



FTI SURVEY: THE FUTURE OF THE NEWSROOM POST-PANDEMIC

June 2021

FTI SURVEY: THE FUTURE OF THE NEWSROOM POST-PANDEMIC

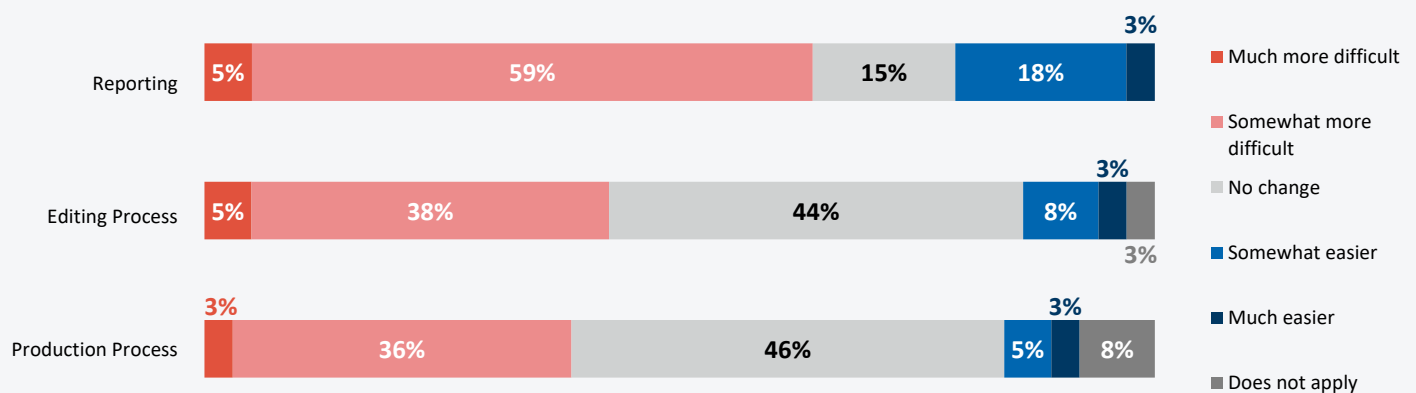
Amid nonstop news coverage of remote work, return to the office and the hybrid future of work, what does this look like for a unique industry, such as journalism, that relies on person-to-person sourcing and engagement? FTI Consulting's Strategic Communications segment conducted research with top tier journalists, sourced through our media contacts, to understand the cultural impact that the pandemic has on the way news is reported and delivered, and expectations of what the newsroom will look like moving forward as more media and their executive and expert sources return to the newsroom.

This insight piece utilized research from an FTI pulse survey, conducted from May 6 - June 9, 2021, including responses from n=44 reporters, editors, and producers based in the United States. Respondents invited to participate anonymously included *Bloomberg*, *Business Insider*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Post*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*. Here are the highlights from our research:

THE CHALLENGE OF REMOTE REPORTING

The pandemic has fundamentally impacted journalism, making it more challenging for practitioners. In fact, 64% of media professionals participating in this survey indicated that the reporting process has become more difficult over the past 18 months.

Q: How have the following changed for you as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



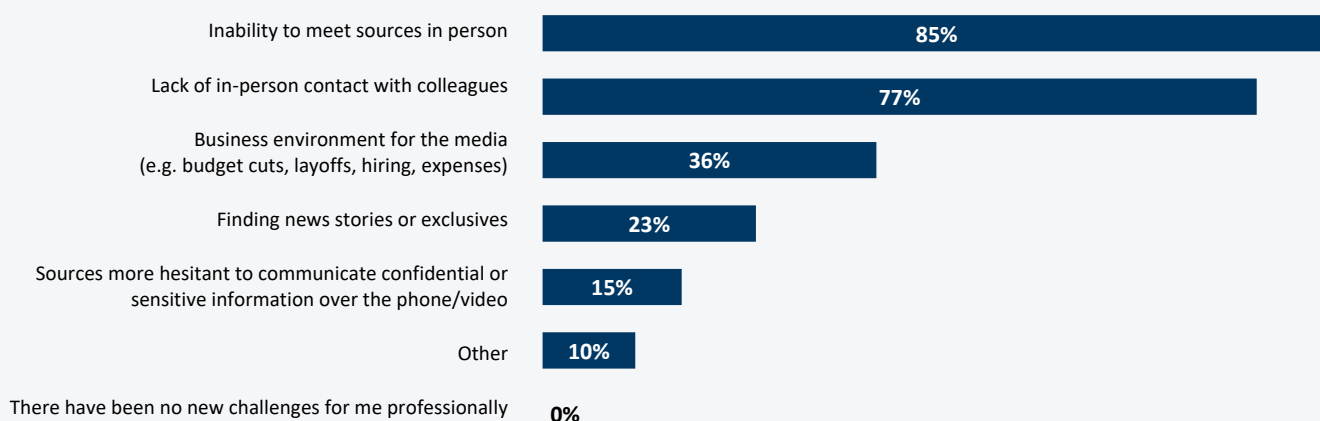
Specifically, the lack of personal contact was seen as the biggest difficulty. This sentiment was echoed by others, with 85% of respondents indicating the inability to meet sources in person as the biggest challenge they faced during the pandemic. Furthermore, 77% noted the lack of in-person contact with colleagues as a significant professional challenge for them.

Despite these challenges, three-quarters (74%) believe the media responded well to the new ways of working during the pandemic, potentially indicating that the landscape of the pre-pandemic newsroom may not go back to where it once was – at least initially.

JOURNALIST COMMENT

“The biggest challenge for me has been building new sources in a work-from-home scenario, which is possible, but more difficult because we can't meet contacts in person.”

Q: What new challenges have you faced professionally due to the COVID-19 pandemic?



THE HYBRID NEWSROOM

The future of the physical newsroom is another important aspect of journalism. Before the pandemic, 62% worked in the newsroom daily. However, as a result of the pandemic, just 16% expect to return daily, with 43% expecting to be in the newsroom between two to three days a week, and 14% expecting to return once a week.

Moreover, one-quarter (24%) expect to stay mostly remote after the pandemic. One journalist noted that they “expect to never return to the newsroom.” With newsrooms already shrinking, it’s striking to see how the pandemic could, in fact, be the catalyst to accelerate this trend.

JOURNALIST COMMENT

“I found that Zoom/audio/phone interviews also went more quickly. Of course, the detail gathered during in person interviews was sacrificed.”

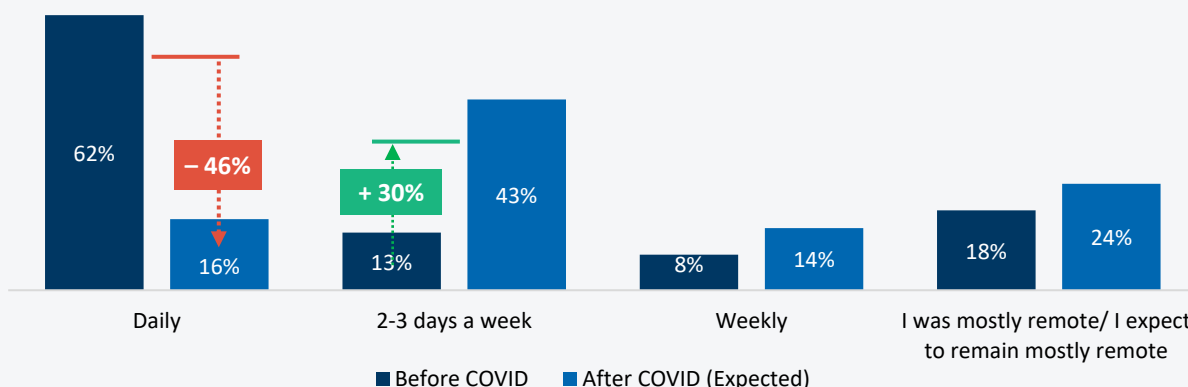
However, at least in the short-term, a majority of our respondents expect to return, at least on a part-time basis, by August (10%) or September (44%).

JOURNALIST COMMENT

"I don't ever expect to return to the newsroom."

Q: How often were you in the newsroom before the COVID-19 pandemic?

Q: How often do you expect to be in the newsroom when health issues from the COVID-19 pandemic are no longer a notable concern?



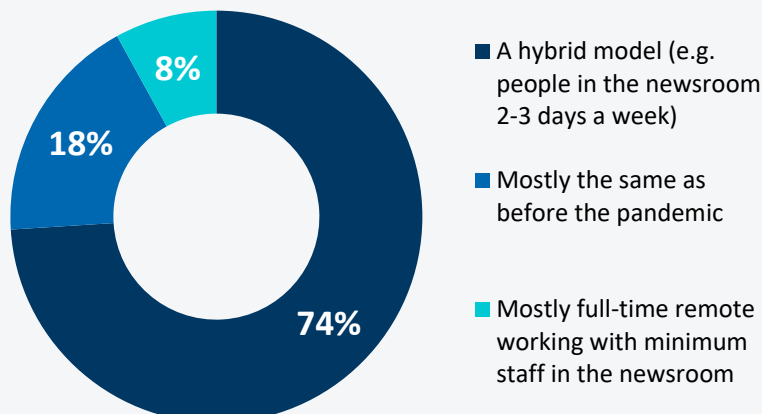
What is clear is that the preference and expectation moving forward is for a hybrid newsroom, with 74% believing this model will be the future.

It's still unclear what the full implications are for journalism as we know it, though some permanent shifts are inevitable, including a notable group of media that will continue to work remotely or visit the newsroom on a part-time basis. This could have a longer-term impact on the industry, with the time journalists save in commutes and the time saved in schedule flexibility translating into the execution and quality of the reporting – for good or for bad.

JOURNALIST COMMENT

"The management of the print/online publication I work for may decide to return to having most reporters in the newsroom on a daily basis or they may decide to keep the hybrid model that will be initially set up once reporters return to the newsroom."

Q: What do you expect the future of the newsroom to look like as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?



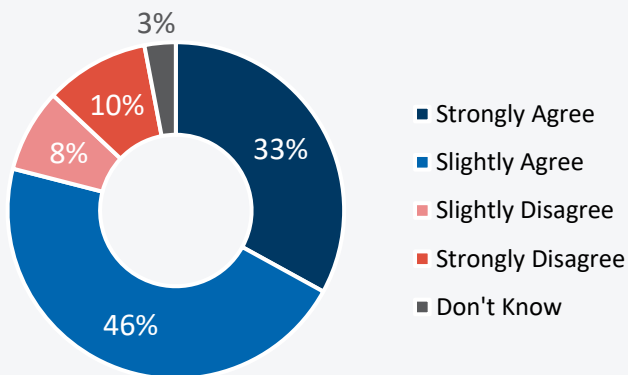
MEDIA REMAINS CRUCIAL, BUT TRUST DEFICIT REMAINS

Driven by an eventful past year, an overwhelming majority of journalists (97%) believe the role of the media within society has never been more important, with 85% of respondents strongly agreeing with this sentiment. This unified opinion speaks to the strong sense of mission within the industry that has not faltered amidst recent challenges.

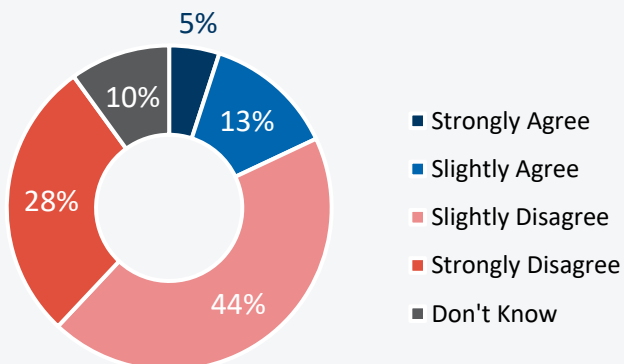
However, despite their crucial role during the pandemic, journalists fear the public's trust in the media is waning, with just 18% of our media contacts believing that trust in the media is higher now than before the pandemic. Now, more than ever, the media is under intense pressure from the public.

Q: How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The media has done its job for society during the pandemic



People trust the media more now than before the pandemic



JOURNALIST COMMENT

"The last year has shown us the importance of authenticity in media, and the importance of building personal brands as journalists. We've been looking at screens exclusively for a year and when everything is content, content creators are king. And the issue of trustworthiness of any news organization is now intractably entwined with the perceived trustworthiness of individual journalists."

JOURNALIST COMMENT

"Most challenging in covering the pandemic was the non-stop political coverage that accompanied it. Now that the 2020 election has wrapped up and Covid is waning, it's become easier to think about stories beyond those two issues."

CONCLUSION

The pandemic caused heartache and extreme challenges which have shifted our work norms. This pulse survey helps provide an indicative viewpoint on directional future trends among news professionals. While some elements of remote communications in news is here to stay, the findings also suggest that the traditions of in-person sourcing, reporting, editing and newsroom teamwork will be valued more than ever in the coming months.

We'd like to thank all the journalists for their time to complete the survey and for their comments in providing color and context.

Research methodology

This research was conducted online by FTI's Digital & Insights team from May 6th - June 9th, 2021 with n=44 reporters, editors, and producers based in the United States participating in this research. Respondents invited to participate anonymously included *Bloomberg*, *Business Insider*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Post*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, with each respondent sourced through FTI's own media connections. The findings should therefore be considered as indicative and not representative of the views of the wider media across the United States. Due to the standard convention of rounding, some totals may not add up to 100%.

CONTACTS:

Dan Margolis

Managing Director, FTI Strategic Communications

dan.margolis@fticonsulting.com +1 (213) 452-6472

James Condon

Senior Director, FTI Strategic Communications

james.condon@fticonsulting.com +1 (646) 912-1280

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and not necessarily the views of FTI Consulting, Inc., its management, its subsidiaries, its affiliates, or its other professionals.

FTI Consulting, Inc., including its subsidiaries and affiliates, is a consulting firm and is not a certified public accounting firm or a law firm.

JOURNALIST COMMENT

"This is not true of my outlet, but there seems to be much less of an emphasis on accuracy and getting things right. Less accountability for mistakes, more emphasis on 'point of view' journalism and less on giving readers and viewers facts and letting them decide."

EXPERTS WITH IMPACT™

FTI Consulting is an independent global business advisory firm dedicated to helping organizations manage change, mitigate risk and resolve disputes: financial, legal, operational, political & regulatory, reputational and transactional. FTI Consulting professionals, located in all major business centers throughout the world, work closely with clients to anticipate, illuminate and overcome complex business challenges and opportunities.

©2021 FTI Consulting, Inc. All rights reserved. www.fticonsulting.com

