



# State of the Blogging Industry

2017

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# The introduction

In early 2016, ConvertKit's Founder and our Director of Growth were sitting at a conference, watching the introduction to a talk about the state of the speaker's industry.

The speaker had no advanced degree in the topic at hand, no specific credentials that gave him absolute authority to speak for the industry and no advanced training in data analysis. And yet, there he was, speaking confidently and with authority on the state of an entire industry.

In that moment, our team had an idea: ConvertKit should create an annual report on the state of the blogging industry. We have the right customers (professional bloggers), we have the ability to tell stories, and we know the industry well enough to do it well.

This report has come to life thanks to the **850+ bloggers** who took more than 20 minutes of their time to tell us about the ins and outs of their blogs and businesses. We asked them to share everything from their detailed income numbers to their biggest struggles to the motivations that keep them going everyday.

In the process, we learned so much about the industry we serve and we're excited to share those results with you in the form of this report, **The State of the Blogging Industry 2017**.

In other words, we're excited to tell the story of the blogging industry and we hope you'll take your time digesting the information – referring back to the data as you need it and reading it in multiple sittings rather than trying to cram it in all at once.

We hope you enjoy the report and we invite you to share the findings with your own audience. We simply ask you to point back to the original report here so others can get the full context if they choose.

Now, before we dive in, we know some of you will want the TLDR; version (too long, didn't read) of the report. You can [click straight through to the high level summary](#). But if you'd rather not ruin the surprise with the summary, keep reading for the full story.

*One final note before we get started: while accurate data points often include decimals for specificity, we want this report to be easy to read and digest. With that in mind, we've rounded nearly every data point to the closest percentage. For example, if something was 38.74%, it reads as 39% here. The exception is where rounding to the closest percentage would have left us with 0%. In that case, a decimal point value is assigned. We hope this makes the report easy to read and share. Thanks for your understanding.*

- Barrett Brooks and The ConvertKit Team

## PART 1: THE PEOPLE

# Who bloggers are: The people behind the blogs

One of the most important goals for us in creating this report was to get an in-depth understanding of the people behind the blogs we all know and love. When we say “blogger”, what does that mean? How old are they? Where do they live? Do they have families?

We had so many questions. After all, it can be easy to lump everyone into this one term of “blogger” and in the process forget that there are humans behind the websites. So before we get into the juicy details of the blogs and businesses, let’s focus on the humans building the blogging industry.

We decided to take many of the categories used on the US Census Report to help us break down the demographics of our survey respondents. This led us to collect data on: age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, number of children, country of origin and residence, ethnicity, education and household income.

Here’s why we chose those categories: we can’t tell the story of the blogging industry without telling the story of the people driving the industry. Further, we know that ConvertKit only reaches a certain segment of the blogging industry today. We want to know exactly who those people are so that we don’t portray this report as the full story until we’re able to reach a broader base. The only way to do that is to truly understand our industry at the human level.

To protect our respondents, no one in the company other than our marketing team lead had access to the full data set. We also gave the option “Prefer not to say” on every demographic question in case someone was uncomfortable in answering. And we won’t attach any personal identifiers to general survey responses or publish individual data.

Outside of that, we’ll get into more of why we asked for particular data, especially around diversity, later in this first section. Now that that’s out of the way, let’s dive in.

## THE SEVEN DIFFERENT GROUPS OF BLOGGERS WHO RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY

The high level data we collected in our survey is pretty basic and we wanted to dig a bit deeper than just saying, “x% of all bloggers this, and y% that.” Instead, we split the data up into seven groups in order to have a more interesting and comparative look at it all throughout this report:

- |                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 All respondents               | 4 Female bloggers        |
| 2 Professional bloggers         | 5 Male bloggers          |
| 3 Not-yet-professional bloggers | 6 Bloggers with children |
| 7 Bloggers with no children     |                          |

You’ll see us use these categories to compare and contrast the answers we received throughout this report. To help with that, we should explain more about what we mean when we say “Professional” and “Not-yet-professional” bloggers. To be clear: that’s not a value judgment on who’s doing better work, but rather a matter of fact based on income levels.

We wanted to be as objective as possible in making this distinction, so instead of arbitrary qualifiers, we used a strict income calculation based on the [2015 U.S. census data for median household incomes in the United States](#). That data shows median incomes in 2015 for family households of \$72,165 and non-family households of \$33,805.

Based on these numbers, we considered the following people to be “professional bloggers,” which you can take to mean they are earning a full-time living from their blog:

- Bloggers **with** children who earned more than **\$72,165** in the past **12 months**

- Bloggers **without** children who earned more than **\$33,805** in the past **12 months**
- Any blogger who earns more than **50%** of household income through their blog

We then divided the data between women and men to better understand the similarities and differences between female-owned and male-owned blogs and businesses.

**Do the genders approach blogging differently?**

**Does one group or the other focus more on money than meaning and vice versa?**

**What business models are women and men more likely to use to monetize their blogs?**

**All of these and more are questions we want answers to.**

The final designation we’ve made throughout the report is children vs. no children. In making this distinction, we’re better able to gauge who is making a full-time living. But more importantly, we are also able to understand parents’ motivations and intentions for their blog as compared to bloggers without children. We’ll see how having a family changes their priorities, goals, and struggles as bloggers along the way.

## ON TO SOME NUMBERS...

Let's take a look at how those groups broke down in raw numbers.

This essentially gives us three main categories for our respondents in this survey:

- 1 Pro or not-yet-pro
- 2 Female or male
- 3 Children or no children

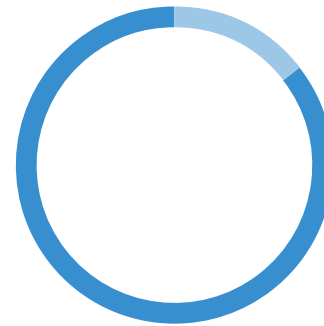
We can see in this graph that there were fewer professional bloggers than not-yet professional bloggers, with just 14% of respondents currently meeting the criteria for a professional blogger.

Meanwhile, women were much more likely to take our survey than men, with 62% of respondents being women.

Finally, the respondent group broke down almost exactly even between bloggers with children and those without children. Now let's take a quick look at the age breakdown.

### Total respondents by segment

835 total respondents



**14%**

Professional bloggers (121)

**86%**

Not-yet-professional bloggers (714)

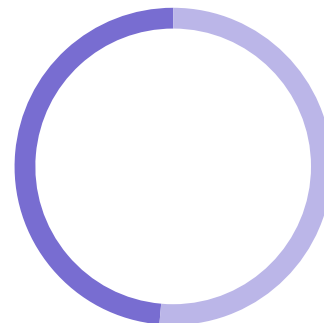


**62%**

Female bloggers (514)

**38%**

Male bloggers (321)



**52%**

Bloggers with children (430)

**48%**

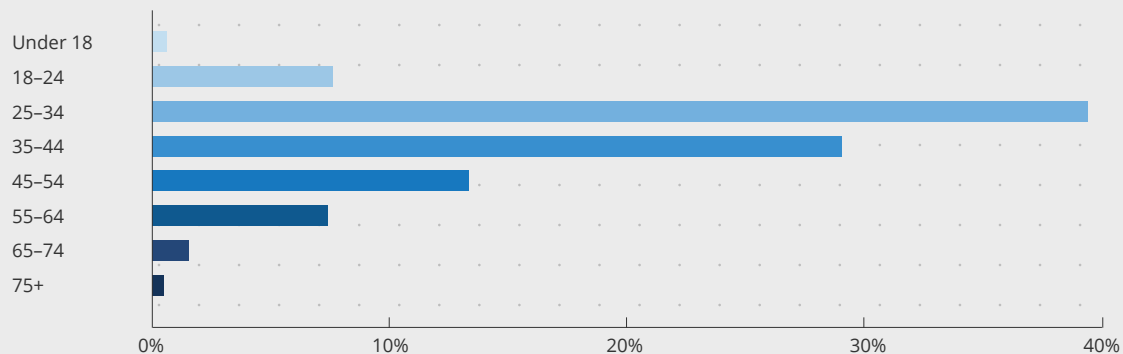
Bloggers without children (405)

## HOW OLD IS THE AVERAGE BLOGGER?

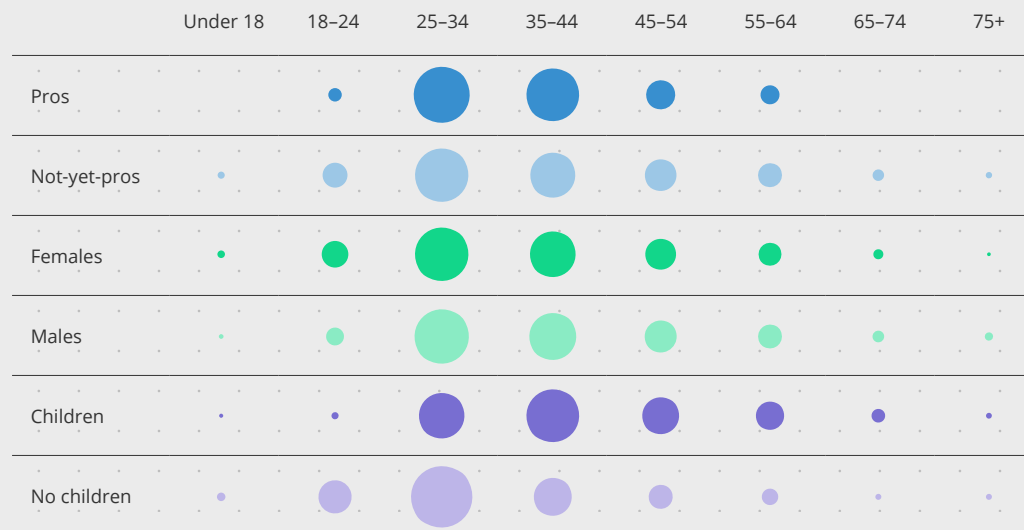
The age breakdown was largely concentrated in the 25-44 range, with 69% of respondents falling within that age range and 23% of respondents being 45 or older. To the right we can see each respondent segment broken into age groups.

It's interesting to note that there were no professional bloggers in the age groups of "Under 18," "65-74" or "75+". Again, while this doesn't exclude these age ranges from the possibility of earning a living from a blog-based business, it may indicate that it's more difficult to make a full time income happen very early in life or without having been steeped in the ways of the web throughout one's core professional years. We would expect there to be more and more professional bloggers over 65 as Generations X and Y continue to age.

### Age of all respondents



### Age breakdown by segment



## ARE BLOGGERS TYPICALLY MARRIED?

While being married doesn't necessarily affect whether a person has a blog, it certainly has an effect on the likelihood of having children. The combination of marriage and kids significantly impacts the priorities and goals bloggers have, as we'll see later in the report.

**On average, respondents were most likely to be married**-- this was especially true for those 35 and older. Of the respondents, 69% were either married or in a domestic partnership. As of 2015, U.S. Census data tells us that 50.3% of Americans were currently married, which tells us that bloggers responding to this survey are more likely than average to be married. The same Census stats tell us that bloggers are less likely to be divorced, separated, or widowed, and less likely to be single.

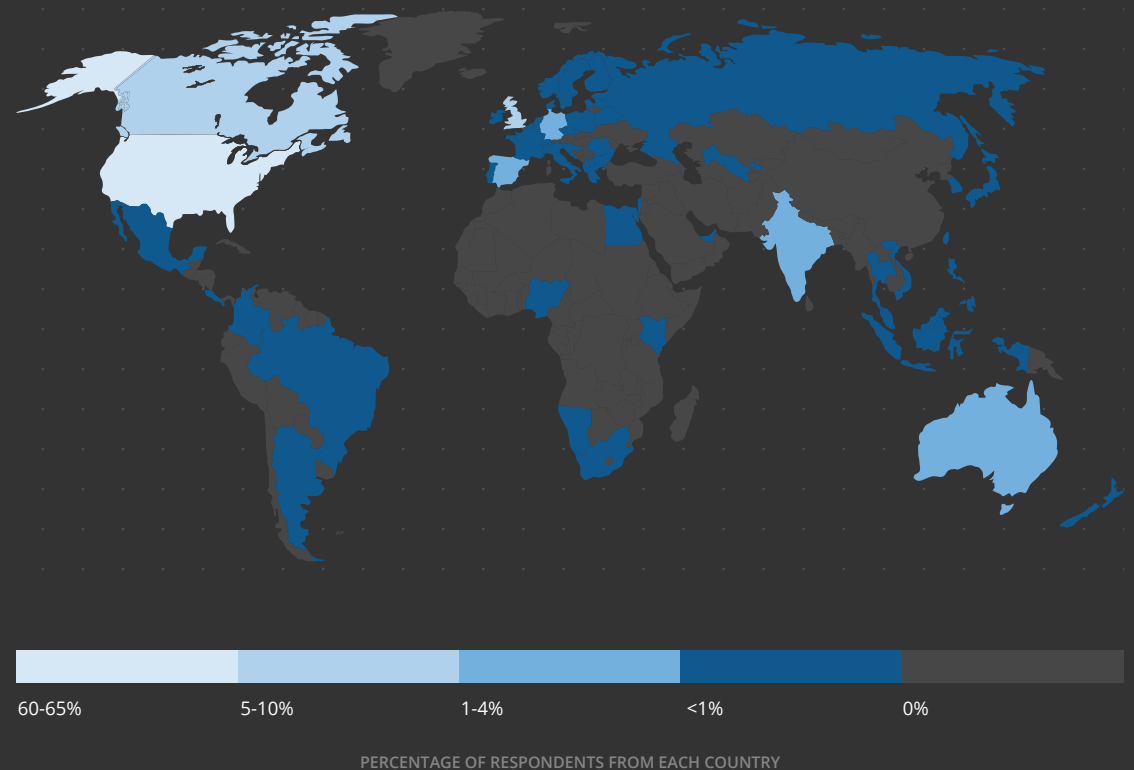
<b>59%</b> married	<b>3%</b> prefer not to say
<b>22%</b> single	<b>&lt;1%</b> never married
<b>9%</b> domestic partnership	<b>&lt;1%</b> separated
<b>5%</b> divorced	<b>&lt;1%</b> widowed

## WHERE DO MOST BLOGGERS LIVE?

Bloggers responding to this survey came from 58 countries across every continent but Antarctica. The breakdown by country is shown in shades of blue in the map to the right, with light blue representing the highest concentration of respondents, most notably showing that the US, UK, Canada, and Australia were the most common countries of residence for bloggers.

That is, of course, colored by the fact that ConvertKit is a US-based company with a majority of US-based employees and customers, in addition to the survey being in English. We hope to continue to grow our international presence, both for our team and customer base as time goes on.

### Country of residence





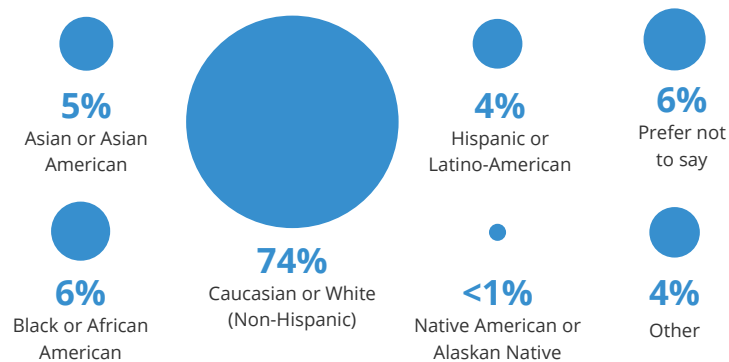
## WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON ETHNICITIES OF BLOGGERS?

We used the US Census Survey categories for ethnicity in our survey, which meant that the options were inherently exclusive for those outside the US. We realized that this was a mistake and likely left our international respondents feeling miffed. We're sorry about that.

Unfortunately, there is no global equivalent for the US Census, so our shared language for ethnicity around the world is imperfect. For example, "Black or African American" is an insufficient ethnic category for a myriad of reasons, including that all African-Americans are not black and all people with an African heritage do not identify as African-American. Similar statements could be made for each category.

This is an important truth to acknowledge and we'll work to provide even more inclusive categories in the future. However, for this inaugural report, our imperfect categories still helped us understand more about the blogging industry than we would have without having asked at all.

### Ethnicity of respondents



The data tells us that 74% of bloggers identify as white or caucasian, compared to 72% of all Americans according to [2010 Census Data](#). The data also showed 6% of bloggers identify as Black or African-American compared to 13% of the American population. We also found that 5% of bloggers identify as Asian, which perfectly mirrors the 5% of Americans who identified as Asian in 2010. The biggest gap comes in those 4% of bloggers who identified as Hispanic or Latino American compared to 16% of Americans in 2010.

This high-level data shows us that Black or African-American and Hispanic or Latino-American bloggers were likely underrepresented in the data. As an industry, we should keep this in mind going forward, both in the way we seek out respondents to surveys like this one and also in the way we build communities and invite diversity into our professional and personal lives.

One of the "other" answers above was filled in as "What the f\*\*\* does this have to do with anything?" We did some research and couldn't find the exact origin of said ethnicity, so rather than be offended, we'll take it in the form of a sincere question.

This has to do with everything. Diversity is valuable in all of its forms. And that's not just according to us. Whether it's research on the [comparative performance of female-led companies vs. the S&P 500](#), [the financial value of an ethnically diverse workforce](#), [how we become more creative when surrounded by people who aren't like us](#) or just the simple fact that we are all unique but created as equals... diversity matters and we value all forms of diversity here at ConvertKit.

That's why it matters.

## HOW MUCH EDUCATION HAVE BLOGGERS COMPLETED?

If you had asked us to guess the education level of the average blogger, we would have guessed that most bloggers have a college degree of some sort. And we would have been spot on.

**The vast majority of bloggers have at least some college education, with 91% of respondents saying they had done some schooling beyond high school.**

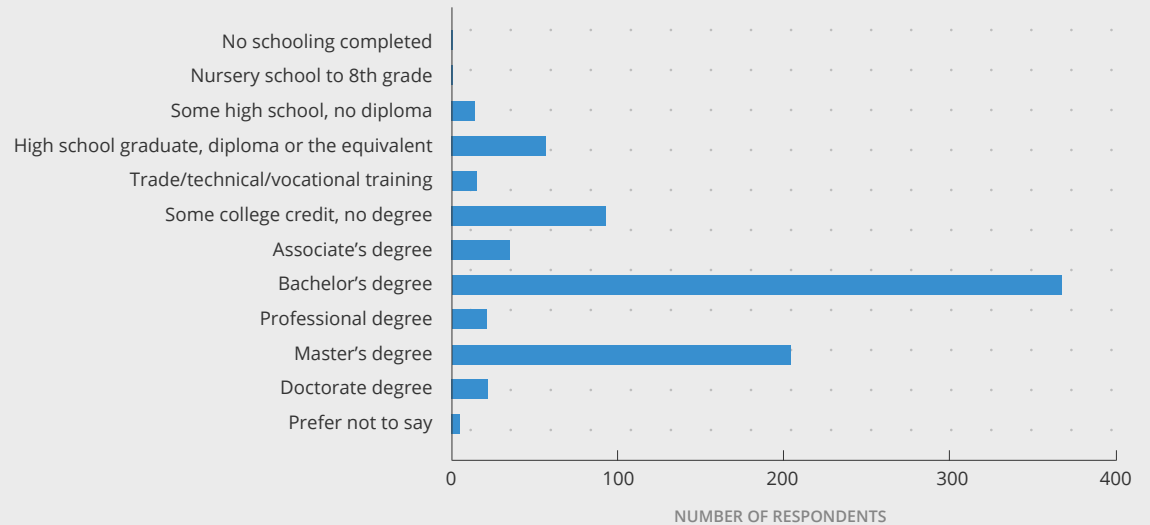
The most surprising stat here is not how many people have a college education or how many people don't, but rather how many bloggers have advanced degrees. A whopping 30% of bloggers have a master's, doctorate or professional degree, even though blogging is perhaps the career that requires the fewest formal credentials of any field.

## HOW MUCH MONEY DOES A BLOGGER'S HOUSEHOLD EARN EACH YEAR?

The household income categories we used, again, come from the US Census survey data categories. **There was a remarkably small difference in number of bloggers in each household income category, with the blogger population perhaps skewing a bit higher than the general population.** Household income is, of course, a combination of income from blogging efforts AND other income generating activity from anyone in the household.

That rounds out our demographic data and hopefully gives you a solid picture of who exactly made up the group of respondents who completed our survey and make up "The Blogging Industry" as far as this report is concerned.

### Highest level of education



### Approximate household income



## PART 2: THE MOTIVATION

# What motivates a person to start a blog

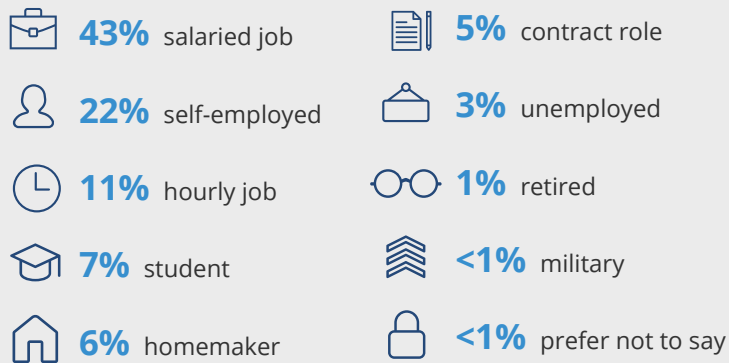
Running a blog is no easy task. Whether you publish daily, weekly, or even just a couple times a month, writing regularly for an audience of humans is a tall order.

What exactly would motivate someone to undertake this effort (even if they don't realize the full extent of the work ahead)?

That's what we tackle in this section, and we kick it off with what bloggers were doing before they started their blogs.

## WHAT WERE YOU DOING BEFORE YOU STARTED A BLOG?

So much of what motivates a person to become a blogger is to escape from their current circumstances in some way. While not everyone is running from something, many bloggers report that quitting their job or becoming self-employed is a major motivation for getting started.



This data doesn't tell us the exact professions bloggers held before starting their blogs, but it does give us a general idea.

It comes as no surprise that the majority of people were in a salaried, hourly, or contract role. **The biggest point of interest was the number of people who were already self-employed.** This is a really interesting opportunity for us to drill down into why someone with an existing business would get started blogging.

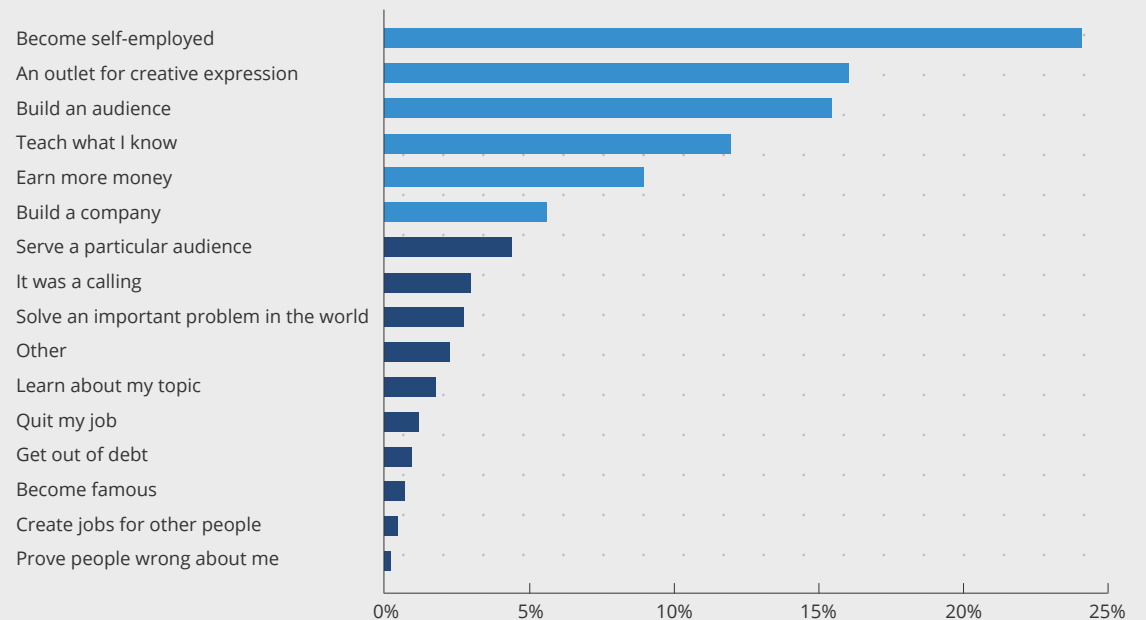
Now let's transition to look at why bloggers get started.

## WHAT WAS YOUR GOAL WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED YOUR BLOG?

As you can see, bloggers had a wide variety of reasons for starting their blogs, but the top six reasons stood out in contrast to the rest.

**Far and away the most prominent reason bloggers get started is to become self-employed**, with 24% of bloggers giving this as their reason.

### Why did you start your blog?



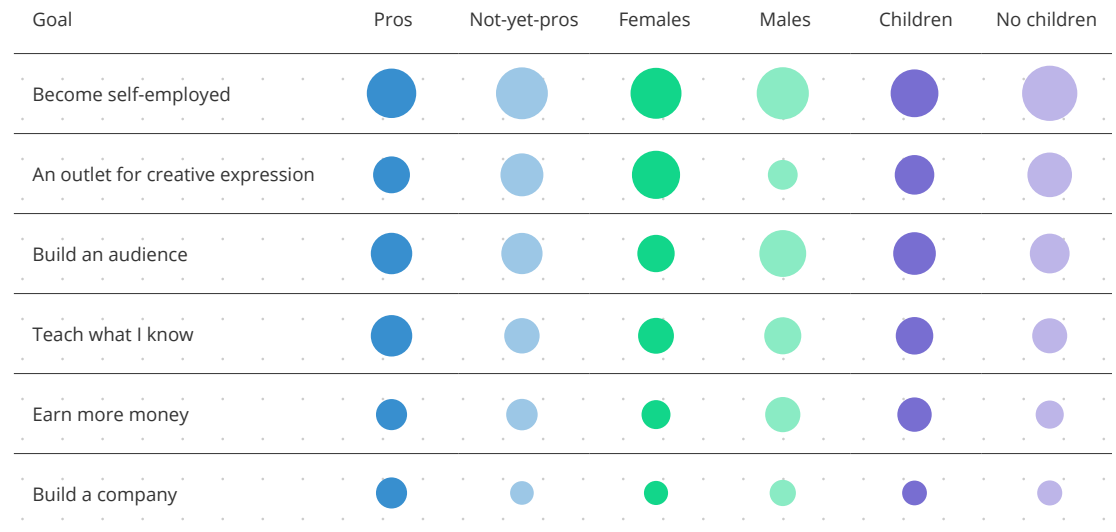
If we drill down into each of the respondents segments, we can see a bit more detail. Here's the graph for why bloggers got started based on those seven categories of respondents.

At a high level, a few key stats immediately stand out:

- Bloggers without children are the most likely segment of respondents to have a goal of becoming self-employed
- Professional bloggers are the most likely to set a primary goal of teaching what they know
- Professional bloggers are also most likely to set a goal of building a company
- Not-yet-professional bloggers do not stand out as an extreme high or low response in any of the top six goal categories
- Female bloggers are most likely to set a goal of having an outlet for creative expression
- Male bloggers are most likely to want to build an audience as they're starting their blog

Each of those statements simplifies the data a bit too much, so let's break this down to find some interesting comparisons and contrasts.

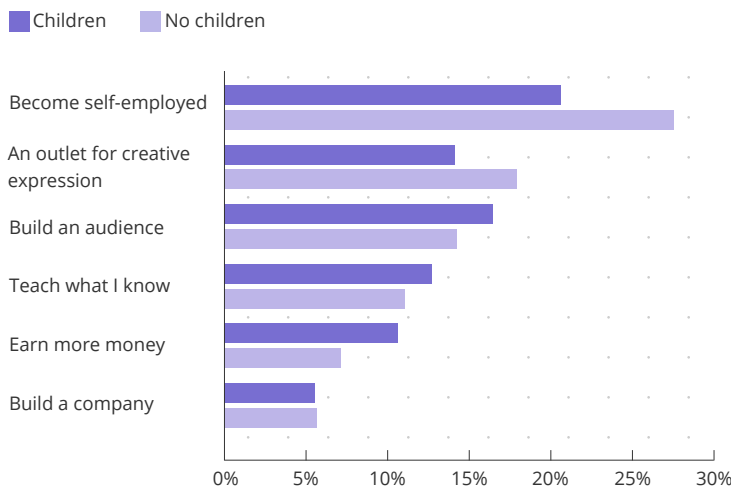
### Top six blogging goals



## DOES HAVING CHILDREN CHANGE A PERSON'S MOTIVATION FOR STARTING A BLOG?

The group most likely to want to become self-employed are those bloggers without children. **They are 33% more likely to have a primary goal of using their blog to become self-employed than those with children.** Similarly, bloggers without children are 27% more likely to start a blog as a creative outlet compared to those with children.

### Top six goals



**This does NOT mean that bloggers with children should throw out the idea that they can use a blog to become self-employed, build a company, or have an outlet for creative expression.** But it does mean they seem to feel a greater sense of burden and responsibility. That might mean their willingness to take risks is a bit lower and that they have to be more intentional with setting priorities for business activities.

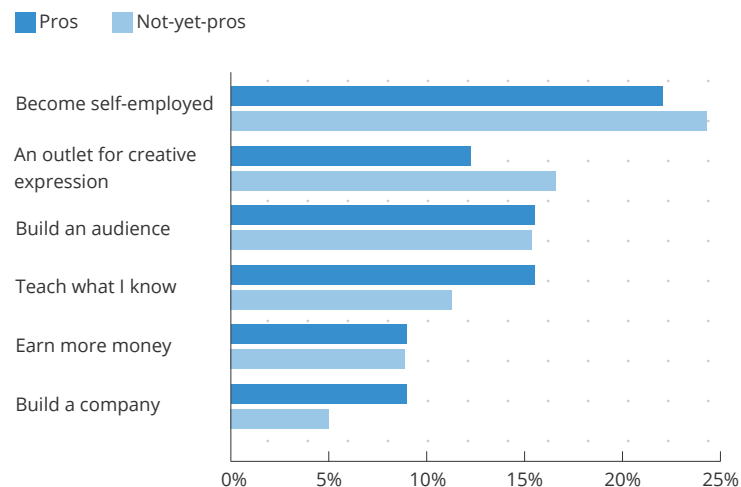
Further, this provides powerful foresight for those bloggers without families today who plan to have children at some point

down the road. Take advantage of the time you have before you become a parent to chase after the bigger, riskier, or more spontaneous aspects of blogging before you have the added responsibility of children to consider. Priorities change over time, and that's healthy.

## DID PROFESSIONAL BLOGGERS HAVE UNIQUE MOTIVATIONS FOR GETTING STARTED?

In this breakdown, we compare the primary starting goal of professional bloggers vs. non-professional bloggers (or, not-yet-professional).

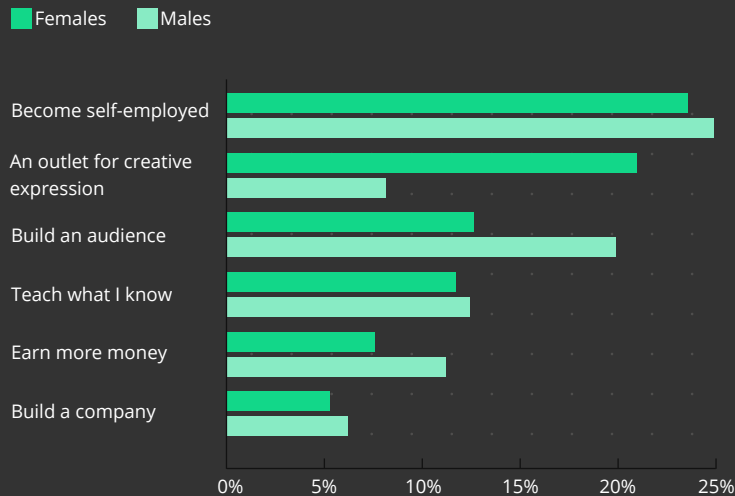
### Top six goals



From these stats it's clear: If you want to build a company, then you can't just use your blog as a creative outlet or personal journal. Setting the right goal for your blog at the outset will help you think through the strategies you'll need to employ to get where you're trying to go as a blogger.

## DOES GENDER CHANGE A PERSON'S MOTIVATION FOR STARTING A BLOG?

### Top six goals



We wanted to look at the breakdown of male vs. female survey results for a number of reasons:

- 1 We care about serving all bloggers and we know that it's natural for our team to have blind spots. We want to work to remove those blind spots for us and for you, our customers and fans.
- 2 We suspect that the motivations and day-to-day reality for male vs. female bloggers are quite varied.
- 3 The Internet, especially the blogging world, is often (but not always) divided between sites clearly targeting a male audience and sites clearly targeting a female audience. Could this data help us understand why?

Digging into this breakdown, we see some similar trends from the pro / not-yet-pro breakdown. "Become Self-employed" is about even, as is "Teach What I Know." However, we do see some big contrasts in "Have an Outlet for Creative Expression," "Build an Audience," and "Earn More Money."

**Women are 159% more likely than men to set a primary goal of having an outlet for creative expression!** That is the most drastic contrast we've seen in this initial set of answers to the question of primary goal at the beginning of a blog's life. We continue to be interested in the differences between what motivates male and female bloggers when they're getting started, and this will be a great opportunity for future research on the industry.

### HOW DO BLOGGERS DEFINE SUCCESS AND HAPPINESS?

No state of the industry report would be complete without understanding how the people in that industry think about the broad ideas of success and happiness. After all, bloggers, perhaps more than anyone, are the people who are actively building their own future as a way to seek out a sense of fulfillment both at work and at home. Let's unpack what exactly that means.

We asked two separate questions to gauge bloggers' thoughts:

**Which of the following factors contribute to your sense of happiness?**

**Which of the following factors contribute to your sense of success?**

Like the primary goals question that kicked off the survey, we gave a range of multiple choice answers. The difference this time was that each respondent could choose as many options as they wanted.

Here were the overall results, split by happiness (in blue) vs. success (in green).

With the options listed in alphabetical order, it's a bit hard to see what won out as the top factors contributing to happiness and success, so let's break it down.

The top five factors contributing to bloggers' sense of happiness, with the percentage of bloggers who selected each factor:

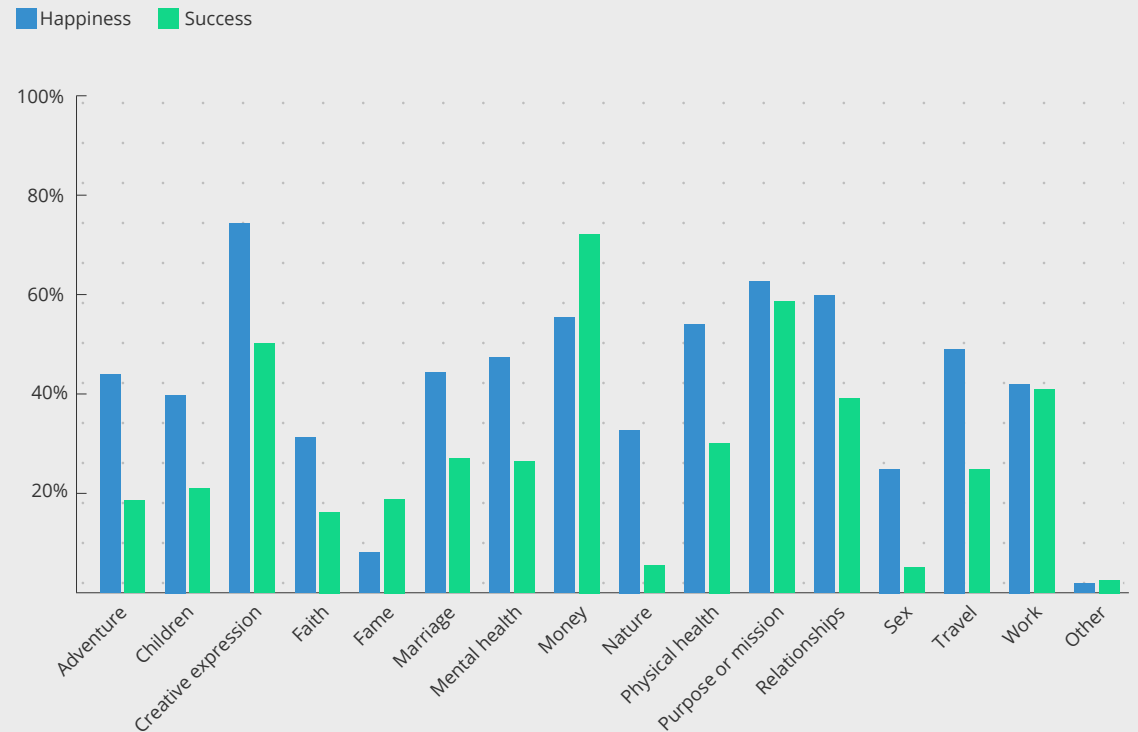
- 1 Creative Expression - 75%
- 2 Purpose or Mission - 63%
- 3 Relationships - 60%
- 4 Money - 56%
- 5 Physical Health - 55%

The top five factors contributing to bloggers' sense of success, again with percentages included:

- 1 Money - 73%
- 2 Purpose or Mission - 59%
- 3 Creative Expression - 51%
- 4 Work - 41%
- 5 Relationships - 40%

The answers clearly show that **above all else, money still equals success for most bloggers and that creative expression contributes to happiness for more bloggers than**

## What factors contribute to your sense of happiness and success?



**any other factor by a decent margin.** Let's not dive into the deep meaning of our existence just yet, because these numbers are a bit confusing in their raw form.

But what would happen if we combined the results from both questions to look at the most popular contributing factors to both happiness AND success?



## WHAT FACTORS MAKE BLOGGERS FEEL BOTH HAPPY AND SUCCESSFUL?

This is my favorite breakdown of the happiness vs. success data because we see clear outliers when we combine happiness and success. This graph shows us the raw number of responses to each factor, with success in green and happiness in blue.

The top five contributing factors to a combined sense of happiness AND success:

- 1 Creative expression
- 2 Purpose or mission
- 3 Relationships
- 4 Money
- 5 Physical health

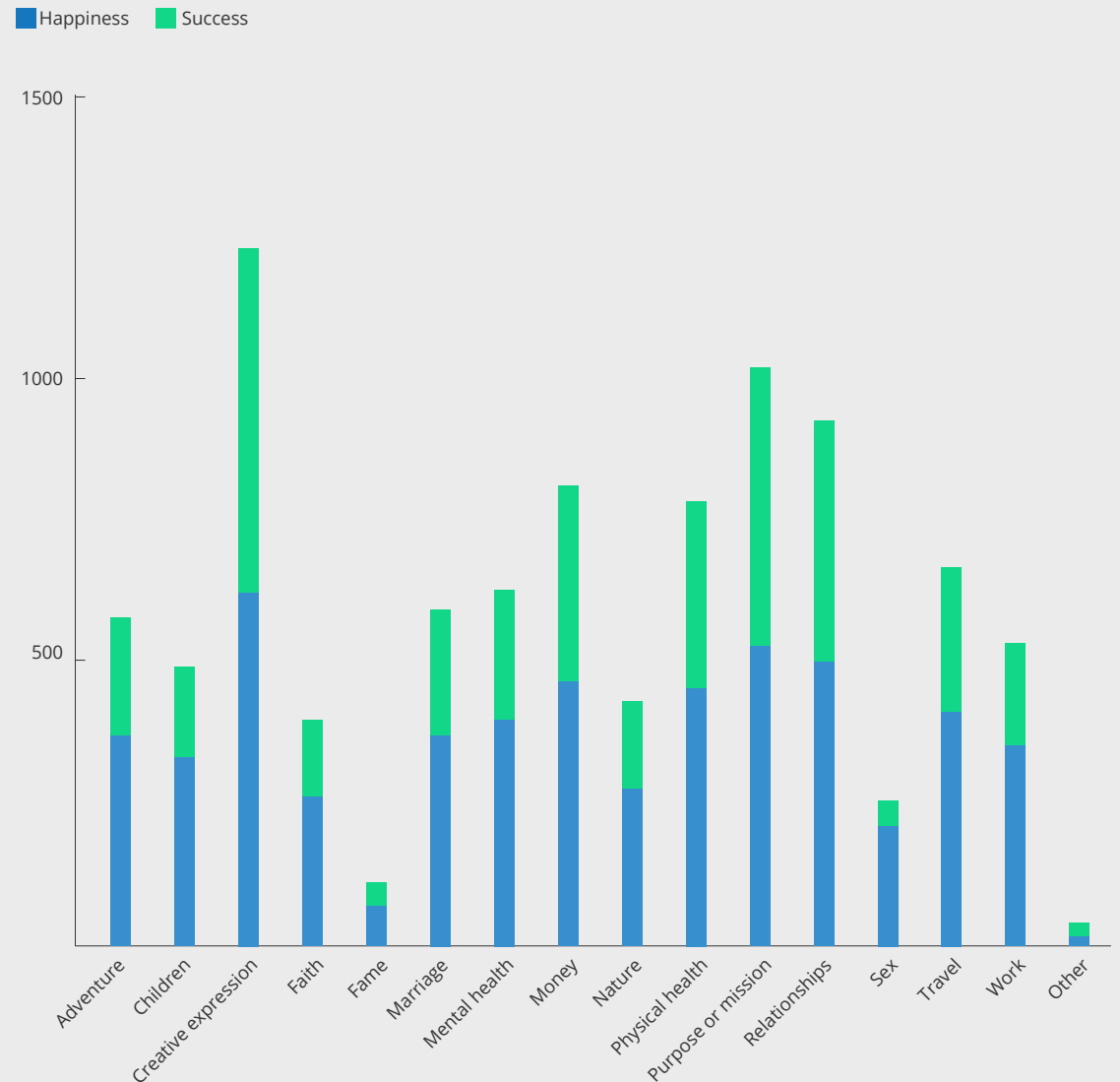
We might say that the intersection of our sense of happiness and our sense of success represents what many of us would consider a sense of fulfillment. And **we, as an industry, need to do a better job of connecting creativity and purpose to our money-making ability.**

Rather than publish income reports or brag about our launch revenue, perhaps we can stay more focused on serving our audiences through the work we do and carefully choose work that deeply engages us because of our personal connection to that work.

The future of blogging, if there is to be a future at all, is at the intersection of these three factors: creativity, purpose, and money. With this understanding, we have a filter through which to view all of the remaining data.

Let's get going.

### What factors contribute to your sense of happiness and success?



## PART 3: THE TOPIC

# The most popular blog topics

Every blog has a topic. It seems like that should be true, but in reality too many blogs have a complete lack of focus or topic. They can come across like wide-ranging dialogues on the meaning of life or myopic, self-centered personal journals.

To grow an audience today, it is almost a requirement that you start with a specific topic and clearly communicate it. We thought it might be interesting to see which topics are currently being covered intensely in the blogging world vs. which topics are less popular.

We offered so many different options for this question that they don't all fit on a graph.

One note: Obviously, these numbers add up to more than 100%. That's because each survey respondent was allowed to select as many topics as applied to their blog in their minds.

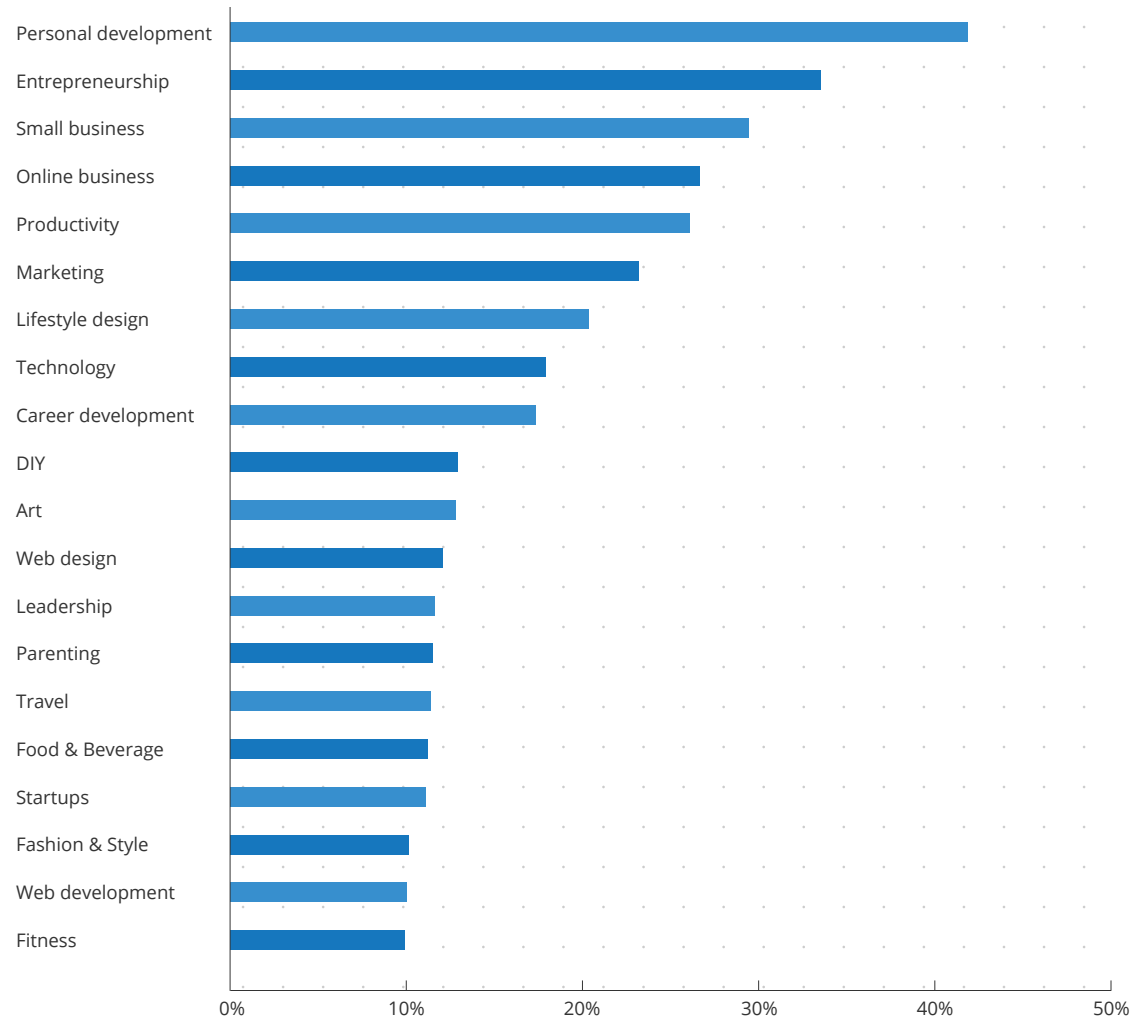
Now let's chat more about the most and least popular with an eye toward which topics might be most ripe for new bloggers or bloggers looking to change topic.

## THE MOST POPULAR BLOG TOPICS

You could practically make a meme out of the top of this graph. Personal development, entrepreneurship, small business, online business, productivity, marketing, and lifestyle design are the top seven topics, the least of which is covered by more than 20% of bloggers. No wonder it can seem like the Internet is an echo chamber. A remarkable percentage of bloggers are writing about the same topics.

### What topics does your blog cover?

Top 20 topics



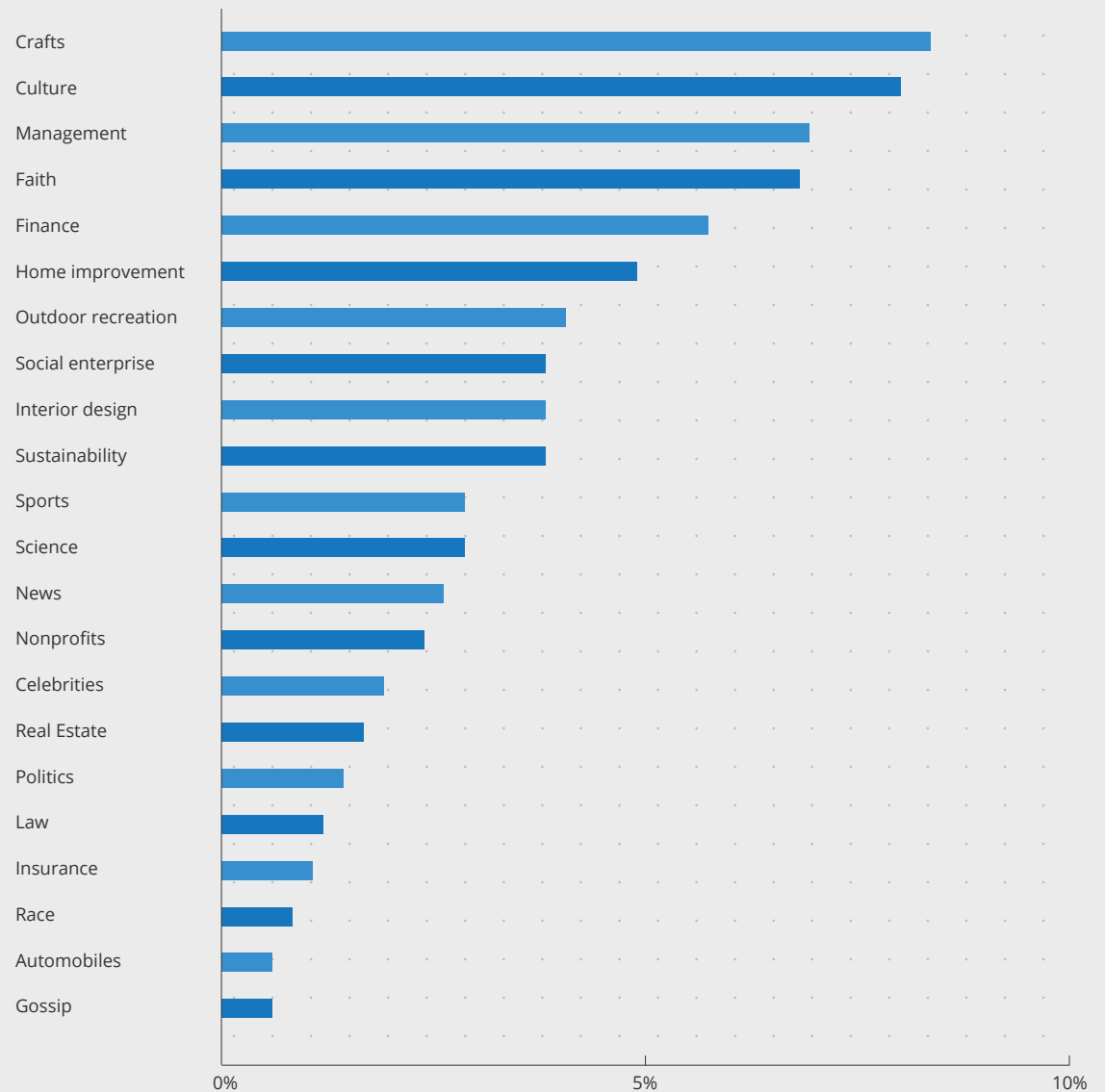
## THE LEAST POPULAR BLOG TOPICS

It's really important to immediately note the difference in scale of this graph. The most popular topics on this chart are less popular than the least popular on the last graph, which maxed out at 45%. This graph maxes out at 8.5%.

You can see that crafts, culture, management, faith, finance, and home improvement all have a number of bloggers covering them. Meanwhile, at the bottom of the graph, we see many topics that are traditionally covered by large media organizations like sports, news, celebrities, politics, automobiles and gossip.

### What topics does your blog cover?

Bottom 22 topics



## BLOG TOPICS WE OVERLOOKED IN OUR SURVEY

Before we move on, it's important to take a look at the "Other" category, which included 21% of bloggers. This category showed us that we clearly left out a number of topics from our list. **The major ones that received a quite a few write-ins included education and teaching, photography, graphic design, health and well-being, and writing.** These seemed to stand out as distinct topics that we'll certainly include in this report in years to come.

"Other" also included some truly unique topics, such as the respondents blogging about historical swordsmanship, summer camp, or industrial flooring. Some things just don't fit nicely into the buckets we provided!

Before we move on to the blogging tools and tactics section, let's compare the top five topics of professional and not-yet-professional bloggers.

## WHAT BLOG TOPICS ARE MOST POPULAR FOR PROFESSIONAL BLOGGERS?

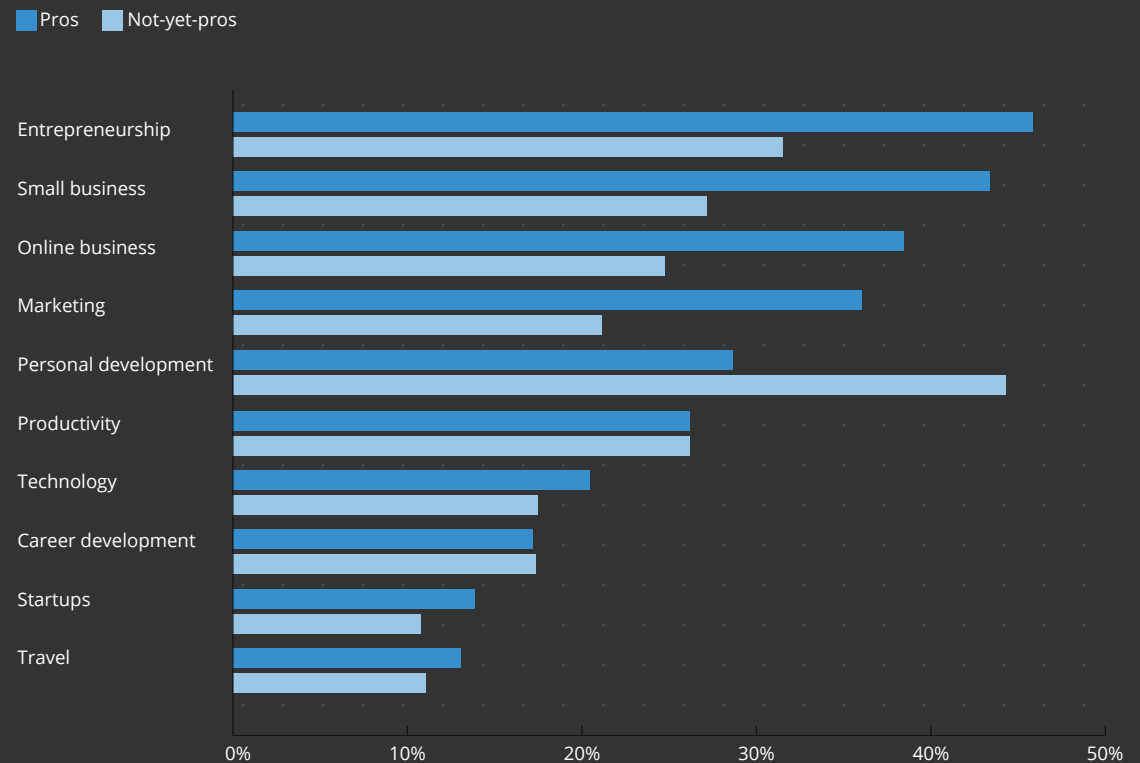
The most popular topics for pros vs. not-yet-pros: Entrepreneurship vs. Personal Development. Of the pro bloggers, 46% blog about entrepreneurship and 44% of not-yet-professional bloggers cover personal development.

This trend illustrates a story we see so often in the blogging world (and maybe it's your story too). Many bloggers start out, as we've seen, looking for a creative outlet or for somewhere to document their personal development journey, so their blog naturally takes on a "personal development" topic.

**Then, there comes a day when many of those not-yet-pro bloggers wake up and realize it's tough to stand out as a personal development blogger AND it's easy to make a case for why someone should pay you if you're teaching them about entrepreneurship.** Many people make that shift from blogging about personal development to blogging about entrepreneurship as a result.

Next we turn to the tools and tactics bloggers use to go from an idea to regularly publishing content.

## Most common blog topics of pro and not-yet pro bloggers



## PART 4: THE BLOG

# How bloggers start and run their blogs



## WHAT BLOGGING PLATFORM OR CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM DO BLOGGERS USE?

One of the most common questions bloggers have when starting out is about what platform they should use to build their website and blog. While we believe it's more important to use the platform that works best for your individual needs, we also wanted to find out if there is a fan favorite. It turns out there is, and it's not even a close race.

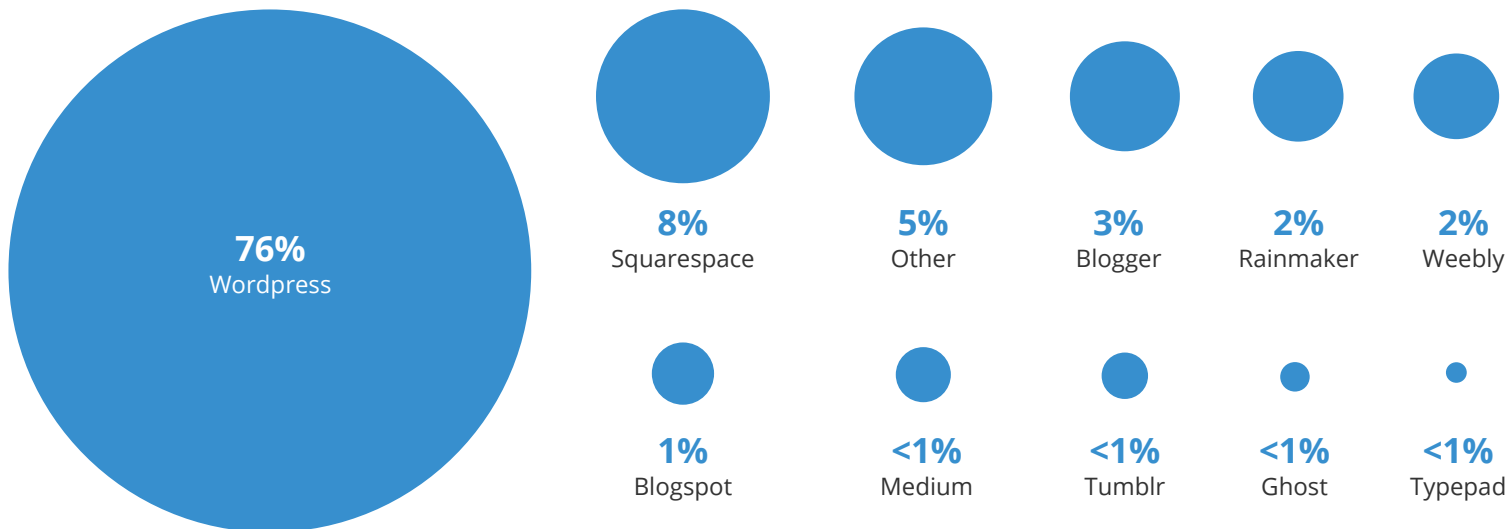
**Out of all respondents, 76% use Wordpress as their website and blogging platform.** More than three-fourths of all bloggers! That's pretty insane when you consider the many different blogging and website platforms available.

Of those respondents who use Wordpress, 82% use Wordpress.org (the self-hosted version of Wordpress), while 16% use Wordpress.com (the Wordpress-hosted version), with the remaining respondents either unsure or choosing not to designate.

Of those who answered "Other" the most common alternatives to the listed options were [Jekyll](#), self-hosted, and Wix.

Noticeably absent was the presence of e-commerce platforms like Shopify, Big Commerce, or Magento. We'll see later that the majority of respondents are not selling physical products, and yet we anticipated at least one respondent to be using one of these platforms. We were wrong.

### What do you use as your blog platform?



## HOW OFTEN DO BLOGGERS PUBLISH NEW POSTS?

### “Consistency is king.”

– Everyone who teaches anything on the Internet

You’ve probably heard this advice over and over. “The most important thing to do when you’re a blogger is to stay consistent. Make sure that you don’t miss a date on your publishing calendar,” they say.

But how often does the typical blogger publish? And is there a difference between pros and not-yet-pros? Perhaps most importantly, is there a difference between how often bloggers intend to publish and how often they actually publish?

We asked. Here’s what you had to say.

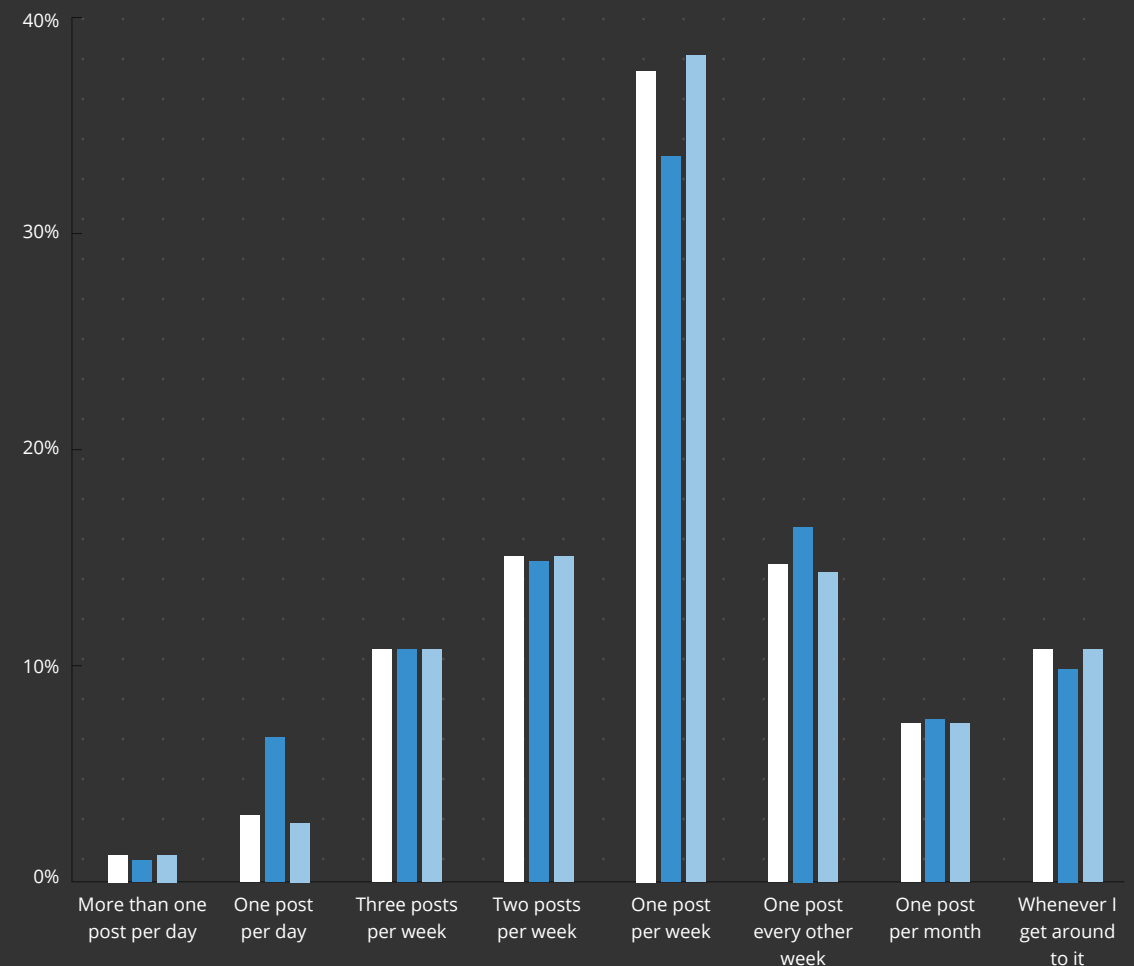
One post per week is by far the most popular intended publishing frequency for all respondents, pros, and not-yet-pros.

- **38%** of all respondents intend to publish once per week
- **34%** of pros intend to publish once per week
- **38%** of not-yet-pros intend to publish once per week

**In general, we find it remarkable that 11% of bloggers plan to publish whenever they get around to it.** But we also understand that that’s life and sometimes it’s tough to stay consistent.

### How often do you intend to publish posts on your own blog?

■ All ■ Pros ■ Not-yet-pros



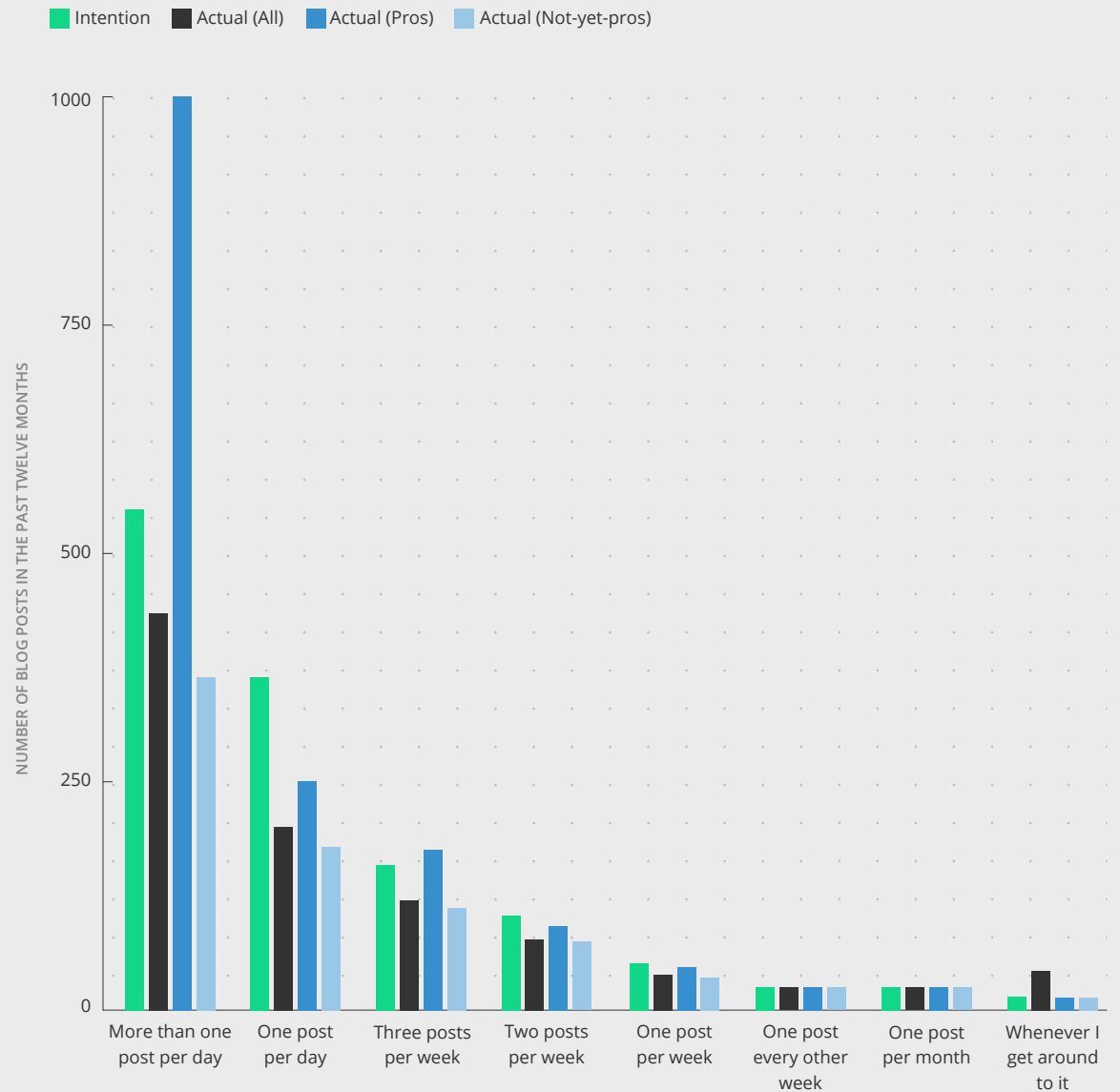


## BUT HOW OFTEN DO BLOGGERS ACTUALLY PUBLISH NEW POSTS?

So what does this look like in practice? How do intentions translate to real publishing frequency? To find out, we asked how many blog posts each blogger had published in the past twelve months (August 2015 - July 2016).

In this graph, we compare how often bloggers intended to publish to how often they actually published. The blue represents the intended publishing frequency, and the other colors show us that **in every case, the average number of posts published for all respondents was less than the intended number of posts published.**

### Intended publishing frequency vs actual publishing frequency

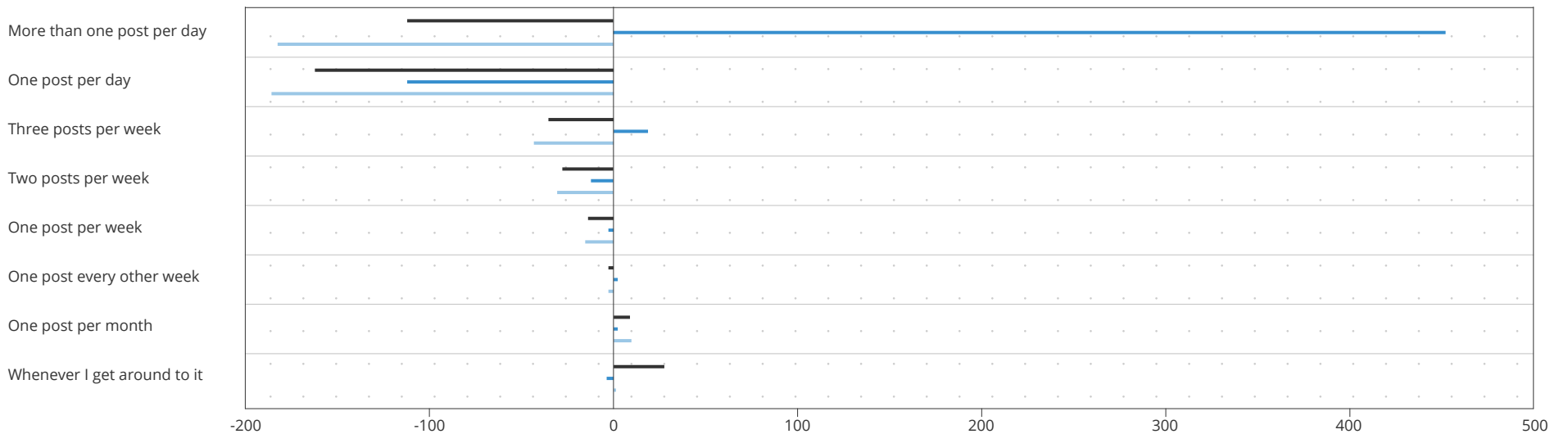


To illustrate the gap between intention and reality, this graph shows the differentials for all respondents, pros and not-yet-pros:

### Intended publishing frequency vs actual publishing frequency (differentials)

The differential is what we get when we subtract the intended number of posts from the actual number of posts published.

— Differential (All) — Differential (Pros) — Differential (Not-yet-pros)



It's important to take a few things away here:

**First, everyone struggles to meet their publishing goals, including the pros.** The trick is to keep the difference between your intention and your actual publishing frequency as small as possible over the course of a year.

**Second, the most common publishing frequency has nothing to do with the best strategy for your business.** Just because the vast majority of people intend to publish weekly,

that does not automatically make weekly publishing the best answer for your business.

**Third, if you want to fit in with the pack, the answer is clear: publish weekly.** But remember, the goal is to build an audience who trusts you. In order to do that, you have to show that you know the nooks and crannies of your chosen topic. By publishing weekly, you'll write 45-50 new posts per year. Is that enough to master your topic?

## HOW FAR IN ADVANCE DO BLOGGERS WRITE THEIR POSTS?

Now we know that most people don't publish as often as they intend to. That would lead us to believe that most bloggers struggle to keep up with their publishing calendar. So how far in advance do they typically write blog posts when they do publish?

Of the respondents, 52% of bloggers write either the day before or on the same day as they plan to publish. No wonder there's such a large discrepancy between how often bloggers plan to publish and how often they actually publish!

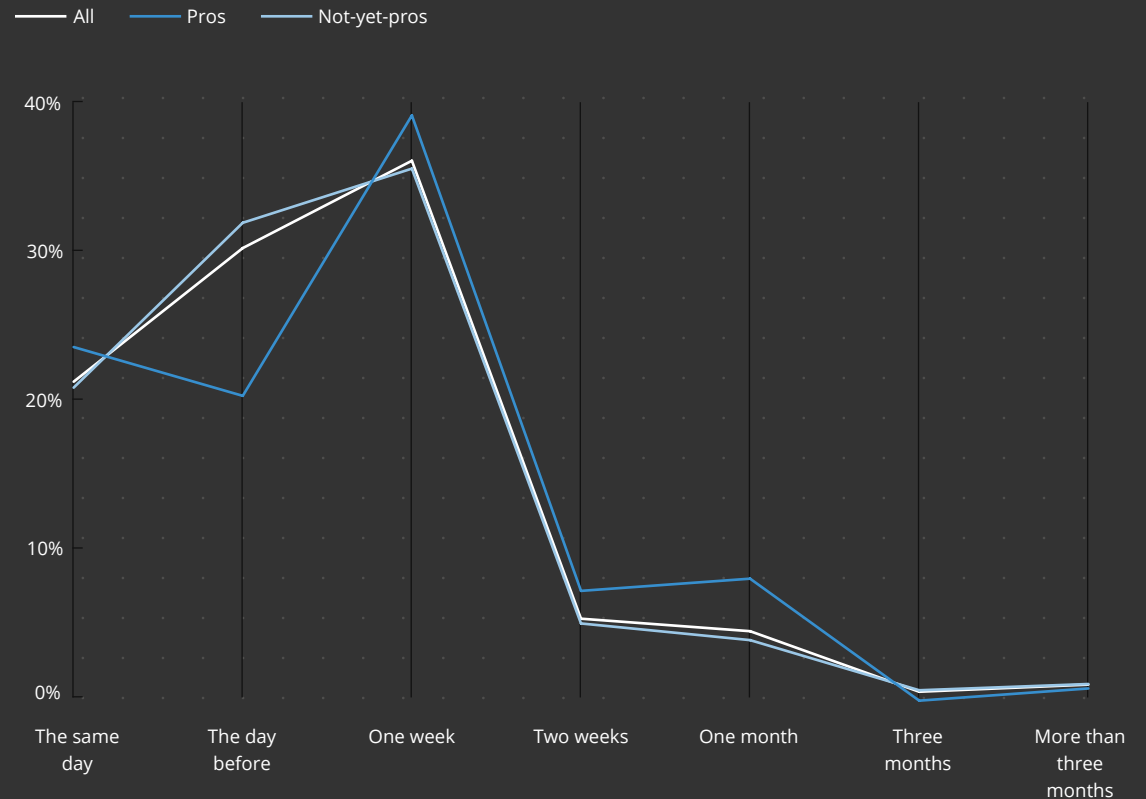
And this isn't just the people who plan to publish daily we're talking about. A full 50% (157 out of 314) of the bloggers who plan to publish weekly write their posts the day before or the day of publishing. Even 47% (28 out of 60) of bloggers who plan to publish once per month are writing the day before or the day of.

**This data shows us very clearly that bloggers could unlock an entirely new level of consistency by increasing the gap between when they write and when they publish.**

Imagine what it would feel like to work one month ahead in your publishing calendar. You would guarantee that you don't miss a publish date. You would have time to ask a trusted advisor, peer, or friend for feedback on your upcoming post. You would have time to incorporate edits and make the post stronger as well as add media to make the post more engaging. You could provide a stronger call to action or [add a content upgrade](#) to each post.

Although most people write a day ahead or less of publishing, the largest single group (36%) writes one week ahead of time.

### How long before a blog post's publish date do you write the post?



Pros are more than twice as likely to write blog posts one month before their publish date than not-yet-pros. Not-yet-pros are 57% more likely to write the day before they publish than pros, while pros are slightly more likely to write and publish on the same day.

## THE ANATOMY OF BLOG POSTS ACROSS THE BLOGGING INDUSTRY

Blog posts themselves are at the core of what bloggers do. How long is the average blog post? What kind of media do bloggers use? How do they measure the success of a post? Where do they put email signup forms? Do they accept comments? We asked all of these questions to get a picture of the nuts and bolts of blog posts today.

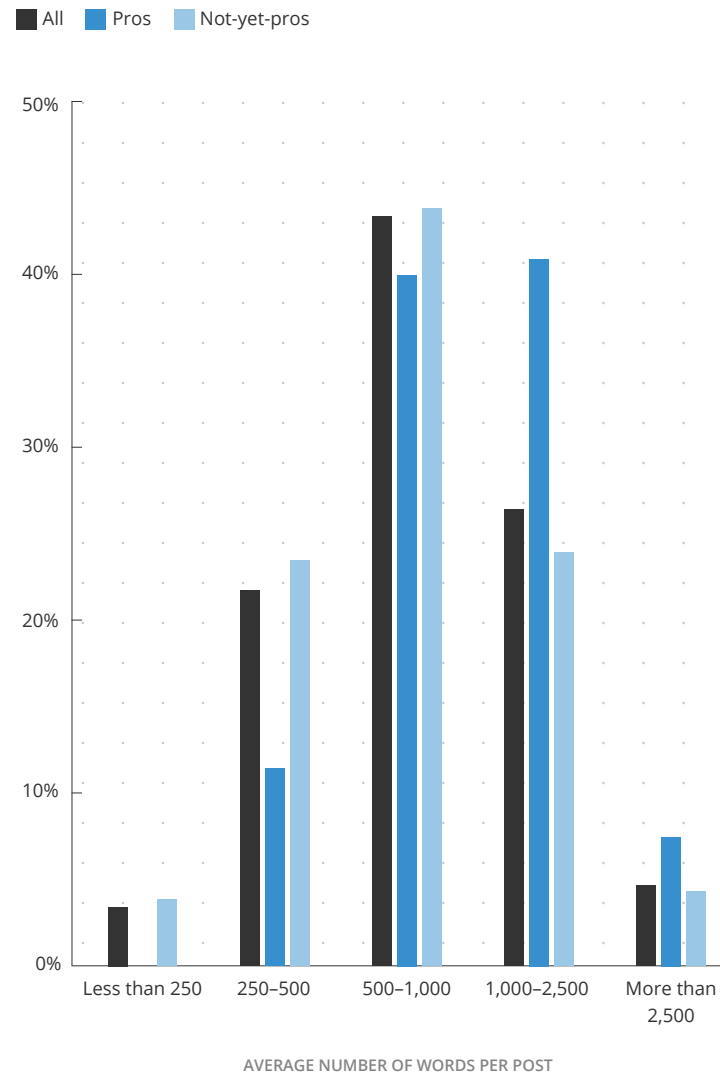
### HOW LONG IS THE AVERAGE BLOG POST?

Everyone has an opinion about the right length for a blog post. Some people are longform advocates while others are fans of quippy, fast reads. To get away from dogma and focus on practice, we asked each respondent to tell us how many words they write in an average blog post.

The most popular length is between 500 and 1,000 words long. That's true for both pros, at 40%, and not-yet-pros, at 44%. The biggest differences between pros and not-yet-pros are that not-yet-pros are 141% more likely to write posts of 500 words or less. Meanwhile, pros are 69.86% more likely to write posts of 1,000 words or more.

Do you have to write long blog posts to be a pro? No. But there is almost certainly more to dig into behind the curtain here in the future.

### About how long is your average blog post?



## HOW DO BLOGGERS MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF A GIVEN BLOG POST?

We were somewhat surprised to learn that more bloggers measure a blog post's success based on total site visitors than email subscribers. Even more surprising: pro bloggers measure a blog post's success by both unique site visitors and social shares (!) versus new email subscribers.


Of those that responded with "other", one was quite profound. This respondent said they measure the success of a blog post with a simple question, "Is this post the best thing on the Internet about the topic at hand?"

You won't be surprised to hear that we believe new email subscribers is the measure of a blog post's success. Of the respondents, 17% of pros agree and 20% of not-yet-pros do as well. **To turn a blog reader into a customer, you have to have a way to get back in touch, and that almost always means turning them into an email subscriber first.**


### What is the #1 way you measure the success of a blog post?

 Site visitors


**21%** All  
**16%** Pros  
**22%** Not-yet-pros

 Email subscribers

**20%** All  
**17%** Pros  
**20%** Not-yet-pros

 Site visits (Unique)


**18%** All  
**20%** Pros  
**17%** Not-yet-pros

 Social shares


**13%** All  
**20%** Pros  
**12%** Not-yet-pros

 Comments


**9%** All  
**4%** Pros  
**10%** Not-yet-pros

 Sales of products or services

**6%** All  
**11%** Pros  
**5%** Not-yet-pros

 Emails from readers

**5%** All  
**4%** Pros  
**5%** Not-yet-pros

 Time spent on page

**4%** All  
**2%** Pros  
**4%** Not-yet-pros

 Other

**4%** All  
**5%** Pros  
**4%** Not-yet-pros

## WHERE DO BLOGGERS PUT EMAIL OPT-IN FORMS ON THEIR BLOGS?

Placing the form at the end of a post is far and away the most popular location for an opt-in form at 64% of respondents, with pop-up forms being a distant second at 28%.

Overall, pros are much more likely to have a form somewhere on their blog posts, with only 3% having no email forms at all, whereas 12% of not-yet-pros have no forms at all.

This is a drastic mistake in our opinion. Whether you're just getting started or have been a blogger for years, you should be collecting email addresses on your blog even if you do nothing with them right now. Your email list is an asset that you own. You can move it from email provider to email provider and always be able to get in touch with the people who have given you permission.

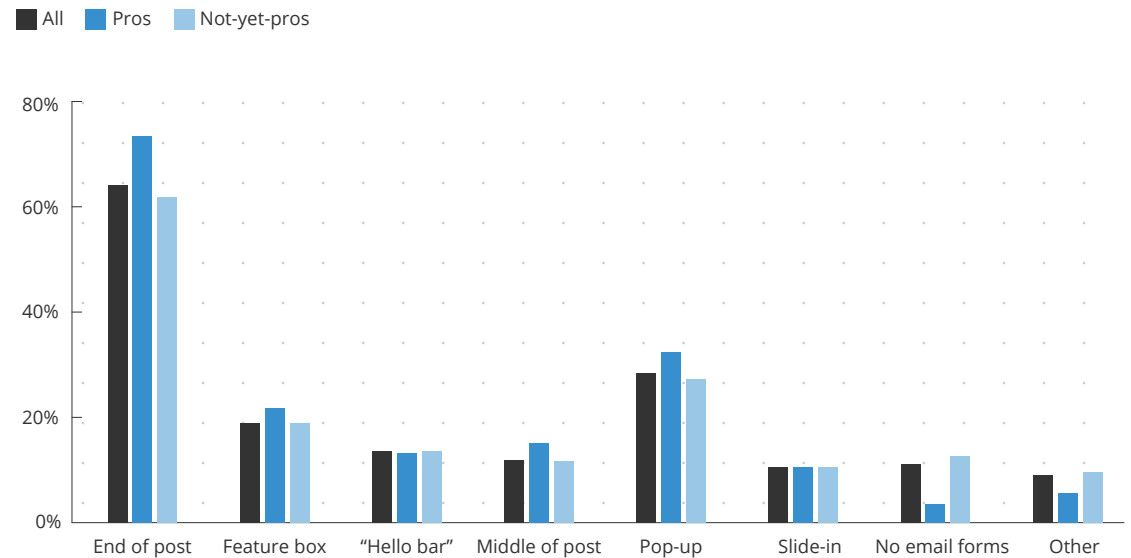
You should start growing an email list today if you haven't already. [Here's a quick article on where to put your opt-in forms.](#)

## DO MOST BLOGGERS ACCEPT COMMENTS FROM READERS?

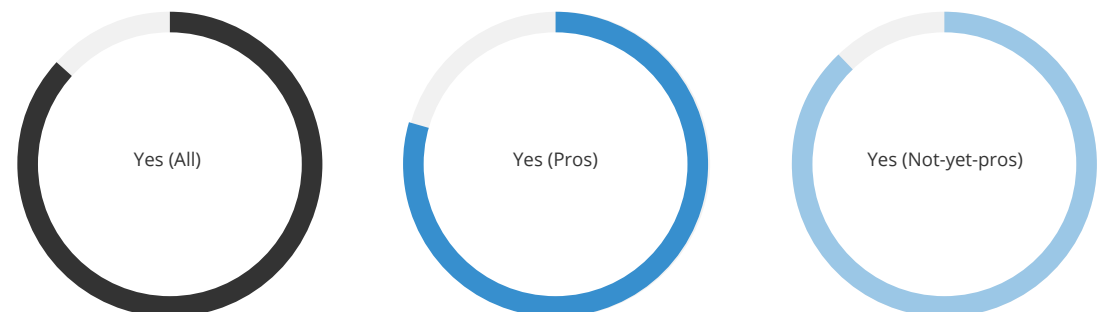
After an end of post opt-in form, some bloggers allow readers to comment on a blog post. Let's find out how many.

The debate is age-old. [To allow comments or not to allow comments?](#) Well, our survey clearly shows that the vast majority of bloggers still believe comments are valuable, with 87% of bloggers allowing comments and 13% that do not.

## On a typical blog post, where do you have email opt-in forms?



## Do you allow comments on your blog?



## HOW MANY BLOGGERS ACCEPT GUEST POSTS, SPONSORED POSTS, AND ADVERTISEMENTS?

Pros and not-yet-pros are nearly equal in how likely they are to accept guest posts, with about half accepting and half not accepting guest posts. The gap widens when it comes sponsored posts and advertisements. Not-yet-pros are 39% more likely to accept sponsored posts and 20% more likely to accept advertisements.

Overall this is interesting in that guest posts are not a revenue generating opportunity in and of themselves, unless they are able to generate affiliate revenue. Meanwhile sponsored posts and advertisements are direct sources of revenue, but not-yet-pros are more likely to accept them.

That rounds out the blog section of the survey, which is a huge part of the blogging industry. Next we turn to the audience, which is the necessary better half of the blog itself. After all, without an audience, there is no chance for a blogger to go pro.

## Do you allow guest posts, sponsored posts or advertisements on your blog?



## PART 5: THE AUDIENCE

# How bloggers grow their audience

Without an audience, you could write 1,000 blog posts a year and it would be a bit like that old saying, “if a tree falls in the woods does it make a sound?”

The answer is that it doesn't matter. An audience is what allows a blog to become a business rather than a personal journal. In this section, we cover the ins and outs of how bloggers build an audience.



## HOW MUCH TRAFFIC DOES THE AVERAGE BLOG GET EACH YEAR?

This data shows what we would have assumed when we asked the question: professional bloggers get much more traffic, on average, than not-yet-professional bloggers. It's important to note here that "users" is the number of unique visitors to a website during the past twelve months, as opposed to overall traffic numbers, which would be significantly higher.

56% of professional bloggers had at least 100,000 users on their sites during the previous twelve months, whereas just 18% of not-yet-professional bloggers had more than 100,000 users. This makes sense: the more individuals who visit your site, the more potential customers who are paying attention to your business. Without sufficient attention, it can be challenging to earn a full time living.

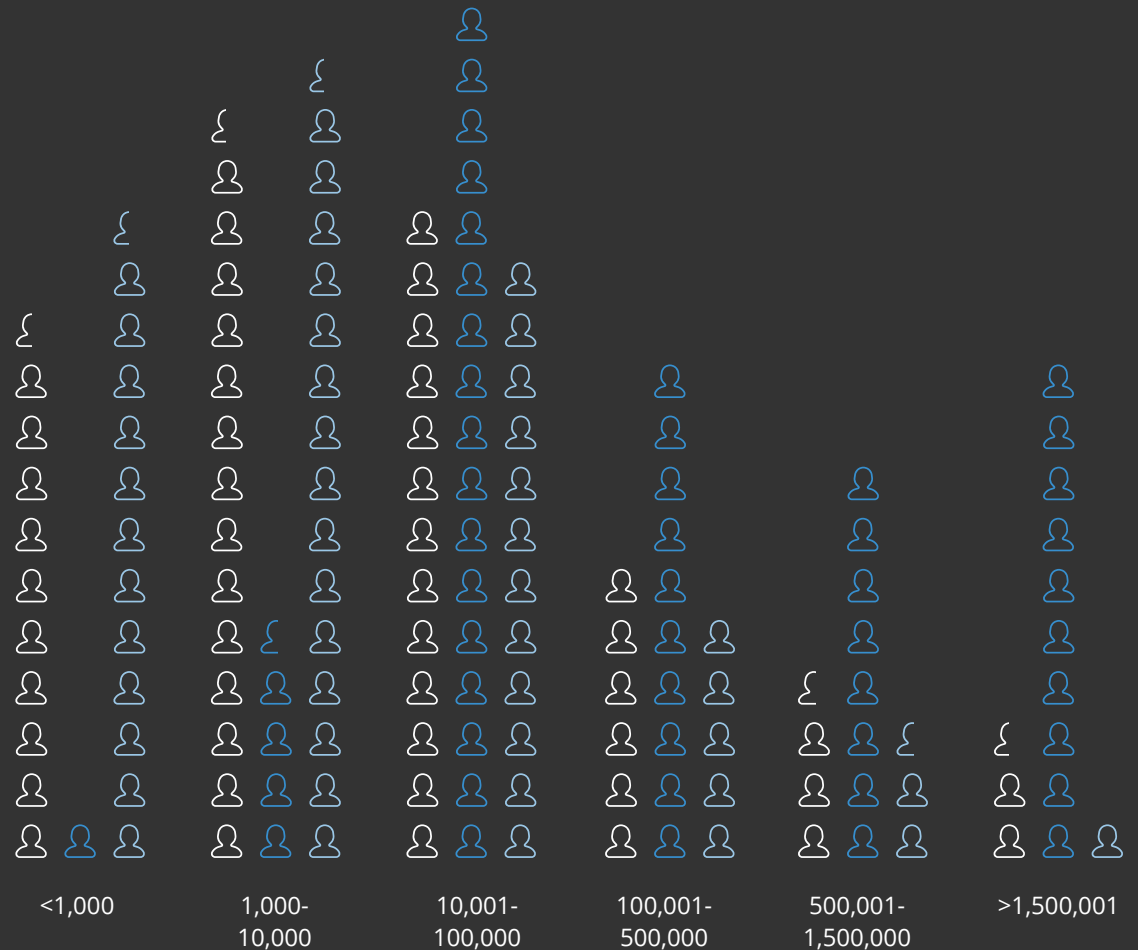
This data tells a simple story:

### To grow your business, you also need to grow your traffic.

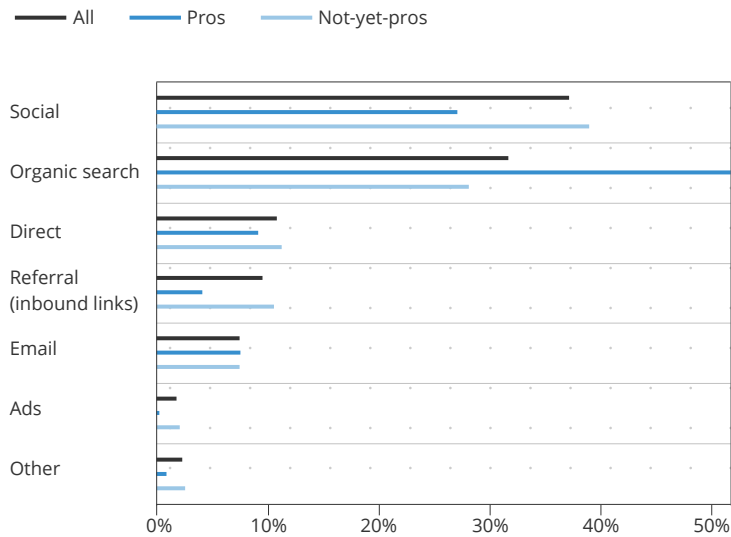
If you don't want to grow your traffic, then you'll need a different model for getting in front of new potential customers. This often means you should focus on direct outreach and sales, which requires you to have a high priced product or service to be able to make a living.

## How many users visited your site over the past 12 months?

= 2% All    = 2% Pros    = 2% Not-yet-pros



## #1 traffic source in the past 12 months

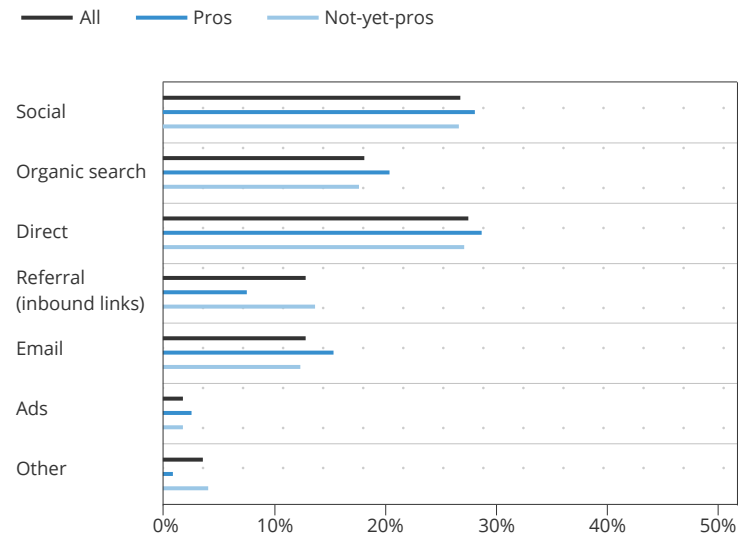


### WHAT IS THE BEST SOURCE OF WEBSITE TRAFFIC FOR BLOGS?

The number one way bloggers get that traffic varies between pros and not-yet-pros. Specifically, not-yet-pros are most likely to generate traffic through social media. 39% of not-yet-pros say that their number one source of traffic is social media, compared to 27% of pros.

Meanwhile, organic search is the number one source of blog traffic for professionals, with 52% of pros using organic search as their number one source compared to 28% of not-yet-pros. That means pros are 84% more likely to use have organic search as their top source of traffic.

## #2 traffic source in the past 12 months



Search traffic has many factors that contribute to it, and Moz has put together [one of the best guides on the internet to getting started with SEO](#). If you read that guide from end-to-end, you'll have a great headstart on your competition for improving your search results and generating more traffic from your blogging efforts.

The number two source of traffic for pros (28%) and not-yet-pros (26%) alike is direct traffic. Direct traffic is a catch-all bucket that Google uses to attribute traffic when they don't know how else to attribute it. If a user copies and pastes a link into their browser, visits your homepage by typing it into their browser directly, or somehow lands on your site without an attributable source, it lands in that direct bucket.

Of all the traffic sources for a blog, direct traffic is the least actionable for a blogger. You can't do anything to change this because you don't know where these people are coming from.

Luckily, social traffic is the number two source of traffic for a nearly equal percentage of pros (27%) and not-yet-pros (26%). Social traffic is very much in your control, and you can get started with [our guide to setting up a social media workflow](#) and then [turn your social media followers into email subscribers](#).

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### Over the past 12 months, how many users visited your site during your most and least popular month?

#### MOST POPULAR (MEAN)

---

All  
**52,806**

Pros  
**189,151**

Not-yet-pros  
**29,476**

#### LEAST POPULAR (MEAN)

---

All  
**22,602**

Pros  
**102,377**

Not-yet-pros  
**8,952**

#### MOST POPULAR (MEDIAN)

---

All  
**2,000**

Pros  
**22,110**

Not-yet-pros  
**1,245**

#### LEAST POPULAR (MEDIAN)

---

All  
**400**

Pros  
**8,619**

Not-yet-pros  
**200**

## HOW MUCH TRAFFIC DOES THE AVERAGE BLOG GET DURING THEIR MOST POPULAR MONTHS?

The most and least popular months for pros and not-yet-pros were reflective of their overall traffic numbers. Using the mean to calculate the average, pros range from 102,377 users visiting their sites on their least popular months to 189,151 in their most popular months. That drops significantly when we use median instead, to make the range 8,619 (least popular) to 22,110 (most popular). The median is probably a better measure here, as half of all respondents have more traffic than that range and half have more. The mean is significantly affected by the bloggers with very large audiences, which skews the numbers.

On the not-yet-pro end of things, the mean range is 8,952 in the least popular months to 29,476 in the most popular months. When we switch to median, the least popular month is 250 users and the most popular is 1,245 users.

If you're just getting started with your blog, the median average users is a great initial target to set. If you're landing between 250 and 1,245 users reading your blog per month when you're just getting started, then you're doing pretty well. Over time, as you get more advanced and have goals of going pro, you want to see your traffic numbers increasing towards the pro median average users of between 8,619 and 22,110.

These are great milestones to set for yourself and give you a valuable set of baseline metrics to compare your audience growth to the rest of the industry. With that said, remember that traffic only matters if it helps you reach your business goals. At the end of the day, [traffic is just a vanity metric](#).

## WHAT STRATEGIES DO BLOGGERS USE TO GROW THEIR AUDIENCE?

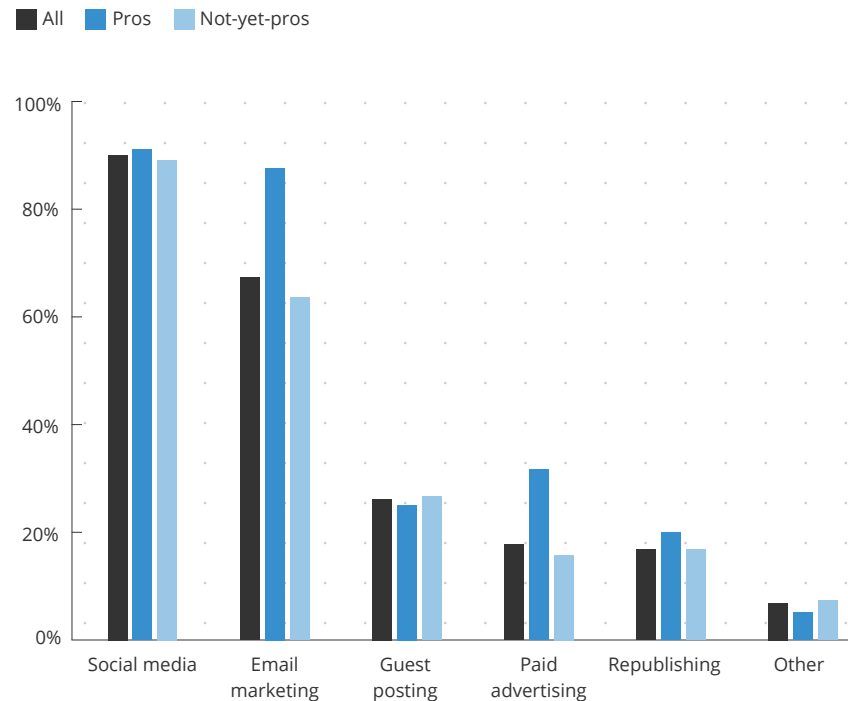
Here's the short version on strategies for growing an audience: almost everyone uses social media, many (but not enough) people use email marketing, and other strategies are much less popular.

91% of pros and 90% of not-yet-pros use social media to grow their audience. Compare that to 88% of pros and 64% of not-yet-pros who use email marketing to grow their audience, while pros are 4% more likely to use social over email.

Guest posting, paid advertising, and republishing are all in use. 26% of all bloggers use guest posting as a strategy for growing their audience, with pros and not-yet-pros being close to equal. 32% of pros use paid advertising compared to just 16% of not-yet-pros. Finally, 17% of all bloggers use republishing, with pros being slightly more likely to use this as a strategy.

Let's break down each of these strategies individually to learn more.

### What strategies do you use to grow your audience?



## HOW DO BLOGGERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW THEIR AUDIENCE?

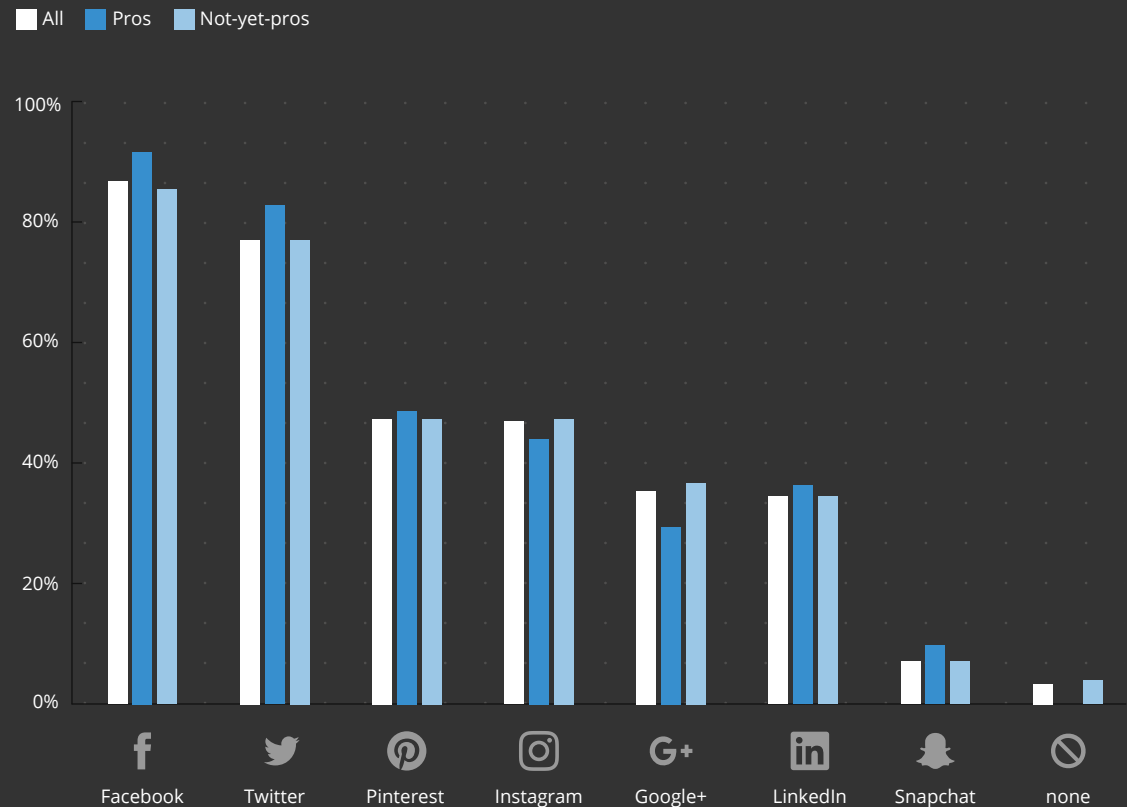
Social media is the most preferred method for growing an audience across all bloggers, but we all know social media can mean very different things to different people. Here are the networks bloggers are using most.

We can see that the popularity of networks is the exact same amongst pros and not-yet-pros, with Twitter and Facebook being far and away the most popular. The small difference in order of popularity is that pros prefer LinkedIn over Google+, whereas not-yet-pros are the opposite.

92% of pros and 86% of not-yet-pros use Facebook to promote their blog posts; 83% of pros and 77% of not-yet-pros use Twitter. Pinterest and Instagram are in a clear second tier of popularity. 48% of both pros and not-yet-pros use Pinterest to promote their blog posts; 44% of pros and 47% of not-yet-pros use Instagram.

These stats are unsurprising in that they mirror the relative popularity of these social networks around the world. Facebook and Twitter have the largest user bases, with the other platforms trailing behind in a similar way to the graph to the right.

### Which social media networks do you use to promote your blog posts?



Once you're up and running with social media, you'll have to decide how many times to share a given piece of content across your networks. Here's what other bloggers are doing:

### On average, how many times do you share a given post across all social networks?

MEAN	MEDIAN
All <b>5.97</b>	All <b>3</b>
Pros <b>7.79</b>	Pros <b>4</b>
Not-yet-pros <b>5.64</b>	Not-yet-pros <b>3</b>

We see that pros are slightly more aggressive with promoting their own content on social, averaging 8 social media posts for every blog post they publish, while not-yet-pros promote each post 6 times across their social networks.

You can use these numbers as a benchmark, but remember to do what's right for your audience in the end. You want to find the sweet spot between letting your audience know about a new blog post and also not being so in their face that they stop following you altogether.

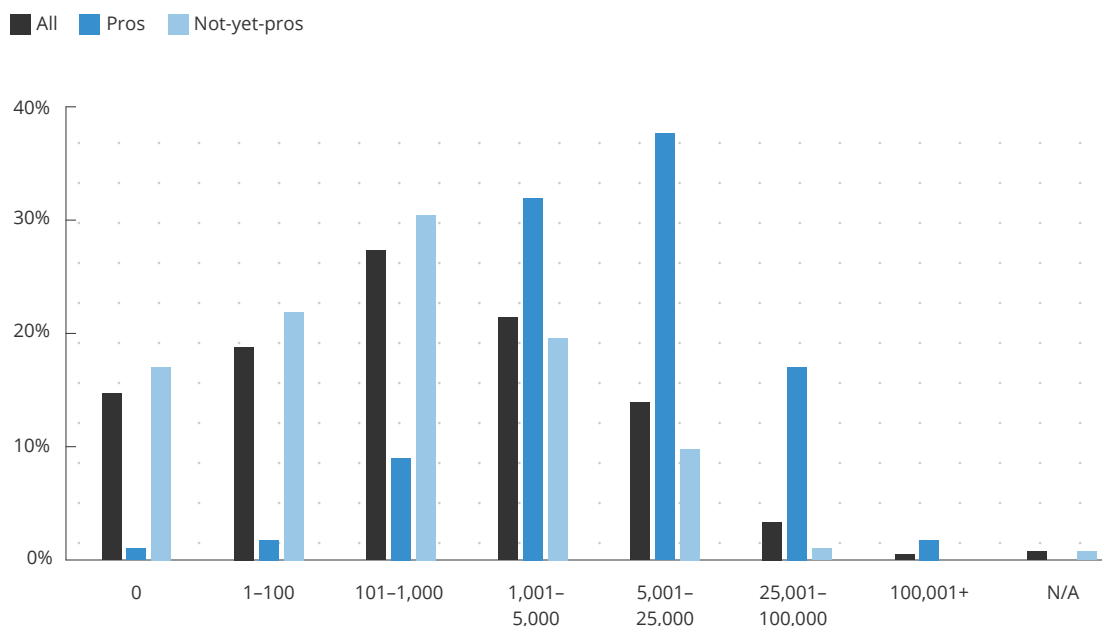
### HOW DO BLOGGERS USE EMAIL MARKETING TO GROW THEIR AUDIENCE?

Like traffic numbers, email subscriber numbers skew much larger for pros than not-yet-pros. 57% of pros have at least

5,000 email subscribers compared to 10% of not-yet-pros. 69% of not-yet-pros have 1,000 email subscribers or less, compared to 11% of pros.

Based on this, we can say that **pros are likely to have an email list of 5,000 subscribers or more and not-yet-pros are highly likely to have less than 1,000 email subscribers.**

### How many email subscribers did you have as of July 31, 2016?



If you're looking for a good benchmark for how many people should be in your audience before you start trying to make a living, we'd say that 1,000 subscribers is a good initial target for launching your first product or service (even though it never hurts to start today, no matter how big your audience might be).

Finding a product that is a great fit for your audience once you hit 1,000 subscribers means that you can focus on growing your audience to 5,000 email subscribers or more to help you sell that product to more people and reach for that professional blogger benchmark we set at the beginning of this report.

But how fast can you expect to grow?

### What were the mean and median email list growth rates for the past 12 months?

MEAN	MEDIAN
All <b>269%</b>	All <b>67%</b>
Pros <b>154%</b>	Pros <b>67%</b>
Not-yet-pros <b>300%</b>	Not-yet-pros <b>67%</b>

The average email list growth rate (mean) varies widely between pros, at 154%, and not-yet-pros, at 300%. This might seem backwards, but in fact it makes perfect sense. Not-yet-pros are much more likely to have a small email list to begin with, which means that it takes a smaller number of new email subscribers to have a high growth rate.

For example, if you have 100 email subscribers on January 1 and add 300 email subscribers over the next twelve months, you'd have a 300% growth rate. But if you started with 1,000 subscribers and add 300 email subscribers, you would have just a 30% growth rate.

When we use median to measure growth rate, we actually end up with a great benchmark for measuring your growth compared to the industry. The all-blogger, pro, and not-yet-pro median growth rate is 67% annually. So if you start with 1,000 subscribers today and add 667 over the next year, you would match the median growth rate for the blogging industry. This seems like a very reasonable baseline goal to aim for, especially as your audience grows.

The earlier you are in your blogging journey, the higher you should set the bar for your target growth rate. After all, we've seen that audience size is definitely correlated with the ability to make a living from your blog.

## HOW DO BLOGGERS USE PAID ADVERTISING TO GROW THEIR AUDIENCE?

When it comes to paid advertising, we specifically focused on which social networks bloggers are using as paid ad platforms to promote their blog posts. This means we didn't ask about Google Adwords and other paid platforms that are more typically used to promote specific products or services.

**Most bloggers (58%) do not use any paid ads to promote their content.** There is a drastic difference between pros and not-yet-pros, with pros being 50% more likely to use paid ads than not-yet-pros.

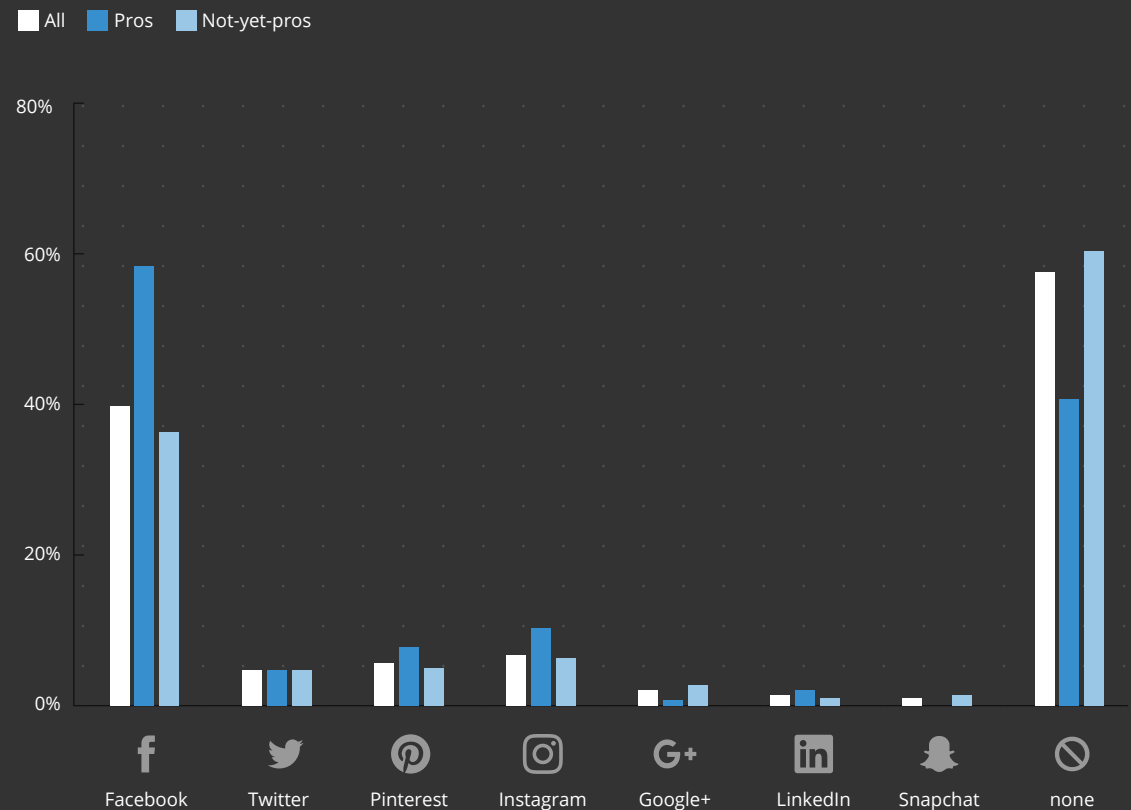
Of those who use paid ads, Facebook ads are far and away the most popular. 58% of all pros use Facebook ads, but **99% of pros who use some form of paid advertising use Facebook ads.** Similarly, 37% of all not-yet-pros use Facebook ads, but that shoots up to 93% of not-yet-pros who use some form of paid advertising. The next most popular paid ad platform is Instagram, which pales in comparison to Facebook. 18% of pros and 16% of not-yet-pros who use paid ads use Instagram for paid ads.

Overall, paid ads seem to be a case of "it takes money to make money." Once bloggers get over the hump of making a full time living from their blog, they are much more likely to use paid ads to accelerate their success.

## HOW DO BLOGGERS USE REPUBLISHING TO GROW THEIR AUDIENCE?

Republishing is the practice of publishing a blog post on your site and then publishing the full content of that post on another platform. It has become a fashionable way to get more attention for blog posts over the past couple of years.

### Which social media networks do you pay to promote your blog posts?

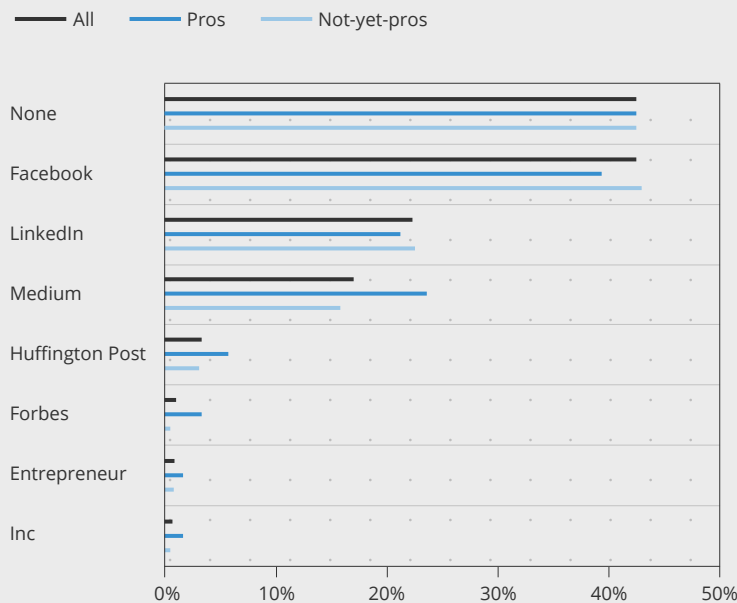




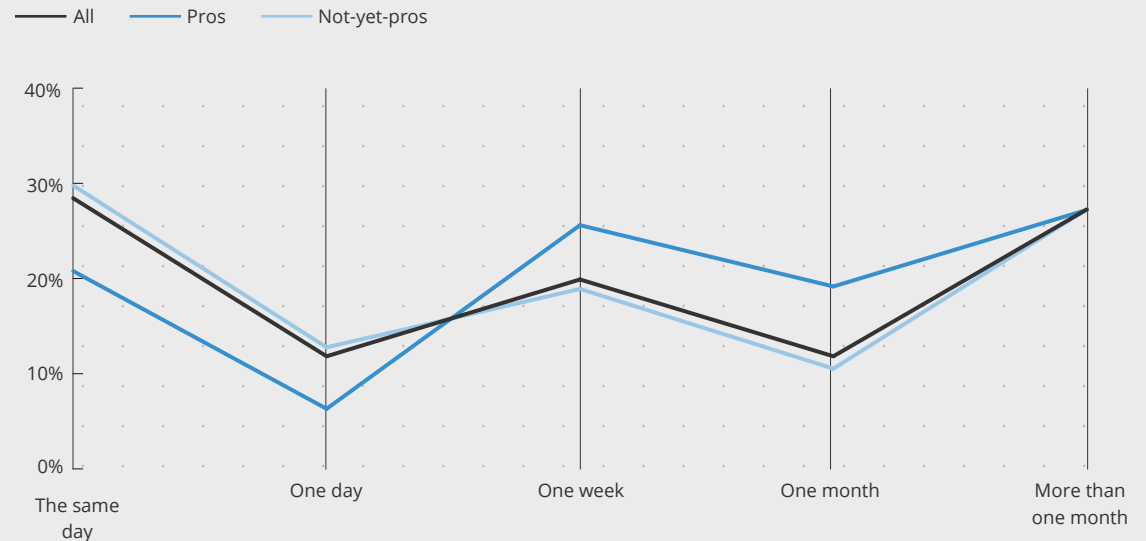
It's hard to point to an exact moment when this became true, but [Medium's importer](#) certainly increased the number of people using republishing. This trend has been accelerated with [Facebook adding blog style functionality](#) to the notes feature on the platform.

Overall, we see that 57% of bloggers are using some form of republishing to promote their blog posts. 39% of pros are using Facebook to republish and 43% of not-yet-pros are doing the same. 21% of pros and 23% of not-yet-pros are republishing on LinkedIn. The biggest variance we see here is that 24% of pros are republishing on Medium compared to 16% of not-yet-pros.

### On which sites do you republish your content?



### How long do you wait before republishing one of your blog posts?



Most bloggers who republish do so on other platforms the same day that they publish the original blog post: 30% of not-yet-pros who use republishing make this a habit compared to 21% of pros. Pros are more likely to wait at least a week, with 73% of pros who use republishing waiting at least a week and 47% of pros who republish waiting at least a month. 57% of not-yet-pros wait at least a week, and 38% wait at least a month.

If you don't use republishing or haven't learned much about the practice, you might wonder what this tactic is and how to use it to your advantage. Neil Patel wrote [a great post highlighting the risks of using this strategy incorrectly, and how to adjust to get the maximum benefit](#).

That wraps up the data on blog audiences and the strategies bloggers use to grow their audiences. Next up we'll look at bloggers' work habits.

## PART 6: THE WORK HABITS

# How much, when, where, and with whom bloggers work

Blogging is such a weird thing. In theory, anyone who has access to the Internet, a computer, and the drive to make it happen can use blogging as a tool to make a living.

You can blog from anywhere in the world at any time you want. Your customers can come from any country in the world. And if you play your cards right, you might be able to do all of this while maintaining a full-time job.

But that's just the theory, so we asked respondents to tell us how, when, and where they get their work done. The results showed us that reality is much more boring.

## DO BLOGGERS TREAT THEIR BLOGS LIKE A FULL-TIME JOB, PART-TIME JOB, SIDE GIG, OR A HOBBY?

“Do you consider your blog a full-time, part-time job, side gig or hobby” might seem like an odd question... after all shouldn't all pros be working full time on their blogs?

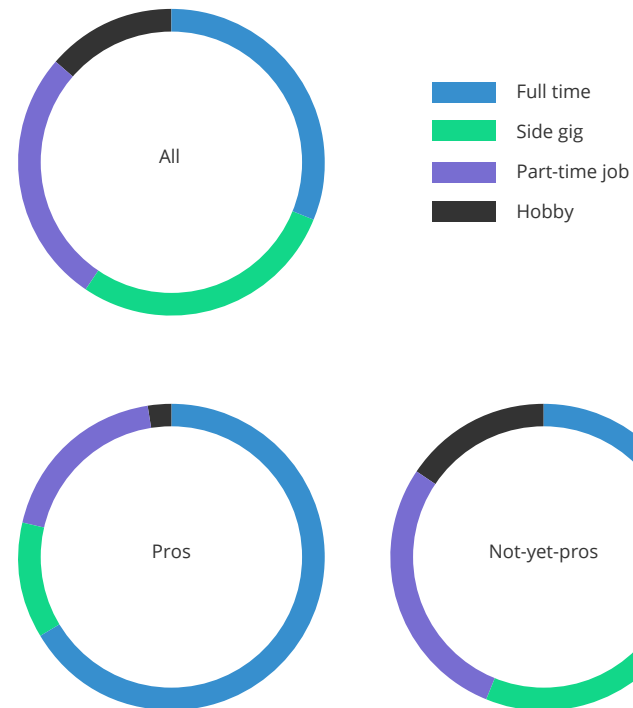
It turns out the answer is no. To be sure, most pros (66%) consider their blog-based business to be a full-time job. That's by no means all pros, and equally surprising is the fact that 25% of not-yet-pros consider their blog and business to be a full-time job even though they're not yet making a full-time living from their efforts. Overall, the majority of not-yet-pros (59%) consider their blog to be a part-time job or side gig.

The rest of the pros break down across side gig (12%), part-time job (19%), and hobby (2%). We love this because it means that even though many of these pros could probably leave their jobs if they really wanted to, they choose to keep a job for any number of reasons. We'd guess that our criteria for pro-level income does not always match the income needs of a given blogger and their family. But a lucky few likely stay in their jobs because they love their job and their blogs.

We also took a look at whether this changes based on gender and children.

Of female bloggers, 35% consider their blog to be a full-time job compared to 25% of male bloggers. Interestingly, bloggers with children were more likely to consider their blog a full-time job than bloggers without children, whereas bloggers without children were more likely to consider their blog a hobby. Males were most likely to consider their blog a side gig at 36% and most likely to consider their blog a hobby at 17%.

### Do you consider your blog a full-time job, part-time job, side-gig, or hobby?



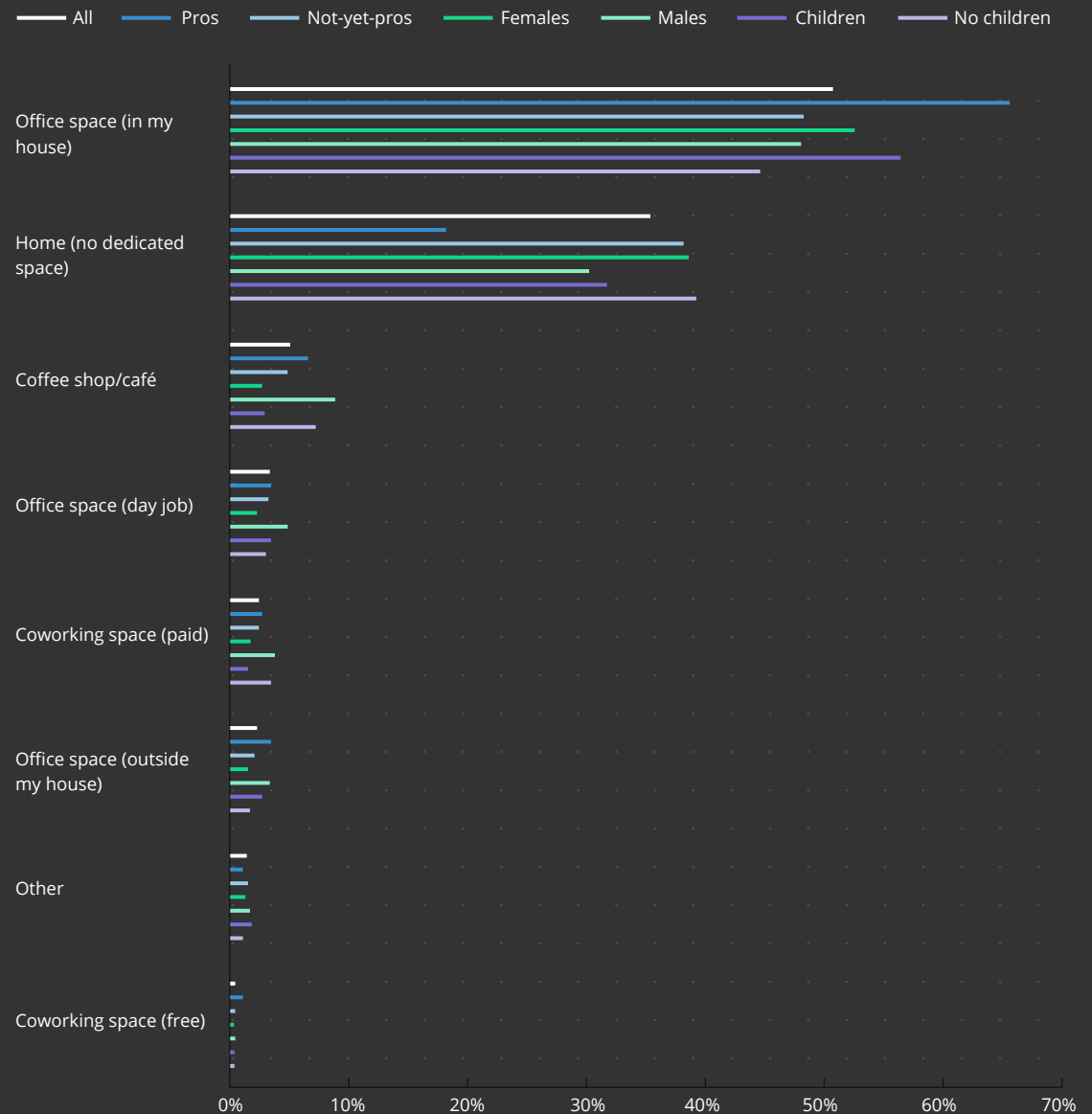
## WHAT KIND OF OFFICE SPACE DO BLOGGERS USE?

Bloggers work on the beach right? That's how we've heard it's supposed to work, anyways. It was weird though, because when we asked, no one actually said that they work from the beach. Here's what they had to say instead:

Most bloggers work from a dedicated office space in their house, including 66% of pros. That was the most popular option across all respondent segments. The second most popular was working from the house, but not in a dedicated office space. **In all, 86% of all bloggers do their work from home, whether in a dedicated office space or not.** No other location even remotely came close in popularity.

The only other stand out stat here is that males are the most likely segment to work from a coffee shop or cafe, at 9%, but that's nothing compared to the 78% of males who work from home.

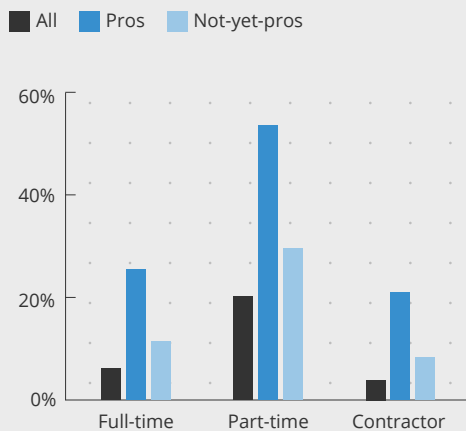
## From where do you most often work on your business?



## DO BLOGGERS HIRE EMPLOYEES?

While not many bloggers had an initial goal of building a company or employing other people, a fair number of bloggers do employ others on some level. Here's what we found:

### Do you have any full-time employees, part-time employees or contractors?



Of the pros, 20% have full-time employees compared to 4% of not-yet-pros. Also, 30% of pros have at least one part-time employee compared to 8% of not-yet-pros. Finally, 53% of pros work with at least one contractor, compared to 21% of not-yet-pros.

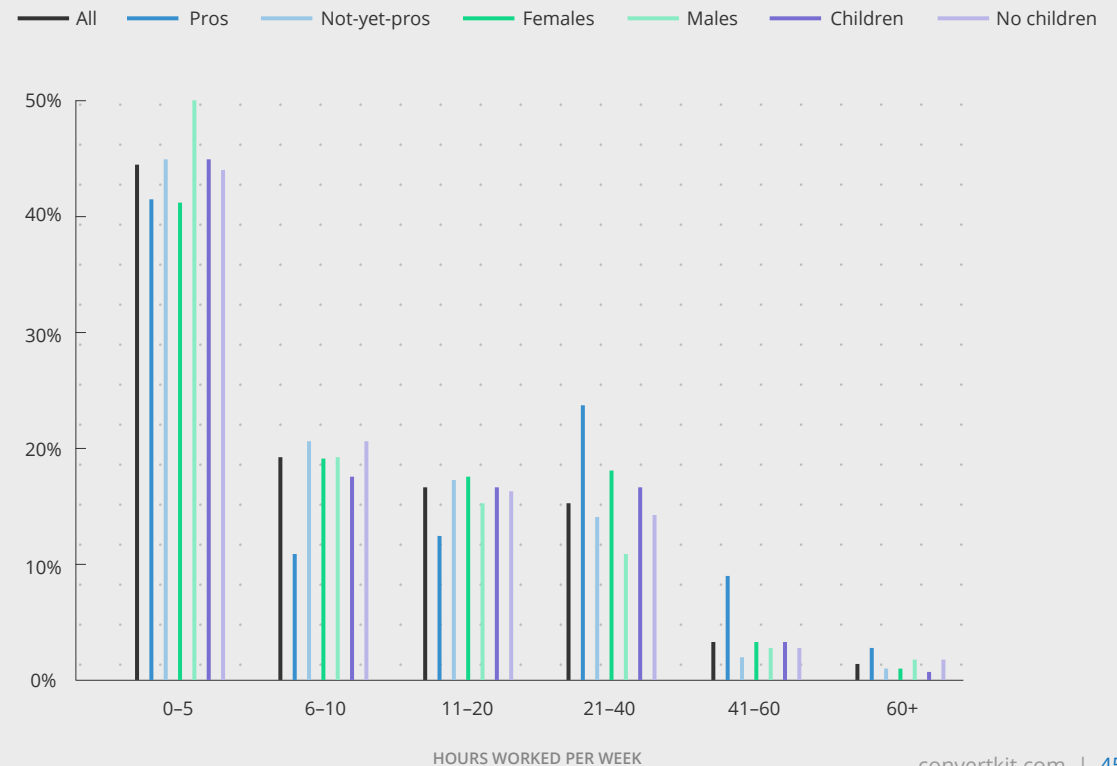
**This tells us that overall, pros are much more likely to seek out paid help than not-yet-pros, which makes a ton of sense.** For one, pros have more money to spend on help and second, pros are more likely to have more work to go around since their blogs are further along.

At the same time, we know not-yet-pros feel the pinch of too much work and not enough time, especially the more their audience grows. When not-yet-pros pay for help, it's usually for contract help so that they don't have to make any long-term commitments that will add too much burden too early in their business.

## HOW MANY HOURS DO BLOGGERS WORK EACH WEEK?

Is the four hour work week real? How much do pro bloggers work compared to not-yet-pros? We were eager to find out:

### How many hours do you typically work on your blog or business each week?



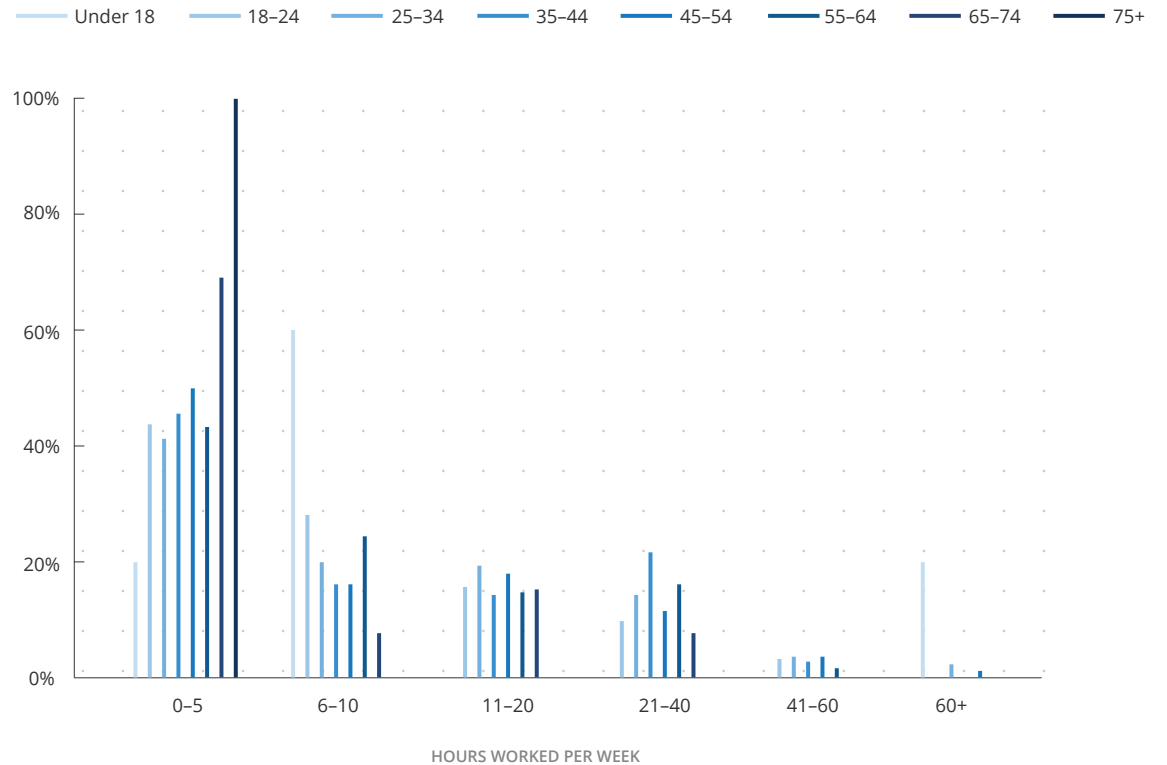
**Believe it or not, pros were most likely to say that they work between 0-5 hours per week on their blog.** Of those pros, 42% are able to make more than the median US household income in just five hours per week or less. That is crazy! And, in fact, 0-5 hours of work per week was the most common response from all respondent segments.

On the other hand, pros were most likely to work more than 20 hours per week on their blogs, with 35% working more than 20 hours every week. Pros were also most likely to work more than 60 hours per week at 3%. However, it's important to remember that 75%+ of not-yet-pro bloggers do not consider their blog a full-time job, so their blogging hours are likely on top of another job. That makes for long hours every week.

These respondent segments are helpful, but we also wanted to take a look at how age affects the number of hours worked.

The age breakdown gives us a couple of interesting tidbits. Bloggers 65 and older are highly likely to spend 5 hours or less blogging each week. Bloggers 35-44 years old are most likely to spend 21-40 hours each week, at 21%. Other than that, the age breakdowns mostly tell us that bloggers of all ages spend a similar amount of time blogging. The breakdown between pro and not-yet-pro still gives us the best distinction on working hours.

## How many hours do you typically work on your blog or business each week?



This breakdown is interesting, as it shows us when during the day a blogger puts in their hours. In fact, compared to how many hours and what days of the week, this graph shows the greatest discrepancies.

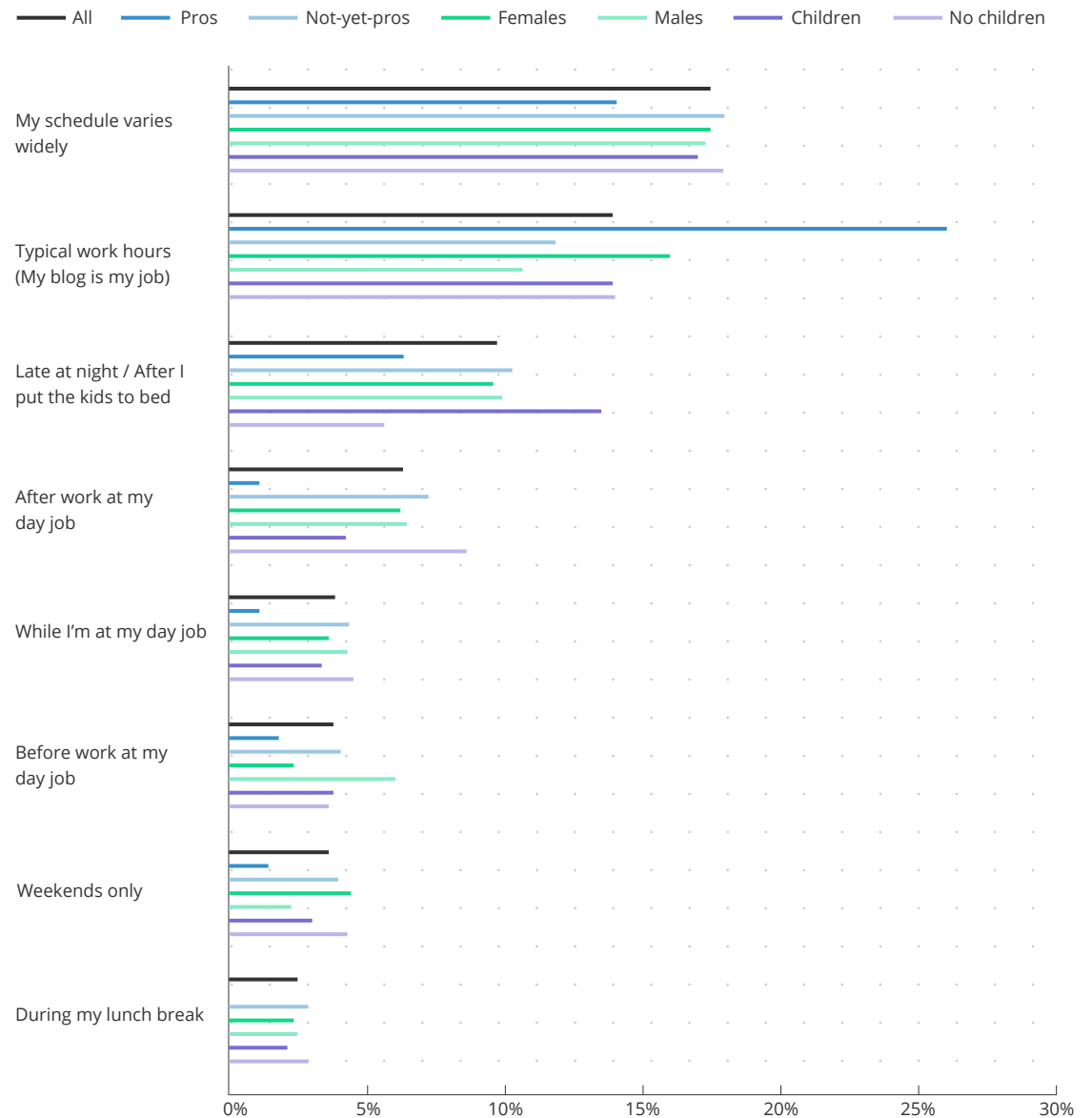
About 40% of all segments say that their schedule varies widely, except for the 33% of pros who say the same. Pros are much more likely to work during typical work hours than any other segment of respondents, which makes sense.

Bloggers with children are most likely to work late at night and bloggers without children are most likely to work on their blogs right after they're done with their day jobs. Having the responsibility of raising children has very real implications for spending time on your blog.

Males are 157% more likely than females to work on their business before they go to work at their day job. Not-yet-pros are more than twice as likely as pros to work only on the weekends, as are females compared to males.

In the second to last section, we turn to one of the most important topics of all: the money. While we don't see money as the point, earning money from your blog is certainly the key to being able to quit your job, go full-time in your business, support your family, and give more to causes you believe in. Let's take a look at how bloggers earn money (and how much they earn when they do).

## During which times of day do you typically work on your blog or business?



## PART 7: THE MONEY

# How bloggers make money

Money is a tool for accomplishing your goals in life. Whether you want to start a nonprofit, travel the world, buy a Tesla, retire early, or simply provide for your family, money is a tool for bringing your ideas to life.

Sometimes, we tell ourselves a story about how money will change our lives, even when money is not actually the thing holding us back. But other times, money is the key to unlocking our potential and living a better life.

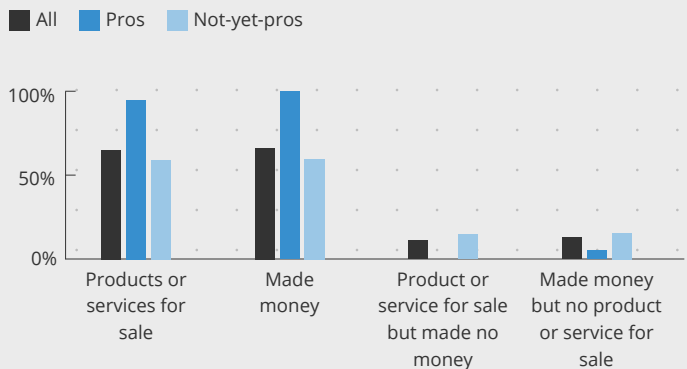
When it comes to blogging, and certainly professional blogging, money is what allows bloggers to spend the majority of their time running a business, investing in themselves, and serving their customers. Here's what respondents had to say about money.



## WHAT PRODUCTS AND/OR SERVICES DO BLOGGERS SELL?

In order to make money, you have to have something for sale. That's fundamentally how a blog turns into a business. So we looked at how many people had a product or service for sale and whether or not those people made money over the past year.

### Do you have products or services for sale and did you make any money this past year?



Of all bloggers, 65% had a product or service for sale and 66% of bloggers made money in the past year. We found that 12% of bloggers with a product or service for sale did not make any money in the past year, all of whom were not-yet-pros. We'll cover the bloggers who made money without a product or service for sale in a bit.

Of the pros, 95% reported having a product or service for sale versus 60% of not-yet-pros. Perhaps obviously, 100% of pros made money in the past year versus 60% of not-yet-pros.

You might ask: how is it possible that more bloggers made money than had a product or service for sale? We dug in to find

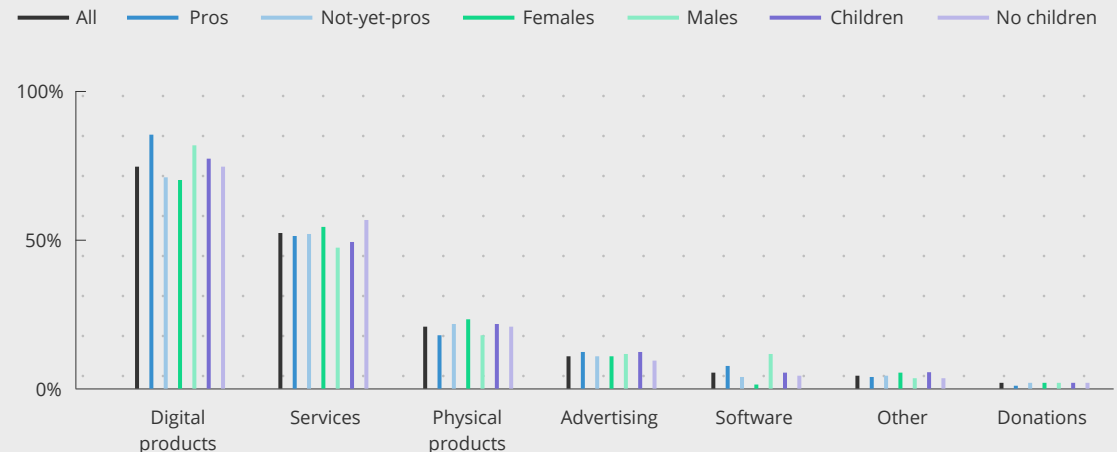
out how it was possible and it turns out it may have been the wording of the question.

We found that most bloggers who did not have a product or service for sale but still made money did so from ads. So why did they answer "no" to having something for sale? This is likely because allowing ads on a website does not seem to fit as either a product or service and our questions specifically asked, "Over the past year, did you have a product or service for sale?" Regardless of the reasoning, it turns out that no one, in fact, made money without having a product or service for sale if we lump ads in as a service.

If there is a definite line in the sand between those bloggers who make money and those who don't, it is this: bloggers who make money have something available for sale.

But it's not enough to know that bloggers had something for sale. We wanted to know what kind of offering bloggers most typically have for sale. Here's what we found:

### What kinds of products or services do you have for sale?



Digital products were far and away the most popular offering for all bloggers with 74% of all bloggers, 85% of pro bloggers, and 72% of not-yet-pro bloggers having a digital product for sale. These digital products could include ebooks, courses, audio programs, and other digital media. Males (82%) were more likely to sell digital products than females (70%), but there was not much difference between bloggers with and without children.

Services were the second most popular offering with 52% of all bloggers, 52% of pro bloggers, and 52% of not-yet-pro bloggers having services for sale. Bloggers without children (57%) were more likely than bloggers with children (49%) to have a service for sale, and female (54%) bloggers were more likely than males (48%).

Female bloggers (23%) were more likely to sell physical products than male bloggers (17%). On the flip side, male bloggers (11%) are significantly more likely to sell software than female bloggers (0.88%), which mirrors the lack of gender parity across the tech industry in general and in the coding, development, and software engineering professions in particular.

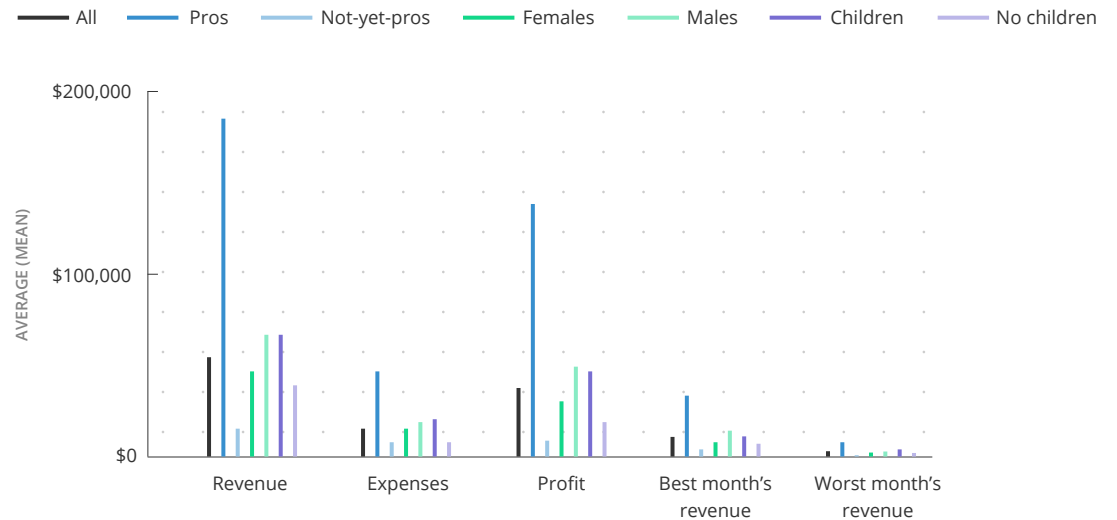
Just how much money do bloggers make? That's up next.

## HOW MUCH REVENUE, EXPENSES, AND PROFIT DO BLOGGERS RACK UP IN A YEAR?

Revenue is great, but it's not nearly as important as profit for running a sustainable business. We divided the respondents into pro and not-yet-pro categories based on their profit, not revenue, for a reason. Profit goes in an entrepreneur's pocket, while revenue is a vanity metric.

**All respondents reported an average (mean) of \$54,108 in the past year, with average expenses of \$15,895 and profits of \$38,016.** Those numbers were largely bolstered by

### Bloggers who made money: What were your gross revenue, expenses, profit, best month, and worst month over the past 12 months?



outliers within the pro blogger group, which you can see in the difference in average revenue and profit between pros and not-yet-pros.

Pros reported average revenue of \$185,975 in the past year, with \$47,912 in average expenses and \$138,046 in profits. Compare that to \$16,267 in average revenue, \$6,769 in average expenses and \$9,497 in average profits for not-yet-pros.

Meanwhile, despite the fact that there are more female professional bloggers than male professional bloggers, we see a large gap in average profits between male bloggers (\$49,638) and female bloggers (\$30,892). **That is a profit gap of 61% for female bloggers, which is three times worse than [the full-time worker gender pay gap of 20% as reported in 2015](#).**

We see a similar profit gap between those bloggers with children, who averaged \$46,797 in profit, and bloggers without children, who averaged \$19,381 in profit. That is a 141% profit gap, which is huge.

Both of these gaps are deserving of more research, but we especially believe that to be true of the gender gap. Why is it that female bloggers are earning less, on average, than males? Is this a systemic problem, a matter of deliberate choice, or something more complicated that combines many different factors?

For those bloggers who did not earn money in the past year, we wanted to know how much money they spent in the process of building their blog. This should be useful to new bloggers especially in helping to budget for the period between launch and income.

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### If you did not earn money this year, what were your business expenses?

#### AVERAGE (MEAN) EXPENSES

All		
<b>\$953</b>		
Pros	Females	Children
<b>N/A</b>	<b>\$826</b>	<b>\$1,129</b>
Not-yet-pros	Males	No children
<b>\$953</b>	<b>\$1,150</b>	<b>\$790</b>

Bloggers who did not earn money in the past year spent an average of \$953 building their blogs. Males (\$1,150) spent more than female (\$826) and bloggers with children (\$1,129) spent more than those without children (\$790), which mirrors the profit gap described above as well.

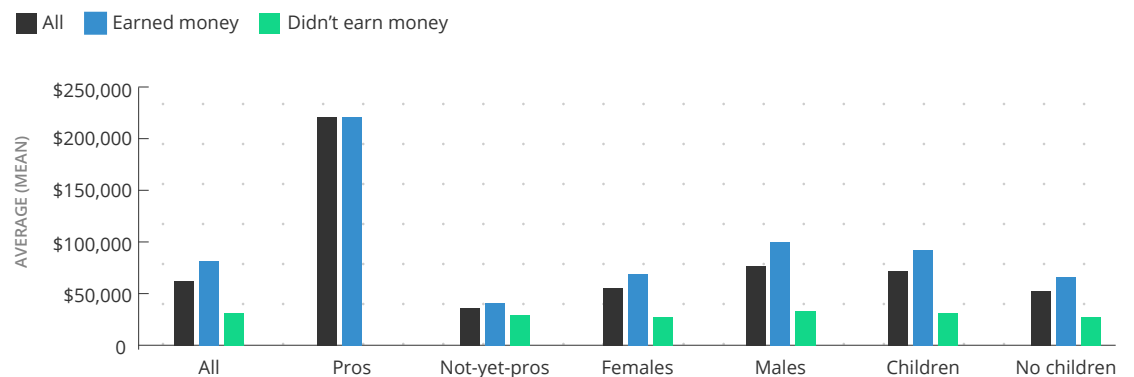
**This seems to indicate that a new blogger could safely budget \$1,000 per year of operations to get up and running before earning revenue.** That said, keep in mind that not-yet-pros who earned revenue in the past year spent \$6,769 on average, so those expenses will go up quickly as you make a concerted effort to grow your blog's audience and income.

### HOW BIG ARE BLOGGERS' GOALS FOR EARNING MONEY?

We couldn't resist asking respondents what their goals are for the year ahead and we could not be happier that we did. The goals bloggers set for themselves are revealing of the psychology that drives us and the potential barriers we break through as we build a business over time.

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### What is your profit goal over the next 12 months?



We divided each respondent segment into those who made money in the past year and those who did not make money in the past year in an effort to understand whether making money in the past affects our goals for making money in the future. All of the results would tell us that the answer is a resounding “yes.”

**If you have made money in the past as a blogger, you are more likely to set a higher goal (\$79,852) for yourself than those who have not made money in the past (\$28,754).** This reflects [a money mindset that has been widely covered](#) in self-help and personal finance material around the web.

Males who earned money this past year (\$99,934) are more likely to set higher goals than females (\$67,544) who also earned money this past year. This alone is a 48% gap, which may be one factor in why male bloggers earn more than females.

Based on this data, males believe they can earn more than females, which is reflective of the fact that [women are less likely than men to negotiate](#) for higher salary and [less likely than men to apply for jobs even when they are overqualified](#). As an industry, this is a huge opportunity to improve the state of the blogging world by encouraging more women to ask for what they're worth and to set higher earning goals for themselves, especially if that does not interfere with other life goals.

One last note here: Pros are out of control (in a good way) with their earning goals, with their average profit goal for the next year coming in at \$222,606. This represents the boost in confidence and the change in money mindset that comes from taking control of your own life by starting a blog and turning it into a profitable, sustainable business.

**When we as humans see our potential by taking risks, earning rewards, and having complete autonomy over our work, we set the bar higher and higher. Eventually, the problem is not so much, “how much can I earn” but rather,**

**Why do I do what I do and how can I be a good steward of the resources I have by serving others?**

That is the question we'll be asking more and more of our customers as we support you in pursuing an independent living through blogging: How can you serve others by building a blog-based business?

Now that we've seen the full picture of the blogging industry, from the motivations that inspire a new blogger to get started to the income that rewards the risk we take as bloggers and entrepreneurs, we'll close this report with a look at the biggest struggles bloggers face everyday.

## PART 8: THE STRUGGLES

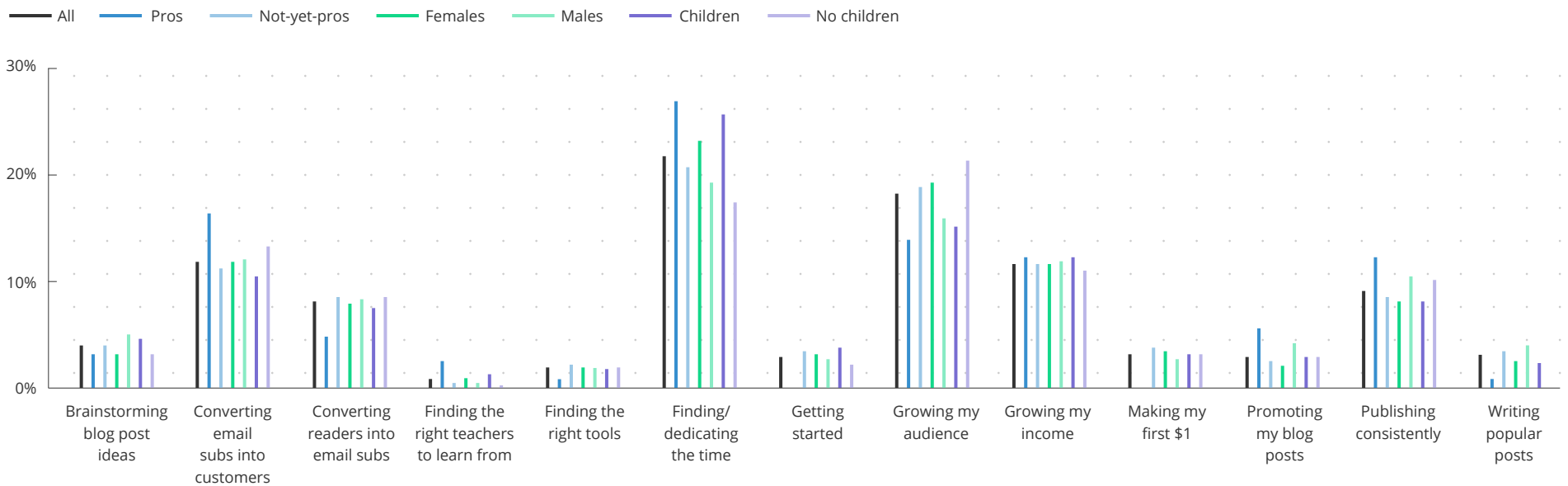
# What bloggers struggle with

The lifestyle is enticing. The income is rewarding. The motivation is there. And yet, no matter how great an opportunity might be, there will always be struggles. The blogging industry is no different. These are the major struggles bloggers cope with on a regular basis.

Finding or dedicating the time to their blog or business is the number one struggle for every segment of respondents other than those without children. Respectively, 22% of all respondents, 27% of pros, 21% of not-yet-pros, 24% of females, 19% of males, 26% of bloggers with children, and 18% of bloggers without children say that finding the time is their number one struggle in running their blog or business.

Of bloggers without children, 21% named “Growing my audience” as their number one struggle, making it their top struggle. “Growing my audience” is the second most popular main struggle for not-yet-pros (19%), females (19%), males (16%), and bloggers with children (15%). “Growing my audience” is the third most popular number one struggle for pro bloggers at 14%.

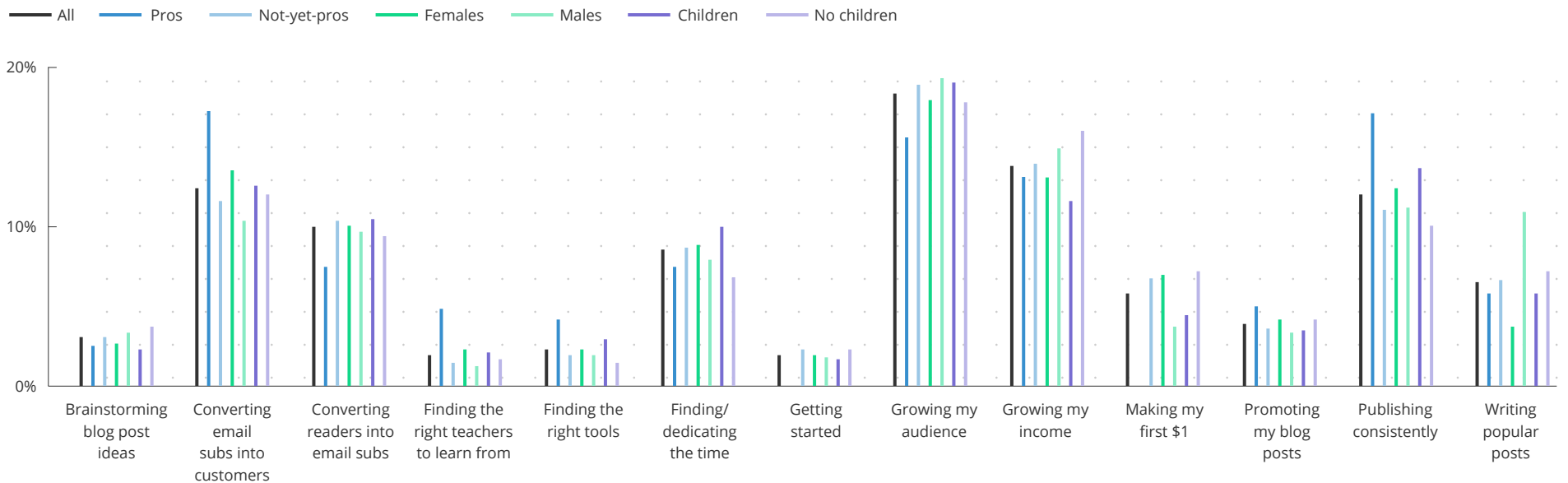
## What is your #1 struggle in running your blog or business?



The number two struggles showed a similar trend below.

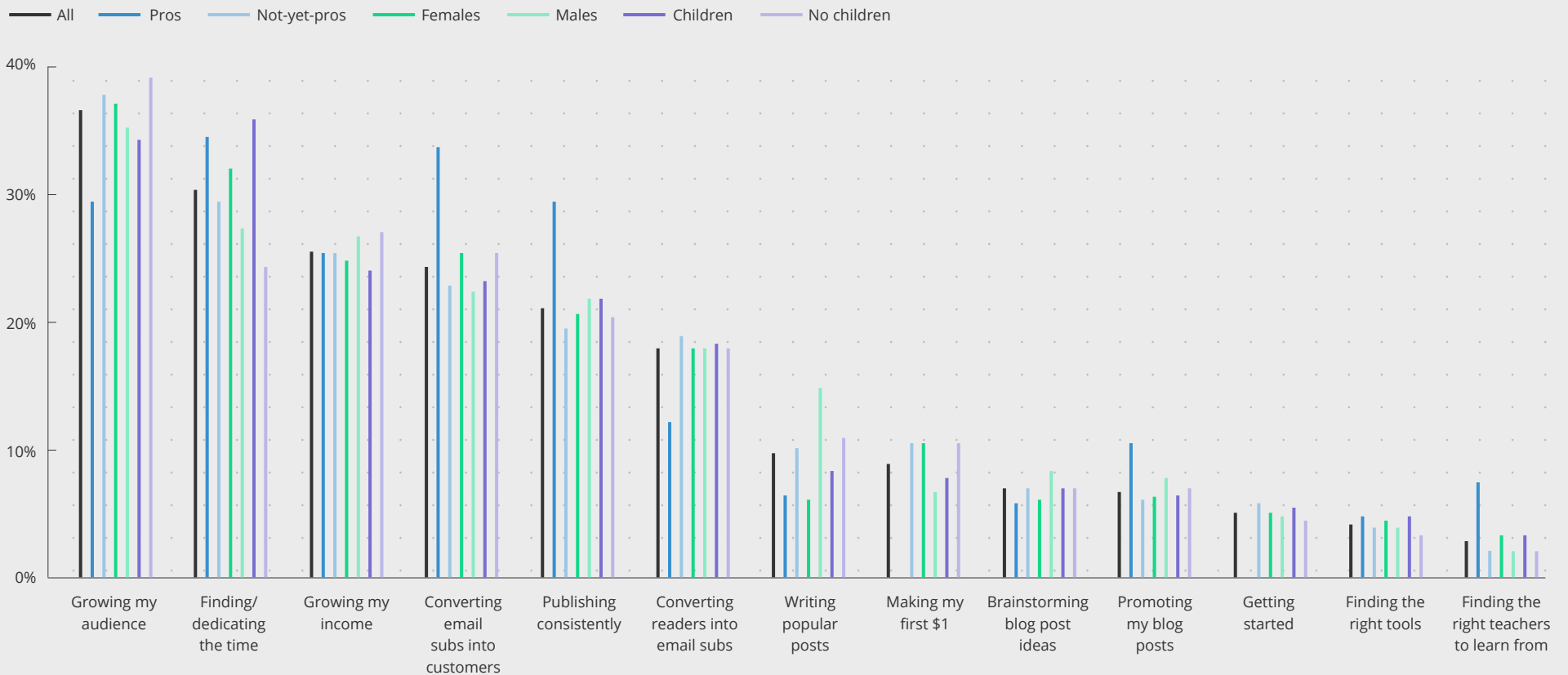
All respondents most often listed their number two biggest struggle as “Growing my audience” (18%), “Growing my income” (14%), “Converting email subscribers into customers” (13%) and “Publishing consistently” (12%). You can see from the graph that this order was not true amongst all respondent segments based on outlier results like the pro column in “Converting email subscribers into customers” and “Publishing consistently”, bloggers with children in “Publishing consistently,” as well as the male column in “Writing popular posts.”

## What is your #2 struggle in running your blog or business?



Having these two separate graphs left a bit of an unclear picture as to the top struggles for bloggers, so we combined answers from both questions and to understand the most often stated struggles.

### Combination of #1 and #2 struggles





You can see the order of importance for all respondents as:

- 1 Growing my audience
- 2 Finding/dedicating the time
- 3 Growing my income
- 4 Converting email subscribers into customers
- 5 Publishing consistently

If we look only at Pros, the struggles are the same, but in a different order:

- 1 Finding/dedicating the time
- 2 Converting email subscribers into customers
- 3 Publishing consistently
- 4 Growing my audience
- 5 Growing my income

All other segments of respondents have the same top five, in slightly different orders. Based on this, we can see that there are a few major topics that bloggers can focus on to help them overcome their biggest obstacles.

**First, bloggers should focus on setting aside time in their schedule to work on their blogs and businesses, just like they do with other appointments and meetings throughout their week.** To make sure they make the most of their time, they should also get very clear on their priorities based on what strategies and tasks will help them achieve their goals, focusing relentlessly on those priorities during their scheduled blogging time each week.

**We can also see that bloggers will benefit from finding a couple of key teachers or mentors** to help them learn the

best tactics for growing an audience and turning that audience into customers. **Specifically, bloggers will want to learn how to grow their email list, the different products and services they can sell to turn their blog into a business, and marketing methods for turning email subscribers into customers.**

[The ConvertKit blog](#) is a great place to learn about these topics, and we also recommend the following blogs and businesses to learn more:

- [Pat Flynn](#)
- [Marie Forleo](#)
- [Moz](#)
- [Wistia](#)
- [Quicksprout](#)
- [Fizzle](#)
- [Buffer](#)
- [Unbounce](#)

While this list isn't exhaustive and doesn't represent all of our friends who are great teachers, it's a good place to start. Most importantly, your job is not to subscribe to every blog and publication you can to learn everything you can. Instead, focus on finding one or two teachers whose message and style resonate most with you and learn from them until you feel like you've soaked up everything you can from them. Then, focus on your very next step in your business and find the best teacher to help you make progress on that step.

## THE CONCLUSION

# Bloggging is still what powers the growth of small online businesses

Over 850 bloggers spent more than twenty minutes each telling us about the ins and outs of their blogs and businesses in 2017. Without them, this report would not exist. Thanks to them, to you, this report digs into what it really means to be a blogger and how we make a living in this industry today.

Here are our key takeaways from this year's report:

About **15%** of people who consider themselves to be bloggers also earn more money than the median United States household income based on 2015 census data; we call these bloggers the pros.

About **85%** of people who consider themselves to be bloggers are not earning more than the median household income, but they do represent the future of the industry in that they are at various stages of growing their businesses and surely some will enter the "Pro" category in the next year.

If you were to force us to make an avatar of the average blogger based on this survey, she would be **25-45, white, married, college educated, and in the upper middle class.**

The avatar of the average blogger is not a truism, but rather an oversimplification of a diverse and growing industry full of many

unique individuals who come from a plethora of backgrounds, cultures, experiences, and regions of the world.

We hope the blogging industry will become **more diverse with time**. In particular, we would love to see more representation on this survey in years to come from people of many different ethnicities and countries of origin. In that diversity, the blogging industry will gain perspective and richness that it would otherwise lack and we will all be better for it.

Bloggers most often get started with a goal of becoming **self-employed** and having an **outlet for creative expression**. The tension between these two goals is a beautiful thing and one that makes the pursuit worthy of our time and energy as bloggers.

As bloggers, we feel a sense of happiness and success primarily from **creative expression, a feeling of purpose in our lives and work, the relationships we have, money to help us achieve our goals, and our physical health**. The balance of purpose and money is one that we can continue to pursue by making our work about more than just monthly income reports, but rather about the impact we make in our customers' lives.

Personal development, entrepreneurship, small business, online business, productivity, marketing, and lifestyle design are the

top seven topics bloggers write about, with at least **20%** of bloggers covering each of the above.

Most bloggers use **Wordpress** as their platform of choice for their blog and website; they intend to publish weekly blog posts between **500 and 1,000 words**, and they often fall short of their publishing intentions.

While we could use many types of media, we typically include photos in our posts and we measure the **success** of our posts based on total site visitors, new email subscribers and social shares each time we hit publish.

Most bloggers have had between **1,000 and 10,000 visitors** on their site in the past year, but pros far exceed this with between **10,000 and 100,000 visitors** over the same time period; almost all bloggers use social media and email marketing to grow that audience over time. They typically see email list growth of **66% (median) to 269% (mean) per year**, with not-yet-pros growing much faster.

Bloggers typically work on their blogs as a side gig or full-time job, largely depending on how much money they're making; when they work on their blogs, they do so from home, typically working less than **5 hours a week**; when they hire help, they typically hire contractors.

Most bloggers have a product or service for sale and when they do, they typically sell either digital products or services; Pros

reported average (mean) profits over the past year of **\$138,064** in profit compared to **\$9,497** in average profits for not-yet-pros.

We see that real past earnings affect goals for future earnings across the board, with pros setting their sights high, with an average profit goal of **\$222,000** for the next 12 months compared to an average goal of **\$35,000** for not-yet pros. The split is even bigger when we compare bloggers who didn't earn money this year vs. those who did; and, unfortunately, there is a **60% profit earnings gap** between male and female bloggers that needs to be closed.

Finally, bloggers struggle to find the time to invest in their blogs and businesses, using that time to grow their audience, and then finding ways to turn that audience into a viable, sustainable business by converting email subscribers into customers.

That's the State of the Blogging Industry in 2017. This is the inaugural report that we hope will kick off many years of documenting the state of the industry and the ways in which it is bound to grow and change over time.

We're still in the early innings of what it means to be a blogger and an entrepreneur making a living through small online businesses. Here's to your continued success and our industry continuing to grow into a well-respected, prestigious profession focused on doing good for the people we serve.

Thanks for reading. Now get back to work ;)

-The ConvertKit Team

Thanks to our partners who helped us recruit a diverse group of bloggers to complete this year's survey:



Go to [convertkit.com/request-demo](https://convertkit.com/request-demo) to see how we can help you grow your business in 2017.