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PULSAR*

TikTok Journalism

The platform's impact on news audiences

Short-form video platforms: the new newsrooms?

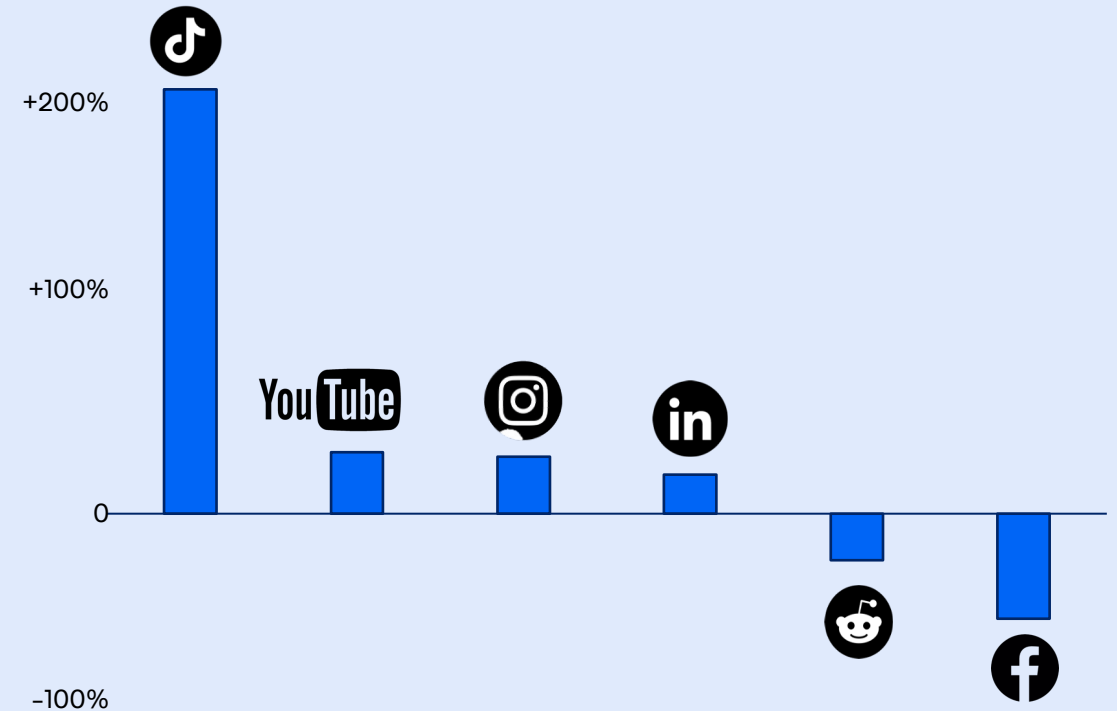
Journalism isn't dying – but it is changing.

As the popularity of printed papers and hourly TV and radio broadcasts dwindle, news reporting has evolved with the changing times, moving with its audiences to new formats. For many in the digital era, this means vertical video – easily accessed and shared across social networks.

The numbers show how short-form video has transformed the ways in which news is consumed, created, and comprehended by audiences. In 2024, mentions of TikTok as a news source are up by 207% (and 28% on Instagram) compared to 2020.

What does this mean for comms teams tasked with working in these formats to gain press coverage and boost awareness? In this report, we'll analyse the modern media landscape – one now resized to portrait mode.

'I read this on...': Where do audiences say they get their news?



A global comparison of the share of voice growth rate among social platforms related to news consumption behaviour on X (2020 vs. 2024). Source: Pulsar TRAC

The growing public & media interest in TikTok journalism

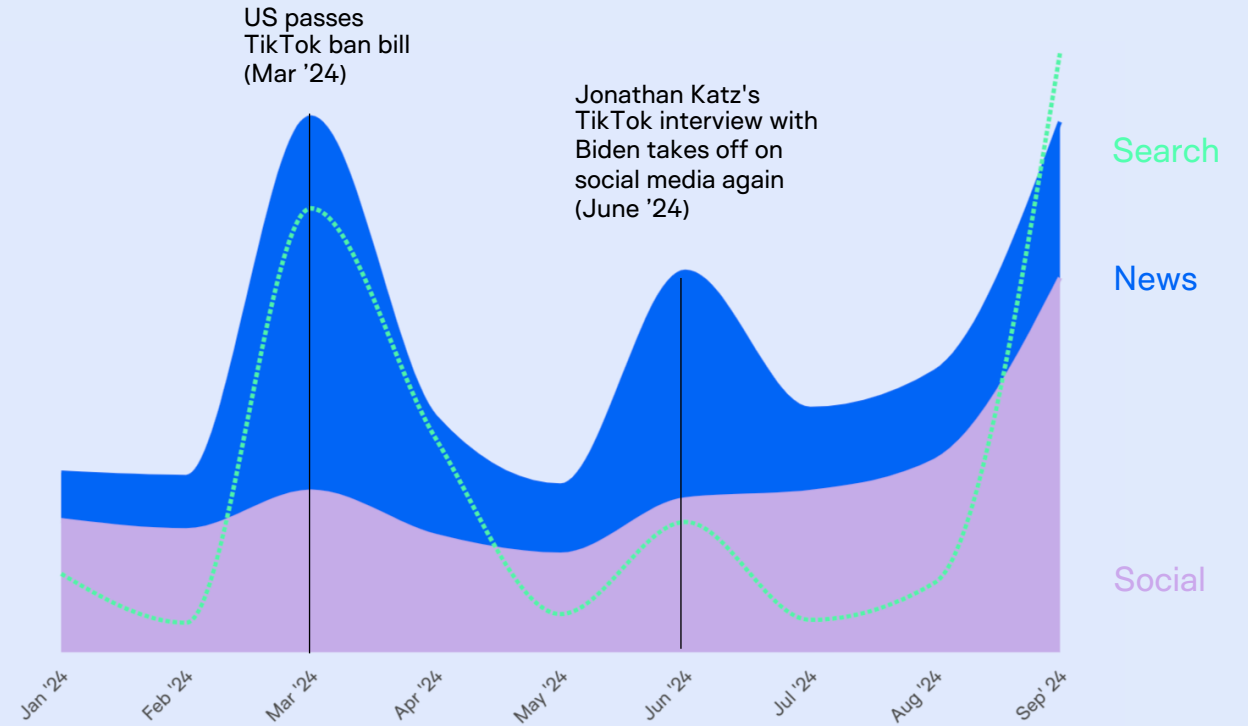
It's instructive to view how the conversation around TikTok and journalism has changed over time. Whereas initially it focused on journalism *about* TikTok, it has shifted to conversations about journalism *on* TikTok.

As just one example, independent journalist Jonathan M. Katz's TikTok interview with President Biden went viral, making waves on social and in mainstream media. Viewers laud Katz's investigative approach while calling out politicians and 'traditional' media for their lack of accountability.

This report examines what the move to video means for news consumption and the news cycle by tracking global top news accounts on vertical news platforms like TikTok from 1 January to 20 October 2024.

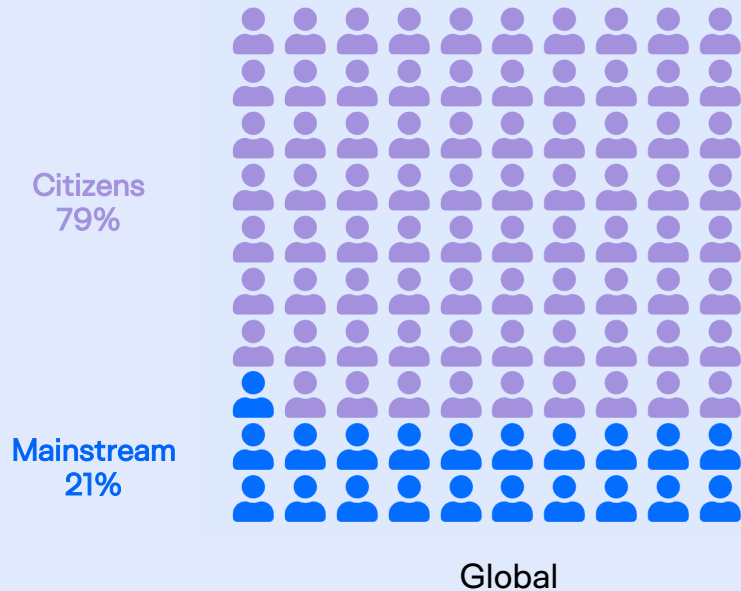
Read on for...

- ◆ How, and why, interest in TikTok journalism has grown so quickly
- ◆ The most influential voices and the audiences they attract
- ◆ What TikTok journalism means for 'hard news', including elections and global politics

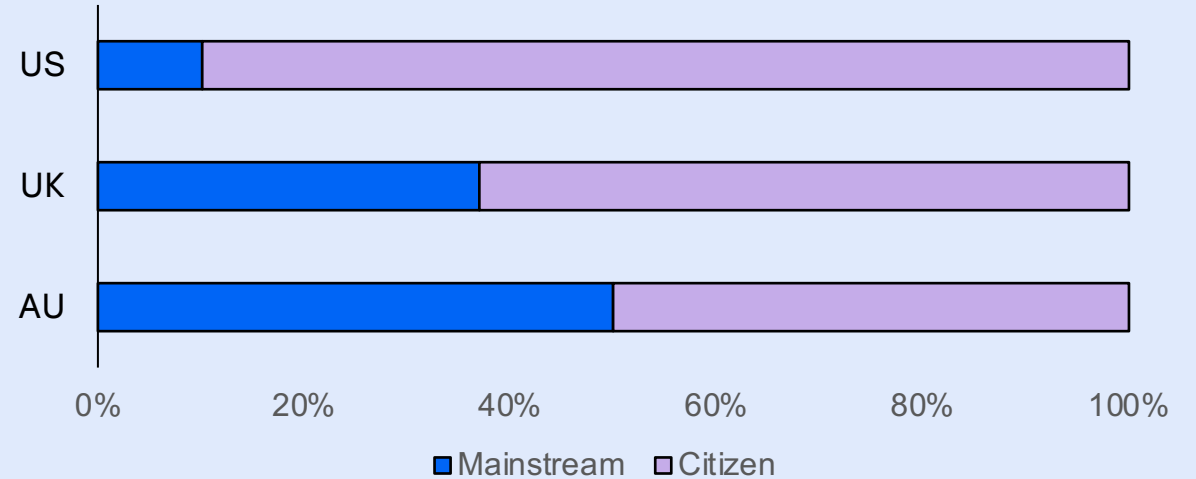


Volumes of social and news associated with TikTok Journalism across the globe, normalised, Jan 2020 – Sept 2024, Source: Pulsar TRENDS & Google Trends

Out of Broadcasting House and into digital spaces: TikTok news is driven by independent 'citizen' journalists



Unlike on the printed page, journalists with staff roles at media outlets aren't automatically the most 'read' on vertical video platforms. Instead, independent 'citizen' journalists, with no set publisher or organisational affiliation, are gaining the majority of impressions and follower counts across the world. This is particularly true in the US, where individual personality can drive follower counts and loyalty, but also in the UK.



Percentage of mainstream news outlets and citizen journalists in TikTok Journalism conversation between 1 Jan – 20 Oct 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

This could be expected for the UK audience, considering [decreased public confidence](#) in mainstream media over the last few years, and the – likely unrelated, but still impactful – increase in [parasocially-charged trust](#) in [individual influencers](#). For PRs getting started on media outreach for a campaign, should you be targeting big-name publishers with your video-ready content, or branch out, and consider independent journalists to reach wider audiences?

Top TikTok journalism posts in the UK

There's no doubt that established mainstream media outlets, like BBC News and The Sun, have been successful in their move to short-form news formats. Both are busy racking up the most impressions on TikTok in the UK news scene. However, their follower growth is showing signs of saturation – they appear to have found their audiences. In comparison, individual influencers

are netting new followers by going beyond the traditional 'facts only' news delivery of big outlets. 'Citizen' creators add extra commentary and opinion that mainstream news organisations are often unable to, utilising a personality-driven lighter touch and quirkier editing, mixing coverage of entertainment alongside 'hard news'.

Another reporting genre gaining dedicated followers on TikTok – as it does in national and regional print across the country – is sport. A significant number of football fans are now engaging with updates and opinion on their chosen team via video platforms. Content that maps onto community thrives online.

The Sun
2.6M followers

Keir Starmer mistakenly calls for 'return of the sausages' instead of Israeli hostages

The Prime Minister was speaking at the Labour party conference
#keirstarmer #pm #sausages #labour

Provocative news
167.6k engagements

Dylan Page
13.4M followers

Shocking New Details!

What do you guys think about this?

Funny news edits
224k engagements

theathleticfc
236.2k followers

similarly to

For the second year running, Chelsea have started a Premier League season without a front of shirt sponsor

Sport news alerts
149k engagements


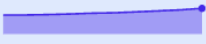



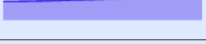

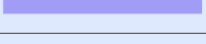

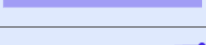

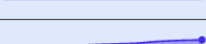





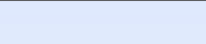
Who are the most influential UK voices in TikTok journalism?

On the established media organisations side, heavy hitters including ITV News, Sky News, and BBC News are at the top when it comes to viewership and engagement on TikTok. But citizen journalists are close on their tails.


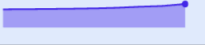

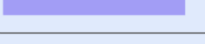

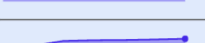

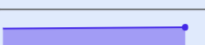

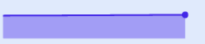

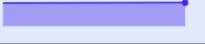

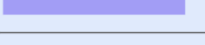

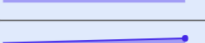



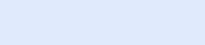
Among UK news influencers, Dylan Page, AKA 'News Daddy' stands out, with the largest and fastest-growing audience. His success can be attributed to his consistency, alongside his lighter approach to reporting, posting two to three

times a day. His overlaying of extra commentary on existing news footage provides an additional element for viewers in search of information on world events. With no official publishing house to answer to, this influencer has the freedom to share opinions and build his following among like-minded audiences.

mainstream

	Account	Social Impressions	Followers	Followers over time
	itvnews	4,432,232,346	3.7M	
	skynews	1,580,901,055	6.7M	
	bbcnews	1,469,293,560	4.5M	
	thesun	1,014,513,233	2.4M	
	goalglobal	1,008,565,975	6M	
	bbcspot	796,208,300	2.5M	
	gbnews	622,718,438	1.3M	
	c4news	570,051,617	1.6M	
	dailymailuk	45,897,012	1.2M	

Citizen

	Account	Social Impressions	Followers	Followers over time
	dylan.page	3,713,960,179	13.5M	
	darealestm1ne	99,556,651	48.2k	
	_katie_hopkins_	41,481,746	27.1k	
	shetalkscars	8,195,751	217.5k	
	matta_of_fact	7,340,378	1.3M	
	dr_idz	3,374,744	1.9M	
	flynn_castles	1,223,424	1.5M	
	thatgingerfella1	864,607	942.7k	
	sophiasmithgaler	631,862	550k	
	haveyoursaynow	422,033	24.4k	

The most influential mainstream and citizen accounts across the globe on TikTok between 7 Jan – 16 Oct 2024. Social impressions are calculated based on the total views, likes, and shares on TikTok. Source: Pulsar TRAC

Mainstream vs. independent journalists: Different takes on different topics

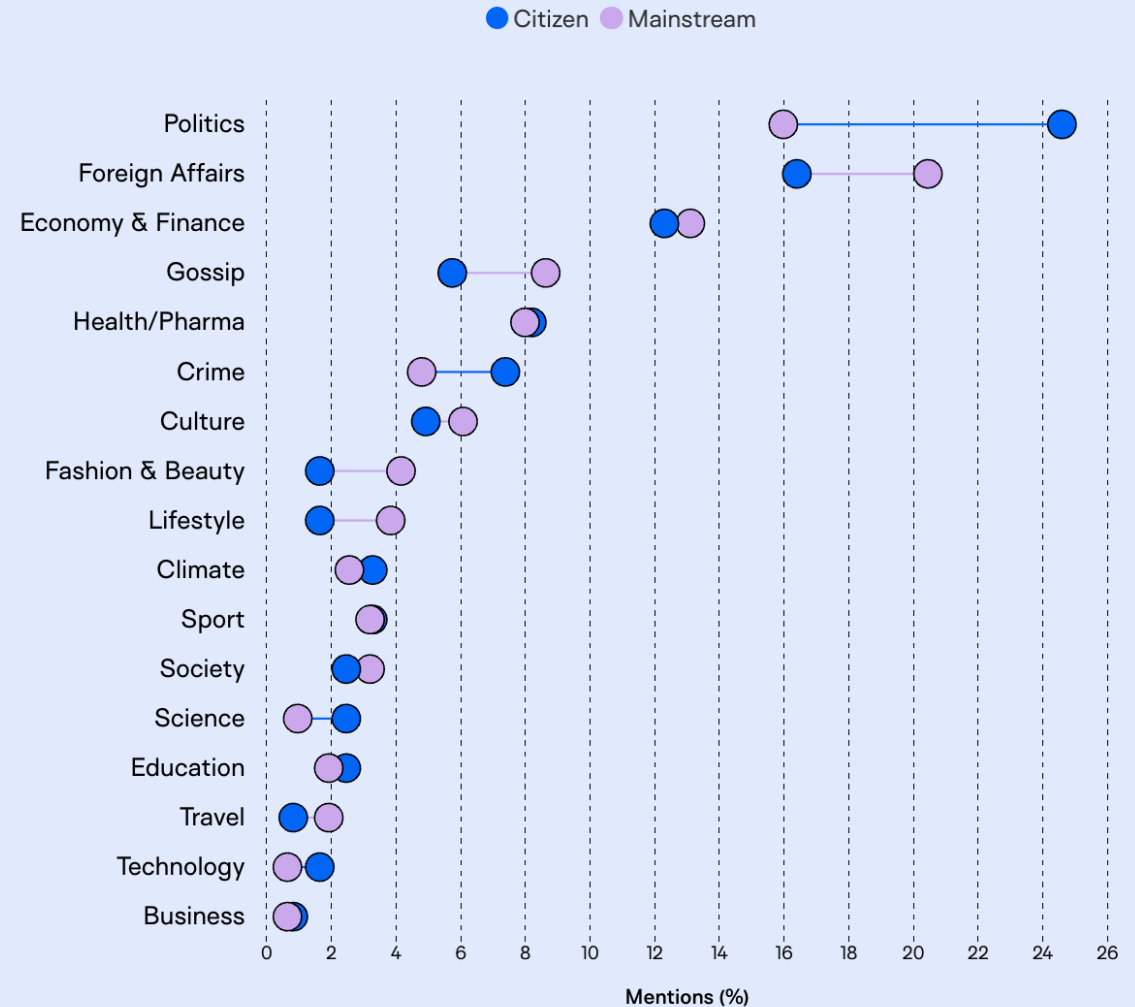
The differences in engagement with established media organisations and citizen journalists isn't just down to audience trust or editing style.

The topics they each cover are different, and reveal how each form of journalism is developing in the platform era. It can also indicate where you should be targeting your comms and outreach.

From looking at the data in UK, mainstream media TikTok outlets largely focus on gossip, foreign affairs, and sports as their topics. In comparison, citizen content creators more often address politics, the economy, and global issues.

In times where established outlets are [criticised](#) for the stories they don't cover, citizen journalists lead the way in covering underreported crises, such as global conflict and the cost-of-living, offering concise narratives that resonate with viewers looking for quick and digestible information and insight.

Perspectives often overlooked are included here, with multilingual content created for UK immigrant communities underserved by traditional media. In this way, short-form news can democratise information, empowering audiences to engage with important issues in ways, and places, that work for them.

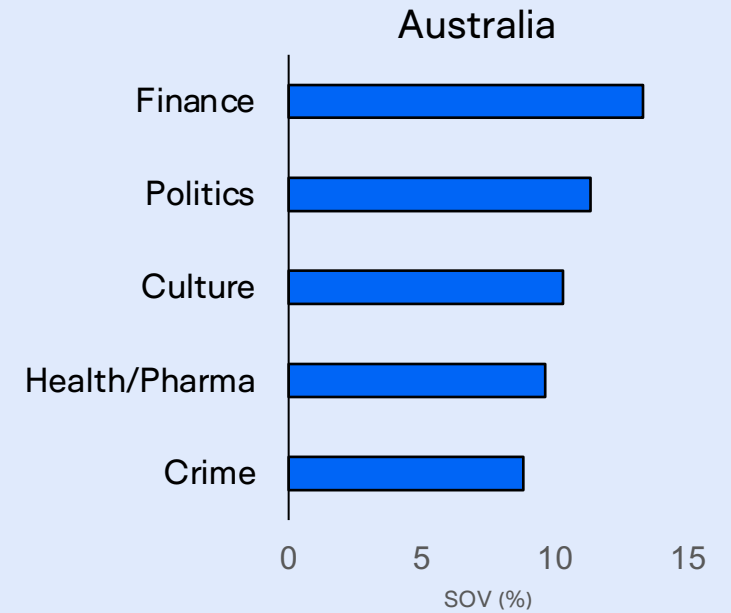
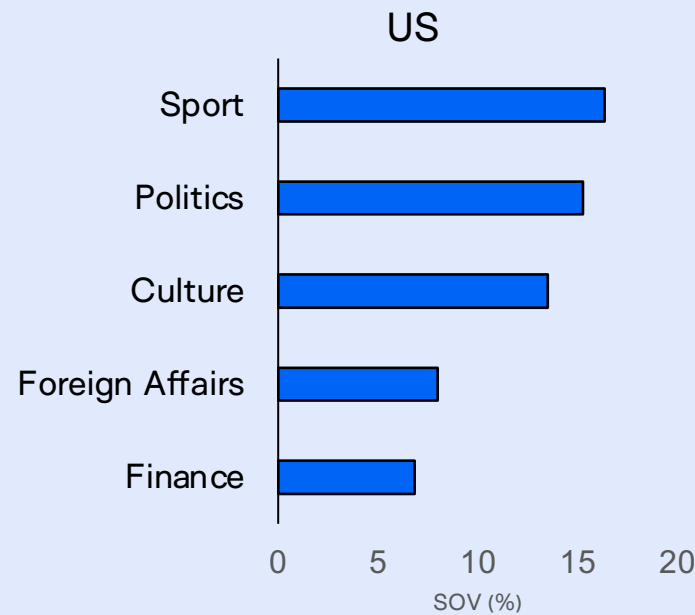
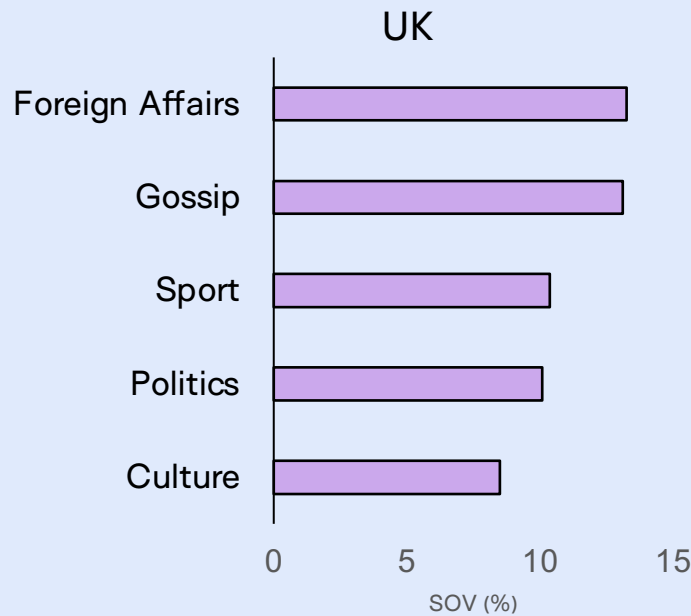


Top topics discussed by mainstream news outlets and citizen journalists on TikTok between 1 Jan - 20 Oct 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

How UK audiences differ from other regions on what they like to watch

For UK audiences, foreign affairs is number one. Entertainment topics, like celebrity gossip and sports also dominate, reflecting a public appetite for lighter content alongside hard-hitting news. Tabloid stories about royalty and celebrities are sought out alongside football news – all easily accessible and enjoyed while scrolling through For You pages.

The UK audiences' appetite for this blend of politics and culture is echoed on the platform internationally, as users seek to engage with important social issues in digestible formats. The dynamic nature of TikTok journalism allows for diverse voices and real-time commentary to reach audiences across the globe, making it an ideal space for discussion of challenging topics alongside 'fluffier' content.

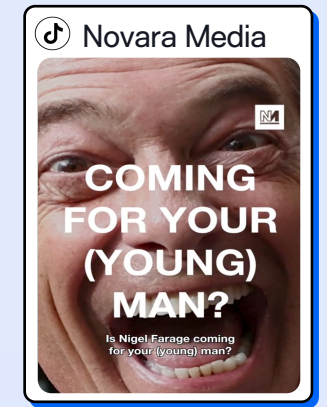
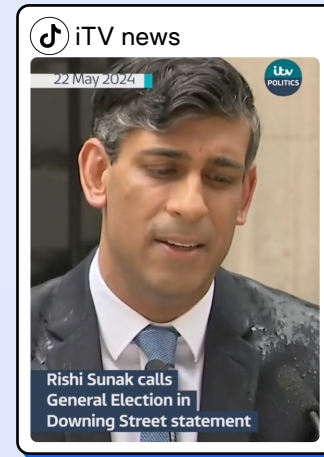


Topic breakdown covered by mainstream and citizen accounts on TikTok across the US, UK, and Australia from 7 January to 17 October 2024. Source: Pulsar TRAC

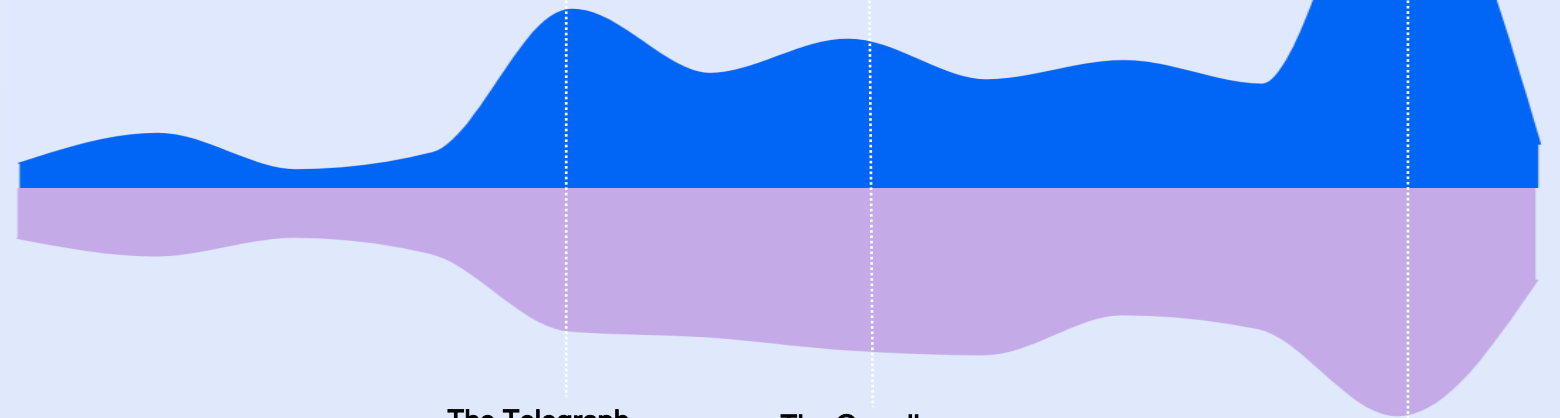
Case study: UK General Election 2024

The most popular content related to the UK General Election on TikTok didn't come from individual content creators offering fresher formats and upfront takes, but from the already established press publishers, like ITV News. Newer media companies including Novara Media also took a significant slice of the engagement – offering a more left-leaning take on political reporting.

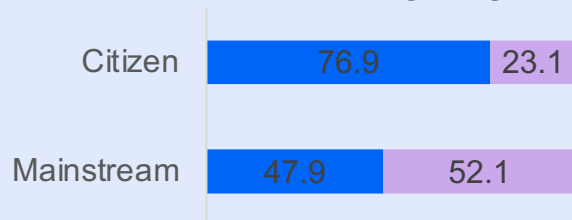
Where personality came back in was in the focus of the content – Reform UK leader Nigel Farage was a key focus in political content on TikTok. His often shocking, and very shareable, statements proved ideal for the shorter format, even when he wasn't the person sharing the video in question, with his followers (and haters alike) interacting with content centred around his successful election to parliament.



TikTok
Mainstream news



■ Left-leaning ■ Right-leaning



The Telegraph

Why Rishi Sunak had to go bold and call an election now (May 22)

The Guardian

Starmer and Sunak clash over taxes, the NHS and immigration in head-to-head TV debate – as it happened (June 4)

BBC

Rishi Sunak accepts responsibility for historic Tory defeat (Jul 4)

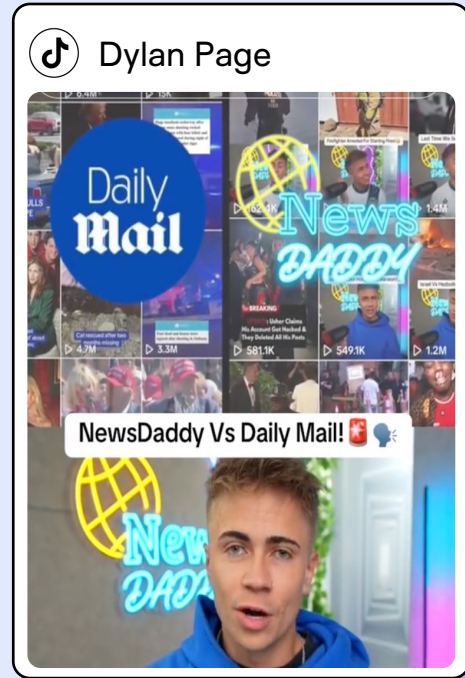
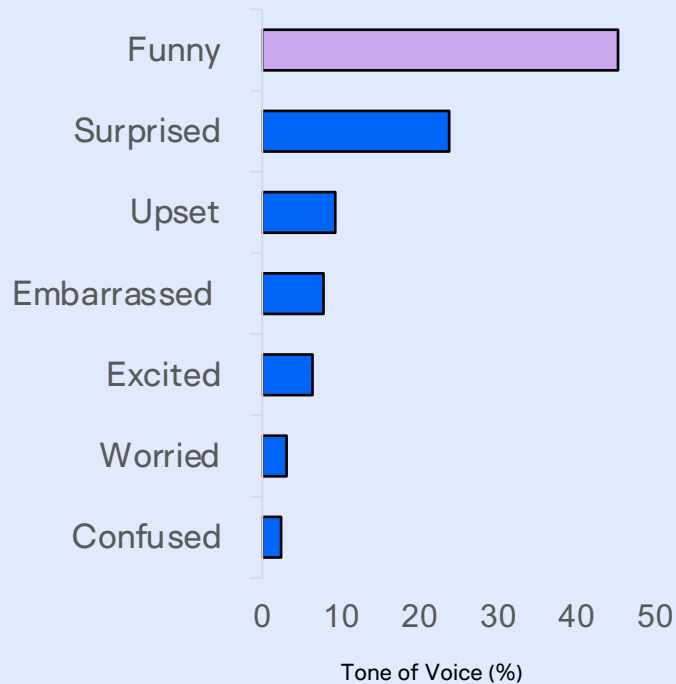
News as entertainment and personal branding

The unique mix of influencer and reporter that platforms like TikTok can bestow on creators makes entertaining as important as informing for getting engagement. Examining the UK news conversation shows that nearly half of content has humorous framing – personality-driven content works.

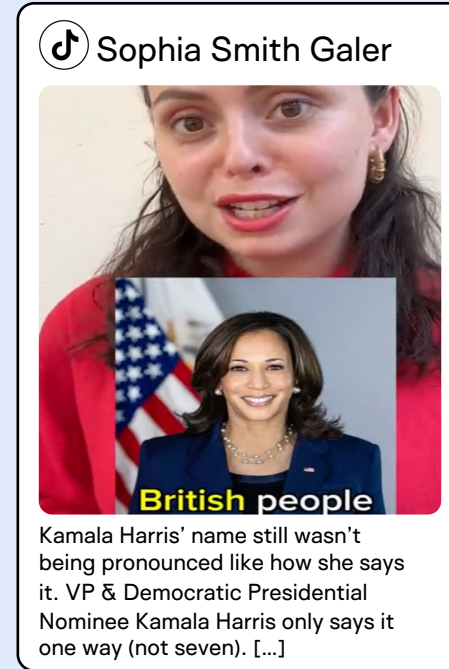
Smith Galer – who regularly speaks at industry events on TikTok's impact on journalism – focuses on education to foster a connection with her audience. She credits TikTok as gifting journalism the 'power to reach people who'll find it empowering'.

Even figures from 'traditional' media, like Max Foster of CNN, are pivoting to TikTok, leveraging their careers with an extra personal touch to shape the news narrative.

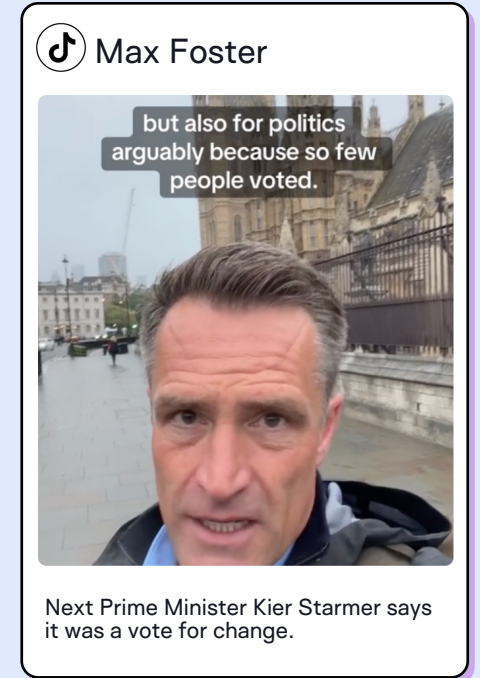
Want to connect with new audiences, too? It's time to join them on TikTok.



Followers: 13.4M
Focus: News / Reporting
Content type: Storytelling



Followers: 550k
Focus: Language News
Content type: Education



Followers: 1.2M
Focus: News / Opinions
Content type: Gatekeeper

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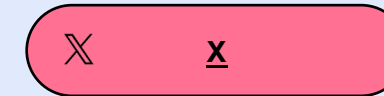
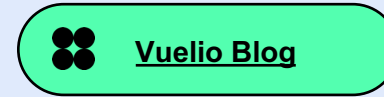
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