The 2025 Independent Publishing Report

Social media

Welcome to this edition of the Independent Publishing Report

It summarises the findings of our survey of independent publishers' use of social media, including trends in platform usage and follower numbers, engagement and challenges.

Our survey was conducted in June and July 2025 in association with independent research agency **Shift Insight** (www.shift-insight.co.uk).

Year-on-year comparisons in this report are based on a similar survey of IPG members in 2024. Thank you to the **126 IPG members** who completed the survey.

Introduction from Publiship

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Publiship is very pleased to support the IPG's important research into independent publishing. This is a dynamic and inspiring sector, but it isn't always easy for smaller publishers to connect with their readers. These findings show how well they are using social media to get their books discovered, build their brands and grow sales. IPG members' creative campaigns are cutting through the endless noise on multiple social platforms—especially on Instagram.

We hope you find this edition of the Independent Publishing Report helpful in benchmarking your activity, identifying opportunities and challenges and planning ways to make your social media even better. We would be pleased to hear your views and discuss how Publiship can support your business.

ipg
Independent Publishers Guild

Key numbers

83% Of members use Instagram, the most popular social channel

75% Use Facebook

57% Use LinkedIn

83% Of those using Bluesky have increased followers in the last year, making it the fastest-growing platform

8 Percentage point increase in publishers using TikTok, as well as percentage point decrease in those using YouTube

5.6 Average number of social channels used by IPG members

63% Of those using X say their approach has changed—and 41% of these have stopped using it completely

49% Of those using X have seen their followers fall year-on-year

73% Use social media to grow brand awareness—the top reason

39% Say resource constraints are the biggest challenge in their use of social media

1. Social media platforms

1.1 Popular platforms

Instagram is the most common social platform for publishers. More than four in five **(83%)** members now use it—**9** percentage points more than at the time of the last survey in 2024.

The next most popular platforms are Facebook **(75%)** and LinkedIn **(57%)**, though publishers' usage levels of these are largely static year-on-year. Nearly half **(48%)** use Bluesky, which is the fastest growing platform for usage, with numbers rising **16** percentage points year-on-year.

X (**56%**; see section 1.4), YouTube **(42%)** and TikTok **(34%)** are the next most used channels. The proportion of publishers using YouTube has dropped by **8** percentage points while TikTok has increased by **8** percentage points, indicating a notable migration between the two.

Several other platforms are used by minorities of members, including Goodreads **(17%)**, Threads **(13%)** and Pinterest **(12%)**.

Which of these channels do you use to reach end-users?

Instagram	83%	(up 9%)
Facebook	75%	(up 2%)
Direct email	68%	(-)
LinkedIn	57%	(-)
X (formerly Twitter)	56%	(down 7%)
Bluesky	48%	(up 16%)
YouTube	42%	(down 8%)
TikTok	34%	(up 8%)
Direct email	26%	(down 1%)
Goodreads	17%	(up 4%)
Threads	13%	(up 4%)
Pinterest	12%	(-)
WhatsApp	9%	(down 3%)

1.2 Total platforms

Survey respondents use an average of **5.6** social channels to reach end-users—a small year-on-year increase from **5.4** in 2024. Only **2%** do not use any social platforms.

1.3 Trends in usage

For the second year in a row, Bluesky is the fastest growing social media platform in publishing in follower terms. More than four in five (**83%**) of publishers who use it say their number of followers has increased in the last year.

Instagram and TikTok are the next fastest growing platforms, with year-on-year increases in follower numbers for **76%** and **72%** of publishers respectively. Both numbers are very similar to 2024, indicating stable growth here. LinkedIn (**67%**), YouTube (**42%**) and Facebook (**38%**) have all seen upward usage trends, though the numbers of publishers reporting static levels here are notably higher than on Bluesky, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn.

Have you seen an increase in followers in these channels over the last year?
(Asked only to those who use that channel)

Bluesky	Instagram	TikTok	LinkedIn	YouTube	Facebook	X
83%	76%	72%	67%	42%	38%	13%

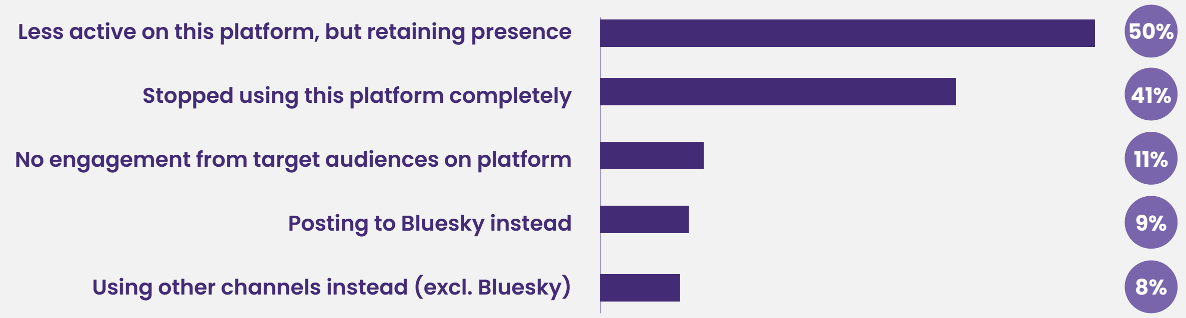
1.4 Trends on X

While publishers' use of most social media platforms has increased (see section 1.1), there is a sharp contrast in trends on X (formerly Twitter). The proportion of publishers using X fell by **7** percentage points to **56%**, which means it has dropped to fourth on the list of most used platforms.

This trend is mirrored by follower numbers. Only **13%** of publishers have seen their followers on X increase, but around half (**49%**) have recorded a drop. This is much higher than last year's figure of **33%**. It indicates an acceleration in the migration of both publishers and followers away from X to other platforms like Bluesky.

Nearly two thirds (**63%**) of members say their use of X has changed in the last year—**18** percentage points more than in the last survey. Of these, **41%** have stopped using X completely, and **50%** have maintained a presence but are less active there.

How has your approach to using X changed?
(Asked only to those who reported a change)



2. Users and engagement

2.1 End-users

Exactly half (**50%**) of members say their end-users are adult consumers. The next most common end-users are academics and researchers (**37%**), professionals (**29%**), educators (**29%**), students (**25%**), specialist communities (**23%**), children (**22%**) and Young Adults (**15%**). This variety of end-users indicates the very wide social media reach of IPG members.

2.2 Effective engagement platforms

Publishers say Instagram is the most effective channel for engagement with end-users. Nearly half (**45%**) say it is one of the three social channels that are most effective in attracting engagement.

Facebook (**33%**) is the next most effective platform, followed by X (**21%**)—despite the general decline in follower numbers here (see section 1.4)—and LinkedIn (**19%**). Bluesky (**16%**) has relatively low engagement, though it ranks ahead of TikTok (**9%**) and YouTube (**8%**).

Which of these are your top three channels for effectiveness of engagement with end-users?

Instagram	Facebook	X	LinkedIn	Bluesky	TikTok	YouTube
45%	33%	30%	21%	19%	9%	8%

2.3 Types of engagement

Nearly three quarters (**73%**) of respondents say they use social media to grow brand awareness, while half (**48%**) do so to increase sales. Other purposes include support for author communities (**36%**), engaging with target audiences (**24%**) and increasing the visibility of titles (**14%**). Brand awareness is also the most important priority for social media activity at the moment.

3. Direct marketing

3.1 Direct emails

The survey also asked publishers about their use of direct emails to reach end-users. Just over two thirds (**68%**) use these—a figure that is unchanged year-on-year. Three in five (**60%**) have seen an increase in numbers signed up for direct emails over the last year, which is faster growth than YouTube, Facebook and X but slower than Bluesky, Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn. However, direct emails often achieve better engagement. Three in ten (**30%**) cite them as one of their three most effective forms of engagement, putting them behind only Instagram and Facebook.

3.2 Direct mails

Direct mails are used by **26%** of publishers, compared to **27%** in 2024. Just over a third (**36%**) have seen an increase in subscribers to these mails in the last year.

4. Constraints

4.1 Resources

Two in five (**40%**) members say resource constraints are their biggest single challenge when promoting books on social media. These constraints are led by budget pressures, limited staff time and the absence of a dedicated digital marketing role.

4.2 Other constraints

Publishers' social media activity is also constrained by the difficulty of reaching target audiences (**20%**)—especially older demographics and academic communities.

There is also a lack of expertise in effective social media use (**19%**), including around fragmented user bases and making repetitive communications feel fresh and engaging. Navigating volatile social media algorithms (**19%**) is another challenge, and members cite the difficulty of cutting through the noise and adapting to the growing number of available platforms. Additionally, **13%** say they see little return on engagement efforts, noting that ever-changing algorithms make meaningful engagement increasingly time-consuming.

Five conclusions

1. Instagram leads social media for use and engagement.

Instagram has consolidated its position as publishers' most popular social media platform, having widened the gap on Facebook over the last year. Publishers also consider it to be the most effective channel for engagement with end-users.

2. Bluesky is the fastest growing platform.

For the second year in a row, more than four in five publishers report an increase in followers on Bluesky. Followers on Instagram and LinkedIn are growing nearly as fast, and both of these are thought to be more effective than Bluesky in engagement terms.

3. Publishers continue to move away from X.

There has been a substantial net decline in publishers' follower numbers on X for two successive years. Many IPG members have either quit the platform or reduced activity. Migration from X has contributed to growth on other platforms like Bluesky.

4. TikTok is overtaking YouTube.

Publishers and their followers are switching in sizeable numbers from YouTube to TikTok. Those using TikTok have increased by nearly a quarter year-on-year while YouTube users are down. However, these are considered to be the two weakest of the leading social platforms in achieving engagement with end-users.

5. Resource shortages are restricting engagement.

Brand awareness is the top reason publishers use social media. However, activity is being restricted by a shortage of resources and expertise, especially when navigating algorithms and reaching target audiences.

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