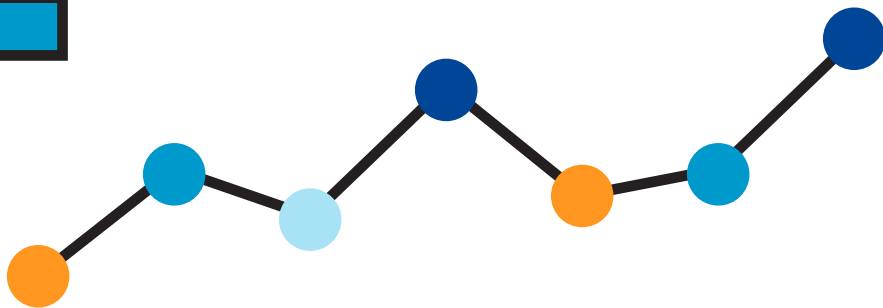
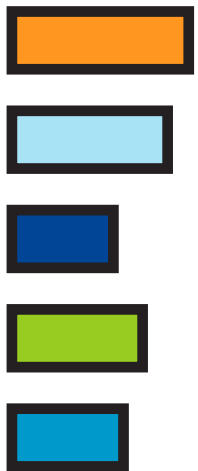


2023

# The State of System Administration



# The calm after the storm

The last few years have been a whirlwind. Between the pandemic, changing remote work structures, and supply chain issues, being a sysadmin was more difficult than ever. You had to pivot on a dime with dogged tenacity and unrelenting ingenuity.

While we haven't reached a state anyone could call "normal" just yet, things are inching progressively closer – and much of that success can be attributed to sysadmins. After years of relative chaos, it's high time to take a little breather and give yourself a pat on the back. We're excited about the future of system administration, and we know you are too.

We surveyed more than 1,000 sysadmins from around the world for insights into what lies ahead in 2023. Respondents came from a wide variety of industries, including manufacturing, education, government, healthcare, and more. Most had over 10 years of experience, so they know the ins and outs of the field.

Let's explore their responses to uncover what 2023 will look like for sysadmins.

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# About PDQ

Here at PDQ, we're passionate about sysadmins. (We're sysadmins ourselves, so it's a little self-serving.) We help sysadmins stay in the know and entertained with our live weekly webcasts, in-depth blog posts, and hilarious videos. (Did someone say Planet Office nature documentary?) Oh yeah. We also make software. Pretty great software, if we do say so ourselves.

PDQ Deploy and Inventory help thousands of sysadmins streamline their Windows patch management and software deployment processes. SimpleMDM joined the family to help sysadmins manage Apple devices. Then, SmartDeploy came along with its next-level computer imaging and driver management.

But there was still something missing in our hearts (and product line): an agent-based remote Windows device management solution. PDQ Connect, currently in beta, fills that void with panache.

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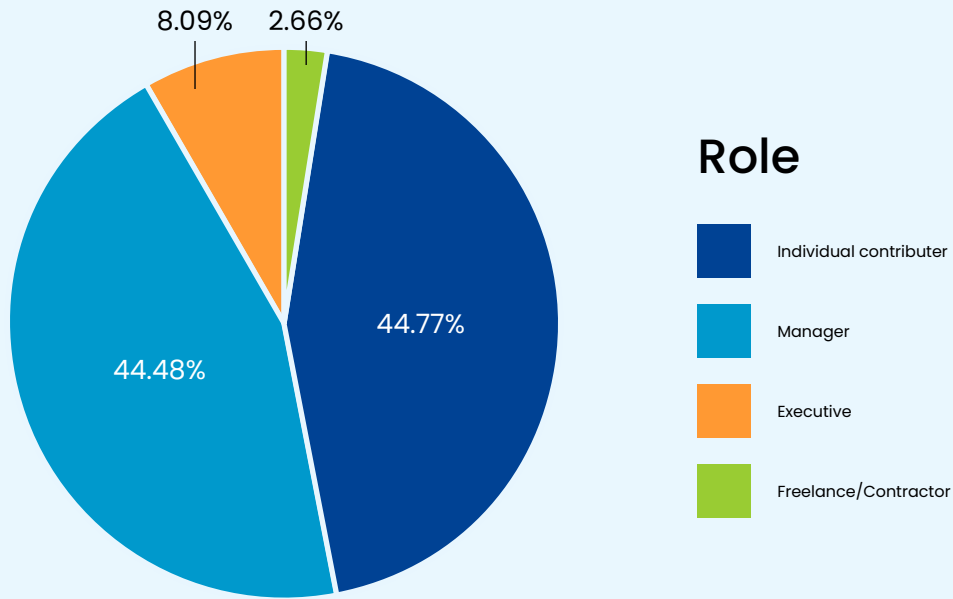
**Want to check them out? Start a free trial**

[Deploy & Inventory](#) | [SimpleMDM](#) | [SmartDeploy](#)



# Demo graphics

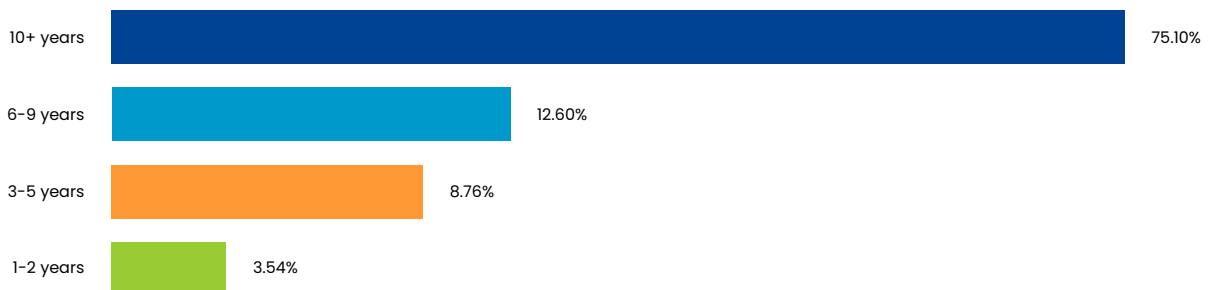
We begged for information, and 1,021 respondents took pity on us. That said, not all of you answered every question. We get it. You're mysterious. But when the number of respondents varies between questions, you only have yourselves to blame.



Nearly 90% of survey respondents are individual contributors, managers, or freelancers, so they get their hands dirty with the day-to-day work.

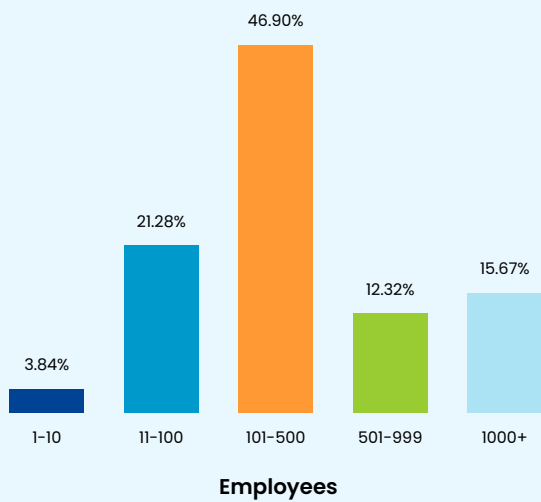
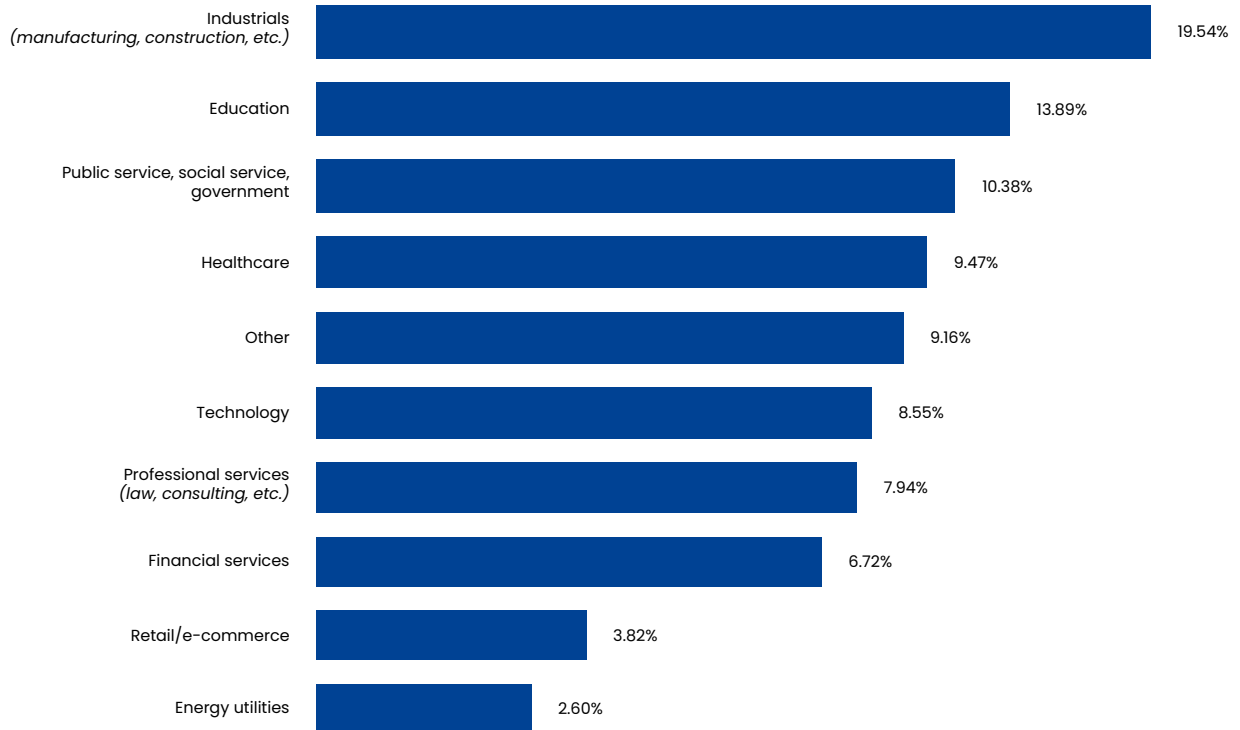
## Years of experience

The huge majority of respondents have over 10 years of experience. They've been there, done that, and reminded countless users to plug in their machines.



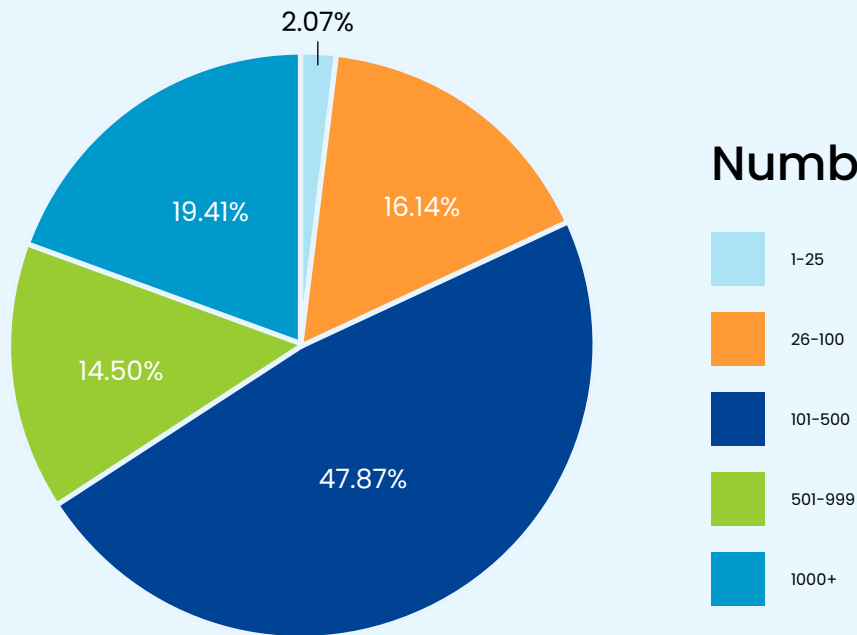
# Industry

Sysadmins work across all industries, which was reflected in our data. However, some areas are more common than others.



## Size of the company

On a global scale, small and midsize businesses (SMBs) make up 90% of all companies and employ 50% of the workforce. While our respondents' companies vary in size from tiny to epically large, it comes as no surprise that SMBs are especially well represented.



### Number of machines

Most sysadmins surveyed manage 101 to 500 machines, but nearly 20% oversee 1,000 or more (excluding servers). Stay strong, brave souls.



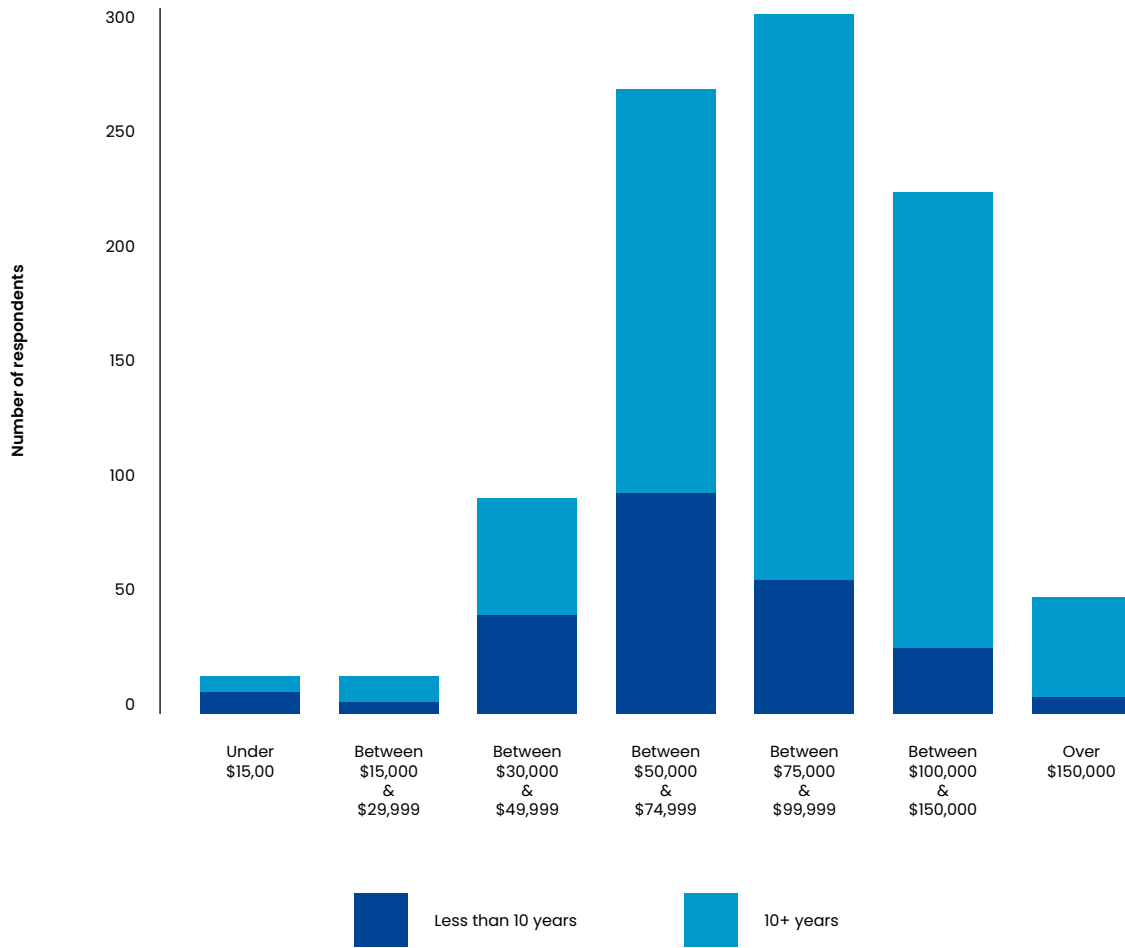




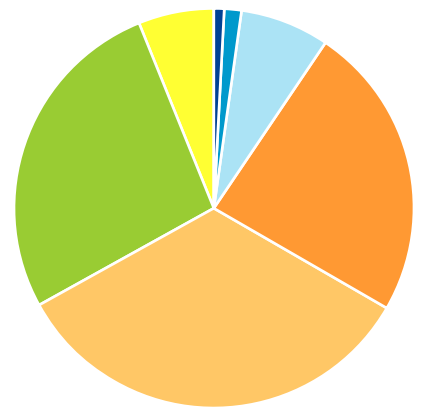
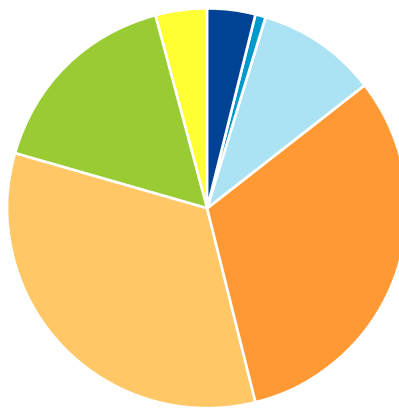
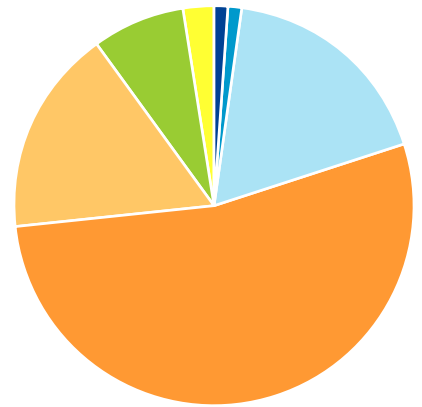
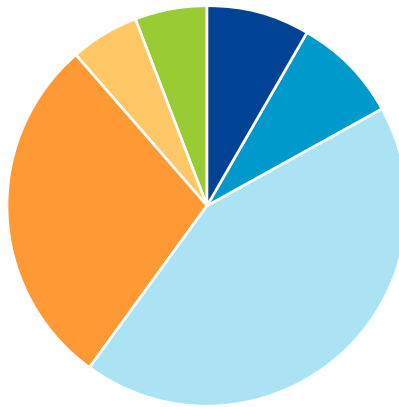
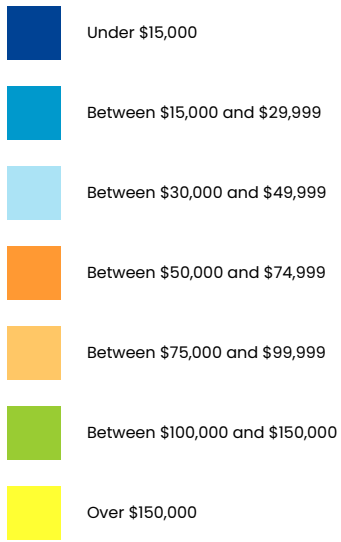
# Salary

Now for the juicy stuff: the money. Compared to the average American, most sysadmins are doing pretty well. The median salary for Americans falls around [\\$71,000](#), while our respondents have a median salary between \$75,000 and \$99,999.

## Sysadmin salary ranges



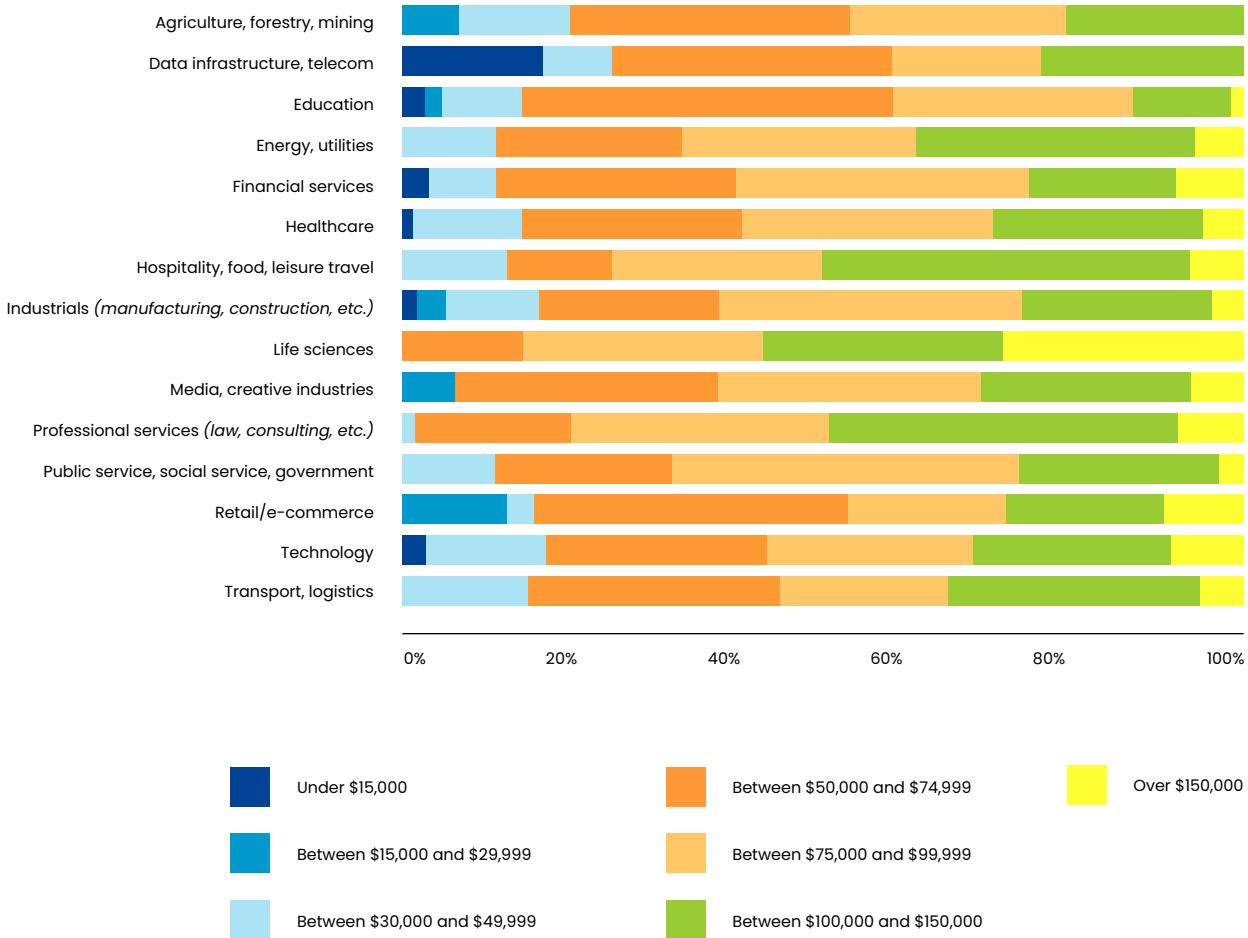
## Salary by tenure



It goes without saying that your earning potential increases as you gain experience in the field. Two thirds of sysadmins with at least 10 years of experience earn more than \$75,000 per year. While most sysadmins receive a significantly lower salary starting out, your perseverance may eventually be rewarded in cold hard cash.

# Salary by industry

Industry also plays a role in the average sysadmin salary. Industrials, tech, finance, and healthcare skew higher, whereas education, agriculture, and retail positions tend to pay less.



## Takeaway

While there is no “standard” sysadmin salary, understanding what’s common for your field and tenure can help you negotiate fair compensation.

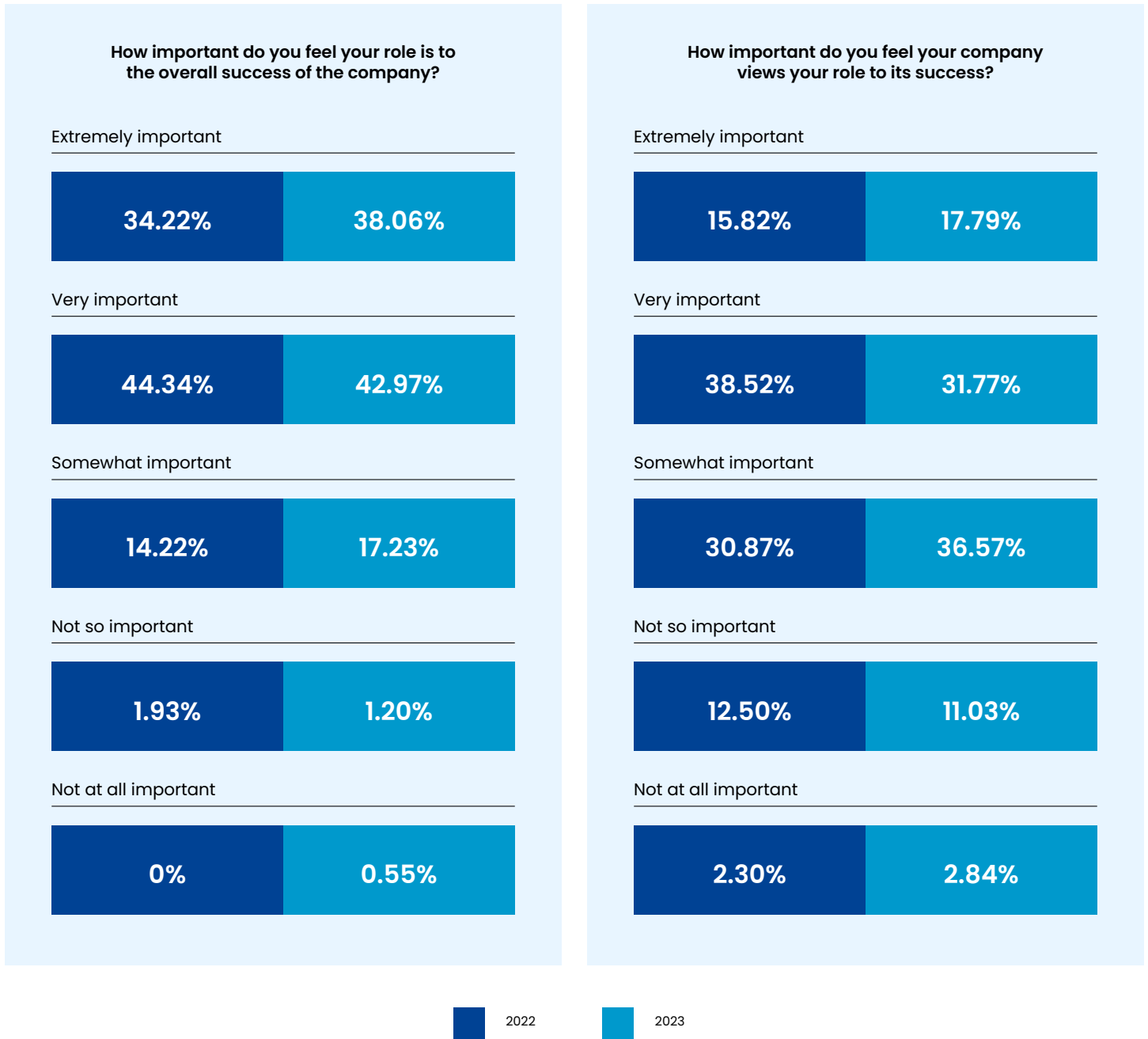


# Sentiment

As pandemic stresses subside, sysadmin sentiment is on the rise. Most categories we analyzed saw notable improvements over last year. You might not be getting the recognition you deserve, but at least you're getting a little more respect.

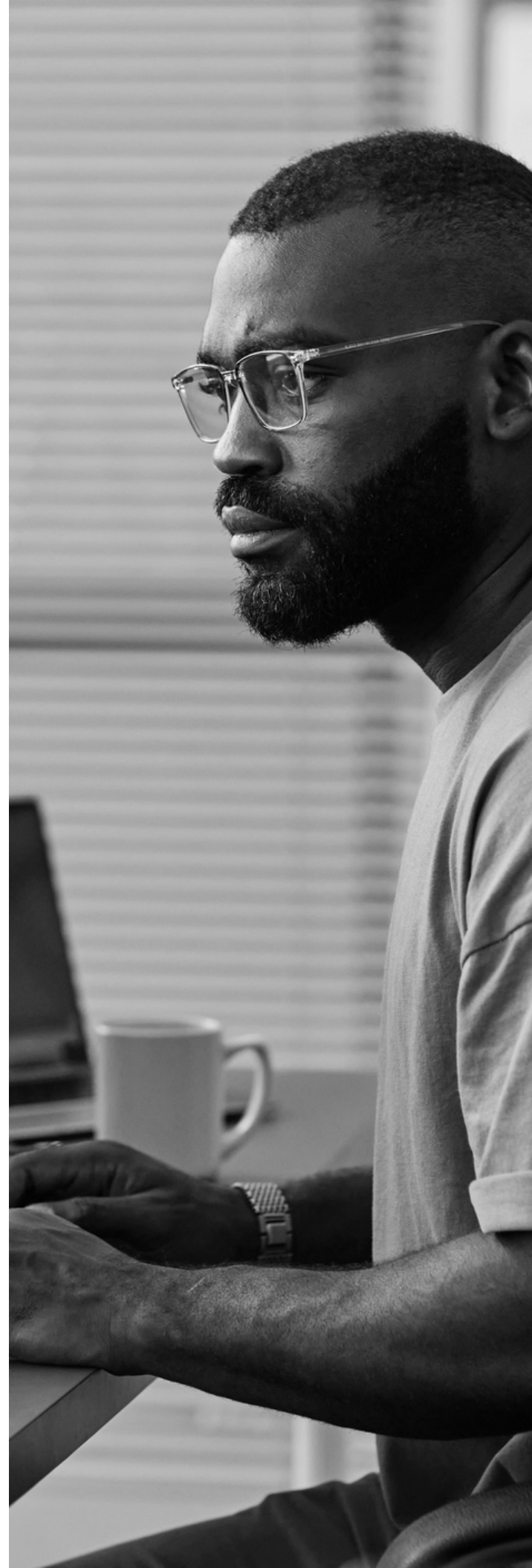
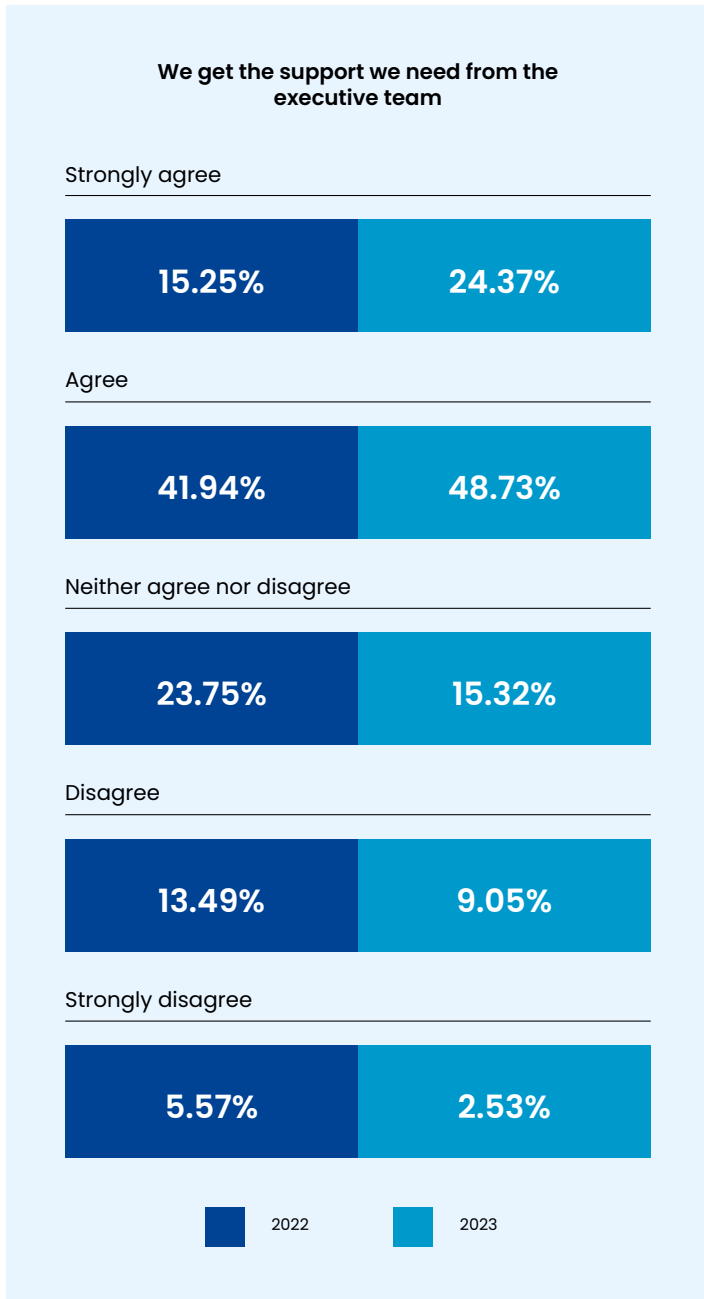
# Perceived importance

Functional computers are essential to virtually every facet of modern business, but not everyone understands the work behind keeping everything up and running. Most sysadmins see a direct connection between their roles and overall company success. However, they remain unconvinced that their employers recognize their value. That said, we saw slight growth in the number of sysadmins who felt the company viewed their role as at least somewhat important. We'll tally this as a tiny win.



## Executive support

This year saw a major spike in perceived executive support. Just over 73% agree or strongly agree that they get the support they need from the executive team, up from 57% last year. While we can't confidently determine the root cause of this surge, we suspect that the rash of phishing attacks against executives has forced leaders to lean on their IT teams. After all, everyone who's survived middle school knows the potential for embarrassment is the strongest motivator.



## Stress

Stress levels remain virtually unchanged from last year. Sysadmins working in education and healthcare report the highest stress levels, while those in tech are as cool as cucumbers.

I am less stressed at work now than I was a year ago

Strongly agree



Agree



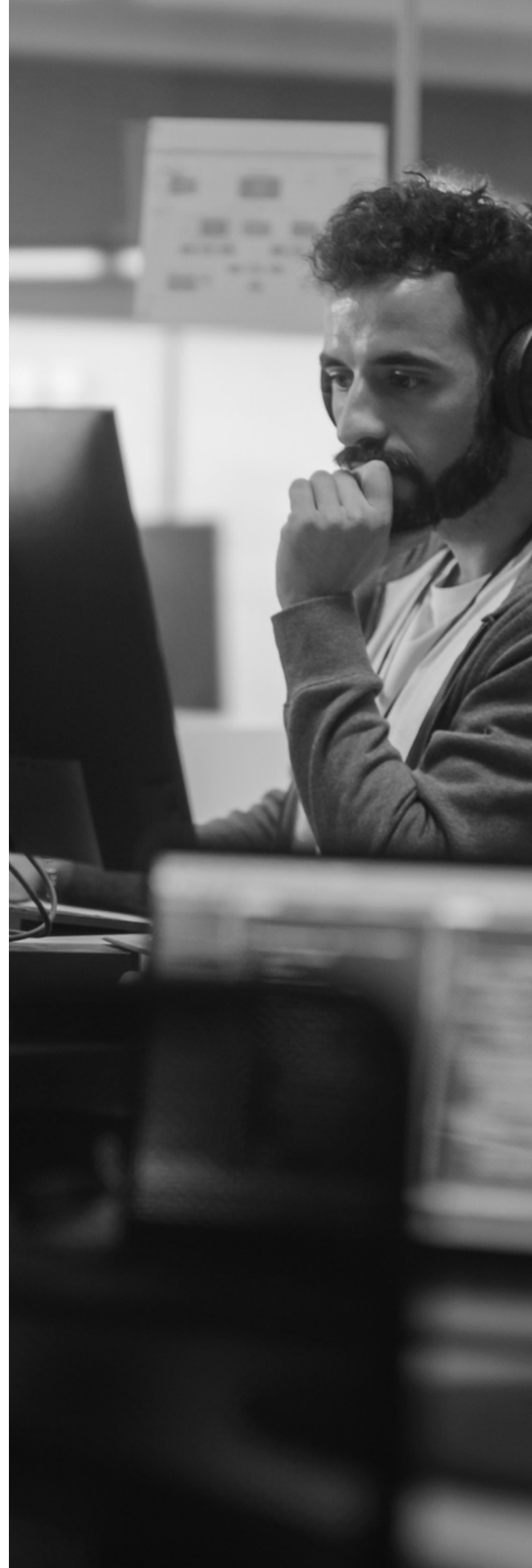
Neither agree nor disagree



Disagree



Strongly disagree



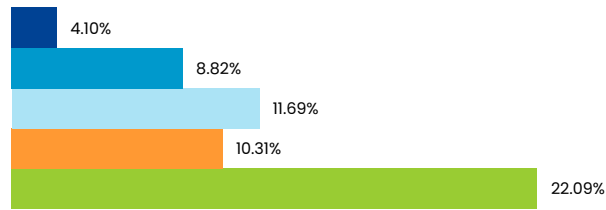


## 02 Sentiment

### I am less stressed at work now than I was a year ago



#### Strongly agree



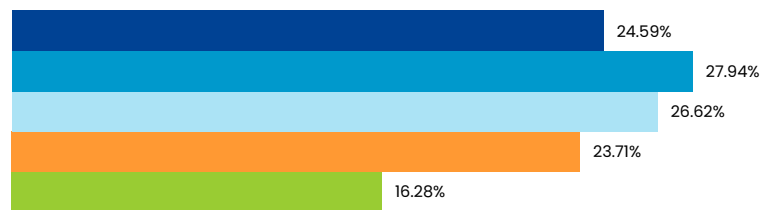
#### Agree



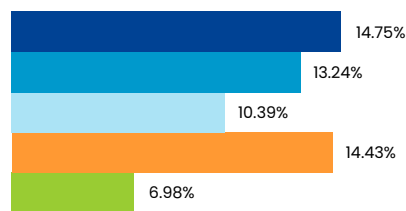
#### Neither agree nor disagree



#### Disagree



#### Strongly disagree



# Tools

Just as you wouldn't play Dungeons & Dragons without the standard seven-dice set, you should never have to maintain machines without the right tools. Luckily, more and more sysadmins have the solutions they need to keep their environments healthy. We're happy for you! (But as a company that provides these tools, we're also pretty darn happy for ourselves.)

**I have the tools I need to do my job successfully**

Strongly agree



Agree



Neither agree nor disagree



Disagree



Strongly disagree



## Continuity of employment

Like last year, most sysadmins we surveyed plan to be at the same job a year from now. Only around 7% actively plan to leave their jobs, which is well below the [national average of 36%](#). Unsurprisingly, those early in their careers are most likely to consider a switch, while over 70% of those with 6 or more years of experience plan to stay put. Sysadmins in healthcare and industrials are most likely to change jobs, and those in education and government express the most interest in hunkering down. Hello, pension!

### I will still be at my current job a year from now

Strongly agree



Agree



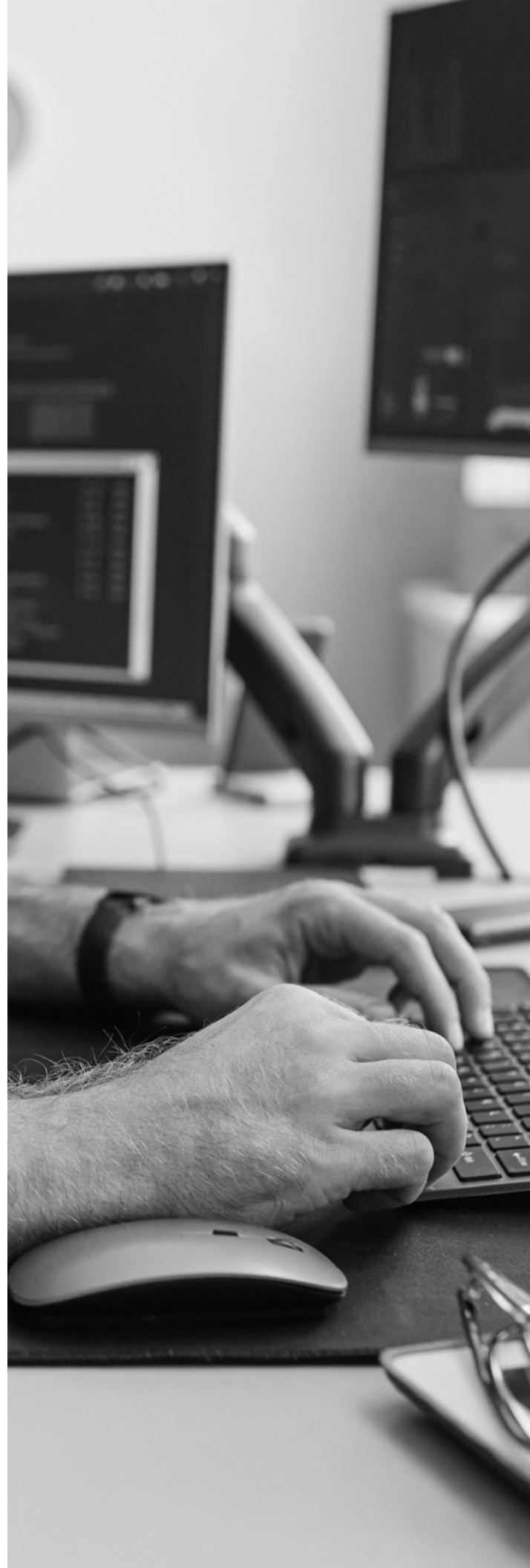
Neither agree nor disagree



Disagree

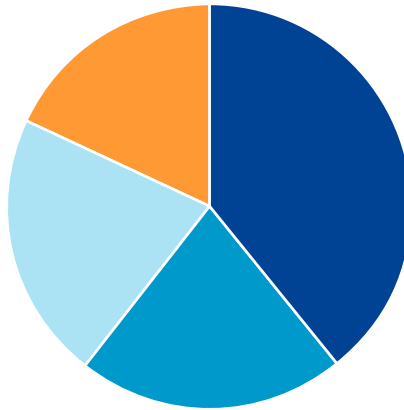
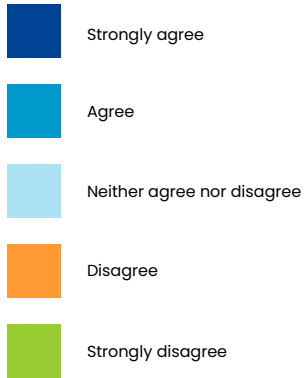


Strongly disagree

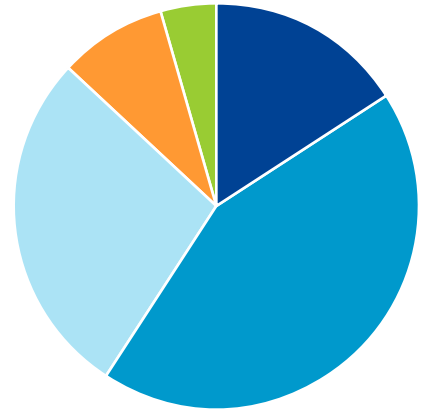


## 02 Sentiment

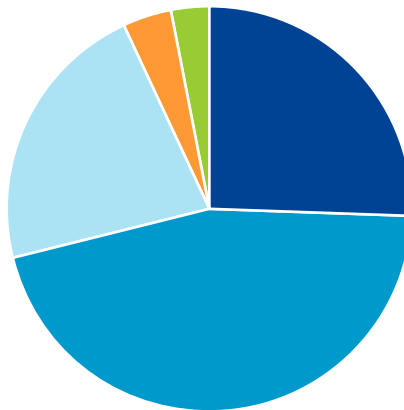
I will still be at my current job a year from now



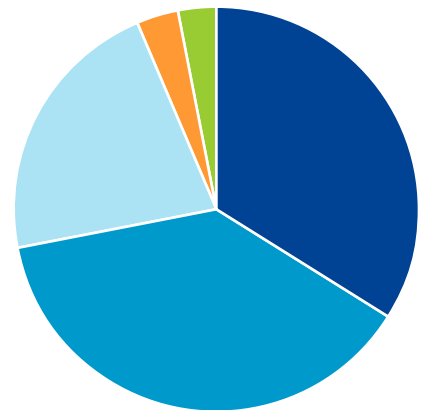
1-2 years' experience



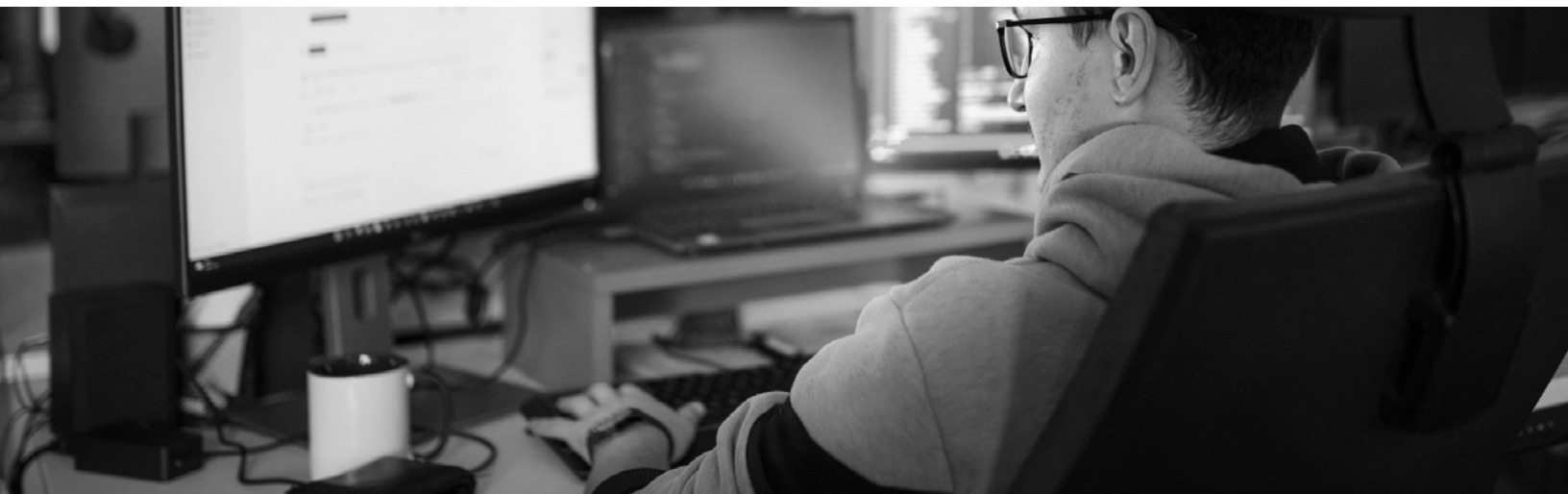
3-5 years' experience



6-9 years' experience



10+ years' experience



**I will still be at my current job a year from now**

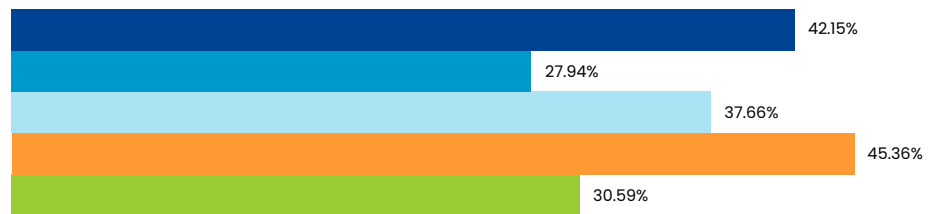
By industry

- Education
- Healthcare
- Industrials (manufacturing, construction, etc.)
- Public service, social service, government
- Technology

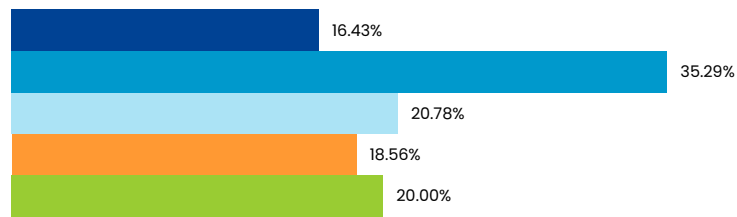
Strongly agree



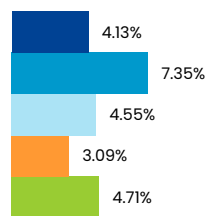
Agree



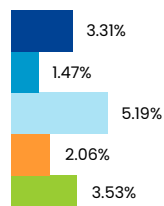
Neither agree nor disagree



Disagree



Strongly disagree



## Continuity in field

Sysadmins gotta sysadmin. Despite the ups and downs of the field, most respondents plan to stick it out. In fact, there's been a slight uptick in those who strongly agree that they'll stay a sysadmin in 2023. Respondents early in their careers are most likely to jump ship, but even they generally want to continue in the role. Once a sysadmin, always a sysadmin!

### I will still be in my current field a year from now

Strongly agree



Agree



Neither agree nor disagree



Disagree



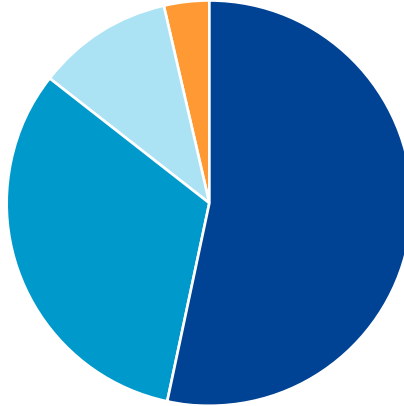
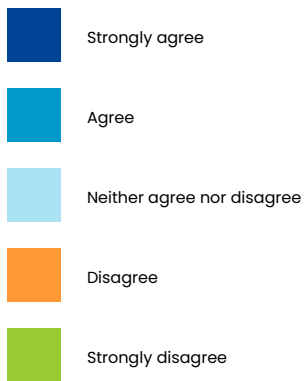
Strongly disagree



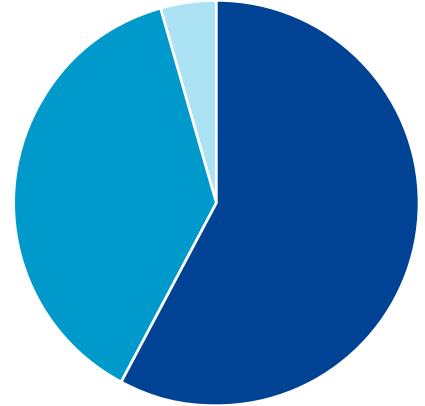


## 02 Sentiment

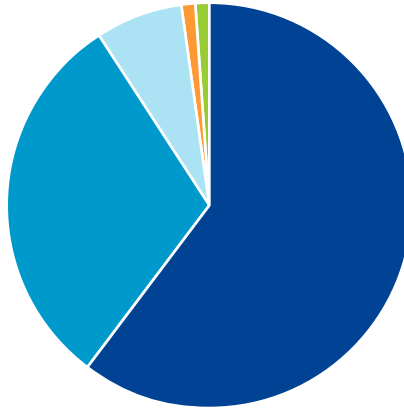
I will still be in my current field a year from now



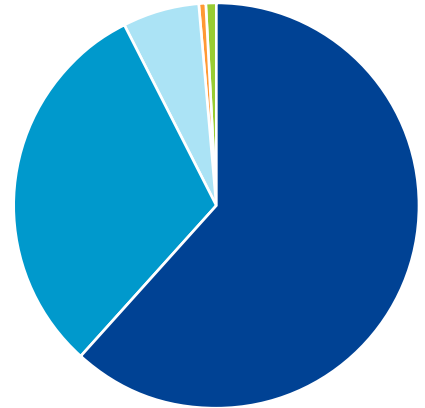
1-2 years' experience



3-5 years' experience



6-9 years' experience



10+ years' experience



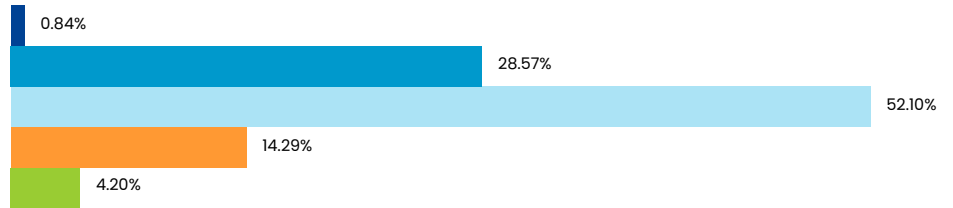
# Budget changes

The economy has been turbulent to say the least. The undeniably weird economic conditions have also created uncertainty around budgets. Most sysadmins we surveyed think their budgets will stay about the same. However, many in tech expect their budgets to increase slightly or significantly. Sysadmins working in government or education are most likely to anticipate budget cuts. Is this the recession we've been dreading?

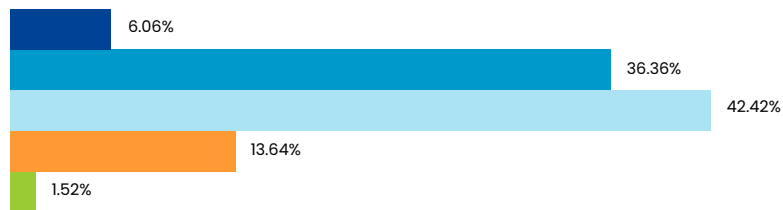
## Do you expect your budget to grow next year?

- Grow significantly
- Grow slightly
- Stay the same
- Shrink slightly
- Shrink significantly

### Education



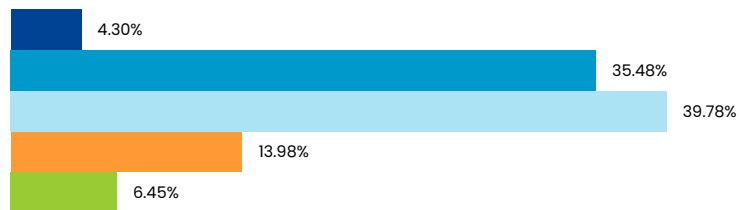
### Healthcare



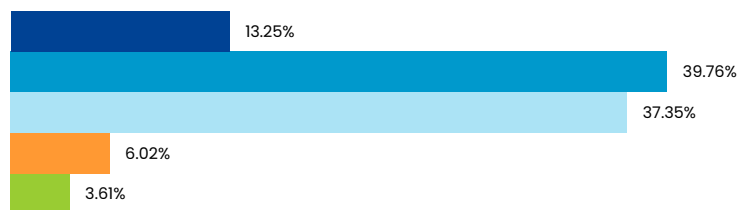
### Industrials (manufacturing, construction, etc.)



### Public service, social service, government



### Technology





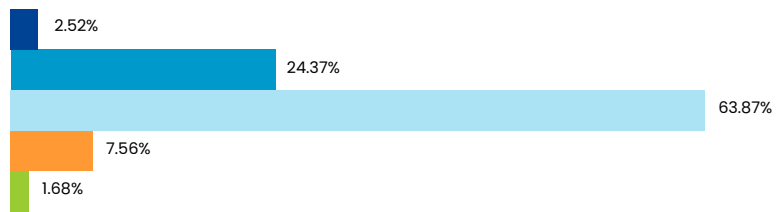
# Team changes

A huge majority of respondents anticipate that their teams will stay about the same size, so you can keep enjoying those hefty workloads and long hours. The one exception is the technology industry, where sysadmins expect slight or significant team growth.

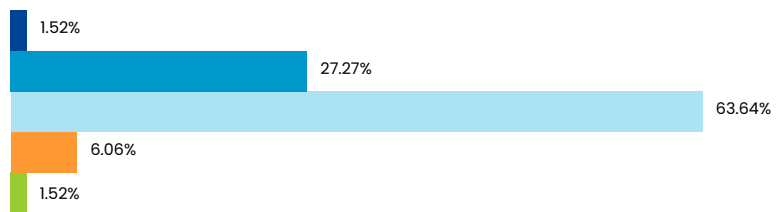
**Do you expect your team to grow, shrink, or stay the same next year?**

- Grow significantly
- Grow slightly
- Stay the same
- Shrink slightly
- Shrink significantly

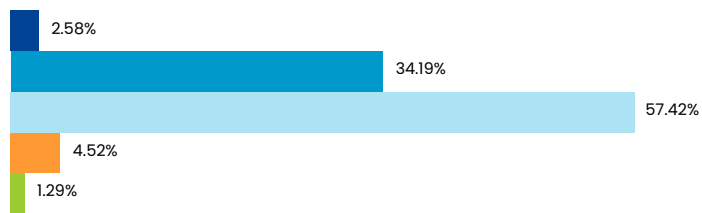
## Education



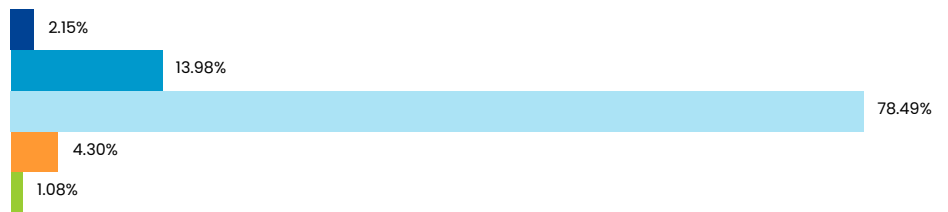
## Healthcare



## Industrials (manufacturing, construction, etc.)



## Public service, social service, government



## Technology

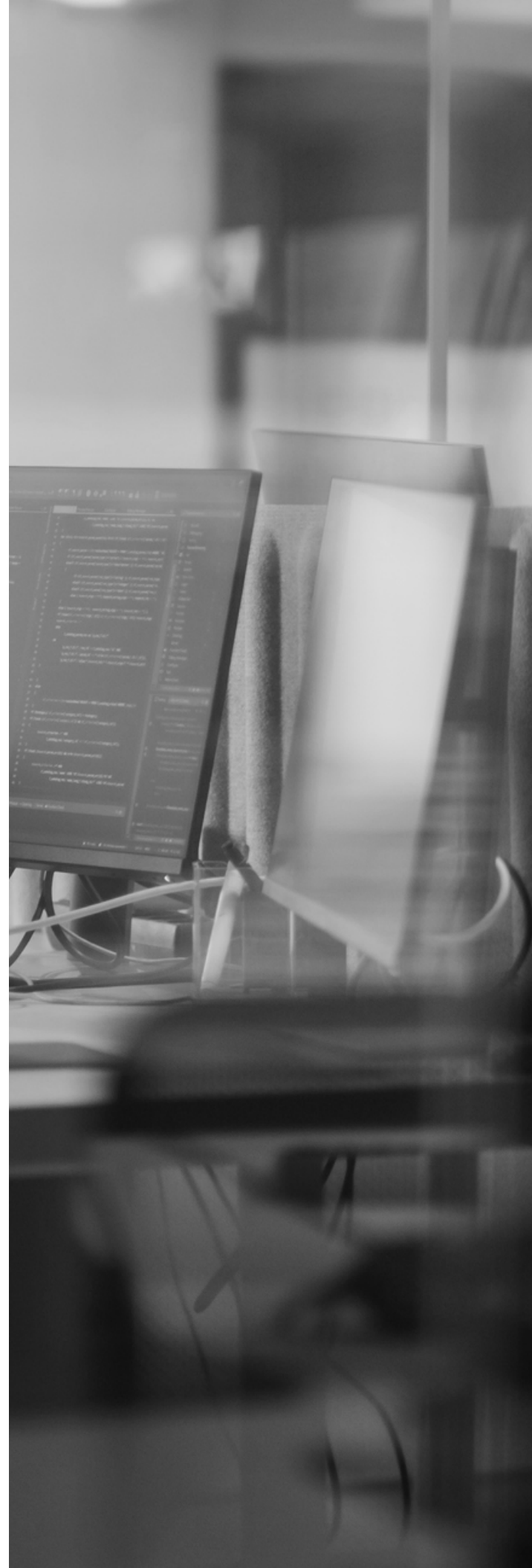
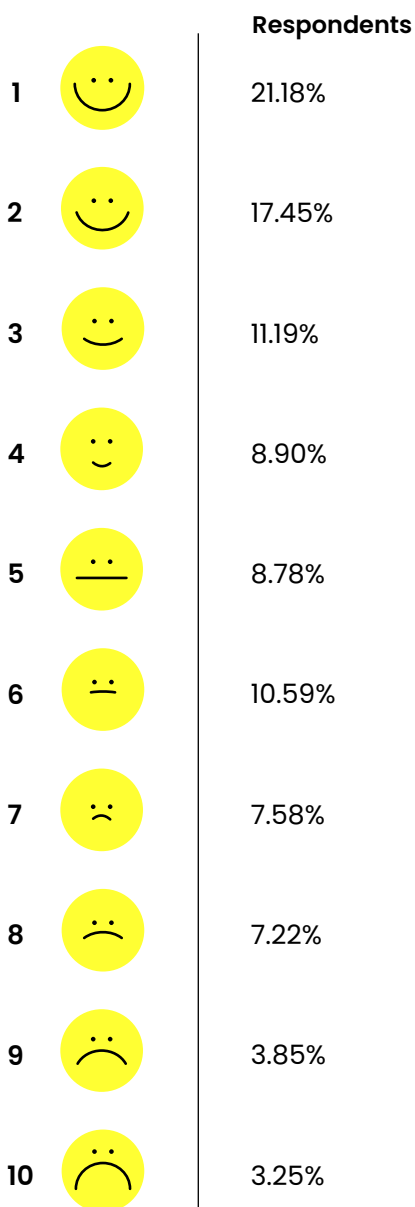


## Job security anxiety

Most sysadmins aren't lying awake at night worried about losing their jobs. (Your 5 p.m. pick-me-up Red Bull is the more likely culprit for any lost shuteye.) Overall, job security anxiety is quite low, but it's somewhat higher for sysadmins in industrials. Those in technology and education are particularly unconcerned despite the mass layoffs by tech giants.

Less experienced sysadmins are also less likely to worry about job security. This may be a result of their greater interest in changing jobs or switching fields.

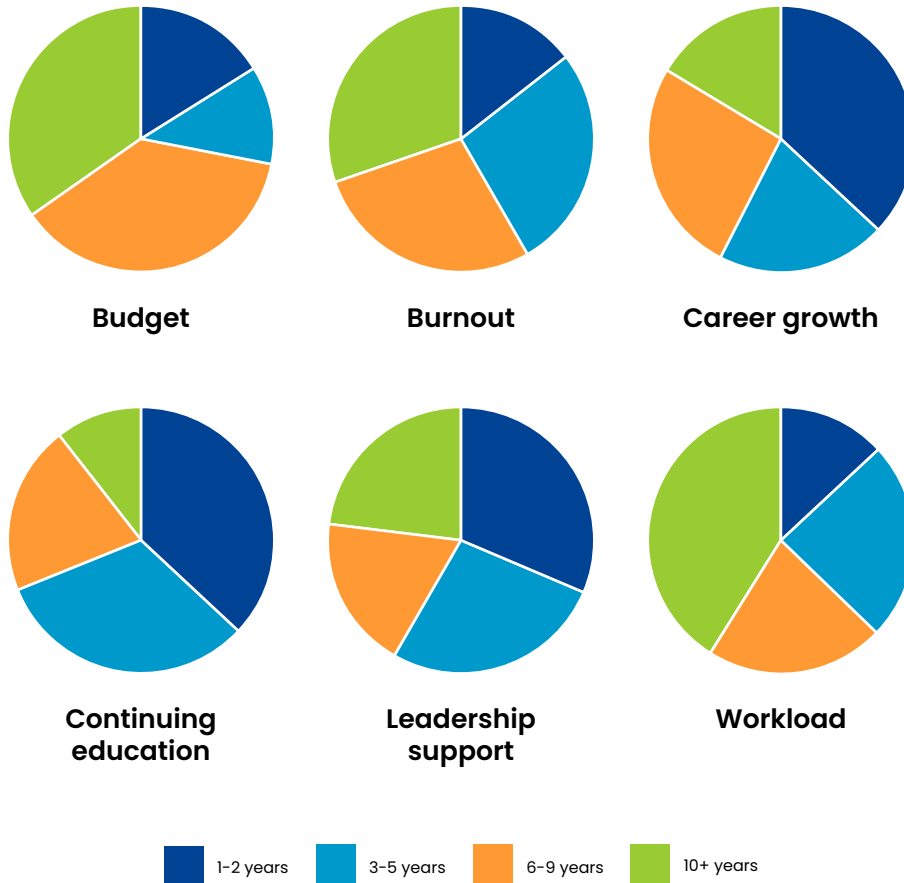
**On a scale from 1 to 10, rate your anxiety about your job security given the current economic conditions.**



# Career and professional concern

The sysadmin life isn't easy. Overall, the primary professional concerns of our respondents are burnout and workload. That said, concerns shift depending on industry and years in the field. Those working in education and government are most concerned with burnout. Burnout and workload worries also increase with more years in the field, whereas early career sysadmins are much more focused on career growth and continuing education. Some experienced sysadmins also wrote in fears of ageism or aging out.

What's your biggest concern about your career?



## Takeaway

With executive support on the rise, many sysadmins have a valuable opportunity to improve their organizations' systems and their own working conditions. Making a business case to address your biggest concerns may be your ticket to successful change.

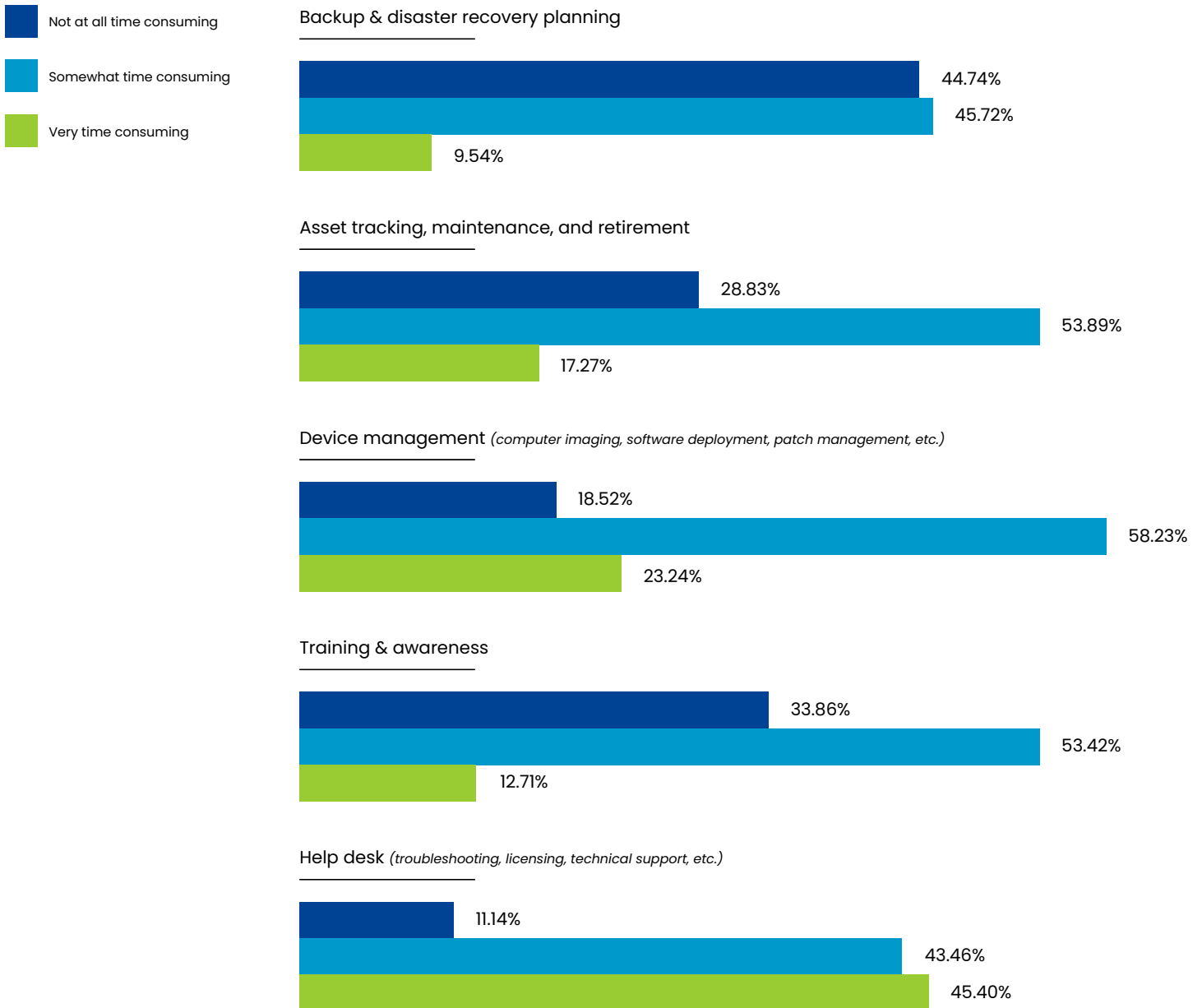


# Work environ- ment

We often wonder what the average sysadmin's day looks like: the environment, the machines, where they hide the good whiskey — just the normal stuff. Both computing and work environments vary wildly, but we spotted some trends that shed light on a sysadmin's natural habitat.

# Time-consuming tasks

Since last year, training and awareness has taken up less and less time for sysadmins. Maybe it has something to do with employees returning to the office, maybe your company invested in third-party solutions, or maybe you've just given up hope of convincing users that 12345678 is a bad password. Meanwhile, help desk responsibilities increased. Of the sysadmins we surveyed, 89% report that help desk tasks are now somewhat or very time consuming (compared to 84% last year). This is particularly true in education and public service.

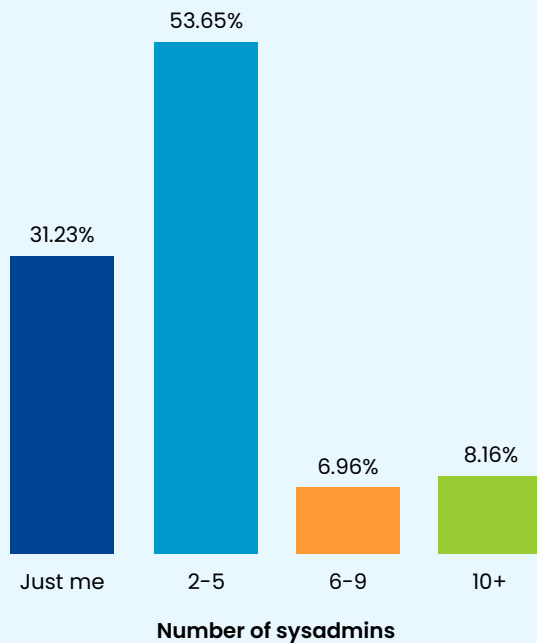


## Number of sysadmins

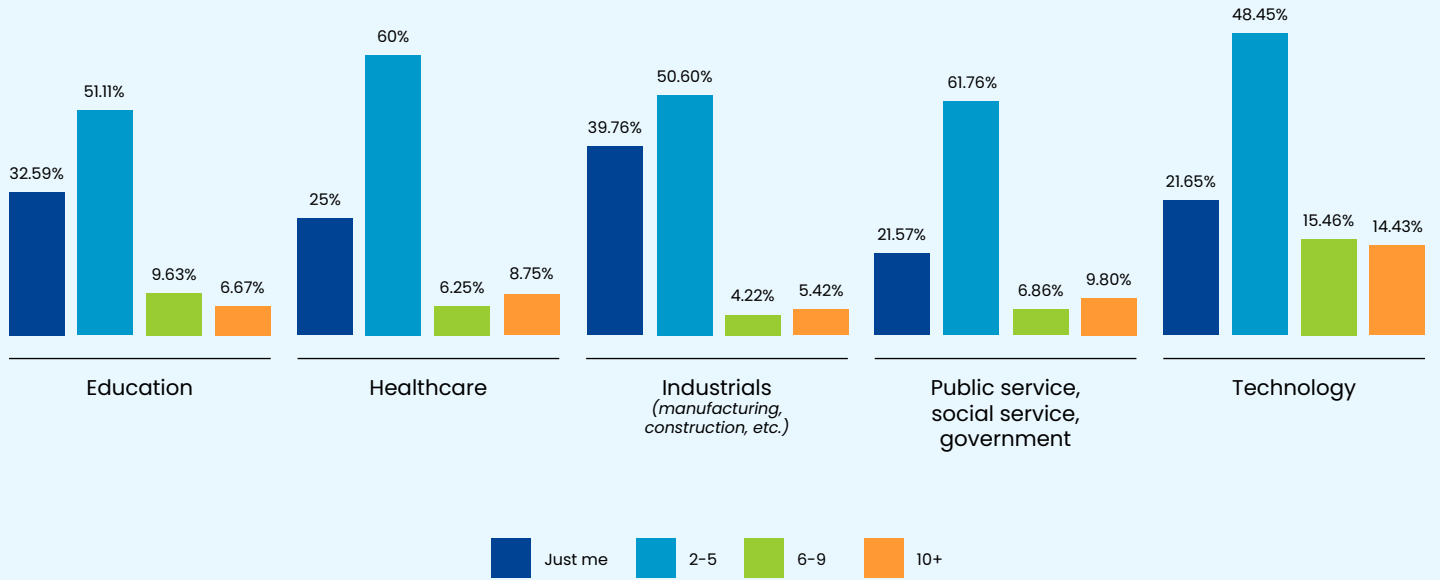
The majority of respondents work on a team of 2 to 5 sysadmins, but 31% are the sole sysadmin in their organization. Most of these brave souls manage under 500 machines, but a whopping 32% of lone sysadmins manage over 500 machines. We fear you as much as we admire you.

Sysadmins working in industrials and education are the most likely to work alone, while those in tech and public service are more likely to work in a team. Tech IT teams tend to be the biggest with 14% of tech respondents working on teams of 10 or more sysadmins.

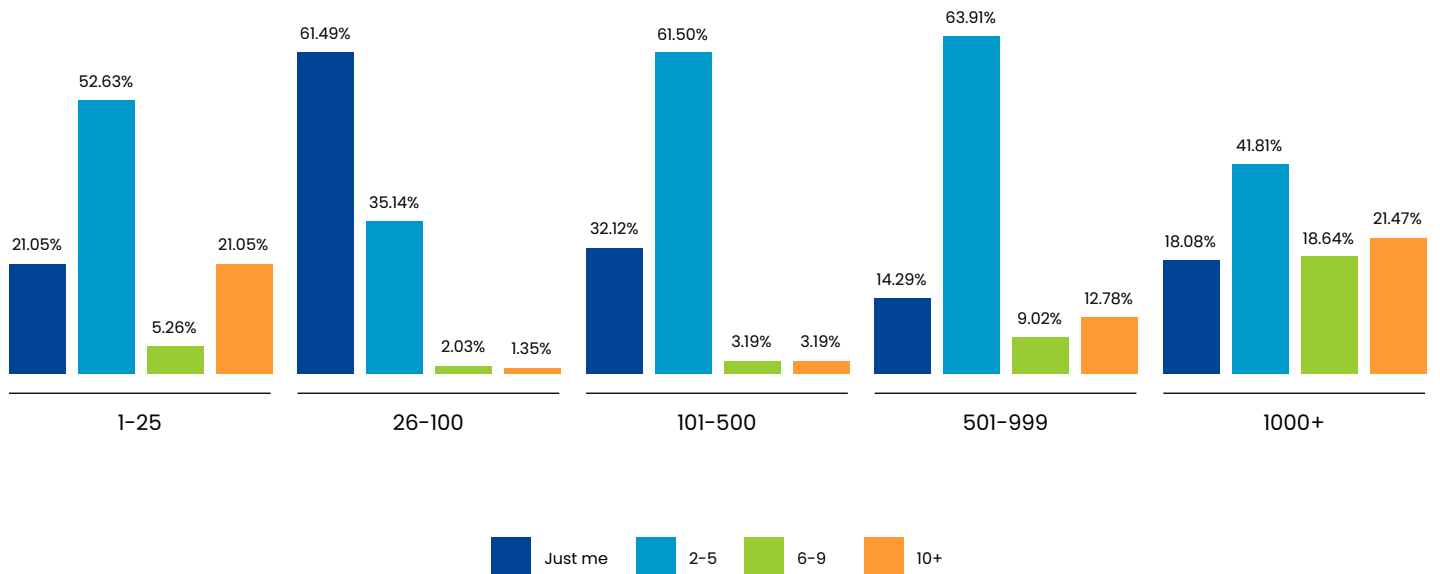
How many total sysadmins work at your place of employment (including yourself)?



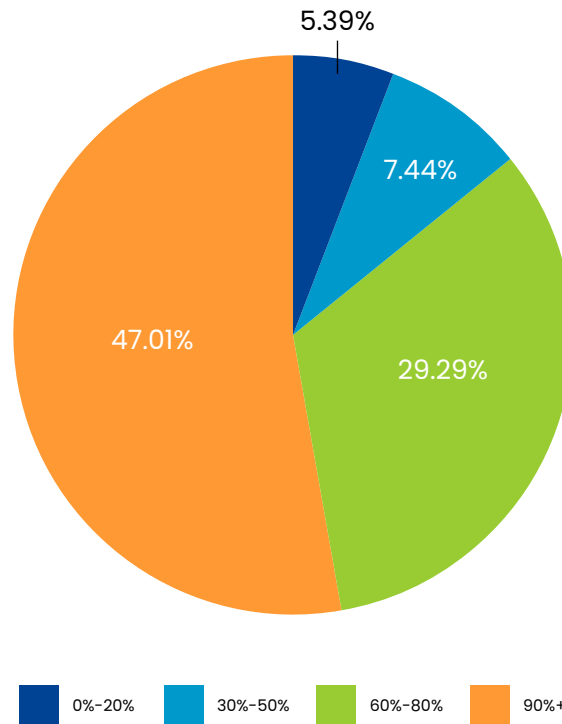
### How many total sysadmins work at your place of employment (including yourself)?



### Machines managed



### Percent of machines that are Windows devices

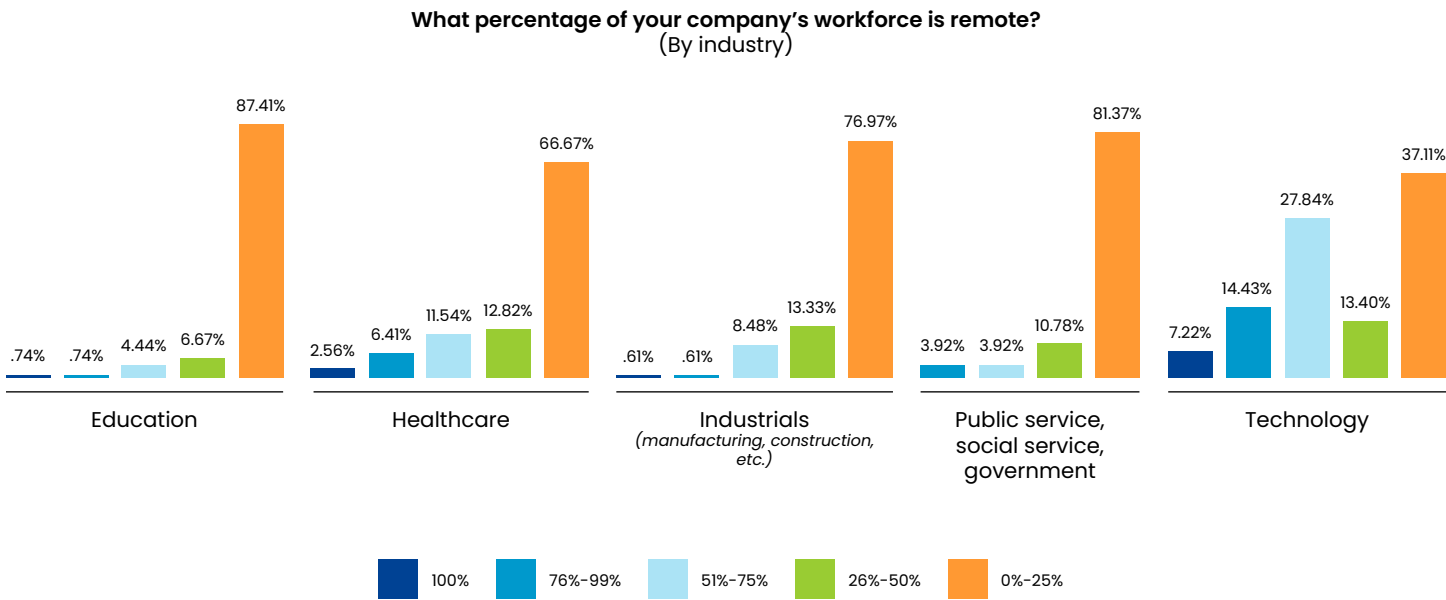
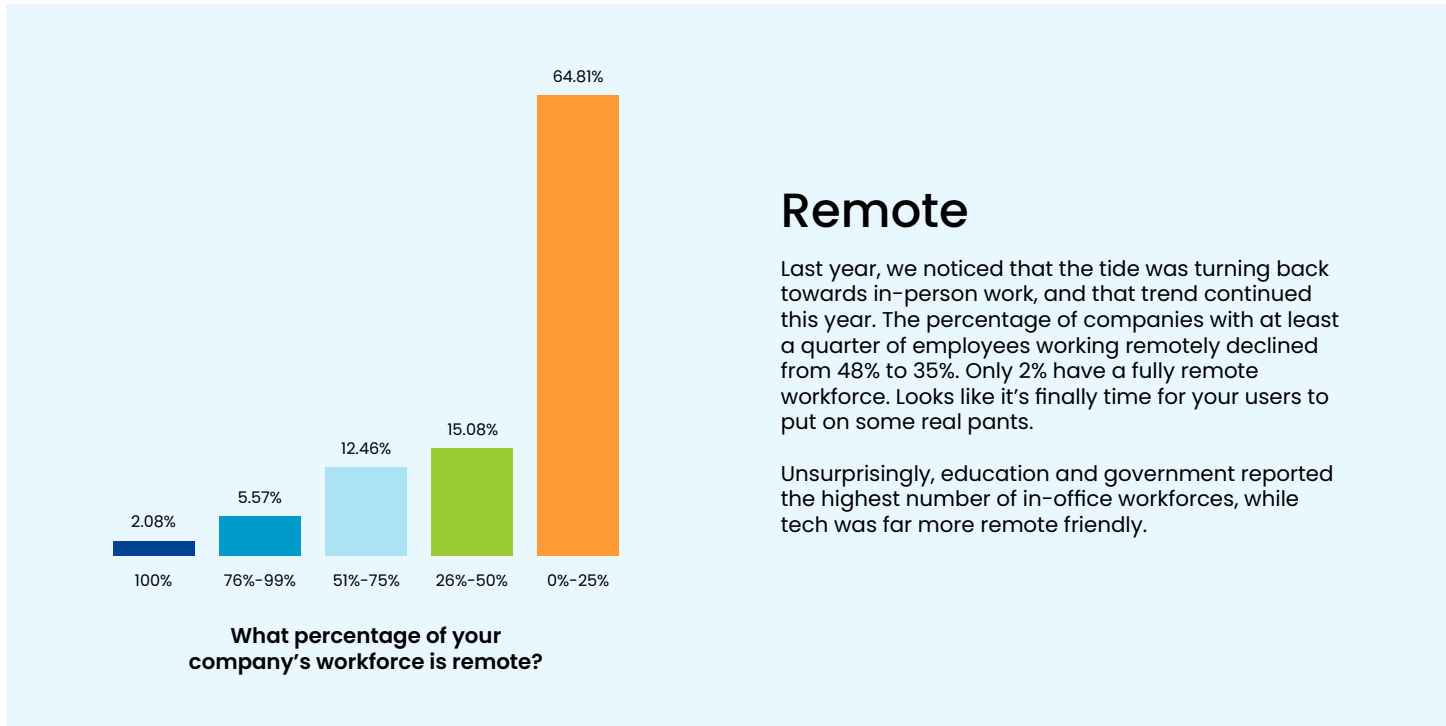


Windows continues to reign supreme. Just .6% of respondents report that they don't have a single Windows machine in their environment, while 80% of respondents say that Windows devices make up at least 70% of their fleets. We can only imagine that Bill Gates is doing an incredibly awkward happy dance somewhere.

Over 300 sysadmins also report managing a small number of iOS devices, making up around 10% to 20% of their total fleets. These devices may be company owned or BYOD. Another 331 sysadmins manage some Linux devices (10% to 20% of their fleets), which are likely for engineers who specifically requested them.

Chromebooks are unpopular in most industries, but 65% of those who manage Chromebooks work in education.





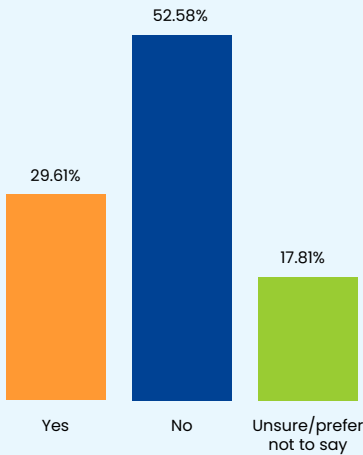
## Takeaway

If you're managing more machines than your team can handle, talk to your boss about hiring more team members or implementing solutions to simplify the most time-consuming tasks. Overburdening a small IT team puts business operations at risk.



# Cyber- security

In the first half of 2022, weekly [cyberattacks increased by 42%](#). Our respondents report a fairly consistent number of cyberattacks since last year, but we found some disconcerting trends that could put companies at an increased risk.

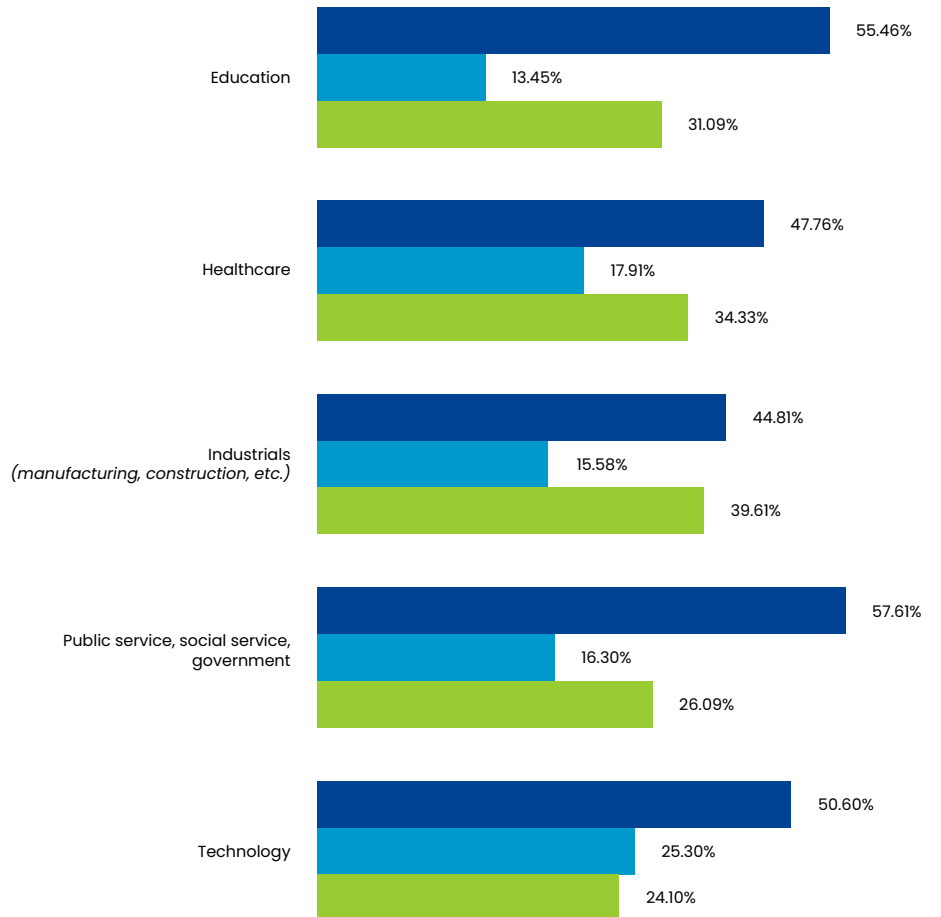
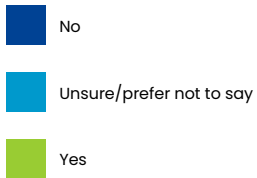


Has your company experienced a cybersecurity incident in the last 5 years?

## Cyberattacks

Nearly 30% of respondents have experienced a cybersecurity incident in the last 5 years. While financial services and healthcare were the biggest targets last year, healthcare and industrials are this year's prime targets. In other words, hackers ♥ healthcare.

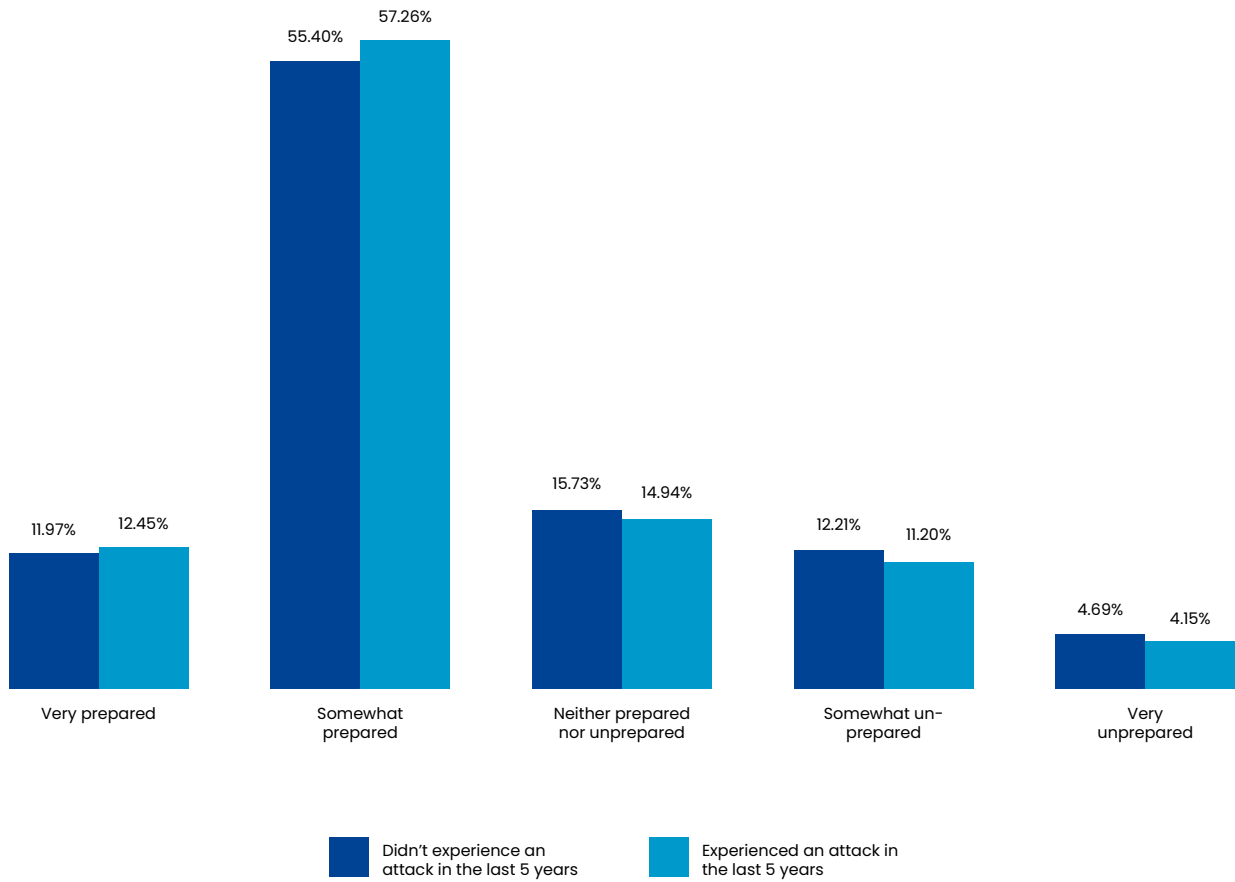
### Has your company experienced a cybersecurity incident in the last 5 years?

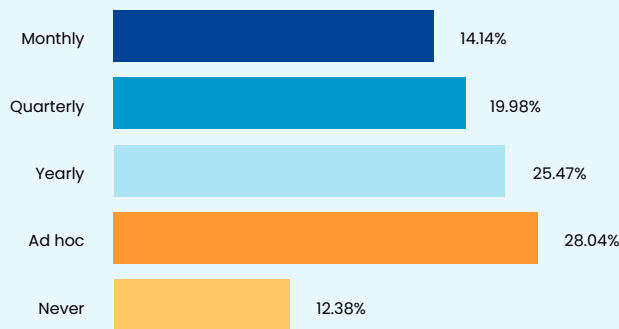




Unfortunately, those who have experienced a cyberattack do not feel much more prepared for another attack than those who haven't been a victim. This is what keeps sysadmins up late at night. Time to apply lessons learned to [beef up your defenses](#) so you can finally reunite with your REM cycle.

### How prepared do you feel for a cyberattack?



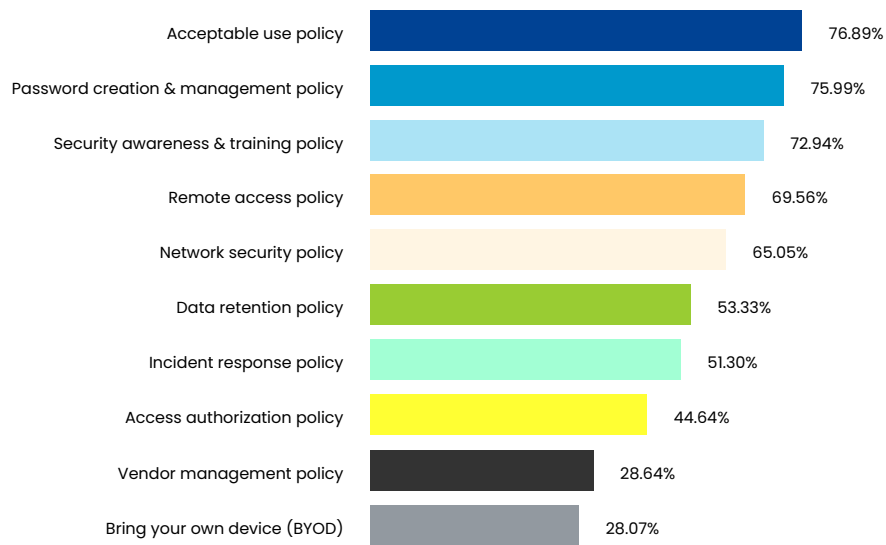


## Training

It's no secret that users are one of the biggest threats to any environment. The human element is thought to be a driver in 82% of data breaches. Still, 50% of respondents only offer cybersecurity training yearly or on an ad hoc basis, and over 10% never conduct training sessions.

## Policies

Documenting and enforcing [clear policies](#) are the foundations of strong cybersecurity. The majority of respondents say their organizations have some of the most critical IT policies in place. That said, a few more well-documented policies might inspire fear, awe, and compliance in users.



## Takeaway

Proactive measures are essential to preventing and preparing for cyberattacks. Investing resources in user [training](#) can save sysadmins a lot of headaches down the road.



# Toolbox

Between scaling, maintaining, monitoring, and securing dozens to thousands of machines, sysadmins have a lot on their plates. Luckily, there's a wide array of powerful solutions to help them persevere. We'll highlight sysadmin favorites.



## Full disclosure

Most survey respondents are PDQ customers, so the deck is stacked in our favor. That said, they stick with us for a reason, and it's not just our model-like good looks and mildly offensive personalities.

## 1. Mobile device management

With more and more smartphones, tablets, and other devices finding their way into the workplace, managing disparate devices becomes increasingly complicated. Mobile device management (MDM) solutions help, though 31% of respondents forgo them. Those who use MDM software favor Microsoft Intune, Microsoft Configuration Manager, Jamf, and Meraki.



## 2. Software deployment & updates

When they need to push out updates or patches, sysadmins rely on PDQ Deploy (stop, you're making us blush), Microsoft Intune, Microsoft Configuration Manager, and SmartDeploy (hey, that's us again).



## 3. Asset management

PDQ Inventory and Snipe-IT top the list of asset management solutions. However, nearly 10% of respondents don't use software or inventory assets manually. You have our sincerest sympathies.



## 4. Install & configure operating systems

Installing and configuring operating systems at scale can be mind numbing and time consuming. Still, 32% of you make do without software. Of those who utilize a solution, MDT and SmartDeploy are the clear favorites.



## 5. Remote access

Remote access solutions face intense competition. A whopping 44.5% of responses included write-in answers. TeamViewer and ConnectWise Control made a good showing, while BeyondTrust (formerly Bomgar) and AnyDesk got lots of love from those write-in votes.



## 6. Ticketing

Ticketing was the most hotly contested category with a wide array of answers, including 52% write-ins. After last year, we expected Jira Service Desk, Spiceworks, and Freshdesk to hold strong, and they did not disappoint. Zendesk, ServiceNow, and Jitbit also earned notable write-in mentions.



## Takeaway

While sysadmins are swamped, they know what tools will make their lives easier. Unfortunately, it's not a collect-them-all situation, so limiting your selections is half the battle.

## Breakroom debates

This year, we wanted to finally put to rest issues that have plagued us all for decades: How GIF is pronounced and whether Han or Greedo shot first. 78.5% of respondents say GIF (hard G) rather than JIF, presumably so there's no risk of peanut-butter-related confusion. Meanwhile, 80% believe that Han Solo shot first. Time to do away with unnecessary, illogical edits once and for all.

Go ahead and leverage these numbers to prove to your coworkers that you're right.





# Summary & takeaways

So what's on the agenda for 2023? Let's recap the top takeaways to prepare for the year ahead:

- ✓ While there is no "standard" sysadmin salary, understanding what's common for your field and tenure can help you negotiate fair compensation.
- ✓ With executive support on the rise, many sysadmins have a valuable opportunity to improve their organizations' systems and their own working conditions. Making a business case to address your biggest concerns may be your ticket to successful change.
- ✓ If you're managing more machines than your team can handle, talk to your boss about hiring more team members or implementing solutions to simplify the most time-consuming tasks. Overburdening a small IT team puts business operations at risk.
- ✓ Proactive measures are essential to preventing and preparing for cyberattacks. Investing resources in training can save sysadmins a lot of headaches down the road.
- ✓ While sysadmins are swamped, they know what tools can make their lives easier. Unfortunately, it's not a collect-them-all situation, so limiting your selections is half the battle.

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Thank you to all who participated, and we hope you learned something useful. Keep an eye out for another report the same time next year. Until then, take advantage of our free trials if you haven't already:

- [14-day free trial of PDQ Deploy and Inventory](#)
- [30-day free trial of SimpleMDM](#)
- [15-day free trial of SmartDeploy](#)



## Stay ahead of sysadmin trends

Share this report with your colleagues and friends, [subscribe to our blog](#), and [check out our YouTube channel](#) to stay on top of what's happening in the sysadmin world.