

FTSE100 CEO Social Tracker

Edition 2 | May 2022

Foreword



We're excited to share the second edition of the FTSE100 CEO Social Tracker, conducted and published biannually by Kest CNC. In this edition of the Tracker, we do a deep dive into 302 leaders' posts on LinkedIn and Twitter from 1st January to 31st March 2022.

This edition reveals a dramatic change in the composition of the top 10 FTSE100 CEO rankings, with new names entering the leaderboard despite a striking decline in posting compared to past months. The analysis demonstrates there's space for growth when it comes to executive communications across social – and that CEOs are not making the most of their social platforms. As of March 2022, only 66 out of 100 FTSE100 CEOs were active on LinkedIn, with only 30 active in the past three months. Twitter figures were even lower, with just 20 CEOs active on Twitter.

The FTSE100 CEO Social Tracker also provides insight into the conversation topics, engagements, content and tone used by the CEOs. As CEOs try to relate more to their audiences, we've seen the language of leadership become more personal and inspiring – important attributes to possess given the geopolitical context while conducting our analysis.

The first quarter of 2022 made for some of the most challenging communications terrain for leaders in our lifetime. Putin's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 sent shockwaves through the world, resulting in one of the biggest refugee crises since World War II. As governments enacted sanctions and publicly condemned Putin's actions, eyes turned to business leaders to respond to the unfolding crisis. It was a key time for FTSE100 executives to step up and be heard, but to also handle a major global issue sensitively and with compassion.

Analysis in the Tracker has revealed the CEO social data story of Ukraine, Russia and corporate responses. The resulting report shows a sizeable shift in executive communications, with executives sharing emotive responses to the crisis, yet posting significantly less than in the previous quarter. It highlights how executives have rapidly shifted focus to respond to current affairs.

However, geopolitical issues were not the only topics covered. Sustainability was a key subject covered by execs in the run-up to COP26, although there was a dramatic falloff on the theme following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Our analysis of posts around sustainability, DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion), HR (human resources) and financial results explores what social best practice looks like for executives, and highlights what drives engagement.

Insights at a glance



The FTSE100 CEO Social Tracker

According to our FTSE100 CEO Social Tracker

66% of FTSE100 CEOs
were present
on LinkedIn

234 posts published by FTSE100 CEOs between January 1st and March 31st 2022

20% of FTSE100 CEOs
were present
on Twitter

68 posts published by FTSE100 CEOs between January 1st to March 31st 2022

Our parameters and the questions we aimed to answer:

Topics of conversation

What are the main topics / themes covered?

Content types

What are the most and least engaging types of content used?

Engagement

What content is driving the highest engagement?

Using the platform functionality

How are CEOs using the platform's functionality?

Tone of voice

What type of language leads to the highest engagement?

Since we left off...

The FTSE100 has changed since our last report spanning mid-June to October 2021, with new voices and ideas being shared.

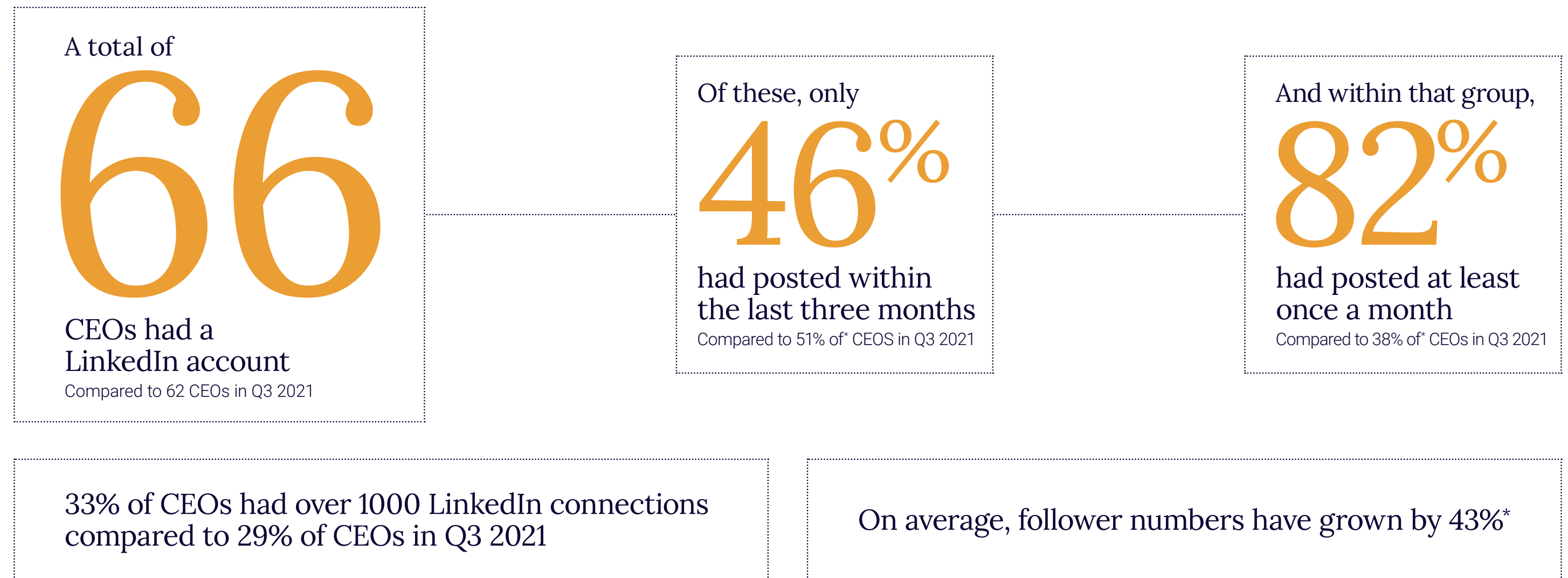
7 new companies have joined the FTSE100

2 companies have had CEO changes

A total of 547 posts have been published on LinkedIn by FTSE100 CEOs

LinkedIn activity Q3 2021 to Q1 2022

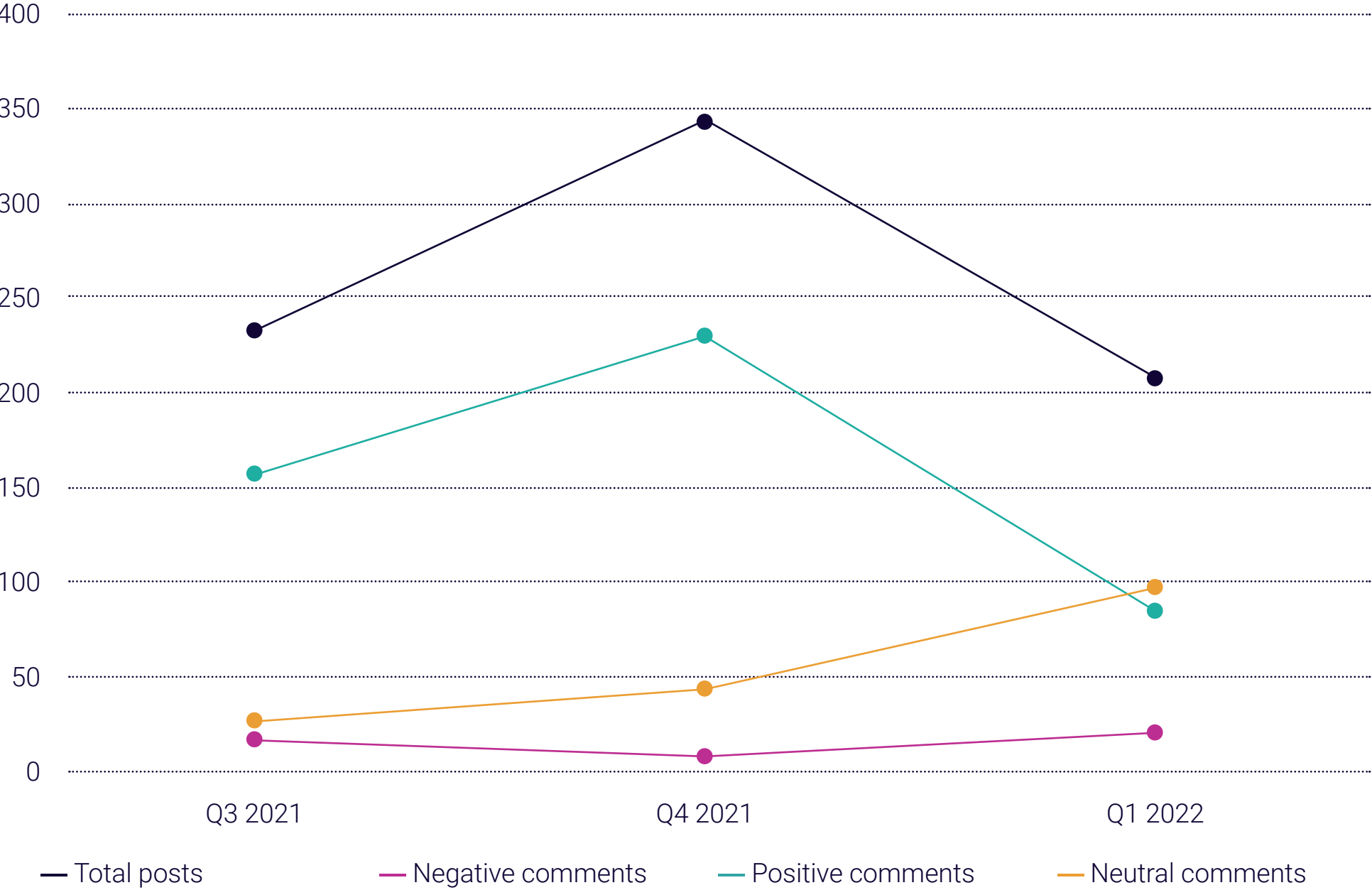
Overall, activity has remained at a similar level in the past six months. However, CEOs that engage with social media have posted more often.



*This takes into consideration new CEOs who have joined the FTSE 100, which may have added a lot of followers.

LinkedIn posts frequency by quarter

Number of posts per quarter

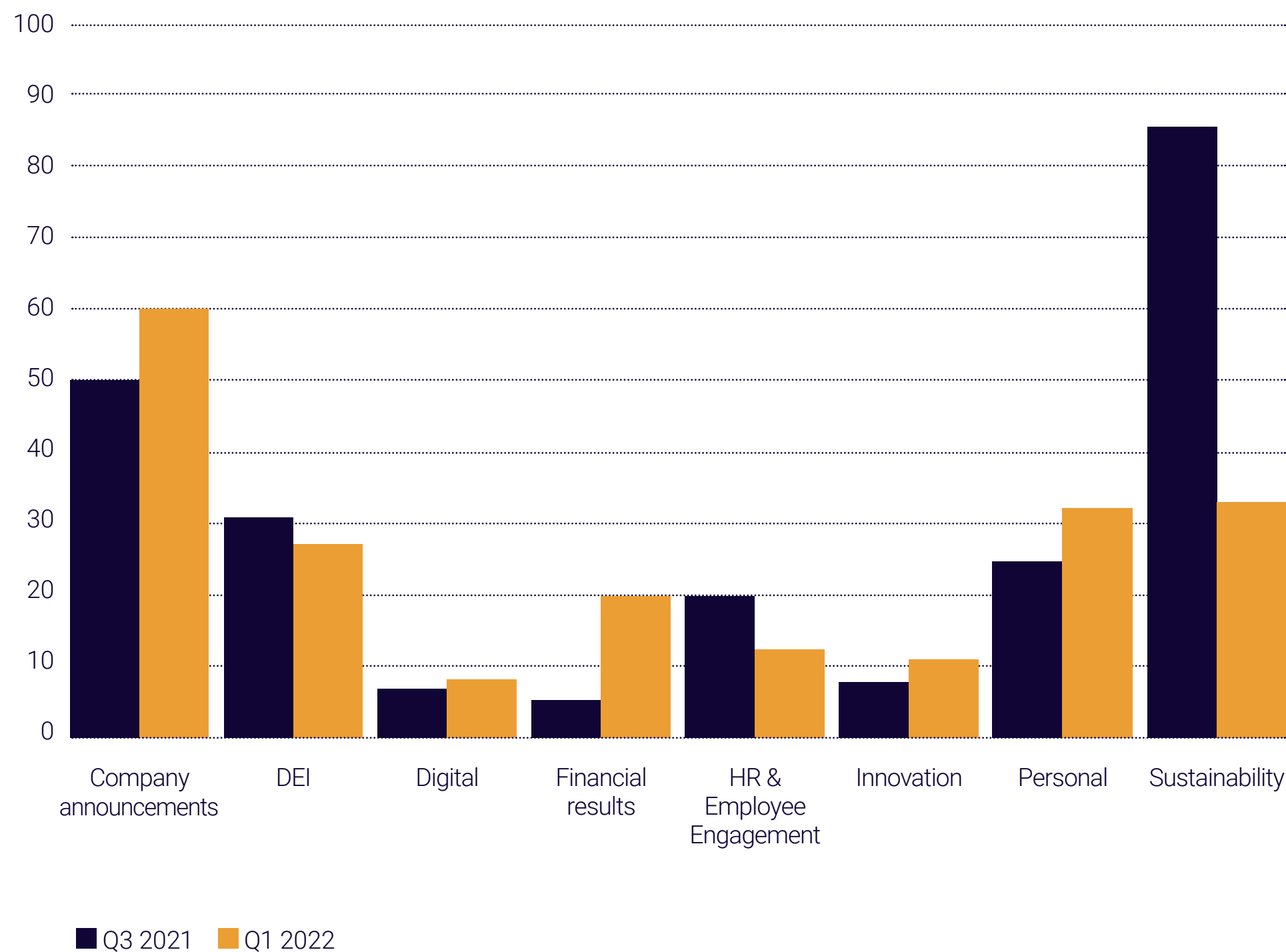


Posting frequency picked up following the summer months as a result of COP26 in November, but has declined to levels below that of July 2021 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Post sentiment count is based on posts which had comments. Posts with no comments are not counted.

What have FTSE100 CEOs been sharing on LinkedIn?

Post topics Q3 2021 and Q1 2022



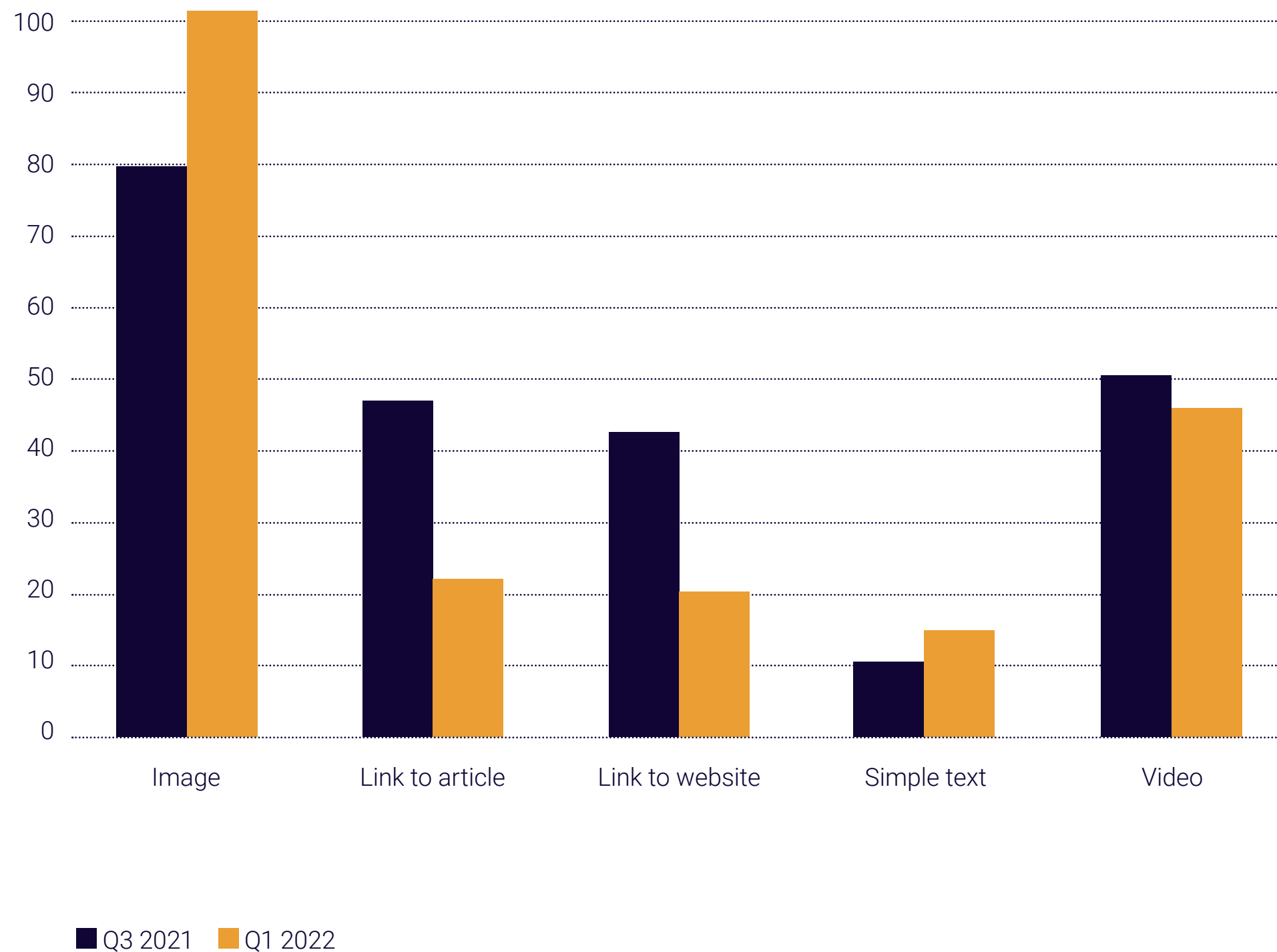
There has been a sharp decrease in sustainability-related posts following COP26.

Company announcements and financial results have increased by 18.2% and 107.75% respectively. This has been driven by end of year reporting and the war in Ukraine.

Companies have imposed social media embargoes as a result of the war, turning LinkedIn into a tool used primarily for important company announcements.

How have they been communicating?

Post format Q3 2021 and Q1 2022



Images have remained the most popular format for LinkedIn posts, making up 49% of all posts, followed by videos which made up 22% of posts.











There has been an increase of 30% in the use of simple text when sharing messages, emphasizing the importance of language rather than eye-catching visuals.

Audio clips have not been used, indicating a gap in the market for new and innovative ways of making an impact.

Top 10 FTSE100 CEOs based on engagements



Introducing our Q1 2022 top 10 CEOs based on engagements

Ranking		CEO	Company	Engagements
1	▲	 Ben van Beurden	Royal Dutch Shell	7733
2	▲	 Alan Jope	Unilever	4394
3	▼	 Bernard Looney	BP	3319
4	✱	 Emma Walmsley	GlaxoSmithKline	1906
5	▼	 Laxman Narasimhan	Reckitt	1811
6	▼	 Noel Quinn	HSBC	1741
7	✱	 C.S. Venkatakrishnan	Barclays	1228
8	✱	 Zoran Bogdanovic	Coca-Cola HBC	1010
9	▼	 Alison Rose	NatWest Group	852
10	▼	 Keith Barr	IHG Hotels	818

The ranking of our top 10 CEOs based on social engagements has changed drastically in the past six months, with new players entering the list.

The engagement score was calculated from the average number of engagements per post in Q1 2022. Posts with an overall negative sentiment were excluded from the calculations.

High engagement on social media doesn't always mean positive engagement. For example, one executive had to apologize for their organization continuing to work in Russia.

These are the CEOs who received the highest amount of engagement per post.

Our top 10 CEOs at a glance

From commenting on sustainability to leveraging hashtags, we've mapped what sets the most engaging executive content apart.

60% **shared a post on sustainability**
Although less so than six months ago, sustainability remains central to CEO LinkedIn narratives.

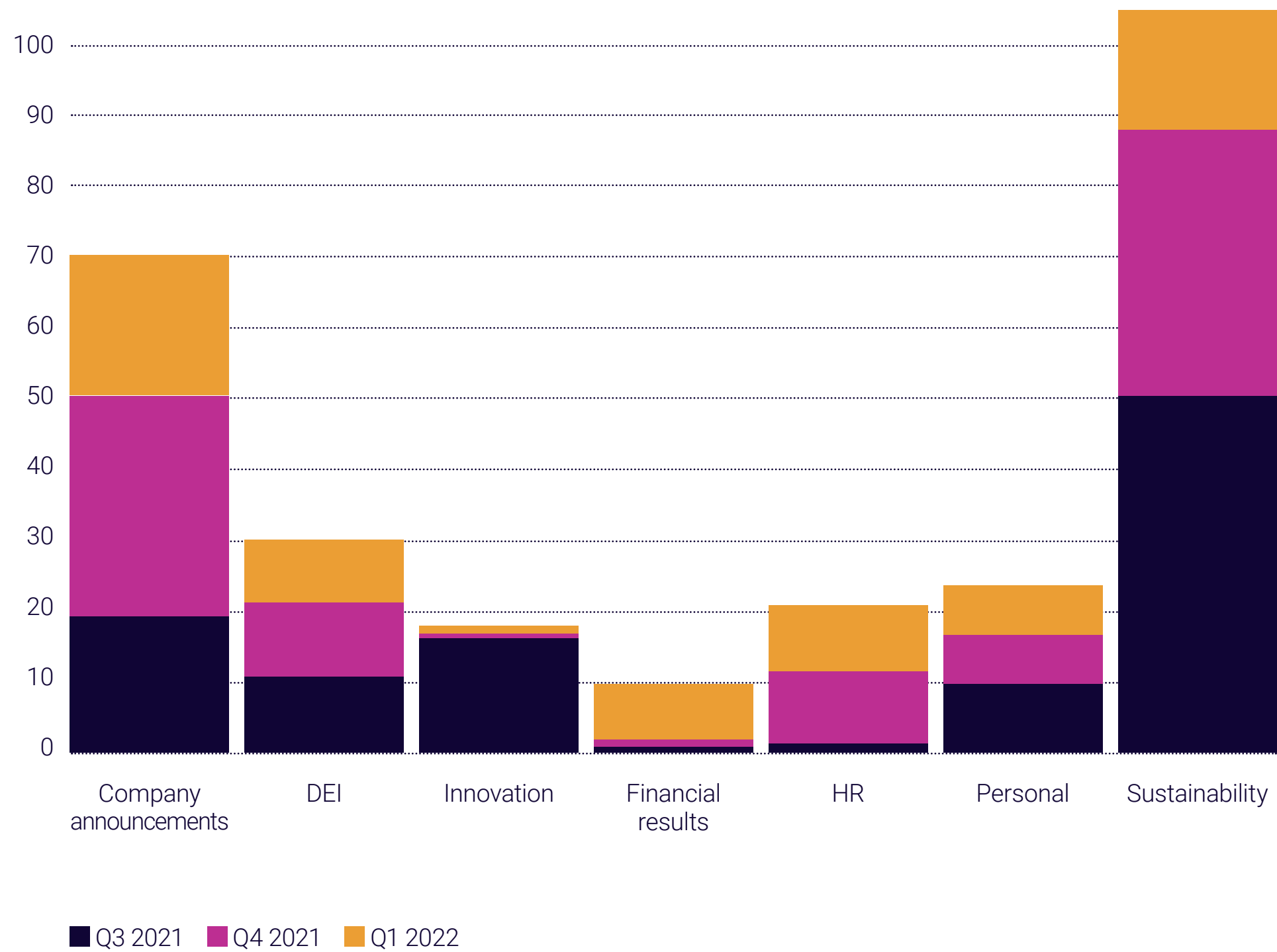
90% **used hashtags when sharing posts**
Hashtags have remained popular amongst our top CEOs, who use them to coin company phrases or discuss topical issues.

40% **posted over 3x a month**
There has been a sharp decline in frequency of posting as a result of the war in the Ukraine.

80% **had over 15,000 connections**
A large number of connections is a key driver for engagement.

What are the Top 10 CEOs posting about?

Top 10 CEOs LinkedIn post topics

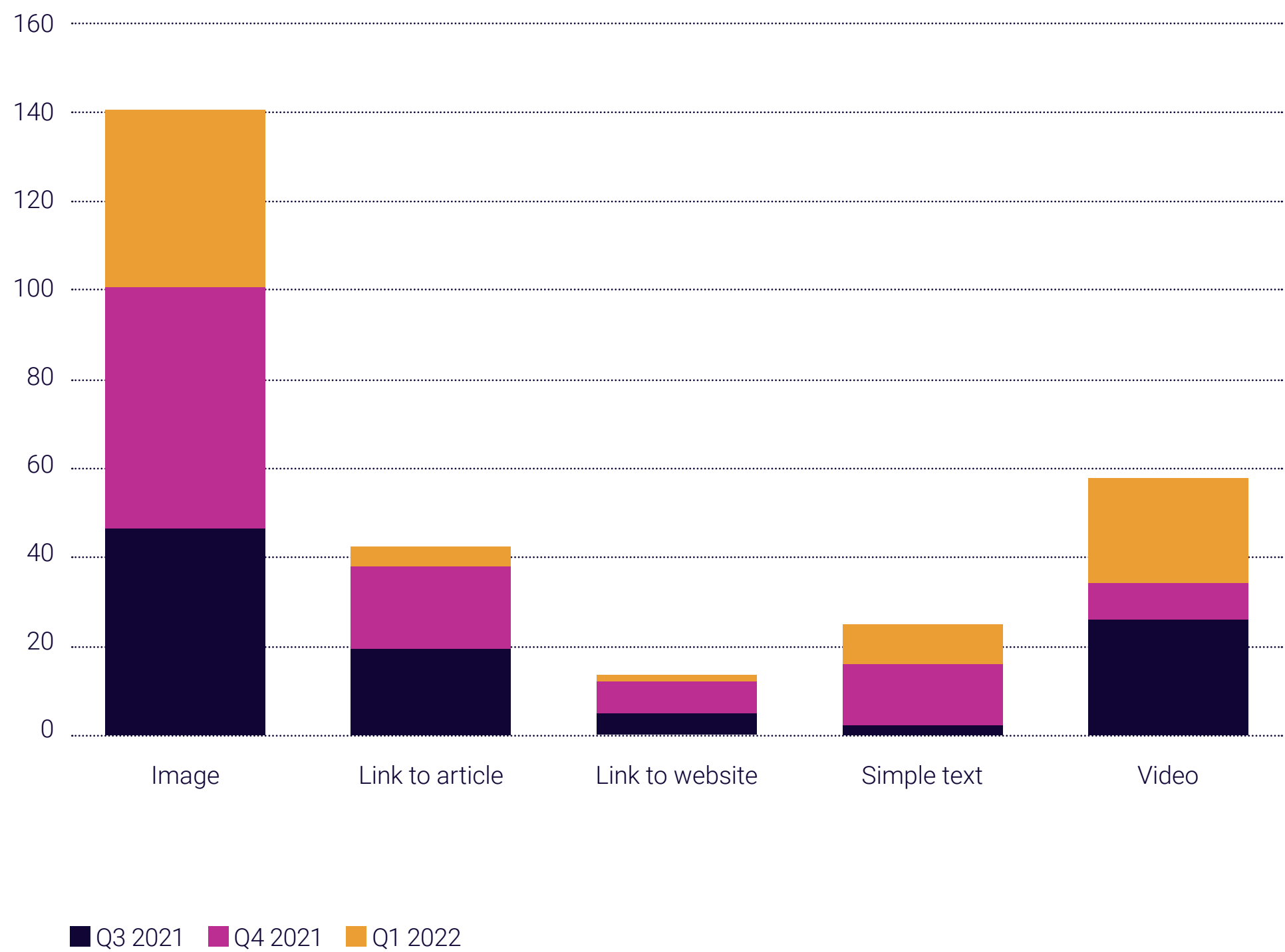


Company announcements have dominated the posts by our top 10 CEOs on LinkedIn in Q1 2022.

Our top 10 CEOs posted significantly less in Q1 than in Q3 2021. Overall, FTSE100 CEOs posted 12% less in Q1 2022 (compared to Q3 2021). In contrast, our top 10 CEOs posted 33% less.

How are they conveying their message?

Top 10 CEOs LinkedIn post formats

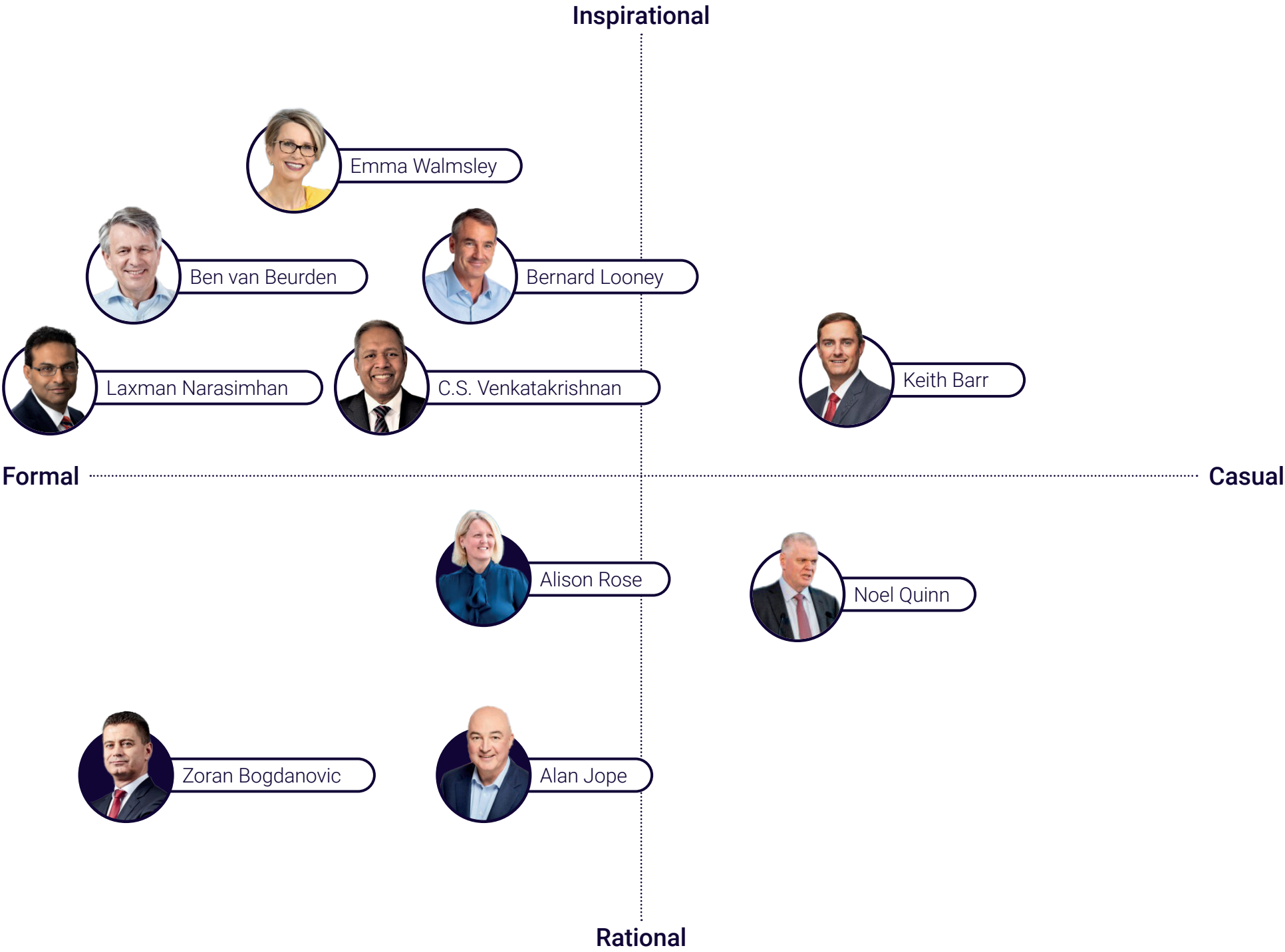


Images have consistently remained the format of choice of our top CEOs when posting on LinkedIn.

Compared to six months ago, top CEOs are using more simple text posts, which highlight their message rather than using eye-catching visuals.

The usage of images as post format declined by 20% between Q3 2021 and Q1 2022, whilst the usage of simple text increased by 61% in the same time period.

Communicating like a leader



We have analyzed the language and tone used by the top CEOs, based on engagement in the past quarters, mapping them out visually to display their individual communications styles. These CEOs tend to communicate in a formal tone, using inspirational language which makes the reader feel close to the company’s goals and achievements.

Crisis reaction deep dive



Responding to a crisis on social media

On the 24th February 2022, Putin announced that Russia was enacting a 'special military operation' to 'demilitarise and denazify' Ukraine. The resulting invasion of Ukraine has resulted in one of the largest refugee crises in Europe since WWII, and has shocked the world.

As governments enacted sanctions and publicly condemned Putin's actions, eyes turned to business leaders to respond to the unfolding crisis. It was a key time for FTSE100 executives to step up and be heard, but also to handle a major global issue with sensitivity and compassion.

Their responses by numbers:

14 total posts

74,925 total engagements

5,117 average engagements per post

50% of posts were text only

Crisis post themes: highest engagement

60%

used first person

The posts made it clear it was a personal perspective, but also representative of the organization.

80%

used emotive language

'Shocked and saddened' and 'horrified' were used to highlight the incredibly tragic situation.

100%

covered company action

All executives made it clear what their organization was doing in response to the crisis, from humanitarian support to ceasing operations in Russia.

20%

produced their own company crisis situation

High engagement doesn't always mean positive engagement. One executive had to apologize for their organization continuing work in Russia.

The top five most-engaged-with posts earned 76% of all engagements among FTSE100 CEOs relating to the invasion of Ukraine. There were a few key themes that highlighted what a highly engaging executive post looks like in times of crisis.

Crisis post themes: lowest engagement

80% **used first person plural**
The majority of executives referred to 'we' and 'us', rather than 'I'. As a result, posts were less personal and more of a company announcement.

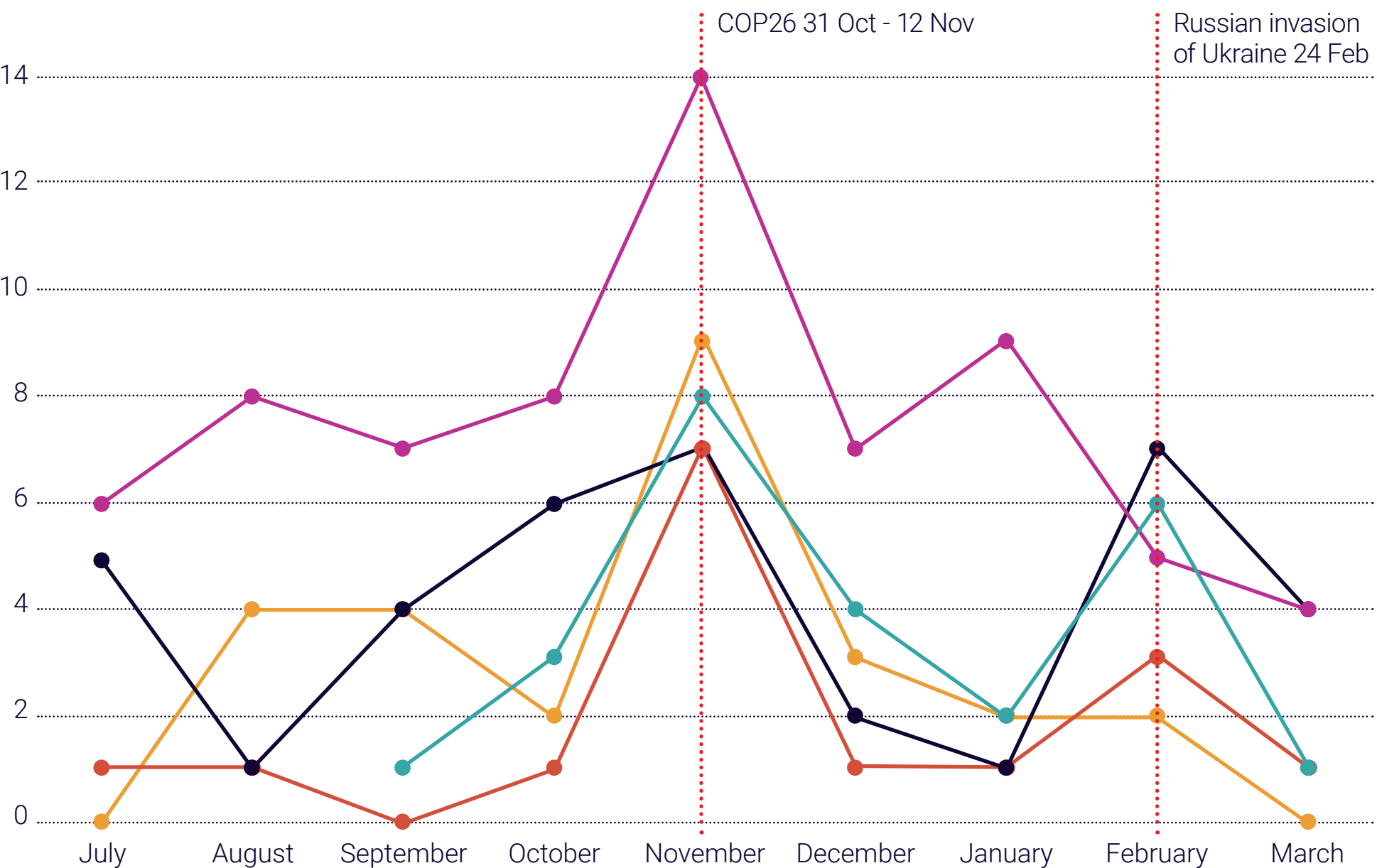
80% **used impersonal language**
Without the emotional or personal connection in posts, they read much more formal and less impactful.

60% **were less than 350 characters long**
These posts were much shorter than their high-engagement counterparts. In some cases, brevity can minimize the impact of a statement.

20% **were re-shared company posts**
One executive re-shared a company post, with additional copy. However, the bespoke copy didn't add a personalized approach, limiting impact and engagement.

The posts with the least engagement clearly demonstrated what not to do in the face of a crisis. Posts were impersonal and lacked emotion.

LinkedIn posts per month, shared by the top five most-engaged-with FTSE100 CEOs



We have looked at the frequency with which some of our top CEOs have communicated in the past few months.

The data showcases a peak of activity in November reflected in sustainability-related posts, as a result of COP26 and its impact on companies.

All CEOs reduced their activity in March following the invasion of Ukraine, showcasing how companies have limited themselves when it comes to social posting.



Is the Ukraine situation triggering negative engagements?

Sentiment breakdown of posts mentioning Ukraine



Posts related to Ukraine were received with mixed sentiment, with most posts having an overall neutral sentiment.

Negative sentiment tended to criticize the company rather than the CEO, often criticizing companies that continue to operate in Russia.

■ Neutral ■ Positive ■ Negative

Is the Ukraine situation triggering negative engagements?

57%

Posts with
a negative
sentiment

1 Jan 2022 - 24 Feb 2022 (55 days)

43%

Posts with
a negative
sentiment

24 Feb 2022 – 31 Mar 2022 (35 days)

Within Q1, the number of posts with a negative sentiment has more or less remained the same before and after the start of the Ukraine Crisis.

Whilst CEOs have posted less on average, this does not necessarily mean more posts have been received with a negative sentiment.

How to approach executive comms posts in the face of a crisis?

Key lessons

Keep it
personal

Using first person singular is key as it showcases leadership and teamwork within the organization.

Use emotive
language

It's important to show an emotional response where appropriate. It's a chance to humanize an organization.

Don't worry
about wordcount

Personal posts on LinkedIn can be lengthy. Audiences want to see a considered approach.

Show,
don't tell

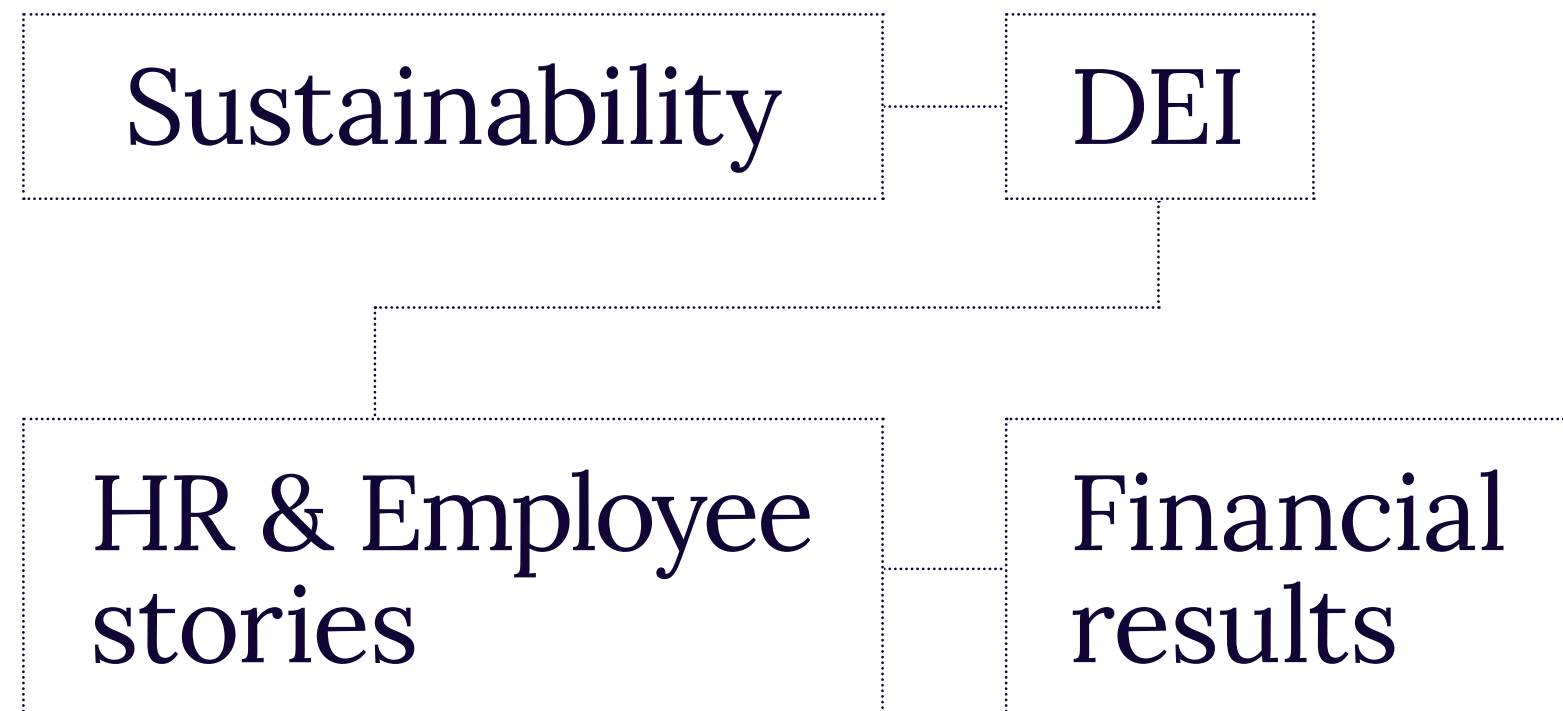
Execs must communicate action. 100% of high-engagement posts covered the business response to the crisis.

Posts with the highest engagement



70% of the posts with highest engagement in Q1 2022 have focused on the war in Ukraine.

Following the crisis deep dive, this section will analyze the most engaging posts related to...



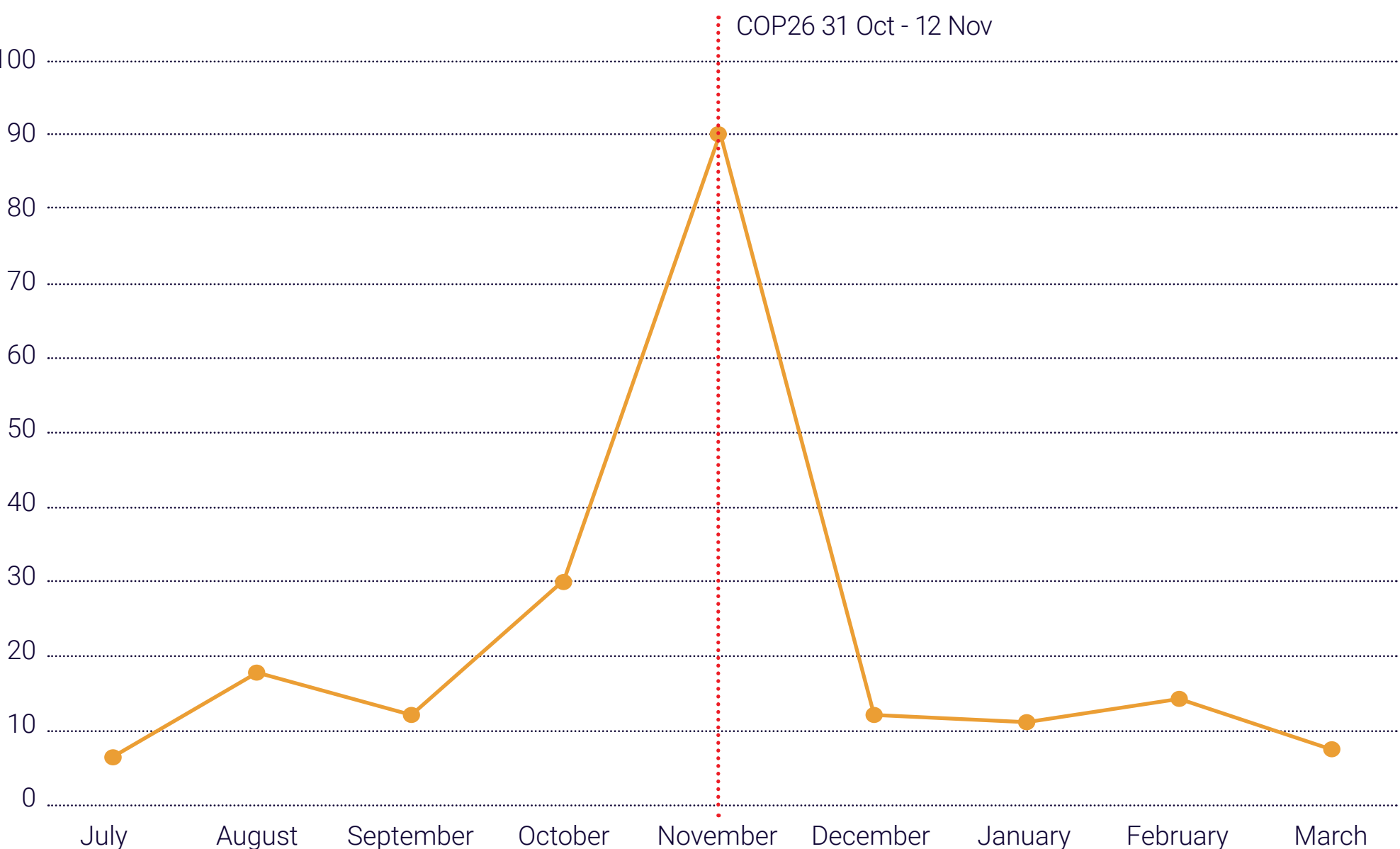
Communicating on sustainability



Tracking posts on sustainability over time

COP26 drove the conversation online

Posts on sustainability July 2021 to March 2022



This graph displays the amount of posts related to sustainability in each month, from 1st July 2021 to 31st March 2022.

There is a large peak in activity in November 2021, due to the COP26 event which took place from October 31st to November 12th, 2021. The number of posts related to sustainability declines rapidly in November, stabilizing during Q1 2021.

There is a decrease in posts during March, in which only seven posts related to sustainability were published by FTSE100 CEOs.

Top 10 posts talking about sustainability

CEOs that clearly communicated company action with engaging visuals drove the most engagement – and it's clear that one CEO in particular leads the pack when posting about this topic.

50% **were from one CEO**
One of the CEOs analyzed produced five out of the top 10 most-engaged-with posts.

90% **used multimedia**
Images, video and link previews all featured heavily across the most-engaged posts. Images featured in 60% of posts.

60% **covered company action**
The majority of posts focused on how companies were reducing their carbon footprint, or supporting the energy transition.

80% **used hashtags**
Branded campaign hashtags featured heavily, as well as #lowcarbon and #energytransition.

Communicating on sustainability: best practice

Be a part of the conversation by participating in the LinkedIn community.

Learnings from our top CEO posts

Do:

- Tag colleagues and partners in posts to help drive engagement and connect with your community online
- Don't limit your post length – it's more important to tell a clear and engaging story
- Have an eye-catching opening line that's less than 140 characters (posts truncate after that)
- Include images that feature the CEO
- Be a part of the conversation and reply to comments

Lessons from the least engaged-with posts

Don't:

- Include external links too often – they're not favored by LinkedIn's algorithm
 - You can include the link in a comment under the post as a workaround
- Have multimedia assets (e.g., image and videos) that don't feature the CEO don't have the same impact – ensure content is always highly relevant and personal to the CEO

Communicating on DEI



Top posts talking about DEI

There were only eight posts relating to DEI posted in Q1. Of those posts, the top five all had the same features and themes in common:

All written by CEOs who are part of underrepresented groups in business, such as women or ethnic minorities

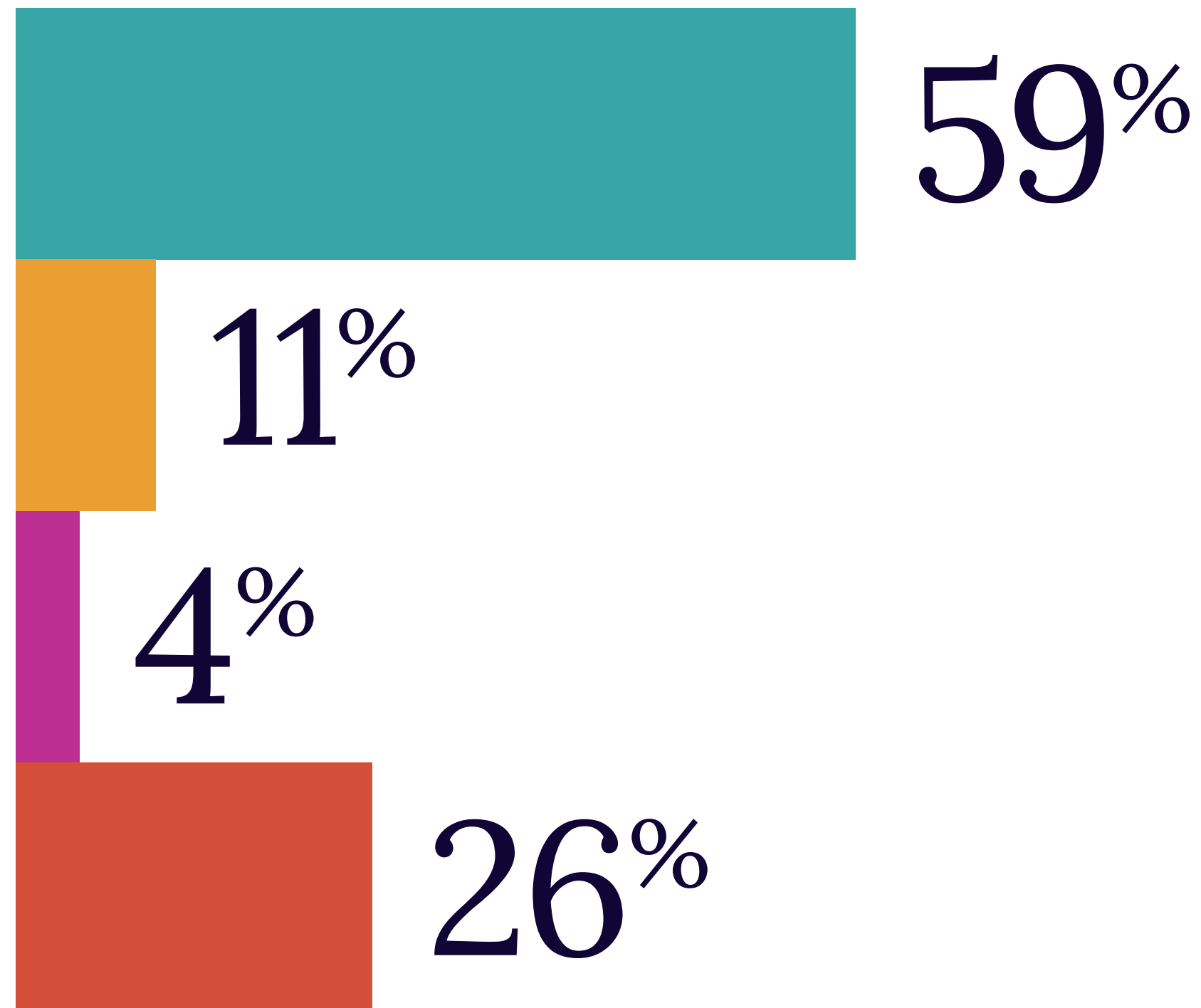
All posts focus on gender imbalance, shared on awareness days

All use multimedia, such as images, PDFs and videos

All posts acknowledge current gender gaps in their industries

Posts on DEI tend to be reactive rather than proactive

Posts on the subject of DEI Q1 2022



When looking at all the posts by FTSE100 CEOs related to DEI in Q1 2022, it becomes evident that the majority of posts celebrate a specific date.

This makes the practice of posting DEI related posts reactive, rather than proactive.

59% of posts were in relation to International Women's Day, whilst 11% of posts celebrated Martin Luther King Day.

- International Women's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- LGBT History Month
- Other

Communicating on DEI: best practice

Empathy and transparency result in authentic content.

Learnings from our top CEO posts

Do:

- Keep copy personal, but appropriate – showcasing empathy around DEI issues is key
- Use awareness days as a hook to maximize reach
- Be candid and transparent about the DEI issues that the company faces and has to work on

Lessons from the least engaged-with posts

Don't:

- Be impersonal and speak at a company level – it should be the CEO's take on the issue at hand
- Just post for the sake of it on an awareness day – execs should back up words with action
- Share multiple posts on one awareness day – it's likely that one post won't be seen or engaged with as much

Communicating on HR & Employee Engagement



Top 10 posts talking about HR and employee stories

The top-performing posts were unafraid to get personal – showcasing the unique contributions of employees and featuring more “informal” photo or video content.

70%

profiled an individual or group of employees

The posts detailed the unique value these specific employees are bringing to the business. By tagging them, further engagement is generated.

20%

featured “informal” photos of the CEO or employees

Deviating from the standard corporate headshot, showing people in their natural work environment or at home creates more interesting content.

20%

included video content of leadership and employees

A simple video compilation of self-filmed videos can be a low-cost yet engaging content format.

Communicating on HR and employee stories: best practice

Sharing personal journeys brings CEOs closer to their employees, and their LinkedIn community.

Learnings from our top CEO posts

Do:

- Be unafraid to share just a glimmer of one's own journey – Alison Rose is a champion here, making her appear approachable to her online audience
- Demonstrate evidence that the CEO has personally spoken with the employee(s), e.g., via unique anecdotes or photos

Lessons from the least engaged-with posts

Don't:

- Forget to tag the LinkedIn profile of the employee(s).
- Share posts which don't display people as the forefront of the company

Communicating financial results



Top 10 posts talking about financial results

The top-performing posts used strong financial performance to gain trust in the company's success to pursue other corporate objectives – highlighting their “team” and appearing on video were additional trends from the CEOs.

50% featured a video of the CEO presenting the results

Whether filming from their desk or behind a green screen, the most popular format to showcase financial results included video content of the CEOs.

80% acknowledged the value brought by the CEOs' “team” or “employees”

Highlighting the contributions of the company's “people” is a key trend across top-performing posts.

70% used results as an opportunity to reaffirm corporate strategic objectives

From Shell's net-zero ambition, to Rio Tinto's aim to strengthen its ESG credentials – most top-performing posts highlighted results to reiterate corporate vision.

Communicating on financial results: best practice

Showcasing financial success alongside wider business ambitions leads to high engagement.

Learnings from our top CEO posts

Do:

- Highlight the efforts and contributions of your colleagues – at the least, this will drive cross-company social engagement
- Showcase strategic corporate ambitions
- Use interesting content formats, such as video, infographic, slides, to engage an online audience with financial results

Lessons from the least engaged-with posts

Don't:

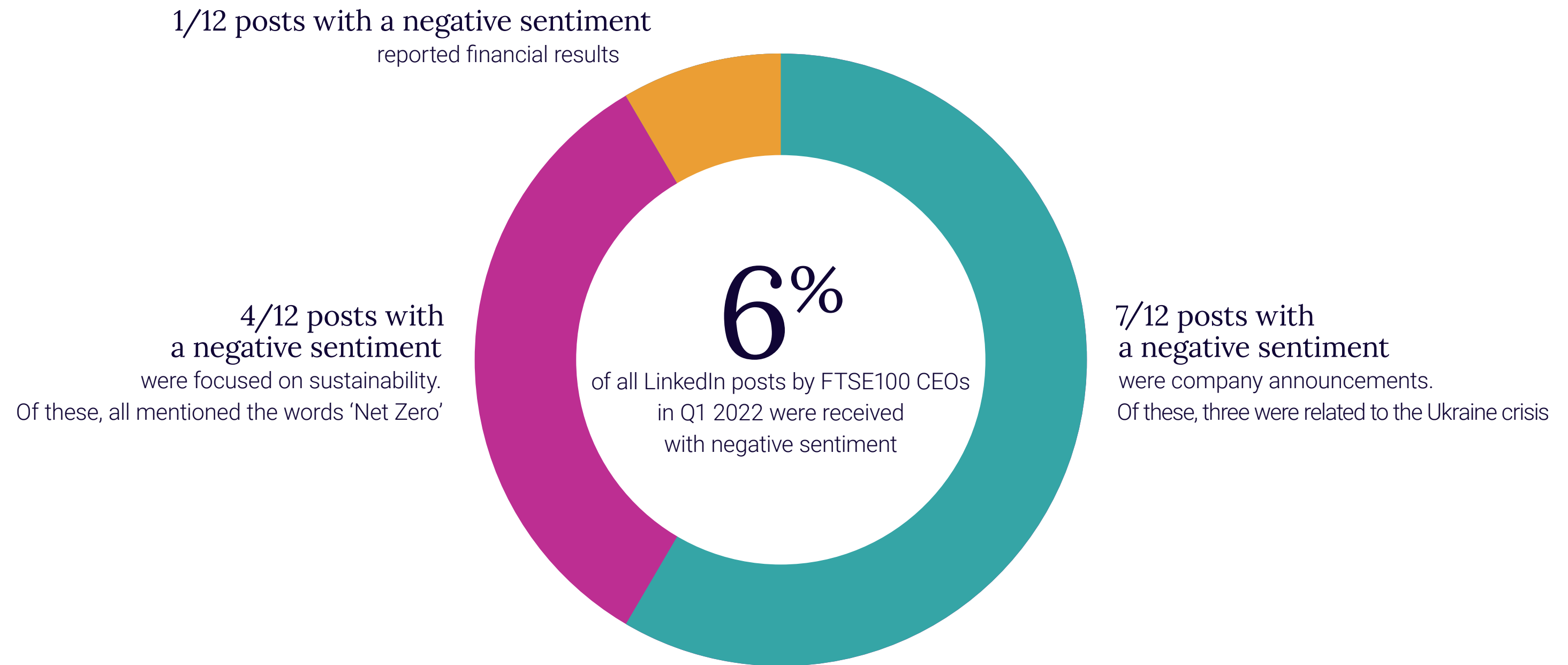
- Appear out of touch with current social climate (e.g., do acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic where relevant)
- Forget to link a full press release or financial breakdown

Posts received negatively



Negative posts on LinkedIn: what can we learn?

We have analyzed the posts which received negative comments from LinkedIn users in Q1 2022.



*Negative posts were calculated on the basis of posts which received a majority of negative comments.

The anatomy of a negative comment

██████████
██████████
“Sustainable” investments don’t matter if they’re totally outweighed by your sustainable ones: <https://marketforces.org.uk/barclays>

██████████
██████████
Just hope everyone that is chasing (or being pushed?) to strive for [#energytransition](#) and [#industrial #sustainability](#) does not lose sight of the need to manage the transition slowly (and smartly) away from hydrocarbons such that we do not have countries such as those in Europe suffering from lack of supply of gas etc. and experiencing spikes in energy prices. Cutting off one’s nose to spite one’s face, in this type of situation, can have lethal consequences - do not need to look further than Storm Uri last year in Texas to see what can happen if things are not thought carefully and comprehensively IMHO

██████████
██████████
Barclays is one of the most important banking service providers to the Adani Group, a company building massive thermal coal mines and power stations. Barclays knows this, doesn’t seem to care.

██████████
██████████
It definitely helps when you’re paying zero pounds in corporate taxes in the UK(0). And one billion over a decade may sound nice, but it’s ****not even a third**** of what youve spent on buying back shares ****in just one year****. Just as ever, it’s deception and empty promises over meaningful action while the planet is burning and people are suffering the consequences of your price gouging practices.

(0) <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/government-energy-bills-chancellor-north-sea-rishi-sunak-b2010143.html>

██████████
██████████
Suggestion: for BP to demonstrate real leadership in business ethics and purpose driven new-capitalist business models, why not hand over the multi-billion \$ windfall from the recent/current energy price increases to be distributed to householders who are in fuel poverty and small businesses who are struggling to keep afloat?

██████████
██████████
Bernard Looney I’m a bit disappointed that most of **bp** communication pivoted back to “deliver more oil” compared to 2 years ago. I wished you’d continue to comment more on the progress made in the Low-carbon areas. A French politician used to say that the windsock does not change its mind, it’s just the wind that is turning. Is that your case? It will be much much harder to support decarbonisation of value chains given how much time we have than try to squeeze the last barrel. [#leadership](#) [#climateaction](#)

██████████
██████████
I agree with the sentiment, however it would be a good start to look at how employees are treated or mistreated!
A culture starts at the top! Whether it’s a president or a CEO. Toxic behaviours and cultures thrive when core values are not protected and the clique is!
I have witnessed and experienced such egregious events and behaviours in your organisation. Racism, discrimination, bullying, ridiculing employees with disabilities, ridiculing employees with mental health issues, targeting tec! All against your codes! Very sad!

██████████
██████████
BP could funnel a lot more than renewables -5% of humungus profits, largest for 8 years, into Nissan EV production to shorten the gap between big oil and vastly less oil.

Negative comments can be overwhelming – but what are they really saying?

The majority of negative comments criticise the company, or company decisions, rather than the CEO.

In most cases, posts which received a majority of negative comments also received neutral/positive comments.

In conclusion

Overall, the executive social landscape has changed significantly, responding to the dramatic change in current affairs and the geopolitical crisis in Ukraine.

The Ukraine conflict highlights the ways in which a connected CEO's approach to social can impact an organisation's reputation, as her/his most engaging posts provide company updates and action in response to events. Additionally, the report demonstrates that in the face of a crisis, most executives have taken a 'less is more' approach, presenting significantly fewer posts in response to the situation in Ukraine.

Nonetheless, social media remains a relevant area for CEOs to drive thought leadership and connect with their communities. There is room to express one's voice on topics such as sustainability and DEI without timing it to an event or date – allowing it to be driven by a personal response, rather than corporate strategy.

The next six months will provide a new, possibly even more challenging landscape for executives and their comms teams. As the news cycle moves on from the current crisis, communications professionals will have to advise on how to sensitively begin proactive executive social campaigns, whilst still recognising the ongoing conflict. At the same time, it will also provide an opportunity for organisations to effectively communicate company action through their leaders.

An aerial, high-angle photograph of a paved plaza with large square tiles. The image is split vertically down the middle. The left half is brightly lit, showing several people walking in various directions, with their long, dark shadows cast to the right. The right half is in deep shadow, with the same scene appearing much darker and less detailed. The people are dressed in casual summer attire like t-shirts and jeans. The overall composition suggests a transition or a duality of light and shadow.

KEKST
CNC

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