

**From Risk to Reward:**

# **How Leaked Internal Communications Shape Brand Perception**

**2025**

# Key Takeaways From Our Analysis

**Leaked internal communications can be both a risk and an opportunity.**

Brands can capitalize on journalists' habits of sourcing from internal communications.

Communicators should ensure their company's internal communications ecosystem is stocked with positive messages, particularly about **innovation** or **company strategy**, to make the most of this opportunity.

- 1 When internal comms are leaked to the media this can pose a threat to reputation, but certain outlets often utilise leaked messaging for positive stories as well.
- 2 Most internal comms leaked to the media is 'top down' communication from management and leadership and originates from formal written messages, memos and emails.
- 3 Major companies are leveraging 'leaked' messages as opportunities, highlighting innovation and industry leadership to shape positive public perception.
- 4 Employee Resource Groups are not a risk, but leaked casual or social messages on boards or instant messages, especially on the topic of DEI, have a risk of going viral.

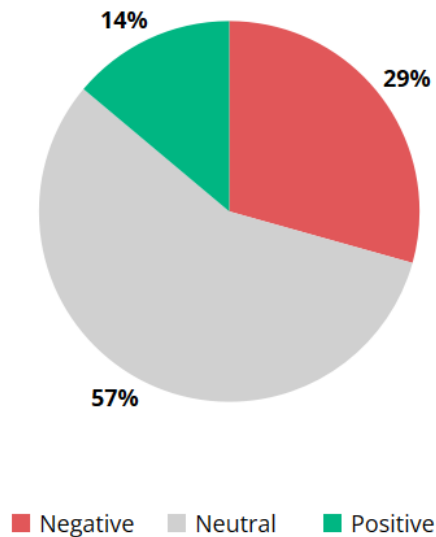
***Read on for the data behind these statements.***

# Internal comms mentions are often negative, but there is an opportunity for positive messaging with key outlets.

A small number of outlets drive the majority of internal comms mentions, but they utilize internal sources to both positive and negative effect.

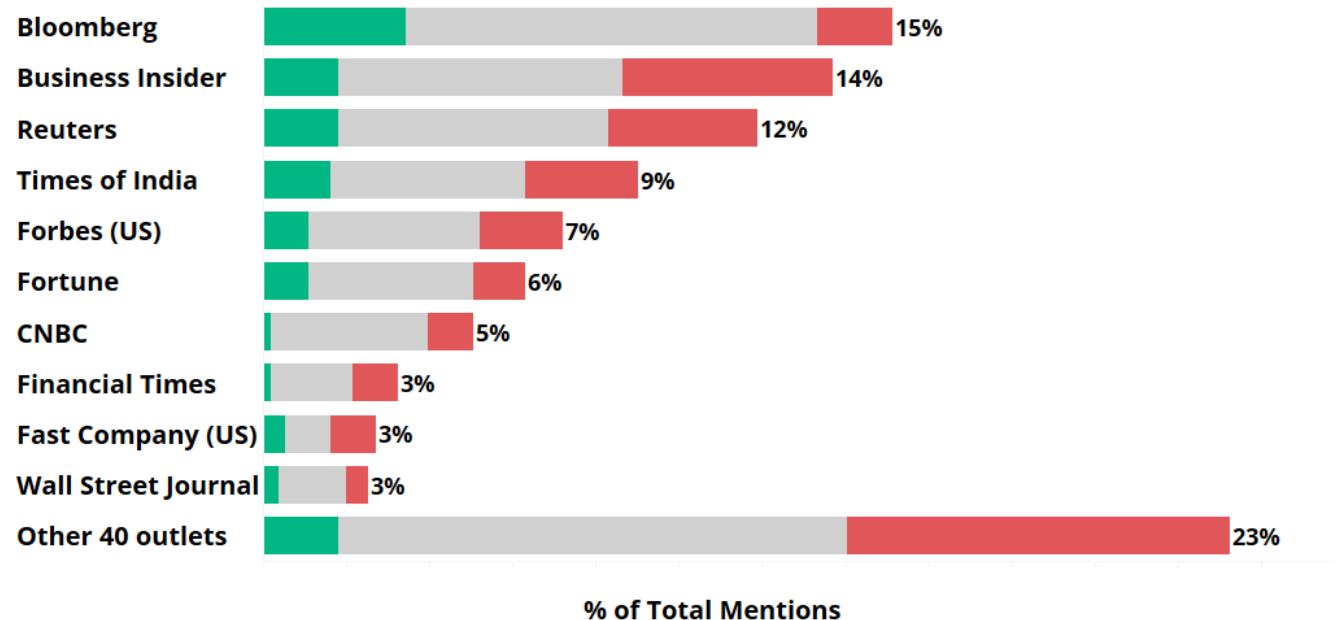
## Total Internal Comms mentions

Percentage of positive, neutral and negative mentions



## Internal Comms mentions in tracked media outlets

Proportion of total mentions per outlet with sentiment

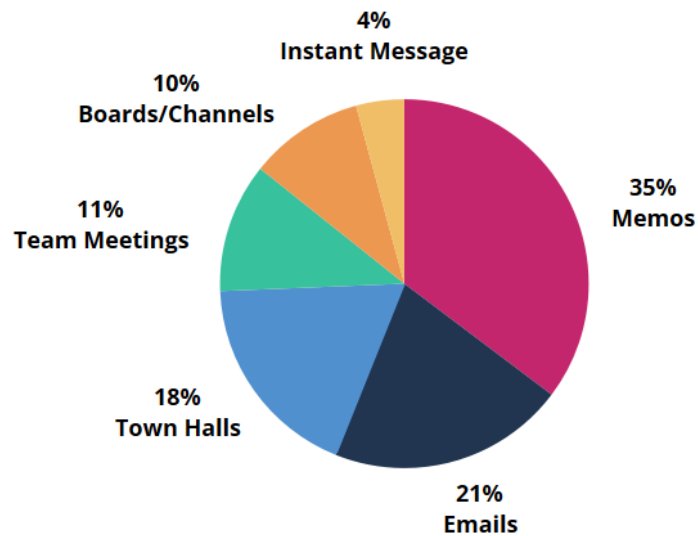


# Over half of internal comms media mentions originate from formal written messages, memos, and emails.

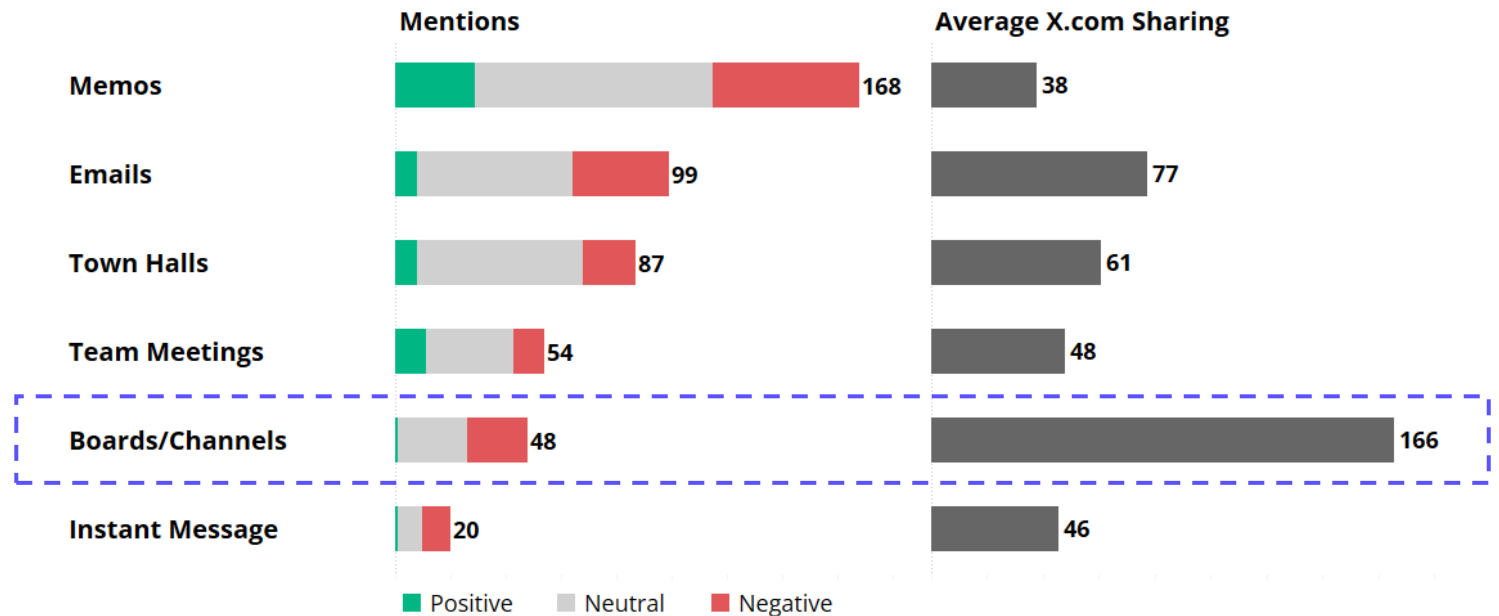
Leaked informal or social comms from message boards and channels feature infrequently but are most likely to have a wide-reaching impact on social media.

## Source medium of Internal Comms media mentions

Proportion of source type within total mentions



Volume and sentiment of mentions with average X.com sharing

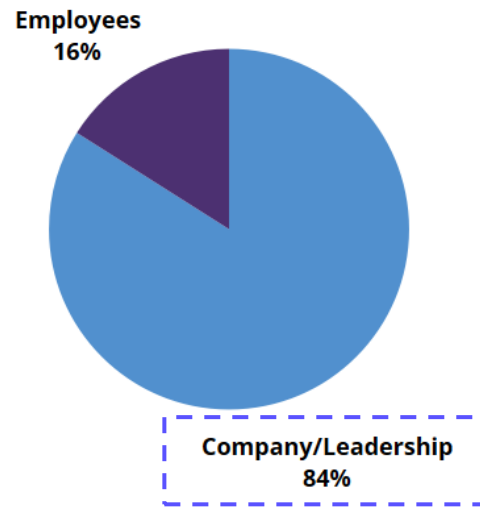


# Most internal comms leaked to the media is 'top down' communication from management and leadership.

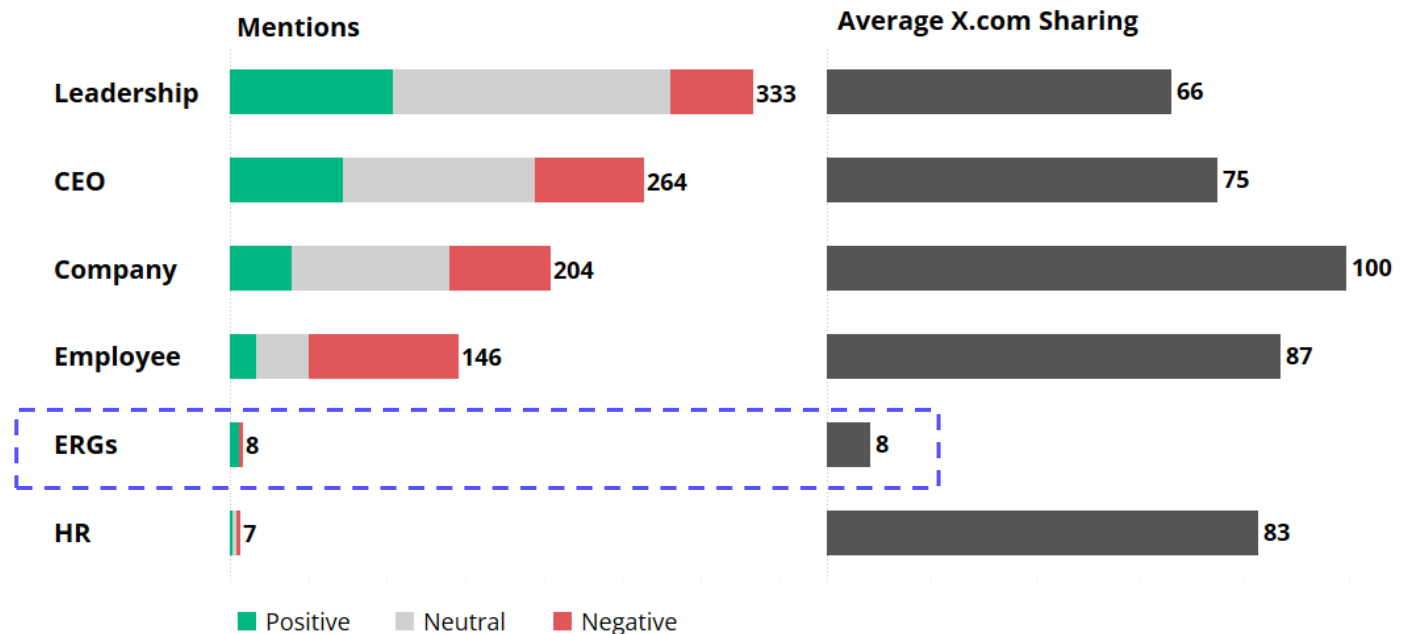
Employee Resource Group communications are not a risk. They rarely feature in the media, and when they do it has a minimal effect on social audiences.

## People sources of Internal Comms media mentions

Proportion of mentions originating from company vs employees



Volume and sentiment of mentions with average X.com sharing

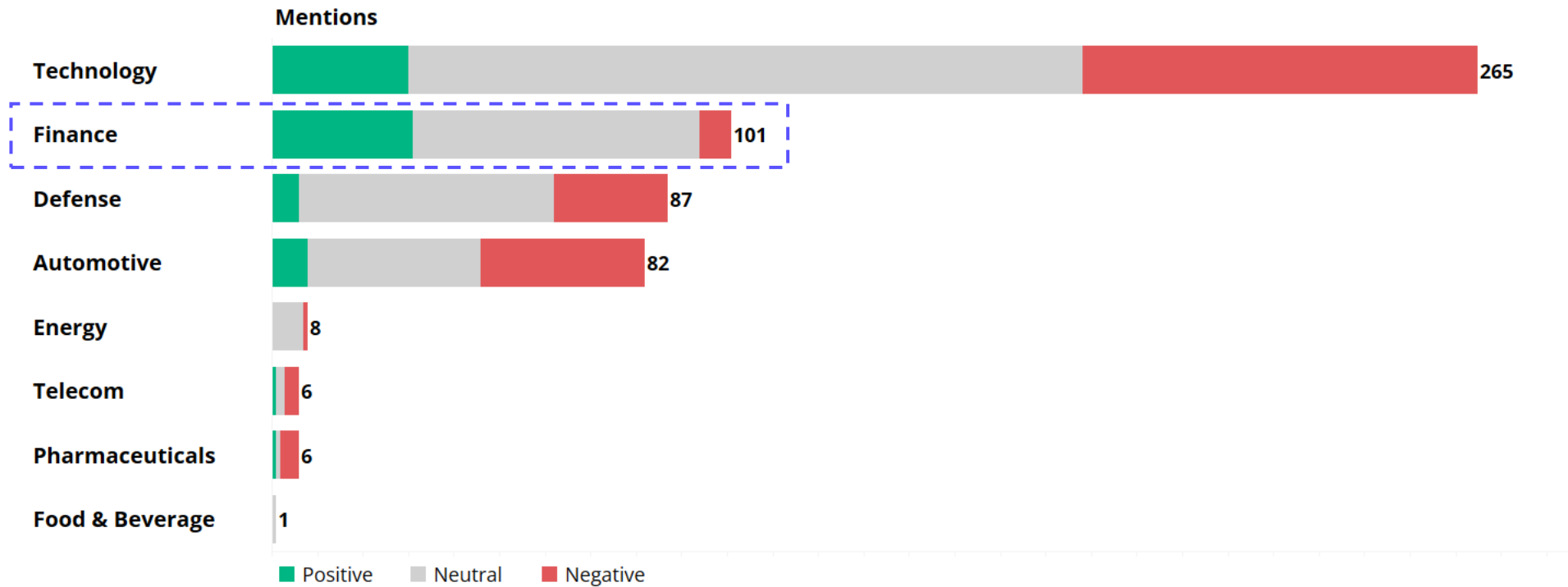


# Leaked internal comms affect certain sectors more than others.

Finance sees the most upside from internal comms leaks. Tech and Auto volumes are high due to layoffs and return-to-office narratives.

## Internal Comms media mentions by sector

Volume and sentiment of mentions

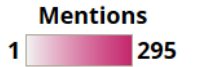


# Workplace issues are not the most prominent reputational issue in internal comms media mentions.

For all sectors, internal comms mentions related to Business Performance or Products were more common.

## Topic context for Internal Comms mentions

Volume of mentions per topic per sector



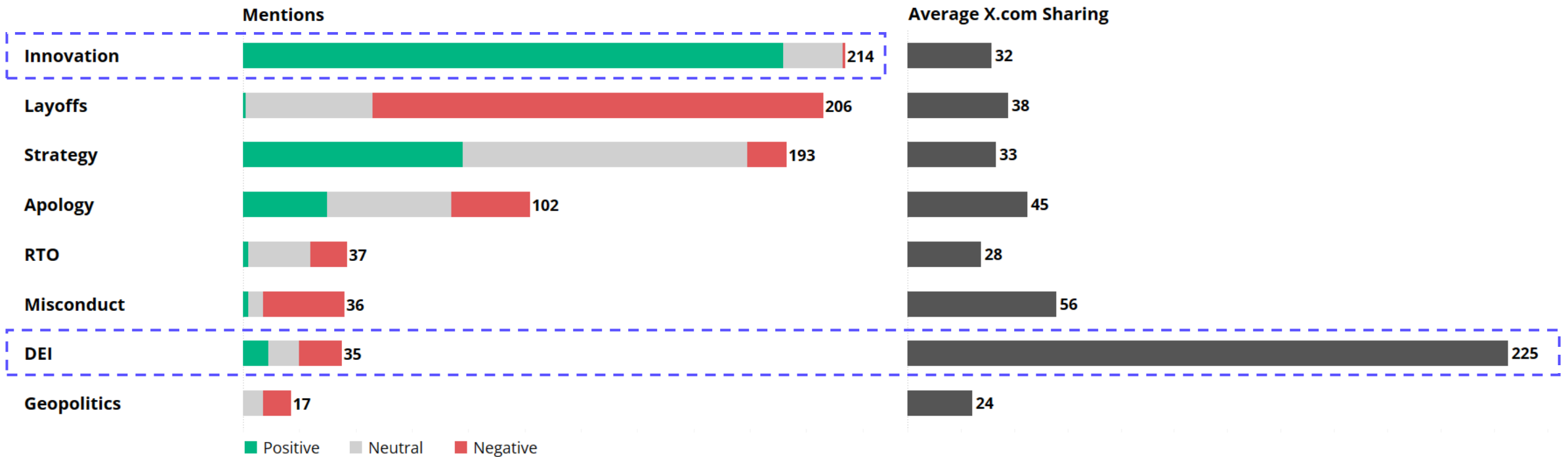
	Technology	Defense	Finance	Automotive	Energy	Pharmaceutica..	Telecom	Food & Beverage	Insurance
<b>Business Performance</b>	295	78	125	85	13	4	5	3	
<b>Products &amp; Services</b>	278	80	65	58	3	4	6	2	
<b>Workplace</b>	198	33	41	54	5	2	2	1	
<b>Legal &amp; Regulatory</b>	84	74	18	31	6	3	2		1
<b>Innovation</b>	146	6	19	23	2	2	1		
<b>Thought Leadership</b>	93	32	34	11	2	2	1	2	
<b>Governance</b>	60	44	8	13	3	2	1		
<b>Environment</b>	6		2	1	3				

# Companies can leverage internal comms leaks as a powerful tool for showcasing innovation and strategic leadership.

On the other hand, DEI issues are a risk as social media users are likely to amplify internal comms media mentions on this topic.

## Topics featured in Internal Comms media mentions

Volume, sentiment and average X.com sharing of mentions





# Methodology

PublicRelay utilizes a human-technology hybrid approach to extract key messages, topic relationships, and sentiment from unstructured text.

Using this approach, PublicRelay analyzed the earned media of **50 major companies across 9 sectors**. Companies in each sector were chosen based on a combination of factors including firm market capitalization and knowledge of each sector's media landscape.

For each company, PublicRelay analyzed **over 50+ reputational topics across 6 dimensions**. Other company characteristics tracked included CEOs, spokespeople, products, and trending topics. Each topic was associated with a company, and each company/topic association received a distinct sentiment (positive, neutral, negative).

To standardize company comparisons, **the media analysis was limited to 50 of the most prominent global publications**. These publications were chosen based on a variety of factors analyzed from over a decade's worth of PublicRelay's client data, factoring in readership size, global presence, balance in perspective, and publication frequency.

To guarantee media relevance, PublicRelay only analyzed earned media where at least one company was mentioned 3+ times in the article text or was mentioned in the article title.

To ensure measurement precision, PublicRelay only analyzed articles from their original publication source. An article's syndication across multiple publications was grouped with the original published article.

# Companies Tracked

## Automotive

Ford  
GM  
Tesla  
Toyota  
Volkswagen

## Defense

Boeing  
General Dynamics  
Lockheed Martin  
Northrop Grumman  
Raytheon

## Energy

BP  
Chevron  
ConocoPhillips  
Exxon  
Shell

## Finance

Bank of America  
BlackRock  
Citigroup  
Goldman Sachs  
JPMorgan Chase  
Wells Fargo

## Technology

Amazon  
Apple  
Google  
Microsoft  
Meta

## Telecom

AT&T  
Comcast  
T-Mobile  
Verizon  
Charter/Spectrum

## Food & Bev.

Coca-Cola  
Diageo  
Kraft Heinz  
Mondelez  
PepsiCo

## Pharma

Bristol-Meyers Squibb  
Eli Lilly  
Merck  
Novartis  
Pfizer  
Roche

## Insurance

AIG  
Allianz  
AXA  
MetLife  
New York Life  
Prudential

# Publications Analyzed

ABC  
Al Jazeera  
Associated Press  
Australian Financial Review  
Barron's  
BBC  
Bloomberg  
Business Day Nigeria  
Business Insider  
Business Standard  
CBC  
CBS  
CNBC  
CNN  
Fast Company  
Financial Post  
Forbes  
Fortune  
Fox Business

Fox News  
Hindu Business Line  
Los Angeles Times  
MSNBC  
National Post  
NBC News  
New York Times  
Nikkei  
Nikkei Asian Review  
NPR  
Politico  
Reuters  
South China Morning Post  
Straits Times  
Sydney Morning Herald  
TechCrunch  
The Atlantic  
The Economist  
The Guardian

The Hill  
The National  
The Telegraph  
Time  
Times of India  
Toronto Star  
U.S. News & World Report  
USA Today  
Wall Street Journal  
Washington Post  
WIRED

# About PublicRelay

PublicRelay is the most trusted data & analytics solution for communications and marketing professionals at the world's most recognizable consumer and business brands, associations, universities, and government agencies.

Our clients confidently use our media analysis to plan and measure influencer engagement, reputation management, competitive landscape, and message pull through. Known for its innovation, superior data quality, and actionable insights, PublicRelay helps communicators not only understand what they have done but what to do next.





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