

WAN-IFRA Report | January 2025

# World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025

The annual global survey, analysis and report  
on publishers' business and predictions



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of News Publishers

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## World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025

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# About the Report

**Just like news organisations all over the world, we, too, here at WAN-IFRA are experimenting with generative AI tools, whether that be with summarising meetings, creating bullet summaries, transcriptions, in our finance department, and more.**

And we just tested how an AI-generated podcast of this report would work. Quite simply, we ran the PDF of the report through Google's NotebookLM and the result was fascinating. I had listened with astonishment to a number of examples when it was first launched, and I remember the "this is crazy," almost laughable feeling that lingered days afterward.

But this was the first time we tested it on our content (at least as far as I know!). And when it is your content, that initial "oh, this is cool" listening experience quickly gives way to intense anxiety – as an editor.

"How the hell will this crystallise a dense 68-page report full of charts, data, case studies, analyses into a coherent podcast?" "Which trends or takeaways will it possibly twist one way or another?" On and on and on...

But what I was most interested in (or concerned with) was how nuanced it would present the findings because that cuts right to the heart of the challenges of this research and report: providing context, nuance and complexity to global, aggregate findings. In other words, one key trend or development could mean something quite different for your news organisation, your market or region.

In the end, the nearly 35-minute podcast did a relatively good job of presenting the findings. Much better than I could have done!

The podcast's overall tone (in voice and content) in presenting the takeaways and trends was somewhat positive but with consistent caveats. Which is understandable and relatively in tune with our report: publishers are generally upbeat about their business prospects for 2025 and beyond. Diversified and digital revenues are growing. Smart investments and innovations are paying off.

But one of the key takeaways from our global survey of news executives (240 responses representing 85 countries) really stood out in the podcast as a great example of that complexity and nuance within our industry: print revenue fell to 45 percent, down 12.5 percent YoY. That is the first time print has dipped below 50 percent of total revenue since we have been conducting this research.

Initially, the voices on the podcast seemed somewhat enthused to present this finding – or at least that is how I heard it. But they quickly pointed out that print is thriving in some markets, while obviously struggling in others, that digital revenues grew by 7 percent but are not offsetting those steeper declines in print, and that other revenue streams continue to grow.

That previous paragraph was my own oversimplified explanation of some major trends impacting this industry. And there is nothing simple about what publishers are facing in 2025 and beyond.

Every year we publish our flagship World Press Trends Outlook, we aim to crystallise the complex nature of the challenges and opportunities news publishers face, particularly with business but also their journalism. To try not to oversimplify emerging or longtime trends.

And as the podcast showed, it is inevitable that a "but" often follows any positive development. Never was that more evident than in this year's report.

At a time when trust in journalism is tepid at best, when uncertainty looms on the global geopolitical scene, when many publishers' traffic and profits are (still) seemingly at the mercy of a few powerful companies' whims... publishers seem bullish about the way forward, our research shows.

Much of that has to do with the ongoing transformation and innovation actually taking place in the industry. And, yes, AI is playing a part in that and will play an even larger role in the future.

Thanks to all the news executives who responded to our survey, to the entire World Press Trends team, and Stibo DX for supporting our report.

OK, pressure is on us to do our own podcast. Stay tuned.

– **Dean Roper, Director of Insights, WAN-IFRA**

# Report Methodology

The **World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025** report is based on data gathered from a comprehensive online survey distributed by WAN-IFRA to senior media executives worldwide. The survey was conducted from July to September 2024 and was available in four languages: English, French, Spanish, and German. This multilingual approach ensures both inclusivity and a broad geographic representation.

## Respondent overview

The survey gathered 242 responses from senior media executives across 85 countries, providing insights from diverse media markets in both developed and developing economies.

Using classifications from the World Bank, respondents spanned a spectrum of market contexts: 58% came from high-income economies, with 42% in developing regions. This diversity in respondents is critical for a nuanced understanding of global trends, especially as media dynamics vary widely across different economic landscapes.

Half of respondents (50%) hold C-suite roles, including CEOs, Publishers, and Owners, reflecting senior leadership perspectives in the global news industry.

## Survey participant profiles



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

The remainder included Commercial Directors, Heads of Strategy, and Executive Editors (43%), offering a balanced view of strategic and operational insights.

## Data sources and analysis

This report integrates responses from WAN-IFRA's proprietary survey and previous World Press Trend studies. Our findings are supported by further conclusions from other WAN-IFRA reports and leading research organizations. Findings are further augmented by case studies from around the world which illustrate many of the themes and ideas explored throughout the report.

Key metrics such as revenue, circulation, and advertising were evaluated in partnership with PwC's *Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2024-2028*. Additional audience insights were enriched through collaborations with analytics firms like Chartbeat, enabling a multi-faceted analysis of reader behaviours and engagement trends.

By combining proprietary data with external insights, WAN-IFRA's 35th annual World Press Trends report provides a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing news publishers worldwide. Within this, historical data from our previous studies continues to serve as a valuable benchmark, enabling us to track shifts over time in revenue mix, market share, and digital transformation.

As a result, WAN-IFRA's annual World Press Trends report provides a well-rounded view of the strategic priorities, challenges, and opportunities faced by news publishers across the global media landscape.

# Executive Summary

This is the 35th annual World Press Trends Outlook report, an annual study from WAN-IFRA (World Association of News Publishers) that offers an in-depth look at the current and future state of the global news media industry.

As in previous years, this study is grounded in findings from a comprehensive survey of senior media executives and newsroom leaders. More than 240 participants, across 85 countries, contributed insights into pivotal areas of the news media business. This includes trends in revenue generation, business outgoings, digital transformation, relationships with technology platforms, and press freedom.

These expert insights, coupled with case studies from around the world, offer us a fresh perspective on the health of the news industry and today's media landscape.

## Key Findings

### 1. Revenue Trends

- Print remains a significant revenue source for many news publishers, accounting for 45% of total income among our survey participants. However, reliance on print is falling. It is down from 57.5% of publisher revenues in 2023 and 53.5% in 2022.
- Digital revenues grew by 7% year-on-year. They now constitute over 31% of total revenues, as multiple publishers successfully implement paywalls and digital subscriptions, while at the same time monetising products such as podcasts and newsletters.
- Publishers continue to invest in efforts to diversify their revenue streams. Alternative income streams – such as events, e-commerce, and memberships – are gaining in traction. They now account for nearly a quarter (23.8%) of total revenues.

### 2. Digital Transformation and Business Outlook

- While digital transformation is maturing, only 10% of publishers rate their efforts as "sophisticated." Developing markets face greater challenges, with 51% of respondents describing their efforts as "emergent."
- Optimism in the industry is rising, with 61% of respondents feeling positive about the next 12 months, increasing to 64% over the next three years. This is driven by factors such as growing revenue diversification, technological advances, and strategic acquisitions.

### 3. Outgoings and Investments

- Editorial costs now account for nearly 37% of publisher budgets, up from 28% in 2023, reflecting efforts to deliver distinct content and new verticals.
- The amount of publishers' budgets going to print has decreased slightly, and investment in product development has halved since last year. Product remains an important focus, so decreased costs are likely to be the result of maintaining and developing existing products, instead of creating new ones.
- Investment in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Analytics Tools are also pivotal to the strategic priorities of news publishers in the coming year.

### 4. Artificial Intelligence and Relationships with Platforms

- AI is transforming workflows, and is being used for everything from creating audio articles, through to deployment of dynamic paywall and chatbots. However, challenges remain around issues of copyright and company-wide adoption.
- Relationships with platforms continue to evolve. Partnerships with video, messaging, and AI platforms have shown the greatest improvement over the past 12 months. However, revenue from platform partnerships dropped to 12% of total revenues in 2024, down from 15.1% last year.

### 5. Press and Media Freedom

- Attacks on media freedom are increasing globally, with rising incidents of online harassment, cyberattacks, and physical violence against journalists. Almost 100 journalists were killed in 2024.
- Regulatory actions, legal threats, and platform censorship further threaten media independence, especially in developing markets.
- Shining a light on these issues, as well as investing in initiatives like anti-SLAPP legislation and digital safety training, is critical to protecting journalists and fostering media freedom.

## Moving Forward

The latest edition of WAN-IFRA's World Press Trends Outlook reinforces the resilience of the global news industry. News publishers are making progress in their efforts to diversify revenues, and actively investing in AI and other technologies to support on-going digital transformation. As a result, more than half of our survey respondents (54.5%) reported an increase in their overall revenues over the last 12 months.

However, the news industry continues to face challenges such as declining print revenues, shifting consumer behaviors, and the need for continued innovation. Moreover, press freedom continues to come under attack in many parts of the world. To counter these negative pressures, the need for collaboration, training, and advocating on behalf of the industry, is as important as ever.

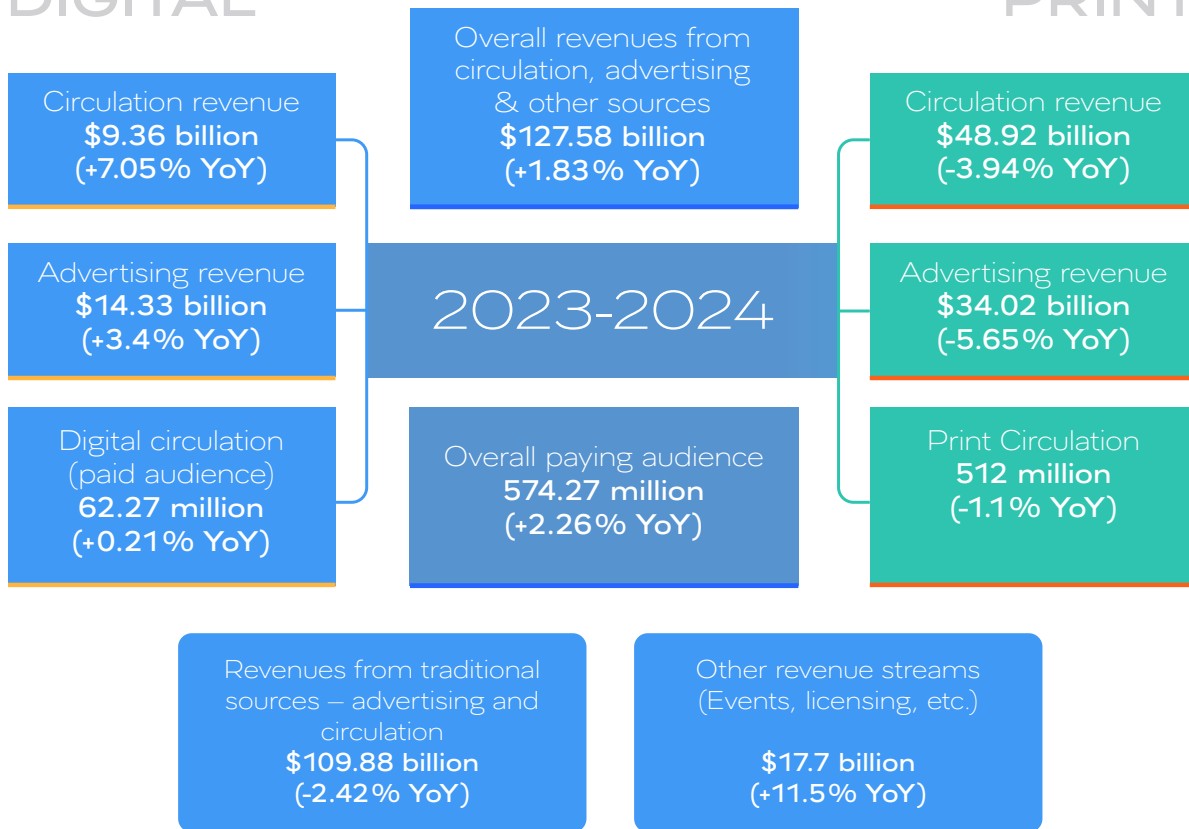
# Key Performance Indicators

While the industry's core revenue streams of advertising and circulation are mostly declining YoY, the relentless focus on diversifying revenue streams – think events, e-commerce, printing/distribution services, B2B, etc. – is paying off.

According to PwC and our calculations, the industry actually grew by nearly 1.8% over the last year.

# DIGITAL

# PRINT



Source: WPT analysis of WPT Outlook survey and historical data. \* Figures based on daily and weekly publications.

As we have mentioned already, World Press Trends serves as a benchmark for publishers to gauge where their strategies, businesses and activities stack up globally. But it is also an opportunity to see where the industry stacks up. And that global snapshot above is our best attempt (estimate) to put a financial value on news media.

According to our estimates, the global news media industry earned nearly US\$ 128 billion in revenues over the past year. We came to that figure using PwC’s Media and Entertainment Outlook, World Press Trends historical data (including weekly newspapers) and our annual publisher survey.

Let’s put that into perspective:

- In 2023, global over-the-top (OTT) video revenue reached an estimated US\$ 288 billion, according to Statista.
- The global box office reached nearly US\$ 34 billion in 2023, according to Deadline.
- The recorded music industry amounted to US\$ 28.6 billion, according to Statista.

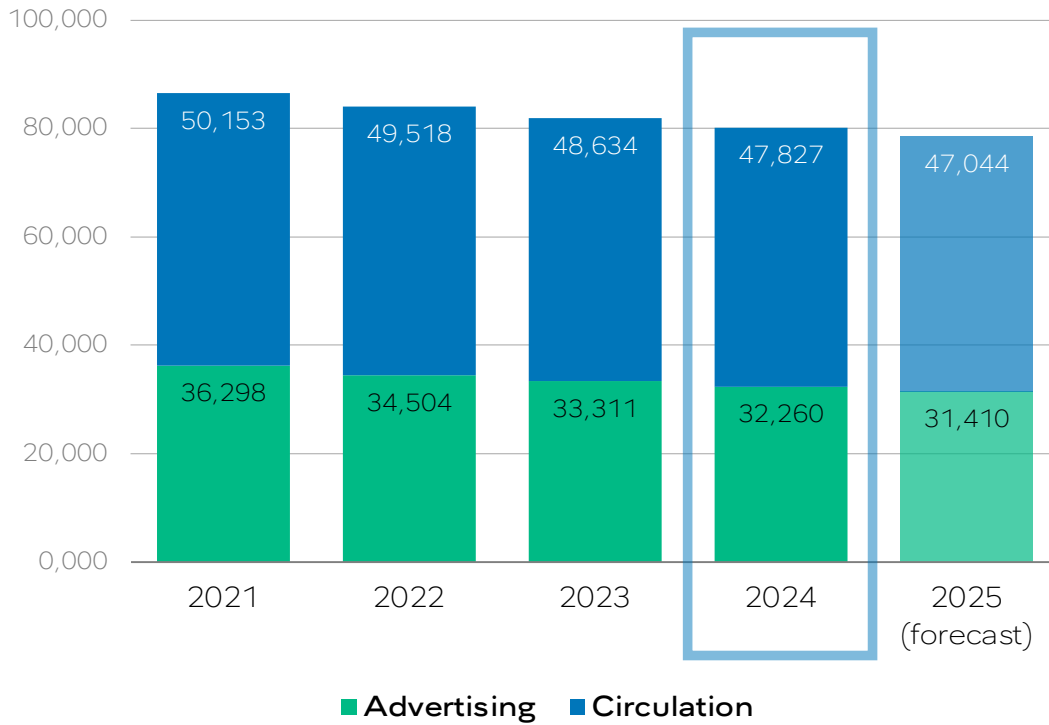
- Netflix revenue for the 12 months ending September 30, 2024 was US\$ 37.58 billion, according to the company.
- Google posted US\$ 307.3 billion revenues in 2023, reported Yahoo; Meta US\$ 134.9 billion (Yahoo).

Add all that up and news media’s position in the attention value chain is quite significant. That is despite the relentless change, challenges and ongoing uncertainty surrounding the industry – the same facing those other related sectors.

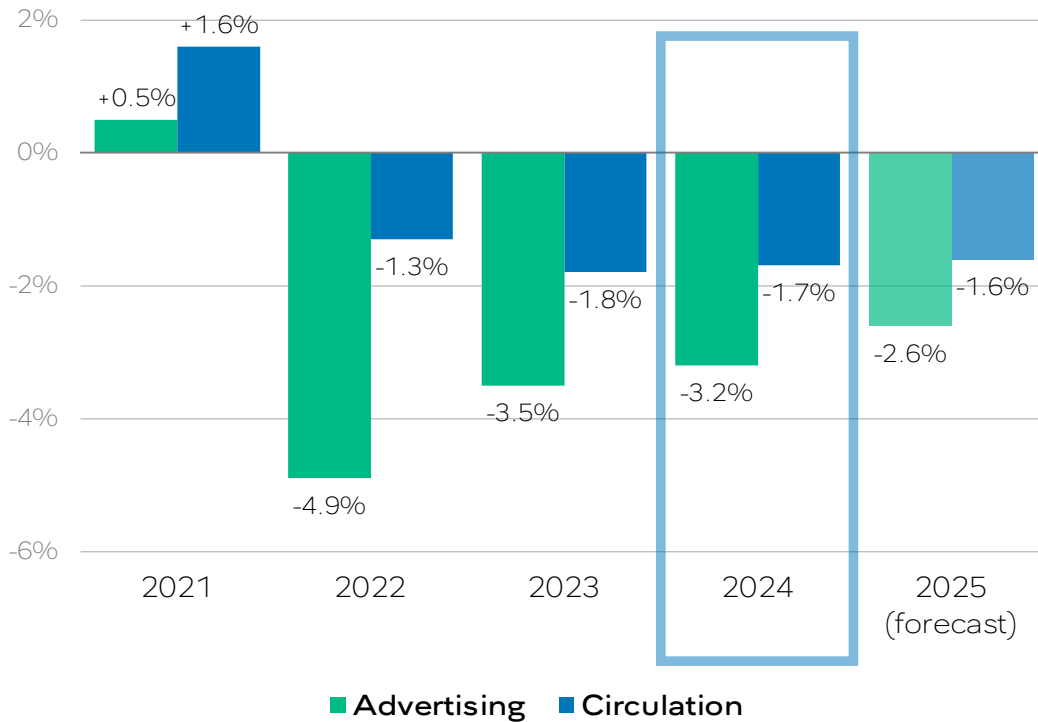
And that total revenue figure of US\$ 128 billion is indeed an increase YoY, thanks in large part to the continued rise in revenue from other revenue streams outside of circulation and advertising. But of course the continued decline of print revenue (particularly higher in regions like Europe and the Americas), the lower impact of actual digital circulation gains (as well as concerns of how maturing markets extend growth), and the volatile nature of digital advertising are stark reminders of the challenges ahead.

# Core revenue decline continues, but signs of slowing the 'bleeding'

## Newspaper advertising & circulation revenue development (in US\$ mn)



## Year-on-year change in advertising and circulation revenues



Source: WPT analysis of data from PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2024-2028

Looking at news media’s overall circulation and advertising revenue development, according to PwC, (opposite page, which does not include weekly publications) offers a sobering but not-so new reality: continued year-on-year declines of core revenue streams.

Circulation revenue, according to PwC, is still significantly higher than that of advertising, nearly 60%. However, in our survey, publishers told us circulation revenue makes up about 43%, compared to 40% advertising.

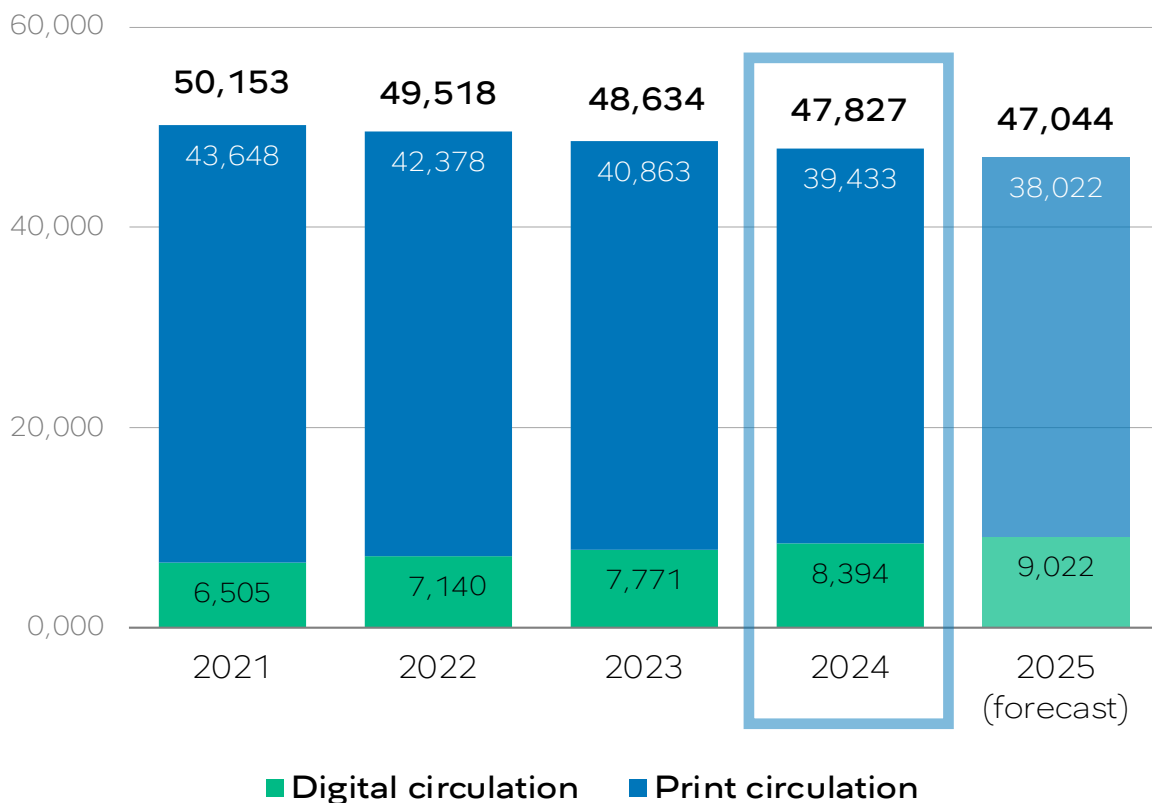
According to PwC, from 2022-2024 advertising revenue has declined on average 3.86%; circulation 1.6%.

In 2024 and 2025 PwC is projecting smaller declines compared to the last few years. Managing that decline, especially print advertising and circulation, while driving digital transformation (and revenue) and exploring / creating new revenue streams is the ongoing challenge for news publishers.

2021 was the last year the industry saw total revenue growth, at least for circulation and advertising.

The slower declines heading into 2025 are largely due to publishers’ (even) leaner production operations and continued slight growth in digital circulation and advertising.

### Newspaper circulation revenues (in US\$ mn)



Source: WPT analysis of data from PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2024-2028

## Print still brings in 82% of circulation revenue

With all the focus on digital reader revenue, publishers still rely heavily on print circulation revenue, which declined by 3.5% in 2024.

That figure may seem lower than expected as many newspapers in the Americas and Europe, for example, have reported double-digit declines. But in certain Asian markets, for example, print circulation remains quite stable – relatively speaking.

So while most news media companies remain focused on transforming and diversifying their business towards a more digitally sustainable future, print continues to play an important role in their business and with their customers. And can serve as a bridge to that digital future.

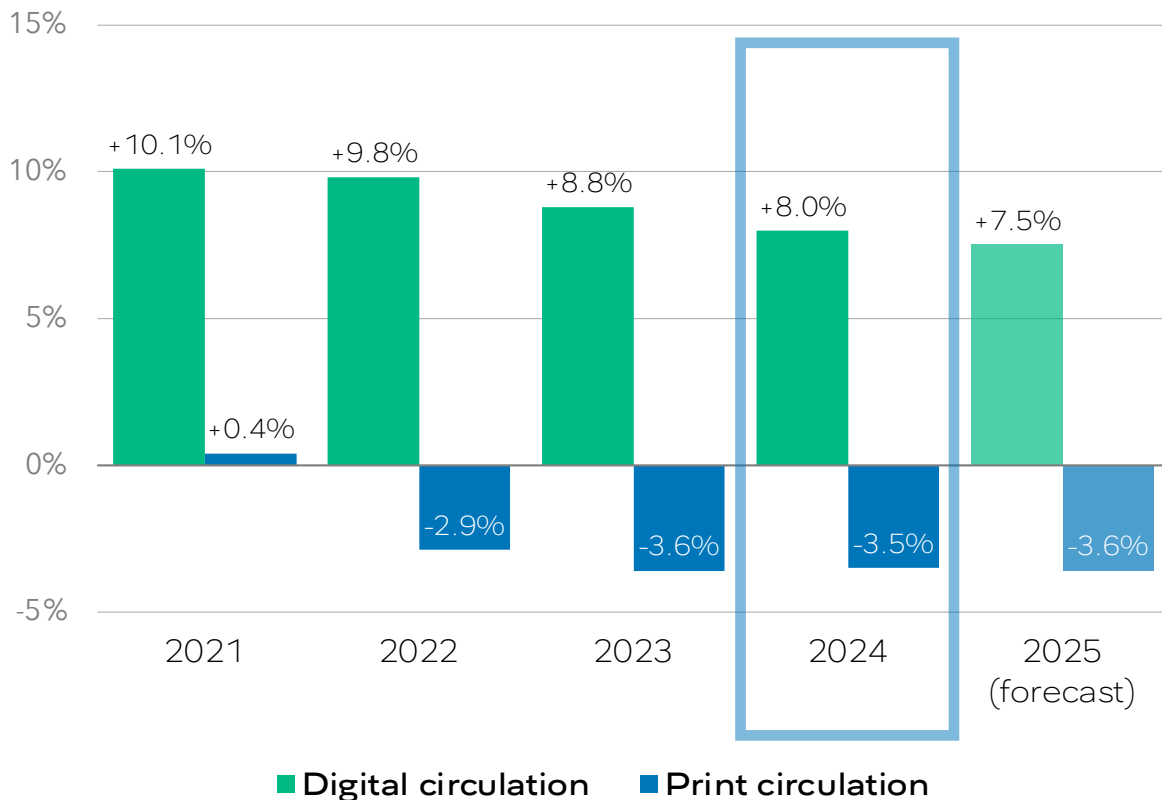
The conundrum, however, is that the low level of digital circulation gains highlights the challenges of making digital reader revenue work and payoff.

For now, there are few big winners (like The New York Times), and other business models that are more effective in respective regions and markets.

Digital circulation does continue to grow (8% in 2024) but the rate of growth is slowing year over year, also indicating that the model is maturing (and plateauing) in many regions.

In 2020 and 2021 during the peak lockdowns of COVID, consumers opened their wallets to subscribe to quality journalism, as well as other platforms (Netflix, Spotify, etc.). Today the competition is fierce for more streaming players, local news subscriptions vs. national and even international brands.

### Year-on-year change in newspaper print and digital circulation revenues



Source: WPT analysis of data from PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2024-2028

## The headwinds get stronger for advertising

While advertising is still a formidable revenue stream for news publishers, the YoY overall declines are telling, particularly in print. Just like with print circulation, many newspapers report double-digit declines in overall advertising.

Print advertising continues to fall, 6.6% in 2024. While digital advertising brings in more than digital circulation, news publishers struggle to make significant inroads competing within their own markets/traditional competitors, but especially with the big tech platforms.

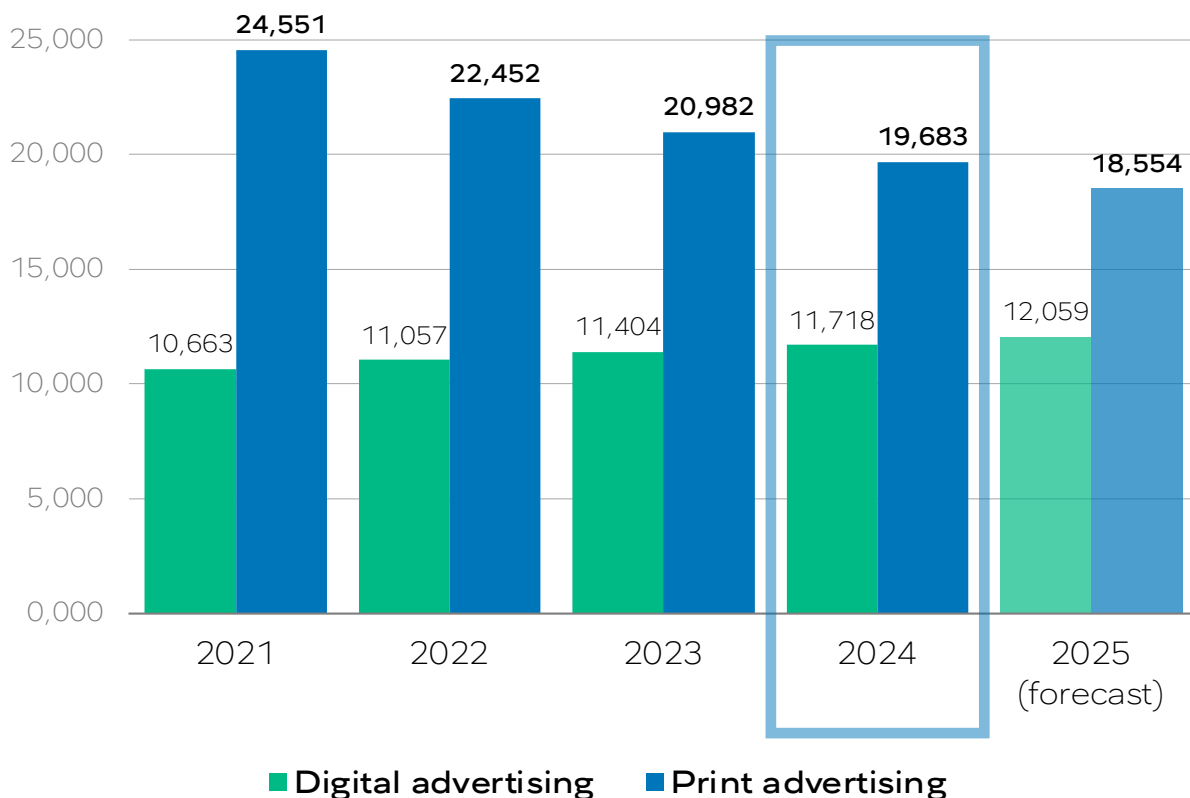
And indeed, all forecasts for global advertising and digital advertising spend over the next few years predict significant YoY increases, but not so for news media.

Digital advertising revenue is increasing ever-so slightly YoY; this about 2.7%. But much like the circulation conundrum, the same rings true here: the incremental increase in digital advertising is not nearly enough to offset the steeper declines in print advertising.

All that said, advertising as a model is working in some regions and markets. Our research has found that a number of developing markets are doing well with digital advertising, combined with more diversified revenue streams.

Advertising still makes up a big chunk of revenue for publishers, especially big brands, but it is increasingly becoming a risky bet as THE core business model.

### Digital and print newspaper advertising revenues (in US\$ mn)



Source: WPT analysis of data from PwC Global Entertainment & Media Outlook 2024-2028

# Revenue Trends

**This chapter explores changing revenue dynamics, including the continued significance of print, the growth of digital, and on-going efforts to build sustainable alternative income streams.**

This year's edition of the World Press Trends Outlook report once again reveals a complex landscape for revenue generation across the global news industry.

As digital transformation continues, publishers face the dual challenge of declining traditional revenue sources, in particular income from print advertising and circulation, alongside the need for continued growth in digital and alternative revenue streams.

These alternative income sources remain some way off from historical print levels. Meanwhile, as noted in previous studies, digital gains for most publishers remain insufficient to counterbalance the steady declines in print and advertising income that they have previously benefited from.

### The continued importance of print

Print still accounts for a substantial portion of total revenue for multiple legacy news publishers, particularly in countries like Japan and India. Whether it is resilience or reliance depending on the market or region, this means that print circulation and advertising account for 44.6% of average revenues among our survey respondents.

As a result, many publishers continue to invest in print, while at the same time seeking to diversify and grow their digital offerings. However, the need for diversification is all the more acute given that print increasingly accounts for a smaller and smaller percentage of overall publisher revenues.

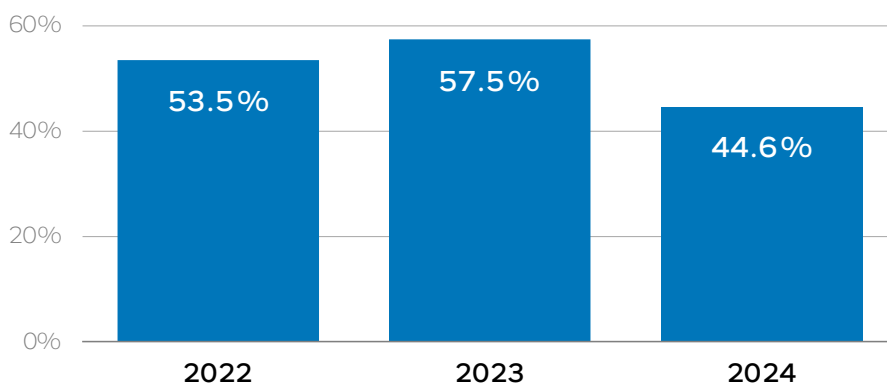
This is the first time that we have seen income from print drop to below 50% of total income. In our 2023 survey, combined income from print advertising and circulation delivered more than half (57.5%) of revenues across our respondent base. A year previously, in our 2022-23 report, that figure had stood at 53.5%. A drop of 12.5% since last year demonstrates the urgency with which news publishers need to reduce their print dependence.

The revenue mix of [Mediahuis](#), a leading European news publisher, [exemplifies this dichotomy](#).<sup>1</sup> At present, around 70% of their income comes from print, compared to 30% via digital. Yet, their 1.8 million subscribers are almost equally split across these mediums. The company aims to flip its revenue model by the end of the decade. The goal is “to go from 70/30 to 30/70 in seven years. And if we are there by 2030 then we can say that we are a digitally sustainable company,” Mediahuis chief executive Gert Ysebaert explained at WAN-IFRA’s World News Media Congress 2024 in Copenhagen in May.

Elsewhere, reminding us of print’s continued importance, some publishers are leaning further into the medium, while at the same time also endeavouring to expand their digital revenues.

The US-based magazine The Atlantic, for example, has prospered with a growing digital subscription business. They now have more than 1 million subscribers, and towards the end of Q1 2024, they also [reported](#)<sup>2</sup> that booked advertising was up 33% from 2023.

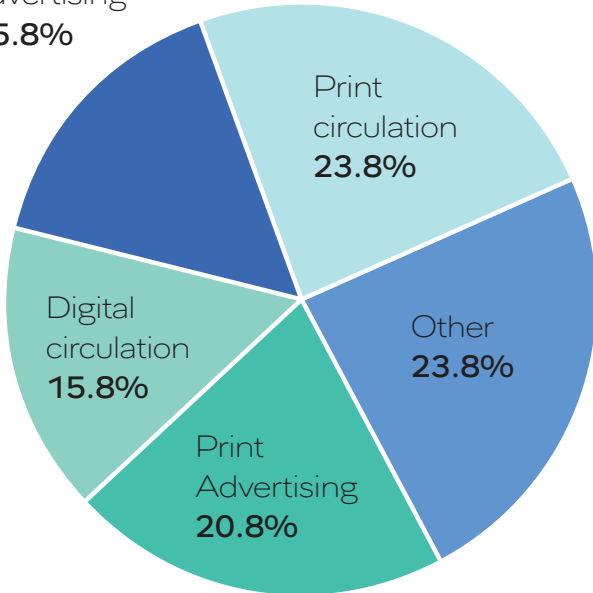
Revenue from print circulation and print advertising as a percentage of total revenue



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

## What percentage of your total revenue comes from the following sources?

Digital advertising  
15.8%



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

Subsequently, in October 2024, [The Atlantic declared](#)<sup>3</sup> that as a result of subscription growth and a return to profitability, they would return to monthly editions of its print publication. The title had been published 10 times a year for the past 22 years. “More people subscribe to our print magazine than at any time since its birth in 1857,” noted Editor-in-chief Jeffrey Goldberg, who shared that they would also be increasing their coverage of defense, national security, and technology issues.

The move signifies part of a remarkable turnaround for the brand. Just four years ago, at the height of COVID, the company had a \$20 million deficit and was forced to [lay off 68 staffers](#),<sup>4</sup> akin to 17% of total employees. This was despite its coverage of the pandemic being widely praised.<sup>5</sup>

At WAN-IFRA’s Indian Printers Summit, [Janhavi Pawar](#), Director of [Sakal Media Group](#) shared<sup>6</sup> how they had recently launched three new print products, as well as a digital subscription, targeting Gen Z.

This might be an audience that publishers don’t think will be attracted to print, but Sakal believes otherwise.

A new ‘phygital’ product (left) which features a four-page supplement of custom games within the print newspaper broke even on its first day.



Image via [The Atlantic](#)

Nevertheless, more widely, the predominant trend is a different one: with news publishers grappling with the need to maintain the value of their print products, while at the same time seeking to reduce their reliance on this revenue stream.

As part of this picture, it's also worth remembering that not every print news outlet finds the medium profitable or sustainable. In some cases, news publishers have determined that the heavy costs associated with print media, coupled with continuing shifts in consumer habits, means that print operations are no longer financially viable. In response, outlets have reduced the frequency of print publications, the number of pages and the amount of original content (i.e. non-wire copy) that they offer, or ceased printing altogether.

This landscape therefore remains a complex one. For some news outlets, print advertising and circulation remain at the heart of their sources of income. Others are cutting back, looking to reduce print expenditure, or divest their print interests.

It's clear that there is no cookie cutter model here. Nonetheless, across our sample, although print's share of the total revenue pie has now dropped below 50% for the first time, it remains a substantial portion of the revenue pie. This underlines how revenue mixes are changing, and why publishers must continually look to adapt their revenue strategies in response to changing markets and consumer behaviours.

## Growth in digital revenues

In contrast to print, digital revenues - both in terms of online advertising and reader subscriptions - have increased by 7% year-on-year.

Digital revenues, derived from both advertising and circulation, now account for nearly a third (31.6%) of total revenues, as news publishers continue to explore opportunities for online paywalls, paid apps and other verticals.

Demonstrating this need for digital diversification, both Reuters and CNN introduced paywalls in the past year. As The Wall Street Journal [notes](#),<sup>7</sup> the Reuters news site “has [previously] been free for consumers since 1995,” attracting 45 – 50 million unique viewers a month, from 240 countries and territories around the world.



Four-page fortnightly supplement

Meanwhile, the leading Spanish newspaper El País [launched](#)<sup>8</sup> a digital US edition, which “aspires to be the informative voice and meeting place of the Latino universe in the North American country.” [EL PAÍS US](#) targets the 60 million plus Spanish-speaking people in the United States, and builds off separate editions that are already produced in Mexico, Columbia, Chile and Argentina.

Other major publishers have introduced new subscription tiers for their existing products. One such outlet, The Economist launched a subscription model for their audio content, [Economist Podcasts+](#).<sup>9</sup>

Subscribers get access to all of their podcasts, as well as a limited number of free articles each month, and several newsletters. Access to all articles and newsletters, or the ability to attend a subscriber event, requires an upgrade to a full digital subscription.

At the same time, The New York Times made its podcast archive subscription-only. A standalone podcast subscription costs \$6/month and \$50/year. In [announcing](#)<sup>10</sup> the move, [Ben Cotton](#), head of subscription growth at The Times, explained that “our audio journalism connects The Times with millions of people every day.”



Screenshot 12th November 2024 via EL PAÍS US Español

“...Now we’re taking a significant step forward in transforming this powerful connection into a key driver of our subscription business.”

These moves demonstrate the optimism that some publishers have audiences paying for audio products,

as well as the importance that audio and podcasts can play in the subscription funnel.

Alongside these moves, we also continue to see publishers looking to grow digital revenues through investment in Games, as well as new

verticals and other products and packages.

In the USA, the [Atlanta Journal-Constitution launched a campaign](#)<sup>11</sup> at the start of the year which offered new digital subscribers access for \$1.99/week. For life. The only condition? You have to remain a subscriber.

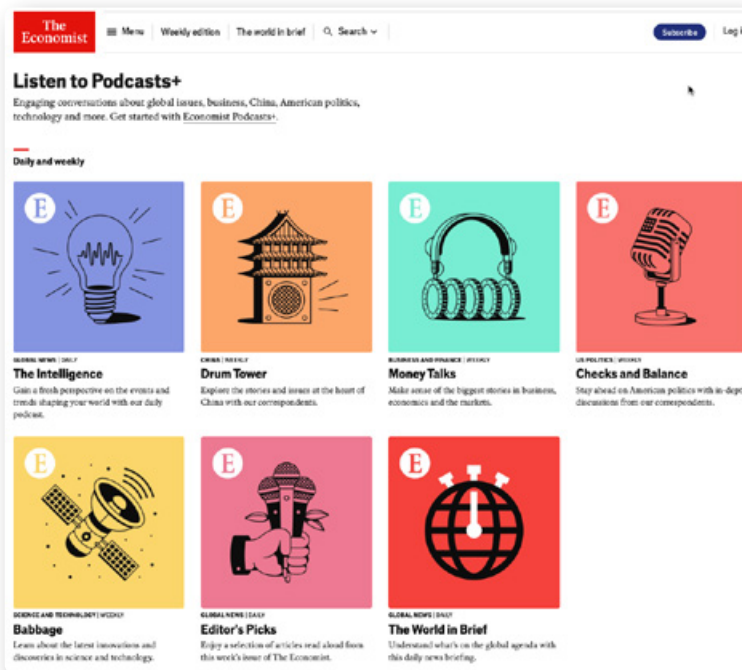


Image: Screenshot 11 November 2024 via <https://www.economist.com/audio/podcasts>

One potentially cautionary tale for this type of pricing offer was also seen this year. Readers who took out a \$99 lifetime subscription to Rolling Stone earlier in the millennium, [found](#)<sup>12</sup> that they would no longer receive print copies of the magazine, but rather a PDF replica of each issue.

“It’s not the same thing, getting a PDF. You can’t touch it, you can’t feel it, [Samir Husni](#), a magazine consultant and former Professor at the University of Mississippi, [told Slate](#).<sup>13</sup> Husni, who is known to many as “Mr. Magazine” also noted other issues with this approach. “I mean, how would I know it’s the genuine real thing? Anyone can fake a PDF these days,” he added.

## Other income streams becoming more prominent

The importance of diversifying revenue streams is also reflected in the finding that "other income" grew by 5% year-on-year. Collectively, this category – which encompasses activities such as e-commerce, events and licensing – now accounts for nearly a quarter (23.8%) of revenues across our complete sample.

Within this "other" category, events are – by a considerable margin – the leading activity that news publishers are leaning into. The pre-COVID enthusiasm for this potential revenue stream appears to have returned, driven by the opportunity to generate income through sponsorships, ticket sales, and paid exhibitors, as well as formats which include in-person, online and hybrid possibilities.

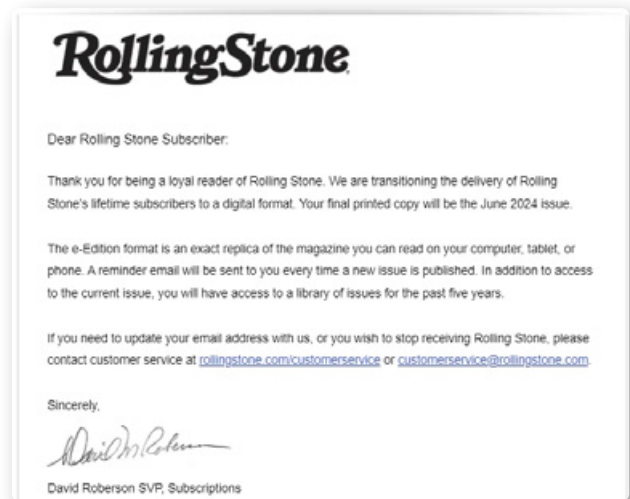
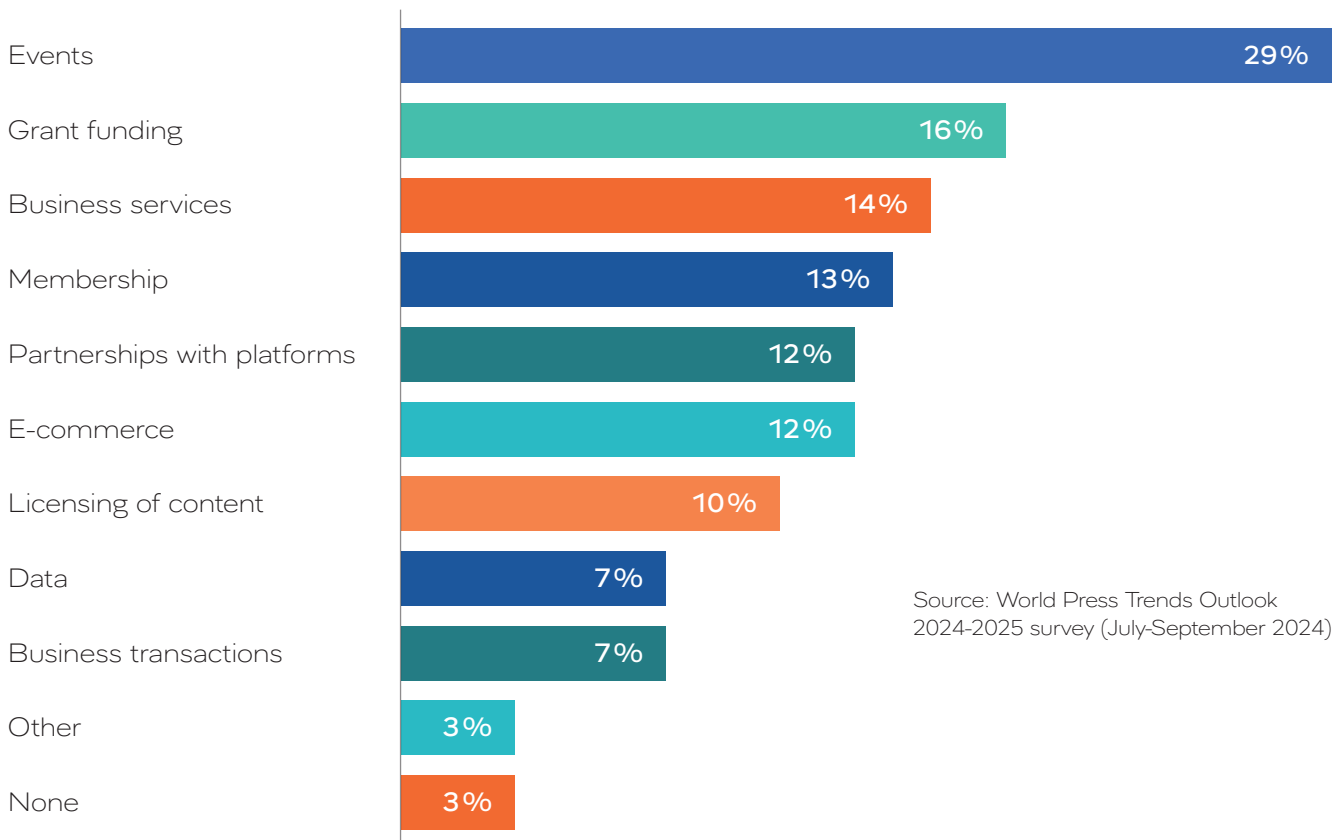


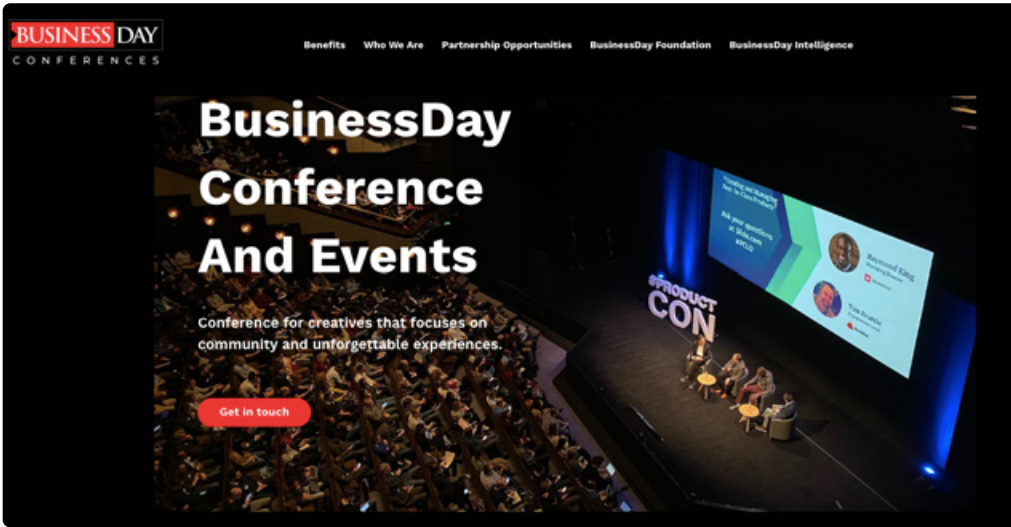
Image [via](#) Reddit

Nigeria's [BusinessDay](#) is an example of one news publisher that has leaned heavily into events, organizing dozens every year across a range of audiences and formats. At WAN-IFRA's [Digital Media Africa](#) conference in Nairobi, they [revealed](#)<sup>14</sup> that events now accounts for around 32% of the publisher's annual revenues, and about 40% of its profitability.

## Apart from advertising and reader revenue, which of the following are your most important revenue sources in 2024?



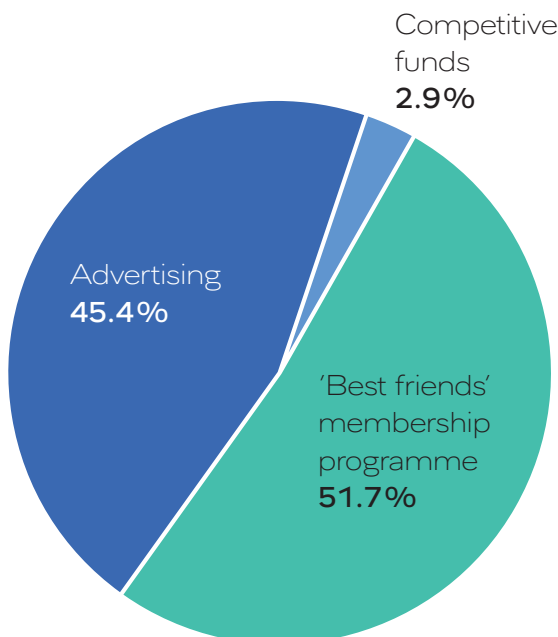
Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)



Screenshot [via](#) WAN-IFRA

Alongside this, we also saw considerable consistency in the value attributed by news publishers to a number of other specific revenue streams. This includes grant funding (16% said it was their most important non-advertising and reader revenue source in 2024, vs.15% in 2023), partnerships with platforms (12% vs.15%) and business services (14% vs. 15%).

### 2023 income at Cenital, Argentina



The [Digital News Report 2024](#),<sup>15</sup> from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism places this type of activity in the context of stilted subscription growth and a challenging advertising market. “In this context, and with similar pressures all over the world, we are seeing news media looking to introduce or strengthen reader payment models such as subscription, membership, and donation,” they observe.

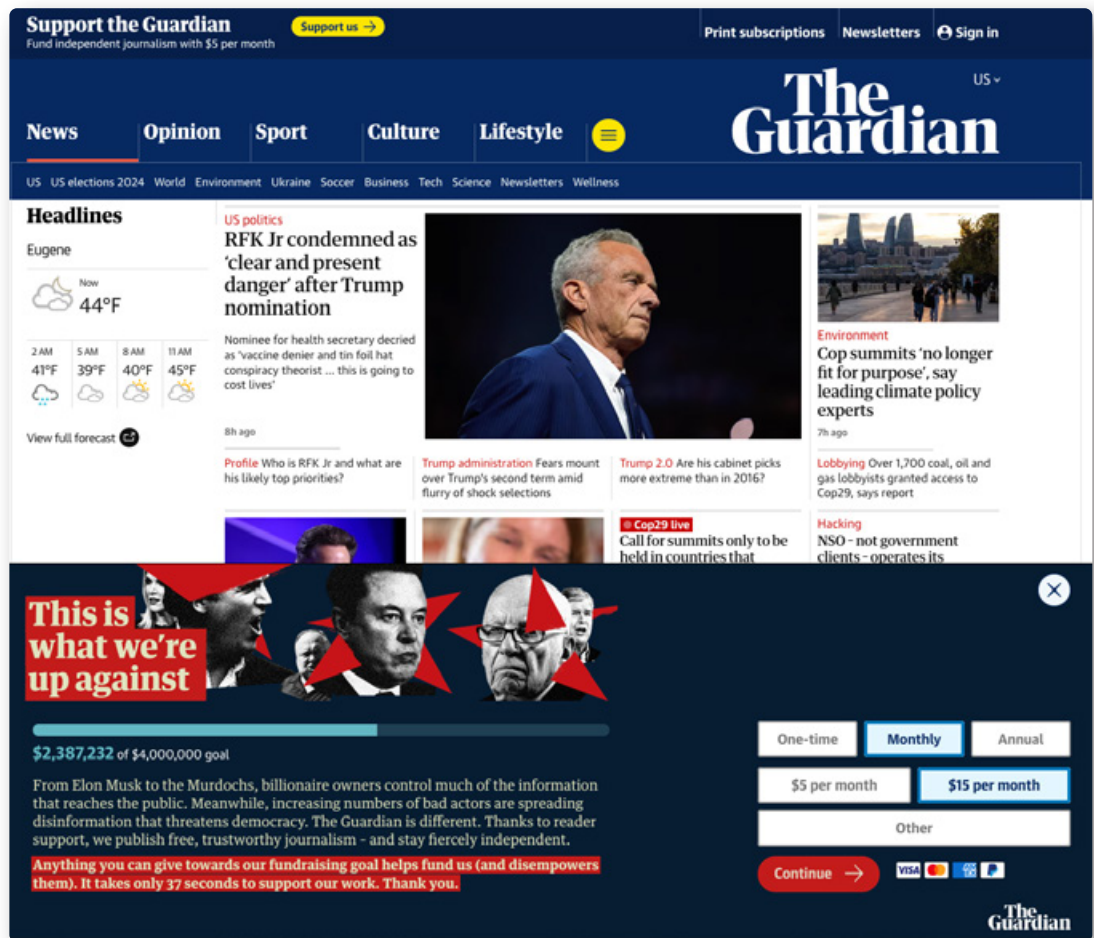
Among our survey respondents, one interesting area of differentiation in 2024 can be seen in attitudes towards memberships. In 2023, just 5% of our sample said this would be an important revenue source. By 2024, that had grown to 13%, perhaps reflecting the maturity of this income stream, and its proven track record at an increasing number of news outlets.

In Argentina, the digital news outlet [Cenital](#) derived [more than half of their income in 2023](#)<sup>16</sup> from their “Best Friends,” a term they apply to those who contribute to their [membership programme](#). Meanwhile, at [The Daily Maverick](#) in South Africa, their membership program – Maverick Insider – now accounts for [40% of overall revenues](#).<sup>17</sup>

Among our sample, more than a quarter of respondents (28%) told us that their organization already has a membership or contribution model.

Contributions, in the form of donations, may not come with the types of perks often associated with membership models (e.g. content that is ad-free or features reduced ads, member/subscriber only content, early access to

Screenshot, homepage of the US edition of The Guardian website, November 14th 2024



events etc.). Nevertheless, donations are becoming more commonplace due to the rise of non-profit media outlets and campaigns like those run by The Guardian.

Alongside this, micropayments appear to be in vogue once more. The digital landscape is littered with [examples](#)<sup>18</sup> of failed attempts to make this model work. Writing in the Columbia Journalism Review back in 2020, the British journalist James Ball<sup>19</sup> [contended](#)<sup>20</sup> that “micropayments will never be a thing in journalism.”

More recently, as a newsletter from The Fix in September [put it](#),<sup>21</sup> “micropayments in news have long been an appealing idea that hasn’t worked in practice.”

One reason for this might be that the models deployed by publishers have tended to focus on pay-per-article, or daily access models. Countering this, The Washington Post has been experimenting with a week-long package.

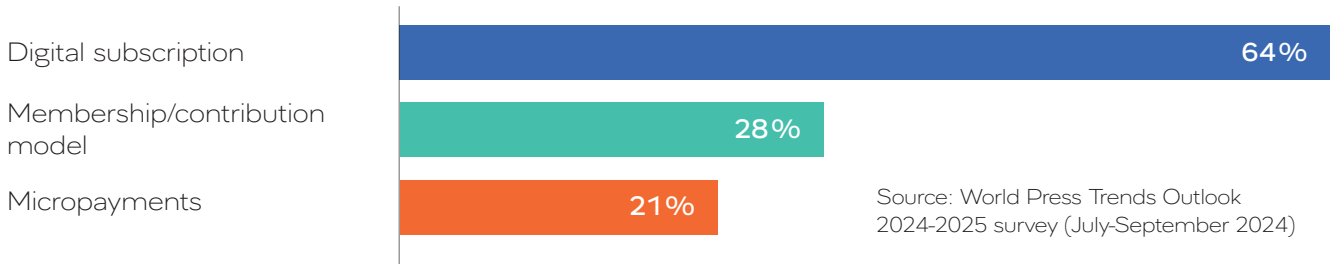
The price being offered changes (from \$4 to \$10) depending on a number of consumer variables, staff at Nieman Lab [found](#).<sup>22</sup>

Offering a longer “trial” to content from the Post may be one way to help convert readers to other longer, more expensive, subscription tiers.

For Kevin Anderson and James Kember at PugPig, micropayments should be seen “as part of a subscription journey.”

Broadening the definition to include “micro” subscriptions, they [point](#)<sup>23</sup> to products like FT Edit, which offers eight stories a day from the Financial Times, as “a gateway to allow the brands to establish a relationship and habit with a user, whilst enabling the publisher to monetise the relationship with those people that will never pay for a full rate subscription.”

## Does your organisation have some form of:



A look at the FT's pricing structure would seem to reinforce this view. At \$4.99 a month for [US consumers](#)<sup>24</sup>, FT Edit offers a very different price point to full subscriptions which range from \$39 a month for digital access, and a \$75 premium digital product.

As we will see in later sections of this report, these diversification efforts play out against a varied backdrop in terms of profitability, business confidence and proposed areas for investment. What we can discern, however, is that publishers are being required to focus on revenue generation that goes beyond monies from circulation (sales and subscriptions) and advertising, examples of which will be illustrated throughout this report.

# Business Outlook and Digital Transformation

**This chapter looks at how publishers feel about the year ahead, and efforts to embrace digital across the organisation.**

The news media industry continues to operate in a period of significant transformation, with revenues and business models, operations and journalistic practice, as well as wider challenges to press freedom, all impacting on the health and vitality of the sector.

We asked our respondents about their attitudes towards this current state of affairs, as well as how they think things will shape up in the coming years. Alongside this, we also dived into the topic of digital transformation, profitability and several other key areas of activity. Together, these insights help us to understand where publishers are at, where they are going and where they think they will be in the near future. It's this picture that we paint in this chapter.

## Business outlook

Data from the latest survey shows a marked increase in optimism among media executives compared to this time last year. Overall, respondents to our 2024 survey expressed a more positive sentiment towards both their short-term and medium-term futures.

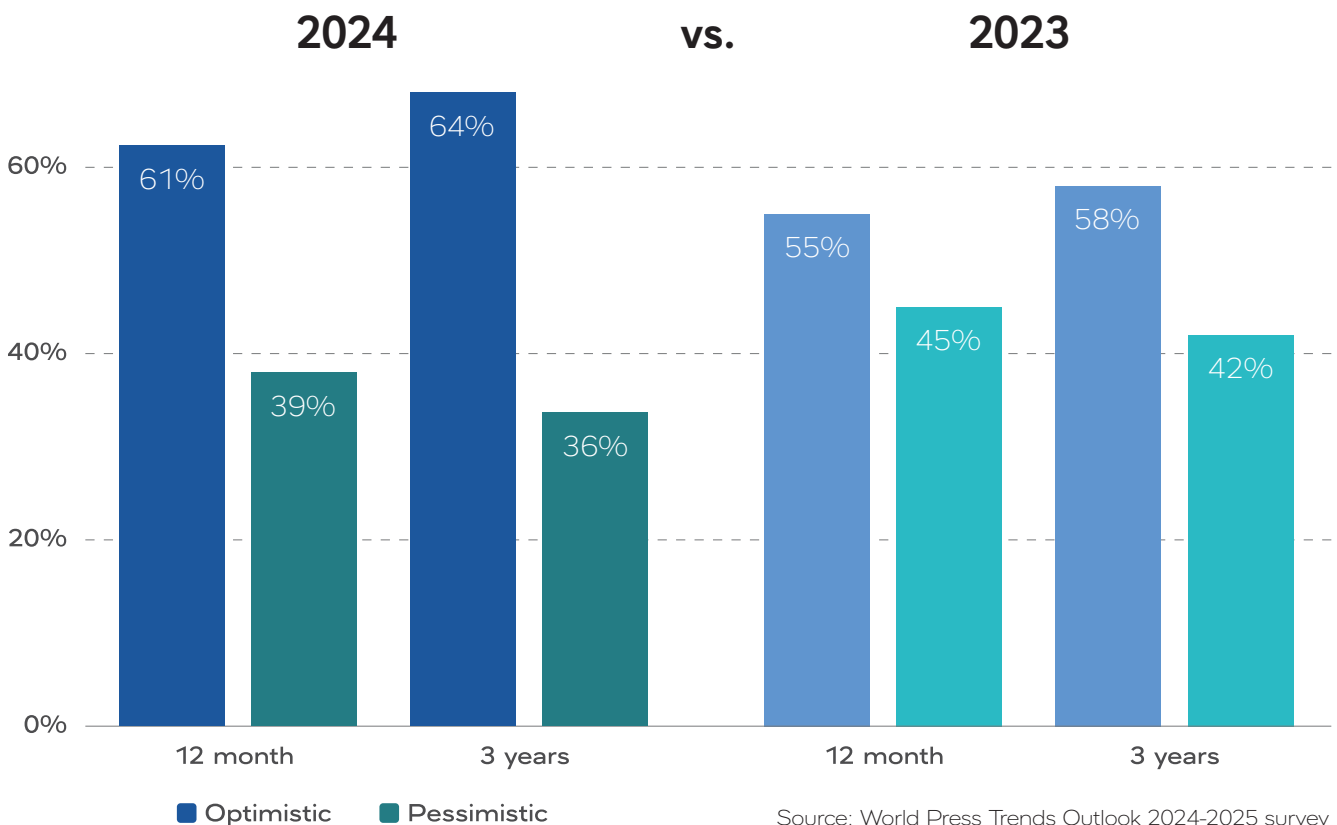
The majority of our respondents (61%) say they are optimistic about how their business will develop over the next 12 months.

This finding comes despite continued uncertainty across several key indices (such as changing revenues, the cost of living crisis, inflationary pressures, and the role and impact of AI).

Despite these factors, this rate of optimism rises to 64% of our survey participants when looking at a three-year horizon.

Overall levels of optimism are higher than those seen last year, where a cautious optimism permeated our sample.

### How do you feel about your company's business prospects: For the next 12 months, the next 3 years?



Given the myriad of challenges that the news industry continues to face, this finding may be surprising. However, this positive outlook may well be shaped by factors such as maturing digital transformation efforts, continued revenue diversification, successful audience engagement strategies, as well as technological advances (e.g. the impact of AI), partnerships and acquisitions.

Examples of these ideas in action that we have seen over the past year include:

- SPH Media, Singapore’s largest news publisher [acquired](#)<sup>25</sup> Tech in Asia (TIA), a move that TIA’s [Willis Wee wrote](#)<sup>26</sup> would enable TIA to scale at the same time as supporting SPH Media’s goals to develop a regional business title.
- Bloomberg launched a new [Weekend Edition](#) in October, their first major new digital product since the launch of Bloomberg UK in 2022. “We expect it to be a significant driver of our ambitions to reach 2.5 million subscribers over the next few years and grow every area of our business,” [said](#)<sup>27</sup> Chief Operating Officer [Julia Beizer](#) in a press release.

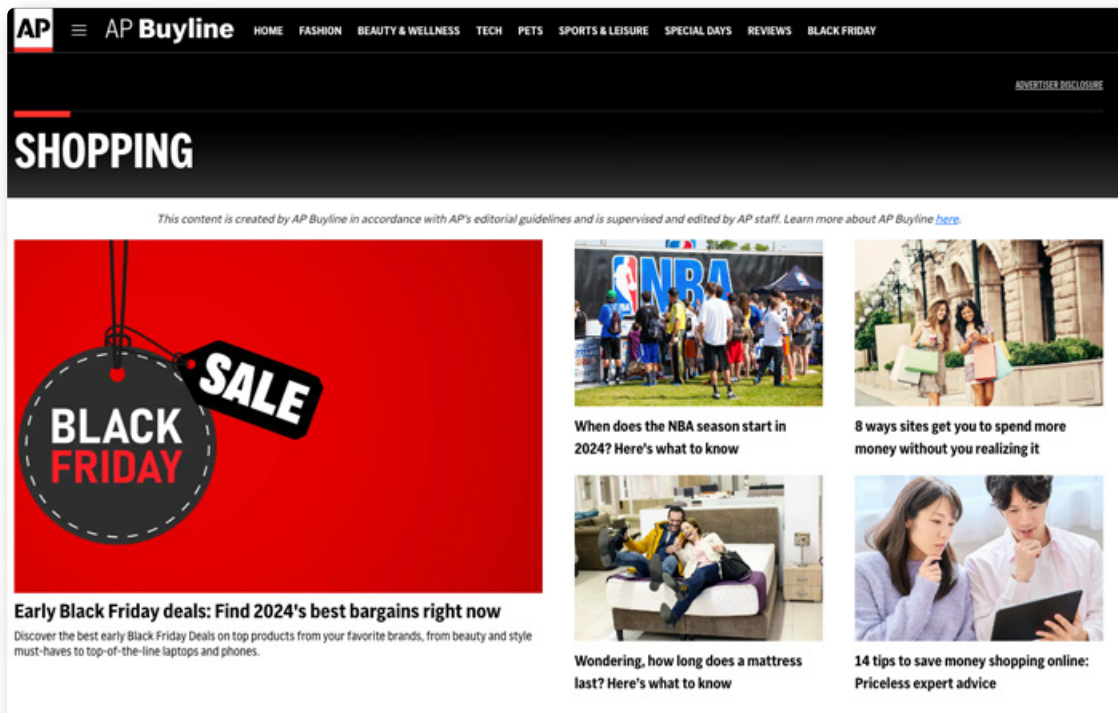
- By [diversifying their culture beat](#)<sup>28</sup> to include fresh approaches to content and new products, the [Hamburger Abendblatt](#) boosted subscription conversions from this vertical by 37%, with page views over a six month period up 79%.
- One of the latest big publishers to move into the e-commerce space is The Associated Press. They launched an e-commerce site, [AP Buyline](#), in partnership with Taboola in March 2024. The site offers how-to guides and reviews.

Buoyed by the success of these types of efforts, we continue to see a growing number of media executives and editors expressing a more positive outlook for the future of their company. (Although, as we will come on to, not everyone feels that same way.)

## Profitability

A further factor fueling optimism among parts of our sample can be seen in the return to profitability, and growing profit margins at some news publishers.

More than half of our survey respondents (54.5%) reported an increase in overall revenue in the last 12 months.



Screenshot: <https://apnews.com/buyline-shopping/> 17th November 2024

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<b>22M+</b> GLOBAL USERS (+22% YOY)	<b>41M+</b> MONTHLY PAGEVIEWS (+24% YOY)
<b>9.2M+</b> TOTAL SOCIAL FOLLOWERS	<b>175M+</b> SOCIAL VIDEO VIEWS

Source: Fortune Lucid, June 2024 vs June 2023. Social followers (Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn, X/Twitter, Threads, YouTube) as of September 2024. Social video views (TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn, X/Twitter, YouTube), January 2024 – July 2024

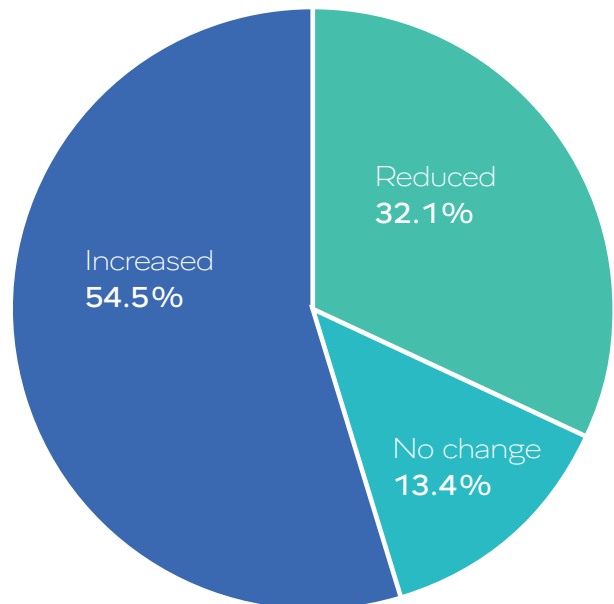
Screenshot [via](#) the Fortune Media Kit, 17 November 2024

Each situation will be different, but considerations shaping these findings include fruitful revenue diversification efforts, the viability of new products, and success in reaching new audiences.

In some cases, all of these different elements come together. ADWEEK [highlights](#)<sup>29</sup> [Fortune](#), the US-based business publisher, as one such example. Last year, the company generated \$130 million in revenue and delivered a third consecutive year of profitability. They note the role that digital has played in these efforts, with readership up from a 12-month average of 8 million unique monthly site visitors in June 2021, to 18.4 million monthly uniques for the year preceding June 2023.<sup>30</sup> The company is seeking to double their digital revenues in the next five years.

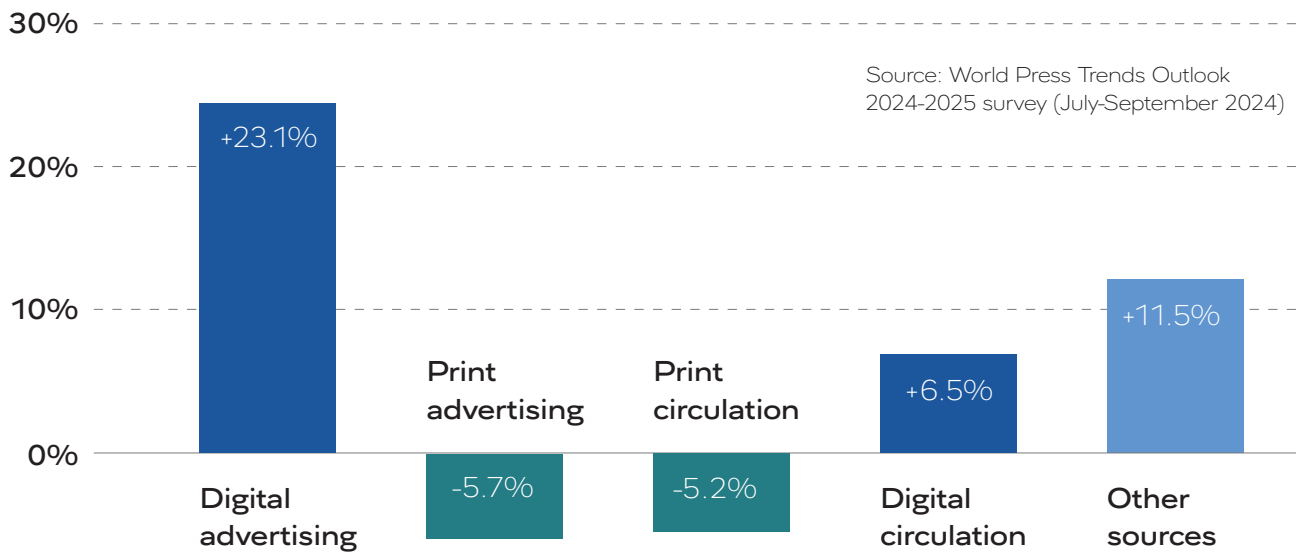
Meanwhile, the South China Morning Post has [found](#)<sup>31</sup> that reducing the number of events it holds has increased income and profitability from this side of its business, demonstrating how volume isn't the only way to scale revenues. Earlier this year, the company also [launched](#)<sup>32</sup> a premium subscription product, [SCMP PLUS](#), designed to help business leaders “decode news on China with curated analysis, summaries, fact sheets, opinion and more.” The company makes around 40% of its revenue from non-advertising sources.

### How has your company's overall revenue changed in the last 12 months?



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

## How have your company's revenues changed in the last 12 months?



### An uneven picture

We would be remiss, however, if we were to paint an entirely rosy picture of this business landscape. After all, “the essential tension, in any creative enterprise,” [writes](#)<sup>33</sup> [Brian Morrissey](#) in his newsletter [The Rebooting](#), “is between craft and quality and scale and profitability.”

Walking this tightrope is not easy, for legacy operators and start-ups alike.

At the start of the year, TIME Magazine [laid off staff](#)<sup>34</sup> across a range of departments. In a [memo](#),<sup>35</sup> CEO [Jessica Sibley](#) wrote that “in the year ahead... accelerating TIME’s path to profitability is our key priority.” To achieve this Sibley observed that “over the last 12 months we have diligently reduced our expenses,” while also noting that “we must continue increasing our revenue while managing operator costs efficiently.”

Gen-Z focused outlet [The News Movement](#), which was founded in 2021, has had a rocky road to financial viability, The New York Times [reported](#).<sup>36</sup> However, executives [told](#)<sup>37</sup> Press Gazette this summer that the outlet projects to be profitable at some point next year. In doing this, they are seeking to avoid a dependence on platforms for revenue, and instead leverage their understanding of younger audiences with other companies interested in this demographic.

“The commercial team is out there sharing our approach to social-first storytelling to brands that want to reach audiences like ours,” Editor and Editorial Director [Rebecca Hutson](#) said.

Looking at our survey, although more than half of our sample said income had increased in the past year, about one-third said it had declined. One proxy for this can be seen in the large number of lay-offs that have been seen across the media industries over the past year.

Alongside this, we continue to witness the ongoing migration of advertising revenues to technology platforms, as well as shifting consumer behaviours and preferences, coupled with continued issues such as news avoidance and low levels of trust in the mainstream media in many markets. These factors can impact on a publisher’s wellbeing.

Similarly, our data demonstrates that efforts to diversify revenues – and their relative success – are far from uniform.

Publishers in developing markets, for instance, report stronger digital advertising growth (+26.2% year-on-year) compared to developed markets (+19.3%). This may reflect a lower starting point, as digital markets and consumption catches up with other regions, but innovations and increased emphasis on these revenue streams might also play a role.

Meanwhile, the decline in income for both print advertising and circulation that we saw from our sample, will also give pause for thought.

Data [shared](#)<sup>38</sup> at WAN-IFRA’s recent [Digital Media India](#) conference by [Andy Budiman](#), CEO of KG Media in Indonesia, ably demonstrates these trends. In sharing these figures, Budiman posits a position that will be familiar to many other news publishers.

Across the Indonesian archipelago [KG Media](#) employs 6,200 people, including 2,000 journalists at more than 100 newsrooms.

Although 70% of KG Media’s revenue comes from print, digital and TV advertising, print ads have declined from 43% of their revenue in 2019 to 23% in 2023.

In contrast, digital advertising has grown from 18% of the group’s revenues to 32% in that time.

Digital advertising revenues have been driven by efforts such as sponsored posts from brands on the company’s social media accounts, content marketing, and video ads. But Budiman is keen to stress that this type of growth is likely to slow, emphasising the need – at KG Media

and other companies worldwide – for continued revenue diversification.

## Digital transformation

As we have noted in previous studies, digital transformation is an on-going process. It is never complete.

That said, we asked respondents to rate the current level of digital transformation at their news organisation. Only 10% of publishers rate their digital transformation as “sophisticated,” though this is double the number in 2023. This growth may be a reflection of investments in digital infrastructure and AI, and their perceived potential.

More widely, over three-quarters of our sample (76%) classified their digital transformation efforts as “emergent” or “advanced.” These classifications consistently account for the self-ranking given by the majority of new media organizations, indicating that most companies determine that they are somewhere along the middle of their digital transformation journey.

These efforts don’t just focus on the creation of new digital products and investments, they also incorporate cultural change.

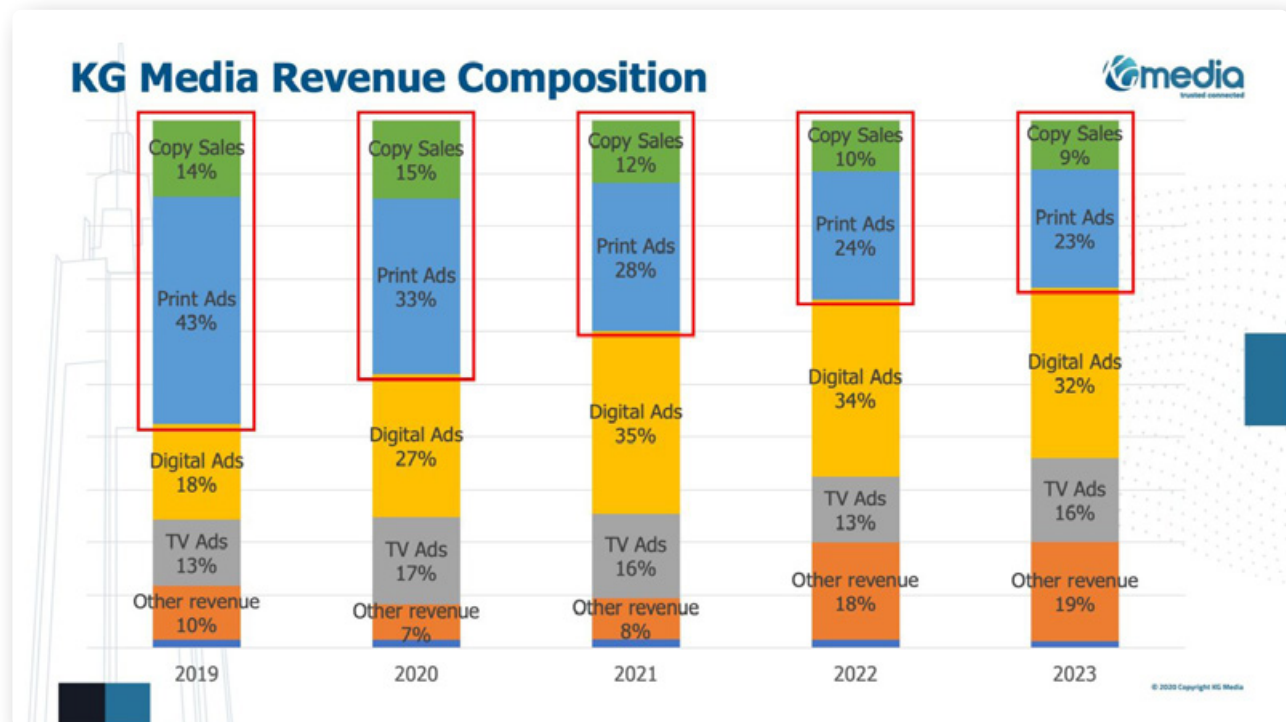
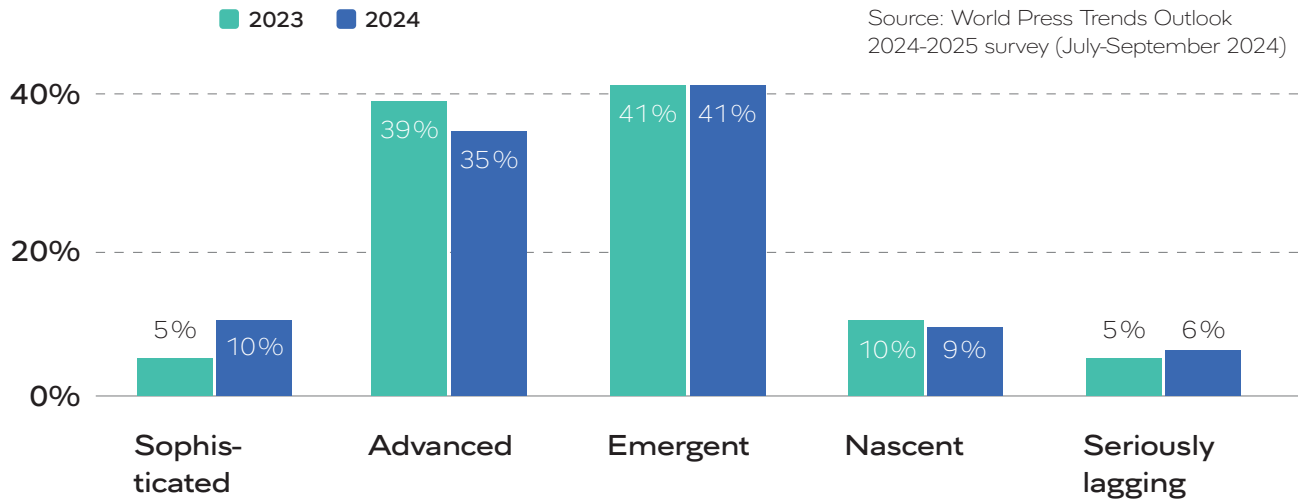


Image [via](#) WAN-IFRA

## Regarding digital transformation, at what stage would you say your news organisation is in comparison to your market or region?



This change is both internal and external, as [outlined](#)<sup>39</sup> by the Spanish journalist and consultant [Ismael Nafría](#). In a recent [book](#), he charts the evolution of Argentina’s [Clarín](#) into the Spanish-language newspaper with the largest number of digital subscribers in the world.

Nafría notes the need for compelling content that cannot be accessed outside of a paywall. Being unable to access what Clarín refers to as “decisive articles” is seen as fundamental to encouraging readers to subscribe. The publication aims to produce 10-12 of these types of articles a day.

From	To
A print newspaper	A multiplatform media company
A big, traditional organisation	An efficient, agile, flexible, and innovative organisation
A B2B company with little knowledge of their readers	A proactive B2B and B2C company that develops a community and knows their clients
Distribution of newspapers and magazines	A leading logistic/postal business
Developing digital projects “from the paper”	A company that develops projects as “digital native” player
Low rate of job satisfaction	A company with an excellent working environment

Source: Clarín [via](#) The Audiencers



Image [promoting](#) e-reader, e-paper pdf and audio offerings from Die Zeit.

At the other end of the spectrum, 6% of organizations declare their digital transformation as “seriously lagging.” Fully realizing digital potential may be harder in developing markets, or for smaller publishers, due to the resource requirements – from investments to personnel – required to fully harness the possibilities that digital can afford.

However, it would be wrong to assume that these sentiments only apply to developing markets.

[Die Zeit](#) in Germany, for example, has deliberately adopted a “go-slow” approach<sup>40</sup> to digital transformation. “We still haven’t transformed at all,” their online Editor-in-Chief [Jochen Wegner](#) told WAN-IFRA’s recent [World News Media Congress](#) earlier this year.

The outlet still has separate newsrooms for their print and digital operations, both with an independent Editor-in-Chief, and located in different cities: print in Hamburg, digital in Berlin. “We have often done the opposite of what we were advised to do,” Wegner reflects.

Yet this doesn’t mean they are not embracing digital. Far from it. These efforts, as the Digital News Report [points out](#),<sup>41</sup> include “experimenting with an AI-based application to answer reader questions on current events from its archives,” and they also offer an [extensive roster](#)<sup>42</sup> of more than 30 [podcasts](#).<sup>43</sup>

Our data demonstrates that the pace of digital transformation varies significantly across the industry. Although the majority of news organizations are making progress, the full potential and possibilities created by digital has only been tapped into by a small percentage of industry leaders.

This divergence is particularly acute when we compare and contrast responses from survey participants in developed and developing markets.

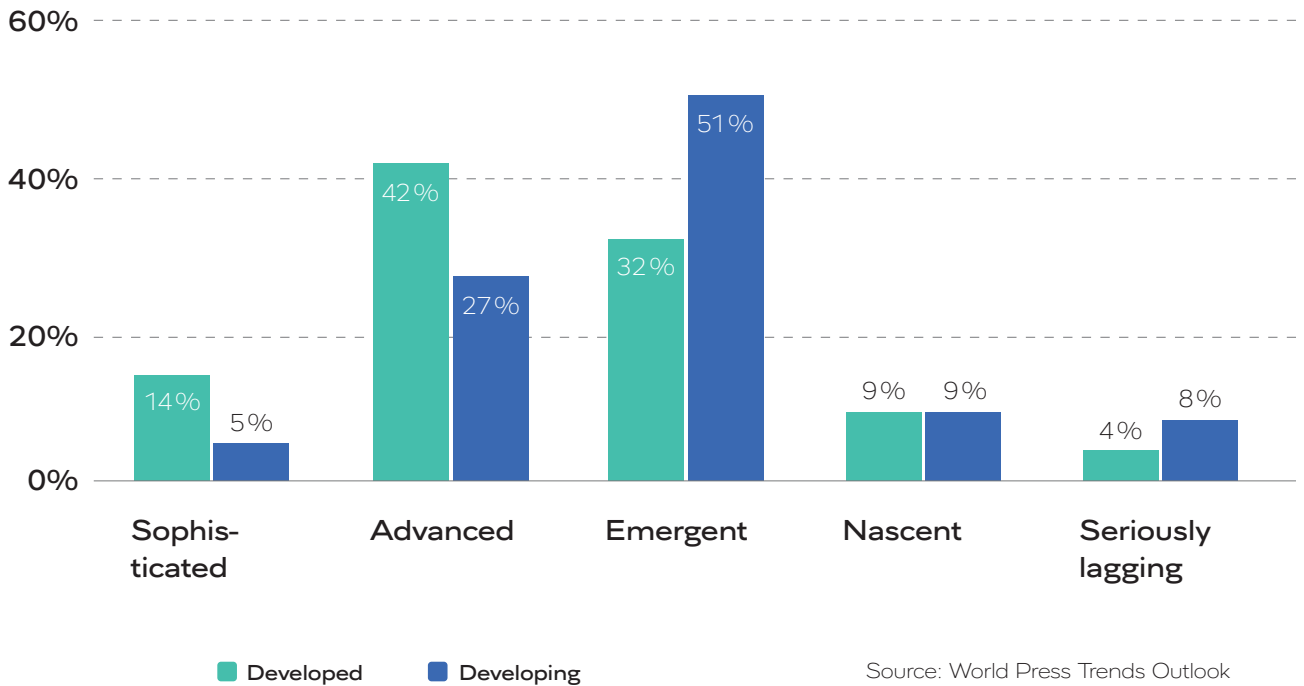
Respondents from developed regions are more likely to determine that their company’s digital transformation efforts are either ‘sophisticated’ (14% vs. 5% in developing markets), or ‘advanced’ (42% vs. 27%). More than half (56%) of respondents in developed markets characterised their company’s efforts in these upper tiers.

In contrast, over half of survey participants (51%) in developing markets described their digital transformation efforts as ‘emergent,’ whereas just under a third of respondents (32%) in developed markets placed their business in this category.

This finding reinforced the pressing need for additional support to advance digital transformation among publishers in developing economies.

Addressing this requires a multi-faceted approach which includes improving access to skills, technology, and funding within newsrooms and across the company, as well as fostering stronger digital habits among audiences, and leaning further into the places and spaces where they are using technology in their daily lives. Only by taking such a holistic approach can we ensure that publishers in developing markets are best equipped to harness the possibilities that are unlocked by an increasingly digital-first world.

### Regarding digital transformation, at what stage would you say your news organisation is in comparison to your market or region?



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

# The Cost of Doing Business

The background of the page is a dark teal color with a subtle, semi-transparent image of several coins scattered across it. One coin in the upper right is clearly visible, showing its intricate design.

**This chapter explores the financial outlays that news publishers have, as well as their investment priorities and other issues related to expenditure and cost-savings.**

In 2024, the global news publishing industry continues to navigate the dual pressures of increasing operational costs, and the imperative to make strategic investments which will yield returns in the medium to long-term.

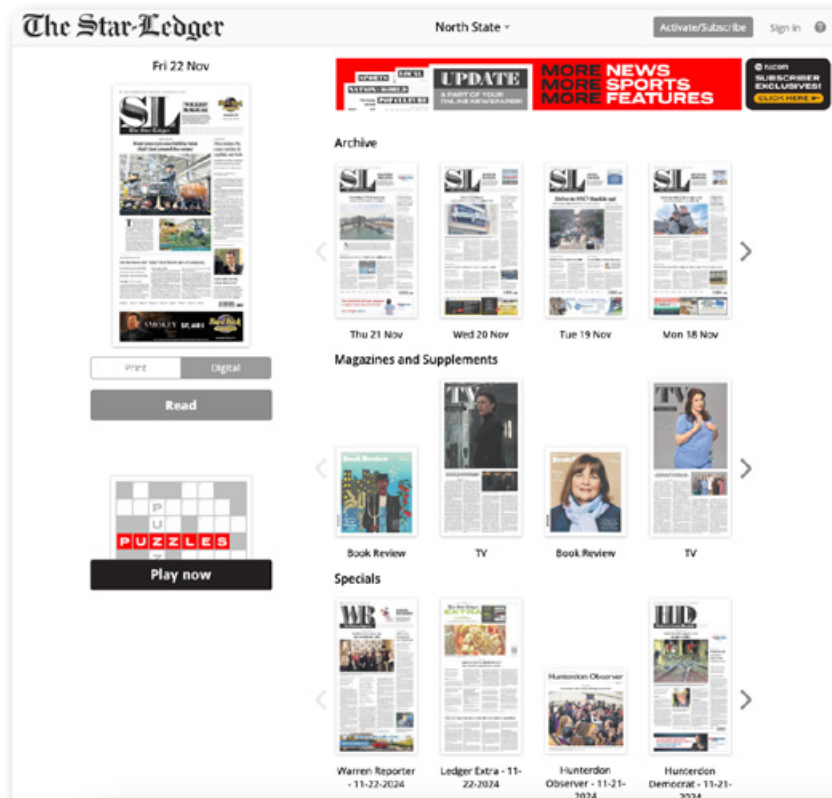
Within this, investment in content and newsroom technology remains pivotal for publishers. This includes a focus on editorial, and tools – such as analytics and AI – which support these efforts. Furthermore, news publishers also continue to prioritise moves to grow and diversify revenues, a strategic need which continues to underpin investment decisions and wider financial commitments.

### Costs and outgoings

Although the past year has seen considerable layoffs across the news, media and technology industries, this impact has not necessarily been felt in terms of reduced editorial costs. In fact, our survey shows a spike in editorial costs and the percentage of monies set aside for content.

Respondents to our 2024 survey indicated that nearly 37% (36.9%) of their current costs were for editorial work and content production. This figure is up by 8.7% from 28.2% in 2023.

Screenshot of the [digital edition](#) of The Star-Ledger, 22 November 2024.



Factors which may shape this finding include investment in new verticals and personnel, as well as a recognition that in a world awash with content, distinctiveness is an important differentiator. That's especially true in an age of subscriptions and an emphasis on growing reader revenues, where your editorial proposition (and pricing point) is pivotal to success.

More widely, the cost of print production has dropped from 17.8% of budgets in 2023 to 15% in 2024. Although the cost of paper remains high, this figure may reflect the efforts seen at some outlets to reduce the pagination and frequency of print publications, as well as smaller print audiences, which in turn can reduce the overall cost of a print run.

While outlets like The New York Times have [successfully managed](#)<sup>44</sup> to slow the decline of print revenues and circulation (at the same time as growing their digital audience), others have seen these revenues decline precipitously, sometimes resulting in rapid shifts away from print.

In New Jersey, USA, the Garden State's largest paper, [The Star-Ledger](#), along with daily newspapers The Times of Trenton and the South Jersey Times, and the weekly

Hunterdon County Democrat will all [cease print production](#)<sup>45</sup> in early-2025. “Thus far in 2024, Star-Ledger print circulation is down 21% in the last year,” the paper revealed.

Online versions, which feature more than 10 pages of local and national content not found in the current printed newspaper, will continue. As a result of the move, the production facility for these papers will close.

Another American East Coast printing outlet, based in Rhode Island, also announced towards the end of the year that it was [shutting up shop](#),<sup>46</sup> impacting 136 jobs, and 15 titles, all of which will be printed elsewhere.

Meanwhile, in France, Journal des Enfants (JDE) ceased production after 40 years. The weekly news magazine aimed at 8-14 year-olds, has seen circulation drop from 150,000 subscribers in 1993 to 7,000 in 2024, [Le Figaro reported](#).<sup>47</sup>

Reflecting on the closure, one of its reporters, [Edith Alberts](#), [asked](#):<sup>48</sup> “At a time when mistrust is eating away at the relationship between the French and the media, a brick from the foundation of this edifice is being removed, further destabilizing the structure. Who will the children of tomorrow trust to get their information?” “Such a closure is unusual in Europe where weekly print publications for children have seen a renaissance in

recent years,” [observed](#)<sup>49</sup> [Aralynn Abare McMane](#), the Founder and Executive Director of Global Youth & News Media, a nonprofit based in France.

Together, editorial and print costs represent more than half of the business outgoings for the publishers that responded to our survey (*see table below*). Outside of these two substantive areas, expenditure in most other areas remains stable.

However, it is noticeable that survey respondents told us that they are spending less on product development this year. In 2023, survey participants indicated that this activity accounted for 12.8% of costs at their company, a figure which dropped to 6.9% in 2024.

This drop in expenditure may be attributable to where some publishers are in the product cycle, with maintenance activities potentially costing less than development and implementation. The role of AI in product development may also contribute to reduced outgoings in this arena.

Nevertheless, product development remains a strategic imperative. More than 80% of our survey participants said this was an area that was important to invest in over the coming year.

These investments in products can be both internal, and external, in their focus.

## Overview of expenditures of World Press Trends Survey participants’ companies

Type of costs	2024	2023	Change since 2023
Editorial and content	36.9%	28.2%	+8.7%
Print production and distribution	15.0%	17.8%	-2.8%
Advertising/Sales	11.8%	13.1%	-1.3%
General and admin	13.0%	12.8%	+0.2%
IT/Technology	11.0%	11.7%	-0.7%
Product development	6.9%	12.8%	-5.9%
Other	5.4%	7.4%	-2.0%

In the UK, The Telegraph set out an ambitious plan at the start of the year to [launch an AI-driven tool every month](#).<sup>50</sup> One of these products, which created AI-generated summaries at the top of their email newsletters, has increased click-through rates by 20%.

On the other side of the pond, The New York Times [re-designed their Games app](#)<sup>51</sup> to make it easy for users to see the full spectrum of their offering. They later adopted the same principles for their wider app design, showcasing the NYT’s key content verticals as well as sub brands like Wirecutter, The Athletic and its Audio content.

“Formerly relegated to their own apps, the section brands have been folded into the experience,” [writes](#)<sup>52</sup> [Mark Wilson](#), the Global Design Editor at Fast Company. “You can see recipes or product recommendations within the main NYT app all the time,” he states. “Though their stand-alone apps will continue to offer a deeper-dive experience.”

On the other side of the world, the Indian digital pureplay provider [Newslaundry](#), offers a wide range of functionality within their app including a native podcast player, in-app subscriptions, gift subscription, ad-free, personalised notifications, bookmarking, a dark mode and more.

“Journalism products are often notorious for offering a bad user experience,” [says](#)<sup>53</sup> [Chitranshu Tewari](#), Director, Product and Revenue. “We don’t have that excuse,” they note. “If a user is paying anywhere between INR 3,000 to INR 10,000 (about 33 euros to 110 euros) every year for a Newslaundry subscription, they will unsubscribe if we don’t offer a good experience.”

However, it’s worth remembering that a great user experience alone is not enough to attract and retain audiences, which is why investment in editorial continues to remain essential for news publishers.

## Investment priorities

As we have seen, news publishers in high-income economies typically report greater progress in terms of digital transformation. This rating is likely to be rooted in more substantial investments in digital infrastructure and AI. Conversely, digital adoption in emerging markets, though optimistic, can lag behind.

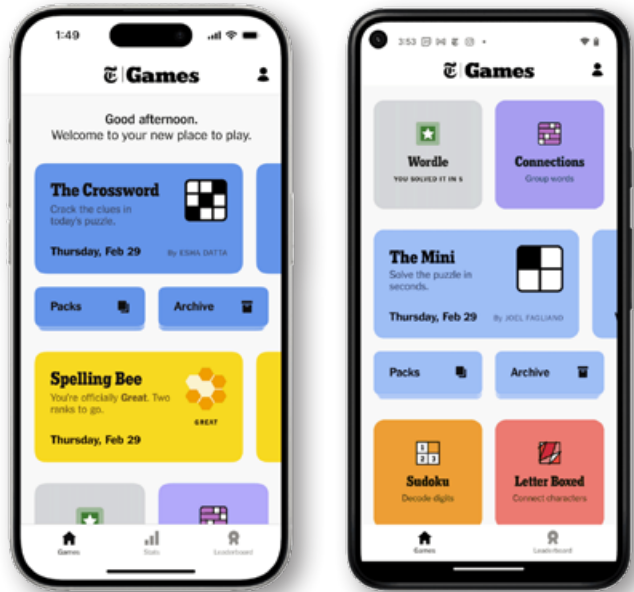


Image via [TechCrunch](#)



Image via <https://www.newslaundry.com/download-app>



Image via WAN-IFRA

Regardless of where they are on this spectrum, news publishers recognise the essential nature of investing in technology and the role this can play in advancing their business.

Subsequently, our survey respondents revealed that they are proposing to invest heavily in areas such as AI and automation (87%), data analytics (86%) and formats like video (79%) in the coming year.

These impacts can be transformative.

The Swedish publisher [NTM](#) shared at WAN-IFRA's recent World News Media Congress in Copenhagen how they have [harnessed analytics to help reach younger audiences](#).<sup>54</sup>

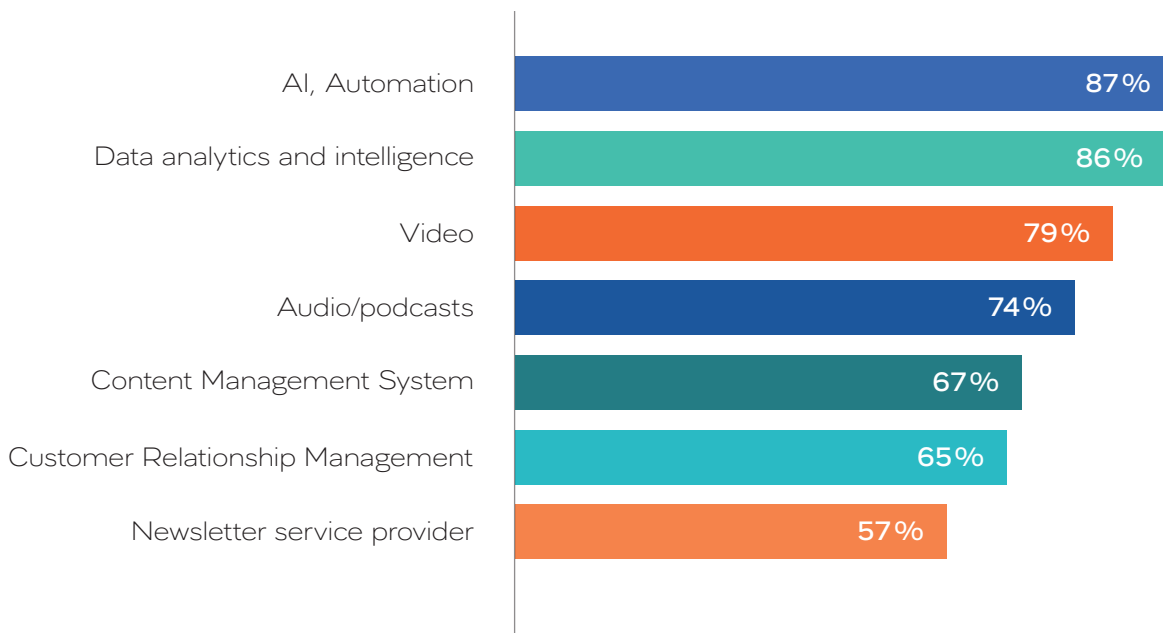
With most of its readership aged 50-70+ the group deployed data analysis to more actively engage with its target audience of 30-50 year olds. This included focusing on seven key beats that most resonated with this demographic: breaking news, crime and legal punishment, city, residence, jobs, healthcare, and family.

They also created dashboards where any story that achieved a clickthrough rate of 50% among the 30-50 year old age group was marked with a green star.

Alongside this, the group also [determined](#)<sup>55</sup> to “produce fewer but better stories,” and tighten its focus on retaining subscribers by creating “good content in video, text and podcasts that actually engage the audience and makes them feel they get value for money.”

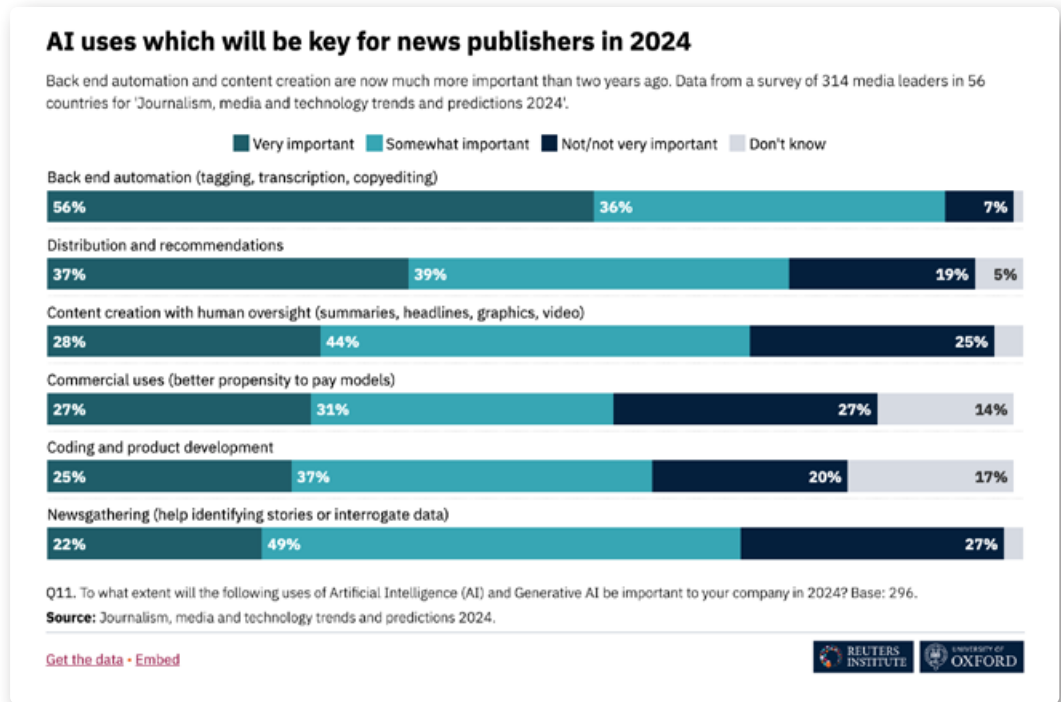
“That is the focus for newsrooms, not driving conversions and finding new customers,” contends [Jens Pettersson](#), the group's Head of Editorial Development.

### To what extent is it important for your organisation to invest in the following technology/products over the next 12 months?



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

Image via the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism



In many cases, the different elements that news-room leaders are prioritizing through their investment strategies may also come together. The functionality that AI can help unlock, for example, can potentially aid in everything from back end automation through to content distribution and newsgathering.

Many of the benefits of these investments are in areas that are far from flashy. Yet, they can yield considerable cost savings and other efficiencies.

At VG, the Norwegian tabloid owned by [Schibsted](#), JoJo, their proprietary transcription tool, has already [saved over 18,000 hours in transcription work](#).<sup>56</sup> The German public broadcaster ZDF deploys AI for [live captioning on its TV broadcasts](#),<sup>57</sup> while The Economist has translated some of its videos for TikTok and Instagram into German, French, Spanish and Mandarin using AI. “The translations are checked by our editorial staff before the videos are published,” the company [notes](#).<sup>58</sup> More widely, they also [undertake](#)<sup>59</sup> to label all content that has been converted, summarised or translated by AI.

In Canada, about 40% of [The Logic](#)’s active subscriber base utilizes their app. Nearly 20% of those who responded to a subscriber survey [told the](#)

[outlet](#)<sup>60</sup> that they depended on the app to alert them when new content was published, serving as a reminder of how automated alerts and notifications continue to also be valuable to many audiences.

Investments in content management systems (CMS) can also remain critical, particularly as publishers adopt multi-platform strategies and continue in their efforts to seek out audiences off-platform. Nearly three-quarters (73%) of respondents highlighted this as an area that was important to invest in over the next 12 months.

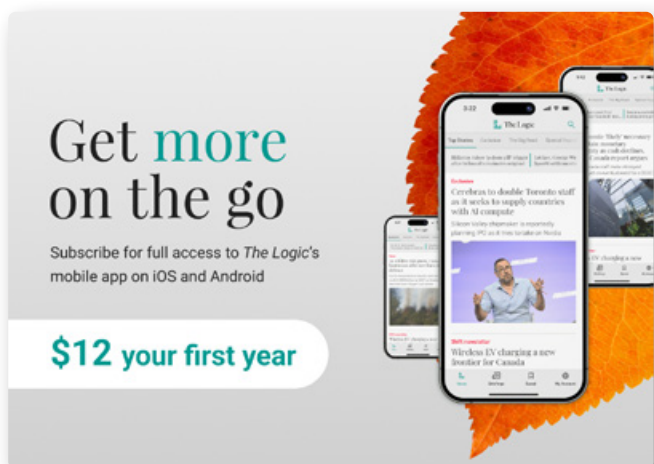


Image: Pop up on The Logic website, 23 November 2024

## Moving forward

Technology aside, we also asked our survey participants about other areas that they felt it was important to invest in over the coming year. Although it is important to note that this does not necessarily mean that they will invest in these areas, these findings do provide us with the priorities that newsroom leaders have identified.

Not surprisingly, revenue generation was a key area of focus, with a particular emphasis of doubling-down on efforts to grow reader revenues (83%) and the associated product dev to support that (81%), as well as developing “other” income streams (80%). Reader revenue (print/digital) makes up about 45% of publishers' total revenue with only 15.8% coming from digital. Yet, it is clearly considered a major priority for publishers to that part of business to offset the YoY declines in print. The emphasis on reader revenue and production development also means that marketing continues to be important for a large number (72%) of our respondents.

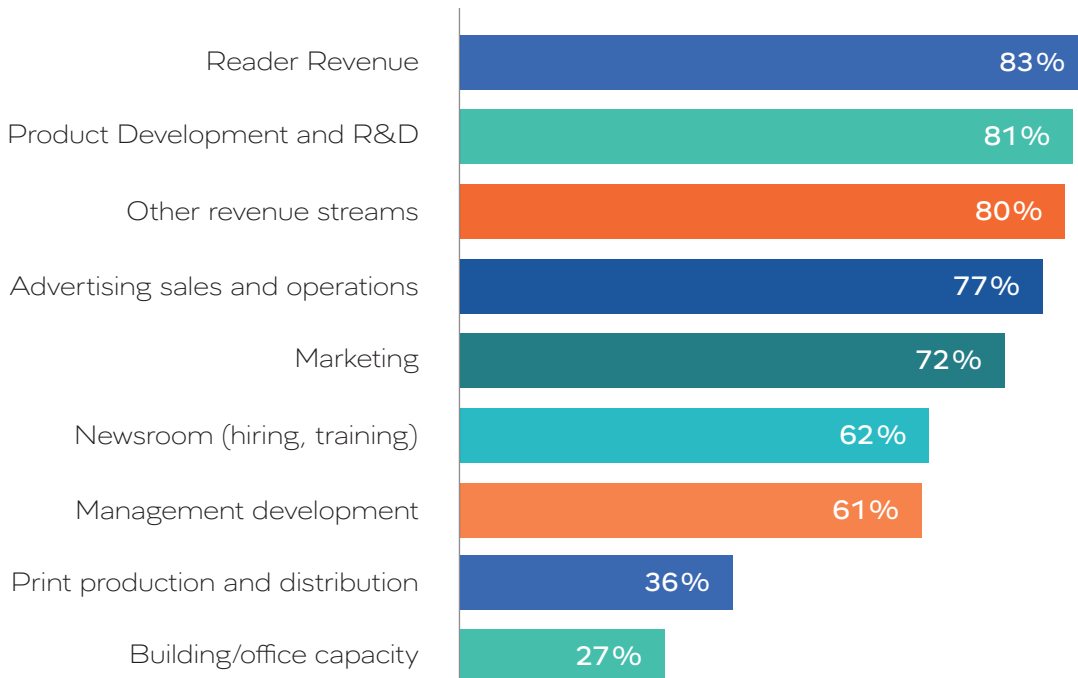
The need to develop other revenue streams, as well as doubling-down on reader revenues and continuing to develop advertising sales and operations, is well known. However, its urgency is reinforced by data from media buying agencies like [GroupM](#).

Their 2024 [midyear advertising forecast](#) estimated that global advertising revenues will be worth \$989.8 billion in 2024 (up 7.8%) and \$1.1 trillion in 2025 (an increase of 6.8%). Digital advertising now accounts for 70.6% (\$699.0 billion) of total advertising revenues.

Their [forecasts](#)<sup>61</sup> suggest that advertising spend across all channels, with the exception of print, which is expected to decline by 3%.

This emphasizes once again the need for publishers to reduce their reliance on dead wood revenues, as well as the importance of growing digital and exploring possible partnerships with expanding sectors like [retail media](#)<sup>62</sup>.

## To what extent is it important for your organisation to invest in the following areas over the next 12 months?



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

[Retail media](#)<sup>63</sup> remains a fast growing sector in the USA, as well as other markets. By 2029, it is [predicted](#)<sup>64</sup> to constitute 17.4% of the global advertising market. That's up from 15.1% this year, and [just 1.5% of total global ad revenues](#)<sup>65</sup> 10 years ago. "For publishers, this represents a threat and opportunity," [says](#)<sup>66</sup> Brian Morrissey, suggesting that some of this spend is being diverted from publisher's advertising inventories. "These budget shifts are not all coming from retail marketing budgets. After all, while retail media is booming, advertising on publishing content is not," he states.

In a sign of potential things to come, this Spring [Best Buy](#) and [CNET announced](#)<sup>67</sup> a partnership taking content from CNET to Best Buy channels — such as [BestBuy.com](#), Best Buy stores and the [Best Buy Mobile App](#). Advertisers can also buy ad space across both Best Buy and CNET channels. In a [press release](#)<sup>68</sup>, the companies noted that a survey of consumers who took part in an in-store test found that "86% said that seeing CNET's content while shopping made them more confident in their tech purchases and the content helped garner a 25% lift in purchase intent."

This type of partnership is one that we are likely to see more of, [posits](#)<sup>69</sup> AdWeek. "Think grocery chains pairing up with recipe publishers, pharmacies with health publishers or beauty retailers and fashion sites.

Other publishers have also moved directly into the retail space, exploring [opportunities in the e-commerce arena](#).<sup>70</sup> Last year, [The Daily Wire](#), a US-based [conservative media](#) and entertainment company, generated over \$22 million from commerce, akin to nearly 10% of its revenue for the year. Much of this stemmed from its [Jeremy's Razors](#) products, which delivered more than \$19 million in 2023, [Axios reports](#),<sup>71</sup> up from \$10 million in 2022. The remaining commerce revenues came from their merchandise store.

Insights from EMARKETER further [highlight](#)<sup>72</sup> potential revenue threats and opportunities for publishers.

This includes the role of the creator economy in driving purchases, and the emergence of platforms like TikTok as a replacement for traditional search. These trends, in turn, may shift audience behaviours and advertising dollars away from traditional media companies.

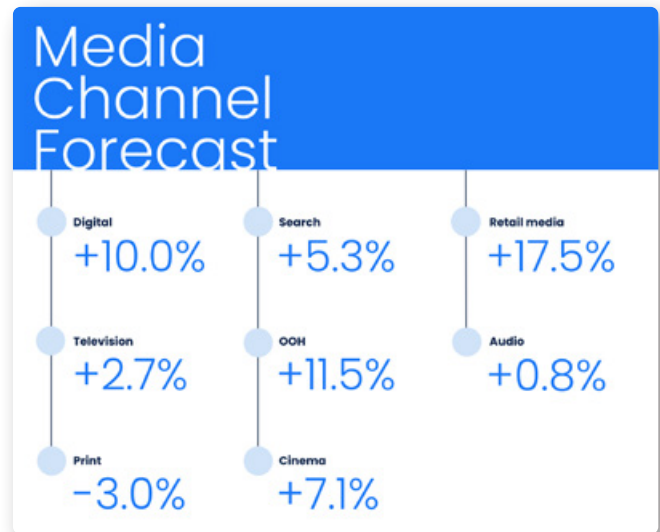
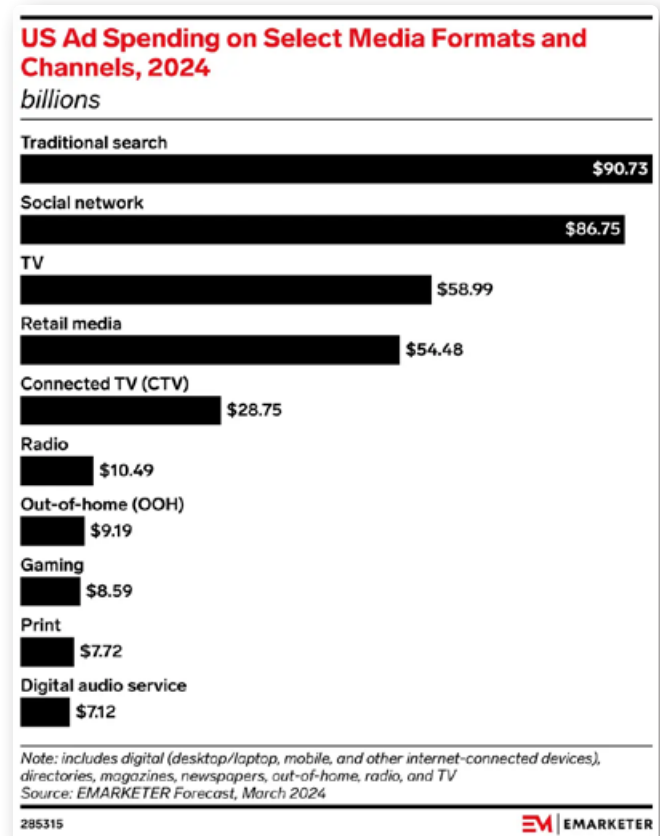


Image via GroupM

Of particular note to many news publishers is data from EMARKETER showing that in the USA print advertising spend is ranked ninth out of the ten categories that feature, only just ahead of digital audio services (\$7.72 billion vs. \$7.12 billion in 2024).



This reinforces that while print remains an important source of revenue for many publishers, its importance for advertisers continues to diminish, with advertisers increasingly favoring digital platforms that offer more precise audience targeting.

Against this backdrop, the need to create compelling products (including those where you can sell ads) and deeper relationships with consumers, is more important than ever. Given this, although monies being spent on product development appear to have dropped since our 2023 study, we can see why survey participants continue to stress the importance of this as a potential investment area.

As [Eric Ulke](#), Vice President of Product at The Baltimore Banner and [Reese Oxner](#), product manager at Slate Magazine [put it](#): “When news organizations are led by product thinkers – those with the ability to strategically align business, audience and technology goals while integrating journalism ethics – they’re more likely to find success, as they’re able to connect their content and business strategy in order to develop dedicated audiences and new revenue streams.”

Put another way, product-driven thinking is no longer optional – it’s essential for attracting and retaining audiences, as well as unlocking fresh revenue potential, bridging the gap between content creation and strategic innovation.

As the data and examples in this chapter illustrates, the news industry is navigating a mix of evolving (sometimes rising) costs, shifting revenue streams, coupled with the need for compelling content and on-going innovation in terms of both editorial delivery and production. The challenges of balancing operational costs with investments in technology, editorial excellence, and product innovation may seem daunting. However, they are a challenge that every outlet must rise to meet.

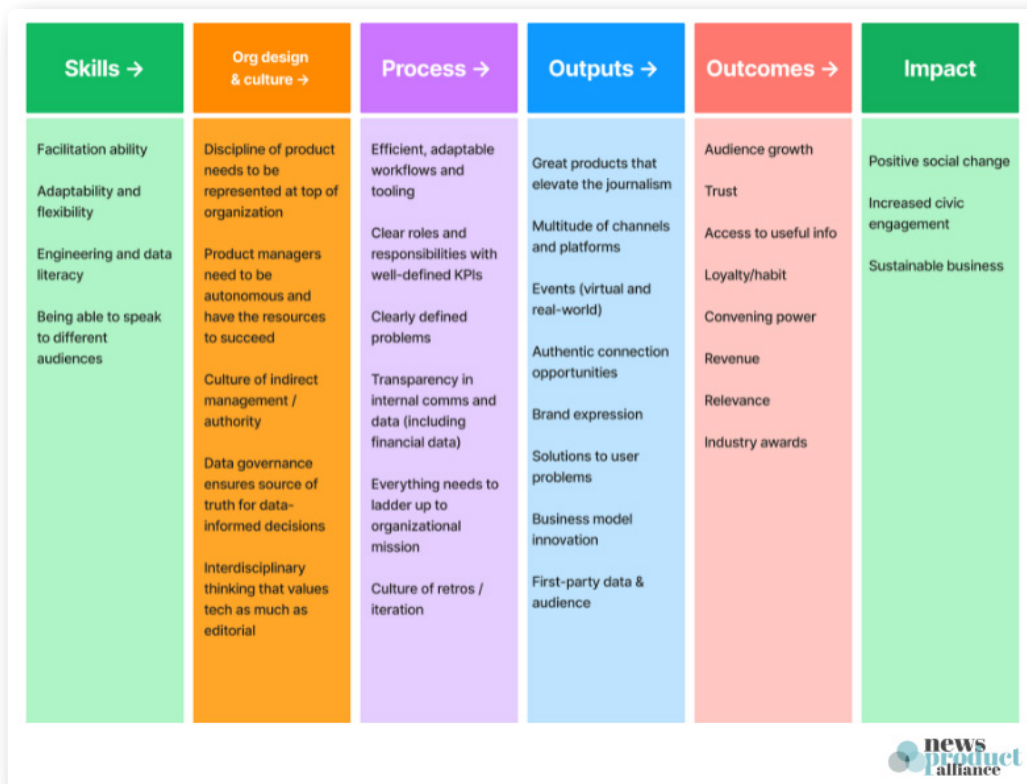


Image: Product Thinking in Practice [via](#) News Product Alliance

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World Association  
of News Publishers

# Artificial Intelligence and Relationships with Platforms

**In this chapter we examine how news publishers are continuing to adapt to the realities of an increasingly AI-driven world, as well as their on-going relationships with some of the biggest technology players.**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping elements of the media landscape at an unprecedented pace, driving innovation while at the same time prompting a reassessment of traditional models for news production, distribution, and monetization. This presents both opportunities and challenges, and we explore both of these dynamics in this section of the latest World Press Trends study.

Alongside this, evolving relationships with legacy technology companies like Google and Meta remain pivotal to the health and vibrancy of the news media landscape. These Silicon Valley giants are themselves investing heavily in AI, creating a complex dynamic in which publishers must navigate rapid changes across social networks and search algorithms, as well as their impact on issues of consumer trust, as well as referral traffic, and content visibility.

The intricate interplay between publishers and platforms is one that is long rooted in both collaboration and competition. That’s not going away. It’s just changing. Rapidly.

## AI readiness

Last year, we wrote about the [Year of AI](#).<sup>73</sup> The launch of ChatGPT to the public just two years ago (30th November 2022) propelled the potential for Generative AI into the mainstream, turning it into the biggest – and most talked about – trend in the media and tech space.

Since then, the hype around this technology has perhaps cooled a little, although it remains a hot topic of conversation and an area of major investment. [Menlo Ventures](#), an early stage venture capital firm, [reports](#)<sup>74</sup> that AI spend grew six-fold in 2024. This market was worth \$13.8 billion this year, up from the \$2.3 billion spent in 2023.

For news media leaders, investments in AI continue to be of strategic importance. We asked our survey respondents to rank – on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the highest) – the importance of investing in different business areas and technologies. More than a quarter (25.4%) of our survey responded by giving AI the highest possible ranking.

Part of the reason for this can be attributed to the sheer [breadth of possibilities that AI technologies can potentially unlock](#).<sup>75</sup>

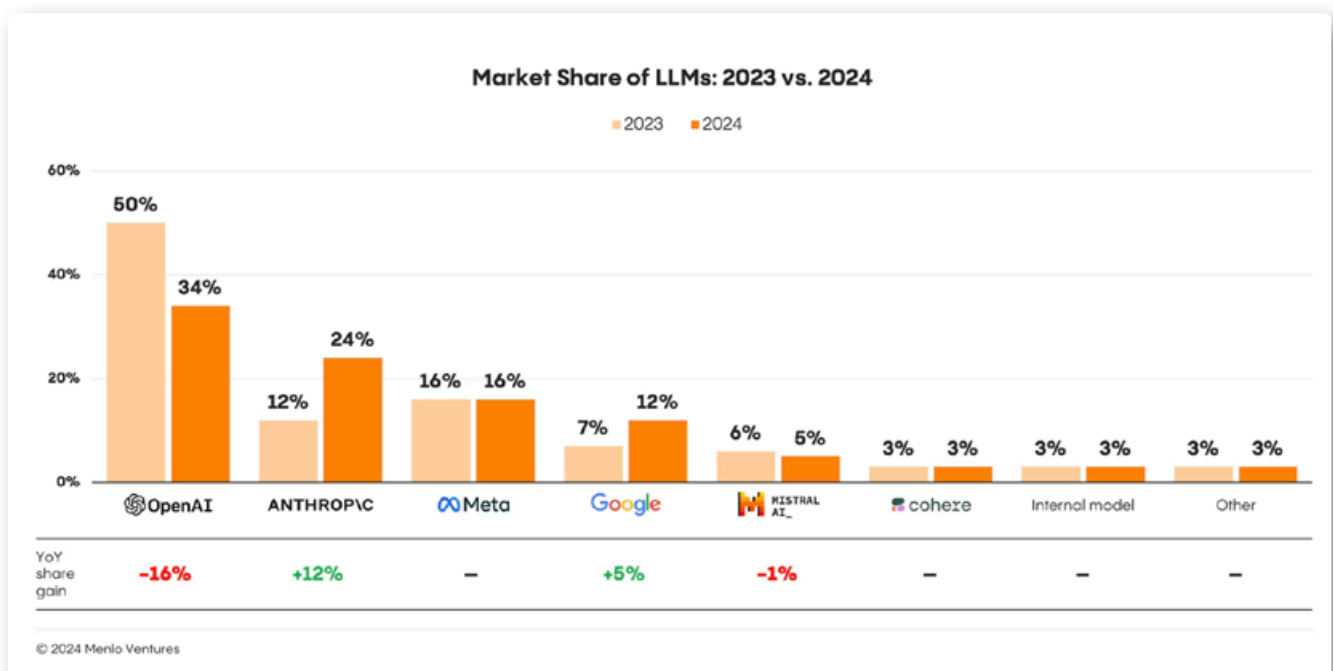
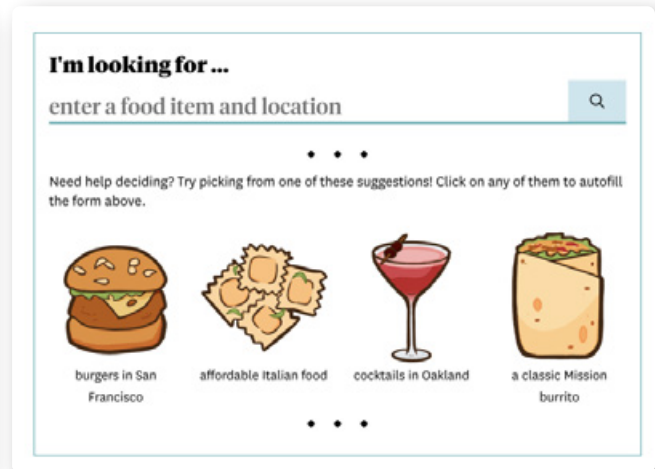


Image [via](#) Menlo Ventures



Image and screengrab [via](#) the San Francisco Chronicle



As we will see, this includes everything from article generation, through to backend work like improved SEO and transcription, as well as product enhancements, data analysis, and more. The [JournalismAI](#) team at LSE has a [database](#)<sup>76</sup> of more than 150 case studies showcasing “creative applications of AI in journalism.”

[Aftonbladet](#), a Swedish newspaper brand which is part of the Schibsted group, reaches around 4 million of Sweden’s 10 million population on a daily basis. The newsroom’s CMS incorporates AI-generated article summaries, produced with OpenAI’s API, to provide a digest of the story just below the article’s lead. “We found that users who expanded the summary box spent more time reading the full articles compared to those who did not, “ [says Martin Schori](#), their Deputy Managing editor and Associate Publisher. “Initially, we suspected an issue with our data, but similar trends have been observed by other media houses using AI-generated summaries.”

The French daily [Le Monde](#) now offers its subscribers AI-generated audio versions of all articles in its mobile app. Users can alter the playback speed, as well as continue to listen while browsing or when the phone is locked. Readers who use the feature are 1.7 times more engaged than other consumers, The Audiencers website [revealed](#).<sup>77</sup>

Elsewhere, the Peruvian news outlet [Ojo Público](#) has used AI to create an audio offering which, [provides access to its investigative work](#)<sup>78</sup> in the Indigenous languages of Quechua, Aymara and Awajún, as well as Spanish.

Further north, in the USA, outlets such as New York Public Radio and The Conversation are working with the team at [News Games](#) to harness puzzles, quizzes and crosswords created – and published – using Generative AI. The San Francisco Chronicle, meanwhile, tapped into reviews from their Food & Wine team to [create](#)<sup>79</sup> “Chowbot”, to provide audiences with AI-powered recommendations.

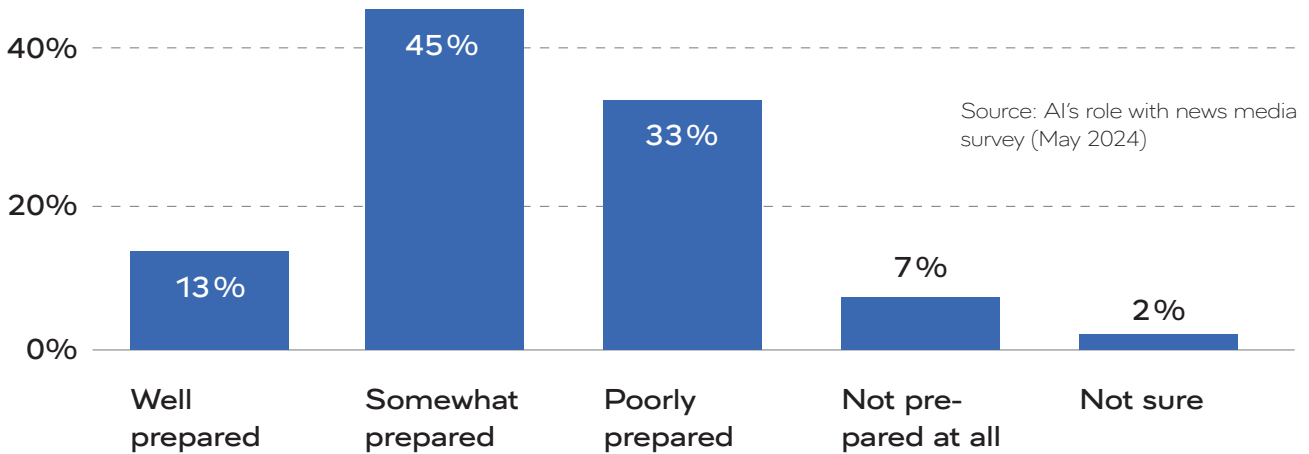
However, earlier WAN-IFRA research suggests that only a minority of news leaders (13%) feel that their company is well prepared to take advantage of AI technologies. Around 40% of survey respondents in a study this Spring recognised that they had a long way to go, indicating that their company was either “poorly prepared” (33% of respondents) or “not prepared at all” (7%). The largest group – nearly half (45%) of those sampled by WAN-IFRA in May 2024 – felt “somewhat prepared” to truly tap into this technology.

This mirrors the findings of [other research](#),<sup>80</sup> and reflects the speed with which this technology is evolving, as well as a cautiousness about its adoption among journalists and consumers alike.

Fundamental to the successful use of AI at a company level is the buy-in of senior managers.

Yet, our research suggests that this AI confidence, and competence, is not universal. New data gathered for this study found that our survey respondents felt their

## How ready do you think your company is to take advantage of AI's potential?



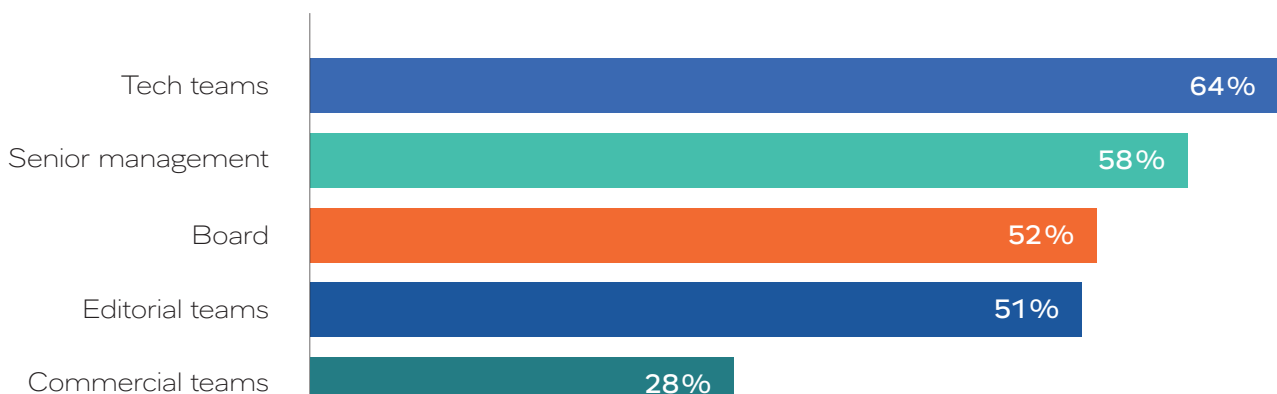
commercial teams were behind others in their organisation when it came to successfully engaging with AI technologies.

This can potentially be attributed to several factors including skill gaps, the integration of AI into sales and other commercial workflows, and cultural resistance. Given this, creating a license to experiment with this technology, showcasing successful commercial AI applications, and integrating AI solutions into workflows can all potentially close this gap.

After all, for AI's impact to be fully felt across an organization, it is incumbent on news publishers to ensure that commercial teams not only catch up with AI adoption, but that they also see it as a tool to drive revenue growth and innovation. This is integral to an organization's overall strategy for digital transformation.

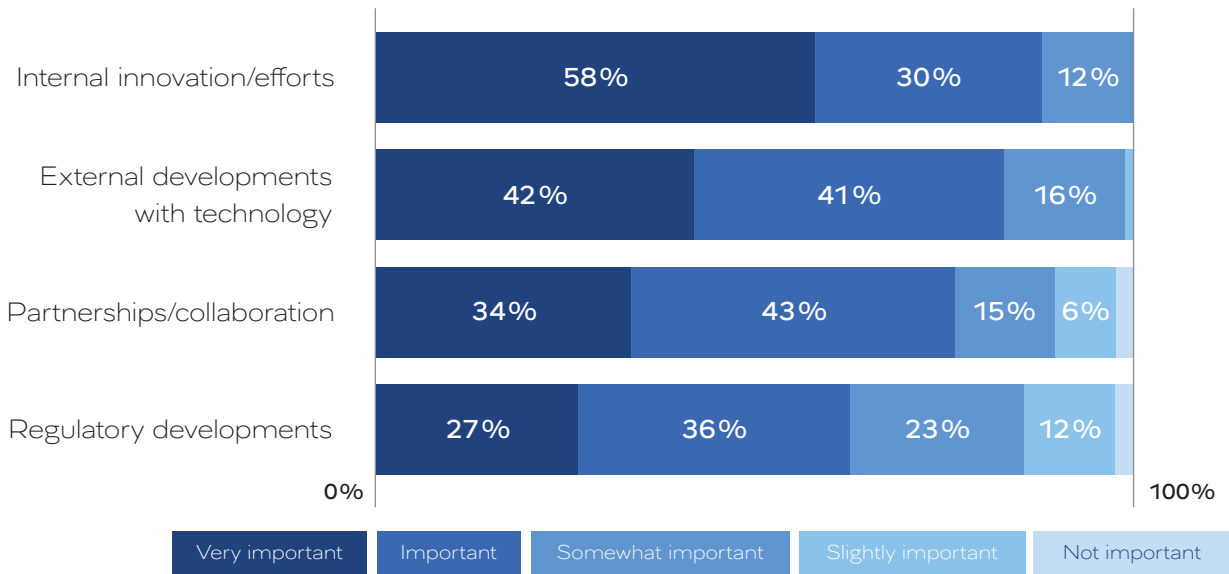
Beyond this, we should acknowledge that much of the news industry has rapidly adopted, experimented, and rolled-out products, workflows and content that is driven by new Generative AI technologies.

## How confident are you that the following groups within your organisation have the competence to ensure effective engagement with AI technologies?



Source: World Press Trends Outlook 2024-2025 survey (July-September 2024)

## How much of your future success with the utilisation of AI depends on:



Source: AI's role with news media survey (May 2024)

At the same time, important questions remain. This includes the potentially cataclysmic effect that Generative AI may have on search-driven traffic, the challenge of creating partnerships with AI companies (especially for smaller publishers) as well as questions around copyright and the need for creators to be compensated for their work.

“AI is a threat, a real threat to journalism,” News Corp CEO [Robert Thomson warns](#).<sup>81</sup> “We are at a particularly early stage of its evolution, and it is an exponentially expedited evolution.”

As a result of this “expedited evolution,” it is evident, given some of the [AI-driven failures](#)<sup>82</sup> we have seen in the past year, that human oversight remains crucial in maintaining journalistic standards. Subsequently, when it comes to using these technologies it’s worth heeding the advice of [Jody Doherty-Cove](#), Head of AI at Newsquest, who [points out](#)<sup>83</sup> that while “experimenting is really fun, publishing is very serious.” “So, make sure that you have safeguards in place,” he advocates.

### Relationship with platforms

In the AI era, the relationship between publishers and platforms continues to be defined by the sense of tension and opportunity that has [long underpinned](#)<sup>84</sup> these dynamics.

While platforms provide invaluable distribution and technological resources, they also hold significant power over content visibility and opportunities for monetisation. For publishers, maintaining their autonomy – and avoiding an overreliance on specific platforms – while simultaneously seeking to benefit from the tools and audiences that these platforms and tech companies provide, is a delicate balancing act.

This technological landscape is also becoming more complex with the emergence of major new players like OpenAI and Anthropic, as well as the new products and AI ambitions of Google, Meta, Microsoft and other long-standing Silicon Valley operators.

Many of the discussions that publishers are having with these newer entrants feels familiar. The Indian news agency [ANI has sued OpenAI](#)<sup>85</sup> for allegedly using its content without permission. Similarly, earlier in the year, eight major metropolitan newspapers in the USA, including The Chicago Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, and The Denver Post, [sued Microsoft and OpenAI](#)<sup>86</sup> for using their articles without permission or payment. The New York Times, which [sued both companies](#)<sup>87</sup> at the end of last year for copyright infringement, also [issued](#)<sup>88</sup> a “cease and desist” notice to the AI startup Perplexity in October of this year.<sup>89</sup>

At the same time, some news outlets have [signed licensing, training and other deals](#)<sup>90</sup> with Generative AI companies. Axel Springer and Microsoft [announced](#)<sup>91</sup> an expanded partnership earlier this year, covering advertising, AI, content and cloud computing, while Hearst’s partnership with ChatGPT will feature “appropriate citations and direct links” in OpenAI’s app. This will provide “transparency and easy access to the original Hearst sources,” a [press release](#)<sup>92</sup> for the deal stated.

In the meantime, Reuters, Axel Springer, Hearst Magazines, USA TODAY Network and Financial Times, were featured content partners for the launch of Copilot Daily a morning voice delivered summary of news and weather, built into [Microsoft’s Co-Pilot product](#).<sup>93</sup>

And major UK-based publishers including the Financial Times, DMG Media, Guardian Media Group and Sky News, were among those to sign a strategic partnership [ProRata.ai](#). The firm is “one of several companies,” The Hollywood Reporter [wrote](#),<sup>94</sup> “that see a business opportunity in finding tech solutions to the scrape-and-steal model of most generative AI systems, which are trained on copyright-protected material but do not compensate the original creators.”

Against this rapidly changing backdrop, we asked our survey respondents about their relationships with platforms, digging deeper than in previous years, by framing this around dealings related to specific types of activity. (We recognize, of course, that many tech giants offer services across this spectrum of products.)

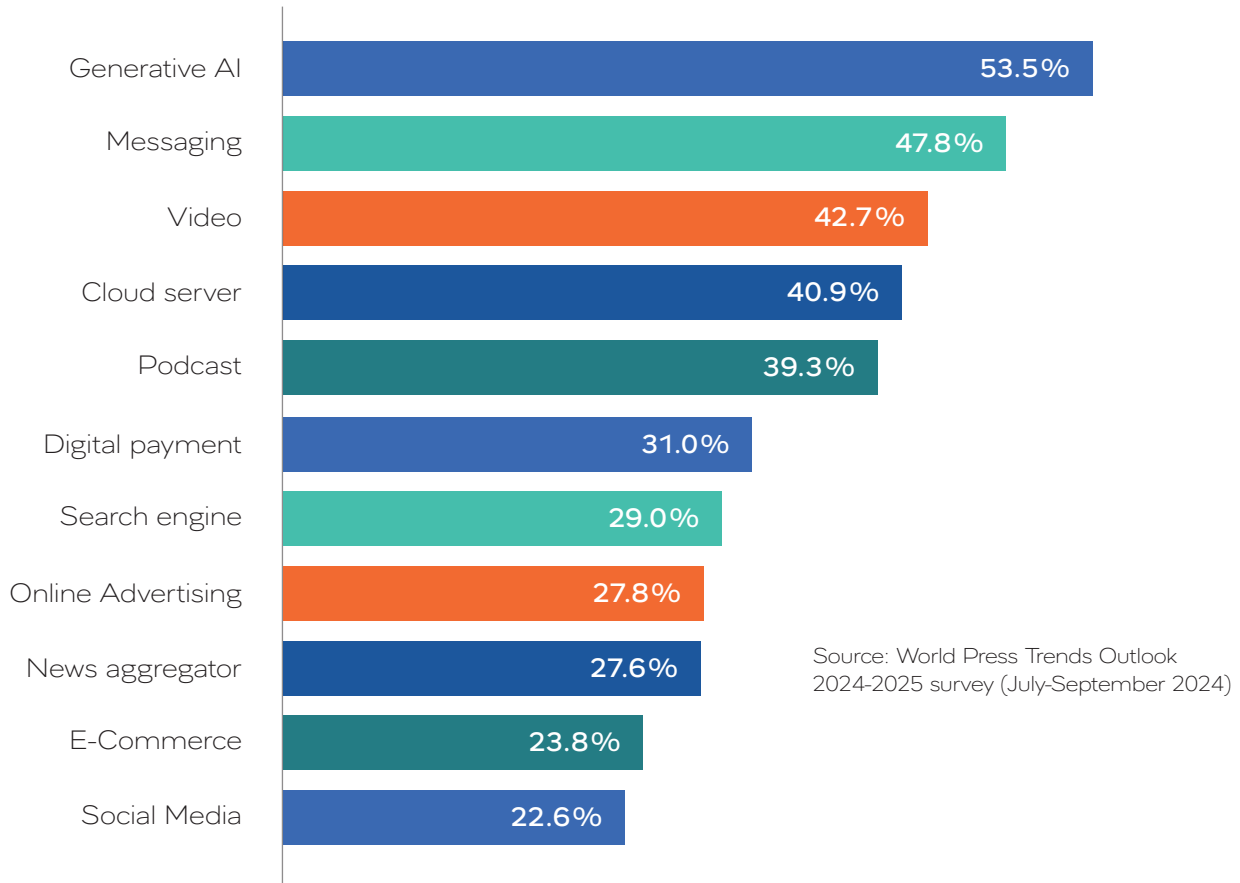
Within this, our sample told us that most significant improvements in their relationships with platforms were seen in the areas of Generative AI (53.5%), Messaging (47.8%), and Video platforms (42.7%). These are all areas of strategic importance for news publishers.

At the other end of the scale, relationships focused on activities such as search (29.0%), online advertising (27.8%), and news aggregators (27.6%) saw lower levels of improvement. This matters given the need to grow online advertising, the [risk of rapid declines in referral traffic](#)<sup>95</sup> due to AI search, and the recent move by Apple to start selling its own advertising inventory within Apple News. Axios [scooped](#)<sup>96</sup> that “beginning next year, Apple will sell premium sponsorships of editorially curated content for relevant events, such as the Met Gala, the U.S. Open, and more.”

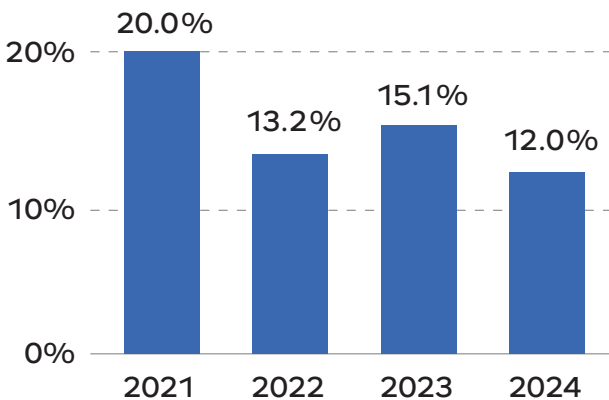


Image featuring examples of OpenAI Partnerships [via](#) Foundation Marketing.

## Have relations with tech platforms gotten better or worse in the past year? (Percentage who report these relations have improved)



## Revenues from partnerships with platforms as percentage of other revenues (other than advertising and circulation)



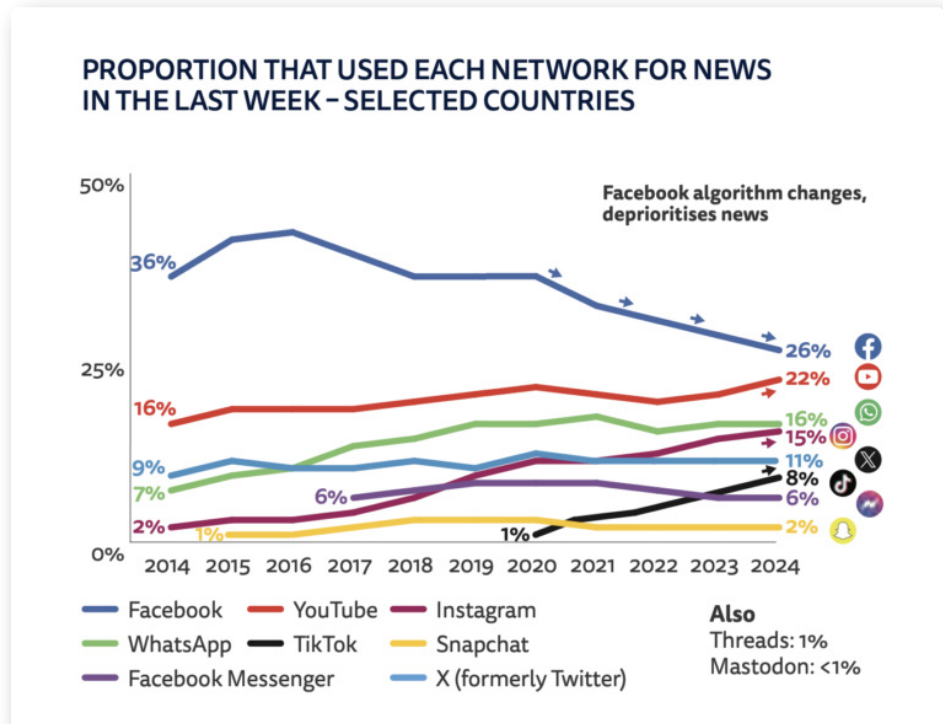
They also shared that the popular news aggregator would also be selling premium sponsorships, including specific Apple News feeds, as “banner placements and video ads across 17 different formats, including carousel ads that feature different products.”

News publishers reported moderate progress in terms of the state of their relationships over the past year in other areas of strategic importance to them. This includes providers focused on cloud servers (40.9%) and podcasting platforms (39.3%), as well as digital payments (31.0%).

We also asked survey respondents about the health of the revenues they enjoy from platforms.

As a percentage, this shows a steady decline over the past four years. In 2021, partnerships contributed 20.0% of revenues in the “Other” category (one which excludes advertising and circulation). This figure may have been artificially boosted by emergency COVID-19 relief funds from the likes of Google and Facebook. That dropped sharply to 13.17% in 2022.

Image [via](#) the 2024 Digital News Report



After a slight recovery, rebounding to 15.1% of other income sources in 2023, revenues from platforms declined again to 12% in 2024, marking the lowest level in this four-year period.

The reasons for this are perhaps well known and include declining referral traffic, particularly from X and Facebook as a result of deprioritising news, as well as [scaling back funding](#)<sup>97</sup> for other forms of more direct journalistic support.

These declining percentages (which may not be the same as declining \$ sums, given growth in overall revenues seen at many publishers) reflect a strategic shift by media organizations. As platform-generated revenues shrink, media companies are increasingly diversifying and prioritizing other direct income sources such as events, e-commerce, licensing, and memberships.

Alongside this, publishers are also reassessing their off-platform strategies as news and media consumption habits continue to change. Channels like YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp are, for example, becoming [increasingly prominent for news](#),<sup>98</sup> leading many publishers to focus more on these spaces as a result.

Collaborations and a growing effort to [engage on platforms like LinkedIn](#)<sup>99</sup> also represent part of the evolving publishers platform strategies, as do the use of tools like

Creative Commons and other partnerships to [encourage content sharing](#).<sup>100</sup>

Substack, long cited as the preferred platform for independent journalists, also continues to grow. Semafor [reported](#)<sup>101</sup> that “Substack has added more than a million paid subscribers over the last year,” noting that “news content continues to account for the company’s largest segment of subscribers.” That said, “the future of that business probably isn’t news,” media editor Max Tani contends. “Instead, the new model Substacker may be more like [Violet Witchel of Violet Cooks](#), a food and recipe influencer.”

As media organizations increasingly focus on building sustainable, direct revenue streams, they will continue to modify their relationship with platforms. This means doubling-down on spaces like [TikTok](#)<sup>102</sup> and YouTube, as well as potentially [moving away from platforms like X](#)<sup>103</sup> due to concerns around misinformation and brand safety.

Such moves are also a response to a recognition that certain platforms no longer drive traffic as they once did. According to Nieman Lab, [citing data](#)<sup>104</sup> from Chartbeat, “social’s share of traffic to the 700 U.S. news sites that are Chartbeat clients has dropped by a third since January 2023, from 6% then of all traffic then to 4% of all traffic now.”

Number of Facebook referrals by publisher size, Jan 2018= 100, 792 news sites

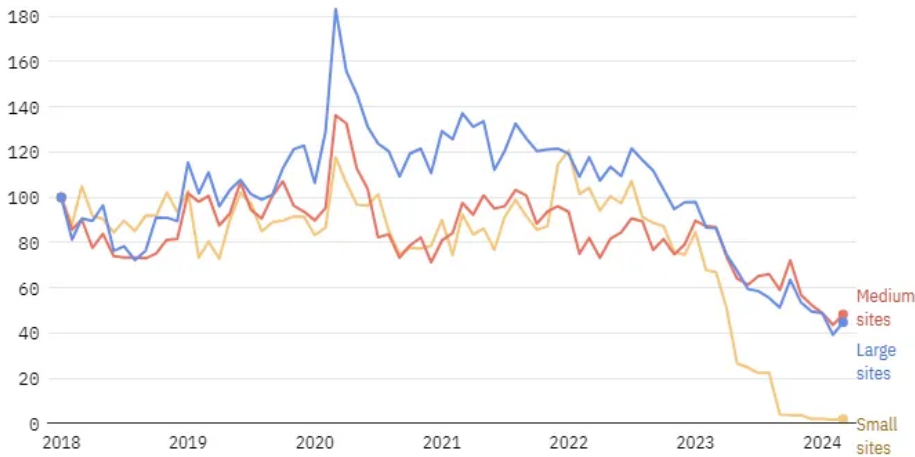


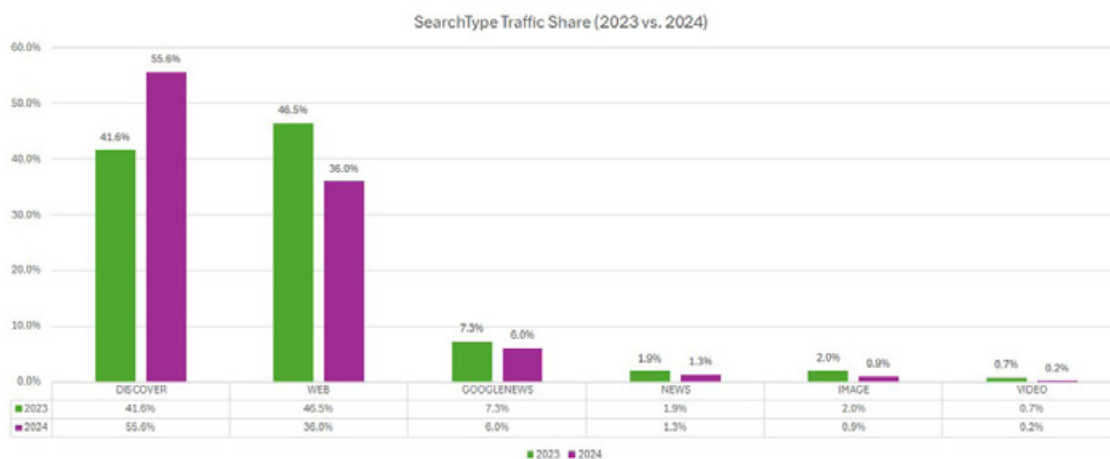
Image [via](#) Social Media Today

Source: Chartbeat

Traffic referrals from some platforms, like those owned by Google, are also going through a readjustment. [NewzDash](#), a News & Editorial SEO tool, has [described](#)<sup>105</sup> how traffic from online search declined from 46.5% of publishers' Google traffic in 2023 to 36% in 2024.

However, in contrast, the share of traffic from Google Discover grew to 55.6% of publishers' total Google traffic in 2024. That's up from 41.6% last year. In the UK, the regional publisher Reach recently [revealed](#)<sup>106</sup> that Google Discover is now their "biggest referrer of traffic".

## Google Search Traffic Distribution for News Publishers (2023 vs. 2024)



**NewzDash.com**

**newzdash**  
Real-Time News SEO

Image [via](#) [John Shehata](#), CEO, Founder of @NewzDash, on X.

These developments serve as a reminder that the publisher-platform relationships remain far from static. “We can choose to see this as yet-another-blown handed to the industry by big tech – or we can see it as an opportunity,” [says](#)<sup>107</sup> [Julia Beizer](#) the Chief Operating Officer of Bloomberg Media.

Publishers have learned from past experience not to rely too heavily on specific platforms, and that they need to innovate and diversify their business and revenue models. Fortunately, our research suggests that many news outlets are doing just that.

# Media and Press Freedom

**In our final chapter we examine the state of media and press freedom around the world, and highlight some of the key issues to emerge over the past year.**

Press freedom continues to face mounting challenges. This takes a myriad of different forms, a finding reinforced by the insights shared with us by our survey respondents.

## Attacks on many fronts

More than half of participants (52%) indicated that their organization, or people within it, had been subjected to online harassment. A similar number (51%) shared that they had been recipients of cyber-attacks.

In September, [Agence France-Presse](#) (AFP), one of the world's leading news agencies, fell victim to a significant cyberattack. In a [statement](#)<sup>108</sup> they commented that this affected “part of its delivery service to clients,” and that “it is not yet known who carried out this attack or why.” The company worked with the French National Agency for IT Systems Security (ANSSI) to help restore operations.

Earlier in the year, Poland's state news agency PAP was also [hit by a cyberattack](#),<sup>109</sup> which government ministers suggested might have been led by Russia. As part of this attack, hackers [published a false story](#)<sup>110</sup> on the PAP newswire stating that the country was mobilizing 200,000 men to fight in the war in Ukraine. On X, Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk commented on the timing of the attack by [saying](#)<sup>111</sup> that this represented “another very dangerous hacker attack which well illustrates Russia's destabilization strategy on the eve of the European elections.”

In terms of harassment, both online and in person, the [Coalition For Women In Journalism](#) has highlighted examples of the challenges that journalists can face. Commenting on the experience of [Lola Del Carril](#), an Argentine journalist for ESPN and others, they [shared](#)<sup>112</sup> how “the reporter has been subjected to a vicious [online harassment](#)<sup>113</sup> campaign for her work.”

Pointing to a “toxic online environment,” they stress how targeted attacks and cyberbullying against women in sports media “undermines the professionalism and credibility of these journalists, creates barriers to their success, and contributes to a hostile work environment.”

Our survey numbers – in terms of the level of online harassment and cyber-attacks experienced by media outlets – were similar to last year. In 2023, 56% of our survey



In a post to [Instagram](#), Del Carril wrote how “I swear it really distresses me to come and report for four hours straight and come out and only receive shit.” Image [via](#) La Nacion.

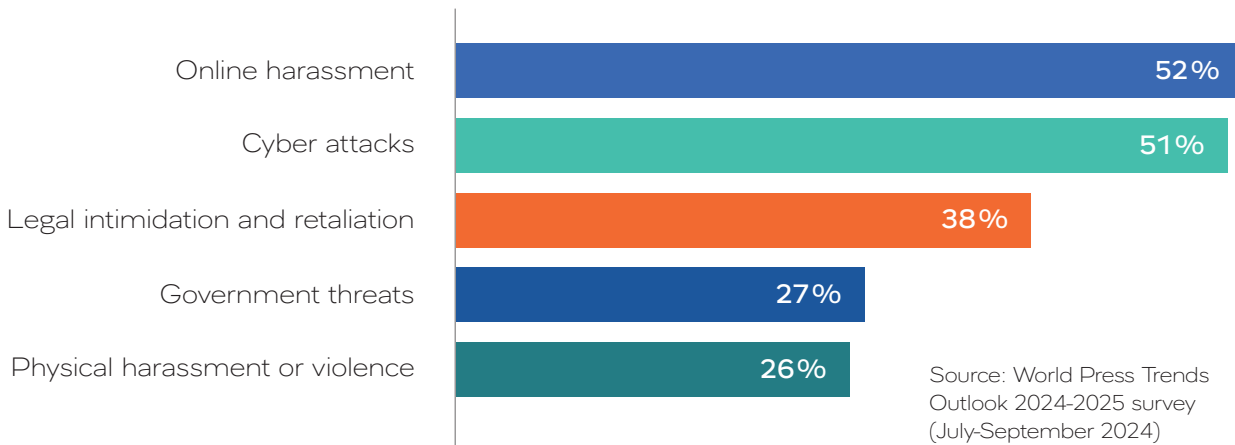
respondents told us that staff within their company had endured online harassment (vs. 52% this year). Similarly, just under half of participants (47%) last year pointed to cyber-attacks on their outlet (compared to 51% from our latest survey).

However, in other areas, we saw some shifts. Our sample in 2024 indicated that they were less likely to be impacted by legal intimidations in the past year (38% in 2024 vs. 44% in 2023).

They also indicated that physical harassment and violence was on the rise. Among our 2023 sample just 10% said that this has been something witnessed at their company in the previous 12 months. For our 2024 respondents, that figure had jumped to 26%.

Reasons for this increase may include growing political polarisation, continued anti-media rhetoric by politicians (potentially emboldening attacks by the public and by others), increased coverage – in a major election year – of protests, political rallies and events with a heightened risk of physical confrontation. We have also witnessed increased physical violence in some markets from law enforcement, resulting in physical attacks, detentions, and arrests of journalists.

## Has your organisation or its staff experienced any of the following forms of threat to your press freedoms in the past year?



In the USA, for example, [data](#)<sup>114</sup> from a survey conducted by the [International Women’s Media Foundation](#) (IWMF) found that 37.7% of respondents reported being threatened with, or had experienced, physical violence while working as a journalist.<sup>115</sup> By the end of November 2024, the Freedom of the Press Foundation had [recorded 77 assaults](#)<sup>116</sup> on journalists in the USA this year.

Multiple journalists [covering protests in the country of Georgia](#) this spring [reported](#)<sup>117</sup> that they were attacked by the police. In many cases equipment was damaged and injuries were sustained, part of a pattern of recent attacks in the country in [recent years](#).<sup>118</sup>

On occasion, journalists endure multiple threats. PEN America [points](#)<sup>119</sup> to how staff at [The Haitian Times](#), which is based in Brooklyn (New York) and covers the Haitian diaspora, were doxxed after debunking anti-immigrant conspiracy theories related to Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio. Later, the paper’s editor [found](#)<sup>120</sup> police outside their home following false reports that a murder had taken place at their address. As researchers writing in [The Conversation](#) [noted](#),<sup>121</sup> this type of practice is known as “swatting.” They describe this as “an intimidation tactic that [involves](#) calling the police or SWAT team to a private residence under false pretenses, often in retaliation for speech, and it has resulted in [several deaths](#).”

“We strongly condemn the intimidation of the staff of the Haitian Times,” PEN America said in a statement. “Swatting, which combines the threat of physical harm

with online abuse, is a severe intimidation tactic and must be understood as a direct and deliberate threat to press freedom.

Commenting on the same case, and sharing principles applicable to journalists and journalism worldwide, [Viktorya Vilks](#), digital safety director at PEN America, argued that “if journalists are unable to cover politics without fear of physical reprisal, their absence will create a void in which mis- and disinformation thrive – a threat that is magnified during a contentious election season.”

Interestingly, the level of threats from Government remains similar (27% in 2024 vs 24% in 2023), our survey respondent told us, although some organisations have seen different trendlines. Reporters Without Borders (RSF), for example, [recounted](#)<sup>122</sup> earlier this year that “press freedom around the world is being threatened by the very people who should be its guarantors – political authorities.”

Commenting on this during the publication of the [2024 World Press Freedom report](#), RSF Editorial Director [Anne Bocandé](#) cautioned that “states and other political forces are playing a decreasing role in protecting press freedom.

They went on to explain that “this disempowerment sometimes goes hand in hand with more hostile actions that undermine the role of journalists, or even instrumentalise the media through campaigns of harassment or disinformation.” “Journalism worthy of that name is,

on the contrary, a necessary condition for any democratic system and the exercise of political freedoms,” they added.

## The global picture

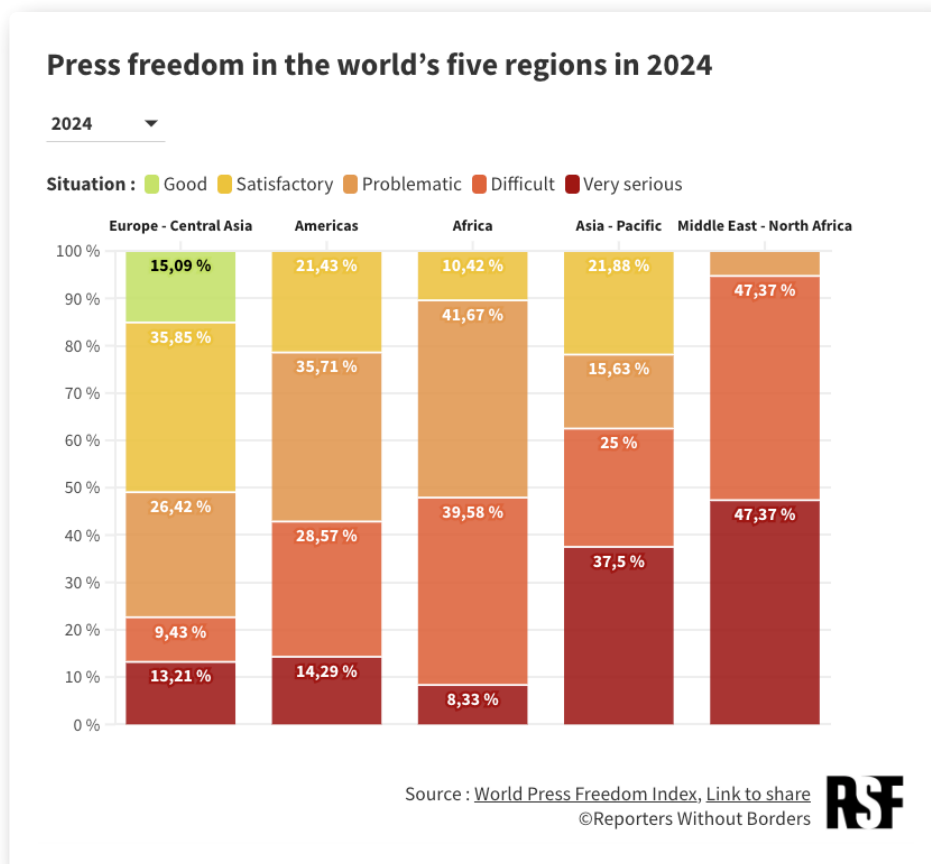
RSF’s report points to a declining level of media freedom in much of the world, reinforcing many of our own findings. The study found that the percentage of countries with “satisfactory” press conditions had decreased from 36% in 2023 to 21% in 2024.

In the United States, commentators reflected on how the country had slid down RSF’s rankings in recent years. “Once considered a bastion for free expression, the U.S. is now on par with developing countries that have few resources or protections dedicated to journalism, including Belize, Ivory Coast and Ghana,” Axios [observed](#).<sup>123</sup> The USA has witnessed a discernible decline in press freedom, driven by economic pressures and political polarization. It is now placed in 55<sup>th</sup> place in RSF’s latest press freedom index.

More than a third (38%) of our sample indicated that they had seen legal attacks and intimidation in the past year, and globally, legal frameworks continue to be used as a means to suppress media freedom.

The Public Media Alliance [warned](#)<sup>124</sup> about how laws introduced in Pakistan to curb “disinformation”, “cyber-crimes” and “spying”, could be used “to harass journalists and impose censorship.” The country also [shut down X](#)<sup>125</sup> for [nearly 9 months](#),<sup>126</sup> on the basis of national security concerns at the time of February’s [election](#). Alongside this, Al Jazeera [reported](#)<sup>127</sup> that journalists in the country had also been not to cover PTI, the party of the imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

These tactics are not unique to Pakistan, as laws around the world are used to stifle the work of journalists and reduce opportunities for public discourse. As part of this, social networks may be shut down (X was also [shut down in Brazil](#)<sup>128</sup> for a [period of time](#)<sup>129</sup>) or throttled,



and pressure is put on journalists about what they can, and cannot, report. That pressure might include reduced access to sources and events, as well as more physical and online intimidations.

Concerns around media capture also abound. A new report on media in Greece [underscores](#)<sup>130</sup> the lack of media plurality in the country. The [Greek media landscape](#) is characterized by what the International Press Institute (IPI) and the Media and Journalism Research Center (MJRC) describe as “a high concentration of media in the hands of wealthy families with close political ties, particularly the New Democracy party.”

Underpinning the media freedom landscape is sobering data about the very real risks that many journalists face while doing their job. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [identified](#) 98 journalists killed in 2024. Many of these have been in the Middle East, covering the war in Gaza. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) notes that nearly 162 journalists [have lost their lives](#)<sup>131</sup> there since the beginning of the conflict in October 2023, including 148 Palestinian journalists and media workers.

## Looking ahead

As we cast our eye to the New Year, many of the troubling issues which have negatively impacted media and press freedom in 2024 look set to continue. The media landscape remains rife with threats against journalists, deployment of regulatory and legal actions to constrain reporting and [research](#),<sup>132</sup> as well as wider impacts driven by disinformation campaigns, distrust in media, and ongoing economic and technological pressures. All of these elements impact the free flow of information and the ability of journalists to do their job without impunity.

In response, there are a number of things that can be done. Here are three of them.

### 1. Funding

Sweden is just one country that has increased its financial support for organisations working to protect journalists and human rights. In doing so, they have called on others to do the same.

## 98 Journalists Killed

in 2024 / Motive Confirmed



On World Press Freedom Day 2024, the Swedish Government issued a [statement](#)<sup>133</sup> noting that “today, 71% of the world’s population lives in autocracies... Ten years ago, the corresponding figure was 48%.”

They drew a direct line between this and issues related to freedom of expression, arguing that “the threat to free and independent media is greater today than ten years ago.” Yet, “support to the media sector has fallen globally and currently accounts for only 0.5% of global aid.”

“This is not sustainable,” they contended, going on to say, “we all have a choice between just watching a development where free speech is increasingly restricted, or doing what we can to protect it.”

## 2. Public engagement

The media, civil society and other actors must continue to stress why journalism matters and its impact if independent journalism disappears or its ability to operate freely is reduced.

To help emphasize this, South Africa’s [Daily Maverick](#) intentionally [shut down for a day](#)<sup>134</sup> this spring, in a bid to highlight the news and information crisis being felt around the world. In doing this, they followed a model that [other outlets have also followed](#)<sup>135</sup> over the years.

Other media channels, like [Forbidden Stories](#), a Paris-based NGO which was founded in 2017, have specifically been set-up to keep stories alive after the journalists covering them have been silenced.

As they [explain](#):<sup>136</sup> “It is vital for our democracies that a counterbalancing force like the press can investigate and expose environmental crimes, corruption, surveillance, organized crime, disinformation, and human rights violations.” “Killing the journalist won’t kill the story,” they add.

These types of campaigns and actions can help to build broader support for press freedom, encouraging communities – including politicians and other public figures – to stand up for journalists’ rights and stress the importance of a free press.

As the NGO [Human Rights First](#) has [suggested](#),<sup>137</sup> “coordinated efforts... are essential for ensuring the safety of journalists and preserving human rights globally. More communities should join in this call to action, for the



Image [via](#) WAN-IFRA

integrity of our democracies, the safety of our journalists, and the preservation of human rights.” “The time to defend our freedoms is now,” they assert.

## 3. Training and support

Media outlets, advocates and funders also need to do more to recognise, and respond, to attacks on journalists.

CPJ, for example, points to the “disturbing rise in online harassment, especially against women, journalists of color, LGBTQ+ reporters, and journalists who belong to religious or ethnic minorities.” They also identify how local journalists can be especially vulnerable to attacks. “Local journalists often lack the safety training and resources found in large national media outlets,” they [comment](#),<sup>138</sup> “rendering them more vulnerable to retaliation at the hands of those disgruntled with their reporting.”



Image [via](#) European Press Prize



Free Press Unlimited, together with five other press freedom organisations, [called](#) for the immediate release of journalists and media workers imprisoned in Venezuela

Countering this through safety training, including online safety and access to protective equipment and digital tools, as well as more mechanisms for legal support such as endorsing anti-SLAPP legislation, can all play a role in helping to protect all journalists from legal, physical and online intimidation.

One such initiative, the [European Anti-SLAPP Conference](#), [recently](#)<sup>139</sup> brought together 30 speakers and over 250 participants from 25 countries, with the goal of countering SLAPPs and protecting individuals engaged in public participation from unfounded claims and abusive legal proceedings.

Advocacy efforts like this are essential in pushing back against the plethora of methods, such as SLAPPs, that are being used to stifle media freedom.

Activism efforts can further include calling for the release of incarcerated journalists, supporting reporters operating in exile, offering emergency assistance to journalists under threat, including relocation, financial aid, and psychological support, lobbying against laws and regulations which may limit a free press, as well as creating pressure [by shining a spotlight](#)<sup>140</sup> on infringements of press freedom.

To safeguard press freedom, and to push for stronger media protections, stakeholders should also encourage governments to repeal laws that can criminalise journalistic work and put sources at risk. At the same time it is also incumbent on them to ensure that protections against harassment and violence directed towards journalists remain fit for purpose and are being upheld.

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Preserving and strengthening media freedom is an ongoing struggle. As the threats facing journalists evolve and grow, so too must the strategies to counter them.

This requires the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders, including governments, media outlets, NGOs, funders, and the broader public. These efforts are not just about protecting journalists, they are also about protecting the public's right to accurate, trustworthy, information, and ensuring that truth and accountability prevails over threats, intimidation and censorship.

We all have a responsibility to nurture and fight for media freedom, as well as work to sustain and maintain it. We will continue to have our work cut out to make progress, but the stakes are too high for journalists and communities, if current trend lines continue. We hope in future iterations of this report to have more positive stories and progress to share with you.

# About the Contributors



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**Teemu Henriksson** is Research Editor at WAN-IFRA, contributing to the association's research activities about news publishing industry trends, particularly World Press Trends. He manages much of WAN-IFRA's community-based market surveys and analysis. He also coordinates coverage and provides content and research for WAN-IFRA's Table Stakes Europe initiative.



**Dean Roper** is Director of Insights and Editor-in-Chief of WAN-IFRA. He is responsible for coordinating all activities related to the organisation's array of content and research. He has more than 30 years' experience working in the news publishing industry, much of that time spent researching, analysing, identifying and ultimately reporting about global news media developments.

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