

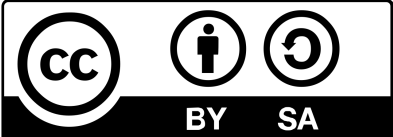


FlightSim Community  
Survey 2026

**Final Report**

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## Preamble

In previous editions of this survey report, we have summarized the preceding year. Accordingly, the Navigraph FlightSim Community Survey 2023 was published in late December 2023 and reflected the flight simulation landscape of that year.

However, with the release of Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024, FlyByWire's A380, and PMDG's Boeing 777, among others, we chose to delay the publication of the 2024 survey into 2025 in order to better capture community sentiment following these launches. As we began planning the subsequent survey covering 2025, it became clear that its publication would likely be pushed into 2026 as well.

At that point, we recognized that publishing a survey in 2026 that primarily reflects the previous year could be confusing. To address this, we decided to rename the survey reports based on their year of publication rather than the year they cover.

As a result, in our sequence of eight consecutive surveys, you will not find a FlightSim Community Survey 2025. Instead, we move directly from 2024 to 2026 for the reasons outlined above.

Now, with this potential confusion out of the way, we are pleased to share the results of the eight consecutive FlightSim Community Survey! This year, 42,332 respondents participated in the survey, answering 58 questions prepared by Navigraph in collaboration with 92 survey partners. The number of respondents, partners, and questions make this the most comprehensive survey of its kind in the flight simulation community.

Similar to previous years, we have rotated a number of questions. Old questions are temporarily put in time-out in favor of new ones. That way, we can sample the community with an appropriate frequency while also being mindful of the time and effort the respondents give us. This year, we have introduced some questions with the intention of modeling users' motivations. We have also progressed into correlation, comparing the answers to one question with another. This allows us to answer some interesting questions, which you will find towards the end of this report. We have only scratched the surface! You can do these correlation studies yourself by downloading the survey dataset, which we always make available to the public via the survey website.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all respondents who took the time to participate in the survey and share their perspectives. We are also grateful to our partners across the flight simulation ecosystem - developers, companies, organizations, and media - for their valuable input and support in distributing the survey. Your collective contributions help us deepen our understanding of the community and where it is heading.

This year's survey has been a collaborative effort at Navigraph, with Jennifer Bunn, Malin Söderlund, Gordon O'Callaghan, Natalie Selin, Markus Hamburger, Stephen O'Connell, and me working together across planning, design, analysis, and presentation. It has once again been an engaging and rewarding process, and we hope you find the results as insightful as we do.

Stockholm, April 2026



Magnus Axholt, Navigraph CEO & Co-Founder

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Partners

The FlightSim Community Survey 2026 is a collaborative effort conducted by the developers, organizations, and companies alphabetically presented in the list of partners below.

Navigraph was responsible for coordinating, designing, compiling, and funding the survey, as well as authoring this document.



- Aero Dynamics
- Aerosoft
- AirFrance Virtuel
- Bel Geode- Boomflowah Productions
- Blackbird Simulations
- BlueBird Simulations
- BRAVO 737
- Bravo Airspace
- British Avgeek
- Caffeine Simulations
- Carenado
- Closed Traffic Podcast
- Contrail Shop
- Cruise Level
- Delan Engineering Ltd
- Delta Virtual Airlines
- Digital Flight Dynamics
- Efbx.io
- ELEVATEX
- FeelThere
- Fenix
- Flight One Software
- Flight Sim Labs, Ltd.
- Flight Simulation Association (FSA)
- FlightFX
- FlightGear
- FlightSim Studio AG
- FlightsimWebshop
- FlightSimWeekend
- Flugsimulatorclub
- Fly UK Virtual Airways
- FlyByWire Simulations
- FS Reviews
- FS-FlightControl – AB-Tools GmbH
- FSElite
- FSExpo
- FSiPanel
- FSNews (ENDAXI CZ s.r.o.)
- FSNews24 (flightnews24.de)
- FSREBORN
- GearDown Simulations
- GeoFS
- Haversine
- Headwind Simulations
- HeliSimmer
- Horizon Simulations
- Hype Performance Group
- Infinite Flight
- iniBuilds
- IVAO
- Laminar Research
- Leonardo Software House
- LH Virtual
- Lockheed Martin
- MK Studios
- MM Simulations
- MSFS Addons
- Navigraph
- NextGen Simulations
- Orbx
- Parallel 42
- Pilot Experience Sim
- Pimax
- PMDG Simulations
- PMS50
- Q8Pilot
- Qbit Simulations
- RealSimGear
- RealTraffic
- SayIntentions.AI
- Simbitworld
- simFlight
- SIMMARKET
- Simvol
- SimWorks Studios
- Sky Blue Radio
- SoFly
- TDS Sim Software
- TFDi Design
- The Flight Lounge
- Threshold
- ToLiss Simulation
- TorqueSim Aircraft Development
- Twotonemurphy
- Total Aviation
- V Pilot Designs
- vAMSYS
- VATSIM
- VATSIM Radar
- Verticalsim
- WINCTRL
- X-Crafts
- XP72

## 1.2. Purpose and Target Audience

The primary purpose of the survey is to provide participating partners with comprehensive insights into the flight simulation community, enabling them to:

- Recruit new pilots to the flight simulation hobby
- Develop products and services that meet the needs and preferences of the community
- Make informed product decisions based on market data, such as user needs, preferences, and price sensitivity

The secondary purpose is to support the wider community by providing valuable information that enables individuals to:

- Discover resources to deepen their flight simulation interest
- Contribute to the development and growth of the community
- Influence the direction of product development by sharing their experiences and preferences
- Engage in meaningful discussions in forums and on social media, following the survey results
- Learn what other users consider good software, hardware, and services

In addition, the survey serves as a resource for media outlets, providing data and insights to support articles and reporting on the state of the flight simulation industry.

## 1.3. Data Protection

The data was collected from the respondents anonymously without storing any personally identifiable information. No tracking mechanisms were used in the survey, and individual responses cannot be linked back to any respondent. The dataset will also be shared in anonymised form, with all personally identifiable information removed. The data was collected in the legitimate interest pursued by Navigraph and the partners. To the best of our judgment, the survey was conducted in a fashion compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679. For any questions regarding user privacy, please contact [contact@navigraph.com](mailto:contact@navigraph.com).

## 1.4. Previous Work

VATSIM conducted a survey in 2006, with a total of 6,691 respondents.

AVSIM has previously published a demographic survey for the flight simulation community. The most recent one was made in 2013<sup>1</sup>. It had approximately 2,800 respondents.

In 2016, there was a DCS Playerbase Survey<sup>2</sup> with 851 respondents<sup>3</sup>. It was repeated in 2022<sup>4</sup> and had 1,488 respondents<sup>5</sup>.

Laminar Research has collected usage data from its X-Plane simulator and published two reports<sup>6</sup> in November 2017 and June 2018.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.avsim.com/forums/topic/430855-results-of-the-2013-avsim-community-demographics-survey/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/hoggit/comments/4m40oo/june\\_2016\\_dcs\\_playerbase\\_survey\\_inprogress/](https://www.reddit.com/r/hoggit/comments/4m40oo/june_2016_dcs_playerbase_survey_inprogress/)

<sup>3</sup> [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bNSk2Z8qt0utoiKrGHpuxdG\\_xnvoG6dTUaVXiQKxi5c/viewanalytics](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1bNSk2Z8qt0utoiKrGHpuxdG_xnvoG6dTUaVXiQKxi5c/viewanalytics)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.reddit.com/r/hoggit/comments/wmkon8/dcs\\_community\\_survey/](https://www.reddit.com/r/hoggit/comments/wmkon8/dcs_community_survey/)

<sup>5</sup> <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1t9baBZGenMZXUfzdg1iJdTeu9hEkgAQdMfSYcpR4FBs/viewanalytics>

<sup>6</sup> <https://developer.x-plane.com/category/x-plane-usage-data/>

Navigraph has previously conducted customer surveys. In 2017<sup>7</sup> it had 3,187 respondents. In 2016, 2,200 participated. While these surveys had significant portions aimed at product feedback specific to Navigraph, they also had demographic questions included from the AVSIM survey.

With the collaboration of partners, Navigraph conducted flight community surveys in 2018<sup>8</sup> (15,000 respondents), 2019<sup>9</sup> (17,800 respondents), 2020<sup>10</sup> (23,500 respondents), 2021<sup>11</sup> (24,200 respondents), 2022<sup>12</sup> (25,400 respondents), 2023<sup>13</sup> (23,736 respondents), and 2024<sup>14</sup> (23,600 respondents).

It is our impression that there have been additional small surveys completed in the past. Either they have been published by various developers with the intent of obtaining specific product feedback, or they have been published by interest organizations with the intent of obtaining feedback on the particular operations of that organization.

The FlightSim Community Surveys from 2018 to 2024 are different by offering:

- A significantly larger sample size compared to any previous flight simulation community survey
- A diverse sample representing multiple user groups, including users from various developers and members of different organizations
- Carefully designed questions, developed by a dedicated survey team to capture the broad range of interests and perspectives within the community
- An effort to track trends over time, with each year's question set adjusted to focus on topics that require close and continuous monitoring

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<sup>7</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/survey-results-prepar3d-x-plane-up-fsx-down>

<sup>8</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/flightsim-community-survey-2018-results>

<sup>9</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/flightsim-community-survey-2019-results>

<sup>10</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/flightsim-community-2020-survey-results>

<sup>11</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/survey2021>

<sup>12</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/survey2022>

<sup>13</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/survey-2023>

<sup>14</sup> <https://navigraph.com/blog/survey-2024>

## 2. Method

Navigraph was responsible for coordinating, designing, compiling, and funding the survey, as well as authoring this document.

Navigraph initiated the survey collaboration by issuing an official invite through social media channels and the Navigraph newsletter, inviting partners to participate. Partners who contributed to the survey in earlier years were contacted directly via email. In order to achieve a representative sample of the community, partners were purposefully selected from diverse segments of the flightsim community.

Navigraph requested partners to submit areas of particular interest to them. Navigraph edited, consolidated, and designed questions based on the partners' areas of interest.

All partners were asked to publish an individual survey link at a specific date and time. The partners were free to choose how to distribute the link, but many chose to publish on social media, forums, websites, and newsletters.

The respondents were not compensated for their contribution. The incentive for the respondents to contribute to the survey is the possibility to guide development in the flightsim community. The incentive for the partners to contribute to the survey is the possibility to direct the survey into various areas of interest and reach a wider audience compared to publishing an individual survey themselves.

The information presented in this survey report is only based on aggregated data. No other analysis as to statistical significance, power, or confidence interval has been done.

### 2.1. Data Cleaning

This year, we have based the analysis and diagrams on data only from respondents who completed all 58 questions of the survey.

42,332 respondents started the survey. 44% of the respondents completed all the questions. Of the remaining 18,407 respondents, we removed 2,700 respondents who exhibited two or more signs typical of insincere respondents. The total number of respondents, as displayed in the graphs below, amounts to 15,600.

### 2.2. Sampling Bias and Validity

Since respondents were not selected through a random sampling technique, but instead chose to participate voluntarily, there is a potential for bias in the collected data. This is a common limitation in surveys where participants are self-selected rather than randomly chosen based on the survey's intended focus.

It is important to emphasize that this survey simply summarizes the data collected rather than drawing definitive conclusions about the flight simulation community as a whole. Because we cannot confirm whether the dataset accurately represents the broader flight simulation community, we refrain from making absolute claims. For this reason, confidence intervals and margins of error were not calculated.

That said, what can we infer from this dataset? First, with 15,600 clean respondent data, it is a large sample compared to similar surveys. Generally, larger samples tend to better reflect the broader

population, and a high number of participants can help reduce the impact of selection bias. While the dataset may not be fully representative of the entire flight simulation community, it does accurately reflect the responses of those who chose to participate.

Additionally, the dataset allows for trend analysis and year-over-year comparisons. This year, 48.3% of participants were new and had not taken the survey the previous year. Yet, many survey questions show consistent response patterns across consecutive years. If significant sampling bias were present, greater variation might be expected, particularly given that each year sees around 50% of respondents being new. The low variance between yearly samples suggests that the results may be representative of the population or that a consistent type of bias is present across surveys. While this consistency increases confidence in the results, absolute certainty remains unattainable.

With these considerations in mind, we now turn to the results of the collected data.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Respondents

The survey received responses from 42,332 (23,600) participants with 44% (61%) completing all 58 (50) survey questions. (Values from the previous year are shown in parentheses.)

Of the remaining 18,407 respondents, 2,700 were removed for showing signs of insincere intent. The results presented below are based on clean data from 15,600 respondents collected during the survey period, February 24th to March 9th, 2026.

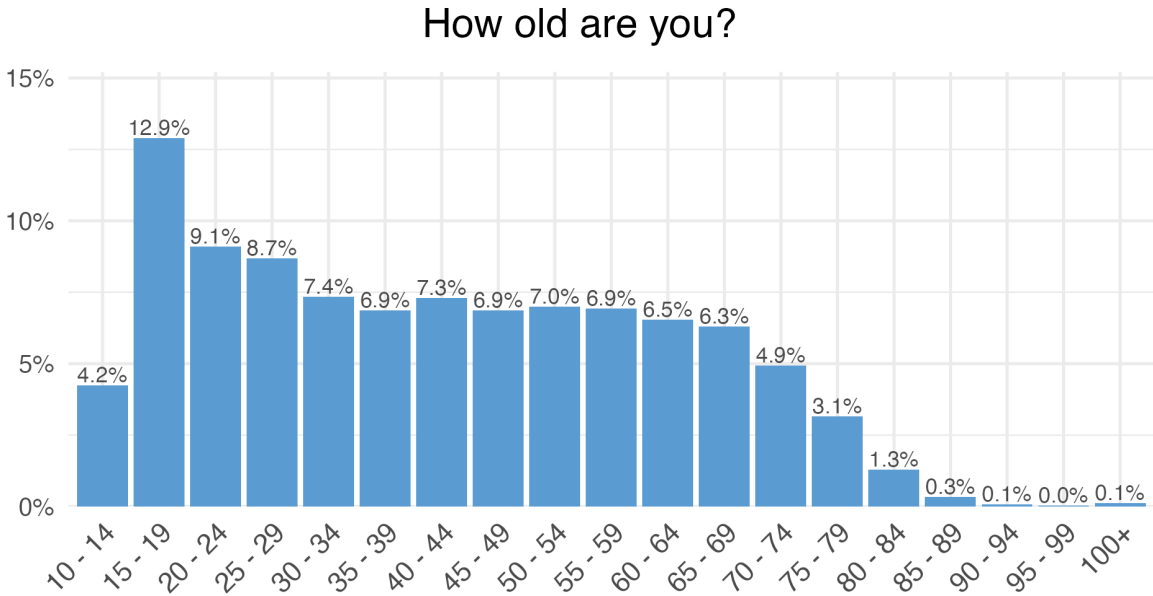
Unfortunately, due to a faulty URL redirect, we have no information on how many respondents each survey partner contributed with.

#### 3.2. Demographics

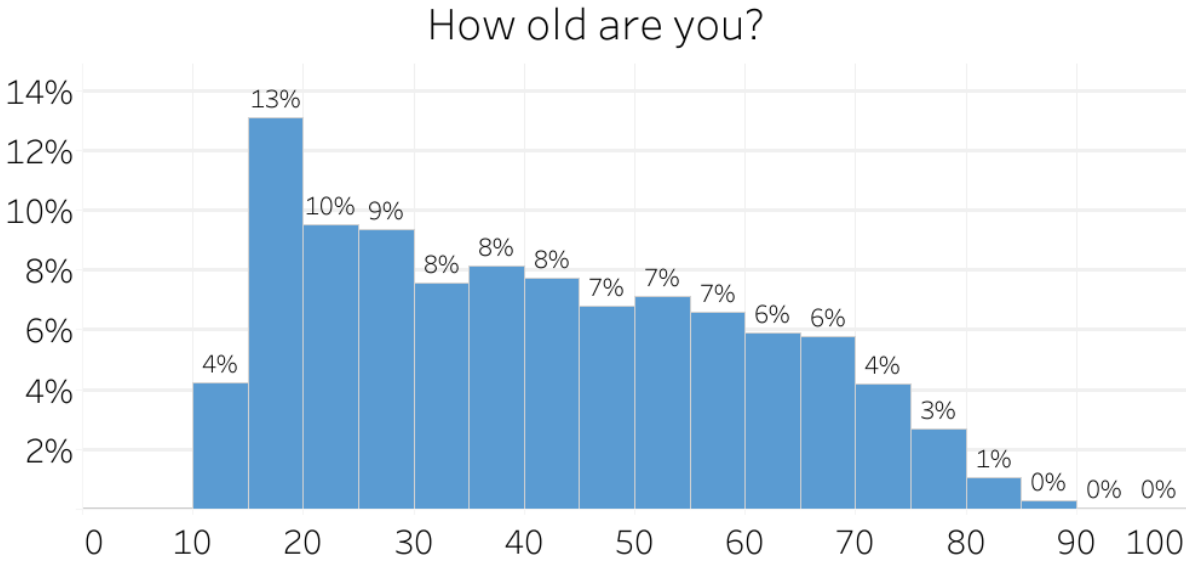
##### 3.2.1 Age

The age distribution remains stable, reflecting a broader user base across several age groups. As in previous years, the largest concentration is among users in their late teens and twenties, with a clear peak around ages 15 to 19.

Compared to last year, only minor variations are visible. Engagement across ages 30 to 70 remains steady, while participation gradually declines beyond age 75.

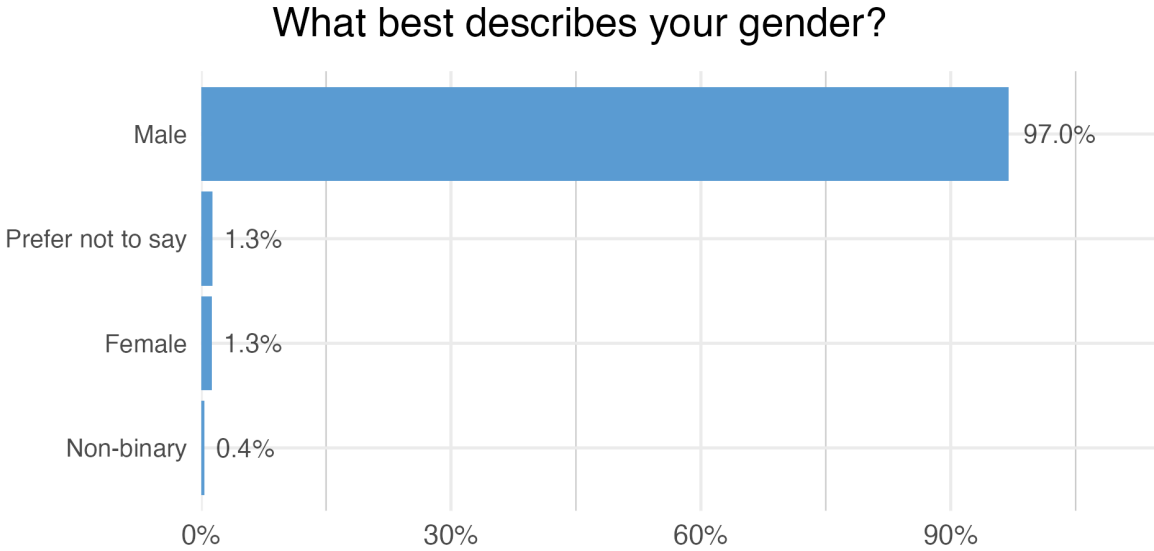


Last year's result:

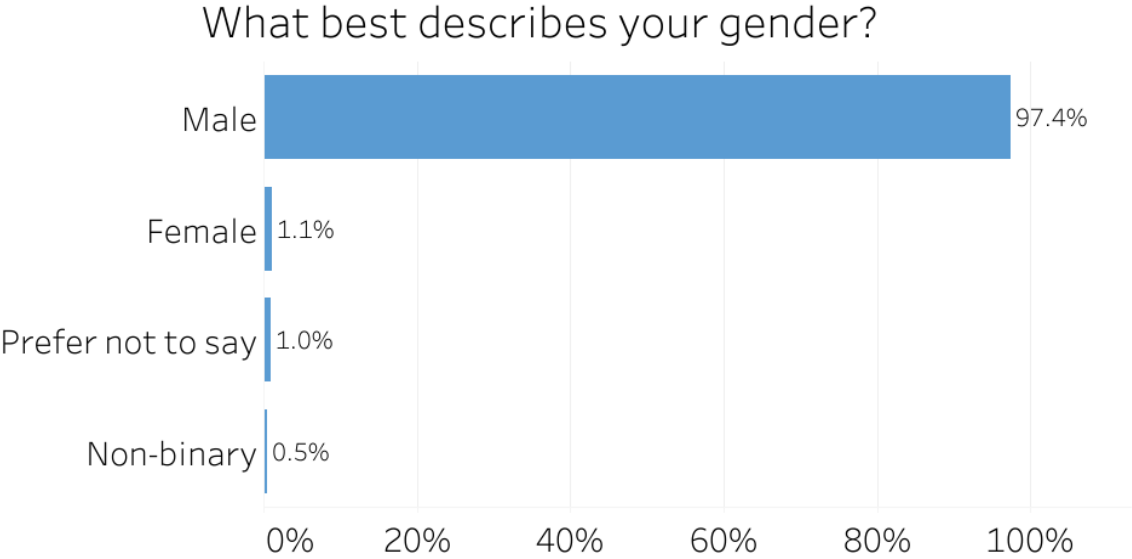


### 3.2.2. Gender

This year's survey results show that 97% of the respondents are male, with only a small share identifying as female, non-binary, or preferring not to say. The distribution is largely unchanged compared to previous years and continues to reflect the established demographics of the flight simulation community.



Last year's result:

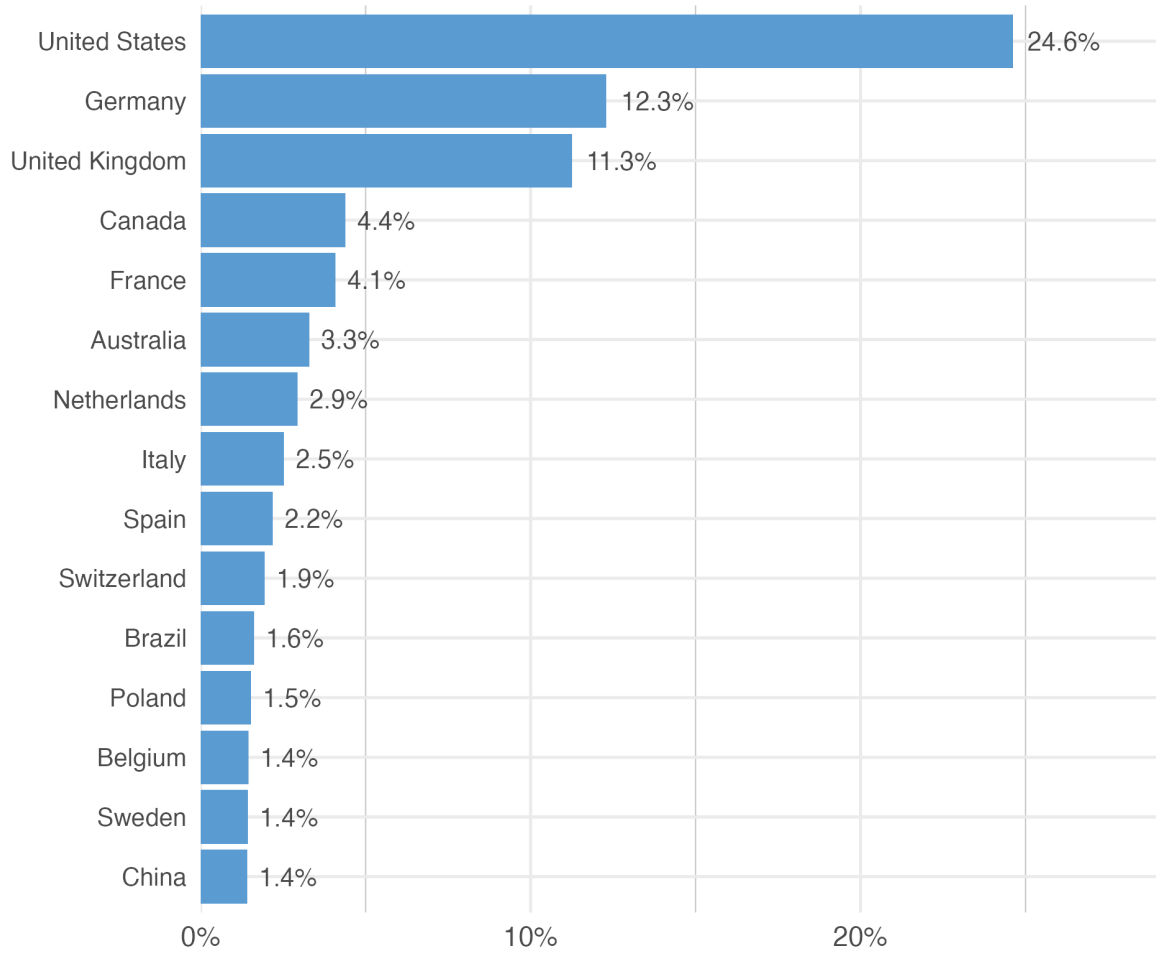


### 3.2.3. Country Location

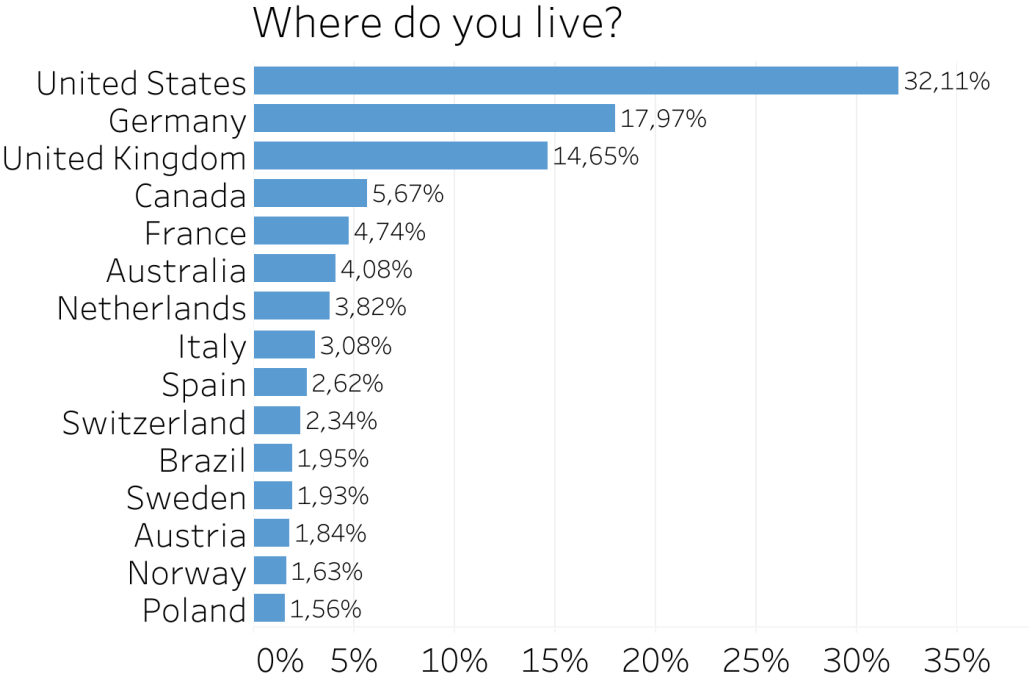
The United States remains the leading country among respondents, followed by Germany and the United Kingdom. While the ranking remains stable from last year, all three countries show lower shares of respondents than in the previous survey.

Overall, the top countries remain familiar, with only a minor shift in the list. China appears in this year's top 15, while Austria and Norway are no longer represented.

## Where do you live?



Last year's result:



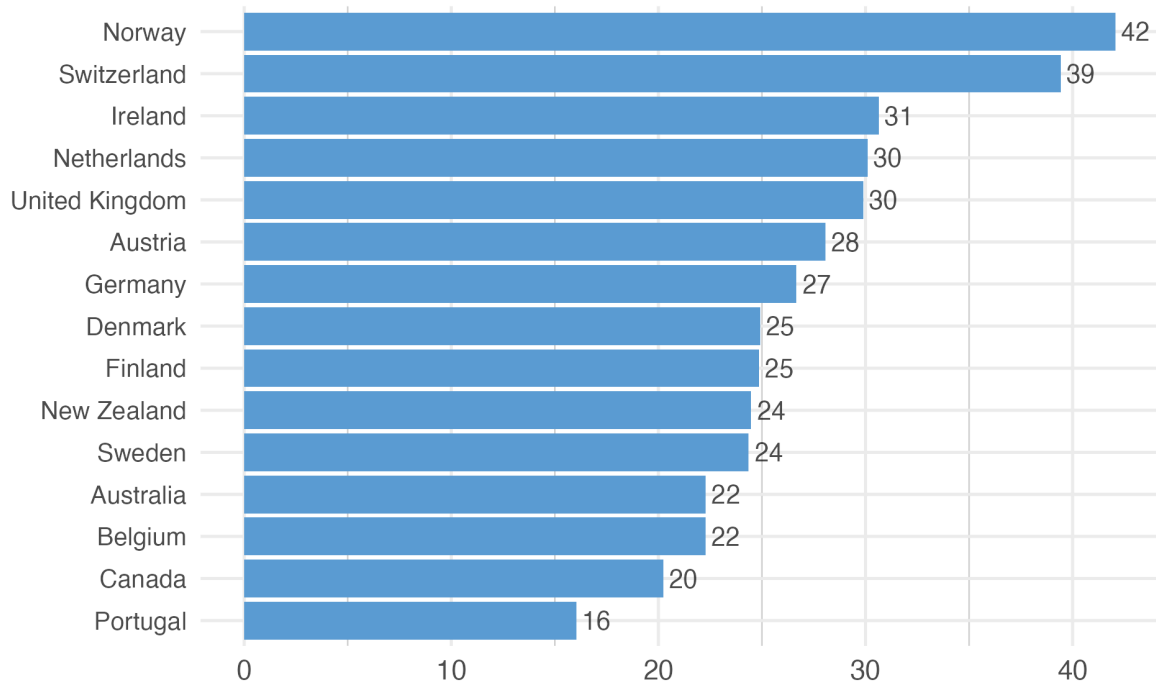
### 3.2.3.1. Location Normalized by Population

In addition to measuring the total number of respondents by country, we also analyzed participation relative to population size to understand where flight simulation interest is most concentrated.

Norway leads this year with 42 respondents per million people, followed by Switzerland at 39. Ireland (31), the Netherlands (30), and the United Kingdom (30) also rank highly, with several other European countries close behind.

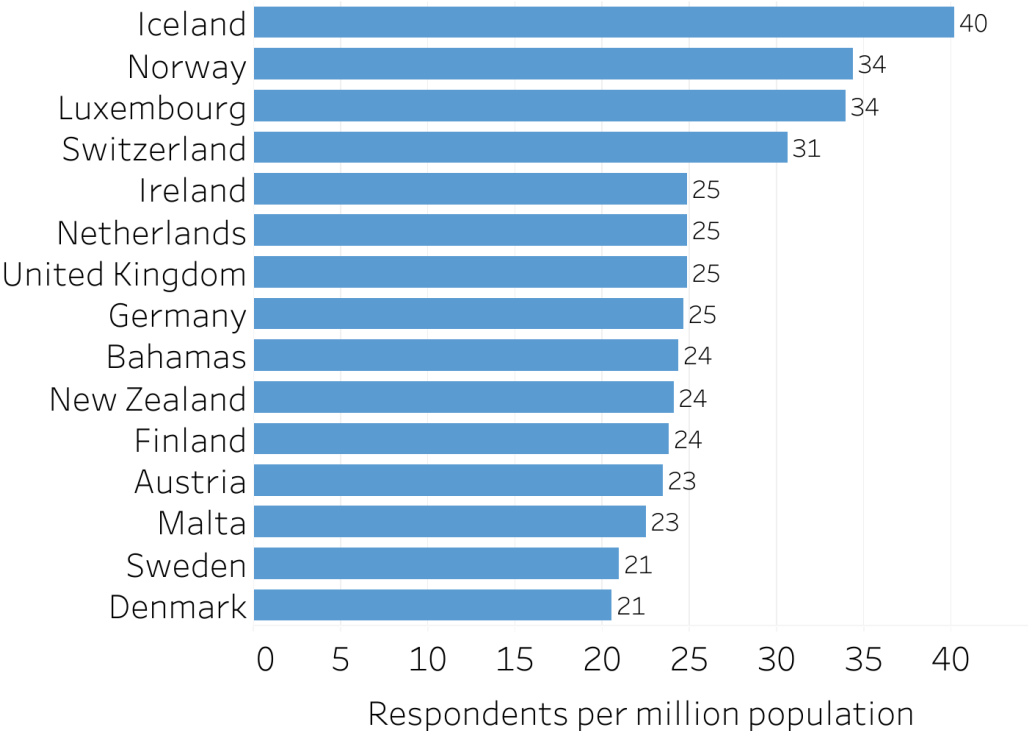
Overall, the distribution remains consistent with previous years, showing particularly strong engagement in smaller and mid-sized European countries, where flight simulation continues to have a highly concentrated audience.

## Where do you live? (Normalized by country population)



Last year's result:

### Where do you live? (Normalized by country population)

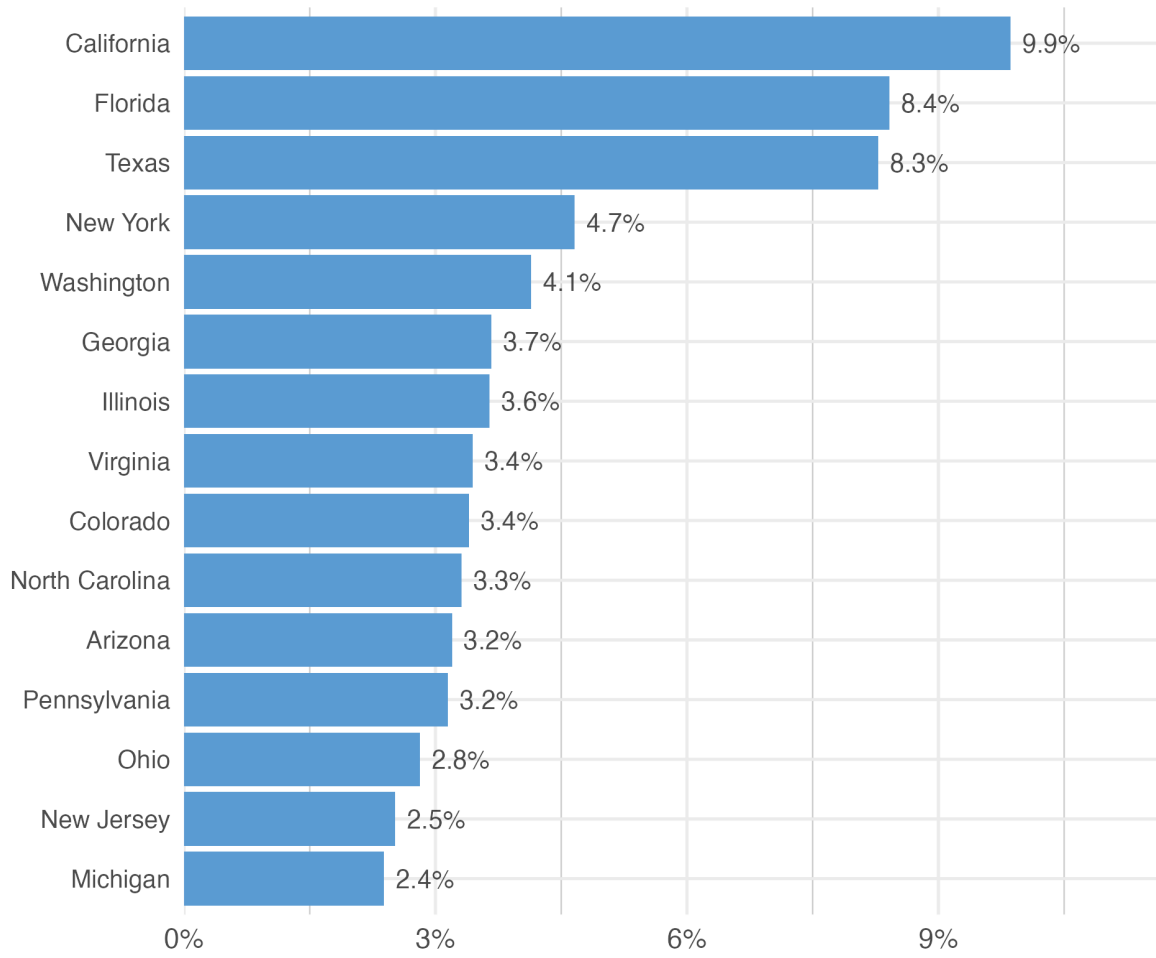


#### 3.2.3.2. U.S. State Distribution

When asked which U.S. state they reside in, 9.9% of respondents selected California, making it the most represented state. Florida (8.4%) and Texas (8.3%) follow closely behind, with New York at 4.7%.

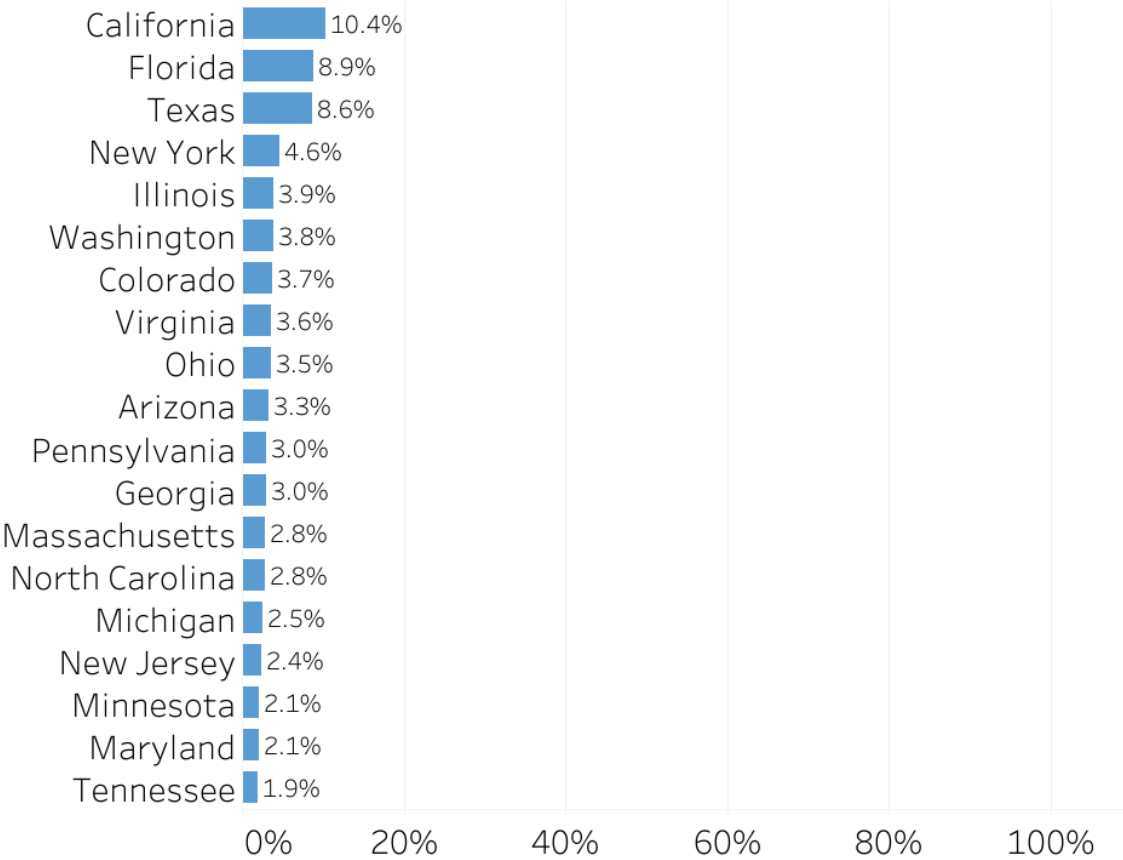
The overall distribution remains very similar to last year, with only minor changes in percentages and ranking. As before, larger and more populous states continue to account for the highest share of respondents.

## Which State Territory do you live in?



Last year's result:

### Which state do you live in?

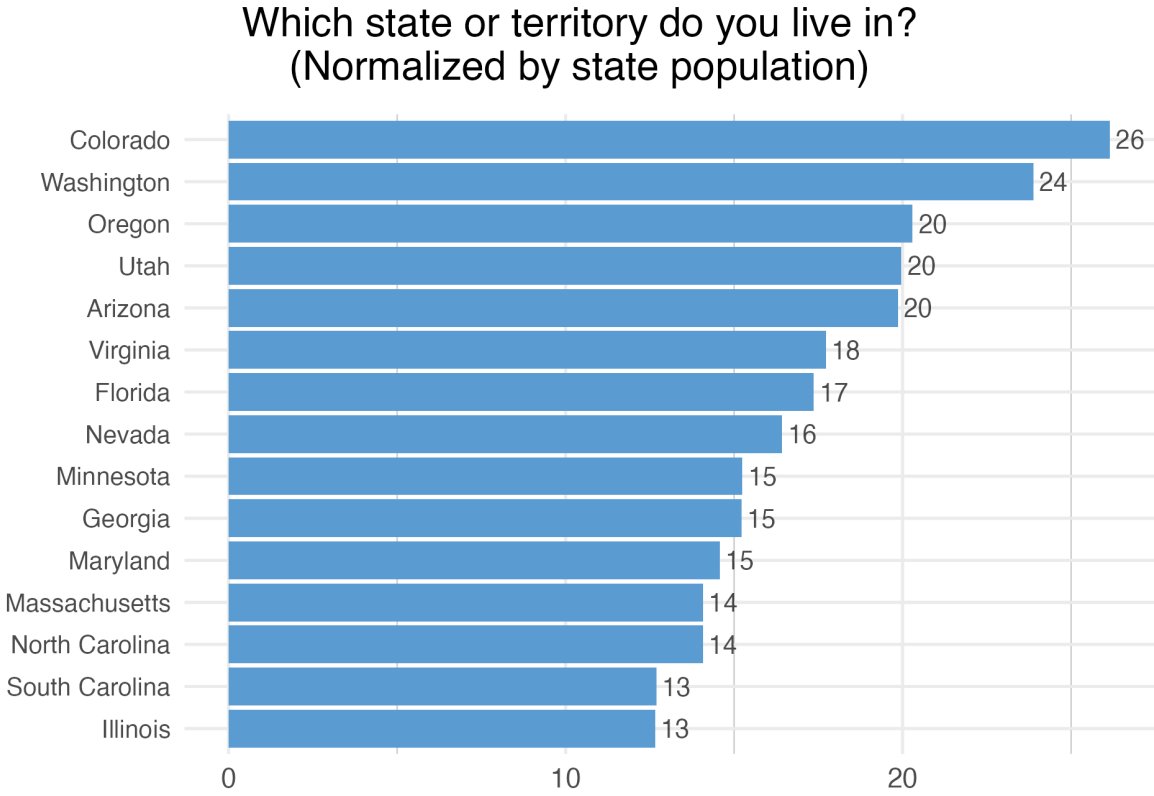


3.2.3.3. U.S. State Distribution Normalized by Population

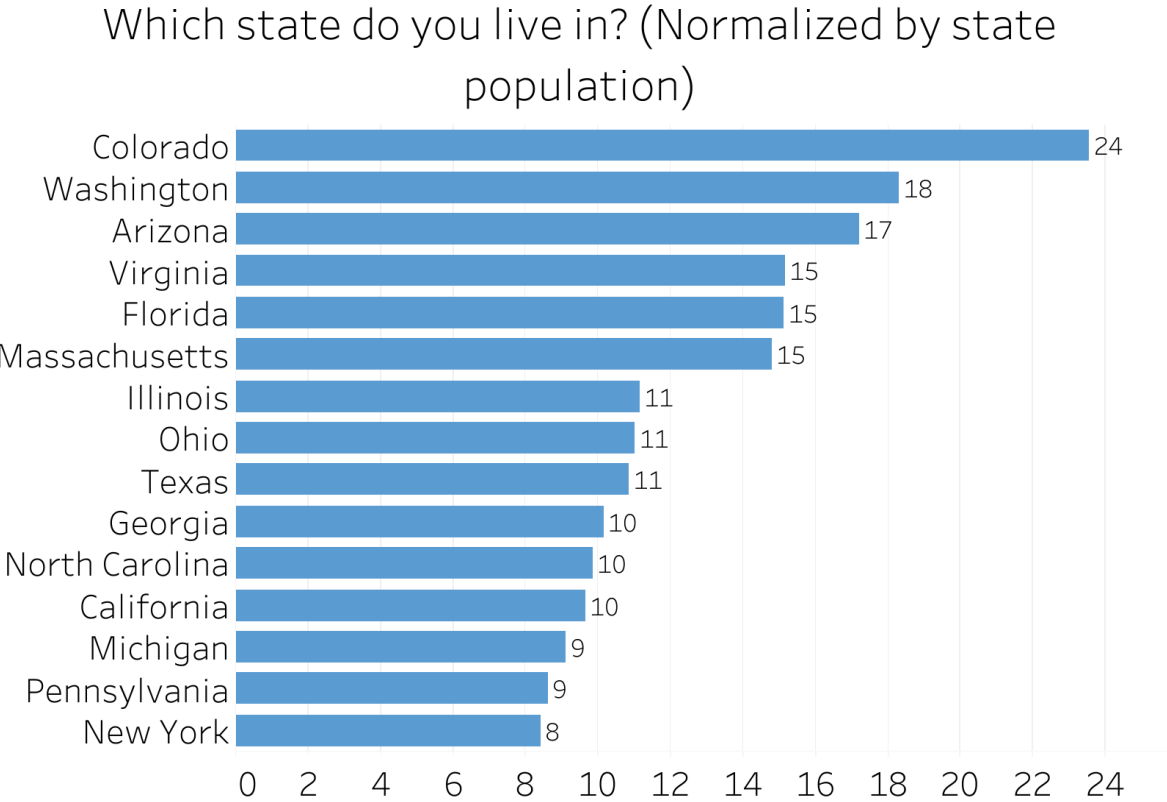
In addition to total respondents by state, we also normalized the data by population to highlight where flight simulation engagement is strongest on a per capita basis.

Colorado once again leads in normalized participation with 26 respondents per million residents, followed by Washington (24). Oregon, Utah, and Arizona all show strong engagement at 20, while Virginia (18) and Florida (17) continue to rank highly.

This view provides a different perspective compared to total responses. While larger states contribute more respondents overall, this normalization highlights regions where interest in flight simulation is especially concentrated relative to population size.



Last year's result:

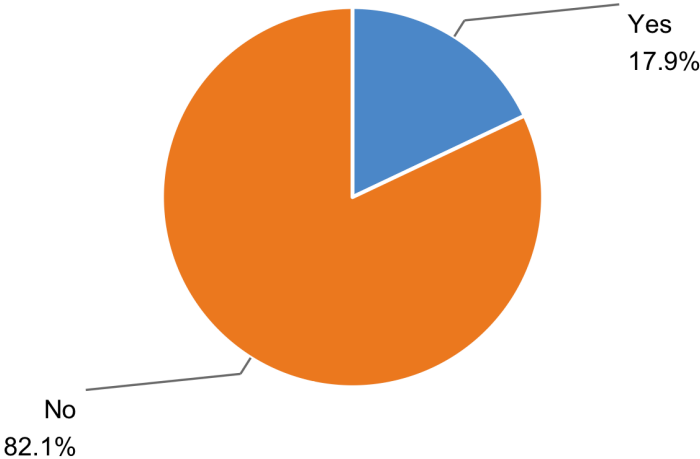


### 3.2.4. Working within Aviation

The survey asked respondents about their involvement in the aviation industry. The results show that 17.9% of respondents work within aviation, which is basically unchanged from last year's 18.0%.

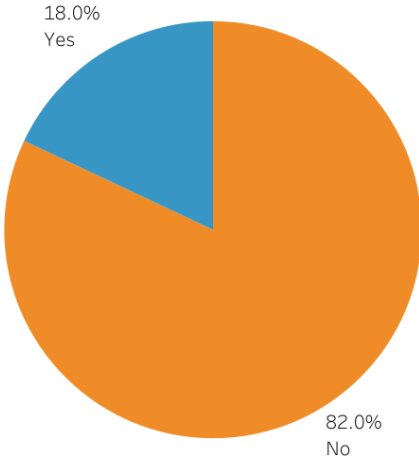
Overall, this indicates a stable proportion of respondents actively working in the aviation industry.

Do you work within aviation?



Last year's result:

Do you work within aviation?

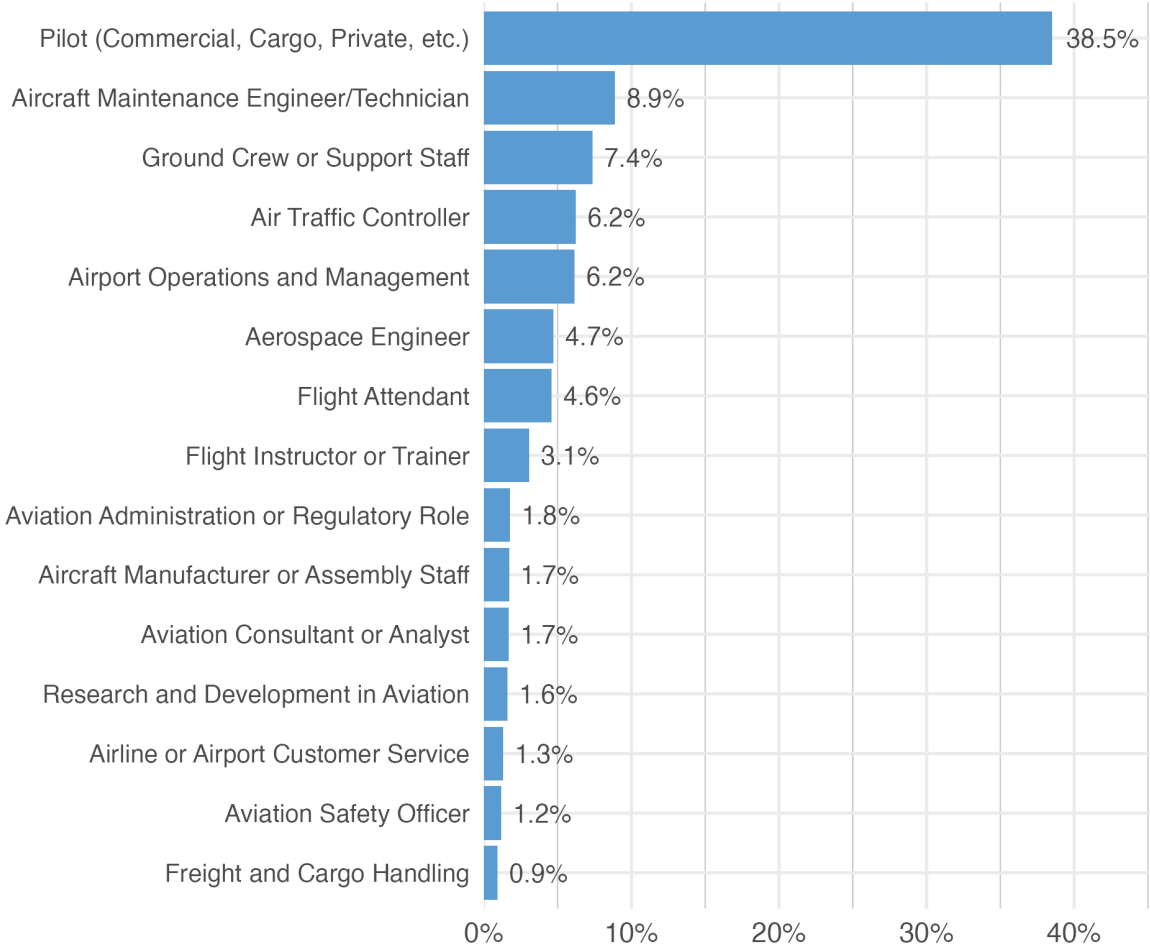


### 3.2.4.1 Area of Aviation

This question was only asked to respondents who indicated that they work within the aviation industry. Pilots remain the largest group, accounting for 38.5% of respondents, though this represents a slight decrease from last year. Aircraft Maintenance Engineers and Technicians (8.9%) and Ground Crew or Support Staff (7.4%) continue to follow, both showing small decreases compared to the previous year. Other roles, such as Air Traffic Controllers and Airport Operations, remain relatively stable.

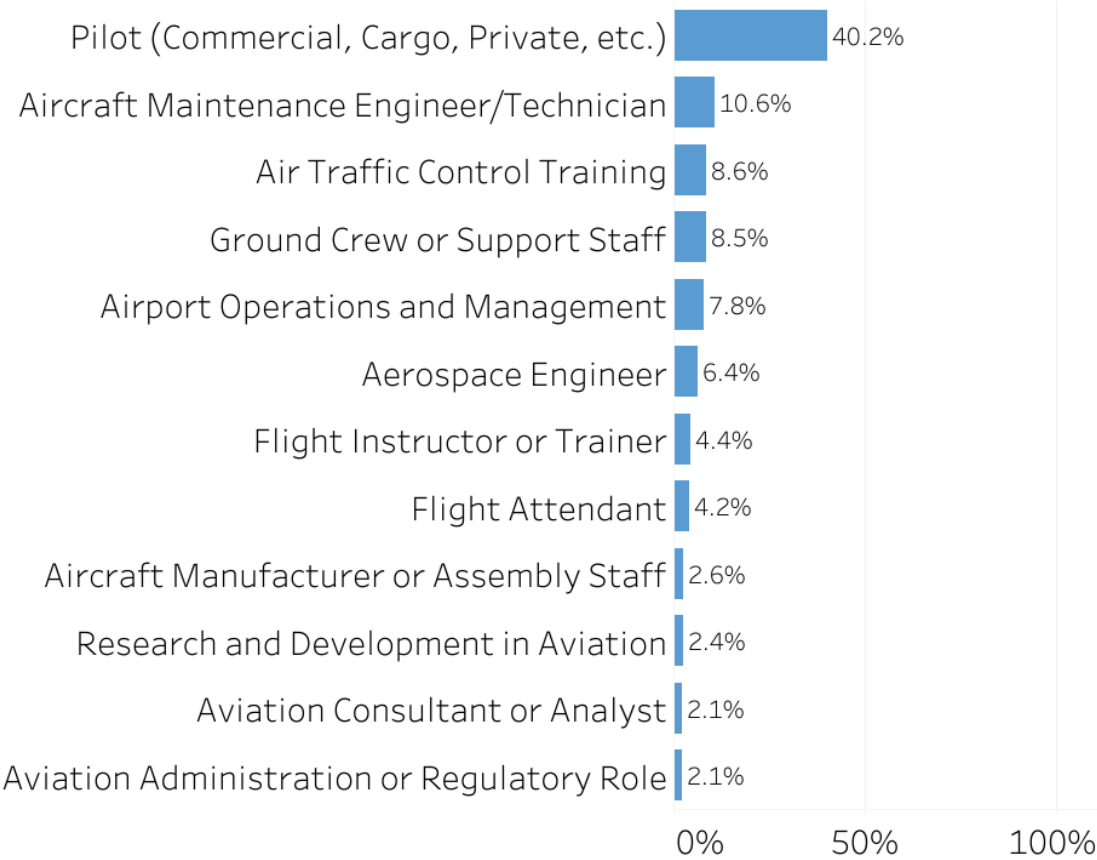
Overall, while pilots continue to make up the largest share, the distribution across aviation roles remains broadly consistent, with only minor shifts between categories.

### In which area of aviation do you work?



Last year's result:

### In what area of aviation do you work?

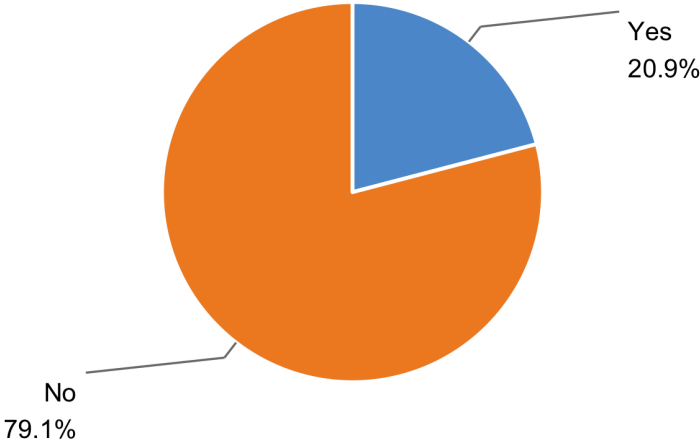


### 3.3. Background

#### 3.3.1. Pilot License

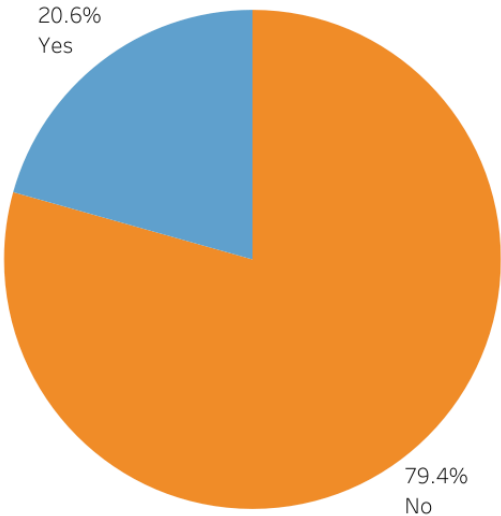
The percentage of respondents holding a pilot license remains stable, with 20.9% answering yes this year compared to 20.6% last year. This consistency suggests a steady level of licensed pilots within the community.

Do you have a pilot license?



Last year's result:

Do you have a pilot license?



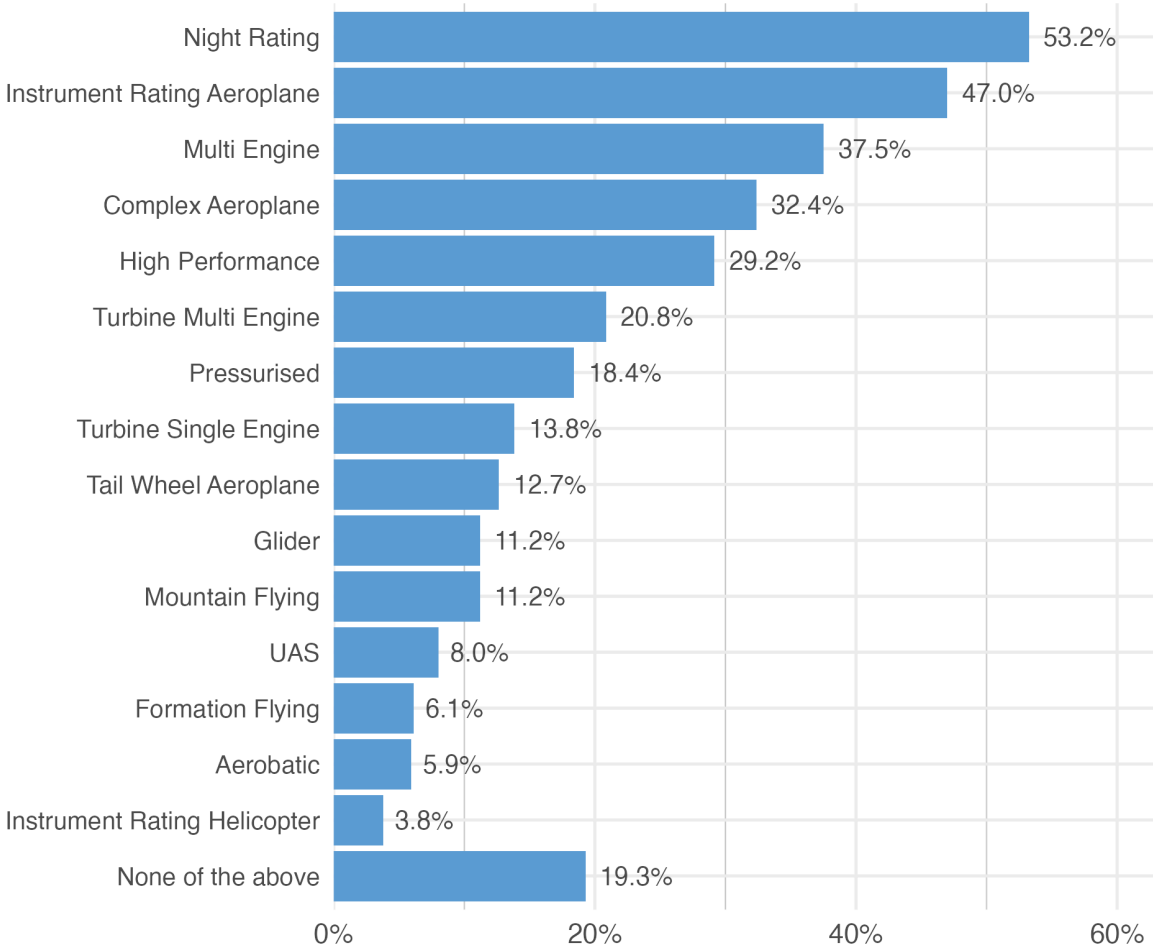
### 3.3.2. Additional Ratings

This question was only presented to respondents who answered “yes” to having a pilot’s license. Among them, 53.2% hold a Night Rating, making it the most common additional qualification. Instrument Rating Aeroplane follows at 47%, remaining one of the most common next steps for expanding operational capability.

Multi-Engine (37.5%) and Complex Aeroplane (32.4%) ratings are also widely represented, both closely aligned with last year’s results. Other ratings, such as High Performance (29.2%) and Turbine Multi-Engine (20.8%), continue to reflect more advanced or career-oriented progression paths.

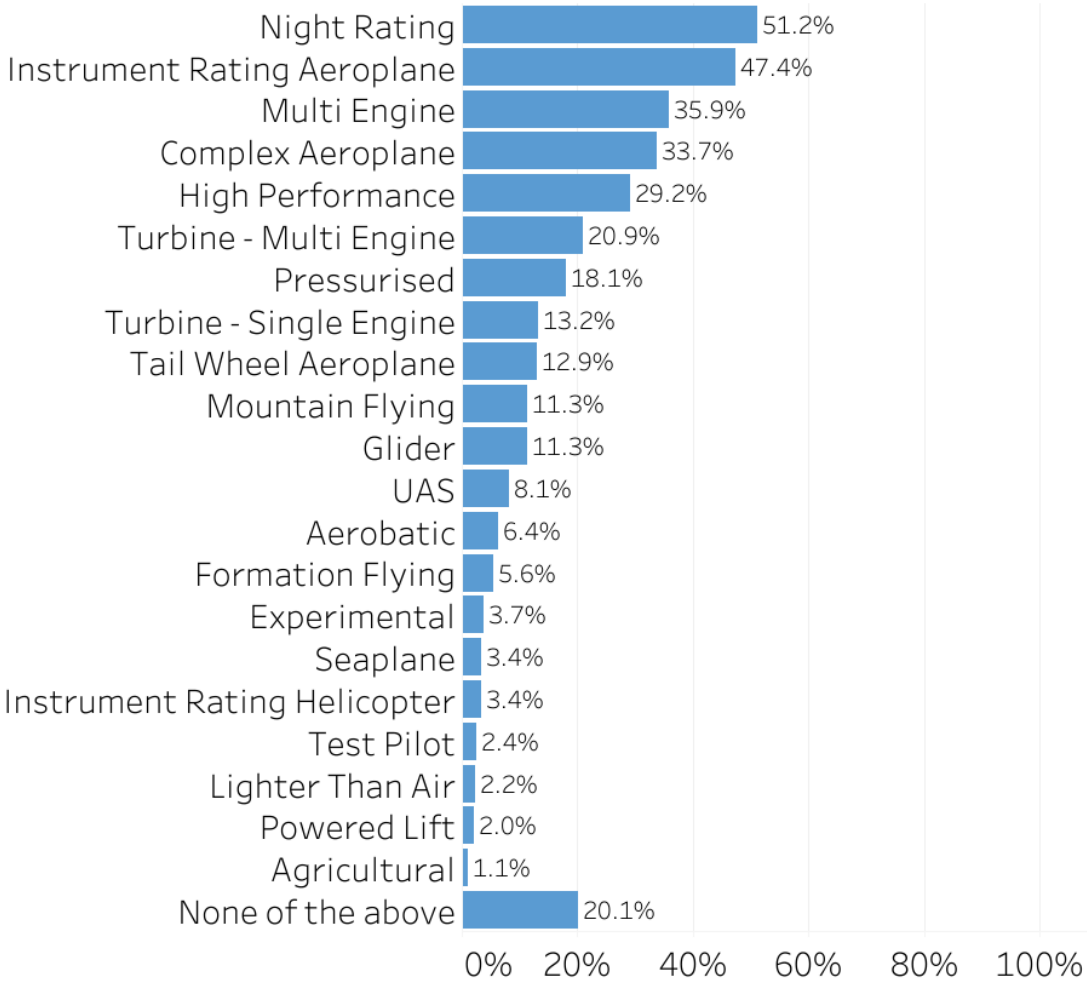
At the lower end, more specialized ratings such as Aerobatic (5.9%) and Instrument Rating Helicopter (3.8%) remain niche. Additionally, 19.3% selected “None of the above”, indicating a consistent share of pilots who have not pursued further ratings beyond their initial license.

What additional ratings do you hold as a pilot?



Last year's result:

### What additional ratings do you hold as a pilot?

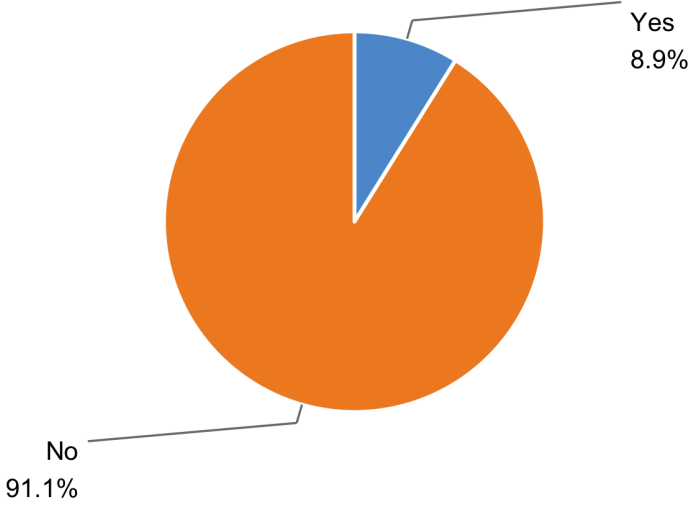


### 3.3.3. Flight School Enrollment

This question was directed to respondents who do not hold a pilot’s license. In this year’s survey, 8.9% of respondents report that they are currently enrolled in flight school.

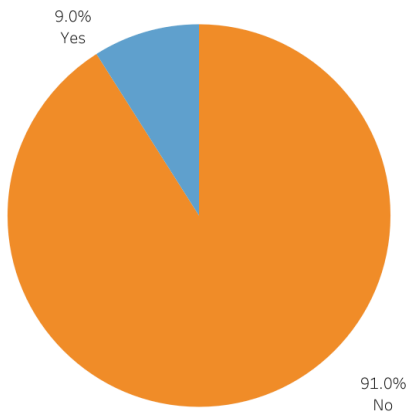
This result is nearly identical to last year’s 9%, indicating a stable level of interest in real-world aviation training among flight simulation enthusiasts.

Are you currently enrolled in flight school?



Last year’s result:

Are you currently enrolled in flight school?

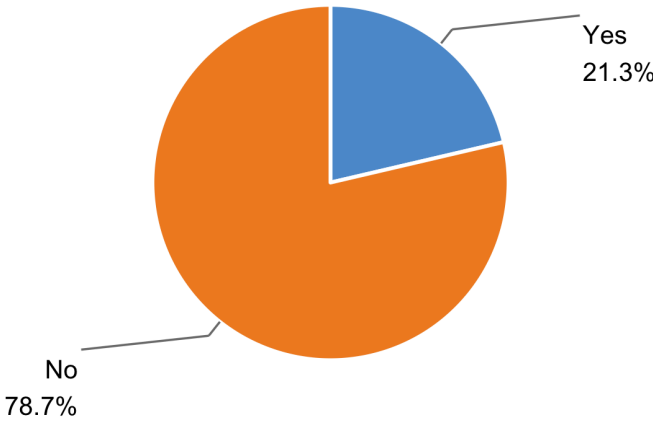


### 3.3.4. Flight Lesson Consideration

The survey indicates that 21.3% of respondents are considering taking real-world flight lessons within the next year, down from 23.1% last year.

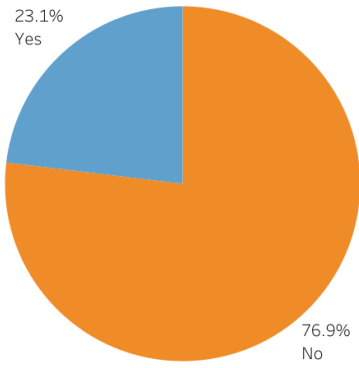
Compared to previous surveys, this continues a gradual downward trend in interest over time. While the decline is modest, it may reflect factors such as financial constraints, shifting priorities, or a greater focus on virtual aviation.

Are you considering taking real world flight lessons within the next year?



Last year's result:

Are you considering taking real-world flight lessons within the next year?

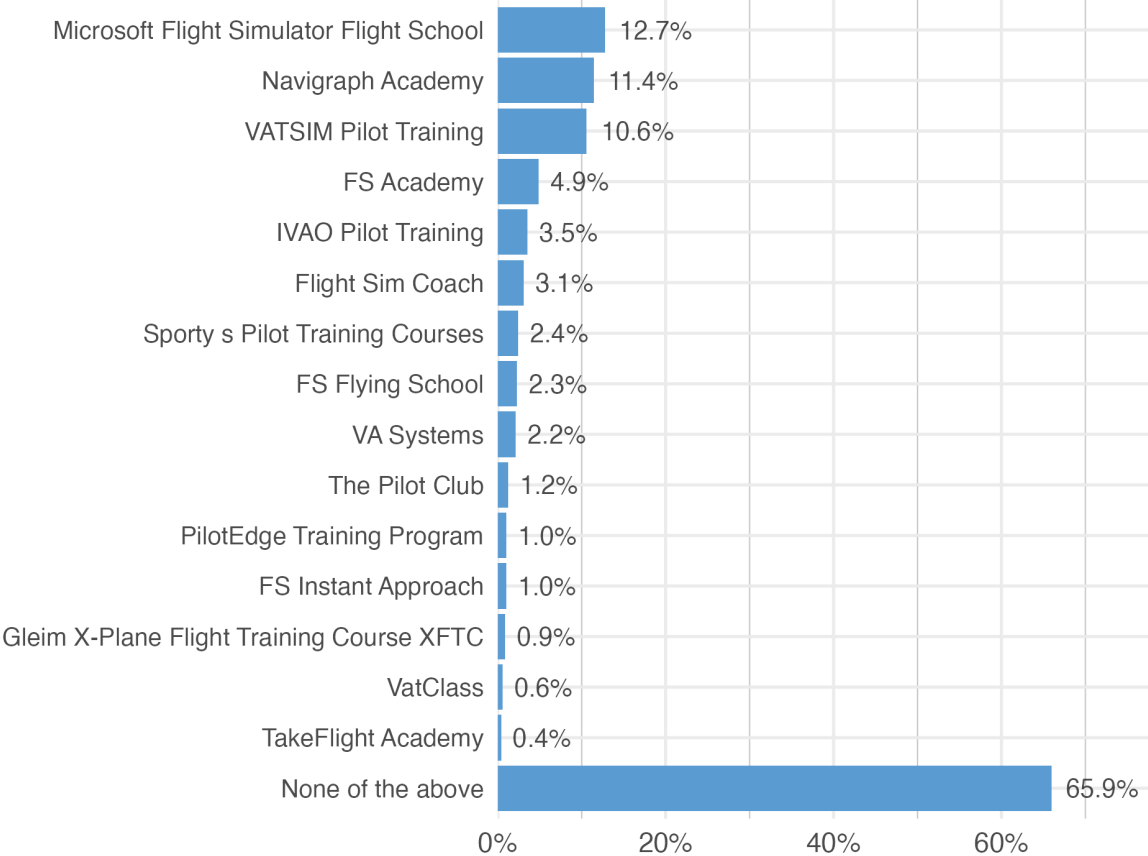


### 3.3.5. Your Flight Training Experience

A new question for this year’s survey explores the use of online flight schools and training programs over the past 12 months. Overall participation remains relatively low, with 65.9% of respondents reporting no usage.

Among those who do engage, the most popular options are Microsoft Flight Simulator Flight School (12.7%), Navigraph Academy (11.4%), and VATSIM Pilot Training (10.6%).

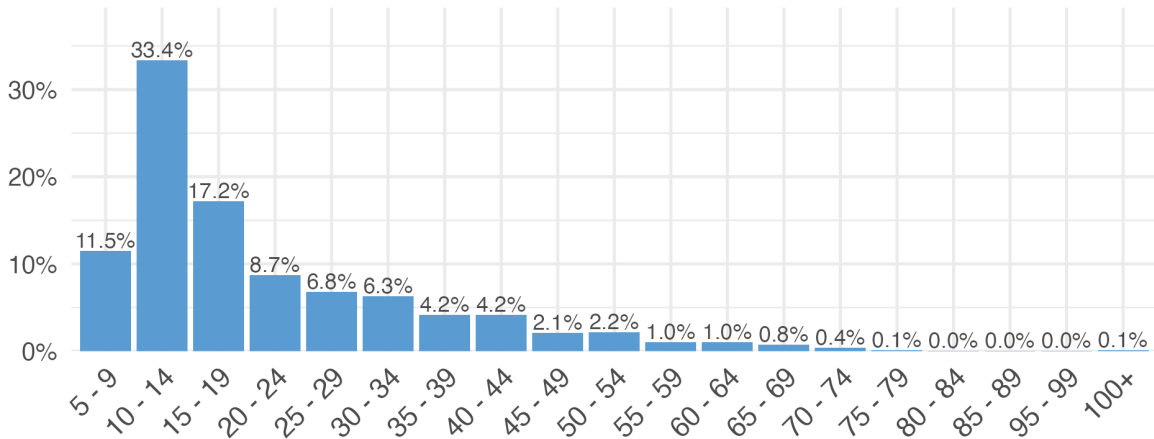
Which of the following online flight school training program or teaching software if any have you spent time in during the past year?



### 3.3.6. Simulation Introduction Age

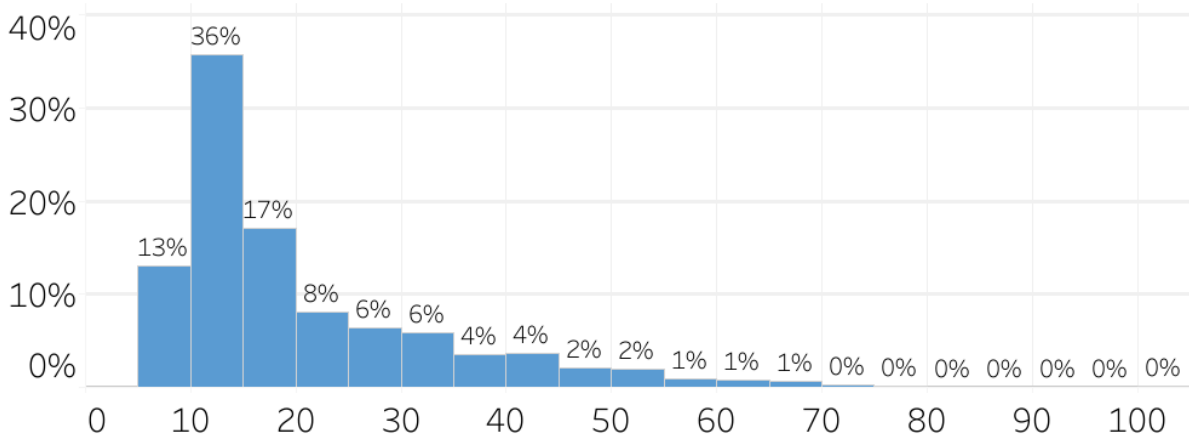
The age at which respondents first became interested in flight simulation remains largely unchanged. The 10-14 age range continues to be the most common starting point, although it shows a slight decrease compared to last year.

At what age did you start to get interested in flight simming?



Last year's result:

At what age did you start to get interested in flight simming?

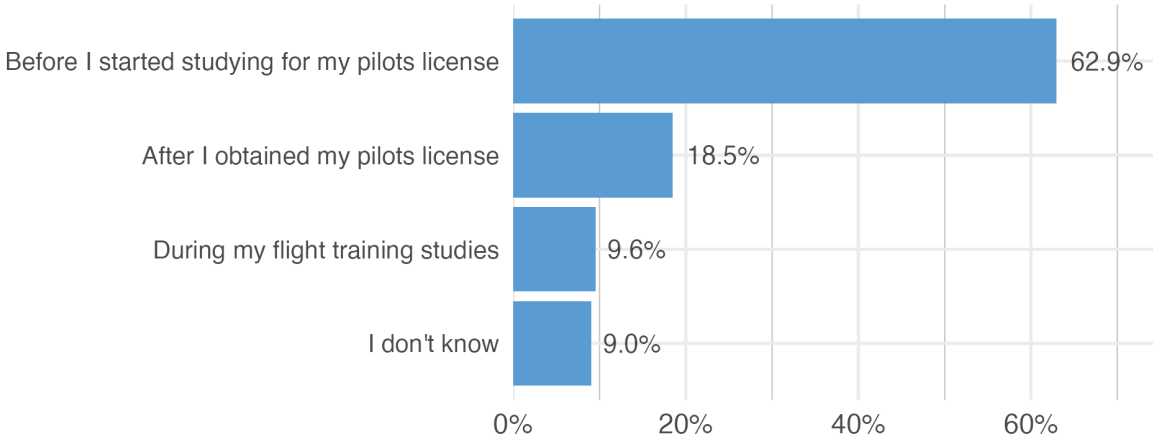


### 3.3.7. Simulator Relative to Training

This question was only presented to respondents who hold a pilot license and focuses on when they became interested in flight simulation in relation to their training. The majority (62.9%) report gaining interest before starting their pilot training, suggesting that flight simulation often serves as an early entry point into aviation. Compared to last year, this share has decreased slightly from 67.9%, while those becoming interested during training increased to 9.6% from 6.8%. Interest after obtaining a license remains stable at 18.5%.

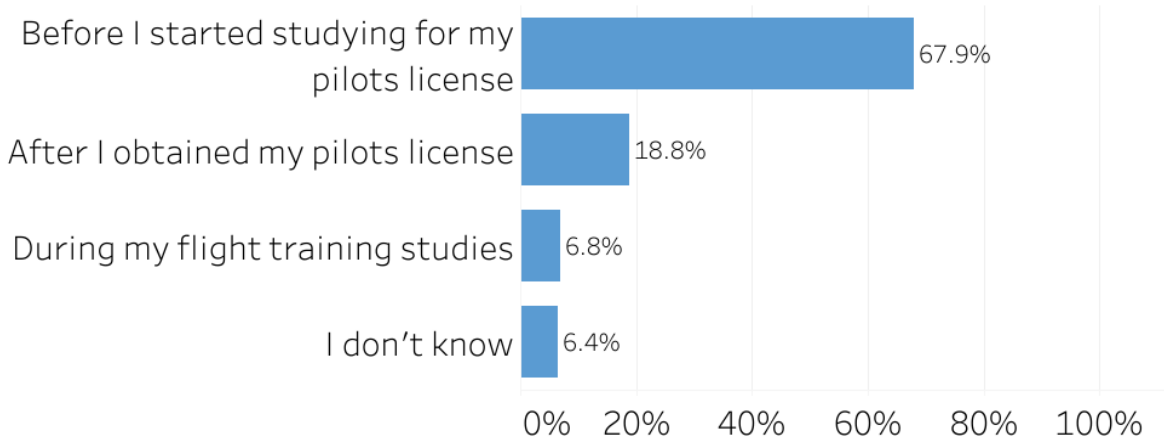
Overall, the results suggest that while flight simulation is most commonly an early influence, it continues to attract users at different stages of their aviation journey.

When did you get interested in flight simming in relation to you pilot license?



Last year's result:

### When did you get interested in flight simming in relation to your pilots license?



#### 3.3.8. Could You Land It?

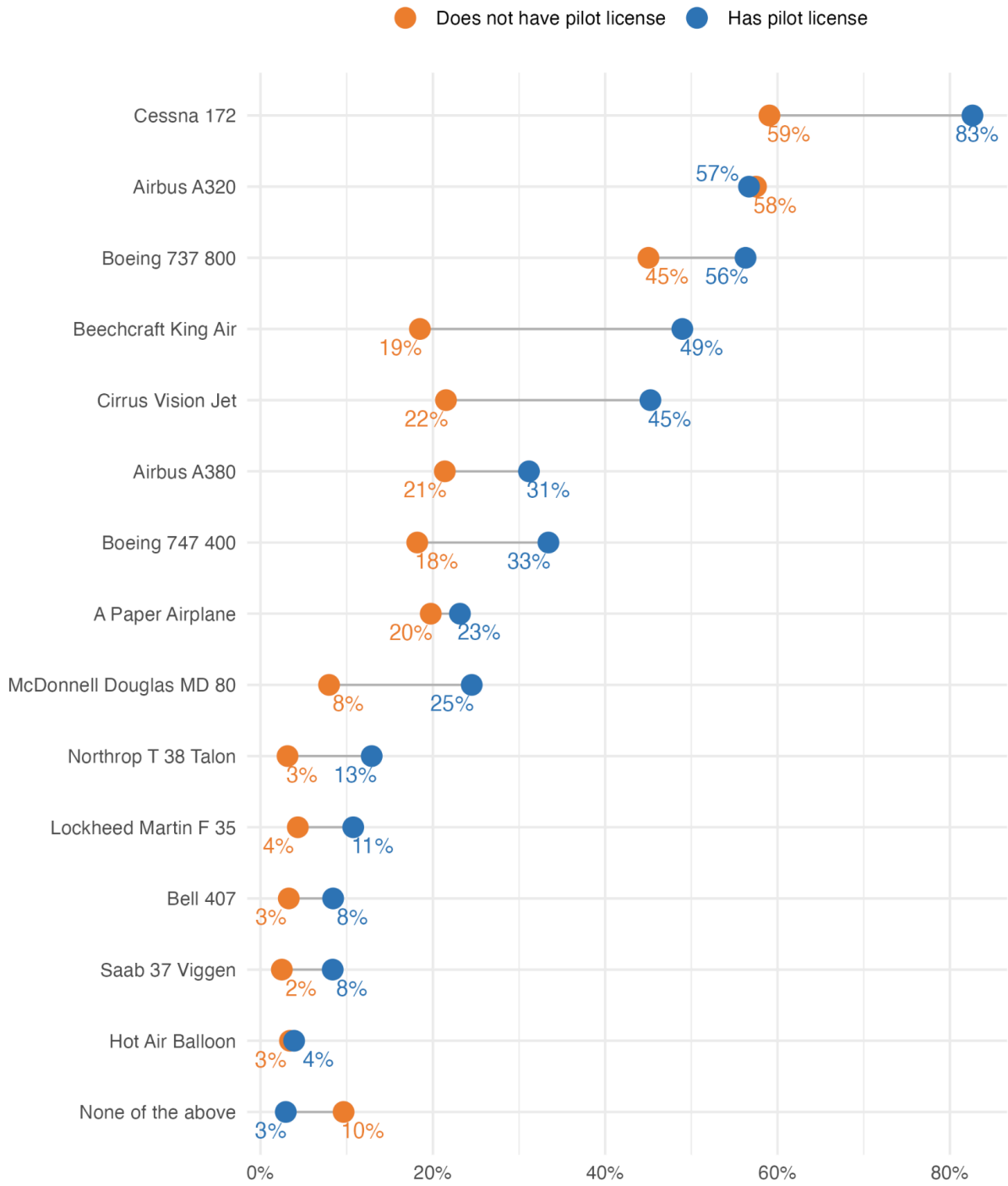
This question was included as a more lighthearted addition to the survey, asking respondents which aircraft they believe they could land in real life. As expected, confidence is highest for smaller aircraft, with the Cessna 172 topping the list across both groups. However, a notable share of respondents also believe they could successfully land large commercial aircraft such as the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737-800.

Even among those without a pilot license, confidence levels remain relatively high across a range of aircraft types, including widebodies like the Airbus A380 and Boeing 747. At the other end of the scale, more complex or specialized aircraft, such as fighter jets and helicopters, see lower levels of confidence.

In all cases, simmers report similar or higher confidence in their ability to land the aircraft. This trend extends even to the paper plane, which was selected by around one-fifth of respondents.

Overall, the results offer an entertaining glimpse into how simulation experience may influence perceived real-world capability, with many respondents appearing optimistic about their chances.

## Which aircraft do you think you could land in real life?



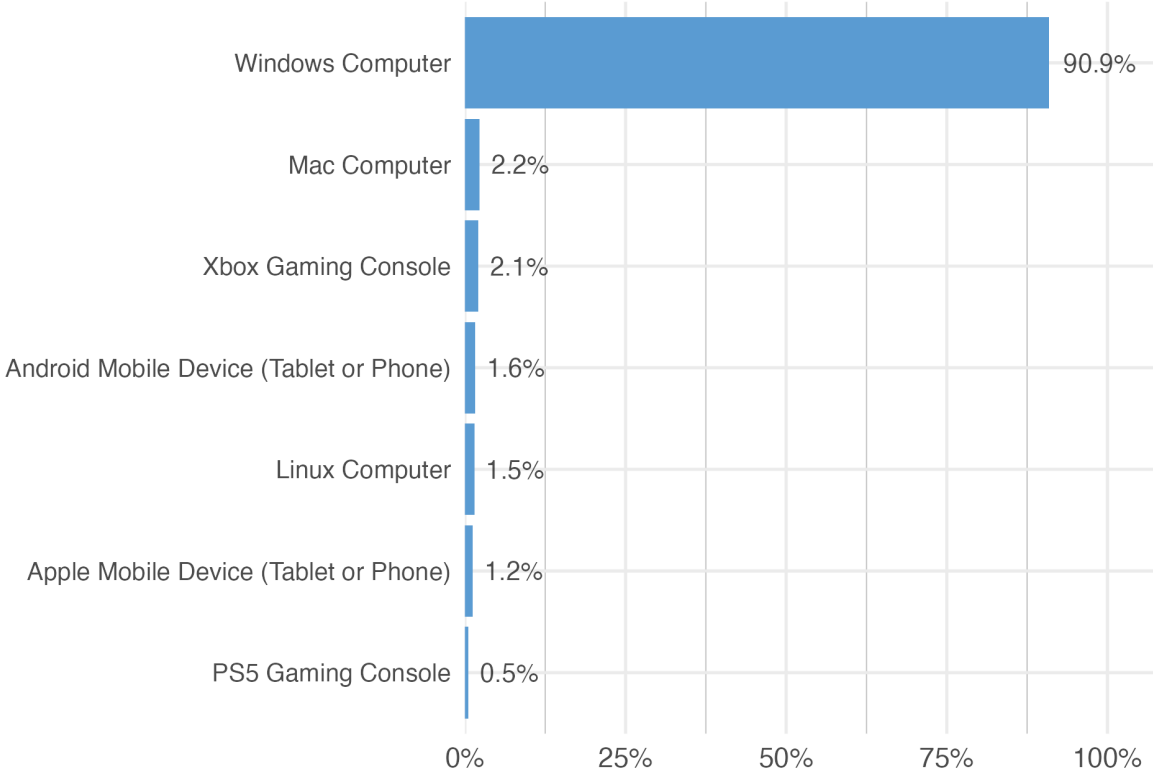
### 3.4. Hardware Setup

#### 3.4.1. Primary Hardware

This year's survey continues to separate Windows and Mac computer results. Windows computers remain the dominant platform at 90.9%, slightly decreased from last year's 91.9%, while the Mac machines also dipped slightly from 2.4% to 2.2%. Gradual growth can be seen with Xbox users, as it has grown from 1.7% to 2.1%. This indicates that more users are coming onboard with MSFS 2020 and MSFS 2024. Android devices saw a slight increase from 1.2% to 1.6% while Apple mobile devices stayed at 1.2%.

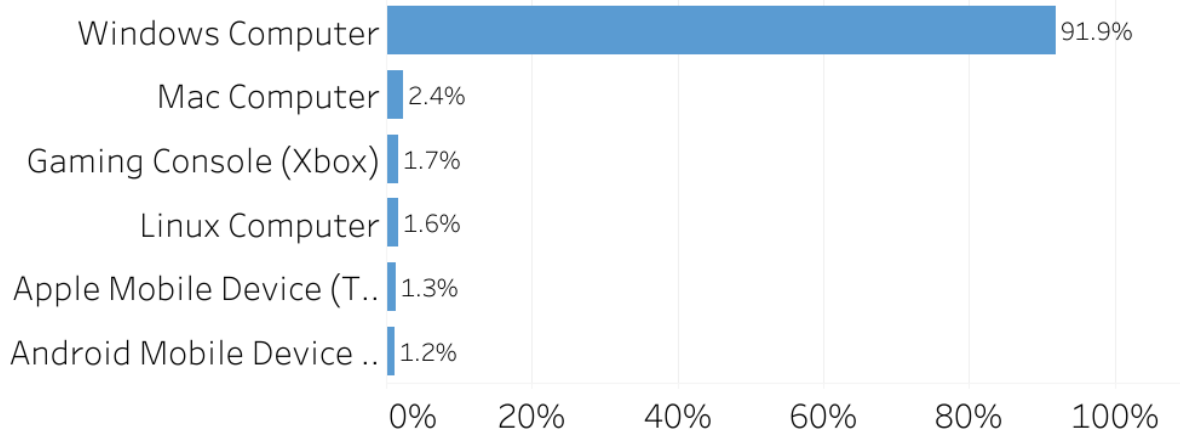
This year also introduces the PS5 platform, with respondents registering at 0.5%. While low, it indicates expansion of platforms on which flight simulator enthusiasts are engaging with flight simulation.

Which hardware do you primarily use to run your flight simulator?



Last year's result:

## Which hardware do you primarily use to run your flight simulator?



### 3.4.2. Peripheral Hardware

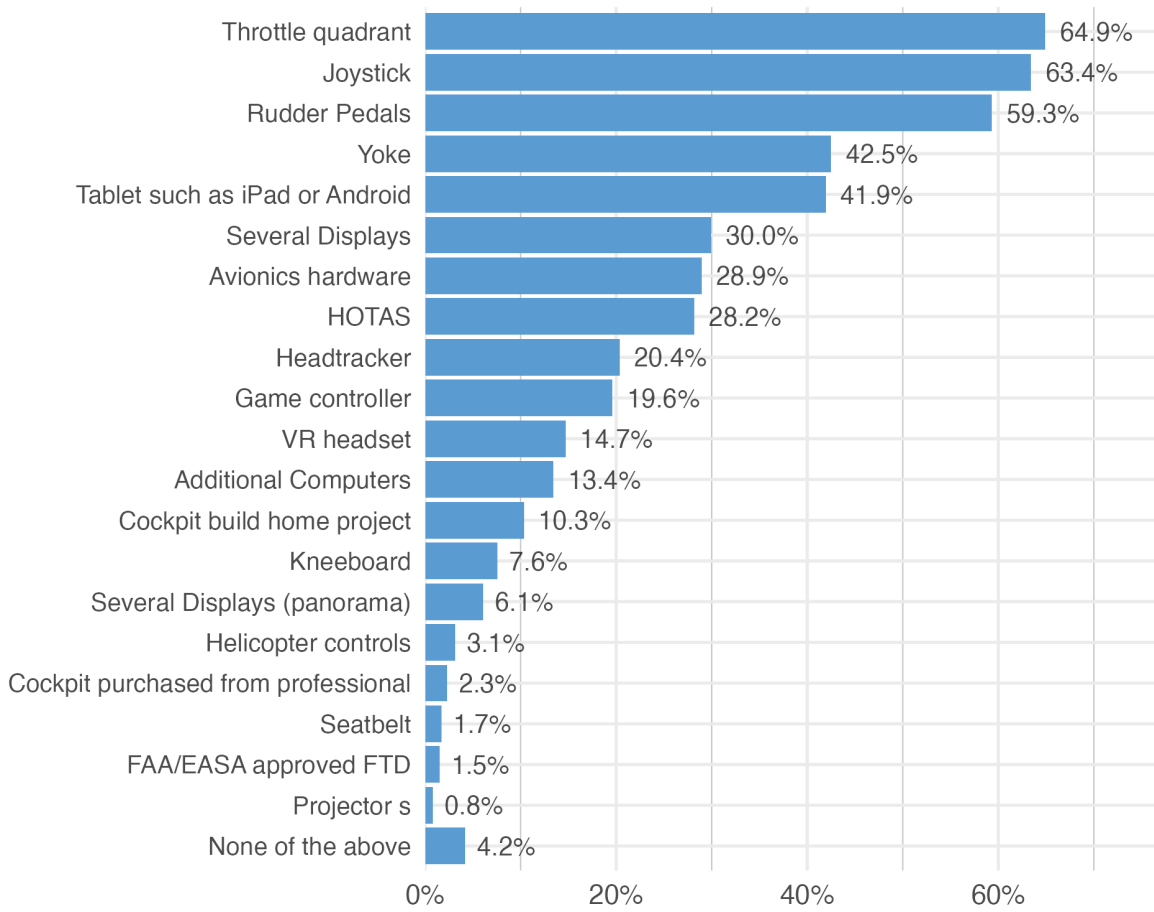
This question provides insight into: What hardware does the community actually fly with?

Throttle quadrants still have the largest share amongst respondents, at 64.9%, though down slightly from last year's 66.9%. Joysticks and rudder pedals also, 63.4% and 59.3%, respectively. There are lots of options to choose from as their respective price points have been steadily dropping over the years.

Further down the list, HOTAS has dropped from 31.9% to 28.2%, and game controllers appeared as a tracked category this year at 19.6%. Immersive flight simulator enthusiasts mentioned seatbelts are an important addition, also, at 1.7%.

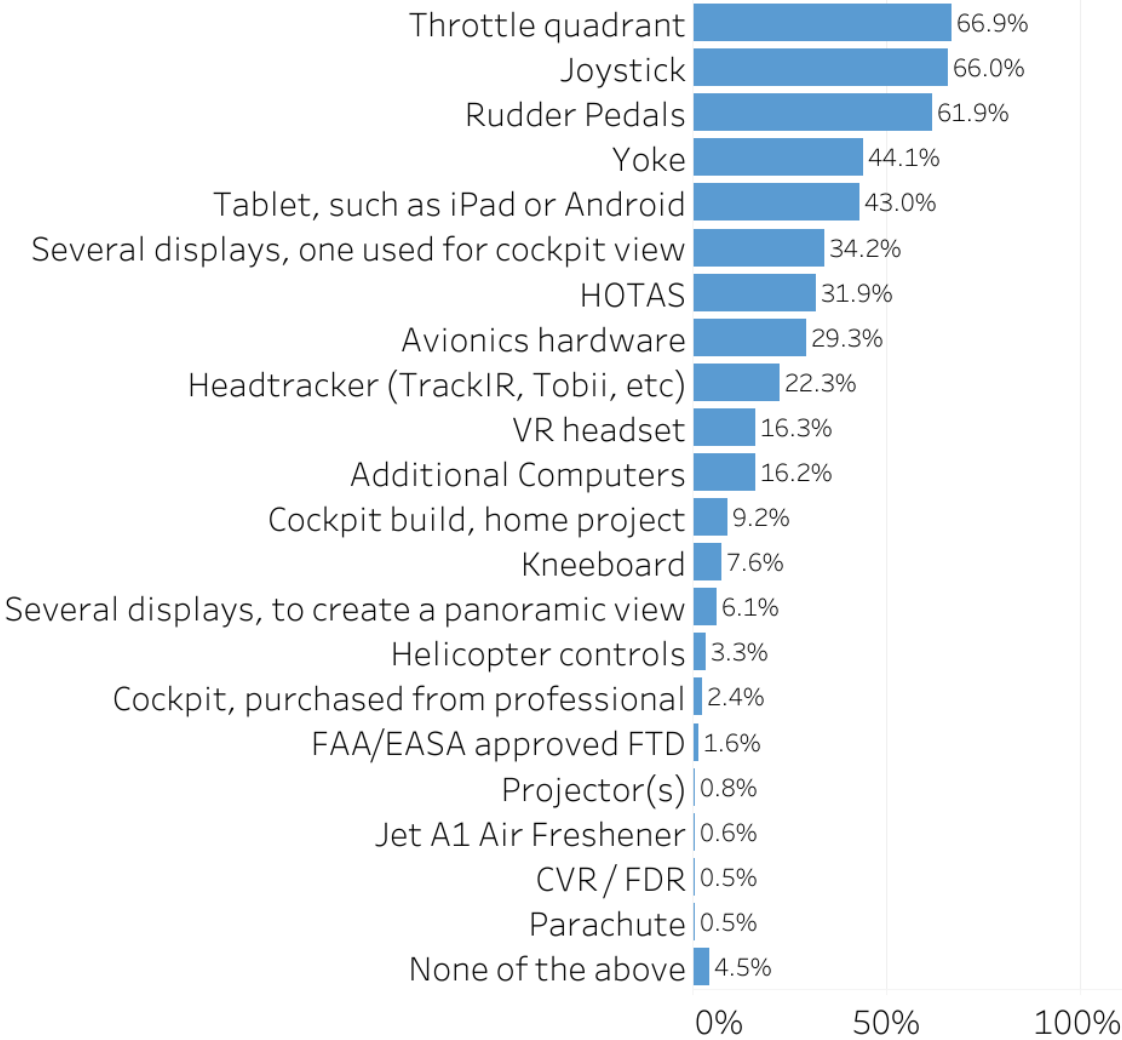
A slight increase is observed in homebuilt cockpit projects, a slight uptick from 9.2% to 10.3%. There are more inspiring hardware add-ons becoming available, which let immersion take on a whole new level over the last year or two, which may indicate a growing trend.

## Which peripheral hardware do you currently use together with your flight simulator?



Last year's result:

### Which additional peripheral hardware do you use together with your flight simulator?



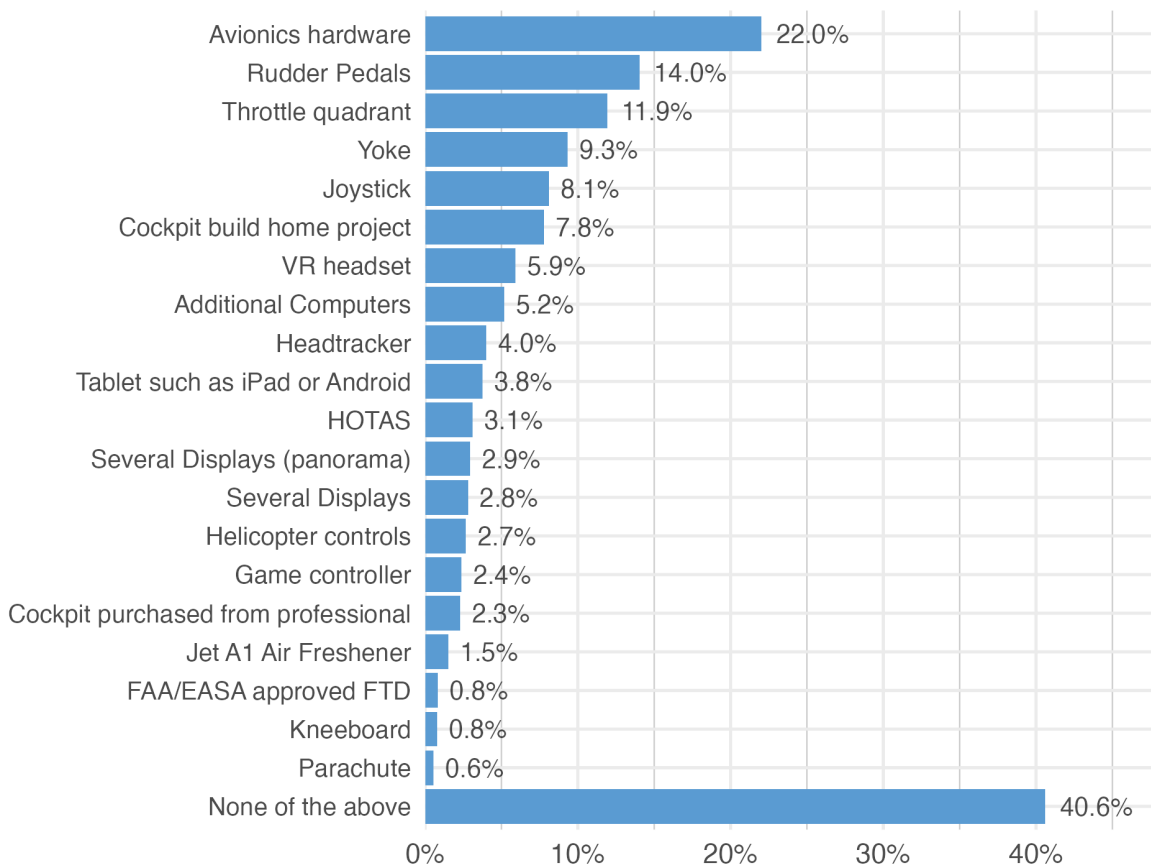
### 3.4.3. Planned Peripheral Purchases

In a similar fashion, avionics hardware holds the top spot again this year, at 22%, the same result as last year. There have been so many avionics hardware announcements and releases, particularly from Moza and WinCTRL. Rudder pedals also remain amongst the most popular, with the slight uptick over last year, at 14%, along with throttle quadrants at 11.9%, up from its 9.5% on last year's survey.

With the upcoming hardware releases from WinCTRL, Moza, and Skalarki, home builders may feel more inspired than ever, DIY cockpit build projects jumping from 5.9% to 7.8%. VR headsets and head trackers have dipped a little over last year, VR at 5.9% and head trackers at 4%, down from their previous years 6.3% and 4.4%, respectively.

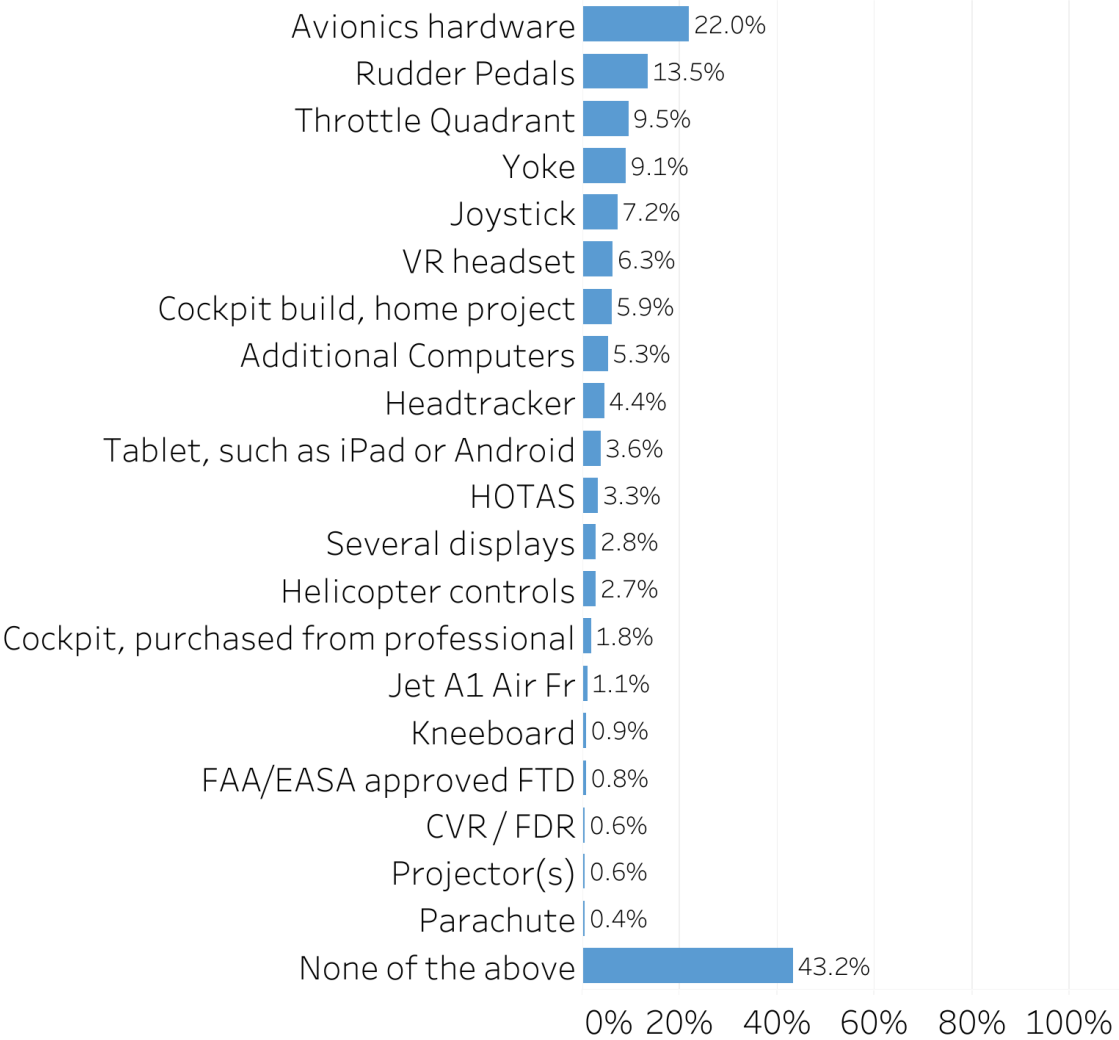
Game controllers appear as a newly tracked item this year at 2.4%, with both Honeycomb and Meridian GMT showcasing some dedicated flight simulation controllers.

### In the coming 12 months which peripheral hardware do you plan to purchase for use with your flight simulator?



Last year's result:

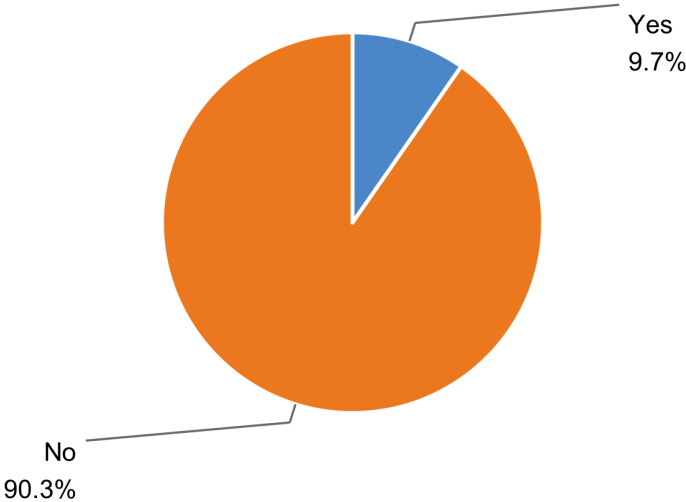
In the coming 12 months, which peripheral hardware do you plan to purchase for use with your flight simulator?



### 3.4.4. Do You Primarily Fly Using VR?

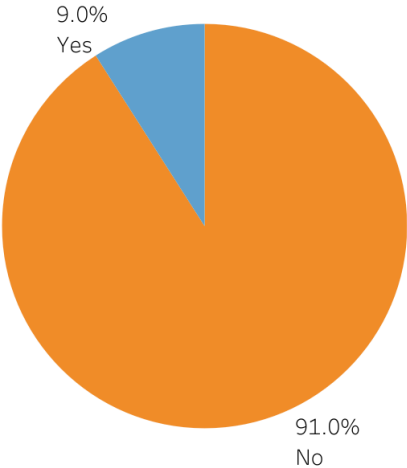
VR remains a niche but a very dedicated corner of the flight simulation community. There are lots of options for 2026, Pimax Dream Air SE and Bigscreen Beyond 2e, to name a few. We have seen a small increase in usage over the last year, 9.7%, up from 9% in the previous year.

Do you primarily fly using VR?



Last year's result:

Do you primarily fly using VR?

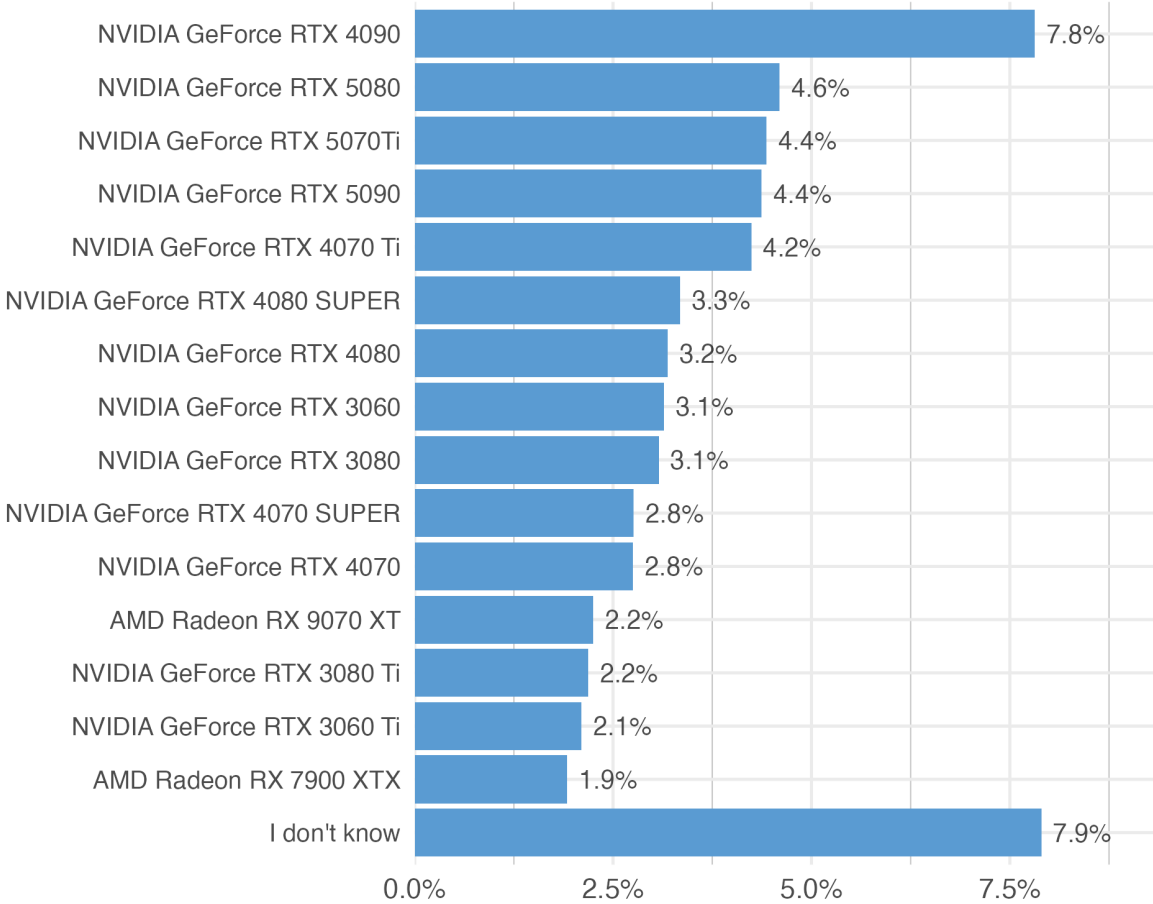


### 3.4.5. Graphics Card

NVIDIA holds the top spot again this year. The RTX 4090 still has the largest share amongst survey respondents at 7.8%; however, it is a big drop from last year's 16.9%. Given what has been released since, this makes sense. The RTX 5070Ti, 5080, and 5090 all appear on the list at 4.4%, 4.6% and 4.4% respectively.

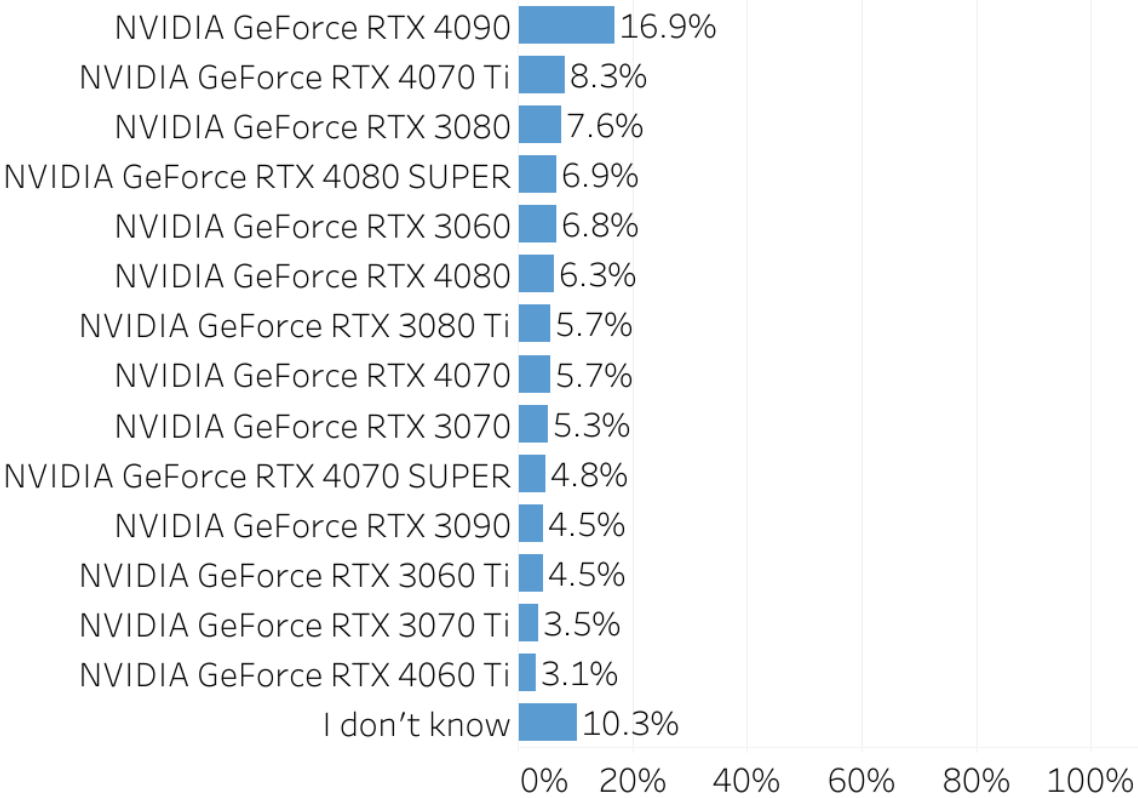
AMD is appearing on the list as 2.2% of respondents report using the RX 9070XT and 1.9% the RX 7900XTX.

Which graphics card do you have in your primary flight simulator computer?



Last year's result:

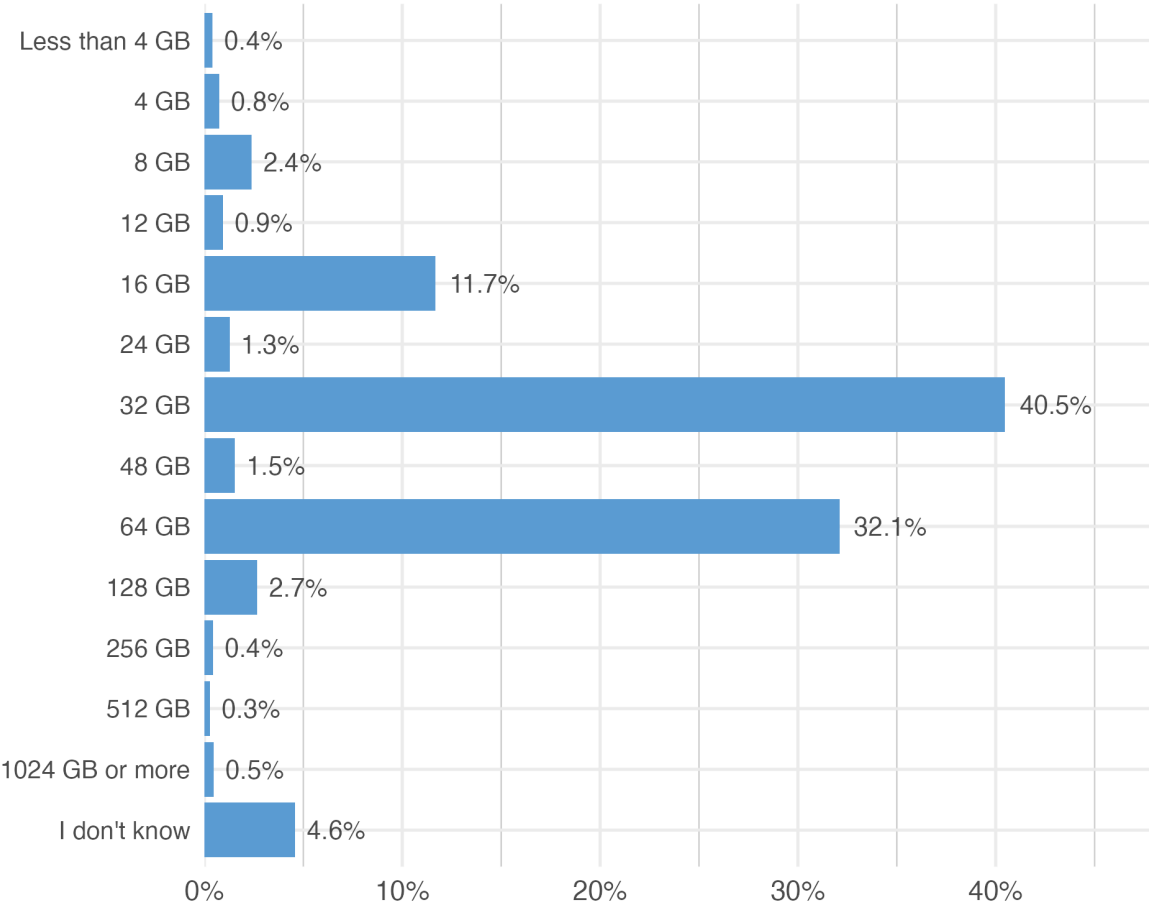
### Which graphics card do you have in your primary flight simulator computer?



### 3.4.6. RAM

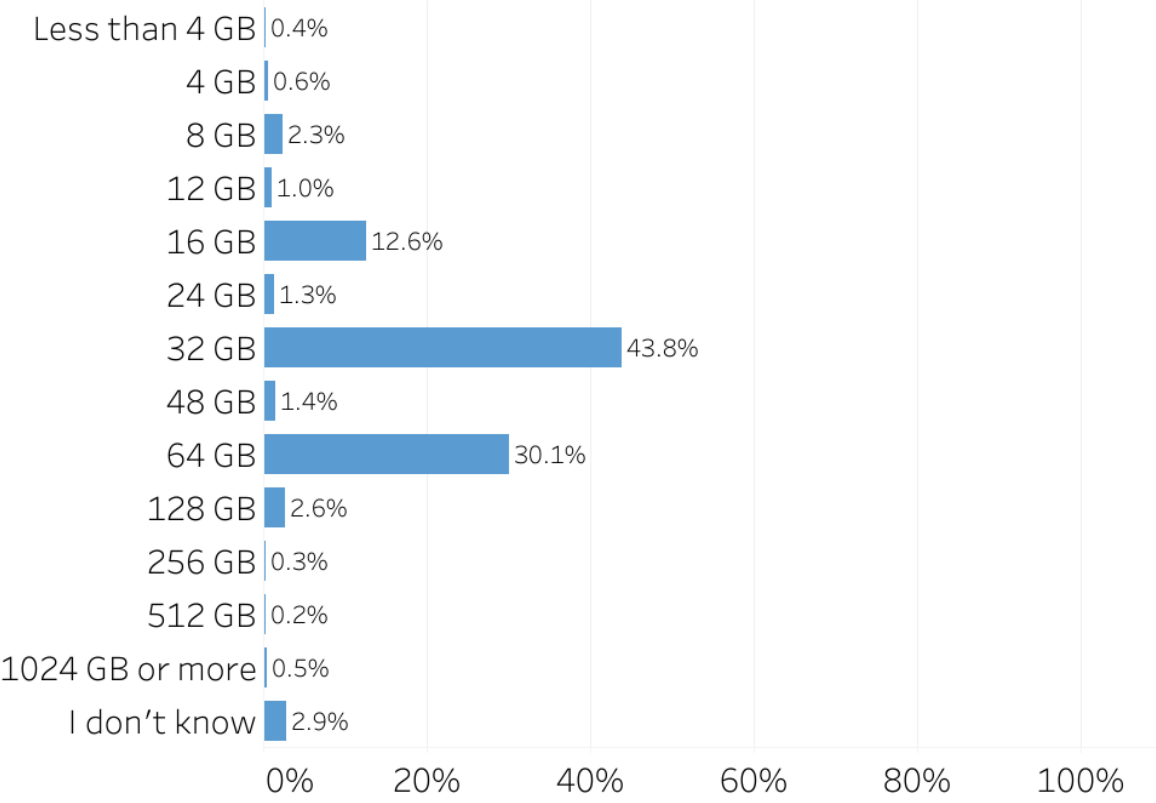
There is a slight drop in this year's most reported RAM compared to last year, 40.5% of respondents reporting they have 32GB installed, versus 43.8% last year, and an increase of 2 percentage points in respondents reporting having 64GB installed. Given the graphical demands, in particular, MSFS 2024, these higher RAM configurations make sense.

How much RAM do you have in your primary flight simulator computer?



Last year's result:

### How much RAM do you have in your primary flight simulator computer?



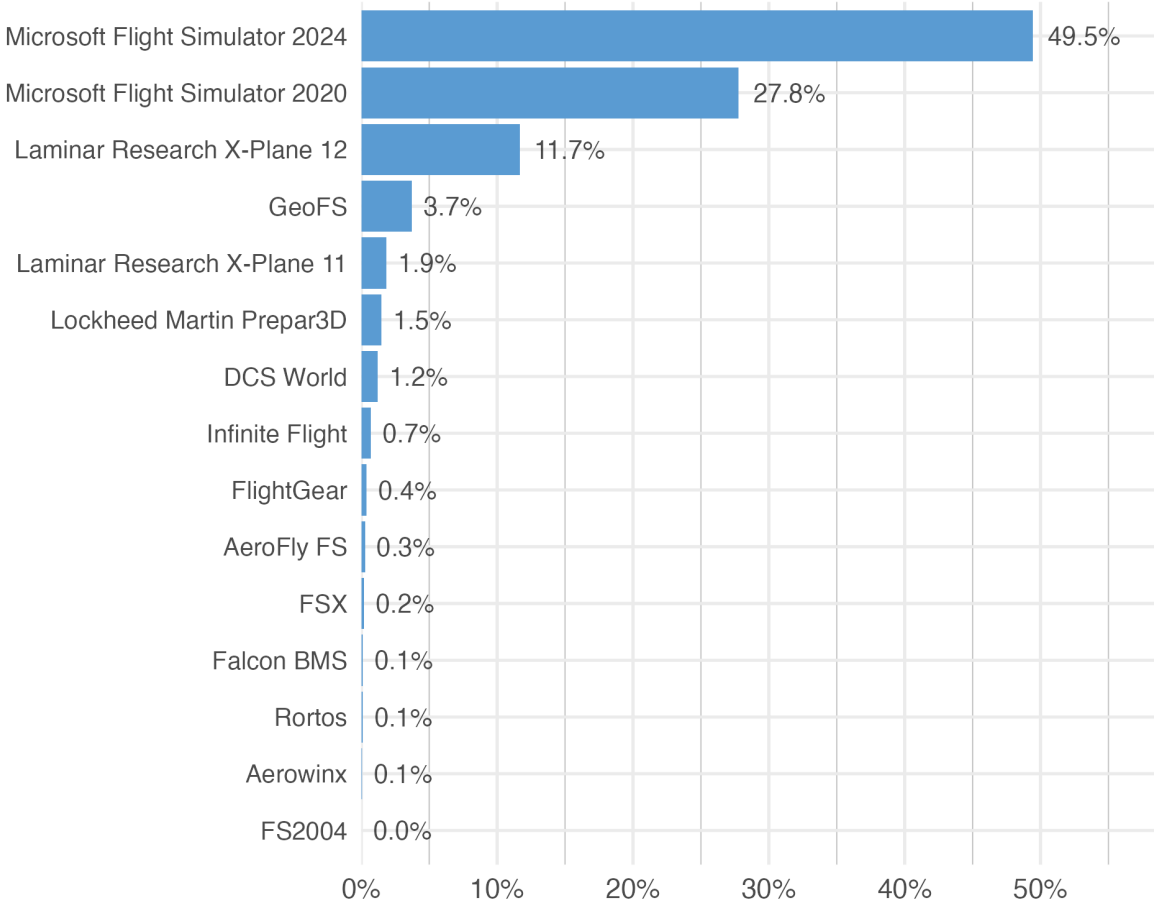
### 3.5. Software Setup

#### 3.5.1. Primary Flight Simulator

Microsoft Flight Simulator continues to dominate as the primary simulator among respondents. However, unlike last year, Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 now takes the lead at 49.5%, while Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 drops to second place at 27.8%. This reflects a clear shift as users continue transitioning to the newer version. In last year’s survey, Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 led with 52%, while Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 stood at 24.9%.

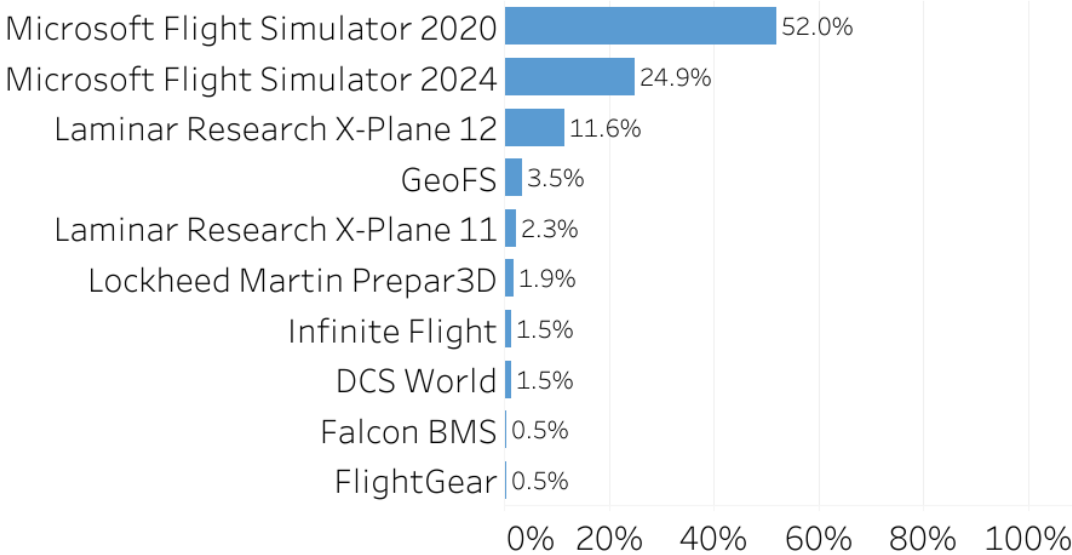
Laminar Research X-Plane 12 remains stable at 11.7%, nearly identical to last year’s 11.6%. GeoFS remains the same at around 3.7% while X-Plane 11 continues its gradual decline, indicating an ongoing transition toward newer platforms.

Which one is currently your primary flight simulator software?



Last year's result:

### Which one is currently your primary flight simulator software?

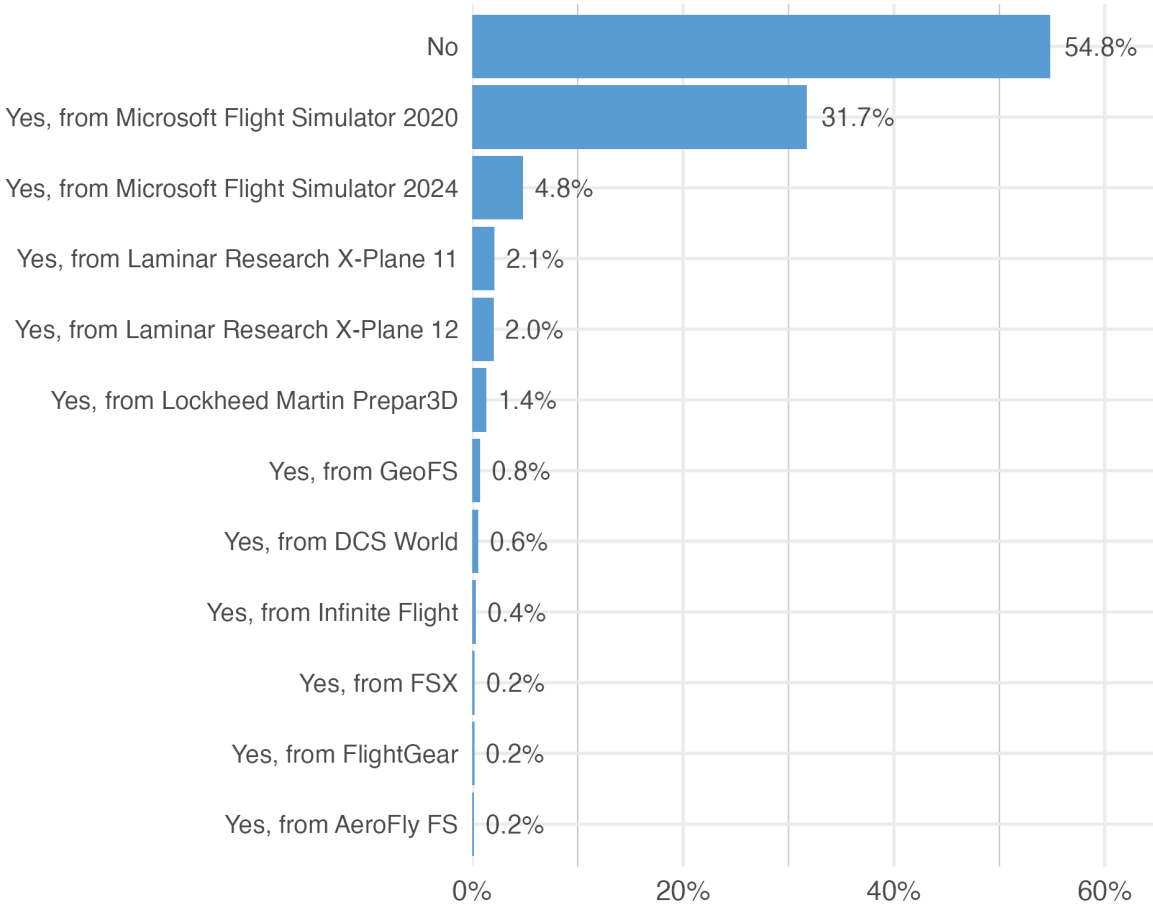


### 3.5.2. Flight Simulation Loyalty and Switching Trends

When asked if they had switched their primary flight simulator in the past 12 months, 54.8% of respondents indicated that they had not, while 45.2% reported that they had made a switch. The largest share of those who switched came from Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 at 31.7%. A smaller portion reported switching from Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 at 4.8%.

Other simulators account for smaller shares, including X-Plane 11 at 2.1%, X-Plane 12 at 2.0%, and Prepar3D at 1.4%. Additional platforms such as GeoFS, DCS World, Infinite Flight, and FlightGear each represent less than 1% of responses. Compared to last year, the share of respondents who have switched has increased slightly, while Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 remains the primary source of switching.

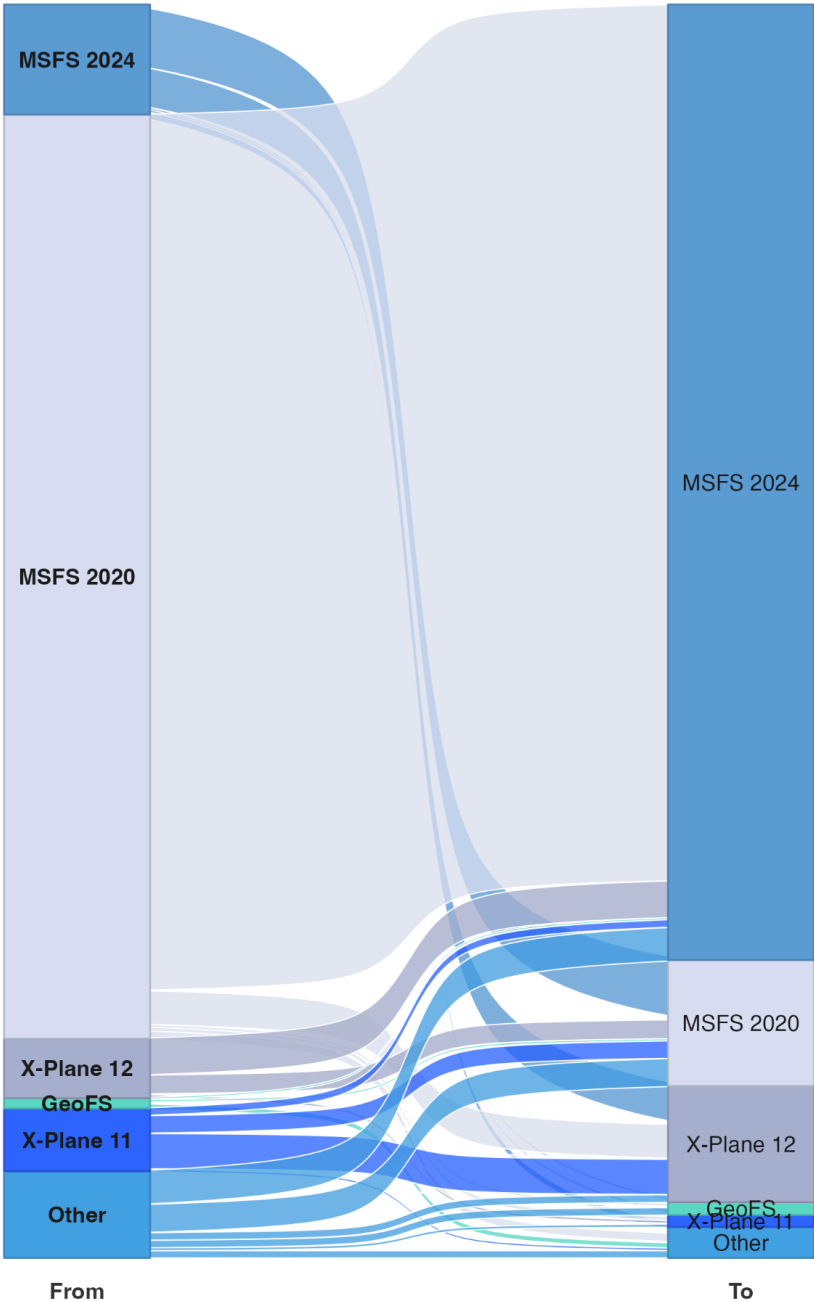
#### Have you switched your primary flight simulation software in the past 12 months?



To better understand how users are moving between simulators, we also visualized switching behavior using a flow diagram. This highlights not just how many users switched, but where they came from and where they went. The data shows a clear trend toward Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024, with the majority of users switching from MSFS 2020 as well as smaller but noticeable movements from X-Plane and other platforms. At the same time, a portion of users remain within their existing ecosystem or move between alternative simulators, illustrating that while MSFS 2024 is the primary destination, the flight simulation landscape remains diverse.

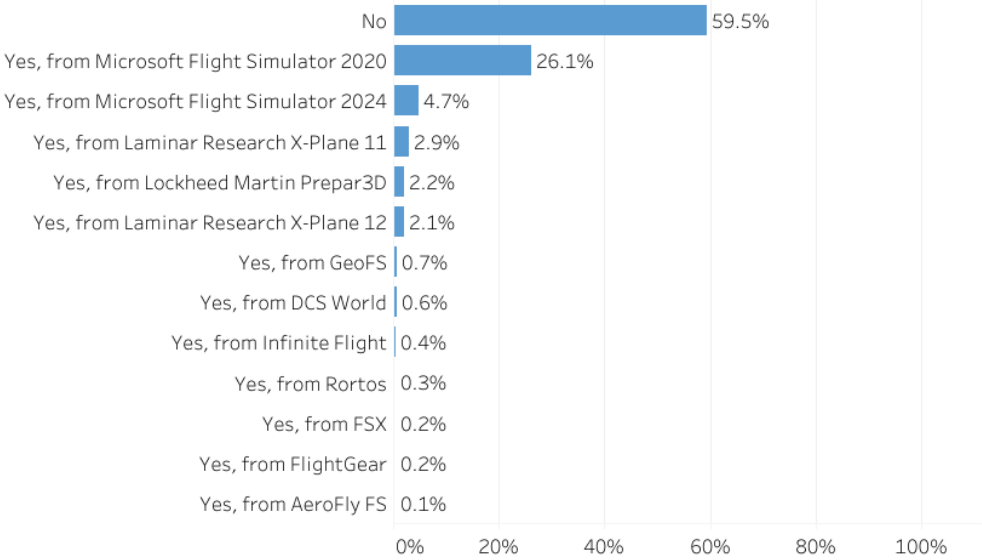
### Simulator switching

Of the users that switched, where did they go?



Last year's result:

### Have you switched your primary flight simulation software in the past 12 months?

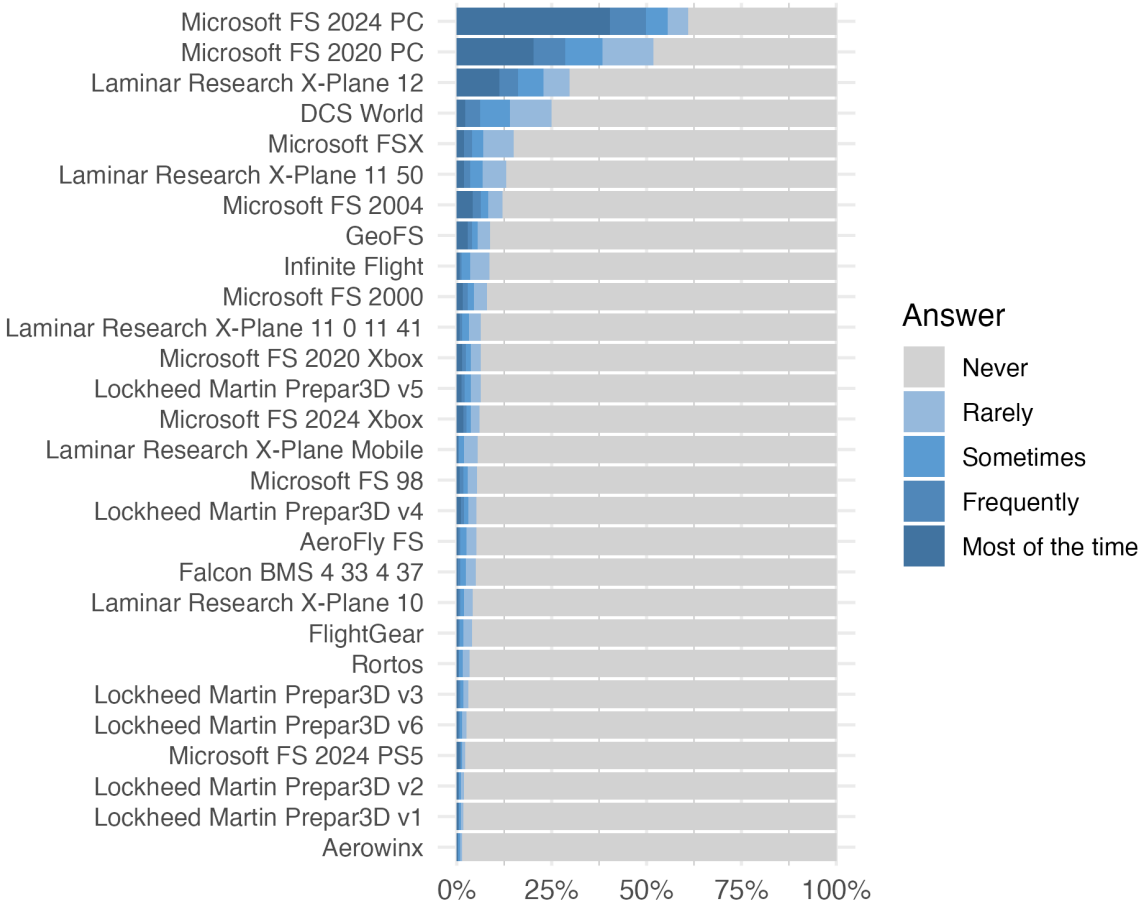


### 3.5.3. Simulator Preference

The big shift from last year is at the top of this chart, MSFS 2024 (PC) has taken the top spot from MSFS 2020, a reversal from last year when MSFS 2020 was clearly the most popular sim. MSFS 2020 still has a strong and active user base.

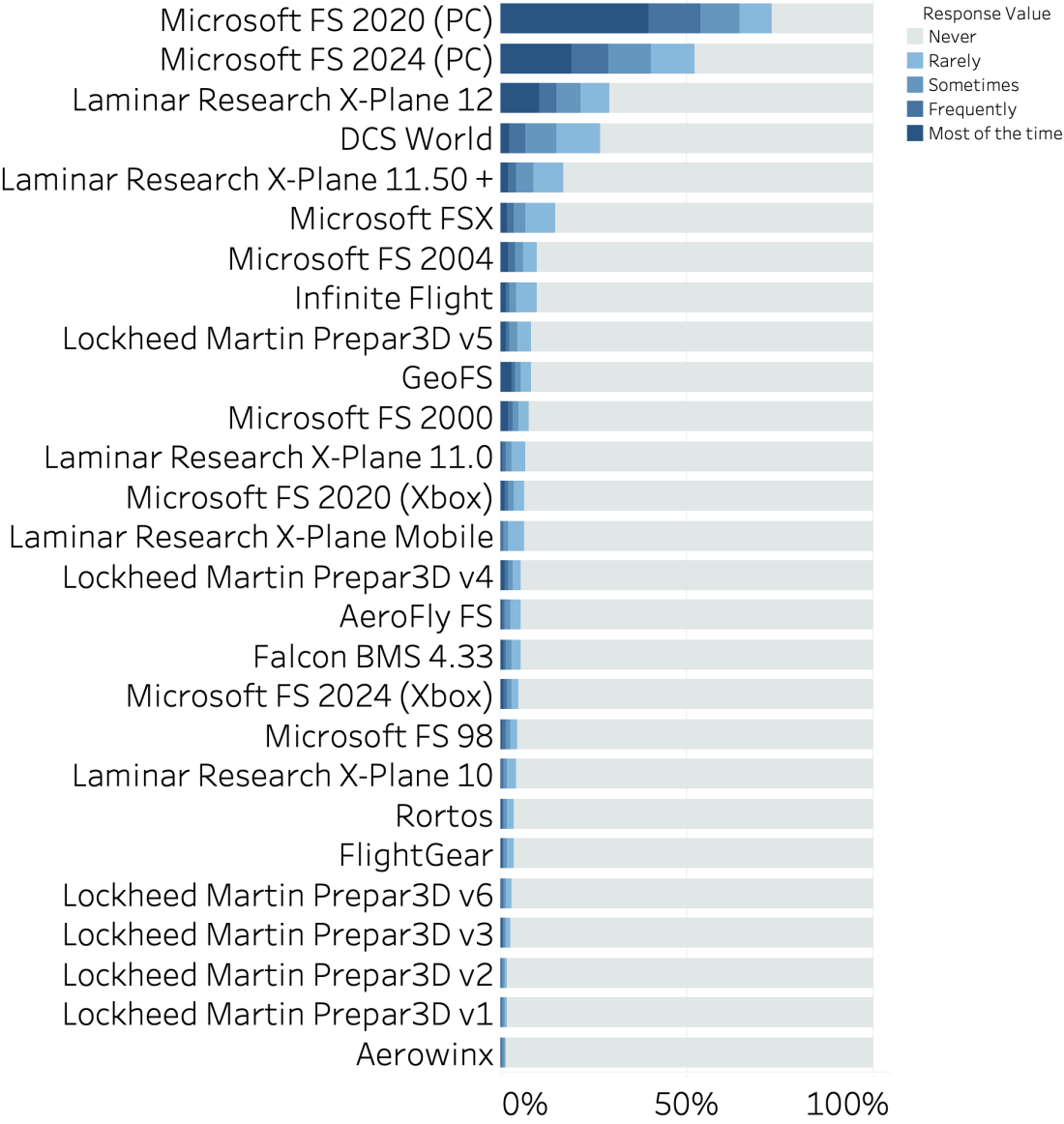
Laminar Research X-Plane 12 still holds third place, which is consistent with last year's result. Further down the list, legacy sims like FSX, FS2004, and older X-Plane versions are largely in the “never” or “rarely” territory.

How often do you fly any of the following flight simulator software?



Last year's result:

How often do you fly any of the following flight simulator software?



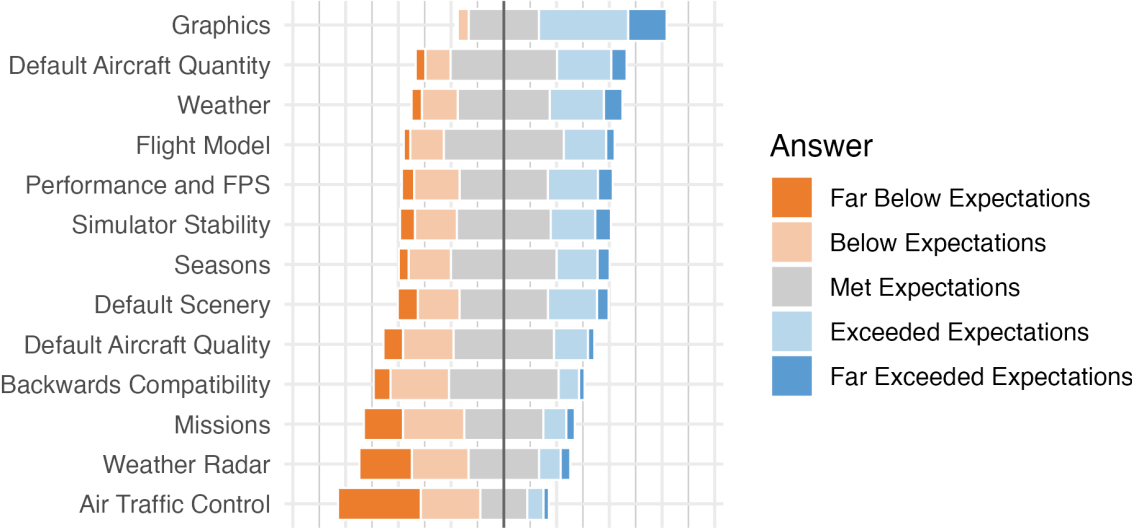
### 3.5.4. MSFS 2024: Performance vs Expectations

Overall, MSFS 2024 continues to meet or exceed expectations across several core areas, with Graphics remaining the strongest-performing category. Default Aircraft Quality and Quantity, as well as Weather, also show strong positive responses, with most users reporting that expectations are met or exceeded. Compared to last year's, there are modest improvements across visual and aircraft-related categories, reinforcing the simulators' strength in presentation and core experience.

However, several areas continue to underperform. Air Traffic Control, Weather Radar, and Missions show the highest shares of responses below expectations, highlighting ongoing gaps in depth and functionality. Performance-related areas such as Simulator Stability and FPS remain more mixed but continue to lean slightly negative.

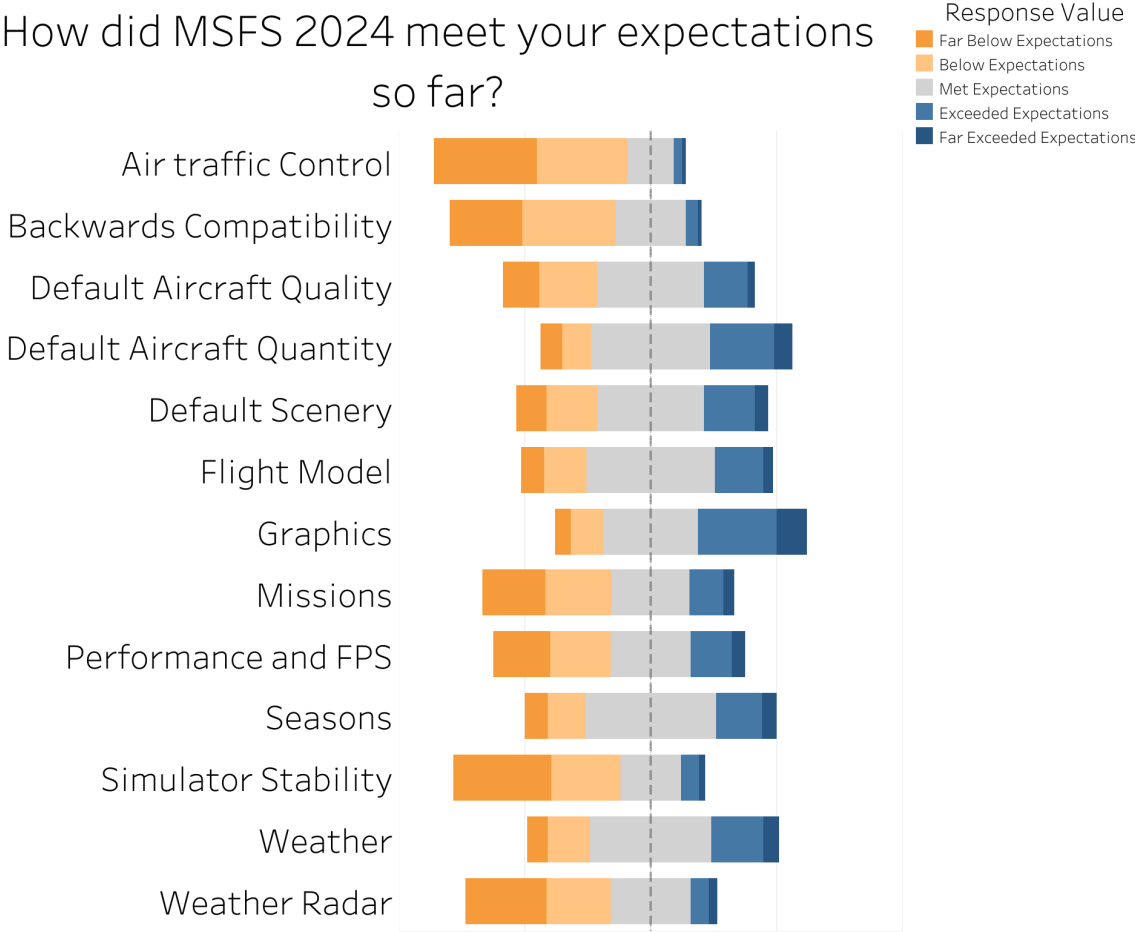
Overall, while MSFS 2024 delivers strongly on the visual and core simulation features, system depth and stability remain key areas for improvement.

#### How is MSFS 2024 meeting your expectations?



Last year's results:

# How did MSFS 2024 meet your expectations so far?



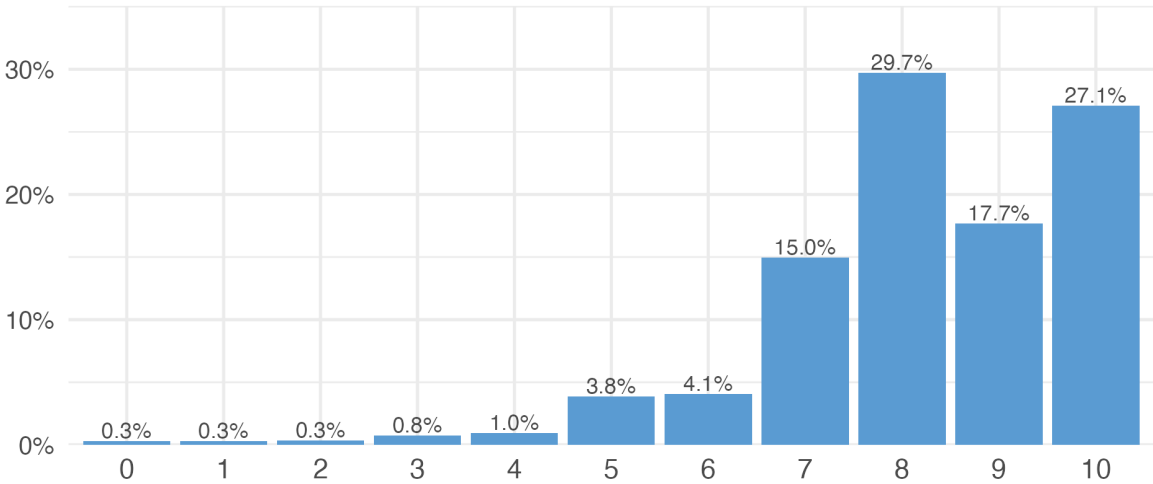
### 3.5.5. How Likely Are You to Recommend MSFS 2024?

User sentiment toward MSFS 2024 is strongly positive, with responses skewed toward higher recommendation scores. The most common ratings are 8 (29.7%) and 10 (27.1%), while low scores (0-4) account for only 2.7% of responses. Overall, 44.8% of respondents are promoters (9-10) compared to 10.5% detractors (0-6), resulting in a clearly positive net sentiment.

Last year’s results are calculated using all survey respondents as the denominator, while the 2026 results are based only on respondents who were asked the question (Have you tried MSFS 2024?). As a result, last year’s distribution does not sum to 100% by design and is not directly comparable.

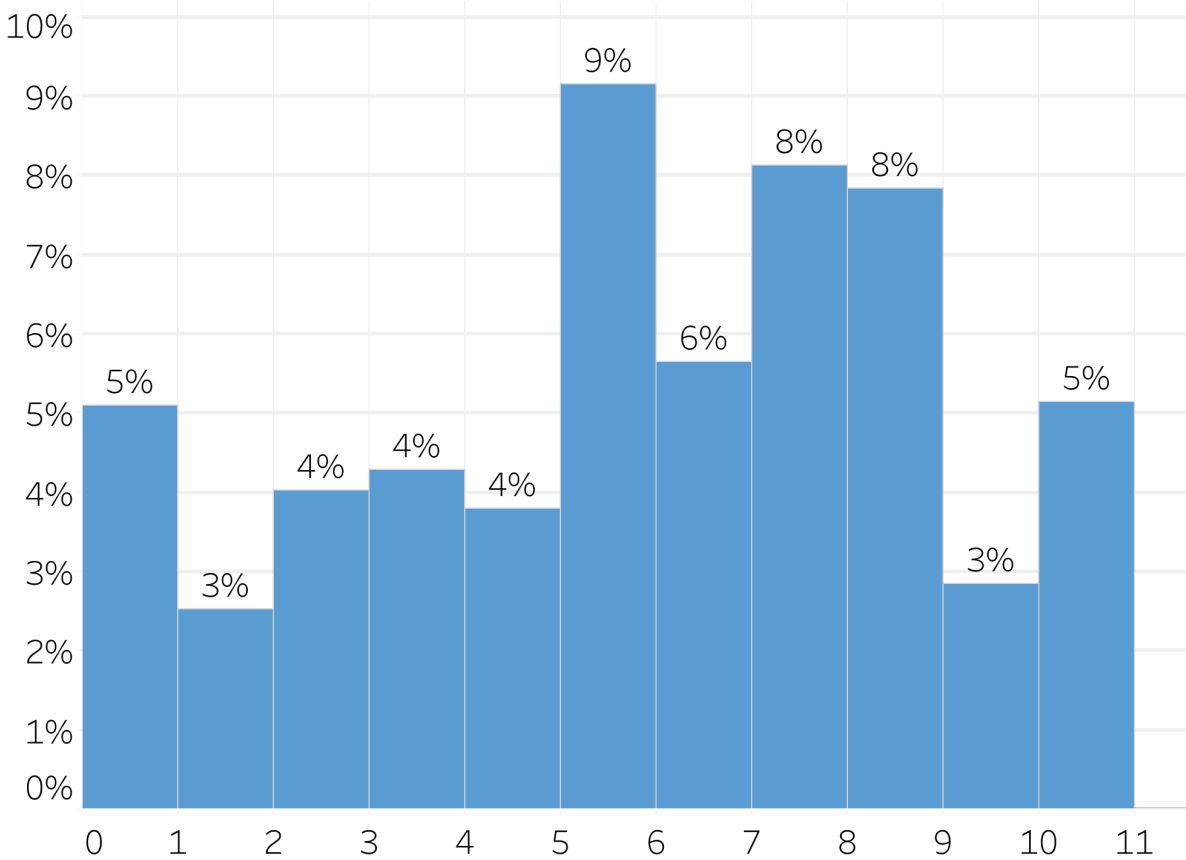
Despite this, the distribution this year is more strongly concentrated in the higher score ranges. While last year’s responses were more evenly spread across the scale, this year shows a clearer cluster in the upper range, suggesting increased satisfaction and confidence in the simulator.

How likely are you to recommend MSFS 2024?



Last year's result:

### How likely are you to recommend MSFS 2024?

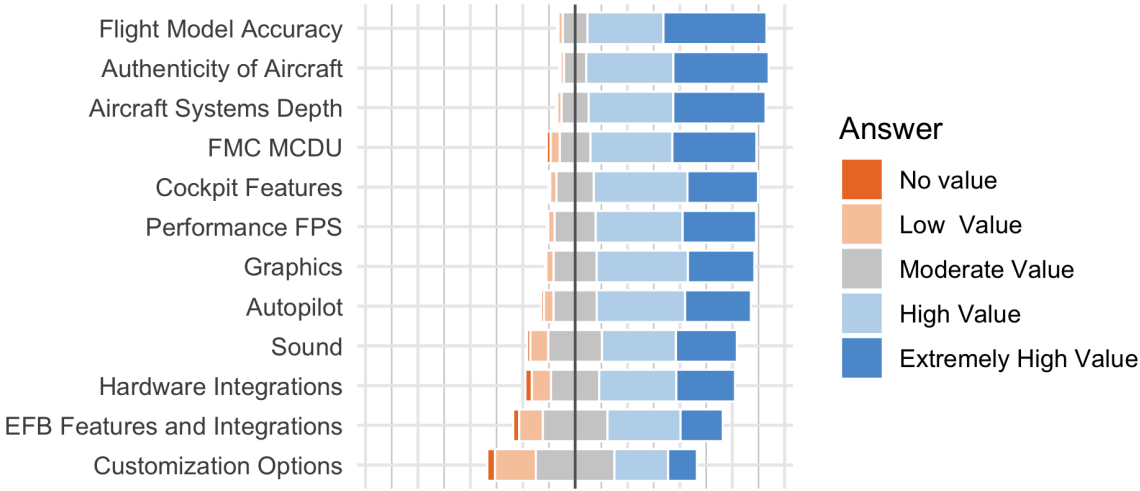


### 3.5.6. Addon Aircraft Features

Aircraft Systems Depth, Authenticity of Aircraft, and Flight Model Accuracy remain the highest rated features, with a large share of respondents selecting high or extremely high value. Features such as FMC/MCDU, Cockpit Features, and Performance (FPS) also receive consistently high ratings.

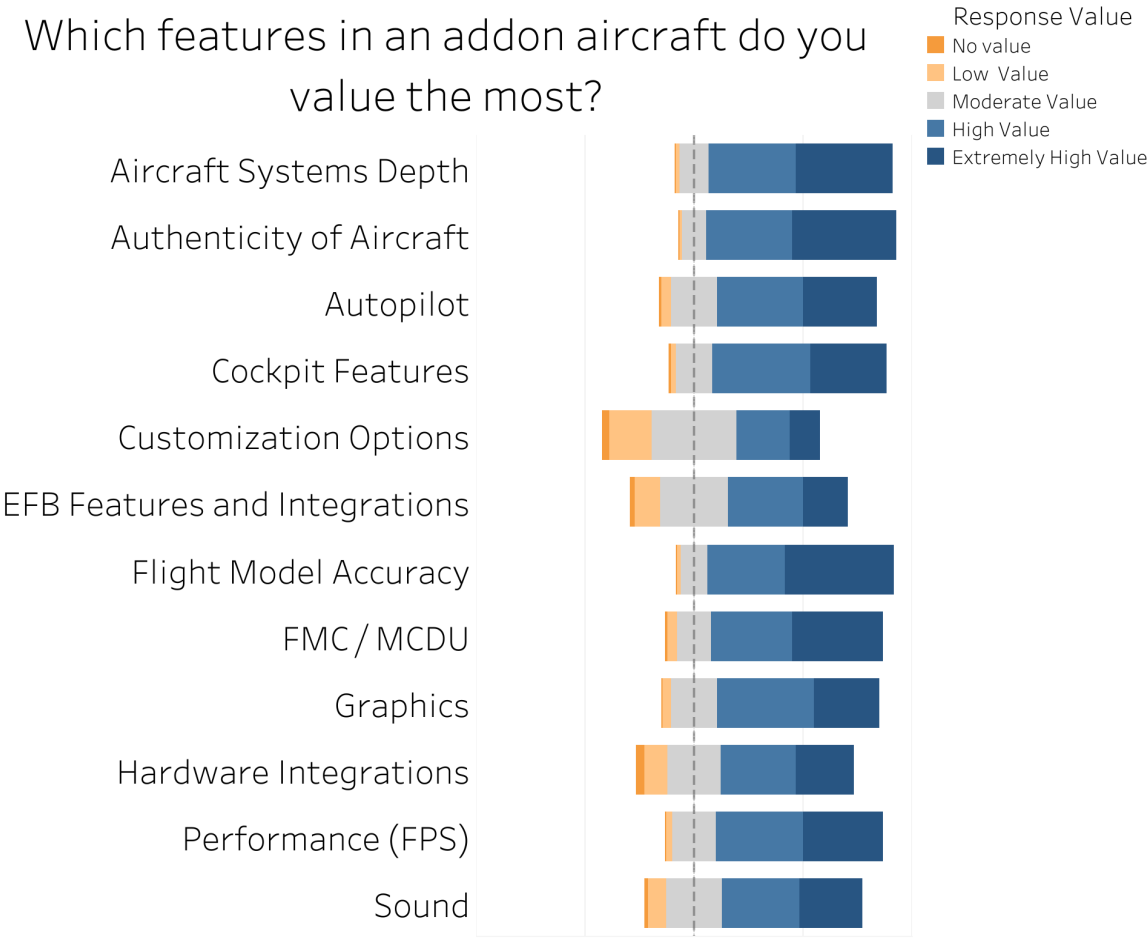
Graphics, Autopilot, and Sound continue to be rated highly, while Customization Options, EFB Features, and Integrations show comparatively lower ratings.

Which features in an addon aircraft do you value the most?



Last year's result:

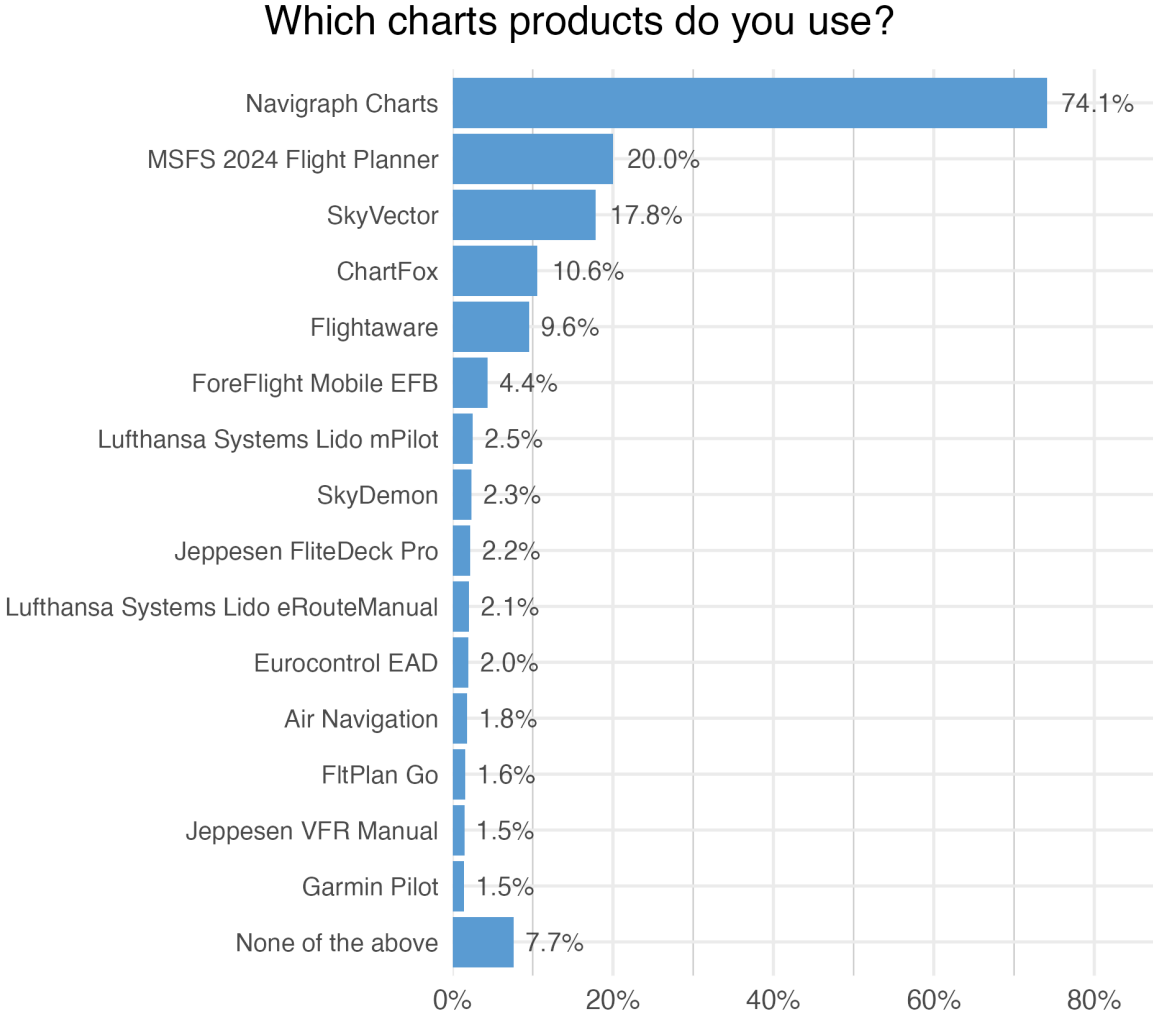
### Which features in an addon aircraft do you value the most?



### 3.5.7. Charts Products

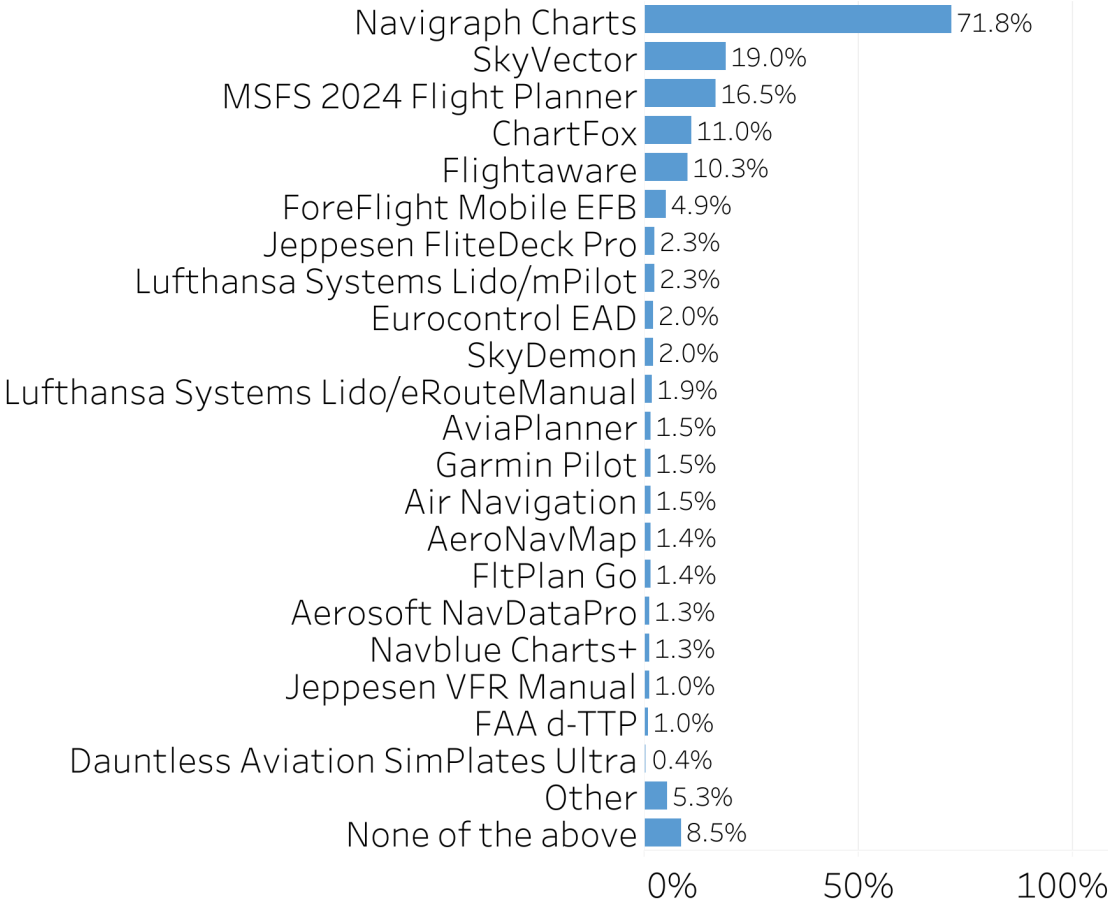
Navigraph Charts remains the most used product, with 74.1% of respondents, compared to 71.8% last year. SkyVector showed a slight decrease from 19% to 17.8% while MSFS 2024 Flight Planner increased from 16.5% to 20.0%.

ChartFox (10.6%) show a small decrease compared to last year, while other products remain at similar levels with only minor variations.



Last year's result:

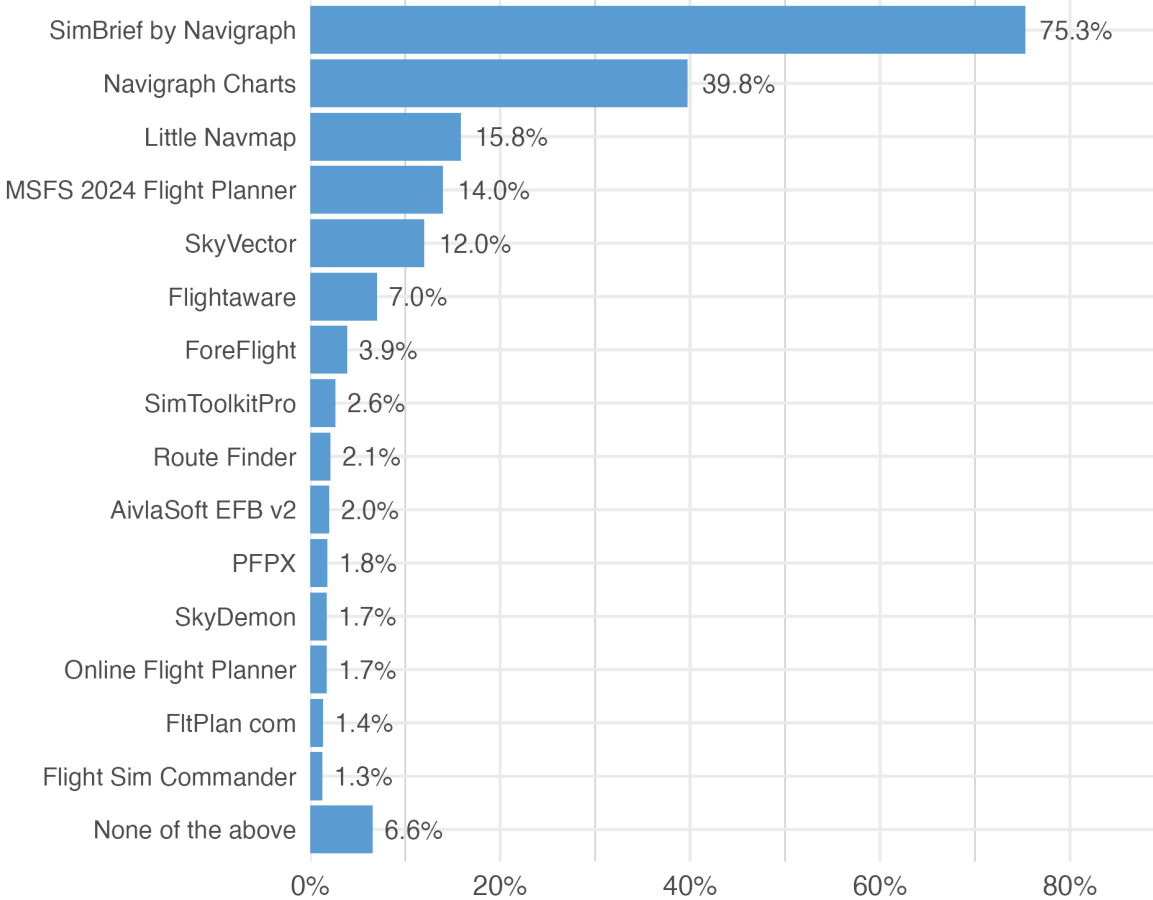
### Which charts products do you use?



### 3.5.8. Flight Planning

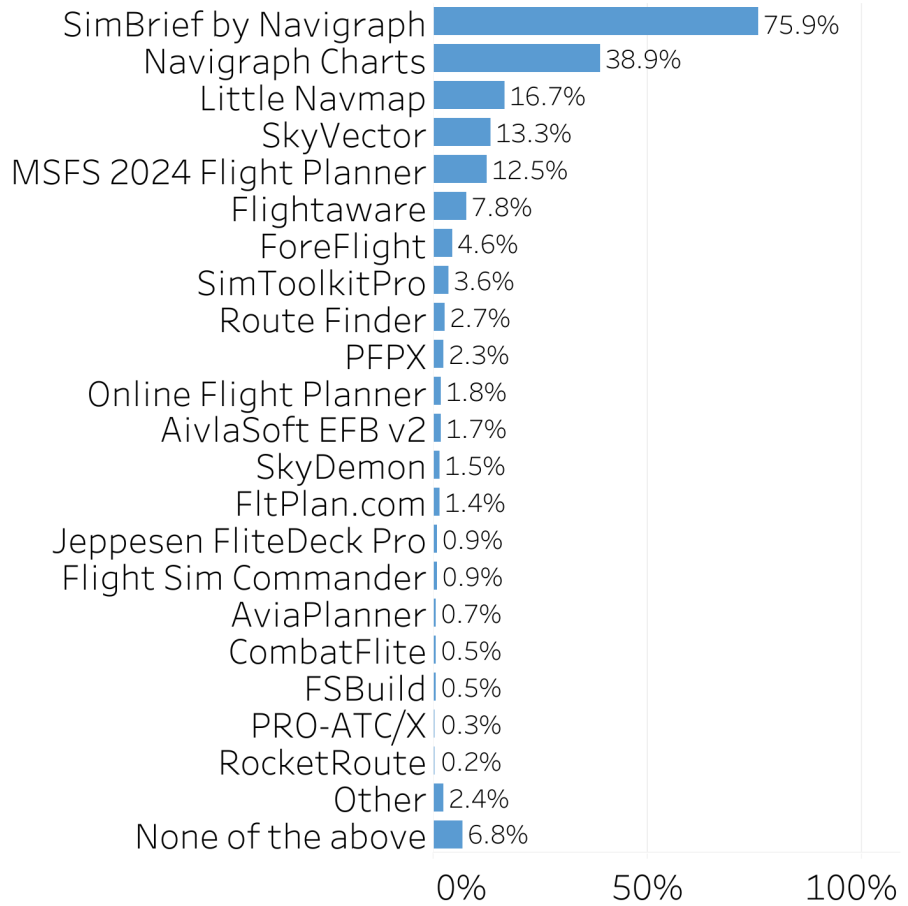
SimBrief by Navigraph remains the most used flight planning tool, with 75.3% of respondents showing no significant change compared to last year. Navigraph Charts at 39.8% also largely unchanged. Overall, usage across flight planning tools remains stable, with only minor variation compared to the previous survey.

#### Which flight planning software or service do you use?



Last year's result:

## Which flight planning software or service do you use?



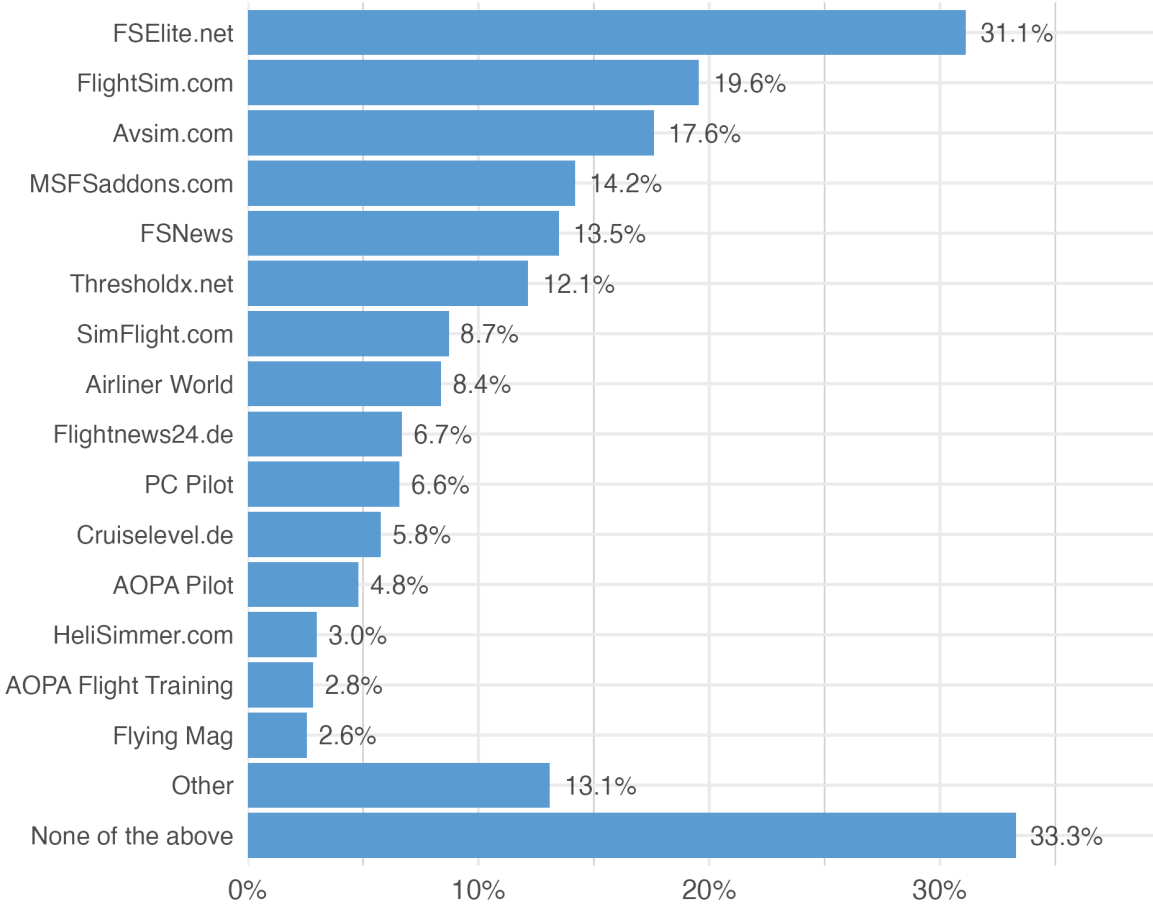
### 3.6. Media

#### 3.6.1. Media Consumption

For several years, we’ve tracked media consumption habits within the flightsim community, and the overall trend observed last year continues into 2026. FSElite remains the most frequently consumed source by the respondents, followed by FlightSim.com and Avsim.com. However, all three platforms have seen notable declines in this year’s survey. FSElite decreased from 41.8% to 31.1%, while FlightSim.com dropped from 23.6% to 19.6%, and Avsim.com from 23.4% to 17.6%.

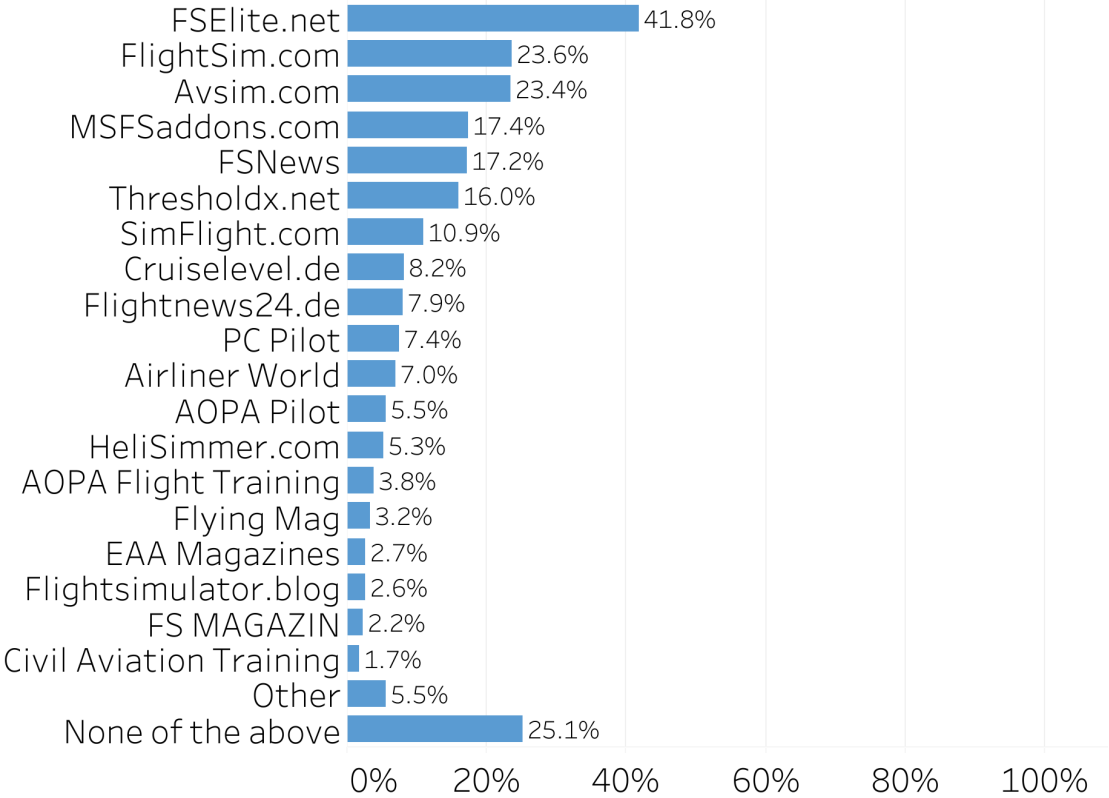
This downward trend appears consistent across traditional flightsim news outlets, reinforcing the shift identified in last year’s survey. At the same time, the proportion of respondents selecting “None of the above” has increased from 25.1% to 33.3%, suggesting that a growing segment of the community could potentially be turning to alternative media sources or disengaging from traditional news platforms altogether.

Which flightsim or aviation related media have you consumed in the past 12 months?



Last year's result:

Which flightsim or aviation-related media have you consumed in the past 12 months?



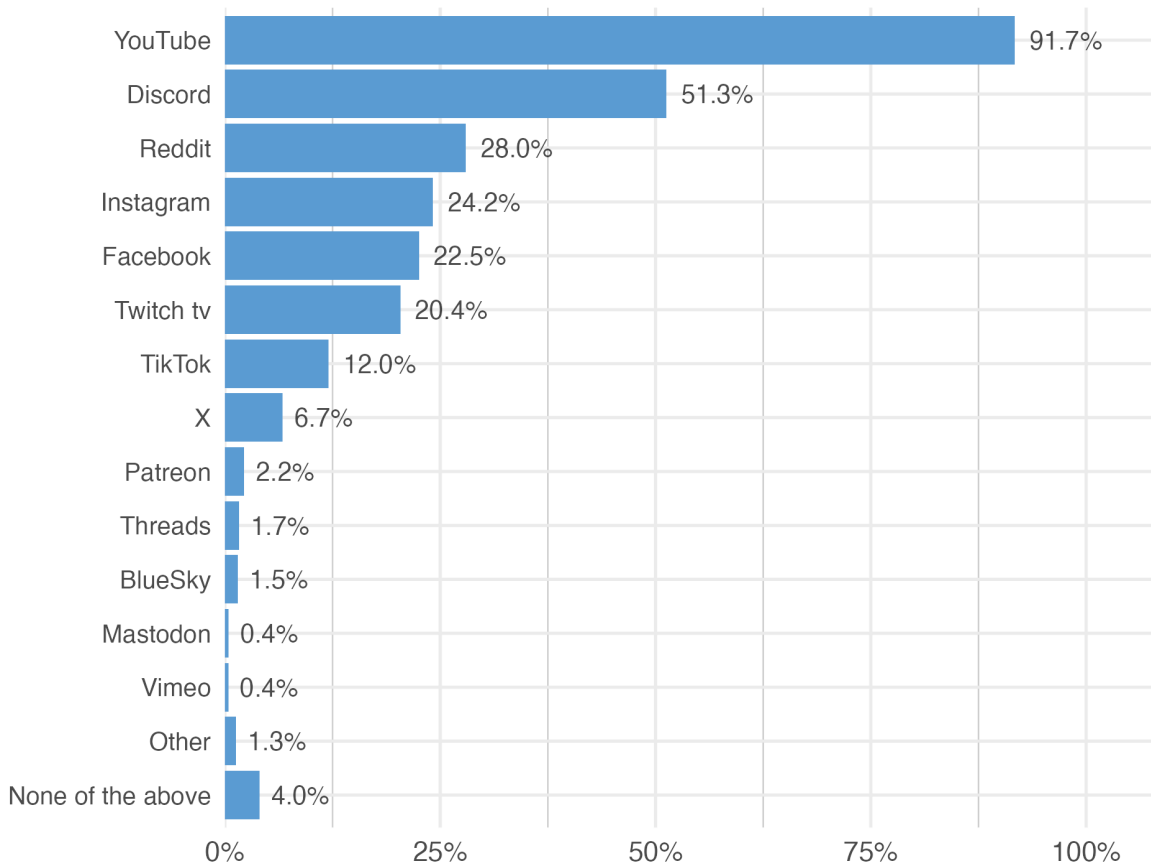
### 3.6.2. Social Media

YouTube continues to dominate as the primary platform for consuming flight simulation content, with another year of over 90% of respondents selecting it. Discord remains the second most-used platform, though its share has declined to 51.3%, continuing a downward trend from 59.1% last year and 66.3% the year prior.

Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook maintain steady usage levels at 28.0%, 24.2%, and 22.5%, respectively, highlighting a broad mix of platforms used for both discussion and content discovery. Meanwhile, Twitch has dropped to sixth place, decreasing from 27.3% to 20.4%, suggesting a reduced interest in live-streamed content compared to previous years.

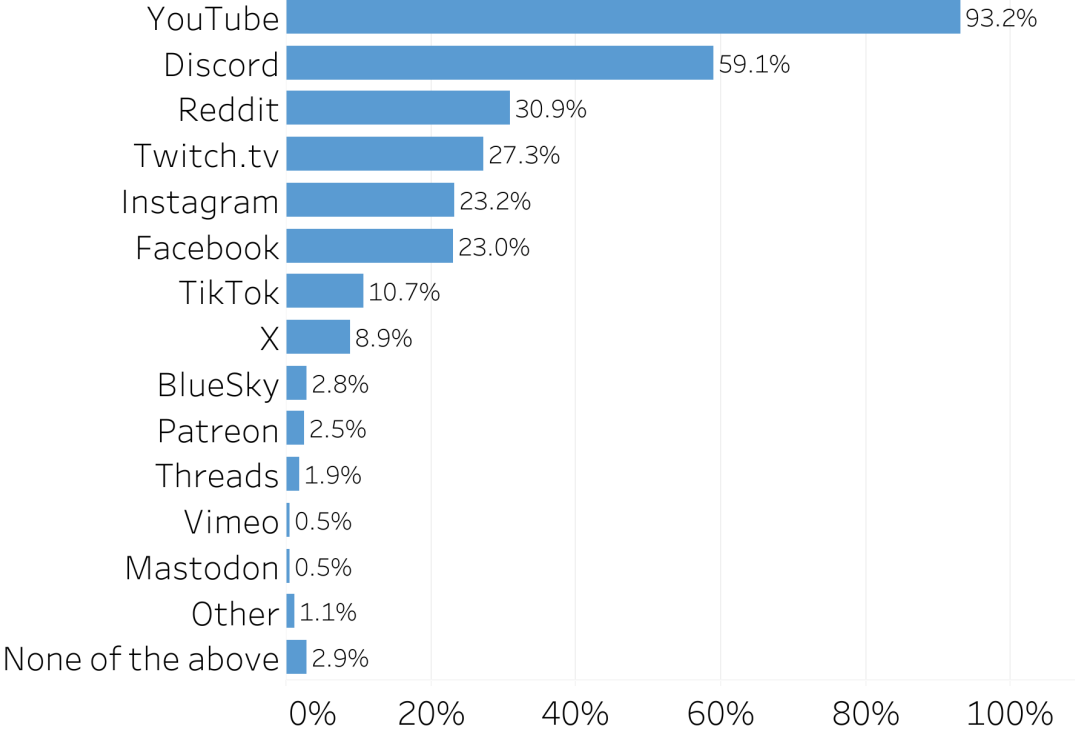
Overall, the data indicates a gradual shift away from real-time and live engagement platforms like Discord and Twitch, while on-demand and passive content consumption continues to have a strong position in the community.

Which social media platforms have you used for consuming flight simulation related content in the past 12 months?



Last year's result:

Which social media platforms have you used for consuming flight simulation related content in the past 12 months?



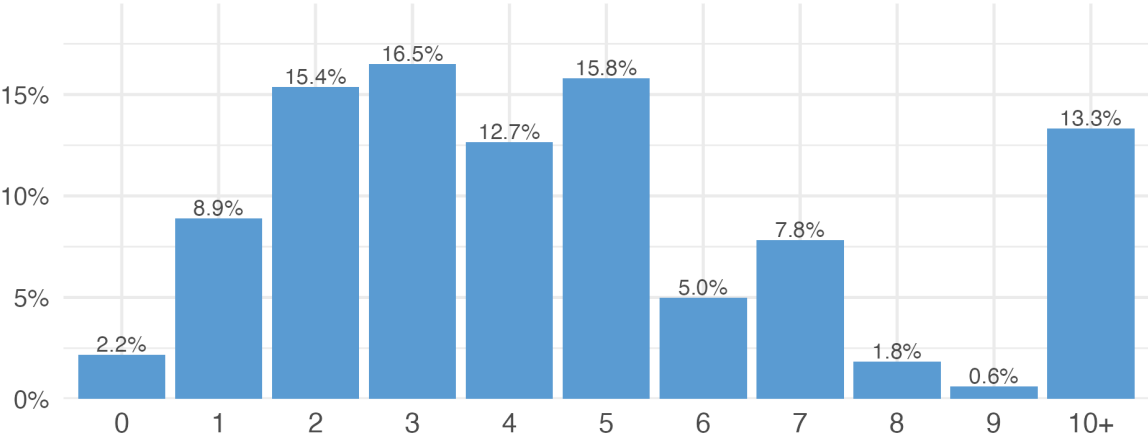
### 3.7. Simulator Habits

#### 3.7.1. Usage - Sessions per Week

The distribution of flight simulation sessions per week remains largely unchanged compared to last year, with all response categories within 1 percentage point of previous results. This indicates a stable usage pattern across the community.

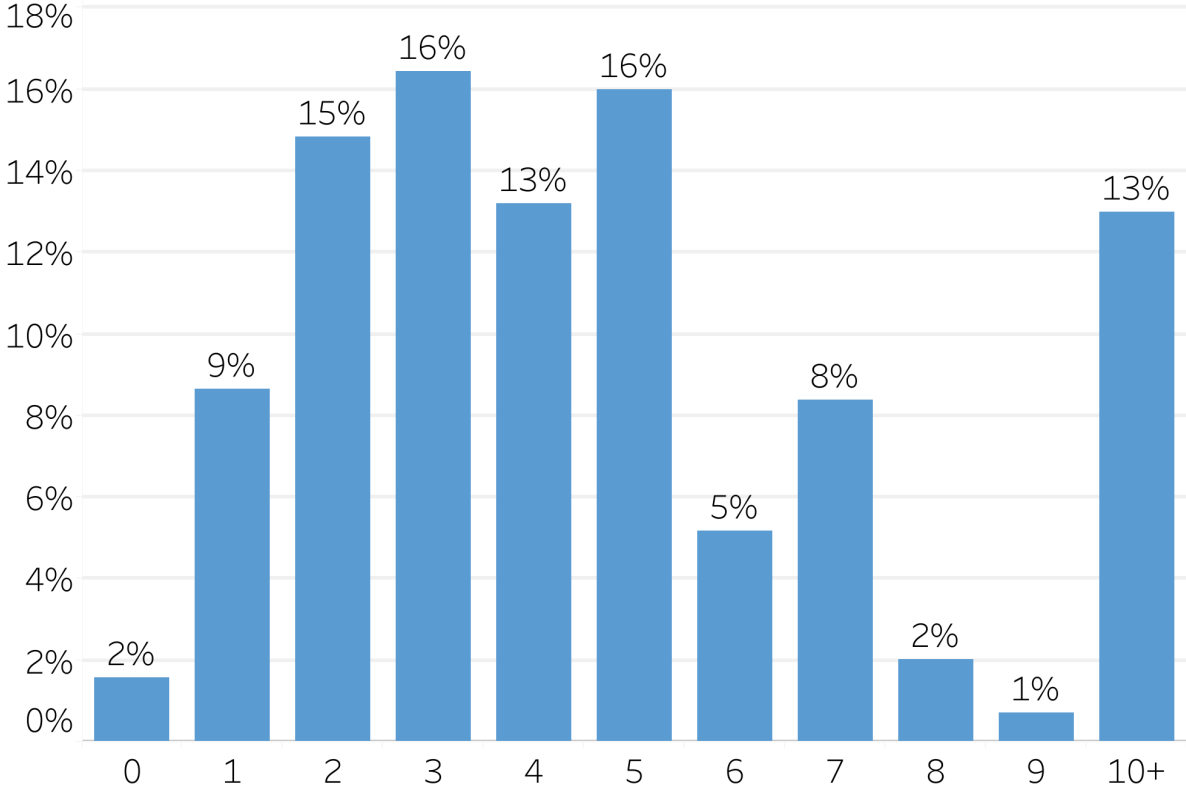
This consistency suggests that the balance between casual and highly active users has held steady, with no notable shifts toward either more frequent or less frequent engagement over the past year.

How many sessions per week do you use the flight simulator on average?



Last year's result:

How many sessions per week do you use the flight simulator on average?

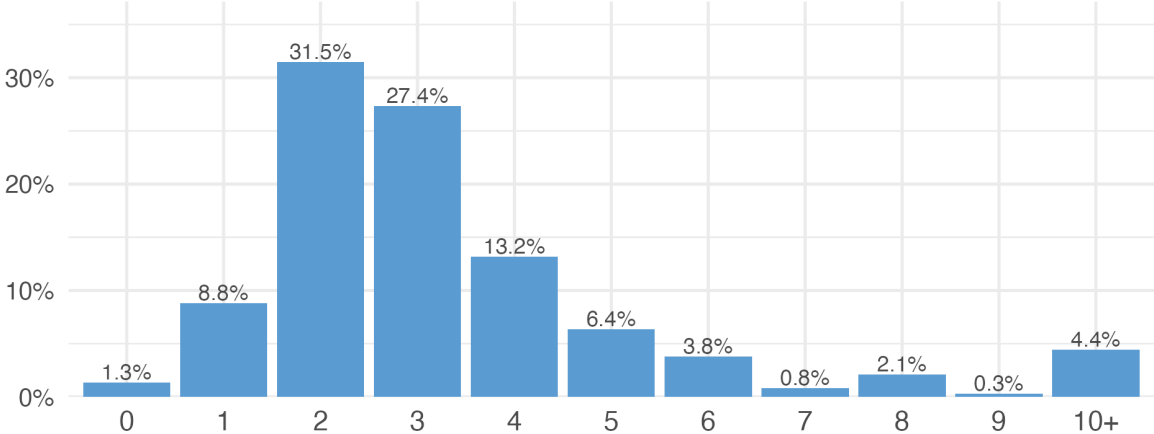


### 3.7.2. Usage - Hours per Session

When it comes to the amount of time users spend per session, the distribution has remained largely unchanged from last year, with all response categories within one percentage point of previous results.

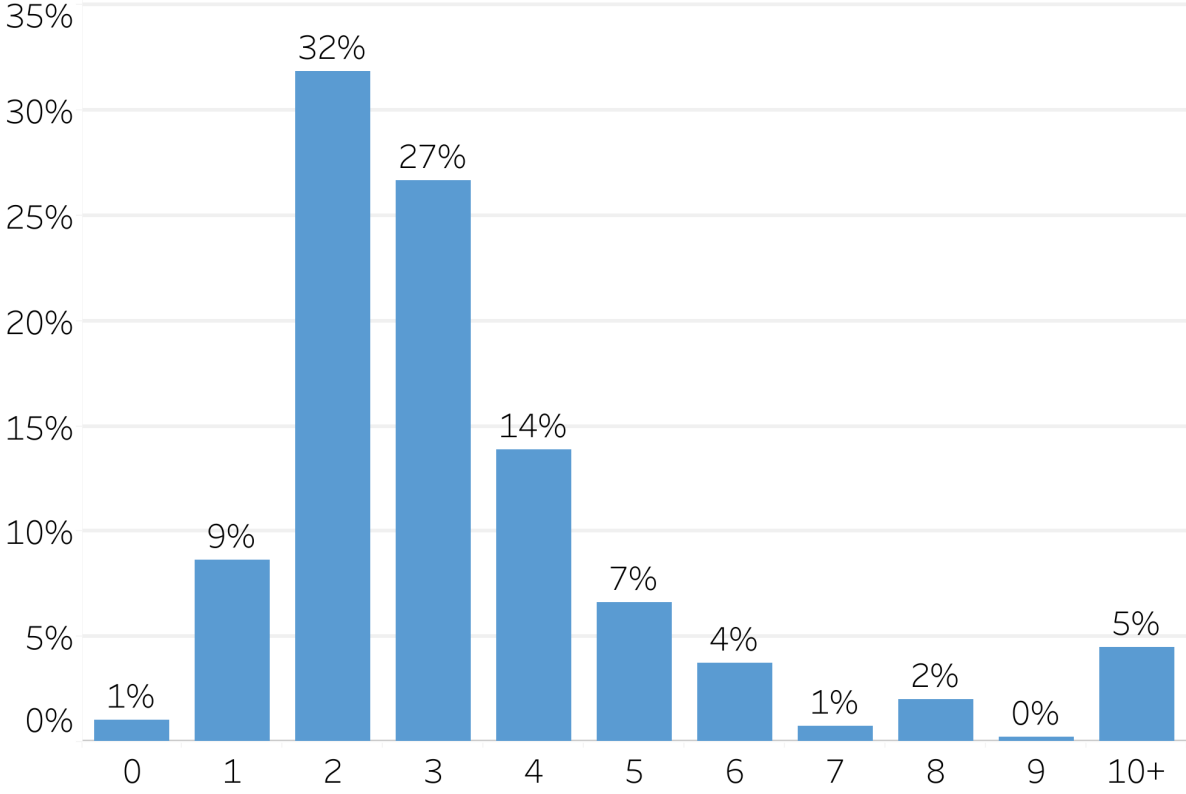
This suggests that session length habits are stable, with the community continuing to balance shorter, medium, and longer sessions in much the same way as last year. Sessions lasting 2 and 3 hours remain the most popular, at 31.5% and 27.4% respectively.

How many hours do you use the flight simulator during a typical session?



Last year's result:

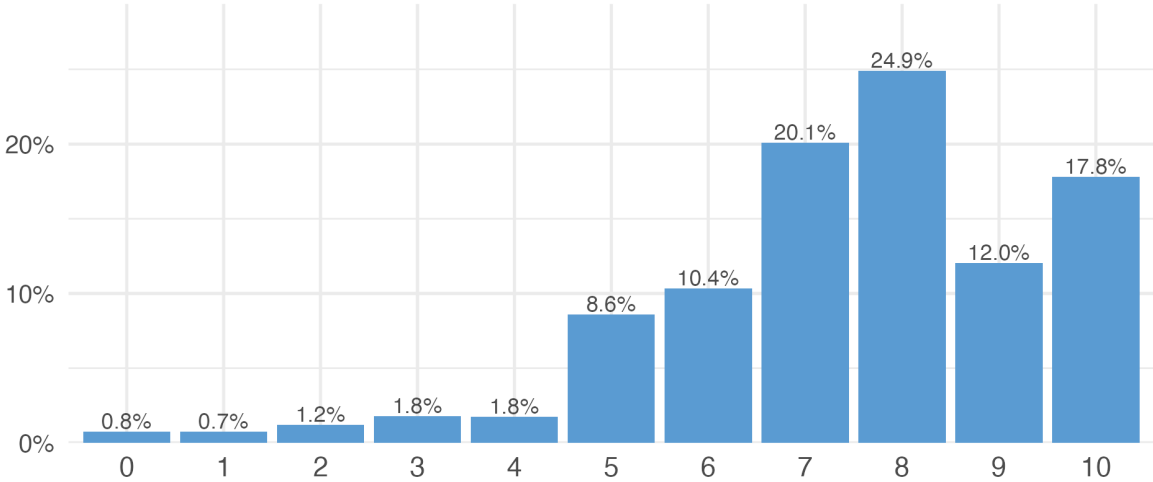
How many hours do you use the flight simulator during a typical session?



### 3.7.3. The Role of Flight Simulation in Your Life

This year, we introduced a new question to better understand the role flight simulation plays in our users' lives. The results show a clear skew toward the higher end of the scale, with a majority rating its importance between 7 and 10. In fact, nearly a quarter of respondents selected 8, making it the single most common answer. Lower ratings remain relatively rare, suggesting that for most users, flight simulation is not just something they engage with occasionally, but a meaningful and consistent part of their daily lives. This highlights the strong emotional and personal connection users have with flight simulation, reinforcing its role as a long-term and deeply valued experience.

How important is flight simulation in your life?

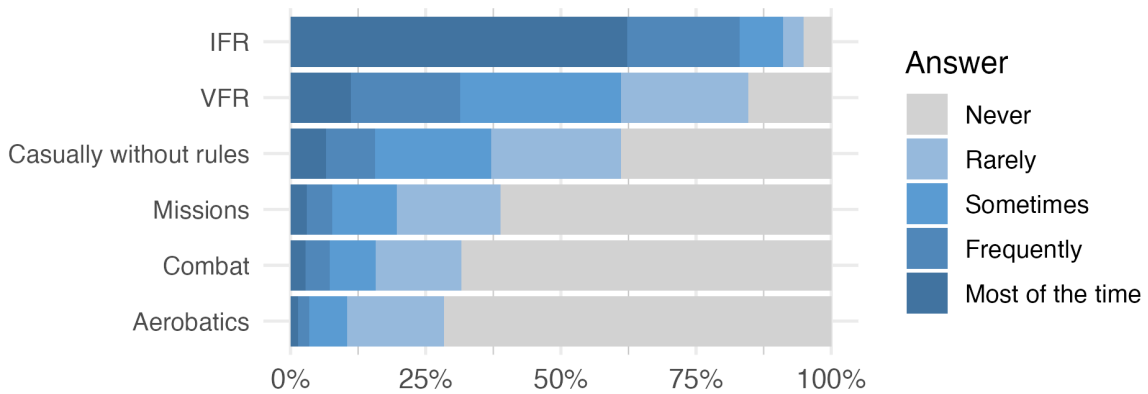


### 3.7.4. Flight Rules

The distribution of preferred flight types remains largely unchanged compared to last year, indicating stable flying habits across the community. IFR flying continues to be the most popular method, followed by VFR and casual flying without rules.

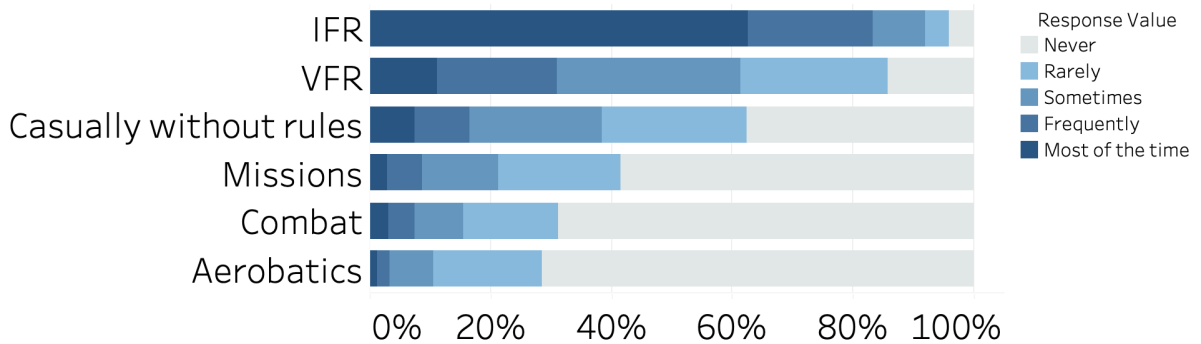
This stability reinforces the shift observed in 2025 toward more structured flying experiences. The continued dominance of IFR suggests a sustained interest in realism, procedures, and system depth, which may influence how users engage with simulators, as well as the types of add-ons and content they prioritize.

#### How do you normally fly in the simulator?



Last year's result:

#### How do you normally fly in the simulator?



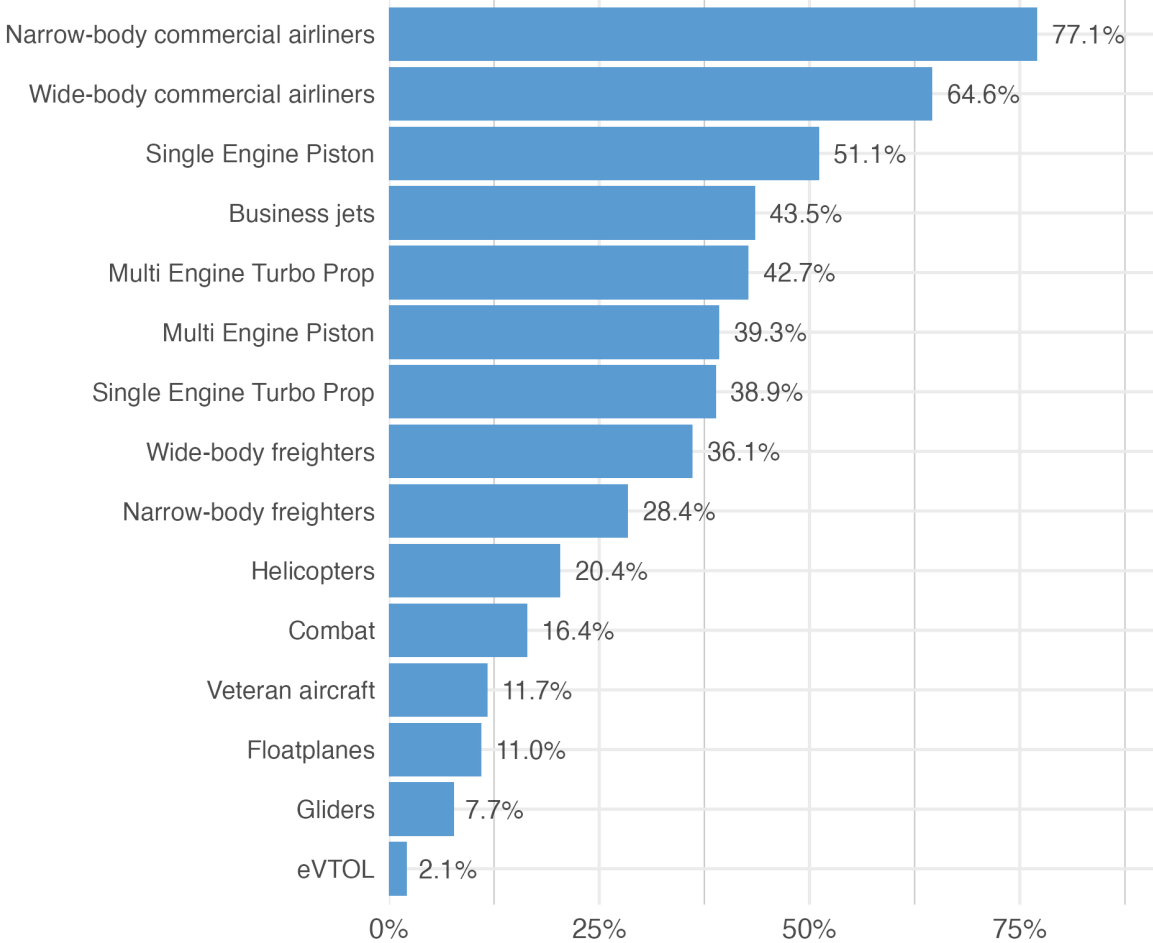
### 3.7.5. Aircraft Types

The distribution of preferred aircraft types remains largely unchanged compared to last year, indicating stable interests among the respondents. Commercial airliners continue to dominate, with both narrow-body and wide-body aircraft maintaining their positions as the most popular choices.

The only notable change is a slight decrease in wide-body aircraft usage, declining from 67.2% to 64.6%, though this does not significantly alter the overall trend. Other categories remain broadly in line with 2025 results.

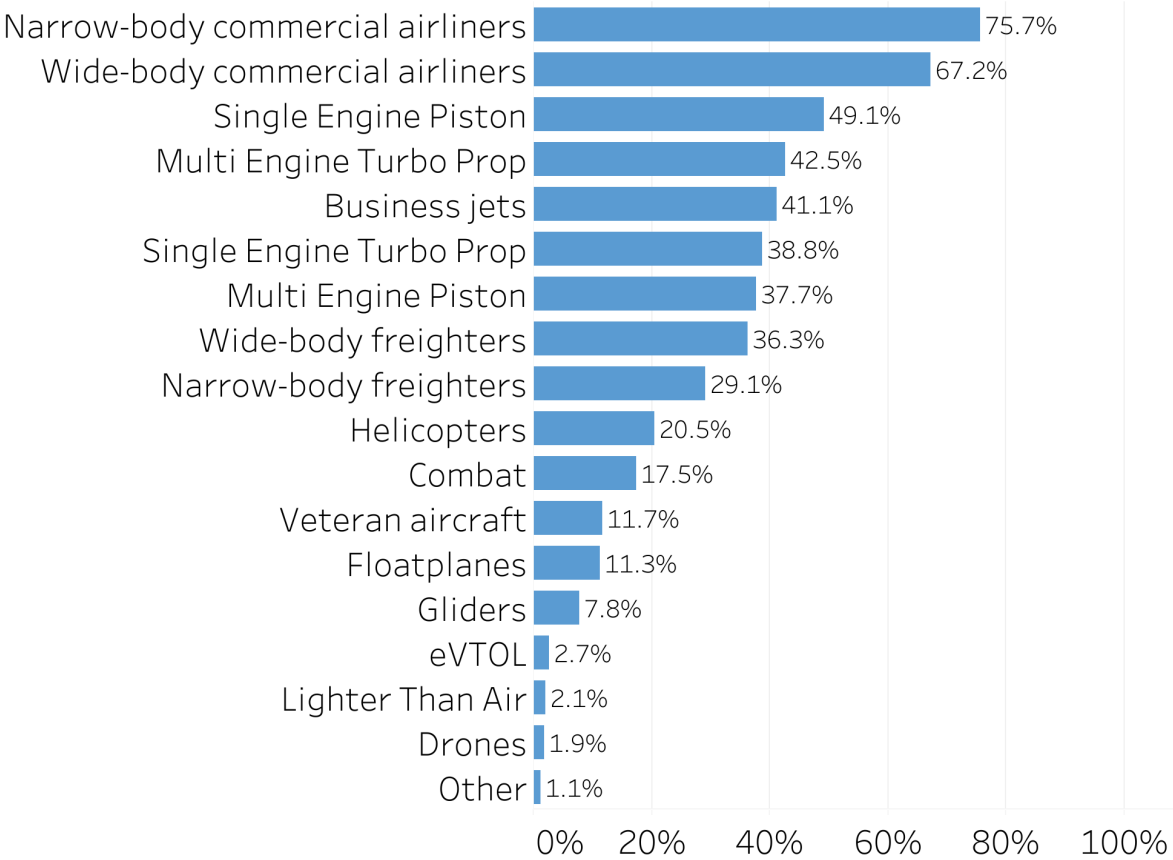
Overall, the data reinforces last year’s pattern, with strong and continued interest in airliner operations, while other segments, such as general aviation, combat, and emerging aircraft types, remain more niche in comparison.

#### What do you enjoy flying in the simulator?



Last year's result:

### What do you enjoy flying in the simulator?



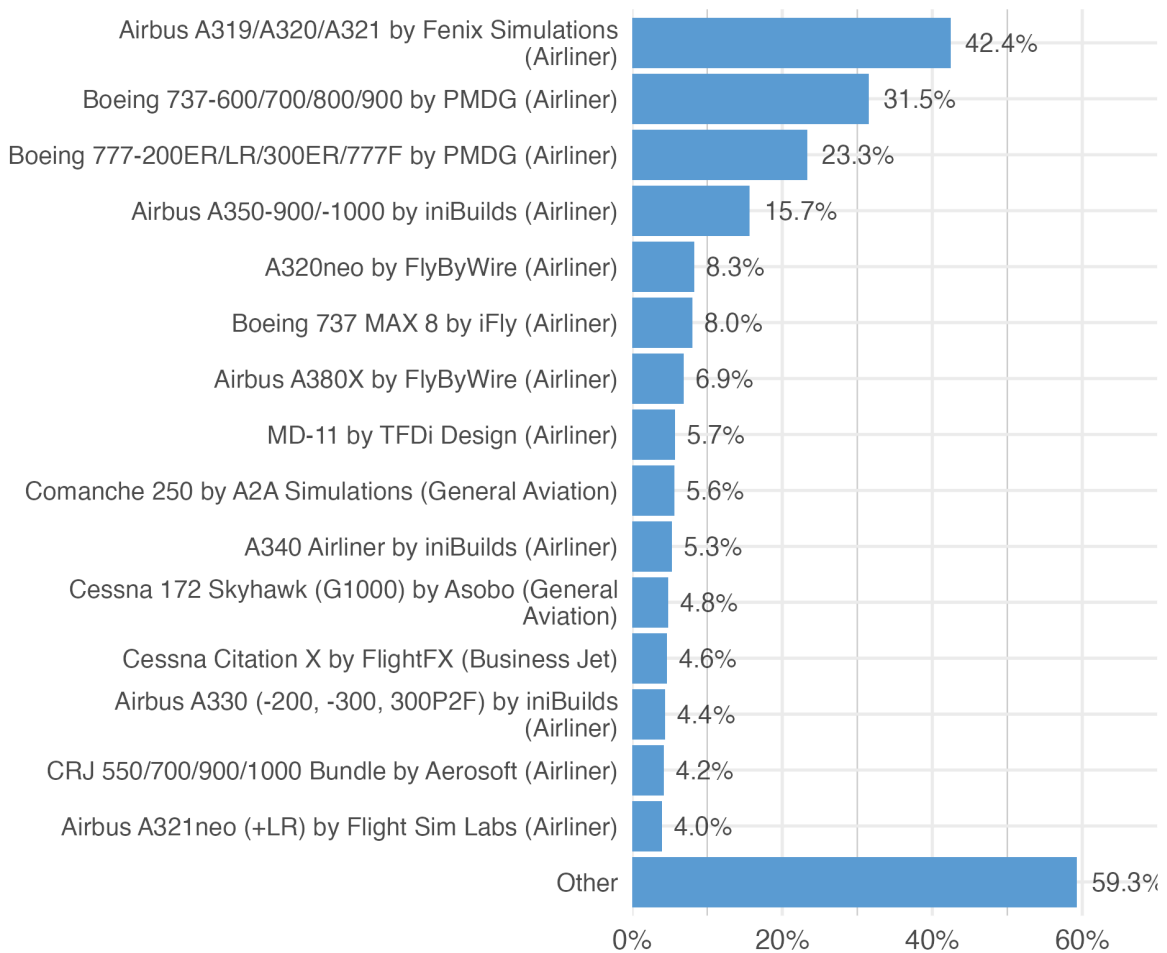
### 3.7.6. MSFS Aircraft Addons

This question highlights the most popular aircraft used in MSFS among the respondents. The Fenix Simulations A319, A320, and A321 family remains the top choice within the community at 42.4%, though this represents a notable decrease compared to last year.

PMDG's lineup continues to perform strongly, with the Boeing 737 series at 31.5%, followed by their 777 variants reaching 23.3%. IniBuilds' A350 also stands at 15.7%, while their A340 released in October 2025 has made it onto the top list at 5.3%.

Overall, while the Fenix Airbus family still maintains its leading position, the gap has narrowed, suggesting diversified aircraft usage patterns with popular aircraft from developers such as PMDG, FlyByWire, iFly, A2A Simulations, TFDi, FlightFX, and iniBuilds.

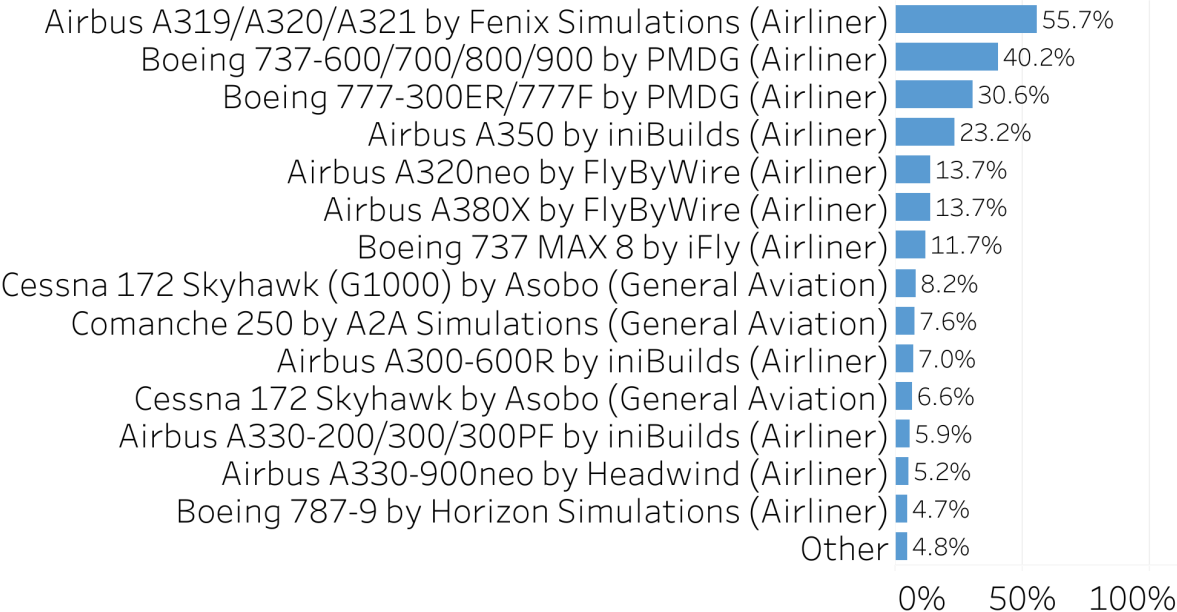
#### Which MSFS aircraft do you normally fly?



Previously, percentages were based on total selections. Here, percentages are based on total respondents, meaning each figure represents the proportion of respondents who selected that option. As multiple responses were allowed, totals may exceed 100%. While both methodologies have their pros and cons, we've decided to do this change to align with how all the other graphs in this survey are done and because it more intuitively answers the question "X% of respondents chose Y".

Last year's result:

### Which MSFS aircraft do you normally fly?

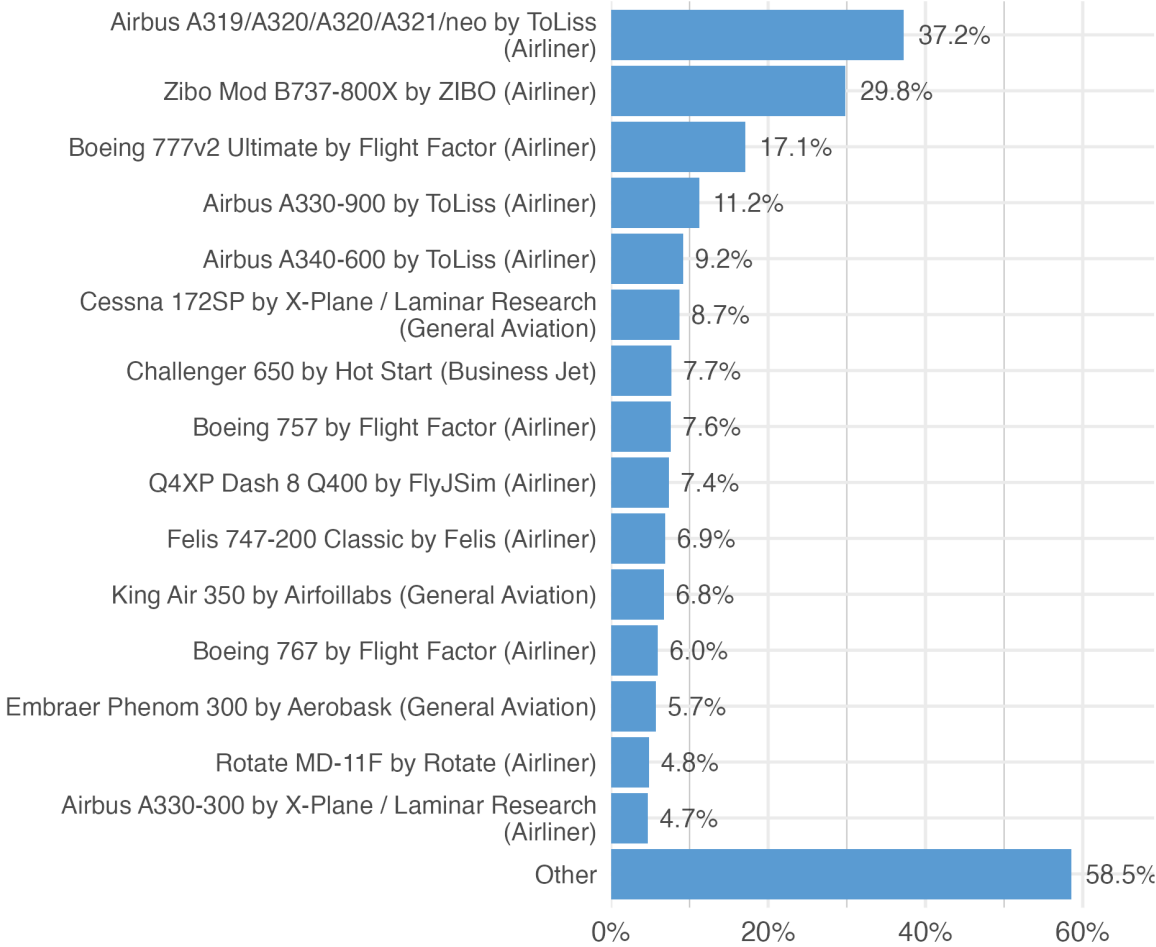


### 3.7.7. X-Plane Aircraft Addons

This question highlights the most popular aircraft used by respondents in X-Plane. When grouping the ToLiss Airbus narrowbody family, including the A320, A320neo, A321, and A321neo, their combined share reaches 37.2%. The Zibo Mod Boeing 737-800X remains frequently flown at 29.8%.

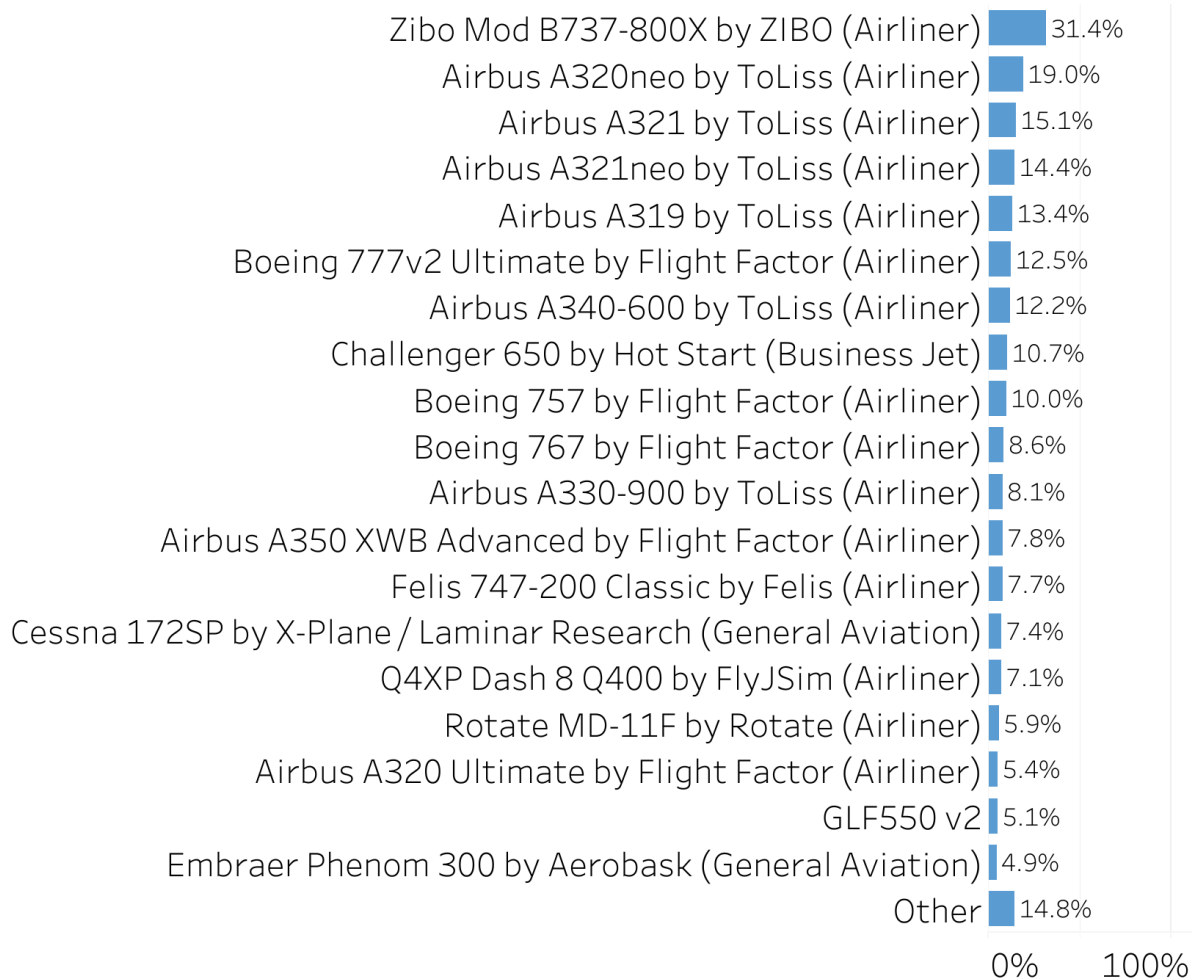
This reinforces the continued interest in detailed narrowbody aircraft. At the same time, FlightFactor’s 777v2 Ultimate has seen a notable increase in usage, rising from 13% to 17.1%, suggesting growing engagement with widebody operations as well.

#### Which X Plane aircraft do you normally fly?



Last year's result:

## Which X-Plane aircraft do you normally fly?



## 3.8. What's Important to You?

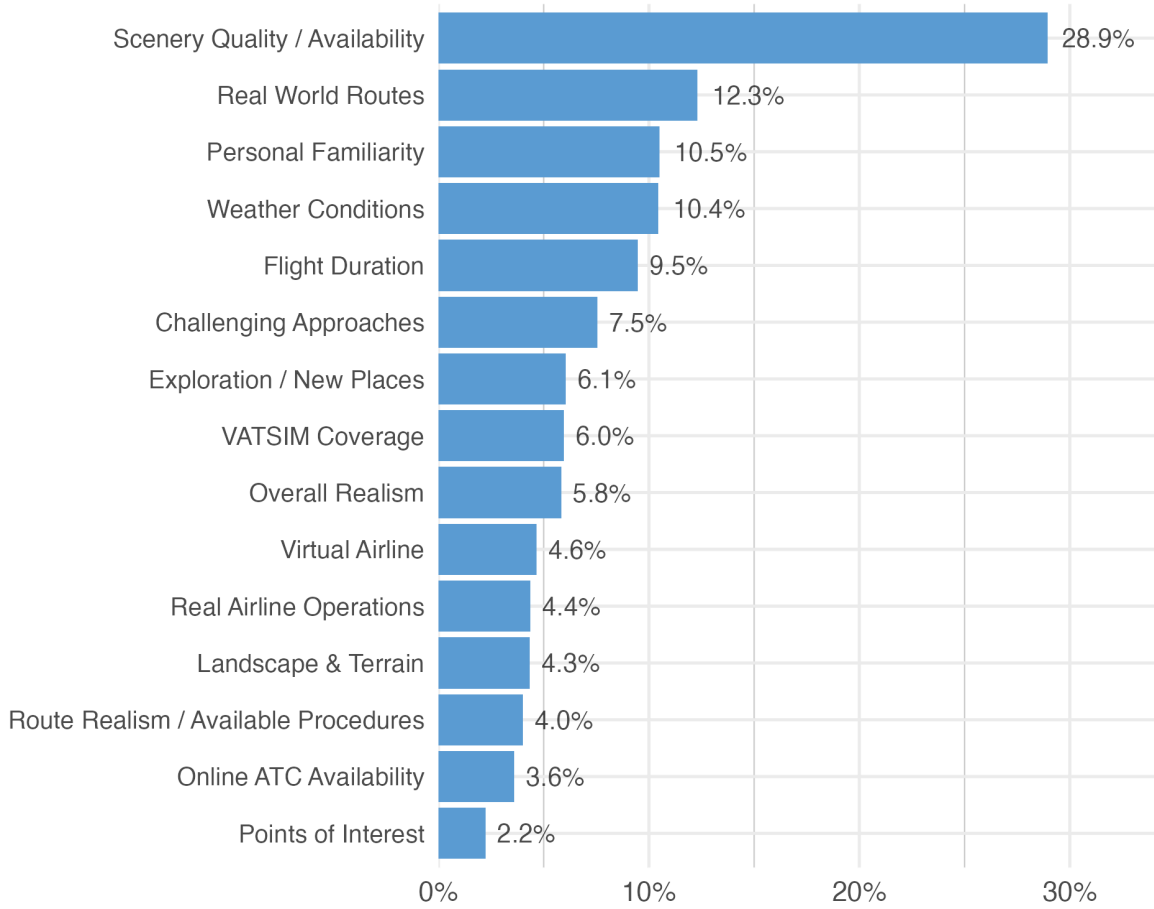
### 3.8.1. Global Flight Preferences in Simulators

This question explores what factors are most important to respondents when selecting where to fly. As in last year's survey, this was a free-text question, with responses grouped into common themes. Scenery quality and availability are the most frequently mentioned factors at 28.9%, followed by real-world routes at 12.3%. Personal familiarity and weather conditions are also commonly mentioned, at 10.5% and 10.4% respectively, with flight duration at 9.5%.

Other factors, such as challenging approaches (7.5%), exploration or new places (6.1%), and VATSIM coverage (6.0%) appear in smaller shares of responses. Additional themes, including overall realism (5.8%), virtual airlines (4.6%), real airline operations (4.4%), and landscape or terrain (4.3%), are also represented.

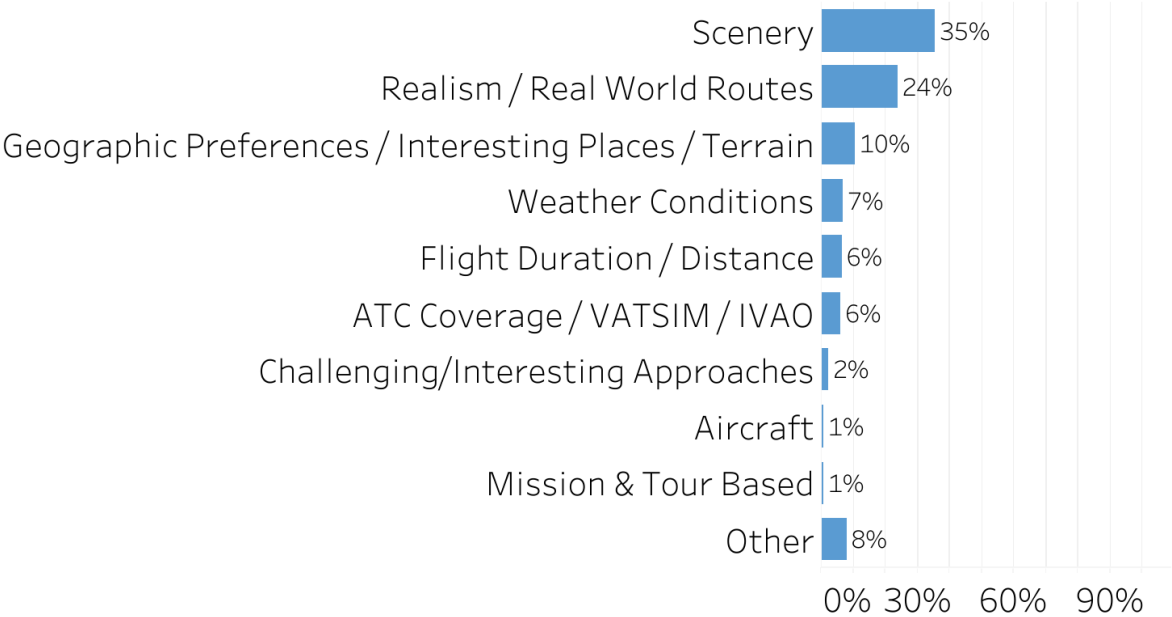
Compared to last year, the results show a similar overall pattern, with scenery remaining the most prominent factor. Realism-related aspects, when considered together across multiple categories, continue to represent a significant share of responses. Personal and practical considerations, such as familiarity, weather, and available time, also play an important role in how respondents choose where to fly.

## What s important to you when selecting where to fly?



Last year's result:

### What's important to you when selecting where to fly?

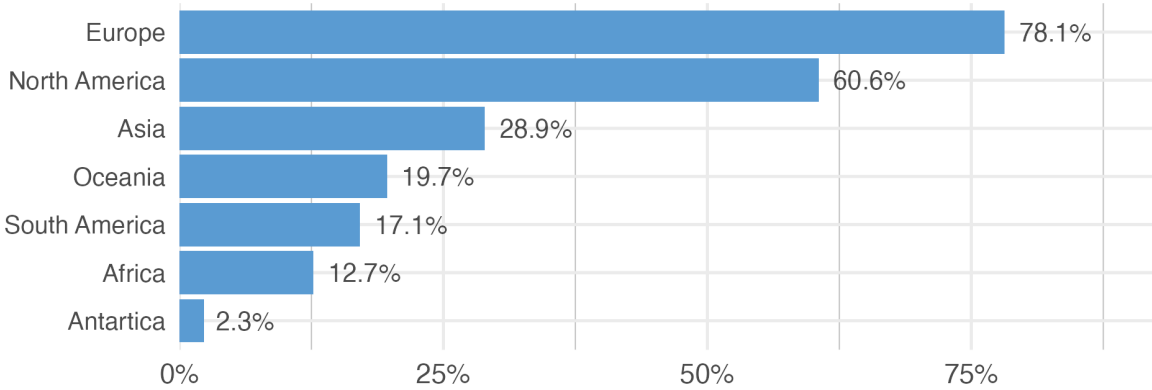


### 3.8.2. Continent Flight Preferences

This question highlights where flight simmers typically choose to fly. Europe remains the most popular region at 78.1%, followed by North America at 60.6%, showing very similar patterns to last year. Asia increases slightly to 28.9%, while Oceania (19.7%), South America (17.1%), and Africa (12.7%) remain relatively stable. Antarctica appears as a new category at 2.3%.

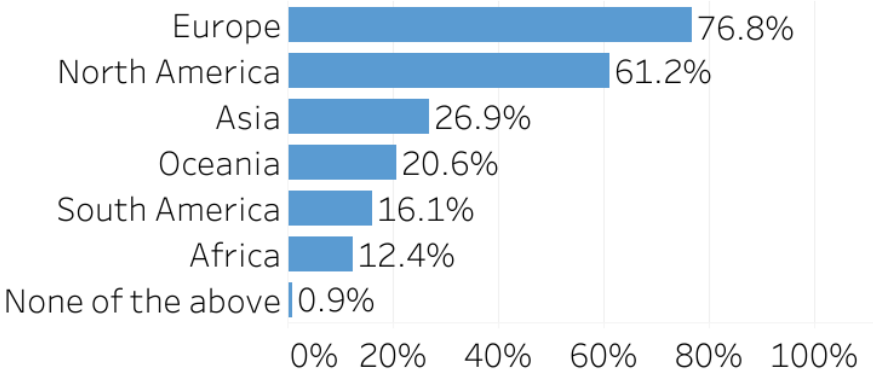
Across the dataset, preferences remain consistent, with Europe and North America continuing to dominate.

Where in the world do you typically fly?



Last year's result:

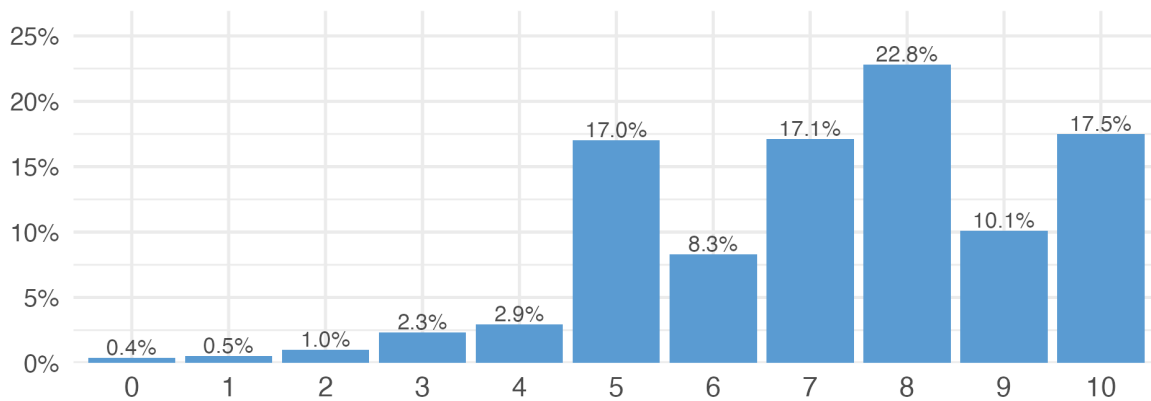
Where in the world do you typically fly?



### 3.8.3. When Things Get Tough in the Simulator

This year, we also introduced a new question to understand how users emotionally respond when facing challenges in the simulator. The results again lean strongly toward the higher end of the scale, with most respondents selecting values between 7 and 10. The most common response is 8, followed closely by 10 and 7, indicating that difficult situations are more often experienced as engaging or rewarding rather than discouraging. Lower scores are relatively uncommon, suggesting that frustration is not the dominant reaction. Instead, the data points to a mindset where challenges are seen as a natural and even motivating part of the experience, reinforcing the idea that learning and progression are key drivers of long-term engagement.

On a scale the feeling I get when I encounter something difficult to learn in the flight simulator is typically?



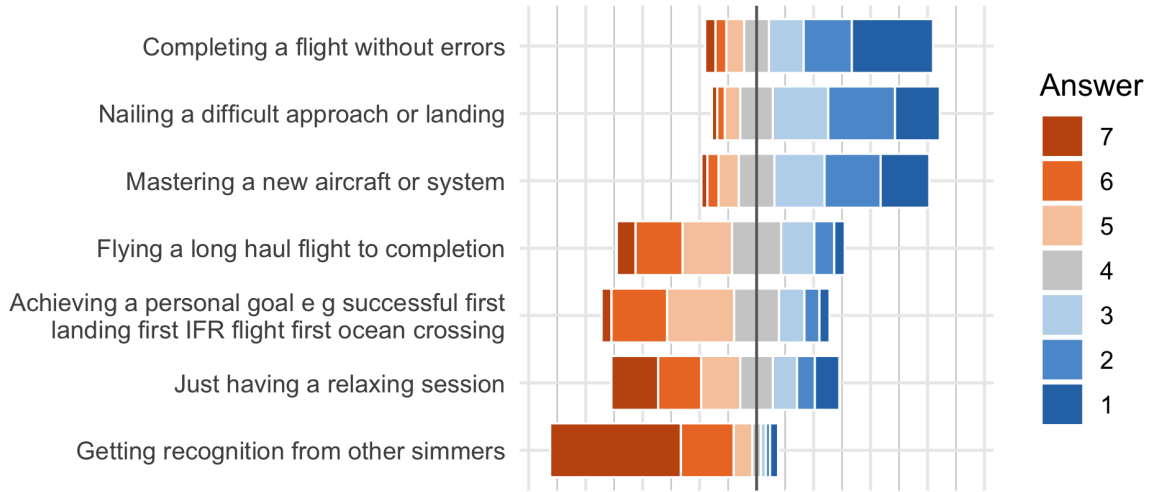
### 3.8.4. What Feels Like a Real Win for You?

This new question explores what users consider to be the strongest sense of accomplishment in flight simulation. Respondents were asked to rank the statements in order from most to least rewarding (1-7).

The responses show that completing a flight without errors, executing a difficult approach or landing, and mastering a new aircraft or system are among the most selected options. Personal milestones, such as a first IFR flight or ocean crossing, are also commonly chosen.

Options such as having a relaxing session or receiving recognition from others are selected less frequently in comparison. The results indicate that accomplishment is most often associated with task completion, skill development, and reaching defined goals within the simulator.

## What gives you the strongest sense of accomplishment in flight simulation?



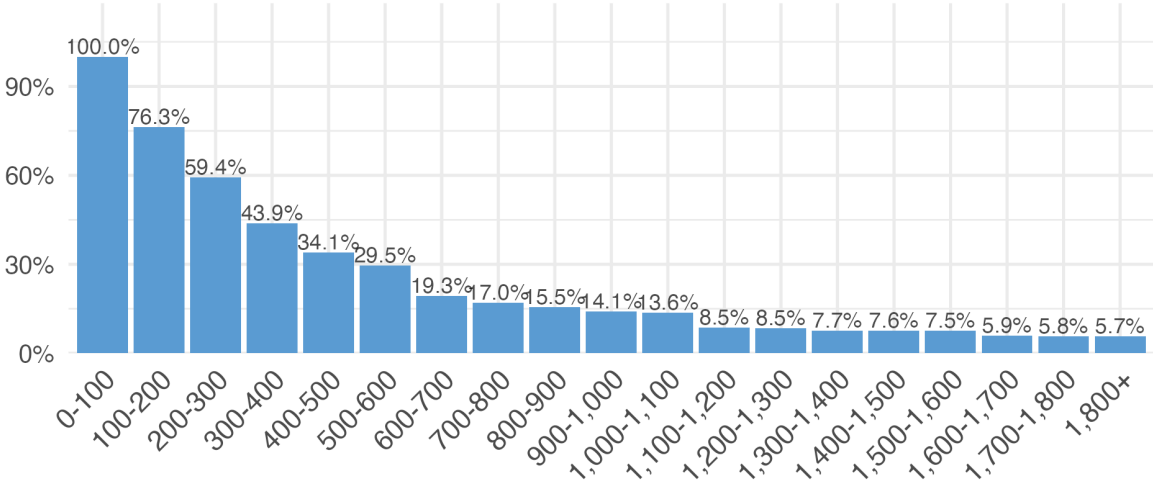
### 3.9. Consumption Habits

#### 3.9.1. Software Expenses

Spending on software and addons is broadly distributed, with 76.3% of respondents spending at least \$100 to \$200 in the last 12 months. This share declines steadily across higher tiers, 59.4% for \$200-\$300, 43.9% for \$300-\$400, falling to under 8% by the \$1,000-\$1,200 range and 5% above \$1,800.

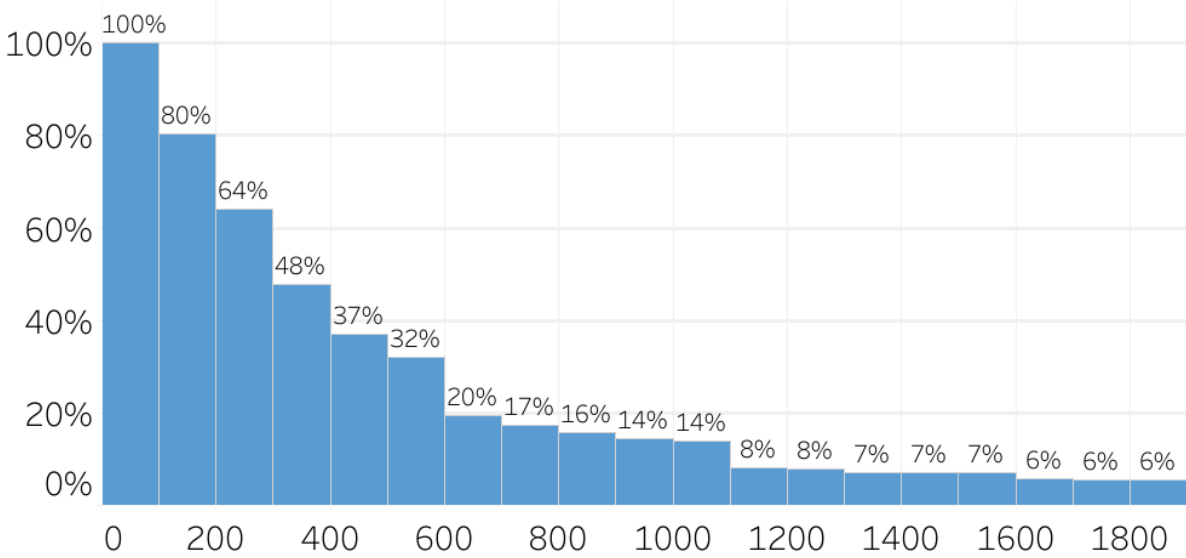
This points to a broad base of users making repeated, mid-range purchases with a smaller group of enthusiasts driving high-value spend.

How much do you estimate you have spent on flight simulation software and addons in the last 12 months?



Last year's result:

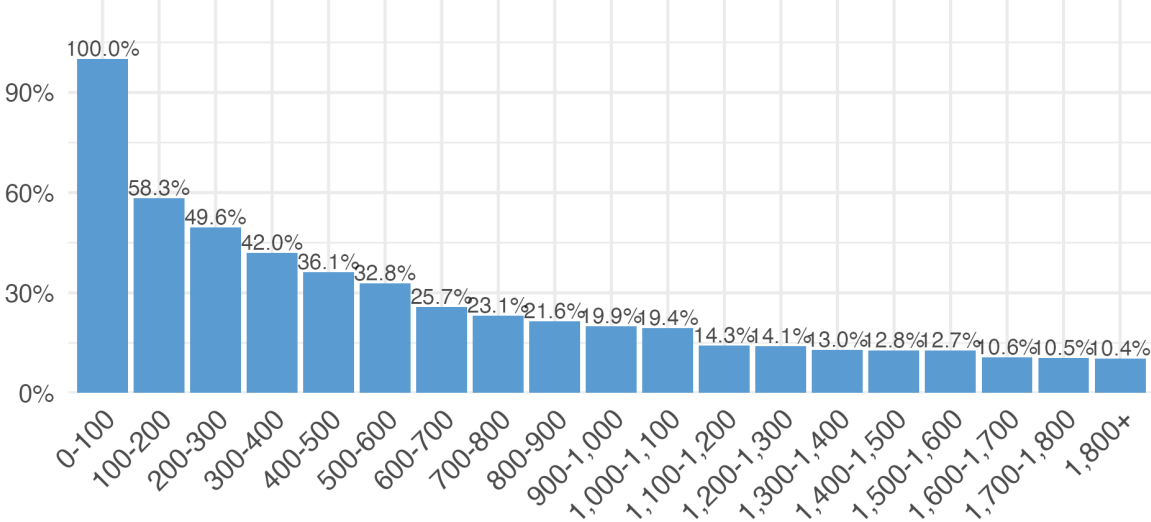
How much do you estimate you have spent on flight simulation software and addons in the last 12 months? (in United States Dollars).



### 3.9.2. Hardware Expenses

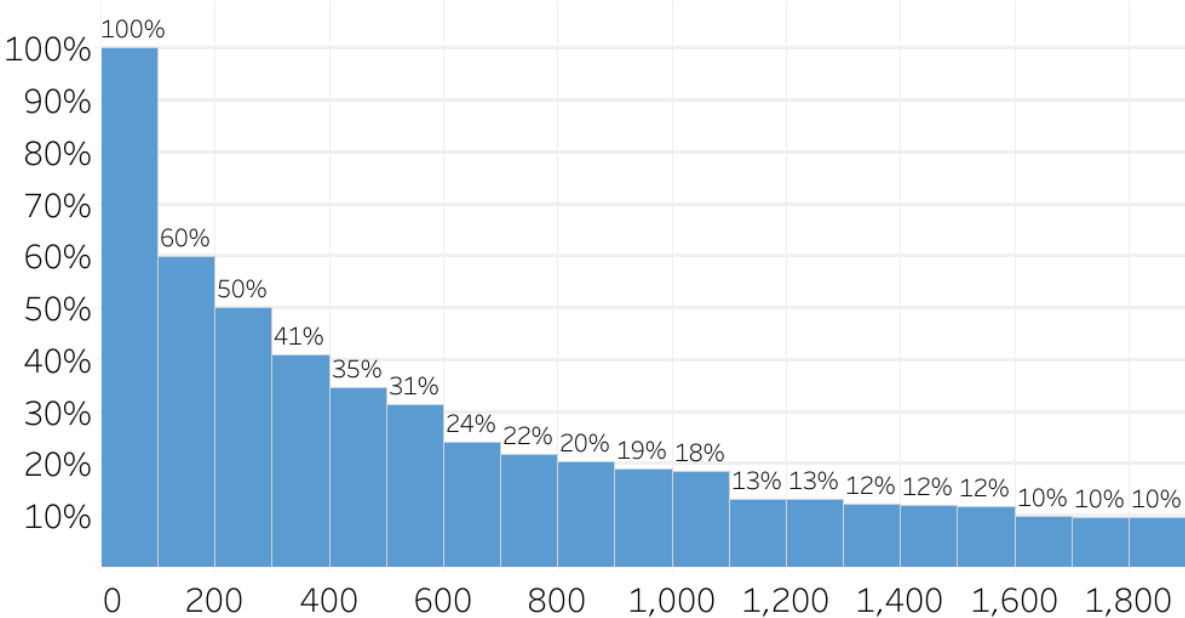
Spending on flight simulation hardware is concentrated on the lower end, with a 41.7 percentage point drop from those spending \$0-\$100 to \$100-\$200. The share then declines steadily across higher thresholds, with only 10.4% of respondents spending \$1,800 or more in the last 12 months.

How much do you estimate you have spent on flight simulation hardware in the last 12 months?



Last year's result:

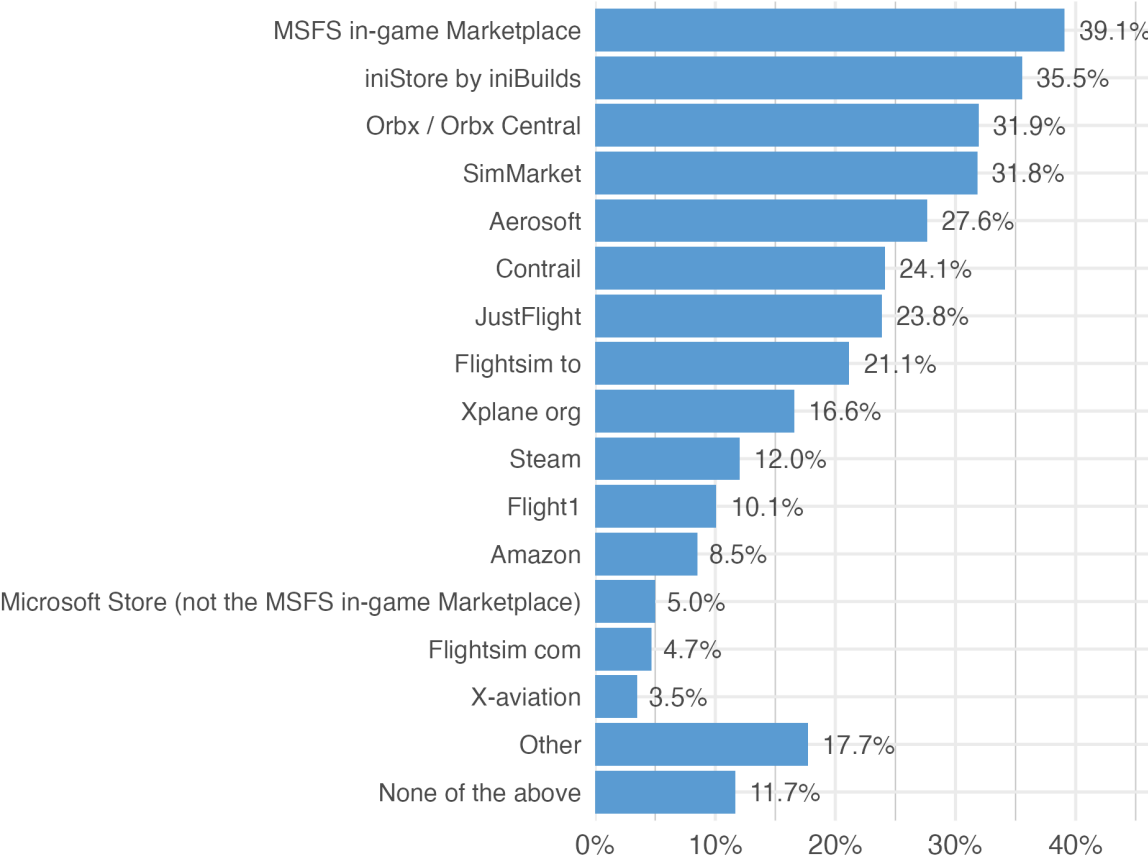
How much do you estimate you have spent on flight simulation hardware in the last 12 months? (in United States Dollars).



### 3.9.3. Online Stores for Software

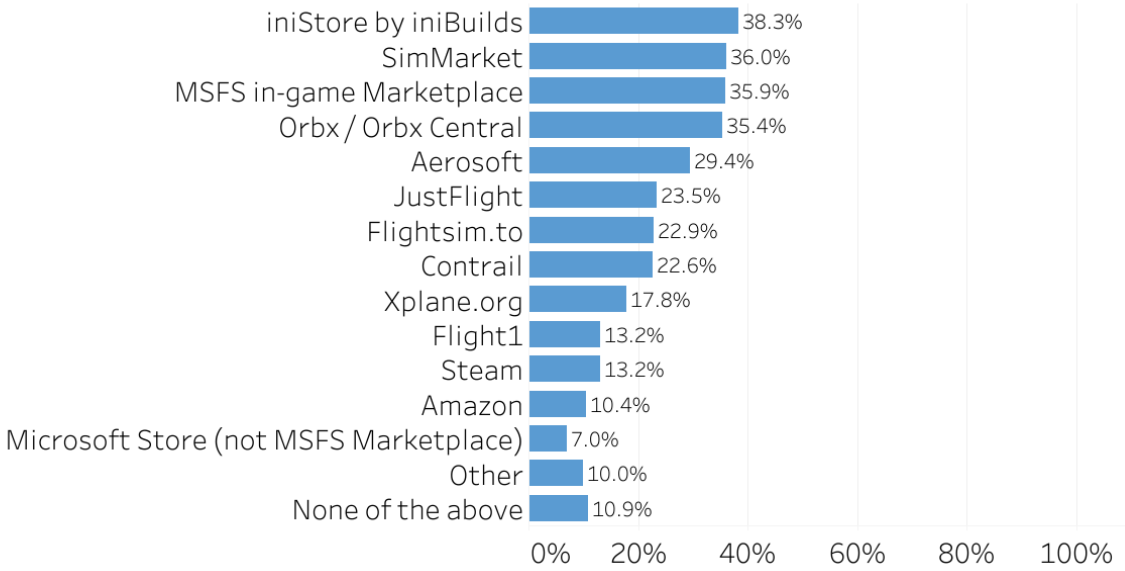
Purchasing habits for flight simulation software remain largely consistent with the previous year, although the top positions have shifted. The MSFS in-game Marketplace now leads with 39.1% of respondents, followed closely by iniStore by IniBuilds (35.5%), Orbx (31.9%), and SimMarket (31.8%).

From which online stores have you purchased flight simulation software products in the past 12 months?



Last year's result:

From which online stores have you purchased flight simulation software products in the past 12 months?



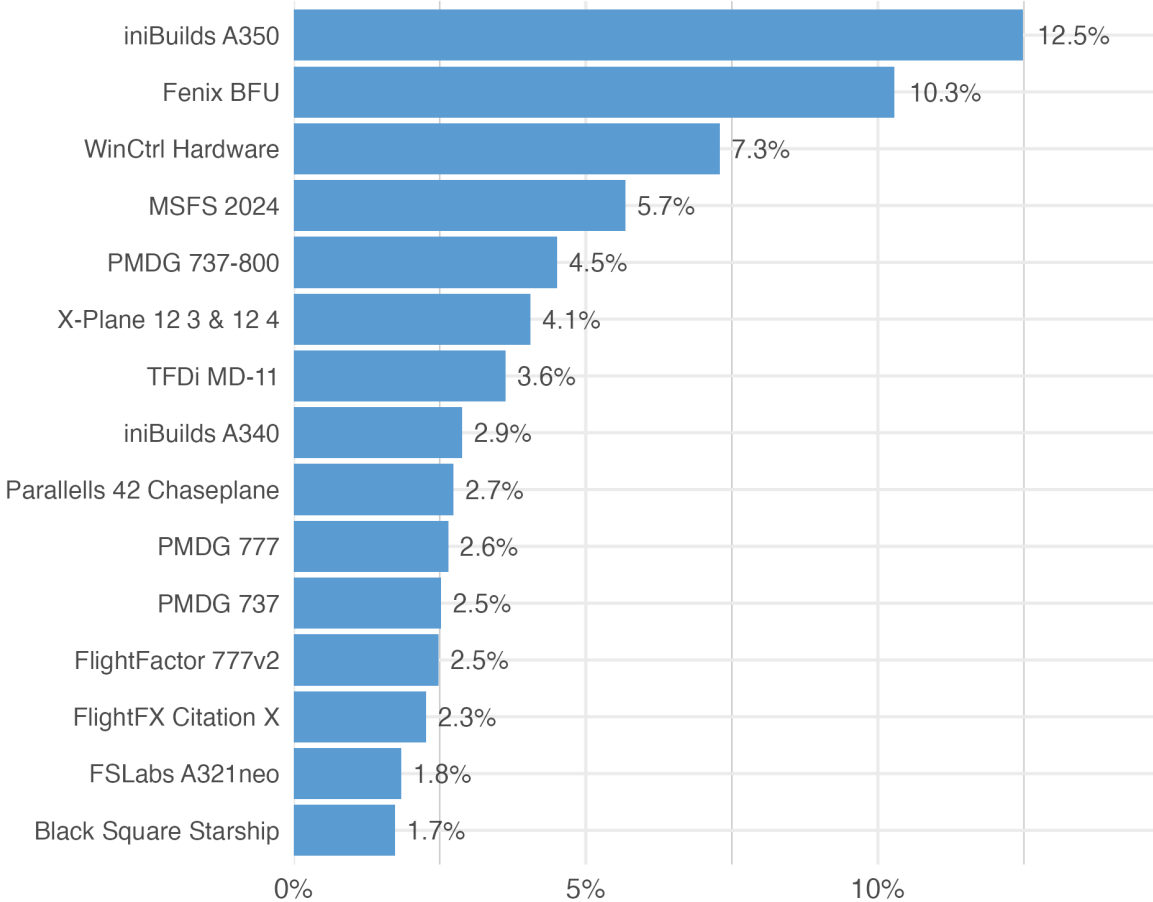
### 3.10. Highlights

#### 3.10.1. What Was the Best Product Release?

The following question included a free-text field, where respondents were asked to name what they consider to be the best flight simulation product release in the last 12 months. The results show a wide spread of responses across aircraft, simulator platforms, and hardware. The most frequently mentioned product is the iniBuilds A350 at 12.5%, followed by Fenix BFU at 10.3% and WinCtrl hardware at 7.3%. Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 appears at 5.7%, with several other aircraft releases, including PMDG, TFDi, and iniBuilds products, each receiving smaller shares of the responses.

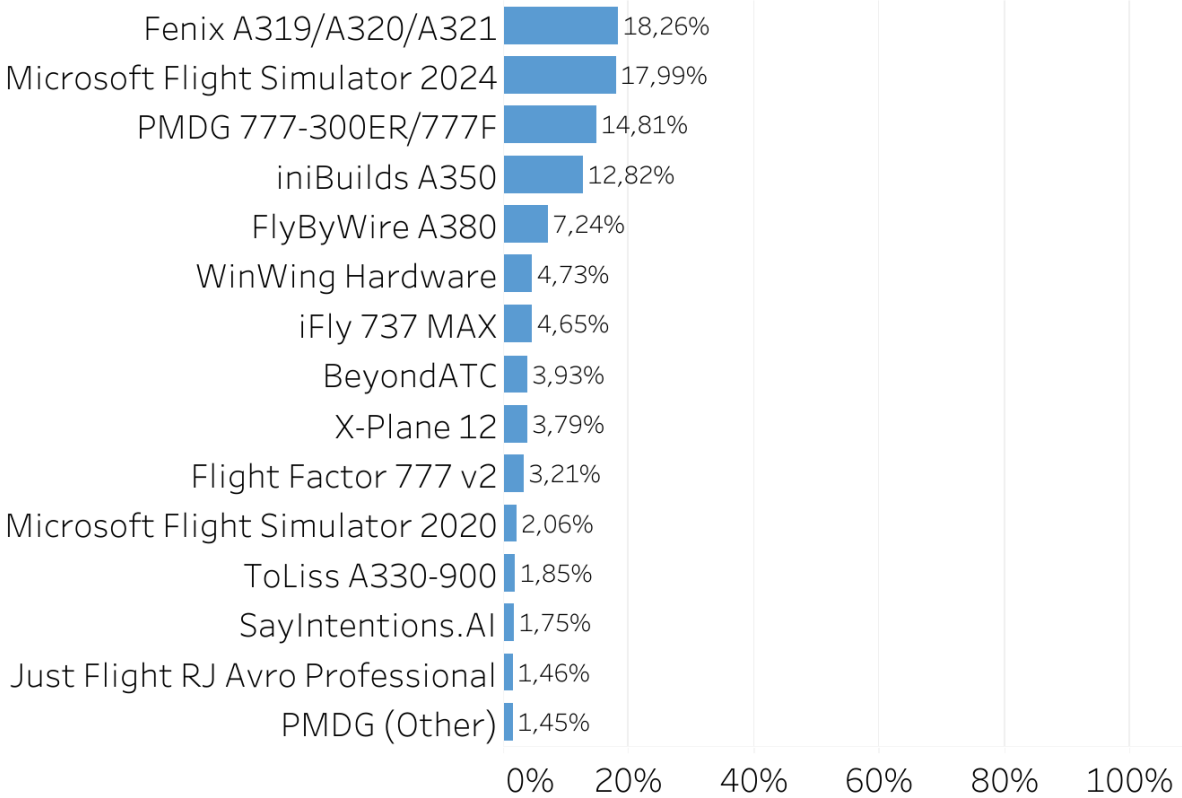
Compared to last year, when a few products received a larger share of the responses, this year's results are more evenly distributed across multiple releases. Hardware from WinCtrl (former WinWing) products continue to appear among the top answers, alongside aircraft and platform updates, indicating a broader range of product categories being recognized by respondents.

What was the single best flight simulation product release in the last 12 months?



Last year's result:

What was the single best flight simulation product release in the last 12 months?

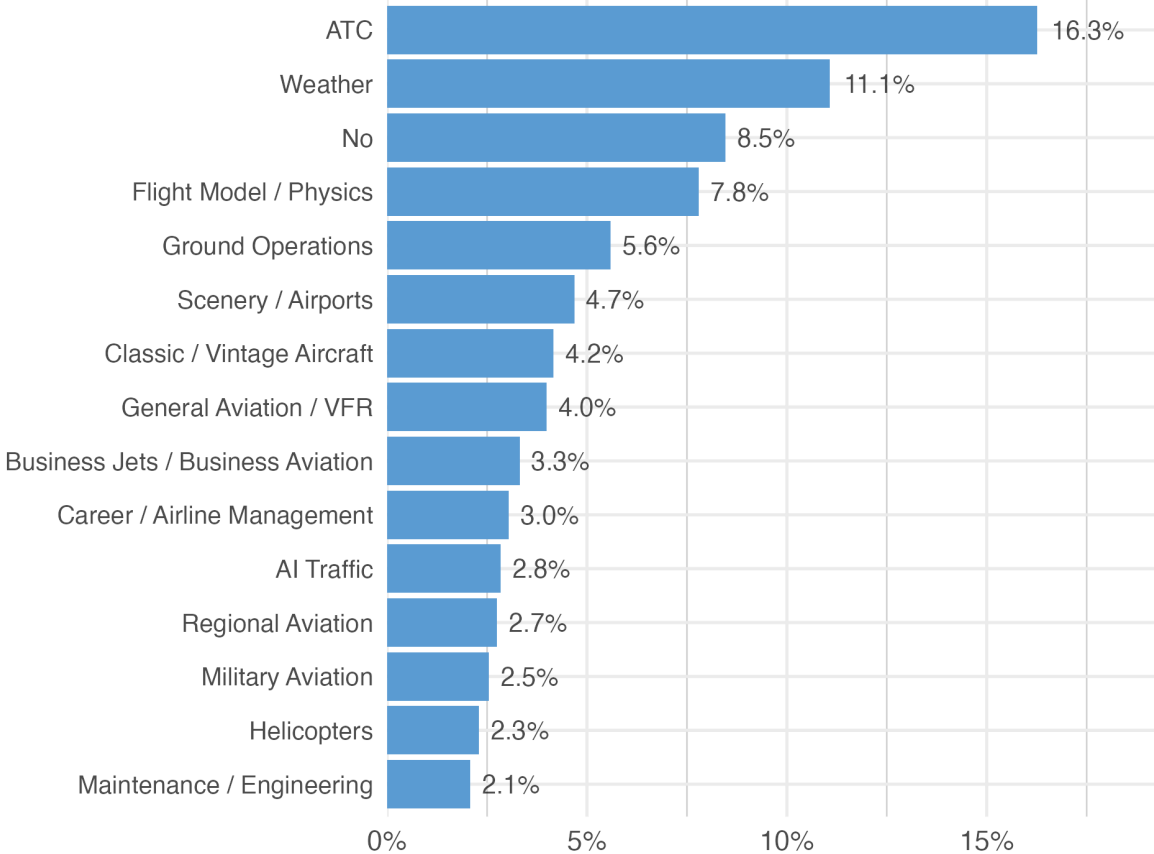


### 3.10.2. What Could Flight Simulation Do Better?

This question was new for this year, and we asked respondents whether there are aspects of aviation they feel are incorrectly or insufficiently represented in flight simulation. ATC is the most frequently mentioned area at 16.3%, followed by weather at 11.1% and flight model or physics at 7.8%. Ground operations and scenery or airports are also noted by a smaller share of respondents.

A range of other areas, including general aviation, business aviation, AI traffic, and regional aviation, are mentioned with lower percentages. Around 8.5% of respondents indicate that they do not see any areas as insufficiently represented. The responses are broad in nature and do not specify which aspects within these areas are considered insufficient or incorrect. Overall, the results are distributed across multiple categories, with no single area accounting for a majority.

Is there any part of aviation that you think is incorrectly or insufficiently represented in flight simulation?



### 3.11. ATC Networks

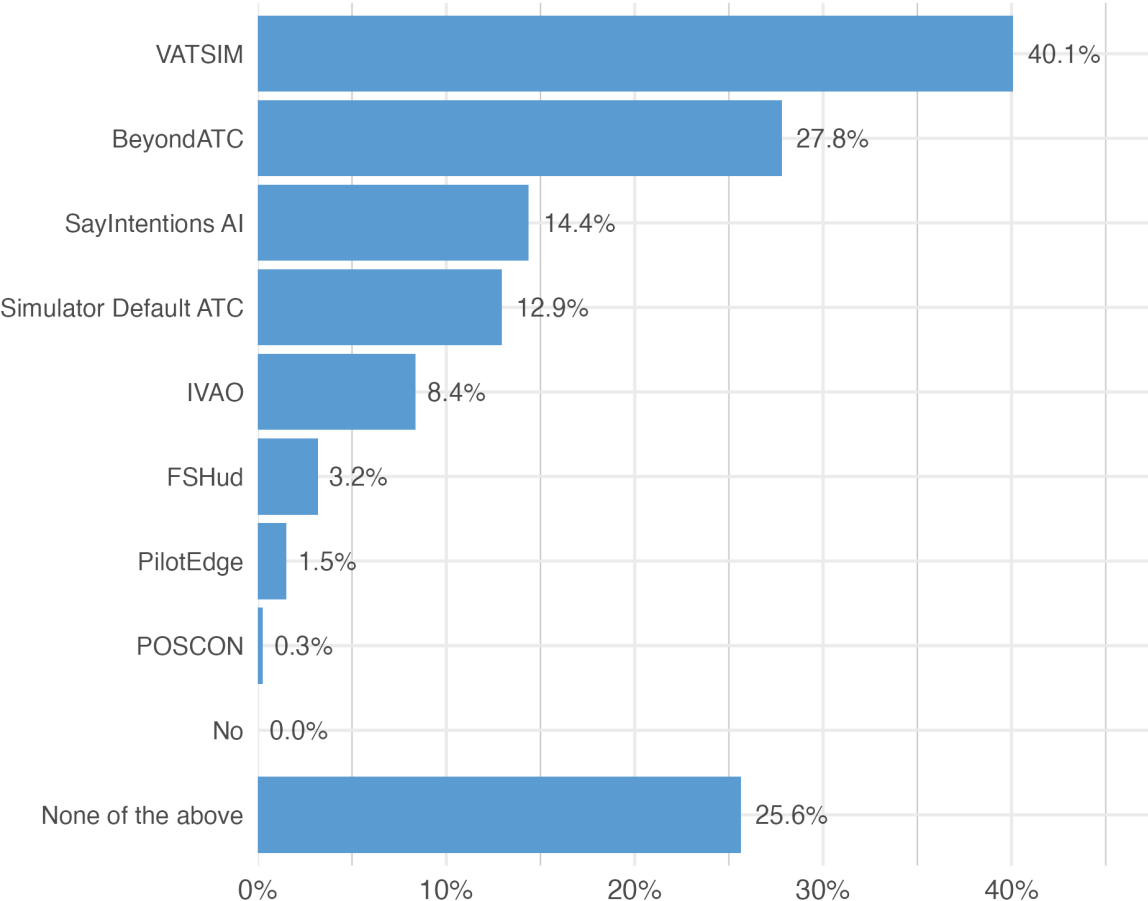
#### 3.11.1. ATC Network Usage

VATSIM remains the most used ATC network, with 40.1% of respondents reporting usage in the past 12 months. BeyondATC continues to show strong adoption at 27.8%, followed by SayIntentions AI at 14.4%. Simulator Default ATC is used by 12.9% of the respondents, indicating that many still rely on built-in solutions.

Compared to last year, VATSIM shows a slight decrease from 42.4% to 40.1%, while BeyondATC has increased from 24.9% to 27.8%. SayIntentions AI has also increased from 9.7% to 14.4%. IVAO remains relatively stable at 8.4% compared to 8.5% last year.

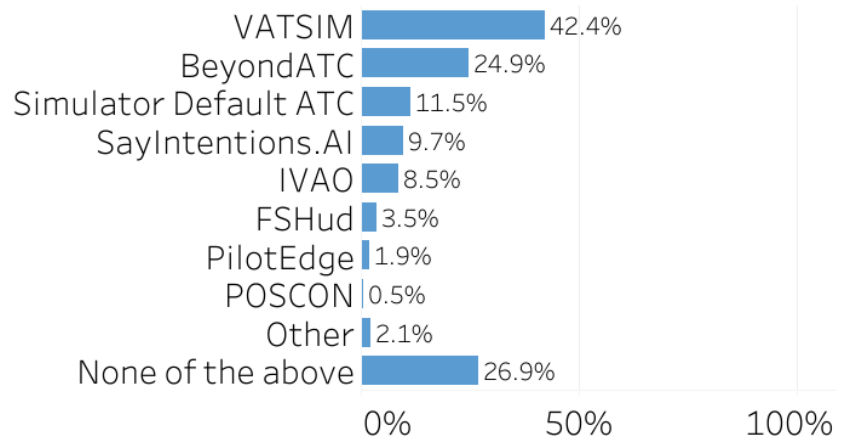
Additionally, 25.6% of respondents reported using none of the listed ATC options, compared to 26.9% last year.

Which of the following ATC networks software have you used in the last 12 months?



Last year's result:

Which of the following ATC networks/software have you used in the last 12 months?

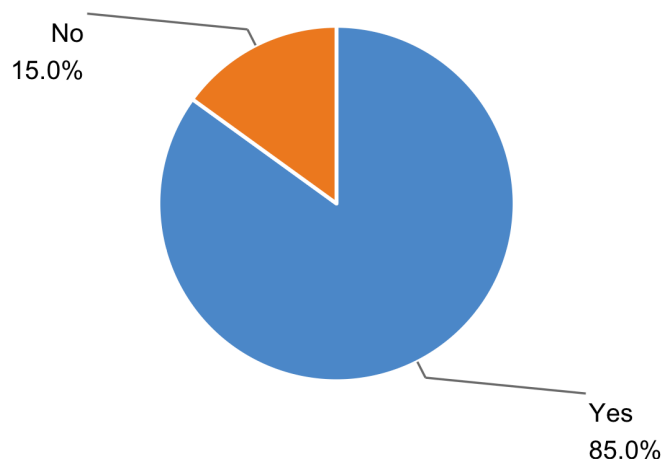


### 3.12. Virtual Airlines

#### 3.12.1. Have You Heard of Virtual Airlines?

This new question explores respondents' awareness of the concept of virtual airlines. The results show that 85% of respondents are familiar with virtual airlines, while 15% have not heard of them. This suggests that the concept is widely recognized among the surveyed audience, with a relatively small portion remaining unfamiliar

Have you heard about the concept of Virtual Airlines?

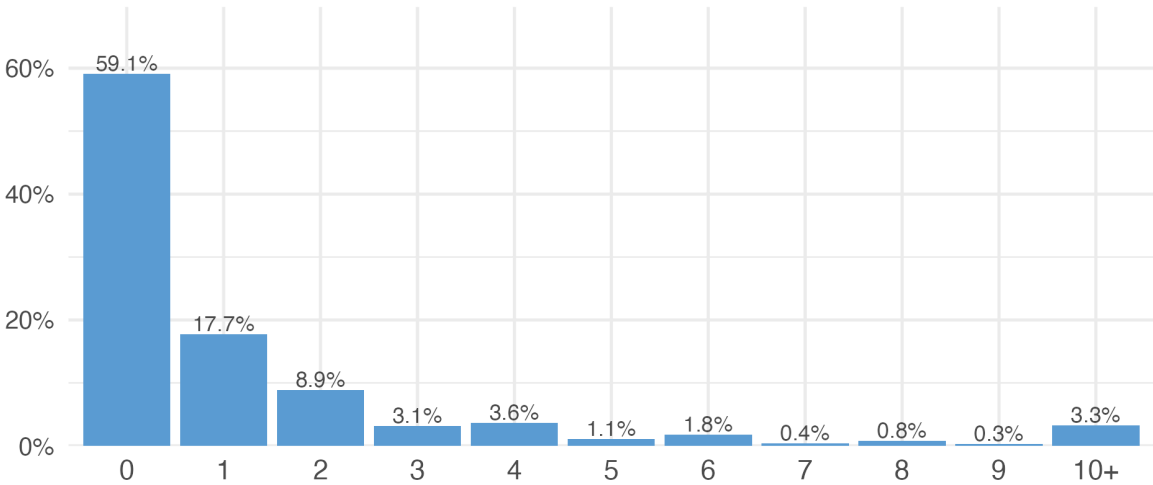


### 3.12.2. Virtual Airline Membership

This question examines how many respondents are members of virtual airlines. The results show that 59.1% of respondents are not members of any virtual airline. Among those who are members, 17.7% report being part of one virtual airline, while 8.9% are members of two. Smaller shares of respondents report membership in three or more virtual airlines, with 3.3% indicating membership in ten or more.

In general, the results show that while awareness of virtual airlines is high, a majority of respondents are not actively participating in them, and those who do tend to be members of a small number of organizations.

How many virtual airlines are you a member of?



### 3.13. Exhibitions & Conferences

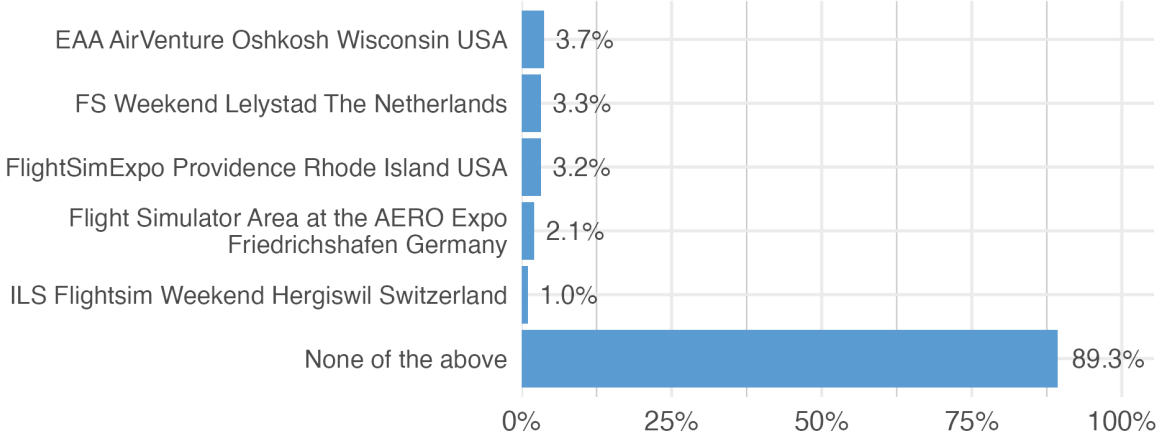
#### 3.13.1. Attendance

Flight simulation event attendance remains relatively stable, with only minor changes across individual events. FSWeekend saw a slight increase from 2.9% to 3.3%, while EAA AirVenture Oshkosh also grew from 2.4% to 3.7%.

FlightSimExpo saw a small decrease, dropping from 3.4% to 3.2%, while Aero Expo Friedrichshafen increased from 1.6% to 2.1%. ILS Flightsim Weekend also saw a marginal rise from 0.8% to 1.0%.

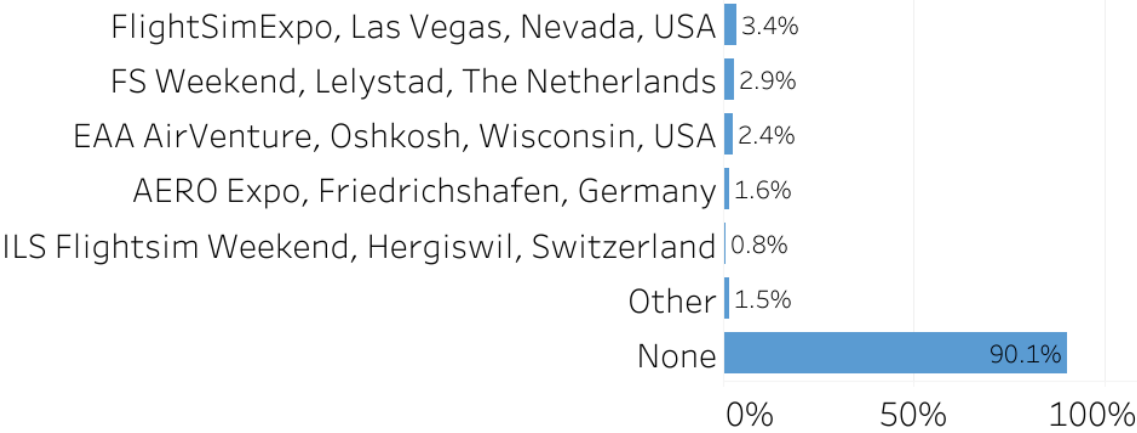
Overall, these small fluctuations suggest continued and steady interest in in-person events, with no major shifts in attendance patterns across the community.

Which flight simulator exhibitions or conferences have you visited during the last 12 months?



Last year's result:

Which flight simulator exhibitions or conferences have you visited during the last 12 months?



### 3.13.2. Future Event Plans

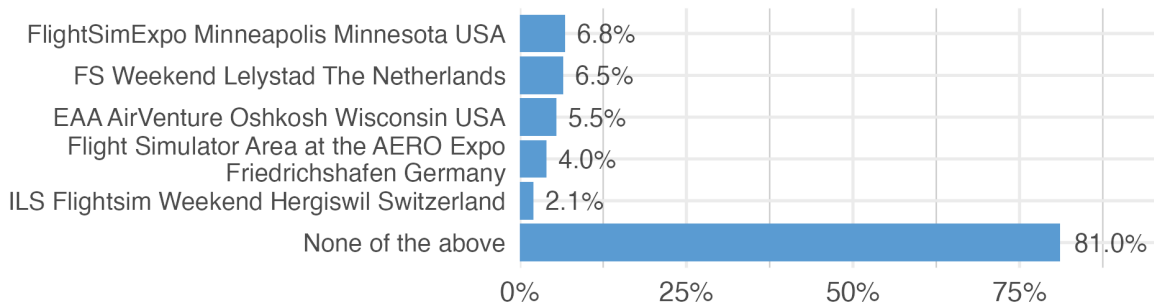
Like last year, almost 20% of respondents plan to attend a flight simulation event in the coming year, indicating stable interest in in-person gatherings.

FlightSimExpo remains the most popular choice at 6.8%, slightly down from 7.3% last year. FSWeekend has seen an increase in interest, rising from 5.2% to 6.5%, while EAA AirVenture Oshkosh also experienced an uptick from 4.6% to 5.5%.

Aero Friedrichshafen continues its gradual growth, increasing from 3.3% to 4.0%, while ILS Flightsim Weekend increased from 1.8% to 2.1%.

The data suggests consistent intent to attend events, with minor shifts between individual shows rather than any significant change in overall interest.

#### Which flight simulation exhibitions or conferences do you plan to attend during the next 12 months?



Last year's result:

#### Which flight simulation exhibitions or conferences do you plan to attend during the next 12 months?



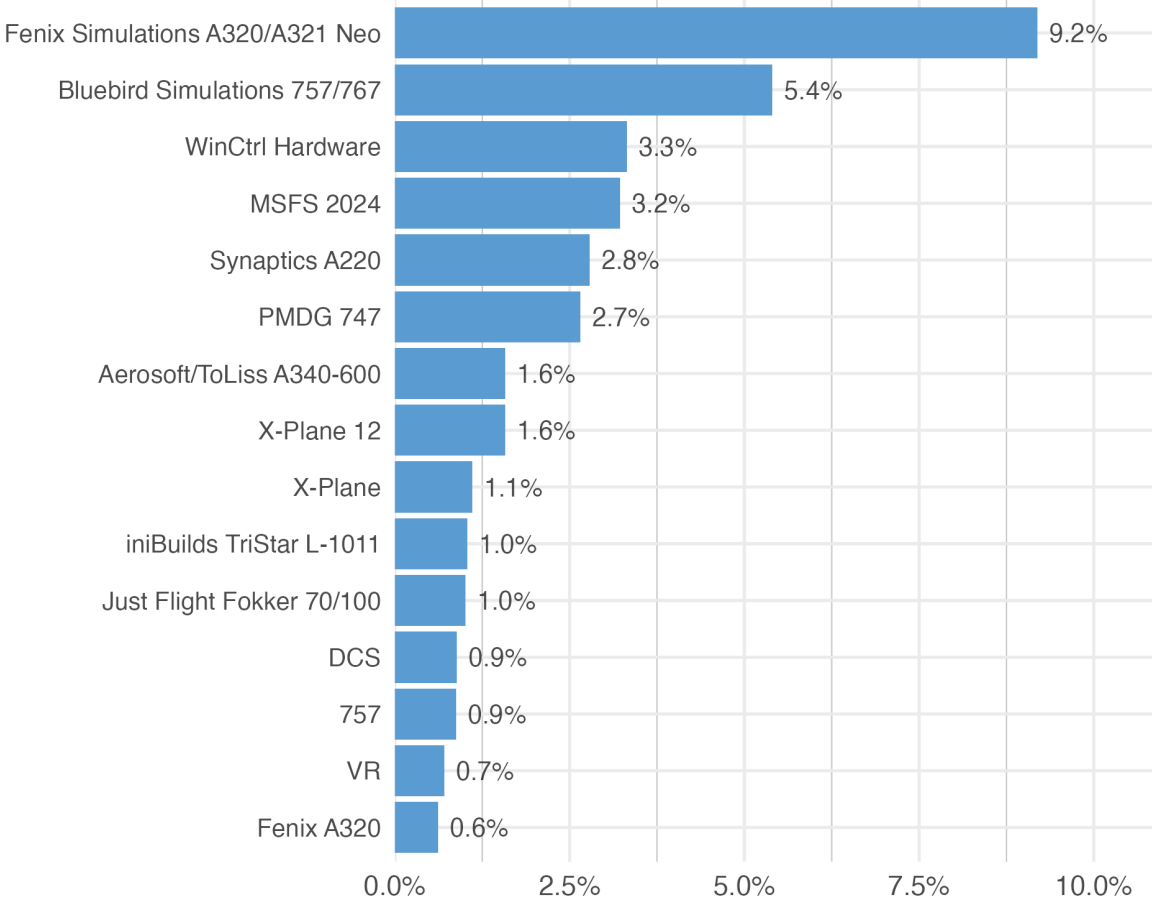
### 3.14. The Future

#### 3.14.1. Anticipated Product Releases

Responses to this question show a broad range of anticipated product releases over the next 12 months, with no single release dominating the results. The Fenix Simulations A320/A321 Neo is the most frequently mentioned at 9.2%, followed by the Bluebird Simulations 757/767 at 5.4%. WinCtrl hardware and Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 are cited by 3.3% and 3.2% respectively, with Synaptics A220 and PMDG 747 also appearing among the more frequently mentioned products.

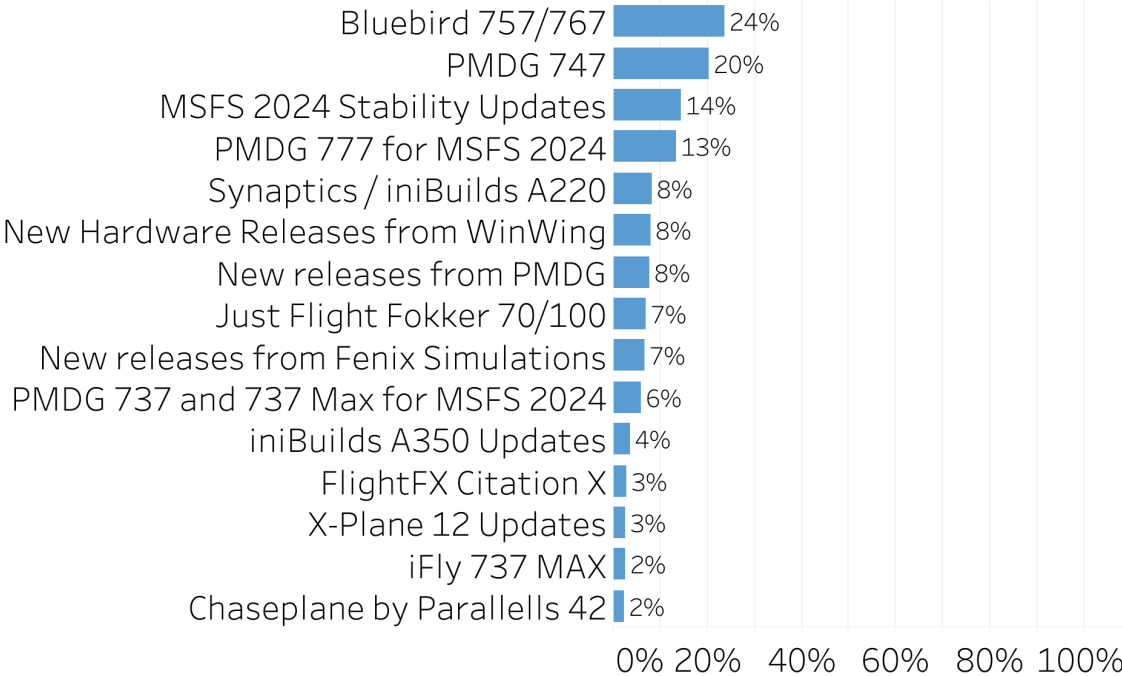
Compared to last year, when individual releases such as the Bluebird 757/767 and PMDG 747 accounted for a larger share of responses, this year’s results are more evenly distributed. Aircraft, simulator updates, and hardware are all represented among the top answers, indicating a wider spread of anticipated releases.

Which flight simulation related product releases are you looking forward to in the next 12 months?



Last year's result:

Which flight simulation-related product releases are you looking forward to in the next 12 months?



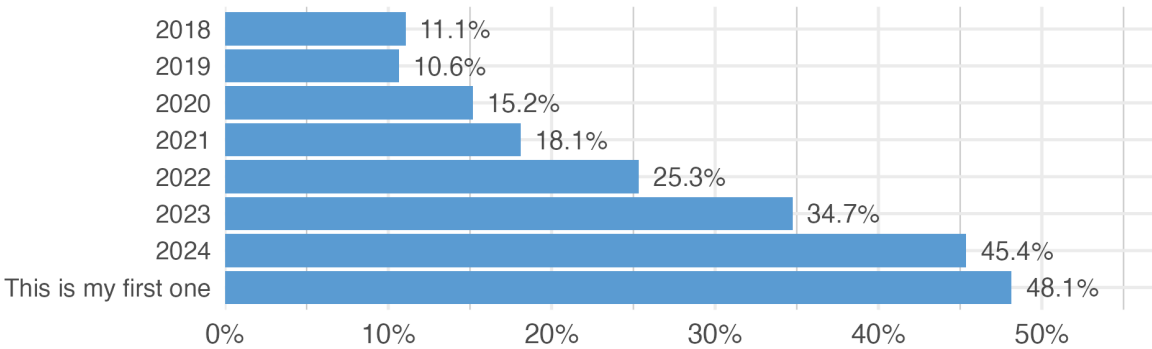
### 3.15. Survey Experience

#### 3.15.1. Participation

In last year’s survey, 48.1% of respondents had also participated in the 2023 survey, 37.0% in the 2022 survey, and 26.4% in the 2021 survey. This year shows a very similar pattern, with 45.4% having taken part in the 2024 survey, 34.7% in the 2023 survey, and 25.3% in the 2022 survey.

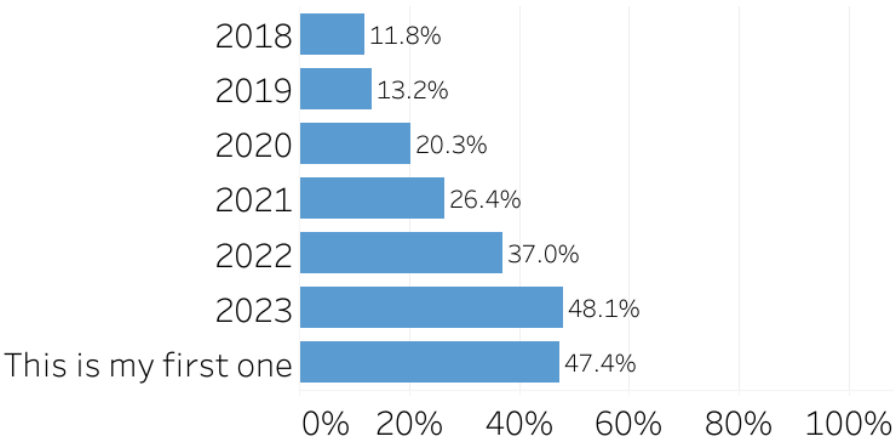
This consistency suggests a stable core of returning respondents, while still allowing for a steady influx of new participants each year.

Which previous FlightSim Community Survey have you taken?



Last year’s result:

Which previous FlightSim Community Survey have you taken?



## 3.16. Motivation Questions

### 3.16.1 Mastery and Realism Define the Core User Mindset

This section highlights a clear pattern in what motivates flight simulation users. The strongest agreement is found in statements related to mastery and immersion, indicating that most users are driven by a desire to understand systems, improve their skills, and operate in ways that reflect real-world aviation. Learning, precision, and doing things correctly are central to the experience.

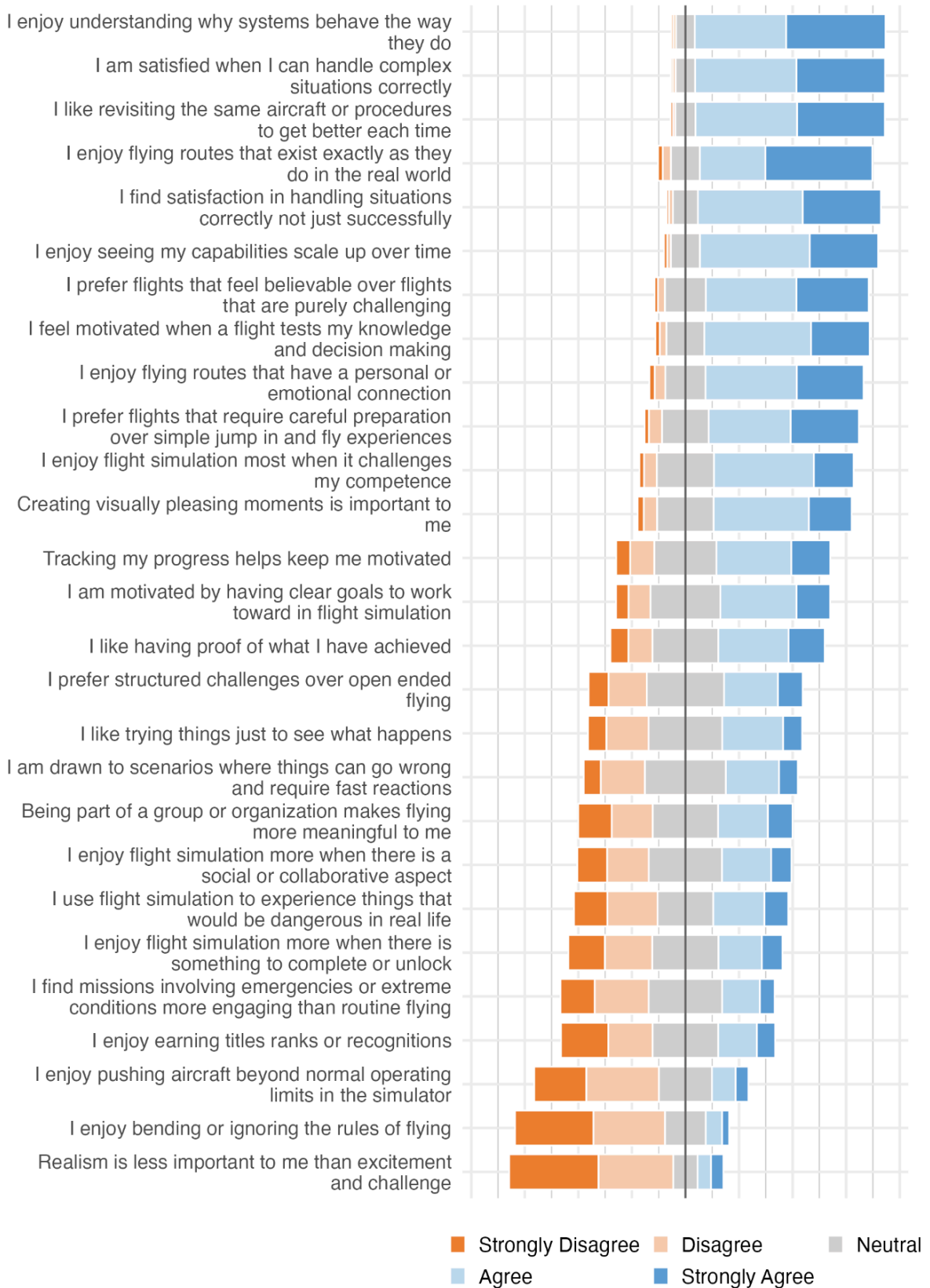
There is also solid support for achievement-based motivation, such as setting goals, tracking progress, and seeing proof of improvement. However, these elements appear to play a more supporting role, enhancing the overall experience rather than driving it on their own.

Motivations tied to creativity and visual enjoyment are present but less prominent, suggesting they complement rather than define the experience.

In contrast, there is relatively low agreement with statements linked to chaos and unpredictability, such as bending rules, pushing limits, or prioritizing excitement over realism. Similarly, social motivations rank lower, suggesting that, for many users, flight simulation remains primarily an individual, self-driven activity.

The results show that flight simulation is most valued for its structure, realism, and skill-oriented nature, with users motivated by learning, progression, and authenticity rather than unpredictability or social interaction.

## How much do you agree with the following statements?



### 3.16.2 Immersion and Skill Development Matter More Than Rewards or Competition

This section highlights what aspects of the flight simulation experience users consider most important. The strongest responses are centered around immersion and mastery, with high importance placed on realistic elements such as visual quality, flight planning, following standard operating procedures, and improving flying skills. These results reinforce that authenticity and skill development are at the core of the experience.

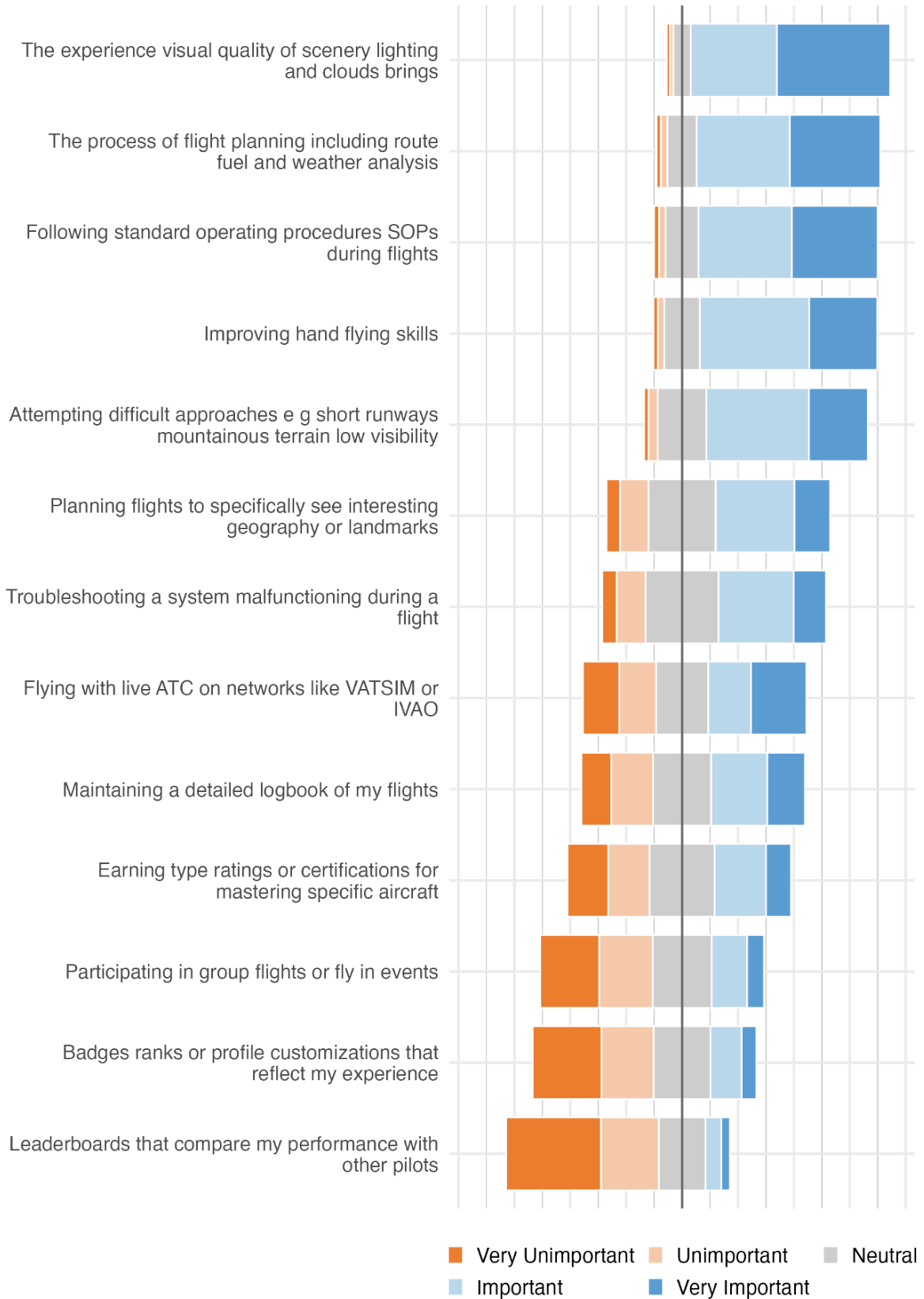
Challenging scenarios, such as difficult approaches and complex situations, are also highly rated, indicating that users value experiences that test their abilities within a realistic framework.

Mid-level importance is given to activities like exploring scenery, troubleshooting system failures, and flying with live ATC. These elements enhance the experience but are not essential for all users.

Lower importance is placed on achievement and socially driven features, such as maintaining logbooks, earning certifications, participating in group flights, and customization options like badges or ranks. Features tied to competition, such as leaderboards, rank the lowest overall, suggesting that comparison with others is not a key motivator for most users.

Collectively, the results show that users prioritize a realistic, skill-focused experience, where immersion and personal competence matter far more than social interaction or competitive progression systems.

## How important are the following to your flightsim experience?

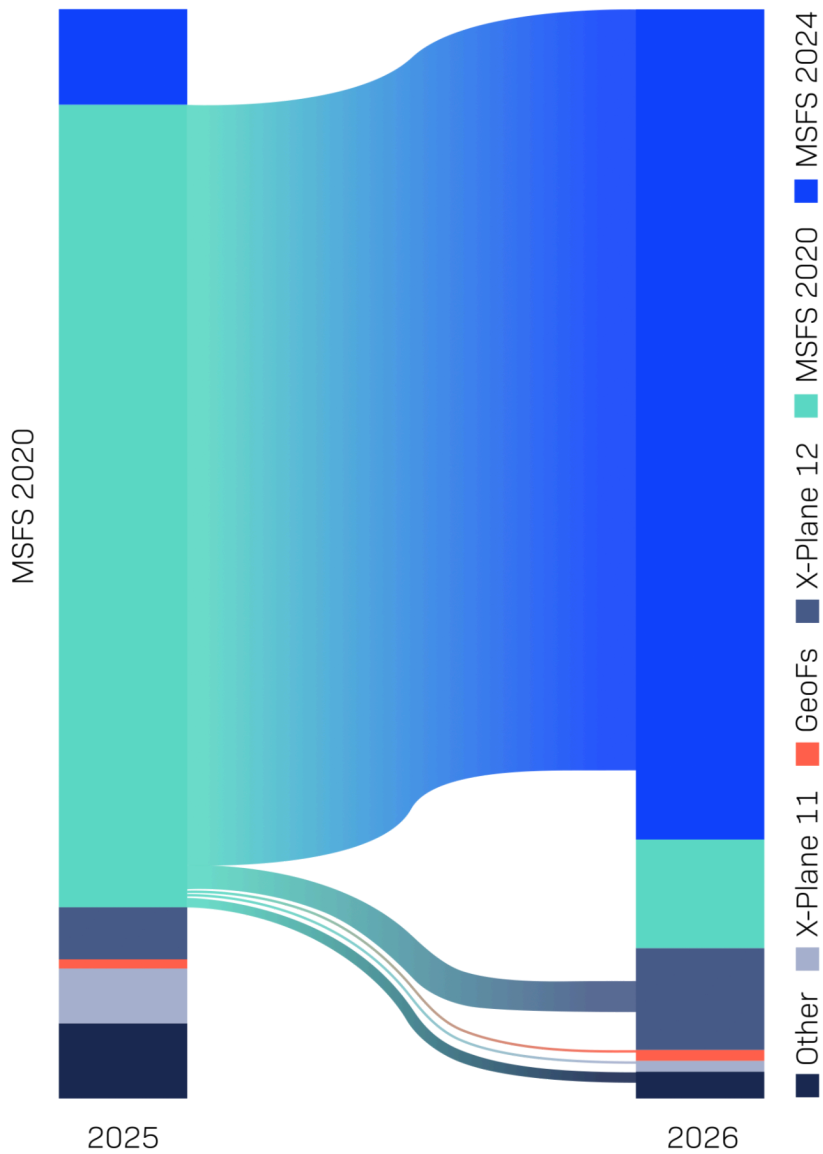


# 4. Discussion

## 4.1. MSFS 2024 Adoption and User Sentiment

Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 has quickly become the leading platform among the respondents, with 49.5% (3.5.1. Primary Flight Simulator) identifying it as their primary simulator. This marks a clear shift from MSFS 2020 and reflects rapid adoption, with many users transitioning within the Microsoft ecosystem.

Switching data supports this trend, with a large share of users who changed simulators coming from MSFS 2020. However, 41.8% of respondents who have MSFS 2020 as their primary simulator have not switched, indicating a stable segment that may be more cautious in adopting the new simulator.



MSFS 2024 is not only widely adopted but also heavily used. It leads across usage frequency, showing that it has become a core part of regular simming routines rather than a secondary or occasional platform.

Overall sentiment is strongly positive. The simulator performs best in visual and presentation focused areas, with graphics standing out in particular. Core features like weather and default aircraft also meet or exceed expectations for most users.

However, some areas consistently fall short. Air traffic control, weather radar, and missions are the most common pain points, while performance factors such as stability and FPS remain more mixed, leaning slightly negative. This highlights a gap between visual quality and system depth.

Despite this, recommendation scores are high with 44.8% of respondents classified as promoters compared to 10.5% detractors, indicating strong overall satisfaction and confidence in the platform.

In general, MSFS 2024 holds a clear leadership position, driven by strong adoption, high engagement, and positive sentiment. Continued improvements in system depth and performance will be key to maintaining and strengthening this position within the broader flight simulation community.

## **4.2. Simulator Platforms Attracting New Pilots**

The analysis combines responses from two survey questions, years of experience and primary simulator platform, to understand where new simmers (under two years of experience) are currently concentrated.

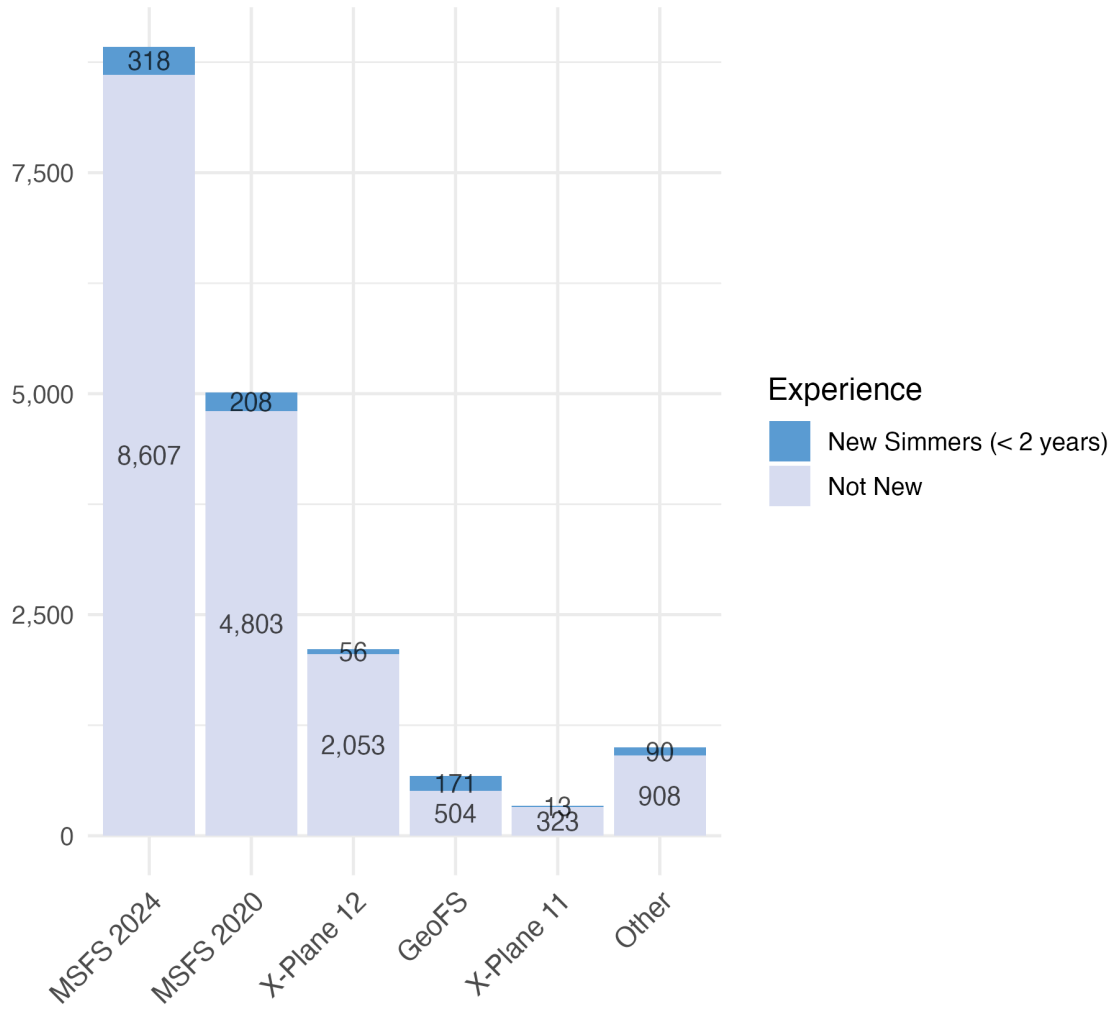
The results show a clear dominance of Microsoft Flight Simulator 2024 (318 users) and MSFS 2020 (208 users). Together, they account for the majority of new simmers, representing approximately 70% of all respondents in this segment. This reinforces MSFS as the primary platform where new users are establishing themselves early in their simulation journey.

At the same time, GeoFS stands out in relative terms, with 171 new users, representing roughly 25% of its total user base. While smaller in scale, this indicates that GeoFS has a strong appeal among beginners and likely serves as an accessible entry point into the flight simulation world.

In contrast, X-Plane platforms show limited uptake among newer users, with 56 users on X-Plane 12 and 13 on X-Plane 11, implying a stronger concentration of more experienced simmers.

Taken together, new user activity appears highly concentrated in MSFS, with GeoFS acting as a secondary entry pathway, while other platforms remain more established within experienced segments.

## Proportion of new simmers by primary simulator



### 4.3. Spending Patterns Across Age Groups

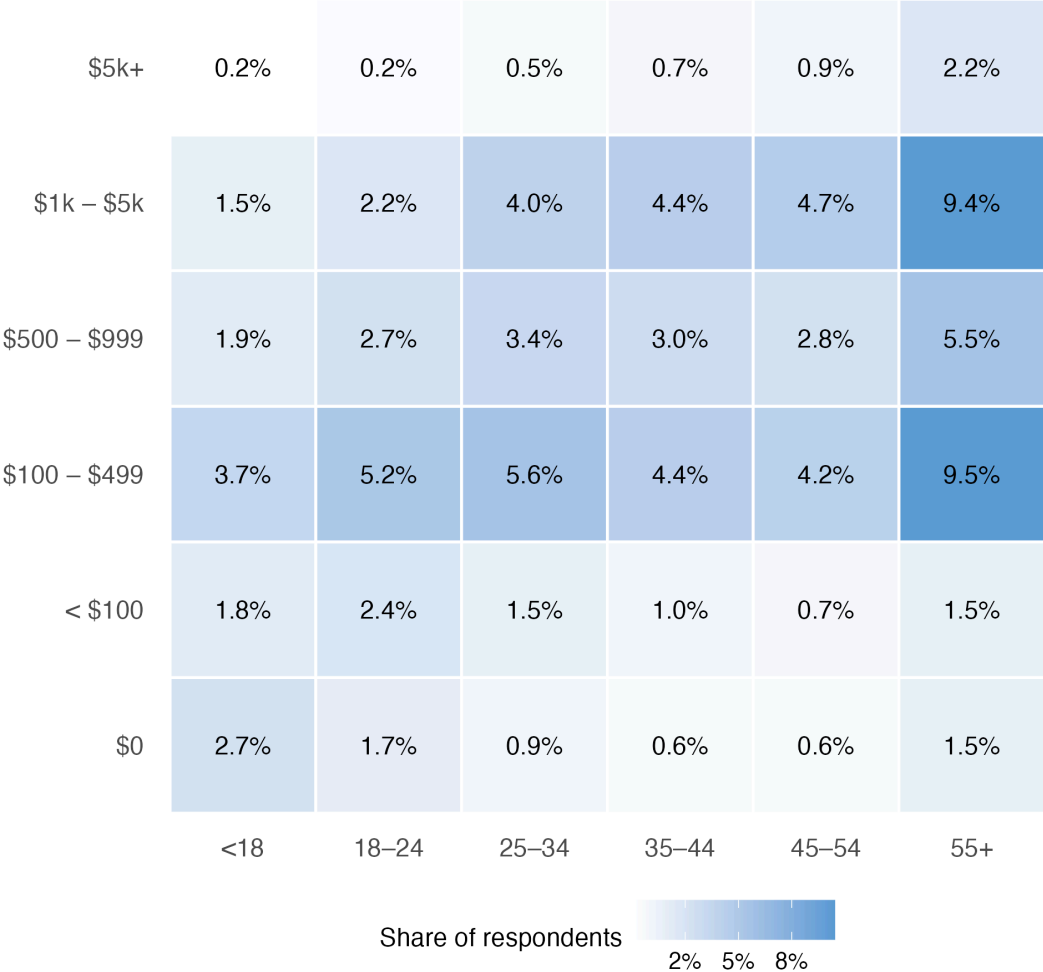
Spending patterns show a relationship and the age of respondents, with high expenditure concentrated among older respondents. The 55+ group stands out, with the largest shares in higher spending brackets, including 9.4% in the \$1k-\$5k range, 9.5% in the \$100-\$499 range, and 2.2% exceeding \$5k, indicating a greater likelihood of substantial financial investment in flight simulation products.

In contrast, younger users are more concentrated in lower spending tiers, with higher shares in \$0 and under \$100 categories. Users aged 25-44 show a more balanced distribution across spending levels, with moderate representation in the \$100-\$999 range (around 3-5%) suggesting a gradual increase in financial commitment.

This pattern aligns closely with increasing purchasing power across life stages, as users gain greater financial capacity to invest in flight simulation.

Overall, we can conclude that although there is a correlation between age and spend, this is likely influenced by increasing purchasing power, but may also reflect longer engagement with flight simulation, where users gradually invest in hardware and addons over time.

Total spend across age groups



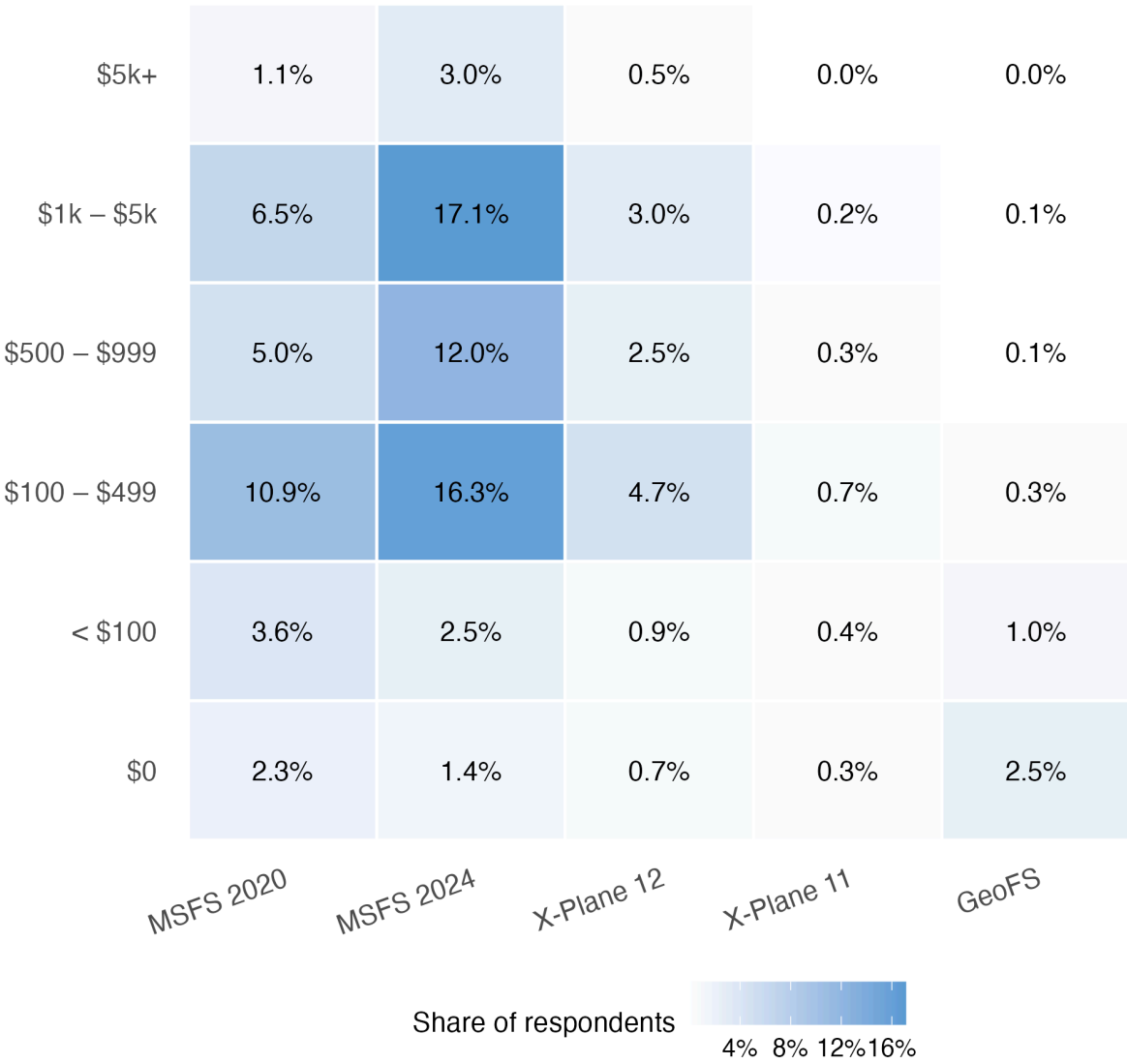
### 4.4. Spending Patterns by Simulator Platform

Spending patterns vary across simulator platforms, with Microsoft Flight Simulator 2020 and 2024 showing the highest concentration of users in higher spending brackets. MSFS 2024 users, in particular, show strong representation in middle to high spending categories, including the \$100-\$499 and \$1k-\$5k ranges as well as a small but notable share exceeding \$5k. MSFS 2020 shows a similar but slightly lower trend.

X-Plane 12 shows more moderate spending, while X-Plane 11 has minimal presence in higher spending brackets, suggesting its legacy status. GeoFS users are largely concentrated in lower spending categories, consistent with its accessibility and lower investment requirements.

Overall, the results suggest that spending is closely linked to each simulator, with MSFS users more likely to invest financially, while other platforms attract lower spending levels.

Total spend across primary simulators



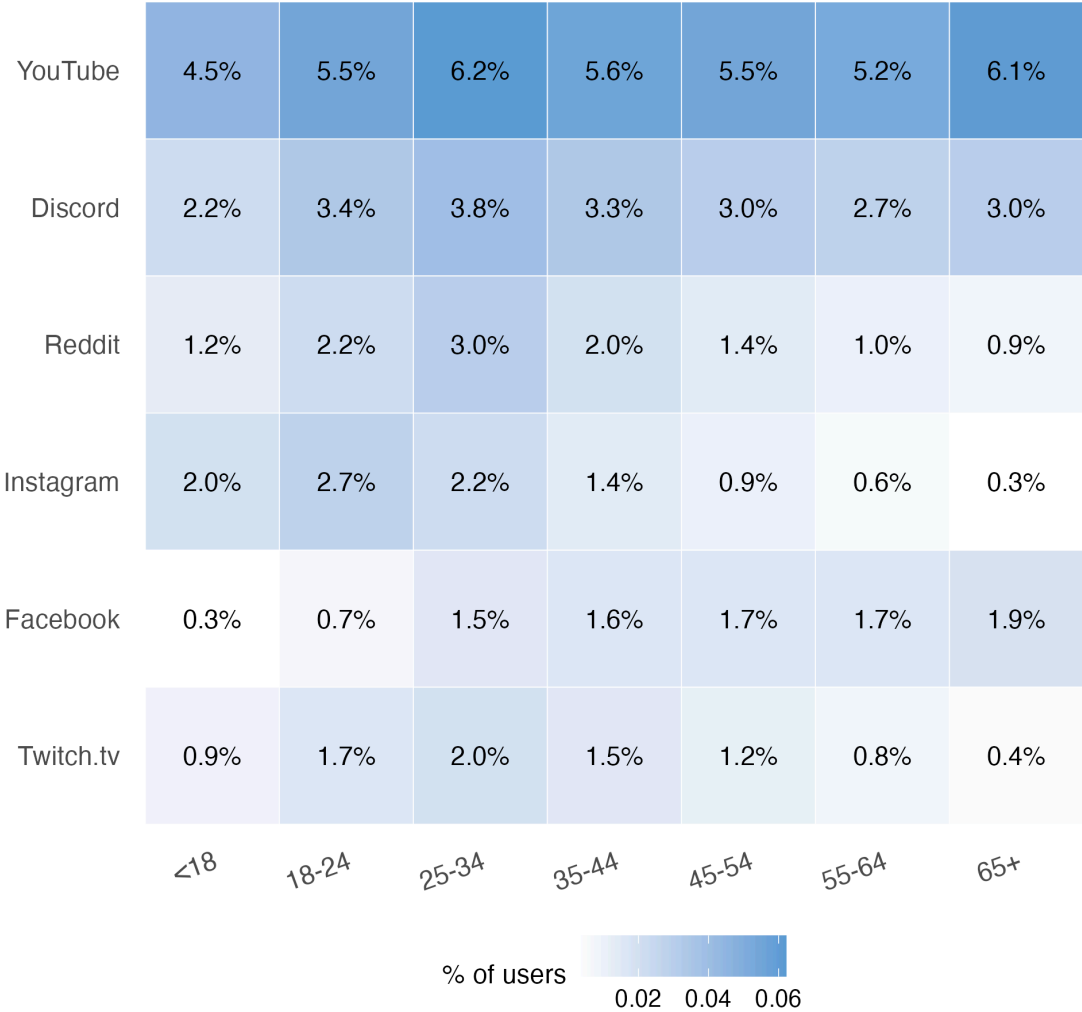
### 4.5. Age Distribution on Social Media Platforms

Social media usage for flight simulation content shows clear platform preferences across age groups, with YouTube consistently dominant across all segments, ranging from 4.5% (<18) to 6.2% (25-34). This highlights its role as the primary source of content consumption regardless of age. Discord follows as the second most used platform, with relatively stable usage across age groups (around 2.7-3.8%) indicating its continued importance for community interaction.

Beyond these two platforms, preferences vary more noticeably across age groups. Reddit and Twitch show stronger usage among younger and mid-age users, peaking around the 25-34 group (3% and 2% respectively) before declining in older segments. In contrast, Facebook usage increases steadily with age, rising from 0.3% (<18) to 1.9% (65+), suggesting it remains more relevant among older users. Similarly, Instagram is more concentrated among younger users, with usage declining consistently with age.

Overall, this analysis suggests a split between universally dominant platforms (YouTube) and age-dependent platforms where younger users favor more interactive or content-driven platforms, while older users show a gradual shift toward more traditional social media channels.

Social media usage for flight simulation content by age group



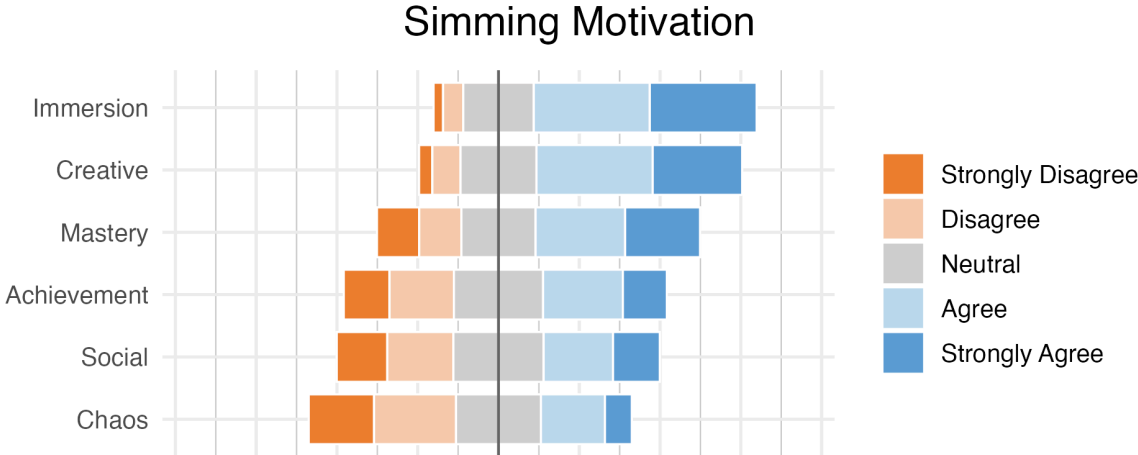
### 4.6. Motivations Driving Engagement in Flight Simulation

Simming motivations highlight a clear hierarchy in what drives users. Immersion emerges as the strongest overall motivation, followed closely by creative and mastery-oriented motivations, indicating that users value both realistic experiences and the ability to engage with the simulation in visually and personally meaningful ways.

Mastery is also a key driver, reinforcing the importance of learning, improving skills, and developing competence over time. Achievement-based motivations are present but more moderate, suggesting that while goals and progress matter, they are not the primary reason users engage with flight simulation.

Lower in the ranking are social and chaos-driven motivations. Social aspects, such as group interaction and shared experiences, show mixed importance, while chaos-related motivations, including unpredictability and rule-bending, receive the lowest levels of agreement overall.

Overall, the results suggest that flight simulation is primarily experienced as a realistic, skill-focused, and personally engaging activity, where immersion and self-improvement are far more important than social interaction or high-intensity, unpredictable gameplay.



## 5. Future Work

Each year, we aim to increase the number of respondents while improving the representation of the broader flight simulation community. As participation remains voluntary, future surveys will continue to focus on enhancing dataset representativeness, including expanding survey partnerships to reach a more diverse range of users across platforms, regions, and experience levels.

This year, we introduced deeper correlation analysis and began exploring user motivations in more detail. Future work will build on this by further developing these areas, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how different aspects of the hobby, such as platform choice, spending behavior and engagement, relate to one another.

Additionally, further analysis of price sensitivity, spending behavior, and the potential impact of broader economic factors, such as inflation, will provide valuable insights into how users invest in flight simulation over time.

If you would like to analyze the data for yourself the raw dataset from this survey is available on the Navigraph website. We encourage you to share any results from analyzing the data on social media using the hashtag [#flightsimsurveyanalysis](#). We'll be happy to repost and help drive deeper discussions within the community.

By building on these efforts, we can better understand emerging trends and support the continued growth of the flight simulation industry.