

MARKETERS SURVEY RESULTS 2018

---

# An Insider's Look at Media, Brand Safety, and Partnerships

# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Marketers and Media: What the Survey Reveals</b>	<b>4</b>
▶ Contextual targeting is on the rise	5
▶ The need for context at scale	7
▶ Brand safety remains elusive	8
▶ Partnering for brand safety	11
<b>Media and Brand Safety: United States vs. Europe</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix: Survey Demographics</b>	<b>15</b>



# Executive Summary

Reach vs. relevance. Brand safety vs. performance. Tech sophistication vs. streamlining. Marketers today find themselves pursuing priorities, and even KPIs, that are increasingly at odds with one another, or so suggest the results of a Sizmek survey of more than 500 advertising decision makers.

Explosive growth in digital media spend has produced a rich, diverse digital marketing landscape. But many brands find it increasingly difficult to reach their customers in the right context, with **62% of marketers stating they feel the media landscape has become too complex.**

The wealth of data created from digital sources enables marketers to target desired audiences like never before. However, there is not an endless supply of the premium and brand-appropriate content that marketers demand. Often, marketers seeking scale must choose between audience and context—which can put performance at risk. And when campaigns deliver low acquisition costs and high engagement, marketers worry it is often at the expense of brand safety. These findings were true across the United States and Europe too, though there was some disparity between the two regions when it comes to brand safety.

In this research, we look at the trade-offs brands are facing, emerging strategies for overcoming them, and how a new kind of partnership model is developing as a result.

## Key findings include:

- ▶ **81%** of marketers find that targeting both audience and context negatively impacts the scale and performance of campaigns.
- ▶ **87%** of marketers plan to increase the scale of their contextual targeting in the next 12 months.
- ▶ **77%** of marketers agree that AI increases performance in digital ad campaigns.
- ▶ **61%** of marketers have a third-party brand safety solution in place.
- ▶ **64%** agree that achieving brand safety on campaigns can be a challenge and often negatively impacts performance.
- ▶ **84%** of marketers hope to find better value from their brand safety solutions in the coming year.

# Marketers and Media: What the Survey Reveals

Sizmek surveyed 522 brand marketers about their current marketing activities, priorities, challenges, and views across the spectrum of digital display marketing. The professionals surveyed ranged from vice president to managerial level across the United States and Europe. The group has a combined annual digital advertising spend of more than \$500 million. Sizmek partnered with a third-party market research organization, Qualtrics, to achieve anonymous and impartial results. [\(For a full breakdown of the survey sample, please see the Appendix.\)](#)

From the trade-offs of audience vs. contextual targeting to concerns over brand safety to working with third-party partners, the marketers surveyed revealed oftentimes surprising insights on the challenges they face in media today.



# Contextual targeting is on the rise

A large majority (**71%**) of marketers find balancing audience and context to be difficult and that trying to achieve both has costs. A significant **81%** agree that targeting both audience and context often negatively impacts the scale and performance of campaigns. While balancing audience and context is the ultimate goal, when marketers are forced to choose either “right person” and “right place” for their campaigns, context takes priority.

## Challenge



71%

of marketers find it difficult to achieve reach while delivering to the right audience in the right context

## Solution



87%

of marketers plan to increase scale of contextual targeting and find new audiences



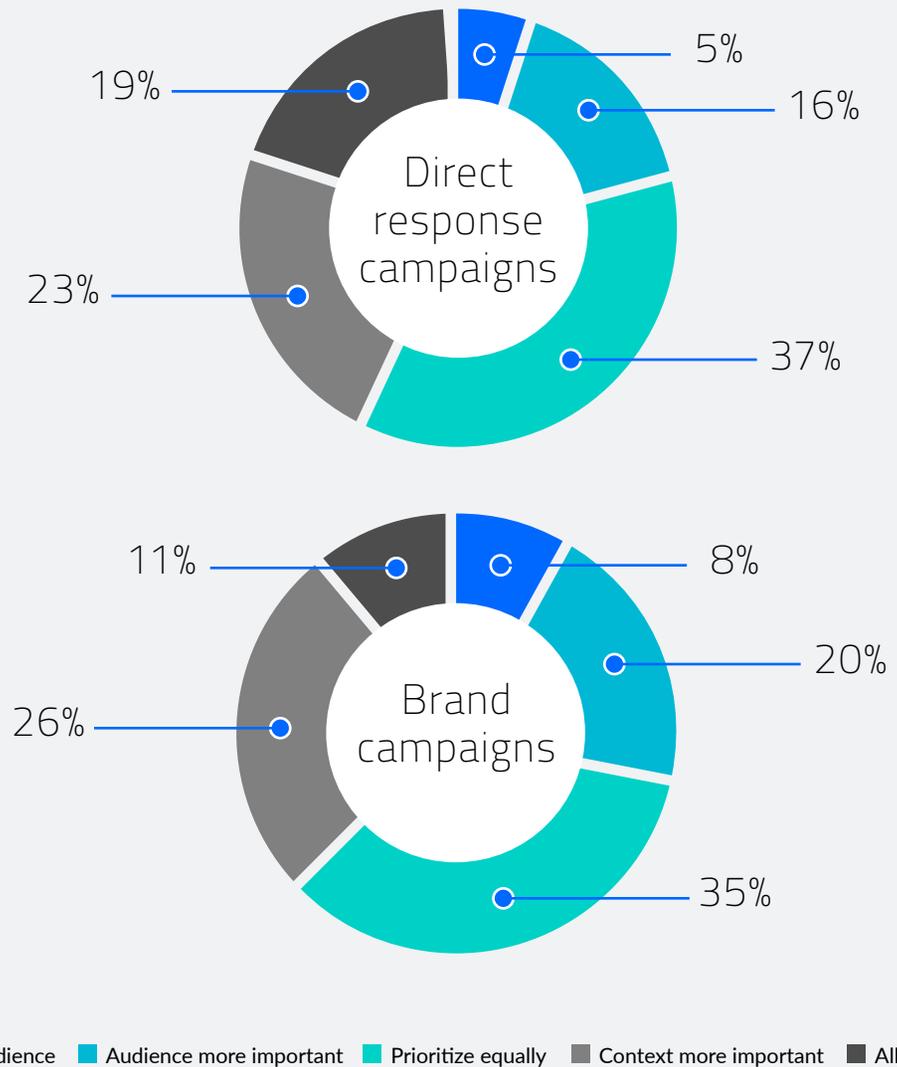
Further, marketers report that they must navigate a web of suppliers, partners, and agencies just to deliver ads to their customers, with **62%** agreeing that the digital media landscape has become too complex.

Looking ahead, **77%** predict that data privacy regulations such as Europe's GDPR will make targeting audiences using third-party data increasingly difficult. This means that advanced contextual targeting will become essential to build out new audiences.

Despite these complexities, **80%** of marketers stated that achieving both audience and contextual targeting at scale is either a critical or high priority in the coming year. Among those marketers, **78%** plan to improve their contextual targeting capabilities in the same time period.

Interestingly, **74%** of marketers believe that the context in which ads are delivered is better outside of "walled gardens."

**Overall, what is your targeting strategy on the scale of audience (cookie-based) vs. context (page content, etc.)?**



# The need for context at scale

In order for brands to scale up their contextual capabilities (**87%** plan to do so) without compromising performance, a contextual strategy must include customer acquisition. Brands that use contextual targeting to find new audiences (**87%** of marketers plan to do this) can create algorithmic models of converters based on contextual campaigns and then create custom lookalike audiences with similar behavioral attributes. In this way, brands can extend the reach of the campaign to new consumers and find audiences at the lowest media cost.

This two-pronged approach requires the use of AI in order to execute digital display campaigns on the open web while serving in the right context to the right audience. Approximately **77%** of survey respondents agree that AI increases performance in digital ad campaigns. They (**81%**) also agree that by automating workflows, AI allows marketing staff to focus more on value-generating tasks. This is likely why **81%** of marketers plan to increase the use of AI technology in digital display advertising over the next 12 months.

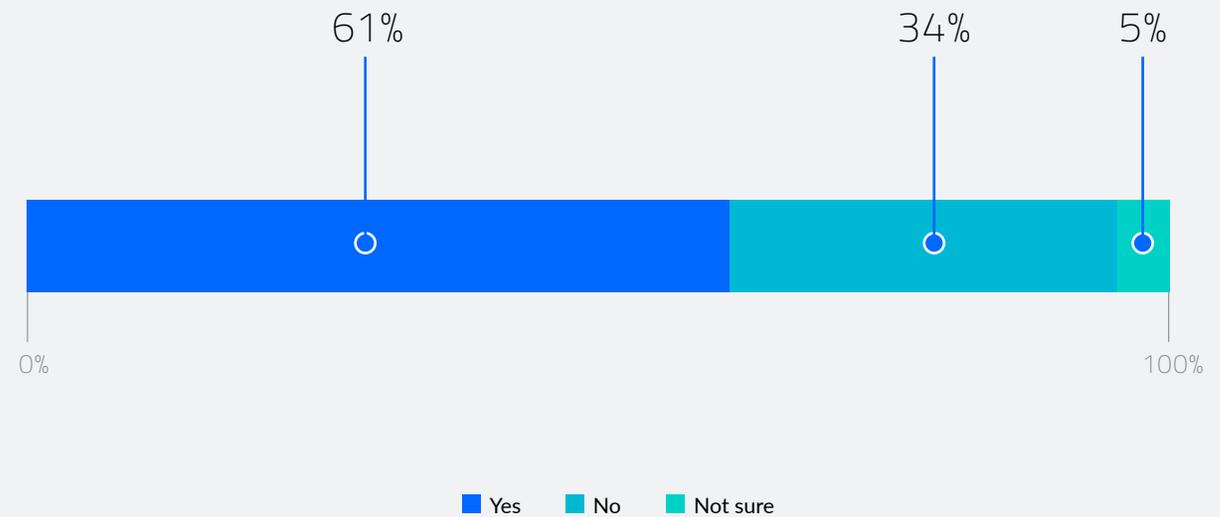
---



# Brand safety remains elusive

Brand safety has been a hot topic in digital advertising in recent years, and some feel trust has been lost in the media supply chain. It's therefore surprising to learn that only **61%** of marketers have a third-party brand safety solution in place. What's more, those who do are not necessarily satisfied, with **84%** seeking better value from their brand safety solutions.

**Do you currently have a third-party brand safety solution/partner in place on your digital campaigns?**

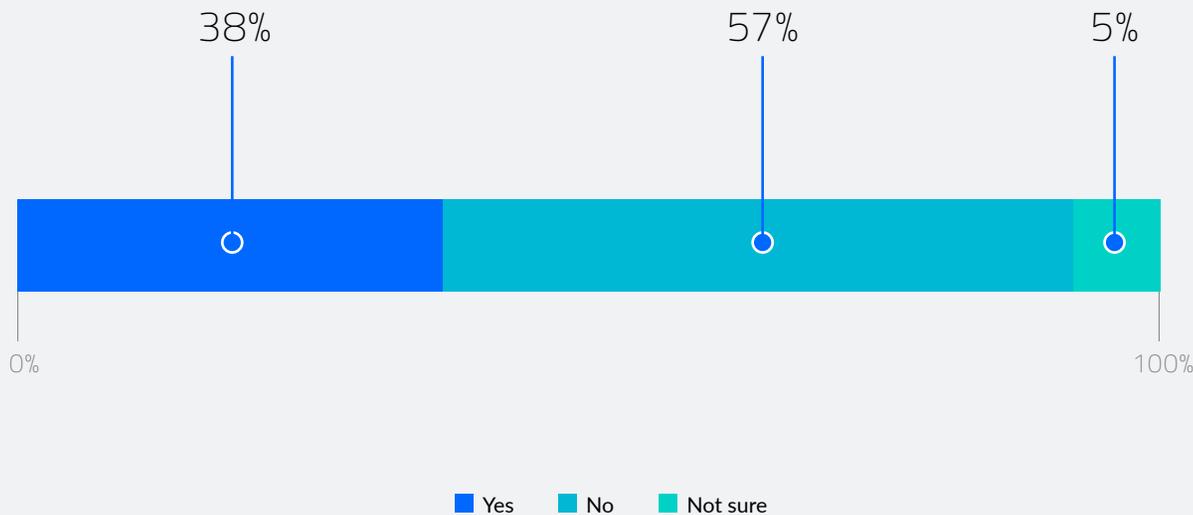


While it can often be difficult to detect if an ad has been delivered to a harmful or brand-unsafe page, **38%** of marketers believe that their brands have done so.

Looking ahead, **85%** of marketers stated that improving brand safety across their digital campaigns is a high or critical priority. But brand safety is a tough nut to crack, with **64%** of marketers reporting they find it difficult to implement an effective solution, with syncing the solution to the DSP and seamless blocking of harmful inventory being particular challenges.

They also perceive a performance cost to brand safety, with **64%** of marketers saying that achieving brand safety often negatively impacts the speed at which a campaign optimizes. Finally, more than half of marketers say their organization's brand safety solution is too expensive.

**To the best of your knowledge, has your brand ever delivered ads on harmful webpages?**



64%

**"We find it challenging to implement an effective brand safety solution."**

57%

**"Our current brand safety solution is too expensive."**

64%

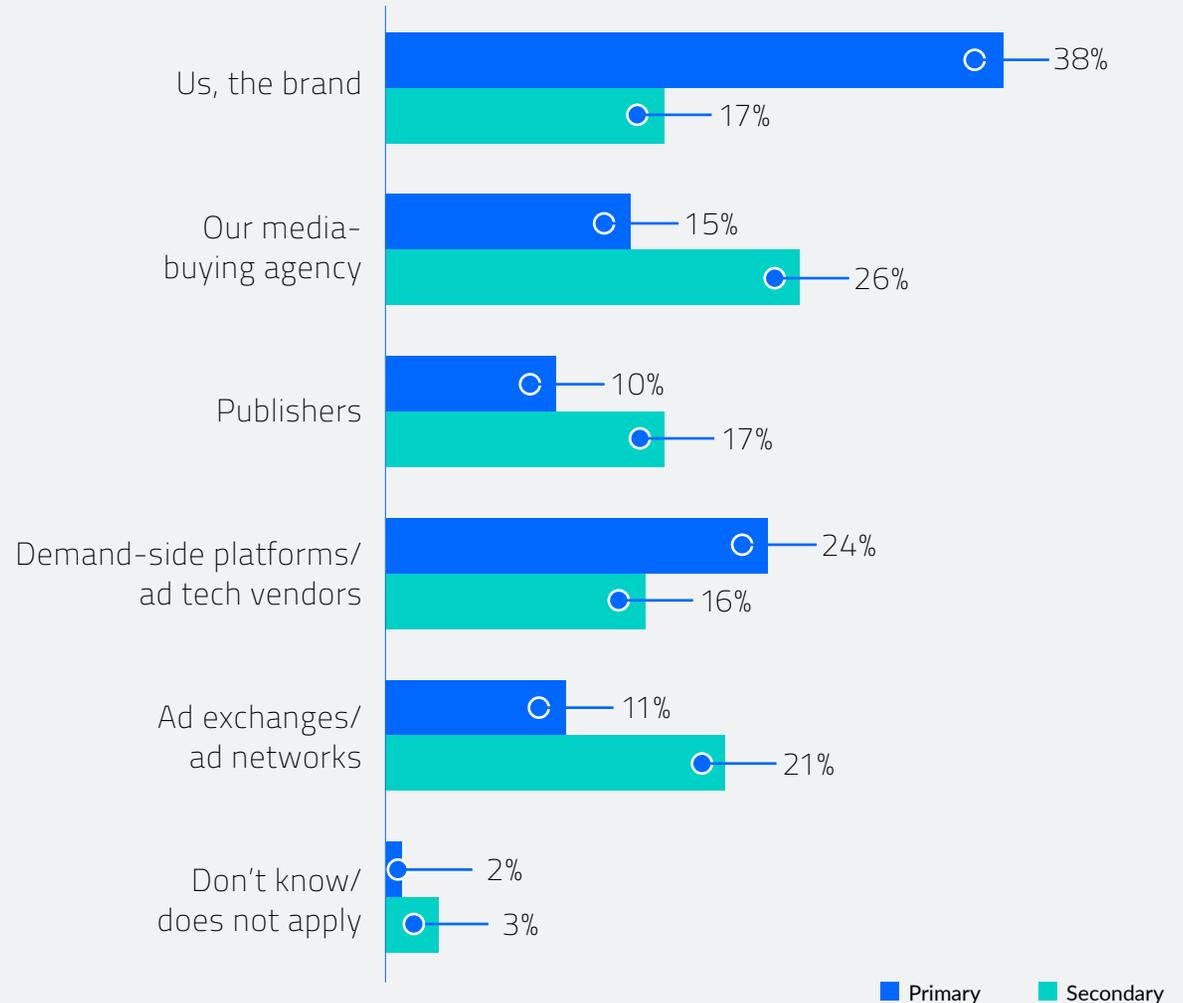
**"Achieving brand safety on campaigns often negatively impacts performance."**



Another key piece in the brand safety puzzle is ownership. When asked who brands believe has primary responsibility for brand safety, **38%** say it belongs with the brand itself. This is likely why **80%** have developed brand safety guidelines for their agencies and partners to follow. Interestingly, **24%** of marketers believe primary responsibility should lie with demand-side platforms and other ad tech vendors.

Looking at secondary responsibility, media buying agencies came out top, with ad exchanges and networks close behind. This suggests that all parties are expected to contribute to the effort.

### Who do you think is responsible for brand safety?



# Partnering for brand safety

In order for brands to achieve effective brand protection, they must work with the right partners. They need solutions that are easy to implement, pre-integrated into a DSP, and capable of navigating the complexity of what “harmful pages” means. For example, page content that is negative for an auto campaign may not be for a fashion campaign, so a brand safety solution that can make these kinds of distinctions is ideal.

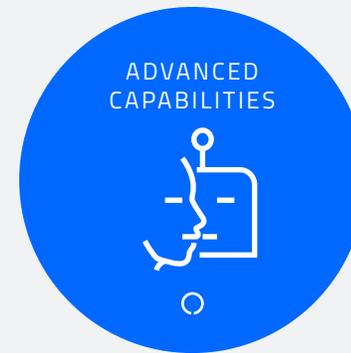
## Challenge



85%

of marketers state that improving brand safety is a high or critical priority.

## Solution



85%

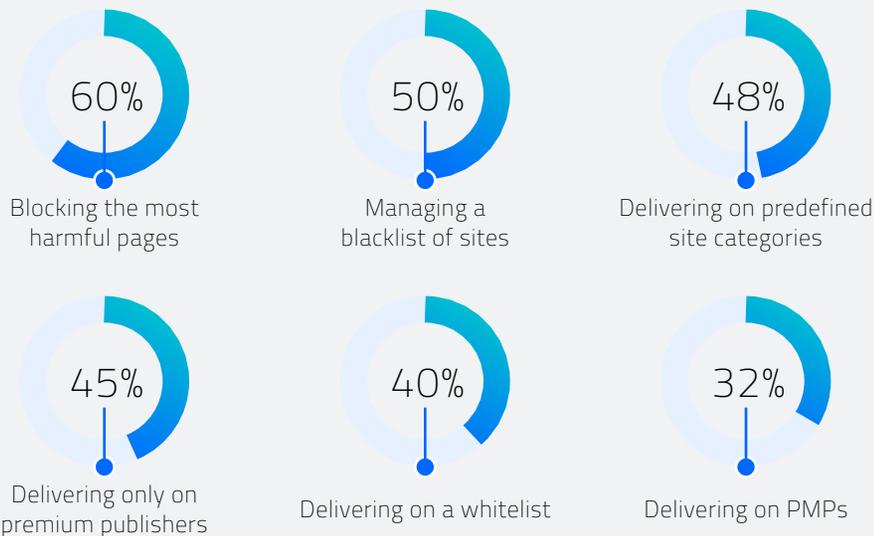
of marketers are prioritizing working with vendors that offer advanced capabilities at a fair price.



It is clearly important that brands work with vendors that offer good value, with **85%** reporting this as a priority. However, the fact that only **58%** of brands have been through an RFI for a brand safety vendor shows that more can be done to ensure brand-safe campaigns.

Achieving brand safety must be an integral part of the full digital media buying strategy. In addition to working with a third-party brand safety vendor, **brands want full transparency on where ads have been shown from DSPs, exchanges, and agencies, with 76% prioritizing this.** The more hands involved in passing an ad from brand to consumer, the higher the risk of a harmful placement, so **reducing the number of vendors in the supply chain is a priority for 64% of marketers.**

### What does brand safety mean for your brand's digital campaigns?



76%

prioritize "getting more transparency from our digital display inventory."

64%

prioritize "reducing the number of vendors/partners we work with."

63%

agree "walled gardens" don't give us enough inventory transparency."

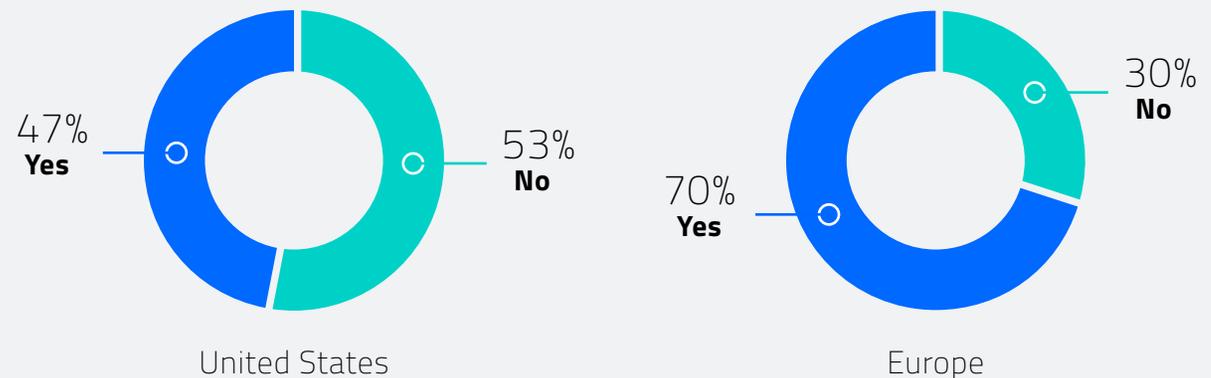


# Media and Brand Safety: United States vs. Europe

Across the survey, respondents from the United States and Europe answered similarly—except when it came to brand safety. When asked if they had a third-party brand safety solution in place, **70%** of European marketers had one as compared to only **47%** of American. Despite a much higher percentage of brand safety solutions in place in Europe, **49%** of respondents said they knew that ads had been delivered to harmful web pages (as compared to only **17%** of American). This could signify that European marketers were more aware of problems with brand safety and took action accordingly, or that there is more concern about brand safety in general in Europe.

Another interesting difference between European and American marketers came when looking at who they thought was responsible for brand safety. American marketers feel that the responsibility primarily falls on the brand itself (**52%**) as opposed to less than a third (**31%**) of European marketers.

## Do you have a third-party brand safety solution in place?



# Conclusion

The complexity and fragmentation of the digital ecosystem is clearly a burden for marketers, resulting in a desire to reduce the number of partners they work with and to get more value from those they do. Consolidation will in fact make it vital to find the right partners—those that can meet diverse and sometimes competing needs in an efficient, cost-effective, and transparent way.

In light of the priorities of today's decision makers in marketing, these one-stop partners must be able to meet rising need for AI-driven approaches to achieving scale and performance and offer cost-effective brand safety solutions. Through the Sizmek DSP and Peer39, Sizmek offers numerous media and targeting solutions—all enhanced by the power of AI—that can be customized to your specific needs. Plus, with an independent, open, and transparent approach, Sizmek offers a real alternative to the restrictive decision-making of walled garden companies.

**To learn more about how Sizmek can help your business, contact your account representative or a [Sizmek pro](#).**

## About Sizmek

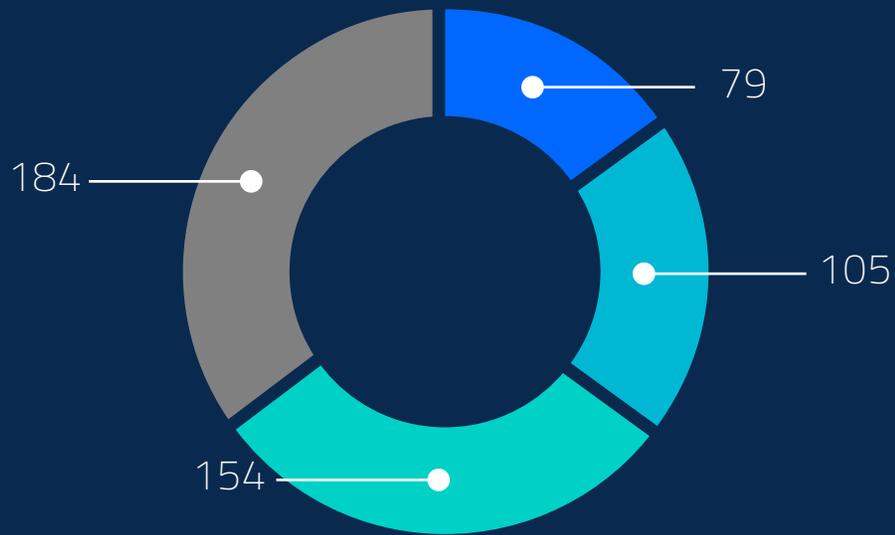
Sizmek is the largest independent buy-side advertising platform that creates impressions that inspire. Sizmek provides powerful, integrated solutions that enable data, creative, and media to work together for optimal campaign performance across the entire customer journey. Our AI-driven decisioning engine can identify robust insights within data across the five key dimensions of predictive marketing—campaigns, consumers, context, creative, and cost. We bring all the elements of our clients' media plans together in one place to gain better understanding for more meaningful relationships, make every moment of interaction matter, and drive more value across the entire plan. Sizmek operates its platform in more than 70 countries, with local offices in many countries providing award-winning service throughout the Americas, EMEA, and APAC, and connecting more than 20,000 advertisers and 3,600 agencies to audiences around the world.



# Appendix: Survey Demographics

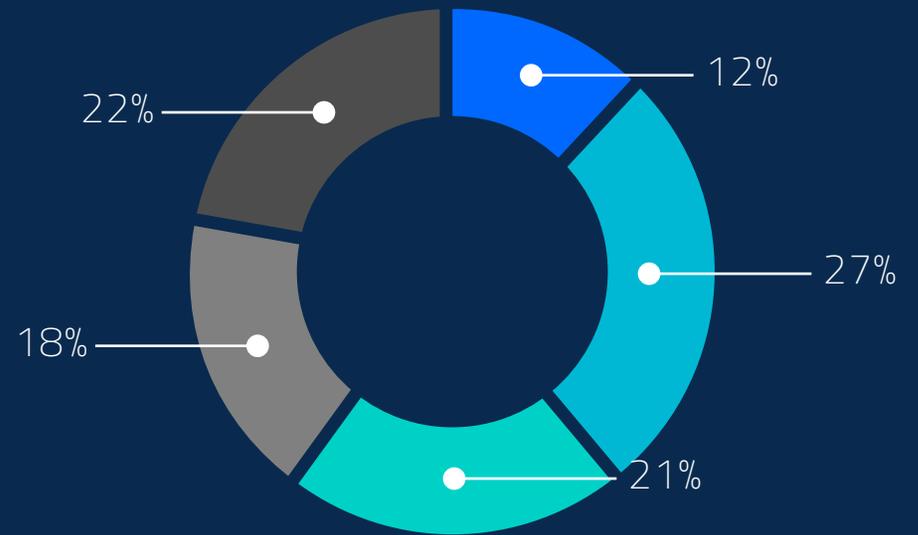


### Which country do you live in?



- France
- Germany
- United Kingdom
- United States

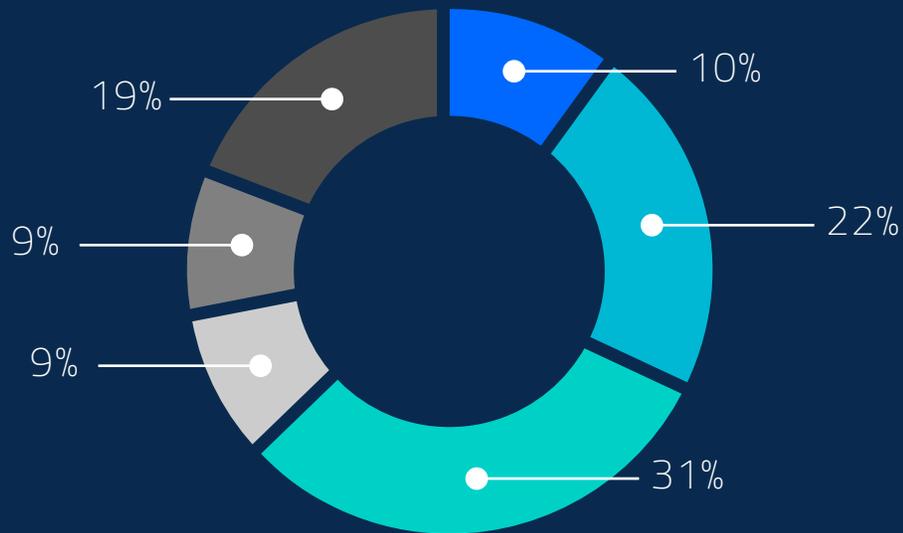
### Which best describes your position at your organization?



- Vice President (VP)
- C-level
- Head of a department
- Director
- Manager

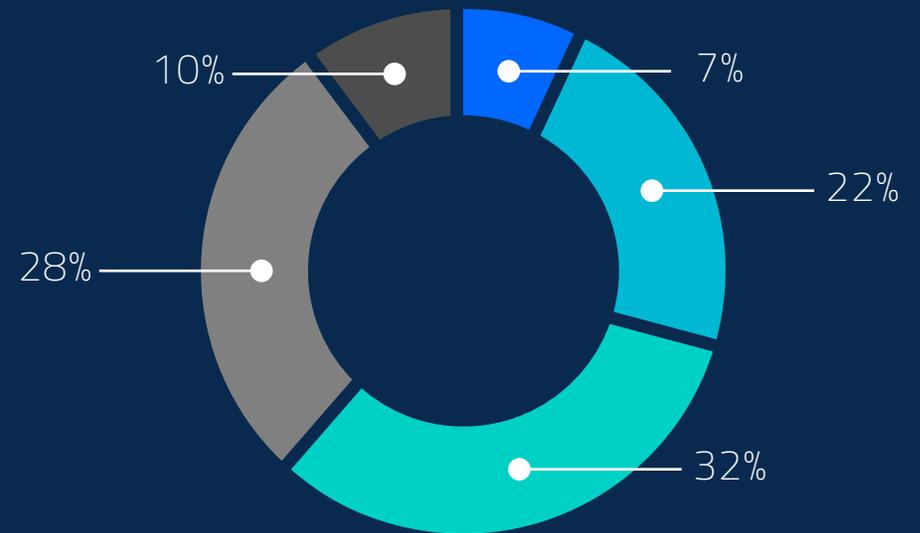


Which of the following best describes the industry to which your company belongs?



- FMCG / CPG
- Automotive
- Retail
- Travel, tourism, hospitality
- Telecoms and consumer tech
- Financial services, banking, and insurance

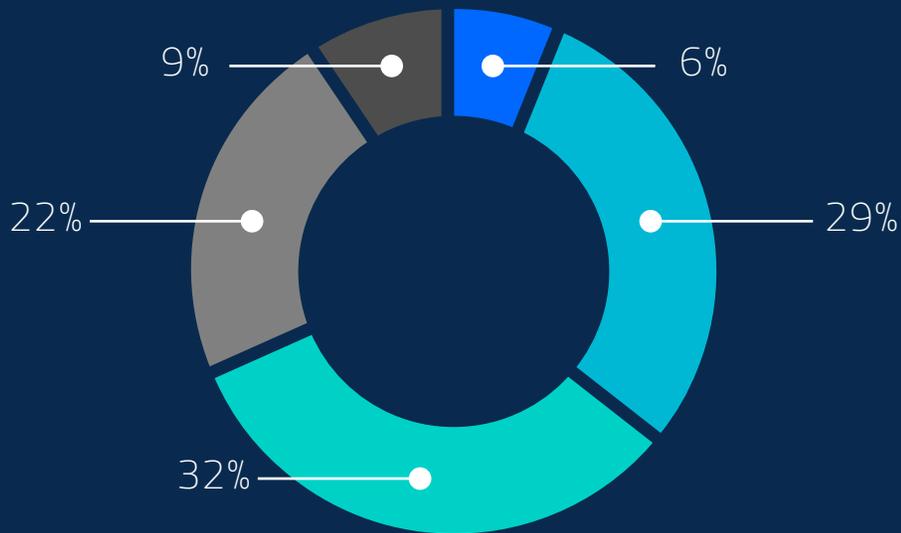
Using your best estimate, how much does your organization spend on digital media per year (USD)?



- Less than \$100,000
- \$100,000 to less than \$500,000
- \$500,000 to less than \$1 million
- \$1 million to less than \$5 million
- \$5 million or more



Using your best estimate, how many employees work for your firm/organization worldwide?



- 2-99 (Small)
- 100-999 (Medium)
- 1,000-4,999 (Large)
- 5,000-19,999 (Very large)
- 20,000 or more (Global)

Using your best estimate, what is your organization's annual revenue (USD)?



- Less than \$1 million
- \$1 million to less than \$100 million
- \$100 million to less than \$1 billion
- \$1 billion to less than \$5 billion
- \$5 billion or more

