

Top Line Findings



George Washington University and Cision
2009 Social Media & Online Usage Study

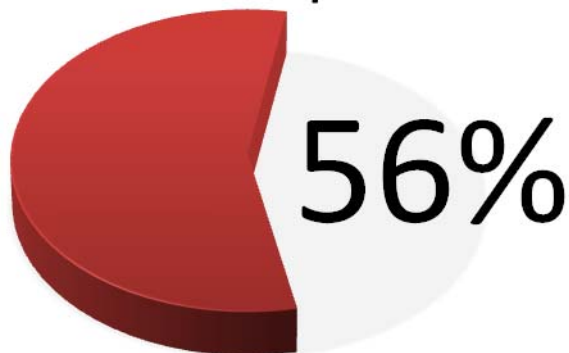
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cision and Don Bates of George Washington University conducted an online survey of Print and Web journalists from September 1, 2009, to October 13, 2009, to measure use of, and attitudes toward, social media for researching and reporting stories. Social media is defined as blogs, social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, microblogging sites such as Twitter, photo/video sharing sites such as YouTube and Flickr, and review sites or web discussion forums such as eopinions.com. Results are based on 371 responses.

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPORTANCE & USAGE

- ▶ Most journalists – 56% – said social media was *important* or *somewhat important* for reporting and producing the stories they wrote.

Social Media Importance

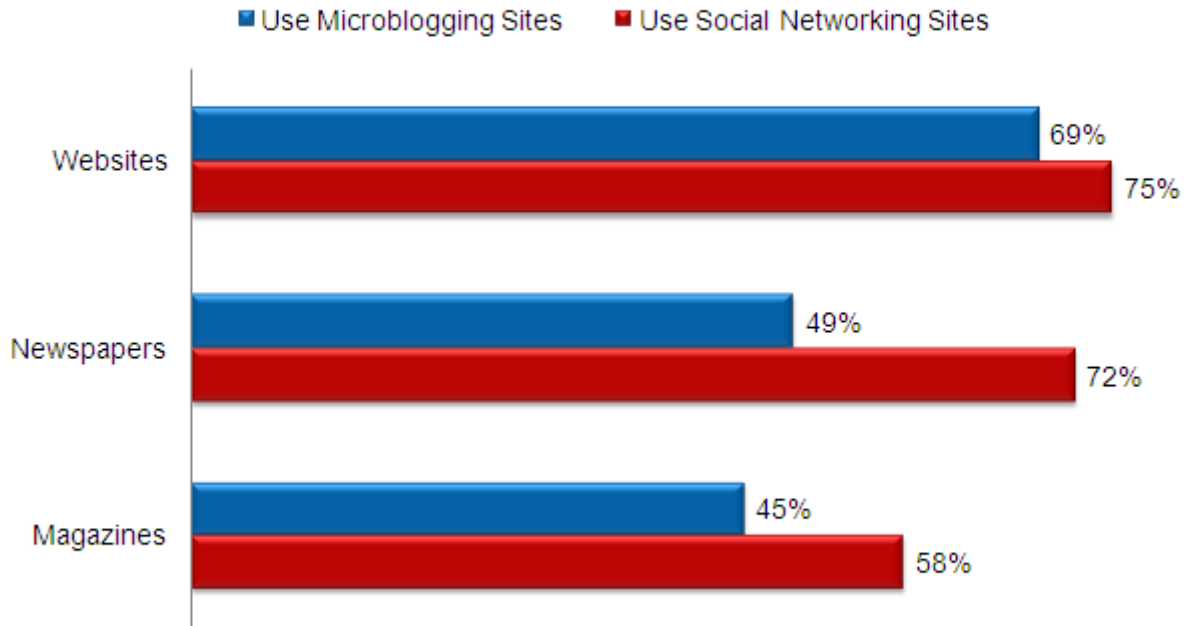


Journalists who spend most of their professional time writing for Websites (69%) reported this the most often, and significantly more so than those at Magazines (48%).

- ▶ Almost nine out of ten journalists reported using *Blogs* for their online research (89%). Only *Corporate websites* (96%) is used by more journalists when doing online research for a story.
- ▶ Approximately two-thirds reported using *Social Networking sites* and just over half make use of *Twitter* for online research.

Newspaper journalists (72%) and those writing for Websites (75%) use *Social Networking sites* such as LinkedIn and Facebook for online research significantly more often than those at Magazines (58%).

Social Media Usage



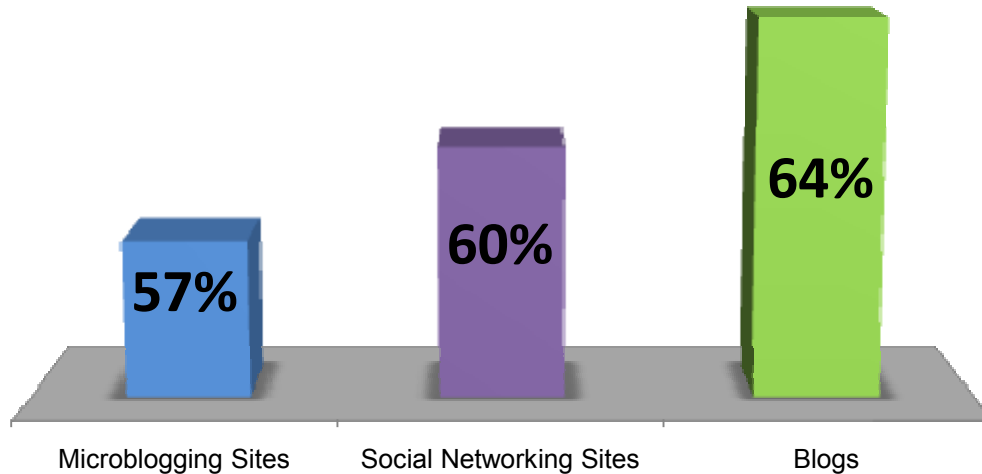
Those writing for Websites use *Microblogging sites* such as Twitter “all the time,” significantly more (21%) than do those in Print (Newspapers and Magazines – 11% each).

- ▶ Corporate websites, press releases and especially PR professionals remain consistently used resources for journalists when writing or producing stories.

The least experienced journalists use information from press releases and PR professionals *more now than five years ago* to write their stories, and more so than their more experienced counterparts.

- ▶ *Blogs* (64%) are the most frequently used social media tool to publish, promote and distribute what journalists write, followed closely by *Social Networking sites* such as *LinkedIn, Facebook* (60%) and *Microblogging sites* such as *Twitter* (57%).

Social Media Tools Used



- ▶ Three-quarters of those responding take the *number of website visitors* (76%) and *number of comments or views* (74%) into account when measuring the impact of their stories. *Number of Twitter followers* and *number of inbound links* are the next most-used metrics (43% each).

Experience makes a difference: Those with less experience consistently utilize online and social media metrics to measure the impact of their stores more often than do those with more experience.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

- ▶ Most journalists responding (84%) said news and information delivered via social media was *slightly less* or *much less reliable/vetted* than news delivered via traditional media.
- ▶ No journalists responding said that news and information delivered via social media is *a lot more reliable* than news delivered via traditional media. Approximately one out of seven said it was either *about the same* or *slightly more reliable*.

Significantly more journalists with the most experience classified news from social media as *less reliable* (88%) compared to those with the least experience (78%).

Journalists from Print media most often found news from social media to be *less reliable* (Newspapers – 91%, Magazines – 85%) compared to journalists at Websites (76%).

- ▶ *Lack of fact-checking, verification or reporting standards* is the number one reason (49%) for journalists' perceptions on the reliability of news and information from social media sources.

Additionally, one-quarter overall cited a source-related mention. *Sourcing* was the one reason given by at least one-fifth of journalists across all perceptions of reliability as it is the one constant that all journalists recognize. Journalists with least experience cited *Sourcing* more often (32%) than did their more experienced counterparts as the reason behind their perceptions of the reliability of information gained from social media.

BENEFITS OF PR PROFESSIONALS VS. SOCIAL MEDIA/WEB SEARCHES

- ▶ Getting an *interview/ access to sources/ experts* (44%) and *targeted information/ answers to questions* (23%) are the top services that PR professionals offer journalists that a web search or social media cannot.
- ▶ Journalists also appreciate the *perspective - information in context, background information* (17%) – that a PR professional can offer.

OTHER

- ▶ *Google* is the top search engine for online research with all responding journalists using this tool. *Wikipedia* is second, used by approximately six out of ten.

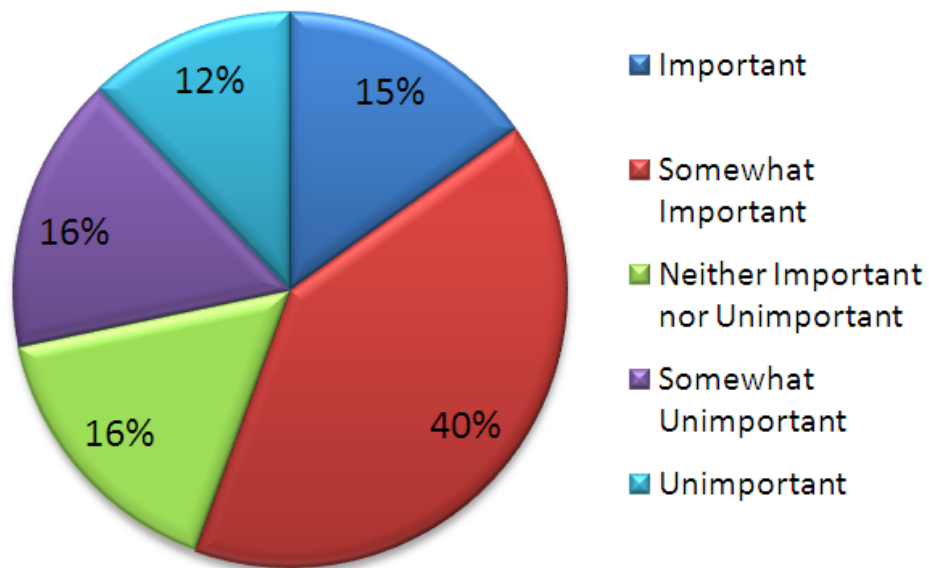
RESEARCH FINDINGS
SOCIAL MEDIA IMPORTANCE

Q1. How important have social media become for reporting and producing the stories you write?
(Based on 371 responses – Answers may not sum to 100% due to rounding.)

Most journalists – 56% – said that social media were *important* or *somewhat important* for reporting and producing the stories they wrote.

Important	15%
Somewhat Important	40%
Neither Important nor Unimportant	16%
Somewhat Unimportant	16%
Unimportant	12%

Social Media Importance



- ▶ The groups placing the highest levels of importance on social media for reporting and producing stories were journalists who spend most of their professional time writing for Websites (69%). Those at Newspapers (59%) and Magazines (48%) reported this less often. This last difference between Magazine journalists and Website journalists is statistically significant.

- ▶ Little variation in this perception is seen across the various experience categories; less than eight percentage points separate the lesser experienced journalists from those with the most experience.

PUBLISHING STORIES

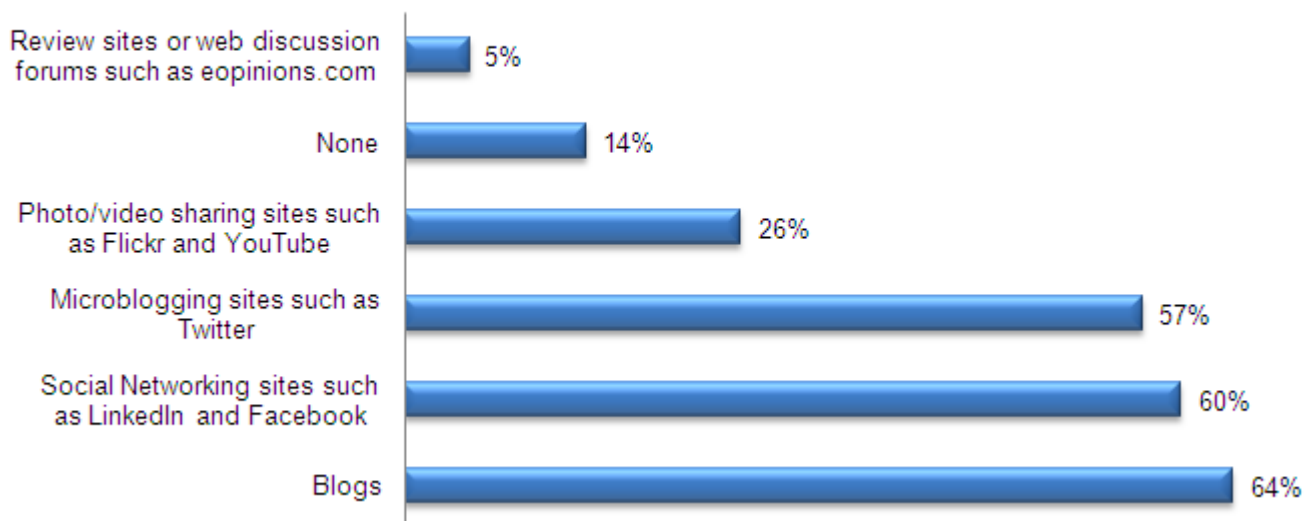
Q2. What social media tools are you using to publish, promote and distribute what you write?

(Multiple responses – Based on 371 responses.)

Blogs are the most frequently used social media tool to publish, promote and distribute what journalists write, followed closely by Social Networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook) and Microblogging sites (Twitter).

Blogs	64%
Social Networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook	60%
Microblogging sites such as Twitter	57%
Photo/Video sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube	26%
None	14%
Review sites or web discussion forums such as eopinions.com	5%

Social Media Tools Used



- ▶ *Social Networking sites* are especially utilized by those who spend most of their professional time writing for Websites (73%), significantly more so than those at Magazines (61%) or Newspapers (49%).

- ▶ *Microblogging sites such as Twitter* are most highly used by those at Websites (74%) and Magazines (57%). Newspaper journalists are most likely to report using *No* social media tools (21%). Even Magazine journalists (57%) utilize *Microblogging sites* significantly more often than do those at Newspapers (43%) when publishing what they write.
- ▶ There is little difference between journalists with less experience (9 or fewer years, 10-19 years) and those with more experience (20 or more years) when it comes to utilizing *Blogs* (less than 2 percentage points separates these groups) or *Social Networking sites* (less than 8 percentage points) but the difference for *Microblogging sites* is significant (9 or fewer years – 63%; 10-19 years – 67%; compared with only 48% for those working 20 or more years.)

MEASURING STORY IMPACT

Q3. Do you take into account any of these metrics when measuring the impact of your stories published on the Internet/Social Media sites?

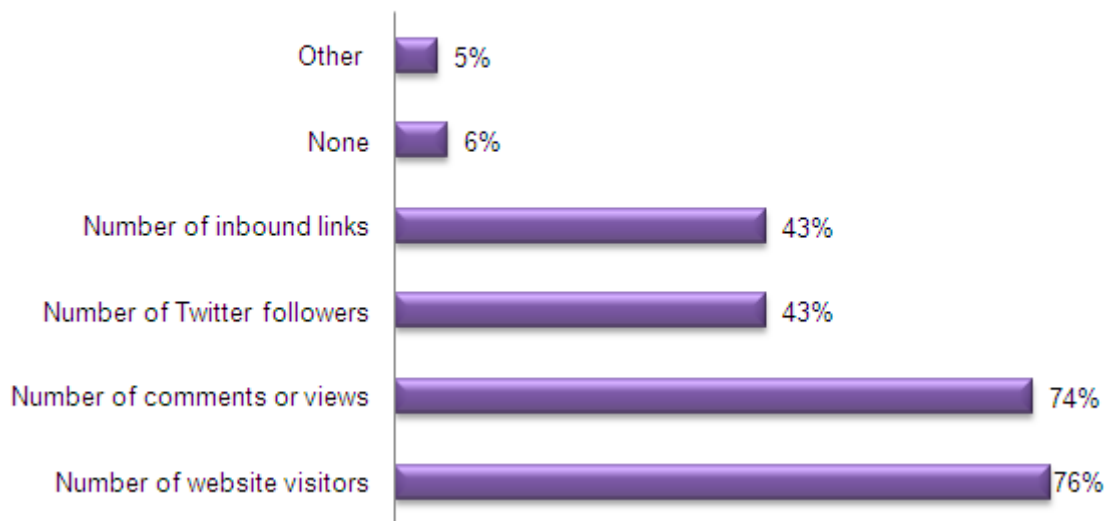
(Multiple responses – Based on 310 responses.)

Three-quarters of those responding take the *number of website visitors* and *number of comments or views* into account when measuring the impact of their stories. *Number of Twitter followers* and *number of inbound links* are the next most-used metrics.

Experience does make a difference – those with less experience consistently utilized online and social media metrics to measure impact more often than do those with more experience.

Number of website visitors	76%
Number of comments or views	74%
Number of Twitter followers	43%
Number of inbound links	43%
None	6%
Other	5%

Measuring Story Impact



- ▶ More journalists writing for Websites took into account more of these metrics when measuring the impact of their stories compared to journalists at Print media.

- ▶ Significant differences exist between the two groups of Print journalists where more Magazine journalists than Newspaper journalists take the *number of website visitors* (79% vs. 58%) and *number of inbound links* (42% vs. 25%) into account when measuring the impact of their stories.
- ▶ Overall, journalists with the least experience (9 or fewer years) take into account all four of the metrics tested more often than their more experienced counterparts (10-19 years, 20+ years) when measuring the impact of their stories. This difference is significant for *number of website visitors* (86% vs. 72% and 73%, respectively). *Number of Twitter followers* is almost equally utilized by those with 9 or fewer years of experience (51%) and 10-19 years of experience (50%), both significantly more than those with 20 or more years of experience (34%).

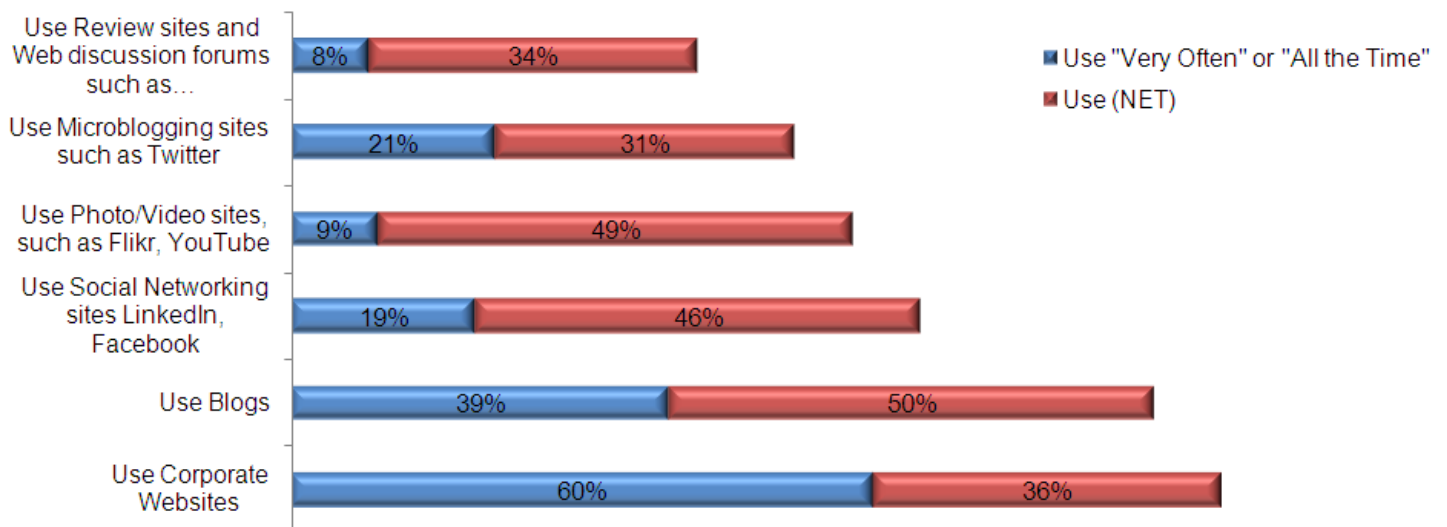
RESEARCHING ONLINE FOR STORIES

Q4. How often do you visit the following types of sites when doing online research for a story?
(Multiple responses – Based on 371 responses.)

While the traditional resource of *Corporate websites* (96%) is used by the vast majority of journalists when researching a story online, almost nine out of ten reported using *Blogs* for their online research (89%). Approximately two-thirds use *Social Networking sites* and just over half make use of *Twitter*.

Experience is less of a factor than type of media when doing online research for a story.

	Use (NET)	Use “Very Often” or “All the Time”	Use “Very Often” or “All the Time” by Media Type
Use Corporate websites	96%	60%	Magazine – 68%
Use Blogs	89%	39%	Website – 56%
Use Social Networking sites such as LinkedIn, FaceBook	65%	19%	Website – 28% Newspaper – 27%
Use Photo/Video sharing sites such as Flickr, YouTube	58%	9%	Website – 13%
Use Microblogging sites such as Twitter	52%	21%	Website – 31%
Use Review sites and Web discussion forums such as eopinions.com, Ripoffreport.com	42%	8%	Website – 13%



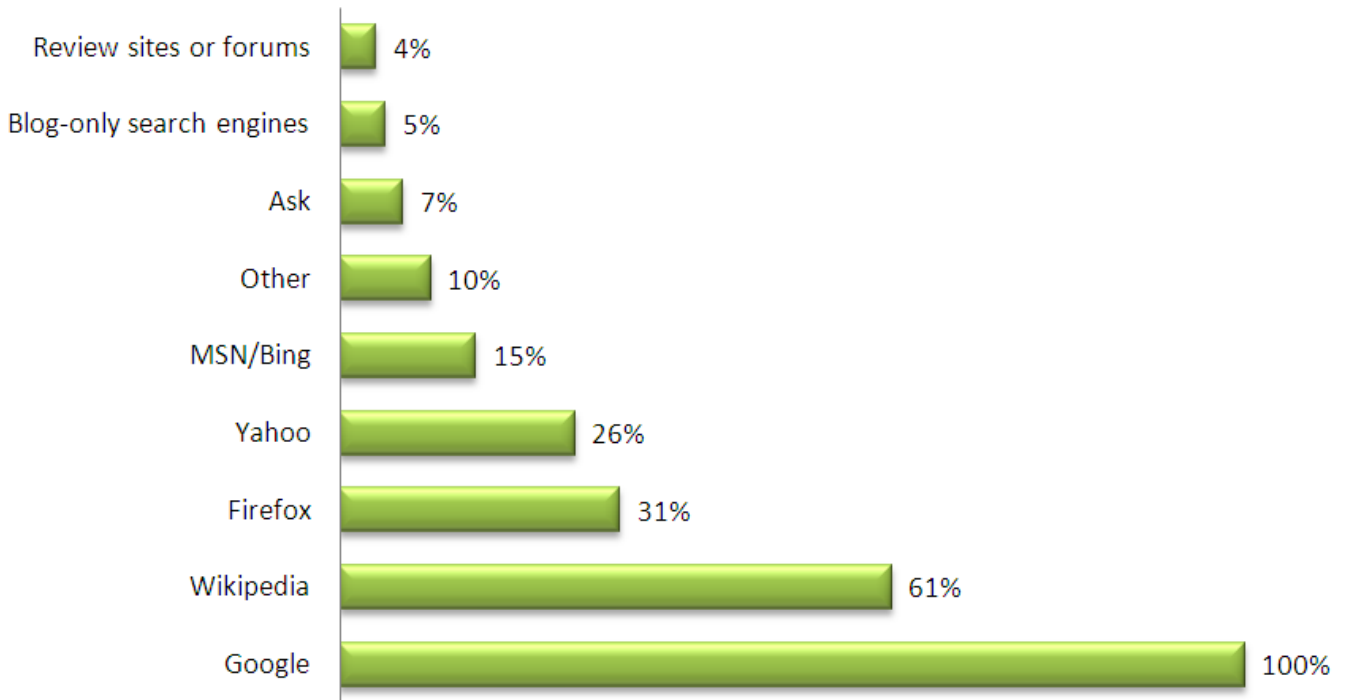
- ▶ Across the six online research methods examined, those writing for Websites were the “heavier” users (use a resource “Very often – more than once a week,” or “All the time – once a day or more”) in five of the six methods. The one exception is *Corporate websites* where journalists from Magazines are the heaviest users (68%).
- ▶ *Social Networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook* are the research tool of choice for those at Websites (75%) and, surprisingly, Newspapers (72%). These two groups use this research tool significantly more often than do those at Magazines (58%). However, most of that usage is less frequent – 1-2 times a month.
- ▶ *Photo/Video sharing sites such as Flickr and YouTube* are used by over half of journalists interviewed overall (58%), but most of this usage is less frequent, 1-2 times a month.
- ▶ Twenty-one percent of those writing for a Website reported using *Microblogging sites* “All the time,” which is significantly more than the 11 percent each for Print journalists at Newspapers and Magazines. Over half for each type of Print media said they *never* use these sites for online research.
- ▶ *Review sites and web discussion forums such as eopinions.com and Ripoffreport.com* are the least-used online research resource for the journalists interviewed – less than half overall (42%) say they use this resource. Most of this usage comes in the less frequent, 1-2 times a month category across all media types.

Q5. Which search engines/sites do you use when doing online research for a story?

(Multiple responses – Based on 370 responses.)

Google is the top search engine for online research with all responding journalists using this tool. Wikipedia is second but still used by six out of ten.

Google	100%
Wikipedia	61%
Firefox	31%
Yahoo	26%
MSN/Bing	15%
Ask	7%
Blog-only search engines such as Technorati, IceRocket	5%
Review sites or web discussion forums such as eopinons.com, Ripoffreport.com	4%
Other	10%



- ▶ Significantly more journalists with 20 or more years of experience reported using *Yahoo* (32%) compared to their counterparts with the least experience (9 or fewer years – 19%).
- ▶ *Firefox* is used by journalists at Newspapers (39%) more so than those at Magazines (30%) or Websites (27%).
- ▶ *MSN/Bing* is the choice of journalists at Websites (24%) and less often for Newspaper (11%) or Magazine (14%) journalists.

RELIABILITY OF NEWS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Q6. Do you think that news and information delivered via social media is more or less reliable/vetted than news delivered via traditional media?

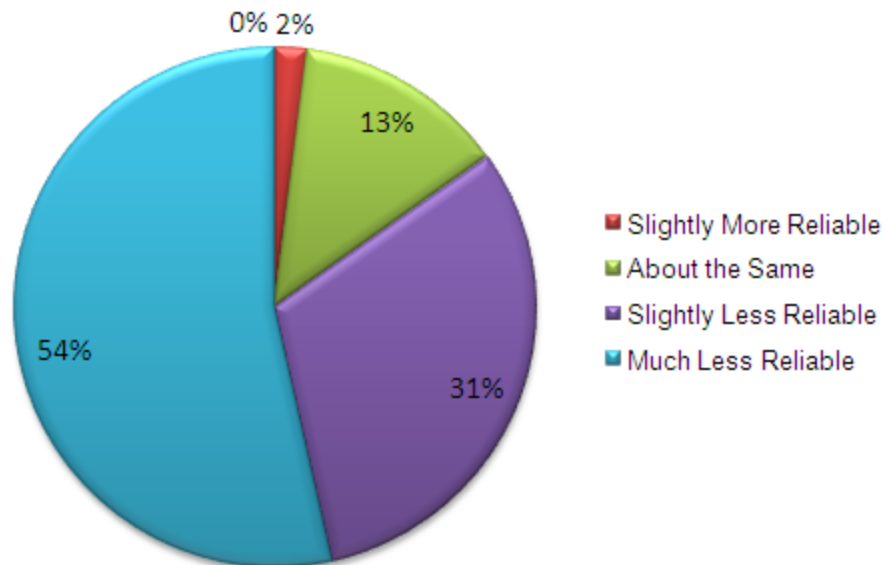
(Based on 365 responses.)

Most journalists interviewed (84%) said news and information delivered via social media was *slightly less or much less reliable/vetted* than news delivered via traditional media. No journalists responding said that news and information delivered via social media is *a lot more reliable* than news delivered via traditional media. In aggregate, approximately one out of seven said it was either *about the same or slightly more reliable*.

Experience level and to some extent media type factored into perceptions of the reliability of news and information delivered via social media.

A Lot More Reliable	—
Slightly More Reliable	2%
About the Same	13%
Slightly Less Reliable	31%
Much Less Reliable	53%

Reliability of Social Media News



- ▶ Significantly more journalists with the most experience classified news from social media as *less reliable* (88%) compared to those with the least experience (78%).
- ▶ Journalists from Print media most often found news from social media to be *less reliable* (Newspapers – 91%; Magazines – 85%) compared to those writing for Websites (76%).
- ▶ More journalists writing for Websites (21%) said the reliability of news from social media was a neutral *about the same* compared to Print journalists (Newspaper – 7%; Magazines – 14%).

Q7. Why do you say that?
(Based on 331 responses.)

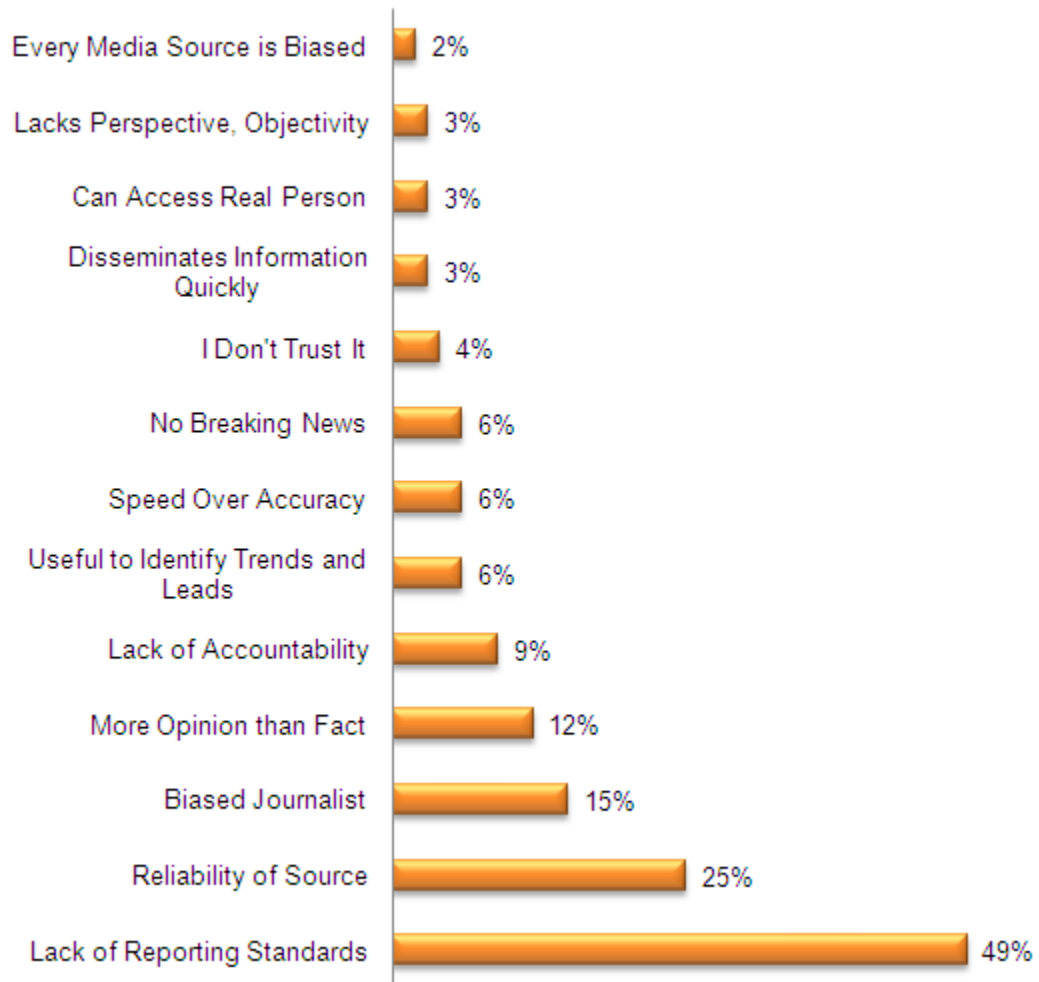
Almost half of journalists responding mentioned *lack of fact-checking, verification or reporting standards* as the reason for their perceptions on the reliability of news and information from social media sources.

One-quarter overall cited a *source-related* mention. *Sourcing* was the one reason given by at least one-fifth of journalists across all perceptions of reliability as it is the one constant that all journalists recognize.

- Over half of the journalists who considered news and information delivered via social media to be “much less” or “slightly less” reliable/vetted said it was due to the *lack of fact-checking, verification or reporting standards* (57%). The *source* of social media information was also a cause for concern with this group of journalists, but to a much lesser degree (22%) than the lack of oversight or confirmation.
- *Sourcing* (43%) was also the main reason cited for the perception that the reliability of social media news and information was “about the same” as traditional media.
- The very few (2% overall) who indicated that news and information via social media was “slightly more” reliable/vetted than news/information via traditional media also cited *sourcing* as their main reason.

Lack of fact-checking, verification, reporting standards	49%
Source – reliability is a function of the source of the information	25%
Anyone can say anything – some lie, have agendas, are biased	15%
It’s more opinion than fact	12%
Lack of accountability – anonymity	9%
Useful to identify trends, get a feel, a lead, a tip	6%
It stresses speed over accuracy	6%
It only passes along information, no breaking news	6%
I don’t trust it	4%
Good for disseminating information quickly	3%
Can access a real person with actual experience	3%
Lacks perspective, objectivity	3%
Every media source makes mistakes, is biased	2%

Why Do You Say That?



INFORMATION SOURCE USAGE

Q8. Compared to five years ago, how much do you use the news and information from each of the following sources when writing or producing your stories?

(Based on 363-367 responses.)

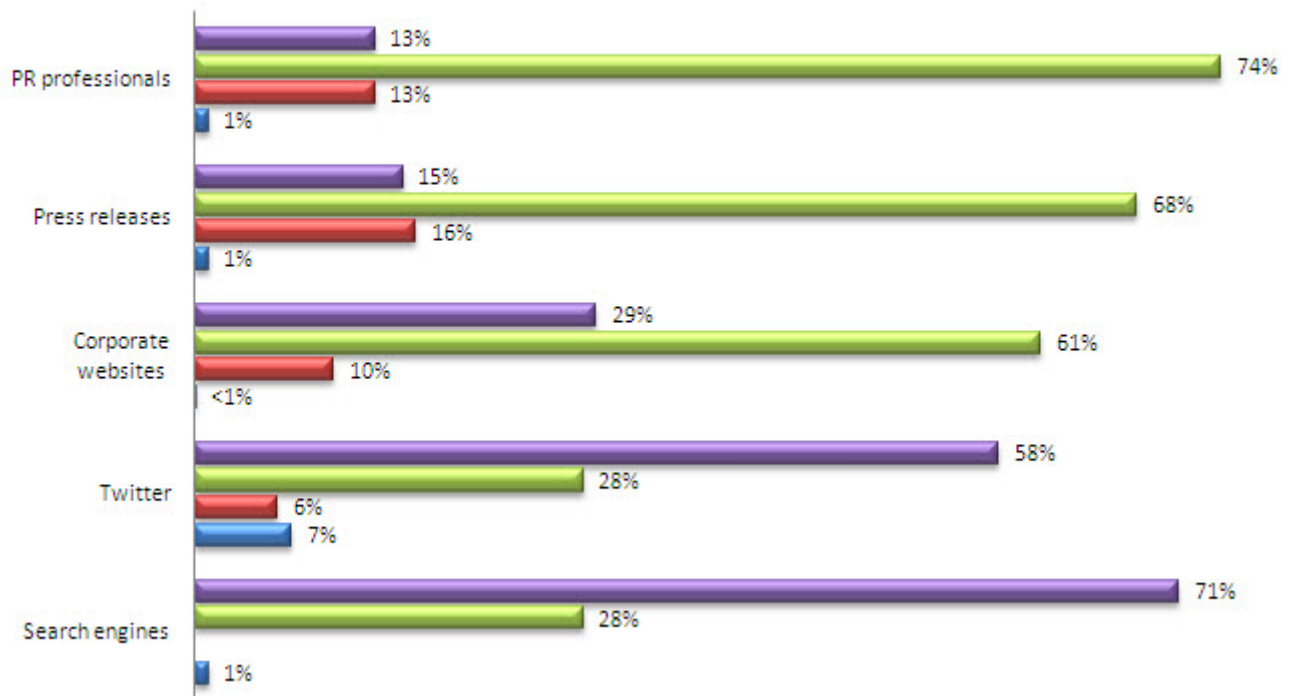
The majority of journalists responding said their usage of news and information from *search engines/the Web* and also *Twitter* for writing or producing stories has increased compared to five years ago. *Corporate websites, press releases* and especially *PR professionals*, remain as consistently used resources for journalists when writing or producing stories.

Less experienced journalists use information from *press releases* and *PR professionals* more now than five years ago to write their stories – more so than their more experienced counterparts.

	Usage Compared to Five Years Ago			NA/ Don't Use
	More	About the Same	Less	
Search engines/the Web	71%	28%	—	1%
Twitter	58%	28%	6%	7%
Corporate websites	29%	61%	10%	<1%
Press releases	15%	68%	16%	1%
PR professionals	13%	74%	13%	1%

Comparative Social Media Usage

■ More ■ About the Same ■ Less ■ NA/Don't Use



- ▶ Increased usage of information from Search engines/the Web is strong across all sub groups, with some variation across experience levels; more than 60 percent each said they use this resource more often now than five years ago, especially those with the most experience (20+ years; 80%), representing a significant difference compared to their counterparts with less experience.
- ▶ Increased usage of information via *Twitter* shows more variation across certain media types than experience levels. Those writing for Websites (75%) and even Newspapers (62%) report increased usage, but less than half of those writing for Magazines (49%) reported this – they were more likely to say their usage of this information source has been about the same (37%) compared to those at other media.
- ▶ Usage of information gained from *Corporate websites* has remained about the same as five years ago, overall, but some groups reported using it more now than previously. Those with 20 or more years of experience (33%) and those with 9 or fewer years (31%) used information from this source more now than five years ago, compared to only 21 percent of those with 10-19 years of experience. The majority of this last group has been utilizing *Corporate website* information all along; 71 percent said their usage was *about the same*.
- ▶ More journalists with the least amount of experience (9 or fewer years) are turning to *Press releases* (27%) and *PR professionals* (19%) for information when writing their stories more now than five years ago. Both of these percentages are significantly higher than what more experienced journalists (10-19 years) report, as they have been using *Press releases* (71%) and *PR professionals* (76%) about the same as before. The same pattern can be seen concerning usage of information from *PR professionals*, but the difference is not as large.

PR PROFESSIONALS AS AN INFORMATION SOURCE

Q9. What added service or information can PR professionals offer you that a web search or social media cannot?

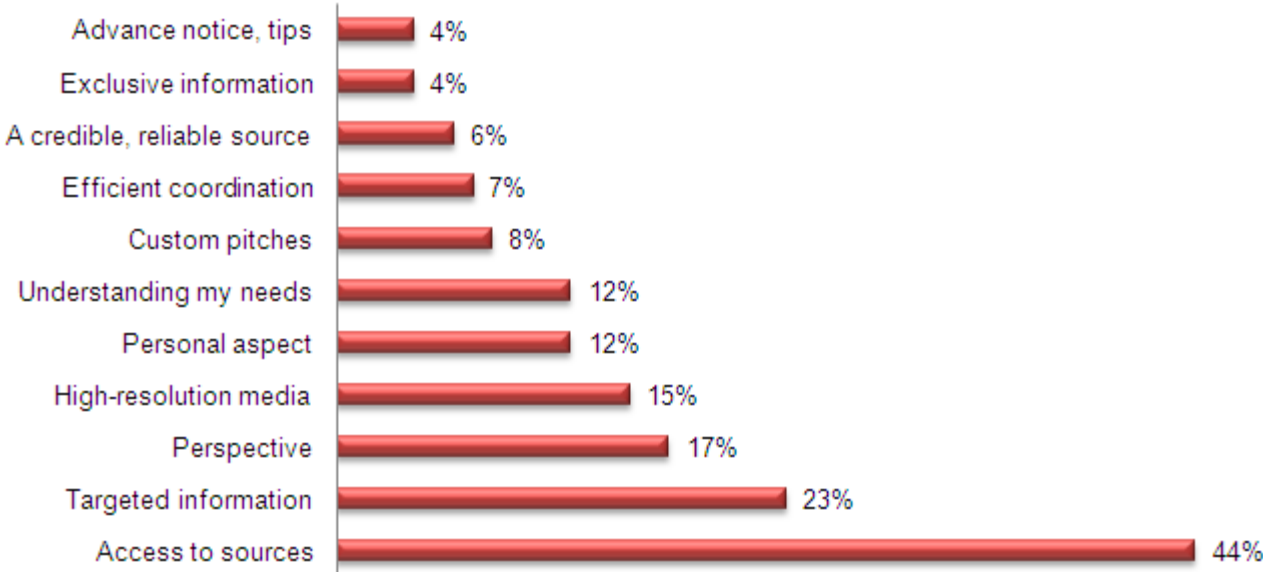
(Based on 287 responses.)

Getting an *interview, access to sources, experts (44%)* and *targeted information, answers to questions (23%)* are the top services that PR professionals offer journalists that a web search or social media cannot.

Journalists also appreciate the perspective – *information in context, background information (17%)* that a PR professional can offer.

Interviews, access to sources, experts	44%
Answers to questions, targeted information	23%
Perspective – information in context, background information	17%
High-resolution images, graphics, videos	15%
Personal aspect – a relationship, direct contact	12%
Understanding my publication, my needs	12%
Custom pitches – story ideas	8%
Efficient coordination, facilitation	7%
A credible, reliable source of information – honesty	6%
Exclusive information	4%
Advance notice – tips	4%

Added Services from Working with PR Professionals



METHODOLOGY

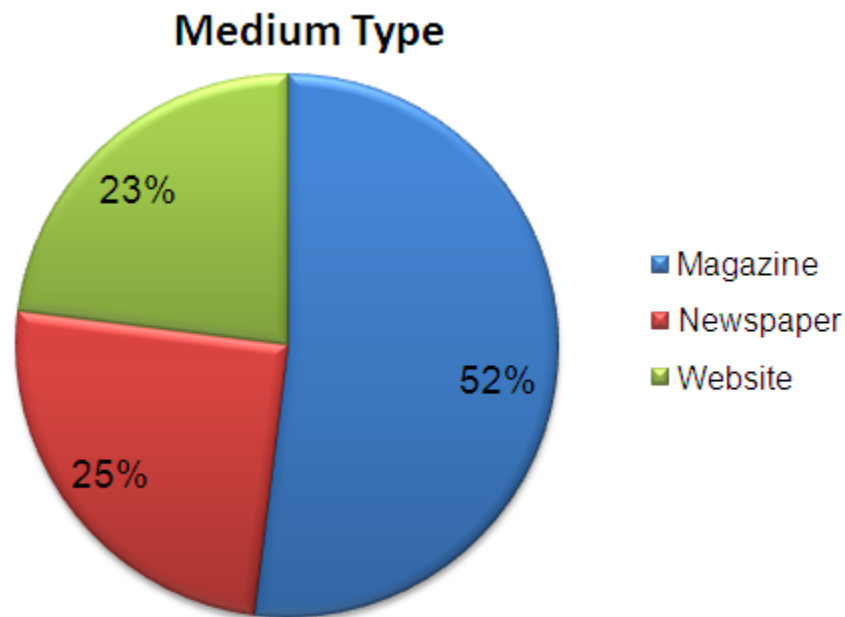
Results presented are based on 371 responses collected between September 1, 2009, and October 13, 2009. Statistical testing based on a 95 percent confidence interval was implemented to analyze any differences in respondent sub-populations. In this study, a significant difference (based on both size of difference and a sufficient number of respondents) means that we are 95% sure that the difference between two percentages is too large to have occurred by chance. Care should be used when interpreting the results as some subgroups are small in size.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Q10. What one medium do you spend most of your professional time writing for?
(Based on 371 responses.)

Three-quarters of the journalists responding worked at a Print-based media.

Magazine	52%
Newspaper	25%
Web site	23%

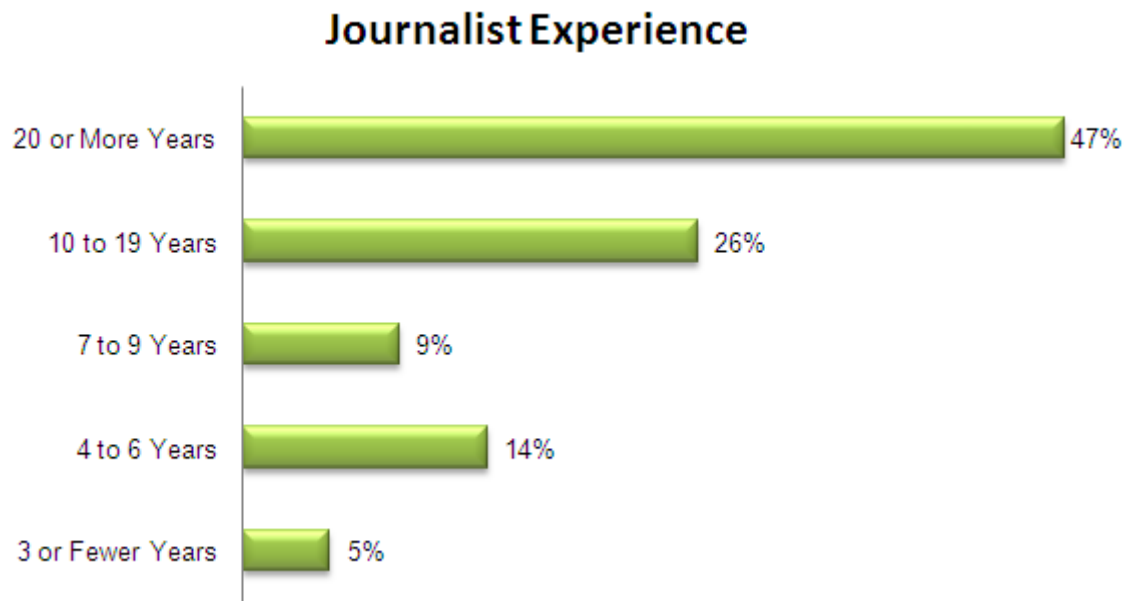


Q11. How long have you been a journalist?

(Based on 370 responses.)

The reported median number of years respondents have been working as journalists is 18.

3 or fewer years	5%
4-6 years	14%
7-9 years	9%
10-19 years	26%
20 or more years	47%
Median (in years)	18



ABOUT THE SURVEY

Cision, Don Bates and GWU jointly conducted the survey to inform best practices and teaching in the public relations and political management fields and to deepen understanding of how editors and reporters use and value social media and other resources. A custom questionnaire consisting of both open-ended and closed-end questions was sent to 9,100 editors/journalists in the fall of 2009.

About Cision:

Cision (www.cision.com) empowers businesses to make better decisions and improve performance through its CisionPoint software solutions for corporate communication and PR professionals. Powered by local experts with global reach, Cision delivers relevant media information, targeted distribution, media monitoring, and precise media analysis. Cision has offices in Europe, North America and Asia, and has partners in 125 countries. Cision AB is quoted on the Nordic Exchange with revenue of SEK 1.8 billion in 2008.

About The George Washington University's Strategic Public Relations Program:

Established in the fall of 2008, GW's Strategic Public Relations Program offers a master's degree, both on campus and online, and a graduate certificate. The program is part of GW's Graduate School of Political Management (www.gwu.edu/gspm), which also offers graduate degrees in political management, legislative affairs, and PAC management, as well as a certificate in community advocacy for not-for-profit organizations, and international programs in Latin America and Europe.

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