



The 2022 NYU SPS / PRWeek

# Attitudinal Survey of PR Professionals

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# OBJECTIVES

To learn more about the values and motivations of PR professionals, together with their perspectives on the profession and its practitioners.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Division of Programs in Business

INTEGRATED MARKETING &  
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# Key Insights and Implications



## 1 Are PR professionals too progressive for their target audiences?

PR professionals are significantly more “progressive” than the US population—including when it comes to issues relating to politics, economics, public safety, and society. What are the implications for how PR practitioners design campaigns aimed at the general population, and is this a problem for the profession?



## 2 Does PR have a PR problem?

PR practitioners believe people have a largely negative view of the profession in terms of its value, its ethics and respect for PR professionals. If so, what can PR do to rehabilitate the image of its own profession?



## 3 PR demands skills in both creativity and business acumen.

PR practitioners think that “creativity” and “storytelling ability” are the profession’s most valuable skills. However, these are closely followed by “the ability to work with others” and “client management skills.” Is this perfect mix really what it takes to succeed in PR today?



## 4 Are PR professionals valued in the C-suite?

PR professionals believe they bring significant and unique strategic value, especially for executive-level clients. Is this being recognized more broadly by CMOs and other members of the C-Suite, or does PR still struggle to be heard?



DETAILED FINDINGS



1 PR practitioners have more “progressive” attitudes than the general US population.

In terms of political ideology, PR practitioners of all ages are far more likely to self-identify as “progressive” (68%) than the general US population (26%) and far less likely to identify as “conservative” (7%) than the US population (34%).

PR practitioners also rate themselves consistently more “progressive” on political, economic, social and safety issues than the general US population.

**SOCIAL ISSUES**

The greatest gap between PR professionals and the general population is on social issues where 45% of professionals said they were “very” progressive (5 on a 5-point scale), while only 14% of general population identified this way.

**45% vs. 14%**

professionals said they are “very progressive”      of the general population identified this way

**SAFETY ISSUES**

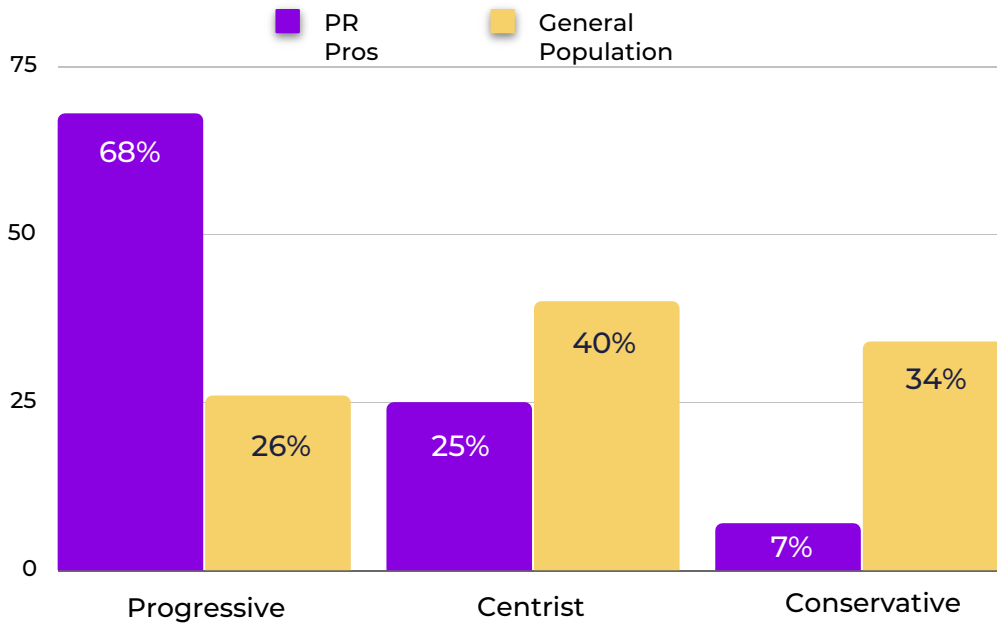
The narrowest gap was on safety, where 20% of professionals said they were “very” progressive vs. 11% of the general population.

**20% vs. 11%**

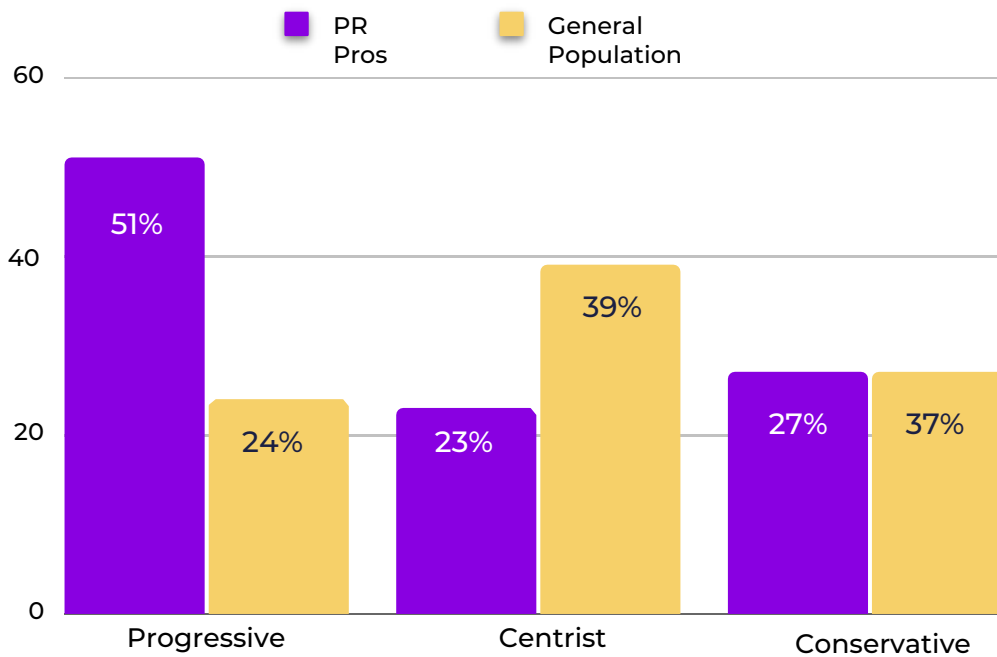
professionals said they are “very progressive”      of the general population identified this way

Additionally, PR practitioners claim to value “social good” significantly more highly than the general population, together with “community” and “the environment.”

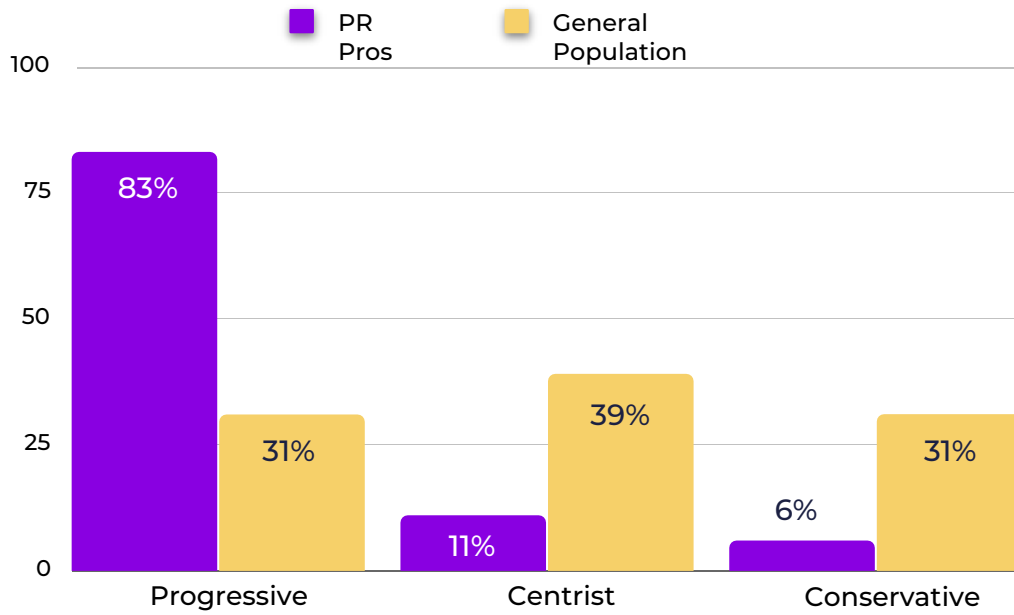
## Political Ideology



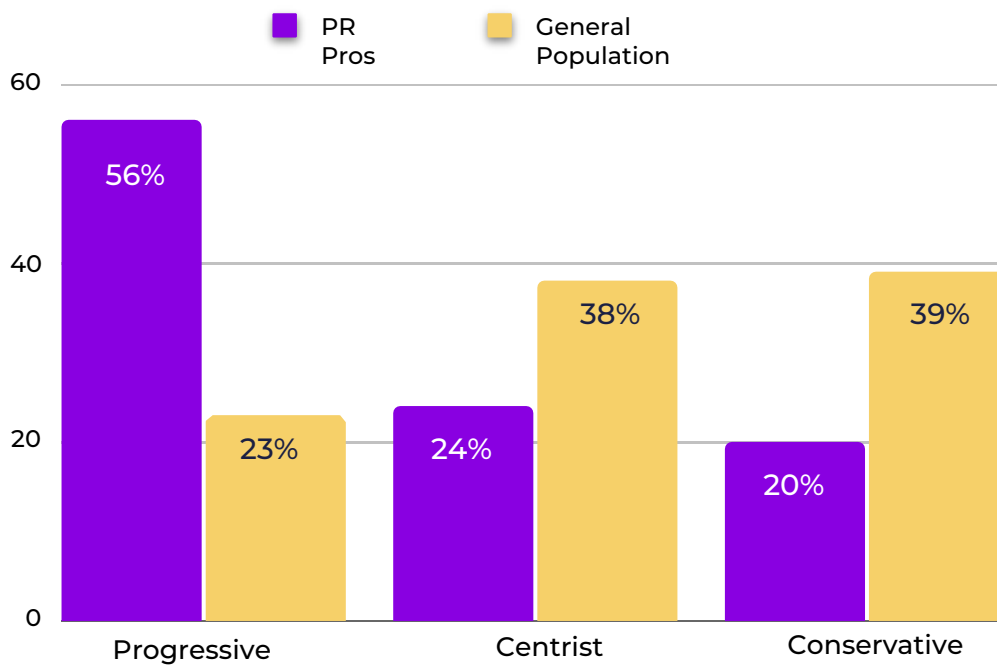
## Economic Issues



## Social Issues



## Safety Issues

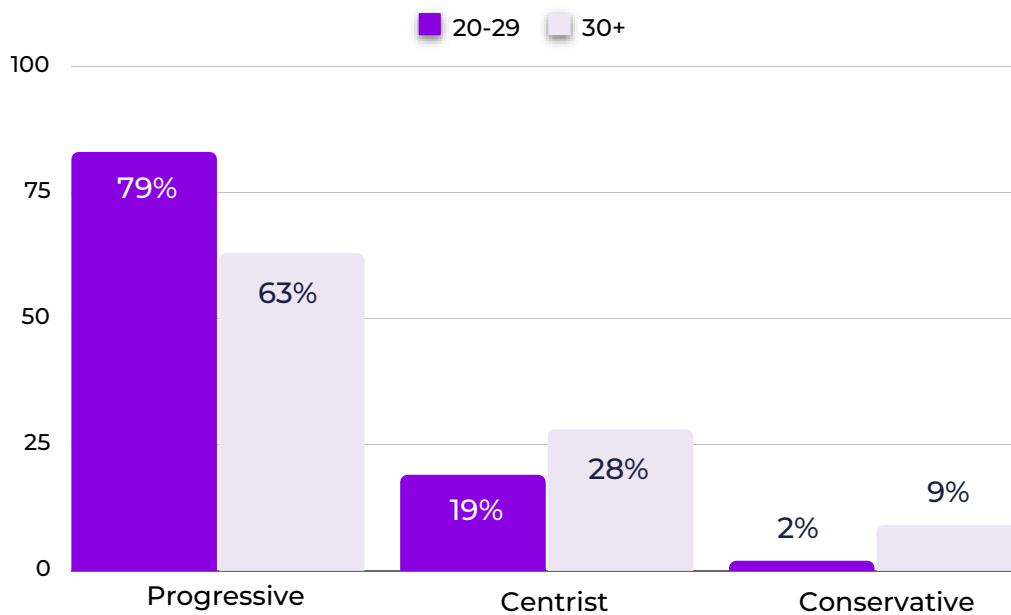


An age segmentation among PR practitioners showed that the youngest practitioners (20-29 years old) were significantly more progressive than their older PR peers in terms of their political ideology, as well as their position on economic, social and safety issues.



We can speculate whether this is a function of youthful idealism, or a sign that the profession will trend even more progressive as younger practitioners rise in the ranks.

## Political Ideology PR practitioners



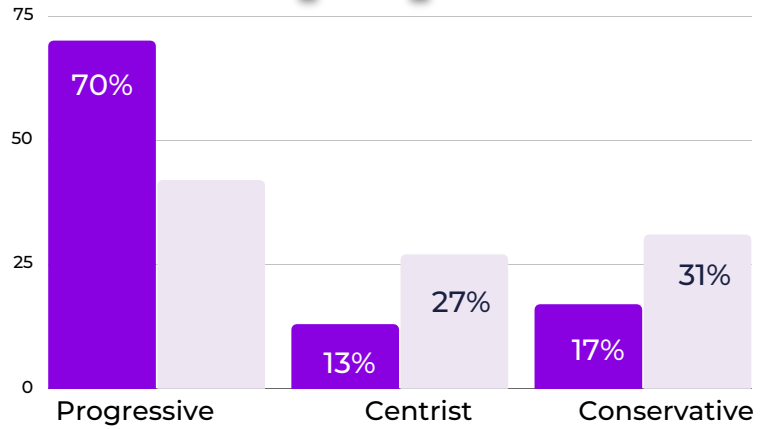




### Economic Issues

PR Practitioners

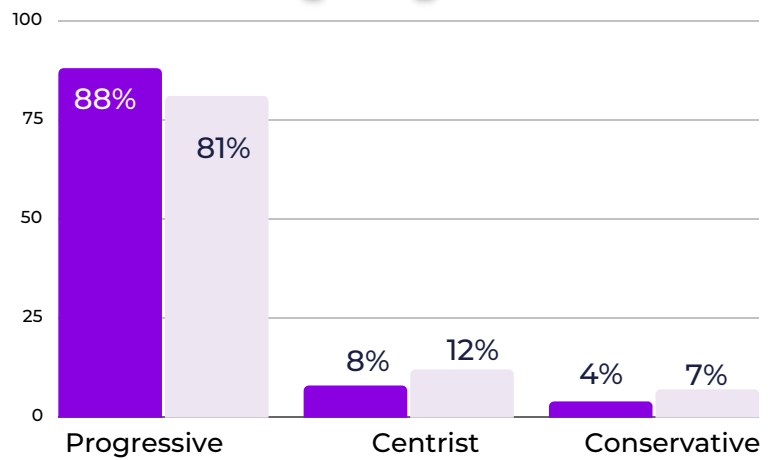
■ 20-29 ■ 30+



### Social Issues

PR Practitioners

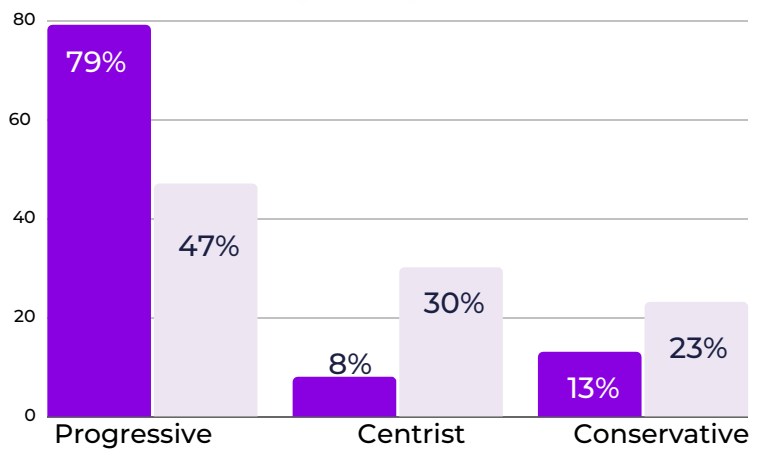
■ 20-29 ■ 30+



### Safety Issues

PR Practitioners

■ 20-29 ■ 30+





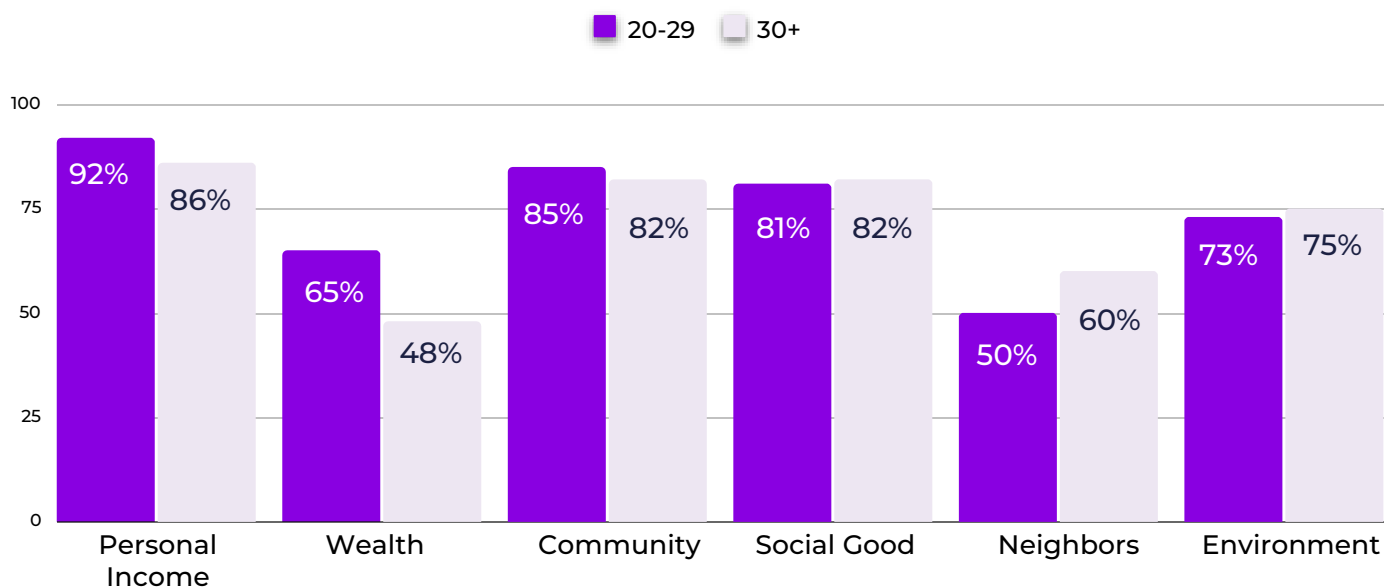
# 2

In terms of what is important to them, PR practitioners prioritize the well-being of others as well as their own individual professional and personal needs.

Overall, PR practitioners rate “personal income” as more important to them than any other dimension studied. However, they rate “social good” and “community” second and third, followed by “environment.”

“Wealth” is of lowest importance among the six dimensions studied except for the youngest in the profession. The 20-29 year olds rate “wealth” as significantly more important (65%) than do their older peers (48%).

## “How important are the following to you?”



# 3 “Being strategic” is by far the most powerful motivator for choosing a profession in PR – while “working with social media” is the least motivating.

PR is sometimes seen as largely executional and tactical. However, not for practitioners, who say that “being strategic” is the most powerful motivator for them to work in PR.

“Earning a good salary” came in as the second most important motivator, followed by “being creative.”

In keeping with the “idealist” side of the profession, the “opportunity to make a positive impact on the world” came in at number four.

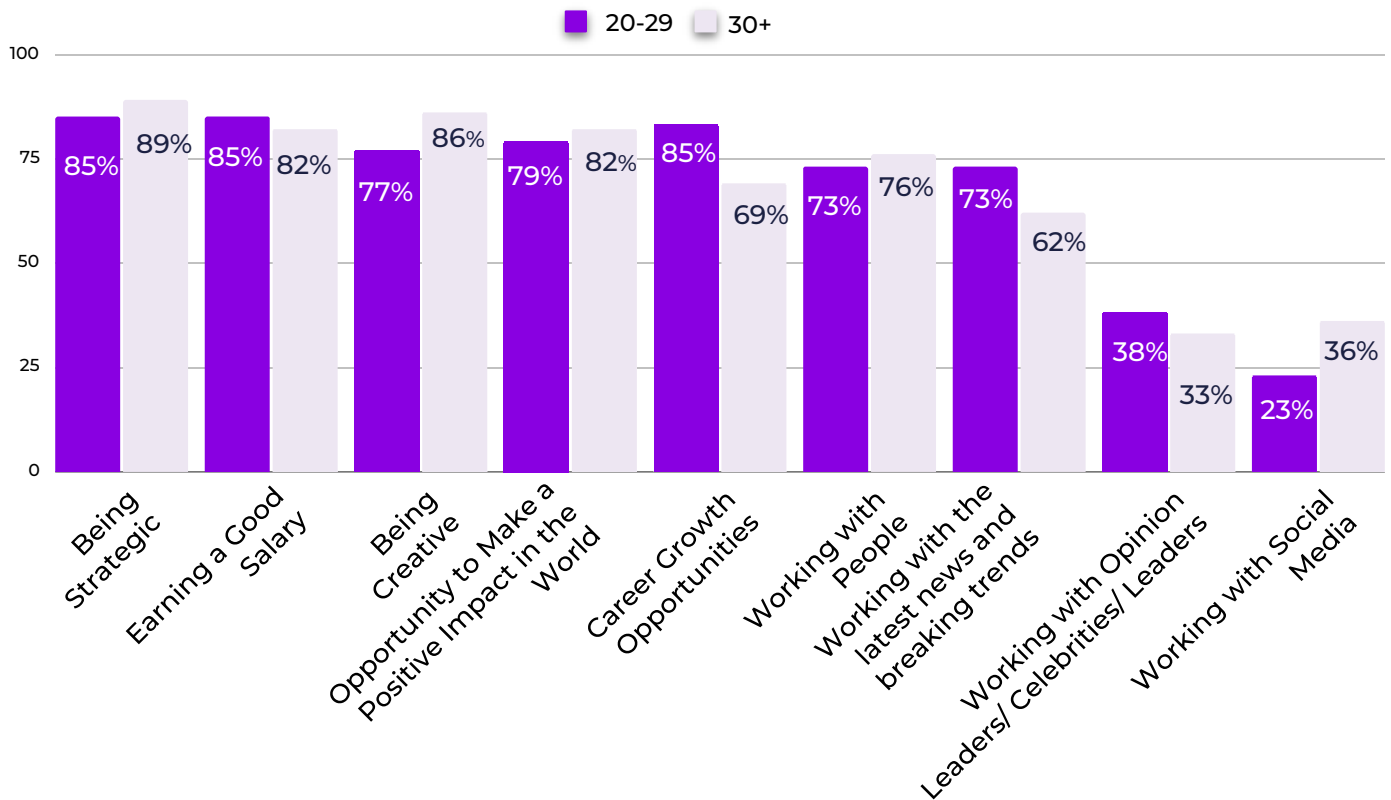
The least motivating elements of the profession were “working with people,” “working with the latest news and breaking trends,” “working with social media,” and “working with celebrities and influencers.”

This is surprising for a profession strongly associated with networking and influence. It suggests that these elements of PR are not as aspirational for students or practitioners as they are thought to be.

- The youngest PR practitioners (20-29) were no more motivated by working with celebrities and influencers, than their older peers, and much less motivated by working with social media.



## What Motivates You to Be a PR Professional?



Younger practitioners are also significantly less likely to think the industry provides practitioners with the technology they need to do their jobs.

This could be a source of job dissatisfaction. Offering the opportunity to work with cutting-edge technology may give companies an advantage in recruitment and retention of the best young talent.

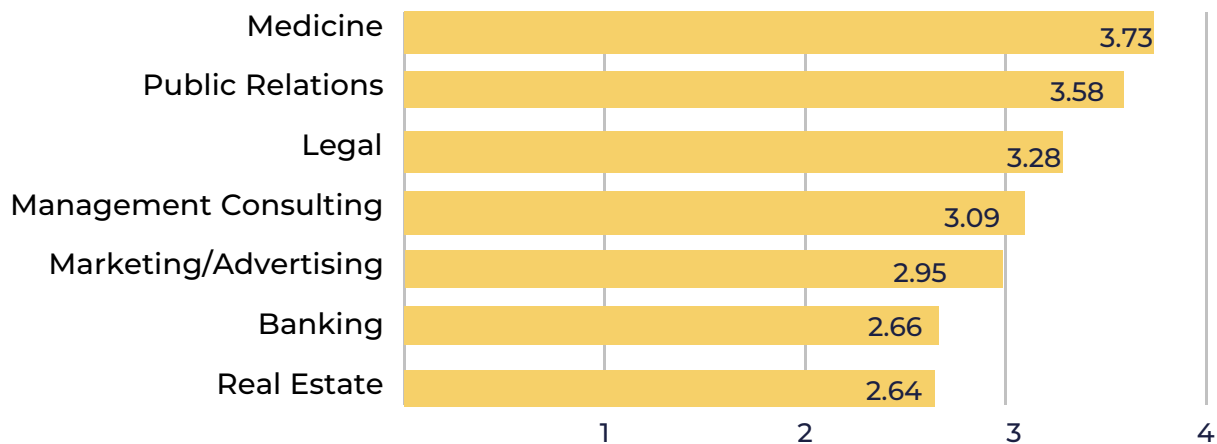




4

PR professionals across all age groups rate PR highly in terms of its professional ethics, second only to medicine.

### Most Ethical Professions (1-5 scale)



In keeping with the emphasis on ethics of the PR profession, over half (52%) of PR practitioners say they have refused to work for a client or a company for ethical reasons.

Older professional (30+) are significantly more likely than younger professionals (20-29) to have refused to work for a client for ethical reasons, with 60% of them saying so, versus 33% of the younger group. This may simply be attributable to more time spent in the profession by older practitioners.

# 5 PR practitioners believe the general public has a largely negative view of the profession in terms of its value, its ethics and respect for PR professionals.

When PR practitioners were asked whether people in general view the PR profession as ethical, 45% rate PR as only a 1 or 2 on a five-point scale (1 = “not at all ethical”).

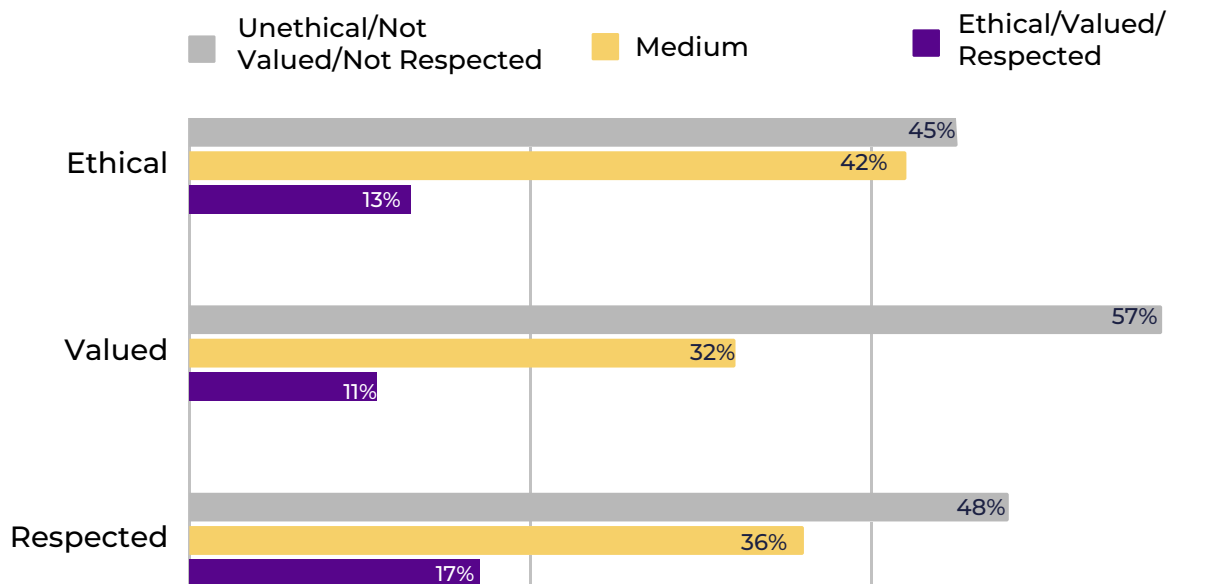
- Only 0.6% believe the public thinks the PR profession is “extremely” ethical (5 = “extremely ethical”).

Similarly, PR professionals do not think people value PR very highly. A full 57% rate PR as only a 1 or a 2 on a five-point scale (1 = “not at all valued”).

- Younger practitioners (20-29) are just as likely as older practitioners (30+) to feel that the profession is not highly valued by others.

PR practitioners feel somewhat respected by people in general, but 48% still only rate respect as a 1 or 2 (1 = “not at all respected”)

## What PR professionals believe the general public thinks of PR (5-point scale)



Overall, this signals that a profession built on burnishing the image of others is living with a perceived image problem itself.

# 6 Today's PR professionals believe that they play a unique role that should be recognized as high-level and strategic.

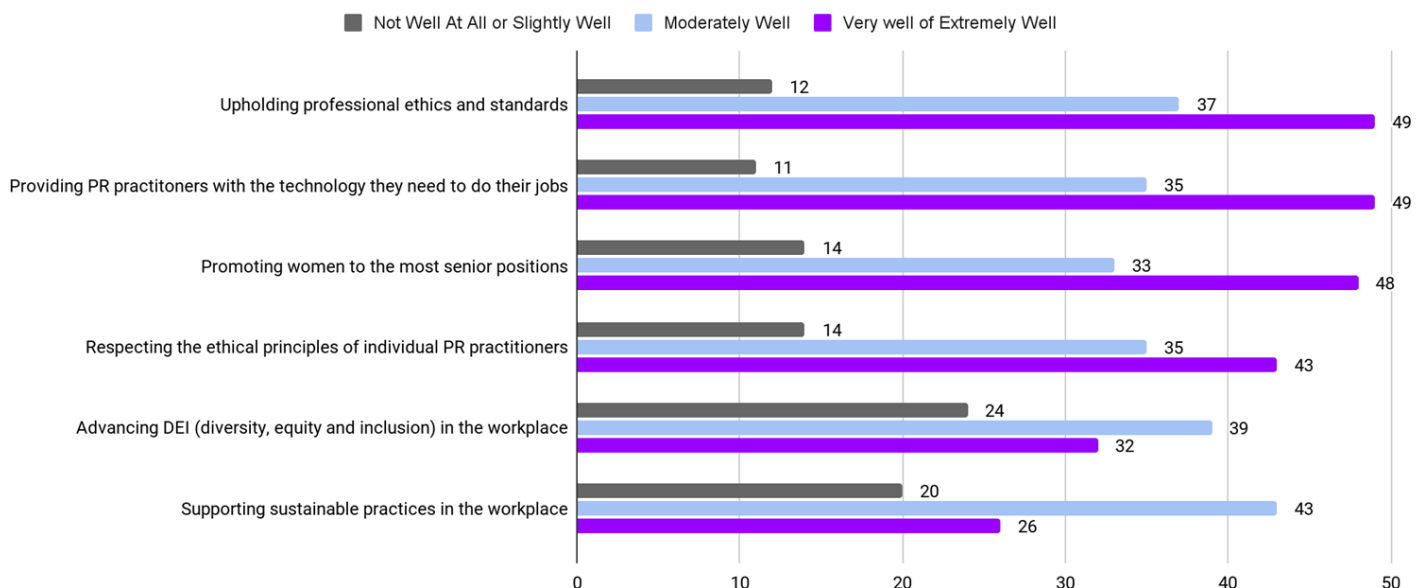
This is in contrast to assumptions that PR plays a primarily tactical or “downstream” role, and also signals the conviction that the profession belongs in the C-suite.

- A full 70% strongly agree that “PR professionals must play a more important role in creating business strategy, not just communicating about it.”
- Furthermore, 67% of PR professionals strongly agree that they should be working more closely with marketing and advertising professionals in integrated campaigns.
- Finally, 78% of PR professionals strongly agree that they “have the expertise needed to help companies, governments and organizations anticipate and respond to major social and cultural changes.”

# 7 PR practitioners believe that the profession has a way to go in terms of advancing DE&I in the workplace – but they do think the profession does a good job of promoting women to the most senior positions

Forty-eight percent think the industry is doing very well or extremely well in promoting women to senior positions, while only 32% think the industry is doing very well or extremely well in advancing DE&I in the workplace.

How is the PR profession performing on each of the following? (Percent of Respondents)





# 8

When it comes to the use of campaign approaches and tactics, younger PR practitioners (20-29) have a greater focus on incorporating social justice issues, consumer co-creation, and the voices of diverse and minority groups into campaigns.

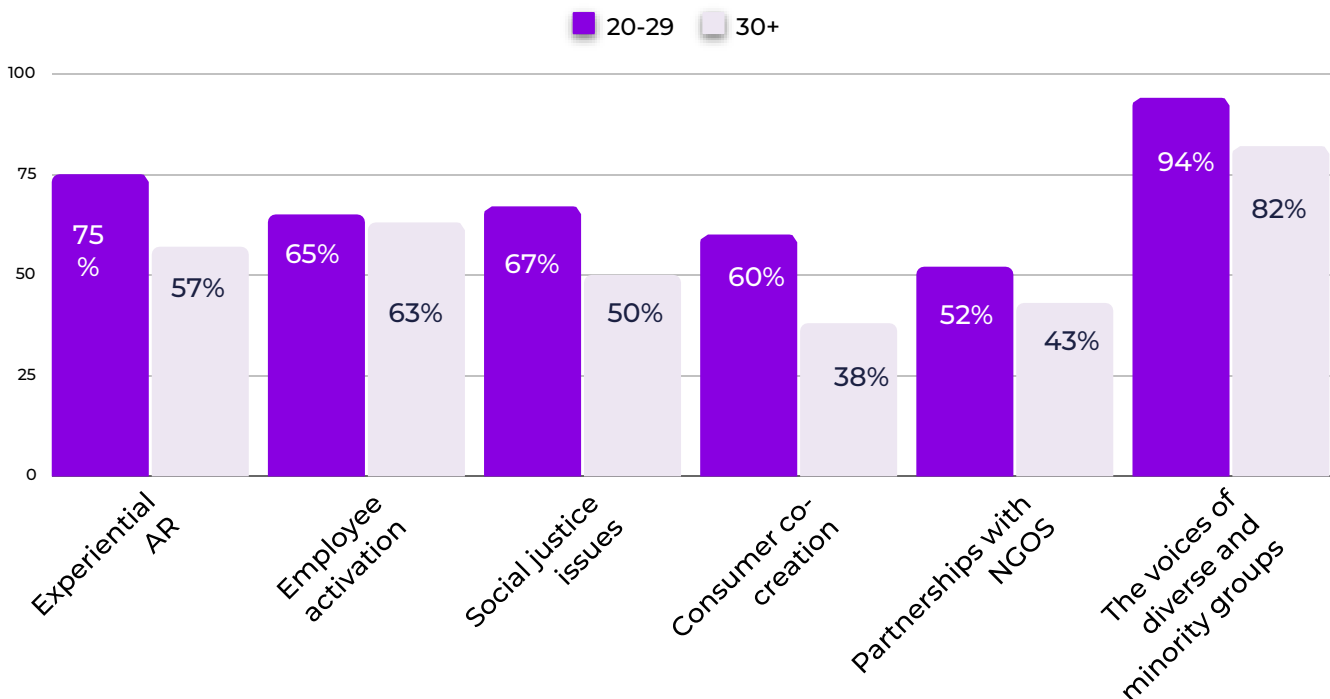
When asked about the importance of integrating various tactics into PR campaigns, all practitioners agreed that it was very important to include “the voices of diverse and minority groups.”

- However, younger practitioners (20-29) were significantly more likely than their older (30+) peers to think this was important. Furthermore, female practitioners overall are significantly more likely than male practitioners to think this is important

While only 38% of 30+ PR practitioners thought consumer co-creation was very or extremely important, significantly more 20-29-year-old (60%) than 30+ practitioners thought so.

- Likewise, while 51% of 30+ practitioners agreed that it was very or extremely important to include “social justice issues” in campaigns, 67% of 20-29-year-olds thought it was very or extremely important.

## Which Elements are Important to Include in Campaigns?



“Employee activation” is considered a very important element in today’s PR campaigns by all PR practitioners, with 63% saying it is very or extremely important—but there is a gender difference.

Male PR practitioners are significantly more likely than female practitioners to think employee activation is an important tactic for PR campaigns.

# 9

## “Creativity” and the “ability to work with others” top the list of the most valued personal skills and traits for PR practitioners

The most valued personal skills and traits among PR practitioners are “creativity” and the “ability to work with others.” These skills scored significantly more highly than others rated.

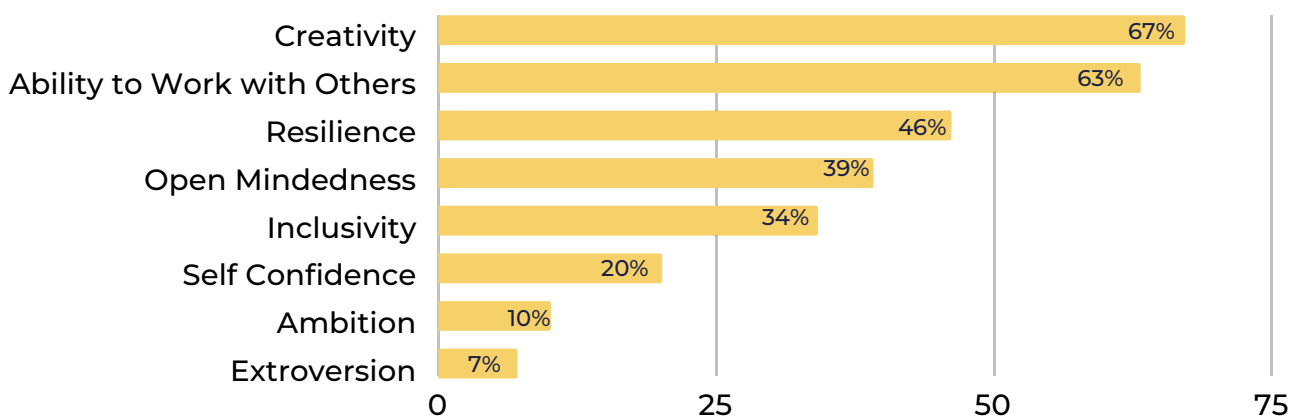
Next came “resilience” followed by open-mindedness and inclusivity.

- Older practitioners (30+) were significantly more likely to say “resilience” was an important personal attribute, compared to their younger (20-29) peers.

Perhaps surprisingly for a profession known for being about people, “extroversion” was rated least important as a personal trait.

- However, younger practitioners (20-29) were significantly more likely than older professionals to say that “extroversion” was important for success in PR.

### The Most Important Personal Skills and Traits for PR Professionals



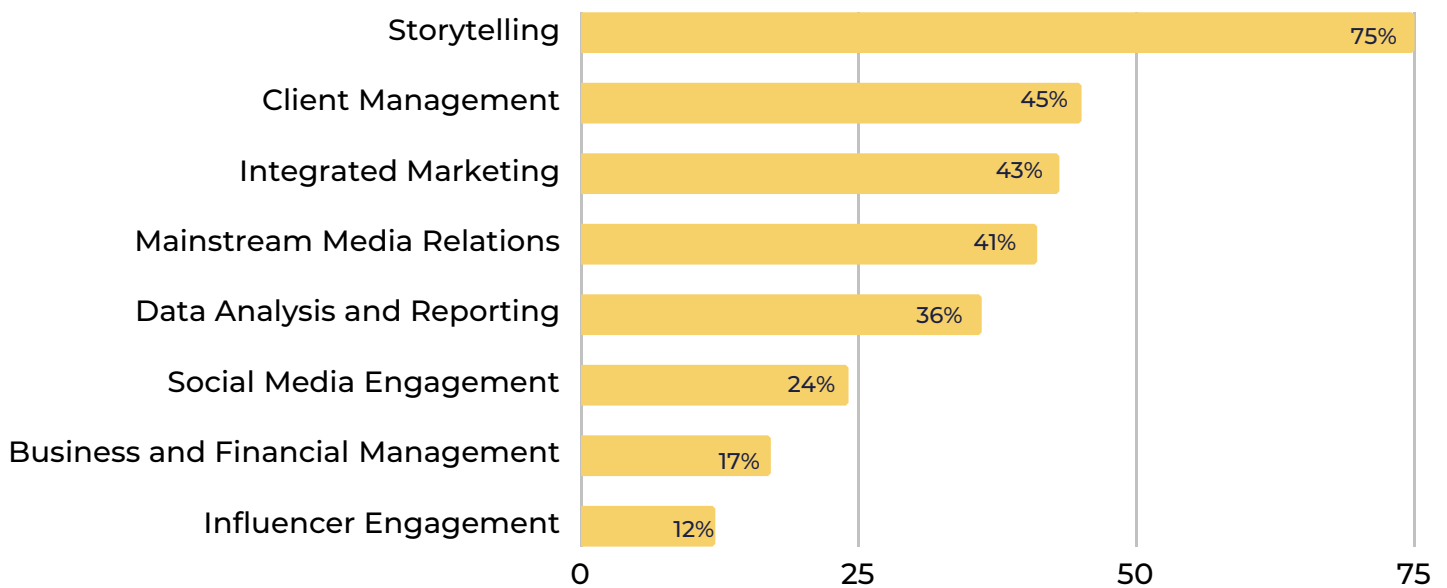
# 10

“Storytelling” is by far the most valued professional skill in PR.

A full 75% of respondents selected “storytelling” as an important professional skill.

- This was followed by being skilled in “client management,” “integrated marketing” and “mainstream media relations.”
- “Social media engagement,” “business and financial management” and “influencer engagement” were rated less highly than most other attributes.

## The Most Important Professional Skills





# METHODOLOGY

The data were gathered using two quantitative online surveys.

A survey distributed among PR professionals and PR graduate students aged 20+ with a final sample of 153 was included in the analysis.

- A custom questionnaire was developed for this survey that included several sections
  - Social value dimensions
    - Ideology - Positions participants on a traditional liberal/conservative scale, considering economic, social, and safety dimensions of ideology.
    - Internal and External Focus - Measures if participants focus more on personal benefits or society around them.
  - Motivators - Examines main factors that motivate PR professionals
  - Ethics - Set of questions about ethical practices and perception of ethics in PR profession and other industries.
  - Tactics - Measured the importance of different PR tactics
  - Role of PR - Examines what participants believe the role of PR should be within an organization
  - Performances of PR - Examines what participants perception of impact of PR function on different corporate issues.
  - Skills - Measures them importance of different personal and professional skills for PR professionals.

A survey distributed among a representative sample of 2,500 US residents aged 18+

- For this survey, a questionnaire was developed using a mix of custom questions and existing industry-standard or academic-standard variables and questions.
  - Questions correspond to the same social values questions that were distributed to PR professionals.





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