2025 CAREER OUTLOOK:
CONTENT AND MARKETING PROFESSIONALS

New research looks at industry layoffs, AI's disruptive impact, "phantom jobs," return-to-office mandates — and how all of these factors impact marketing careers and compensation.

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AN INDUSTRY IN RAPID TRANSITION

As AI and economic headwinds reshape marketing, careers in the industry are undergoing profound changes.

Even four years after the Great Disruption, marketing jobs and careers are still unsettled. One in three marketers told us their organization laid off marketers in the past year.

Is AI to blame? The majority of marketers we surveyed said no: Just 3% of marketers said their team has replaced employees with AI tools. Yet AI has had a profound impact: Nearly one in four (23%) said their marketing team has had to shift job requirements to adapt to gen AI's influence.

And our research has detected signs that the true impact has yet to be felt: Some marketers we surveyed expressed doubts that the size of their marketing team would rebound, given AI's potential to streamline workflows and make marketing more efficient.

One marketer explained, "Due to layoffs on our team, we've begun to leverage AI for efficiency." Another shared, "We use AI to repurpose content in light of layoffs and less staff."

Despite high layoff rates among companies in our survey, most marketers who were laid off in the last two years report finding a job within six months. On average it took marketers three months to find a new job — certainly slower than the hot talent market of a few years ago, but not as long as online discussions might lead you to believe. One marketer posting on Reddit explained, "I usually give myself 4-6 months for a job search, as sometimes it can take 2-4 weeks to even hear back from a single company — and if they respond too quickly, that can be a red flag."[1]

UNCERTAINTY AFFECTS MORALE AND RETENTION

"I'm actively hunting for a new job. Our marketing and communications team is currently undergoing review — the third review since I joined the organization five years ago. Reviews like these undermine morale and make people more likely to jump."

Even so, 68% believe that finding a job in marketing today is more challenging than it was five years ago. What drives this thinking?

Most believe the challenges are related to macroeconomic factors like financial pressures (75%) and heightened competition for marketing jobs (69%). Others believe AI is responsible for the challenges (33%).

We also noticed an undercurrent of frustration among marketers related to "phantom jobs" — job postings that marketers say are misleading or even fake, whether because the company is trying to meet an internal posting requirement or because it's harvesting data about potential candidates. More than a few shared their suspicions and anecdotes:

- ► "Hiring managers seem to be using the interview process to define what they need in a new candidate, then they evolve the job description. This should be defined before they start recruiting!"
- ► "Many job listings are not actually real or open. Many I encounter are scams."
- ► "Some companies are not really hiring. They're posting jobs to see what's out there and then ghosting people."
- ► "I wonder whether some job listings I see are just a way to grab followers on social media, or even worse, collect data about job seekers."

These suspicions speak to how frustrating a job search can be for marketers — whether because bots are reading and filtering resumes or because they cannot trust that job postings are accurate and real.

THE RISE OF PHANTOM JOBS
Some marketers tell us the job market is full of "phantom jobs" — roles that companies have no intention of hiring for. At best, companies are listing jobs to meet internal public posting requirements; at worst, they're harvesting data.

Marketing Layoffs

33%: Company laid off marketing employees in the last 12 months

11%: Personally experienced a layoff in the last 12 months

3 months: How long it took to find a new marketing role

One person shared their experience in a Reddit community for marketers: "Unless you are extremely well connected or live in a densely populated urban center, you are going to be battling for the attention of a computer, not a recruiter. A *computer* doesn't have feelings, doesn't have empathy, doesn't think you're special. You are another string of binary code and you either fit the parameters it has been programmed to look for, or you don't." [2]
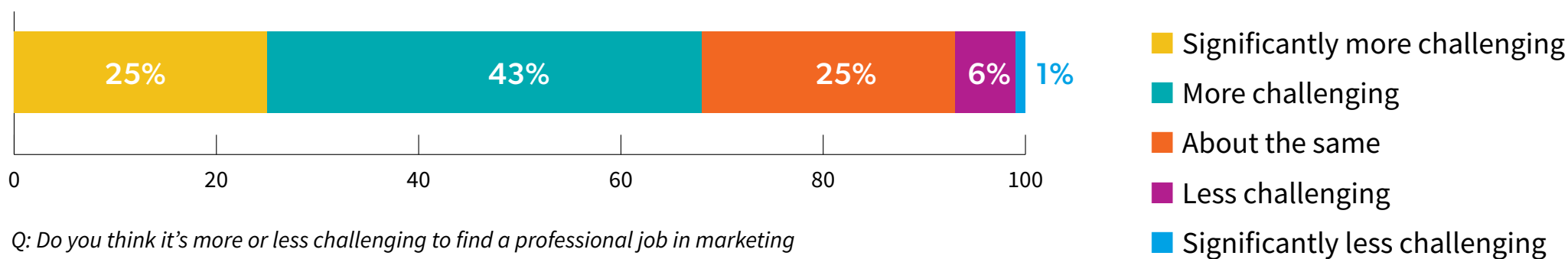
[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/marketing/comments/10elf29/the_job_search_is_hard/
[2] https://www.reddit.com/r/marketing/comments/10elf29/the_job_search_is_hard/

MARKETERS REPORT JOB SEARCH FRUSTRATIONS

"Unless you are extremely well connected or live in a densely populated urban center, you are going to be battling for the attention of a *computer*, not a recruiter."

Most say finding work is more challenging in 2024

| 25% | 43% | 25% | 6% | 1% |

- Significantly more challenging
- More challenging
- About the same
- Less challenging
- Significantly less challenging
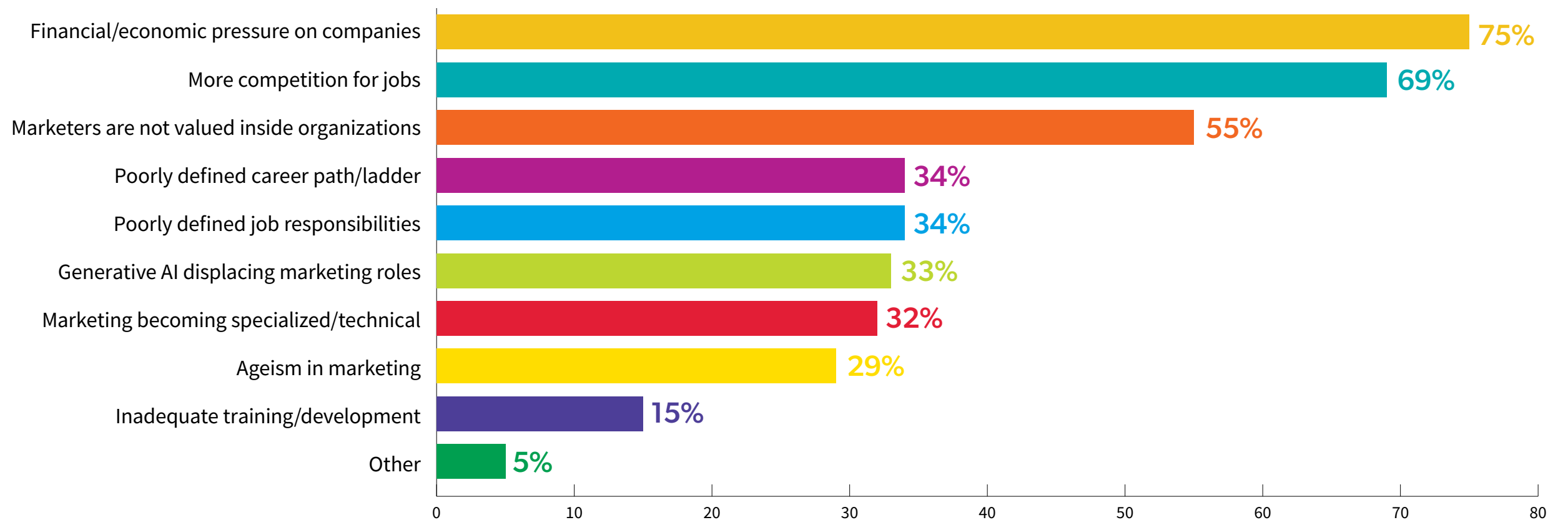
Q: Do you think it's more or less challenging to find a professional job in marketing now compared to five years ago?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

Economic conditions cited as top job search challenge

Challenge	Percentage
Financial/economic pressure on companies	75%
More competition for jobs	69%
Marketers are not valued inside organizations	55%
Poorly defined career path/ladder	34%
Poorly defined job responsibilities	34%
Generative AI displacing marketing roles	33%
Marketing becoming specialized/technical	32%
Ageism in marketing	29%
Inadequate training/development	15%
Other	5%

Q: Why do you think it's more challenging to find a job in marketing?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

Despite industry challenges, marketers are satisfied at work.

Now the good news: Marketers are overwhelmingly optimistic about their jobs/careers. Seventy-six percent are either somewhat or very satisfied in their marketing role; director-level and above marketers are nearly 2x more likely to say they are "very satisfied" than are all others.

Despite relatively high levels of satisfaction, marketers are increasingly curious about a career move. More than one in three (35%) are actively pursuing or highly interested in finding another job — up 4 points from last year and 7 points from two years ago. And yet, only half of marketers agree that if they had to start their careers over, they would still choose a career in marketing (another 30% were neutral about the issue).

This metric correlates with a stronger job market; people are more likely to seek security (i.e., no job change) in a down market. Most who are considering leaving their current role want to stay in marketing (71%).

One after-effect of the pandemic years is a strong preference among marketing professionals to work remotely at least part time. This development has important ramifications for employers. Just 16% of marketers surveyed say they work in the office full time. The remainder work remotely either full time or on a hybrid schedule. And among those who work hybrid or remotely, more than two in three (68%) say they would not stay with their current employer if forced to work in the office full time. A higher percentage of women than men (55% vs. 35%) say they'd leave their roles if forced to work in an office every day.
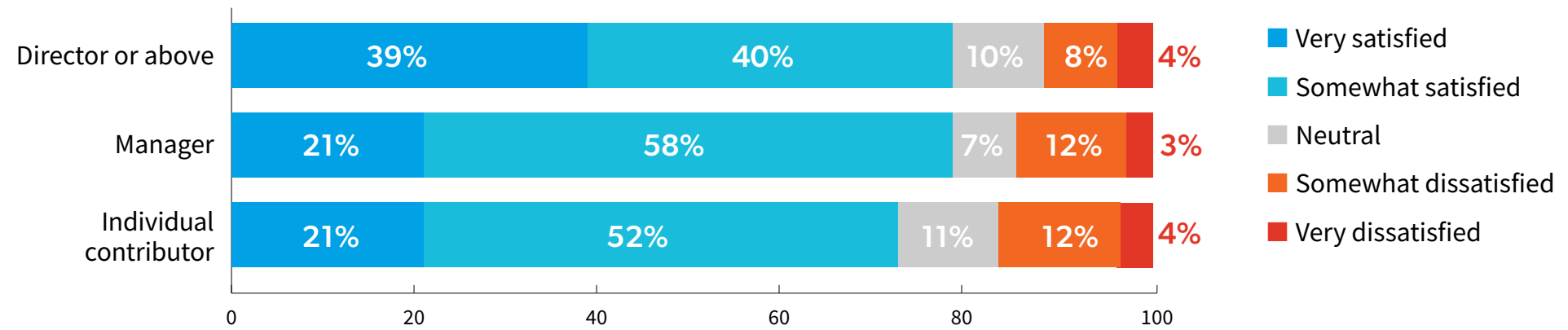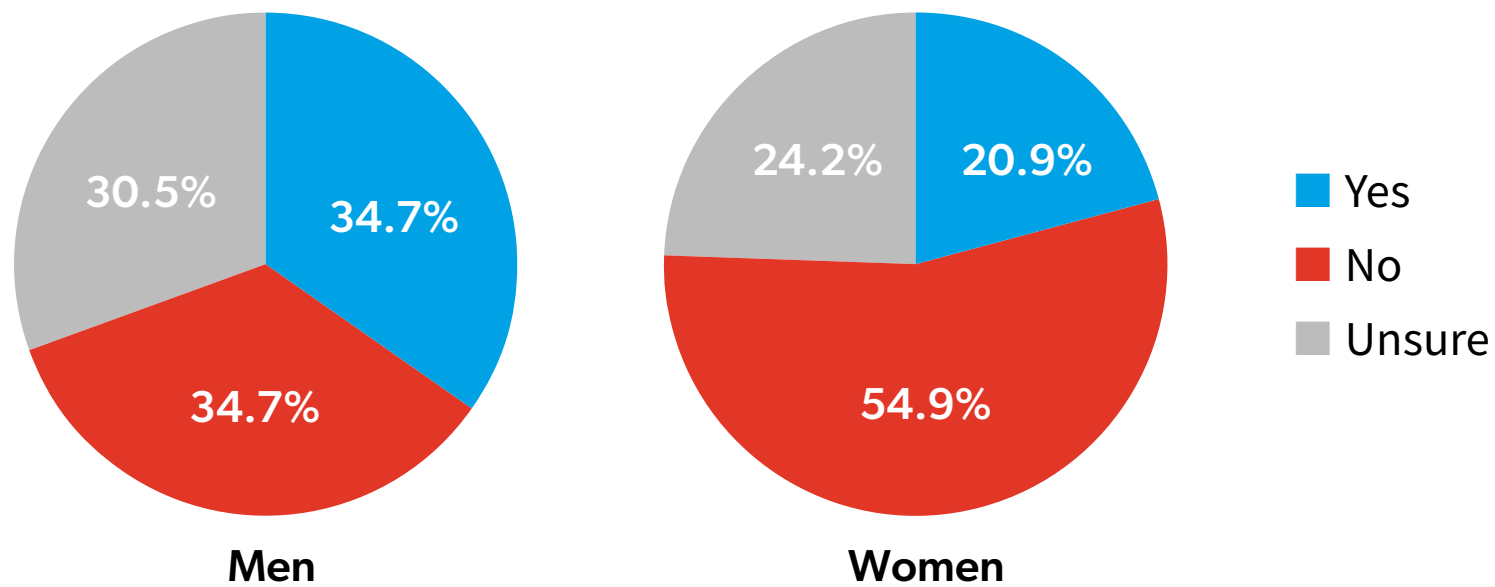
84% say they work remotely at least part time.

Marketers at director level or above more likely to be very satisfied

					Legend
Director or above	39%	40%	10%	8%	4%
Manager	21%	58%	7%	12%	3%
Individual contributor	21%	52%	11%	12%	4%

- ■ Very satisfied
- ■ Somewhat satisfied
- ■ Neutral
- ■ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ■ Very dissatisfied

Q: How satisfied do you feel in your current job?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

Women are more likely to quit if forced to work in-office full time

Men
- 34.7% (Yes)
- 34.7% (No)
- 30.5% (Unsure)

Women
- 20.9% (Yes)
- 54.9% (No)
- 24.2% (Unsure)

- ■ Yes
- ■ No
- ■ Unsure

Q: Would you stay in your current job if you were forced to work in the office full time?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

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Most employers 'stay the course' when it comes to remote work

18%

24%

58%

- ■ More willing to allow remote work
- ■ About the same
- ■ Less willing to allow remote work
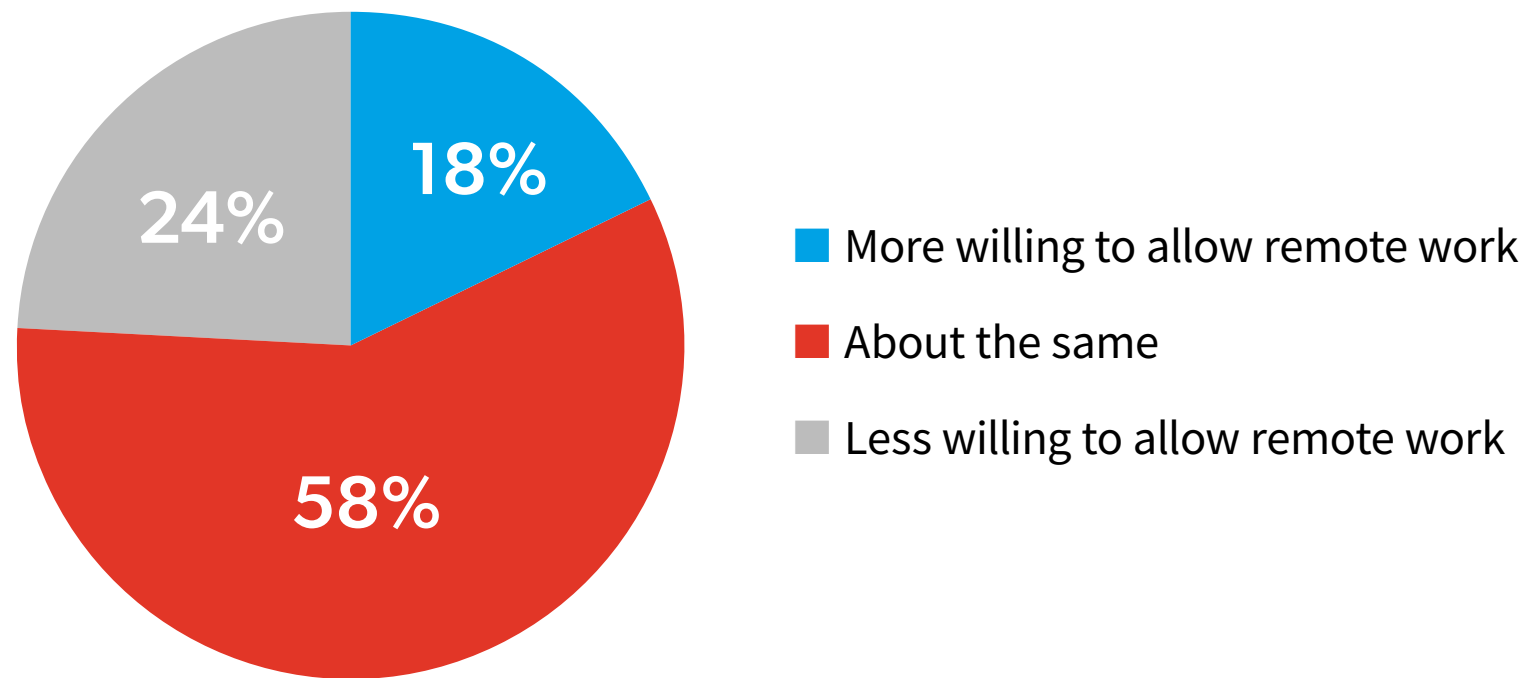
Q: Is your employer more or less willing to allow remote working compared to one year ago?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

HOW MUCH ARE MARKETERS PAID?

We asked marketers how much they make, whether they feel fairly compensated, and how they supplement their incomes.

On average, marketers in the U.S. make $108,380 per year, 3% lower than last year. Marketers believe they should be earning approximately 20% more than what they currently earn.	**Average annual compensation for U.S.-based marketer: $108,380**
Those who work in large urban centers like New York City, Boston, and San Francisco make 30% more than their peers in smaller markets.*	**Major urban centers: $122,265 All other locations: $93,737**
Men make 7% more than women and are nearly six times more likely to hold a C-level or ownership position in a company.	**Male: $114,503 Female: $107,096**
Employees at director level or above report income approximately 1.6x that of individual contributors.	**Director and above: $146,901 Manager: $102,914 Individual contributor: $89,455**
Not surprisingly, older workers earn more than younger, less experienced professionals. This year, the gap between Gen Z and Boomers closed slightly — from a multiple of 2.2 to 2.1.	**Gen Z: $65,375 Millennials: $101,347 Gen X: $126,534 Baby boomers: $135,000**

The following areas are considered "major metros": Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. To define the "major metro differential," we compared professionals in these cities against all other U.S. respondents.

THE MAJOR METRO DIFFERENTIAL:

Those who work in large urban centers like New York City, Boston, and San Francisco make more money than their peers in smaller markets and the pay gap can be quite large. For example, directors in the top 14 major metro areas in the U.S. make 43% more than their peers in other markets, managers make 24% more, and individual contributors make 30% more.

COMPENSATION RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Included here are marketing professionals who are employed full time in the U.S. Full-time freelancers are not included in this group.

Freelance work supplements income for many.

More than 1 in 5 marketers (22%) say they freelance on the side, in addition to their full-time marketing jobs. On average, marketers make an additional $8,250 per year from freelance gigs.

The most popular gigs are writing (68%), content strategy (47%), and editing (46%). And nearly all (83%) take on freelance work that's marketing-related.

While some report that freelancing assignments are passion projects (47%), most take on the extra work largely to supplement their incomes (84%). Female full-time marketers are nearly 50% more likely to freelance on the side than are their male counterparts.

For experienced marketers, freelance side projects can be a way to develop their skills, expand their networks, and boost their take-home pay.

One marketer commenting on Reddit surfaces freelance work using their LinkedIn network: "I get all my freelance leads through LinkedIn—mostly from people I've worked with in the past. It can literally be as simple as just updating your profile to say you freelance."[1] Another warns marketers to avoid low-paying platforms in favor of freelance services that target experienced marketers: "[B]ecome a vetted member of more premium marketing freelance platforms … [like] MarketerHire, Braintrust, YunoJuno (U.K.), We Are Rosie, Mayple, and Worksome."

[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/marketing/comments/15lhhyt/how_to_actually_start_earning_as_a_digital/
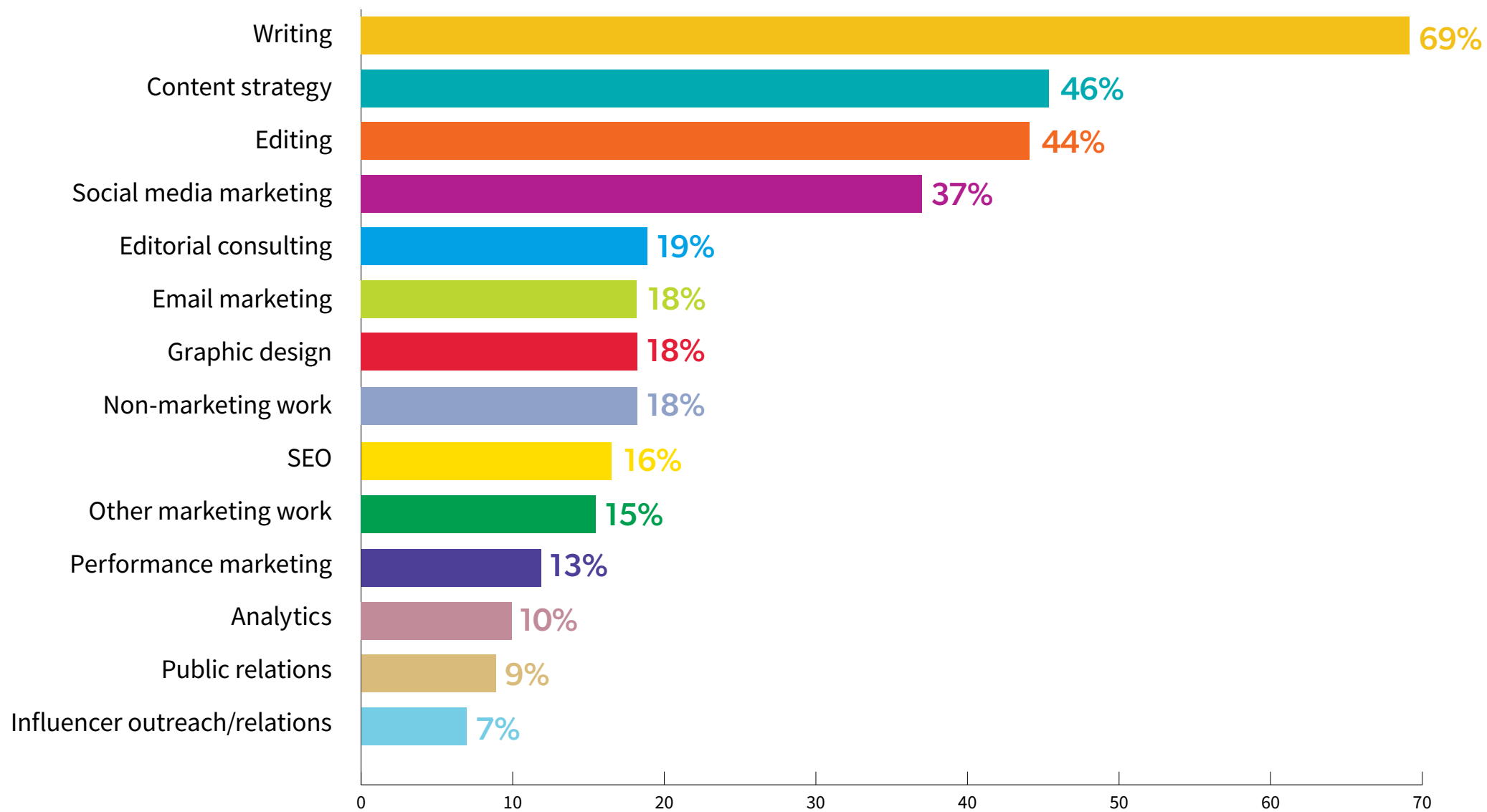
22%
Marketers who freelance on the side, in addition to full-time marketing jobs

$8,250
Average amount of money marketers make per year from part-time freelance gigs

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Writing is the most common marketing gig work

Category	Percentage
Writing	69%
Content strategy	46%
Editing	44%
Social media marketing	37%
Editorial consulting	19%
Email marketing	18%
Graphic design	18%
Non-marketing work	18%
SEO	16%
Other marketing work	15%
Performance marketing	13%
Analytics	10%
Public relations	9%
Influencer outreach/relations	7%

Q: What kind of freelancing do you do? (Select all that apply.)
Source: Content Marketing Institute

AI AND THE MODERN MARKETER

Marketers say AI can supercharge their workflows and boost accuracy, but most believe AI-generated writing is mediocre. So why are so many using it for that purpose?

The research shows conflicting attitudes about AI: On one hand, a belief that AI will drive efficiency gains; on the other, deep misgivings about diminished content quality.

Marketers largely use gen AI as a "co-pilot" — a tool to make them more efficient and creative. And 68% say these tools are saving them time at work. The most common uses for gen AI are brainstorming topics (61%) and summarizing content (52%).

Fewer are using gen AI to replace a human writer (i.e., 44% say they're using AI to "write drafts"). That's because most marketers (69%) believe the writing output from AI tools is mediocre — even "soulless," as one marketer told us. Another says, "My direct report uses AI for outlining and brainstorming at times, but I usually find AI-generated content to be unsophisticated."

Marketers report mixed feelings about the quality of AI's assistance. Using generative AI for proofreading scores highest (50% call that a "high-value" application), followed by summarizing content (49%), and outlining assignments (42%). Fewer say AI is a high-value tool for writing copy — whether writing articles (37%) or email copy (34%).

WILL GEN AI IMPACT CAREERS?

Overall, most marketers (51%) view gen AI tools as a "net positive" for their marketing careers — 4x the rate of those who call it a "net negative." Entry-level marketers (those with five years' experience or less) are more likely to report a net positive than their more experienced colleagues.

20% of marketers say their organization offers training to learn how to use generative AI.

Despite widespread use of gen AI tools in marketing (just 11% say they *don't* use gen AI tools at all), training on how to use gen AI is rare. Just 19% say their organizations provide any.

The fact that marketers get little-to-no direction about AI from their employers is concerning. While marketers' tendency toward curiosity and creativity may compel them to experiment with new tools, experimenting with gen AI can get teams into trouble in myriad ways: copyright and intellectual property violations, incomplete fact checking, uninteresting/uninsightful content. And misusing AI tools — or not overseeing their output — can lead audiences or clients to mistrust marketers' content.
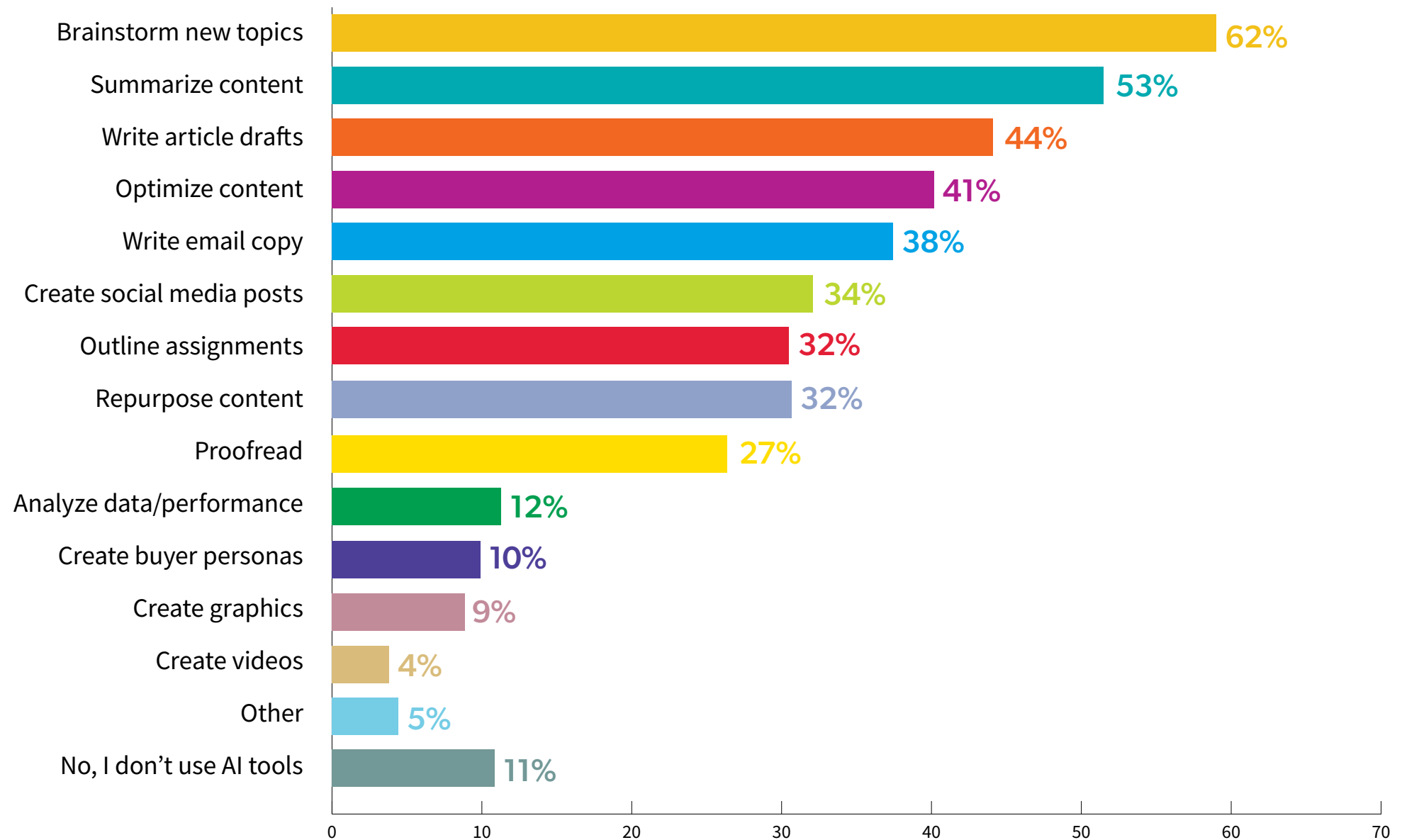
Marketers take an ad hoc approach to using AI:

"Our video and digital team members have used AI despite a company directive to hold until a policy regarding AI is in use. (Luckily the errors due to AI were caught before video and blog were disseminated.) There's widespread disagreement among staff about how AI should be used. Most who use it don't understand the nuances of fact-checking and work outside the rules."

"I've been asked to use AI to help generate content, but have also been told we cannot officially use it. (I log on with my own account.)"

"Others on my team are highly dependent on ChatGPT, which has resulted in low-quality content — and my organization accepts this. It makes my job harder as I try to uplevel our content quality and performance."

"We're being asked to learn and use it as much as possible. But we are also in control of determining best practices and what has the most value. Our CEO wants to enhance our experience and efficiency, but not replace us."

Many marketers use AI to brainstorm new topics and summarize content

Task	Percentage
Brainstorm new topics	62%
Summarize content	53%
Write article drafts	44%
Optimize content	41%
Write email copy	38%
Create social media posts	34%
Outline assignments	32%
Repurpose content	32%
Proofread	27%
Analyze data/performance	12%
Create buyer personas	10%
Create graphics	9%
Create videos	4%
Other	5%
No, I don't use AI tools	11%

Q: Do you use generative AI tools to assist with any of these content tasks? (Select all that apply.)
Source: Content Marketing Institute

Rank order of high-value generative AI use cases

1 Proofread

2 Summarize content

3 Outline assignments

4 Brainstorm new topics

5 Write article drafts

6 Analyze data/performance

7 Write email copy

8 Repurpose content

9 Create buyer personas

10 Optimize content

Q: Do you use generative AI tools to assist with any of these content tasks? (Select all that apply.)
Rank order is based on the percent (%) who chose "high value" for each activity. Showing top 10 only.
Source: Content Marketing Institute

The positive

68% say AI saves time in their work.

The negative

69% say gen AI produces mediocre content.

41% say creative roles are becoming commoditized by gen AI.

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RESKILLING RAMPS UP

Marketers overwhelmingly want to improve their skills to keep up with industry changes, but companies are often falling short in providing up-to-the-moment training.

Seventy-six percent say marketers need to master specialized or niche skills to remain relevant in the face of AI. In other words, skills development is central to a long, successful career. If that's true, why do marketers report that their employers are falling short on training?

► Just 36% say their marketing training meets their career needs (both internal and external training).

► 58% say their organization's training program is not keeping pace with changes in marketing.

► When marketers pursue training outside of their organizations, they look for help from training organizations (64%), tech vendors (58%), LinkedIn Learning (46%), and other learning platforms like Coursera or Udemy (42%).

When asked what skills they want to develop to stay relevant, the largest share wants help learning new technologies (49%), followed by leadership skills (39%) and data/analytics skills (35%). Learning new skills is especially important as companies revamp workflows, applying AI and automations to make processes more efficient and effective. While AI may not wholly replace marketers anytime soon, it may allow some marketing organizations to pause hiring; one marketer explained, "We have been able to do more with the resources we have already."

Skill building is a way to increase individual marketers' value inside their organizations at a time when value is under scrutiny. One user on a Reddit marketing subreddit explains, "I learn as many skills as possible. I've survived a lot of firing squads simply because I was the only one who knew XYZ thing. [...] You need to edit a video but your video contractor is looking too expensive these days? No problem, I got it. The PR agency and software suite is weighing down the budget? I can do enough to keep us afloat." [4]

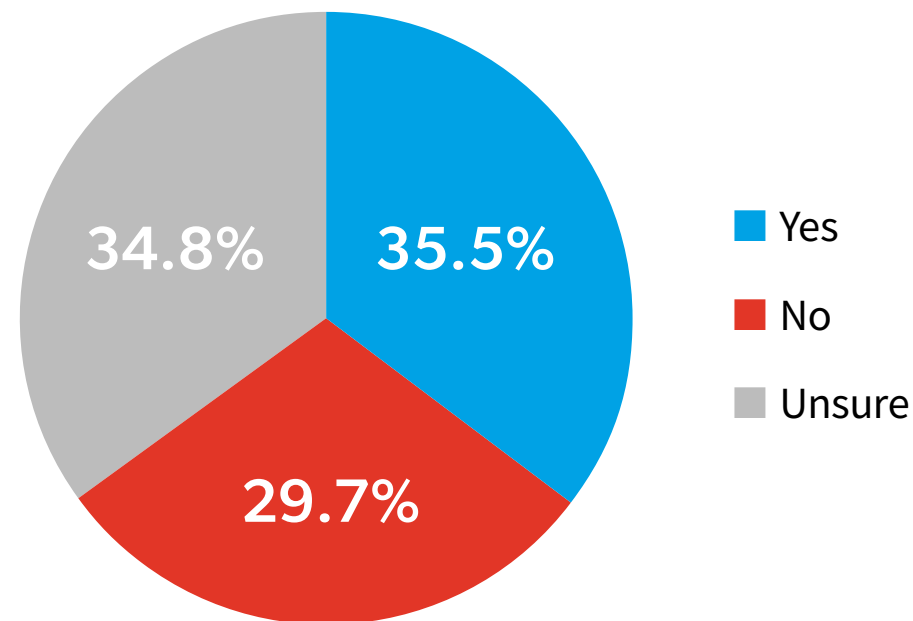[4] *https://www.reddit.com/r/marketing/comments/170laj4/how_prone_is_marketing_to_layoffs/*

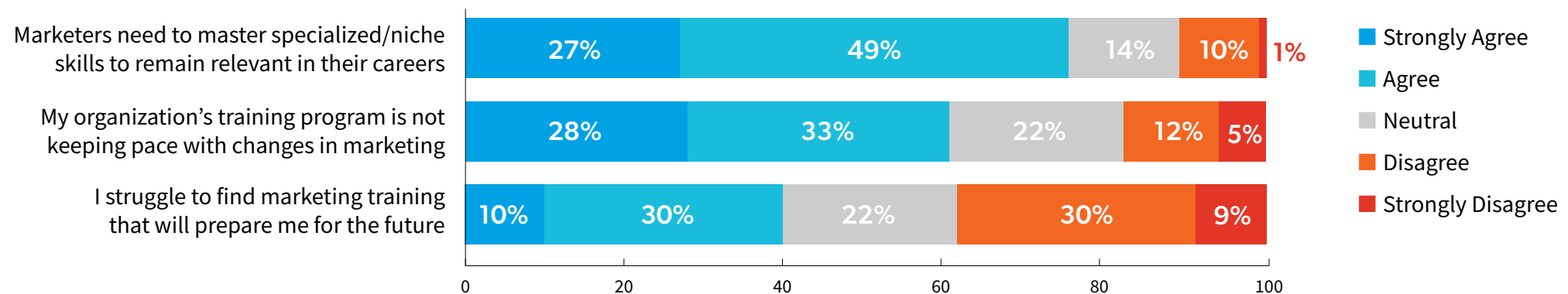**48%** of marketers say they are pursuing professional training outside their organization.

Just 1 in 3 report current training is meeting their career needs

Yes — 35.5%
No — 29.7%
Unsure — 34.8%

Q: Is your current marketing training (in-house training plus any outside training) meeting your career needs?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

What do marketers think about training opportunities and needs?

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Marketers need to master specialized/niche skills to remain relevant in their careers	27%	49%	14%	10%	1%
My organization's training program is not keeping pace with changes in marketing	28%	33%	22%	12%	5%
I struggle to find marketing training that will prepare me for the future	10%	30%	22%	30%	9%

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?
Source: Content Marketing Institute

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The skills marketers want to develop and sharpen, by generation

	Gen Z	Millenials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Working with new technologies	45%	43%	60%	59%
Search engine optimization	40%	33%	33%	41%
Leadership/management skills	40%	48%	28%	16%
Data analytics/data science	35%	36%	35%	34%
Audience development/segmentation	29%	28%	17%	16%
Writing/editing skills	26%	20%	16%	16%
Community development/activation	22%	12%	10%	9%
Audio/video (filming, editing, production)	15%	18%	18%	25%
Data visualization/data presentation	15%	16%	21%	19%
User/customer experience	12%	18%	17%	31%
Process automation	8%	18%	17%	13%

Q: What skills are you most interested in developing/sharpening to advance in content marketing? (Select top three.)
Source: Content Marketing Institute

READY, SET, GO!

Advice for individual marketers and hiring companies racing to evolve in a fast-moving industry.

MARKETERS:

Benchmark your pay against compensation research.
Do your research to find out the prevailing pay rates for your role, experience, and location, then consider how you'll use this information. If you find you're undervalued, develop a plan to close the gap. This might involve making a case to your current employer or putting in the work to find another role. Changing jobs — whether internally or with another company — is often the most expedient way to grow your income.

Get comfortable with AI tools — even if your company isn't focused on it.
Whether you're a writer, social media manager, designer, or account manager, gen AI has a critical role to play in your day-to-day job and career. Even if your company lags behind in adoption, start to experiment with tools in your free time. You'll have no shortage of interesting options, including: Perplexity for topical research, Reword for generating content, Gong.io for customer conversations, Lavender.ai for email coaching, and many more.

In the absence of guidance from your employer, experiment, experiment, experiment.
Get started by reviewing best practices for using AI in marketing — including how the AP counsels journalists working with AI tools. Also, join AI-related marketing communities to see how your peers are using AI and honing their skills. Couple these with training.

Keep training, growing, and advancing.
One thing is certain: Marketers need to upskill — no matter their role. Individuals we surveyed are focused on learning new tech platforms, leadership skills, and data/analytics skills. The challenge can be in figuring out where to go to develop these skills. Nearly half (48%) of marketers say they're using third-party companies to develop their skills. The advantage: External training companies have up-to-the-minute training on fast-changing digital marketing technologies and tactics — everything from technical skills (SEO and Google Analytics) to leadership skills and content marketing strategy.

Get more career advice and curated job listings at contentmarketinginstitute.com/careers.

HIRING COMPANIES:

Define your AI guidelines — even if they're preliminary.
Organizations need to put in place policies and procedures for using generative AI — not just at the company level, but also at the marketing level. And marketers need training for how to use (and not use) it. Currently only 19% of organizations do this. (Consider these resources for developing AI guidelines and important use cases for your team.)

Take the AI bull by the horns.
Many marketers told us their internal use of AI is still ad hoc and unmanaged. And marketers are using tools at their own discretion — mainly low-powered free tools in the absence of any direction from leadership. It's time to confront the problem and be more intentional about your AI tech stack for marketing workflows.

Make skills development/refinement a priority.
Three in four marketers say they need to master specialized or niche skills to remain relevant. Organizations should be supporting this — either by growing internal training opportunities or offering third-party development opportunities.
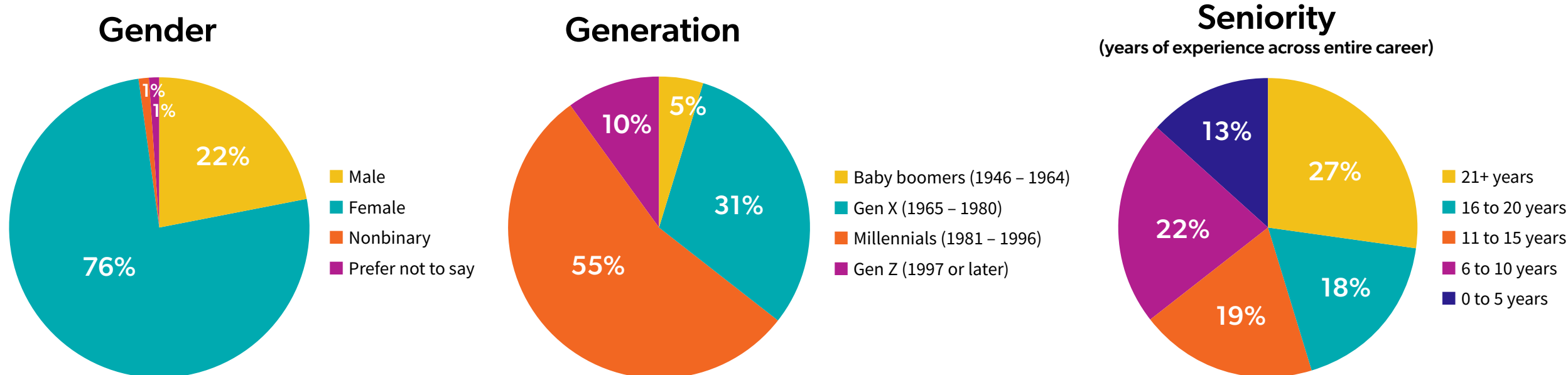
Don't leave behind core creative skills.
Eighty-nine percent of marketers say "original writing" and "graphic/visual design" will still be valuable for marketing teams in five years. These resilient, non-tech skills will continue to be in demand as AI makes deeper inroads into marketing roles and responsibilities. These are the skills that will correct the worst aspects of AI-authored creativity (e.g., the "soulless" and "unsophisticated" content our survey-takers reported). Companies should continue to develop these skills in employees, even as they race to adopt AI-driven tools.

Methodology

The Content Marketing Institute surveyed 704 marketers in May 2024. Our sample was 78% women and 22% men. A detailed breakdown of age and seniority is shown below.

To calculate salary, we focused on full-time employed marketers working in the U.S. Self-employed/freelance marketers are not included in this group.

Gender

- Male
- Female
- Nonbinary
- Prefer not to say

Generation

- Baby boomers (1946 – 1964)
- Gen X (1965 – 1980)
- Millennials (1981 – 1996)
- Gen Z (1997 or later)

Seniority
(years of experience across entire career)

- 21+ years
- 16 to 20 years
- 11 to 15 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 0 to 5 years

About Content Marketing Institute

Content Marketing Institute (CMI) exists to do one thing: advance the practice of content marketing through online education and in-person and digital events. We create and curate content experiences that teach marketers and creators from enterprise brands, small businesses, and agencies how to attract and retain customers through compelling, multichannel storytelling. Global brands turn to CMI for strategic consultation, training, and research. Organizations from around the world send teams to Content Marketing World, the largest content marketing-focused event, the Marketing Analytics & Data Science (MADS) conference, and CMI virtual events, including ContentTECH Summit. Our community of 215,000+ content marketers shares camaraderie and conversation. CMI is organized by Informa Connect. To learn more, visit www.contentmarketinginstitute.com.