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LIVE BLOG

2026 SURVEY REPORT

Inside the Future of Journalism

How emerging and established journalists see the changing world of news



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Executive summary

Tickaroo's journalism industry survey returns for a second year, but this time with a wider lens. In last year's Next Gen Journalism report, we gave journalism students and early-career reporters a voice. This year, we have expanded the remit to include experienced newsroom professionals to see where the early career journalists and the people who already run the industry agree, and where they don't.

The results point to a profession that believes in its purpose but is struggling to sustain it. Emerging journalists are more concerned about getting a foothold in the industry, citing a lack of paid opportunities and competition for jobs. Established journalists are more likely to point to the financial pressures and changing business models affecting the industry as a whole. Both groups see serious challenges, but their priorities reflect different positions within the profession. The pressure also extends beyond entry-level roles: freelancers report financial and job insecurity at levels similar to students.

Together, these perspectives reveal a connected challenge: journalism must create viable routes into the profession while addressing the financial pressures that threaten its long-term sustainability. The report explores how those pressures intersect with changes in news delivery, technology and the skills journalists need.

Four Headline Findings

01 A profession people believe in, but struggle to sustain

More than half (55%) of this year's respondents entered journalism to tell important stories, and half (50%) for a love of writing. Yet 77% say low starting wages and the cost of living are barriers for new journalists, 65% point to uncertainty about the industry's future and 62% to a lack of paid opportunities. Asked for the single change they would make, a third (33%) of all respondents chose more support for young and emerging journalists - the most popular answer by a wide margin. This varied considerably between career stages though, named by 49% of emerging journalists, against 17% of established journalists.



of this year's respondents entered journalism to tell important stories

02 Two career stages, different pressures

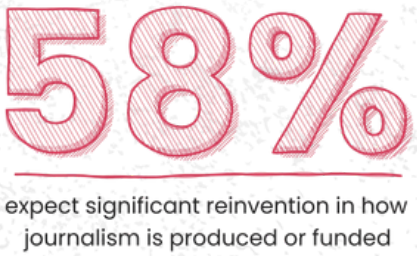
The research underlines the differences in how the two career stages view the challenges the industry is facing, and critically, the reasons for this.

Established journalists are primarily worried about whether the industry can sustain itself. They are more focused on the wider pressures that will confront the newer cohorts: 80% see financial pressure and changing business models as a defining challenge, against 50% of emerging journalists.

Emerging journalists' concerns centre largely on getting into the profession; 77% cite a lack of paid opportunities, against 48% of established journalists. The gap in how each group sees this issue is telling. Only 17% of established journalists name support for young journalists as their priority, against 49% of emerging journalists. Experienced journalists may underestimate how much they can do for the next generation but the way through this crisis is collaboration and through bringing both perspectives to the table. Emerging journalists bring fresh eyes without the heavy weight of legacy and a native feel for new formats. Established journalists bring the experience to know what lasts and how to make things happen.

03 A changing news landscape without a settled business model

Almost six in ten (58%) expect significant reinvention in how journalism is produced or funded.



expect significant reinvention in how journalism is produced or funded

Respondents expect AI-generated summaries (61%) and short-form video (50%) to shape how news is delivered, and are also more comfortable working in membership- and subscription- funded newsrooms than in advertising-funded ones.

Membership and community funding models scored 3.97 out of 5, subscriptions 3.78 and advertising 3.05. That preference does not tell us which models are most likely to succeed commercially, however. Expectations for future news delivery are a separate question: only 24% expect membership or community-funded journalism to shape delivery over the next five to ten years.

04 Technology adoption alongside professional caution

Overall, four in five journalists (79%) see navigating AI-generated content and misinformation as an ethical dilemma, and 70% agree AI risks undermining public trust. Just over half (52%) are comfortable using AI tools, and 58% believe AI-generated content can meet journalistic standards if properly edited by humans. Only 18% trust AI-assisted tools to verify information. Journalists are open to AI helping produce news; they are far more wary of trusting it to check what is true.

However, established journalists are clearly more comfortable using AI tools (64% versus 41%). Emerging journalists are more cautious, perhaps because AI is learning to do much of the work that once gave them their first job. The industry must find ways new ways for emerging journalists to cut their teeth in the industry. Because their caution actually provides them with an advantage. Emerging journalists' value is their judgement, not the jobs that now AI can do.

This is not unique to journalism. In many industries, AI is changing processes faster than organizations can settle them. We are doing many things for the first time and passing several inflection points at once, and nobody can say with certainty what comes next. That uncertainty is real, but the call for change is clear.

For newsrooms, the question is no longer whether to use AI. It is how to use it to make journalists more effective and valuable to audiences, and how to make sure the people entering the profession now are part of that change rather than replaced by it. Redefining junior job profiles should be a priority.

Key stats

55%

entered journalism to tell important stories; 50% for a love of writing.

77%

cite low starting wages and cost of living as barriers for early-career journalists; 62% cite a lack of paid opportunities.

49%

of emerging journalists choose more support for young journalists as the one change they would make, against 17% of established journalists.

64%

say financial pressure and changing business models define journalism's current challenge.

61%

expect AI-generated summaries and explainers in news delivery within five to ten years.

69%

are comfortable with membership or community-funded newsrooms, yet only 24% expect them to shape how news is delivered.

79%

see AI-generated content and misinformation as an ethical dilemma; only 18% trust AI tools to help verify information.

41%

of emerging journalists are comfortable using AI tools, against 64%of established journalists.

This is a profession holding two thoughts at once: that journalism matters enormously, but that the way it is staffed, funded and now automated may not be able to sustain it. That tension between purpose and practicality is what this report explores.

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CHAPTER

01

Introduction



Why Tickaroo ran the survey

Tickaroo launched the survey in 2025 to understand how journalists view the state of their profession in a rapidly changing world, what they hope for its future and the challenges they face building a career in it.

As a news and sports media software company supporting modern newsrooms with tools for live reporting and multimedia storytelling, we wanted to build a clearer picture of what the industry needs, from skills and support to innovation and reform. In our first year, we focused on student and early-career reporters. In this second year, we have widened the conversation to include more experienced journalists, so that the next generation's views can be read alongside those of the people who hire, edit and mentor them.

> "Journalism's future will benefit from two groups hearing each other: those who are trying to get in and those who already run the industry. This year's research shows they share more than they might think, but where they differ is a good place to build industry dialogue."
>
> **NAOMI OWUSU, TICKAROO CEO AND CO-FOUNDER**

The pressures reshaping journalism

The survey took place against continued upheaval in the news. Publishers are grappling with monetisation, uncertain traffic and audience behaviour that keeps shifting, and job losses and restructuring remain part of newsroom life.

3,444

journalism job cuts recorded across the UK and US in 2025 (Press Gazette)

Press Gazette's 2025 tracker recorded at least 3,444 journalism job cuts across the UK and US in 2025, and its rolling 2026 tracker shows further rounds this year.

Three pressures run through this year's findings:

- Economic: whether journalism can offer a sustainable career, particularly to those starting out.
- Structural: how news reaches audiences and who pays for it.
- Technological: how AI is adopted without compromising accuracy and trust.

Last year's report focused on students and early-career journalists, finding strong belief in journalism's democratic purpose alongside frustration with the industry's economics and culture. By including more experienced professionals this year, the research can explore whether those pressures are shared across the profession, and where perspectives differ according to career stage.

Methodology

The survey gathered quantitative and qualitative responses from 227 journalists, journalism students and related media professionals across more than 20 countries between April and October 2026. Respondents could skip questions, so the number answering varies. Every figure in this report is based on the people who answered that question, and we state the base where it is small.

- **Who responded:**

The sample is international. Of the 212 respondents who gave their location, 88 (42%) are based in the UK, 56 (26%) in Germany, 17 (8%) in Switzerland and 51 (24%) elsewhere, including the US, Denmark, France, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, and parts of Africa, South and East Asia. Where the numbers allow, we compare UK respondents with those based elsewhere, because our 2025 report was UK-focused.

- **Career stage:**

We compare emerging journalists, meaning students, graduates and anyone with five years' experience or less (114 respondents), with established journalists, meaning those with six or more years' experience (103 respondents). A third (33%) of respondents have one to five years' experience, 19% less than one year, 15% six to ten years, 10% eleven to fifteen, and 23% sixteen or more. Ten respondents who did not answer the experience question are excluded from career-stage comparisons.

- **Age:**

The sample is well split across ages. Of 213 respondents who disclosed their age, 28 (13%) are between 18-21, 34 (16%) between 22-25, 28 (13%) between 26-30, the largest age group (57/ 27%) is between 31-40 with 41-50 year olds making 14% with 29 respondents and those aged 51+ providing 37 (17%) of the sample.

- **Roles:**

The largest groups are journalism students (23%), freelance or independent journalists (21%), staff journalists (18%) and editors or newsroom leaders (15%). The remainder include audience and engagement specialists, creators and producers.

- **How to read the numbers:**

Many questions allowed more than one answer, so percentages do not add up to 100. Ratings use a five-point scale, and where we describe people as comfortable or concerned we mean a rating of four or five. Responses are anonymous and self-reported, so they show how respondents see their industry rather than externally verified facts. Where we mention a difference between groups, it is statistically notable; smaller differences are described as directional or not mentioned.

- **Compared with 2025:**

This year's survey is larger, international and includes more experienced respondents, and some questions were reworded. The two years are therefore not directly comparable. Where we refer to 2025, we describe results as in line with, similar to or higher than last year's, using UK emerging respondents as the closest comparison group.

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CHAPTER

02

Making journalism a sustainable career



Journalists chose this profession for the story and the craft. What threatens it is less about the work than about whether it can be made to pay. This chapter looks at why people enter journalism, the barriers they say stand in the way, and where emerging and established journalists see the problem differently.

Motivations

Reasons for entering journalism are strikingly consistent across the career stages. More than half (55%) of respondents were inspired by telling important stories, half (50%) by a love of writing and almost half (46%) by the desire to inform or educate. Emerging and established journalists give broadly similar reasons, with the one notable gap being a higher interest among emerging journalists in visual and broadcast storytelling (23% against 12%).

Our 2025 respondents, who were all students or early-career journalists in the UK, gave the same top reason: telling important stories. The sense of purpose that draws people into journalism looks consistent.

> Working in an organization where I wouldn't be thrown under the bus for holding powers to account.
>
> **– JOURNALISM STUDENT, WHEN ASKED ABOUT THEIR DREAM JOB.**

Financial viability & barriers to entry

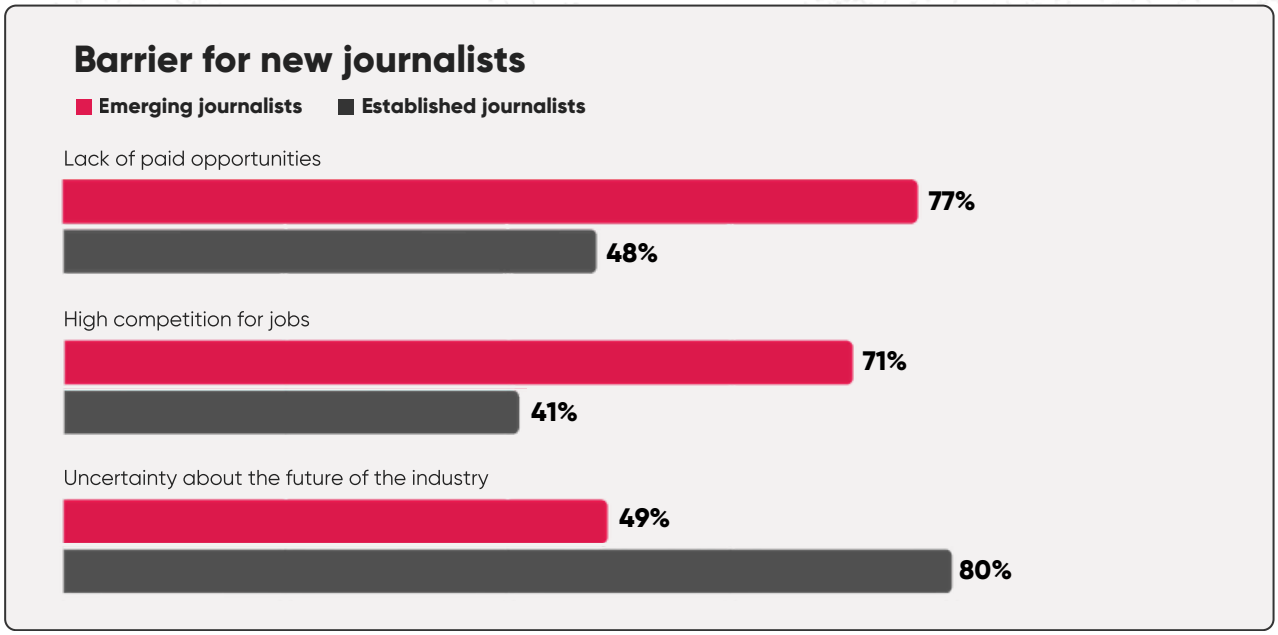
The pressures facing journalism are felt across the profession, but they are particularly acute for those trying to establish a career. When respondents rated their concerns for the future of journalism on a five-point scale, both emerging and established journalists identified financial instability and pay as significant concerns (4.04 for emerging journalists and 3.79 for established journalists, with no statistically significant difference).

The gap widens when it comes to access and security. Emerging journalists rate the lack of paid entry-level roles at 4.01, compared with 2.86 among established journalists. They are also more concerned about job security (4.12, against 3.59) and the long-term viability of a journalism career (4.01, against 3.61).

> I am a NCTJ grad (May 2026) and I did not get a job in my field... It felt impossible to break into.
>
> **– JOURNALISM GRADUATE, UK**

The pattern is reflected in respondents' views of the barriers facing young journalists. Overall, 62% identify a lack of paid opportunities as a barrier to entry, rising to 77% among emerging journalists, compared with 48% of established journalists. Competition for jobs is cited by 56% overall, including 71% of emerging journalists and 41% of established journalists.

Yet established journalists are more likely to identify uncertainty about the future of the industry itself as a barrier for young people entering the profession: 80%, compared with 49% of emerging journalists. This suggests that concerns about the next generation's prospects extend beyond those at the beginning of their careers.



Low pay is the one barrier on which everyone agrees, and the share who cite it is in line with last year's 80% among UK emerging respondents (78% this year).

The findings point to a challenge that spans the profession, but takes different forms at different career stages. Financial pressure is a shared concern; for emerging journalists, the immediate question is whether they can secure paid work, build experience and see a sustainable future in the industry. Established journalists appear more concerned about the wider uncertainty surrounding journalism's future.

Addressing these pressures means looking at both the conditions that allow people to enter journalism and the prospects that encourage them to stay. Paid entry routes, clearer progression and greater security are practical starting points for making journalism a more viable long-term career.

Career insecurity extends beyond entry-level roles

> It's hard to keep hearing how important journalism is when it's difficult to make it pay.
>
> **– FREELANCE JOURNALIST, UK**

It would be easy to read this as a story about the start of a career, but the data suggests that the pressures are not confined to people entering the profession. Freelance journalists rate financial instability at 4.22 out of 5 and job security at 4.24, close to students (4.11 and 4.40) and well above staff journalists (3.67 and 3.26)

and editors or newsroom leaders (3.36 and 3.18).

This distinction matters: creating entry-level roles will not, on its own, address the insecurity experienced by people already working in journalism.

> There are armies of freelancers out there holding up publications.
>
> **– FREELANCE JOURNALIST, ESTABLISHED**

Freelancing and career sustainability are also the areas in which respondents feel least prepared, at 2.83 out of 5, a point we return to in Chapter 5.

What would they change?

We asked respondents to choose the one thing they would change about the industry. A third (33%) chose more support for young and emerging journalists. Next came less focus on speed and more emphasis on depth (16%) and greater public trust in the media (15%).

The stage split is stark. Half (49%) of emerging journalists chose support for young journalists, against 17% of established journalists. Established journalists were more likely to choose greater public trust in the media (24% against 7%) and more end-user willingness to pay for journalism (19% against 3%).

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Emerging journalists want more support from the industry, while established journalists want more from the public.

A UK pattern

UK respondents are the most concerned. Four in five (80%) cite a lack of paid opportunities, against 56% in Germany and 45% in the rest of the world (ROW), and 73% cite competition for jobs (compared to 44% in Germany and 45% in ROW). Job security concern averages 4.38 in the UK, against 3.46 in Germany and 3.59 elsewhere, and 43% of UK respondents chose more support for young journalists as their one change, against 28% in Germany.



of UK respondents cite a lack of paid opportunities

UK respondents are also less likely to cite uncertainty about the industry's future (48%, against 80% in Germany and 70% elsewhere), as if their concerns are less about whether journalism will survive and more about whether they can get into it.

What this means

Motivation is not what needs fixing. The data points to access, financial security and support throughout a journalism career as the major problems facing journalists.

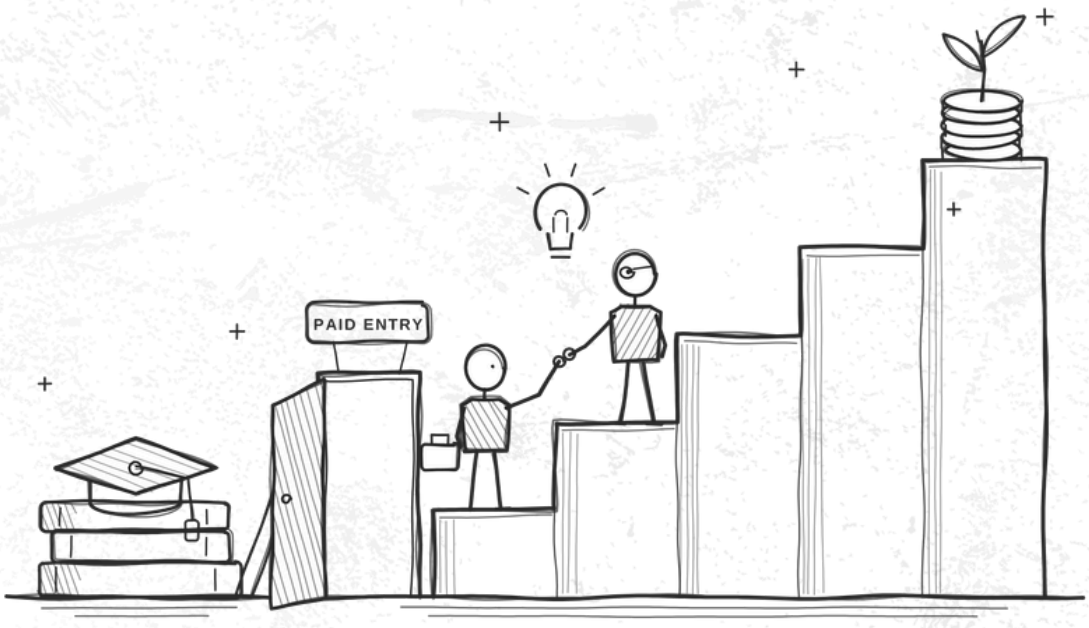
For publishers and editors, paid entry routes and clearer progression are practical starting points for addressing the barriers respondents identify.

For educators, the findings suggest a need to prepare students for the realities of the job market alongside the craft of reporting, including the business and career skills needed to sustain a career.

For established journalists, there is a clear appetite at the early career stage for learning from experienced colleagues: 69% of emerging journalists plan to do so, compared with 24% of established journalists who name it as part of their own development plans. This measures respondents' own plans for professional development, rather than their willingness to mentor others, but it highlights an opportunity to explore how mentoring could be supported.

69%

of emerging journalists plan to learn from experienced colleagues



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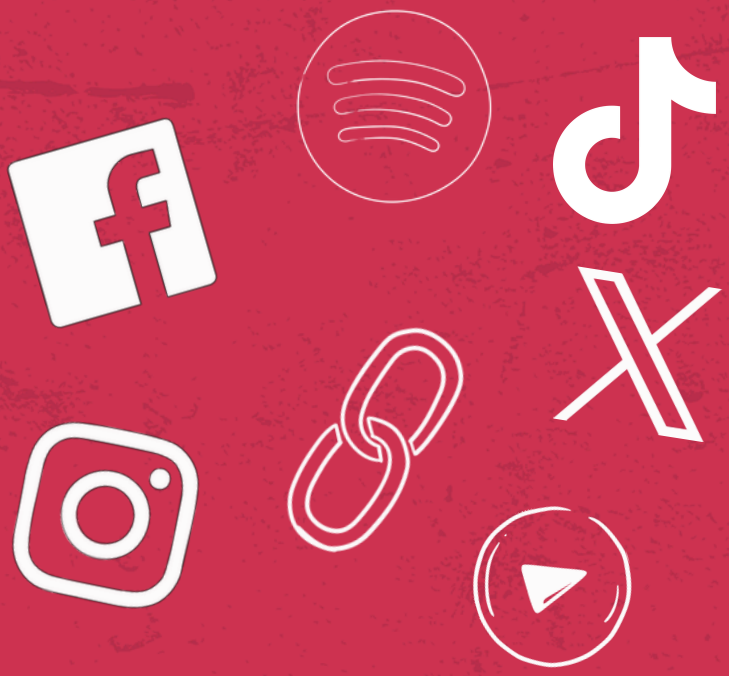
CHAPTER

03

The future of news



Changes in how news is produced and delivered raise questions about more than formats and funding. As journalists anticipate greater use of AI-generated summaries, short-form video and platform-led distribution, questions of credibility, editorial judgement and trust become part of the same debate.

This chapter examines two related but distinct questions: what respondents think will shape news delivery over the next five to ten years, and which newsroom funding models they would feel most comfortable working within. Comparing the answers reveals where their expectations for the industry align with, or differ from, their own preferences.

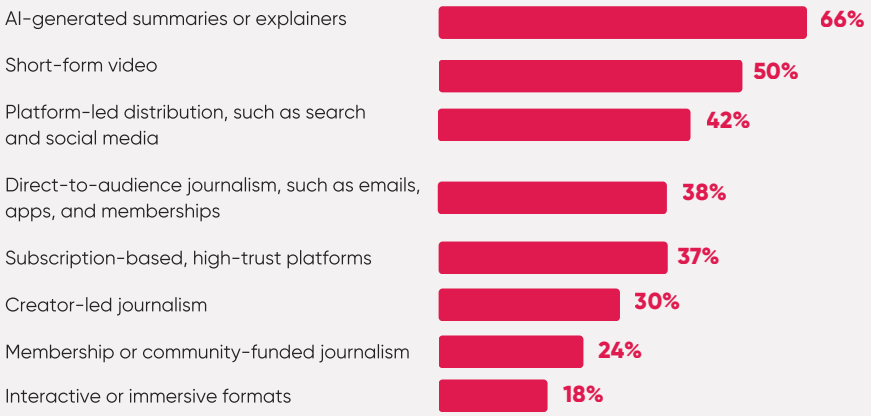
Expecting reinvention

More than half (58%) of respondents expect journalism to undergo significant reinvention in how it is produced or funded over the next decade. Unsurprisingly, established journalists are more likely to say so (68%) than emerging journalists (49%).

Respondents named podcasting and long-form storytelling (66%), digital and multimedia reporting (54%), investigative journalism (41%) and independent or creator-led journalism (38%) as the areas currently thriving.

Asked which formats, channels and funding models they expect to shape news delivery over the next five to ten years, respondents selected the following options:

Expected to shape news delivery in the next five to ten years (all respondents)

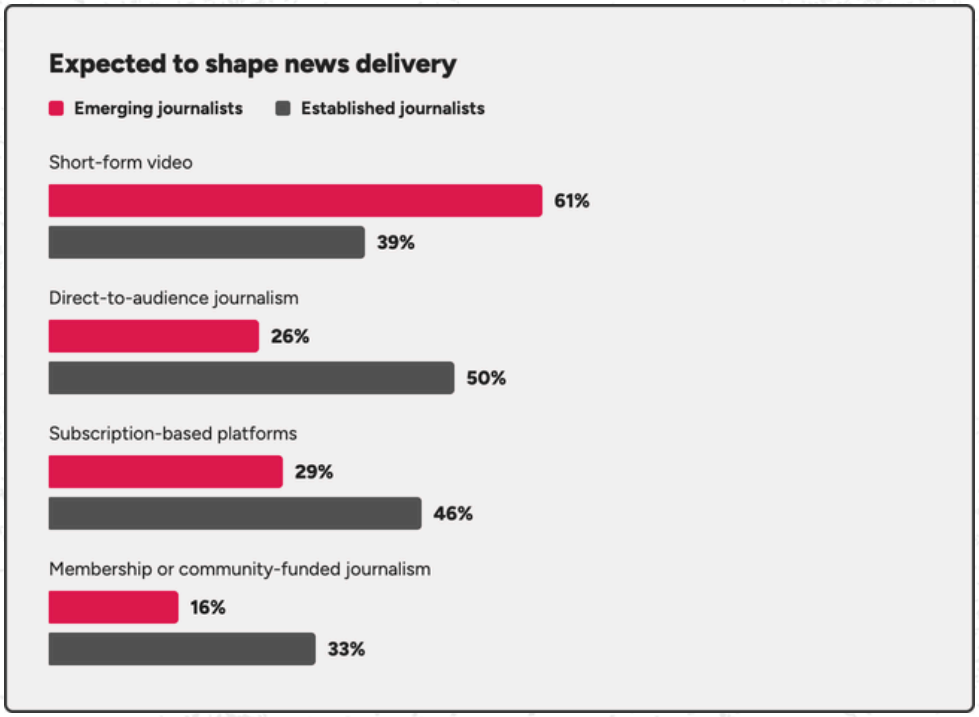


NB The figures represent the share of respondents selecting each option, not a ranking of multually exclusive predictions.

AI-generated summaries and explainers are the most commonly anticipated influence on future news delivery. Their prominence raises a question beyond format: how can news organisations use new ways of presenting information while maintaining the credibility and editorial oversight on which journalism depends? Chapter 4 explores journalists' views on AI, verification and public trust in more detail.

The expectation for AI-generated summaries is higher than last year's 41%, and is similar among UK emerging respondents (61%). Expectations for short-form video (59% among UK emerging respondents, 63% last year) and subscription models (41% and 43%) are in line with 2025.

Career stage and age shape the expectations:

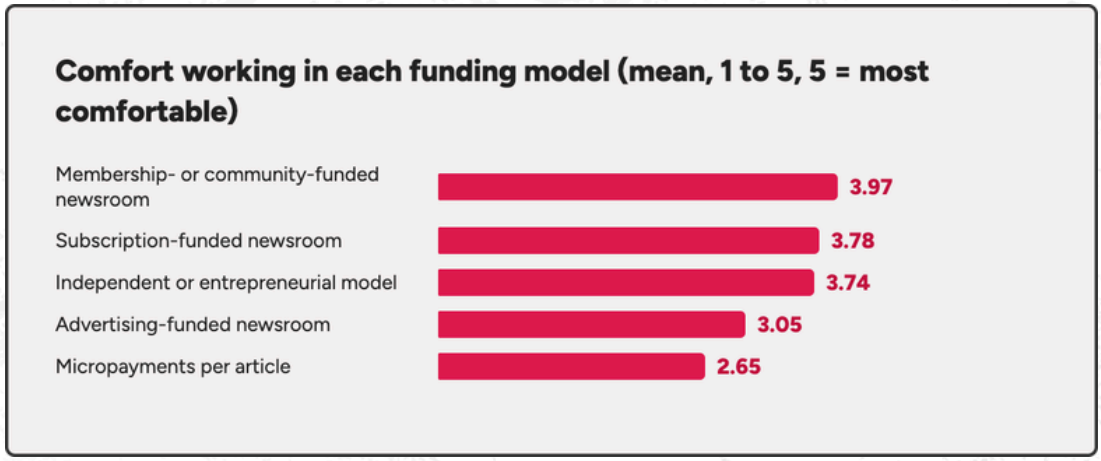


By age, 71% of 18 to 25-year-olds expect short-form video, against 38% of those over 41, while only 10% of the youngest group expect membership journalism, against 36% of the oldest. Younger journalists expect to reach audiences through platforms and video; older journalists expect direct relationships and paid models. Both groups expect AI summaries and platform distribution in similar numbers.

Alongside expectations of changes to how news is delivered, respondents expressed concerns about the forces that may shape journalism's future. Emerging journalists are more likely than established journalists to believe journalism is increasingly influenced by commercial or political interests (42%, compared with 21%). This suggests that, for those entering the profession, questions about the future of journalism extend beyond new formats and business models to include perceptions of editorial independence. This concern about editorial independence sits alongside the questions of credibility and trust explored in the next chapter.

Who pays?

We asked how comfortable respondents are working in different kinds of newsrooms. The ranking is clear:



Emerging and established journalists agree: they score membership models almost identically (3.96 and 3.99). Differences appear around advertising, which editors and newsroom leaders like least (2.55) and freelancers most (3.46). By geography, UK respondents are more comfortable with advertising (3.30) than their German counterparts (2.78).

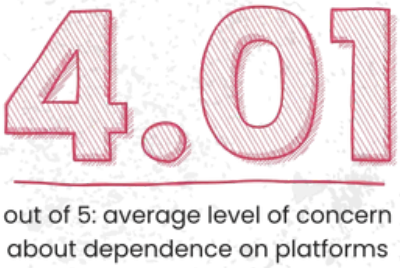
These are comfort ratings, not predictions, however. A journalist who would be happy to work for a membership newsroom has told us about their values, not about whether such newsrooms will succeed commercially.

The gap between preference and expectation

These results measure two different things. Nearly seven in ten respondents (69%) say they would feel comfortable working in a membership- or community-funded newsroom, while 61% would feel comfortable in a subscription-funded newsroom. But only 24% expect membership or community-funded journalism to shape news delivery over the next five to ten years, and 37% expect subscription-based platforms to do so.

The figures do not prove that respondents see a contradiction, or that reader-funded models will have a limited commercial future. They do show that the funding models respondents feel most comfortable working within are not necessarily the ones they expect to shape news delivery.

Respondents also expect AI summaries, short-form video and platform-led distribution to play a role in future news delivery. At the same time, dependence on platforms is a significant concern, with an average rating of 4.01 out of 5. For publishers, the challenge is to respond to changing ways of reaching audiences while developing sustainable funding models and maintaining the trust and editorial independence on which journalism depends.



What this means

The business model conversation and the format conversation are being led by different expectations. Established journalists are more likely to anticipate reinvention and direct, paid relationships with audiences. Emerging journalists are more likely to expect short-form video to shape news delivery (61%, compared with 39% of established journalists) and to identify creator-led publishing as an area that is thriving (45%, compared with 29%). These diverse views may reflect how each generation itself consumes news, and it underlines that no single channel or funding model will serve every audience. These differences suggest that career stage influences how journalists see the future of news, from the channels they expect to grow to the forms of publishing they believe are already gaining ground.

For newsroom leaders, the challenge is to connect these expectations: developing formats that meet changing audience habits while building sustainable relationships with readers. That means considering not only how news reaches audiences and how it is funded, but also how editorial independence and credibility are maintained as delivery models evolve. The survey does not identify one funding model as the most commercially viable, but it shows that journalists' expectations for the future of news extend beyond format alone.

For publishers, the lesson is diversification. This is an issue that predates AI. It means combining advertising reach, subscriptions and reader contributions, while exploring revenue streams beyond the article itself, such as events, expert services, licensing and B2B products. Sustainable journalism will depend less on finding the one right model than on building a resilient mix that reflects audience needs and preferences.

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CHAPTER

04

AI, credibility, and editorial judgement



Journalists are not rejecting AI, but they are drawing a line around it. For instance, they will accept AI assistance with production, with many being comfortable using it. But with only 18% trusting AI-assisted tools to help verify information, what they will not do is hand over the question that matters most to the profession: what is true.

Chapter 3 found that 61% of respondents expect AI-generated summaries or explainers to shape news delivery over the next five to ten years. Understanding what journalists think about AI's role in production, verification and trust is therefore central to understanding how they see the future of the profession.

Comfortable with AI, wary of trusting it

Last year, 75% of respondents named AI and misinformation as a leading ethical challenge. This year, we looked more closely at how journalists use AI, where they draw the line and what they think it does to trust.

The concern has not gone away. Four in five (79%) respondents identify navigating AI-generated content and misinformation as an ethical dilemma, 59% cite disclosure and transparency around AI use, and 60% cite the balance between speed and accuracy in breaking news. Seven in ten (70%) agree that AI risks undermining public trust in journalism.



see navigating AI-generated content and misinformation as an ethical dilemma

Yet just over half (52%) are comfortable using AI tools to support their work, and 58% believe AI-generated content can meet journalistic quality standards if it is properly edited by humans. Half (51%) say they would use AI more extensively with proper training and editorial support.

Support is not verification

The sharpest line in the data runs between AI that helps produce journalism and AI that checks it. Only 18% of respondents trust AI-assisted tools to help verify information such as data, images and video.

There is a further skills challenge. Respondents rate their preparedness in verification and open-source research at 3.09 out of 5, and only 39% rate themselves at four or five. Trust in AI-assisted verification is low, while confidence in human verification skills is also limited. The findings point to the importance of supporting verification skills as misinformation becomes harder to navigate.

> "Ethical media teams that have drawn a hard line against overly relying on AI to do sensitive journalistic work.
>
> **– FREELANCE JOURNALIST, WHEN ASKED WHO IS CONTRIBUTING POSITIVELY TO JOURNALISM.**

Misinformation and jobs are different worries

Worry about misinformation and worry about AI replacing opportunities are related but distinct, and the data separates them. Misinformation is the near-universal concern: it averages 4.28 out of 5, and 80% rate it four or five.

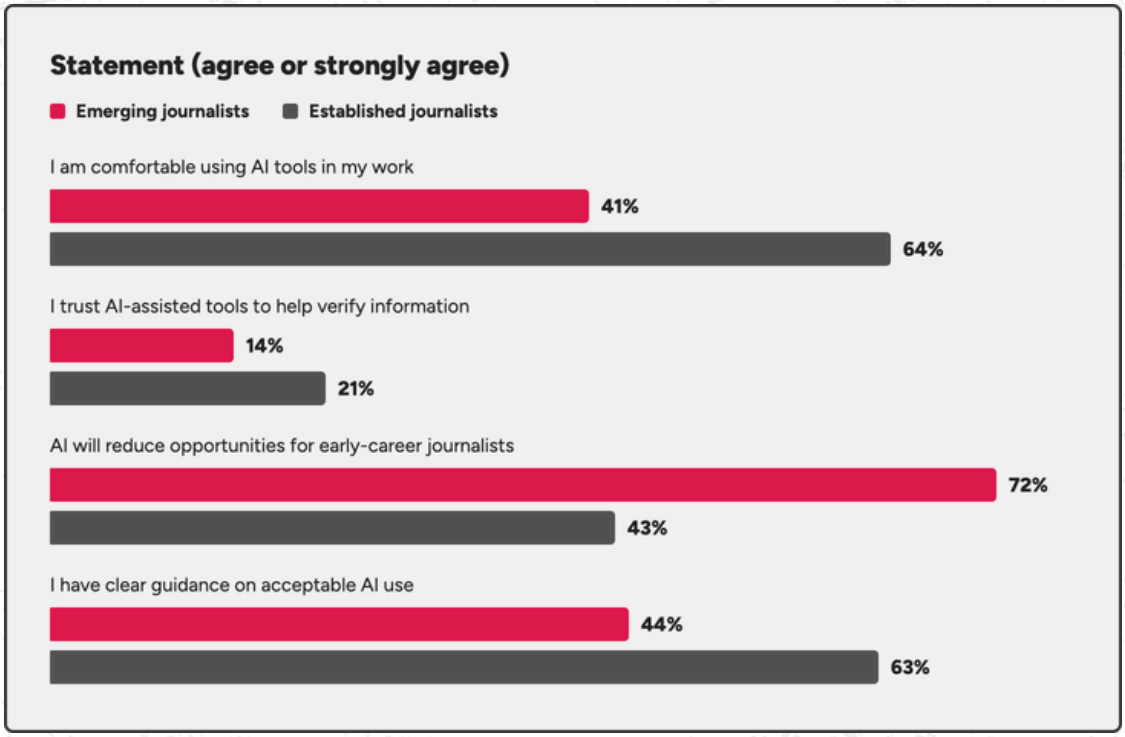
The effect of AI on entry-level roles averages 3.61 (59% rate it four or five) and on career progression 3.51 (53%). More than half (57%) agree that AI will reduce opportunities for early-career journalists.

PUT SIMPLY

Misinformation worries everyone. Job worries depend on who you are.

Emerging journalists are less comfortable, not more

It would be natural to assume that the youngest journalists are the keenest adopters of AI, but that's not what our survey finds.



On the editorial questions, the two groups are much closer. They are equally likely to say they understand what the ethical boundaries of AI use should be (around 71%), similarly worried about telling fact from misinformation (72% and 79%), equally willing to use AI more with training (50% and 52%) and don't significantly differ on whether edited AI content can meet quality standards.

Both groups share a position on standards. They differ on personal risk - their comfort with AI and their concern about its effect on early-career opportunities.

> I think the threat is far greater at the other end of the scale.
>
> **– STAFF JOURNALIST, UK, ARGUING THAT AI ENDANGERS EXPERIENCED JOURNALISTS, NOT ONLY ENTRANTS.**

Role matters, and so does where you work

Those closest to managing AI are the most comfortable with it. Editors and newsroom leaders (3.86 out of 5) and staff journalists (3.80) report comfort using AI tools; students (2.64) and freelancers (2.86) do not. Editors are the group least worried about AI reducing early-career opportunities (3.00, against 4.11 for students), and rate AI content as capable of meeting quality standards at 4.19, against 2.89 for students.

Location matters even more. UK respondents are far less comfortable using AI (2.80) than German respondents (3.95), with respondents elsewhere in between (3.45). UK respondents are more worried about AI reducing early-career opportunities (4.25 in the UK, 3.14 in Germany, 3.38 elsewhere) and are the least likely to trust AI to verify information (10% against 19% in Germany and 26% elsewhere). The pattern holds within each career stage, so it is not simply a result of the UK sample being younger. Among established journalists, comfort with AI is 2.89 in the UK and 4.14 in Germany.

Age and entry-level work are closely linked: 78% of 18 to 25-year-olds rate AI's impact on entry-level roles as a concern (four or five), against 43% of those over 41.

> I will never use any AI at any stage of my journalistic output, or in any other facet of my life.
>
> **– FREELANCE JOURNALIST, UK.**

Since 2025

The findings on AI and misinformation are broadly in line with last year's report. Among UK emerging respondents, 85% identify AI-generated content and misinformation as an ethical dilemma, compared with 74% in 2025. Concern about the impact of AI and automation on journalism averages 4.26 among UK emerging respondents, compared with 3.9 last year. Confidence in AI and automation skills remains among the lowest-rated skill areas for UK emerging respondents (2.33, compared with 2.0 in 2025).

These figures suggest that the concerns remain significant, but should be treated as indicative rather than evidence of a definitive increase: the samples differ in size and make-up, and the questions are not directly comparable.

What this means

For newsroom leaders, the central finding is a gap between those who set AI policy and those who work in its shadow. Editors are the most comfortable with AI and the least worried about junior roles. Early-career journalists are the least comfortable, the most worried and the least likely to feel they have clear guidance. Closing that gap means involving them in shaping policy, not only briefing them on it.

It is hard to predict how AI will change journalism, which is why governance is so important. Newsrooms need leadership that sets transparent goals for AI use, involves early-career journalists from the start, and is willing to adjust as the technology evolves. This is change management, and it is ongoing.

At the centre of all this is the junior role, which needs to be redefined. If AI takes over the more mechanical parts of production, the value of an entry-level journalist shifts towards what has always been the core of the profession: verification, story selection, editorial judgement and communication with audiences. These skills are not new, but their relative importance is growing. When content becomes cheap to produce, deciding what matters and checking what is true, including what AI produces, becomes the differentiator.

The data shows why this matters. Journalists will not trust AI to verify information, yet many do not feel prepared in their own verification skills. These skills were traditionally learned slowly, through years of routine work, which is the very work AI now handles. Juniors therefore need to learn them earlier and more deliberately, including by understanding how AI works and where its possibilities and limits lie. Labs and projects inside universities, and structured internships outside them, can provide that training ground. Newsrooms that use AI in production but keep humans accountable for checking are working in line with their staff's views. Transparency is among the most-cited ethical concerns (59%), so disclosure should be designed in from the start, not added as an afterthought.



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CHAPTER

05

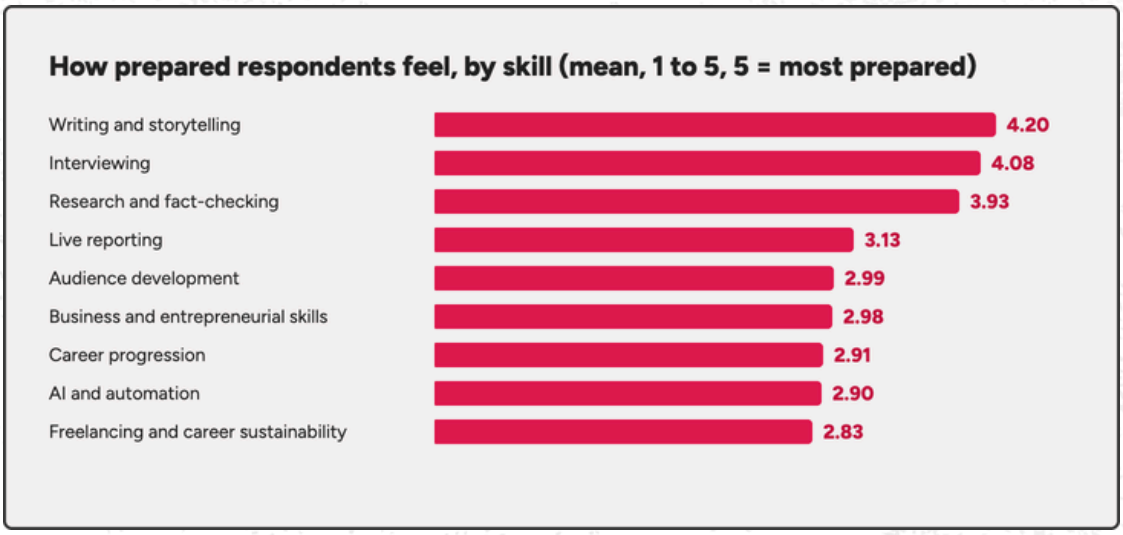
The skills and support journalism needs



Journalists are confident in the craft, but they are far less sure that they are prepared for a career in journalism. We examine skills, professional development and diversity to ask what the industry needs to sustain its workforce and keep the quality of its journalism high.

Strong on craft, thin on wider skills

We asked respondents to rate how well prepared they feel across a range of skills, from one to five. The pattern echoes our 2025 report: the traditional strengths of the craft score highest.



The lowest scores sit in the areas that determine whether a journalism career is sustainable: freelancing, progression, business skills and audience development, alongside AI. The gap is between the craft of reporting and the skills needed to build a career around it, and may partly reflect how journalists are trained. Education and early-career development tend to prioritise the practical craft of reporting, from writing and interviewing to research and verification. These skills are essential, but building a sustainable career also requires an understanding of business models, audience development and career progression. If those areas receive less attention in training and early professional experience, journalists may enter the industry equipped to do the work but less prepared to navigate the commercial realities of sustaining it.

This points to a broader question about how well journalism education and early-career development prepare people for the realities of the profession beyond reporting itself. The ability to build an audience, understand the business behind journalism and navigate career progression can be as important to sustaining a career as the craft skills themselves. The results offer one indication of where journalists feel prepared, and where they see room to develop.

Indeed, these are self-ratings, and confidence tends to rise with experience, so they are best read as how prepared people feel rather than measured competence. Emerging journalists rate themselves lower on seven of the fourteen skills, notably digital tools and analytics (2.97 against 3.63 for established journalists), business and entrepreneurial skills (2.61 against 3.31), career progression (2.62 against 3.16), freelancing (2.53 against 3.10) and live reporting (2.83 against 3.40). They also rate themselves lower on writing (4.00 against 4.38) and interviewing (3.86 against 4.26). On multimedia production, verification, legal and ethical understanding, and AI, the two groups feel similarly equipped. Everyone feels under-prepared for AI.

7 of 14

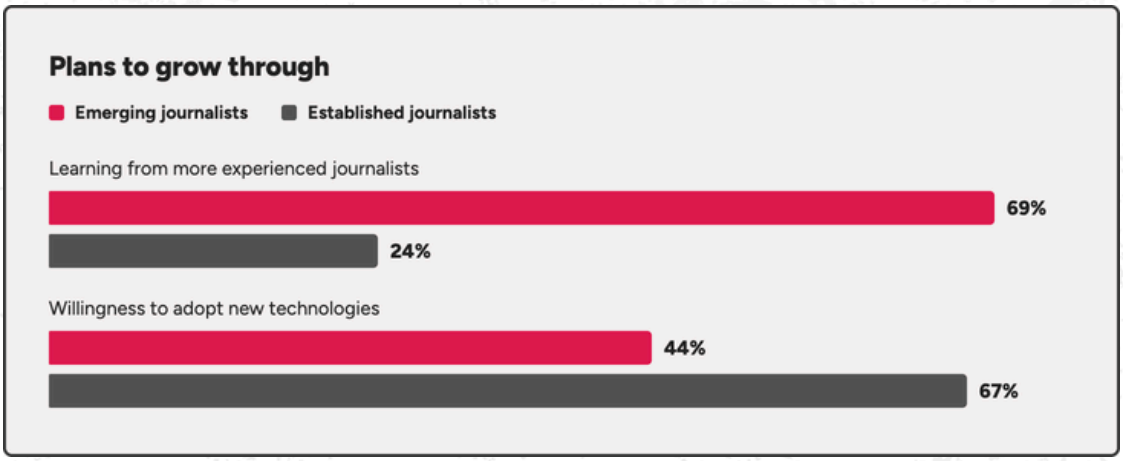
skills where emerging journalists rate themselves lower than established journalists

Among UK emerging respondents, confidence is in line with last year: writing at 4.00 (4.1 in 2025), research and fact-checking at 3.97 (3.9) and career progression at 2.40 (2.6). The higher scores across the full sample this year reflect a more experienced group of respondents, not an improvement in preparedness.

How journalists plan to grow

Asked how they plan to keep growing in a changing industry, respondents chose collaboration with a network of journalists (60%), willingness to adopt new technologies (55%), continuing professional development (CPD) and training (53%) and learning from more experienced journalists (46%).

The stage split is where the interesting questions lie:



Emerging journalists overwhelmingly want to learn from experienced colleagues (69%, and 71% of 18 to 25- year-olds), but only a quarter of established journalists name that as part of their own plans. And it is established journalists, not emerging ones, who are more likely to say they will adopt new technologies. The picture of a young, tech-hungry generation does not hold in this data.

> Trainees entering the profession are being trained by people who themselves don't have the depth of journalistic knowledge and experience required.
>
> **– EDITOR, UK.**

The finding challenges the assumption that younger journalists will naturally lead technology adoption. But willingness to adopt new tools may reflect professional experience and the opportunity to influence how technology is used, as much as familiarity with it. Established journalists may have a clearer view of where new tools can support newsroom priorities, while emerging journalists may have less control over decisions about their use.

As noted in the previous chapter, the junior role in journalism is changing significantly, and both education and industry onboarding need to adapt. While not a priority for the majority of established journalists, for emerging journalists, learning on the job from more experienced colleagues is becoming more important, not less.

The results raise important issues that need to be addressed by newsroom leaders: Firstly, the exchange between generations needs to be actively organised rather than left to chance. Secondly, openness to new technology needs to be matched by opportunities for journalists at every career stage to shape how it is introduced.

Diversity as an editorial quality issue

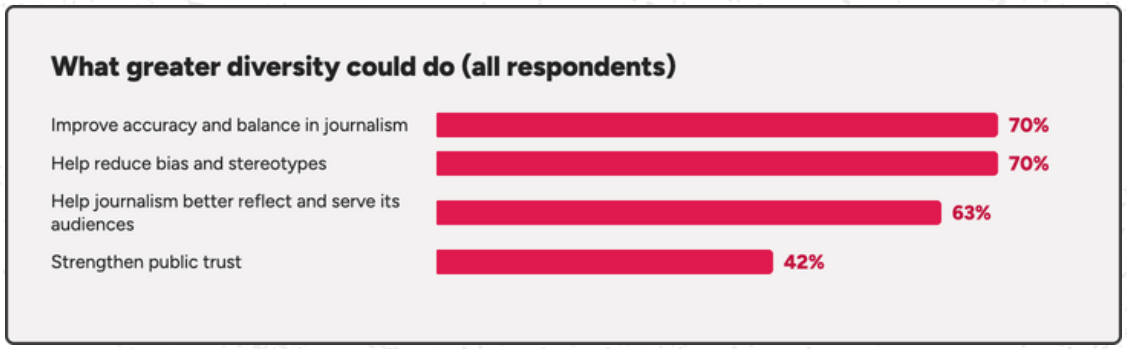
More than three-quarters (78%) rate diversity and representation as highly important for the future of journalism, with a high degree of agreement between emerging and established journalists.

That said, emerging journalists rate diversity as more important than established journalists do (4.23 against 3.86), and are more likely to link it to fairer access to careers (56% compared to 38%). That chimes with last year's data, which showed 89% of the emerging respondent base emphasising diversity's importance.

78%

rate diversity and representation as highly important for the future of journalism

This year, we also asked what difference greater diversity would make. Respondents link it first and foremost to the quality of reporting:



48% said it could make careers fairer and more accessible, while 45% said it could improve newsroom culture. Lack of diversity in hiring is named as a barrier to entry by 28% overall, a lower share than wages or competition, and is more often cited in the UK (38%) than in Germany (17%).

Respondents value diversity and connect it to editorial quality, but fewer identify a lack of diversity in hiring as a direct barrier to entering the profession. Overall, 28% identify it as a barrier to entry, compared with higher shares citing low starting wages and competition for jobs.

These are distinct measures: the perceived importance of diversity and its potential effect on reporting are not the same as whether respondents identify hiring practices as a personal barrier to entry.

One possible explanation for the gap is survivorship bias. Established journalists are, by definition, those who successfully entered the profession, and research suggests this entry point is not neutral. UK data shows that journalism students resemble the wider student body, yet those who secure jobs are less likely to come from under-represented backgrounds. Today, 80% of UK journalists come from professional or upper-class backgrounds, almost twice the rate of the wider workforce.

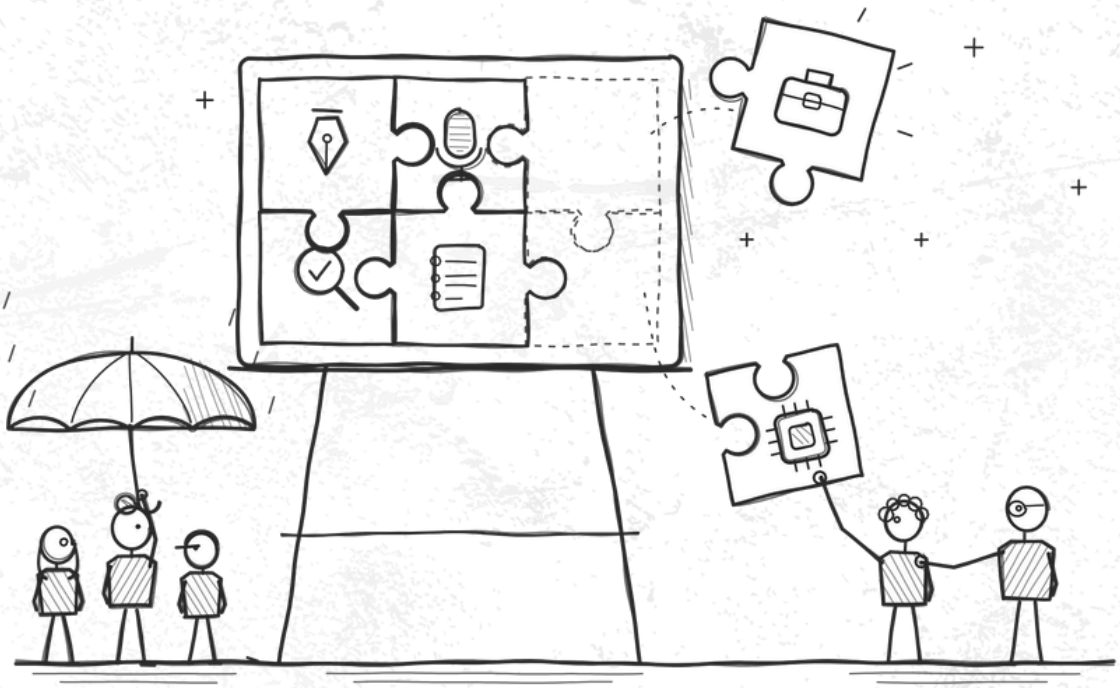
What this means

The skills findings highlight where respondents feel they need more support. For newsroom leaders, they offer a practical starting point for professional development. Business, career-progression and freelancing skills are where confidence is lowest, suggesting a need for more targeted support in areas that can be overlooked in day-to-day newsroom training. Mentoring is the clearest gap between what one career stage wants and what the other plans to offer; a formal scheme could turn that demand into a structured opportunity for knowledge-sharing and career guidance.

Diversity and representation are also central to the future of journalism. While respondents broadly agree on their importance, emerging journalists place greater emphasis on diversity and are more likely to connect it with fairer access to careers. This suggests that efforts to improve representation need to consider not only whose stories are told, but who gets the opportunity to enter and progress within the profession.

Educators have done their job on the craft. Writing, interviewing and fact-checking are strengths. The opportunity is in the skills graduates say they lack on arrival: business, freelancing, digital tools and AI.

Industry bodies and publishers should note that freelancers' sense of insecurity is as high as students', so sustainability programmes aimed only at entry-level pay will miss a large part of the workforce.



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CHAPTER

06

Bright spots: What's already working



Despite the pressures described in this report, respondents retain a strong sense of journalism's purpose. More than half entered the profession to tell important stories (55%), while 50% cite a love of writing. Respondents also identify practical ways to keep developing, particularly collaboration with other journalists (60%), adopting new technologies (55%) and continuing professional development (53%). These findings do not cancel out concerns about pay, job security or trust, but they show that the profession retains a strong commitment to its work and to learning.

Across the industry, a number of organisations and initiatives are helping journalists develop new skills, explore emerging technologies and build connections with others working in the profession. The following examples reflect some of the positive activity taking place around the themes identified in this year's research and set examples of how the industry can be driven and fortified through the involvement of experienced media and tech companies.

MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION

Founded by journalists Hayley McKenna and Jenny Sieg, The Fact Studio helps people navigate today's complex media landscape through media literacy education, including the challenges posed by social platforms, misinformation and AI. Its work speaks to the importance of maintaining public confidence in information, against a backdrop in which misinformation and the potential impact of AI on trust remain concerns for journalists.

USING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Source Code is a London-based meetup bringing journalists, developers, data scientists and editors together to explore the relationship between journalism and technology. Through in-person events, short talks and discussion, it creates opportunities to exchange ideas and learn from one another, reflecting two areas respondents see as important to their development: adopting new technologies (55%) and collaboration with other journalists (60%).

DEVELOPING NEW SKILLS

Journo Resources provides practical career resources for people entering and working in journalism. Its offering includes paid job and graduate-scheme listings, freelance rates and salary information, alongside workshops and training delivered by working journalists. By combining practical career guidance with opportunities to build new skills, it supports the ongoing development that 53% of respondents identify as important to their professional growth.

JournalismUK provides news, analysis, training, jobs and industry events for journalists and publishers. Its Newsrewired conference and media training offer opportunities to explore developments in digital publishing, share experience and keep up with changes across the industry, helping journalists build the knowledge they need to adapt as the profession evolves.

CONNECTING AND SUPPORTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Founded in 2024 by Rachel Duffy (Head of Community at The Times), the Young Journalist Network creates opportunities for emerging journalists to connect with peers and more experienced professionals. Through events, mentorship and career development opportunities, it helps address some of the challenges facing people trying to establish themselves in the industry, including access to advice and professional networks. This reflects the value respondents place on collaboration, identified by 60% as a way to continue developing, and the 69% of emerging journalists who plan to learn from more experienced colleagues.

The Journalism Innovation and Leadership Programme (JILeaders), run by the Media Innovation Studio at the University of Lancashire, supports media professionals looking to develop their leadership capabilities and navigate change in the industry. Its part-time postgraduate pathway brings together newsroom leaders and media professionals to explore the strategic, economic and societal challenges facing journalism, supported by mentoring and an international professional network. By combining practical career guidance with opportunities to build new skills, it speaks to respondents' emphasis on continuous learning as an important part of career development.

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CHAPTER

07

Conclusion: Supporting journalism at every stage



This year's research shows a profession committed to journalism's public purpose but concerned about the conditions needed to sustain it. The wider sample adds an important dimension to last year's report: while many pressures are shared, they are experienced differently across career stages and roles.

Across the report, three connected issues stand out:

1. Making journalism a viable career
2. Finding sustainable ways to fund and distribute news
3. Adopting AI without compromising verification, editorial judgement or public trust.

Addressing them requires attention to the conditions in which journalists work, as well as the technology and business models shaping the industry.

Trust remains central. Only 18% of respondents would trust AI to verify information, while 70% fear it could erode public trust. Journalists also expect AI summaries, short-form video and platform-led distribution to influence how news reaches audiences. For publishers, this means adapting to changing audience habits while maintaining clear editorial accountability and developing funding models that can support reliable journalism over the long term.

But the industry's capacity to respond depends on the people doing the work. Emerging journalists are particularly concerned about paid opportunities, competition and AI's potential impact on entry-level roles. Almost half (49%) would prioritise greater support for young and emerging journalists, compared with 17% of established respondents. Freelancers, meanwhile, report substantial concern about financial instability and job security, underlining that career insecurity extends beyond those entering the profession.



Turning shared experience into practical support

One of the clearest opportunities lies in connecting journalists at different career stages. Some 69% of emerging journalists plan to learn from more experienced colleagues, yet the research does not show an equivalent commitment from established journalists to provide that support. This is an opportunity for publishers and newsrooms, educators and industry bodies to turn informal goodwill into practical measures.

That could mean structured mentoring, clearer routes into paid work, and professional development that extends beyond reporting skills to cover freelancing, business models and career progression. It also means involving emerging journalists in decisions about new technology, giving them the training and guidance to use AI responsibly while protecting the opportunities through which they learn the craft. Experienced journalists can contribute practical knowledge and editorial judgement, while emerging colleagues bring their own expectations of changing formats, platforms and working practices and are often closer to younger audiences that news organisations find hard to reach

Support must work in both directions. Emerging journalists need access to experience, opportunities and a clearer understanding of how to build sustainable careers. Established journalists and freelancers also need support as business models, technology and working conditions change. Different career stages bring different perspectives, and effective development should recognise those differences rather than assume a single approach will work for everyone.

The findings provide a starting point for action: create stronger connections between experienced and emerging talent, make career development part of newsroom practice, and ensure journalists have a voice in how the profession adapts. Journalism's future depends not only on the stories it tells or the technologies it adopts, but on whether people can enter the profession, develop their skills, contribute their talent and build a working life within it.

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About Tickaroo

Tickaroo is a news and sports media software company supporting modern newsrooms with tools for live reporting and multimedia storytelling.

