Memo

2025 State of Media & Readership Report

An annual study of the media landscape and what people read about over the last year.

Introduction

In an era where attention is fragmented, one thing remains clear: news still matters, and readership data proves it.

The 2025 State of Media & Readership Report goes beyond tracking what gets published—it reveals what actually gets read. Understanding readership trends empowers communicators to craft messages that resonate, gauge the true impact of media coverage, and respond effectively to emerging narratives.

By analyzing over half a million articles, this report uncovers what captured public interest over the past year, when readership peaked, and how brands and organizations can navigate the ever-evolving media landscape. These data-driven insights offer a roadmap to inform and refine media strategies in the year ahead.

Key Term to Know

Readership / readers = the number of unique visitors to an article.

Memo measures readership from publishers' on-page analytics, not via monthly web traffic, potential reach formulas, social proxies, or other inaccurate estimates.

Memo is the first platform to partner with publishers to report the true performance, power, and value of earned media coverage. Learn more.
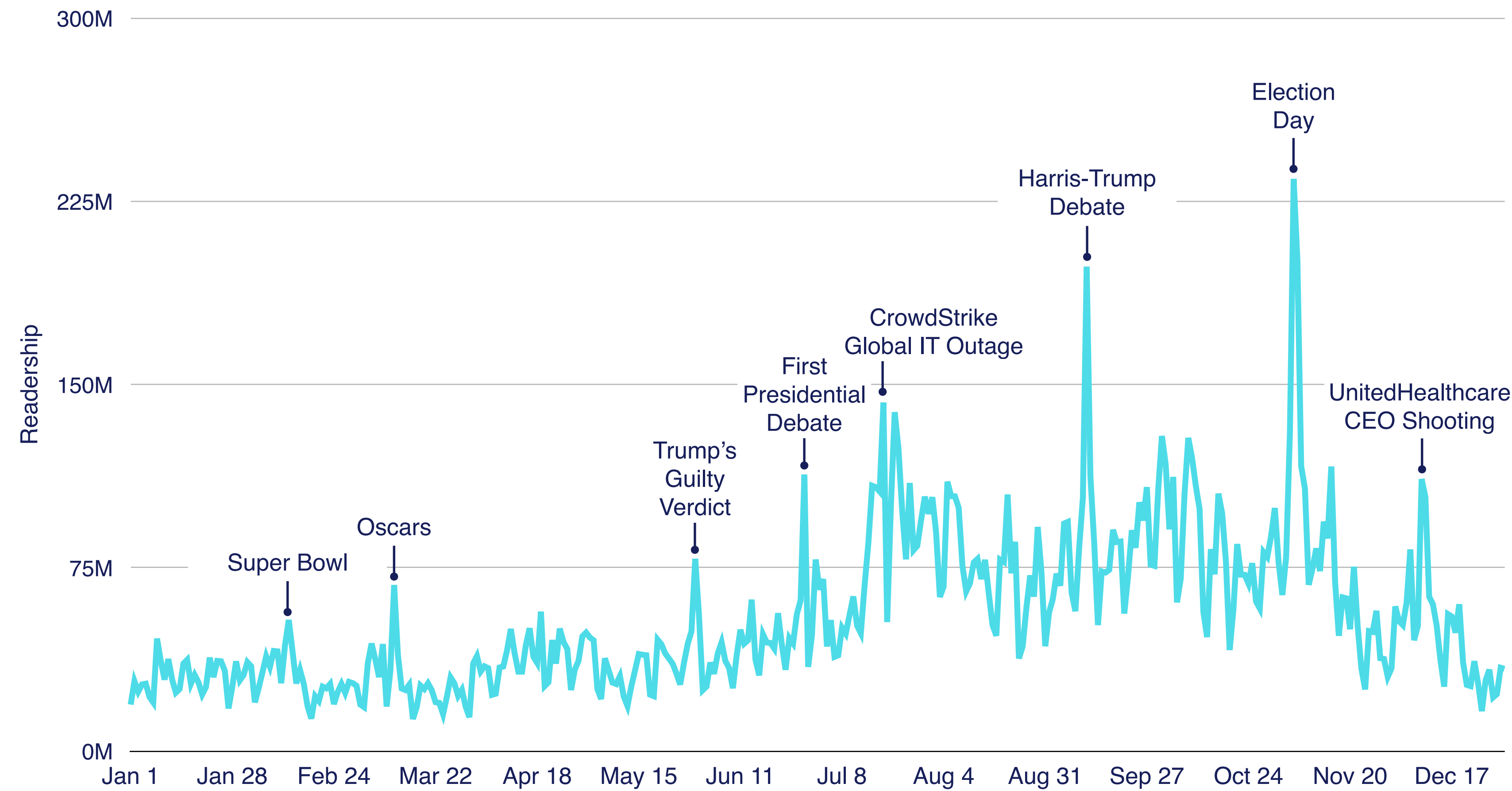
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Key Takeaways

1 **The presidential election dominated the media landscape in 2024.** The election generated 4x more readers than any other topic and captured nearly as much readership as every other major news story combined.

2 **UVMs are not a viable proxy for readership.** Readership varies so greatly from article to article and reporter to reporter that just looking at UVMs can be misleading.

3 **Readers are turning to op-eds, especially around politics, current events, and societal changes.** Average readership on opinion pieces has been steadily growing year over year.

4 **Seasonal moments are predictable and timely.** The Super Bowl saw nearly 2.5x more readership than any other seasonal moment and is an opportunity to increase awareness or push deals & promos.

5 **CEO readership was highest on executive compensation, wealth, and asset articles.** Public perception is increasingly shaped by how openly a CEO communicates about earnings, benefits, and financial decisions—particularly when those contrast with company performance, worker pay, or shareholder returns.

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Biggest Readership Moments of 2024

What peaked peoples' interest in 2024? A lot of political news, incidents, and celebrity moments. Here are the moments that attracted the most readers in 2024:

Readership

- 300M
- 225M
- 150M
- 75M
- 0M

Jan 1 | Jan 28 | Feb 24 | Mar 22 | Apr 18 | May 15 | Jun 11 | Jul 8 | Aug 4 | Aug 31 | Sep 27 | Oct 24 | Nov 20 | Dec 17

Chart annotations:
- Super Bowl
- Oscars
- Trump's Guilty Verdict
- First Presidential Debate
- CrowdStrike Global IT Outage
- Harris-Trump Debate
- Election Day
- UnitedHealthcare CEO Shooting

Most-read Topics Ranked

These were the themes that drew the most readership throughout 2024.

1. 2024 Election
2. Climate Change
3. Inflation/Recession
4. Jan 6 Investigation
5. Middle Eastern Conflict

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The Year of Votes, Vital Issues, and Viral Moments

In 2024, the presidential election overshadowed other stories, dominating readership quarter after quarter. In fact, **the 2024 Election alone captured 69% of the readership of all other major news stories combined. This highlights its unparalleled prominence in the year's media landscape.** Global crises like climate change and Middle Eastern conflicts also commanded attention, while domestic concerns like inflation, reproductive rights, and inflation/recession kept readers engaged across the political spectrum.

Meanwhile, lighter stories like the Olympics and celebrity buzz surrounding Taylor Swift and Travis Kelce added moments of levity to an otherwise heavy news cycle, showing that readers seek balance between critical issues and cultural highlights.

Q1: Jan.-Mar.

1 2024 Election
(863M readers)

2 Israel-Palestine War
(297M readers)

3 Jan. 6 Investigation
(216M readers)

4 Climate Change
(205M readers)

5 Taylor Swift & Travis Kelce
(177M readers)

Q2: Apr.-Jun.

1 2024 Election
(834M readers)

2 Middle East War
(681M readers)

3 Climate Change
(236M readers)

4 Inflation/Recession
(157M readers)

5 Russia & Ukraine War
(158M readers)

Q3: Jul.-Sep.
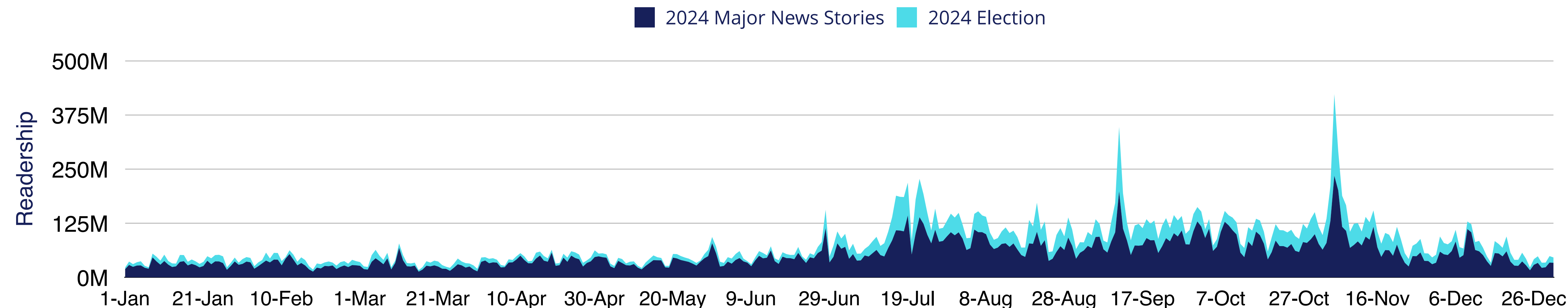
1 2024 Election
(3.6B readers)

2 Climate Change
(580M readers)

3 Middle East War
(494M readers)

4 Olympics
(439M readers)

5 Inflation/Recession
(301M readers)

Q4: Oct.-Dec.

1 2024 Election
(2.9B readers)

2 Climate Change
(933M readers)

3 Middle East War
(420M readers)

4 UnitedHealthcare CEO Shooting
(290M readers)

5 Reproductive Rights
(239M readers)

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Breaking Through the Noise

2024 Election vs. Other Major News Stories

■ 2024 Major News Stories ■ 2024 Election

The 2024 Election dominated the media landscape, drawing significantly more readership than other major news stories throughout the year. Readership spiked during key election moments, demonstrating its strong hold on public interest.

Overall, the election attracted 47% more readers on average compared to other major topics and 4x the total readership of the second most-read topic, climate change. The 2024 election also claimed the most-read story of the year, with over 39 million readers on one article alone—a clear sign of **the public's heightened demand for timely and reliable election coverage amid competing narratives**.

2024 Election Fast Facts

47%
more readers on average compared to other major news stories

4x
the readership compared to the second most-read topic of climate change

#1
most-read story of 2024, with over 39M readers on one <u>article</u>

The takeaway: capitalize on major events by delivering timely, relevant, and engaging content to maximize audience reach and impact.

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When does an article's readership peak?

Based on a sample of 240K articles published in August 2024, we have found that, on average, an article receives 87% of its readership in the first three days after publication (43% on Day 1, 32% on Day 2, and 12% on Day 3).

Readership typically peaks on the day of publication or the following day before experiencing a sharp decline. This trend is even more pronounced on timely news stories, as over half of news and entertainment readership came on the first day after publication. These findings emphasize the **short lifespan of news content and the need for communicators to act swiftly—whether responding to coverage, making corrections, or maximizing visibility—before audience attention fades**.

## Percent of Article Readership Reached by Day After Publication

(average trend from sample of 240K news articles)

An article receives 87% of its readership within the first 3 days of publication, on average.

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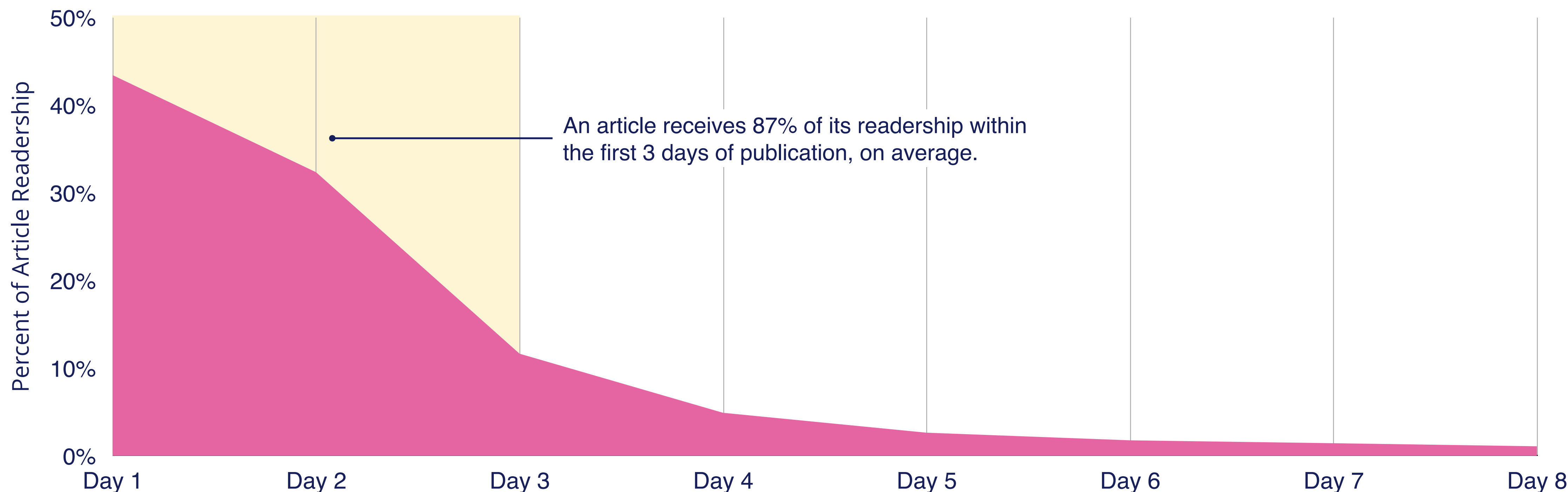
Busiest News Days of the Week

Readers consume the most news on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

Although overall readership dips on weekends, articles published on Saturdays or Sundays tend to attract more readers on average, showing sustained audience engagement.

Total & Average Readership by Day

■ Total Readership   ◆ Average Readership per Article
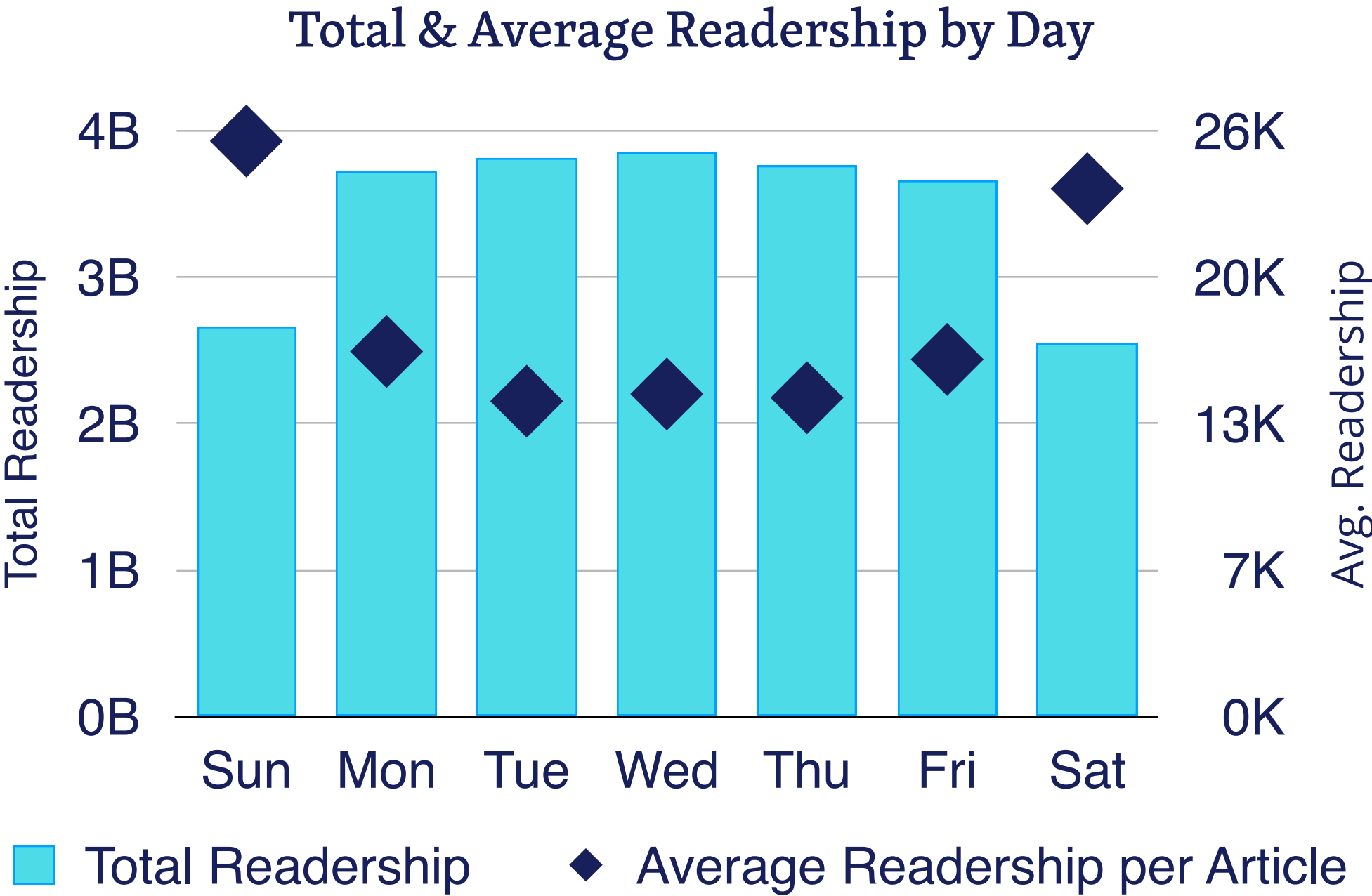
The takeaway: a weekend pitch isn't a lost cause—it could actually work in your favor.

Daily Readership Trends By Publisher Vertical

Timely news stories follow the same trends. Coverage volume is highest during the week, but average readership peaks on the weekends.

Business & Financial

Entertainment
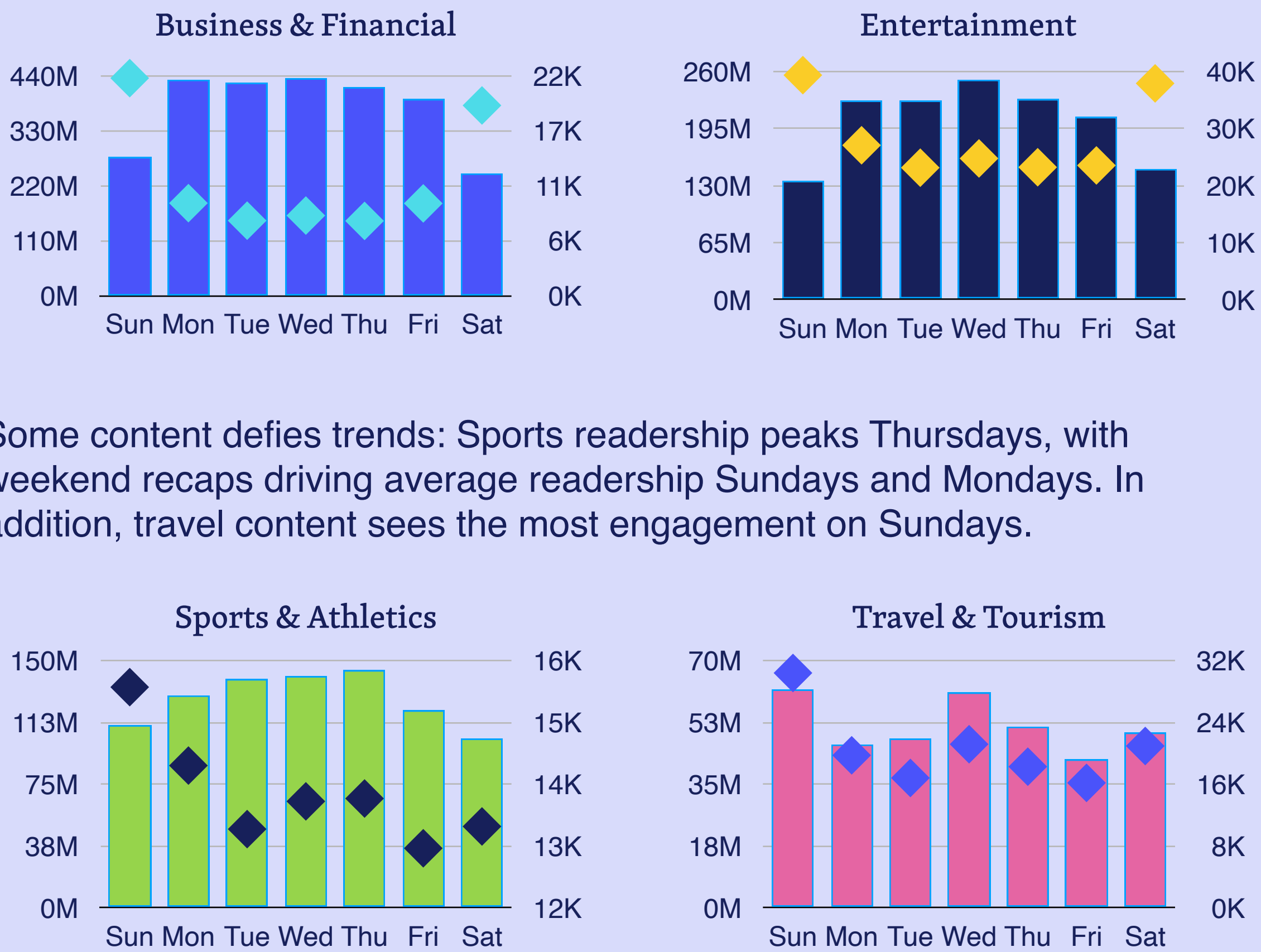
Some content defies trends: Sports readership peaks Thursdays, with weekend recaps driving average readership Sundays and Mondays. In addition, travel content sees the most engagement on Sundays.

Sports & Athletics

Travel & Tourism

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UVMs vs. Readership

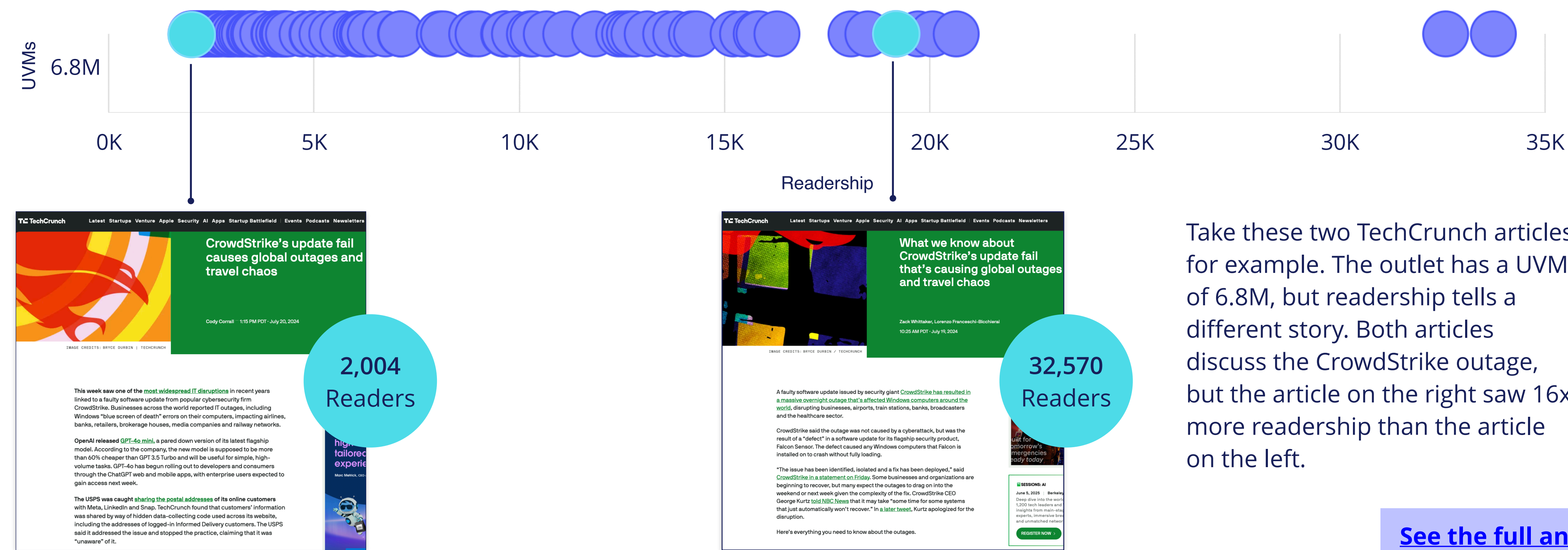**Publisher UVMs (Unique Visitor Metrics) provide no insight into how many people actually read a specific article.** In fact, there is virtually no correlation between publisher UVMs and an article's actual readership.

UVMs vs. Readership for TechCrunch Articles

UVMs

6.8M

0K   5K   10K   15K   20K   25K   30K   35K

Readership

2,004
Readers

32,570
Readers

Take these two TechCrunch articles for example. The outlet has a UVM of 6.8M, but readership tells a different story. Both articles discuss the CrowdStrike outage, but the article on the right saw 16x more readership than the article on the left.

The takeaway: UVMs and impressions fail to differentiate article performance within a publication.

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Paywalled News & the Impact of Syndication

Total Readership by Paywall Type

Legend: ■ Original URL Readership ■ Aggregator Readership

X-axis: No Paywall, Partial Paywall, Full Paywall
Y-axis: 0M, 3M, 5M, 8M, 10M
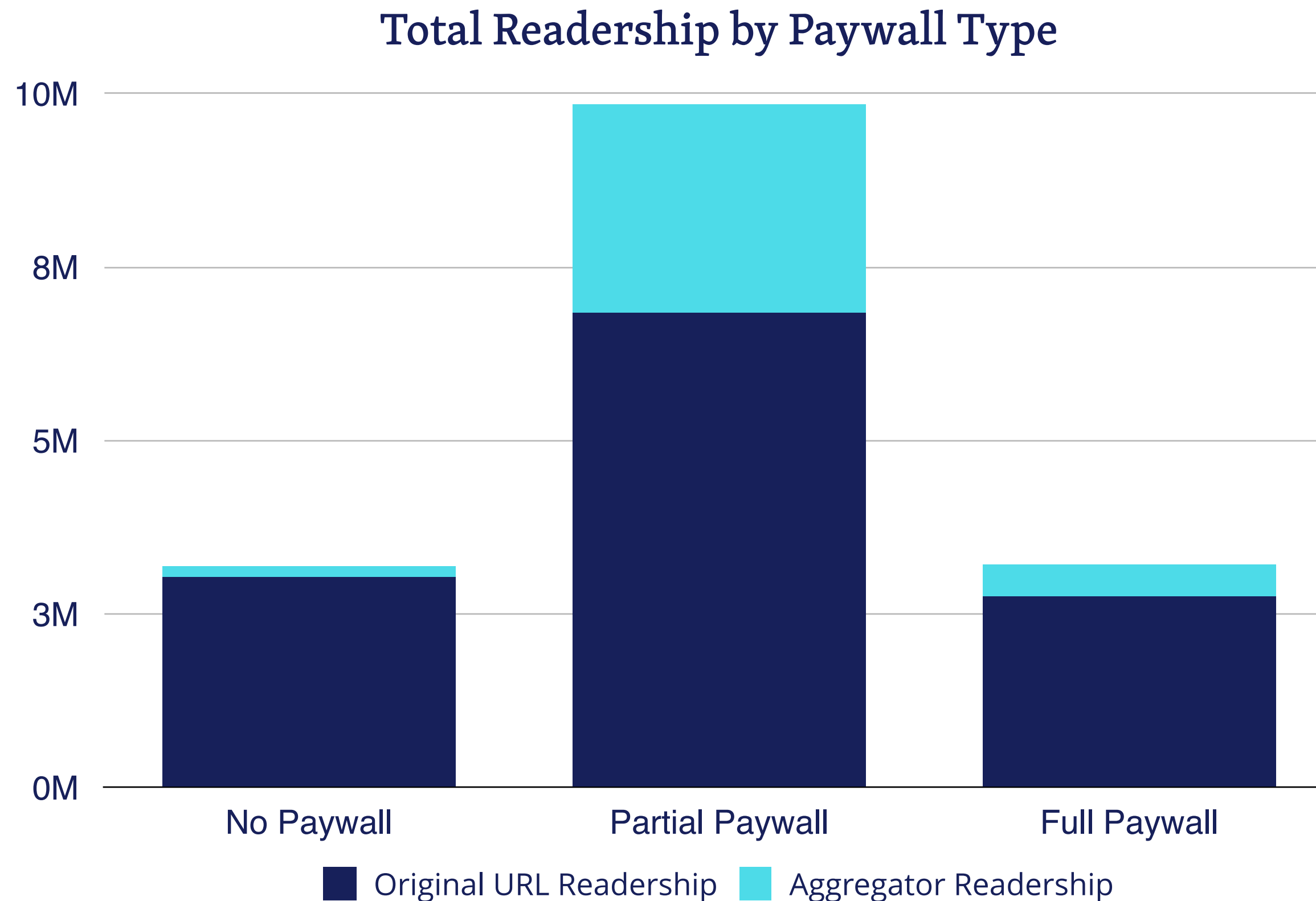
+29% average bump in readership from syndication

+5% bump when the original source is non-paywalled

+36% bump when the original source is paywalled

Don't discount syndication sites like Yahoo and MSN. Aggregators can amplify stories, especially when they come from niche publications or paywalled sites.

What is the impact of syndication to mass-reach aggregators like MSN and Yahoo! News? On average, an article receives 29% more readers when syndicated to MSN or Yahoo! Sites.

This readership boost is particularly **impactful for paywalled news** sites: originally paywalled articles see a whopping **36% boost**.

The takeaway: don't discount a paywalled reporter if they have a history of widening readership through syndication.

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What seasonal moments do people care about?

The Super Bowl is the biggest moment of the year in terms of readership, driving **nearly 2.5x more readership than any other seasonal moment**.

With celebrity focused articles typically driving high readership, the Oscars experienced the largest single day spike.

The top-read sales moments of the year were Black Friday/Cyber Monday, 4th of July, Labor Day, and Memorial Day.

Seasonal Moments Readership Over Time
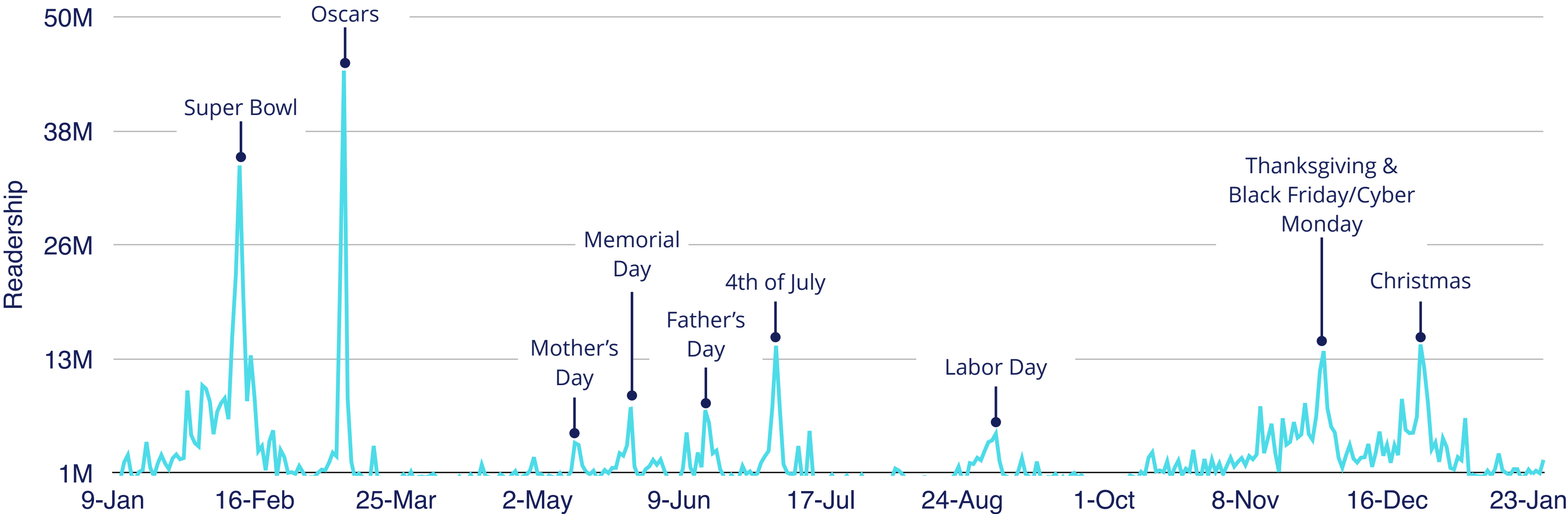
Seasonal Moments by Readership

The takeaway: leverage seasonal moments to push brand deals & promos.

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Readership of CEOs in the News

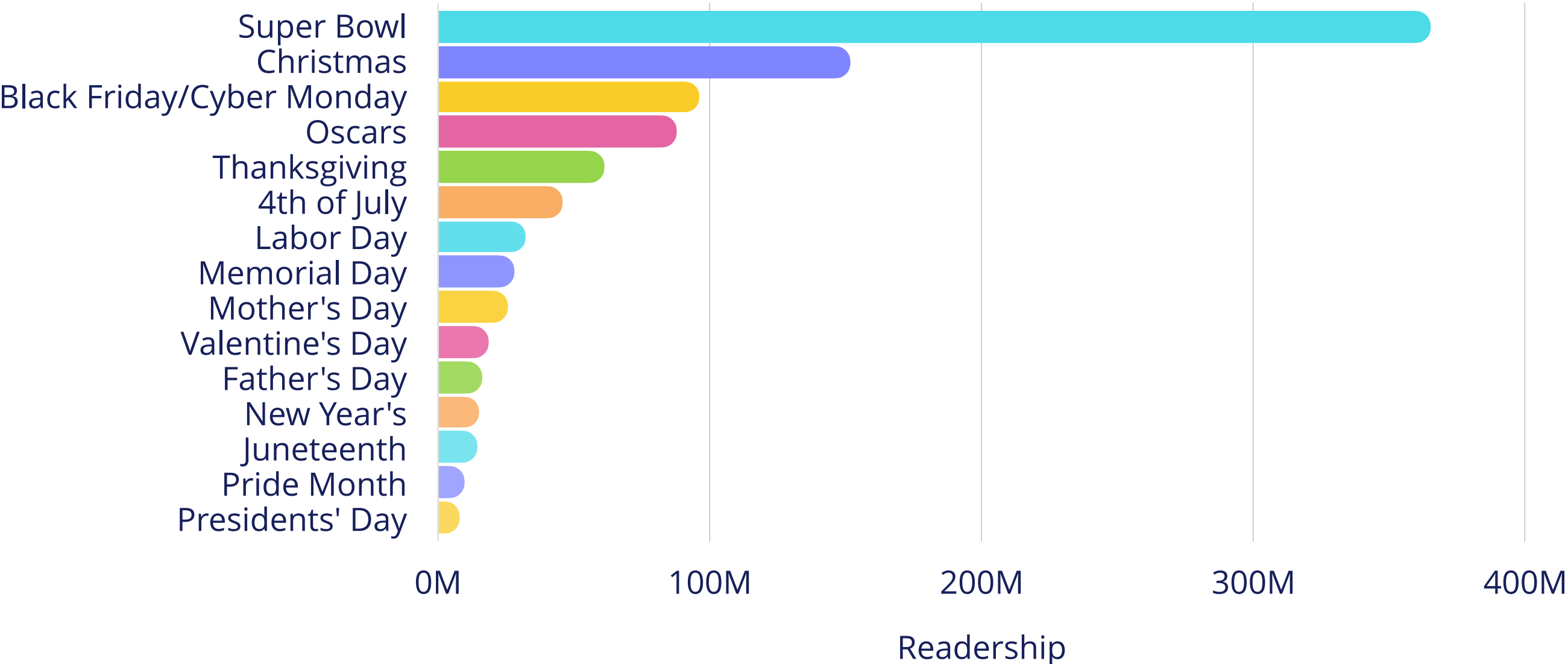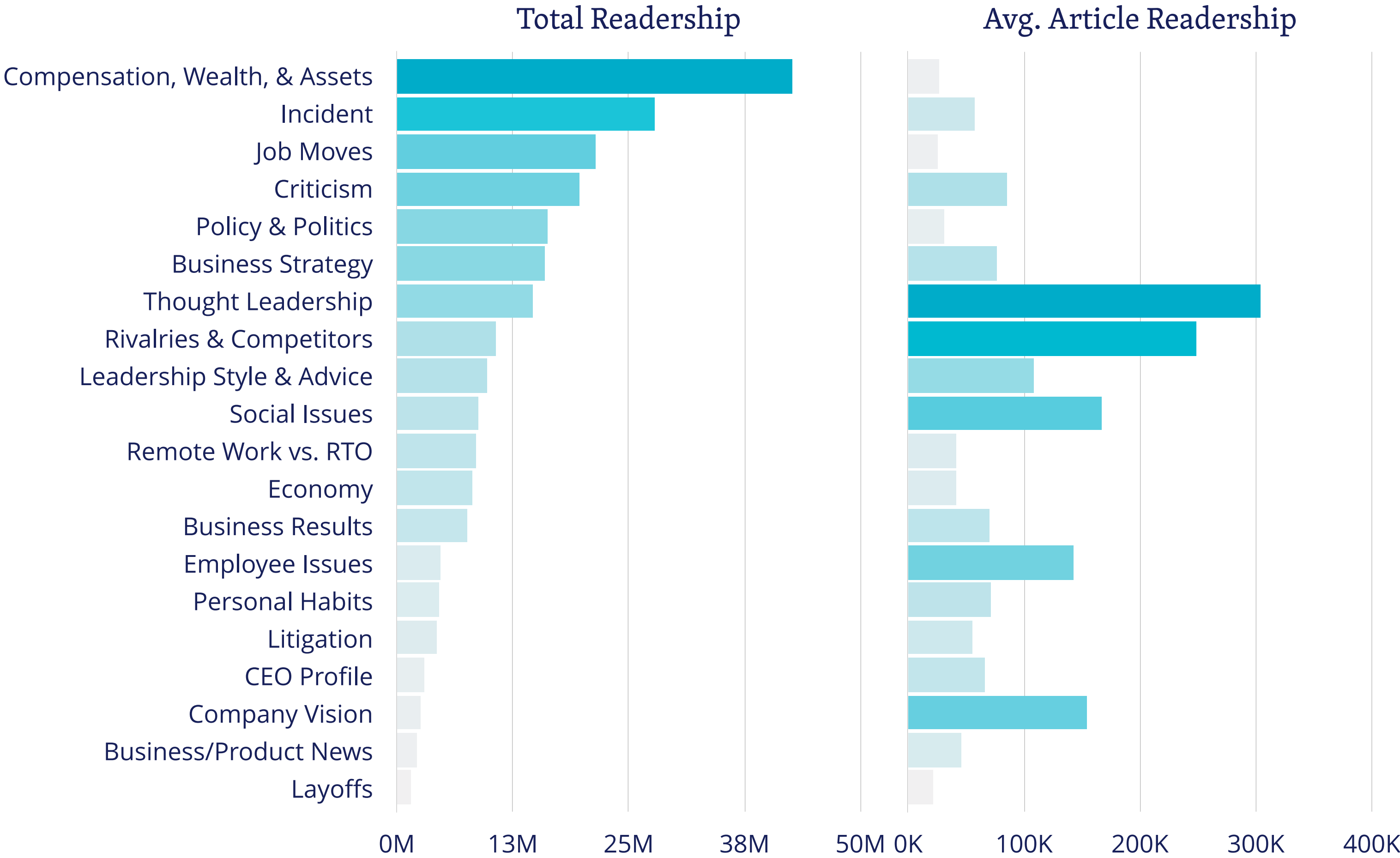From major corporate shake-ups to high-stakes leadership decisions, CEOs were at the center of some of the biggest headlines in 2024. Whether navigating economic challenges, driving innovation, or facing controversy, top executives from across industries played a crucial role in shaping the business landscape.

Readership by CEO Headline Topic

Total Readership

Topic	
Compensation, Wealth, & Assets	
Incident	
Job Moves	
Criticism	
Policy & Politics	
Business Strategy	
Thought Leadership	
Rivalries & Competitors	
Leadership Style & Advice	
Social Issues	
Remote Work vs. RTO	
Economy	
Business Results	
Employee Issues	
Personal Habits	
Litigation	
CEO Profile	
Company Vision	
Business/Product News	
Layoffs	

Total Readership x-axis: 0M 13M 25M 38M 50M

Avg. Article Readership x-axis: 0K 100K 200K 300K 400K

Stories covering CEO **compensation, wealth, & assets** saw high readership, particularly in cases where executive pay sharply contrasted with company performance. Boeing's CEO pay amid its safety crisis and Tesla's board revisiting Elon Musk's massive compensation package were among the most widely read.
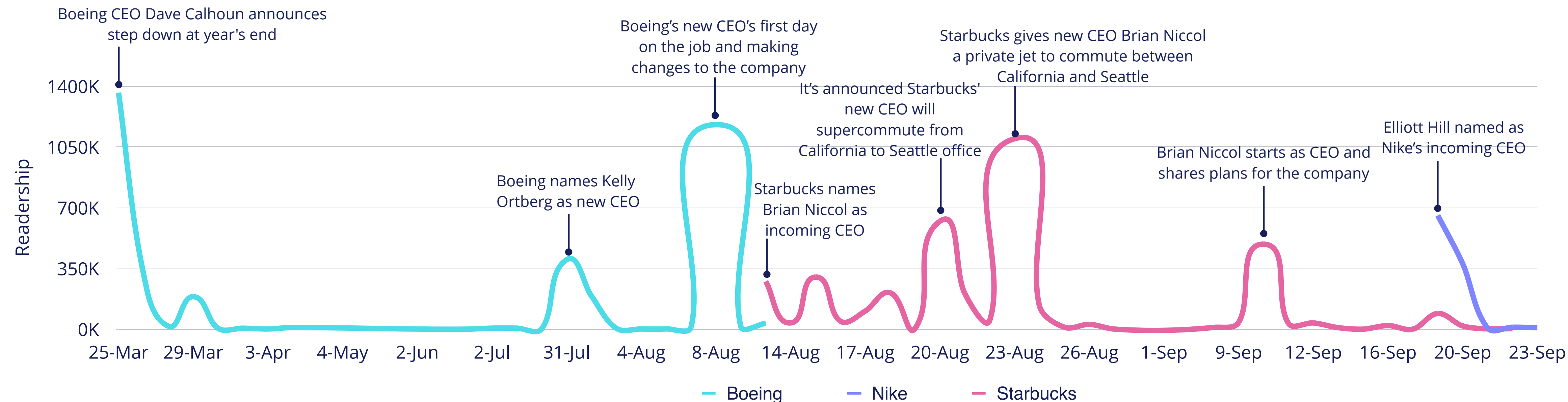
Incident quickly became a topic of high interest in December, as 75% of the topic's total readership came from articles about the shooting of UnitedHealthcare CEO, Brian Thompson.

AI-related discussions by CEOs have been among the most widely read topics in 2024. Executives discussing AI's impact on **business strategy, automation, job displacement, and general thought leadership** saw particularly high readership, reflecting growing public and investor interest in the technology's rapid development.

The takeaway: CEOs face constant scrutiny —transparent communication on key public issues is essential.

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Spotlight: Leadership Change Communications

CEO Readership Over Time by Brand

Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun announces step down at year's end

Boeing's new CEO's first day on the job and making changes to the company

Boeing names Kelly Ortberg as new CEO

Starbucks gives new CEO Brian Niccol a private jet to commute between California and Seattle

It's announced Starbucks' new CEO will supercommute from California to Seattle office

Starbucks names Brian Niccol as incoming CEO

Brian Niccol starts as CEO and shares plans for the company

Elliott Hill named as Nike's incoming CEO

Readership

1400K
1050K
700K
350K
0K

25-Mar 29-Mar 3-Apr 4-May 2-Jun 2-Jul 31-Jul 4-Aug 8-Aug 14-Aug 17-Aug 20-Aug 23-Aug 26-Aug 1-Sep 9-Sep 12-Sep 16-Sep 20-Sep 23-Sep

— Boeing   — Nike   — Starbucks

Boeing announced its existing CEO stepping down 4 months before naming its new CEO. Following the announcement, readership was fueled by articles that focused on the ongoing safety crisis and uncertain future of the company. As Boeing searched for its next CEO, the media was asking, "Can a New CEO Save Boeing?" and speculating if Boeing would turn to an "outsider CEO to tackle spiraling crisis".

Starbucks and Nike announced the step down of the current CEO and the incoming CEO in tandem. **This condensed the news cycle and consumers primarily read stories related to the next chapter.**

The takeaway: with leadership changes, one announcement allows positive, forward looking messages to take precedence over negative reflections of the past.
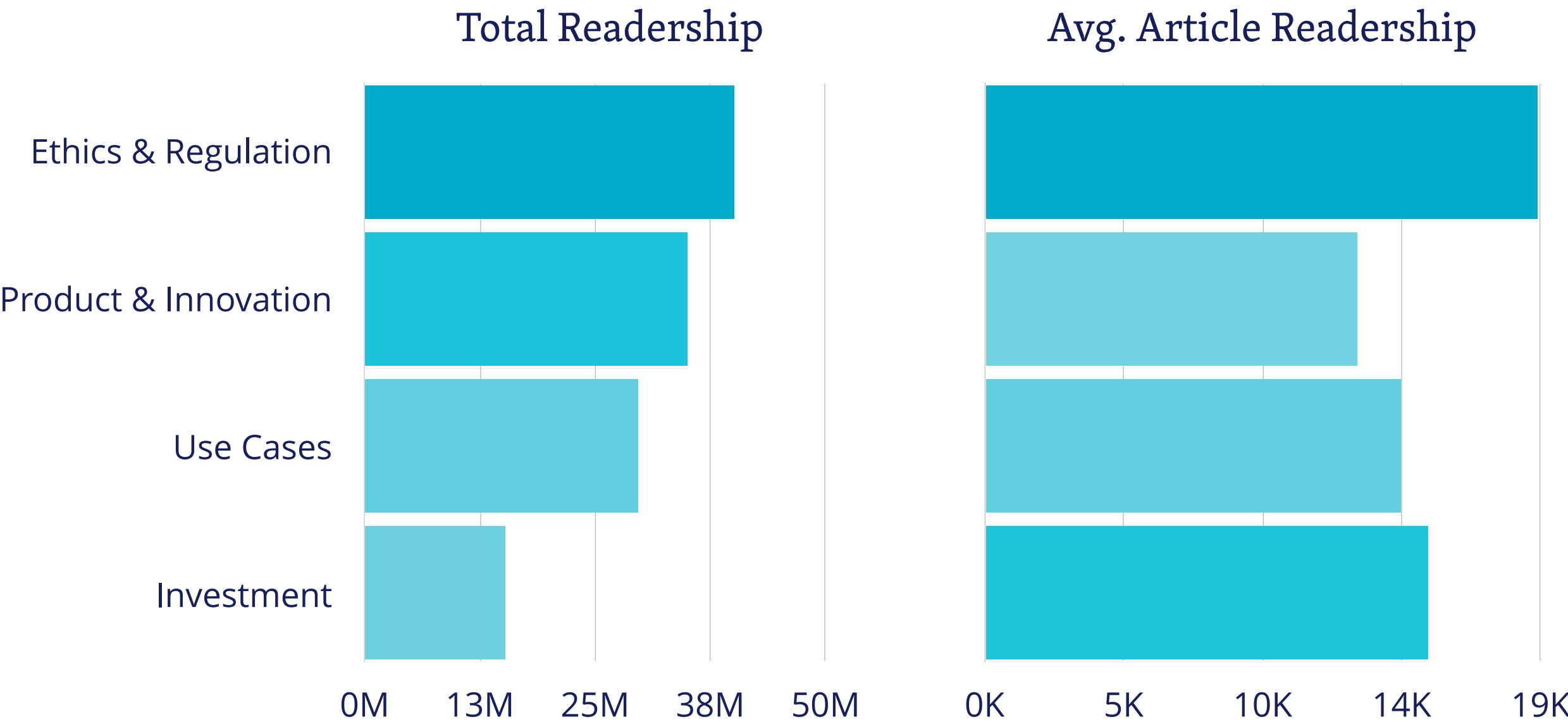
See the full analysis

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Generative AI in the News

AI can't shake its reputation problem. AI Product & Innovation is covered frequently and is highly positive, but readership behavior suggests **consumers are still very nervous about the technology and what it could do unregulated**.
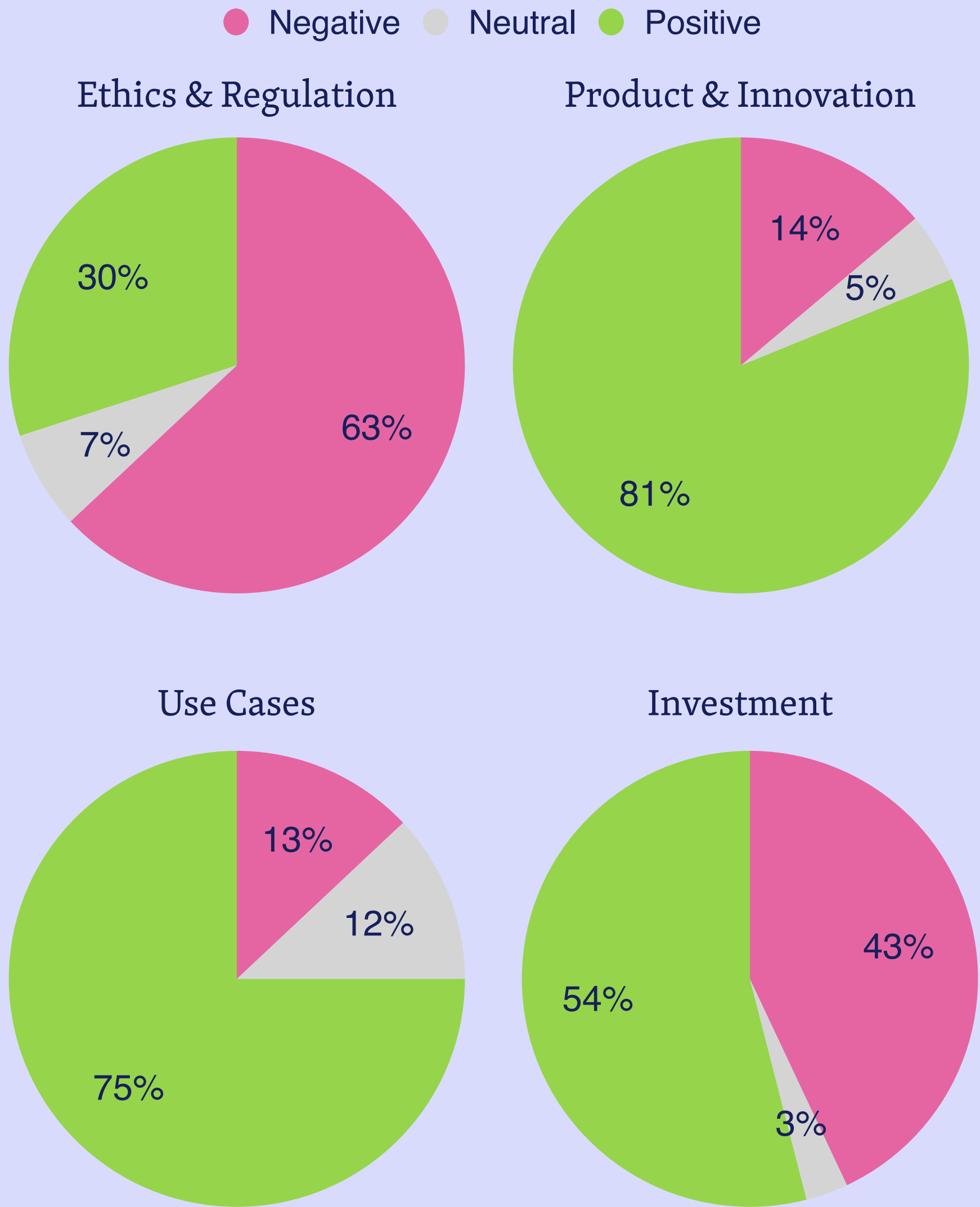
Promote safety and responsibility when discussing AI innovation, but beware: **a negative AI article could send your brand into crisis**.

Generative AI Readership by Topic

Total Readership

Avg. Article Readership

- Ethics & Regulation
- Product & Innovation
- Use Cases
- Investment

0M   13M   25M   38M   50M

0K   5K   10K   14K   19K

The takeaway: focus on ethics, transparency, and real-world innovations to capture interest and build trust.

## Generative AI Topics Share of Sentiment by Readership

● Negative ● Neutral ● Positive

Ethics & Regulation

30%
7%
63%

Product & Innovation

14%
5%
81%

Use Cases

13%
12%
75%

Investment

43%
54%
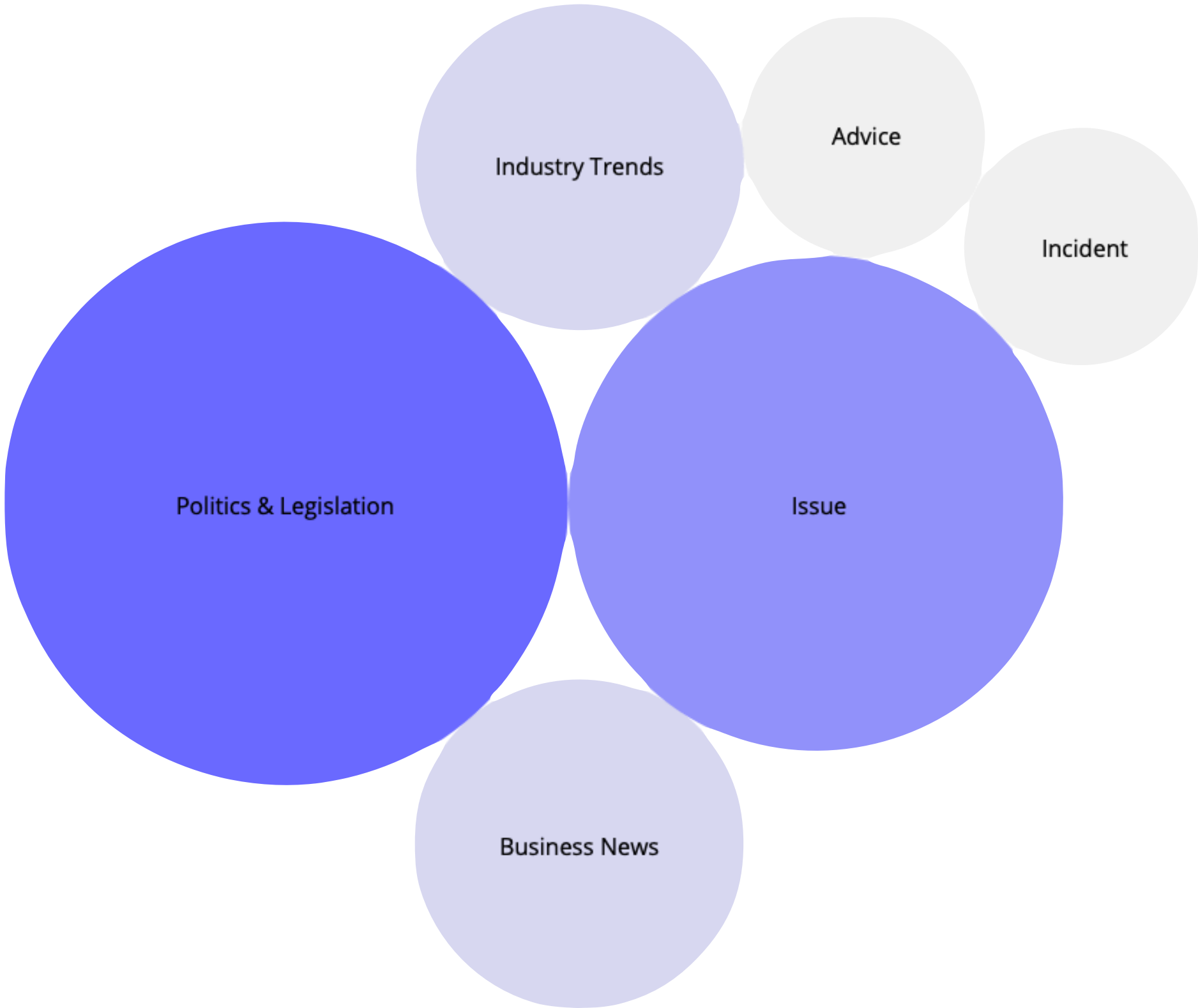3%

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Do Op-Eds Move the Needle?

Op-Eds have steadily grown in popularity, consistently achieving higher readership than the average article published by their respective outlets. This trend underscores the increasing value and engagement associated with opinion pieces.

Among Op-Ed topics, **Politics and Issues dominate as the most-read categories**, appealing to a broad audience across publishers. These articles often explore current events, societal challenges, and policy debates, resonating strongly with readers and outperforming general benchmarks across various media platforms.

Average Readership Over Time

Yearly Avg. Readership
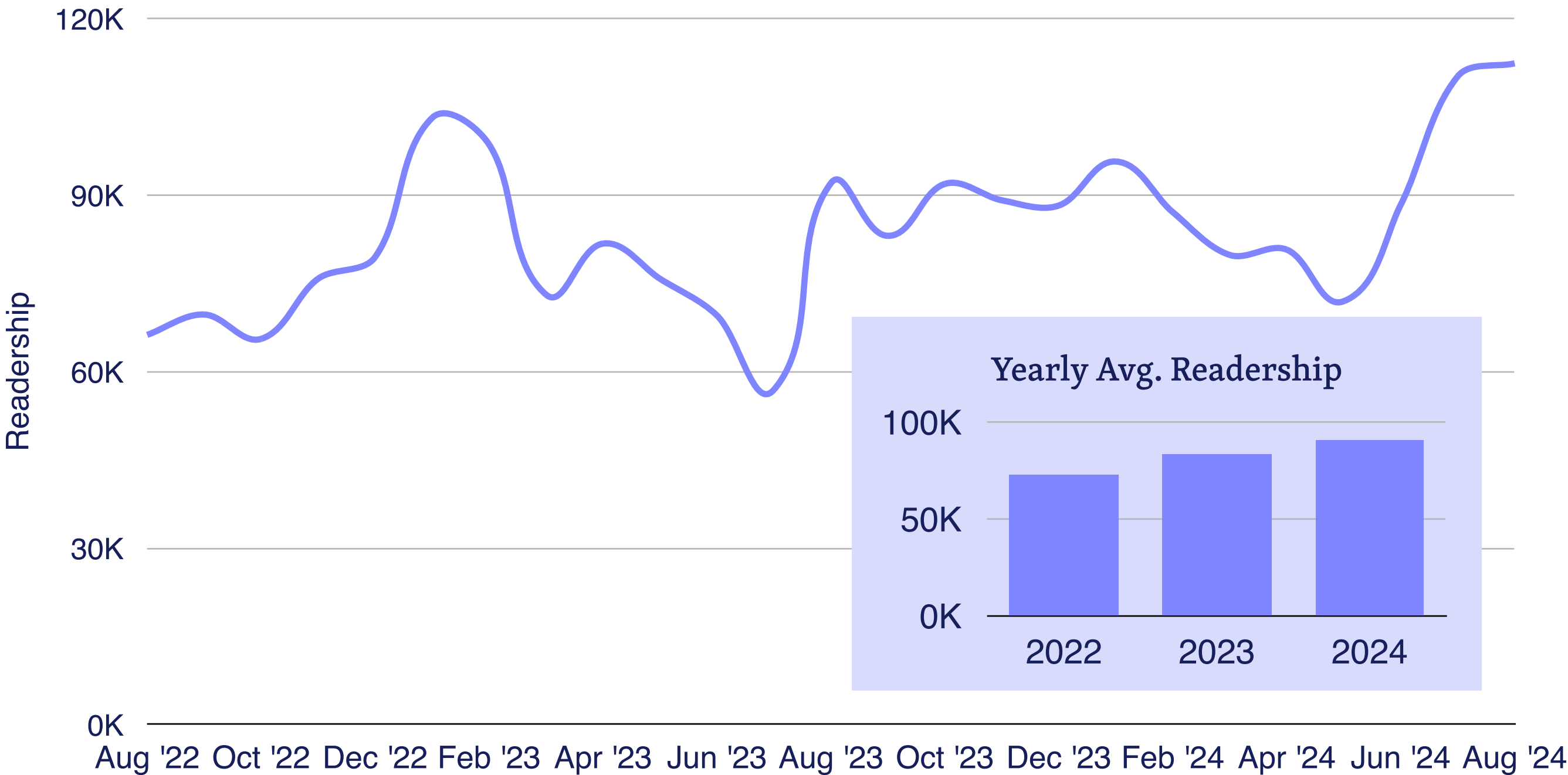
Relative Readership of Op-Ed Topics
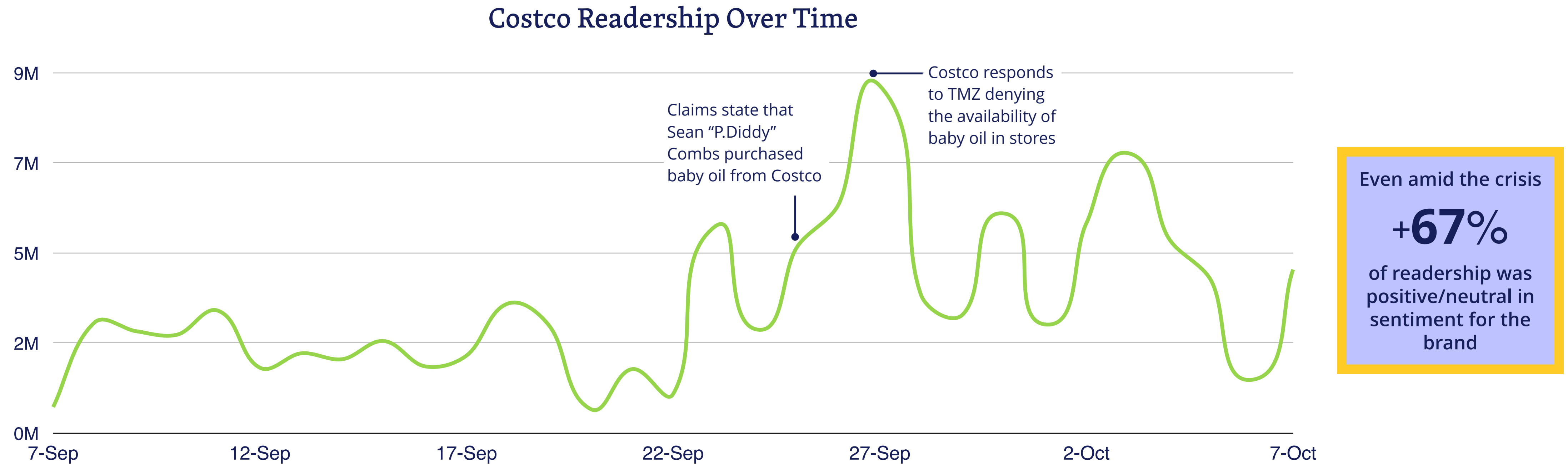

- Industry Trends
- Advice
- Incident
- Politics & Legislation
- Issue
- Business News

The takeaway: focus on enhancing Op-Ed content and expanding its visibility to capitalize on this growing audience interest.
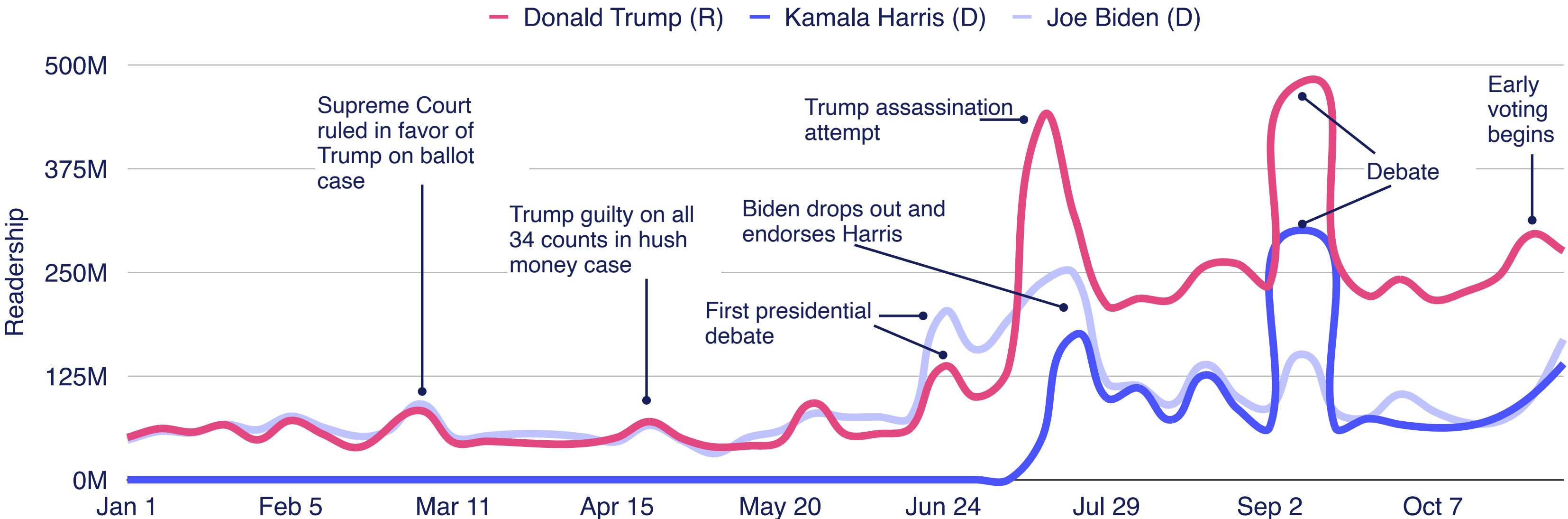
Spotlight: Costco Brand Study

Costco Readership Over Time

Claims state that Sean "P.Diddy" Combs purchased baby oil from Costco

Costco responds to TMZ denying the availability of baby oil in stores

Even amid the crisis

+67%

of readership was positive/neutral in sentiment for the brand

Costco found itself in the crossfires of the scandal involving Sean "P. Diddy" Combs last fall, after initial allegations surfaced linking Costco to the baby oil in bulk.

Costco was quick to distance itself from the situation, confirming that none of the retailer's U.S. locations carry baby oil. While the brand's **comments resuscitated an otherwise dying news cycle**, the quick-witted approach of saying "hey, don't bring us into this" gave Costco a **positive position in the larger crisis**.

The takeaway: proactively addressing misinformation can mitigate brand risk

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2024 Presidential Election

Candidate Readership Over Time

— Donald Trump (R) — Kamala Harris (D) — Joe Biden (D)

Readership (y-axis): 500M, 375M, 250M, 125M, 0M

x-axis: Jan 1, Feb 5, Mar 11, Apr 15, May 20, Jun 24, Jul 29, Sep 2, Oct 7

Annotations:
- Supreme Court ruled in favor of Trump on ballot case
- Trump guilty on all 34 counts in hush money case
- First presidential debate
- Biden drops out and endorses Harris
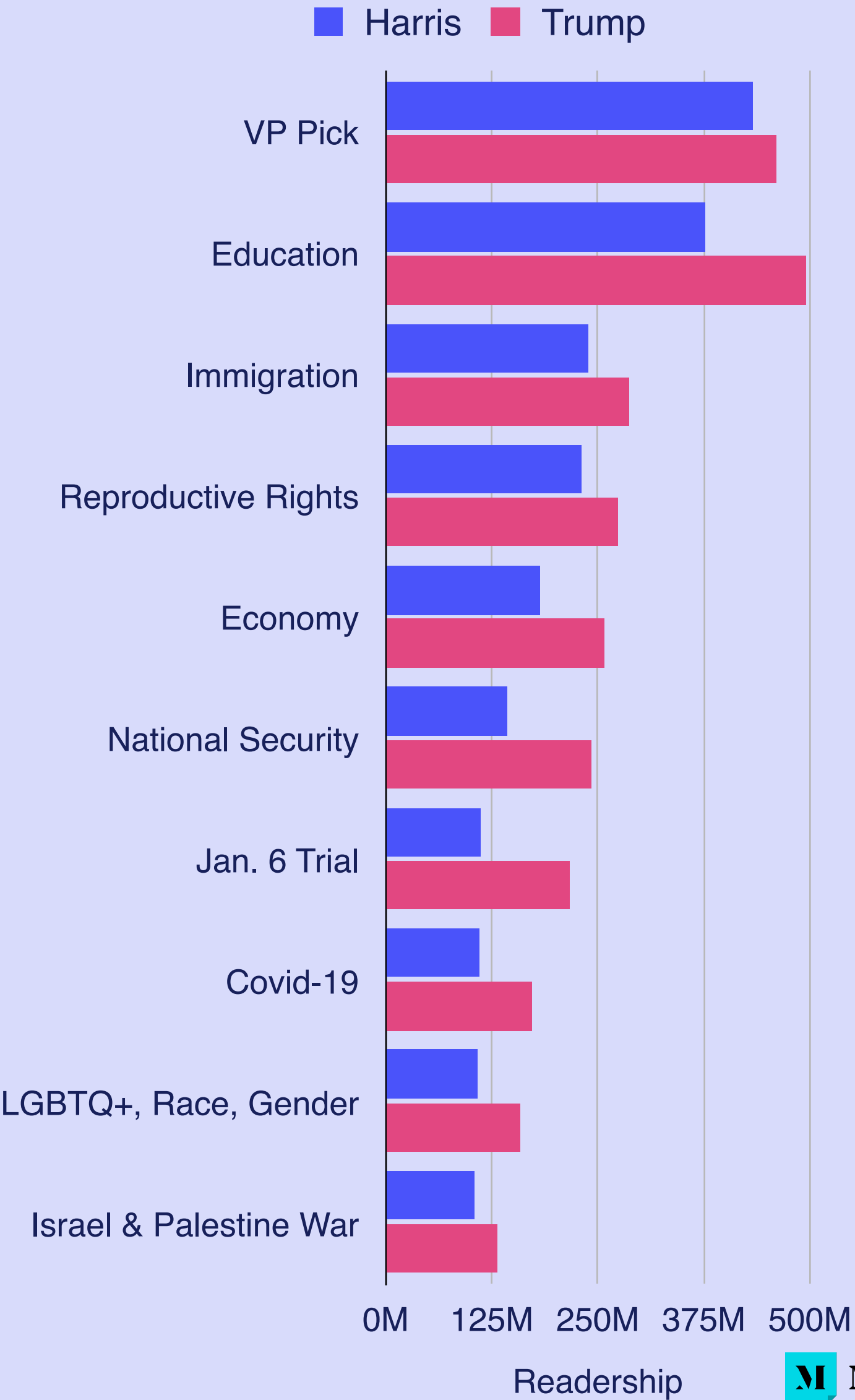- Trump assassination attempt
- Debate
- Early voting begins

The Presidential Election dominated the media in 2024, drawing over 8B readers, with spikes tied to legal developments, debates, conventions, and candidate shifts.

Key issues like education and immigration were top priorities for voters across party lines, making up 20% of voter issue readership.

Left-leaning outlets saw strong readership despite paywalls, which may limit access for lower-income readers, while non-leaning outlets attracted broader audiences due to accessibility and cross-political appeal.

The takeaway: anticipate readership increases around high- stakes events and be prepared to offer in-depth coverage during these times to capture heightened public interest.

Top-Read Voter Issues

■ Harris ■ Trump

Issues (top to bottom): VP Pick, Education, Immigration, Reproductive Rights, Economy, National Security, Jan. 6 Trial, Covid-19, LGBTQ+, Race, Gender, Israel & Palestine War

x-axis: 0M, 125M, 250M, 375M, 500M

Readership

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Action Items

☐ **When announcing a leadership change, keep it to one announcement and focus on the future.** Boeing's prolonged CEO change drove more than 3x the readers as Nike's streamlined announcement.

☐ **Use readership to gauge whether a story is a true crisis or not.** Costco was able to maintain its positive brand perception by distancing itself from a potential crisis with humor.

☐ **Act fast to shape the narrative.** 87% of an article's readership happens within the first three days of publication. Timely responses to breaking news maximize visibility and message control.

☐ **Leverage CEO commentary on trending topics for visibility.** CEO discussions on AI, compensation, and business strategy ranked among the highest-read topics in 2024, showing that leaders should engage strategically on key issues.

☐ **Understand when and where people read news to optimize messaging.** Business and financial news readership peaks midweek, while lifestyle and travel content perform better over weekends—timing your announcements accordingly can enhance engagement.

Methodology & Data

For this report, Memo analyzed article readership (i.e. the unique visitors to an article) from hundreds of national, local, business, lifestyle, and trade outlets. Details about the specific data sets are below.

Macro Trends: 363K articles published Jan 1- Dec 31, 2024 about the biggest issues, themes, events, and public figures of the year. Used for biggest news moments of the year and busiest news days of the week. A subset of 15K was analyzed for generative AI in the news.

Brand Coverage: Over 500K articles published Jan 1 - Dec 31, 2024 across various industries and publications. Subsets of 14K articles for op-ed analysis, 5K articles were analyzed for CEO coverage, 1K articles for leadership change analysis, and 6K articles for Costco Brand Study.

2024 Election: 101K articles published Jan 1 - Nov 4, 2024 about the U.S. presidential candidates.

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Accurate data leads to better decisions.

Only Memo reports readership direct from publications.

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