

Streem®

State of the Media Report

NEW ZEALAND

Our summary of the media industry trends, insights, and talking points to know for 2026.

Executive Summary

Disruption, transformation, resilience — a year of media in New Zealand

The year 2025 has marked a pivotal period of transformation for New Zealand's media landscape, defined by accelerated digital change, renewed debate around public interest journalism, and the continued shift towards the power of local content.

Structural pressures, such as commercial disruption, declining traditional advertising, and shifting consumption from linear broadcasting to on-demand and social platforms, have accelerated over the past decade and 2025 has been no exception. Several notable corporate restructures, platform realignments, and newsroom in the past 12 months underlined both the fragility and resilience of New Zealand's media landscape.

At the same time, 2025 highlighted the growing tension between commercial sustainability and the democratic importance of trusted local journalism. Print circulation and broadcast revenues declined alongside ever-expanding investment in digital-first news products, subscription models, and hybrid funding approaches.

And, while audience habits continued to fragment, with younger demographics increasingly favouring short-form video, podcasts, and creator-led content over traditional news formats, there was renewed engagement with credible news sources in an era of misinformation.

The rise of artificial intelligence was a defining theme of 2025. Media companies invested heavily in transparent editorial standards, fact-checking processes, and the responsible adoption of AI tools to enhance production efficiency while safeguarding journalistic integrity. Concurrently, the sector faced growing expectations to reflect the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Collectively, the developments of 2025 demonstrate a media landscape in active transition: adapting business models, redefining content strategies, and experimentation with partnerships in a bid to remain viable and relevant.

This report examines the year's most significant moments in detail, assesses the implications for media sustainability and public interest journalism, and considers emerging opportunities that may shape the sector's trajectory in the years ahead.

News Bites

Bite 1.

A **Talbot Mills Research** survey found only 13% of NZ Europeans prefer "Pākehā". 45% choose "New Zealander", 28% "European New Zealander", 13% "Kiwi".

Source: The New Zealand Herald

Bite 2.

Treat Instagram like search, not just social because Google now indexes pro accounts. Write keyword-rich captions and sharpen bios. 30% of business owners and marketers have already changed. 23% say Insta SEO beats ads, and 58% will lift organic spend.

Source: Adobe Express

Bite 3.

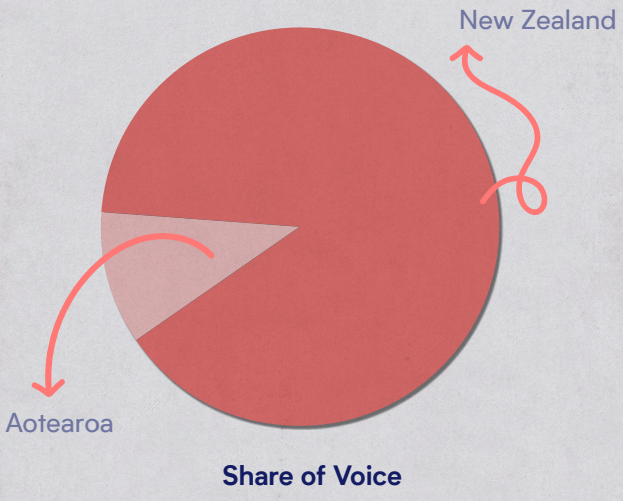
Stuff's subscription mastheads grew audiences 26% year-on-year to nearly 1.5m a month. Digital subs up 57%. The Press now reaches 881k, The Post 906k. In an election year, trusted analysis pulls attention and ad dollars follow.

Source: M+AD

Bite 4.

Comparing media mentions side by side, "New Zealand" dominated the media landscape, appearing 89.3% of the time compared to "Aotearoa" which only managed 10.7% share of voice.

- **1,537,280 (89.3%)** New Zealand
- **184,860 (10.7%)** Aotearoa



Share of Voice

Source: Streem Data

Bite 5.

"AI slop" was mentioned in news almost 200 times throughout 2025."

Source: Streem Data

Themes in News Content on Media Reform 2025



Source: Streem Data

2025 Timeline

January 2025 | NZ Herald newsroom shakeup

NZME announces almost 40 roles are set to be cut from the *NZ Herald*, *BusinessDesk*, *and Newstalk ZB*.

February 2025 | Media Reform package out for public consultation

The Ministry for Culture & Heritage releases a discussion document, *Media Reform*, that outlines five draft proposals to support and modernise New Zealand's media legislation and media and content production sector.

6 March, 2025 | Jim Grenon buys 9% stake in NZME

Canadian billionaire Jim Grenon buys 9% stake in NZME and moves to install himself on the board.

1 April, 2025 | Media reform for the streaming age

Media experts call out NZ's Broadcasting Act, stating it's as old as Video Ezy, and media reform is needed for the streaming age.

1 April, 2025 | Morning Report celebrates 50 years

Radio New Zealand's flagship morning news and current affairs programme, *Morning Report*, celebrates 50 years on air.

7 April, 2025 | QMS obtains full ownership of MediaWorks

Australian outdoor media company QMS buys remaining 45% of MediaWorks, having previously owned 55%.

16 May, 2025 | Stuff announces the closure of 15 community and rural titles

Fifteen community and rural newspapers cease publication, with affected titles shutting down by the end of July.

22 May, 2025 | Investing in local journalism

The Budget 2025 includes an investment of $6.4 million over four years to council, community and court reporting. The funding will be distributed through NZ On Air.

26 May, 2025 | NZME launches live digital news-streaming service Herald Now, hosted by Ryan Bridge

Herald Now goes live as a digital news-streaming service, hosted by broadcaster Ryan Bridge, former co-host of AM on Three.

3 June, 2025 | Stephen Joyce named NZME chairman, with Jim Grenon installed as a director

Former National Party cabinet minister Stephen Joyce takes the helm as NZME chairman, joining the board alongside new director Jim Grenon after a shareholder vote and board reshuffle.

27 June, 2025 | Paul Henry appointed to TVNZ Board

Seasoned broadcaster, Paul Henry, is appointed to the TVNZ Board by Media and Communications Minister, Hon. Paul Goldsmith.

2 July, 2025 | Trade Me and Stuff partnership finalised

Trade Me takes a 50% stake in Stuff Digital, the digital operations of Stuff, which publishes stuff.co.nz and ThreeNews.

7 July, 2025 | Introduction of the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill

The Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill is introduced to help support the financial sustainability of local news media, particularly in light of large global digital platforms such as Google and Meta.

30 July, 2025 | Marlborough Express folds after 160 years

The Marlborough Express newspaper prints for the final time after 160 years of local reporting.

1 August, 2025 | Sky TV buys Three for $1

Sky TV completes its purchase of TV3 for $1, and Warner Bros. Discovery exits the New Zealand media market.

6 October, 2025 | RNZ appoints first Chief Audio Officer

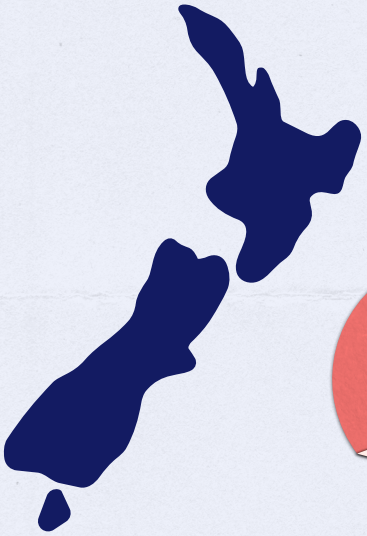
Pip Keane is appointed RNZ's first Chief Audio Officer, a new role created after an internal review of the public broadcaster's declining audience numbers.

14 October, 2025 | Levelling playing field for broadcast advertising

Hon Paul Goldsmith, Minister for Media & Communications, announces the lifting of advertising restrictions for broadcasters on Sunday. This is a result of The Broadcasting (Repeal of Advertising Restrictions) Amendment Act 2025.

Media Consumption

Radio is the rising star



1.65m readers

In mid-2025, Roy Morgan's readership results for the 12 months to June 2025 revealed 2.7 million New Zealanders aged 14+ read newspapers (via print or online) in an average 7-day period. The findings also revealed 1.65 million aged 14+ read magazines in print or online.

Stuff Group retained its number one position as the top news site for New Zealanders, but Radio New Zealand (RNZ) was the standout performer in 2025, recognised as the best-performing news website with a readership of 1.7m unique visitors a month.

Top News Sites by Similarweb Traffic (Dec 2025)

In first place, stuff.co.nz was the most visited News & Media Publishers website in New Zealand in December 2025, followed by nzherald.co.nz as the runner up, and rnz.co.nz ranking at third place as the leaders of the News & Media Publishers websites in New Zealand.

61.4% read or accessed newspapers

Of New Zealanders aged 14+

37.5% read magazines

Rank	Website	Total Monthly Visits (Est.)	Avg. Visit Duration	Bounce Rate
1	Stuff.co.nz	23.3M — 24.1M	04:01	40.6%
2	NZHerald.co.nz	18.5M — 19.2M	03:23	53.6%
3	RNZ.co.nz	10.8M — 11.9M	02:14	52.3%
4	1News.co.nz	5.5M — 6.0M	01:14	68.0%
5	TVNZ.co.nz	4.2M — 4.3M	03:37	41.8%
6	ThePress.co.nz	4.2M — 4.8M	00:21	10.3%
7	ODT.co.nz	2.3M — 2.4M	03:01	54.1%

Key Findings

The *New Zealand Herald* was the most widely read publication

7.9%

The Post **increased its readership by 7.9% during the 12 months of June 2024–2025**

Top 10 read publications in 2025

1	New Zealand Herald
2	The Post
3	Otago Daily Times
4	The Press
5	Waikato Times
6	Hawke's Bay Today
7	Sunday Star Times
8	Bay of Plenty Times
9	Northern Advocate
10	Taranaki Daily News

The New Zealand Herald's *Canvas* was the most widely read Newspaper Inserted Magazine with a readership of 206,000, a year-on-year increase of 14.4% and a readership over 50 per cent higher than any other magazine.

206,000
readers

14.4%
year-on-year increase

50%
higher readership

Magazine Readership

25 magazines increased their 'average issue print readership' in the year to June 2025.

New Zealand's most widely read magazine was *AA Directions* with an average issue readership of 367,000 — more than 100,000 ahead of any other magazine. *The New Zealand Listener* was the second most read magazine with an average issue readership of 224,000, up 5,000 on 2024.

In third place, *NZ Woman's Day* had a print readership of 130,000, just ahead of *Dish*, which increased its print readership by 39,000 to 125,000. *Kia Ora Magazine* was fifth with a print readership of 123,000.

"Magazines and newspapers continue to reach audiences of millions of New Zealanders, which is a valuable asset for these traditional media channels in an increasingly fragmented and competitive media landscape."

Michele Levine,
Chief Executive Officer, Roy Morgan

Source: Roy Morgan

NZME reports strong performance

Nielsen CMI research
Q4 2024 — Q3 2025

The New Zealand Herald brand reaches

1.8 million

Kiwis every day

+40k Readers YOY



On Sunday, The NZ Herald reaches 7 out of 10 readers engaging with a Sunday newspaper

#1 APP **NZ Herald**

The NZ Herald app remains the #1 News app and has been for the last 21 months with more than 18 million monthly launches

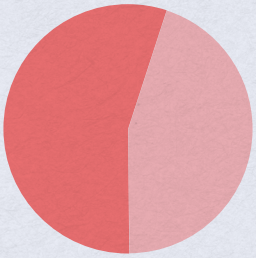
21 MONTHS

Print is

4x

more trusted than social media





56%

use no other media while they're reading the paper

Local, trusted news remains a vital part of regional communities

The Waikato Herald **16% YOY**

Hawke's Bay Today **13% YOY**

Added investment for local content

Irirangi Te Motu | NZ On Air

In 2025, the New Zealand Government announced that $6.4 million would go towards supporting local, public-interest journalism initiatives over the coming four years. Two of the primary initiatives to receive an injection of funding were: RNZ's ***Local Democracy Reporting scheme*** (LDR) and NZME's ***Open Justice — Te Pātiti scheme***.

Source: NZ on Air

NZ On Air has also announced it will continue to support specialist current affairs shows in 2026. This support extends to:

- *Q+A with Jack Tame*, TVNZ
- *Paddy Gower Has Issues*, Three, ThreeNow, Stuff, social media
- *Tagata Pasifika*, TVNZ, TVNZ+, TP+
- *Mata*
- *Newsroom Investigates*
- *The Detail*

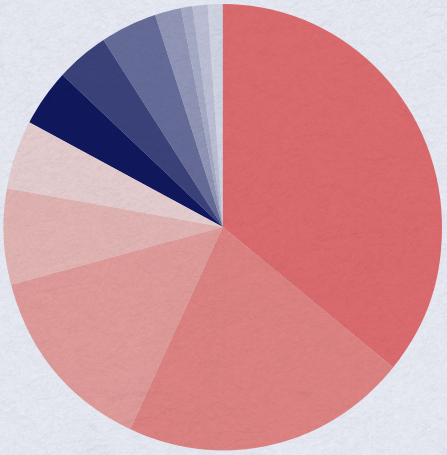
"It is a very privileged position to be able to support expansion in local reporting at this time, recognising the vital importance of quality journalism in the coming election year when New Zealand audiences need trusted information."

Amie Mills,
Head of Funding, NZ On Air

Screen content funding by platform

Scripted and non-fiction funding supported content on at least 23 platforms. The pie graph shows funded content by primary/commissioning platform. Most content plays out on at least one additional (secondary) platform, and in some cases many additional platforms.

Source: NZ On Air



- TVNZ | 36
- Discovery NZ (Three) | 21
- Sky Network TV | 14
- YouTube | 7
- Whakaata Māori | 5
- RNZ | 4
- NZME | 4
- Other | 4
- Coconet.tv | 2
- The Spinoff | 1
- Newsroom NZ | 1
- Stuff | 1

Where are the Audiences?

Irirangi Te Motu | NZ On Air's flagship report *Where are the Audiences* focused on children's use of media in 2025. The study, which explored how tamariki (children) aged 2–14 years in New Zealand accessed and experienced media, revealed that YouTube was the most used media platform by children.

69% use YouTube or YouTube Kids on a daily basis.

36% use Netflix daily compared to NETFLIX

16% who use Disney+.

41% The total daily reach of local TV (all linear and on demand).

39% of children play online games daily and

24% use social media.

39% of parents describe the top benefit of local content as being relatable stories and characters.

Source: Where are the Audiences — Children's Media Use Report 2025

Funded content

Local content remains a drawcard for New Zealanders as results from Irirangi Te Motu | NZ On Air's year in review show. The entity's funding of New Zealand content was reflected in the:

75.4% of New Zealanders who watched funded content on linear TV.

24m streams of funded (new) content on demand.

54% of New Zealanders who tuned in to *Country Calendar*, the highest-rated show of 2025

"Public media funding has never been more important, as our local media ecosystem continues to experience turbulence and instability. NZ On Air's funding has been a lifeline to many this year as we saw media outlets laying off staff and making cuts to services and content. With audiences at risk of seeing and hearing less local content, we have had to carefully balance competing needs and stretch every dollar further."

NZ On Air

Lights, camera, impact

In 2025, NZ On Air joined up with the NZ Film Commission and Te Māngai Pāho in a Mahi Tahi **project to commission detailed research into the Economic and Cultural Impact of New Zealand screen content**. The research, undertaken by The New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) and Verian, analysed the role of screen production in shaping New Zealand's economy and culture.

Key findings from the report, ***Lights, camera, impact: The role of screen production in shaping New Zealand's economy and culture*** included:

Source: NZ on Air - Lights, camera, impact Report 2025

$3B total output from the screen sector

73% of New Zealanders agree NZ-made content shapes national identity

87% of international viewers say Māori stories help them value indigenous storytelling more broadly

On the airwaves

Radio New Zealand

National audiences continue to grow

Radio New Zealand announced that it finished 2025 on a high note after results from the GfK Commercial Radio Survey revealed the national broadcaster had experienced growth across a number of key programmes.

That proved to be good news for the national broadcaster after survey results earlier in the year had revealed RNZ's audience numbers had fallen to 468,000 in 2025, down from 607,000 in 2021. The earlier declining numbers instigated a review of RNZ's activity, carried out by Richard Sutherland, former RNZ Head of News.

Sutherland's report prepared a new RNZ Audio Plan and recommended that RNZ appoint a Chief Audio Officer, clearly define its demographic, focus on live radio, and treat Auckland as its **'strategic centre of gravity'**.

Key findings from the GfK Commercial Radio Survey 3*:

RNZ National's audience 10+ is

500,300 in a typical week. *(475,800 in Survey 2)*

RNZ Concert's audience 10+ is

154,100 in a typical week. *(170,400 in Survey 2)*

The combined RNZ audience is

584,300 *(an increase of 8,800 from Survey 2)*

5.1%

Morning Report experienced a 5.1% increase in RNZ National's listenership with over 13,000 or 4% more people listening to RNZ's morning news programme in the survey period.

*Survey 3: August 10 to November 1, 2025 vs. Survey 2: May 11 to July 19, 2025

RNZ's digital platforms had 1,698,000 New Zealanders aged 15+ visiting rnz.co.nz in October 2025.

rnz.co.nz

This was the highest ever monthly audience for RNZ's website.



1.5m New Zealanders visited rnz.co.nz in April 2025 (up 400,000 from April 2024) and time spent increased from 24 to 42 minutes.

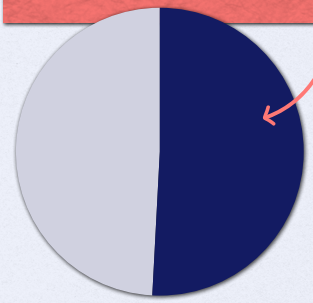
New Zealand's top-ranking commercial radio stations include:

- Newstalk ZB
- More FM
- The Breeze
- The Edge
- The Rock

3.3 million listeners per week

Total Commercial Radio cumulative audience

51% of people 10+ listen to commercial radio during breakfast (6am-9am).



Kiwis opt to tune in as The Infinite Dial 2025 reveals audio leads weekly media consumption.

94%

of Kiwis listen to audio (online music, podcasts, over-the-air radio, or radio online)

78%

watch or listen to YouTube

73%

use social media

This growth is driven by Kiwis aged 35 — 54, with the majority of the population listening to Live Radio. In 2025, **68% of Kiwis 16+** listened to AM/FM radio each week, and most of them did so in the car.

"We are so pleased to see the third iteration of The Infinite Dial New Zealand. It is clear that audio is a powerhouse when it comes to reaching consumers, and radio remains resilient, fuelled by in-car consumption and catch-up radio podcasts."

Larry Rosin,
President, Edison Research

The power of podcasts

Podcast growth continues unabated, with

55% of all New Zealanders aged 16+ listening to or watching a podcast monthly. Meanwhile,

36% of New Zealanders over 16 tuned into podcasts each week in 2025,

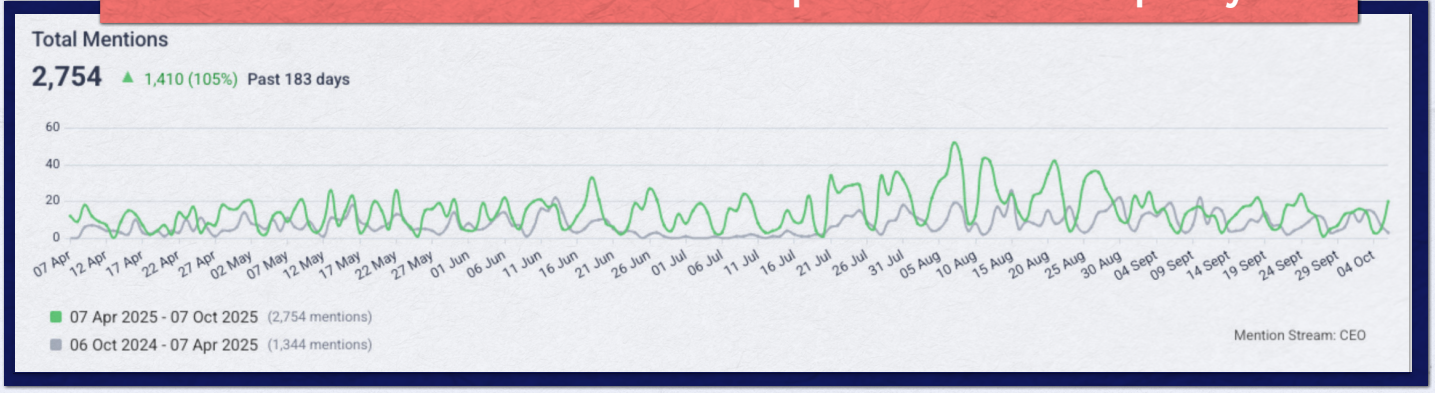
up from **31%** in 2023.

The 2025 PR Guide to Podcasts reported the 'rise and rise of podcasts in New Zealand positions the medium as an **integral component** of contemporary PR strategies.'

"Podcasts aren't just a 'nice to have' for brands but a genuinely strategic channel. Unlike a quick media grab or press release quote, podcast interviews provide extended airtime to explain your ideas, values, or products to an already engaged audience. They offer a depth and authenticity of information that complements traditional media. And, in a market where earned attention is harder than ever to come by, having this opportunity to build lasting connections offers exponential value."

Leon Hudson,
Managing Director, Streem

Mentions of 'CEO' in New Zealand podcasts over the past year



Streem data shows mentions of CEOs in New Zealand podcasts are up 105% in the past six months, reflecting the growing prominence of executives in podcast conversations and the medium's expanding role in corporate communications.

Having access to podcast monitoring within the broader media mix helps ensure this increasingly influential channel isn't overlooked, especially given the impact podcasts can have on shaping reputations.

New Zealand Podcast of the Year
Kelly Tarlton's Final Treasure Hunt

Digital Media

The use of digital media in 2025 further confirmed the digital-first media ecosystem that New Zealand media companies and audiences are entrenched in. With 96% of the New Zealand population connected to the internet and 79% of the population identifying as a social media user, digital media is, without doubt, mainstream.

This shift has reshaped how news, entertainment and advertising are consumed, distributed and monetised, **reinforcing digital as the default channel** while intensifying competition for attention, trust and revenue.

State of Digital in New Zealand 2025

6.03 million
active cellular mobile connections

5.03 million
individuals using the internet

4.14 million
social media users

How New Zealand's PR and Communications Industry Is Adapting to a Changing Media Landscape

"I feel for media organisations as they are all under increasing (and massive) financial pressures. This does sometimes however lead to less than optimum behaviours. My approach has always been to be accessible, reliable and authentic—and as I've developed trust, give as much as I am able to. It really comes down to the relationships you can build with journalists. We still have some high calibre operators here."

Mark Knoff-Thomas,
CEO, Newmarket Business Association, Media Commentator, and PRINZ Communicator of the Year, 2025

Shrinking newsrooms, rising digital fragmentation, new formats, and increasing pressure on journalists: as New Zealand's media environment continues to shift, the public relations and communications sector is being forced to evolve just as quickly.

According to the Public Relations Institute of New Zealand (PRINZ), the most striking industry change is the renewed emphasis on relationships. Despite rapid digital innovation, the fundamentals matter more than ever: understanding what journalists need, respecting their time, and building genuine, long-term connections that help both sides work smarter, not harder.

With fewer journalists now covering broader beats, PR practitioners must ensure their communication is targeted, relevant, and truly newsworthy, rather

than adding to the noise. As one senior media leader put it, "we can tell a mile away if you've just put this through AI." Authenticity and specificity now carry real weight.

This relationship-led approach is emerging alongside a significant shift in the channels through which New Zealanders consume information. Digital formats, especially podcasts, on-demand audio, and social-first storytelling, have become everyday media touchpoints.

PRINZ notes that this diversification of channels demands a more strategic mindset:

"Practitioners must move beyond tactical, one-off pitches and instead develop integrated plans that give media partners a clear picture of what an organisation is trying to achieve across time. This includes building SMART objectives, reviewing campaign effectiveness, and refining approaches based on what resonates.
Even crisis response, which often requires speed above all else, should be grounded in planning done well before an issue breaks. Long-term strategy, not reactive activity, is becoming the defining marker of high-quality practice."

Susanne Martin,
CEO, PRINZ

What the industry is hearing from news leaders is consistent: **trusted relationships are the "gold dust" that enable collaboration, quick turnarounds, and reliable access to subject-matter expertise.**

Journalists increasingly value PR practitioners who make their lives easier, those who understand the newsroom context, supply clear and accurate information, and maintain communication even when they don't need something immediately.

The era of the long lunch may be over, but the era of meaningful professional connection is not.

As PRINZ's leadership emphasizes, the industry's evolution hinges on one question: how can we make the media's job easier, while delivering communication that is purposeful, honest, and genuinely valuable?

Those who can answer that will **be the practitioners who thrive in New Zealand's next media era.**

Hot Topics

HOT TOPIC #1

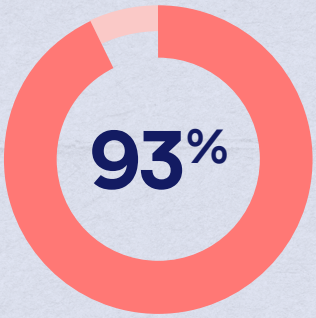
Trust in News

Trust in news has become one of the defining issues of our time, shaping not only how people stay informed but how they engage with society as a whole. In Aotearoa New Zealand, shifting habits, global political turbulence, and the rise of digital platforms have all played a role in eroding confidence in journalism.

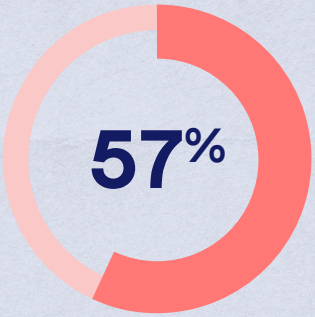
Recent research paints a clear picture: New Zealanders are still consuming large amounts of news, yet their trust in it is sliding. The sixth edition of JMAD's *Trust in News in New Zealand* report, authored by Dr Merja Myllylahti and Dr Greg Treadwell of AUT's School of Communication Studies, investigated why.

In 2025, "Trump fatigue" is now one of the key reasons 73% of New Zealanders say they actively avoid the news to some extent. For context, in Finland (where **trust in news is highest**), avoidance sits at only 21%.

Key Findings



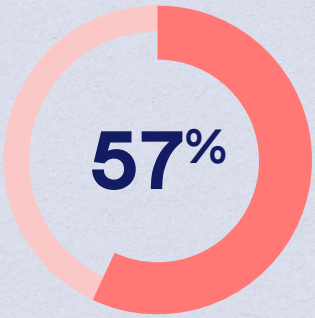
of New Zealanders access the news at least once a day



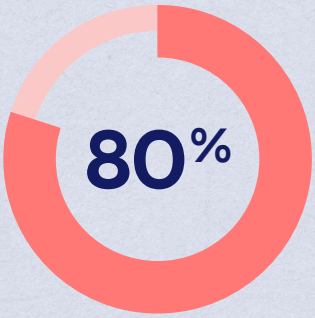
check in on the news more often



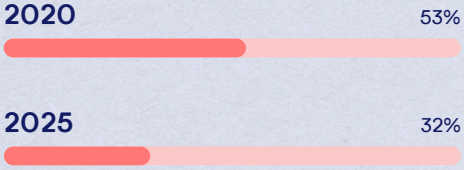
Search results are 10% better when local news sources are available



read, watch or listen to news for more than 20 minutes daily



of New Zealanders trust the news provided by their local media outlets

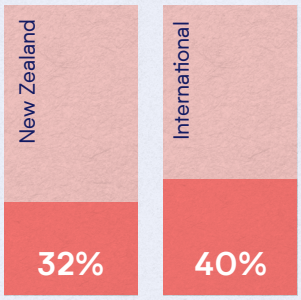


In 2025, New Zealanders' trust in news sat at just 32%, down from 53% in 2020.

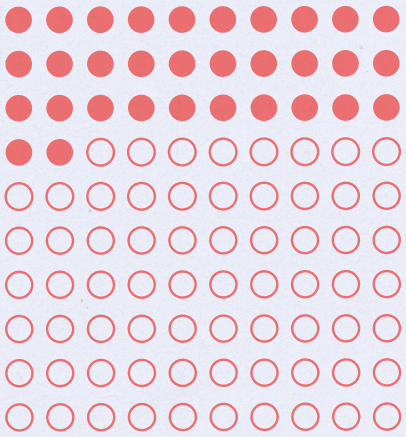
In 2025:



RNZ was perceived as the most trusted news brand, the Otago Daily Times was rated as second, and TVNZ and NBR received the third-highest trust scores.



General trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand (32%) was substantially lower than the 2024 Reuters Digital News Report's international average of 47 countries (40%).



Approximately 32% of New Zealanders say they trust **"most of the news most of the time."**

Source: Myllylahti, M. & Treadwell, G. (2025). Trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand 2025. AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD). https://www.jmadresearch.com/trust-in-news-in-newzealand

New Zealanders' level of trust in media was further scrutinised by the Broadcasting Standards Authority's (BSA) *Trust in News Media 2025* report, which showed that New Zealand's trust remained below international averages.

Tim Watkin, award-winning journalist and RNZ podcast executive, has drawn on research from New Zealand and around the world in his book, *How to Rebuild Trust in Journalism*, to confront the breakdown in trust between journalism and the public, examining the challenges faced by journalists in the digital age.

"We are refining and adding to our editorial strategy to ensure we remain focused on truthful and objective reporting, and that we rectify any errors as soon as practicable. Our reputation as a trusted media outlet is paramount."

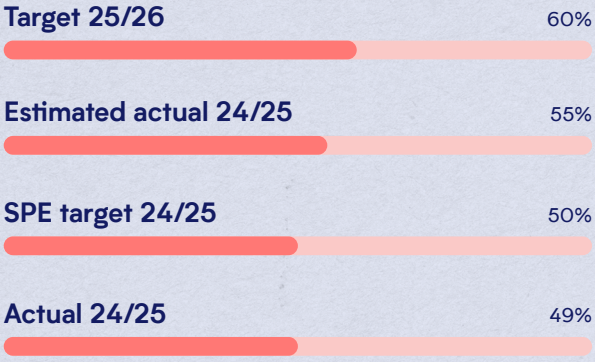
Radio New Zealand

Radio New Zealand's 2025-2026 Statement of Performance Expectations also provides a long-term SOI goal and 25/26 objective to 'Build trust with audiences' and **'Foster a strong national identity through trusted content.'**

RNZ has committed to focusing "even more tightly on providing information people can trust and making our editorial processes as transparent as we can."

Foster a strong national identity through trusted content

"Increase percentage of New Zealanders who agree RNZ is an organisation you can trust."



Source: Radio New Zealand

Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer 2025

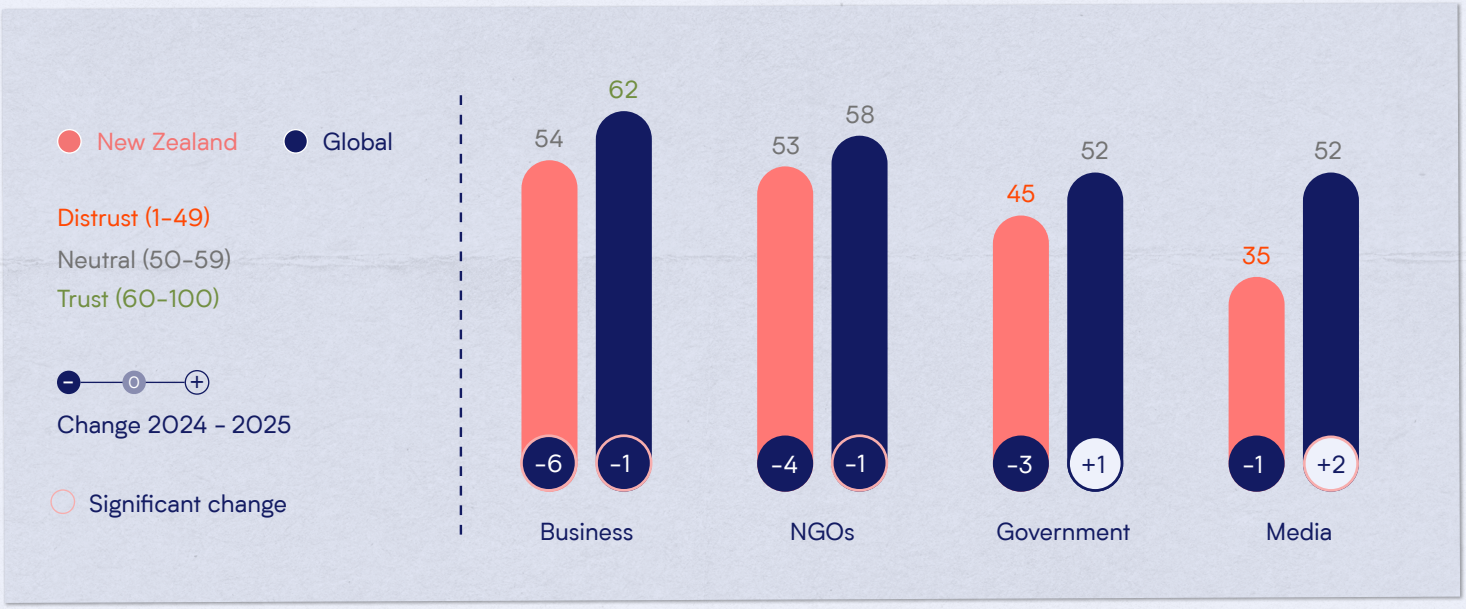
Trust vs Misinformation (OR) Disinformation

Trust is more than just a buzzword; it's a non-negotiable for Kiwis, but as the Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer reveals, there is a widening trust hierarchy occurring in New Zealand, with businesses now the most trusted institution ahead of media organisations. Although trust in New Zealand media specifically has only declined by one point, it comes at a time when global trust in media is rising. This suggests that local dynamics, rather than global trends, **are shaping audience sentiment.**

This gap also highlights a critical challenge for New Zealand media organisations, policymakers, and journalists alike to rebuild credibility. Initiatives, such as *Media Reform*, that focus on clearer standards, greater transparency, and a renewed commitment to accuracy are the first, much-needed, step towards that.

"The Trust Barometer shows only 19% of New Zealanders believe the next generation will be better off compared to today, with the global average sitting at 36%. There is also intense scepticism of government officials, business leaders and journalists with on average 61% reporting they worry about the leaders purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false, and 68% say it's becoming harder to tell if the news being reported was produced by a respectable source or an individual trying to deceive people."

Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer 2025



Public trust in news media

Key factors from BSA research on how to strengthen trust in New Zealand's news media:

Report with credible evidence

Trust is highest when news is supported by credible, cited evidence *(69% of respondents)*.

Ensure neutral, balanced reporting

Neutral reporting *(66%)* and presenting multiple views are key to public trust.

Provide in-depth, accurate coverage

In-depth reporting *(64%)* and prompt correction of mistakes *(63%)* build credibility.

Be transparent and accountable

Disclose funding, ownership, and correct errors openly to rebuild trust.

Separate news from opinion

Clearly label commentary, opinion, and sponsored content to avoid confusion.

Understand audience perspectives

Perceptions of bias are shaped by personal views; trust is easier to lose than regain.

Source: BSA, Public Trust in News Media

HOT TOPIC #2

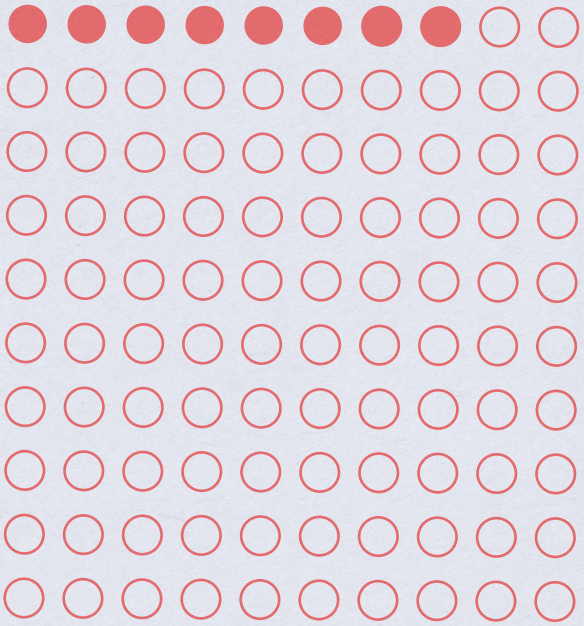
AI, search and the new rules of visibility

"Many major news media companies are flirting with the idea of AI while some have gone all the way. Some are openly using it to create and curate content, including headlines and summaries. Others still have guardrails around the creation of original content but are using it for research, transcription, data analysis, personalisation and social media moderation."

Jane Patterson
Director, Editorial Quality and Training, RNZ



of New Zealanders said they were comfortable consuming news produced by AI with some human oversight.



AI-Written Content Now Dominates 60% of News Articles

What It Means for Media in 2025

60% of news articles globally are now AI-generated, and this number is projected to increase.

57% of media companies use AI tools to automate parts of their content production (News Media Alliance, 2024).

62% of journalists believe AI can improve content quality but insist it should not replace human oversight (Reuters, 2023).

45% of global newsrooms are planning to fully integrate AI within the next five years (Pew Research Center, 2024).

20% of AI-driven content content has led to a 20% increase in engagement on platforms using AI for news delivery (Forrester, 2025).

Source: Pearl Lemon

New Zealand's AI Adoption: A Comprehensive Analysis in 2025

New Zealand's AI adoption surged in 2025, with

82–87%
of businesses and

69%
of consumers using AI tools for productivity, though trust remains a challenge.

Source: AI New Zealand

As AI reshaped search behaviour in 2025, it also rewrote the rules of discoverability for all indexed content, including news media. Traditional SEO has focused on ranking highly on search engine results pages (SERPs). That model still matters, but it is no longer sufficient on its own.

Two new concepts gained traction this year: Answer Engine Optimisation (AEO) and Generative Engine Optimisation (GEO) (Meyer, 2025). AEO focuses on optimising content for specific answer-led placements within search results, such as featured snippets, FAQs and "People Also Ask" panels. The goal is clarity and directness: content that can be easily extracted and presented as an answer.

GEO goes a step further. It focuses on making content trustworthy, attributable and discoverable within AI-generated summaries, both on SERPs and inside conversational tools such as chatbots. Where AEO prioritises structure, GEO prioritises credibility.

Early research suggests this credibility signal matters. Studies indicate that AI-generated answers are more likely to cite established media brands, treating journalistic sources as a proxy for trust. In effect, AI is reinforcing something PR has long understood: earned media coverage carries authority far beyond the moment of publication. **What has changed is scale.** AI systems are now amplifying that authority across countless queries, summaries and citations.

"AI Slop" — word of the year



Australia's Macquarie Dictionary's Word of the Year was 'AI Slop,' used to describe "low-quality content created by generative AI which often contains errors and is not requested by the user". Streem data backs this up with "Written by AI" also featuring heavily in the news media during 2025.

Throughout 2025:

"AI Slop" mentioned
243
times throughout 2025

"Written by AI" mentioned
274
times throughout 2025

(NZ Mentions across Print, Online, Radio, TV, Magazine, podcasts Jan 1 - Dec 31 2025)

HOT TOPIC #3

The power of local journalism

Local journalism is emerging as one of the most critical pillars of New Zealand's media ecosystem at a time when national newsrooms are shrinking, global platforms are reshaping attention, and trust in news continues to waver.

As large outlets consolidate and international content flows freely into local feeds, the stories that hold communities together risk slipping through the cracks.

Local newsrooms, often small, overworked, and deeply embedded in their regions, are uniquely positioned to counter that drift. **They offer context, accountability, and visibility** on issues that matter in people's daily lives: council decisions, school struggles, infrastructure failures, and community triumphs.

In an era where audiences increasingly question the relevance of traditional news, local journalism restores proximity and purpose.

Themes in NZ News Content on Local Journalism in 2025



Source: Streem Data

Local media outlets a trusted source of news

While JMAD's Trust in News survey showed only 33% of New Zealanders trusted news in general, a survey by the news industry lobby organisation New Zealand News Publishers Association (NPA) found "more than 80% of New Zealanders trust the news provided by their local media outlets."

Director of Public Affairs for the NPA, Andrew Holden, said the survey's high-trust result was not surprising **"given people respond more positively when they are asked about local newsrooms rather than a generic 'media'."**

"Much is made of declining trust in media as measured in other studies, but this shows that New Zealanders have a connection to their local newsrooms, they understand how important it is to have journalists on the ground reporting about their community — in good times and bad — and they want to see that work reflected in search and social media."

Andrew Holden,
Director of Public Affairs, NPA

Types of news New Zealanders are most interested in

Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in?



Source: NPA

Community credibility

The power of working within communities has never been more evident. When journalists and communicators build real relationships at the local level, they gain access to perspectives that national narratives often miss. These connections help to promote stories that resonate more strongly, represent more voices, and reflect the nuance of lived experience.

For PR and communications in Aotearoa New Zealand, engaging authentically with local media isn't just a distribution tactic; it's a strategic investment in credibility. Regionally-based reporters frequently become the trusted intermediaries between organisations and the public, and the quality of that relationship can determine whether information is received with interest, scepticism, or not at all. In communities where resources are stretched, the value of respectful, well-prepared engagement is amplified.

As New Zealand's media landscape continues to fragment, the role of local journalism will only grow more important. Audiences crave information that feels relevant and grounded, and research consistently shows that trust is higher when people recognise the reporters, outlets, and institutions behind the coverage. For communicators, this means shifting focus from national exposure to sustainable, community-centred engagement.

Supporting local news outlets, many of which are operated by some of New Zealand's most experienced journalists by offering access, clarity, context, and long-term partnership will strengthen not just individual stories but the resilience of New Zealand's media ecosystem as a whole. In a country defined by diverse regions and tight-knit communities, the future of meaningful storytelling will depend on the strength of these local relationships and the shared commitment to keeping community voices heard.

SuperGran

s media landscape continues to evolve amid rapid digital
es increasingly turning to online platforms and social media
. While traditional outlets such as print newspapers, radio,
ential, newsrooms are adapting their reporting models to

The "SuperGran" phenomenon shows that some of the country's most compelling stories don't originate in big newsrooms or major metros but in local papers deeply connected to the people they serve. It's a reminder that local journalism remains a powerful engine for storytelling, visibility, and national reach.*

*Good Local Media Ltd is an independent media company with 200,000+ readers across Waikato, King Country and Bay of Plenty.

The "SuperGran" story is a standout example of how local journalism can spark national attention and reinforce the value of reporting rooted in community.

When Cambridge grandmother Shirlee heroically chased down an alleged thief in her slippers, she chose to speak exclusively with the Cambridge News, trusting her local paper to tell the story with accuracy and heart. That decision paid off. What began as a community exclusive, secured by independently owned Good Local Media Ltd*. quickly ignited national interest. Major outlets across the country picked up the story, propelling it to viral status and driving more than half a million hits to the local news publication's website.



SuperGran Shirlee

Looking at the landscape

Navigating the next media shift

What's ahead in 2026?

Social media ban for Under-16s — will New Zealand follow in Australia's footsteps?

The growing influence of **"News Influencers"**

Misinformation in a new media environment

For PR and communications professionals, this potential shift isn't just a policy footnote. If social access for under-16s tightens, practitioners will need to rethink how they build awareness, educate, and engage younger audiences and their influencers (parents, teachers, community leaders).

Messaging may need to move toward more formal, vetted channels. Campaign tactics may prioritise partnerships with trusted institutions, and content strategies might evolve to ensure that when younger audiences *do* encounter messages, those messages are clear, compelling, and genuinely useful.

As regulations evolve, there must be a greater emphasis on credibility, age-appropriate storytelling, and cross-channel resilience in an environment where social media may no longer be the default pathway to the next generation.

What to look for in 2026?

#1-Social media ban

Australia's move toward banning social media for under-16s is already rippling across the region, and it's forcing the New Zealand media and communications sector to consider whether similar restrictions could be on the horizon.

If Australia sees early gains like reduced harm, improved wellbeing, or stronger public support, the political appetite here may shift quickly.

For the media landscape, such a ban would significantly reshape how young audiences access information, entertainment, and news. Social platforms currently act as one of the primary gateways for youth engagement, meaning any formal age restriction could fragment audience reach, redirect younger users toward alternative channels, and increase pressure on traditional media and schools to fill the information gap.

What to look for in 2026?

#2-The growing influence of news influencers

The rapid rise of news influencers is reshaping how New Zealanders discover, digest, and debate current events.

discover debate digest

These creators, some trained journalists, many not, have built highly engaged audiences by delivering fast takes, behind-the-scenes context, or unapologetically opinionated commentary on platforms where traditional media has struggled to gain traction.

Their appeal is obvious:

they're accessible, personality-driven, and often speak in a tone that feels more honest or relatable than a formal newsroom bulletin. As trust in traditional media continues to dip, more New Zealanders are turning to these independent voices for interpretation, not just information.

By 2026, the line between journalism, commentary, and entertainment will blur even further, forcing both audiences and regulators to confront uncomfortable questions: who gets to be **considered a news source**, and what responsibilities should they carry?

For New Zealand media organisations and communications professionals, the challenge won't just be keeping up—it will be redefining their role. Navigating the growing influence of news influencers will require a dual strategy: doubling down on trust-building practices while meeting audiences in the formats and spaces where influencers thrive. That might mean more transparent reporting, greater use of personality-driven storytelling, smarter collaborations, and a willingness to show the "workings" behind the journalism.

What to look for in 2026?

#3-Misinformation in a new media environment

Misinformation is thriving and media organisations and communications professionals are faced with the increasing and ongoing challenge of earning trust and credibility in a content-rich world. In the past, those who produced content had journalist standards to uphold. Fact-checking was part of the sub-editing process, and professional accountability helped separate fact from fiction (for the most part at least).

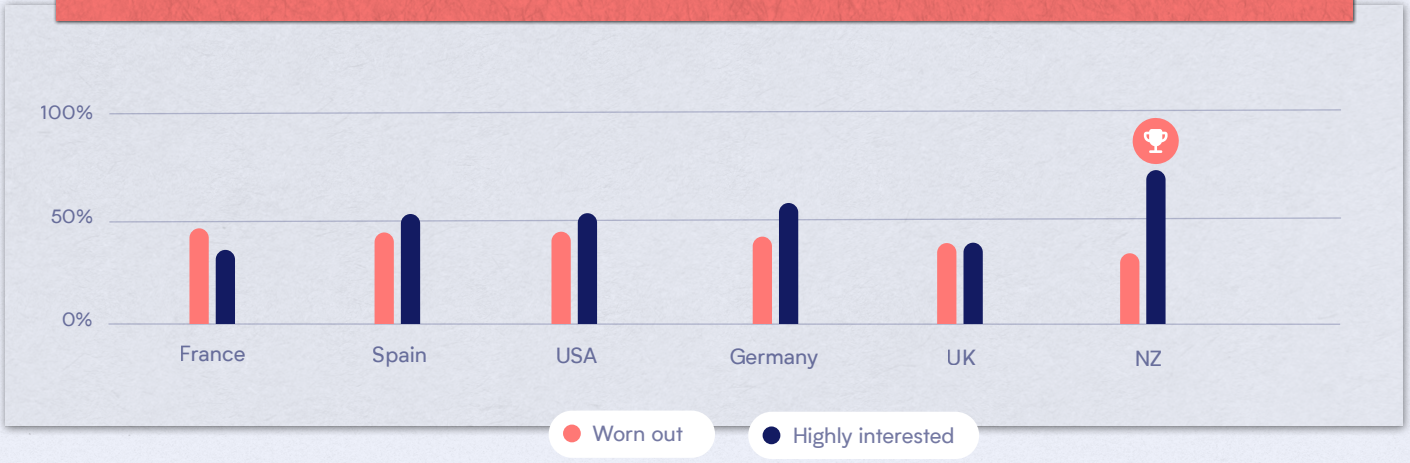
Today, those barriers exist only among those who still value the ethics of journalism. But as content platforms have made it increasingly easy for anyone to become a publisher with a LinkedIn page, Substack account, YouTube channel, or simply a smartphone with a decent signal, those professional accountability standards cease to exist.

Access isn't the issue; accuracy is.

And, when content goes live without policies, editorial standards, guidelines, or even a second opinion, misinformation is inevitable.

For PR practitioners, this presents an opportunity to become custodians of credibility, prioritising content that is concise, solutions-oriented, and anchored in clear public value, while applying editorial rigour even when platforms don't require it.

Those who are worn out/highly interested in news in selected markets



Source: Data - JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2024

The 2026 media landscape: what PR needs to know

Earned media matters, arguably more than ever. In a fragmented and AI-driven media environment, it remains one of the most powerful signals of credibility, trust, and authority. But how PR delivers that value is changing.

Here's what practitioners need to understand, and adapt to, in 2026.

1. AI is a priority audience

There's a new audience in town, and it's not to be ignored. Generative AI tools are increasingly shaping how information is discovered, summarised, and, most importantly, trusted. That means, PR professionals must continue to think beyond traditional SEO and focus on GEO — Generative Engine Optimisation. Why? Because content is no longer consumed solely by humans. AI models feed off citations and favour authoritative commentary in reputable outlets.



Top Tip

In 2026, visibility is as much about being referenced as it is about being read.

2. Authenticity reigns supreme

If there's one thing that the rise of AI has taught us over the past 12+ months, it's that interaction, connection, and conversation are more valuable than ever before. What cuts through the flood of content we are now all exposed to is not volume but genuine access and insight. Journalists are prioritising trusted relationships that offer expertise, clarity, and responsiveness.



Top Tip

In 2026, PR's value lies in enabling informed journalism by way of real access to people, data, and perspectives.

3. Measure authority

The days of measuring success by coverage volume alone are over. Think quality, not quantity, although we all still love it when our stories go viral. The focus needs to be on authority-led metrics: the quality of outlets, consistency of narrative, prominence of spokespeople, and visibility of trusted sources.



Top Tip

In 2026, the goal isn't to be found everywhere, but to be present where credibility is built.

4. Make it easier for newsrooms to say yes

New Zealand's media sector continues to operate under tight financial and resourcing pressures, which means journalists are expected to deliver more for less. As PR professionals, providing 'ready-to-run' assets, from well-trained media spokespeople to unique story angles, supporting visuals to robust data, will further enable accurate, timely news stories that audiences can trust.



Top Tip

In 2026, content that can be published quickly, accurately and with confidence will achieve greater reach.

5. Put local media where it belongs... in the centre

Local media is experiencing a quiet but powerful resurgence, so ignore it at your peril. Local, community and regional news outlets produce stories that hold weight; stories that feel relevant, trusted, and real to readers.



Top Tip

In 2026, local media isn't a fallback; it's where meaningful stories begin.

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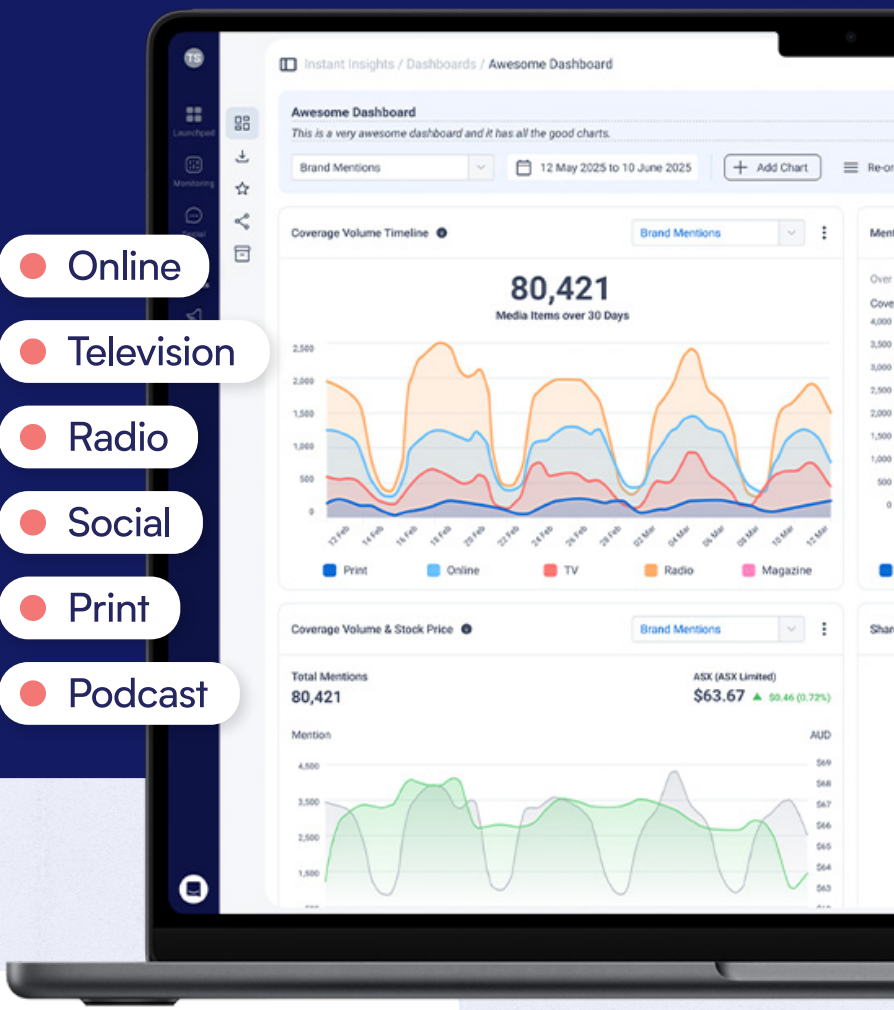
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