The 2020 Instagram Stories
Benchmark Report

THE GUIDE TO INSTAGRAM STORIES METRICS AND BENCHMARKS FOR 2020

Rival IQ

Welcome

"How are my Instagram Stories *really* doing?"

Instagram Stories continue to grow in importance to your social media marketing efforts, but it can be tough to know how your brand stacks up against competitors.

In this report, we're examining the Instagram Stories performance of 29k+ Stories and over 145k frames to bring you data benchmarks. Use these to set attainable goals for your brand and advance your strategy.

Rival IQ

Questions to Answer with The Instagram Stories Benchmark Report
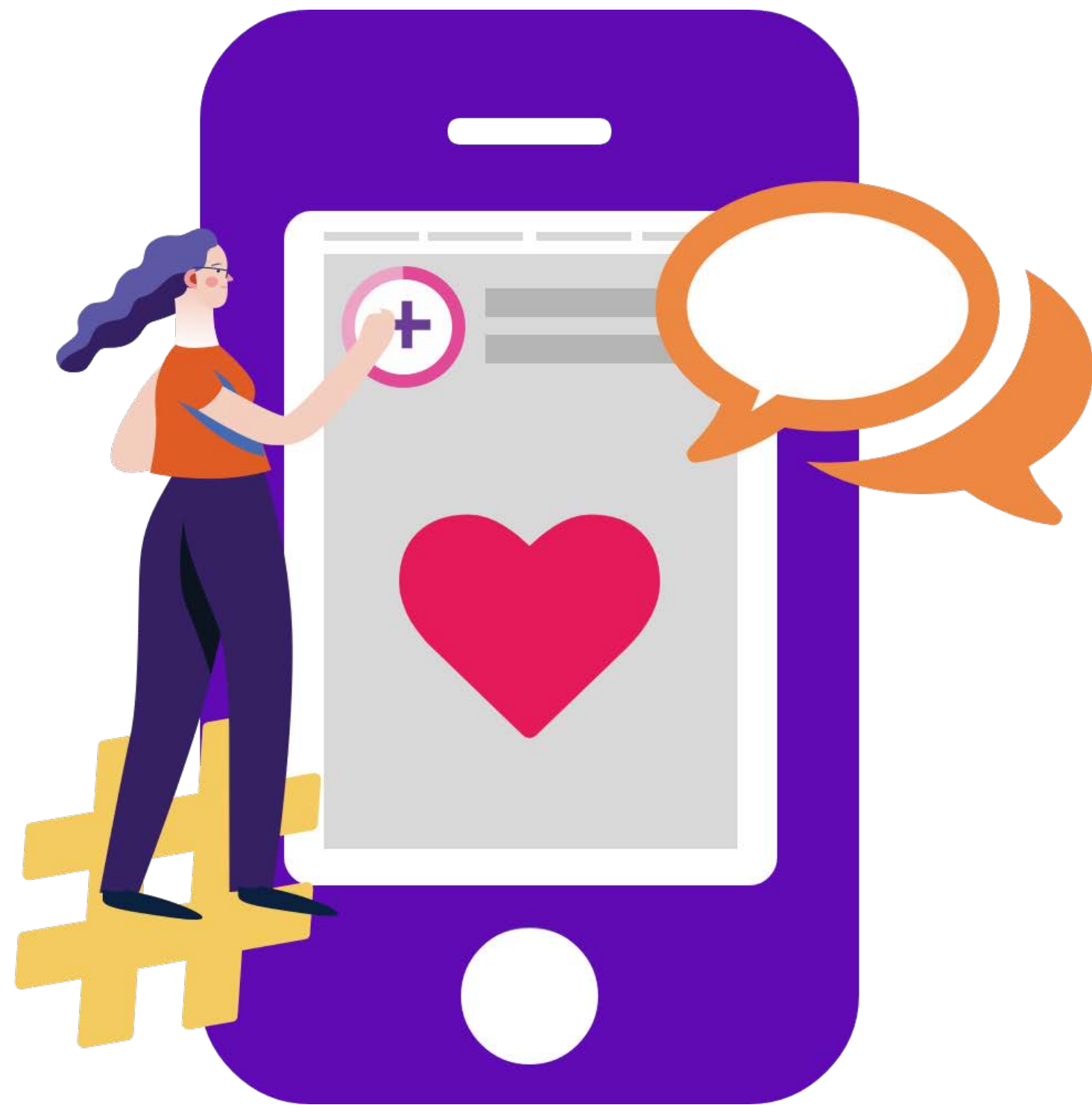
- How do I find my Instagram Stories stats?

- How frequently should I be posting Stories?

- Should I be posting videos, images, or both in my Instagram Stories?

- What kind of Stories engagement (taps, replies, and exits) should I expect?

- How might my Instagram Stories engagement change if I posted more or grew my followers?

Rival IQ

The Data Set Details

DATA SET INCLUDES

550
HANDLES

IN 2019 BETWEEN THE MONTHS OF

JUN > **JUL** > **AUG** > **SEPT** > **OCT**

COMPRISING

29k
STORIES

145k
FRAMES

Rival IQ

The Metrics: Definitions

Frame: A single photo or video posted to your Instagram Story.

Story: The set of frames posted to your Story within a single 24-hour day.

Story Viewers: The number of people who saw your Story on a given day.

Impressions: The total number of views of a frame in your Story.

Reach: The total number of unique people that saw a frame in your Story.

Engagement: Measurable interaction on Instagram Stories and posts, including likes, comments, replies, and shares.

Retention Rate: The percentage of your Story Viewers on any given day that see all your frames.

Reach Rate: Your Story Viewers on any given day divided by your follower count, expressed as a percentage. percentage.

Post Reach Rate: The reach of a post expressed as a percentage of your followers.

Tap-Forward Rate: The percentage of your impressions that have a tap forward to see the next photo or video.

Tap-Back Rate: The percentage of your impressions that have a tap backward to see the previous photo or video again.

Reply Rate: The percentage of your Story Viewers that replied to your Story on any given day.

Exit Rate: The percentage of your impressions that exit your Stories by swiping right, swiping down, or closing Stories.
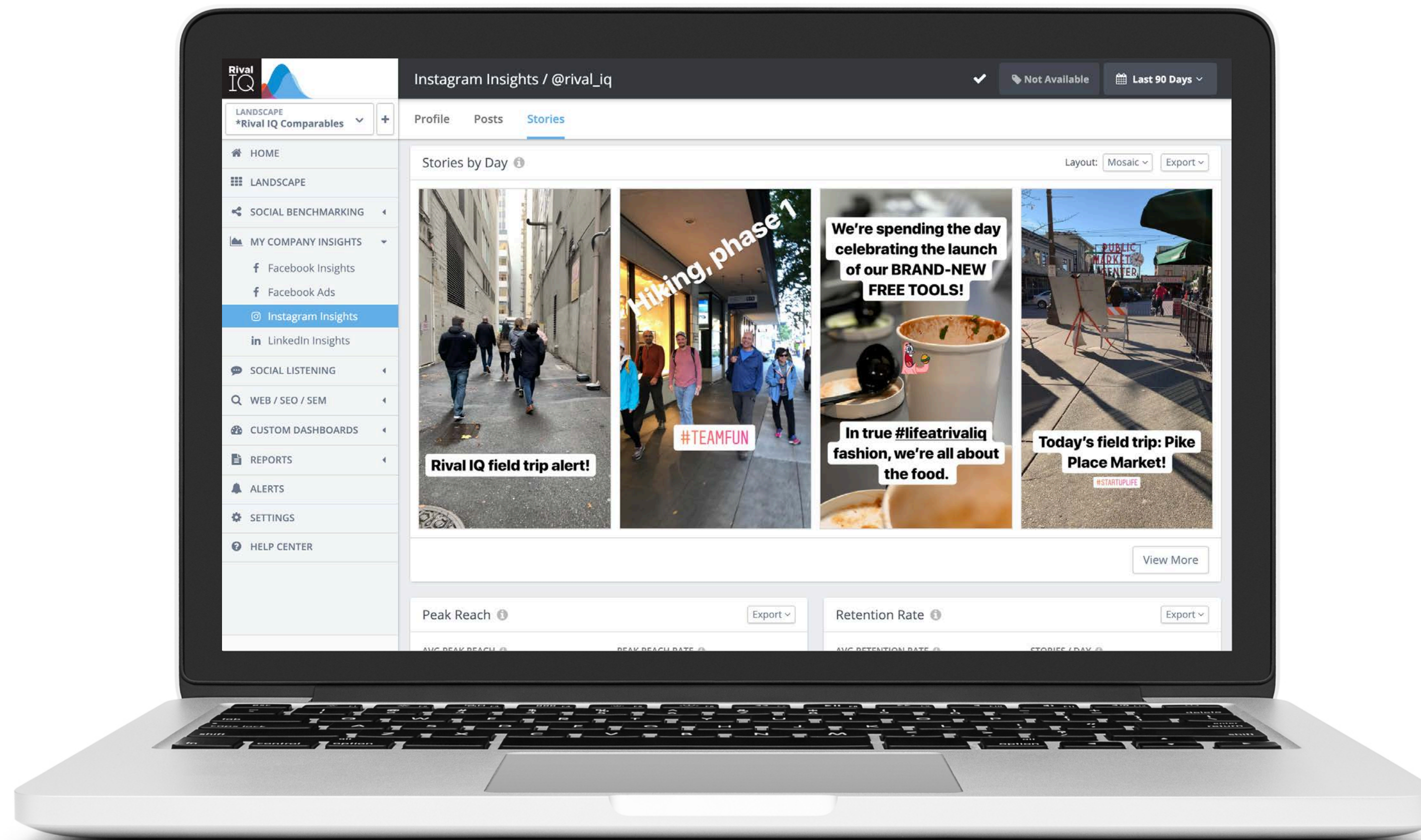
Rival IQ

Where can I see my data?

Looking in the native app? Here's where to find your stats.
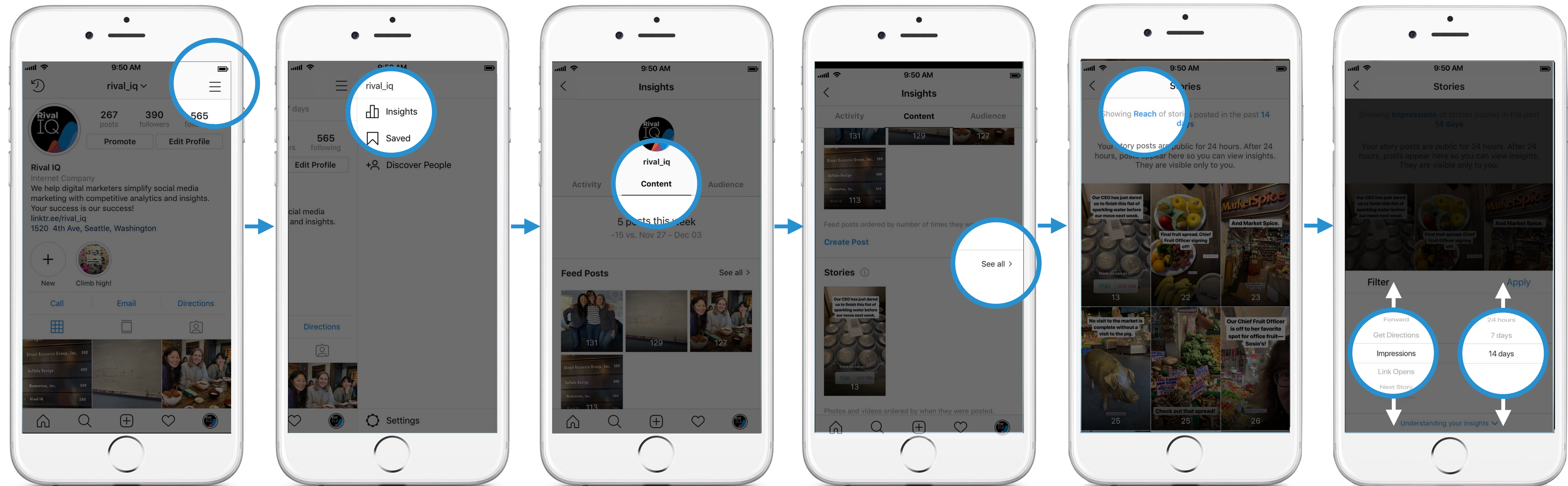
Where can I see my data?

Track and measure your Instagram Stories performance right inside Rival IQ using our Instagram Insights Reports.

Key findings

A summary of big changes and takeaways in the report.

Key findings
and takeaways

Retention Rates are up

Retention rates on Stories are up for 2019. Story viewers are tapping backward, sticking around longer, or watching every frame. Engagement elements that Instagram added in the past year, like stickers, are likely helping.

Reach Rate is down

Your Stories aren't reaching as large of a percentage of your followers as in the previous year. There's been a [consistent rise in marketers using Instagram](#), and with the increased competition, Stories are more saturated and less likely to be seen.

Top brands are still posting a lot

Instagram's most active brands post Stories at least every other day, almost 33% more than the average brand. That's dedication to consistent Stories content.

Your feed still gets more reach

Despite the rise in brands using Stories and viewers watching them, Instagram posts still see a much higher reach rate. So hook viewers with posts and keep them engaged with Stories.

Rival IQ

DESCRIBING THE DATA

Days with a Story

The number of days per month brands published a Story.

What is days with a Story?

The number of days per month a handle published to their Story.

There are two main ways to measure Stories-published activity levels:

1. How often do brands publish to Stories?

2. How many frames are typically published in a day?

Days with a Story answers the first of these questions.

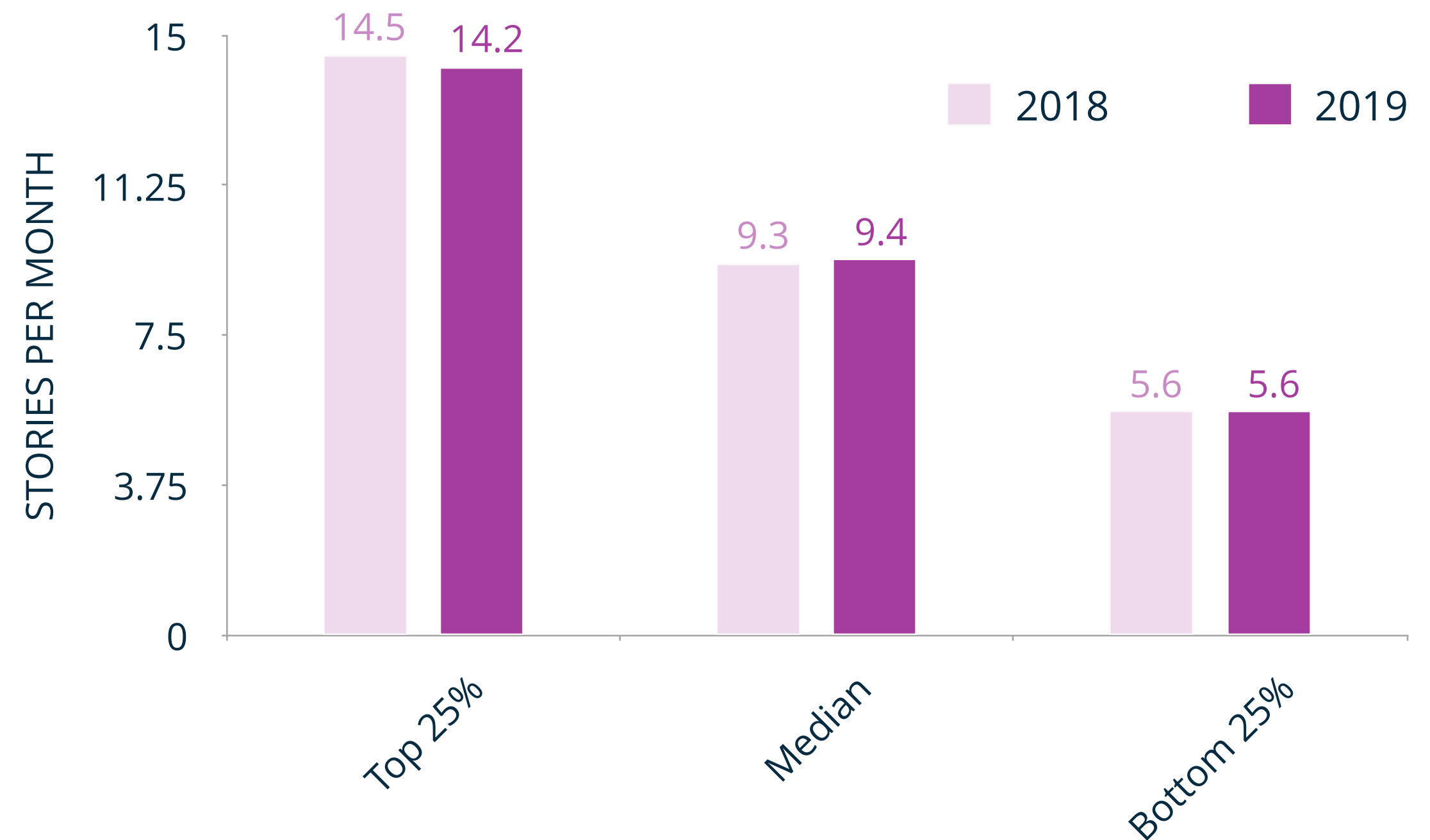| S	M	T	W	T	F	S
✔		✔		✔		✔
	✔		✔		✔	
✔		✔		✔		✔
	✔		✔			

DAYS WITH A STORY

Rival IQ

Days with a Story

The number of days per month brands published to Stories.

The average brand is posting Instagram Stories 9 times per month.

The top 25% most active brands publish Stories at least 14 times a month—roughly every other day.

The least active 25% of brands publish just over 1 Story per week.

Compared to last year's data, Story posting per month hasn't changed much. The median rate has increased slightly and the top 25% of brands are posting slightly less. This consistency means the majority of brands still post Stories just over twice per week. Where does your brand fall?

Rival IQ

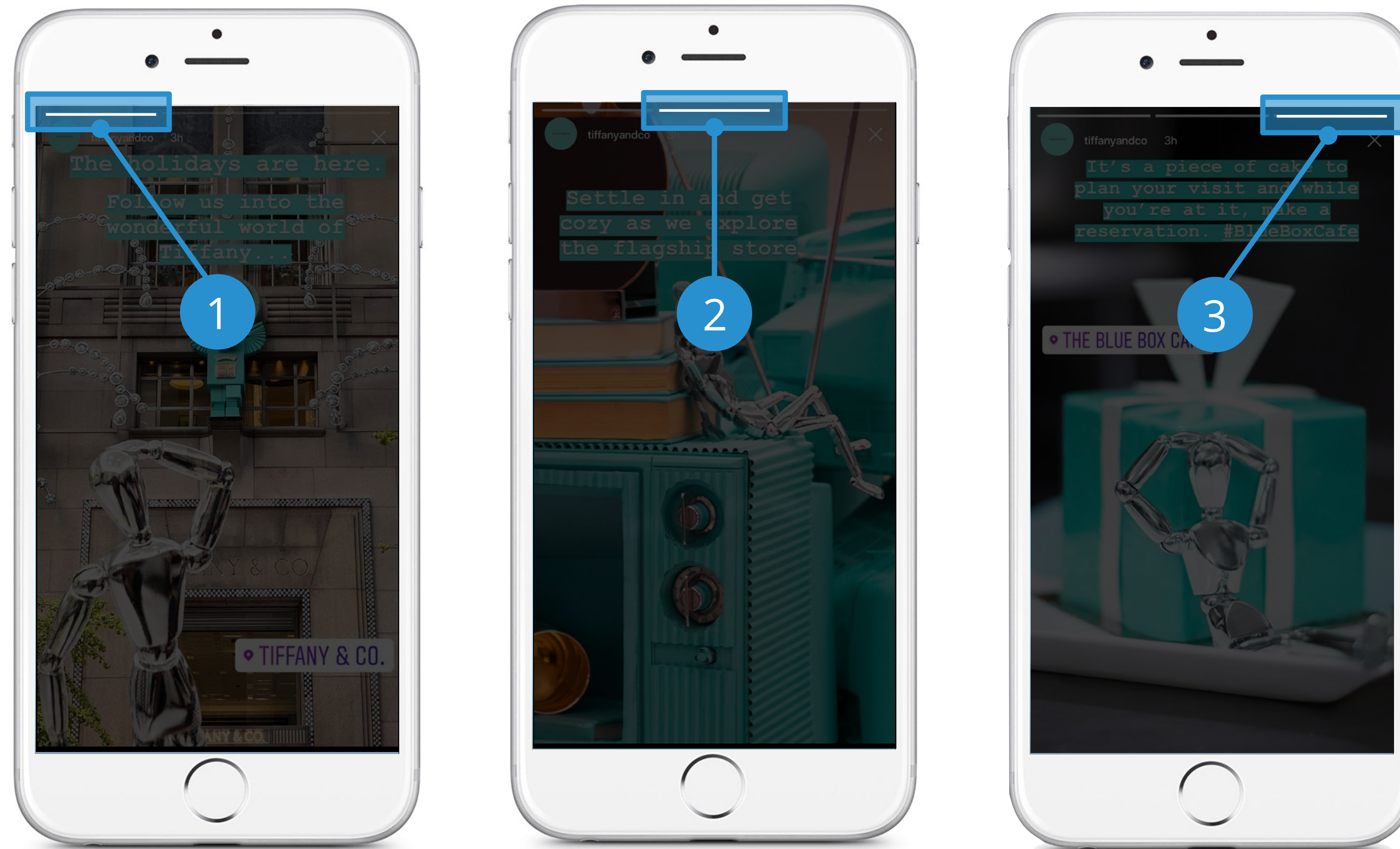**DESCRIBING THE DATA**

Frames per day

The number of individual photos or video frames posted to your Story within a 24-hour period.

What is frames per day?

The number of individual photos or video frames posted to Stories within a 24-hour period.

In this example, Tiffany & Co. posted **three frames per day**.

Frames per day: 2018 v. 2019

The number of individual photos or video frames posted to Stories within a 24-hour period.

Generally, shorter Stories are more common than long ones.

About 28% of Story activity comprises days with only one frame.

1-3 frames accounts for about 54% of brand activity.

Only 24% of Stories have 7 or more frames.

Median is 3 frames per story in 2019.

% OF STORIES

NUMBER OF FRAMES PER DAY

2018   2019
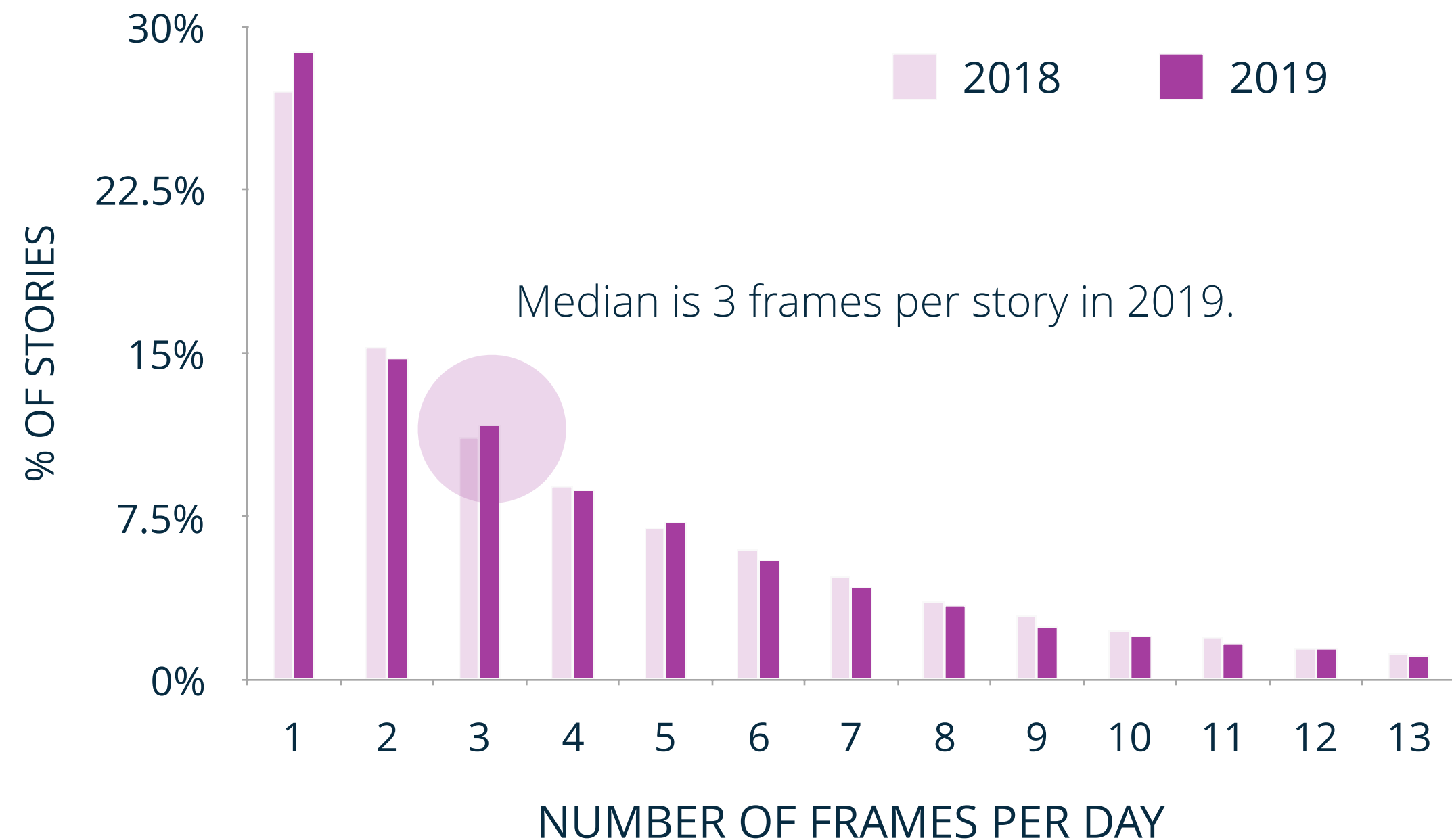
More brands are using Stories in their marketing, but they're not posting higher frame counts. Smaller Stories with minimal frames have increased from 2019. Finding your own brand's average number of frames per day can help benchmark your frame frequency strategy.

Rival IQ

Rival IQ

ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE

Retention rate

The percentage of Story Viewers on any given day that see all frames.

What is retention rate?

The percentage of Story Viewers on any given day that see all posted Story frames.
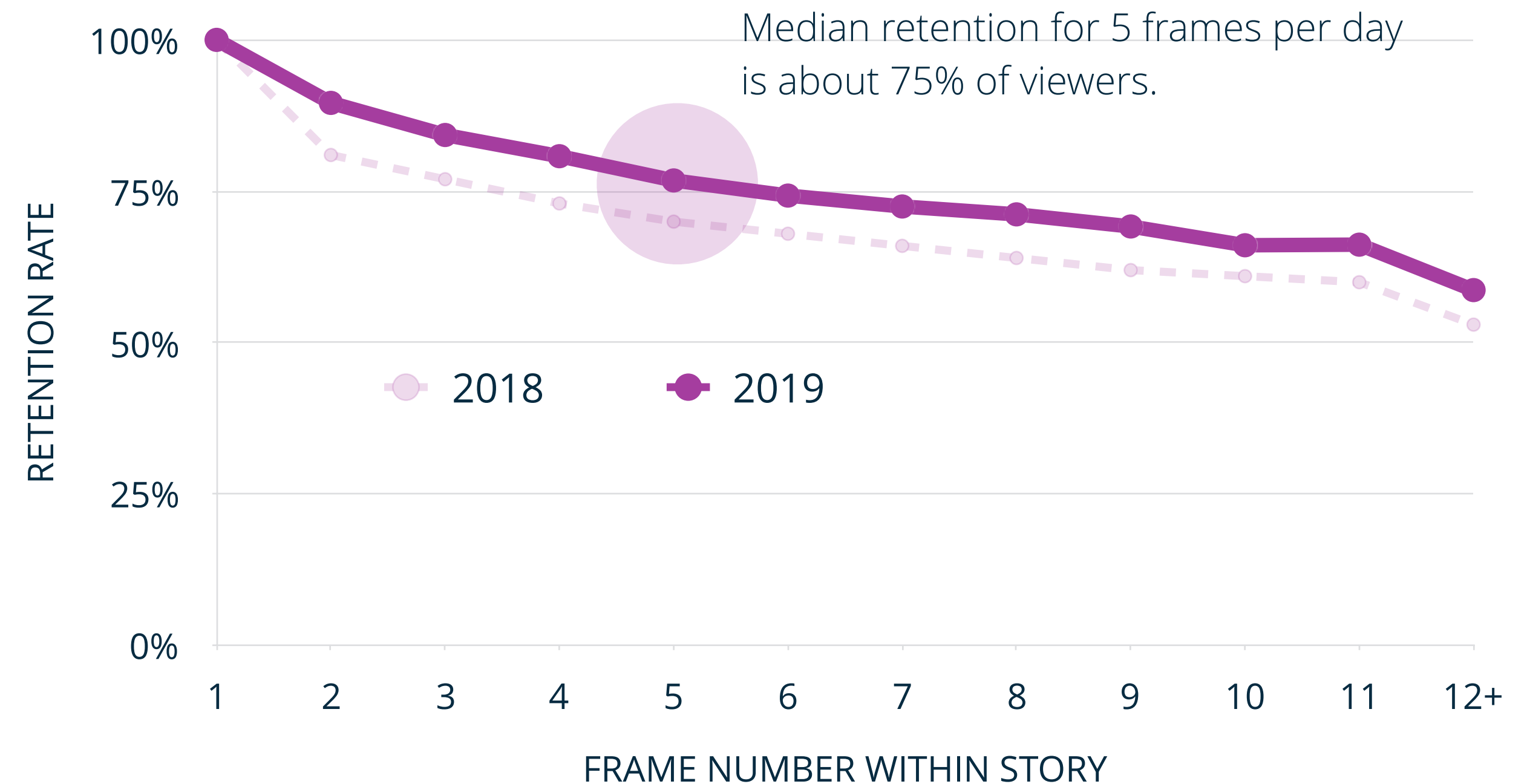
This is what **68% retention** looks like.

👤 **100**
VIEWERS

👤 **80**
VIEWERS

👤 **76**
VIEWERS

👤 **73**
VIEWERS

👤 **68**
VIEWERS

20 EXITS

4 EXITS

3 EXITS

5 EXITS

Retention rate by frame

The percentage of Story Viewers on any given day that see all Story frames.

The more frames you publish, the lower the retention rate.

You can only lose viewers with each additional frame, so no surprise here. The biggest dip is from 1 to 2 frames a day as users swipe past the Story.

After that big initial drop-off, the retention decline slows down and stays above 75% through 5 stories per day.

Median retention for 5 frames per day is about 75% of viewers.

RETENTION RATE

100%

75%

50%

25%

0%

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12+

FRAME NUMBER WITHIN STORY

2018   2019

In our experience, retention is one of the best measures of Instagram Story success. Make sure the first frame hooks viewers, and then from there, the sky's the limit. The overall retention rate is likely higher for 2019 thanks in part to Instagram's continued rollout of interactive stickers (e.g., polls, quizzes, sliders, etc).
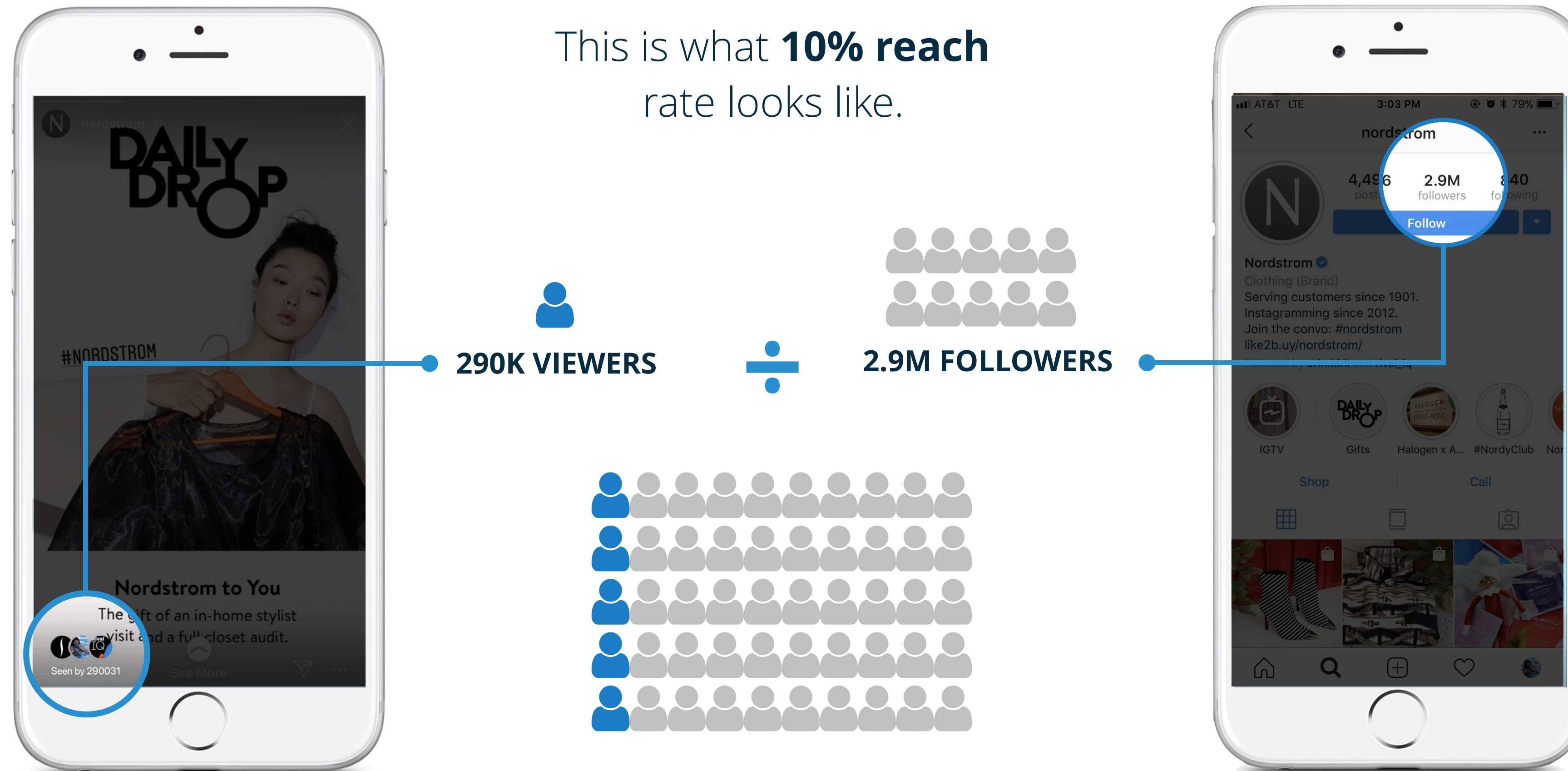
Rival IQ

ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE

Reach rate

Your Story Viewers on any given day divided by follower count, expressed as a percentage.

What is reach rate?

Your Story Viewers on any given day divided by follower count, expressed as a percentage.

This is what **10% reach** rate looks like.

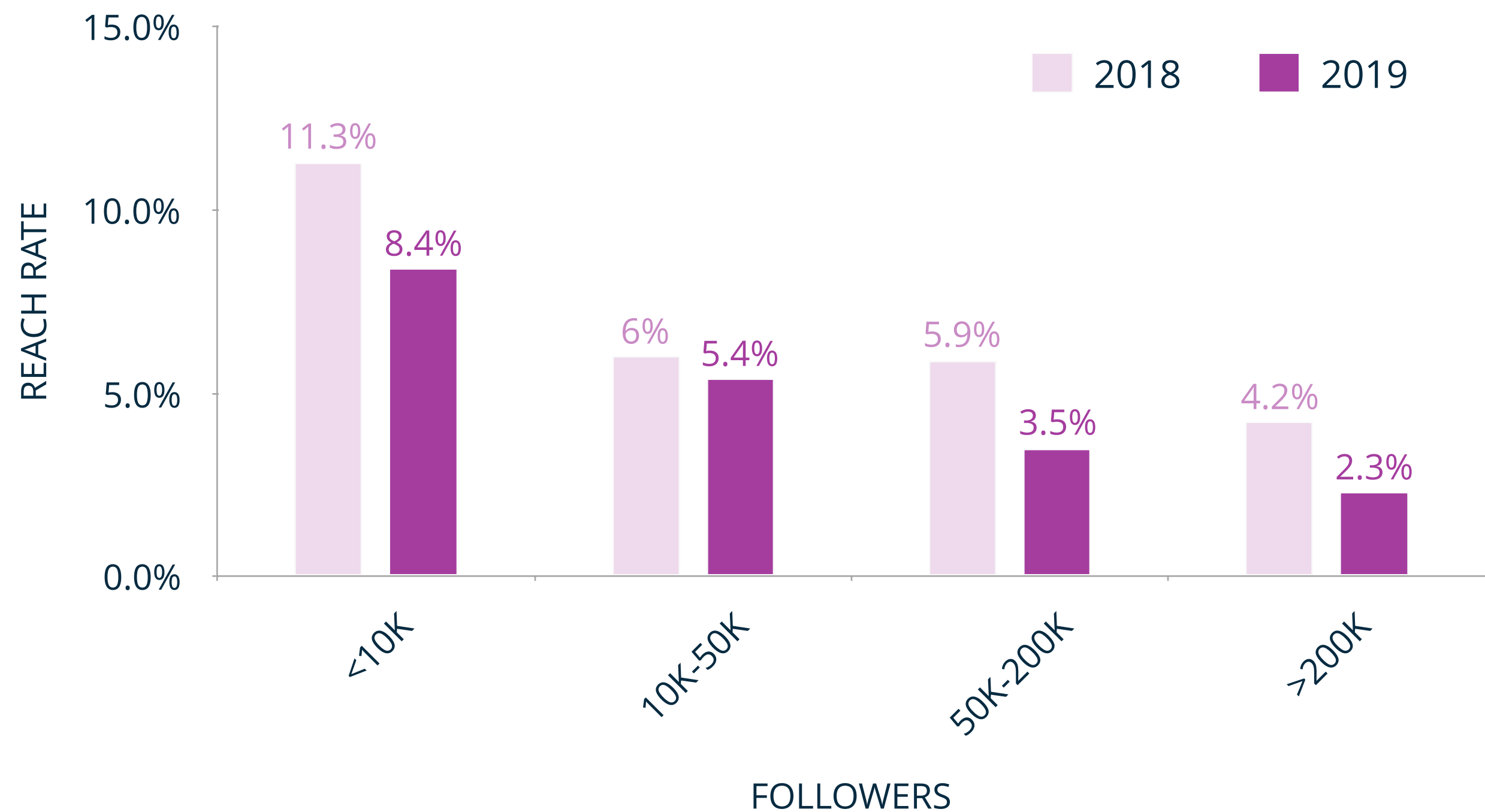**290K VIEWERS** ÷ **2.9M FOLLOWERS**

Reach rate

Your Story Viewers on any given day divided by follower count, expressed as a percentage.

Reach rate is one metric where brands are suffering in 2020.

Since the previous year, reach rate for Stories has decreased in every size bracket of followers.

Brands with over 200k followers saw the largest drop in retention rate with -45%.

With a 6.2% increase in US active users and more brands competing for views (73.2% of US Marketers use Instagram), encouraging early Story engagement can boost your reach rate over time within Instagram's Story algorithm.
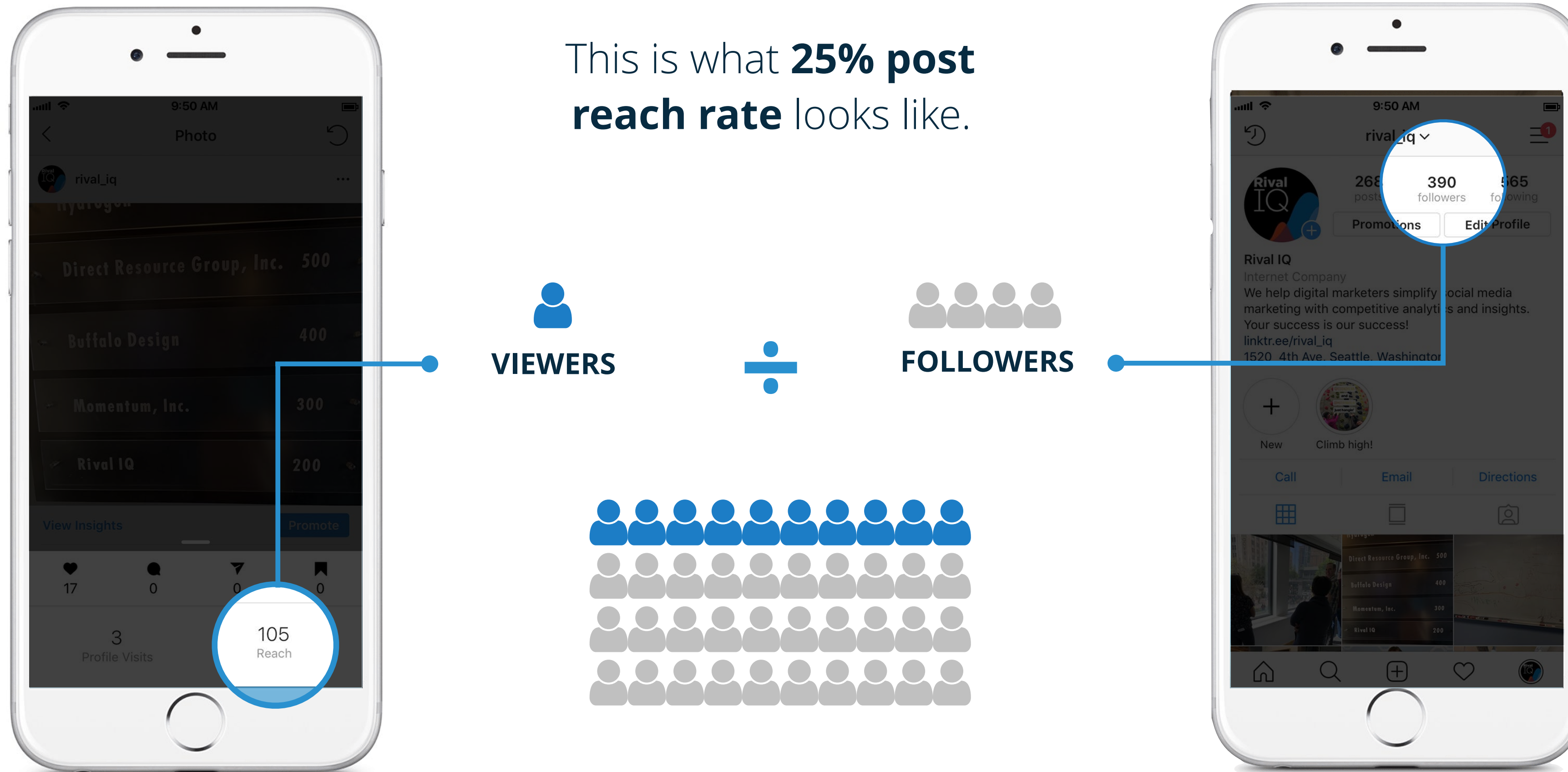
A COMPARISON POINT TO STORIES

Post reach rate

The reach of a post expressed as a percentage of followers.

What is post reach rate?

The reach of a post expressed as a percentage of followers.

This is what **25% post reach rate** looks like.

VIEWERS ÷ FOLLOWERS

Post reach rate

The reach of a post expressed as a percentage of followers.

On average, brands saw a decrease of 5.7% in post reach rates for 2020.

The outlier, handles with 10-50k followers, saw an increase of 14% in their reach rate.

As we saw last year, handles with larger followings see dramatically lower reach rates.

For handles with 200K or more followers, only about 14% of followers see their posts.
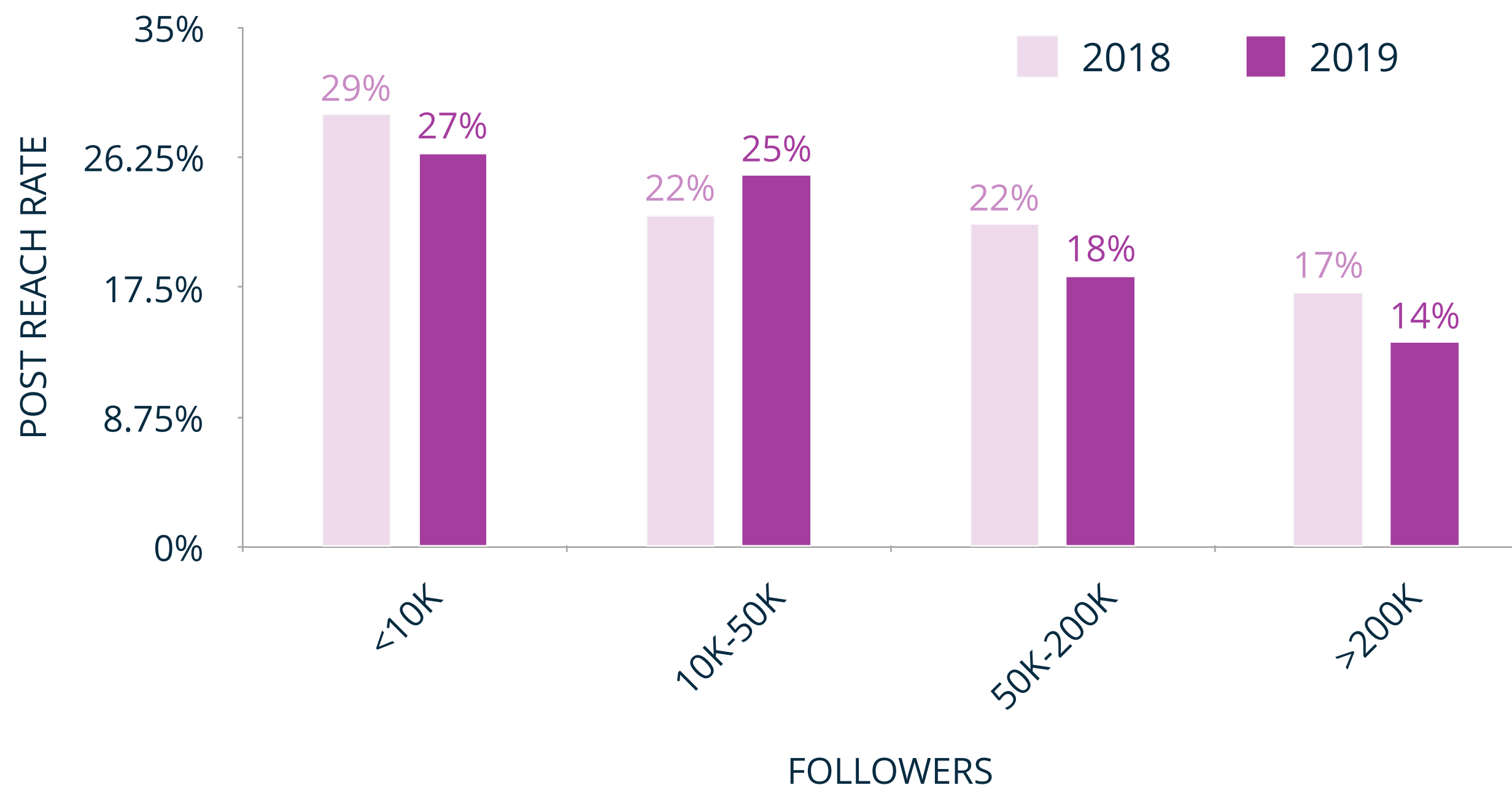
With the continued growth of the Instagram user base and the ever-increasing amount of content, advertising, and features (e.g., Stories, IGTV), the decline of organic post reach was expected for 2019.

Rival IQ

Reach rate: Stories vs. posts

The reach of a post expressed as a percentage of followers.

No matter how many followers you have,
more of them are seeing your posts than your stories.
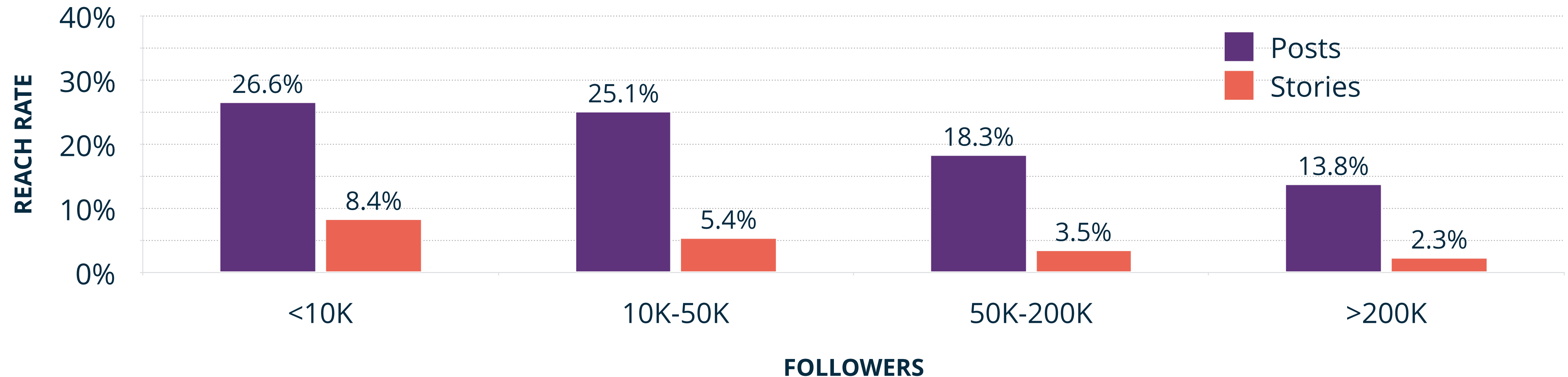
Stories overall see a much lower reach rate compared with posts again this year. Posts may have a much higher reach rate, but the repeat impressions from an engaged Story Viewer can be more valuable to brands.

ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE
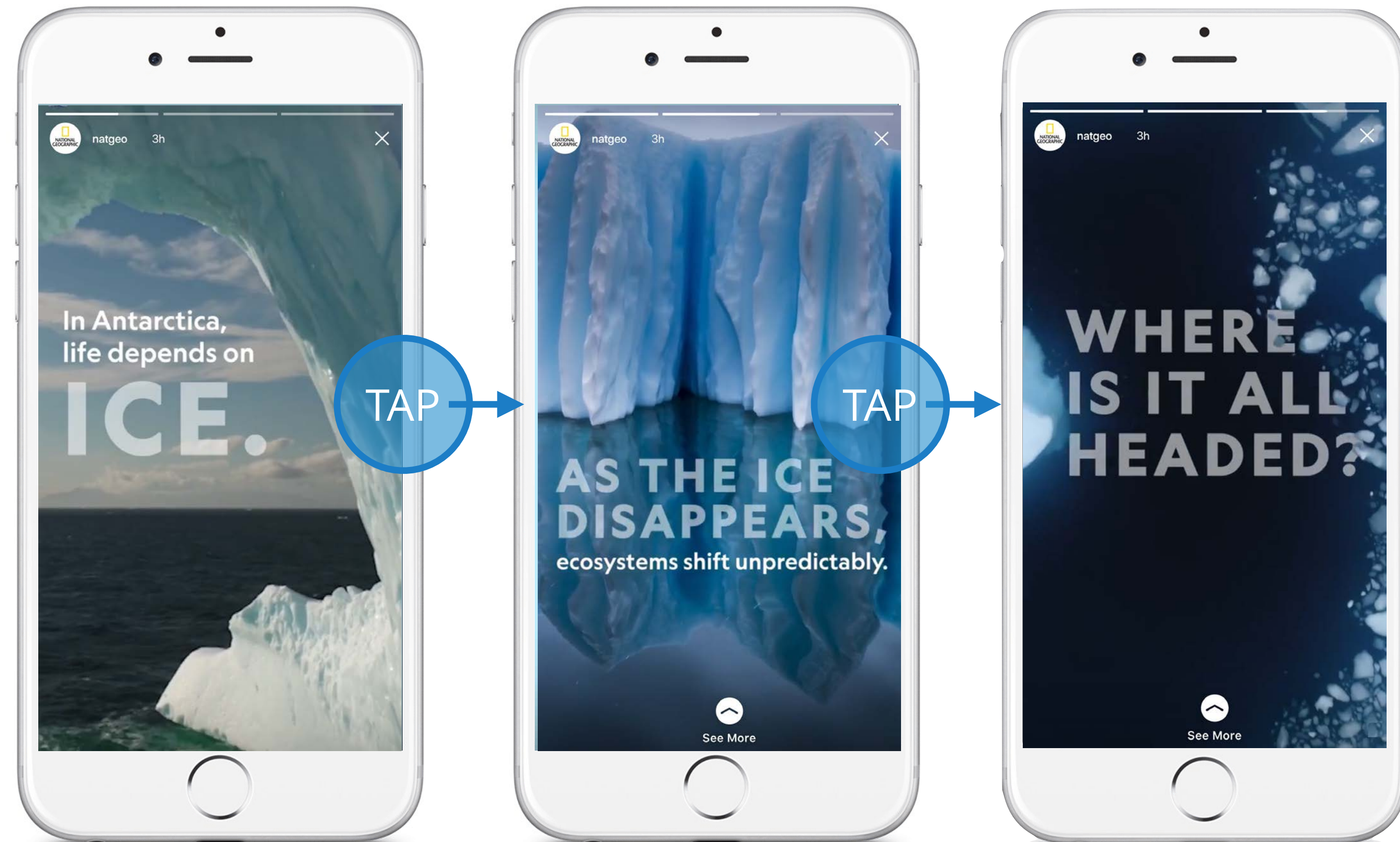
Tap-forward rate

The percentage of Story impressions that have a tap forward.

What is tap-forward rate?

The percentage of Story impressions that have a tap forward.

A tap on the right side of your frame means your viewer has seen enough and is ready for your next frame.
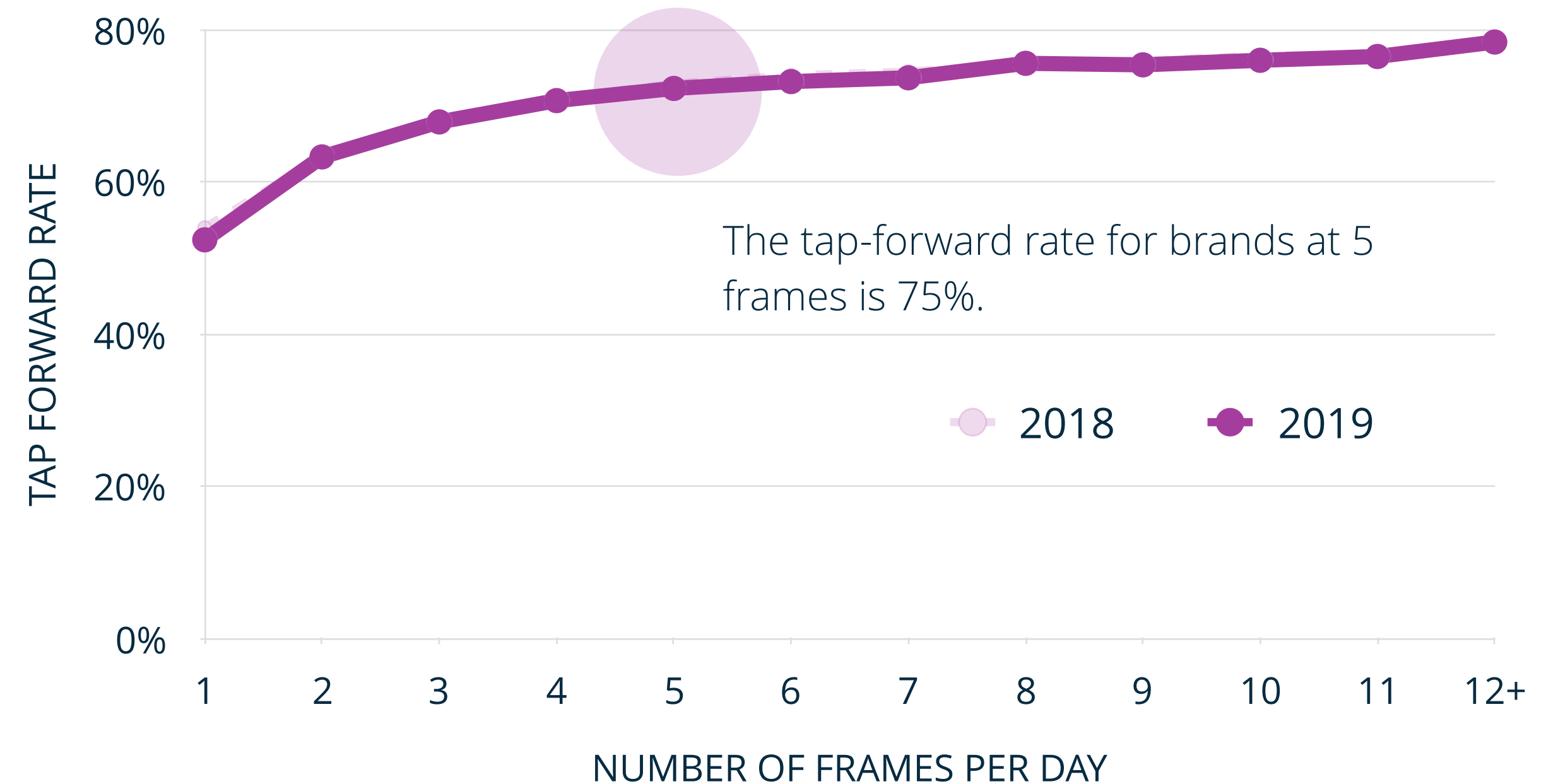
Tap-forward rate

The percentage of your impressions that have a tap forward.

The more frames in your day, the more likely followers will tap-forward.

The median tap-forward rate at 5 frames per day is about 75%.

Tap-forward rates have stayed almost exactly the same compared to last year's data.

With more than 12 frames, almost 80% of your viewers are tapping forward, on average.

The tap-forward rate for brands at 5 frames is 75%.

2018   2019

TAP FORWARD RATE

80%
60%
40%
20%
0%

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12+
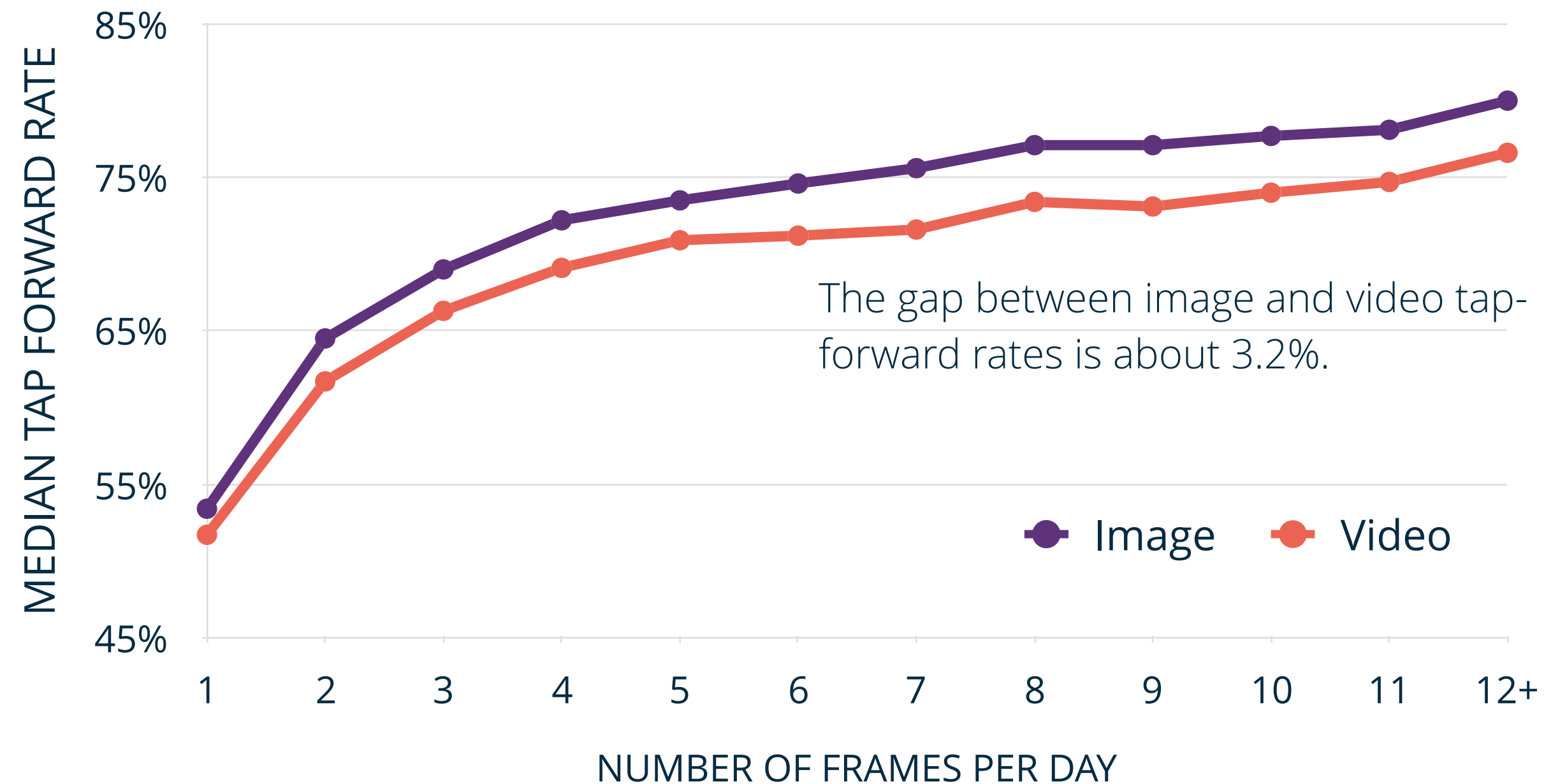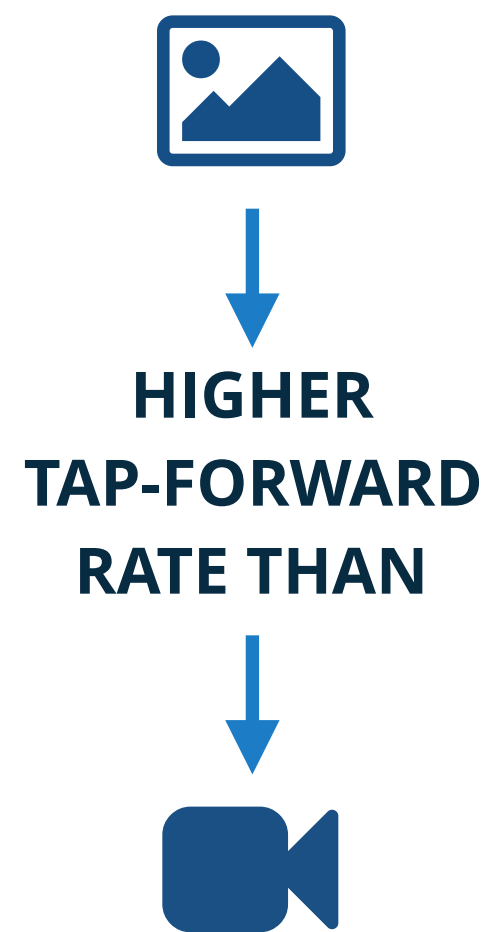
NUMBER OF FRAMES PER DAY

Tapping forward isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it does indicate that the viewer has either seen enough of the content or wasn't interested in the first place. Keep your frames concise and experiment with video to maintain your viewers throughout the entire Story.

Rival IQ

Tap-Forward Rate: Image vs. Video

The percentage of your impressions that have a tap forward.

The media type matters to your tap forward rate

Overall, images have higher tap forward rates by about 3.2%. This gap occurs regardless of the number of stories in a day.

HIGHER
TAP-FORWARD
RATE THAN

The gap between image and video tap-forward rates is about 3.2%.

MEDIAN TAP FORWARD RATE

NUMBER OF FRAMES PER DAY

Image   Video

Once someone has consumed an image, they're ready to move on to the next thing. More engaging media like videos means more viewers are sticking around until your next frame rather than skipping ahead.

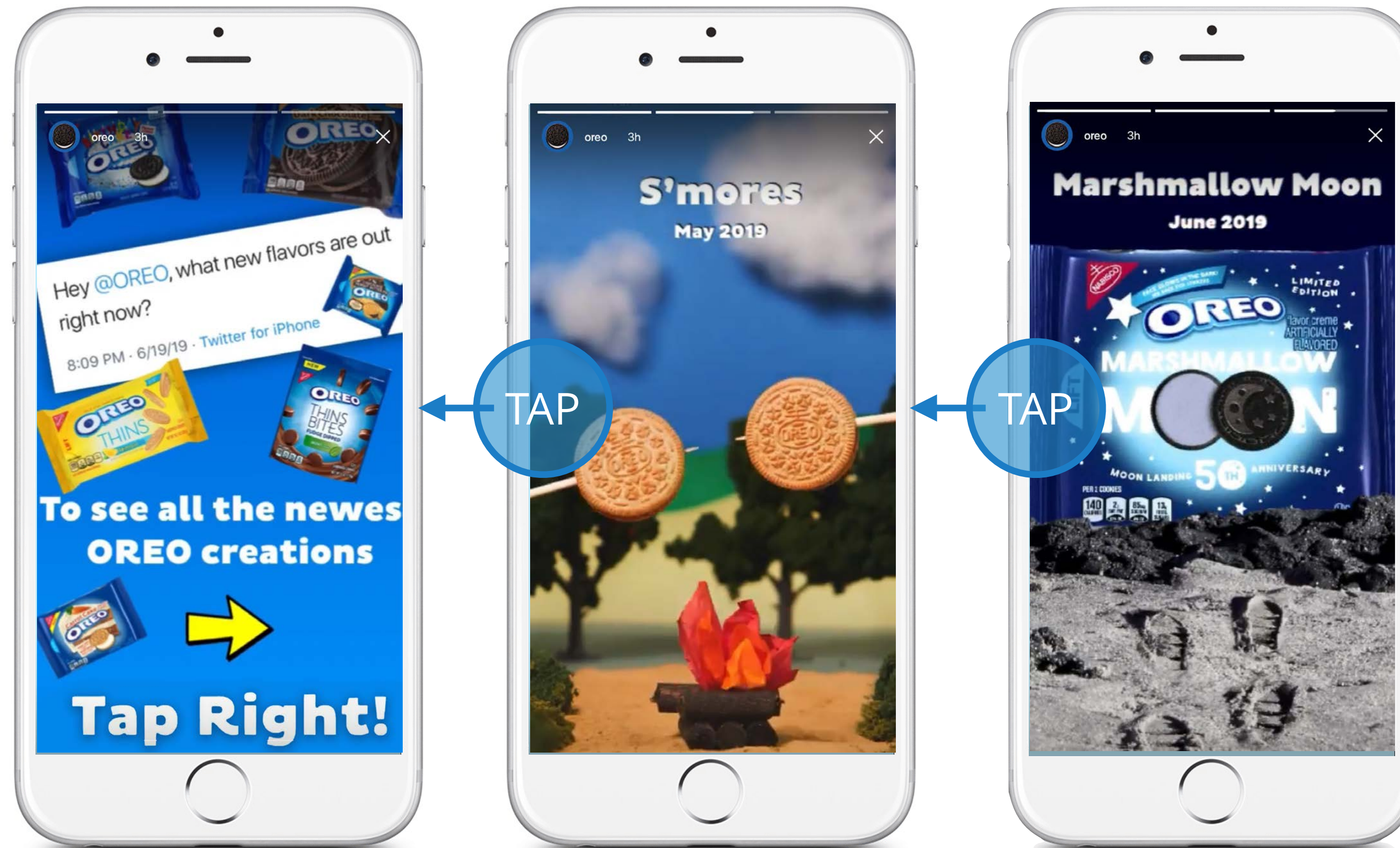Rival IQ

ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE

Tap-back rate

The percentage of Story impressions with a tap backward.

What is tap-back rate?

The percentage of Story impressions with a tap backward.

A tap on the left side of your frame means your viewer wanted to go back to the previous image for another look.
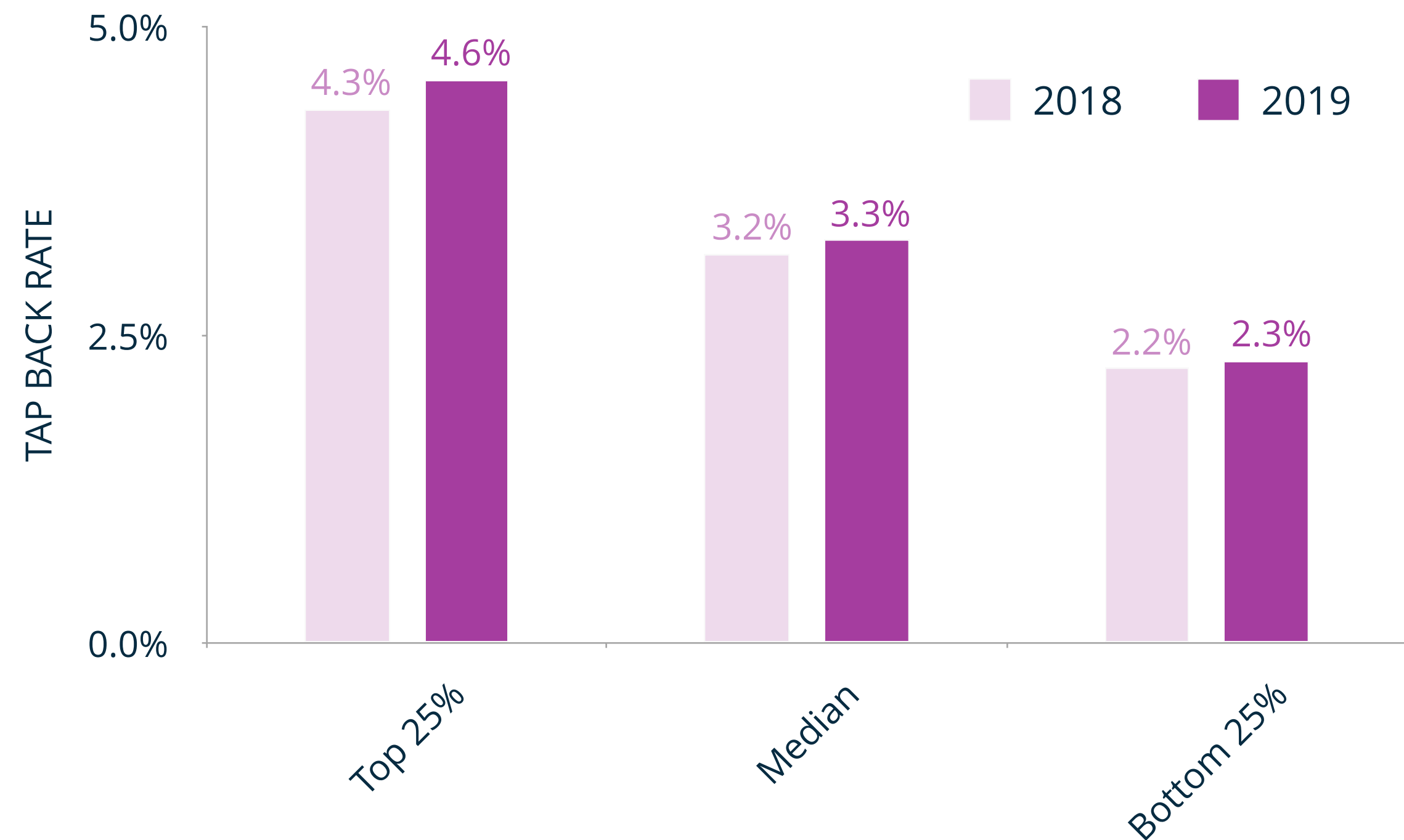
Tap-back rate

The percentage of Story impressions with a tap backward.

The tap-back rate is only slightly higher in 2020 across the board.

The median tap-back rate is about 3%, but the top 25% of brands see tap-back rates at 4.6%.

Tap-backs are a great indication of content that your followers want to consume more of.

Tap-backs mean a viewer was eager to reengage with your content, which is always a good thing. Tap-backs have slightly increased, perhaps as Story viewers get more comfortable with Instagram's UX.

TAP BACK RATE

Legend: 2018, 2019

- Top 25%: 4.3% (2018), 4.6% (2019)
- Median: 3.2% (2018), 3.3% (2019)
- Bottom 25%: 2.2% (2018), 2.3% (2019)

Y-axis: 0.0%, 2.5%, 5.0%

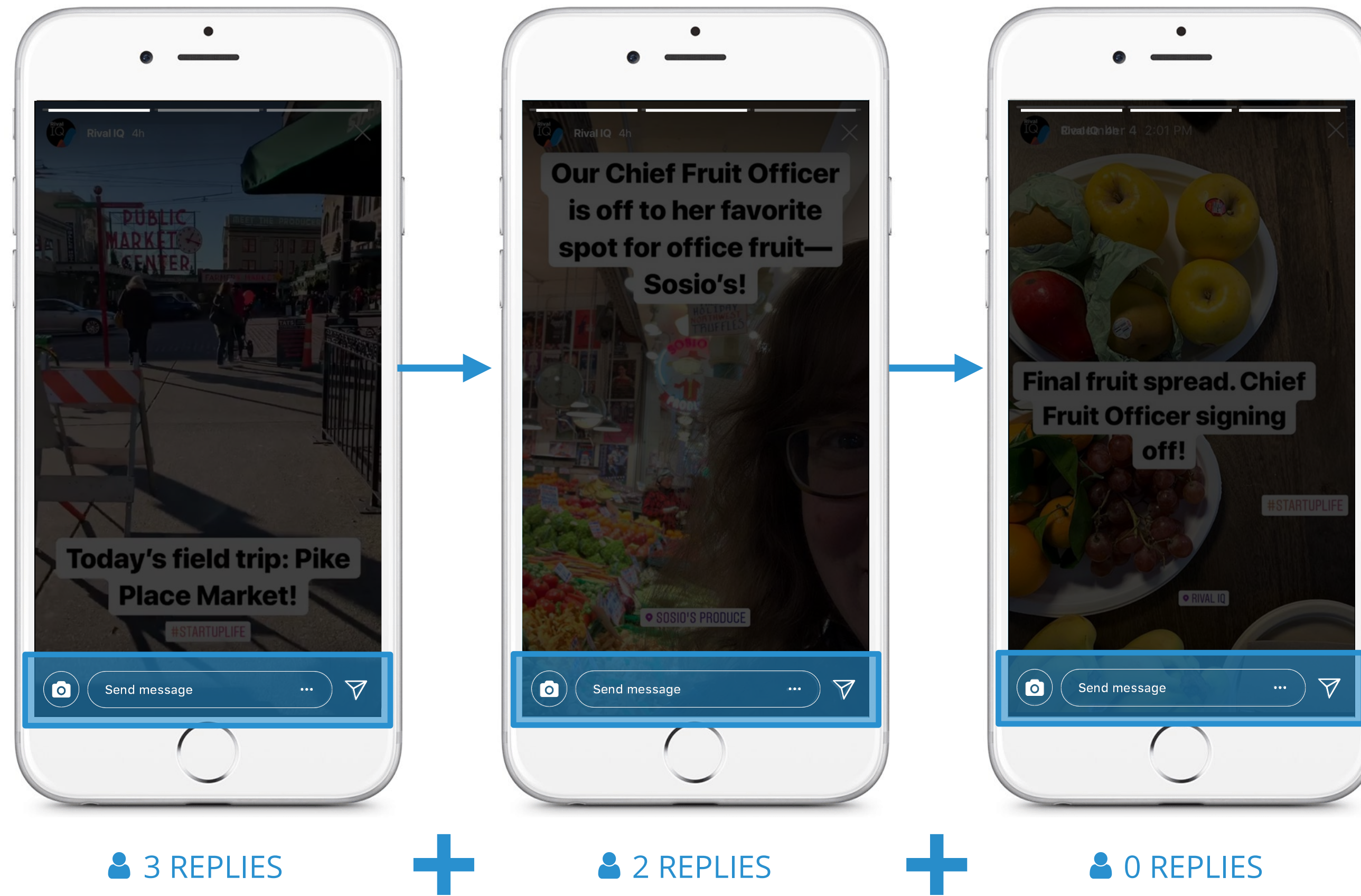Rival IQ

ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE

Reply rate

The percentage of Story Viewers that replied to the Story on any given day.
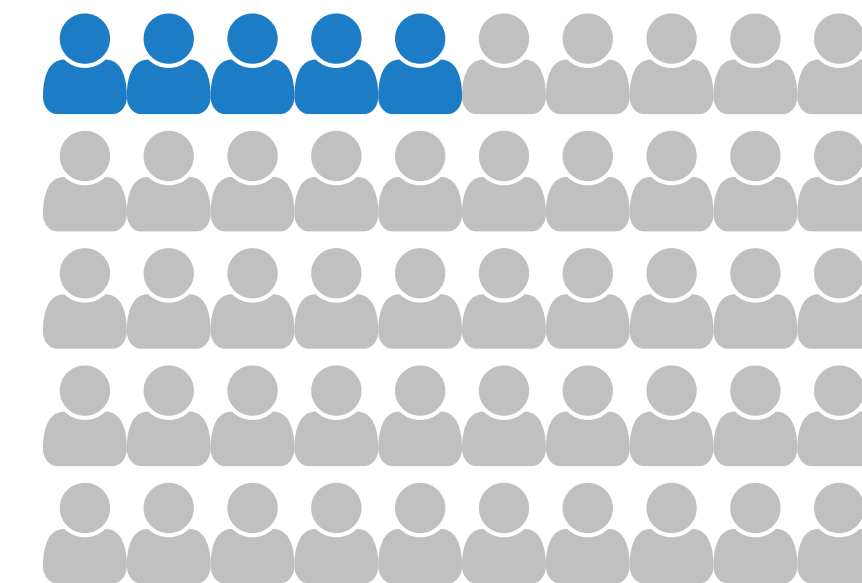
What is reply rate?

The percentage of Story Viewers that replied to the Story on any given day.

This is what **10% reply rate** looks like.

5 REPLIES ÷ **50 VIEWERS**

3 REPLIES + **2 REPLIES** + **0 REPLIES**

Today's field trip: Pike Place Market!

Our Chief Fruit Officer is off to her favorite spot for office fruit— Sosio's!

Final fruit spread. Chief Fruit Officer signing off!

Rival IQ

Reply rate

The percentage of Story Viewers that replied to the Story on any given day.

The average reply rate has increased in 2020.

The top 25% of brands in this study saw a 47% increase in Story replies. Median reply rates also grew, about 40%.

Our analysis shows that users mostly don't reply—particularly in the bottom 25% which has a 0% average reply rate.

You're reading it right. The bottom 25% of stories doesn't get any replies on average.
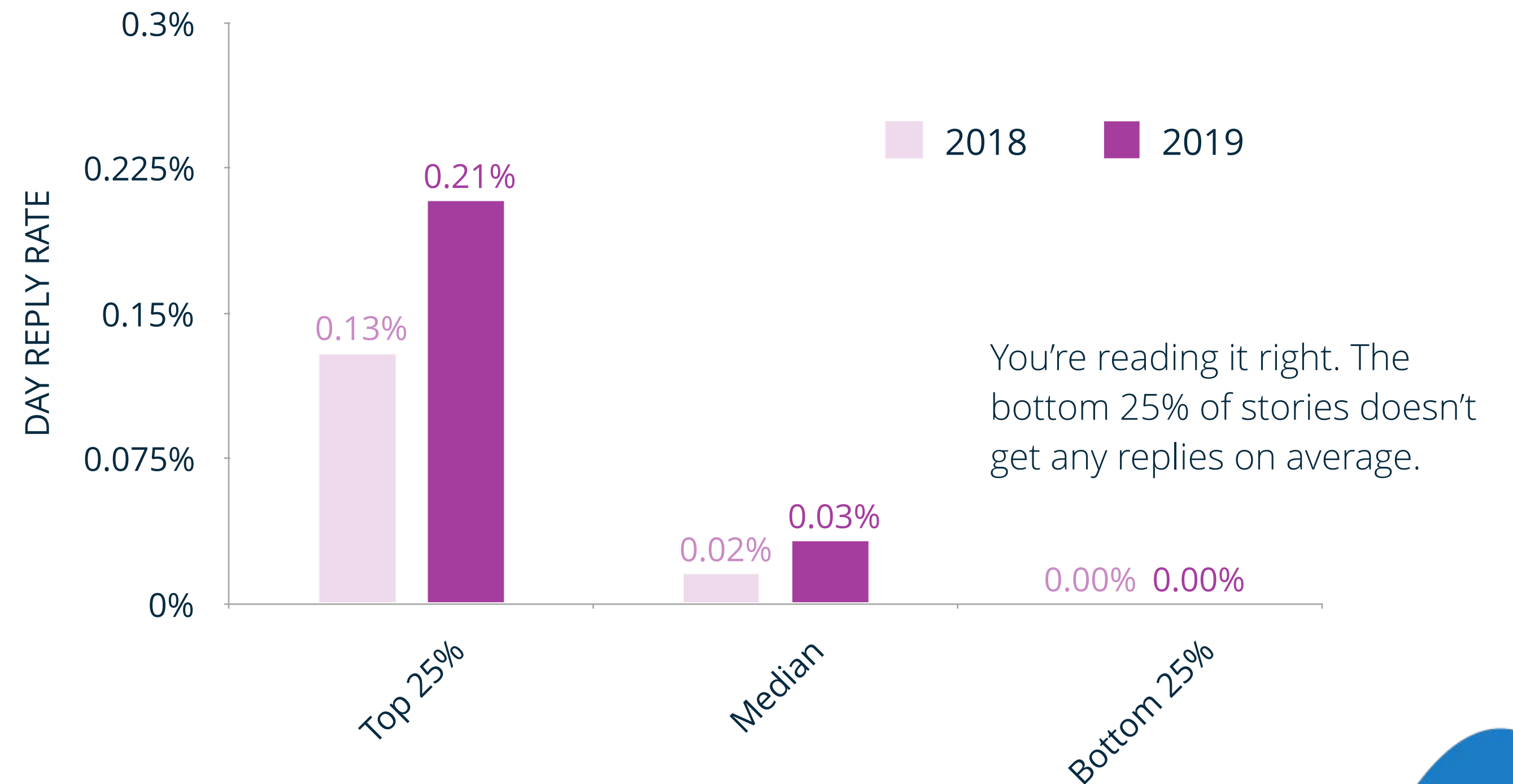
Making it easy for viewers to reply, like asking a question, can put your Story at the top of their list. Messages and emoji reactions, added in late July 2018, are included in reply rates that contribute to the uptick for 2019. Unfortunately Instagram's API limits data from in-frame engagement stickers like polls and quizzes, for now!
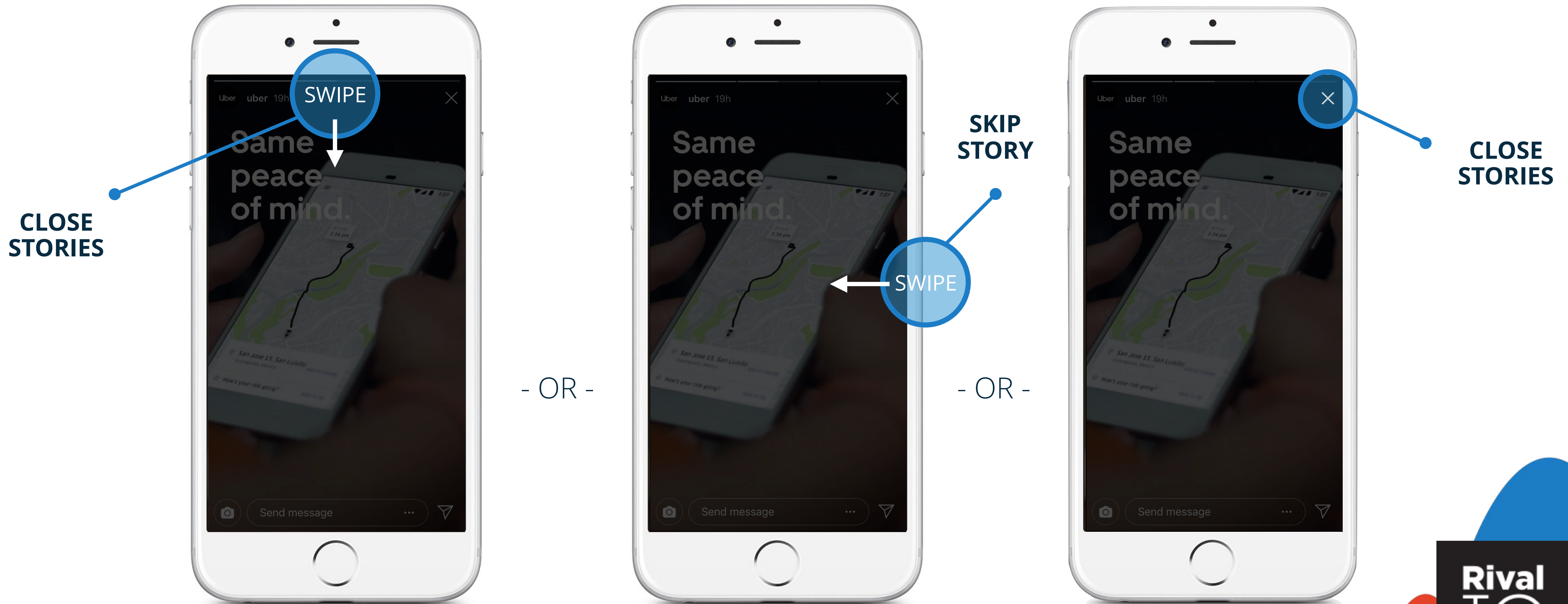
ENGAGEMENT METRIC DEEP DIVE

Exit rate

The percentage of impressions that exit your Stories by swiping right, swiping down, or closing Stories.

What is exit rate?

The percentage of impressions that exit your Story.

CLOSE STORIES

SWIPE

- OR -

SKIP STORY

SWIPE

- OR -

CLOSE STORIES

CLOSE STORIES

Rival IQ

Exit rate

The percentage of impressions that exit your Story.

Story exit rate starts at about 8% for days with a single Story.

The rate begins to really tail off at 5 frames per day and flattens out in the 3% range.

Brands overall improved by about 20% in exit rate performance since the year's data. This correlates with gains seen in retention, too.

The exit rate starts to flatten out around 5 frames per day.
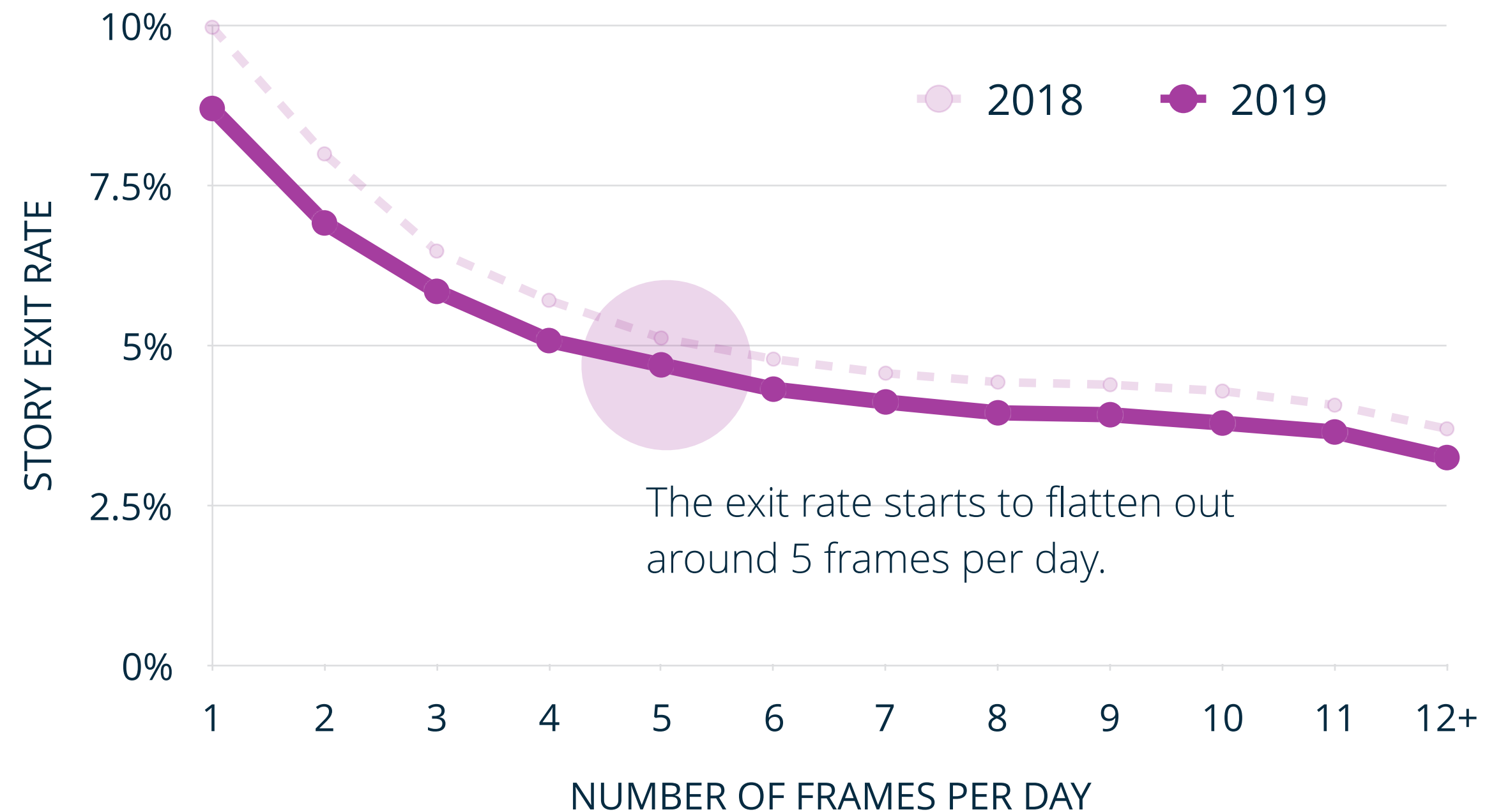
Exit rate is correlated with retention, so consider this graph a companion of the retention rate analysis. In this report, the average brand's performance is outperforming the previous year's Story data. Fewer skips, exits, and closing Stories across the board. Well done 🏆

Rival IQ

About Rival IQ

Rival IQ is a social media analytics toolkit that helps you:

Supercharge your social landscape

Track results across all social profiles, including engagement, influencers, social bios, and sentiment —for **you and your competitors**.

Stay ahead of the competition

Conduct competitive analysis in minutes. Monitor your industry, create benchmarks, and evaluate and respond to competitor activity before the market shifts.

Do more with your data

Dive deeper into your social media analytics with Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram Insights, boosted post detection, LinkedIn Insights, and so much more.

Rival IQ

GET YOUR FREE TRIAL ▶