

A STUDY BY
MUCK RACK

THE STATE OF PR 2026

About this survey

Company type:

- 56% agencies
- 13% brands
- 14% nonprofits
- 9% consultant
- 2% government

PR team size:

- Solo: 18%
- 2-5: 28%
- 6-10: 16%
- 11-20: 13%
- 20+: 25%

Location:

- 91% U.S.
- 5% Europe
- 2% Canada
- 1% Asia

Primary audience:

- 28% B2B
- 23% B2C
- 44% B2B and B2C

Industry:

- Advertising & Marketing: 26%
- Technology: 12%
- Nonprofit: 11%
- Entertainment & Leisure: 8%
- Education: 7%
- Healthcare & Pharmaceuticals: 6%
- Finance & Financial Services: 5%
- Food & Beverage: 3%
- Retail & Consumer Durables: 3%

Methodology

We surveyed 1,115 PR professionals from May 14 to June 12, 2026.

This survey was designed to provide insights that help improve the workflow of public relations professionals.

Muck Rack distributed the survey primarily via email. We cleaned the results by removing low-effort responses, duplicate entries, spam-generated responses, and any major outliers, leaving us with a total of 971 usable responses.

Because the wording of some questions changed from previous years, direct year-over-year comparisons may not be valid. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding or excluded categories.

Executive summary

- **AI is standard in PR workflows: 80%** of PR pros already use generative AI as part of their work. Meanwhile, **61%** say AI and automation will grow in importance over the next five years, keeping it the industry's top future priority.
- **GEO is emerging, but ownership is still unclear:** Nearly three-quarters (**73%**) of PR pros say Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) is at least somewhat important to their communications strategy. Yet **29%** say no one owns GEO at their organization.
- **Earned media remains difficult to secure: 71%** cite low response rates from journalists as a top challenge, while **61%** point to shrinking media lists in relevant beats. Just **2%** say it hasn't become more difficult to secure earned media.
- **Thought leadership continues to grow:** More than half (**51%**) of PR pros say thought leadership makes up at least a quarter of their job, a 6-point increase from last year.
- **Authority is becoming an AI strategy: 55%** of PR pros say they're securing coverage in high-authority publications to improve visibility in AI-generated responses. Half are also creating more authoritative content and optimizing it for search.
- **LinkedIn continues to lead PR's social strategy: 60%** of PR pros say LinkedIn is the most valuable social platform for their work, far ahead of Instagram at **18%**.



1 PR's role and ● work environment

Media relations remains the center of PR work

Media relations continues to define the PR role, with **84%** of pros saying it makes up at least a quarter of their job. That figure is unchanged from last year, reinforcing its place as the foundation of the profession.

But PR work continues to stretch beyond traditional media outreach. About half of PR pros say thought leadership is a major part of their job, an increase of **6%** compared to last year. **45%** cite media measurement and reporting and **41%** cite content creation.

Which of these constitutes at least 25 percent of your job as a PR professional?

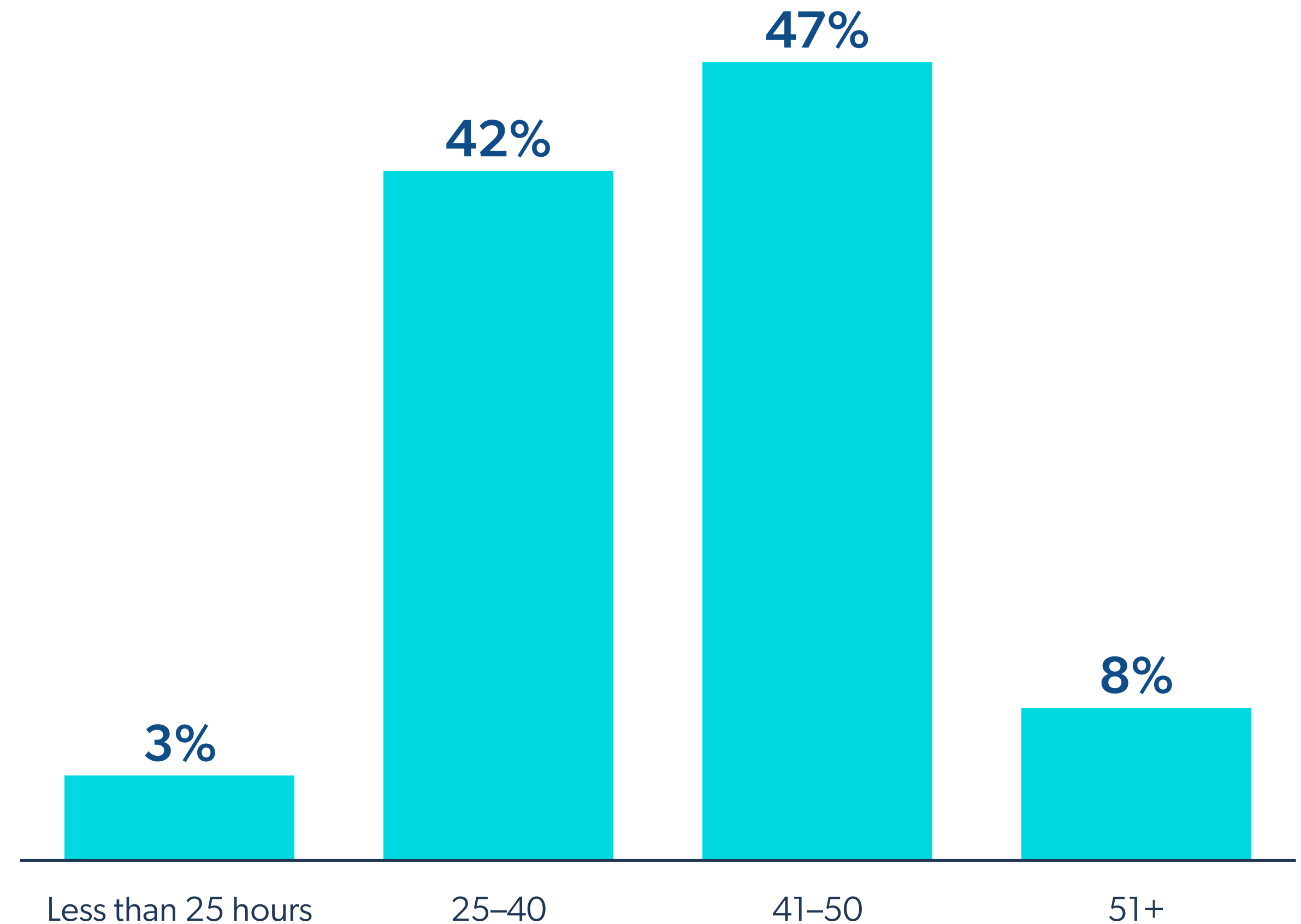


More than half of PR pros work over 40 hours a week

PR work continues to stretch beyond the standard workweek. More than half of PR pros, **55%**, say they worked more than 40 hours last week.

Most of that group worked between 41 and 50 hours, while **8%** reported working 51 or more. Another **42%** worked between 25 and 40 hours, and just **3%** worked fewer than 25 hours.

How many hours did you work last week?

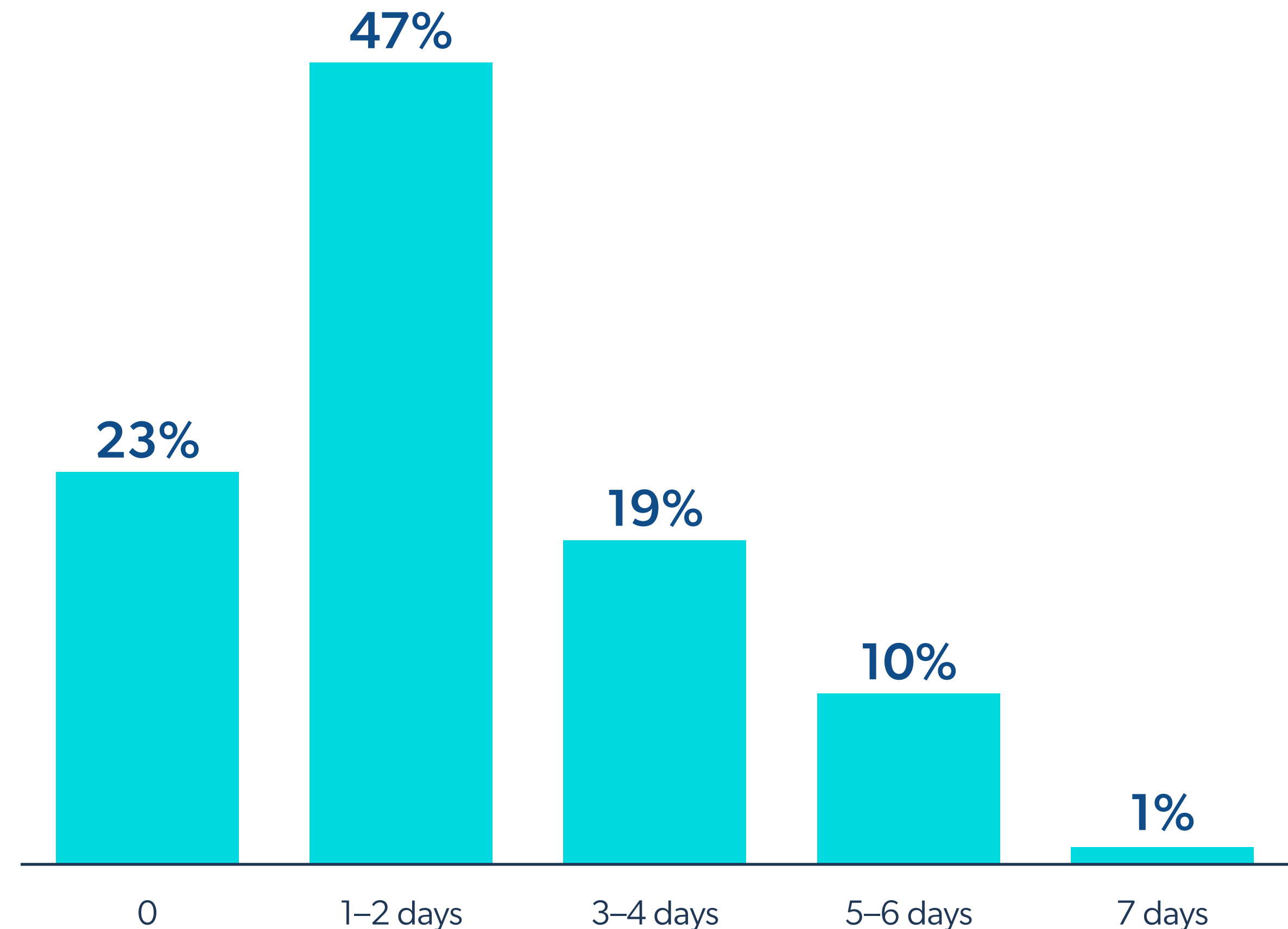


After-hours work remains the norm for PR pros

Most PR pros aren't keeping work contained to regular business hours. More than three-quarters, **77%**, say they worked after hours at least once last week.

For many, that extra work is occasional. Nearly half, **47%**, worked after hours 1–2 days. But for others, it is more frequent: **30%** worked late nights, early mornings or weekends at least 3 days last week.

How many days did you work after hours last week (e.g., late nights, early mornings, weekends)?

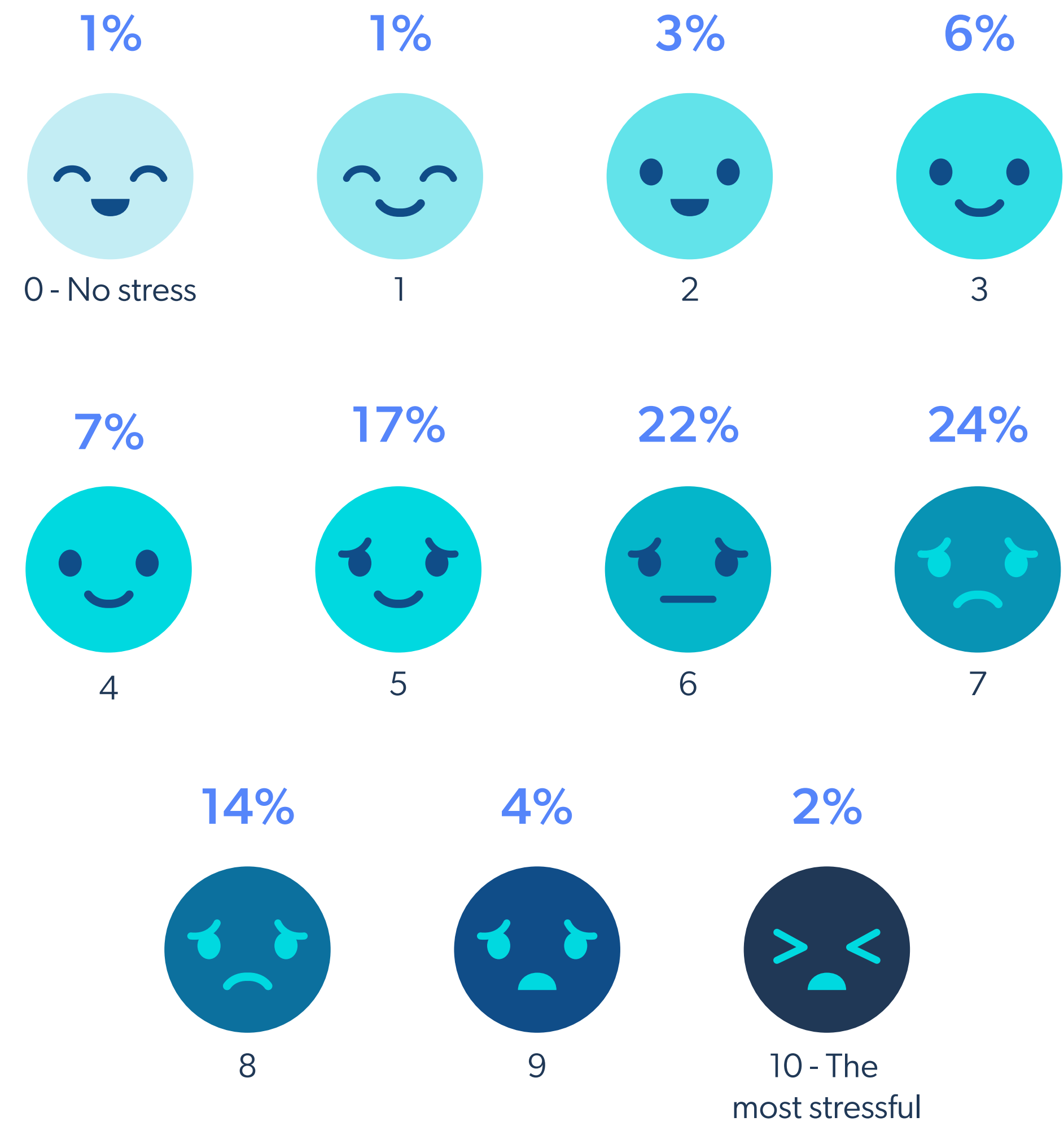


PR pros continue to report high stress

Stress remains a common part of PR work. On a scale from 0 to 10, PR pros were most likely to rate their work stress at a **7**.

Overall, **66%** rated their stress as high, or above five, while just **18%** put their stress below a five. Another **17%** landed directly at the midpoint. The results suggest that even as most PR pros keep up with long hours and after-hours work, many are doing so under sustained pressure.

Over the last two weeks, how would you describe your stress level about work?





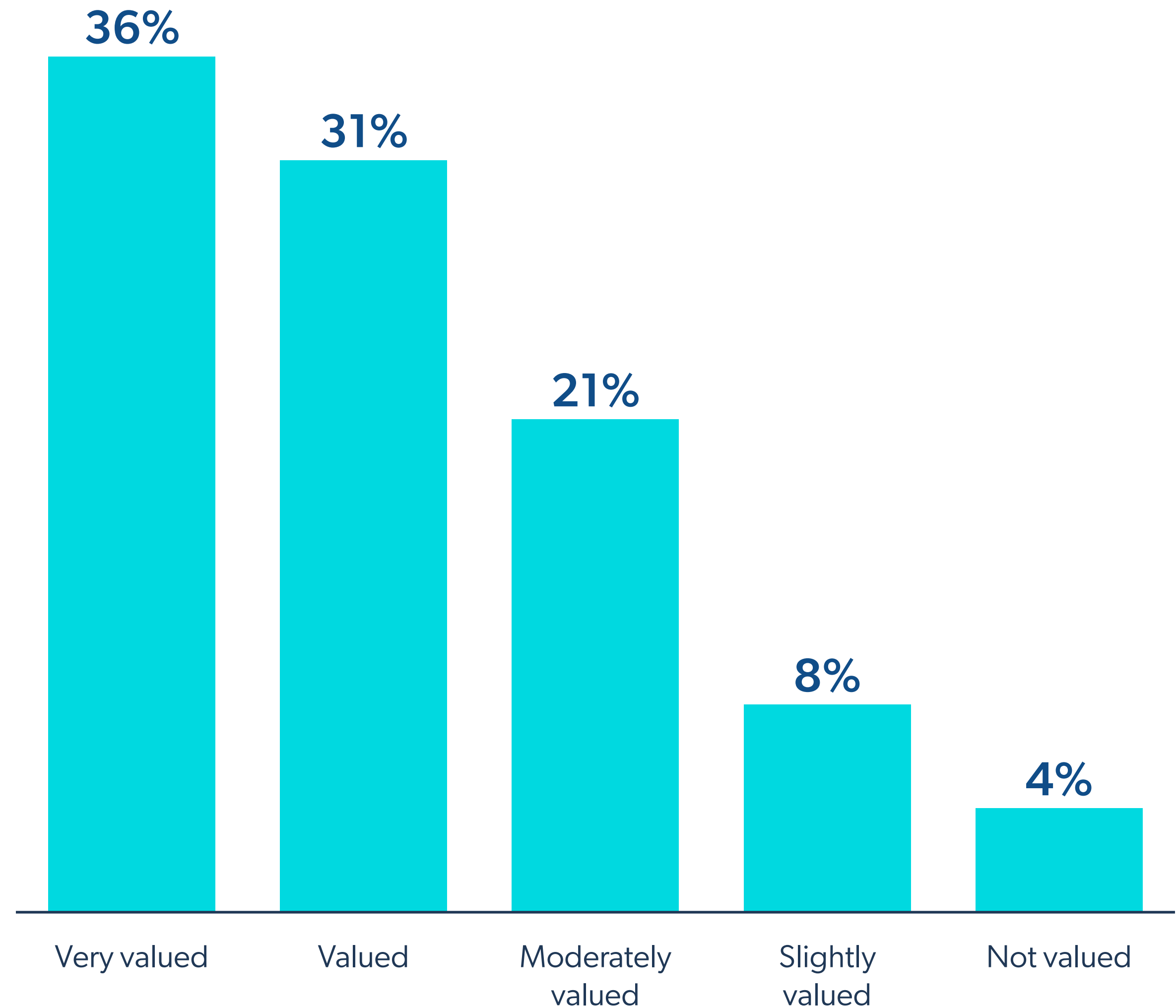
2 Perception ● and alignment

Most PR pros feel valued by leadership

PR pros are generally positive about how leadership views their work. More than two-thirds say the PR and communications function is valued by company leadership, including **36%** who say it is very valued and **31%** who say it is valued.

Still, that leaves a sizable group who are less convinced. **One-third** say PR is only moderately, slightly or not valued by leadership, suggesting many teams still have room to strengthen PR's standing inside the organization.

How valued do you feel the PR/Communications function is by your company's leadership?

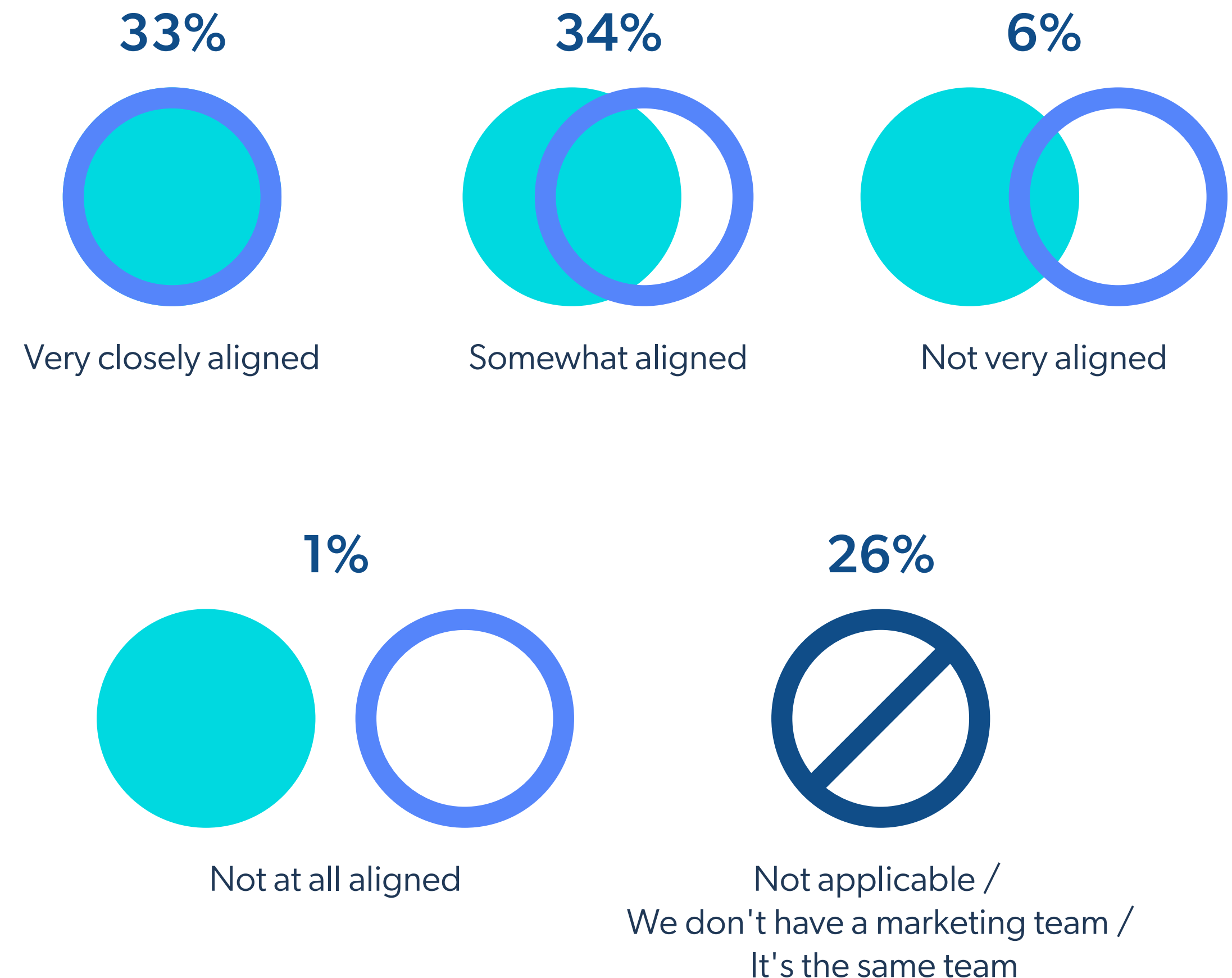


Comms and marketing remain closely connected

Among PR pros overall, **67%** say their communications team is at least somewhat aligned with marketing on strategy and goals. That includes **33%** who say the teams are very closely aligned and **34%** who say they are somewhat aligned.

Only **7%** report low or no alignment. Another **26%** say the question does not apply, either because they do not have a marketing team or because communications and marketing are handled by the same team.

How closely aligned do you feel your communications team is with your marketing team on strategy and goals?



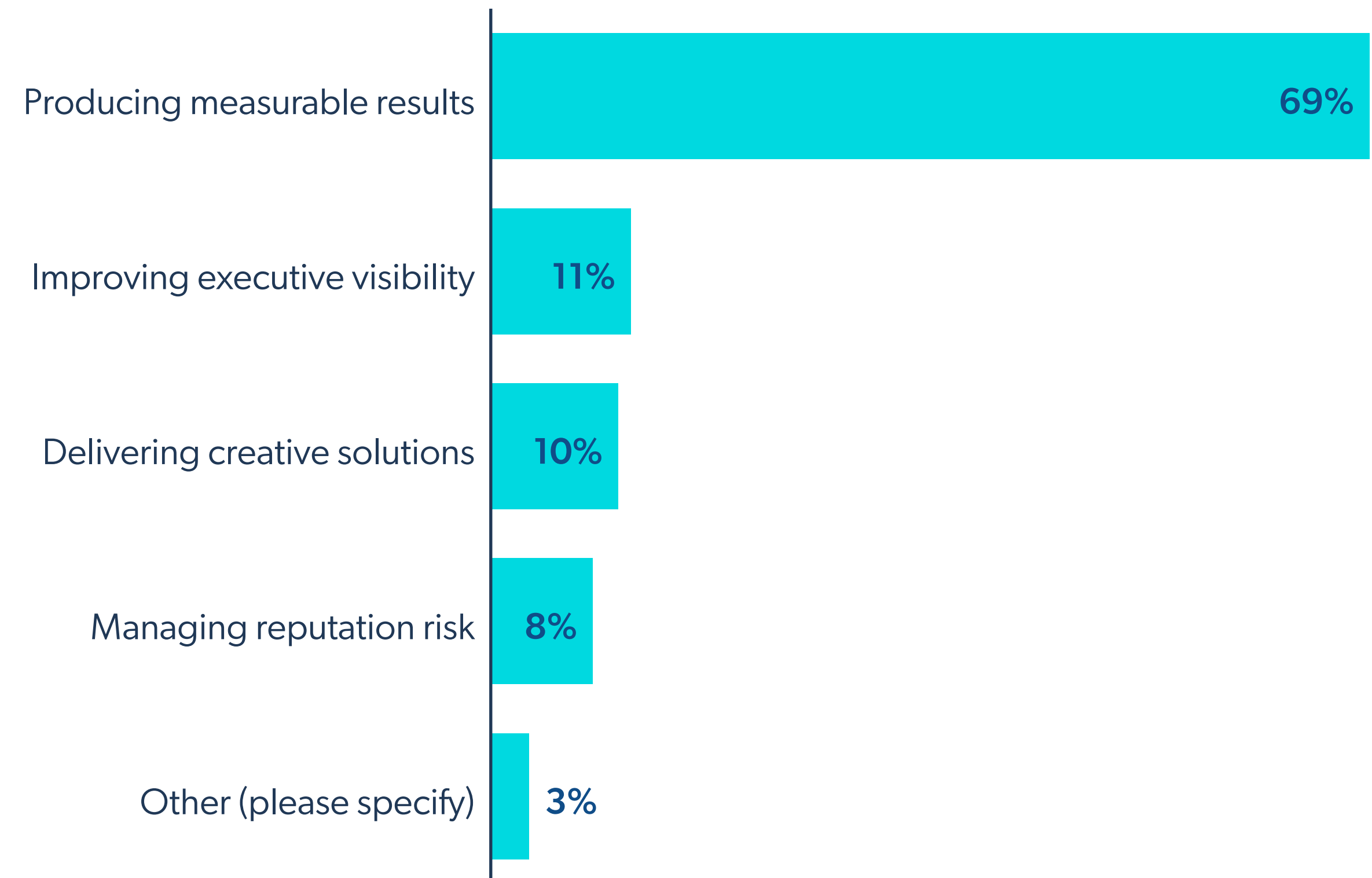
Measurable results remain the clearest path to proving PR's value

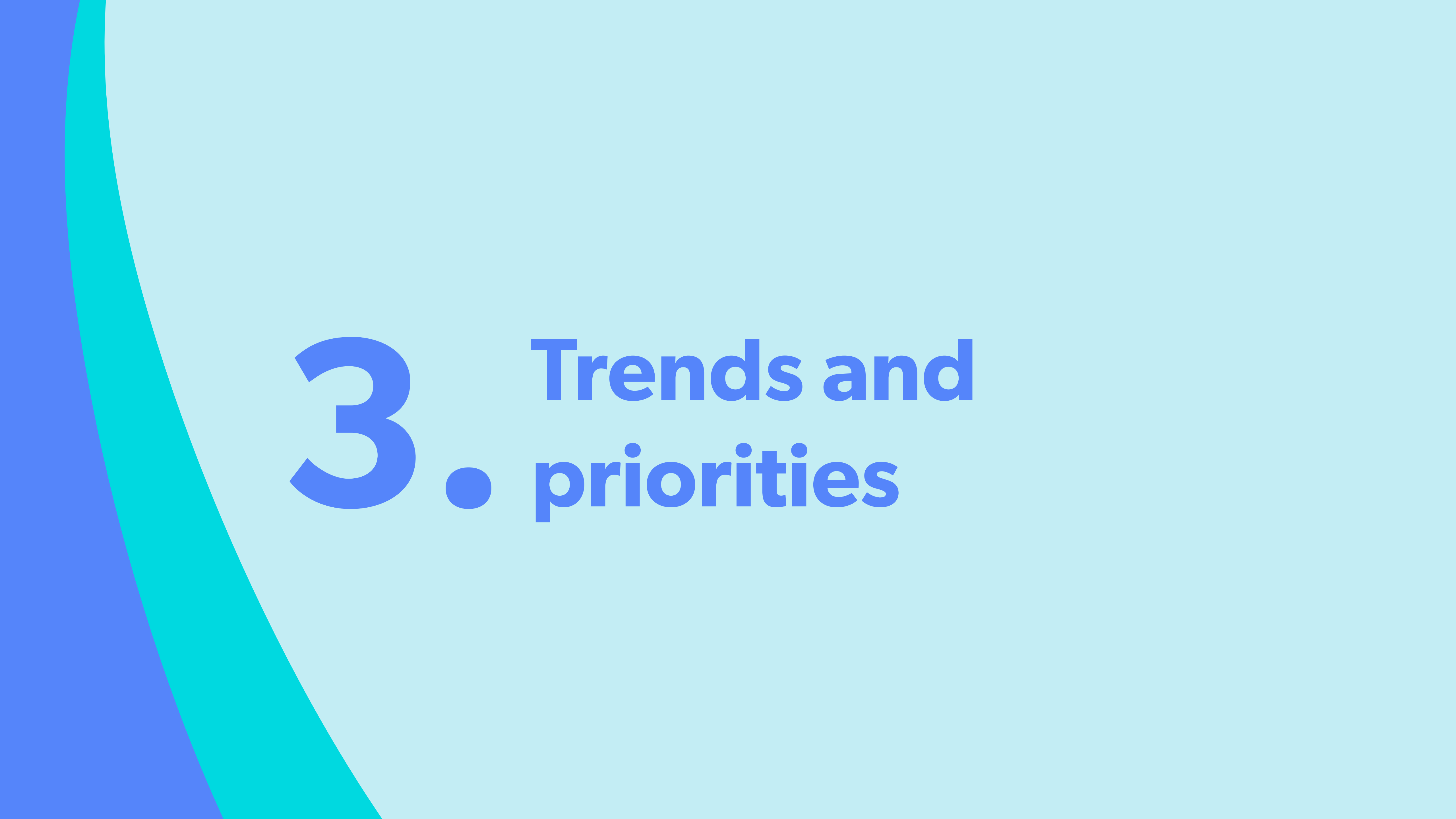
PR pros overwhelmingly agree on the best way to increase the perceived value of their work. More than two-thirds, **69%**, say producing measurable results is the most effective way to show PR's value to company leadership or clients.

Other approaches trail far behind. **11%** point to improving executive visibility, **10%** cite delivering creative solutions and **8%** say managing reputation risk.

The results show that PR teams continue to see measurement as central to earning trust and demonstrating impact.

In your opinion, what's the best way to increase the perceived value of PR to company leadership or clients?





3. Trends and priorities

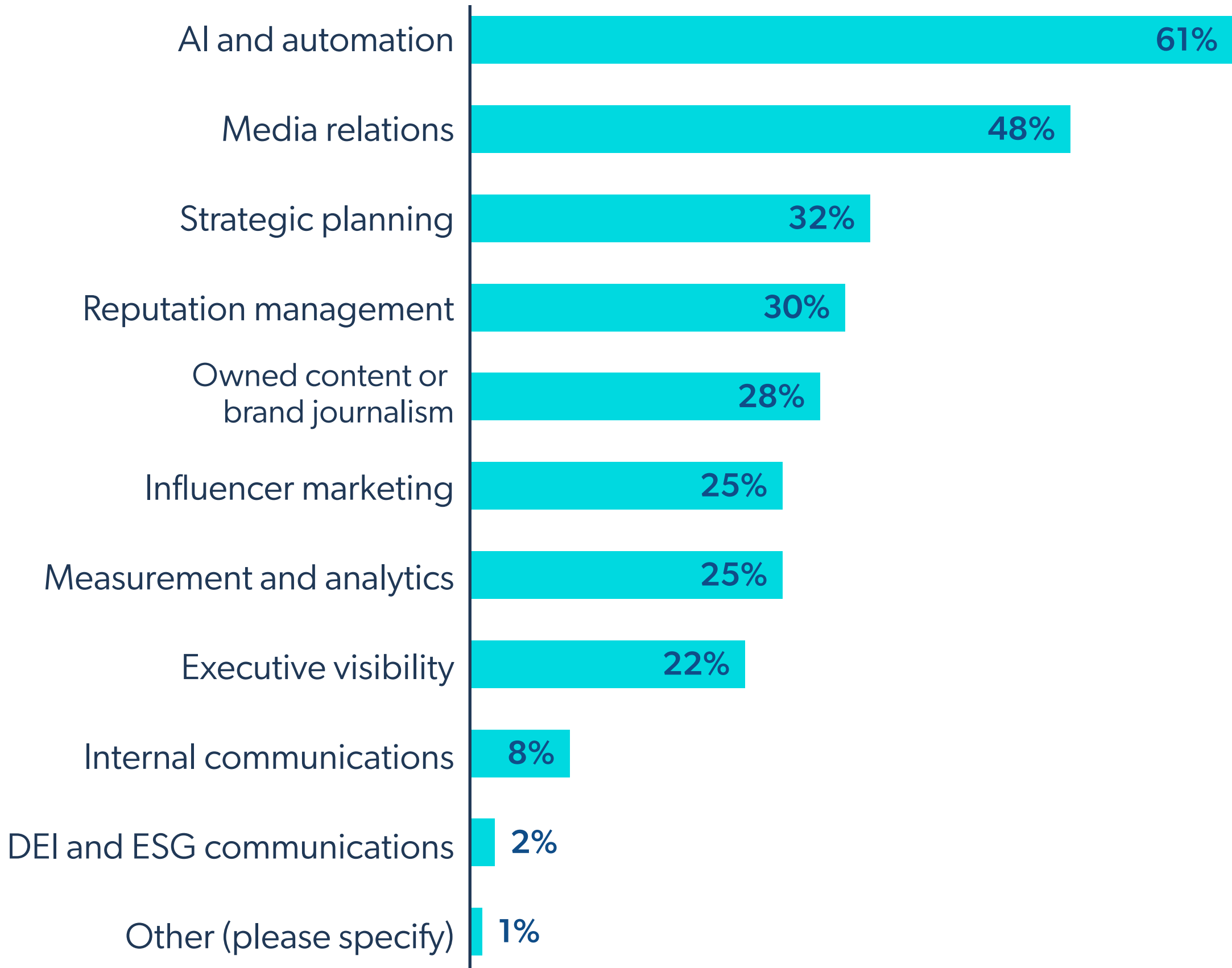
AI leads PR's future priorities, but media relations is gaining ground

AI and automation remain the top area PR pros expect to grow in importance over the next five years, selected by **61%** of respondents.

But traditional PR skills are not fading into the background. Media relations ranked second at **48%**, up from **35%** last year. Strategic planning (**32%**) and reputation management (**30%**) followed, while owned content or brand journalism was selected by **28%**.

The results suggest PR pros are preparing for a future shaped by AI, but still see strong media relationships as central to the work ahead.

Which areas do you expect to grow most in importance over the next 5 years? (select up to 3)



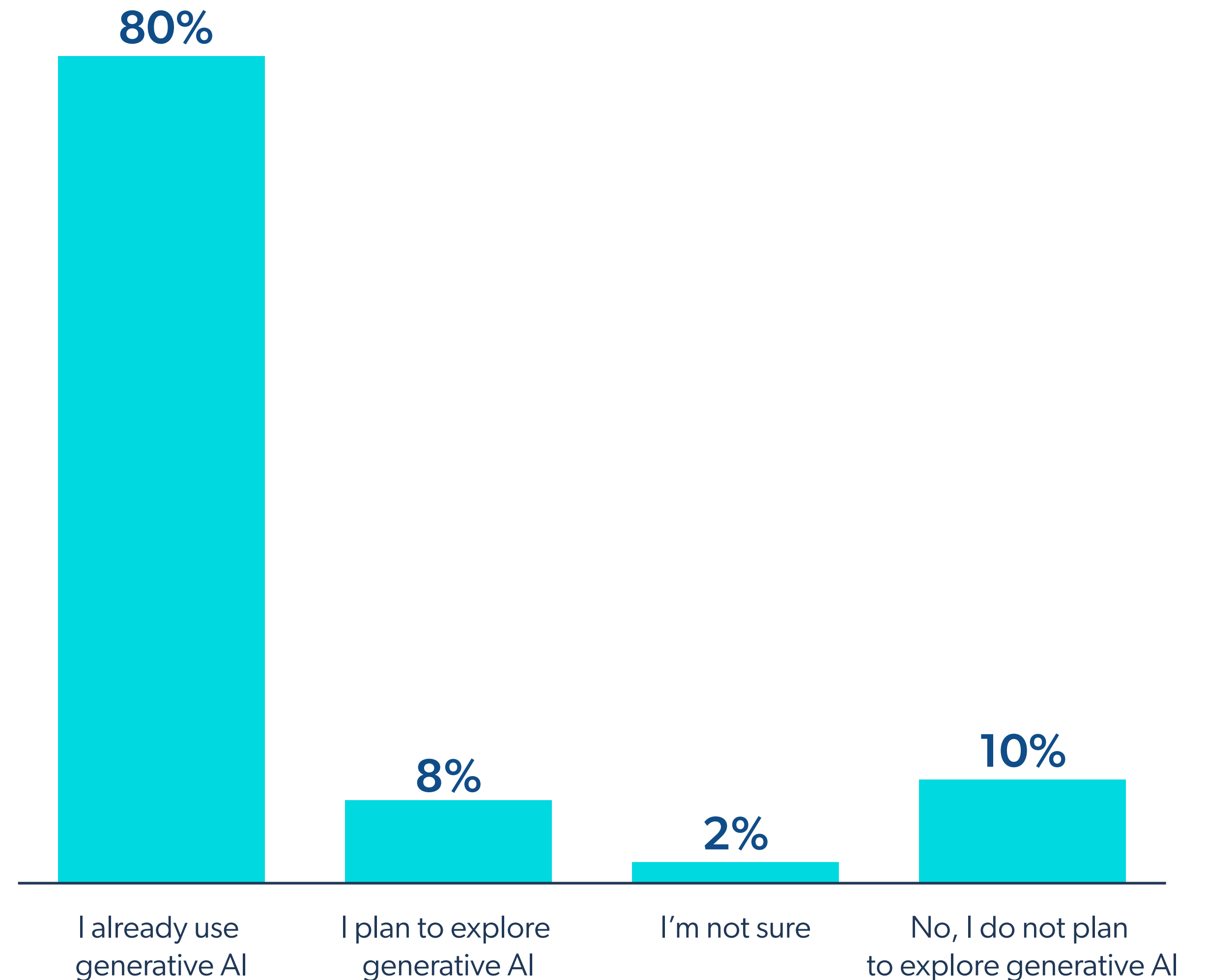
Generative AI is already part of most PR workflows

Generative AI is no longer an emerging tool for most PR pros. **80%** say they already use it in their workflow, up slightly from **77%** last year.

Another **8%** plan to explore generative AI, while **10%** say they do not plan to use it. Just **2%** are unsure.

The results suggest AI adoption is becoming standard across the industry, with only a small share of PR pros still undecided.

Do you use generative AI in your workflow?



Low journalist response rates remain the top earned media challenge

For PR pros, the top three biggest barriers to earned media are still tied to access, same as 2025. **71%** say low response rates from journalists made it harder to secure coverage this year, while **61%** point to smaller or shrinking media lists in relevant beats.

Other challenges were more scattered. **43%** cite increased competition for coverage, while **36%** point to a lack of timely or newsworthy stories and the same share cite shorter media cycles.

Only **2%** say it has not become more difficult to secure earned media this year, suggesting the challenge is nearly universal across the industry.

Which of the following challenges made it more difficult to secure earned media this year?



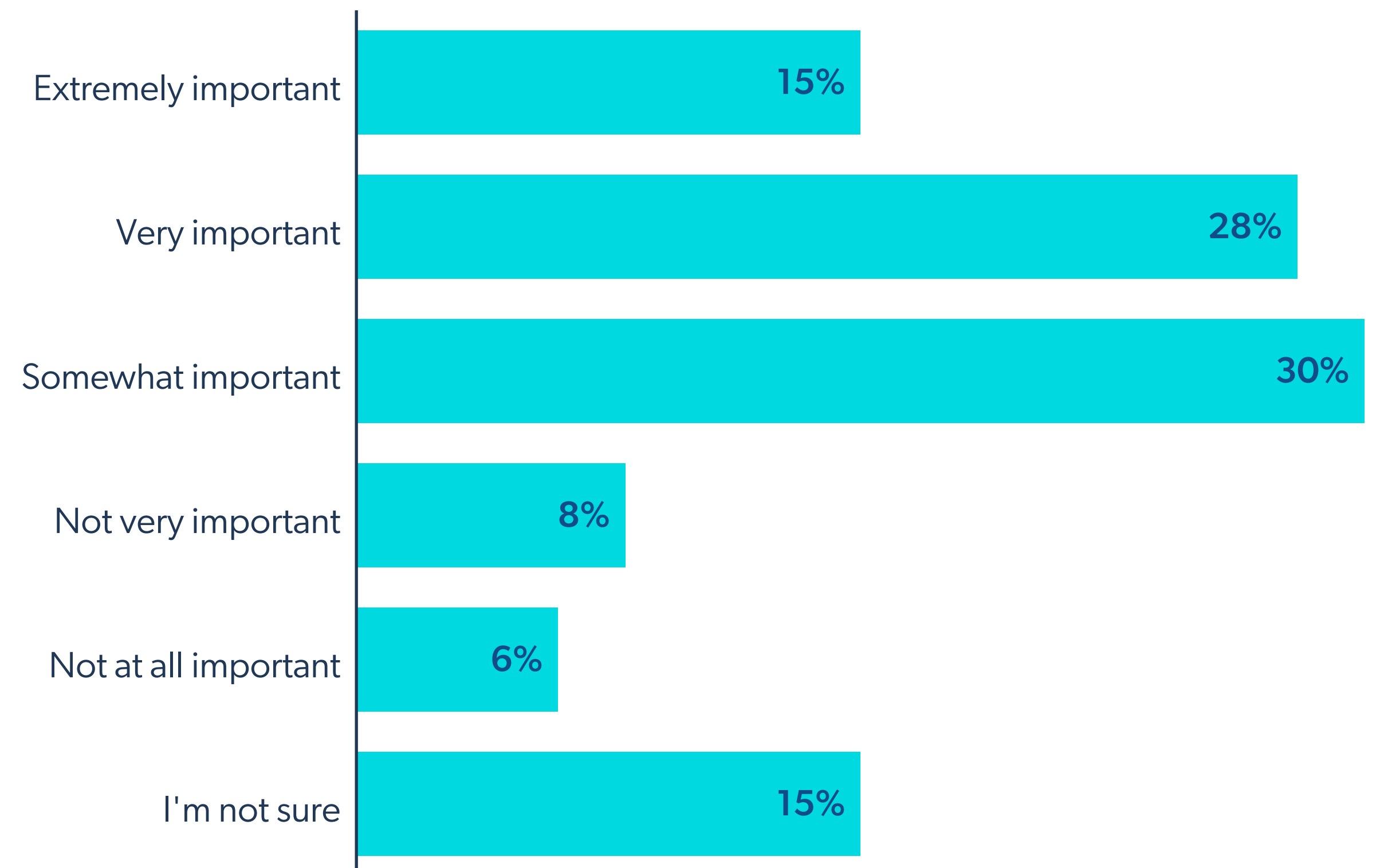
GEO is already entering the PR strategy conversation

Generative Engine Optimization is still an emerging area for PR, but many communications teams are already paying attention to it. Nearly **three-quarters** of PR pros say GEO is at least somewhat important to their PR or communications strategy today.

That includes **15%** who say it is extremely important and **28%** who say it is very important. Another **30%** say it is somewhat important.

Still, the field appears unsettled. **14%** say GEO is not very or not at all important, while **15%** are unsure, suggesting many teams are still determining what role it should play in their strategy.

How important is GEO to your PR or communications strategy today?



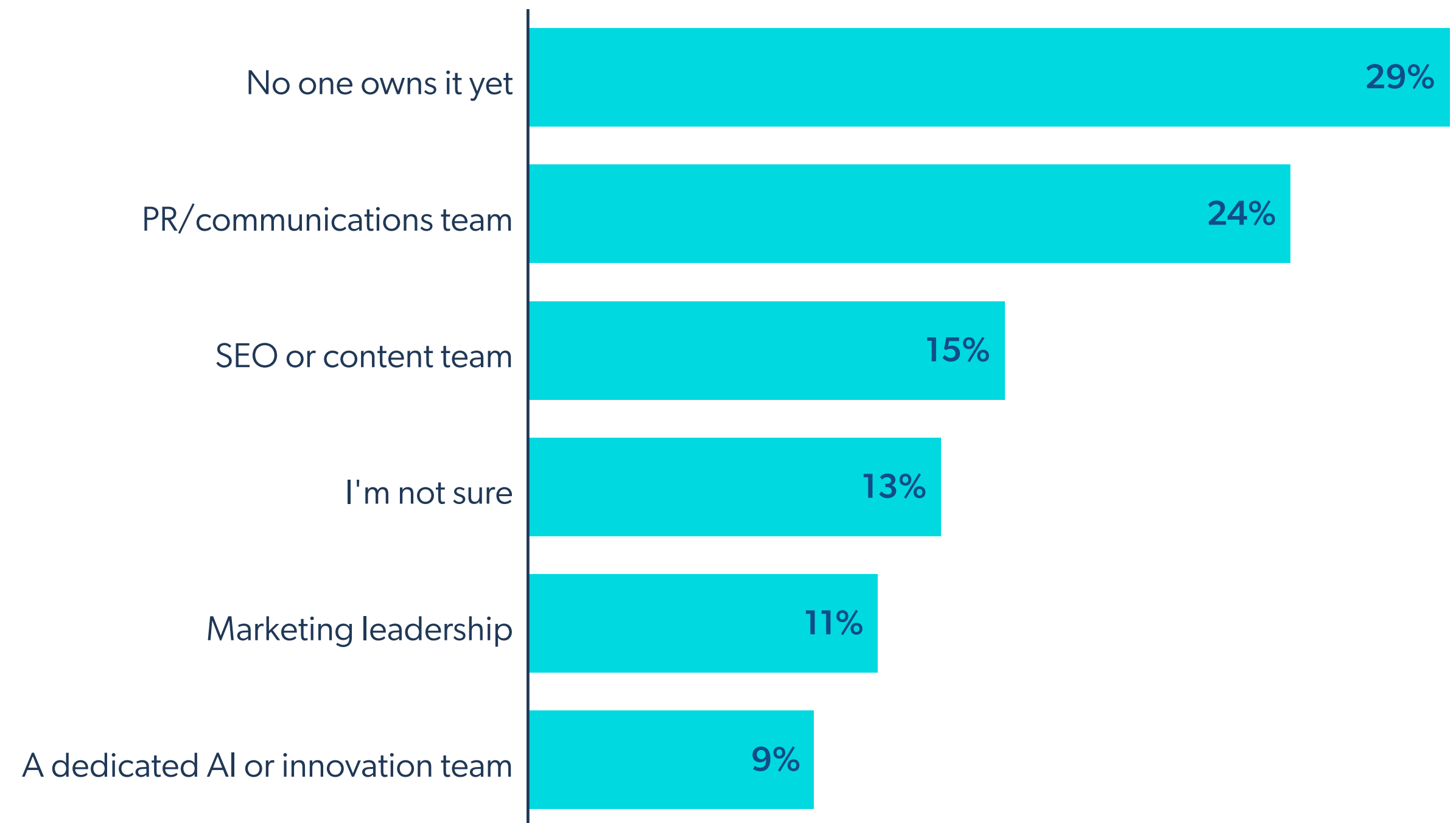
GEO ownership is still taking shape

While many PR pros say GEO matters to their strategy, ownership remains unsettled. The largest group, **29%**, say no one owns GEO yet at their organization, while another **13%** are not sure who is responsible.

PR and communications teams are the most commonly named owner, selected by **24%** of respondents. Others say GEO belongs to SEO or content teams (**15%**), marketing leadership (**11%**) or a dedicated AI or innovation team (**9%**).

The results suggest GEO is becoming relevant before many organizations have clearly decided where it belongs.

Who is primarily responsible for GEO at your organization?



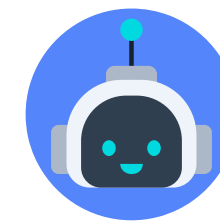
AI visibility is pushing PR teams toward authority-building tactics

PR pros are using a mix of content, search and media relations tactics to improve visibility in AI-generated responses.

The most common tactic is securing coverage in high-authority publications, selected by **55%** of respondents. Half say they are creating more authoritative or data-driven content, and the same share are optimizing content for search.

Many teams are also adapting how content is structured. **44%** say they are making content easier for AI tools to parse, such as by using clear answers or FAQs.

Still, GEO remains early for some teams. **16%** say they are not using any specific tactics yet, while **8%** are unsure.



Which of the following tactics are you using to improve visibility in AI-generated responses?

- 55%** Securing coverage in high-authority publications
- 50%** Creating more authoritative or data-driven content
- 50%** Optimizing content for search (SEO)
- 44%** Structuring content for easier AI parsing (e.g., clear answers, FAQs)
- 29%** Monitoring AI tools for brand mentions or citations
- 16%** We are not using any specific tactics yet
- 8%** I'm not sure
- 2%** Other

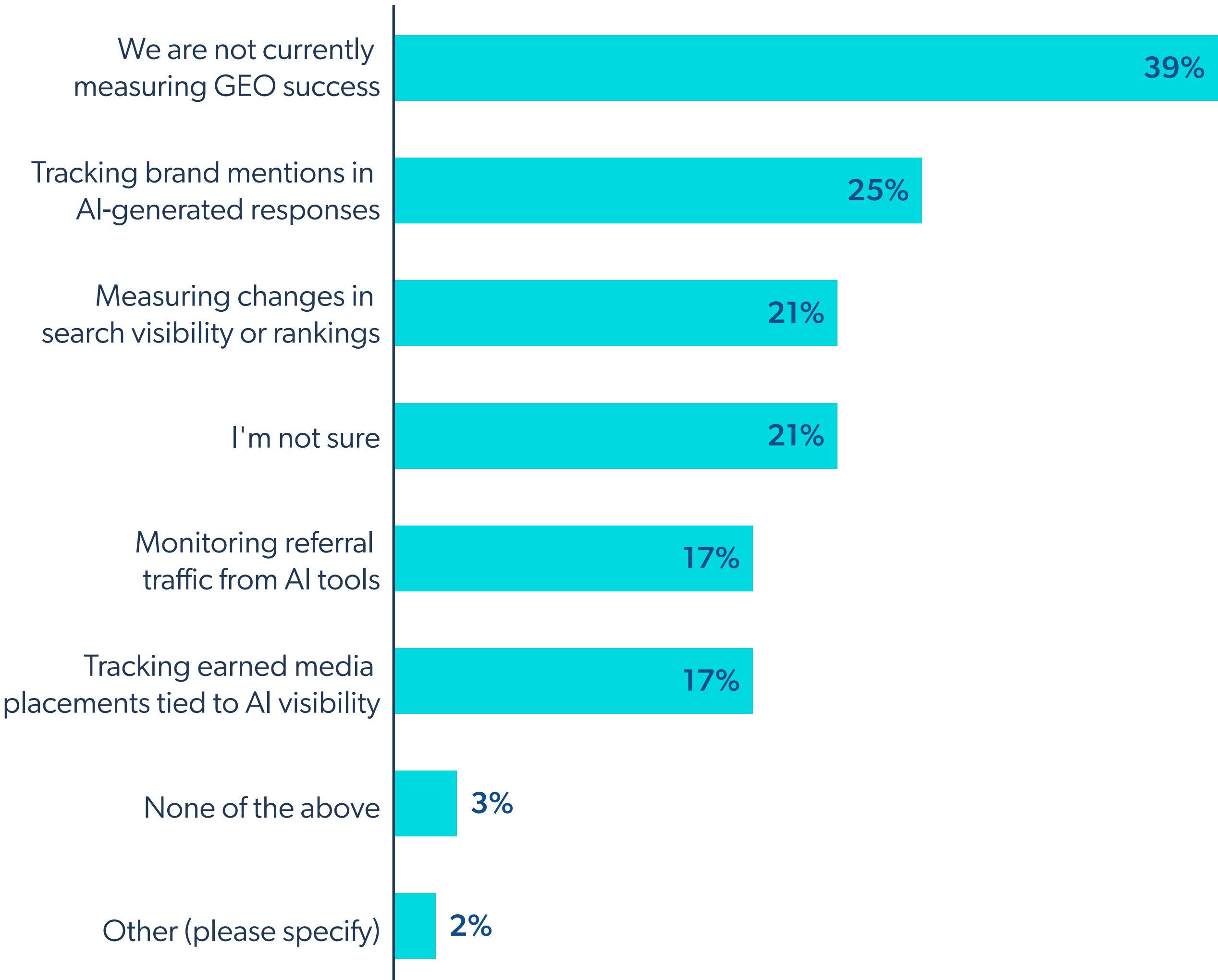
GEO measurement is still catching up

Even as PR teams experiment with GEO tactics, many have not yet figured out how to measure success. **39%** say they are not currently measuring GEO, making it the most common response.

Among those tracking GEO in some way, the most common approach is monitoring brand mentions in AI-generated responses, selected by **25%** of respondents. Others are measuring changes in search visibility or rankings (**21%**), monitoring referral traffic from AI tools (**17%**) or tracking earned media placements tied to AI visibility (**17%**).

Another **21%** are not sure how GEO success is being measured, underscoring how early this area remains for many PR teams.

How are you measuring success related to GEO today?





4 Pitching and ● media relations

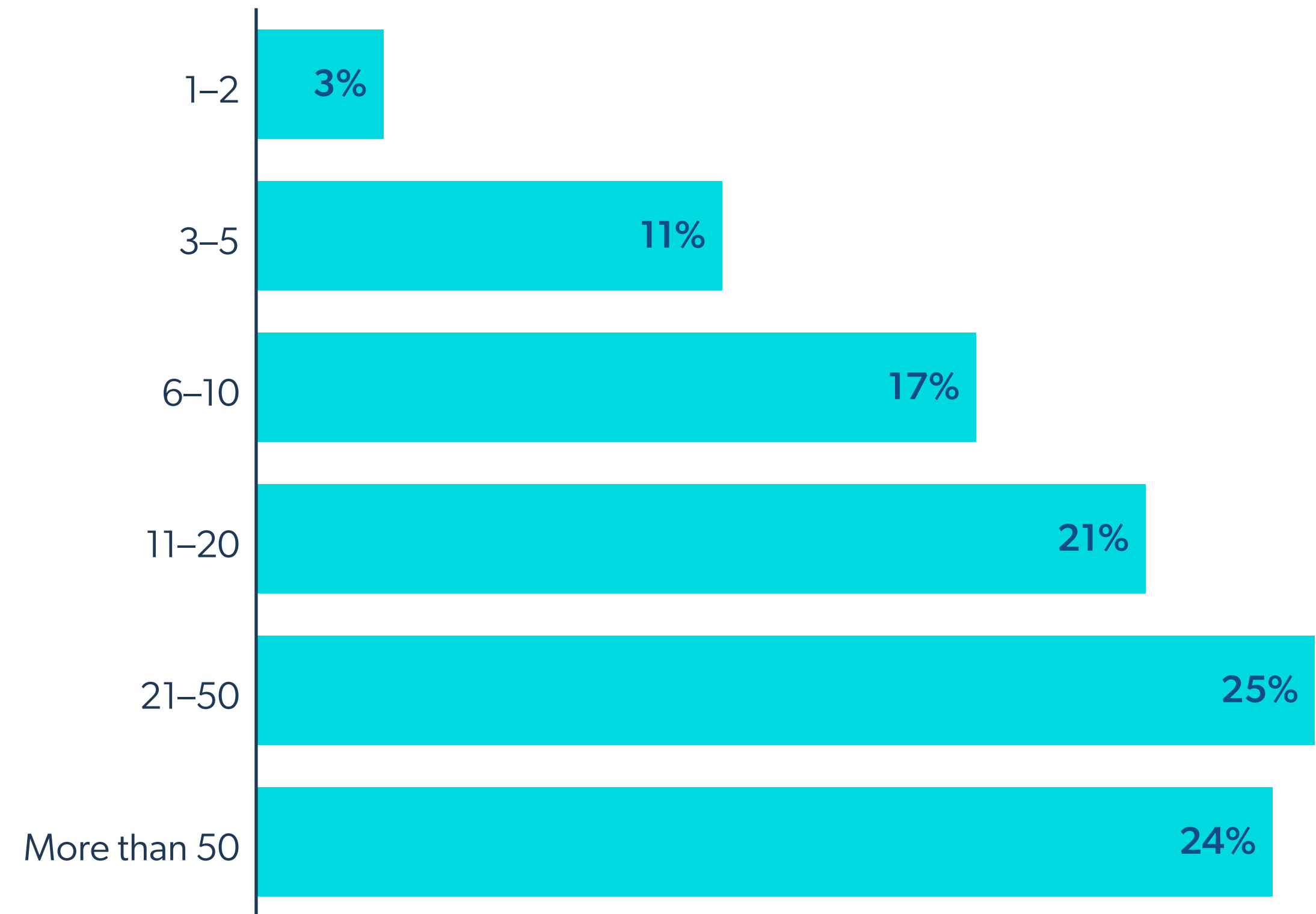
Nearly half of PR pros pitch more than 20 journalists at once

Pitching is still often a wide-net strategy. Nearly half of PR pros, **49%**, say they pitch more than 20 journalists per campaign or announcement.

That includes **25%** who pitch 21–50 journalists and **24%** who pitch more than 50. Smaller pitch lists are less common: **31%** pitch between 6 and 20 journalists, while just **14%** pitch 5 or fewer.

The results show that, even as PR pros face lower response rates and shrinking media lists, many are still reaching out to large groups of journalists to secure coverage.

On average, how many journalists do you pitch per campaign or announcement?



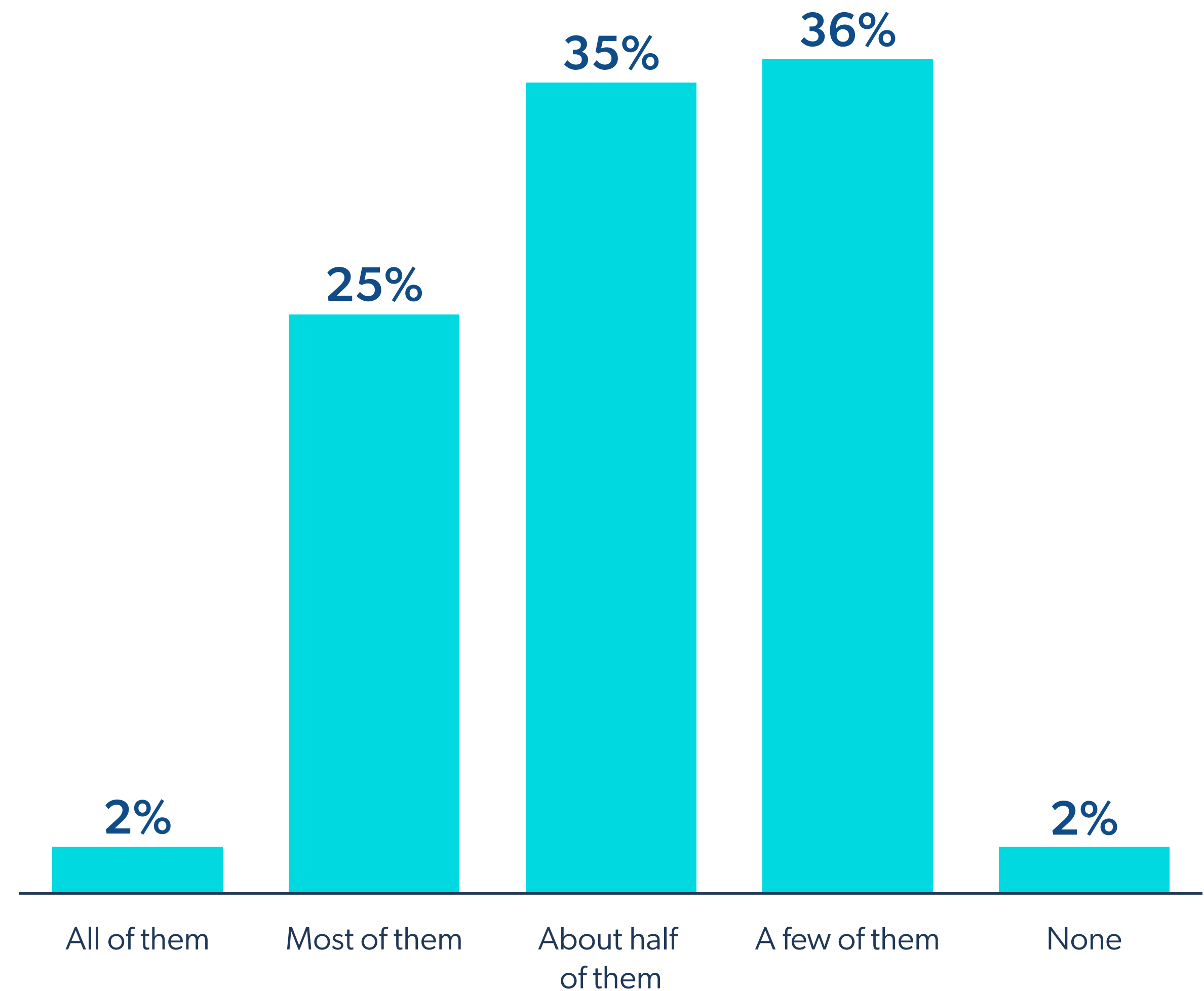
Most PR pros pitch a mix of familiar and less familiar reporters

PR pros are not pitching entirely cold, but they are not usually pitching only close contacts either. The largest shares say they have worked with a few of the reporters they pitch (**36%**) or about half of them (**35%**).

Only **27%** say they have worked with most or all of the reporters they pitch. At the other end, just **2%** say they have not worked with any of them before.

Compared to last year, fewer PR pros say they have worked with most or all of the reporters they pitch, down from **31%** in 2025.

Generally, out of the reporters that you pitch, about how many have worked with before?



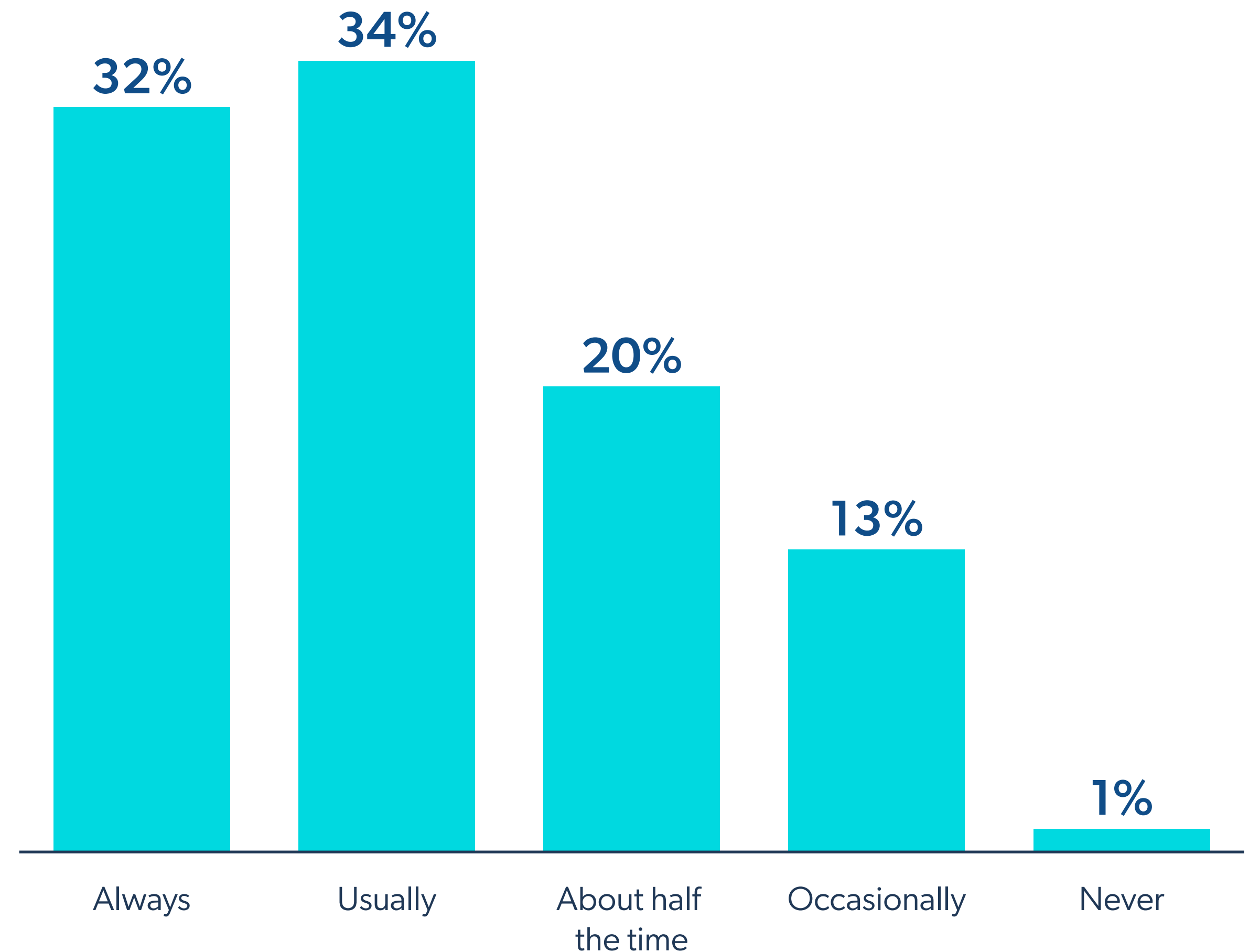
Two-thirds of PR pros usually or always personalize their pitches

Most PR pros say personalization is a regular part of their pitching process. **66%** say they usually or always personalize their pitches, including **32%** who always do and **34%** who usually do.

Another **20%** personalize about half the time, while **13%** do so occasionally. Just **1%** say they never personalize their pitches.

The share who usually or always personalize is down slightly from **70%** last year.

How often do you personalize your pitches?



Most personalized pitches only change a few sentences

Among PR pros who personalize their pitches, most say the changes are limited. **73%** say they change a few sentences to make the pitch relevant to the journalist.

A smaller share go further. **15%** say they tailor every part of the pitch, while **11%** personalize only the greeting.

The share who tailor every part of the pitch is up slightly from **11%** last year.

If you personalize your pitches, how in-depth are those personalizations?



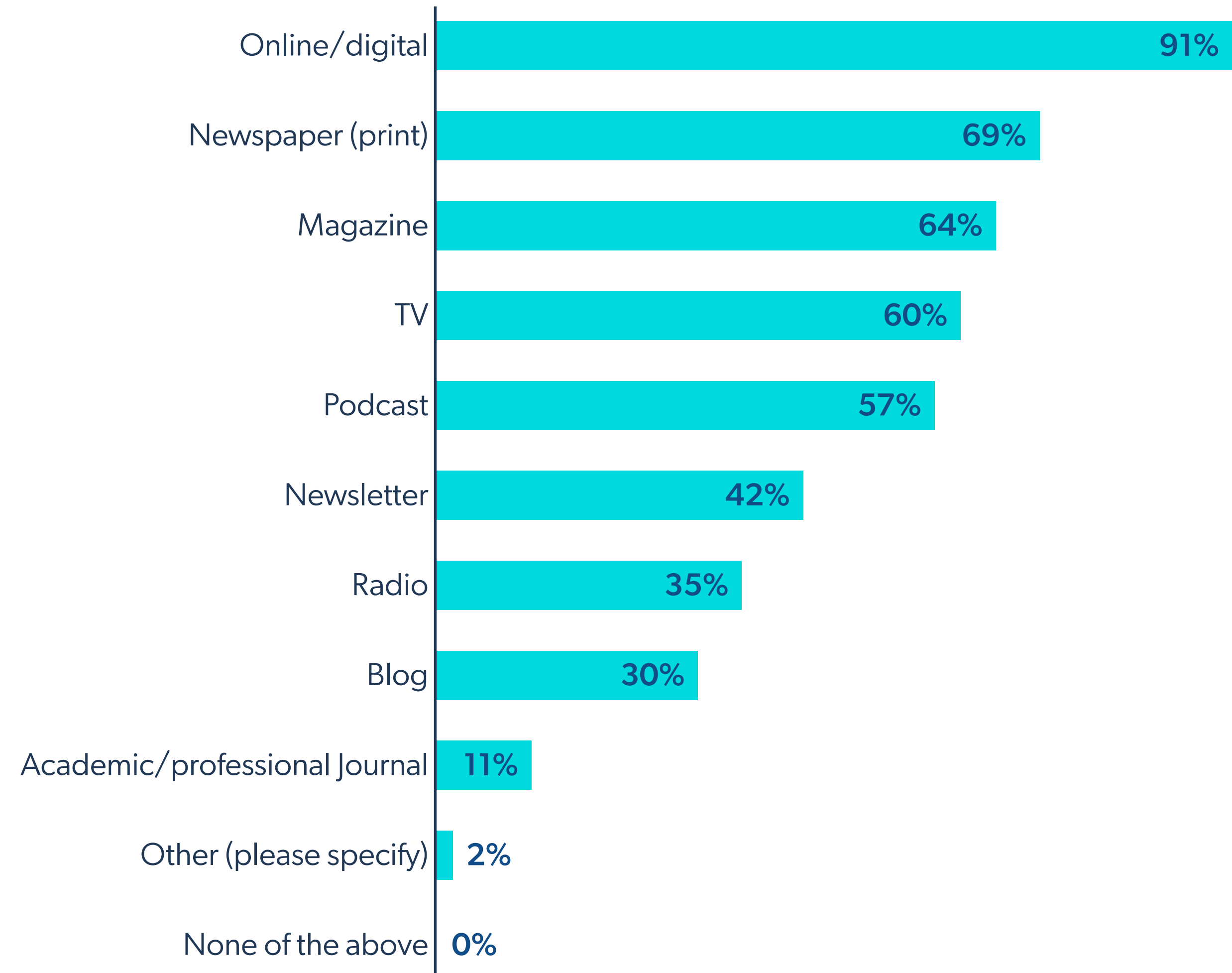
Online media remains the most common pitching target

Online and digital outlets continue to be the most commonly pitched media type, selected by **91%** of PR pros.

Traditional formats still receive significant outreach. **69%** commonly pitch newspapers, **64%** pitch magazines and **60%** pitch TV. Podcasts are also a common target, selected by **57%** of respondents.

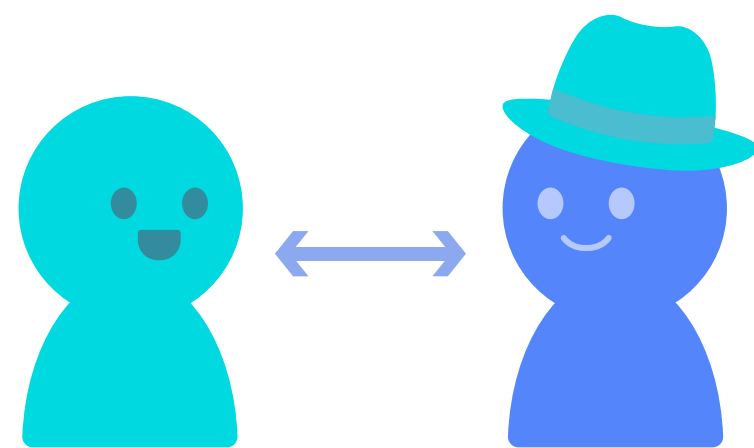
Other formats are less common, including newsletters (**42%**), radio (**35%**), blogs (**30%**) and academic or professional journals (**11%**).

Which types of media do you commonly pitch?

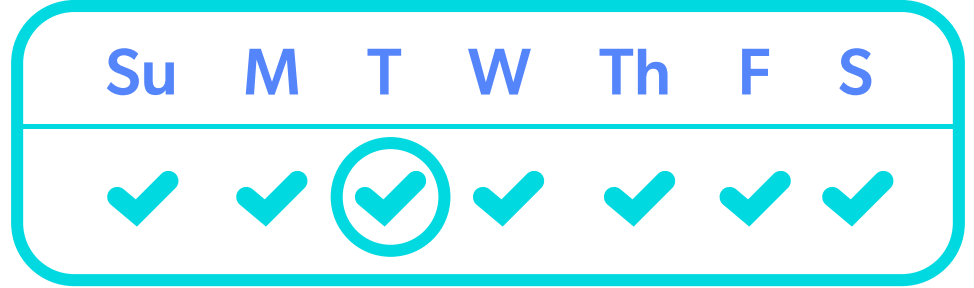


HOW TO PITCH

According to five years of surveys



Almost **70%** prefer to pitch via 1:1 emails



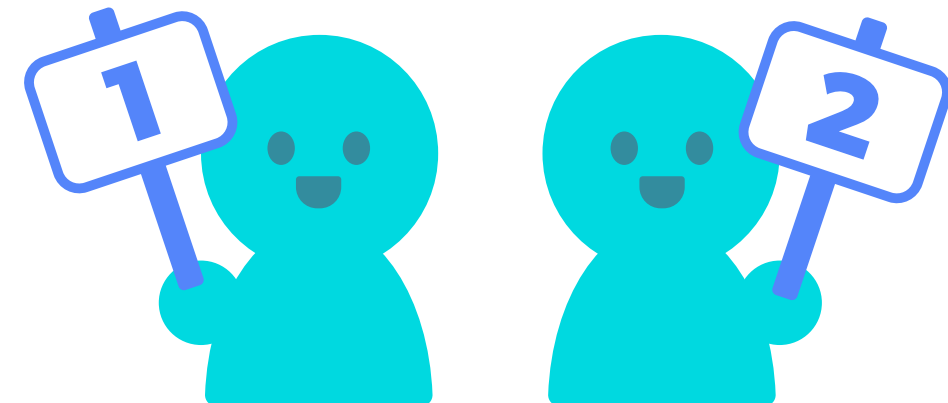
51% prefer to pitch on Tuesday



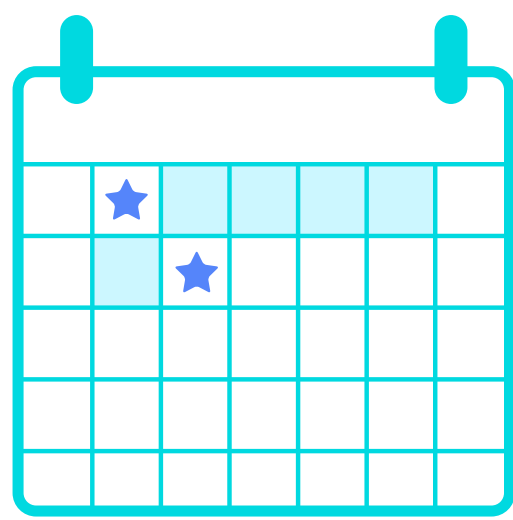
80% prefer to pitch before noon



87% keep their pitches under 300 words



PR pros are split when it comes to follow-ups: **41%** say one is acceptable, **40%** say two



54% send their first follow up 3–6 days later



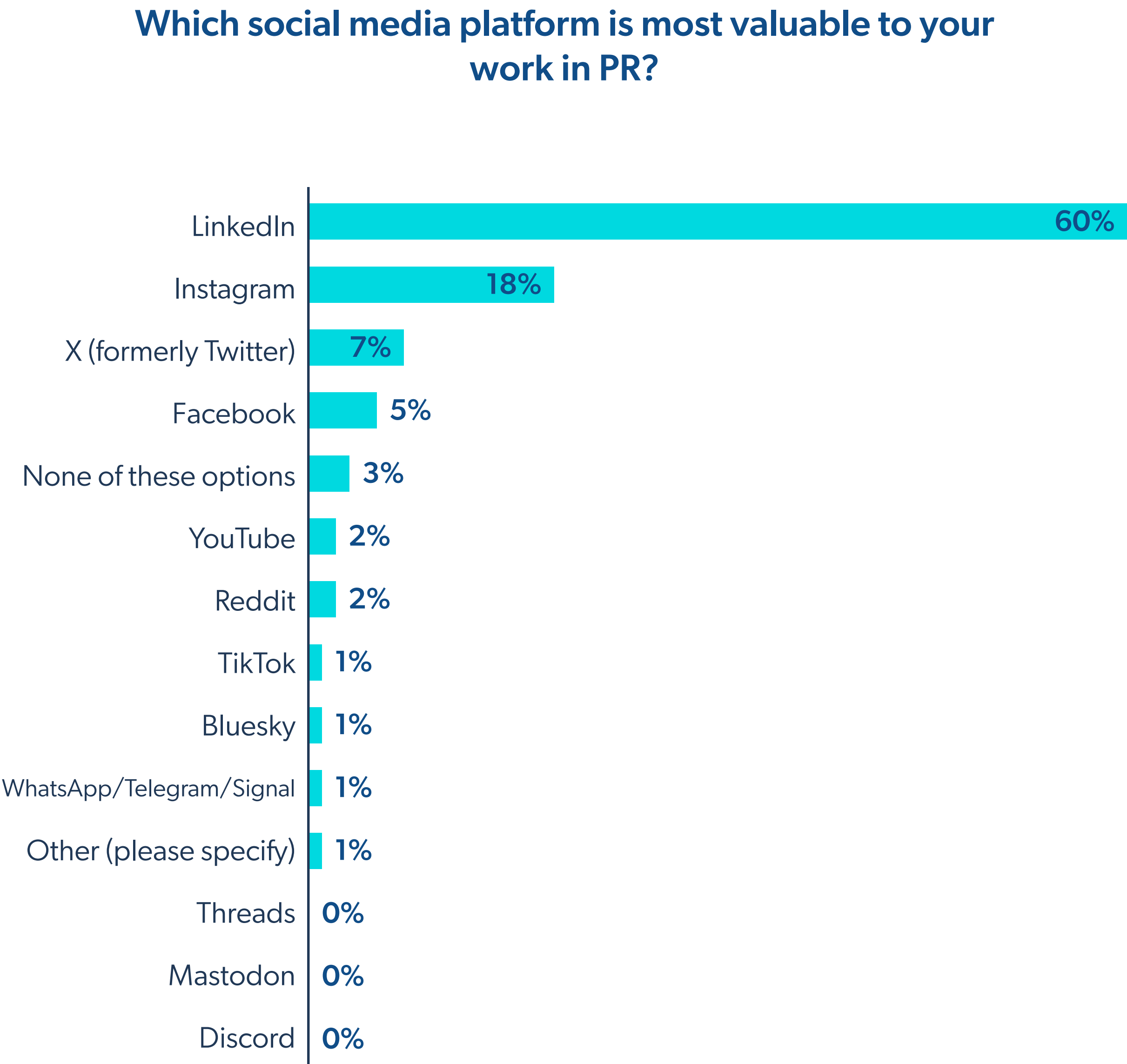
5. Social media usage

LinkedIn is still the most valuable social platform for PR pros

LinkedIn remains the clear leader among social platforms for PR work. **60%** of PR pros say it is the most valuable platform to their work, far ahead of Instagram at **18%**.

X continues to rank lower, with **7%** selecting it as their most valuable platform. Facebook follows at **5%**, while every other platform was selected by **3%** or less.

Compared to last year, LinkedIn gained ground while X declined.



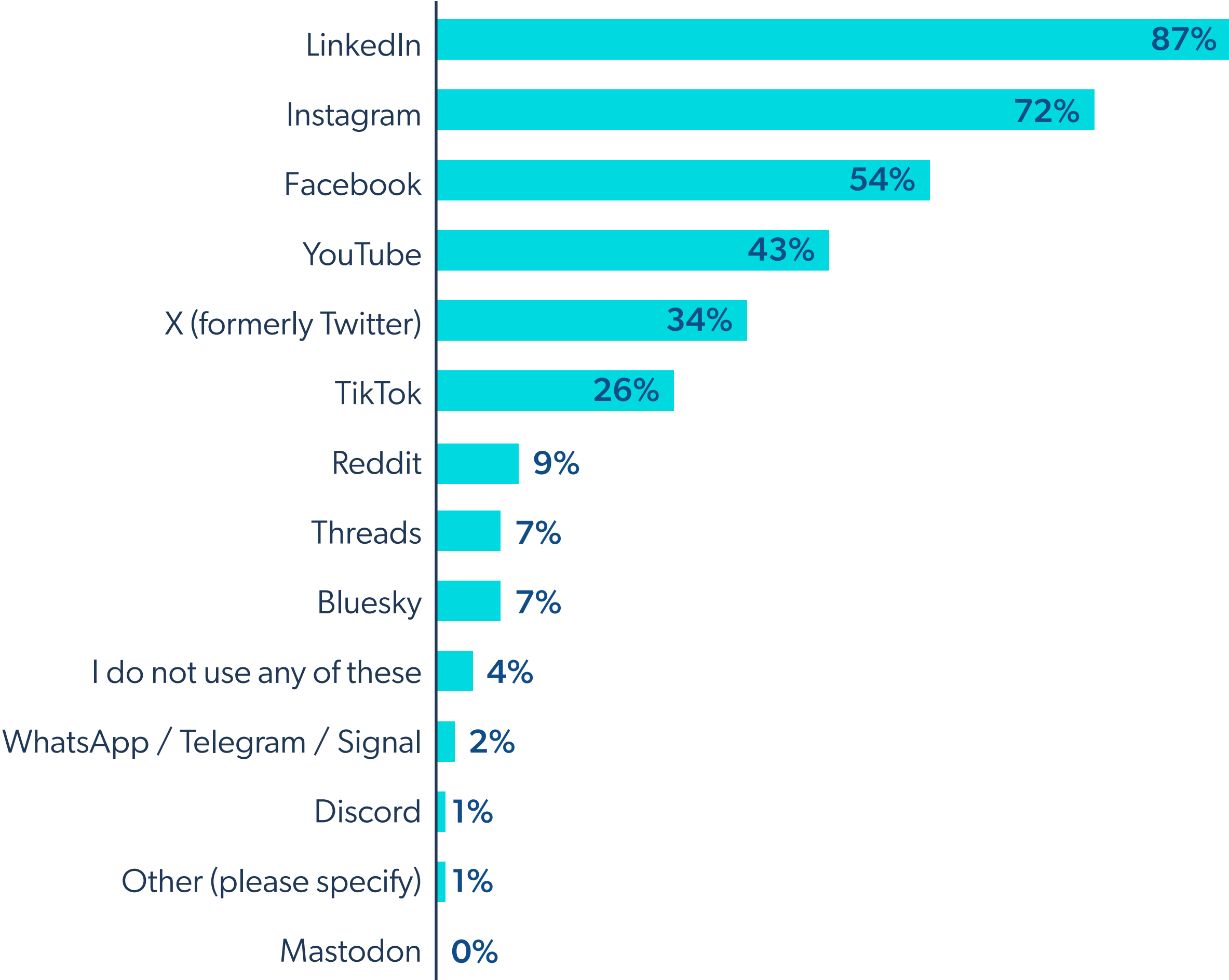
LinkedIn and Instagram lead PR social media strategies

LinkedIn remains the most common social platform in PR and communications strategies, selected by **87%** of PR pros. Instagram follows at **72%**.

Facebook (**54%**), YouTube (**43%**) and X (**34%**) are also part of many company strategies. TikTok was selected by **26%** of respondents.

Emerging or more niche platforms are less common, with Reddit at **9%**, Bluesky at **7%** and Threads at **7%**.

Which of the following social platforms are part of your company's social media and communications strategy?



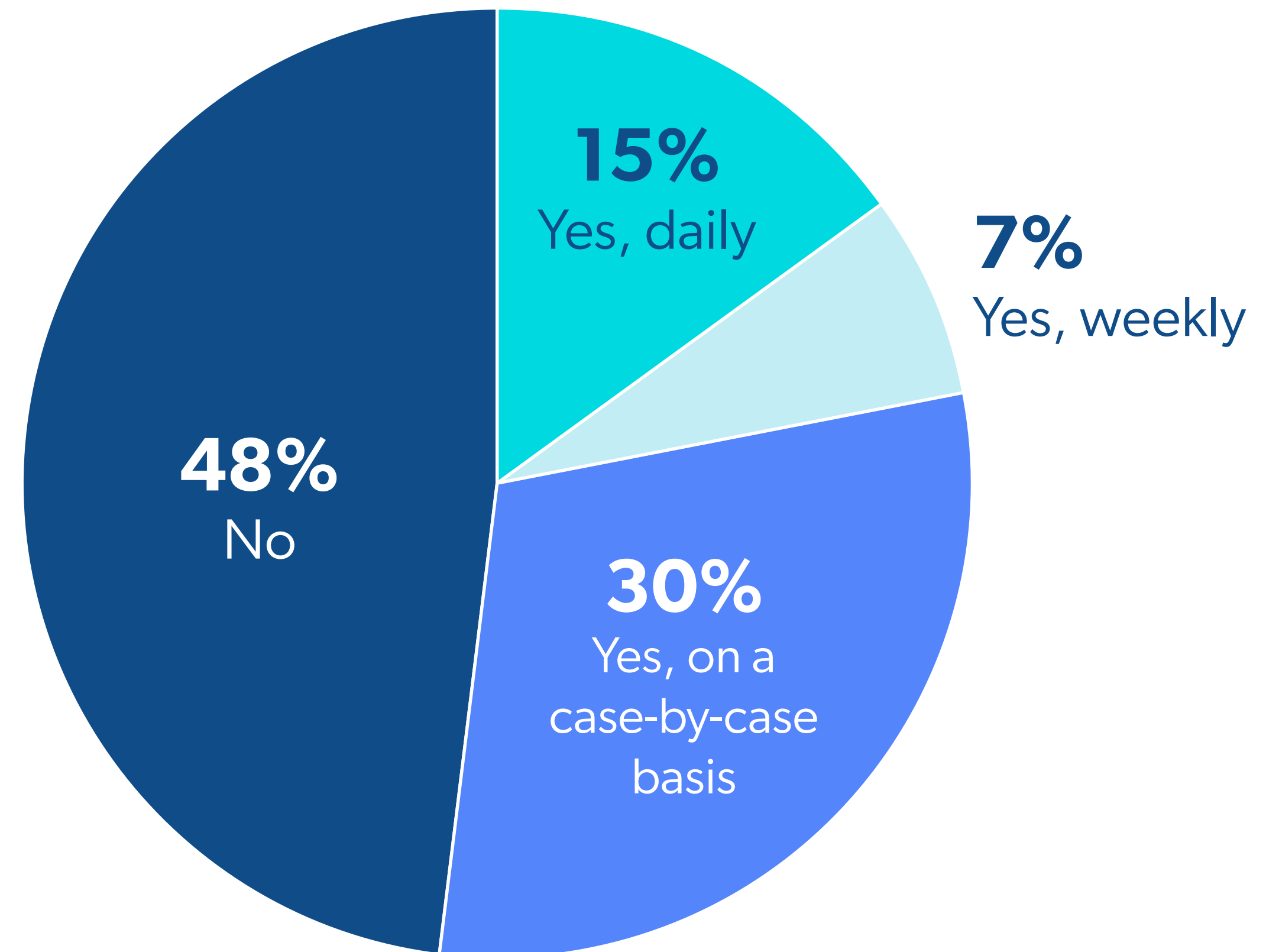
About half of PR pros use social listening tools

Social listening tool use is nearly evenly split. **52%** of PR pros say they use social listening tools at least occasionally, while **48%** say they do not use them.

The most common use case is occasional. **30%** say they use social listening tools on a case-by-case basis, compared to **15%** who use them daily and **7%** who use them weekly.

Compared to last year, the share of PR pros who do not use social listening tools fell from **53%** to **48%**.

Do you use social listening tools?



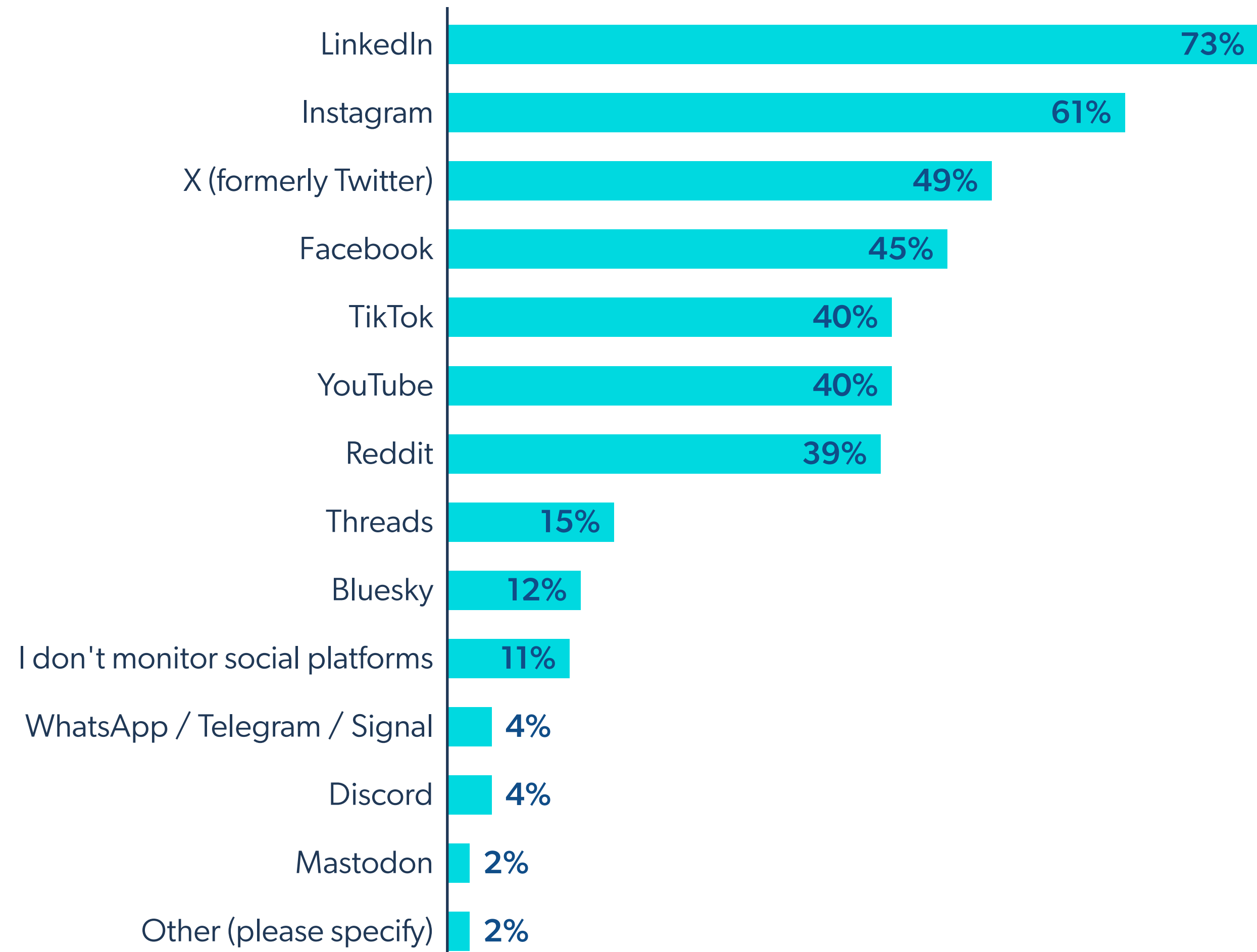
PR pros most want to monitor LinkedIn, Instagram and X

LinkedIn is the platform PR pros most want to monitor, selected by **73%** of respondents. Instagram follows at **61%**, while X ranks third at **49%**.

Several other platforms also draw significant interest. **45%** want to monitor Facebook, **40%** want to monitor YouTube and **40%** want to monitor TikTok. Reddit follows closely at **39%**.

Less common monitoring priorities include Threads (**15%**), Bluesky (**12%**), Discord (**4%**) and WhatsApp, Telegram or Signal (**4%**). **11%** say they do not monitor social platforms.

Which social platforms do you want to monitor?



MUCK RACK

Thank you!

Muck Rack is the leading provider of AI-powered PR software built for how brands and agencies work. The only platform powered by intuitive, AI technology and the most accurate, comprehensive data provided by journalists themselves, Muck Rack combines media database, monitoring and reporting for seamless team collaboration, pitching and measurement.

Learn more

muckrack.com