

2024

PR Guide to Effective Media Engagement

Medianet



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Acknowledgement of country:

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this report was written. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities and pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

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About this guide

This guide offers a set of comprehensive learnings for PR professionals based on the experiences and preferences of Australian journalists. This information refers to findings from Medianet's 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 annual journalist surveys, which each surveyed over 800 Australian journalists.

The full findings reports from each year contain far more depth and analysis, including responses to questions beyond the scope of journalists' relationships with PR.

To access these reports [click here](#).

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team@medianet.com.au

Please note: these surveys were intended to provide a snapshot of the experiences of journalists, not a comprehensive study into the state of the media industry. Responses received may not fully reflect an accurate sample of Australian journalists.

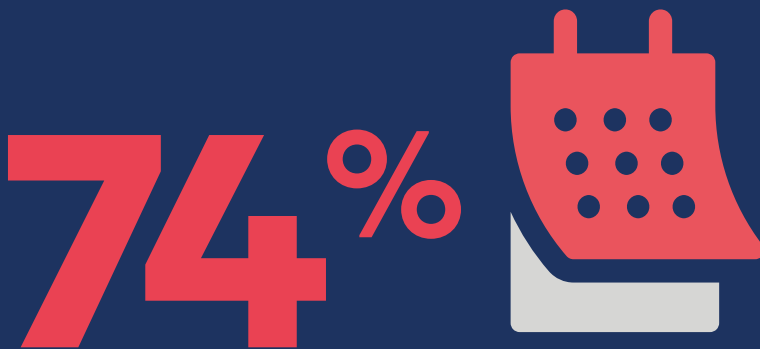
Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number. Where these do not add up to 100, this is due to respondents being able to select more than one answer to the question or due to rounding.



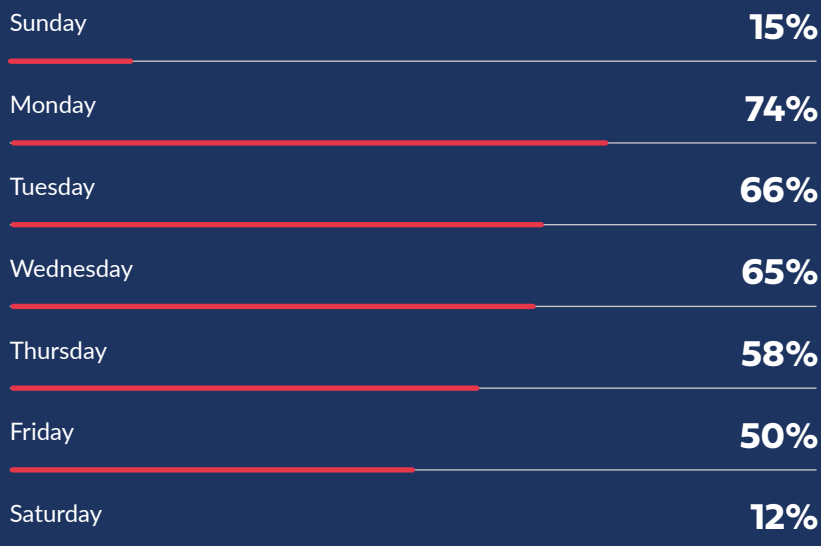
Building relationships with journalists is incredibly important. Before pitching a story to a specific journalist I make sure to read their latest stories so I know they have an interest in what I am sending to them. Sending journalists irrelevant pitches will only sour a relationship and make you lose out in the long run.



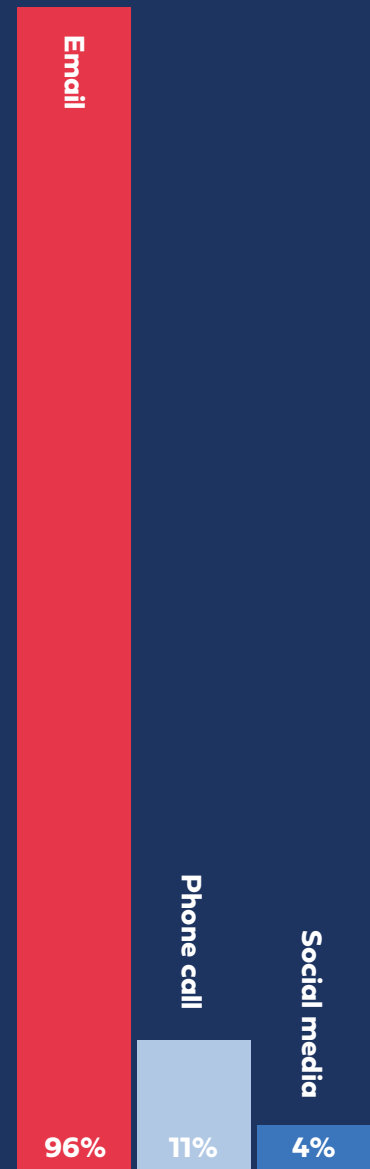
Our must-have stats for PR



The best time to send a pitch to a journalist is on Monday morning via email.

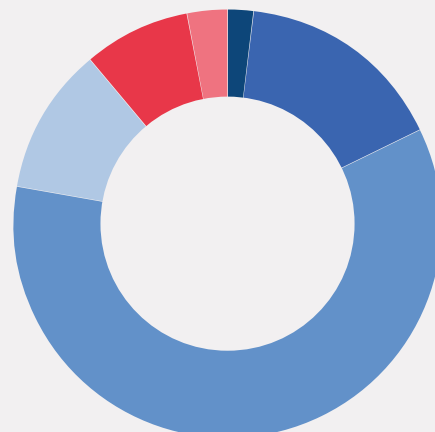
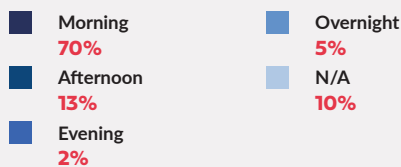


Journalists preferred day to receive pitches (page 21)



Journalists preferred contact methods (page 20)

Journalists preferred time to receive pitches (page 21)

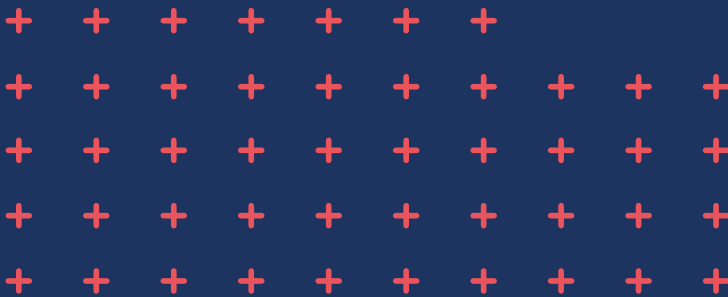




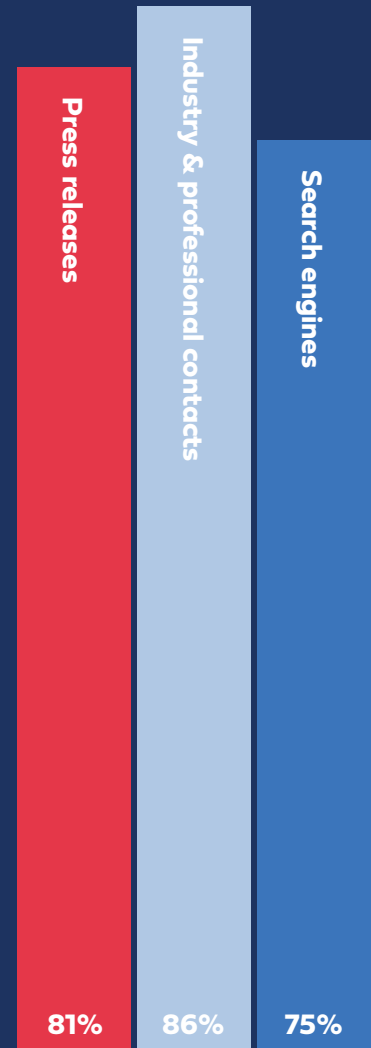
While Facebook has been the top social media platform used professionally by journalists consistently every year, followed by Twitter/X, the use of other platforms (Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok) has been on the rise by journalists. Twitter/X use by journalists has been declining with a 10% drop in 2023. (Learn more on page 35)

47%

of survey respondents said they were less likely to cover a story that had already been covered by another media organisation. (page 33)



Providing story or interview exclusives (62%) and sending personalised story pitches (61%) were voted the top two ways to build a relationship with journalists. (page 26)



Top 3 story sources used by journalists in 2023 (page 11)

68%

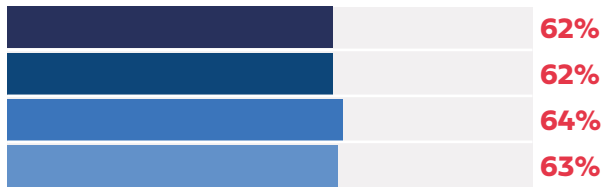
Story not relevant to journalists' field/audience



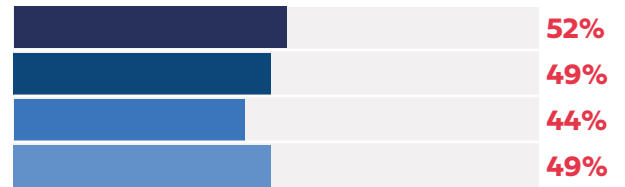
Top 4 journalists 'Pet Peeves' when being contacted by PR (page 24)

Media industry snapshot

Digital



Print



Radio



TV



Podcast

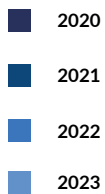


FIGURE 1: Sector of the media industry over time

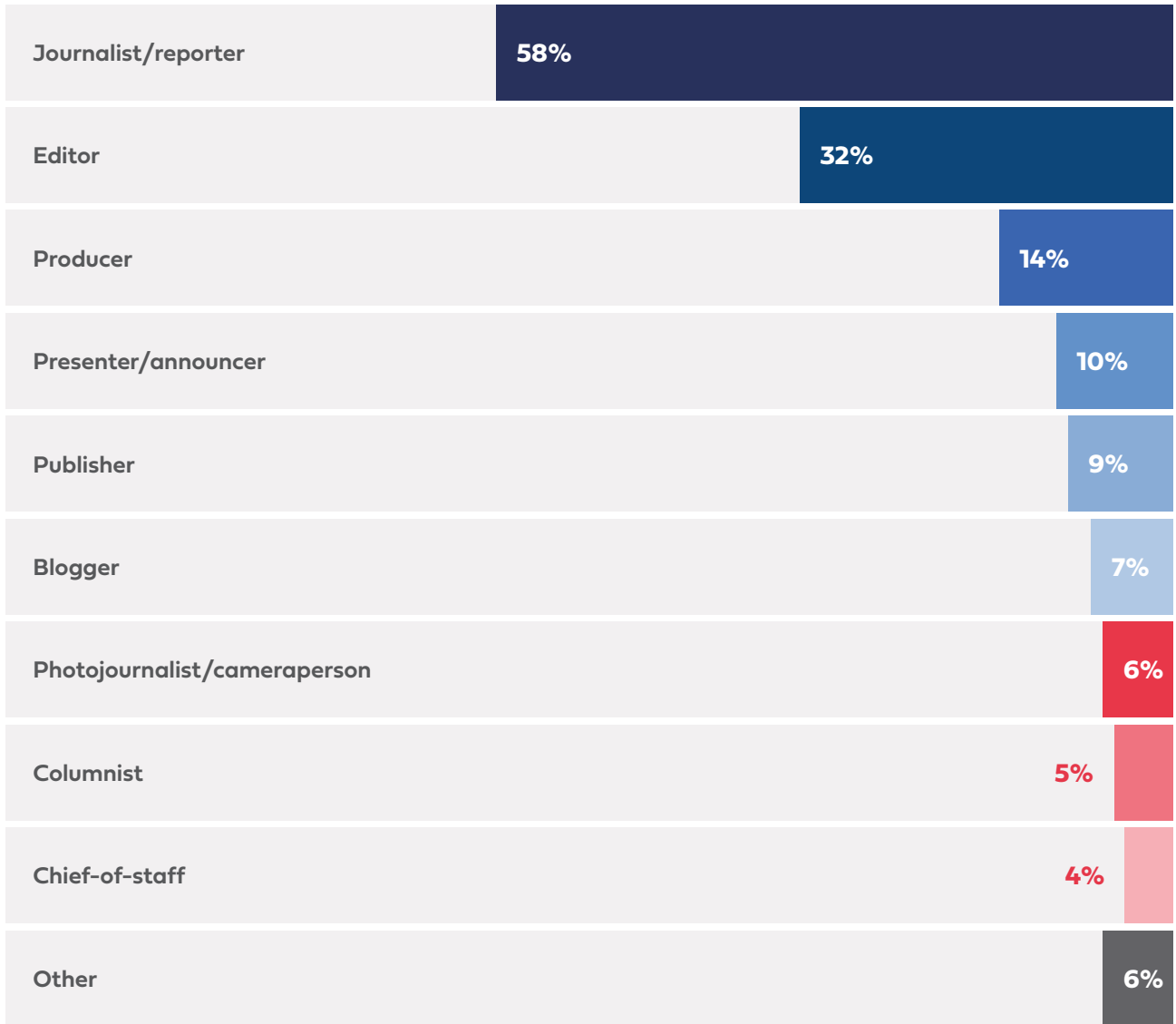


FIGURE 2: Role in the media, 2023

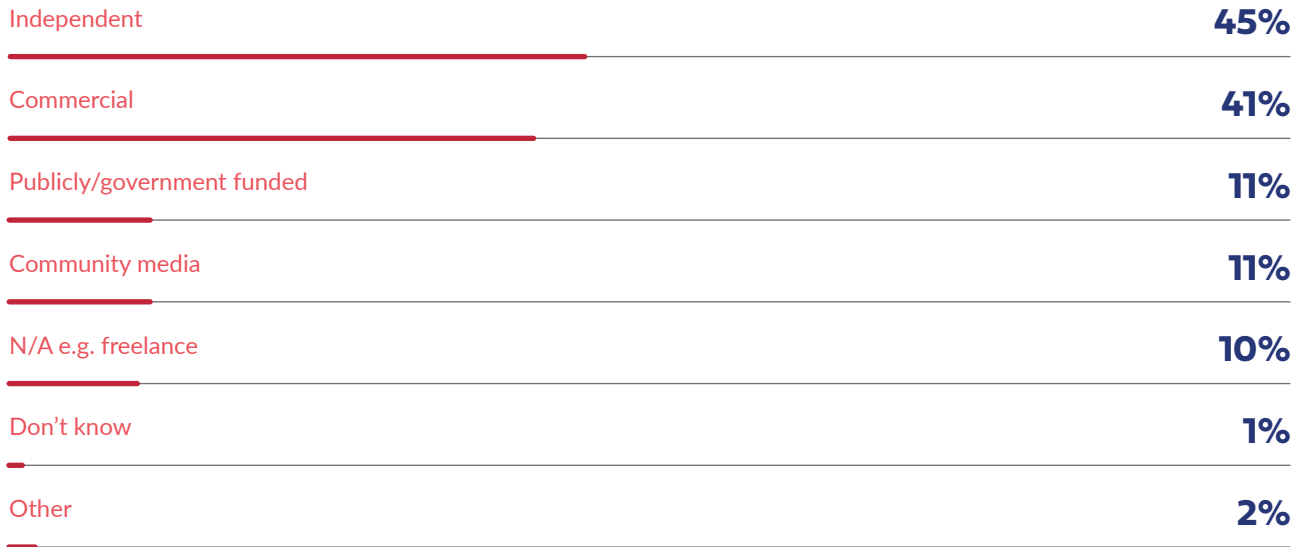
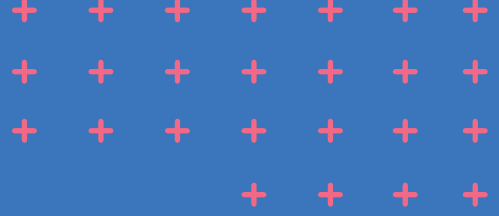


FIGURE 3: Type of media organisation, 2023



The full findings reports from each year contain far more depth and analysis, including responses to questions beyond the scope of journalists' relationships with PR.

[View all reports](#)



2024

Press releases and pitches

How journalists source their stories

86%

of journalists use industry and professional contacts as their top story source.



Over time, industry and professional contacts have remained the top story source for journalists (used by 86% of respondents in 2023).

Press releases are the second most used story source, used by 81% of journalists.

The most significant change to the story sources of journalists in 2023 was a 9% drop in journalists using PR agencies and publicists. Another change was the use of generative AI by media professionals throughout 2023, with 7% of survey respondents saying they had used this source.

A higher percentage of journalists working in TV and radio used the general public as story sources in 2023 when compared to other media types. Radio journalists also reported using social media as a story source more commonly than journalists working on other platforms. Digital and print journalists used PR agencies or publicists slightly more than journalists from other platforms, and those in print also used official documents as story sources at slightly higher rates. Journalists working in podcasting reported the highest percentage of using journals or peer-reviewed articles as story sources in 2023.

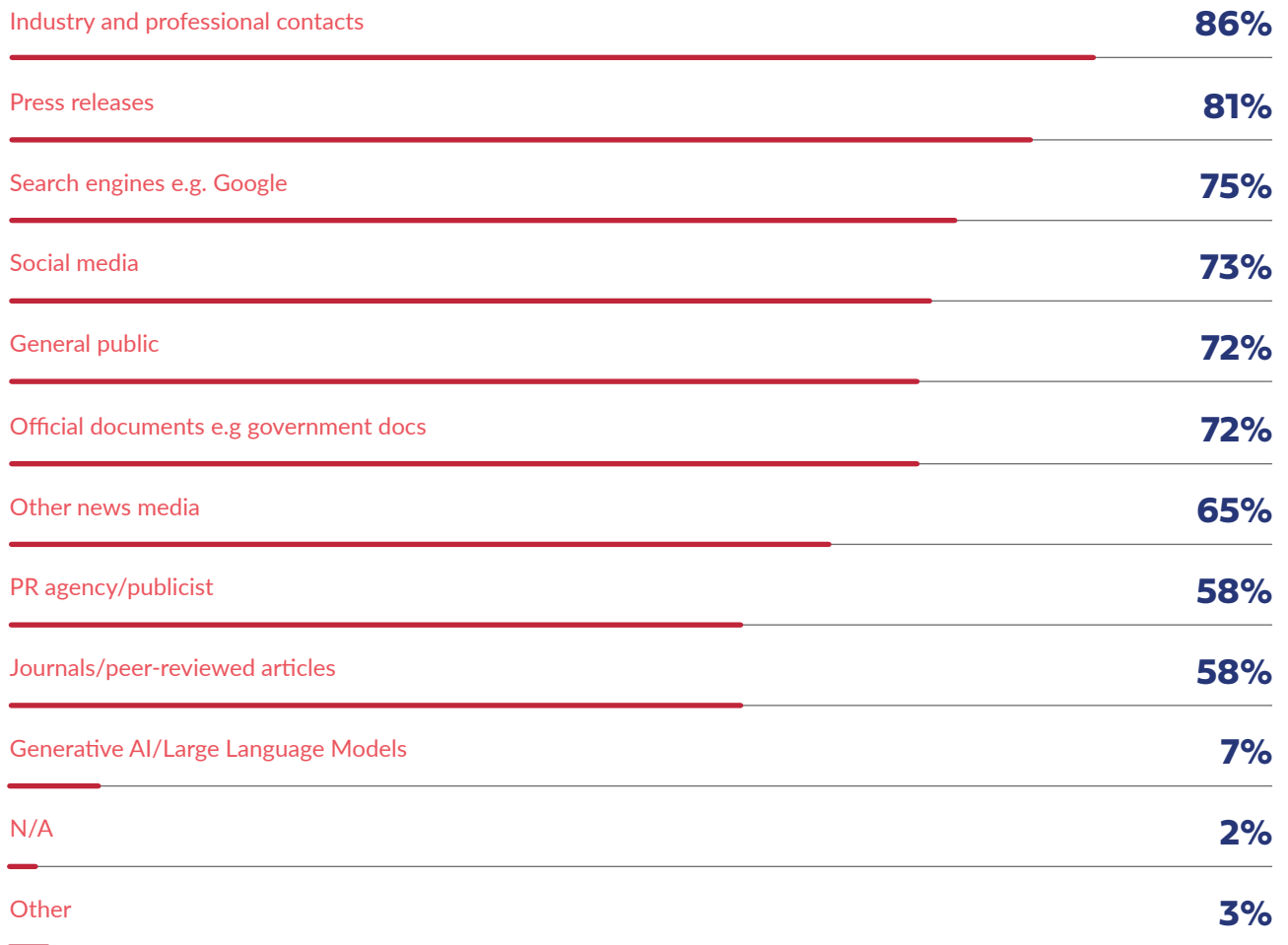
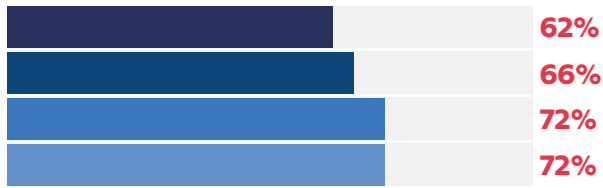


FIGURE 4: Story sources used by journalists in 2023

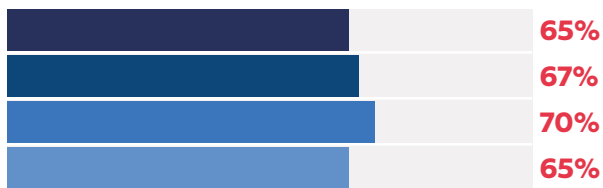
General public



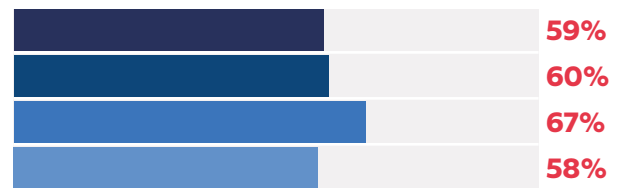
Industry and professional contacts



Other news media



PR agencies/publicists



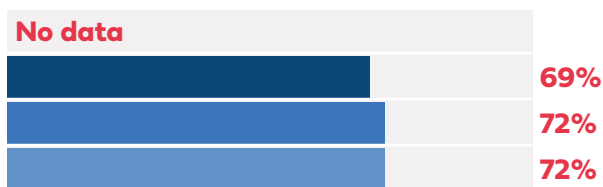
Press releases



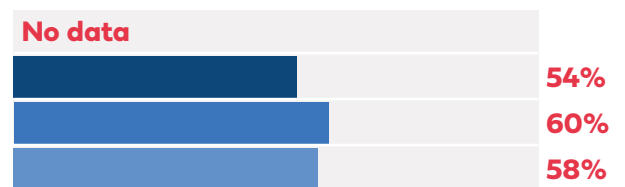
Social media



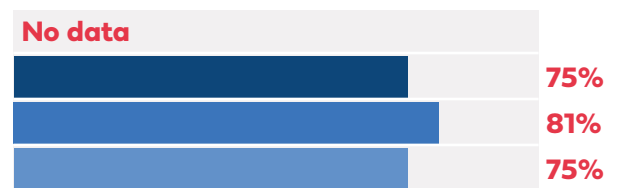
Official documents e.g. government docs



Journals/peer-reviewed articles



Search engines e.g. Google



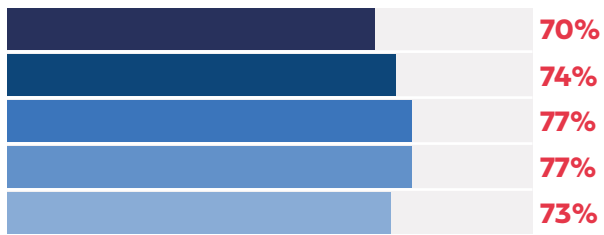
- 2020
- 2021
- 2022
- 2023

Generative AI/LLMS



FIGURE 5: Story sources used by journalists, year

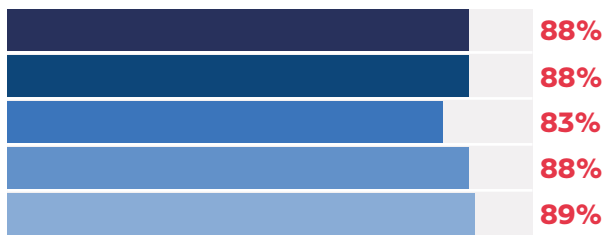
General public



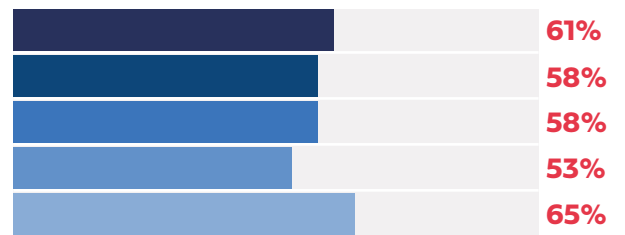
Generative AI/LLMS



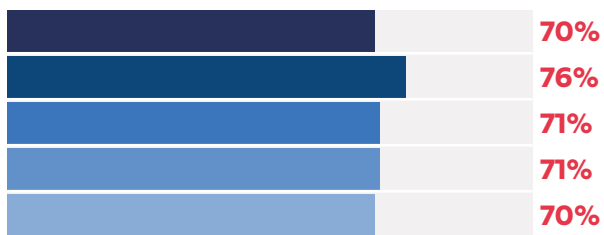
Industry and professional contacts



Journals/peer-reviewed articles



Official documents e.g. government docs



Other news media

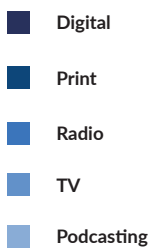
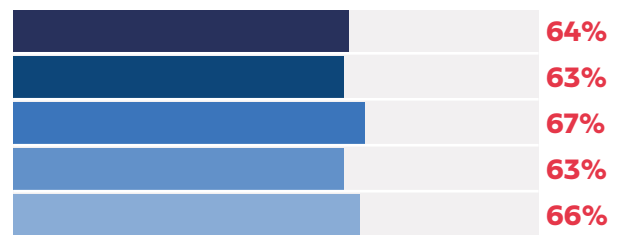
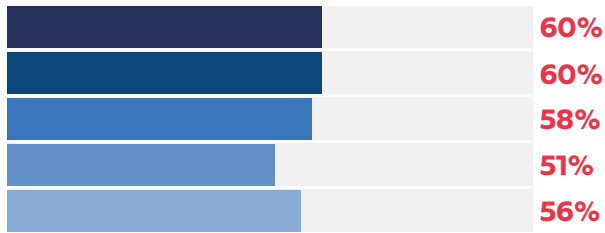
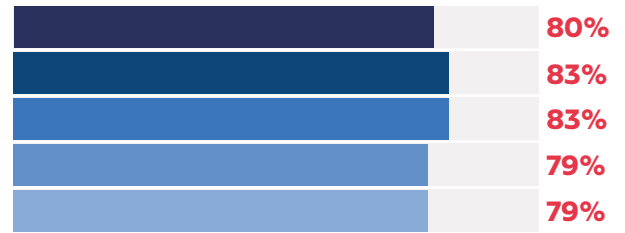


FIGURE 6: Story sources used by journalists in 2023, by platform

PR agencies/publicists



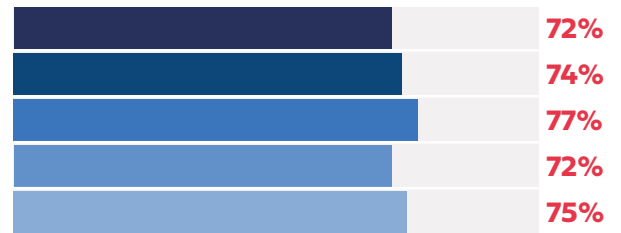
Press releases



Search engines e.g. Google



Social media



- Digital
- Print
- Radio
- TV
- Podcasting

FIGURE 6 continued

How journalists use press releases

81%

of journalists used press releases as a story source in 2023.



Of the 683 survey respondents (81%) who used press releases to source stories in 2023, the majority (89%) said their PR contacts email them directly with press releases.

About two-thirds (67%) said they receive emails or pitches from a press release distribution service, while 35% receive press releases from their editor or chief-of-staff and 32% find them online on a press release platform.

Of the 81% of respondents who said they used press releases as story sources, more than half (55%) said they tend to write or produce the story themselves using some information from the release. Twenty-nine percent said they use the release as background information only, and 13% said they use the information on the release for most of the story.

Journalists working in TV had a significantly higher proportion of respondents who said they use press releases as background information only. Those in radio had the highest rates of reporting using the information in a release for most of a story.

📌 Media now is dependent on press releases as there is not enough time or resources to hunt independently for stories.

– Journalist, 2022

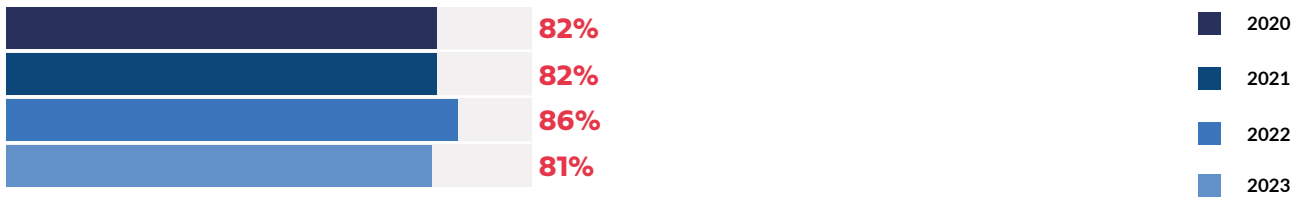


FIGURE 7: Journalists' use of press releases to source stories, year

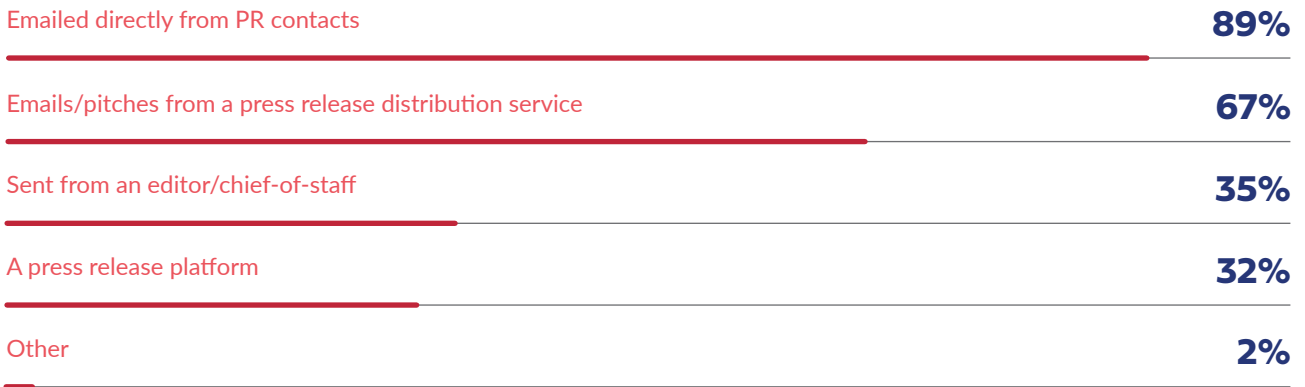


FIGURE 8: Where journalists found press releases in 2023

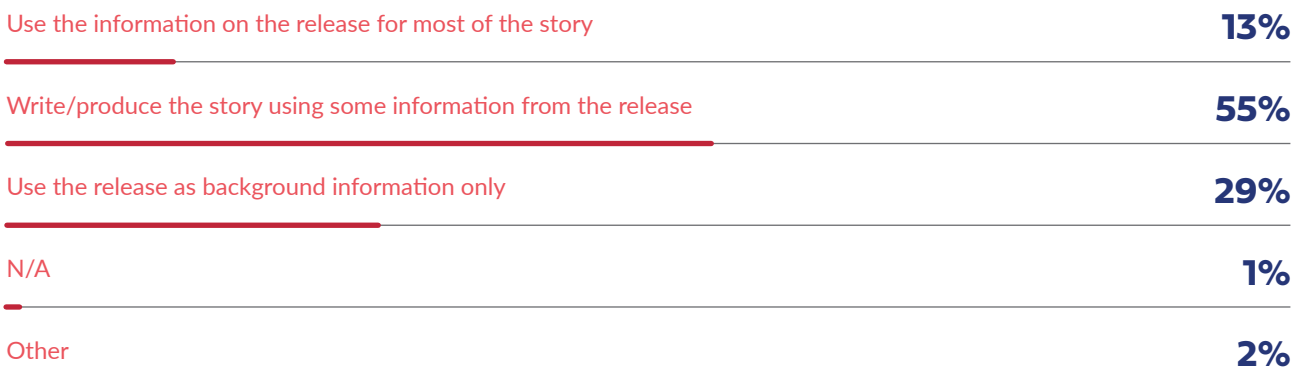
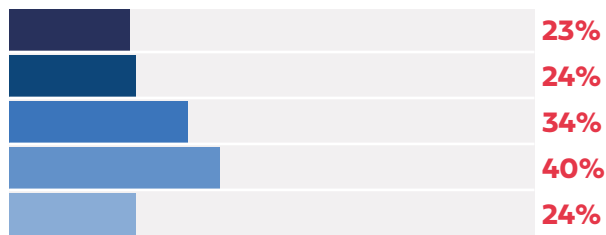
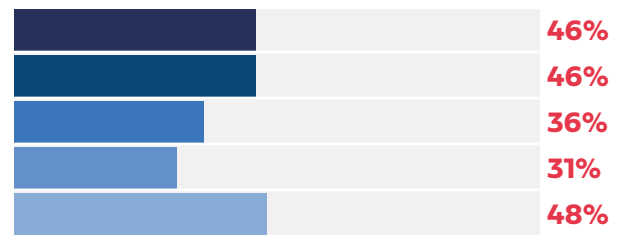


FIGURE 9: Journalists' use of press releases in stories in 2023 (those who use press releases)

Use the release as background information only



Write/produce the story using some information from the release



Use the information on the release for most of the story



Don't use press releases



- Digital
- Print
- Radio
- TV
- Podcasting

FIGURE 10: Journalists' use of press releases in stories in 2023, by journalists' platform (all respondents)

What is the ideal pitch length

When receiving a press release, only 11% of journalists in 2022 said they read the whole thing before deciding if the story is worth pursuing.

The majority of respondents (70%) read less than a paragraph, with 37% opening the email and glancing at it, 23% reading the first paragraph and

10% reading just the email subject line. Twenty percent read more than one paragraph but not the whole release.

Similarly, according to 59% of journalists in 2021 the ideal story pitch length is a paragraph or two.

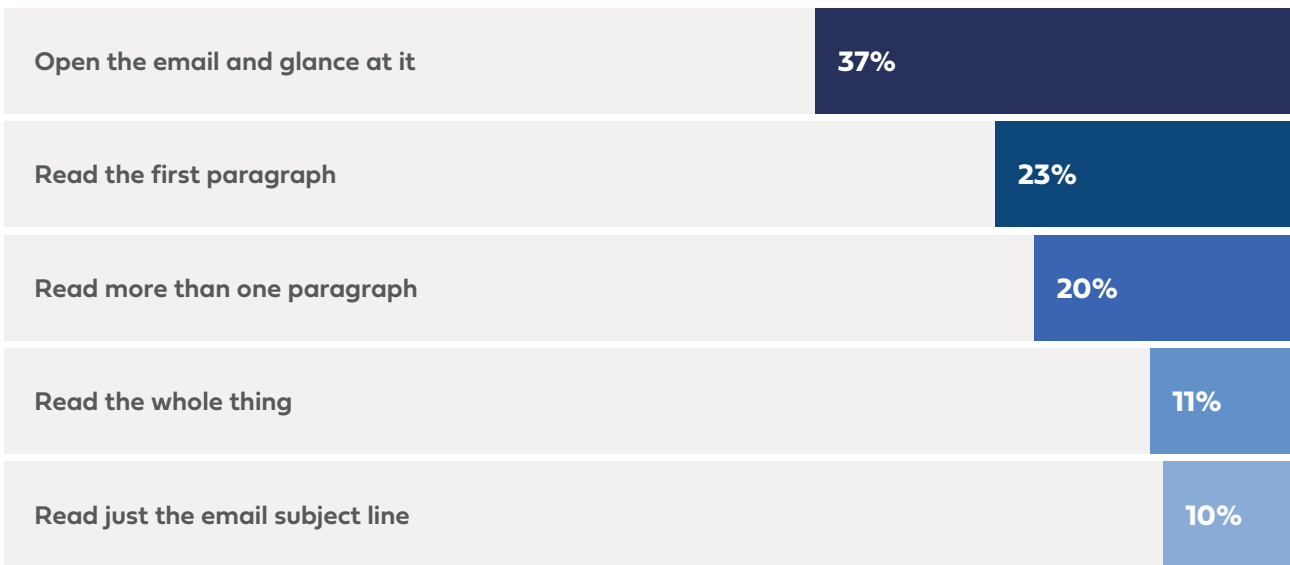


FIGURE 11: How much journalists read of a press release, 2022

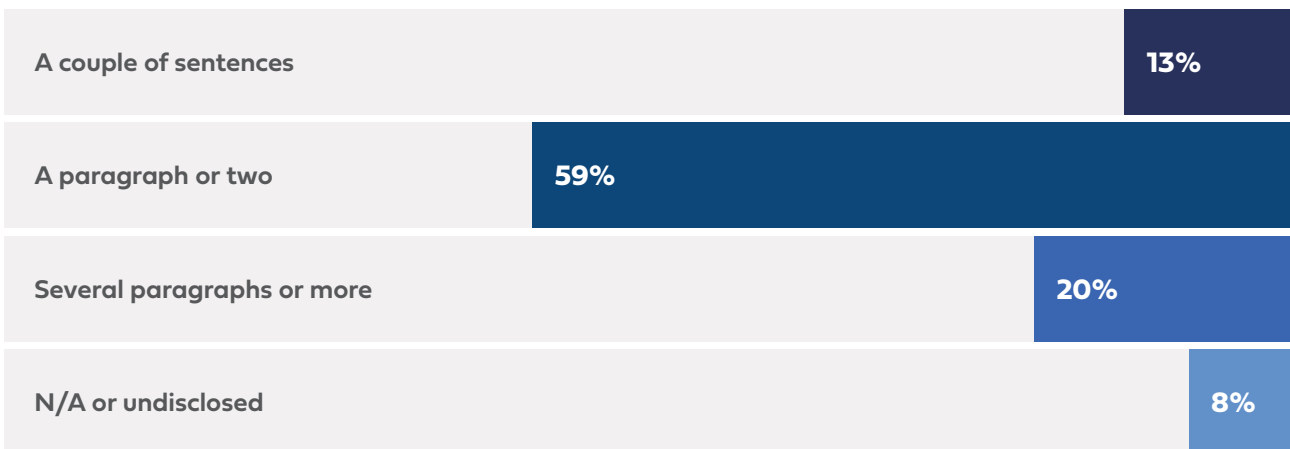


FIGURE 12: Ideal pitch length for journalists, 2021

How to use embargoes effectively

Almost all (95%) of survey respondents in 2021 indicated that embargoes are relevant to their area of work in the media. Of these journalists, 94% responded that they always respect the date on embargoes.

Almost half of journalist survey respondents (48%) in 2022 said they

generally like to receive embargoed releases a few days in advance. One day is the preferred notice period for 24% of journalists, one week for 15% and more than one week for 9%.

These preferences did not differ significantly depending on the journalists' platform (print compared to radio etc.).



FIGURE 13: Journalists' adherence to embargoes, 2021

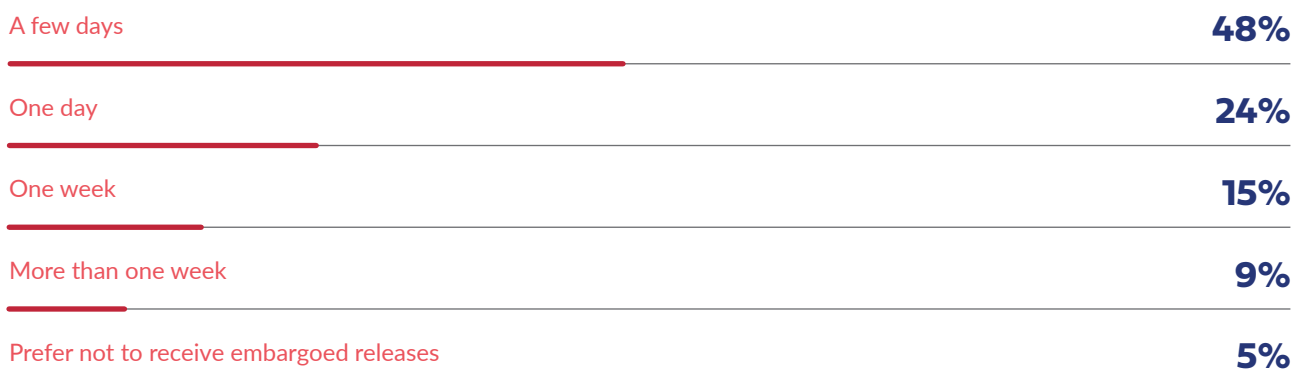


FIGURE 14: Preferred advanced notice time for embargoed releases, 2022

When and how to contact journalists

96%



of journalists highlighted email as their preferred way for PR to contact them.

Email was highlighted by 96% of journalists surveyed in 2021 as one of the ways they prefer PR to contact them.

The majority of journalists (70%) responded that morning is their preferred time to receive pitches and press releases.

Earlier in the week was found to be journalists' preferred days to be contacted by PR, with Monday being the most preferred day for 74% of respondents and each subsequent weekday declining in popularity.

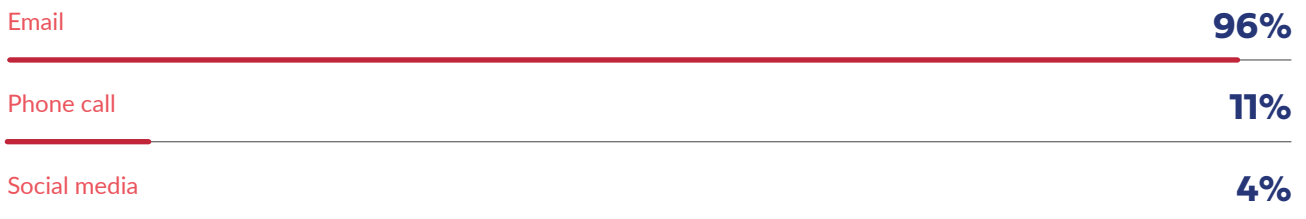


FIGURE 15: Journalists' preferred contact methods by PR, 2021

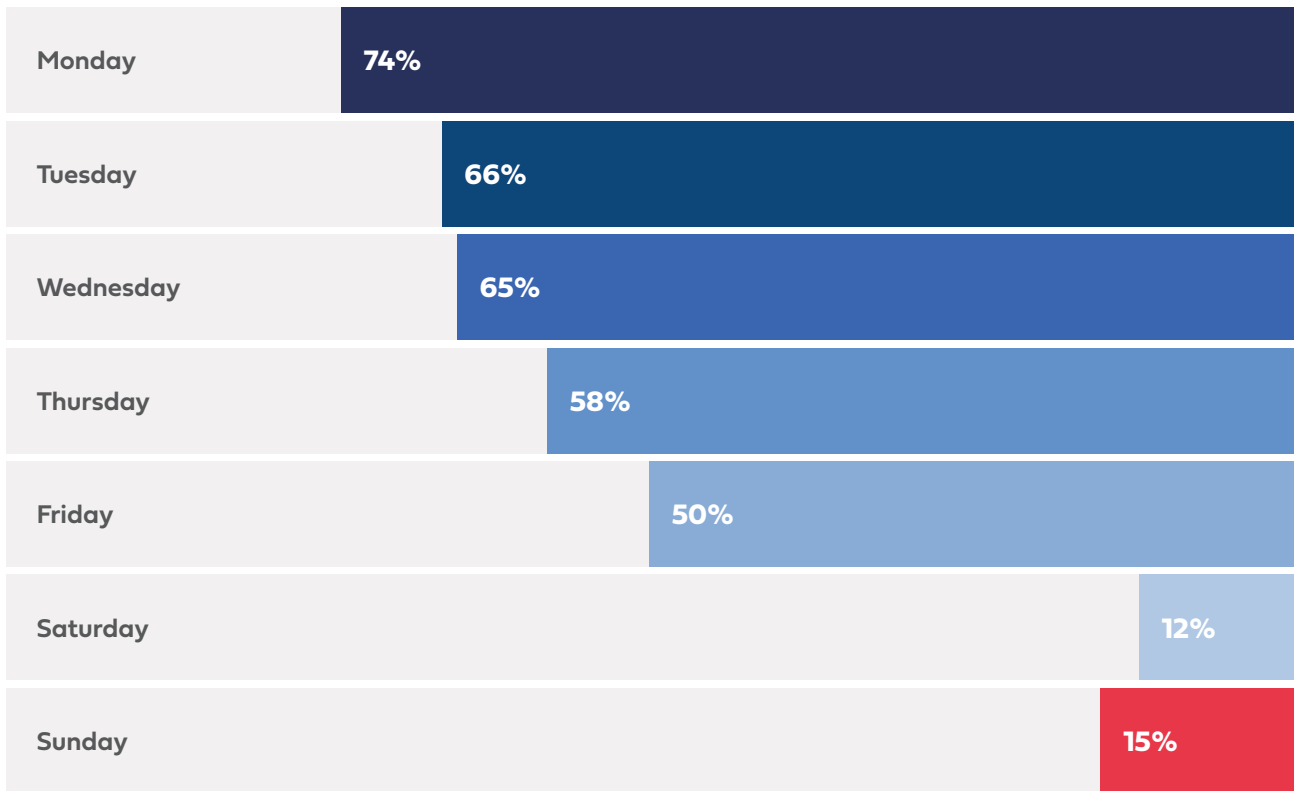
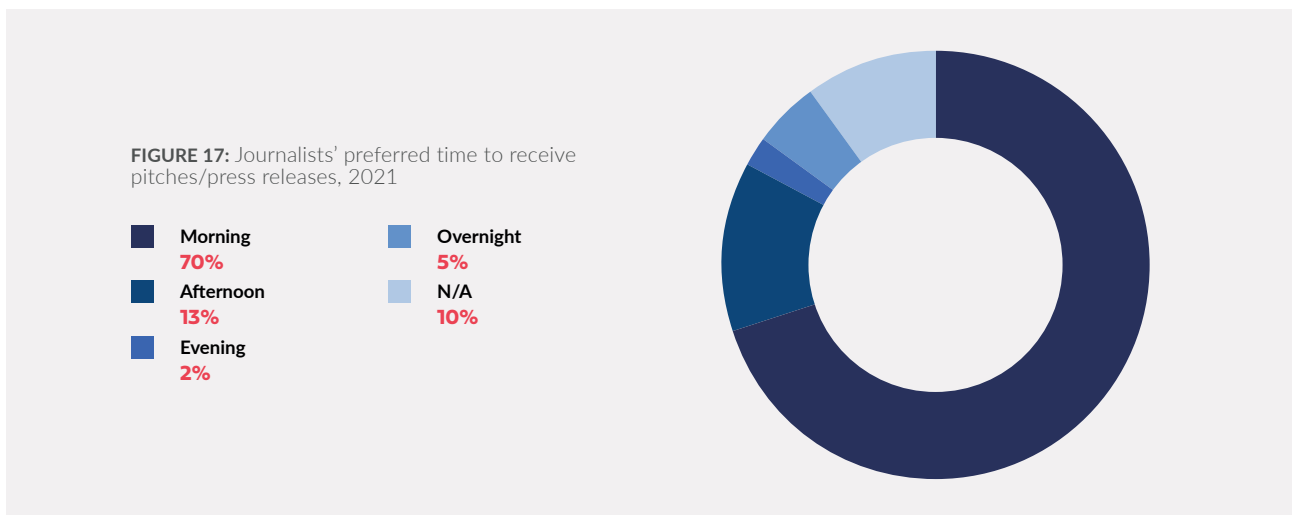


FIGURE 16: Journalists' preferred days to be contacted by PR, 2021



If, when and how to follow-up a pitch

79%



of journalists do not appreciate receiving a follow-up email or phone call about a pitch or press release.

More than three-quarters of respondents (79%) said they do not appreciate receiving a follow-up email or phone call about a pitch or press release, and would contact the PR professional themselves

if interested in the story. Sixteen percent said they appreciate one follow-up email or call. Only 1% of journalists preferred PR to follow up with them repeatedly until they responded.

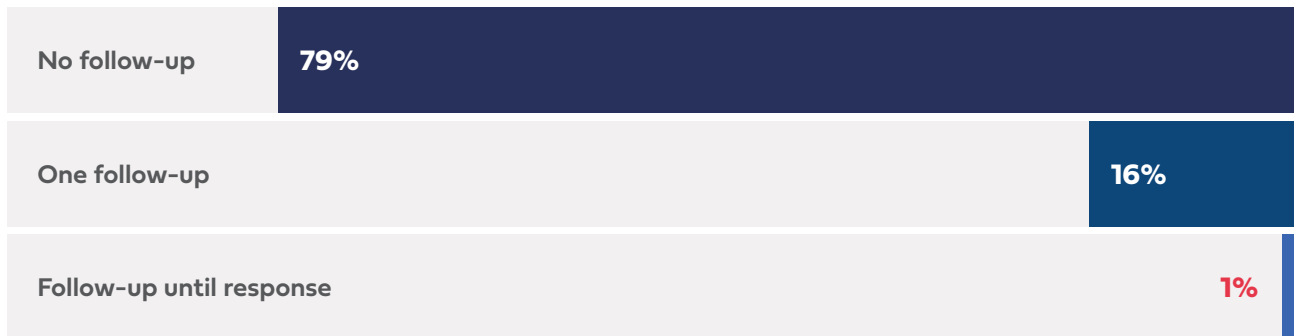


FIGURE 18: Pitch follow-up preferences, 2021

There is a fine line between enough/ too much contact. Trusted PR folks are invaluable.
– Journalist, 2022

Follow up emails from PR can be irritating. Journalists keep on top of their emails and if they don't reply it's probably not right for them to cover.
– Journalist, 2022

What journalists want in a pitch

2021 survey respondents were asked to identify up to three of the most important elements to them when receiving PR pitches. Overwhelmingly, the most widely valued aspect for journalists when receiving pitches was that content is relevant to the journalists' specific area of work and their target audience.

Original or unique content and pitches that note a spokesperson is available to comment proved the second and third most important elements respectively.



FIGURE 19: Most important elements of a pitch, 2021

How to annoy a journalist (or how NOT to)

Similarly, journalists were asked to identify up to three of their biggest ‘pet peeves’ or annoyances when receiving a press release or story idea. Most of the journalists (68%) responded that one of their greatest ‘pet peeves’ is receiving pitches for

stories not relevant to their field or audience. Nearly half of respondents (48%) identified content lacking news value as their greatest peeve, and 30% identified being contacted too often by PR professionals.



FIGURE 20: Journalists ‘pet peeves’ when being contacted by PR, 2021

Biggest 'pet peeve' is when:



I need to spend brain space deciphering what the press release means. Just give me the point and why it matters to our audience.

– Journalist, 2021



Content is aimed at promoting businesses and organisations rather than informing the public. That's not journalism.

– Journalist, 2021



Someone else published the story the day before or overnight.

– Journalist, 2021

How to work with journalists

Respondents in 2023 were asked about the best ways for PR professionals to build a strong working relationship with journalists. Providing story or interview exclusives and sending personalised story pitches were the top two ways, preferred by 62% and 61% of journalists respectively.

This was followed by sending press releases, one of the best ways to build a strong professional relationship according to 48% of respondents.

Making contact only when necessary was found to be preferred over regular contact via email or phone.

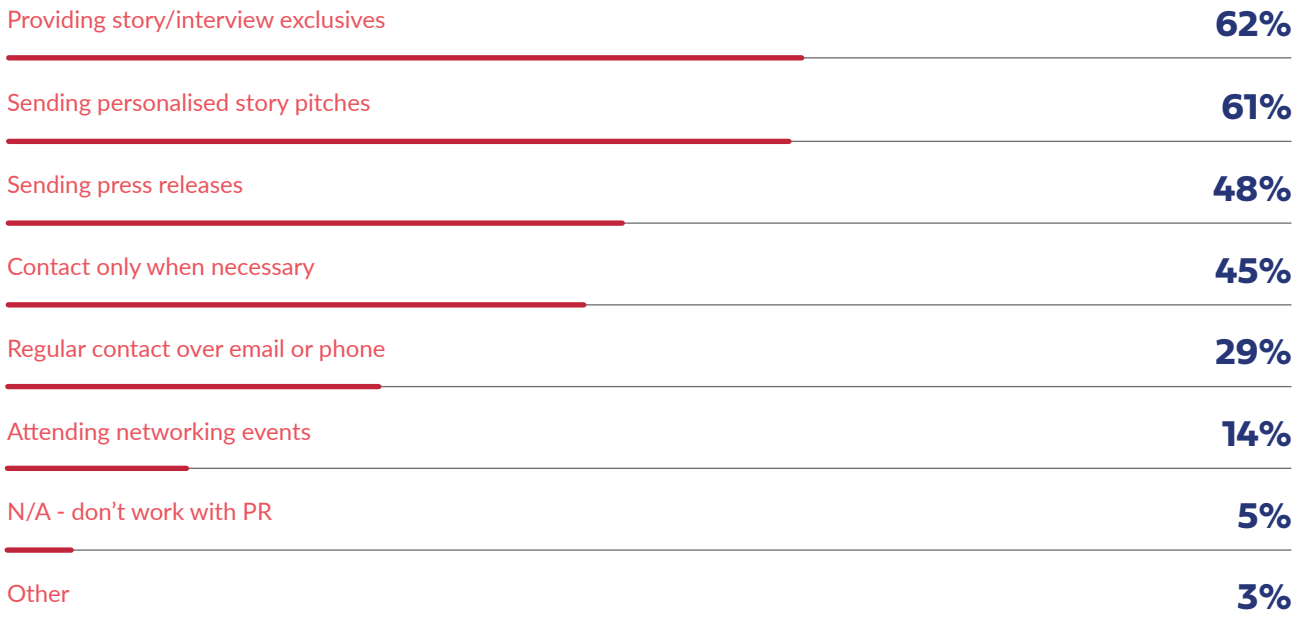


FIGURE 21: How PR can build a strong working relationship with journalists

🗨️ If PR are pitching talent for an interview, they need to be available that day.

– Journalist, 2023



PR who are familiar with a person's work, or an outlet's specific tone and coverage area, will have more success and foster better connections with journalists.

- Journalist 2023

When agreeing to send information or arrange interviews please make it as hassle free as possible and refrain from trying to control the conversation. Trust goes a long way. I am not interested in plotting a company's downfall.

- Journalist, 2023

If sending press releases, only send them to relevant journalists. I get hundreds of emails a day and many of them are junk that aren't related to my round. If that person ever contacts me with a relevant story, I'll be used to them spamming me with useless information and won't even open the email.

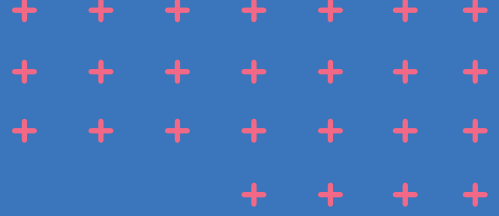
- Journalist, 2023

What is major news in your niche is often completely irrelevant to the rest of my audience.

- Journalist, 2023

It is harder to find and work with trustworthy PR professionals, but I value them more than ever.

- Journalist, 2023



2024

Story content

What journalists want in a story

2021 survey respondents were asked to select up to three “features” that are most important to them in the stories they produce.

News value (44%) and human interest (38%) ranked as the most important features for journalists in the content they produce.

“Good news” stories, human interest and local significance were found to be more important to regional journalists. Journalists working in the city valued national significance, original ideas/thought leadership and news value more.

Of the 4% who noted other considerations, the most common response was audience relevance.

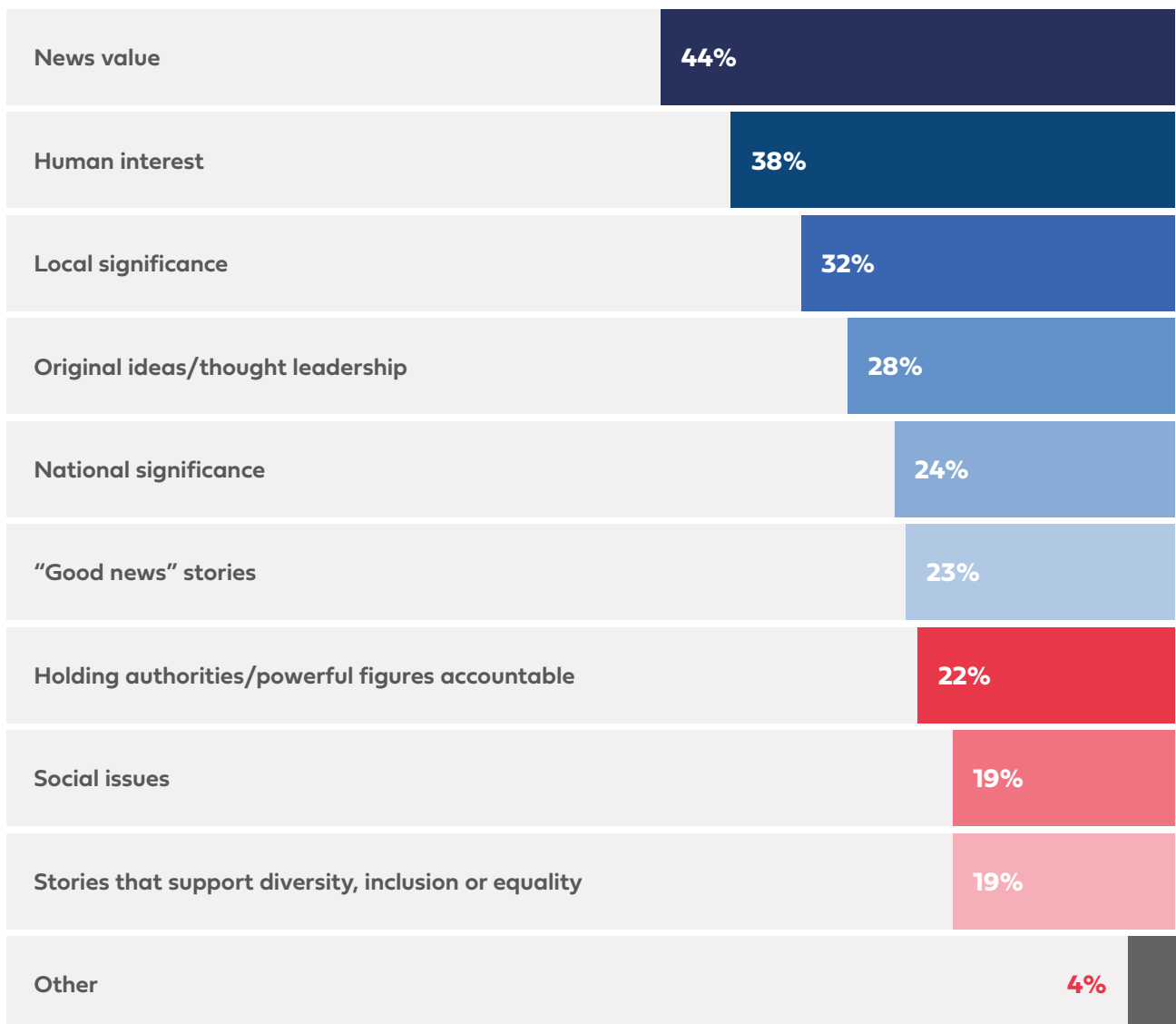


FIGURE 22: Highest valued features in media content, 2021

What drives journalists to cover a story

Informing the public, raising awareness for issues and entertaining audiences/providing enjoyment were found to be the top three factors driving journalists to cover stories in 2023.

Journalists working for community media organisations were more commonly motivated by raising awareness for issues, shaping policy and agenda and building their personal public profile, than journalists at other media organisations. Those working for publicly/government

funded organisations were more highly motivated by informing the public, holding people accountable and exposing wrongdoing than other journalists. Journalists working for commercial organisations were more motivated by generating ‘clicks’ or audience engagement for their organisation, while respondents from independent organisations had marginally higher rates of being driven by entertaining audiences or providing enjoyment.

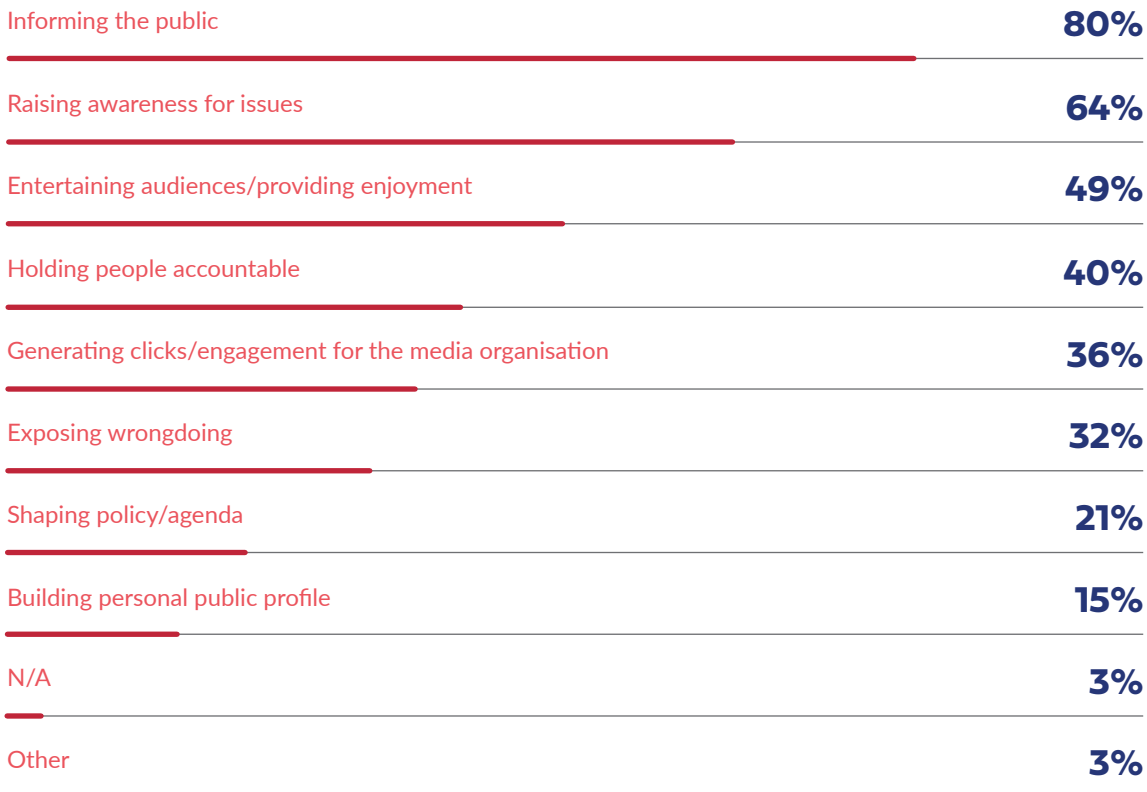
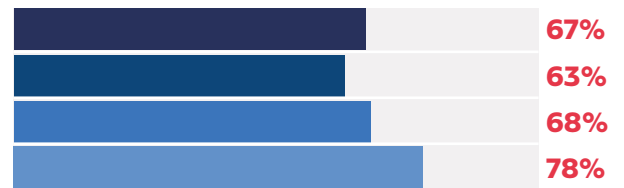


FIGURE 23: Factors driving journalists to cover stories

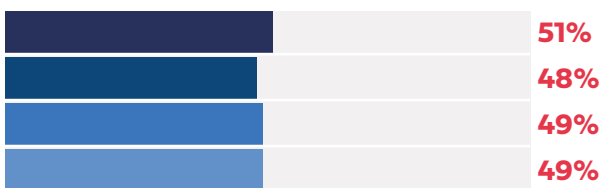
Informing the public



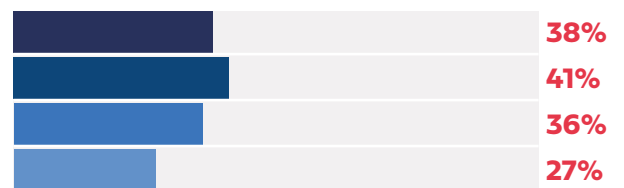
Raising awareness for issues



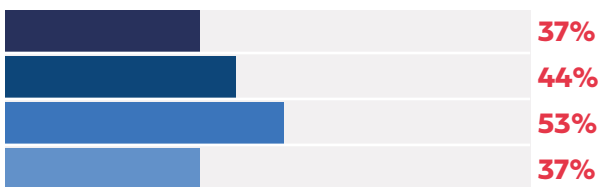
Entertaining audiences/providing enjoyment



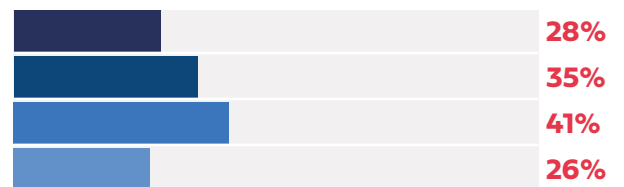
Generating clicks/engagement for the media organisation



Holding people accountable



Exposing wrongdoing



Shaping policy/agenda



Building personal public profile



FIGURE 24: Factors driving journalists to cover stories (media organisation type)

How important are exclusives

Almost half (47%) of survey respondents said they were less likely to cover a story that had already been covered by another media organisation. Only 13% of respondents said they were more likely to cover a story that had already been covered.

Journalists working in podcasting were the least likely to cover stories that had already been reported, followed by those in TV. Radio was the platform on which the highest percentage of journalists said they would be more likely to cover a story that had already been reported in the media.

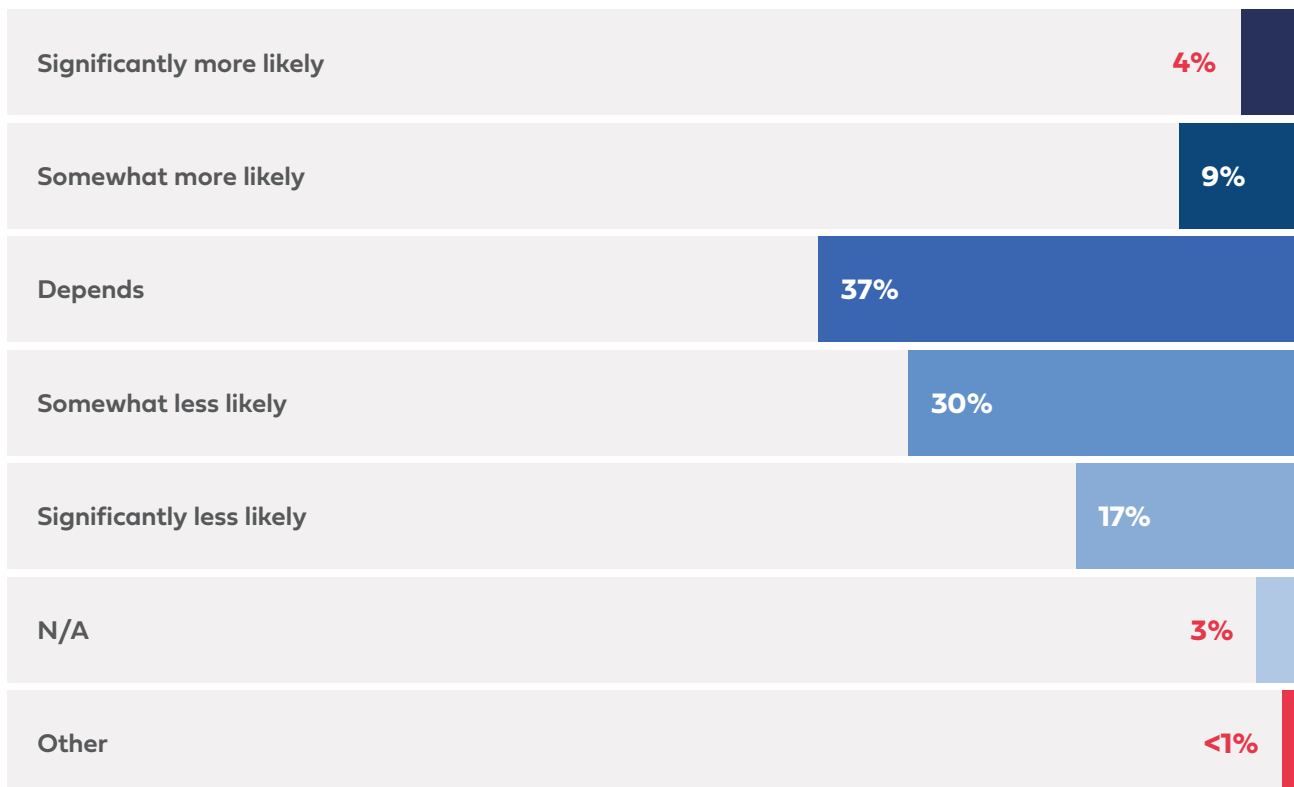
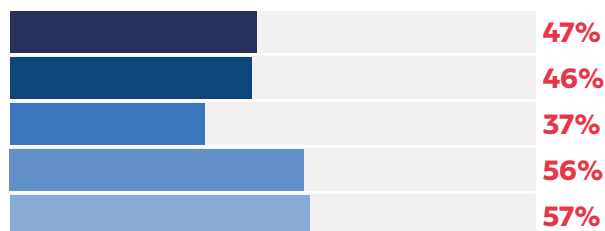


FIGURE 25: Likelihood of covering stories already reported

🗣️ [I am] much more likely to work with PR if they have a deep understanding of my round, what I cover and the angles I would cover it from, [and] offer exclusives/first runs etc.

– Journalist, 2023

Less likely

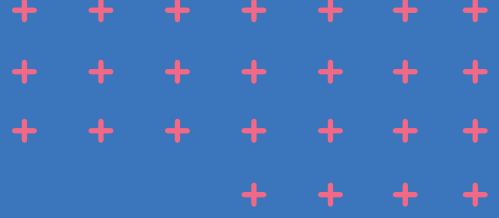


More likely



- Digital
- Print
- Radio
- TV
- Podcasting

FIGURE 26: Likelihood of covering stories already reported (journalists' platform)

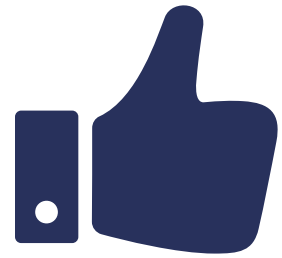


2024

Social media

How do journalists use social media

96%



of journalists use social media in their media work.

The use of social media professionally by journalists remained high in 2023, with 96% of respondents having used social media in their media work. Almost three quarters (73%) of journalists in 2023 used social media as a story source, while nearly all respondents (96%) used social media in some way in their work as journalists (for example sharing their own articles/content).

Facebook continued to be the most commonly used platform by journalists professionally in 2023. Twitter/X usage has dropped significantly (see page 38) from being the second most used by journalists in 2022 to being the 4th most used. Instagram and LinkedIn are now the second and third most used platforms respectively. Use of TikTok as a story source rose steadily again in 2023.

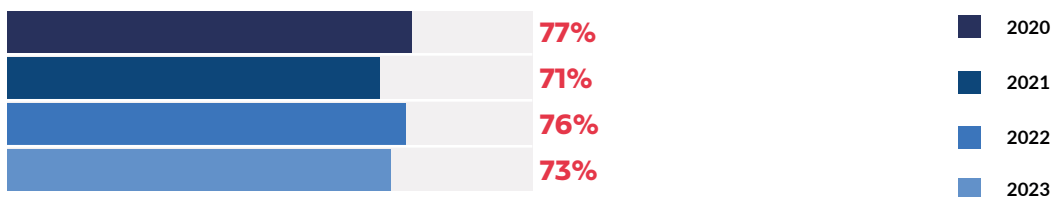


FIGURE 27: Journalists' using social media as a story source

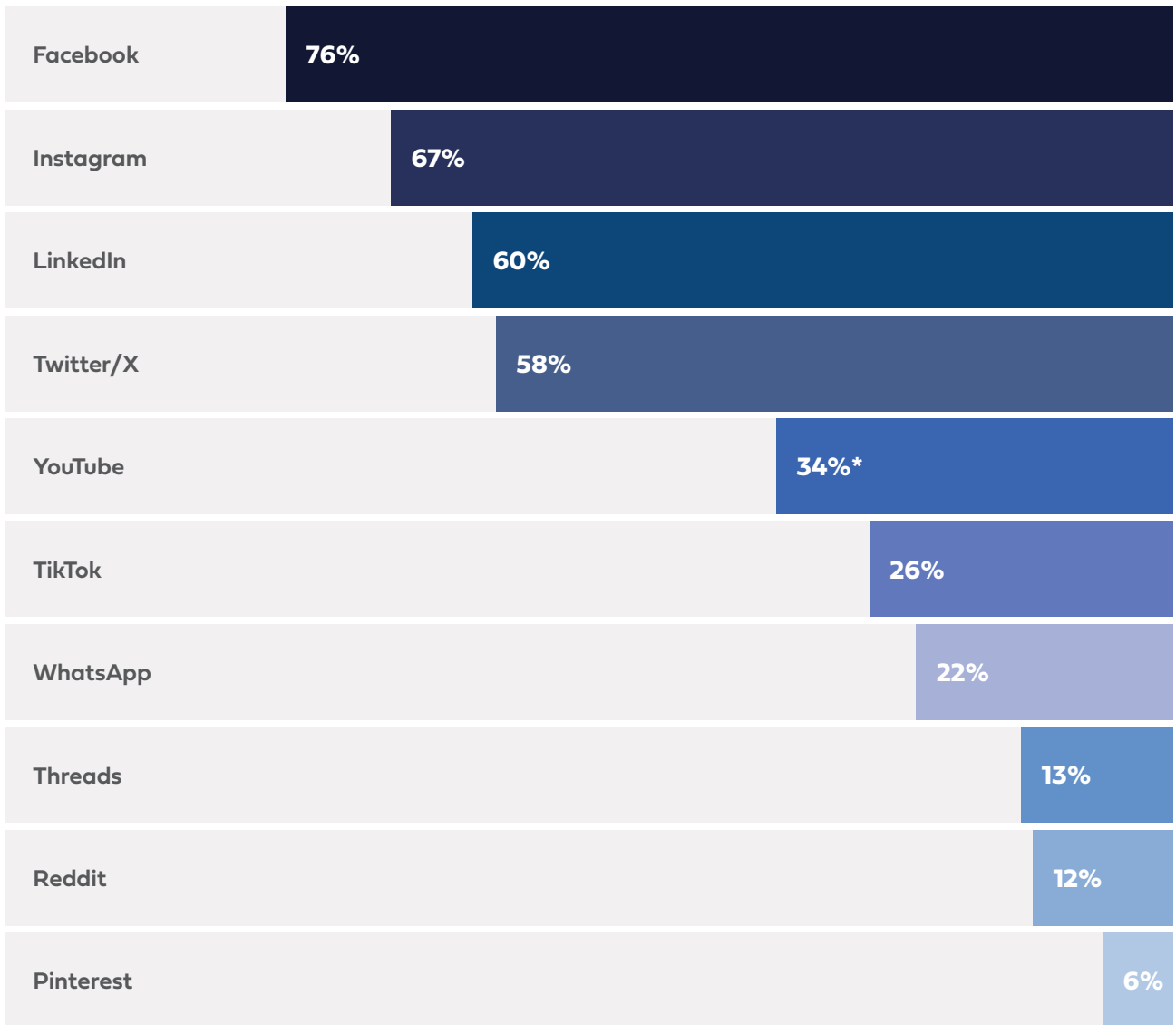


FIGURE 28: Professional social media usage by journalists in 2023

**YouTube was added as a response option following the publication of the survey. Results have been scaled to reflect this.*

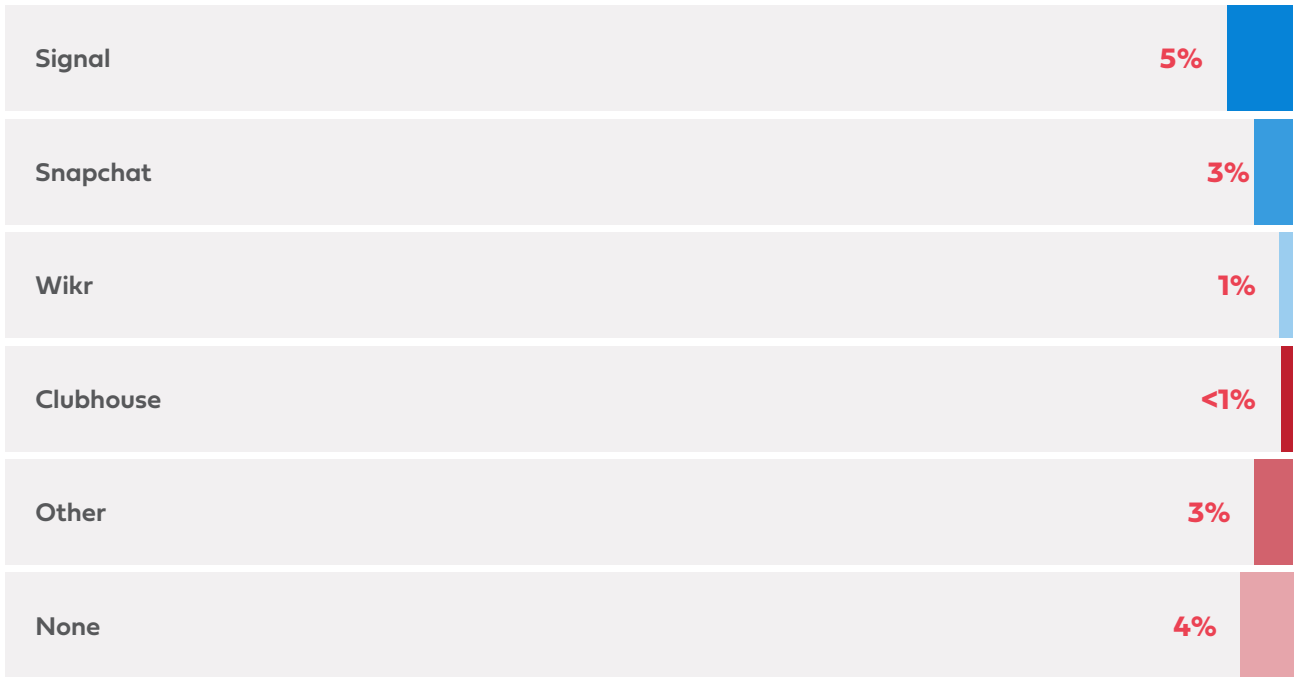
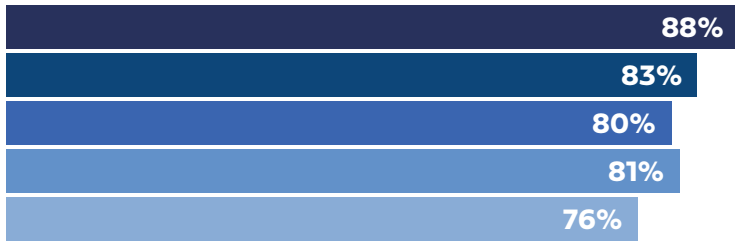
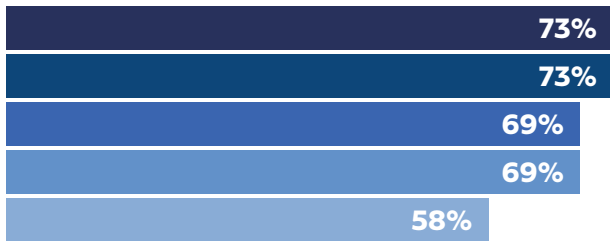


FIGURE 28 continued

Facebook



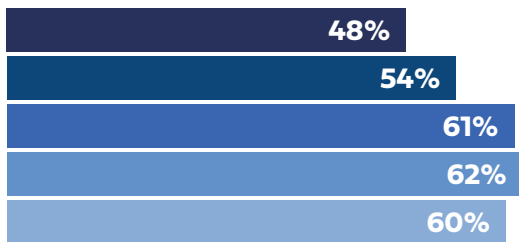
Twitter/X



Instagram



LinkedIn



TikTok

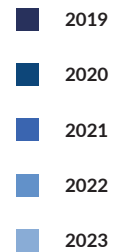
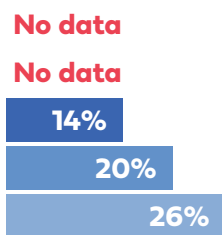


FIGURE 29: Professional social media usage by journalists (year)

What is different about social media now

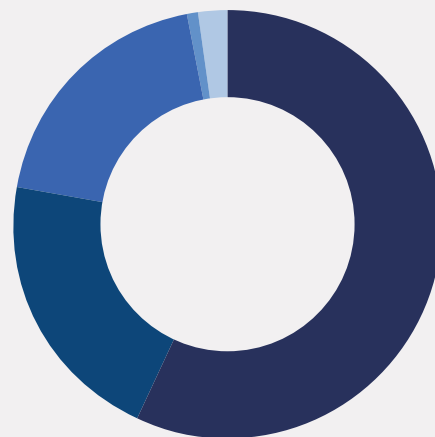
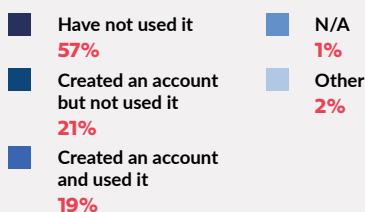
In 2023 we saw the widely publicised launch of the new social media platform Threads. More than half of journalists in 2023 (57%) had not used the platform at all, while 21% had created an account but not used it. Nineteen percent of respondents actively used Threads in their work in 2023, and 13% said they had used it as a story source.

The platform formerly known as Twitter also received significant publicity in 2023, following the company's acquisition by Elon Musk in 2022 and subsequent rebrand to X in July 2023. Some users closed their accounts or decided to boycott the platform due to concern that it had facilitated an increase in hate speech or misinformation.

There was a significant drop in professional Twitter/X usage in 2023, with 58% of respondents saying they used the platform, down from 69% in 2022. Ten percent identified having either recently deleted their account or stopped using it in 2023. A quarter of respondents (26%) said they still have an account but rarely used Twitter/X in 2023. Just 1% said they had switched to the platform Threads instead.

Thirty-five percent of journalists said they were active users of the platform in their work in 2023.

FIGURE 30: Journalists' professional use of Threads in 2023 (of those who use social media professionally)



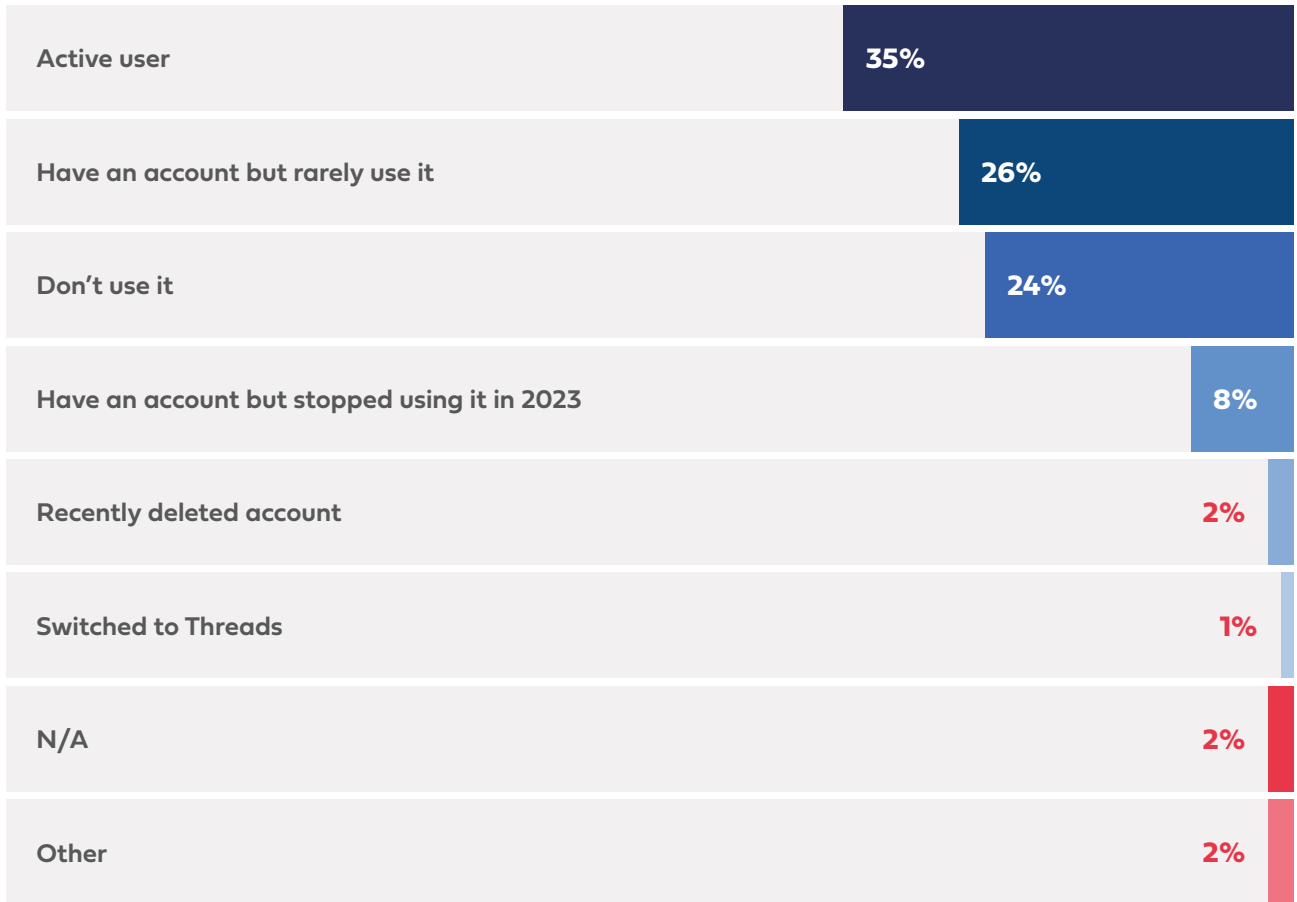


FIGURE 31: Journalists' professional use of Twitter/X in 2023

About Medianet

Medianet is ANZ's #1 Media Intelligence platform with a suite of PR and communications solutions that help organisations connect with their target audience and achieve earned media success.

Medianet's suite of PR services include a comprehensive database of Australia and New Zealand journalists, a press release distribution platform, sophisticated media analysis and reporting insights, and much more.

Our unique relationships with Australian newsrooms is like no other, and we've built trusted partnerships with a community of media contacts where you can find insightful information – no matter your passion or vertical.

Our mission is to empower our customers with the incredible benefits of earned media, while assisting journalists to tell the stories that matter.

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