

THE CHANGING ROLE OF SCIENCE PRESS OFFICERS

**online survey of UK press officers
research carried out for the Science Media Centre**

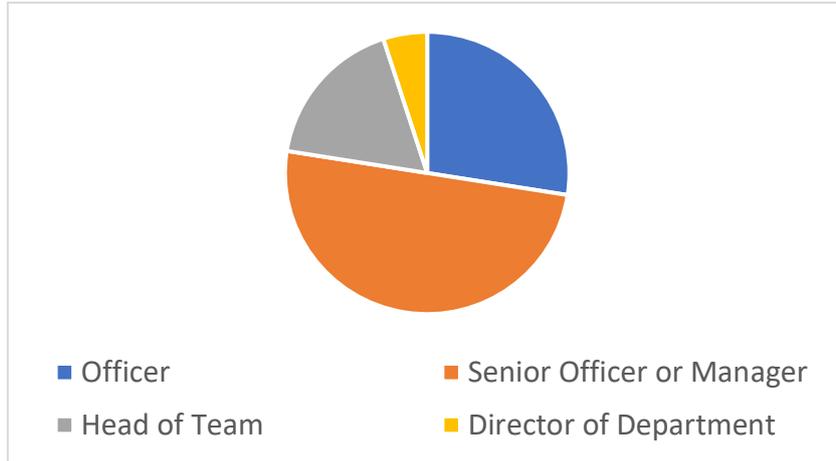
April 2022

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This report details the findings of an online survey of UK science and research press and communications officers carried out in April 2022. 116 participants completed the anonymous Microsoft Forms survey, 40 of whom worked in a UK university at the time. The results presented here are based on the full responses of those 40 individuals. The remaining data, which show similar patterns to those detailed here, will be used for future extensions of the CROSPPO project that are being considered. They will also be made available to Stempra, the UK network of science PR, communications, and media relations professionals.

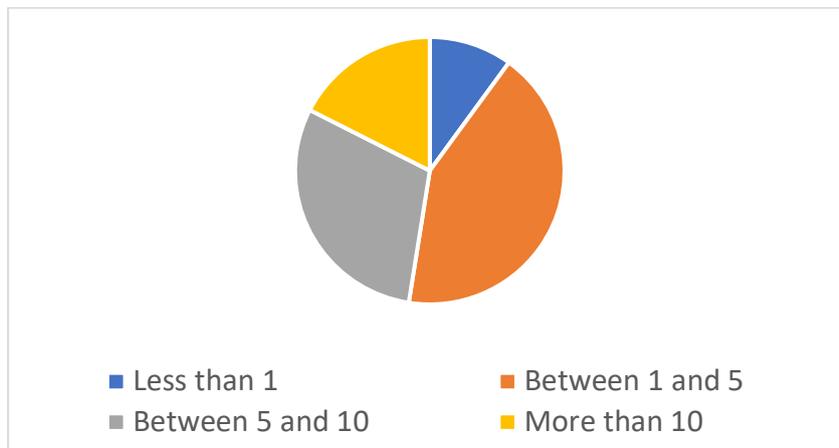
1. How would you describe the approximate level of responsibility of your role?

| | Responses | % |
|---------------------------|-----------|------|
| Officer | 11 | 27.5 |
| Senior Officer or Manager | 20 | 50.0 |
| Head of Team | 7 | 17.5 |
| Director of Department | 2 | 5.0 |



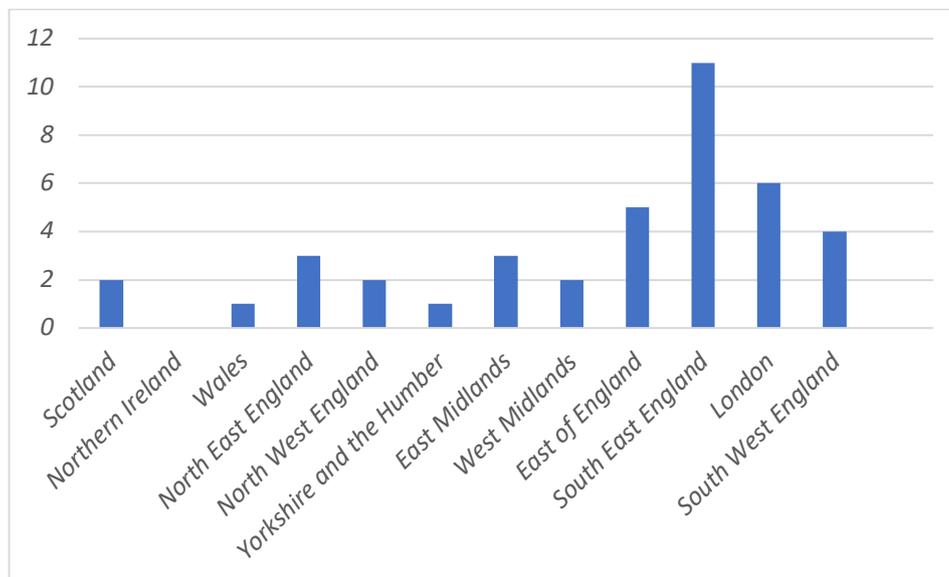
2. How many years have you held your current role?

| | Responses | % |
|------------------|-----------|------|
| Less than 1 | 4 | 10.0 |
| Between 1 and 5 | 17 | 42.5 |
| Between 5 and 10 | 12 | 30.0 |
| More than 10 | 7 | 17.5 |



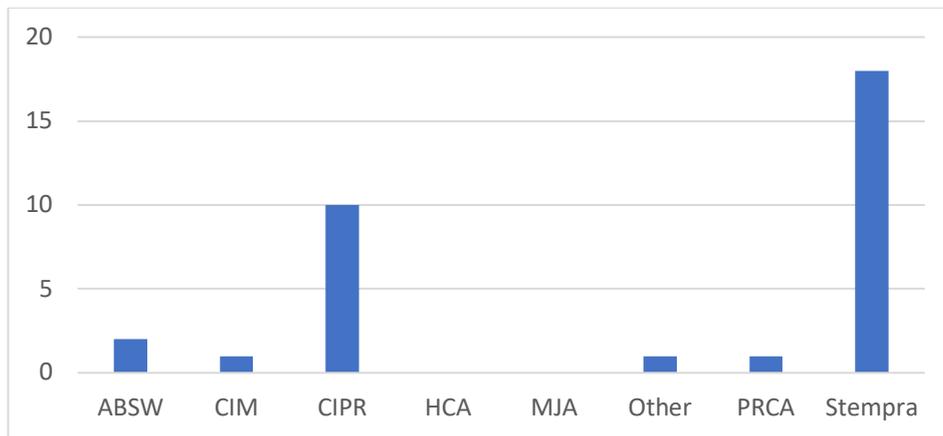
3. Where is your organisation based?

| | Responses |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Scotland | 2 |
| Northern Ireland | 0 |
| Wales | 1 |
| North East England | 3 |
| North West England | 2 |
| Yorkshire and the Humber | 1 |
| East Midlands | 3 |
| West Midlands | 2 |
| East of England | 5 |
| South East England | 11 |
| London | 6 |
| South West England | 4 |



4. Are you a member of any of the following professional bodies? Select all that apply.

| | Responses |
|--|-----------|
| Association of British Science Writers (ABSW) | 2 |
| Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) | 1 |
| Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) | 10 |
| Healthcare Communications Association (HCA) | 0 |
| Medical Journalists' Association (MJA) | 0 |
| Other | 1 |
| Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA) | 1 |
| Stempra | 18 |



5. Who are the main audiences you and your team aim to reach through your work? List up to three.

- press, internal audience, engaged public
- media: national, scientific, international
- students, funders, parents
- other researchers, general public, schools
- regional media, UK national media, trade press
- prospective students, general public, women and girls interested in science
- public, academics, industry
- local and regional public, global health journalists and stakeholders, science journalists
- media, social media followers, funders
- press, public, parents of prospective students
- media: regional, national mainstream, specialist
- general public, university colleagues and academic community, local community
- general national media, general public (families), other research/health professionals
- prospective students (undergrad/graduate), referring vets, students' families, alumni
- staff, students, general public
- public, policymakers, businesses
- journalists, general public
- potential industrial partners, potential academic partners, public
- policy actors, potential donors and alumni (primarily via national/international media)
- international academic community, policymakers / politicians, students
- public affected by our research, healthcare professionals, policymakers
- media, public, policy makers
- researchers in the institution, researchers in peer and partner organisations, funders
- media, local community, research community, plus more
- journalists, general public, staff and students
- general public, trade and industry, global networks of academics
- potential students, policymakers, general public – and media
- media, industry/trade, general public
- general public, international academics, decision-makers
- public, funders, other scientists

- policymakers, academics, local community
- science-curious/health conscious public, potential funders and academic collaborators
- prospective students, national science media, potential research collaborators
- academics internationally, prospective students internationally
- parents/carers of potential students, academics, students/potential students
- policy makers, local community, potential partners
- general public, prospective students, prospective researchers
- national media, international media, general public
- general public, academics, students

6. What core skills are required to do your job? List up to three.

- media relations, science communication, prioritisation
- simplification of science, writing, understanding the importance of 'impact' and an academic's objectives
- negotiation, people management, media relations
- press release writing, ability to spot a news story, excellent social and networking skills
- research, writing, planning
- press release writing, filming, and editing video/photography, comprehension
- writing, social media, photography
- writing, interpersonal skills, networking
- excellent communication and writing skills, negotiation skills, resilience
- writing, research, communication
- understand complex information quickly, producing copy and multimedia to deadline, balancing multiple projects simultaneously
- understanding and interpreting science, writing in an accessible way, understanding the needs and priorities of journalists (and being able to respond)
- communicating clearly and accessibly, agility and ability to deliver in high-speed environment, stakeholder management and ability to motivate/engage people
- write for specific audiences, understanding of issues/research, patience, and initiative
- flexibility, time management, can do attitude
- excellent writing, manage own workload, manage website, social media
- excellent writing, including to distil complex scientific information and present clearly and accessibly, good communication/relationship skills (with researchers and journalists), good time management/planning press releases to embargo
- scientific understanding, writing, relationship building
- excellent communication, explain complex subjects in an engaging way, flexibility in time management, adapt to changing deadlines and priorities, multi-tasking
- writing, interpersonal communication, time management
- diplomacy, strategic/critical thinking, excellent oral and written communications
- media relations, digital media, project management
- good news sense, communication skills, working under pressure
- good all-round communications skills, stakeholder management, strategic planning, and project management
- news understanding and media liaison, stakeholder management, writing

- translate complex research for general public, write clear, concise and captivating copy
- media handling, written communication, planning/time management
- writing (or translating complex research into jargon-free copy), good understanding of the media, good eye for risk assessment
- strong written skills, news/journalistic instincts, strong awareness of the media
- leadership, project management, news sense
- writing clearly, interpersonal communication, time management
- ability to communicate complex info in a compelling way, relationship building and responsiveness, time management
- verbal and written communication, strategic thinking, knowledge of science
- press release writing, knowledge of faculty/sector, content manipulation for university-owned channels (eg website/social media)
- stakeholder management, line management, political awareness
- clear writing, communication, understanding complex academic research
- strategic thinking, stakeholder management, critical thinking
- writing press releases, liaising with media, guiding researchers re media engagement
- spot story potential in research, write compelling and catchy news copy, managing media stories
- editorial judgement, press release process (researching, interviewing, and writing), communication (with academics, journalists and other stakeholders)

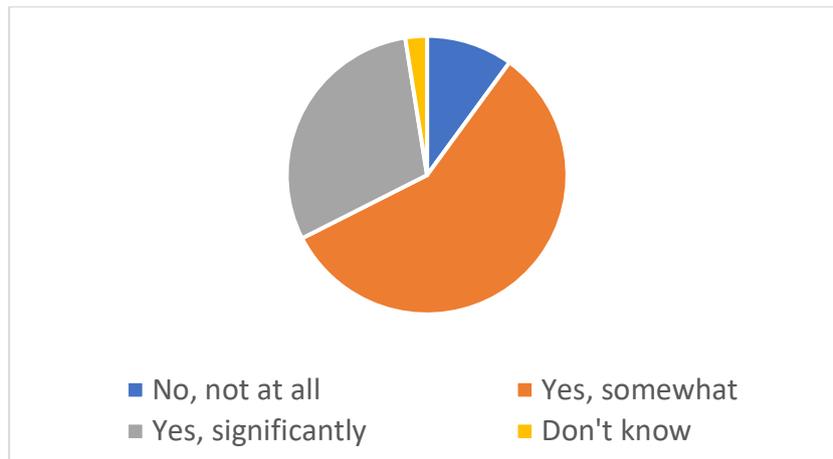
7. Are there any areas where you would like more training? List up to three.

- crisis communications, best PR practice
- filming and editing, photography
- people management
- how to support researchers to provide expert commentary
- filming and editing video, project management
- how to maximise social media impact
- how to get your stories picked up by mainstream press
- how to integrate video content into your comms
- networking
- time management, management, op-ed writing/pitching
- strategy and project planning, planning, and delivering risky projects
- multimedia training eg social media or video editing
- google analytics, data analysis/statistics, science writing
- social media strategy for academia, trends in social media
- graphic design
- what journalists want (how to pitch, exclusives, etc), when not to do stories
- strategic media approaches, social media trends, networking, line management
- project management
- communicating controversial subject areas, pitfalls and how to avoid them
- behavioural insights, new emerging social media platforms, data visualisation
- video production and editing
- developments and trends in comms beyond media, evaluation of media coverage

- issues management
- coding, audio, and visual skills (shooting, editing), data analysis
- leadership
- policy engagement, public affairs, leadership, and management
- crisis communications, managing upwards, international media engagement
- social media, interviewing
- understanding government/parliamentary engagement, navigating online harassment
- audio editing
- broadcast skills, social media skills, presenting skills

8. Has the work you do, or the role, changed in the last 5 years?

| | Responses | % |
|--------------------|-----------|------|
| No, not at all | 4 | 10.0 |
| Yes, somewhat | 23 | 57.5 |
| Yes, significantly | 12 | 30.0 |
| Don't know | 1 | 2.5 |



9. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, state briefly the main way your role has changed (and why).

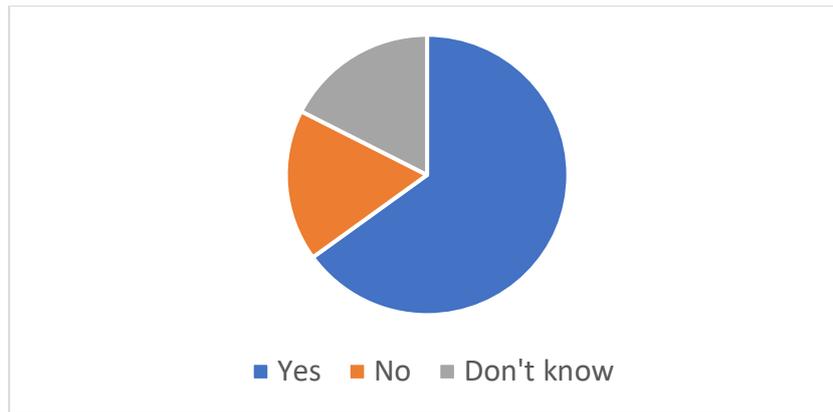
- When I began my job hard copy publications had a greater role but these days effective use of social media is one of the most important aspects of my work.
- Taken on additional responsibilities as a result of organisational restructure: now have marketing and events staff, too, and a greater industry focus.
- Much more stakeholder engagement not just media work now.
- Much more multimedia production - filming and editing video for sharing with media and social media.
- High turnover, seems to be less writing and more request based, more pressure to pitch, more demand from fact checking outlets.

- Covid has caused journalists to look for scientific expertise much more, with knock on effect that we've had to find more creative ways to pitch non-covid science. It's also become easier for researchers to deliver interviews from home and journalists still seem open to this option (to an extent). Much less emphasis on AVE (thank goodness).
- We have become more campaigns focused, reflecting the fact we are trying to build reputation around our key strengths. This involves more content planning and stakeholder management than traditional press release-based comms.
- I have developed my role and helped colleagues understand more about communications and what is possible and what is news.
- Increase in importance of digital comms / social media marketing.
- Less supervision of my work, added responsibility and expectations which are often unrealistic in terms of capacity.
- Institutionally there is more focus on impact of media coverage rather than just numbers of views - this means we can target sector publications rather than always trying to get coverage in the nationals and it's satisfying to know when a piece of media coverage has led to a new collaboration or raised the profile of the researcher. We record this now in a quarterly report which encourages other academics to promote their research with us.
- Researchers are generally more media savvy now and proactive about promoting their research - the ones that get in touch are generally keen to do media, rather than simply ticking a box required by their funders.
- Remote working has meant it's much easier to set up broadcast interviews - broadcasters are happy to interview over Zoom/Skype or WhatsApp rather than requiring interviewees to travel to the studio, or do an interview over an ISDN line. The flip side of this is it's harder to set up on site filming opportunities.
- Media outlets are more receptive to using video footage provided by press teams, even the BBC no longer require everything to be filmed by them.
- Far broader remit for communications teams and professionals, especially as regards internal and external stakeholder communications. Much more time spent on complex issues and crisis management - sector / university politically-motivated knocking stories - which are intensely time consuming / sapping.
- A greater focus on media relations during the height of the pandemic, ie spending the bulk of my time on it rather than only part of my time.
- The demand for what we do, ie publicising new research, has grown, expectations have increased. Also more expectation of different types of content to target different audiences.
- More stakeholder management.
- Expanded remit of external comms to include wider group of target audiences and involvement in more projects.
- Focus changed during the pandemic to Covid related news. Push for more social media presence.
- Taken on wider suite of external affairs including public affairs and policy.
- It has moved from a role which was focused on media relations to a role that encompasses all areas of communications, such as social media, video, internal comms, stakeholder comms etc.
- Covid-19 shifted the focus of our work for a period of time, it was 'the only story in town'. Now the pandemic is leaving the news agenda, but I feel we are not seeing the same take-up of our experts that we had prior to the pandemic.

- Also, senior management perceptions of the role of a press office has changed - focus on problems within the organisation and the 'ease' of getting scientists to talk about Covid has led to a feeling we need to refocus on the organisation.
- Greater focus on digital content for social media channels and on prospective student audience. Enormous focus on maintaining/increasing income from student recruitment due to HE funding model and very competitive UK and international market. Research/researchers/research comms/media coverage all de-valued as a result.
- It seems to fluctuate depending on leadership how much time we spend on courting journalists versus producing original content. Personally I prefer the latter....
- Covid obviously changed everything for approx. 18 months. Also, grown into a new role, more managerial responsibility and senior leadership interaction, less working directly with journos.
- Lots more responsibility.
- We've lost team members in various restructures, so my role has gone from: 2015: Health PR lead and internal comms officer (sending fortnightly staff bulletin) to 2022: Health, medical and dental PR lead, internal comms lead (sending weekly staff and student bulletins), EDI lead for directorate (contributing to Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter) and National Student Survey Co-ordinator (no idea how this landed in our remit, but it did!).
- Promotion to management role. Greater focus on stakeholder engagement.
- The bread and butter of the job is still writing press releases, but we're now expected to do much more multimedia work eg. podcasts, videos. The job is also becoming less about news and more about 'content'.
- Pace of issues/change has increased significantly. More high-level strategic thinking and less comms delivery.
- More focus on aligning with University strategic objectives, more focus on engage funders, wider campaign.
- Harder to get coverage since the social media algorithm changes and slightly mad world events of the last few years. Less space for more stories...
- Due to Covid the nature of my work has changed - much of the university's research has pivoted to the virus and as such that's been the main focus. Securing coverage for other research has involved thinking carefully about what - and how - we pitch, given journalists have also been so focused on the pandemic. Working from home - and conducting all communication with academics and journalists online - has also been a big change. The above is changing and I can imagine the next year or so will see a return to a more usual news agenda.

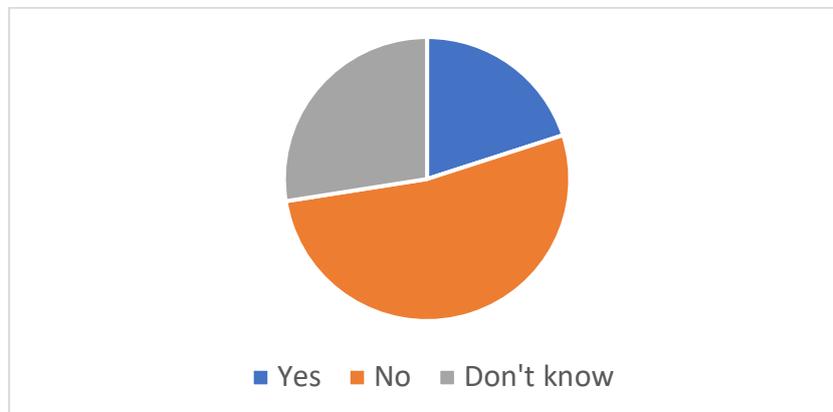
10. Does your organisation have a named objective as part of its strategy or vision to engage with the public and share the knowledge it creates?

| | Responses | % |
|------------|-----------|------|
| Yes | 26 | 65.0 |
| No | 7 | 17.5 |
| Don't know | 7 | 17.5 |



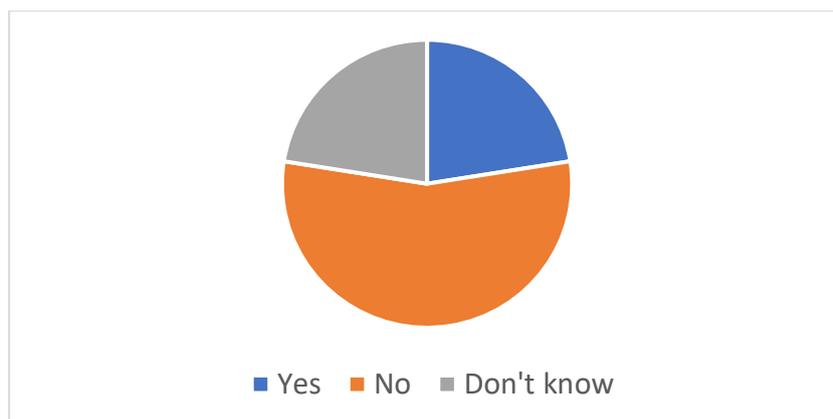
11. Do you, your team or your department have a named objective in your communications or business plan to improve public trust in science or research through communications and engagement?

| | Responses | % |
|------------|-----------|------|
| Yes | 8 | 20.0 |
| No | 21 | 52.5 |
| Don't know | 11 | 27.5 |



12. Do you, your team or your department have a named objective in your communications or business plan to improve public trust in science or research through engaging with the news media?

| | Responses | % |
|------------|-----------|------|
| Yes | 9 | 22.5 |
| No | 22 | 55.0 |
| Don't know | 9 | 22.5 |

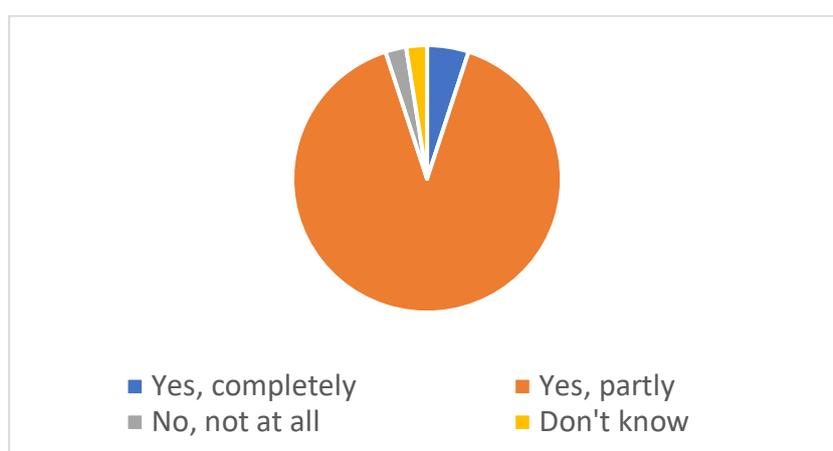


13. Do you think your organisation has a responsibility to improve public trust in or attitudes to science or research?

40 (100%) answered yes

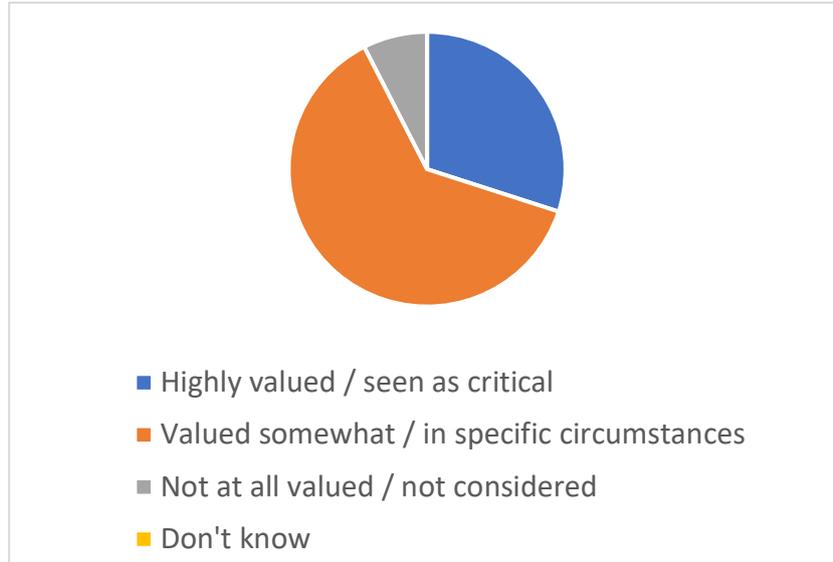
14. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, do you think it meets that responsibility?

| | Responses | % |
|-----------------|-----------|------|
| Yes, completely | 2 | 5.0 |
| Yes, partly | 36 | 90.0 |
| No, not at all | 1 | 2.5 |
| Don't know | 1 | 2.5 |



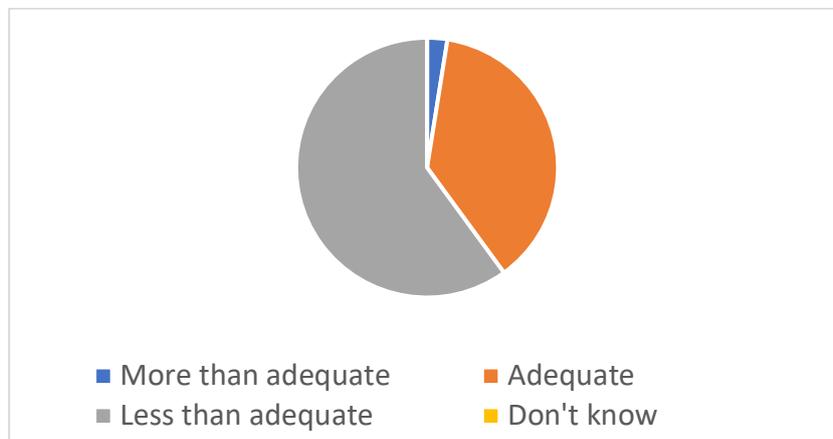
15. How valued do you feel the role of communications is in your current organisation?

| | Responses | % |
|---|-----------|------|
| Highly valued / seen as critical | 12 | 30.0 |
| Valued somewhat / in specific circumstances | 25 | 62.5 |
| Not at all valued / not considered | 3 | 7.5 |
| Don't know | 0 | 0.0 |



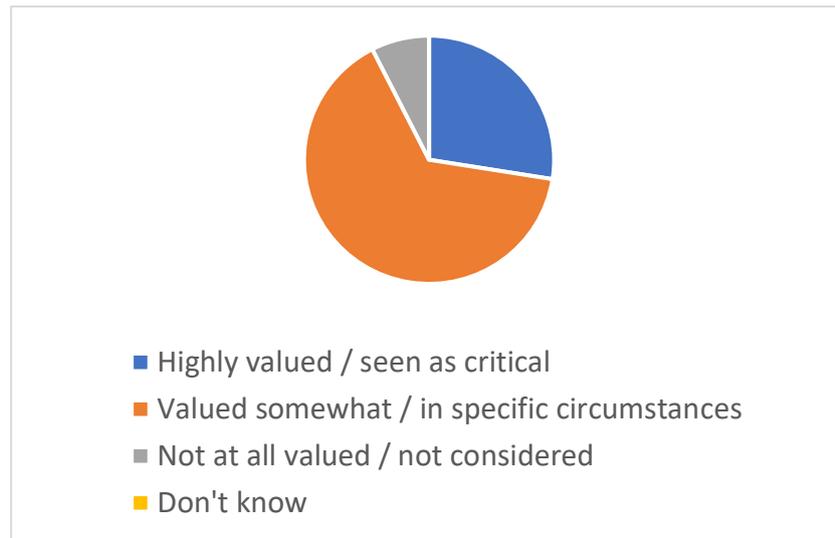
16. How would you describe the level of resource that you and your team have available? Include both staff numbers and budget in your consideration.

| | Responses | % |
|--------------------|-----------|------|
| More than adequate | 1 | 2.5 |
| Adequate | 15 | 37.5 |
| Less than adequate | 24 | 60.0 |
| Don't know | 0 | 0.0 |



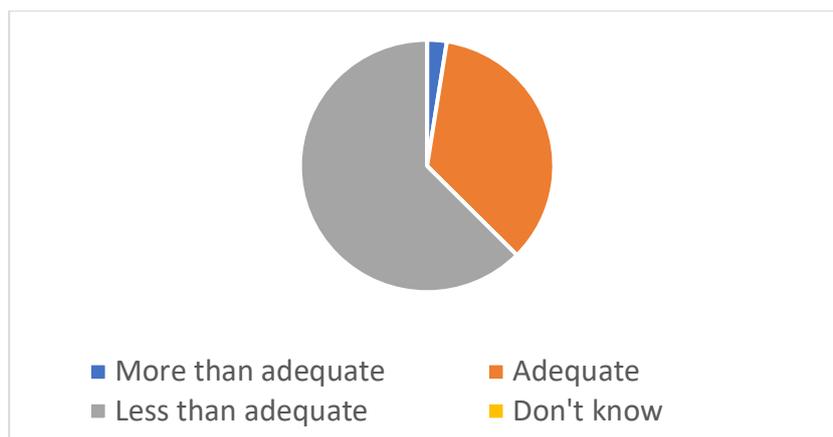
17. How valued do you feel the role of press and media relations is in your current organisation?

| | Responses | % |
|---|------------------|----------|
| Highly valued / seen as critical | 11 | 27.5 |
| Valued somewhat / in specific circumstances | 26 | 65.0 |
| Not at all valued / not considered | 3 | 7.5 |
| Don't know | 0 | 0.0 |



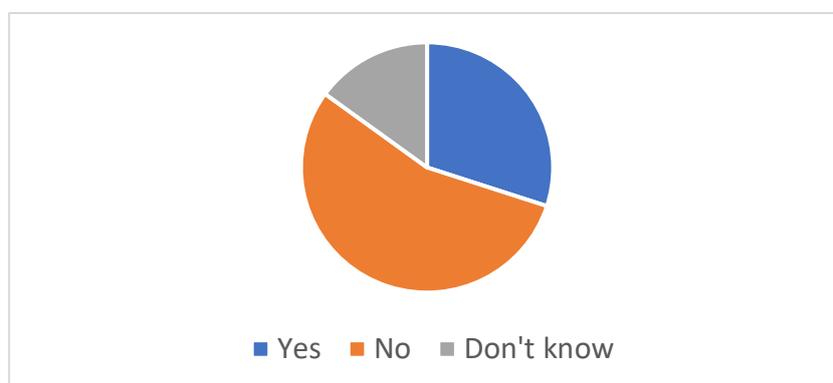
18. How would you describe the level of resource your organisation has available for supporting scientists and researchers to engage with the news media? Include both staff numbers and budget in your consideration.

| | Responses | % |
|--------------------|------------------|----------|
| More than adequate | 1 | 2.5 |
| Adequate | 14 | 35.0 |
| Less than adequate | 25 | 62.5 |
| Don't know | 0 | 0.0 |



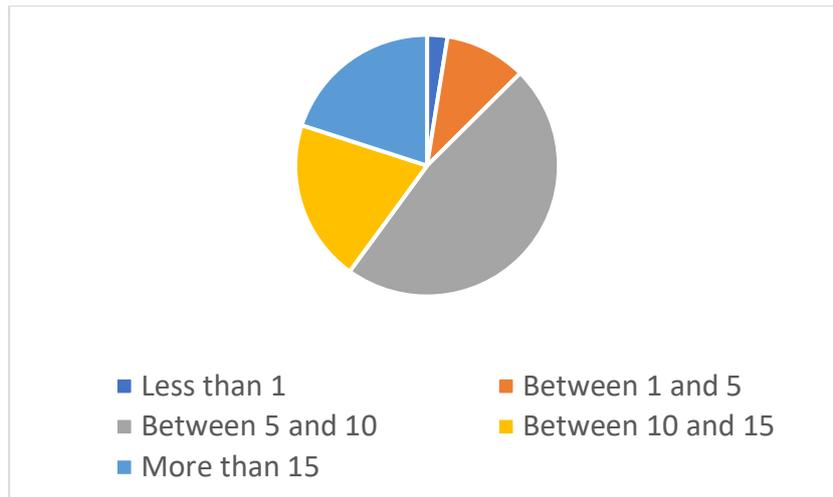
19. Does your organisation have any policies in place to support scientists and researchers engaging with the media to prepare for and deal with online abuse and harassment?

| | Responses | % |
|------------|-----------|------|
| Yes | 12 | 30.0 |
| No | 22 | 55.0 |
| Don't know | 6 | 15.0 |



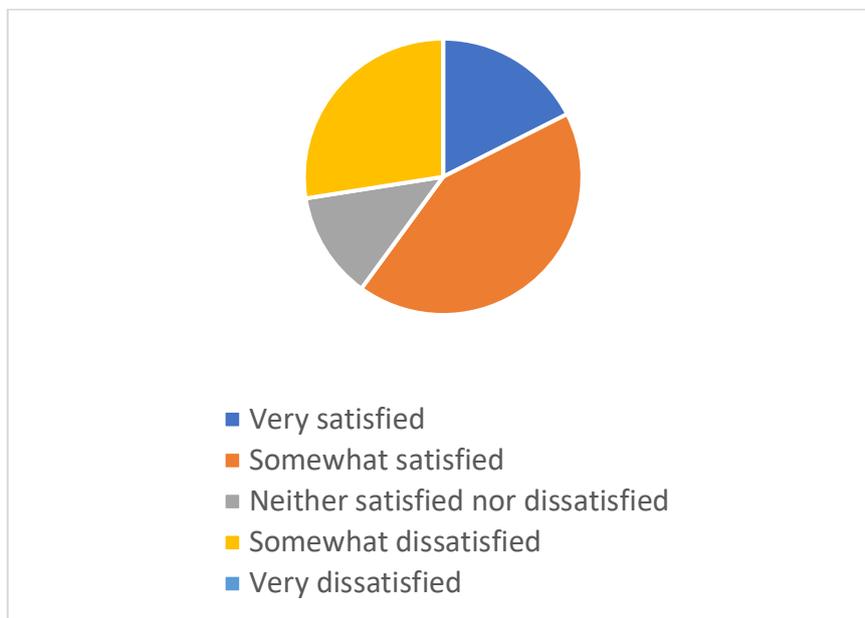
20. How many years have you held roles that primarily involve science or research communication?

| | Responses | % |
|-------------------|-----------|------|
| Less than 1 | 1 | 2.5 |
| Between 1 and 5 | 4 | 10.0 |
| Between 5 and 10 | 19 | 47.5 |
| Between 10 and 15 | 8 | 20.0 |
| More than 15 | 8 | 20.0 |



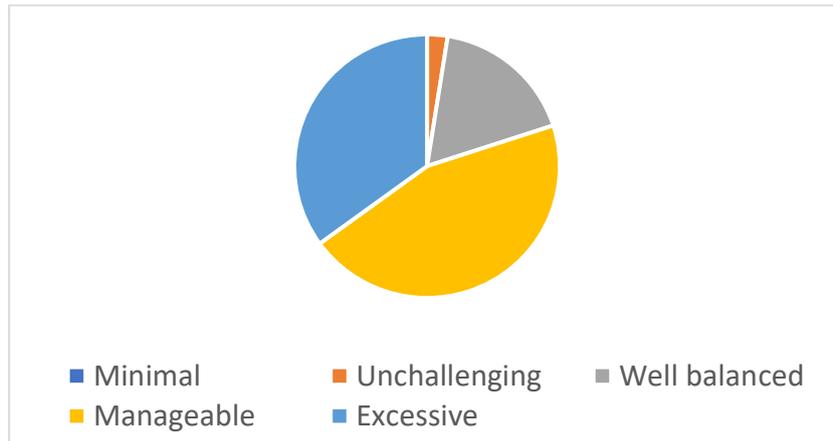
21. How satisfied are you in your current role?

| | Responses | % |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------|
| Very satisfied | 7 | 17.5 |
| Somewhat satisfied | 17 | 42.5 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 5 | 12.5 |
| Somewhat dissatisfied | 11 | 27.5 |
| Very dissatisfied | 0 | 0 |



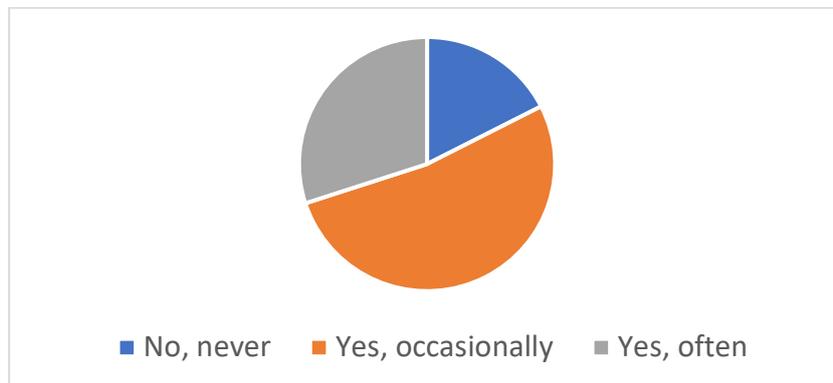
22. How would you describe your current workload?

| | Responses | % |
|---------------|------------------|----------|
| Minimal | 0 | 0.0 |
| Unchallenging | 1 | 2.5 |
| Well balanced | 7 | 17.5 |
| Manageable | 18 | 45.0 |
| Excessive | 14 | 35.0 |



23. Have you considered leaving your role, or your sector altogether, in the last 5 years?

| | Responses | % |
|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| No, never | 7 | 17.5 |
| Yes, occasionally | 21 | 52.5 |
| Yes, often | 12 | 30.0 |



24. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, state briefly the main reason you have considered leaving.

- Small organisation, no chance of promotion.
- Pay.
- Workload.
- Being given additional responsibilities that take me away from press office work, lack of resource in the team, excessive workload. Constant firefighting mode.
- Institutional indifference to communications work, lack of progression, workload, senior management changes, repetitive nature of work, reduced value on creative output.
- I enjoy my job and am very grateful to have it, but I sometimes don't feel like I've found the job I was born to do and that might be in another sector.
- I feel undervalued, underpaid, underutilised and often de-skilled.
- I feel isolated and side-lined, and am often the last to know important comms related matters. My HoD has unrealistic expectations of what my role should include and the extent of my capacity. I have no budget and no assistance.
- Because I want to write about science - not necessarily focused on science press releases whose success on getting media coverage is to a large extent out of my hands.
- Just the role, not the field. For career development and progression.
- There are no opportunities for advancement in my current role, I'm at the top of my pay scale, and media relations does feel like you're on a hamster wheel/screaming into the void.
- Internal challenges.
- Workload coupled with lack of recognition of the need for communications to be involved in wider decision-making.
- Lack of understanding/appreciation of what we do, often within our own wider team/division. Engaging with news media not seen as a priority by some, eg in marketing team, whose focus is student recruitment, making content for social. Don't seem to grasp that in order to recruit students you need a good reputation, and that's what we're doing through our work raising the profile of our research/researchers.
- Undervalued - lack of strategic insight and interest in strategic communications from senior management. Overwork.
- Not through dissatisfaction in my role, only in looking at other opportunities elsewhere.
- Undervalued, increasing workload including non-media work plus unrealistic expectations. Lack of understanding about research communications.
- New challenge, plus have relocated so looking for new work more local to new home.
- Left one organisation due to an impending restructure, and considered leaving another for the same reason. In both cases, I had uncertainty that changes to be implemented would help our ability to communicate research.
- Workload pressures, excessive bureaucracy, organisational structure issues, feeling undervalued.
- Catering to the whims of leadership, rather than being allowed to get on with work.
- In previous role, because of lack of progression opportunities and lack of resources.
- Burnout; no salary progression despite role increasing in responsibility and workload; worries about the amount of computer work and what it's doing to my body and mind; increasingly feeling like trying to communicate important science is met with ever-growing brick walls. Not knowing how to fix any of these problems.

- Excessive workload and lack of opportunity for progression. The work piles up, I continually meet challenges, but I'm still a relatively low pay grade.
- Career development.
- I have caring responsibilities and juggling work and care can be tricky.
- Workload and stress.
- Sections of the media in the UK are toxic and destructive, and sometimes I don't feel good about engaging with them or giving them good stories/easy copy to boost their clicks.
- To go back to journalism.

25. Please add any other comments you wish to make, for example state briefly what you see as the future opportunities or challenges for your role or the wider sector.

- Not having enough capacity to cover everything and missing out on opportunities.
- We have far more science stories that we could communicate to the public than we are currently doing - there simply aren't the resources to enable this, and the media seems to be at saturation point.
- I think that engagement with the media is crucial and that social media is extremely important, particularly in a global organisation
- Very difficult to envisage talent moving out of London, as more senior roles mean significant drop in pay. Hope that other institutions are able to 'level up' their comms divisions and further highlight the critical nature of higher education and research sectors in the future of the UK's cultural and economic landscape.
- Improving the opportunities for women to participate more equally in media comms. We have targets on this now, but it is an ongoing challenge.
- There's a real threat in the recent trend towards decisions and beliefs among the public that are based on emotions and not evidence eg Brexit, voting patterns. It's challenging to make scientific findings sound interesting in a world obsessed with popular culture and celebrity while preserving their integrity and instilling a genuine understanding of and respect for them among the public or politicians.
- I think understanding of communications in the University sector (or some areas) is limited both in what it can achieve and in the investment and time needed. I feel the work I am involved in can be very basic due to this. I think the impact that comms work can have is not taken advantage of.
- An emerging challenge in the news media is how content is becoming more and more personalised for the consumer, meaning that they only see a very narrow slice of what is going on in the world, depending on what they've previously read. If this trend continues, it will make it very difficult to reach new audiences and make messages heard outside the echo chamber.
- In this era of fake news and misinformation, journalists have an even more important role to play in filtering, fact checking, investigating and curating stories so that people can rely on trusted new sources rather than having to filter and do their own research in the overwhelmingly crowded news space, where opinions are given air space according to who shouts louder, rather than validity or truth.
- At my institution, reactive comms is seen as the 'important' part, even though it's mostly dealing with student press. Research comms is viewed as a poor relation, or a reputational exercise to counteract the negative coverage around student issues and inequality.

- Political challenges - anti-University narrative, especially in the right of centre media that can overshadow the more positive narratives.
- Opportunity to capitalise on the value attributed to communications due to the pandemic.
- Challenges due to the need to pick up other work that was neglected over the last couple of years, but keep up the momentum with media relations.
- It feels like however much coverage we get, what we do is never quite enough and we're battling with branding/marketing pressures and expectations. Working with the media, eg what they want and how we do it, essentially hasn't changed that much really, the basic of it needing to be a good story remains. But knowing how the media works, how to time stories, what journalists expect, being able to write a decent press release, the ins and outs of researchers' papers and how journals work, are quite specific, separate skills to 'marketing', which we often get banded together with. We have to push back on things that aren't news or attempts to turn us into content creators in ways that risk making the research/story something it's not.
- A continuing challenge is showing the impact of our work, eg it doesn't necessarily equate to xyz students being recruited. It's much more nuanced, and impacts can be further down the line, eg engaging with policy makers, new research funding, but this bigger picture is just as important.
- Biggest opportunities are growing UK research budgets, and the chance to build on the high profile of science and research during the pandemic. Biggest challenges are if news media reduces resourcing for specialist reporting of science, or if universities ask even more of comms functions without any more resource.
- Scepticism amongst the public. The huge issue of disinformation since Covid. Funding cuts.
- Challenge of post-Covid 'science fatigue' leading to reduced coverage of science stories, and whataboutery where risks and harms presented in health sciences stories are assessed against Covid.
- Resourcing is always a challenge. Concerned by Government's attitude to science, evidence, criticism, etc.
- Public trust in science is a huge one - this is compounded by increasingly polarised views which are enhanced by (and perhaps even somewhat rooted in) social media. Increasing isolationism and, dare I say, fascism in the UK and, again, polarisation of views compounded by a press which is arguably not so free. Monetary and political agendas seem to take precedent, and this leaves me concerned about how we fit in as research media communicators.
- The challenges are that everyone thinks they're an expert on comms!
- The resource issue isn't going to get any better but expectations on the team are going to continue increasing.
- Social sites such as R/Science on Reddit show there is a wider public appetite for knowledge sharing and engagement with the latest research. We need to try and harness this more, rather than focusing on mainstream media, who are not as good at identifying what will be of interest to the public as they like to think.
- Future challenges - further major global health events; the news media's continued shift to digital and how we tackle this; continued challenges around how research is presented in the media (prospects hopefully good with the SMC's help!)

26. What one thing would improve your role or the field of science and research press and communications in the UK?

- More funds to resource the team.
- Bigger budget for our department.
- Better support from above.
- More long-form, in-depth pieces in mainstream media.
- Better coordination and easier ways to share expertise and seek advice from others in similar posts. It would be great if Universities could teach young scientists how valuable communications will be in their future job.
- I need more resources my team and more training for journalists in terms of how research works.
- There are far fewer dedicated science journalists in the UK media than ever, which means science is not often effectively communicated to the public. More investment in media to train and retain dedicated specialist journalists would help to redress this imbalance, although I am painfully aware that this is very unlikely to happen.
- More opportunities to be an independent source and less led by journal publication dates and 'spray and pray' journalist requests where 'any expert will do' approach used - or commonly referred to in the sector as 'escaping the treadmill'!
- Replacing the embargo system with something more flexible that works for both journalists and journals.
- A greater appetite for communicating research to the general public among scientists.
- A strategic view and resource.
- If the public were as interested in science as I am!
- Having more of a purpose than just 'tell people about science', in the sense of sharing that information to get to a goal (like, improving uptake of screening or something). I think this would help showcase our skills and the point of having a comms team as it's something more tangible than counting column inches/retweets.
- People telling us stuff in advance rather than the day before ;-)
- I think a lot of us have to wean off the cycle of media relations, with buy-in from leadership. The media is an important channel, but it deals mainly in tropes, and often lacks nuance.
- More talented staff at a lower level to enable greater focus on strategy and planning.
- Appreciation among the university sector that research comms is different to marketing, but just as vital. Especially in terms of reputation making and raising. The coverage generated in news media and subsequently shared digitally, eg online or on social channels, is vastly more than our own channels could manage alone.
- Incentives for researchers to consider and understand communications as an integral part of the research process.
- More data, or standard practice methods of collecting data, that show the many different types of value that news and media engagement can offer universities.
- Change the focus to quality rather than quantity.
- Partnership with a PR body to develop formalised training resources appropriate for Sci Comms, eg STEMPPRA working with CIPR on understanding evidence, risk etc.
- I think it would benefit science communication if universities focused less on the 'low impact' funding/award/niche stories and put a greater input into the 'high news value' projects which have a direct impact on people and society.

- Clear support from senior management - particularly around communicating controversial topics, so we can be confident in publicising these without concerns about our reputation.
- Probably changing the HE funding model!
- Allowing me to be more creative, rather than a constant focus on the 'press'.
- Less London-centrism.
- My role / the team - more resource. The wider field - better ways of myth-busting and helping journalists/the general public realise that facts and opinion are different.
- I think we're generally making progress, but there are some academics who will never understand the benefits of working with the media. They're not willing to engage and are horrified by the tight deadlines - it's an uphill struggle, but we do win some over.
- An institutional strategy that provides focus.
- More female academics putting themselves forward for media so their work and achievements are better recognised.