

2024

State of the Media Report

Next-Level Insights for PR

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About the State of the Media Report



15 Years of Insight

For more than a decade, media professionals around the world have trusted Cision's State of the Media Report to be the industry voice for the public relations and corporate communications professionals who seek to partner with them. Widely recognised as the industry standard bearer for identifying trends in journalism, the State of the Media Report began in 2009 as a relatively small, joint study with George Washington University to get a pulse on how journalists were using this fascinating new technology called "social media" and interacting with PR professionals.

Then Vs. Now

Back then, only 56% of journalists said social media was "important" or "somewhat important" for reporting and producing stories. Compare that to today, with 97% of journalists using social media for a variety of work-related purposes – from reporting stories to finding sources. At the time, social media was in its infancy, with blogs, Facebook, and Twitter (now X, and once considered a "microblogging" site) commanding the most media attention. Fifteen years later, the media ecosystem looks dramatically different. Instagram, which didn't even exist yet, is now one of the most-used platforms among journalists.

What hasn't changed in 15 years is the fact that the media's relationship with PR remains a valuable one. Yet, as the media landscape has changed, so have their challenges, and inevitably, how they prioritise what they need from their PR partners. Consider the following data point from our first report:

In 2009, we asked about the most valuable services PR professionals offer journalists. The top answers were "interviews and access to sources or experts," followed by "targeted information/answers to questions". While journalists today still consider those elements among the top ways PR professionals can make their lives easier (as the question is now phrased), they now take a backseat to journalists' number one request of PR: "Understand my audience and what they find relevant."

Where We Stand Today

Much like the media landscape, this report has evolved significantly in the last 15 years, growing into a global survey 10 times its original size, and expanding beyond social media usage to understand the nuances of how journalists work, the challenges they face, and the implications for PR. For the 2024 report, we surveyed more than 3,000 journalists worldwide to find out the challenges imposed by factors such as changing audience behaviours, industry downsizing, and not least of all, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence. We examined the implications of these challenges for the media relations sector, as well as potential opportunities. Our respondents provided candid insight into what they want and need from public relations professionals, how to get their attention, and how to strengthen existing media relationships while formulating new ones.

Combining this unique data with decades of experience helping PR professionals build strong media relationships, we present the 2024 State of the Media Report.

Survey Methodology

Cision conducted its 2024 State of the Media survey in January and February of 2024. Surveys were emailed to Cision Media Database members, who are vetted by the company's media research team to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers, and bloggers, and to the members of our Connectively community. We also made the survey available to media professionals in the PR Newswire for Journalists database.

This year's survey collected responses from 3,016 respondents in 19 markets across the globe: U.S., Canada, UK, France, Germany, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Spain, Portugal, China, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.

For select questions throughout this report, respondents were permitted to choose more than one answer, resulting in percentages exceeding 100%. A portion of the questions asked in the survey were also optional, so some questions may have been skipped by participants, resulting in percentages less than 100%.

It's also important to note that for this year's survey, we evolved several questions to derive more insightful data. As a result, direct comparisons to previous years' data may not be available. Any direct comparisons we were able to make to last year's data are noted throughout the report.

Key Findings



Highlights and Main Takeaways from the Report

An Industry Divided on Data

Storytelling has always been at the heart of journalism, but data has now become an essential ingredient. The majority of journalists are relying on data to measure success and to shape their editorial strategy. For nearly 2 in 5 journalists, data will play an even larger role in how they approach their work this year. At the same time, many journalists struggle with the pressure to prioritise stories that are “popular” in terms of engagement and views; as one respondent noted, “So much of journalism has become about ‘clicks’ and ‘shares’ and those often seem to take precedence over keeping the public informed.”

The Secret to Winning Journalists Over Comes Down to One Thing

A consistent theme throughout the survey results was the need for relevant content from the public relations professionals who reach out to them. When asked to describe the “perfect” PR pitch, relevance was by far the most cited factor – but it was only one element of many ways for public relations professionals to stand out.

Media Outreach is Not One-Size-Fits-All Globally

This year, we looked at how journalists around the world differ when it comes to the challenges they face, the way they work, and what they want from media relations teams. The variations in how journalists across North America, EMEA, and APAC countries perceive their biggest challenges, approach social media, utilise PR content, and define success should be key considerations for PR teams working with international clients.

The Impact of Independent Journalism

As more journalists build their brands outside of traditional media outlets, we were curious to see how independent and freelance journalists’ perspectives differed from those who were full-time staffers. There are notable differences in how journalists in each camp perceive industry challenges, define success, and prioritise content – all of which can influence what they want and need from their PR partners.

Journalists Have Mixed Feelings on AI

The explosion of generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Gemini (previously Bard) last year left many in the media grappling with its many implications and possible dangers. One in four survey respondents cited AI as one of their biggest challenges as a journalist, but nearly half are leveraging AI in various ways and at various levels – from brainstorming story ideas to helping with research.

Content Is King, and Multimedia Is the Heir Apparent

The number one social media platform journalists plan to have more presence on in the coming year is Instagram (and YouTube and TikTok aren’t far behind), which aligns with the finding that multimedia is among the types of content journalists want the most from PR professionals – and that the right multimedia can be the key to securing coveted earned media coverage.

Changing Audience Behaviors Present New Challenges

While journalists cited “maintaining credibility as a trusted news source” as the top industry challenge of the last year (for the second year in a row), “adapting to changing audience behaviors around media consumption” was right on its heels. “Competing with social media influencers and digital content creators for audience attention” made its way into the top five (following “lack of staffing and resources” and “declining revenue”). These emerging challenges indicate that journalists are struggling to keep up with changes in the way audiences get their news and information.

Part I

Inside the Mind of the Media

Challenges, Priorities, and Approaches to Work

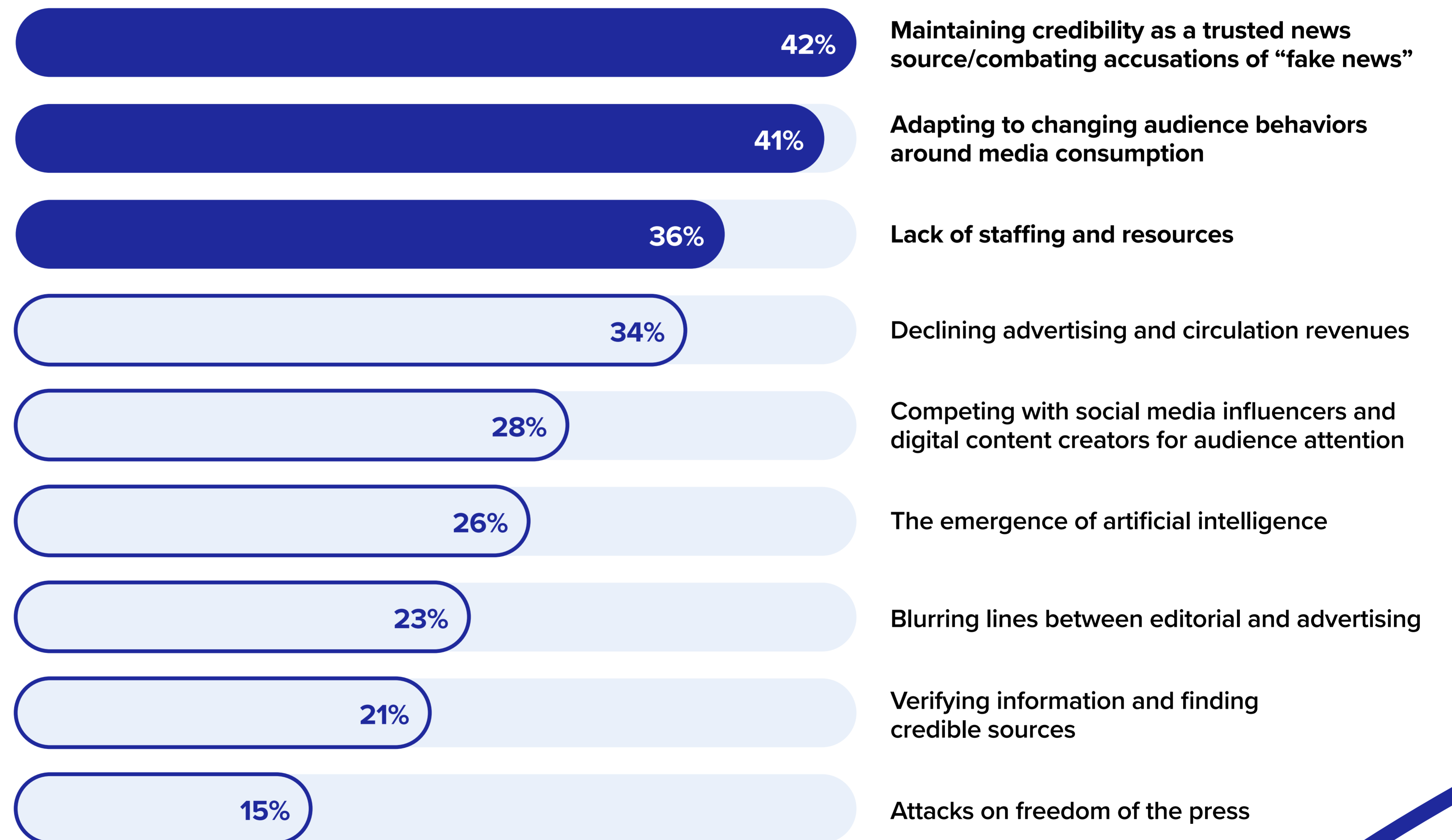
Under Pressure and Overcoming Obstacles

Understanding journalists' biggest challenges is the first step to building strong media relationships. When you know where they are coming from, you can tailor your interactions to be more meaningful and your pitches to resonate more effectively.

Similar to previous years, “maintaining credibility as a trusted news source/combating accusations of ‘fake news,’” emerged as the top perceived industry challenge. This year, however, last year’s second and third biggest challenges – “lack of staffing and resources” and “declining advertising and circulation revenues” – took a back seat to “adapting to changing audience perceptions around media consumption”. Another new development for 2024: The emergence of artificial intelligence – barely a blip on the radar last year – was cited by 26% of journalists as a top three challenge for the industry.

As the chart on the next page shows, on an individual level, journalists are feeling the toll that media downsizing is taking more than anything else.

What do you believe were the biggest challenges for the journalism industry in the last year?



What were your biggest challenges as a journalist in the last year?

Media downsizing and reduced resources

60%

Balancing reporting on important topics against pressure to drive business

42%

Having to compete with misinformation online

33%

Politicisation of the press

22%

Reporting on important topics in the face of threats related to backlash or outrage

18%

Other

13%

Addressing racial inequality issues

4%

Why It Matters

PR professionals and journalists have a shared interest in maintaining credibility with their audiences, whose habits for consuming news are always evolving. This underscores the need for PR to be extra diligent in ensuring they can back up their stories with objective facts, verified data (more on that later), and credible sources. Keeping a pulse on media trends will also help PR teams ensure they are serving up the most relevant stories for the audiences who matter most.



There's a new challenge in town.

Last year, “lack of staffing and resources” was the second-biggest industry challenge. This year, it was replaced by “adapting to changing audience perceptions around media consumption”.

(“Maintaining credibility as a trusted news source” maintains the No. 1 spot.)

In Their Own Words...

When asked about those “other” biggest challenges, here’s what journalists had to say:

“Declining traffic because of Google’s algorithm changes.”

“Accuracy in reporting versus those who want to break stories first – regardless of accuracy.”

“Trying to do quality journalism while also generating sustainable revenue.”

“Personal challenges and staying hopeful in the face of so many industry layoffs and shutdowns.”

“The fact that so much of journalism has become about ‘clicks’ and ‘shares’ and those often seem to take precedence over keeping the public informed.”

“Competing with content created by advertisers.”

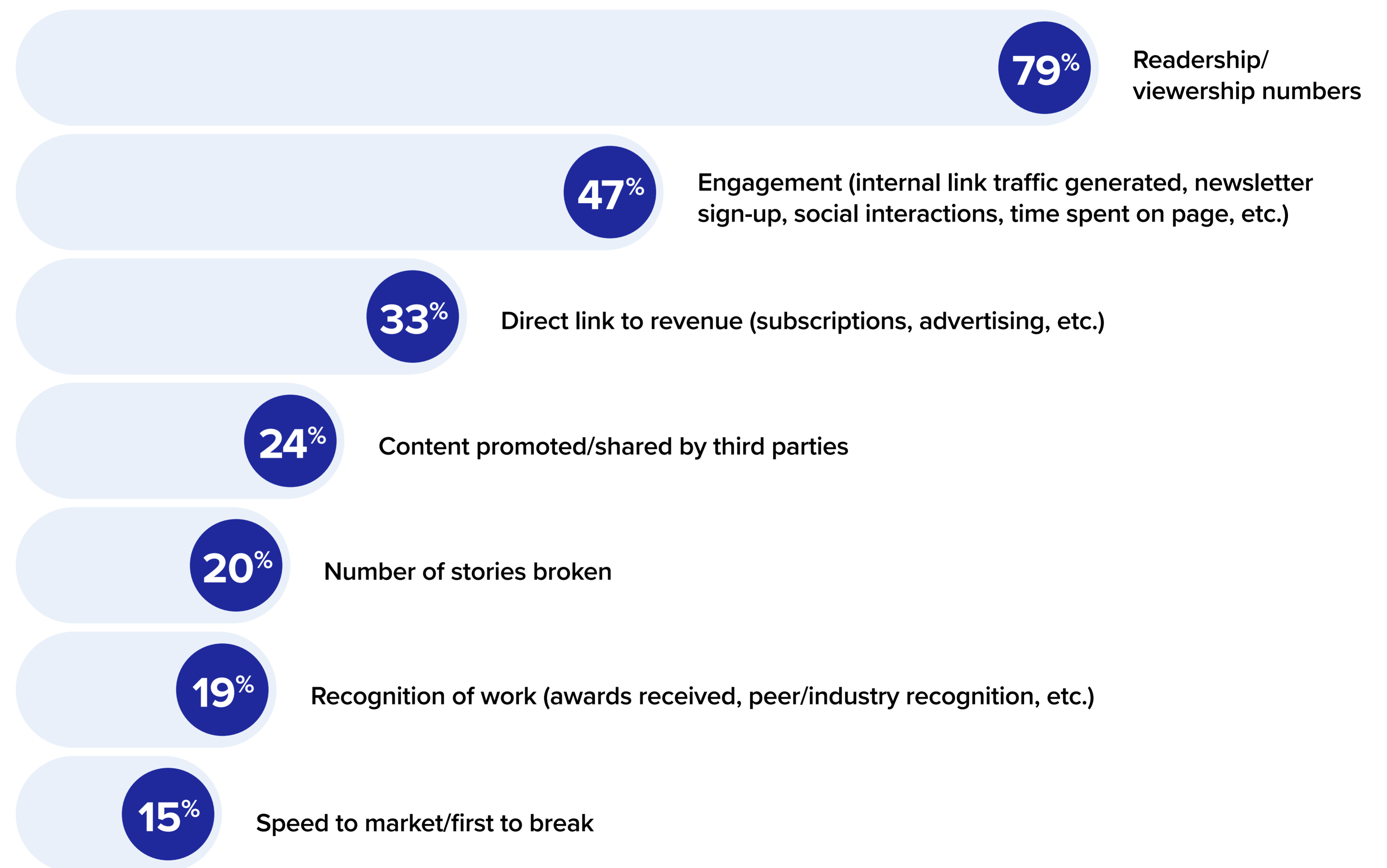
Essentials of Their Success

When asked how their organisations identify success, the vast majority of journalists cited “readership/viewership numbers” as one of their top three metrics for evaluating success, followed by “engagement” and “direct link to revenue”.

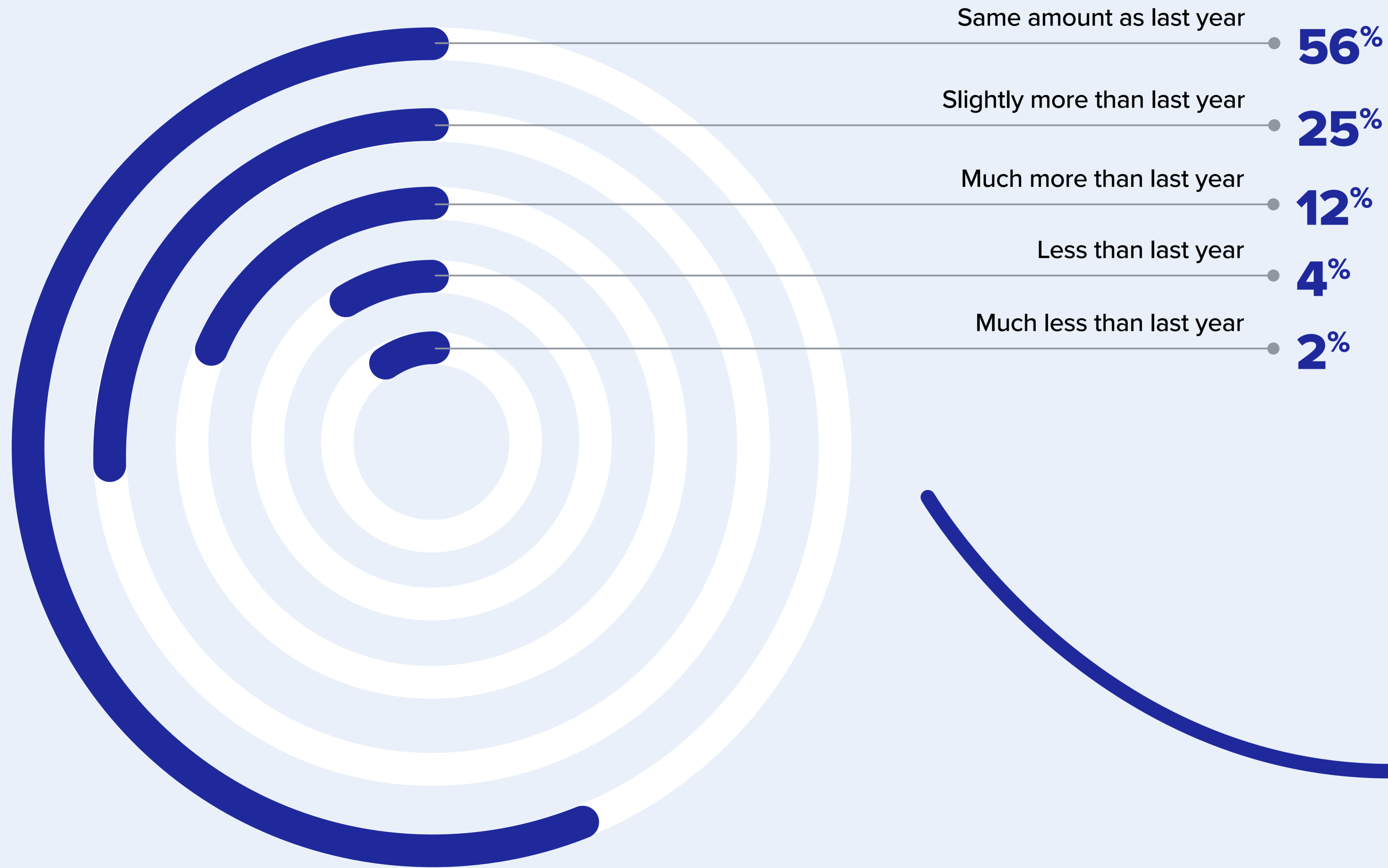
These findings underscore the importance of offering stories that have the potential to not just attract and engage large audiences, but generate revenue as well.

While it’s clear that journalists are already relying on data like audience metrics to understand what will resonate most, as the chart on the next page shows, data is expected to become much more integral to editorial strategies.

What were your organisation’s primary measures of success for content developed in 2023?



Compared to last year, how much are you relying on data (views, engagement, demographic data, etc.) to shape your editorial strategy?



Why It Matters

Knowing that data is central to how journalists operate and plan their editorial strategies, PR professionals who can leverage data insights (e.g., monitoring the media and trending topics) to pitch stories they know will resonate with a journalist's audience stand a better chance of getting coverage.

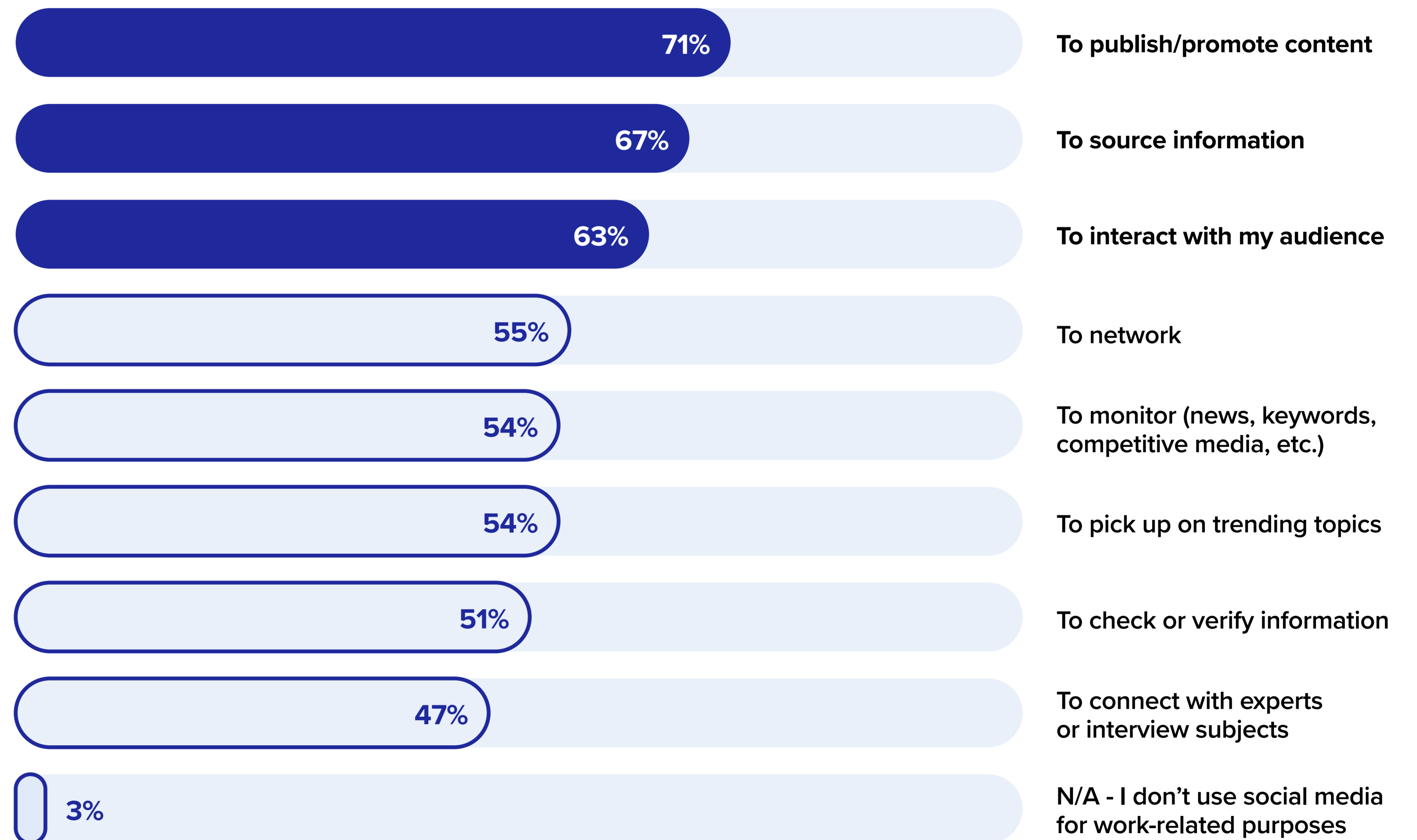
Examining Journalism's Social Status

Social media continues to be ubiquitous for journalists, with only 3% indicating they don't use it for work-related purposes, and the vast majority using it to promote content.

As for where their outlets intend to increase their social media activity, Instagram is the clear winner, as shown in the chart on the next page.

While TikTok, WhatsApp, and even Threads are gaining some ground, media brands are still flocking to more established sites.

In the last year, have you used social media for any of the following work-related reasons?



Over the next year, which social media platforms does your brand/media outlet plan to be more active on?



Why It Matters

PR professionals should note the many ways in which most journalists use social media and consider how they can offer the same value: By connecting them to experts or interview subjects, presenting story ideas around trending topics, and ensuring information is verified.

Be sure to consider the different types of content that work well on these sites when pitching journalists for story ideas that could play well on social. For instance, pitching a video to share on Instagram versus a thought leadership article to share on LinkedIn.



Facebook makes the top three.

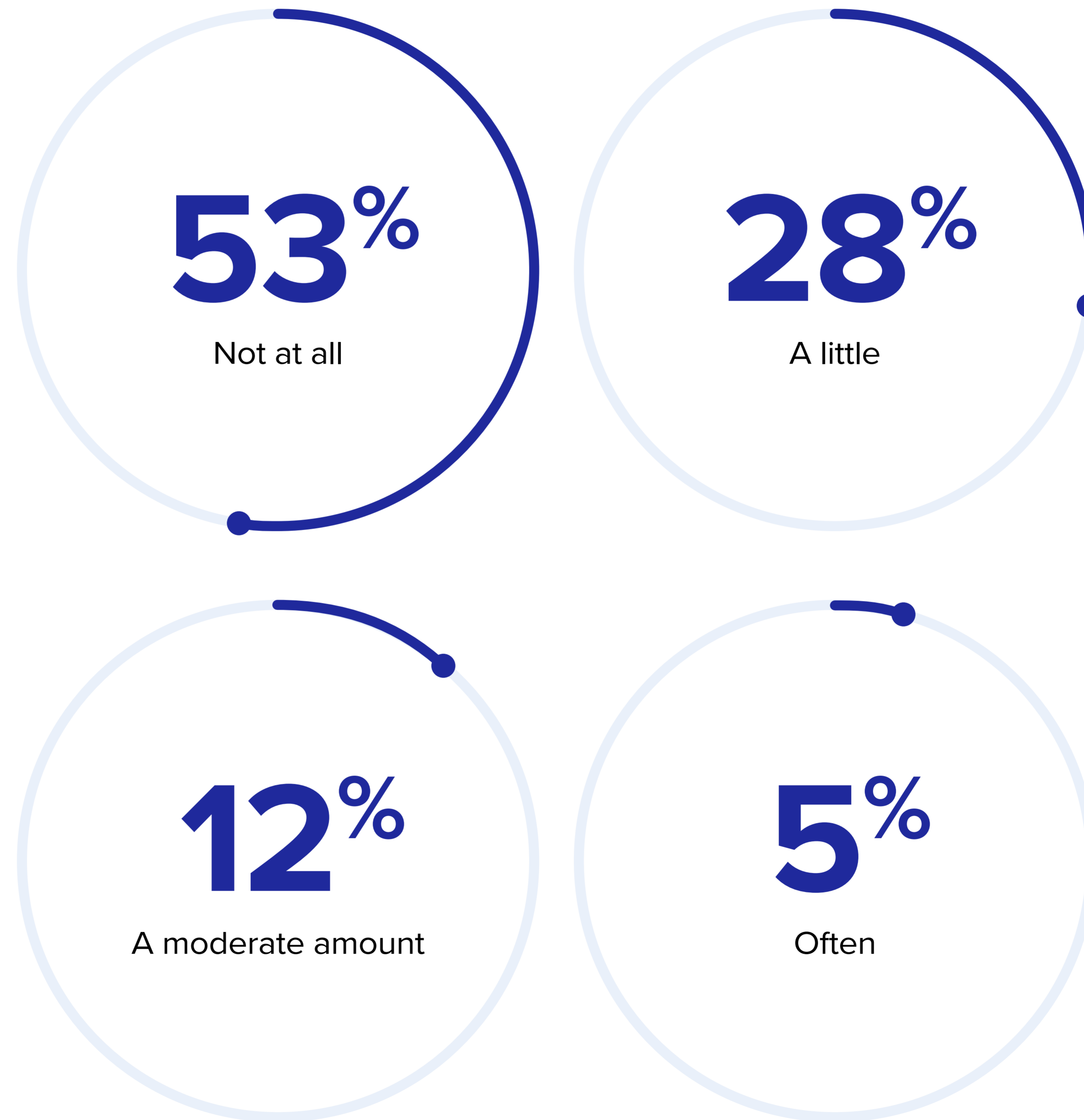
Last year, Facebook wasn't even in the top five of social media platforms journalists planned to increase activity on. **This year, it's No. 3.**

AI in the Newsroom

Even though AI has emerged as one of the biggest challenges for journalism, a significant number of journalists have experimented with it, indicating that they are open to AI if it makes sense, can be validated, and used responsibly.

When asked to specify what other ways they leveraged AI, answers ranged from having no interest in it (“None of the above, and I am adamantly opposed to any such use”), to helping with supplementary writing tasks (“To create article summaries and social media captions”), to curiosity around how it works (“To learn about AI and how ‘off’ it is”).

Are you using generative AI tools like ChatGPT or Bard in your work?



In what capacity have you used generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Bard in your work?

To research certain topics

23%

To help create outlines or early drafts of content

19%

To brainstorm new story ideas

13%

To brainstorm interview questions

11%

To create multimedia (video, images, etc.)

8%

To learn more about my audiences

5%

Why It Matters

While most journalists are not using generative AI (for now), PR professionals should note how the early adopters are leveraging it. Knowing that journalists are looking for assistance brainstorming story ideas, researching topics, or creating multimedia, for example, PR professionals can give themselves an advantage by proactively providing these assets themselves.

Part II

The State of Media Relations

What Journalists Wish PR Professionals Knew

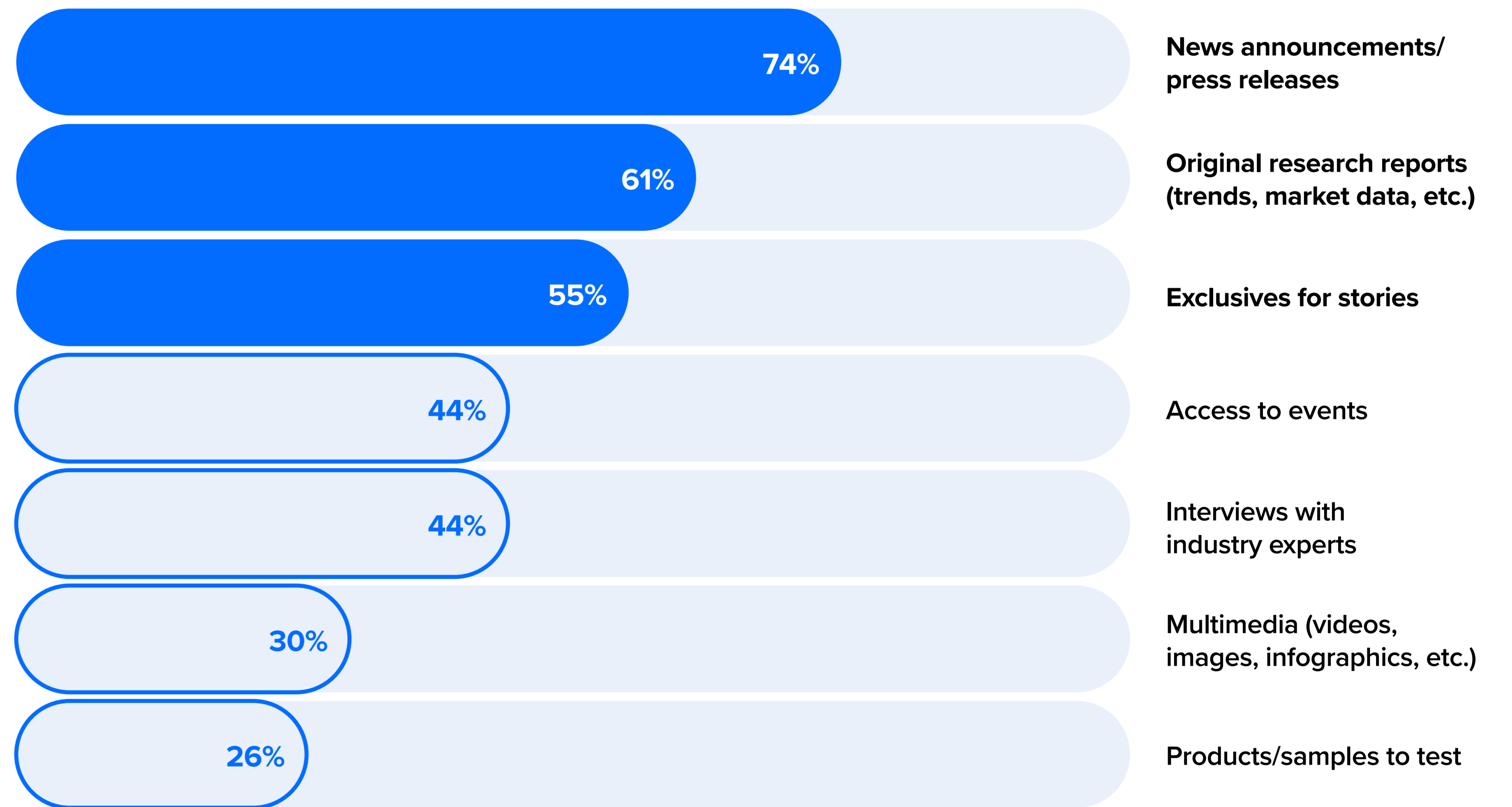
The Content Journalists Want

What do journalists want from PR professionals? We went straight to the source to find out. The press release still holds immense value for journalists, with nearly 3 in 4 naming it as something they'd like to receive from PR professionals.

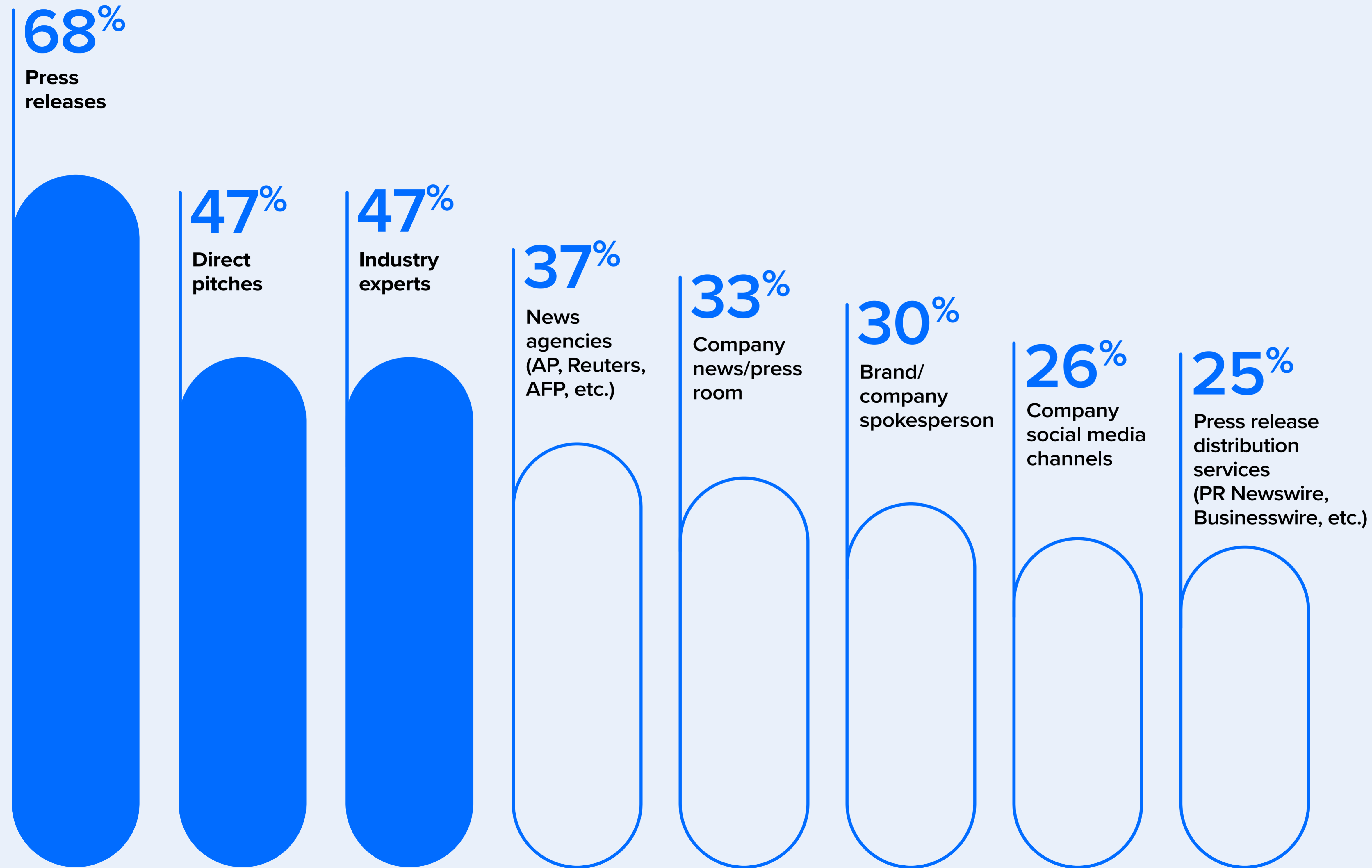
But press releases are only one part of the attention-getting equation: Most journalists also want original research and story exclusives.

As the chart on the next page shows, press releases are also the resource journalists find most useful for generating content or story ideas; however, direct pitches and industry experts follow closely behind.

What kind of content do you most want to receive from public relations professionals?



Which sources do you find most useful for generating content or ideas?



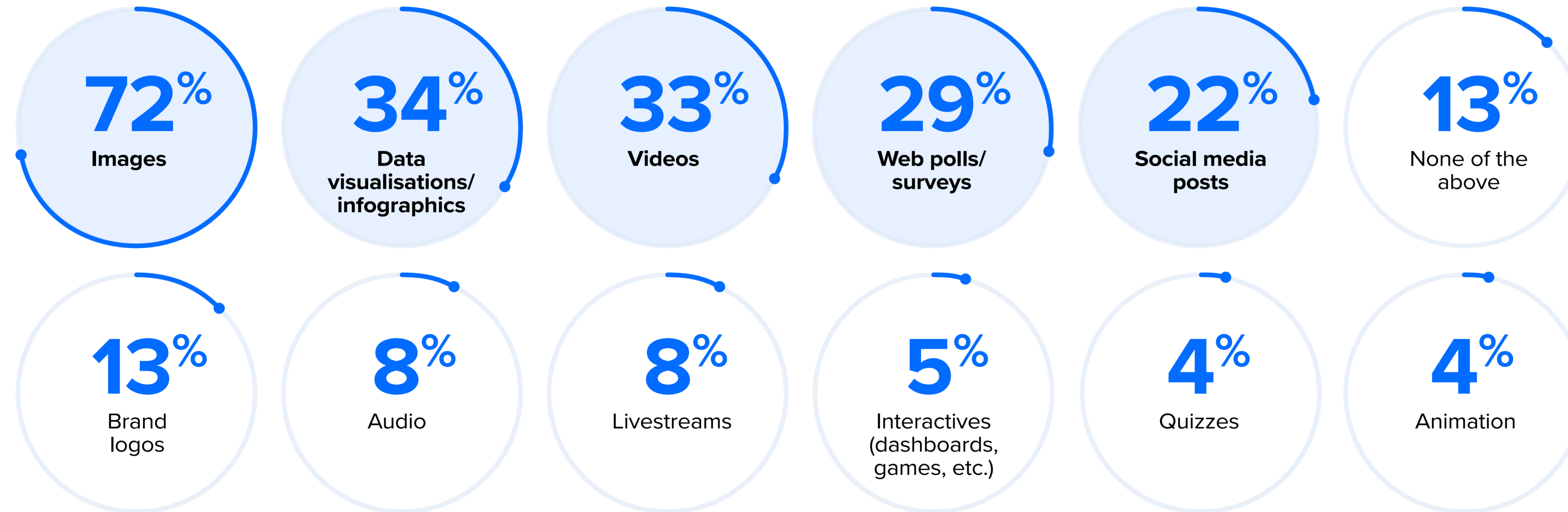
Why It Matters

As these findings show, there are myriad ways to tell your brand's story leveraging content and sources that journalists will respond to. Consider how you can combine these to add more power to your media outreach. For example, when reaching out to journalists with your pitch, include a press release with quotes from industry experts, and a link to your company newsroom.

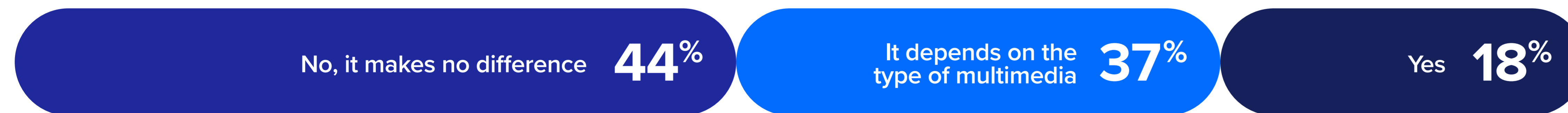
Multimedia Matters

Not only do journalists find value in the multimedia elements PR teams provide, but the right multimedia can be a deciding factor on whether to cover your story. Images are by far the most popular form of multimedia, with data visualisations/infographics and videos following.

Which multimedia elements – provided by a PR professional – have you used in your content over the past year?



Are you more likely to pursue a pitch if it includes multimedia elements?



Why It Matters

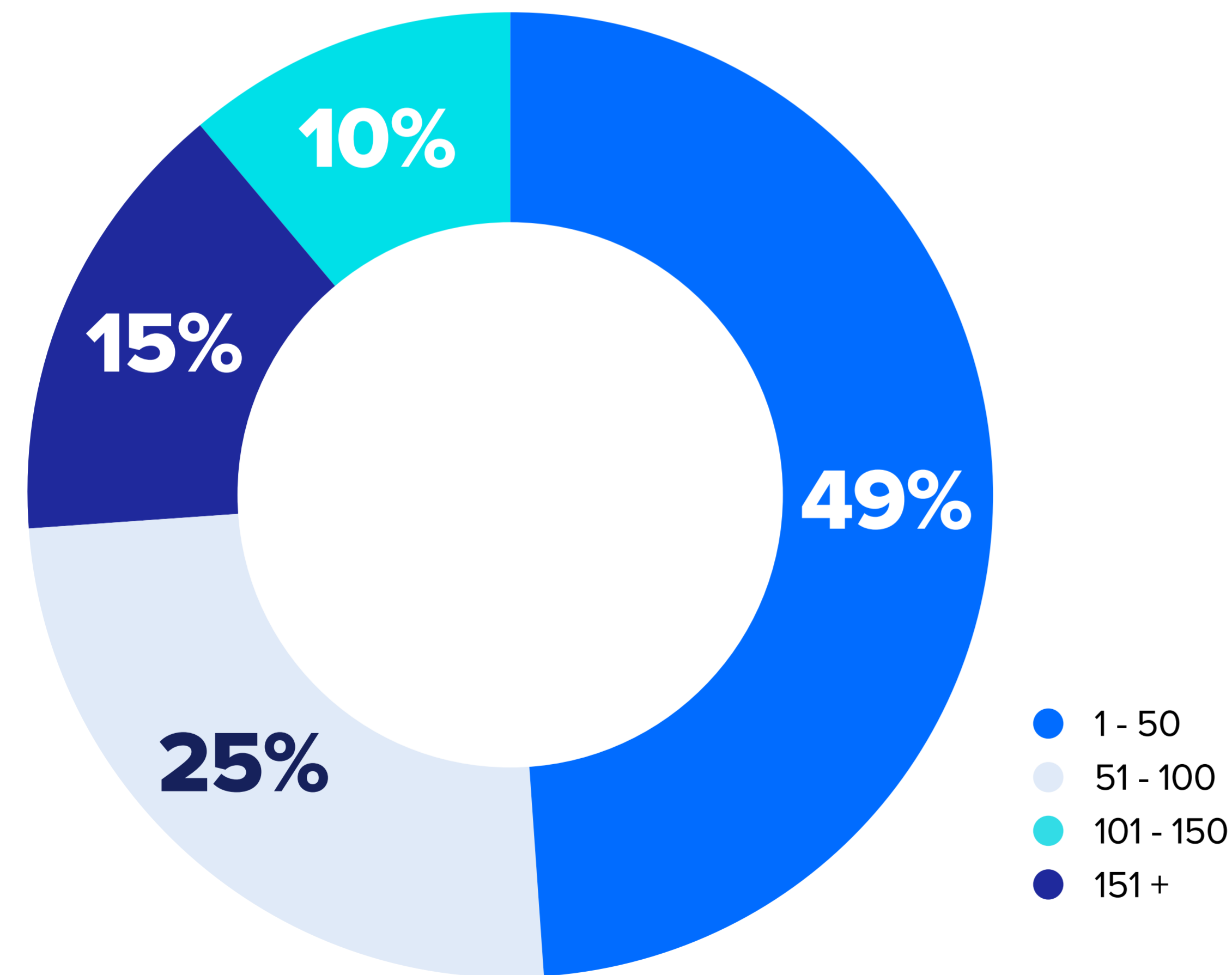
While including multimedia in your pitch isn't a surefire way to get coverage, it clearly has sway – especially when the multimedia helps bring the story to life and (most importantly) makes sense for the journalist's medium.

(Pro tip: A secure storage link to those assets will stop their inboxes filling up with attachments.)

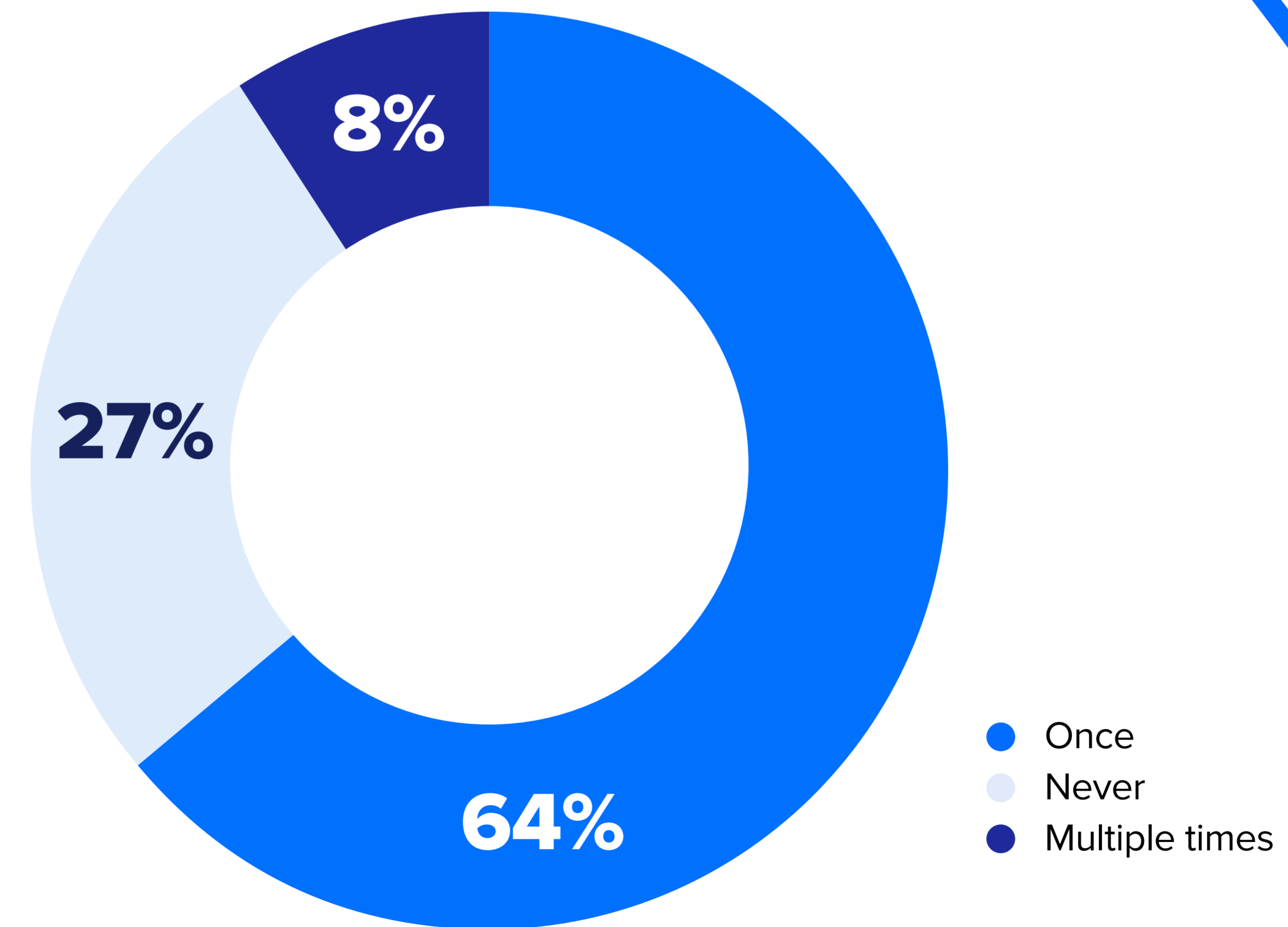
Achieving the Right Pitch

1 in 2 journalists are inundated with more than 50 pitches per week; yet only a fraction of these have any relevance to the topics they cover. While the vast majority of journalists prefer email outreach, they are more divided on their follow-up preferences.

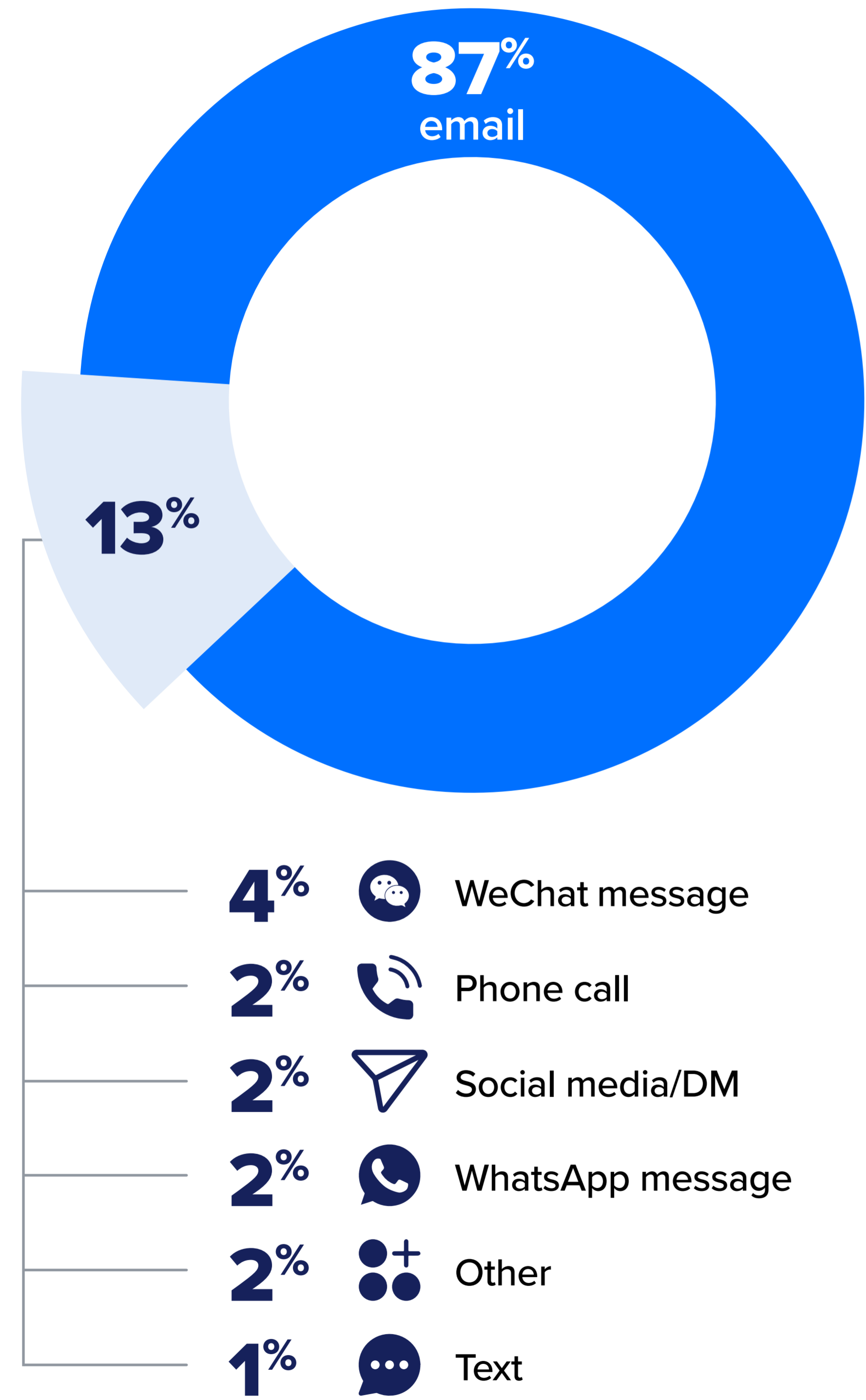
On average, how many pitches do you receive a week (including emails, phone calls, social media messages, etc.)?



How many times should a PR professional follow up with you after a pitch?

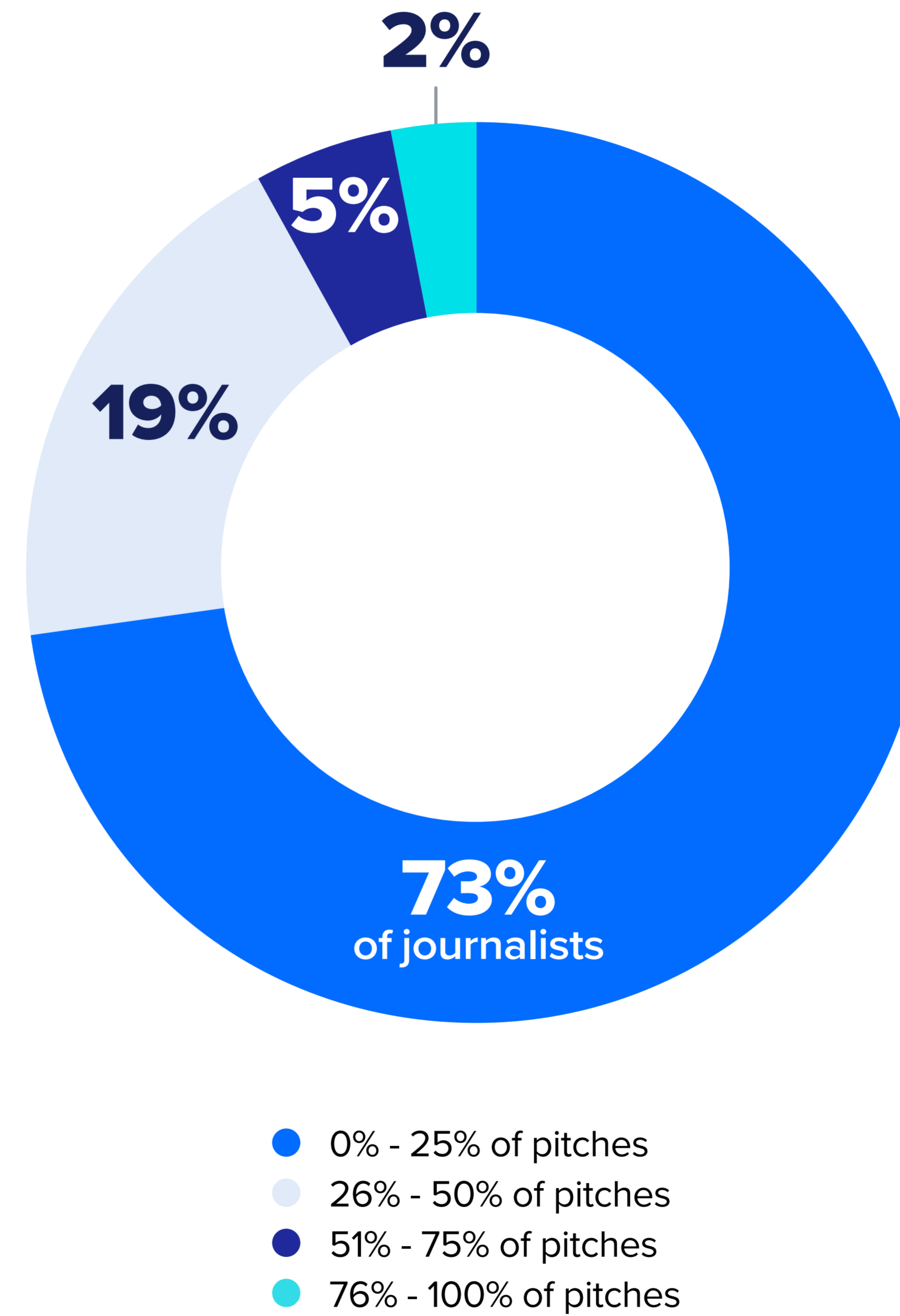


How do you prefer to receive pitches?*



*Additional answer options were given in China.

What percentage of pitches received do you consider relevant?



Why It Matters

This further underscores the need to do the necessary legwork to understand the journalists you're reaching out to. From there you can determine not only if your pitch is right for their audience (or how to craft it accordingly), but if and how to follow up.

(Pro tip: A comprehensive [media database](#) can help you identify the right journalists to reach out to for your pitch, along with data to understand the right follow-up approach.)



Are journalists getting fed up with follow ups?

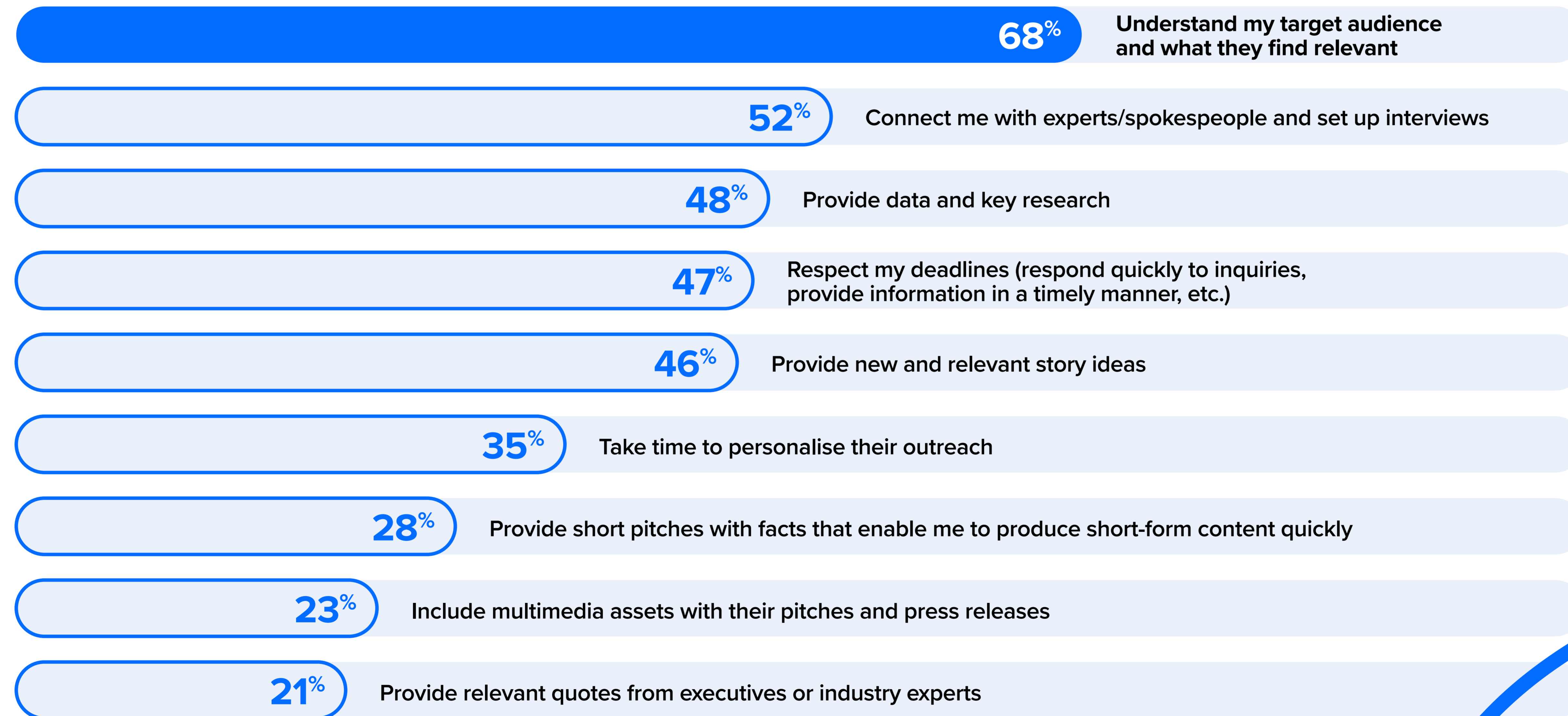
Last year, 17% of journalists told us it's OK to follow up more than once.

This year, only 8% said the same.

How to Gain Favour with Journalists

Only 7% of journalists consider pitches to be relevant more than half the time, so it makes sense that “understand my audience and what they find relevant” is the number one way PR professionals can make journalists’ lives easier. But the opportunities to provide added value to journalists don’t end there, as this chart shows.

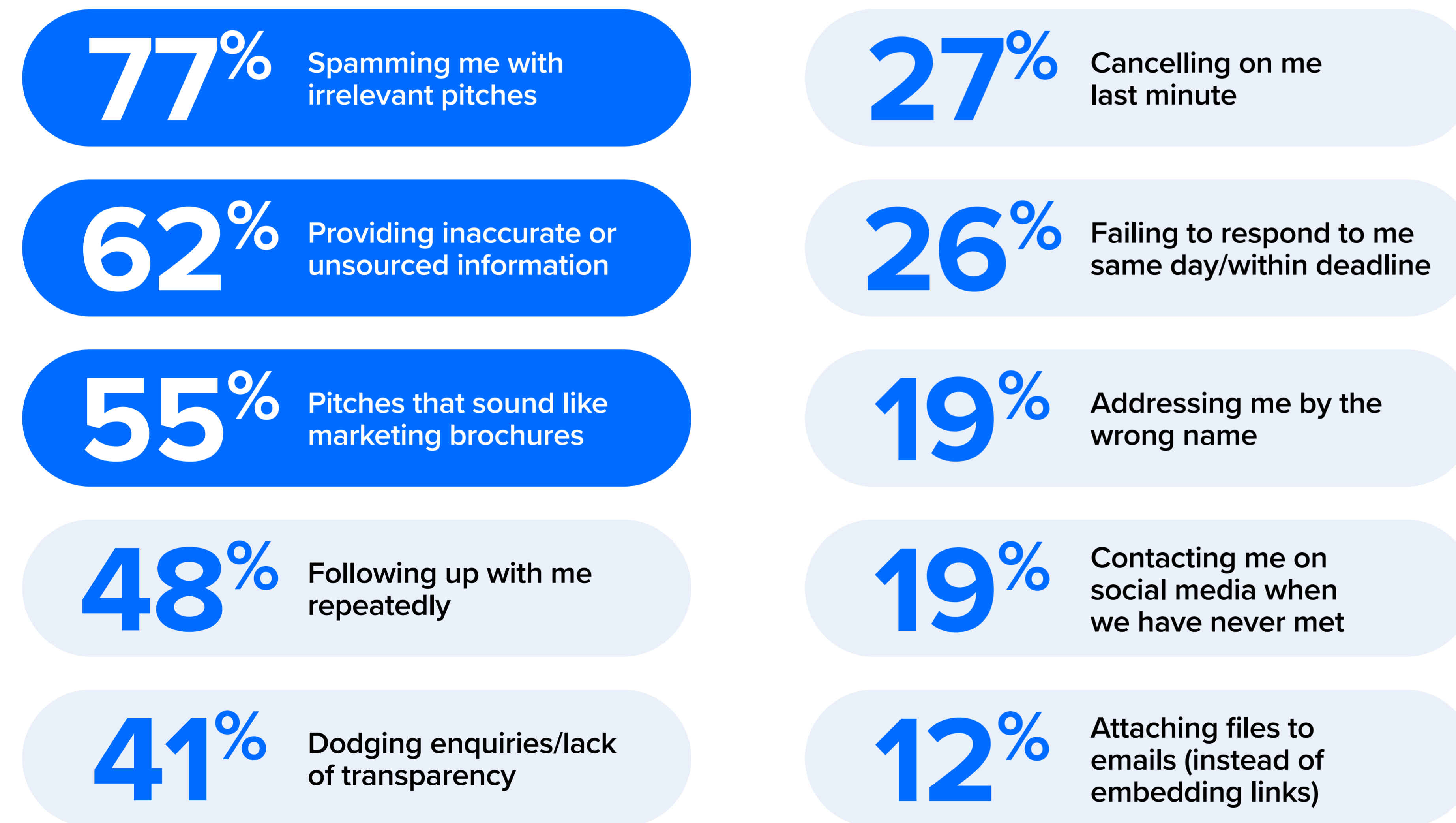
What can PR professionals do to make your job easier?



How to Lose Favour with Journalists

In addition to revealing what they want from PR professionals and the actions they appreciate, journalists also shed light on the behaviours they won't tolerate. Given their overflowing inboxes, it follows that getting "spammed" with irrelevant pitches is first on the list.

What would make you block a PR professional or put them on your "don't call" list?



Why It Matters

The easier PR teams make it for journalists to cover their stories, the more likely they are to do so. And the easier you are to work with, the more likely journalists will want to work with you again (and again), so take note of the many ways you can be of assistance. At the same time, it is equally important to be aware of ways in which you may be unintentionally getting in your own way.



Journalists want relevant pitches, expert connections, and data – in that order.

For the **second year in a row,** journalists say these are the top ways PR can make their lives easier.

In Their Own Words...

Journalists had a few other pieces of advice for PR professionals who want to get on their good side:

“Fewer follow-ups to unsolicited messages. My inbox is drowning!”

“Make sure the multimedia assets are usable - full resolution printable photos for example.”

“Stop wasting my time with pitches that are completely out of my coverage area.”

“Provide sources for interviews who are subject matter experts and willing to be honest and forthcoming and answer questions.”

“Actually respond to queries in a polite way, rather than ‘ghosting’ or ignoring a query and assuming that type of behaviour is acceptable business practice.”

“Provide print-ready copy, the better written the better.”

How to Craft a Perfect PR Pitch, According to Journalists

“The perfect PR pitch is...”

We asked journalists to finish this statement to get a clearer picture of what they look for from the PR professionals who reach out to them. Despite having the freedom to say whatever they wanted, an overwhelming number of responses mentioned “relevance”. Other common sentiments included: brief, to-the-point messages; multimedia; professionalism; personalisation; and transparent communication. We’ve pulled out a selection of responses that reflect these common themes:

“Relevant to my audience.”

“Relevant to the region and the people who live there.”

“Concise and to the point. Bullet points are great or short sentences that tell me what I need to know.”

“Relevant and reliable and contains visuals.”

“Showing that the PR person has looked at our website, read the content, and can tailor their pitch to the types of experts and story subjects we present.”

“Actually newsworthy, not just a brand trying to get eyeballs.”

“Personalised. Courteous. Brief and to the point. Not transactional.”

“Well written, with no hyperbole.”

“A direct headline and delivers in 25 words to entice the journalist to continue to read.”

“Relevant information, sourced information, pertinent to our market/demographics.”

Part III

Around the World

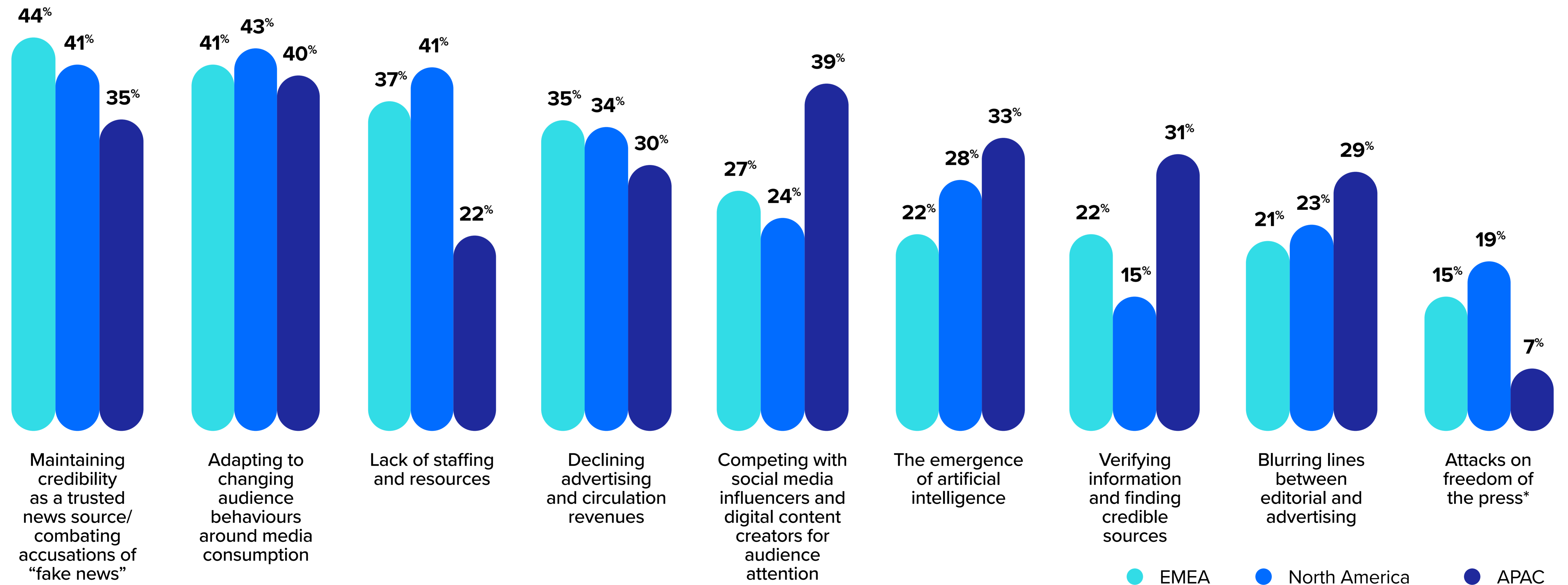
Variations Across Regions

Variations Across Regions

For PR professionals who serve international teams, it's important to note the regional differences in how journalists work, and the nuances to consider when thinking about how to approach them, provide value, and build those relationships. The following charts provide visibility into the nuances of working across the globe.

APAC countries struggled notably less with lack of staffing and resources; more with competing with social media influencers, finding credible sources, and blurring lines between editorial and advertising.

What do you believe were the biggest challenges for journalism in the last year?



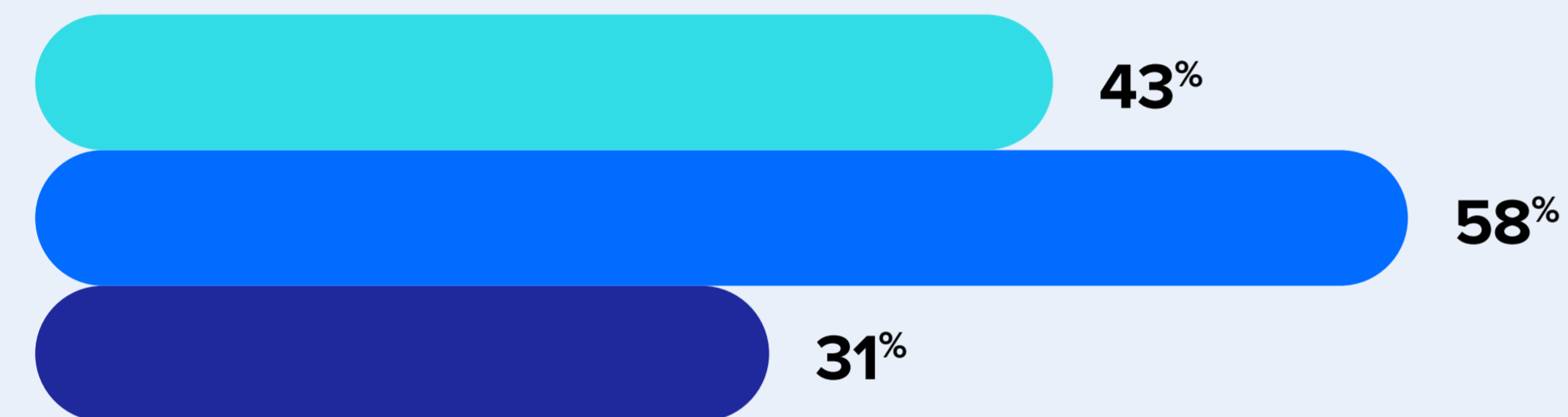
*Not all APAC countries gave this as an answer option

What were your organisation's primary measures of success for content developed in 2023?

Readership/viewership numbers



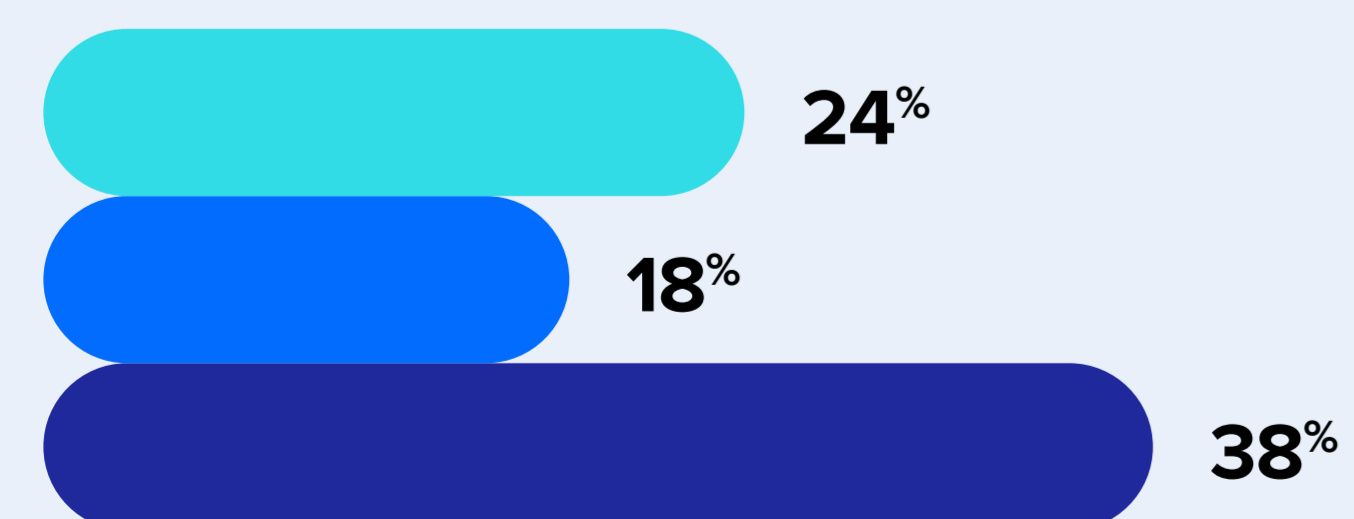
Engagement (internal link traffic generated, newsletter sign-up, social interactions, time spent on page, etc.)



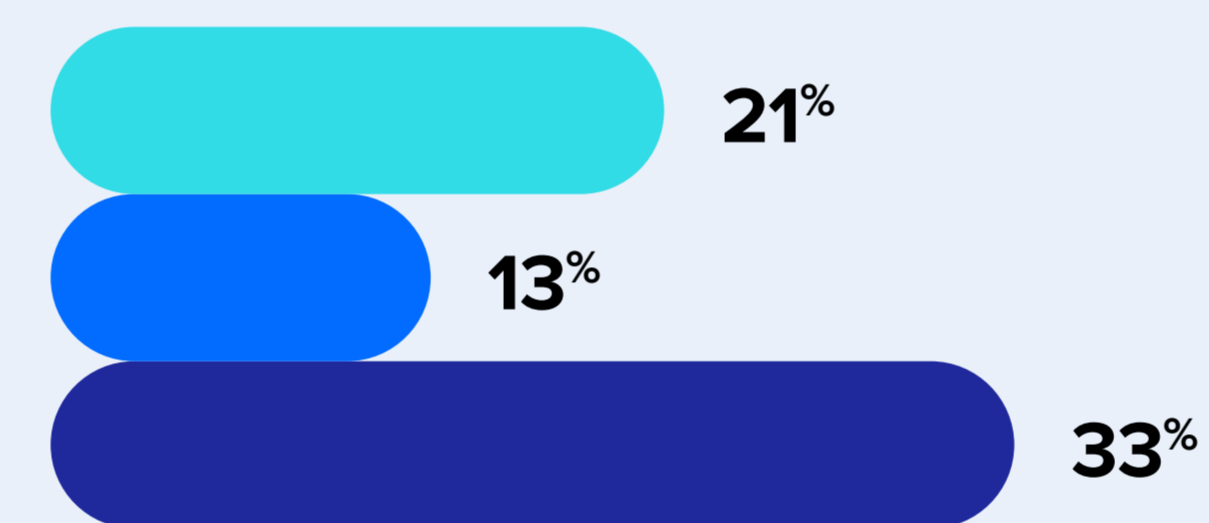
Direct link to revenue (subscriptions, advertising, etc.)



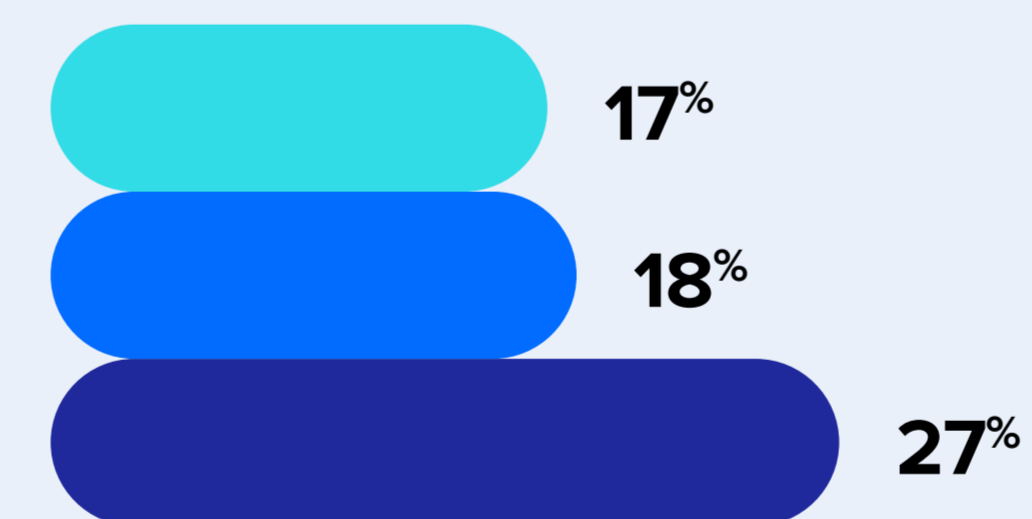
Content promoted/shared by third parties



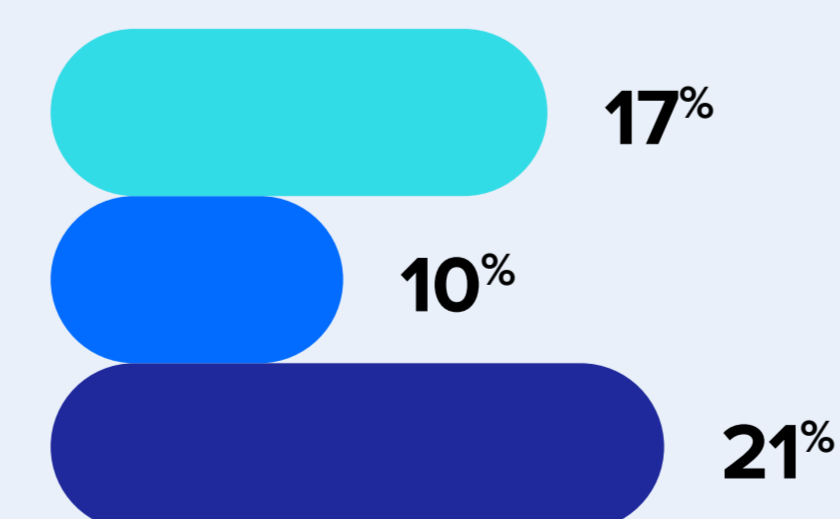
Number of stories broken



Recognition of work (awards received, peer/industry recognition, etc.)



Speed to market/first to break

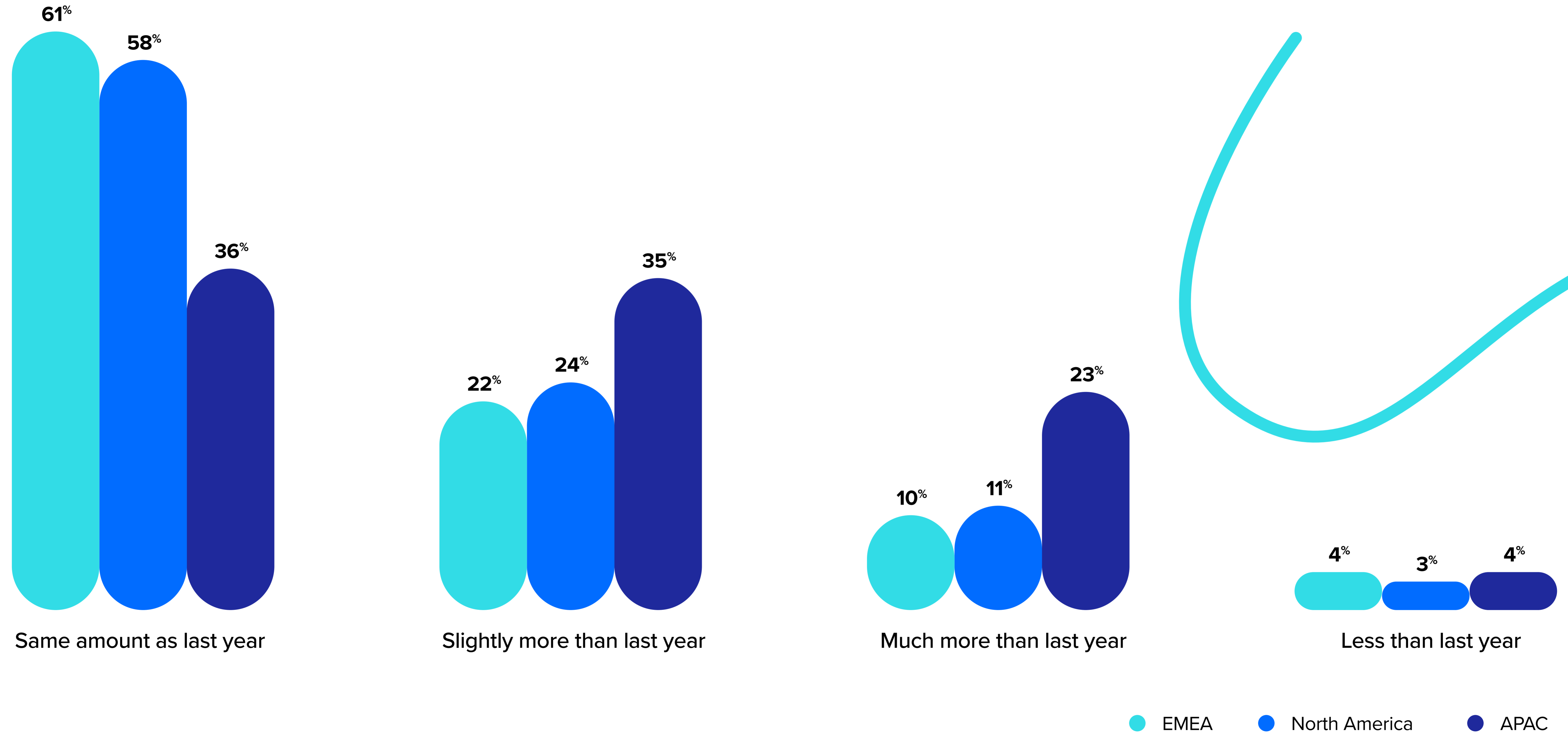


APAC places less emphasis on engagement, and more emphasis/value on content shared or promoted by third parties, number of stories broken, and recognition of work.

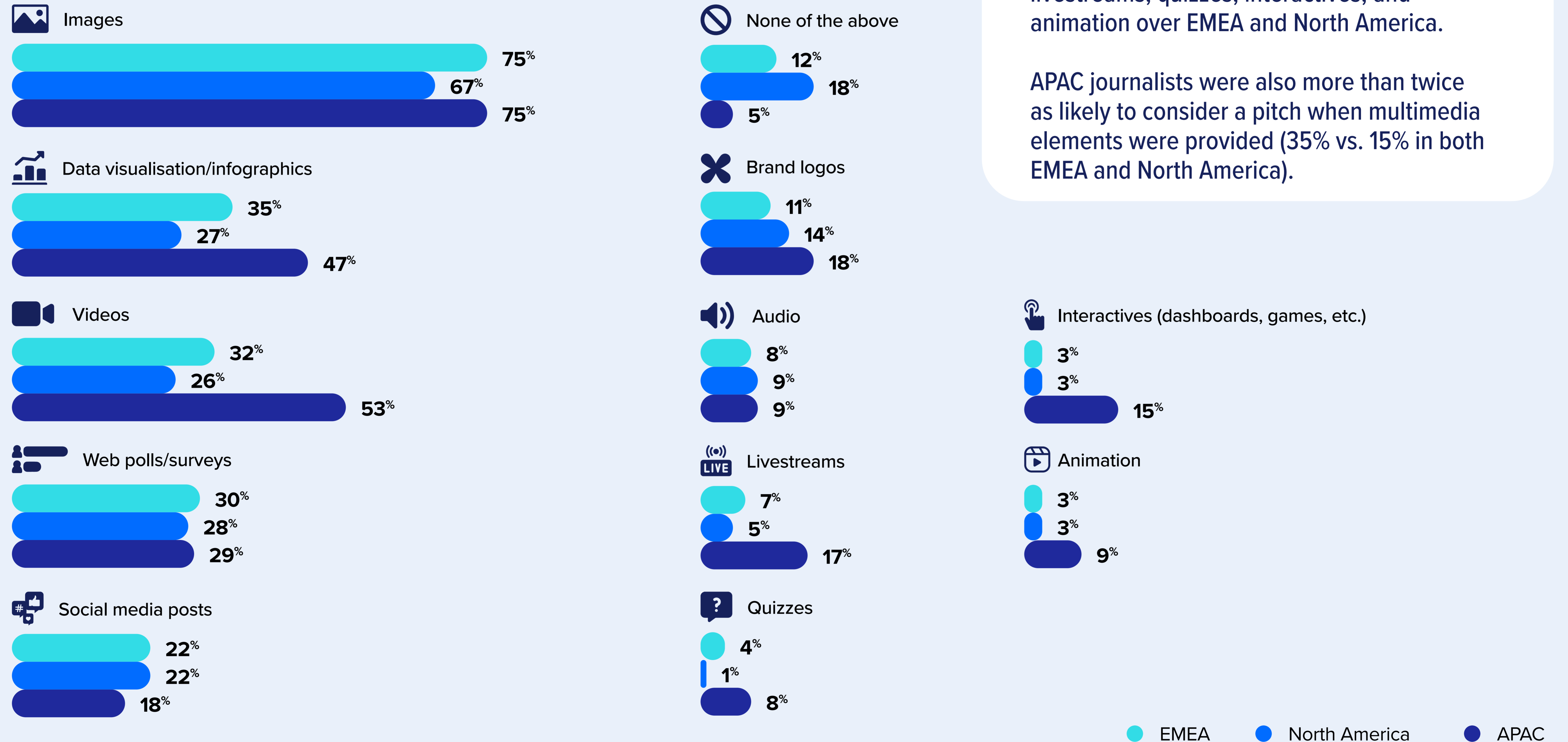
● EMEA ● North America ● APAC

Compared to last year, how much are you relying on data (views, engagement, demographic data, etc.) to shape your editorial strategy?

APAC journalists are relying more heavily on data this year than their counterparts in other areas of the world.



Which multimedia elements – provided by a PR professional – have you used in your content over the past year?

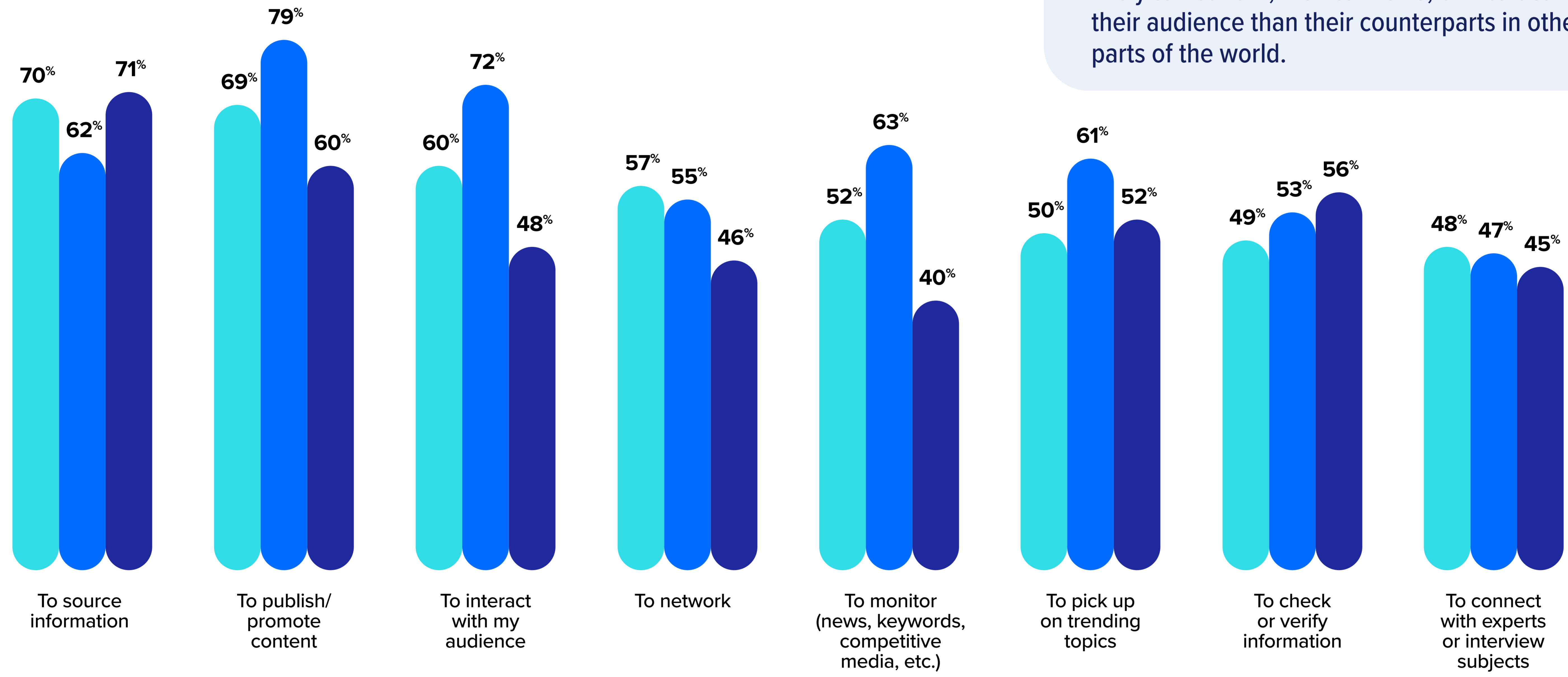


APAC countries are more likely to use multimedia provided by PR teams; they gravitated towards videos, data visualisations, livestreams, quizzes, interactives, and animation over EMEA and North America.

APAC journalists were also more than twice as likely to consider a pitch when multimedia elements were provided (35% vs. 15% in both EMEA and North America).

In the last year, have you used social media for any of the following work-related reasons?

North American journalists are more likely to use social media to publish and promote content, interact with their audiences, and monitor news or trending topics than APAC or European journalists. APAC journalists are less likely to network, monitor news, or interact with their audience than their counterparts in other parts of the world.



● EMEA ● North America ● APAC

Over the next year, which social media platforms does your brand/media outlet plan to be more active on?*

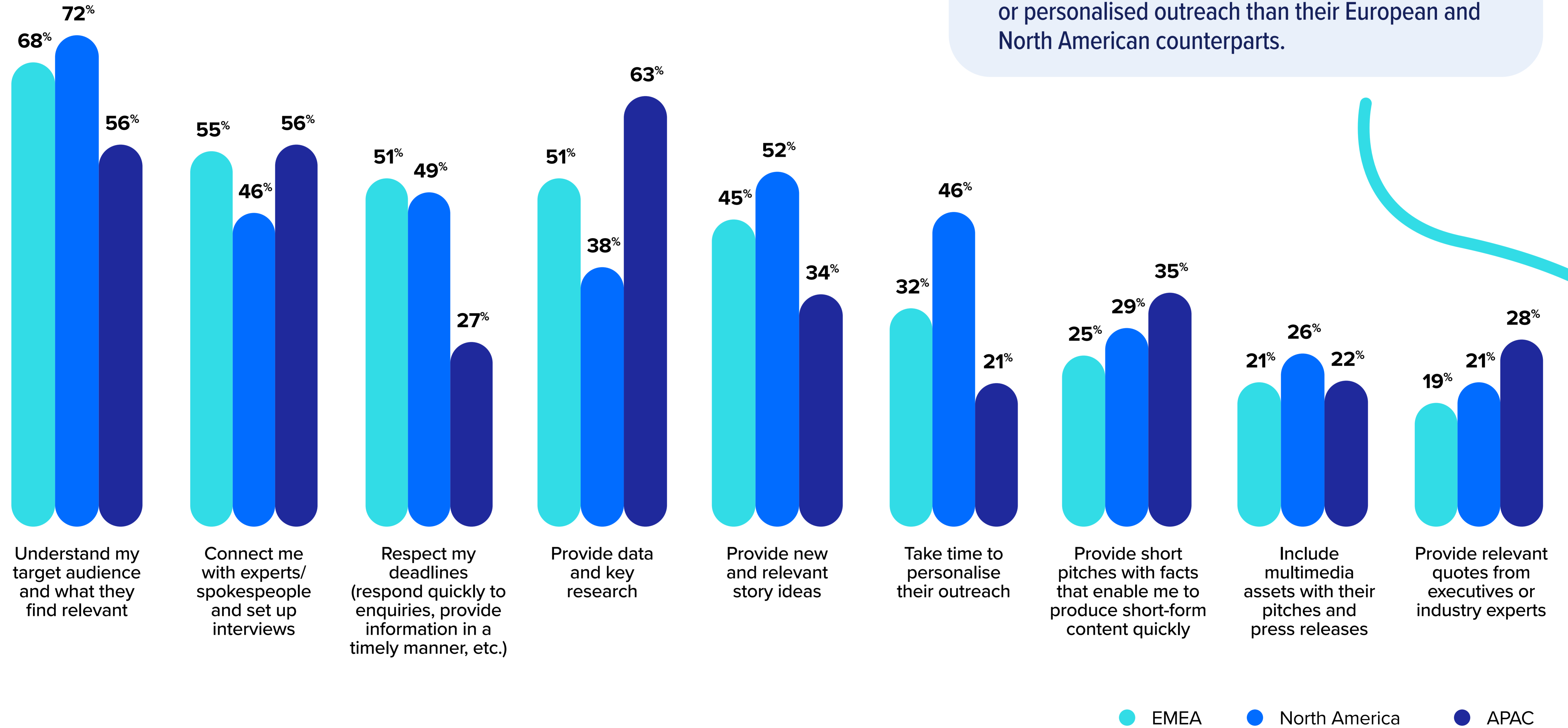
APAC journalists – specifically those in China – showed stark differences in choice of social media platform, gravitating more towards region-specific social networks like WeChat, Weibo, Little Red Book, and Douyin.



● EMEA ● North America ● APAC
 *Additional answer options were provided in China's survey

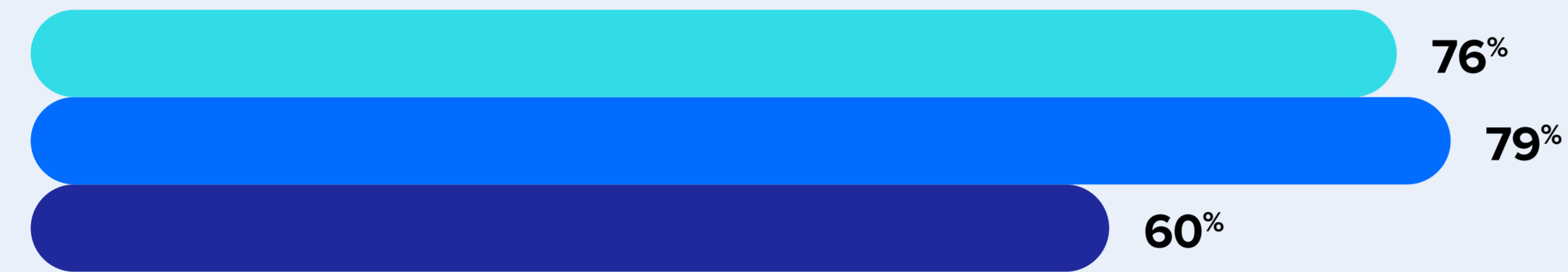
What can PR professionals do to make your job easier?

For APAC journalists, getting data and key research trumps understanding target audiences (the top choice for both EMEA and North America); they are also less concerned with response to deadlines or personalised outreach than their European and North American counterparts.



What kind of content do you most want to receive from public relations professionals?

News announcements/press releases



Original research reports (trends, market data, etc.)



Exclusives for stories



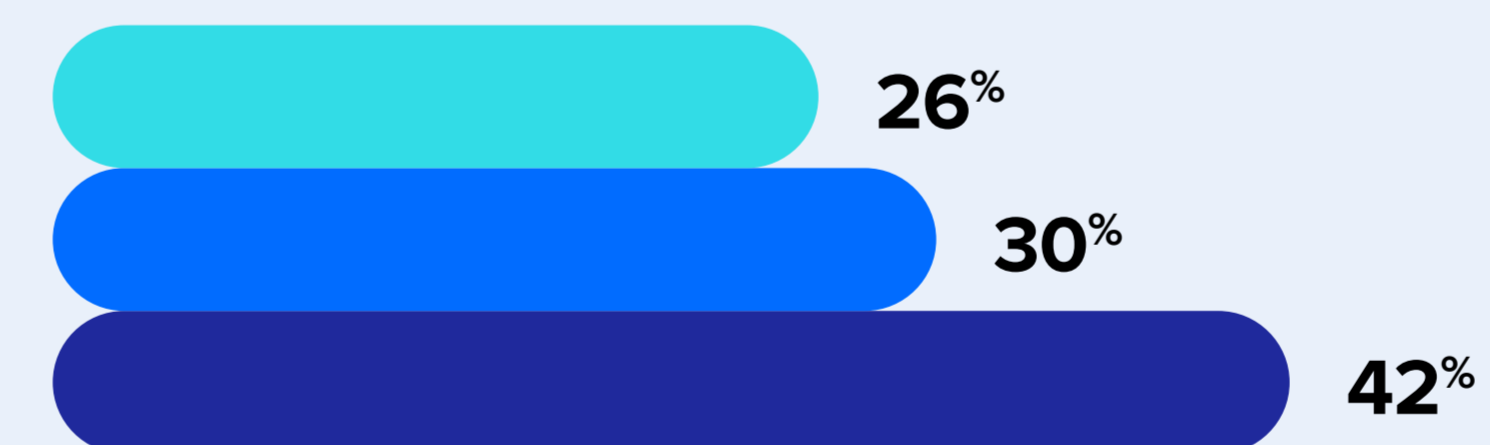
Access to events



Interviews with industry experts



Multimedia (videos, images, infographics, etc.)



Products/samples to test



While news announcements remain the most in-demand type of content for European and North American media, APAC journalists place higher value on original research and exclusives for stories.

● EMEA ● North America ● APAC

Part IV

How the Other Half Works

Freelancers Vs. Staffers

Of the 3,000 journalists surveyed, more than 1 in 5 (22%) identified as freelance or independent journalists. We were curious to know if and how their work status affected their perceived challenges, how they measured success, and their relationships with public relations professionals. In this section, we highlighted some notable areas of difference between journalists who identified as freelancers or independent versus those who identified as exclusively on staff at a media outlet.

Measures of Success

Measures of success are similar, but freelancers value content promoted/shared by third parties over direct link to revenue, perhaps because they are more reliant on growing their audience organically.

What were your organisation's primary measures of success for content developed in 2023?

Readership/viewership numbers



Number of stories broken



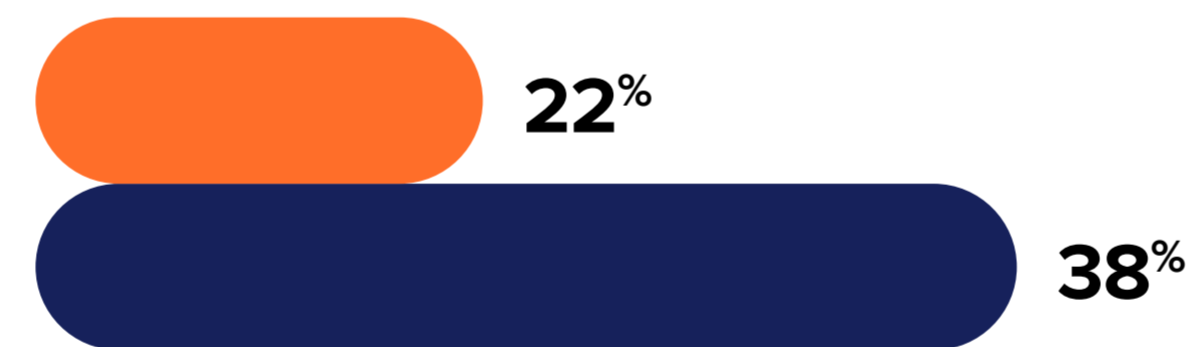
Engagement (internal link traffic generated, newsletter sign-up, social interactions, time spent on page, etc.)



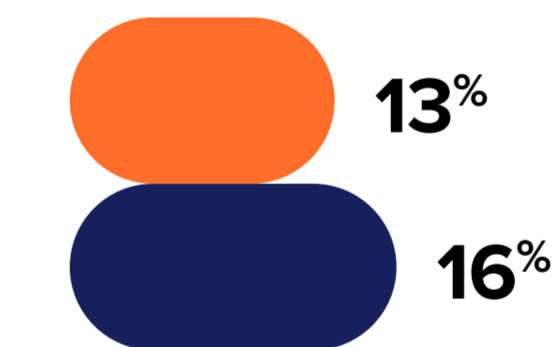
Recognition of work (awards received, peer/industry recognition, etc.)



Direct link to revenue (subscriptions, advertising, etc.)



Speed to market/first to break



Content promoted/shared by third parties

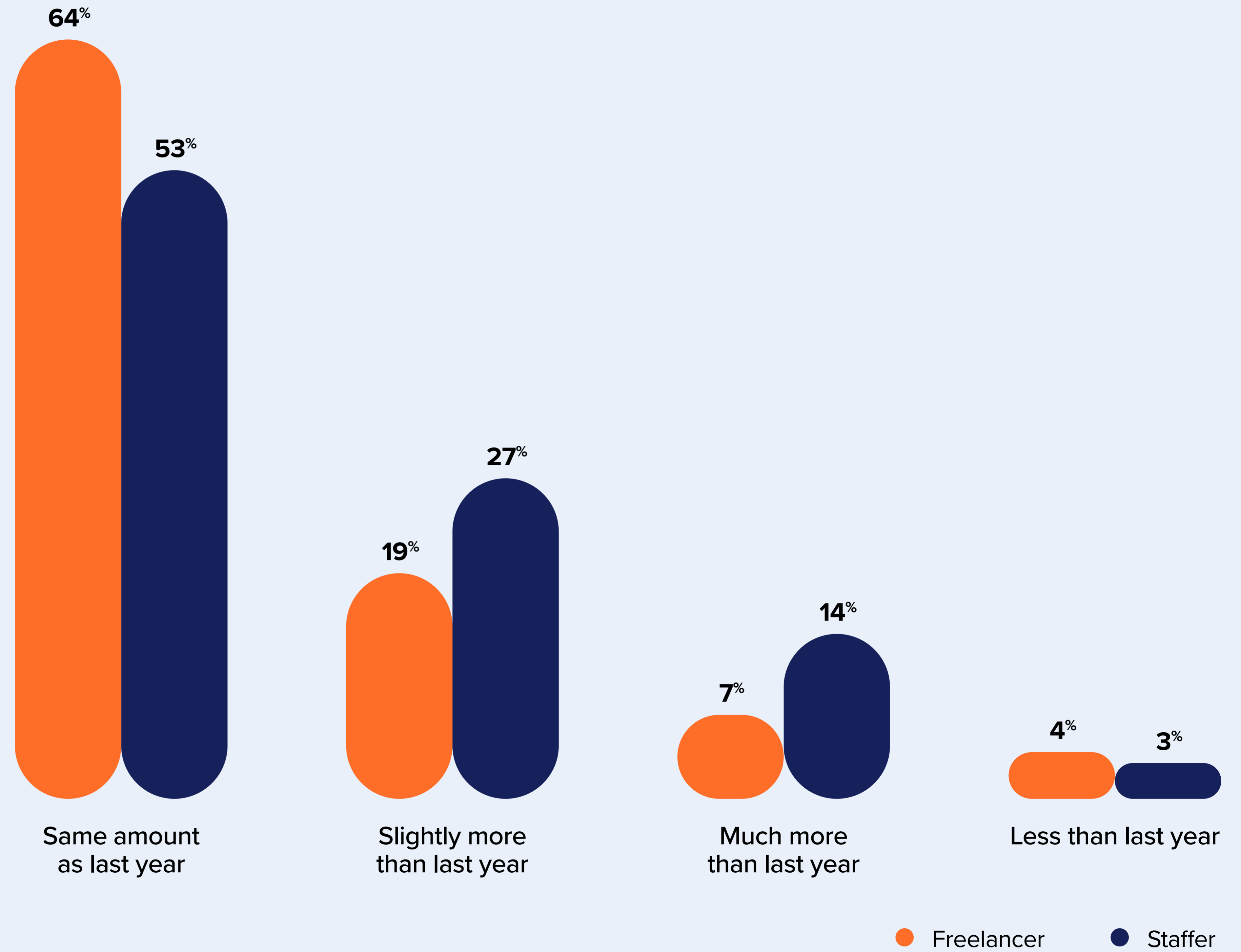


● Freelancer ● Staffer

Reliance on Data

Only 26% of freelancers plan to rely more on data this year, compared to 41% of staffers who say the same thing. This could indicate staffers have more access to data and pressure to bring engagement to the business, as staffers are also more likely to measure success by audience numbers, engagement, and direct links to revenue.

Compared to last year, how much are you relying on data (views, engagement, demographic data, etc.) to shape your editorial strategy?



Biggest Perceived Challenges

Freelancers viewed artificial intelligence as more of a threat to journalism than staffers; whereas staffers saw “adapting to changing audience behaviors around media consumption” and “lack of staffing and resources” as bigger industry challenges than their freelance counterparts. On an individual level, freelancers and staffers felt similar struggles (see next page); however, staffers struggled more with balancing reporting against pressure to bring in business.

What do you believe were the biggest challenges for journalism in the last year?

Maintaining credibility as a trusted news source/ combating accusations of “fake news”



Declining advertising and circulation revenues



Verifying information and finding credible sources



Adapting to changing audience behaviors around media consumption



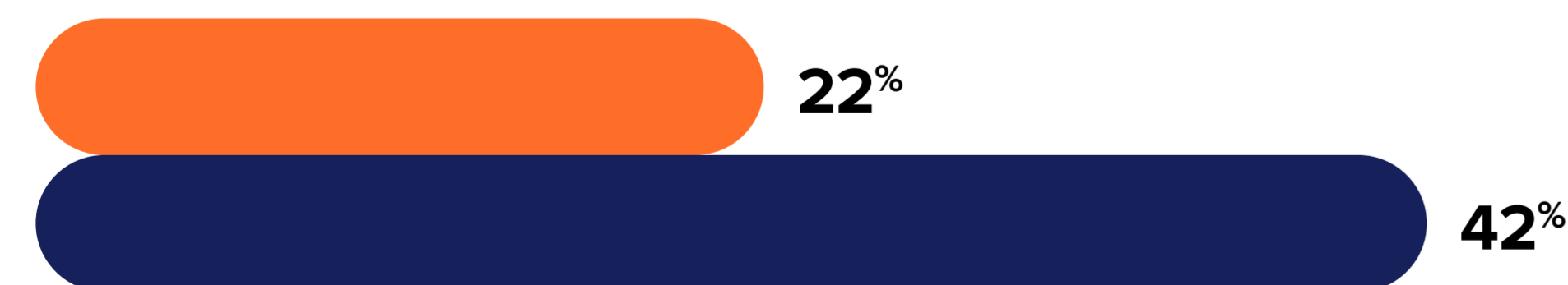
Competing with social media influencers and digital content creators for audience attention



Blurring lines between editorial and advertising



Lack of staffing and resources



The emergence of artificial intelligence



Attacks on freedom of the press



● Freelancer ● Staffer

What were your biggest challenges as a journalist in the last year?

Media downsizing and reduced resources



Balancing reporting on important topics against pressure to drive business



Having to compete with misinformation online



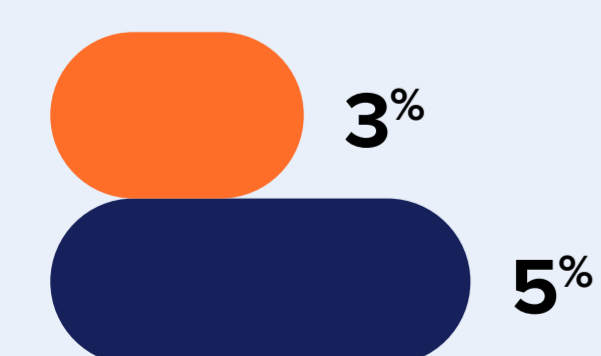
Politicisation of the press



Reporting on important topics in the face of threats related to backlash or outrage



Addressing racial inequality issues



● Freelancer ● Staffer

Content Wanted From PR

Press releases and news announcements remain essential content for independent journalists and freelancers alike; however, PR teams who want coverage for their products or events may have more luck reaching out to independent journalists. They express more interest in access to events and products or samples to test; whereas full-time staff are more attracted to original research and exclusives for stories.

Why It Matters

Just as PR teams working internationally need to be aware of the nuances in how the global media work, they should understand the different dynamics at play when dealing with freelance journalists versus journalists tied to a larger organisation.

What kind of content do you most want to receive from public relations professionals?

News announcements/press releases



Interviews with industry experts



Original research reports (trends, market data, etc.)



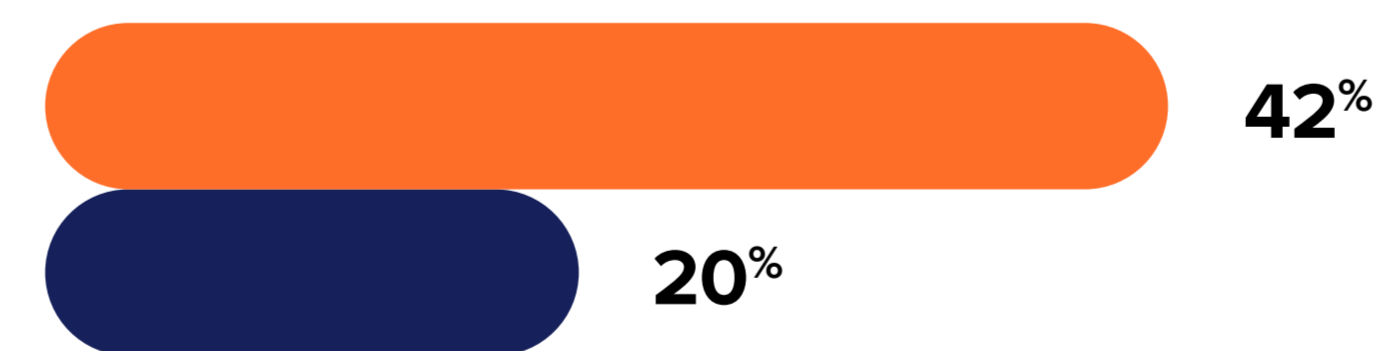
Multimedia (videos, images, infographics, etc.)



Exclusives for stories



Products/samples to test



Access to events



● Freelancer ● Staffer

Final Thoughts

For the past 15 years, we've approached this report with one major goal in mind: To provide comprehensive insight into the behaviors and perceptions of journalists for the public relations professionals who seek to connect and build valuable professional relationships with them. Our platforms reflect that mentality. [CisionOne](#), our comprehensive suite of solutions, is designed to help modern PR and corporate communications teams navigate the constantly evolving media landscape and empower them with the resources they need to see and be seen, understand and be understood by the audiences who matter most.

To learn more about how to apply the insights and findings from this year's report into your own communications strategy, schedule a consultation with a Cision expert today.



About Cision

Cision is the global leader in consumer and media intelligence, engagement, and communication solutions. We equip PR and corporate communications, marketing, and social media professionals with the tools they need to excel in today's data-driven world. Our deep expertise, exclusive data partnerships, and award-winning brands and products, including [CisionOne](#), [Brandwatch](#), and [PR Newswire](#), enable over 75,000 companies and organisations, including 84% of the Fortune 500, to see and be seen, understand and be understood by the audiences that matter most to them.