

# 2021 Mind Mapping Software Trends Survey

*Learn how your peers are using it and the benefits they're leveraging from it*



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# The State of Mind Mapping Software 2021

The last year and a half have been a roller coaster of change, much of it unexpected. Mind mapping software, along with other types of visual thinking tools, have risen in importance to help in-person and remote teams to brainstorm, plan and manage projects and to collaborate and innovate.

## Survey objectives

- Shed light on the ways in which you and your peers utilize mind mapping software to enhance your work.
- If you're thinking of investing in it, to help you clearly understand what it makes possible.
- Help you understand how your peers are using it and the benefits they're experiencing as a result - so you can learn from them.

## Research highlights

Here are some most notable highlights from the 2021 survey:

**Productivity increase:** On average, mind mapping software helps busy executives to be 20-30% more productive in their work.

**Creativity increase:** The largest percentage of respondents said it increases their creativity by 50%, a significant increase compared to the 2019 survey.

**The top 5 benefits of mind mapping software**, according to survey respondents, are improved understanding of complex issues, increased knowledge capture/organization, reaching clarity of thinking faster, improved organization and enhanced synthesis of information.

**The top 5 applications of mind mapping software** are project management, creating to-do lists, knowledge management, strategic planning and creative problem solving.

**An indispensable clarity aid:** Almost three-quarters of respondents say mind mapping software is essential or helps them significantly to reach clarity on key business issues.

**Confidence booster:** Almost three-quarter of survey respondents (72.6%) say that it

gives them the confidence to take on more complex projects that they would have previously avoided.

**Expert users get the biggest payoff:** Survey responses clearly show that expert users of mind mapping software are able to leverage the biggest benefits from it. Training to achieve mastery in the use of mind mapping software DOES pay off!

Here's what this year's data shows about expert users:

- Improved understanding of complex issues is the biggest benefit of mind mapping software by an almost 2-to-1 margin over the next closest response, increased knowledge capture and organization.
- Almost half of all respondents said it makes a significant difference in helping them distill information and reach clarity faster.
- Over one-third of expert users (37.5%) agree that mind mapping software is essential in helping them see opportunities that weren't visible before.
- Nearly half of expert users say it has revolutionized the way in which they work.
- Nearly all expert users (87.5%) say it enables them to take on more complex tasks that they otherwise would have avoided.
- Similarly, nearly four-fifths of expert users (78.1%) believe they wouldn't be able to produce the same quality of work if they didn't have mind mapping software.
- 86% say it helps them tackle complex tasks that they may have otherwise avoided if they didn't use mind mapping software.

Wishing you all the best in 2022,

Chuck Frey

Founder & Publisher

[The Mind Mapping Software Blog](#)

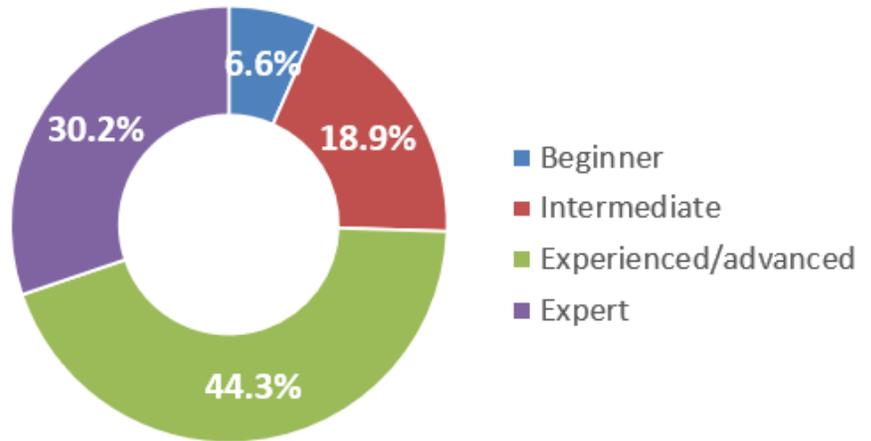
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# The survey results

## What is your level of experience with mind mapping software?

The majority of respondents (63%) reported that they were either intermediate or experienced/advanced users of mind mapping software.

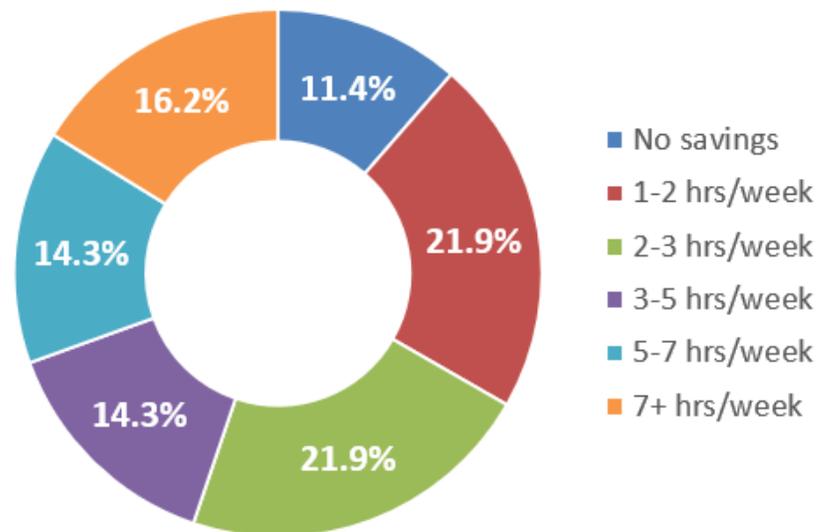
Only 6.6% identified themselves as beginners, while just over 30% said they were expert users.



## Approximately how many hours per week does your mind mapping software save you, compared to conventional methods of planning and brainstorming?

Respondents to the 2021 survey continued to give mind mapping software high marks for its ability to save them time.

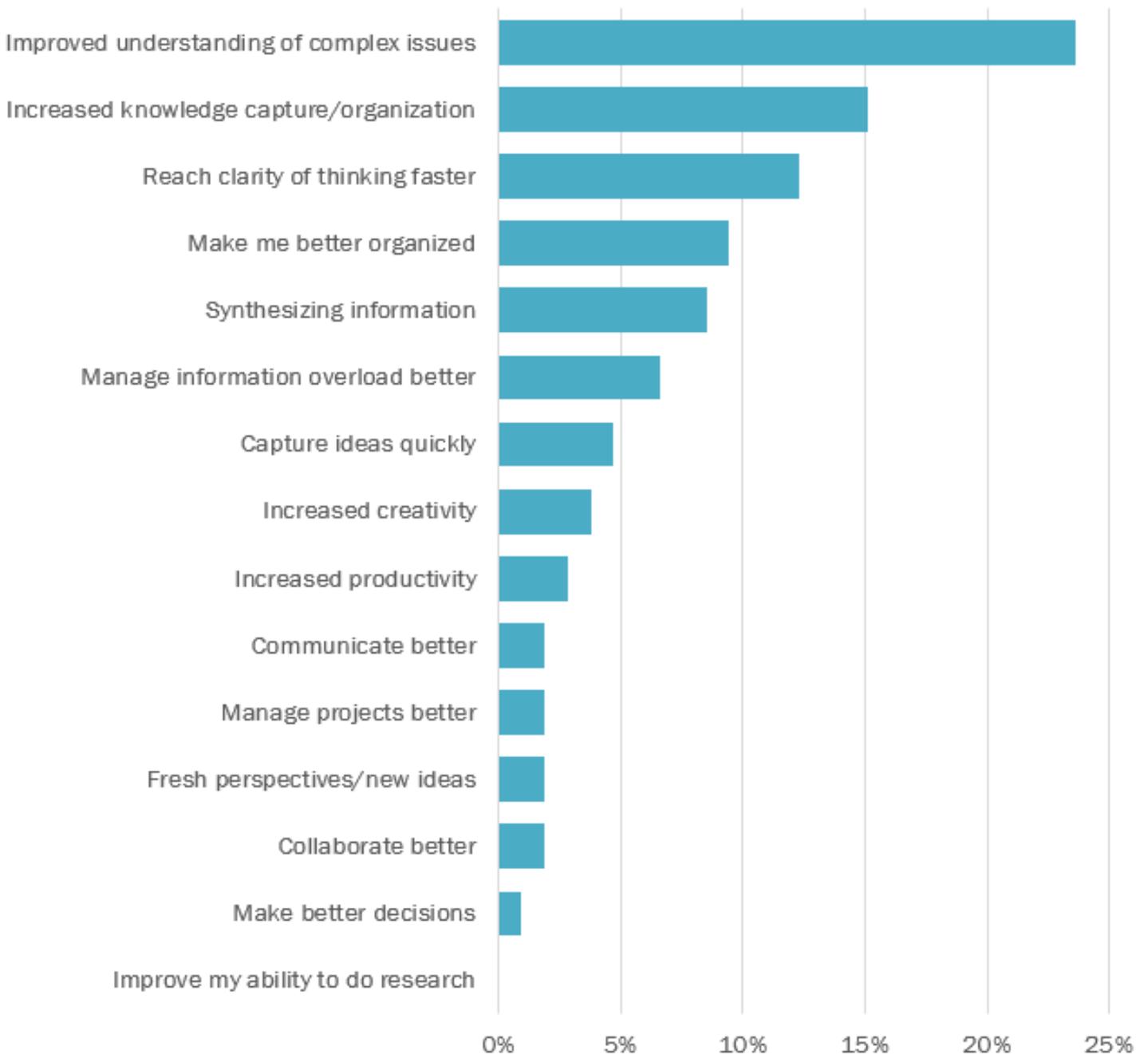
16% of all survey respondents said it saves them more than 7 hours a week. Another 14.3% said it saves them 5 to 7 hours a week, an increase of over 1% since the 2019 survey. The biggest percentage of survey respondents (43.8%) said it saves them an average of 1 to 3 hours per week.



Part of the reason these results vary so widely depends upon how each person is using mind mapping software. Some of them live in the software most of their workday, managing projects, brainstorming and collaborating. Other users, in contrast, may only use it once a day or a few times a week as their workload and projects require.

Nearly half of beginner users (43%) saw no time savings. This is probably due to the fact that they're just learning how to use the program and haven't tapped into its more advanced features. Also, they may not have encountered best practices that can help them get the most value out of it. Expert users said it saves them 1-3 hours per week.

## What is the single biggest benefit you have experienced from using mind mapping software?



As you can see from this chart, mind mapping software is used today in a myriad of business applications. Here are the biggest benefits survey respondents get from using mind mapping software, in declining order of popularity:

1. Improved understanding of complex issues (23.6%)
2. Increased knowledge capture/organization (15.1%)
3. Reach clarity of thinking faster (12.3%)
4. Make me better organized (9.4%)
5. Synthesizing information (8.5%)

Improved understanding of complex issues has been the top-ranked answer for the last five surveys, often by a significant margin.

The top benefits cited by survey respondents have one thing in common: They are focused on higher-level thinking tasks that require a tool that can help them to capture, organize, distill and communicate their thoughts and ideas efficiently.

## **In what business applications do you currently use mind mapping software?**

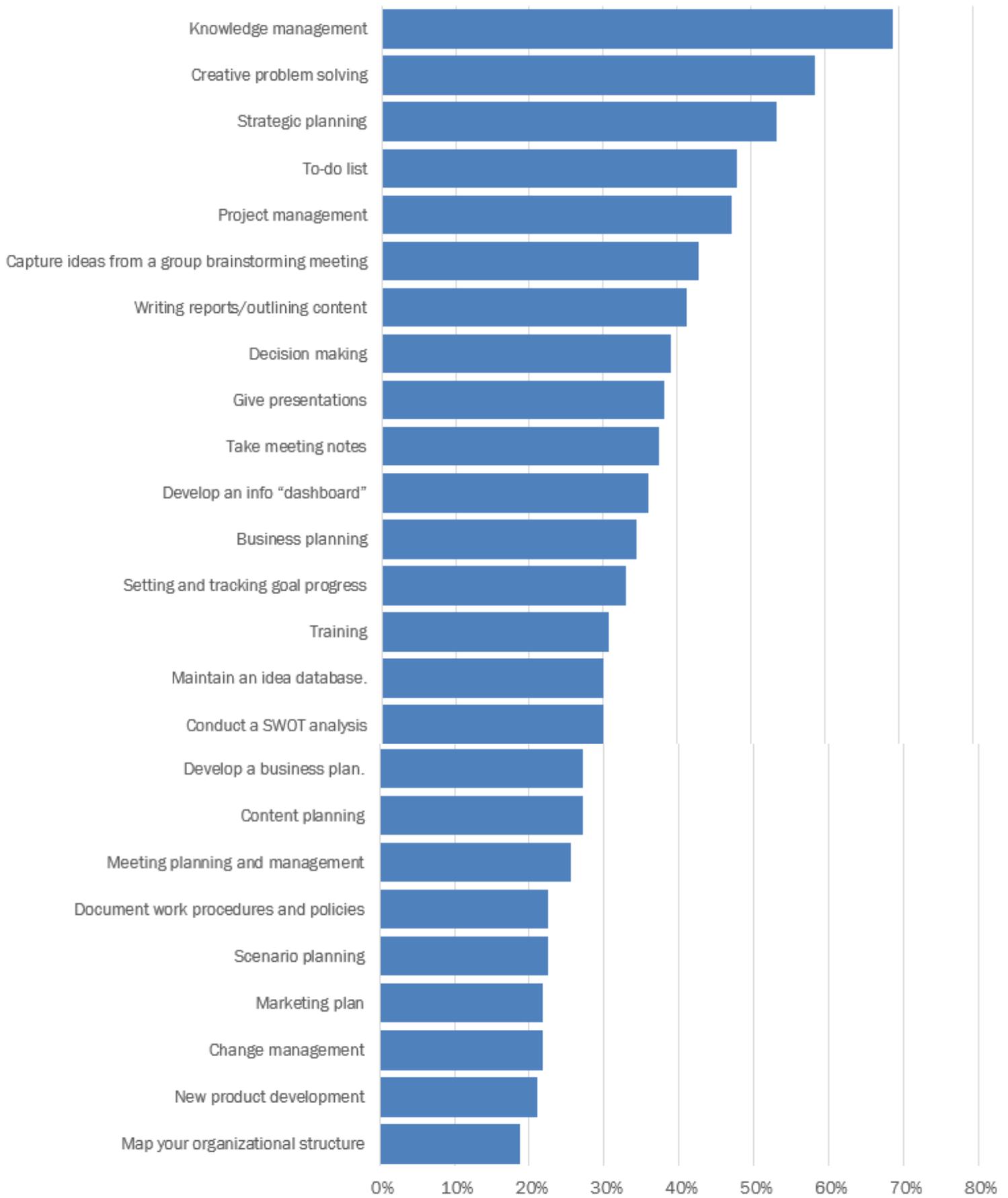
This perennial question is always a good measure of how the nature of work is evolving. Here are the top 10 applications survey respondents cited:

1. Project management (59.4%)
2. To-do list (52.5%)
3. Knowledge management (51.0%)
4. Strategic planning (46.5%)
5. Creative problem solving (45.5%)
6. Capture ideas from a group brainstorming meeting (45.5%)
7. Decision making (44.6%)
8. Give presentations (43.5%)
9. Writing reports/outlining content (41.6%)
10. Take meeting notes (41.6%)

In the 2019 survey, project management dropped to number five, but has once again re-asserted its lead, topping out seven points ahead of the next most common application.

If you are considering investing in mind mapping software, this data is invaluable to make the case for it. If you are already using it, the responses to this question should reveal additional ways in which you may be able to benefit from it.

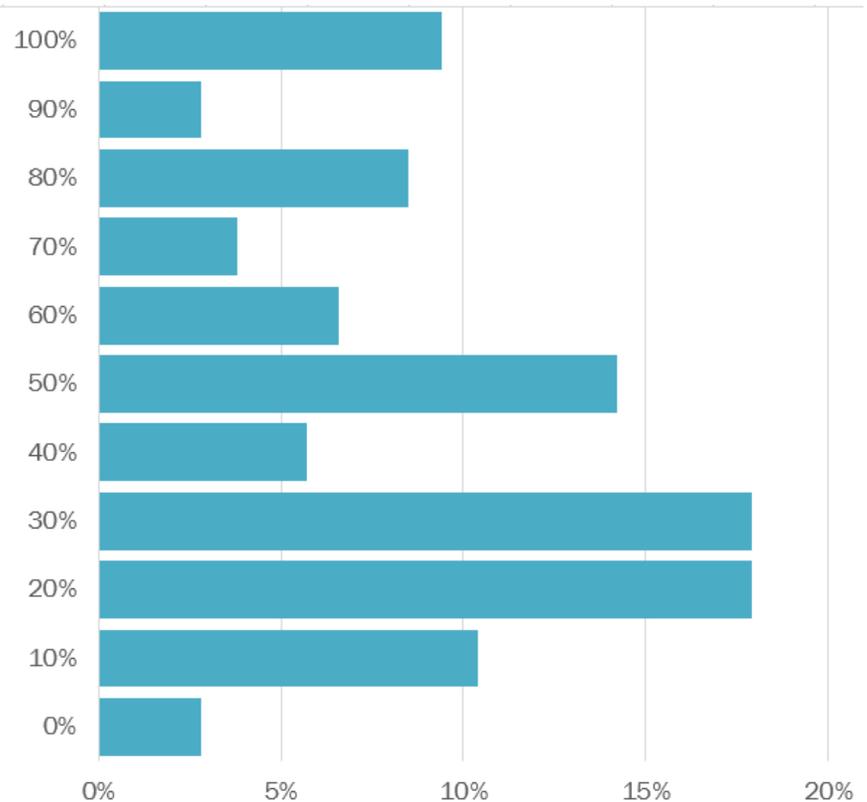
See the chart on the next page for the full ranking of all 36 applications.



## How much of a **PRODUCTIVITY** increase have you experienced from using mind mapping software?

Results from the last 4 surveys revealed that users of it average a 20-30% productivity increase. Respondents continue to estimate similar increases in this year's survey, with 17.9% of respondents saying it increases their productivity by 20% or 30%. Another 14.2% said it boosts their productivity by 50%.

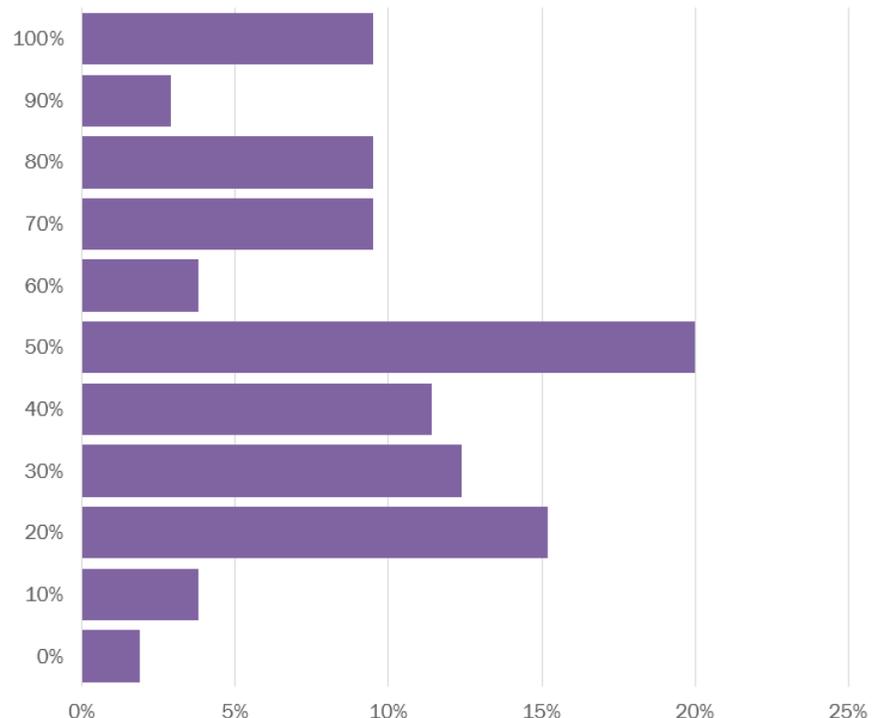
Of beginner users of mind mapping software, the largest percentage of respondents (28.6%) said it only increases their productivity by 10%.



## How much of a **CREATIVITY** increase have you experienced from using mind mapping software?

Creativity is very important to knowledge workers in general and users of mind mapping software specifically. That's why I continue to be interested in quantifying how much better it makes them at generating and cultivating ideas.

Two years ago, the average increase reported by 2019 survey respondents was 30%. This year, it leaped to 50%. On both sides of that, 20% and 40%, 13.5% of respondents agreed that it helped them achieve those levels of increase.



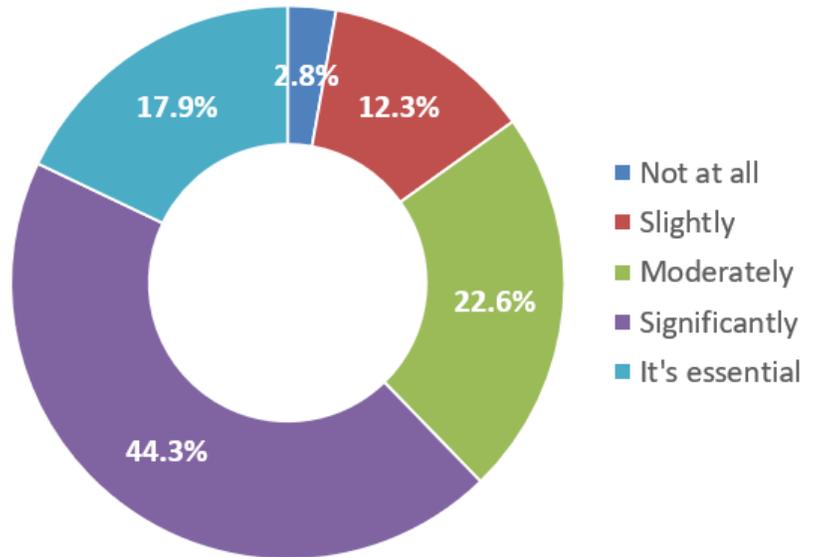
## To what extent does mind mapping software help you to...

This series of questions is designed to take a deeper look at specific applications of mind mapping software and its benefits. Here's what you had to say:

### ...Distill information and reach CLARITY faster?

Reaching clarity on key business issues is clearly a priority area for users of mind mapping software. Almost half of respondents (44.3%) said it helps them "significantly," up 4% from 2019. Another 17% said it's essential, also up 2% since the 2019 survey.

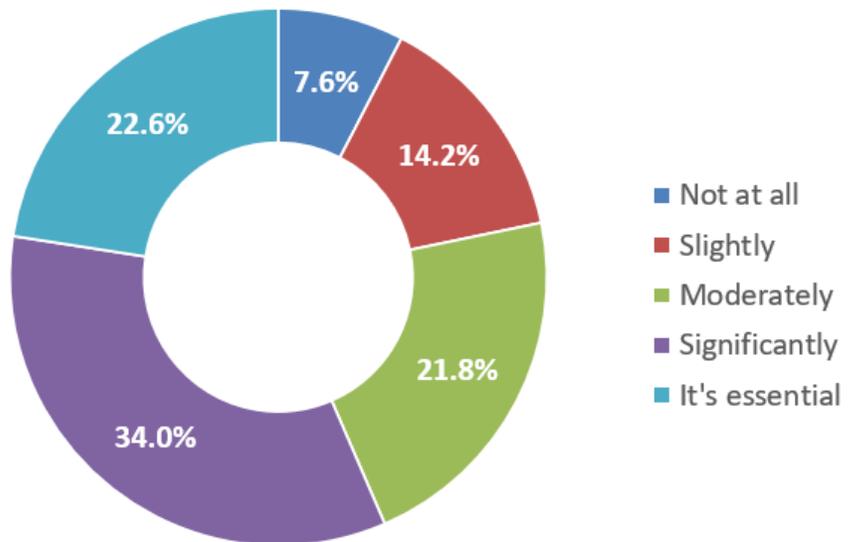
Clearly, this is one of the most important benefits of mind mapping software.



### ...SHARE YOUR IDEAS with greater clarity and impact?

Over 55% of users of mind mapping software said that it helps them present their ideas with greater impact to a "significant" or "essential" degree.

The mind map format IS eye-catching. That makes it a powerful tool for presenting ideas directly, or for exporting your mind map as an image for inclusion in reports and presentation decks.

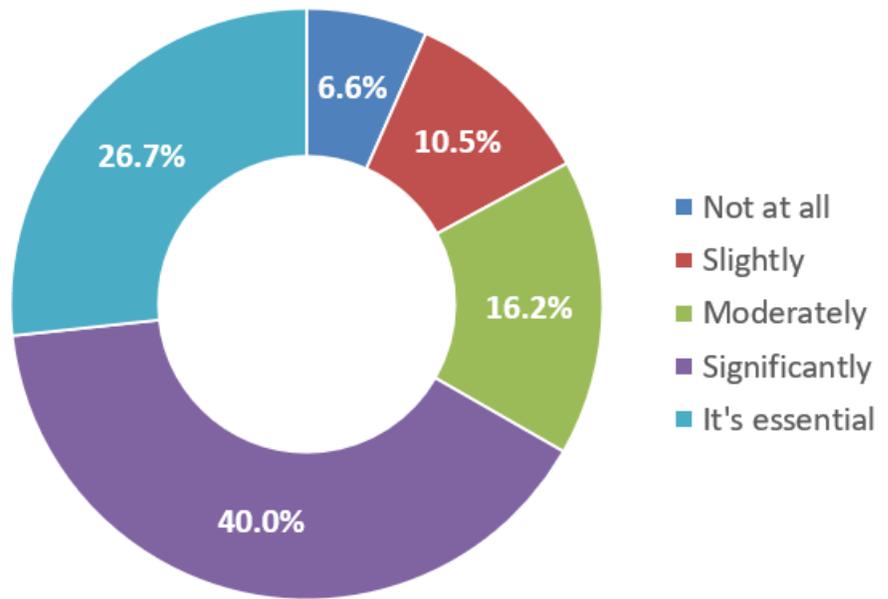


## ...MANAGE PROJECTS more efficiently?

Over one-third of respondents (40%) said mind mapping software helps them “significantly” to manage projects efficiently. Another one-fourth (26.7%) declared it “essential” in this role.

The largest percentage of beginner users (40%) said it only helps them “moderately,” while a similar percentage of expert users said it helps them “significantly.”

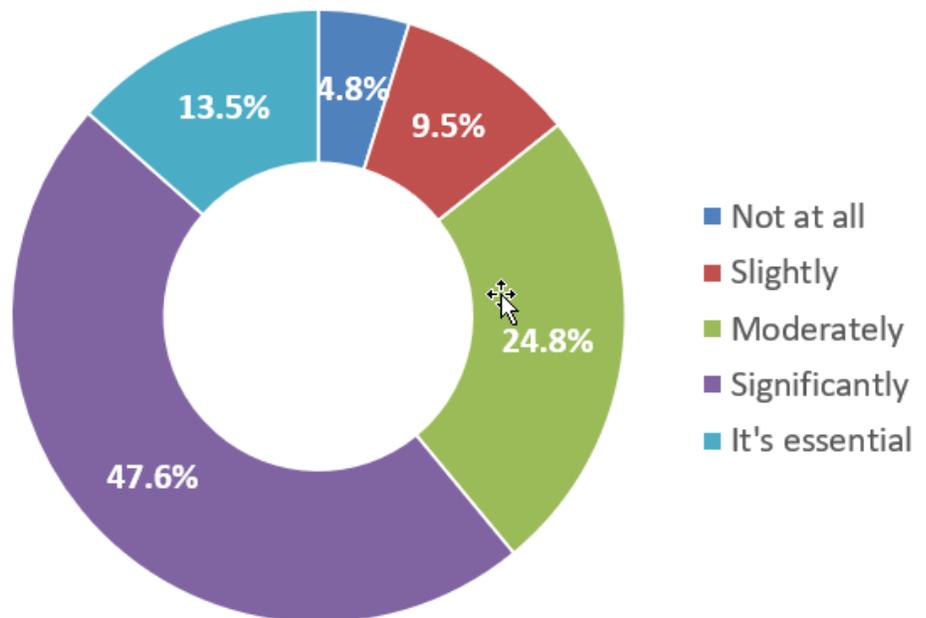
Clearly, the more experience you have with mind mapping software, the more valuable it is as a project management tool.



## ...Improve your DECISION-MAKING?

By enabling you to create a flexible visual canvas of pros, cons and other information, you can use mind mapping software to make better informed decisions.

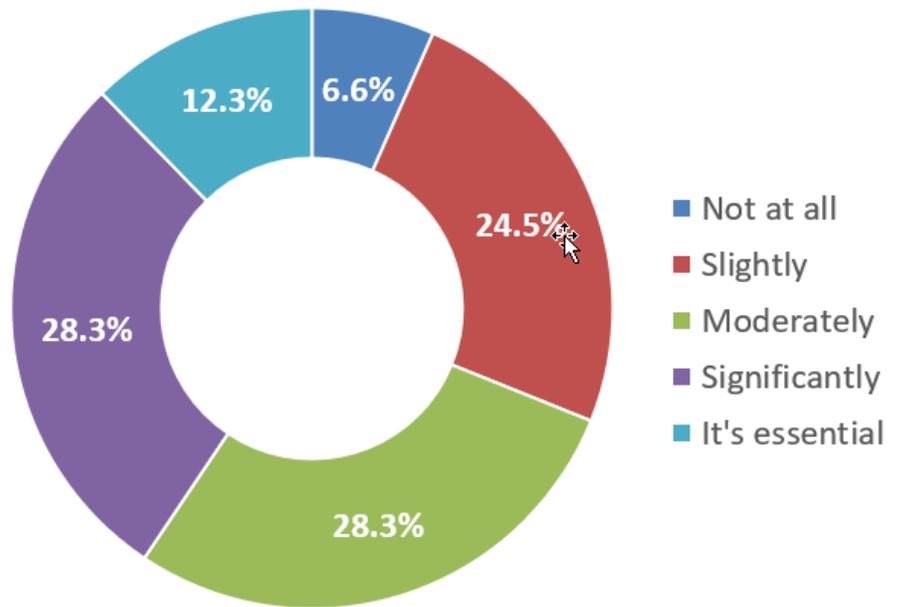
That's definitely reflected in this data! This year, almost half of respondents (47.6%) said it "significantly" improves their decision-making. That's up from 35% in 2019. Another one-fourth (24.8%) said it did so to a "moderate" extent.



## ...COLLABORATE more effectively with others?

Collaboration was an area where respondents were evenly split in their opinions of its effectiveness. Roughly one-fourth each of respondents characterized mind mapping software's impact on their collaboration abilities as significant, moderate and slight.

This may be a reflection of how people are using mind mapping software. For many users, it's a solo effort. No collaboration is involved. For others, it may be an occasional part of their responsibilities. For still others, collaboration using this type of tool may be a more common task.

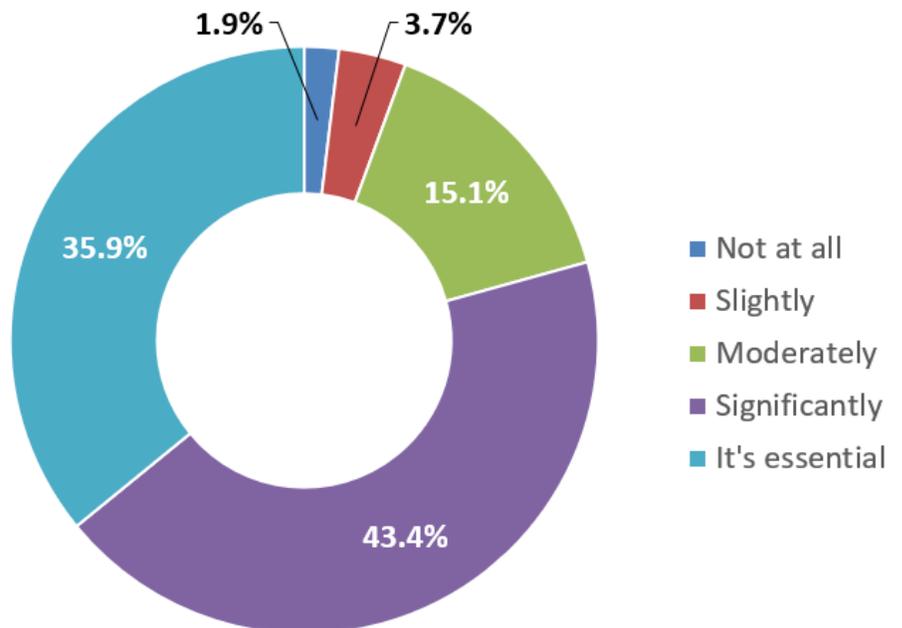


## ...Generate and capture IDEAS more efficiently?

Mind mapping software is a powerful tool for capturing, improving and evaluating ideas. That's the conclusion of this year's survey respondents. Nearly half (43.4%) said that it helps "significantly" with this role, while another 36% said it's an "essential" tool.

In contrast, only 30% of beginner users of mind mapping software find that it helps them "significantly."

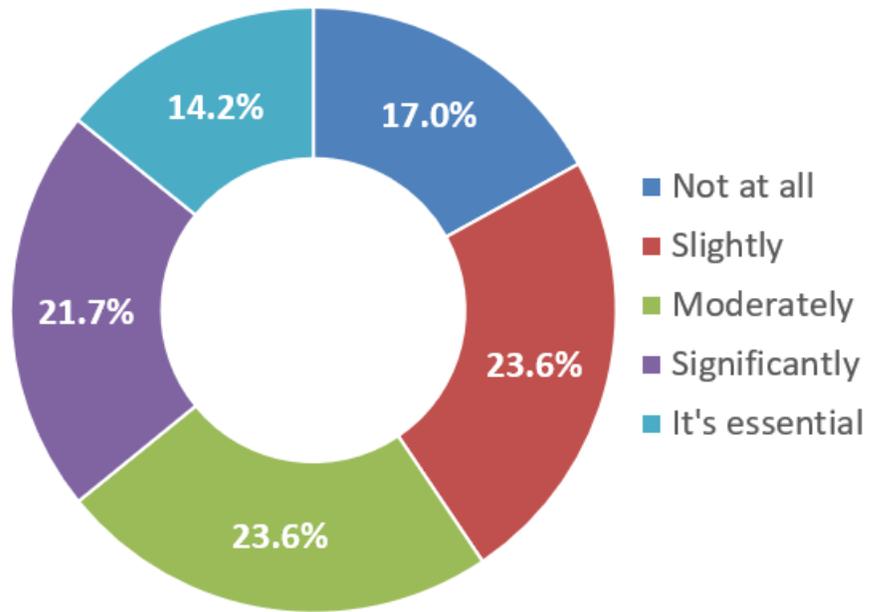
The implication is clear: The more you know, the more value mind mapping software can produce.



## ...Give you a **COMPETITIVE EDGE** in your career?

I believe strongly that equipping yourself with advanced thinking tools, visual or otherwise, can help give you an edge in your career. Mind mapping software is one of those tools.

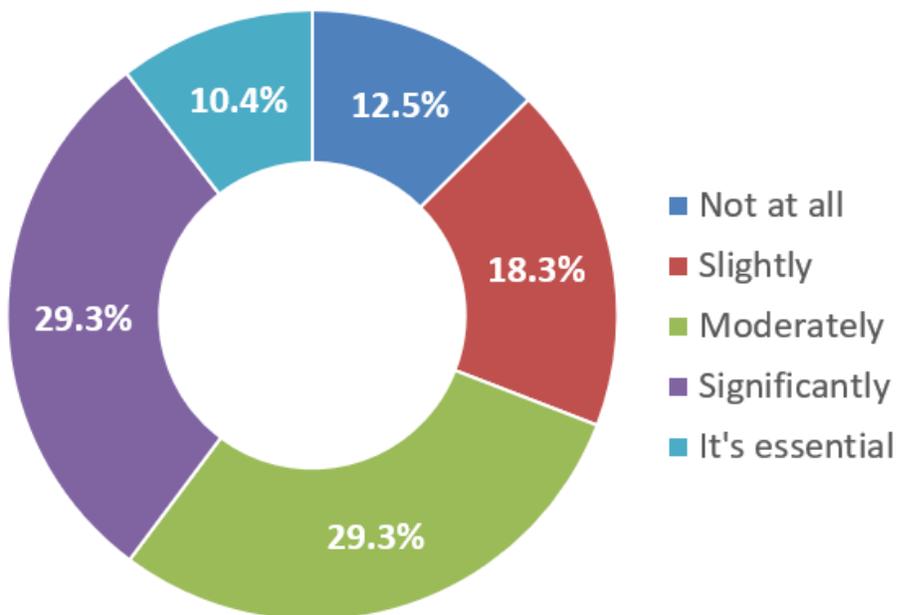
Apparently, respondents of this year's survey don't agree. Only 14% believe it's "essential." Almost one-quarter of respondents (21.7%) believe it helps them "significantly" to expand their competitive edge. The largest group of respondents (23.6%) said it helps them "moderately" or only "slightly."



## ...Identify the **ROOT CAUSES** of business problems?

As in years past, responses to this questions remained lukewarm.

The percentage of respondents who said mind mapping software is "essential" in this application remained about the same as 2019 - roughly 10%. The percentage of people who think it helps them significantly dropped by 6% to 29.3%.

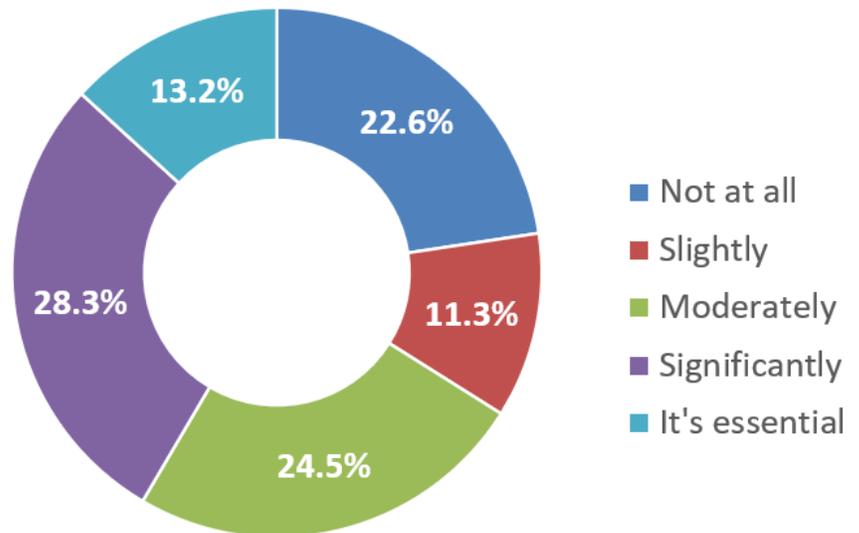


## ...DIFFERENTIATE YOU in the minds of your boss and senior-level executives?

I continue to think of mind mapping software as a tool that differentiates me to my boss and senior-level executives - part of my "secret sauce" that enables me to think divergently, look at challenges from multiple perspectives and to plan effectively.

Your responses to this question continue to steadily trend upward: In 2021, the percentage of respondents who consider it to be essential rose by 3.5%.

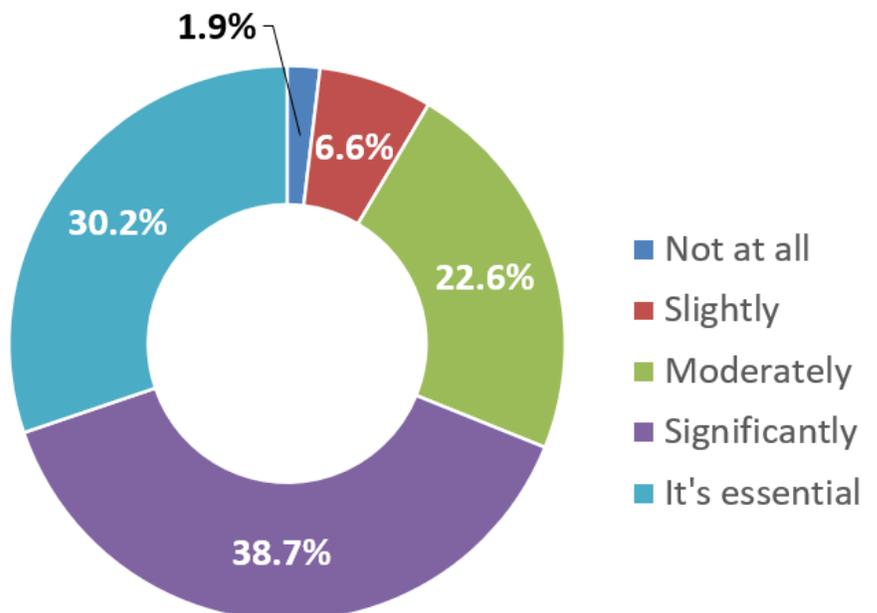
The percentage of respondents who say it helps them "significantly" in this area also rose slightly to 28.3%.



## ...Think more CREATIVELY?

In my opinion, thinking creatively is one of the biggest benefits of mind mapping software. It supports the brain's associative capabilities like no other type of business tool.

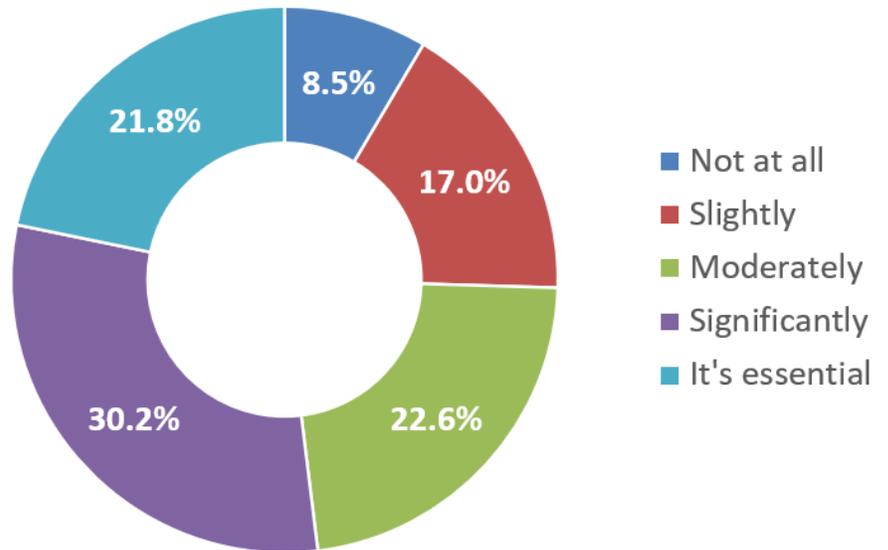
Almost one-third of respondents (30.2%) believe it's essential in this role, while another third (38.7%) say it helps them "significantly." These numbers are down slightly from 2019 (31.6% and 42.1%, respectively).



## ...Create high-quality PLANS and REPORTS?

Mind mapping software, because of the ways in which it enables its users to gather, organize, distill and share information, is an awesome platform for creating high-quality plans and reports.

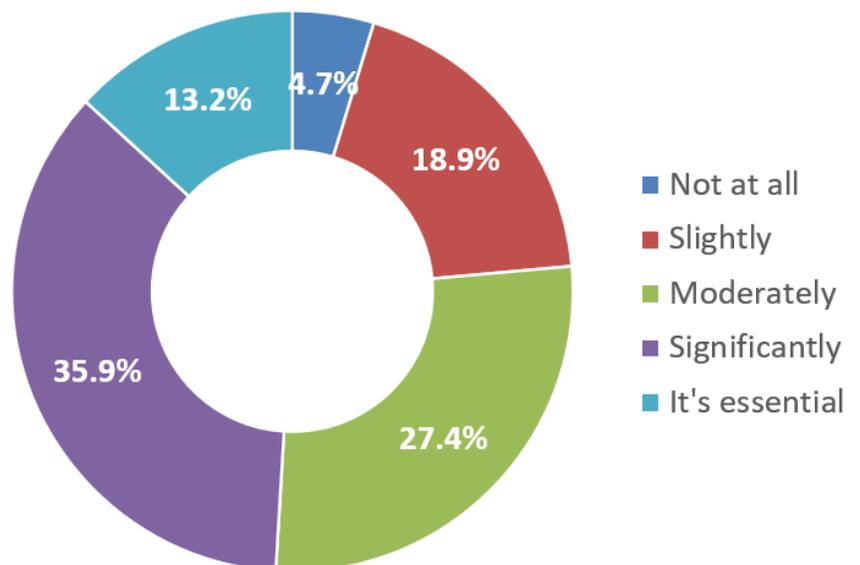
Over 20% of respondents agreed, calling it “essential” in this role. Another 30.2% said it helps them “significantly,” while 22.6% described the extent to which it helps them as “moderate.”



## ...See OPPORTUNITIES that weren't visible before?

This has always been another big benefit of mind mapping software, in my opinion. The fact that you can arrange and rearrange map topics at will enables you to experiment with different arrangements of information - which can help you see connections and opportunities that were not visible to you before.

Fortunately, a growing percentage of you seem to agree with this assessment: 13% of you say it's essential in this role while another 36% say it's a significant benefit.

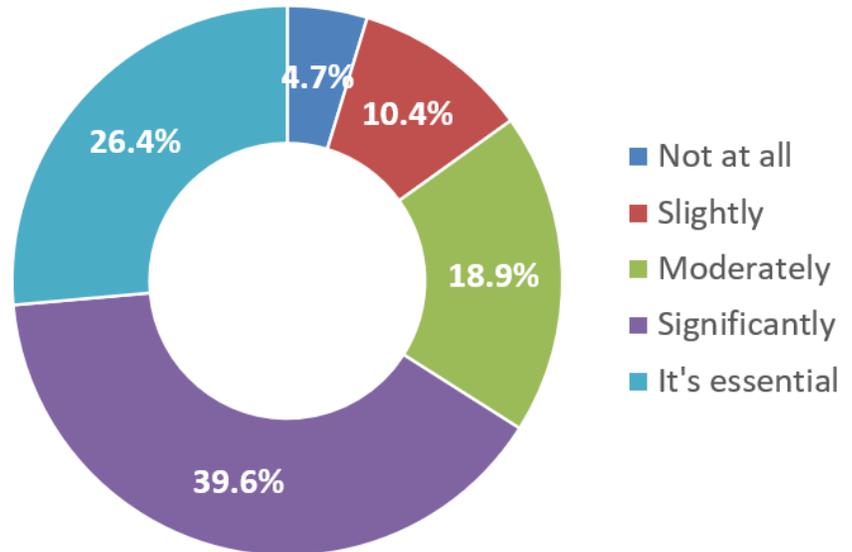


Once again, experts see this benefit more clearly than anyone else: One-fourth of them (25.5%) say it's essential and over one-third (37.5%) see it as a significant benefit.

## ...Make innovative CONNECTIONS between pieces of information?

This question is closely related to the last one. Being able to reorganize the elements of your mind map at will enables you to see connections that weren't previously visible. The biggest percentage of respondents (39.6%) said it helps them significantly in this role, while just over one-fourth (26.4%) said it's essential.

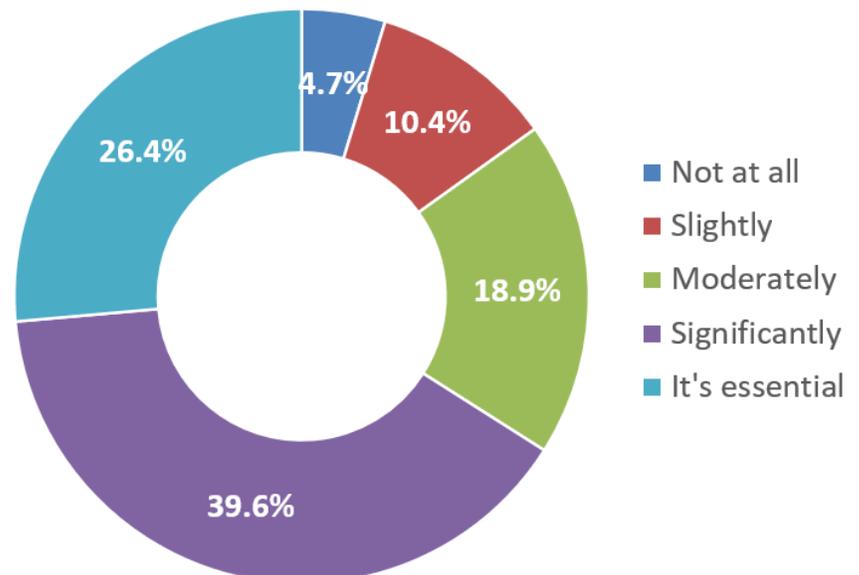
Once again, expert users see this as a powerful benefit of mind mapping software: Over one-third (37.5%) say it's essential, while almost half (43.8%) say it's a significant benefit.



## ...Reach CLARITY on key business issues faster?

Historically, this has always been one of the biggest benefits of mind mapping software. Nearly three-quarters of all respondents to this year's survey call it "essential" or say it helps them "significantly" (26.4% and 39.6%, respectively).

Expert users ranked it moderately higher. 28.1% say it's essential in this role, while nearly half (46.9%) say it plays a significant role.

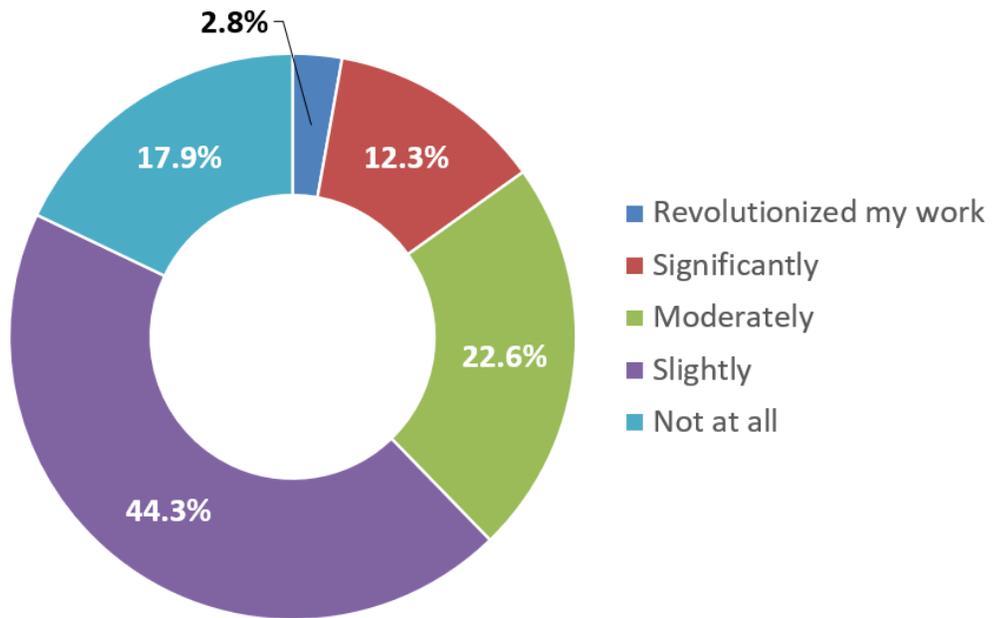


## To what extent has mind mapping software changed the overall way in which you work?

This is a bigger picture question, which aims to paint a picture of the overall impact of

mind mapping software.

In 2019, nearly one-fourth of survey respondents (23.3%) said it had a "revolutionary" effect on their work. That dropped precipitously to only 2.8% in 2021. Similarly, only 12% said it makes a significant difference in their work. I don't know how to explain this sudden drop, because these numbers have been quite consistent in the last four surveys.

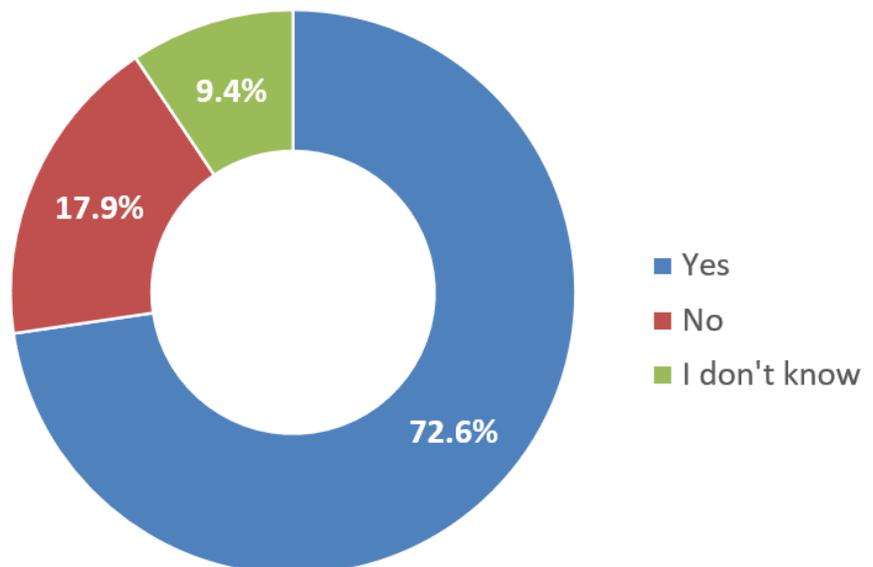


The story was much different for expert users: Nearly half of them (43.8%) say it has revolutionized the way they work and exactly half (50%) said it has made a significant impact on their work.

The lesson continues to be clear: The more you know about using the advanced capabilities of your software, the bigger the impact it's likely to have on your work.

## Does your mind mapping software enable you to tackle more complex tasks and projects that you would have previously avoided?

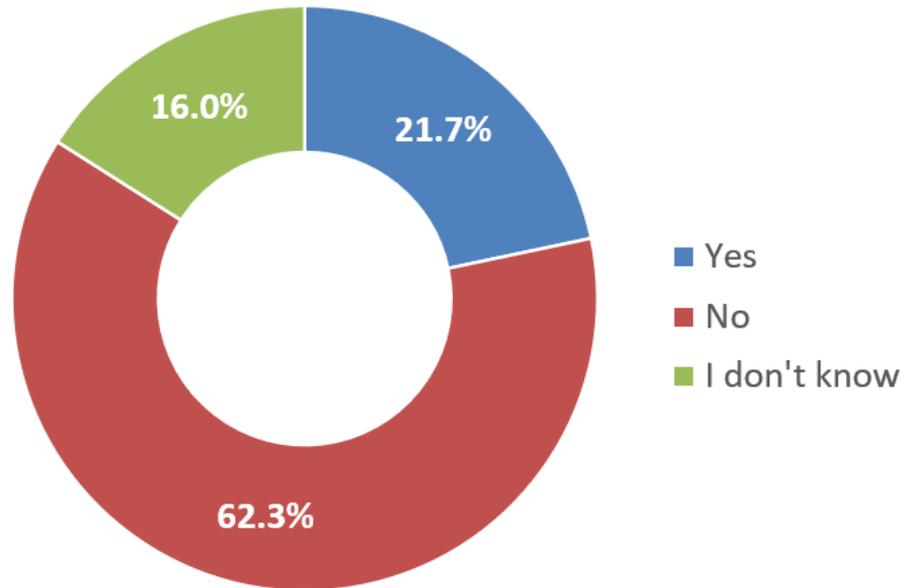
If there ever was a question that's a mandate for the business use of mind mapping software, this is it. Almost three-quarters of you (72.6%) said yes. For expert users, the responses are even higher: 87.5% agree that it helps them tackle more complex tasks.



## If you didn't have mind mapping software, would you be able to produce the same quality of work?

This question comes at the value mind mapping software provides in a different direction: What if you DIDN'T have it?

The responses to this question crept up to an all-time high in 2021: 62.3% of you said that "no" you wouldn't be able to produce the same quality of work without mind mapping software, up 2% since 2019.

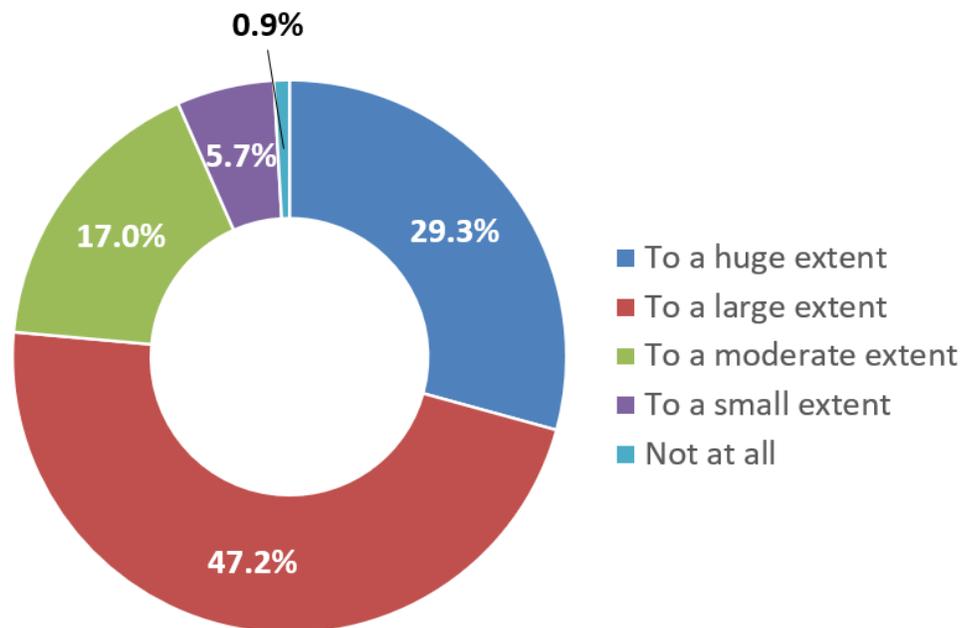


That number jumps to 78.1% for expert users of mind mapping software. In other words, the majority of users of mind mapping software consider it to be indispensable!

## To what extent does mind mapping software help you do a more thorough job of THINKING and PLANNING?

This is one of the most important applications of mind mapping software. So it's valuable to take a closer look at just how much it helps users of it.

This year, nearly half of you said it helps you with thinking and planning "to a large extent." Almost one-third (29.3%) said it does so "to a huge extent." That number jumps by 8 percentage points for expert users (to 37.5%).



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- A Click to Go
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**COLOR THEME**

Color theme means possibilities. Combine it with skeleton and build elegant mind maps at ease.

**TREE TABLE**

Expand topics from left to right, or top to bottom, and identify whole and part relationships clearly.

# THANK YOU!

Thanks so much for helping to make this 2021 Mind Mapping Software Trends Report another eye-opening experience!

I wish you much success in 2022 with mind mapping software!

Best Regards,

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## Questions?

If you have any questions about this report, please contact Chuck at [chuck@chuckfrey.com](mailto:chuck@chuckfrey.com).

## About the author

Chuck Frey is the author of [The Mind Mapping Software Blog](#). He has written numerous articles and reviews about mind mapping software and is widely regarded as one of the world's leading authorities on mind mapping and visual thinking. Chuck has also authored numerous resources designed to help business people use it better, including:

- [Power Tips & Strategies for Mind Mapping Software](#), the definitive collection of tips and best practices for current users of mind mapping software. It is currently in its fourth edition.
- [Multiple e-courses on how to use mind mapping software](#), with a special emphasis on popular business applications of it.
- [The Mind Mapping Software Comparison Chart](#), which compares the features and functionality of 11 popular mind mapping programs, side-by-side, in a convenient dot chart format.

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