



CISION'S 2018 GLOBAL  
**STATE OF  
THE MEDIA  
REPORT**

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# INTRODUCTION

It's been an extraordinary year for journalism, to say the least.

As the fake news saga rumbles on, UK politicians are growing frustrated with the apparent reluctance of social media firms to take action.

When lawmakers quizzed tech companies on the issue, one committee member lamented that social media firms just “don't get it”. Labour MP Julie Elliott said Twitter's executives thought “they had no responsibility for what was on their platform”.

At the same time, constant attacks from politicians threaten to undermine the media's ability to hold public figures to account. While Donald Trump may have popularised the term, it's increasingly common to hear people dismiss unflattering coverage as “fake news”.

But while the majority of UK journalists agree fake news is making people more sceptical about the content they read, a startling 93% are unsure what it means for their publication - or think its impact has been “neutral”.

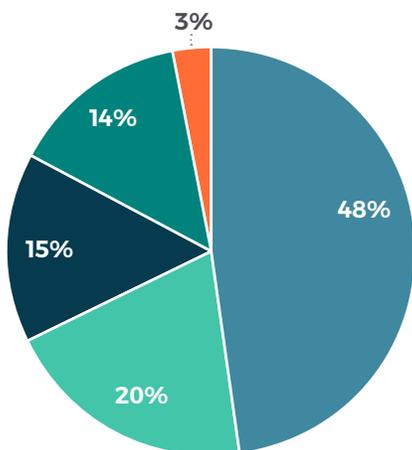
That is one of the key findings in Cision's 2018 *State of the Media* survey, for which the company polled 1,355 journalists from across six countries on their perceptions of the media and communications industries.

It seems the public may now be turning away from sensationalist headlines and seeking out sources of information they can trust.

*The Metro* recently overtook *The Sun* to become Britain's most-read daily newspaper, with an audience of 10.4 million readers per month. This marks the first time the tabloid has been knocked off the top spot since 1978 -

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Being **accurate** is more important than being first.
- Journalists are concerned about **fake news** and **trust in the media**.
- Reporters and editors still **trust the press release** the most.
- PR professionals are being asked to provide **accurate, newsworthy** information.



▶ Here's a breakdown of this year's global respondents, by outlet:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ■ PRINT (NEWSPAPER/MAGAZINE)<br>651 responses     | ■ INDIVIDUAL/PERSONAL BLOG/FREELANCE<br>194 responses |
| ■ ONLINE-ONLY NEWS OUTLET<br>267 responses        | ■ SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM<br>35 responses               |
| ■ BROADCAST (TV, RADIO, PODCAST)<br>208 responses |   |

by a title renowned for staying neutral on the big issues of the day.

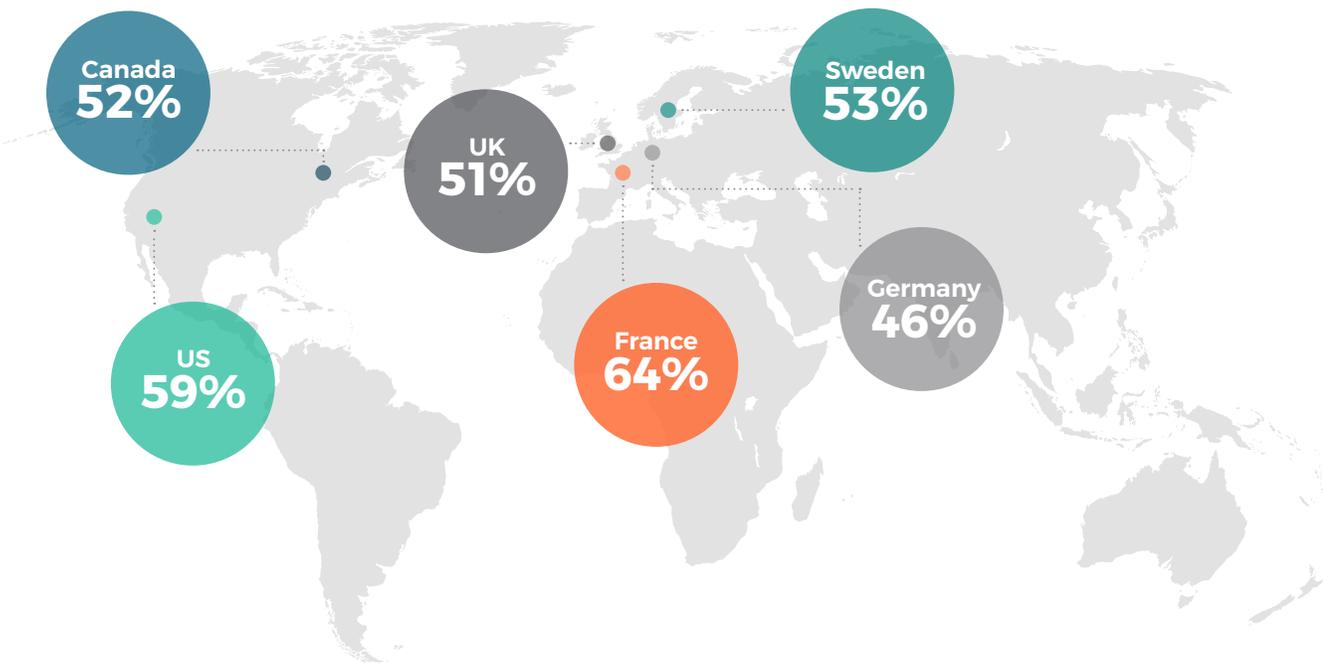
This conclusion is also supported by the results of this year's survey. A full 81.4% of British journalists said their title values accuracy the most, above exclusivity or

being the first to break a story.

Globally, 71% of respondents believed the public has lost trust in the media over the last year, underpinning how important it is for communicators to provide journalists with reliable, newsworthy information.

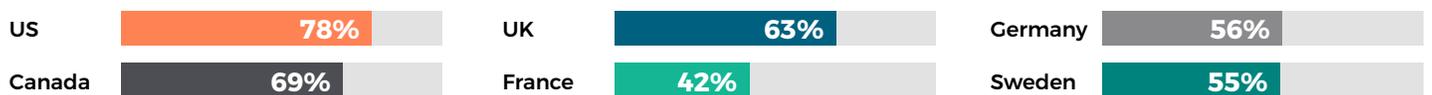
### We asked: "What's the biggest impact that 'fake news' (defined as false content presented as as real news coverage of actual events) will have on journalism?"

► Here's the proportion of journalists who said it will make readers more sceptical about what they read, by country:



Declining trust is another burning issue, with **71%** saying they think the public has lost trust in journalists. That's down from 91% last year, but it's still a worrying statistic.

► Here's how the above sentiment was expressed by country:



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As you'll see throughout this report, journalists still need reliable public relations partners – perhaps now, more than ever.

Social media is also making journalists' jobs more complicated, and some worry that social networks and search engines are causing audiences to bypass traditional media.

While journalists can get story ideas from anywhere, they still say their most valuable and trusted piece of PR content is the traditional press release.

Most are happy to work with public relations professionals, provided they're receiving information that's accurate, newsworthy and can be used to enhance their coverage.



### **UNITED KINGDOM: SOCIAL MEDIA STRUGGLES**

Fake news may not be as top of mind in Britain as it is in other places, with just 19% of journalists citing it as the top challenge facing the industry. But 37% did say social networks and search engines bypassing traditional media has been the biggest test for journalism over the last 12 months.

When it comes to how technology could impact their work, 26% said changes to social media algorithms (like Facebook's recent update) will be most disruptive. Other tech innovations, such as better and cheaper video production and advances in artificial intelligence, were also cited as having the potential to impact on their work.

Like their international peers, UK journalists trust press releases, with 44% ranking them as the most reliable brand news source. Official spokespeople come in second with 23% of the vote.

Accuracy is even more important in the UK than elsewhere, with 81% of journalists saying that ensuring content is 100% correct is paramount. Only 7% said being the first to publish a story was most important to their organisation – three percentage points below the global average.

Writing press releases with a clear news hook looks to be the best way to ensure you capture a journalist's attention, with 37% saying this is key. Comms professionals should also ensure they are providing accurate content from trustworthy sources.

# JOURNALISM'S BIG CHALLENGES

It's no secret the journalism industry is undergoing some profound changes. Newsrooms are either shrinking or changing the focus of their coverage. This year's survey helped elucidate the scope of those changes.

Out of all the issues the industry is facing, 28% said staffing and resources were the biggest challenges in journalism over the last 12 months. Social networks and search engines bypassing traditional media came a close second at 25%. Fake news, blurred lines between editorial and advertising and issues around freedom of the press rounded out the list of challenges.

The proliferation of fake news, typically created by "troll farms" and those on the extreme ends of the political spectrum, was cited as the third most pressing challenge over the last 12 months. It's still a major concern for many journalists, with more than half saying "fake news" is making readers more sceptical about the content they read, including news produced by real reporters. Meanwhile, 46% are still unsure of how these untrue stories will impact their organisation in the future.

But there may be a bright side to the fake news phenomenon: 21% of respondents said that it's increasing the importance of journalistic standards, while 9% said it's improving the popularity of trusted and established media brands.

## How are journalists dealing with the industry's biggest challenges?

▶ Here's what the journalists we surveyed had to say:



"Being mindful of accuracy and attention to facts in everything we do, avoiding production techniques that might misrepresent reality in any way."

"Compiling original and creative content that is interesting to the audience. Sharing content on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Putting emphasis on human interest stories and targeting a young audience that consumes news via social media platforms."

"I continue to write news for bona fide news organisations, but I also promote my work where possible on social platforms. Having to master this pace is the biggest challenge where in the past writing news, getting it right and speedy publishing was enough."

"It's a struggle."

"Creating original content, seeking out our own stories, putting together a product people will look for on its own merits."



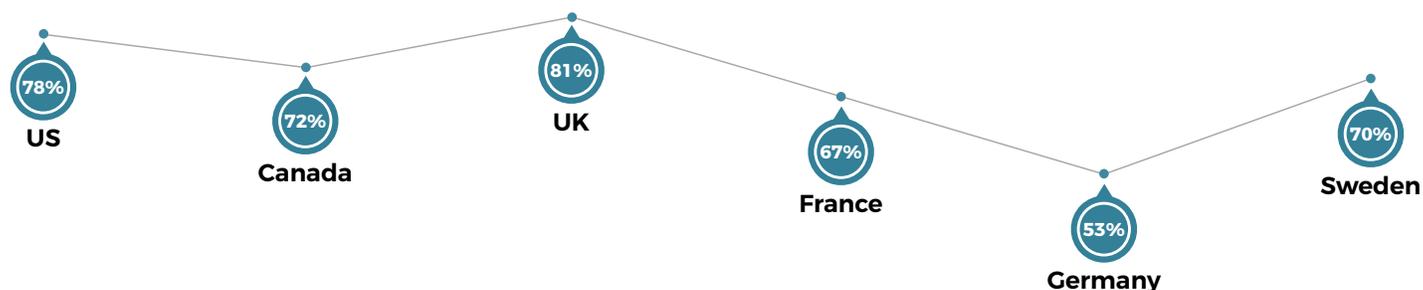
# WHY ACCURACY COMES FIRST

With so much attention on news media these days, being first to publish, whether on social media or their outlet's website, is no longer the priority for most journalists. As we saw last year, ensuring that content is 100%

accurate is paramount. A full 75% of global respondents said getting things right is most important to their news organisation. Only 10% said the same about being first to publish, down from 13% in 2017.

**Globally, 75% of media say that ensuring content is 100% accurate is the top priority for their organisation.**

► Here's how the above sentiment was expressed by country:



Emphasising the value journalists place on accuracy may help the media grow its audience. When we asked journalists if the public had lost or gained trust in the media over the last year, 71% said people had lost trust, with only 5% saying the opposite. While that's still a troubling number, it is down from 91% in last year's survey. This could be because public attacks on the media industry have made people pay more attention to what journalists do and the value they provide. The publication of several ground-breaking stories has no doubt also helped educate people about what the media does. People are increasingly looking to traditionally

trusted sources to provide relevant and factual coverage of current events.

Movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp highlighted the importance of journalism, having started after reporters broke stories on sexual harassment in Hollywood and the media. We wanted to know if these movements help or hurt the perception of journalism, since many of the controversies centred around media personalities. Our research suggests that the media is viewed more favourably with 36% saying it strongly enforces journalism's role, 35% saying it didn't make a difference and 29% saying they hurt journalism's image.

# DEALING WITH TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

## Emerging technology and social media trends

### Social algorithm updates

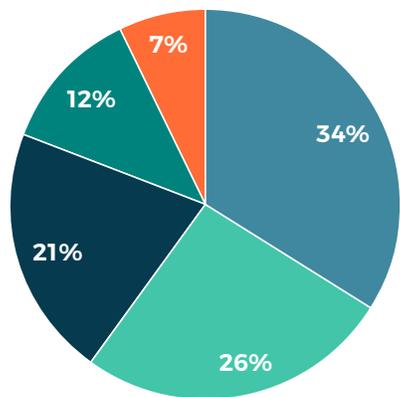
Social media has been a major media disruptor for years. But it's still something many journalists grapple with as part of their day-to-day duties. When asked what new technology will change the way journalists work the most, 34% said new social media algorithms. Specifically, they cited Facebook's recent news feed and algorithm updates, saying these will have the biggest impact on their jobs. More than a quarter said better and cheaper video production technology would influence their work. Meanwhile, 21% think artificial intelligence and machine learning will improve the way they analyse traffic and performance data and predict readership trends.

### Smart devices and voice technology

As for other technologies, the survey found that home assistants, such as Amazon Alexa and Google Home, may be incorporated into the content development process in the future. Up to 38% of respondents said these devices will be impactful, but aren't yet a near-term priority. Another 32% said these devices won't have a major impact on media consumption, while 22% believed they would increase people's focus on new content delivery channels. Just 8% said this technology would force a complete rethink of publishing as we know it.



When asked what new technology will change the way journalists work the most, 34% said new social media algorithms



### Journalists told us what technology they think will change the way they work the most:

- **UPDATED SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS** (e.g. Facebook's updates)
- **BETTER AND CHEAPER VIDEO PRODUCTION TECHNOLOGY** (drones, cameras, etc.)
- **AI/MACHINE LEARNING ON THE BACK END** (i.e. to analyse traffic/content performance and predict trends in readership/viewership)
- **AI/MACHINE LEARNING ON THE FRONT END** (i.e. to automate the creation of articles and videos using interview footage, etc.)
- **VOICE RECOGNITION/ACTIVATED TECHNOLOGY AND ASSISTANTS**

# THE CONTINUING NEED FOR PR

As the journalism industry continues to change, its dependence on public relations professionals remains strong. We asked respondents whether their relationships with PR professionals are more or less valuable in light of declining trust in the media. In response, 70% said their relationships remained as important as ever, while 20% said they are more valuable.

When it comes to what journalists want from their PR contacts, 63% said news announcements and press releases. This indicates that most reporters want to continue interacting with their PR professionals in the same way they have been historically. However, 22% said original research on trends and market data was also important to them, suggesting new opportunities for PR and comms pros to provide sources for media titles.

Journalists also trust press releases the most, with 44% saying they are the most trustworthy source of brand-related information. Only 30% said the same about company spokespeople, so clearly there is work to be done when it comes to the spokespeople

PR professionals provide. A further 20% said they trust company websites the most. Despite how much time journalists spend on social media, just 3% said they trust content from blogs and social media channels.

▶ **Press releases are the #1 most valuable content source**

**63%**

When it comes to what journalists want from their PR contacts, 63% said news announcements and press releases

▶ **Press releases are the #1 most trusted brand source**

**44%**

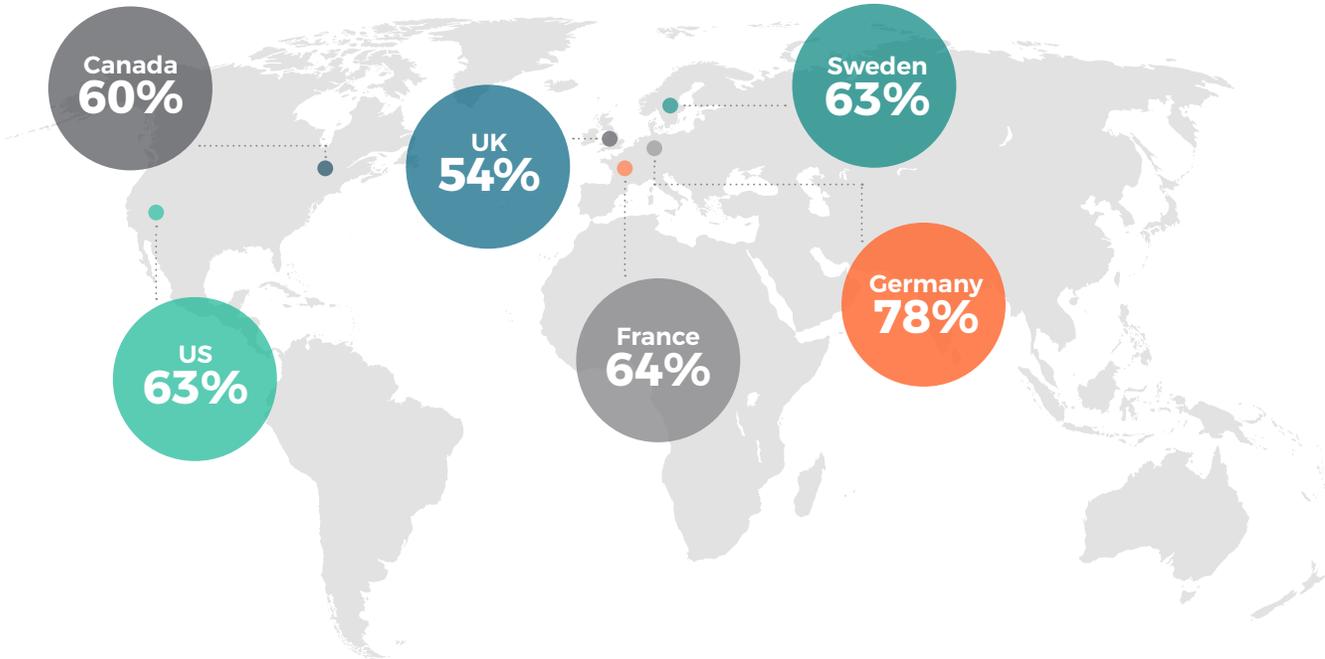
Journalists also trust press releases the most, with 44% saying that it's their most trustworthy source of brand-related information

## IN PRESS RELEASES WE TRUST

Journalists continue to love the press release. For three years in a row, media professionals have ranked press releases and news announcements as the most valuable type content they receive from their PR contacts. They've also once again chosen the press release as their most trusted brand source. This is nearly universal, with journalists from around the world citing press releases as their most trusted source of company information.



▶ The percentage of journalists from each country surveyed who said press releases were the most trustworthy brand news source:



▶ Here's what journalists want to see from PR pros:

1. Press releases
2. Original research reports
3. Follow-up press releases
4. Content marketing/advocacy releases
5. Video clips/b-roll/livestream
6. Blog posts

▶ How to make a press release more effective (global numbers):



# BUILDING TRUST IN THE MEDIA

Given the low levels of trust in media today and concerns about how fake news might impact the industry going forwards, being a trustworthy partner to journalists is paramount. But how can brands help build up that trust?

One place to start is to provide media professionals relevant and honest research and information via press releases or story pitches and to arm brand spokespeople with real and interesting stories to tell.

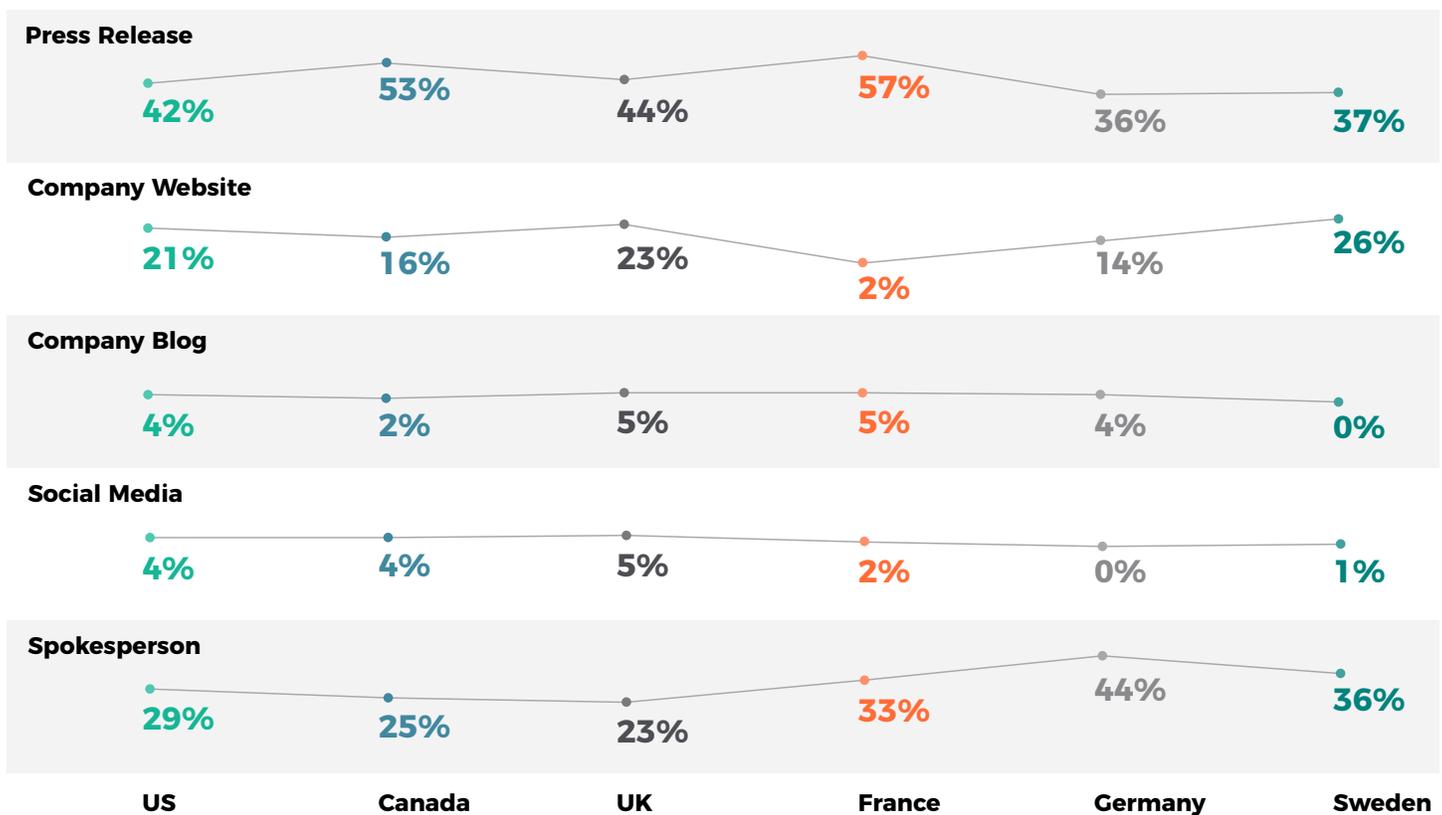
Continuing to make earned media a priority is important, too. Using owned channels like websites or company blogs can provide some context and

useful information, but they're not useful for reporting a story. In fact, only 3% of global respondents said that a company blog is a trustworthy source of brand information for their stories. Getting someone to speak to a journalist directly, versus just pointing them to your site, is still important today.

But whatever your media outreach plan involves – whether it's a blog post, a press release or a CEO giving an interview – PR pros must put forward material free from marketing jargon and that explains clearly how something works and why it's relevant to journalists.

Even as media formats change (social explosion, sites, blogs, etc.) the tried and true press release still reigns, followed closely by company spokespeople. It seems "the more things change, the more they stay the same". The data shows that the media continues to fall back on traditional, trusted sources of brand content.

► Here's how media ranked different earned and owned channels for trustworthiness:



# PUT THE NEWS HOOK FIRST

If there's one thing PR professionals can do to help journalists do their jobs better, it's ensure that any press releases they do send out have a clearly stated news hook. That was something 45% of respondents said when asked how press releases can be more efficient. Writing conversationally is also important, as 27% indicated that they dislike press releases that feel templated and include jargon. More quotes and multimedia elements would help, too.

As strong as the PR-journalist rapport may be, there are ways to improve the relationship. According to the survey, 28% of respondents think PR professionals can do a better job of researching and understanding journalists and their outlets before pitching, while 24% would like pitches to be more tailored to their beat. Another 27% said PR professionals should have data and expert sources ready to go when reporters need them. But only 15% said their number one request from PR professionals was less spam.

Journalism may be dealing with several challenges these days, but the

PR industry can help news outlets navigate these choppy waters. No matter what happens in the industry, eye-catching, fact-based storytelling is still paramount. The PR professionals who can help reporters and editors with their work – by providing accurate, information-rich press releases and by giving journalists access to sources – will be the ones who will enjoy the greatest success.



Global respondents rated their PR professionals at **3.38** out of 5 stars, between neutral and satisfied

## Building better relationships with the media

▶ Here's what journalists say they want from PR pros:

1. Research/understand my media outlet
2. Provide me with data and expert sources when I need them
3. Tailor the pitch to suit my beat(s)/coverage
4. Stop spamming me
5. Include multimedia assets with your pitch

### MEDIA TIP:

For the third year in a row, journalists asked that you research them, understand who they are and what they cover before pitching them, ranking this their top request of PR pros. They also want brands to provide original data and expert sources in a timely manner. It's best to have a solid PR pitching and press release strategy, along with a stable of spokespeople ready upon request.



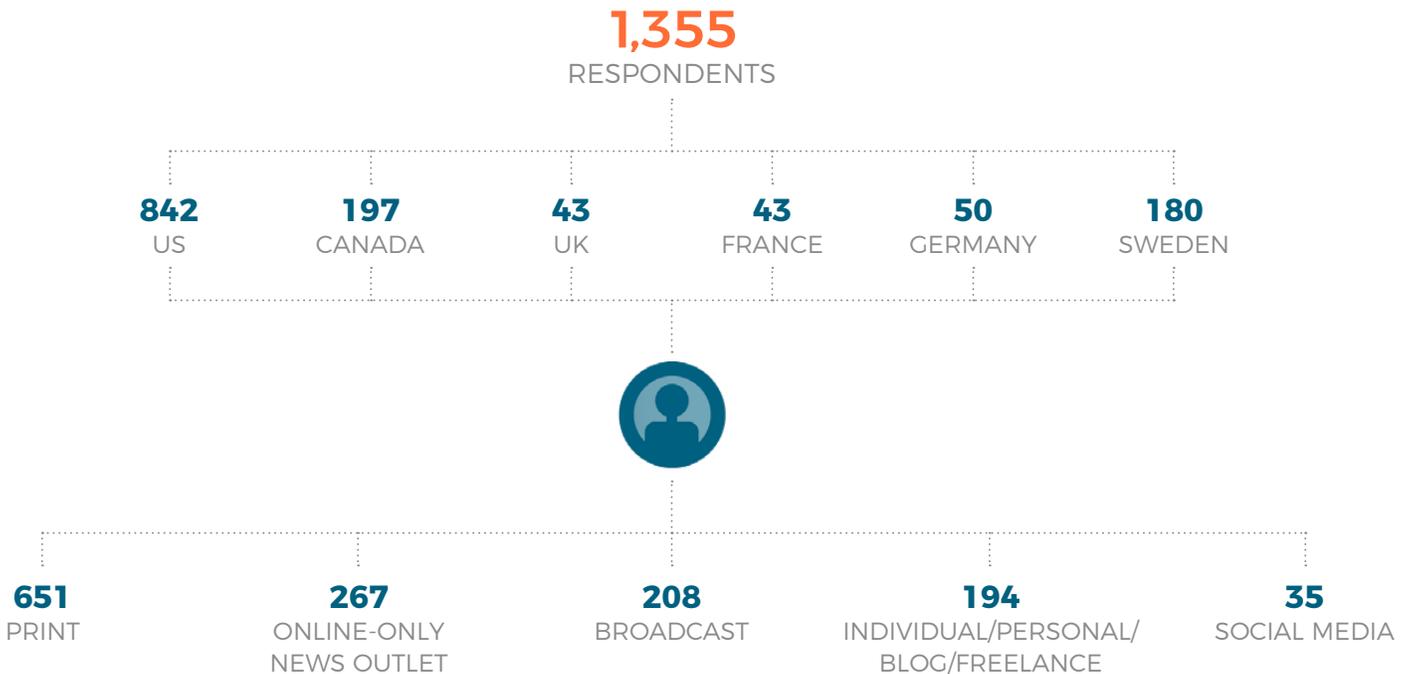
Research journalists and understand who they are before pitching them

# 2018 CISION STATE OF THE MEDIA METHODOLOGY

Cision conducted its *2018 State of the Media Survey* between February 1 and February 28 of this year. Surveys were emailed to Cision Media Database members and are vetted by the company's media research team to verify their positions as media professionals, influencers and bloggers. The survey was also available to media professionals in the PR Newswire for Journalists database.

This year's survey collected 1,355 total responses from across the media spectrum. 842 respondents were

from the US, 197 were from Canada, 43 from the UK, 43 from France, 50 from Germany and 180 from Sweden. Globally, 651 are in print (newspaper/magazine), 208 work in broadcast (TV/radio/podcast), 267 work for an online-only news outlet, 194 identified as individuals/personal bloggers/freelancers and 35 work for a social media platform. The survey language was translated and localised for each country and market and then the results were tallied together to form this global report.





## ABOUT CISION

Cision Ltd. (NYSE: CISN) is a leading global provider of earned media software and services to public relations and marketing communications professionals. Cision® software allows users to identify and engage with key influencers, craft and distribute meaningful stories, and measure the business impact of their campaigns. Cision has over 4,000 employees with offices in 15 countries throughout the Americas, EMIA, and APAC. Learn how to communicate like never before with the **Cision Communications Cloud®**.

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