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Facing Change: The needs, attitudes and experiences of people in media

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Table of contents: Facing Change

- Overview
.....
- Who is a 'journalist' today, where they work and what they do
.....
- Graduates' feelings on their work and the state of journalism
.....
- How journalists are dealing with industry changes
.....
- What journalists encounter in their jobs and careers
.....
- Skills, knowledge and comfort levels with job skills
.....
- Experiences with school, student media, and internships
.....
- The career paths of people with communication degrees
.....
- Methodology
.....
- Download the report or topline results

A new study of communication graduates finds that people in many different industries — from commercial brands to government and think tanks — now produce what they consider journalism, and while they are pessimistic about the direction of news in general, most believe their own work in the last five years has gotten better.

In all, about a third (35%) of these more than 10,000 journalism and communication graduates produce what they consider journalism today, according to the survey of two generations of alumni from 22 universities across the United States.

Many of those producing what they consider journalism, however, do not work for news organizations. Fully 17% of these graduates who are employed by commercial brands consider their work journalism, as do 19% of those in politics, government and think tanks, 34% of those who describe themselves as entrepreneurs and 20% of those who work for technology companies.

These graduates, whatever work they are engaged in, also tend to be skeptical of some new trends in news, including sponsored content. Most believe it will end up harming the publishing organizations that engage in it. The majority of these graduates overall also believe that aggregators should pay licensing fees to those who produce original news content if journalism is to thrive.

61%

of journalists think the journalism they produce is better than five years ago

There is a broad pessimism about the future of news among these graduates, three quarters of whom have degrees in journalism and the rest in advertising, public relations, marketing or communication. In all, just 17% think the quality of news they see has improved in the last five years. The majority of them, 66%, think it is getting worse.

Those who describe their work as “journalism” are only somewhat more optimistic — 22% think news today is improving. But that changes markedly when they are asked about their own work. Fully 61% think the journalism they produce is better than five years ago. That difference, between perceptions of their own work and whatever they have in mind when they think of news in general, may suggest a middle ground between the work they know and consume and what they consider some of the far edges of media today.

And young journalists are the most optimistic. While still skeptical, fully a quarter (25%) of journalists under age 35 think news in general is getting better today, and 78% feel that way about their own work. Whatever their work, the youngest of these graduates are also more likely than their elders to have had pay raises and promotions in the last five years.

These are some the findings of the survey, which is a collaboration of the American Press Institute and 22 different universities with journalism or communication programs. The study may be the largest ever undertaken of people who studied media in the United States. It probed attitudes and experiences of those who studied media across two generations on a range of topics — from people’s views of the current media landscape and their education to their job experiences and what skills they need in their work today.

The large sample size, 10,482 people, allows for comparisons across different types of degrees, different age groups, and different categories of employer. API in the future will make the survey responses available to other researchers who wish to delve further into subsets to explore by gender, ethnicity and more, in ways this initial report may not.

Among other findings:

- **A degree in journalism can lead to work in many fields.** While 41% of those surveyed with journalism degrees work for journalism companies, 22% work for commercial brands, 16% in education and 14% in politics/government and think tanks. Those with degrees in other areas also work in journalism as well. Fully 33% of those with a communication degree, for instance, work for journalism employers.
- **These graduates believe the nature of information on the web, not the economics of news, is the biggest challenge facing journalism.** Fully 57% think the biggest issue is “the flood of opinion and false information on the Internet.” The second challenge, cited by significantly fewer people (44%), is a broken economic model. The perceptions, moreover, don’t change much depending on the field someone works in.
- **Majorities also laud the access and new tools that technology brings.** Seven in 10 (67%) say the biggest benefit technology brings to media is that people can access news from anywhere. Six in 10 cite new storytelling tools (56%) and the ease of distribution (56%).
- **These graduates identify ethics and writing as the most critical skills they need in their workplace — no matter where they work.** On a list of 23 different skills they think are important in their work, ethics ranked first (84% citing it as “very” important), nearly matched by the ability to write (also 84%). Next came having expertise in a specific subject other than journalism (58%) followed by leadership skills (54%). Digital skills came further down, led by knowing social media (ranked 6th at 48%). Only 5% named coding skills and 4% understanding computer science.
- **People with communication degrees are doing more work, and working in new jobs, but not getting raises.** Over the past five years, the most common experience for journalism and communication graduates has been taking on added duties in their existing jobs (without receiving promotions). Nearly two-thirds (63%) have had work added on, and 27% in all have had work added without getting paid more. In all, less than half of those surveyed (46%) say they have had a pay raise in the past five years — regardless of the industry they work in.
- **Most of these graduates feel secure in their jobs.** The majority of people (78% overall) feel “very” or at least “fairly” secure in their jobs, though those employed by journalism organizations somewhat less (66%). (Those who describe themselves as entrepreneurs feel least secure, 61%). About two-thirds (67%) of those who work in journalism expect to be doing so in five years, though another 17% would like to but worry they might not be able to.

- **Most people view their academic experience positively.** In all, 92% recalled their journalism or communication school experience “very” (57%) or “somewhat” (35%) favorably. When asked all the ways people have learned professionally, school ranks third, well behind people trying things on their own and seeking out mentors, though a school experience, of course involves mentors and experimentation as well.
- **But not all the curricula are rated equally.** Even among those who graduated in the last decade, people believe schools still teach traditional skills best (fully 67% of graduates across years gave the highest rating to teaching writing). Yet some newer skills have not grown as much as many might expect. Just 4% of those who graduated from communication and journalism programs in the last 10 years, for instance, rank the training they received in HTML highly, nearly the same as those who graduated 10 to 20 years ago.

Who was surveyed

The survey, perhaps an unprecedentedly broad look at the experiences and attitudes of two generations of graduates of American universities in media, communication, journalism, public relations and advertising, is the product of an unusual collaboration between the American Press Institute and some 22 journalism and communication schools. (See Methodology for the list). The collaboration on a single survey instrument agreed to by all parties generated the opportunity for an unusually large number of respondents, 10,482. That large base also offers the opportunity for future researchers to delve more deeply into correlations of subsets and subgroups.

The graduates surveyed came from a cross-section of degrees and ages, and work in a wide range of fields in and outside media.

Including those who might have more than one degree, 75% have an undergraduate or master’s degree in journalism or TV/radio/film. Another 16% hold degrees in public relations, marketing or advertising. Fourteen percent have degrees in communication. Another 9% had degrees in other disciplines.

What degrees people earned

Degree type	Percent
ALL JOURNALISM	74.8%*
Undergraduate in journalism	56.3%
Masters in journalism	18%
Undergraduate in TV/radio/film	1.7%
Graduate in TV/radio/film	0.4%
ALL COMMUNICATIONS (non-journalism)	13.5%*
Undergraduate in communications	10.9%
Graduate in communications	2.4%
Telecom (graduate or undergraduate)	0.4%
ALL PR/MARKETING/ADVERTISING	15.7%*
Undergraduate in PR	8.9%
Undergraduate in advertising / marketing	6.4%
Masters in PR	0.5%
Masters in advertising / marketing	0.4%
OTHER DEGREES	8.6%*
Undergraduate in other subjects	4.6%
Masters in other subjects	1.9%
PhD / doctorate program (non-MD)	1.9%
Law degree	0.4%
MBA	0.2%
INCOMPLETE (certificate or no degree)	0.7%*

Data Source: Question: What college or graduate degrees do you have? Check all that apply.

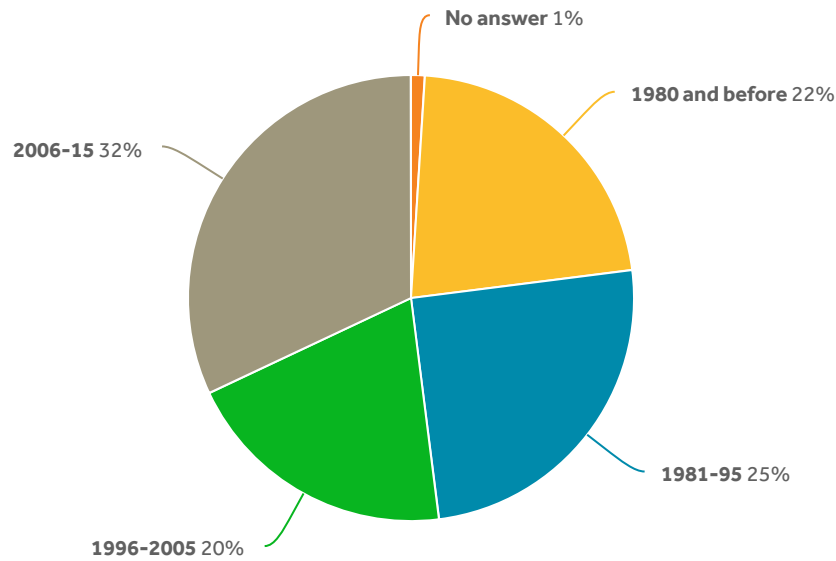
* Percent who answered any of the included subcategories

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The respondent group crossed generations. Fully 22% received their degrees in 1980 or earlier, 25% between 1981 and 1995, 20% between 1996 and 2005 and roughly a third (32%) in the past decade.

When people graduated

All respondents



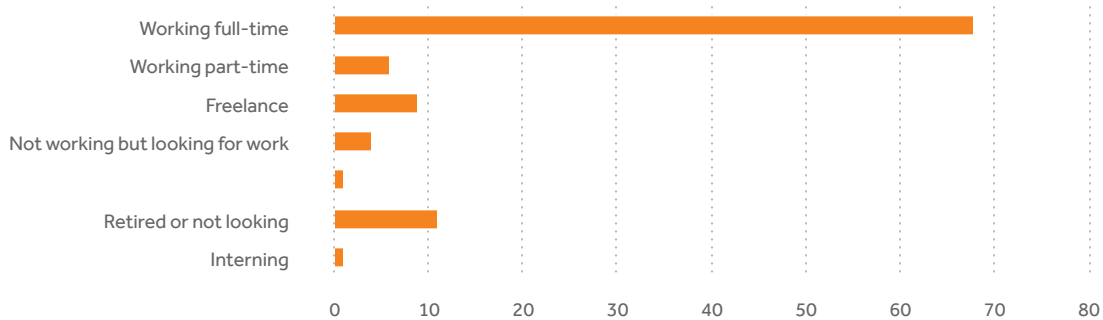
Data Source: Question: In what year did you earn your degree?

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More than two-thirds (68%) of these graduates are currently working full-time; 11% are retired. About 15% described themselves as working part-time or freelancing.

Employment status of the graduates

All respondents



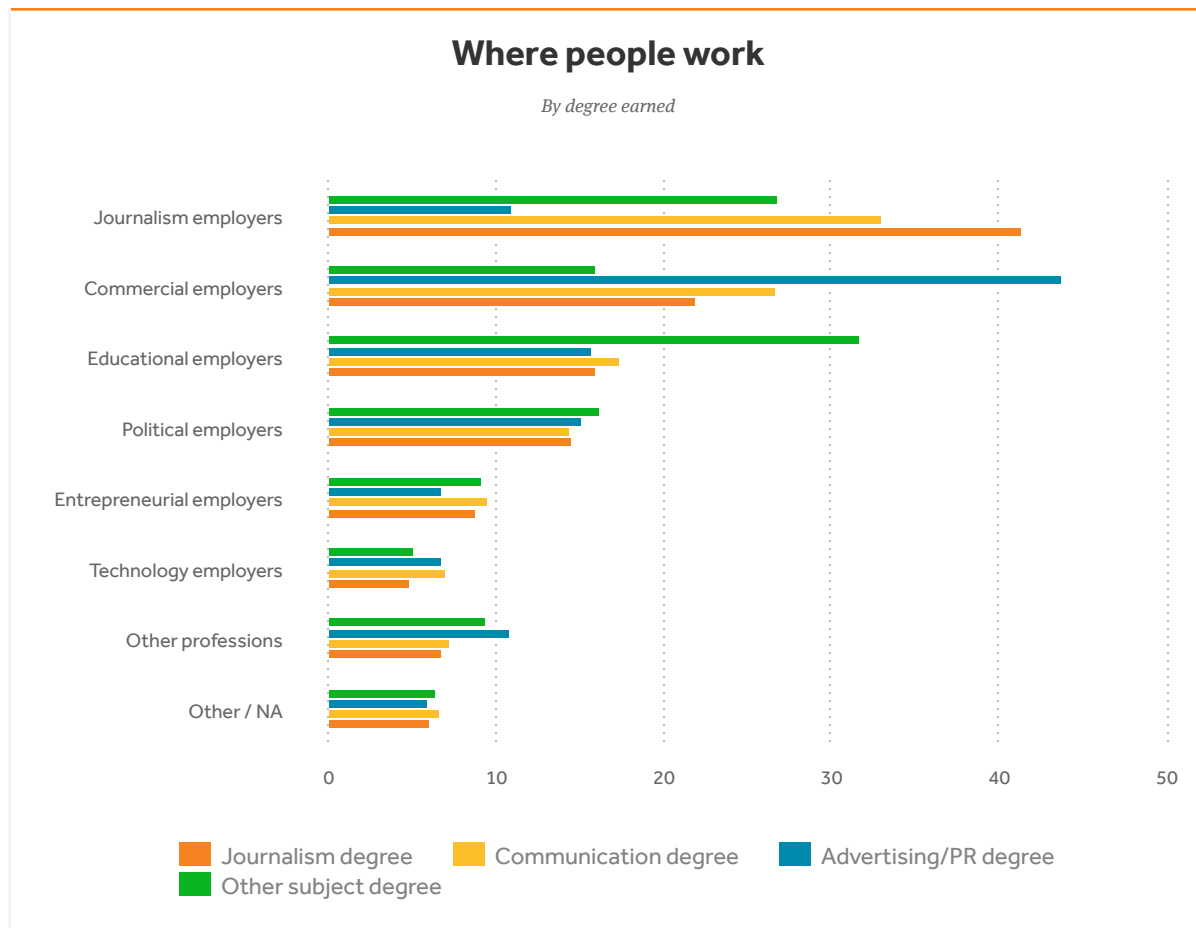
Data Source: Question: What is your current employment status?

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And where do these people work? While 75% had degrees in journalism, just 36% reported working for journalistic employers. Another 25% reported working for commercial brand companies.

Fully 17% work in education, including academic publishing, journalism education or collegiate athletics. Close to 15% worked in the political world, in government, advocacy, nonprofits or think tanks, while another 15% were either entrepreneurs or worked in other professions such as law, finance or health. (Those retired noted where they last worked.)

The type of degree a person earned only somewhat predicts the type of work they currently do. For instance, 41% of those with journalism degrees work for journalistic enterprises, but 22% work for commercial brands. A similar number of public relations and advertising graduates work in public relations and advertising, 44%. The percentage who ended up in politics and advocacy was similar across all degree types.



Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes where you work? (If multiple places, check all that apply)

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The graduates of journalism and communication schools who stayed in journalism seem to mostly be at legacy media outlets. Among the 36% in journalism organizations, there are 11% in newspaper media, 10% television, 6% magazine, and 3% radio. Only 4% work for digital-only news organizations. Another 5% have gone to work for non-journalistic technology companies.

However, as we will detail in the next chapter, many of those working in traditional organizations are employing modern digital skills. And many of those who work in non-journalistic organizations still consider their own work to be journalistic in nature.

Where people work

By employer category	Percent
JOURNALISM	36.1%*
Newspaper media	11.1%
TV media	10.2%
Freelancing	8.7%
Magazines	5.6%
Digital-only news organization	4.4%
Radio media	2.7%
Sports (non-broadcast)	0.6%
Film media	0.5%
News agency/wire service	0.5%
Other multimedia	0.1%
COMMERCIAL	25.0%*
Advertising/marketing/public relations/communication /media agency	16.1%
Commercial product or services company (for-profit, non-media or communications)	8.7%
Sales/retail / rental / wholesale	1.2%
EDUCATION	16.8%*
Educational institution	16.6%
Continuing education	0.2%
POLITICAL	14.6%*
Advocacy/public interest/think-tank group (nonprofit)	8.2%
Government	6.8%
ENTREPRENEURIAL/START-UP	8.4%*
TECHNOLOGY	5.2%*
Technology or social media company	4.6%
Science / engineering	0.3%
Research / development	0.2%
IT	0.1%
OTHER PROFESSIONAL	7.3%*
Commercial / financial services	3.1%
Law	2.3%
Health / well-being	1.9%

Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes where you work? Check all that apply.

* Percent who answered any of the included subcategories

Who is a 'journalist' today, where they work and what they do

Significant numbers of journalism and communication graduates now practice what they consider journalism, even though they don't work for traditional news organizations, our survey of journalism school graduates found.

The survey probed this phenomenon with several questions, including asking people to explain in very granular terms what skills they employ in their work and what issues or topics they produce content about.

One question we asked people regardless of where they were employed is if they “would describe the work they did or contributed to as journalism.” We found that many do journalistic work in nontraditional places. And significant numbers of people, too, utilize skill sets they studied in journalism and communication schools in work they do not describe as journalism.

In all, 35% of the more than 10,000 respondents describe what they did to be journalism, while 59% did not. Another 6% weren't sure or didn't answer.¹



Sizable minorities of people who work in other fields feel they are now producing journalism outside of news organizations.



Yet in some ways, the most revealing trends emerge when these findings are broken down by employer. Most who work for a journalism

employer considered what they did to be journalistic. In all, almost three-quarters (72%) of those working for journalism organizations considered their work as or contributing to journalism.

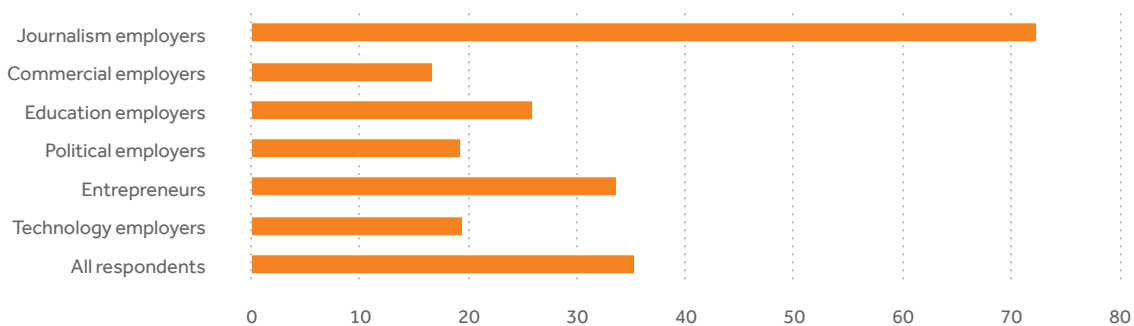
At the same time, however, sizable minorities of people who work in other fields but who have training in journalism, marketing, public relations or communication feel they are now producing journalism outside of news organizations.

For instance, 17% of those working for commercial brands believe their work to be journalistic; so did 19% of those in politics.

More than a third of those who consider themselves entrepreneurs (34%) believe they are working in or contributing to journalism. So do 20% of those working in technology, as well as 26% of those in education (many of whom might be teaching journalism).

Is the work you do 'journalism'?

By employer category



Data Source: Question: Would you describe the work you do or contribute to as journalism?

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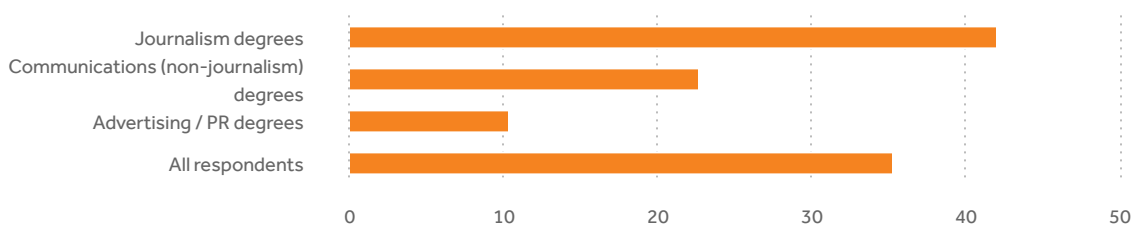
And just as journalism may be contributed to or practiced in many kinds of industries, the survey also finds that it may come from those with different educational degree concentrations — even within the communication and media education. On top of that, a journalism education is not just training people to be journalists.

Of those with journalism degrees, for instance, fewer than half (42%) considered the work they currently did to be journalistic, and 51% did not.

But nearly a quarter (23%) of those with communication (rather than journalism) degrees describe the work they do as journalism. So do more than 10% of those whose degrees were in advertising or public relations.

Is the work you do 'journalism'?

By degree earned



Data Source: Question: Would you describe the work you do or contribute to as journalism?

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The survey also went further, asking people specifically what tasks they perform in their jobs — wherever they worked. This was exploring the kind of skills that might be necessary in different fields, and getting a more detailed sense of what people might mean when they describe their work as journalistic or not.

Accounting for the fact that people do multiple tasks (most cite on average 2.5 from these lists) fully half of these graduates, 53%, say they are involved directly in creating content (meaning they do reporting of some kind, write, copy edit, web design, data visualization, work with user content, and more). Most of those who also say they supervise these people or do brand content creation have also listed themselves here. If you add everyone, the number rises slightly to 55%. More than a third (36%) say they employ reporting and writing skills, 19% copy editing, and almost as many, 15%, in audience engagement through social media and community content. A smaller number, 5%, said web development and production, while 8% said data visualization and graphics, and 3% said data journalism.

About a third of graduates are engaged in marketing, public relations or advertising, including 25% in public relations, 9% in brand content production, 8% in writing advertising copy. Fully 14% of these graduates are now in education, and that number is higher among older graduates. More than 5% are doing audience research, and 7% more traditional market research.

Tasks graduates perform at work

Skill	Percent
CREATING CONTENT	52.7%*
Writing and reporting	36.0%
Copy editing	19.2%
Audience engagement (social media, community content)	15.2%
Graphics / design or data visualization	7.7%
Web development (designer or developer)	4.5%
Data journalism	3.2%
TV / video / radio production	5.1%
Photo	7.6%
Web production	6.4%
MANAGEMENT	25.4%*
Assignment / section editing	8.8%
Product management	5.5%
Senior management	15.0%
PR / MARKETING / ADVERTISING	33.9%*
Advertising creative, art	4.1%
Advertising creative, copy	7.9%
Advertising account executive / planner	4.7%
Content production for brands	9.0%
Media planning / buying	4.9%
Public relations / marketing	25.4%
EDUCATION / TEACHING	13.7%*
RESEARCH	13.1%*
Academic research	4.1%
Audience development and research	5.2%
Market analysis / research	7.3%
OTHER	17.9%*
Other non-media related	7.7%
Legal services	3.0%
Sales / customer service	2.9%
Business Development	1.5%
Fundraising	1.2%
Event planning	1.0%
Lobbying	0.7%
Recruitment / HR	0.6%
Publishing	0.1%

Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes what you personally do in your job? (Select all that apply.)

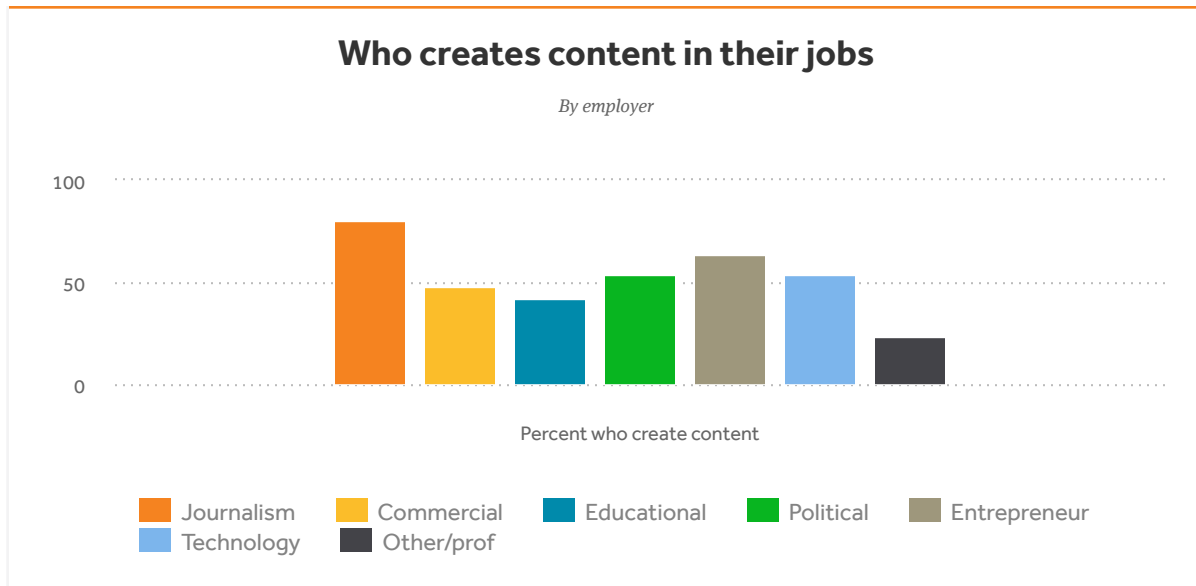
* Percent who answered any of the included subcategories

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One striking finding, though, is where these different skills are being employed. As an example, 22% of these graduates working in journalism organizations say they perform tasks that they would describe marketing and public relations. Roughly half of those working in commercial brand companies (48%) are engaged in creating content, and that number rises to 50% if we add those identified specifically “content production for brands.” Fifty-four percent of those in politics are engaged in content creation. Marketing and public relations are a significant part of the tasks described by people in all the employer groups (47% of these graduates working politics, 46% of those in startups, 38% of those in technology).

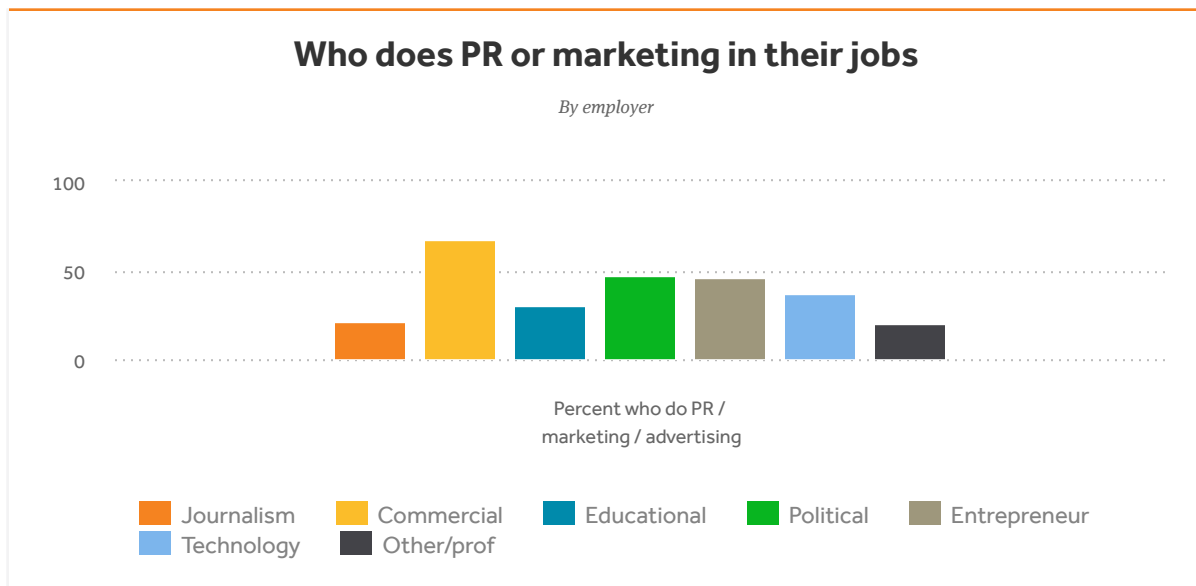
In the modern workplace, the tasks people perform cut across the landscape.

Content, though, remains at the core for those in journalism. Fully 80% of those who work for journalism employers describe the tasks they do as directly creating content, and that does not include necessarily all of the managers or senior manager who supervise them who did not cite directly creating it themselves.



Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes what you personally do in your job? (Select all that apply.)

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Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes what you personally do in your job? (Select all that apply.)

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The generational gap in skills

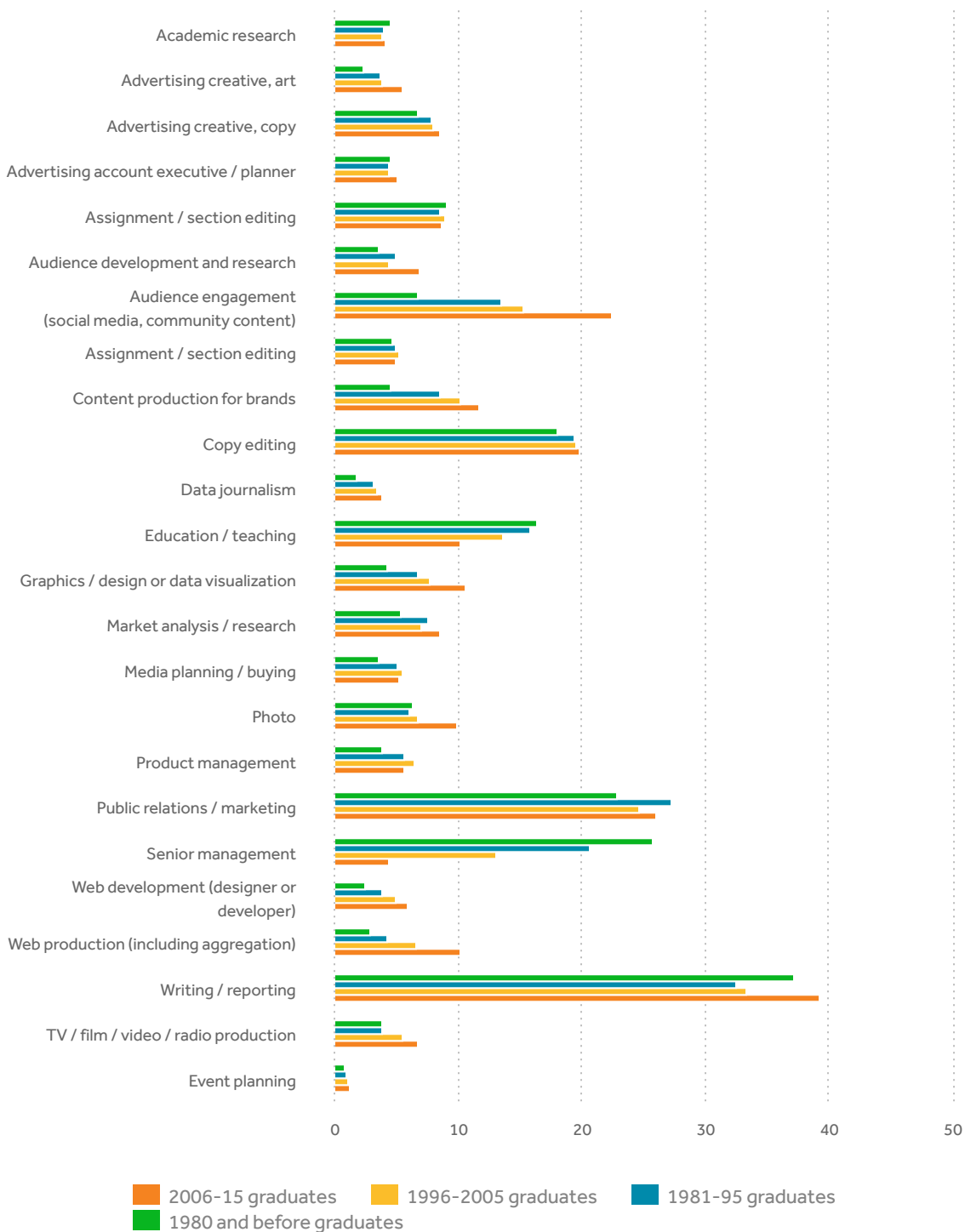
The study puts in sharp relief the extent to which those who graduated in the past decade have skills to do digital work in greater numbers than older people working in media.

For instance, 22% of those who graduated in the past 10 years employ social media and community audience engagement skills, compared with 15% of those who graduated between 1996-2005 and 7% of those who graduated before 1981. The youngest are twice as likely to do graphic design (11%) as the oldest cohort (4%), web development (6% to 3%) or to create content for commercial brands (12% vs. 5%). Just 7% of this youngest cohort say they are engaged in audience development and research as part of their job and 4% data journalism — but while relatively small numbers, these, too, are roughly double that of the oldest group. The youngest group is more likely to be involved in web production, including aggregation.

On the other hand, the only job skills for which the oldest cohort significantly outnumbered the youngest were “education and teaching” (16% among those graduated before 1981 vs. 10% for the post-2006 graduates) and “senior management” at 26% for the oldest group and only 4% for the youngest. Both are job roles which inherently favor more tenure and experience.

What people do in their jobs

By graduation date



Data Source: Question: Which of the following best describes what you personally do in your job? (Select all that apply.)

1. These totals include all 10,482 respondents, including those who are retired and those who are seeking work, who referred to the work they did in the past. Fully 44% of the 1,148 respondents who are retired said the work they did was journalistic, and 33% of the 369 people seeking work said their work in the past was journalistic. ↩

Graduates' feelings on their work and the state of journalism

One question virtually everyone in media hears at one point or another is whether the world of journalism, with all the possibilities and disruption caused by technology, is getting better or worse. The survey asked a series of questions that probed this.

The answers varied significantly depending on where people worked in the media, their age, and whether they were talking about their own work or that of others.

The general picture was one of concern, even alarm, over the quality of the information that is flooding to the public as well as the resources to produce journalism. But that is leavened by a sense of possibility as consumers have more ability to access information.

There is a dichotomy in the responses. Most people think their own work is improving, while the world of media and journalism in general is getting worse.

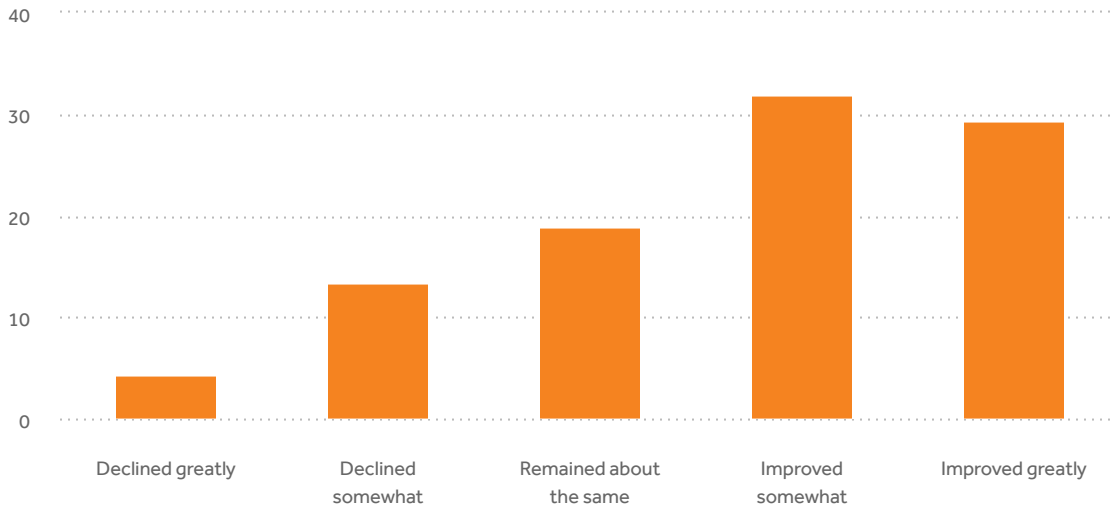
Similarly, there is a sense of wonder about the access citizens have to information and a sense of skepticism about public appetite for quality. In addition to skepticism about the public, there is skepticism about media ownership. And the youngest graduates are more likely to feel that legacy organizations are failing to adapt.

Interestingly too, there is more agreement over what the exciting possibilities are than what the biggest challenges are.

The survey first asked just those working in journalism whether they thought the quality of the work they personally were able to produce in the past five years had improved or not. Most (61%) think that their own work has gotten better (29% greatly and 32% somewhat). Another 19% say it has remained about the same. Just 18% think the work they are able to produce has degraded.

Do journalists think their own work is better than 5 years ago?

Asked of those who consider their work to be journalism



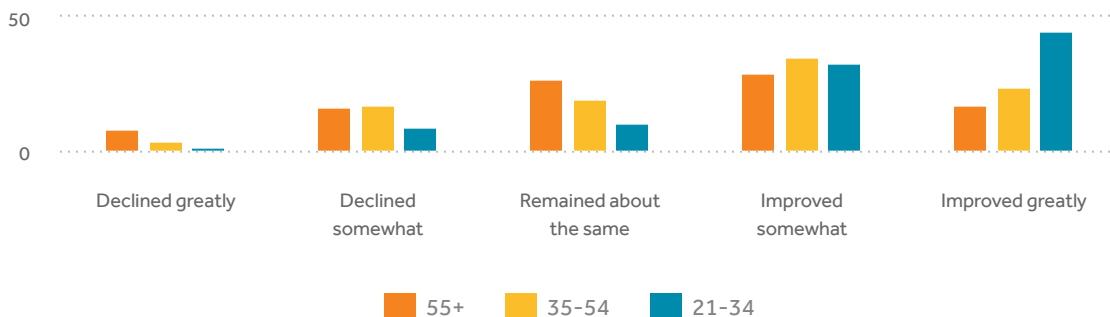
Data Source: Question: Thinking about the changes in journalism and your own work, do you think the quality of what you are able to produce is better, worse or about the same as what you produced five years ago? (If you have been working in journalism for less than five years, then for as long as you have been working.)

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These responses vary markedly by generation, as strikingly as any findings in the study. Among those under age 35, fully 78% believe the work they are able to produce has improved — and 45% believe it has improved “greatly.” By contrast, 59% of those ages 35-54 feel the work they can produce is better than five years ago (and 24% believe it has improved greatly). Among those over age 55, that number is 46% (and 17% say it has improved greatly).

Does age affect whether journalists think their work is getting better?

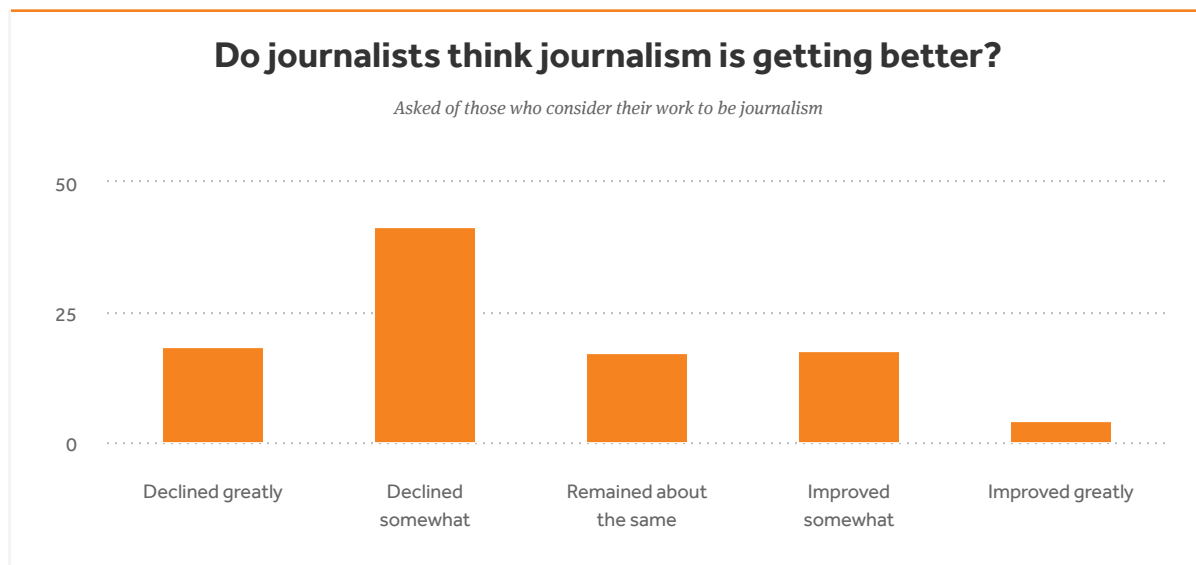
Asked of those who consider their work to be journalism



Data Source: Question: Thinking about the changes in journalism and your own work, do you think the quality of what you are able to produce is better, worse or about the same as what you produced five years ago? (If you have been working in journalism for less than five years, then for as long as you have been working.)

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When people engaged in journalism are asked about media in general, rather than their own work, their answers change significantly. When asked to generalize, less than a quarter (22%) think the journalism produced in general is improving, just a third as many who feel that way about their own work. And 6 out of 10 who describe themselves as engaged in journalism think journalism in general is getting worse.



Data Source: Question: Thinking of media in general, do you think on balance that the journalism produced today has improved in quality, declined in quality, or is about the same as it was five years ago?

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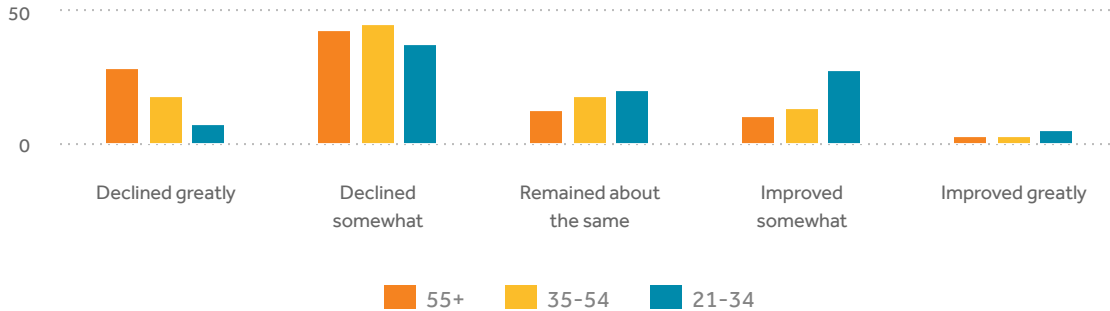
These numbers differ by age, as well, but the overall pattern holds. The youngest in journalism are more optimistic, but only a minority feel media are improving.

Of this group, those under age 35, a little over a third feel media are getting better (34%). By contrast, 1 in 5 thinks it is about the same (21%), and just less than half (46%) think it is getting worse.

For the oldest cohort who describe their work as journalistic, however, just 14% see media getting better, and 72% think it's getting worse.

Does age affect whether journalists think journalism in general is improving?

Asked of those who consider their work to be journalism



Data Source: Question: Thinking of media in general, do you think on balance that the journalism produced today has improved in quality, declined in quality, or is about the same as it was five years ago?

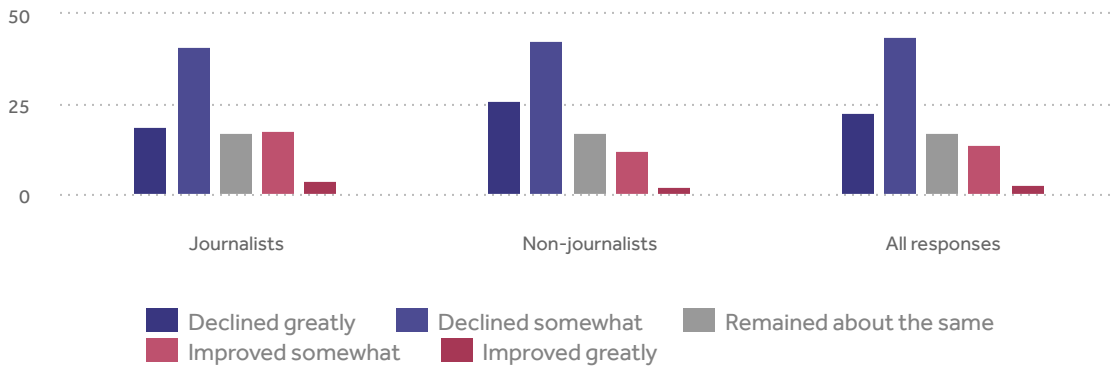
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That is the view of those who describe their work as journalistic. What about the larger universe, including those who studied communication and media but whose work is outside journalism?

The views of those who are not doing journalism professionally are more pessimistic. Just 14% of those of media graduates who are not journalists think “the journalism produced today has improved in quality” from 5 years ago (compared with 22% of those engaged in journalism), while 69% think it is declining in quality—and 26% see it declining “greatly.”

Is journalism in general getting better?

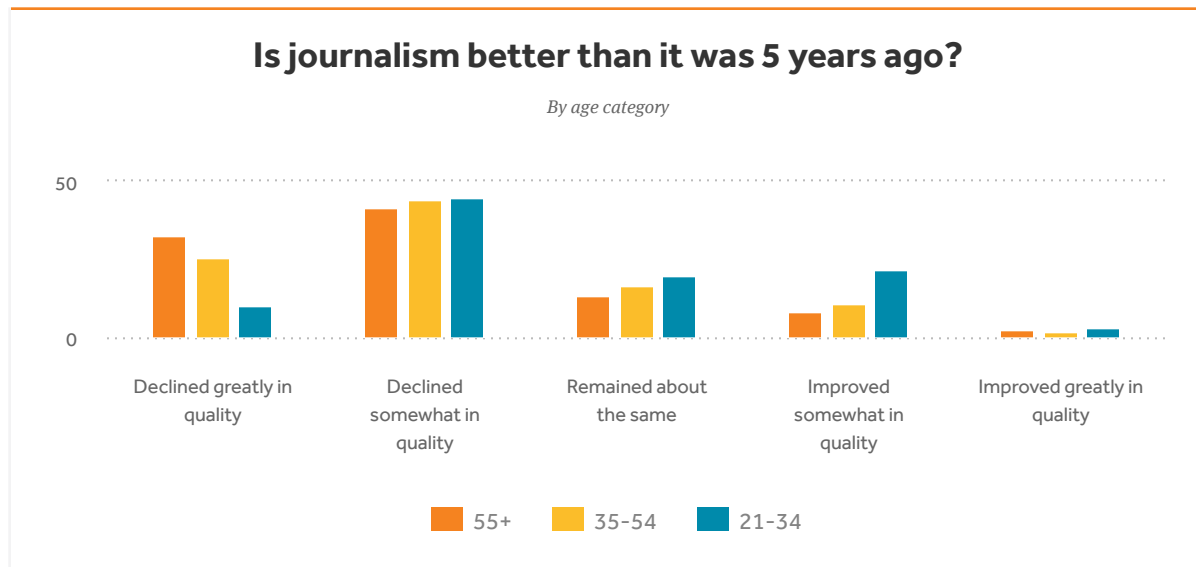
Journalists vs. non-journalists



Data Source: Question: Thinking of media in general, do you think on balance that the journalism produced today has improved in quality, declined in quality, or is about the same as it was five years ago?

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People’s attitudes about whether journalism is on the right track or the wrong track also vary somewhat by age, but here too the differences are not dramatic. Those under 35 are not as pessimistic about journalism’s direction as older graduates, but they are still wary. A slim majority (55%) of those under 35 think journalism is getting worse, but that is far less than the 70% of those 35-54 and 74% of those 55 or older who think so. Still, just a quarter of this group, who would qualify as millennial journalism and communication graduates, think journalism generally is getting better.



Data Source: Question: Thinking of media in general, do you think on balance that the journalism produced today has improved in quality, declined in quality or is about the same as it was five years ago?

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While age influenced how optimistic people were about journalism, the industry these graduates worked in did not make much difference. Whether they were employed in news, commercial brands, politics or technology, there weren’t appreciable differences in attitude.

In addition to asking about the general direction of journalism, the survey probed more specifically what opportunities and challenges surround the disruption.

What did these journalism and communication graduates consider the biggest challenge to journalism?

The largest group didn’t cite money or ownership. They cited the nature of the information on the web. Fully 57% said they thought the biggest challenge facing journalism today was “the flood of opinion and false information on the Internet.” Indeed, this was the only challenge that was cited by a majority.

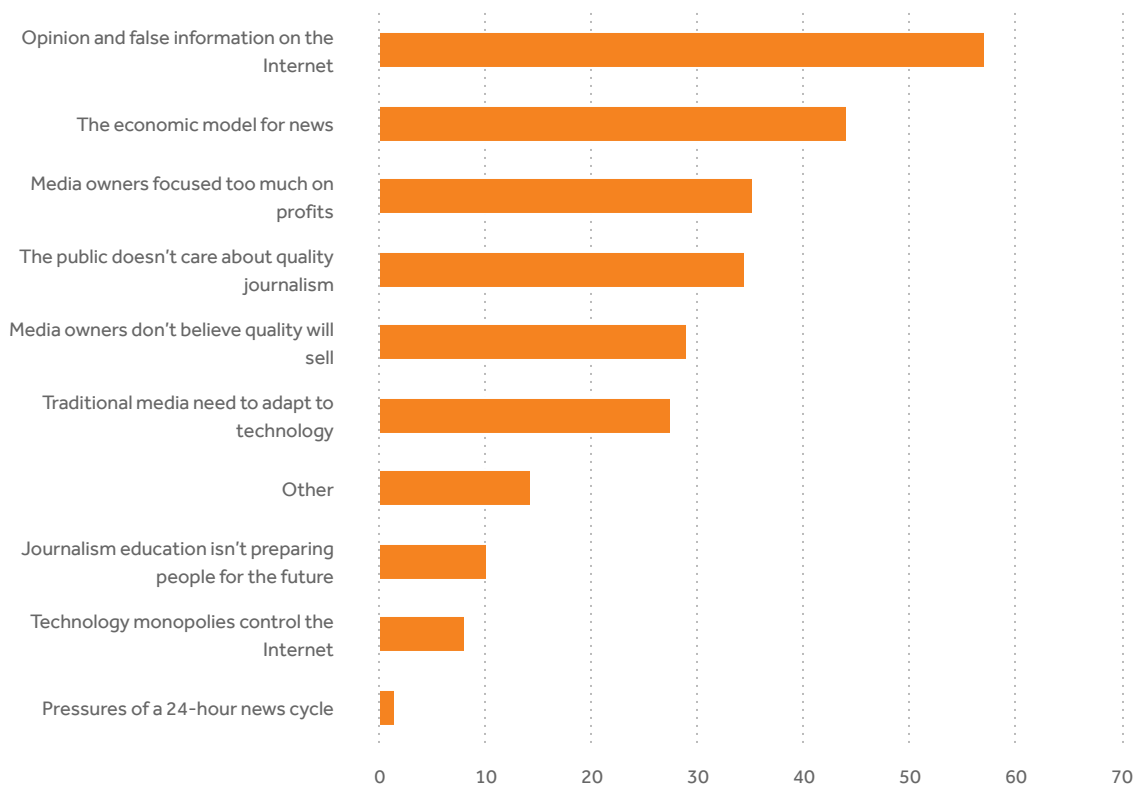
The second challenge, cited by significantly fewer people (44%), was that the economic model for journalism is broken.

Roughly a third of respondents cite media owners being too focused on profits (35%) and the public not caring enough about quality (35%). A slightly lower number think media owners don’t believe quality will sell (29%).

But only a little more than a quarter of respondents think legacy media’s inability to adapt faster is among the biggest challenges facing media.

What are the biggest challenges facing journalism?

All respondents



Data Source: Question: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing journalism in general today? Choose no more than three.

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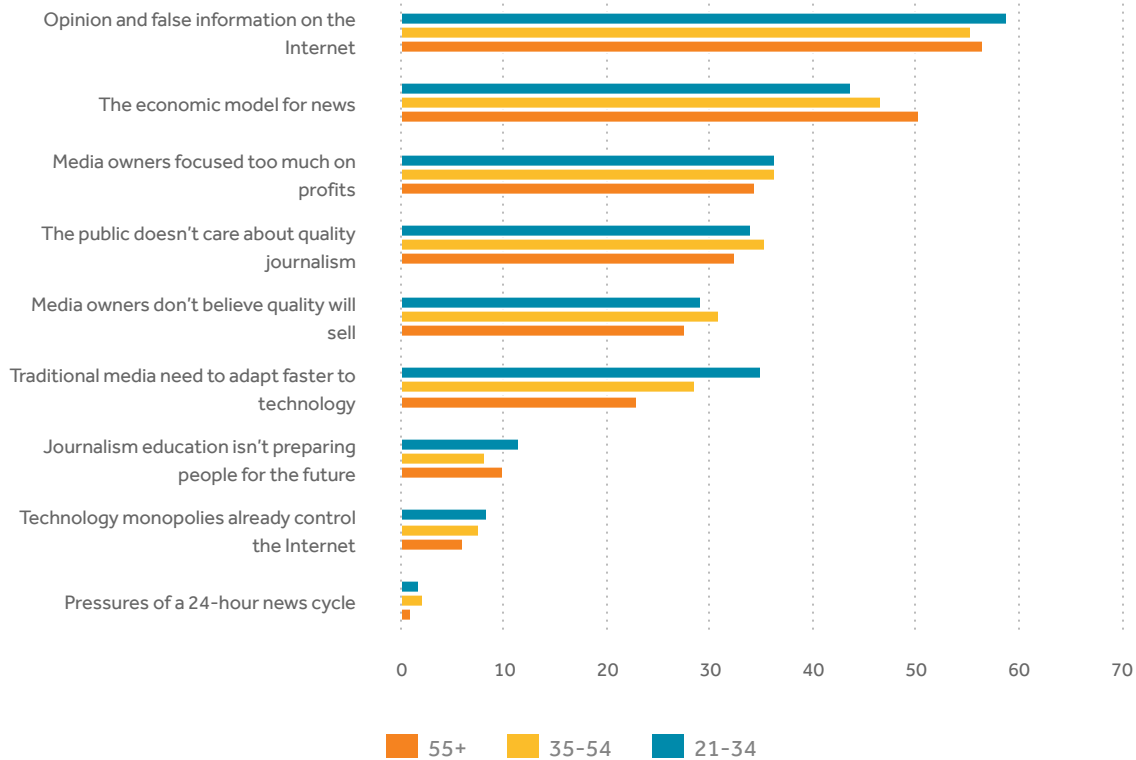
Interestingly, perceptions about the challenges brought on by technology did not vary much by age.

Those over age 55, for instance, were slightly more inclined to think the economic model for news was broken than were those under 35 (50% versus 44%). Those under 35 were notably more inclined to think that traditional media companies needed to adapt faster than were those a generation older (35% versus 23%).

But for many factors there was no statistically significant difference by age. And, interestingly, the youngest respondents were as likely as the oldest to think that among the biggest challenges was the flood of opinion and false information online (59% among those under age 35 and 57% of those over age 55).

The digital natives who study communication and journalism, in other words, are as skeptical of what they find on the web as the previous generation who did not grow up with it.

Age only slightly alters what graduates see as challenges to journalism



Data Source: Question: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing journalism in general today? Choose no more than three.

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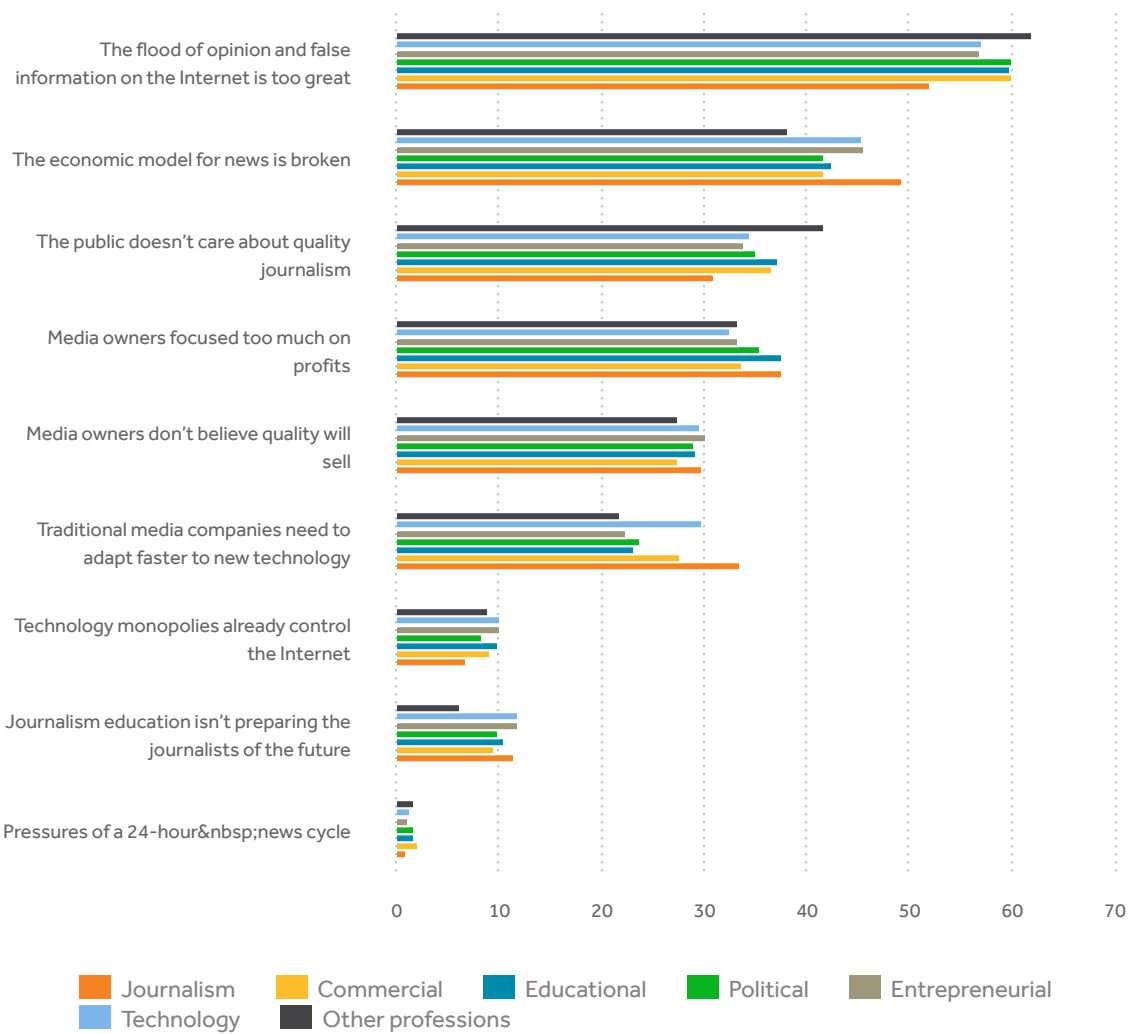
Does the assessment of journalism's problems vary by the profession in which these communication and journalism graduates now work? To a notable degree it does. Those in commercial brands, education, and politics, for instance, are more inclined to think the Internet is a flood of opinion and false information (60% for each) than are those who work in news (52%).

On the other hand, people working in journalism are more inclined to think media companies are failing to adapt (34%) than are graduates in all other fields (25%). Those in journalism are also somewhat more likely to think the economic model for news is broken (49%) than those in other fields (43%).

People in journalism, by contrast, are somewhat less likely to blame the public for not liking quality news (31%) than are their fellow graduates who now work in other fields (37%).

What are the greatest challenges to journalism today?

By employer category



Data Source: Question: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing journalism in general today? Choose no more than three.

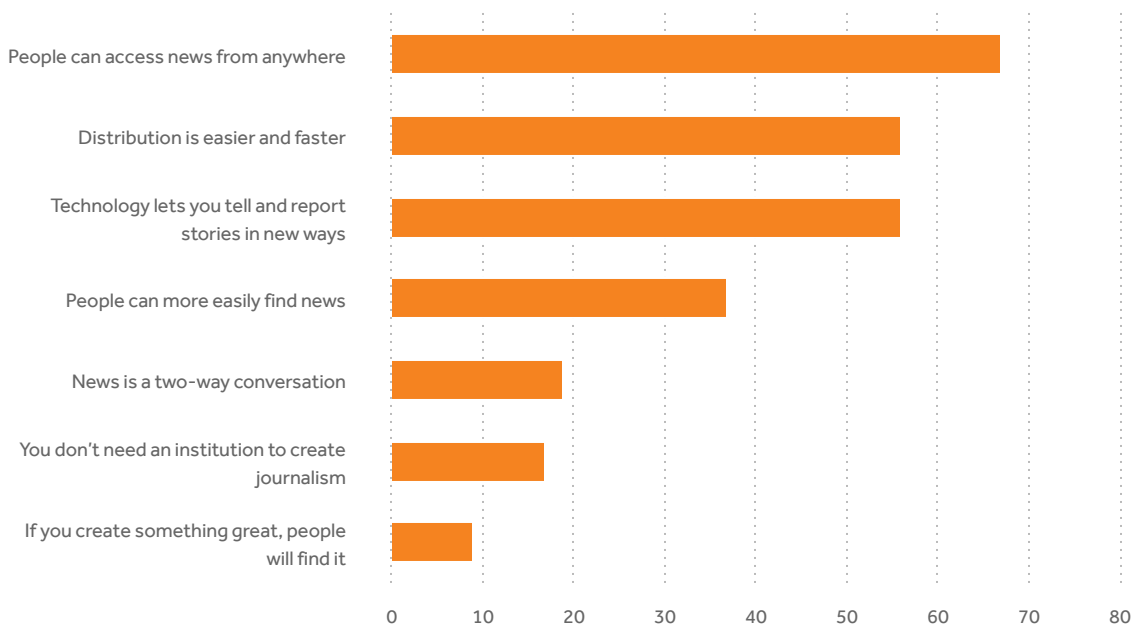
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If those are the challenges, what did those who studied media in college and graduate school think were the biggest benefits of the technological revolution?

Here, majorities of respondents cited several items. Fully two-thirds of respondents (67%) cite the fact that “people can access news from anywhere,” followed by 56% who said distribution is easier and faster or note the existence of new storytelling tools. Far fewer, just over a third, cited the ability of people to find what they want, and only 1 in 5 (19%) cited the idea that news is a two-way conversation. Only 17% cited the idea that one needn’t be part of an institution to create journalism.

Biggest benefits of technology for news

All respondents



Data Source: Question: What do you think is the biggest benefit that new technologies bring to journalism today? Please pick up to three.

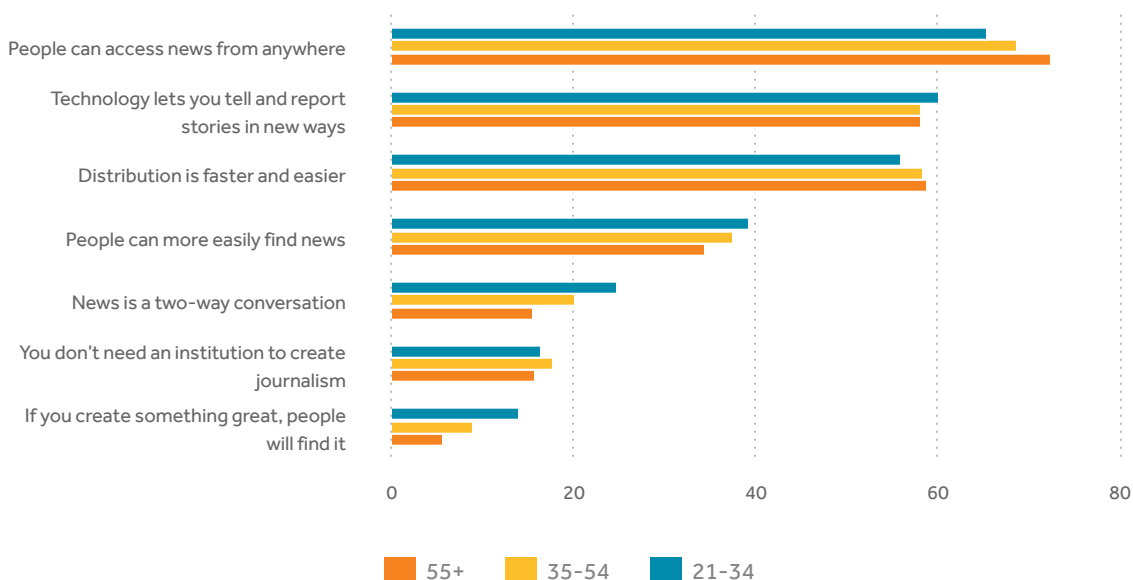
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Interestingly, while one's age and profession made a big difference in how people assessed the challenges facing media and news, they did not correlate to differences as much in what people saw as the benefits of technology.

Millennial graduates (those under age 35) were more likely to cite as a benefit that news is a two-way conversation (25%) than either those age 35-54 (20%) or those over age 55 (16%). Though numbers were small in general, the youngest were more likely to think that if you create something great, people will find it (14% for those under 35 versus 9% for those age 35-54 and 6% for those 55-plus). But for most concepts, there were no differences by age.

How people think technology makes journalism better

By age category



Data Source: Question: What do you think is the biggest benefit that new technologies bring to journalism today? Please pick up to three.

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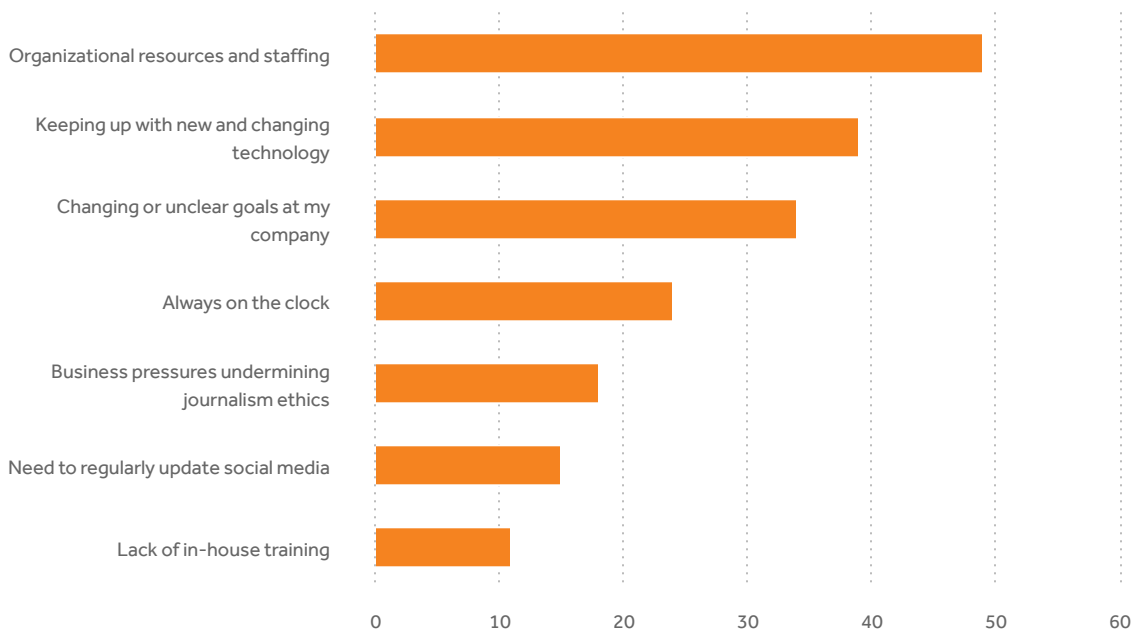
If age made little difference in the perceptions of technology's benefits to the media world, people's employers correlated with even fewer distinctions. Profession, in other words, did not seem to alter perception about technology's promise.

Beyond more general perceptions about journalism, the study also probed how technological and economic change might be influencing the work that these graduates personally do — whatever their industry. It probed what people considered the biggest obstacles to their doing their jobs.

Three items stood out above all. At the top of the list was money, or more specifically organizational resources and staffing. Half of all respondents (49%), regardless of where they worked, say lack of resources is a challenge. This is followed by the difficulty of keeping up with changing technology (39%) and changing or unclear goals at their companies (34%). Lagging behind is the fact that people feel they are always on the clock (24%), the need to constantly update, particularly with social media (15%), and lack of in-house training (11%).

Biggest obstacles in people's jobs

All respondents



Data Source: Question: Thinking about your own work, whether in journalism or not, what obstacles do you think most affect your ability to do your job? (Select up to three.)

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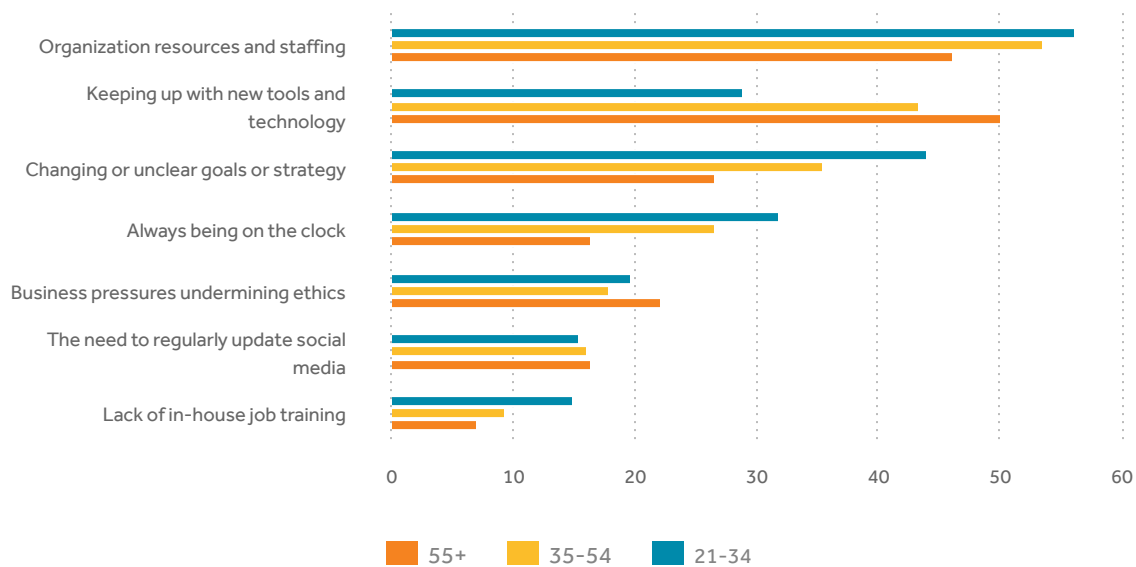
These results do vary by age — but not all in one direction and not on all matters. The youngest see always being on the clock due to connectivity as a bigger problem than older graduates. Nearly a third (32%) cited it as one of the biggest obstacles they face, compared with 27% of those age 35-54 and just 17% of those 55 or older.

These younger graduates also see changing or unclear goals at their company as a much bigger problem (44%) than older graduates (36% for those age 35-54 and 27% for those 55 and older), perhaps because older employees are more involved in making the strategy or perhaps because they have lived through more course-changing in their careers already.

Older graduates find keeping up with technology far more daunting than younger ones. But on a core of other issues, including the demands of social media and the pressure on ethics, there was little in the way of generational divide.

What are the obstacles to doing your job well?

By age group



Data Source: Question: Thinking about your own work, whether in journalism or not, what obstacles do you think most affect your ability to do your job? (Select up to three.)

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If age correlated to different perceptions about obstacles at work, did the industry where people work? To a degree. Those who consider themselves entrepreneurs are more bothered by the pressures of constantly updating on social media. People in commercial brands are more bothered by having to keep up with new tools and technology. Entrepreneurs are far less bothered by lack of resources than those in virtually all other fields.

One difference here worth noting: Those in journalism are more worried about the impact of business pressure on ethics than those in other fields – 27% cited this as a major obstacle versus an average of 15% for other professions.

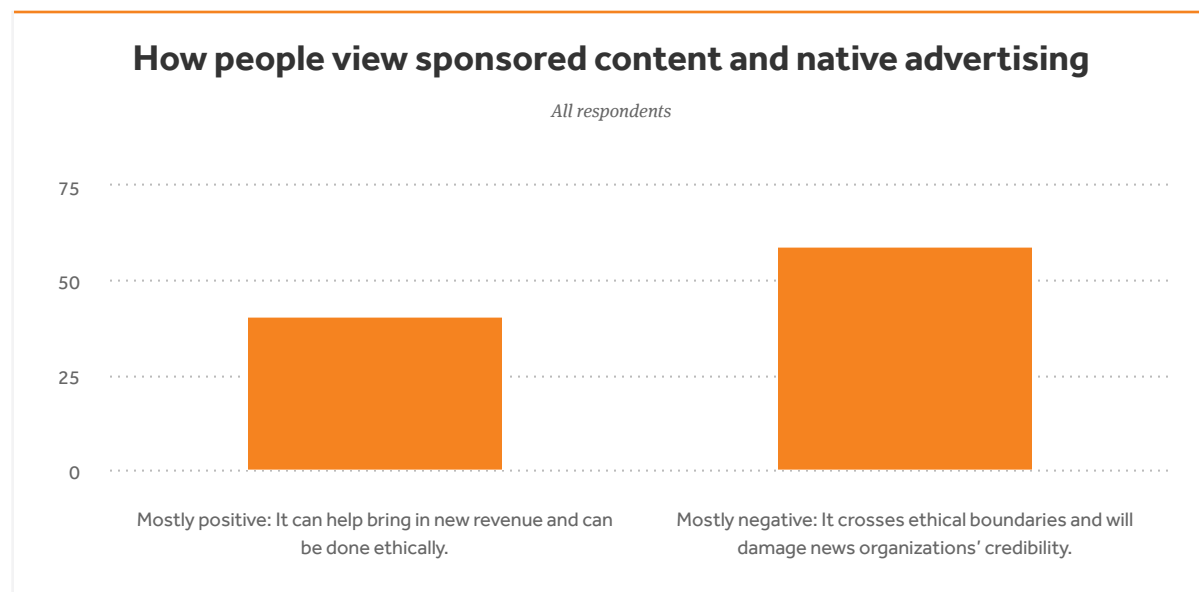
How journalists are dealing with industry changes

Journalists' views on new trends: sponsored content and aggregation

Technology and business disruption have brought about new issues that relate to ethics and economics. The survey probed two of these in particular: the advent of sponsored content or native advertising and the issue of compensation for aggregation and curation.

First, the quest for new, more effective and more lucrative ways to monetize advertising on the web. Wherever it was headed, or no matter the shape it took, did people think what was being called sponsored content or native advertising would help content providers by providing new revenue? Or were they more likely to think it would ultimately hurt media by crossing ethical boundaries in a way that would hurt the brands that engaged in it?

Asked to choose, the majority of these journalism and communication graduates thought sponsored content or native advertising was likely to have a negative impact on the news organizations that engaged in it (59%) rather than a positive one (41%).



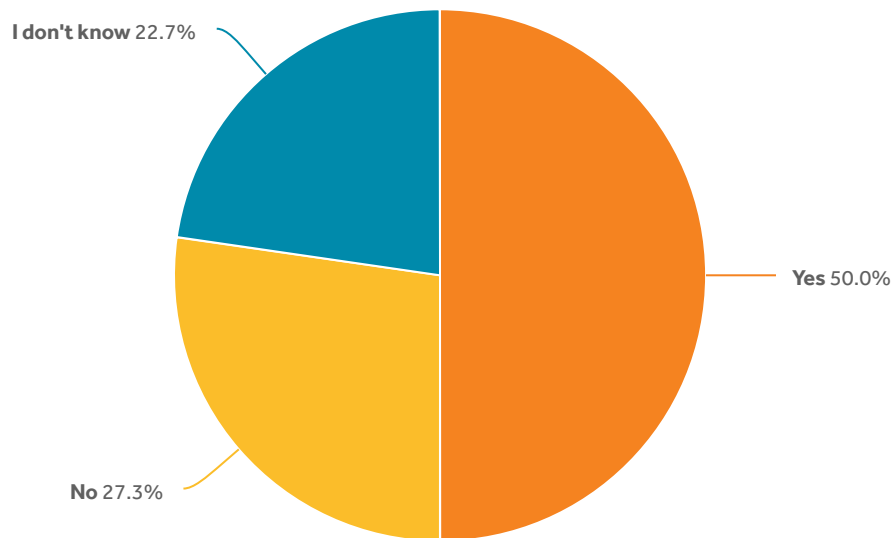
Data Source: Question: In general, which of the following statements comes closer to your view of the practice of sponsored content or native advertising?

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Then we probed those engaged in journalism whether their organizations are trying some form of native advertising. By almost a two-to-one margin, those who work in journalism say their organizations are already experimenting with some form of sponsored content or native advertising, though a significant number said they didn't know. Fully 50% of those who work in journalism say their organizations now employ some kind of sponsored content, while 27% say they do not. But almost as many, 23%, say they are unsure.

Does your news organization offer sponsored content?

Asked of those who work in journalism



Data Source: Question: If you work in journalism, does your organization offer advertisers some form of native advertising or sponsored content?

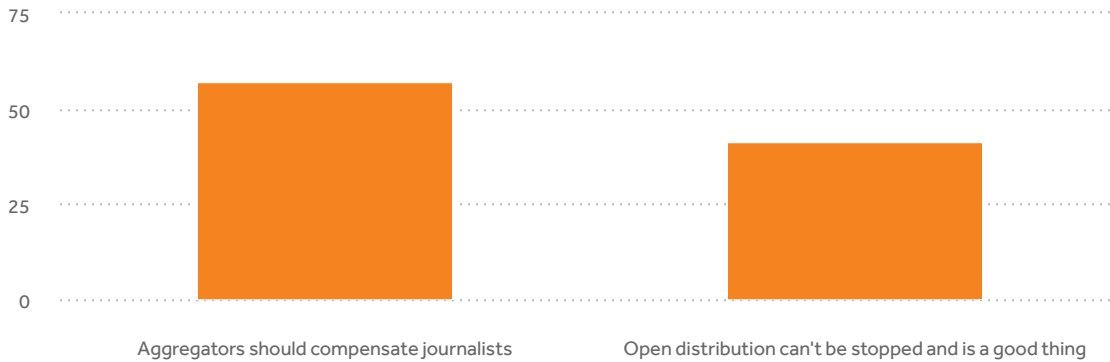
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We also probed how people feel about aggregation — incorporating and redistributing content originally produced by others. Do people think that content producers should be paid by anyone who aggregated their content? Or do they think that aggregation helped content producers get more audience and that it was now an inevitable effect of technology?

Overall, a majority believe aggregators should compensate content producers for curating their content (57%). A significantly lower number (41%) said they thought curation was now just inevitable and it was better to have a bigger audience.

How people view aggregation

All respondents



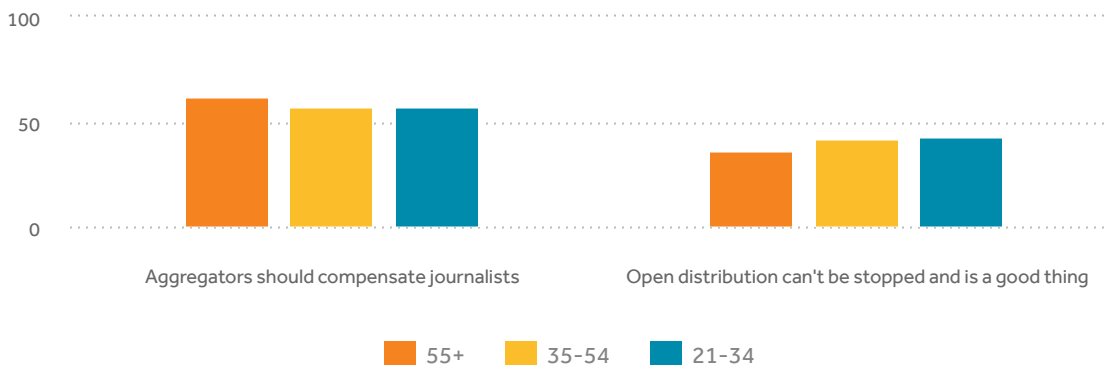
Data Source: Question: The Internet makes redistributing content from other publishers easier than ever. Which of the following comes closer to your view of this practice?

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Does age impact people's attitude toward aggregation? Not appreciably. The youngest cohort and the oldest have similar views—aggregators should compensate content creators.

How people view aggregation

By age



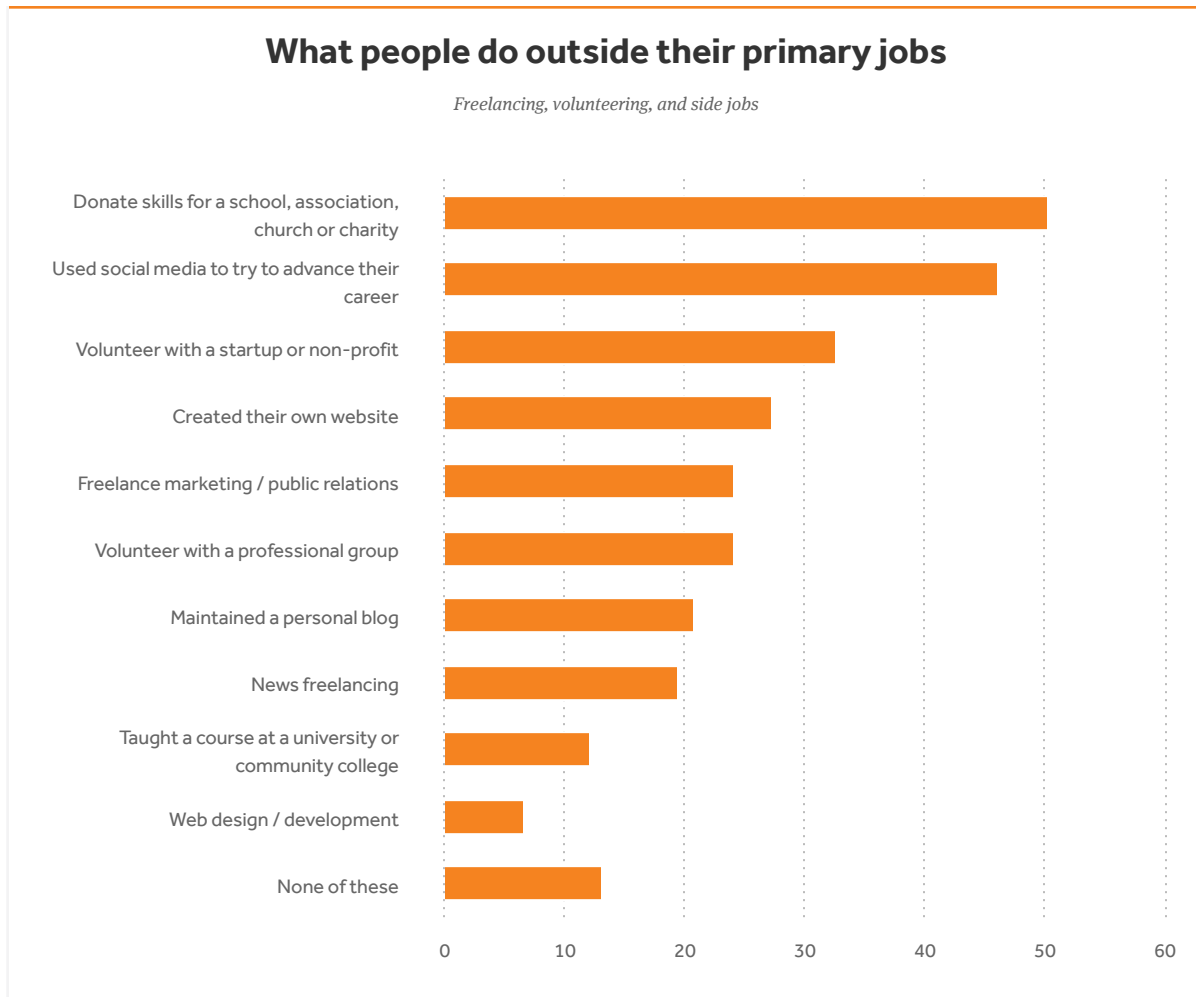
Data Source: Question: Which of the following comes closer to your view of this practice? Good journalism costs money to produce and aggregators should compensate journalists and their organizations for that work. Or there is no stopping open distribution now and it's better to have more available to everyone.

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Journalists take on freelancing and extra jobs

Economists talk increasingly about a phenomenon called the “gig economy,” in which people increasingly may not work as employees but take on work by project. This has always been a part of the world of media. It has been the norm in some fields, such as motion pictures, television and documentary filmmaking, and in the last generation, for many in photojournalism.

The survey did some probing of what experience people had with freelance and other work beyond their core job. The great majority of respondents had done something (only 13% said none of the options applied). The largest group (50%) had donated skills to some charitable group, association, church or school, even more than said they had tried to build their personal brand in social media (46%). About 1 in 5 said they had done freelance work in news (20%).



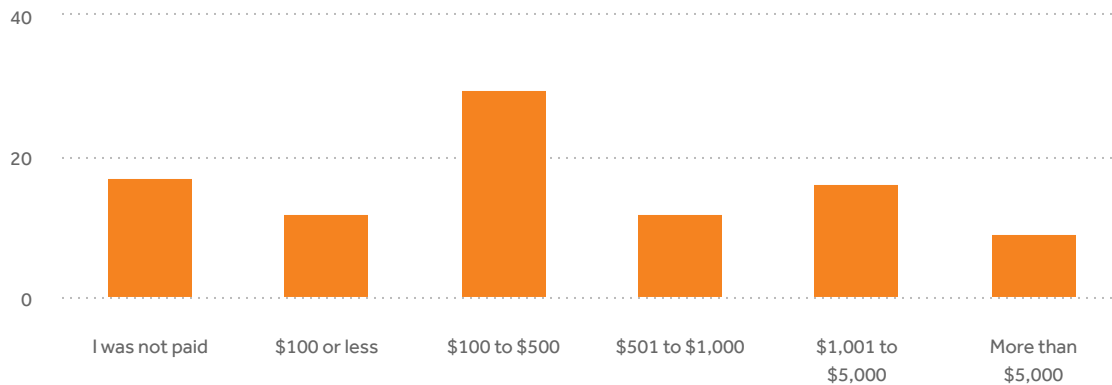
Data Source: Question: Outside of your primary job, which, if any, of the following have you done in the last five years? (Select all that apply)

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Of those who did freelance journalism, the survey then asked how much, if at all, they were paid. The largest group, 30%, were paid between \$100 and \$500. Almost 1 in five (17%) did the work for free. About 16% were paid between \$1,000 and \$5,000, and just under 9% were paid more than \$5,000.

How much people were paid for their last freelance assignment

Asked of those who did freelance journalism work



Data Source: Question: If you did freelance work, how much were you paid for your most recent assignment?

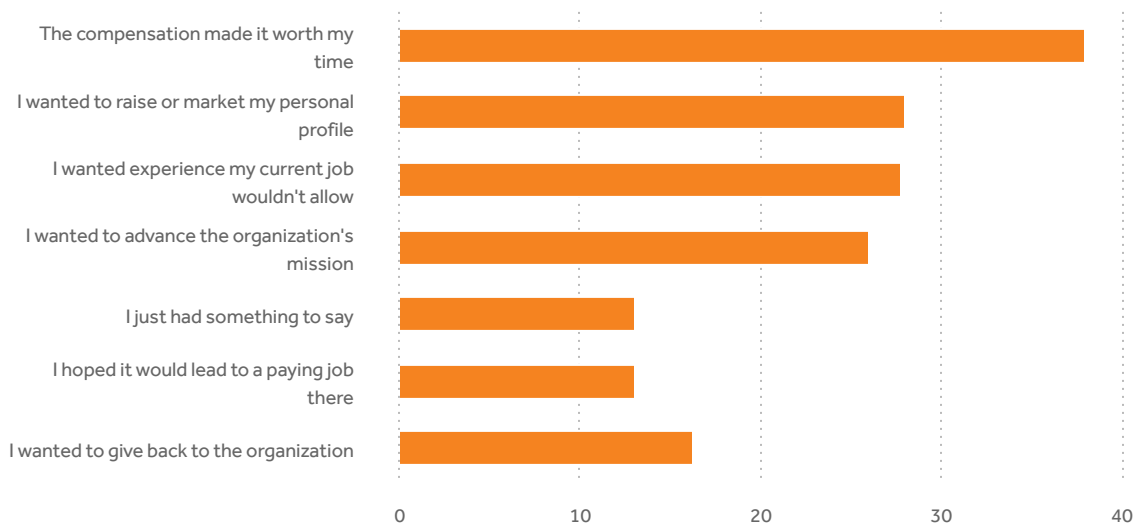
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We then went one step further and asked those who had done this work about their motivation for doing it. Were they trying to make new professional connections? Raise their profile? Or was it the money?

Despite the relatively low amounts of money paid, the largest motivation (40% citing it) said the compensation made the freelance work worth their time. The second largest motivation was raising one's profile (32%), and that was closely followed by trying to learn new skills beyond what their current job offered (29%).

Reasons people chose to freelance

Asked of those who have done freelance journalism work



Data Source: Question: Which of the following were the most important reasons for your deciding to do the freelance work? (Choose up to three. Answers can tally to more than 100%)

What journalists encounter in their jobs and careers

The survey also went deeper to look at the experiences of these journalism and communication graduates in their work. That began by asking people (regardless of where they work) what they had personally experienced in their jobs in the last five years.

The results might be interpreted as relatively grim, but again age made a big difference in results, and some of them are distinctly positive.

The only item that the majority of respondents said they had experienced was that they had new duties added to their existing job (as opposed to being promoted). Nearly two-thirds of people said they had experienced this in the last five years (63%).

At the same time, only 46% said they had a pay raise in the last five years.

When those are correlated, a little more than 27% of these graduates say they have experienced more duties without receiving any pay raise in the last five years. Is one industry tougher in this regard, than another?

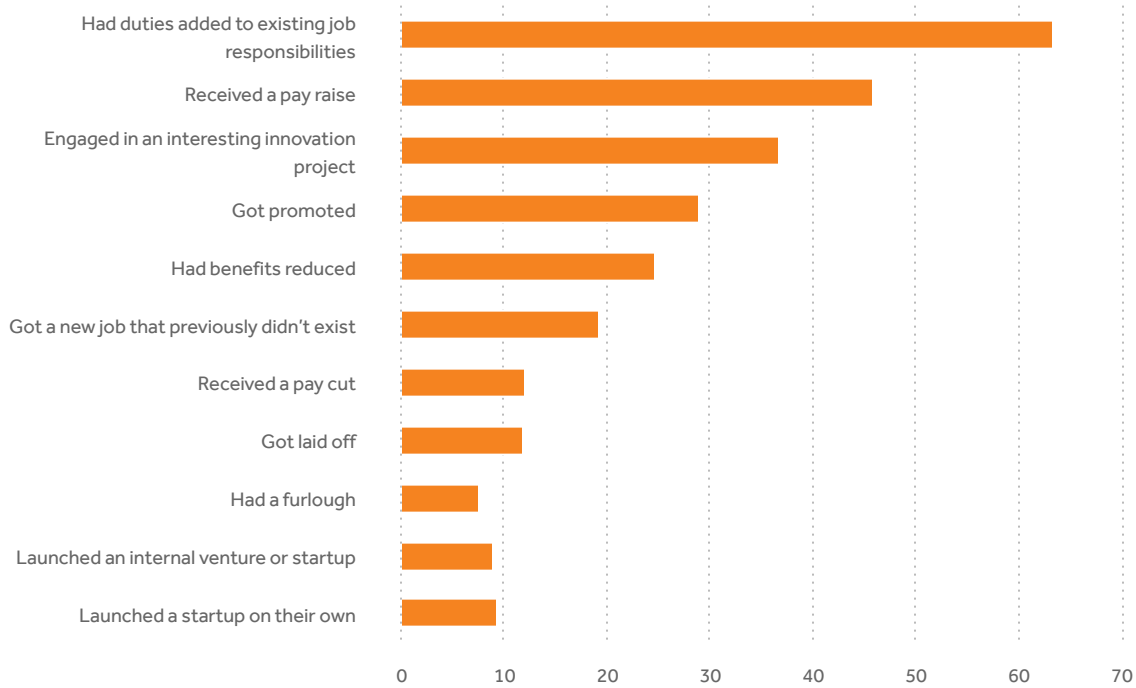
Not really. While 30% of those in journalism say they've gotten more responsibilities but not any pay raises, that is true of 32% of those in education, 28% of those in politics, 30% of those working in startup or entrepreneurial environments and 27% of those in technology.

On a different side of the ledger, 37% said they had been engaged in an interesting innovation project, and 29% said they had been promoted. Another 19% said they had gotten a new job that hadn't existed before.

There were also some even more dour findings here. Fully 12% said they had suffered pay cuts, 12% layoffs, and 8% furloughs.

What people have experienced at work

All respondents



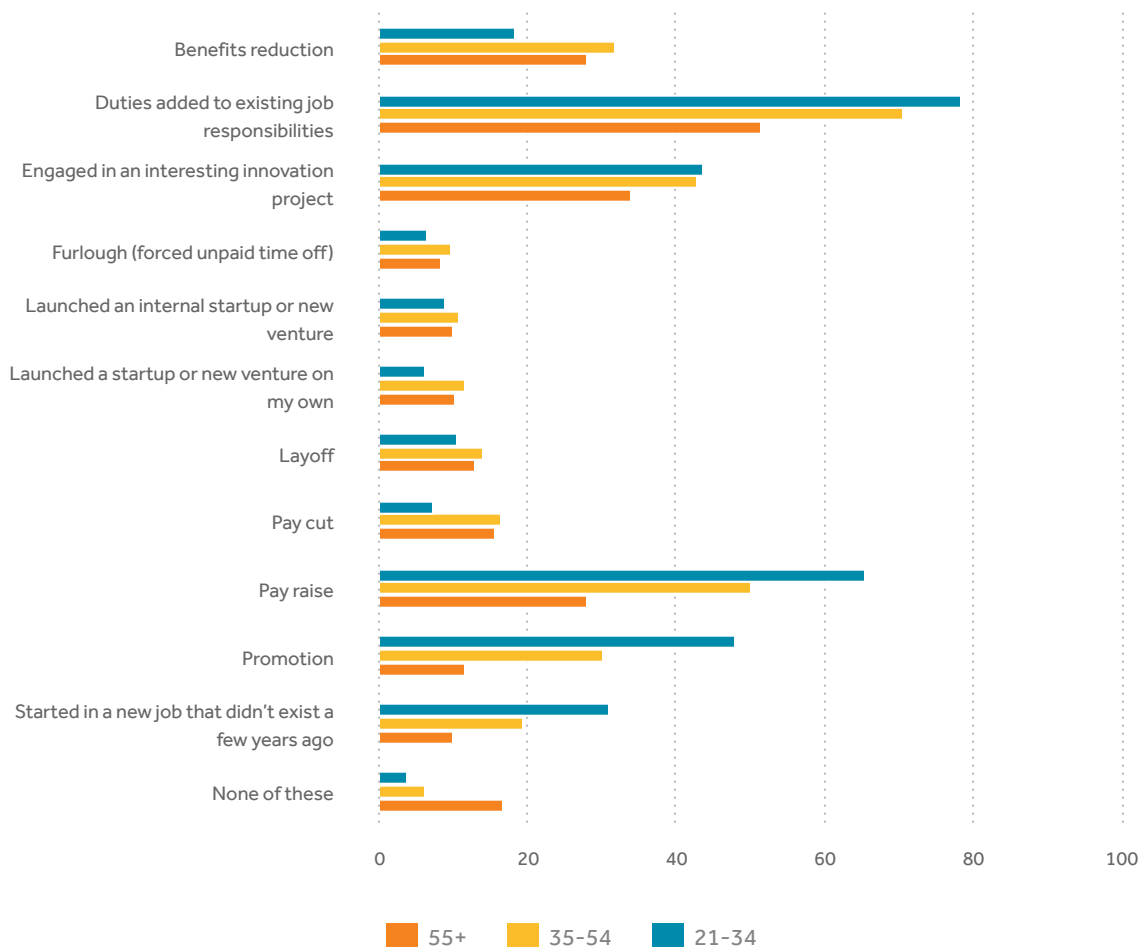
Data Source: Question: Which of the following have you personally experienced in the last 5 years?

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These responses vary substantially by age. The youngest graduates, for instance, were more likely to have new duties added to their jobs without being formally promoted, which could be a sign of their becoming more efficient or simply being more willing. They were substantially more likely to get a pay raise (66%) than those 35-54 (50%) or those 55 and older (28%). They were half as likely to say they had suffered a pay cut. They were far more likely to have been promoted (48%) compared with 30% for those 35-54 and 12% for those 55 and older, though this may reflect the greater number of job categories open to younger employees and the smaller number in senior positions.

Recent job experiences

By age



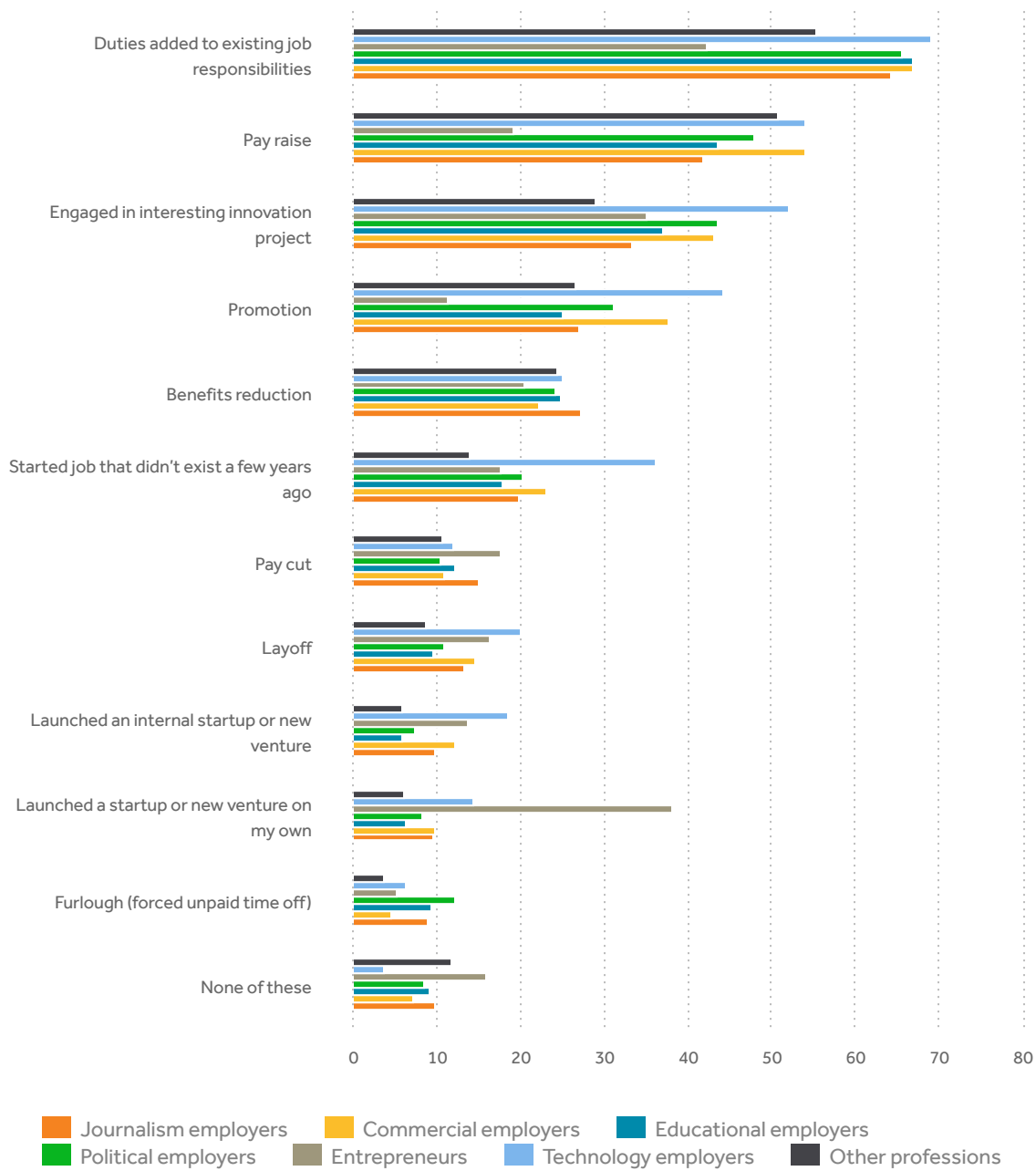
Data Source: Question: Which of the following have you personally experienced at work at least once in the last five years? Select all that apply.

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The industry one works in seems to have less impact on what kinds of experiences people have had in the past five years at work. There were differences by employer category, but it is harder to generalize. Those in journalism are the most likely to have faced reductions in benefits by a slight margin. But generally there are not clear patterns. People in different employment categories have experienced some things that are positive and some things that are negative, without one industry standing out as clearly benefiting and another suffering.

What people have experienced in their jobs

By employer type

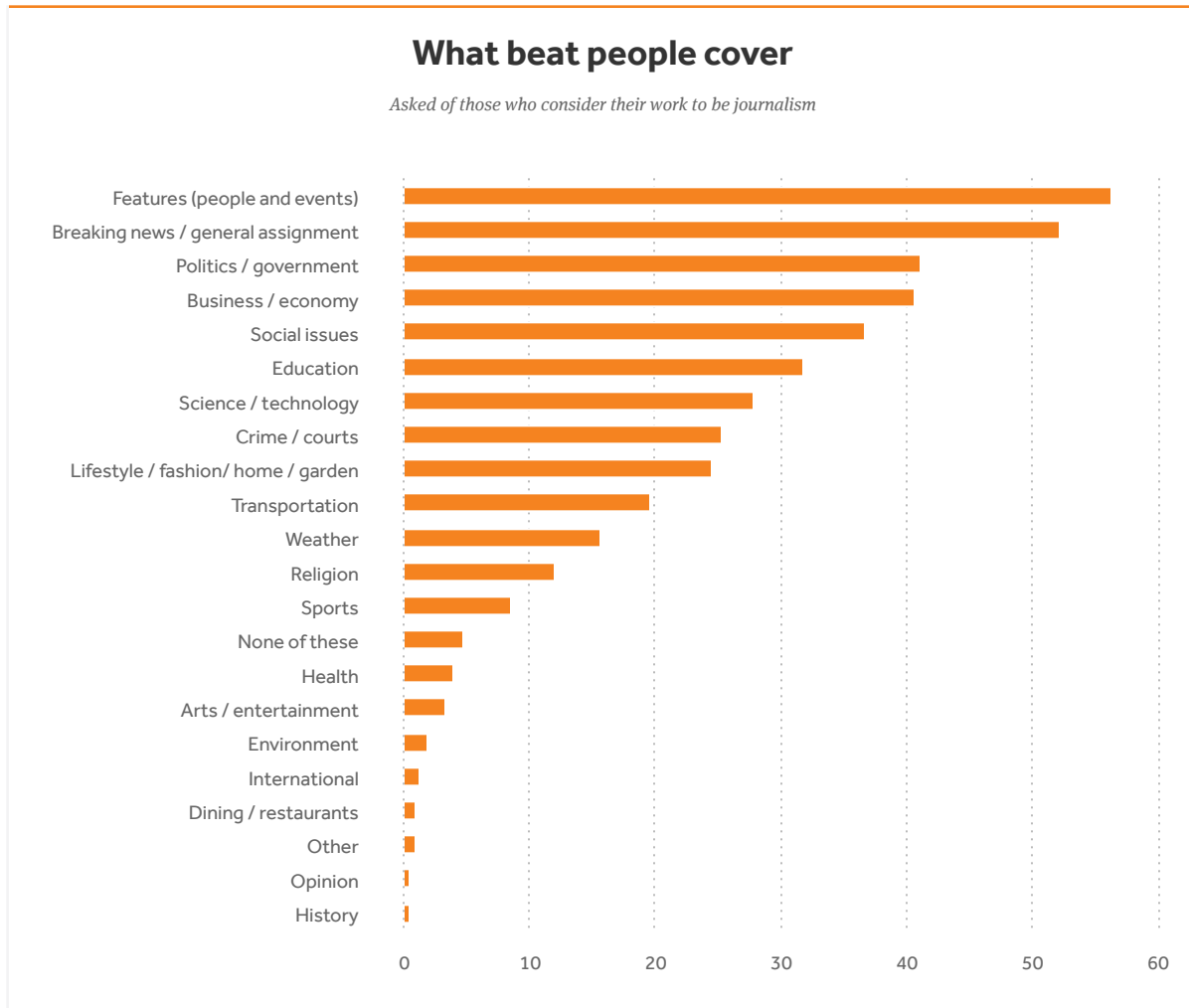


Data Source: Question: Which of the following have you personally experienced at work at least once within the past 5 years? Select all that apply.

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The survey also probed the experience of people in journalism in particular. What beats do people cover? How do they feel about their jobs? What are their plans?

When we asked those in journalism what topics they are responsible for either covering or editing, the topics varied fairly widely. Features and general assignment were the most common (56% and 52%). About the same number of people said they cover or edit politics as do business (41% each), something we imagine might not have been true a generation ago when business journalism was not as robust. Social issues and education came next. Science and technology writing is now a major beat, 7th on this long list, above crime and court, just below education and social issues.



Data Source: Question: About which of the following topics are you frequently responsible for producing or editing content? (Check all that apply.)

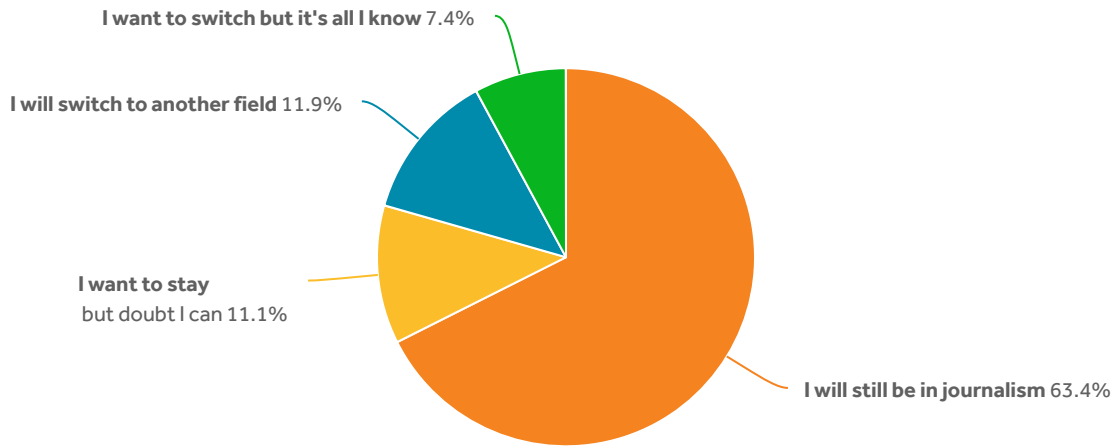
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We also asked people engaged in journalism where they saw themselves in the future. Did they imagine they would remain in journalism?

Most, 67% believed they would still be in journalism. Another 17% wanted to but worried they could not. Ten percent thought they would switch, and 7% wanted to but said they worried journalism was all they knew.

Where people working in journalism see themselves in 5 years

Asked of those currently working in journalism



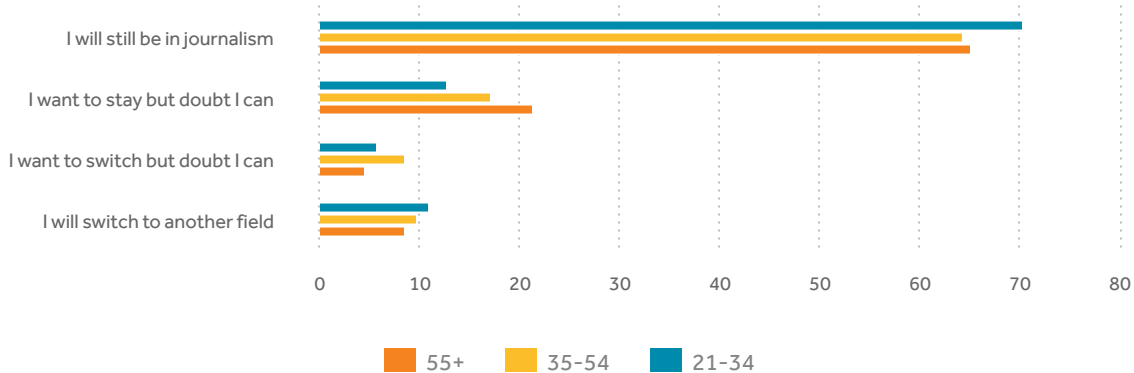
Data Source: Question: If you work in journalism, where do you see yourself in five years?

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Yes. Younger journalists were more confident they would remain in the field. Fully 70% said they thought they would still be in journalism, versus closer to 65% for their elders.

Where people in journalism see themselves working in 5 years

By age

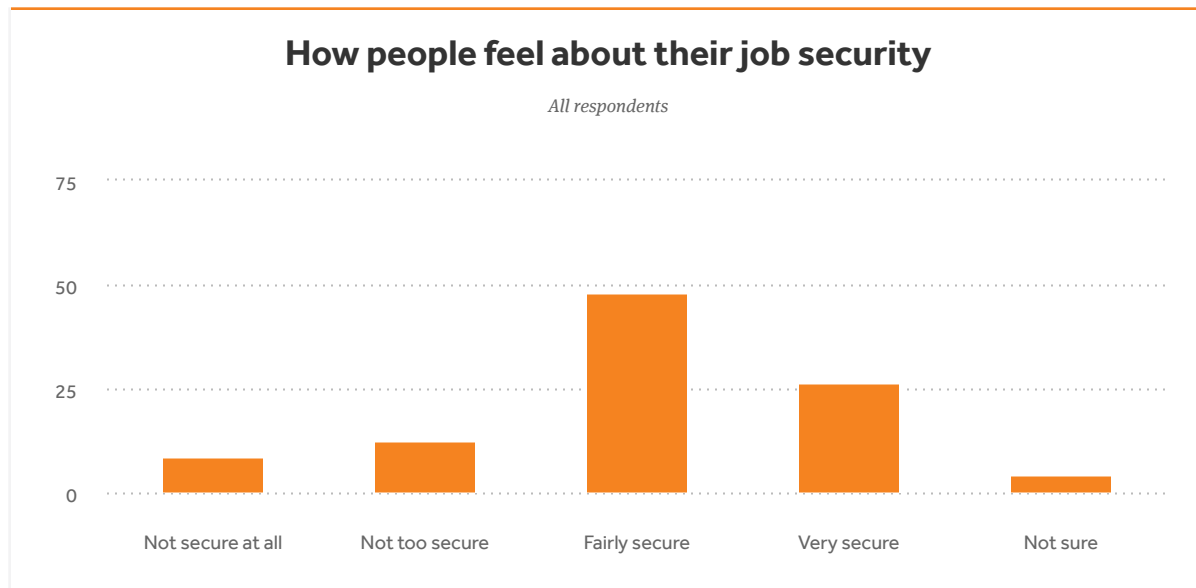


Data Source: Question: If you work in journalism, describe where you see yourself in five years.

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Finally we asked people about their sense of job security. This question was asked of everyone, and we could compare those engaged in journalism with the broader sample.

In all, three-quarters (75%) describe themselves as feeling “very” or “fairly” secure about their job in five years (with 26% of all respondents saying “very”). Just one in five (21%) say “not too” or “not secure at all.” Just 4% say they’re not sure.



Data Source: Question: How would you describe your feeling about your job security?

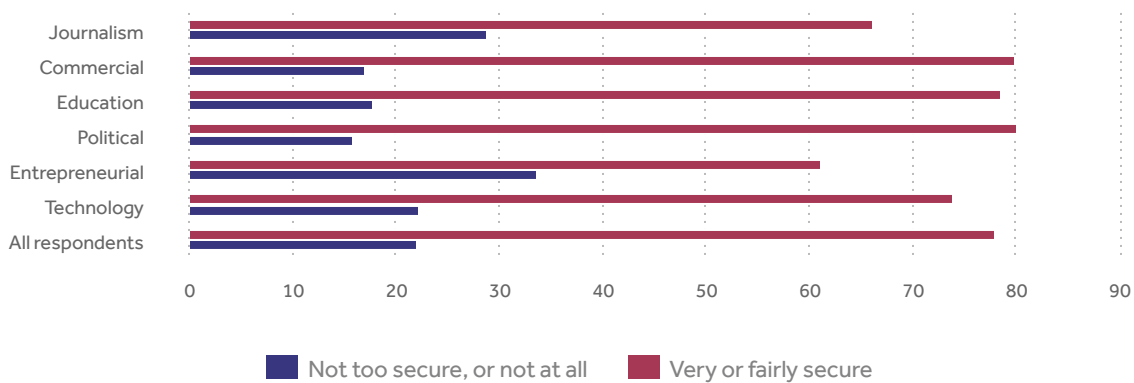
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Does the industry people work in make much difference? Some but not as much as people might think. The majority across all employment categories felt either “very” or “fairly” secure, including those in journalism. The highest in feeling very secure are those with professional degrees, working in politics or education (each at more than 30%).

Fully 66% of those in journalism say they feel fairly or very secure (just 19% very, the lowest level of any profession).

How secure people in different industries feel about their jobs

By employer category



Data Source: Question: How would you describe your feeling about your job security?

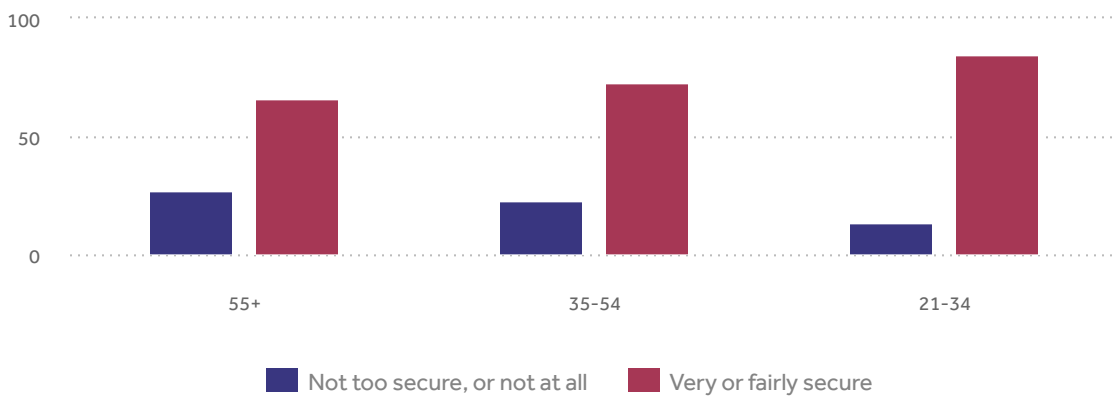
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How big a difference does age make in these perceptions of job security? Some, certainly.

The youngest are the most likely to feel a sense of job security. Fully 85% of those age 34 or younger feel at least fairly secure. That is notably more than 73% of those between the ages of 35 and 54. Those over age 55 feel least secure. But even in this cohort, 66% say they feel at least fairly secure about their job. Just 27% describe themselves as feeling insecure. Interestingly, a much higher percentage than any other group, about 8% said they weren't sure.

How secure people feel about their jobs

By age



Data Source: Question: How would you describe your feeling about your job security?

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Skills, knowledge and comfort levels with job skills

The survey also probed a series of questions about a range of different skill sets and asked people about their knowledge and comfort levels with them.

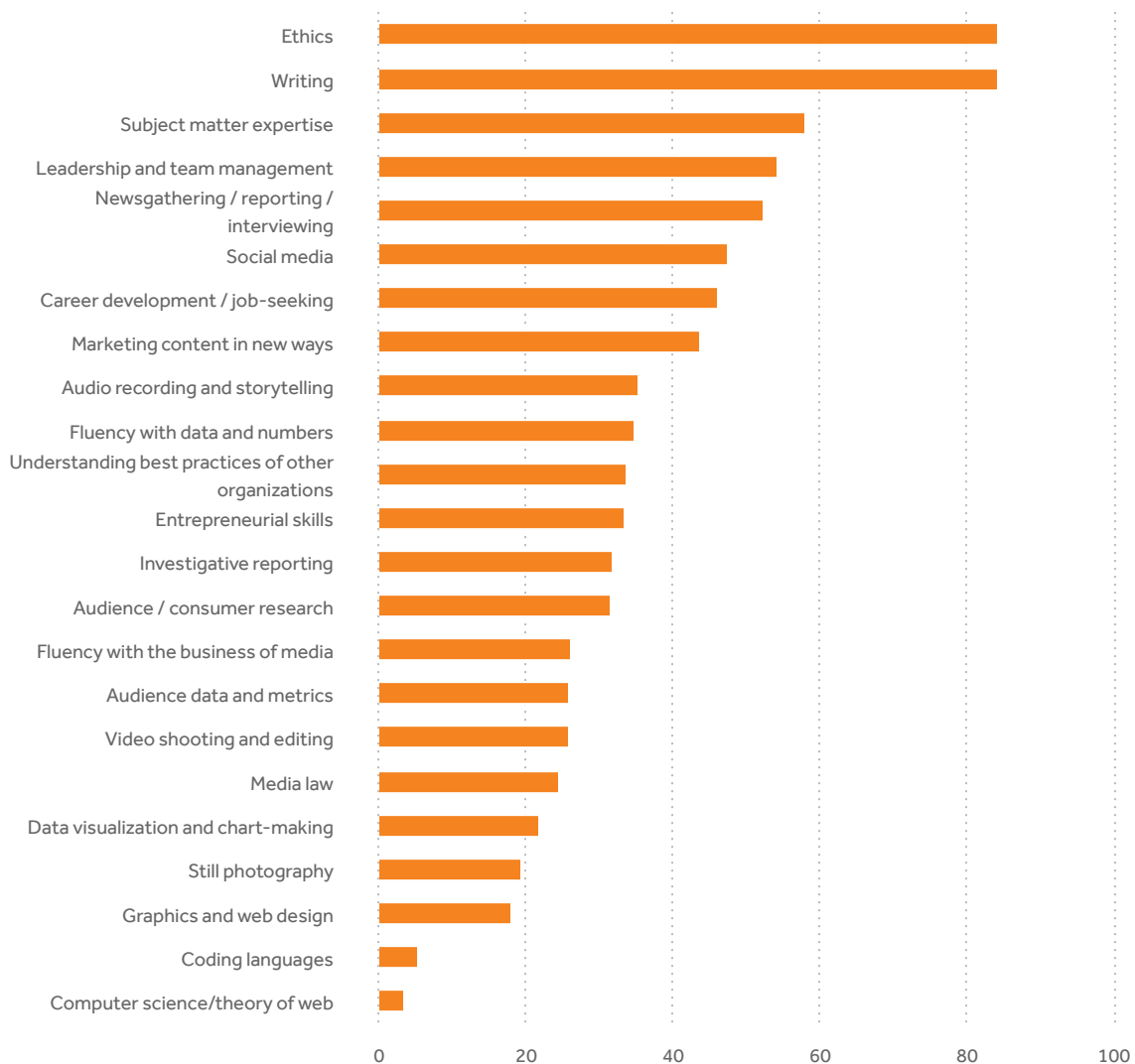
One question in that sequence asked people about some two dozen skills that they might use in whatever their field and asked how important they thought each one was. That list ranged from writing and reporting skills to numeracy and entrepreneurship to knowing the history of the web.

In many cases people rated traditional skills highest, but there were some surprises on the list as well. When ranking by percentage of graduates who called the skill “very important” to their work, leadership and career development skills ranked near the top (4 and 7) as did social media skills (6) and knowing new ways to market content (8) and entrepreneurship (12).

There are five skills that a majority of all respondents ranked as “very important,” though all journalism and communication graduates were surveyed about this, not just those involved in journalism or even content creation. The top two skills that majorities described as very important were ethics, (84% called it “very” important) and writing, (84% “very “important”). The third-ranked skill, “having subject matter expertise,” was described as very important by far fewer (58%). Next came leadership skills (54%) and newsgathering (53%).

What skills are most important in your work?

All respondents



Data Source: Question: How important do you think each of the following skills is for someone in the field you work in today? Showing percent saying "very important."

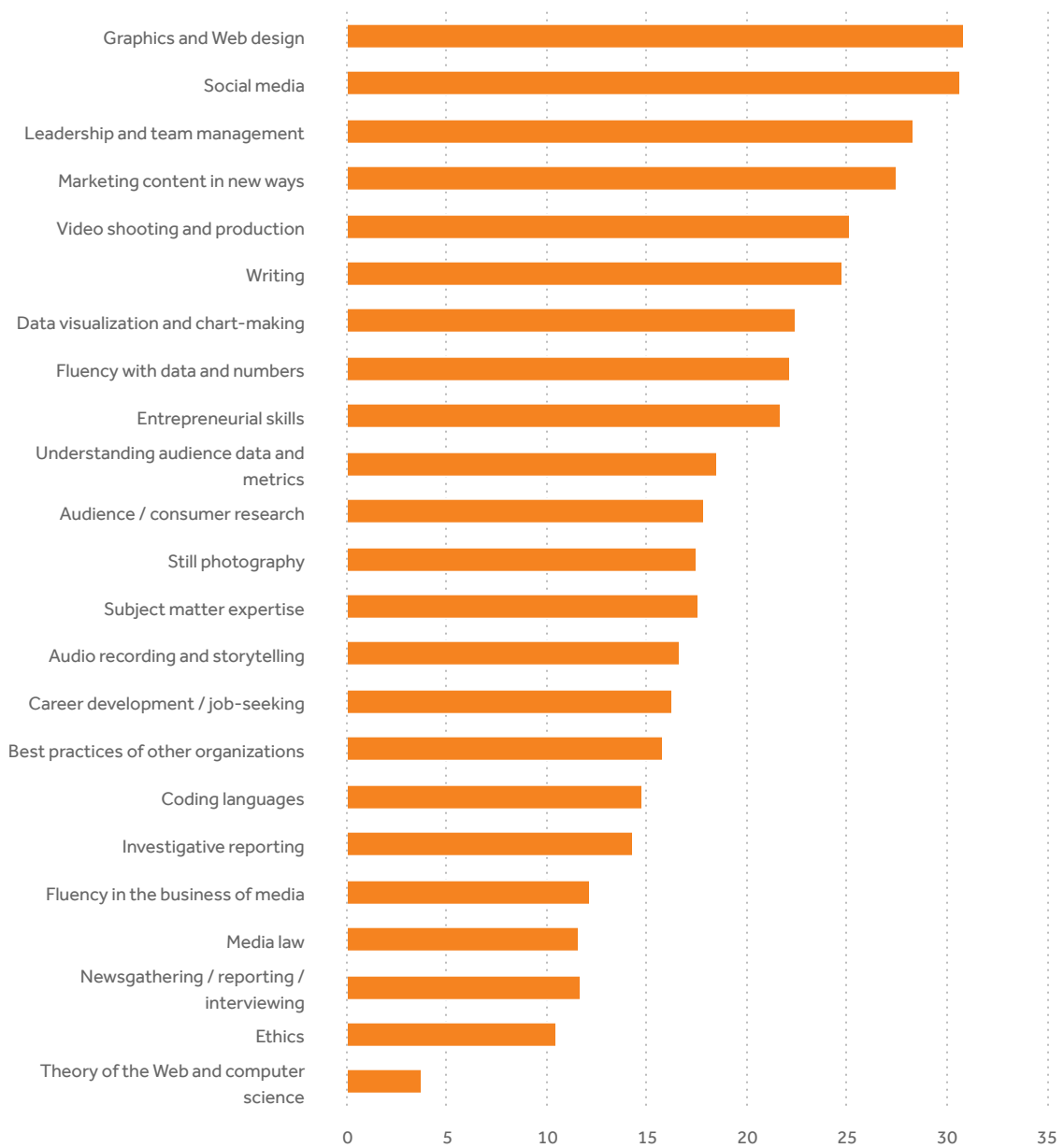
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And for which of these skills would people pursue further training than they currently have?

That was a dramatically different list, curiously. Here, graphics (ranked 21st in importance) and social media skills, came out as the skill set most people said they would pursue (31% for each), followed by leadership and team management skills and learning content marketing (28%).

Skills for which people would seek training

All respondents



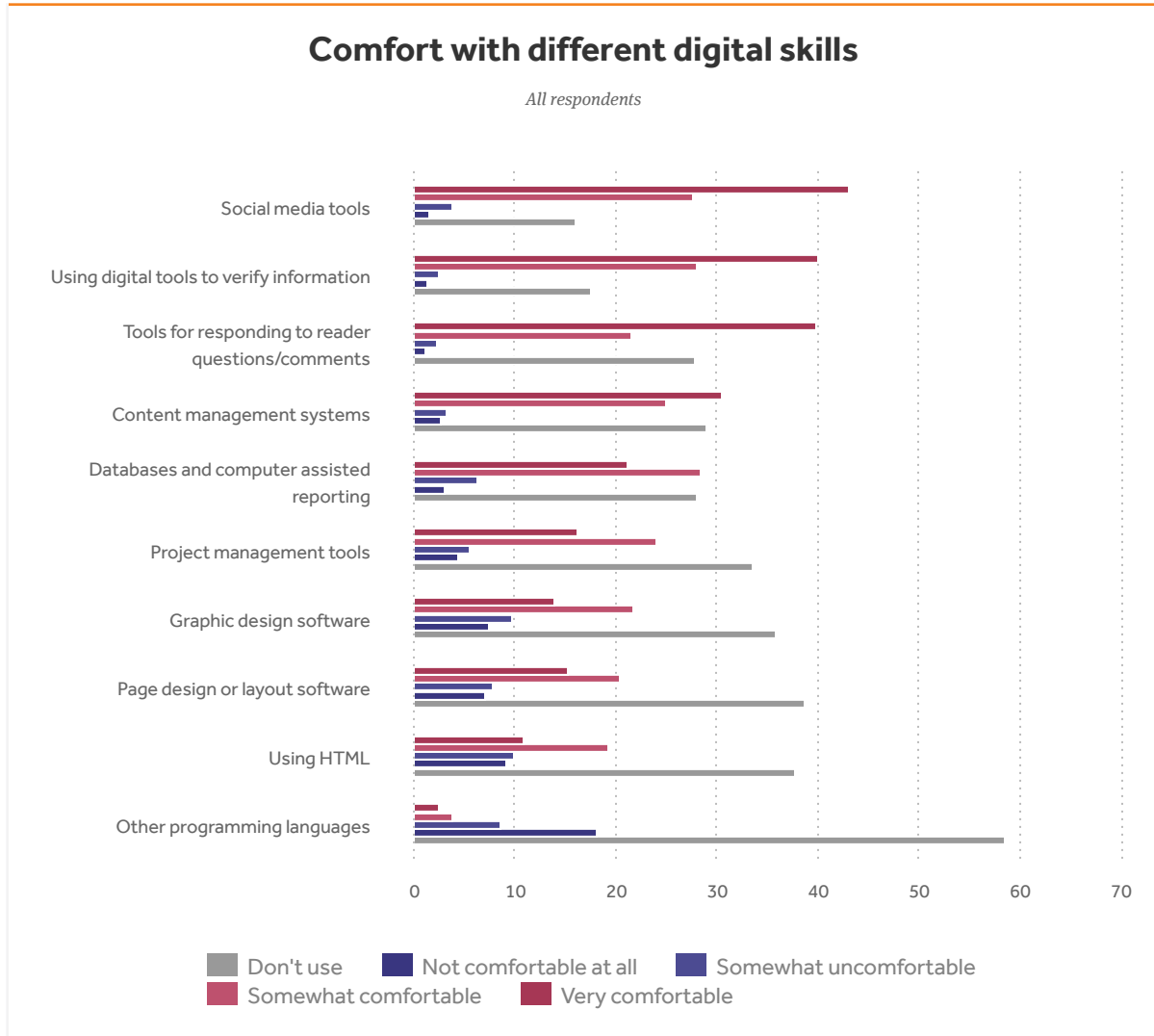
Data Source: Question: For which of these skills would you pursue further training? Check all that apply.

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We also asked people about 10 different technologies they might use in their jobs today — from knowing how to write computer code to using database tools for reporting.

On that list of 10, people were most comfortable with using social media platforms. Nearly 71% of these graduates say they are comfortable with them, 43% saying “very” and 28% “somewhat.” Using digital tools for verifying information was second. Here, 68% say they’re comfortable—with 40% saying very much so. Nearly half register comfort with database reporting. Yet just 30% of these graduates register comfort using HTML, the most basic computer language, and just 11% saying “very.” Fully 57% say they are uncomfortable or don’t use it at all.

CLICK AND DRAG IN THE PLOT AREA TO ZOOM IN



Data Source: Question: How comfortable are you employing each of the following technologies or digital practices for your job?

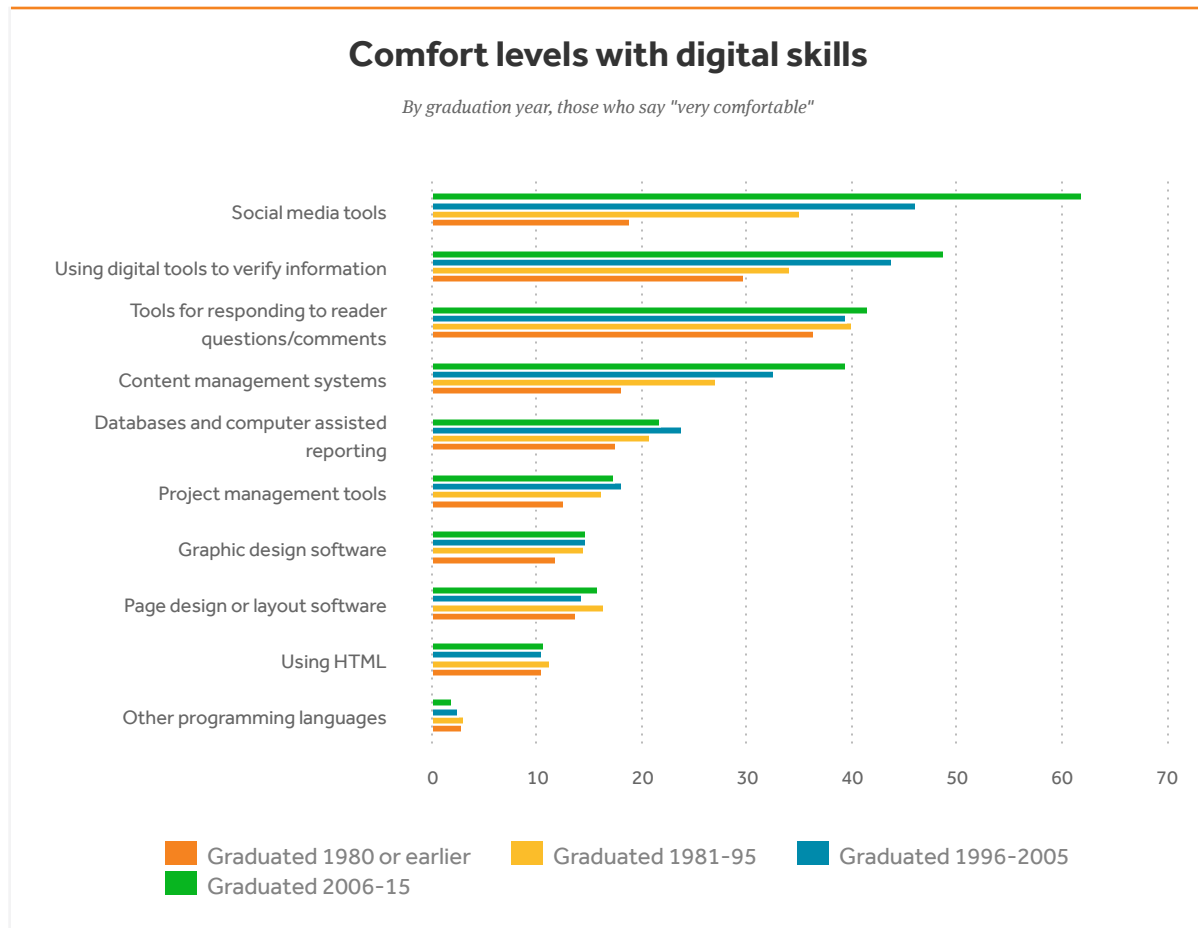
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Do these totals begin to look different if we dissect them by age? Are more recent graduates fundamentally different than older in their comfort level with digital skills?

There are differences, but perhaps not as striking as some might expect. For instance, 10% of those who graduated before 1981 say they are very comfortable with HTML. Just 11% of those who graduated after 2005 say so. Twelve percent of those who graduated more than 35 years ago are comfortable with graphic design software. Of those who graduated in the last 10 years, that number rises to just four points, to 15%. Computer assisted reporting shifts from 18% saying very comfortable of those who graduated before 1981. It moves up four percentage points to 22% of those who graduated in the last decade. Actually more graduates from 1996 to 2005 expressed high levels of comfort with computer assisted reporting (24%).

While those differences may suggest older graduates are learning on the job, it also suggests that communication schools may not have changed as much as some might have anticipated. There is a good deal more data exploring that specific question in the next section.

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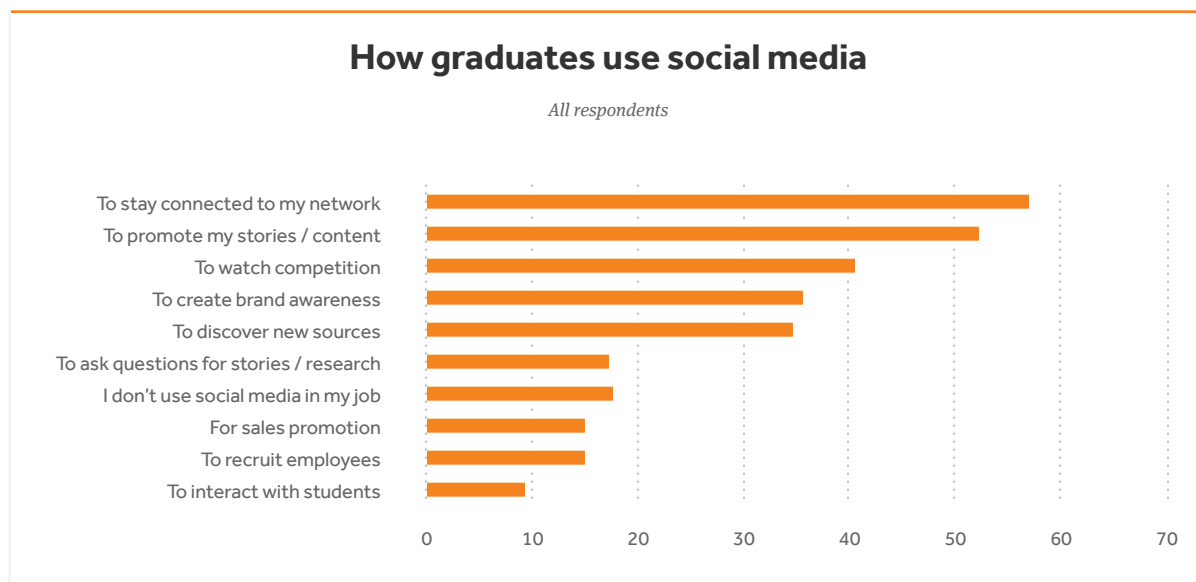
Data Source: Question: How comfortable are you employing each of the following technologies or digital practices for your job?
Showing percent saying "very comfortable."

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Finally, we went more in depth at one of these skill areas. Social media has become so important to how people find content, particularly news, that the survey probed in great detail how people are using social networks now in their jobs.

The answers fall into four basic categories. People could use social media to learn or listen, either to consumers or other people in their area of expertise; they could use it for marketing and distribution purposes. They could use it to manage people, as in recruiting employees. Or they could not use social networks.

The number-one way that these journalism and communication graduates used social media was to stay connected to their network of colleagues (both a learning and managing method), followed by promoting their content (which is marketing).



Data Source: Question: How do you use social media?

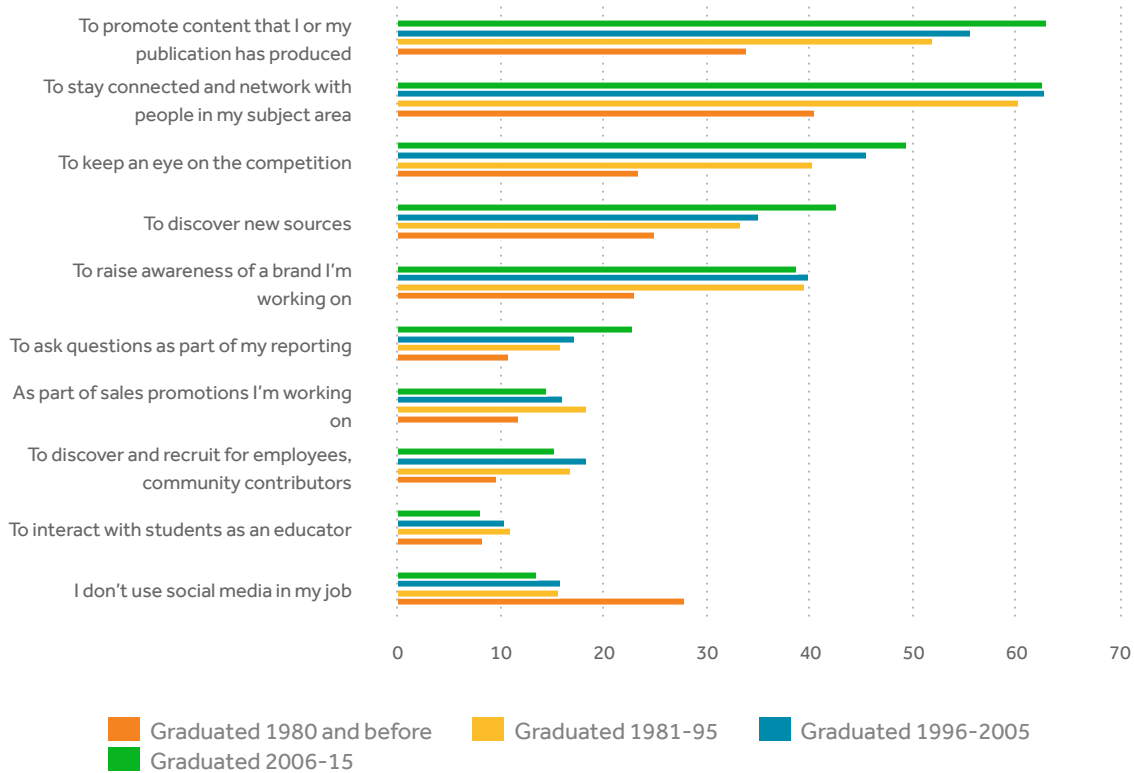
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As we might expect, when one graduated makes a difference here, but perhaps not as large a one as some might expect. For instance, 63% of those who graduated in the past decade say they use social media to promote the content they have produced, versus 56% for those who graduated in the previous decade. The most recent graduates are also more likely to use social media to “discover new sources” (43%), compared with 35% of those who graduated in the decade prior. The biggest differences, of course, are with those who graduated in 1980 or earlier, a group that is most likely over 55.

But for various uses there are not major differences except with the very oldest age cohort and the youngest. And fewer of the very youngest age cohort may be using social media in certain ways than some might expect. For instance, only 23% say they use social media to ask questions of people as part of their reporting, compared with 17% who graduated in the decade prior. In other words, relatively few across all age cohorts are using social media fully as a reporting tool versus one for marketing.

How people use social media

By graduation date



Data Source: Question: In what ways do you use social media, check all that apply?

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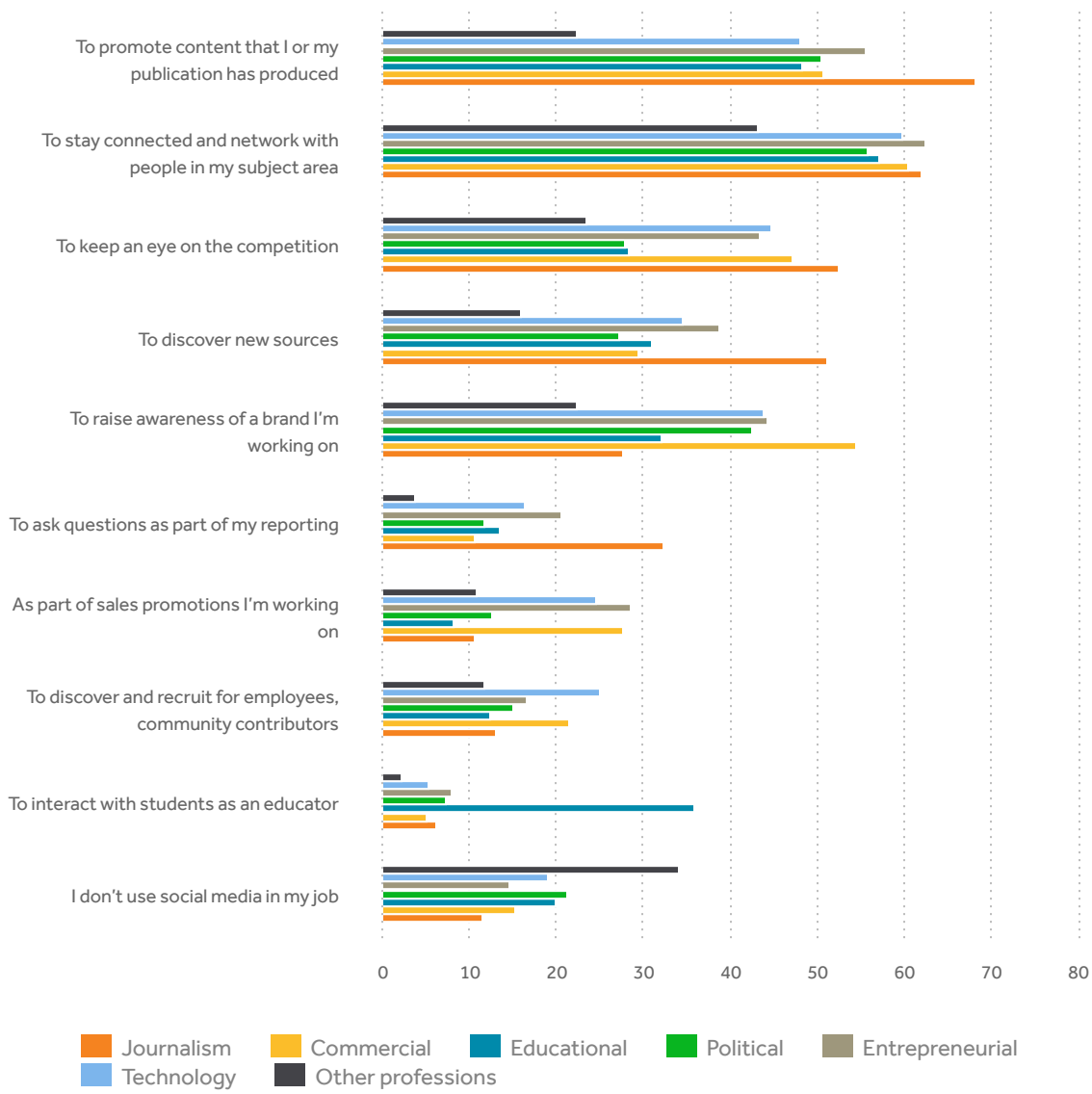
If people in media have been criticized for being slow to embrace social media, the data here would suggest that criticism may be somewhat unfair.

When we break down this data by employment category, those in news generally are more likely to say they use social media for almost every task than those in other fields.

For instance, 68% in news say they use it to promote content they produce, compared with an average of 46% across other fields. And 51% in news say they use social media networks to “discover new sources” to learn from, higher than the average of 29% across other fields. Even if one looks at a category of social media use that may seem especially universal to any field, to “stay connected and network with people in my subject area,” people in news rank high, about the same as those who work in entrepreneurial or startup companies. Fully 62% of people in news say they use social media in this way and 63% for entrepreneurs. It averages 55% across the other employment categories.

How people use social media

By employer category



Data Source: Question: In what ways do you use social media, check all that apply?

Experiences with school, student media, and internships

The college journalism and communication experience

At a time of enormous change, how people learn — and how academic institutions, educators, organizations, student publications and others can help them — is a major issue. The survey asked people a battery of questions about how they learn, what they learned in school and their academic experience more generally.

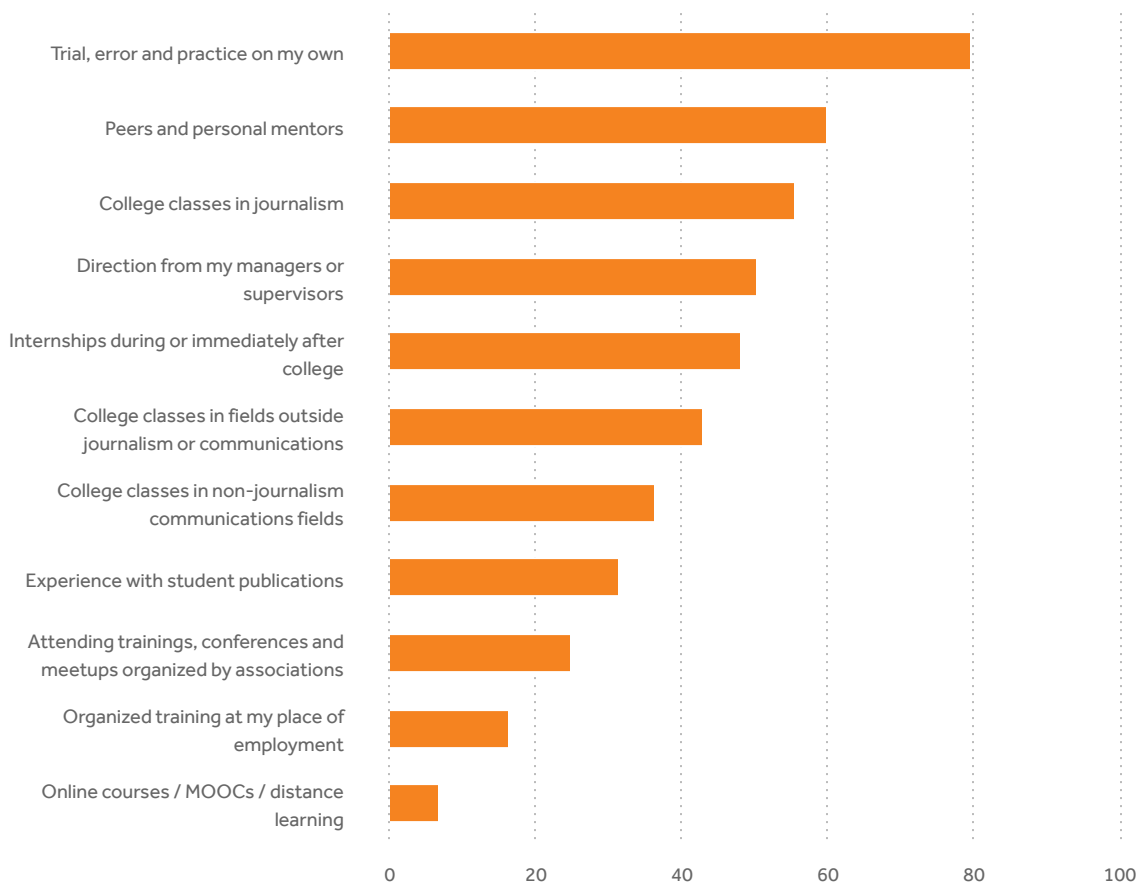
In general, people view their academic experience positively. But schools clearly teach some subjects better than others, and there are longstanding underlying questions about what kind of experiences in school and on the job are most resonant.

We began by asking a broad question. Thinking about how people had learned their professional skills, we asked them to rank various methods of learning, from their core classes in college and graduate to professional on the job training and their own personal efforts at trial and error.

At the top of the pyramid of learning sits something more personal than what people found in a classroom. At the bottom sits what was organized for them in terms of professional development on the job, and even lower what they have found online or in distance learning. Fully 80% rated trial on their own as the most valuable way they have learned followed by mentors they sought out (60%) and then school classes (56%). The fact that classes comes in third behind trial and error and mentors may undercount to some degree the various indirect influences in education—where trial and error and mentors also occur. Stronger programs also will have stronger student media and more active and helpful alumni networks. But the findings point out how important those indirect influences are.

Value of professional learning methods

All respondents



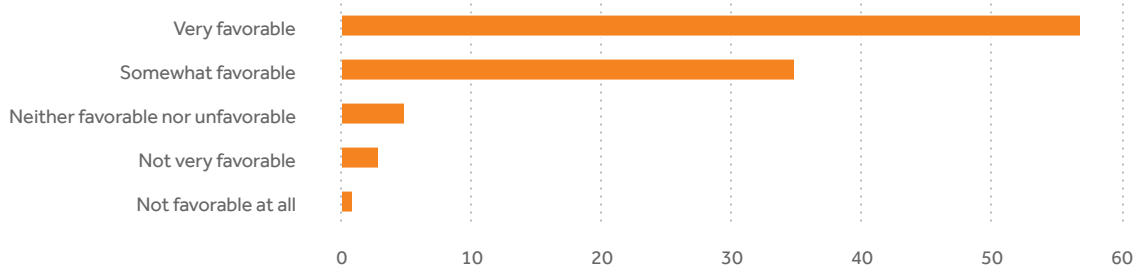
Data Source: Question: Thinking about the ways you have learned as a professional, please rank how valuable each of the following has been to you. Showing percent who answered "very valuable."

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When asked to evaluate their academic experience in journalism, communication, public relations or media generally, they regard it with fondness. About 9 out of 10 (92%) rate their journalism/communication school experience as either "very" (57%) or "somewhat" (35%) favorable. Only 4% rate it as unfavorable.

How graduates rate their journalism or communications school experience overall

All respondents



Data Source: Question: How would you rate your journalism/communications school experience overall?

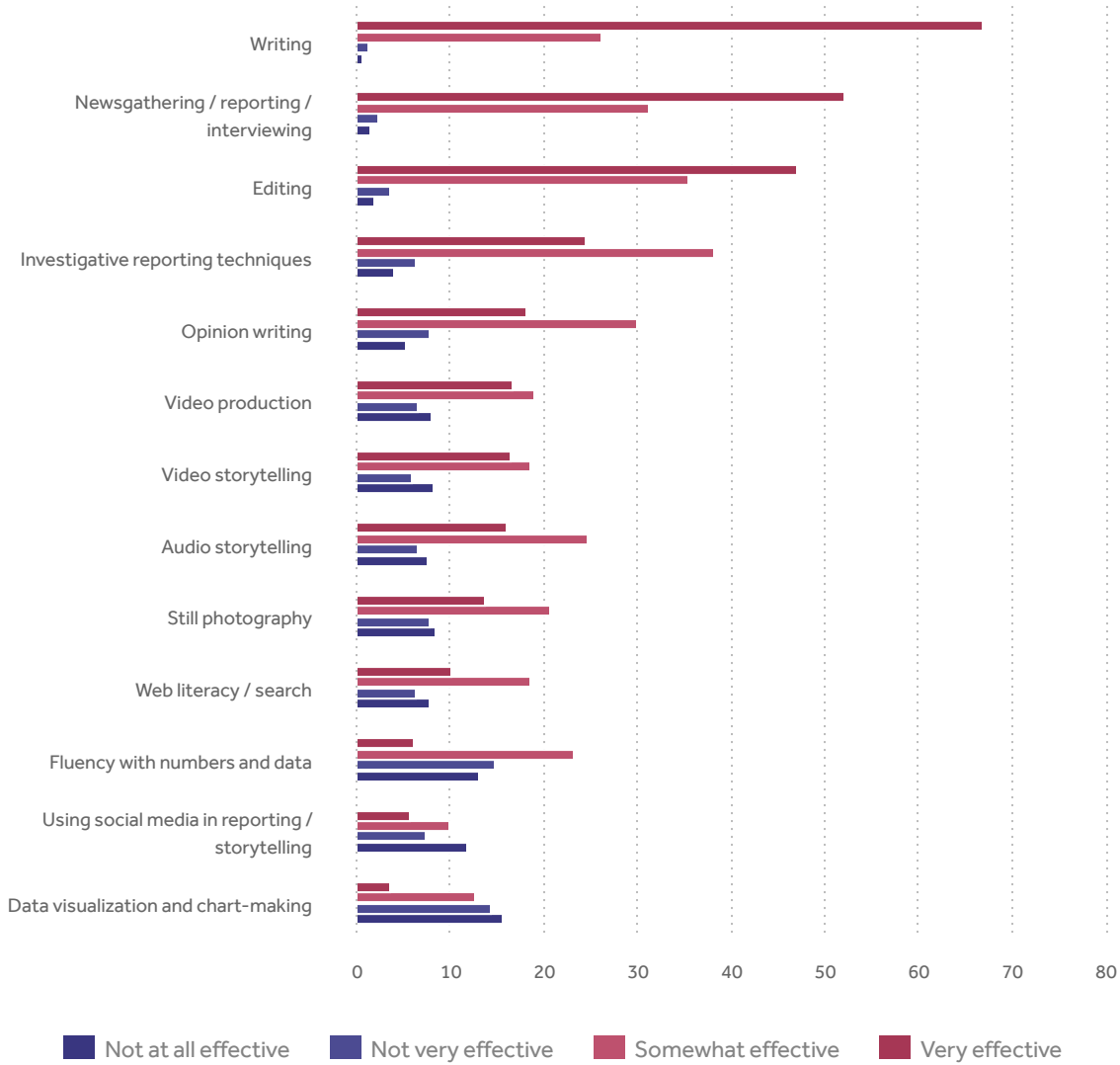
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When asked how effective their schools were at teaching specific skill sets, however, that picture becomes more nuanced. We asked this question a couple of ways. First, we asked about different fairly traditional journalistic skills that are taught in communication and journalism education – including audio and video storytelling, editing and opinion writing.

Writing stood again at the top of the list of skills for which people thought their academic institutions had prepared them well. Reporting and editing also stood high (No. 3 and No. 4 on a list of 13 skills). Interestingly, some skills that more than a generation ago schools identified as a need still sit low on this list of traditional items. Fluency with numbers and data ranked 11th out of 13 in the number of people who thought what they learned was effective.

How effective was your school at teaching different core communication skills?

All respondents



Data Source: Question: How effective would you say your school was at teaching each of the following reporting and writing skills?

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How much do these scores change depending on when someone graduated? The answer offers some clue to how much curricula may have shifted over the years, at least for these core content-producing skills. The answer is there are signs of change, but perhaps not as much as some might suspect.

First, the fundamentals remain. The first four ranks — writing, newsgathering, editing and investigative techniques — remain the same from the oldest graduate cohort to the youngest.

But other skills have moved up. Video instruction has improved in the estimation of graduates (10% thought is very effective before 1981, 24% in the last decade.) Web literacy, naturally, moves up, from 2% to 24% calling the training they received very effective. But some things did not change much. When it comes to teaching fluency with numbers and math generally, 6% rated their training very effective before 1981. Seven percent who graduated a generation later rated it so.

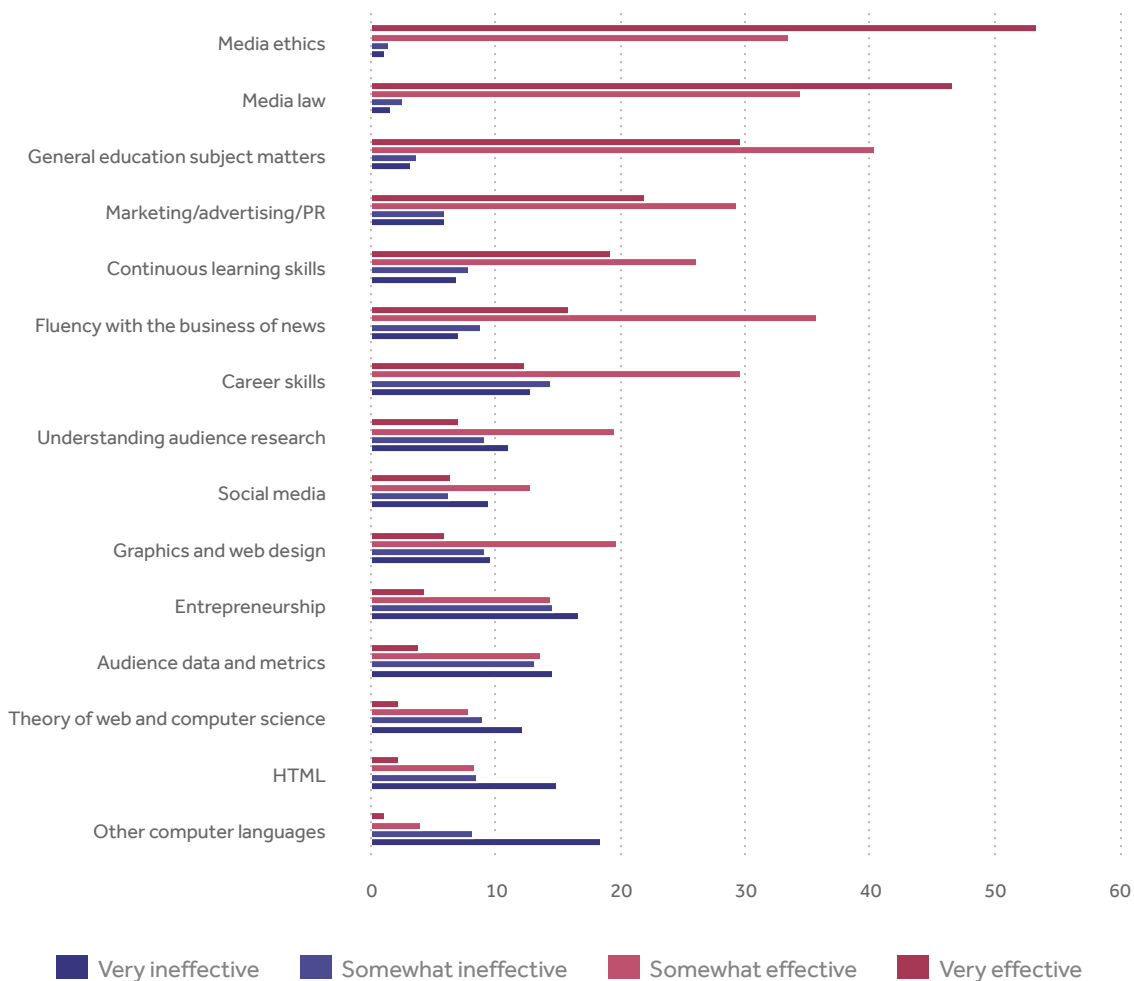
The list does not change as much if one looks by the nature of the degree earned, whether it was in journalism, public relations and advertising or communication generally.

Then we asked about skills that go beyond traditional newsgathering — from the same list we asked about ranking how important skills were in the workplace — everything from computer science and the economics of media to career development skills and using metrics.

Here ethics and media law stood out well. Issues that related to data and technology did not.

What skills beyond reporting and writing schools teach best

Percentages who said the teaching of the skill was very effective, somewhat effective, somewhat ineffective or very ineffective



Data Source: Question: How effective would you say your school was at teaching the following skills that go beyond the traditional newsgathering / news presentation skills?

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For these non-traditional and sometimes more digitally oriented skills, one might expect the date of graduation to make an enormous difference in how alumni ranked how effective the school was. That kind of shift, however, is not evident in the data.

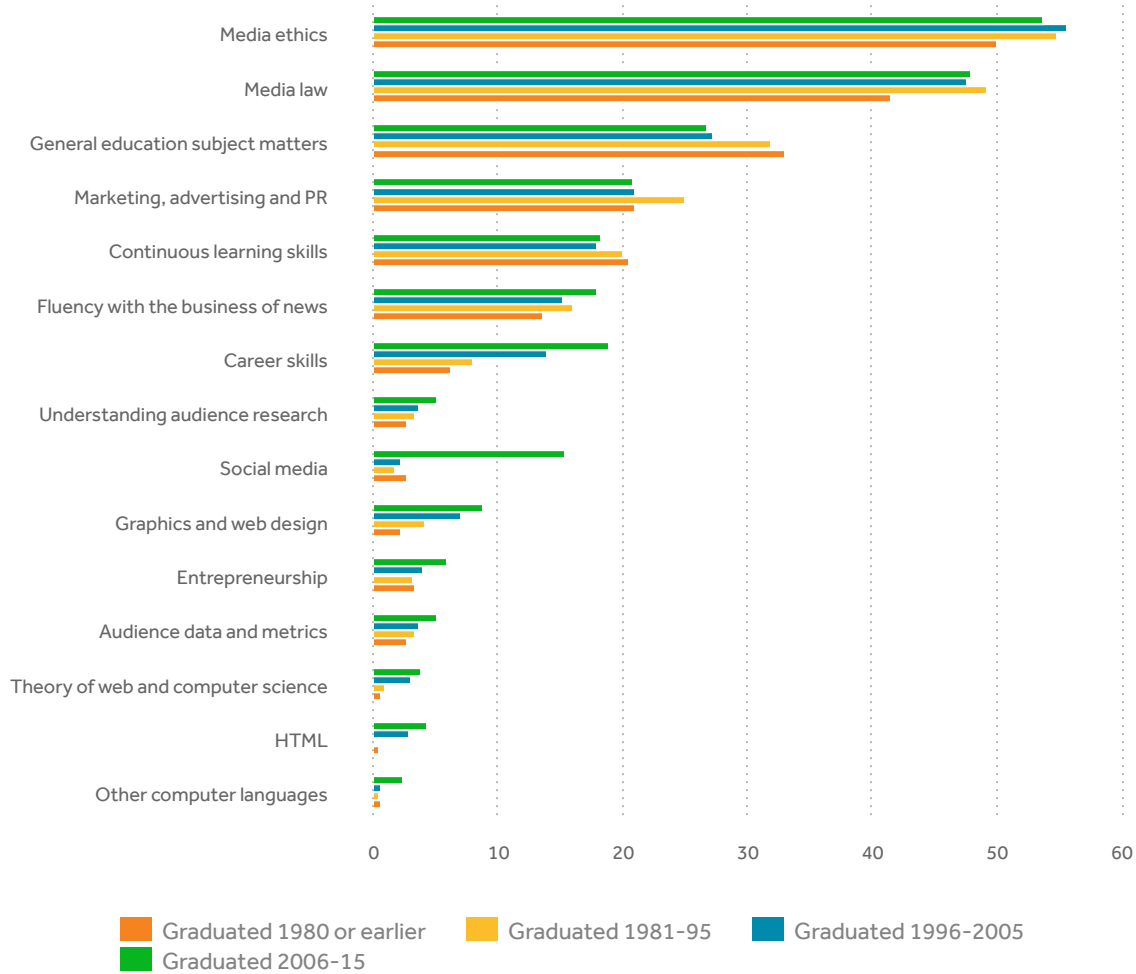
Indeed, when one looks closely at the different eras, the overall picture is of an academy that has changed relatively slowly. As an example, 3% of those who graduated between 1996 and 2005 rated their schools as very effective at teaching HTML, the foundational and most basic computer language. In those who graduated in the next decade and most recently, that number grew by 1 percentage point to 4%.

Put another way, the ranking of mean ratings of the first six items on this list of non-traditional skills is virtually the same whether one looks at those who graduated before 1981 and those who graduated after 2005 (understanding the economics of the news business and being prepared for being a lifelong learner switch places). Schools get clearly higher rankings for some things: The teaching of career management skills rises progressively from 6% rating it very effective prior to 1981 to triple that number (19%) for those who graduated in the past decade. The teaching of social media skills increases sevenfold in the rankings of those who graduated between 1996 and 2005 versus those who graduated after 2005 (from 2% to 15%). That shift, and relatively high ranking, suggests communication schools have seized on the importance of social media strongly — particularly given that Facebook itself was founded in 2004.

But looking across this data more generally, not only do communication schools remain strongest in the ratings of older skills when it comes to those that move beyond core reporting and writing (such as media ethics and media law), but also the level of change on new skills is relatively low.

How effective graduates say the teaching of a skill was varies by graduation year

Percentage who said teaching of a skill was "very effective"



Data Source: Question: How effective would you say your school was at teaching the following skills that go beyond traditional each reporting and writing?

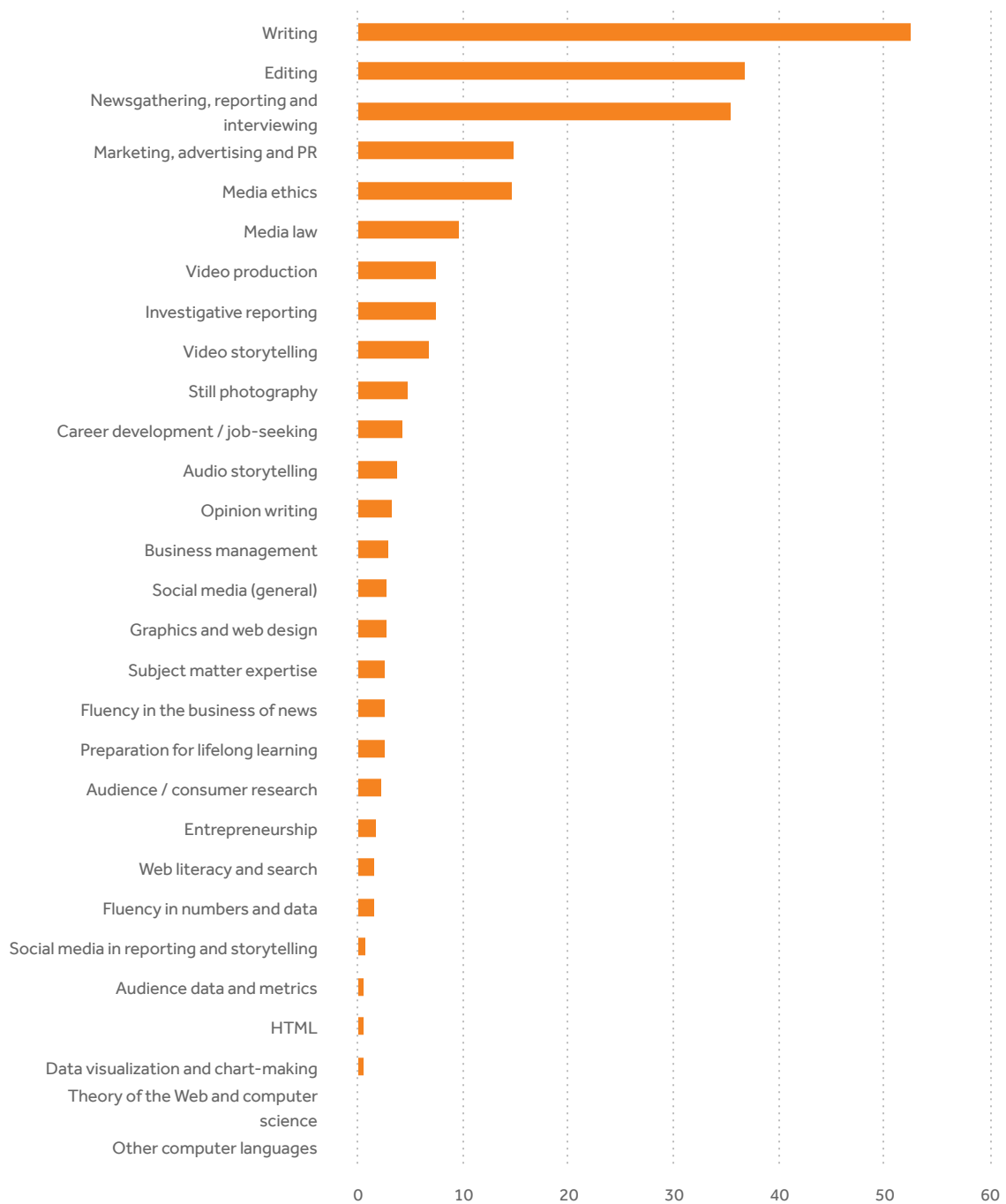
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To verify what schools do well even more, the survey asked a follow-up: In which topics did people feel “most prepared,” asking them to pick up to three choices. Here, as one would expect, the three most traditional and core skills, transferable across topics and even industries stood out. But only one skill was cited by more than a majority.

The majority (though a slim majority, 53%) named writing skills, and roughly a third (37%) cited “editing” and then news and information gathering/reporting and interviewing skills (36%). No other skill set rose above 15%, though different people in this very large respondent base named many different skills as ones they were best prepared in.

What skills people feel "most prepared" for

All respondents



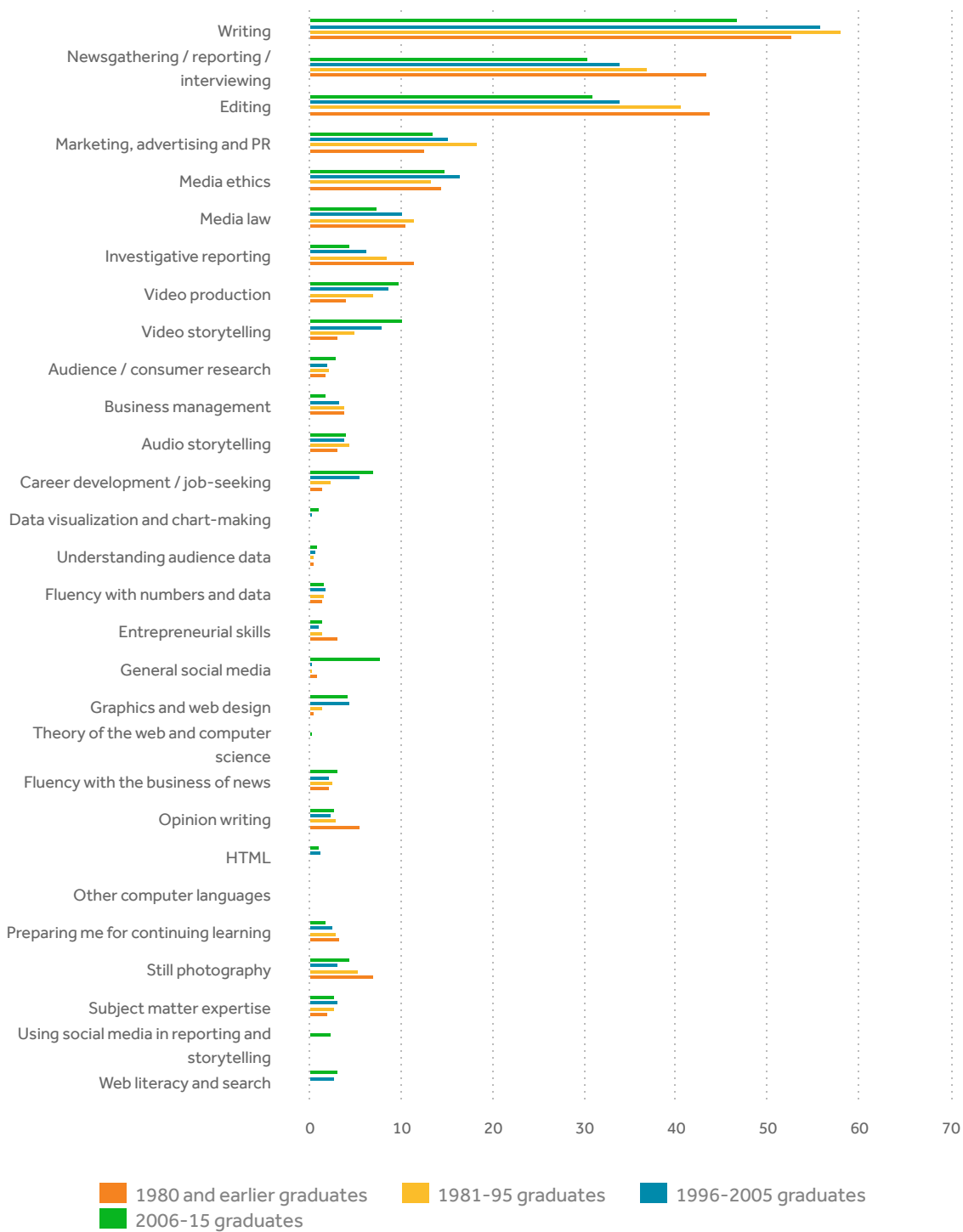
Data Source: Question: In which of the following areas did you feel you were the most prepared? Choose up to three.

This list changes in subtle ways, rather than dramatic ones, when one looks at when people graduated. While the rankings are similar across generations, fewer people who graduated after 2005 say they feel most prepared in newsgathering than do those who graduated before 1981 (31% versus 43%, and successively fewer in each age cohort in between. The patterns and the numbers show an almost identical drop in editing. (The pattern does not hold for the evaluation of writing training.)

Conversely, more people in the youngest graduation cohort say they were most prepared in video storytelling and production, social media and career skills, and design.

What skills people feel "most prepared" for

By graduation date



Data Source: Question: In which of the following areas did you feel you were the most prepared (by your school)? Choose up to three.

We also asked what people felt least prepared in. Many of the answers, but not all of these, are more digital skills, and the answers vary significantly by when people graduated. But some of the top areas that people felt ill-prepared for — such as fluency with math in general, career development and business management — are hardly items that are a function of digital technology.

Skills people feel "least prepared" for

Skill	Percent
HTML	18.3%
Business management	14.7%
Entrepreneurial skills	13.8%
Career development / job-seeking	13.6%
Fluency with numbers and data	12.9%
Other computer languages	12.6%
Data visualization and chart-making	12.0%
Graphics and web design	12.0%
Understanding audience data	9.8%
Audience / consumer research	8.5%
Video production	8.0%
General social media skills	6.1%
Social media for reporting / storytelling	5.7%
Theory of the web and computer science	5.6%
Fluency with the business of news	5.3%
Investigative reporting	5.1%
Audio storytelling	4.9%
Video storytelling	3.6%
Opinion writing	3.9%
Still photography	3.7%
Marketing, advertising and PR	3.7%
Web literacy and search	3.6%
Editing	2.3%
Subject matter expertise	2.3%
Preparation for continuing learning	2.1%
Media law	1.7%
Newsgathering / reporting / interviewing	1.5%
Writing	1.4%
Media ethics	0.9%

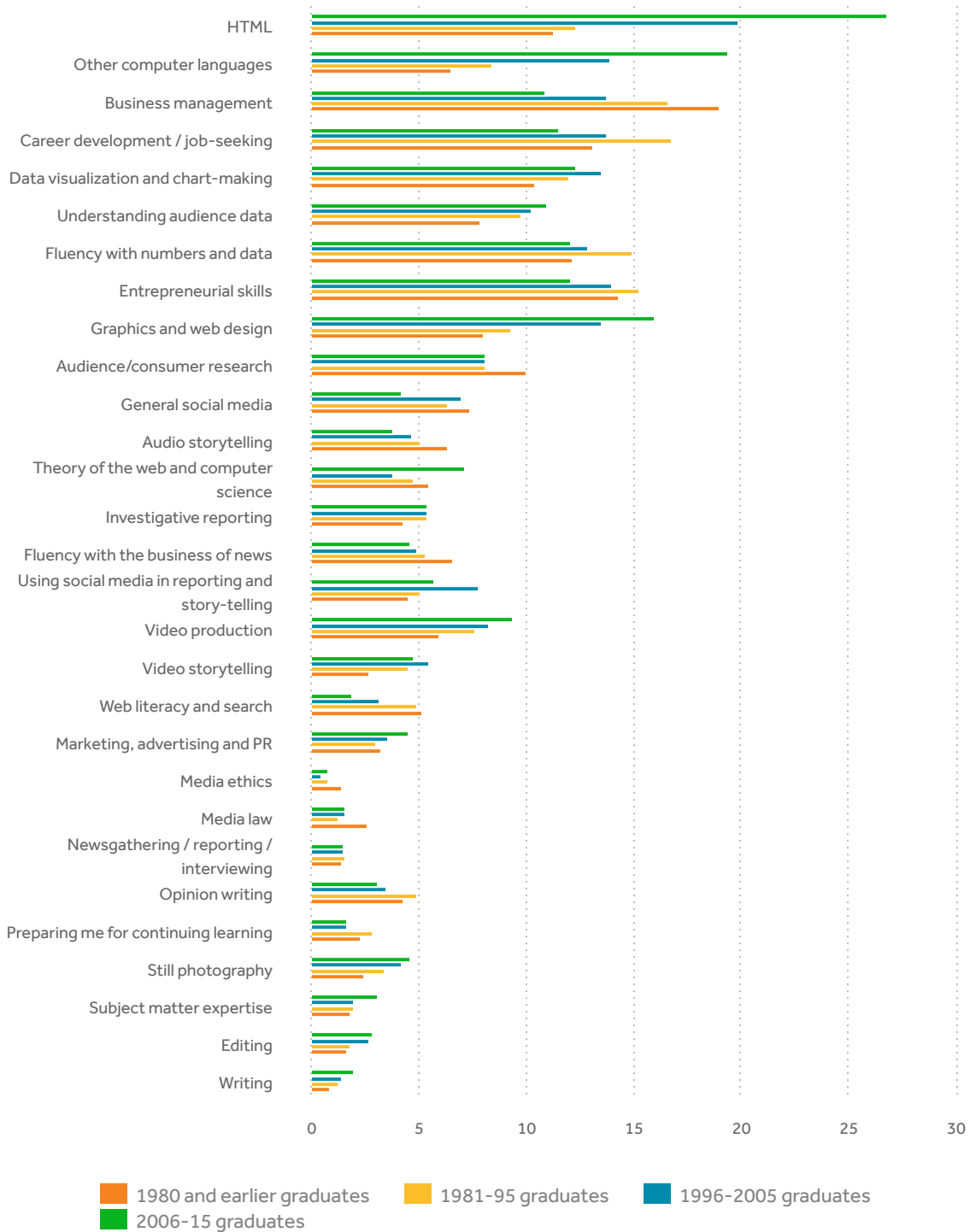
Data Source: Question: In which of the following areas did you feel you were the least prepared (by your school)? Choose up to three.

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Interestingly, too, more recent graduates are more likely to say they were least well prepared for various digital and multimedia skills. For instance, higher percentages of those who graduated in the past decade feel ill-prepared in graphics and web design. Fully 27% of these most recent graduates say they feel least prepared in HTML, the highest percentage saying they were ill-prepared for any of the skills queried. That finding, for a skill many high school students now receive, stands out.

What skills people feel "least prepared" for

By graduation date



Data Source: Question: In which of the following areas did you feel you were the least prepared (by your school)? Choose up to three.

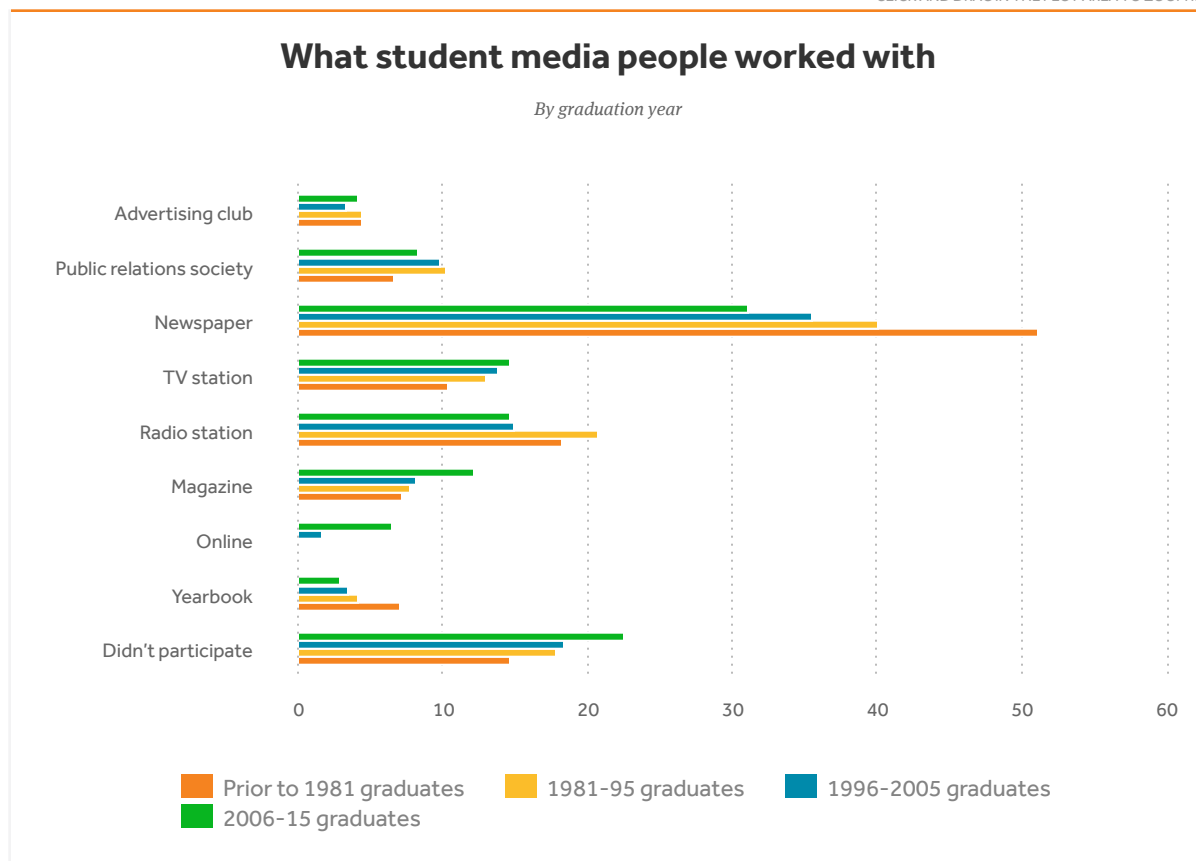
To some significant degree, these numbers may reflect ongoing issues educators face. There are limits to how many journalism and communication credits schools can teach due to accreditation. As the list of skills needed grows, the available credits to teach new courses cannot grow at a commensurate rate. Faculties and curricula may change more slowly than industry. But the numbers raise issues.

Student media and internships

One area educators are curious about and that the survey probed with some granularity is the experience and impact of student media organizations — from publications such as print and television to advertising clubs and public relations societies. Another was the impact of internships.

Not all graduates participated in them, though most did, and student newspapers were the most popular, with more than a third (39%) saying they had spent some time with them. But the list shows some significant change over time. Prior to 1981, more than half of students worked on a newspaper in school. That had fallen to 40% between 1981 and 1995 and stands at 31% for those who graduated between 2006 and 2015. Radio participation has declined as well. Magazine work has become more popular. Online work still lags well behind most other kinds of student publications, even in the past decade.

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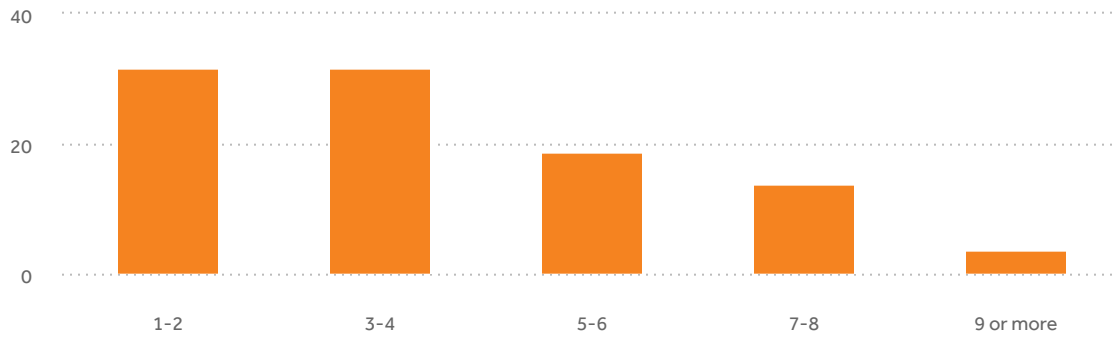


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Of those who did participate, most people spent a sizable amount of time on student media organizations, too. More than half (56%) spent at least three semesters working with them.

How many semesters people worked at student media organizations

Of people who worked in student media



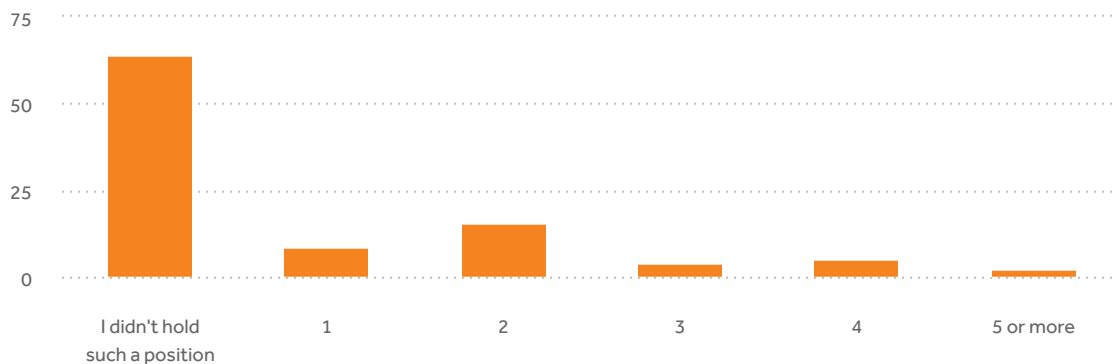
Data Source: Question: How many semesters did you spend working at student-run media organizations or agencies?

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The majority of those who worked on student publications (six out of ten), did not hold senior management positions on them—which often can take enormous amounts of student time. But those who did take on those management roles did so for long periods. More than a quarter of all those who worked on student publications held senior management jobs for at least a year.

Semesters spent leading student media organizations

Asked of those who participated in student-run media organizations



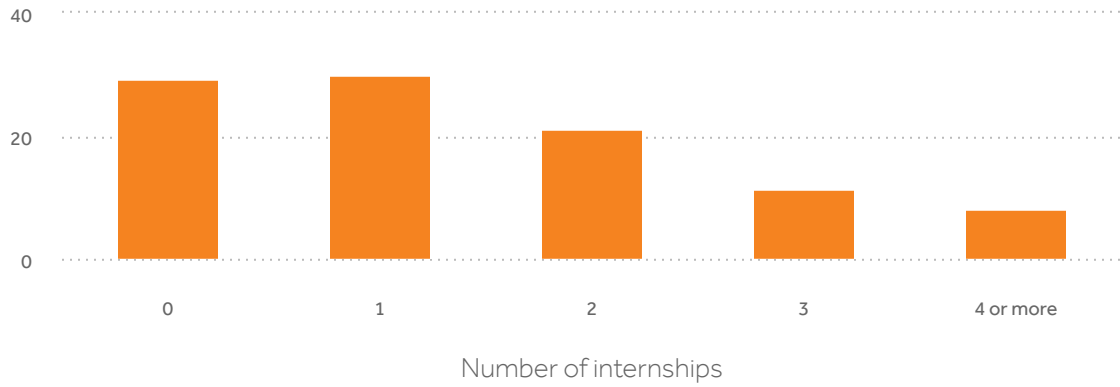
Data Source: Question: How many semesters, if at all, did you hold one of the top two positions at a student-run media organization, such as editor in chief, managing editor, executive producer, news director, or other officer?

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The study also looked at internships. Fully 7 out of 10 said they had internships of some kind. And 41% said they had more than one.

Most graduates had internships, some more than others

All respondents

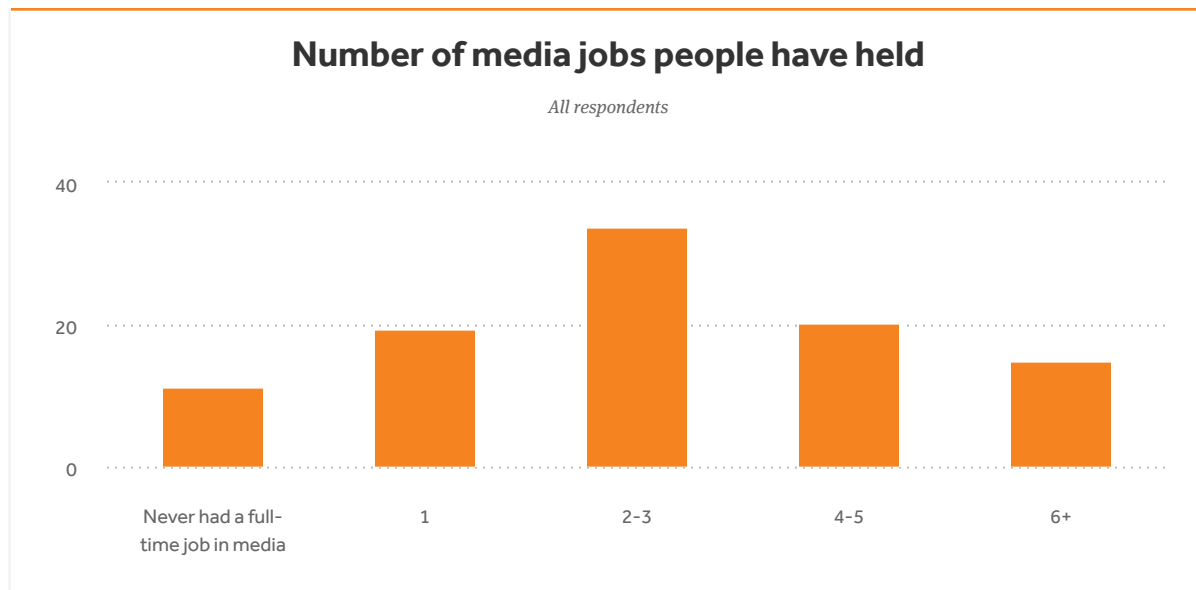


Data Source: Question: How many internships did you have in journalism either during school or immediately after graduating?

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The career paths of people with communication degrees

After graduating, the great majority of these students (89%) did work in media, journalism, public relations or somewhere in communication, at least for some time. Most have had several such jobs.



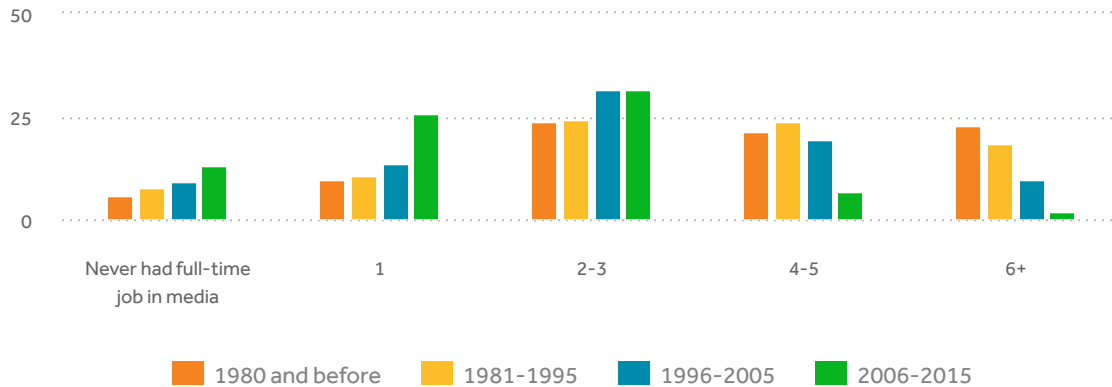
Data Source: Question: How many full-time jobs in journalism, media, advertising or public relations, if any, have you had?

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The largest number of people have had two to three jobs in media since graduation, and that doesn't change much whether someone graduated between 2015 or decades earlier. Indeed, some people who graduated in the last decade have had four to five jobs already, and a few even six or more.

Number of media jobs people have held

By graduation date



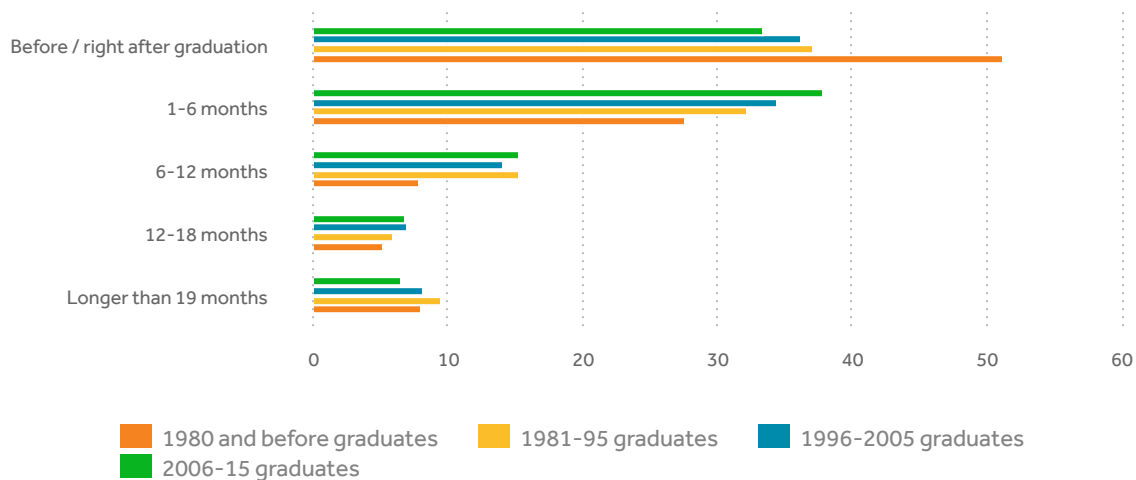
Data Source: Question: How many full-time jobs in journalism, media, advertising or public relations, if any, have you had?

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Most of these graduates who got media jobs, moreover, got their first one relatively quickly, within six months of graduating. Have more recent graduates, those who left school in 2006 or later, had a harder time? No. In every graduation cohort, the majority had jobs within six months—69% of those who graduated between 1981 and 1995, 71% among those who graduated between 1996 and 2005, and 71% among the most recent graduation cohort, those who got their degrees between 2006 and 2015, during the economic upheaval.

Time between finishing school and getting a full-time media job

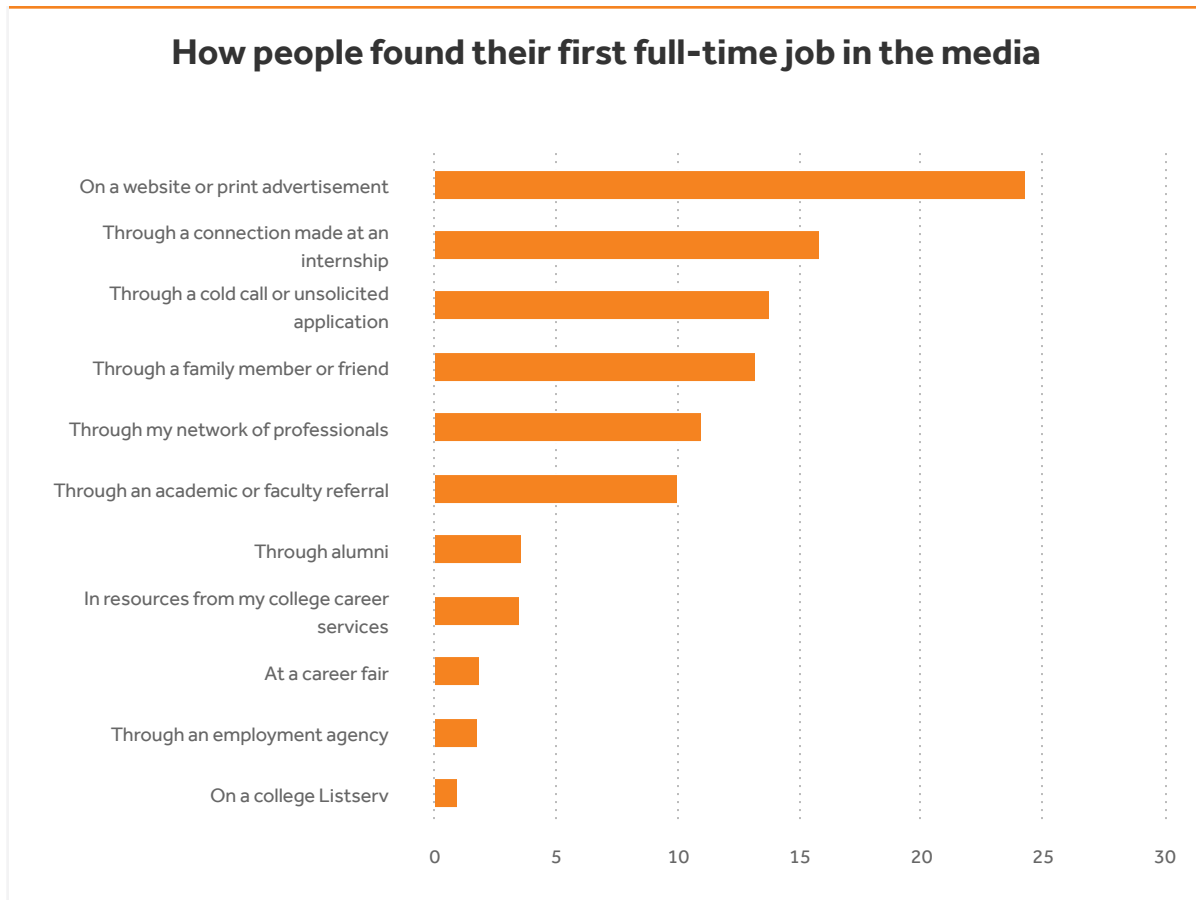
By graduation year



Data Source: Question: How long after you finished school did you get your first full-time job in media?

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One perennial question students ask is the path people took to find their jobs. The answer is there is no one path that stands out. Self-reliance matters, however. The largest number of these graduates, nearly 1 in 4, said they found their first job through a website or ad they discovered on their own (24%) or cold call or unsolicited application (14%). Internships were also important, with 16% saying they found their first job through that connection. Family members and friends mattered (13%) almost as much, as did professional network connections people had made (11%) as did academic or faculty referral. Add to that 10% citing faculty help those who discovered the job the college career office or Listserv (4%) and Alumni help (4%) and 18% mentioned formal university connections.



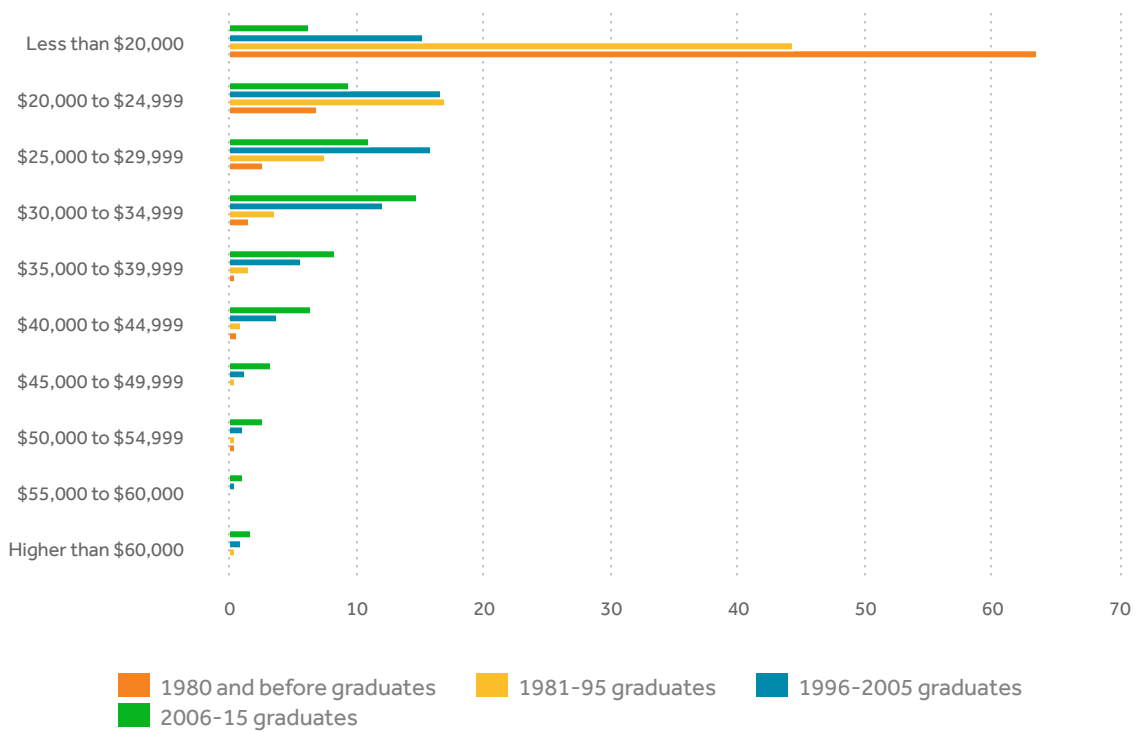
Data Source: Question: How did you find your first full-time job in media?

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Finally, the survey asked about starting salaries. This number data is a little harder to evaluate. The starting salaries of people in different graduation eras cannot be easily compared. Even those graduating just in the most recent period, 2006 to 2015 spans a decade. Starting salaries clearly have risen, and among the graduates of these schools at least, most people are starting at \$30,000 or above.

What salary did people start at in their first full-time job?

By graduation year



Data Source: Question: What salary range did you start at in your first full-time job in media?

Methodology

The survey was conducted online through the lists of alumni of the 22 participating schools and was distributed through partner alumni email lists between April 14 and June 29, 2015, with the dates varying within that time frame among different schools.

The survey was executed using the SurveyMonkey survey tool, with consultation from senior SurveyMonkey research staff. The results were moved to and analyzed using SPSS.

The following institutions participated in the project:

- Arizona State University, Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication
- Boston University, College of Communication
- City University of New York, Graduate School of Journalism
- Columbia University, Graduate School of Journalism
- George Washington University, School of Media & Public Affairs
- Louisiana State University, Manship School of Mass Communication
- Michigan State University, School of Journalism
- Northwestern University, Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications
- Pennsylvania State University, College of Communications
- Stony Brook University, School of Journalism
- Syracuse University, S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications
- Temple University, School of Media and Communication
- University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism
- University of Florida, College of Journalism and Communications
- University of Iowa, School of Journalism & Mass Communication
- University of Maryland, College Park, Philip Merrill College of Journalism
- University of Nebraska, Lincoln, College of Journalism and Mass Communications
- University of Nevada, Reno, Reynolds School of Journalism

- University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, School of Media and Journalism
- University of Southern California, Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism
- University of Texas, Austin, Moody College of Communication
- Washington State University, Edward R. Murrow College of Communication

Potential partner institutions were identified by several factors including size, location and history of their journalism and communication schools. Twenty-five schools were approached and 22 participated in full. Representatives from all schools consulted on the design and wording of the questionnaire. Schools were also given slots for four proprietary questions. The data from any one school will remain anonymous except for that school. Each school will be given its own dataset of its alumni, which it can compare to the aggregate dataset. Schools will be able to compare graduates in detail (i.e., those with only journalism programs will be able to compare their graduates just to other journalism graduates). The identity of any one graduate will remain confidential, and all schools agreed that they cannot use the individual responses to contact that alumni for fundraising or other purposes.

The full dataset will be available to scholars in the near future, though the date of that release will depend on future releases.

For most schools, all communication with the alumni came directly from the individual educational institution. Two institutions requested that API send the invitation to participate. At no time did API or its consultants have any identifying information on the graduates invited to participate. Schools used similar language in their emails and follow-up reminders to encourage participation to ensure uniformity in the how the study was presented (to minimize bias across the schools in terms of who might respond). The invitations and reminders were sent through email. The link to SurveyMonkey was included in each of these emails.

The survey was not generic; instead it was tailored to each school with school name and other identifying features to ensure comfort on the part of the respondent. After the data collection, the surveys for each of the schools was consolidated into a single dataset.

A total of more than 105,000 invitations were sent, and 11,931 accessed the survey.

Some respondents did not complete the entire survey. To be considered a “completed survey” respondents had to answer to a certain point and had to be a qualified alumni. Of these, 89% reached the required completion point. Fully 69% of those finished the survey in its entirety; 10,482 met the criteria to be included in the dataset.

Due to a variation in programming, the wording for one school’s questionnaire was slightly different than the rest. While the data for this school are valid, those are not included in the dataset for this report or in the totals of completes.

In addition to the 22 academic partners, two news industry associations also partnered on the survey, the American Society of News Editors and the Radio, Television and Digital News Directors Association. The questionnaire for these respondents was essentially the same in order to allow for some comparison between industry leaders and the alumni. Those comparisons will come in a later report along with a breakout of alumni who identified themselves as senior managers.

The survey included a combination of closed- and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were coded into meaningful categories.

The following people worked on the survey and report:

- **Tom Rosenstiel**, the executive director of the American Press Institute, helped write the survey instrument and was a principal drafter of the report.
- **Maria Ivancin**, president of the Market Research Bureau and adjunct associate professor at American University, helped write the survey instrument, consolidated the surveys into a single dataset, cleaned the data, conducted all the tabulation of the data and consulted on the data analysis and report.
- **Kevin Loker**, the program manager of API, helped develop the survey instrument and was primary contact with the partner schools.
- **Stephen Lacy**, professor at Michigan State University and former AEJMC President, consulted on the survey instrument and the data analysis.
- **Katie Yaeger**, summer fellow at API, coded open-ended responses for analysis.
- **Jeff Sonderman**, the deputy director of API, helped edit and build the report.
- **Nayana Davis**, a consultant to API, programmed the survey and coordinated its distribution with the partners.
- **Laurie Beth Harris**, editorial coordinator of API, helped build the report.

Download the report or topline results

For printing and offline viewing, a PDF version of this study report and the topline survey results are available for download.

For questions or to learn more about further analysis with the data, please contact Laurie Beth Harris at lauriebeth.harris@pressinstitute.org.