#NewMR

The State of Insights September 2023

NewMR Report
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Introduction

The main message from this study is that the people we spoke to (in both June and September) were generally, but not universally, optimistic. Most people see AI as the most positive thing impacting research, and it is the method they expect to use more over the next 18 months. However, most people see a potential downside to AI too.

This is the second report in a NewMR series that looks at the insight's ecosystem. The first wave was in June 2023. Analysis of the data shows that very little has changed over the three months between these waves. The main shift is that AI is even more dominant as a theme in September than in June.
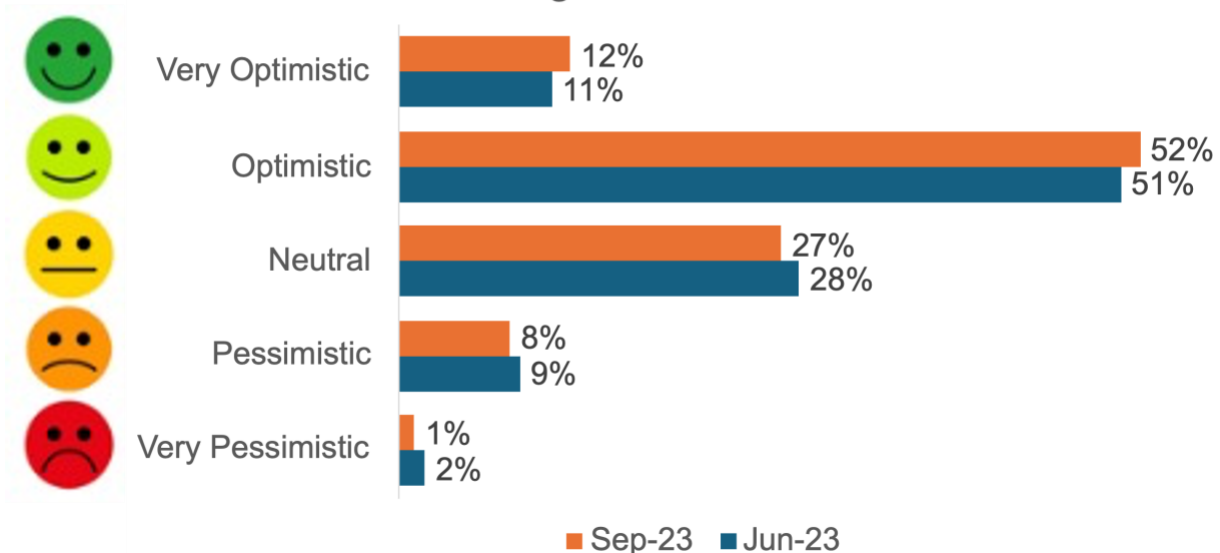
This report looks at the following three topics:
- The level of optimism in insights and research
- The most positive and the most worrying things at the moment
- What do researchers expect to be using more of and less of over the next 18 months?

The sample composition should be noted. The population that is being sampled comprises people interested in insights and in some way connected with NewMR. This process tends to overrecruit English speakers, people who have been in insights for more than 10 years and are more likely to be in Europe or North America.

Optimism

Optimism was asked using a 5-point smiley scale, ranging from Very Pessimistic to Very Optimistic.

How optimistic are you about the state of insights and research?

	Very Optimistic	Optimistic	Neutral	Pessimistic	Very Pessimistic
Sep-23	12%	52%	27%	8%	1%
Jun-23	11%	51%	28%	9%	2%

■ Sep-23 ■ Jun-23

How optimistic are you about the state of insights and research?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Total Pessimistic	10%	9%
Total Optimistic	61%	64%
Net Optimism	*51%*	*55%*

The Table and chart above show that nearly two-thirds of the participants in the study were optimistic, but about 10% were pessimistic. The data for September and June were very similar.
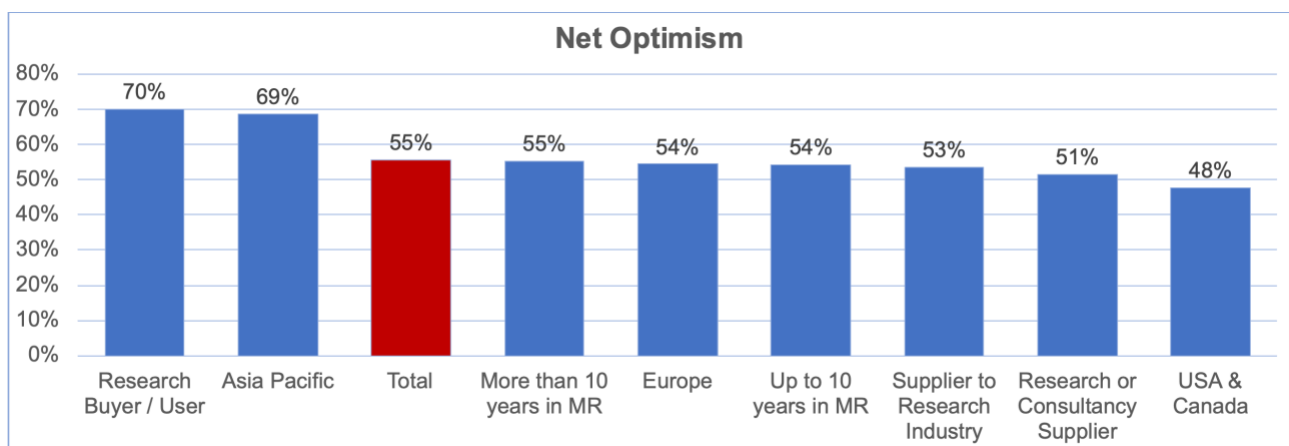
The tables below show the levels of optimism, pessimism, and net optimism for different sub-groups in the data for June and September 2023.

Net Optimism June 2023	Research Buyer / User	USA & Canada	Supplier to the Research Industry	Total	Asia Pacific	Europe	Research or Consultancy Supplier
Base	36	83	43	270	51	117	178
Total Pessimistic	6%	10%	7%	10%	10%	9%	13%
Total Optimistic	64%	66%	60%	61%	61%	58%	58%
Net Optimism	58%	57%	53%	51%	51%	49%	46%

Net Optimism September 2023	Research Buyer / User	Asia Pacific	Total	More than 10 years in MR	Europe	Up to 10 years in MR	Supplier to the Research Industry	Research or Consultancy Supplier	USA & Canada
Base	50	51	355	298	160	59	43	249	113
Total Pessimistic	8%	4%	9%	9%	9%	10%	9%	9%	12%
Total Optimistic	78%	73%	65%	64%	63%	64%	63%	61%	59%
Net Optimism	70%	69%	55%	55%	54%	54%	53%	51%	48%

Given the sample sizes, we can note that Research Buyers were the most optimistic in both waves and that Research/Consultancy Suppliers showed lower levels of optimism. However, as the chart below illustrates, most groups show similar levels of optimism.

We will wait until we have further waves before drawing further conclusions.

The most positive things in 2023
We asked the participants to say, "What are the most positive things about the insights and research world in 2023?" in their own words. This generated two themes, AI and technology being the main theme and the second theme relating to clients and the market for research and insights.

Regarding AI, the phrases tend to be straightforward, such as "*Continuing technological advances/AI*" and "*AI developments to streamline and create efficiencies*". Many of the comments went further than simply listing tech, such as "*We continue to make use of new tools at our disposal to address real business needs that research and insights can help to answer.*" and "*Increased ability to harness data and insights as research and tools become more sophisticated.*"

The comments about clients and the market for research covered three sub-themes Quality, Customer Focus and Opportunities for Growth. Examples of Quality include "*Some clients putting accent on quality of the data collected - being interested in the process of how the data is collected and checked, and not only in the final data received.*"

In terms of Customer Focus, many comments linked to changes such as AI, for example, "*Interest in customer focus and fact based decision making new technologies arising from AI*". Similarly, many comments relating to Opportunities for Growth linked to AI and technology, for example, "*Ongoing demand for insights and research across industries, along with the influx of technology-led innovations for insights and research.*"

The word cloud below, produced by [Word Cloud Plus](#), shows a similar picture, with AI and technology leading the way. Beyond the AI and technology themes, the cloud shows the impact of the importance of data, business decisions, and data quality.

The most positive things reported in this wave were very similar to the positives mentioned in June.

The most negative or worrying things in 2023
We asked the participants to say, "What are the most negative or worrying things about the world of insights and research in 2023?"

One of the top worrying themes was AI, showing that it is seen as both positive and negative. Comments relating to this included "*The whole AI thing and how it will affect the way research is done and if it will affect jobs.*", "*AI-washing. I'm all for embracing the technology, but it doesn't*

mean that we need to put 'ai' words in everything we do.", and "*I think it is worrying how little we understand AI and how much people are starting to rely on it already*".

The single largest group of worries related to changes by clients, for example, "*Shrinking client budgets; hybrid working means project commissioning times are increasing dramatically; clients will deem that doing their own AI powered DIY research is 'good enough'*"

Other key worries included: concerns about the quality of data (especially because of fraud), lack of skills and training in the research ecosystem, and problems related to the economy and client budgets.

The negative/worrying things mentioned in September were similar to those mentioned in June 2023, but with AI taking a bigger role in the concerns.

These themes are highlighted in the word cloud shown below.

What is going to be used more?
To get a sense of which aspects of research are going to be used more and those which are going to be used less in the near future, we asked the participants to describe their expectations via open-ended questions. To investigate where the increases would be, we asked: "What types of research approaches or research tools do you expect to be using more of over the next 18 months?"

By a long way, more than in June 2023, the main thing that people say they are going to use more of is AI. Here is a typical comment "*I expect to be utilising AI a lot more both with internal platforms and third party suppliers, not just during analysis but also fieldwork with conversational surveys and AI prompting in qual work*"

Beyond AI, the main mention was for more qual research. More qual work leveraging AI is one angle, but so is straightforward qual, for example, "*all forms of qualitative research approaches*" and "*Qualitative research approach eg FGD and in-depth interview*". It is interesting to note that

ESOMAR's recently released Global Market Research Report highlighted a growth in qualitative research.

Our participants also said they expected to do more analysis, including visualisation, text analytics, and dashboards.

What is going to be used less?

We asked the participants, "What types of research approaches or research tools do you expect to be using less of in the near future?" Many of them said there was nothing they were expecting to use less of over the next 18 months; indeed, this was the single most common response.

Amongst those who did list things they were going to use less, the main category was face-to-face research, and the second category was something participants described as 'traditional research'.

What else did people say?

In every NewMR study, we finish by asking people whether there is anything else they would like to say about this topic or, indeed, this study.

Most participants did not leave an additional comment. Amongst those who left an on-topic comment, themes included:

- Excitement about the potential impact of AI.
- Concern about the potential impact of AI.
- Concern about the jobs market for researchers.
- Concern about data quality.

One comment that sums up the extra comments nicely is "*The State of Insights and Research is changing dramatically - researchers will be AI-enabled or obsolete. What a fabulously exciting time to be a market researcher.*"

So What?

The main message from this study is that the insight professionals we spoke to tend to be optimistic about the state of insights. We can also note the broadly optimistic tone of the responses is similar across the two waves. However, it is also important to note that 10% of our participants described themselves as pessimistic about the state of insights.

The focus of attention of research and insight professionals is on AI. Most people see AI as potentially positive, but many of these people also acknowledge it potential harm.

Beyond AI, the three themes worries that many participants mentioned were a) data quality concerns, b) the economy and declining client budgets, and c) the impact of DIY/Self-serve on the structure and viability of the current insight's ecosystem.

Appendix

The appendix includes the questionnaire, a hole count of the data, information about the author, NewMR & The Future Place, and information about Word Cloud Plus.

The Use of AI in Creating This Report

ResearchWiseAI was used to aid the analysis of the open-ended responses, as was Word Cloud Plus. Grammarly was used to aid the proofreading, as was the Mac dictation of text (I spot errors better when I hear them, as opposed to reading them.)

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was fielded via the QuestionPro platform (many thanks to them for providing it). The study was conducted using QuestionPro's maximum anonymity setting, which means that passive data such as IP address were not collected. Below is a copy of the questionnaire, which comprised three closed questions and five open-ended questions.

The State of Insights and Research in September 2023
Hi, this is a short questionnaire to explore the state of insights in June 2023. The results will be shared via NewMR's website, newsletter and social media channels.
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. However, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions, you can withdraw from the survey at any point.
The study is being conducted using QuestionPro's strict anonymity setting; we will not know who you are. If you have questions at any time about the survey or the procedures, you may contact Ray Poynter & NewMR by email at ray@new-mr.com
Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start the survey now by clicking on the Start button below.

Which of the following best describes your relationship to research and insights?
1. Research Buyer / User
2. Research or Consultancy Supplier
3. Supplier to the Research Industry (eg software or fieldwork)
4. Academic
5. Prefer not to say
6. Other (please type) _____

Which region best describes where you are currently based?
1. Africa & Middle East
2. Asia Pacific
3. Europe
4. Latin America
5. USA & Canada
6. Prefer not to say
7. Other _____

How long have you worked in the research and insights field?
(From Wave 2)
1. Less than one year
2. 1 to 4 years
3. 5 to 10 years
4. More than 10 years
5. NA

6. Prefer not to say

How optimistic are you about the state of insights and research?
[Asked via five smileys]
1. Very Pessimistic
2. Pessimistic
3. Neutral
4. Optimistic
5. Very Optimistic

What are the most positive things about the insights and research world in 2023?
[Open-ended question]

What are the most negative or worrying things about the world of insights and research in 2023?
[Open-ended question]

What types of research approaches or research tools do you expect to be using more of over the next 18 months?
[Open-ended question]

What types of research approaches or research tools do you expect to be using less of in the near future?
[Open-ended question]

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about this topic or this survey?
[Open-ended question]

Many thanks for helping, the results will be presented via a NewMR Webinar, NewMR.org, social media, and our newsletter.
Please click Done to ensure your answers are submitted.

Hole Count

A hole count refers to a summary of all the totals from a project. In olden times, the data were stored as a series of holes on punch cards. To get all the totals from a project, the card counter simply counted all the holes.

In this study, there are only four closed questions, and here are their totals and percentages.

Which of the following best describes your relationship to research and insights?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Research or Consultancy Supplier	178	249
Supplier to the Research Industry (eg software or fieldwork)	43	43
Research Buyer / User	36	50
Academic	3	6
Other (please type)	9	6
Prefer not to say	1	2
Total	*270*	*356*

Which of the following best describes your relationship to research and insights?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Research or Consultancy Supplier	66%	70%
Supplier to the Research Industry (eg software or fieldwork)	16%	12%
Research Buyer / User	13%	14%
Academic	1%	2%
Other (please type)	3%	2%
Prefer not to say	0%	1%
Total	*100%*	*100%*

Which region best describes where you are currently based?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Europe	117	160
USA & Canada	83	113
Asia Pacific	51	51
Africa & Middle East	9	18
Latin America	8	9
Other	2	4
Total	*270*	*355*

Which region best describes where you are currently based?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Europe	43%	45%
USA & Canada	31%	32%
Asia Pacific	19%	14%
Africa & Middle East	3%	5%
Latin America	3%	3%
Other	1%	1%
Total	*100%*	*100%*

How long have you worked in the research and insights field?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Less than one year	N/a	2
1 to 4 years	N/a	18
5 to 10 years	N/a	39
More than 10 years	N/a	298
Total	N/a	*357*

How long have you worked in the research and insights field?

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Less than one year	N/a	1%
1 to 4 years	N/a	5%
5 to 10 years	N/a	11%
More than 10 years	N/a	83%
Total	N/a	100%

How optimistic are you about the state of insights and research

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Very Pessimistic	5	4
Pessimistic	23	28
Neutral	76	96
Optimistic	137	186
Very Optimistic	29	43
Total	*270*	*357*

How optimistic are you about the state of insights and research

Options	Jun-23	Sep-23
Very Pessimistic	2%	1%
Pessimistic	9%	8%
Neutral	28%	27%
Optimistic	51%	52%
Very Optimistic	11%	12%
Total	*100%*	100%

Ray Poynter, NewMR & The Future Place

The author of this report is Ray Poynter, the founder of NewMR and the Managing Director of The Future Place.

Word Cloud Plus

The word clouds in this report were created by Word Cloud Plus, a system that has been created by Ray and Will Poynter. You can try Word Cloud Plus for free by clicking here.

ResearchWiseAI

ResearchWiseAI is a new service developed by Ray and Will Poynter which leverages AI to analysis market research data.