



The State of CMS 2023: United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

Content management systems (CMSs) are at the heart of any modern business. They connect digital brands with relevant audiences and support the day-to-day operations that come with running a successful organization. As the core of a company, it's not enough for a CMS to do the bare minimum. In a world of high customer expectations, systems as well as their users must constantly evolve to create the best possible experience.

Usage habits in the United Kingdom continue to develop, ranging from which types of teams interact with the CMS to how many they're juggling at once. Even the core technology itself has gone through significant developments: the once universal monolithic CMS with a tightly coupled front and backend no longer holds a monopoly over users. Headless technology – systems that separate the two ends – has changed the game, transforming what users can expect from their content management system. Keeping up with unfolding patterns like these is key to understanding the current and future state of the industry.

That's why Storyblok has compiled the State of CMS 2023: United Kingdom report. We set out to take stock of the modern user's needs and behavior in the region: what makes one CMS worth using and another worth abandoning? How has the headless revolution affected their company's performance? How are they reaching their current audience, and how will that strategy change in the coming years?

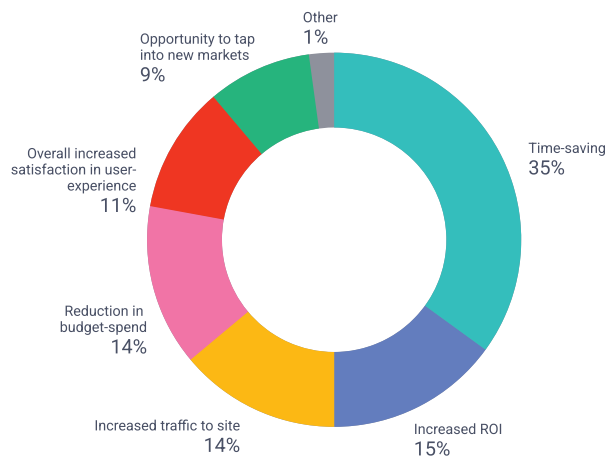
To find the answer to these questions and more, we've collected data from users around the region to understand their choices – and in turn, what role CMSs play in a constantly changing UK market.

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Executive Summary

- 1 The majority of users (55%) need more than 1 CMS just to maintain their content operations, with 7% using 4 or more CMSs.
- 2 **Minimizing delivery risk, need of new technology stack/legacy, and trying out new proofs of concept** are the main reasons behind having more than 1 CMS in place - a direct result of the legacy architecture of traditional CMS solutions like *WordPress, Adobe Experience Manager, and Webflow*.
- 3 **Time-consuming processes, difficulty in needing to learn a new system/skill/tech stack, and security issues** are the 3 main reasons why businesses change their CMS.
- 4 **30%** of respondents believe their current CMS workflows are difficult or very difficult.
- 5 In the vast majority of businesses (77%) multiple teams use a CMS on a regular basis, making proper workflows and collaboration capabilities even more important.
- 6 **33% of businesses** already use a Headless CMS to manage their content from one central hub and publish simultaneously on any channel.
- 7 **An overwhelming majority (87%)** of businesses report improved KPIs, revenue growth, and productivity since using a headless CMS.



Reported improvements since using a headless CMS

The State of CMS - United Kingdom

Content management systems have been essential tools for organizations for around 25 years. As technology continues to evolve, so does the general understanding of what a CMS is and what it can do. However, knowledge and use of these systems are not necessarily universal, and not every team member comes into direct contact with them on a day-to-day basis. It's important to make sure that we're assessing the state of CMS based on the choices made by active users.

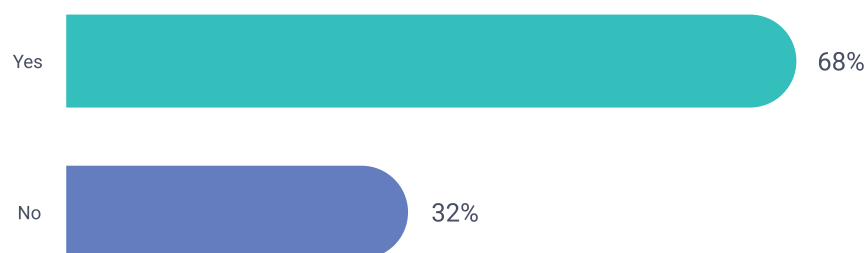
As such, we started off the study with a screening question to make sure respondents were familiar with how their organization manages content:

“ A Content Management System (otherwise known as a CMS), is a software application that allows users to build and manage a website without having to code it from scratch.

BASED ON THE DESCRIPTION ABOVE, ARE YOU CURRENTLY USING A CMS AT YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Those who answered “yes” continued on with the study, while those who answered “no” were excused. This ensures that all our participants were operating within a company that uses a CMS.

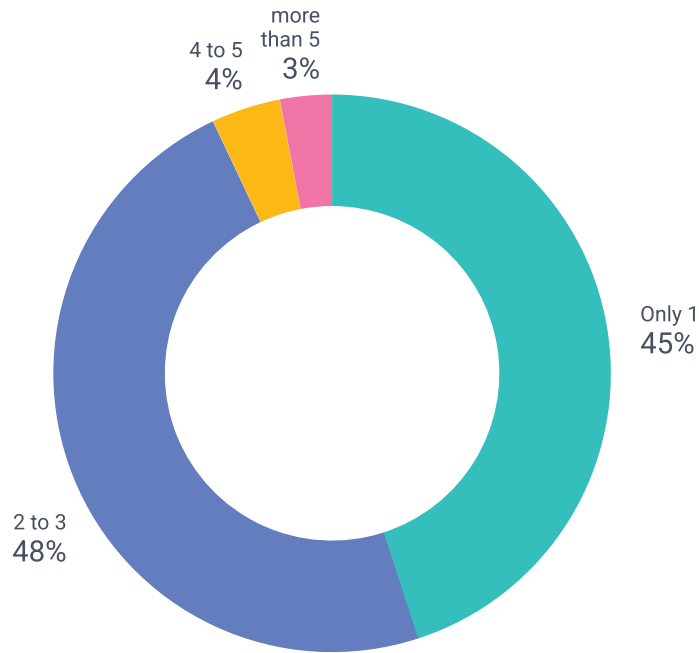
Our results revealed the following:



A majority of respondents (**68%**) indicated that they currently use a CMS at their organization and thus could accurately respond to the following questions. This brought the qualifying sample from 189 to **129**.

Survey Results

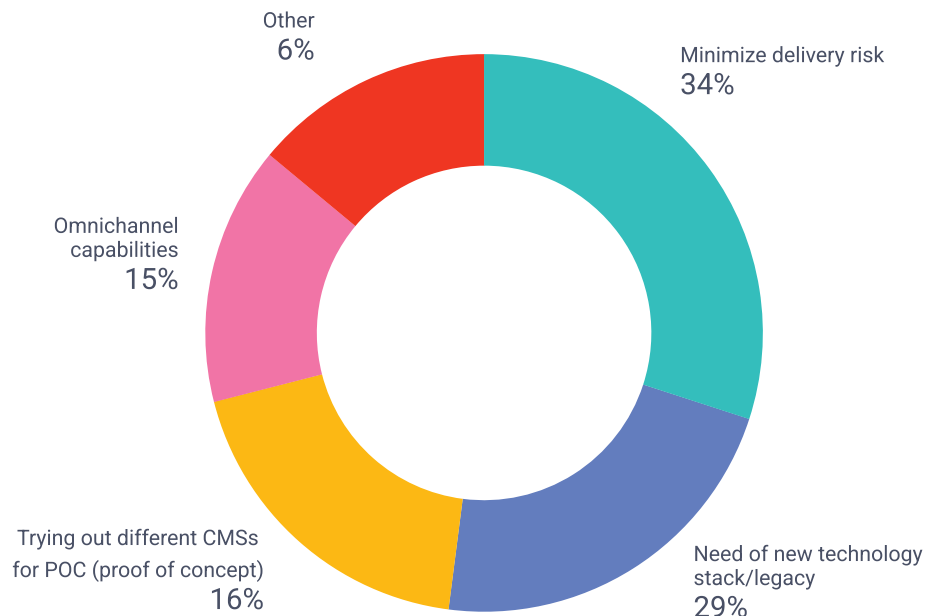
1 How many CMSs do you currently use at your organization?



Most respondents (48%) used 2 to 3 CMSs in their organization. However, the number of respondents using just one was close behind at **45%**. Using 4 or more CMSs stands at **7%**, proving many companies still struggle with a central solution to content management.

2

If you use more than 2 CMSs at your organization, please select reasons why you are using more than 2 CMSs at your organization:



The use of multiple CMSs is not always wise: it can lead to issues such as disorganized workflow, content siloing, and communication issues. Thus, it's important to understand why some users continue to operate several CMSs regardless of these downsides.

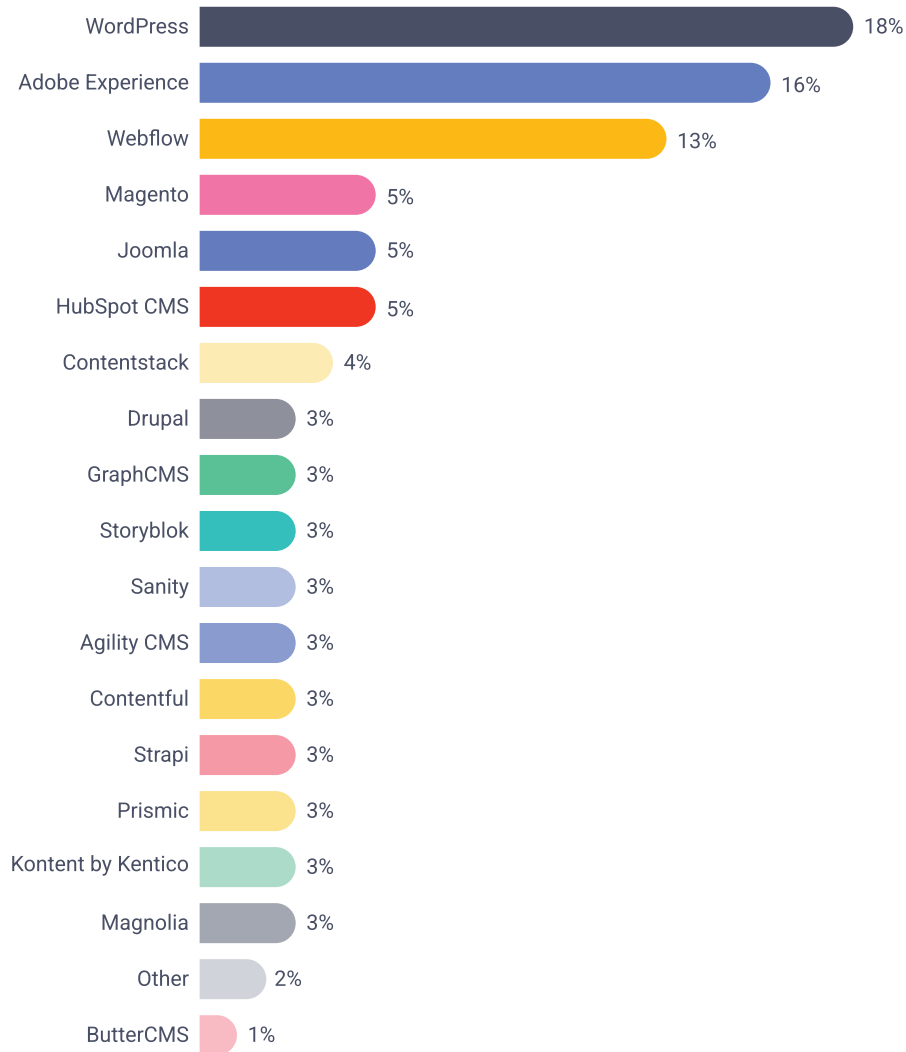
The top-listed reason for using more than 2 CMSs was to **minimize delivery risk**. This could be the result of having backups, or perhaps using multiple CMSs to serve multiple frontends.

The second reason behind using more than two CMSs was to satisfy the **need for a new technology stack/legacy**. Monolithic systems are not built to be adaptable: the all-in-one, tightly connected nature of the technology makes it hard to change things or add new programs. It can be a costly, difficult process that carries the risk of crashing the entire system should a failure occur. As such, users who need additional capabilities may find it easier to simply use an entirely new CMS. Unfortunately, this is not a sustainable solution.

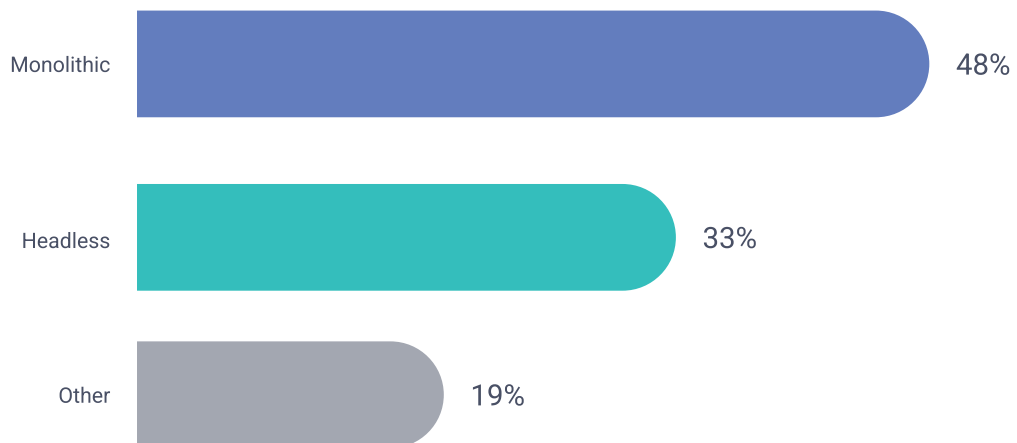
The third most commonly cited reason was **trying out different CMSs for POC (proof of concept)**. Switching to a new CMS is not always easy – especially if it's a traditional system. Monolithic CMSs come with rigid architecture that can make sharing information difficult. Thus, it's not wholly surprising that companies in the UK are opting to try out new systems before undertaking the complex migration process. **Respondents from this region were 3% more likely to report trying new POC than the international sample**, suggesting that users in the UK may be more interested in evolving technologies than the global community.

3

Which CMSs are you currently using?



The most commonly used CMS platform in the sample is WordPress. The top 6 CMSs by the number of users alone are all monolithic solutions: WordPress, Adobe Experience Manager, Webflow, Magento, Joomla, and Hubspot CMS.

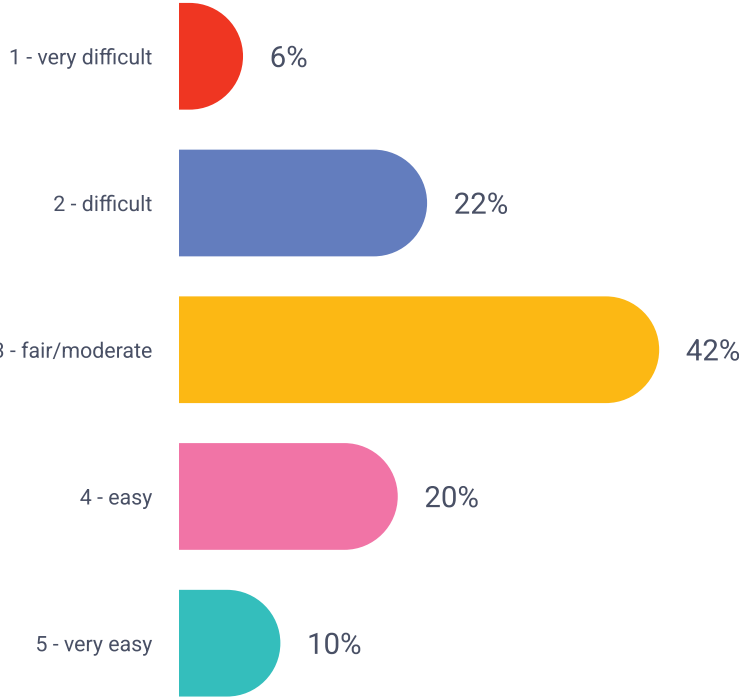


While monolithic systems made up the majority of the sample at 48%, **headless systems still claimed 33%**. Other choices (such as page builders, web apps, and custom CMSs) came in last with 19% of respondents. When compared to the global results of State of CMS 2023, there is a small difference present: **respondents in the UK were roughly 3% less likely to use headless systems and 3% more likely to use alternative systems**. However, this difference is relatively minor and still shows an impressive amount of users choosing headless systems.

As shown in Question 2, UK respondents were also more likely than their international counterparts to be using multiple CMSs for proof of concept purposes. This could indicate that more users in the region are still in the early stages of discovering the benefits of headless. This would explain the high percentage of headless users that still lags slightly behind the global average.

4

How would you rate your team's/organization's processes prior to using a CMS? - 1 being very difficult and 5 being very easy

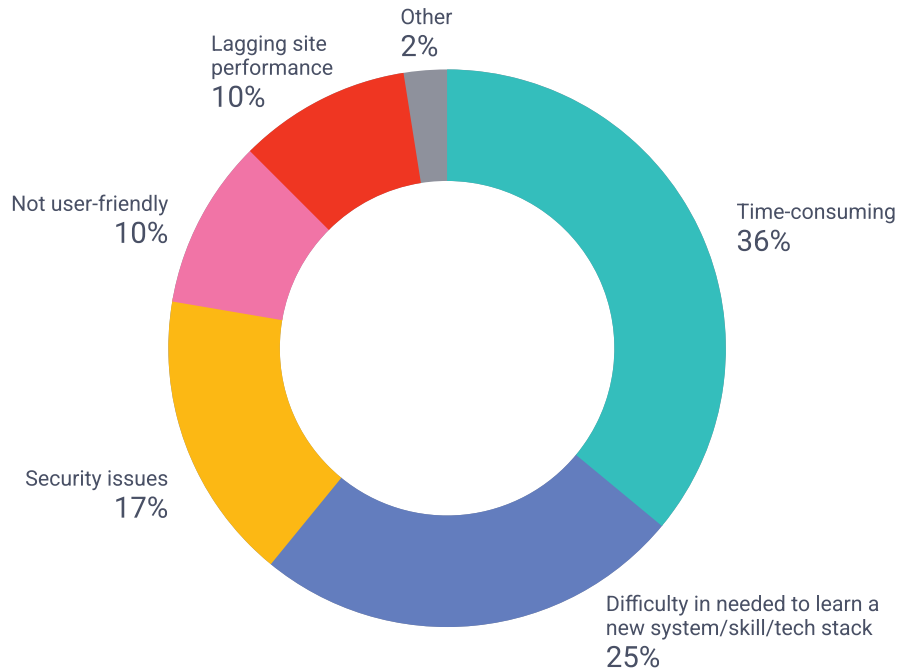


CMSs often bring big changes to organizations, making the contrast between the prior and current experience interesting to investigate.

In this case, the majority of respondents reported that their organizational processes prior to using a CMS were Fair/Moderate. 28% cited that it was either difficult or very difficult. **Overall, only a minority of 28% saw their processes prior to using a CMS as either easy or very easy.**

5

What were the pain points and/or missing features that made you migrate to a platform?



It's unlikely that users switching to a new platform have only a single pain point to cause such a change. As such, users were able to choose multiple options for this question. **The most common pain point by an impressive margin was that the old platform was time-consuming.** Better time management impacts every part of the content pipeline and improving it can be an essential way to optimize an organization's performance.

The second most common pain point was **difficulty in needing to learn a new system/skill/tech stack.** This is another aspect that can negatively impact a company's productivity and effectiveness – an inability to change old programs and add new ones can mean falling behind as customer expectations and technology evolve. Monolithic CMSs are typically the culprits behind this system as their rigid architecture and set frontend make it nearly impossible to quickly adapt to changing tech needs.

The third most common pain point was **security issues.** Security threats to a CMS can lead to serious consequences for the organization: lost revenue, stolen data, and a huge blow to customer trust. This is one reason why many users choose a headless CMS. The use of APIs means that each program is naturally quarantined, so a security risk in one area cannot spread to another. Threats are contained immediately. This is opposed to a monolithic system, where one security breach has the potential to take down an entire system.

How Storytelling Scales

Storyblok is the headless content management system that empowers 110,000 + developers and content teams to create better content experiences across any digital channel.



TRUSTED BY



STRONGER

123%
traffic increase
within 6 months

MARC O'POLO

14 days
full implementation
of Storyblok

WÜSTHOF

50%
revenue growth
in 60 days

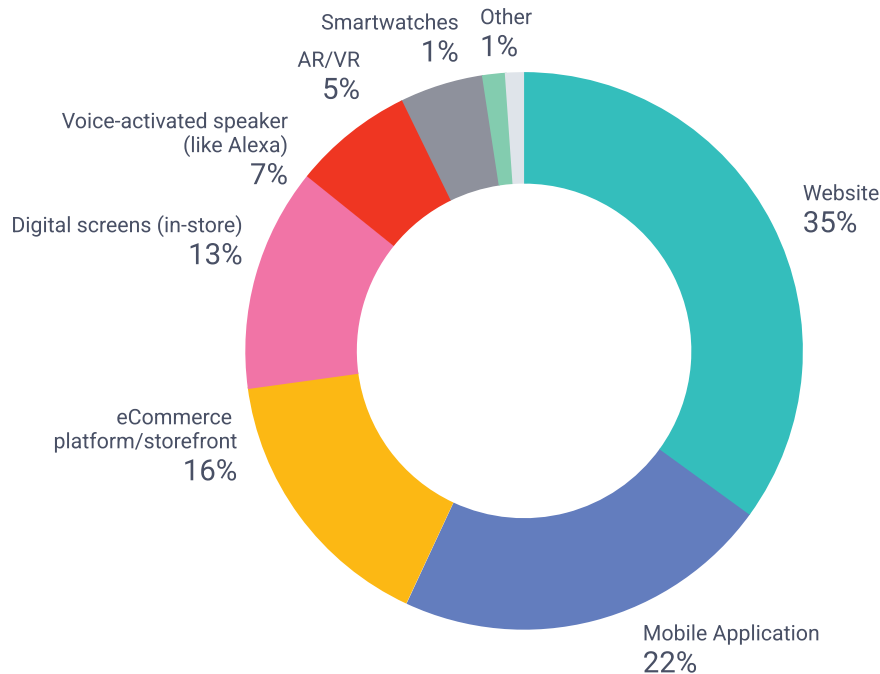
UPC

3x
faster website
performance

To learn more about how Storyblok helps companies provide next-generation digital experience, [read our case studies](#).

6

Which platforms and channels do you currently serve with your CMS?



The most commonly reported channels served by CMSs were **websites, mobile applications, and eCommerce platforms/storefronts** in that order. Given that these are typical channels for modern organizations, this is not surprising.

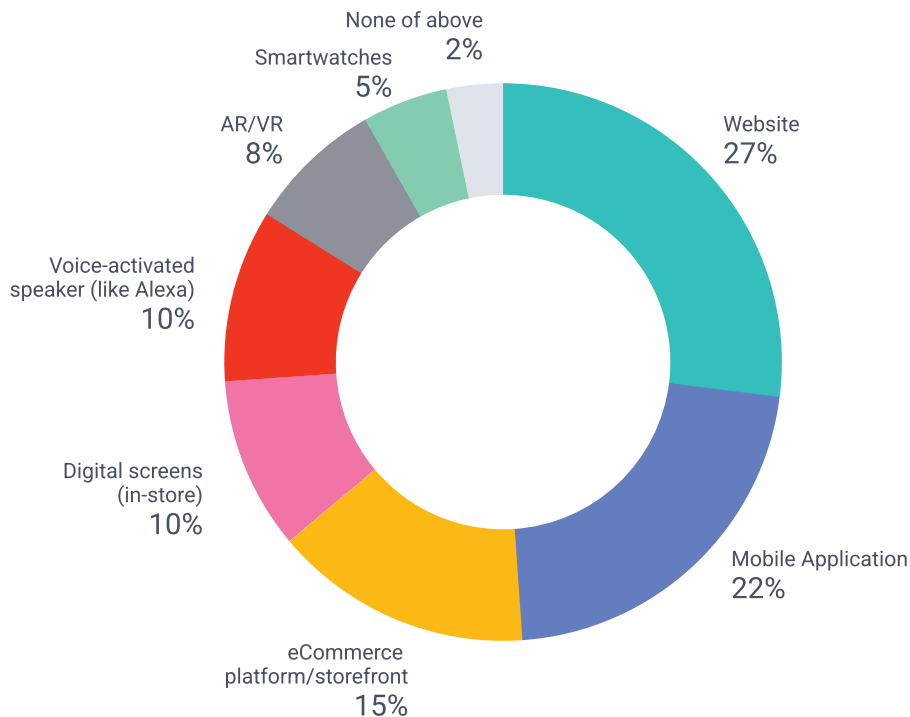
By contrast, the Internet of Things (IoT) options were not nearly as popular. The number of respondents using in-store digital screens, voice-activated speakers, AR/VR, and smart-watch channels combined were still less than those using websites.

One potential cause of this could be one of the pain points discussed in Question 5: difficulty in learning new technologies. IoT options are still relatively new and require omnichannel capabilities that many monolithic systems – systems that most UK respondents reported using – aren't capable of. We may see these numbers increase as the usage of headless CMSs does.

However, it's also worth noting that UK respondents were **4% more likely than the international sample to report using digital screens in-store**. This may suggest that companies in the UK have strategies that rely more heavily on brick-and-mortar stores than their global counterparts.

7

Which new platforms and channels do you plan to serve with your CMS in the future? (Check all that apply)



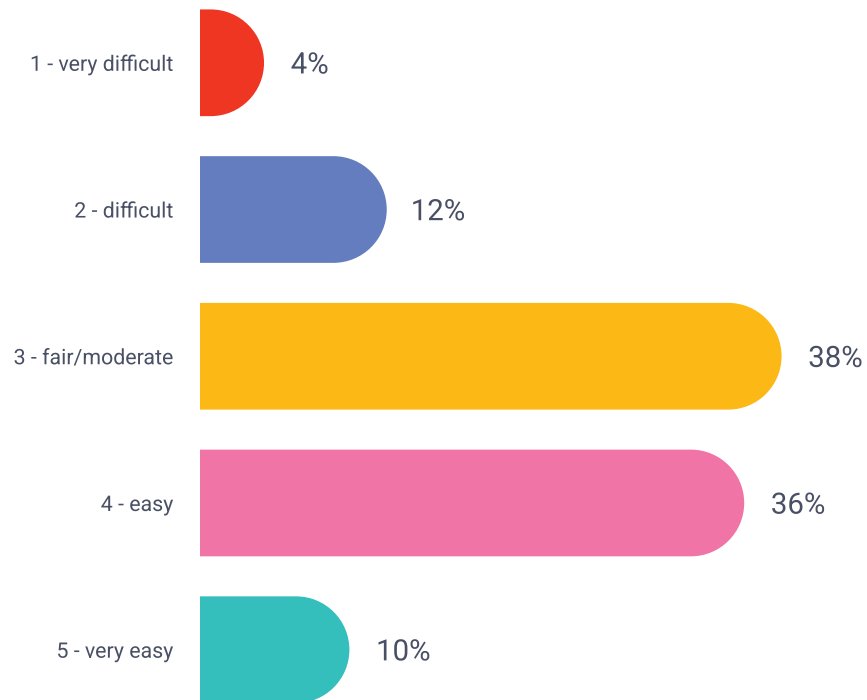
This question took the answers from the last and applied them to future plans. **The results were exactly the same in terms of ranking.** This may reflect a consensus among CMS users of what platforms are worth pursuing.

While the ranking stayed the same, there were differences in the exact number of answers that merit consideration. **Notably, 3% more people intend to use voice-activated speakers than are currently using the channel.** The same goes for AR/VR (up 3%) and smartwatches (up 4%).

This trend suggests that more and more users in the UK are looking to more fully embrace omnichannel strategies. This is supported by the relatively high percentage of headless CMS users: headless CMSs are naturally geared towards omnichannel approaches thanks to being API-based, while monolithic systems only offer a strict backend-frontend connection that limits possible channels by default. Thus, choosing a flexible system is key to accessing audiences using more than the traditional frontends.

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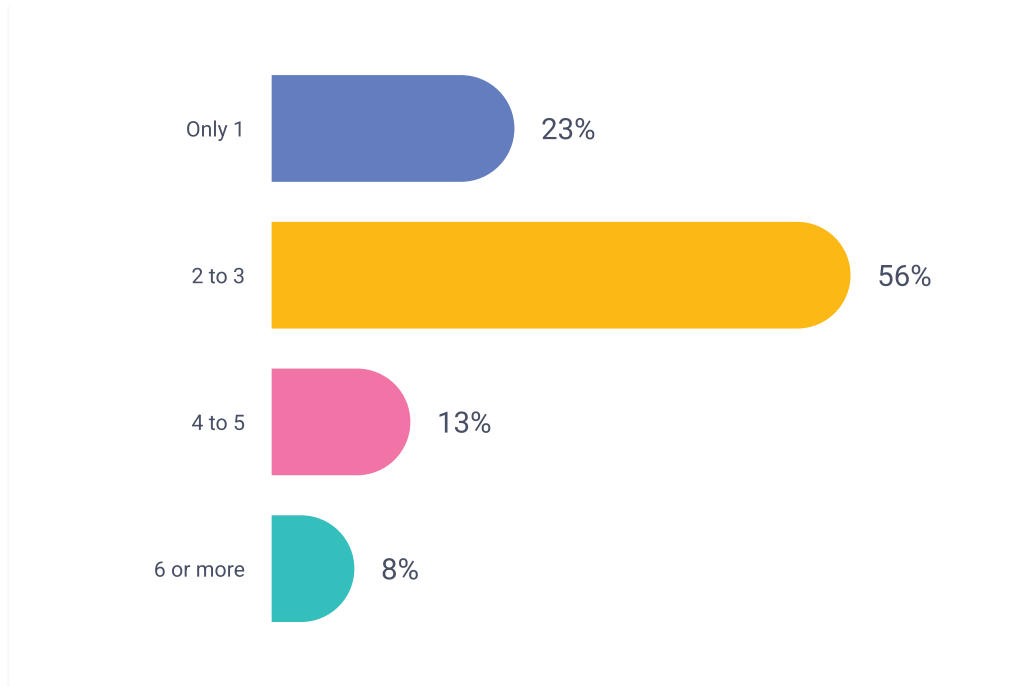
Rate your satisfaction with your current workflow process with your CMS on a scale of 1 to 5 - 1 being very difficult and 5 being very easy



Interestingly, this question indicates that there are significant differences between prior and current workflow process ease. Most notably, **46% of respondents cited their current processes as easy or very easy**, compared to 30% in the previous question. Similarly, those who found it to be difficult or very difficult decreased by an impressive 12%. **This indicates that CMSs improve ease of use across the board when compared to organizations that do not use one.**

9

How many different teams currently use the CMS at your organization?



56% of users stated that 2 to 3 teams currently use the CMS at their organization. 6 or more teams using a CMS was the least common choice, with only 8% indicating that they do so.

As for the 23% of respondents using only one team with their CMS, this may be explained by the type of system. Monolithic CMSs often present issues where they're trickier for non-technical teams to use. This may lead to only one team – perhaps developers – using it. However, this may also mean developers have to handle content responsibilities such as uploading and editing, which can be an inefficient use of their time and make the lives of content creators harder.

10

Please tick which teams are currently using a CMS at your organization



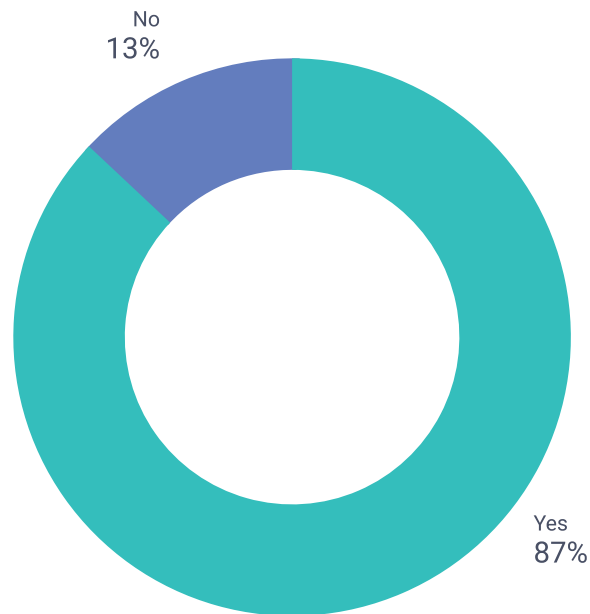
Sales was the team most likely to use the CMS, followed closely by Marketing and Operations. The two teams least likely to use an organization’s CMS were Design teams and Executives.

Interestingly, **developers only made up 11% of the sample**. However, this is a slight increase from the global average in 2022. Combined with the data from Question 3, one reason for this may be the increasing usage of headless in the UK region: as organizations are moving away from monolithic systems and page builders, developers may be finding that they can do more with headless CMSs and thus participate in their usage more.

Another reason for this might be that monolithic CMSs often lack robust collaboration tools. Without proper communication in-engine, developers might find it easier to work with each other and content creators through external tools. Unfortunately, this adds unnecessary steps and roadblocks to the workflow. This theory is further supported by Question 5’s indication that time-consuming processes were the most commonly cited pain point.

11

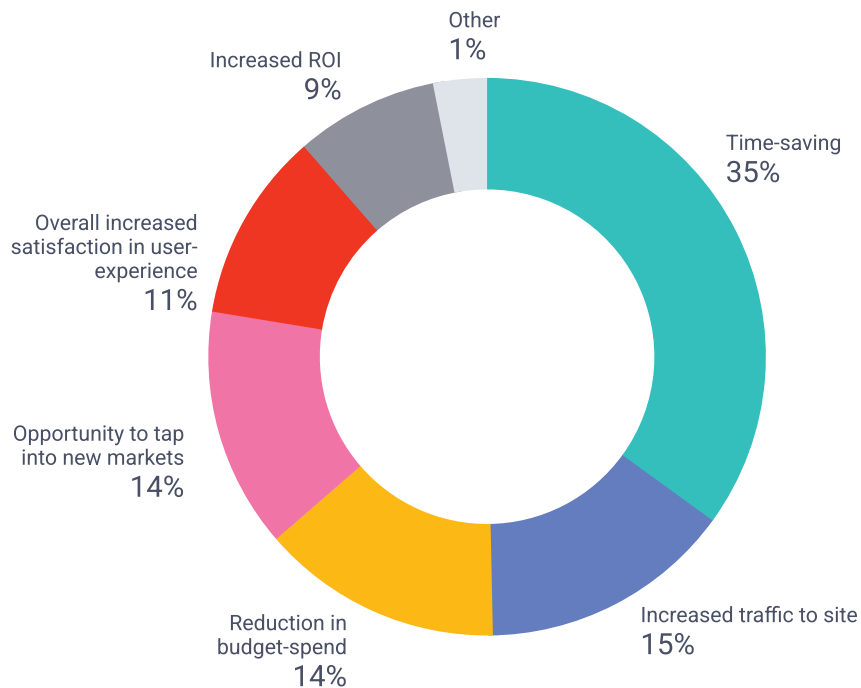
Would you say there have been improvements in terms of time-saving, budget, productivity, increased revenues/growth, meeting your KPIs since using a headless CMS? Have you seen any improvements?



An overwhelming majority of 87% found that switching to a headless CMS improved their content operations. This is despite the fact that the top five CMS choices in the sample were monolithic systems. This may suggest that the comparably lower number of headless CMS users in the sample is not tied to its performance, but possibly other reasons such as a lack of awareness of the technology and its benefits.

12

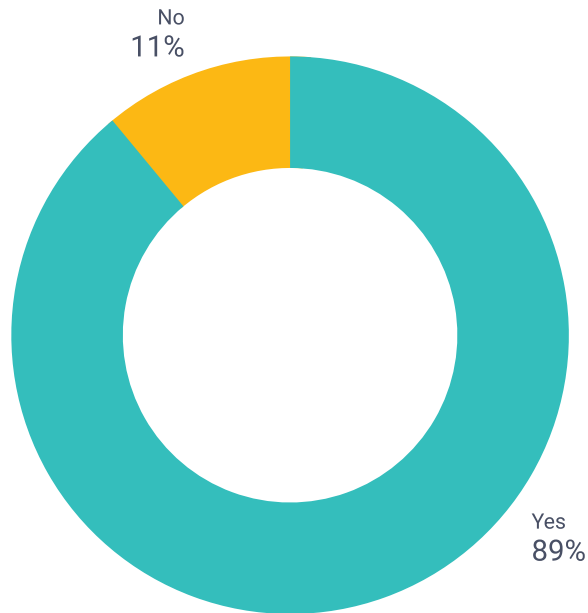
If yes, please choose one or more following improvements you have seen since using a headless CMS



After switching to a headless system, **35% of people saw time-saving improvements**. Considering that this same sample demonstrated time-consuming operations as the main pain point leading them to seek out a new system, this suggests that **switching to a headless CMS can be the solution to the most common content problem**. Additionally, 15% saw increased traffic after adopting a headless system, and 14% found a reduction in budget-spend.

13

Do you think your current CMS will be effective for the next several years?



An impressive **89% of users believe that their current CMS will remain effective in the coming years**. This reduces the likelihood that they will consider switching for future-proofing reasons. However, this does not mean that they will not switch: earlier cited pain points may still affect this decision.

Key Takeaways

The content management industry is in a period of impressive growth. This is perhaps best illustrated by the rise of one CMS type in particular: headless. Users in the UK are showing a growing interest in this type of system as shown by the relatively high rate of adoption.

Despite the fact that the top five CMSs for the UK sample were all monolithic, this doesn't necessarily mean that the pattern will hold: many respondents cited issues such as time-consuming processes and difficulty using new technologies within the system. Moreover, users in the same sample reported benefits after using headless such as less time and money spent. UK users are also more likely than international users to be exploring new proofs of concepts for their CMSs, suggesting an even higher probability of more headless systems in the future of this region.

Overall, the state of CMS in 2023 is one that suggests more and more users will be turning to headless systems, especially when compared to the results from last year. While the use of monolithic systems remains high, so does the awareness of their shortcomings. The CMS market seems to be on the precipice of a turn toward the limitless possibilities offered by headless CMS.

ABOUT STORYBLOK

Storyblok is a next-generation headless content management system revolutionizing how storytelling scales. With an API-first approach, it helps users create and scale content to any digital channel. Features like the visual editor and digital asset manager mean content creators can work independently. The power of headless's best-of-breed approach also means that developers can build a perfectly customized tech stack, all protected by Storyblok's ISO 27001 security certification. Add the benefit of Storyblok's advanced collaboration suite, and all these teams can come together to work together directly within the CMS.

In a constantly changing world with more user experience demands than ever before, brands such as Netflix, T-Mobile, and MindValley trust Storyblok to provide secure, personalized experiences to their users.

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