



- 3 | Executive Summary
- 4 | Key Findings
- **5** Young Journalists Are Bringing Their Values to Work

DEI Is a Priority

Traditional Tenets of Journalism Hold Strong

9 Classic Reporting Methods Prevail—But AI and Social Media Are Useful Tools

Future Journalists Are Split on Al's Impact Next-Gen Journalists Are Already Harnessing the Power of Al Platforms Training Is Key as Al Advances

- 14 | Fighting Misinformation: The Next Generation Joins the Fray

  Journalists Should Lead the Fight Against Fake News
- **18** | Looking for Opportunity in the Midst of Crisis
- 19 | Survey Results
- 26 | Methodology and Demographics

# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The perspectives of the next generation will shape how the industry adapts to the complex problems it faces.

Between the record number of newsroom layoffs, plummeting trust in national media and the continued decimation of local news outlets, it's clear that journalism is facing an existential crisis. Yet fresh recruits continue to seek careers in journalism, drawn by a sense of mission and the opportunity to make a difference.

The perspectives of this next generation will shape how the industry adapts to the complex problems it faces. These include the potential threats from generative artificial intelligence (AI) and other technologies, the rampant spread of misinformation and disinformation on social media, and serious

challenges to the business models of many publications.

We decided to ask this critically important group what they think about the prospects for journalism and how they might approach these hurdles at a moment when the methods, structure and people doing the work are going through significant transformation. We surveyed 100 journalism students and professionals just starting out in the field to find out their perspectives on the debates currently dividing the field and their outlook on the future of journalism—including their view of emerging technologies that are not only changing how the media do their jobs, but could also threaten their livelihoods.

**74%** 

say AI will have a significant impact on journalism

Nearly three-quarters of respondents believe AI or automated journalism will have a significant impact on the profession, though only half think it poses a threat. In fact, many are already using Al-enabled tools for some aspects of their work. But they also embrace classic reporting methods and sourcing to generate story ideas and supply information, more than they rely on social media.

Overall, we found that while the next generation of journalists may be clear-eyed about the challenges ahead, they are passionate about their work and see it as a means of exposing injustice, informing the public and combatting misinformation and disinformation. They are also looking for diverse perspectives and sources to build trust among their readers and improve the quality of reporting, particularly when it comes to the coverage of marginalized communities.

Most importantly, despite the uphill battle ahead, they manage to maintain hope for the future of journalism.

#### **KEY FINDINGS**



have a positive outlook for journalism

# The next generation of journalists is purpose-driven and optimistic.

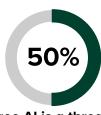
Nearly three-quarters have a positive outlook for journalism in the coming years and more than half cite providing accurate information or exposing injustice as primary motivating factors.



are concerned about diversity in the field

#### DEI is a priority.

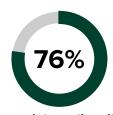
Nearly six in 10 are concerned about the current level of racial, gender and economic representation in journalism.



agree AI is a threat to journalists and those in related careers

# Al is expected to have a significant impact on journalism.

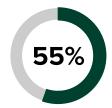
Half of respondents view it as a threat, but many also use Al tools for research and writing.



say social media will or could worsen the spread of misinformation

# Traditional journalistic methods still outweigh social media for reporting.

The majority say social media does play an important role in measuring impact, but it's also a key spreader of false or misleading information.



say the prevalence of fake news has reinforced their interest in journalism

# Nearly half expect misinformation and disinformation to worsen in the coming year.

But more than half say the prevalence of fake news has reinforced their commitment to journalism, and nine in 10 plan to do what they can to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation.



# YOUNG JOURNALISTS ARE BRINGING THEIR VALUES TO WORK

Younger journalists are approaching their careers with a sense of purpose. They are motivated by the ideals of truth, justice and the importance of diversity and inclusion—and they are passionate about making an impact. As one student at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism said before graduation: "My classmates give me hope for the future of journalism because they are passionate about examining social and systemic issues with in-depth reporting."

All but one of the top reasons our respondents cited for pursuing journalism focused on providing a service to others (the one outlier was learning new things, which was cited by 49% of respondents). Among their top motivations:

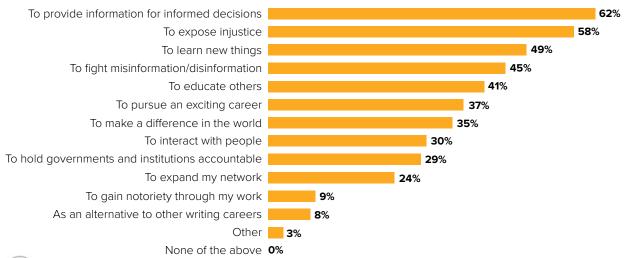
- Providing information for informed decisions (62%)
   Fighting misinformation and disinformation (45%)

Exposing injustice (58%)

Educating readers (41%)

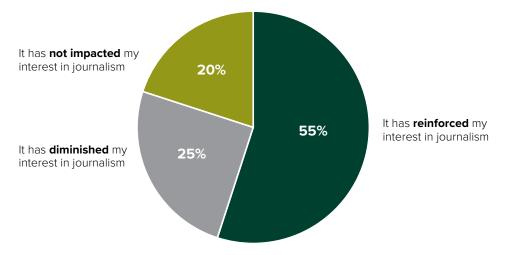
In fact, more than half (55%) of the next generation of journalists say that the propagation of misinformation and disinformation reinforced their interest in the profession, presumably by providing a deeper purpose to their work.







#### How has the prevalence of misinformation and/or disinformation impacted your interest in journalism?



#### **DEI** Is a Priority

Our survey found that diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is a significant concern for up-and-coming journalists in a field where, despite some strides, representation continues to lag behind U.S. demographics—especially when it comes to race and ethnicity. A 2022 Pew Research survey found that just <u>6% of journalists whose jobs involve reporting</u> are Black (Black Americans account for <u>about 15%</u> of the U.S. population); the same study identified similar degrees of underrepresentation for both Hispanic and Asian reporters.

A majority of our respondents (59%) say they are concerned about the current level of diversity in journalism among leadership and practitioners, a finding that comes amid <u>persistent measurement hurdles</u> and <u>sluggish changes to hiring practices</u>. These concerns are in line with other young professionals broadly: a separate Pew Research study, for example, <u>found that</u> the 18-29 age cohort was more likely than any other to see DEI efforts in the workplace as a good thing. Older journalists on the other hand—particularly those above the age of 65—were <u>considerably less</u> <u>likely</u> to take issue with the current level of newsroom racial diversity.

Indeed, many of our survey respondents believe that diversity in the profession across racial, gender and economic categories is foundational for good reporting. One respondent suggested that an absence of diversity could lead to "stereotyping, misrepresentation, and a failure to accurately reflect the experiences and perspectives of communities of color." Others voiced concerns about narrow coverage and "social imbalance" on topics in the news. Another respondent surmised that limited perspectives could result in losing "people's trust and support."

Journalism programs are reflecting—and likely shaping—these priorities. Most respondents either agree (37%) or strongly agree (48%) that their journalism program teaches the importance of having diverse sources in reporting. And 83% agree or strongly agree their professors emphasize the importance of incorporating diverse voices in reporting.



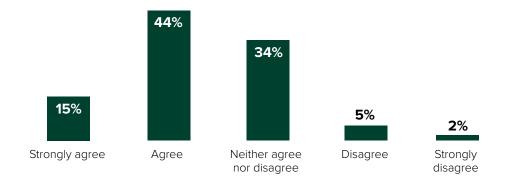
"Journalism aspires to in some way reflect society and tell truths and stories that represent society, and you can't really do that very well if you don't represent and reflect that society in your newsrooms," said Gerry Lanosga, director of journalism and an associate professor at Indiana University Bloomington's Media School. "We're trying to address it, but it's a difficult hurdle to get over."

Our survey findings suggest that efforts to <a href="improve diversity">improve diversity</a> in journalism are changing attitudes, particularly at the younger end of the profession, with the potential to create impact beyond the field. Organizations responding to media requests often take cues from journalists about who to make available for quotes and perspectives. Our <a href="2022 State of DEl">2022 State of DEl</a>
<a href="Content">Content</a> survey, for example, found that the majority of legal marketing executives surveyed believe elevating diverse voices can further their firm's DEl efforts. Nextgen journalists' focus on the issue could accelerate that trend as reporters increasingly look to diversify their sourcing.



#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

I am concerned about the current level of diversity in journalism among practitioners/leadership.



#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

In my journalism program, I am being taught the importance of having diverse sources.

48% Strongly agree

37% Agree

My professors have emphasized the importance of incorporating diverse voices in reporting.

34% Strongly agree 49% Agree 83%



85%

#### Traditional Tenets of Journalism Hold Strong

While the next generation places greater emphasis on diversity in perspectives and sources than some more seasoned journalists, our respondents continue to value objectivity and fact-based reporting. In fact, our survey found almost all respondents see impartiality as an obligation: asked if journalists should strive to present impartiality in the news, just 2% of respondents disagreed. This comes even as the broader industry grapples with questions surrounding truth and perspective and what <u>objectivity actually means in practice</u> and the <u>value it holds</u> for reporting.

Still, for the small number of respondents who disagree, they reject the standard of impartiality in favor of a practical perspective they believe better reflects the world we live in—and, in some cases, the historic exclusion of some perspectives from mainstream journalism. One young journalist explained that he has "grown to believe that journalists at their core can't be objective, meaning that fake news and misinformation [have] been in journalism forever. Media historically has been misrepresenting minorities for years."

Another respondent, when asked about the role of objectivity in rebuilding journalism, had simply "come to terms with the fact that objectivity is not possible" and that journalists should "brand" themselves according to their perspectives. This may reflect the current divisive climate and shifts in the industry as publications increasingly cater to <u>politically polarized audiences</u>.





The next generation of journalists still relies heavily on tried-and-true techniques from the reporter's toolbox to source and verify information, though emerging technologies like Al are gaining ground in other aspects of the work.

Our survey found nearly all (97%) respondents report using top-tier publications and government agencies and organizations to generate story ideas, research topics, source intelligence and/or vet information. Similarly, other traditional sources of information, such as reporting in the field (94%), drawing from a network of primary sources (92%), and looking to experts and think tanks (92%), are immensely popular resources for young journalists.

Lanosga noted that journalism students are taught to think of the profession primarily as "a discipline of verification" along with the specific tools to fact-check information. Even as new technologies become available, he said that the essentials of ensuring accuracy are "not very different from what journalists have been doing all along," except that they're occurring "in this hyped-up environment where disinformation can spread so easily."

Journalism students are taught to think of the profession as "a discipline of verification."

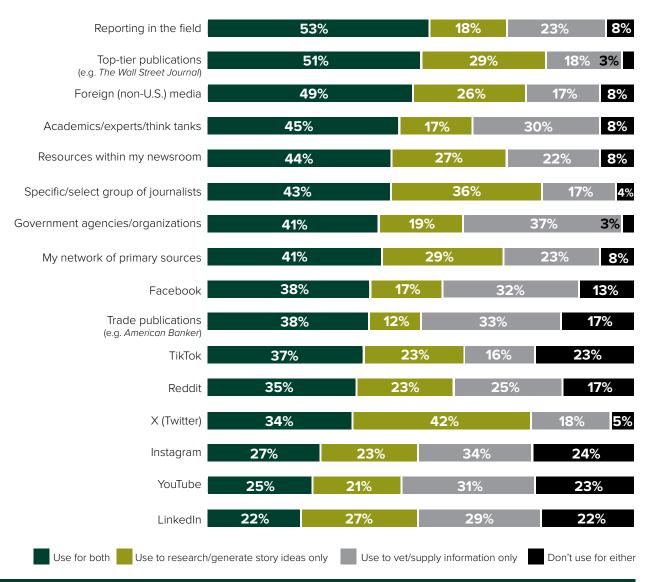
Notably, young journalists were far less reliant on social media in their reporting, perhaps due to its association with misinformation. With the exception of Twitter (<u>now rebranded as "X"</u>)—which 42% of respondents use to research and generate story ideas—and to a lesser extent, Facebook, nearly a quarter of respondents said they do not use platforms like TikTok (23%), Instagram (24%), YouTube (23%), LinkedIn (22%) and Reddit (17%) for either generating story ideas or supplying information.

Yet the next generation does recognize social media as an important element of distribution for journalists and publications, with respondents saying that social media shares are either moderately important (41%) or very important (45%) in measuring impact. When <a href="half">half</a> of U.S. adults get their news from social media platforms at least some of the time, and as trust in traditional media declines, meeting Americans on these platforms is simply a necessity for effective distribution.



This complicated relationship with social media aligns with the perspectives of working journalists, the majority of whom <u>see social media as a useful tool</u> for promoting stories, connecting with their audience, and finding sources and stories to cover, even if most of them also think it has had a negative impact on the state of journalism.





#### Future Journalists Are Split on Al's Impact

Looking ahead, nearly three-quarters of respondents (74%) agree that artificial intelligence or automated journalism will have a significant impact on the industry. However, when it comes to whether these changes pose a danger to journalists and those in related careers, respondents are decidedly more divided. Only half (50%) agree to some degree that it poses a threat, while approximately a quarter are neutral (24%) or disagree (26%).

Concerns about the potential hazards of Al echo the broader conversation in the media about how the technology—specifically generative Al, which can generate content out of whole cloth from prompts in a matter of seconds—could eliminate jobs and accelerate the spread of misinformation.



As University of Washington Associate Professor Kate Starbird, an expert in Al, <u>recently noted</u>, "Generative Al creates content that sounds reasonable and plausible, but has little regard for accuracy."

For these reasons, the introduction of platforms like ChatGPT prompted <u>anxious</u> <u>predictions</u> and <u>sweeping assertions</u> about the ways Al could change journalism—and some respondents agree that it has the potential to render journalists "obsolete" and "cause social panic."

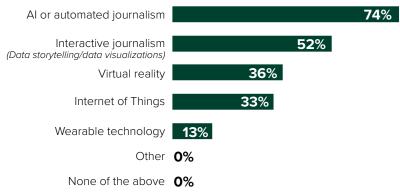
Several highlight Al's potential as a tool that's capable of both progress and harm. Some respondents, however, tend to ultimately view Al as a threat—"unnecessary in journalism," as one said, adding "I feel if anything it spreads even more misinformation."

Another said: "We don't need Al to write for us, we can write for ourselves. A robot should not be portraying human events and the human experience." Others note that Al could potentially replace journalists. "Once Al has the ability to contextualize information, reason as to why it's important, and organize it in such a way to make it engaging and understandable—all in the matter of seconds—human journalists could become obsolete," said one respondent.

"Students always have a really nuanced view of technology, whether it's Al or social media," said Amy Merrick, a senior professional lecturer at DePaul University's College of Communication and former reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* who includes discussions on the impact of Al as part of her syllabus. "As a group, they always can clearly see the benefits and the shortcomings of any of the technologies we're talking about."

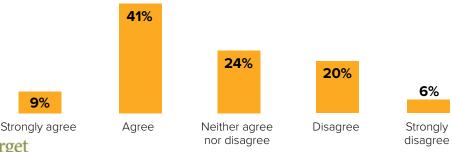
We don't need
Al to write for
us, we can write
for ourselves."

# Which of the following emerging technologies do you feel will have a significant impact on journalism? (select all that apply)



#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

The introduction of Al into journalism is a threat to journalists and those in related careers.





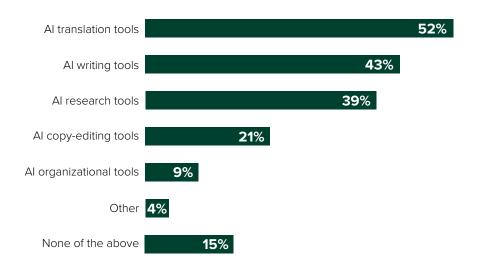
#### Next-Gen Journalists Are Already Harnessing the Power of Al Platforms

Respondents report using a wide range of Al tools for research, writing and editing. Some say they use Al for work including data analysis, photo processing and video editing; to improve production efficiency; or even to detect and combat misinformation. This comes as experts have also noted the potential for Al tools to <u>assist reporters</u>—and <u>understaffed newsrooms in particular</u>—with a variety of tasks, including compiling stories, targeting specific audiences and measuring impact through views and shares. Recognizing this potential, Google has begun to <u>market its Al tools</u> to both large and small newsrooms.

Interestingly, our survey found that Al-based translation tools (such as Google Translate, DeepL and Mirai Translate) are the most popular, used by 52% of respondents, suggesting a diversity of sources and/or audiences. Significant shares of respondents also report using Al writing tools like ChatGPT and Jasper (43%), Al research tools like Semantic Scholar and Bit.ai (39%), and Al copyediting tools like Anyword (21%), demonstrating both a familiarity with and an openness to using these emerging technologies.

Respondents' widespread use of technology tools likely has its roots in their education and training. Many journalism schools appear to have accepted that both social media and the burgeoning use of Al-enabled tools are here to stay and that being proficient at using them will be an increasingly important aspect of the profession. When asked to assess whether social media was a core component of their journalism instruction—for example, as a topic regularly covered in lectures, reading materials and assignments—more than eight in 10 respondents either agree (54%) or strongly agree (28%). While Al has not penetrated the curriculum to the same extent, a majority (57%) say the use and impact of Al in journalism is or was part of their education.

# Which of the following artificial intelligence tools have you used in your journalism work? (select all that apply)





#### Training Is Key as Al Advances

As these tools become more sophisticated and their usage more widespread, training on how to properly use them will be crucial. The "journalistic disaster" at CNET earlier this year, when the publication was forced to issue substantial corrections for a number of Al-written articles, demonstrates how important it is for future journalists to understand the pitfalls and risks as well as the potential of these tools.

"You see a lot of advice that AI can provide a good first draft, for example," Merrick said. "But the act of writing refines your thoughts, so if you skip that work, it's necessarily going to be more shallow and you're going to have fewer original insights. What is going to set you apart in the industry at this point is providing those original insights, the information that people can't get elsewhere, connecting different disciplines."

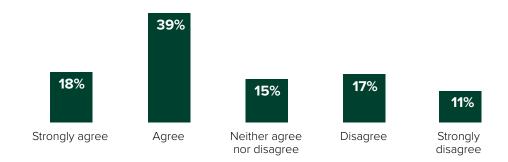
The foundational techniques of journalism—boots-on-the-ground reporting, talking to experts, synthesizing new information—require human interactions, complex problem-solving and sound judgement. Journalists look to their networks of sources, public relations contacts and trusted experts to verify and source stories that are informative, useful and timely.



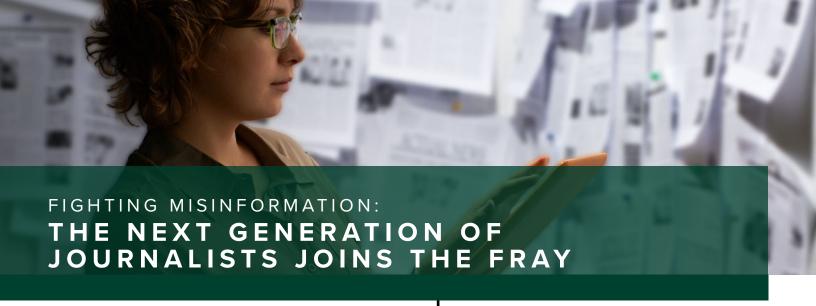
Generative AI platforms, on the other hand, use machine learning algorithms and are trained on enormous datasets that allow them to create new content modeled on what has come before in response to prompts. While this makes them a powerful summarization and explanatory tool—and the technology continues to evolve new applications—whether these platforms can source new, accurate, attributable information for breaking news stories or investigative journalism has yet to be demonstrated.

#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

The impact and use of AI in journalism is/was a component of my journalism education.







In our <u>2021 survey of veteran journalists</u>, we found that nearly all (93%) believe that misinformation and disinformation negatively impact journalism, and it appears the next generation agrees. Journalism students and new professionals are deeply concerned about the rampant spread of misinformation and disinformation—and similarly conflicted about how to address it.

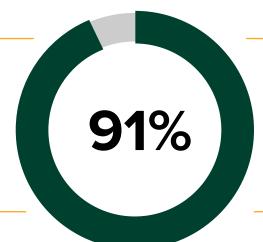
Our survey found that 91% of young journalists agree or strongly agree that misinformation (information that is false) and disinformation (information that is intentionally fabricated) negatively impact journalism. Among the reasons: reduced integrity, loss of trust and credibility, the potential for legal action and the possibility of provoking conflict—a phenomenon on full display on several occasions in recent years, including the <u>January 6th insurrection</u> when false claims of election fraud led to protesters swarming the Capitol and attacking journalists and police.

#### MISINFORMATION:

False or inaccurate information that is mistakenly or inadvertently created or spread without the intent to deceive.

#### **DISINFORMATION:**

False information that is deliberately created and spread to influence public opinion or obscure the truth.



say misinformation and/ or disinformation negatively impact journalism.

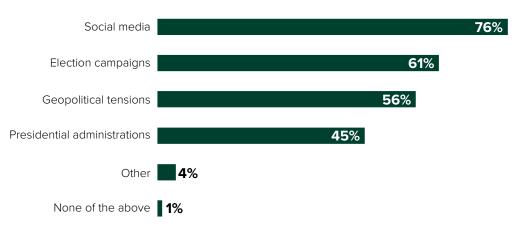


Furthermore, the majority of respondents (78%) agree or strongly agree that misinformation and/or disinformation have delegitimized traditional journalism and news sources. This undermining has been two-fold, coming both externally from influential public figures, such as former President Donald Trump's public attacks on "dishonest journalists," and internally from the industry itself, as prominent media outlets such as Fox News repeatedly broadcast claims they knew to be false. Reflecting this phenomenon, respondents cite election campaigns (61%), presidential administrations (45%), and geopolitical tensions (56%) among the factors that worsen the spread of misinformation and disinformation.

And more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents selected social media as a factor that will or could potentially worsen the spread of misinformation and disinformation, reflecting the generally held belief that social media is a primary vehicle for spreading and amplifying incorrect information. These current and future journalists are digital natives who came of age in an era marked by election-related <u>disinformation campaigns</u> on social media and the rampant spread of COVID misinformation on platforms like Facebook—not to mention a president who famously used social media to attack the press.

# Which factors do you think will or could potentially worsen the spread of misinformation and disinformation?

(select all that apply)





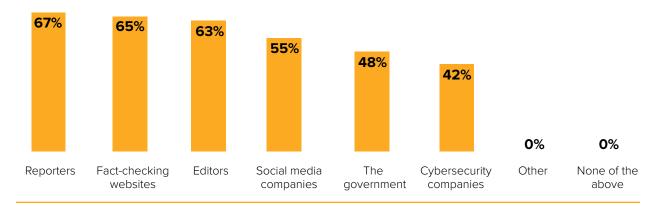
#### Journalists Should Lead the Fight Against Fake News

When it comes to addressing the spread of false or misleading information circulated by news outlets and social media, respondents place much of the responsibility on the profession itself—results that parallel what veteran journalists told Greentarget in 2020 and 2021. Among next-gen journalists, 67% say reporters should be tasked with identifying and combatting inaccurate information circulated by news outlets and social media, with fact-checking websites (65%) a close second, and editors coming in third at 63%. Fewer chose social media companies, the government and cybersecurity companies, which accounted for 55%, 48% and 42% of responses, respectively.

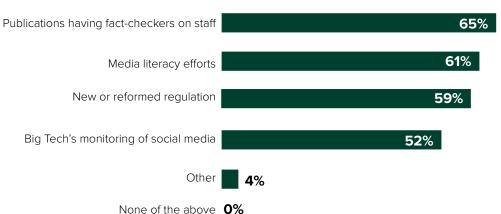
Survey respondents also cite several methods they believe can mitigate the spread of misinformation and disinformation, led by publications having fact-checkers on staff (65%)— something that is, however, increasingly rare at daily and online news organizations. Other top choices are media literacy efforts (61%), new or reformed regulation (59%), and Big Tech's monitoring of social media (52%). Their responses reflect more optimism than those of the veteran journalists we surveyed in our **2021 survey**, only 35% of whom said media literacy efforts had a moderate or high impact in lessening the spread of fake news.

# Who/which of the following should be tasked with identifying and combating inaccurate information that is circulated by news outlets as well as social media?

(select all that apply)



# Which factors do you believe will or could potentially mitigate the spread of misinformation and/or disinformation? (select all that apply)





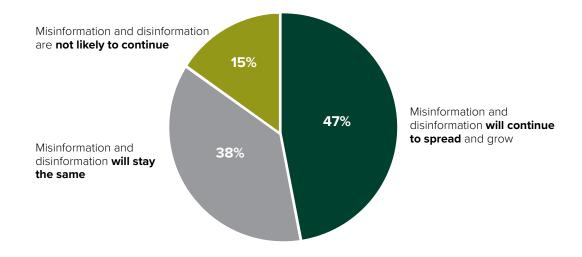
Recent developments have revealed some practical challenges to those proposed solutions. The number of fact-checking outlets has <u>leveled off</u> over the past several years (and few publications have in-house teams). Meanwhile, legislation or regulations aimed at curbing misinformation and disinformation seems unlikely to progress, as fact-checking has become a <u>politically polarized</u> issue.

On the social media front, recent court decisions also pose a challenge to stemming the tide of misinformation and disinformation through legal or regulatory means. In May 2023, the <u>Supreme</u> <u>Court</u> declined in two cases to hold technology platforms liable for user-generated content, while in July 2023, a federal judge in Louisiana <u>limited</u> much of the federal government from even speaking with social media companies about moderating content.

Yet another issue is whether social media platforms have both the will and ability to vet the staggering amount of content produced by users. Amid economic troubles, many platforms have already cut their <u>content moderation teams</u>. And National Public Radio's decision earlier this year to <u>leave X</u> after the platform labeled the broadcaster "state-affiliated media"—the same term used for propaganda outlets in authoritarian countries—clearly demonstrates the hazards of relying on Big Tech to fact-check information.

At an individual level, survey respondents are willing to take matters into their own hands. More than nine in 10 respondents (91%) plan to do what they can to combat misinformation and disinformation. Yet many also recognize they are fighting an uphill battle—with nearly half (47%) expecting misinformation and disinformation to get worse in the coming year.

#### Where do you think the trajectory of misinformation/disinformation is headed within the next year?



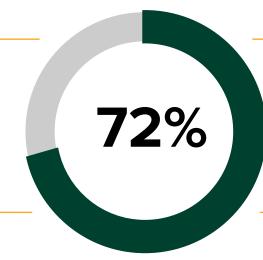


# LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITY IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

Despite the many challenges journalism currently faces—economic struggles, proliferating misinformation and disinformation, declining public trust—the next generation of journalists are bringing their commitment to truth, justice and integrity to their work.

They're also optimistic. Asked what the next decade may hold for the future of journalism, not a single respondent is "very negative" in their outlook and nearly three-quarters (72%) are somewhat or very positive.

We believe these results are encouraging—and that the future of journalism is in good hands.

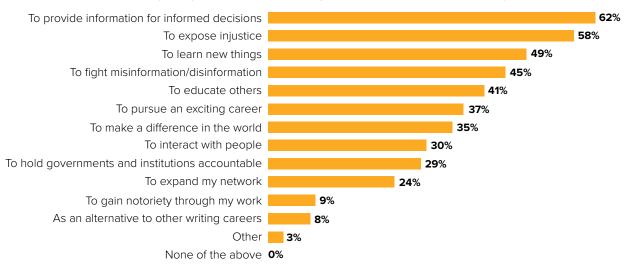


have a positive outlook for journalism over the next decade.



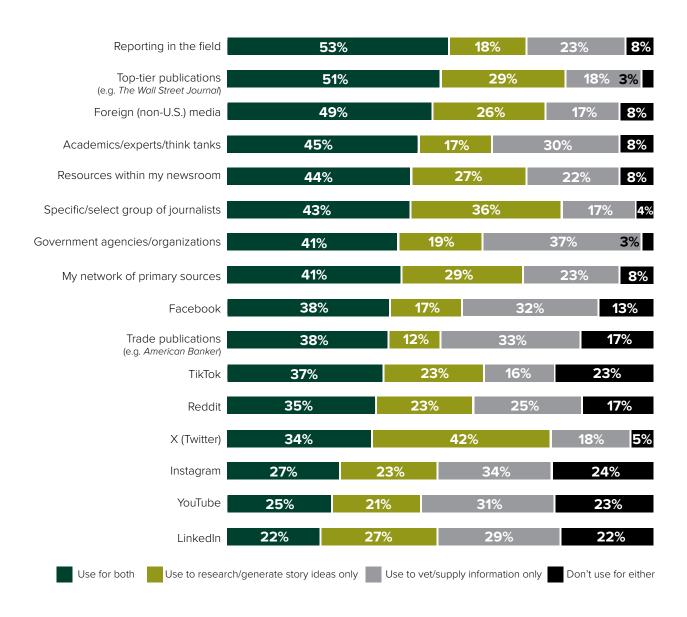


#### Why did you decide to pursue journalism? (select all that apply)





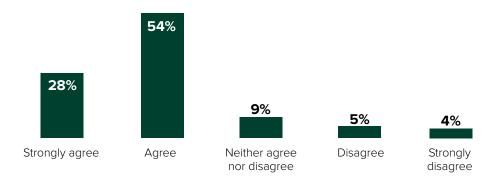
#### Which of the following do you use to research/generate story ideas versus to vet/supply information?



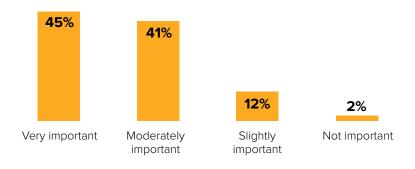


#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

Social media is/was a core component of my journalism education (e.g., regularly covered in lectures, reading materials, assignments).

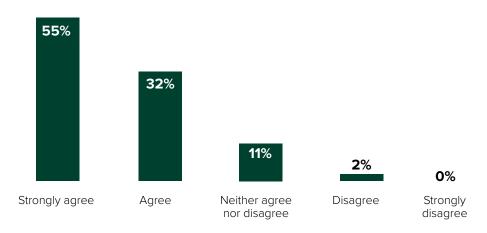


#### How important are social media shares to measuring impact?



#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

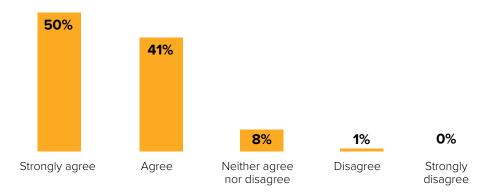
Journalists should strive to present impartiality in the news.



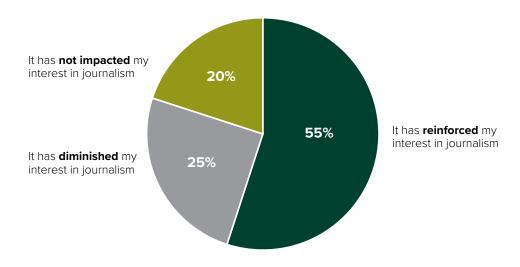


#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

Misinformation and/or disinformation negatively impact journalism.

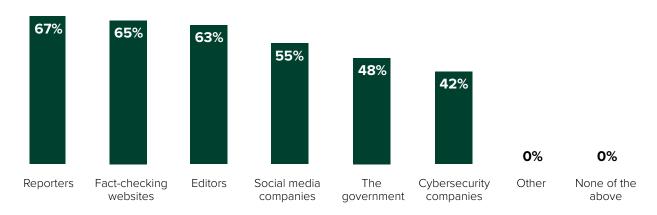


#### How has the prevalence of misinformation and/or disinformation impacted your interest in journalism?



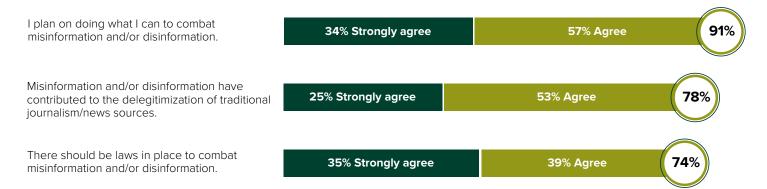
### Who/which of the following should be tasked with identifying and combating inaccurate information that is circulated by news outlets as well as social media?

(select all that apply)

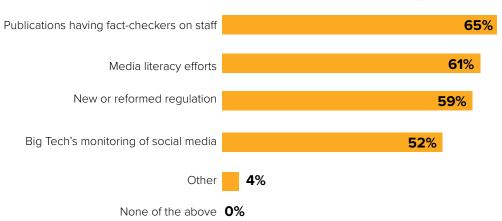




#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

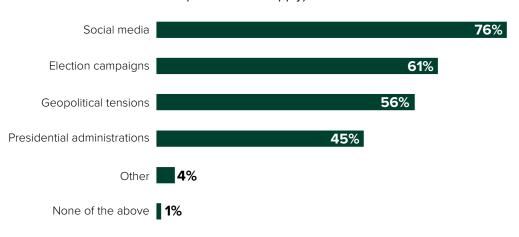


# Which factors do you believe will or could potentially mitigate the spread of misinformation and/or disinformation? (select all that apply)



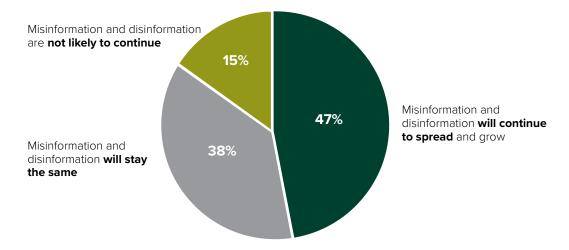
### Which factors do you think will or could potentially worsen the spread of misinformation and disinformation?

(select all that apply)

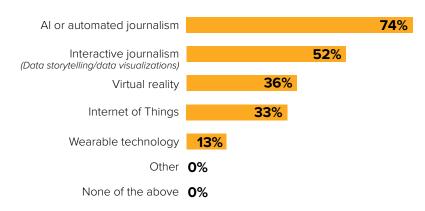




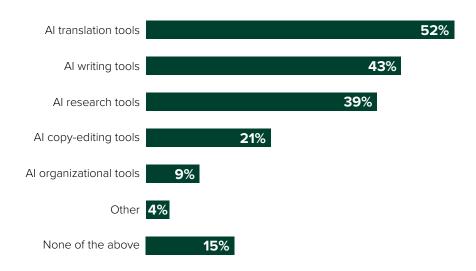
#### Where do you think the trajectory of misinformation/disinformation is headed within the next year?



# Which of the following emerging technologies do you feel will have a significant impact on journalism? (select all that apply)



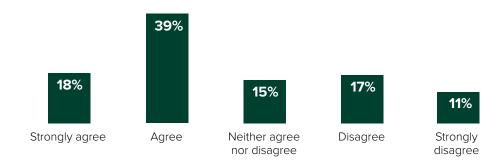
# Which of the following artificial intelligence tools have you used in your journalism work? (select all that apply)





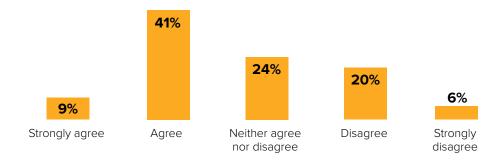
#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

The impact and use of AI in journalism is/was a component of my journalism education.



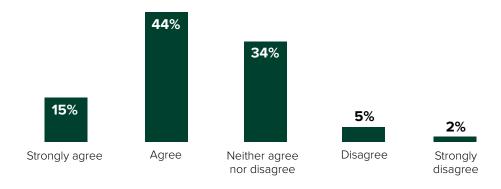
#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

The introduction of AI into journalism is a threat to journalists and those in related careers.



#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

I am concerned about the current level of diversity in journalism among practitioners/leadership.





#### Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

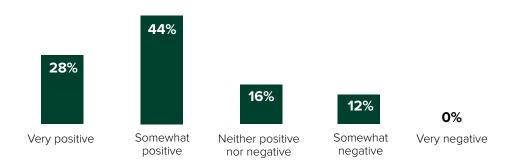


48% Strongly agree 37% Agree 85%

34% Strongly agree 49% Agree 83%

My professors have emphasized the importance of incorporating diverse voices in reporting.

As you think about what the next decade may hold for journalism, what is your overall outlook?

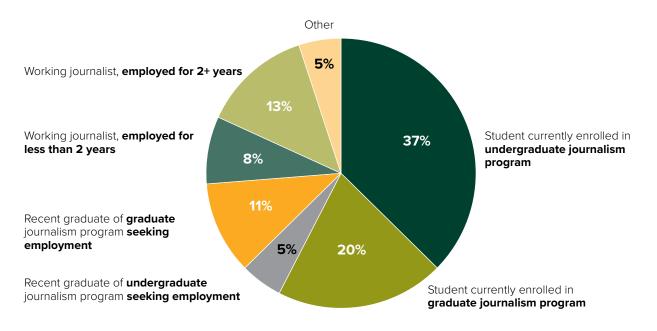




# METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

In the second quarter of 2023, Greentarget conducted qualitative and quantitative research to inform this study. We conducted several in-depth interviews and distributed an online survey to 10 journalist groups and 40 colleges and universities. The survey was completed by 100 respondents, largely emerging and current journalists based in the U.S. Responses were anonymous and data was analyzed in the aggregate. The sum of the percentages in questions where respondents were asked to select all that apply will likely exceed 100%, and percentages in certain single-response questions may also not quite add up to 100% due to rounding.

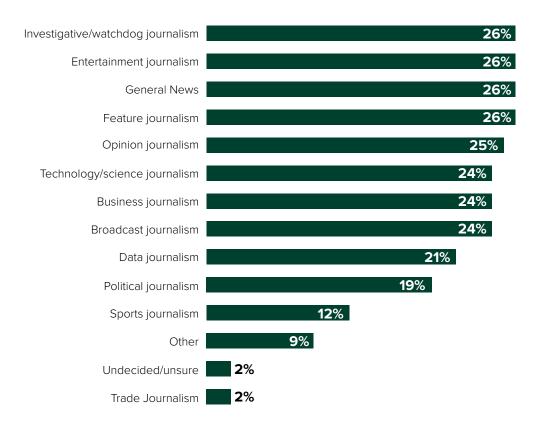
#### What title best describes your role?





#### Which best describes your current aspirational field(s) of journalism?

(select all that apply)

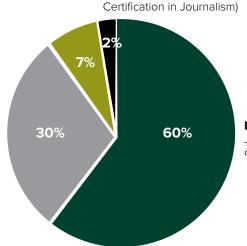


#### Which best describes the academic degree you attained/are in the process of attaining?

**Other** (Bachelor of Science in Journalism, Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Public Relations;

Master of Science in Journalism, Mass Communications, Journalism & Mass Communications or related

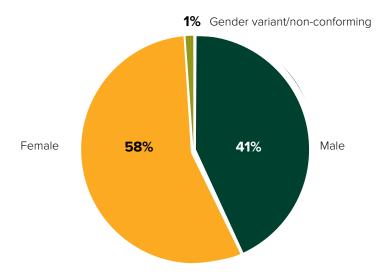
Master of Arts in Journalism, Mass Communications, Journalism & Mass Communications or related



**BA** in Journalism, Mass Communications, Journalism & Mass Communications or related

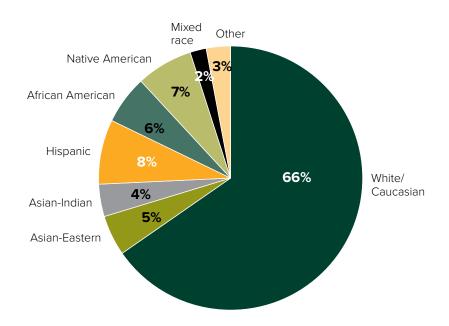


#### To which gender identity do you most identify?



#### What is your ethnic background?

(select all that apply)







# **CONTACT US**

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