



Vuelio

UK BLOGGERS SURVEY 2017

1. Overview

Blogging is now a well-established media for consumers who turn to their favourite writers for news, advice, inspiration or information on a particular topic or theme.

This survey was first conducted in 2016 following the successful launch of the Vuelio Blog Awards in November 2015 to gain a greater understanding of bloggers, their work and their relationship with PR professionals. This 2017 report provides a snapshot of the blogger sector and maps some of the changes in their work, behaviour, attitudes and opinions since last year.

This looks in detail at a number of key findings about the industry:

- Bloggers are predominantly female and blog for personal reasons
- Lifestyle is the most popular theme for blogs but parenting and family shows the biggest increase since last year
- Growth in professional blogging (influencers) and although most blog for personal reasons there is more interest in developing it commercially
- Most influencers own and manage their own blog and three-quarters reported they focus on just one blog
- Most blogs attract 1 - 10,000 unique visitors and only a small increase in large blogs over 10,000 visitors
- Twitter and Facebook are the preferred methods to promote content with females active on Instagram and Pinterest
- Little change in promoting a blog since last year with over two thirds of bloggers spending up to 15 hours per week on their blog
- Over a third of influencers are pitched to seven times or more a week by PR professionals and frequency is increasing since last year
- Despite PRs pitching frequently it does not result in published content
- Bloggers still believe that transparency about brand sponsorship is essential

2. UK Blog typology

2.1 Lifestyle is the most popular theme for blogs but parenting and family shows the biggest increase since last year

The top five most popular categories in 2017 were lifestyle, parenting and family, fashion and beauty, travel and food. Last year, lifestyle and fashion and beauty jointly topped the list (Table 1).

Fashion and beauty's decline since last year is doubtless attributable to manifold possible causes, but among them would be the gradual shift of influencers whose interests are visual from blogging to channels such as Instagram – a theme that recurs throughout this report.

	Total 2016	Total 2017
Lifestyle	31%	34%
Parenting / family	16%	29%
Fashion and beauty	31%	20%
Travel	15%	18%
Food / drink	17%	15%

Table 1: Top 5 Main categories of blogs

Overall men addressed a greater range of topics, with almost all categories represented; women were focused on fewer themes, particularly lifestyle, fashion and beauty, and parenting (Table 2, next page). However, the gender difference for parenting/family was marginal, with 13% of men and 16% of women identifying this as the primary focus of their blog.

Men were much more likely to use combinations of themes in their blogs e.g. travel, food and health, and to also lead on sport, film and TV and technology and gaming. In contrast, the main focus for women is most likely to be fashion and beauty or lifestyle, followed by parenting and family related blogs.

	Male	Female
Lifestyle	5%	29%
Food	5%	10%
Fashion and beauty	3%	17%
Sport	8%	1%
Parenting/family	13%	16%
Health and wellbeing	1%	3%
Travel	9%	9%
Business	3%	1%
Political	5%	0%
Media and marketing	3%	1%
Film and TV	9%	1%
Craft and creative	1%	2%
Technology and gaming	4%	0%
Music	7%	0%
Arts and culture	10%	3%
Other and combinations	14%	7%

Table 2: Main categories of blogs by gender (%) blogs

2.2 Growth in professional blogging – although most still blog for personal reasons there is more interest in developing it commercially

Respondents' reasons for blogging can broadly be categorised as either personal or professional (Figure 1).

Although most (31%) are self-declared hobbyists, this proportion is slightly less than last year, and the biggest area of growth is among those aiming to monetise their work. For example, 12% claim their blog is their main source of income and 18% state that they want it to become their main source of income.

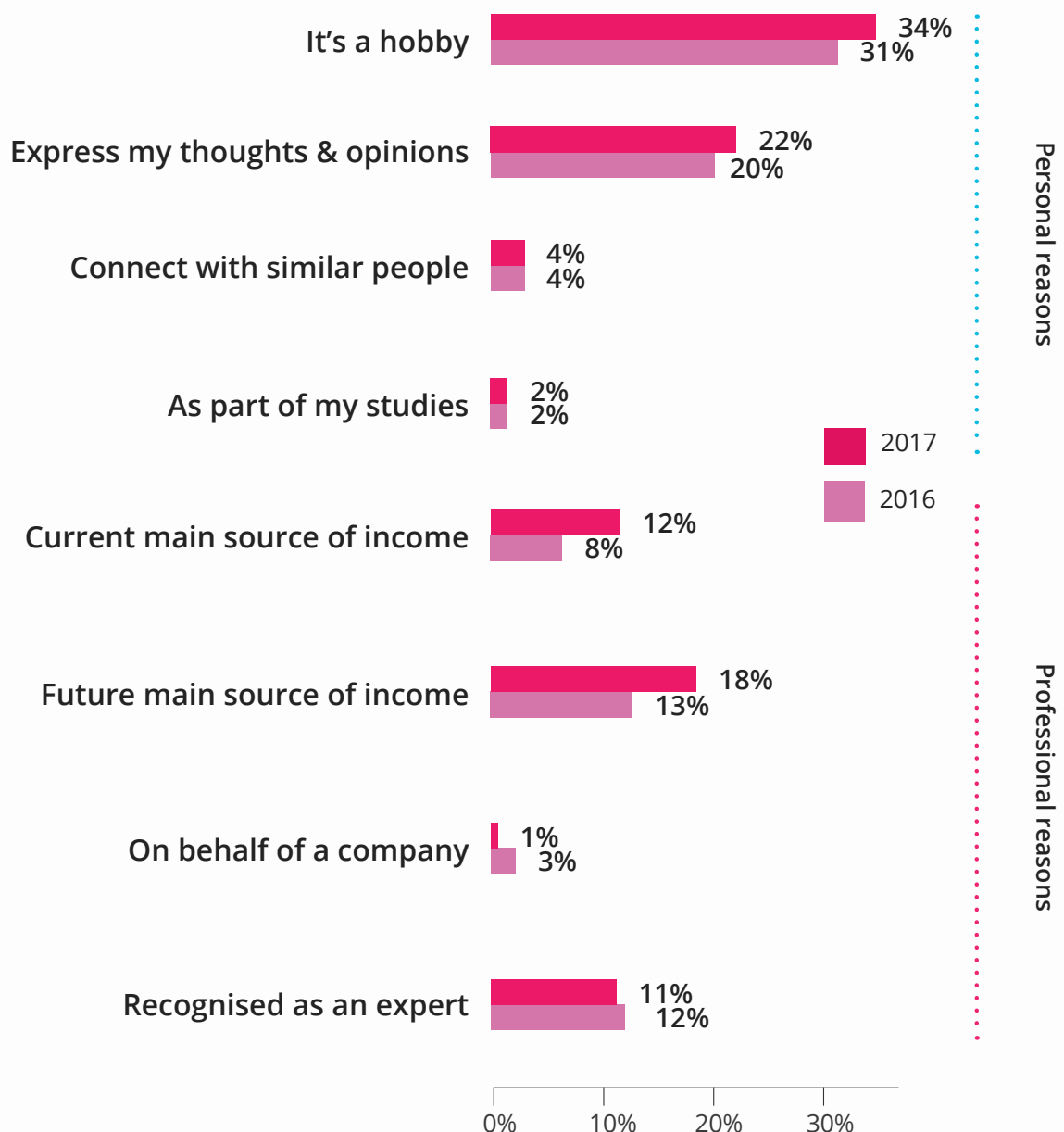


Figure 1: Reasons for blogging(%)

2.3 Most influencers own and manage their own blog and for three-quarters of them, it is just one blog

74% of respondents manage one blog and 18% two blogs – reinforcing the idea of influencers specialised in one area, or at least connected themes, with focused channel outputs.

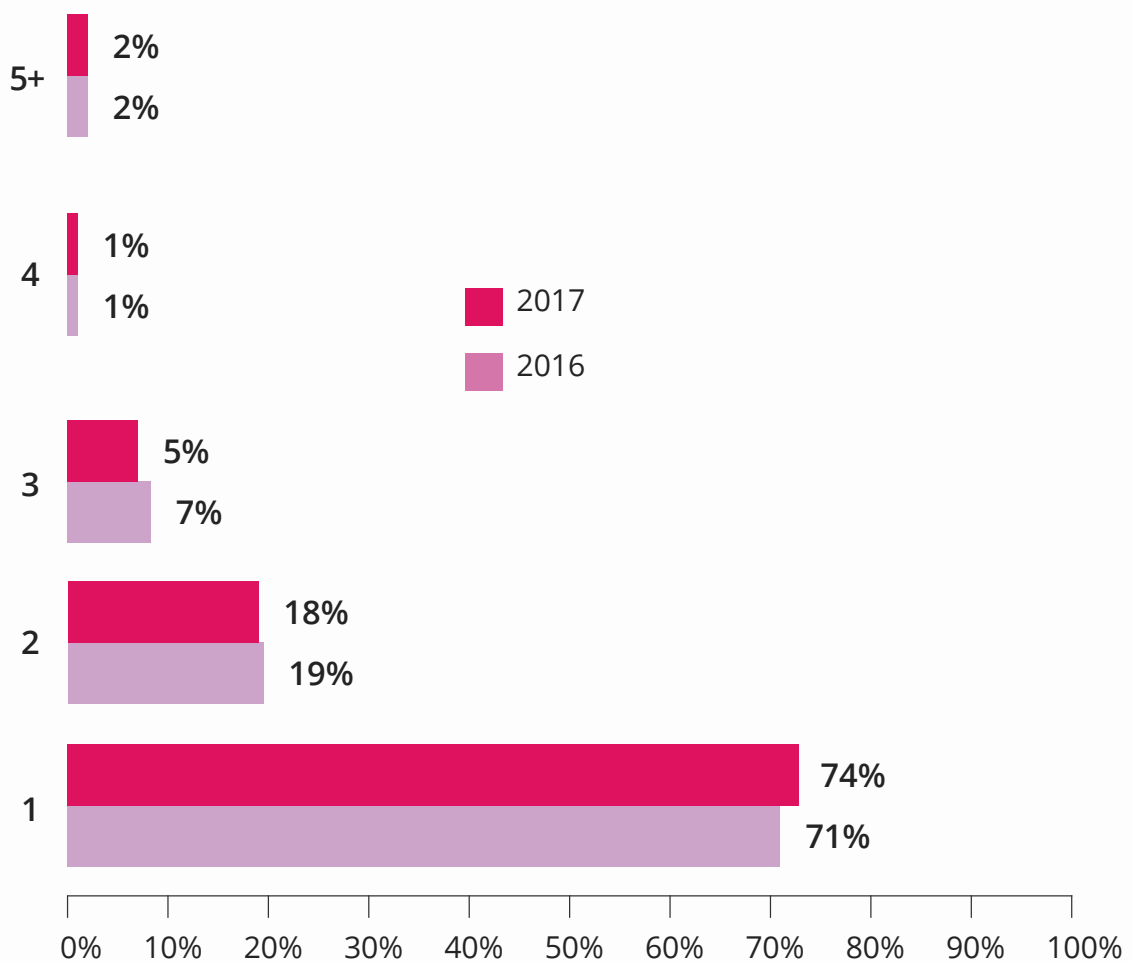


Figure 2: How many blogs do you own or manage? (% of respondents)

34% of those with one blog are hobbyists, while almost a fifth have plans for it to become a main source of income in the future.

However, the commercial aspects of blogging become more evident as more blogs are managed – those looking after more than one are more likely to carry adverts and more likely to measure engagement. For example, 60% of those who own one blog use reader analytics compared to 75% of those with four.

2.4 The frequency of posting is declining with an increase in those posting once a week increasing

Over a third (38%) posted once a week, a proportion that has increased 14% since last year (Table 3). There is further evidence that more influencers are posting less; for example, this year 81% posted 1-3 posts per week, compared to 74% in 2016.

Number of Posts	% of respondents	
	2016	2017
1	24%	38%
2	27%	25%
3	23%	18%
4	8%	6%
5 or more	18%	13%

Table 3: Frequency of posting by main reason for blogging (% of respondents)

There was a preference for posting once a week across all categories of blog, with the exceptions of lifestyle (where 31% posted three times a week) and parenting/family (38% posted four times a week).

Respondents also reported more frequent posting when blogging was the main source of income, whereas those who wrote a blog for a hobby were most likely to post once a week (Figure 3).

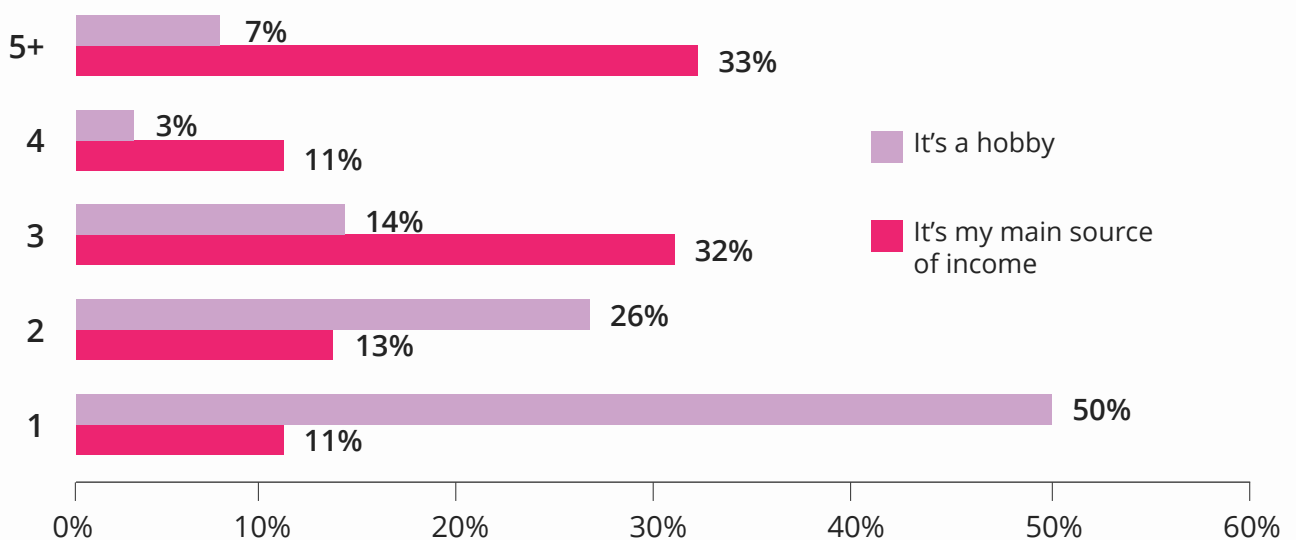


Figure 3: Frequency of posting by main reason for blogging (% of respondents)

Almost all respondents (98%) own their own blogs; the remainder working on behalf of other organisations. Therefore, this report represents a study of independent bloggers, as would be expected to emerge from a survey of Vuelio Media Database constituents.

2.5 Most blogs attract 1 - 10,000 unique visitors and only a small increase in large blogs over 10,000 visitors

Of the 93% of respondents measuring activity on their blog, most (41%) reported that their blogs received between 1,000 – 10,000 unique visitors per month (Chart 1) with an almost equal split between the large blogs (above 10,000) and small blogs (0-1,000). Based on the same number of unique visitors, these sizes have not altered very much since last year when 27% were classified as small, 45% medium and 28% large.

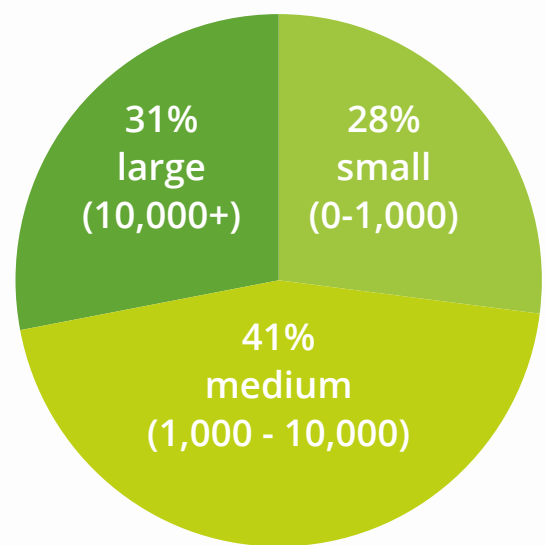


Chart 1: Number of unique visits received per month (%)

Those who cited personal reasons for writing their blogs tended to attract fewer unique visitors, with 77% stating that they attracted up to 1,000 per week, whereas bloggers citing professional reasons for writing were more likely to have a larger number of unique visitors (Figure 4).

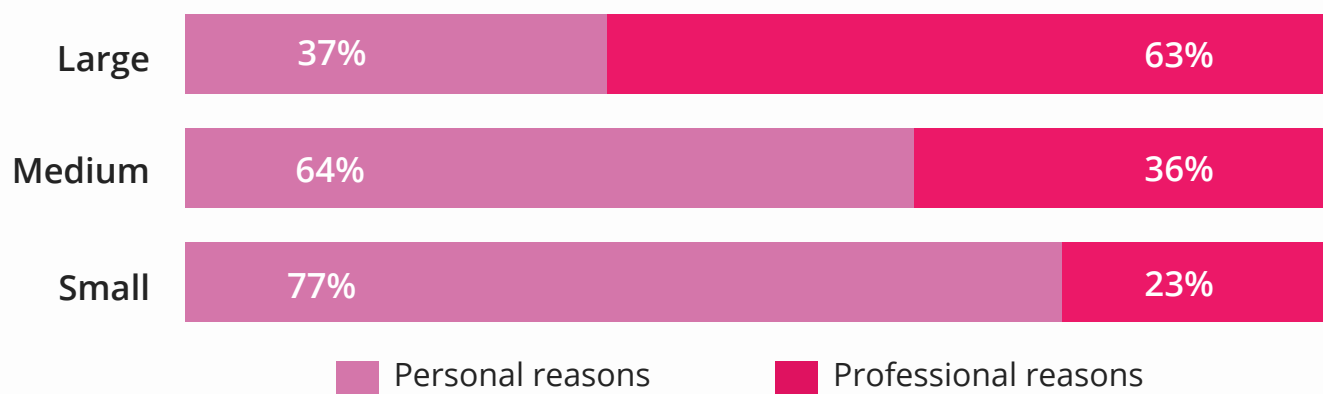


Figure 4: Number of unique visitors depends on reasons for blogging

2.6 Little change in promoting a blog since last year with over two thirds of bloggers spending up to 15 hours per week on their blog

Overall there was very little change in the amount of time spent promoting a blog since last year. Most bloggers (30%) spent between 5-10 hours per week on their blog (Figure 5), a marginal increase of 1% since 2016. The largest increase (4%) since last year was reported by those spending less time (between 1-4 hours per week), while there was a 5% decrease in those spending between 11-20 hours. What change there was suggests influencers are spending less time promoting blogs.

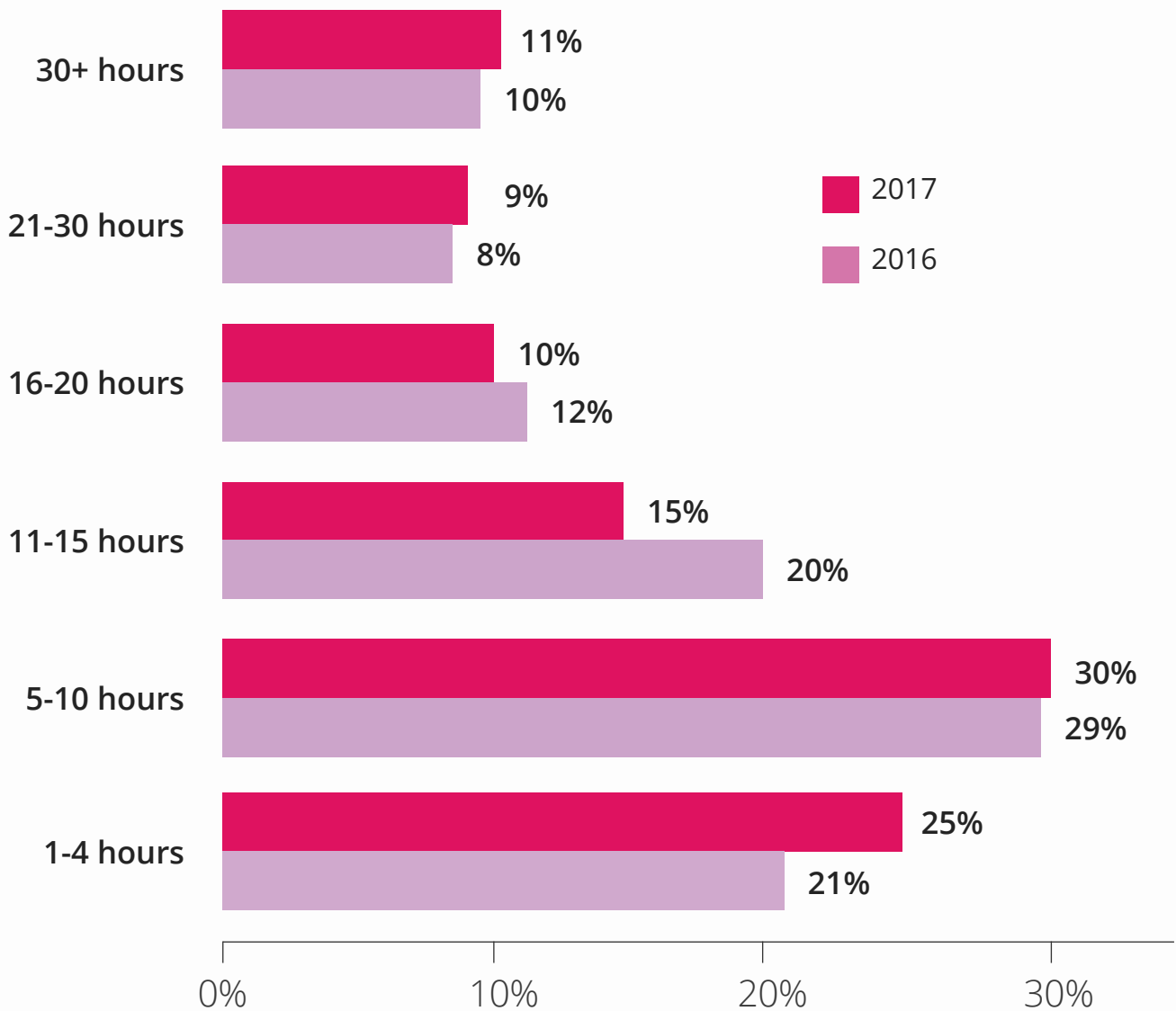


Figure 5: Time spent on blogging

Professional respondents reported that they were more likely to spend longer promoting their blog. 65% of those using their blog as main source of income spent more than 30 hours per week promoting it, in comparison to only 11% of those whose aim was to express their own opinions and 3% of those who blog as a hobby.

Most of those blogging for personal reasons spent between 1-4 hours per week (83%), whereas professional bloggers were likely to have spent 30 more hours (89%, up from 75% in 2016).

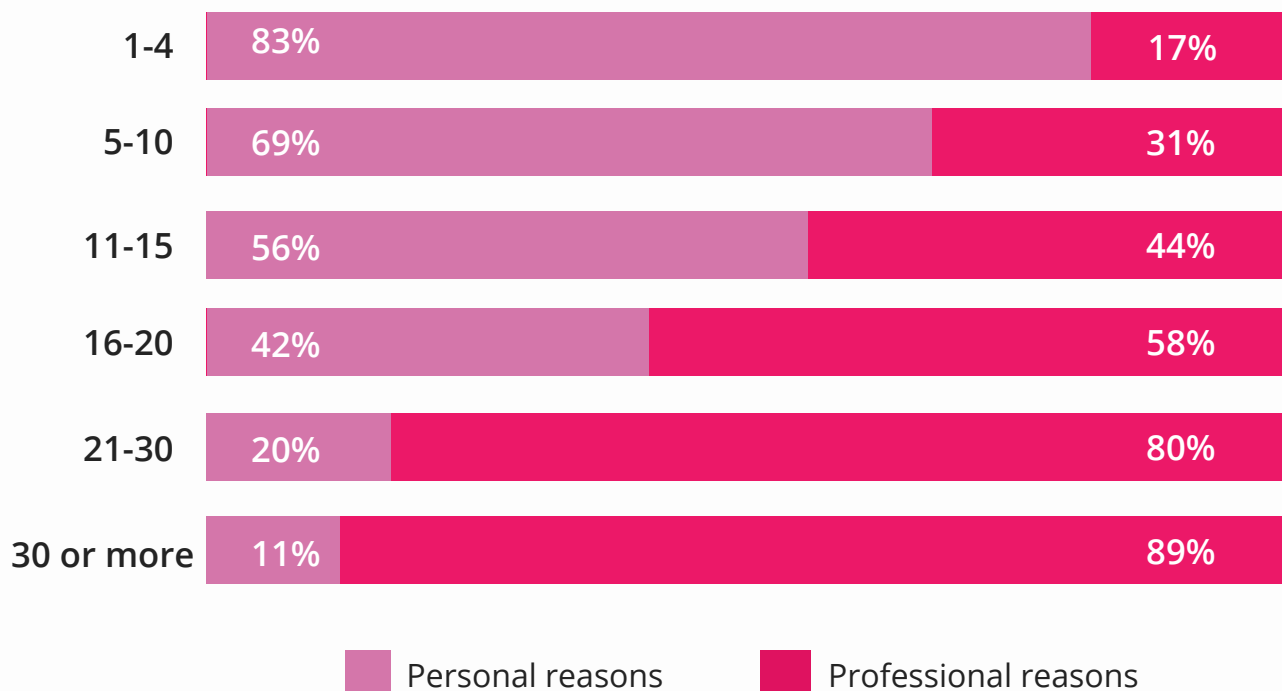


Figure 6: Time spent promoting blog based on reasons for blogging (personal or professional)

It was also apparent that the more time spent promoting a blog the more followers it received. So, for those who have 10,000 or more followers, 67% of them are spending 30 hours or more a week on their blog, compared to 28% for medium sized blogs and 5% for small blogs (see Figure 7, next page).

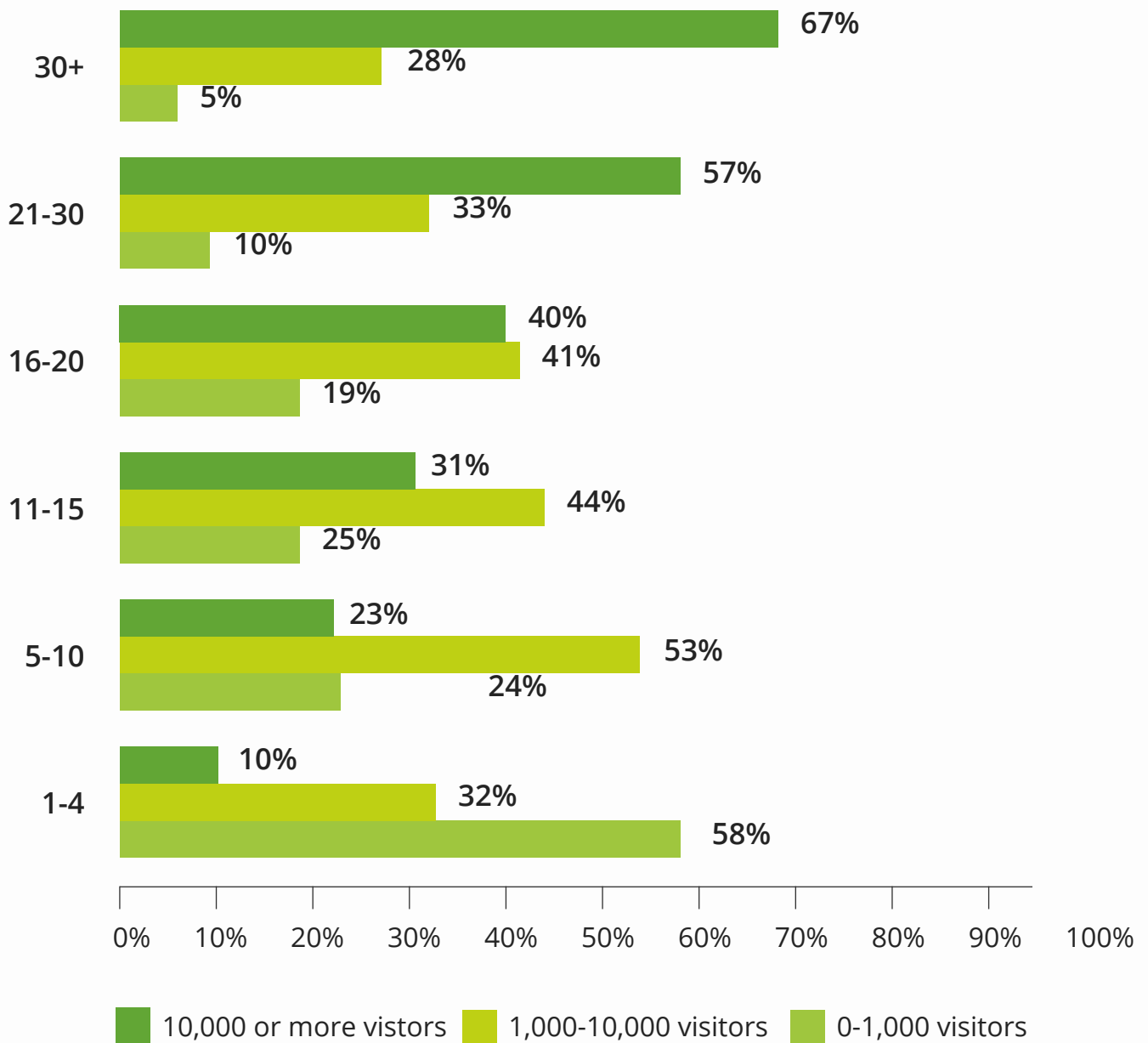


Figure 7: Number of unique visitors against time spent on main blog (%)

Overall it seems spending longer promoting your work offers greater rewards in terms of unique visitors. However, for those blogging for personal reasons, growing a larger audience is not necessarily a key objective. Equally, as audience engagement for smaller blogs can be higher than for larger blogs it does not necessarily make them less influential.

2.7 Twitter and Facebook are the preferred methods to promote content with females active on Instagram and Pinterest

There is very little change in how bloggers choose to promote their work, with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest remaining the preferred channels, although Twitter and Pinterest are showing marginal declines (4% and 3% respectively).

What is most noticeable is the considerable growth of Bloglovin' which received very few mentions in 2016 but was identified as a key platform by 50% of respondents to promote their blog. Google + is showing greatest decline (-13%).

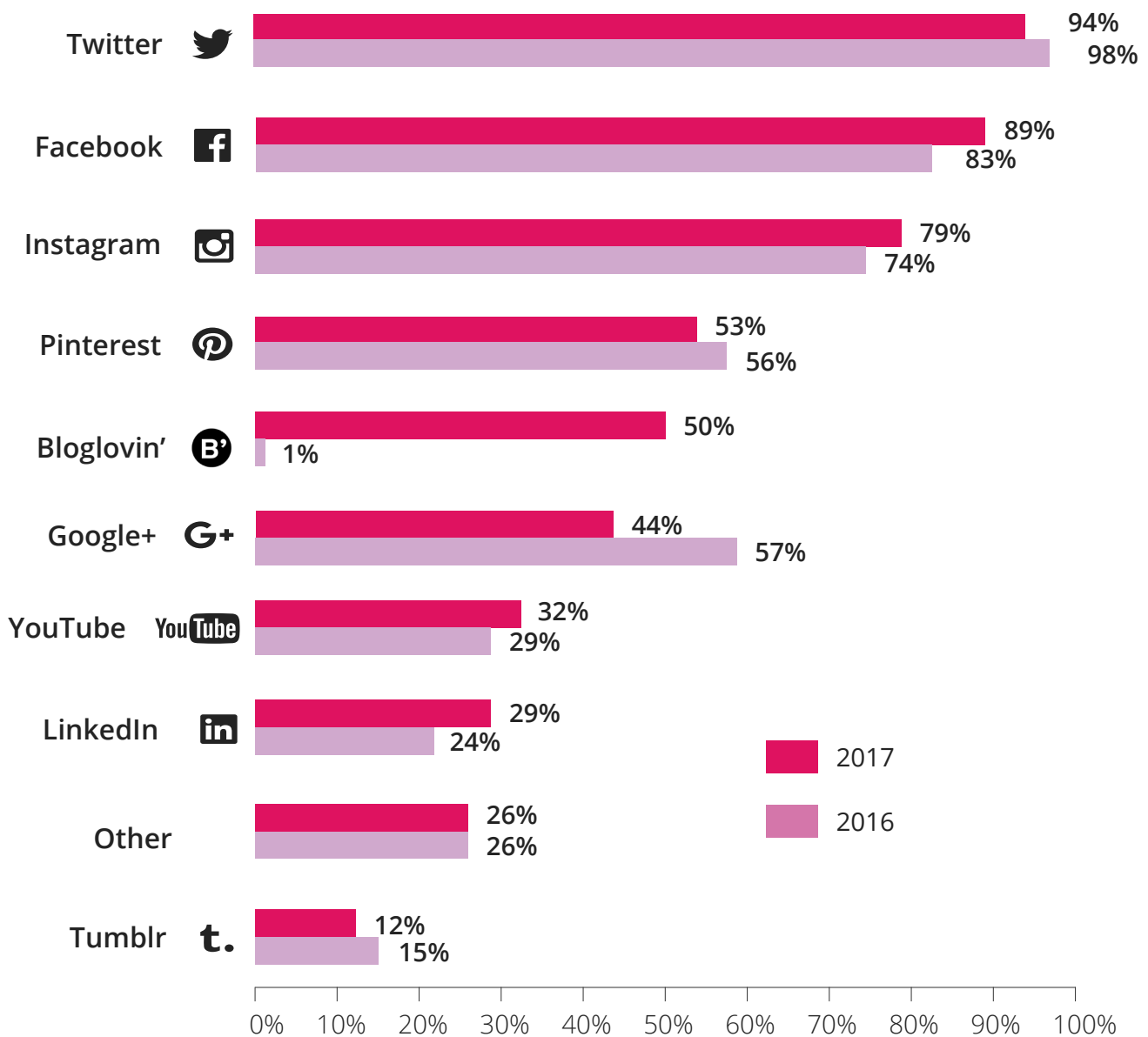


Figure 8: Most frequently used social media to promote and share blog content (%)

*(Figures add to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than 1. Other includes Snapchat, WhatsApp, Flickr, Periscope, Vimeo, Slideshare, Storify, Stumbleupon and others not specified.)

Instagram, Pinterest and Bloglovin' were clear favourites for females, probably reflecting a focus on visual channels, revealing the topics of blogs they are most likely to address, e.g. fashion and beauty, lifestyle etc. In contrast, men were more likely to turn to Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

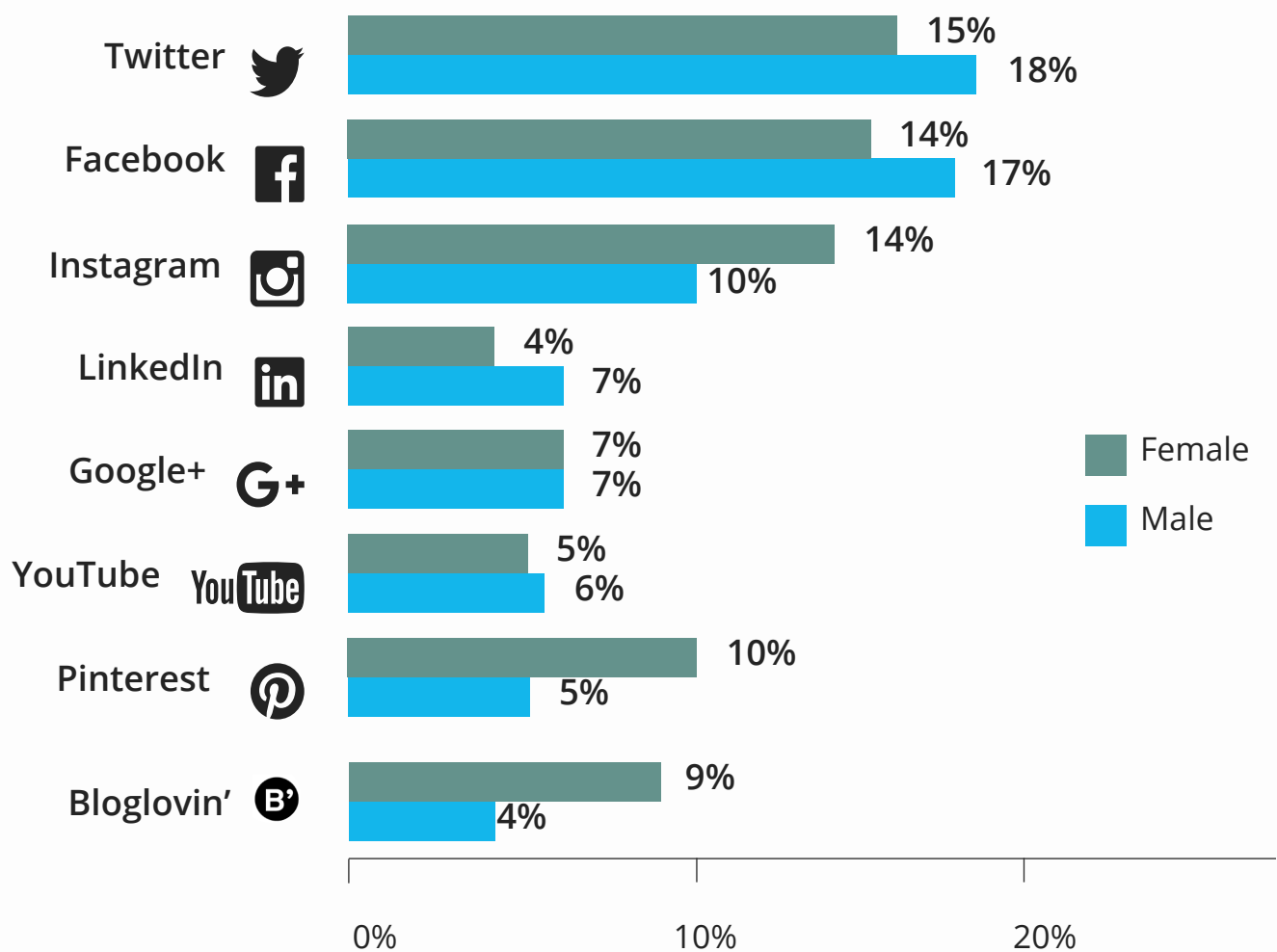


Figure 9: Social media channels used by males and females to promote their blogs

3. Working with PRs

3.1 Over a third of bloggers are pitched to seven times or more a week by PR professionals - and the frequency is increasing

Most bloggers reported being pitched to seven or more times a week so it appears that PR professionals are active in the blogger market, although an increasing number reported that they are not pitched to at all.

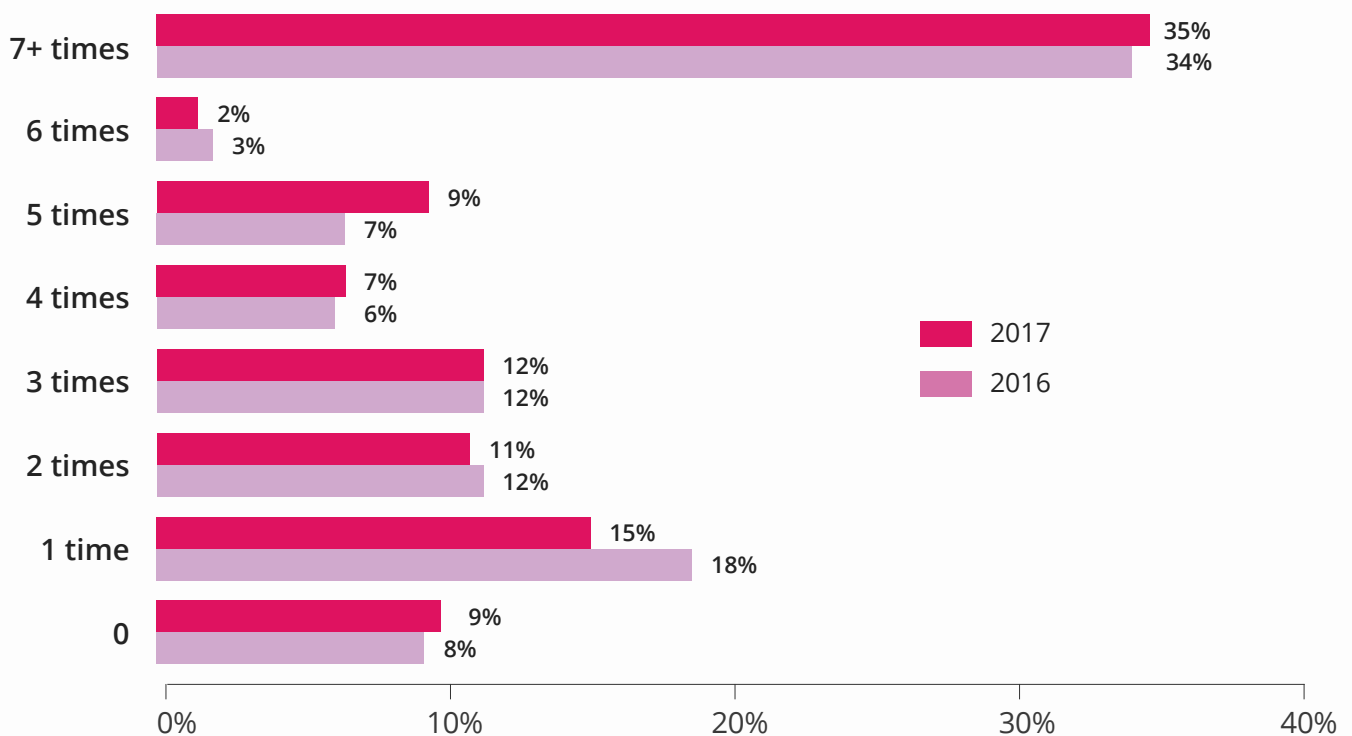


Figure 10: Number of times per week bloggers are pitched to (%)

This dip might speak of better targeting by PRs, but it is noticeable that there is little difference in the size of unique visitors to the blog and the frequency of PRs pitching them. Potentially PRs recognise the benefits of both large and micro-influencers and are pitching them all.

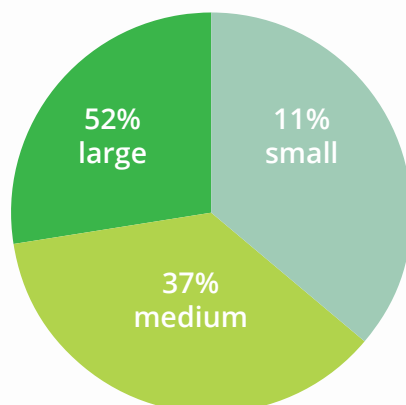


Chart 2: Bloggers who are pitched to 7 or more times per week by size of blog (%)

3.2 Despite PRs pitching frequently it does not result in published content

Despite the relatively high frequency of pitches from PR professionals, 70% of bloggers stated that only one pitch a week or less resulted in any content on their blog. The patterns were very similar for those writing for personal reasons and those writing professionally.

This pattern is almost identical to last year, suggesting that whilst reaching the influencer market is a key target for PRs, bloggers, no matter how successful, remain focused on their own opinion and the needs of their audience.

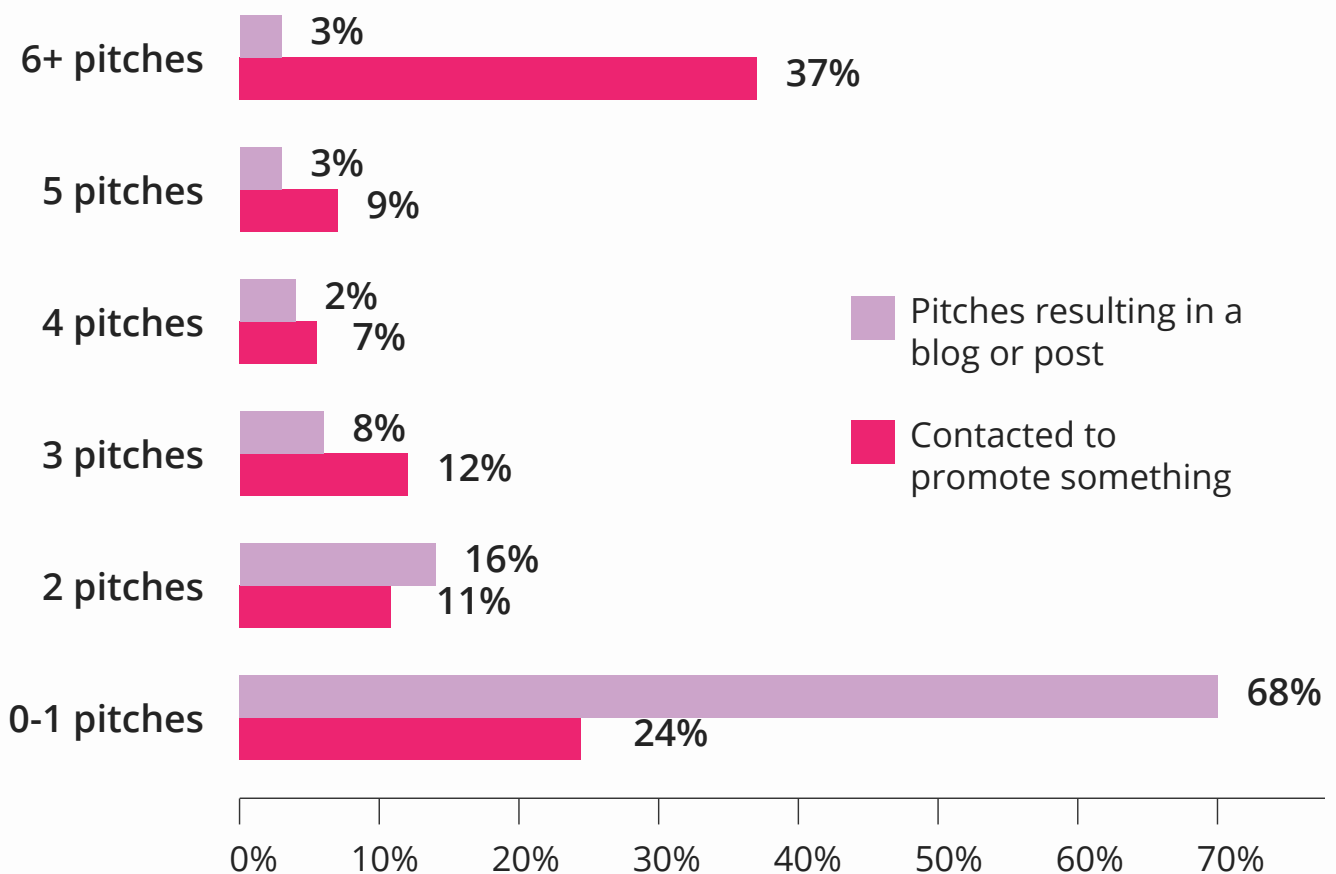


Figure 11: Number of pitches made against whether this resulted in content (%)

While pitching was evident to all different types of blogs, those receiving the most pitches were the main top five topics covering lifestyle, parenting/family, fashion and beauty, food and travel.

Influencers clearly stated that their personal opinion of the brand was the key factor in deciding whether a pitch would result in published content, reported by 61% of our respondents. This reinforces the independence of bloggers and the importance of finding the right influencer who is likely to support a particular brand.

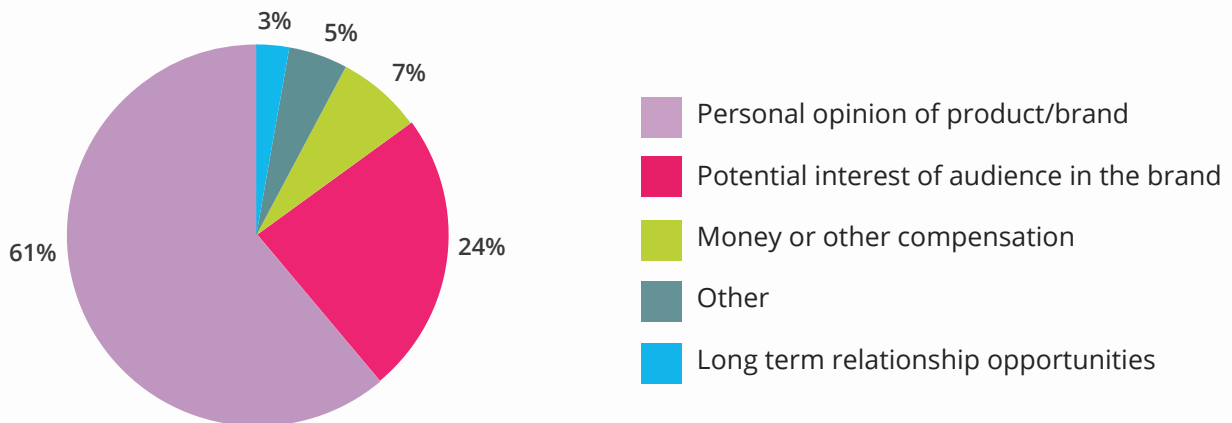


Chart 3: Main reason pitches are successful (%)

3.3 Relationship with PRs generally good but bloggers feel they lack credibility compared to traditional journalists

Bloggers still feel they lack the credibility afforded traditional journalists, but there has been a slight shift since last year, perhaps indicating the status of an influencer is growing in the eyes of PRs. More than half (54%) feel they will be more trusted than traditional journalists in the future, although this belief is not as strongly held as last year (see Table 4).

	<i>Disagree completely</i>	<i>Disagree somewhat</i>	<i>Neither agree or disagree</i>	<i>Agree somewhat</i>	<i>Agree completely</i>	
PRs regard traditional journalists as more important than bloggers	5%	15%	23%	42%	15%	2017
	2%	13%	24%	40%	22%	2016
In the future, bloggers will be more trusted than traditional journalists	4%	16%	28%	38%	14%	2017
	2%	13%	32%	37%	17%	2016

Table 4: Views on blogging and PR (%)

Overall, three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported having a good relationship with PRs, compared to 73% last year. However, this did vary according to the topic of the blog (Figure 12) with only 17% of those working on political blogs reporting a positive relationship.

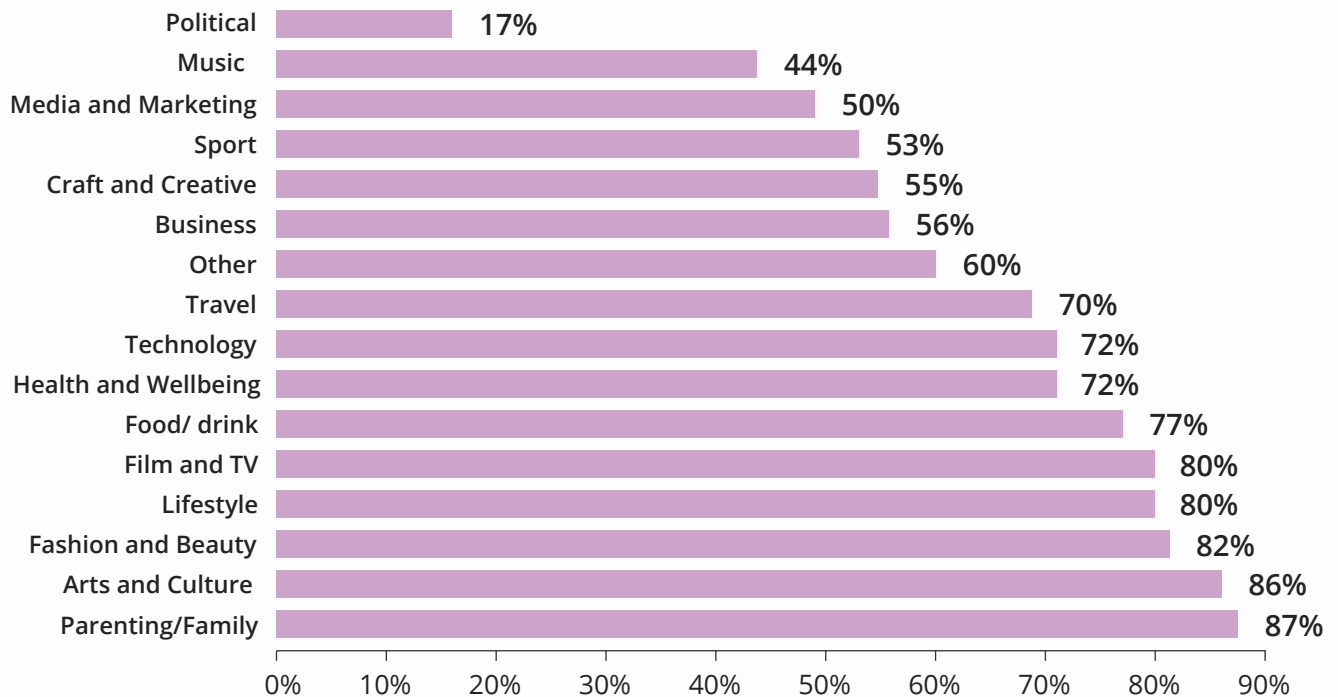


Figure 12: Influencers agreeing/strongly agreeing they have a good relationship with PRs (% respondent).

It is also noticeable that those working on blogs which attract bigger audiences report a better relationship, likely to be because these bloggers rely more on PRs to develop content and ideas for their blog.

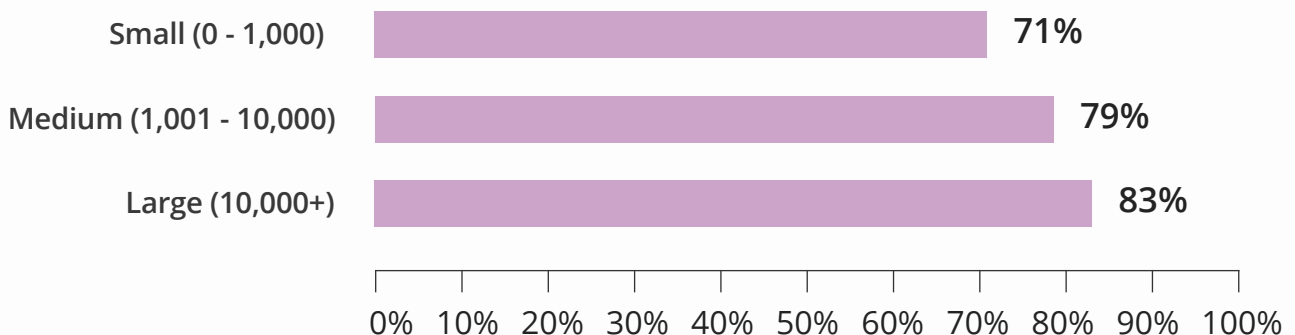


Figure 13: Agreed/strongly agreed they had a good relationship with PRs by size of blog (% respondents)

4. Remuneration & disclosure

4.1 Bloggers still believe that transparency about brand sponsorship is essential

Over four-fifths of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that disclosure about who is behind any sponsorship of their blog is important, a position supported by both those blogging for professional reasons (82%) and those doing so for personal reasons (70%). Bloggers also seem increasingly aware of their influence – there is a growing feeling that any branded mentions should be paid for.

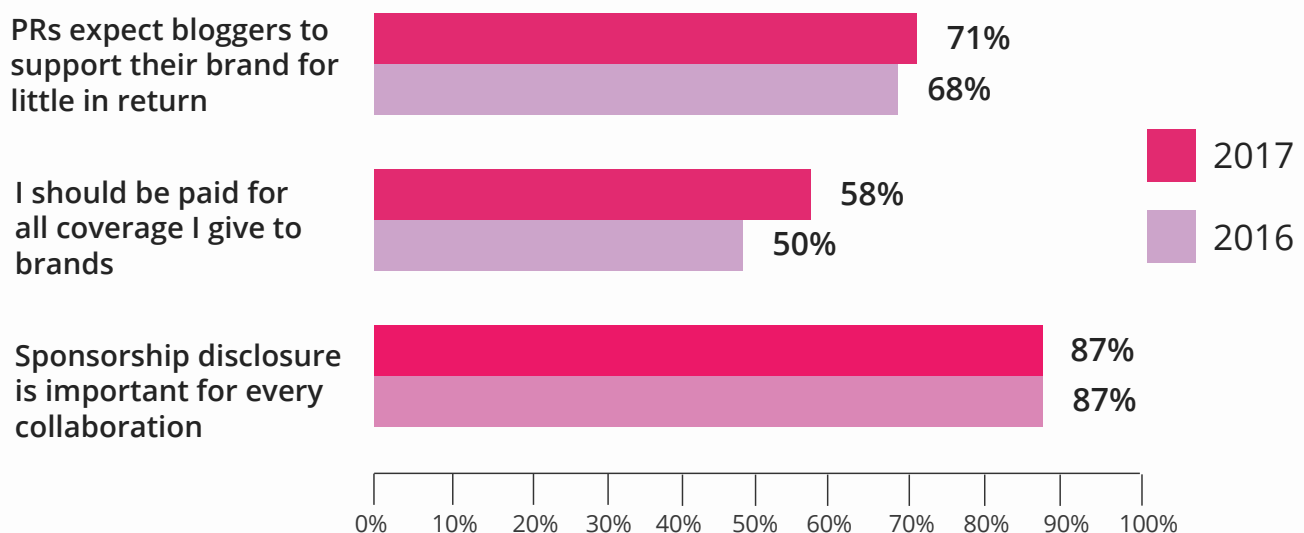


Figure 14: Views on commercialisation of blogs (%)

Not surprisingly those who blog professionally were more likely to agree/strongly agree that they should be paid for brand coverage (65%) compared to those who blog for personal reasons (54%). Similarly, 76% of those who blog professionally were more likely to agree that sponsorship disclosure is important against 66% for those who do so for personal reasons.

Agreeing payment or compensation was ranked as the number one biggest challenge in 2016; this year influencers are more vexed by PR professionals not getting their details right and failing to receive a response after contacting a PR.

5. Profile of a UK blogger

5.1 Bloggers are predominantly female and blog for personal reasons

78% of respondents were female, which is a typical gender split for blogging and is similar to 2016 (77%). Over half of all respondents (56%) reported blogging for personal reasons, down 6% from last year, with the remainder stating they do so for professional reasons (chart 6).

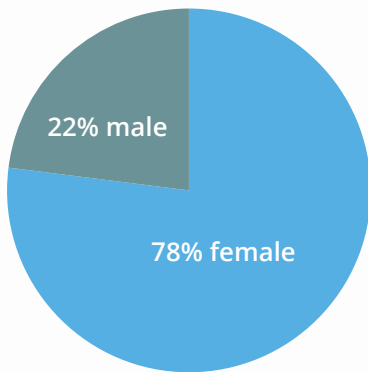


Chart 4: Gender of bloggers (%)

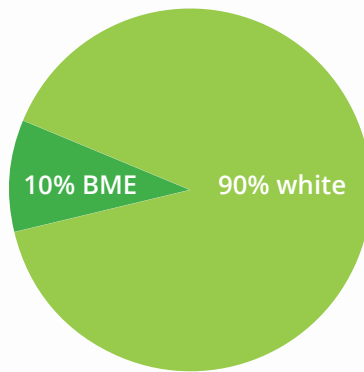


Chart 5: Ethnicity of bloggers (%)

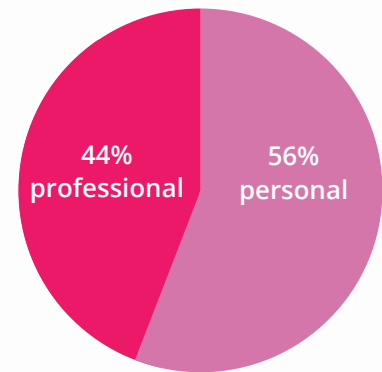


Chart 6: Personal v professional reasons for blogging (%)

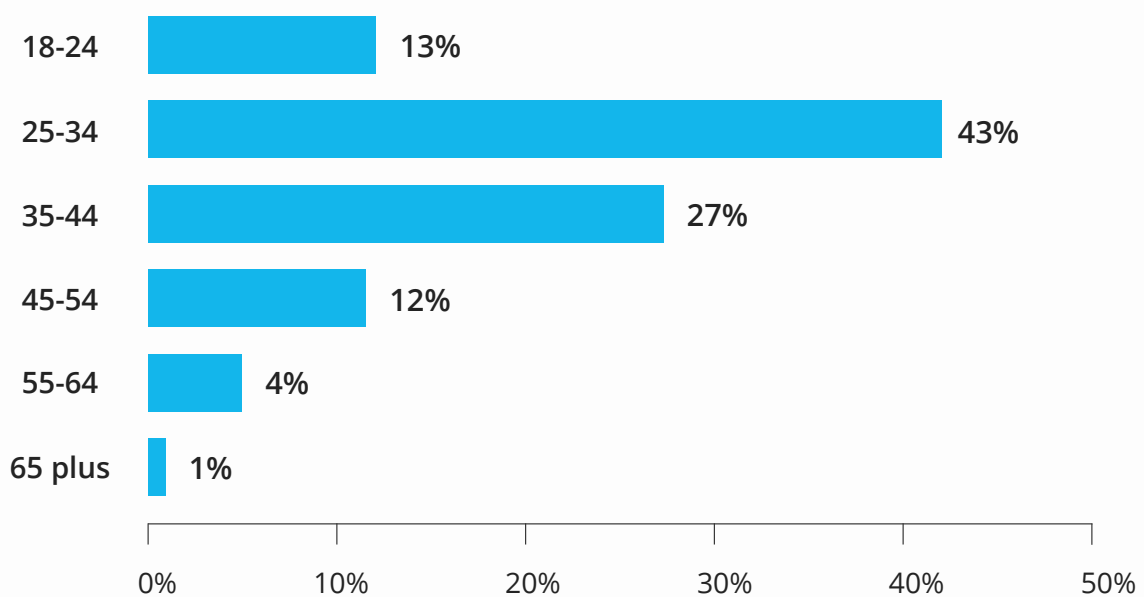


Figure 15: Age of bloggers (%)

About the survey

This survey was conducted in February 2017 to explore how bloggers work, their activities and views about their relationship with PR professionals and the future commercialisation of their work.

To reach this group of bloggers an online survey was sent to all UK bloggers registered with the Vuelio database. This resulted in 586 usable responses. As the database largely represents those owning and managing their own blog, those who blog on behalf of organisations are under-represented and would be likely to have different views and behaviours than are represented here.

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