

**pipedrive**



# **STATE OF SALES**

## **2019-2020**

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# Foreword

When we conducted this survey between December 2019 and January 2020, no one could have foreseen the true extent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has had on the business world.

As such, the results of our survey paint a picture of a sales industry that is optimistic for 2020, but also conscious of the potential challenges.

The health and financial crises that have affected businesses globally in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated those challenges. Uncertainty has led to a market crash, leaving many businesses struggling to make ends meet. Necessary quarantine measures have caused retail, food and hospitality businesses to close. Companies are having to take action to protect the health of their employees, providing remote working tools, which is changing the way many do business.

There are industries, such as travel and tourism, that have all but collapsed. On the other hand, those businesses that provide a service during these changing times are seeing an astronomical rise in demand. In the SaaS world, for example, video conferencing companies are proving to be vital for professionals who need to stay in touch with colleagues, clients and prospects.

Even though this survey was conducted before the pandemic, we believe that it still tells an important story—one which holds true today and will continue to do so as businesses around the world adapt to the challenging global economic fallout.

As you will see on the next slide, our key learnings were that sales professionals feel under-appreciated and are working long hours for little compensation. Quality lead generation is a key challenge for salespeople, but with the right tools, sales organizations can be more successful.

COVID-19 won't change these facts: as companies react to fluctuating levels of demand, their sales teams will feel the brunt of the pressure; customers will also be affected by this uncertainty, which means increased churn and a necessary focus for sales teams on acquiring new leads who are likely to convert; as more businesses move to a remote working methodology, tools to stay connected and productive will prove vital.

However, the true narrative of 2020 will only come to light at the end of the year, which is why our next State of Sales report will focus on the contrast between the discoveries in this report and those from the survey we will conduct in December.

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**William Sigsworth**

Content Editor, Pipedrive

# Six Key Sales Stories in 2019-2020

## 1. Salespeople are underappreciated.

Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents feel that salespeople are underappreciated in the business world. Three-quarters consider themselves as a “salesperson” and when you ask this group if they feel sales is underappreciated, 70% say “yes”.

## 2. Many are working long hours and often not getting compensated.

On average, six out of ten (60%) respondents are working over 40 hours a week, with 22% working a staggering 50+ hours. Eight out of ten (80%) respondents work weekends either regularly or occasionally, but only a third (32%) are compensated for weekend work.

## 3. However, they are satisfied, successful at sales and salespeople are proud of their role.

The majority (85%) of respondents say they are successful at sales, while 77% say they are satisfied in their current role. The vast majority (92%) of those who consider themselves to be a “salesperson” are proud to do so.

## 4. Prospecting and lead qualification is the biggest challenge in 2020.

Over a third (34%) of respondents said that they think prospecting and lead qualification is going to be the biggest challenge for salespeople in 2020. That’s double the next highest percentage as 17% believe that hiring and training will be the biggest challenge for salespeople.

## 5. People aren’t using technology to tackle the challenge of prospecting.

Surprisingly, despite the challenge they face, half (49%) of respondents aren’t using technology or automation tools to help them source leads. Interestingly, more than three-quarters of respondents say that they are happy with the tools and tech available to them.

## 6. Better technology makes salespeople successful.

The technology that is available to salespeople has a direct correlation to how successful they are at sales. 79% of successful salespeople were happy with the tools and tech available to them for their sales work, as opposed to 61% of non-successful salespeople.

# Sales Career Perceptions

## Salespeople feel underappreciated

They are working long hours, often on weekends, and rarely getting compensated for their time. Despite that, salespeople are more likely than not to feel proud to be a salesperson, successful and satisfied in their role.

In this section, we find out about working hours, job perception and who people are talking to about the stress they encounter in their job.

## Pride and appreciation

Three-quarters (75%) of respondents consider themselves to be salespeople, and of that number 40% are working 41 hours a week or more, with 15% working at least 50 hours a week on average.

70% of salespeople say that they feel underappreciated and, in fact, most respondents agree, with 69% overall saying that they believe the efforts of salespeople are underappreciated in the business world.

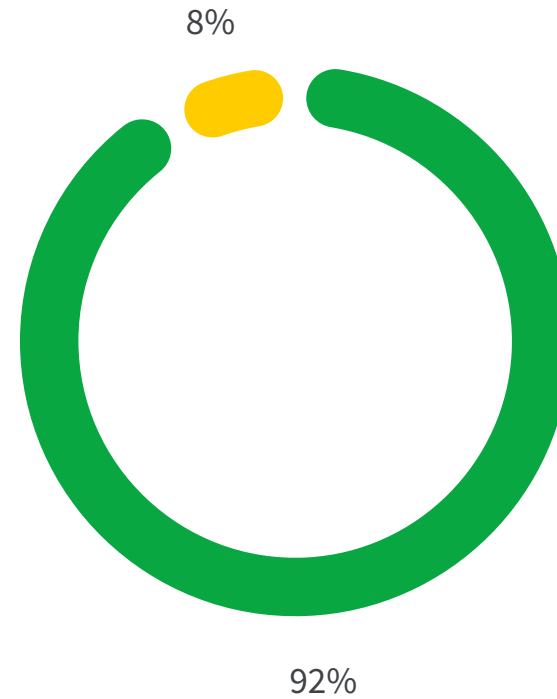
Despite this lack of appreciation, the vast majority of people who identify themselves as salespeople are proud to call themselves a salesperson, with 92% saying that they are proud to do so.



Do you think salespeople are underappreciated in the business world?

Are you proud to call yourself a salesperson?

● Yes ● No

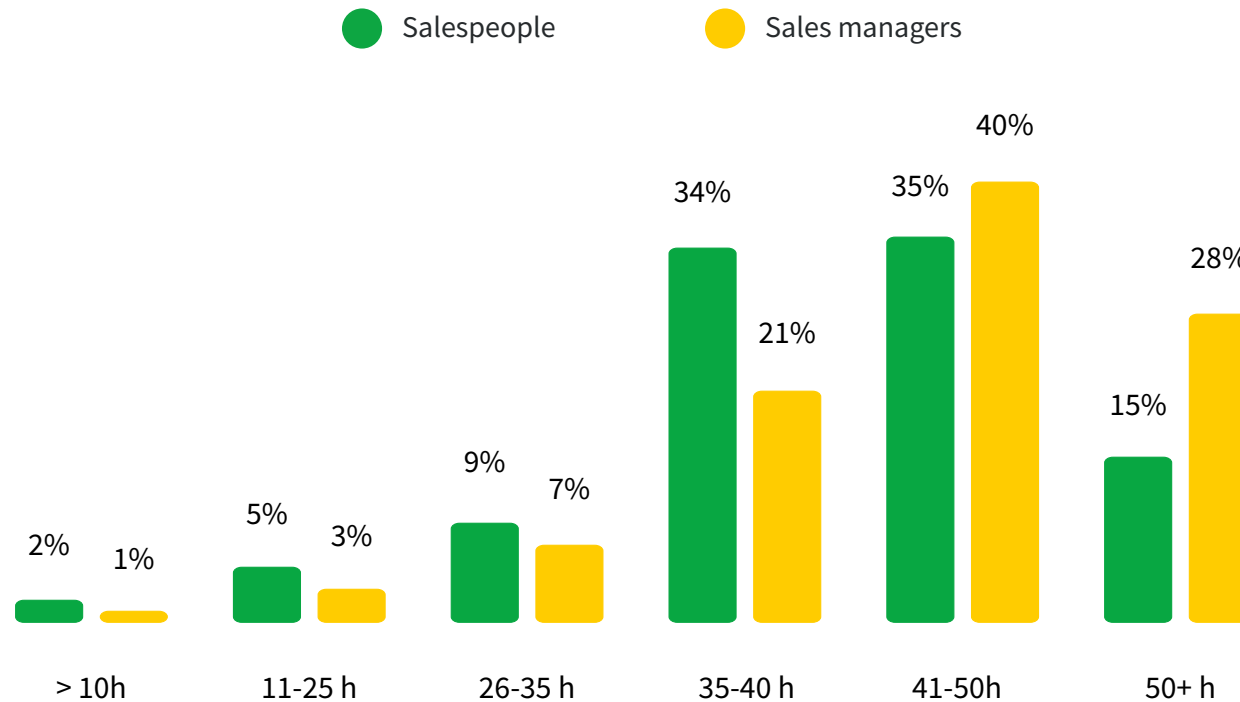


## Working hours

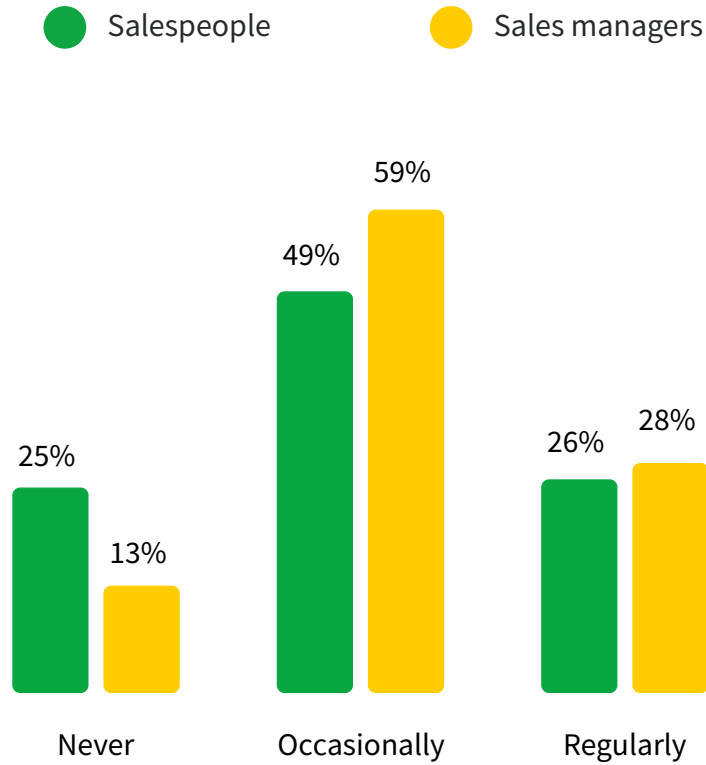
Unsurprisingly, sales managers are also working long hours. The majority (68%) of sales managers work more than 40 hours a week, while more than a quarter (28%) work at least 50 hours. Over a quarter of both salespeople (26%) and sales managers (28%) regularly work weekends.

Over half of the respondents (51%) manage salespeople. As some sales managers also identify themselves as salespeople, the term “Salespeople” on these pages refers to people who identify as a salesperson but don’t manage salespeople.

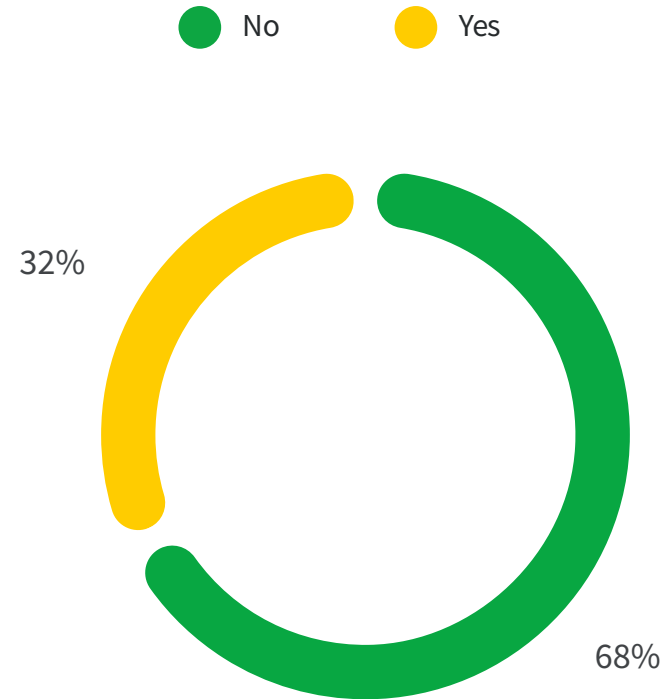
### On average, how many hours do you work?



### Do you ever work on weekends?



### Are you compensated for weekend work?



Overall, despite the majority working weekends and long hours, less than a third of respondents (32%) said they get compensated for weekend work.



## Sharing the sales burden

Despite working long hours and not being compensated for their work, a surprising percentage of respondents, 20%, say they don't need to talk to anyone about the pressures of sales. Half of the people we surveyed (47%) say that they talk to family and friends the most about the pressures involved in sales. People are least likely to turn to their managers, with only 7% saying that they talk to their managers the most about the pressures of sales activity.

Of course, a significant number of respondents own their own business, so have no one above them at work to talk to. However, 16% of salespeople specifically said that they don't need to talk to anyone about sales pressure, while 22% of sales managers said the same.

Who do you talk to most about the pressures of sales activity?

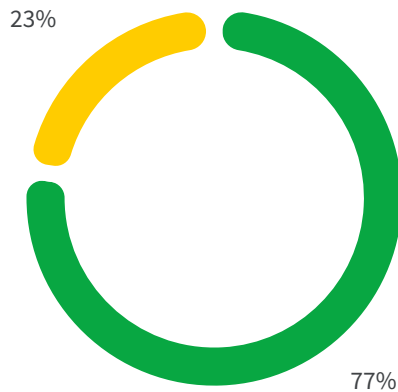


## Satisfaction and aspirations

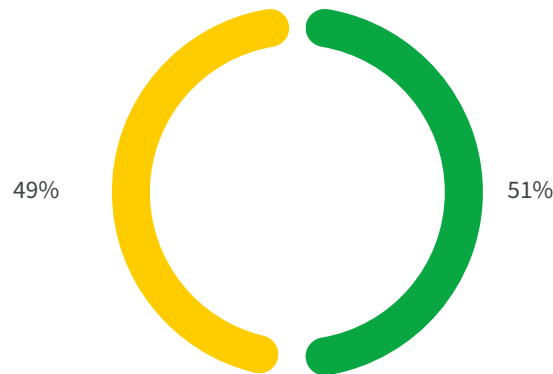
The majority of people working in sales are satisfied in their current role. In fact, over three-quarters of salespeople (77%) are satisfied. However, that doesn't mean that they don't have career aspirations. Almost half (49%) of respondents who don't manage salespeople wish to become a sales manager in the future.

Over a third (38%) of respondents own their own business. Of course, this doesn't prevent them from managing salespeople or considering themselves to be a salesperson—and proud of it! Most of those who don't own a business wish to do so in the future, with 61% saying that they would like to be business owners.

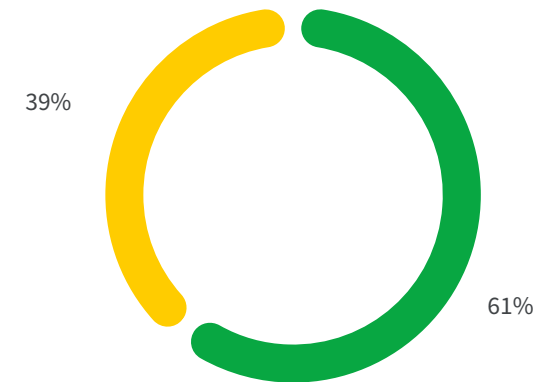
Are you satisfied with your current role?



Do you wish to become a sales manager in the future?



Do you wish to own a business in the future?

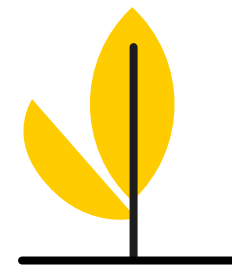


● Yes ● No

# Sales Performance

At Pipedrive, we know that sales is a craft. Salespeople, sales managers and business owners can train to improve their sales ability, just as an engineer can go from fixing bicycles to building jet engines, or a guitarist can go from practising scales to headlining festivals. We also know that sales is often not considered to be a craft. After all, as we saw earlier on in this report, 70% of salespeople feel that their work in sales goes underappreciated.

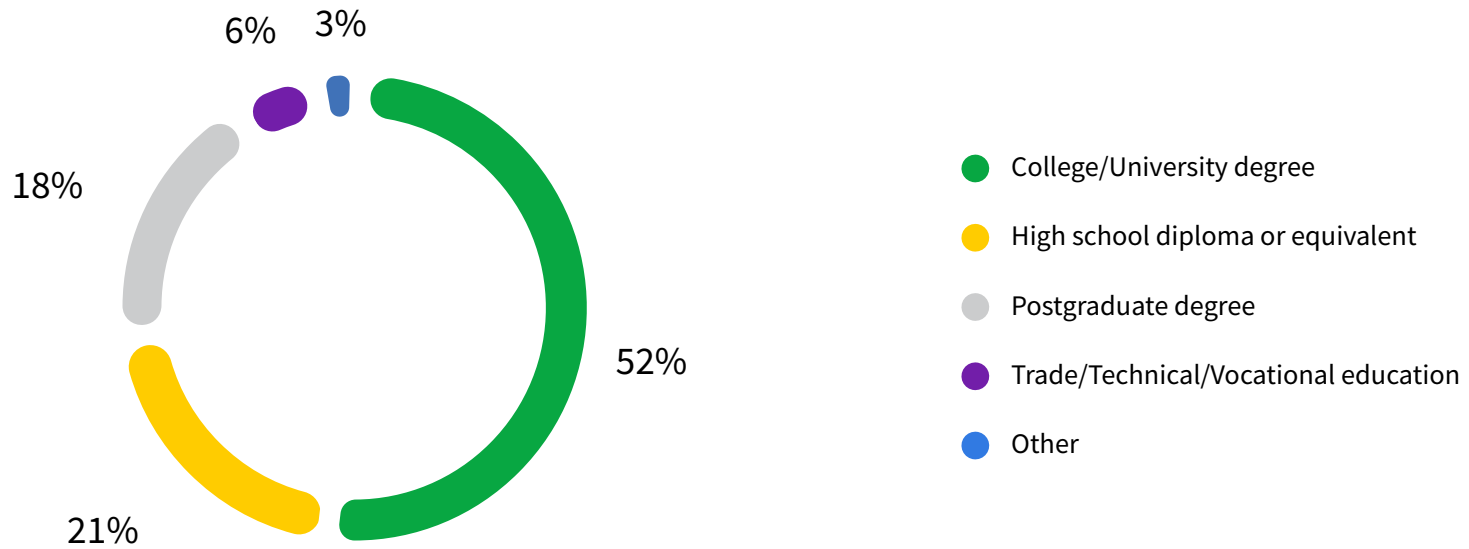
**However, salespeople are resilient.** Even though they are underappreciated they are proud, and even when they don't hit their targets they feel like they are successful at selling. In this section, we find out how improving skills that are valuable to salespeople and using every training tool at your disposal, from mentoring to online courses, can make you a better seller.



## Many respondents are highly educated

The majority of respondents (70%) have a university degree, while another 6% have a trade, technical or vocational qualification. One fifth (21%) have a high school diploma.

What is the highest school degree you have completed?

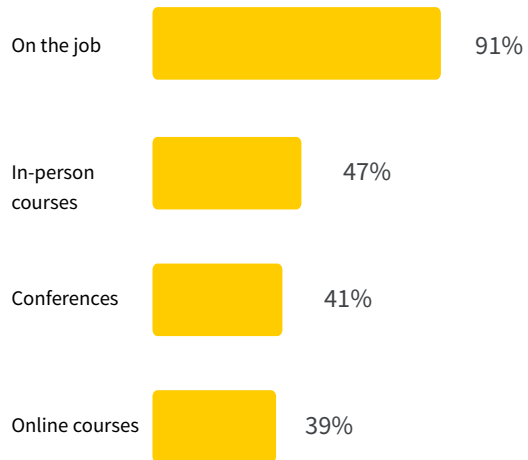


## Learning sales on the job

Due to the lack of education available, almost all respondents improve their sales by training on the job. There is also a lack of training options for people who are already in a sales role, so many either aren't being given the opportunity or aren't taking the opportunity to improve through other methods.

Roughly half (51%) of respondents are taking feedback from their manager in order to improve their sales skills. Apart from that statistic, there's not one training method that at least half of respondents say they are using.

### What sales training do you have?



### How have you developed your sales skills?

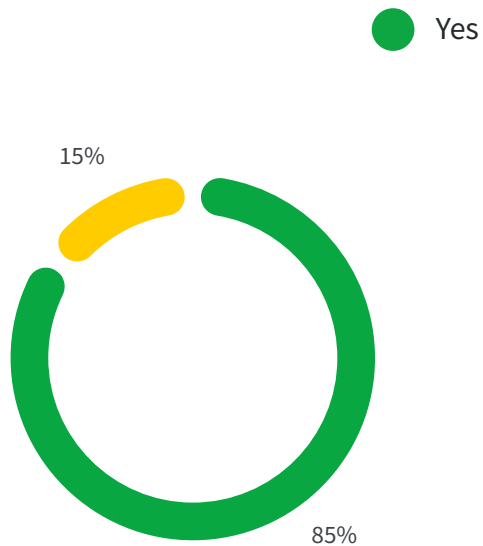


## Measuring success

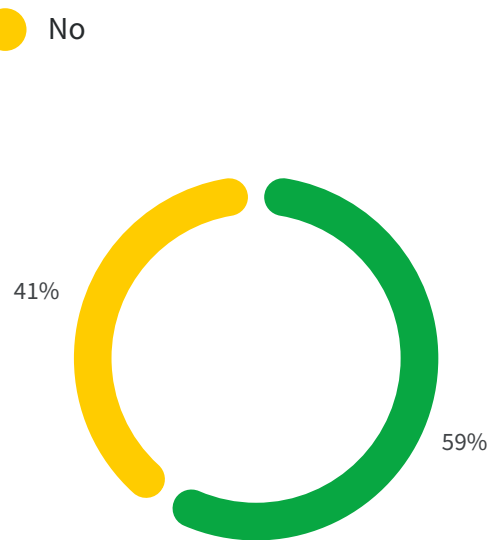
Overall, the majority of respondents (85%) consider themselves to be successful at sales. Interestingly, however, that doesn't align with the responses to two questions that refer to the key indicator of success in sales: hitting your annual target and your regular sales quota

Over four in ten respondents said that they didn't hit their annual sales target last year, while only 16% of respondents say that they always hit their regular sales quota.

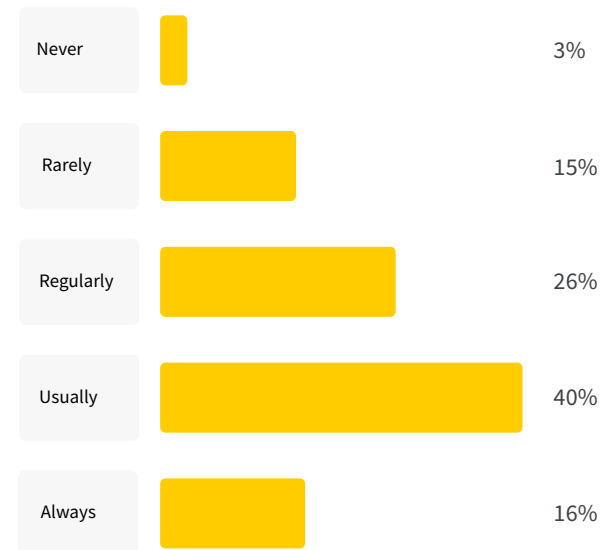
Do you consider yourself to be successful at sales?



Did you reach your sales target last year?



How often you hit your regular sales quota?

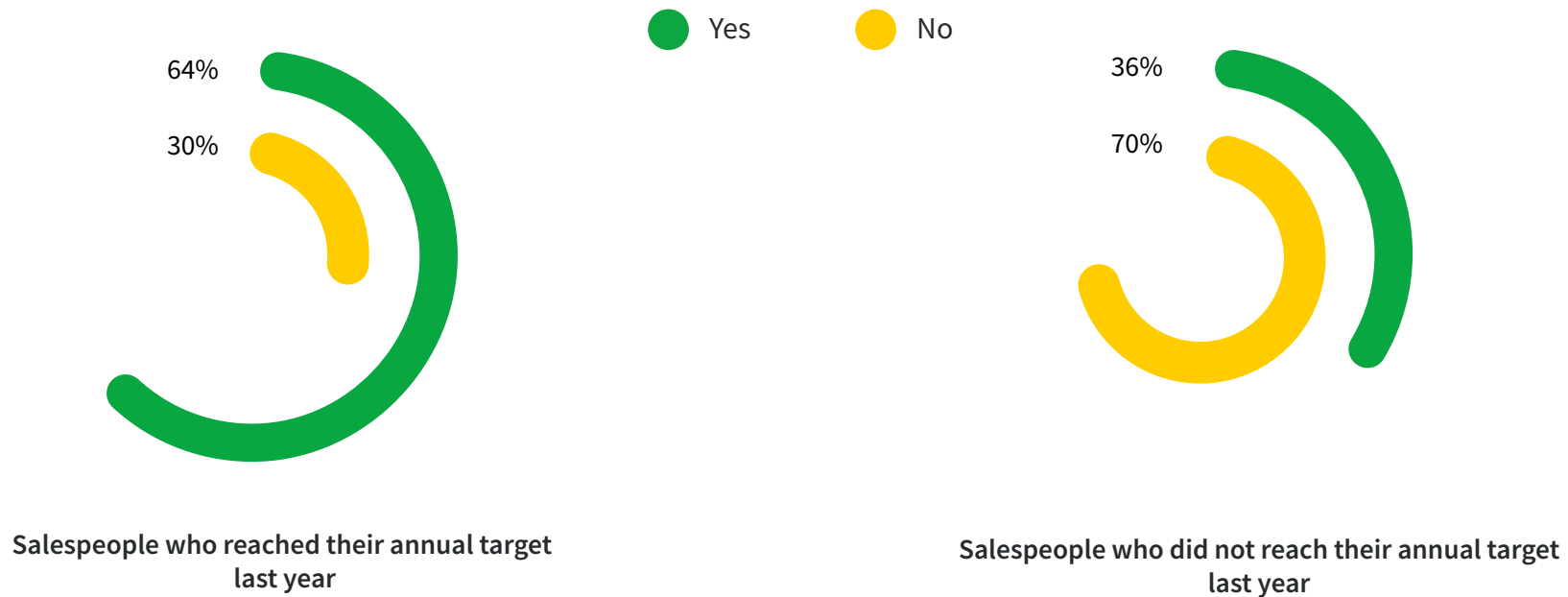


## Sales success doesn't necessarily mean hitting targets

Over a third (36%) of people who did not hit their annual sales target last year consider themselves to be successful at sales, while three in 10 of people who did hit their targets still do not think they are successful.

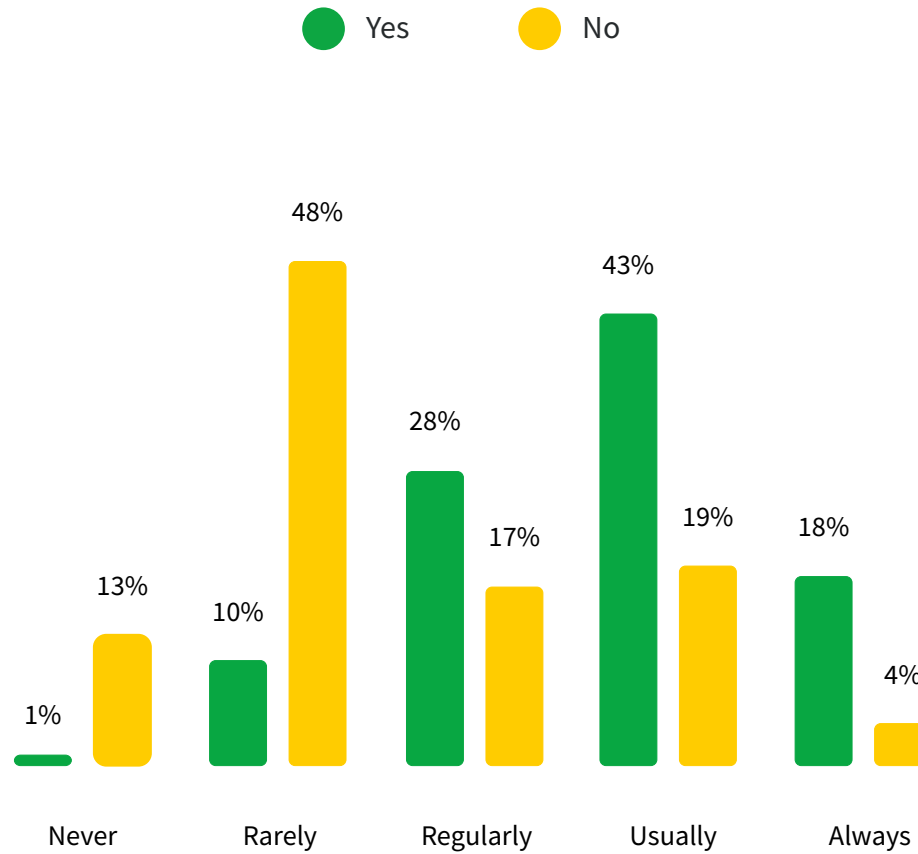
Meanwhile, 11% of people who rarely or never hit their sales quota consider themselves to be successful. On the flipside, 23% of people who usually or always hit their targets do not consider themselves to be successful at sales.

### Do you consider yourself to be successful at sales?



## How often do you hit your regular sales quota?

Do you consider yourself to be successful at sales?



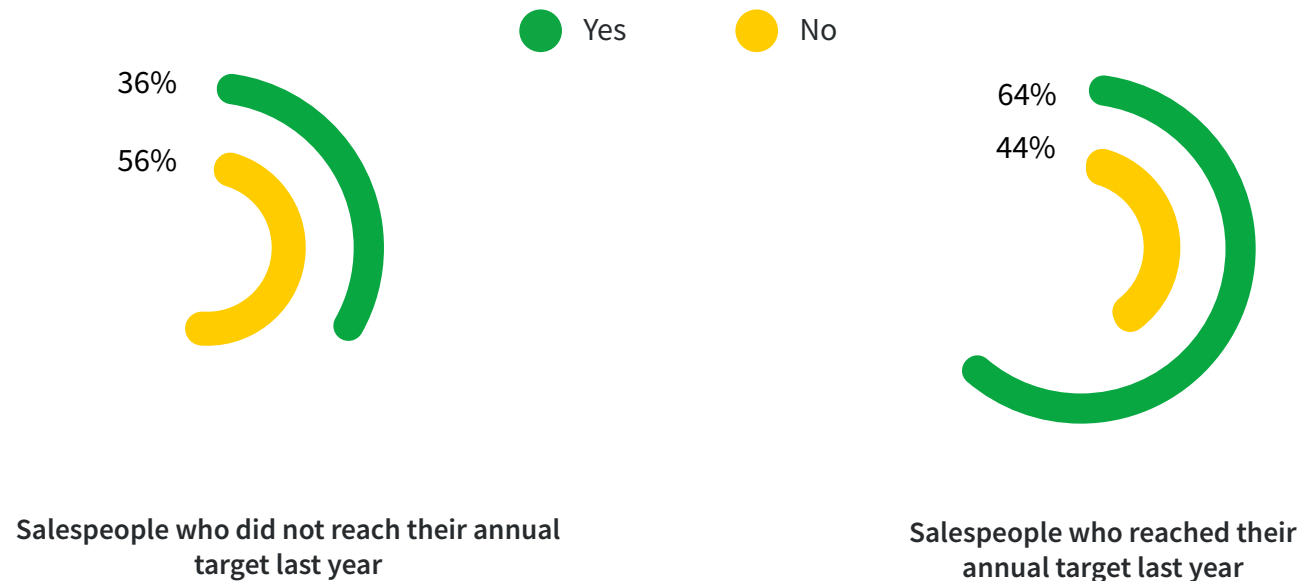


## Success and satisfaction

The stats on the previous page suggest that people aren't just measuring their success based on whether or not they hit their targets. There is a similar story when it comes to job satisfaction. Over a third of people (36%) who are satisfied in their careers didn't hit their sales target last year, while 15% who rarely or never hit their regular sales quota are satisfied as well.

A high proportion of people who usually or always hit their sales quota, 46% in fact, aren't satisfied in their current role. Meanwhile, 44% of people who hit their target last year are also not satisfied in their current role.

### Are you satisfied in your current role?



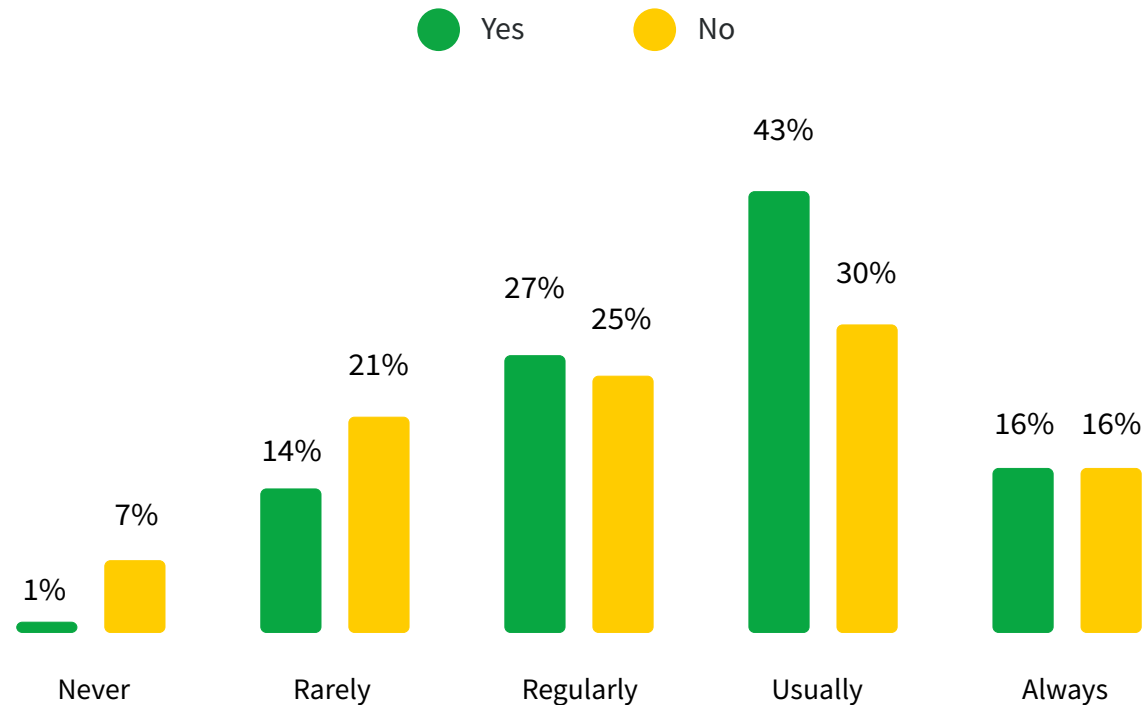
## However, you can see the data on this page in a different light

Potentially, respondents have higher aspirations, or would like their employer to recognize the fact that they are hitting key KPIs and be rewarded with progression. Two-thirds (66%) of non-sales managers who are hitting their sales quota but aren't satisfied in their current role wish to become sales managers in the future.

That's a significant increase when compared to the respondents base as a whole in the 'Satisfaction and aspirations' section: Overall, of those people who aren't a sales manager already, half (51%) want to become one in the future.

### How often you hit your regular sales quota?

Are you satisfied with your current role?

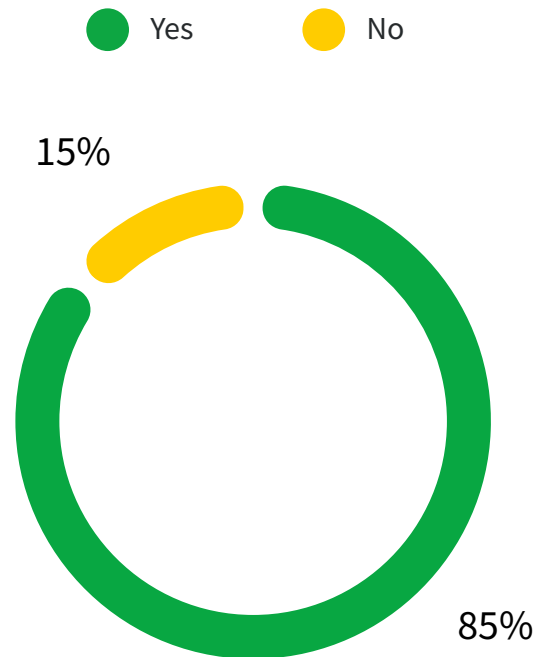


## What makes a successful salesperson?

So, how can salespeople improve their own abilities and how can sales managers and business owners make their sales teams more successful and satisfied? Working on their soft skills, including communication and relationship management, helped respondents to feel satisfied in their role and consider themselves to be successful.

Most respondents work on things like communication and relationship management, with 85% saying that they regularly work on improving their soft skills.

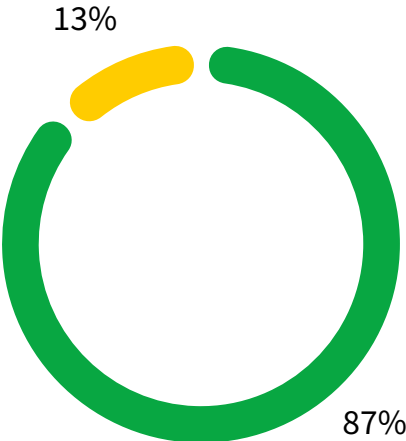
### Do you regularly work on your soft skills?



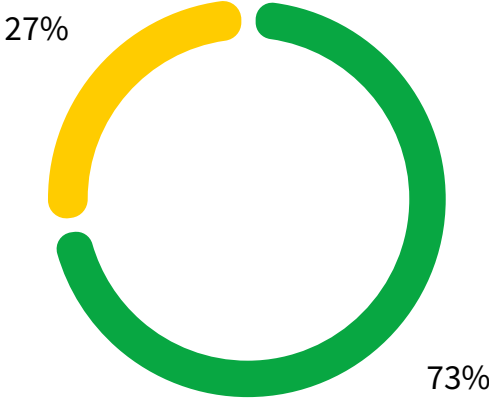
Having employees that work on their soft skills also helps the business as a whole, as respondents who regularly work on their soft skills are 7 percentage points more likely to have hit their sales targets last year and 6 percentage points more likely to always hit their sales quota than respondents who don't work on improving their sales skills.

### Do you regularly work on your soft skills?

● Yes    ● No



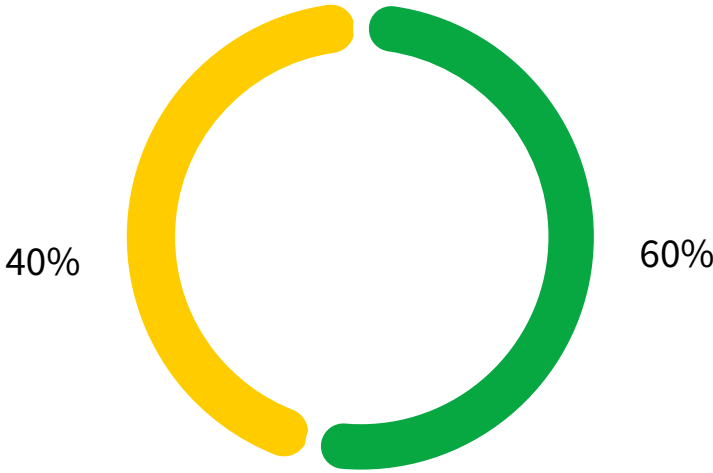
Salespeople who consider themselves successful



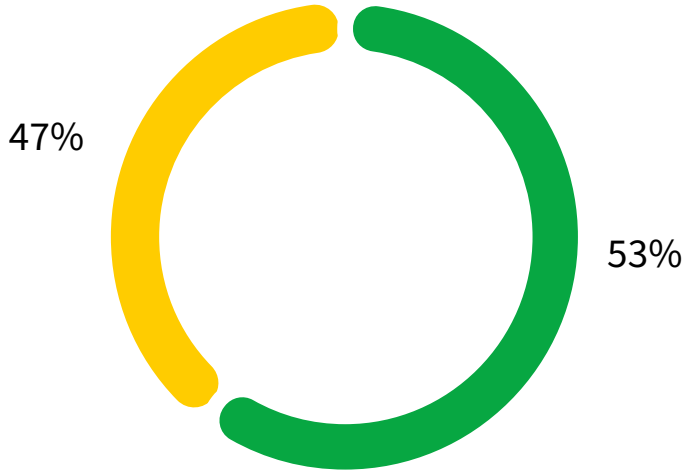
Salespeople who do not consider themselves successful

# Did you reach your sales target last year?

● Yes    ● No



Respondents who regularly work on improving their soft skills

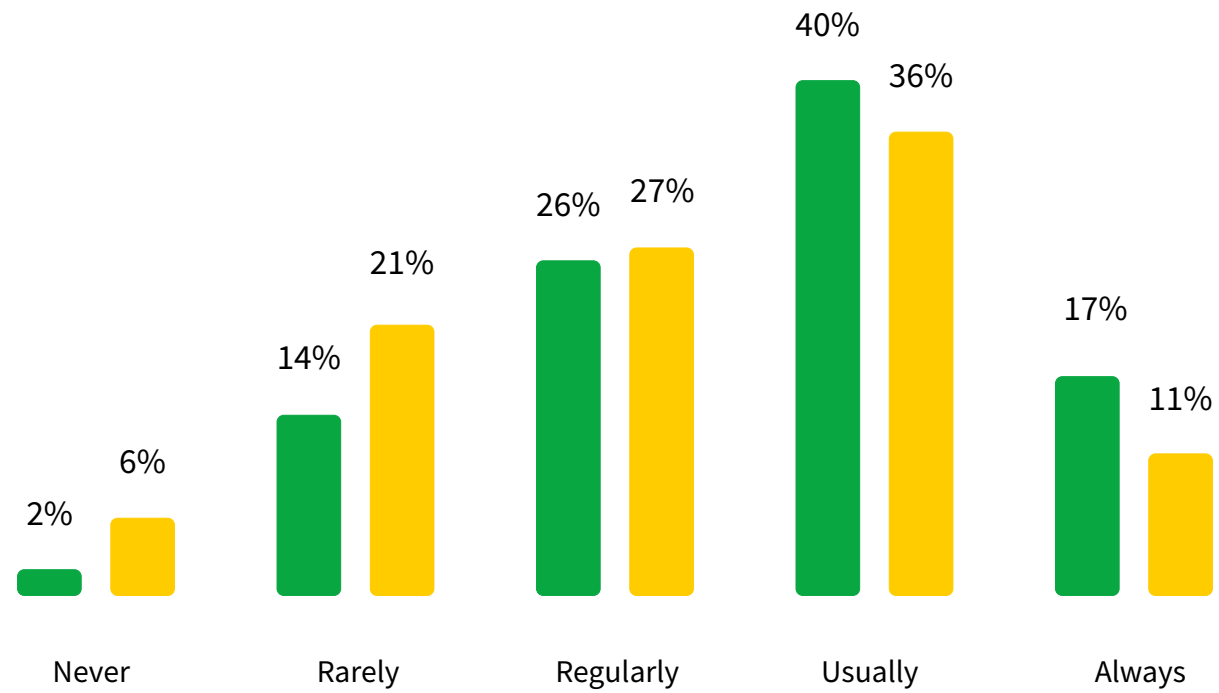


Respondents who do not work on improving their soft skills

## How often you hit your regular sales quota?

Do you regularly work on your soft skills?

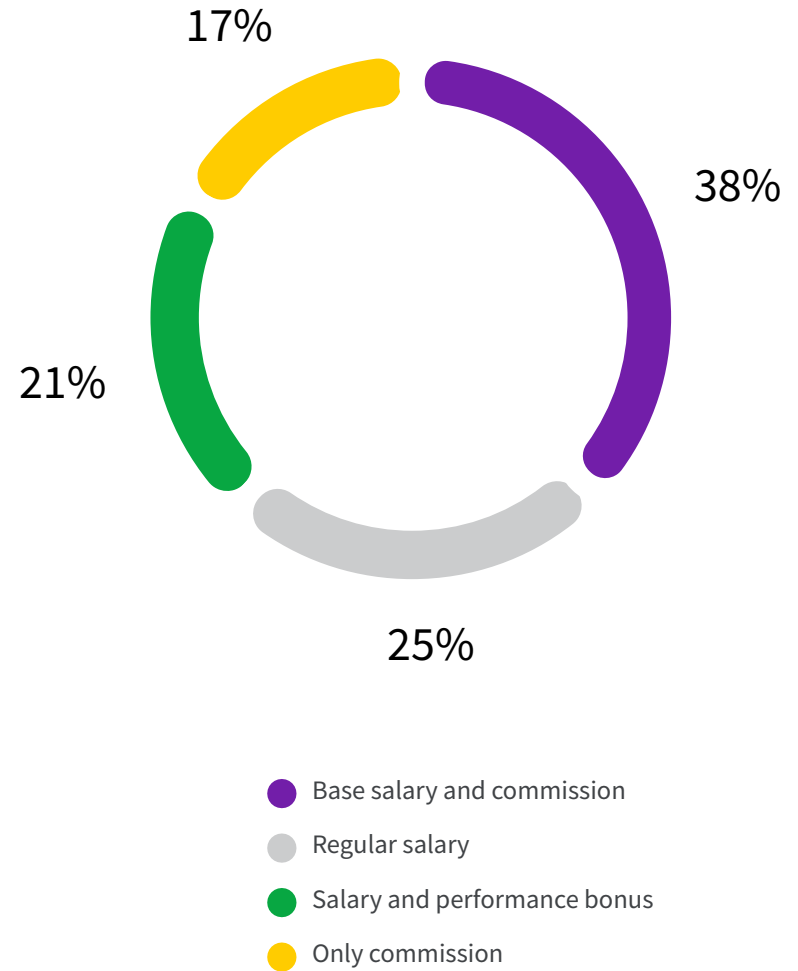
● Yes ● No



## Pay structures in sales

Base salary and commission is the most common pay structure for respondents. The percentage of respondents receiving base salary and commission jumps up when you look at those who consider themselves to be salespeople but don't manage other sales reps, while sales managers are most likely to receive a performance bonus on top of their regular salary.

Which of the following best describes your pay structure?

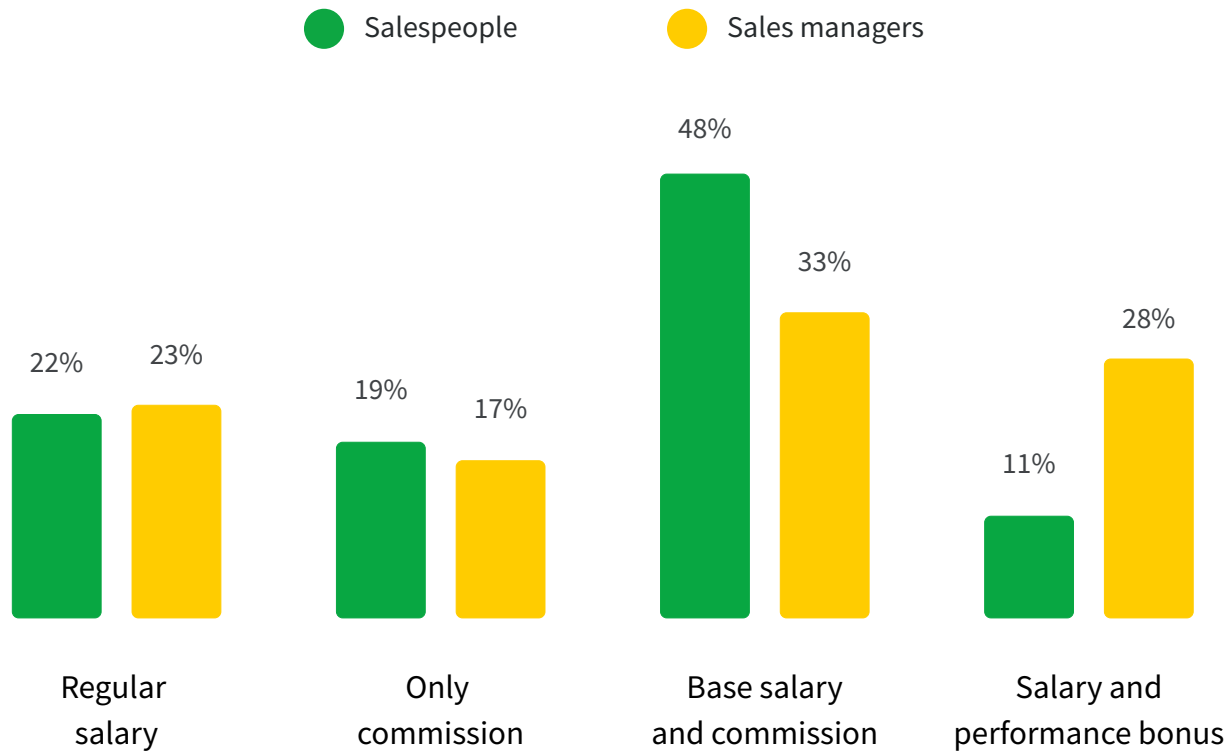


## How pay structure impacts success

The pay structure that employers select for their sales team has a significant impact on how successful they feel.

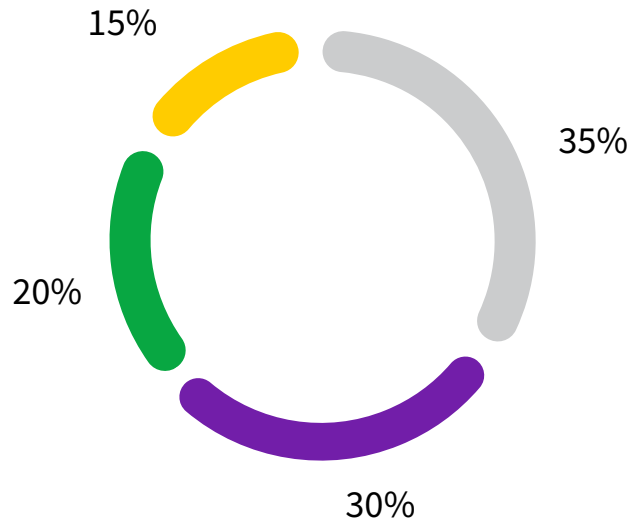
Unsurprisingly, base salary and commission is the pay structure that is most likely to make respondents feel successful at sales, as they can directly link their achievements with the pay packet they receive at the end of the month.

### Which one of the following best describes your pay structure?

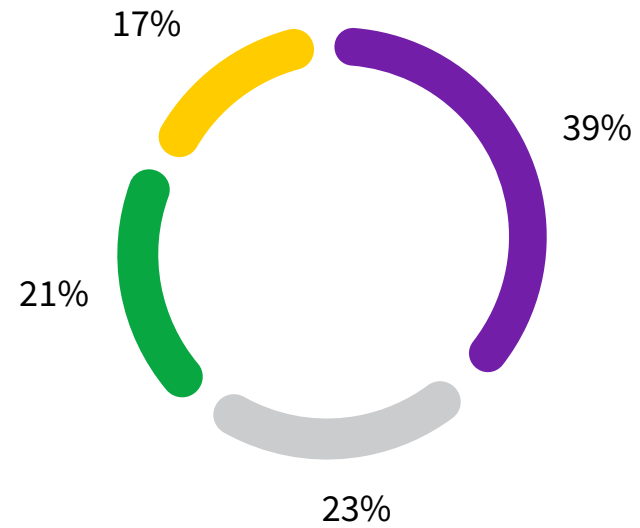




### Which one of the following best describes your pay structure?



Salespeople who do not consider themselves successful



Salespeople who consider themselves successful

- Base salary and commission
- Only commission
- Regular salary
- Salary and performance bonus

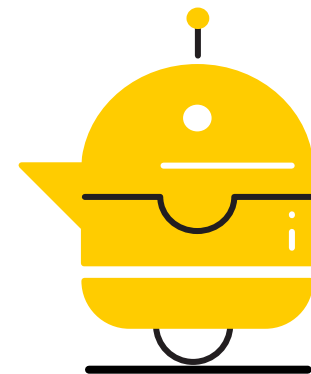
# Sales Trends and Challenges

In the world of sales, some things change and some things stay the same. Salespeople need to secure themselves against future challenges without losing sight of what's important right now.

By far the biggest challenge for people working in sales is generating good quality leads. A third of respondents (34%) said that prospecting and lead qualification would be their biggest challenge in 2020—that's double the number who selected the next biggest challenge: hiring and training.

In fact, after selling, respondents were most likely to say that they spend most of their day prospecting. Account management was third, but lead qualification was a close fourth.

**There are plenty of activities that are taking people away from selling, but could automation be the answer?** When we asked respondents what the biggest sales trend would be in 2020, sales automation got the most votes. In this section, we look into what people expected in sales in 2020 and what they are basing this supposition on.

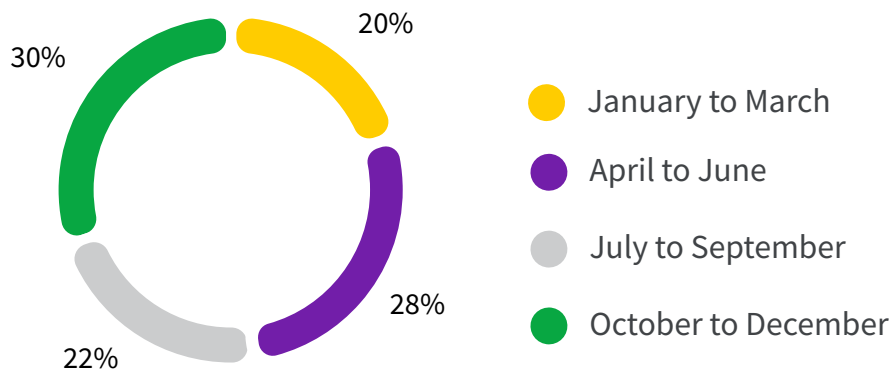


## Seasonality still affects sales

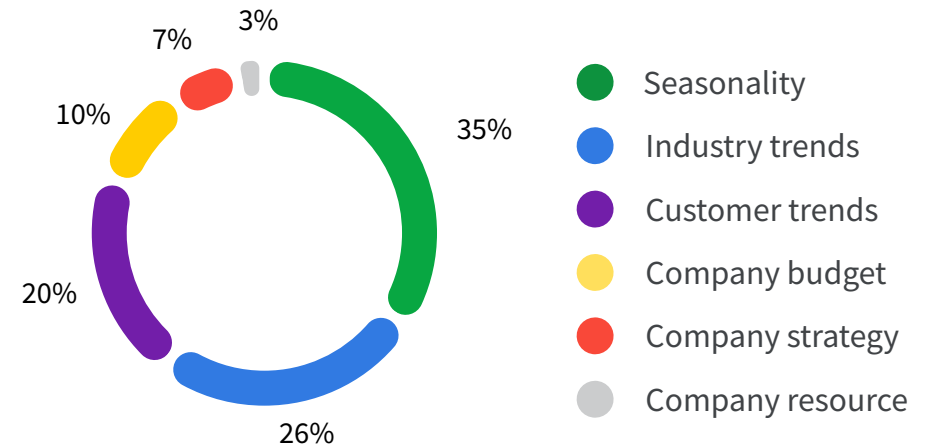
One thing that never seems to change is when in the year salespeople are at their busiest. October to December, the run up to the festive period, is the busiest period for our respondents, with 30% saying that's their most successful sales period.

Seasonality is the key reason why things are busiest in the final quarter of the year, with over a third (35%) saying so. Knowing your customer and your industry is also important, as a quarter (26%) of respondents say that industry trends are the main influence on their sales peaks and troughs, while a fifth (20%) say that it's customer trends.

What is your most successful period for selling?



Why do you think that is your most successful period for selling?

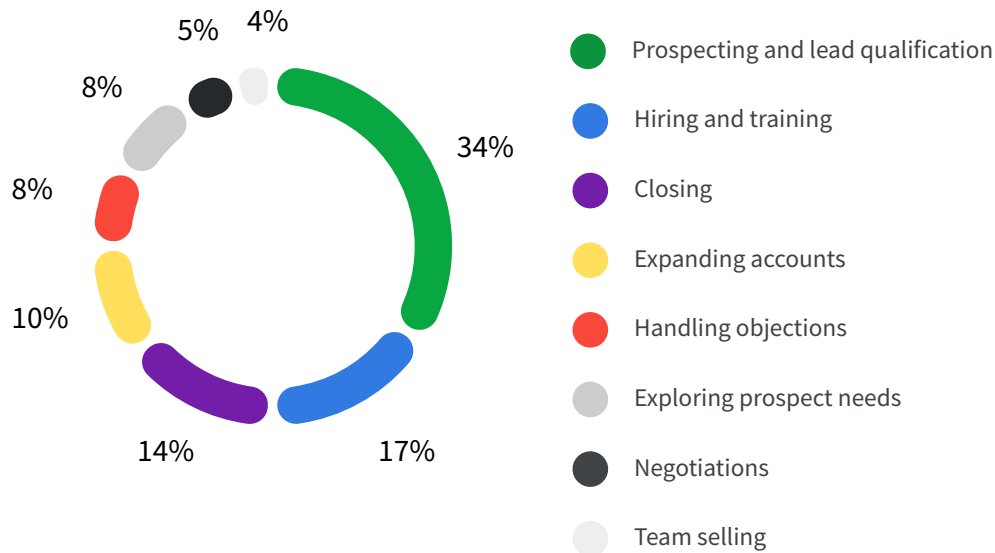


## Qualified lead generation is the biggest challenge for salespeople

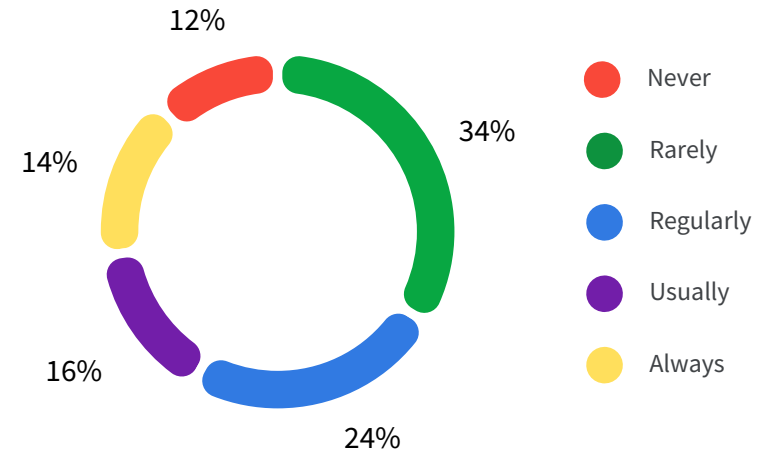
Prospecting and lead qualification is, by far, the activity that most salespeople struggle with. A third (34%) of respondents identified lead generation as the biggest challenge this year, double the next highest number, with 17% saying that it was hiring and training.

Hiring and training is still a real challenge for many, however, as is winning customers, with 14% of respondents identifying closing as their biggest challenge. Over half (54%) of recipients at least regularly struggle to find sales leads.

Which of the following do you think will be the biggest challenge for salespeople in 2020?



Do you struggle to find enough sales leads?

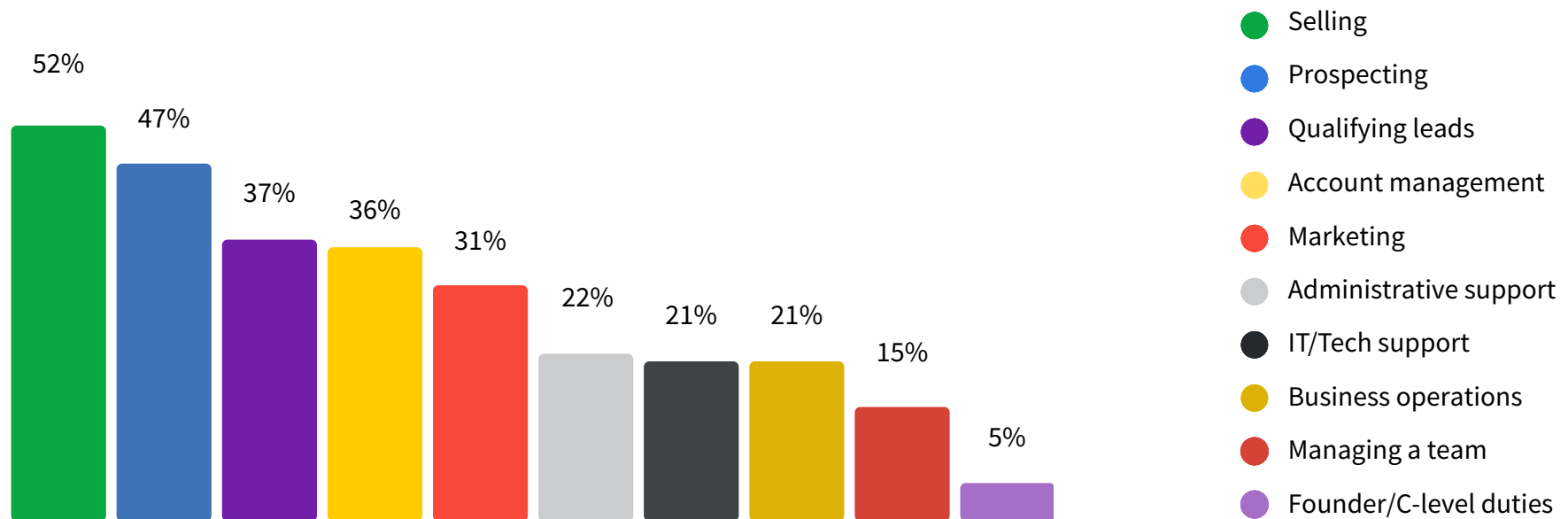


## How people spend their working day

Unsurprisingly, prospecting and qualifying leads are two of the top four activities that salespeople say they spend most of their time doing. Our survey reveals that lead generation is just one of the complex tasks that takes people away from selling.

Only half of our respondents selected selling as one of the activities that takes up most of their working day. Of course, many of our respondents were sales managers and business owners, who have other responsibilities, including team management and business operations.

### What do you spend most of your workday on?

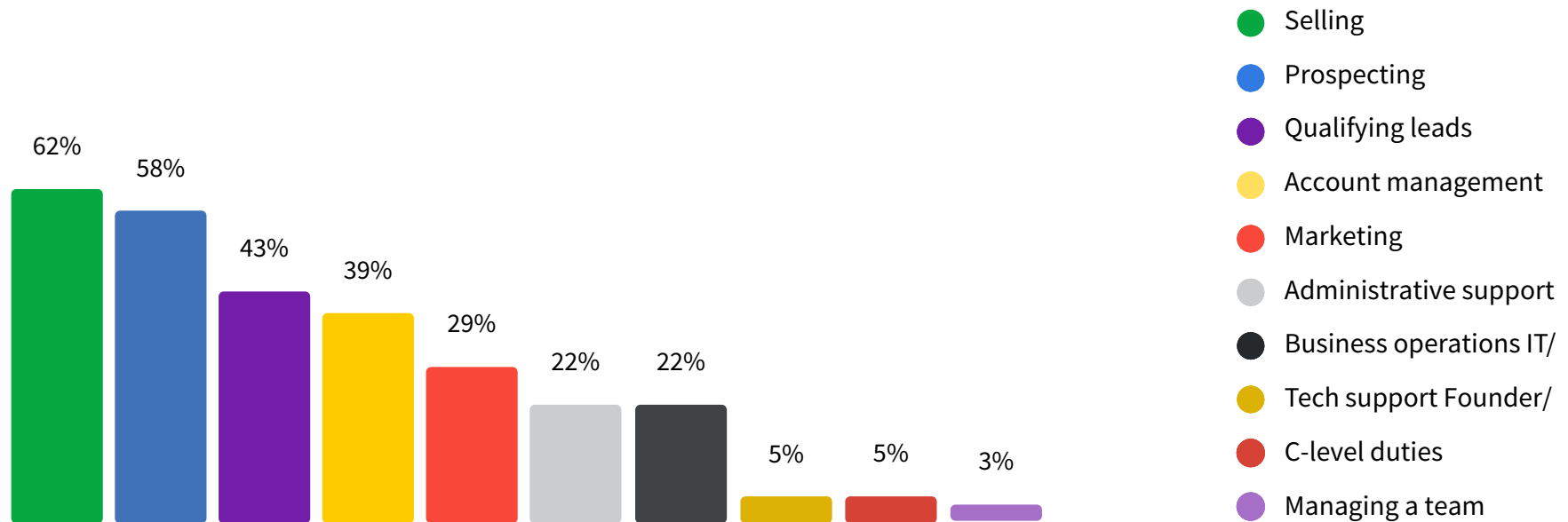


## Salespeople can't focus on sales

However, when we look at people who specifically identify themselves as salespeople, 38% still didn't identify selling as one of their main day-to-day activities.

Over a fifth of people (22%) who identified themselves as salespeople spend a portion of their time on business operations, the same percentage on administrative support, while 29% have marketing responsibilities.

### What do you spend most of your workday on?

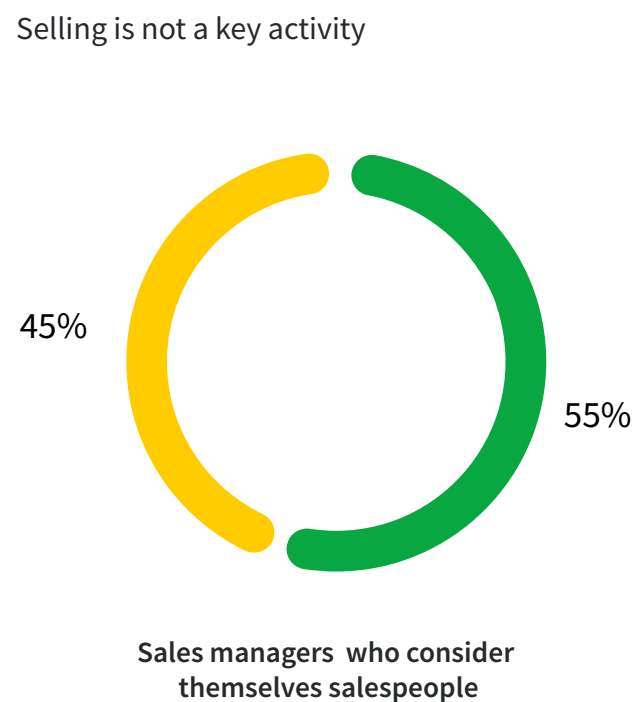
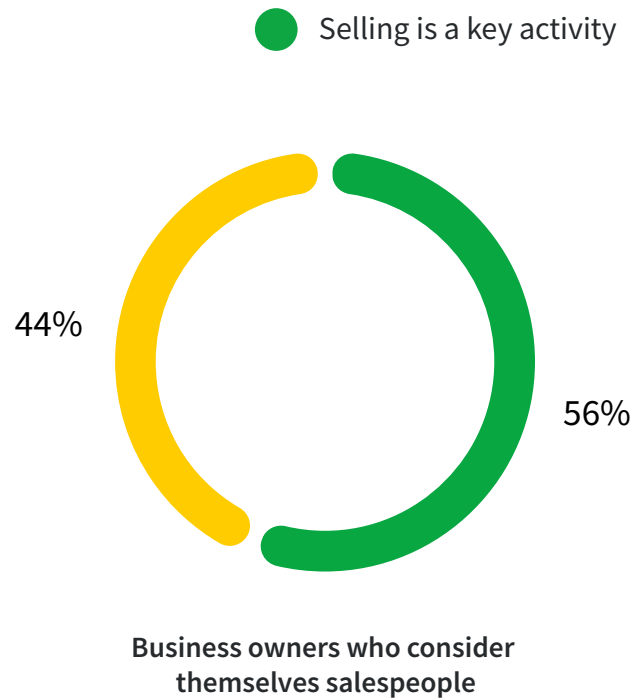


## Business owners and sales managers are overstretched

Although all salespeople are feeling stretched, this particularly highlights the strain on owners and employees of small sales teams and small businesses.

15% of business owners who identify as salespeople are sole proprietors, so can't rely on any support to carry out their sales activities.

Almost half of sales managers (44%) and business owners (45%) who also consider themselves to be salespeople don't list selling as one of their main day-to-day activities.

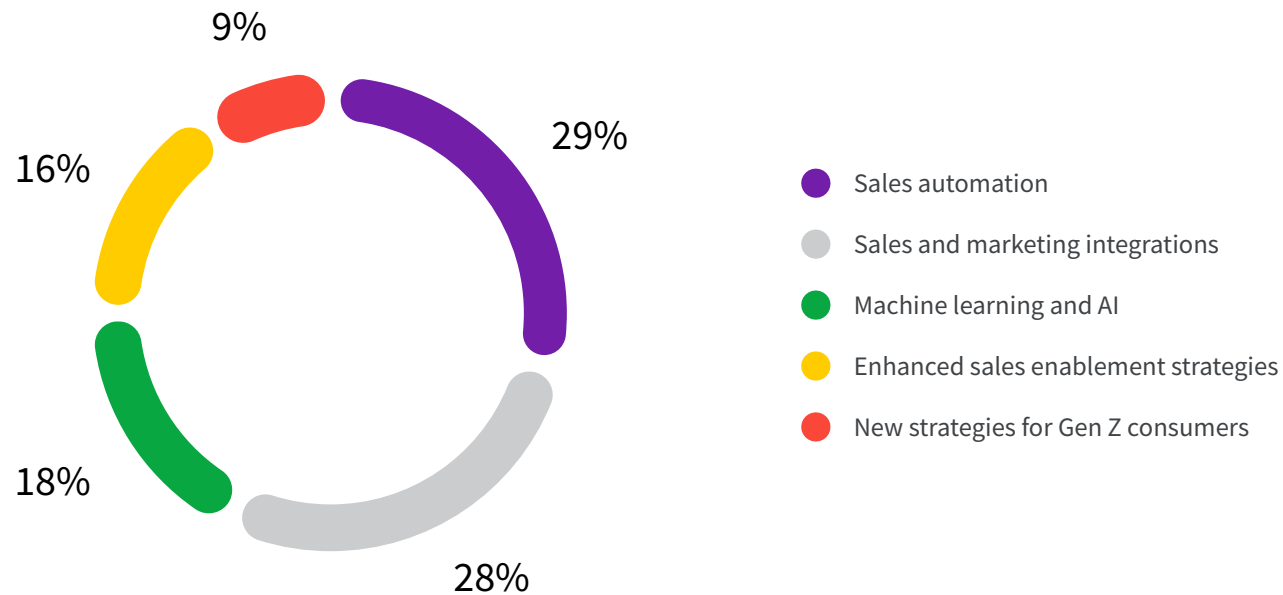


## Sales automation is the biggest sales trend

Our respondents believe that sales automation is the biggest sales trend in 2020, with 29% choosing it. However, sales and marketing integrations came a close second, with 28% of respondents saying that it would be the biggest sales trend this year.

So, if lead qualification and prospecting is a key challenge to sales professionals, and sales automation is a key trend, could the right automation tools help them tackle their lead generation tasks?

Which of the following do you think will be the biggest sales trend in 2020?





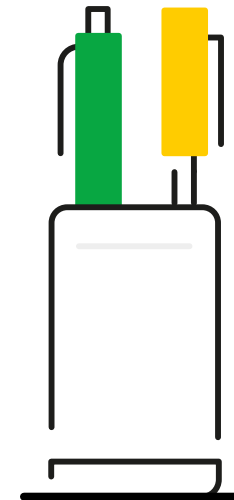
# Tools and Technology

We've seen how the right training can help salespeople become more successful, more likely to hit their sales targets and feel more satisfied in their role. We've also seen that automation is a big trend for the future. However, our survey reveals that many sales companies aren't investing in automation technology, which is making them less likely to be successful.

**Salespeople with access to the right sales tools and technology are more likely to:**

- Consider themselves to be successful at sales
- Have reached their annual sales target in 2019
- Be satisfied in their current role

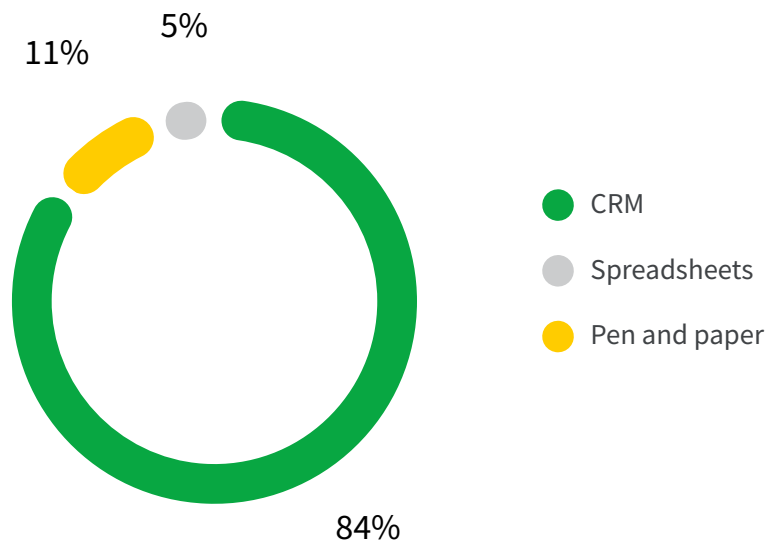
With the right tools at their disposal, salespeople and sales managers will be able to focus more on those activities that drive prospects and customers through the funnel, encourage them to buy and generate revenue. **In this section we look at the impact tools and technology has on sales.**



## How people are tracking their sales

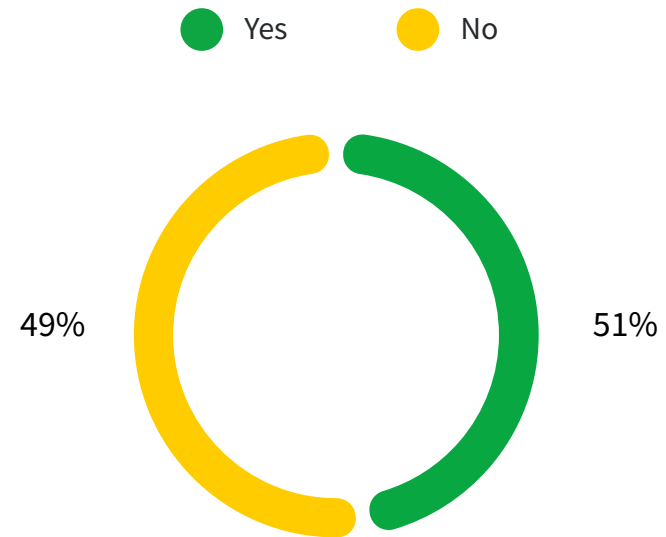
The majority of respondents (84%) have invested in a CRM to help them focus their efforts on selling. However, that still leaves 11% who are relying on spreadsheets, while 5% are just using a pen and paper to track their sales.

What do you use for selling?



Only half (51%) of people we surveyed are using technology or automation tools to source leads.

Do you use any technology or automation tools to help you source leads?

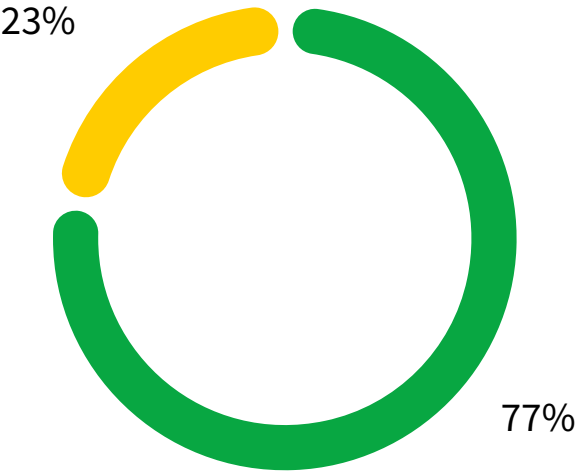


# People are happy with their sales tools

Despite many knowing that lead qualification is a significant sales challenge and a significant proportion acknowledging that they don't use anything to automate their lead generation, three-quarters (77%) of salespeople are happy with the tools and tech at their disposal.

Are you happy with the tech and tools available to you for your sales work?

● Yes    ● No



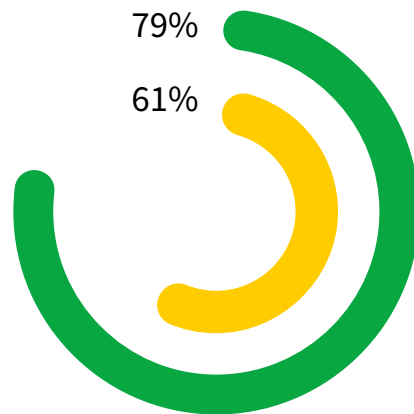
## Using tools improves sales across all metrics

Our survey reveals that the best salespeople take advantage of sales tools.

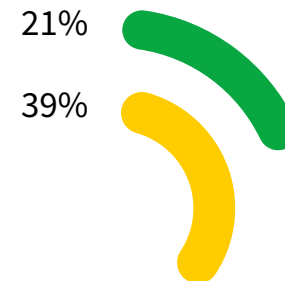
People who are happy with the tools and technology at their disposal are 18 percentage points more likely to consider themselves successful at sales and 28 percentage points more likely to say they are satisfied in their role.

Do you consider yourself to be successful at sales?

● Yes ● No



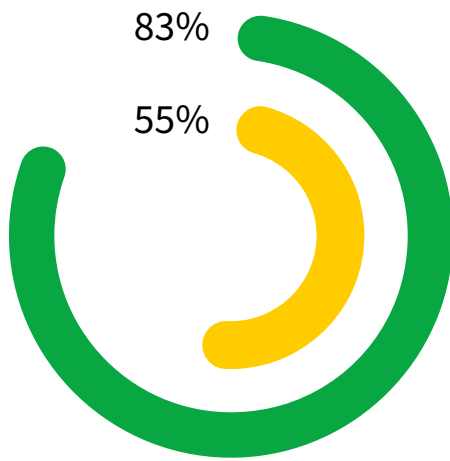
People happy with the tools at their disposal



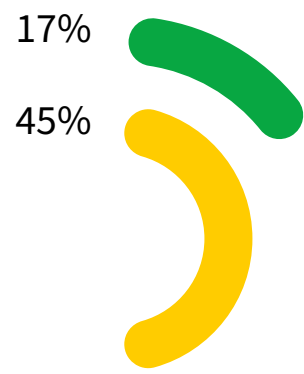
People not happy with the tools at their disposal

Are you satisfied in your current role?

● Yes    ● No



People happy with the tools at their disposal



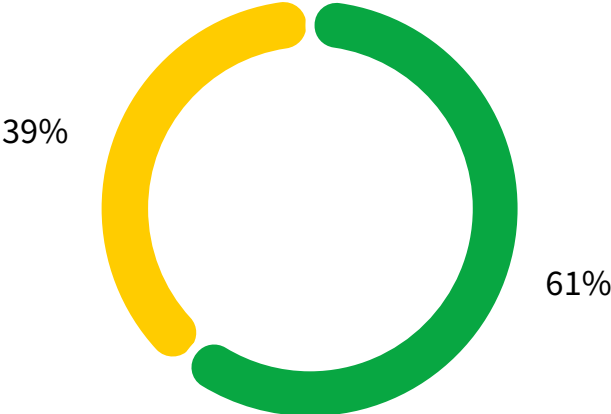
People not happy with the tools at their disposal

# The benefits of using a CRM

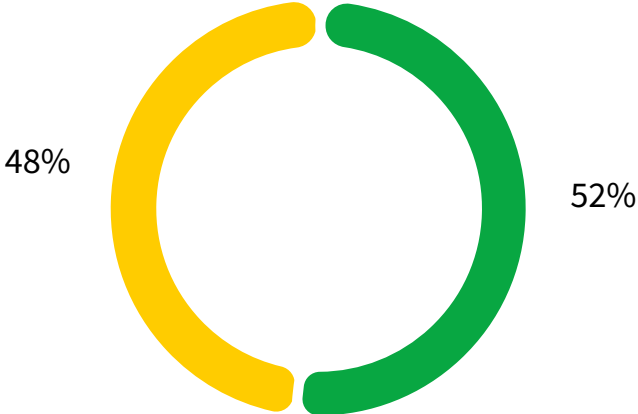
People who use a CRM tool for sales are 9 percentage points more likely to have hit their annual sales target last year and be satisfied in their current role.

Did you reach your annual sales target last year?

● Yes    ● No



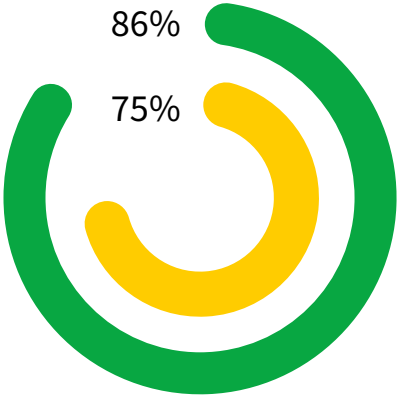
Salespeople who use CRM tools for sales



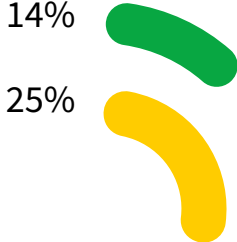
Salespeople who don't use CRM tools for sales

Are you satisfied in your current role?

● Yes    ● No



Salespeople who use CRM tools for sales



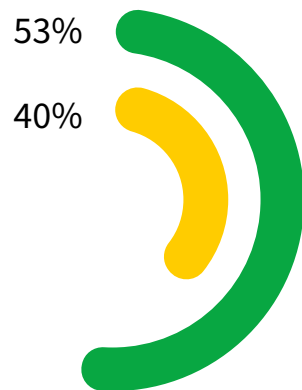
Salespeople who don't use CRM tools for sales

## Lead generation tools help people hit targets and feel successful

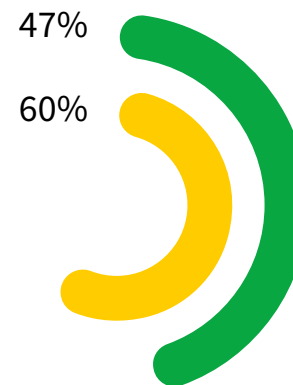
People who use technology to help them generate leads are 13 percentage points more likely to consider themselves successful at sales and 7 percentage points more likely to have hit their annual sales target last year.

Do you consider yourself to be successful at sales?

● Yes    ● No



Salespeople who use CRM tools for sales

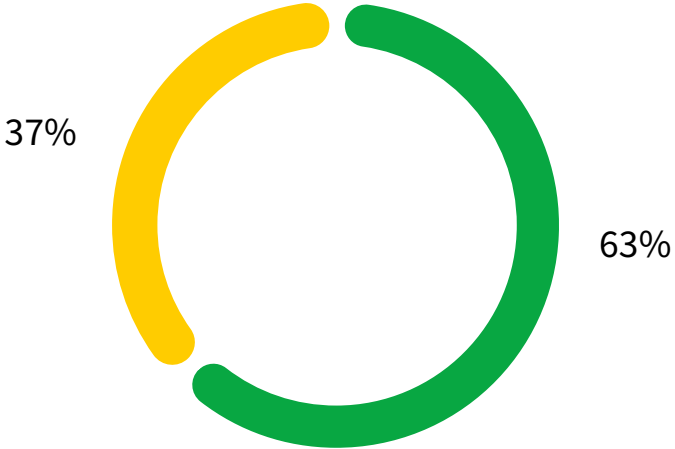


Salespeople who don't use CRM tools for sales



Did you reach your annual sales target last year?

● Yes    ● No



Salespeople who use technology or automation tools to source leads



Salespeople who don't use technology or automation tools to source leads

# Conclusions

Sales is a vital part of any business.  
Sales equals revenue, which equals business survival, stability and growth.

This is a fact. It feels like something that shouldn't need to be said.

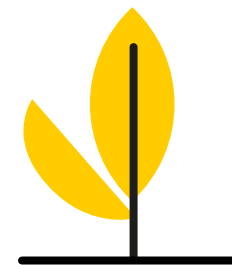
**However, as we've revealed in this survey and through our research, sales is still massively undervalued in the business world.**

- Salespeople feel underappreciated.
- The majority are only learning about sales 'on the job'.
- Other responsibilities are taking salespeople away from selling, which should be their key focus
- Many are working long hours and weekends without any compensation

**Thankfully, salespeople are resilient.** They are proud to work in sales and are satisfied in their roles. They are regularly hitting their sales quotas and, even when they're not, they still feel successful.

But there's always room for improvement, especially with the challenges that salespeople and people who are involved in sales activities face. Many have already realized what could help them to get better and help boost their business: **technology**.

Sales automation tools can make salespeople feel even more confident and successful. Along with the right educational resources, technology could be the key to unlocking true sales excellence and rapid business growth.



# Survey Respondent Demographics

Our Survey consisted of 37 questions and was completed by 1,000 respondents.

Respondents included salespeople, sales managers, business owners, people working for sales businesses and people who do sales as part of their role. The survey was conducted between 5 December 2019 and 13 January 2020.

## **We surveyed respondents across three channels:**

1. Customers who use Pipedrive in English
2. Non-customer subscribers to our English-language newsletters
3. People who are identified as working in the sales industry on LinkedIn

## **There were two separate surveys containing identical questions:**

1. An incentivized survey sent to people in the US or US citizens only
2. A non-incentivized survey to people not in the US and non-US citizens only



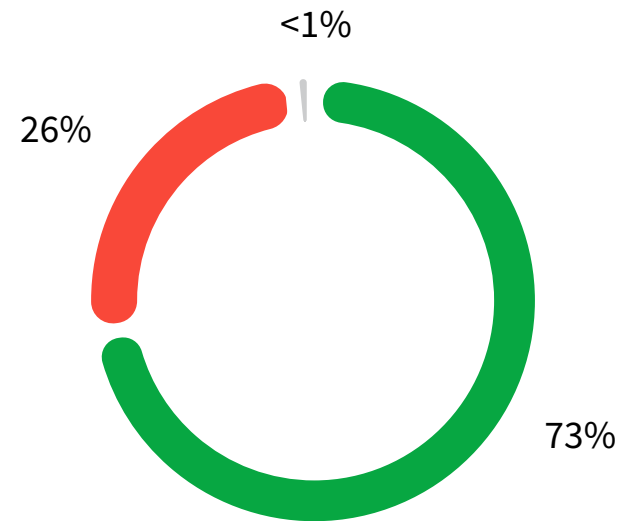
### Where do you work?

- Rest of English speaking world
- US



### What is your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Prefer not to say

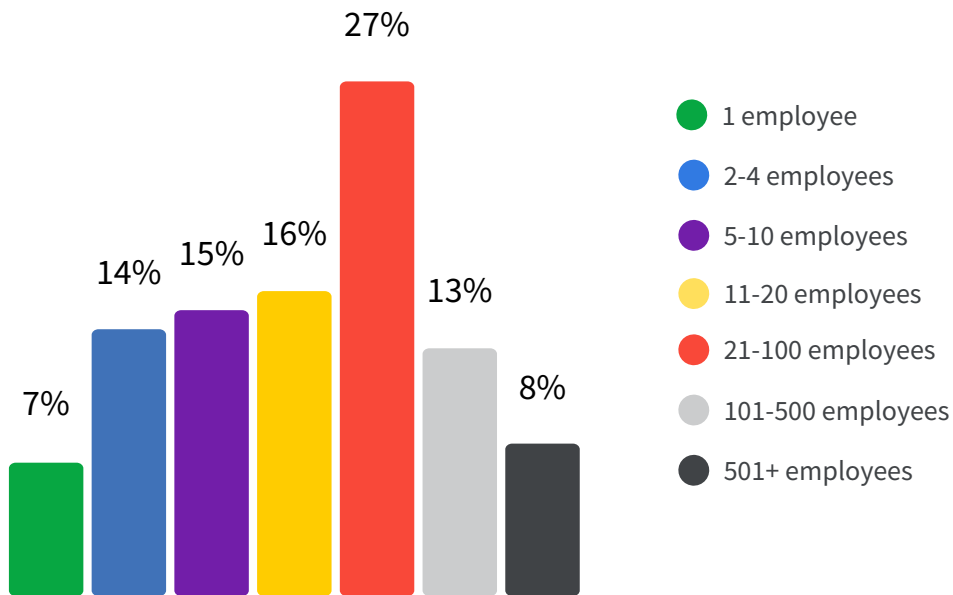


## Company size

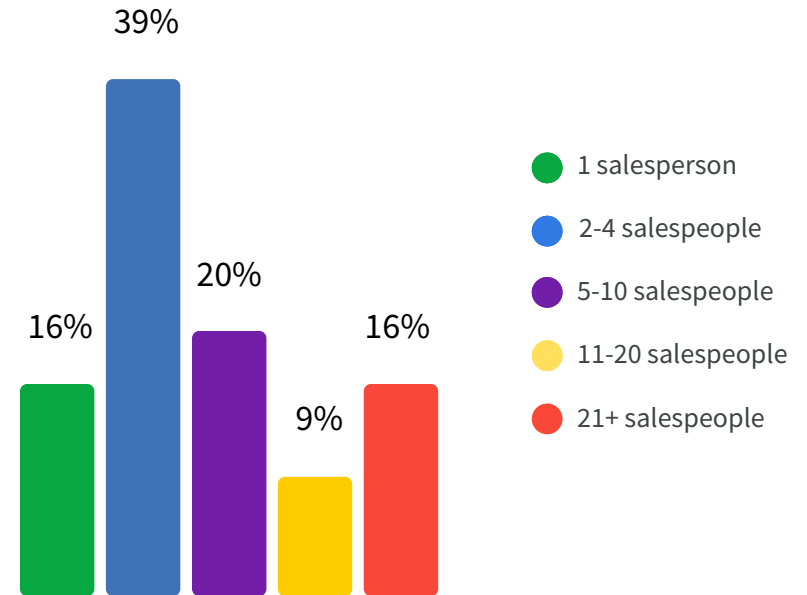
Over a quarter (27%) of respondents work in companies with 21-100 employees.

Four in ten (39%) of respondents had 2-4 salespeople working at their company, which was almost double the next largest percentage.

How many employees are there in your company?



How many salespeople are there in your company?



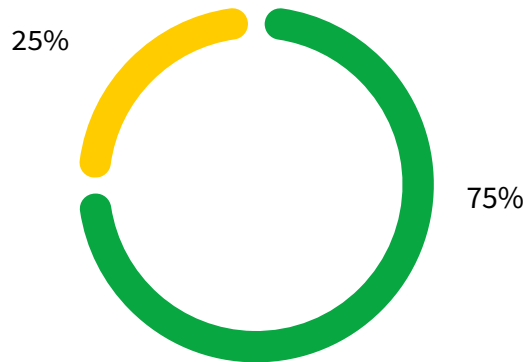
## Job Role

Three-quarters (75%) of the respondents consider themselves to be salespeople. Almost half of the participants are sales managers (49%). Over two-thirds (38%) are business owners.

Being a sales manager or a business owner doesn't stop respondents from considering themselves to be a 'salesperson'.

Three-quarters (74%) of business owners consider themselves to be a salesperson, while 81% of sales managers do the same.

Do you consider yourself to be a salesperson?



Do you manage salespeople?



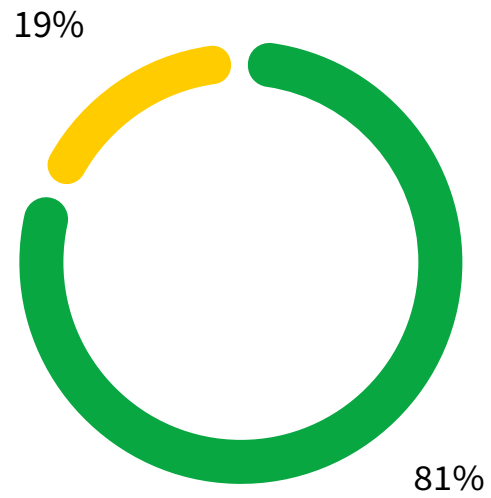
Do you own a business?



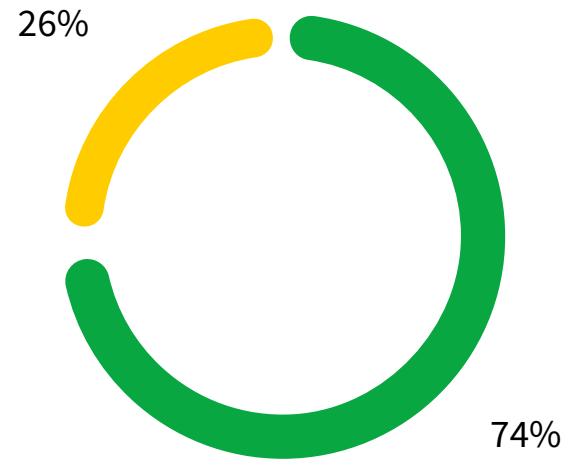
● Yes ● No

### Do you consider yourself to be a salesperson?

● Yes    ● No



Sales managers

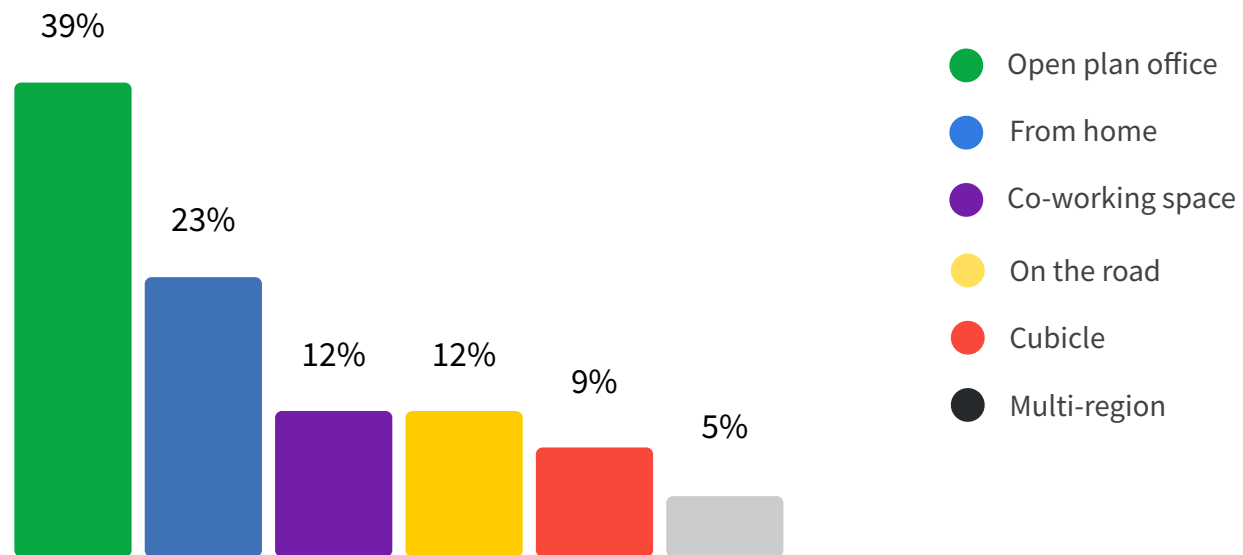


Business owners

## Workspace

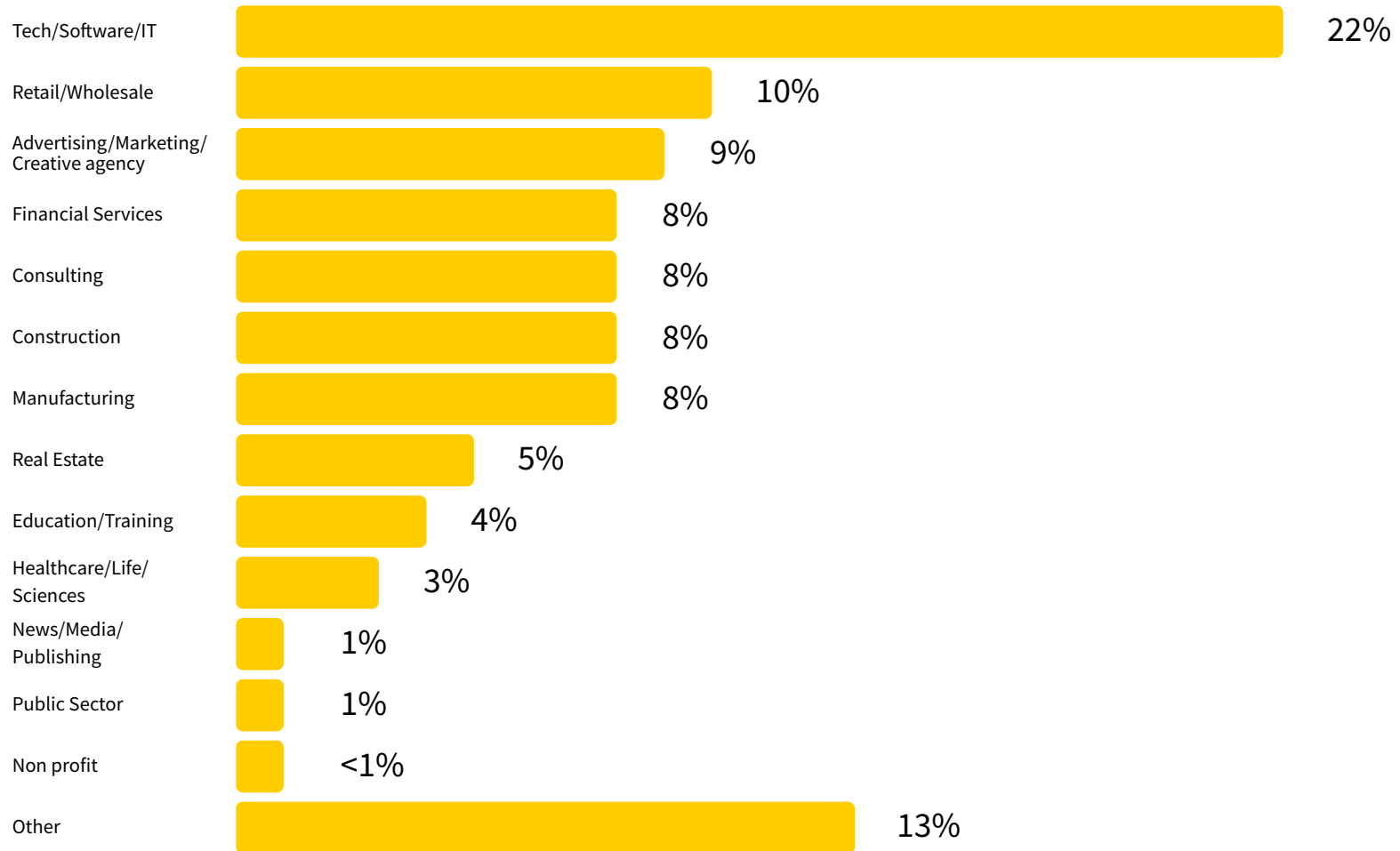
Almost four in ten respondents (39%) work in an open-plan office.

Where do you work from the most?





## Respondents per industry



**pipelinedrive**