



# Propel Wrapped: Journalist Engagement H1 2023

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Understanding how the news  
was pitched and received this  
year so far





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## Thank you!



# Overview

So far, 2023 has been a year full of news.... Surprise, surprise! Einstein may have said that "God doesn't play dice with the universe," but it certainly seems like the almighty is playing ad-libs with the stories that have come out this year.

**Looking at over one million anonymized PR pitches sent to journalists via the Propel platform between January and June of 2023, our team wanted to see how some of the most newsworthy topics of the year were pitched. We found several interesting trends in how PR pros were using various news stories as hooks for their pitching initiatives. So far, we've found that the average journalist response rate for H1 2023 stands at 2.95%**

To arrive at such findings, we focused on key words and phrases from several of the largest news stories of the year and dissected pitching metrics to see how different stories relating to major news topics were being pitched, and whether or not they were being responded to. We of course did not cover all major stories, rather dialled in on a few key topics from the first half of 2023.

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## The specific news topics we looked at were:

- Tech
- World Events
- The Economy
- Climate
- Social Media
- Celebrations
- Funding Rounds

# Tech





# Tech

This has been a big year for tech as [Chat GPT](#) continued to make waves, [Google released its own generative AI called Bard](#), [Apple released a pair of \\$3,500 VR goggles](#), and [quantum computing came closer to fruition](#).

- While there were only 113 pitches related to quantum computing, it received a journalist open rate of **80.53%** and a response rate of **18.58%**, showing that if there's a new, interesting, and relevant angle on this subject, journalists will happily take it.
- There were over **1,700** pitches mentioning Apple, but only **1.72%** of these pitches were responded to.
- Finally, the year's big game-changing technology, generative AI, received an overall response rate of **11.57%**, showing journalists are yearning for interesting stories about this groundbreaking technology. This is compared with an response rate of **2.19%** for pitches talking about AI only. It appears that when they say that "everything is AI now," this is actually the truth. PR pros need to be careful about how they're pitching AI since it's now so common.

# Social Media





# Social Media

The world of social media was turned on its head when [Elon Musk got rid of Twitter's blue checkmark](#), and [challenged Mark Zuckerberg to a cage fight](#). Meanwhile, various governments have [imposed TikTok bans](#), and Meta has [shifted its focus from the Metaverse](#). On top of all this, podcasts are gaining even more prominence with [YouTube coming out with its portal for podcasters](#) and [Spotify streamlining its podcast services](#).

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- Stories about Meta were surprisingly popular among PR professionals, but didn't seem to be of too much interest to journalists, with close to 4,000 pitches mentioning the company yet a response rate of only **1.19%**.
  - The same goes for stories about Twitter, which received a similar response rate of **1.29%**.
  - Meanwhile, TikTok made waves across the internet, but pitches mentioning the Chinese social media platform were only responded to **1.5%** of the time.
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Interestingly, influencer pitching seemed to become a lot more popular among PR professionals over the past six months, with pitches about these media personalities being opened **79.33%** of the time and getting responded to **27.41%** of the time.

Meanwhile, as the power of podcasts continues to prove itself, people in communications are beginning to take notice. Pitches to various podcasts were responded to **17.29%** of the time, well above the average for 2023.

# World Events







# World Events

With so much going on in the world, journalists are having to contend with what's being termed a "[permacrisis](#)" as everything is happening everywhere at the same time. With wars in [Europe](#), [Africa](#), and the [Middle East](#) still ongoing, coupled with [rising tensions between China and the US](#), there seems to be no shortage of tension in the world. In addition, campaigns are beginning for dozens of elections which will see over three billion people go to the polls to vote for the leadership of the US, Russia, India, Mexico, Egypt, the EU, and more.

- Surprisingly, there were almost an even number of pitches mentioning Biden and Trump, Yet these pitches only received response rates of **0.22%** and **0.55%** respectively.
- Meanwhile, there were fewer than 100 pitches mentioning Ukraine and no pitches mentioning Russia. Ukraine pitches received response rates of **17.28%**.
- Pitches mentioning China were responded to **3.7%** of the time, but there were no pitches mentioning Taiwan.
- Perhaps most interestingly, while there were only slightly more pitches mentioning war than peace, war pitches received response rates of **9.67%** compared to a **0.29%** response rate for pitches mentioning peace.

# Celebrations





# Celebrations

2023 has already been chock-full of fun events – from the [Super Bowl](#) and the [Cannes Film Festival](#) to [Pride Month](#) and [King Charles III's coronation](#). PR professionals love using these major events as hooks when pitching, but how well do they actually work? Well, as it turns out:

- Despite there being thousands of pitches mentioning the Super Bowl, only **0.52%** of them were responded to by journalists, pointing to a situation where journalists were likely inundated with these kinds of pitches.
- Pitches mentioning the Queen were responded to **7.17%** of the time. This is in contrast to pitches mentioning King Charles III's coronation, which were only responded to **0.37%** of the time.
- June was also filled with festivities, with the summer season kicking off with Pride and Juneteenth. However, pitches mentioning Pride were only responded to **2.03%** of the time, likely showing journalist fatigue with this topic. Interestingly, Juneteenth pitches were only responded to **0.82%** of the time.
- The world of film also had a big year prior to seeing most actors join forces with the writer's strike. Prior to this, we saw the Cannes Film Festival and the Oscars take center stage (or the "main screen" to be more accurate). Pitches mentioning Cannes received response rates of **9.17%**, but Oscars pitches were only responded to **0.57%** of the time.

# The Economy





# The Economy

The biggest topic everyone was talking about was the economy, with [inflation](#) hitting pocketbooks, people and countries. In addition, tech companies were imposing [massive layoffs](#) after years of growth. All of this led to the biggest question of them all - are we heading into a recession?

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- Of course, it's impossible to talk about the economy without mentioning the banks! However, of the nearly 9,000 pitches mentioning them, only **2.1%** were responded to.
- Inflation and debt-related pitches didn't do much better. Of the thousands of pitches mentioning these topics, only **2.22%** of pitches mentioning inflation and **1.24%** of pitches mentioning debt were responded to. Perhaps these pitches were too depressing for the journalists who themselves were watching colleagues being laid off around them.
- Speaking of which, layoffs hit almost every major industry, including mainstream media and tech. This unfortunately made the topic a hot one to pitch. However, this doom and gloom may have been too much for journalists to focus on, who only responded to **2.55%** of these kinds of pitches.
- In an attempt buoy their hopes and mental wellbeing (or to adhere to their assigned topics), journalists were hungry for any positive story they could get. This can be seen through the fact that people in the media were responsive to pitches mentioning growth, with these being opened over **87%** of the time and being responded to **6.38%** of the time. These were the highest open and response rates in this category.

# Funding Rounds





# Funding Rounds

Despite the economic situation, there was still a lot of buzz around tech funding rounds. The amounts seem to be less than they were in previous years when interest rates were at 0 and money was free, but the fact that funding rounds are still happening is a positive sign.

However, response rates were down across the board, likely because journalists are less likely to write stories about down rounds, or because the funding amount didn't reach the threshold for what the journalist is willing to cover.

## It was found that:

- Pitches mentioning “investment” in general performed relatively poorly, only being responded to **1.2%** of the time.
- However, pitches surrounding pre-seed and seed funding rounds were responded to **5.62%** of the time. This is almost double the average.
- Pitches for Series A's performed quite well, with **11.92%** of these pitches being responded to.
- Meanwhile, Series B's performed even better, receiving a **15.7%** response rate. However, this was the series with the fewest amount of pitches.
- Finally, pitches surrounded Series C's excited journalists in 2023 so far, with these pitches being responded to **13.14%** of the time.

# Climate







# Climate

Let's face it – it's hot outside. And not just normal summer hot, but blistering, heatwave level hot. Between fires burning in Canada, cold snaps in the winter, heatwaves hitting the southern US, Europe, the Middle East, and China, and massive deluges in the Northern US and the Indian subcontinent, talking about the weather is now actually a deep subject.

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- All kinds of weather-related pitches were getting responses. However, none more than those mentioning snow. These pitches received a whopping response rate of **12.94%**. This was followed by pitches mentioning rain at **3.73%** (although this was the most pitched weather phenomenon with over 3,000 pitches), then heat at **1.67%** followed by fire at **1.42%**. Meanwhile, pitches talking about the climate were responded to a paltry **1.68%** of the time.
- Of course, one of the causes of climate change is energy production, and the phrase “energy” was pitched over 10,000 times. However, these pitches were only responded to **1.7%** of the time. On the other hand, pitches mentioning power had response rates of **7.67%**!
- Looking at how we get our energy, pitches mentioning wind were responded to the most at **4.68%**. This was followed by gas which received responses **3.13%** of the time. However, despite being pitched almost the same amount as gas, pitches mentioning solar energy only got a **2.57%** response rate.
- Finally, with **0.97%** and **0.5%** response rate respectively, oil and coal received the lowest response rates of any energy-focused pitch.



# Key Takeaways

As always, the first half of 2023 was packed with breaking news, all the way from the temperature of the political arena to the temperature outside. News trends can feel like a shiny ticket to the spotlight for brands around the world, and this is true when your media outreach is executed well. This means following the data to understand what journalists really want from your next news pitch. Here's a recap of important findings from our study of one million PR pitches sent to journalist during H1 2023...

## Summary of key findings:

- Journalists have been keen on positive news this year so far, with pitches mentioning growth being opened **over 87%** of the time and being responded to **6.38%** of the time.
- The year's big game-changing technology, **generative AI**, received an overall response rate of **11.57%** showing journalists are yearning for interesting stories about this groundbreaking innovation.
- Despite there being thousands of pitches mentioning the Super Bowl, only **0.52%** of them were responded to by journalists, pointing to a situation where journalists were likely inundated with these kinds of pitches.
- Influencer pitching seemed to become a lot more popular among PR professionals over the past six months, with pitches about these media personalities being opened **79.33%** of the time and getting responded to **27.41%** of the time.
- Series A funding news performed quite well, with **11.92%** of these pitches being responded to. Series B's performed even better, receiving a **15.7%** response rate. However, this was the series with the fewest amount of pitches. Series C's excited journalists as well, with these pitches being responded to **13.14%** of the time.
- All kinds of weather-related pitches were getting responses this year so far. However, none more than those mentioning snow. These pitches received a whopping response rate of **12.94%**.



# Thank you & happy pitching!

Still searching for the right PR tools to help you tell your story? Propel PRM is made to make your life easier as a comms pro, from researching the perfect media contacts to easily measuring results.

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