

# THE Q REPORT

## CORPORATE RESEARCHER REPORT 2021

An independent study, written for and developed with the help of client-side marketing research and insights professionals



### WELCOME TO THE EIGHTH ANNUAL QUIRK'S Q REPORT!

As was the case in 2020, our 2021 Q Report again focuses on the impact of the pandemic on marketing researchers and their jobs. But while COVID-19 is clearly not going away any time soon, for this iteration we chose to also look forward, asking our researcher respondents for their take on the future of their profession.

We also asked about their likelihood to hire research staff in the next 12 months; their level of satisfaction with their current job; the new skills they feel could most benefit their career; how valued they feel research is internally and in business overall; and the importance of corporate diversity, flexibility and support for their professional development.

The purpose of the report is to give corporate researchers (those whose job it is to gather, analyze and disseminate insights about their organizations' customers, products and services) an in-depth

look into their world, helping them learn more about what their peers and colleagues are doing and also benchmark themselves and their departments.

The 2021 Q Report work life and salary and compensation study of end-client/corporate researchers is based on data gathered from an invite-only online survey sent to pre-qualified marketing research subscribers of Quirk's. The survey was fielded from June 10 to July 16, 2021. In total we received 1,951 usable qualified responses of which 816 were from end-client researchers and used for this end-client report. An interval (margin of error) of 2.16 at the 95% confidence level was achieved for the entire study. (Not all respondents answered all questions.)

We want to thank all of our client-side readers who took the time to complete the survey and provide their candid thoughts.

We also want to thank our content partners for sharing their industry insights. Toluna outlines the ways automation can deliver insights with speed and agility. InnovateMR charts the new age of customer validation. DISQO shows how behavioral data can bridge the say-do gap. Bellomy makes a case for text analytics. Gocious offers tips on aligning research and innovation. SightX explores the implications of brands' responses to the pandemic. InsightsNow gives a crash course in implicit testing. Forsta argues for the value of visual storytelling. Momentive illustrates the merits of new technology for adapting to the pandemic. And Quirk's Talent looks at how researchers can explore a gig work approach.

We hope you find this report useful. Please let us know how we can make next year's edition more informative and valuable to you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Rydholm  
Editor  
joe@quirks.com

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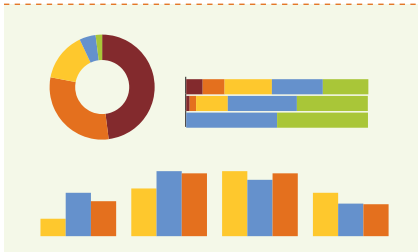
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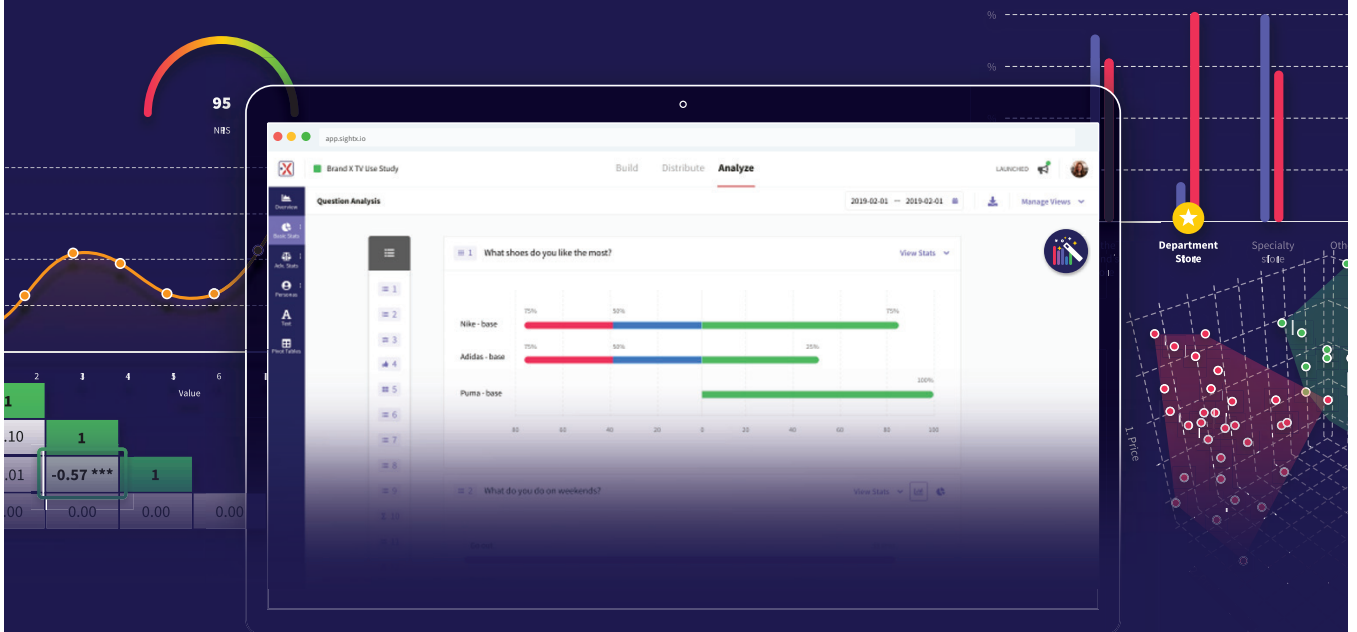


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# ON THE RISE

Corporate insights teams beating back threats, reestablishing relevance

By Joseph Rydholm >> Quirk's Media

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Late last July, when we began fielding the survey for the 2020 Q Report, we were all in the thick of the pandemic. Almost a year later, launching the survey for this year's Q Report, there are tantalizing signs that we are coming out of it – along with the delta variant's daily reminders that COVID-19 is not going away quietly. While in 2020 we asked researchers many questions to get at how they were adapting to the pandemic's many impacts, this year we pivoted to a more forward-looking approach.

In other words, how do we feel about where we are and where we might be going?

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at the 95% confidence level was achieved for the entire study. (Not all respondents answered all questions.)

Along with a host of questions about department staff levels, years on the job, skill sets and job satisfaction (see the accompanying content for a deeper dive on those findings), we asked open-ends about: the biggest research-related changes their organization planned for the coming year; how valued they feel marketing research is internally and in the business world as a whole; and how they feel about

the future of insights as a profession.

### Hopeful and optimistic

No major themes emerged from the question about the MR-related changes planned for the coming year and the tone was largely hopeful and optimistic despite the current societal backdrop. Lots of talk of automation (of reporting,

analysis, etc.), of centralizing (from small tasks like getting a handle on processes such as documentation and global standards to reorganizing the insights function) and of coming to grips with the impact of company-wide overhauls.

*Internalizing market research activities (survey programming, fieldwork and data processing) in order to*

*become more agile and deliver market research results and insights much more rapidly. Providing a 360-degree view on market knowledge and insights: becoming data source- and survey methodology-agnostic!*

*Continuing to reinforce the goal of establishing the team as a center of excellence that the entire organization should rely on. The practice has*

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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

## GIG WORK COMES TO THE MARKETING RESEARCH AND INSIGHTS INDUSTRY

By Quirk's Talent

The job market has changed over the last five years and the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated that change. Workers and companies alike want more flexibility.

Among many surveys, more than three-quarters of non-traditional workers reported being satisfied with their independent work arrangements. They report that the control this arrangement allows them over their scheduling is a main reason for their satisfaction along with the income it provides.

For companies, using gig employees allows them to have experts when they need them and allows their business to operate at scale. CIO reports that "95 percent of businesses now view this new gig labor as a key element to developing and running a successful business." The marketing research and insights industry is no different. The problem

for most industries, including ours, is that it is often difficult to find vetted gig employees and vetted employers to make the relationship work successfully.

Quirk's Talent was originally launched to help bring qualified talent to jobs for full-time and part-time permanent placement, but we have added a new service to match independent/gig contractors and employers together!

### For companies

Whether you are a research vendor or an end-client brand, let our decades of experience and vast database of talent find the perfect person for your temporary project or expansion plans. Pay just for the amount of time you need. No long-term contracts or HR issues to deal with. A freelance/contract insight professional from Quirk's Talent allows you to complete the job at a

lower commitment. Quirk's will ensure the person has the right skills and experience needed for your project. To learn more visit [www.QuirksTalent.com](http://www.QuirksTalent.com).

### For the independent contractor

If you are looking for a more flexible schedule, supplemental income or variety in your work, consider adding your résumé to the Quirk's Talent database. Quirk's Talent is looking for individuals who have experience in all facets of marketing research and want to utilize their skills to help companies complete their research objectives. Quirk's will ensure a good fit and will manage all payment details. To learn more and add yourself to our list visit [www.QuirksTalent.com](http://www.QuirksTalent.com).

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previously been that some teams went off on their own to launch market research projects with external vendors, which in some cases led to redundant work. The centralized approach will streamline market research projects that could be utilized across the organization, while ensuring that internal-trained market research professionals manage the process from start to finish.

Rather than being focused on market research, our team is growing into a strategist role. It's likely more of our research will be outsourced and our team will be more focused on the 'story of the data' and how it impacts our clients' strategy and business.

For every mention of reducing headcount there seemed to be one or two indications of adding workers (along with some bemoaning of the difficulty in doing so) and the general impression is that the new team members were part of staff expansions rather than refilling vacancies from COVID-19-related furloughs or layoffs.

After investing year after year in digital analytics, our new CMO has made an investment in an additional analyst on the market research side. We look forward to hiring this new person in the next year. This person will focus on our audience of the future (younger and more racially and ethnically diverse).

Researchers offered many expressions of intent to continue providing insights not just data, as a way to deliver more value for internal clients while also demonstrating the limits of relying on gathering data without having staff and processes on hand to make sense of it.

I don't anticipate any structural changes (hiring, budget adjustments, etc.) but as I get better at demonstrating the value of data and making good use of the tools we have, I think the adoption, acceptance and appetite for data will all increase. I hope that data and my role will have more of a strategic seat at the table early in project planning processes.

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## EMBEDDED AUTOMATION HELPS COMPANIES DELIVER UNPRECEDENTED INSIGHTS WITH SPEED AND AGILITY

By Janice Caston  
SVP Global Marketing, Toluna

As insights teams need to be more agile, an automated insights solution unlocks new opportunities to stay ahead.

Automated insights solutions inform product development, drive brand growth and offer the consistency needed to fuel efficiency and scalability. Why is this important? Because today's market is changing faster than ever before and so are consumer behaviors and expectations.

### Meet the modern insights professional's demands

It stands to reason that consumer insights professionals have new and specific demands to keep up with target audiences. Aside from the struggle of ever-changing consumers, they're faced with business pressures ranging from budget constraints to aggressive timelines and beyond.

Fifty-nine percent of today's buyers agree they can access tools previously not available. Here's what to know about their insights demands – all of which automation can deliver.

### Speed and agility are non-negotiable

Fast-moving projects often demand results in hours or days – not weeks – to bring new products to market and stay competitive. Further, each project is different and likely requires customization.

Many insights professionals are supporting multiple business functions, with an average of nine under their jurisdiction, meaning crunch time is all the time. They're expected to handle as much as possible in-house, making fast, flexible technology and real-time results a must. Pre-templated questionnaires with customization options are the fast and flexible time and resource saver that insights professionals rely on to get studies done quickly and reliably.

There were also multiple comments around organizations becoming more customer-centric, often due to new leadership calling for the change. (You'd like to think focusing on the customer is a given but as we all know, edicts from above are often more powerful drivers than common sense!)

*More research is being demanded as internal clients get the message that the new CEO wants VOC justifications for product design/development, etc.*

Though sometimes too much C-level involvement/interest is a bad thing.

*We have multiple layers of new leadership (from CEO down). Once again insights has a SVP leading the team with a direct line to the overall head of marketing. That alone will get us a 'seat at the table.' Unfortunately reorgs will happen. And we are somewhat struggling trying to satisfy these new leaders, some of whom are from different industries. They are demanding changes to tracking studies without understanding all the impacts, only considering their demands. This will make it very tough for some time.*

Within many companies and organizations, one welcome (if you can use that term for anything connected to COVID-19) impact of the

## POSITIVES

- Pandemic bump for value of insights
- More data = more need for MR
- Qual coming back
- Customer centricity on the rise
- Proven ability to adapt/evolve

## NEGATIVES

- Falling response rates
- Panel data quality
- DIY not going away
- Automation/AI
- UX encroaching on MR's turf

## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

### Insights professionals expect value, efficiency and support

Doing more with less is a common expectation across industries and around the world. About 77% of insights professionals report feeling budget pressure and more than half look to automation to drive value and efficiency. Automation becomes even more powerful when coupled with live, expert support – when and where it's needed – to further control costs.

Automation helps insights professionals save without sacrificing quality. Intuitive technology that's always being optimized frees up their time and energy so it can be invested elsewhere. This type of efficiency keeps projects manageable, on schedule and on (or under) budget.

### Scale quality and consistency are key

Business questions must be answered at scale to keep up with today's vast global insights needs and automation ensures that insights professionals aren't sacrificing quality for the sake of time.

Professionals rely on customization, analytics and visualization to provide simplicity and scale to their projects and common project and product parameters to drive scale and consistency. Best-practice methodology and quality checks are baked right into the solutions for better outcomes – even on the biggest projects.

### How automated solutions answer industry needs

Automation isn't one-size-fits-all, nor is it meant to replace human knowledge and support. Not only do built-in templates and modules

deliver on the speed and agility insights professionals now need but they also leverage best practices, advanced thinking and best-in-class approaches.

From there, brands can quickly and easily customize solutions, find the right fit and share across the company and around the world.

Embedded automation helps brands achieve faster consumer learning in a powerful and cost-effective way. An overwhelming 83% of technology suppliers agree that automation would enable users to complete projects and initiatives faster. This is the catalyst for seamless collaboration and accurate, real-time reporting on a larger scale.

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pandemic was the elevation of the insights function’s internal status as a beacon in the dark, as everyone from the CEO to the regional sales manager suddenly felt tempest-tossed by the economic and societal shifts and changes.

**How valued?**

While not pegging it to anything related to COVID-19, we asked respondents twin questions on how valued they felt the insights function was at their organizations and in the general business world (using a 0-10 scale from not valued at all to extremely valued).

At the organizational level, a combined 64% rated the value between 7 and 9 and the comments reflected that generally positive assessment.

*We have worked hard for a seat at the table and it’s paying off. Market research is a valued business partner.*

*There is so much demand for insights, we can’t keep up!*

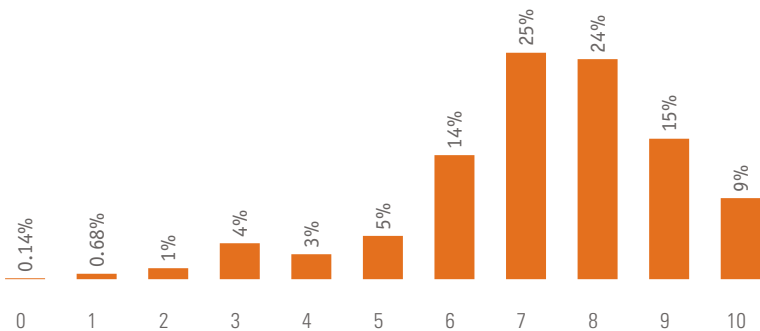
*The pandemic has changed it for the better.*

But alas, the picture is not all rosy in other organizations:

*Research is so expensive to execute. There is little knowledge on balancing the practical with the theoretical. It is seductive to half-ass things to keep costs low. This is compounded by the widespread lack of understanding in executing research by our peers. Our internal partners reflect on past experiences where they worked with insights folks who delivered what they needed. What they don’t know is that what they were served was poorly designed garbage a slight step above a gut check.*

**How valued do you think the marketing research and insight function is at your organization?**

(Using a 0-10 scale of “Not valued at all” to “Extremely valued”)



**HOW MR CAN BOOST ITS INTERNAL STANDING**

**Get out there and spread the word:**

*I routinely share and present my research findings and insights to our CEO, senior leadership teams, on down to individual contributors. I see firsthand how my insights and recommendations are implemented across the organization, used to uncover other opportunities and are part of action plans.*

**Deliver quality results – quickly:**

*While they come to us often, we have the reputation of being ‘slow,’ which brings our value down.*

**Let them know not just anybody can do research (and keep DIY at bay!):**

*We are constantly educating people on what it is that we do. Once they understand, they see the value.*

**Keep growing professionally:**

*We need to evolve and be multi-skills people: data scientists and analysts, marketing specialists, web researchers, sociologists, behavioral scientists, qual researchers, excellent communicators, cross-functional managers.*



# INNOVATEMR'S VISION SUITE: THE FUTURE IS VALIDATION

By Molly Strawn  
Senior Marketing Strategist,  
InnovateMR

"Ma'am, can I have a moment of your time to ask if you have any food allergies and how often you eat out at restaurants?"

That was me, adorned in my signature clipboard and DIY polo at the Thousand Oaks mall, getting ignored by the fifteenth person in a row. I was attempting to gather customer validation for my newest corporate venture: Simple Lyfe. But as it turned out, a company working to certify restaurants in allergy-safe food services was not drumming up the hoopla I had anticipated.

No matter our passion, drive or gift for strategic planning, we simply cannot sell a product or service that no one wants. As I discovered with Simple Lyfe, target customers "in the wild" may not share that same deep passion previously seen in research and development forecasts, marketing decks or enthusiastic sales huddles. Of course, I would not have learned this if I had not stepped outside the business (literally) and just got to work in a bubble. Without gathering sentiment about your passionate dream from the outside world, wasted time and missed revenue is inevitable.

Collecting key insights from target audiences – market sentiment, concept validation or purchase habits – is the most crucial step in the entrepreneurial journey but remains the hardest to achieve. Solopreneurs have limited access to the actionable insights they need

and even less access to a large-scale research project. Unless teams prioritize research spend and efforts upfront to answer these questions (typically, with a generous investor to foot the bill), they may go for months, if not years, with their blind spots unchecked.

But there is a foundational shift occurring. You no longer need to be fluent in research jargon (adopting phrases like "survey link appends," "redirects," "LOI," "EPC," etc.) to find the answers to important questions. The future of research will be built on agile, adaptive technology – solutions that give everyone, professional researcher or not, access to the insights they need to help push their businesses forward.

We are feeling this shift in the market research industry but it is not an isolated incident; large corporations, as well as entrepreneurs, do not have the time or resources to devote to manage multi-step studies. However, the need for insights has only grown stronger. Today, attention spans are dwindling, customers demand a corporate conscience behind their favorite brands and one disparaging review can rip through social media like wildfire. New entrepreneurs need to find new ways to prepare. They are smart, sophisticated and hungry for intuitive solutions presented with simplicity to help them prepare for business longevity.

InnovateMR has created the technology these decision makers need: the Vision Suite™. I have created many surveys on various platforms in my startup journey

but never one that streamlines the entire research process into one easy-to-use workflow. It goes beyond intuitive survey creation to tie in profiling/targeting to ask the right person the right thing, instantly. Quick-pulse insights like this could be the difference in what product gets developed and which blueprints are not worth the investment.

But just as the data needs to be fast, it also needs to be right. Participant answers cannot inform actionable insights unless they are reliable. InnovateMR is continually on the forefront of market research data quality with customizable and adaptive quality tools. A part of the Vision Suite™, Text Analyzer™ is a revolutionary new way to verify open-end text responses at scale using AI technology, wading through hundreds or even thousands of replies to extract meaningful and genuine feedback automatically. It will flag gibberish, profanity, copy/paste action, bot scripting, spelling errors, type timing, duplication and identifiable information. It will even look for contextual answers to ensure the text is directly addressing the question.

When every unique voice has access to tools that comprehend, contextualize and anticipate the future of business, it will pad our economy with solutions custom-fitted to the direct needs of the world. My days at the mall with a clipboard may be over but the new age of customer validation is just getting started.

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And others expressed variations of “it depends,” citing factors such a lack of organization-wide belief in insights and a disconnect between management’s words and its actions (sound familiar?) for their middling assessment:

*I say 6 because I think our organization is generally pretty interested in research but how much they apply it varies by the individual.*

*We say we are consumer-driven and consumer insights is our top priority but the company often doesn’t act like that’s true.*

*Highly valued by the marketing team, not always as valued by our partners across the organization.*

As to the reasons why it’s not always valued:

*(C)ustomer insights activity is seen as requiring basic skills, a lot of people are teaching you how to do your job, some even try to do it ‘because it’s rather obvious,’ thus insights people are positioned at low levels in the hierarchy.*

*Too many people just want to go with their gut – that has not worked out well in many cases – but we are a*

*male-dominated organization and have a lot of egos that need to be heard.*

*Our CX/MR function is very new and we are still trying to demonstrate value.*

*I was hired six months ago to revamp the MR function at my company. There is great enthusiasm for more and better research yet also a fair amount of reluctance to let go of the way things have been done for decades (without consistent professional leadership in the MR function). I’m content and pleased with the level of enthusiasm for better research,*

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## BRIDGING THE SAY-DO GAP WITH BEHAVIORAL DATA

By Anne Hunter  
VP of Product Marketing, DISQO

Surveys are a strong and proven tool for understanding consumer motivations, interests and opinions. However, the limits of human recall and self-censorship make them imperfect instruments to gather data on people’s behaviors. When respondents are asked to report on things that occurred in the past, they often fail to be 100% accurate. In addition, when predicting what they will do going forward, they may misjudge their future actions. Can today’s busy and overstimulated consumer really remember everything that happened in the past and know with certainty how their days will be spent in the future?

The variance between what people think or say and what actions they actually take is known as the say-do gap.

A clear example of this gap emerged during a study we conducted on the opinions and behaviors of members of a politically oriented social network. Leveraging zero-party data from our large 100% opt-in U.S. behavioral audience panel, we randomly selected a sample of survey respondents who had visited the social platform and assigned them to test and control groups. The test group was first asked who they voted for in the last election and then were asked about the websites they had recently visited. The control group was first asked what type of car they owned and then asked

the same series of questions about media consumption.

As expected, neither group was able to accurately describe their past media behaviors but the control group exhibited a higher accuracy in describing their media consumption compared to the group asked about their political preferences. While it’s long been understood that survey question sequencing and framing can have an impact on attitudinal responses, it is notable that we detected a difference in the way that initial question frame impacted the accuracy of self-reported behavior. There was indeed a gap between how consumers report their online behavior in a survey and how they actually behave online, which can be further exacerbated by the survey instrument itself.

Surveys of consumers can provide an excellent understand-

though there are still challenges ahead.

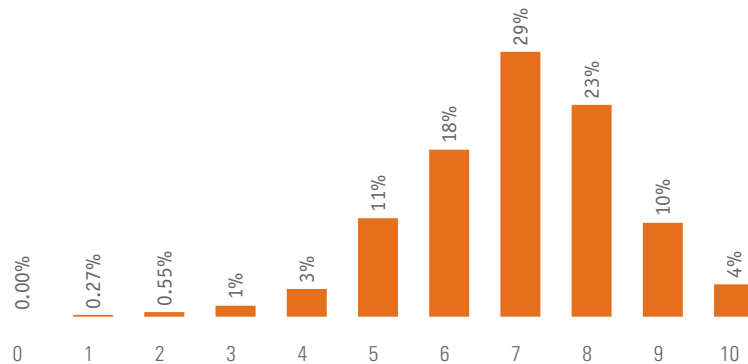
*Very valued, but not in the right way. Too much emphasis on scorekeeping, satisfaction research, not enough on insights and supporting strategy. (Stakeholders already think they know what the market wants.)*

### Similar problems

Respondents seem to feel that research is a bit more valued in the general business world, assigning slightly higher external valuation levels than internal while also citing similar problems.

How valued do you think the marketing research and insight function is as a profession in the general business world?

(Using a 0-10 scale of “Not valued at all” to “Extremely valued”)



## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

ing of the “why.” However, bringing survey recall and passively collected behavioral data together from a single source is what truly closes the gap because different things can actually happen than what people originally intended or wanted.

In market research, understanding the say-do gap becomes critical to the success of corporate initiatives in several ways:

**Brand equity tracking:** Among the myriad benefits that brand tracking provides, adding behavioral data can catch early signals of change and create better predictions of sales performance than survey data alone.

**Marketing strategy:** Leveraging behavioral data in tandem with survey data uncovers a complete, holistic view of the customer journey. Connecting people’s opinions to their actual behaviors is key

in understanding how to effectively market to consumers at every touchpoint.

**Advertising effectiveness:** Not all media can be easily measured through survey tags. By adding behavioral panel views of actual ad exposure, such as on social media sites, a completely distinct and neutral analysis of advertising performance can be executed for media optimization, including the impact on sales behaviors.

**Product development and innovation:** Rich consumer insights are vital at every product stage from ideation and testing to commercialization and beyond. Identifying and closing the say-do gap drives new product innovation and ensures product success.

**Customer experience:** People at the extremes of experience are the most likely to respond to CX feedback mechanisms. Analyze

actual experience for the general population instead of only hearing from the most vocal customers by combining survey feedback with passive behavioral data to achieve a true understanding of the drivers of experience.

As the need for accurate insights continues to grow, researchers must determine when to apply a standalone survey-driven methodology, when to leverage observed behavioral data or when a combination of the two would be best. Have you checked your insights for the say-do gap?



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*Research is tricky. When it says what people want to hear they love it. When it gives a different answer they question and challenge the results.*

*Everyone talks about understanding customer needs. I am not saying MR is the only way to uncover such needs, nor I am saying research does this perfectly, yet research is less valued compared to the value it delivers.*

Oversurveying, DIY tools and the widespread availability of data from a host of non-research sources were cited as factors diminishing the impact of insights-gathering.

*Marketing research is still undervalued in many companies. A recent focus on data science (a.k.a. data warehouses) is clouding the waters for us before executives. It is a fight to stay relevant and visible.*

*The democratization of data collection through SaaS tools and the demands for agile research means that a lot of the standards and skills associated with high-quality research are thrown out the window. Also, now it seems everyone is researching the customer. Not unlike the ‘tragedy of the commons’ when we phoned the public, now it is done through many channels. I suspect customers will eventually get tired of being con-*

*stantly asked for their opinion after every transaction they have with a company.*

*Everyone thinks they’re a market researcher. The DIY tools place the research capability in untrained hands or in the hands of those interested in lead gen, etc., and it hurts bona fide research efforts.*

*People are being inundated with feedback requests, forms and surveys. There is starting to be a lot of garbage input.*

### Look ahead

After assessing the present, we wrapped up the survey by ask-

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## WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE PACE OF SOCIETY SURPASSES THE PACE OF RESEARCH?

By Maggie Whitley  
Senior Research Associate, Bellomy

“Unprecedented times” make for a seemingly endless amount of information to dig through – there are always new topics to discuss and new questions for researchers to explore. The rate at which consumer opinions and actions change is increasing and businesses equipped to navigate these changes will reap the greatest rewards.

But where do we start identifying the right questions to ask? How do we formulate questions about behaviors when we know people have been, and will forever be, changed by the global pandemic?

For us, those answers were found in the actual words our respondents shared with us or on their social networks.

### Who will help us understand what is coming on the horizon?

Consumers are constantly sharing their motivations, fears, opinions and experiences.

By examining the unstructured feedback they’re sharing through digital channels, we can gain insight into what’s to come – before we start designing a survey or study. Take yourself back to February 2020 and con-

sider a typical multi-select question that asks respondents to indicate (from a predetermined list) the top categories they purchased that month. Did it include some newly emerging categories like personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies?

When fielding our COVID-19 segmentation survey, items like masks and hand sanitizer were added to our survey options only because we were able to leverage unstructured consumer feedback in a meaningful way.

### How do we transform unstructured, organic responses into a wealth of knowledge?

While including PPE in our survey was obvious in this case, other categorical and behavioral shifts are not so easy to identify without the help of advanced text analytics.

ing them to look ahead and give us their views of the future of the insights profession. Again, optimism generally reigned, with respondents seeing opportunities for personal and professional growth, thanks to research's pivotal (and long-acknowledged) role as the conduit through which companies hear the voice of the customer.

*I think it'll always be necessary, even if it will constantly be changing and evolving. Our group always says that market research is just one data point alongside many. I don't believe that will change, even as new types of data points and ways of gathering information come into the picture.*

## NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE

*The availability of DIY tools means some think they can do market research and are an expert. Just because I can go to Home Depot and buy all the things necessary to build a house does not make me a homebuilder. I realize my inexperience and limitations. I wish others would do the same when it comes to market research.*

*They may get rid of [the marketing research function] entirely as they feel they can automate all our survey findings into self-serve portals for all business partners. So they will pull data they don't understand nor know how to apply. Good times.*

## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Text analytics tools take consumers' thoughts and feelings from the channels where they express them, transforming a collection of comments into insights that help businesses learn, change and grow. In the past, mining large batches of unstructured feedback was difficult and time-consuming. However, recent advances in text analytics have allowed us to pull in data from more sources than ever before – social media, Google store reviews, forums, Reddit threads and even traditional survey open-end responses – and analyze that feedback in a comprehensive and aggregated way.

### Why do we want to go beyond formal, constructed surveys to mine unstructured consumer feedback?

Researchers empowered by robust text analytics systems can quickly

surface business risks, opportunities and challenges and work with business teams to identify strategies that leverage traditional and emerging research techniques more effectively.

Modern text analytics tools are key to making sense of the changes ahead. Improved ROI for innovations and improvements, faster recognition of business opportunities and risks, and increased understanding of consumer-business interactions will enable organizations to realize their objectives, build new products, market themselves better and deliver on their promises to stakeholders and consumers.

### So, what do you do when the pace of society surpasses the pace of research?

Anyone can read through individual reviews and verbatims but the keys to the future lie in tools that

mine themes, map connections, identify trends from thousands of real-time responses from everyday people and deliver actionable findings to researchers.

If we want our businesses to not only survive on the other side of the pandemic but thrive and serve our customers better than ever, we need to extract the maximum value from verbatims and truly listen to what consumers are saying.

To see how Bellomy's Text Analytics tool can help you navigate through a sea of consumer comments, request a demo at [bellomy.com/text-analytics](http://bellomy.com/text-analytics).

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*I feel very enthusiastic and optimistic. We're clearly in a transformation era that is placing shoppers, consumers and people at the heart of business and brand strategies. Data and technology are bigger and bigger enablers but there will still be a crucial need of human intelligence to connect the dots and identify growth opportunities.*

The business intelligence movement is highlighting the importance of data insights so research is once again coming to the forefront as important to business decision-making, respondents said.

*I'm semi-bullish. If we get stuck thinking about insights as primarily a survey-based profession, we will slowly be replaced. But I'm optimistic that the insights profession will be able to stay current and adapt to a [combination of] more captive data analytics + traditional insights methods.*

*I feel very positive about the future. The amount of data is exploding every day and the industry needs people to analyze and make sense of it.*

*If we get the message across that you need dedicated insights people with skills in data and storytelling then the future is good.*

*The outlook is positive, I think marketing research will be increasingly valued especially for those that can triangulate insights with other non-research data sources (e.g., operational product metrics, financials) to align findings across the business.*

Data-quality issues seemed to top the list worries, in the form of fretting over falling response rates and fears about fraudulent panel respondents.

*I'd feel better about [the future] if panel sample wasn't such a problem.*

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## STREAMLINE INSIGHTS COMMUNICATION TO ALIGN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

By Adam Schalke  
Director of Business Development, Gocious

Your company wants to grow. Your boss asks you to validate a new product strategy for the path they're considering; your job is to help balance opportunity against risk.

Your risk vs. success assessment can include areas such as:

- market evaluation
- competitive analysis
- brand-new, disruptive product ideas
- incremental product ideas
- build vs. buy analysis
- pricing strategy

You deploy proven research methods and use your favorite tools to come up with comprehensive data sets and important insights. You present them to the team in a combination of typical tools, such as PowerPoint decks, Excel spreadsheets, Word docs and e-mail. The team is excited by the data and seems to "get it" as you're presenting it.

However, once the research is completed and you're on to other projects, how do you know if the product team was really able to put your

work to use? And further, what was the impact made on the end project, whether it's the go/no-go decision or actual implementation? And without this knowledge, how do you ensure that you're growing and improving your output so that your team is on the right track and can put your insights to practical use?

Clearly, there's often a disconnect between research and innovation teams. The issues are multifold – from poor communication to habitual use of "flat" non-dynamic tools (read: PowerPoint, Excel, etc.) – making collaboration challenging. With the lack of a single tool that multiple business units can access and work in as a "single source of truth," even the most brilliant insights can be easily forgotten and dismissed as too much effort to decide for and use.

With busy teams, the results are often lack of follow-through,

Despite practically all industries increasingly relying on data analysis for decision making, I am becoming skeptical of the quality of insight you are able to obtain via survey research. Too many panels seem to have professional survey takers/task rabbits taking surveys and I think people have become increasingly able to goose quality-detection mechanisms.

Research vendors take note: Despite the impressive progress made in offering alternatives to pages and pages of radio buttons, client-side researchers still hunger for survey tools and approaches that offer respondents a fun, potentially

entertaining (or at least not stultifying) experience.

*I think response rates will decline. There's opportunity in survey research to innovate ways of gathering data that are less time consuming/difficult for respondents.*

*It will continue to be important but will have to find creative ways to get feedback instead of using long questionnaires.*

*[S]urveys aren't short enough, gamified enough to continue to engage humans.*

Though, that said, for all of the decades of talk of the need to shorten surveys, questionnaires remain stubbornly lengthy and no matter how engaging a survey platform is, a long survey is still a long survey. Further, researchers are the ones writing (or approving) the questionnaires so if they really want to stop burdening respondents, it's all within their power to do so.

### UX encroaching

A popular topic at industry conferences in recent years has been the intersection of UX and marketing research and the tone has always been very collegial, with the two

## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

leading to valuable insights that took tens and sometimes hundreds of hours to craft falling through the proverbial organizational cracks.

There are a few important aspects to consider when solving for a more integrated process. Focus on these factors to better meet the end goal of being useful to the product/innovation team.

### 1. Eliminating bias

This could mean performing independent research through third-party firms, using existing research from reputable sources or using specialized software that allows for weighted scoring feature suitability as part of a wider set of features making up a complete product. Using the right tool, weighted scoring can give an impartial view into the optimal combination of variables that could either make or break a project.

### 2. Facilitating teamwork and transparency

Eliminating silos within organizations has been made easier with cloud-based tools such as Slack, Teams, Asana and G Suite, depending on the application. For product management teams, specifically, there's Gocious, which acts as an organizing tool for product managers and their collaborators. Much like the other cloud-based tools above, Gocious brings business units together around the same data set and does so with features specifically geared toward a product manager's daily activities that result in bringing an optimized product to market.

### 3. Increasing usefulness

Easier access to information and better understanding of it lead to higher utilization. Rather than providing the product team with post-meeting attachments that get lost in e-mail or sit in a five-levels-

deep Dropbox folder, try instead a cloud-based editable tool – editability being key. If data can be segmented and queried (such as in Gocious), it means that researchers or product managers themselves can custom-tailor the information to the product analysis at hand and have the ability to re-segment/re-query if the project parameters change – or shall we say, as they change.

Solving for these elements should bring the researcher into the fold in a more meaningful way, while aligning research and innovation teams to serve a singular goal: putting the optimal product into the right market, based on the best information available.

**gocIOUS**

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disciplines sharing many commonalities, but interestingly in this edition of the Q Report survey there were many slightly wary-sounding mentions of UX encroaching on MR's turf, with the biggest worries seeming to be internal confusion over what each one does and an eventual subsumption of research.

*The increase in UX research teams in many companies also seems to be impacting the perception around market research teams, as many companies don't understand the difference between the two functions.*

*I think it is heading in a particular direction – UX research and big data. I see a need for my area of expertise waning.*

*[Research] needs to continue evolving as the boundaries with the other types of insight professions are getting more and more blurred.*

Respondents made many mentions of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation and the threats they embody to the marketing researcher's traditional strong suits of data gathering and data analysis. But commenters also see the rise of dumb data as an opportunity for researchers to step in and give shape and voice to its meaning.

*I was worried a few years ago when the rhetoric was that AI and automation would take over our industry. I think two positive things have happened: 1) AI and automation are now focused on enhancing our jobs; and 2) people have realized that a shift to AI and automation left everyone asking 'why' consumers or clients do what they do and thus there has been a shift back to qualitative research being critical again.*

*With actual data available more and more every day, it will be less important to get stated intent data. It is critical that insights and analytics are combined.*

*We're moving into much more of a digital space – a lot of the data we used to rely on quantitative surveys for, we can easily get in other ways. I think market research will remain important but will evolve into something much different. That said, there will always be a need for qualitative research.*

Along with fears of too much DIY research among internal groups, while there were plenty of expressions of worry over tech-based tools usurping research's role, whether born of experience using some of those tools (and finding out they're not going to instantly make research obsolete) or just a general societal trend of being more comfortable with (i.e., less afraid of) technology, many respondents sounded notes of optimism around being able to harness tech for their advantage.

*I think the tech bubble of shiny and new will burst once we realize that it isn't the replacement for traditional research that we all expected. Nothing replaces human interaction when it comes to getting information from humans.*

*I think a recalibration has been happening – in recent past, there had been a large pendulum swing to big data and analytics away from primary research. I think that things are rebalancing as companies realize that big data can't solve all ills and yield all insights, and that integrating the two is the best path forward.*

## NOTABLE AND QUOTABLE

*Not terribly optimistic [about the profession]. My son expressed interest and I suggested he look at other alternatives.*

*Very positive. Seems like more and more companies are recognizing the value of our work and changing their mind-set about the customer from "I already know them" to "I need to truly know them."*

And this tech vs. human angle may also extend to the people who work with the data, in the eyes of some respondents, who cited the benefits to marketing researchers of having a long of history of surveying and interviewing people, unlike the (big) data analysts who are more versed in working with data.

*Much of the functional work to conduct marketing research is being automated so the day-to-day tasks of designing surveys, collecting data, tabulating and analyzing data are being greatly reduced. We need to replace those functional tasks with higher-value strategic functions that can't be replicated with technology. We need to evolve and add more skills to our toolkit than traditional marketing research. Additional skills/experience such as moderator training, data science, organizational psychology, workshop facilitation and others are needed to broaden the value of our function in business and elevate it to a more strategic place inside organizations.*

Sounds simple enough! 🗣️





# CONSUMERS REMEMBER WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER

By Naira Musallam, Ph.D.  
Co-founder, SightX

In 2020, our collective circumstances changed drastically, transforming life as we knew it into one of the most memorable experiences of our lifetime.

As is often the case in life-altering events, change begets change. And as we took a step back from our hectic lives, many of us found ourselves reevaluating our priorities and values, both on an individual and societal scale. During these times, many emphasized time with their families and others experienced the pain of being away from loved ones. Some experienced growth and others went into survival mode. It was a year where many spoke out against long-standing racial inequalities.

Ultimately, these changes worked their way into our consumption habits, where they are likely to stay. Through research with our partners at Vox Media, we found that brands who can acknowledge this moment, delicately navigate the changes and deliver on their promises will be the most successful in building trust as we move forward. We would like to share three key takeaways relevant to the insights community.

## The power of empathy

In the last 15 months, 75% of people reported experiencing some form of loss. Often, these losses occurred in multiple areas of their lives, impacting everything from careers to mental health. Even those lucky enough to count themselves within

the 25% still faced a slew of changes that suspended life as they knew it.

All of the losses we faced, large and small, will continue to shape our thoughts, actions and behaviors for the foreseeable future. While moving forward may feel like a daunting task for some, empathy will be key in easing the transition.

*... being able to genuinely speak to the changes people have endured will be invaluable.*

For brands, this will mean finding a way to authentically acknowledge the pain, hope, fear and uncertainty many are feeling. Leading with empathy may feel a bit strange, especially for companies that dominate their marketing with sales-focused language. But being able to genuinely speak to the changes people have endured will be invaluable.

## Navigating change

As we make moves toward normalcy, 84% of people expect brands to take a more active role in navigating the transition. Many (51%) think brands should encourage us to put COVID-19 behind us as soon as possible. Some (37%) want to see brand messaging that can help us adjust to all of the changes we have experienced. Others (20%) are looking for brands to focus primarily on safety. And a small but not

ignorable percentage (12%) want brands to come up with campaigns to reenergize us.

No matter the exact message, it's clear that most of us would prefer brands to be connected to significant events taking place in our lives. And while leading with empathy is the first step, brands will have to find ways to more deeply understand the feelings and motivations of their audience(s) to know how to empathize effectively.

## Delivering on promises

In 2020, we saw many brands jump headfirst into conversations surrounding topics like the pandemic, social justice or equality. However, as time has passed, many brands have toned down their stance or gone silent entirely and people are taking note.

Nearly a quarter of people expect brands to continue supporting underserved communities, even after we put the pandemic behind us. However, it is important to note that support shouldn't only be vocal. Many people have become especially sensitive to performative empathy and allyship. Brands that can live up to their messaging and tangibly support the causes that matter to them and their customers will succeed.

As we chart a path forward, the brands that build trust will be those that focus on understanding the changes their customers have undergone in the last year.

[www.sightx.io](http://www.sightx.io)



# INSTRUMENTS FOR INSIGHTS

What skills do researchers need to navigate the future of research?

By Emily C. Koenig >> Quirk's Media

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**I**n the 2020 Q Report, researchers around the world made it clear they were up for the challenge of redefining insights and identifying the skills necessary to survive the unknown. This year, as the marketing research and insight industry works to manage a changing economy – including shifts in individual markets, consumer behaviors and research trends – we thought it appropriate to see what new skills and/or expertise researchers think would be most beneficial to their careers.

While some respondents reported the need for more tools rather than expertise/skills (“I just need tools better than Excel.”), most responses focused on a combination of industry-specific hard skills, general soft skills and the importance of continued education.

## Focus on tech

Researchers made it clear they are committed to upping their digital game, though the focuses were quite varied. Respondents shared the desire to improve skills around a variety of programs and software, ranging from

Zoom, PowerPoint and Photoshop to Tableau and SAS. One respondent simply wrote, “Anything that has to do with online/technology.”

Big data – a leading buzzword from years past – was only mentioned by name a handful of times. But there were multiple mentions of AI, data science, conjoint analysis, technical coding, programming and data analytics.

Many made it obvious that the need for specific new skills stems from companies bringing more tasks in-house.



## WHAT'S THE 'SO WHAT' ABOUT IMPLICIT TESTING?

By Dave Lundahl  
CEO, InsightsNow

In this time of change, companies have had to become more agile in how their business decisions are made. The consumer today is different than before the pandemic. Health and wellness concerns are heightened and new concerns have emerged regarding sustainability and diversity. More shoppers are using online tools to inform their purchase decisions – or to avoid retail altogether through online purchases.

As a result, we find ourselves in a time of incredible innovation as companies pivot. This has elevated the need for innovative ways to not only speed up the delivery of insights for decisions but also make insights more relevant.

Key to providing speed and relevancy in insights during this time of change has been the advancement of a class of neuromarketing techniques that contain implicit testing. Implicit testing helps you better understand why people do what they do in order for brands to create marketing, innovation and product development plans to disrupt or nudge consumer behaviors.

Implicit testing is a class of neuromarketing techniques that does not require special equipment such as brain-scanning EEG hardware to measure brain activity; physiological sensors to measure arousal; or eye-tracking and facial coding to capture study participant attention. Based on what neuroscientists call “prime-target”

response measures, implicit testing techniques can easily and cost-effectively be integrated into almost any research protocol or study.

In 2017, here at InsightsNow, we made a breakthrough in the delivery of implicit techniques with the development of what we call the Implicit/Explicit Test™. This advancement uses neuroscience in two ways. It applies a very powerful driver of human behavior called priming and it measures not only response behavior but also what mode of thinking a participant uses at the point of an experience or situational context where a target is presented for response.

Priming places participants mentally into their own recent product experiences or into situational contexts they frequent and this establishes how participants react to targets. For example, a participant's desire for ice cream (the target) in the context of wintery images (as your prime) will likely be different than if the images are of a hot summer day.

The mode of thinking (implicit or explicit) is ascertained by comparing the speed of response to various calibrated speed-of-response patterns that are known to be implicit (fast) or explicit (slow). To learn more about how the Implicit/Explicit Test works, we welcome you to download “The Implicit/Explicit Test™: Applying Neuromarketing to Enable Better Product Marketing, Development and Innovation.”

Since this advancement, we have been rapidly expanding

Implicit/Explicit Test's application into the expansive universe of marketing research approaches. To date, we have found innovative and effective ways to apply this technique in food, beverage, pet care, supplements, beauty care, household care, nutritional products, OTC pharma, health care, marketing advertisement and technology studies. Retailers are using this approach to decide the brands and SKUs to place on their store shelves. Ingredient suppliers and flavor and fragrance companies are using it to help their CPG clients build prized products for consumers and shoppers. We are applying it in marketing and media research to know how to nudge or disrupt shoppers, consumers and people navigating health care choices or for government agencies to help people make vaccination decisions.

We invite you to join us in discovering what's the “so what” about implicit testing! To learn more about how to apply the Implicit/Explicit Test™, please download our recently completed e-book that defines eight distinct applications ([www.insightsnow.com/8implicitapps](http://www.insightsnow.com/8implicitapps)). This includes applications to learn how to nudge or disrupt people through product claims, ingredients labeling and label design to assess brand trust and awareness, measure emotions, understand the impact of context and position products to be perceived as relevant and beneficial.

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Scaling in-house research teams, further education in developments and new capabilities in DIY/in-house research.

Be more independent in survey-building so that more in-house research can be done without spending on third-party and related analysis skills.

Training on advanced survey programming/analytics. I came from a large market research firm where we had a team of programmers and statisticians that would handle everything related to programming an advanced survey and running the data analysis. I am now on a team

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## VISUAL STORYTELLING: A KEY SKILL OF THE FUTURE?

By Alexander Skorka, Forsta

Thanks to the development of dashboard applications, access to high-quality data-related insights requires minimum time and knowledge. One would think that this development would encourage the use of data and analytics across the board. However, though “digital natives” are quite good at exploiting data, many companies still fail to take full advantage of this opportunity. Why? Well, the challenge isn’t to simply introduce new technologies; teams need to adopt new ways of thinking and learn new skills to continuously apply in their day-to-day work. One of these skills is visual storytelling – which will be the most widespread means of using analytics in 2025, according to Gartner.

### What distinguishes visual storytelling from classic data visualization?

Visual storytelling tells a story with the help of infographics. The combination of text, images, symbols and diagrams creates communication that is both entertaining and effective. Information and entertainment merge to produce infotainment. Classic data visualization, on the other hand, uses tables and diagrams and often views information and data too abstractly and in isolation. It is thus easy to overlook interrelationship and principles of effect. Visual storytelling is the answer to the ever-increasing flood of

information and need to democratize data.

### What makes for good visual storytelling?

Like any good story, the visual version starts with an event that is worthy of a more detailed look. This can be, for example, a recent problem or opportunity that has emerged. A good visual story establishes connections between facts, emotions, frameworks, attitudes and courses of action. It thus establishes the causal relationships between all relevant facts. Whether implied, hypothesized or asserted, causal relationships are crucial for a story to work. In other words: In a story, everything happens for a reason.

Stories in the form of infographics can be compared to narrative sequences. They provide a visual, narrative path through the relevant facts. Infographics guide

with just one other researcher and we handle everything from the first sales pitch to the final report delivery.

*Learning R and Python programming for data analytics to marry customer data with survey data to gain a richer understanding of the consumer.*

Several shared frustrations around barriers to access related to expensive software and learning curves.

*The jobs I'm applying for use their own set of tools that you seem to only learn on the job or by paying the vendor a lot of money.*

*Better statistical understanding. My experience comes primarily from on the job [training], rather than a statistical educational background.*

### Improving communication

Historically, storytelling has been a topic of interest for marketing research and insights professionals. So it wasn't surprising to see many responses focus specifically on the ability to use data to tell a story and, ultimately, transform it into consumable insights.

*Better ways to show results – to make the information tell a story.*

*Communicating research basics to non-expert audiences.*

*The ability to persuade my team that data matters in the work we do. If I can demonstrate the value of my role in our department, then I think our overall success will increase.*

Many respondents shared the desire to improve verbal presentation skills.

*Toastmasters-style ability to speak well and sound knowledgeable in any situation.*

## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

the viewer through the world of data rather than simply throwing them into it. These stories put facts and their interactions in a specific order, making it easier to gain insights and derive measures more effectively.

### What effect can visual storytelling have?

#### 1. Visual storytelling is a valuable tool in change management.

Storytelling cannot do without a strong problem-solving orientation, so change is already built into the story. A good story promotes improvement and development. It lets the audience know the ways and circumstances under which a change is possible, stimulating the audience to think further.

**2. Consistently applied visual storytelling enables data silos to be torn down.** A wide variety of departments collect and maintain lots of interesting information. How-

ever, this information is trapped in silos and often lacks a holistic view of customers, markets and business processes. Storytelling is directly tied to addressing problems. It inadvertently must include as many perspectives – and thus data – as possible in the analysis from various departments and systems.

**3. Visual storytelling is the key to democratizing business data across the enterprise.** An ever-increasing number of stakeholders require actionable and decision-relevant information. However, many of these stakeholders are not familiar with data and analytics. By using infographics, complex issues can be illustrated to these users in a way that is easy to understand and reliable in terms of interpretation. This leads to data being used more widely and frequently in decision-making processes.

**4. Visual storytelling fosters collaboration across the enterprise.**

Unlike abstract diagrams, stories allow us to talk about insights and solutions. They help us understand causes, effect relationships and principles and, more importantly, share them with others. This results in collaboration that better supports teams to create innovative solutions.

### Summary

Used correctly, visual storytelling is a key skill that all employees need to learn. This is because visual storytelling supports change processes, helps break down data silos and promotes the democratization of data and collaborative decision-making processes.

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Interpersonal communication also made the list.

*As a middle-aged white male, getting better at doing research with those who identify differently than I do.*

*Building authority/courage in asking peers/other teams to take on tasks – easy to do for direct reports, not so easy to do for people of the same title level or higher than you.*

### Leadership

Leadership and management were two common themes, with many respondents sharing how their career would benefit from executive coaching, leadership training and people-management skills. And after more than a year of remote work and limited in-person contact, it wasn't a surprise to see some individuals sharing the need for skills around "leading in a virtual environment."

One respondent highlighted how important forward-thinking leaders truly are:

*We are at an inflection point. Until our executive director retires, our department will make no further progress in transforming into an insights function.*

### Presentation and strategy

Presentation skills and strategy – which represent a gray area where soft skills meet hard – were among

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## ANTICIPATING CUSTOMER NEEDS AND MAINTAINING BOLDNESS IN THE AGE OF UNCERTAINTY

By Divya Shroff  
Senior Product Marketing Manager, Momentive

In the post-pandemic world of never-ending change, businesses are trying to stay ahead of the curve and determine what's next. With a focus on speed and boldness, leaders aren't just bracing for ongoing pandemic impacts but also other societal, political and environmental disruptions. As companies rethink approaches to navigate and thrive in this new landscape, keeping tabs on the market and customers is more critical than ever.

### Consumers demand more from brands than ever before

Momentive launched several COVID-19 impact studies and found that, compared to before the pandemic, 28% of consumers are spending less, while 34% are spending more. The types of products consumers are buying are also changing; 24% say they have been spending more on private labels than on name brands throughout the pandemic. When it comes to generational shopping habits, Gen Z consumers want more from brands than just affordable and high-quality products. Brand authenticity, transparency and sustainability are higher priorities for this age cohort than for older consumers.

### B2B decision makers say "brand matters"

Brand perception and brand tracking are no longer just a B2C priority. Even B2B companies need to worry about brand authenticity. In a study of 271 business professionals with purchasing power, 89% of C-level executives said company reputation matters the most when making a decision about a software provider. Brand values also have an impact on decision-making. When respondents were asked how they would respond if a provider they were considering had made a business decision that conflicted with their company's values, 25% of respondents said they would consider a competitive product and 18% said they would drop the company from consideration.

### Adapting to fast-changing industries requires new technology

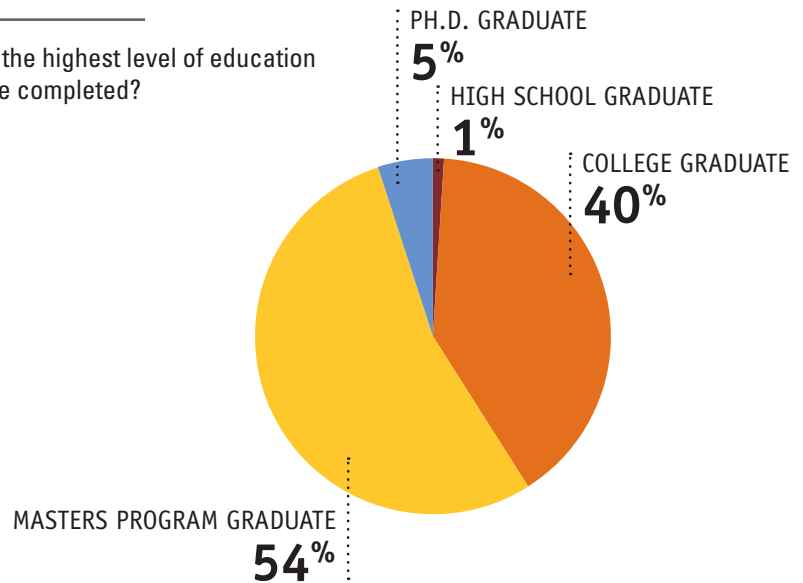
Emerging markets also changed rapidly and courted controversy,

the common skills researchers said would be beneficial to their careers.

While many general presentation soft skills were named – communication, project management and public speaking – others called out hard skills, such as the need to improve dashboards, user interfaces and master data visualization software and techniques.

Regardless of the focus, it seems the hope is to increase the actionability of research findings.

What is the highest level of education you have completed?



## INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

highlighting the increased need for companies to keep pace with market shifts. In the world of finance and digital investing, it was a particularly wild year. For example, the drama around the GameStop stock and Robinhood app fueled a media firestorm. However, very few Americans have actually made social media-driven stock purchases. In fact, 75% say not only have they not purchased GameStop or similar stock but they have no interest in ever participating in community-driven trading events.

Bitcoin also broke new investment records during the pandemic, though opinions on Bitcoin are mixed. Among those who've heard of it, 22% say it's a good investment opportunity but not as useful as a currency to purchase goods and services. However, Bitcoin owners are even more bullish on its growth path now than they were three years ago; 64% say they think Bitcoin will be worth significantly

more five years from now than it is today, up from 47% in 2018.

The bottom line is this: Companies across different industries will be required to pivot to get ahead of market shifts and will need to leverage different market research solutions to keep pace with customer needs and trends – from flash polls, to brand tracking, to industry tracking and more.

### Accurately anticipating customer needs with speed

With a pressing need to get closer to customers and anticipate needs, organizations are rethinking approaches to market research and considering new technology. According to a new McKinsey Global Survey of executives, 49% said increasing use of advanced technologies for business decision-making is here to stay and echoed a familiar finding: Companies that embraced the use of advanced technologies and speed in experimenting and innovating outperformed those

that did not. We wanted to lead by example and used our own brand and market insights solution to embark on a bold change – rebranding and relaunching our company into Momentive, an agile experience management company.

Consumer behavior and business models will continue to shift at an accelerated pace and companies need to prepare. The silver lining is that there is new technology to help you understand what your customers care about now and what they'll need tomorrow, which will place you well ahead of your competitors.

**Want to learn more? Visit [www.momentive.ai/insights](http://www.momentive.ai/insights).**



[www.momentive.ai](http://www.momentive.ai)

### Continued education

Numerous respondents reported that continued education would be beneficial to their career – which some may find surprising, given that 54% of respondents hold a master's degree and 5% have a Ph.D.

So what are they interested in learning? Several mentioned the need for qual-specific training, namely moderating.

*Right now, I am seeing a big need for RIVA or Burke's certification in qualitative moderating. Many organizations are requesting someone who is RIVA-trained.*

*I just completed moderator training and managed my first group. I intend to continue on this trajectory.*

*I think we'll always need qualitative research, but even that will become more complicated and begin to demand people with advanced degrees (which I do not have).*

*Burke needs to come back to New York! We need affordable qual training!*

Other responses highlighted the demand for training outside of marketing research and insights – including legal, pharmaceutical, financial, UX certificates, international business, foreign language, journalism and business – in order better meet the needs of often varied client-side roles.

*B2B marketing skills (SEO, etc.). My role was expanded beyond insights*

## TAKEAWAYS FOR VENDORS

- **Clients worry about panel data quality.** Improve your data-quality measures, especially panel sample and data, and communicate your efforts to client-side researchers so they can feel confident in the data you're gathering for them.
- **Clients fear falling response rates.** Corporate researchers see a need for more engaging, more entertaining ways for respondents to take surveys. If you offer those tools, let them know.
- **Clients seek diversity.** Reflecting the societal movement toward diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), corporate researchers are increasingly in search of vendors who have diverse management and staff and also who are skilled at researching issues surrounding DEI.
- **Clients need help with storytelling.** Q Report respondents wished for their vendors to help them build narratives from research data, to make the complex simple and facilitate socializing findings internally.
- **Clients could use a partner.** Especially in light of the pandemic, corporate researchers report being inundated with internal project requests and are facing these increased workloads with smaller staffs after COVID-induced furloughs or layoffs. A vendor partner who helps them weather this storm will lay the groundwork for a longer-term relationship.

*to cover marketing and my career is insights.*

*My company is currently investing in my education (MBA), which I believe is of great benefit.*

Travel reimbursement was also mentioned alongside educational opportunities, reminding us that while much can be accomplished in the virtual realm, many researchers still value in-person learning.

### Eyes on retirement

We'd be remiss to not include the responses from those nearing the

end of their careers. While you undeniably can teach old dogs new tricks, some pre-retirement researchers feel new skills aren't worth the investment.

*I am close enough to retirement that additional investment of skills by me won't be very useful.*

*I'm actually in the pre-retirement stage, so it's hard for me to answer this one. 🗣️*





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# RESEARCHERS SEEK FLEXIBILITY, DIVERSITY

By Emily C. Koenig >> Quirk's Media

One of the main goals of Quirk's annual Q Report is to better understand the client-side researcher and see what's on their minds. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the pace of change has begun to increase, prompting us to focus on a few topics – flexibility, diversity and shifts in employment – that hit the global spotlight in 2020 to see how they have impacted marketing research and insights professionals.

As we've done in past reports, we're (mostly) letting the data speak for itself, highlighting interesting tidbits and respondent comments throughout. You will also find a few data points from years past to show how far we've come and highlight what has – and hasn't – changed in the last few years.

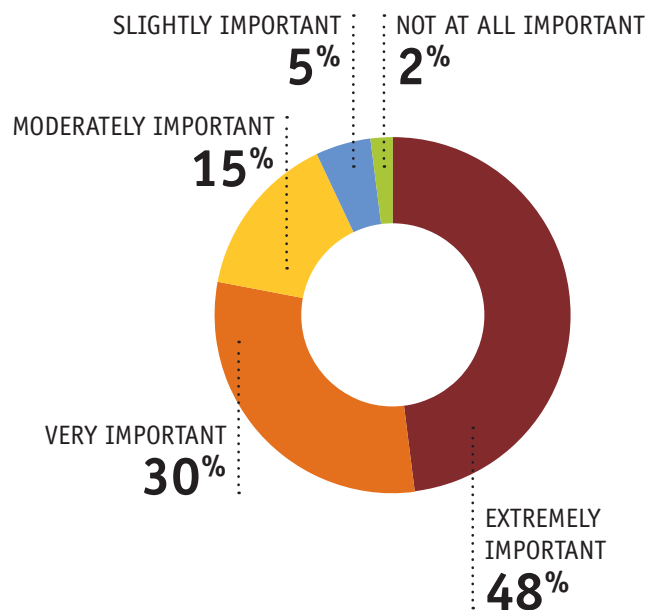
The 2021 edition of Quirk's annual survey received responses from a total of 816 full-time (defined as 35+ hours per week) client-side insights professionals. The survey has more to offer than we can include in this report. If you are interested in seeing a breakdown of compensation for all job titles, including crosstabs by age, gender, location, industry and more, visit URL.

So what does the research industry look like in 2021?

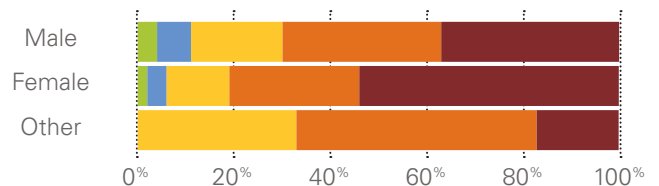
## Importance of flexibility

With work from home trending, we asked respondents, "How important is it to you that your organization allows the flexibility to work remotely either partially or fully?" A whopping 78% said this is extremely important or very important. Interestingly, 54% of women

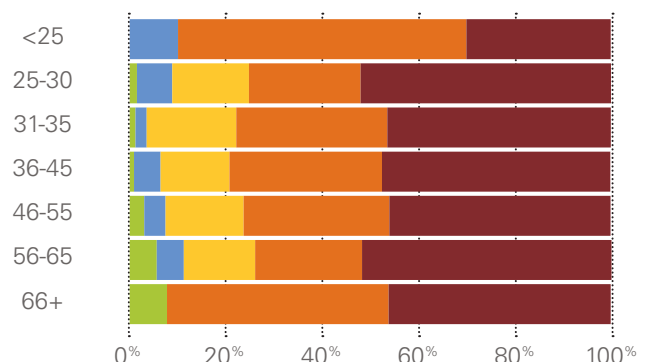
How important is it to you that your organization allows the flexibility to work remotely either partially or fully?



## IMPORTANCE BY GENDER



## IMPORTANCE BY AGE



said it was extremely important as compared to only 37% of men.

### Diversity

In 2020, like many industries around the world, research and insights put a heavy focus on diversity. When asked, “How important is it to you that your organization has a commitment to diversity in the workplace?” a combined 69% of respondents said extremely important or very important.

When looking through this year’s verbatims, many respondents noted the need for more diversity and inclusion efforts, both in terms of the research being conducted and the profession:

*More diversity and inclusion-based research. Using more vendors that focus on diversity markets or are diversity-founded.*

*After investing year after year in digital analytics, our new CMO has made an investment in an additional analyst on the market research side. We look forward to hiring this new person in the next year. This person will focus on our audience of the future (younger and more racially and ethnically diverse).*

*The profession has to be more encompassing of a diverse workforce.*

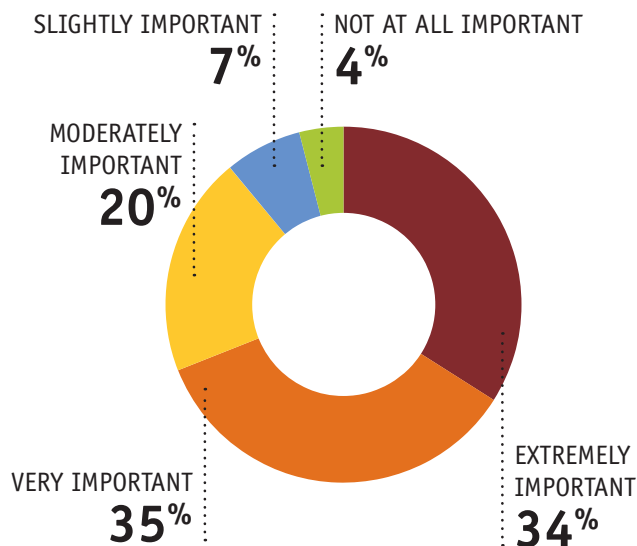
2020 also saw the launch of several new diversity-focused industry organizations: Colour of Research (<https://www.colourofresearch.org>), a global community driven to bring about more diversity in the research industry; Insights in Color (<https://www.insightsin-color.com>), a community for multicultural market research and insights professionals; and Out in Research, a group championing LGBTQ+ diversity within the industry. WIRE in Color (<https://www.womeninresearch.org/wire-in-color>), which launched in 2018, is another industry group focused on racial and cultural diversity and equity.

### Changes in employment

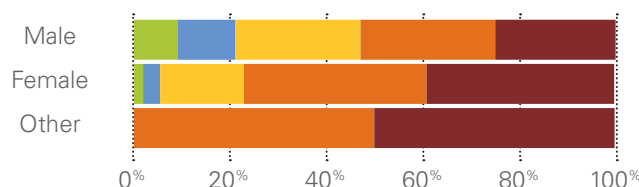
Back in 2010, a combined 60% of respondents said it was very unlikely, unlikely or somewhat unlikely that their companies would hire additional employees. In 2019, months before the COVID-19 pandemic, that number sat at 48%. This year, it fell to 43%.

But, are researchers looking for new jobs? According to our survey, only 8% said they were very likely to seek employment at a different company this year. This may be related to the fact that the percentage of re-

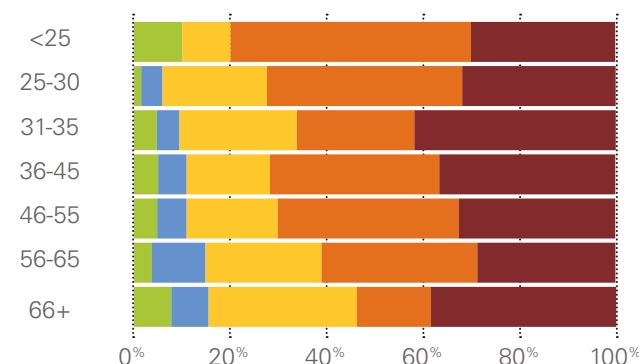
How important is it to you that your organization has a commitment to diversity in the workplace?



### IMPORTANCE BY GENDER



### IMPORTANCE BY AGE

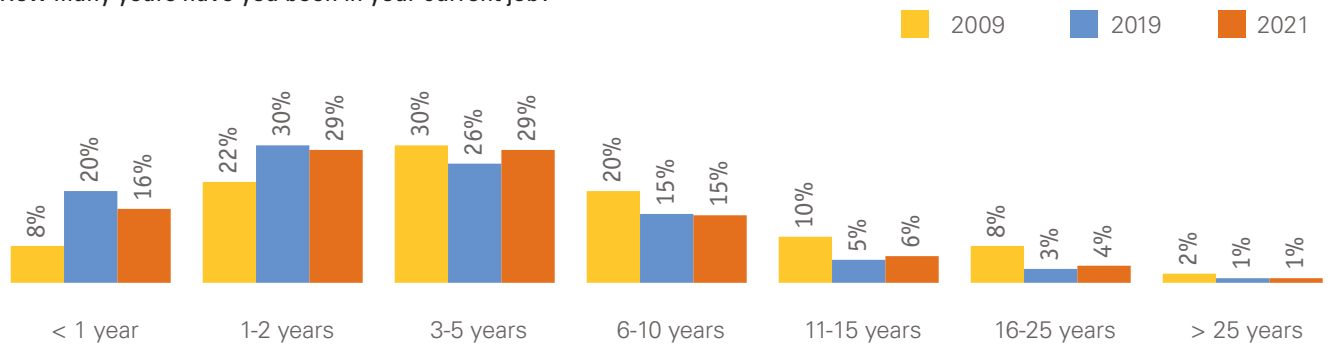


searchers who are new to their positions is up, with 16% reporting they have been in their current job for less than a year, as compared to 13% in 2019 and 8% in 2009.

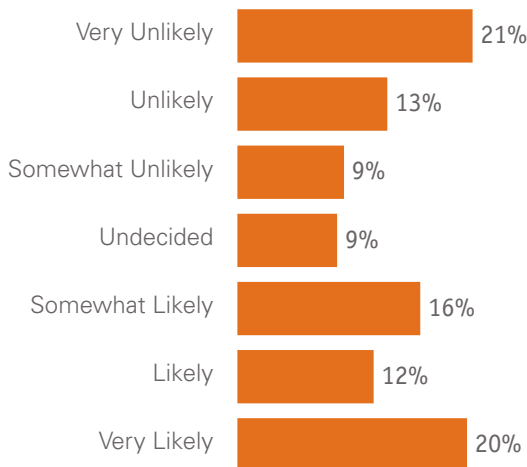
Several respondents shared their experiences regarding layoffs, employment challenges and victories:

*I was only laid off two months and was very busy interviewing the whole time, and was on the final round with several companies when I accepted an offer.*

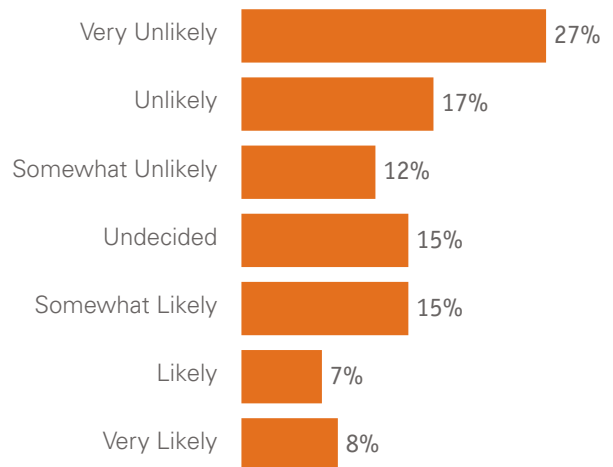
How many years have you been in your current job?



How likely is it that your company will hire additional permanent market research employees in the next 12 months?



How likely is it that your company will hire additional contract research employees in the next 12 months?

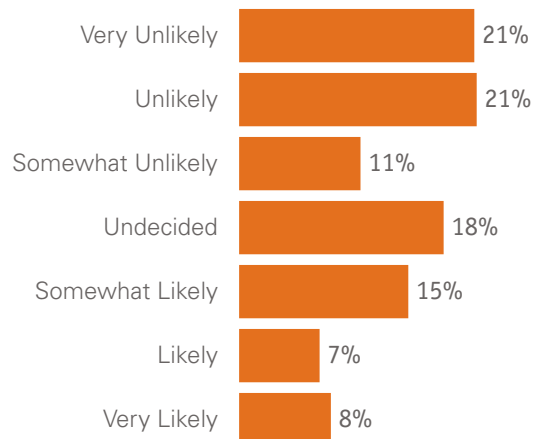


*I've been laid off twice from organizations that were obviously not committed and convinced of the value received, however I'm currently with an organization that highly values insights and leadership expects them in all strategic and tactical plans. But if I could do my career over again I would choose another profession because those layoffs were huge setbacks to my career and life that I'm still paying for.*

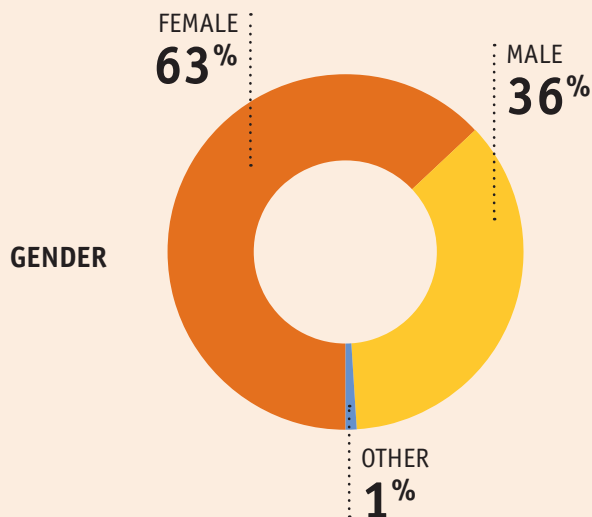
*Wouldn't be surprised if they are trying to do away with research. None of our positions are ever backfilled when someone leaves. Everyone is terribly overwhelmed with work and unsupportive leaders.*

*I feel underpaid on the client side and have considered returning to the vendor side.*

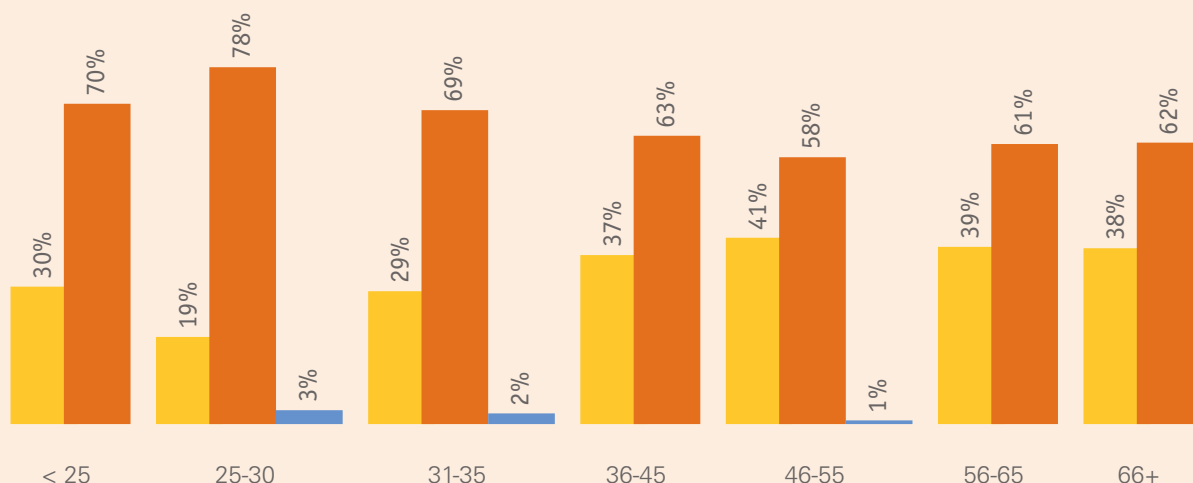
How likely are you to seek employment at a different company this year?



## WOMEN HOLD THE MAJORITY




### AGE IN YEARS BY GENDER



*I'm in a position where we don't have enough business to hire a new person but I can't take on much more business without another person. It is a Catch-22.*

*I was hired six months ago to revamp the MR function at my company. There is great enthusiasm for more and better research, yet also a fair amount of reluctance to let go of the way things have been done for decades (without consistent professional leadership in the MR function). I'm content and pleased with the level of enthusiasm for better research, though there are still challenges ahead.*

*I love [my job]! I have to motivate myself but the idea of gleanng some type of learning from talking to a customer, reading over survey results, etc., makes me happy and keeps me going. *

## METHODOLOGY

The 2021 Q Report work life and salary and compensation study of end-client/corporate researchers is based on data gathered from an invite-only online survey sent to pre-qualified marketing research subscribers of Quirk's. The survey was fielded from June 10 to July 16, 2021. In total we received 1,951 usable qualified responses of which 816 were from end-client researchers and used for this end-client report. An interval (margin of error) of 2.16 at the 95% confidence level was achieved for the entire study. (Not all respondents answered all questions.)