

A STUDY BY
MUCK RACK

STATE OF JOURNALISM

2026

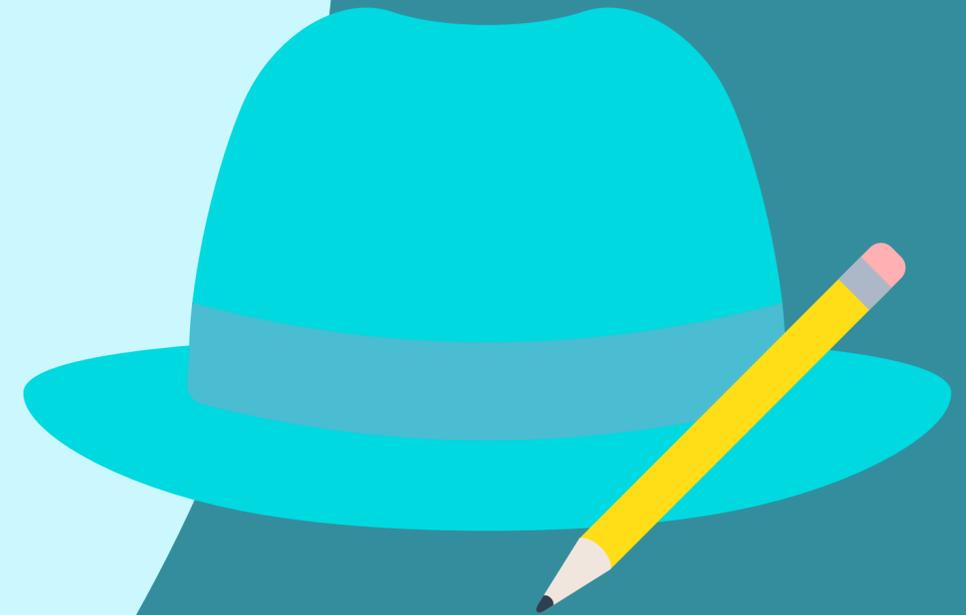


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Executive summary

- Disinformation and lack of funding tie as top threats at **32%**, while concern about unchecked AI rises to **26%**, up 8 points.
- AI adoption reaches **82%**, with ChatGPT use climbing to **47%** and Gemini jumping to **22%**.
- Reliance on social media for reporting falls to **21%**, down 12 points since 2024, though **45%** still rely on it for promotion.
- **86%** say PR pitches inspire at least some stories, yet **88%** delete pitches that miss their beat.
- LinkedIn is the most trusted platform at **58%**, while TikTok distrust rises to **61%** and Bluesky momentum drops 14 points.

How journalists work

HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

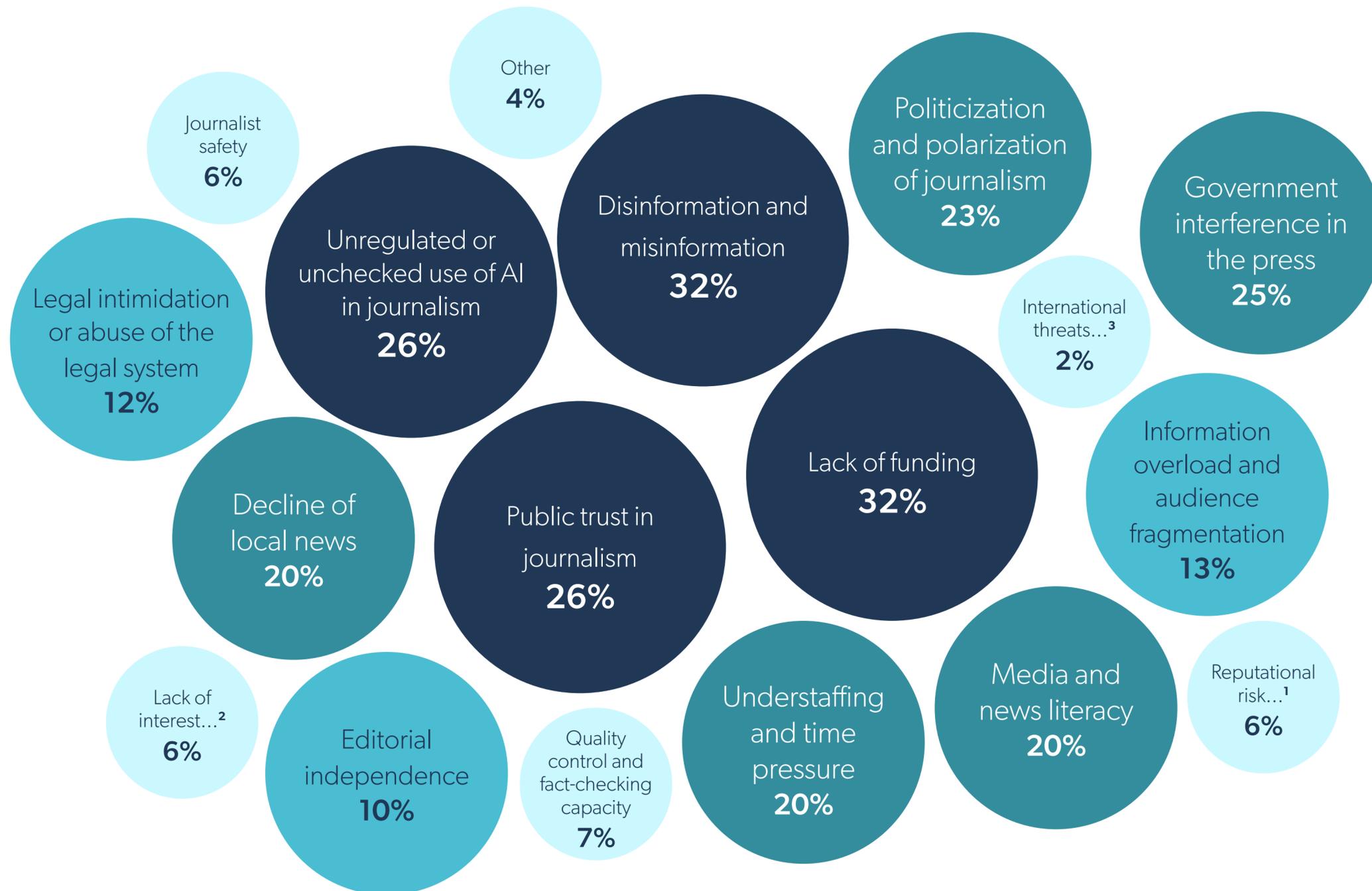
AI concerns surge to 26%, as funding and disinformation lead at 32%

Disinformation and lack of funding remain the top concerns, each cited by **32%** of journalists. But the biggest shift this year is AI.

Concern about unchecked AI use jumped from **18%** in 2025 to **26%**, an 8 percentage-point increase, putting it level with public trust at **26%**.

Meanwhile, concern about disinformation dipped from **36%** to **32%**, suggesting the threat landscape is widening rather than consolidating around a single issue.

What issues facing journalists are most concerning to you? (choose your top three)



1. Reputational risk from commercial pressures

2. Lack of interest in journalism among students and early-career workers

3. International threats to press freedom

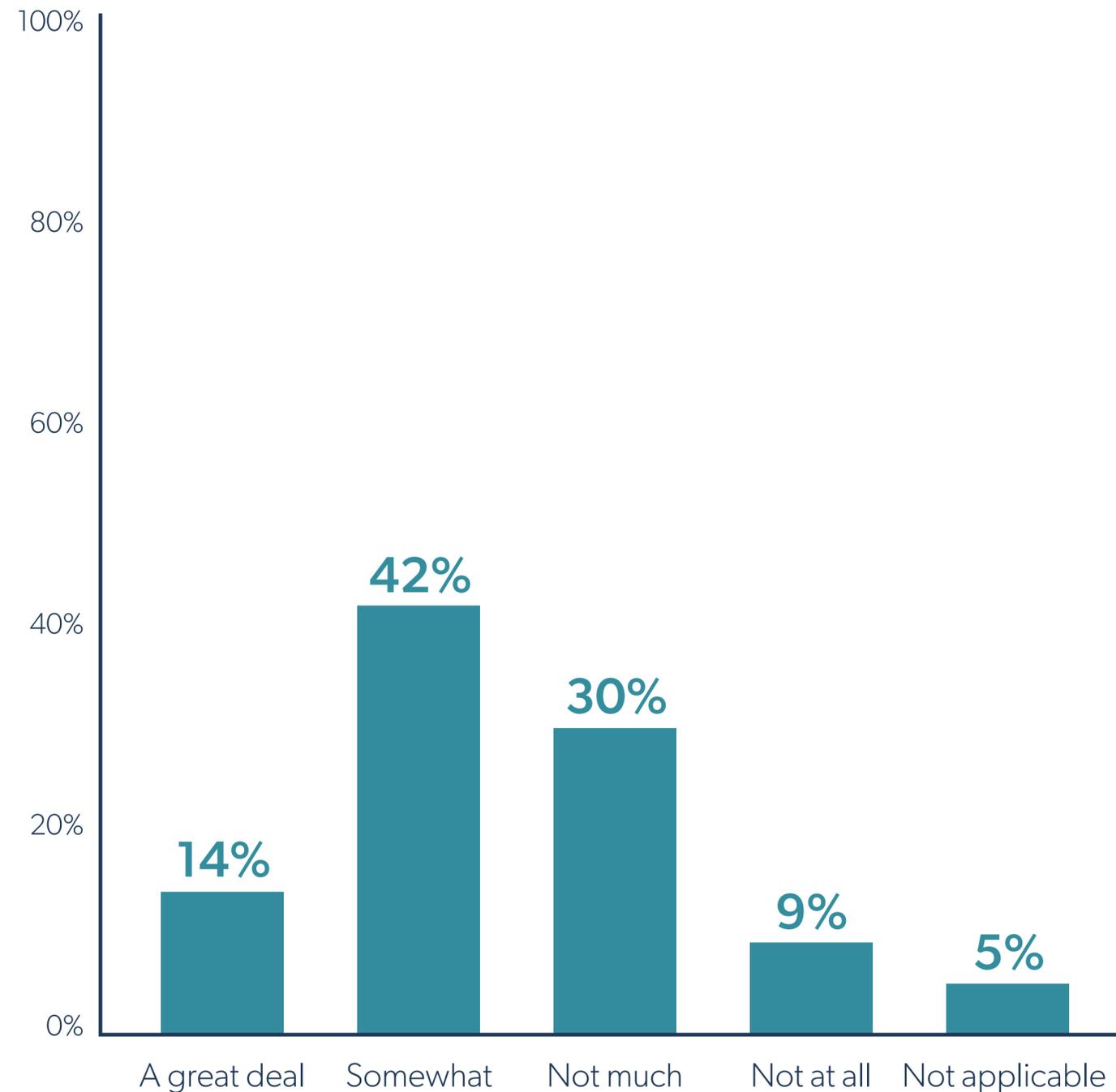
HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

A majority say misinformation is making reporting harder

More than half of journalists say misinformation has complicated their work over the past year. **14%** say it has made reporting a great deal more difficult, while another **42%** say it makes reporting somewhat more difficult.

In contrast, **30%** say not much and just **9%** say not at all.

How much has misinformation or disinformation made your reporting more difficult in the past year?



HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Most journalists say their work feels meaningful, but nearly half say it's exhausting

Journalists are far more likely to describe their work as meaningful than anything else, with **65%** selecting that option.

Still, the emotional picture is mixed. **47%** say the job feels exhausting and **38%** say it feels precarious, while **43%** find it rewarding and **32%** say it feels exciting.

Which of the following best describes your current feelings about your work in journalism? (Select all that apply)

It feels...

meaningful 65%

exhausting 47%

rewarding 43%

precarious 38%

exciting 32%

routine or repetitive 25%

isolating 18%

Other 5%

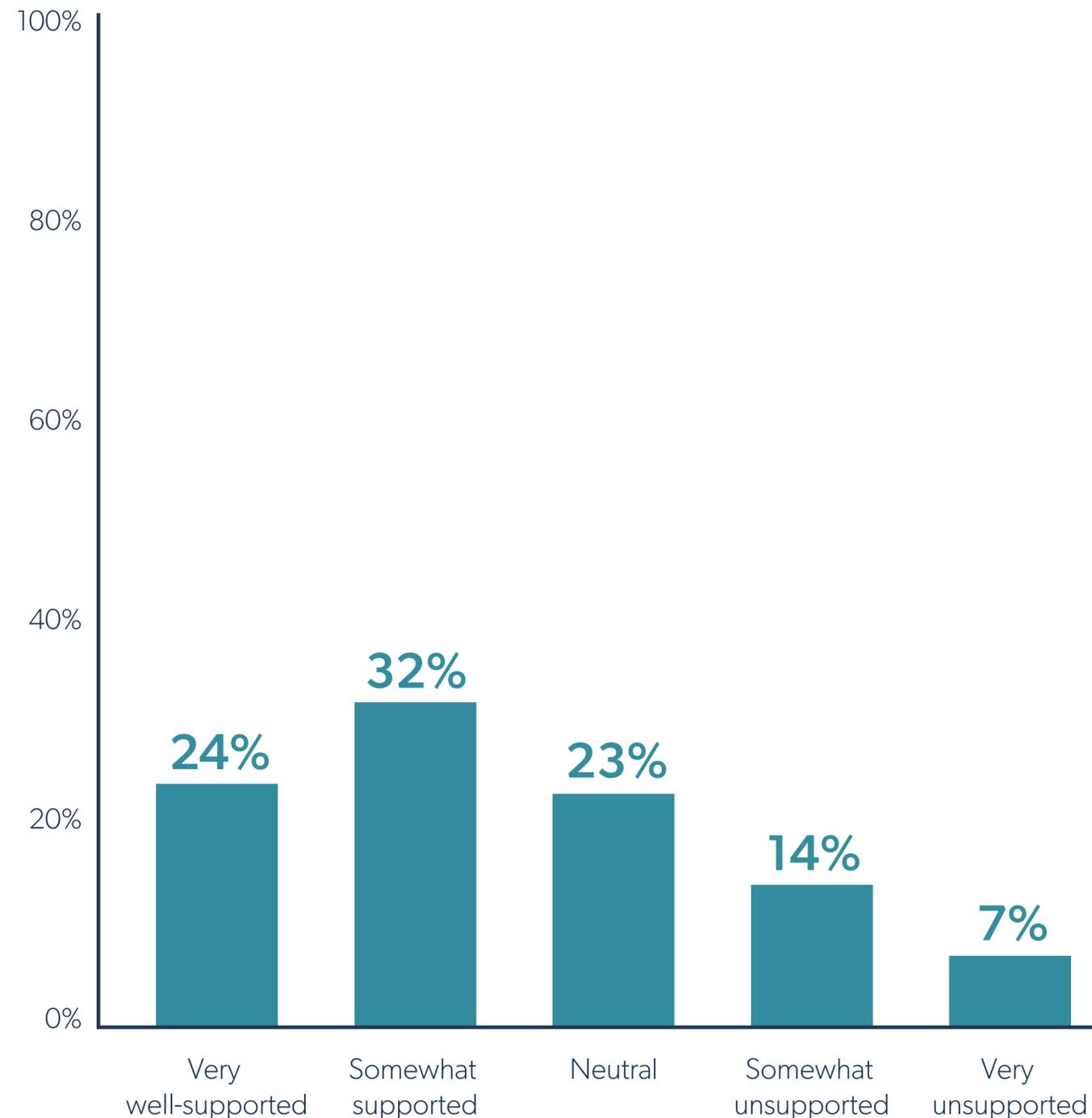
HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

56% of journalists feel supported in their role

A slim majority of journalists feel backed by the tools and guidance they need. **24%** say they are very well-supported and **32%** say somewhat supported, totaling **56%** on the positive side.

Another **23%** feel neutral, while **21%** report feeling unsupported to some degree.

How well-supported do you feel in your current role in terms of tools, training, or editorial guidance?



What's one thing leadership at your organization can do to make you feel better supported?

Provide **positive feedback** without needing to seek it out, rather than purely conveying when there's a problem.

Better training on use of AI in journalism.

Hire more people instead of demanding we do more with less.

Raise my pay for the first time in 10 years and second time in the last 28 years.

Spend more time going through story ideas and guidance, specifically with topics I haven't covered before.

Provide a clear growth/survival strategy for our outlet

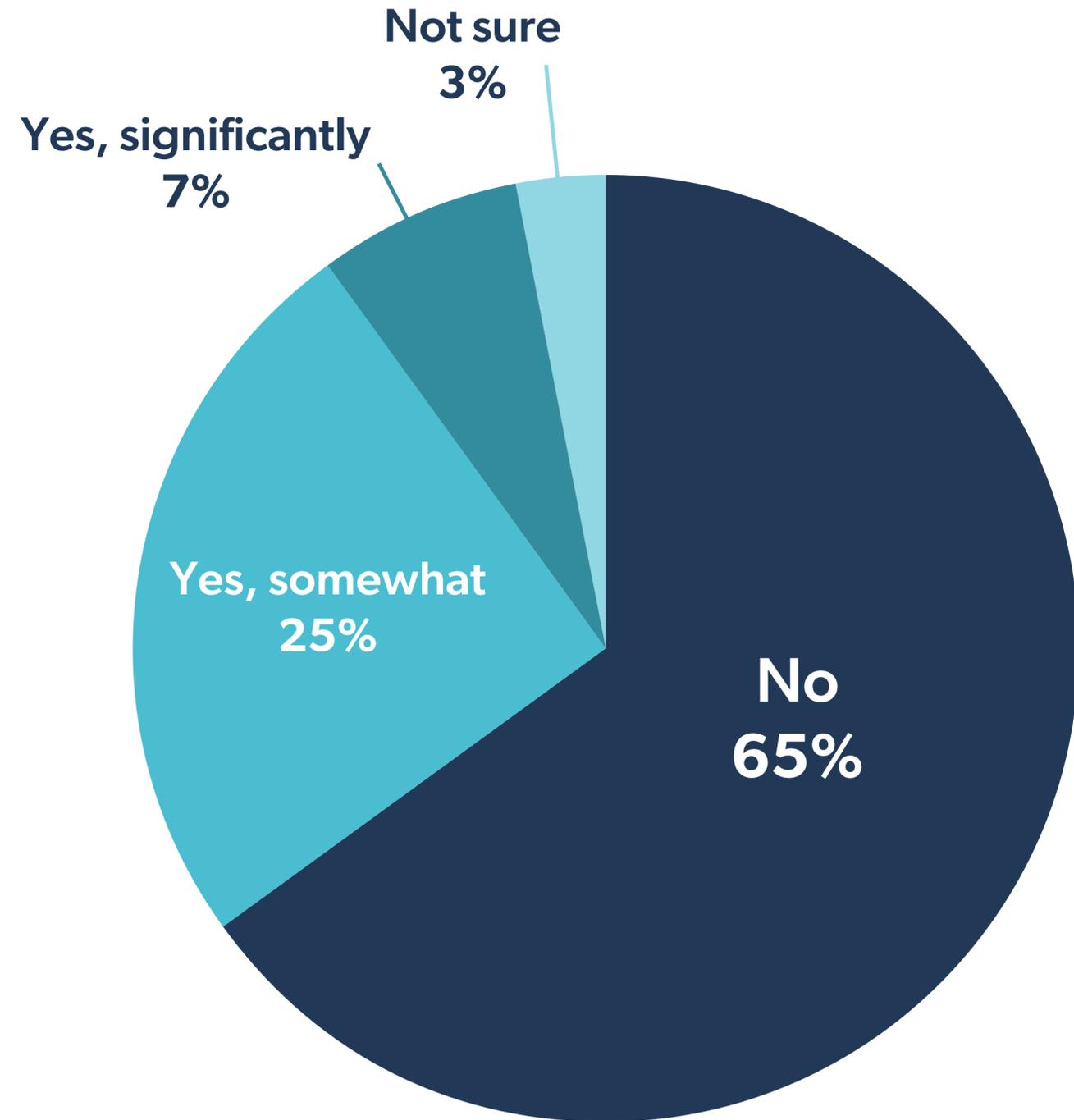
HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Nearly one-third say safety concerns have affected their work

Safety is shaping how many journalists operate. **7%** say safety concerns have significantly affected how they do their job, and another **25%** say somewhat. That means **32%** have adjusted their work in some way due to safety risks.

Meanwhile, **65%** say safety has not affected their work, with **3%** unsure.

In the past year, have safety concerns affected how you do your job as a journalist?



HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Most say they usually have enough time, but 15% rarely or never do

A majority of journalists feel they can meet their standards most of the time. **18%** say they always have enough time, and **39%** say often.

Still, time pressure persists for many, with **14%** saying rarely and **1%** saying never. Another **27%** fall in the middle.

Do you feel you have enough time to complete your journalistic work to your standards?



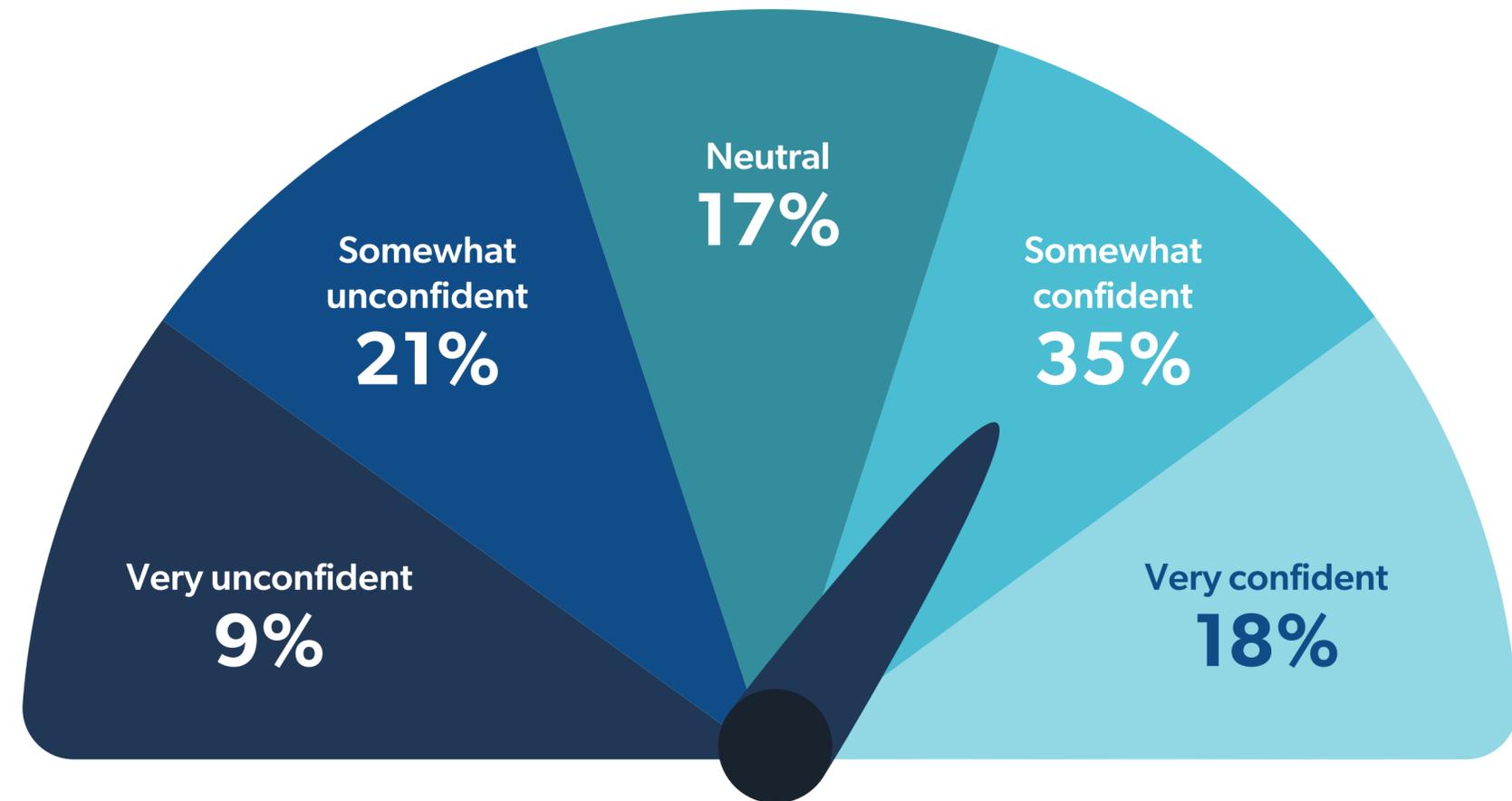
HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Just over half feel confident about their long-term prospects

18% of journalists say they are very confident and 35% somewhat confident, totaling 53% on the optimistic side.

At the same time, 21% say they are somewhat unconfident and 9% very unconfident, while 17% feel neutral.

How confident are you in your long-term career prospects in journalism?



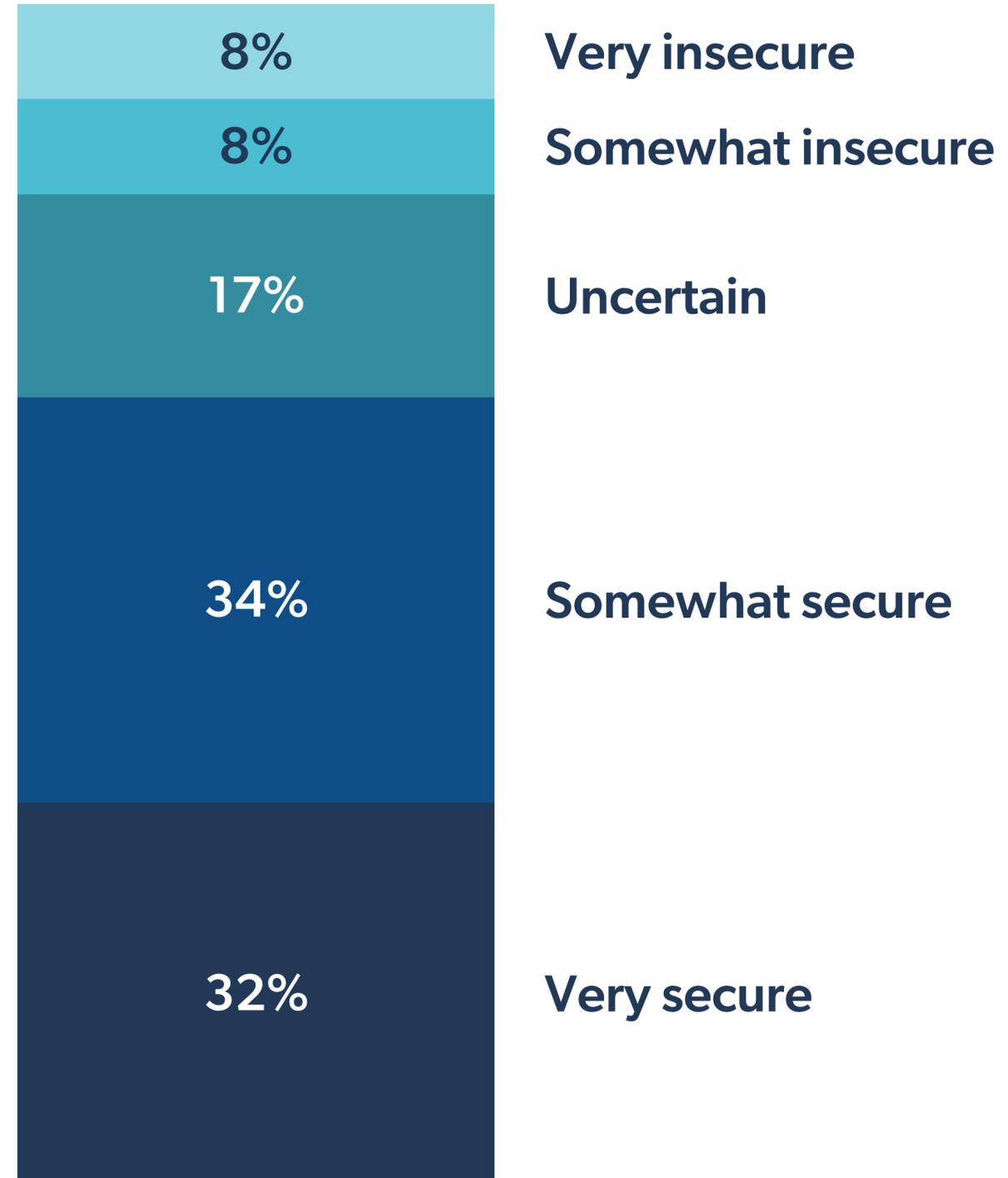
HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Short-term job security outpaces long-term career confidence

While **66%** of journalists say their job feels very or somewhat secure over the next year, only **53%** feel confident about their long-term career prospects.

16% say they feel somewhat or very insecure about their current job.

How secure does your current job feel over the next 12 months?

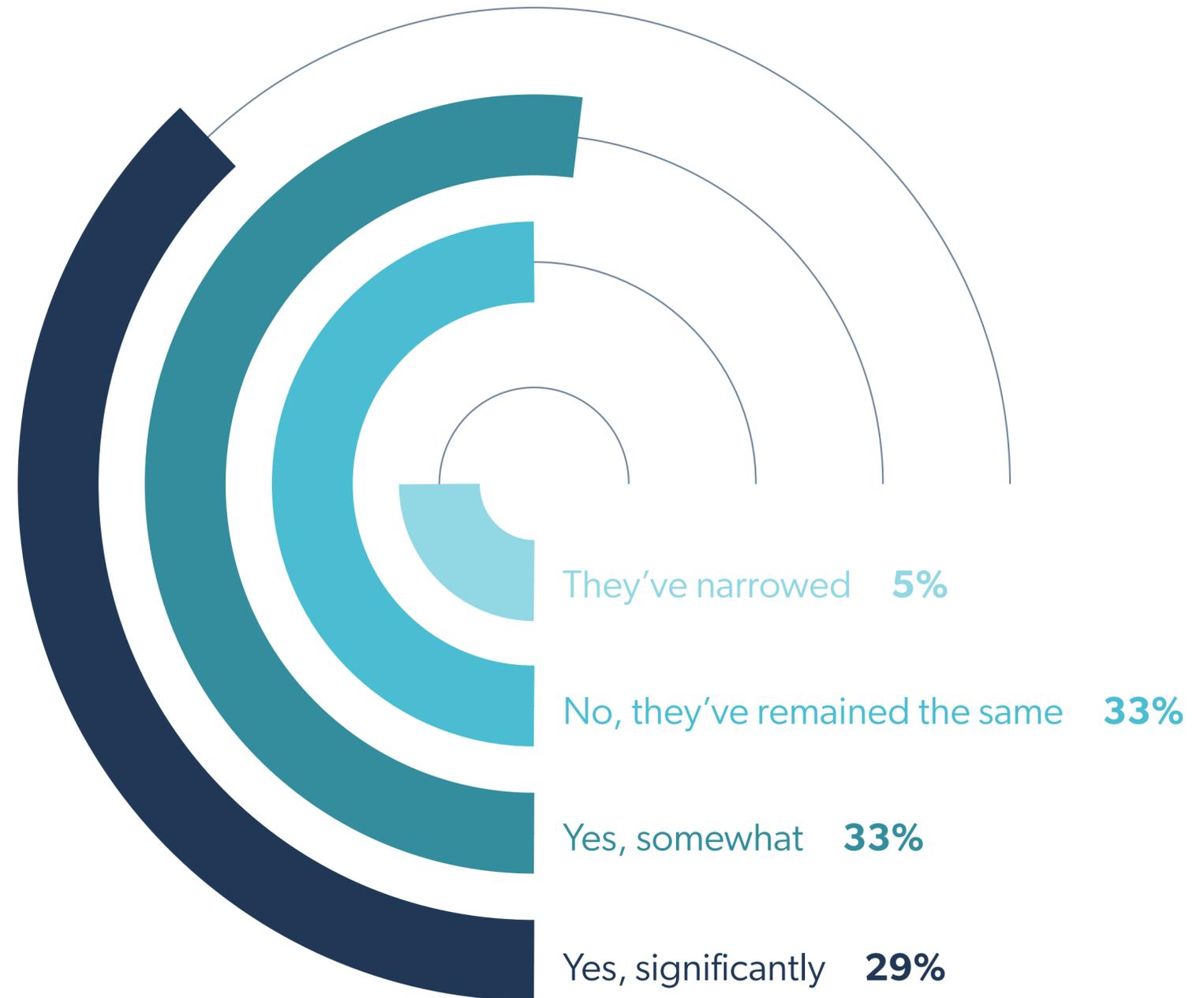


HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

Role expansion holds steady at 62% for the second year

62% of journalists say their responsibilities have expanded. Just 33% report no change, and 5% say their duties have narrowed.

Have your job responsibilities expanded in the past year beyond your core role?



HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

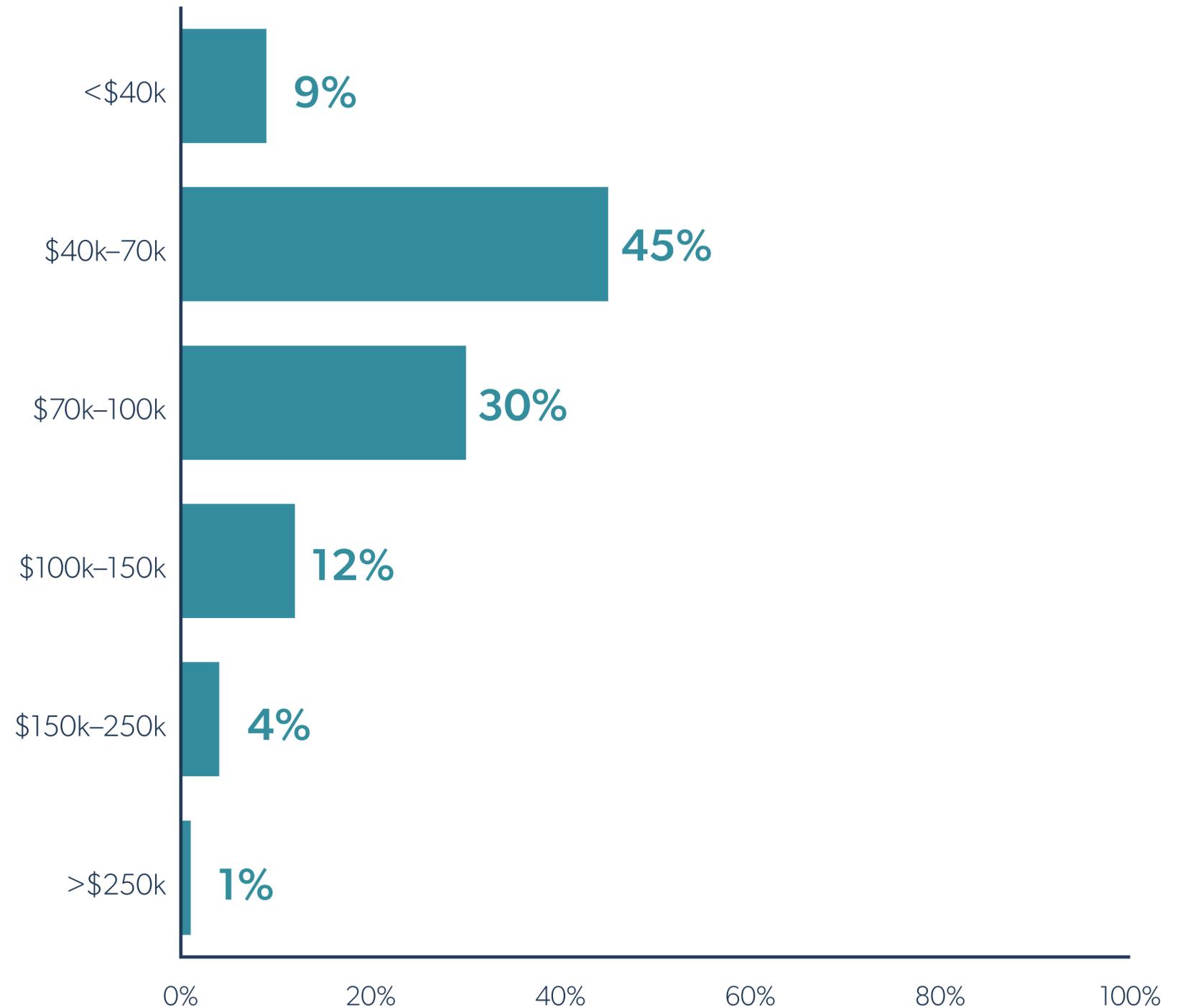
Nearly half of full-time journalists earn between \$40k and \$70k

45% of journalists earn between \$40,000 and \$70,000 per year, making it the most common salary band.

Another **30%** fall between \$70,000 and \$100,000, while **9%** earn less than \$40,000.

At the higher end, **17%** make more than \$100,000, including just **1%** earning over \$250,000.

How much do you earn per year from your full-time job?



HOW JOURNALISTS WORK

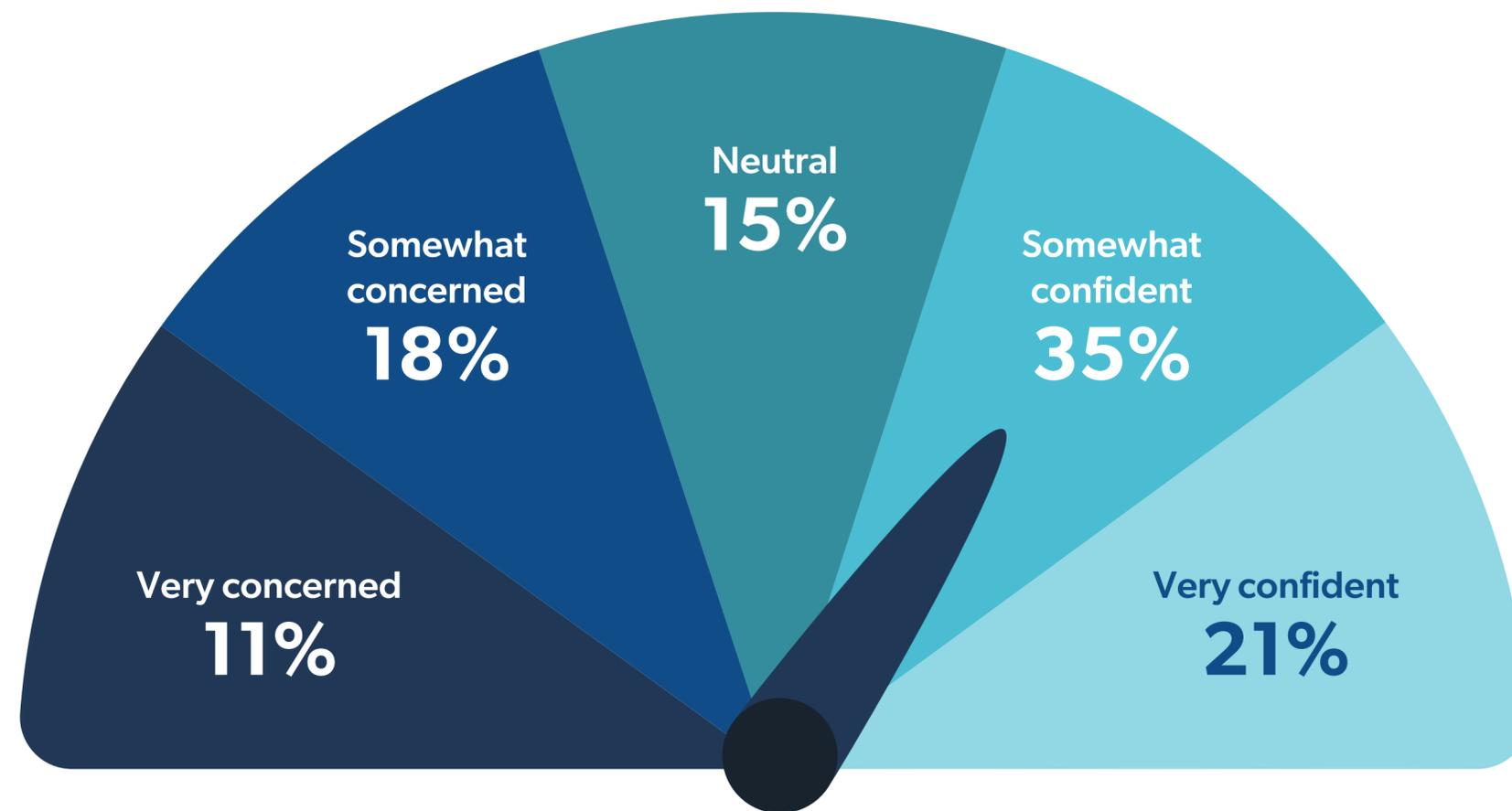
Organizational confidence is steady, but nearly one in three have concerns

A slim majority of journalists express confidence in their organization's long-term stability. **21%** say they are very confident and **35%** somewhat confident, totaling **56%** on the positive side.

At the same time, **18%** are somewhat concerned and **11%** very concerned, meaning **29%** carry meaningful doubts.

Another **15%** feel neutral, reflecting a workforce that is more confident than concerned, but far from certain.

How confident are you in the long-term stability of the organization you work for?



AI and social media

AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

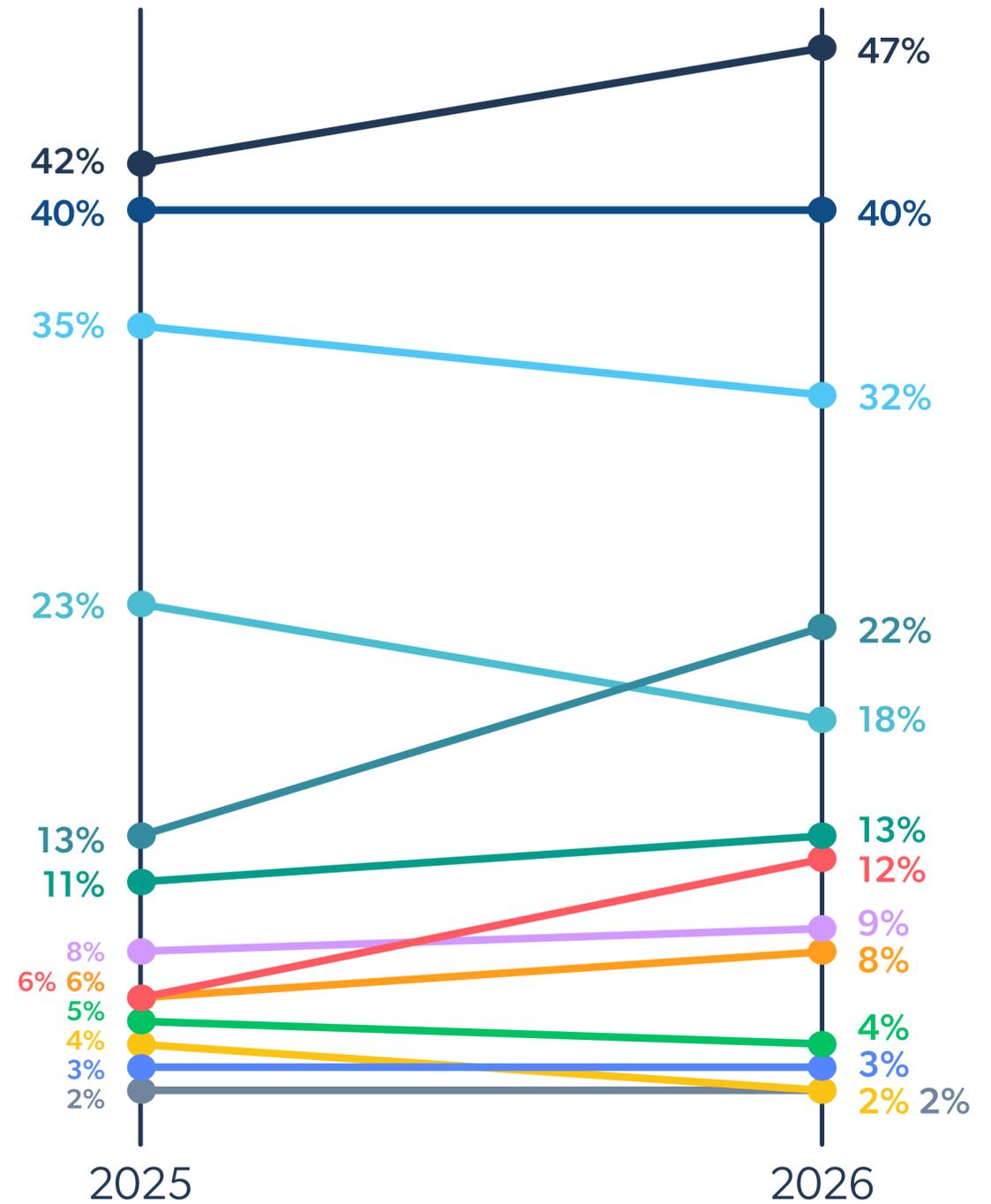
AI adoption climbs to 82%, with ChatGPT and Gemini gaining ground

AI usage continues to grow. Just **18%** of journalists say they use none of the listed tools, down from **23%** last year, meaning adoption has risen from **77%** to **82%**.

ChatGPT leads at **47%**, up from **42%**, while Gemini jumps from **13%** to **22%** and Claude doubles from **6%** to **12%**. Transcription tools hold steady at **40%**.

Which of the following AI tools or platforms have you used in your journalistic work in the past 12 months? (Select all that apply)

- ChatGPT
- AI transcription tools (e.g. Otter.ai)
- Grammarly
- Gemini
- None of these options
- AI tools built for my newsroom
- Claude
- Perplexity AI
- Other
- Adobe Firefly or Photoshop AI features
- AI speech-to-text tools (e.g. Whisper)
- AI image generators (e.g. DALL-E)
- AI coding assistants (e.g. GitHub Copilot)



AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Reliance on social media for reporting has fallen 12 points in two years

Just **21%** of journalists now say social media is very important to producing their work, down from **33%** in 2024, a 12 percentage-point decline over two years.

Another **20%** say it is important and **24%** moderately important, meaning **65%** still see at least some value. But strong reliance has clearly softened, with **34%** now saying social media is only slightly or not important to their reporting process.

Important
20%

Slightly Important
17%



Very Important
21%

Moderately Important
24%

Not Important
17%

AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

45% say social media is very important for promotion, holding steady year over year

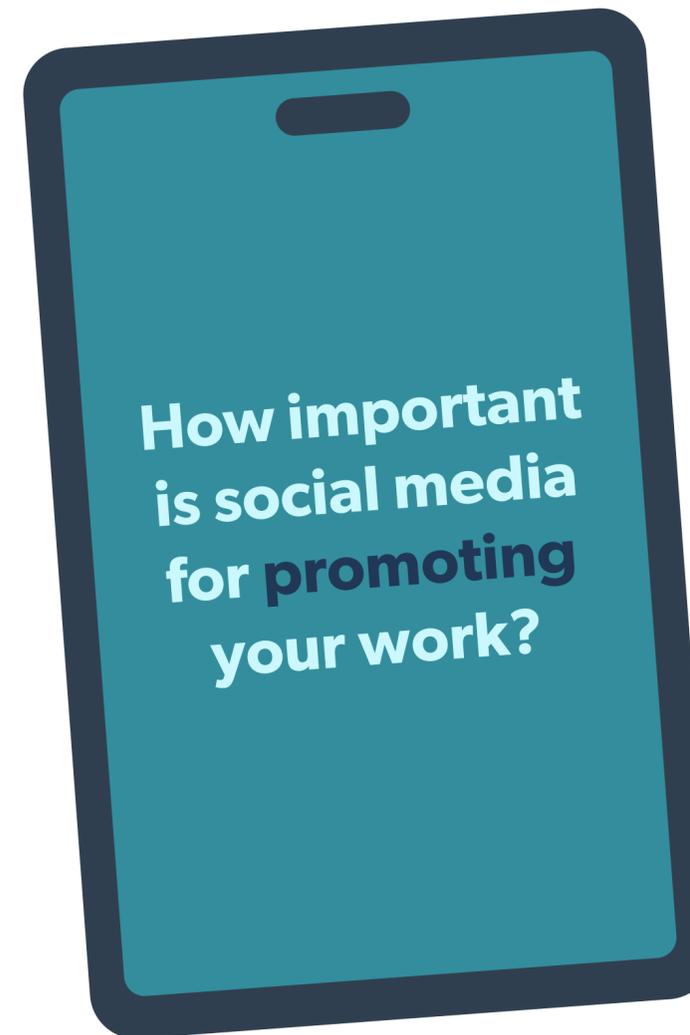
Social media remains far more critical for promotion than for reporting. **45%** of journalists say it is very important for promoting their work, unchanged from last year. Combined, **72%** rate it very or important this year.

That aligns with 2024, when **70%** said social media was important or very important for promotion.

Very Important
45%

Moderately Important
17%

Not Important
3%



Important
27%

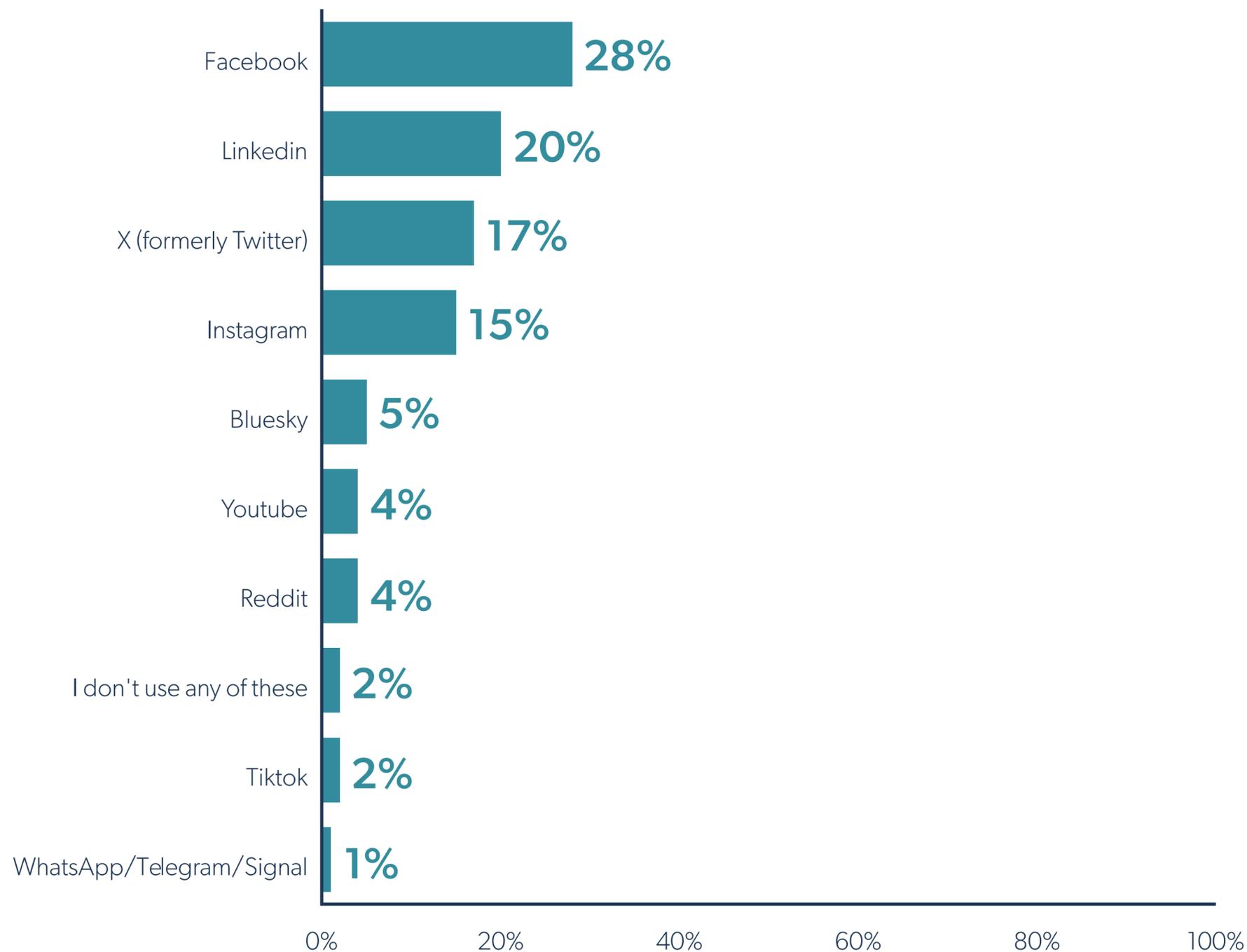
Slightly Important
9%

Facebook is the most valuable social platform for journalists as X falls

28% of journalists say Facebook is the most valuable social platform for their work, keeping it in the top spot for the second year.

LinkedIn follows at **20%**, while X drops to **17%**, down from **36%** in 2024 and **21%** last year. Instagram comes in at **15%**, and no other platform exceeds **5%**.

Overall, which social media is most valuable to you as a journalist?

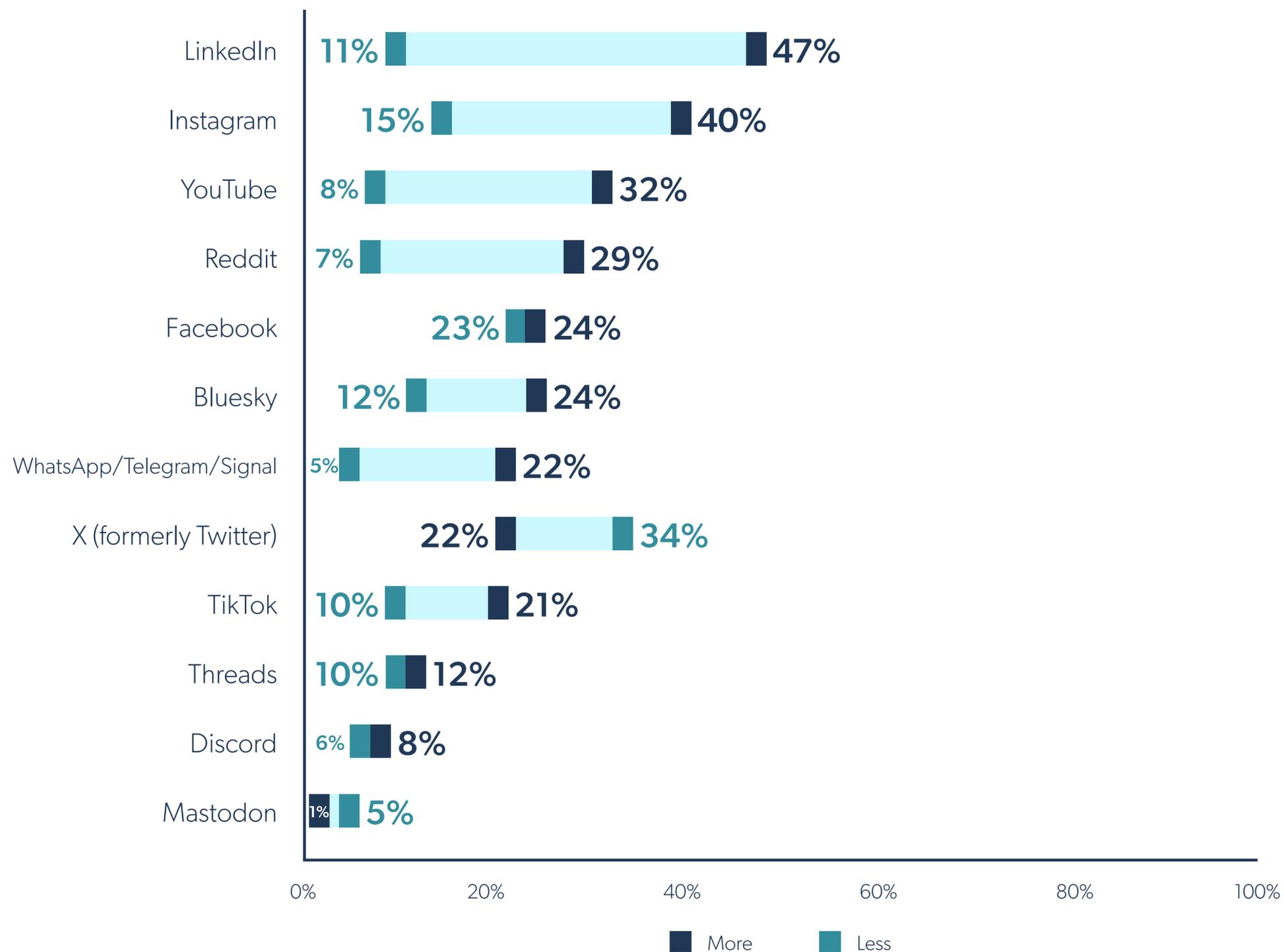


Journalists shift time toward LinkedIn and Instagram as Bluesky's growth slows sharply

LinkedIn continues to gain attention, with **47%** of journalists spending more time there, followed by Instagram at **40%** and YouTube at **32%**, all largely steady year over year.

The biggest movement is on Bluesky, where the share spending more time fell from **38%** to **24%**, a 14 percentage-point drop, and those spending less time rose from **4%** to **12%**.

Over the last year, did you spend more or less time on the following social networks compared to the previous year?

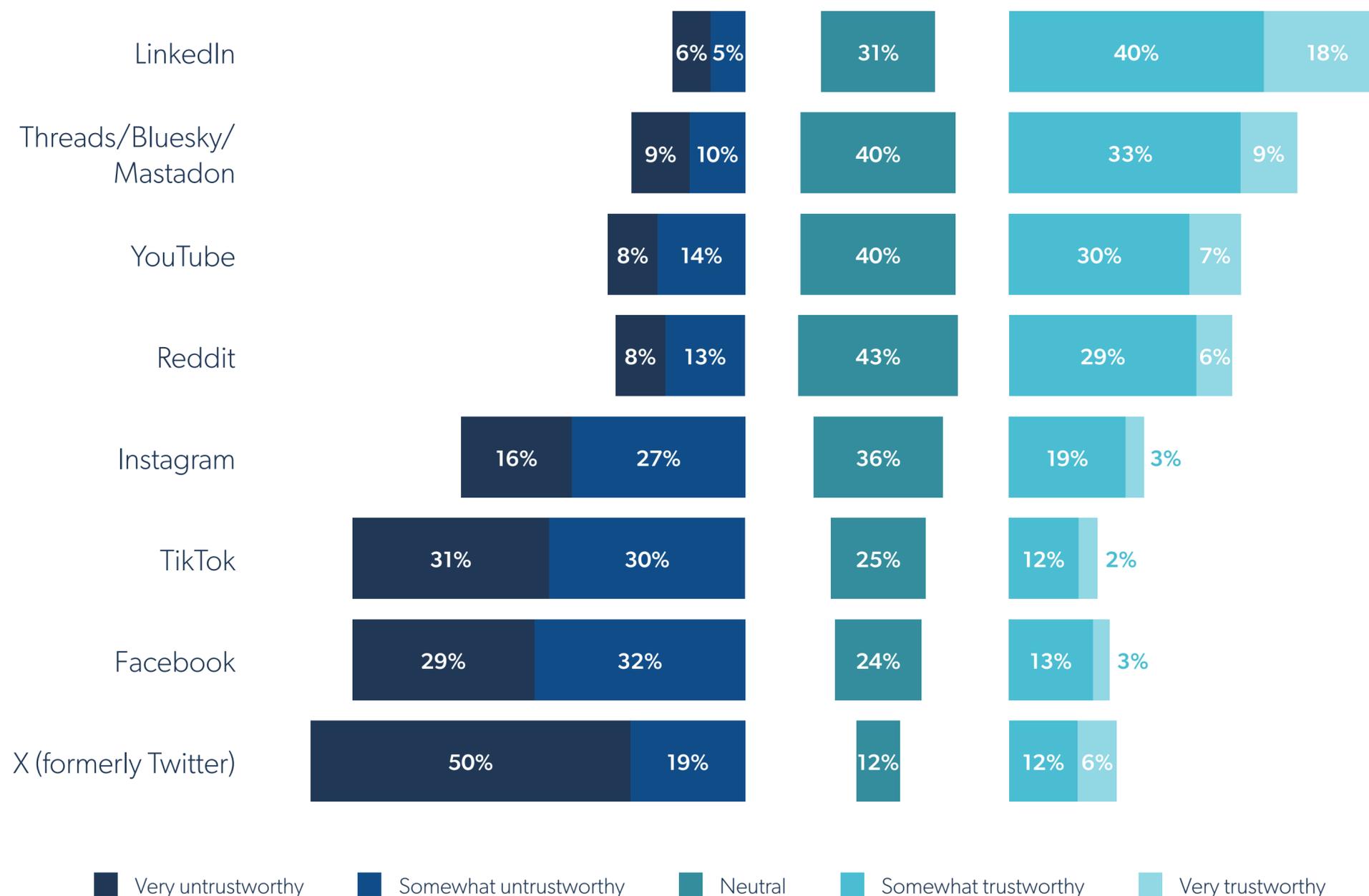


LinkedIn remains most trusted, while distrust in TikTok jumps 10 points

LinkedIn continues to stand apart from its peers with **58%** of journalists saying they trust the platform to treat journalistic content fairly.

The biggest shift this year is TikTok. The share who view it as untrustworthy rose from **51%** to **61%**, a 10 percentage-point increase, driven by a sharp drop in neutral responses from **35%** to **25%**. Trust perceptions are largely stable elsewhere, but TikTok is moving decisively in the wrong direction.

How much do you trust each of the following platforms to treat journalistic content fairly?



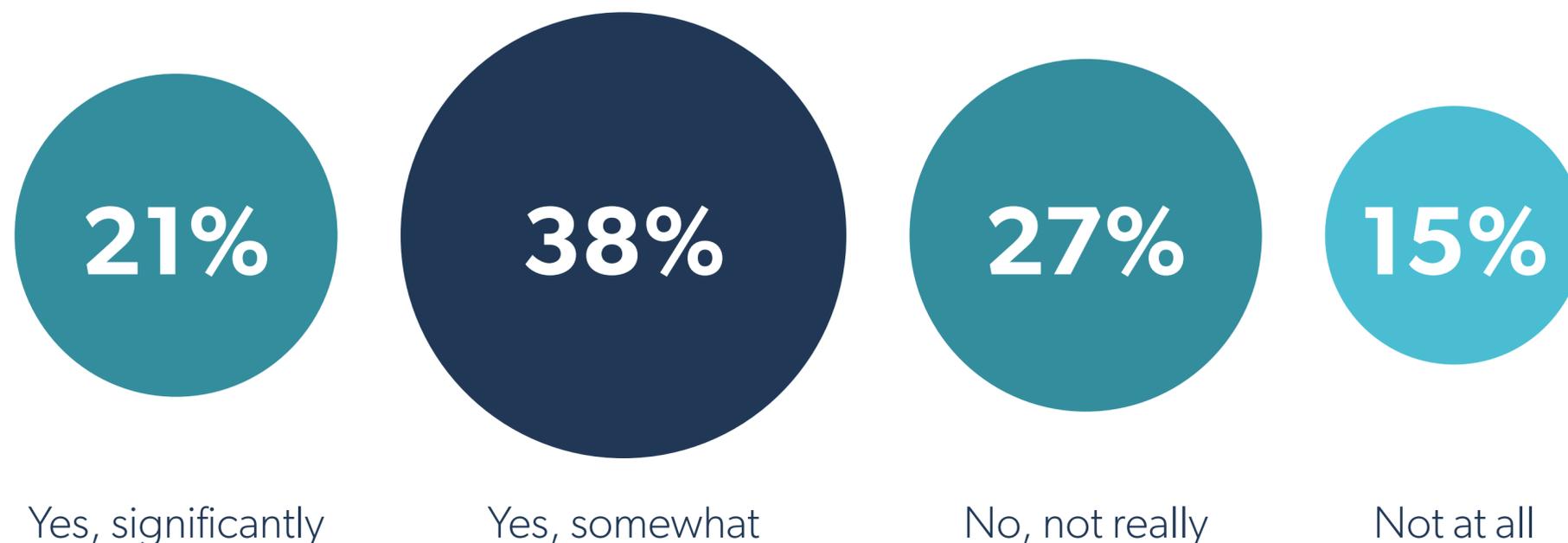
AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Nearly 59% of journalists say safety concerns shape how they use social media

Personal safety and harassment are influencing how journalists show up online. **21%** say these concerns have significantly affected how they use social media professionally, and **38%** say somewhat. That totals **59%** who report at least some impact.

Meanwhile, **27%** say not really and **15%** say not at all.

Have concerns about personal safety, harassment, or reputation management affected how you use social media professionally?

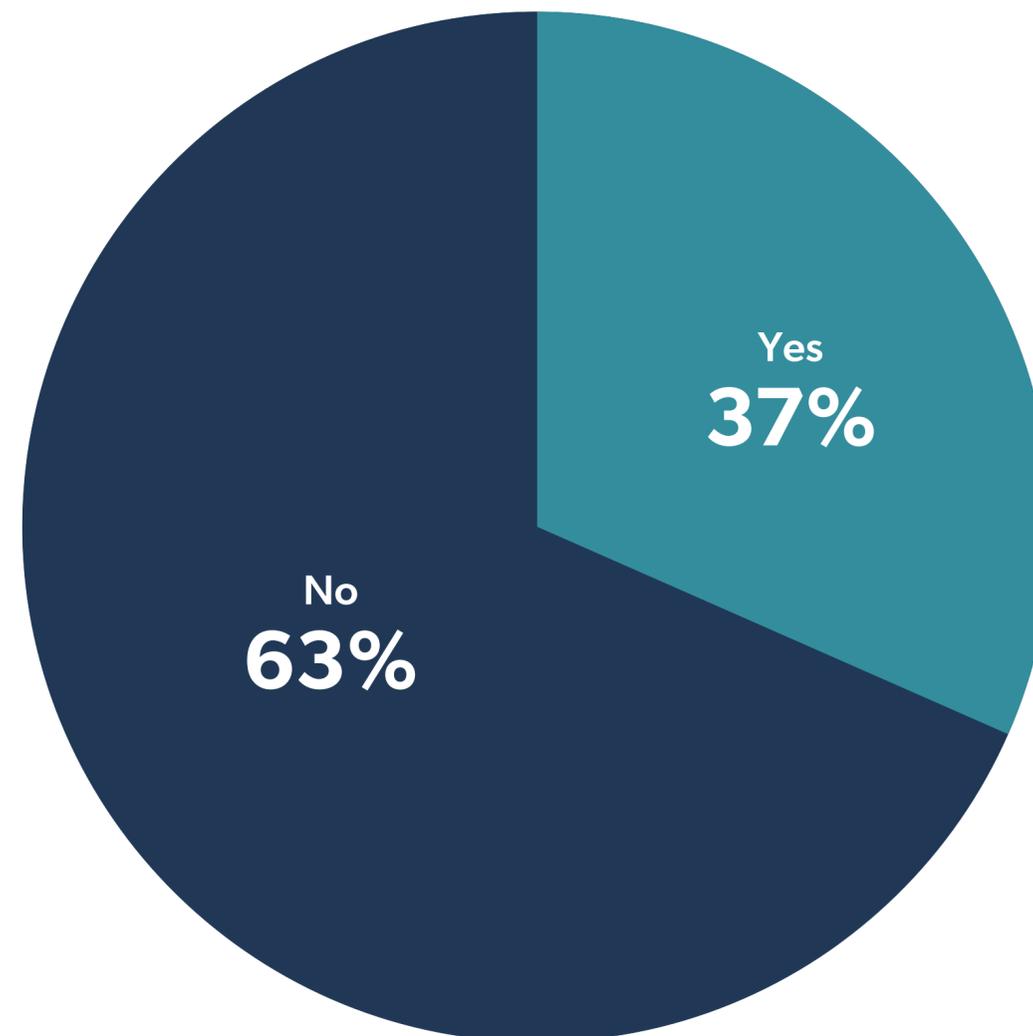


AI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

More than one-third publish independently

37% of journalists say they publish news, commentary or other content under their own name or brand outside a traditional media organization. This figure is up slightly compared to last year.

Do you independently publish news, commentary, or other content under your own name or brand, outside of a traditional media organization?



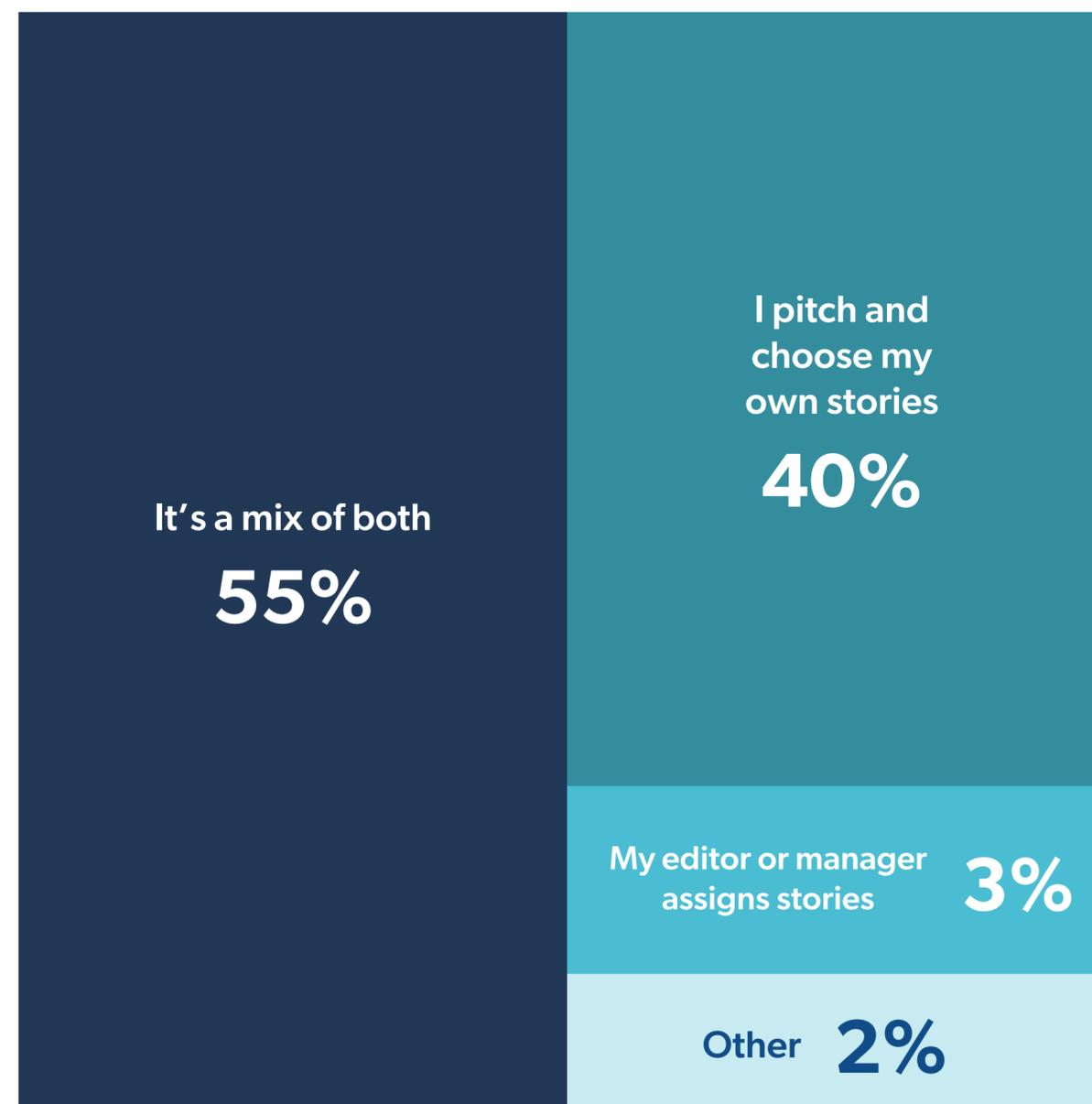
Media relations

MEDIA RELATIONS

Only 3% of journalists have their stories fully assigned

55% of journalists say deciding what stories to work on is a mix of pitching and assignments, while 40% say they pitch and choose their own stories outright. Just 3% say their editor or manager fully assigns their work.

Who primarily decides what stories you work on?



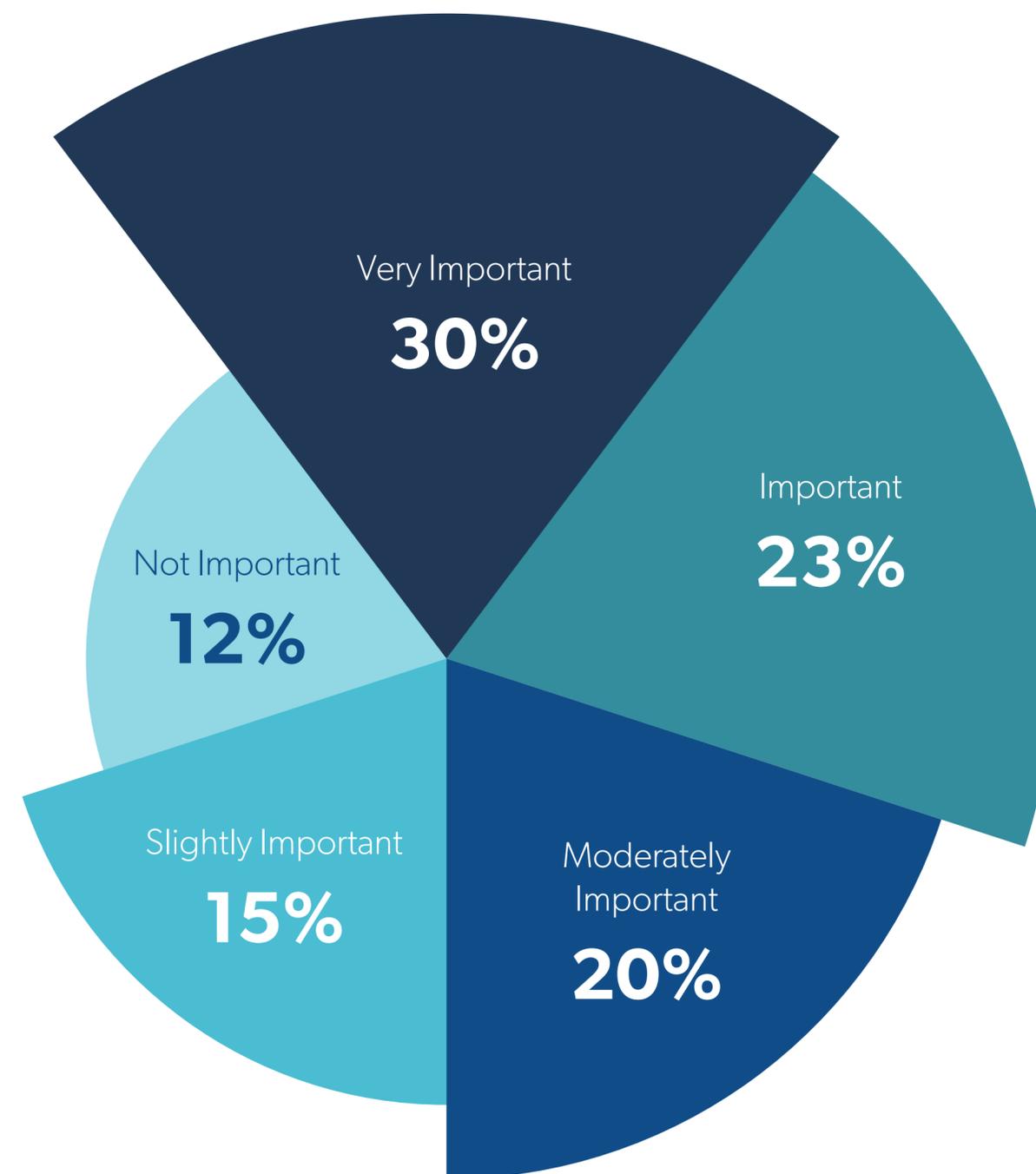
MEDIA RELATIONS

A majority say PR relationships are important to their success

PR relationships matter to most journalists. **30%** say PR pros are very important to being successful at their job and **23%** say important, totaling **53%** on the high-importance side.

Another **20%** rate them moderately important, while **27%** say slightly or not important.

How important are your relationships with public relations professionals to being successful at your job?



MEDIA RELATIONS

More than half of journalists seldom or never respond to PR pitches

54% of journalists say they seldom or never respond to PR pitches.

Another 25% respond about half the time, while just 15% say usually and 6% always.

How often do you respond to PR pros when they pitch you stories?

A survey form with five radio button options and three action buttons at the bottom. The options are: Always 6%, Usually 15%, About half the time 25%, Seldom 47%, and Never 7%. The action buttons are Reply, Forward, and a trash icon.

Response Frequency	Percentage
Always	6%
Usually	15%
About half the time	25%
Seldom	47%
Never	7%

← Reply → Forward 🗑️

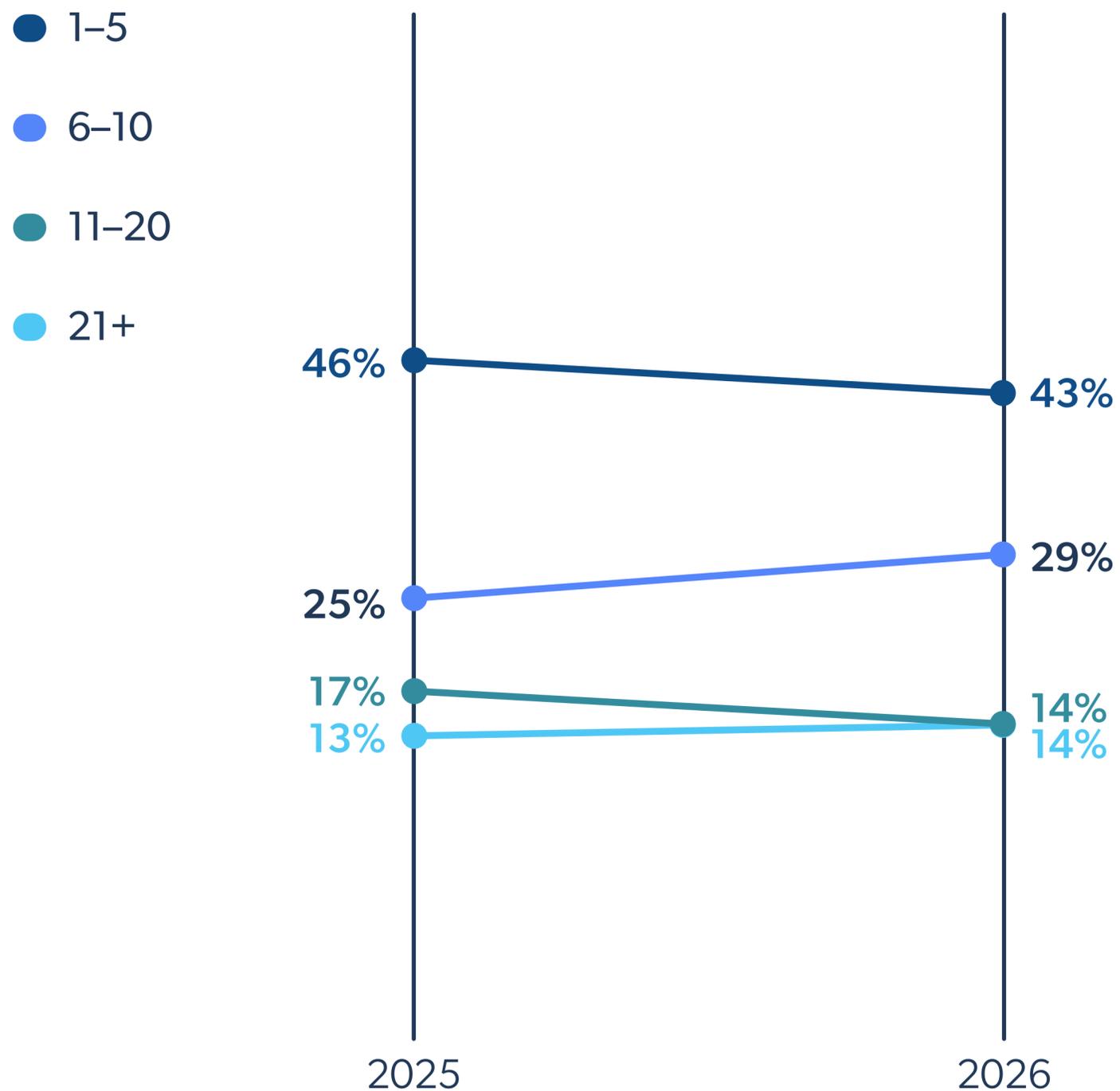
MEDIA RELATIONS

Daily pitch volume shifts upward, with more journalists receiving 6 to 10 per day

Inbox pressure remains high and is inching upward. **29%** of journalists now receive 6–10 PR pitches on a normal work day, up from **25%** last year.

The share receiving just 1–5 dips from **46%** to **43%**, while **14%** report getting more than 20 per day, slightly up from **13%**. Fewer journalists fall in the 11–20 range at **14%**, down from **17%**.

How many PR pitches did you receive during your last normal work day?

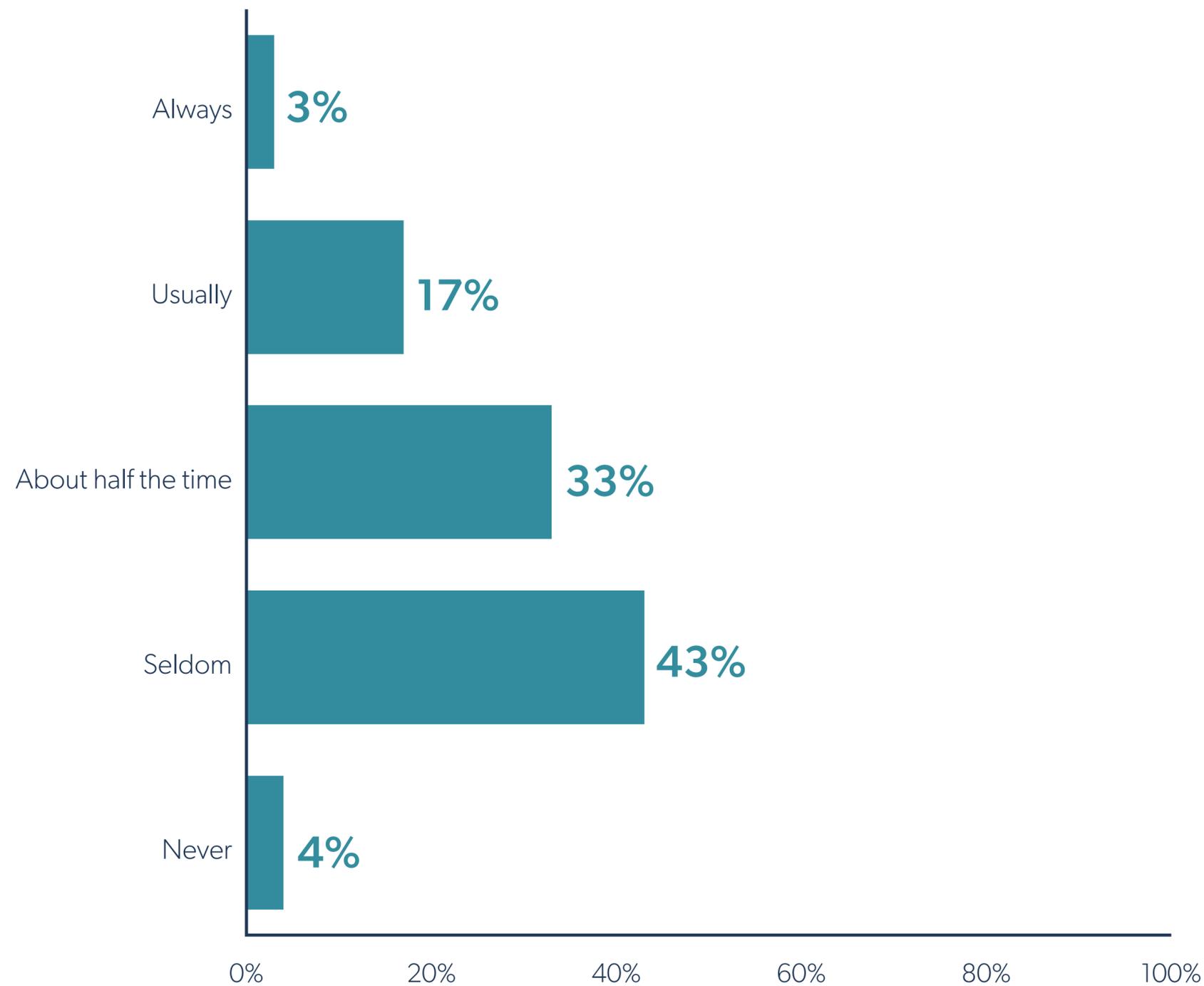


MEDIA RELATIONS

Nearly half of journalists say relevant pitches are rare

Relevance remains the core challenge in media relations. **43%** of journalists say they seldom receive pitches that match what they cover, and **4%** say never. Only **3%** say pitches are always relevant and **17%** say usually. One-third say about half the time.

How often do you receive PR pitches relevant to what you cover?



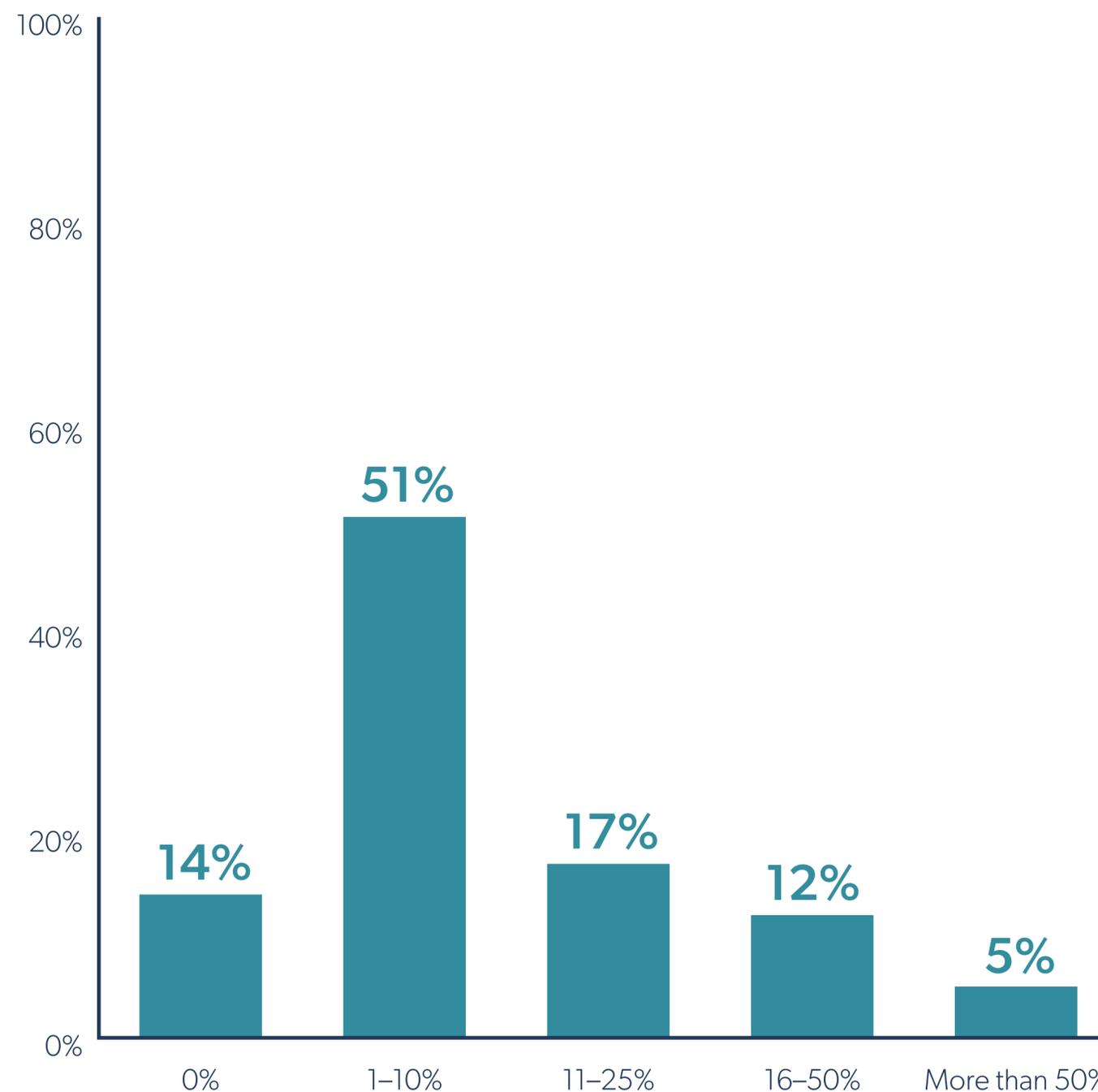
MEDIA RELATIONS

86% of journalists say at least some stories start with a PR pitch

PR pitches rarely dominate coverage, but they are part of the mix. **51%** of journalists say **1%–10%** of their stories originate from a pitch, and **34%** say more than **10%** do.

Only **14%** say none of their work starts that way. Pitches may not drive most stories, but they consistently contribute to the news cycle.

About what percentage of your published stories started with a PR pitch?



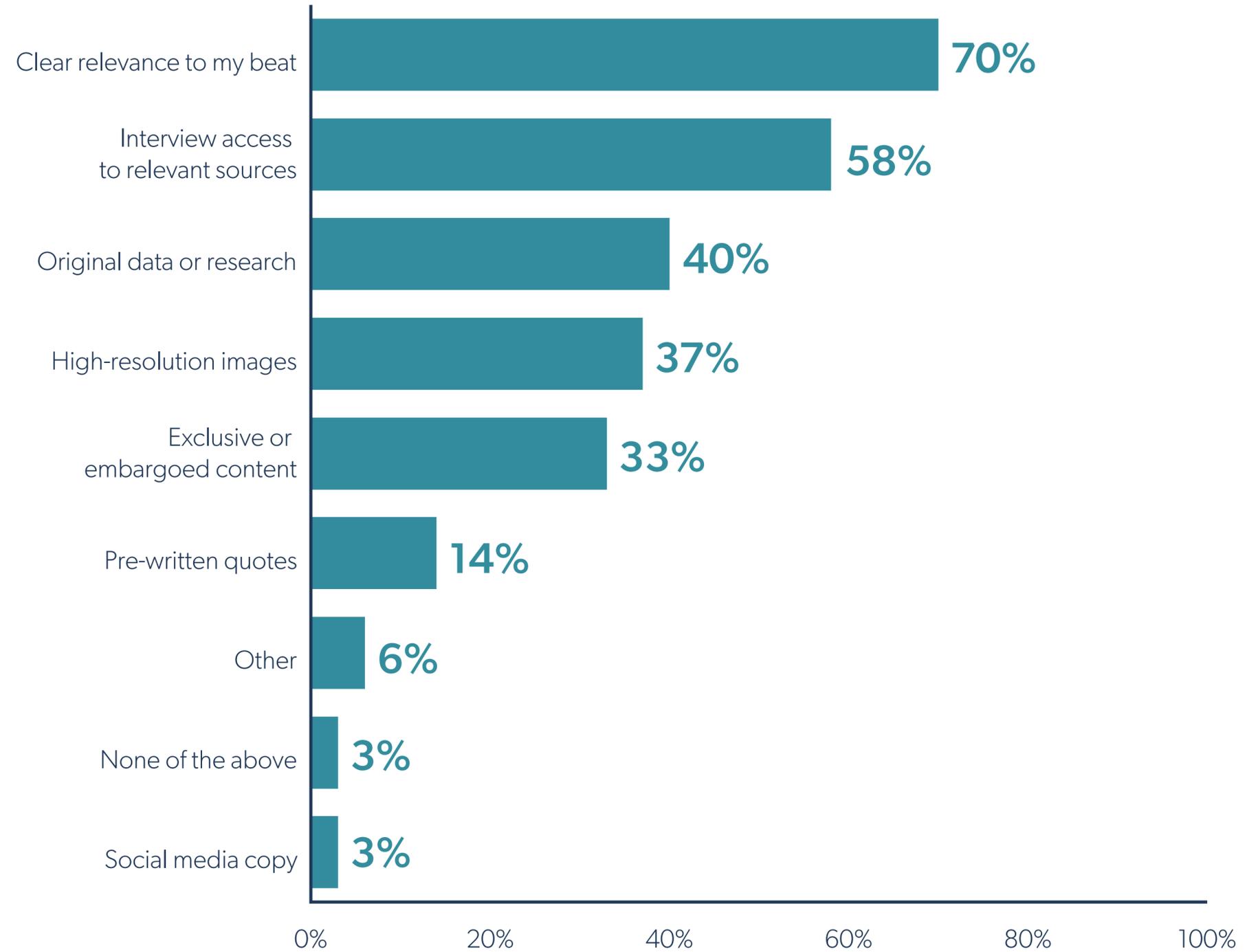
MEDIA RELATIONS

Relevance and access matter most in a pitch

Journalists are clear about what makes a pitch worthwhile. **70%** say it should demonstrate clear relevance to their beat, making alignment the top priority. Access also matters, with **58%** wanting interview access to relevant sources.

Beyond that, **40%** value original data or research and **37%** want high-resolution images. Tactics like pre-written quotes at **14%** and social media copy at **3%** rank far lower.

Which of the following should a PR pro ideally offer along with their story pitch?



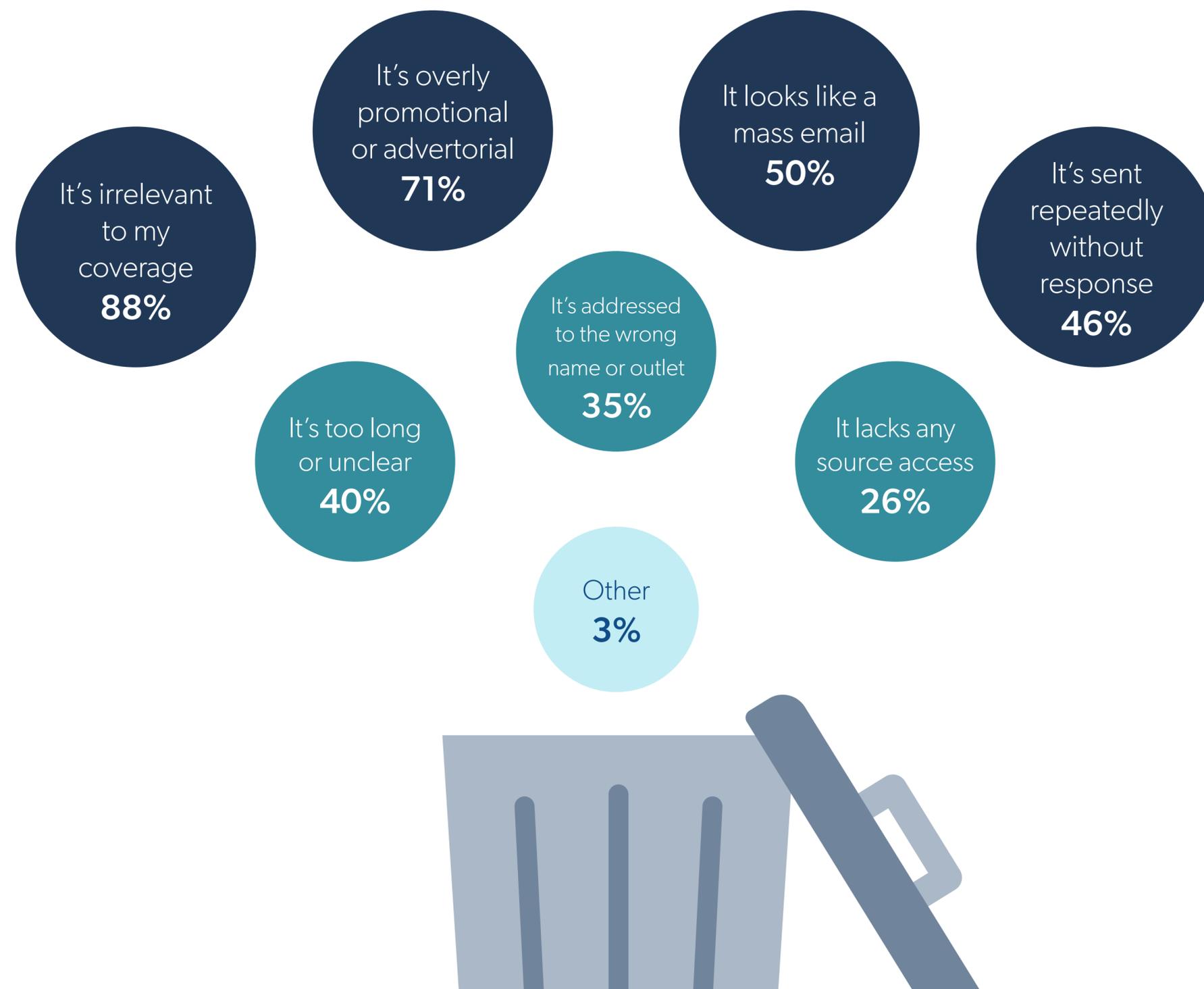
MEDIA RELATIONS

88% of journalists delete pitches that miss their beat

88% of journalists say they immediately disregard pitches that do not match their coverage area. 71% reject those that feel overly promotional, and 50% are put off by mass emails.

Repeated follow-ups without response at 46% and pitches that are too long or unclear at 40% also drive deletions.

What causes you to immediately disregard or delete a PR pitch? (Select all that apply)



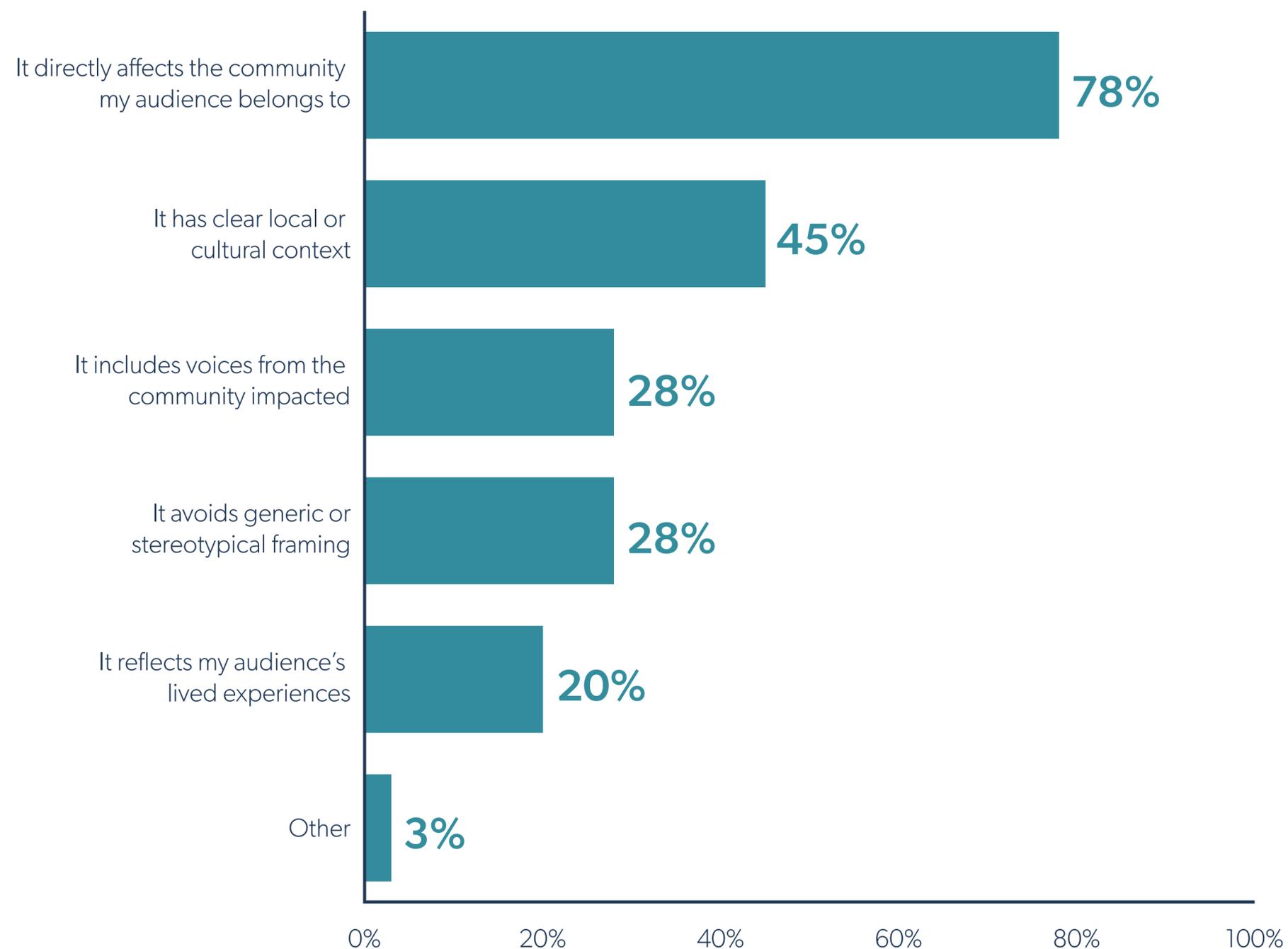
MEDIA RELATIONS

Community impact defines true relevance for pitches

Relevance goes beyond matching a beat. **78%** of journalists say a pitch feels genuinely relevant when it directly affects the community their audience belongs to. **45%** look for clear local or cultural context, and **28%** value including voices from the impacted community.

Another **28%** say avoiding generic or stereotypical framing matters, while **20%** prioritize reflecting lived experiences.

What makes a pitch genuinely relevant to your audience, not just your beat?

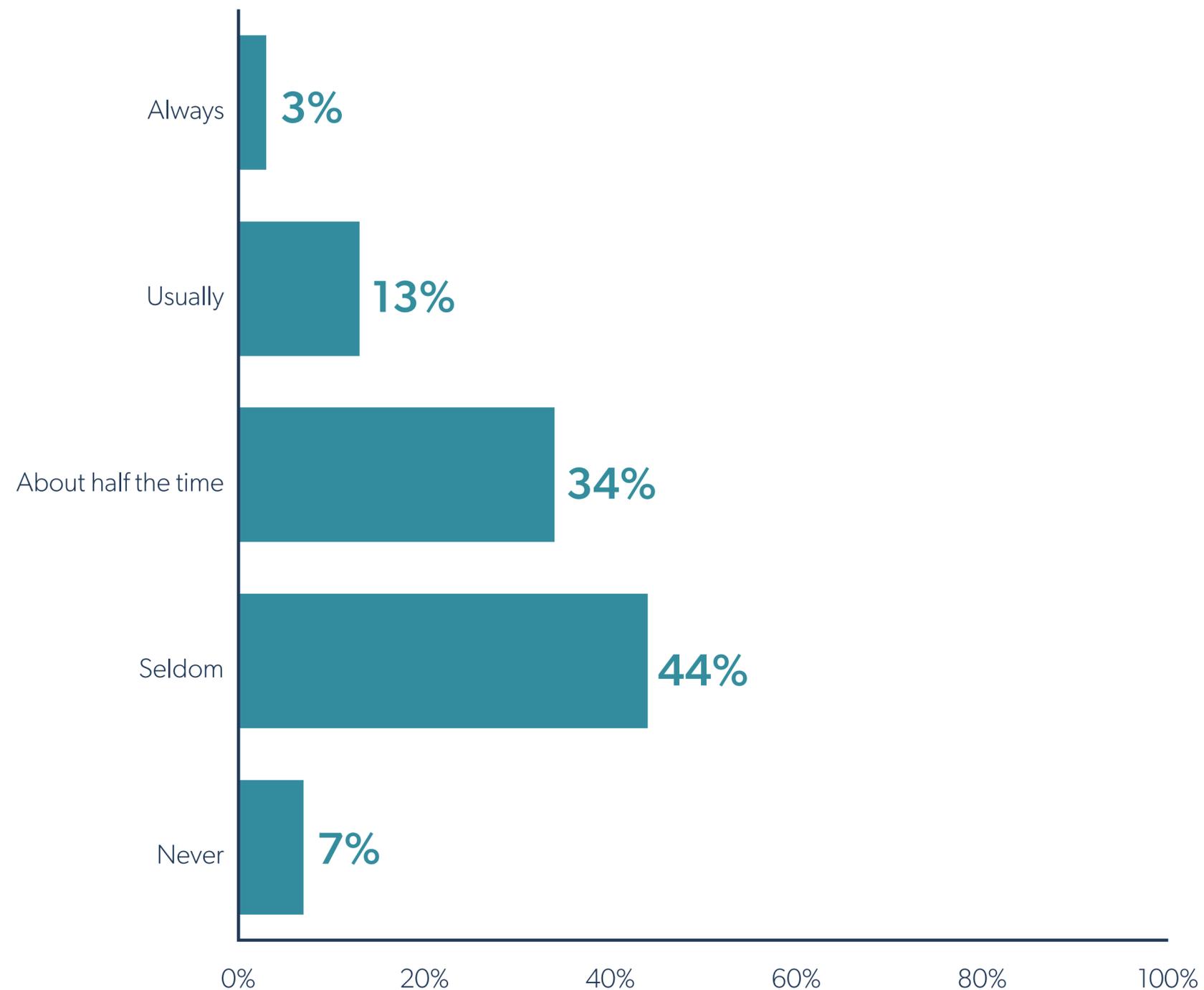


MEDIA RELATIONS

Only 16% of journalists say pitches usually reflect their community

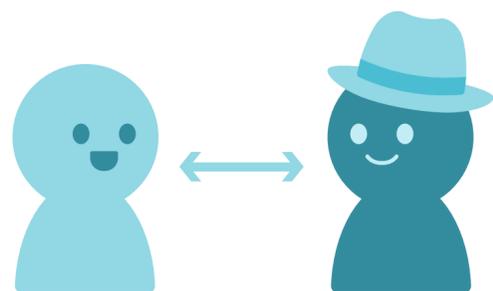
Just **3%** of journalists say PR outreach always reflects the community their outlet serves, and **13%** say usually. The largest share, **44%**, say this happens seldom, while **7%** say never. Another **34%** say about half the time.

How often do PR pitches demonstrate awareness of the community your outlet serves?

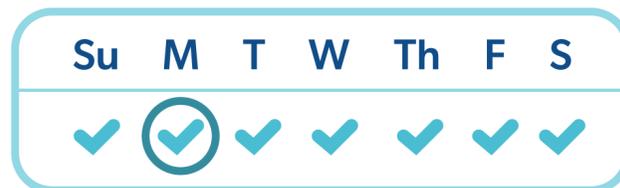


THE PERFECT PITCH

According to eight years of journalist surveys



62% of journalists prefer to be pitched via 1:1 email



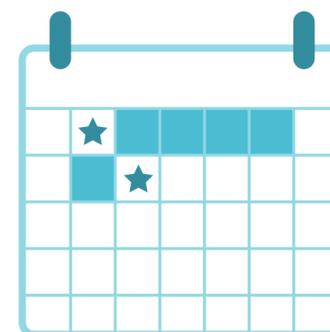
50% don't care which day they are pitched, but of those that do, **18%** prefer to be pitched on a Monday



78% want to receive pitches before noon



69% prefer pitches that are under 200 words



50% say one follow up is ideal, and **51%** say it should come within 3–7 days later

What's one thing you wish PR pros knew?

"Keep it **short**, keep it **simple**."

"Don't pitch widely;
pitch selectively, and
then widen as needed."

"I can tell if you use **AI**."

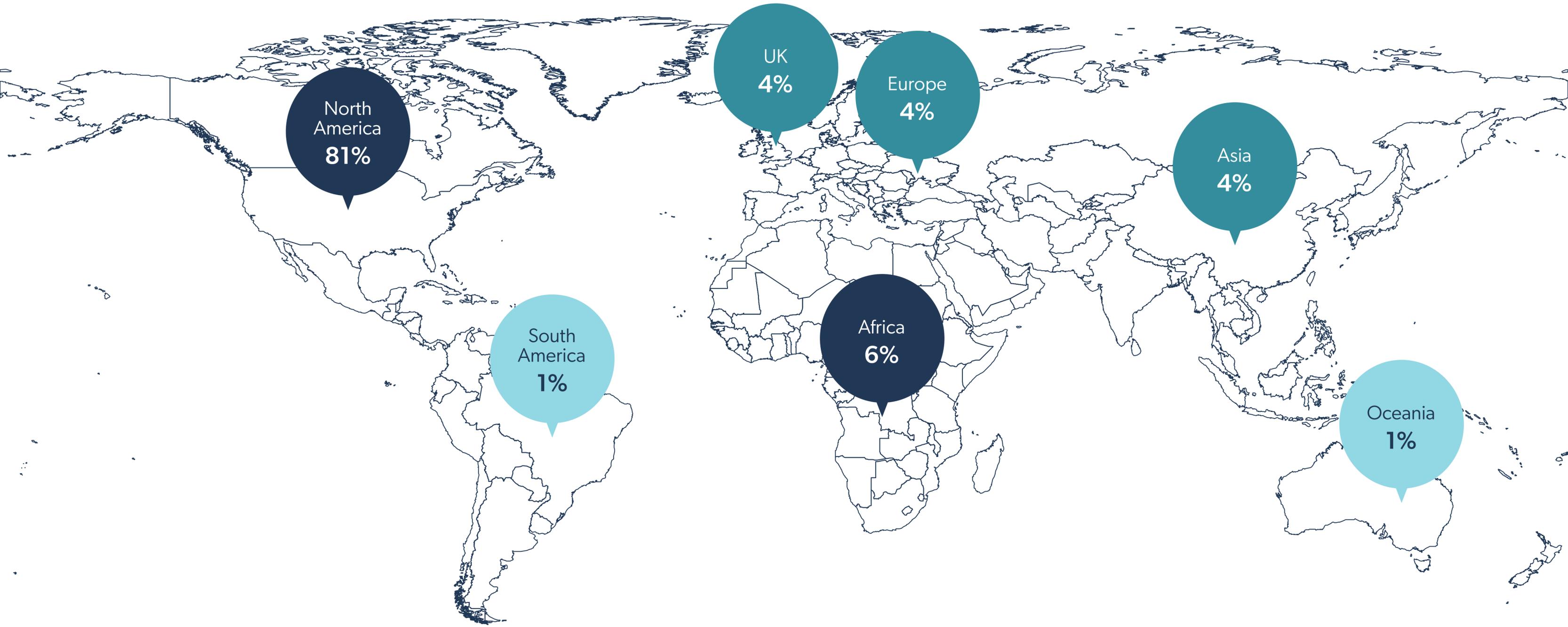
"**Personal relationships** matter."

"I think most PR pros are doing
their jobs **adequately**."

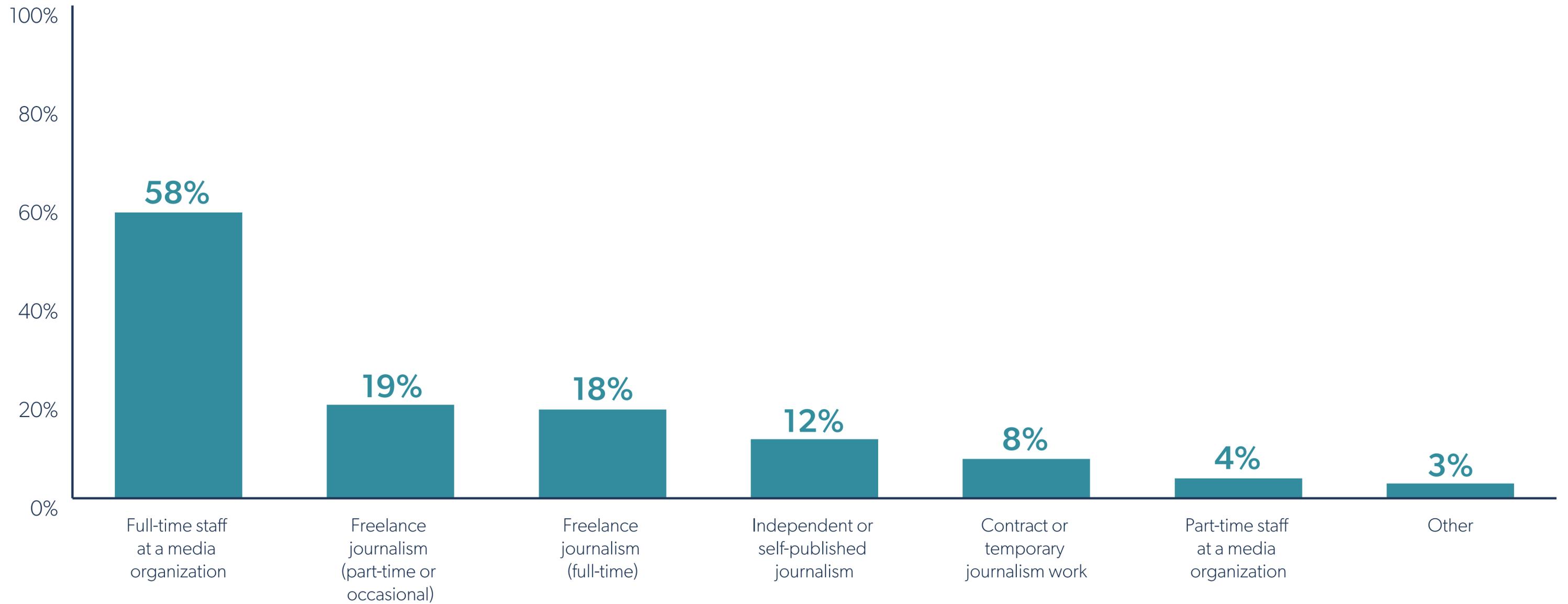
"Know the **journalist**
and its **readership**."

Demographics

In what country do you work?



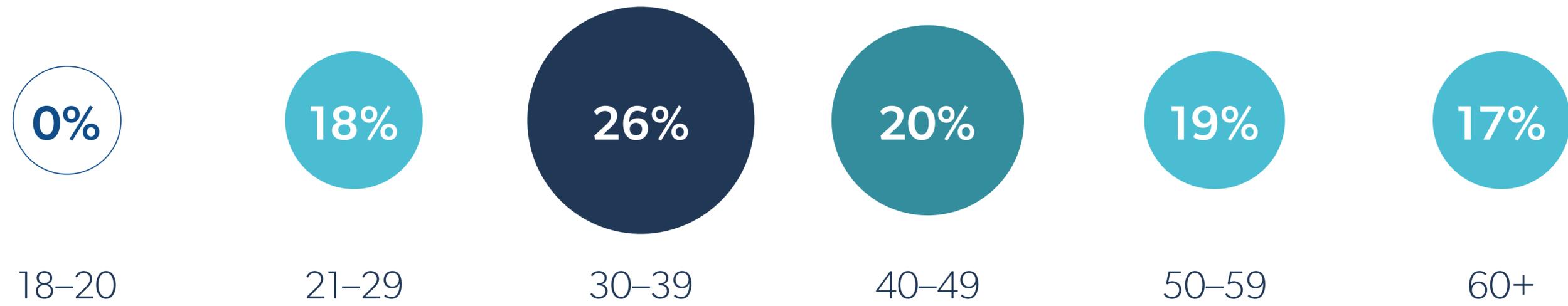
What types of journalism work are you currently doing?



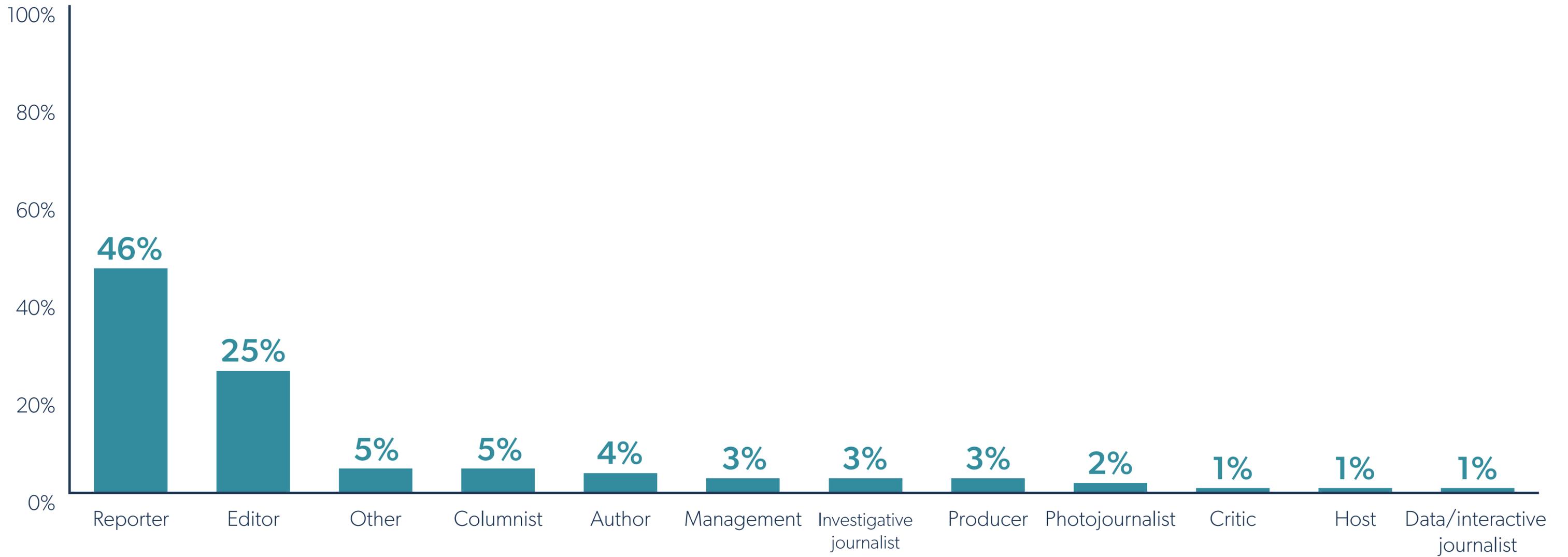
How long have you been a journalist?



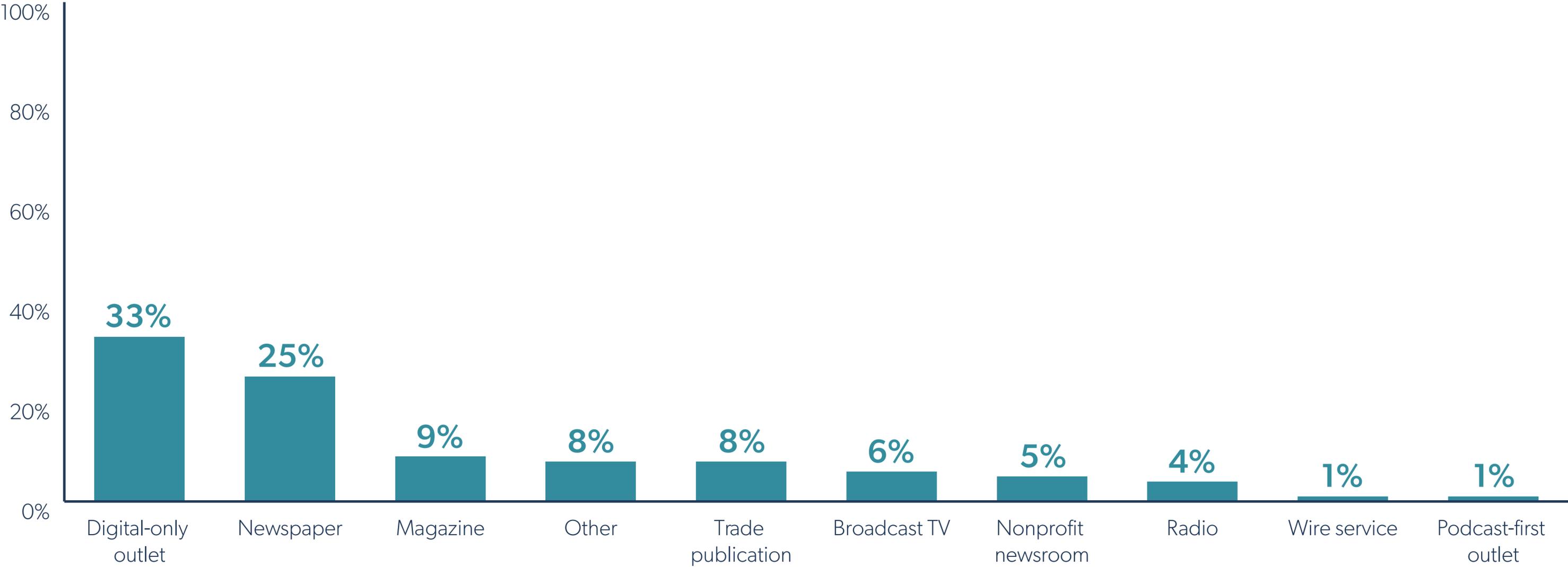
How old are you?



What best describes your role?



What type of organization do you work for?

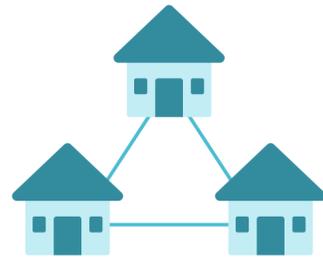


Which audiences does your primary outlet explicitly aim to serve, regardless of geographic scope?



46%

Local community



36%

National general audience



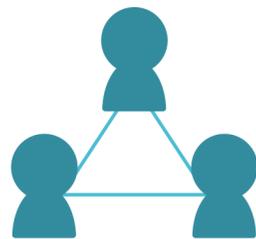
32%

Global audience



10%

Other



7%

Ethnic or cultural community



6%

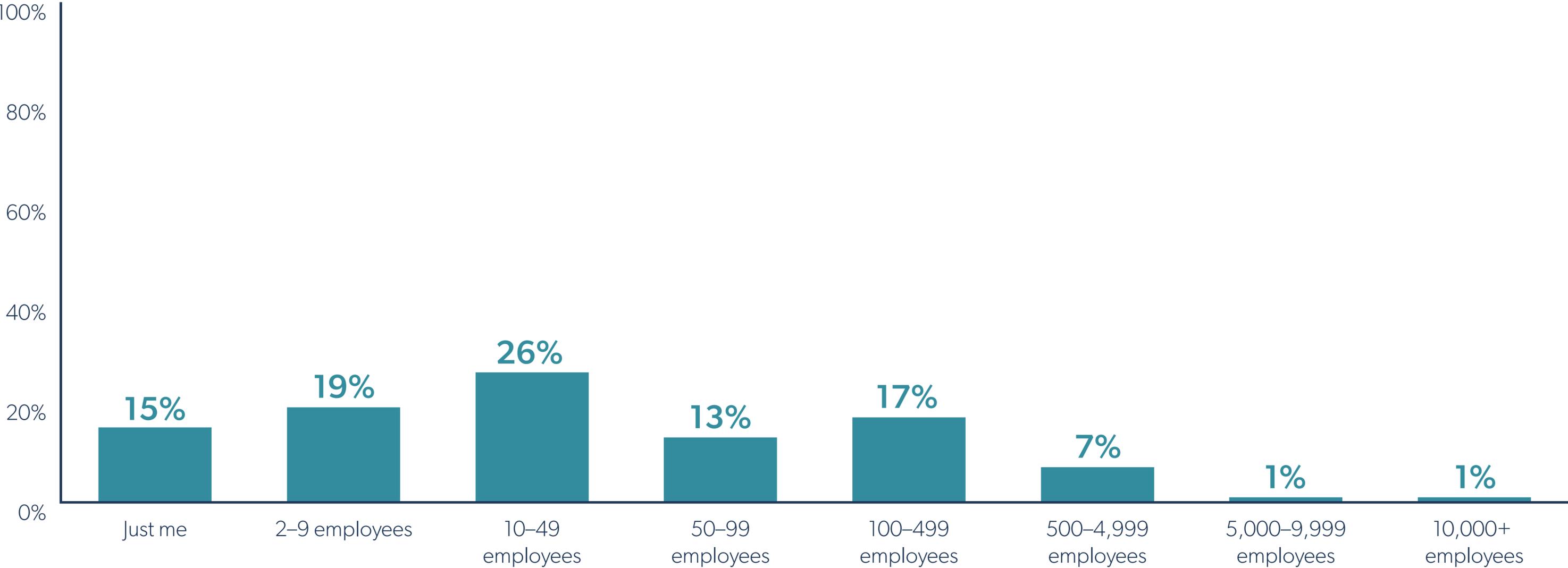
Language-based audience



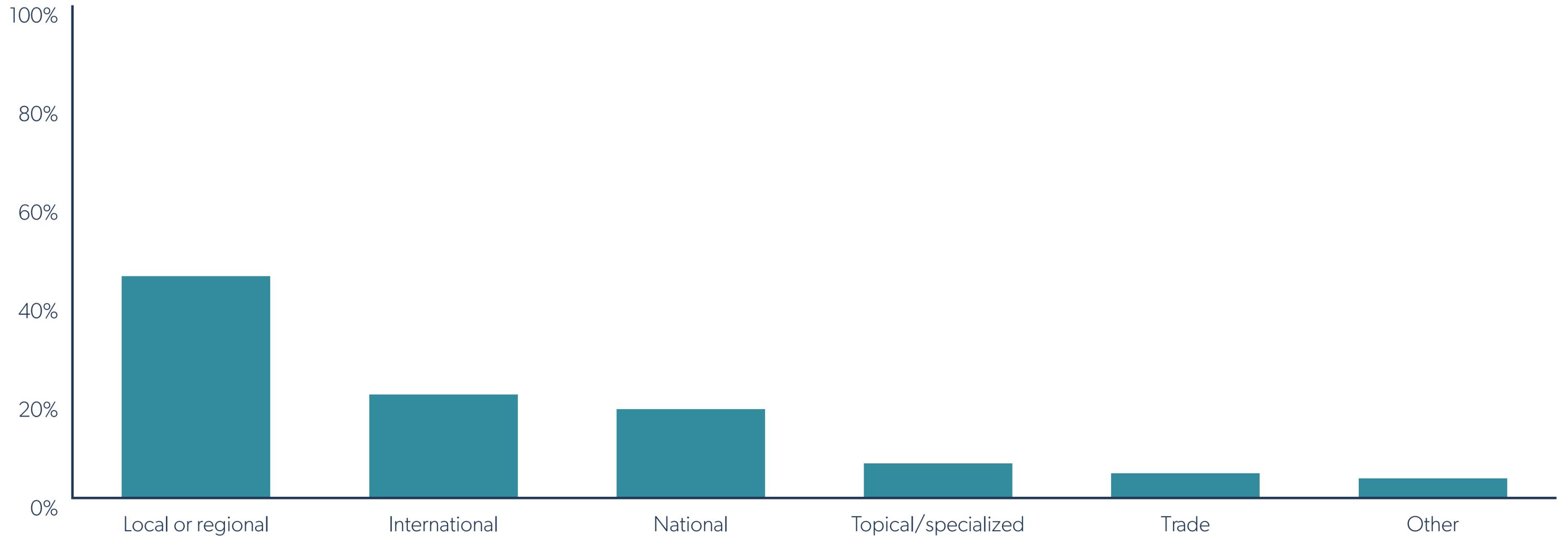
1%

None of the above

If you work full time at a news organization, about how many full-time employees work at your company?



If you work full time at a news organization, what is the scope of your publication's coverage?



Methodology

We surveyed 1,044 journalists from January 30 to March 2, 2026.

The goal of this survey is to understand the current state of journalism and the future outlook of the industry by speaking to the people who produce the news. The self-administered online survey collected 1,044 responses, with 897 included in the final analysis after data cleaning.

The survey was distributed via email to journalists in Muck Rack's database from January 30 to March 2, 2026. Most responses came from U.S.-based journalists, with additional representation from the United Kingdom, Canada and India.

Low-quality responses were removed from the sample. This includes duplicates, spam, low-effort responses and straight-line answers. Unless otherwise noted, results should not be compared with previous years due to changes in question wording. Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding errors.

Salary data includes only full-time, U.S.-based journalists.

A special thanks to our partners at Asian American Journalists Association.

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