



Q3 2023

Propel Media Barometer

The framework
of a perfect pitch



Table of Contents

Overview

Journalist engagement

- The latest on open & response rates
 - Q/Q comparisons
 - Y/Y comparisons

Timing

- Average time to open a pitch
- Average time to respond to a pitch
- Average time to publish a story
- Send vs. open vs. response times
- The average pitching cycle duration

The framework of a perfect pitch

- Q2 pitching best practices
- The perfect pitch of Q2 2023

Trending news topics at the pitching level

- Pride
- Housing & real estate
- The economy
- Podcasts
- Technology
- Tech funding

Key Takeaways

Thank you!

Overview

The Propel team does an extensive study on half a million PR email pitches sent to journalists and shares key findings in its ever-evolving Media Barometer reports. The ultimate goal is to highlight overarching trends and changes in the media relations industry and make it easier for every business to get the earned media coverage that meets, if not exceeds, their branding goals in an increasingly saturated digital environment.

The obstacles to securing high-quality press coverage continue to increase, most recently with fake news, public distrust of mainstream media on the rise, and shrinking newsrooms. This report will teach you how to optimize your journalist outreach strategy when pitching news for your brand or clients based on the performance of the 485,722 pitches sent during Q2 of 2023.

Here are a few key findings from our email PR pitching study:

- Journalists opened an average of **49.14%** of the pitches they received.
- Journalists responded to an average of **2.99%** of the pitches they received. A response can include anything from “no thank you” to “I’ll take the story.”
- Approximately **66%** of all pitch responses happen the same day the pitch is received.
- The time it takes for all stories to be published has **increased** in Q2 2023, a metric which coincides with mass journalist layoffs and dwindling media resources.
- The majority of news placements are published **within 7 days** of the initial pitch being sent (68.31% of articles published).
- Out of every weekday, journalists responded to the most pitches on **Tuesday** (27.73% of all journalist responses).
- Journalists are responding to **16.59%** of podcast-related pitches, a 10% increase over Q1. This is also over **5X** the response rate for the average pitch.

Journalist engagement



Q2 2023 open & response rates: Q/Q comparisons

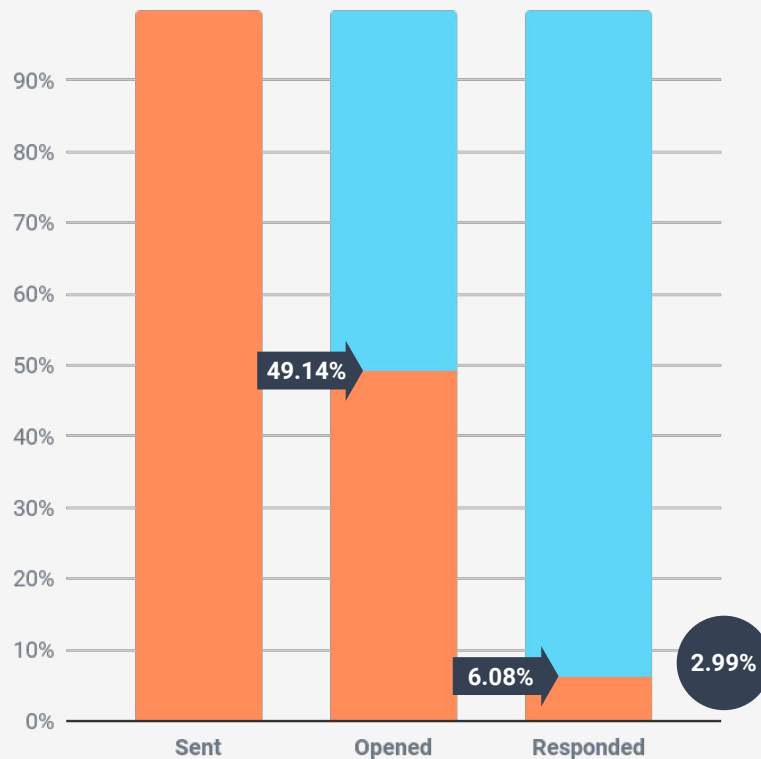
Journalists opened an average of **49.14%** of the pitches they received.

- The average open rate to all pitches in Q2 of 2023 has remained consistently high from what we saw previously when analyzing pitch engagement from Q1 of 2023 (48.12%). This is encouraging because we saw a 10% increase when comparing open rates from 2022 and 2023, and so far journalists are maintaining this open rate.

Journalists responded to an average of **2.99%** of the pitches they received. A response can include anything from “no thank you” to “I’ll take the story.”

- We saw insignificant change to the average journalist open rate to PR pitches between Q1 and Q2 of 2023. Looking back at the Q1 rate, journalists were only responding to 2.91% of pitches they received January-March of this year. While it is encouraging that the average response rate has not dropped since then, it tells us that we still work in a media environment where less than 3 of every 100 PR pitches get responses from journalists.

Average open & response rates



Journalist engagement explored: Y/Y comparisons

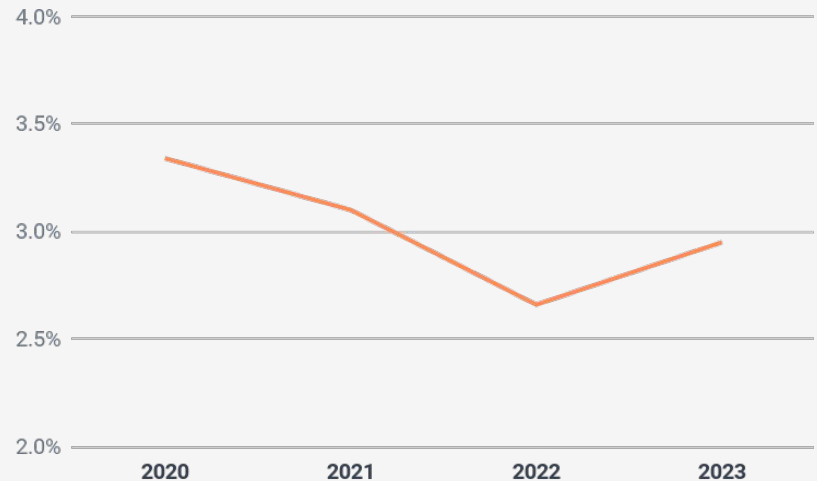
The consistent downward trend in journalist engagement with PR email pitches tells us that getting earned media coverage is more challenging than ever before.

In 2022, the average journalist response rate hovered between **3%** and **4%** for the majority of the year, until it dipped down to **2.66%** in Q4.

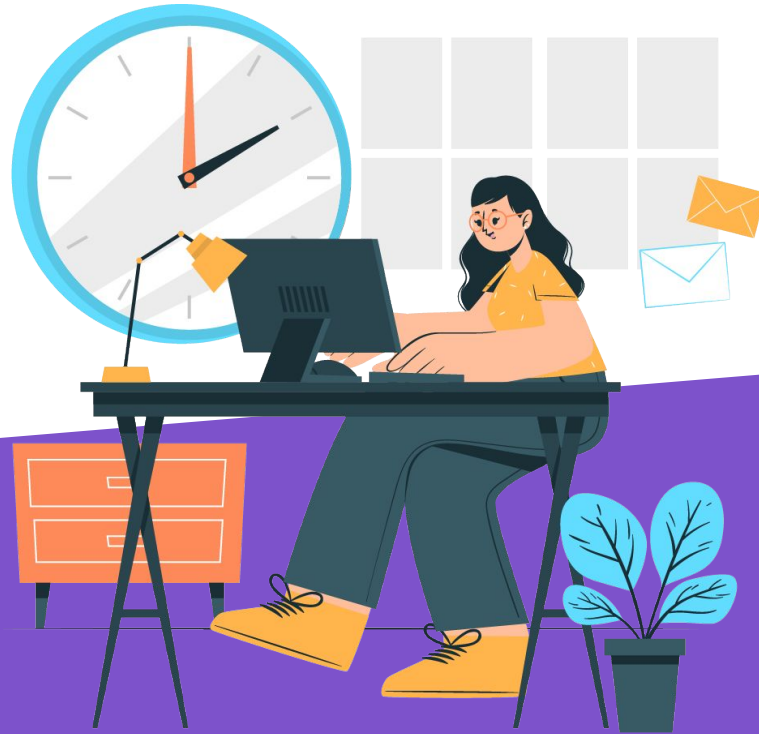
This therefore marks the third quarter in a row that journalists' responses have stayed below **3%**, and sheds light on today's evolving media environment.

- When we first began publishing the Barometer reports in 2020, the average journalist response rate stood at **7.33%** in Q1.
- Will we see the average response rate take a turn for the better as 2023 progresses? Stay tuned for further analysis on the annual journalist response rate status.

Annual Average Journalist Response Rates (%)



Timing



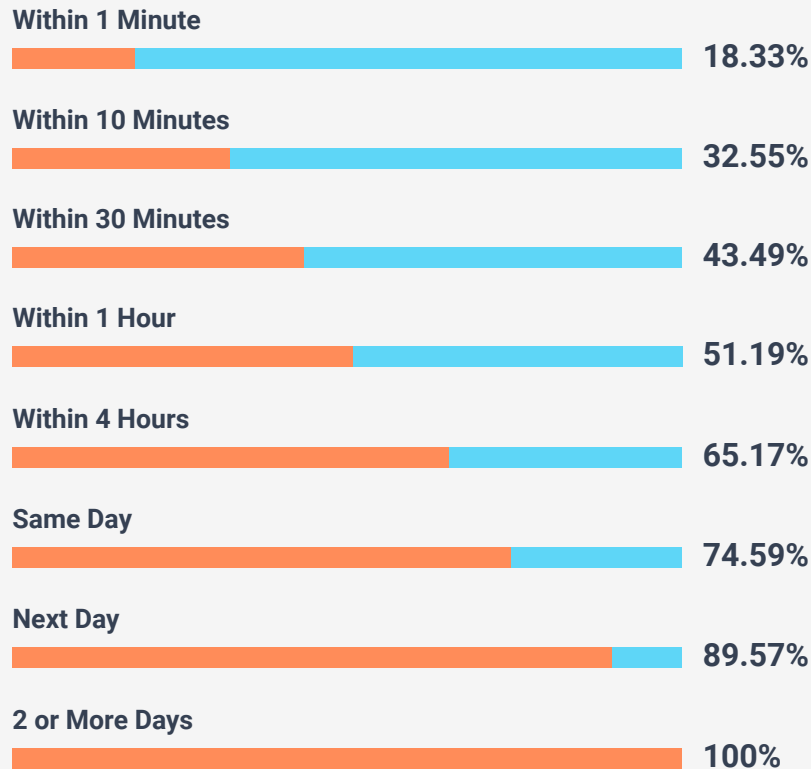
Average time to open a pitch

Despite media outlets' diminishing resources, we see impressive consistency with the average time it takes for journalists to open a pitch.

Propel believes that fewer journalists are being forced to do more work to keep up with the news cycle, and the journalists who remain likely feel as if they're 'drinking out of a firehose' to stay on top of their jobs.

One key indicator of this is that the majority of all pitch opens happen within the first hour that a pitch is sent (**51.19%** of pitch opens) as journalists quickly search their inboxes for relevant stories.

This number, coupled with updates on the turbulent state of the media, prove how important it is to time your news pitches perfectly and only send them to journalists that they are actually relevant to.



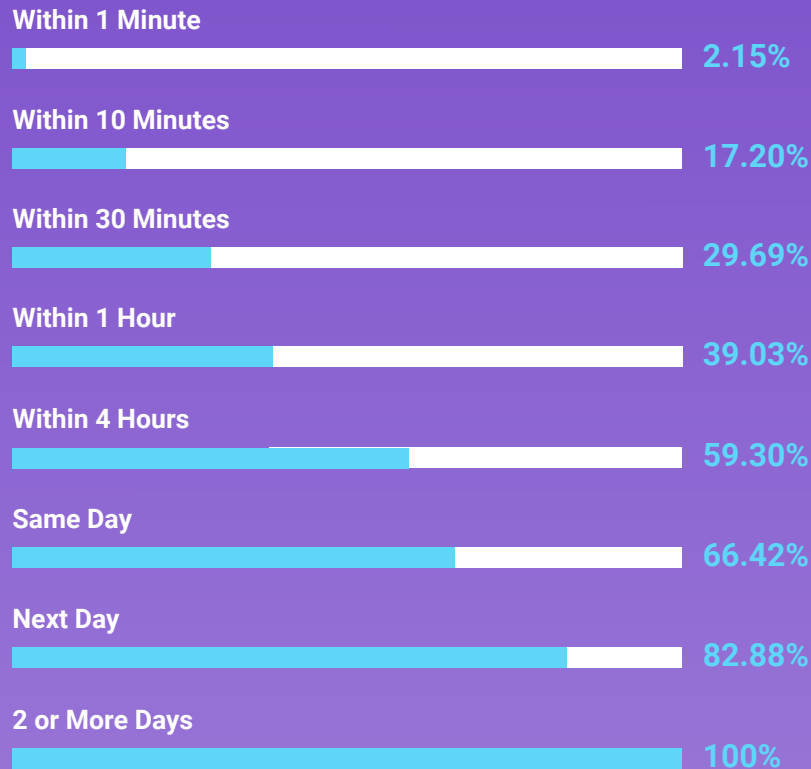
Average time to respond to a pitch

Did you know that **66.42%** of all pitch responses happen within the same day the pitch is received?

Also, the majority of pitches are responded to **within four hours** of the initial send time, if it's going to be responded to at all. This is important to keep in mind when planning the timing for your next PR campaign.

These findings echo the importance of being patient and respectful when communicating with journalist contacts about your news. With particularly time-sensitive content, it is often appropriate to follow up after a day or two if you have still not heard back from a journalist.

However, when you have the luxury of a larger time window, for instance, when pitching more evergreen pieces, know you can be more patient with your media contacts, and therefore preserve the long-term relationships as they navigate their new time and resource constraints.



Average time to publish a story

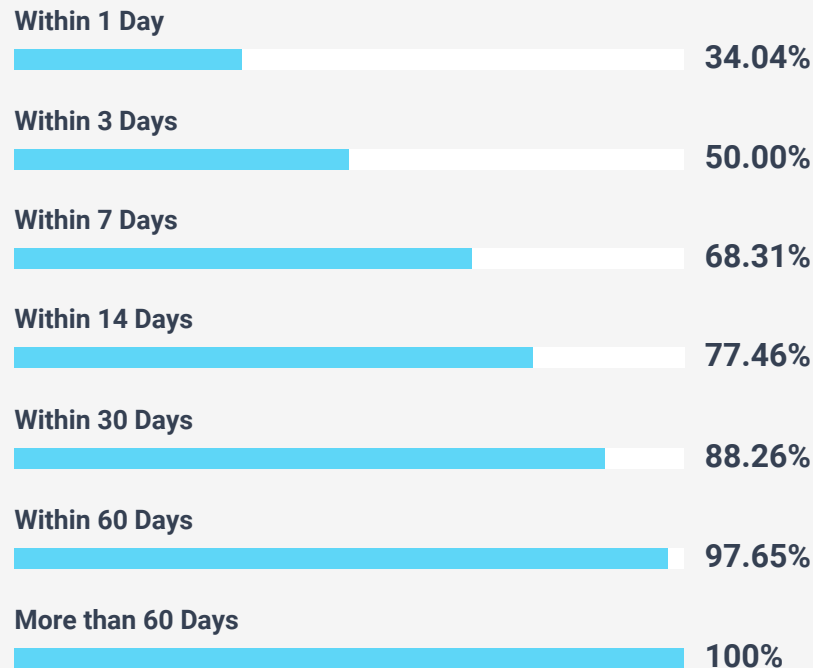
In the past quarter, we saw a general decline in how fast stories were getting published.

For example, in Q1, **59.51%** of news stories were published within three days of the initial pitch being sent, but in Q2, only **50%** of news stories were published within this timeframe. You can see the rest of the Q1 rates in [last quarter's Media Barometer report](#).

This speaks directly to the aftermath of mass media layoffs and a handful of media outlets like BuzzFeed News and Vice News closing down completely.

With fewer journalists writing, it will of course take longer for all pitches to move through the news cycle and become published articles.

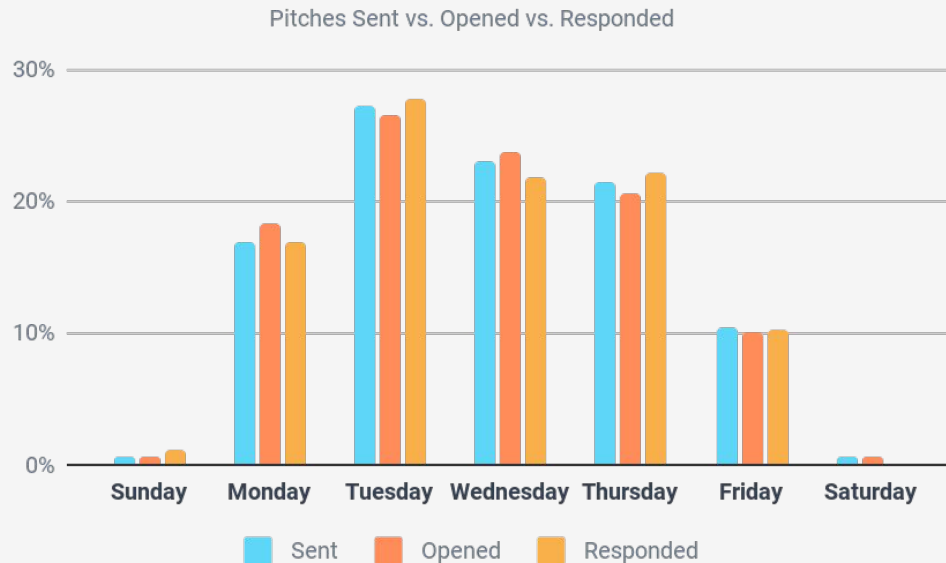
See the Q2 2023 percentage breakdown on the right. Note that the total sample for this breakdown is only considering publish times for pitches that result in published articles.



Send vs. open vs. response times

Tuesday appears to be the most popular day for both sending out pitches on the PR side and engaging back with them on the journalist side by a longshot.

- In Q2 of 2023, PR pros sent out **27.27%** of all pitches on Tuesday.
- Journalists opened the most PR pitches on Tuesday as well, with **26.53%** of all pitch opens happening on this early day of the week.
- Finally, **27.73%** of all journalist responses came in on Tuesday, which is more than what we saw on any other weekday. This is the biggest difference we found in our “send vs. open vs. response times” portion of the report between Q1 and Q2, as **Thursday** garnered the most journalist responses in Q1 (**22.55%** of journalist responses).

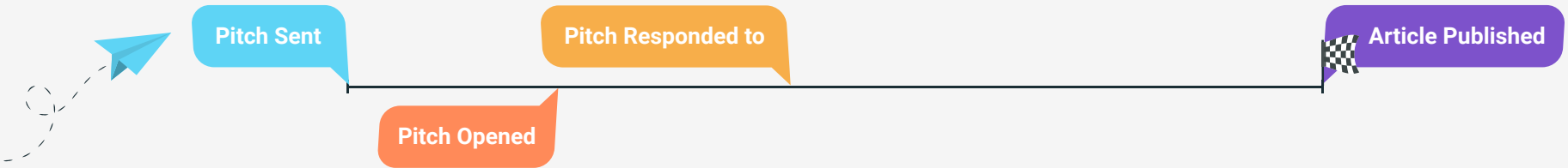


How long does it usually take to get a story placed in the media?

Now that we understand the breakdown of journalist open, response and publish rates over time, we can better understand the overall pitch cycle from the time a pitch is sent to the day it becomes published:

- The majority of pitch opens happen within **1 hour** of a journalist receiving the pitch (**51.19%** of all opens).
- The majority of pitch responses happen within **4 hours** of a journalist receiving the pitch (**59.3%** of all responses).
- The majority of news placements are published within **7 days** of the initial pitch being sent (**68.31%** of articles published).

Last quarter, the majority of news placements went live within **3 days** of a pitch being sent, showing another sign of the news cycle slowing down a bit with the shifting media landscape at play.



The framework of a perfect pitch



Which pitches from Q2 2023 did journalists engage with the most?

To determine the most engaging or hypothetically “perfect” pitch from Q2 of 2023, we analyzed journalist open and response rates correlated with key pitch elements like journalist-topic relevance, subject length, number of embedded links and more.

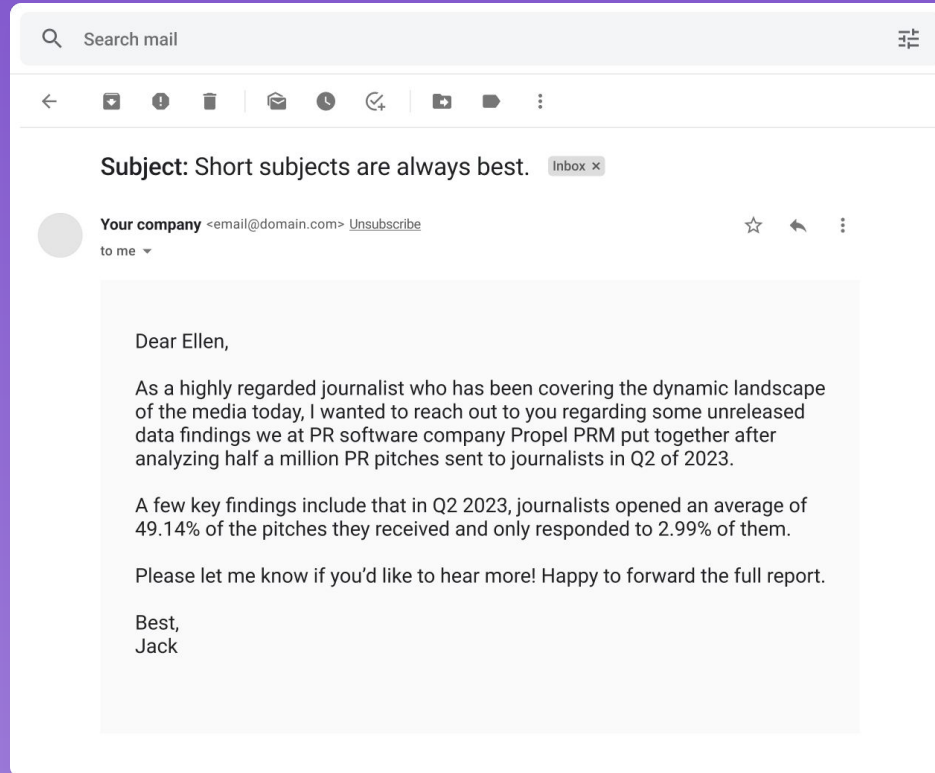
After studying the best results from nearly half a million pitches, we arrived at the following recommendations seen on the right for optimal media engagement results.



PR Pitching Best Practices:

- ✓ Most pitched topic with the best response rate: **“Real Estate”**
- ✓ Best subject length: **6-9 words**
- ✓ The best pitch lead length: **51-80 words**
- ✓ The best pitch body length: **51-150 words**
- ✓ The optimal number of embedded links: **2-3**
- ✓ Best day for pitch responses: **Tuesday**

The perfect pitch structure of Q2 2023



Trending news topics at the pitching level



Pride

- Q2 2023 saw Pride festivities all over the world, and PR pros used this to their advantage as pitching hooks.
- However, with so many Pride pitches being sent, journalists were overwhelmed, leading to pitch open rates of **45.26%**.
- Even more pressing, only **1.88%** of these pitches were getting any sort of response!

This means that unless your pitch had an interesting, hot take on Pride, your story idea was likely just getting lost in the cacophony of other Pride pitches journalists were receiving.



Housing & real estate

No matter where you are in the world, housing is a hot-button issue.

Whether it's mortgage rates increasing, rent going up, or lines of up to 100 people to go see open houses, it's getting harder and harder for people to find affordable roofs to put over their heads.

This fact hasn't been lost on PR professionals, and they're using it ever more as hooks in their pitches. And journalists are quite hungry for these stories.

In fact, pitches mentioning homes and housing received response rates of **5.04%**, and those about mortgages are receiving above average response rates of **3.2%**.



The economy

With all the doom and gloom over the world economy, it's interesting to see how the biggest economic issues of the day are being covered.

- For instance, despite the writer's strike still in full swing, pitches mentioning the word "strike" have decreased by **97%**, and journalists aren't seeming to be overly interested in the subject either.
- Pitches mentioning layoffs also didn't perform well, with only **1.07%** receiving responses from journalists, and pitches mentioning unions only received a **0.62%** response rate.
- Meanwhile, despite the US expecting to deal with rolling blackouts over the summer, pitches mentioning energy declined by **85.23%**, with responses sitting at a little over **2%**.
- However, journalists are responding quite well to more positive news surrounding the economy, with pitches mentioning growth being opened **96.24%** of the time and being responded to **7.2%** of the time. Perhaps there is more hope for the economy than previously thought.



Podcasts

Podcasting is having quite a moment, with the industry seeming to start to mature.

For example, Spotify merged its two podcast companies, and this has created some growing pains, with the company cutting hundreds of people and dozens of its underperforming podcasts.

This seems to have shaken PR pros, and has led to a small decrease in podcast pitching volume as they wait out the storm.

However, despite this, podcasters have been opening a whopping **73.35%** of the pitches they receive – a similar rate to the amount of podcast pitches opened in Q1 2023.

In more good news, the rate of responses by podcasters to PR pitches has continued to increase, going to **16.59%**. This is over **5X** the response rate for the average pitch.



Technology

There's a lot going on in the world of tech, from Apple releasing its new VR goggles to Elon Musk challenging Mark Zuckerberg to a cage fight. However, we at Propel have noticed several interesting trends.

- For instance, the number of pitches mentioning AI dropped by **76%**, and their response rates dropped by a little over a third to **1.26%**.
- It is also important to note that pitches mentioning generative AI had a response rate of **11.47%**, showing that journalists are hungry for unique and interesting generative AI stories.
- Meanwhile, pitches mentioning hacking were responded to **4.35%** of the time, while pitches mentioning cybersecurity were only responded to **1.18%** of the time - less than half the average response rate.



Tech funding

This quarter's numbers for tech funding were so off the charts that we were concerned that our analytics weren't working properly. However, after confirming the numbers with journalists around the world who cover tech funding rounds, we determined that the numbers are indeed accurate.

For instance, there was a **551.61%** increase in pre-seed and seed round pitching compared to Q1 2023, but a **67.41%** decrease in responses. Meanwhile, there was a **74%** decrease in the volume of Series A pitches, yet responses to these funding pitches were stable. Series B pitches stayed the same, but they were opened **25%** less than and responded to **52.43%** less than in Q1. Meanwhile, there was a shocking **413%** increase in the number of Series C pitches, but these were responded to **54.1%** less than they were responded to in the previous quarter.

- However, despite these significant decreases in response rates, they were still well above average, with these pitches being responded to **3.95%**, **10.91%**, **9.83%**, and **11.14%** of the time respectively.
- And yet, strangely, there has been an **81.57%** drop in the number of responses to pitches mentioning investing, with these pitches receiving responses only **1.27%** of the time. Propel is going to continue to follow these numbers to gain a better understanding of what is going on in the world of tech funding.



Key Takeaways

We analyzed a sample of 485,722 pitches PR people sent via the Propel platform during Q2 of 2023 for this study to figure out what makes up the “perfect” pitch today.

Key findings include:

- Journalists opened an average of **49.14%** of the pitches they received.
- Journalists responded to an average of **2.99%** of the pitches they received. A response can include anything from “no thank you” to “I’ll take the story.”
- Approximately **66%** of all pitch responses happen within the same day the pitch is received.
- The time it takes for all stories to be published has **increased** in Q2 2023 with mass journalist layoffs and dwindling media resources, contrasted against faster publish rates seen in Q1 2023.
- The majority of news placements are published **within 7 days** of the initial pitch being sent (68.31% of articles published).
- Out of every weekday, journalists responded to the most pitches on **Tuesday** (27.73% of all journalist responses).
- Journalists are responding to **16.59%** of podcast-related pitches, which has increased since we last measured this in Q1. This is over **5X** the response rate for the average pitch.

How will you use the Propel Media Barometer to correct the course of media relations? To continue learning from our quarterly reports on the earned media landscape and its constant evolution, make sure to [keep up with Propel](#).



Thank You & Happy Pitching!

Still looking 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.

Most recently, we now offer AI-powered pitch & press release writer and media list builder that you can [try for free here](#).

Finally, you can [book a demo with our team](#) to learn more about Propel, the all-in-one PR tool suite you've been looking for.

[Learn About Propel](#)