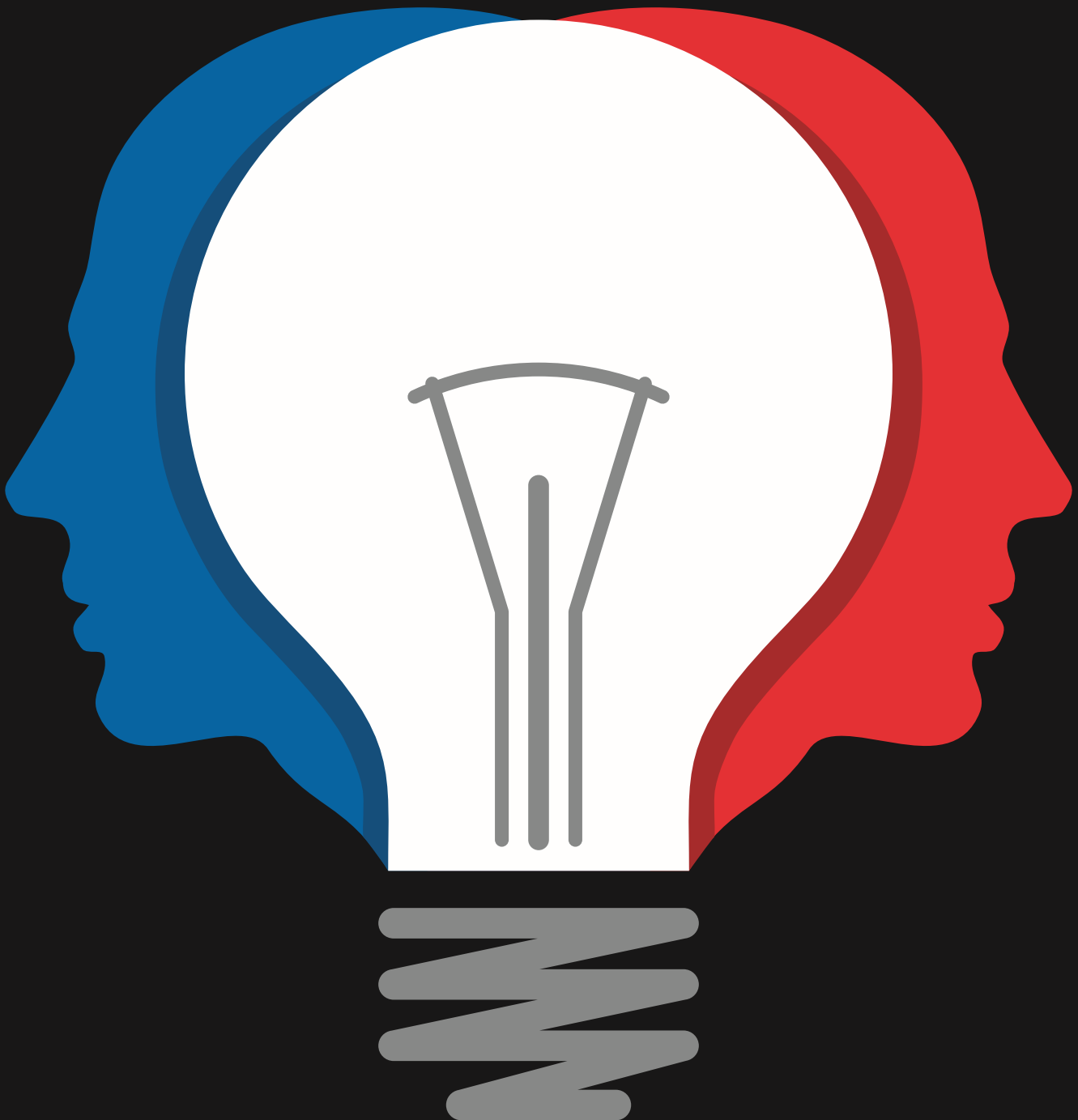




EDUCATION WEEK
RESEARCH CENTER

Education Innovation

Results of a National Survey



About Editorial Projects In Education

Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, the online *Teacher*, *EdWeek Market Brief*, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The Education Week Research Center conducts surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in *Education Week* and special reports such as *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts online data resource.

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Executive Summary

In October 2018, the Education Week Research Center conducted a nationally-representative online survey of nearly 500 K-12 teachers, principals, and district leaders to learn more about their views on innovation — a common buzzword that was defined in the survey as “the introduction and/or creation of new ideas or methods.”

Major findings from the survey include:

- Almost all educators (91%) believe that innovation will be at least a moderate priority for them in their schools and districts over the next year. But only 17 percent say it will be a very high priority.
- Differences emerge when the results are disaggregated by respondents’ professional roles. While roughly two-thirds of school principals and three-quarters of district administrators expect innovation to be a high or very high priority in the year ahead, only 41 percent of teachers share that view.
- The vast majority of educators (89%) feel that there was at least some innovation in their schools or districts over the past year. But only 8 percent indicate they saw a great deal of innovation.
- When teachers and school principals try to innovate, they might be driven by different motivations than district leaders. Both teachers (47%) and school principals (45%) most often say their efforts to innovate are driven by the goal of increasing overall student achievement. District leaders (27%) most commonly cite the need to keep pace with a changing economy and the skills students need for employment but just 9 percent of teachers point to that goal.
- The majority of educators (56%) feel pressure to be innovative in their schools or districts. Some educators are feeling more heat than others. Nearly three-quarters of district leaders (72%) cite pressure to innovate, compared with half of school principals (49%) or teachers (50%).
- When asked to identify the challenge that most often stops them from innovating, more than one-third of educators (36%) highlight the impact of workload and day-to-day deadlines or time pressures. More than one-fifth (22%) point to a lack of funding.
- Barriers to innovation differ across communities. Nearly half (46%) of educators from the wealthiest districts point to workload and time pressures as the most significant challenges. By contrast, those issues are the top barrier for only about one-quarter (27%) of educators in the highest-poverty districts where a lack of funding is an equally common stumbling block.

The survey results provide insight into the perspectives of educators with first-hand experience in schools and districts nationwide. They also highlight differences in how educators think about innovation based on their varying professional roles and the socioeconomic characteristics of their schools and districts.

Introduction

The word “innovation” is commonly used in a variety of sectors including the business community, the nonprofit or philanthropic world, and government. It’s also used in education. Policymakers at the state and federal levels have routinely cast their nets in search of cutting-edge solutions for schools.

For instance, the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Innovation and Improvement is tasked with promoting and investing in innovative programs and practices. The federal Investing in Innovation or i3 program provided \$1.4 billion to promote initiatives across the nation.

Disruptive changes sparked by education technology and other forces are on the radar of education analysts. Even a quick internet search reveals a whole host of articles and organizations focused on educational innovation.

But what how do educators currently working in schools and districts think about innovation? How much of a priority is it for them?

In October 2018, the Education Week Research Center conducted a nationally-representative online survey of nearly 500 K-12 teachers, principals, and district leaders to learn more about their views on innovation—a common buzzword that was defined in the survey as “the introduction and/or creation of new ideas or methods.”

The survey included 17 questions on a range of topics.

- The amount of innovation in schools and districts
- The degree to which innovation is a priority for teachers and school administrators
- Pressure that educators feel to be innovative
- Challenges that stop innovation and supports that could foster it
- Sources that educators rely on for insights or inspiration with respect to innovation

SURVEY DETAILS

Survey Administered: October 30 to November 8, 2018

Sample: Nationally-representative

Respondents: District administrators, school principals, and teachers

Total Respondents: 493

The proper role for innovation in education is still something that analysts will debate. In his 2018 *Education Week* commentary titled *Why I’m Against Innovation in Education*, author and consultant, Mike Schmoker, writes that he’s “against our inordinate obsession with what’s new at the expense of what works — with exceedingly superior (if much older) evidence-based practices.”

The survey results in this report won’t settle debates about innovation’s place in education. But they offer clues about how and why educators are trying to innovate in their schools and districts.

Innovation in Schools

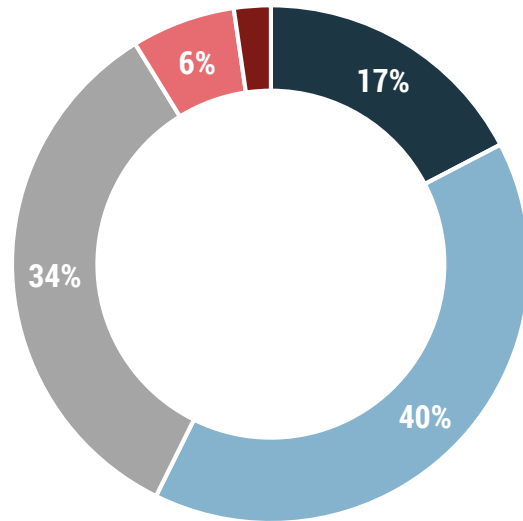
Is Innovation a Priority for Educators?

Educators work to address a range of significant goals and demands each year. They must determine which competing priorities reach the top of their to-do lists. Because, in broad terms, innovation is linked to improvement, it's something that many educators are likely to embrace. But it's also logical to guess that there might be some tension between the goal of changing things for the better and other priorities, such as meeting day-to-day deadlines or implementing tried and true instructional strategies. Survey results suggest that innovation is on educators' radar, but not the top item on their agendas.

Almost all educators (91%) believe that innovation will be at least a moderate priority for them in their schools and districts over the next year. But only 17 percent say it will be a very high priority.

Differences emerge when the results are disaggregated by respondents' professional roles. While roughly two-thirds of school principals and three-quarters of district administrators expect innovation to be a high or very high priority in the year ahead, only 41 percent of teachers share that view.

To what extent will innovation be a priority for you in your school or district over the next year?

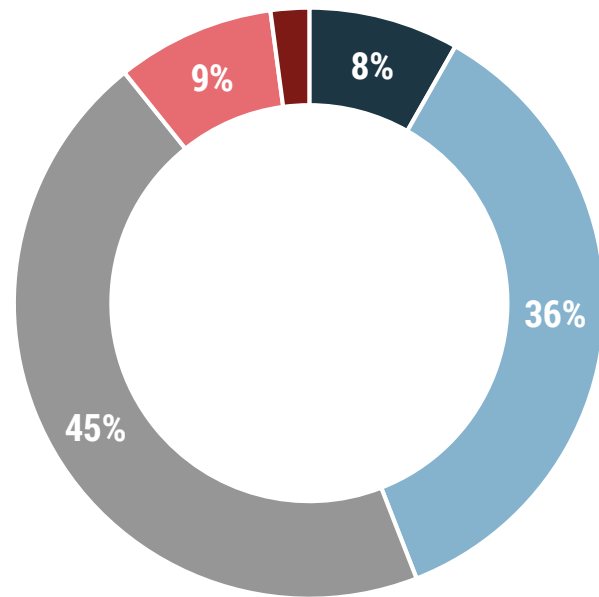


■ Very high priority ■ High ■ Moderate ■ Low ■ Not a priority

How Much Innovation Takes Place?

The vast majority of educators (89%) feel that there was at least some innovation in their schools or districts over the past year. But only 8 percent indicate they saw a great deal of innovation.

How would you describe the amount of innovation in your school or district over the past year?



■ A great deal ■ Quite a lot ■ Some ■ Very little ■ None

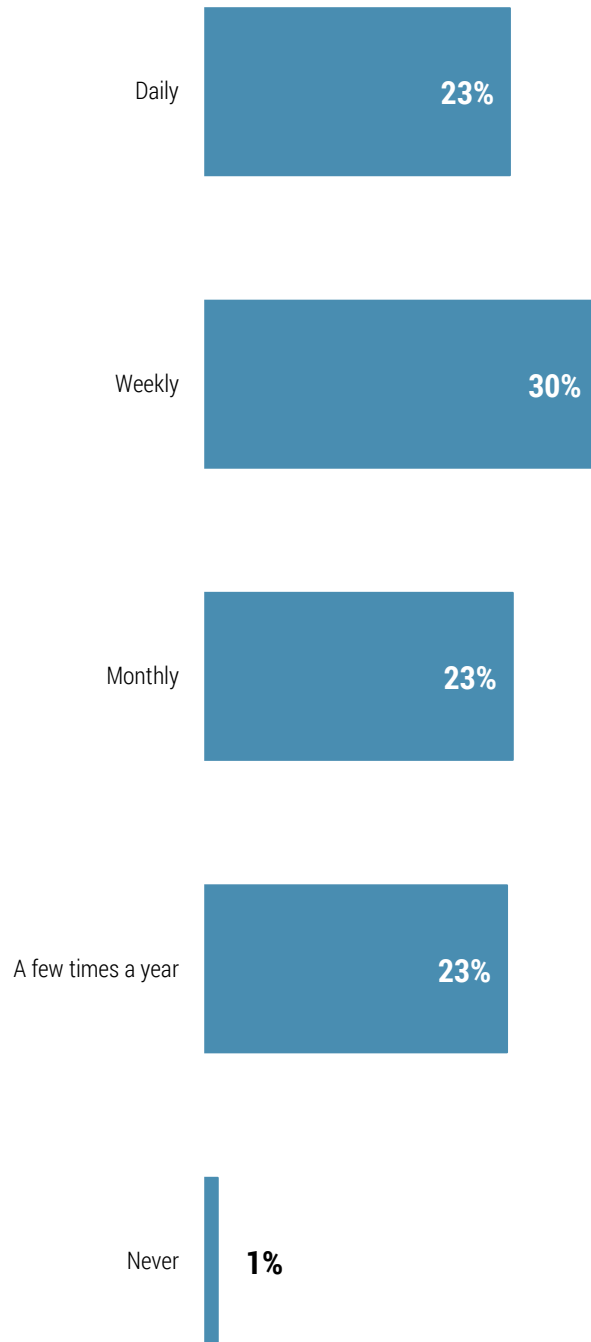
Are Efforts to Innovate Rare in Schools?

Innovation could occur on daily tasks or it could be something that's reserved for a handful of occasions a year.

Educators are about equally likely to say they try to innovate daily (23%), weekly (30%), monthly (23%), or just a few times a year (23%).

Legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden famously warned players that they should "never mistake activity for achievement." Do daily efforts to innovate have more impact than less frequent attempts? That judgement lies in the eye of the beholder and may depend on the quality of the innovations.

How often do you try to innovate in your school or district?



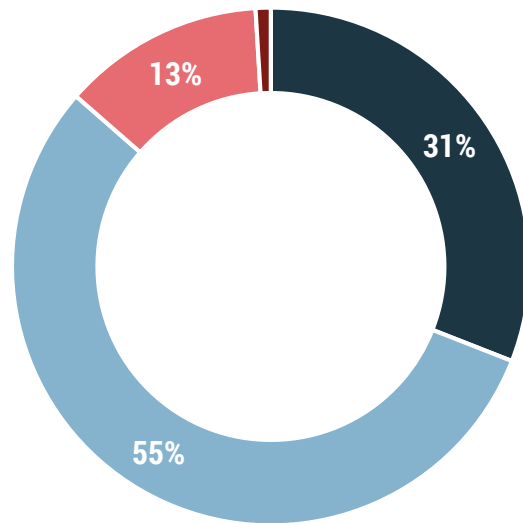
Approaches to Innovation

Are Educators Early-Adopters?

Educators were asked to describe their adoption of new innovations on a scale ranging from risk-taker to resister, loosely based on the “Diffusion of Innovations” model put forward by Everett Rogers in his research. His model classifies members of a social system into adopter categories based on innovativeness or the degree to which an individual is earlier or later in adopting new ideas¹. The majority (55%) say they like to try out new innovations before they are commonly used, but select them carefully. Roughly one-third describe themselves as risk-takers willing to be the first to try new innovations that may not succeed. Zero respondents say they are usually resistant to new innovations and among the last to adopt them.

¹Rogers, E. M. (2003). Diffusion of innovations. Simon and Schuster.

Which of the following best describes your adoption of new innovations?



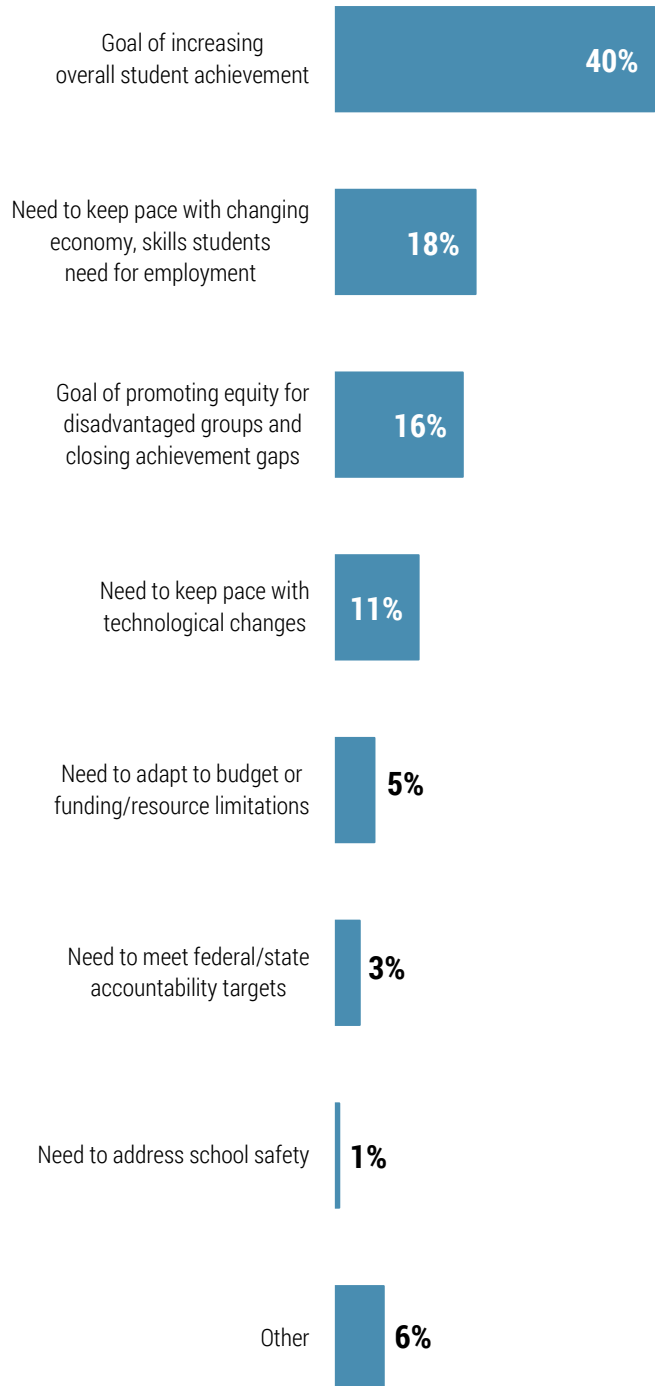
- I am a risk-taker, willing to be the first to try new innovations that may not succeed
- I like to try out new innovations before they are commonly used, but select them carefully
- I will try new innovations, but after they have been available for a while
- I am generally skeptical about new innovations and will try them later than most people
- I am usually resistant to new innovations and among the last to adopt them

What Drives Educators to Innovate?

Four in 10 educators report that the goal of increasing overall student achievement is most likely to drive their efforts to innovate, making it the most commonly cited motivation. That goal far outpaced the need to keep pace with a changing economy and the skills students need for employment, which rank second at just 18 percent.

When teachers and school principals try to innovate, they might be driven by different motivations than district leaders. Both teachers (47%) and school principals (45%) most often say their efforts to innovate are driven by the goal of increasing overall student achievement. District leaders (27%) most commonly cite the need to keep pace with a changing economy and the skills students need for employment but just 9 percent of teachers point to that goal.

Which of the following factors is most likely to drive your efforts to innovate in your school or district?



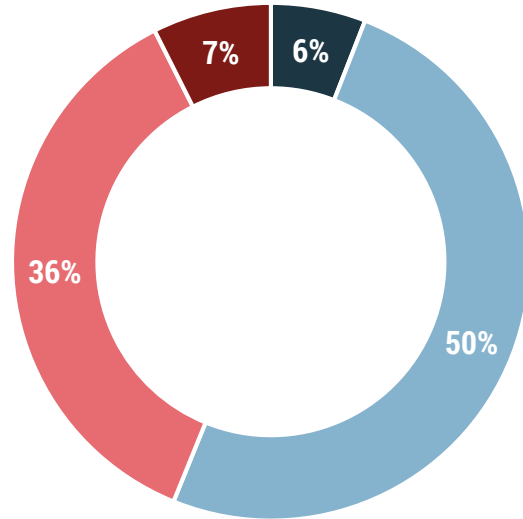
Pressure to Innovate

Do Educators Feel Pressure to Innovate?

The majority of educators (56%) feel pressure to be innovative in their schools or districts. The pressure can take varying forms, come from different sources, and have unpredictable effects. But there's no question that educators are feeling the heat to develop new solutions and make cutting-edge improvements.

Some educators are feeling more heat than others. Nearly three-quarters of district leaders (72%) cite pressure to innovate, compared with half of school principals (49%) or teachers (50%).

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I feel pressure to be innovative in my school or district.



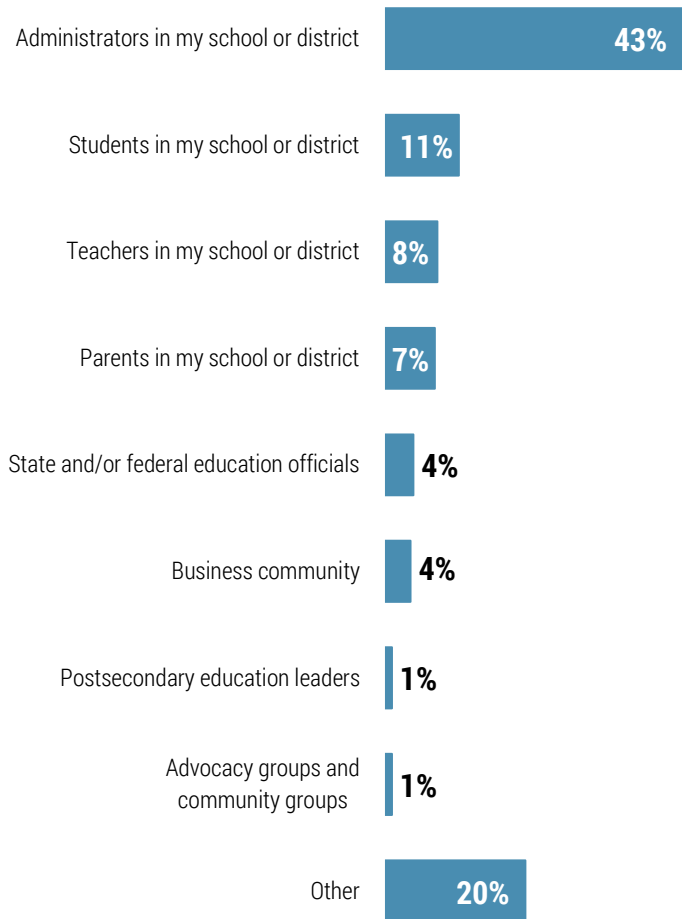
■ Completely agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Completely disagree

What Are the Primary Pressure Sources?

Administrators are the most common source of the pressure educators feel to be innovative. Educators are much less likely to cite pressure from other stakeholders in their schools and districts, such as students, parents, or teachers. They're even less likely to point to the influence of business or postsecondary leaders outside the K-12 community.

An even higher share of educators in urban and high-poverty communities point to administrators. The majority of educators in urban (61%) districts say that administrators are the leading pressure source. By contrast, just 50 percent of suburban and 33 percent of rural/town educators cite administrators.

What is the primary source of the pressure you feel to be innovative in your school or district?

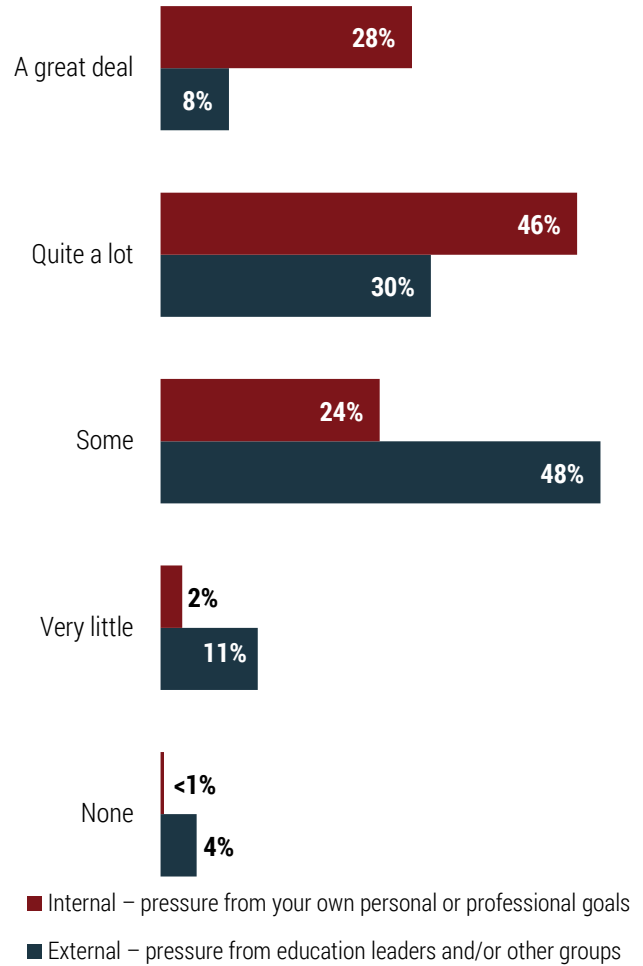


Note: Only respondents indicating they feel pressure to innovate were asked about sources of pressure.

Is Pressure Internal or External?

In any line of work, people may feel pressure to meet both their own personal or professional goals and the demands of external forces. With respect to innovation, educators report that they feel more internal than external pressure. Nearly three-quarters of respondents (74%) say they feel quite a lot or a great deal of internal pressure. Only 38 percent feel that same degree of pressure from external sources, such as education leaders or other groups.

When it comes to pressure to be innovative in your school or district, how much pressure do you feel from the following sources?



Note: Only respondents indicating they feel pressure to innovate were asked about sources of pressure.

Challenges and Supports

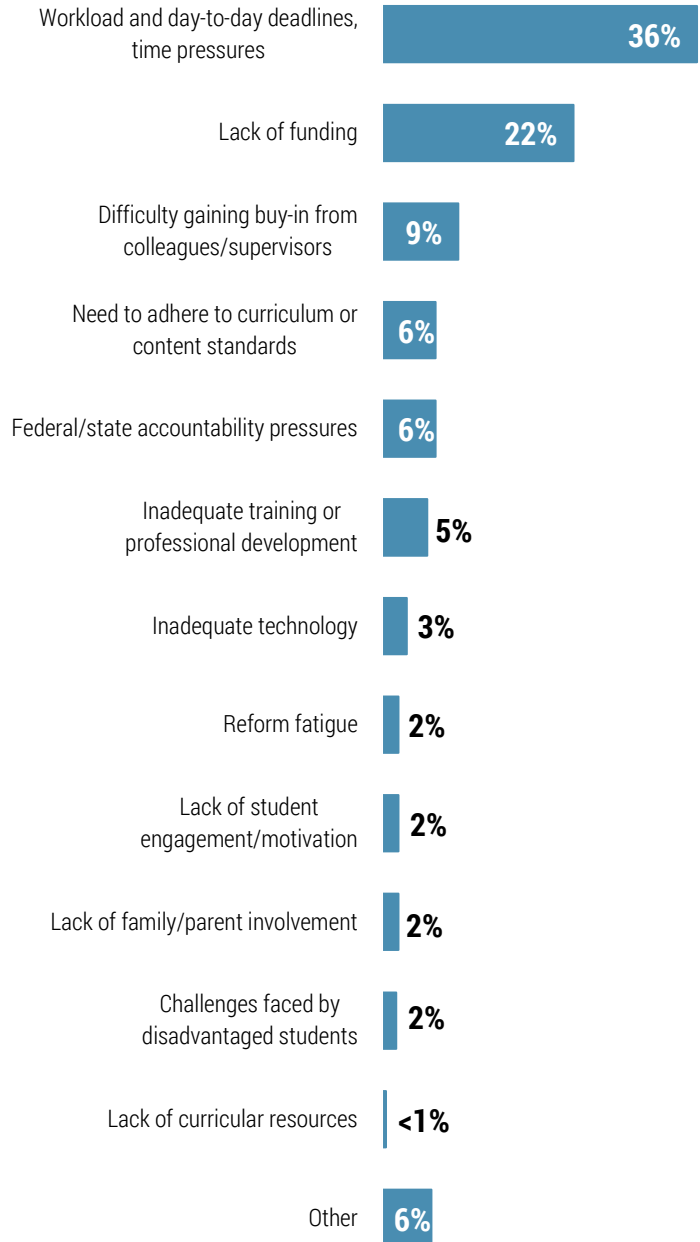
What Stops Innovation?

When asked to identify the challenge that most often stops them from innovating, more than one-third of educators (36%) highlight the impact of workload and day-to-day deadlines or time pressures. More than one-fifth (22%) point to a lack of funding.

Barriers to innovation differ across communities. For 44 percent of suburban educators, workload and day-to-day deadlines most commonly stop innovation, compared with only 3 in 10 educators in urban and rural/town locations. A lack of funding is cited more often by urban and rural educators than by their suburban peers.

Workload and time pressures are by far the most common challenges to innovation say educators in the wealthiest districts. A lack of funding rivals them in high-poverty communities. Nearly half (46%) of educators from the wealthiest districts point to workload and time pressures as the most significant challenges. By contrast, those issues are the top barrier for only about one-quarter (27%) of educators in the highest-poverty districts where a lack of funding is an equally common stumbling block.

Which of the following challenges most often stops you from innovating in your school or district?

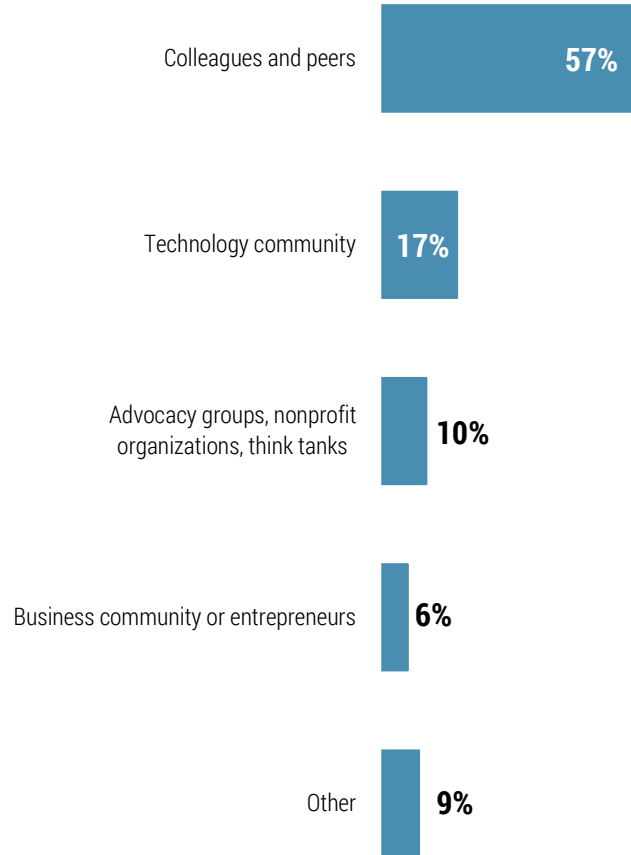


Where Do Educators Look for Insights?

The majority of educators (57%) most often look to colleagues and peers for insights or inspiration with respect to innovation. Much smaller shares of survey respondents point to sources outside their schools or districts, such as the technology community (17%); advocacy groups, nonprofits, and think tanks (10%); or business leaders (6%).

The technology community is the top source of innovation insights for one-quarter of educators in the wealthiest districts compared with only 10 percent in the poorest districts.

Who do you most often look to for insights or inspiration with respect to innovation in your school or district?

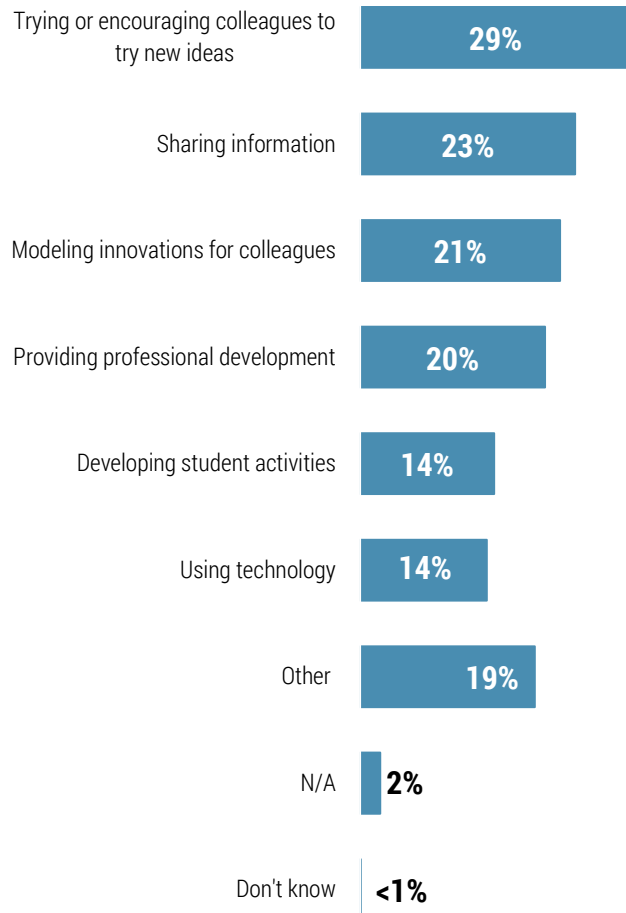


How Are Educators Inspiring Innovation?

In responses to an open-ended survey question, educators shared the ways that they inspire innovation in their schools or districts. They most often said they encourage others to take risks by trying new ideas and techniques in their departments or classrooms. For example, one respondent inspires innovation “by creating an environment where teachers are encouraged to break from the norm, feel safe to take chances, ask for support in their work, and experience empowered partnership internally and externally.”

Educators also commonly seek to inspire innovation by sharing information. For instance, one respondent focuses on “sharing research with faculty and leadership teams.” Other top options include modeling innovations for colleagues and providing professional development or training.

How do you inspire innovation in your school or district?



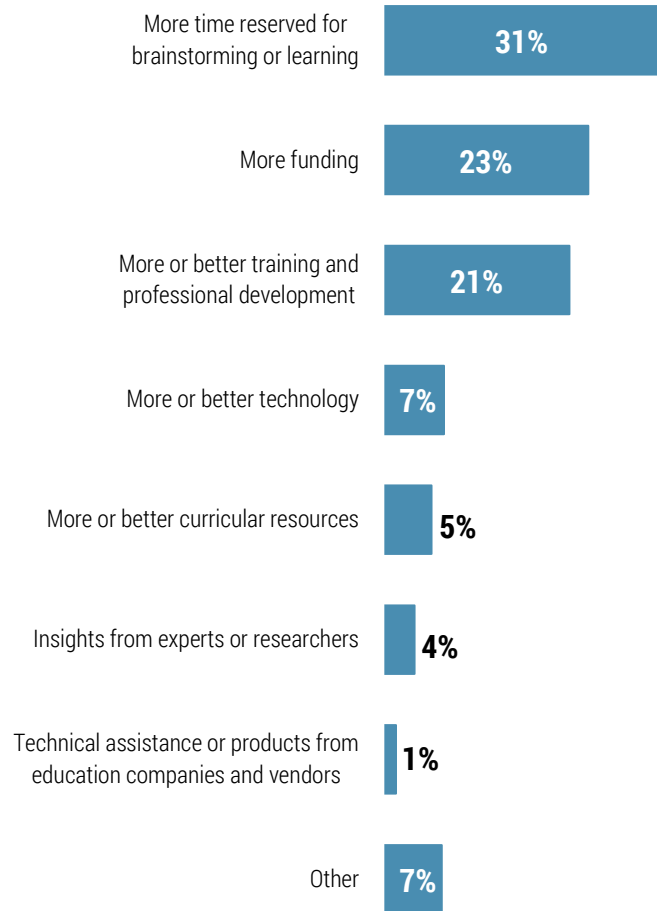
Which Supports Are Most Needed?

Educators think certain types of support will be more helpful than others in spurring innovation. More time reserved for brainstorming or learning (31%) rises to the top of the list, followed by more funding (23%), and more or better training (21%). By contrast, relatively few survey respondents say they most need more or better technology (7%) or curricular resources (5%). Even fewer emphasize a need for insights from experts (4%) or products from education companies (1%).

When asked to identify the supports they most need in order to be more innovative, one-quarter of educators in urban (25%) and rural/town (26%) locations cite the need for training and professional development. Only 12 percent of their suburban peers highlight that need.

Slightly more than one-third (35%) of educators in the most affluent communities say they most need time for brainstorming or learning in order to be more innovative as opposed to roughly one-fifth (21%) of their counterparts in the least affluent areas, where the greatest needs are for professional development (30%) and funding (29%).

Which of the following supports do you most need in order to be more innovative in your school or district?

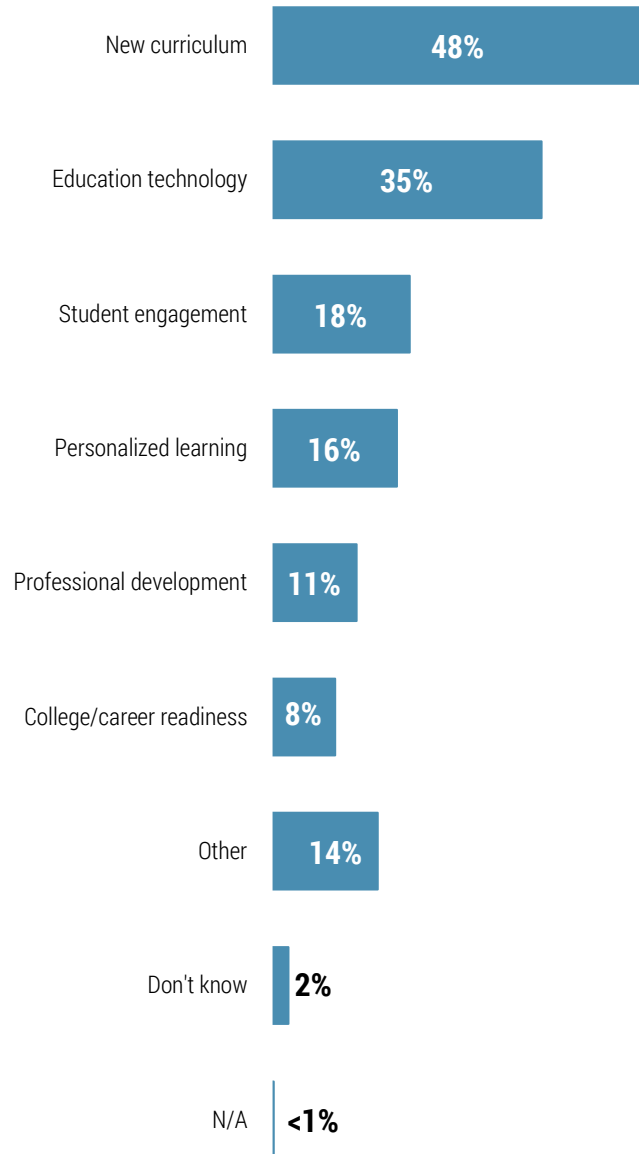


Which Innovation Would Educators Choose to Spend Money on?

Additional funding is one type of support that educators say they need in order to be more innovative. Survey respondents were asked to discuss how they would spend new money. In responses to an open-ended question, respondents most often said that if they could have more dollars to implement just one innovation, it would be a new or updated curriculum. One respondent, for instance, would spend to “develop a coding class that incorporates AI and robotics, and is something that is not a club, but part of the curriculum.”

Education technology is another top spending priority. For example, one respondent would use additional funding for virtual reality/virtual field trips so that students “can experience things that may otherwise not be available.”

If you could have more dollars to develop or implement one educational innovation, what would it be?

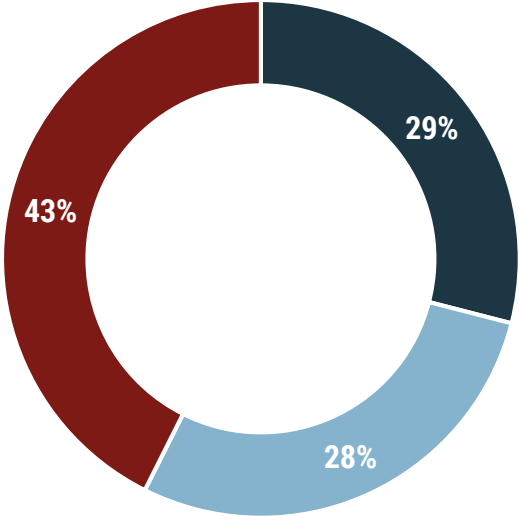


Respondent Demographics

Professional Roles

The Education Week Research Center surveyed nearly 500 K-12 educators to learn more about their views on innovation in their schools or districts. The majority (57%) are either school or district administrators but teachers also make up a sizeable share of respondents (43%).

Which of the following best describes your current professional role?

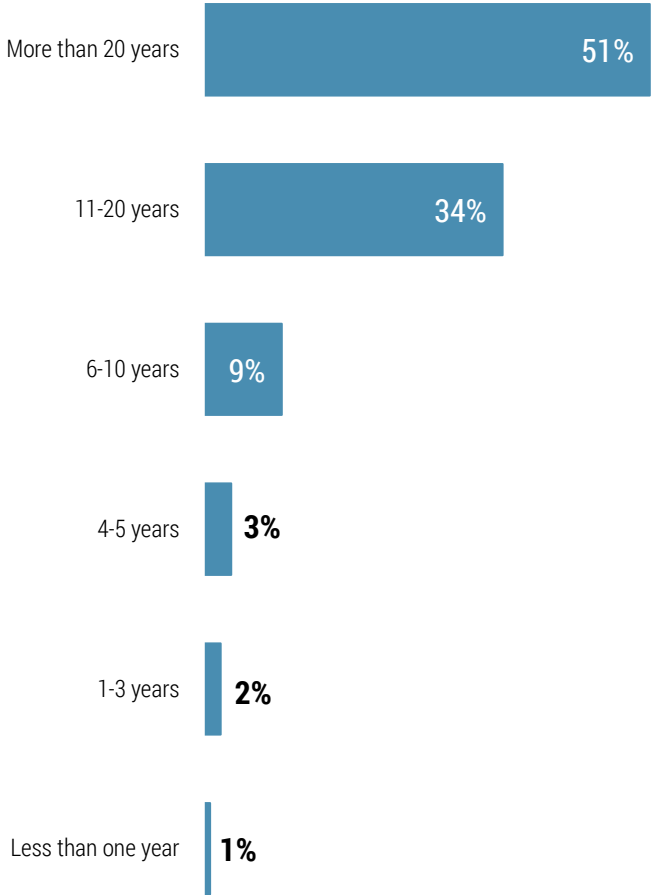


- District administrator
- School principal
- Teacher in a K-12 school

Experience in K-12 Education

Roughly half of survey respondents have more than 20 years of experience in K-12 education.

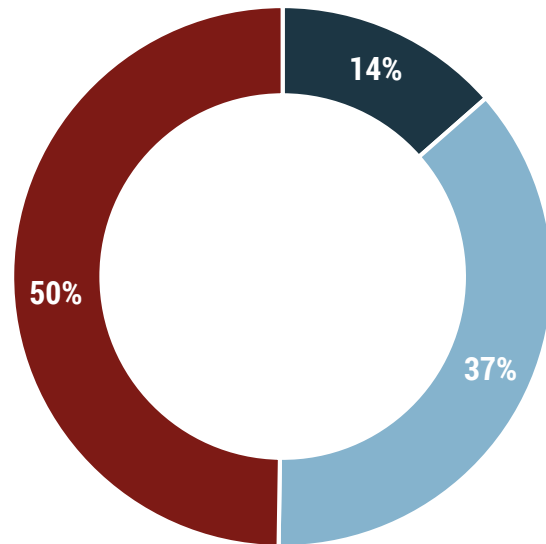
How long have you worked in K-12 education?



Locale

Half of respondents work for districts located in rural communities or towns. Nearly 4 in 10 work in suburban areas.

Which of the following best describes the location of your district?

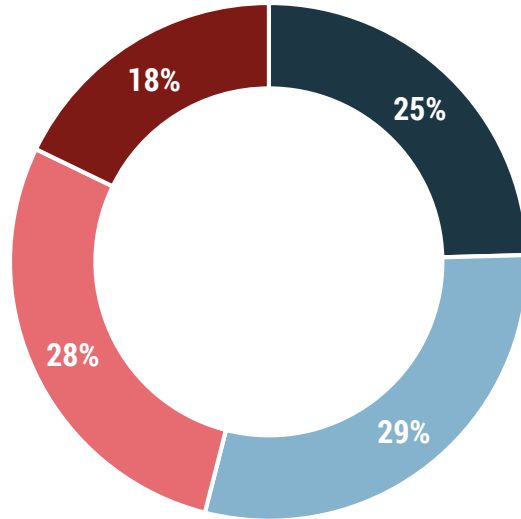


■ Urban ■ Suburban ■ Rural or town

District Poverty

Respondents work in districts with varying poverty levels. One-quarter are employed by districts where 0-25 percent of students are in poverty. Roughly one-fifth work in districts where low-income students make up more than 75 percent of enrollment.

Which of the following best describes the percentage of low-income students in your district?



■ Less than 25% ■ 25 to 50% ■ 51 to 75% ■ More than 75%