

An Appify Report

# 2020 Field Service Industry Pulse Check Report

An Examination of the Impacts of Change within  
the Modern Field Service Organization



# Table of Contents

<b>03</b>	<b>Introductions</b>
<b>04</b>	<b>About the Survey</b>
<b>05</b>	<b>Who are the Business Process Decision Makers?</b>
<b>07</b>	<b>Business Processes and Data Accessibility within Field Service</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Measuring Field Service Readiness</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Resources and Technology Investments for Field Service</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Improving Work Order Management Efficiency</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>





# Introduction

Many in the Field Service industry started their company with nothing but a toolbox and sporadic house calls. Some remained a solo operation, and others went on to work for large companies, such as DuPont or Canon. People who started with nothing but a wrench are now running profitable service companies or managing massive service teams within enterprise organizations.

These people, and the organizations for which they work, service everything from grocery store refrigerators to hospital MRI machines. And, when the pandemic hit, the industry felt the repercussions. Grocery store rushes meant more frequent refrigerator repair trips. Restaurants shutting down meant fewer trips to fix a fryer or stove.

The pandemic is just one example of societal upheaval the Field Service industry may encounter. And, any time an event impacts the way society at large uses these pieces of equipment, the industry must adapt.

We hope this report illuminates possible strategies and solutions for your organization as we all navigate through these unprecedented times.

## Key Takeaways

1. Almost one in five field technicians reports dealing with accessible but inaccurate or inaccessible data.
2. Forty-two percent of field technicians spend more than an hour on administrative tasks suggests a need for efficiency within the Field Service industry.
3. Bridging the gap between business processes and technology can improve the collaboration between field technicians and their managers as well as enable all to service customers more effectively and efficiently.

# About the Survey

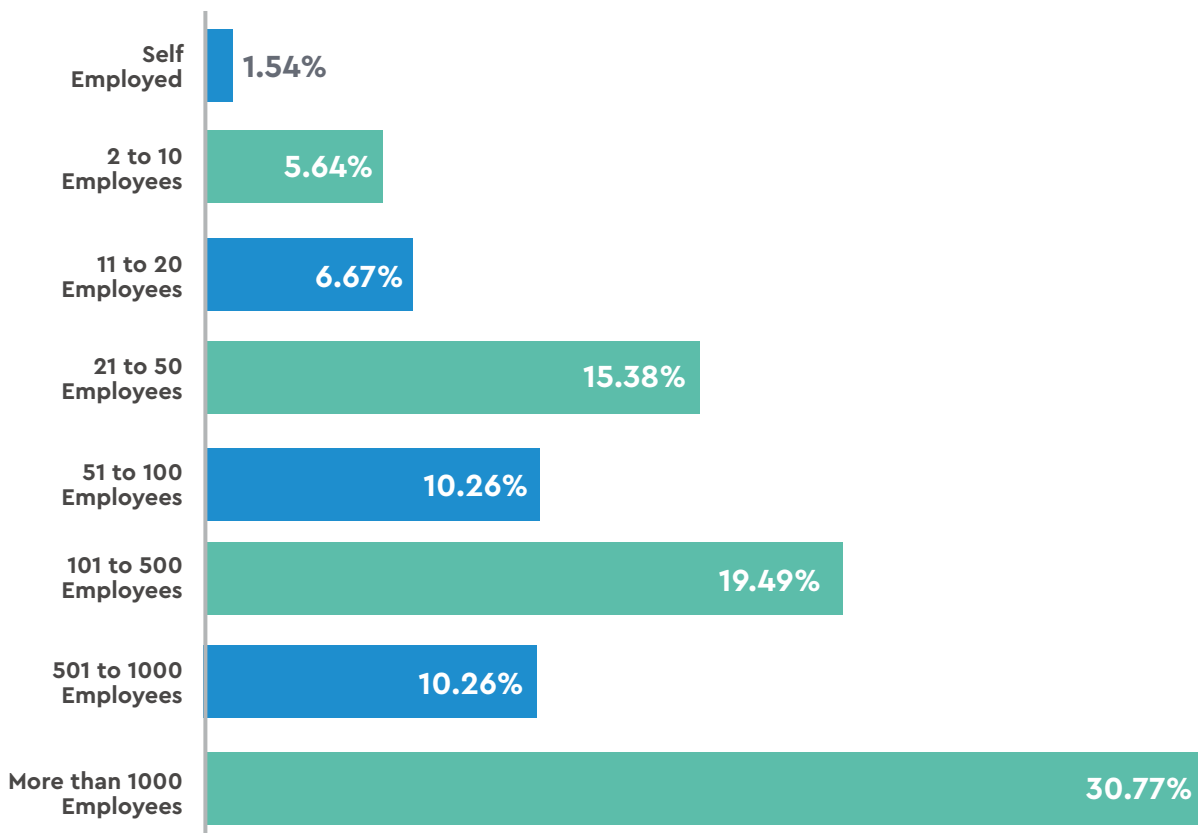
To understand just how people are coping with the current challenge, we polled more than 250 individuals in the industry—field technicians and company owners alike—from a variety of companies around the world to take the pulse of the industry.

We classify mid-market businesses as those that employ 50–500 people. Enterprises employ more than 500 people. Nearly 41% of respondents work for an enterprise-sized firm, and 58.98%

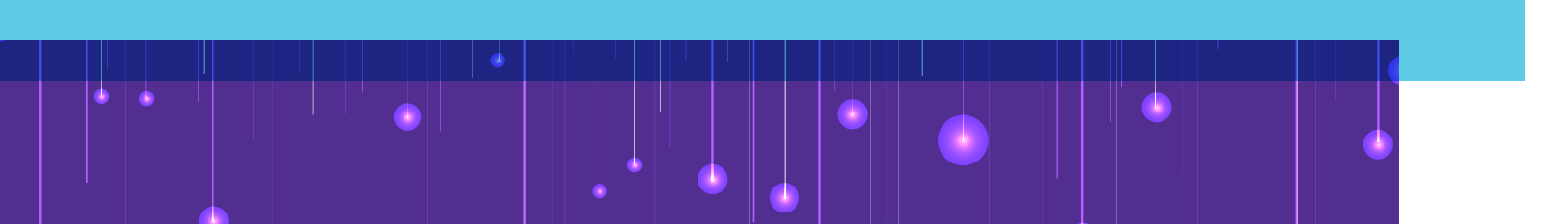
of respondents work for either a mid-market or enterprise-size company.

Fifty-five percent of respondents are individual contributors or team leads. This group also includes respondents who have labeled themselves engineers. The group will be referred to as "field technicians" throughout this report.

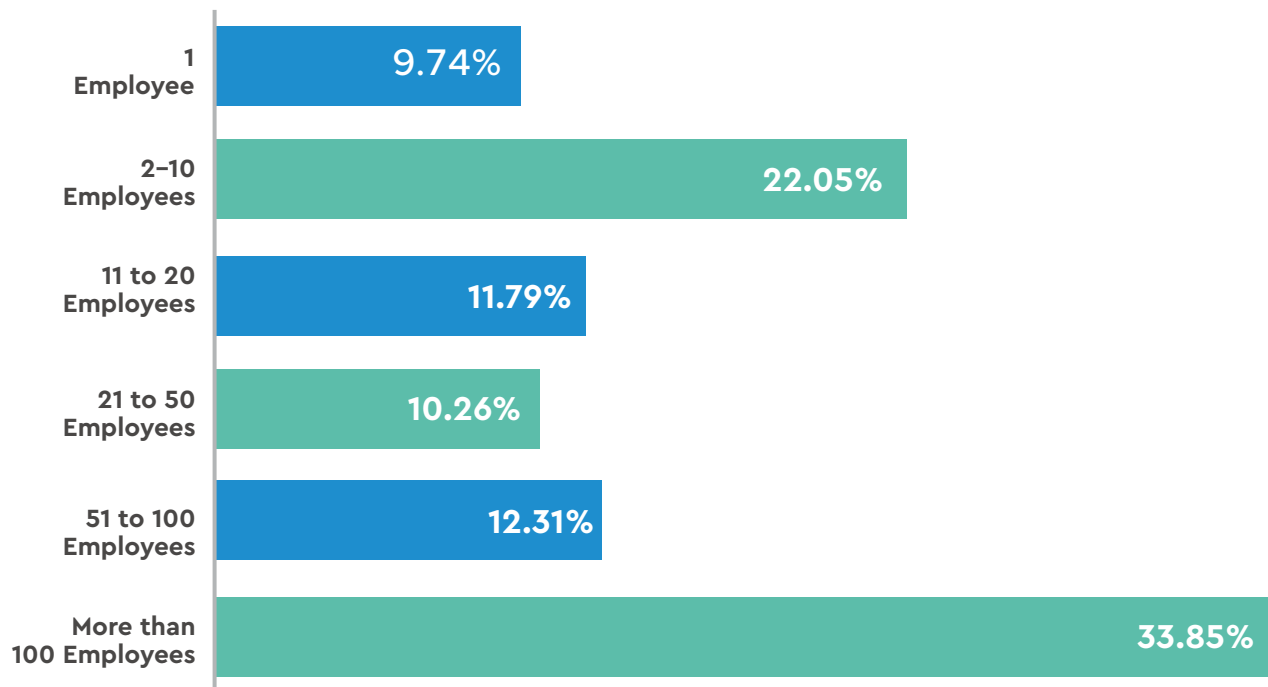
## How many employees work at your company?



(Figure 1)



## How many of your employees are service technicians?



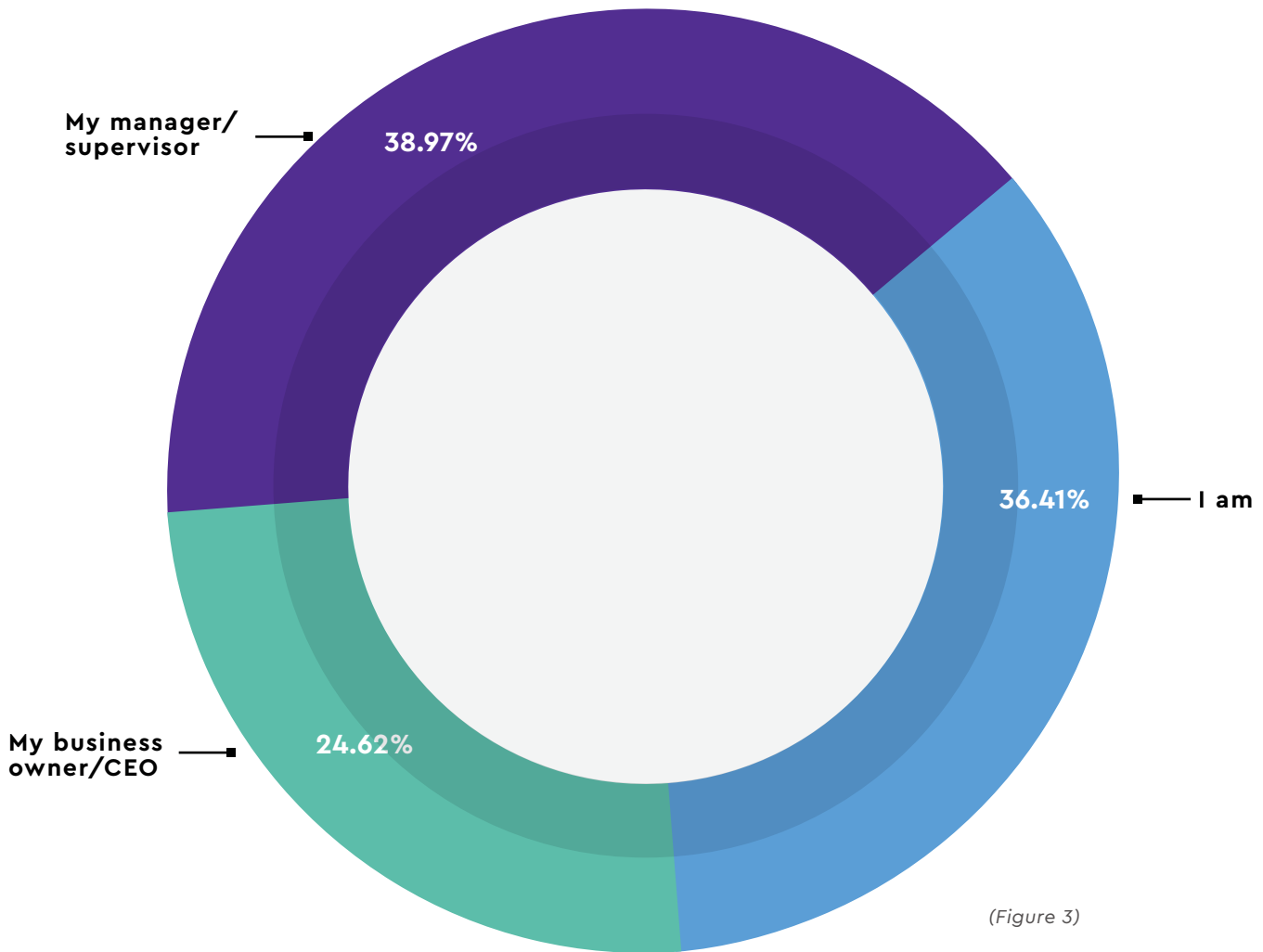
(Figure 2)

## Who are the Business Process Decision Makers?

Parsing who is responsible for business process decisions—decisions ranging from how teams are dispatched to newly developed Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) guidelines—is the first step in mitigating any issues that hamper the delivery of services. For example, though 41% of respondents list

themselves as individual contributors, 36% of respondents are themselves responsible for business process decisions. Thirteen percent of respondents are either C-level or owner or president of their company, but 25% of respondents say business owners or CEOs are responsible for business process decisions.

## Who is primarily responsible for business process decisions related to the delivery of services to customers?



(Figure 3)

A slightly larger proportion of C-level people make business process decisions than there are C-level respondents in the survey. This isn't terribly surprising. Many businesses rely on executives and higher-level contributors to guide the organization forward. But, in an industry where field technicians have intimate knowledge of the job at hand, it seems reasonable to wonder whether they should have a larger say in business process decision making.

As organizations attempt to improve their decision making, they will often be tempted to purchase fix-it-all technologies and spend budget on tools that they feel will help them solve every issue. **Despite the urge to fix everything at once, Field Service companies might instead determine one or two concerns to address and work their way forward from there.**

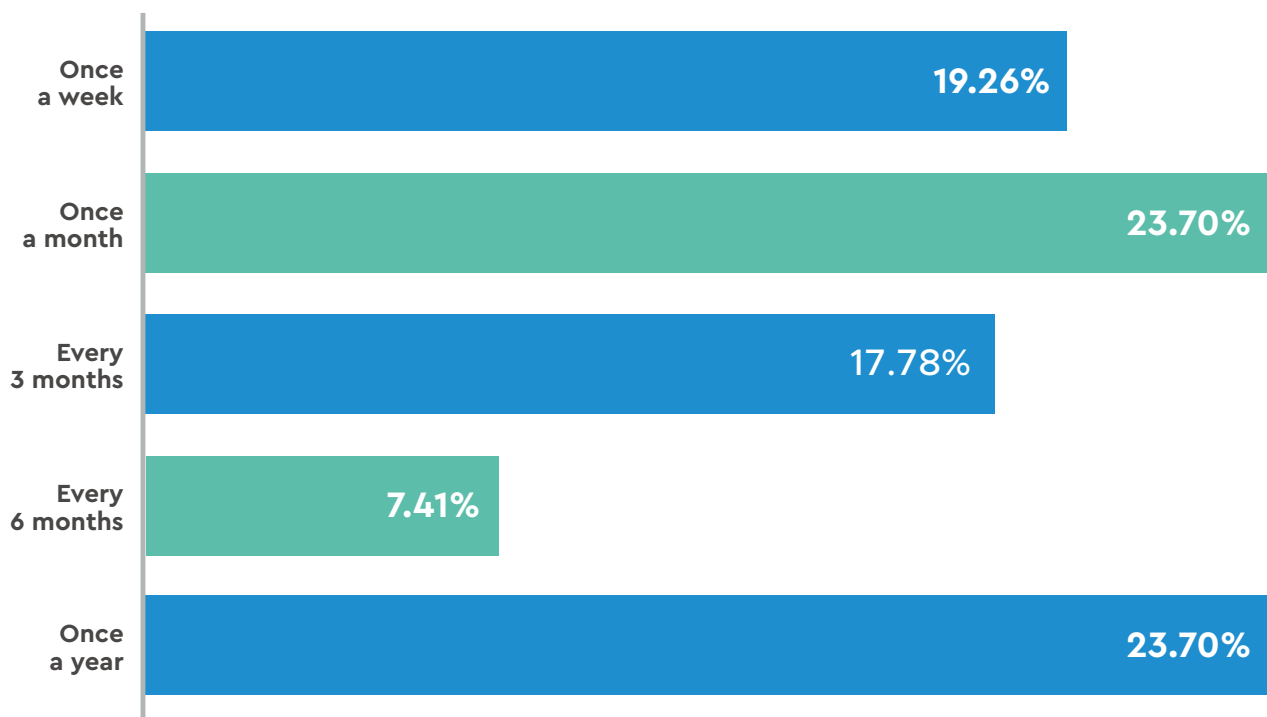
# Business Processes and Data Accessibility within Field Service

Assuming companies have enough data to make intelligent decisions, reviewing business processes regularly should be high-level priorities for companies that wish to become more efficient.

And what of the data used to inform business processes? It will be difficult to affect positive change with poor or inaccessible data no matter how frequently a company reviews its processes.

More than one-third (31%) of respondents report that they review business processes every six months or even less frequently.

## How often does your company review the business process used to service your customers?

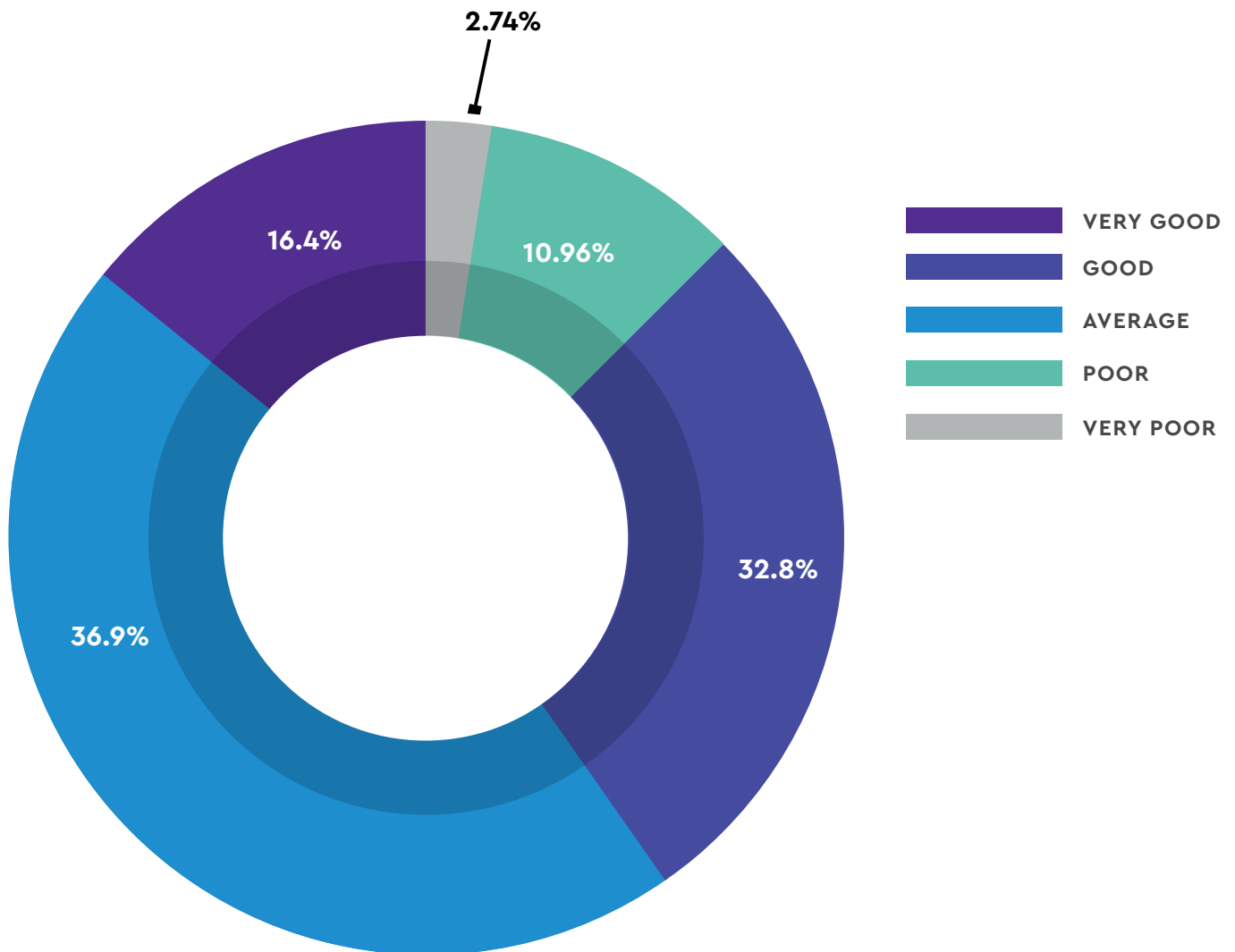


(Figure 4)

A majority (53%) of field technicians rate the quality of their accessible data as either "good" or "very good." Fifty-nine percent of those in managerial roles believe their data is "good" or "very good."

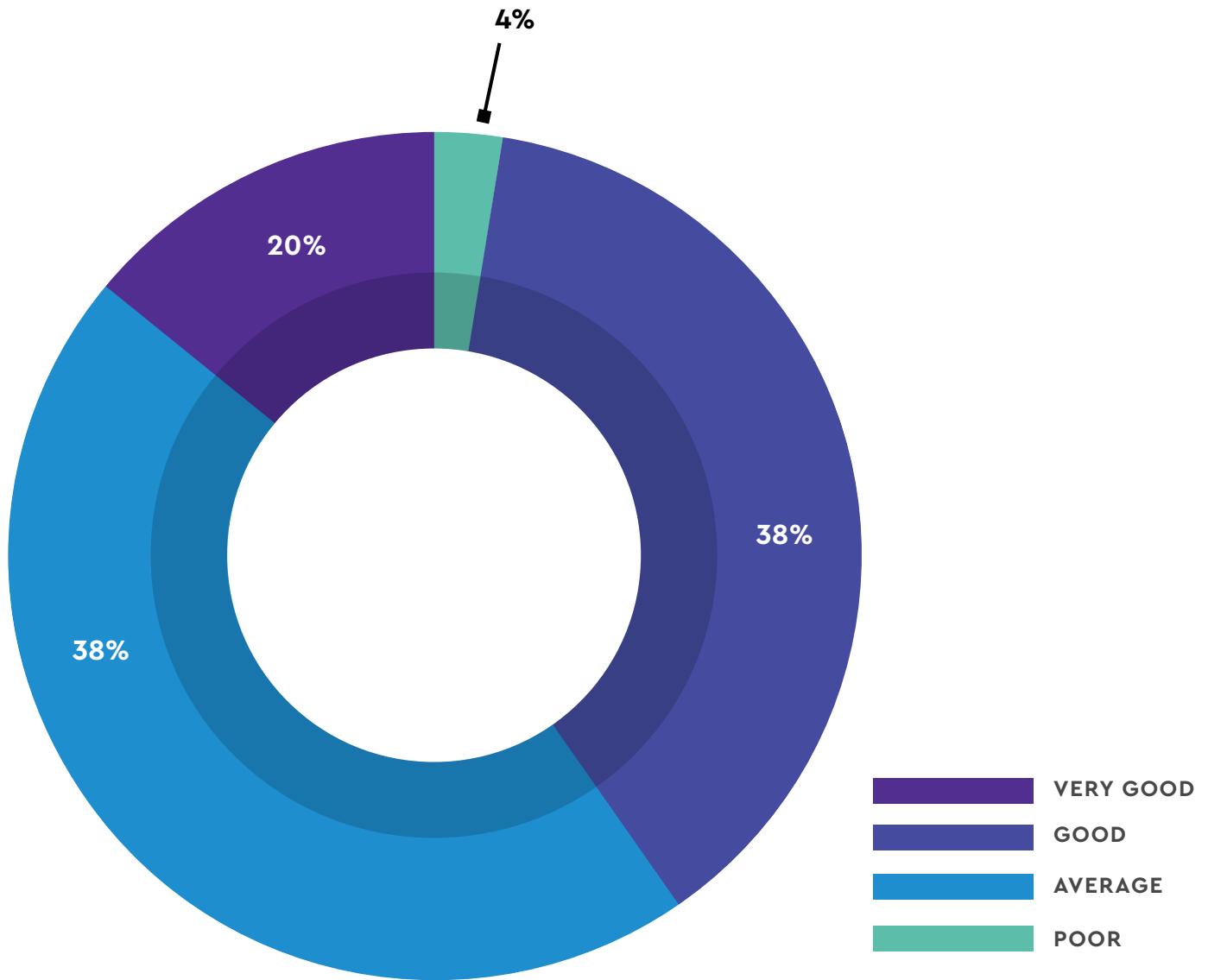
At the other end of the spectrum, nearly 14% of field technicians rate their data as "poor" or "very poor." Companies will likely improve their business process decision making by coming to a better understanding of what makes poor data, poor and eliminating that information from their internal data sources.

## How would you rate the quality of your accessible data?



(Figure 5: Field Technician respondents only)





(Figure 6: Managers and above respondents only)

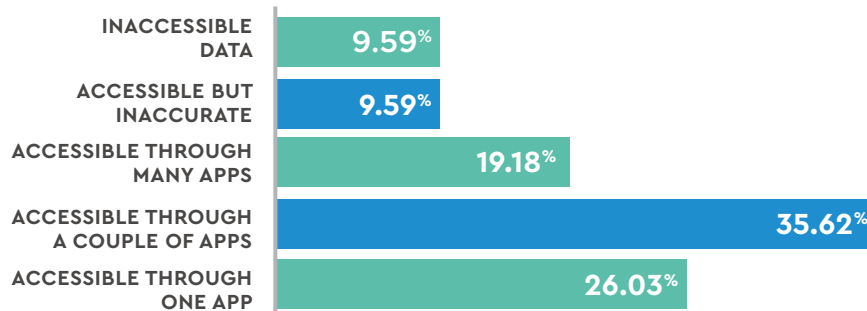
It will be difficult to weed out low-value data if that information is not first accessible. **Only one-quarter (26%) of field technicians describe their work-order data as "accessible through one single application."**

Nineteen percent of field technicians describe their work-order data as either "accessible but inaccurate" or "inaccessible."

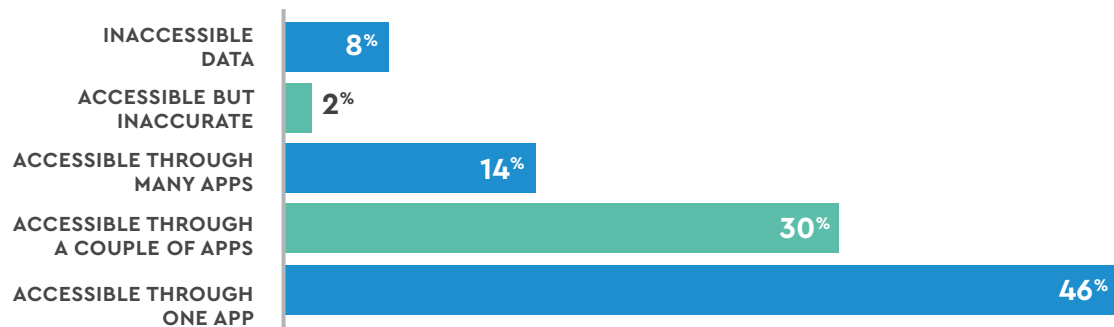
Another challenge exists. A majority (55%) of field technicians say their data is accessible but either through "a couple of apps" or "many apps."

Forty-three percent (43%) of managers must also consult at least two apps to access their data.

## How would you describe the overall accessibility of work order data which enables you to provide services to your customers?



(Figure 7: Field Technician Respondents only)



(Figure 8: Managers and above respondents only)

For Field Service organizations, data enters their systems in the form of manual data entry, paper transactions or mobile device data capture. Data types include information from invoices, work orders, parts, inventory, equipment-maintenance data, and so on. If managers and field technicians alike must jump from one application to the next to manage all of this information, it is likely they will encounter more errors and lower efficiency standards than if everyone had data accessible in one place. Technicians rely on mobile devices in the field.

But what if they enter a poor cellular coverage zone or the Wi-Fi on the jobsite goes down? What if the data input while offline doesn't sync when the device is able to connect to the network again?

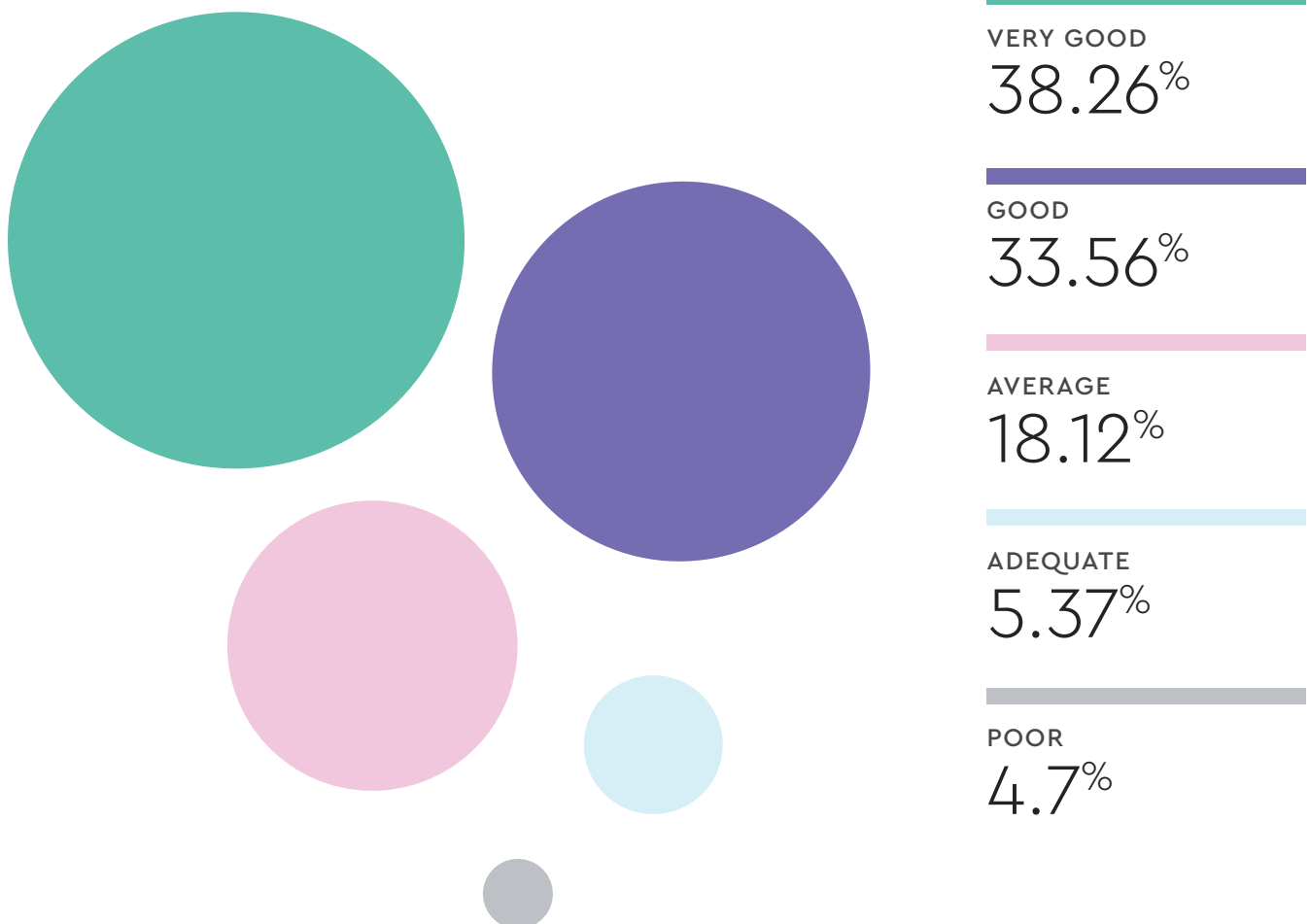
**Ensuring data is accurate requires a variety of different systems and devices to communicate, on and off-line. Doing so is impossible without a flexible solution that can integrate these sources and limit data-quality and accessibility issues.**

# Measuring Field Service Readiness

How field technicians rate their Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and other service equipment is especially crucial as all must now adopt additional, more stringent workplace safety protocols. Seventy-two percent (72.6%) of field technicians and managers rate the quality

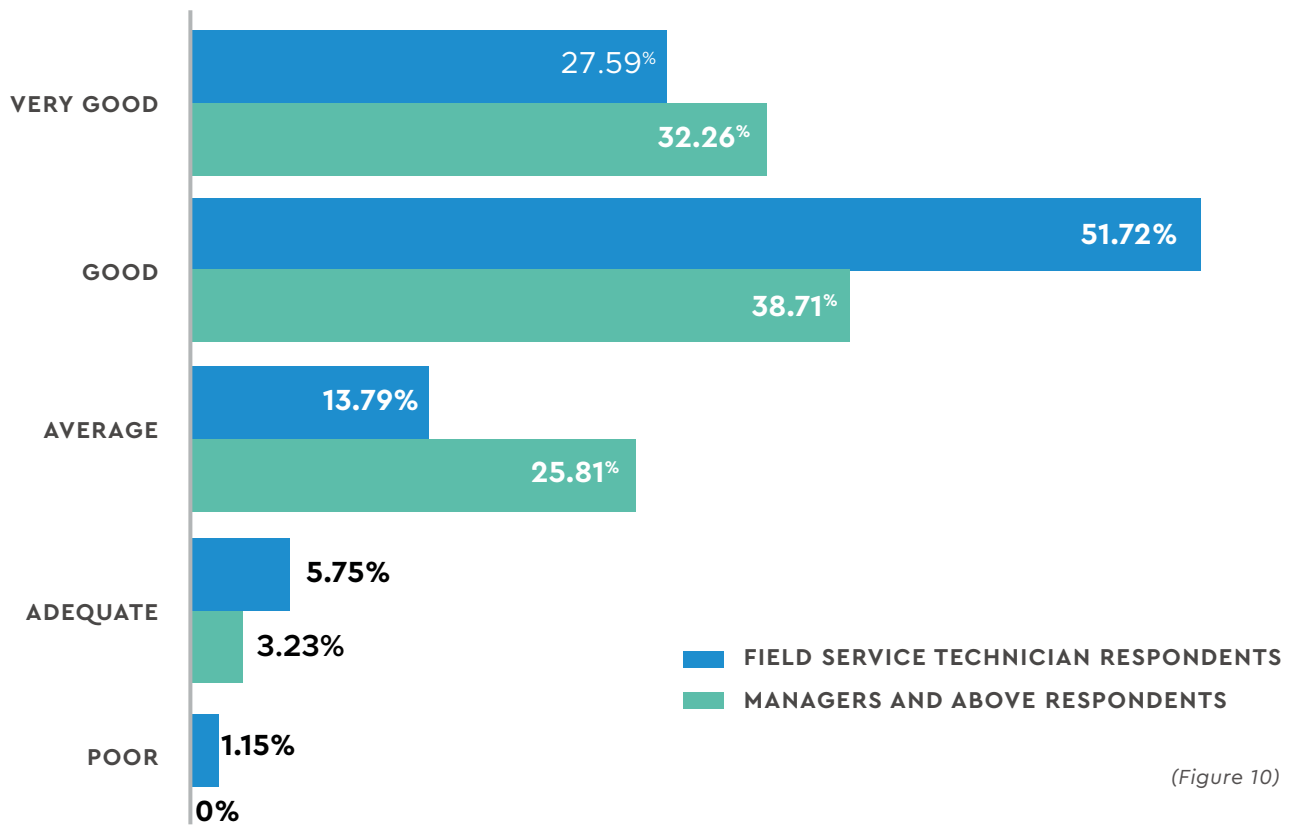
of the PPE they use to service their customers as "good" or "very good," an encouraging sign. This suggests field technicians and management have a shared understanding of what makes for effective PPE.

How would you rate the quality of the PPE you are using to service your customers?



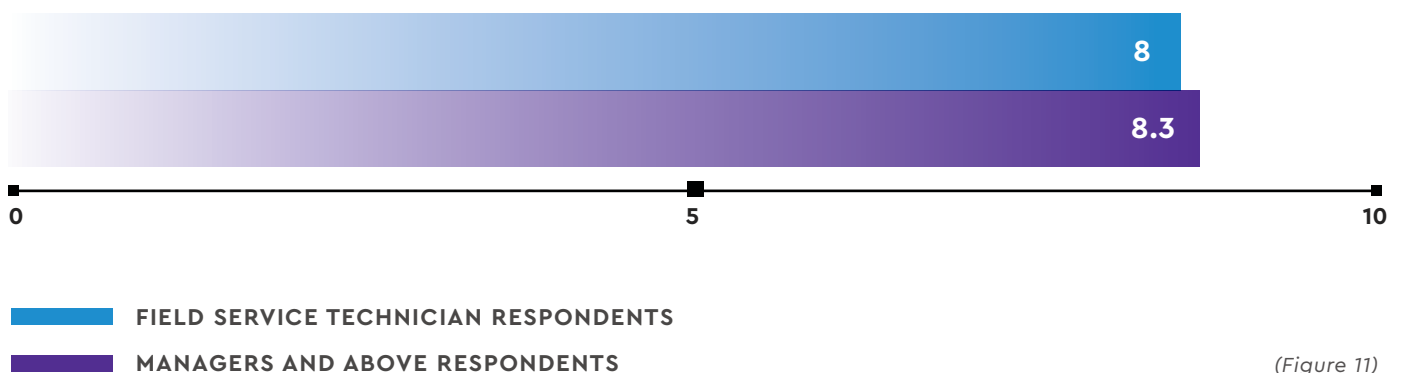
(Figure 9: Field Technician respondents only)

## How would you rate the quality of the equipment you use to service your customers?



## How ready are your service teams to service customers post COVID-19?

Many respondents don't feel that the pandemic will impact their field readiness. We asked respondents to rate how ready service teams will be to go on-site to service customers post COVID-19. Field technicians responded, on average, with a rating of about 8.3.

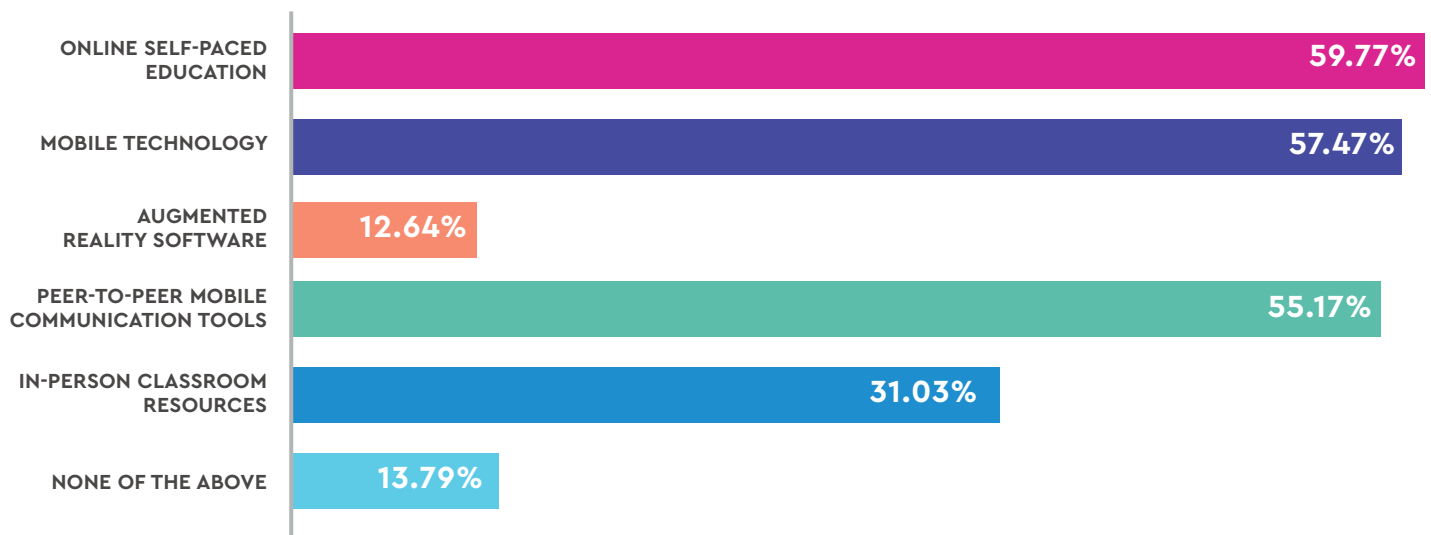


# Resources and Technology Investments for Field Service

We asked respondents what resources are currently being provided to enhance the work and on-site performance of their service teams. Nearly 60% of field technicians replied with "online self-paced education (60%)," "peer-to-peer mobile communication tools (55%)," or "mobile technology (57%)."

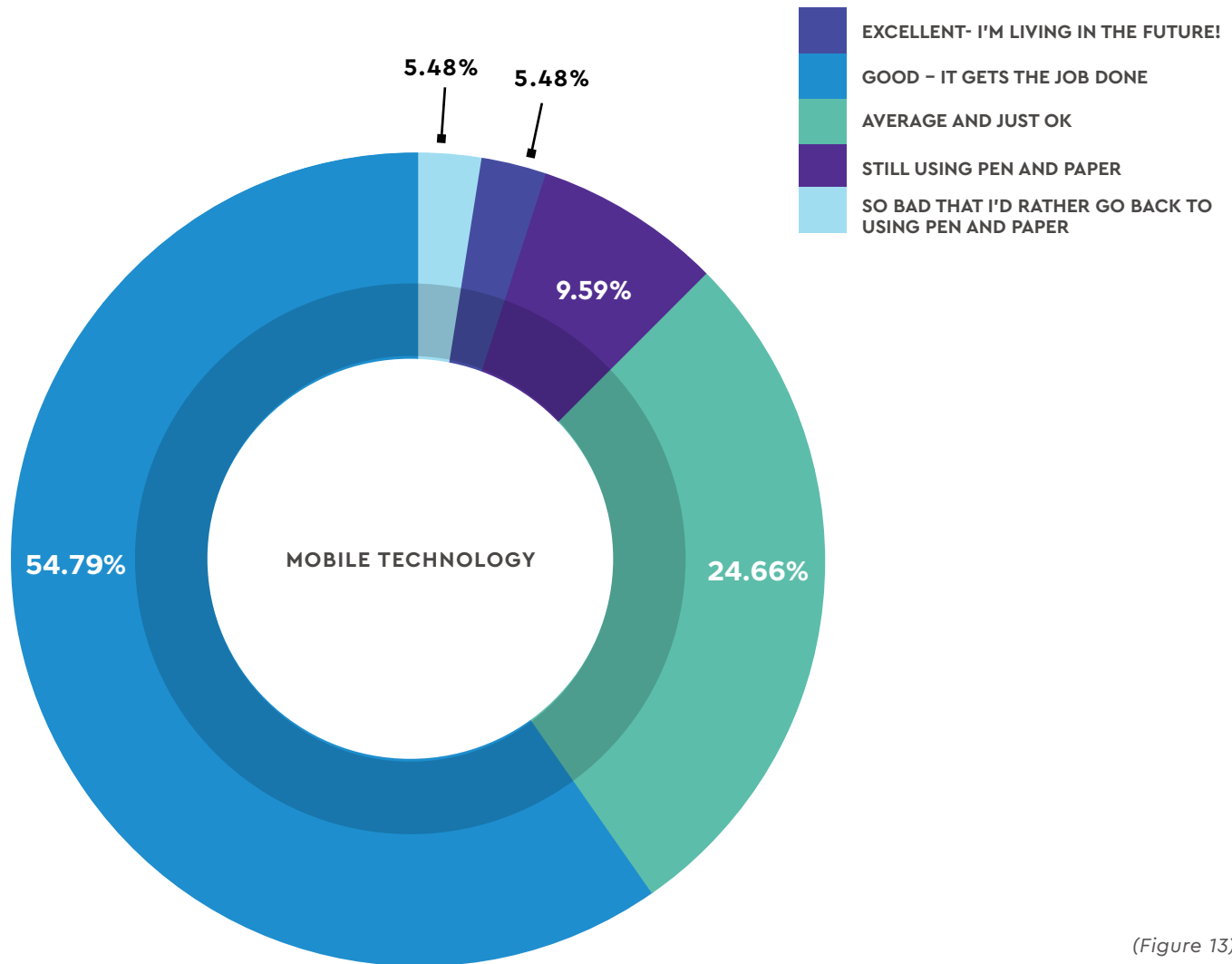
Very few field technicians (13%) report using augmented reality (AR) software, and fewer than one-third (31%) report leveraging in-person classroom resources.

## What resources are being provided to enhance team performance?



(Figure 12: Field Technician respondents only)

## How would you rate the mobile technology you are using to service your customers?



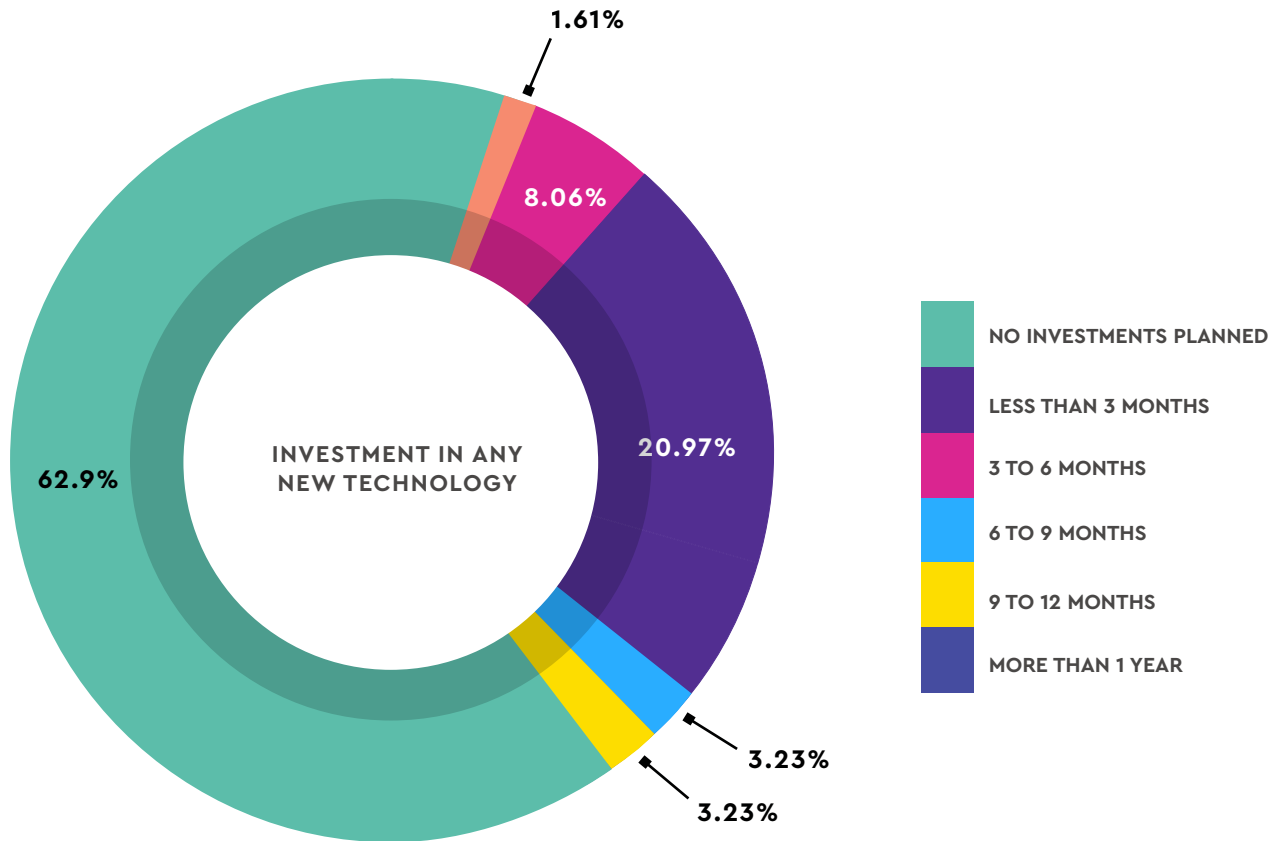
(Figure 13)

Responses to these questions can provide organizations with a better understanding of the types of resources technicians may need moving forward. **A venture capital firm's survey found that 80% of the global workforce is deskless<sup>1</sup>. And, despite these workers' reliance on mobile devices, they rarely seem to be considered when it comes to new technology advancements.**

For example, just 5.48% of our field technician respondents feel their mobile technology is "excellent." And, while a majority (54.79%) feels their mobile technology is "good, it gets the job done," a further one-quarter say their mobile technology is "average and just OK."

<sup>1</sup> [www.desklessworkforce2018.com](http://www.desklessworkforce2018.com)

## Are you looking to invest in new technology for your service teams post COVID-19?

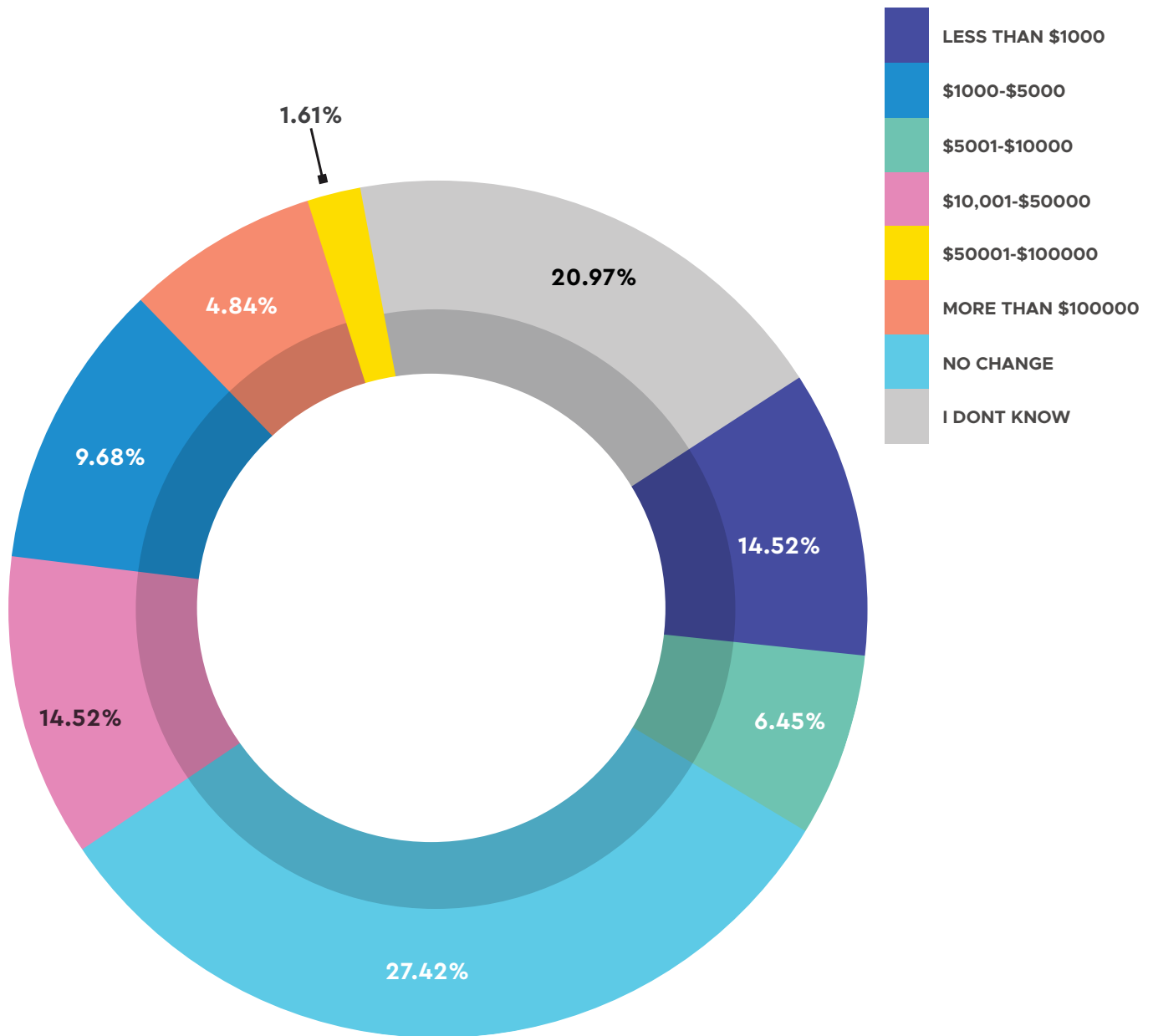


(Figure 14: Managers and above respondents only)

Technology investments might be in order, given those challenges. But, 62.9% of managers and above said "no investments planned" when asked if they are looking to make investments in new technology to support their team post pandemic (though we may again here consider the pandemic to equate with any future upheaval organizations may encounter).

Those respondents that do plan to make changes appear ready to do so quickly. Of the managers who report they will invest in technology, 20.97% plan to do so in less than three months. Of the managers who know their budgets and expect to make technology investments, 24.2% plan to make investments totaling \$5,000 or less.

## How much are you budgeting for new technology to support your service teams post COVID-19?



(Figure 15: Managers and above respondents only)



To help determine the types of investments that may help technicians, we asked them to rank, in order of importance, the features they need from their mobile application in the field. Two-

thirds (62%) or more of the respondents felt work order information, communication with customers, and maintenance procedures and knowledge base were "very important."

	Not Important	Slightly Important	Important	Fairly Important	Very Important	No Opinion
Work Order Information	8.00%	0.00%	22.00%	10.00%	56.00%	4.00%
Inventory and Parts Management	8.16%	8.16%	20.41%	12.24%	44.90%	6.12%
Communication with Peers	6.00%	4.00%	26.00%	16.00%	40.00%	8.00%
Communication with Customers	4.00%	2.00%	6.00%	10.00%	72.00%	6.00%
Maintenance Procedures and Knowledge base	4.00%	2.00%	12.00%	22.00%	58.00%	2.00%
Image and Video Capture	8.00%	20.00%	16.00%	26.00%	28.00%	2.00%

(Figure 16: Managers and above respondents only)

While customer communications and work order information are likely available to field technicians currently, it seems that their tools may be lacking the ability to pass down the organic knowledge base. When a 25-year veteran technician retires, does their domain knowledge leave with them?

Technology decision making must take into account non-traditional forms of data, such as institutional knowledge, in order to provide field technicians with the information and skills they need to succeed.

## Improving Work Order Management Efficiency

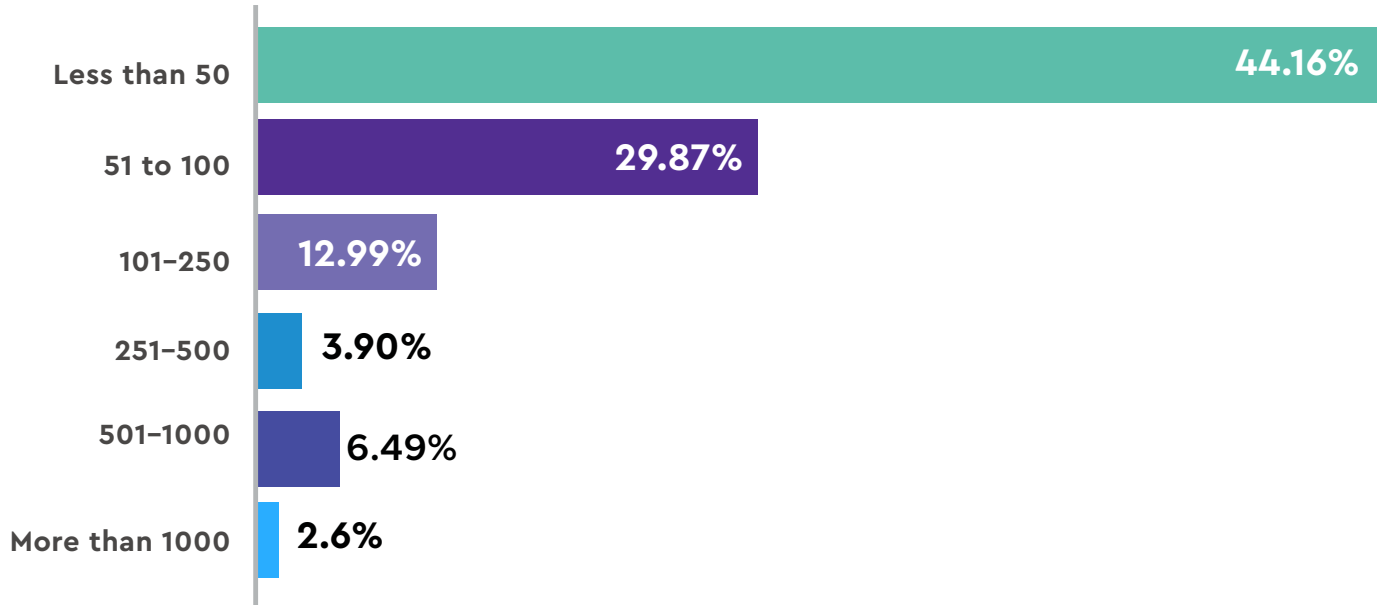
The current societal disruption may very well cause ongoing changes to the types of work orders technicians service. When people stop using hotels en masse, there is less of a need for maintenance. Textile factories have likely seen an uptick in machine usage due to the demand for cloth masks. Those machines will need more frequent attention than they did in the past.

maintenance visits. Other industries will demonstrate a marked drop in demand for their equipment.

Currently, field technicians see about 50 orders or fewer in one month. Forty-four percent of field technicians report receiving fewer than 50 work orders in one month

We may see spikes in work orders for industries that previously relied on only semi-regular

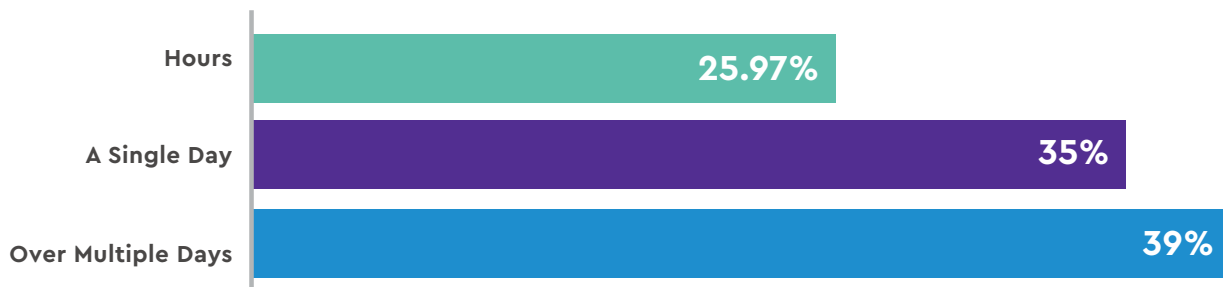
## How many work orders do you typically receive in one month?



(Figure 17: Field Technician respondents only)

There is a range of time frame durations for these work orders. More than one-third (39%) of field technicians have work orders stretching over multiple days, 35% have work orders that last one day, and 25.97% have work orders that last a few hours.

## How long does it take to complete a work order?



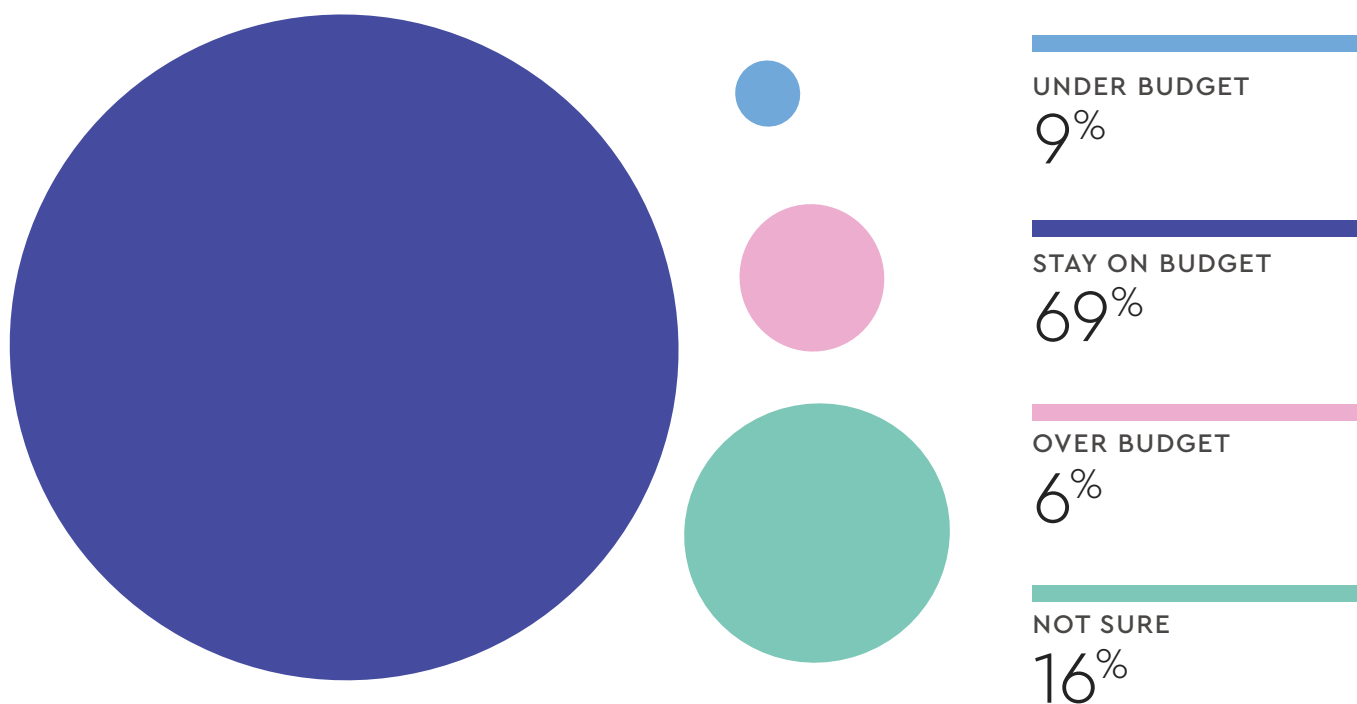
(Figure 18: Field Technician respondents only)

The volume of these orders and the duration they last may shift dramatically in the coming months. How organizations respond to changing demands will likely dictate future success.

# Budgeting and Division of Labor

Sixty-nine percent of managers said their projects stay on budget, and just 6% report typical projects going over budget.

## How many work orders do you typically receive in one month?

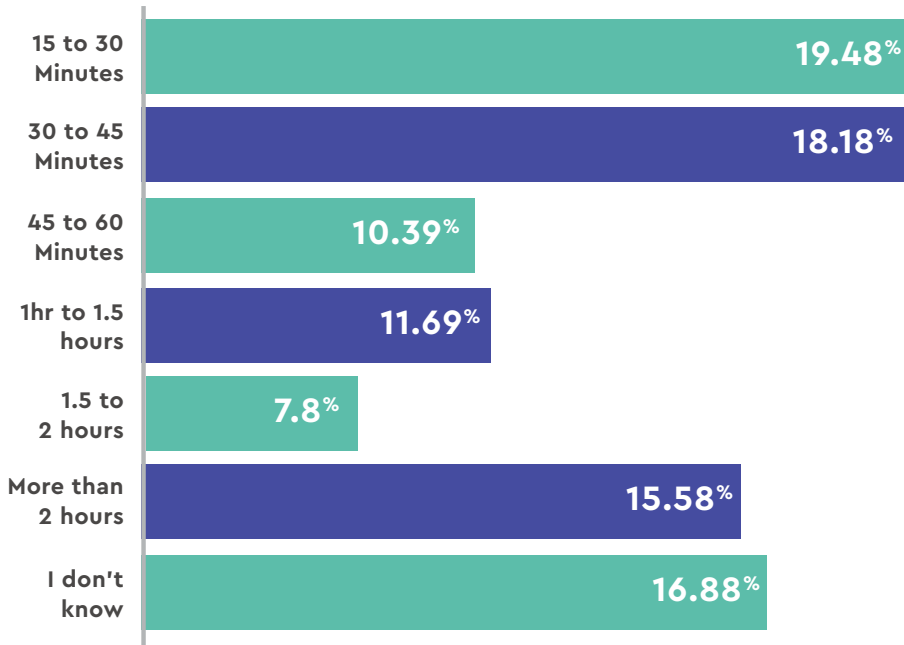


(Figure 19: Field Technician respondents only)

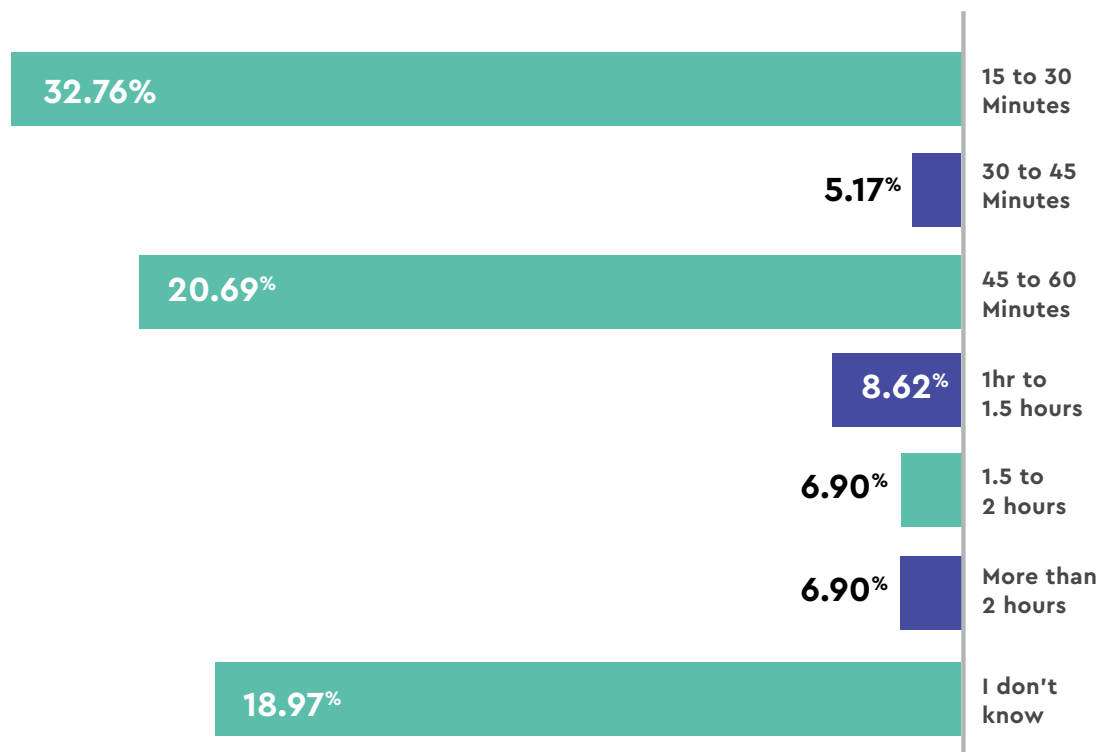
It seems that keeping projects on budget isn't a pressing concern. However, organizations can still improve budgeting at the margins. We asked respondents "How much time would you estimate each field technician spends managing/administering work orders vs. actually performing the work?"

One-quarter of all respondents replied that field technicians spend between 15 and 30 minutes performing administrative work. A slightly smaller proportion (19.48%) of field technicians replied that they spend between 15 and 30 minutes on administrative work. One-third of managers replied that field technicians spend that amount of time doing administrative work.

## How much time does each field technician spend on managing/administering work orders vs actually performing the work?



(Figure 20: Managers and above respondents only)



(Figure 21 Managers and above respondents only)

Managers think that field technicians spend a minimal amount of time on administrative work than the field technicians themselves. This difference is illustrated more boldly when we examine the rate of respondents that think field technicians spend more than two hours on administrative work.

Almost 7% of managers think field technicians spend more than two hours on administrative work. But almost, 16% of field technicians report spending more than two hours on administrative work.

Managers have a different idea than field technicians about the amount of time technicians spend on administrative and work-order management tasks relative to their service tasks. For the Field Service industry in particular, time is money, and any excess time spent on administrative work relative to servicing the work order in question is lost time and therefore lost money.

Bridging this gap using technology and better collaboration can help field technicians see eye to eye with managers about how much time is lost to paperwork and other similar activities.

## Conclusion

Change happens. The question is, will your business be flexible enough to manage through the change. To ensure you can, addressing the needs of the field service teams, continuously examining business processes to look for efficiency gains and improving your technology are key to the continuity of servicing your customers when change occurs.

Field Service remains a vital part of our infrastructure. Allowing employees to focus on the job at hand while increasing productivity to satisfy the needs of their customers should be the goal of any organization. It's clear, however, that many organizations are not prioritizing technology investments in the near future.

It is unwise to buy technology for the sake of having shiny new tools. Yet, companies can still reevaluate their current platforms. If tools in use today are not providing the efficiency needed to service customers and keep field technicians from spending inordinate amounts of time doing administrative work, it may be time to consider a new solution.

If the findings in the report highlight concerns you may have with your business processes, it may be time to reevaluate the tools you're using to deliver business efficiencies.

Our Appify Field Service and Workforce Management Platform can mitigate many of the issues respondents raise with their business processes, data and technology. We are on a mission to bring great software to every employee in your business by making it easy for anyone to build apps that accelerate their work. Whether you automate an off-line paper-based process or enhance your current software-driven process, you can build user-friendly apps with Turbo.

For more information, visit [www.appify.com](http://www.appify.com)

