



Press Release Irrelevance Survey Findings
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Foreword

If viewing this presentation on Slideshare it is best seen in full screen mode. This survey is intended to be read after watching the animation found [here](#) which outlines the issue of irrelevant press releases.

The analysis is based on surveys carried out between 23rd November 2009 and 16th December 2009 by [RealWire](#). Full details of these surveys are included in Appendix 1 of this document.

Respondents were recipients of press release emails including primarily journalists, but also bloggers, editors and publishers – collectively referred to in this analysis as “Recipients”.

The primary findings (sections 1,2 and 3) are based on a total sample size of 152 respondents. The remaining findings are based on smaller sample sizes varying between 57 and 102 respondents. In each case the relevant number is stated.

Key Findings

1.7 billion irrelevant press release emails estimated to be received in total each year by UK and US Journalists alone (Slide 9)

78% of press release emails are received by Recipients to whom they are irrelevant (Graph 2c)

55% of Recipients have taken action to block a sender of news (Graph 3)

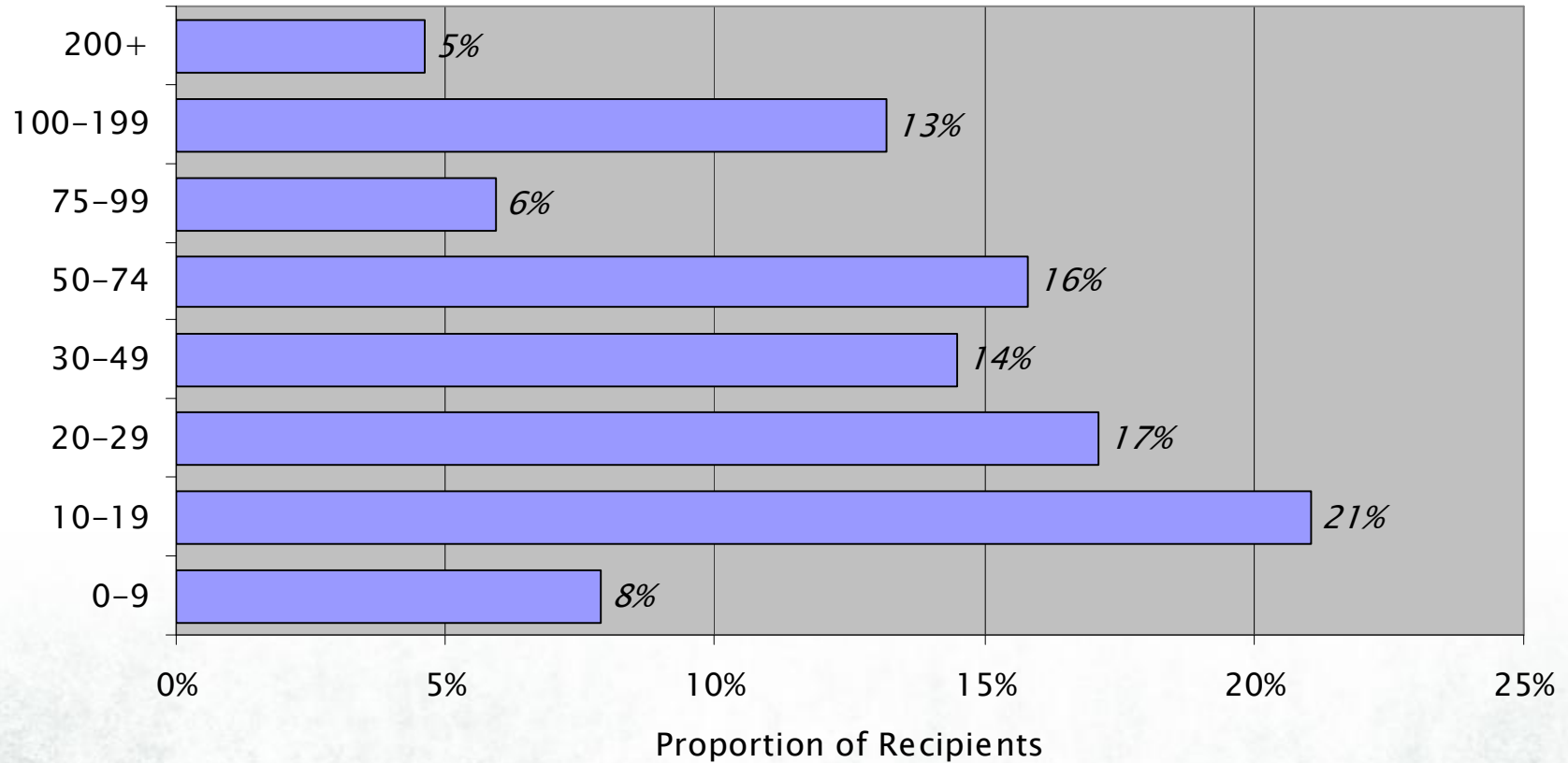
Key Findings (continued)

- 54 is the average number of press releases received by each Recipient per day (Graph 1)
- 57% of Recipients suffer a level of irrelevant press releases of 80% or more (Graph 2a)
- 23% of Recipients suffer a level of irrelevant press releases of 96% or more (Graph 2b)
- Levels of irrelevant press releases are similar on average no matter how many releases received per day (Graph 2d)
- 18% of Recipients receive 100 or more releases per day and receive 55% of the total irrelevant emails that are sent (Graph 2e)
- Acceptable levels of irrelevant press releases differ significantly amongst Recipients with almost as many considering 90% acceptable as zero % (Graph 7b)

Key Findings (continued)

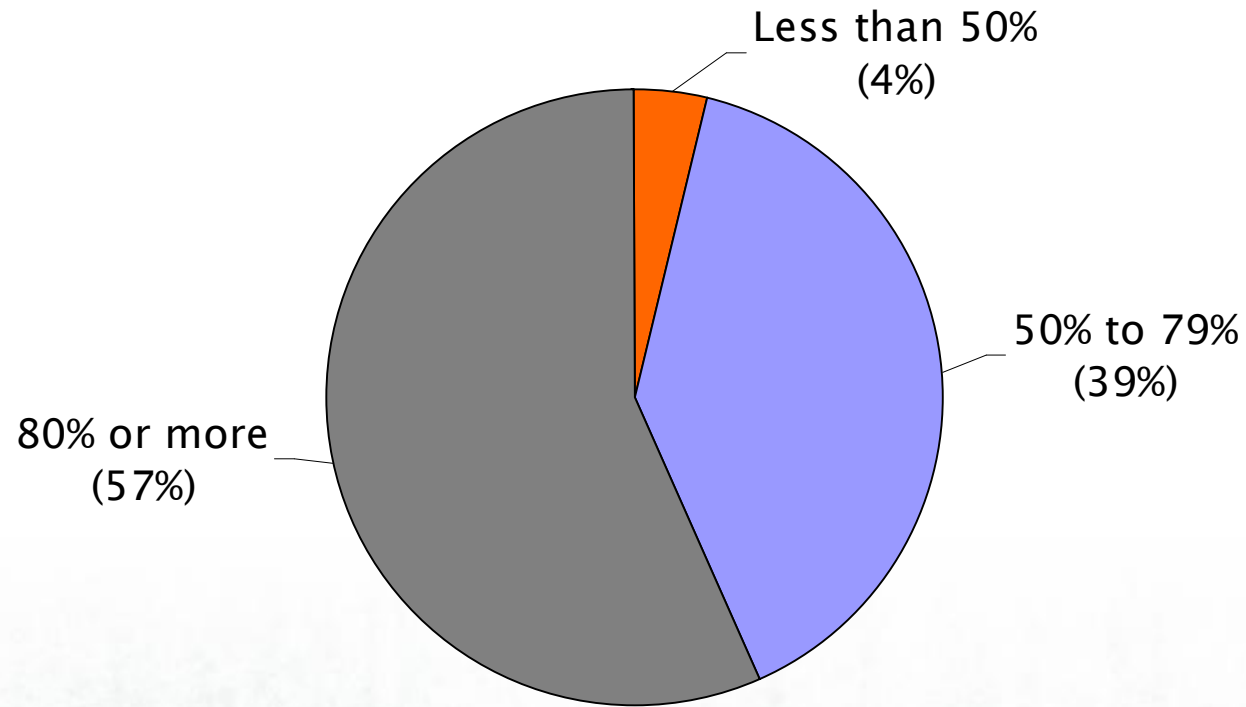
- 63% of Recipients would consider it acceptable if no more than half the releases they received were irrelevant (Graph 7a)
- 65% of Recipients considered the current level of irrelevant press releases they receive to be more than is acceptable (Graph 7b)
- Least popular story types are Office Opening, Appointments, Awards, Financial Results and Client/Customer Wins (Graph 4b)
- Most popular story types are Product and Market related (Graph 4b)
- 33% of Recipients prefer press release emails to come from a named individual (Graph 5)
- 25% of Recipients prefer press release emails to be addressed to them personally (Graph 6)

1. Number of Press Releases Received Per Day



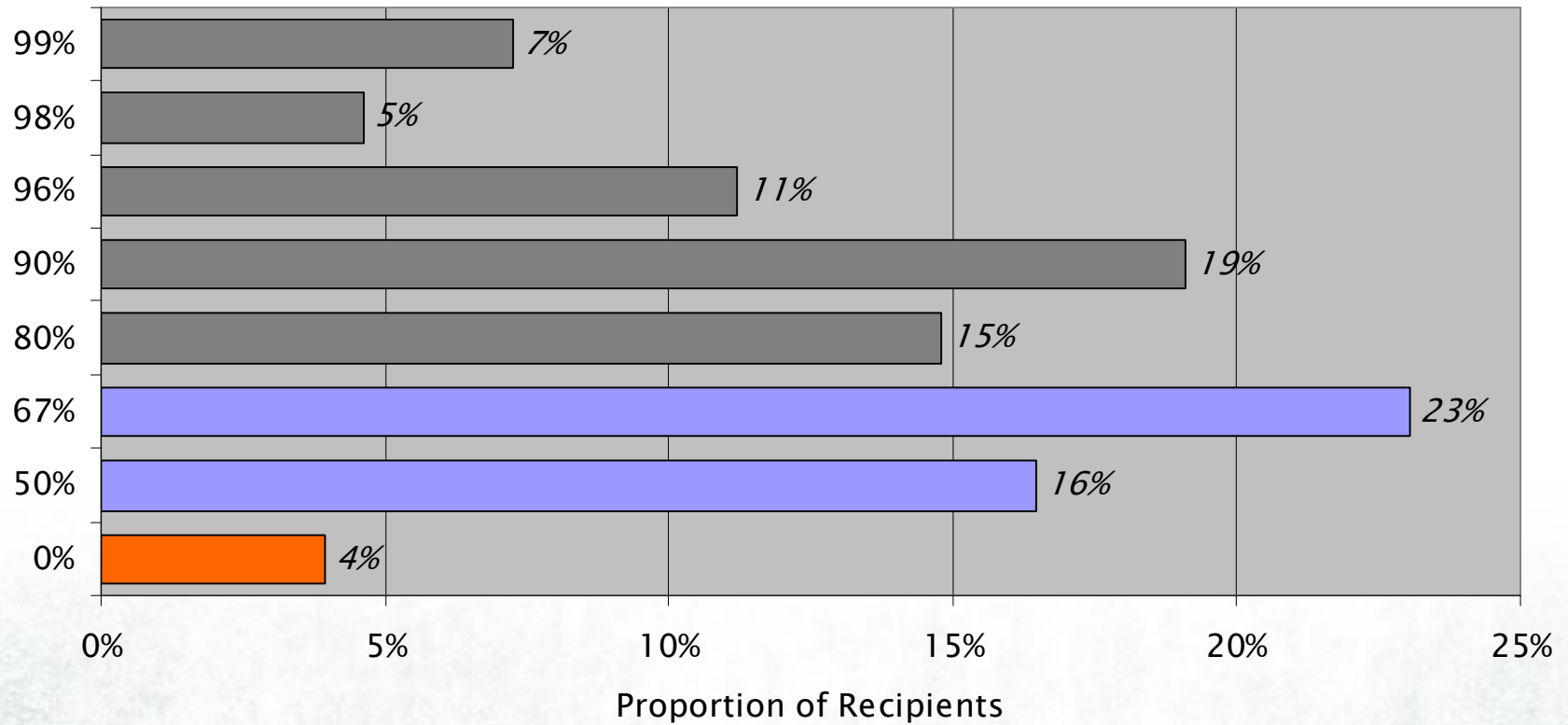
Average number of releases across sample was 54 per day

2a. Press Release Irrelevance Levels by Proportion of Recipients – Summary

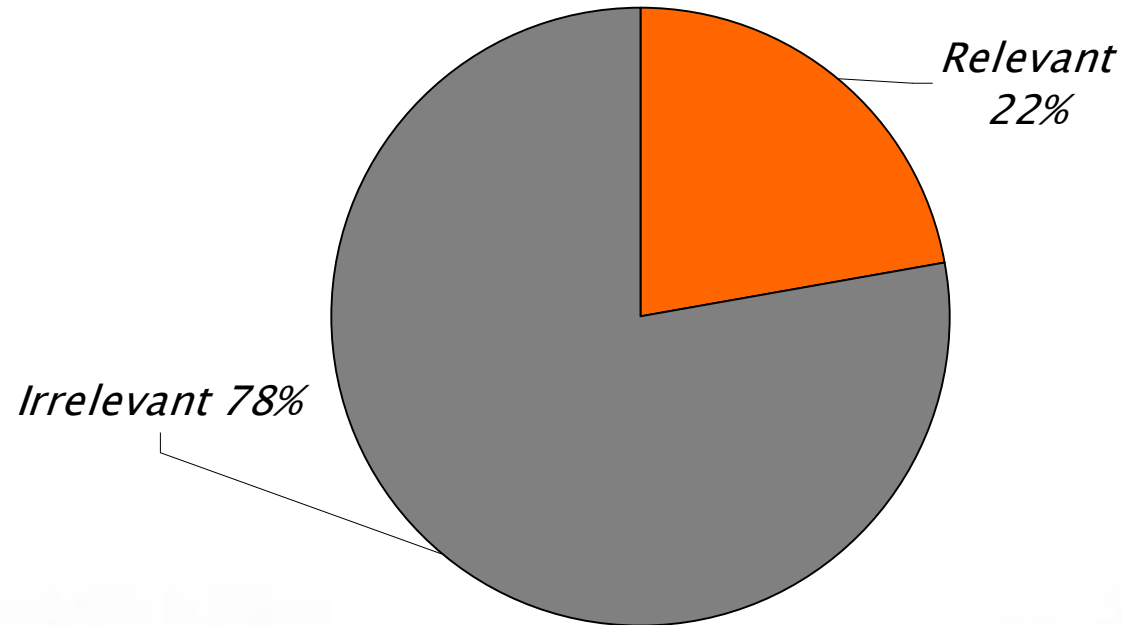


Irrelevant press releases constitute over 80% of those received by the majority of Recipients.

2b. Press Release Irrelevance Levels by Proportion of Recipients – Detailed



2c. Overall Irrelevant Press Releases Received

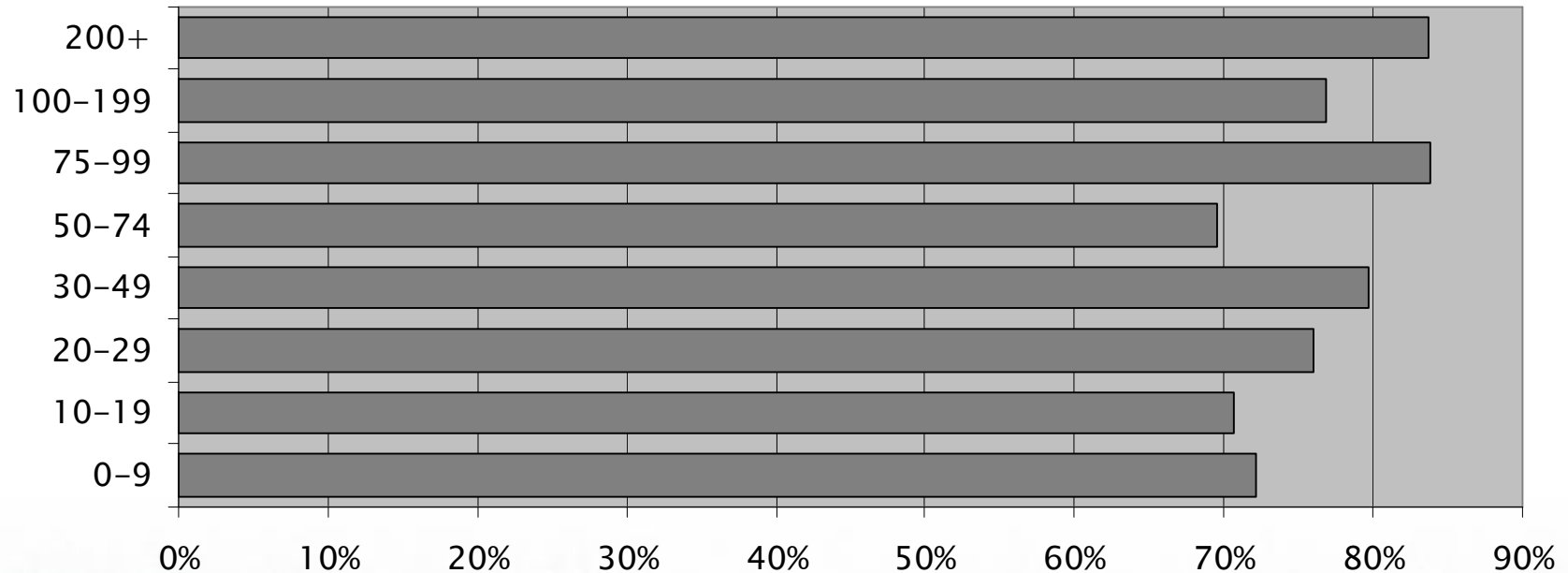


Based on an estimated number of journalists in the UK and US combined of 135,000 and an average of 54 press release emails per day the total number of irrelevant emails this group receives per year is:

1.7 billion

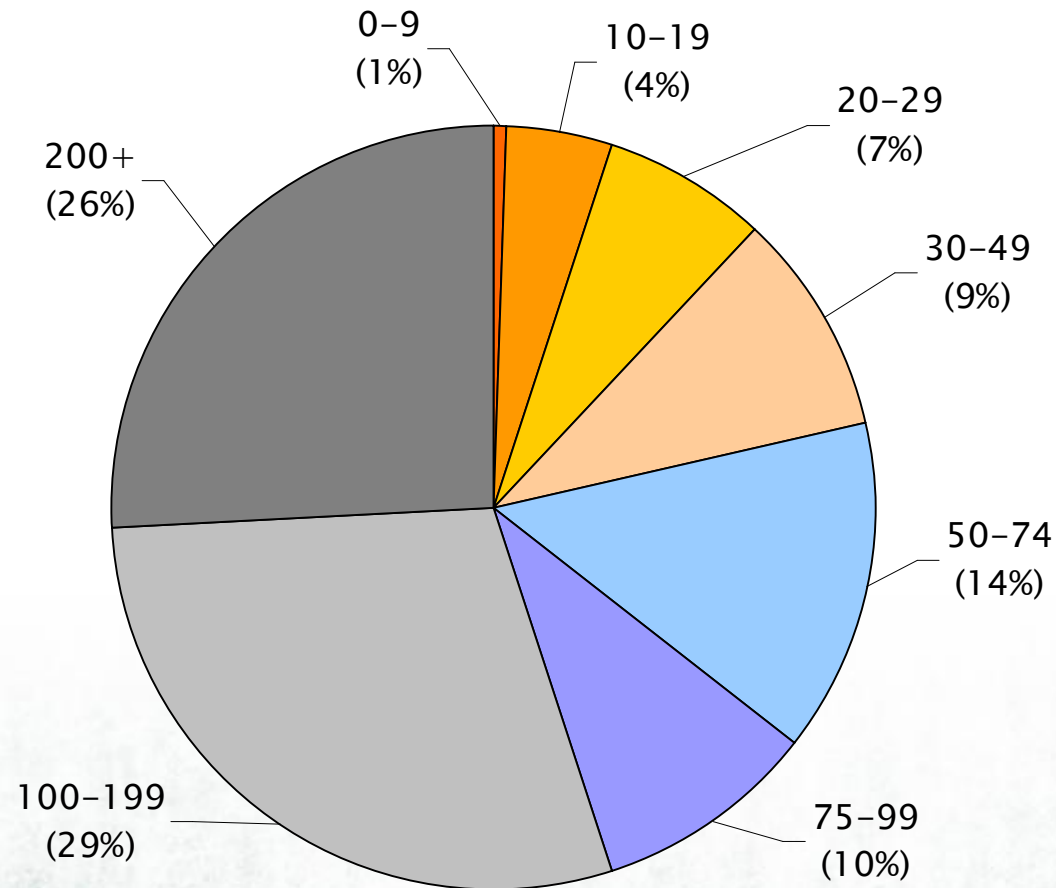
Sources - [ONS Labour Force Survey April-June 2009](#); [US Bureau of Labour Statistics](#); Assumes the same proportion of freelancers working in US as UK. Assumes 300 "working" days per annum which allows for a lower level of releases to be received at weekends.

2d. Levels of Average Irrelevance Depending on Number of Releases Received Per Day



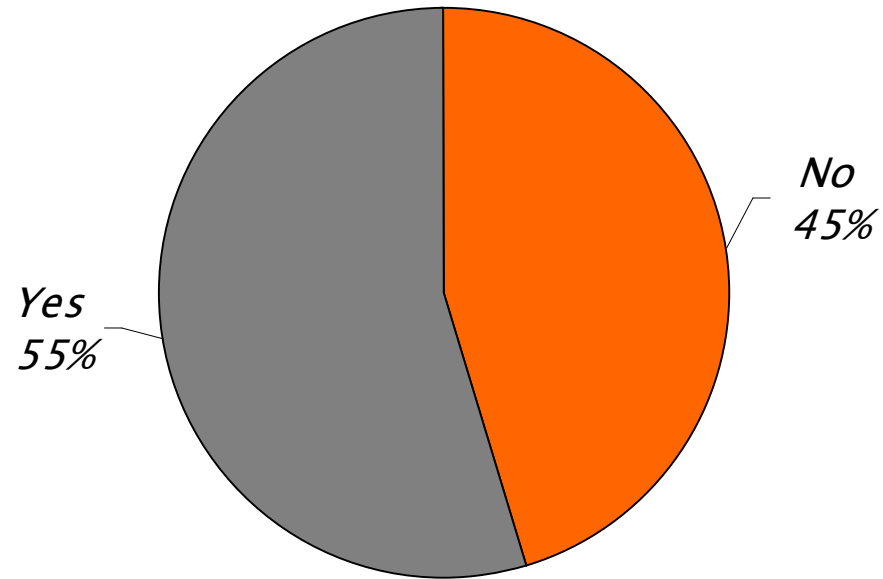
Receiving a lower number of press releases per day still results in a similar proportion of irrelevant ones as those who receive the highest number.

2e. Distribution of Irrelevant Press Releases by Total Number Of Press Releases Received Per Day



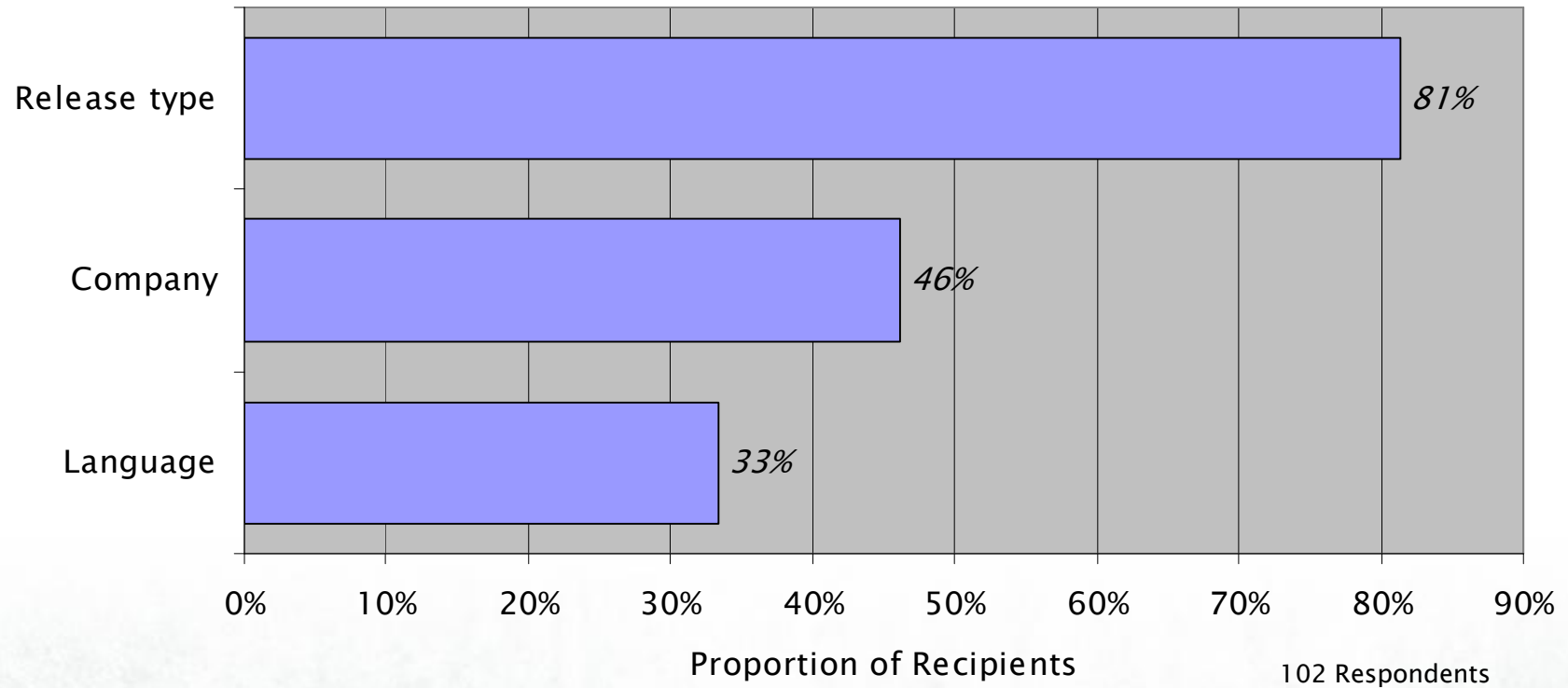
18% of Recipients receive 100 or more releases per day and suffer 55% of the irrelevant press releases received. This implies that this sub group of journalists in the UK and US receive 931 million irrelevant press release emails in total per year. An average of over 38,000 each.

3. Senders Blocking a Source of Press Releases



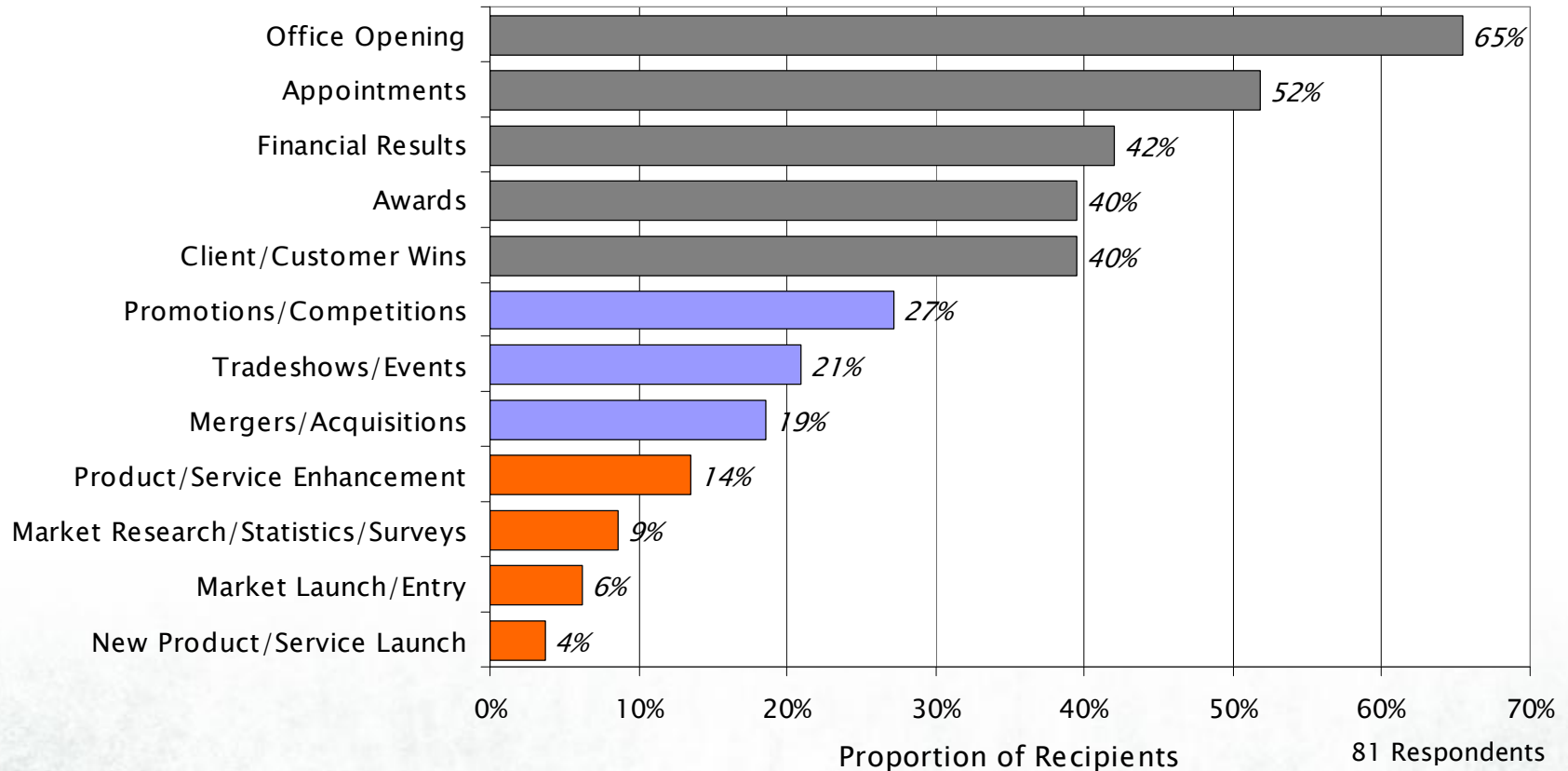
More than half of Recipients have taken action to block a sender of press releases.

4a. Preferred Filters to Achieve Greater Relevancy



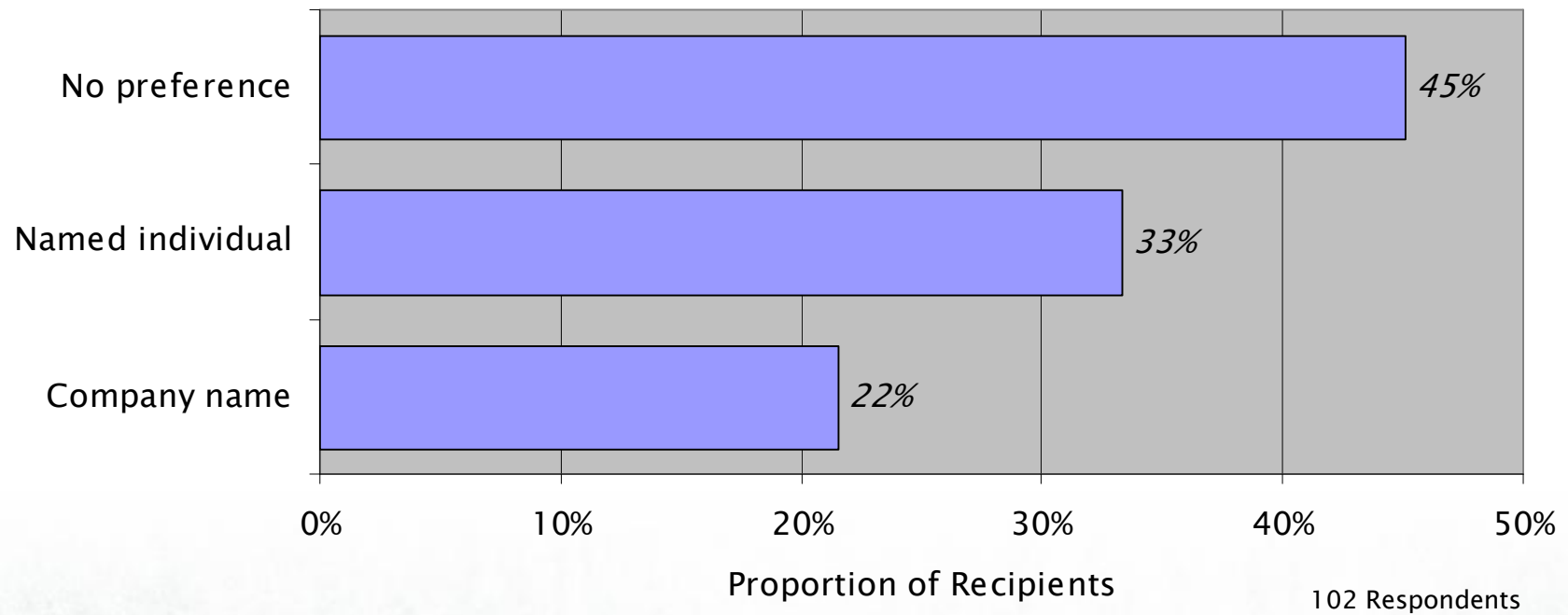
The vast majority of Recipients would like to tailor the press releases they receive based on type of story.

4b. Press Release Types Recipients Prefer Not to Receive



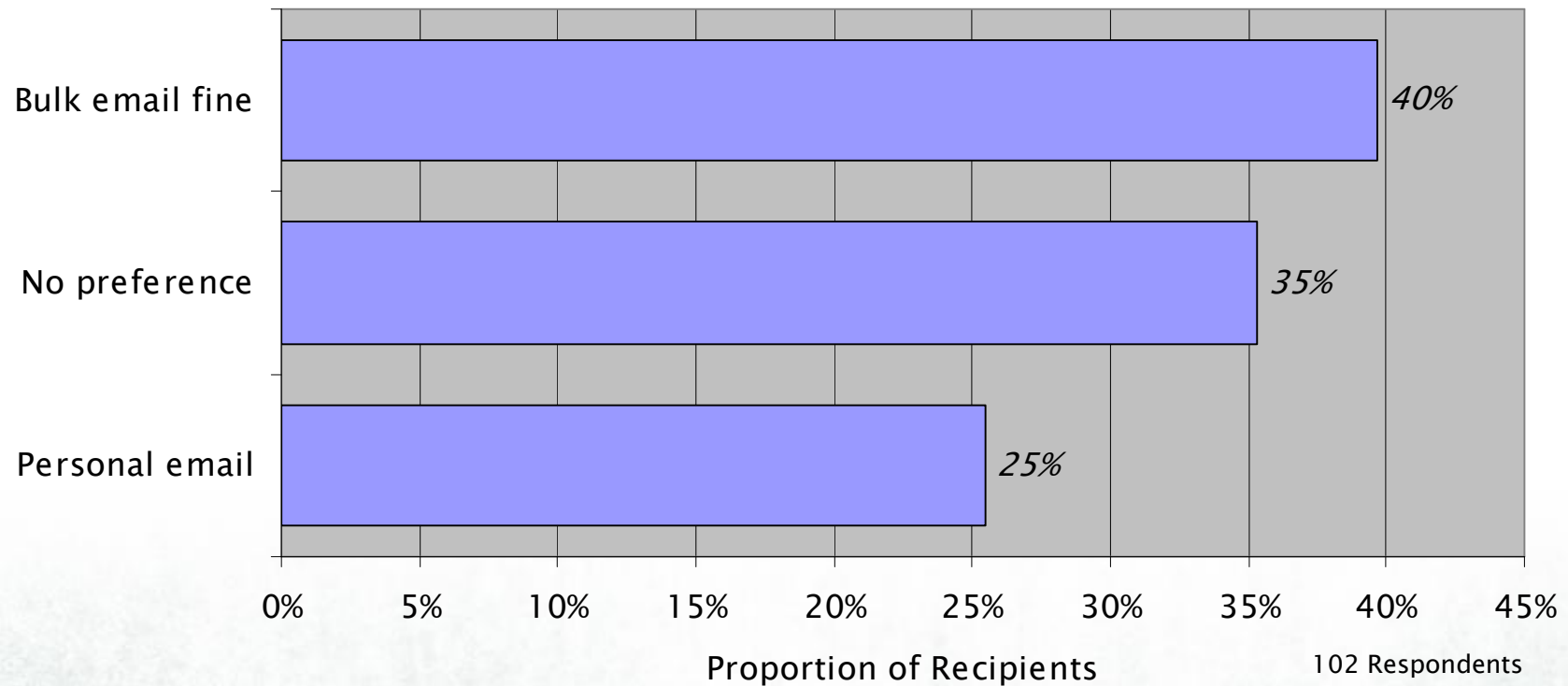
All types of press release stories are of interest to at least a third of potential Recipients. However some stories, such as announcing a new office or appointment, are of interest to a much smaller proportion than those about new products or markets for example and so needed to be targeted effectively.

5. Receiver Preference for Press Release Sender Address



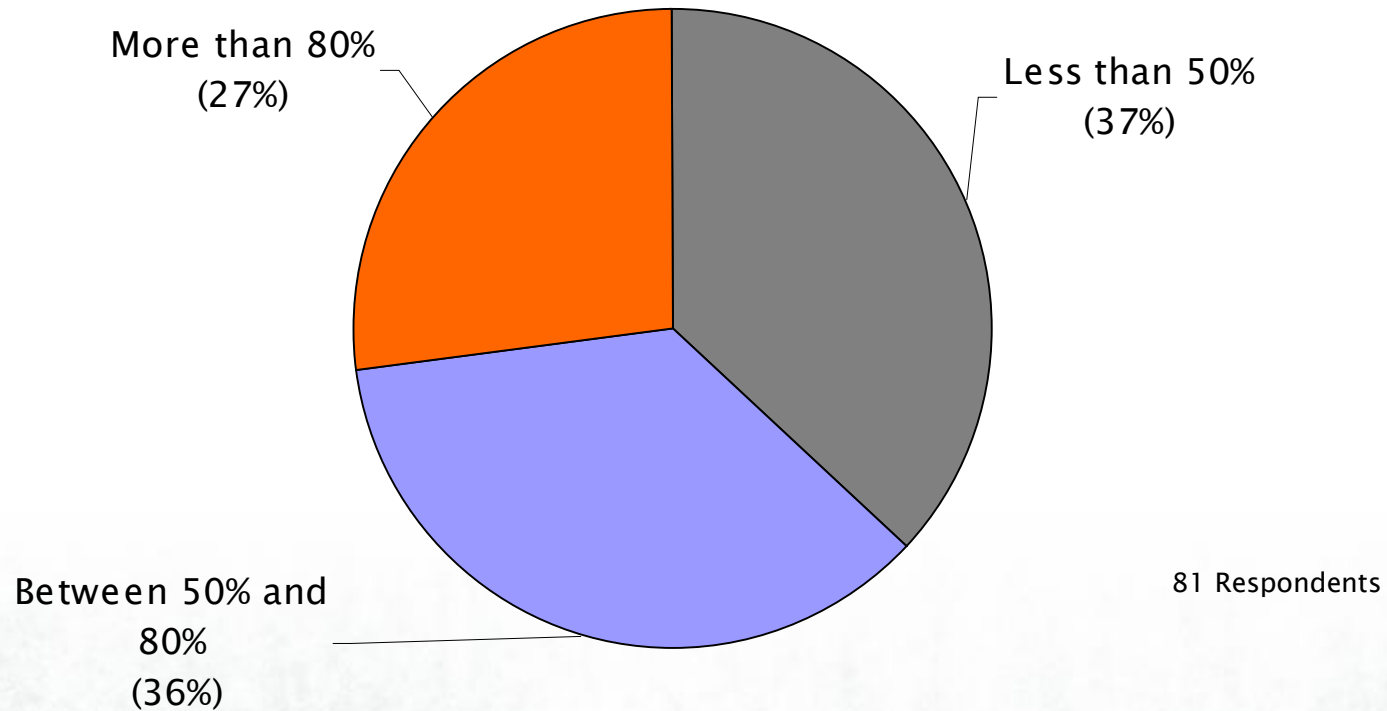
Almost half of Recipients have no strong preference on how a sender of a press release is identified. However sizeable minorities would prefer them to come from either a named individual or company.

6. Preference for How Press Release Emails are Addressed



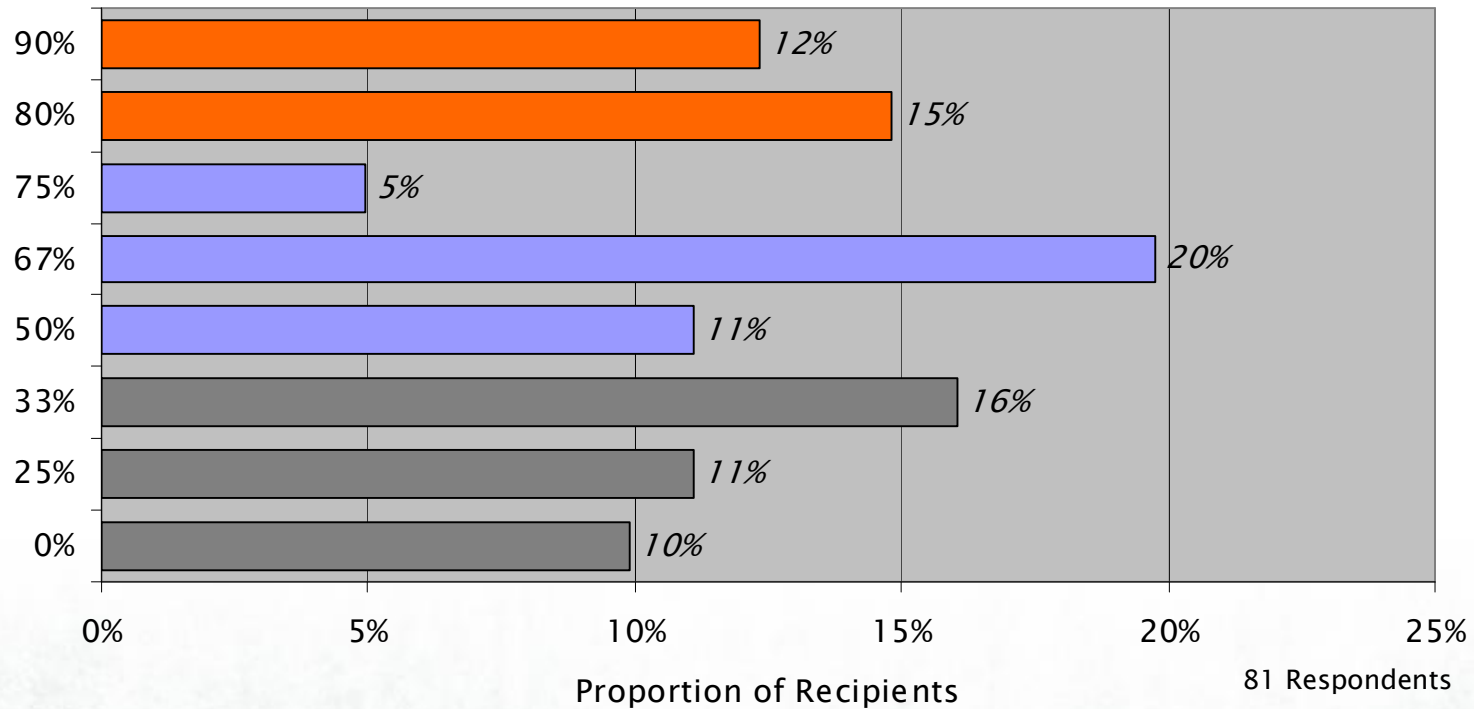
Three quarters of Recipients are happy to receive press release emails on a bulk email basis (or have no preference either way). A quarter though would prefer the email to be personalised.

7a. Recipients Acceptable Level of Irrelevant Press Releases – Summary



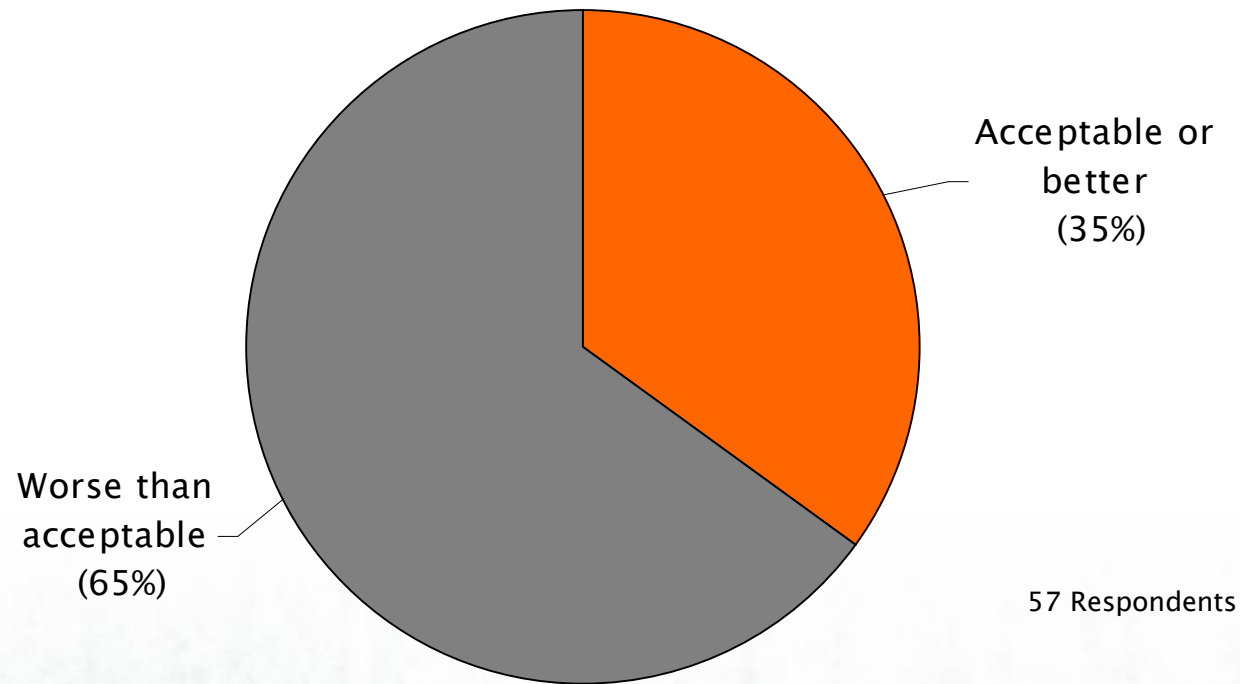
Almost two thirds of Recipients consider an acceptable level of irrelevant press releases to be 50%.

7b. Recipients Acceptable Level of Irrelevant Press Releases – Detailed



There is a significant distribution of views amongst Recipients on acceptable levels of irrelevant press releases with almost as many Recipients considering that 90% being irrelevant is acceptable as think zero.

7c. Recipients Views on the Current Levels of Irrelevant Press Releases They Receive



Two thirds of Recipients consider the current level of irrelevant emails they receive to be greater than the level they would accept.

Areas for further study

Primary sources of irrelevance

These surveys have focussed on the existence of press release pollution. As with pollution in the real world we need to understand and quantify the main reasons why pollution is created. Obviously this is due to poor targeting, but is this in turn caused by culture, technologies employed, working practices, use of databases or other potential reasons?

Reasons for concentration of irrelevance

As noted in Graph 2e it appears that a sizeable minority of Recipients of press releases suffer the vast majority of irrelevant press release emails. More work is needed to establish why this is. Is it concentrated in certain sectors or sub sectors? Is it dependent on the influence of the Recipient and/or their publication?

Areas for further study (continued)

Financial costs of irrelevance

The financial impact of irrelevance on both the PR and Media industries needs to be calculated. We have not sought to do this at this stage as in our opinion a lot more information about the issue is needed from both industries in order to make defensible calculations.

One obvious area would be the value of the time wasted (or saved) on both sides by current approaches and implications this has for productivity.

A more wide reaching area for study though would be estimating the extent to which *irrelevance impacts on the value of the PR industry itself*. This could be caused if irrelevance is leading to a lower level of influence being created by the industry (due to interesting stories getting lost) and the implications this has for its income generating capacity.

Appendix

Timings:

Survey 1 carried out between 23rd and 24th November 2009. 50 respondents

Survey 2 carried out between 3rd and 16th December 2009. 102 respondents

Survey 3 carried out between 11th and 17th December 2009. 58 respondents

Survey 4 carried out between 15th and 16th December 2009. 23 respondents

Respondents:

Survey 1 – 50 respondents

Survey 2 – 102 respondents

Survey 3 – 58 respondents

Survey 4 – 23 respondents

How survey carried out:

Surveys 1 and 4 consisted of replies to a request sent out on Twitter originally by Stephen Davies (3WPR @stedavies)

Survey 2 consisted of replies to an email invitation sent out to over 3,000 of RealWire's registered recipients of press releases. Survey 3 was a follow up survey sent to the previous 102 respondents to Survey 2.

Appendix (continued)

Questions:

Surveys 1 and 2 both asked:

1. On an average working day how many press releases do you receive in your email inbox from all sources?

2. Out of these press releases what proportion would you say is relevant to the areas you cover?

(Definition of relevance being you're happy to receive it even if you don't use it.)

1 in 100

1 in 50

1 in 25

1 in 10

1 in 5

1 in 3

1 in 2

All are relevant

3. Have you ever taken action to block/filter/auto-delete an individual, agency or organisation because of irrelevant press releases?

Survey 2 also asked:

4. Which of the following potential filters would you like to be able to select to achieve a higher level of relevancy of releases received? (Select all that apply)

Release type (eg new product/service, appointment, financial results)

Company

Language

Appendix (continued)

Survey 2 questions (continued)

5. Do you prefer to receive releases from a named individual or a company name?

Individual

Company name

No preference

6. Are you happy to receive releases via "bulk" email (where BCC field is used) or do you prefer a personal email sent only to you?

"Bulk" email is fine

Personal email

No preference

Survey 3 and 4 both asked:

1. What minimum level of relevant press releases do you consider is acceptable to receive? (Definition of relevance being you're happy to receive it even if you don't use it. Definition of acceptable being you would pay attention to the material sent by that source.)

1 in 10 (10%)

1 in 5 (20%)

1 in 4 (25%)

1 in 3 (33%)

1 in 2 (50%)

2 in 3 (66%)

3 in 4 (75%)

All are relevant (100%)

Appendix (continued)

Survey 3 and 4 questions (continued)

2. Which of the following potential release types would you prefer NOT to receive if you could deselect them?

(Select all that apply)

Appointments

Awards

Client/Customer wins

Financial results

Market launch/entry

Market Research/Statistics/Surveys

Mergers/Acquisitions

New Product/Service launch

Office opening

Product/Service enhancement

Promotions/Competitions

Tradeshows/Events

