EDA DIGITALISATION SURVEY 2026
RESULTS

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EDA DIGITALISATION SURVEY 2026

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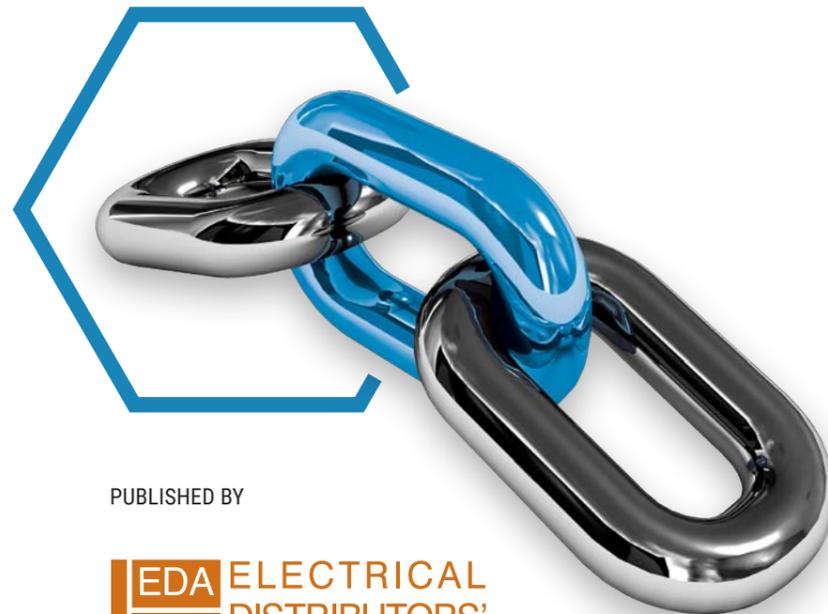
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PUBLISHED BY

EDA ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTORS' ASSOCIATION

WELCOME

Welcome to the EDA's second bespoke digitalisation survey. Three years on from the original survey a number of key factors have emerged which strongly influence the development of digitalisation in our sector:

- A small but growing demand for product sustainability data
- New regulations relating to waste packaging reporting
- The increased focus on product data throughout the construction sectors resulting from the Grenfell inquiry

In addition, the advent of AI, barely mentioned three years ago, will transform both the creation of product data and how it is used within our members' businesses.

All of these must be considered in determining our strategy in addition to continuing to meet our original objectives of helping our sector to digitalise its sales processes.

Since the last survey, our digitalisation journey has moved on in leaps and bounds. There has been rapid growth in usage of EDATA, much of it driven by the integration of EDATA with leading industry ERPs and software platforms, and a growing interest in the platform from contractors and others in the electrotechnical supply chain.

All those involved including our EDATA sponsors and solution provider partners should be proud of what we have achieved. But there is still much to do. The findings of this survey will help steer us through the next three years promoting and leveraging the benefit of high quality product data for the good of the sector.

Margaret Fitzsimons
Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the Electrical Distributors' Association's second in-depth market research programme into the state of digitalisation within the UK Electrotechnical supply chain.

Richard Appleton
Head of Digitalisation

KEY FINDINGS

- The number of wholesalers offering on-line sales facilities is growing steadily, if relatively slowly. However, the proportion of wholesalers' sales through digital and on-line channels remains relatively small and many customers still value personal interaction with their suppliers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many customers research products on-line even if they continue to purchase using traditional methods and a wholesaler's web site is part of an "omnichannel" sales strategy whose contribution cannot be measured on direct sales alone.

- Most respondents expect the proportion of sales through digital and on-line channels to grow significantly, albeit from a low starting point.

- Increasing e-commerce is having a negative effect on margins.

- A wide range of software applications is used by wholesalers in addition to their main business ERP systems. To date the use of AI tools is relatively limited other than for analytics and marketing.

- Manufacturers are starting to realise the potential for AI in creating and enriching product data.

- Both manufacturers and wholesalers are seeing an increase in the number of requests for sustainability, notably embodied carbon, data although the number of manufacturers currently able to provide this data is relatively low (<30%). To date, demand is mostly confined to larger customers working on major or public sector projects. There are several challenges to producing this data including lack of clear standards and collating the source data.

- A majority of manufacturers can provide packaging data including sizes, weights and materials. Demand for this data from wholesalers is largely from larger companies.

- Most wholesalers and manufacturers expect that manufacturers' trade prices will continue to be the basis for product pricing. It will be interesting to see if the advent of AI based pricing tools changes this view and how such tools can be incorporated into business processes without leading to further margin erosion.

- EDATA has increased in importance as a source of product data and support for the project remains strong amongst both wholesalers and manufacturers. There is striking consistency between the ranking of key benefits by both wholesalers and manufacturers. However, there is general agreement that the number of manufacturers listed needs to increase significantly.

OBJECTIVES

- To gain a clear, accurate picture of the current state of digitalisation in the UK Electrotechnical supply chain with a specific focus on Wholesalers and Manufacturers.

- To provide valuable market information and insight for Electrical Wholesalers, Manufacturers and Solution Providers to use when developing their company and digital strategies.

- To understand better how the EDA can help and support digitalisation in the sector.

In doing this we aimed to identify significant changes since the previous survey carried out in Q4 2022 (published in 2023) and to focus on topics which have risen in prominence since then, notably AI and sustainability and packaging data.

METHOD

- Quantitative feedback was obtained via an online survey using a contact list prepared by the EDA comprising key contacts at all EDA Wholesaler Members, Affiliate Manufacturers and Non-Affiliate Manufacturers that are members of EDATA.

- The initial online surveys were circulated to the lead contact at 258 EDA Wholesaler Members, generating a 28% response rate, and to 135 businesses – comprising both EDA Affiliate Manufacturers and Non-Affiliates in the EDATA data pool – generating a 72% response rate.

- Following the initial online surveys, we conducted 10 in depth qualitative telephone interviews with Wholesalers and Manufacturers.

REPORT

- There are two main sections in this report, one covering responses from Wholesalers, the other Manufacturers.

- Due to the volume of data gathered, we have had to be selective in preparing this report. We have tried to include the key quantitative data and present the supporting comments in an objective way.

- Many comments were very similar, and we have selected typical examples to avoid too much repetition. In some cases, different respondents offered opposing points of view in which case we have attempted to reflect this.

- Certain brands, software systems and services were mentioned by respondents, sometimes positively and sometimes less positively. To avoid any danger of misrepresentation we have omitted these comments.

- All market research is subject to a margin of error, and the nature of the sector means that the sample size is relatively small. Furthermore, respondents to a survey of this kind tend to have an interest in the subject leading to potential overstatement of, for example, digital adoption. We are confident that these results paint a reasonably accurate picture, but they should be used as guidance only.

SECTION 1

Wholesalers

The following questions were asked to Wholesalers.

ℹ️ In the report, where we refer to "small wholesalers" we mean wholesalers with up to 5 branches. We acknowledge that a small number of larger wholesalers operate out of just 1, 2, or 3 branches. However in the absence of sales revenue data, the number of branches provides the most accurate metric.

"Medium/large wholesalers" means wholesalers with 6 or more branches.

SMALL WHOLESALERS: 1-5 BRANCHES

MEDIUM / LARGE WHOLESALERS: 6+ BRANCHES

1.1: WHOLESALER RESPONDENTS

The following table shows the breakdown of Wholesaler respondents by their company size, measured by number of branches and number of stock lines carried

Q How many branches do you have?

31%	32%	22%	6%	1%	1%	7%
1 BRANCH	2 - 5 BRANCHES	6 - 15 BRANCHES	16 - 20 BRANCHES	21 - 50 BRANCHES	51 - 100 BRANCHES	Over 100 BRANCHES
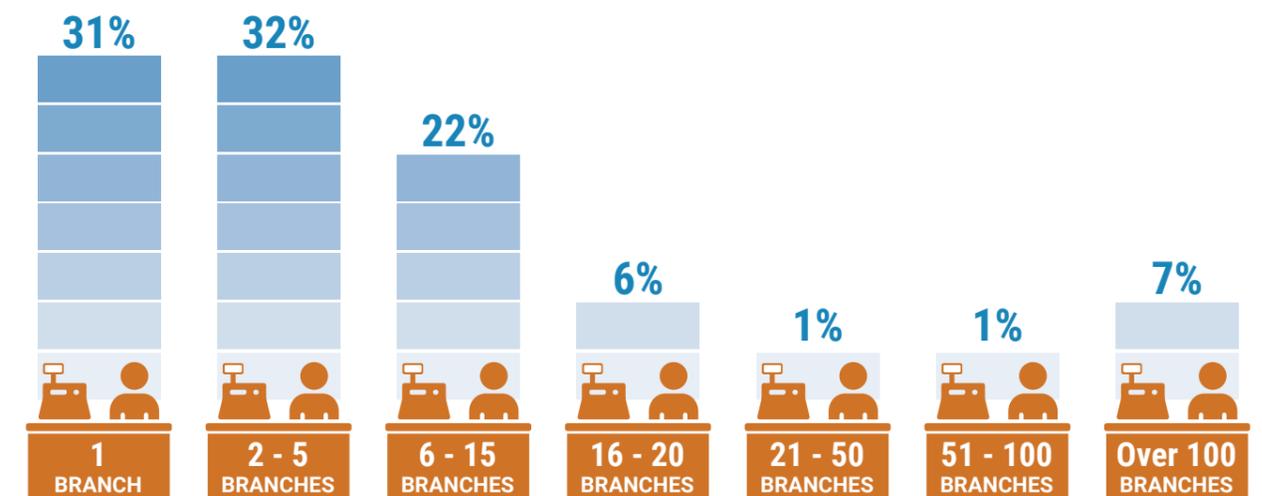
Q How many stock lines do you carry?

Fewer than 5,000	5,000 - 9,999	10,000 - 19,999	20,000 - 49,999	Over 50,000
19%	29%	22%	18%	11%

COMMENT As expected, there is a close correlation between the two company size metrics: 60% of Medium/Large Wholesalers carry over 20,000 stock lines; 67% of small wholesalers carry fewer than 10,000.

1.2: EXTENT OF DIGITALISATION

The purpose of these questions is to understand the extent to which digital processes, notably sales processes are used by electrical wholesalers.

Q Which of the following do you offer or intend to offer?

On-line product catalogue
- ☑ 43%
- 24 18%
- ☒ 38%

Ecommerce enabled B2B web site
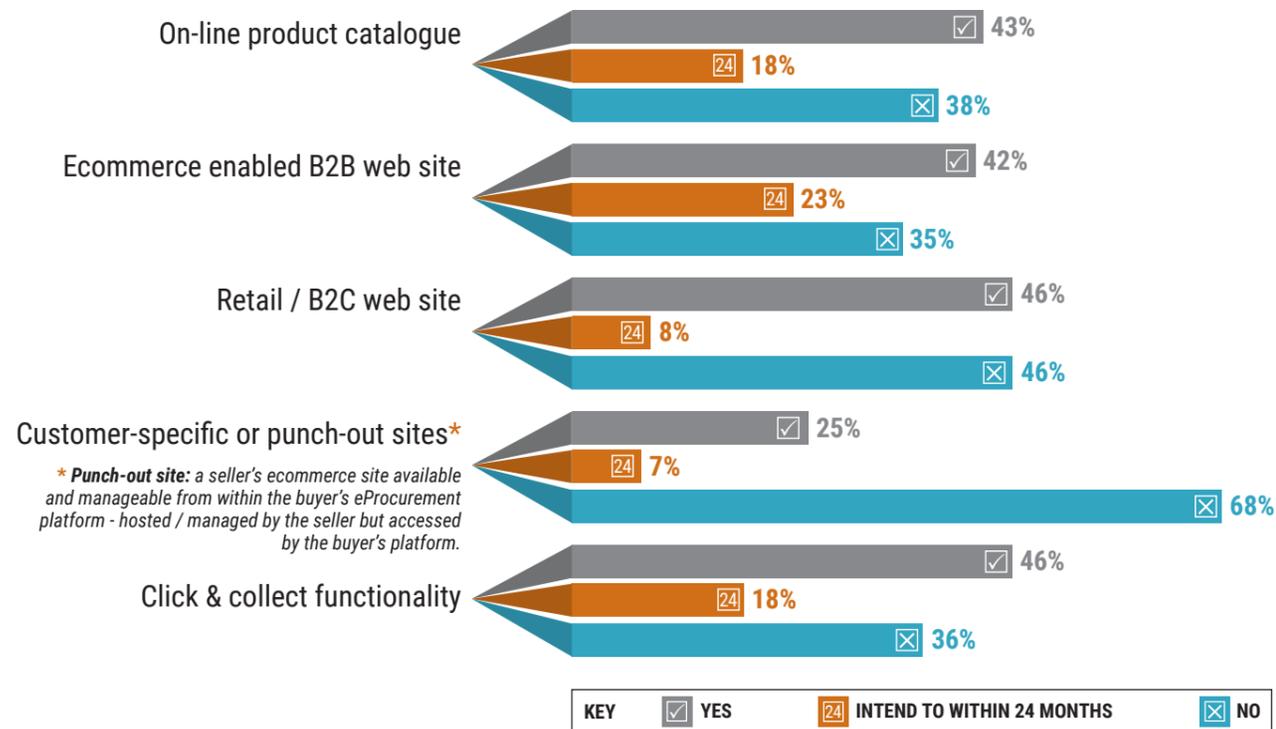- ☑ 42%
- 24 23%
- ☒ 35%

Retail / B2C web site
- ☑ 46%
- 24 8%
- ☒ 46%

Customer-specific or punch-out sites*
* Punch-out site: a seller's ecommerce site available and manageable from within the buyer's eProcurement platform - hosted / managed by the seller but accessed by the buyer's platform.
- ☑ 25%
- 24 7%
- ☒ 68%

Click & collect functionality
- ☑ 46%
- 24 18%
- ☒ 36%

| KEY	☑ YES	24 INTEND TO WITHIN 24 MONTHS	☒ NO

FURTHER ANALYSIS
- The proportion of wholesalers offering digital facilities to their customers has grown since the 2022 survey although the volume of growth is comparatively small. 42% wholesalers now have an ecommerce enabled B2B web site compared to 35% in 2022.
- A greater range of digital sales options is offered by medium/large wholesalers. 87% of medium/large wholesalers have, or intend to introduce, an ecommerce enabled B2B web site compared with 44% of small wholesalers.
- The proportion of wholesalers offering customer-specific or punch-out sites* has almost doubled since 2022. The facility is more widely used amongst Medium/Large wholesalers (39%) than Small Wholesalers (15%).

COMMENT
While the use of punch-out sites is growing, this still appears largely confined to MRO customers. As larger contractors upgrade their ERP systems, opportunities may arise for wholesalers to offer similar integrated purchase and supply facilities to these customers.

Q Approx. what proportion of your sales is through on-line/digital channels?

- Over 50% — 4%
- 26% - 50% — 11%
- 10% - 25% — 11%
- Less than 10% — 74%
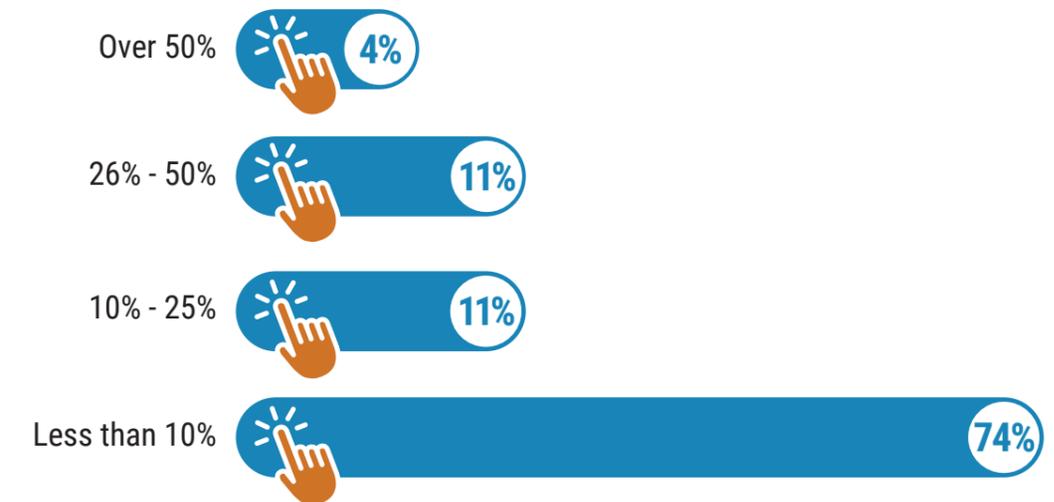
Q How do you expect the volume of business through digital/on-line channels to grow over the next 5 years?

- More than double — 39%
- Double — 28%
- Stay about the same — 33%
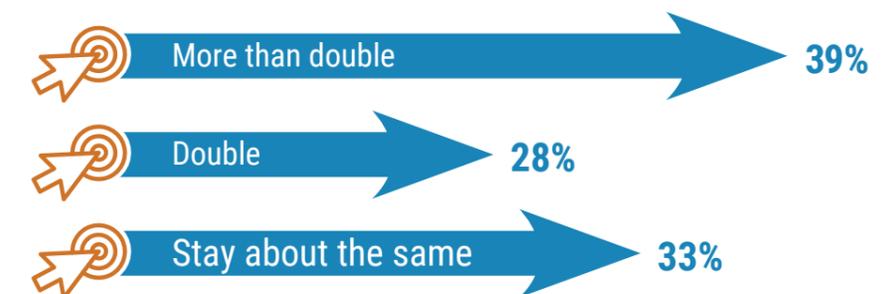
FURTHER ANALYSIS
- The proportion of sales through digital/on-line channels has changed very little since 2022. However, the expectation that this will grow over the next five years has risen sharply with 39% now expecting the volume to more than double, compared with 13% in the previous survey.

Q Since 2022 the number of wholesalers with, or planning to introduce, on-line trading facilities has grown by c. 50% yet the proportion of business carried out through these channels remains about the same.

How do you account for this?

> "If our customers say: 'We need to order online', then we'll do it, but we're not seeing that from our customer base. We're growing year-on-year with a traditional route to market."

> "Initially we saw rapid growth of our online business but the last two years have seen the level of online activity mirror the overall UK business."

> "It starts with the data. The EDA is doing a good job encouraging the suppliers to make their data available, but what use is an online service when only 70% of your basket of products is online? You've still got to do 30% of your order in person or over the phone."

> "There's a perception that contractors and electricians would still rather have face-to-face interaction but it's a question of future-proofing yourself to the changing habits of customers."

> "Many customers want to phone the branch, speak to the person that they know and can trust, and have got a relationship with. That's vital for us as a business because, when everyone's online and everyone can get everything delivered tomorrow, how do you differentiate yourself from everyone else?"

> "A lack of expertise and a lack of specialists, both people or platforms. Many online platforms have been launched in a bit of a piecemeal fashion."

> "We do not necessarily want to switch business from branches to online, our driver being more to offer all the options for a customer to trade with us and to let them choose."

> "Most of our customers, and still a lot of contractors, just want to phone somebody up and give them a description of what they want and leave the work to the wholesaler."

Q Nearly 70% wholesalers think the volume of on-line business will double, or more than double, in the next 5 years.

What do you think are the main drivers for such a rapid acceleration?

> "If everyone pulls their finger out and achieves credible, suitable, digital, platforms to do transactional business online, it could double in five years. But doubling in what? Value or product or SKU count? That's a whole different can of worms."

> "I would agree with that because we're starting from quite a low starting point."

> "I wouldn't be surprised if it does double. But we want to develop and nurture better relations with our customers to retain their loyalty. That's harder to do if it's an arm's-length relationship online, which invariably is price driven."

> "For the last 10 years, we haven't invested the amount we should have done in online sales in order to grow it."

> "There will be an increase but will it double? It will be the younger generation, if anything, driving it."

> "I'd challenge that figure. We would struggle to double our online business unless we were going to move away from the traditional markets. That's very risky. You can lose your identity altogether if you're not careful."

Q Do you experience competition from on-line marketplaces?

Are you seeing this from any specific type of client
or is it across the board?

" The biggest headache isn't necessarily the online competitors, it's the online marketplaces showcasing product they don't stock in order to capture potential customers who are then sold a different product."

" Some wholesalers are rising to the challenge. They're saying: 'We're not going to wait for everyone else to get on with it. We're going to do it ourselves' That's causing some wholesaler groups to stop being so precious about whether they should or shouldn't sell online."
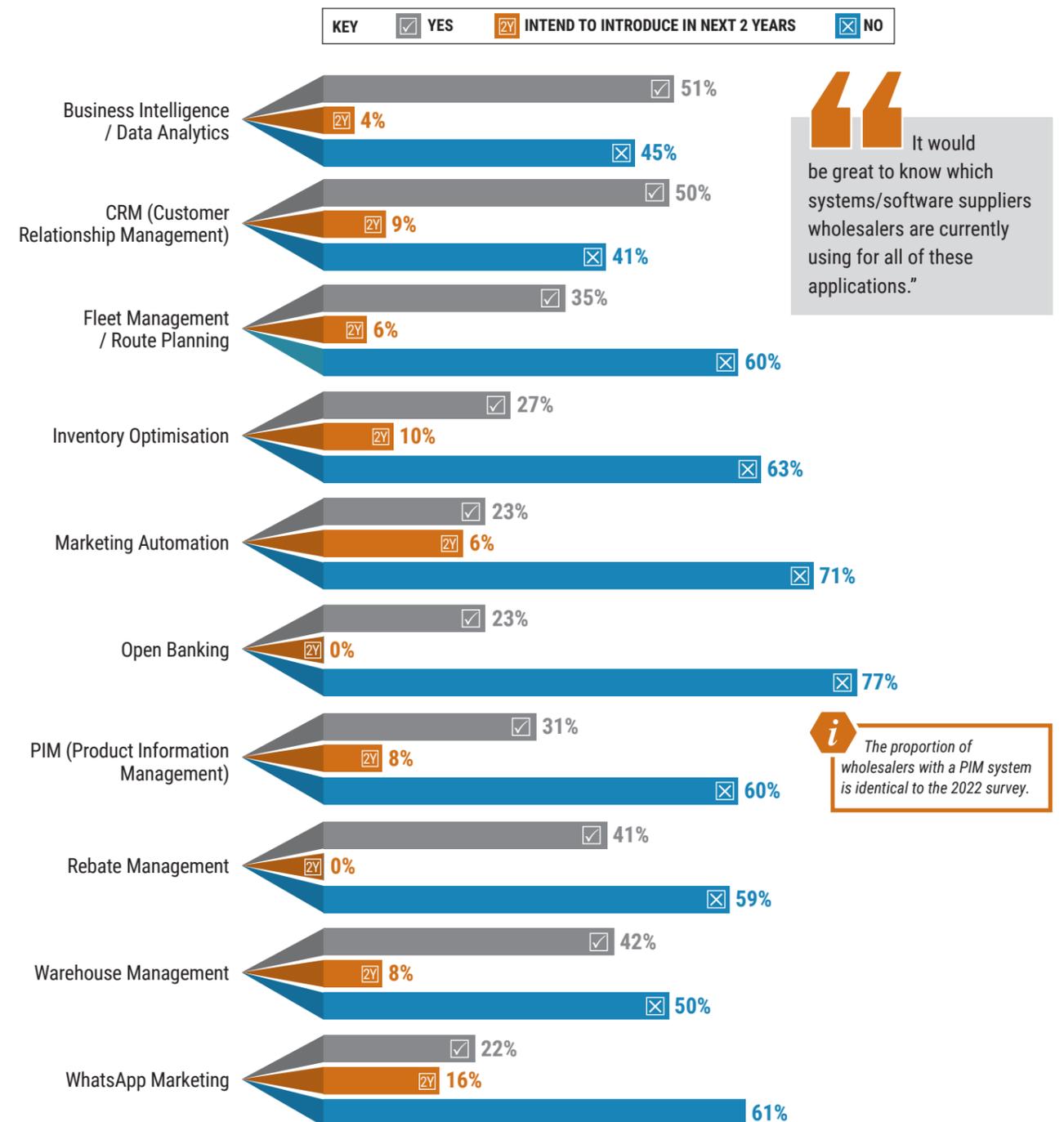
" Some customers will send a screenshot from an online seller saying: 'Can you beat that price?' If it's a regular customer, then we'll always try to help them out."

" Yes, but we don't necessarily lose business. It just drives our margins down."

" People at the counter quote on-line prices for key products. We combat that with 'Well, they might be quite a bit cheaper, but do they even have the full basket of products you need? And look at the price on the rest of the range.' "

" Some independent wholesalers use AI to keep an eye on the market pricing and just reduce it by a penny. So it's a race to the bottom for very specific items, and it just destroys the industry margins."

COMMENT As in many other sectors it is clear that e-commerce is having a negative effect on margins and the introduction of AI pricing tools may accelerate this. As suggested by respondents, it is important that wholesalers introduce strategies based on service and breadth of offer to counter this trend.

Q Do you use any of the following types of system / IT services?

The chart below shows the results across all wholesaler business regardless of size. *Overleaf, you will see further analysis by size of business.*

KEY ☑ YES | 2Y INTEND TO INTRODUCE IN NEXT 2 YEARS | ☒ NO

System	YES	2Y	NO
Business Intelligence / Data Analytics	51%	4%	45%
CRM (Customer Relationship Management)	50%	9%	41%
Fleet Management / Route Planning	35%	6%	60%
Inventory Optimisation	27%	10%	63%
Marketing Automation	23%	6%	71%
Open Banking	23%	0%	77%
PIM (Product Information Management)	31%	8%	60%
Rebate Management	41%	0%	59%
Warehouse Management	42%	8%	50%
WhatsApp Marketing	22%	16%	61%

" It would be great to know which systems/software suppliers wholesalers are currently using for all of these applications."

ℹ *The proportion of wholesalers with a PIM system is identical to the 2022 survey.*
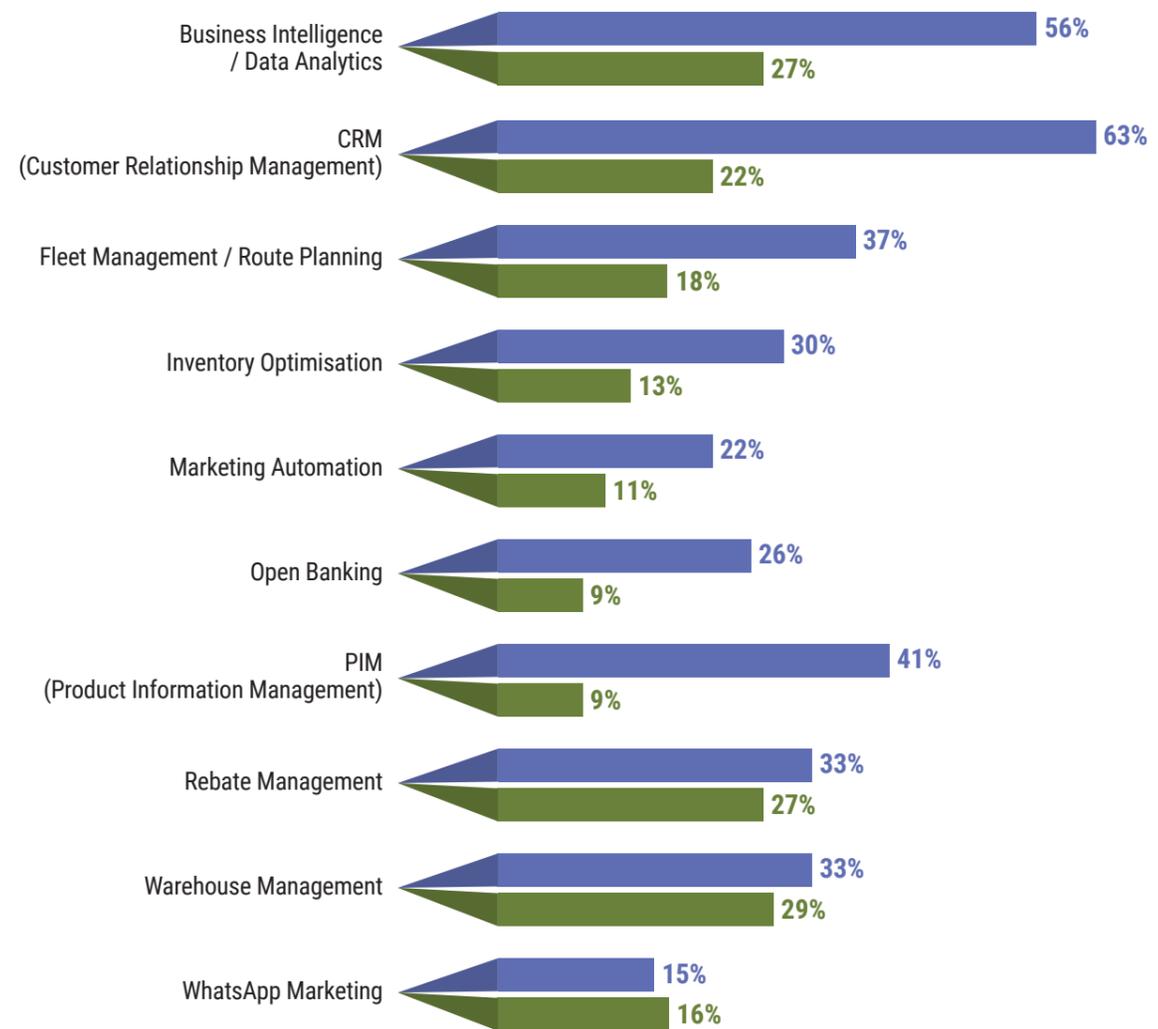
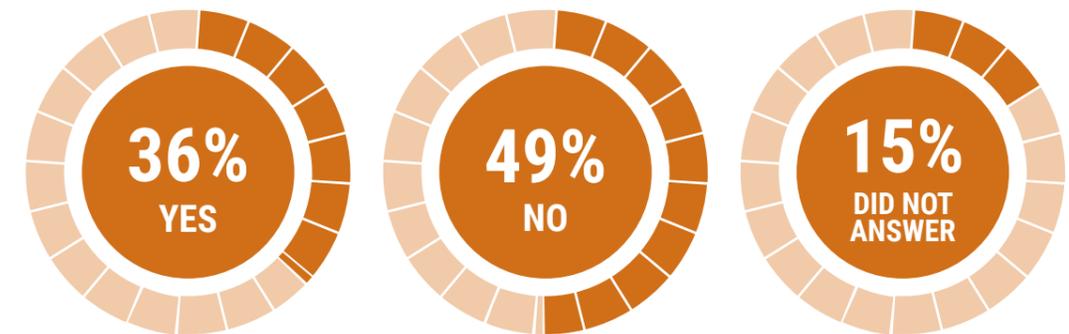**Q** Do you use any of the following types of system / IT services?

i Adoption of these systems is not evenly split between Small and Medium/Large wholesalers and, as expected, is greater amongst Medium/Large wholesalers in most cases.

For those business that answered **yes** to the question, we have provided further analysis below.

KEY: ■ MEDIUM / LARGE WHOLESALERS (6 branches or more) ■ SMALL WHOLESALERS (1 - 5 branches)

Business Intelligence / Data Analytics
- 56%
- 27%

CRM (Customer Relationship Management)
- 63%
- 22%

Fleet Management / Route Planning
- 37%
- 18%

Inventory Optimisation
- 30%
- 13%

Marketing Automation
- 22%
- 11%

Open Banking
- 26%
- 9%

PIM (Product Information Management)
- 41%
- 9%

Rebate Management
- 33%
- 27%

Warehouse Management
- 33%
- 29%

WhatsApp Marketing
- 15%
- 16%

Q Do you use any Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in your business?

36% YES **49% NO** **15% DID NOT ANSWER**

Q Those wholesalers who responded **yes** to the above question, provided further insights on the use of AI.

" We use AI mainly for digital analytics. The creative team use the AI facilities in Adobe software to help simplify image creation."

" We use it for marketing copy and to improve text or give us a basis for an article. Then we'll go in and tweak it to make it more relevant to us."

" Our purchasing team is looking at a tool to help with dead stock and aged stock to find out if we can move it to different branches."
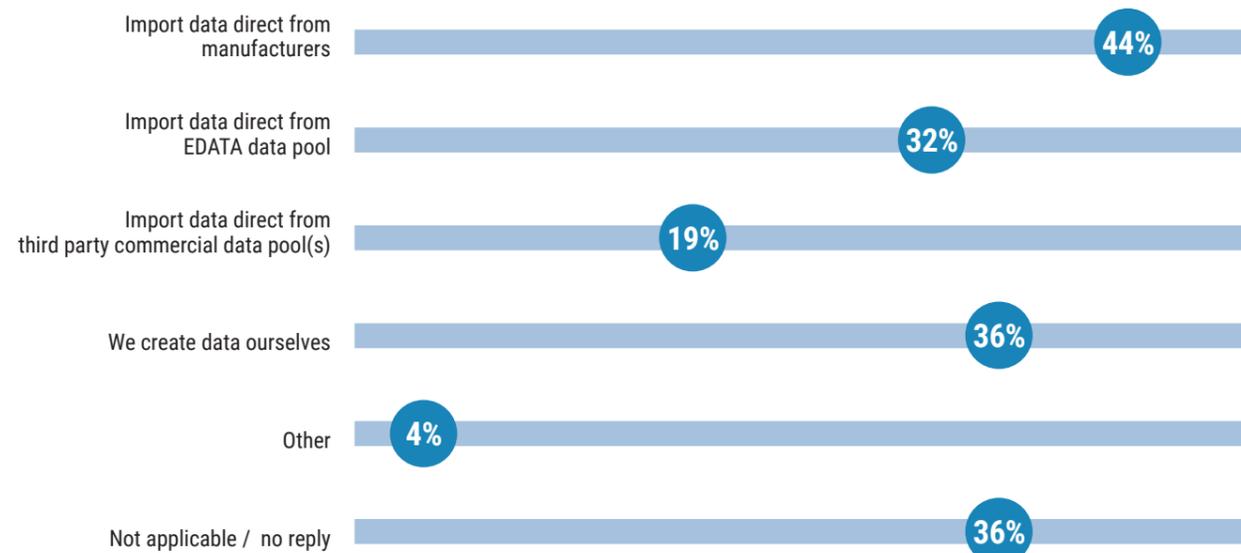
" We're considering a new ERP system and what's out there is really impressive. There is software that automatically scans a large PO from a customer, it could be 100 lines long, and turn it into a sales order. If you add that up, you're saving hundreds of hours a year."

1.3: PRODUCT DATA

The purpose of these questions is to obtain more details about Wholesalers' use of digital product information.

Q How do you obtain product information and images for your website(s)?

- Import data direct from manufacturers — **44%**
- Import data direct from EDATA data pool — **32%**
- Import data direct from third party commercial data pool(s) — **19%**
- We create data ourselves — **36%**
- Other — **4%**
- Not applicable / no reply — **36%**

* Respondents were able to choose more than one answer which is why the total exceeds 100%.

" When selecting the next products to add to our ecommerce site, the ease of collecting data is a priority. The better the data, the more likely we are to add the supplier's catalogue."

Q Thinking about EDATA, the electrotechnical sector product data pool, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Legend: Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree

- **EDATA quality standards have been a significant driver in improving the quality of available product data**
- **EDATA should be expanded to include trade price data**
- **EDATA should be made available to non-EDA businesses**
- **Manufacturers listed on EDATA will be in a stronger position to embrace Digital Product Passports and Construction Products Reform legislation**

(Axis: 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%)

COMMENT

As expected, the proportion of wholesalers sourcing data from EDATA has increased significantly since 2022 while the number importing data direct from manufacturers has remained about the same. This might indicate an appetite to use an industry data pool but that wholesalers must continue importing data directly from manufacturers who are not yet on EDATA.
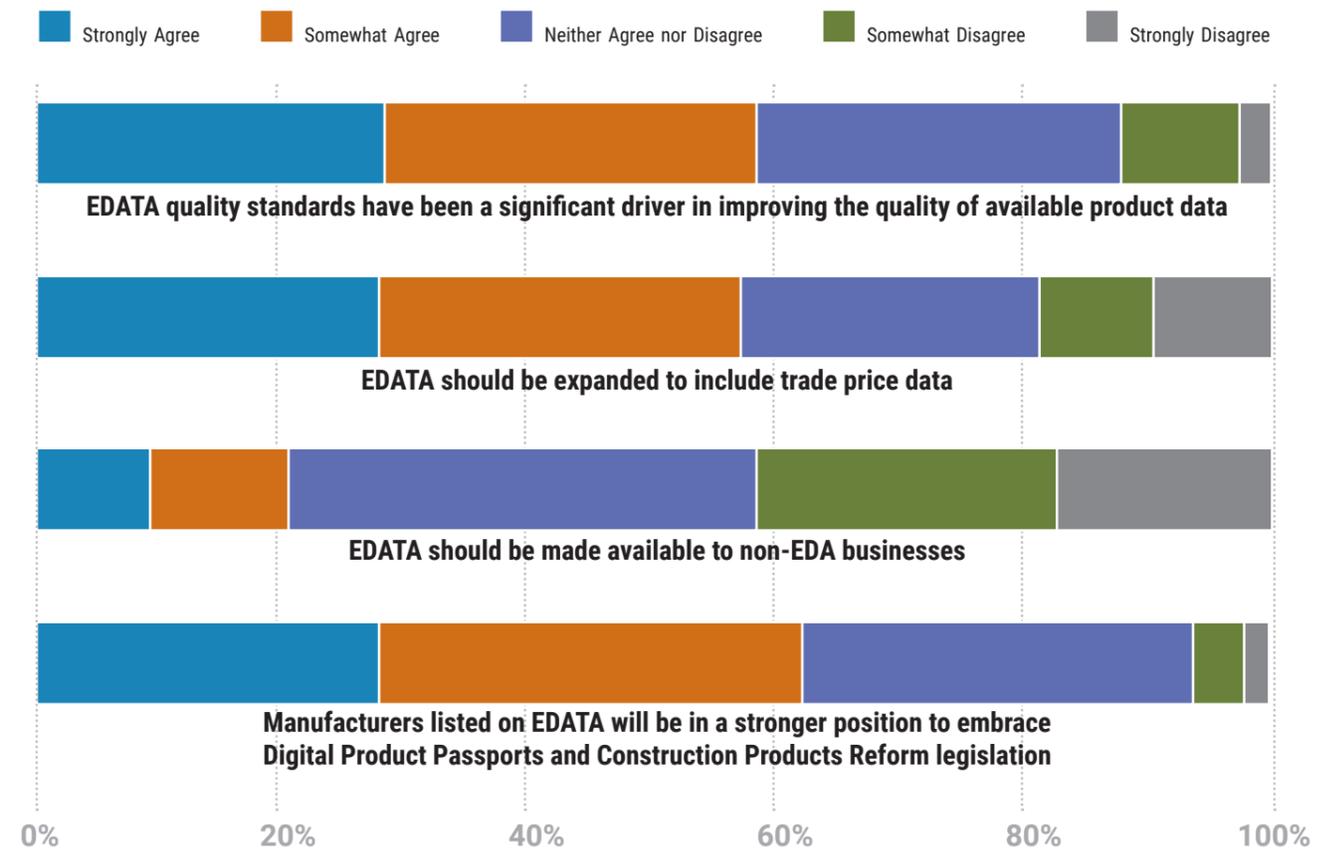
Q What do you consider the most valuable features of EDATA?

Wholesalers were asked to rank a prompted list of nine features of the EDATA data pool.
In top place was 'Accessible free of charge by all EDA wholesaler members' and the ninth
position was 'Use of the global standard ETIM classification'.

Wholesalers also said:

"EDATA's wonderful for technical data. What about pricing?"

"EDATA needs to provide commodity codes, country of origin and unit weights for products. The majority of these are missing."

1	Accessible free of charge by all EDA wholesaler members
2	Ability to produce product data sheets in a standard format
3	Designed to provide product data for wholesalers' websites
4	Integration with wholesalers' ERP system
5	Manufacturers can supply product data in a single format
6	Includes sustainability and packaging data
7	Wholesalers can access data in multiple formats
8	The support offered by the EDATA team to manufacturers to enhance their data
9	Use of the global standard ETIM classification

Q Significantly more wholesalers import product data from the EDATA data pool than in 2022.

What further developments are required to make the EDATA platform the go-to source for electrical wholesalers?

"Wholesalers need to step up their game. The EDATA team and the manufacturers are working quite hard to get their data sorted and available, but the wholesalers need to use it better. We're a bit slow to react and very cost-conscious."

"Everything that's being developed to date is more than enough. Content, descriptions, sustainability, the packaging and weights and all the useful bits of data that are part of the rollout roadmap."

"The big thing is that it needs more suppliers, and it needs more products. If suppliers are already signed up, they need to list their full catalogue, not just their best-selling ranges. Also, we need to get more suppliers signed up so if we get asked for any bit of product data from anywhere, we know that data about that product is going to be there."

"We ask potential ERP suppliers: 'Are you integrated with EDATA?' and the majority are so the EDA has done a very good job on awareness."

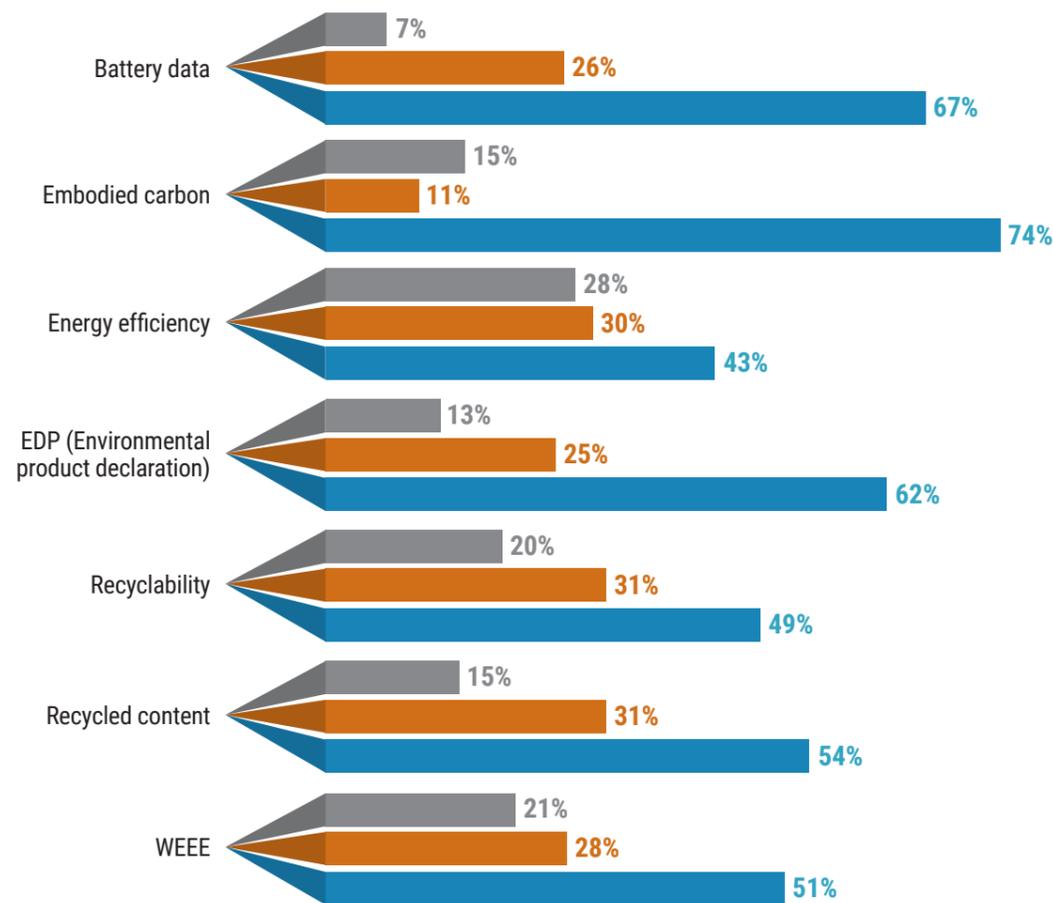"EDATA doesn't give you the pricing which is as important as the data sheets."

"The most important thing is to keep increasing the number of suppliers that are putting their products in EDATA. The pool needs to continue to grow and we need to make sure that the data is being updated by the suppliers."

1.4: SUSTAINABILITY & PACKAGING DATA

The purpose of these questions is to obtain more details about demand for Sustainability and Packaging data.

Q Are your customers asking for any of the following sustainability-related data about products?

KEY: ■ YES, INCREASINGLY FREQUENTLY ■ YES, BUT RARELY ■ NO

Battery data
- 7%
- 26%
- 67%

Embodied carbon
- 15%
- 11%
- 74%

Energy efficiency
- 28%
- 30%
- 43%

EDP (Environmental product declaration)
- 13%
- 25%
- 62%

Recyclability
- 20%
- 31%
- 49%

Recycled content
- 15%
- 31%
- 54%

WEEE
- 21%
- 28%
- 51%

FURTHER ANALYSIS

■ 45% of medium/large wholesalers have been asked for embodied carbon data compared with just 9% of small wholesalers.

Q There is a demand from clients for sustainability related product data, notably embodied carbon and recyclability. Are you seeing this from any specific type of client or is it across the board?

" We are seeing requests for carbon related data from all sectors, not just from large nationals but now also from larger regional players who are trying to gain access to bigger contracts. It seems to be more of a trend in the facilities management industry. We are dealing with several large facilities management companies who are looking for this level of granularity."

" Yes, more so in the last 18 months but not a lot. I probably got asked five or six times last year by larger organisations"
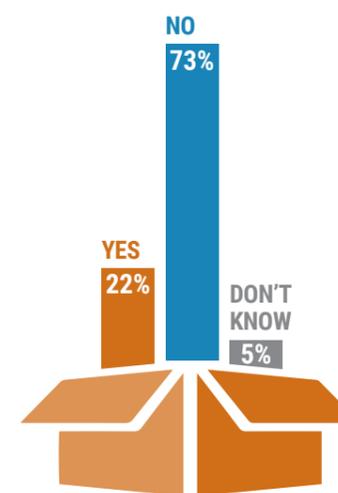
" It's not really an issue unless you're dealing with large contractors on government-type projects or councils"
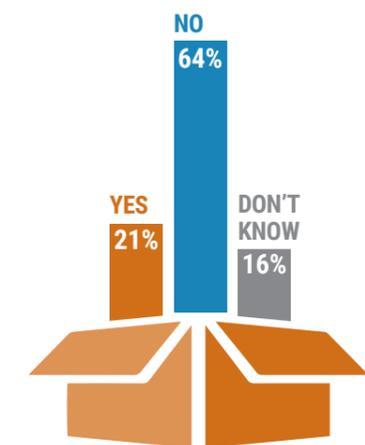
" Manufacturers haven't got the information structured particularly well. A lot of it is general PDFs, and some of the information we've received just isn't right."
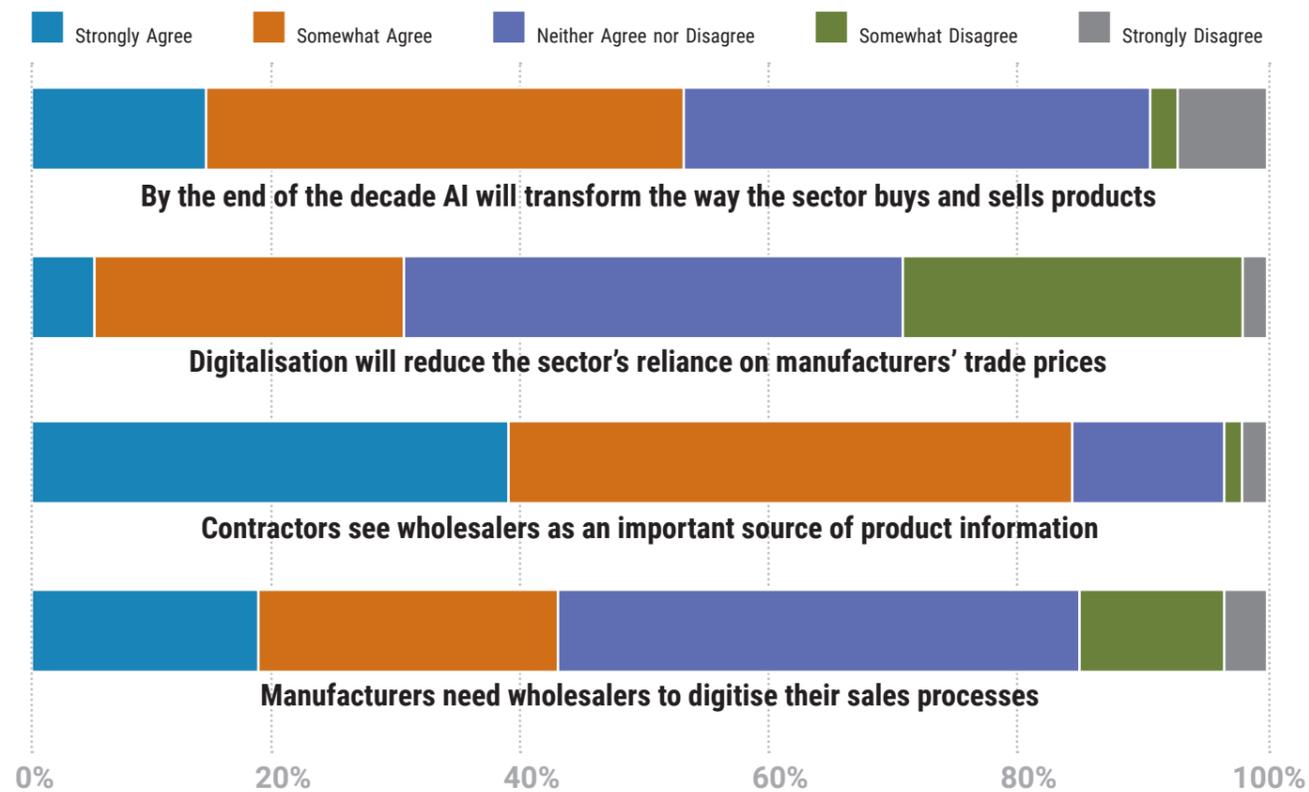
Q Do you ask suppliers for packaging data?

- NO 73%
- YES 22%
- DON'T KNOW 5%

Q Do you collate packaging data to fulfil extended producer responsibility requirements?

- NO 64%
- YES 21%
- DON'T KNOW 16%

The purpose of these questions is to understand electrical Wholesalers' opinions on key issues and market trends affecting their sector

Q Thinking about digitalisation in the electrotechnical sector, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Legend:
- ■ Strongly Agree
- ■ Somewhat Agree
- ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ■ Somewhat Disagree
- ■ Strongly Disagree

By the end of the decade AI will transform the way the sector buys and sells products

Digitalisation will reduce the sector's reliance on manufacturers' trade prices

Contractors see wholesalers as an important source of product information

Manufacturers need wholesalers to digitise their sales processes

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

Q How do you think AI will impact electrical wholesalers in the future?

Consider both positive and negative impacts.

"I can't see it not affecting us. I think the positives will be in marketing. It will help us understand the trends."

"If you can incorporate AI into your CRM system, you will understand the market trends and be able to react more quickly."

"The negative is where it's driving down margins. And that will continue."

"It could improve accuracy of picking and packing and distribution, and that's where we can add value."

"I used to work in FMCG, and I saw the impact of AI as I was leaving that industry – there were already job losses. That's not our intention, but I do believe that the nationals head offices, maybe even branches, could lose jobs."

"There's always lots to do never enough time to do it. A lot of things could be taken over by AI, especially admin so you can crack on with more of the important things."

"Inevitably it will cut some jobs, probably in accounts, which is already the case through EDI data invoice matching and so on."

"I see big positives, whether it's inputting information into a system or deciphering information like dead stock."

SECTION 2

Q How will digitalisation affect the sector's reliance on manufacturers' trade prices?

Might they become obsolete in the future?

> If trade pricing is the base price for how I maintain pricing on my system, then no, it won't disappear or won't become obsolete."

> Trade prices and a discount is the most efficient way for us to sell to customers."

> I don't think so. If suppliers went to a net price model, they'd have to price at product level for everything. I just think the model becomes too messy without a trade price."

> Net prices are more difficult to manage."

> Where would we start pricing at the start of a contract if trade pricing became obsolete?"
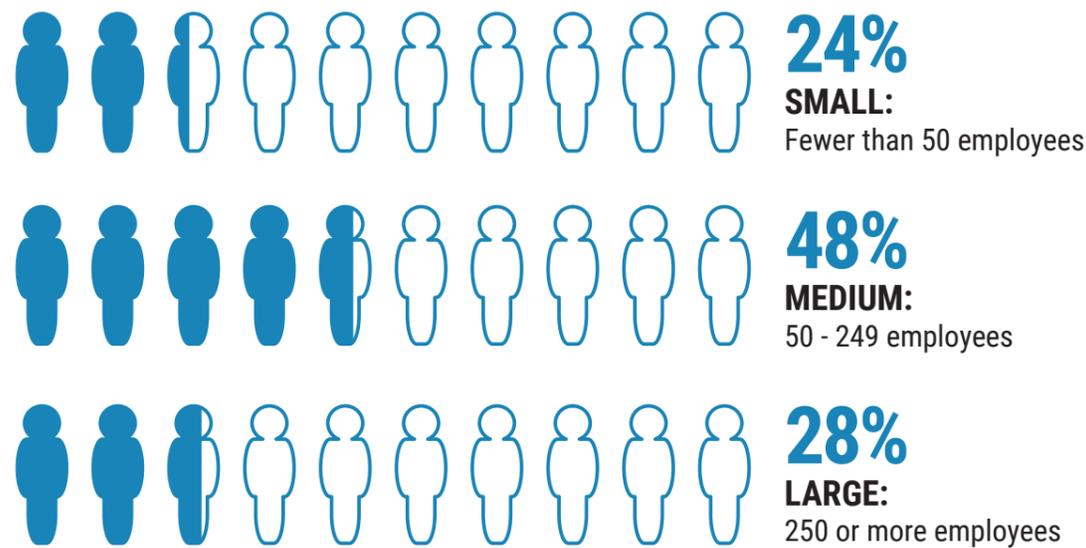
Manufacturers

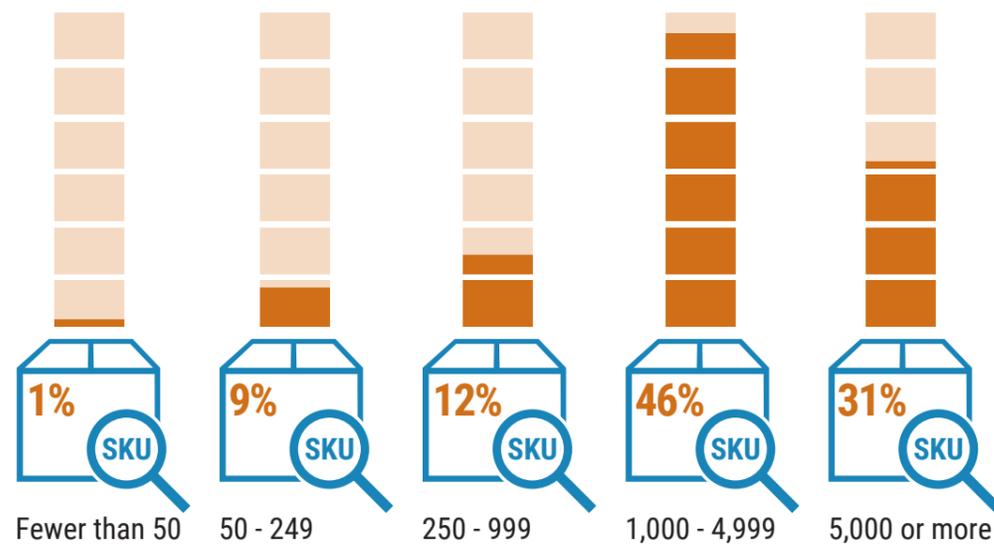The following questions were asked to Manufacturers.

2.1: MANUFACTURER RESPONDENTS

The following table shows the breakdown of Manufacturer respondents by their company size, measured by number of employees.

24%
SMALL:
Fewer than 50 employees

48%
MEDIUM:
50 - 249 employees

28%
LARGE:
250 or more employees

The following table shows the breakdown of Manufacturer respondents by the number of SKUs making up their UK offer.

| 1% | 9% | 12% | 46% | 31% |
| SKU | SKU | SKU | SKU | SKU |
| Fewer than 50 | 50 - 249 | 250 - 999 | 1,000 - 4,999 | 5,000 or more |

2.2: EXTENT OF DIGITALISATION

The purpose of these questions is to understand the extent to which digital processes, notably sales processes, are used by Manufacturers of electrotechnical products.

Q Do you have an on-line customer portal where wholesalers/resellers can place orders?

YES 53%
NO 29%
WE ARE CONSIDERING IT 19%

Q Do you have a PIM (Product Information Management) system where you manage product data in a centralised repository?

YES 89%
NO 5%
WE ARE CONSIDERING IT 5%
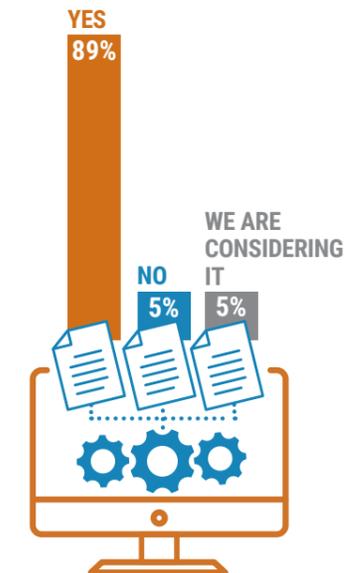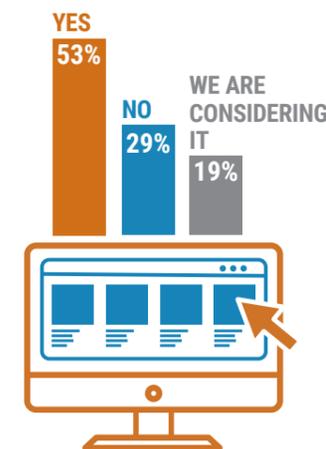
FURTHER ANALYSIS

- The proportion of manufacturer respondents with an on-line customer portal is now 53% representing a slight growth over 2022 when the equivalent figure was 46%.
- The proportion of manufacturer respondents with a PIM system has also grown from 71% in 2022 to 89% in 2025.

COMMENT

The proportion of respondents with a PIM system seems high when compared with those manufacturers who have joined, or are considering joining EDATA, where the figure is closer to 50%.

Q Over 50% of manufacturers have an online customer portal where wholesalers can place orders.
What are the main benefits of this?

" The main benefit is that you can offer real-time information. It's connected to all your systems like ERP and PIM."

" We can free up our customer service people so they can be more proactive rather than reactive"

" We also use EDI links where people can place orders from their systems into our systems, and we also do some optical character recognition of email orders."

" What used to be email or fax has now transitioned online, and that helps us because if customers can place their own orders directly in an online portal, that gives them access to our systems and to our stock levels, and, if it's clever enough, to their pricing model so they know exactly what the price is and they can place those orders directly at any time."

" Orders don't need to be checked for pricing and they don't have to be manually entered. We wouldn't be as big as we are now if we didn't have the online portal."

Q Nearly 70% of wholesalers think the volume of online business will double, or more than double, in the next five years.
How can manufacturers support this transformation?

" I'm a keen advocate of the EDA's EDATA scheme. We try to be ahead of the curve. We're always trying to reach out to customers and steer them in that direction."

" Wholesalers could have access to stock values and stock quantities so wholesalers that don't stock all the products could have access to available products that sit at the manufacturer level, and maybe even have some direct ship arrangement. Then they would have easy access to products that they may otherwise not keep and then expand their offer online."

" We need to make sure that all the data they need is available to them. In the electrical sector they're bound to ETIM, so all the products have to be classified and all the technical data has to be maintained according to that structure."

" It's about making it easy by running a system where they can send us their replacement list or their stock list. We can upload that to our website and allow them to order under their own part numbers."

" That statistic is completely false. Historically, the wholesale trade in the UK is non-digitalised, but that doesn't mean it won't come."

Q Are you aware of situations where your products have been misrepresented on wholesalers' or marketplace web sites by poor product data.
What action have you taken to rectify this?

" If I don't deliver data as a manufacturer, other parties that want to sell our products will create their own data. So you see poor quality images put online, or information that is not complete, or inaccurate. So we want to support as many channels as possible by delivering our own data from our central source of truth. If you don't deliver that, someone will create and deliver it on your behalf."

" You do see inaccurate data on some sites. They don't tend to be major issues but I have seen errors. This is why I'm an advocate of what the EDA is doing to encourage customers to go to the EDATA site and download that data. Effectively that's our own data."

" We can explain that they're misrepresenting the product that's on their website, but beyond that it's very difficult to do anything."

2.3: PRODUCT DATA

The purpose of these questions is to obtain more details about the supply of Manufacturers' digital product information

Q Do you use any AI (artificial intelligence) tools for product classification and/or product data creation?

- Generate — **12%** YES
- Generate — **35%** WE ARE INVESTIGATING THIS
- Generate — **53%** NO
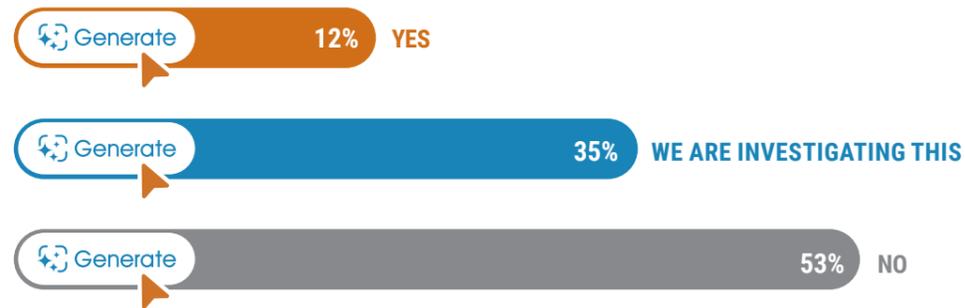
Q Have you investigated the use of AI for creating and managing product data? If so, please outline your experience.

"We are moving to a next generation PIM platform that will support us with standard enrichment activities but also have modules where we can apply and use AI. An example is translating product descriptions into different languages. Or I can upload a photo of a product and ask AI to classify it according to the ETIM model."

"It will be more efficient to create the data. You will be very agile with data creation also with translation. You can also personalise the data."

"It's something I'm investigating and I would be keen to do. I think there's potential to help some of the data enrichment so instead of me having to go through the data line by line, AI can enhance blocks of data very quickly and hopefully very accurately."

"If your existing data is incomplete or inaccurate, then you might not get the expected outcomes. You must be very careful with the source data when you use AI."

"We haven't yet. It's something I'm keen to do from a product perspective. We're using it in some of our marketing functions now just to help with some marketing campaigns."

"An example for us would be terminology. We sell a product called a 'ferrule' but that can mean different products, depending on where you are in the UK and some people use a different name. AI could link those terms so that when a customer asks for that product, it gives them all the options."

COMMENT

The use of AI as a tool to create and manage product data is in its infancy. Early experiments largely focused on classification and technical data but this carried a risk of inaccuracy. More recent experience suggests that the greatest productivity gains (based on current technology) come from the use of AI for creating product descriptions and image manipulation.

Q Approximately what proportion of your products are ETIM classified?

ETIM *UK and Ireland*

- 100% — 25%
- 50% - 99% — 51%
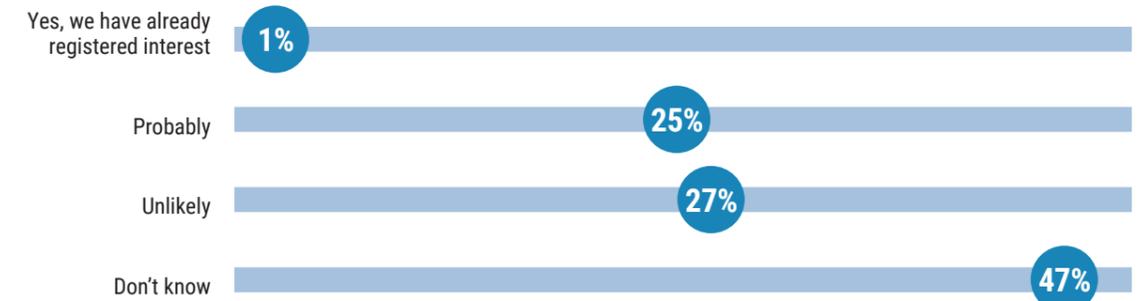- Less than 50% — 9%
- None — 9%
- Don't Know — 7%
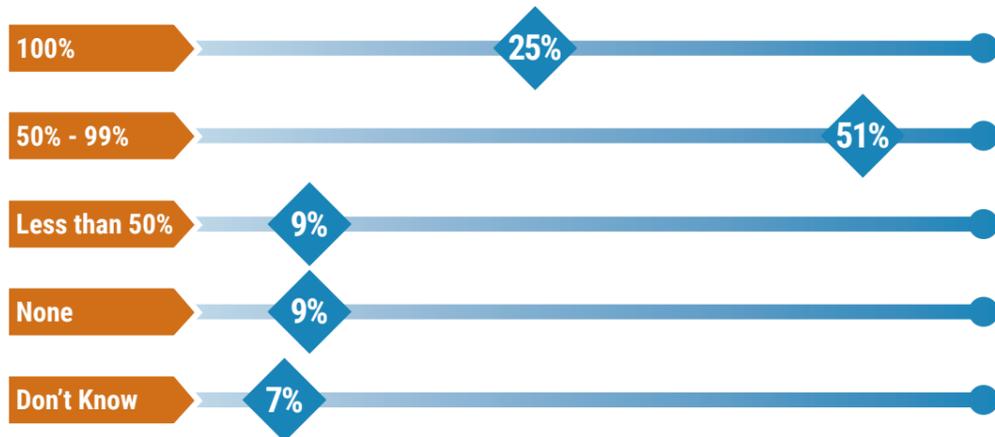
FURTHER ANALYSIS

- Overall, the proportion of products which are ETIM classified has grown with 76% respondents having over 50% of their products ETIM classified compared with 56% in 2022.

Q Approximately what proportion of your products have GTIN codes (=EAN or bar code number)?

- 100% — 51%
- 50% - 99% — 36%
- Less than 50% — 1%
- None — 2%
- Don't Know — 2%
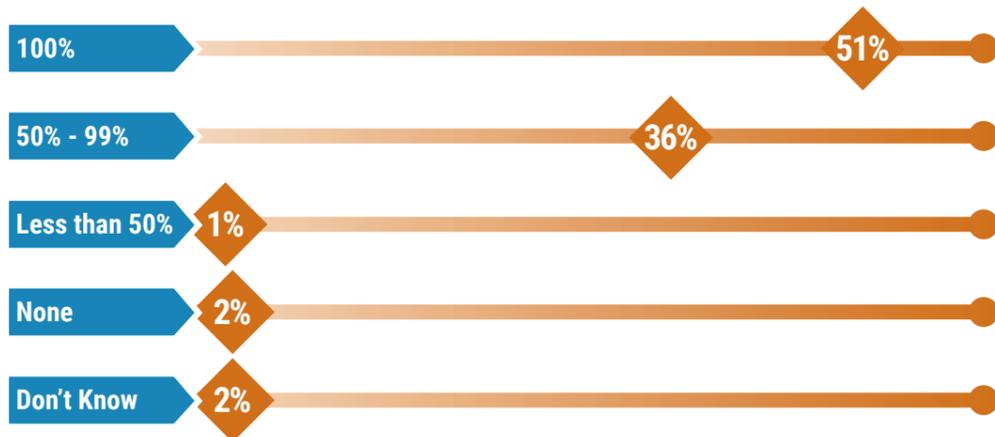
Q Will you be seeking CCPI (Code for Construction Product Information) accreditation?

CCPi CODE FOR CONSTRUCTION PRODUCT INFORMATION

- Yes, we have already registered interest — 1%
- Probably — 25%
- Unlikely — 27%
- Don't know — 47%

" The industry should already be following the key principles without having to follow CCPI. In essence, it's good but there is a cost barrier and industry is beginning to use it against manufacturers i.e. 'if you don't sign up to CCPI, we will not use you...'"

Q Are you aware of forthcoming requirements for manufacturers to provide a Digital Product Passport?

- Yes — 37%
- Yes but we don't know any details — 40%
- No — 23%
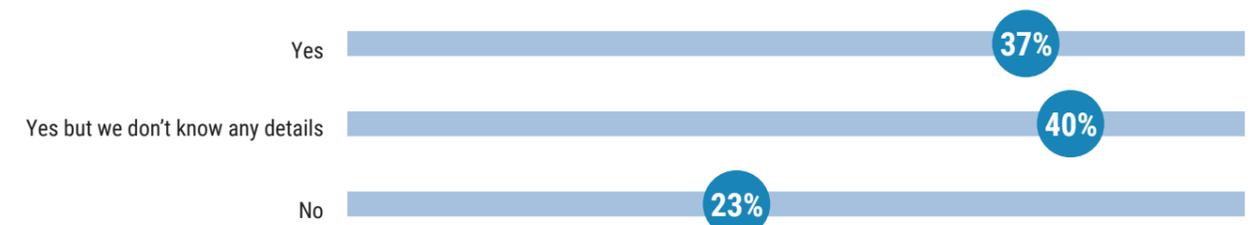
" Yes, but not all details are known. We do have DPPs created internally and have made this available, but if this is the correct, or the standard form, we don't know yet. We've included as much and as best as possible the data."

Q Thinking about EDATA, the electrotechnical sector product data pool, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Legend:
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

EDATA quality standards have been a significant driver in improving the quality of available product data

EDATA should be expanded to include trade price data

EDATA should be made available to non-EDA businesses

Manufacturers listed on EDATA will be in a stronger position to embrace Digital Product Passports from Construction Products Reform legislation

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%
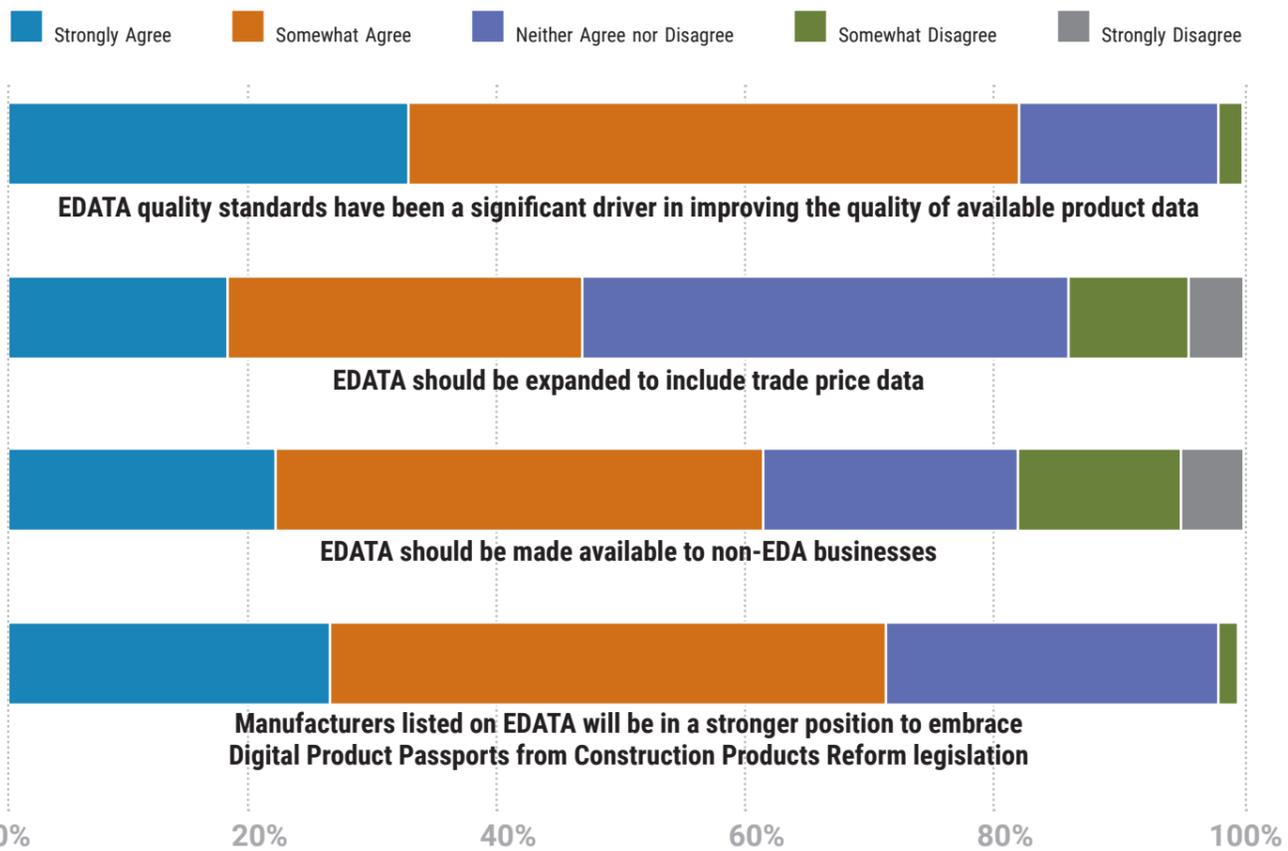
Q What do you consider the most valuable features of EDATA?

Manufacturers were asked to rank a prompted list of nine features of the EDATA data pool. In joint top place were 'Accessible free of charge by all EDA wholesaler members' and 'Ability to produce product data sheets in a standard format' and the ninth position was 'Wholesalers can access data in multiple formats'.
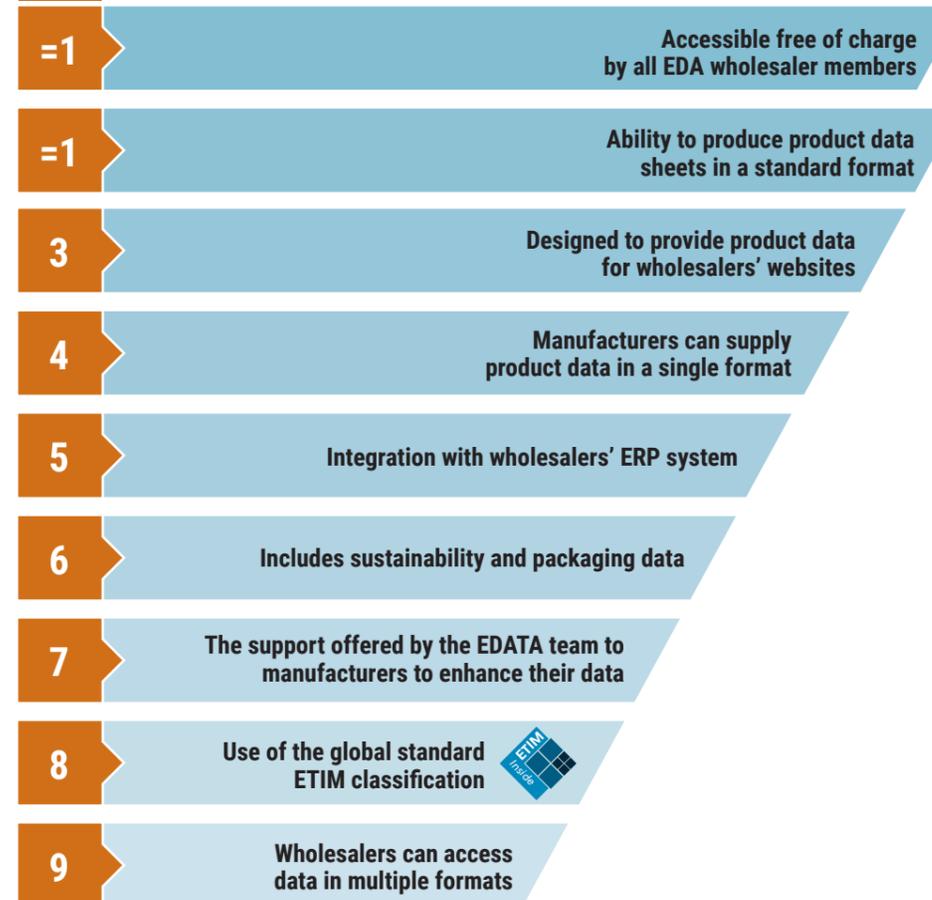
Wholesalers also said:

> " EDATA needs to be embraced by more members, we still have to send out many individual requests for individual products to EDA members."

> " Very difficult to rank these features as they are all important and are interlinked with each other."

- **=1** Accessible free of charge by all EDA wholesaler members
- **=1** Ability to produce product data sheets in a standard format
- **3** Designed to provide product data for wholesalers' websites
- **4** Manufacturers can supply product data in a single format
- **5** Integration with wholesalers' ERP system
- **6** Includes sustainability and packaging data
- **7** The support offered by the EDATA team to manufacturers to enhance their data
- **8** Use of the global standard ETIM classification
- **9** Wholesalers can access data in multiple formats

Q Significantly more wholesalers import product data from EDATA than in 2022. What further developments are required to make the EDATA platform the go-to source for electrical wholesalers?

"Onboard more manufacturers and also expand the data completeness. Product coverage is essential. 90% of the manufacturers in the UK should be represented there."

"Extend the data so customers who are connecting to the portal have everything at their disposal. I can provide e-commerce data and images but also sustainability and packaging data, or product videos and YouTube reviews."

"Scale is probably the biggest issue. EDATA doesn't yet represent the whole of the electrical sector if you're a wholesaler."

"We need to keep improving and enriching the data. I've heard anecdotally that some manufacturers haven't uploaded all of their product data."
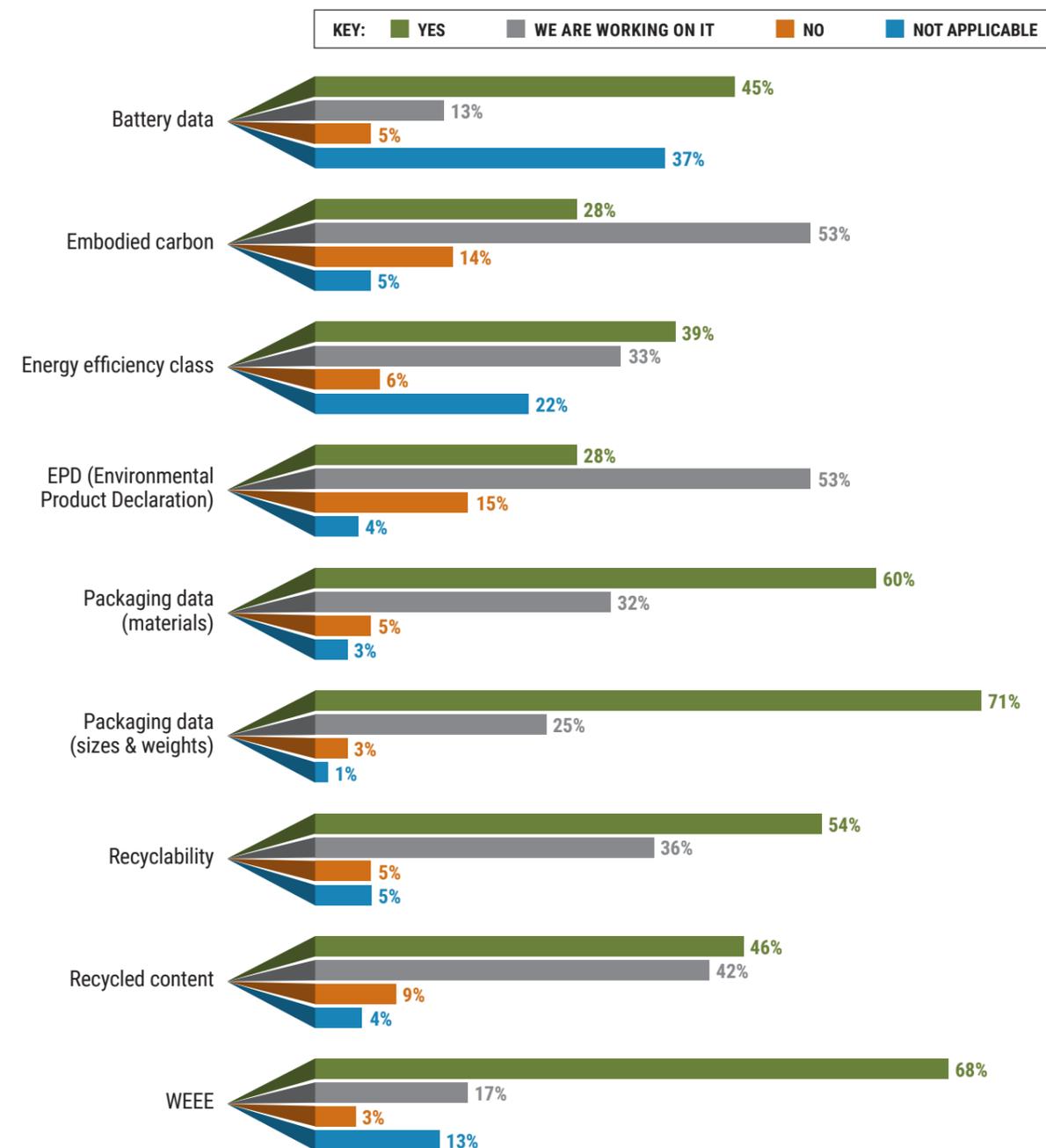
"They have done a good job in positioning themselves as the go-to source. If EDATA evolves with the changing demands of the market, which we probably don't know at this stage, they've done enough to make them the go-to source."

"If it gets to maybe half a million SKUs, maybe more, I think it reaches that critical mass where it almost becomes that one source of truth."

"As EDATA members, we should be telling our customers to use EDATA. The EDA needs to be strong on it too. It's a two-pronged approach."

"The biggest challenge that EDATA has is to continue to get more and more users to use it."

2.4: SUSTAINABILITY & PACKAGING DATA

The purpose of these questions is to obtain more details about the availability of Sustainability and Packaging data.

Q Are you able to provide any of the following sustainability-related data about your products?

KEY: ■ YES   ■ WE ARE WORKING ON IT   ■ NO   ■ NOT APPLICABLE

Battery data
- YES: 45%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 13%
- NO: 5%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 37%

Embodied carbon
- YES: 28%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 53%
- NO: 14%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 5%

Energy efficiency class
- YES: 39%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 33%
- NO: 6%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 22%

EPD (Environmental Product Declaration)
- YES: 28%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 53%
- NO: 15%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 4%

Packaging data (materials)
- YES: 60%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 32%
- NO: 5%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 3%

Packaging data (sizes & weights)
- YES: 71%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 25%
- NO: 3%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 1%

Recyclability
- YES: 54%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 36%
- NO: 5%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 5%

Recycled content
- YES: 46%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 42%
- NO: 9%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 4%

WEEE
- YES: 68%
- WE ARE WORKING ON IT: 17%
- NO: 3%
- NOT APPLICABLE: 13%

Q Over the past two years to what extent have you experienced an increase in requests for product embodied carbon data and/or EPDs?

Please use the scale where 1 = No increase, and 10 = A significant increase

5.22

0 ———————————————— 10

AVERAGE SCORE

Q Over the past two years to what extent have you experienced an increase in requests for packaging and packaging materials data?

Please use the scale where 1 = No increase, and 10 = A significant increase

5.42

0 ———————————————— 10

AVERAGE SCORE

" Packaging requests have been increasing for a longer period than 2 years."

" When talking about 'EPD', we should make sure 'PEP' is included in the same conversation. A Product Environmental Profile (PEP) is an EPD, but specific to HVAC, Electrical and Electronic products."

Q There is demand from clients for sustainability-related product data, notably embodied carbon and recyclability.

Are you seeing this from any specific type of client or is it across the board?

" Almost all our customers are starting to demand sustainability data. Wholesalers have started to show this in their web shops. So if I deliver my sustainability data then I will get my green icon on the website. People can also search only for green products, so if you don't deliver data to the wholesaler you will be excluded from all the searches." *

* This comment comes from a manufacturer based in mainland Europe where demand for sustainability data may be more advanced.

" Customers are asking for details about plastic and recyclability. It's few and far between now but you can see it's starting to happen."

" It used to be just large organisations doing large government or national projects. Now it's filtered down and, in some instances, it's our client that wants to demonstrate to his customers the value of sustainability."

" It is specific customers and it's the national wholesalers that tend to ask for it, because they're dealing with the national contractors."

" We are only seeing this from certain customers. It's more likely to be the blue-chip project-related customers."

" Customers are increasingly asking for sustainability data. I've been with this company for about three years and when I joined, there were probably one or two requests per quarter. That has increased to one or two per month."

Q What are the main challenges to manufacturers in creating and distributing sustainability data?

"My frustration is that it's not something that's being government led or being legislated for at the top level. We're all trying to provide this data but there's a lot of uncertainty about the right way to calculate the embodied carbon in a product and how to supply that data to an end-user."

"Sustainability data is a new topic and that means that the standardisation is still ongoing. Next year the wholesalers will bring out the new data exchange standard which will include the sustainability data. It will prescribe what I need to deliver and how I should deliver this sustainability data." *

* **This comment probably refers to the ETIM xChange data exchange standard**

"A lot of the products in our sector are controlled by British Standards. Everybody knows what those standards are and we all manufacture products to those standards. However when it comes to sustainability data, there doesn't seem to be any one size fits all solution at the moment."

"We use something called TM65. It's a calculation method for working out the amount of embodied carbon in a product over life."

"This data is managed in different platforms, not in a typical ERP or a PIM system."

"Scope 3 data is outside of your control from a sustainability perspective, so trying to get that data from a third party isn't always easy."

Q What are the main challenges to manufacturers in creating and distributing packaging and packaging materials data?

"Packaging is not that complex in our company. The data is maintained in our ERP and from there we push it into our PIM for distribution and syndication."

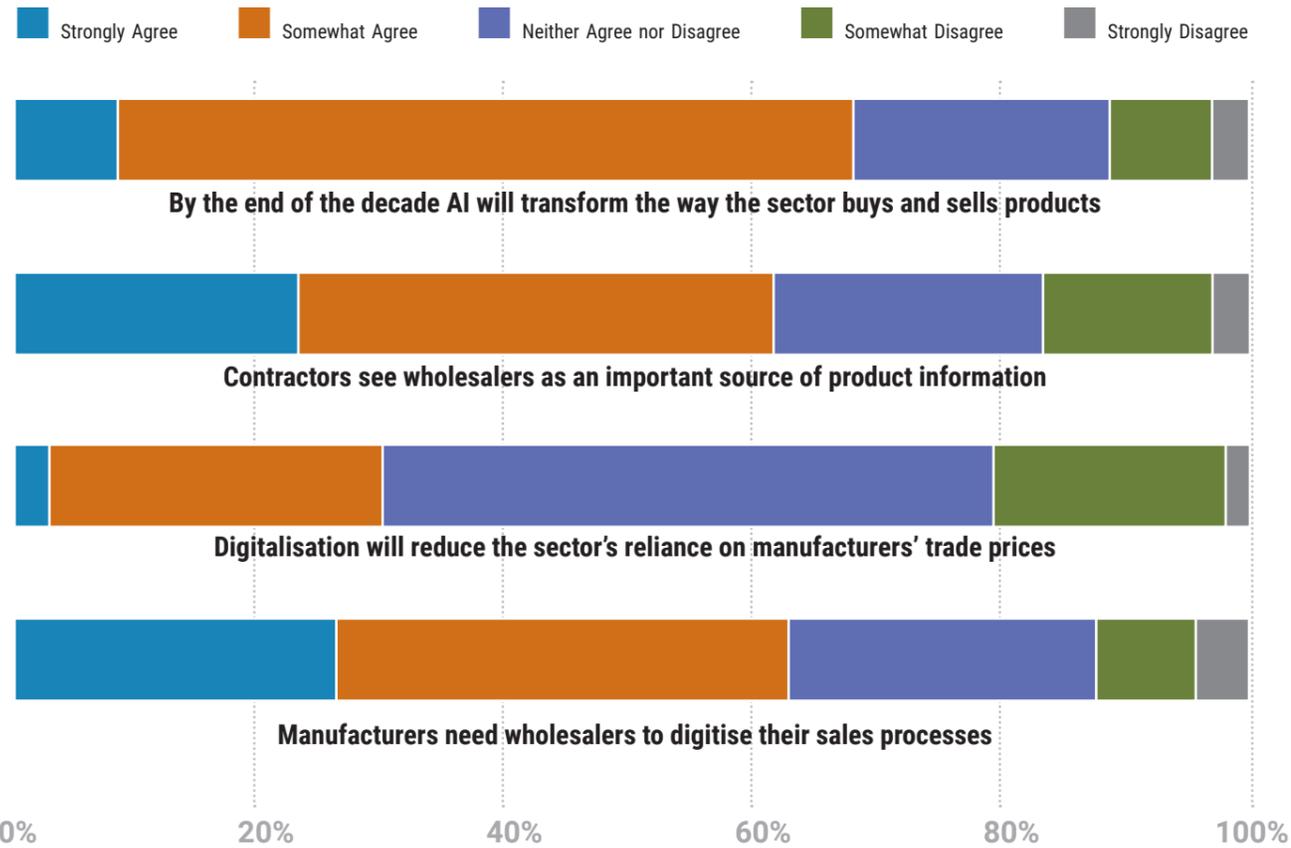"Packaging data has always been the poor relation with regards to product data."

"I see packaging and sustainability data as two of my big challenges in EDATA, probably for the next, dare I say, several years."

"One of the challenges is that everybody wants the data in their own format so every time you get a request, you're reinventing the wheel."

The purpose of these questions is to understand electrical Wholesalers' opinion on key issues and market trends affecting their sector.

Q Thinking about digitalisation in the electrotechnical sector, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Legend:
- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

By the end of the decade AI will transform the way the sector buys and sells products

Contractors see wholesalers as an important source of product information

Digitalisation will reduce the sector's reliance on manufacturers' trade prices

Manufacturers need wholesalers to digitise their sales processes

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Q How do you think AI will affect the electrical sector in the future? Consider both positive and negative impacts.

"It could really have a positive impact in the supply chain. 80% of our revenues come from only 20% of SKUs. We've got a long tail of other products and what we do sometimes miss is a trend developing on a SKU that's not frequently ordered. AI might be able to give us some benefits in supply chain management by spotting those trends early in the purchasing cycle and say 'you need to maybe order this product because we're predicting an unusual increase in sales'."

"AI could look at customer spending patterns and identify areas of opportunity. That can be done now, but it's quite a manual task."

"There are numerous businesses that are under threat from AI particularly when it comes to limiting the headcount that's needed to do the job. But in the electrical sector, having been in this business for my entire professional career, I can't see any areas where that will impact negatively."

"As an industry, we're very backwards in things like this. Used in the right way, it's a positive. All of our marketing is now produced by AI."

"Eventually the industry will realise we have to use it. It's not a choice. It's going to happen whether we like it or not. We need to embrace it and use it in the right way."

COMMENT

A subject which has received some publicity recently, although not identified by our respondents, is the importance of high quality product data to drive AI based tools and applications. High-quality product data makes AI based systems work more effectively and improves customer experience whereas the effects of poor data are further amplified by AI.

Q How will digitalisation affect the sector's reliance on manufacturers' trade prices? Might they become obsolete in the future?

> "I'm not sure they're going to become obsolete in my lifetime. But when a customer logs on to an online system even today they would see their net price. They wouldn't necessarily see our trade price."

> "We still keep some of our products structured that way because I believe it works well. Digitalisation wouldn't have a bearing on that situation. It's a commercial decision whether it's best to have a trade price or a net price."

> "No, I think it will go the other way. Although we've become much more digitalised over the last five years, trade prices are becoming more apparent now than they've ever been."

> "The bigger wholesalers, the nationals, are seeing profits squeezed, so they're pushing us to get back into trade prices rather than net pricing and online pricing."

> "Trade prices are already obsolete because the industry has made them obsolete."

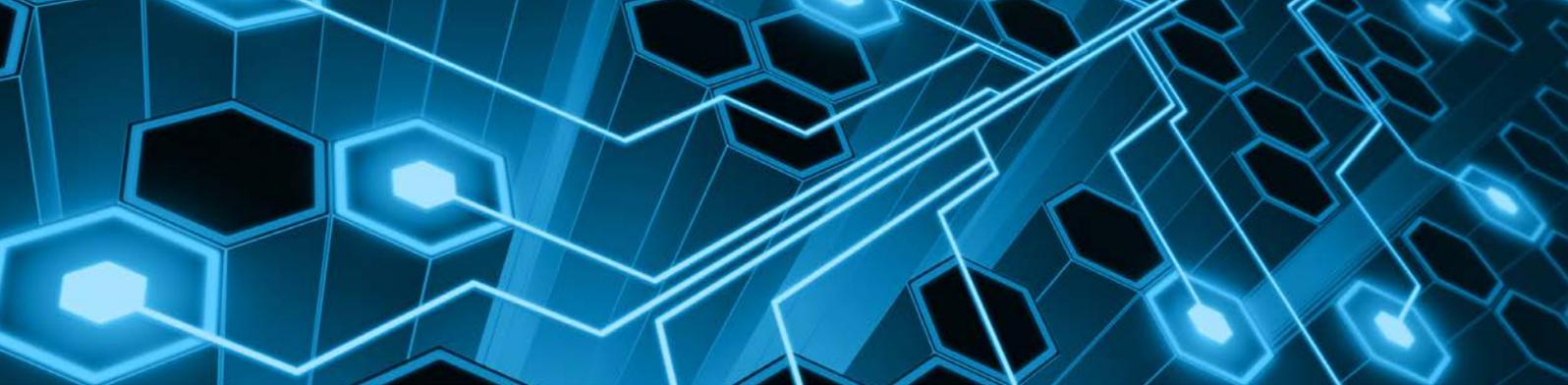## EDA DIGITALISATION SURVEY 2026

The previous survey published in 2023 revealed some change in emphasis in the sector away from digitalisation as pure e-commerce towards a more multi-channel strategy. The intervening period has seen further changes with the realisation that new digital tools, notably AI, backed up by high quality product data, can support the overall sales process. The increasing use of EDATA integrations with wholesalers' ERP systems illustrate this.

Developments in the wider construction industry, the increasing focus on building safety, requirements for embodied carbon data and the expected introduction of digital product passports highlight that digitalisation in the electrotechnical supply chain is just part of a larger and more complex picture.

In order to ensure our sector benefits from the opportunities offered by digitalisation we need to fully understand, and align with, developments in the construction industry as a whole.

To date, the EDA have led the way. Our aim now is to ensure that we maintain this position as a key part of the industry's digital future.

EDA DIGITALISATION SURVEY 2026
RESULTS