



# The State of CMS 2023

## 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 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 Global State of CMS 2023 report. We set out to take stock of the modern user's needs and behavior: 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 world to understand their choices – and in turn, what role CMSs play in a constantly changing market.

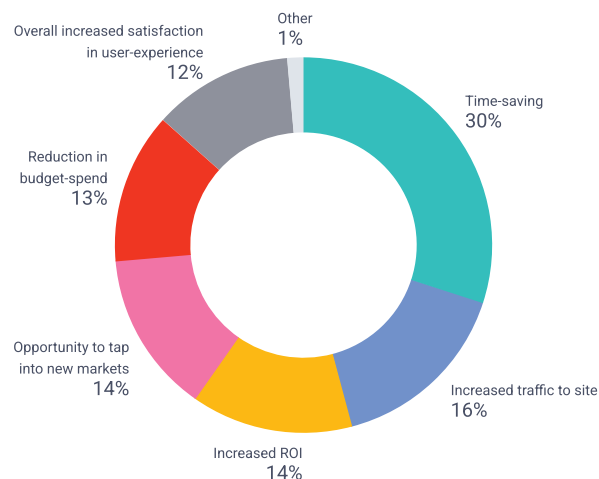
Countries consulted: USA, UK, Netherlands, Germany, France, Sweden, Australia  
Total respondents: 1,639

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# Executive Summary

- 1 The majority of users (57%) need more than 1 CMS just to maintain their content operations, with 11% using 4 or more CMSs.
- 2 **Need for a new technology stack and omnichannel capabilities** 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 **Security issues, difficulty in needing to learn a new system/skill/tech stack, and time consuming processes** are the 3 main reasons why businesses change their CMS.
- 4 22.5% of respondents believe their current CMS workflows are difficult or very difficult.
- 5 In the vast majority of businesses (73%) multiple teams use a CMS on a regular basis, making proper workflows and collaboration capabilities even more important.
- 6 36% 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 (84%) 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

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.

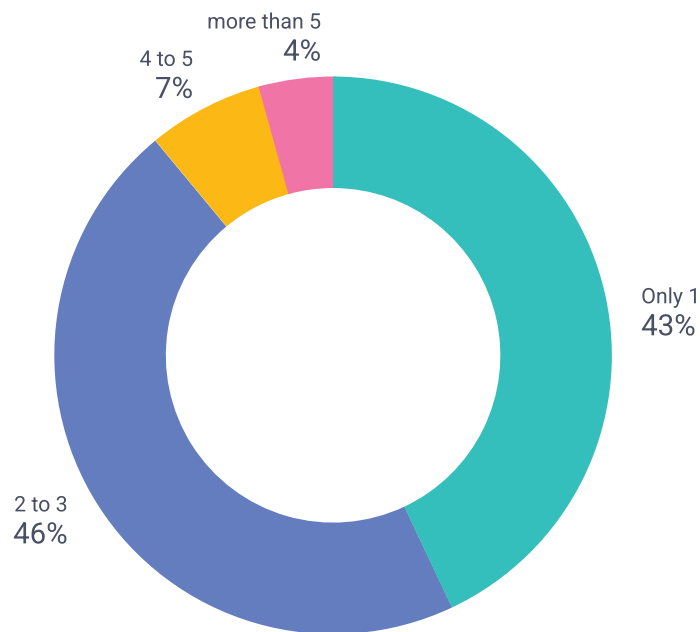
Our results revealed the following:



A majority of respondents (**58%**) 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 1639 to **956**.

# Survey Results

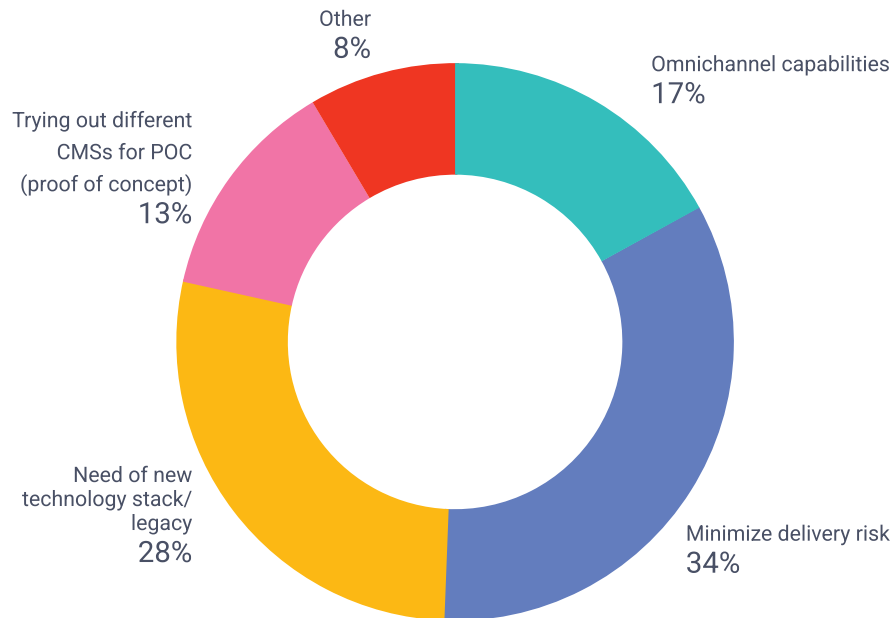
## 1 How many CMSs do you currently use at your organization?



**Most respondents (46%) used 2 to 3 CMSs in their organization.** However, the number of respondents using just one was not far behind at **43%**. Using 4 or more CMSs stands at **11%**, 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.

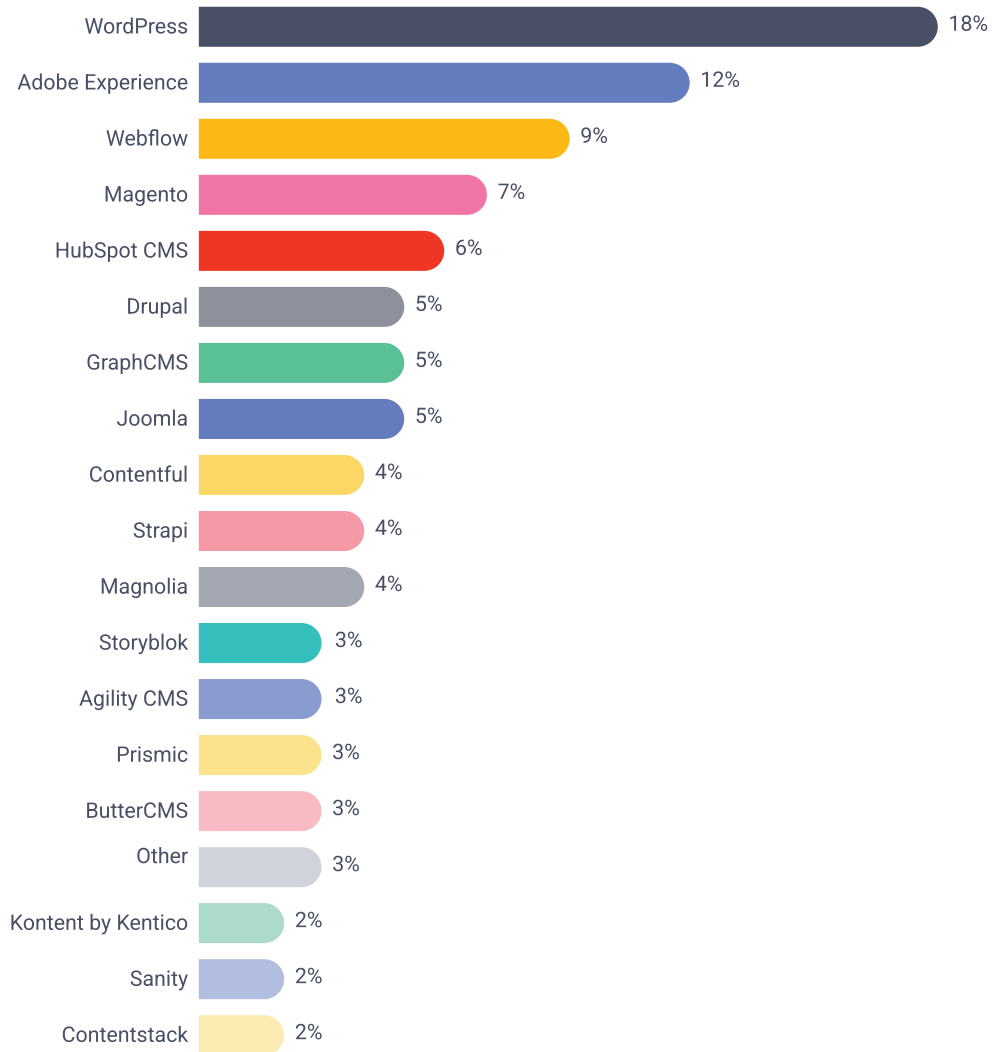
The top-listed reason for using more than 2 CMSs was to **minimize delivery risk**. This could be the result of having backups, or perhaps using multiple CMSs to serve multiple frontends.

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 **omnichannel capabilities**. Omnichannel strategies are an essential part of modern marketing. Customers expect to be able to access content across a huge number of channels, one that will only continue to grow. However, monolithic systems are not suited to providing omnichannel experiences: the backend is tied to a single, inflexible frontend, meaning getting content on multiple platforms is extremely difficult. This may be one reason that users resort to a multi-CMS ecosystem.

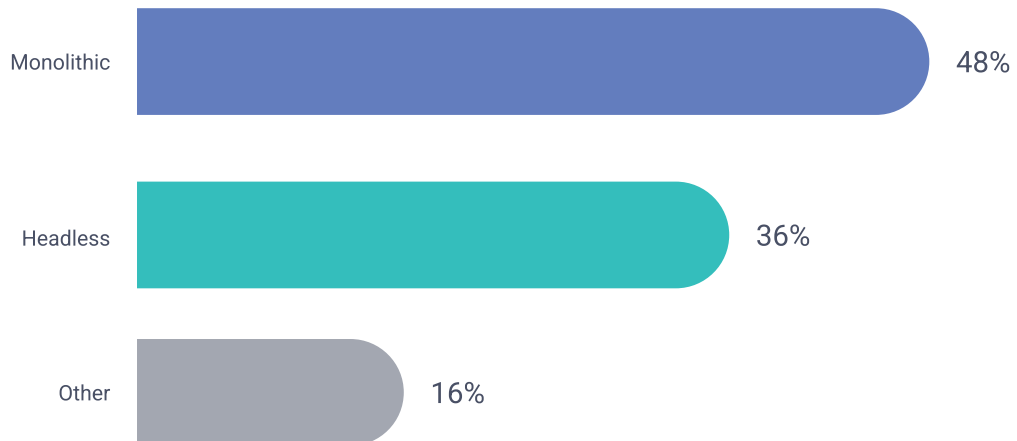
## 3

## Which CMSs are you currently using?



**The most commonly used CMS platform in the sample is WordPress**, which led by nearly 100 respondents. The top 6 CMSs by the number of users alone are all monolithic solutions: Wordpress, Adobe Experience Manager, Webflo, Magento, HubSpot, and Drupal.



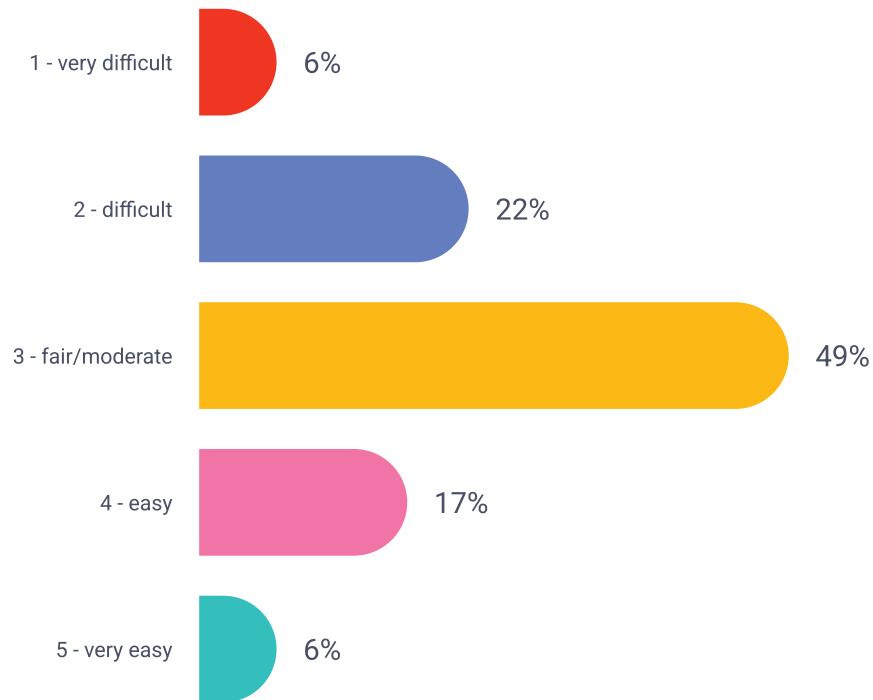


While monolithic systems made up the majority of the sample at 48%, **headless systems still claimed 36%**. Other choices (such as page builders, web apps, and custom CMSs) came in last with 16% of respondents. When compared to the State of CMS 2022, there is a small difference present: **the use of headless CMS has increased by roughly 1% and the use of monolithic CMS decreased by roughly 2%.**

This could be a subtle sign of the CMS industry beginning to favor headless over monolithic systems. However, if this difference is considered insignificant, the similarity to last year's results still proves that headless systems continue to be a strong contender in the CMS market with no signs of decline.

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



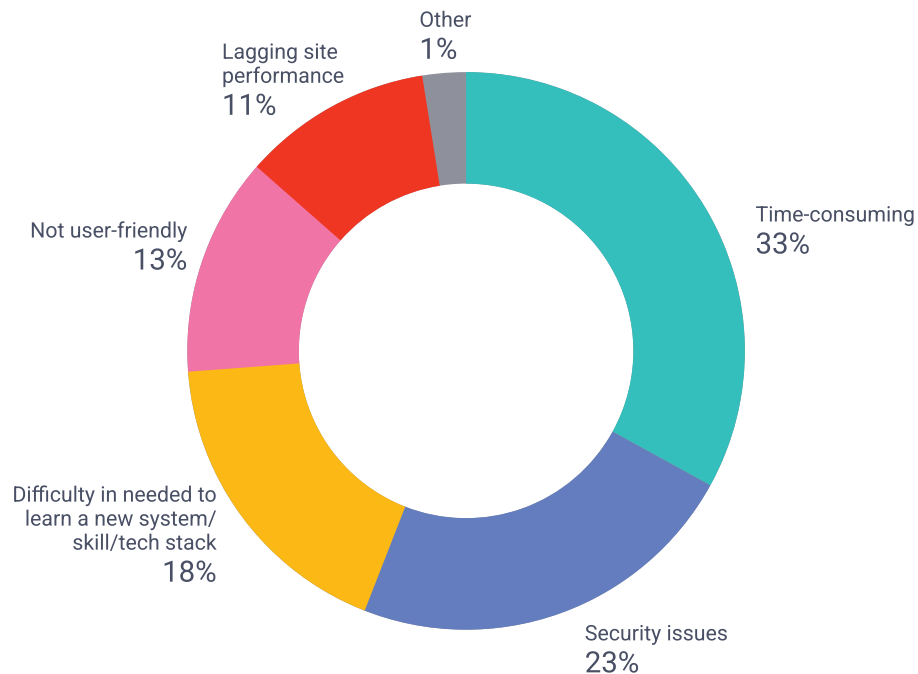
CMSs often bring big changes to organizations, making the contrast between the prior and current experience interesting to investigate.

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 26% 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 **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.

The third most frequently cited 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.

# 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

NETFLIX adidas THE MOUNTAIN OATLY!   RALEIGH AUTODESK DECATHLON upc

### STRONGER

**123%**

traffic increase  
within 6 months

### MARC O'POLO

**14days**

full implementation  
of Storyblok

### WÜSTHOF

**50%**

revenue growth  
in 60 days

### UPC

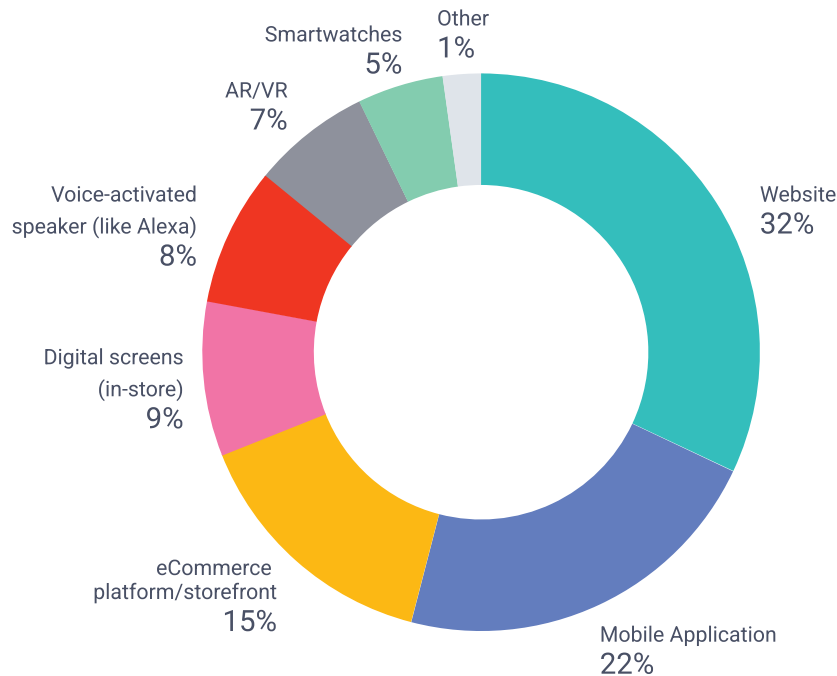
**3x**

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?



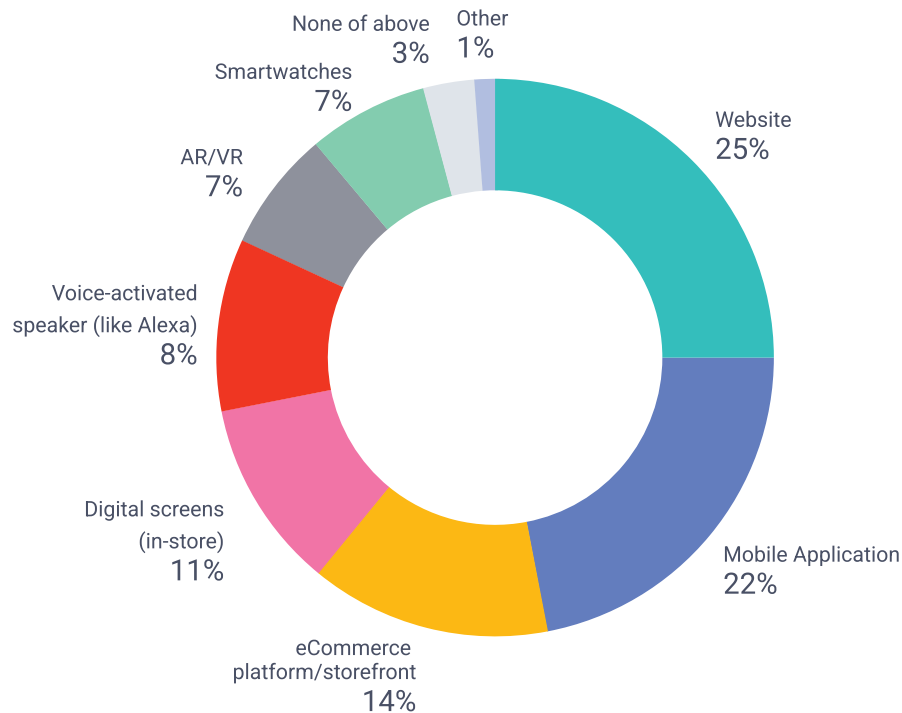
The most commonly reported channels served by CMSs were **websites, mobile applications, and eCommerce platforms/storefronts** in that order. Given that these are typical channels for modern organizations, this is not surprising.

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 – those which make up the majority of this study – aren't capable of. We may see these numbers increase as the usage of headless CMSs does.

7

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

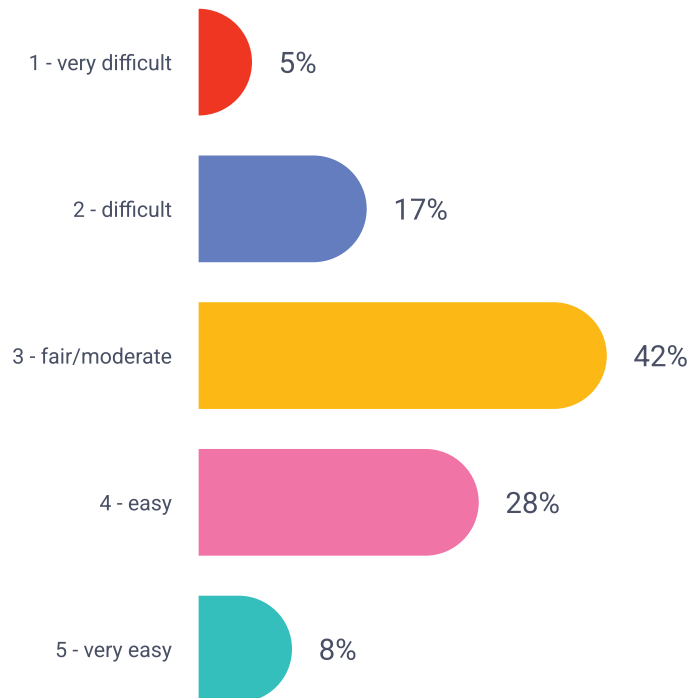


This question took the answers from the last and applied them to future plans. **The results were exactly the same in terms of ranking.** This may reflect a consensus among CMS users of what platforms are worth pursuing.

While the ranking stayed the same, there were differences in the exact number of answers that merit consideration. For example, 9.2% of users stated that they currently use a digital in-store screen, while 11.2% stated that they plan to do so in the future. These moderate increases apply to all categories, showing both a recognition of the trending digital channels as well as a signal that some users are actively planning to take advantage of them.

8

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

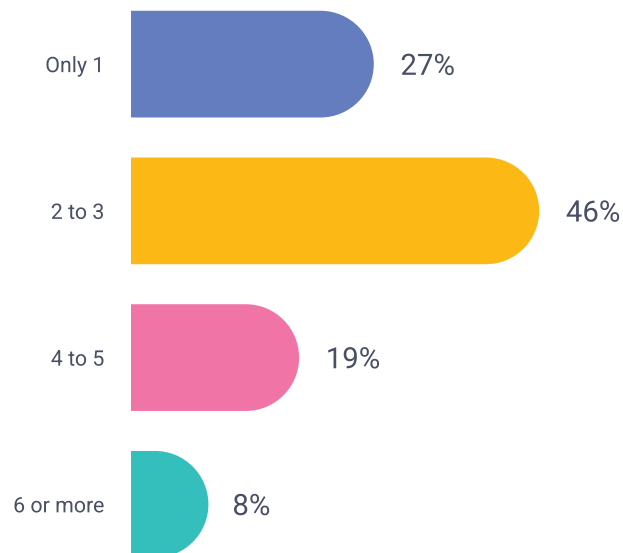


The satisfaction rate for CMS workflow processes presents as a bell curve, though it favors the easy end over the difficult one: **22.5% stated it was very difficult or difficult, 41.6% that it was fair/moderate, and 35.8% that it was easy or very easy.**

It's worth noting that while not an exact match, this distribution is similar to how people ranked their organizational processes before using a CMS. However, there are more easy/very easy answers than difficult/very difficult ones in this chart. **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?



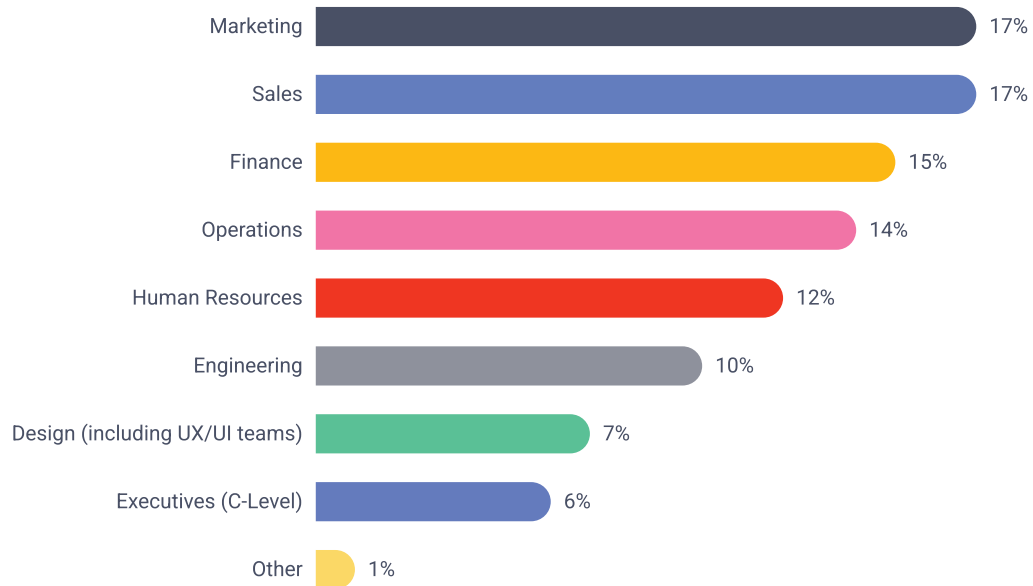
**46% of users stated that 2 to 3 teams currently use the CMS at their organization.** 6 or more teams using a CMS was the least common choice, with only 8% indicating that they do so.

As for the 27% 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



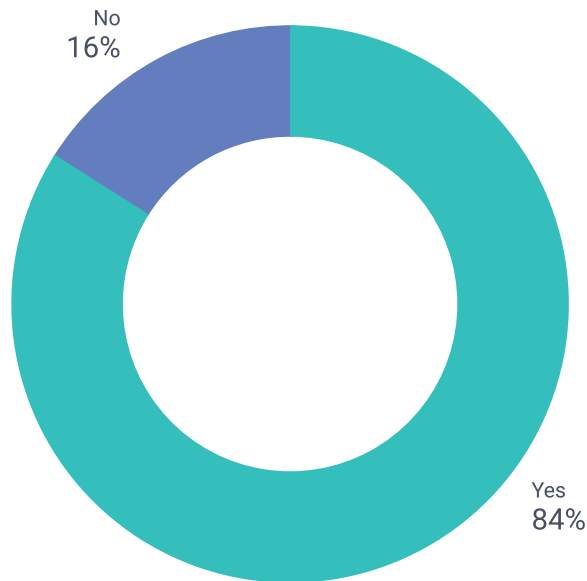
Marketing was the team most likely to use the CMS, followed closely by Sales and Finance. The two teams least likely to use an organization's CMS were Design teams and Executives.

Interestingly, **developers only made up 10% of the sample**. However, this is a slight increase from 2022. Combined with the data from Question 3, one reason for this may be the increasing usage of headless: 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.

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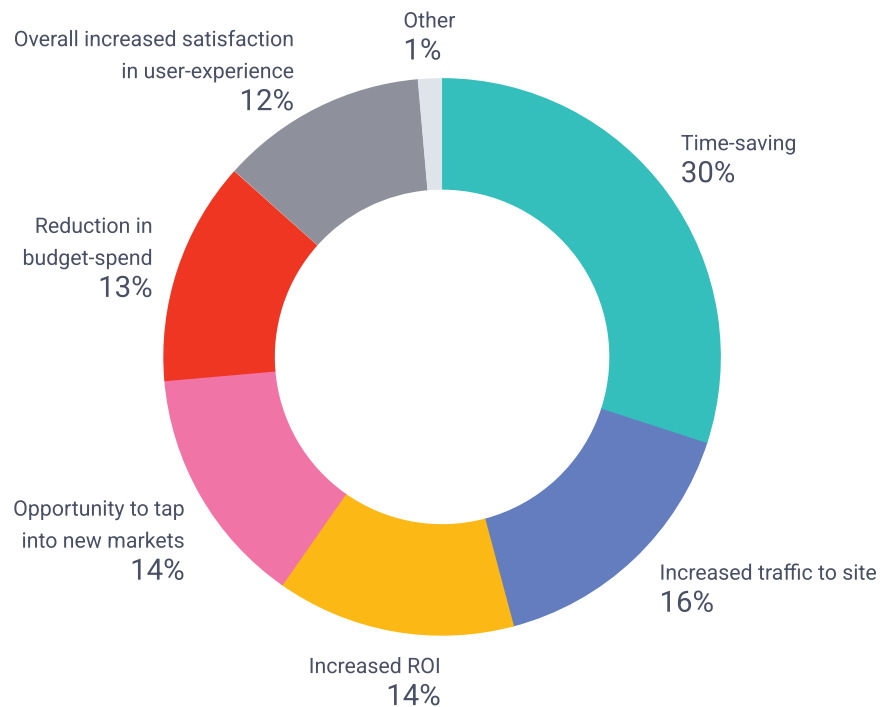
Would you say there have been improvements in terms of time-saving, budget, productivity, increased revenues/growth, meeting your KPIs since using a headless CMS? Have you seen any improvements?



**An overwhelming majority of 84% found that switching to a headless CMS improved their content operations, a 1% increase from 2022.** 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

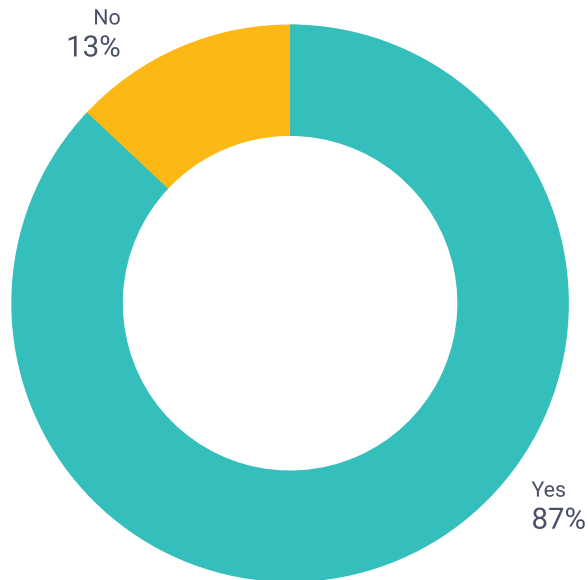
If yes, please choose one or more following improvements you have seen since using a headless CMS



After switching to a headless system, **30% 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, **16%** saw increased traffic after adopting a headless system, and **14%** found better opportunities to tap into new markets.

13

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



An impressive **87% 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

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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. With respondents showing an increasing interest in expanding to new channels and fixing common issues such as time-consuming processes, security, and user experience, it seems that the commonly used monolithic systems may not be up to modern challenges.

This is further illustrated by the overwhelming majority of respondents who have switched to headless seeing benefits to their organizations, more so than in 2022. Despite this, most of the sample was made up of monolithic CMS users. When the low usage rate of headless is compared to the high satisfaction rate, it begins to appear that the thing holding this type of system back is the awareness of the benefits it can offer.

Overall, the state of CMS in 2023 is one that suggests more and more users will turn to headless systems in the future, 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.

Ready to see how Storyblok can take your content management to the next level?

[TALK TO ONE OF OUR SPECIALISTS](#)



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