



# 2021 SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING INDUSTRY REPORT

*How Marketers Are Using  
Social Media to Grow  
Their Businesses*

.....

MAY 2021

BY MICHAEL A. STELZNER



**SocialMedia**  
**Examiner**

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## Letter from the author...

Hello, fellow marketer!

Welcome to our **13<sup>th</sup> annual report**! This is the longest-running social media marketing study. And yes, social media marketing is still changing.

This **40-page report** contains easy-to-digest insights into how marketers are currently using social media and their future plans.

If you're in charge of marketing your business, you'll want to closely **examine the 50+ charts** on the following pages. I'll reveal the "not-so-obvious" findings in this data-rich content.

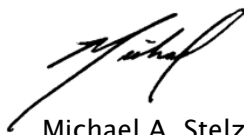
The report covers all of the major social platforms, organic and paid activities, video marketing, and much more.

More than 4,300 of your fellow marketers provided the kinds of insights you won't find elsewhere.

I hope you enjoy it! **If you find value in this report, please let your peers know about it.**

You can find the original page for the report here:  
<https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/report2021/>

All my best!



Michael A. Stelzner  
Founder, Social Media Examiner  
Host, Social Media Marketing podcast



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## Executive summary

This study surveyed more than 4,300 marketers with the goal of understanding how they're using social media to grow and promote their businesses. On the following pages, you'll discover:

- **The top social media questions marketers want answered:** We reveal the big questions today's marketing pros want answered.
- **The benefits of social media marketing:** This section of our study reveals all of the major advantages marketers are achieving with their social media efforts. We also look at how years of experience affect the results.
- **Most-used social media platforms:** Discover which platforms marketers are using now and how their usage will change over the next 12 months. We also examine which platforms experienced marketers are using and the most important platforms for marketers.
- **Organic social plans:** We explore how marketers plan on changing their future organic activities by platform.
- **Video marketing use and plans:** We reveal the video platforms most popular with marketers, their use of short-form video, native video, and live video, and how they plan on changing their video marketing over the next 12 months.
- **Social ad use:** We reveal the social advertising platforms marketers are using and which ad platforms they want to learn more about.

# Major findings

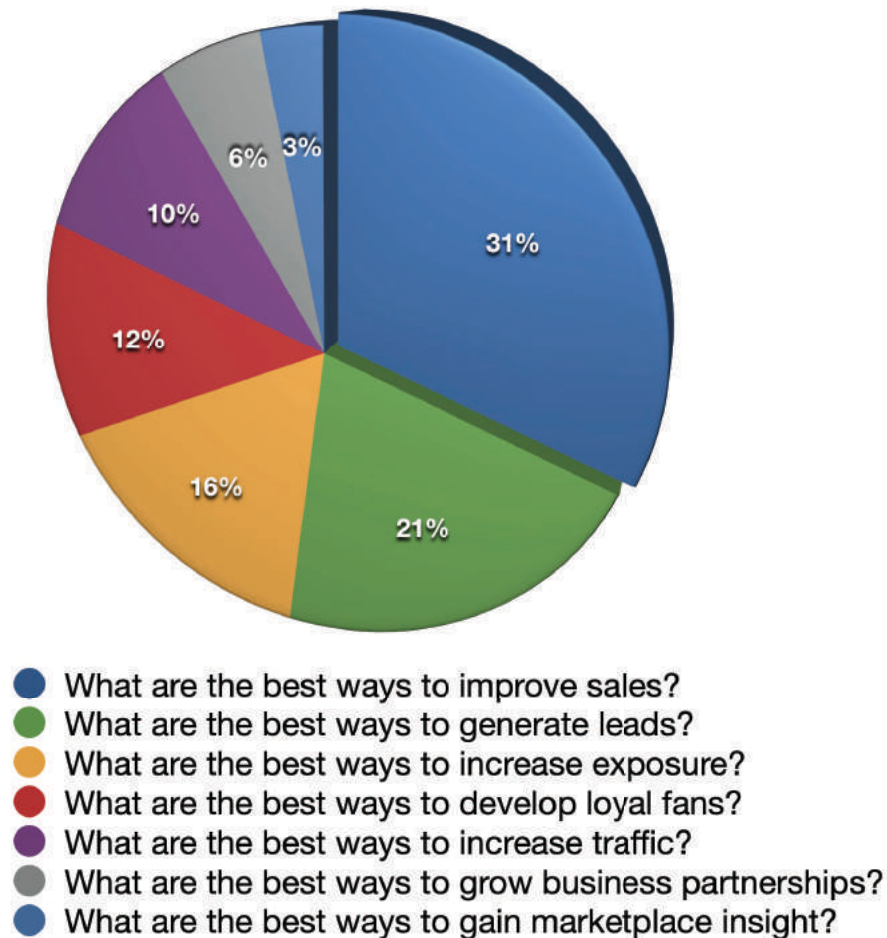
Here's a quick summary of some of our more interesting findings:

- **Facebook declining:** Marketers have been diversifying away from Facebook steadily since 2019. When asked to select their single most important platform, only 54% selected Facebook, down from 67% in 2018. Twelve percent of marketers indicated they'll be decreasing their organic marketing on Facebook and only 47% of marketers plan on increasing their organic activities on the platform.
- **Instagram is hot:** Seventy-eight percent of marketers are using Instagram. It's the second most important social platform for marketing (behind Facebook). A significant 64% of marketers plan on increasing their Instagram organic activities over the next 12 months. Instagram is the number-one platform marketers want to learn more about.
- **Stories video use is on the rise:** Short-form video is growing. More than half of all marketers regularly use Instagram and Facebook for video-based stories.
- **YouTube interest is high:** A significant 71% of marketers plan on increasing their use of YouTube video and 72% want to learn more about organic video marketing on the platform.
- **TikTok is ignored by most marketers:** Only 9% of marketers are using TikTok. A significant 68% do not plan on using the platform in the next year; however, 32% are interested in learning more about TikTok.
- **Facebook dominance still strong:** A very significant 93% of marketers use Facebook (followed by Instagram at 78%). Fifty-four percent of marketers claim Facebook is their most important social platform. Facebook Live is the leading live video platform used by 30% of marketers. Facebook ads are used by 75% of marketers and 61% find the Facebook ads platform the most important for ads.

The above summary is just a taste of what's in this report. On the following pages, you'll find 50+ charts that visually convey some of our fascinating findings.

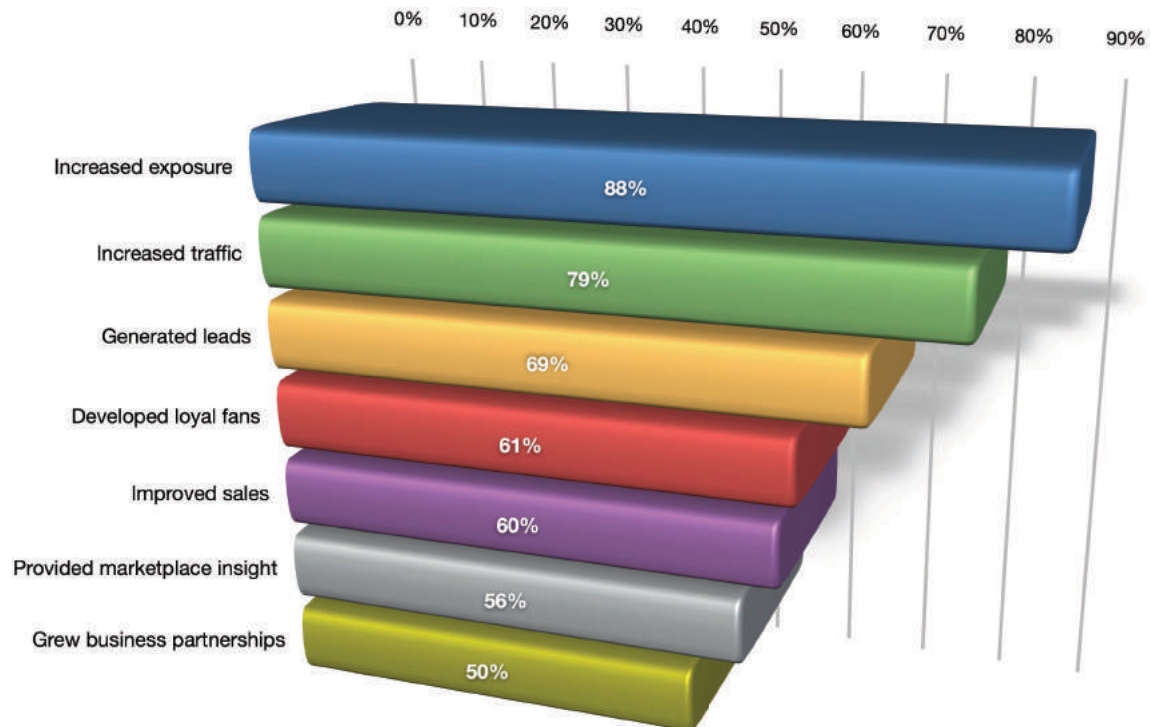
## Most important question social media marketers want answered

We asked marketers to select the single most important question they want answered among a broad range of social marketing questions. Here's what they said:



More than half of the marketers we surveyed strongly desire to get answers to their sales-focused questions—what are the best ways to improve sales and generate leads.

# Benefits of social media marketing



A significant 88% of all marketers we surveyed indicated that their social media efforts have generated more exposure for their businesses. Increased traffic was the second major benefit, with 79% reporting positive results. These benefits have remained in the top two spots for the last 7 years.

All of the social marketing benefits have increased since 2020:

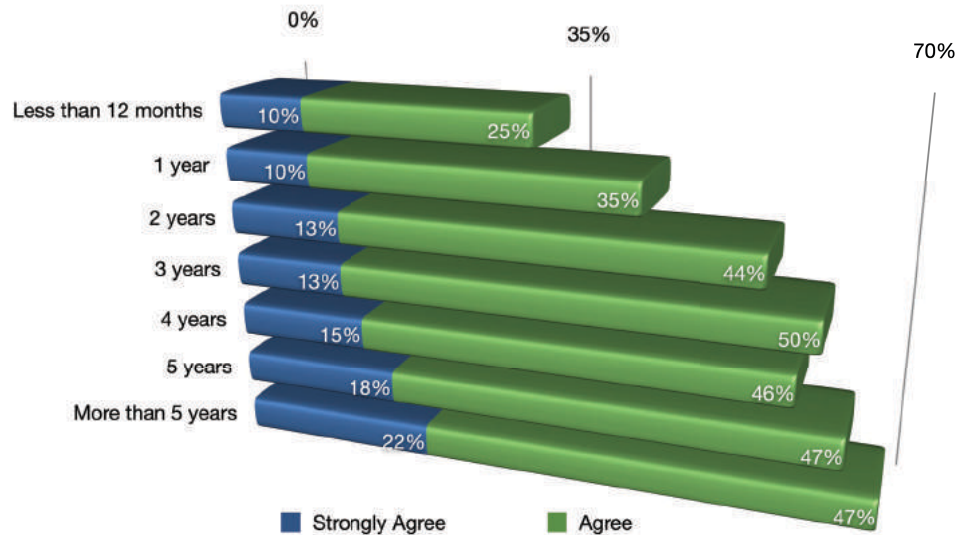
- Increased exposure rose to 88% from 86%.
- Increased traffic nudged up to 79% from 78%.
- Generated leads increased to 69% from 67%.
- Developed loyal fans went to 61% from 60%.
- Improved sales rose to 60% from 59%.
- Provided marketplace insight jumped to 56% from 49%.
- Grew business partnerships edged up to 50% from 49%.

A question that naturally emerges from the above chart is, "Are marketers who've been using social media for years achieving better results?" The following charts address this question.

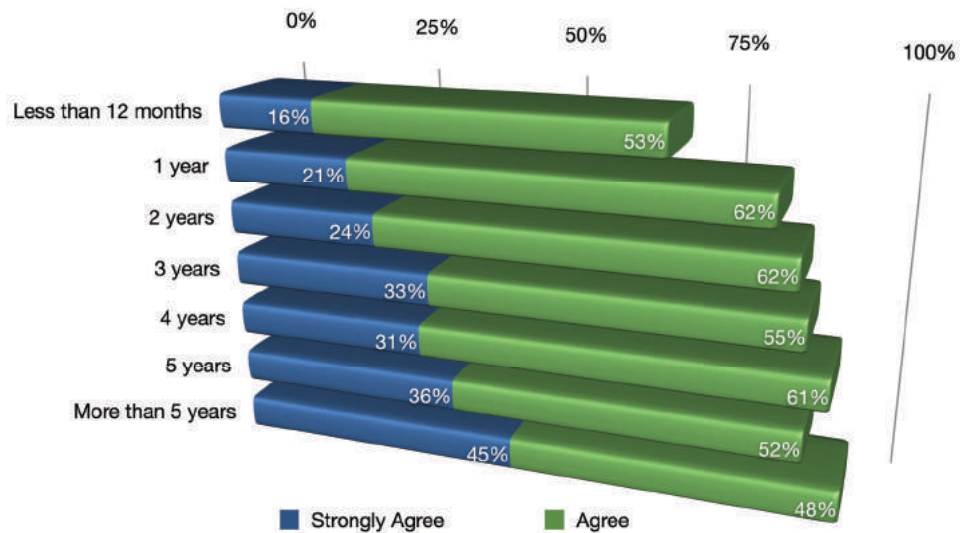


**Improved sales:** A large percentage of marketers find better sales results with more years of social media experience.

For example, more than half of marketers who've been using social media for 2 or more years report it helped them improve sales.

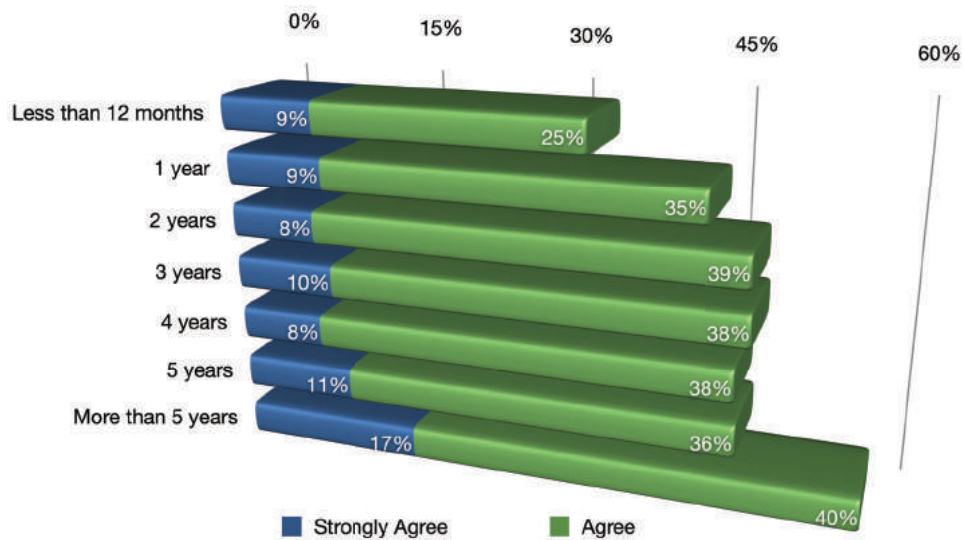


**Increased exposure:** Most marketers (83%+) who've been using social media marketing for 1 year or longer report it generates exposure for their businesses.

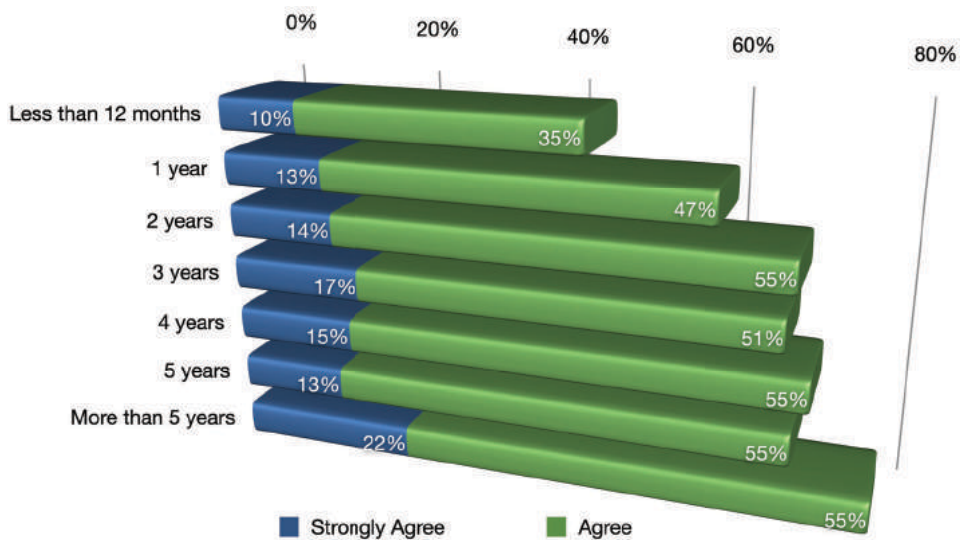




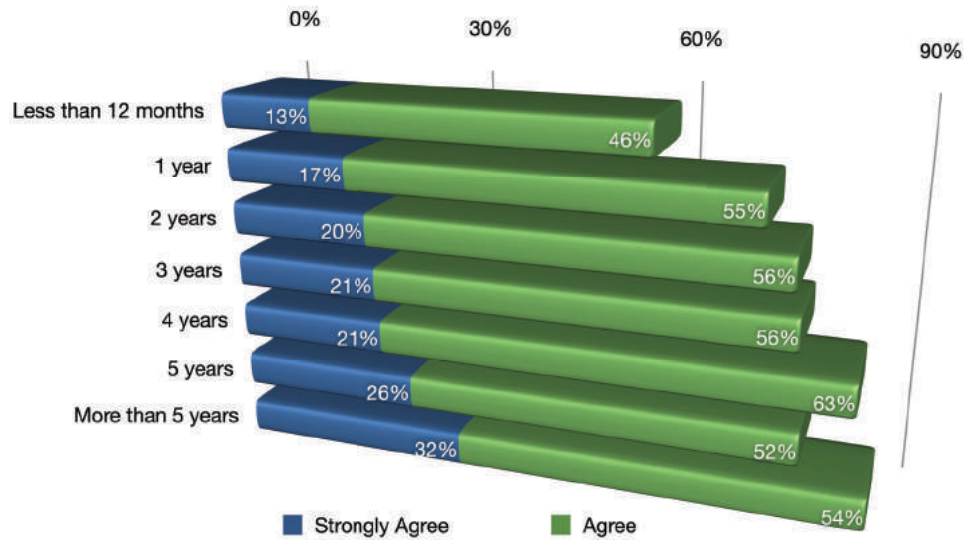
**Grew business partnerships:** Using social media to grow partnerships seems to be underused by most marketers.



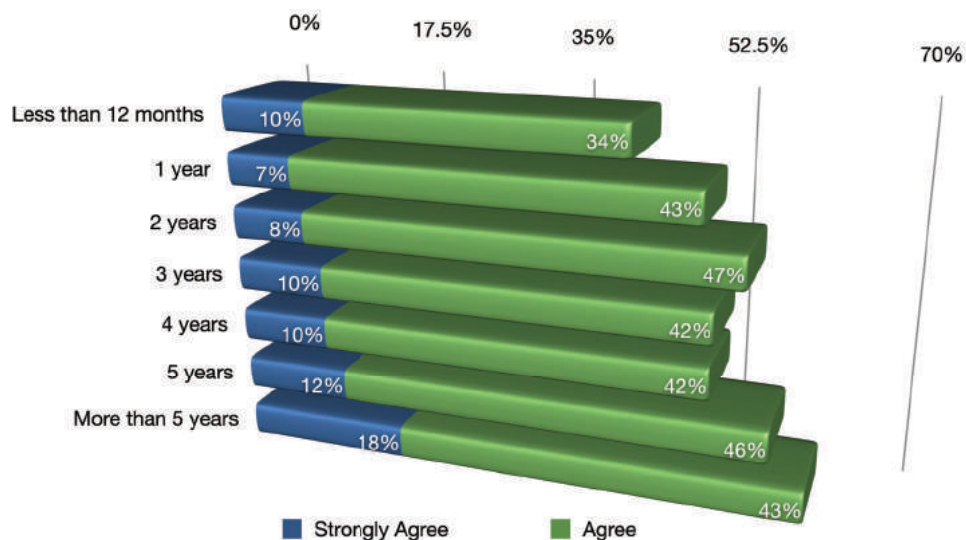
**Generated leads:** This chart shows that marketers get more proficient at generating leads via social platforms with more experience.



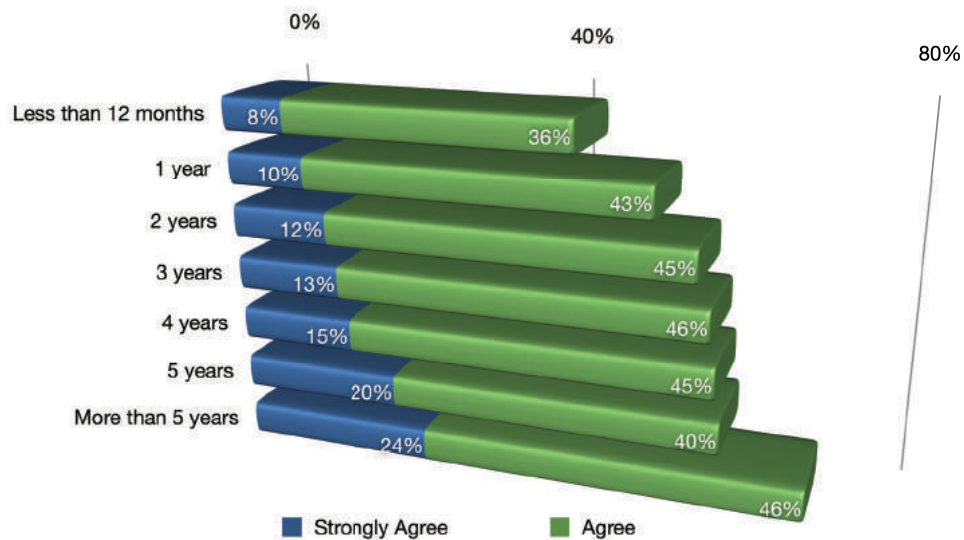
**Increased traffic:** Those who've used social media for 1 year or longer reported substantially better results driving traffic (72%+ reported benefits), compared to those with less experience.



**Provided marketplace insight:** There doesn't appear to be much of a change in this benefit based on years of experience.



**Developed loyal fans:** Building a loyal fan base seems to be an advantage that improves as marketers gain more years of experience.

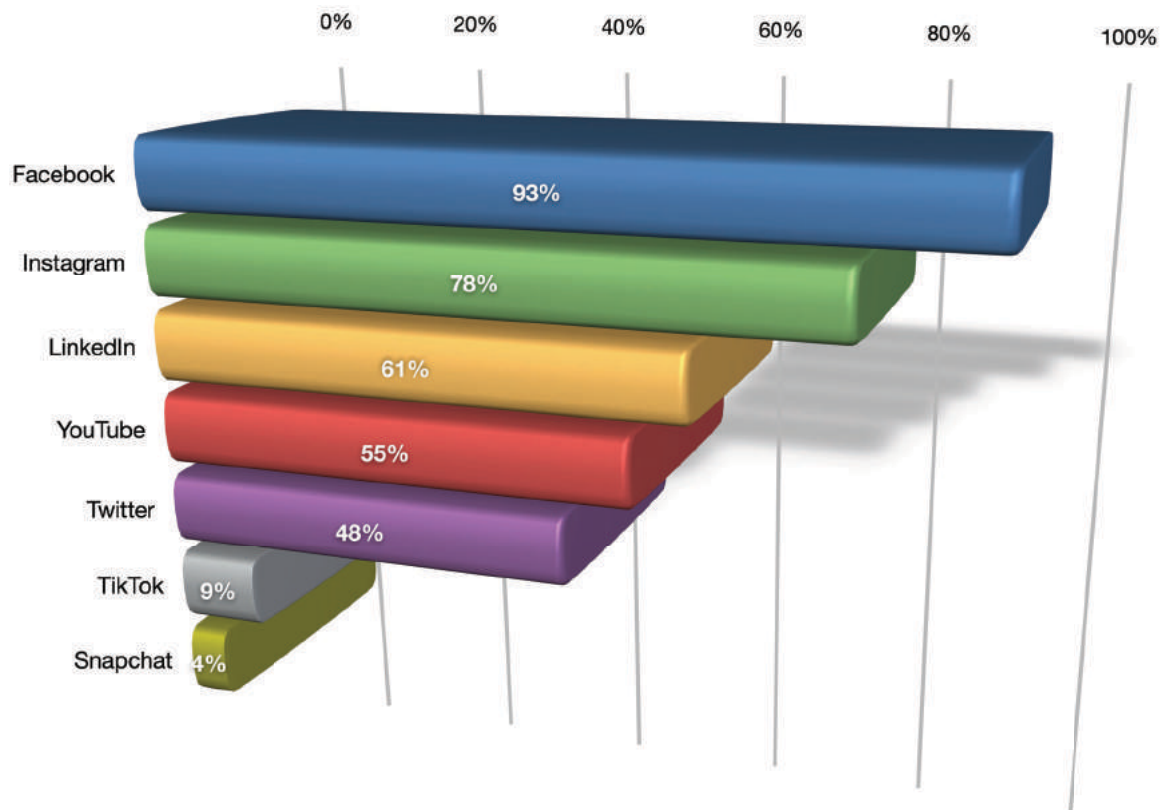


**Learn how to  
grow your sales  
on Instagram in  
2021 and beyond**

**Download now →**



# Commonly used social media platforms



Facebook and Instagram are the top two platforms used by marketers, by a longshot. All other platforms lag behind these top two.

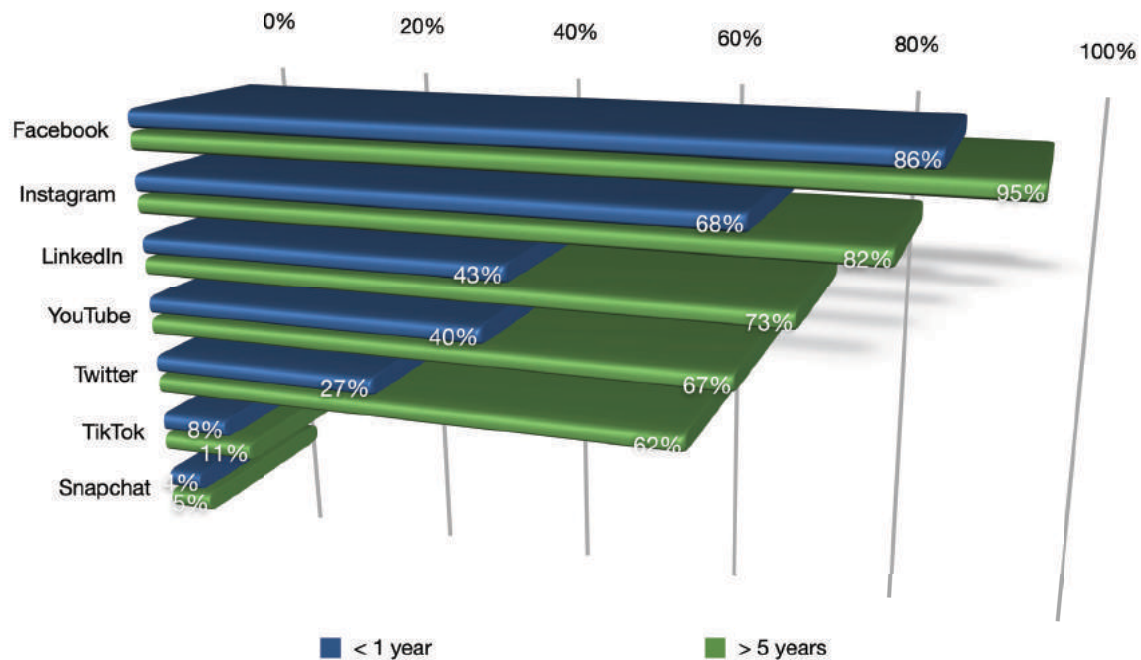
## NOTABLE CHANGES SINCE 2020

- Instagram grew from 76%.
- Twitter fell from 53% and moved from fourth to fifth place.
- YouTube took fourth place, up from 53%.
- TikTok grew from 5%.

## Platform use: Beginners vs. advanced marketers

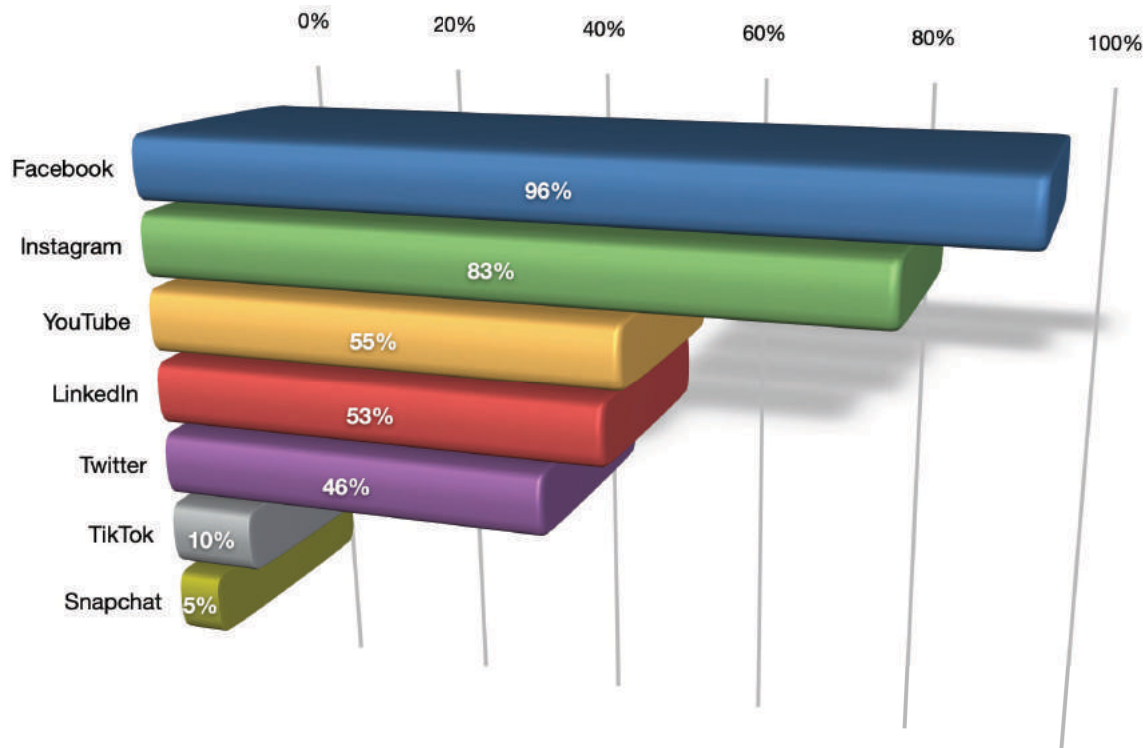
Here's a close examination of which social channels experienced social media marketers are using (the green bars = more than 5 years of experience) compared to those just getting started (the blue bars = less than 12 months of experience).

New social media marketers mostly focus on Facebook (86%) and Instagram (68%). The most experienced marketers are highly diversified.



### Platform use: B2C marketers

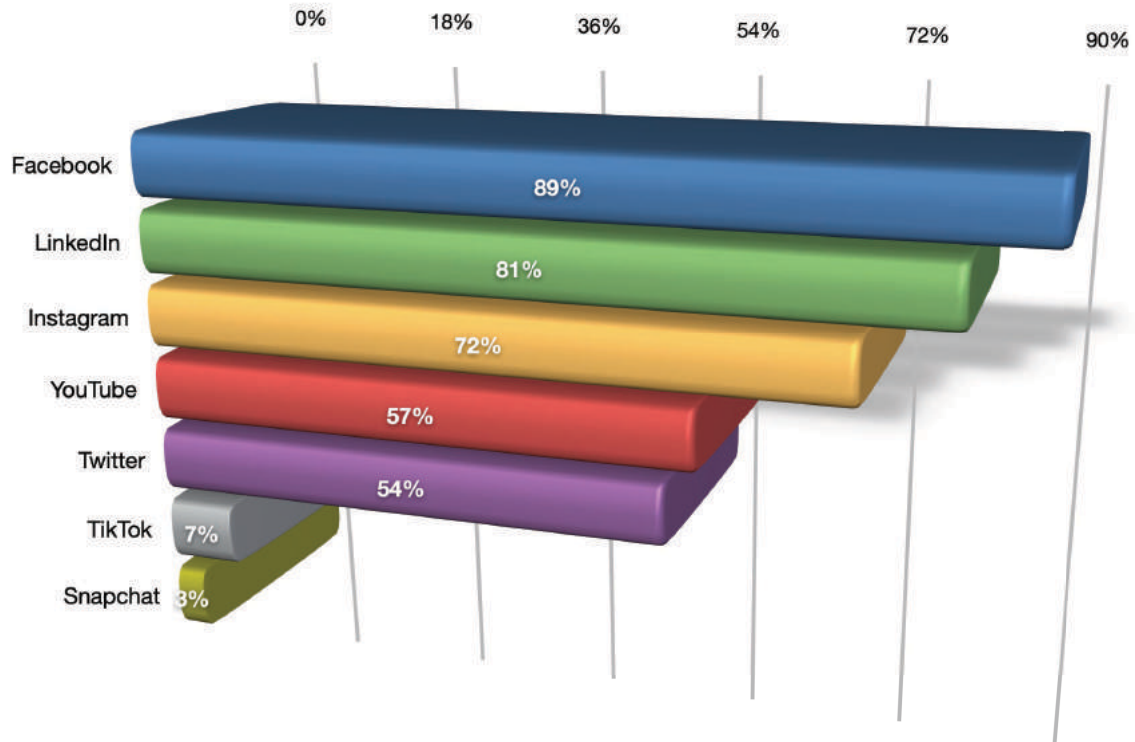
This chart shows that nearly all B2C marketers are focused on Facebook. Interestingly, B2C marketers reduced their use of Twitter (down from 53% in 2020) and increased their use of LinkedIn (up from 50% in 2020).



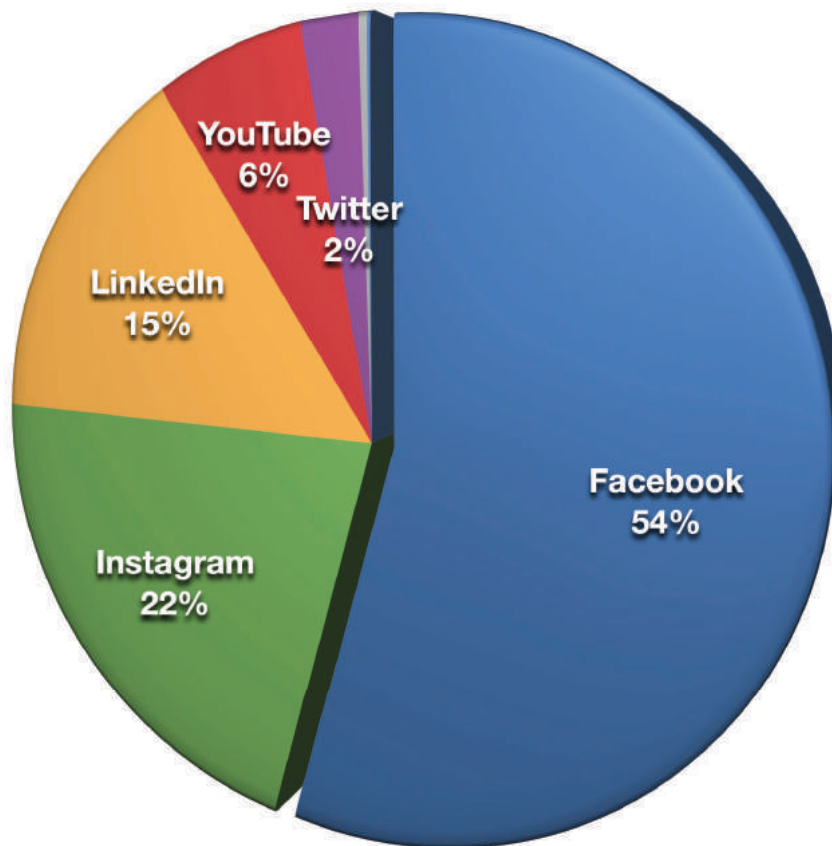


### Platform use: B2B marketers

This chart shows that most B2B marketers use Facebook and a significant percentage use LinkedIn.



## The most important social platform for marketers is...



We asked marketers to select the single most important social platform for their business. Because only one choice was allowed, the findings are revealing.

Most marketers (54%) chose Facebook as their most important platform. This chart clearly reveals Facebook is still the primary platform for marketers.

### NOTABLE CHANGES SINCE 2019

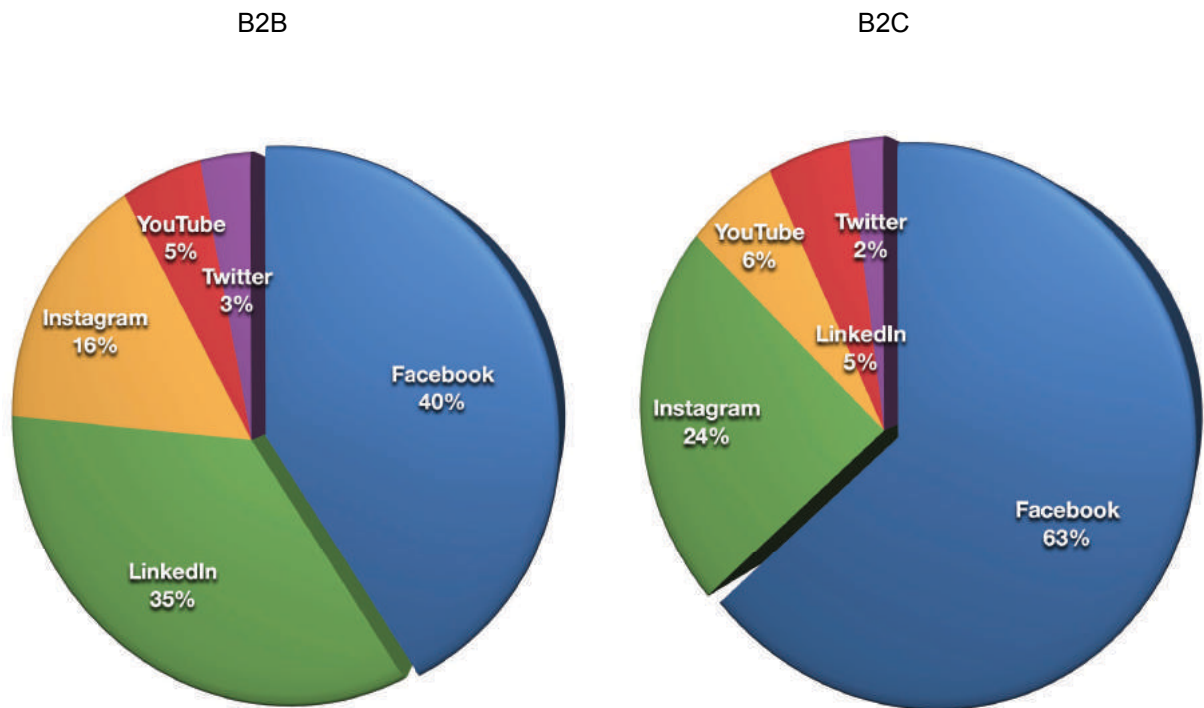
- Facebook dropped from 59%.
- Instagram grew from 17%.

## B2B vs. B2C

Notice the fascinating differences between B2B- and B2C-focused marketers.

Clearly, Facebook dominates in the B2C space (63% of marketers select it as their number-one choice). However, for B2B marketers, Facebook also grabs the most important slot, surpassing LinkedIn.

For B2C marketers, Facebook dropped from 67% and Instagram grew from 19% in 2020.

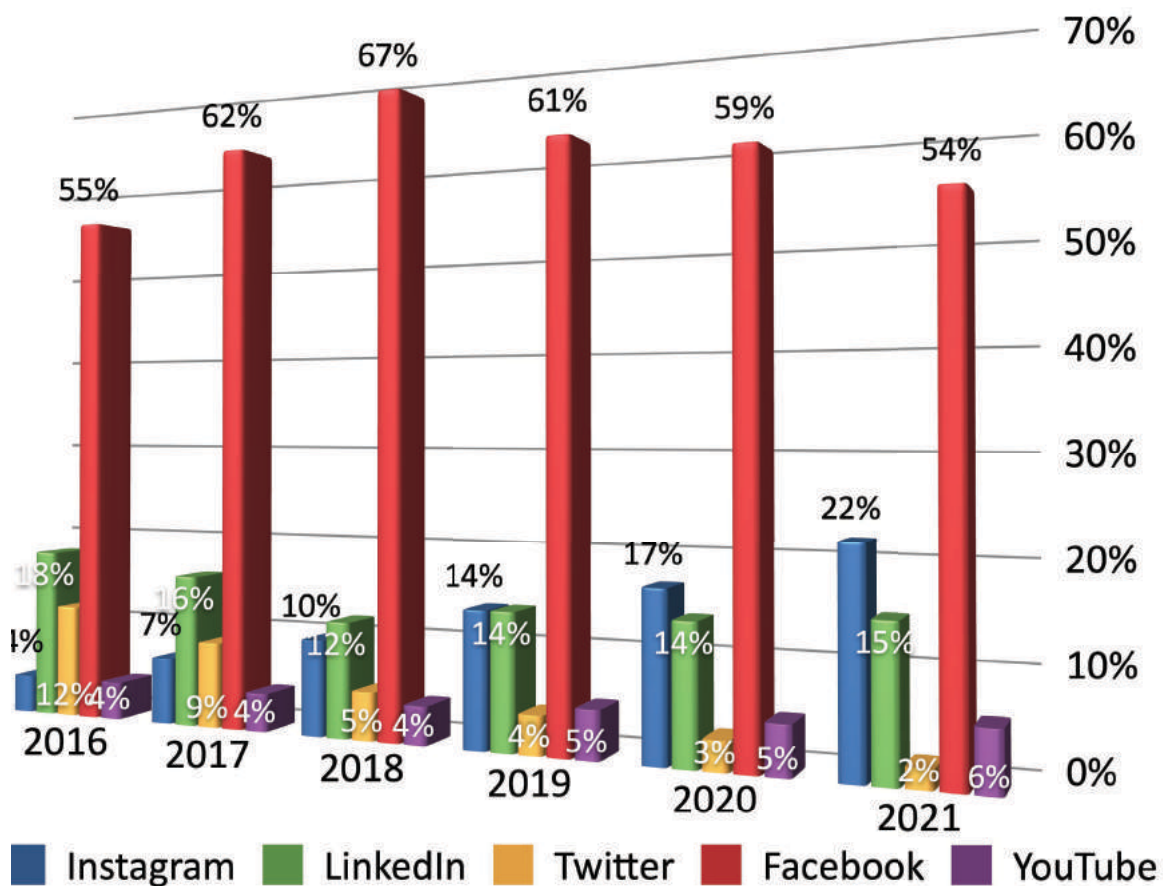


# The rise and fall of social platforms

Here we show the top five social platforms that marketers deem most important over a 6-year period.

Facebook continues its decline that started in 2019.

The rise of Instagram can be clearly seen (blue), alongside the decline in Twitter (yellow).



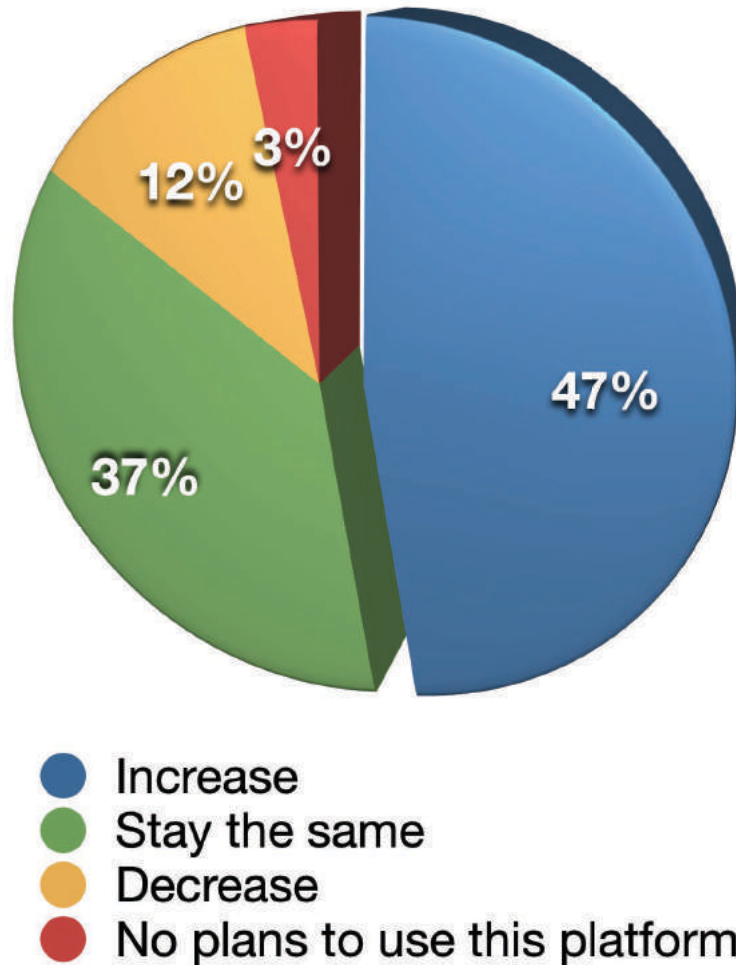
## Organic social plans

We asked marketers how their organic posting activities will change over the next 12 months. Here's a breakdown by platform:

### Future Facebook plans

Our research shows that 12% of marketers indicate they'll be decreasing their organic marketing on Facebook. This is greater than for any other platform.

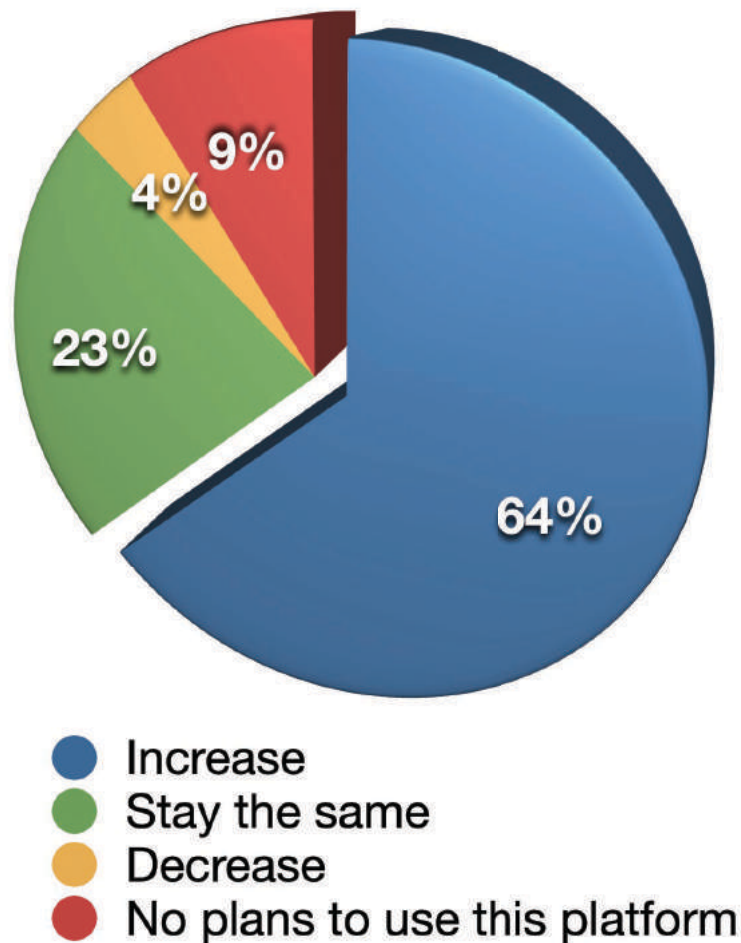
Forty-seven percent of marketers plan on increasing their Facebook organic activities. As shown earlier, Facebook is still the most important social network for most marketers.



## Future Instagram plans

Our research shows a significant 64% of marketers plan on increasing their Instagram organic activities over the next 12 months, making it the top platform where marketers plan on doing more.

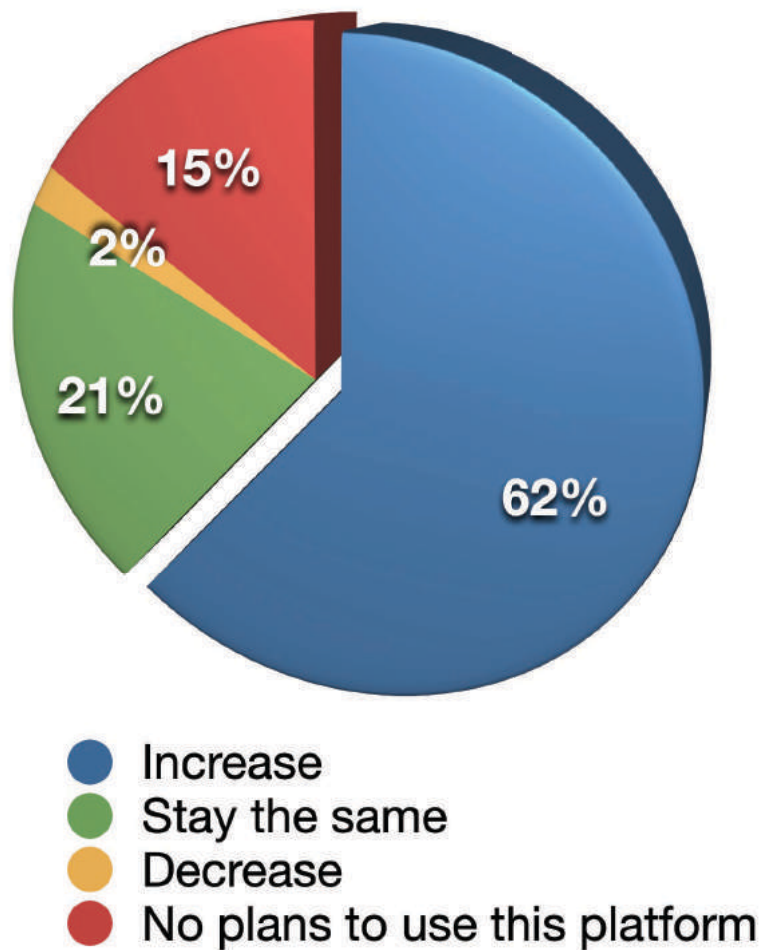
Sixty-nine percent of B2C marketers plan on increasing Instagram organic activities, compared to 59% of B2B.





### Future YouTube plans

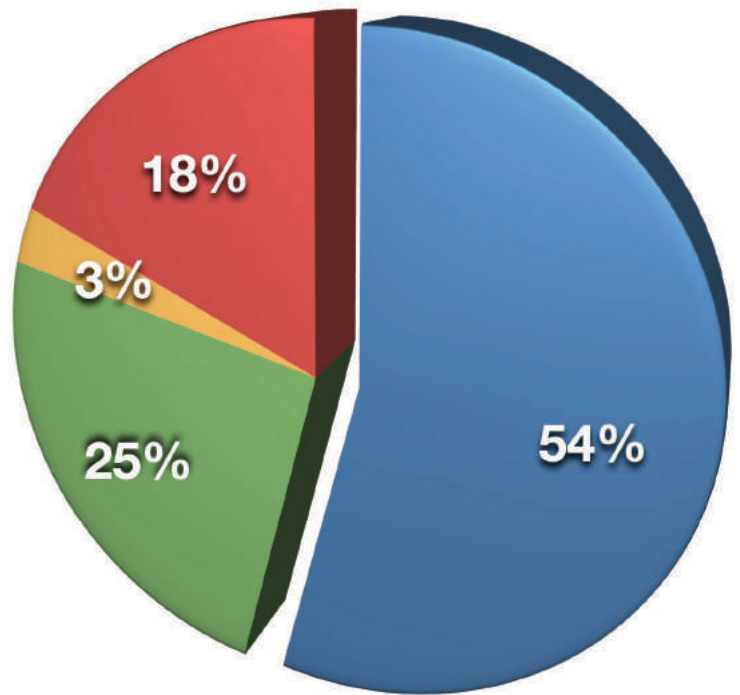
A significant 62% of marketers plan on increasing their YouTube organic activities over the next 12 months. Note that on page 31, we asked this question in a different way and 71% of marketers indicated they plan to increase their YouTube video marketing efforts.



### Future LinkedIn plans

More than half of marketers (54%) plan on increasing their LinkedIn organic activities over the next 12 months.

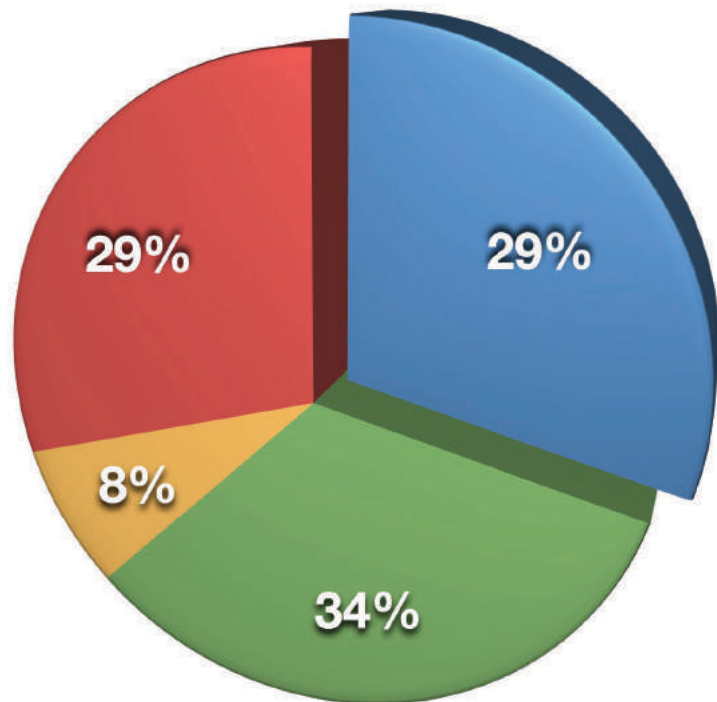
Seventy-four percent of B2B plan on increasing LinkedIn organic activities, compared to 45% of B2C.



- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease
- No plans to use this platform

### Future Twitter plans

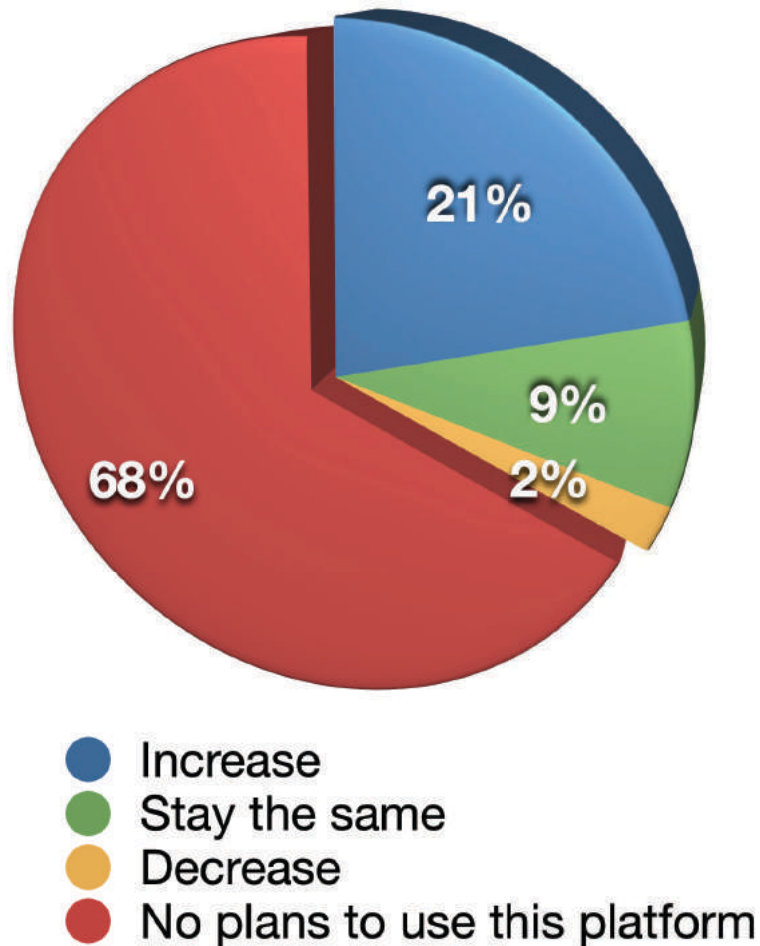
About one in three (29%) marketers plan on increasing their Twitter organic activities over the next 12 months, down from 34% in 2020.



- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease
- No plans to use this platform

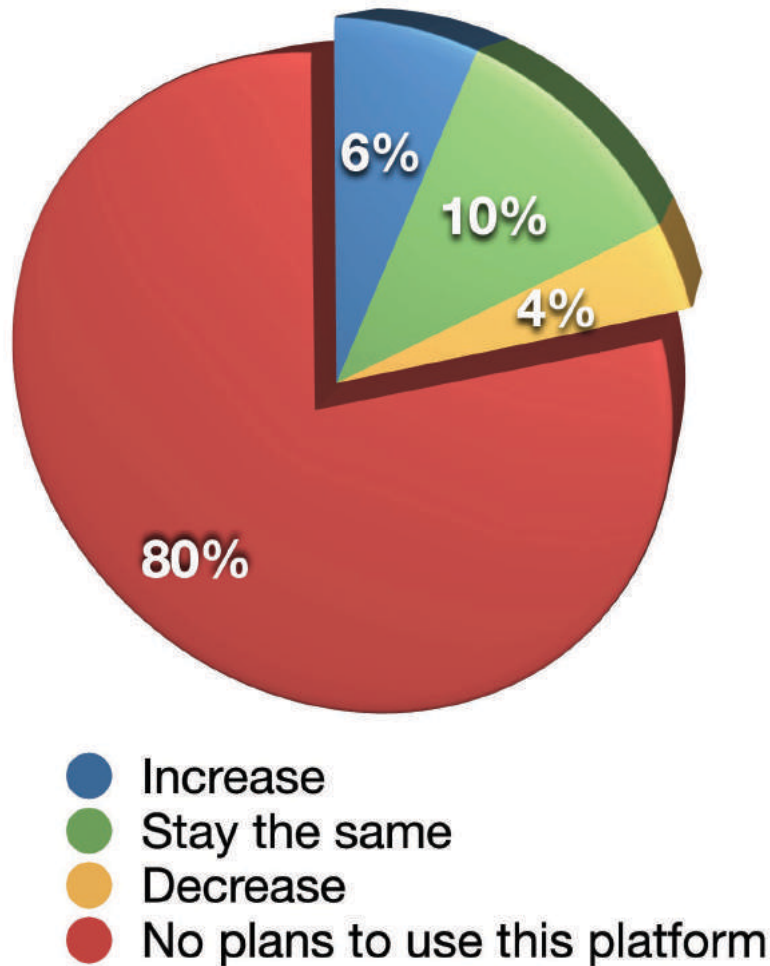
## Future TikTok plans

Twenty-one percent of marketers plan on increasing their TikTok organic activities over the next 12 months, up from 16% in 2020. A significant 68% of marketers have no plans to use TikTok.

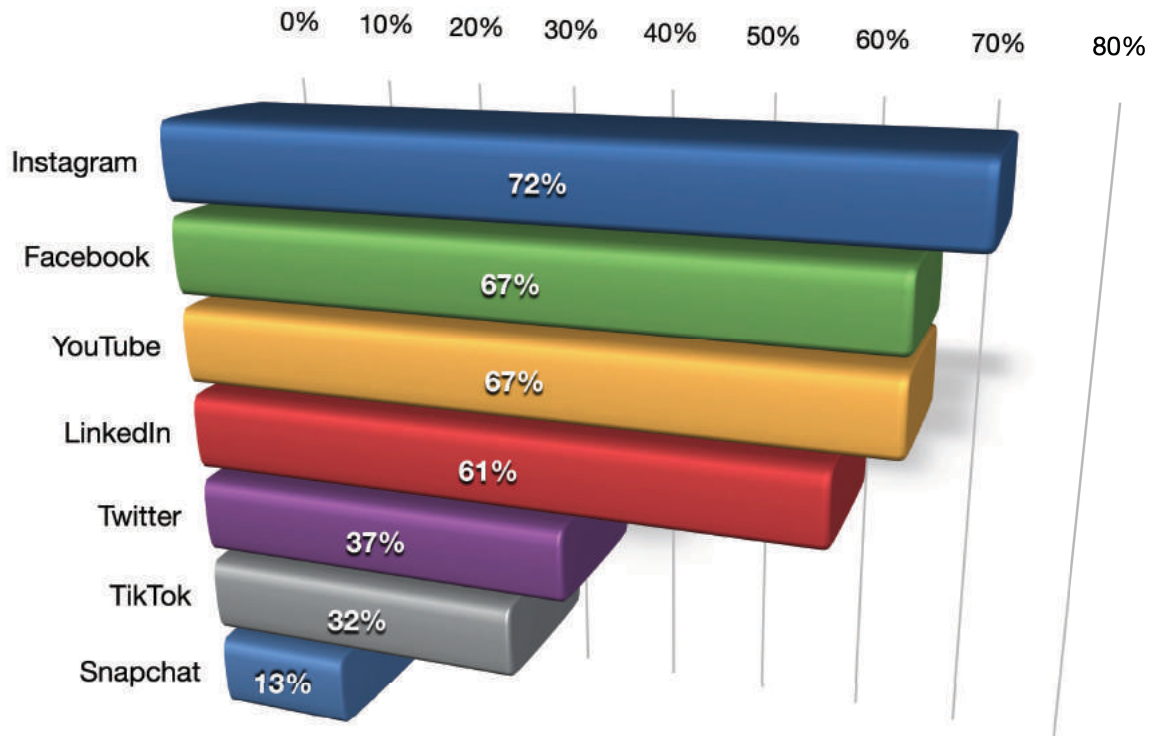


### Future Snapchat plans

Only 6% of marketers plan on increasing their Snapchat organic activities over the next 12 months. A significant 80% of marketers have no plans to use Snapchat.



## Social media platforms marketers want to learn more about

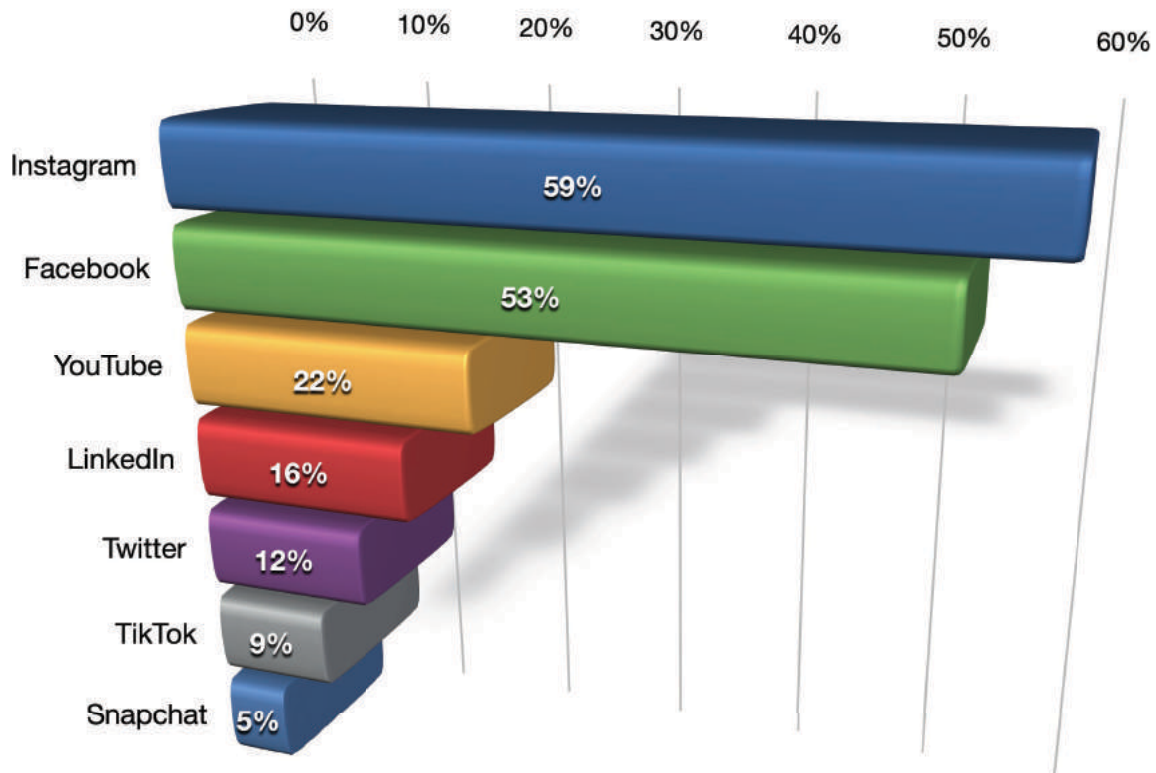


We asked marketers to identify which social media platforms they want to learn more about. Instagram held the top slot for the third year in a row.

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Instagram (77% B2C vs. 63% B2B), Facebook (72% B2C vs. 57% B2B), and TikTok (34% B2C vs. 28% B2B), than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn (72% B2B vs. 55% B2C).



## Stories or short-form video use by marketers

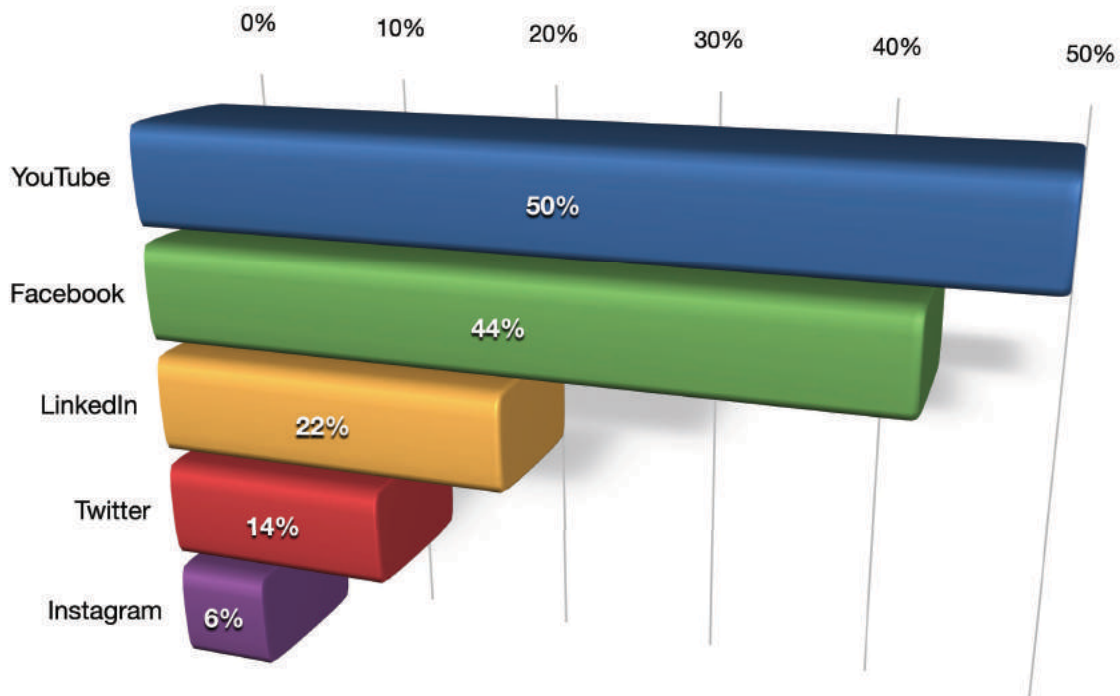


This year, we decided to study different video formats and how they're used across the social channels. We asked marketers to indicate which platforms they regularly used for their video stories (or short-form video that's less than 30 seconds).

Instagram was the number-one story-based video channel used by 59% of marketers, followed by Facebook (53%).

The use of Instagram Stories increased from 46% in 2020, Facebook Stories rose from 32% in 2020, and YouTube Stories more than quadrupled from 5% in 2020.

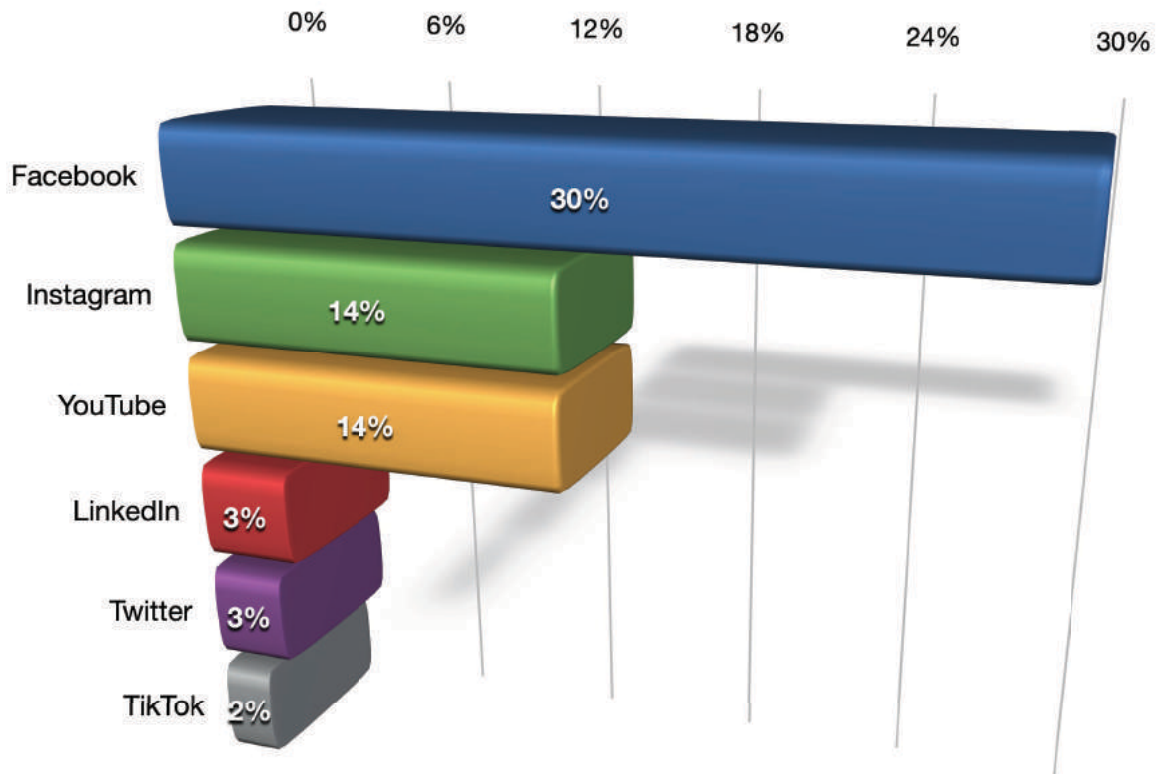
## Native video use by marketers



We asked marketers to indicate which platforms they regularly published native video (30 seconds or longer).

YouTube was the number-one video channel used by 50% of marketers, followed by Facebook (44%). Both of these platforms declined from their 2020 numbers when YouTube video was at 55% and Facebook video was at 49%.

## Live video use by marketers

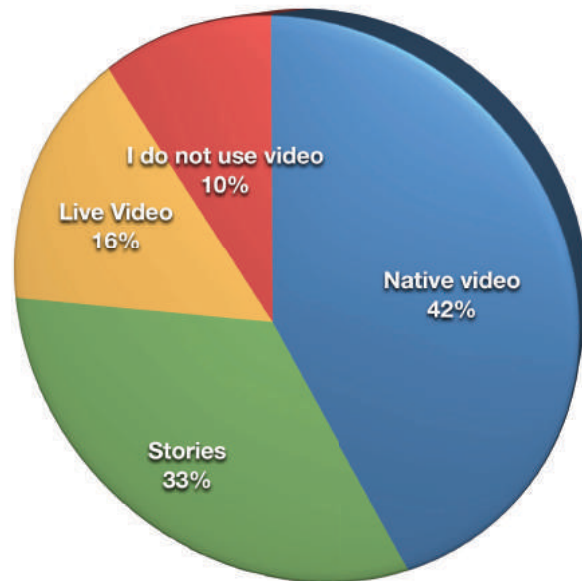


We asked marketers to indicate which platforms they regularly use for live video. Facebook was the number-one live video channel, used by 30% of marketers, followed by Instagram (14%) and YouTube (14%). No other channel came close to Facebook.

Facebook Live and Instagram Live have seen declines since 2020. Facebook fell from 38% and Instagram from 17%. However, YouTube Live grew from 8%.

## The most important video format for marketers is...

We asked marketers to select the single most important video format for their business. Native video holds the top spot, followed by stories.



**Video is the marketer's top priority in 2021!**  
**Are you live streaming for your business yet?**



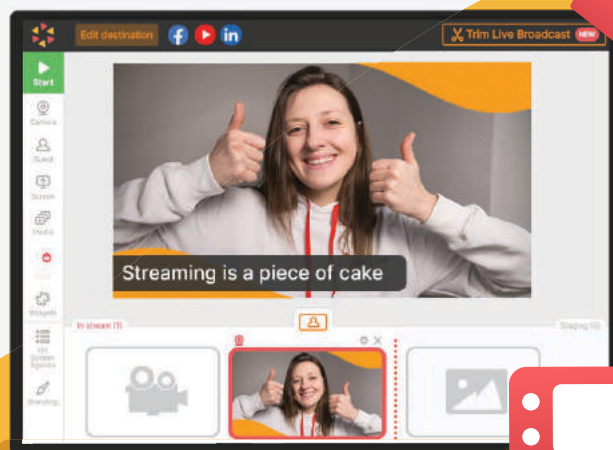
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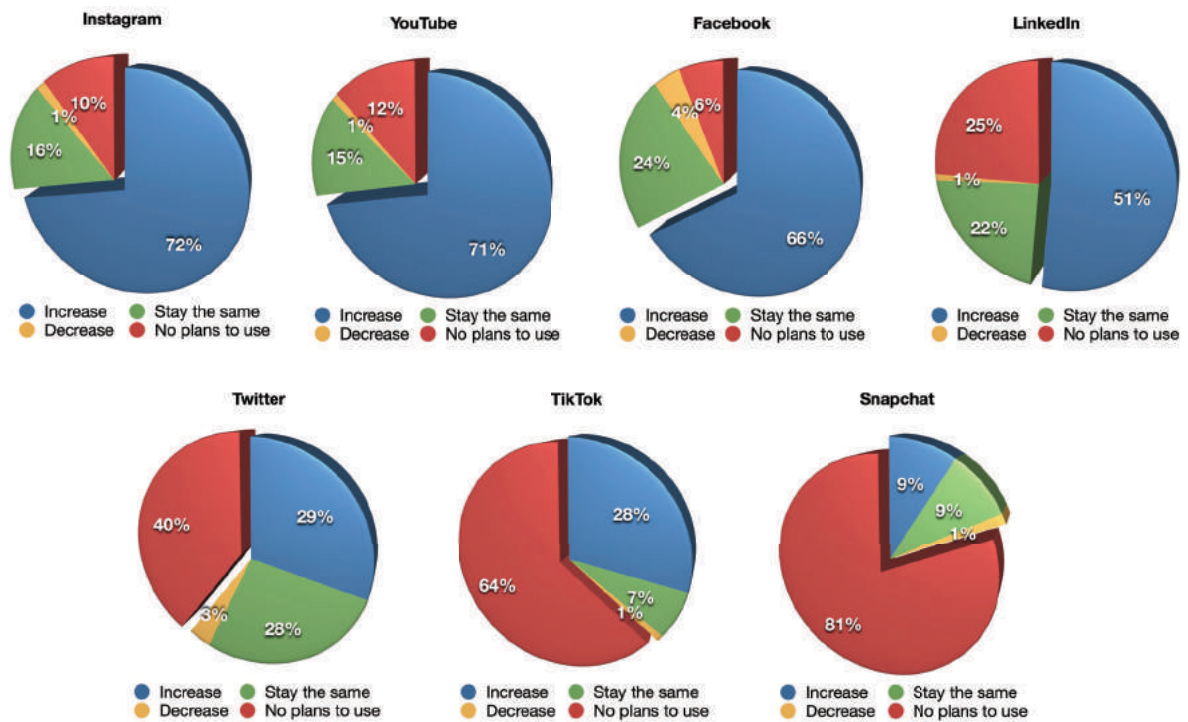


# How will marketers change their future video marketing activities?

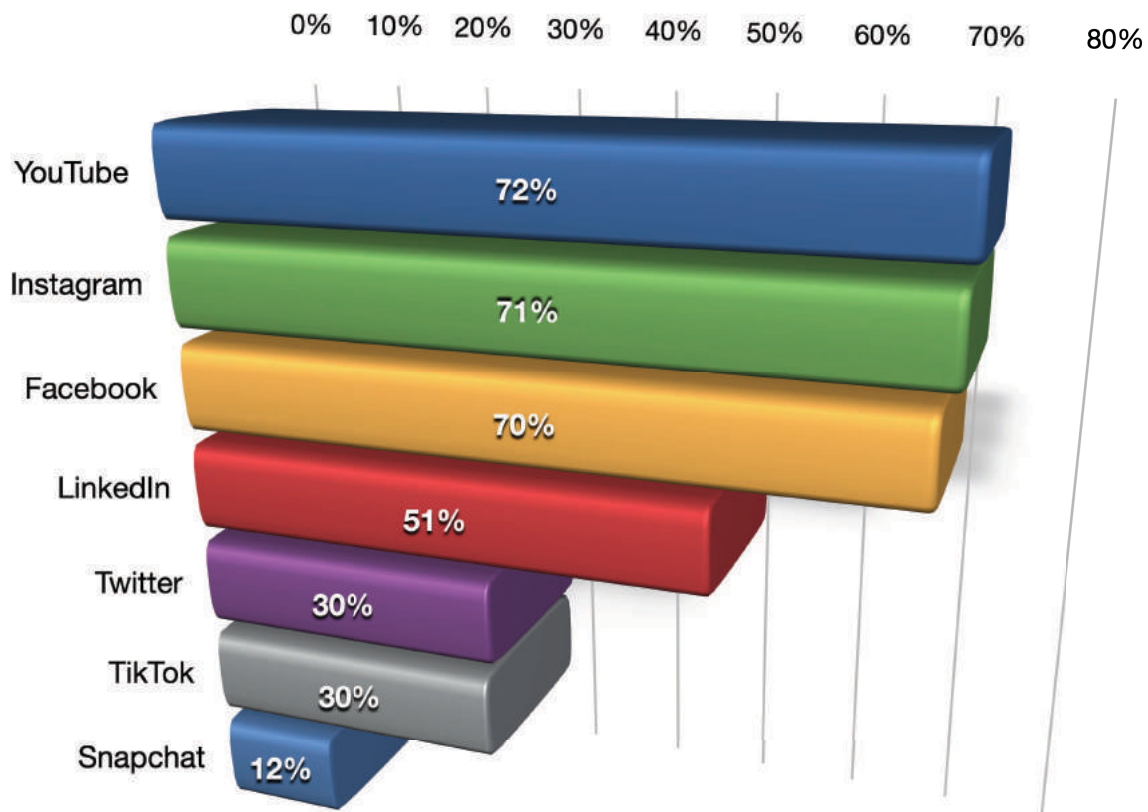
We asked marketers to indicate how they'll change their video marketing use in the near future. Respondents were asked to indicate whether they plan to increase, decrease, remain the same, or not use various platforms in their video marketing.

Marketers mostly plan on increasing their use of Instagram video (72%), YouTube video (71%), and Facebook video (66%). These are the same platforms marketers chose in 2020; however, Instagram took over the number-one slot, passing YouTube.

Here's a breakdown by platform:



## Video platforms marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers to tell us the platforms where they'd like to improve their video marketing knowledge. **YouTube and Instagram were the top video platforms marketers wanted to learn more about.**

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Instagram video (76% B2C vs. 62% B2B) and Facebook video (74% B2C vs. 61% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn video (66% B2B vs. 44% B2C).

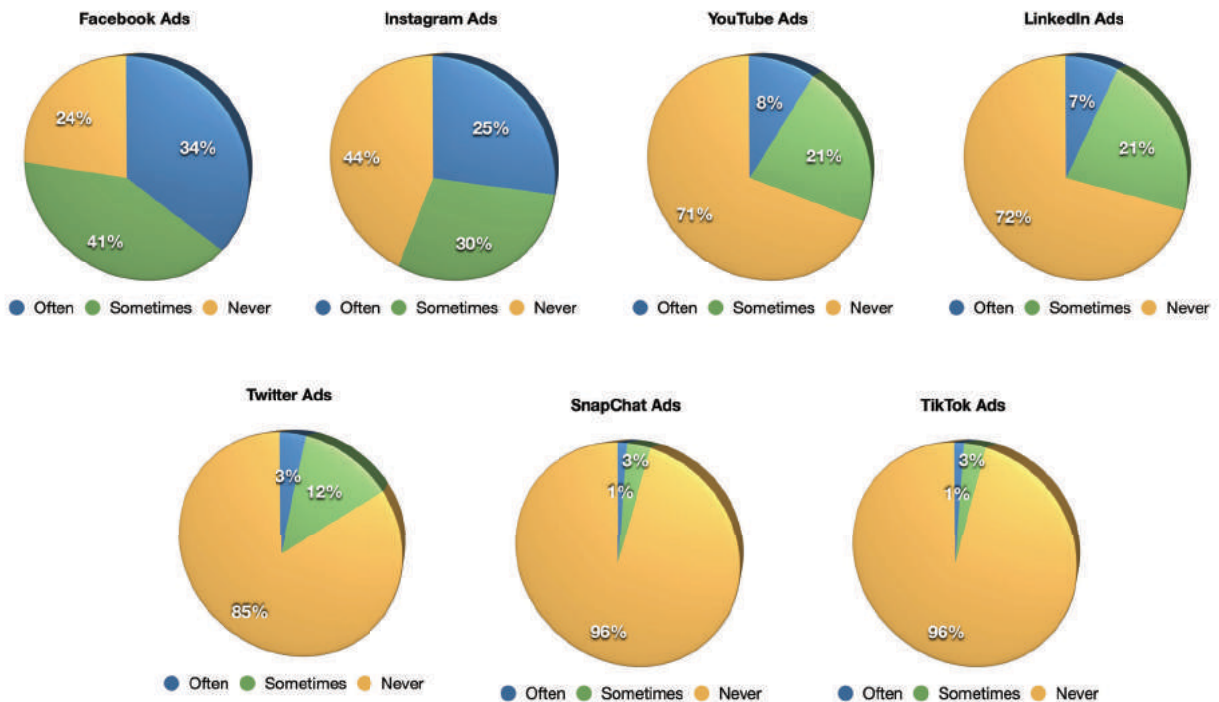


## Social ad use

We asked marketers to indicate how frequently they run ads on a variety of social platforms (often, sometimes, or never).

The ad platform most used by marketers is Facebook (75%), followed by Instagram (55%).

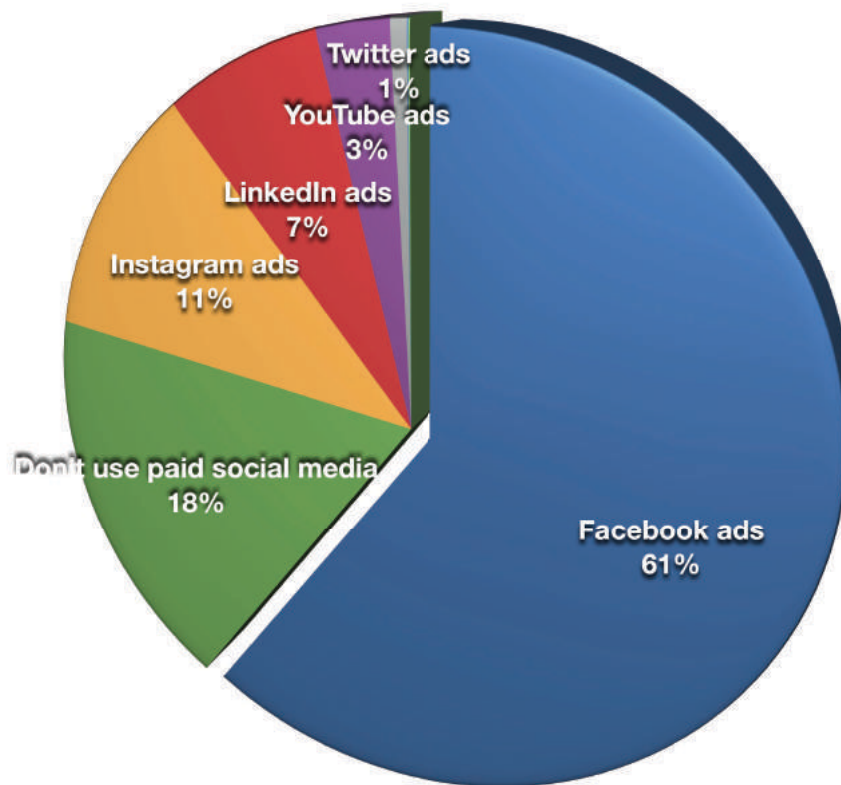
B2C marketers are more likely to use Facebook ads (79% B2C vs. 70% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are using more LinkedIn ads (39% B2B vs. 21% B2C).



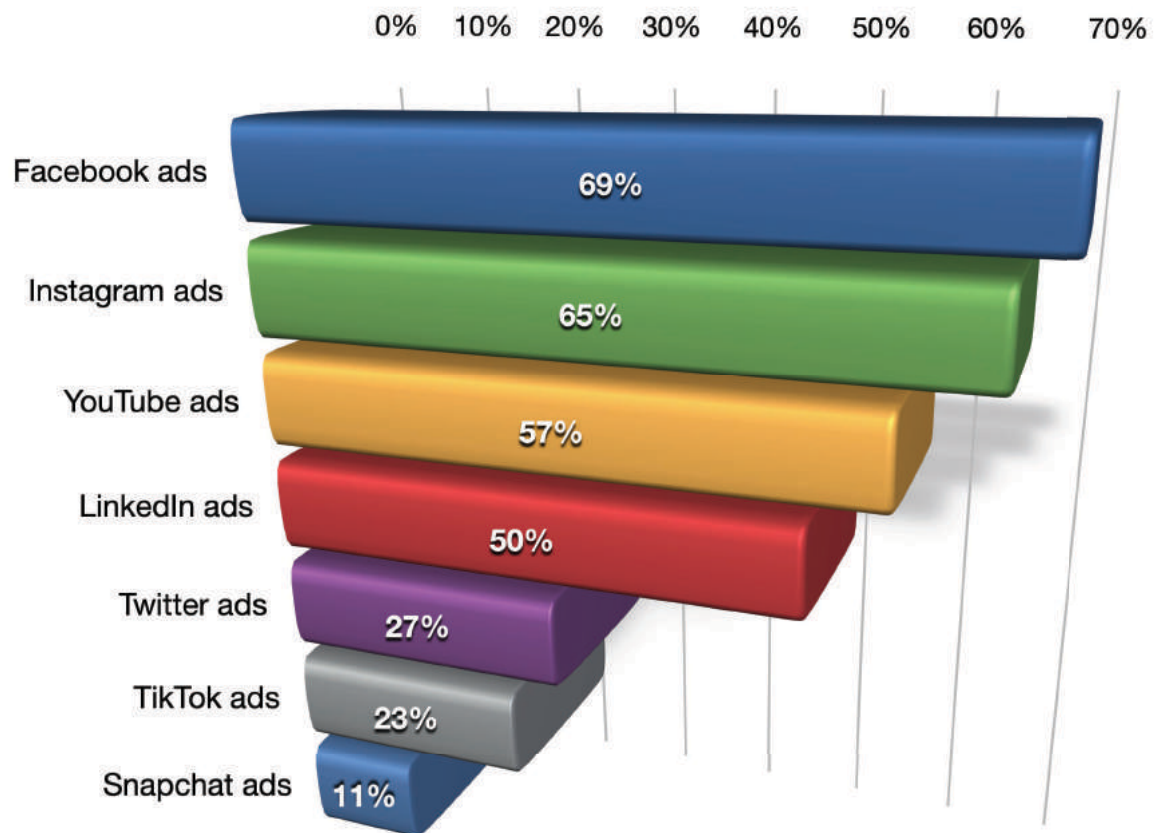
## The most valued social ads platforms

We asked marketers to select the single most important form of paid social for their businesses. Facebook ads took the top slot.

B2C marketers are more likely to value Facebook ads (66% B2C vs. 52% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers place more value on LinkedIn ads (17% B2B vs. 2% B2C).



## Social ad types marketers want to learn more about



We asked marketers to identify which types of social ads they want to learn more about. Facebook took first place at 69%, followed by Instagram at 65%.

B2C marketers are more interested in learning about Facebook ads (73% B2C vs. 62% B2B) and Instagram ads (71% B2C vs. 54% B2B) than their B2B counterparts. B2B marketers are far more interested in learning about LinkedIn ads (64% B2B vs. 43% B2C).

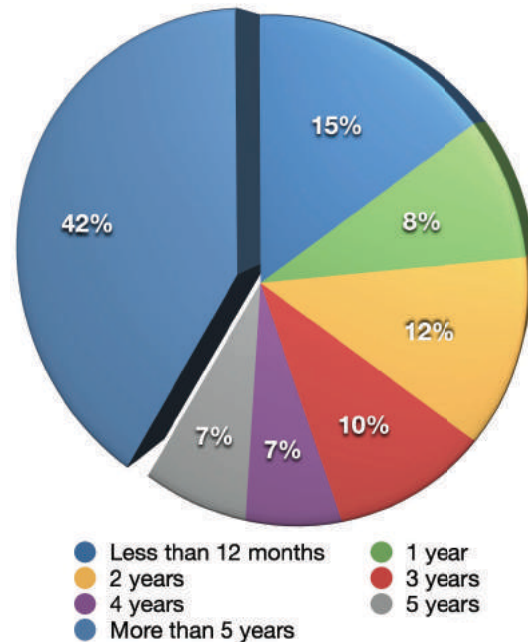
## Survey participant demographics

We leveraged email to find participants for our survey. We conducted this survey in January 2021 by emailing a list of 412,000 marketers and asking them to participate. After 7 days, we closed the survey with **4,394 participants**. Here are the demographic breakdowns:

### Years using social media marketing

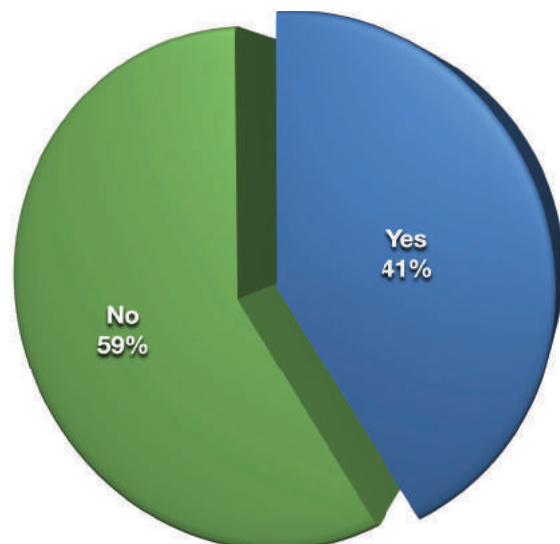
We asked participants how long they've been using social media for marketing.

Forty-nine percent of marketers surveyed have 5 or more years of social media marketing experience.



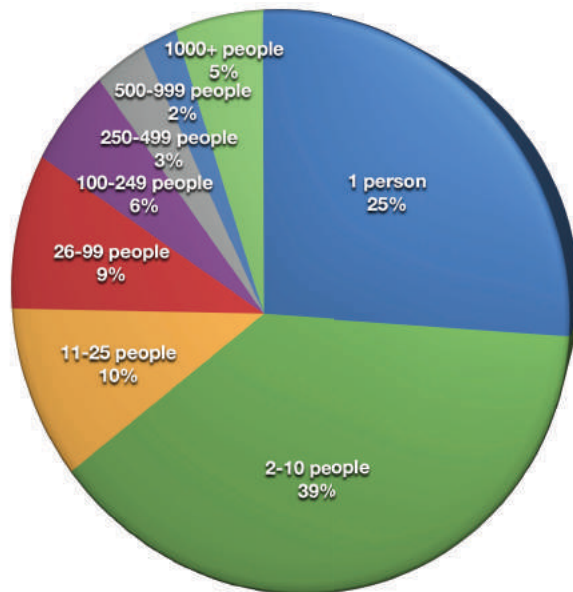
### Is social media marketing your main job responsibility?

Slightly more than two out of five (41%) marketers said social media marketing was their full-time responsibility.



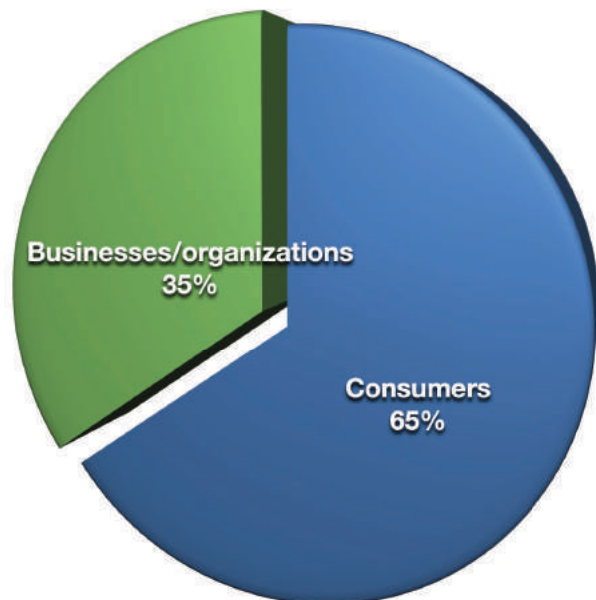
### Business size

The largest group that took the survey works for small businesses of 2–10 employees (39%), followed by the self-employed (25%).



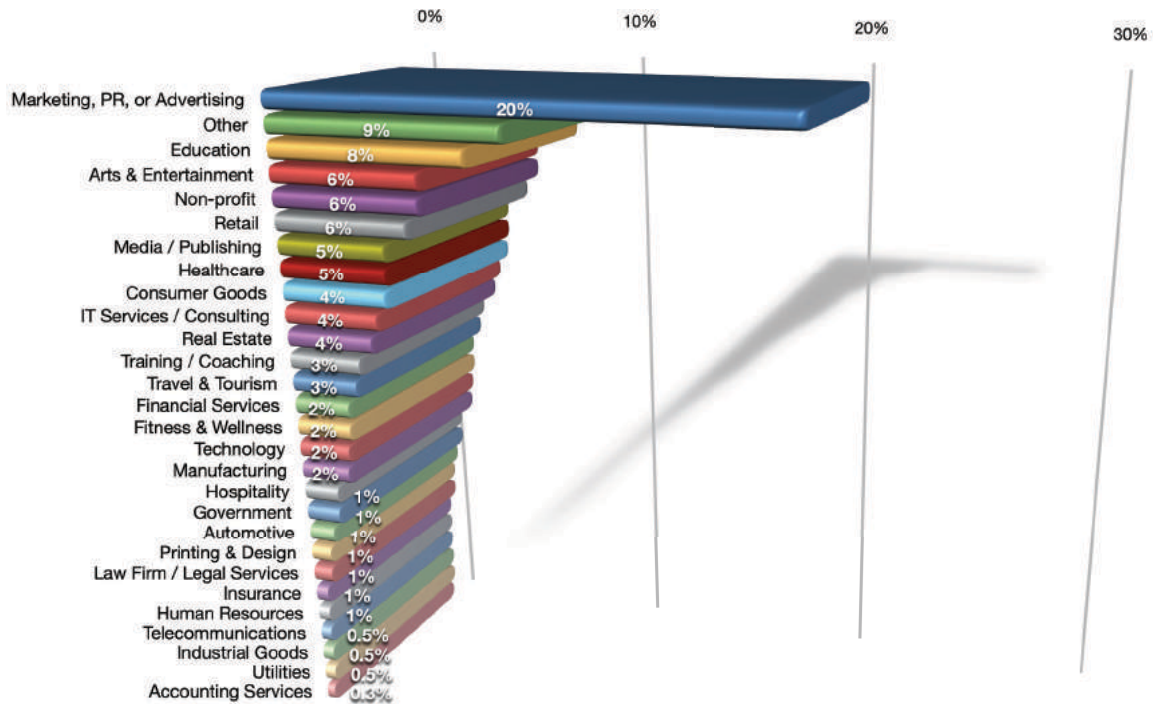
### Primary target audience

About two-thirds (65%) of survey participants focus primarily on attracting consumers (B2C) and the other 35% primarily target businesses (B2B).



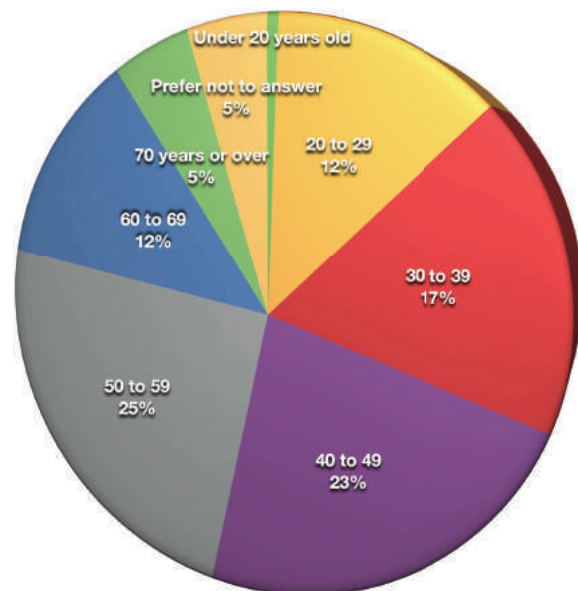
## Industry

Below are the different industries that survey participants work in.



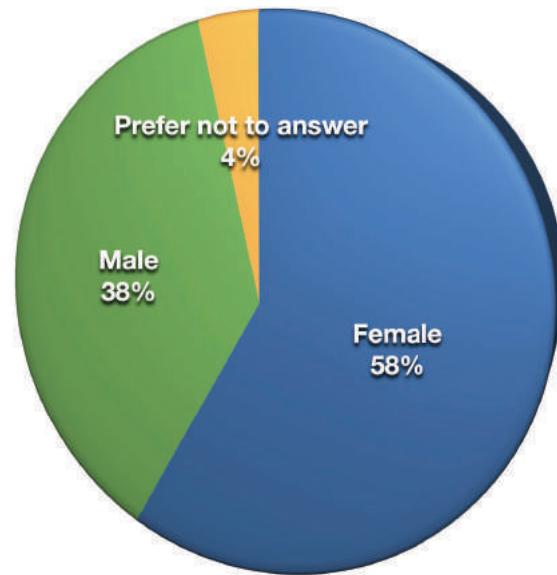
## Age of participants

Most survey participants (87%) were age 30 or older.



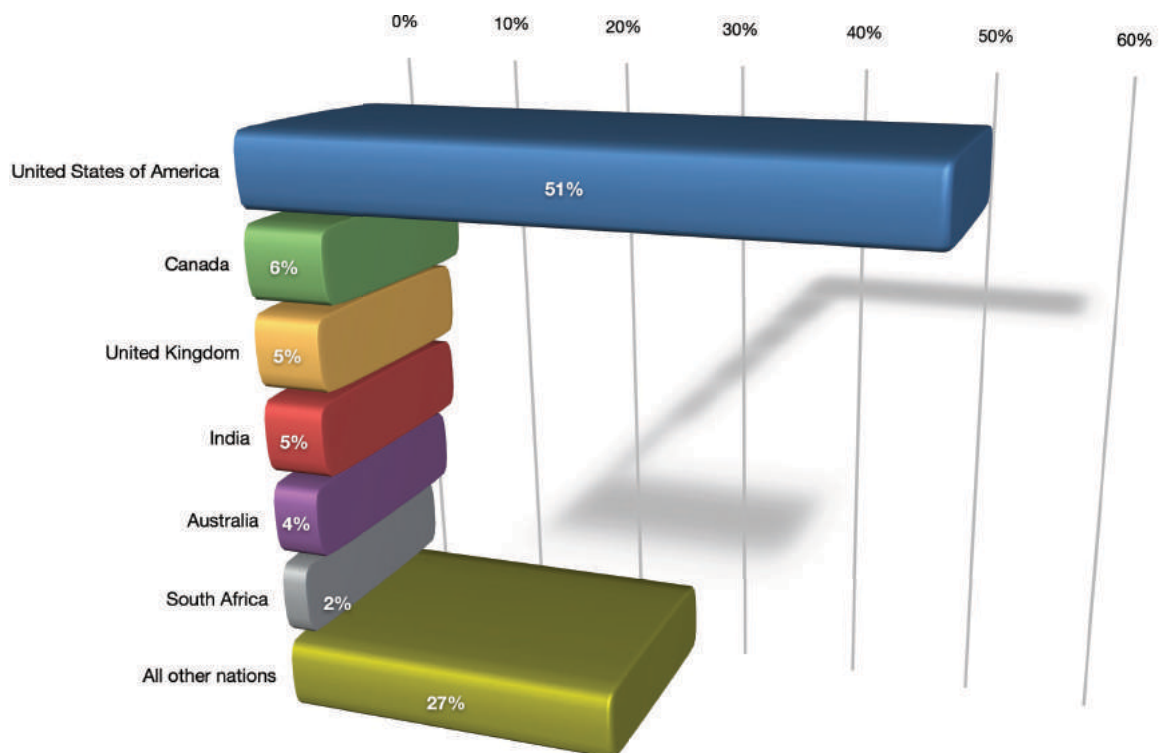
## Gender

Females edged out males, representing 58% of all participants.



## Country

Most participants were based in the United States (51%), followed by Canada (6%), United Kingdom (5%), India (5%), and Australia (4%).





## About Michael A. Stelzner

Michael Stelzner is the founder of Social Media Examiner, author of the books *Launch* and *Writing White Papers*, and host of the Social Media Marketing podcast—a top business podcast.

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**About Social Media Examiner:** The world's largest social media marketing resource, Social Media Examiner helps millions of businesses discover how to best use social media to connect with customers, drive traffic, generate awareness, and increase sales. Social Media Examiner also hosts the largest social media marketing conference, Social Media Marketing World.



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