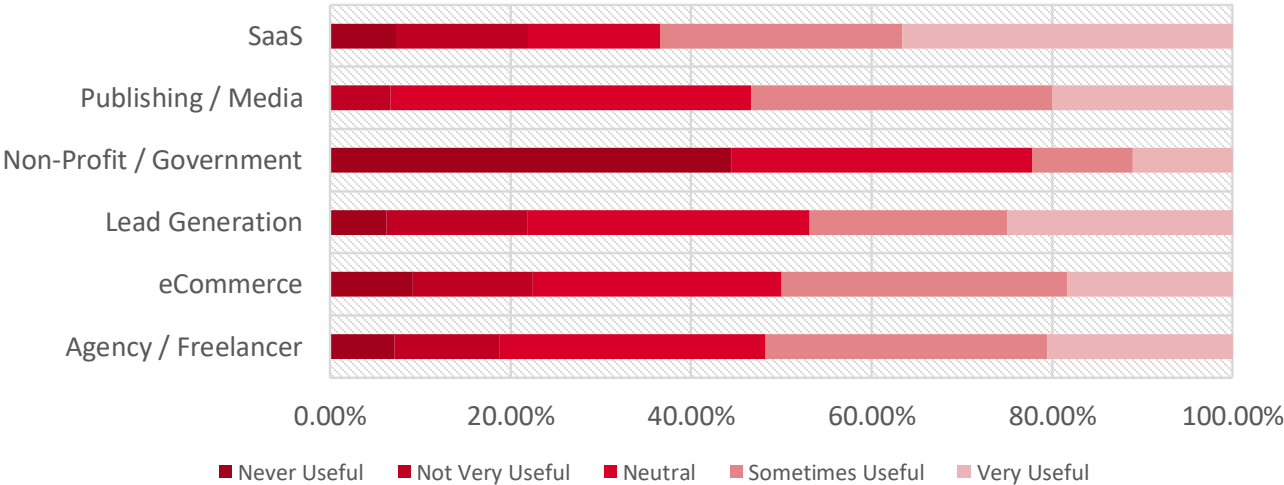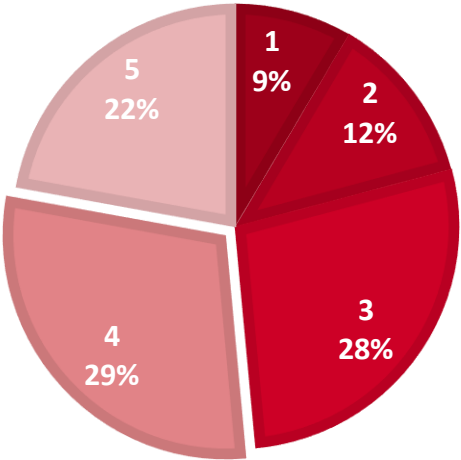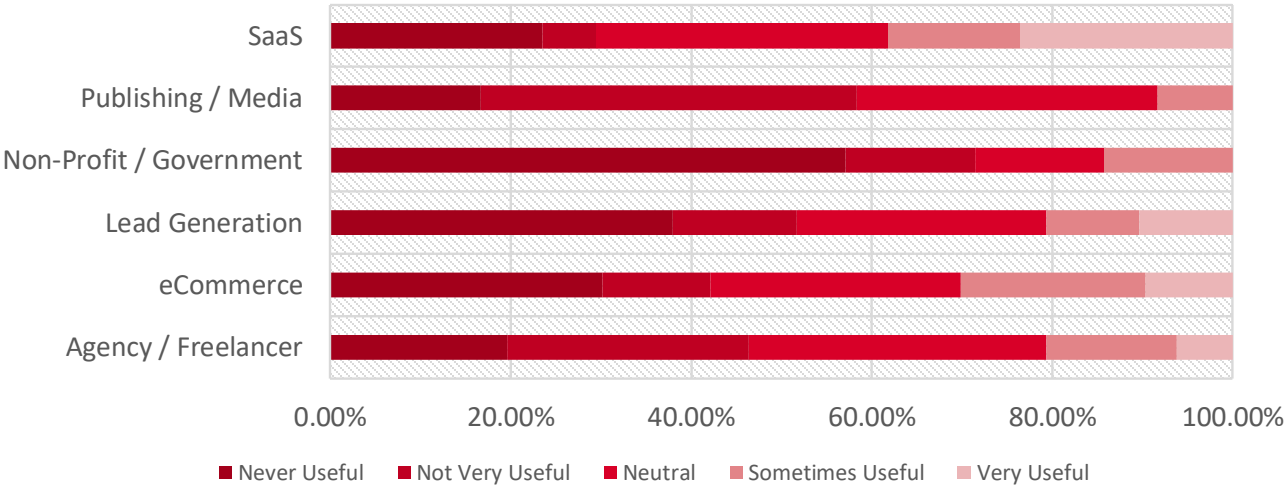

CLICK/SCROLL/MOUSE MAPS
307 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 3.44
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	**26**
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	**38**
3.	NEUTRAL	**85**
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	**90**
5.	VERY USEFUL	**68**

Pie chart:
- 1: 9%
- 2: 12%
- 3: 28%
- 4: 29%
- 5: 22%

Bar chart by industry:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful

EYE TRACKING

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **EYE TRACKING**:
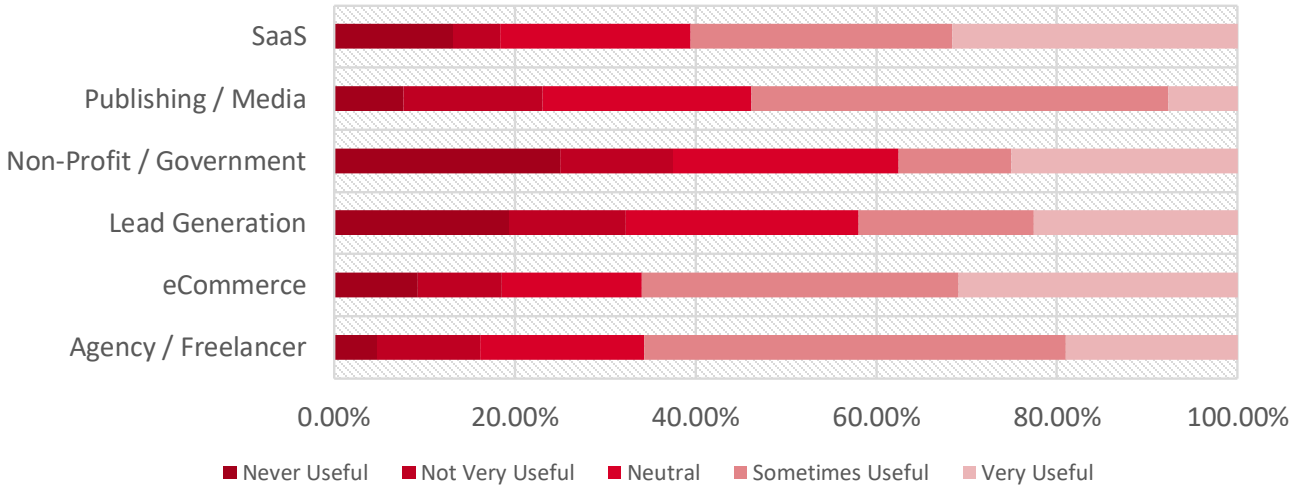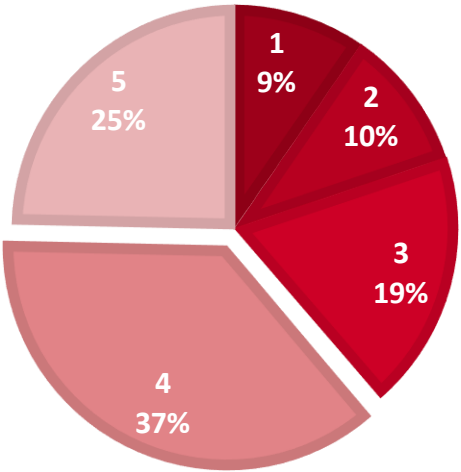

Pie chart:
- 1 — 26%
- 2 — 18%
- 3 — 30%
- 4 — 16%
- 5 — 10%

Bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

Axis: 0.00%, 20.00%, 40.00%, 60.00%, 80.00%, 100.00%

Legend: ■ Never Useful ■ Not Very Useful ■ Neutral ■ Sometimes Useful ■ Very Useful
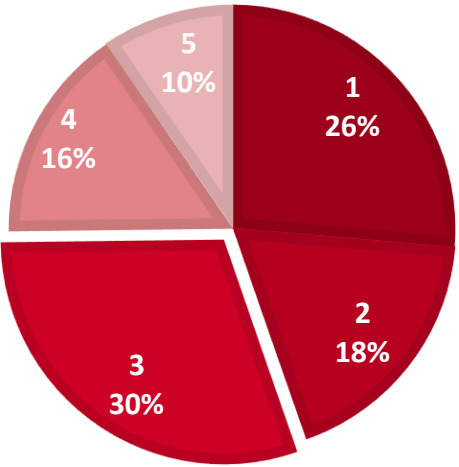
EYE TRACKING
262 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 2.64
MEDIAN RATING: 3

1.	NEVER USEFUL	**69**
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	**48**
3.	NEUTRAL	**79**
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	**41**
5.	VERY USEFUL	**25**

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USER TESTING

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **USER TESTING**:

Pie chart:
- 1 — 9%
- 2 — 10%
- 3 — 19%
- 4 — 37%
- 5 — 25%

Horizontal bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

X-axis: 0.00% 20.00% 40.00% 60.00% 80.00% 100.00%

Legend: Never Useful | Not Very Useful | Neutral | Sometimes Useful | Very Useful

USER TESTING
292 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 3.57
MEDIAN RATING: 4

1.	NEVER USEFUL	**28**
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	**30**
3.	NEUTRAL	**55**
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	**107**
5.	VERY USEFUL	**72**

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BIOMETRIC RESEARCH

In terms of the insights you extract to make smarter optimization decisions, rate the usefulness of **BIOMETRIC RESEARCH**:

Pie chart:
- 1 — 39%
- 2 — 19%
- 3 — 26%
- 4 — 12%
- 5 — 4%

Bar chart categories:
- SaaS
- Publishing / Media
- Non-Profit / Government
- Lead Generation
- eCommerce
- Agency / Freelancer

Axis: 0.00%, 20.00%, 40.00%, 60.00%, 80.00%, 100.00%

Legend: Never Useful, Not Very Useful, Neutral, Sometimes Useful, Very Useful
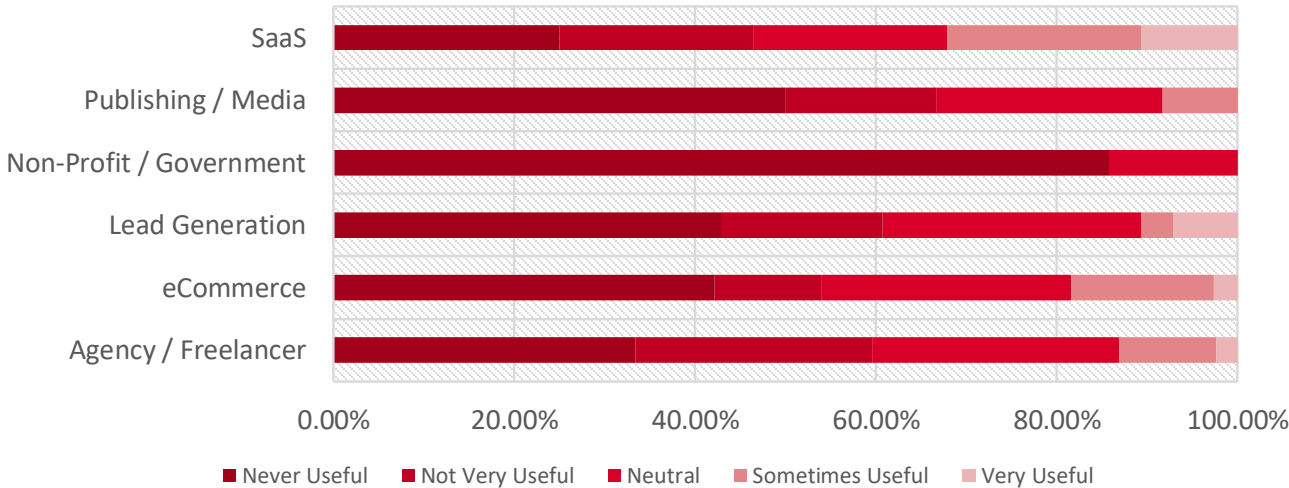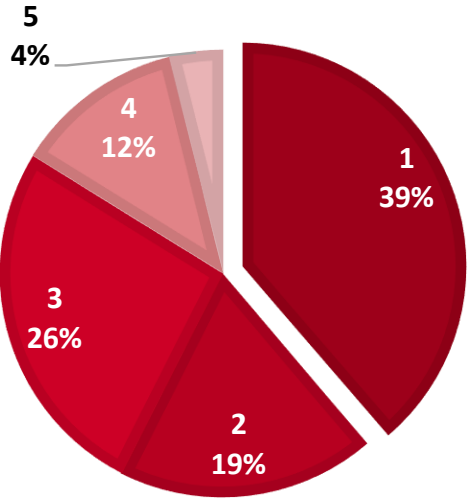
BIOMETRIC RESEARCH
235 RESPONDENTS

MEAN RATING: 2.24
MEDIAN RATING: 2

1.	NEVER USEFUL	91
2.	NOT VERY USEFUL	44
3.	NEUTRAL	62
4.	SOMETIMES USEFUL	29
5.	VERY USEFUL	9

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INSIGHTS SUMMARY

Insight	Average Rating	5 Star Chart
A/B Testing	4.15	★★★★☆
Psychology / Persuasion	3.77	★★★⯪☆
UX / Design	4.01	★★★★☆
Copywriting	3.93	★★★⯪☆
Digital Analytics	4.40	★★★★☆
Personalization	3.40	★★★☆☆
Customer Surveys	3.51	★★★⯪☆
Website Polls	2.98	★★⯪☆☆
Click Maps / Scroll Maps / Mouse Hover Maps	3.44	★★★☆☆
Eye Tracking	2.64	★★⯪☆☆
User Testing	3.57	★★★⯪☆
Biometric Research	2.24	★★☆☆☆

CXL ✛ sentient
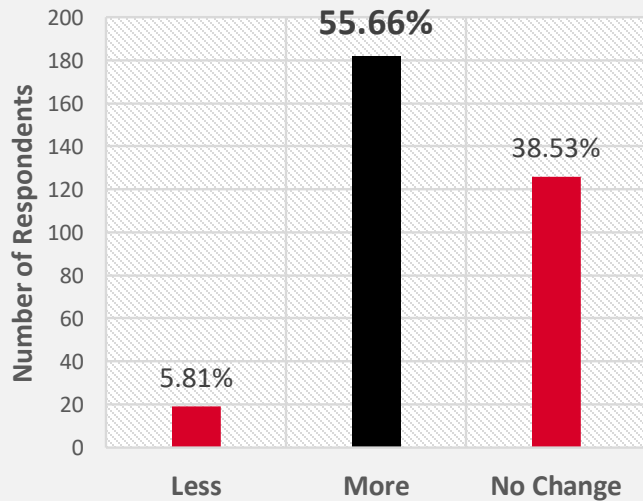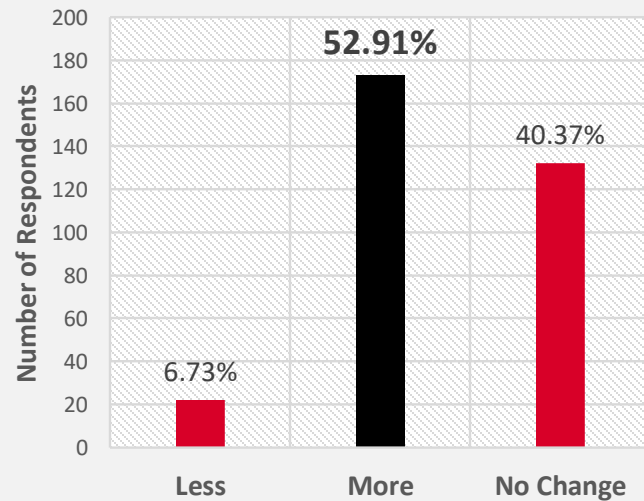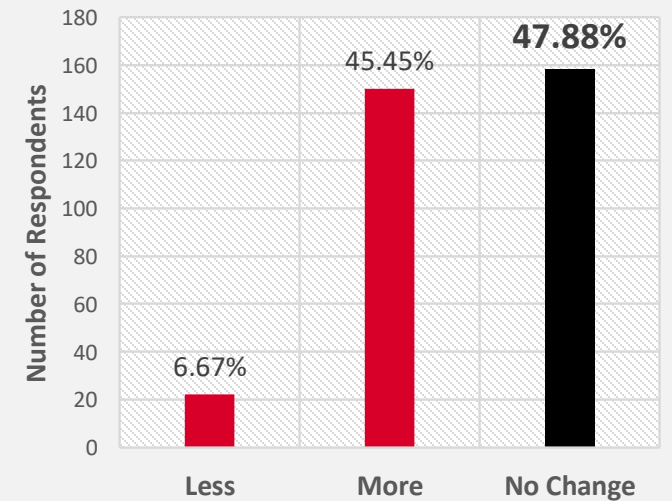
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