

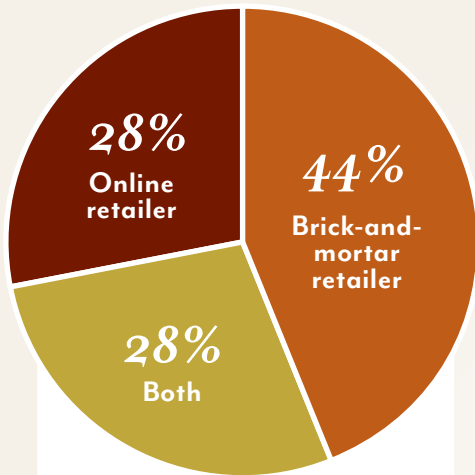
The category endures but continues to evolve

BY SARAH SCHWARTZ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Last spring, Stationery Trends was honored to partner with the Greeting Card Association (GCA) to be named the official publication of *Noted: The Greeting Card Expo. That event will again come to vibrant life April 27 and 28, 2023, co-located with SF NOW in the picturesque Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture in San Francisco. During the winter shows, there will also be *Noted pop-ups at Atlanta Market, Las Vegas Market, Dallas

Winter Market and NY NOW so attendees around the nation can experience the distinctive community vibe, to say nothing of incredible, indie up-and-coming stationery ranges.

As part of Stationery Trends' partnership with the GCA, the magazine conducted an industry survey June 16 to July 11, 2022, with 243 retailer respondents. The results speak to the stationery category's inherent strength, no matter the state of the world.



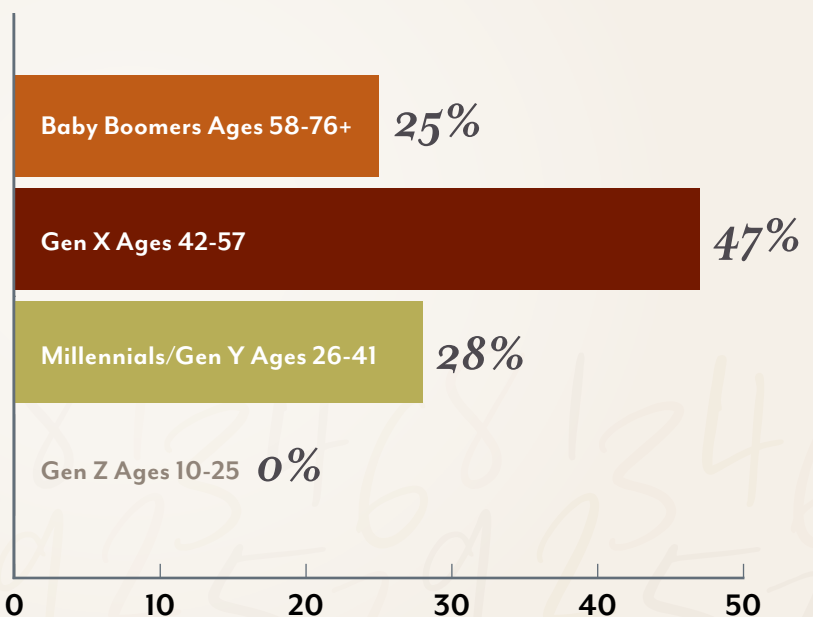
SHIFTING FORMATS

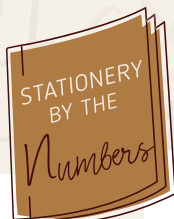
The majority of respondents (44%) remain brick-and-mortar only, while those that are either solely online or both online and brick-and-mortar are tied. However, that is changing: 57% of respondents see adding online sales as their biggest area for growth.

DON'T OVERLOOK GEN X

This generation often gets ignored between baby boomers and millennials, but according to 47% of respondents, they comprise their top customer demographic.

Who makes up your top customer demographic?

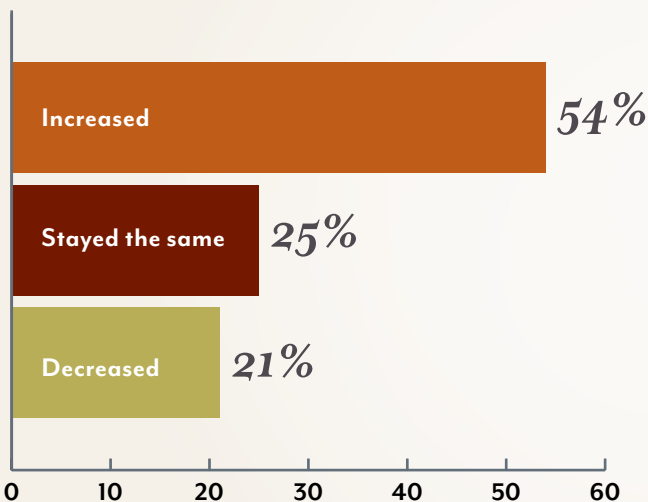




GREETING CARD SALES ARE INCREASING

Over half of respondents say these have increased over the last year — *that's great news all around!*

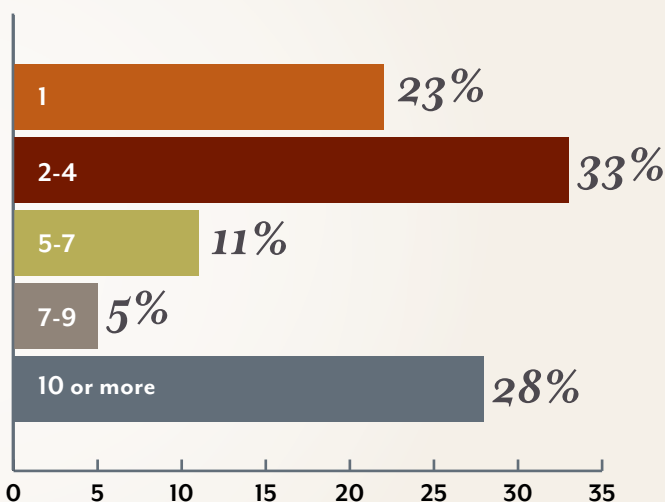
Have your greeting card/stationery sales over the previous year:



CARD COUNTERS

44% of respondents buy from at least five card manufacturers — but 23% only buy from one, and the majority — 33% — buy from two to four. Significantly, 28% buy from 10 or more brands; this approach is necessary for a truly broad, inclusive mix.

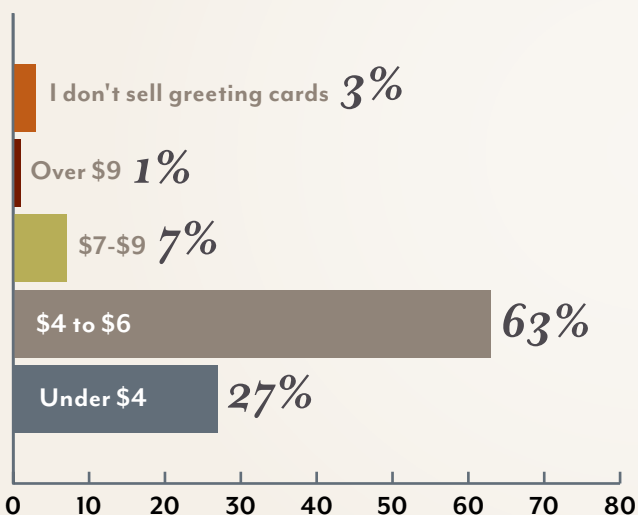
How many different card manufacturers do you buy from?



\$4-\$6 RETAIL PRICE PER CARD IS THE NORM

63% of respondents cited this as their best selling price point; coming in next place was “under \$4.”

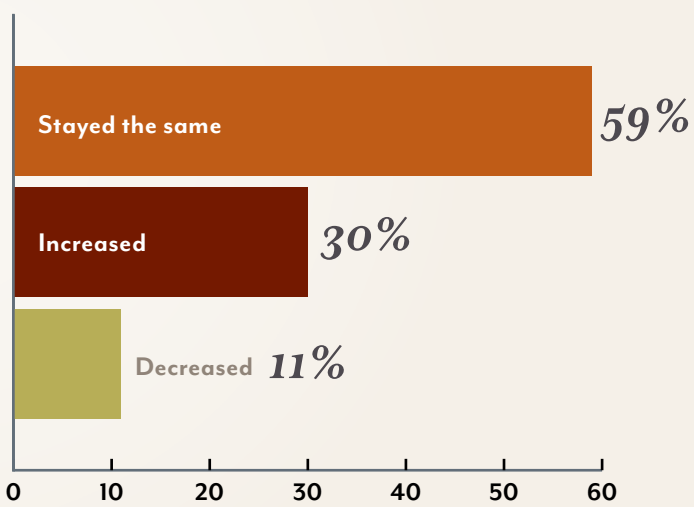
What is the best-selling price point for a greeting card in your store?

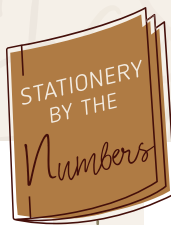


STEADY SALES ARE GOOD SALES!

While 30% of respondents reported increased blank or just because card sales, the majority — 59% — reported that they stayed the same.

Have blank and/or "Just Because" card sales:

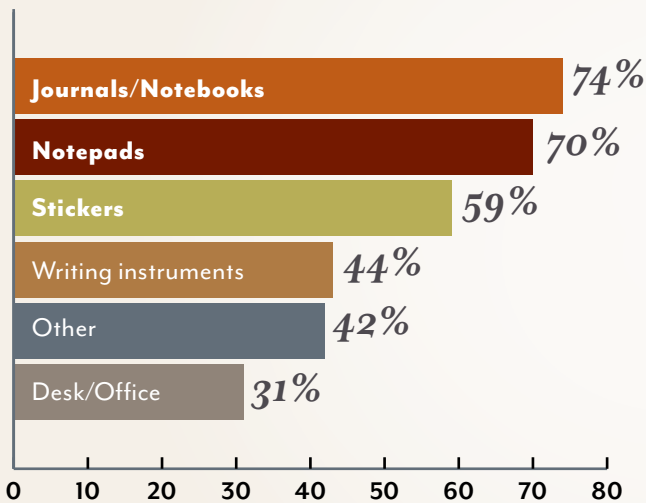




IF YOU ARE EXPANDING YOUR STATIONERY OFFERINGS, CONSIDER OUR TOP THREE

Journals/notebooks, notepads and stickers comprise a winning trinity across respondents.

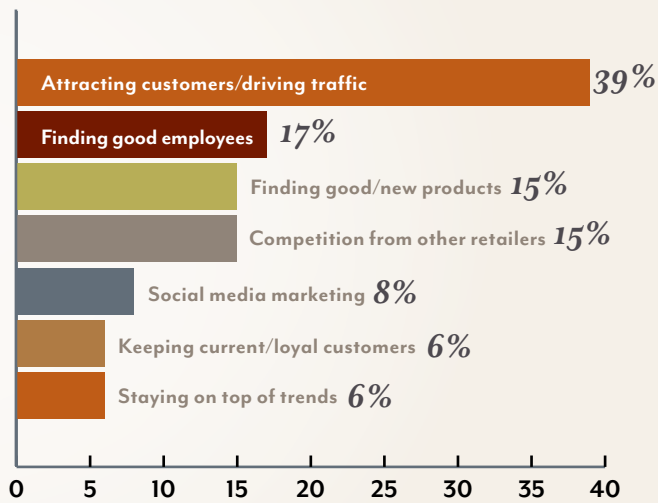
What additional product categories do you sell?



HURDLES & CHALLENGES

The #1 difficulty for respondents is attracting customers and driving traffic, followed by finding superior employees. Amenities like engaging, relatable social media feeds and hyper-focused customer service are more important than ever.

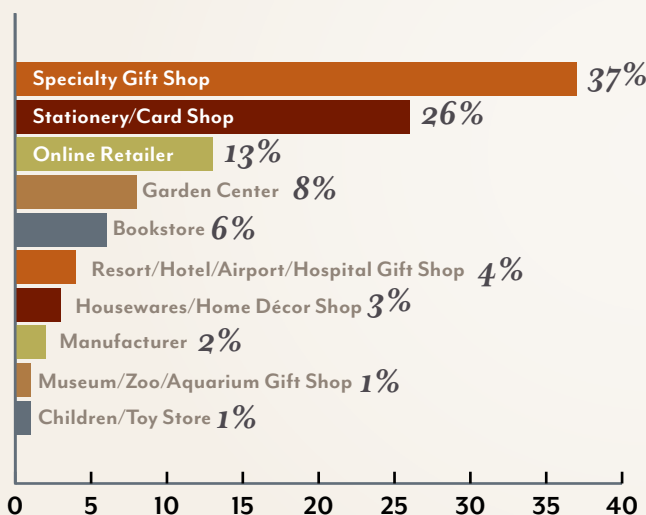
The No. 1 challenge in your day-to-day operations:



SPECIALTY GIFT IS A SEGMENT TO WATCH

This type of venue is often overlooked in our community in favor of the card shop, yet it is a powerful sales driver as well. Bookstores and garden stores are also selling cards.

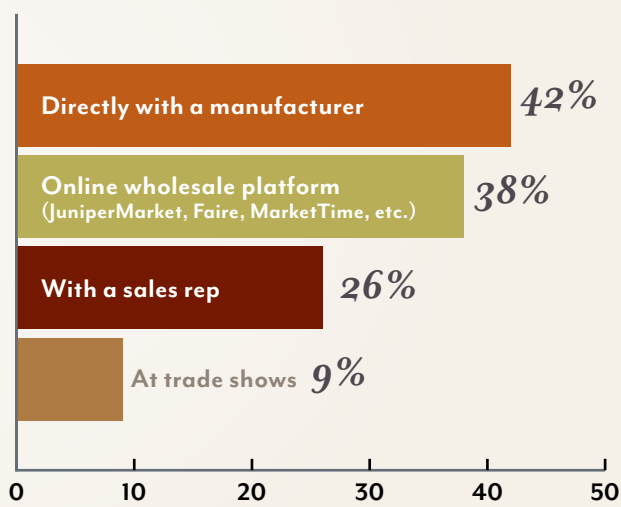
What type of store do you operate?



ONLINE WHOLESALE PLATFORMS ARE GROWING IN IMPORTANCE

We asked respondents to rank how they placed card orders, and 38% of respondents preferred sites like JuniperMarket, Faire and MarketTime.

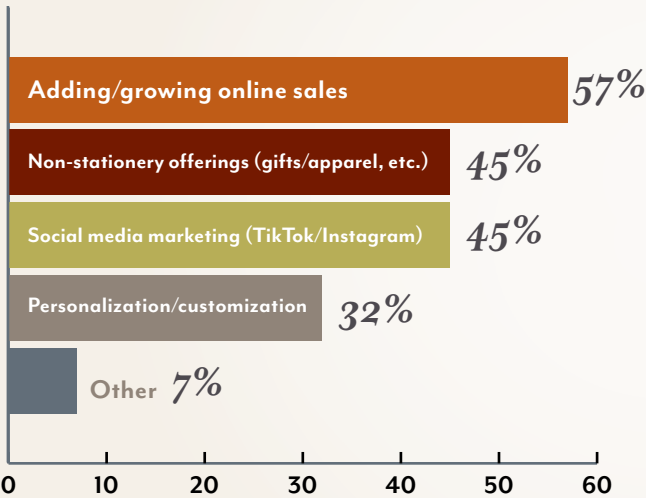
The No. 1 way you place your card orders:



THE ONLINE CROWD

While **57%** of respondents are leaning into the digital domain, broadening merchandise mixes and upping their Reel/TikTok games are focuses as well. Meanwhile, nearly a third are pursuing the sometimes lucrative customization/personalization route.

What do you see as an area/areas for biggest growth for your business?



WE ASKED RESPONDENTS TO WRITE IN THEIR TOP THREE DESIGN TRENDS, AND JUST LIKE THE MARKET, THE RESULTS WERE DIVERSE. HERE ARE A FEW NOTABLE RESPONSES:

“Humor — sweet not vulgar” **“A7 cards are going to the wayside. A2 give retailers more room to display cards.”**

“Diversity”

“Current pop culture/social causes”

“Illustrated animals”

“Cards in Spanish (or non-English)”

“Authenticity”

“Minimalist”

“LGBT-friendly”

“Sustainable”

“Inspirational/Metaphysical”

“Retro mid-century mod”

“Florals with a twist.”

FINALLY, WE ASKED RESPONDENTS, “WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHANGE YOU’VE SEEN IN YOUR BUSINESS IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS? AND WHERE DO YOU SEE IT HEADED IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS?” THEY REVEAL THE BREADTH OF TODAY’S CHALLENGES, AS WELL AS MYRIAD APPROACHES TO THEM. HERE’S SOME VALUABLE TIDBITS:

“Variety of customers. Keeping up with changes to appeal to varying customer base.”

“Cards went up during COVID-19 and have stayed steady & an integral part of our mix as I contain price points. Think that will continue and hope more card retailers join big shows.”

“We’ve been selling a LOT less party invitations but more greeting cards and stationery. Not sure!”

“Prices are increasing and we have to adjust or go out of business.”

“Being online savvy is the bare minimum. You really need to put yourself out there and highlight the story to sell the product. See it heading where small businesses continue to move up the ladder and be the secret sauce.”

“The pandemic largely increased our online sales. That will probably help us keep customers and gain new ones over the next decade.”

“Biggest change is not being able to find quality employees who are dedicated to the brand.”

“We’ve made a concerted effort to bring in more BIPOC-owned brands with cards that reflect diversity and our customers have commented and noticed ie: they care! (Along with female-centric products, but notice this more so with the BIPOC element). I think this will continue in the future, along with inclusivity.”

“Wholesale platforms such as Faire have made competition and finding unique products HARDER.”