

CISION[®]

2021

UK EDITION

State of the Media



THE GO-TO SOURCE FOR BECOMING JOURNALISTS' GO-TO SOURCE

Contents



Executive Summary

The year of 2020 was truly one for the books, and as we trod blindly through the mud, newsrooms bared the duty of informing communities of the good, the bad, and the ugly. Squeezing through pandemic headlines were global stories of bushfires, presidential elections, and racial inequality. For our small island in the sea, reports on royal friction, the Black Lives Matter movement, and 'getting Brexit done', surfaced amidst the COVID-fuelled health and financial crises.

So, it comes as no surprise that the constant stream of heavy beats combined with an economic slump have had a large impact on the media. One year on from our last report, journalists in the UK face a new set of challenges.

As part of [Cision's 2021 Global State of the Media Report](#), we surveyed journalists from all over the country to understand the media landscape in the UK. This report highlights some of the key findings.

Key Takeaways

Compared to last year, more journalists think that trust in the media has improved. However, the majority still believe its declining.

The press release lives on. Journalists still regard press releases and news announcements the most useful source and content, but there are guidelines to follow to make them more successful.

Relevance and targeting (or lack of) in pitching continues to be an issue.

What keeps journalists awake at night

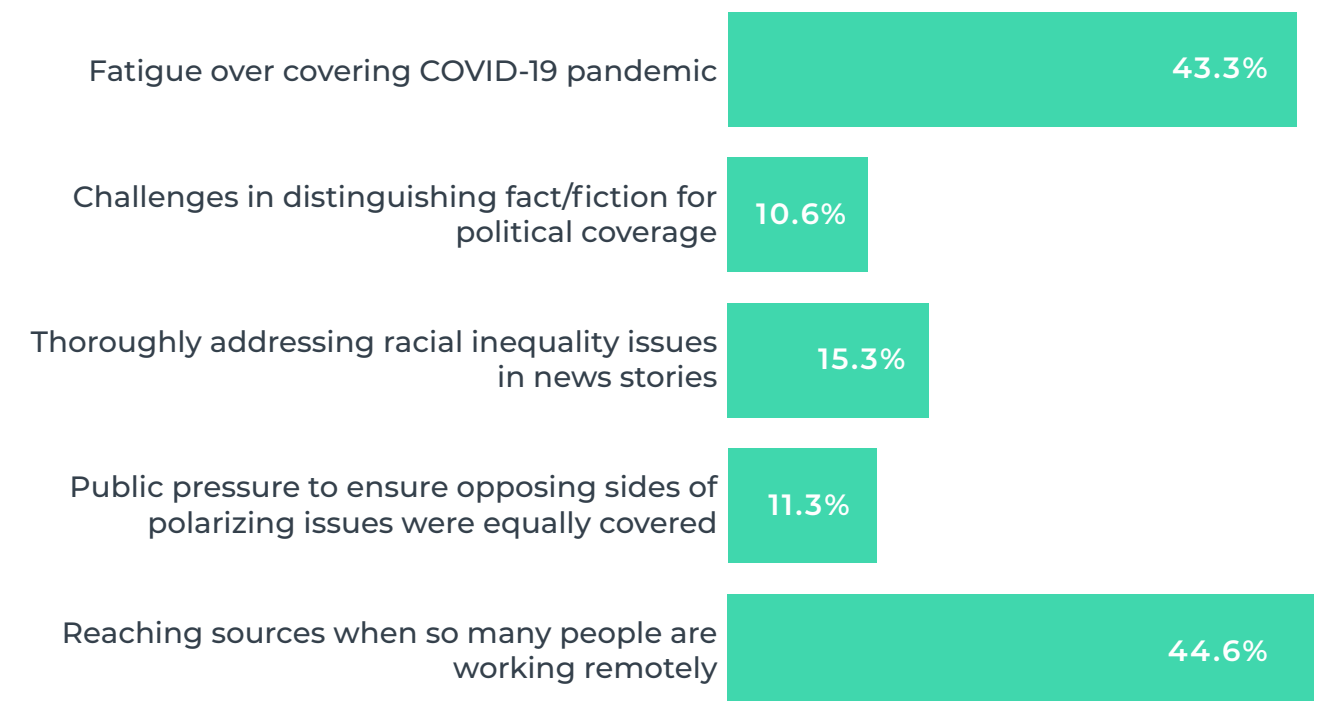
The media landscape has always had its challenges. A lack of staffing and resources continue to put pressure on journalists in the UK as they pursue the biggest news story of our time, and the subject matter itself has flipped more than a few things on its head. Along with COVID-fatigue and declining advertising revenue, journalists have (and still are) struggling to reach sources when people are working remotely.

“That’s too bad, but what does this have to do with me?” you’re wondering. PR pros can turn these challenges into opportunities to work better with journalists. A lack of staff means journalists are crazy busy so it’s less about speed and quantity and more about accuracy and relevance when it comes to pitches.

Stories outside of the pandemic domain are likely to stand out. And going the extra mile to put the right people directly in front of

journalists is bound to get you brownie points. When it comes to pitching preferences, we give you some tips later in the report.

Did you struggle with any of the following in 2020?



“The rise of ‘fake news’ (particularly in social media networks) and the credibility issues this creates across the rest of the press.”

“It’s hard to operate when your work is not valued – ‘fake news’, ‘spelling mistakes’, ‘not a news story’, ‘why the bad news’ etc. – while juggling the problems caused by people sharing Facebook or Google without clicking through to the story.”

“To encourage the public to get their news from legitimate sources and be sceptical of news via social media.”

“Ad and buying revenue drop but also the attacks on the media in general on social media.”

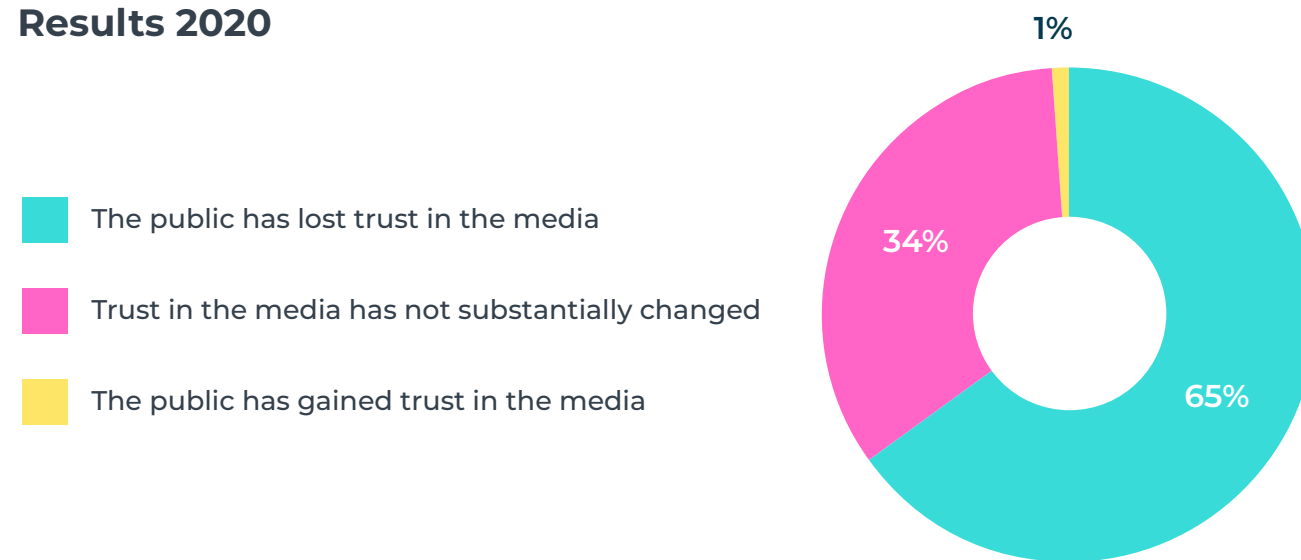
“Blurring between “public service” government comms and political comms.”



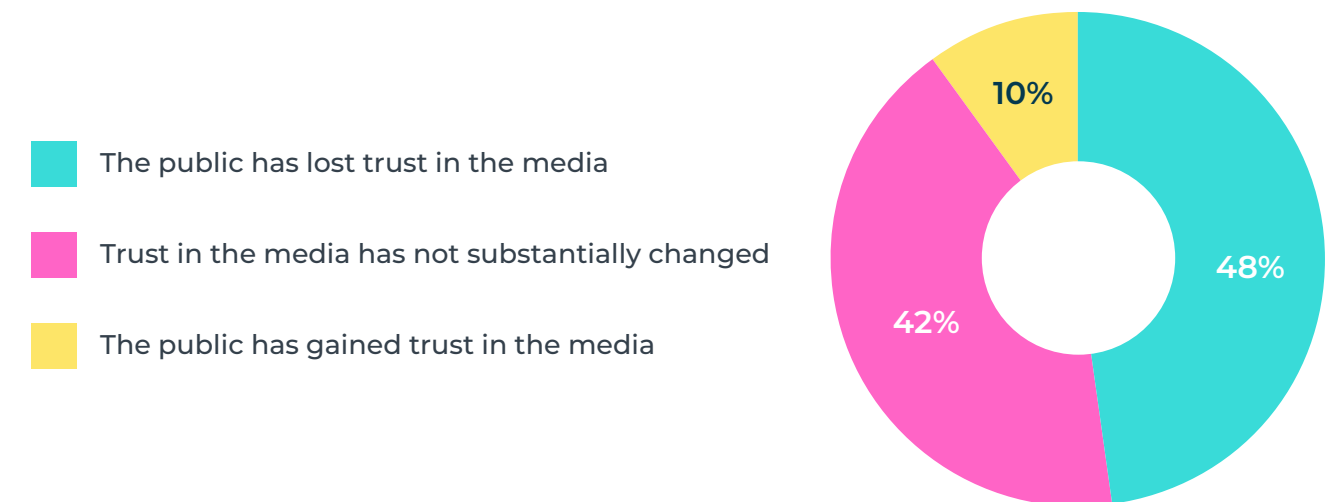
Trust in the media

Cision has covered and tracked this topic over the years, with lack of trust in the media being an ongoing concern for journalists. This year's UK findings show that things are improving with a 9% increase in journalists that think the public has gained trust in the media compared to last year. The gap is slowly closing in, but with almost half (48%) of UK journalists still believing there is a problem, it calls for efforts in delivering researched and fact-based stories.

Results 2020



Results 2021



The million-dollar question: *why* is trust in news lacking?

In the mind of journalists, the rise in social media plays a huge part in credibility concerns. [Research from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism \(RISJ\)](#) also makes some other valuable findings:

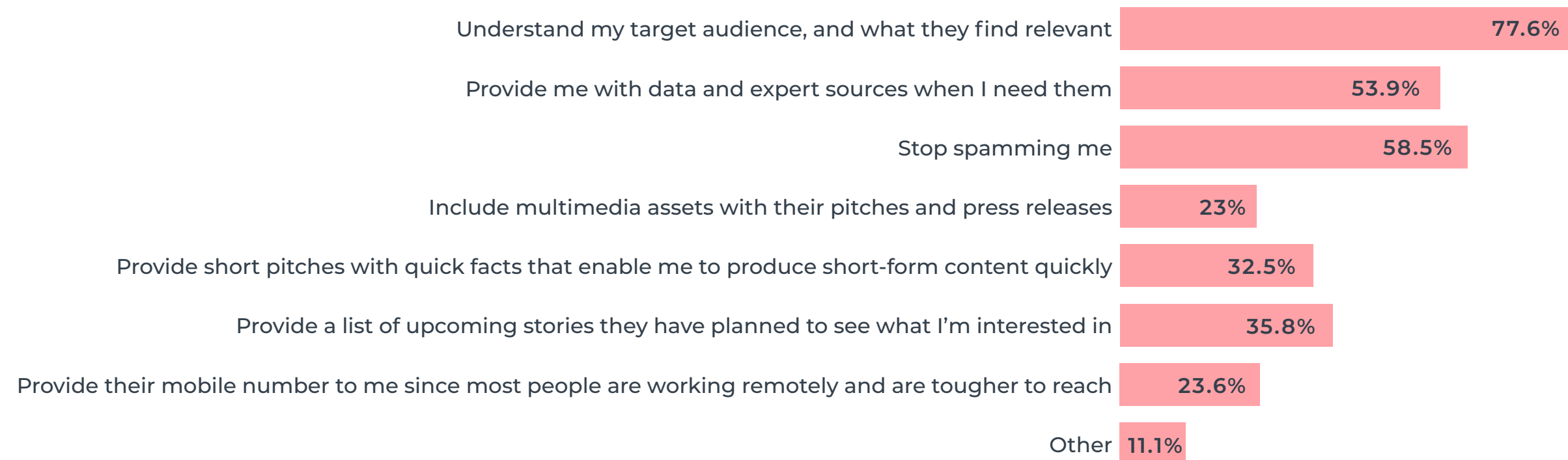
1. Being too far removed from audiences and failings in reflecting the voices of the communities they seek to serve
2. Sensationalism and 'clickbait'
3. As trust in politics has fallen, trust in news has typically followed

Creating connections with journalists

We asked journalists ‘How has your relationship with PR professionals changed over the last year?’ and the majority (64%) said that there was no change at all. To create better relationships between PR professionals and journalists, someone needs to make the first move, right?

Although personalised pitches are great and show you are human too, it’s simply not enough to build a rapport but not have the content that fits the bill. 69% of UK journalists will throw pitches in the virtual bin due to irrelevance, so gaining a deep understanding of target audiences is key. Finding out what a journalist is covering at that time is also an essential step to ensure you stick in minds as a reliable source.

What can PR professionals do to help you?



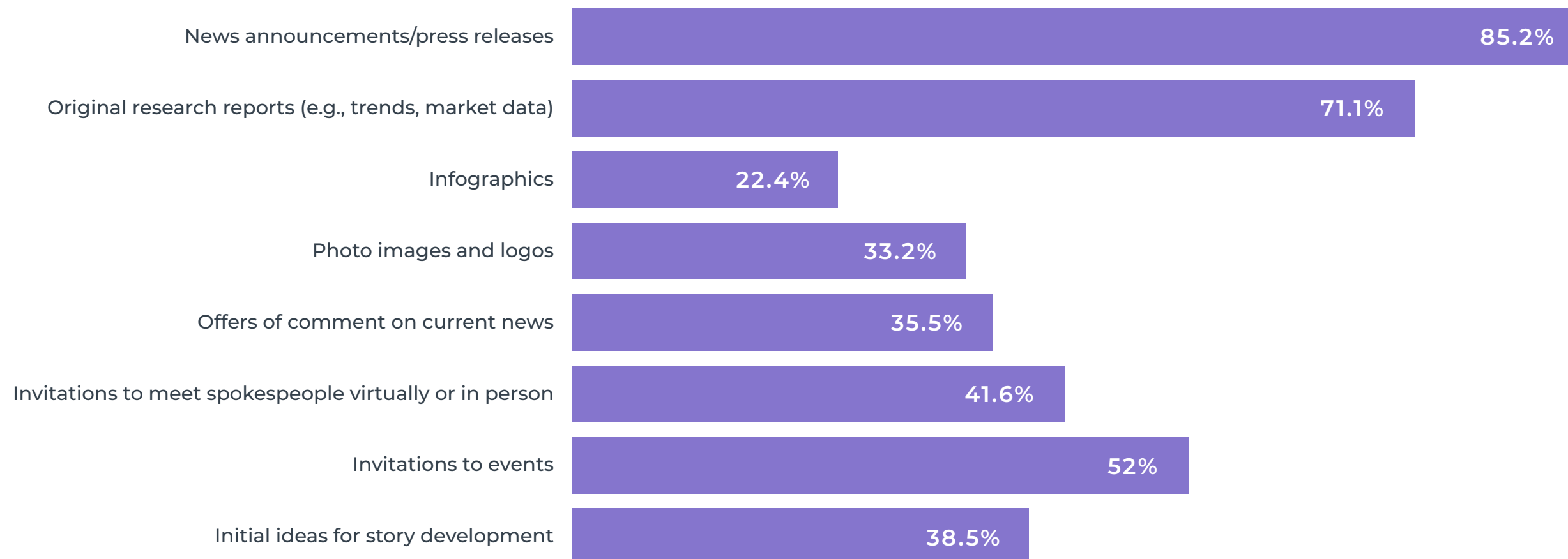


**PR best
practices:**
Dos and don'ts

What you can do

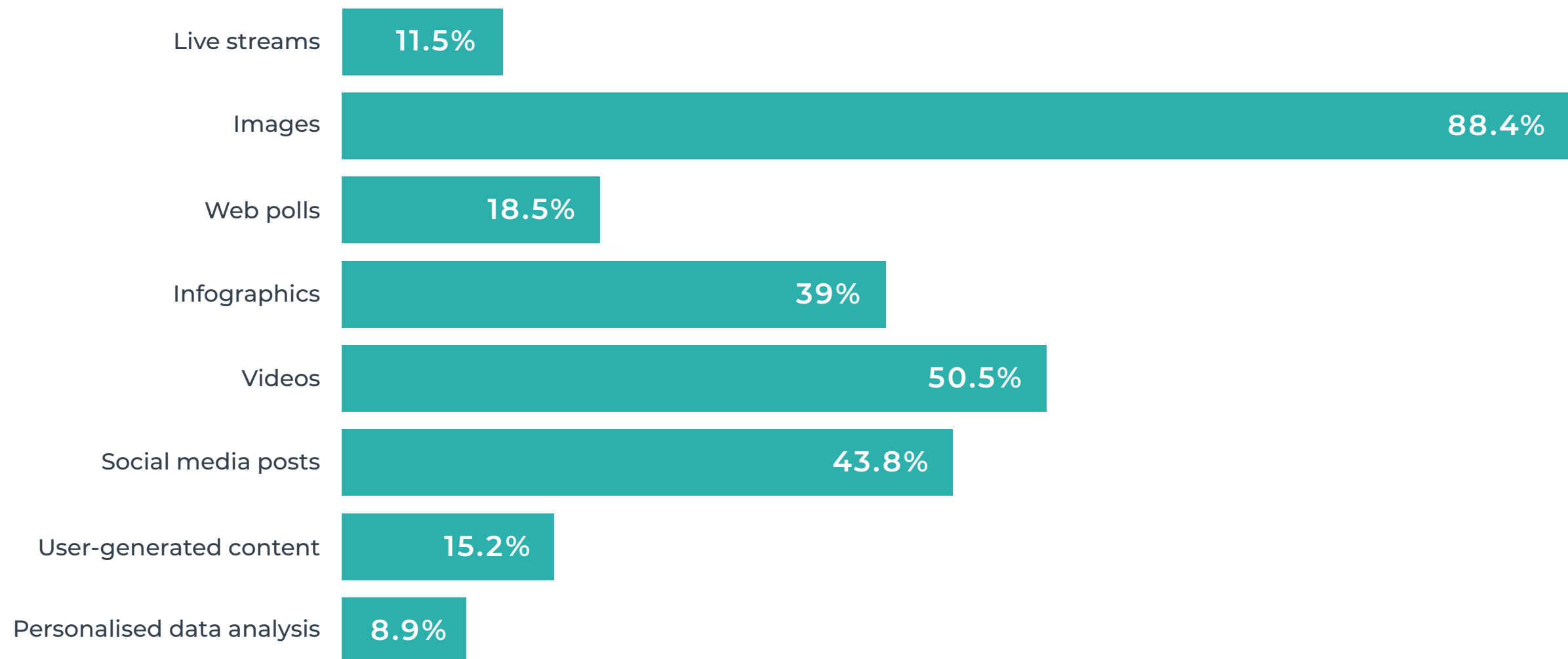
1. **Keep it traditional.** You may have heard the rumours that the press release is old news, but we're here to put them to bed. According to 85% of journalists, the press release is considered the most popular content type.

What kind of content do you want to receive from brands and PR professionals?



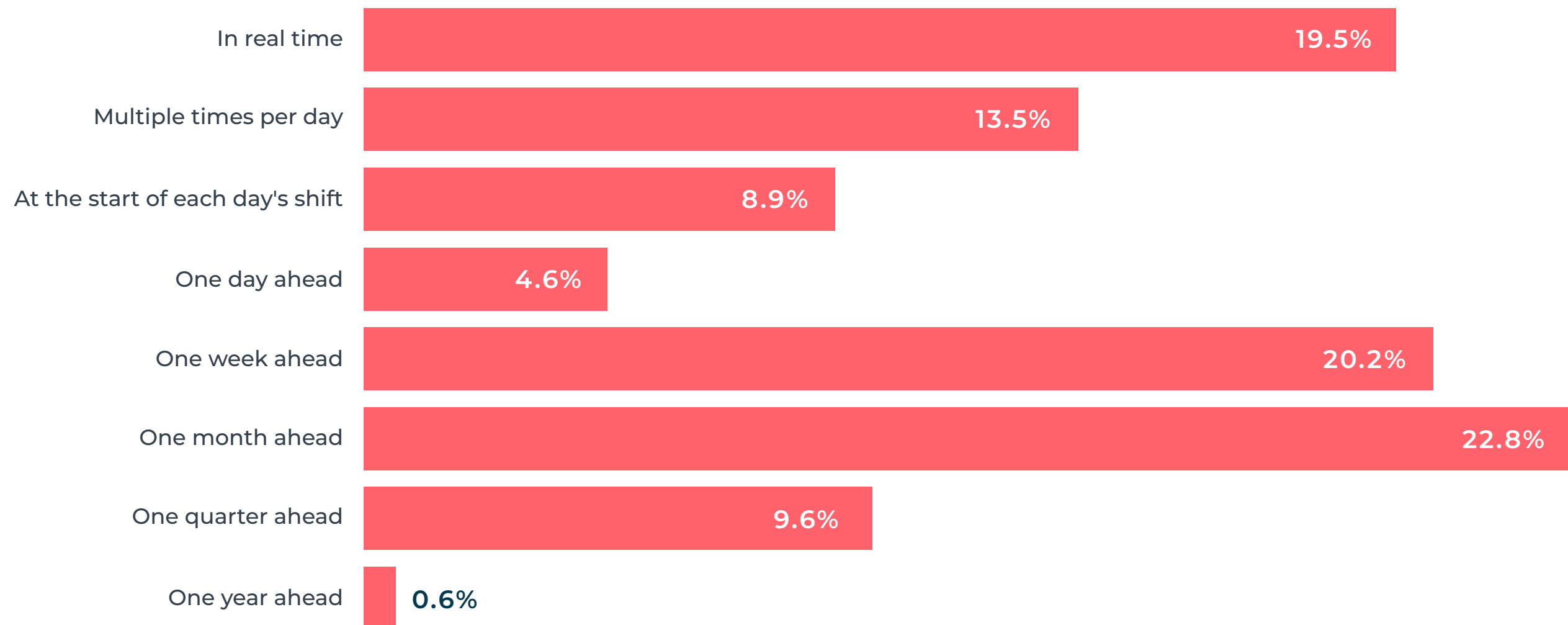
2. **Include multimedia assets with your press releases.** Cision's [2020 State of the Press Release](#) found that adding multimedia increases the views on a piece of news. The overwhelming majority of this year's respondents (88%) included images in their stories within the last six months, followed by video at 51%. With so much news consumed online these days, there is scope to get creative with your graphics.

Which multimedia or data elements have you included in your articles over the past six months?

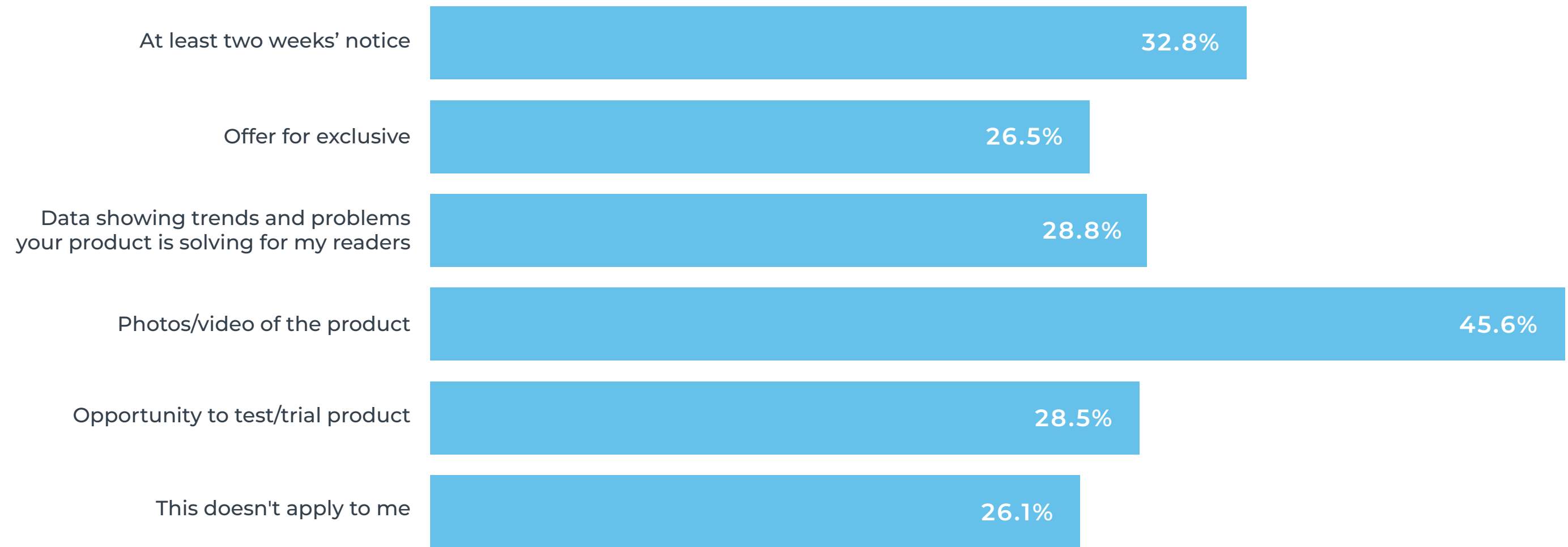


3. **Consider your timings.** Most UK journalists and over half of our respondents (58%) are planning their stories in advance, with many thinking about content ideas for a month down the line. You can give your pitch a better chance of landing coverage by giving two to four weeks' notice and understanding the timetables of newsrooms.

How far in advance do you plan for future stories?



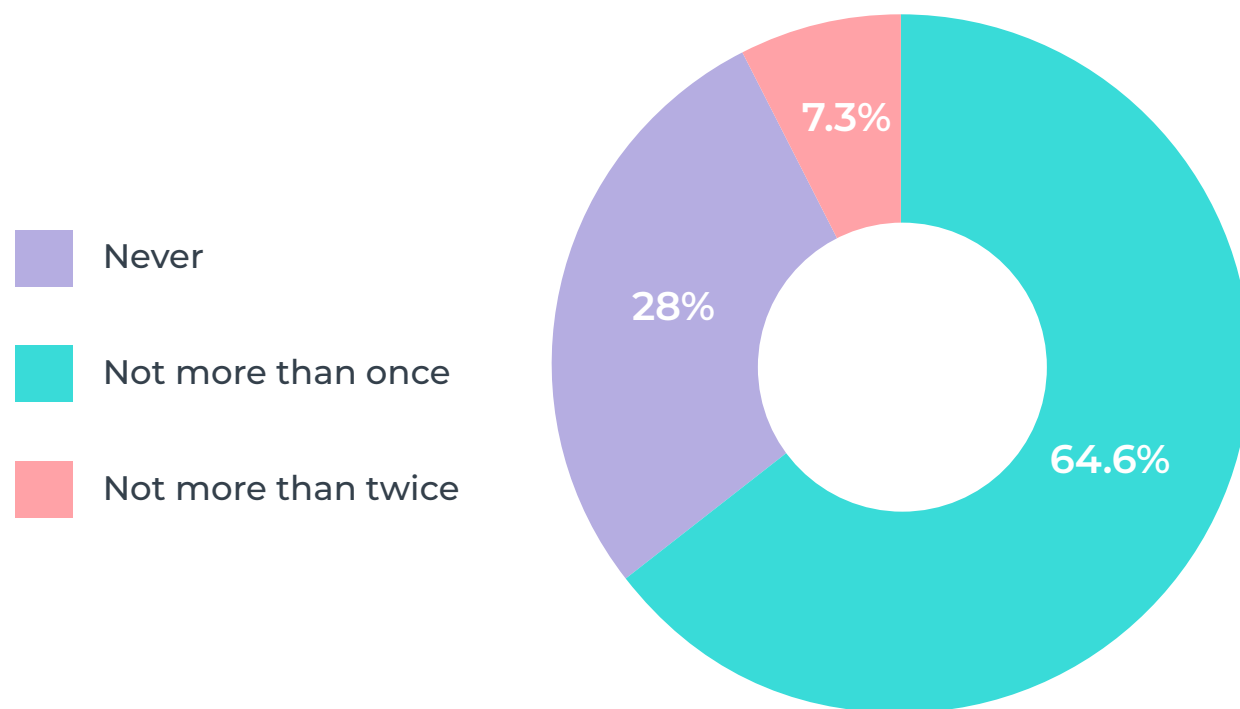
In order for you to consider covering a story on a product launch, what does a pitch need to include?



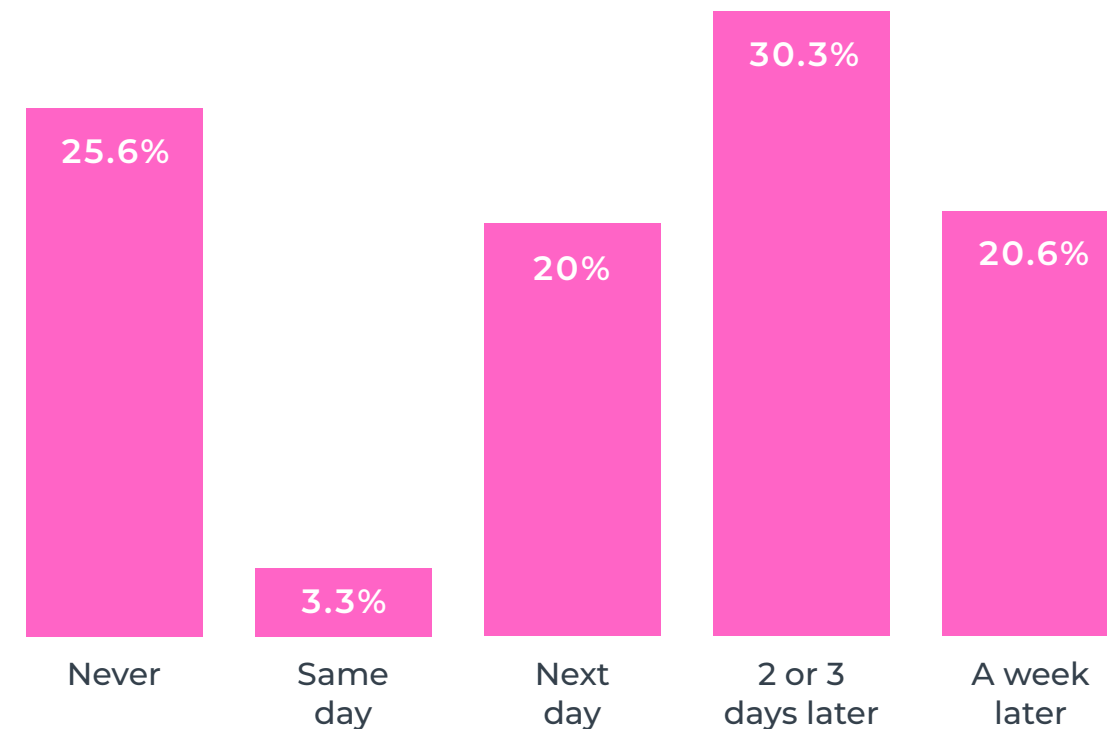
What not to do

1. **Don't follow up more than once.** And if you need to, wait at least two to three days to give the journalist time to read your pitch. If you're worried it will be get lost in their inbox, former newsreader and journalist for BBC, ITV, and ITN, [Genelle Aldred recommends picking up the phone to let them know you'll be sending something over soon.](#)

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

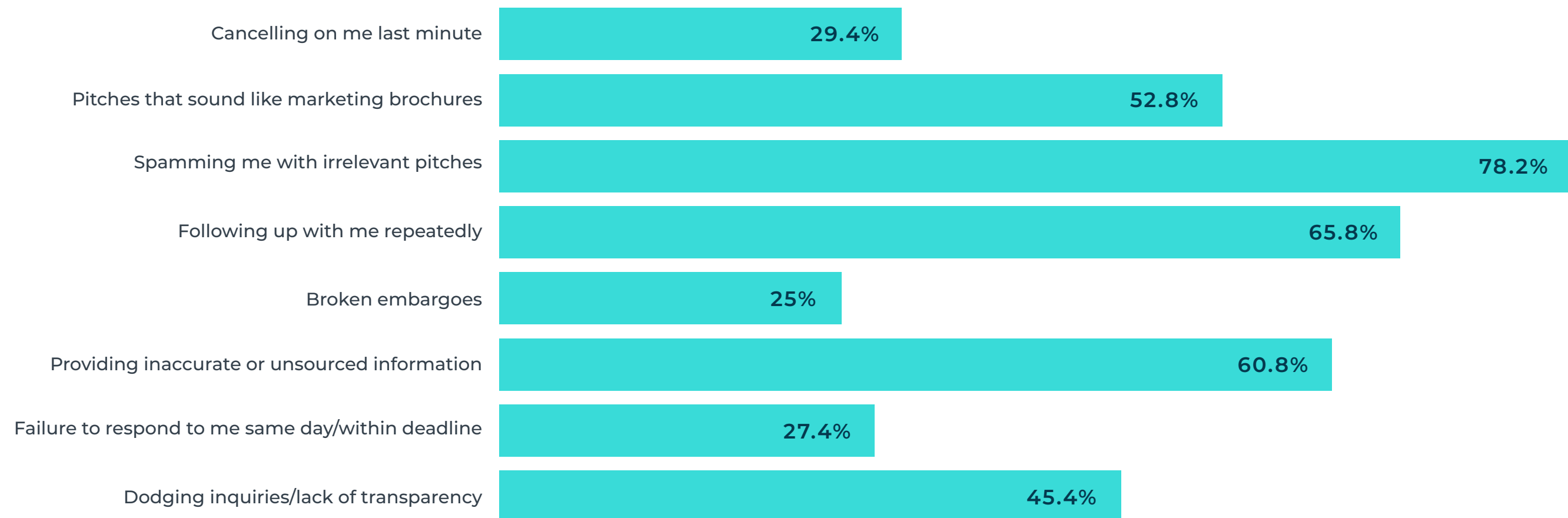


When should a PR professional follow up with you after sending a pitch?



2. **Don't spam and simply hope for the best.** This is a journalist's top pet peeve and sure-fire way to get blocked, ignored, and blacklisted. In fact, 59% of journalists regard 'stop spamming me' as high on the list of things PR pros can do to help (a 42% increase on last year). In our [2021 State of the Media webinar](#), Features Writer for the Sunday Mirror and Sunday People, Laura Connor said, "I get so many press releases where clearly I'm just a bcc. My name isn't on them nor anything to do with the publication that I work for – they're the ones I'm going to ignore." If you blast your database, you'll probably be deemed a time waster.

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



10 words not to use in your pitch

The journalists have spoken. These words/phrases are unofficially banned from press releases due to overuse.

Avoid avoid avoid.



Best of breed



Leading



Unprecedented



Exciting



Unique



Cutting-edge



World Class



ROI



Thrilled



Disruption/Disrupting

Conclusion

In a media landscape where resources are stretched and the pandemic has dominated for so long, journalists are looking to PR professionals to keep abreast of the news agenda and create new ideas for them where possible. Following trends, forming personal connections, and completing extensive research into both reporter and publication will likely end in ongoing coverage and success.

PR pros need to be mindful of journalists (lack of) time and package content with multimedia elements, market data, and expert sources to create efficiency.

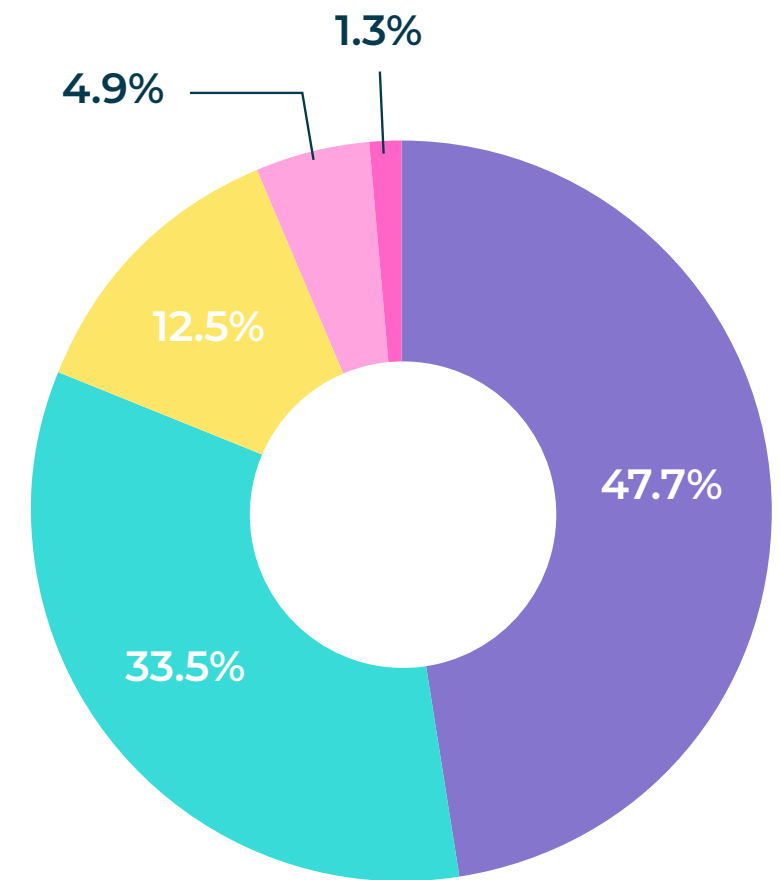
As we see a light at the end of the COVID-tunnel, different stories will start to emerge on the horizon. Be prepared and get communicating!

Methodology

As part of the Global State of the Media Survey conducted between 1 February and 1 March 2021, Cision emailed surveys to Cision Media Database members in the UK, which are vetted by the company's media research team to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers and as bloggers.

The survey was also available to media professionals in the PR Newswire for Journalists database. This year's survey collected responses from 306 respondents in the United Kingdom.

- Print (newspaper/magazine)
- Online-only news outlet
- Broadcast (TV/radio/podcast)
- Individual/personal blog/freelance
- Social media influencer





As a global leader in PR, marketing and social media management technology and intelligence, Cision helps brands and organisations to identify, connect and engage with customers and stakeholders to drive business results. [PR Newswire](#), a network of over 1.1 billion influencers, in-depth monitoring, analytics and its [Falcon.io](#) social media platform headline a premier suite of solutions. In addition, Cision has entered into a definitive agreement to acquire [Brandwatch](#). Cision has offices in 24 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA and APAC.

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