

# The State of Journalism



2022

Social media habits, reporting strategies,  
PR pitching preferences and more

A STUDY BY

**MUCK RACK**

# Research partners



# About this survey

**WE SURVEYED 2,547 JOURNALISTS FROM JANUARY 4th to JANUARY 25th, 2022.**

- **Role:** **64%** are full-time journalists, editorial writers or bloggers, **19%** are full-time freelance journalists and **12%** create journalistic content but supplement their income with other work. Of the **5%** that listed 'Other,' write in responses included editorial functions such as editor, blogger and producer.
- **Experience:** **32%** have been a journalist for 20+ years. **25%** have been a journalist for 10-20 years. **21%** have 6-10 years experience, while **5%** have 1-2 years experience. Finally, **1%** have under 1 year of journalistic experience.
- **Medium:** **74%** of journalists primarily report in online formats. Of those, **41%** report online (with a print edition) and **33%** report online (with no print edition). From the respondents who selected 'other,' the most common format was print with online editions. Most journalists surveyed produce content in at least one additional medium monthly.
- **Beat:** The average journalist covers **4** beats (this is up from last year's 3 beats). The most popular industries covered by survey respondents are Politics, Government and Legal, Arts and Culture, Business and Finance, Energy and Environment and Education.

*See extended audience breakdown in Section 4.*

# Executive Summary

- Only **30%** of journalists agree that the way companies share information is outdated—a decrease from last year’s **47%**, indicating that companies are stepping up the way they share information.
- The average journalist covers **4** beats. Last year, the average journalist covered **3** beats.
- Most journalists surveyed create content in at least one medium in addition to their primary medium. Online (**38%**), print (**25%**) newsletter (**17%**) and podcast (**15%**) were the top additional mediums.
- For the third year in a row, **58%** of journalists are optimistic about their profession.
- Fewer journalists said that CEOs and company PR pros are credible sources for reporting. However, **more** journalists find social media personalities (**17%** vs. **12%** last year) and celebrity spokespeople (**14%** vs. **12%** last year) more credible than they did last year.



# 1



**Social media,  
news consumption  
and reporting**

# As a result of COVID-19, 61% of journalists are covering more stories about the pandemic and health and wellness

That's a decrease from last year's **65%**.

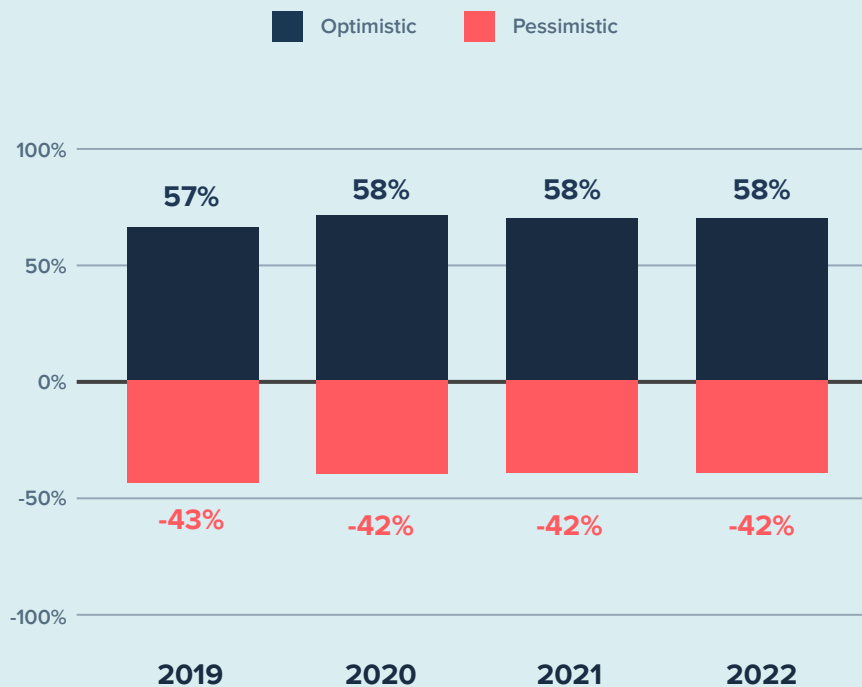
Compared to last year, more journalists say COVID-19 has **not** affected their work—**17%** this year vs. last year's **14%**.

## How has economic uncertainty related to the COVID-19 pandemic affected your work?



For the third year in a row, more than half of journalists are optimistic about their profession

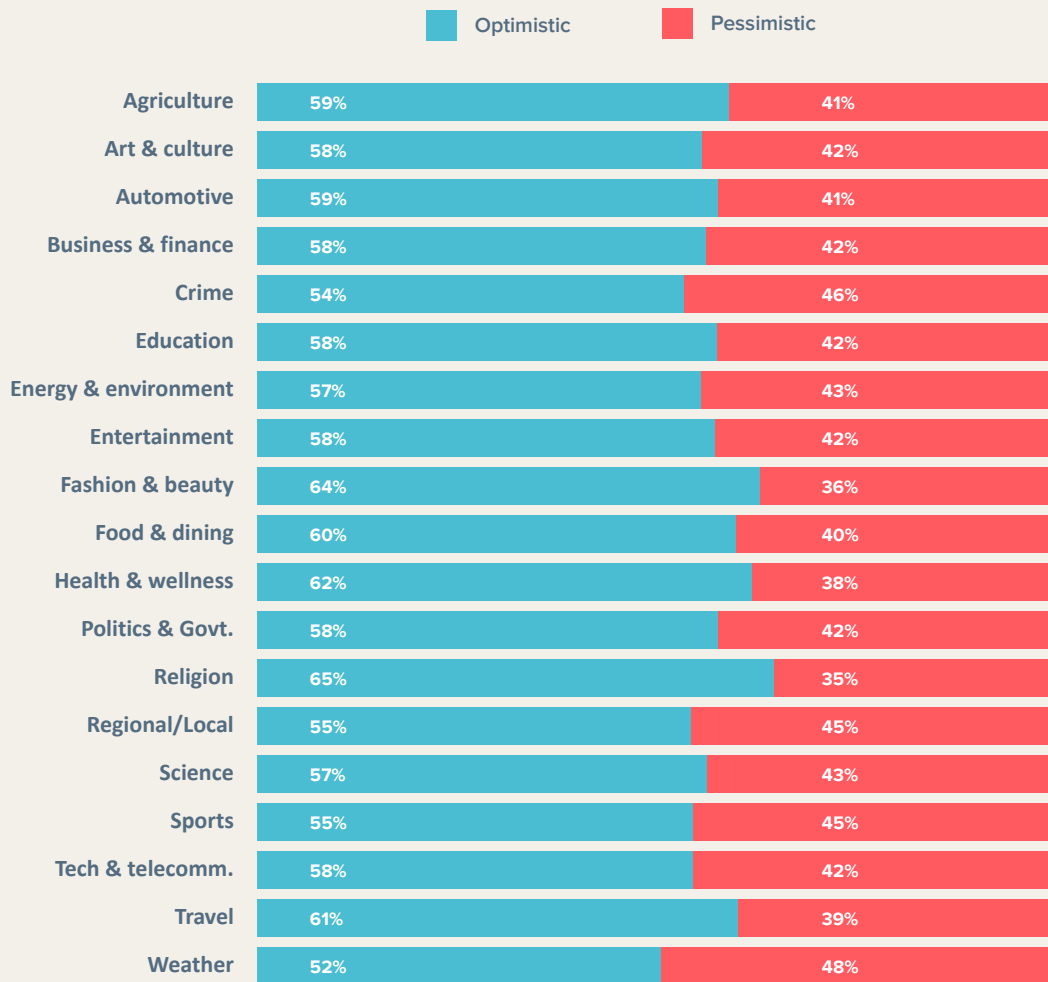
## Are you optimistic about the journalism future?



# Journalists covering Fashion & beauty, Religion are the most optimistic

**65%** of journalists covering Religion and **64%** of journalists covering Fashion & beauty are optimistic about their profession.

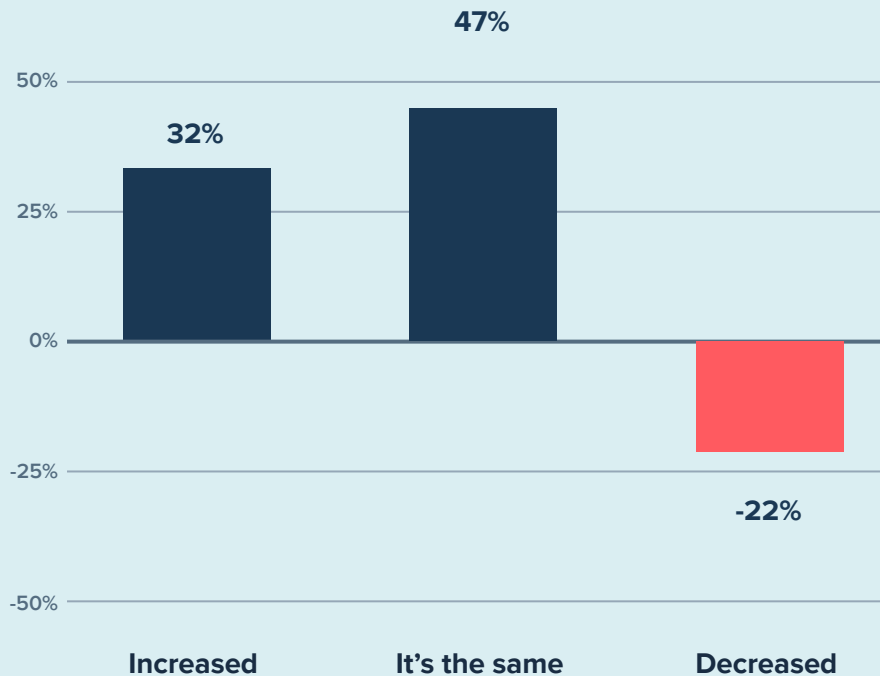
On the other hand, the most pessimistic groups are Weather (**48%**) and Crime (**46%**).





Around a third of journalists say audience trust in their coverage has increased

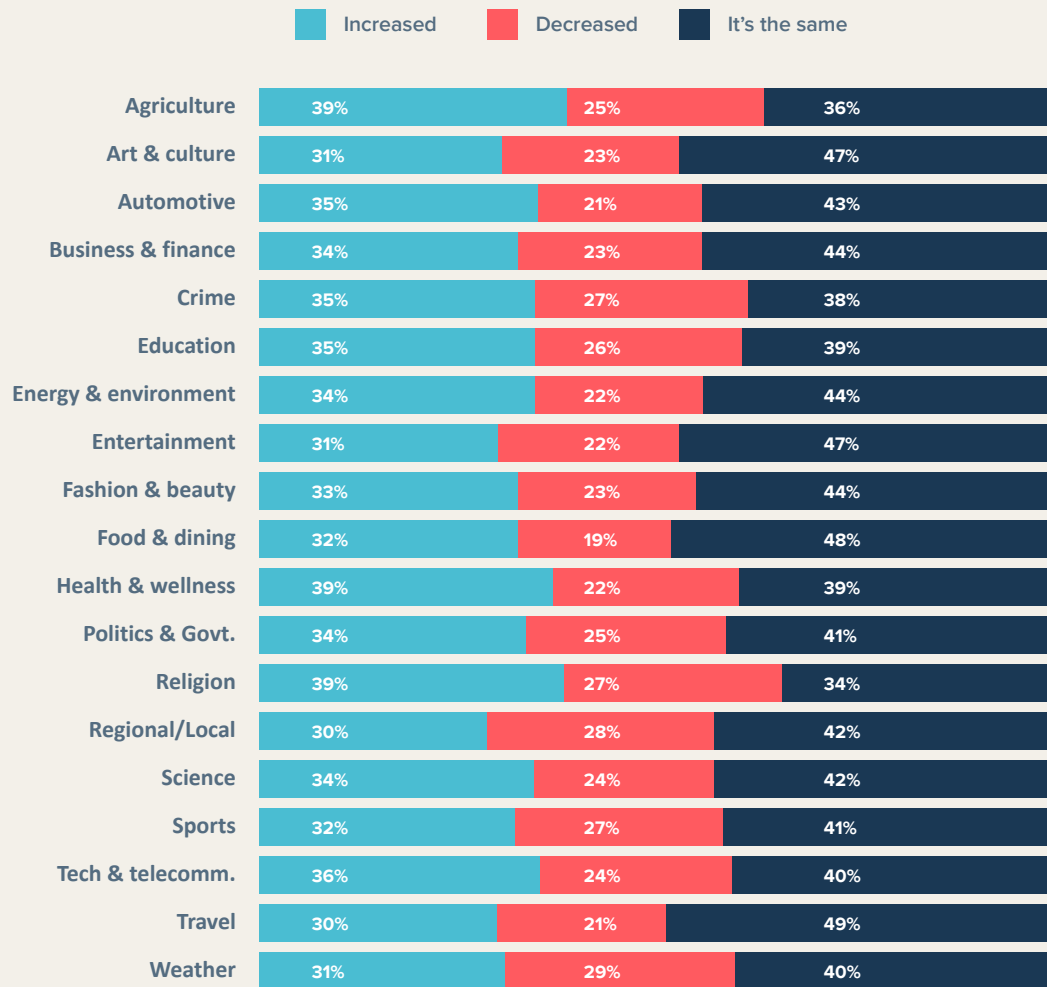
Do you feel that your audience's trust in coverage of your area of journalism has increased or decreased in the past year?



# Health & wellness, Agriculture and Religion said trust increased the most

**39%** of journalists covering Health & wellness, Agriculture and Religion said that audience trust in the coverage of these industries increased.

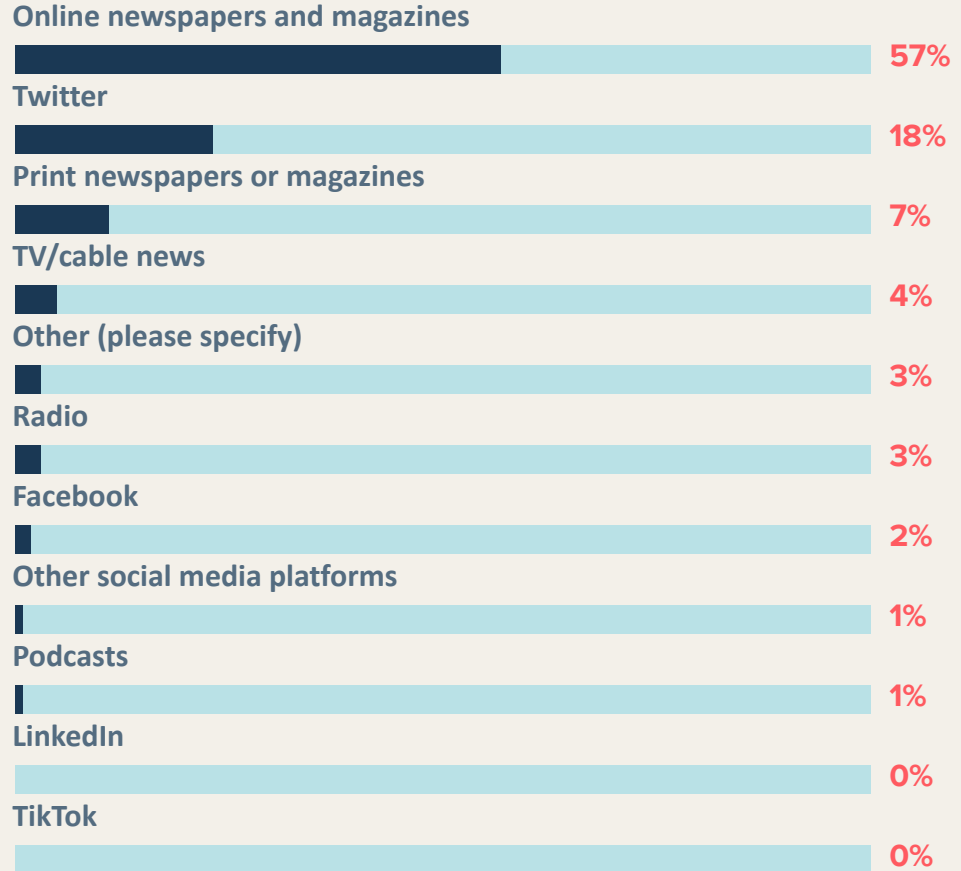
Journalists covering Weather and Regional/Local said audience trust decreased (**29%** and **28%** respectively).



# Most journalists turn to online newspapers or Twitter first for news

**57%** of journalists get their news from online newspapers or magazines, down from **58%** in 2021. **18%** get their news from Twitter (up from **16%** last year).

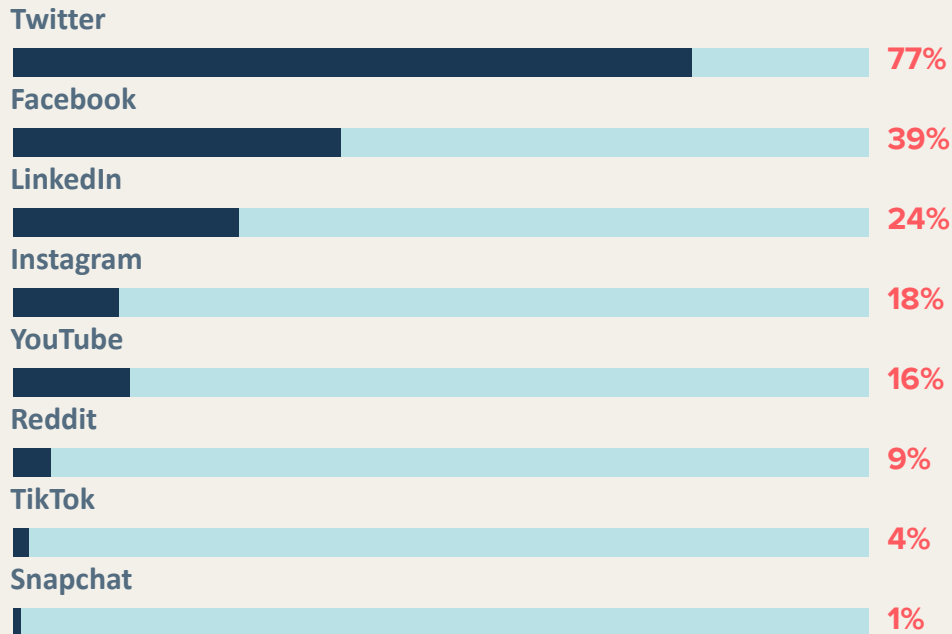
## In general, where do you go first for your news?



# More journalists value Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Reddit and TikTok

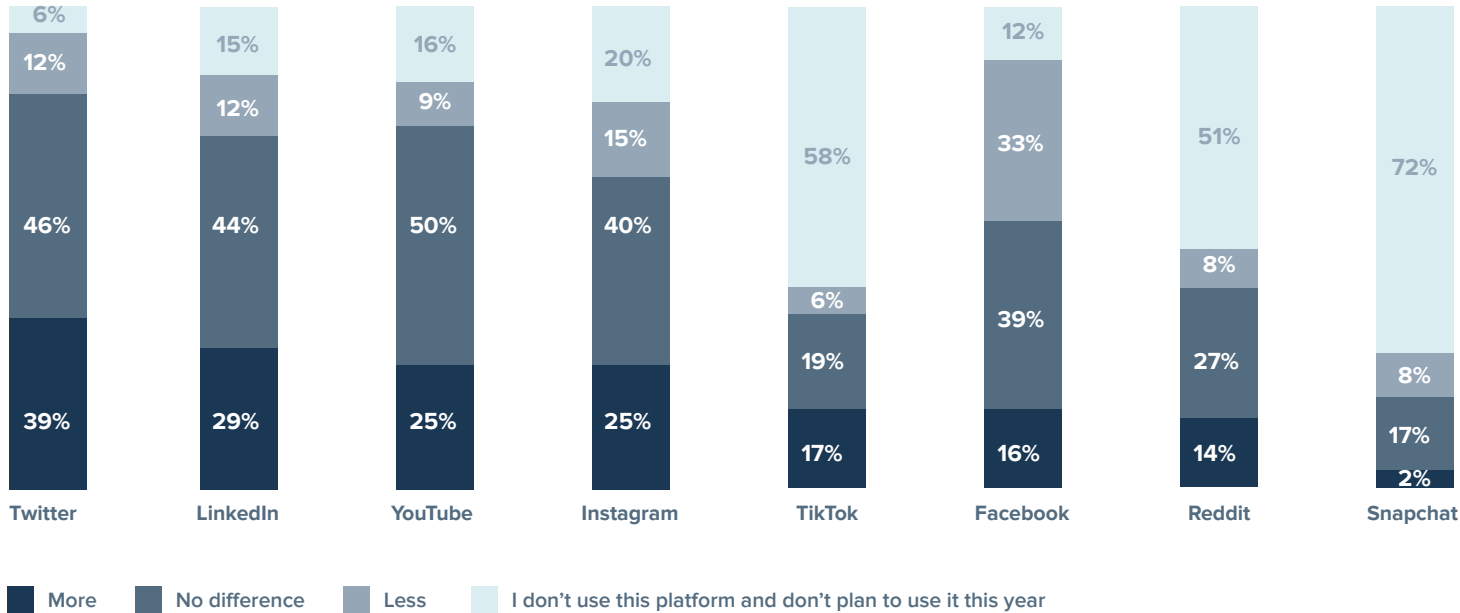
Compared to last year, more journalists value Twitter (**77%** vs. **76%**), LinkedIn (**24%** vs. **23%**), Instagram (**18%** vs. **15%**), Reddit (**9%** vs. **7%**) and TikTok (**4%** vs. **2%**).

## What social network is most valuable to you as a journalist?



# Journalists plan to spend more time on Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube this year

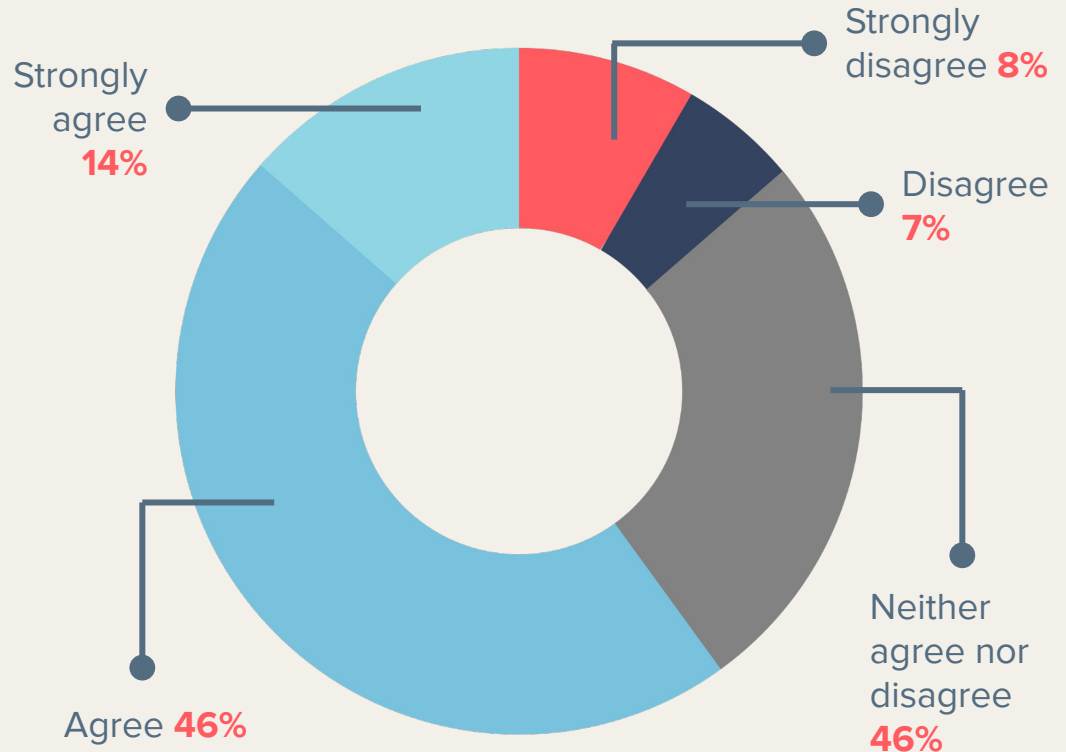
Do you expect to spend more or less time on the following social networks this year?



# 60% of journalists consult a company's social media in their reporting

Compared to 2021, more journalists consult with a company's social media: **60%** this year vs. **58%** last year.

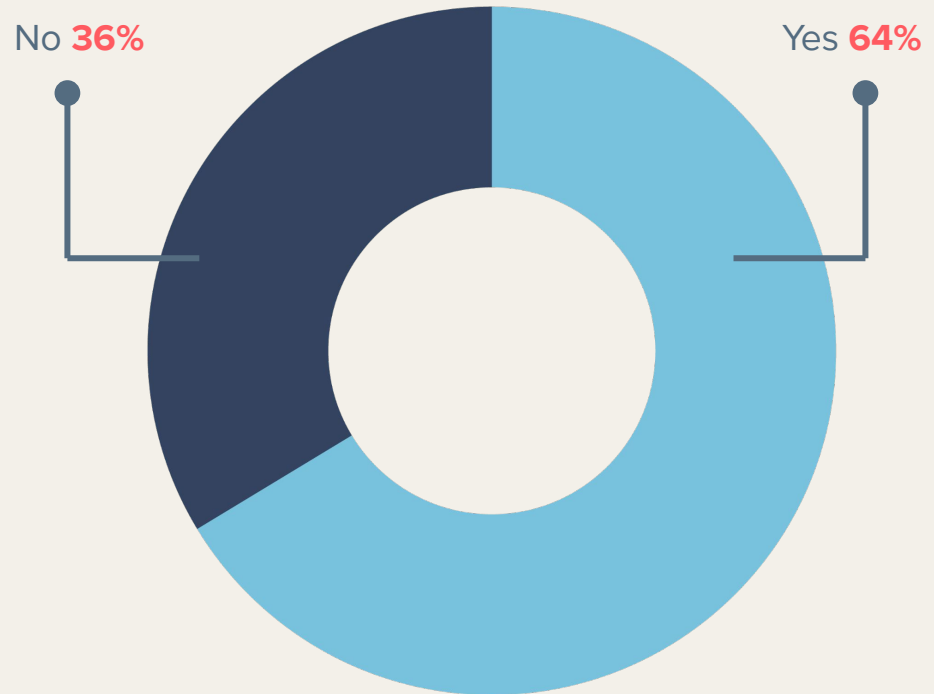
When reporting on a company, I consult the company's social media



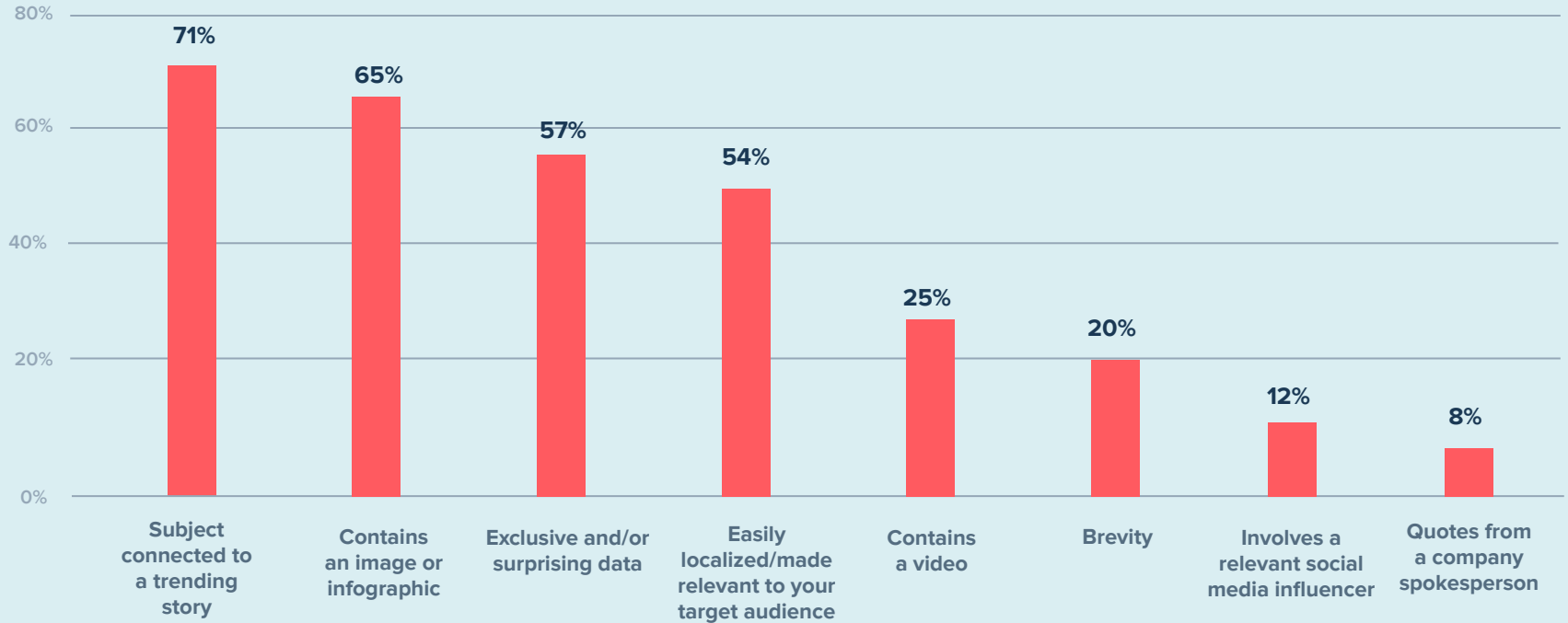
# More journalists are tracking coverage on social media this year

Last year, **62%** of journalists said they track how many times their stories were shared on social media—this year, **64%** do.

Do you track how many times your stories are shared on social media?



## What makes a story shareable?





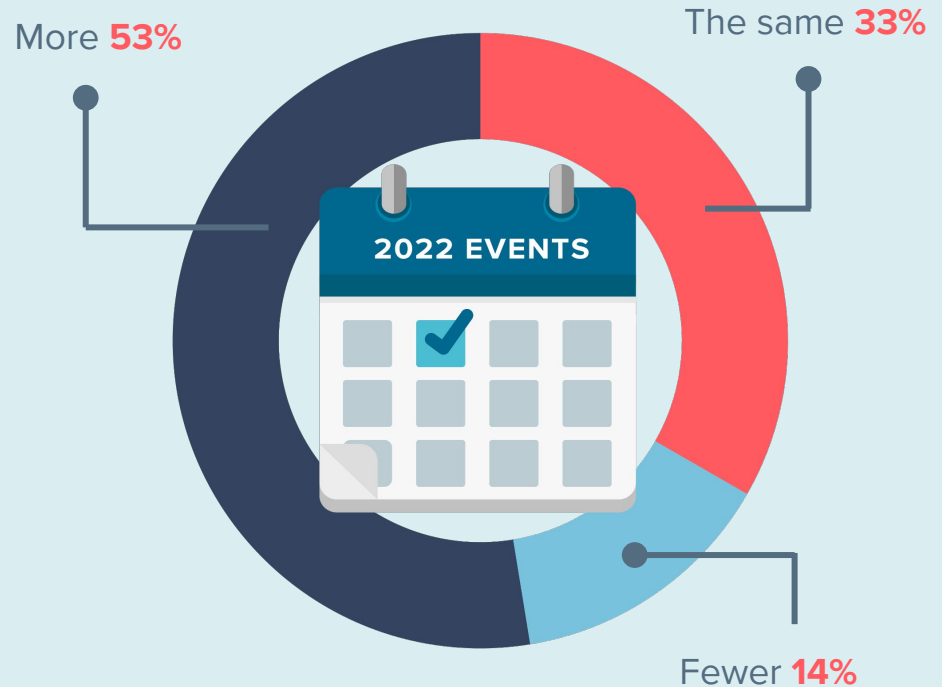
# 2



## Event coverage in 2022

# 53% of journalists plan to attend more in-person events in 2022

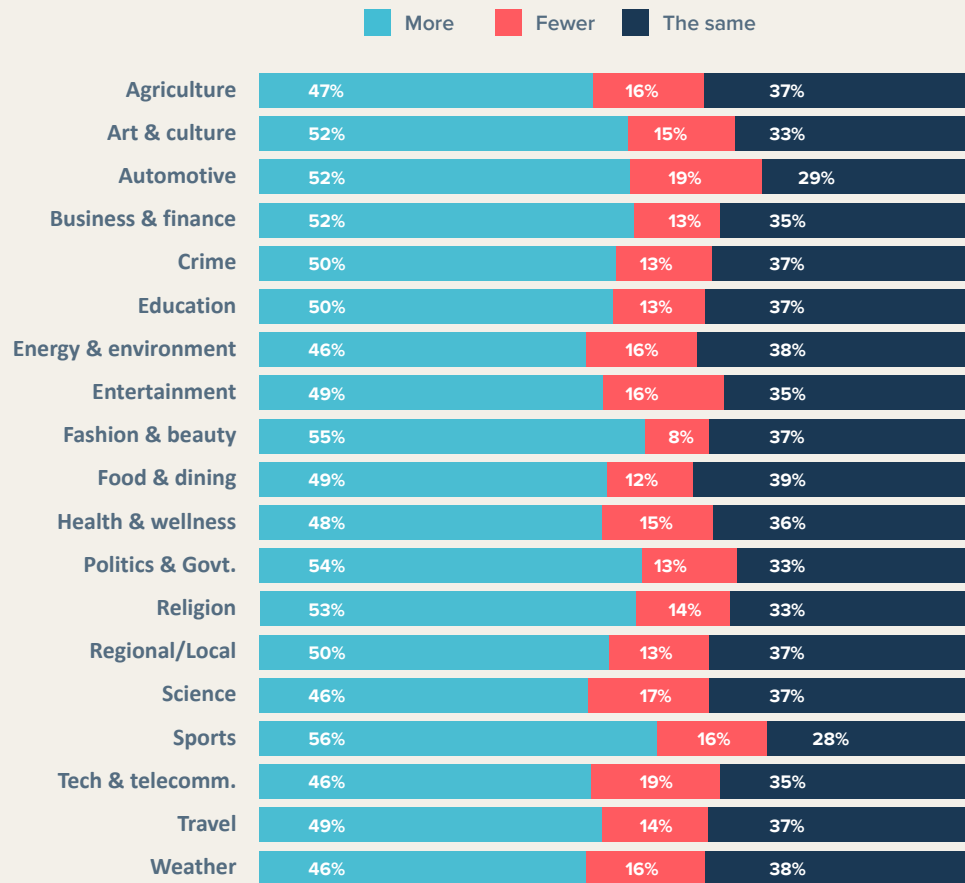
Compared to 2021, do you plan on attending more or fewer in-person events in 2022?



# Sports, Fashion & beauty and Politics & government journalists will cover more events

Tech & telecommunications and Automotive had the highest number of journalists that said they'd attend **fewer** events.

## Compared to 2021, do you plan on attending more or fewer in-person events in 2022?



46% of journalists say an event going virtual doesn't affect their likelihood of covering it

## How likely are you to cover a virtual event in 2022?

More likely to cover a virtual event **34%**

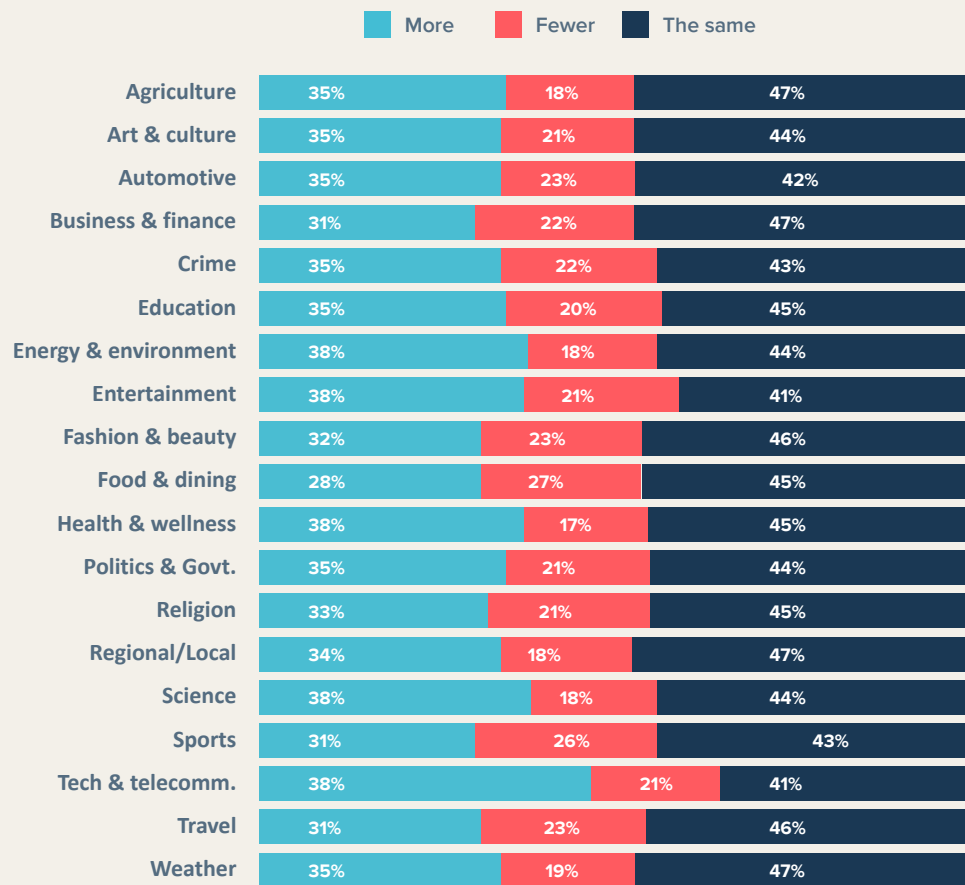
An event going virtual doesn't affect my likelihood of covering it **46%**



# Sports and Food & dining journalists are less likely to cover virtual events

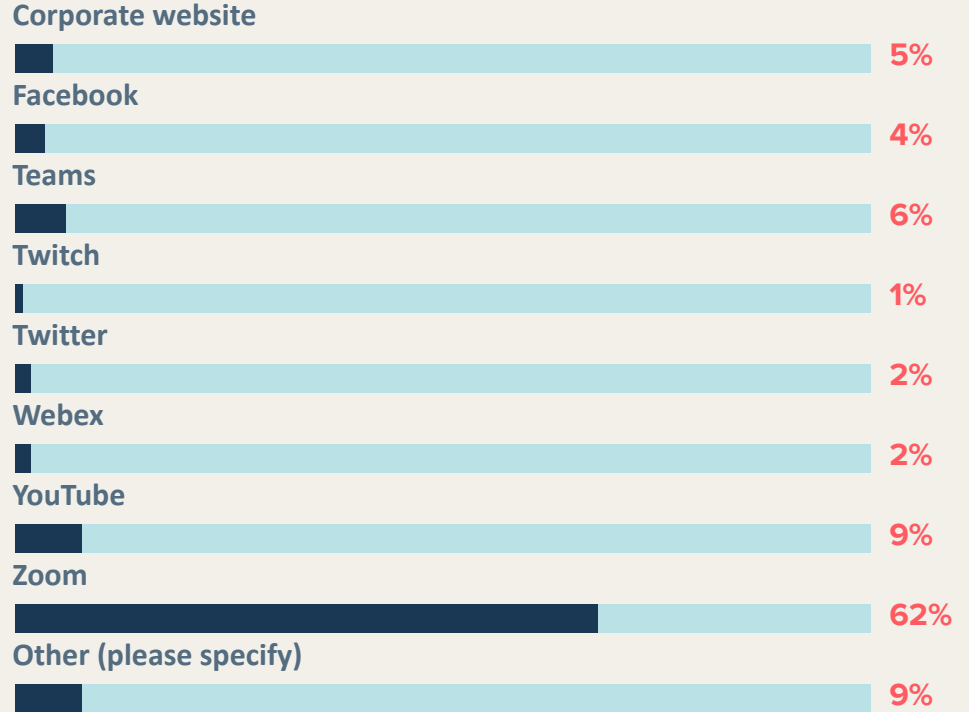
Those who said they're **more** likely to cover virtual events include Tech & telecommunications, Science, Health & wellness and Energy & environment.

## How likely are you to cover a virtual event in 2022?



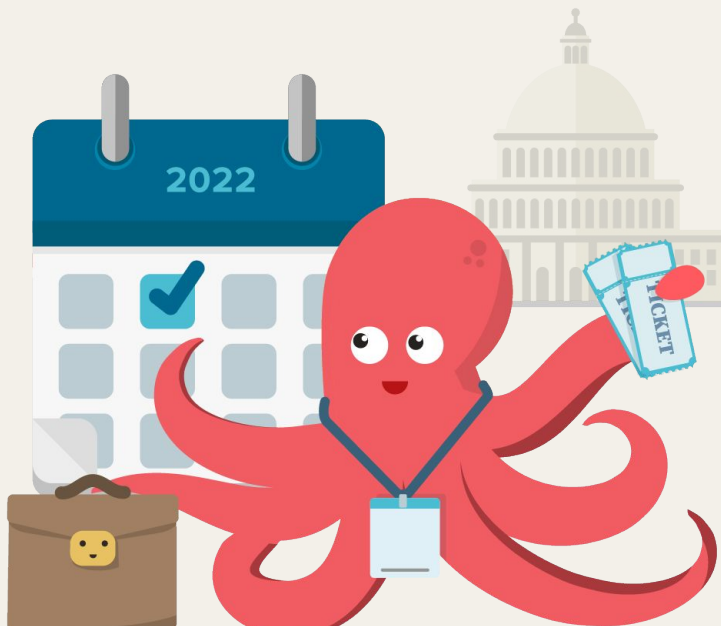
# 62% of journalists prefer Zoom for virtual events

## What platform do you prefer to use for virtual events?



# Top 10 events journalists plan to cover in 2022

1. UN Climate Change Conference (COP26)
2. World Economic Forum
3. World Conference on Climate Change and Sustainability
4. TED
5. Comic-Con
6. SXSW
7. Government Social Media Conference
8. E3
9. Future of Finance
10. TechCrunch Disrupt



# 3



**Media relations:  
pitching  
preferences  
and more**



# Only 30% of journalists agree that the way companies share information is outdated

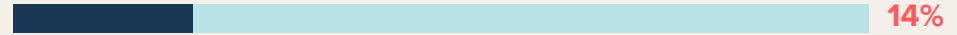
This marks a significant decrease from last year, when **47%** of journalists agreed.

The jump indicates that companies are stepping up the methods they use to share information.

Those that agreed said companies are not tech-savvy and/or information is not validated.

## The way most companies share information with the media is outdated

Strongly agree



Agree



Disagree

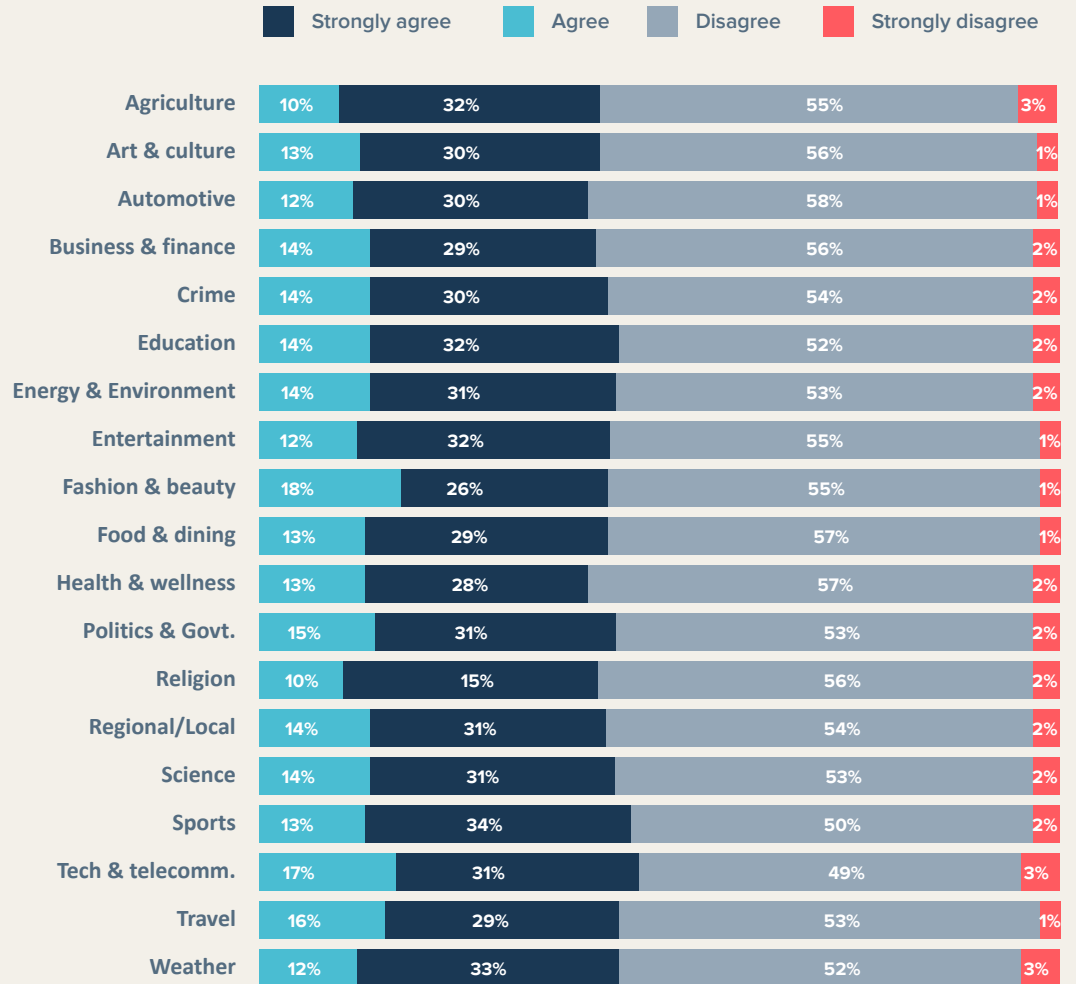


Strongly disagree



# Journalists covering Tech & telecomms most likely to agree that the way companies share information is outdated

Automotive (58%), followed by Food & Dining (57%) and Health & Wellness (57%) are the most likely to disagree.

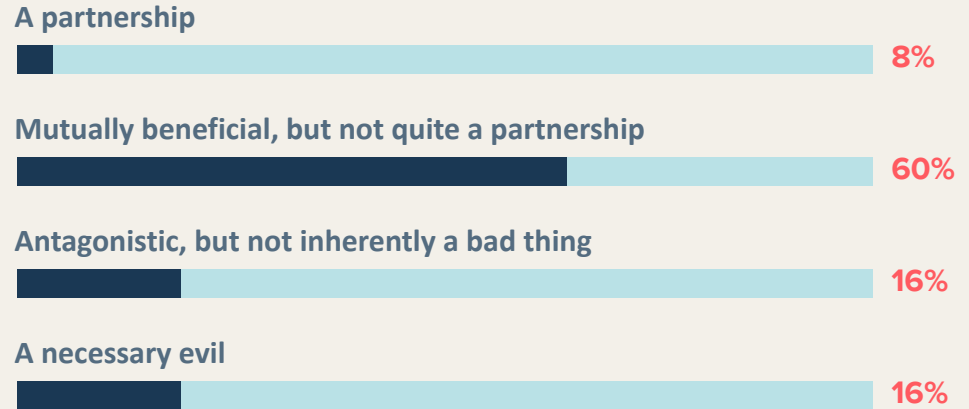


# 60% of journalists say their relationship with PR pros is mutually beneficial

This year, more journalists call their relationship with PR pros a partnership (8%) vs. last year (6%).

Fewer say the relationship is antagonistic (16% vs. 18% last year) and fewer say it's a necessary evil (16% vs. 17% last year).

Do you generally see your relationship with PR teams and people at PR agencies as:



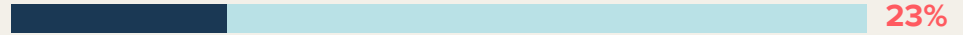
# 59% of journalists are just as likely to respond to pitches as last year

There was an uptick in the % of journalists who are more likely to respond: **23%** this year vs. **22%** last year.

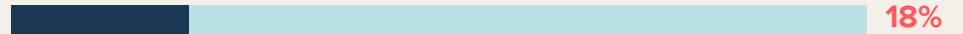
Fewer say they're less likely to respond: **18%** this year vs. **22%** last year.

## Compared to a year ago, I am:

More likely to respond to pitches



Less likely to respond to pitches

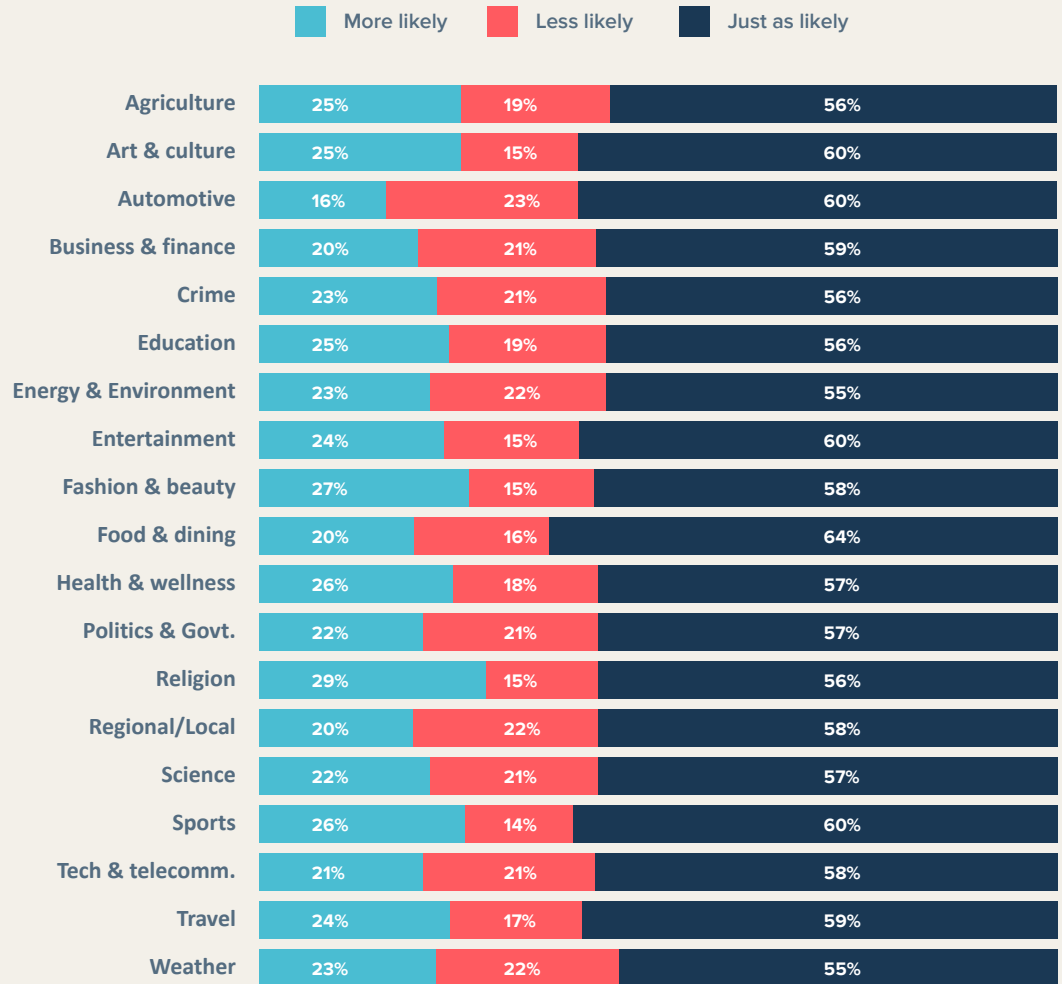


Just as likely to respond to pitches



# Journalists covering Religion, Fashion & beauty more likely to respond to pitches

Journalists covering Automotive had the highest % of those who say they're less likely to respond to pitches.



# Poorly timed and impersonal pitches will still get ignored

Similar to last year, bad timing was the leading reason for journalists rejecting pitches (**24%**), followed by lack of personalization (**22%**).

Under 'Other' numerous journalists said they will reject irrelevant, off-topic, not localized and/or poorly written pitches.

## Why do you immediately reject otherwise relevant pitches?

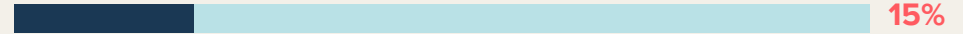
Bad timing



Lack of personalization



Confusing subject line



Too lengthy



Large attachments



Other (please specify)



# 1:1 email still #1 for pitching, 5% hate phone pitches a little less

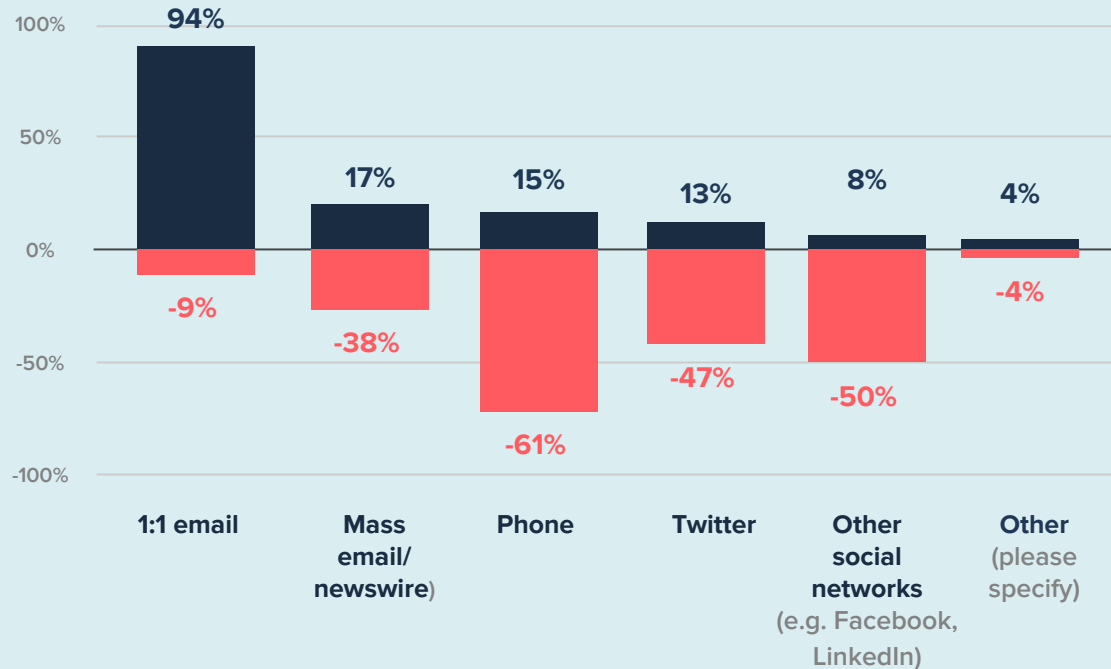
1:1 email remains the top channel PR pros use to pitch journalists.

Interestingly, more journalists say they prefer phone pitches: **15%** this year vs. **10%** last year.

Under “Other,” Whatsapp was a popular write-in preference.

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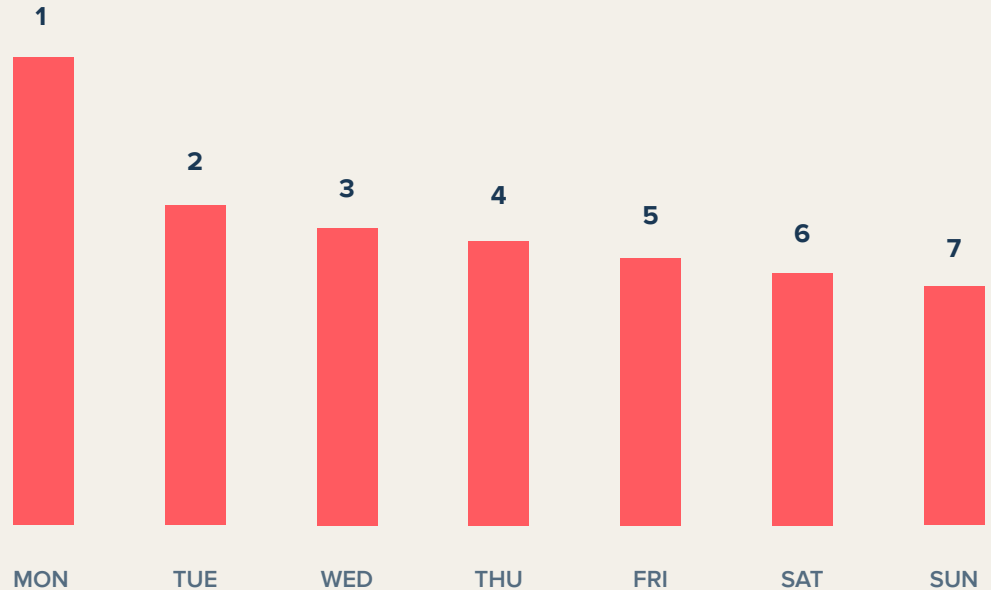
## On which channels do you prefer to be pitched (Select all that apply)



# Most journalists want to receive pitches early in the work week

## On what day of the week do you prefer to receive pitches?

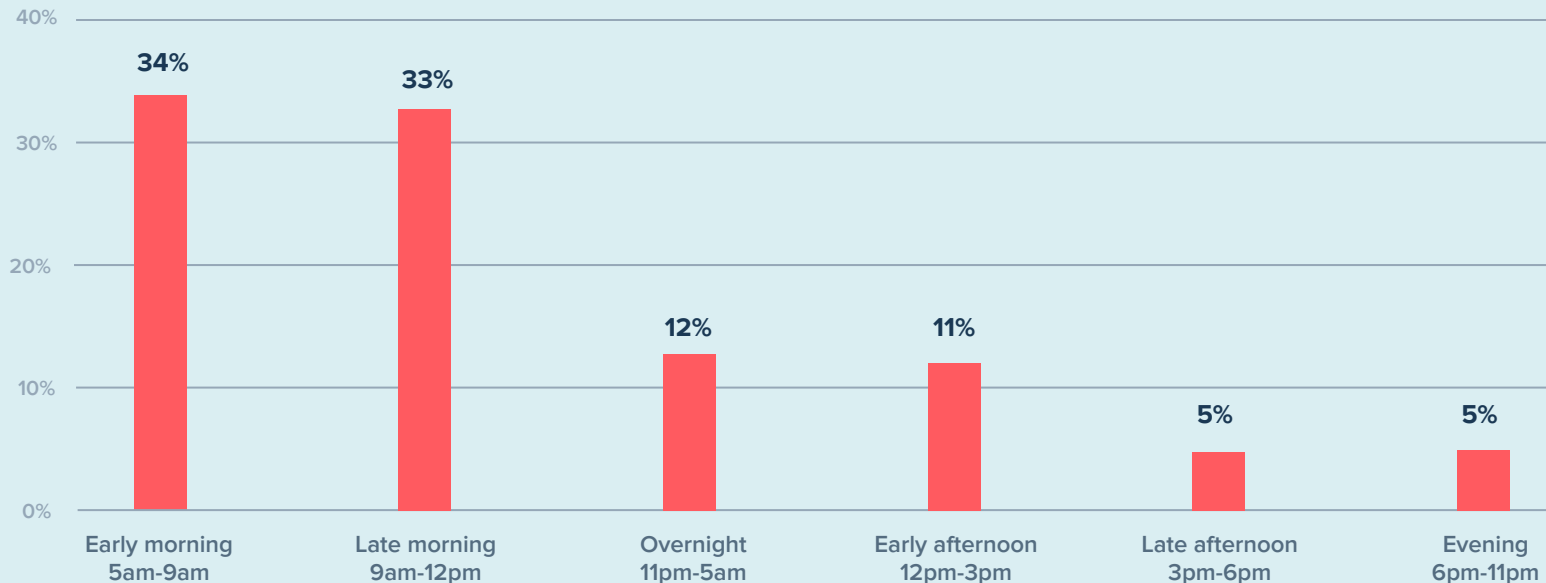
(Please rank from 1-7, with 1 being your most preferred day)





# 67% of journalists prefer to receive pitches between 5am and 12pm

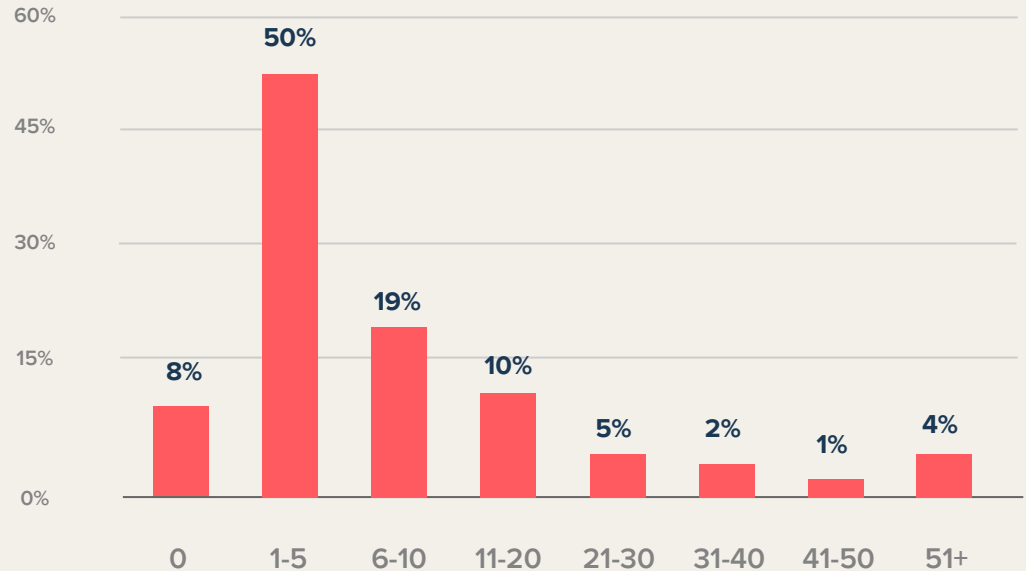
When is the best time for you to receive a pitch?



# Half of journalists receive 1-5 pitches daily, or 5-25 per week

Journalists covering Fashion & beauty receive the most pitches: **23%** get 6-10 and **10%** get 51+ pitches weekly.

## How many pitches do you receive on an average business day?

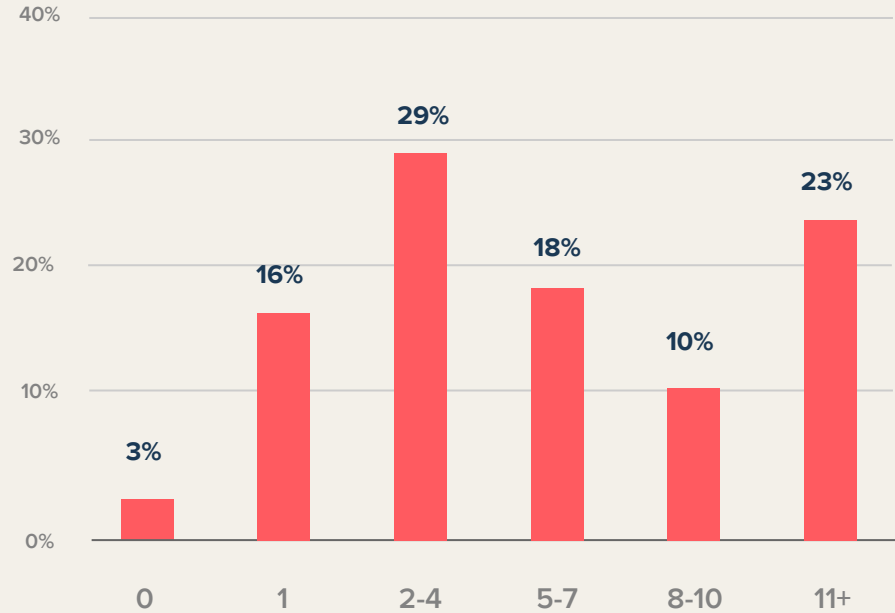


# 51% of journalists publish 5 or more stories per week

The number of journalists publishing a high volume of weekly stories (8 or more) is growing: **33%** this year vs. **31%** last year.

Journalists covering Weather publish the most stories: **43%** publish 11+ stories per week.

## About how many stories do you publish in an average week?



# 80% of journalists say a quarter or more of their stories originate from pitches

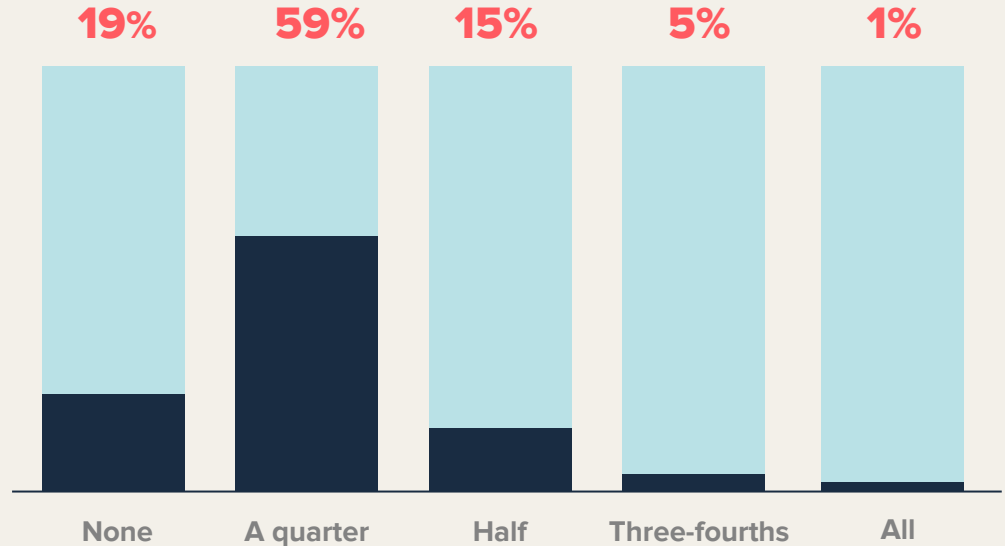
This is down slightly from last year when **81%** said that a quarter or more of their stories originated from pitches.

The % of journalists who said 'A quarter' of their stories came from pitches fell from **61%** last year to **59%** this year.

The portion who said 'Half' grew from **14%** to **15%**.

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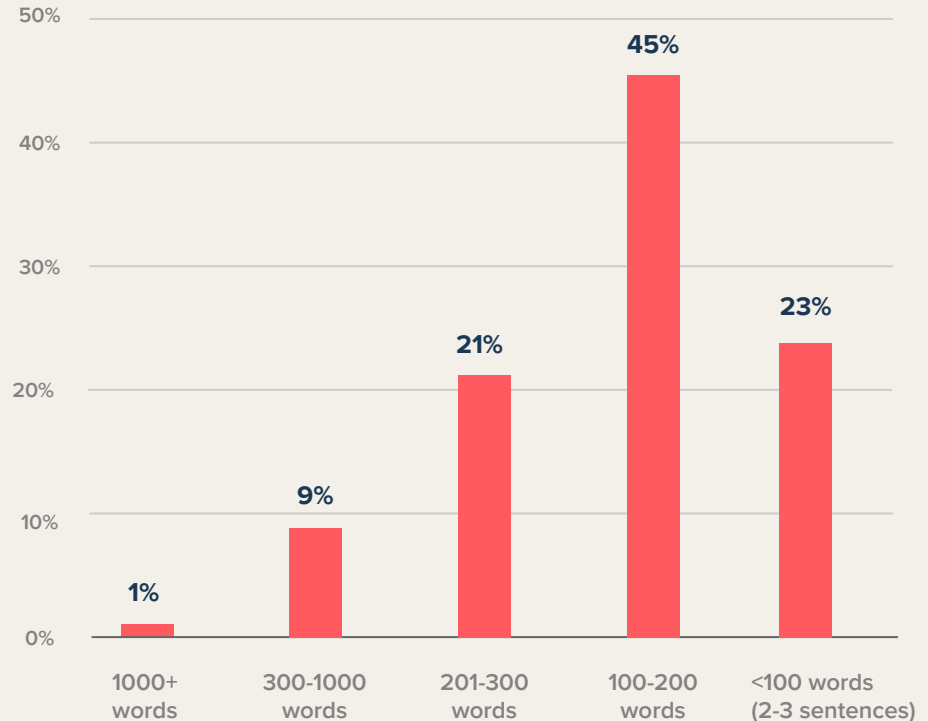
## About what portion of stories you publish originate from pitches?



# 68% of journalists prefer pitches less than 200 words

The outliers? Food & dining and Travel have the most journalists that are OK with pitches that are more than 200 words (**35%** and **34%** respectively).

## What's your ideal pitch length?

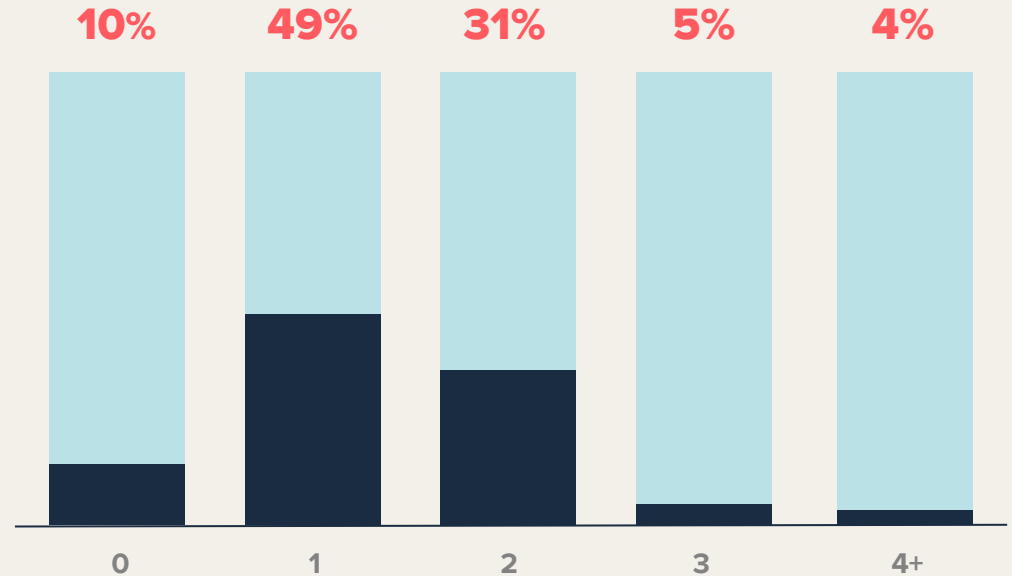


# 90% of journalists say at least 1 follow up email is acceptable

Compared to last year, journalists are open to more follow ups: **31%** are open to 2 vs. **30%** last year.

Additionally, **5%** of journalists are open to 3 follow ups this year vs. **4%** last year.

## How many follow up emails are acceptable?

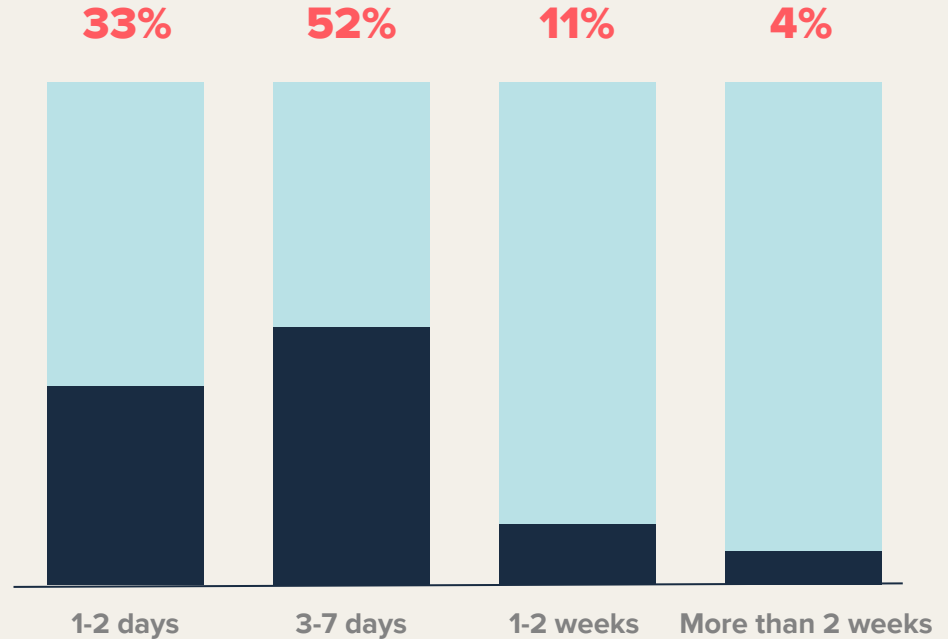


# 85% of journalists are OK with a follow up within a week of the initial email

Similar to last year, the majority of journalists say it's acceptable to follow up within one week.

Slightly more say it's OK to follow up within 1-2 weeks (**11%** this year vs. **10%** last year).

## How long after an initial email is it ok to follow up?



# Fewer journalists find CEOs, company PR pros credible

While the majority find academic subject matter experts credible (**84%**) fewer journalists named CEOs (**66%** vs. **74%** last year) and company PR pros (**50%** vs. **55%** last year).

On the other hand, **more** journalists find social media personalities (**17%** vs. **12%** last year) and celebrity spokespeople (**14%** vs. **12%** last year) credible than they did last year.

## Do you consider the following to be credible sources for your reporting?

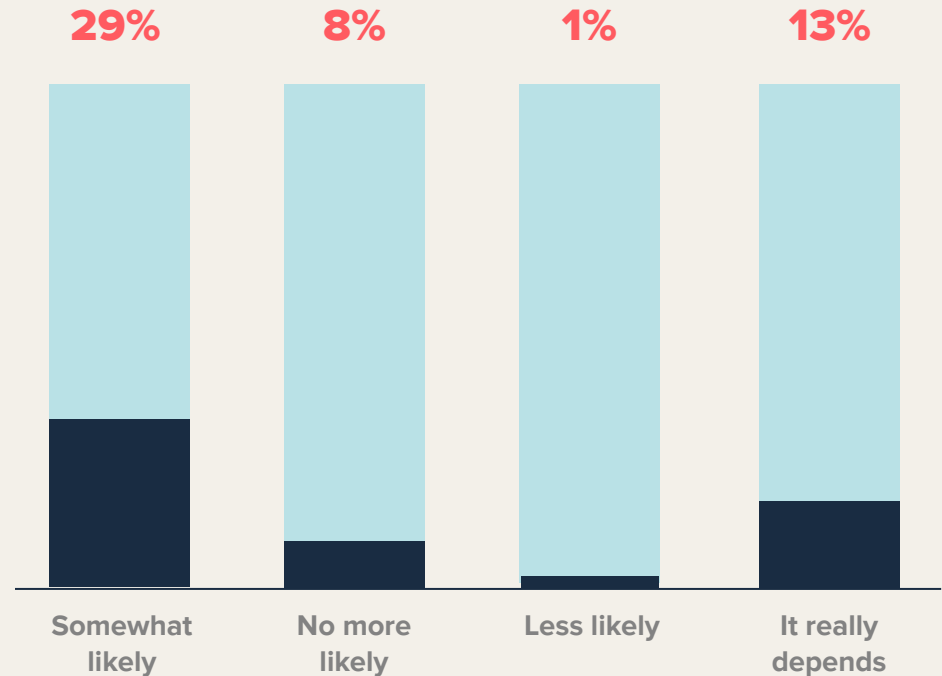




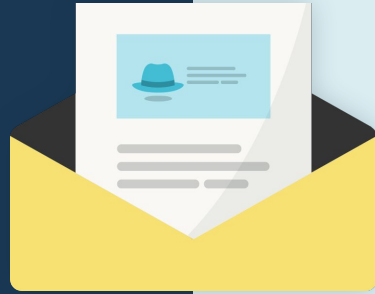
# 79% of journalists are at least somewhat more likely to cover a story if offered an exclusive

There was an increase in the % of journalists who say they're much more likely to cover a story with an exclusive: **50%** this year vs. **46%** last year.

If offered an exclusive, how much more likely are you to cover the story?



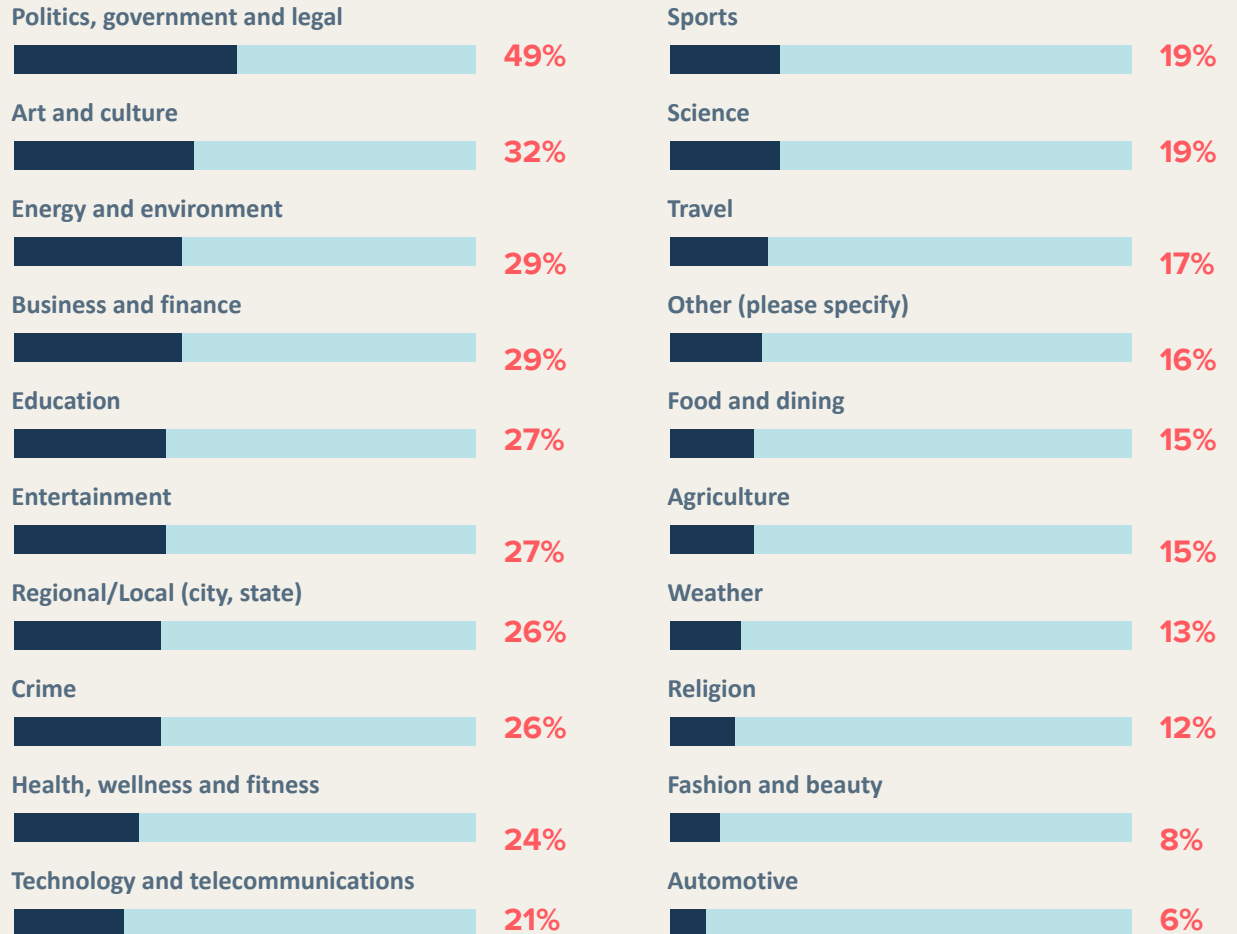
# 4



**Profile of a  
journalist:  
demographics,  
popular mediums  
and more**

# The average journalist covers 4 beats

Last year, the average journalist covered **3** beats. The most popular beat covered by survey respondents was Politics, Government and Legal.



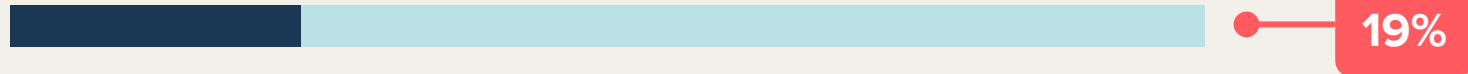
# 83% of those surveyed are full-time journalists

## Which of the following best describes you?

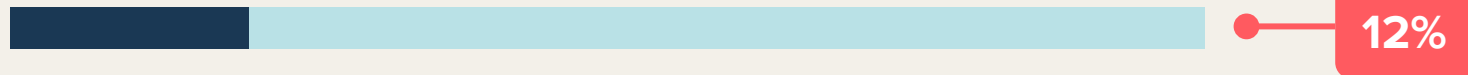
I'm a full-time journalist, editorial writer or blogger



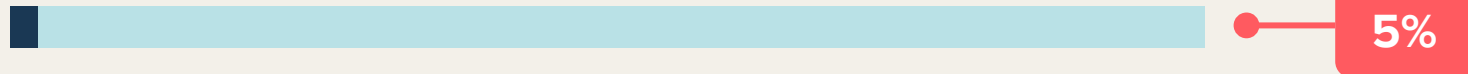
I'm a full-time freelance journalist



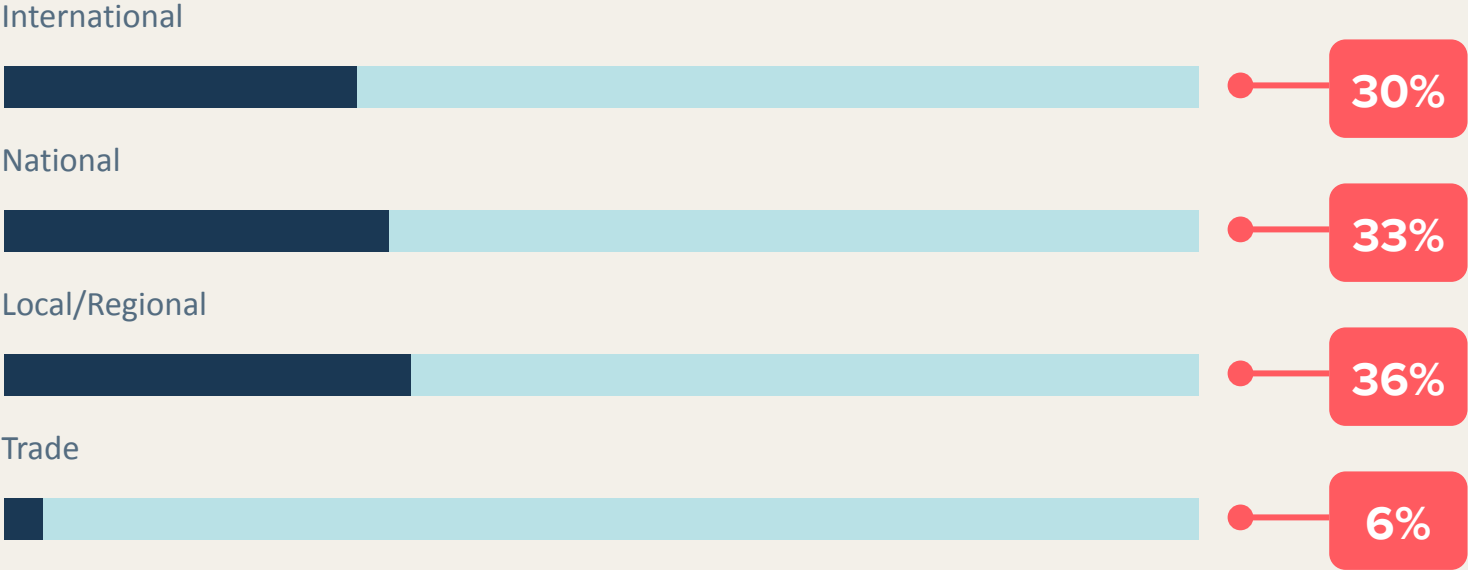
I write some journalistic content, but supplement my income w/ other work



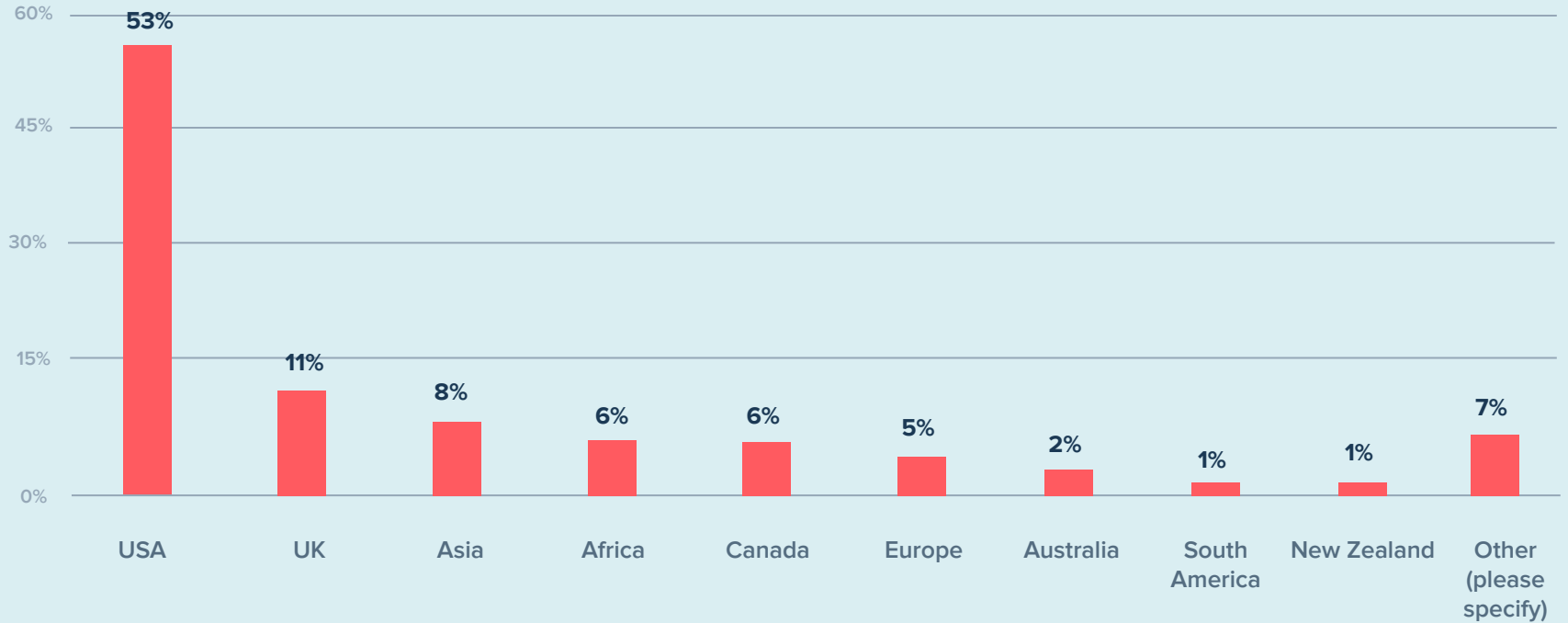
Other (please specify)



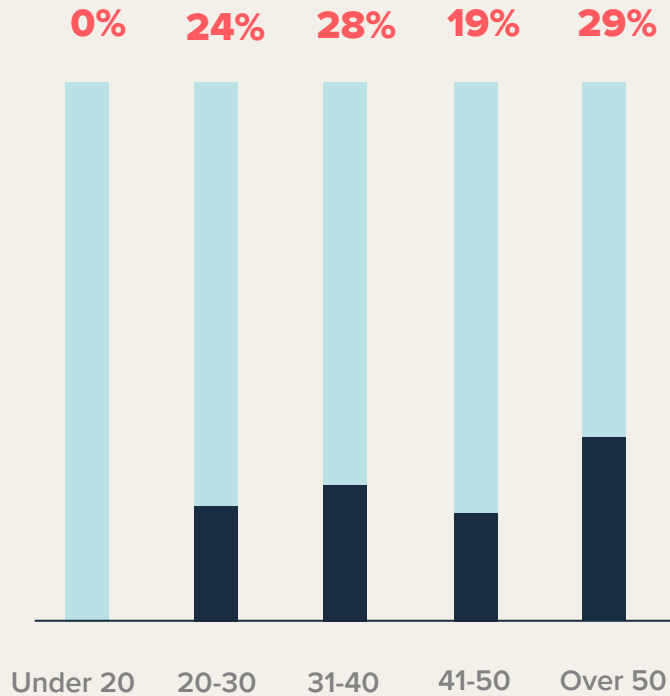
# How would you categorize the scope of your coverage?



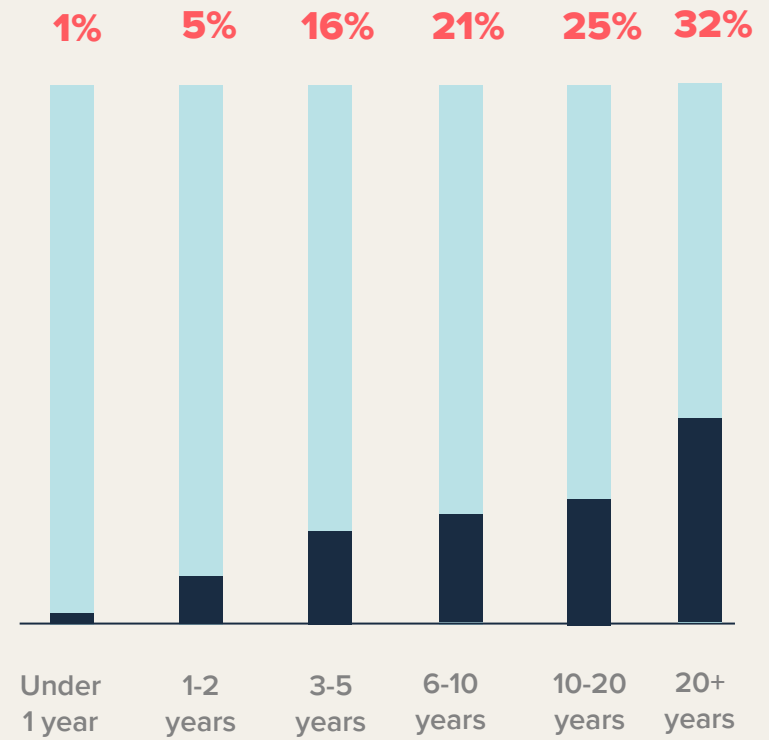
## Where are you based?



## How old are you?



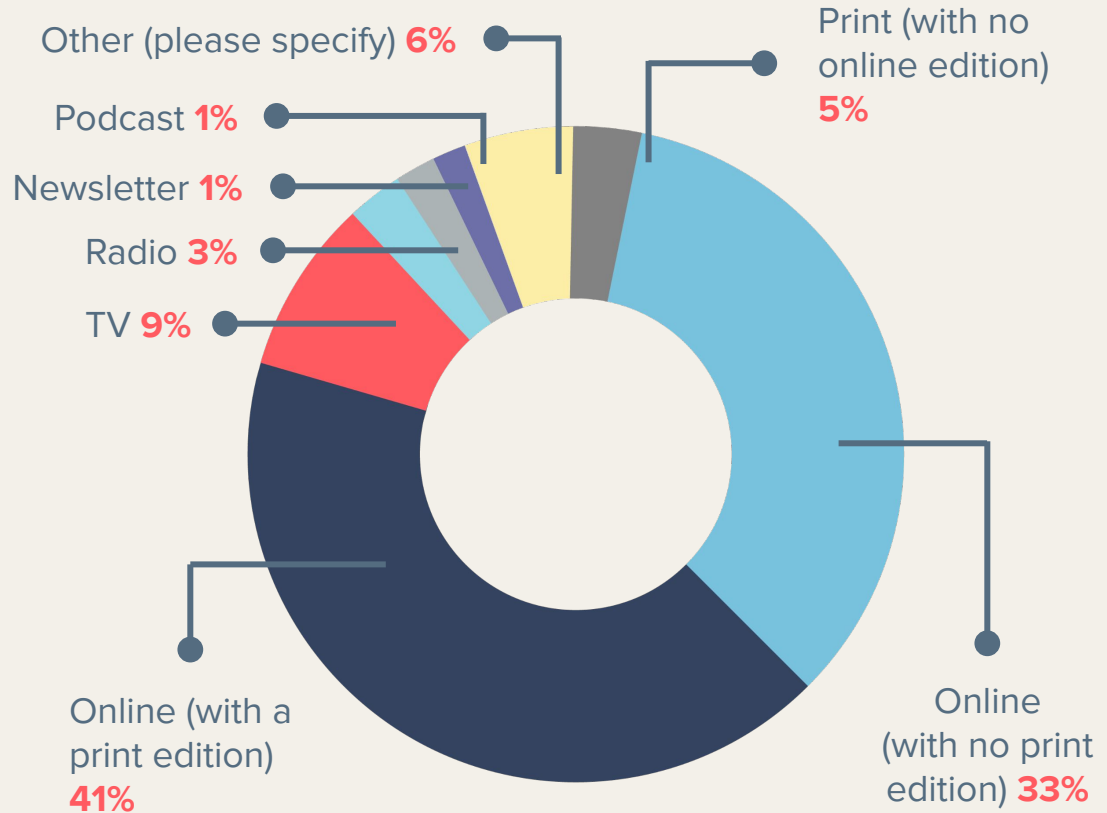
## How long have you been a journalist?



# Online (with a print edition) is the most popular medium

Just under three quarters of journalists primarily report in online formats. Of those, **41%** report online (with a print edition) and **33%** report online (with no print edition). From the respondents who selected 'other', the most common format was print with online editions.

## Which medium do you primarily report in?



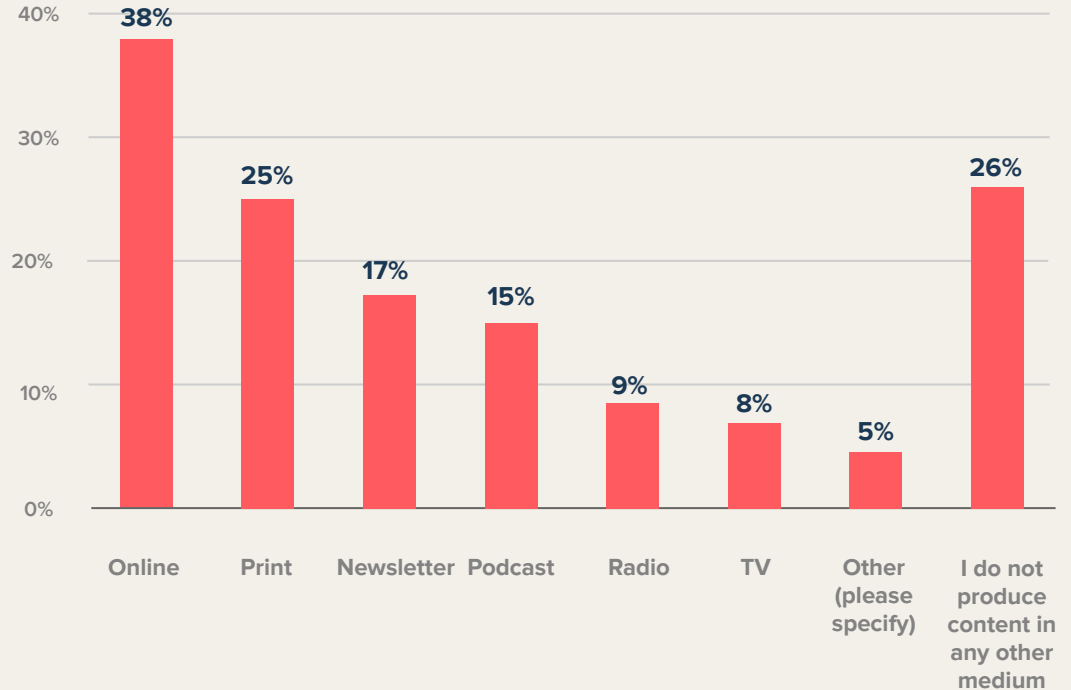


# 74% of journalists surveyed produce content in an additional medium

After online and print, newsletters (17%) and podcasts (15%) are the most popular.

Of the 5% who selected 'Other', the most popular mediums were social media, videos, and blogs.

In addition to your primary medium, do you also produce content at least once a month in any of the following?



# Thank you!

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