



# State of the Headless CMS Market 2018

by Kentico Software

# Headless CMS Market in 2018

For many years, companies have been using traditional web-oriented Content Management Systems.

But the world has changed. Customers want to communicate with brands through new channels and devices—mobile apps, chatbots, digital assistants, augmented or virtual reality, and others.

As the traditional web-oriented CMSs become too limiting in the multichannel world, organizations start to look for a better way to tell their stories and create engaging digital experiences.

That's why we witnessed the rise of the headless CMS concept in the past couple of years.

As we analyzed the headless CMS market, we realized there was no publicly available data that would tell us where the market is today. So we conducted a survey among 986 technical and business people from 85 countries in March and April 2018 and we're happy to share the results in this report.

## **Here are the key insights:**

- 55% of respondents know what headless CMS is
- Of those who understand the headless CMS concept, 86% are positive about the idea, 29% are already using a headless approach and 38% plan to use it in the next 12 months
- The main motivation for a headless CMS is centralizing content management in one place (48%), followed by flexibility (47%), and building lightweight websites (44%)

- 45% currently host their websites or applications in the cloud, 44% use their own servers
- 63% prefer a self-hosted open source headless CMS over SaaS (14%) or vendor-hosted open source CMS (11%)

During the research, we discovered there's confusion about the "headless CMS" term. One-third of respondents who already use a headless CMS actually use a traditional web-oriented CMS, such as WordPress or Drupal, with an added API, which may temporarily address some of the technical challenges, but it won't support aspirations of organizations that want to deliver a truly omnichannel experience.

#### **Our conclusions and predictions:**

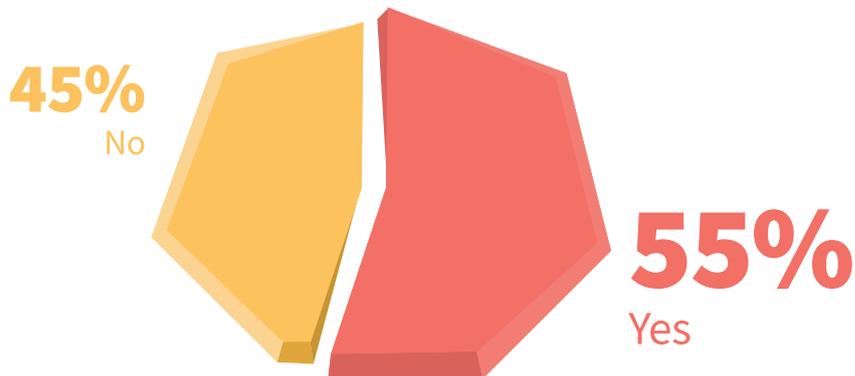
- Headless CMS has been recently a strong trend, but many companies look at it only from a technical perspective and miss the business opportunity to future-proof their content and provide a smooth experience across channels
- We expect the adoption of headless CMS to double by mid-2019
- The adoption will continue to be driven primarily by the needs of technical people who want to use modern front-end frameworks and microservices architecture and avoid limitations of traditional CMSs
- Despite the current preference of the self-hosted open source model, we expect a growth of the SaaS CMS model as companies will look to increase their agility and eliminate costs connected with CMS maintenance



Petr Palas, CEO, Kentico Software

# Do You Know What a Headless CMS Is?

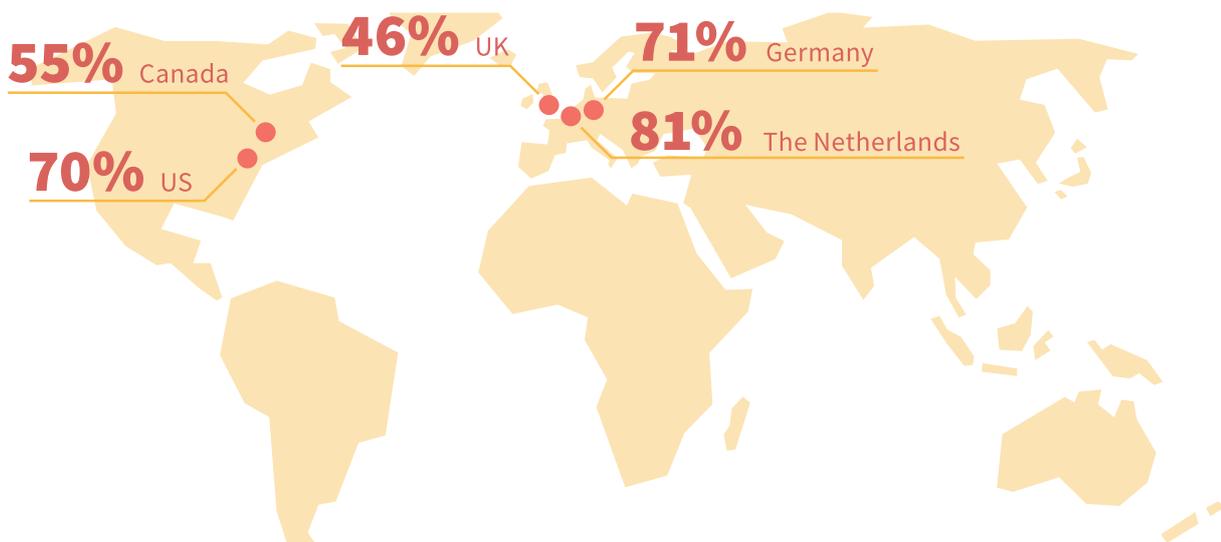
55% of respondents know what a headless CMS is.



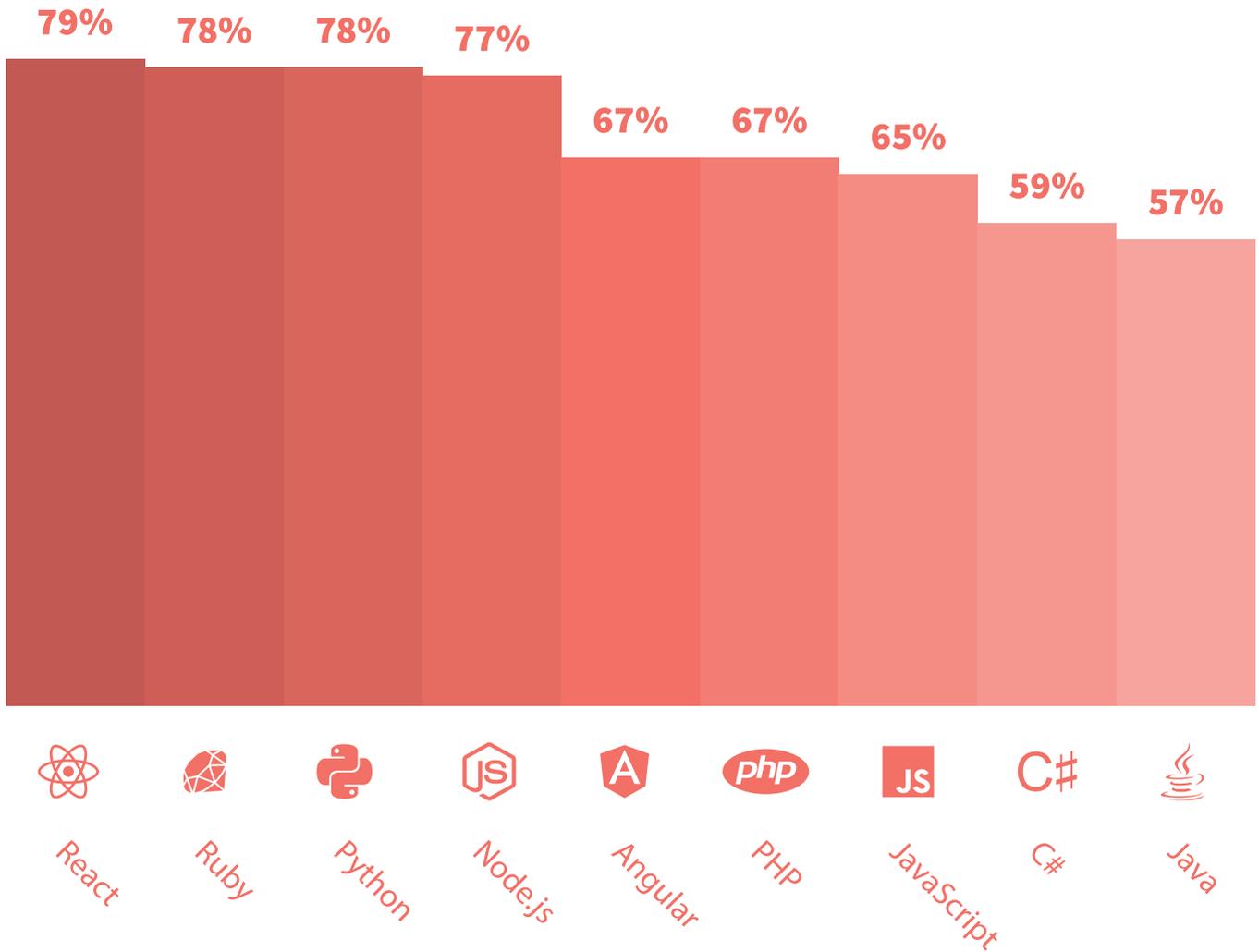
*n* = 986

It's no surprise that the knowledge is higher among technical roles (63%) than among business roles (29%).

When it comes to geography, the awareness of headless CMS is highest in the Netherlands (81%), followed by Germany (71%) and United States (70%). The chart below shows the top five countries.



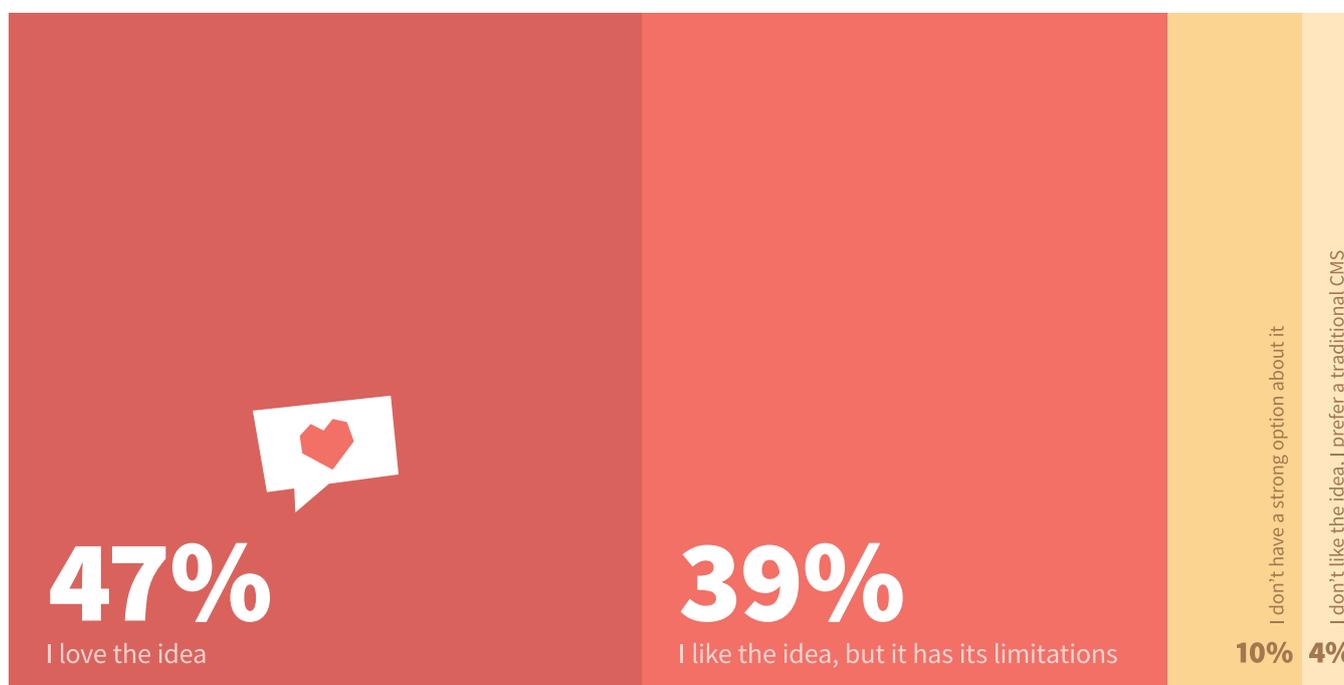
Headless CMS is best known among developers using trendy technologies, such as React (79%), Python (78%), Ruby (78%), and Node.js (77%), compared to traditional back-end languages, such as C# (59%) or Java (57%).



The chart shows only the top nine technologies, sorted by the percentage of people who know headless CMS.

# What Do You Think of the Headless CMS Idea?

Overall, most respondents are positive about headless CMS—47% of those who understand the headless CMS concept said they love the idea, 39% like it, but they also see some limitations. Only 4% do not like the idea. 10% do not have a strong opinion.



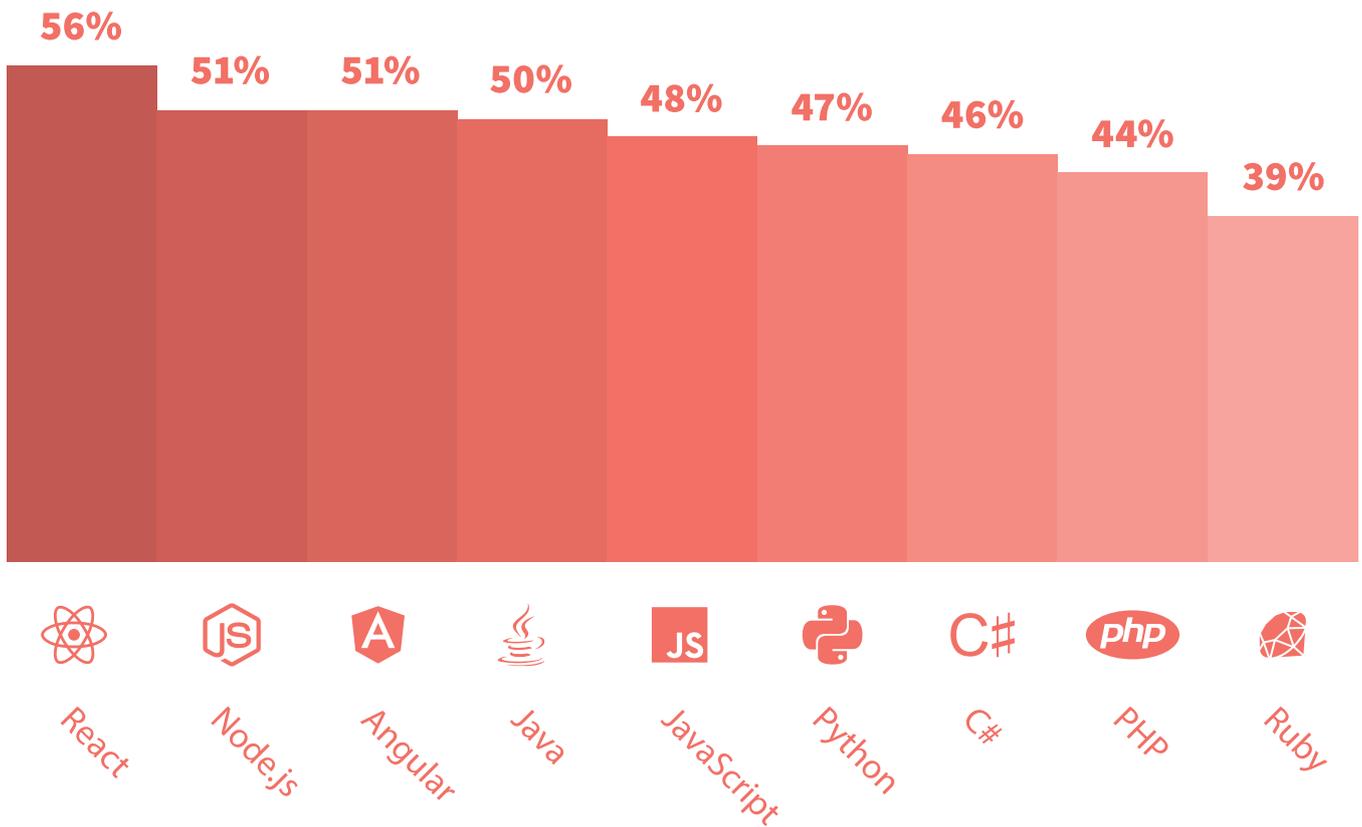
*n = 523 (only those who know what headless CMS is were asked this question)*

## Who Loves Headless CMS?

Not surprisingly, headless CMS has more fans among technical roles (48% said they love the idea) than business roles (39% love the idea).

End clients are more in favor of headless CMS with 52% saying they love the idea compared to 44% when it comes to service providers (digital agencies, freelancers, and system integrators).

Headless CMS is most popular among React developers (56% say they love headless), followed by Node.js, and Angular:



The chart shows only the top nine technologies sorted by the percentage of people who say they love headless CMS.

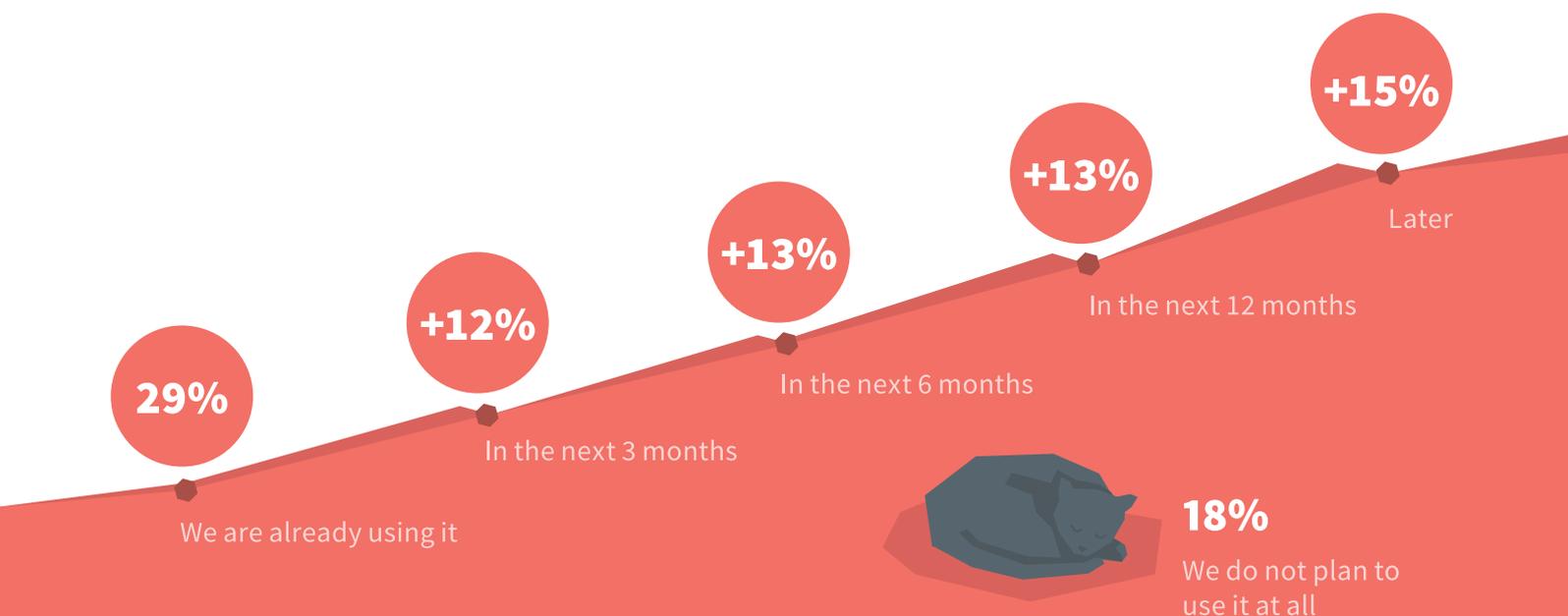
# When Do You Plan to Use a Headless CMS?

29% of those who understand the headless CMS concept say they already use a headless CMS. However, about one-third of them are using a headless variant of a traditional CMS, such as WordPress or Drupal, rather than one of the pure headless CMS products.

The most common headless CMSs people named included (in alphabetical order) Cockpit, Contentful, Dato CMS, Directus, Drupal, GraphCMS, Kentico Cloud, Netlify CMS, Prismic, and WordPress. Several people mentioned they built their own headless CMS.

38% of respondents say they plan to use headless in the next 3–12 months, so the adoption is expected to double in just one year from now.

15% of people plan to use it at some point in the future and only 18% of people say they have no plans to use headless.



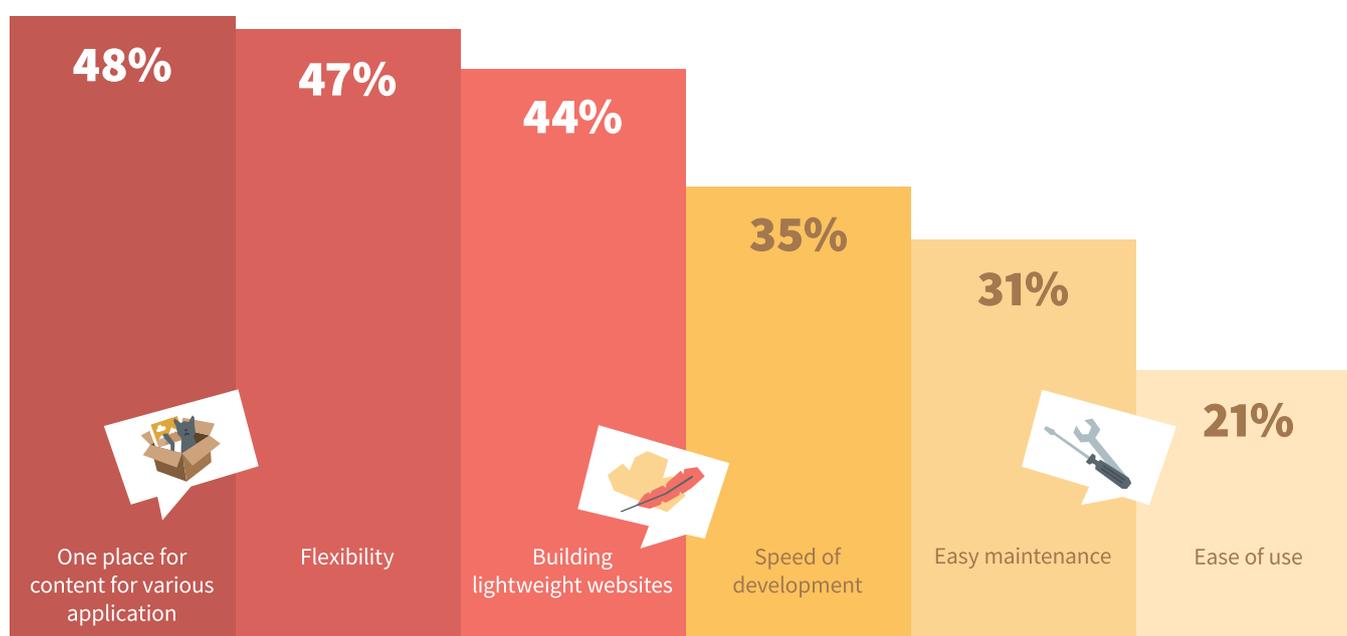
*n = 526 (only those who know what headless CMS is were asked this question)*

The adoption is highest among freelancers (34%) and agencies (31%), while end clients are somewhat slower (21%).

People who already use headless CMS are more positive about the headless concept: 63% of them love the idea of headless CMS and only 30% say “I like it, but it has its limitations”. Contrary to that, people who plan to use headless CMS are more cautious—50% say they love the idea and 41% say they like it.

# Why Do You Use or Plan to Use a Headless CMS?

The main motivation for headless CMS is centralizing content management in one place (48%), followed by flexibility (47%), and building lightweight websites (44%).



*n = 321 (respondents could choose multiple options)*

# Where Do You Host Your Website or Application?

We wanted to know how organizations adopt cloud for their websites today. 44% of respondents say they still host their websites or applications on their own servers, 20% use private cloud, 13% PaaS, and 12% IaaS.



**20%**

In a private cloud



**13%**

In a public cloud using PaaS model



**12%**

In a public cloud using IaaS model



**44%**

On our own servers



**9%**

I do not know

*n* = 936

There were some major differences between top markets: 61% of customers in Germany prefer their own servers compared to United States (36%) and United Kingdom (39%).

# Which of the Headless CMS Models Do You Prefer?

Following the previous questions, we wanted to know what hosting model people would use for their CMS if they could choose. 63% of respondents say they prefer an open source headless CMS hosted by themselves. Only one-quarter of respondents preferred a hosted option—14% prefer SaaS model and 11% prefer an open source headless CMS hosted by the vendor. This was one of the biggest surprises of this survey as the headless architecture finally allows CMS to move toward pure SaaS model with all its benefits.



**63%**

Open source headless CMS  
hosted by myself



**14%**

SaaS headless CMS completely  
managed by the vendor



**11%**

Open source headless CMS  
hosted by the vendor



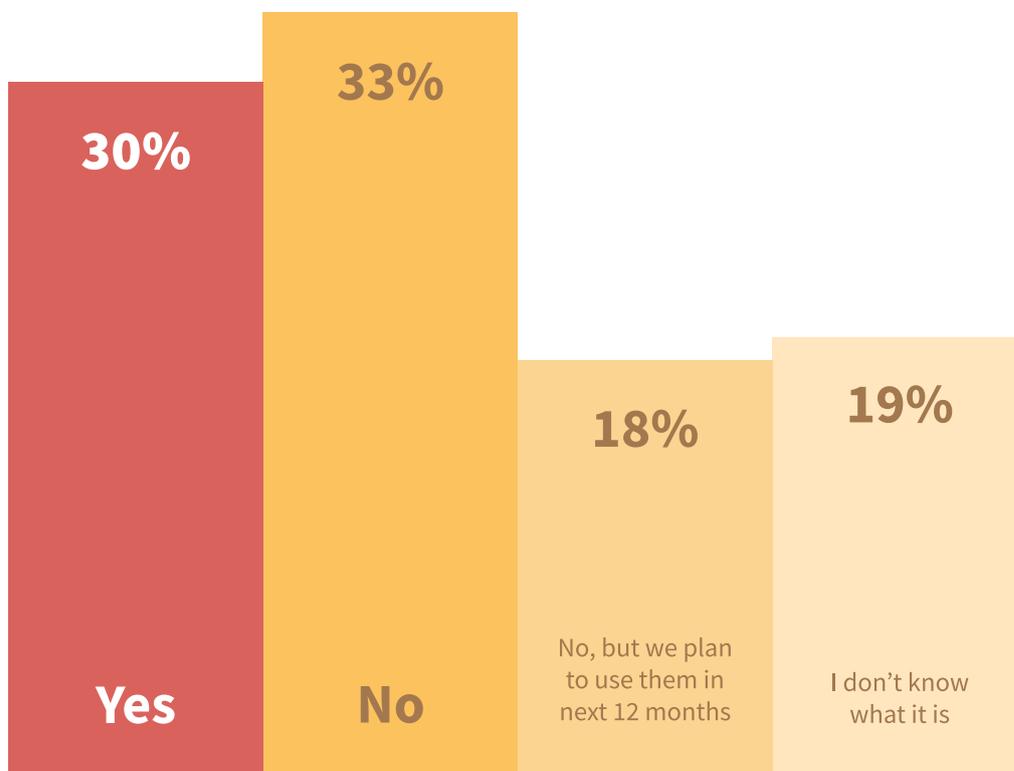
**12%**

I do not know

*n = 430*

# Do You Use Microservices to Build Your Application?

30% already use microservices to build their applications and 18% plan to use them in the next 12 months.



*n = 711 (only technical roles were asked this question)*

There was a clear correlation between microservices and headless CMS—those who use microservices to build their applications are twice as likely to be already using headless CMS (39%) than those who don't (19%).

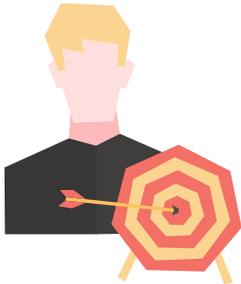
# Respondent Profile

986 respondents answered the survey in the period of March and April 2018, more than two-thirds of them working in technical roles.



**59%**

Developer



**10%**

Marketer



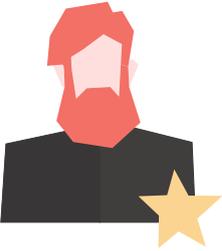
**8%**

Other



**6%**

Project Manager



**5%**

CEO



**5%**

Content Strategist



**4%**

Software Analyst or Architect



**3%**

CTO

47% of respondents are members of in-house teams while the others work in agencies, system integration companies, or as freelancers.



**47%**

Business/Company  
in-house Team



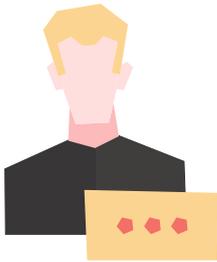
**25%**

Digital Agency



**21%**

Freelancer



**5%**

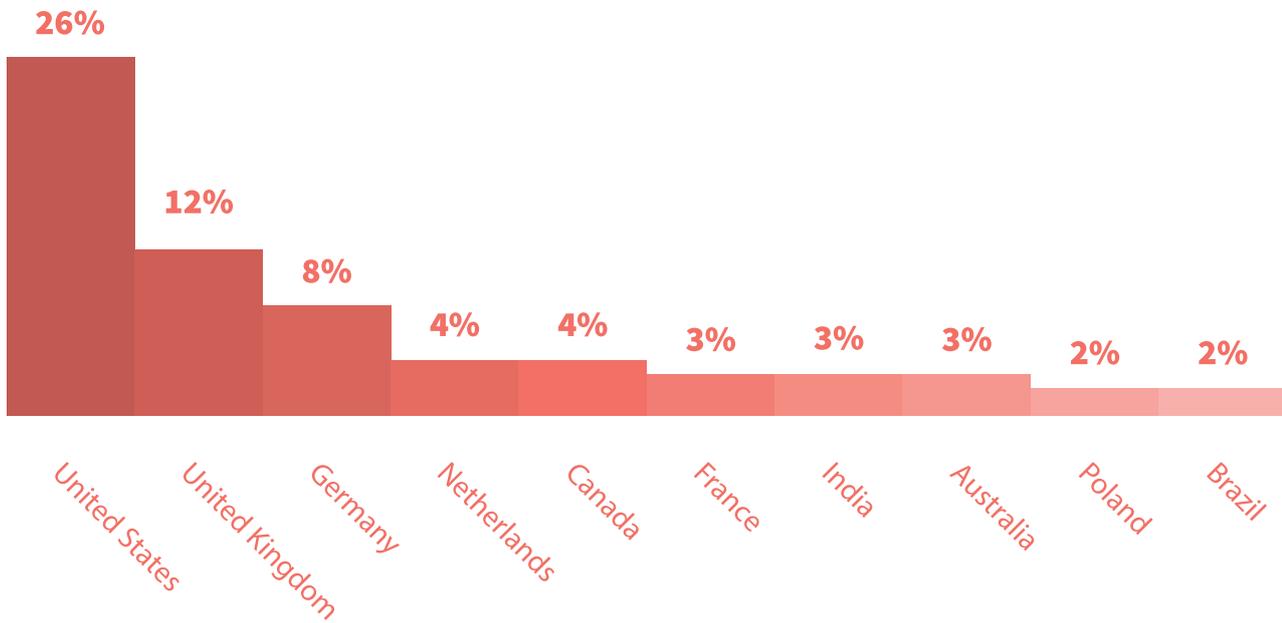
Other



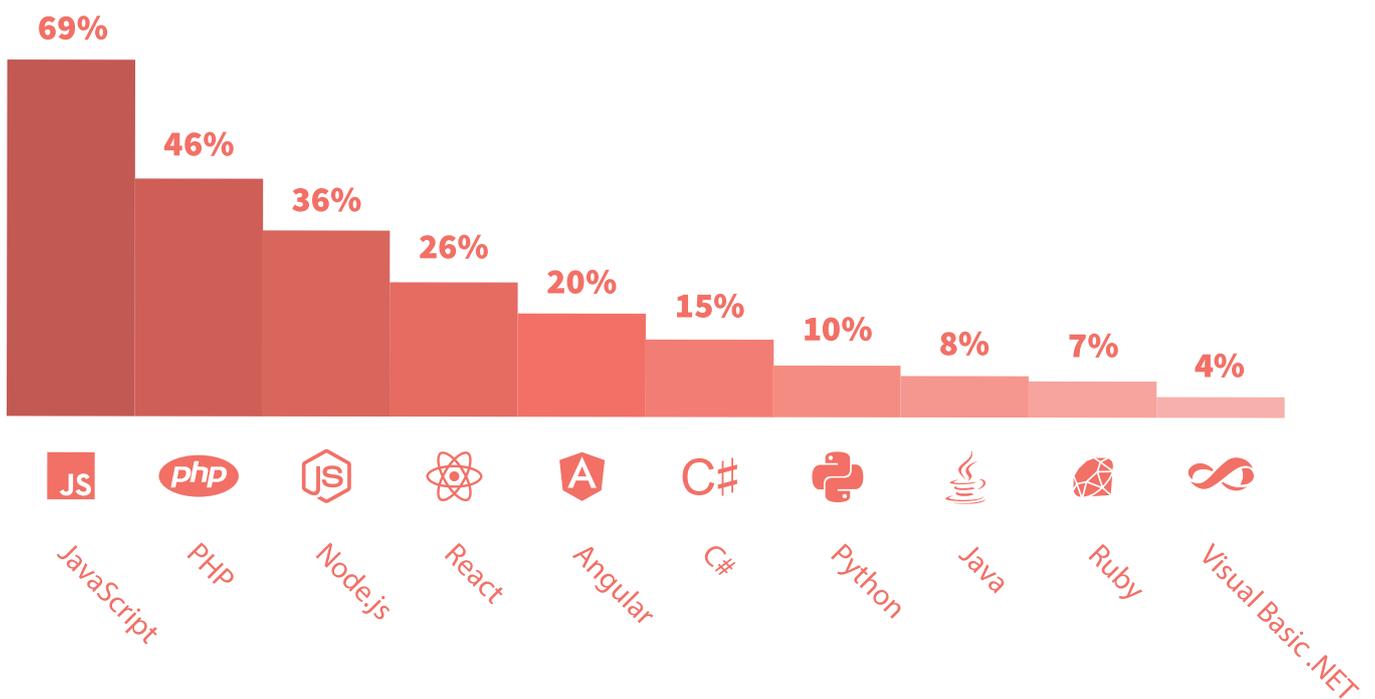
**2%**

System Integration  
Company

The respondents come from 85 countries, with most from the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany. The chart below shows the top 10 countries:



The most popular technologies that respondents used in the past 12 months were JavaScript, PHP, and Node.js. The chart below shows the top 10 languages/frameworks:



# Want to learn more about headless CMS? Download The Ultimate Guide to Headless CMS!



**Ready to try headless CMS?**  
**Go to [kenticocloud.com](https://kenticocloud.com) and start a free trial!**



