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STATE OF AUSTRALIAN CORPORATE AFFAIRS 2025

Reputation. Risk. Results.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Medianet is excited and proud to present our inaugural 2025 State of Australian Corporate Affairs Report. The report marks the start of what we hope will be a valuable annual report for corporate affairs leaders and professionals. Our aim with this report is to provide the industry with meaningful, data-driven insights directly from the voices and practitioners in the industry. In addition, we asked journalists for their perspectives on the corporate affairs function and how they interact with practitioners as part of their work.

As a service provider to the industry, Medianet has unique access to the corporate affairs and communications professionals that lead the industry. Similarly, as we are owned by the media we have unparalleled access to media outlets and journalists. This report combines and compares the knowledge and perspectives of both groups into a powerful analysis of the state of the corporate affairs in the Australian market.

Amrita Sidhu
Managing Director
Medianet

The 2025 State of Australian Corporate Affairs Report brings together the expertise of the Medianet team, with Research, Insights and Marketing all contributing to the final product. Our entire team is passionate about media and communications and we are excited to publish the results and insights contained in this report.

The report puts the focus on corporate affairs – a powerful, influential, highly-skilled but often misunderstood function. The report investigates the current state of the corporate affairs environment in Australia with a focus on reputation, risk and results. What is important to corporate affairs leaders? What keeps them up at night? What challenges, trends and opportunities are they facing? By asking these questions we intend to bring actionable insights, identify industry trends, highlight learnings and uncover unexpected results for those that work in these roles.

We know this report will make a mark and build the foundation for future annual SOCA reports. We look forward to being able to compare the 2025 results with those of future years.

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Please note: This survey is intended to provide a snapshot of the experiences of corporate affairs professionals, and is not an exhaustive study of the corporate affairs sector.

Acknowledgement of Country:

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which this report was written. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and communities and pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 State of Australian Corporate Affairs report is based on two comprehensive surveys conducted by Medianet in September 2025 to provide insights into the current state of the corporate affairs environment in Australia with a particular focus on reputation and risk.

A total of 31 senior corporate affairs professionals, and 117 journalists responded to these anonymous surveys. While the corporate affairs respondent group was smaller in number, this was by design. Medianet deliberately targeted senior corporate affairs professionals and leaders in the function in order to gain high-quality responses and strategic-level insights. Each survey was designed to provide comparative perspectives on the function, role and responsibility of a corporate affairs professional.

The surveys explored key considerations, challenges and strategy when it comes to managing reputation and risk. Key findings include:

- **Strategic voice:** 58% of respondents indicated that corporate affairs was a C-suite function. However, 81% said they had a voice in the strategic direction of their organisations. This demonstrates the influence and importance of corporate affairs even if it doesn't always report directly to the CEO.
- **The AI paradox:** Despite clear AI optimism, with 77% of respondents saying they use Generative AI tools, many also expressed concerns around AI – particularly impact on information accuracy and critical thinking.
- **Challenges:** Cybersecurity was flagged by both corporate affairs professionals and journalists as a key external challenge for organisations. Respondents also noted that internal affairs/employee engagement and government relations are both leading priorities and challenges when it comes to strategic planning and resources.

Survey participants were invited to respond. Some provided responses in a voluntary capacity, while others entered a draw for the chance to win a monetary gift card. Responses were analysed confidentially and all identifying information about respondents was removed to maintain anonymity.

The information presented in this report includes quantitative results, qualitative insights and quotes from respondents. Quotes were selected to reflect common themes shared among many of the responses, but they do not necessarily represent the views of Medianet.

01

THE ROLE

- Demographics
- Strategic influence
- Responsibilities
- Challenges

DEMOGRAPHICS

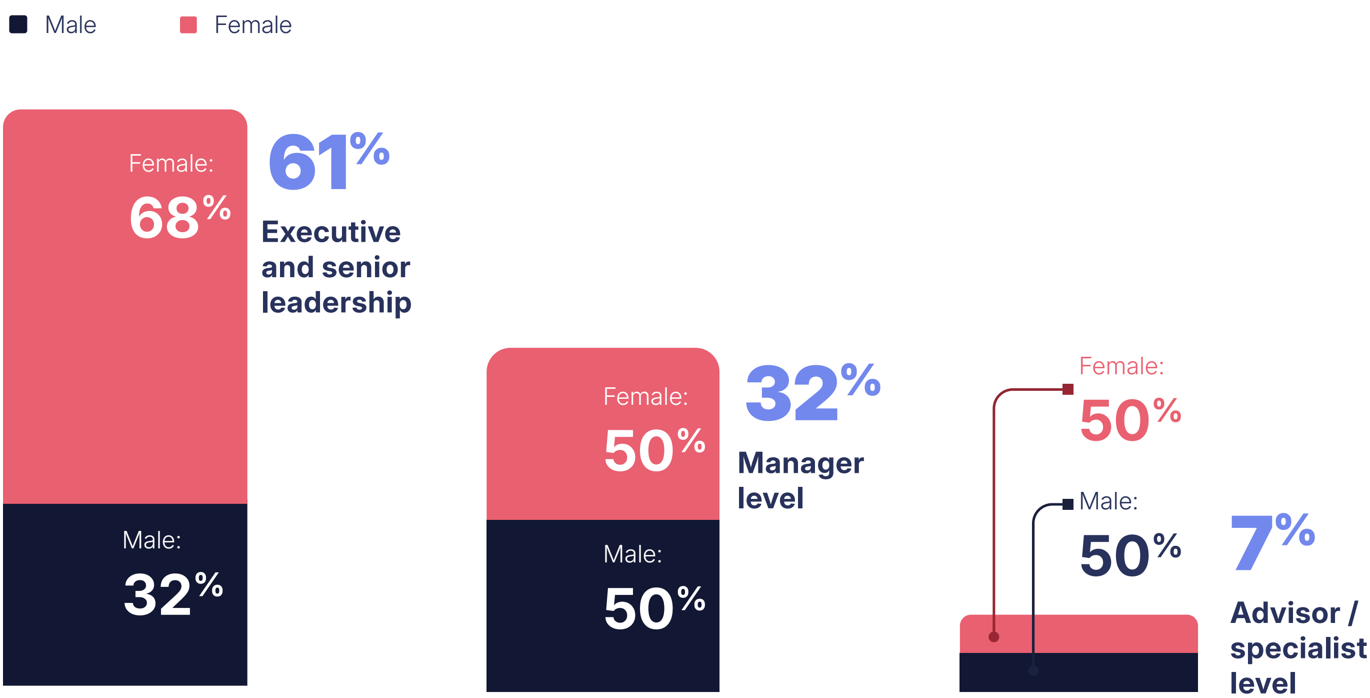
The majority of corporate affairs respondents held executive & senior leadership positions within their organisation's corporate affairs unit (61%), followed by 32% in manager level positions and 6% in advisor/specialist level roles.

The gender split was more interesting. While women hold 9% of Chief Executive Officer positions in ASX 300 listed organisations*, they represented almost two thirds of survey respondents. This was more pronounced among senior/executive titles where there were twice as many female respondents to male respondents.

This is a stark insight that reflects what women anecdotally experience in the workplace more broadly. Despite a strong presence of women in senior corporate affairs roles, the ultimate decision making power continues to reside predominantly with men.

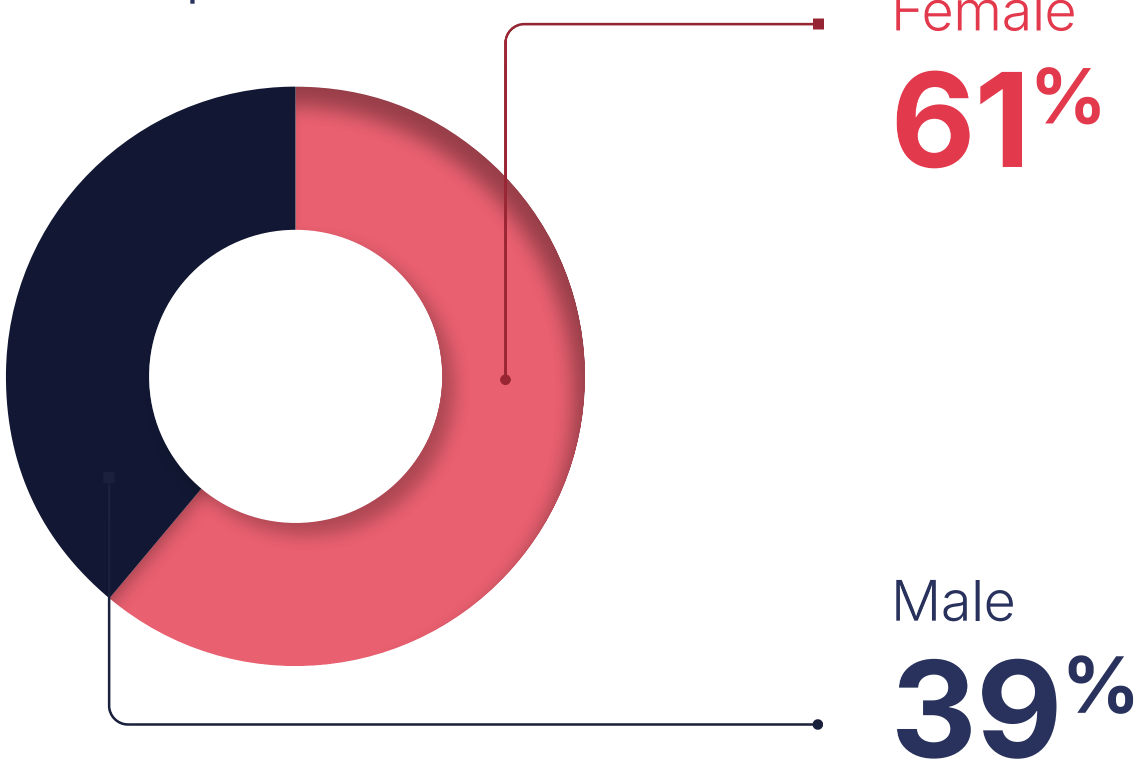
**According to the CEW Senior Executive Census 2025 by Chief Executive Women (CEW)*

Job titles

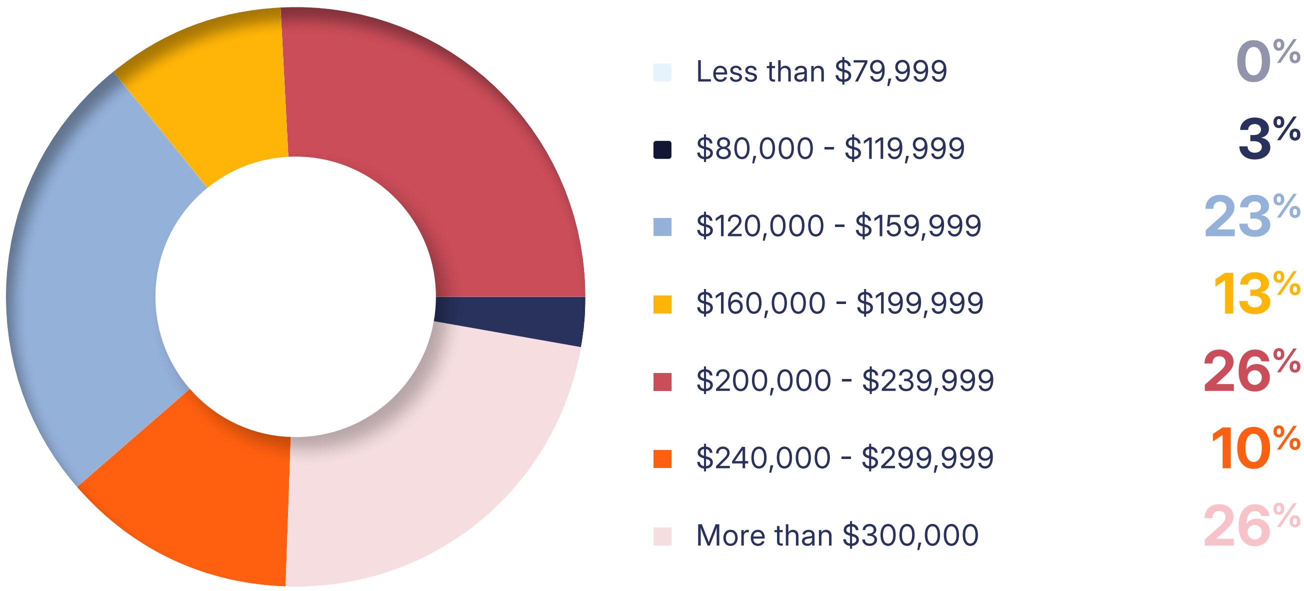


Note: No respondents identified as non-binary

Gender of respondents



Salary ranges



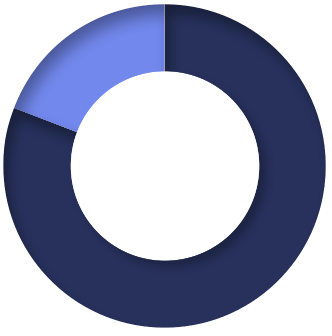
STRATEGIC INFLUENCE

Respondents overwhelmingly (81%) said they feel they have a voice on the strategic direction of the organisation. Interestingly this figure drops when asked if their role is a part of the C-suite function to 58%. So while our surveyees mostly feel they have a seat at the table in terms of the ability to influence, they do not consistently have a formal position in executive leadership teams that report directly to the CEO.

So how do they influence *strategy* if they aren't always a C-suite function?

The answer may lie in the roles and responsibilities of corporate affairs professionals. We asked respondents to describe, in their own words, what their jobs encompassed. **Media relations** and **reputation management** tended to dominate responses, however, many also noted the mandate to **lead strategic direction**.

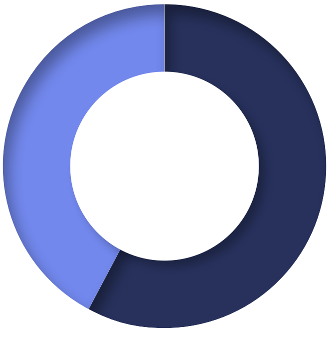
Given the answers consistently indicated a clear strategic influence, is it a problem that not all corporate affairs professionals have a seat in executive leadership teams? Is there an opportunity or obligation for organisations to elevate their position given the level of responsibility expected of them?



Do you feel you have a voice on the strategic direction of the organisation?

Yes **81%**

No **19%**



Is the corporate affairs role part of the C-suite function?

Yes **58%**

No **42%**

On **roles** and **responsibilities**

To lead the strategic direction and execution of all internal and external communications, shaping our public voice and reputation. [My] role spans media relations, crisis communications, executive messaging, and editorial strategy.

My role is to anticipate and manage the internal and external factors that influence our ability to deliver on strategy.

Company reputation, employee engagement, upholding the brand, government relations strategy execution and community investment.

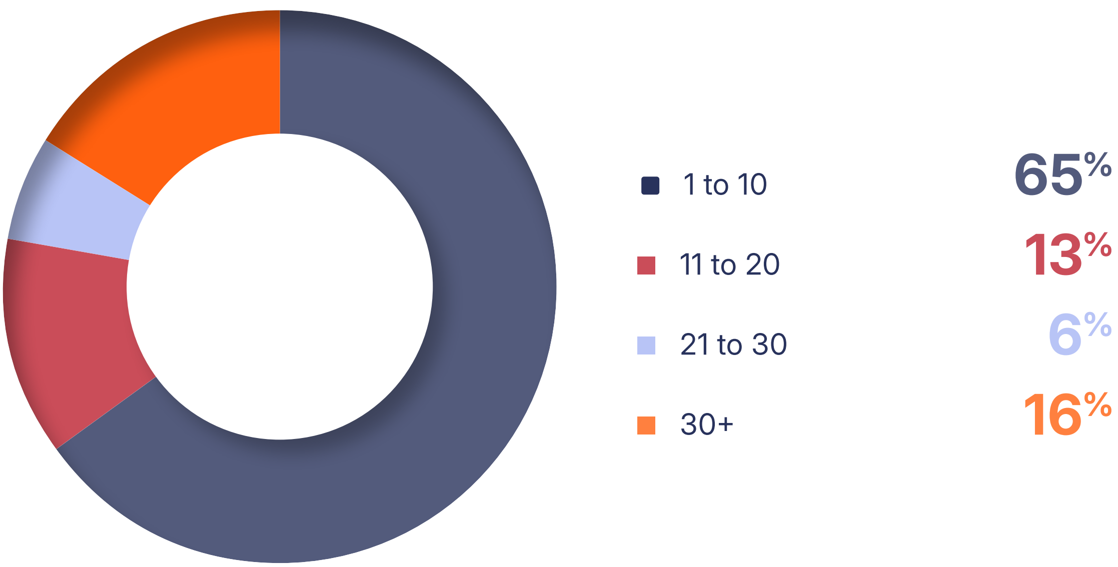
RESPONSIBILITIES

Almost two thirds of respondents operated within a small team (1 to 10 employees), with 16% of respondents recording teams larger than 30, and the rest in between. Regardless of the size of the team, there was a wide range of functions across these responses, demonstrating the breadth and depth of respondents' expertise and responsibilities.

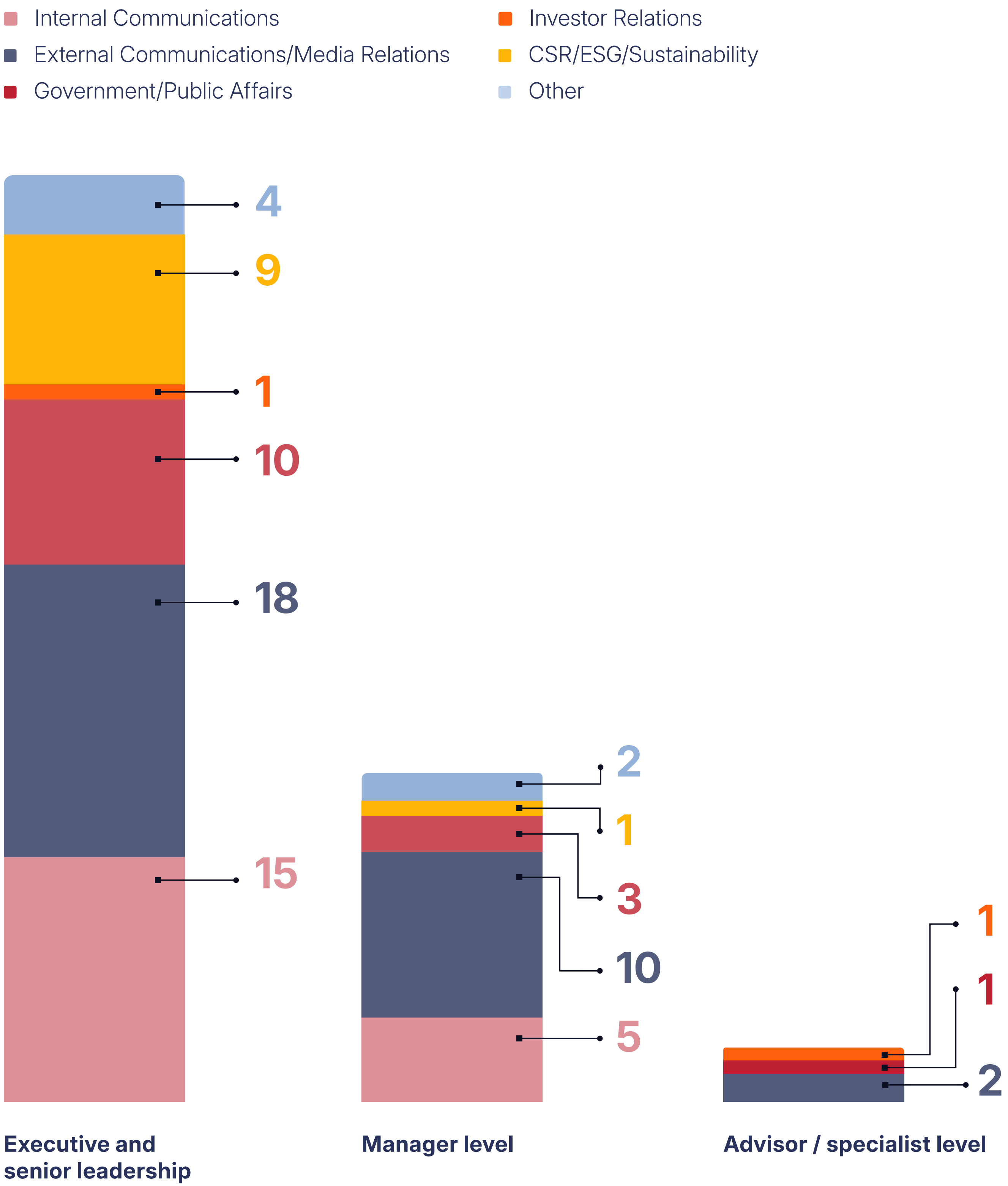
External communications and media relations was the leading function that fell under all respondents' responsibilities. This was followed **by internal communications**, however this function only sat under the responsibility of senior-level and manager-level individuals. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Environmental Social Governance (ESG) tended to be left to those in executive and senior roles, and it was notable that investor relations was not a common responsibility, with just two responses to this category.

Almost half of respondents marked government and public relations as a key responsibility. In addition, results also showed 68% of respondents said they often engage with government/regulatory bodies, while a third of respondents said they find it challenging to engage with these groups. These results highlight an important, but potentially difficult stakeholder group. This could be due to the specific skill set required to engage with government and/or a byproduct of under-resourcing and small team sizes.

Team size



Responsibilities by job title



CHALLENGES

We asked respondents what challenges they have faced this year in their corporate affairs role. The leading response was **increase in workload** (29%). This is reflected in the breadth of roles and responsibilities that our respondents need to manage. This aligns with a broader trend of increased demand in media engagements as CEOs and executives become more and more prominent in media discourse.

The second leading challenge was **career progression and stagnation.** Of these respondents, 67% were women in senior or executive roles. This result correlates with the disconnect between the prominence of women in corporate affairs leadership positions but underrepresentation in CEO positions.

No respondents recorded **money/pay**, or **job security** as challenges they've faced this year, which does reflect the remuneration trends across respondents, with 26% of respondents in the top salary bracket ($300,000+ pa) and and 62% earning $200,000 pa. or more. However, with 61% of overall survey respondents in executive and senior leadership positions, the monetary remuneration is similarly proportional to their responsibilities/workload within their organisation.

> *[What I find challenging is] Leading a team with optimism in an increasingly negative and noisy global environment (i.e broader society); ability to have impact, and the openness to strategic advice in corporate environments that are seeking commercial results.*

What was your biggest individual challenge this year?

02

REPUTATION

- Media strategy & planning
- Engaging with journalists
- The role of AI
- Deloitte AI case study

MEDIA STRATEGY & PLANNING

When it comes to managing public perceptions and brand reputation, unsurprisingly respondents showed a heavy emphasis on external communications. The survey found that external communications/ media relations was the responsibility of **97%** of respondents, and **84%** of respondents said their main media strategy involves **achieving earned media.**

These answers highlight the importance of media engagement in managing brand reputation and public perception. Notably though, reactive engagement and neutralising unfavourable coverage was considered a priority for a smaller share of responses (10%). This poses the question - are corporate affairs teams adequately prepared to react or manage issues or crises? Or, is it merely a matter of priority and focus?

Another notable comparison to make is that while media relations was the second leading critical skill for respondents in their roles, **strategy and business acumen** was actually the leading skill. This indicates, once again, that our respondents must also operate as strategic advisors to leadership, not just manage the external brand.

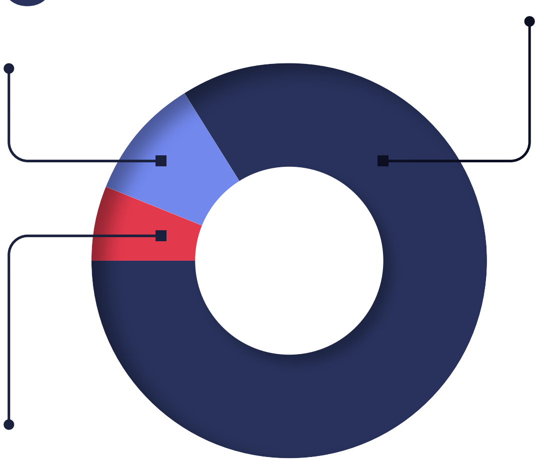
Primary media strategy focus

Neutralising unfavourable media coverage / Reacting to media coverage

10%

Achieving earned media

84%



Other

6%

Critical corporate affairs skills

1. Strategic thinking and business acumen
2. Media relations
3. Digital content creation & social media management
4. Government relations & public policy
5. Data analysis and interpretation
6. AI and Large Language Models
7. Other
8. ESG expertise

Note: Respondents could select multiple responses for this question.

ENGAGING WITH JOURNALISTS

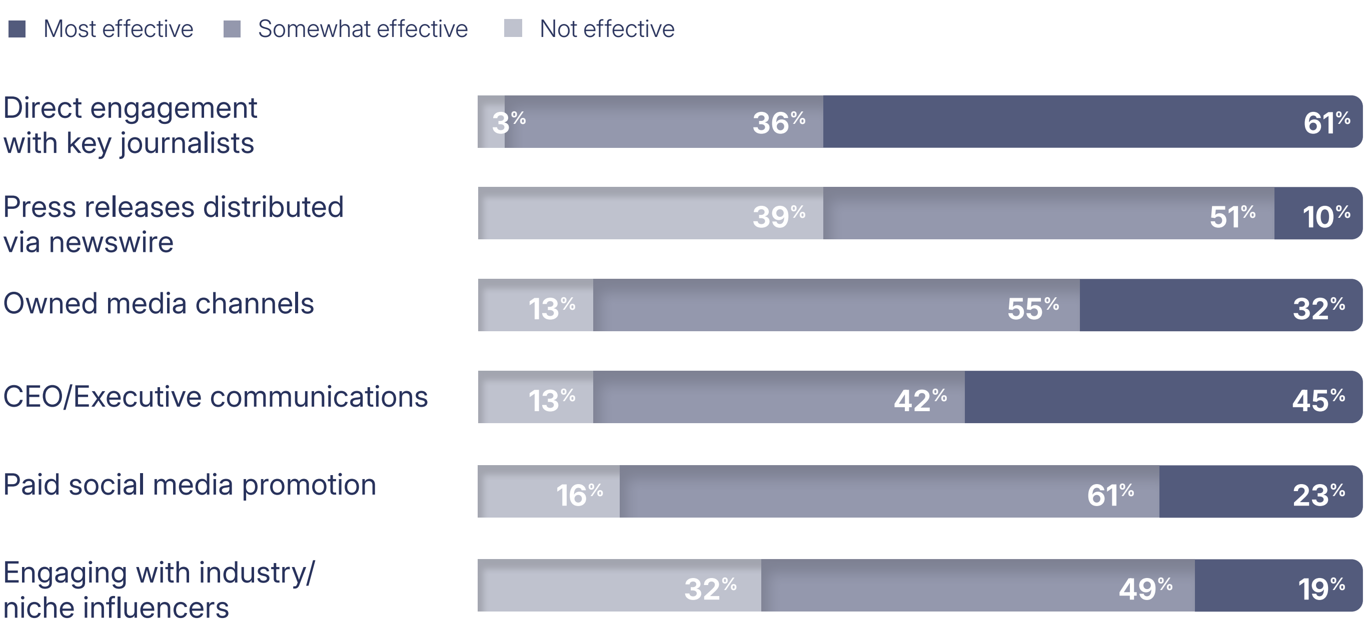
Despite an emphasis on external communications across our corporate affairs respondents, our journalist survey showed that media writers find it challenging to engage with these professionals.

The two channels found most effective by corporate affairs respondents in achieving earned media were **direct engagement with key journalists** (61%) and **direct CEO/Executive communications** (45%).

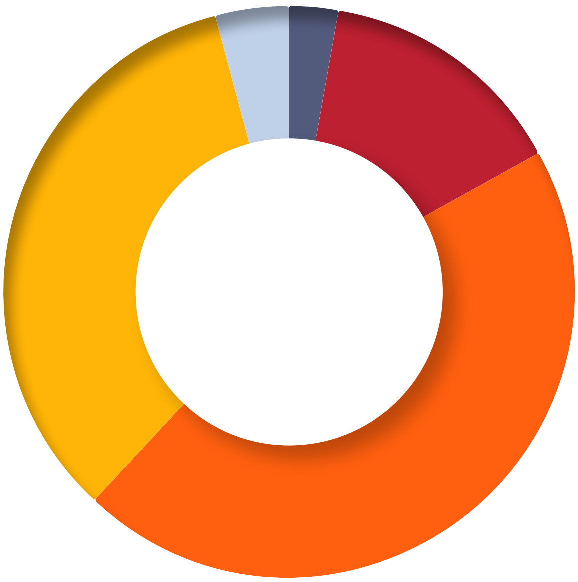
Despite the emphasis and value on direct engagement with journalists, the journalists themselves might not be feeling the love. Journalists in our survey reported that one of the leading challenges they faced when dealing with corporate affairs teams is their responsiveness. In a question asking journalists to rate the responsiveness of corporate affairs teams from a scale of 1 to 5, from least to most responsive, almost half (45%) rate corporate affairs teams' responsiveness at only a 3. Journalists were similarly skeptical of talking points they received from CA units, with 'Trust' recorded as the second leading challenge for journalists, behind responsiveness.

This speaks to the natural, but disparate goals and objectives between journalists and corporate affairs teams. While corporate affairs representatives prioritise engaging with journalists, they also are highly strategic in how they engage in dialogue, aiming to deliver their external communications on message and on brand.

Media communication channels by effectiveness

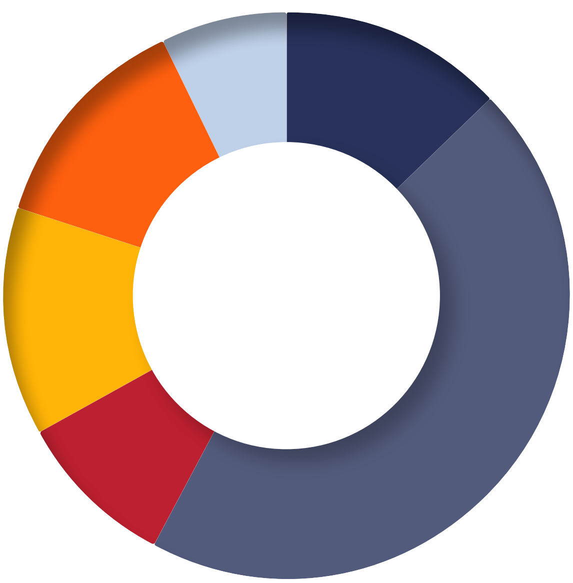


Journalists' judgement of CA responsiveness



- Not responsive 3%
- Somewhat responsive 14%
- Neither responsive or not responsive 45%
- Fairly Responsive 34%
- Very Responsive 4%

Journalists' top challenges with CA teams



- Trust 13%
- Responsiveness 45%
- Story angles 9%
- I don't know who I can talk to 13%
- I don't face any challenges 13%
- Other 7%

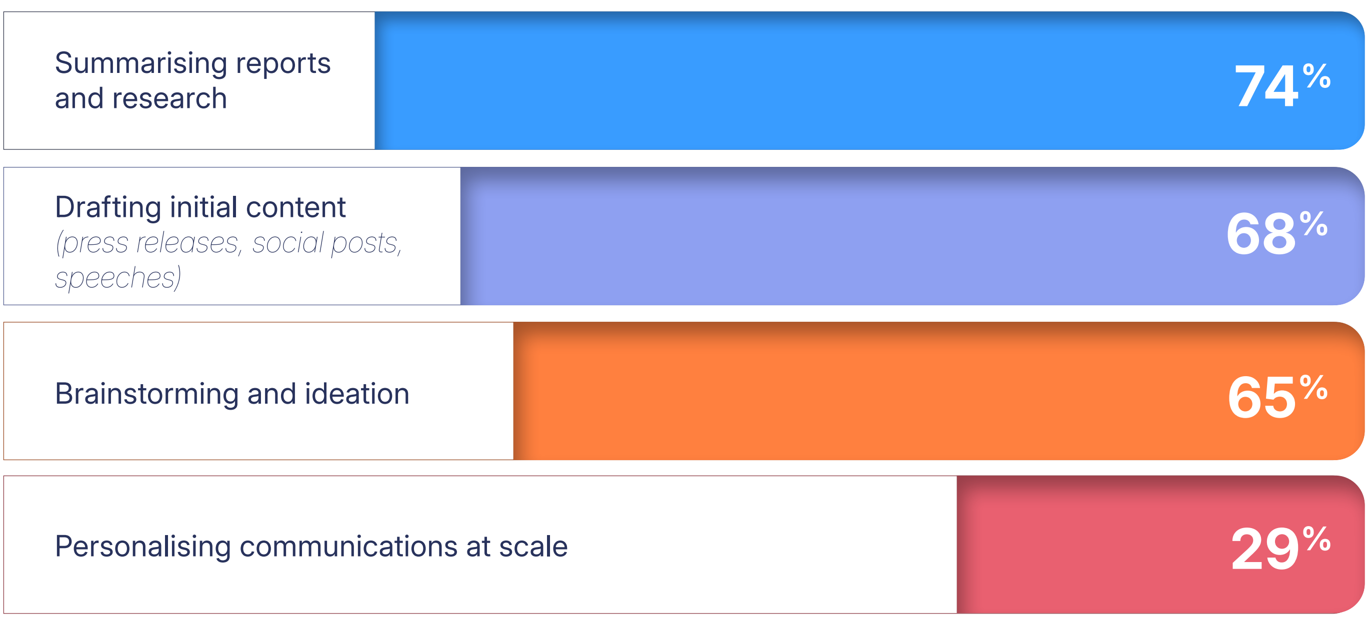
THE ROLE OF AI

The majority of respondents said their teams use generative AI tools. While the leading use for these tools was to **summarise reports and research**, high numbers of respondents also noted they use the technology to **draft initial content and for brainstorming and ideation.**

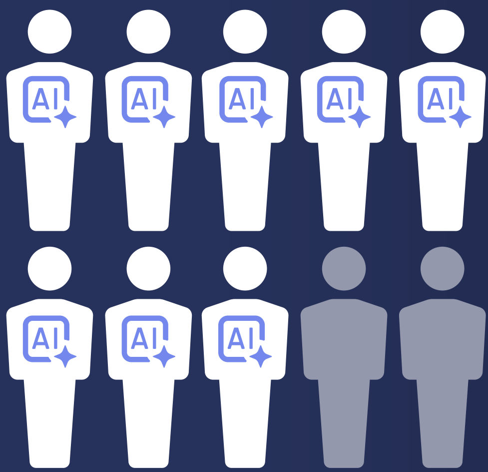
This poses an interesting paradox for our corporate affairs teams. Amid broader optimism around generative AI and the high rates of respondents using AI for the ideation stage, 68% of respondents also flagged risk of **factual inaccuracies and undermining critical thinking** as key concerns around their use of AI.

This also reflects the tension between the wider utilisation of AI and concerns around them that we see more broadly in the corporate world and in our personal lives. Streamlining key tasks, such as crafting messages on which an organisation's reputation rests is potentially undermined when relegating these tasks to AI and LLM technologies.

Corporate affairs use for AI



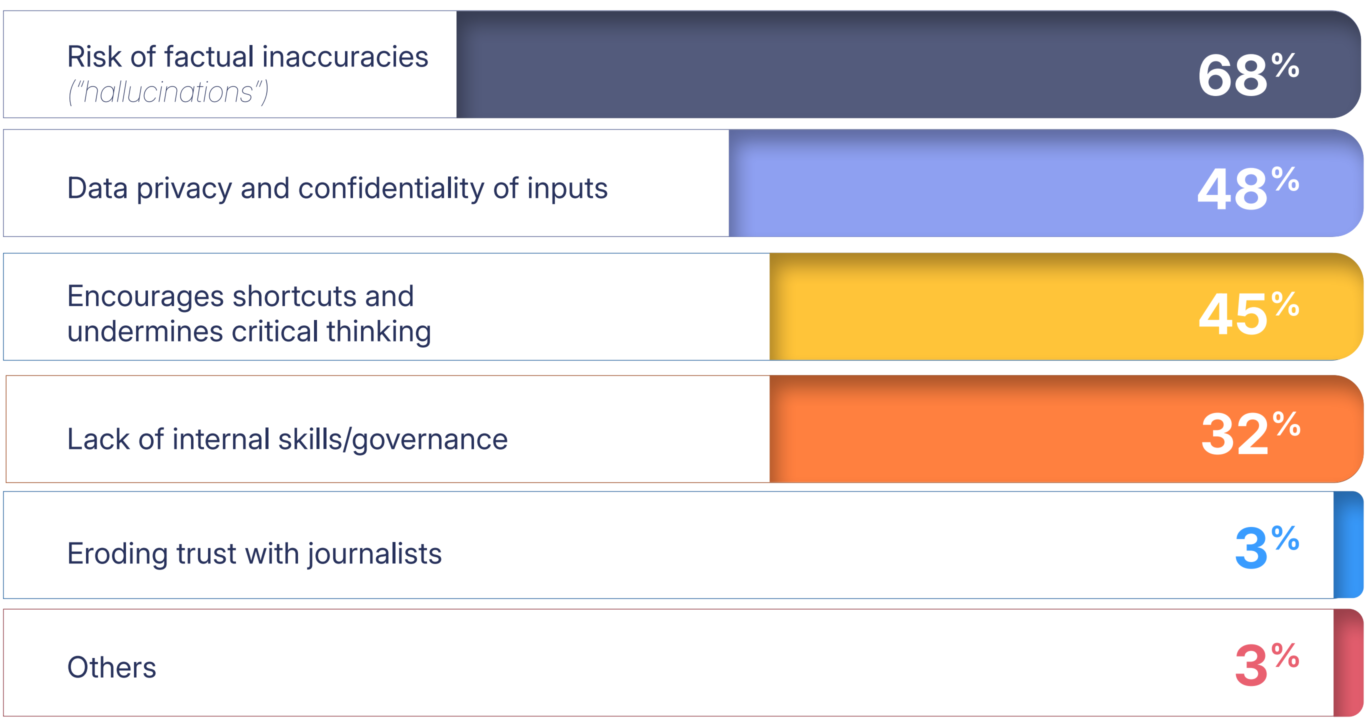
Note: Respondents could select multiple responses for this question.



77% of corporate affairs respondents said their team uses generative AI tools.

(Copilot, Gemini, ChatGPT)

Top concerns regarding use of AI



Note: Respondents could select multiple responses for this question.

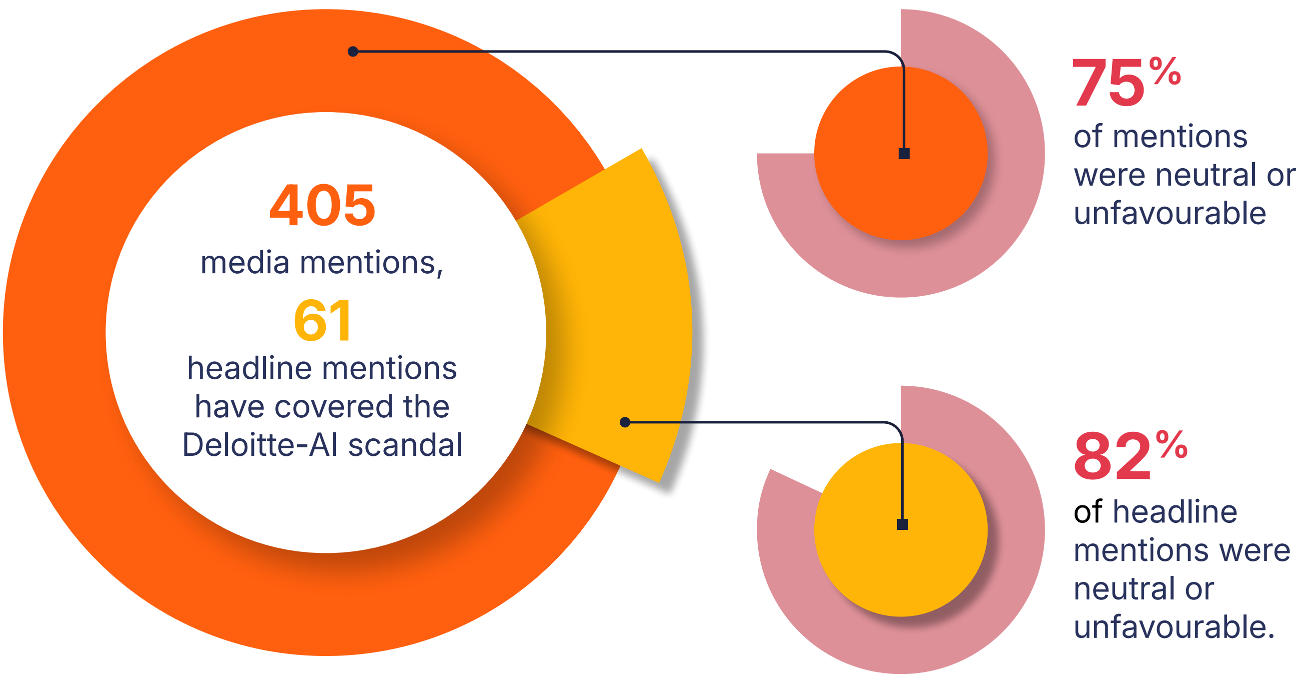
Deloitte AI

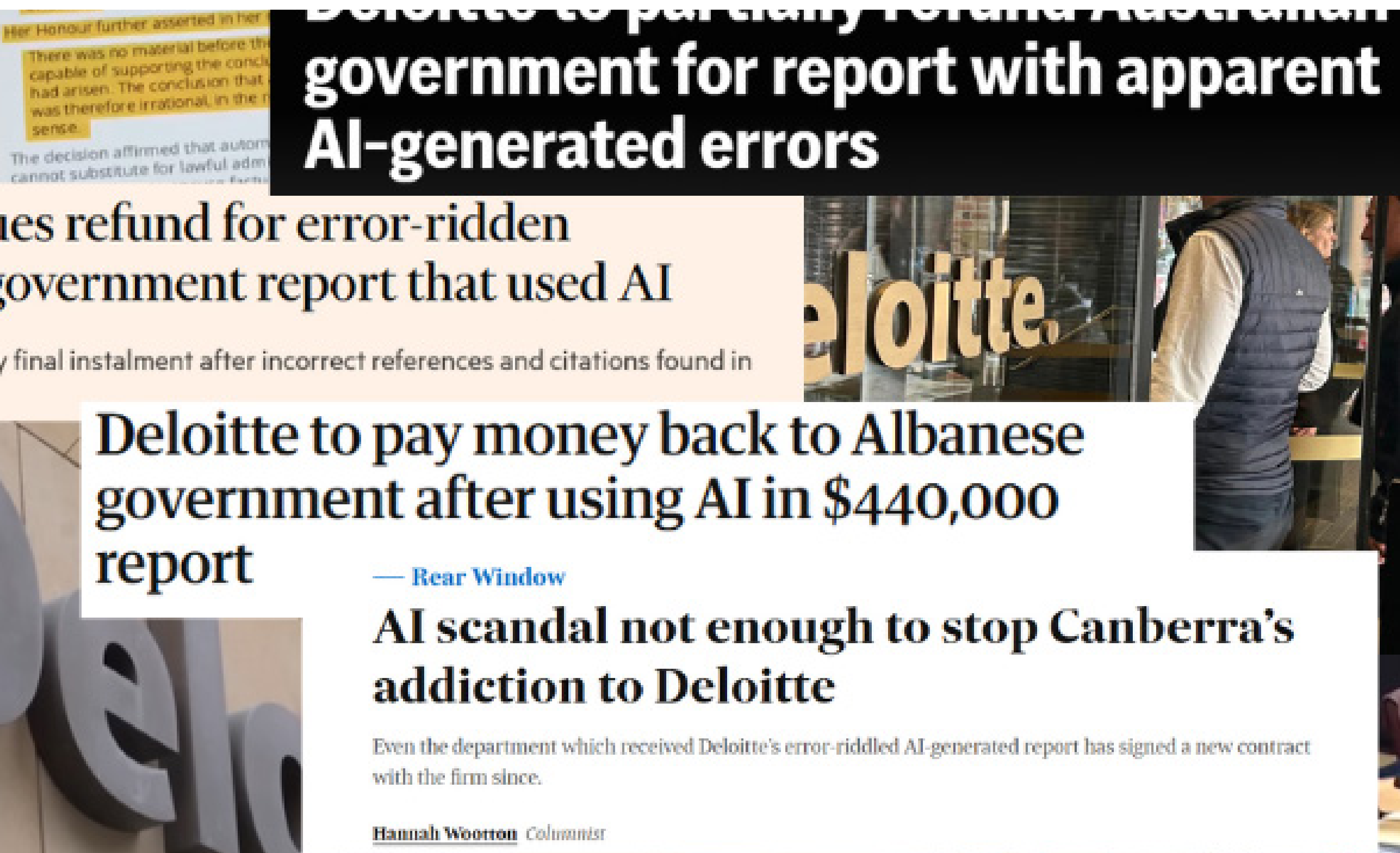
Deloitte is a recent example of being exposed for ‘bad’ use of AI. In August, the *Australian Financial Review* published a story suggesting the firm had prepared a report for the federal government found to have multiple AI-generated errors. By October, the other media outlets caught on, producing scathing headlines with phrases like **‘dodgy report’ ‘botched report’** and **‘Deloitte AI-style disaster’** in major metropolitan newspapers and broadcast segments. Deloitte has since formally apologised and agreed to refund part of the $440,000 report, but the story continues to damage the firm’s reputation with multiple outlets publishing articles deep-diving the reputational fallout from the way the consulting firm chose to manage the crisis.

Reporting on this issue has also raised questions around the wider use of AI in the corporate world, particularly those engaging with government stakeholders or providing high-value services. The federal government was similarly scrutinised in reporting for its dependence on Deloitte, and media took a more distinctly negative view around AI adoption in general during this period.

The Deloitte example shows that the pace of AI-uptake poses a reputational risk. Even the biggest corporations may not yet have the skill-set or a robust crisis comms plan in place for these particular cases.

since **22 August 2025**





03

RISK

- Leading media topics
- Leading reputational risks
- Cyberbreaches in Australia case study
- Strategy and stakeholder engagement
- Challenges for organisations

LEADING MEDIA TOPICS

When comparing the most reported topics according to corporate affairs professionals and according to journalists we can see differing perceptions of what dominates media narratives. Corporate affairs professionals indicated that **products/ services** was the most reported topic followed by **thought leadership**. Both these topics tend to be more proactive and positive in tone. The journalist survey meanwhile showed, in line with the news cycle's negative skew, that topics such as **price gouging or unfairness**, and **AI and technology** are what gets the most media attention. This disconnect may be a natural product of the differing standpoints and objectives of each group.

However, **company announcements and results** appearing as prominent topics for both groups, illustrates the power and importance of financial performance and the role both groups play in messaging and effective reporting.

Leading Media Topics *(CA Responses)*

Leading Media Topics *(Journalist Responses)*

What are the most **underreported** or **misrepresented** corporate topics?

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Media commentary and reporting on profits is too superficial. Focus is often on large profits as a bad thing and ignores where the profits go.

JOURNALIST

In general, AI and how useful/unsuccessful it has been so far in business is not being well understood through the hype.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Leaders looking after their employees. It often seems one-sided that employers are not doing enough, when corporations are doing more than ever before in a cost of living environment.

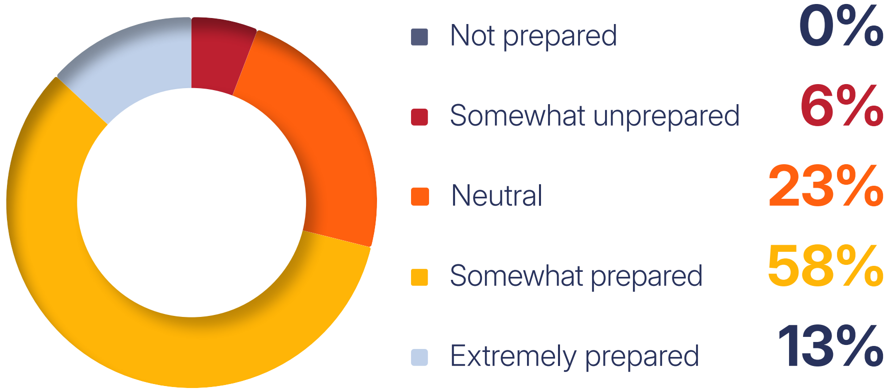
JOURNALIST

At the moment AI and the impact, serious impact, on small business and workplaces.

LEADING REPUTATIONAL RISKS

There was a consensus across both groups that **cyberattacks/ data breaches** as well as **trust, disinformation** and **regulation** number in the top reputational risks for organisations. However, journalists were more likely to rank AI and technology issues as a top 3 reputational risk compared to corporate affairs professionals.

Reputational Crisis Preparedness



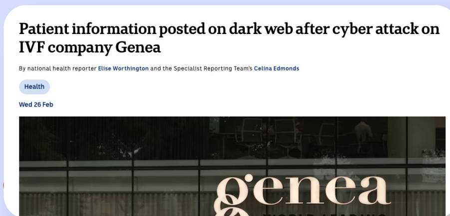
Top reputational risks *(CA Responses)*

Top reputational risks *(Journalist Responses)*

COVERAGE TIMELINE

Genea IVF first confirms a data breach involving sensitive patient information leaked onto the dark web. Negative testimonies from impacted patients and reports of a class action against the IVF provider emerge in August 2025.

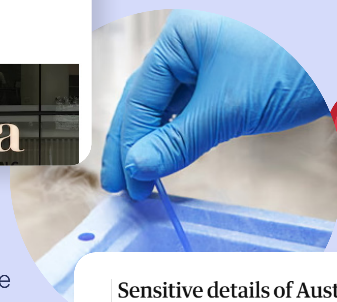
26 February, 2025
Genea IVF


Patient information posted on dark web after cyber attack on IVF company Genea

By national health reporter Elise Worthington and the Specialist Reporting Team's Celina Edmonds

Health

Wed 26 Feb




Sensitive details of Australian IVF patients posted to dark web after Genea data breach

Genea CEO told patients information accessed includes contact details, Medicare card numbers, medical histories, test results and medications

- Follow our Australia news live blog for latest updates
- Get our breaking news email, free app or daily news podcast

CREDIT: Images from Articles: Sensitive details of Australian IVF patients posted to dark web after Genea data breach, *The Guardian*

CYBER BREACHES IN AUSTRALIA

Major breaches since January 2025

The prevalence of cybersecurity incidents are increasing, and with it, media exposure. While many companies experience cyber incidents to some extent, major brands will often become the focus of intense scrutiny when they fall victim to an attack, even if the breach is industry-wide.

Media reporting on cyber incidents also tends to get a second wave, with class actions, government penalties and fines, *(cont.)* poor customer or patient experiences

Australian superannuation funds targeted by hackers, resulting in a small number of clients losing a collective $500k in holdings. Two of the more high-profile funds, REST and AustralianSuper were frequently named within coverage, and continue to appear in discussions around cyber attacks more broadly.

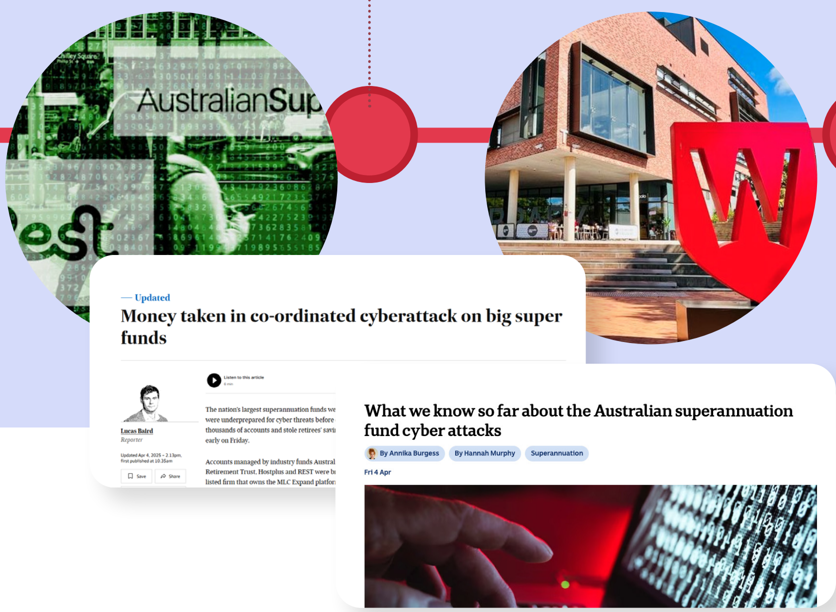
3 April, 2025
AustralianSuper and REST

Western Sydney University first announces a major data leak compromising personal information of 10,000 former or past students. A second breach in October generates a larger spike of unfavourable coverage conflating the two incidents as evidence of major security vulnerabilities.

10 April, 2025
Western Sydney University

Hackers claimed to have stolen data from 5.7 million Qantas customers. Following the initial breach, a class action was raised later in July, and hackers released compromised data in October, driving wide calls for stronger regulatory action against the airline.

1 July, 2025
Qantas



CREDIT: Images from Articles: Money taken in coordinated cyberattack on big super funds, *The Guardian*

CREDIT: Images from Articles: Qantas confirms 5.7 million customers were impacted in cyber attack, *Stephanie Chalmers, ABC NEWS*

propelling the brand back into the media anywhere from three to six months after the initial breach occurred.

The role of government and regulatory bodies has also become more prominent in media discourse. Consumers are calling for stronger policies and safeguards to prevent future attacks, applying pressure on government leaders who in turn apply pressure on the corporate sector.

This has created new and ongoing challenges for corporate affairs teams. In addition to the operational fallout from a major security breach, they face intense public and government scrutiny that can have a protracted effect on brand reputation.

STRATEGY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

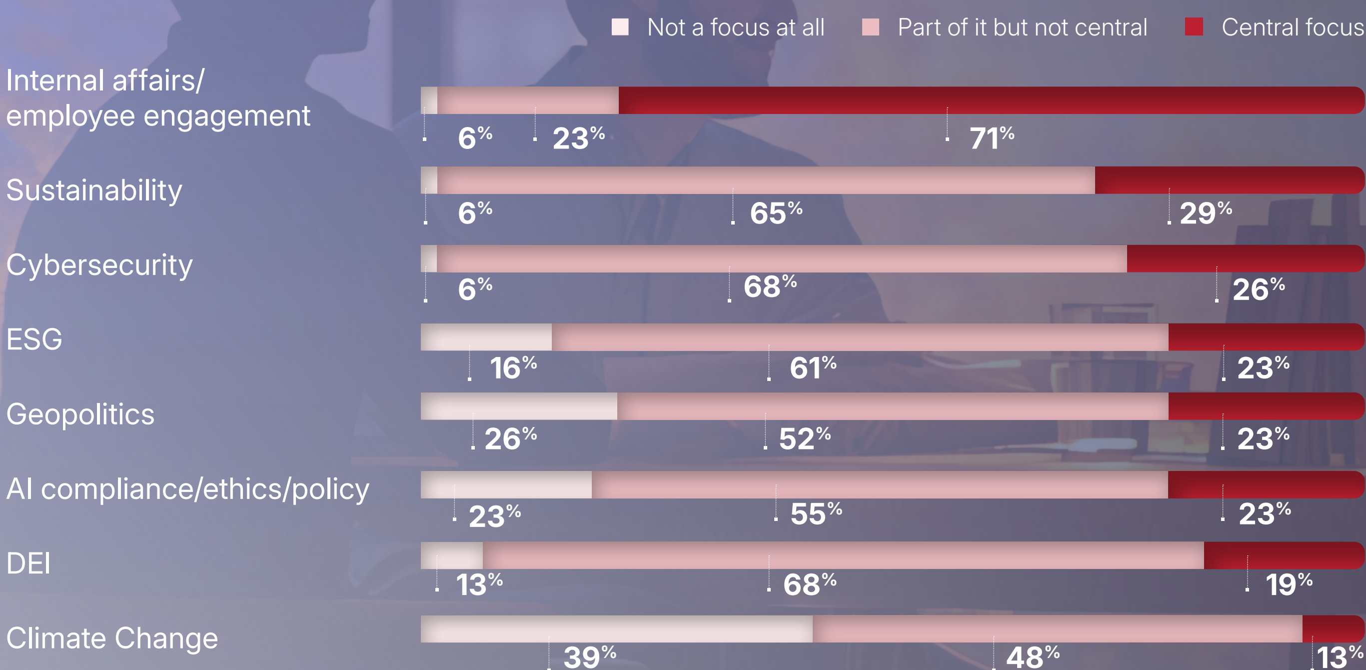
Internal affairs/employee engagement was the leading focus of planning for corporate affairs professionals with 71% of respondents saying this topic is a central focus. This potentially reflects wider trends in media reporting, with traditional outlets increasingly focusing on the impact of AI on employees and their families, job cuts and workforce restructures.

Government was ranked as the most challenging stakeholder group to engage with for corporate affairs teams. This was closely followed by both the **media** and **general public**.

All three groups are both natural stakeholder groups and unsurprisingly pose their own unique challenges.

Furthermore, corporate affairs individuals consider **policymakers** and **regulators** as central to their daily work, with 68% of professionals said they engage with them **often** or **very often**. This demonstrates how integral government bodies and policy makers are in the daily responsibilities of corporate affairs teams, but that teams may not be adequately resourced to be able to properly engage with these stakeholders.

Focus of corporate affairs planning



Which part of your corporate affairs remit is currently most under-resourced?

Digital Communications / Social Media	Government Relations / Public Policy	Content Creation & Storytelling
39%	35%	35%

Most challenging stakeholders

Government	1
Media	2
General public	3
Unions	4
Employees	5
Investors	6

68%

of corporate affairs respondents said they often engage with policy makers or regulatory bodies.

CHALLENGES FOR ORGANISATIONS

Respondents were also asked about their wider business confidence and what they see as key challenges facing organisations. The top three most impactful issues were the spread of **misinformation /disinformation about their industry/ company**, followed by the **erosion of public trust in institutions** and **increasing regulatory and compliance complexity.**

When asked how prepared their organisation was to manage these issues, there wasn't a high level of confidence across the board.

The majority of responses to all topics were **'somewhat prepared'. Increasing regulatory and compliance complexity** had the highest number of respondents that said their organisation was **'very well prepared'**, reflecting the importance of government/ regulatory bodies as a stakeholder group for these professionals. Despite the technology's prevalence across business and public discourse, **AI disruption and integration** was marked as having the lowest level of preparedness by respondents.

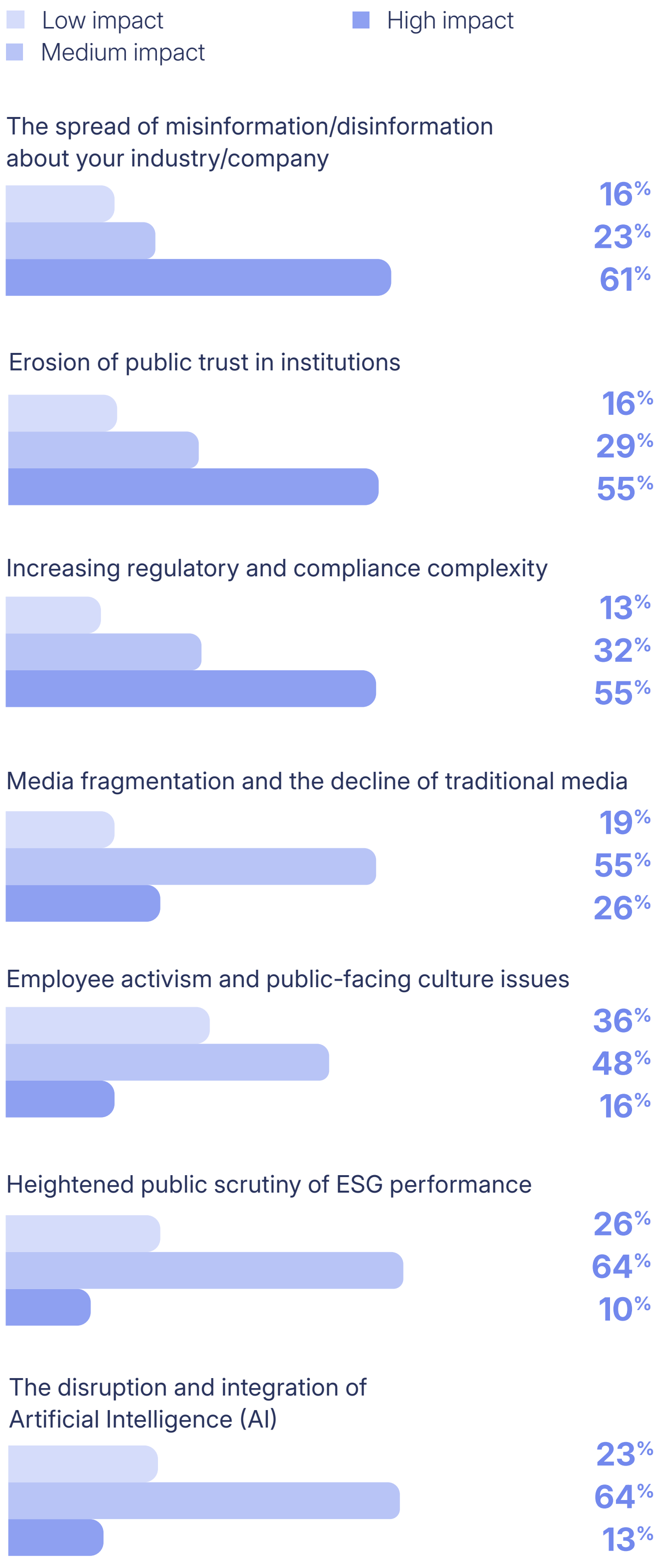
What keeps corporate affairs professionals up at night?

> *Declining trust and reputation, navigating complexity at pace.*

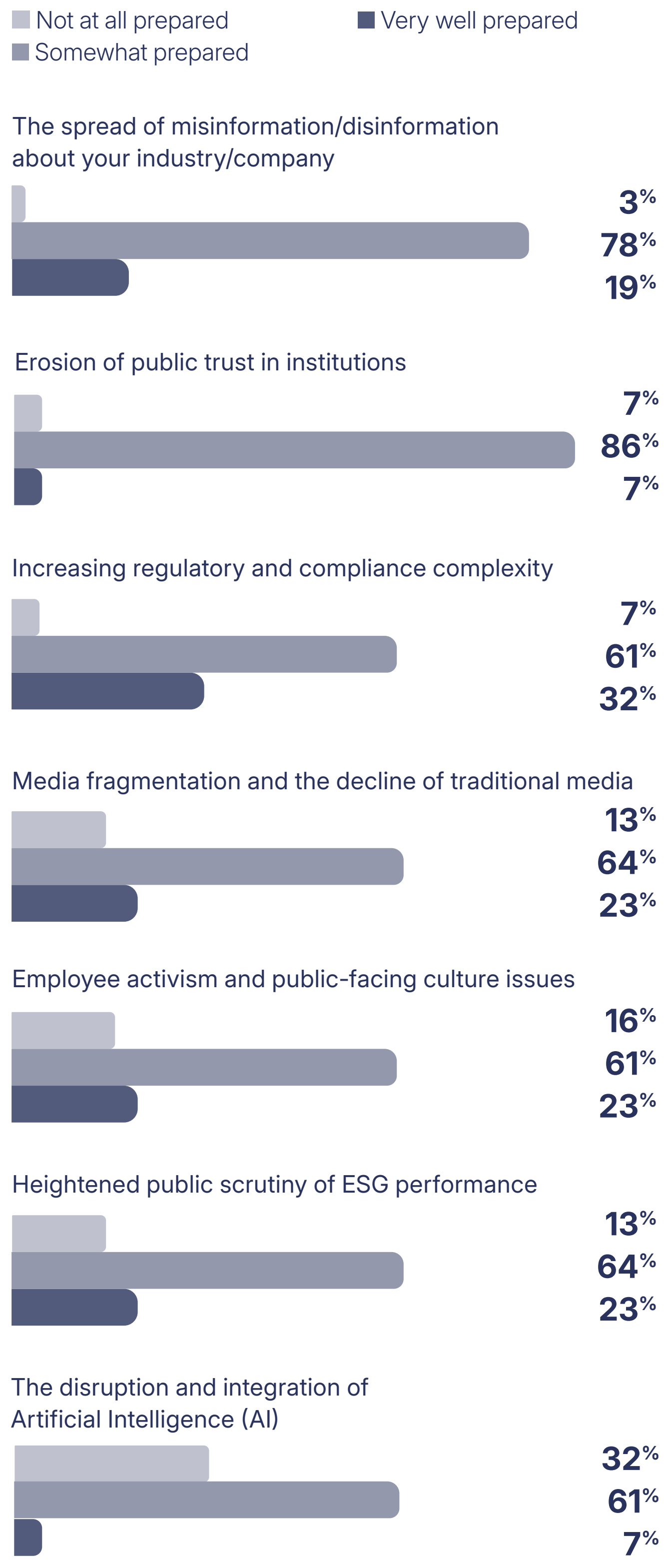
> *Cyber security, budgets, demonstrating impact.*

> *Workplace culture risks.*

Potential impact on organisations



Preparedness



04

RESULTS

- Measuring success
- Return on Investment (ROI)

MEASURING SUCCESS

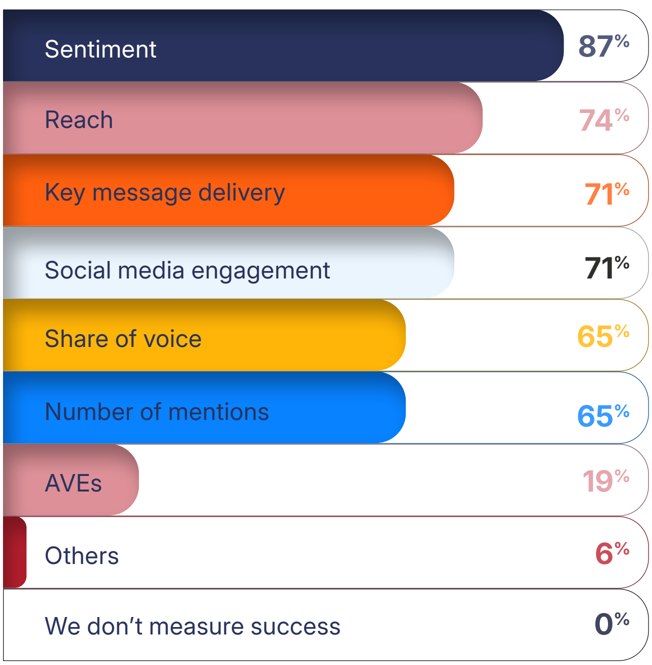
Corporate affairs respondents recorded a wide range of metrics and indicators to measure success. However, well over half also said they only conducted formal reputation audits once a year.

Sentiment and **key message delivery** rated highly as key success metrics, reflecting respondents' overall emphasis on brand reputation. Interestingly though, when looking at performance through the lens of of KPIs, rather than success, **Share of Voice** was the leading indicator followed by **influence on policy**. When we look at these answers collectively we see a range of measures from quantitative statistics (Share of Voice), to qualitative measures (Sentiment and message delivery) and the sometimes unquantifiable (influence on policy).

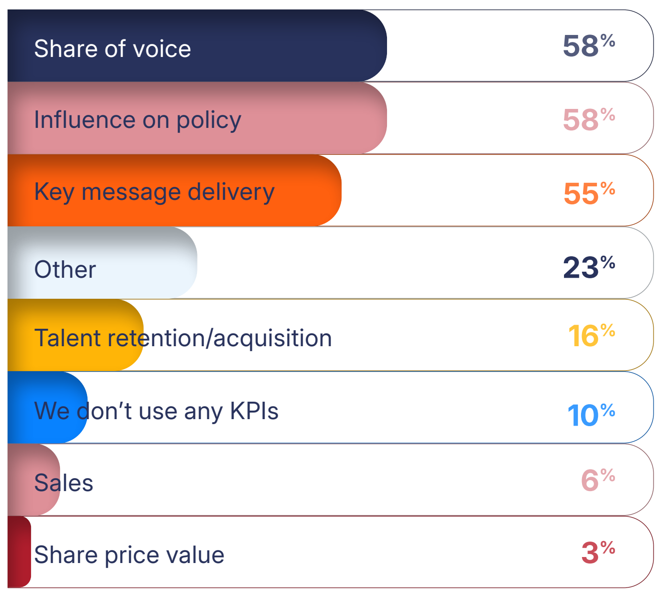
All these measures serve a purpose and evaluate effort, but it also shows a lack of consistency across professionals in the industry in terms of best practice when measuring performance, impact and success.

This highlights a case for reliable, meaningful and robust metrics that speak directly to the functions of corporate affairs.

Success metrics



Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)



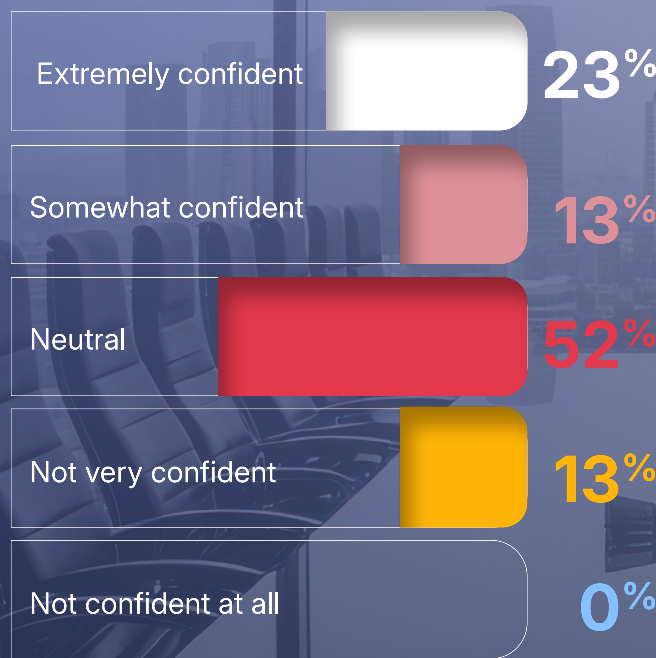
RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Corporate affairs is generally a function that does not directly generate revenue, however, 93% of respondents agreed on the importance of measuring Return on Investment (ROI).

Almost two thirds (61%) said ROI is important for **demonstrating value/impact** of their work to their organisation and leadership. A smaller share said that **securing investment/resources** (32%) and **influencing decision-making** (26%) were key reasons for measuring ROI.

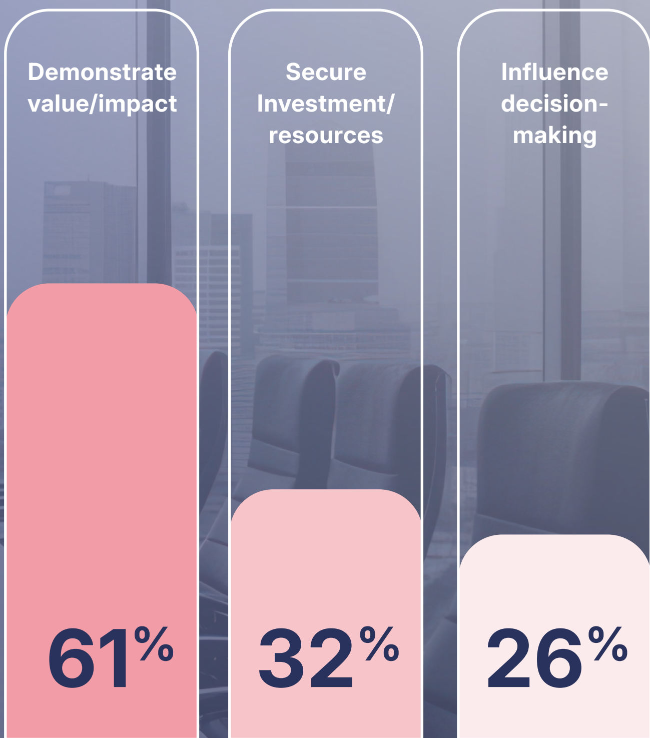
While these responses reflect important functions of ROI reporting, they are also not simple revenue or sales metrics, and are much more intangible and more challenging to quantify. The results echoed this challenge, with 64% of respondents either 'neutral' or 'not confident' in their team's ability to effectively measure ROI.

Confidence in ability to measure ROI



To ensure your organisation values the corp affairs team ROI measurements are essential to gaining trust, respect, resources and more.

Why is measuring ROI important to the corporate affairs function?



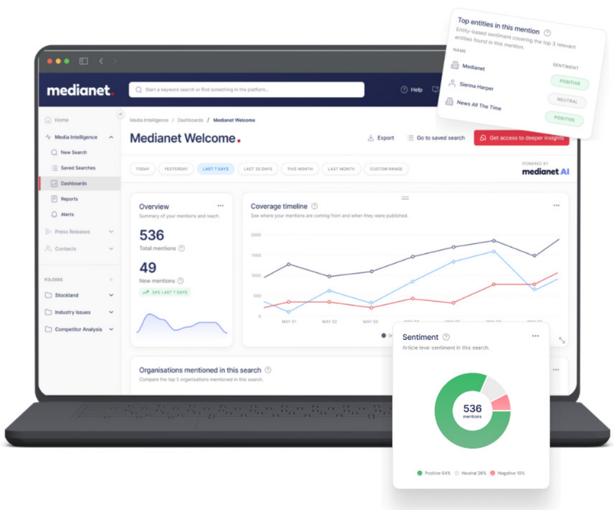
Need to show success to company bureaucrats who are always looking to make savings and don't really understand the value of corporate affairs.

PR and corporate affairs can often be an undervalued, misunderstood function. Organisations may think they don't need a strong brand to thrive, just a strong product. But in reality, the best brands have both.

ABOUT MEDIANET

Medianet is the #1 Media Intelligence platform in Australia and New Zealand with a suite of PR and communications solutions that help organisations connect with their target audience, monitor their media coverage and achieve earned media success.

With a 40 year history of close ties with newsrooms, and being co-owned by the biggest media organisations in Australia – News Corp, Nine and 7 West Media – Medianet offers a unique advantage to those looking to experience the incredible benefits of earned media, while assisting journalists to tell the stories that matter.



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A dedicated series of intimate networking events for ***corporate affairs leaders.***

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