



Don't stop the press!

What does **the future**
hold for **journalism**?

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Underfunded and **under-resourced**: The future of **digital journalism** is in question

There has been a sea change in the media industry; journalists are worried about the future with concerns around decline in quality, reader reluctance to pay for content, and fake news amongst others. These concerns hit the headlines on a weekly basis, with publishers struggling to balance revenue streams while continuing to produce quality content.

This research provides a snapshot into what journalists think about revenue models, data and the future of journalism, which will hopefully help publishers better understand and plan how to build a sustainable business for the future. Our insights were drawn from interviews with 153 journalists across the US, UK and mainland Europe writing for local, national, and international publications across the news, lifestyle and business sectors.

Publishers are betting big on digital subscriptions to compensate for declining ad revenues allowing them to become more independent from global platforms. But, with journalists feeling negative about the future, it's paramount to ensure the credibility of the news media and a high quality of content. This research reveals that today's journalists are onboard with the increasing role of technology and data in their work, so it's important for publishers to be an ally in securing the industry's digital future.

We hope you find this insight interesting and valuable, please get in touch if you have any questions.

.....> **46%** of respondents felt some degree of **negativity** about the future of journalism, in addition to the **78%** who said they feared for the **viability** of sector

.....> A combined **67%** of respondents agreed that an **ad-based model favours 'clickbaity'**, short-form content

.....> Around **half** of respondents further **blamed fake news** (48%), **dependency on ad revenues** (47%), and **shrinking newsrooms** (47%) for undermining the industry

Almost **half of journalists** have a **negative outlook** on the future of journalism

Question: How do you feel about the future of journalism?



38%

Very positive/positive



14%

Neutral

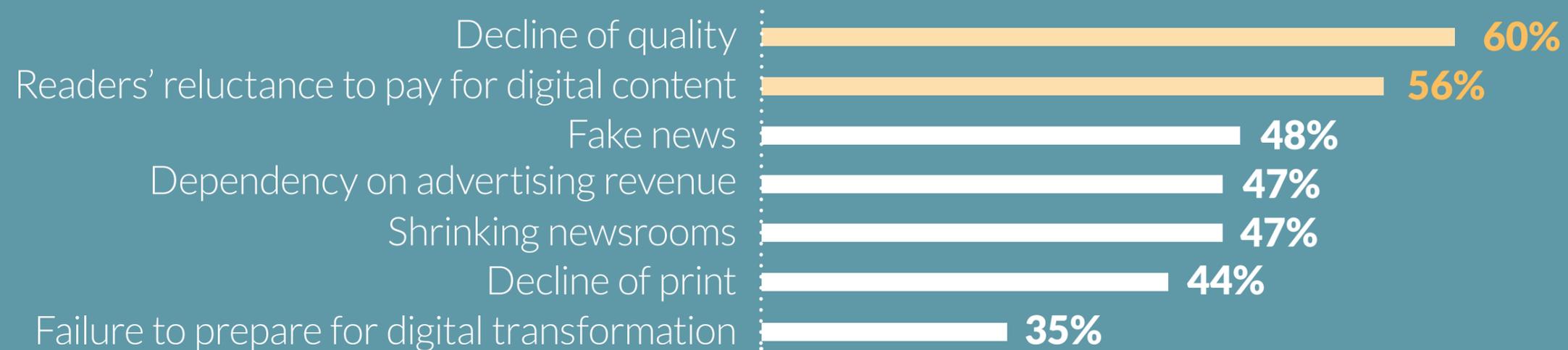


46%

Negative/very negative

Decline of quality and reluctance to pay for content seen as biggest threats to journalism

Question: What do you feel are the biggest threats to journalism at the moment?



The duopoly and competition from other global platforms are often seen by publishers as one of the biggest threats to the industry. However, the research showed that only 21% of journalists felt that this was a big concern. Journalists are, rather, more concerned with factors that directly

impact the integrity of their work such as decline of quality, reluctance to pay for content online, fake news, and reliance on advertising revenue. Newsrooms shrinking has a major effect on both the quantity and quality of the output of journalists, it puts them under more pressure to ensure that

enough of the right content is being produced to support the publisher. 35% felt that their organisations were not ready for digital transformation, indicating that some are still reliant on archaic methods to engage with their readers.

9 out of 10 journalists welcome the **increasing role of technology** in journalism

89 %
YES

11 %
NO

Question: Do you think the increasing role of technology in journalism is a good thing?

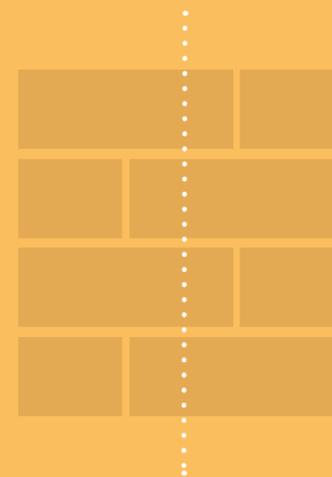
Technology has created many new opportunities for journalists over the past few decades that have ultimately had a positive impact on the industry. Journalists are now able to understand their audiences better, making sure that the content they produce is more likely to engage readers.

It also allows them to work in collaboration with the commercial team to create content that can drive ad revenue and subscriptions where relevant.

Paywalls are seen **as good** – or at least **as necessary**

Question: What do you think about paywalls?

10% Think all content should be free to read



42% Like them, because good journalism needs to be paid for

39% Don't like them but think they're necessary

According to Reuters Institute, 52 percent of publishers said building a subscription audience will be their top business priority in 2019. Many are already working on it, with Vanity Fair, Business Insider and Wired recently introducing login systems and paid content, gathering both recurring revenue and the deterministic IDs that capture accurate reader data.

In our research, almost equal amounts of journalists like paywalls and understand that they are needed, compared to those that don't like them but think they are necessary. Overall, journalists embrace the idea that paying for content online is necessary for funding journalism and complementing an advertising ecosystem.

Data has transformed the way **newsrooms operate**

Question: Do you use data (e.g. in the form of dashboards or optimisation tools) in your newsroom to ...



Two thirds of journalists said that they use data to assess article popularity and half to analyse reader behaviour. Audience and reader data is being used frequently to help journalists make content more engaging and create closer relation-

ships with readers. This can include deciding which content to make freely available and which content to put behind a paywall. 28% use it to drive subscriptions as newsrooms grow to better understand what type of content attracts subscribers.

Even editorial decisions, such as topic selection, angle, headline or article placement – which up until recently were the domain of editors – are now informed by data.

Journalists think that **data helps** building **closer relationships with readers**

Question: Audience / reader data to me is ...

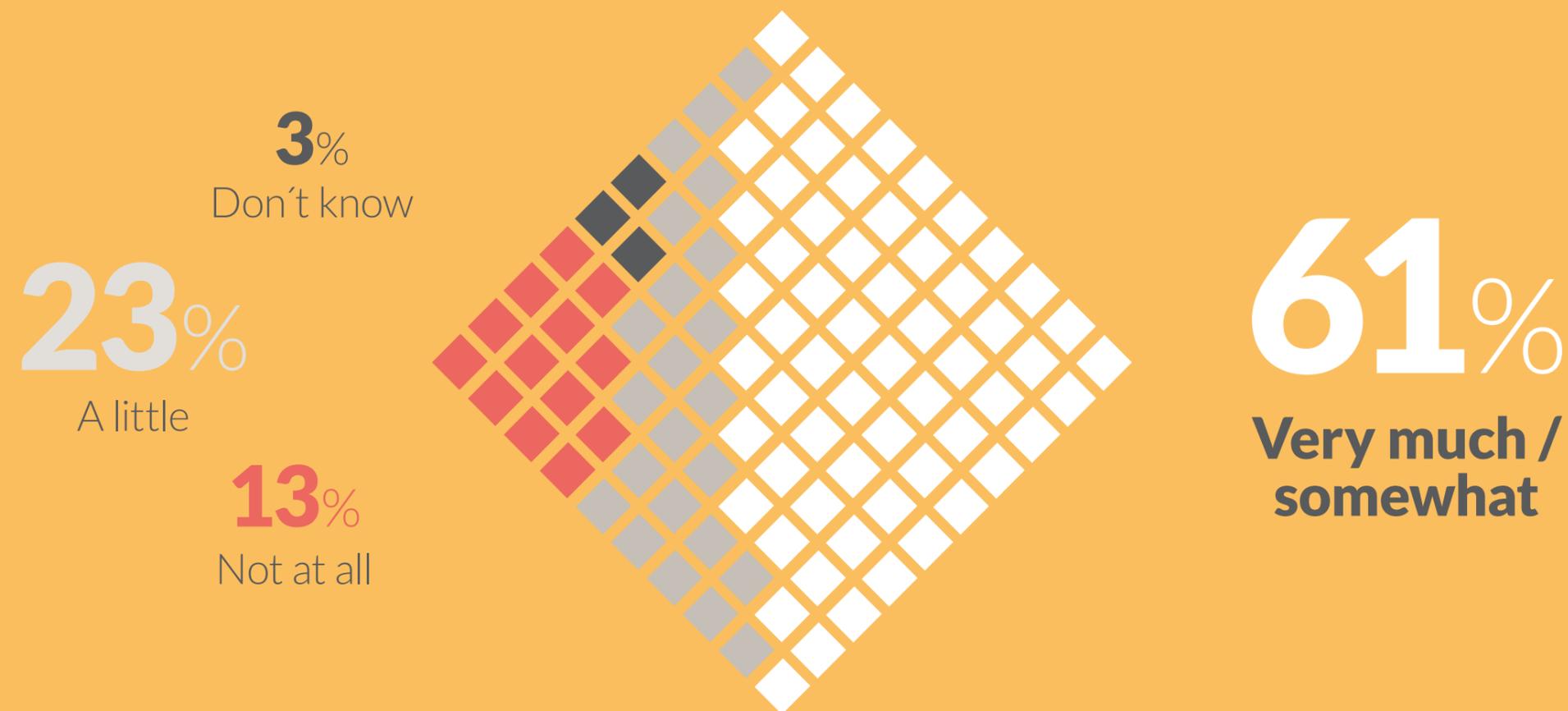


More than two thirds of journalists have a positive attitude to data. 33% understand that audience data is vital to establish a closer relationship with their readers and 32% see it as a way to create better media products

and content. A minority of journalists don't regard audience or reader data as relevant to their daily work (11%) or think it is important only for the advertising department (7%).

Readership metrics impact the way journalists create content

Question: How much of an impact do readership metrics have on the content you produce as an individual?



61% agree that readership metrics have an impact on the content they write, with 19% stating that it is a significant influence.

Journalists understand that the content that they write will be more engaging if they better understand the audience, and metrics are a vital tool for them when aligning their content with their audience.

Majority of journalists are **concerned** about the future of their profession and own job security

Question: I strongly / agree with the following statements ...



Journalists are hugely sceptical about the future, with only 7% agreeing that journalists have good job security, while 78% are concerned about the future of journalism as a whole. It is somewhat reassuring that 58% feel that their organisation has a clear digital strategy,

especially when digital media consumption has become so prevalent. But the fact that 28% did not think their organisation has a digital strategy in place indicates a disjoint between some publishers and the journalists that are producing the content.

There’s also a clear belief that ad revenue based models favour “clickbaity” short-form content (67% agree), while the subscription based model favours long-form, quality journalism (84% agree).

Conclusion

The research has highlighted the very real concerns journalists have about the future of the sector, and has provided a snapshot into the state of journalism in 2019. While it's difficult to pinpoint one factor as the sole perpetrator of modern journalism's decline, there is a definite need to find more sustainable funding models to support both short and long-form quality content.

Publishers are focussing on digital subscriptions to compensate for the decrease in ad revenue, but it's clear that publishers need to ensure that they also focus on quality journalism to avoid quality of editorial decreasing. Journalists are on board with technology influencing their role more, as long as it's useful and doesn't result in short-form "clickbaity" pieces, so it's up to the publisher to strike the right balance.

Whatever stage you are at as a publisher, there are steps that can be taken to future proof your business, protecting credibility and ensuring a journalist centric approach while still driving revenue. It's all about understanding the options for building a sustainable model for the future, and that's individual to you.

Methodology

During the period of 13th May to 3rd June 2019, 153 journalists were asked about their views on the future of journalism and the role of data and technology.

The participants were located in the US, UK and mainland Europe and were targeted via display advertising on social media using parameters related to job title, job role and location. All figures have been rounded to whole numbers.

Although the survey is not representative due to the methods to gain responses, it does provide a snapshot into what journalists think about revenue models, data and the future of journalism.

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