NEWS & MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA

DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: AUSTRALIA 2022

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http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia-2022

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METHODOLOGY

This report is part of a long-running international survey coordinated by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, an international research centre in the comparative study of journalism based at Oxford University. The *Digital News Report* delivers comparative data on media usage in 46 countries and across 6 continents.

The News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra is the Australian partner institute and author of the *Digital News Report: Australia*. This is the eighth annual *DNR: Australia* report.

Fieldwork was conducted between mid-January and the end of February 2022 by YouGov plc. The questionnaire and the overall project methodology were consistent across all territories. Online samples were of around 2000 in each country and are designed to be nationally representative with quotas on age, gender, and region. Education quotas were also applied in all markets except Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Philippines, Romania, South Africa, Thailand, and Turkey. In Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain Sweden, Norway, the United States and United Kingdom we also applied additional political quotas based on vote choice in the most recent national election. The data in all markets were weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data.

Data from India, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are representative of younger English speakers and not the national population, because it is not possible to reach other groups in a representative way using an online survey. The survey was fielded mostly in English in these markets and restricted to ages 18 to 50. Findings should not be taken to be nationally representative in these countries and we have applied caution when comparing across these countries.

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE

The survey was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire between 21 January and 16 February 2022. The sample is drawn from an online panel of 337,206 adult Australians. The final sample is reflective of the population that has access to the internet. The data were weighted to targets based on age, gender, region, education level, and voting history to represent the total population based on Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

In the past, we screened respondents who said they access news less than once a month. Since 2021, we included this group in the survey. Those who access news less than once a month comprised 7% of the sample. Whenever possible, we compared the results and noted any impact of the inclusion of this group.

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE	
Panel size	337,206
Total number of non-news users in the sample (unweighted)	130
Total sample size	**2,038**

2022 PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

Argentina	ARG
Australia	AUS
Austria	AUT
Belgium	BEL
Brazil	BRA
Bulgaria	BUL
Canada	CAN
Chile	CHL
Colombia	COL
Croatia	CRO
Czech Republic	CZE
Denmark	DEN
Finland	FIN
France	FRA
Germany	GER
Greece	GRE
Hong Kong	HK
Hungary	HUN
India	IND
Indonesia	INA
Ireland	IRE
Italy	ITA
Japan	JPN
Kenya	KEN
Korea, South	KOR
Malaysia	MYS
Mexico	MEX
Netherlands	NLD
Nigeria	NGR
Norway	NOR
Peru	PER
Philippines	PHL
Poland	POL
Portugal	POR
Romania	ROU
Singapore	SGN
Slovakia	SVK
South Africa	RSA
Spain	SPA
Sweden	SWE
Switzerland	SUI
Taiwan	TWN
Thailand	THA
Turkey	TUR
UK	UK
USA	USA

As this is an online survey, the results will inevitably underrepresent the consumption habits of people who are not online (typically older, less affluent, regional residents, and with limited formal education). The survey in Australia was conducted in English and does not represent the linguistic diversity of Australia.

EDUCATION QUOTA

The education question reflects the categories in the UN's International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). In the past, the lower educated population was underrepresented. The categories we used in the Australian survey are summarised in the following table.

What is your highest level of education? If you are currently in full-time education please put your highest qualification to date.	LEVEL
• I did not complete any formal education • Early childhood education • Primary education • Lower secondary education (High School, Yr 10)	Low
• Upper secondary education (Yr 12, HSC, Baccalaureate or other Senior Secondary Certificate of Education) • Post-secondary, non-tertiary education (generally vocational/ professional qualification of 1–2 years, e.g. VET (Vocational Education and Training) Certificates I–IV)	Medium
• Bachelors or equivalent level degree • Masters or equivalent level degree • Doctoral or equivalent level degree	High

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

While the data is weighted according to the population size of each State and Territory, the data has also been analysed by postcode. This is important because it allows our report to reflect the geographic diversity of Australia and the differences in news consumption between urban and rural populations. The Australian Bureau of Statistics geographic classifications are used to analyse the data based on the groupings of major cities, inner region, outer region, remote, and very remote. However, because of the small number of participants from remote and very remote areas, we categorised news consumers outside of major cities as 'regional'.

POLITICAL WEIGHTING

This year, Australia was included in the 14 countries where political weighting was applied. In Australia, political weighting was based on voter choice in the 2019 federal election.

GENERATIONS

News consumption is closely tied to age. To improve our understanding of changing consumption habits over the life span, we use a generational approach to our analysis. This provides more meaningful analysis than evenly spaced age groups. For the purposes of reliable international analysis, we have adopted the generational categories used by the PEW Research[1]. In this year's sample the maximum age of the respondents was 92. Instead of using PEW's Greatest and Silent Generation categories, we merged the two and used '76+'. The age span calculation is based on the respondent's estimated age as of December 2021. This is because the fieldwork was conducted in early 2022 and most people would not have reached their birthdays at the time of the survey.

BIRTH YEARS	GENERATION	ABBREVIATION USED	AGE SPAN
1901–27	Greatest Generation	76+	93+
1928–45	Silent Generation		76–92
1946 –64	Baby Boomers	BB	56–75
1965–80	Gen X	X	40–56
1981–96	Gen Y, Millennials	Y	24–40
1997–	Gen Z, Post-millennials	Z	18–24

[1] https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/17/where-millennials-end-and-generation-z-begins/

Core sponsors of the international survey include BBC News, NHK (Japan), Reuters News Agency, Google News Initiative (GNI), Ofcom, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, the Dutch Media Authority (CvdM), the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, the Korea Press Foundation, The Open Society Foundations, the Leibniz Institute for Media Research/Hans Bredow Institute, Hamburg, the University of Navarra, Spain, the ***University of Canberra, Australia****, the Centre d'études sur les médias, Quebec, Canada, and Roskilde University in Denmark.*

AUTHORS

Sora Park is a Professorial Research Fellow at the News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. Her research focuses on digital media users, media markets and media policy. She is the Leader of the *Digital News Report: Australia* project. She is the lead investigator of the ARC Discovery Project '*The rise of mistrust: Digital platforms and trust in news media*'.

Kieran McGuinness is the *Digital News Report* Postdoctoral Fellow at the News & Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. His recent research focuses on mixed method approaches to news consumption, misinformation, journalistic role performance, defence journalism and discourses of risk, problematisation and threat in news media.

Caroline Fisher is Deputy Director of the News & Media Research Centre, Associate Professor of Communication, and Discipline Lead of Journalism at the University of Canberra. Her research interests include trust in news, regional journalism, journalist-source relations, and political 'spin'. She is co-investigator on two ARC-funded projects examining 'The rise of mistrust' and 'The value of news'.

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Kerry McCallum is Director of the News & Media Research Centre. Her research specialises in the relationships between changing media and Australian social policy. She is the co-author of 'The Dynamics of News and Indigenous Policy in Australia' (Intellect, 2017), and is currently lead investigator on the ARC-funded project 'Breaking Silences: Media and the Child Abuse Royal Commission'.

David Nolan is Associate Professor of Media and Journalism Studies at the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. He is currently Lead Investigator of the ARC-funded project 'Amplifying Indigenous News' and President of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association (ANZCA).

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Hal Crawford is a media consultant and former executive. He has worked in newsrooms in Australia and New Zealand as a news editor and director, and now produces the Crawford Media newsletter and podcast.

Lisa Davies was appointed CEO of Australian Associated Press (AAP) in early 2022. She began her career at the newswire in 2000, joined *The Daily Telegraph* in 2004, and moved to *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 2012. There, she undertook a number of roles before in 2017 being appointed editor. She resigned in November 2021.

Genevieve Jacobs is the Group Editor for Region Media and a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. Genevieve is a director of the Cultural Facilities Corporation and the Conflict Resolution Service. She chairs the ACT arts minister's advisory council and the Canberra International Music Festival and has an enduring interest in building community engagement.

James Joyce is Executive Editor of Australian Community Media. Australia's largest publisher of regional news, ACM's network of 140 regional, rural and suburban newspapers and websites stretches into every state and territory. A journalist, columnist and editor for more than 30 years, James is a former editor of *The Canberra Times*. He began his career as a cadet reporter for his hometown paper, the *Newcastle Herald*.

Peter Lewis is the Executive Director of Essential Media, a progressive strategic campaign agency and founder of Civility, a new collaborative engagement platform. Peter is also the Director of the Australia Institute's Centre for Responsible Technology where he hosts the 'Burning Platforms podcast'. He is a regular columnist for Guardian Australia and the author of five books including *Webtopia* (2019) and the *Public Square Project* (2021).

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Nic Newman is a Senior Research Associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University where he is lead author of the annual Digital News Report, the world's largest on-going study of consumer behaviour around news. Nic authors an influential annual report on Media and Technology trends. He is also a digital media consultant and previously was a senior editor at the BBC and a founding member of the BBC News Website.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's report contains positive signs for the Australian news industry. After years of stagnation, paying for news has increased and access to news remains steady. Print news consumption has risen for the first time in six years, and the use of regional and local newspapers is up as well. Trusted traditional and public service broadcasters remain the most popular sources of news and there continues to be a strong audience appreciation for journalistic values of impartiality and independence.

As Australians continue to grapple with the health and economic impacts of Covid-19, the concern about climate change has fallen, and consumers remain politically divided over how the news media should report on it. While audiences here are not as polarised as in other countries, many are cynical about news media organisations and believe they are putting their political and commercial interests ahead of the needs of society. This impacts on their trust in the news. The number of Australians avoiding news is growing, many of them because of news fatigue.

This year's findings highlight the importance and popularity of local news to Australian consumers. The survey also reveals that Australian news consumers are motivated by curiosity and a sense of duty to stay informed, rather than seeing news as fun. We are also becoming more cautious about getting news from social media platforms, which bucks the global trend of people increasingly relying on social media for news. This is partly driven by Australians' heightened concerns about and experiences of online misinformation, particularly about Covid-19.

The pandemic seems to have shifted how people access and engage with news. While there are some signs that news habits are reverting back to pre-Covid levels, some new behaviours may be here to stay.

ONE IN FIVE AUSTRALIANS DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

Only one-third of Australians are interested in news about the environment and climate change, and one in five say they don't pay attention to climate change news. The two strongest predictors of disengagement are age and political orientation; those 76+, and those who identify as right-wing are the most likely to disengage with climate change news.

Encouragingly, rather than relying on celebrities and political parties, people go to experts and traditional news outlets for news about the climate crisis. The most popular sources of climate change news are scientists, experts and academics (50%), documentaries (33%) and major news outlets (27%).

Regarding news reporting about climate change, Australians want less focus on individual responsibility (16%) and more attention on what governments and large companies should do about it (42%).

Audiences are split about whether reporting about climate change should be impartial or advocate a point of view. Forty per cent believe news should take a position on climate action, while 42% say news media should remain impartial on the issue. The strongest support for advocacy comes from the young, left-wing, and those who take the threat of climate change seriously.

All of these attitudes are strongly linked to concern about climate change, which is becoming increasingly polarised across the political spectrum; 81% of those who identify as left, and 32% of those who identify as right express concern. Overall, Australians' concerns have reduced since 2020 (76%, -4). News consumers in regional areas remain less concerned about climate change than those in cities. Those who pay attention to news about climate change are nine times more likely to be 'very' or 'extremely' concerned, indicating the relationship between news media and people's perceptions of climate change.

It must be stressed the survey was in the field after a mild summer and before the severe flooding in Queensland and News South Wales. This is possibly why the proportion considering climate change as 'very' or 'extremely' serious reduced, and those saying they were 'somewhat' concerned increased from 2020.

PAYING FOR NEWS INCREASES

This year, overall payment for online news increased (18%, +5). Australia is now slightly higher than the global average for paying (17%). The biggest increase was among those who get free digital news access as part of a subscription to something else (e.g. broadband, phone, cable) (+3), and there was a 2 percentage point increase in those with ongoing subscriptions.

Consistent with previous years, younger generations are much more likely to pay for news; 28% of Gen Y and 21% of Gen Z pay for news. However, older generations have a higher proportion of those who pay for an ongoing subscription.

The number of news consumers subscribing to more than one news service increased substantially. This means that the pay figure may not fully reflect the increase in digital subscriptions that occurred in Australia as this occurred among those who already subscribe.

When we compare news subscription with other online media subscriptions, it is not faring well. More than two-thirds (67%) of Australians are paying for video streaming services, 45% are paying for music, 27% sport and 21% audiobooks or podcasts. But only 12% pay an ongoing subscription for news, either by subscribing to digital news or by paying for a print/digital bundle. When asked if they will increase the number of online media subscriptions, only 14% say they will, indicating there is little room for growth in an already saturated market.

SHIFTING AWAY FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of social media as a main source of news by Australians fell to 19% from last year (-4), and Facebook's popularity as a place to get news has also fallen further (31%, -2).

After a surge of growth during Covid-19, the use of most social media platforms plateaued this year, with the exception of TikTok and Telegram. TikTok usage doubled since 2020 (7% to 15%) and now one-third of users say they use it to get news. For news, YouTube is losing popularity among Gen Z (26%, -9).

Younger generations appear to be turning away from social media and going to traditional sources of news. While Gen Z's top main source of news is still social media (46%), this was an 8 percentage point drop from last year. Instead, there was an increase in the use of TV (+4) and online (+5) news as main sources among Gen Z. Rather than waiting for 'news to find me' on social media, younger generations are more actively seeking news directly on other platforms.

When on social media, it seems many news consumers are able to recognise individual news brands amongst all the other information on their social media feeds. About one-third (34%) of Facebook news users say more than half of the feed is from news sources. For Twitter news users this is about half (51%). More than half of the users (Facebook 57%, Twitter 59%) think the amount of news they see is about right, expressing satisfaction with the balance of news and other content on social media.

NEWS CONSUMPTION IS STEADY, AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA IS STILL STRONG

Following a peak in news consumption in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, news consumption returned to the longer-term trend. Since last year the proportion using news more than once a day remained about the same (52%, +1), maintaining the position as one of the lightest news consumers globally. For some demographics news consumption increased, most notably women (+4), Gen Z (+5) and Gen Y (6+).

Things have improved for print. For the first time since 2016 we record a slight increase in print news consumption to 22% (+2). It increased the most among women (19%, +4) and Gen Y (22%, +6). The weekly reach of local or regional newspapers went up by 3 percentage points (14%). Among regional news consumers one in four (24%) read their local or regional print newspapers (+7). In contrast, only 3% of news consumers say they access their regional and local newspapers online.

TV is still the most popular medium to access news (60%, -1), with Australians increasingly watching news on smart TVs. Half of news consumers are now using them for general viewing and almost one-quarter (23%) use them for news. TV continues to be the top main source of news (42%, +2) as well. Print as a main source (6%) also went up 2 percentage points, in line with the increase in the general print news consumption.

The weekly reach of the top news outlets has remained steady. The public broadcasters ABC and SBS remain popular and there were increases in consumption for Sky News (+2) and Prime7 (+3).

When asked how they get their news first thing in the morning, more Australians say they go to traditional media such as TV or radio (48%) than online sources (42%). This reinforces the popularity of traditional media and the strength of established broadcasting brands.

JOURNALISTS SHOULD STICK TO REPORTING THE NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, FOR NOW

The data show that many Australians want journalists to stick to reporting the news while on social media. More than half of Australians (52%) say journalists should only report the news and not express their personal opinion on platforms like Twitter or Facebook. Only about one-third (34%) say they should be able to express their views alongside news. However, younger generations were much more in favour of journalists expressing a view; 54% of Gen Z and 43% of Gen Y say personal views are fine on social media, compared to only 24% of Baby Boomers and 17% of 76+. While traditional values of impartiality in journalism remain popular, these findings suggest an ongoing generational shift in attitudes on the role of opinion in news coverage.

Despite the growing popularity of social media as a place to follow journalists, few respondents could name a journalist. When asked to name a presenter, reporter, or columnist they pay attention to, the majority of Australians (73%) chose not to. Perhaps this is not surprising as Australian news consumers are three times more likely to pay attention to a specific news brand (43%) than a journalist or commentator (15%) in their choice of online news.

AUSTRALIANS CONSUME NEWS OUT OF DUTY, NOT FOR FUN

When asked why they keep up with the news many Australians indicate they are driven by curiosity and a sense of duty. Almost half (45%) say their most important reason for consuming news is because they feel a duty to keep themselves informed. Forty-four per cent say it is a good way for them to learn about new things. These are the two most popular reasons. Only 14% say that they watch news because they find it entertaining and fun.

This year we asked what news topics people paid attention to. Australians are most interested in local (67%), international (56%), and Covid-19 (51%) news, but these findings are very gendered. Women are more interested than men in news about their local community, mental health and wellness, lifestyle, entertainment, crime and personal security, environment, and social justice. Men are more interested in international, political, business, sport, and science/technology news.

Preference for news topics also differs by political orientation. Right-wing consumers are more likely to be interested in business, local, sport, and crime news. Left-wing audiences are more drawn towards news about social justice issues, culture, science and technology, the environment and climate change. News about Covid-19 is one of the few news topics that attracts similar levels of interest across the political spectrum.

TRUST IS RETURNING TO PRE-COVID LEVELS

This year, trust in news has fallen slightly to 41% (-2). The 'Covid trust bump' was not sustained and trust returned to the long-term trend, with a jump in distrust towards the news generally. While high levels of trust were maintained in the public broadcasters and regional/local newspapers, trust in commercial broadcasters declined. The gap between trust in news generally, and trust in the brands people use appears to be widening, indicating people's reliance on trusted news sources.

This year we found that perceptions of low trust are linked to the way news organisations manage personal data. Less than one-third (30%) of respondents say they trust online news outlets to use their data responsibly, compared to online retailers (33%). This lack of faith may be one of the reasons news consumers are reluctant to register on news websites to get full access to news (30%). Further, we find that low trust in news is a driver of news avoidance. More than three-quarters (77%) of those who don't trust news also avoid it, compared to 61% of those who trust the news.

The data suggest that one of the keys to encouraging audience engagement and growth may be related to building trust with consumers who are nervous about their personal data online. That consumers trust online retailers more than news outlets suggests that the social and political context may hold clues for how to address this.

MORE SAY OUR MEDIA IS POLITICALLY CLOSE TOGETHER THAN FAR APART

Compared to the UK (37%) and USA (41%), fewer Australians (29%) perceive our news organisations to be politically far apart. In contrast, almost half (48%) of Australians consider news brands to be close together, which is much higher than the USA and UK (35%). This perception accurately reflects the left-right split among news brand audiences, and the dominance of centrist brands in Australia. While academics and journalists have expressed concern in recent years about increasing political partisanship and the polarisation of the media environment, the global data shows that the majority of audiences do not perceive their news media to be politically far apart, including Australia.

We also found that perceptions of polarisation appear to have little impact on news trust. The proportion of respondents who don't trust news consider the news media to be politically far apart (33%) is roughly the same as those who trust the news media generally.

AUSTRALIANS ARE SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE PRIORITIES OF NEWS ORGANISATIONS

Cynicism about the motives of news organisations is relatively high. Almost half of Australians believe news organisations in Australia put their political views (42%) and commercial interests (47%) ahead of what is best for society. These perceptions are closely linked to trust in news. Those who think news media put what's best for society ahead of their political interests have higher trust in news (64%) than consumers who think they put their own interests first (32%).

Australians do not have confidence in the independence of news organisations either. Less than one-third of Australians say news organisations are independent from undue political and government influence and only one in four say they are free from commercial influence. A further one-third are unsure. These perceptions are also directly linked to trust. Those who think the news media are independent from political (75%) and commercial (79%) pressure have much higher levels of trust in news than consumers who believe news organisations are influenced by commercial (19%) and political interests (20%).

These findings reinforce the fact that audiences are broadly in favour of traditional news values of impartiality and independence, and that these remain strong predictors of trust[1]. While the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic created a momentary surge in trust the return to largely politicised reporting appears to have eroded these gains. The data suggest that underlying cynicism has not gone away and restoring audiences' faith in the industry will require a concerted effort.

AUSTRALIANS AVOID NEWS BECAUSE TOO MUCH OF IT IS ABOUT POLITICS AND COVID-19

This year's report paints a picture of a fatigued news audiences with stagnant news interest and high levels of news avoidance. Despite the Black Summer bushfires and the global pandemic since 2020, interest in news continues to fall. The proportion of those who say they are highly interested in news has fallen six percentage points since 2020 (54%). Furthermore, more than two-thirds (68%) of respondents now actively avoid the news, which is an increase of 11 percentage points since 2017.

When asked why they avoid news, many say it is because there is too much about politics and coronavirus (49%), and because it has a negative effect on their mood (44%). Australians are also worn out by the amount of news (32%).

[1] Park, S., Fisher, C., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., K. & McCallum, K. (2021). Digital News Report: Australia 2021. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre. https://apo.org.au/node/312650

Almost a third of avoiders do so because they think news is untrustworthy or biased (32%).

The biggest news avoiders are women (70%), Gen Y (79%), those with high education (70%) and city-dwellers (69%). Left-wing (73%) avoid news more than right-wing (67%). Those who consume their news mainly via social media are more likely to avoid news (77%).

MISINFORMATION IS NOT GOING AWAY

Governments and industry have made efforts to reduce the impact of false and misleading information through various measures. The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation was launched in February 2021 by Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI). Signatories committed to reduce the spread of misinformation by labelling or demoting content plus a range of other measures. Despite these efforts, the data show an increase in people's experiences of misinformation and continuing high levels of concern about online misinformation.

Almost two-thirds (62%) of Australians say they encountered online misinformation in the last week, which is an increase from last year (+3). People experienced misinformation about Covid-19 the most (42%, +4). Gen Z is most likely to encounter misinformation about Covid-19 (51%, +11). In an ongoing challenge to news organisations, concern about misinformation is linked to perceptions of trust in news. Those who are concerned about misinformation have lower trust in news than those who are not concerned about what is real or fake on the internet. Helping audiences to distinguish between quality news and fake news in an online environment will require ongoing education and investment.

KEY FINDINGS

CHAPTER 1
CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

- Three in four Australians consider climate change to be a serious problem.
- News consumers in regional areas remain less concerned about climate change than those in cities.
- Left-leaning consumers are more than twice as concerned about climate change than those on the right (81% vs 32%).
- Those who pay attention to news about climate change are nine times more likely to be concerned, than those who do not (62% vs 7%).
- Those who take climate change more seriously support news media having a clear position in favour of climate change action.

CHAPTER 2
PARTISANSHIP AND POLARISATION

- 42% believe all or most news organisations put their political views ahead of what is best for society, and 47% believe they put commercial interests first.
- Less than one-third (29%) perceive Australian news organisations to be politically polarised.
- Those who identify as either left or right-wing are more likely to consume 7+ news brands.
- Right-wing consumers are more interested in crime, business, sport, and local news, and left-wing prefer culture, environment, climate change, science and technology news.
- Less than one-third of Australians believe news organisations are independent from undue commercial or political influence.

CHAPTER 3
NEWS INTEREST, MOTIVATIONS AND AVOIDANCE

- Despite significant events, news interest has fallen by 6% since the start of the global pandemic.
- Audiences are most interested in local (67%), international (56%) and coronavirus (51%) news.
- A duty to stay informed (45%) and curiosity (44%) are the top reasons for consuming news.
- More than two-thirds of respondents now actively avoid the news, increasing by 11 percentage points since 2017.

- People avoid the news because they think there's too much news about politics and coronavirus, and because of the negative effect it has on their mood.

CHAPTER 4
BRANDING JOURNALISM

- Online news consumers are three times more likely to pay attention to a specific news brand (43%) rather than a journalist or commentator (15%).
- More news consumers believe journalists should stick to reporting the news while on social media (52%) rather than express their personal opinions (34%).
- Compared to older generations, Gen Z is more supportive of reporters expressing their personal opinions (54%).
- Most respondents (73%) could not name a journalist or commentator they regularly paid attention to.
- TV presenters and commentators from a European background are the most well recognised.

CHAPTER 5
NEWS ACCESS

- People are turning away from social media to get their news, in particular Gen Z and Y.
- Overall news consumption is steady but has increased among young people and women.
- There are signs of growth in print news consumption (+2), particularly regional and local newspapers (+3).
- One in four (23%) Australians use smart TVs to access news, and TV remains the most popular main source of news (42%).
- More than a quarter watch TV (27%) or look at their smartphone (26%) to get news first thing in the morning.

CHAPTER 6
SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMERGING NEWS HABITS

- Facebook is still the most popular social media platform (67%), however its use for news continues to decline (-2).
- TikTok usage has doubled since 2020 (7% to 15%), and one-third of users use it for news.
- YouTube is losing popularity among Gen Z as a news platform (-9).
- Australians prefer reading news (61%) rather than watching it online (12%) and say that this is because text is a quicker way to get news.
- Podcast listenership is on the rise among younger generations; half of Gen Z and Y now listen to podcasts.

CHAPTER 7
TRUST AND MISINFORMATION

- Trust in news has fallen to 41% (-2) and distrust has risen to 30% (+2).
- Trust in news brands has declined across the board with commercial broadcasters suffering most.
- Those who think news media put society first and are independent from commercial or political influence have higher trust in news.
- Less than one-third a third of respondents trust news websites with their personal data, and the majority did not register with websites to access online news.
- Those encountering Covid-19 misinformation increased (+3) since last year, and concern about misinformation remains high (64%).

CHAPTER 8
PAYING FOR NEWS AND DIGITAL MEDIA

- More Australians are paying for online news (18%, +5).
- Almost one-third (28%) of Gen Y now pays for news (+12).
- There is a large growth in news consumers who pay for more than one news service (+13).
- News is the least popular type of digital media services people pay for.
- People who pay attention to journalists over news brands are more likely to pay for news.

CHAPTER 9
AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD

- More Australians are interested in local news (67%) than the global average (60%).
- Australians are among the least likely in the world to say they are interested in news about climate change and the environment (36%) and less likely to pay attention to it.
- Australia goes against the global trend with an increase in the experience of Covid-19 misinformation to 42% (+4).
- Australians are slightly less interested in political news (45%) than the global average (47%) and are more likely to avoid news because there is too much coverage about politics and coronavirus (49%; 42% global average).
- Australians are among the most likely in the world to say they use news because they have a duty to keep themselves informed about the news (45%; 36% global average).

1 CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

- Three in four Australians consider climate change to be a serious problem.
- News consumers in regional areas remain less concerned about climate change than those in cities.
- Left-leaning consumers are more than twice as concerned about climate change than those on the right (81% vs 32%).
- Those who pay attention to news about climate change are nine times more likely to be concerned, than those who do not (62% vs 7%).
- Those who take climate change more seriously support news media having a clear position in favour of climate change action.

CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

We asked Australian news consumers about climate change at the end of an abnormally wet summer across much of Australia, particularly Eastern states, due to the impact of *la Niña*. In January the temperature was 1.1°C above the monthly average compared to previous years, equal its hottest recorded temperature (50.7°C in Onslow, WA), while Perth sweltered through six straight days above 40°C, the longest period on record. We should note that the survey was conducted before the extreme floods that occurred in February and March in News South Wales and Queensland.

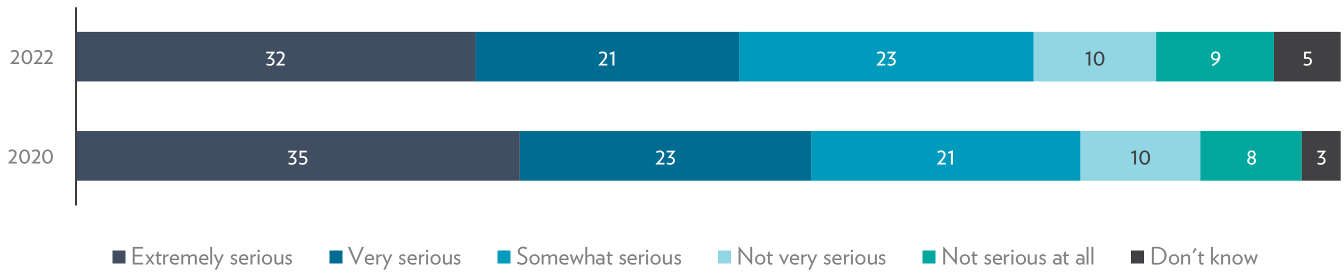
While one cannot attribute climate change as the cause of any single weather event, the frequency and severity of record temperatures, fires and floods all point to an increasingly acute climate emergency with devastating consequences for our natural and social worlds.

Our previous survey of views about climate change, conducted in 2020, was at the tail end of the Black Summer bushfires, which provoked public debate about the changing climate and the adequacy of public policy responses to the dire threats it poses.

This year, three in four (76%) Australians regard climate change as a serious issue. This is a three percentage point drop from 2020 (79%). The number of people considering it a very or extremely serious problem reduced from 58% in 2020 to 53% this year, while those who saw it as 'somewhat serious' increased from 21% to 23%. Almost one in five (19%) considered it 'not very' or 'not at all' serious. Given the extreme gravity of the climate emergency, it might be argued that describing it as 'somewhat serious' itself suggests a degree of climate denial. A further 5% reported that they don't know (see **figure 1.1**).

Concern about climate change decreased in other countries as well this year. However, Australia is among the least concerned, together with the US (see **Chapter 9**).

FIGURE 1.1: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE 2020-2022 (%)



[C1_2020] How serious a problem, if at all, do you think climate change is? [Base: N=2,038]

THE GENERATION AND GENDER GAP HAS NARROWED

Both the gender and age gap have narrowed since 2020. In 2020, more women (61%) than men (55%) were concerned about climate change. Concern among women fell further than men, narrowing the gap to 2%; 53% of women compared to 51% of men (see **figure 1.2**).

While there is a strong generational divide between those who regard climate change as a major problem (59% of Gen X and Gen Y vs 39% of 76+), this gap appears to have narrowed considerably. As **figure 1.3** shows, this reflects a decline in concern across most generations, with the sharpest falls among generations Z (-10), Y (-7), X (-7). Younger generations appear markedly less concerned about climate change in 2022 than they were in 2020.

Consistent with the findings in 2020, respondents in regional areas are less concerned about climate change than those living in major cities, despite extreme weather events and bushfires disproportionately affecting regional areas. This may reflect the fact higher proportions of older and more conservative Australians live in the regions. Our findings also show a direct correlation between education and concern about climate change, with 61% of highly educated respondents considering it to be a serious problem, compared to 41% among those with low levels of education (see **figure 1.2**).

Those who are heavy news consumers with high interest in news are also more likely to consider climate change to be an extremely or very serious issue (see **figure 1.4**).

FIGURE 1.2: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

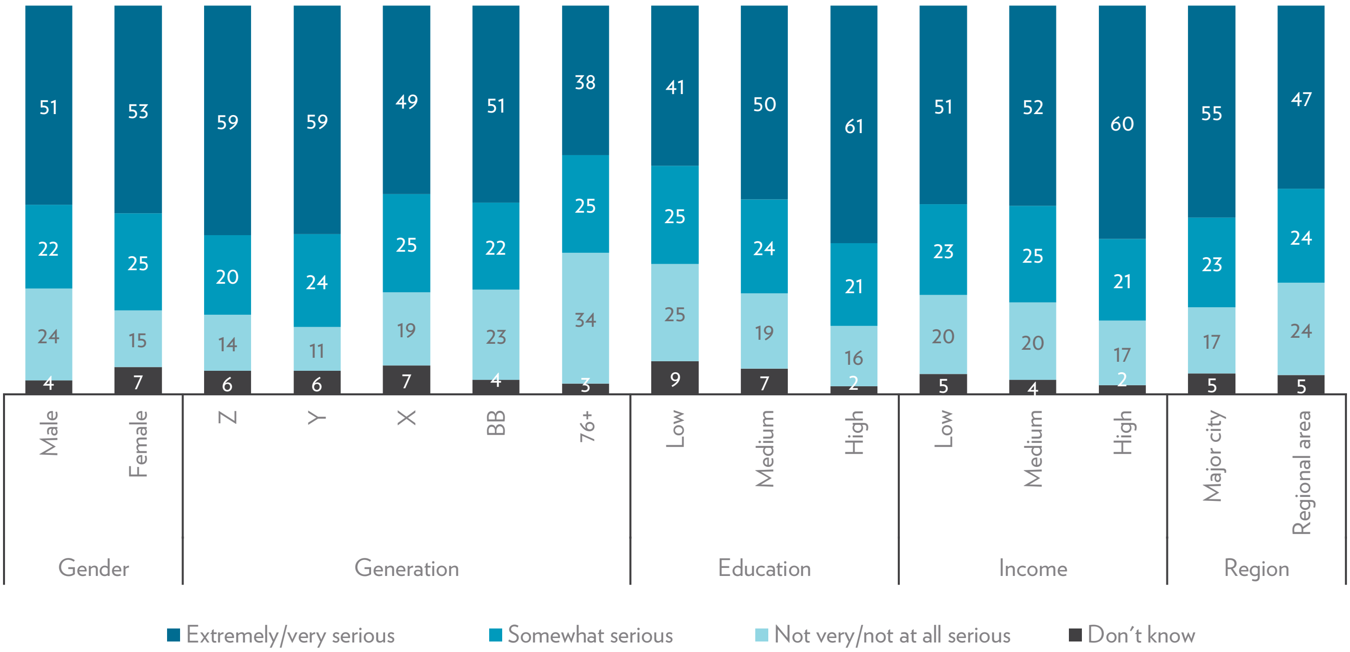
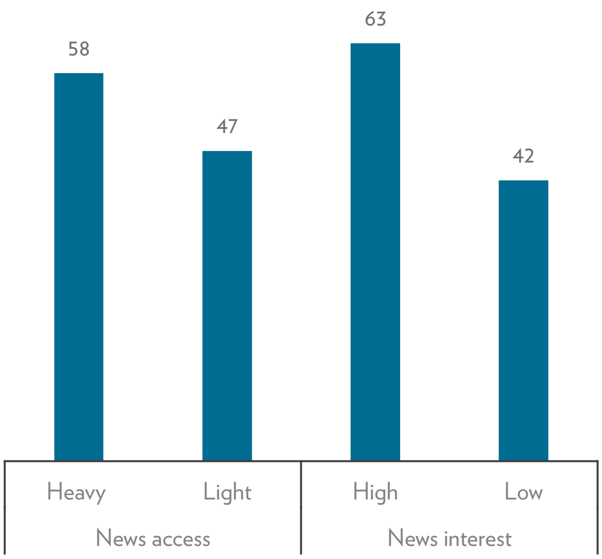


FIGURE 1.3: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY GENDER AND GENERATION 2020-2022 (%)

*Those who think climate change is very or extremely serious

FIGURE 1.4: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST (%)

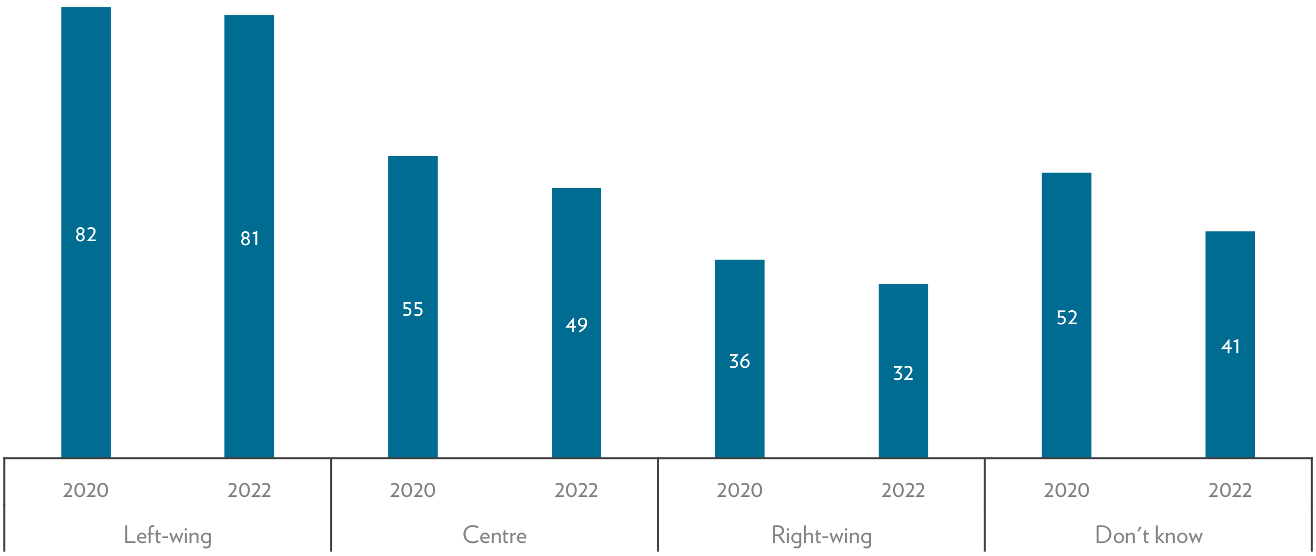


*Those who think climate change is very or extremely serious

POLARISATION PERSISTS BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT-LEANING AUDIENCES

Concern about climate change is strongly linked to political orientation. Most left-wing respondents (81%) are very or extremely concerned, compared to only 32% among right-wing news consumers. This polarisation has persisted and slightly widened since 2020 (see **figure 1.5**).

FIGURE 1.5: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



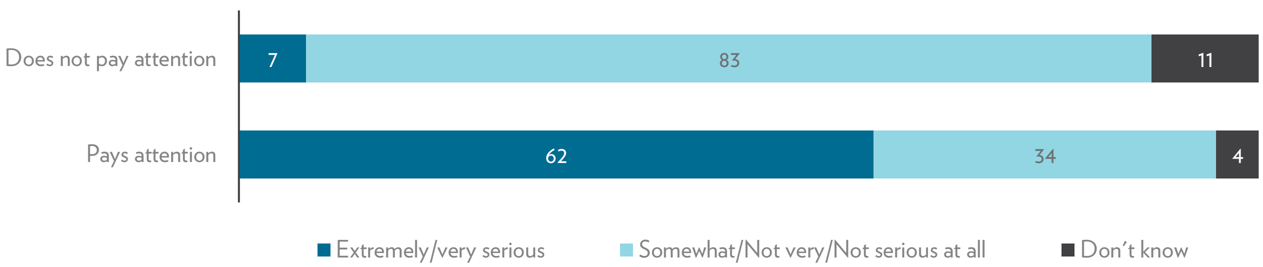
*Those who think climate change is very or extremely serious

ATTITUDE TOWARDS CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

Concern about climate change is strongly correlated to paying attention to climate change news. Those who pay attention are nine times more likely (62%) to view climate change as extremely or very serious than those who do not (7%) (see **figure 1.6**).

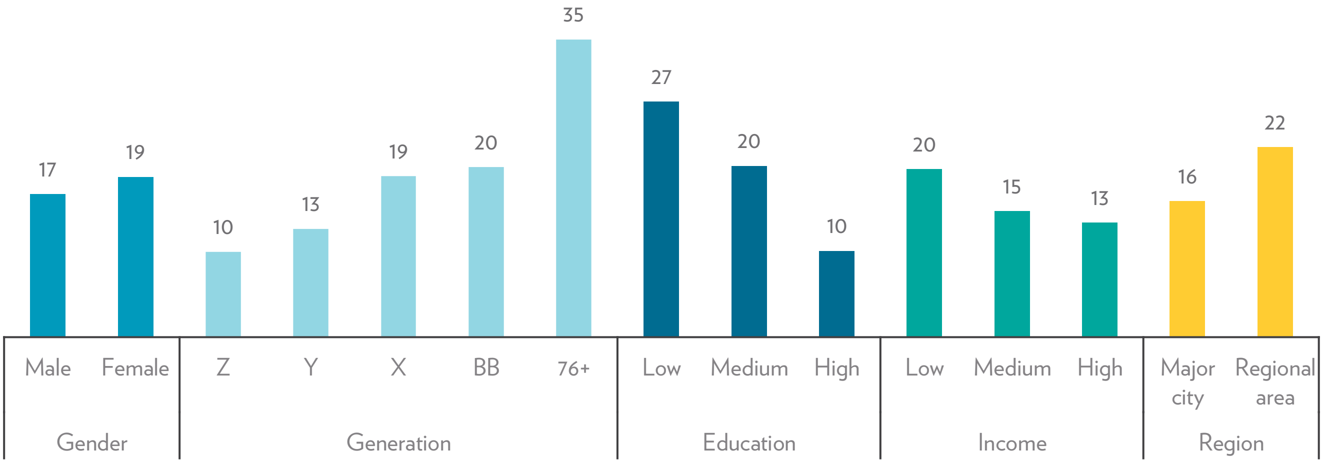
Less educated respondents, those with low income, and those living in regional areas, are less inclined to engage with climate change news. The two strongest predictors of disengagement with news about climate change are age and political orientation, with respondents aged 76+ and those who identify as right-wing the least likely to pay attention to news about climate change (see **figures 1.7** and **1.8**).

FIGURE 1.6: ATTENTION TO NEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY CONCERN (%)



[C1_2022a] When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? Please select all that apply.
*Compared 'I don't pay attention to climate change news' to the rest. Excluded 'don't know'. [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 1.7: 'I DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS' BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

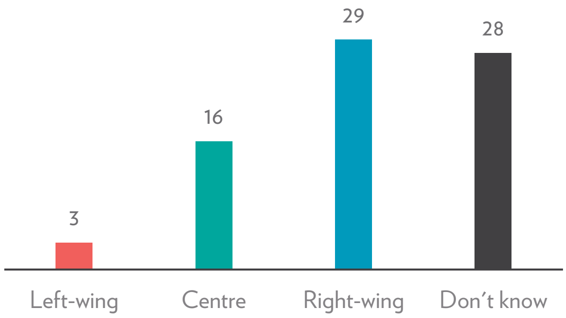


NEWS CONSUMERS GO STRAIGHT TO THE EXPERTS

The most popular sources of climate change news are scientists, experts and academics (50%) (see **figure 1.9**). This was almost twice the proportion of those who nominated major news organisations as their primary source of climate change news (27%). Television and film documentaries are also a major source, nominated by one third of respondents (33%). The high profile of experts suggests increasing 'disintermediation', a term that refers to a trend whereby audiences can go directly to information sources and bypass traditional news outlets.

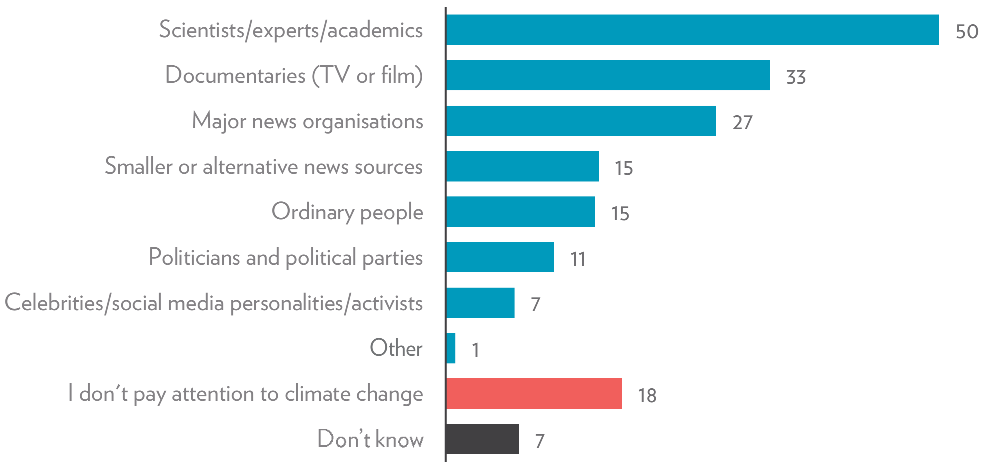
It is notable that only 11% of respondents say they use politicians and political parties as their main source of climate change news. Likewise, people pay little attention to celebrities, social media personalities and activists (7%).

FIGURE 1.8: 'I DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS' BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



More importantly, 18% of respondents say they don't pay any attention to news about climate change (see **figure 1.9**).

FIGURE 1.9: SOURCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS YOU PAY MOST ATTENTION TO (%)



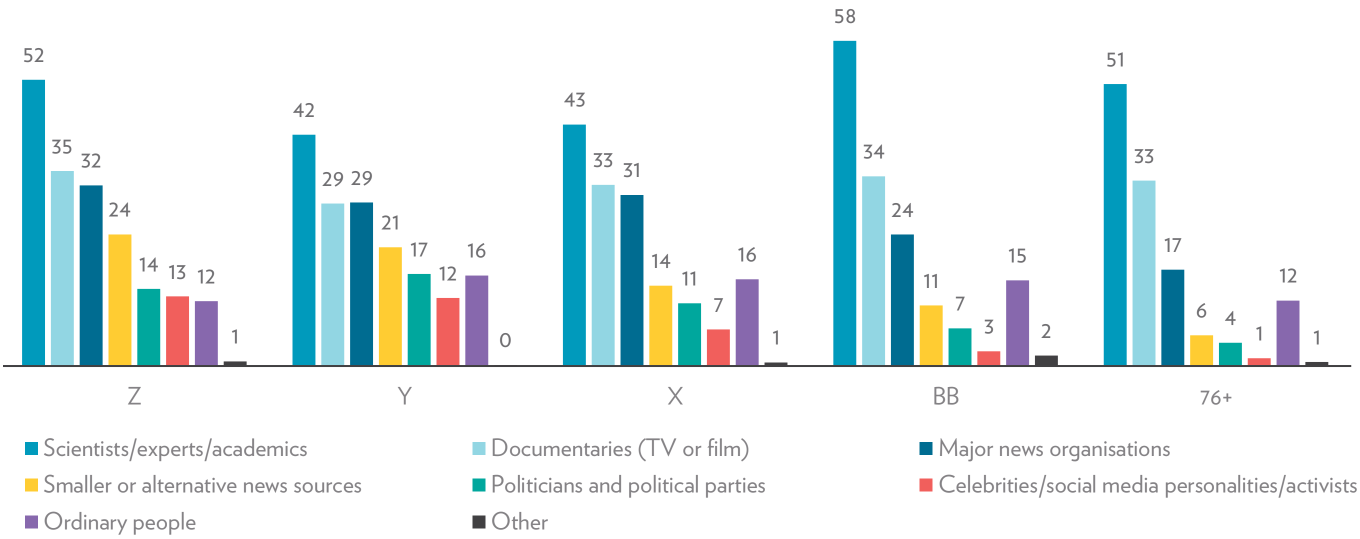
[C1_2022a] When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN SOURCES OF NEWS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Younger generations (particularly Y and Z) are more likely to pay attention to politicians and political parties, smaller and alternative news sources, and celebrities, social media personalities and activists compared to older generations.

Older generations are the more likely to turn to scientists, experts and academics for news about climate change (see **figure 1.10**).

FIGURE 1.10: SOURCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS YOU PAY MOST ATTENTION TO BY GENERATION (%)

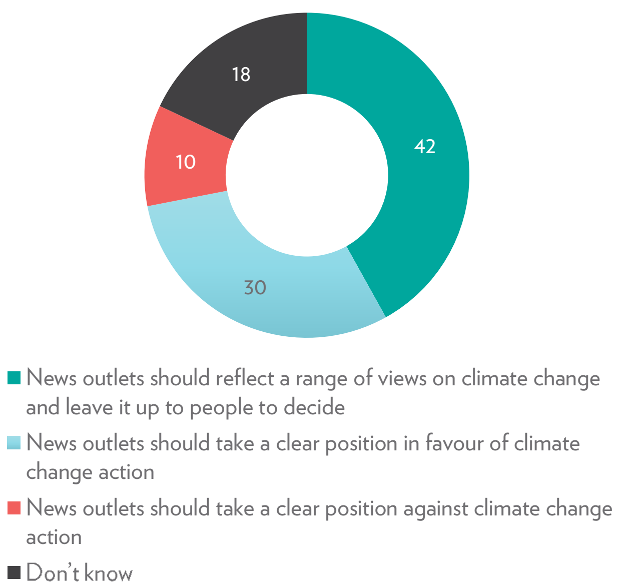


AUDIENCES ARE DIVIDED ON WHETHER NEWS SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

This year we asked how respondents felt news outlets *should* report on climate change. Findings are notably mixed: 42% say they should reflect a range of perspectives on climate change and leave it up to people to decide what (if anything) to do; 30% say they should take a clear position on climate change action; 10% say they should take a clear position against, and a further 18% are unsure (see **figure 1.11**).

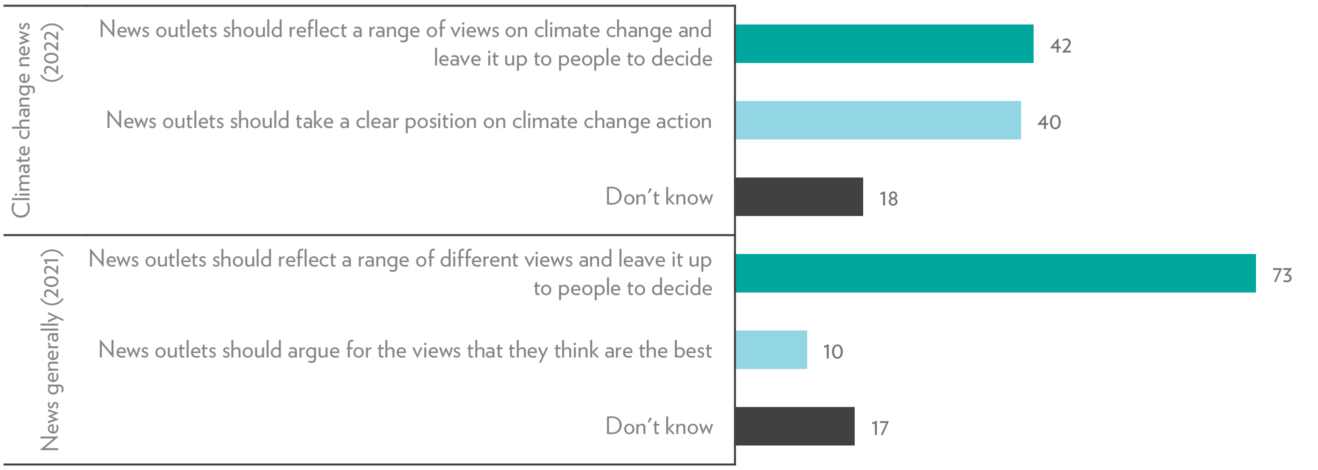
As **figure 1.12** shows, these findings contrast strongly with previous findings about how news in general should be reported. In the *Digital News Report: Australia 2021*, we found that the vast majority (73%) believe news should reflect a range of views and leave it to people to decide, while only 10% think news reports should take a stand on particular issues. By contrast, when it comes to reporting on climate change, 42% said news should be impartial, while 40% think news should take a clear position on climate change action. There is a much stronger demand for news to play an advocacy role in relation to climate change than is generally the case.

FIGURE 1.11: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE (%)



[QAdvocacy_2022] Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view? [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 1.12: BELIEFS ABOUT NEWS IMPARTIALITY AND BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE (%)

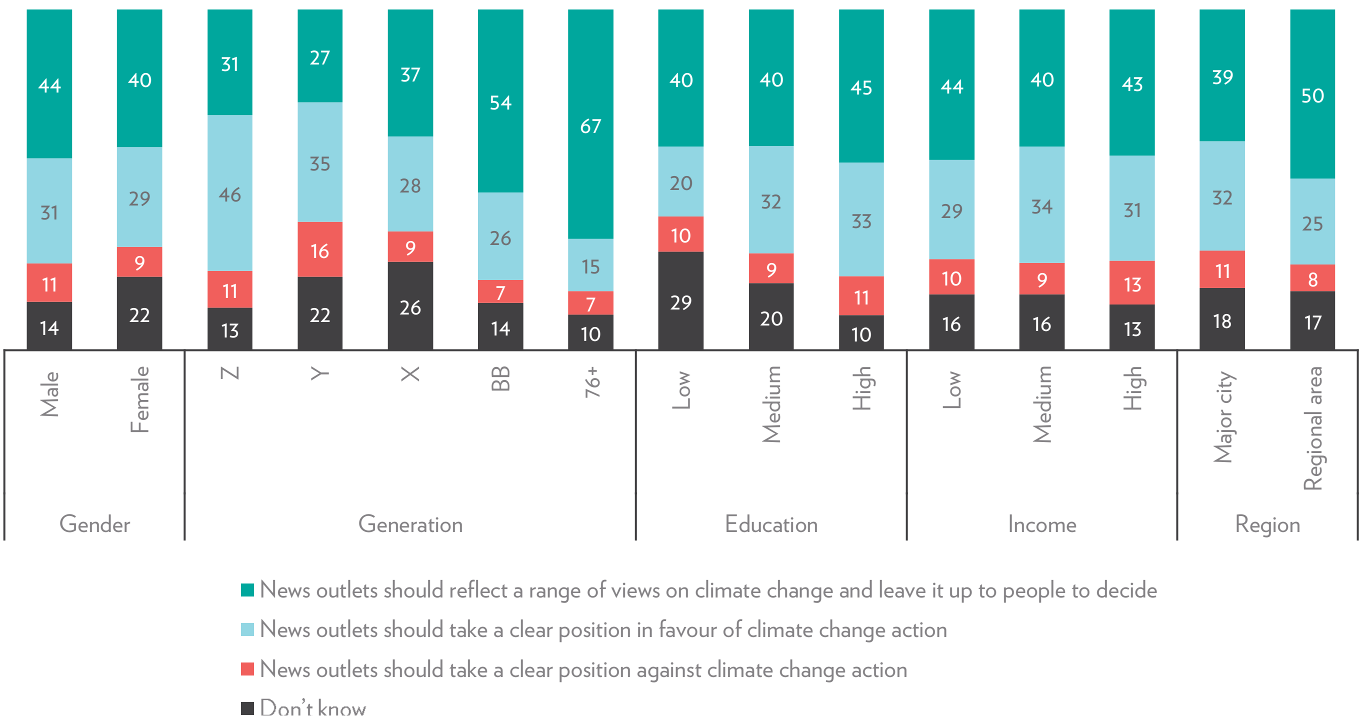


[Q_IMPARTIAL1_2021] Thinking about the news in general in your country, when news outlets report on social and political issues, which of the following comes closest to your view? [Base: N=2034]

YOUNGER GENERATIONS EXPECT NEWS MEDIA TO BE PROACTIVE ON THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Younger generations (Z and Y) more strongly support news outlets taking a clear position about climate change action (46% and 35% respectively) than older generations (Baby Boomers 26%; 76+ 15%). By contrast, older generations expect news media to report impartially (Baby Boomers 54%; 76+ 67%) compared to younger generations (Gen Z 31%; Gen Y 27%). While there are also some differences in views between regional and city dwellers, and among Australians with different levels of education, such differences are relatively minor in comparison to this stark generational divide. This reflects younger generations are more concerned about climate change and their expectations around the advocacy role of journalism (see **figure 1.13**).

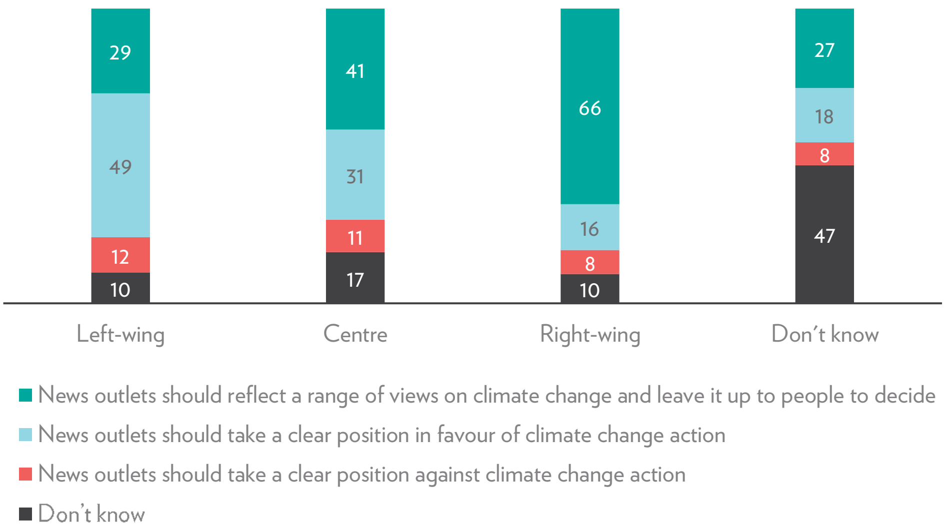
FIGURE 1.13: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



LEFT-WING CONSUMERS THINK NEWS MEDIA SHOULD TAKE A POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

The dominant position among survey participants who identify as left-wing is that news outlets should take a position in favour of climate change action (49%), while two-thirds (66%) of those who identify as right-wing believe news should reflect a range of views and not advocate for any particular course of action (**figure 1.14**).

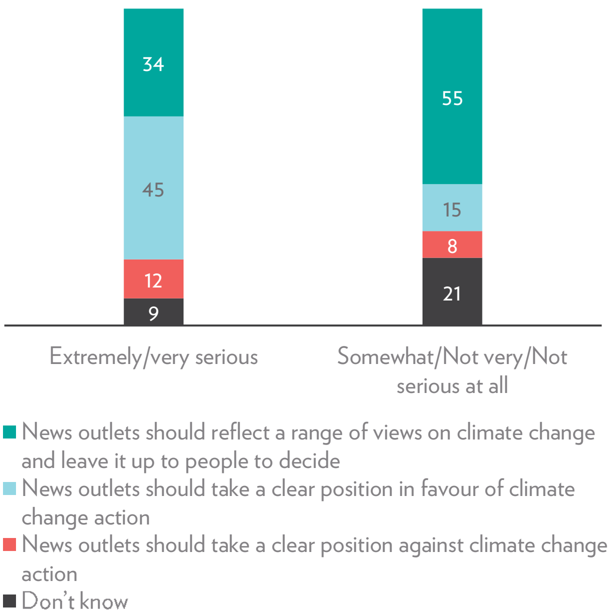
FIGURE 1.14: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



THOSE WHO ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE PREFER NEWS ADVOCACY

There are strong differences in the way climate change should be covered based on levels of concern about the issue. As **figure 1.15** shows, those who believe climate change is extremely or very serious are more likely to say that news outlets should take a clear position in favour of climate change action (45%). By contrast, those who take climate change less or not at all seriously, are more likely to say news outlets should reflect different views (55%) and only 15% believe news media should advocate for action.

FIGURE 1.15: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE BY CONCERN



Those concerned about climate change

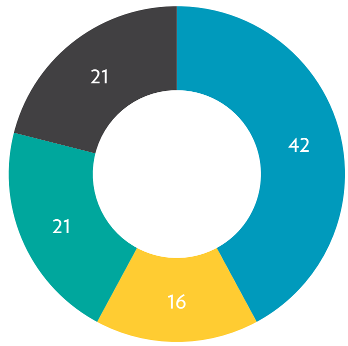
57%
want action

AUSTRALIANS WANT NEWS COVERAGE ON WHAT GOVERNMENTS AND LARGE COMPANIES SHOULD BE DOING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

News consumers want the news media to focus more on what governments and large companies should do about climate change (42%), rather than on the actions of individuals (16%) (see **figure 1.16**). However, 21% feel that coverage should focus on either of these and a further 21% said they don't know.

Younger generations, those on higher incomes, and the most highly educated are most likely to believe that reporting should focus on what governments and major companies should do. Younger generations—Gen Z (22%) and Gen Y (24%)—are also more likely to say news should focus on what individuals should do. Men are more likely to focus on what government and large companies should do (45%) than women (40%). The proportion saying they don't know is highest among those with low education (32%), Gen X (28%), and women (26%) (see **figure 1.17**). Although women are more concerned about climate change and more interested in environment and climate change news than men (see **Chapter 3**) they are less sure how the issue should be reported.

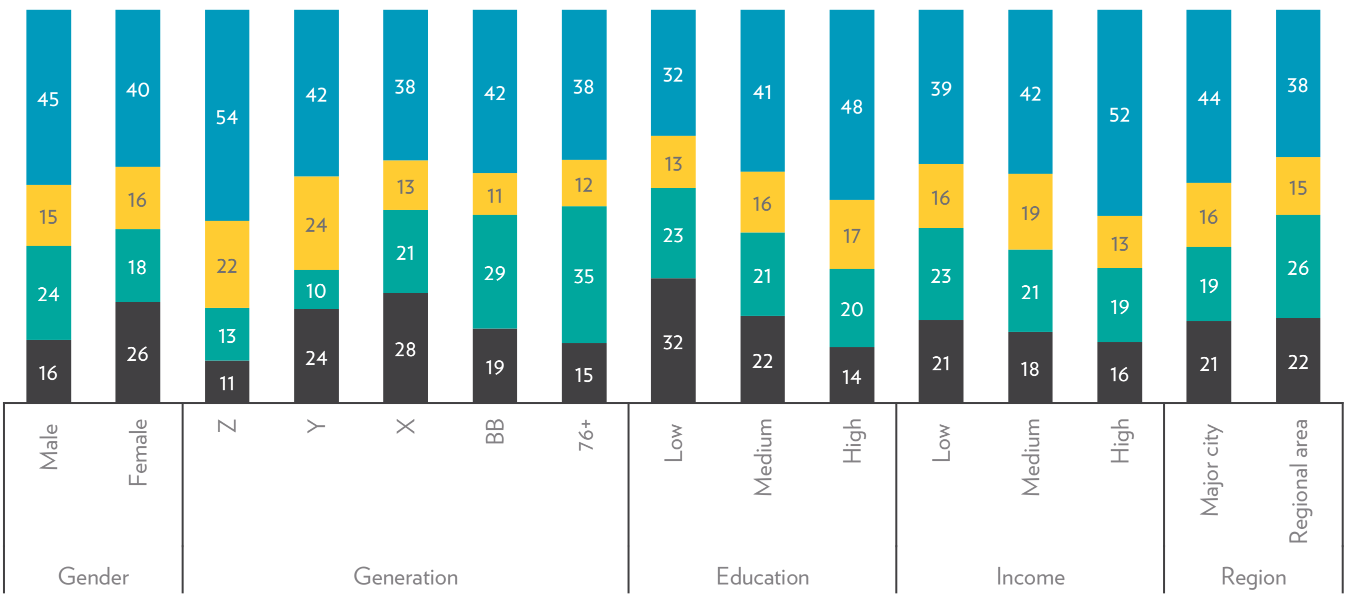
FIGURE 1.16: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT CLIMATE ACTION NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON (%)



■ News outlets should focus more on what governments or large companies should do
■ News outlets should focus more on what individual people should do
■ News outlets should not focus on either of these
■ Don't know

[C2_2022a] Thinking about news about climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view? [Base: N=2,038]

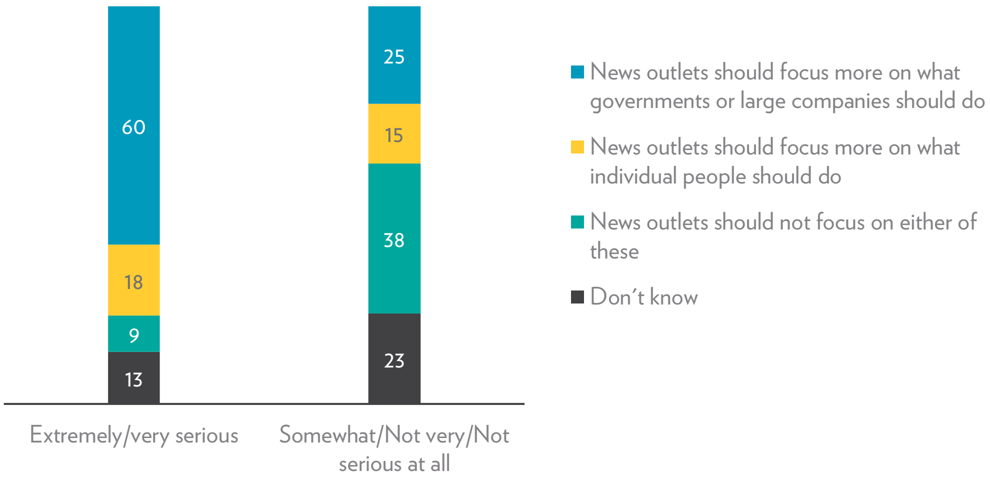
FIGURE 1.17: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



■ News outlets should focus more on what governments or large companies should do
■ News outlets should focus more on what individual people should do
■ News outlets should not focus on either of these
■ Don't know

Figure 1.18 shows that a strong majority (60%) of those who take climate change very or extremely seriously believe the focus should be on what governments and large companies should do, while a further 18% believe the focus should be on individuals. Among those who take it less or not seriously, the most common view is that news outlets should focus on neither institutions nor individuals (38%), although these consumers have more mixed views about what the focus of coverage should be.

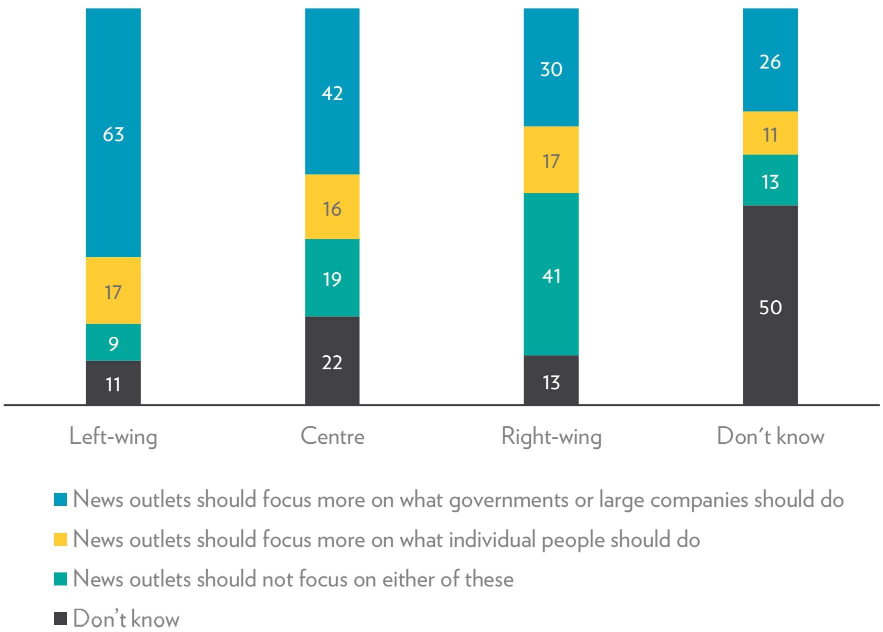
FIGURE 1.18: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT CLIMATE ACTION NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON BY CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE (%)



RIGHT-WING ARE MORE LIKELY TO SAY NEWS SHOULD NOT FOCUS ON ANY CLIMATE ACTION

A political divide is also apparent in perspectives on what news should focus on. A strong majority (63%) of left-wing news consumers believe news should focus on what government and large companies should do, and this is also the dominant response among centrists (42%). By contrast, the most popular response among right-wing news consumers (41%) is that news outlets should focus on neither institutional nor individual action (**figure 1.19**).

FIGURE 1.19: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT CLIMATE ACTION NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



SUMMARY

Australians' views about climate change news are shifting. In the face of an increasingly urgent and devastating climate emergency, some may feel disturbed to see that levels of concern appear to have slightly declined. Our findings also show that, perhaps predictably, views around both climate change and climate change news are politically polarised, and there is also evidence of a strong generational divide surrounding this issue. In line with this divide, we see a high proportion of those concerned about the climate crisis wanting news organisations to take a clear position about the issue.

Interestingly, there is a much stronger demand for news to play an advocacy role in reporting climate change than general news. This is a finding that strongly contrasts with views about how other areas of news should be reported, and is a notable departure from a tradition of impartiality that many news consumers appear to find increasingly untenable in the face of the climate emergency.

Encouragingly, there is preference across generations and the political spectrum for accessing news from experts and traditional news outlets over celebrities, social media and alternative news sources. That being said, there is also a divide between those who pay attention to experts and those who do not pay attention at all. While half say they mostly pay attention to the scientists, experts and academics, almost one in five say they don't pay attention to climate change news, and one in five say news should not focus on climate action. This suggests a small but important minority have disengaged from the issue entirely.

This year's survey was conducted before the extreme floods that occurred in News South Wales and Queensland. Were this survey conducted during or after the floods, the results may have been different.

COMMENTARY

DIVISION ON JOURNALISM'S ROLE IN REPORTING THE CLIMATE CRISIS ARE DISTINCTLY POLITICAL IN NATURE

Ebony Bennett, Deputy Director, The Australia Institute

Australia is already experiencing the impacts of the climate crisis and, despite the scale of the health and economic impacts of the global pandemic over the past two years, the view that climate change is a serious problem remains high.

Political polarisation drives the biggest gap in Australian news consumers' views on climate change. Eight in ten (81%) progressive news consumers are very/extremely concerned about climate change, compared to just three in ten (32%) of conservatives, and this polarisation has widened slightly since the last survey. This polarisation of views has also caused political problems for both Labor and the Coalition in the 2022 federal election.

While Labor has struggled to sell its climate policies to both regional coal communities, as well as voters in inner city electorates, the Coalition faces similar political problems. These results show that serious concern about climate change may not be as widespread among conservative voters, but it certainly seems to be geographically concentrated in traditionally safe Liberal seats. The sheer number of prominent independent candidates[1] running against the Liberal party in blue-ribbon seats on platforms for strong climate action in the 2022 federal election is the perhaps the clearest evidence of real concern among conservatives. The Liberal party's junior Coalition partner, the Nationals, has been publicly challenging the net zero by 2050 target[2] and supporting the expansion of the fossil fuel industry to appeal to its constituents, but these views are anathema in many blue-ribbon Liberal seats like Warringah, which elected Independent Zali Steggall on a platform of climate action. It is unclear how many, if any, climate-driven independents will be elected, or whether they will hold the balance of power.

However, the political threat to the Liberal party from high-profile 'teal independents' shows there is a clear political cost to the Coalition's inaction and division on climate change.

Interestingly, this political polarisation does not appear to drive Liberal climate policy at the state level, where the NSW Liberal government now has some of Australia's most ambitious climate policies, led by Treasurer and Energy Minister Matt Kean[3].

Overall, three quarters (76%) of Australian news consumers consider climate change a serious problem. These results are consistent with The Australia Institute's annual Climate of the Nation survey[4], the country's longest running survey on Australian attitudes towards climate change, which in 2021 found a record 75% of Australians are concerned about climate change (40% of which are very concerned), compared to 14% not very concerned, and 8% who were not concerned at all.

The political polarisation is also reflected in how news consumers think the media should cover the climate crisis in its reporting. Four in ten news consumers (42%) said climate reporting should reflect 'a range of perspectives', three in ten (30%) said the media 'should take a clear position in favour of climate action', 10% said they should take a clear position against, and a further 18% were unsure. That's four in ten news consumers who think the media should play an advocacy role in its climate coverage—what is driving that view?

There has been prominent criticism[5] of the way the Murdoch-owned media outlets have reported on the climate crisis in Australia and international research[6] has shown that, in an effort to provide 'balanced' coverage, the media has sometimes lent too much weight to those who dismiss or deny climate change, creating false balance between scientific experts and people with no scientific training.

"It's not just false balance; the numbers show that the media are 'balancing' experts—who represent the overwhelming majority of reputable scientists—with the views of a relative handful of non-experts,"

—UC Merced professor LeRoy Westerling.

Interestingly, half of news consumers also said scientists, experts and academics were the sources they paid most attention to on climate change, much more so than major news organisations. This strong preference for getting information from experts could reflect the prominent role medical experts played during the management of the pandemic in Australia, often appearing alongside the Prime Minister and state premiers at daily Covid press conferences.

Australia Institute research shows that Australia will struggle to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 on the pre-election federal policy settings. Australia's domestic emissions have been rising[7], there are currently more than 100 gas and coal projects in the pipeline for development[8], Australia has weak fuel efficiency standards[9] and state and federal governments collectively spent more than $11.6 billion on public subsidies to the fossil fuel industry[10] . As the climate crisis worsens, quality public interest journalism is more important than ever, but growing more difficult to access as dozens of newsrooms close around the country.[11]

[1] https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2022/april/1648731600/margaret-simons/independents-and-balance-power#mtr
[2] https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/apr/26/scott-morrison-forced-to-clarify-net-zero-commitment-amid-coalition-division
[3] https://mattkean.com.au/news/media/nsw%E2%80%99s-plan-become-clean-energy-superpower
[4] https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/all-time-high-of-75-of-australians-concerned-about-climate-change/
[5] https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/08/world/australia/fires-murdoch-disinformation.html
[6] https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/media-creates-false-balance-climate-science-study-shows
[7] https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/banking-on-australias-emissions/
[8] https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australias-fossil-fuel-expansion-plans-equivalent-to-over-200-new-coal-power-stations/
[9] https://australiainstitute.org.au/post/australia-91-reliant-on-foreign-oil-research-report/
[10] https://australiainstitute.org.au/report/fossil-fuel-subsidies-in-australia-2021-22/
[11] https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/may/18/more-than-150-australian-newsrooms-shut-since-january-2019-as-covid-19-deepens-media-crisis

*Note, this commentary was written prior to the outcome of the 2022 federal election

NEWS MOMENTS

22 September 2021 | Melbourne is rocked by a magnitude 5.9 earthquake centred in the Victorian Alps. The quake caused damage to brick facades, covering roads with debris and prompting the evacuation of residential buildings across the city. One man was injured but there were no casualties as a result of the earthquake.

IMAGE: JAMES ROSS / AAP IMAGE

2 PARTISANSHIP & POLARISATION

- 42% believe all or most news organisations put their political views ahead of what is best for society, and 47% believe they put commercial interests first.
- Less than one-third (29%) perceive Australian news organisations to be politically polarised.
- Those who identify as either left or right-wing are more likely to consume 7+ news brands.
- Right-wing consumers are more interested in crime, business, sport, and local news, and left-wing prefer culture, environment, climate change, science and technology news.
- Less than one-third of Australians believe news organisations are independent from undue commercial or political influence.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

In this year's survey 29% of news consumers identified as left-wing (very and fairly left-wing, plus slightly left-of-centre); 29% identified as centre (centre only); and 26% identified as right-wing (very and fairly right-wing, plus slightly right-of-centre). A further 16% did not know their political orientation (see **figure 2.1**).

FIGURE 2.1: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS (%)[1]

[Q1F] Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. (Generally, socialist parties would be considered 'left wing' whilst conservative parties would be considered 'right wing'). With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale? [Base: N=2,038]

POLITICAL ORIENTATION BY DEMOGRAPHICS

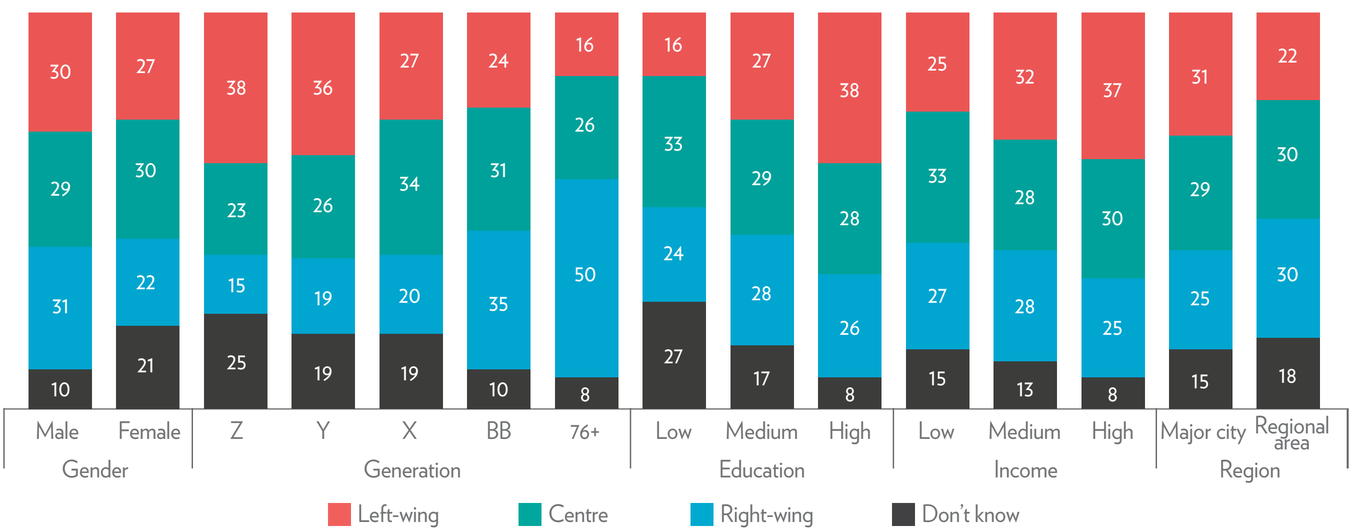
Demographic analysis reveals big differences in political orientation based on generation, geography, gender, education, and income (see **figure 2.2**).

Younger respondents are more likely to identify as left-wing. Gen Z (38%) and Gen Y (36%) are more likely to align themselves with the left side of politics compared to those aged 76+ (16%), half of whom said they were right-wing.

More men identify as right-wing (31%) than women (22%). More women (21%) said they didn't know their political orientation than men (10%). This partly reflects that men are more interested in politics and political news than women.

Education and income are also indicators of political orientation. As found in previous years, news consumers with high levels of education (38%) and income (37%) are more likely to identify as left-wing than right-wing (26% and 25% respectively). More than one-quarter of people who have low levels of education (27%) don't know their political orientation, a much higher figure than that of those with high education levels (8%). A larger proportion of city-dwellers (31%) align themselves with the left side of politics compared to respondents in regional areas (22%).

FIGURE 2.2: POLITICAL ORIENTATION BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

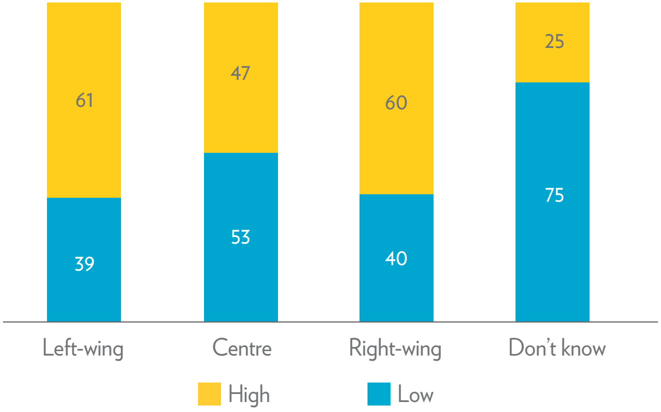


[1] For the first time in this survey, data was weighted to targets based on voter choice in a recent election (2019). However, for Australian respondents there was very little change in the proportionality between 2021 and 2022 for this question.

THOSE WHO HAVE LOW INTEREST IN NEWS DON'T KNOW THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION

Three-quarters of participants who do not know their political orientation have low interest in news. This suggests a degree of disengagement from the political and news environment. In contrast, around 60% of participants who identify as left or right-wing say they are very or extremely interested in news (see **figure 2.3**).

FIGURE 2.3: INTEREST IN NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



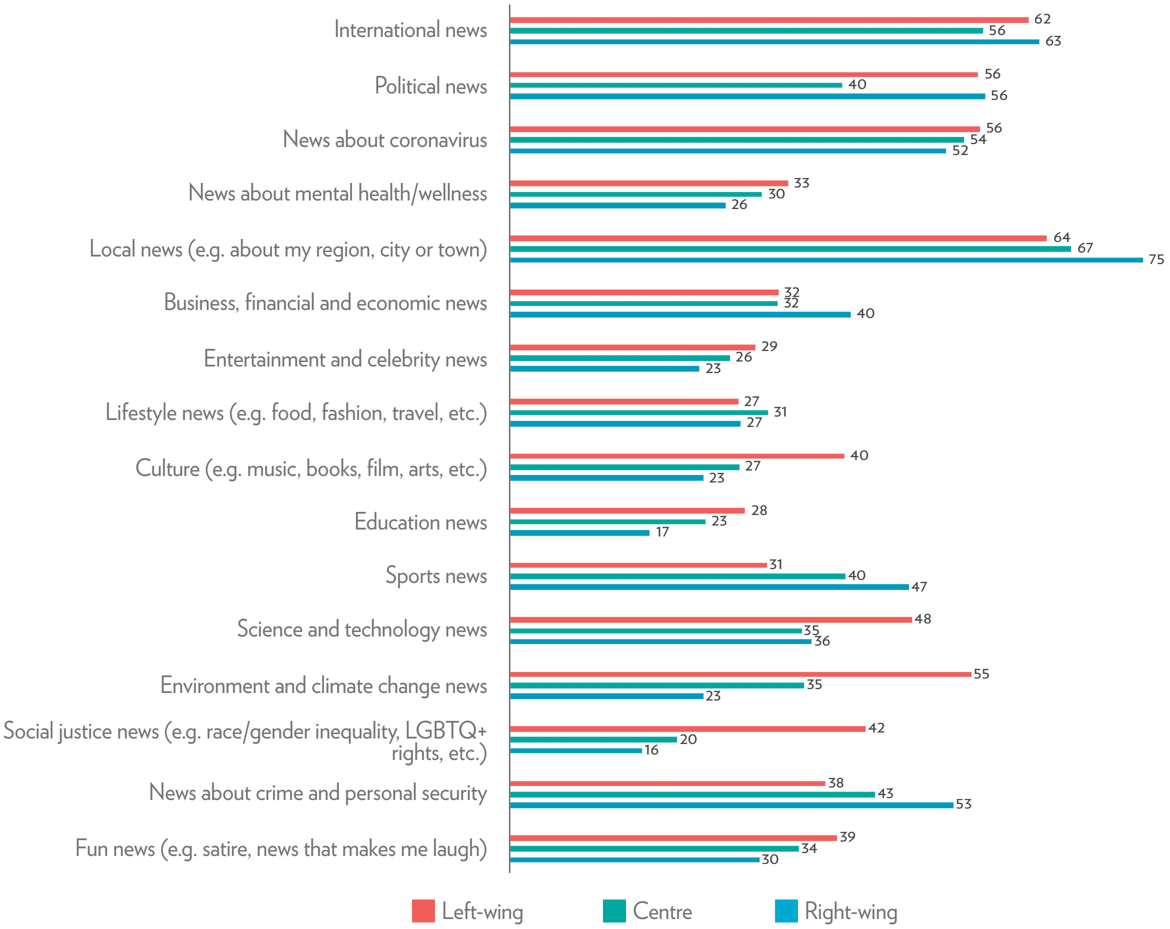
LEFT AND RIGHT-WINGERS ARE EQUALLY INTERESTED IN POLITICAL NEWS

Overall, 45% of respondents say they are interested in political news (see **Chapter 3**). More than half of left and right-wing consumers in this survey appear to be equally interested in news about politics (56%), while centre-oriented participants are less interested (40%) (see **figure 2.4**).

The data reveal some clear differences in preference for news topics based on political orientation. Right-wing respondents have a higher preference for business, local, sport, and crime news; while left-wing participants have a stronger preference for news about social justice issues, culture, science and technology, the environment and climate change. The strong interest in climate change among left-wing consumers is clearly reflected in the findings from **Chapter 1**.

News about Covid-19 was one of the few news topics that attracted similar levels of interest from participants across the political spectrum.

FIGURE 2.4: TYPES OF NEWS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BY POLITICAL ORIENTAION (%)



[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,038]. Those who answered 'don't know' are not shown in the figure.

LEFT-WING RESPONDENTS AVOID THE NEWS MOST

There appears to be a political dimension to news avoidance. Three-quarters (73%) of left-wing consumers say they often, sometimes or occasionally avoid the news, compared to 67% in the centre, and 65% of those who identify as right-wing (see **figure 2.5**). Right-wing news consumers avoid news because there is too much coverage of politics and coronavirus (61%). Left-wing consumers say news has a negative impact on their mood (51%). Left and right wing consumers are equally likely to avoid news because they think news is untrustworthy (37%; 36%) (see **figure 2.6**).

FIGURE 2.5: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

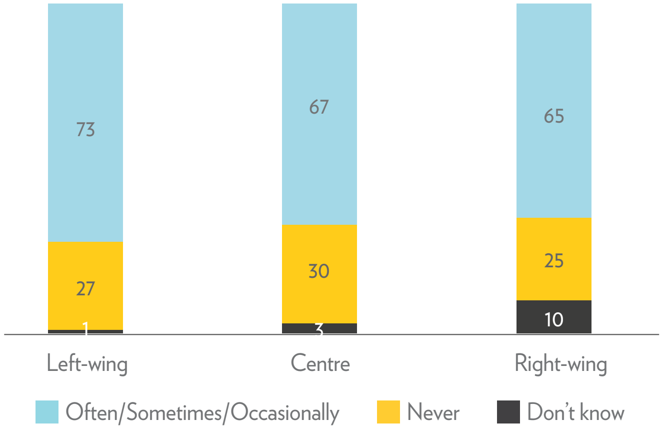
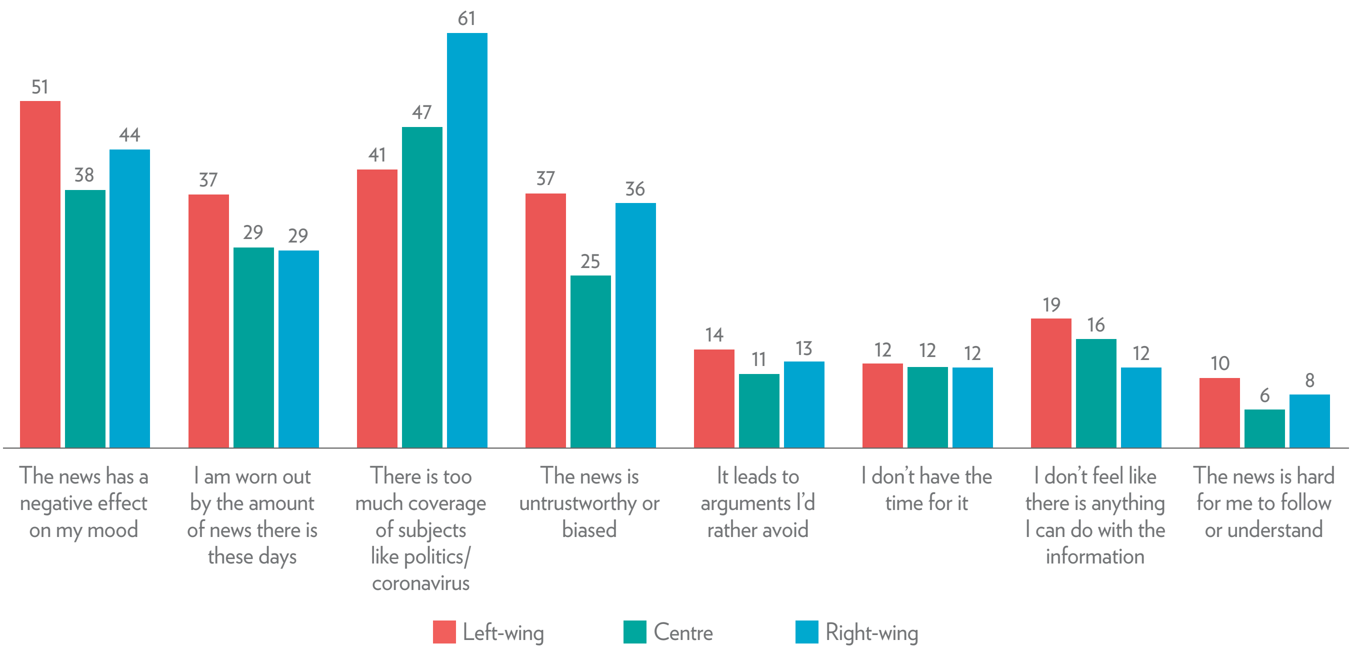


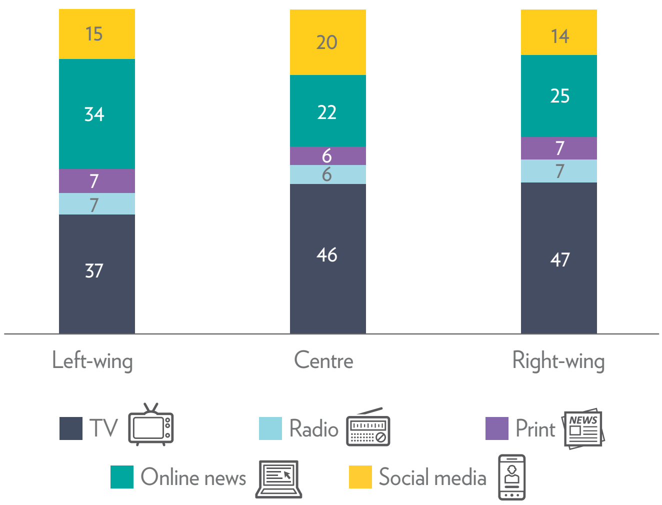
FIGURE 2.6: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



ONLINE NEWS AUDIENCES ARE MORE LEFT-WING

Left-wing oriented news consumers (34%) are more likely than right-wing (25%) to rely on online news sources as their main way to get news. Respondents who identify with the centre of politics are the more likely to mainly use social media platforms to get their news (20%) compared to left- and right-wing. Right-wing consumers are the least likely to rely on social media platforms for news (14%). Instead, they mainly use traditional media, such as TV (47%) (see **figure 2.7**).

FIGURE 2.7: POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



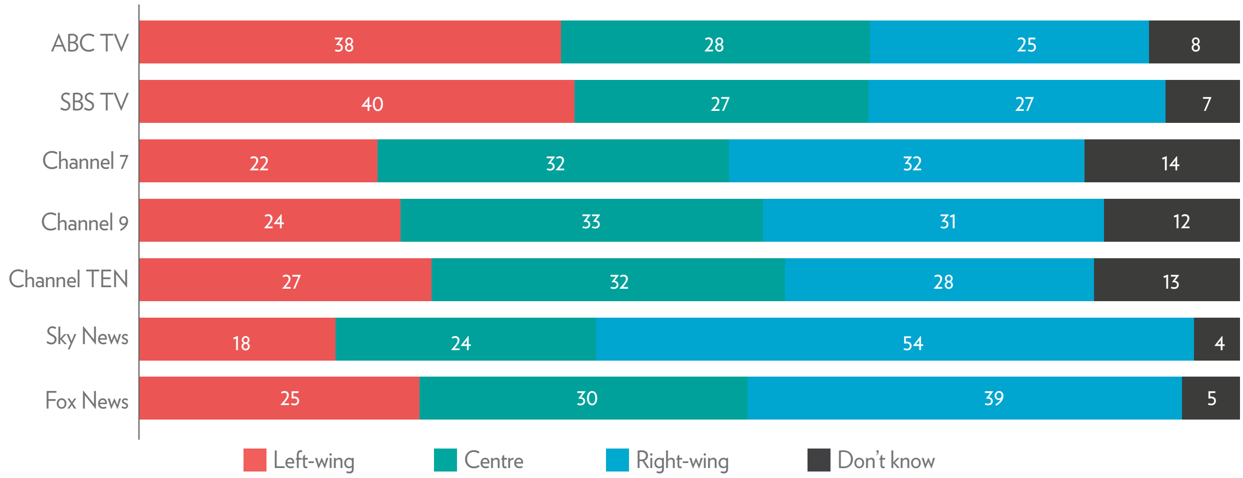
SKY NEWS HAS LARGEST RIGHT-WING AUDIENCE

The data highlight big differences in news brand preferences based on political orientation (see **figures 2.8, 2.9, 2.10**).

As found in previous surveys, audiences for commercial TV news services tend be more centre and right-wing (see **figure 2.8**). While more than half of the audience for the public broadcasters identified as centre and right-wing, the ABC and SBS attract a larger proportion of left-wing oriented viewers.

More than half (54%) of Sky News' audience identified themselves as right-wing, a larger proportion than in 2021 (43%). This might simply reflect the growth in Sky's free-to-air audience in regional Australia, where news consumers tend to identify as more conservative than in the cities.

FIGURE 2.8: TV NEWS AUDIENCES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

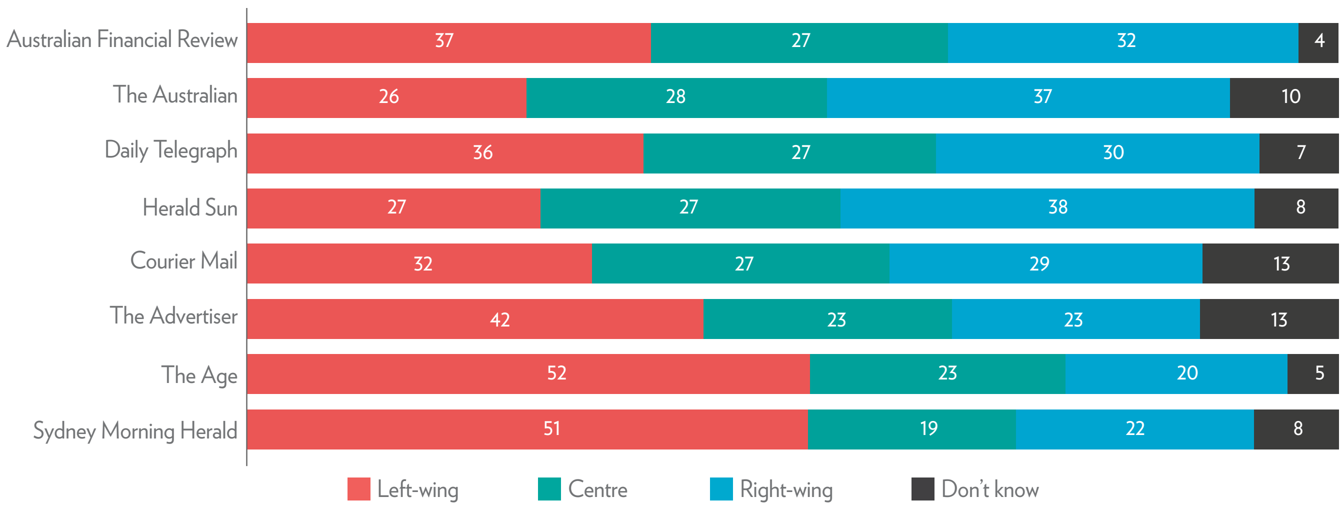


[Base: ABC TV = 655; SBS TV=310; Channel 7 = 759; Channel 9 = 720; Channel TEN = 399; Sky News = 240; Fox News = 114]

AUDIENCES FOR NINE NEWSPAPERS CONTINUE TO BE MORE LEFT-WING THAN FOR NEWS CORP MASTHEADS

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (51%) and *the Age* (52%) continue to attract a higher proportion of left-wing oriented readers than News Corp owned papers (see **figure 2.9**). While more than half of participants who read *The Australian* and *Herald Sun* identify with the centre and left of politics, these two papers also attract the largest proportion of right-wing oriented readers. *The Advertiser* has the largest proportion of left-wing respondents among the News Corp papers in the survey.

FIGURE 2.9: NEWSPAPER AUDIENCES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



[Base: Australian Financial Review = 81; The Australian = 161; Daily Telegraph = 180; Herald Sun = 182; Courier Mail = 136; The Advertiser = 110; The Age = 128; Sydney Morning Herald = 141]

TOP 5 OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (TV, RADIO, PRINT)

We ranked the popularity of offline news brands by political orientation. Although as **figure 2.9** shows, certain newspapers have strongly left-wing audiences, it is important to note that TV remains the most popular way to access news across the political spectrum (see **table 2.1**).

The top offline news brand for left-wing respondents is ABC TV News (54%). Channels 7 and 9 alternate for first spot among centre and right-wing viewers. While more than half of the Sky News audience identifies as right-wing, ABC TV News is still more popular among conservative viewers.

TABLE 2.1: OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

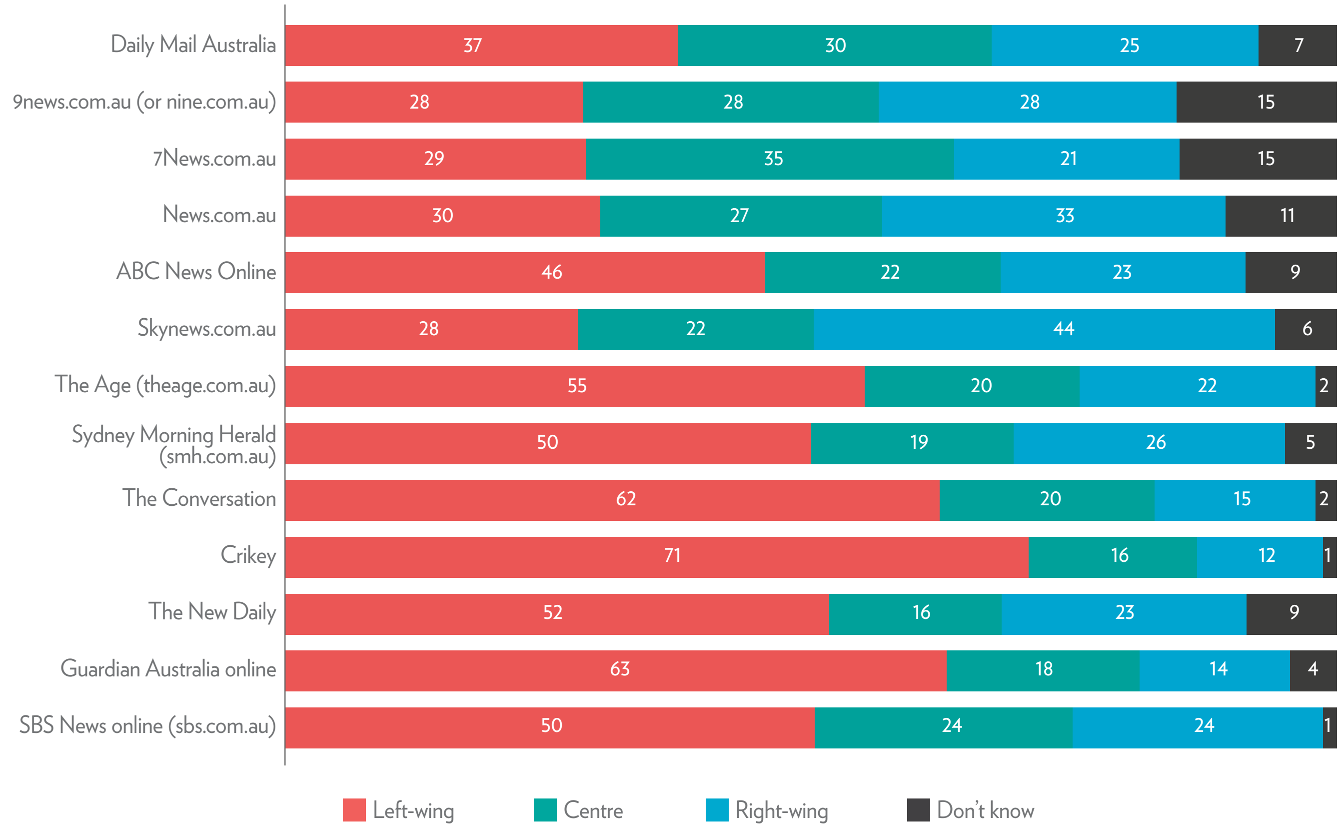
	Left-wing	Centre	Right-wing	Don't know
1	ABC News (54%)	Channel 7 (41%)	Channel 7 (46%)	Channel 7 (34%)
2	Channel 9 (29%)	Channel 9 (40%)	Channel 9 (42%)	Channel 9 (28%)
3	Channel 7 (28%)	ABC News (38%)	ABC News (38%)	ABC News (23%)
4	SBS TV (21%)	Channel TEN (21%)	Sky News (24%)	Channel TEN (17%)
5	Channel TEN (12%)	SBS TV (14%)	Channel TEN (21%)	A regional or local newspaper (12%)

*Among those who identify with a particular political orientation [Base: Left-wing = 586; Centre = 597; Right-wing = 535; Don't know = 320]

DIGITAL BORN OUTLETS CONTINUE TO ATTRACT LEFT-WING AUDIENCES

The online only brands in our survey, such as Crikey, The Conversation and Guardian Australia continue to have a much higher proportion of left-wing oriented consumers than the online versions of traditional news outlets (see **figure 2.10**).

FIGURE 2.10: ONLINE NEWS AUDIENCES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



[Base: Australian Financial Review = 81; Daily Mail Australia = 134; 9news.com.au (or nine.com.au) =328; 7News.com.au = 294; News.com.au = 444; ABC News Online = 528; Skynews.com.au = 186; The Age (theage.com.au) = 147; Sydney Morning Herald (smh.com.au) = 182; The Conversation = 99; Crikey = 75; The New Daily = 116; Guardian Australia online = 245; SBS News online (sbs.com.au) = 146] ew = 81; The Australian = 161; Daily Telegraph = 180; Herald Sun = 182; Courier Mail = 136; The Advertiser = 110; The Age = 128; Sydney Morning Herald = 141]

TOP 5 ONLINE NEWS BRANDS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION

This time, we ranked the top online brands by political orientation. While more than 70% of Crikey's audience identifies with the left side of politics (see **figure 2.10**), it is not one of the top five brands for left-wing news consumers (see **table 2.2**). ABC News online is the most popular online news brand for left-wing news consumers (41%). Although its audience is disproportionately right-wing (44%), Skynews.com.au is only the 4th most popular online news brand among those audiences. News.com.au is the most popular online news brand for both centre and right-wing consumers.

TABLE 2.2: ONLINE NEWS BRANDS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

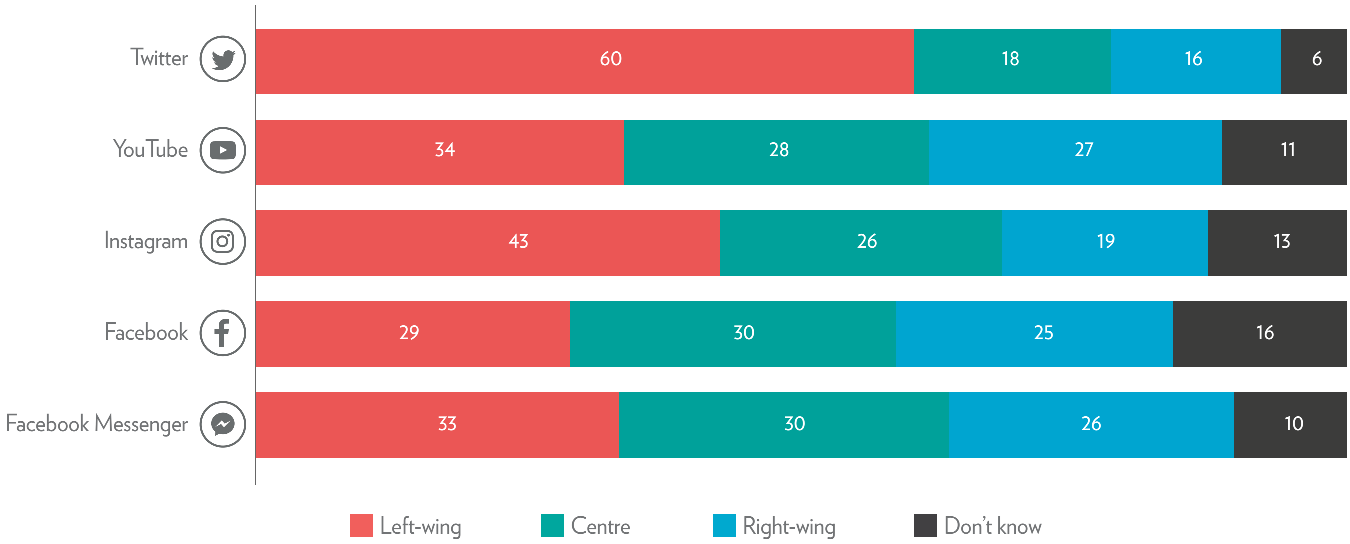
	Left-wing	Centre	Right-wing	Don't know
1	ABC News Online (41%)	News.com.au (20%)	News.com.au (27%)	nine.com.au/9news.com.au (16%)
2	Guardian Australia online (26%)	ABC News Online (20%)	ABC News Online (23%)	News.com.au (15%)
3	News.com.au (23%)	7News.com.au (17%)	nine.com.au/9news.com.au (16%)	ABC News Online (14%)
4	nine.com.au/9news.com.au (16%)	nine.com.au/9news.com.au (15%)	Skynews.com.au (15%)	7News.com.au (14%)
5	Sydney Morning Herald (16%)	Guardian Australia online (8%)	7News.com.au (12%)	10play.com.au (5%)

*Among those who identify with a particular political orientation [Base: Left-wing = 586; Centre = 597; Right-wing = 535; Don't know = 320]

TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM AUDIENCES ARE MORE LEFT-WING THAN FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

The data reveal large differences in the political orientation of participants who use social media platforms for news. Twitter attracts the largest proportion of left-wing users (60%) compared to 29% on Facebook. Instagram also has a comparatively large proportion of left-wing users (43%) and a small proportion of right-wing (19%). News consumers who use YouTube, Facebook and Facebook Messenger for news are relatively evenly spread across the political spectrum. Facebook has the largest proportion of users who do not know their political orientation (16%) (see **figure 2.11**).

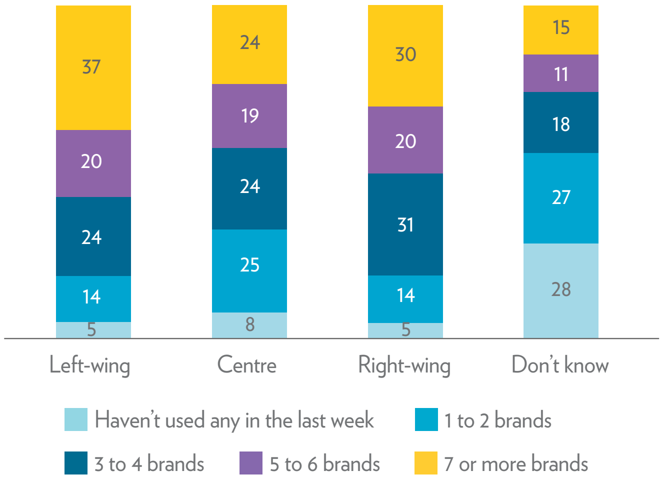
FIGURE 2.11: SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMERS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



POLITICALLY AWARE USE MORE NEWS BRANDS

Both left and right-wing participants use a wider variety of news brands than those who identify with the centre of politics. Left-wing participants use the highest number of brands with 37% saying they had used 7 or more in the last week, compared to right wing (30%) and centrists (24%). The latter are the more likely to use only 1 or 2 brands (25%) compared to left and right-wing oriented participants (14%). However, more than one-quarter (28%) of those who don't know which side of politics they identify with haven't used any news brands in the past week, and a similar proportion (27%) have only used 1 or 2 brands. This suggests that people who identify less with politics have less diversity in their news diet than those who identify with a side of politics (see **figure 2.12**).

FIGURE 2.12: POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS (%)



POLARISATION OF AUDIENCES

Figures 2.13 and **2.14** below are visual representations of the political orientation of audiences of news brands, from left to right. These figures clearly show the difference between online and offline audiences. Online audiences are much more skewed to the left, whereas offline audiences are more evenly spread out and less polarised.

FIGURE 2.13: POLARISATION OF OFFLINE NEWS AUDIENCES (%)

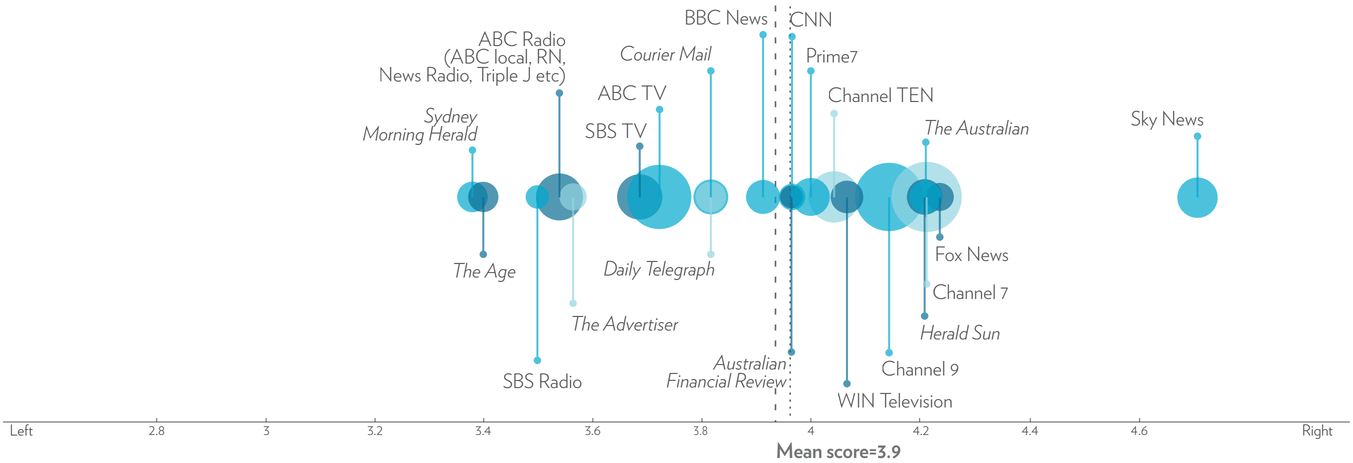
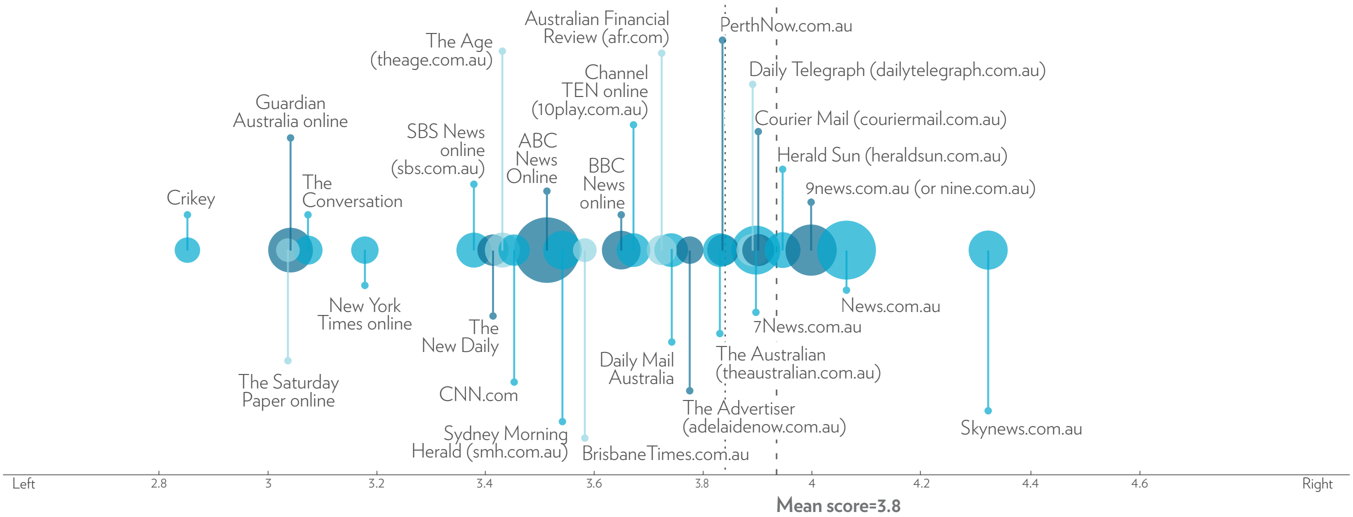


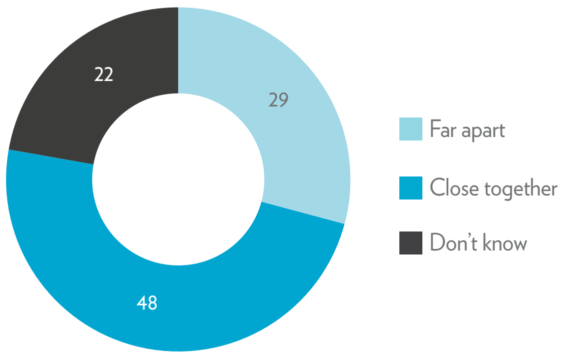
FIGURE 2.14: POLARISATION OF ONLINE NEWS AUDIENCES (%)



AUDIENCES PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION ARE ACCURATE

This year we asked respondents whether they viewed the news media to be close together or far apart politically. Less than one-third of respondents perceive Australian news organisations to be politically polarised. Twenty-nine percent (29%) think news brands are politically far apart, almost half (48%) consider news brands to be close together, and 22% said they didn't know (**figure 2.15**). These findings reflect the spread of news brands across the political spectrum illustrated in **figures 2.13** & **2.14**. This echoes the global trend as in most markets the majority of respondents believe media in their country are not polarised. Only 32% say news organisations in their country are far apart politically (see **Chapter 9**).

FIGURE 2.15: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION (%)



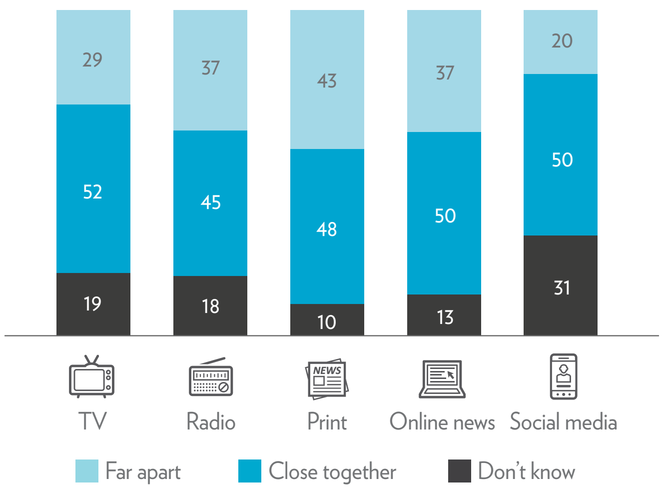
[Q_Polarisation] In your view, how politically close together or far apart are the main news organisations in your country? [Base: N=2,038]

NEWSPAPER READERS PERCEIVE POLARISATION THE MOST

Perceptions of the Australian news being polarised are more likely among print news readers (43%), with less than half (48%) considering news outlets to be politically close together. In contrast, only 29% of people who rely on TV to get their news perceive news organisations to be politically far apart, and more than half (52%) say they are close together (see **figure 2.16**).

These findings reflect analysis of news brands by political orientation of audiences and the traditional polarisation between former Fairfax mastheads such as *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, now owned by Nine, and the more conservative News Corp stable of papers.

FIGURE 2.16: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

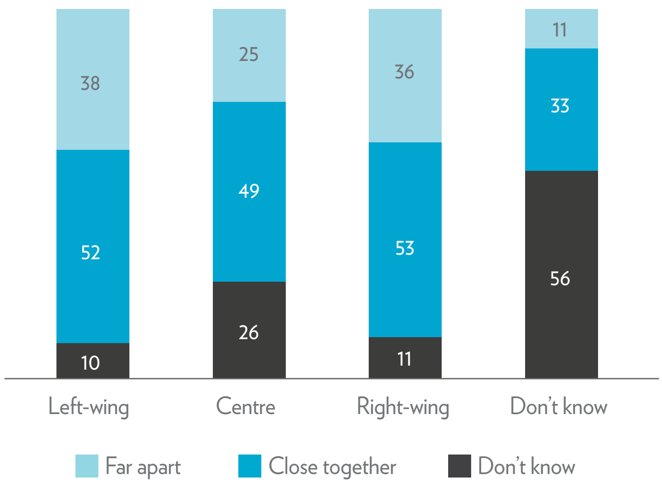


LEFT AND RIGHT HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS ABOUT THE POLARISATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN NEWS MEDIA

A similar proportion of participants who identify with the left or right of the political spectrum perceive the news media in Australia to be either politically far apart or close together. This reflects greater engagement and political awareness of those who can identify their political orientation.

In contrast, consumers who don't know their political orientation are the least likely to have a view about the extent of polarisation of the Australian news media (56%), followed by those who identify with the centre of politics (26%). This reflects a lower level of news consumption, interest in news generally, and political news specifically by these groups (see **figure 2.17**).

FIGURE 2.17: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

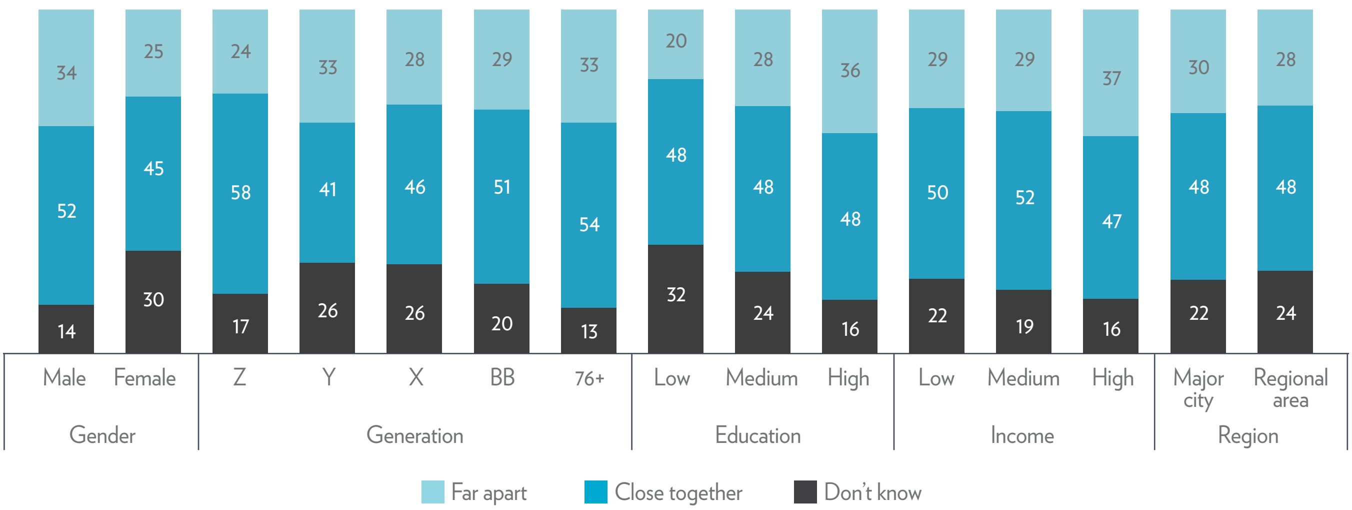


PERCEPTIONS OF POLARISATION INFLUENCED BY GENDER, AGE AND EDUCATION

Gen Y and those 76+ (33%) are more likely to think news organisations are politically polarised in Australia (33%). This partly reflects that older Australians are more likely to rely on print newspapers to get their daily news. Men (34%) news consumers, and those with high levels of education (36%) and income (37%) are more likely to think the news media are politically polarised. This likely reflects the higher levels of interest and heavier news consumption habits of among these demographic groups.

In contrast, members of Gen Z are the most likely to believe that news media are politically close together and not polarised (58%). Women (30%) and those on low education (32%) are the least likely to have an opinion on the issue. This reflects that these cohorts are more likely to get their news via social media platforms, and have a lower interest in news generally, and political news specifically (see **figure 2.18**).

FIGURE 2.18: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



PERCEPTION OF POLARISATION HAS LITTLE IMPACT ON TRUST IN NEWS

Rather than undermine trust in news generally, perceptions of polarisation appear to have little impact on trust in news generally or the news people use specifically. Those who say the news is far apart (45%) are about the same in their levels of trust as those who say it is close together (42%). Those who don't know if the media are polarised are the most likely to trust news (55%) (see **figure 2.19**).

However, those who perceive the Australian news media to be polarised are slightly more likely to avoid news (73%) compared to those who think the news media are close together on the political spectrum (67%) (see **figure 2.20**).

FIGURE 2.19: TRUST IN NEWS BY BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION (%)

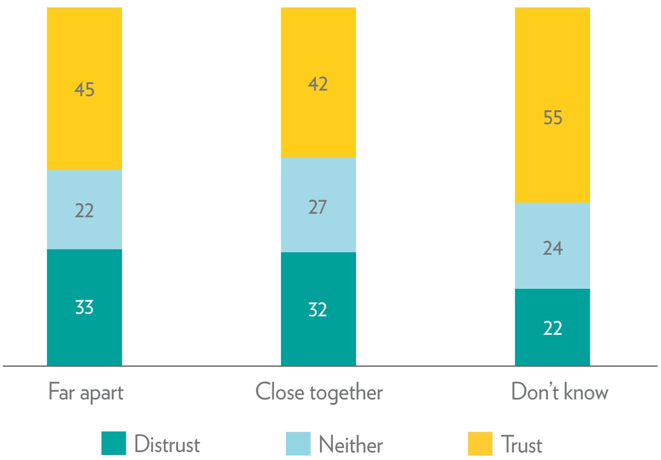
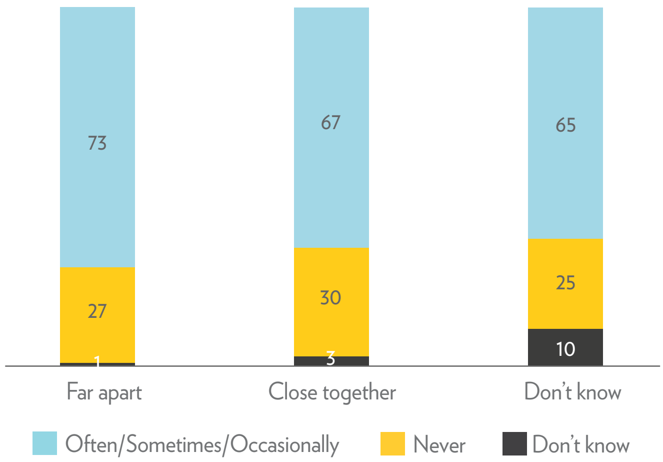


FIGURE 2.20: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION (%)



POLITICAL & COMMERCIAL INTERESTS

MORE SAY NEWS OUTLETS PRIORITISE POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS OVER THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY

This year we asked participants about the priorities of news organisations and if they put what is best for society ahead of their own political and commercial interests.

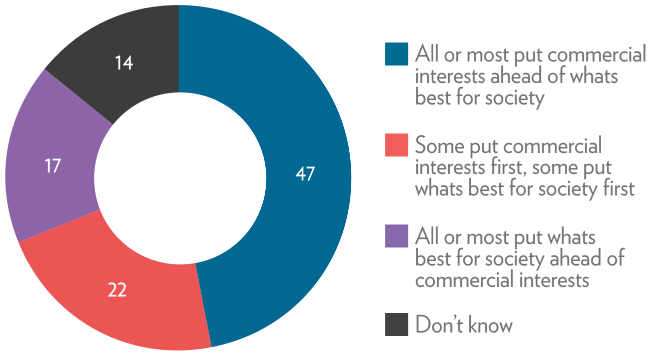
A similar proportion say all or most (47%) news organisations put their commercial interests ahead of the needs of society, and 17% believing the opposite is true (see **figure 2.21**).

Almost half say that all or most (42%) news businesses put their own political views ahead of what is best for society, compared to 18% who felt they tend to put societies needs first (see **figure 2.22**).

POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Men, highly educated, high-income earners and older news consumers are more likely to think news organisations put their commercial interests ahead of what is best for society (see **figure 2.23**).

FIGURE 2.21: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES (%)



[Q_Cynicism_a/b] Which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country? [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 2.22: BELIEF IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES (%)

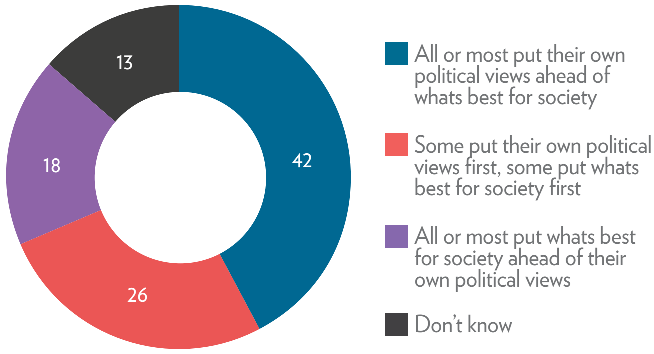
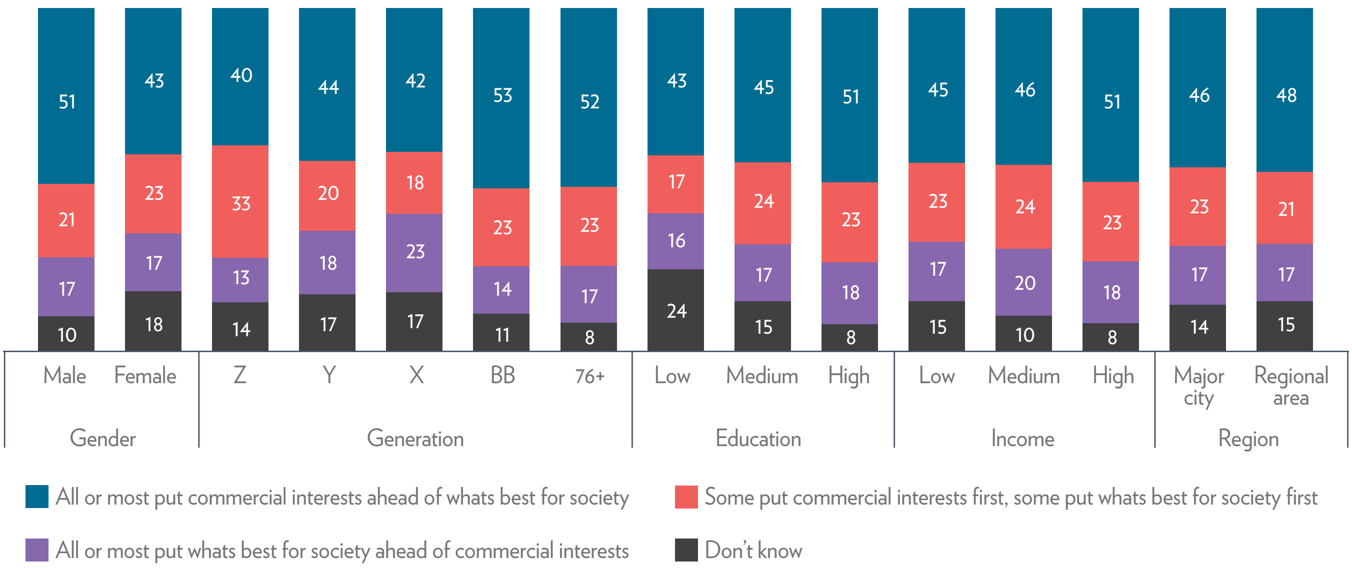
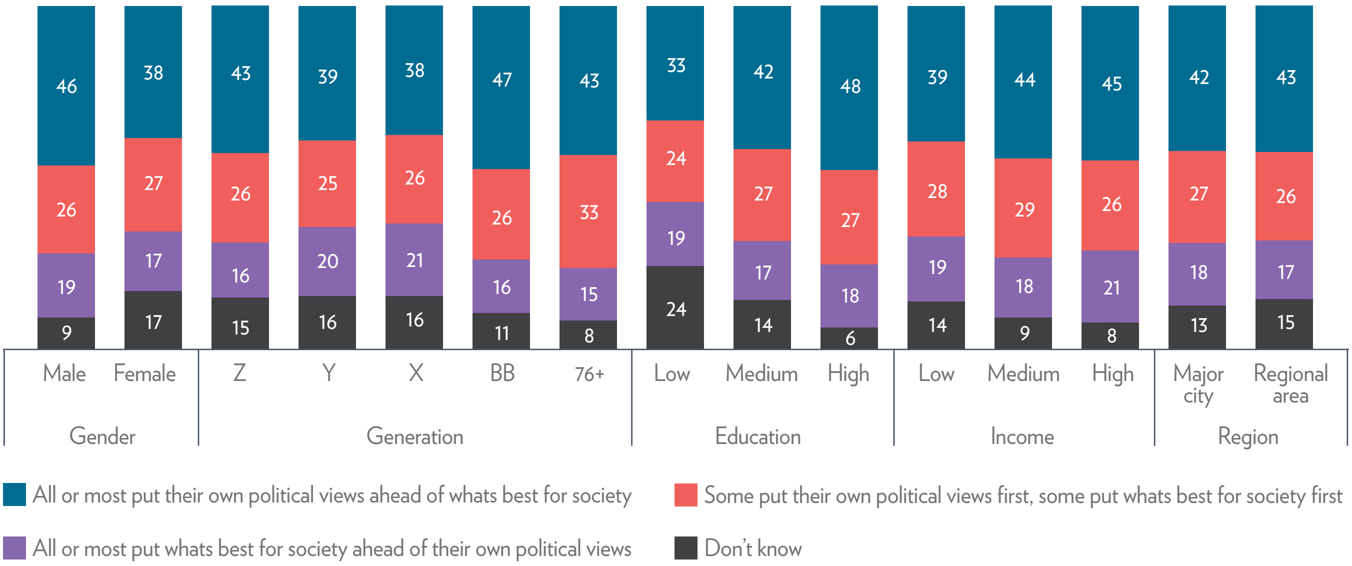


FIGURE 2.23: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



Similarly, men, highly educated, high-income earners and Baby Boomers are more likely to think news organisations put their political interests ahead of what is best for society (see **figure 2.24**).

FIGURE 2.24: BELIEF IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT THINK BUSINESSES PUT THEIR COMMERCIAL INTERESTS AHEAD OF SOCIETY

Both left and right-wing oriented consumers (53%) are more likely than centre-aligned respondents (43%) to believe most or all news organisations put their commercial interests ahead of the needs of society (see **figure 2.25**).

However, right-wing oriented participants are slightly more likely to believe that all or most news businesses put their political views ahead of what's best for society (51%) than left-wing (48%) (see **figure 2.26**).

FIGURE 2.25: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

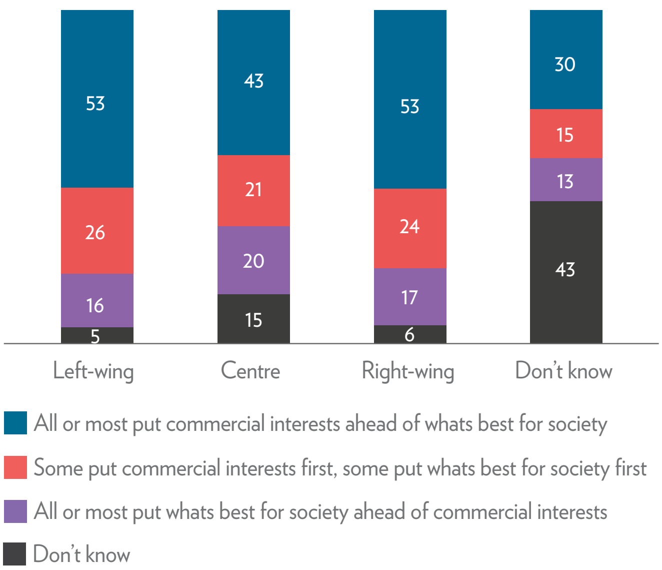
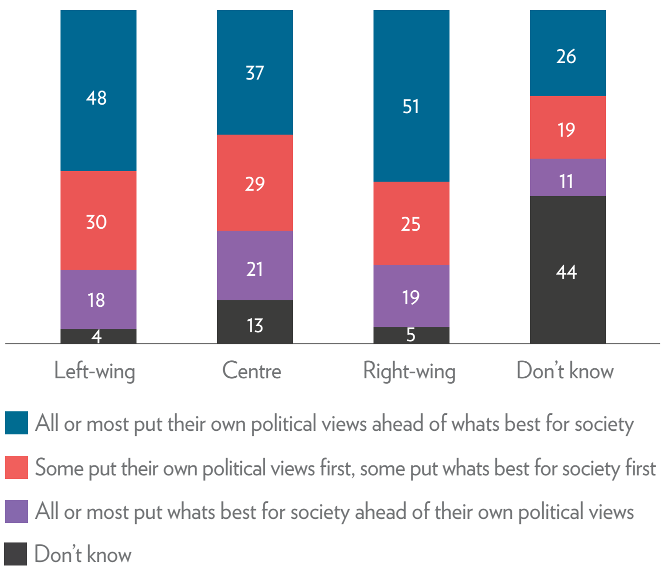


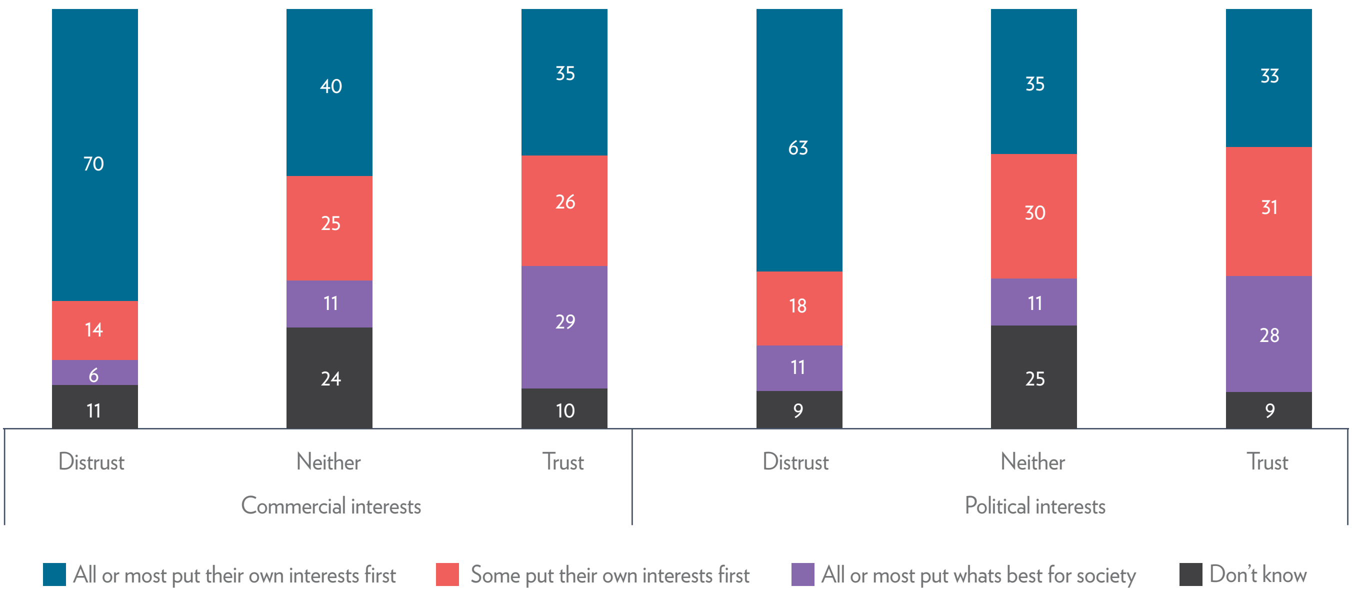
FIGURE 2.26: BELIEF IN POLITICAL PRIORITIES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



PRIORITISING POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL INTERESTS ERODES TRUST IN NEWS

Those who are more trusting are more inclined to say news organisations put society's interests first. Almost two-thirds of participants who don't trust the news (63%) believe news organisations put their political interests ahead of the needs of society, compared to 33% who trust the news. The sentiment is even stronger in relation to commercial interests. Seventy per cent of those who say they do not trust the news believe news organisations prioritise their commercial interests above the needs of society, compared to 35% who say they trust most news most of the time (see **figures 2.27**).

FIGURE 2.27: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL PRIORITIES BY TRUST IN NEWS (%)



ONLY A THIRD BELIEVE NEWS ORGANISATIONS ARE INDEPENDENT FROM UNDUE COMMERCIAL OR POLITICAL INFLUENCE

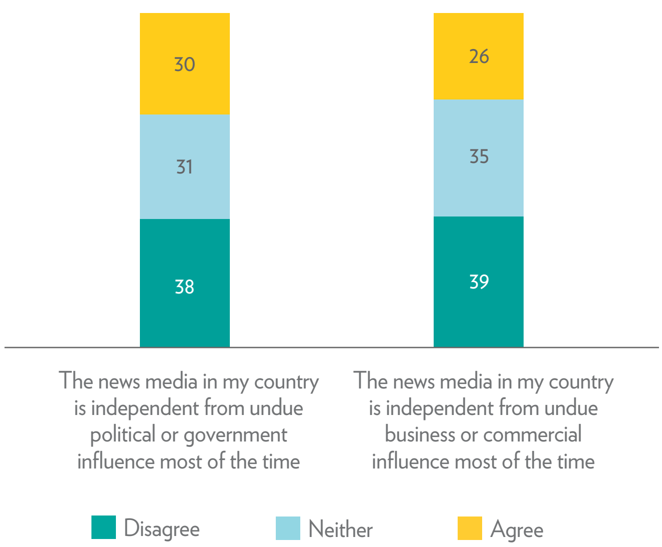
Respondents are divided on whether news organisations in Australia are independent from political and commercial pressures. More say that it is not independent from undue political or government influence (38%) and business or commercial influence (39%) than those who say it is free from such pressures (30% political; 26% commercial). However, a substantial proportion neither agree nor disagree (31% political; 35% commercial) suggesting many are unsure if the media is independent or not (see **figure 2.28**).

News independence

30% political

26% commercial

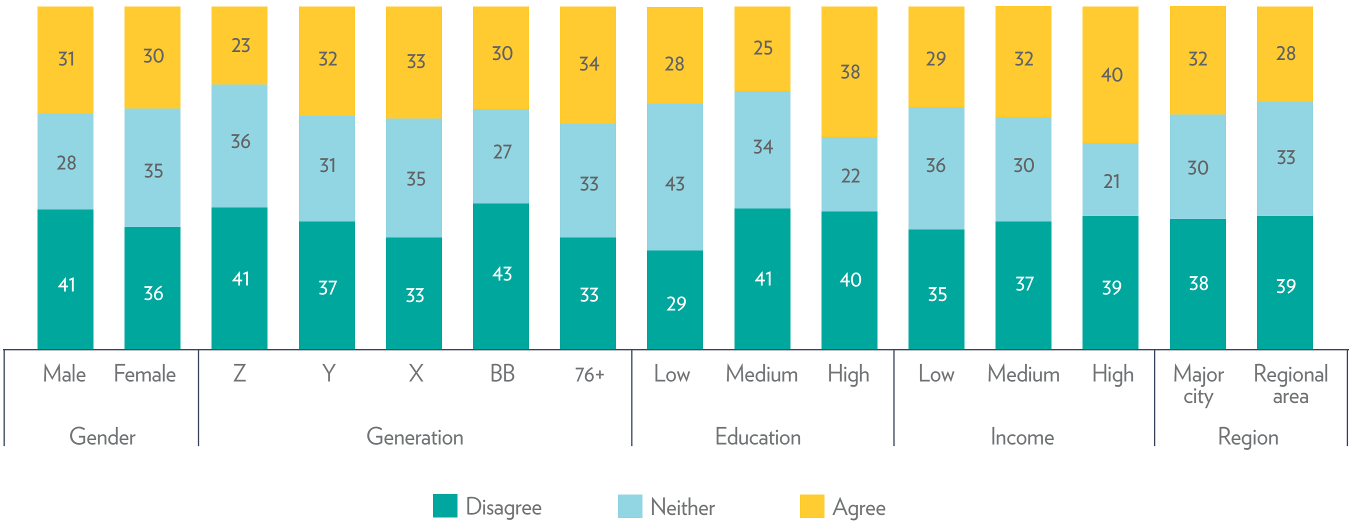
FIGURE 2.28: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON NEWS MEDIA (%)



[Q6_2016B] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time; The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time (Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree) [Base: N=2,038]

Men (41%), Gen Z (41%), Baby Boomers (43%), are those with middle (41%) or high (40%) education are more inclined to believe news organisations are not free from political influence. Gen Z in particular are the least likely to say that organisations are independent from political pressure (23%).

FIGURE 2.29: BELIEF IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON NEWS MEDIA BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



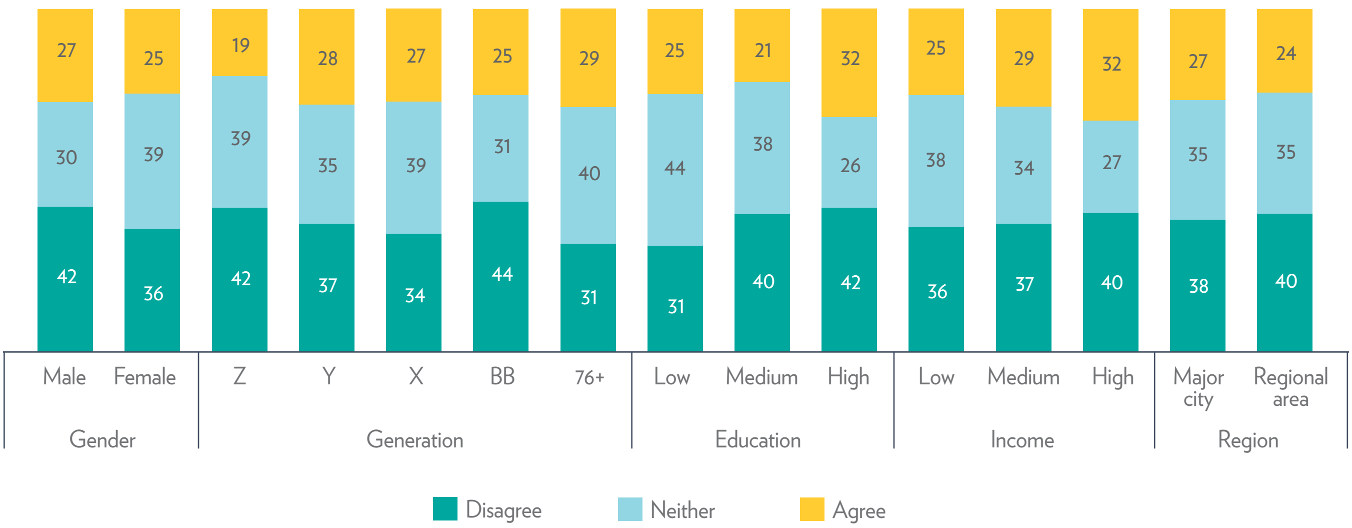
A similar pattern is observed with perceptions of commercial influence. Only 19% of Gen Z say that news organisations are free from commercial influence, compared to 25% of Baby Boomers, 21% on medium income and 24% of those living in regional areas (see **figure 2.30**).

Gen Z: news independence

23% political

19% commercial

FIGURE 2.30: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL INFLUENCE ON NEWS MEDIA BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



POLITICAL PARTISANSHIP DRIVES BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA CAPTURE

The perception that news organisations are unduly influenced by political and commercial factors is most distinct when looking at political orientation. Those who don't know their political orientation or who identify as centrist are more likely to neither agree nor disagree that news organisations in Australia are subject to undue pressure from governments, politicians or commercial interests.

By contrast, those who identify as left-wing (47%) and right-wing (44%) are substantially more likely to say that news organisations are subject to influence from political and government pressure (see **figure 2.31**)..

	Left-wing	Right-wing
Political influence	**47%**	**44%**
Commercial influence	**50%**	**43%**

Similarly, left-wing (50%) and right-wing (43%) are more likely to say news organisations are not independent from commercial influence. The differences are mainly related to the proportion saying they neither agree nor disagree. Fewer left (26%) and right-wing (30%) say they are independent and about the same proportion of centre (29%) agree, but the proportion saying they neither agree or disagree is highest among centrists (43%). This suggests that while those who identify strongly with one or another political orientation have made up their minds, those in the centre remain unsure (see **figure 2.32**).

FIGURE 2.31: BELIEF IN POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON NEWS MEDIA BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

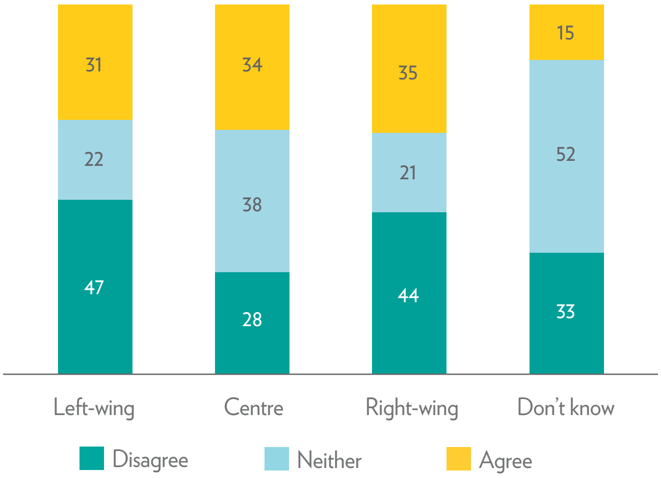
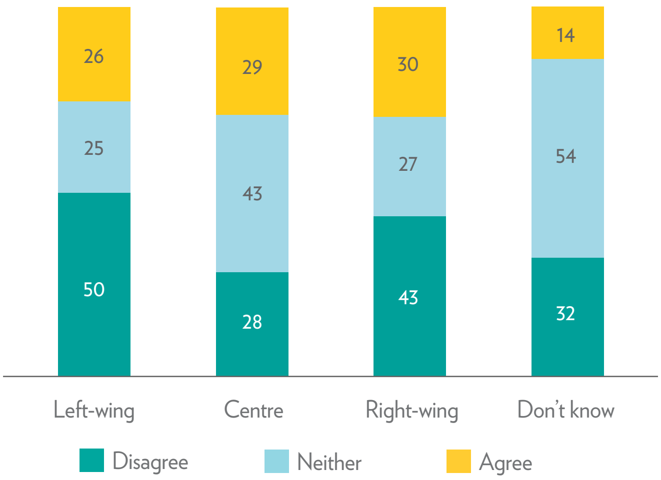


FIGURE 2.32: BELIEF IN COMMERCIAL INFLUENCE ON NEWS MEDIA BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



SUMMARY

Historical partisan divisions in the traditional news media, particularly newspapers, continue to be felt among Australian news consumers. Those who identify with the left of politics are more likely to read the old Fairfax newspapers (now Nine), *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, and right-wing readers will be more attracted to certain News Corp mastheads.

Commercial TV continues to be the bastion of the centre, but there are signs this year the audience for Sky News is growing among right-wing consumers. This might simply reflect its growing audience in regional Australia, which tends to skew slightly to the right due to an ageing population.

The polarisation of audiences is most clearly visible on Twitter and online-only news brands Crikey, The Conversation and The Guardian which attract a large proportion of left-leaning participants. Importantly, while some news brands attract strongly partisan audiences, such as Sky and the Guardian, they are not the most popular brands among those partisan groups. Even among right-wing participants, ABC TV News is more popular than Sky.

Much has been written from an American perspective about the hazards of a polarised media market. However, it is worth noting that compared with markets such as the United States and the United Kingdom, the Australian news market is still more clustered around the centre. The data show that respondents have an accurate view of polarisation in Australia.

While perceptions of polarisation in this survey do not appear to result in higher levels of distrust in the news media, the perception that news media place political interests over the needs of society does correlate with lower levels of trust. This is a consistent finding in audience studies about trust in news, and reducing the dominance of those interests has been identified as one of the solutions to increasing trust in news[1].

Last year's *Digital News Report: Australia 2021* clearly showed a rise in trust in news about Covid-19 during the early months of the pandemic when the news media was putting the needs of society first by prioritising useful health information. Online news outlets dropped their paywalls to ensure the public got access to the information needed and put the regular sensational and conflict-based news reporting on the back burner[2]. This public-interest-first approach was rewarded by higher perceptions of trust, which reduced as news returned to business as usual after twelve months.

While this survey was in the field several months before the 2022 federal election, some of its findings might help interpret the response from voters. People who identify with either side of politics are the most interested in news and in political news. Sixteen percent don't know their political orientation. More than one-quarter of those who 'don't know' their political orientation used only 1-2 news brands or none in the past week. This raises important questions about where they get information they need to make an informed decision at the ballot box.

[1] Fisher, C., Flew, T., Park, S., Lee, J. Y., & Dulleck, U. (2021). Improving trust in news: Audience solutions. *Journalism Practice*, 15(10), 1497-1515.

[2] Nolan, D., McGuinness, K., McCallum, K., & Hanna, C. (2021). Covering COVID-19: How Australian media reported the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

COMMENTARY

DEEPENING POLITICAL DIVIDE?

Peter Lewis, Executive Director, Essential Media

After a bitterly fought federal election campaign, this report highlights the way an increasingly partisan media landscape is contributing to the fracturing of public discourses.

The story of election 2022 was one of vastly different conversations driving different choices in different parts of the country: from the teal movements in inner cities, to the battleground marginals in middle-ring seats to the transgender culture wars directed to the urban fringes.

Increasingly, these different conversations are being driven by different mastheads and media where voters across the political spectrum get served the news that reinforces their world view, rather than the friction of contested ideas mediated through neutral gatekeepers.

These differences have amplified by way social media has found a way to monetise our attention, with users being served content designed to anger and excite in order to harvest more of our attention. This is then sold to the political parties to send tightly targeted advertising to them direct, devoid of context or texture or any pretence to agreed truths. This has created an information landscape of filter-bubbles, where the existing views of users are reinforced and where media companies, desperate for market share, feed the algorithms in order to garner eyeballs.

Like the political parties themselves, media brands are dominating increasingly rigid spheres of influences, dictated by geography, ideology and class.

The tabloids and commercial TVs rule the suburbs, the ABC and Guardian Australia among the educated elites, the Nine-Fairfax empire attempting to position itself at the fault-lines that independent candidates are cleaving.

One could argue that the media has been always thus, that different mastheads have run different editorial lines to meet their markets. The big difference today is that each story is atomised, to be shared, boosted and immortalised, rather than part of a broader journal set in time and destined to become tomorrow's fish and chips. Within these conditions its surprising we managed to conduct an election at all, let alone come to anything approaching a national consensus on where we go next.

In this context, the report offers food for thought for those of us who care about strengthening our democratic processes and building social cohesion. While news outlets rightly need to find new audiences, surely there would be market benefits in ending culture wars and seeking more diverse audiences.

This feeds into another dynamic underwriting this year's survey. For the first time in decades it passes public judgment on a media that is not in decline. Following the striking of the news Media Bargaining Code in early 2021 there has been a significant injection of funds into the Australian media ecosystem. (I won't attempt to retell the battle of the code here, except to say the Morrison Government showed a hitherto undiscovered appetite for world-leading market reform based on hard evidence that sparked an international incident where Facebook withdrew their news service from Australia).

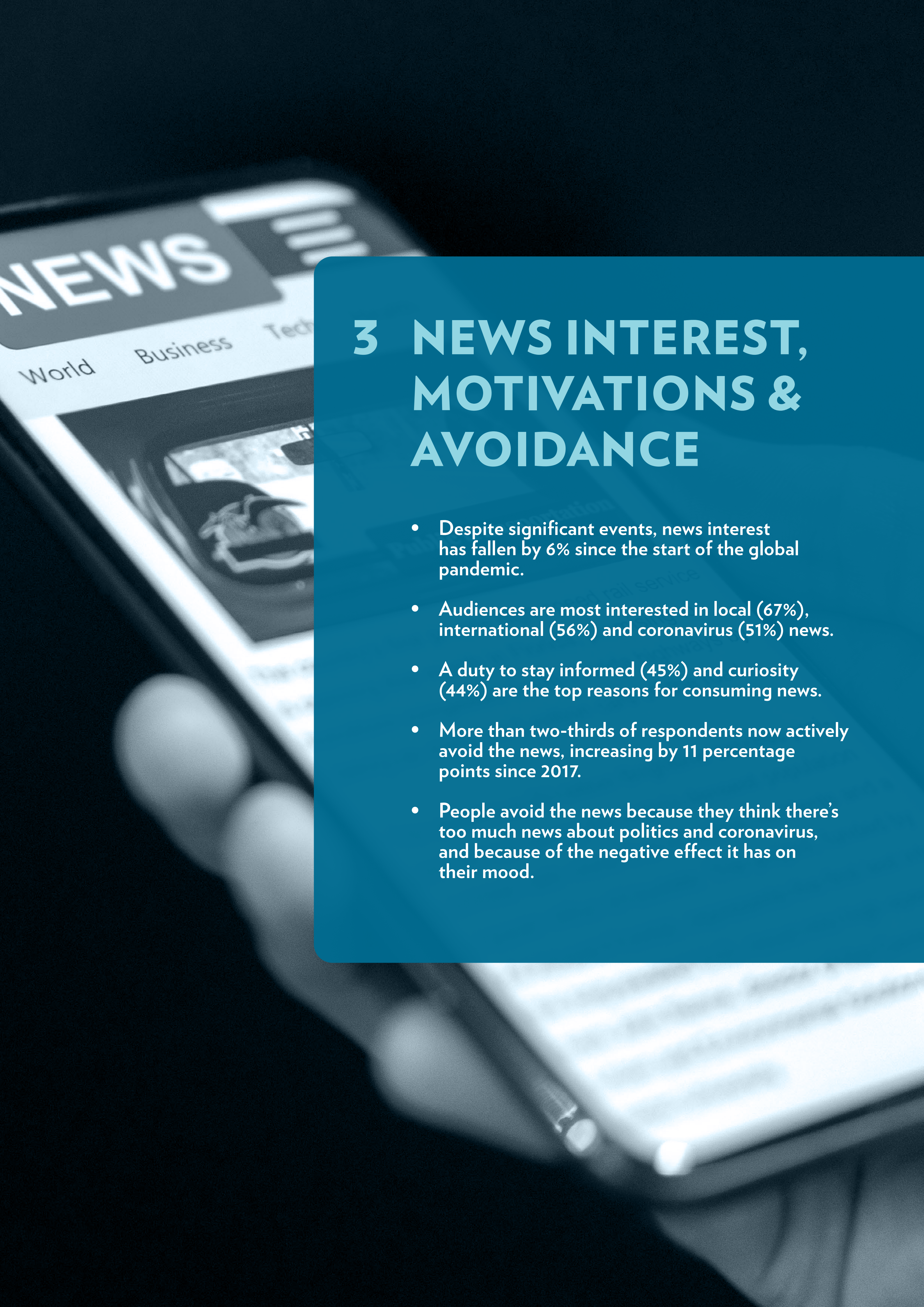
Because of the prosaic nature of the Code, where the digital platforms are not officially covered by legislation on the condition that they voluntarily compensate media companies for the value of their journalism, we don't quite know how this is flowing through the industry.

All we can do is look at a range of indicators. One has been market signals from the major players, bound by commercial in confidence terms, that suggest about $150 million a year has been transferred from the platforms to media companies in deals covering the next four years.

We know that the Fairfax papers have stopped bleeding staff, that News Corp. has been rebuilding its local and regional network; that Guardian Australia has almost doubled its newsroom, and that ABC has committed funds to increasing its regional and rural reporting. (We also know that are number of smaller publishers have been totally left out in the cold, raising real issues around media diversity).

What I was interested in with this study was whether any of these changes has impacted on consumer perspectives. That after the disastrous 2020 where swathes of titles were forced to close, whether a healthier media ecosystem was delivering a more comprehensive news service. The indication from these findings is that they are not. That instead of providing more comprehensive coverage to broader audiences, media companies are using the funds secured by the Australian Government (ie us) from the digital platforms, to build louder megaphones to further divide us.

If this is the legacy of the news Media Bargaining Code it will be remembered as a wasted opportunity for the media to reform itself from a position of relative strength.



3 NEWS INTEREST, MOTIVATIONS & AVOIDANCE

- Despite significant events, news interest has fallen by 6% since the start of the global pandemic.
- Audiences are most interested in local (67%), international (56%) and coronavirus (51%) news.
- A duty to stay informed (45%) and curiosity (44%) are the top reasons for consuming news.
- More than two-thirds of respondents now actively avoid the news, increasing by 11 percentage points since 2017.
- People avoid the news because they think there's too much news about politics and coronavirus, and because of the negative effect it has on their mood.

NEWS INTEREST

Most people (87%) have some interest in news. However, the survey population is split on whether they have a high or low interest in news. Just over half of respondents (51%) are extremely (19%) or very (32%) interested in news, 49% have low interest in news, 36% have some interest, 8% are not very interested, and 5% have no interest in news (see **figure 3.1**).

High news interest

64% 2016 > 54% 2022

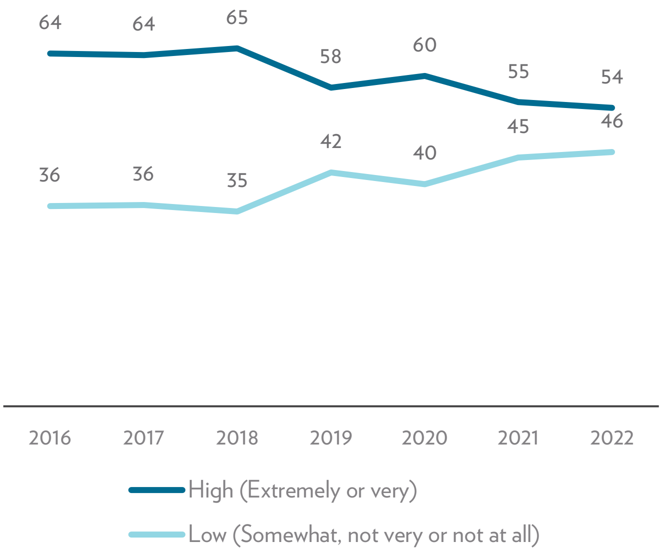
FIGURE 3.1: INTEREST IN NEWS (%)

[Q1c] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? [Base: N=2,038]

DESPITE MAJOR EVENTS NEWS INTEREST CONTINUES TO FALL

Despite the Black Summer bushfires and the global pandemic since 2020, interest in news continues to fall. When we compare the proportion of those who say they are highly interested in news ('extremely' or 'very') those who have high interest in news dropped six percentage points since 2020. Likewise, the proportion of those who have low interest in news ('somewhat', 'not very' or 'not at all') has risen from 40% in 2020 to 46% in 2022 (see **figure 3.2**). In this figure we excluded respondents who accessed news less often than once a month or not at all to be comparable with data from previous years (see **Methodology**).

FIGURE 3.2: HIGH VS LOW INTEREST IN NEWS 2016-2022 (%)

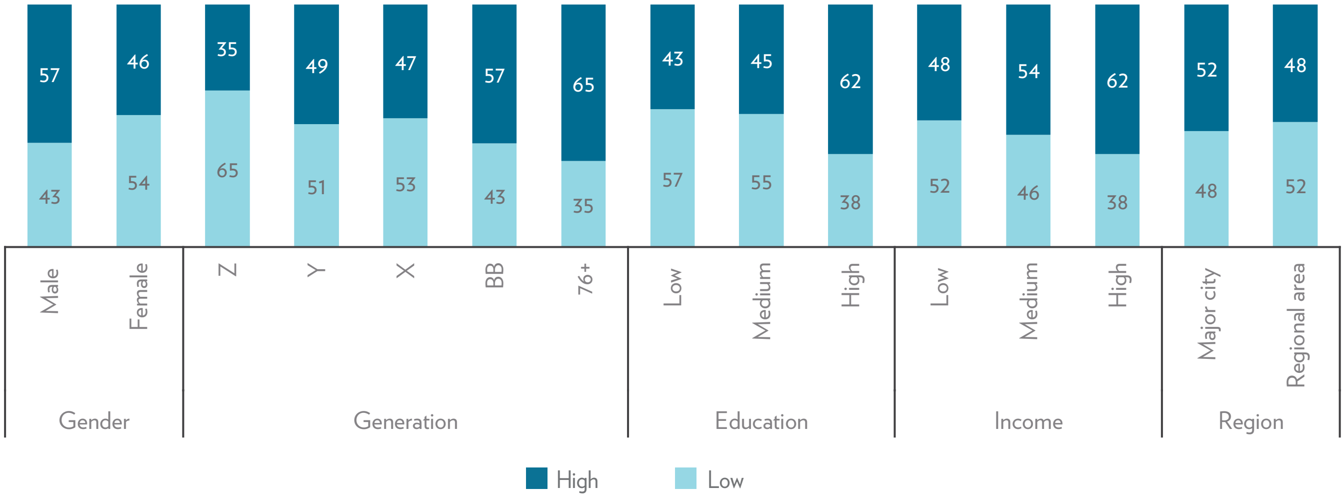


*Excluded don't know, and very low/non news users for 2021 and 2022 for consistent comparison with previous years [Base: N=1,862]

NEWS INTEREST IS GENDERED AND GENERATIONAL

When analysed on the basis of gender, generation, education, income and region, the data highlight a range of factors influencing people's interest in news. Women are far more likely (54%) to have low interest in news than men (43%). Generationally, young people are less interested in news. Two-thirds (65%) of those aged 76+ have high interest in news, followed by Baby Boomers (57%), Gen X (47%), Gen Y (49%), and Gen Z (35%). Income is a factor in news interest, with 62% of high-income earners saying they have high news interest compared with 48% of low-income earners. Similarly, 62% of those with high education are highly interested in news compared to 43% of those with low education (see **figure 3.3**).

FIGURE 3.3: INTEREST IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



INTEREST IN NEWS TOPICS

AUDIENCES WANT THEIR NEWS LOCAL

When asked what types of news people were interested in, nearly two-thirds chose local news (67%). International news was the next most popular category (56%), while less than half chose political news (45%). Despite the impact of the pandemic on people's lives, only 51% of respondents say they are interested in news about coronavirus (see **figure 3.4**).

FIGURE 3.4: TYPES OF NEWS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN (%)

[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,038]

Local news is the most popular news topic across all generations, especially among older respondents. Interestingly, news about Covid-19 does not feature in the top three topics for Gen Z and 76+ but is rated second by Gen Y and Gen X. International news is of interest to all generations, but with stark differences in the degree of interest; 79% of 76+ are interested compared to 47% of Gen Z and just 38% of Gen Y. Older generations are much more interested in political news than younger (see **table 3.1**).

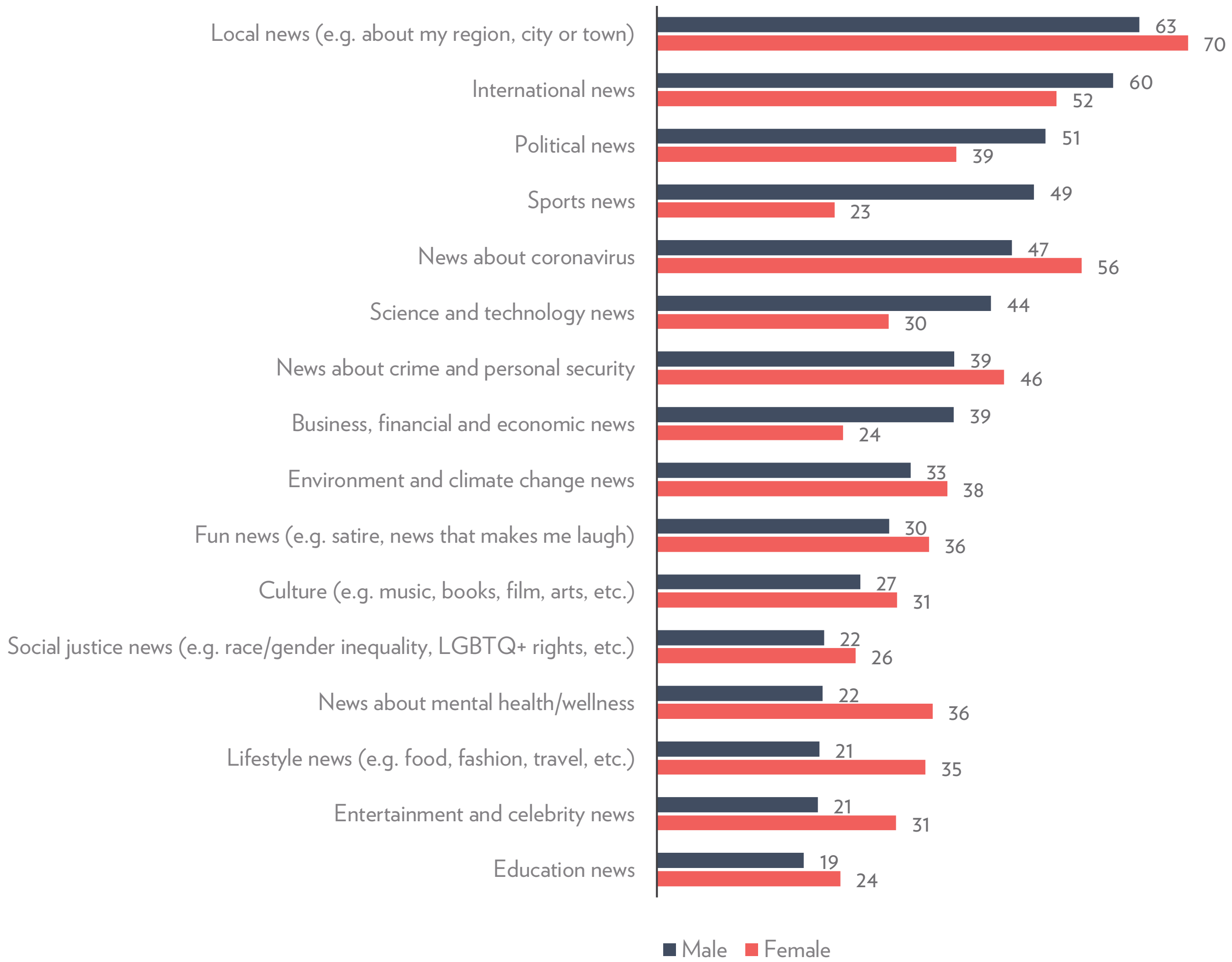
TABLE 3.1: TYPES OF NEWS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BY GENERATION (%)

Top 3	Gen Z	Gen Y	Gen X	Baby Boomers	76+
1	Local news (52%)	Local news (49%)	Local news (68%)	Local news (78%)	Local news (88%)
2	International news (47%)	Coronavirus news (40%)	Coronavirus news (52%)	International news (70%)	International news (79%)
3	Political news (39%)	International news (38%)	International news (52%)	Coronavirus news (60%)	Political news (72%)

WOMEN AND MEN WANT DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEWS

While women and men share an interest in local news, there are differences in other types of news they are interested in. Women are more interested than men in news about mental health/wellness, lifestyle, entertainment, coronavirus, and crime/personal security. Men are more interested in news about sport, business/financial/economics, politics, science/technology, and international affairs (see **figure 3.5**).

FIGURE 3.5: TYPES OF NEWS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BY GENDER (%)

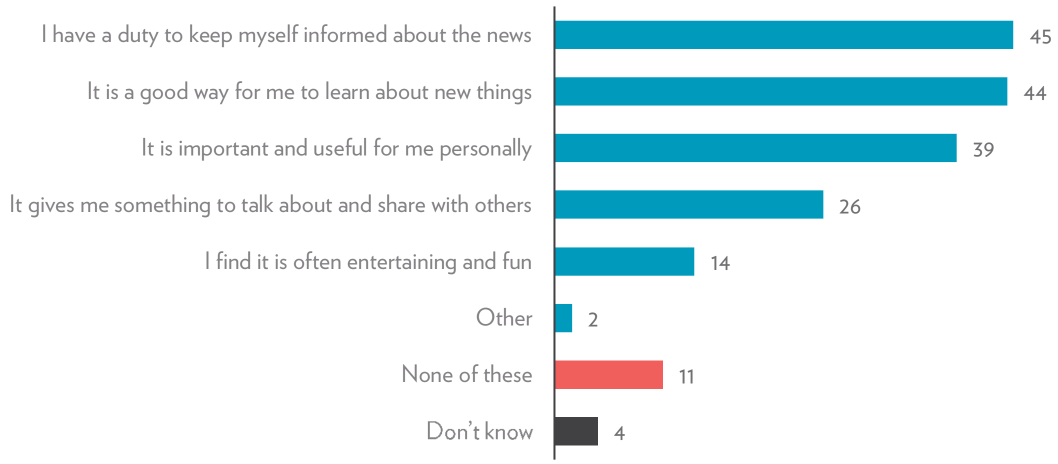


WHY WE CONSUME NEWS

DUTY AND CURIOSITY DRIVE NEWS HABITS

When asked about the most important reason to keep up with the news, 45% of respondents say they have a duty to keep informed, while 44% say it is a good way to learn about new things. People are less likely to say they keep up with the news for social reasons; 26% say it gives them something to talk about with others. Few people (14%) say they keep up with the news because it is often entertaining and fun (see **figure 3.6**).

FIGURE 3.6: MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS (%)

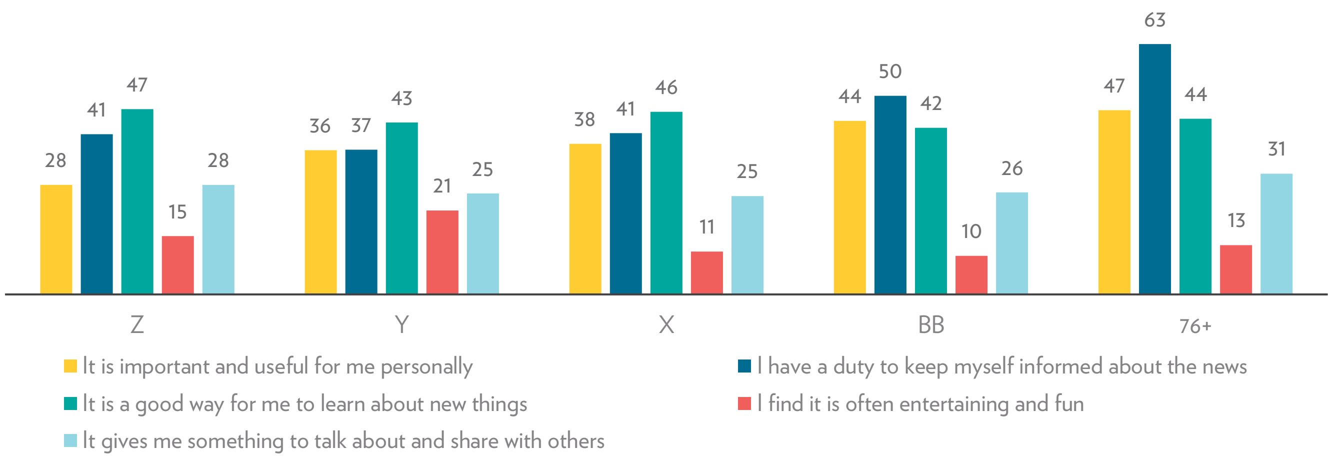


[QMotivations_2022a] Which, if any, are the most important reasons for you, personally, to keep up with the news? Please choose up to three options. [Base: N=2,038]

NEWS IS LESS RELEVANT TO YOUNGER GENERATIONS

There were no significant differences between women and men in their reasons for consuming news. However, we found generational differences. Younger respondents think news is a good way to learn about new things, whereas older generations are motivated out of sense of duty to be informed. Roughly one-quarter of Gen Z (28%) say the news is important and useful to them compared to nearly half of 76+ (47%) (see **figure 3.7**).

FIGURE 3.7: MOST IMPORTANT REASONS TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



[QMotivations_2022a] Which, if any, are the most important reasons for you, personally, to keep up with the news? Please choose up the three options. [Base: N=2,038]

NEWS AVOIDANCE

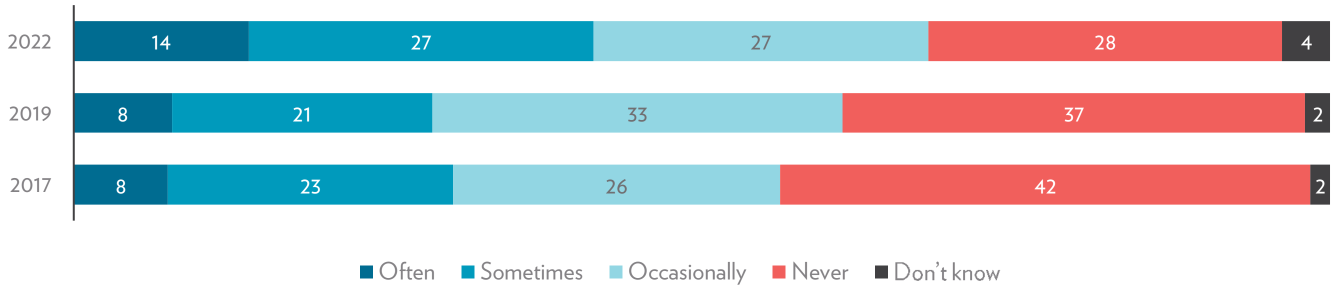
MORE PEOPLE ARE AVOIDING NEWS

There has been a large increase in news avoidance over the past five years. More than two-thirds (68%) of respondents say they 'often, sometimes or occasionally' avoid the news, compared to 62% in 2019, and 57% in 2017. Only 28% of respondents say they never avoid the news (see **figure 3.8**).

News avoidance rate

57% *2017* > **62%** *2019* > **68%** *2022*

FIGURE 3.8: NEWS AVOIDANCE 2017-2022 (%)

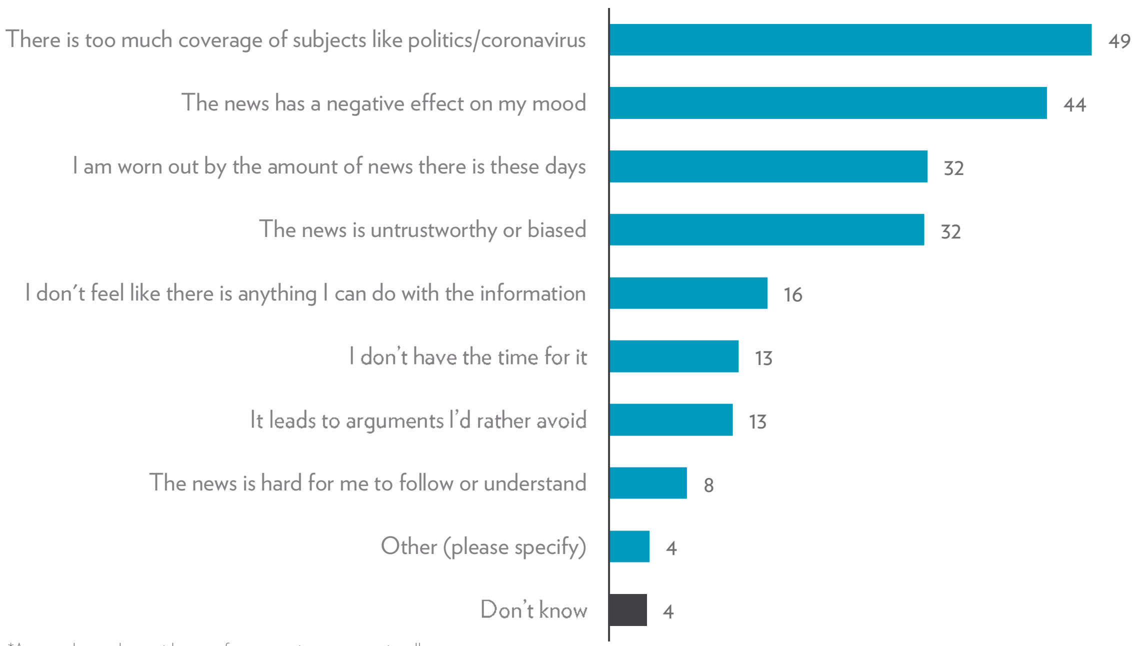


[Q1di_2017] Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? [Base: N=2,038]

WHY PEOPLE AVOID NEWS

We asked respondents to list the reasons why they avoid news (see **figures 3.9**). Among those who avoid news, the top answer is that there is too much coverage of subjects like politics or coronavirus (49%), followed by the negative effect of news on their mood (44%). People also say they are worn out by the amount of news (32%) and that news is untrustworthy or biased (32%).

FIGURE 3.9: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS (%)



*Among those who avoid news often, sometimes or occasionally.
[Q1di_2017ii] Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=1,386]

The biggest news avoiders are women (70%), Gen Y (79%), those with high education (70%), and city-dwellers (69%) (see **figure 3.10**).

Gender appears to play a role in the reasons why people avoid the news. More than half (51%) of women who avoid news said 'it's because there is too much coverage of politics/coronavirus' compared to 46% of men. They are also more likely to say the news has a negative effect on my mood (47%) compared to men (42%). Men who avoid news, on the other hand, are more likely to say they avoid it because it is untrustworthy or biased (37%), and leads to arguments (15%) compared to women (27%; 10%) (see **figure 3.11**).

FIGURE 3.10: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

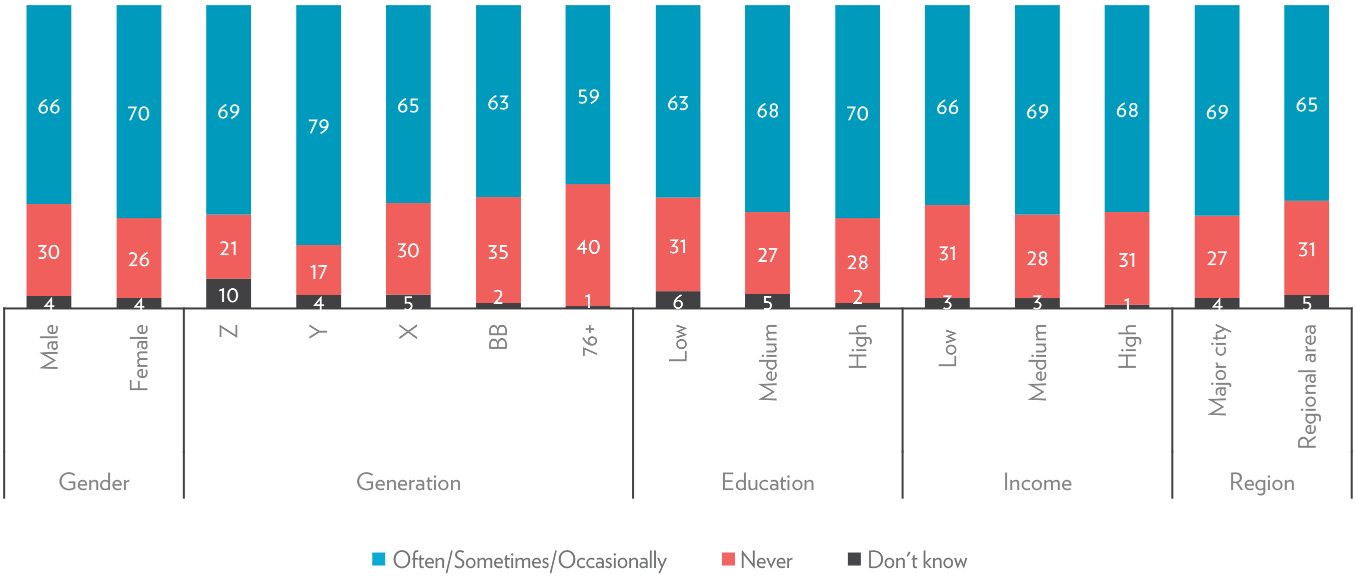
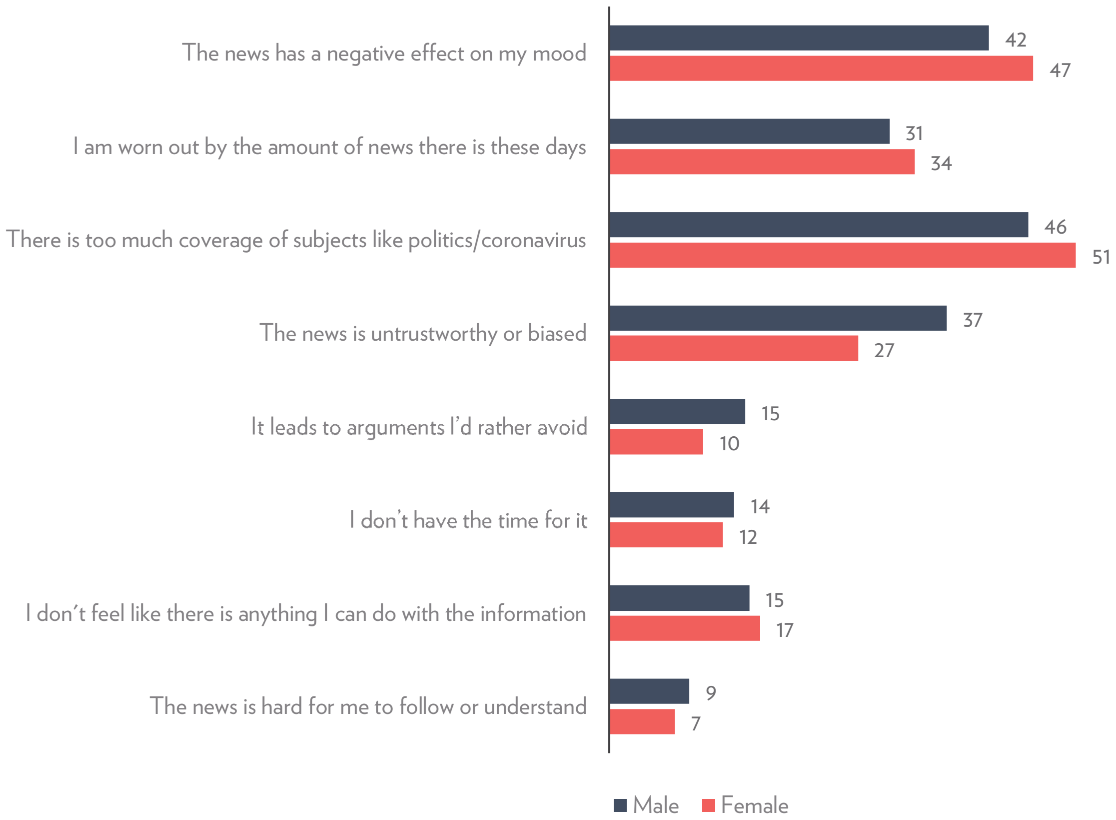
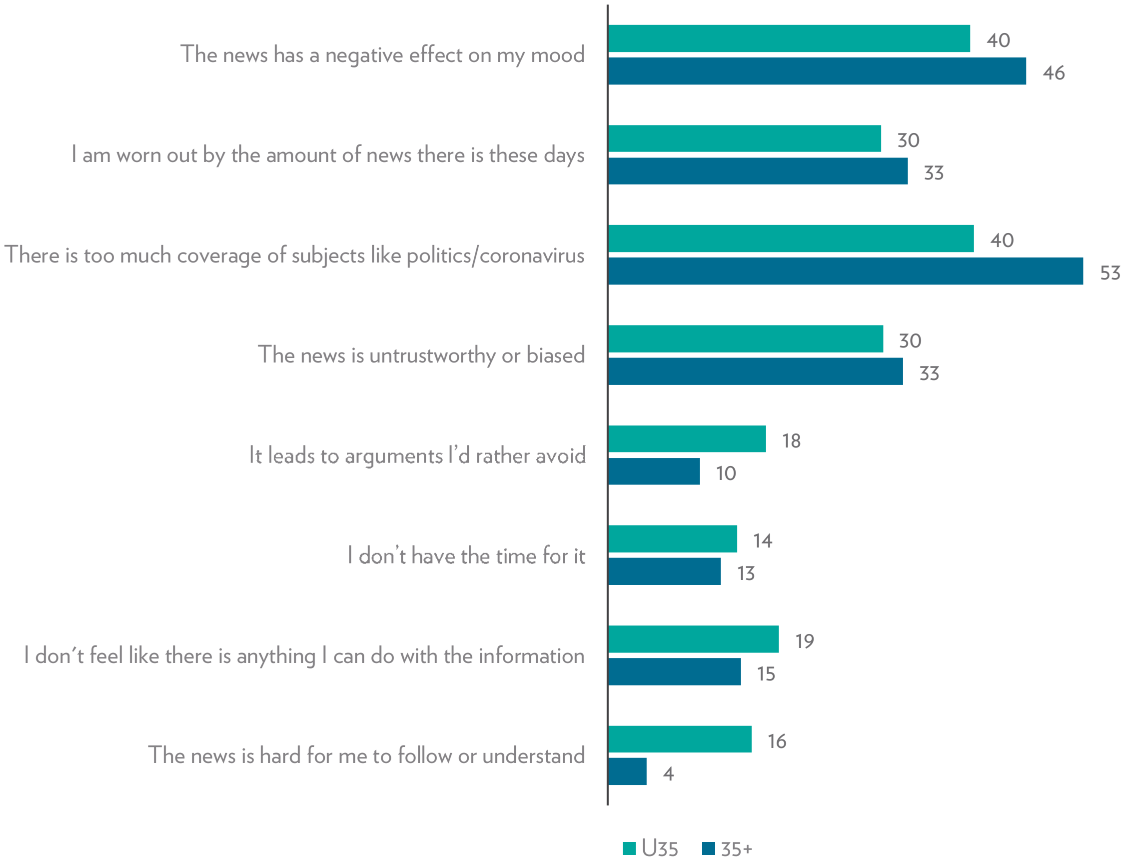


FIGURE 3.11: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY GENDER (%)



We analysed the reasons for avoiding news by age. Those aged 35+ are put off by the amount of political and coronavirus news (53%) compared to 40% of U35. They are more likely to avoid news because of the negative impact it has on their mood. Almost one in five of U35 (18%) avoid news because it leads to arguments and 16% find it hard to follow and understand (see **figure 3.12**). This is likely to be linked to their news consumption on social media which is often incidental and shared publicly.

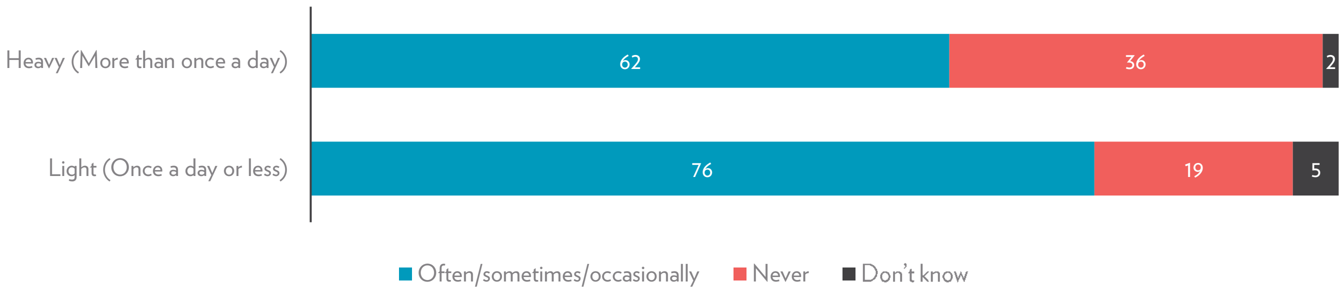
FIGURE 3.12: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY AGE (%)



Almost two-thirds of heavy news consumers (62%) and more than three-quarters of light news consumers (76%) avoid news (occasionally, sometimes or often) (see **figure 3.13**).

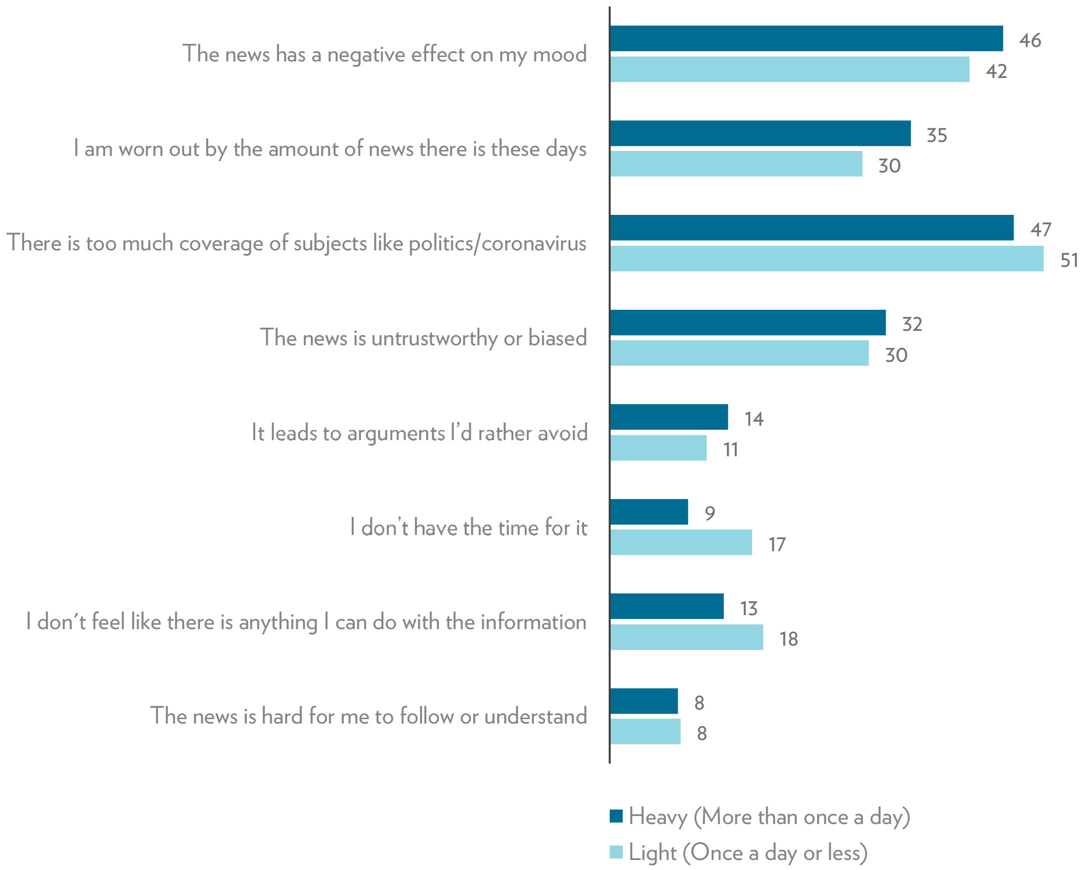
53%
of ***35+*** think there is **too much politics/ coronavirus news**

FIGURE 3.13: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY ACCESS (%)



Almost half of heavy news consumers who avoid news do so because of the negative impact of news on their mood (46%), and more than a third say they are worn out by the amount of coverage (35%). Almost one-fifth of light news consumers avoid news because they don't have time (17%) and feel like there isn't anything they can do with the information (18%) (see **figure 3.14**).

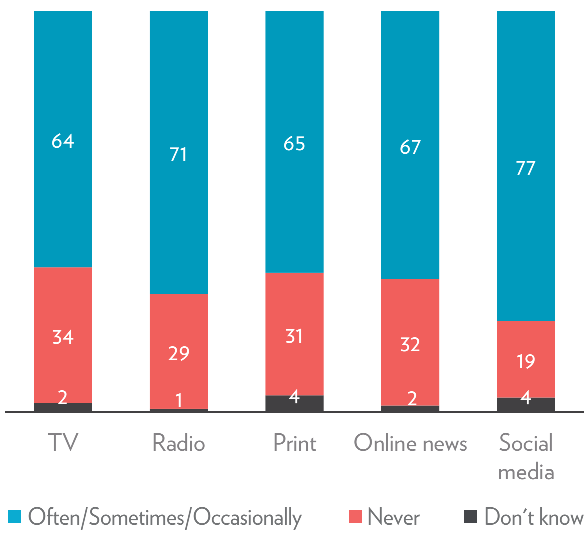
FIGURE 3.14: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY ACCESS (%)



SOCIAL MEDIA USERS AVOID NEWS THE MOST

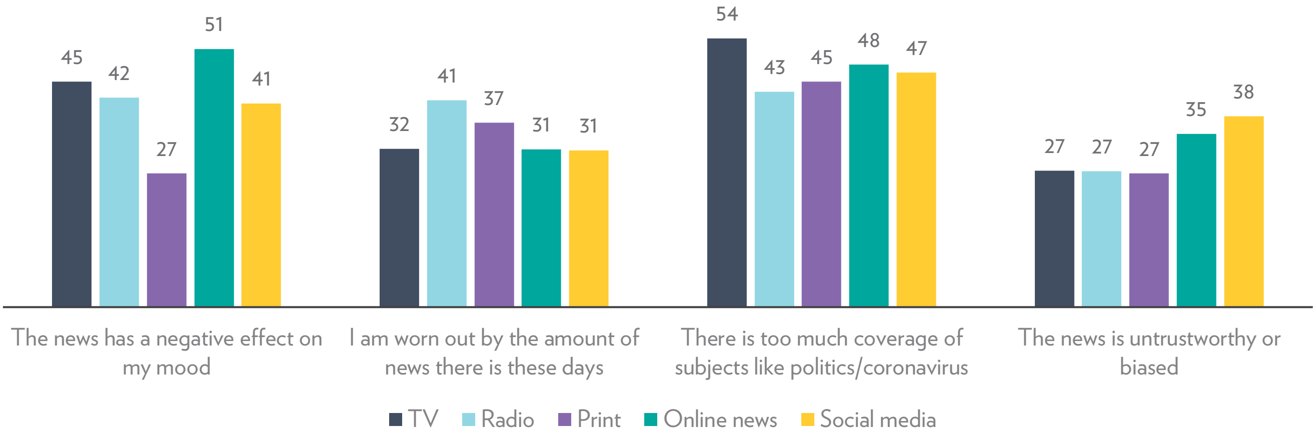
We examined whether news source was a factor in news avoidance, and found that those who consume their news mainly via social media are most likely to avoid news (77%), compared to those who use print (65%) and television (64%) as their main source of news. Those who say TV is their main source of news (34%) are most likely to say they never avoid news, compared to those who mainly access news online (32%), print (31%), or radio (29%). Only 19% of those who say social media is their main source of news never avoid the news (see **figure 3.15**).

FIGURE 3.15: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



TV news viewers are most likely to avoid news because there is too much political and coronavirus coverage (54%), whereas online news consumers avoid news because of the negative impact it has on their mood (51%). Social media users are more likely to avoid news because it is untrustworthy or biased (38%) (see **figure 3.16**).

FIGURE 3.16: MAIN REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



SUMMARY

This year's report paints a picture of a fatigued news audience with stagnant news interest and high levels of news avoidance. Most concerning is the 11-percentage point jump in news avoidance since 2017. In the intervening years, Australian news audiences have experienced the catastrophic events of bushfires, floods and the Covid-19 global pandemic, against a backdrop of geo-political instability. Rather than interest in news increasing, survey respondents cited too much political and coronavirus news and the negative effect it has on their mood as the main reasons to avoid it.

We note stark differences in news interest between women and men. Local news remains the most popular news type across all demographics. However, women's interests lean toward health, lifestyle and entertainment, whereas men are more interested in economic, political and international news.

Overall, people are motivated to consume news are out of a civic duty and to learn new things. Very few people seek out news for entertainment and fun. Younger people are the least likely to find news relevant and useful to them personally. Perhaps this is why they are more likely to avoid news. Their main reason for avoiding news among U35 was because of the negative impact news has on their mood. Compared to older people, younger generations are much more likely to avoid news because it leads to arguments and that it is difficult to understand and follow.

Men are more likely to say they avoid news because it is untrustworthy or biased. Women avoid news because of excessive coverage of politics/coronavirus and the negative effect news has on their mood. This may suggest women are more fatigued by the topics considered newsworthy by mainstream news organisations.

Could it be that the way we conceptualise 'news' is losing its currency? Perhaps news media outlets need to rethink the traditional and gendered categories of news dominated by party politics, business, international and, of course sports news, and reorient their news types and agendas towards non-traditional, more diverse and changing news audiences.

COMMENTARY

THE IMPORTANCE OF FREE, LOCAL NEWS

Genevieve Jacobs, Group Editor, Region Media

There is a bitter irony in this year's *Digital News Report: Australia* findings that overwhelmingly, anyone who cares about news, wants it to be local first.

The nation's major media companies have spent much of the past decade industriously stripping local content and locally based journalists from their mastheads in favour of nationally syndicated content. Companies like Region Media, which is locally owned and operated, financially viable and offering wholly local content are now rare as hens' teeth.

The corporate rationale for cutbacks is clear: radical efficiencies are intended to keep newspapers afloat, but revenue and circulation have slumped, efforts to migrate online have been patchy and even newsprint costs are rising steeply. The effect is dire. There is nobody left to hold power to account and tell the community's stories.

Large media organisations have decided that the newspaper is still worth saving, to the extent that their digital offerings are effectively the paper slapped online. But many news consumers are not native newspaper consumers.

In a world where the fastest growing news source is TikTok and readers have been schooled by Donald Trump to reject anything they disagree with as "fake news", how do you curate a worthwhile debate that informs as much as it engages?

Doing digital local news to a high, sustainable standard must be the answer.

Trust is critical for multiple reasons. Fundamentally, trust drives search engine traffic (an interesting observation when you consider how many trusted journalists have lost their jobs in the past ten years). Readers seeking local news need to know it is accurate and timely; that someone who knows the local context has produced it (and can even pronounce the local place names). Critically, they need local detail. The disaggregation of local media in recent years often means that major news is covered for a national audience—but rarely for a local one.

We saw this most starkly during the Black Summer bushfire crisis when local news outlets struggled to cover urgent breaking news for communities directly at risk. Better resourced national outlets produced high level content that garnered plenty of eyeballs but was not of much actual information value for local audiences.

It's clear that free digital news is the future: this study notes that people who pay for their news online are far more likely to avoid the news than those who consume it free. The study also finds that those who consume news via social media are more likely to avoid it than those who source news via television and radio, perhaps because digital news sources can be so haphazard.

Digital media content needs to be well curated and well balanced so that its appearance in social media feeds is genuinely engaging. It's not clickbait, but audience first content that addresses what people want to read.

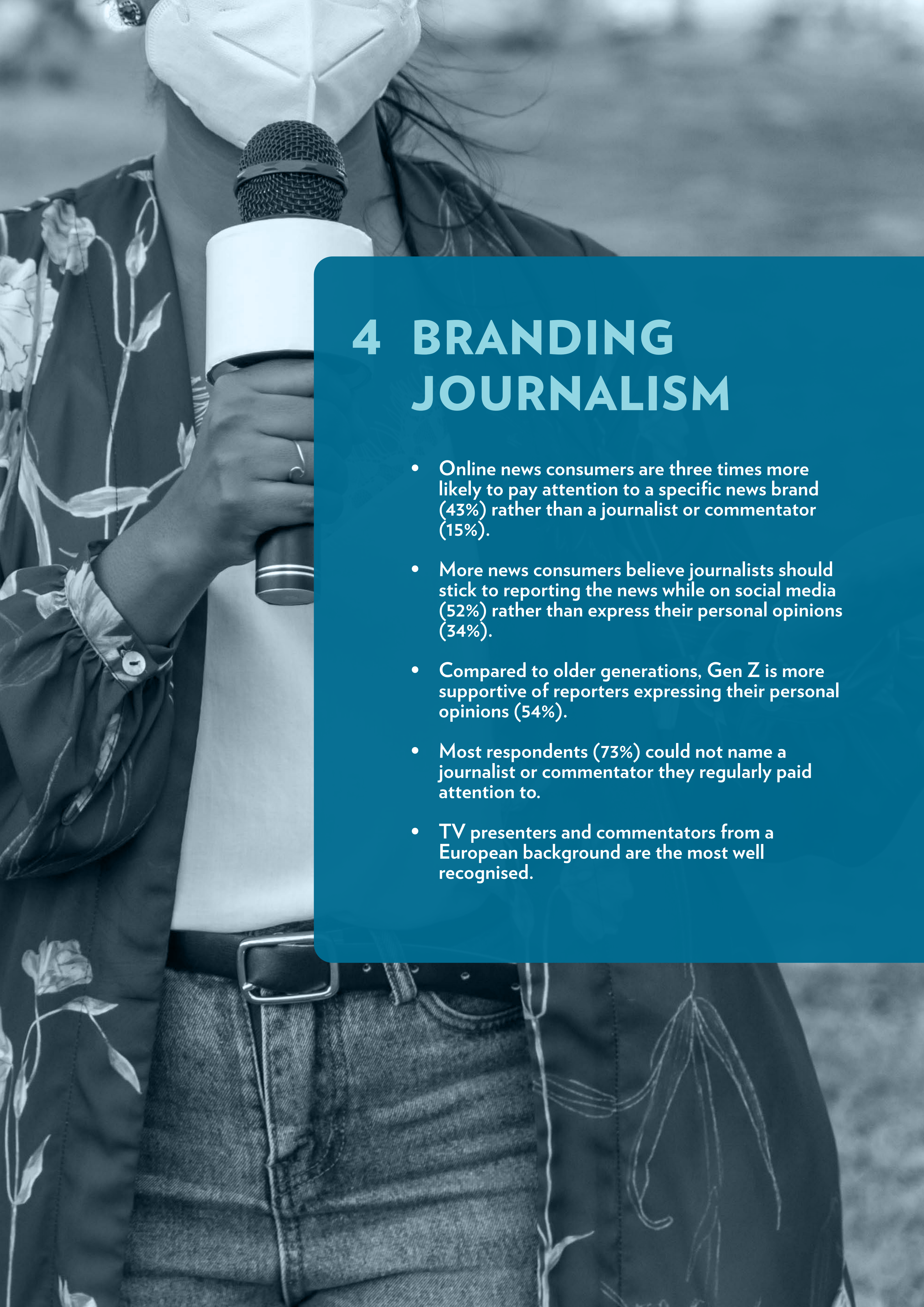
Digital news has been a sobering wake-up call for old journalists who believe politics and sport are the most important media categories.

The bald figures show that community news and features—local people doing interesting things—easily outweigh worthy analyses unless there's an election or grand final in the offing.

That's the background to the *DNR* findings on news: tell me what's happening in my community among my friends and neighbours. Give me the human story about the people in my street. While a small group of people have multiple online news subscriptions and an emotional attachment to print, paywalls are not the answer when free news is now a worldwide benchmark.

Neither is a steady drip feed of grants from government and the social media giants, with all their frightening implications for free speech and independence. And nor are valiant efforts from lone journalists with a Facebook page. Laudable as these might be, they are not a long-term solution. There are many excellent journalists who don't know how to run a news business and one person operations can only ever be a band-aid measure.

The old school values of impartial, balanced and deeply connected local news can be served equally well by a disruptive digital model. Rather than focussing on the death of newspapers with pleas to prop up a dying business model, government and industry must refocus on building a new, diverse and financially robust local news ecosystem. It's a fundamental pillar of our democracy.



4 BRANDING JOURNALISM

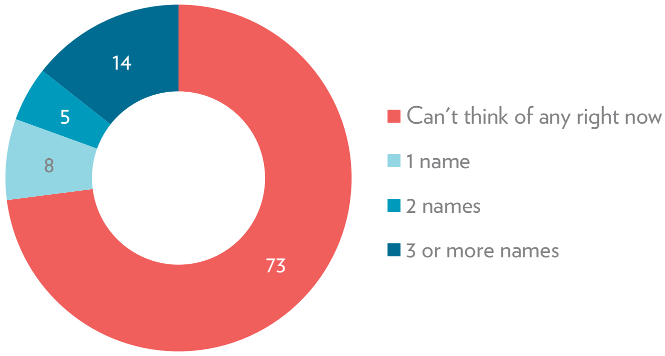
- Online news consumers are three times more likely to pay attention to a specific news brand (43%) rather than a journalist or commentator (15%).
- More news consumers believe journalists should stick to reporting the news while on social media (52%) rather than express their personal opinions (34%).
- Compared to older generations, Gen Z is more supportive of reporters expressing their personal opinions (54%).
- Most respondents (73%) could not name a journalist or commentator they regularly paid attention to.
- TV presenters and commentators from a European background are the most well recognised.

MOST PEOPLE CANNOT RECALL THE NAMES OF JOURNALISTS THEY PAY ATTENTION TO

We asked respondents to name up to five journalists they pay regular attention to. The majority (73%) did not name a presenter, reporter or columnist that they pay regular attention to, 8% named one journalist, 5% named two, and 14% named 3 or more (see **figure 4.1**).

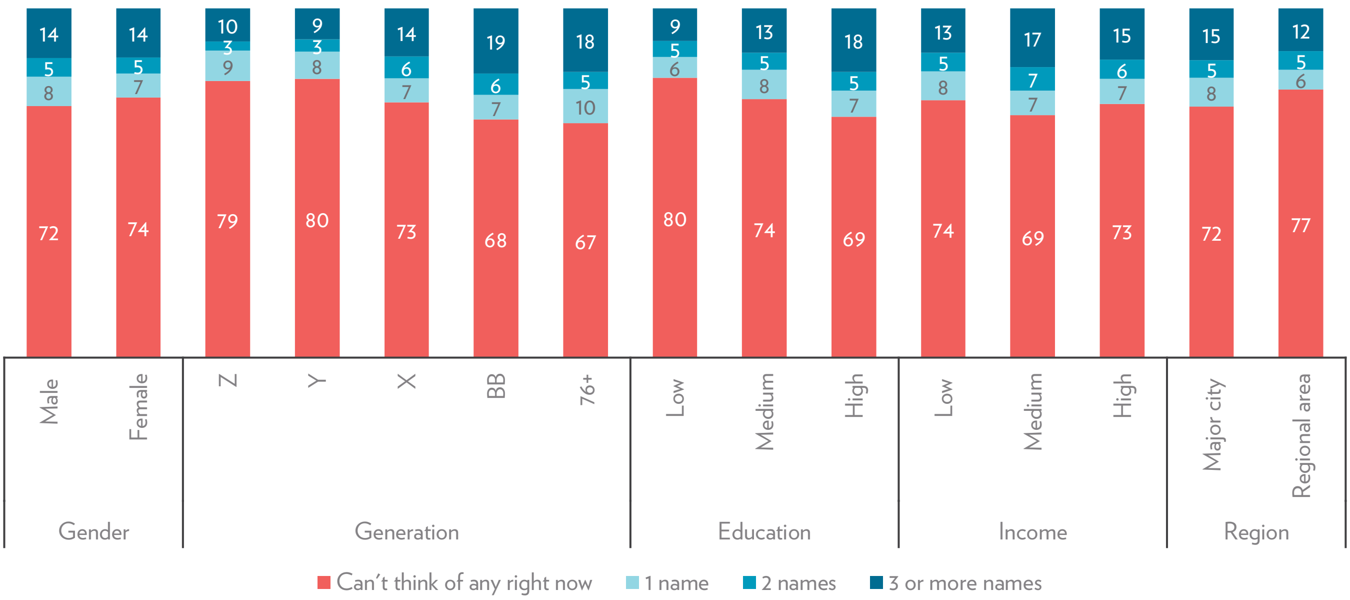
Around a third of Baby Boomers (32%) and those 76+ (33%) recalled one or more names. Those from younger generations were most likely to not be able to think of any. Those who are more highly educated (31%) are more likely than low (20%) and medium (26%) education to recall any names (see **figure 4.2**).

FIGURE 4.1: NUMBER OF NAMED JOURNALISTS REGULARLY PAYING ATTENTION TO (%)



[Q_Journalists2] Please type in the names of up to five journalists that you regularly pay attention to (e.g. news presenters, columnists, or reporters). [Base: N=2,038]

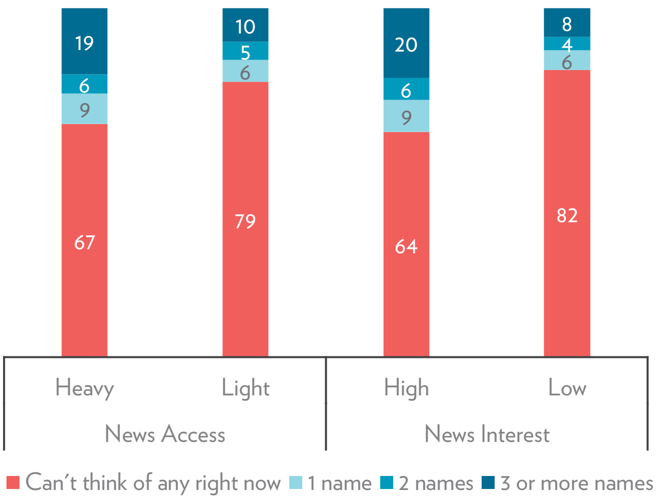
FIGURE 4.2: NUMBER OF NAMED JOURNALISTS REGULARLY PAYING ATTENTION TO BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



Those who are heavy users of news and have high news interest are more able to recall journalists' names. One-third (33%) of heavy news consumers and 36% of those with high interest in news named journalists they pay attention to compared to 21% of light news consumers and 18% of those with low news interest (see **figure 4.3**).

80% of Gen Y
Could not name journalists

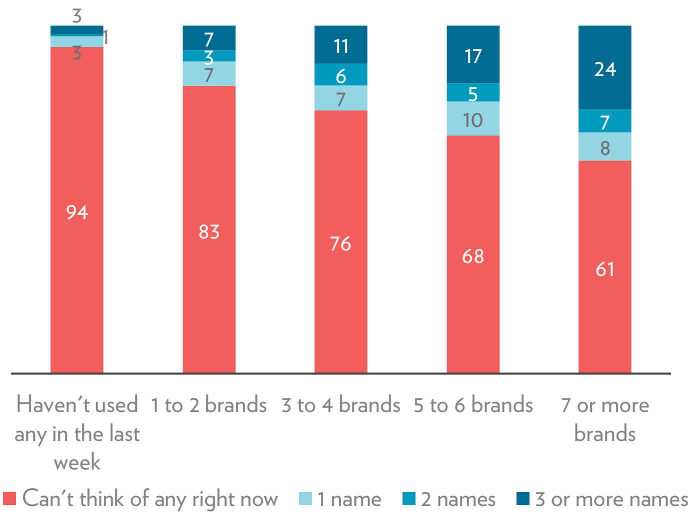
FIGURE 4.3: NUMBER OF NAMED JOURNALISTS REGULARLY PAYING ATTENTION TO BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST (%)



THE MORE BRANDS PEOPLE USE THE EASIER IT IS FOR THEM TO NAME JOURNALISTS

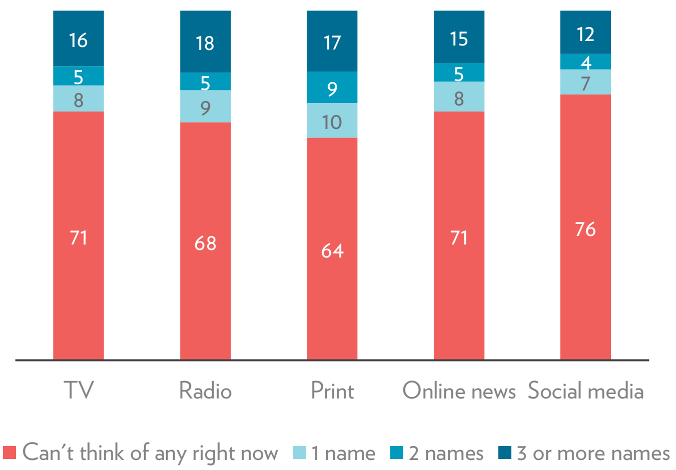
The number of news brands respondents use is related to the number of journalists they are able to name. The vast majority of people who had not used any news brands in the past week were not able to name a journalist, presenter or columnist they regularly pay attention to (94%). In contrast, those who use 7 or more news brands were the most likely to name 3 or more (24%) (see figure 4.4).

FIGURE 4.4: NUMBER OF NAMED JOURNALISTS PAYING ATTENDION TO BY NUMBER OF BRANDS



Those who use mainly use print media (36%) or radio (32%) are more likely to name journalists. Those who use social media as their main source of news are least likely to name any journalist (23%) (see **figure 4.5**).

FIGURE 4.5: NUMBER OF NAMED JOURNALISTS REGULARLY PAYING ATTENTION TO BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



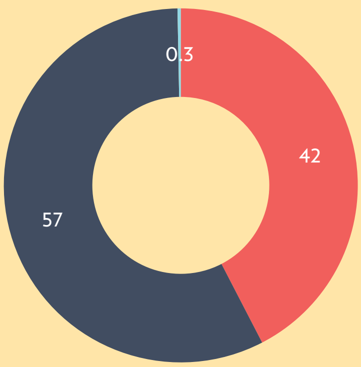
AUSTRALIANS MOSTLY RECALL TV PRESENTERS, REPORTERS AND COMMENTATORS

In total, 544 respondents were able to name at least one journalist. Altogether, respondents recalled 1,325 names. We recoded each name and assessed the journalist's gender, ethnic background (European/non-European), medium the journalist was most active on (broadcast TV/radio, print, social media or a digital-born outlet), news brand they were most closely associated with, and the type of journalism they were most known for (presenter/anchor, correspondent/reporter, columnist/commentator).

For ethnic background, European includes those of Anglo-Celtic and continental European backgrounds. Non-European also includes those of Indigenous Australian background. If coders could not determine accurately—which was sometimes the case for anonymous social media personalities—the journalist was categorised as 'unsure/unknown'. Individuals that respondents considered journalists but did not fit the ordinary definition of journalists (i.e. politicians and influencers) were coded under a separate category for type of journalism.

More than half of the named journalists were male (57%) (see **figure 1**). Additionally, the majority were of European ancestry (91%) (see **figure 2**). Only around 9% had non-European or Indigenous ancestry. These findings are in line with research by Media Diversity Australia[1] which found that only 9.3% of presenters, commentators, and reporters on Australian TV were of non-European background, and 2.1% were Indigenous.

FIGURE 1: NAMED JOURNALISTS BY GENDER (%)

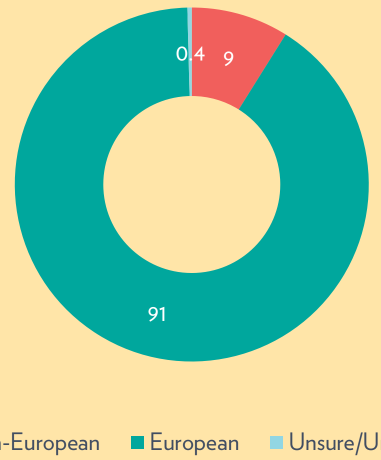


*Among the total number of journalists named by respondents [Base: N=1,325].

Female Male Unsure/Unknown

[1] Media Diversity Australia (2020). *Who gets to tell Australian stories? Sydney*, New South Wales: Media Diversity Australia. https://www.mediadiversityaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Who-Gets-To-Tell-Australian-Stories_LAUNCH-VERSION.pdf

FIGURE 2: NAMED JOURNALISTS BY ETHNICITY (%)



The majority of journalists named are known for their work in broadcast media (74%) (see **figure 3**). Looking at the type of journalist (see **figure 4**), broadcast presenters and anchors were the most mentioned (47%), followed by correspondents/reporters (28%) and columnists/commentators (20%). A small proportion named politicians (1%) and YouTubers (1%) as journalists they paid attention to.

FIGURE 3: NAMED JOURNALISTS BY MEDIUM (%)

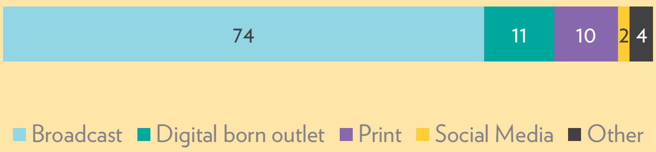
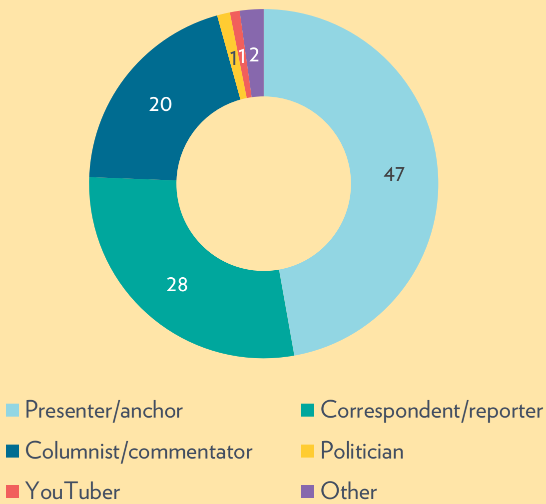
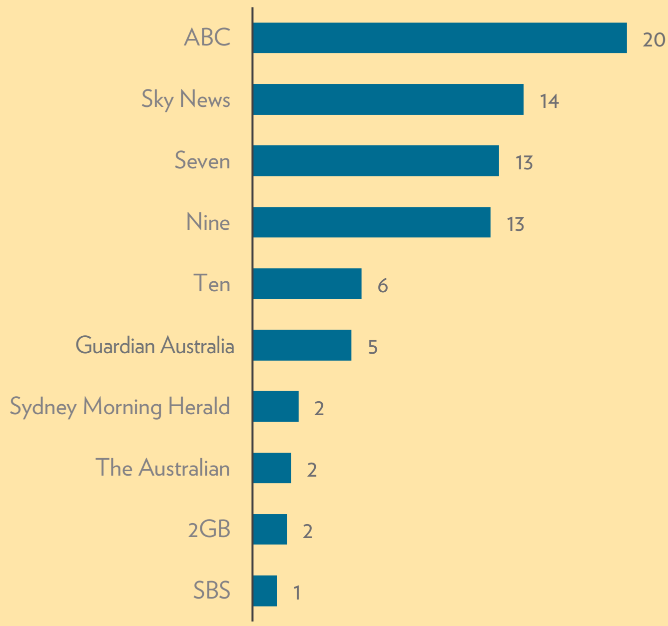


FIGURE 4: NAMED JOURNALISTS BY TYPE OF JOURNALISM (%)



Respondents were able to name journalists from a broad range of outlets, however the most common were established TV brands including ABC, Sky News, Seven and Nine.

FIGURE 5: TOP NAMED JOURNALISTS BY NEWS BRANDS (%)



The most recalled reporter was the ABC's political correspondent Laura Tingle, who was named by 10% of all respondents. The most frequently named presenters and commentators included Seven's David Koch, Sky News's Peta Credlin, Andrew Bolt and Paul Murray, along with the ABC's Leigh Sales (see **table 1**).

TABLE 1: TOP NAMED JOURNALISTS, PRESENTERS AND COMMENTATORS (%)

Top Journalists/Presenters/Commentators	%
Laura Tingle	10
Peta Credlin	6
Paul Murray	6
Andrew Bolt	6
Rita Panahi	5
Leigh Sales	5
Katharine Murphy	4
Alan Jones	4
David Koch	3
Stan Grant	3
Tracy Grimshaw	3
Karl Stefanovic	3

*Among those respondents who could recall the name of at least one journalist [Base: N=544].

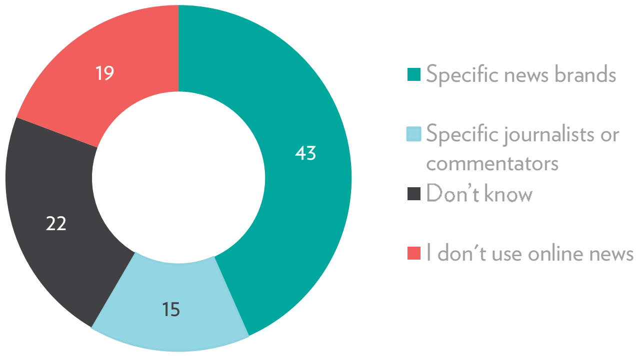
ONLINE NEWS CONSUMERS PAY MORE ATTENTION TO NEWS BRANDS THAN SPECIFIC JOURNALISTS OR COMMENTATORS

This year we asked participants if they pay attention to brands or individual journalists and commentators in their choice of news. This question specifically referred to online news.

Only 15% say they pay most attention to specific journalists or commentators when accessing news online, compared to 43% who pay more attention to specific news brands (see **figure 4.6**). This is particularly true for those who are highly interested in news (56%) and access it more often (55%).

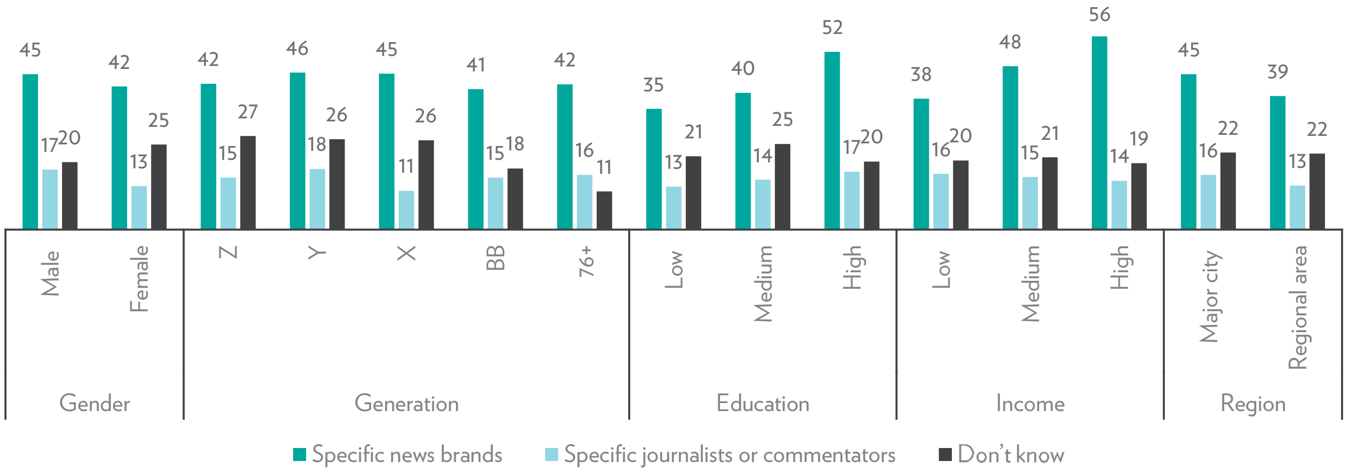
There are differences across gender, education, and income. Men (17%) are somewhat more likely than women (13%) to say they pay attention to specific journalists or commentators. Those with higher education (52%) and income (56%) are more likely to pay attention to specific brands than the average (43%). Women and younger generations are slightly more likely to say they don't know which they pay more attention to (see **figure 4.7**).

FIGURE 4.6: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS (%)



[Q_Journalists_1] When looking for news online, which of the following do you tend to pay most attention to? [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 4.7: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

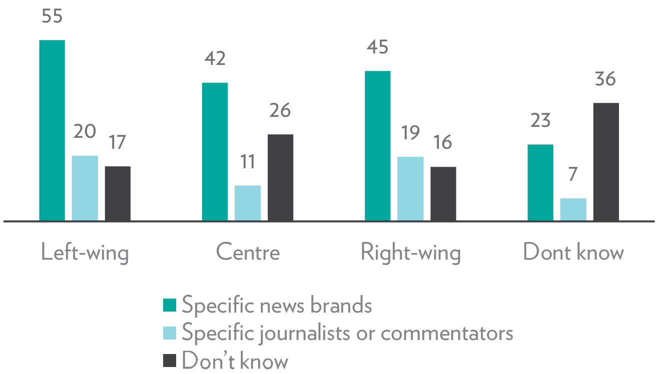


*I don't use online news removed

POLITICALLY AWARE PAY ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC JOURNALISTS

Left-wing oriented news consumers (55%) are also more likely than right-wing (45%) to pay attention to brands. Both left (20%) and right-wing (19%) participants are more likely to pay attention to specific journalists than those who don't know their political orientation (7%). This suggests a higher level of engagement with news and politics (see **figure 4.8**).

FIGURE 4.8: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



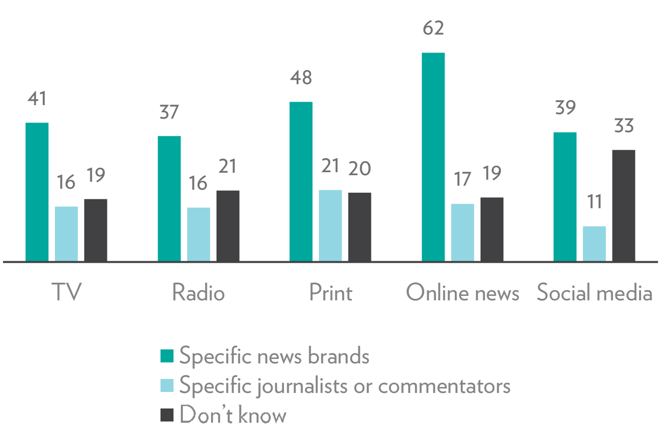
*I don't use online news removed

FACEBOOK NEWS USERS ARE THE LEAST LIKELY TO PAY ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC JOURNALISTS AND COMMENTATORS

Unsurprisingly news consumers who mainly use print and online news sources are the most likely to pay attention to both specific brands and journalists/commentators online (see **figure 4.9**). Those who say they mainly use social media have the lowest recall, with a third (33%) saying they don't know and only 11% saying they pay attention to specific journalists online.

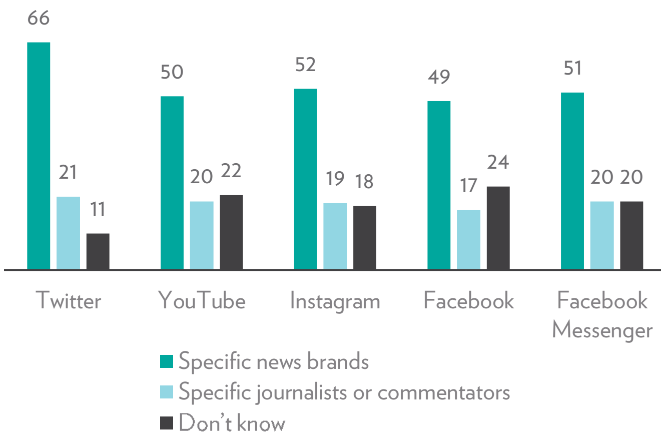
When it comes to news on social media platforms, Twitter users are the most likely to notice specific brands (66%) and Facebook users are the least likely to pay attention to both specific news brands (49%) and journalists (17%) (see **figure 4.10**).

FIGURE 4.9: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



*I don't use online news removed

FIGURE 4.10: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS BY SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS USERS (%)

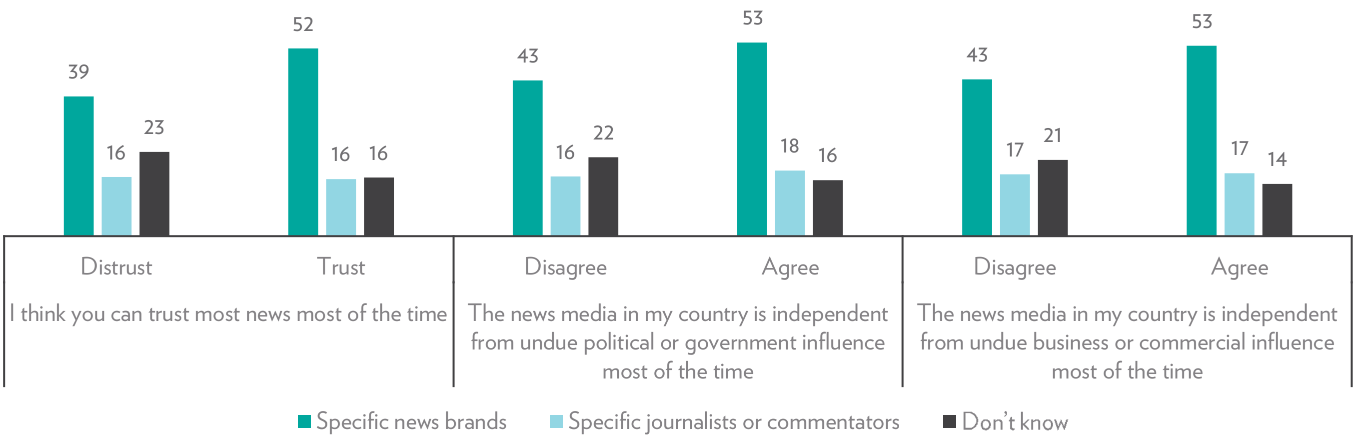


*I don't use online news removed

DISTRUST DRIVES CONSUMERS TOWARDS SPECIFIC BRANDS THEY TRUST

The data reveal a connection between levels of distrust and trust in news and paying attention to specific brands and journalists. A larger proportion of respondents who trust news pay attention to news brands (52%) than those who distrust news (39%). A similar pattern is observed among those who perceive news organisation to be motivated by political or commercial interests, both of which are related to levels of trust (see **figure 4.11**). These findings suggest that distrust in news and concern about commercial and political influence drives consumers towards specific brands they trust.

FIGURE 4.11: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS OR NEWS BRANDS BY TRUST AND INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS (%)



*I don't use online news removed

JOURNALISTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

MANY RESPONDENTS SAY JOURNALISTS SHOULD NOT EXPRESS PERSONAL VIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The use of social media by Australian journalists has been under the spotlight in the past twelve months. Particularly in relation to some ABC journalists, whose social media activity has raised questions about their independence and professionalism.[2] In this context, we asked participants whether reporters should be allowed to report news and express opinions on social media as part of their job, or whether they should stick to reporting the news only.

More than half of participants (52%) believe journalists should just stick to reporting the news when on social media and not express their personal opinions. Around one-third (34%) say reporters should be able to express their personal opinion while on social media, and 14% didn't know (see **figure 4.12**).

Older news consumers are much more likely to believe there is no place for personal opinion from journalists on social media (75%) than Gen Z (29%). More than half of Gen Z support journalists being able to express their opinion as well as news on social media (54%). Participants in regional Australia were also less supportive of reporters using social media for anything other than news than their city counterparts. This likely reflects the ageing of the population in rural and regional Australia (see **figure 4.13**).

FIGURE 4.12: BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALISTIC IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)

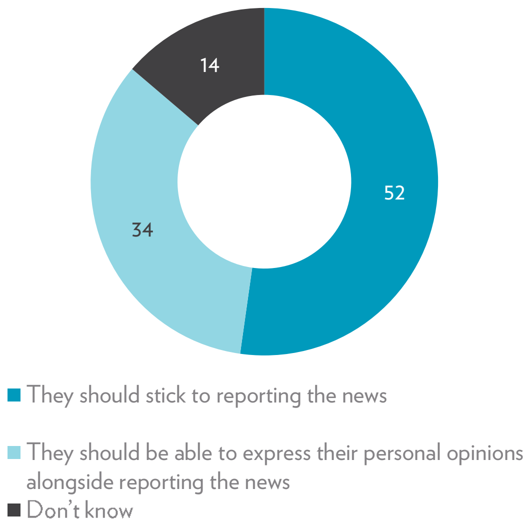
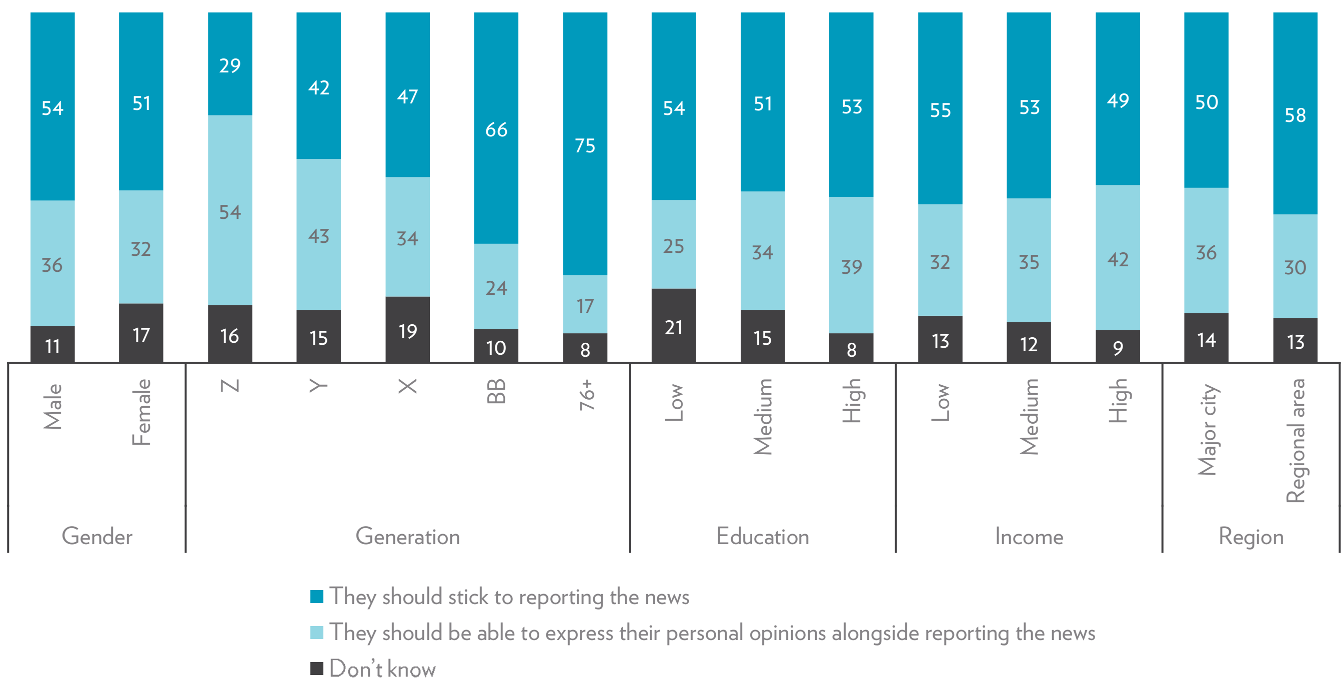


FIGURE 4.13: BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALIST IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



[2] https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/abc-boss-warns-staff-over-social-media-posts-20210809-p58h1p.html
https://www.smh.com.au/culture/tv-and-radio/abc-presenter-takes-a-break-after-accusations-of-bias-20220425-p5afzj.html?btis

TWITTER USERS ARE MOST SUPPORTIVE OF JOURNALISTS EXPRESSING THEIR OPINION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Traditional news consumers, particularly TV (60%) are more opposed to journalists expressing their opinion on social media than online news consumers (47%). Podcast listeners also support journalists expressing their opinion while on social platforms. Twitter users are the most supportive of reporters posting their personal views (62%) and Facebook users the least (39%) (see **figure 4.14**). This reflects the interactive nature of online platforms and the strong presence of journalists on Twitter.

CONSERVATIVES THINK JOURNALISTS SHOULDN'T EXPRESS THEIR OPINION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Almost two-thirds of right-wing participants think journalists should stick to reporting the news when using social media, compared to 43% of left-wing. Almost half of left-leaning participants believe journalists should be able to express their opinion while reporting the news on social media (see **figure 4.15**).

FIGURE 4.14: BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALIST IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS USERS (%)

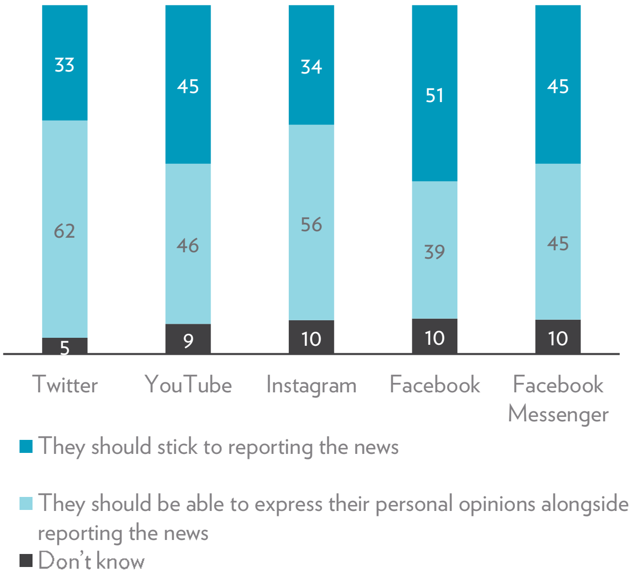
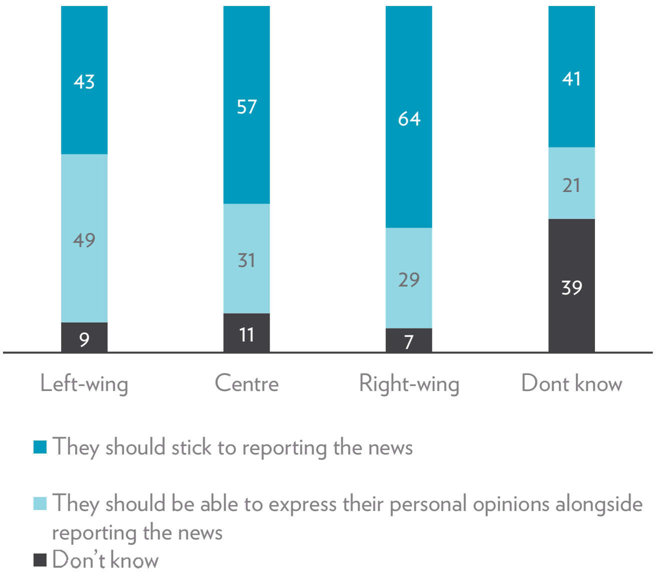


FIGURE 4.15: BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALIST IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



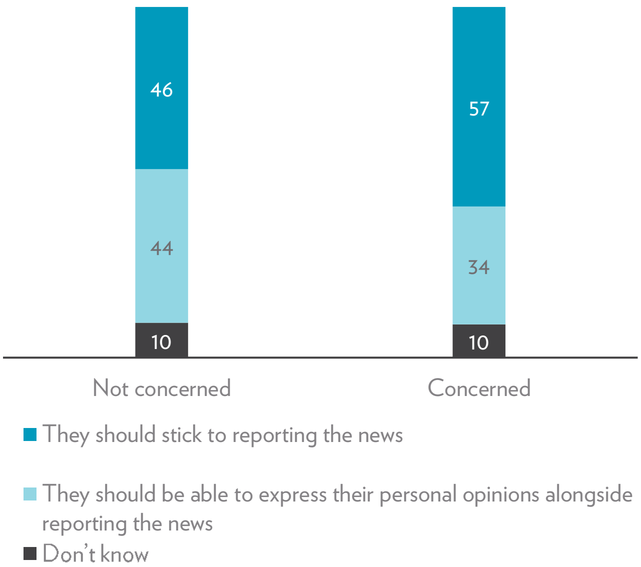
MISINFORMATION AND OPINION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Respondents who are concerned about mis- and disinformation online are more likely to think journalists should not express their opinion on social media (57%) than of those who are not concerned (47%) (see **figure 4.16**).

Personal opinion on social media

Left	Right
49%	29%

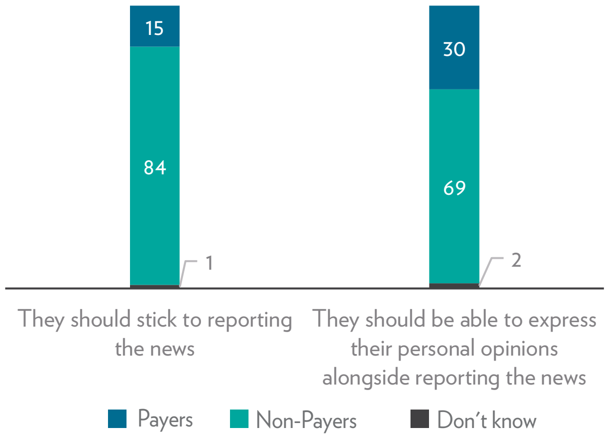
FIGURE 4.16: BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALIST IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION (%)



THOSE WHO PREFER PARTISAN JOURNALISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE MORE LIKELY TO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS

Paying for news appears to be related to beliefs about impartiality. Among those who say journalists should be able to express their personal view on social media 30% say they pay for online news. This is double the proportion of those who say journalists should stick to reporting (15%) (see **figure 4.17**).

FIGURE 4.17: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY BELIEFS ABOUT JOURNALIST IMPARTIALITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)



SUMMARY

The ability to attract audiences is an importance aspect of online journalism. News organisations have encouraged their reporters, presenters, and columnists to develop their profile and build an online presence. One of the ways this is done is through social media. There is a range of personal, organisational, and institutional motivations for journalists to adopt branding practices. Journalistic ambition and the desire to build a strong audience might be important; they also seek to establish themselves as 'experts' in a particular area. News organisations might give strong directives to their reporters to promote themselves. And at an institutional level, journalists might be motivated to market their work online to lift the profile of journalism as a profession.

There are both risks and benefits. By engaging in personal branding, journalists are challenging traditional expectations of impartiality and independence in reporting. This can cause damage to personal and organisational reputations, as experienced by the ABC recently.

The data show the majority of Australian news consumers want journalists to stick to the news and refrain from expressing their opinion while on social media. However, it is generational. Younger people are much more open to reporters expressing themselves than older generations. Previous *DNR: Australia* surveys have shown that younger generations are less wedded to the tradition of objectivity.

Those who use social media as their main source of news are the least likely to know journalists' names. Furthermore, the fact that Facebook users have the lowest recall of specific news brands or journalists highlights the difficulty of the social media environment for the news industry. It is difficult to build brand loyalty and encourage people to pay for subscriptions when they are incidental news consumers, unaware of which organisation generated the news they are consuming.

Despite the ability of journalists to promote themselves online, few participants could name online specific journalists or brands. Instead, the majority of journalists, presenters, or commentators identified by respondents were on traditional news platforms, particularly television and print. Many of those identified appear on several platforms reflecting the transition of established brands from offline to online.

The data also reinforces concern about a lack of diversity in Australian news media, with the majority of journalists people named having an Anglo-Celtic background.

COMMENTARY

GET BACK TO REPORTING AND LET YOUR JOURNALISM SPEAK FOR YOU

Gaven Morris, CEO, Bastion Transform

For years, an echo of editors has urged staff in their newsrooms to 'build your personal brand,' to share their personality and views on social media to attract a loyal band of followers. The *Digital News Report: Australia 2022* is a plea from today's news consumers for journalists to do the opposite.

Audiences seem to be saying they're feeling social media fatigue. That amid all the information sources now literally at their fingertips, some are trustworthy, many are not, and it can be impossible to tell the difference. They want news organisations to do that job for them, to cut through and make sense of the world.

Across the demographic groups represented in the *Digital News Report: Australia*, readers, listeners and viewers are growing weary of the over-sharing and sometimes, the self-obsession of journalists eager to say what they feel, not what they know.

"The socials were fun but get back to reporting and let your journalism speak for you," news consumers might be saying to us all.

Australians consuming news are three times more likely to seek out news brands than individual journalists. This may under-report the brands, as it's likely people seek out a journalist because of their association with the organisation they work for. It's even more fascinating to learn that almost three quarters of Australians do not name a reporter or commentator they pay regular attention to and the more someone uses social media to get their news, the less likely an individual journalist resonates with them. Those who are most concerned about misinformation and fake news are also most eager for journalists to stop sharing their opinions.

This should be great news for journalists, particularly those that work for trusted news services connected to their communities and those who've earned credibility through the quality of their craft, not the volume of their followers.

The *Digital News Report: Australia*'s results are also confirmation that 'the public' is not the collective noun for social media followers.

Mostly, journalists on social media are talking to their friends, their colleagues or increasingly their bilious industry critics.

In my time at ABC News, I contended Twitter was often an excellent internal messaging tool, but it gained us no extra viewers or listeners. Whereas once ABC journalists were encouraged to build their social profiles, they're now explicitly told they're not required to be on the platforms for their work. Organisational and programme accounts are the channels to connect audiences to great content, not the journalist's personal profile.

Like the public represented here, I am not anti social media. Twitter is a very helpful breaking news tool, Facebook connects us to communities and conversations we might not get insights into, Instagram gives us a glimpse into people's worlds and YouTube helps us discover excellent content and creativity.

But these days, opinions are ubiquitous, talk is cheap and quality reporting is rare and precious. In the digital age, it's refreshing to be reminded that journalism in the public interest ranks far above journalists building their personal brand.

5 NEWS ACCESS

- People are turning away from social media to get their news, in particular Gen Z and Y.
- Overall news consumption is steady but has increased among young people and women.
- There are signs of growth in print news consumption (+2), particularly regional and local newspapers (+3).
- One in four (23%) Australians use smart TVs to access news, and TV remains the most popular main source of news (42%).
- More than a quarter watch TV (27%) or look at their smartphone (26%) to get news first thing in the morning.

AUSTRALIANS' NEWS ACCESS REMAINS STEADY

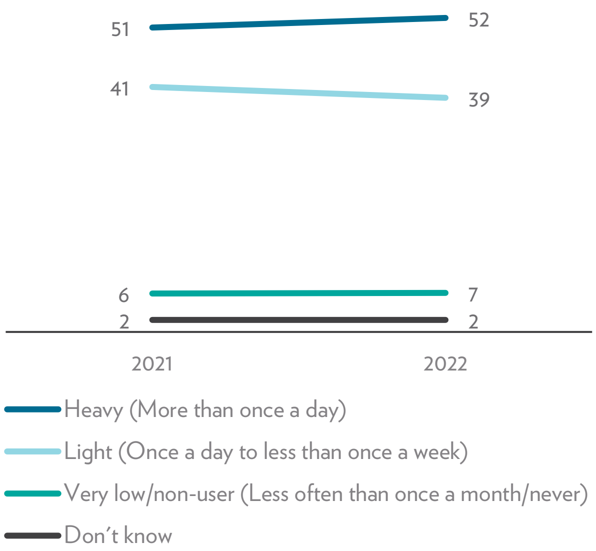
Despite a substantial increase in news consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic[1], the proportion of heavy news consumers remains steady. At the end of January/early February 2022, 52% of Australians accessed news more than once a day, which is similar to last year (+1). Seven percent of respondents say they access news less than once a month or not at all (see **figure 5.1**).

Heavy news consumption

***Gen Y* +6%**

***Gen Z* +5%**

FIGURE 5.1: NEWS ACCESS 2021-2022 (%)



[Q1b_NEW] Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online) [Base: N=2,038].

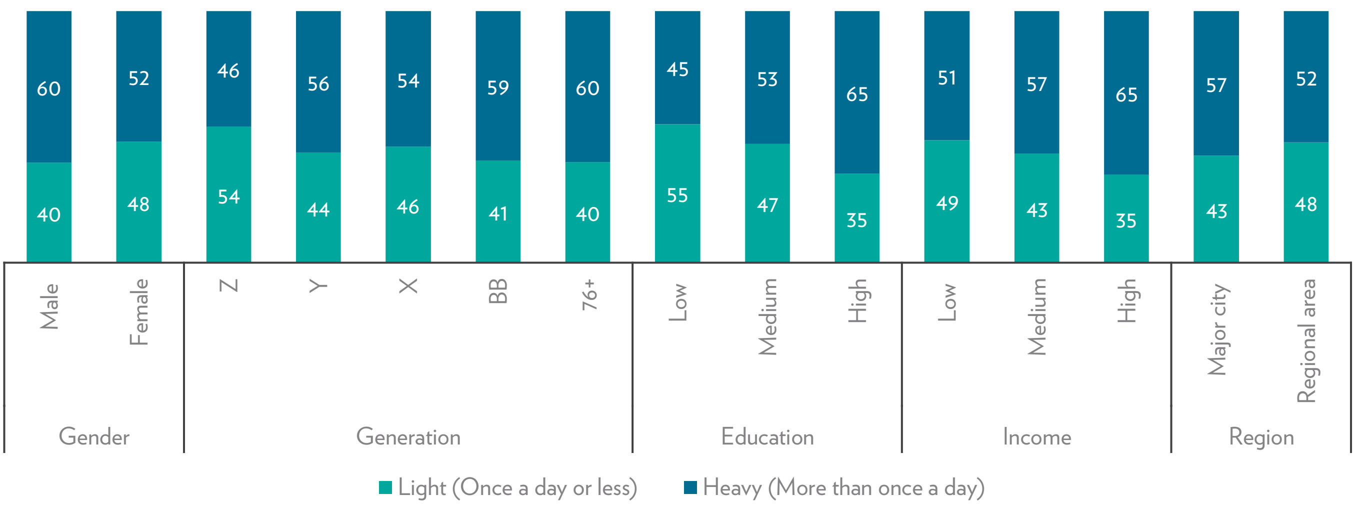
WOMEN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE CONSUMING MORE NEWS

Men are more likely to be heavier news consumers than women; however, there has been a 4 percentage point increase among women since last year. More than half of female news consumers (52%) now access news more than once a day, which is still higher than pre-Covid (50% in 2020).

Baby Boomers (59%) and those aged 76+ (60%) are more likely to be heavy news consumers than Gen Z (46%), Y (56%), and X (54%). While there has been no change in the proportion of heavy news consumers among Baby Boomers and 76+, there was a notable increase among Gen Z (+5), Y (6+) and X (3+) since last year (see **figure 5.2**).

Those with higher education and income continue to be the heaviest news consumers. However, there has been an increase among those with medium education (+5), and low-income earners (+3). City dwellers (57%) are more likely to be heavy news consumers compared to those living in regional areas (52%) as in previous years.

FIGURE 5.2: NEWS ACCESS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



[1] Park, S., Fisher, C., Lee, J. & McGuinness, K. (2020). Covid-19: Australian news and misinformation. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre. https://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/publications/documents/COVID-19-Australian-news-and-misinformation.pdf

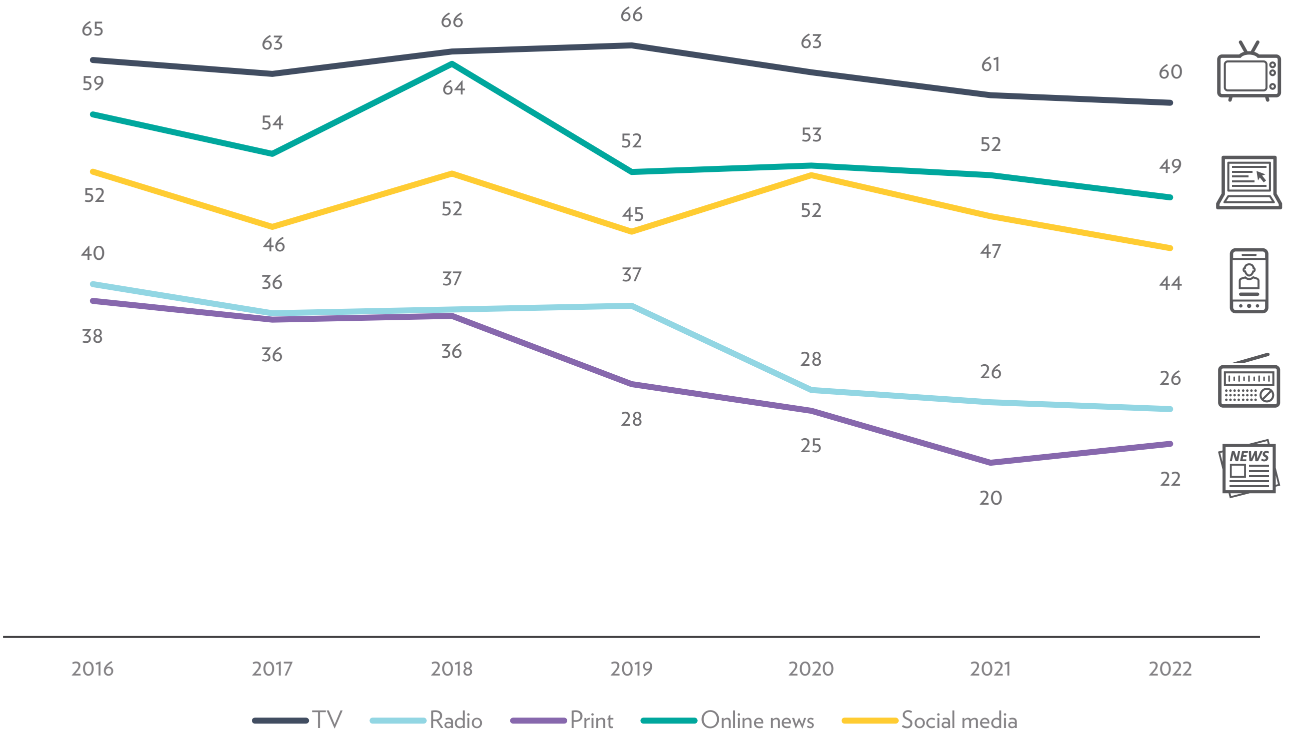
SOCIAL MEDIA FALLS AND PRINT RISES

The majority of news consumers (60%) still use TV as a general source of news. The use of news websites and social media for news decreased by 3 percentage points. For the first time in 6 years, we have seen a slight increase in the use of print as a general source of news (+2) (see **figure 5.3**).

The data also shows a continued fall in the use of social media as a general source of news (-8 since 2020).

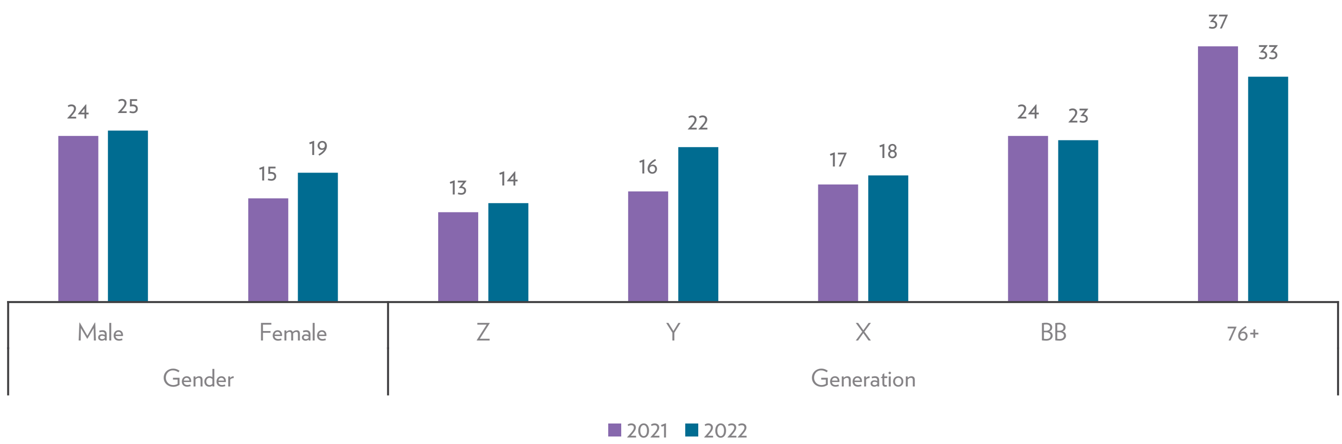
There was a notable increase in print consumption among women and younger generations. **Figure 5.4** shows that nearly one-fifth of women (19%) use print as a general source of news (+3). The use of print among Gen Z and Y increased (+2; +6). In contrast, print consumption remained roughly the same for men, Gen X and Baby Boomers, and fell among those aged 76+ (-4).

FIGURE 5.3: GENERAL SOURCES OF NEWS 2016-2022 (%)



[Q3] Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply. *Note: Prior to 2020 'blogs' were included as 'social media', in subsequent years they were not included in the questionnaire. [Base: N=2,038].

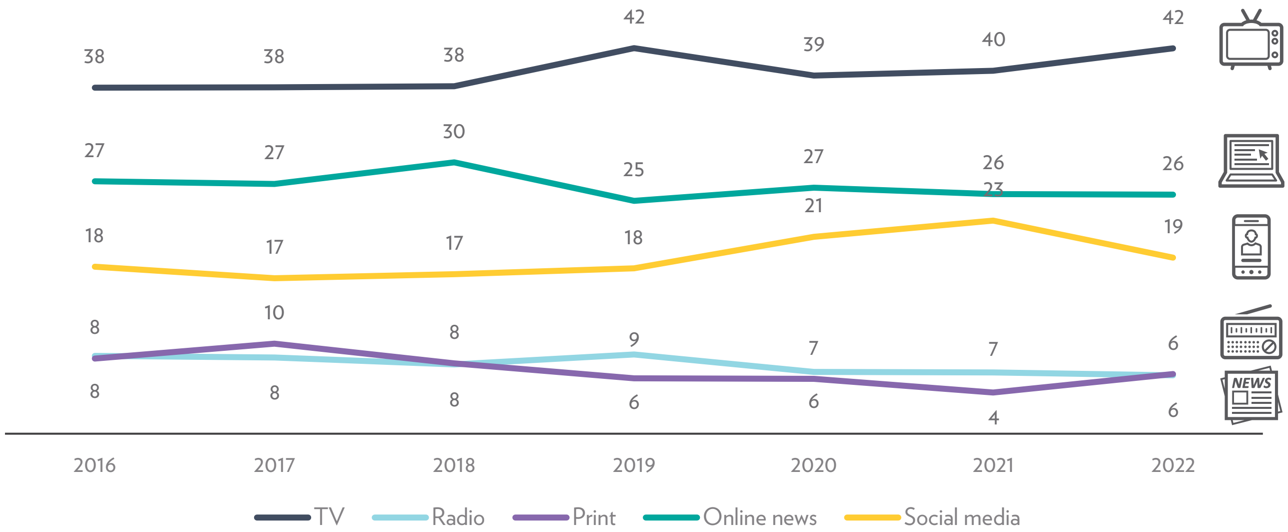
FIGURE 5.4: PRINT NEWS USE BY GENDER AND GENERATION 2021-2022 (%)



SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS HAS FALLEN

The number of news consumers relying on social media for news fell over the past twelve months (-4), while TV has continued to rise in popularity as a main source of news (+2, 42%). There has also been a small growth (+2) in the proportion of respondents using print as their main source of news (6%) (see **figure 5.5**).

FIGURE 5.5: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS 2016 - 2022 (%)



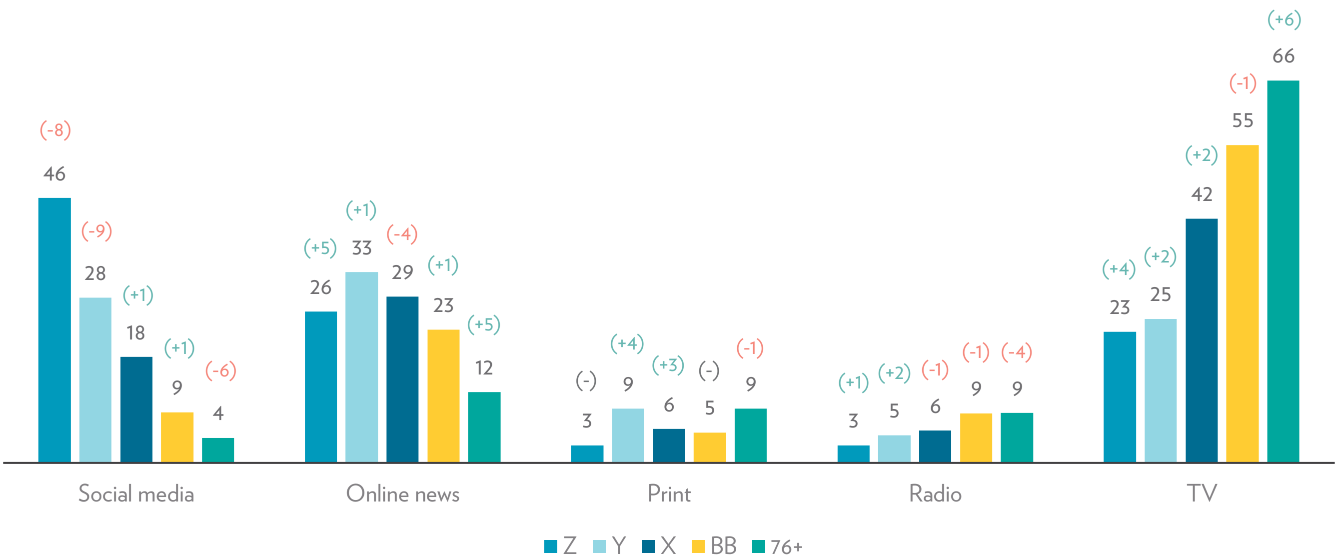
[Q4] You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? *Note: Prior to 2020 'blogs' were included as 'social media', in subsequent years they have been excluded. [Base: Those who used at least one source of news, N=1,867].

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS AMONG GEN Z IS SLOWING DOWN

Younger generations are turning away from social media as their main source of news. The proportion of Gen Z relying on social media to get news has declined to 46% (-8) and Gen Y to 28% (-9) in the past twelve months. Gen Z are turning towards TV and online news sources and Gen Y are looking to print and TV.

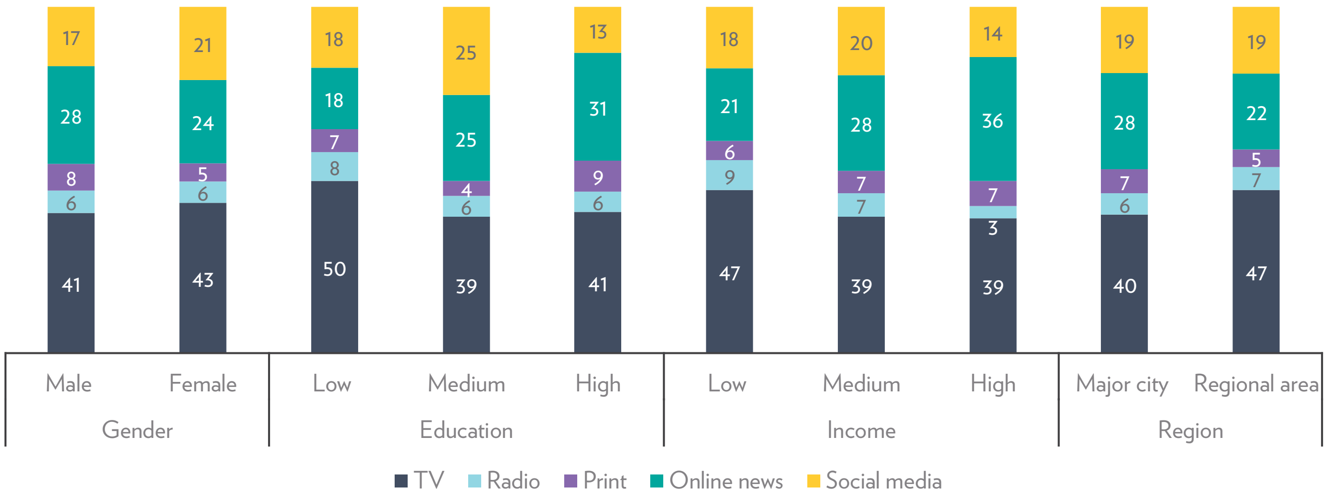
Last year there was a significant increase among those aged 76+ using social media as the main source of news (+7). This year, this has dropped back to 4% (-6). On the other hand, their use of TV as the main source of news went up by six percentage point (66%) as well as online news (+5, 12%) (see **figure 5.6**).

FIGURE 5.6: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



Those with low education, low income and who live in regional areas are more likely to rely on TV to get news. Men and those with high levels of education and income, and live in cities are more likely to mainly use online sources of news. Whereas women are slightly more likely than men to use social media as their main source (see **figure 5.7**).

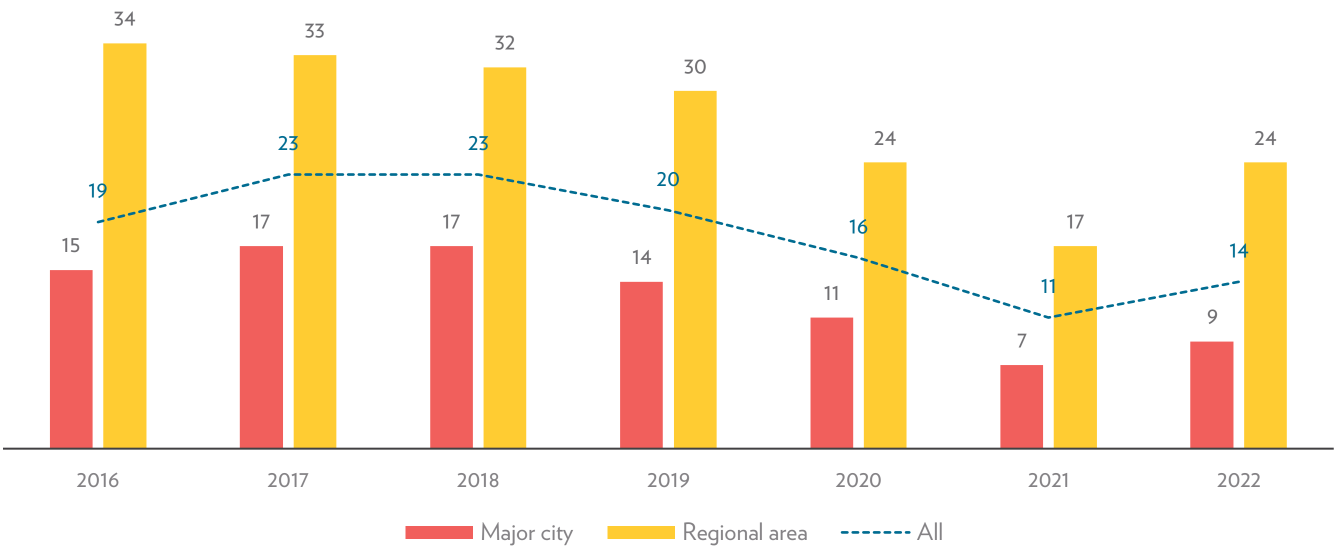
FIGURE 5.7: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



REGIONAL AND LOCAL NEWSPAPERS HAVE REBOUNDED AFTER YEARS OF DECLINE

This year regional/local newspaper use has rebounded, with 14% (+3) of respondents saying that they read a regional/local newspaper. The growth is higher among regional Australians, climbing 7 percentage points to 24%. There was also a slight increase (+2) among respondents in major cities (see **figure 5.8**).

FIGURE 5.8: REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER USE 2016-2022 (%)



[Q5A] Which of the following brands have you used to access news offline in the last week (via TV, radio, print, and other traditional media)? A regional or local newspaper. [Base: N=2,038].

However, the proportion of news consumers who access regional or local newspaper websites continued to decline to 3% (-4). The decline was higher among regional Australians (-7) (see **figure 5.9**).

FIGURE 5.9: REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER WEBSITE USE 2016-2022 (%)

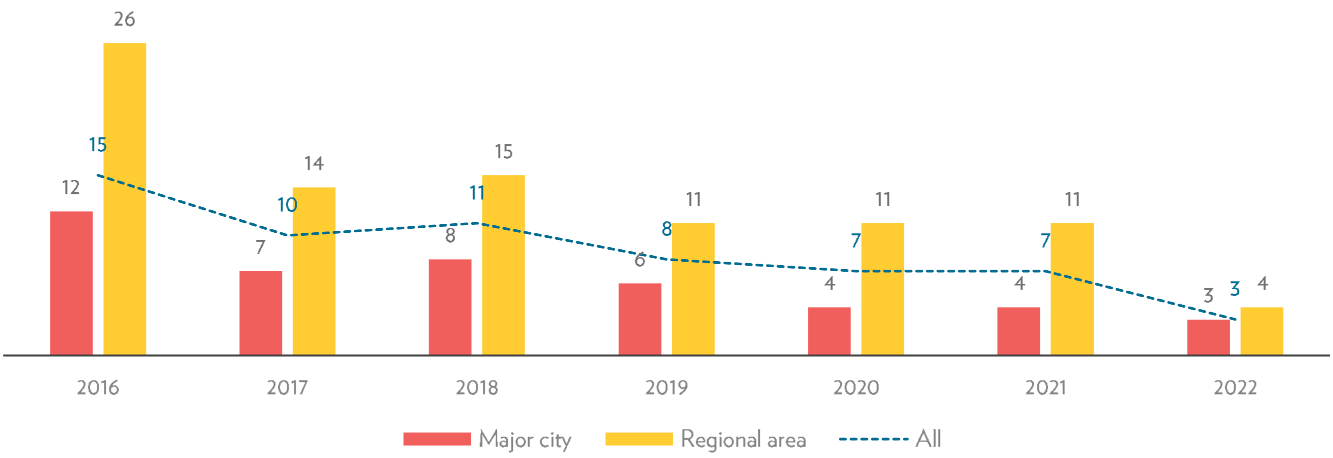
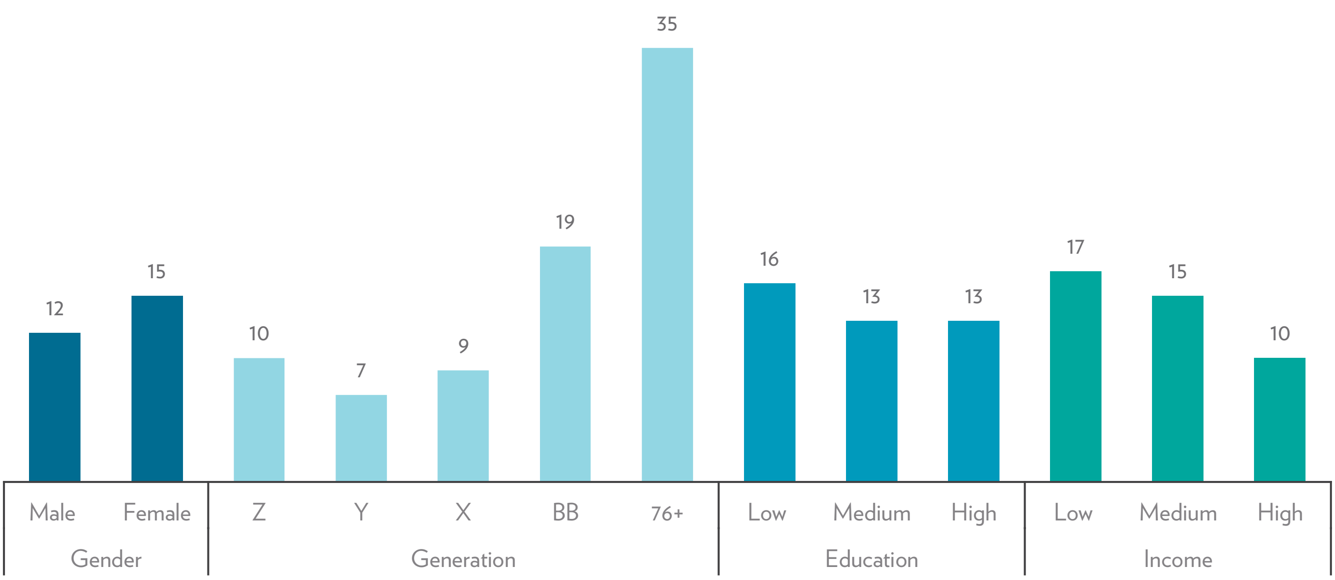


Figure 5.10 shows that women, older generations, and news consumers with low education and income are more likely to read their print edition of their regional or local newspapers. This highlights the importance of maintaining print newspapers for certain socioeconomic groups in society.

FIGURE 5.10: REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER USE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



AUSTRALIA'S PUBLIC BROADCASTERS CONTINUE TO KEEP THEIR VIEWERSHIP

ABC News continues to be the most popular news brand (40%). The use of free-to-air TV news services such as Channel 7 (-2), Channel TEN (+1) and 9 (-1) remained steady in the last year. Sky News recorded a small increase (+2) likely due to its expansion on free-to-air in regional Australia. The popularity of regional newspapers has also risen (+3). In contrast, the number of news consumers using international news brands such as BBC News (-2) and CNN (-2) has declined slightly (see **table 5.1**).

TABLE 5.1: OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS

Brand	N	2022 (% since 2021)
ABC News*	821	40 (-)
Channel 7	759	37 (-2)
Channel 9	720	35 (-1)
Channel TEN	399	20 (+1)
SBS News*	355	17
A regional or local newspaper	280	14 (+3)
Sky News	240	12 (+2)
Commercial FM radio (e.g. Triple M, Nova)	221	11 (-)
Prime7	216	11 (+3)
Herald Sun	182	9 (-)
Daily Telegraph	180	9 (+1)
BBC News	170	8 (-2)
Commercial AM radio (e.g. 2GB, 2UE)	166	8 (+1)
The Australian	161	8 (-)
WIN Television	154	8 (+1)
Sydney Morning Herald	141	7 (+1)
Courier Mail	136	7 (+1)
The Age	128	6 (-)
Fox News	114	6 (-)
The Advertiser	110	5 (-)
CNN	98	5 (-2)
Other Capital city newspapers (Canberra Times, Hobart Mercury, NT News)	91	4 (-1)
Australian Financial Review	81	4 (-)
News channels or newspapers in languages other than English	55	3 (-)
Other newspapers or broadcast news channels from outside Australia	53	3 (+1)

* ABC and SBS News include both TV and Radio audiences. SBS Radio and SBS News Online were included for the first time this year.

ABC News Online (26%) is still the most popular news brand followed by news.com.au. While most online newspaper brands have remained relatively stable since last year, there has been a notable decrease (-4) in the use of regional newspaper websites (see **table 5.2**).

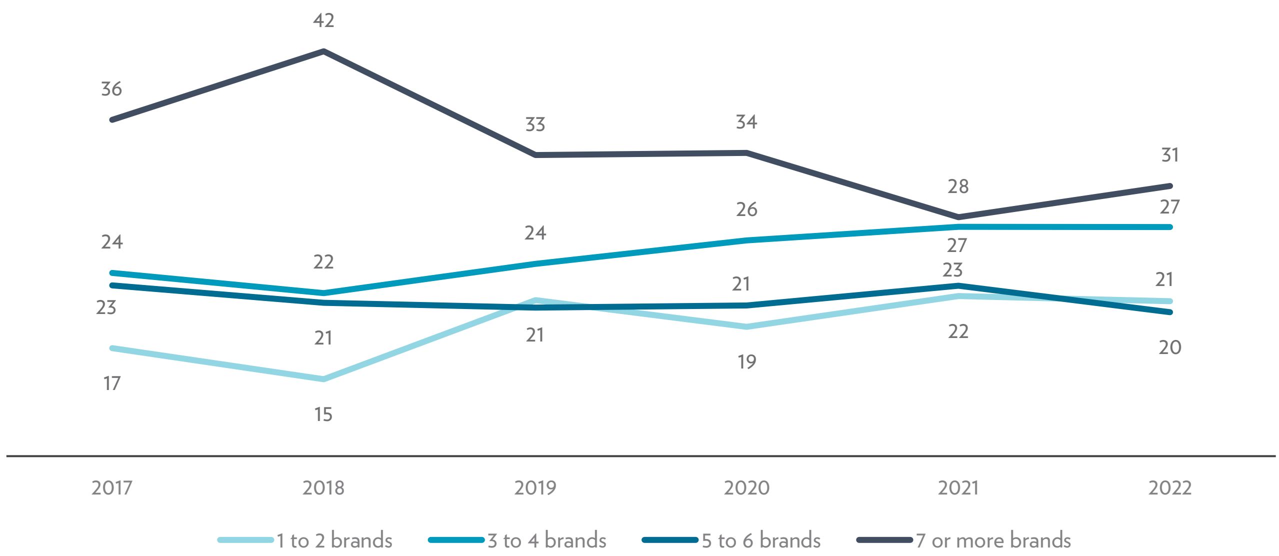
TABLE 5.2: ONLINE NEWS BRANDS

Brand	N	2022 (% since 2021)
ABC News Online	528	26 (-)
News.com.au	444	22 (-)
9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	328	16 (-1)
7News.com.au	294	14 (-3)
Guardian Australia online	245	12 (+1)
Skynews.com.au	186	9 (+2)
Sydney Morning Herald (smh.com.au)	182	9 (-1)
BBC News online	179	9 (-1)
Herald Sun (heraldsun.com.au)	148	7 (-)
The Age (theage.com.au)	147	7 (-1)
SBS News online (sbs.com.au)	146	7
The Australian (theaustralian.com.au)	134	7 (-)
Daily Mail Australia	134	7 (+2)
Channel TEN online (10play.com.au)	134	7 (-)
Daily Telegraph (dailytelegraph.com.au)	122	6 (-1)
Courier Mail w(couriermail.com.au)	118	6 (+1)
CNN.com	118	6 (-1)
The New Daily	116	6 (-)
PerthNow.com.au	115	6 (+1)
Australian Financial Review (afr.com)	106	5 (-)
The Conversation	99	5 (+1)
The Advertiser (adelaidenow.com.au)	85	4 (+1)
New York Times online	85	4 (-1)
Crikey	75	4 (+1)
Other regional or local newspaper website	64	3 (-4)
The Saturday Paper online	63	3 (-)
BrisbaneTimes.com.au	62	3 (-)
Other online sites from outside Australia	45	2 (-1)
Other non-English online news sites	35	2 (-)

CONSUMERS ARE ACCESSING FEWER NEWS BRANDS

We added up both online and offline brands that respondents accessed in the past week. Among the 60 online and offline news brands, the proportion of people who access 1 to 2 news brands (21%) has increased (+4) since 2017 while those who access 7 or more brands fell (-5) to 31%. This suggests that people are using fewer news brands and reflects a general downturn in news consumption (see **figure 5.11**). While more than half of news consumers access 5 or more news brands, the number of media platforms they use to access news has fallen.

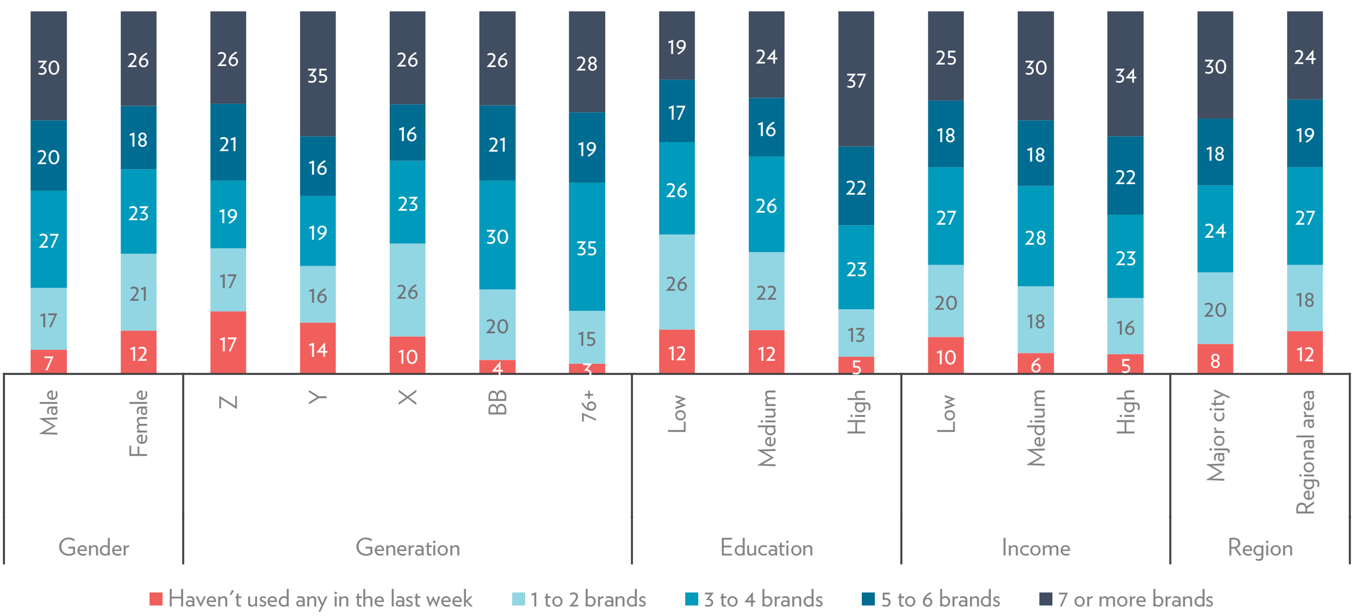
FIGURE 5.11: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS 2017-2022 (%)



*Excluded those who have not used any brands in the last week

Those with high education, high income, men, those living in major cities and Gen Y are more likely to say they use 7+ brands. Older generations are more likely to use 3-4 news brands. They are least likely to say they don't use any brands. In contrast, Gen Z is the most likely to say they used no brands at all in the past week (see **figure 5.12**).

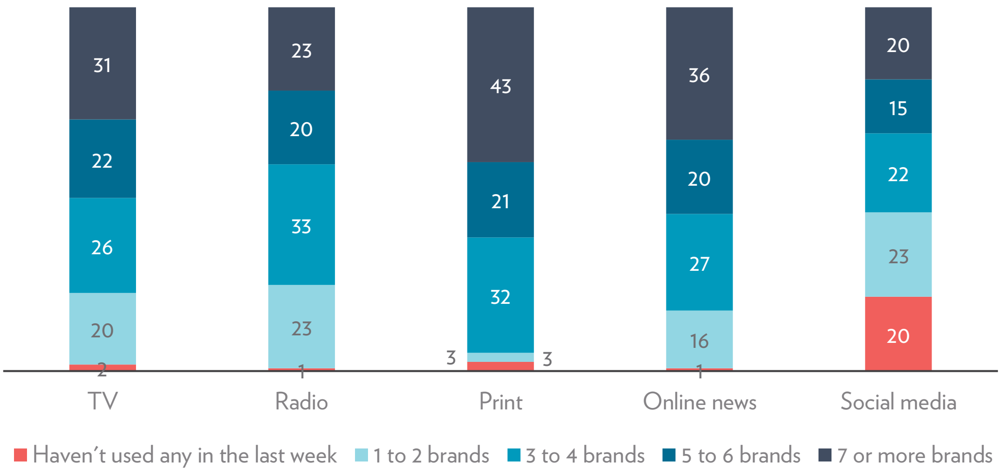
FIGURE 5.12: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS BY DEMOGRAPHICS



	Haven't used any in the last week	1 to 2 brands	3 to 4 brands	5 to 6 brands	7 or more brands
Male	7	17	27	20	30
Female	12	21	23	18	26
Z	17	17	19	21	26
Y	14	16	19	16	35
X	10	26	23	16	26
BB	4	20	30	21	26
76+	3	15	35	19	28
Low (Education)	12	26	26	17	19
Medium (Education)	12	22	26	16	24
High (Education)	5	13	23	22	37
Low (Income)	10	20	27	18	25
Medium (Income)	6	18	28	18	30
High (Income)	5	16	23	22	34
Major city	8	20	24	18	30
Regional area	12	18	27	19	24

Print and online news consumers are more likely to access 7+ news brands and those who mainly get their news on social media are the mostly likely to have not used any news brands in the last week (see **figure 5.13**). This likely reflects that many young people who use social media for news consume less news. They also tend to access news on social media incidentally rather than intentionally (see *Digital News Report: Australia 2021*).

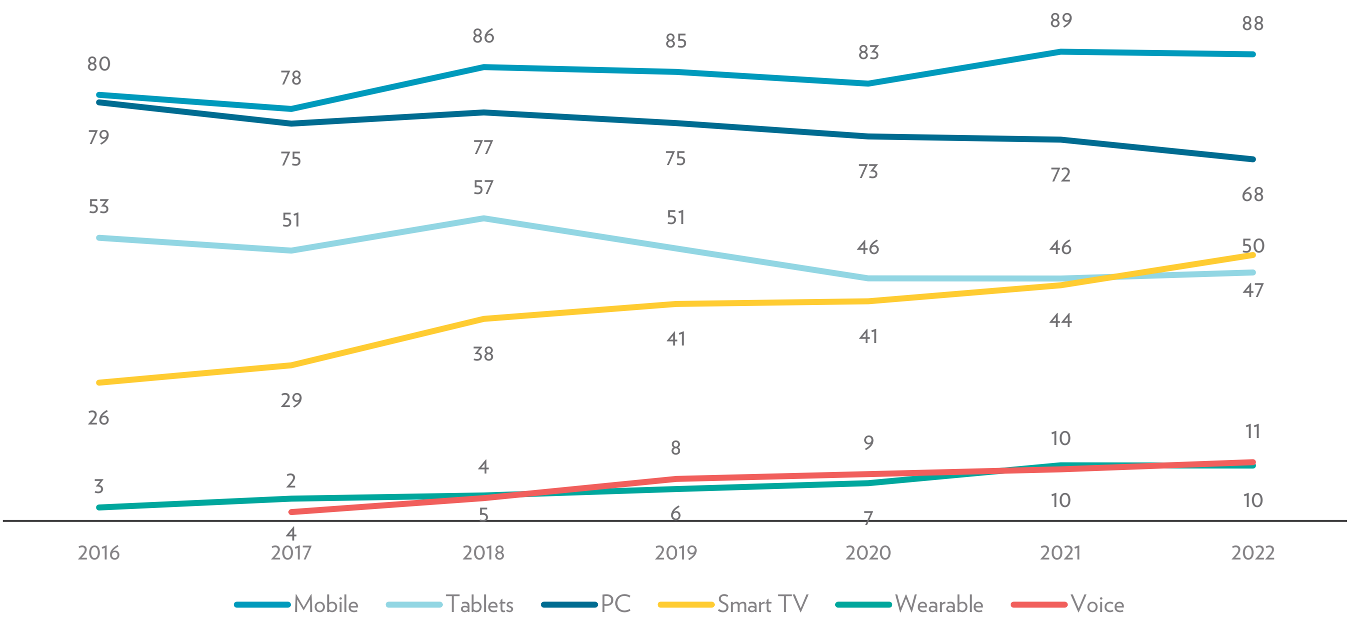
FIGURE 5.13: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS



SMART TVS OVERTAKE TABLETS

Half of respondents (50%) use smart TVs or connected TVs for any purpose, which has now surpassed tablet use (47%). On the other hand, computers/laptops use continues to decline (68%). Mobile phones (88%) are the most used device among Australians. The use of wearable devices (10%) and voice activated speakers (11%) remains low but continues to grow (see **figure 5.14**).

FIGURE 5.14: DEVICES FOR ANY PURPOSE 2016-2022 (%)

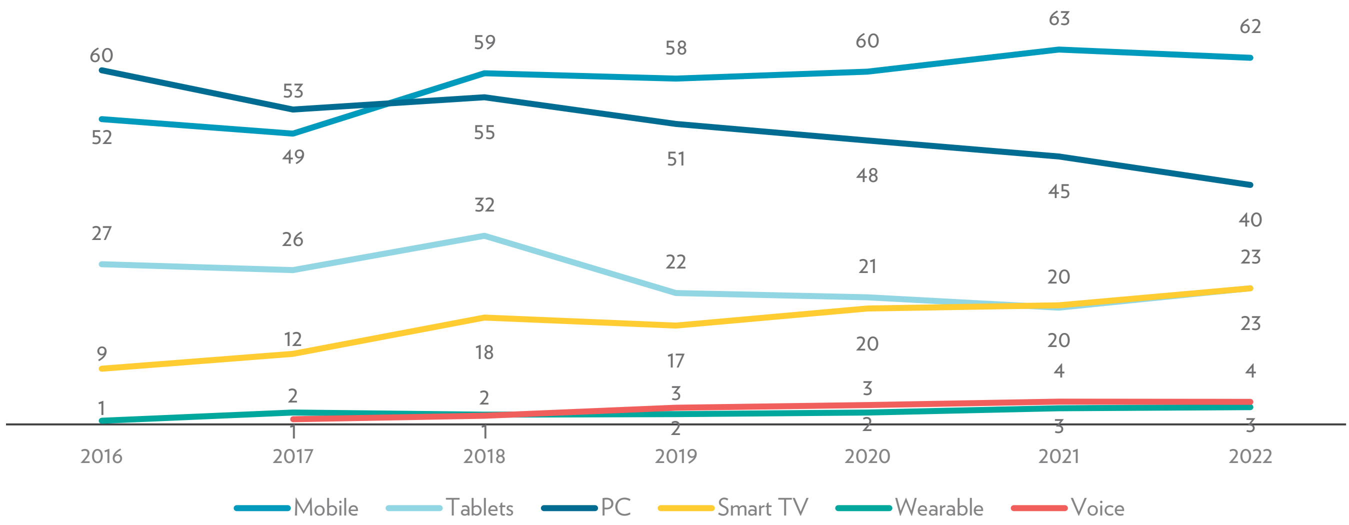


[Q8A] Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use (for any purpose)? Please select all that apply. Smartphone made by Apple (iPhone); Smartphone by another manufacturer (e.g. Samsung, LG, Huawei, Sony, Oppo, Xiaomi, etc.); Other internet connected; Tablet Computer made by Apple (e.g. iPad, iPad Air or iPad mini); Other tablet computer (e.g. Samsung Galaxy, Amazon Fire, Asus ZenPad etc.); Ebook reader (e.g. Kindle, Kobo etc.); Connected TV (a TV that connects to internet via set top box, games console, other box such as Apple TV etc.); Smart TV (TV that connects to the internet directly without the need for any other box); Smart watch or wristband that connects to the internet; Voice activated connected speaker (e.g. Amazon Echo, Google Home, AppleHomePod); None of these; Don't know. [Base: N=2,038].

NEARLY ONE IN FOUR USE SMART TVS TO ACCESS NEWS

Mobile phones continue to be the top device for news consumption (62%). The use of computers/laptops to access news has continued to decline, with only 40% of respondents using it for news. Nearly one in four (23%) get their news via tablets and smart TVs. The use of wearable devices (3%) or voice activated speakers (4%) for news remains unchanged in the last year (see **figure 5.15**).

FIGURE 5.15: DEVICES USED FOR NEWS 2016-2022 (%)



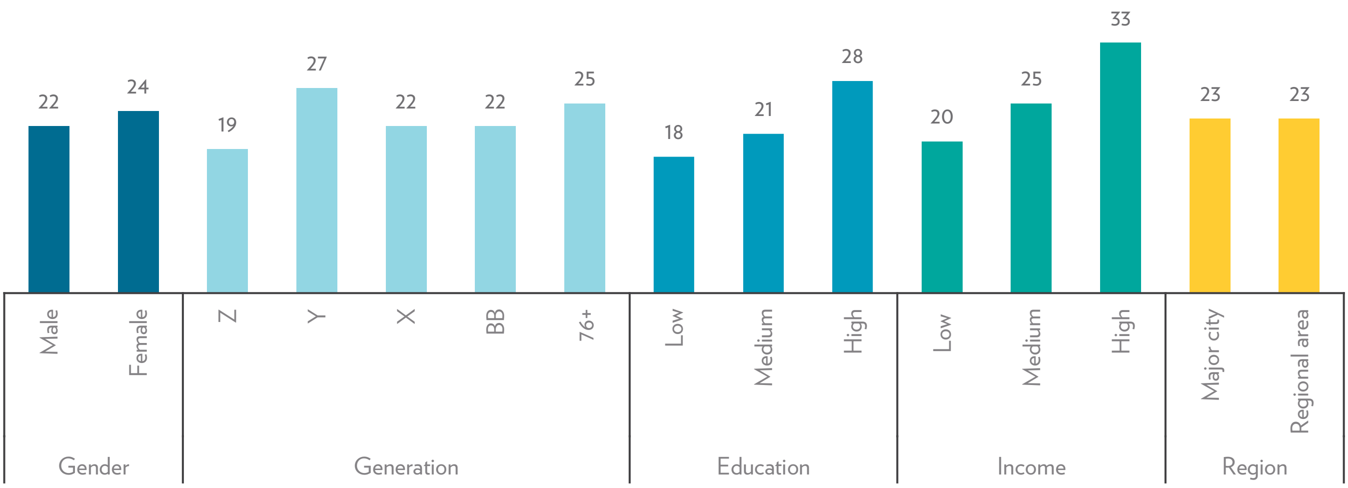
[Q8B] Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week? Please select all that apply. Smartphone made by Apple (iPhone); Smartphone by another manufacturer (e.g. Samsung, LG, Huawei, Sony, Oppo, Xiaomi, etc.); Other internet connected; Tablet Computer made by Apple (e.g. iPad, iPad Air or iPad mini); Other tablet computer (e.g. Samsung Galaxy, Amazon Fire, Asus ZenPad etc.); Ebook reader (e.g. Kindle, Kobo etc.); Connected TV (a TV that connects to internet via set top box, games console, other box such as Apple TV etc.); Smart TV (TV that connects to the internet directly without the need for any other box); Smart watch or wristband that connects to the internet; Voice activated connected speaker (e.g. Amazon Echo, Google Home, AppleHomePod); None of these; Don't know. [Base: N=2,038].

SMART TVS ARE NARROWING THE GENERATION GAP

Smart TVs appear to be narrowing the generation gap in news access. While traditional TV news is predominantly favoured by Baby Boomers and those aged 76+, the proportion of smart TVs used for news is rather evenly distributed across all generations (19% to 27%) (see **figure 5.16**).

More than a quarter of respondents with high education say they access news via a smart TV, which is a 4 percentage point increase since 2021 (24%). Income is also strongly related to using smart TV for news. A third of high-income earners (33%) access news via smart TVs whereas only 20% of low-income earners do. There is no regional gap in smart TV uptake for news.

FIGURE 5.16: SMART TV NEWS ACCESS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

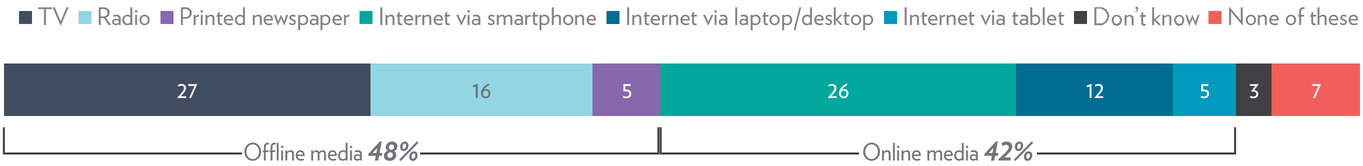


MORNING NEWS

AUSTRALIANS PREFER TRADITIONAL NEWS PLATFORMS IN THE MORNING

This year we asked respondents how they typically consume news first thing in the morning. For more than a quarter (27%), their first contact with news is via TV, followed by smartphones (25%), radio (16%), and computers/laptops (12%). Only 5% read newspapers first thing in the morning. Overall, more Australians prefer offline mediums such as TV and radio (48%) to online mediums (42%) to start their day (see **figure 5.17**).

FIGURE 5.17: FIRST CONTACT WITH NEWS IN THE MORNING (%)



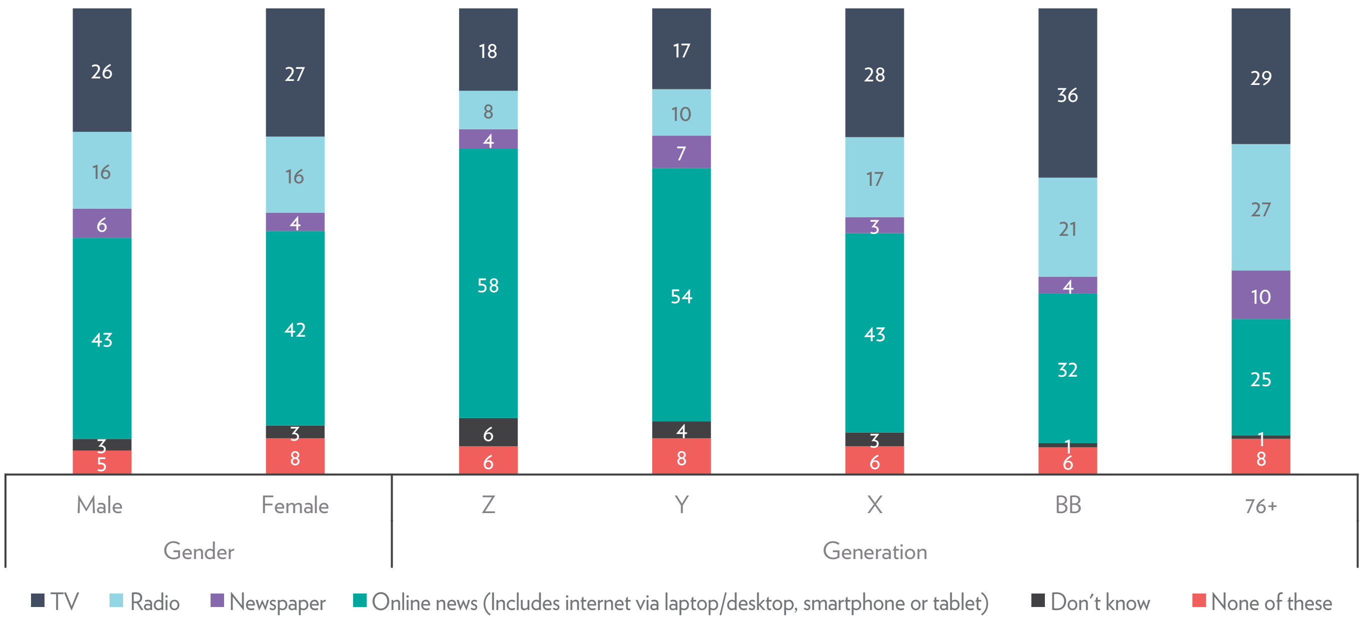
[Q9c_new2016] What is the FIRST way you typically come across news in the morning? [Base: N= 2,038]

OVER HALF OF GEN Z ACCESS NEWS ONLINE IN THE MORNING

More than half of Gen Z (58%) consume online news in the morning with only 18% watching TV news, 8% listening to radio news, and 4% reading newspapers. On the other hand, Baby Boomers and those aged 76+ prefer offline mediums such as TV, radio, and newspapers over breakfast (see **figure 5.18**).

First contact with news online
Gen Z **58%**
Gen Y **54%**

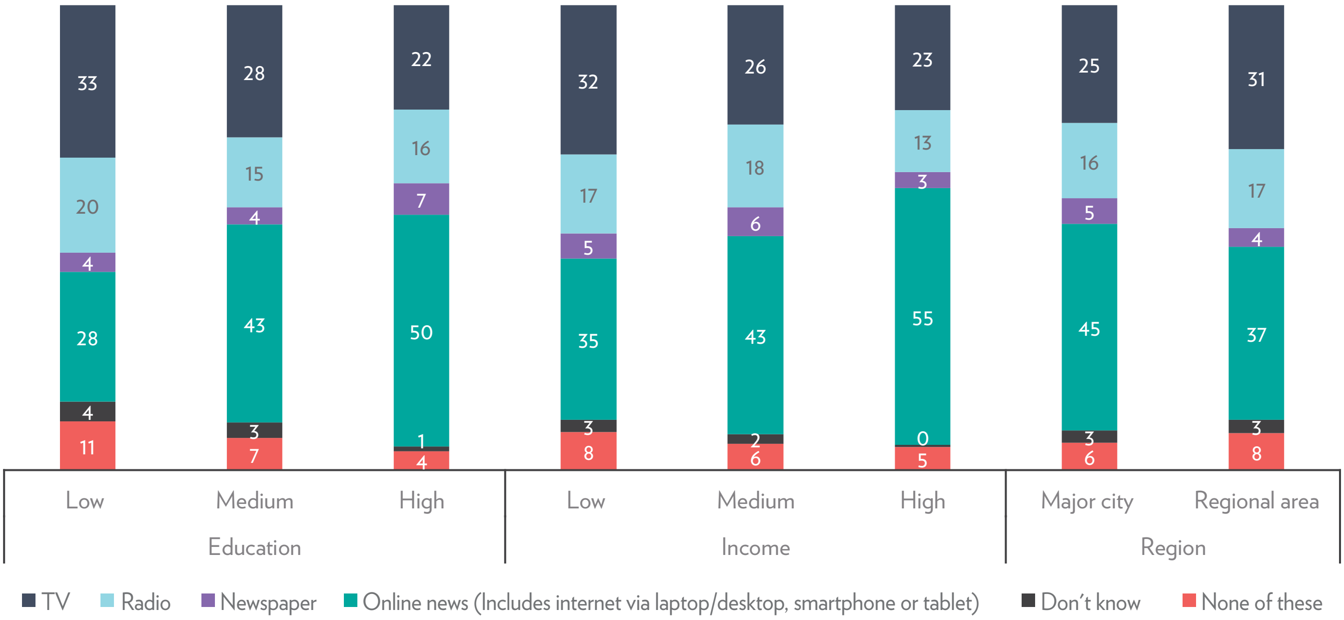
FIGURE 5.18: FIRST CONTACT WITH NEWS IN THE MORNING BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



[Q9c_new2016] What is the FIRST way you typically come across news in the morning? [Base: N= 2,038]

News consumers with high education, high income and city dwellers are much more likely to first come across news in the morning via online mediums, whereas those with low education, low income and live in the regions watch TV news in the morning (see **figure 5.19**).

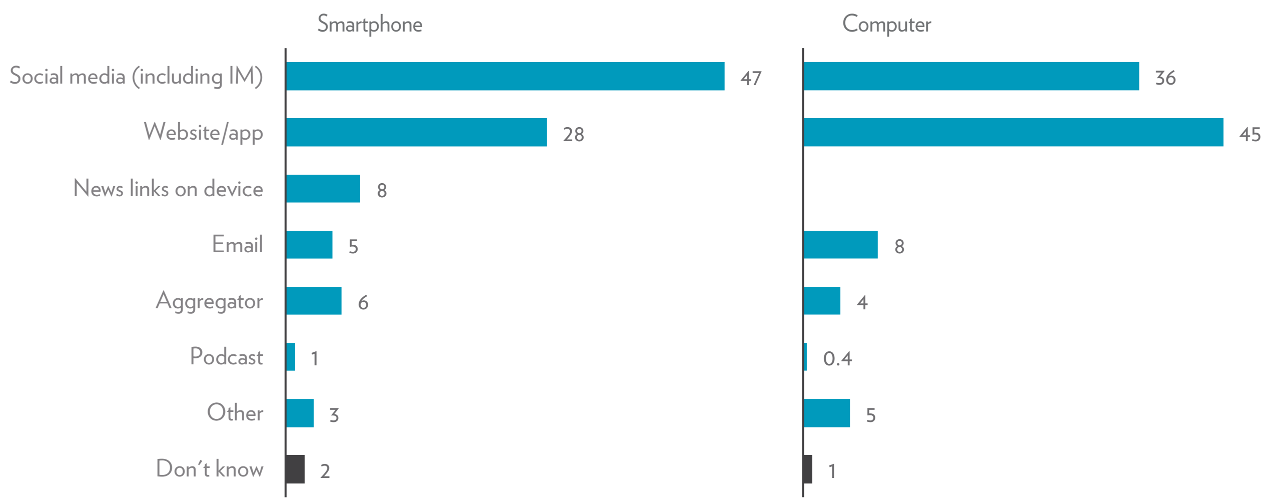
FIGURE 5.19: FIRST CONTACT WITH NEWS IN THE MORNING BY EDUCATION, INCOME AND REGION (%)



NEARLY HALF FIND NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA WHEN PICKING UP SMARTPHONES FOR NEWS

We also asked respondents where they find their first news online. **Figure 20** shows that 42% of those who consume news online in the morning say they get news on social media, which is more prominent among those who use their smartphones for news. Nearly half (47%) of respondents who access news on their smartphones say they came across news on social media first thing in the morning. In contrast, 45% of those who access news via desktops/laptops go directly to news websites (see **figure 5.20**).

FIGURE 5.20: FIRST CONTACT WITH ONLINE NEWS VIA SMARTPHONE AND COMPUTER (%)



[Q9d_2016] You mentioned that your FIRST contact with news in the morning is using the internet via laptop/desktop/smartphone/tablet. In which ONE of the following places do you typically find your first news? [Online: N=864; Smartphone: N=535; Computer: N=236]

SUMMARY

Australians' appetites for news remain steady; the proportion of heavy news consumers sits at around 50%. However, there were shifts in the amount of news consumption among different groups, notably female and younger news consumers. About half of women and Gen Z now access news more than once a day, marking a shift in their behaviour since the pandemic. While there was an increase in news consumption almost one in five Gen Z have not accessed any news brands in the last week.

TV news remains the most popular source of news among Australians, even first thing in the morning. The use of social media for news has dropped, particularly among Gen Z. The popularity of social media for news is slowing down and there was a gradual shift towards TV and online among Gen Z, and print news and TV among Gen Y. This is likely a result of news consumers seeking trustworthy, traditional sources of news during the pandemic, reflecting an increase in experience of misinformation on digital platforms.

For the first time since 2016, print consumption increased slightly and the audience for regional newspapers also showed signs of growth. A quarter of regional Australians read print regional or local newspapers. In contrast, the use of online regional newspapers continued to decline, particularly among regional Australians.

Smart TVs have overtaken the use of tablets for news. While traditional TV news is predominantly used among older generations, smart TVs are popular across all generations.

COMMENTARY

LOCAL NEWS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA: PRECIOUS, PRECARIOUS AND WORTH PAYING FOR

James Joyce, Executive Editor, ACM

Tucked away on page six of *The Collarenebri Gazette*[1] of Wednesday, December 19, 1962, a brief single-column news item appears between the weekly cricket match report ("In a very sociable match at Hebel on Sunday, the home team were defeated by Collarenebri outright ...") and the church notices.

Under the headline "Improved Telephone Service", the newspaper dutifully informs its local readership in north-west NSW of an exciting development:

> **"The Postmaster-General (Mr. Davidson) has advised Mr. A.I. Allan M.P. that following the erection of new wires, two additional telephone channels will be provided between Collarenebri and Pokataroo on the 4th January, 1963. As a result an improved telephone service will be available between those centres."**

Almost 60 years later it is difficult to comprehend connectivity so precarious and precious.

Not just those extra telephone lines between tiny villages less than 15 kilometres apart (New wires! Two additional channels!), but also the way news of this technological advancement is communicated to the people of the district: words painstakingly typeset by hand and printed in black ink on processed wood pulp, the pages folded into a few hundred copies distributed in person by the newspaper's husband-and-wife proprietors and their young children.

Five editions of "the gazette of the golden west"—as its front page masthead grandly proclaims—are the last remaining tangible reminder of the three years my late grandparents, William and Patrica Moloney, spent running *The Collarenebri Gazette* in the early 1960s.

Those tattered, yellowed pages, now treasured family keepsakes, tell of the process that newspaper people sometimes call the "daily miracle": glimpses of the civic, social and sporting life of a community, its rituals, events, achievements and ideas, history, heartbreak and hopes all chronicled and collated into some semblance of order, printed onto pages bundled together and delivered to your doorstep—for sixpence a copy.

Today, of course, the term "daily miracle" doesn't tell the half of it.

> **These are perilous times for news on paper in rural, regional and suburban Australia: higher prices for newsprint, more competition for advertising revenue from digital giants, fewer papers in print, fewer copies circulated.**

But regional newspapers are not giving up without a fight. In places where a paper has folded in recent years, another will spring up. Even amid the Covid-19 pandemic, ACM established new publications in areas where News Corp had closed its newspapers. We have also launched new mobile apps for our daily titles and a redesign of our websites. We have expanded our storytelling capabilities into video and audio, and invested in training and new equipment for our journalists.

We have expanded the political bureau at *The Canberra Times* so that it can serve our local news network with accurate, balanced, independent reporting from the press gallery at Parliament House. And we have hired a small team of property reporters to drive audiences to our realestateview.com.au property portal with the aim of growing it as a longer-term source of revenue to sustain our journalism.

Optimism may sound strange given the bleak picture often painted of regional papers. And, certainly, newspapering in the age of Netflix is an almighty challenge (Netflixing in the age of Netflix, as we've seen recently, is not all plain streaming either).

[1] The Collarenebri Gazette ceased publishing years after editor Bill Moloney, who began his career as a cadet journalist at the (now digital-only) Manly Daily, packed up his family for Mount Isa where he helped launch the (now digital-only) North West Star as its founding managing editor.

But there is hope.

As the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022* shows (see **Chapter 8**), digital news subscriptions are slowly but steadily growing, with 18 per cent of news consumers saying they paid for news in the past year, up five percentage points year on year and an increase of eight percentage points since 2016. This has certainly been the experience at ACM. In 2021, barely five years after our first testing of online subscriptions on two small local news websites on the NSW South Coast, ACM reached a major milestone of more than 100,000 digital subscribers across 40 of our websites, with year-on-year growth of 49 per cent.

In 2022, that number has crept past 120,000—the test for us coming out of (hopefully) the worst of the coronavirus is to parlay the appetite for daily Covid case numbers and public health updates into equally compelling news and information that makes a more meaningful difference to people's daily lives.

There's a hint of this post-pandemic consumption pattern in the report's finding that news consumers in regional Australia who access regional or local newspaper websites have declined in 2022. As life has gone back to more or less normal, the need to stay on top of the saturation—and largely free—online reporting of essential Covid-related updates has reduced.

On the bright side for regional news publishers and another hint that we may be getting back to what used to be everyday life, the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022* (see **Chapter 5**) shows the consumption of printed newspapers is rising, with almost a quarter of regional Australians (24 per cent) saying they read regional/local newspapers—a seven percentage point increase since 2021.

Also cause for optimism: that almost half of news consumers who use print as their main source of news (45 per cent) say they paid for online news in the past year—twice as many as in 2020 (21 percent).

This is the path for regional journalism to survive and even thrive: converting people's valued connection with their local newspaper into the willingness to pay for immediate, convenient online news from credible and trusted sources; from knowledgeable professional local journalists willing to swim against the tide of untruths and government and corporate spin flowing through your social media "feed".

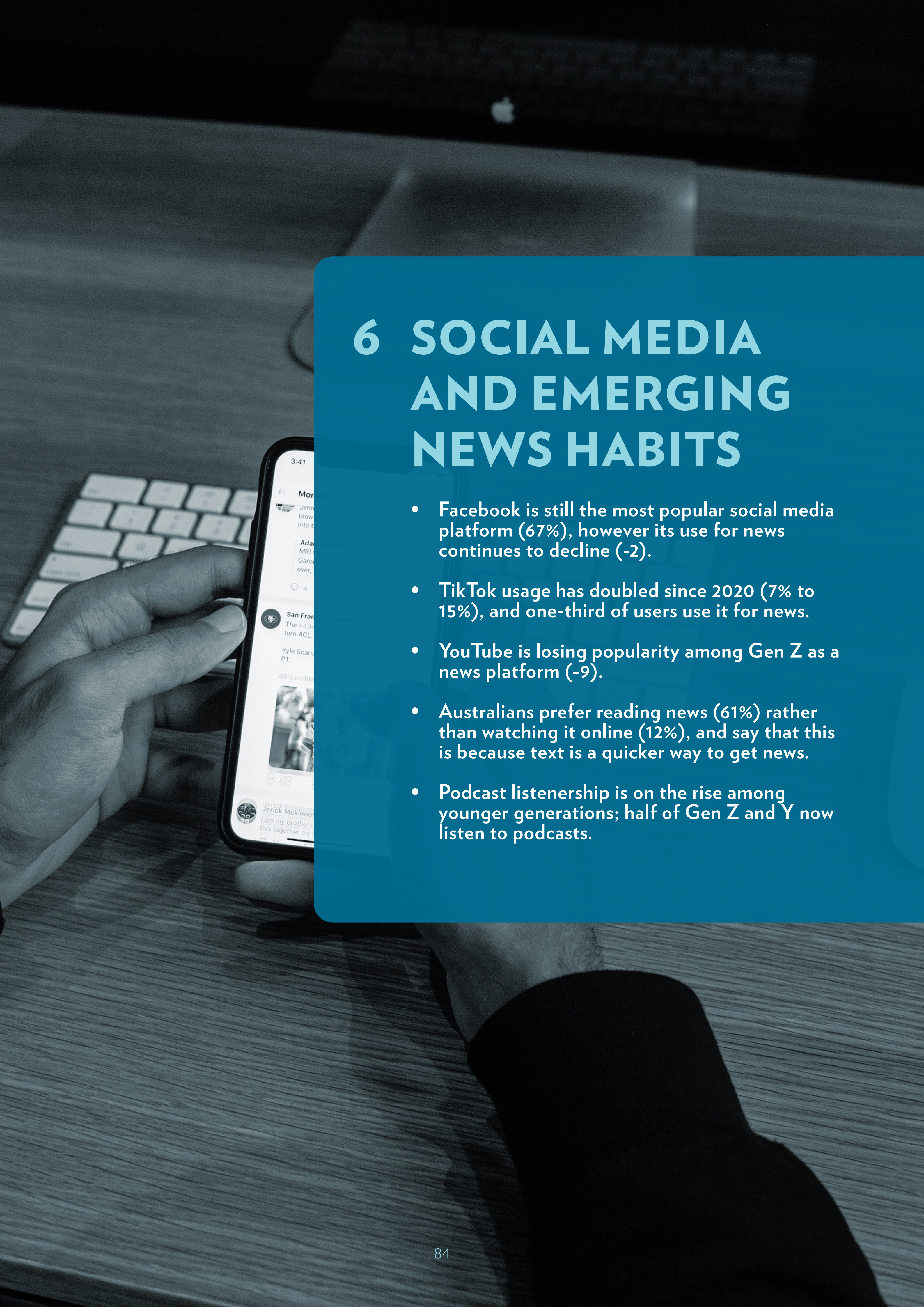
Granted, for many of us opening an app on our iPad will never have the same tactile pleasure as opening the morning paper. But digital subscriptions are helping to sustain the same journalism that is still connecting us to our neighbours, our fellow ratepayers, taxpayers, voters and consumers, and to the collective memory of our community.

Your favourite local newspaper is, and has always been, worth far more than the paper it's printed on. The true value of a local newspaper is in the news.

NEWS MOMENTS

3 November 2021 | Four-year-old Cleo Smith is found by police after being abducted from a campsite in the Gascoyne region of WA 18 days earlier. Police arrested a Carnarvon man in relation to the kidnapping after an extensive forensic search involving over 140 police officers and investigators.

IMAGE: RICHARD WAINWRIGHT / AAP IMAGE



6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMERGING NEWS HABITS

- Facebook is still the most popular social media platform (67%), however its use for news continues to decline (-2).
- TikTok usage has doubled since 2020 (7% to 15%), and one-third of users use it for news.
- YouTube is losing popularity among Gen Z as a news platform (-9).
- Australians prefer reading news (61%) rather than watching it online (12%), and say that this is because text is a quicker way to get news.
- Podcast listenership is on the rise among younger generations; half of Gen Z and Y now listen to podcasts.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

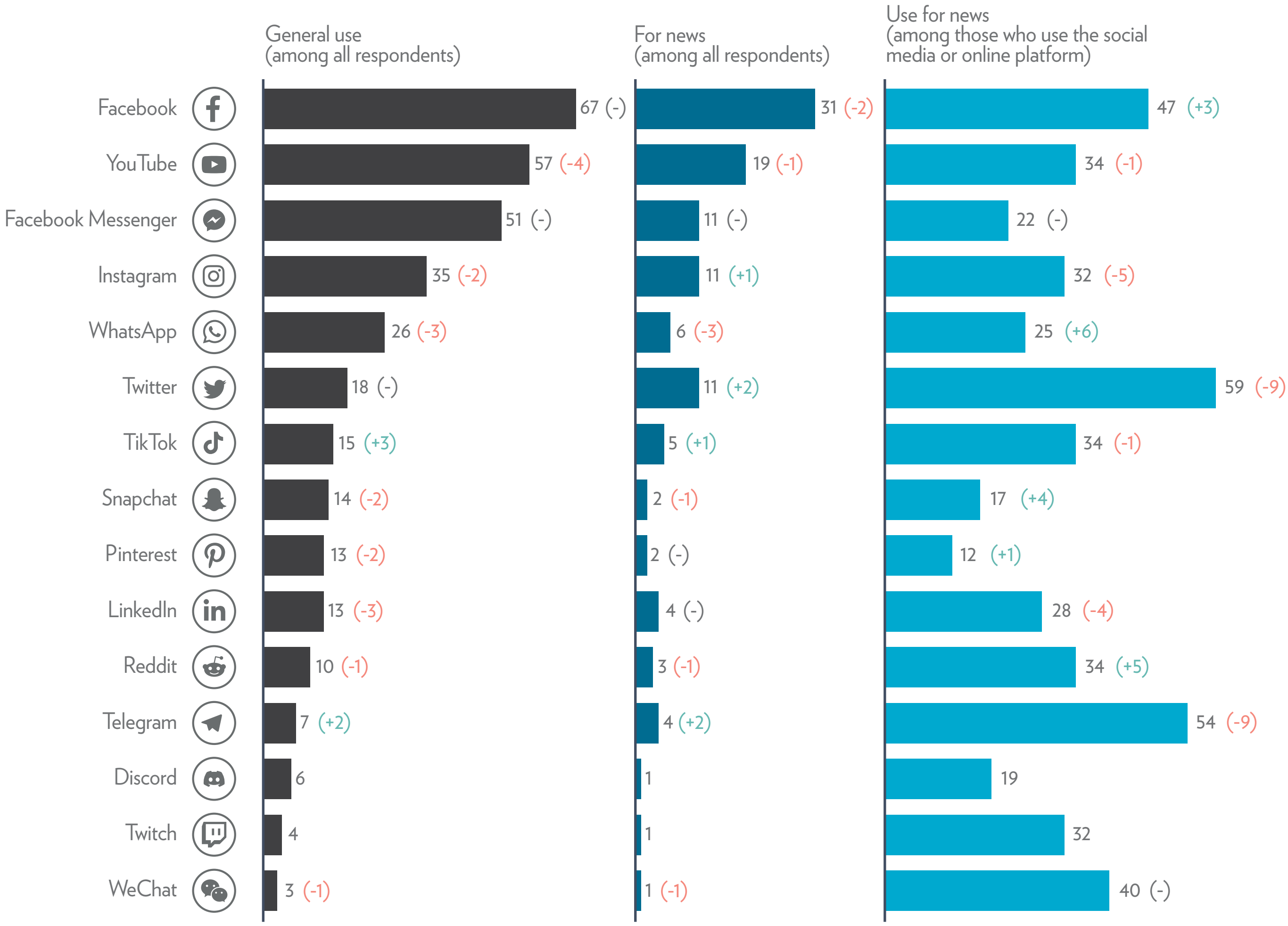
As highlighted in Chapter 5, we find that the overall proportion of respondents using social media to get news has dropped since last year. This is consistent with a fall in general use of social media. Facebook (67%), YouTube (57%) and Facebook Messenger (51%) continue to be the top three social media platforms Australians use generally. While Facebook and Facebook Messenger use remain unchanged, YouTube use dropped by 4 percentage points. General use of Instagram has also fallen slightly in the past year.

While Facebook remains the most popular social media platform to access news, it has continued to decline and only 31% of news consumers now use it for news. Only around one in five say they use YouTube as a source of news. There has been a slight increase in the use of Instagram (+1), Twitter (+2) and Telegram (+2) since 2021 alongside a slight decrease in the use of YouTube (-1) and WhatsApp (-3) for news.

The use of TikTok has increased in the past three years and doubled since 2020 from 7% to 15% this year. However only 5% of respondents say they use it as a source of news. Other platforms popular with younger generations including Discord and Twitch are used by only 1% for news.

Proportionally, around half (47%) of Facebook users say they use it for news, while only a third (32%) of Instagram users do. More than half of Twitter users (59%) use it for news (see **figure 6.1**).

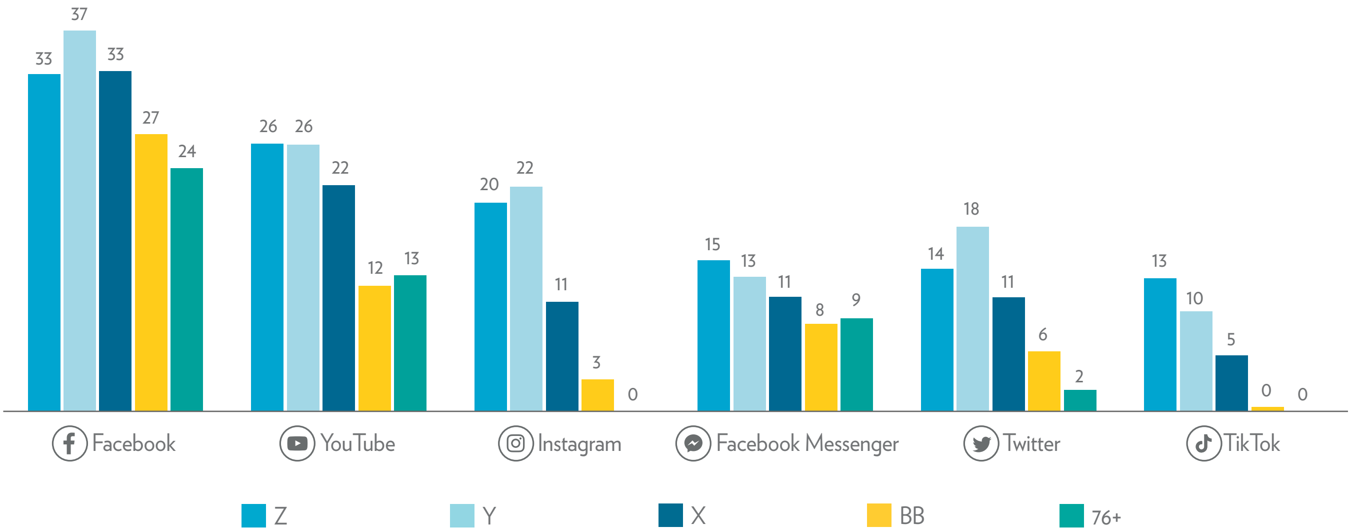
FIGURE 6.1: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED: GENERAL VS FOR NEWS (%)



[Q12A] Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? Please select all that apply. [Q12B] Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week? [Base: N=2,038] Discord and Twitch were not asked in 2021.

There are generational differences in the use of social media platforms to get news. Facebook is the most popular platform to get news across all generations. Instagram remains a popular source of news among younger generations; one fifth of Gen Z (20%) and Gen Y (22%) use it for news compared to 11% of Gen X and only 3% of Baby Boomers. One in eight Gen Z use TikTok for news, which has remained the same since last year (see **figure 6.2**).

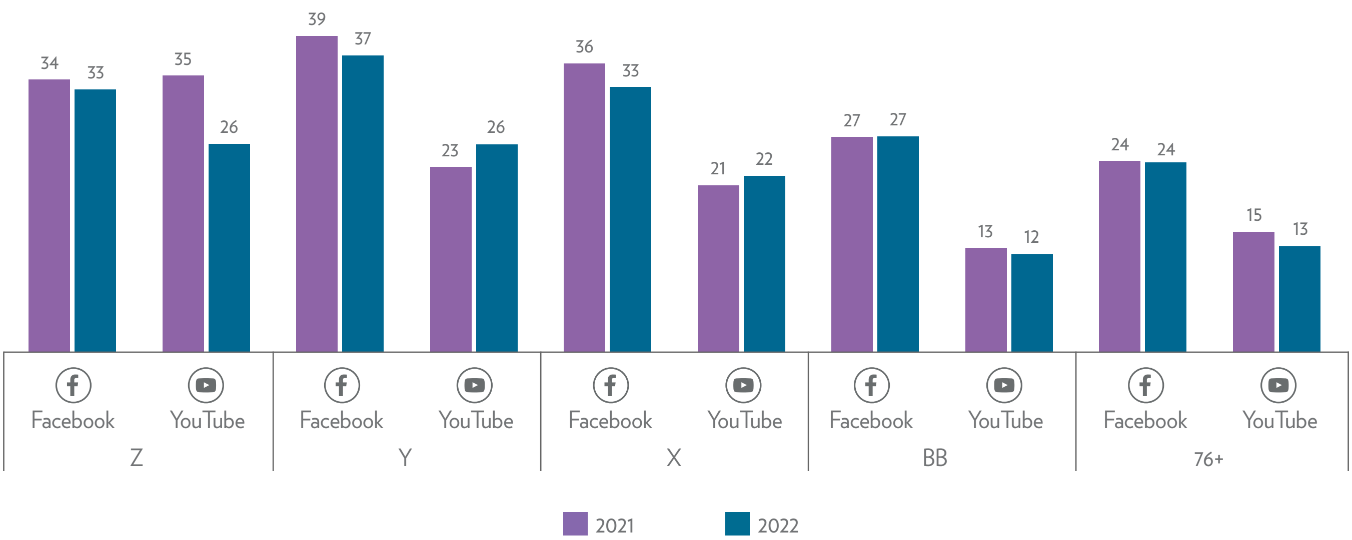
FIGURE 6.2: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



YOUTUBE FOR NEWS IS LOSING POPULARITY AMONG GEN Z

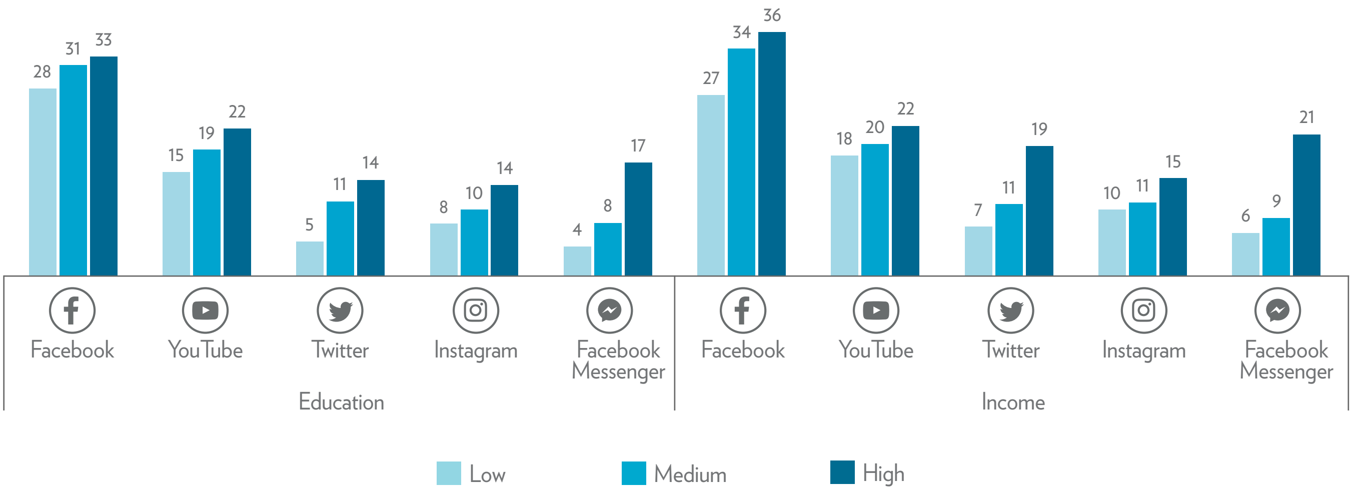
While Facebook usage for news has remained unchanged among Baby Boomers and those aged 76+, it has decreased among Gen X, Y and Z. There has also been a considerable decrease in the use of YouTube for news among Gen Z from 35% in 2021 to 26% in 2022 (-9) (see **figure 6.3**).

FIGURE 6.3: FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE FOR NEWS BY GENERATION 2021-2022 (%)



Overall, those with higher education and income levels are more likely to use social media platforms for news (see **figure 6.4**). Notably, news consumers who are highly educated (14%) and those who are high income earners (19%) are much more likely to use Twitter for news compared to news consumers with low and medium levels of education and income.

FIGURE 6.4: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY EDUCATION AND INCOME (%)



More than half of news consumers (56%) use at least one social media platform to get news on a weekly basis. About one-third use one platform, 13% use two and 14% use 3 or more platforms to get news (see **figure 6.5**).

Younger generations use more social media platforms for news compared to older generations. **Figure 6.6** shows half of Gen Z use more than six social media platforms and one in four (24%) use three or more brands for news. On the other hand, the majority of those aged 76+ (65%) say they have never used any for news in the last week.

FIGURE 6.5: NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS (%)

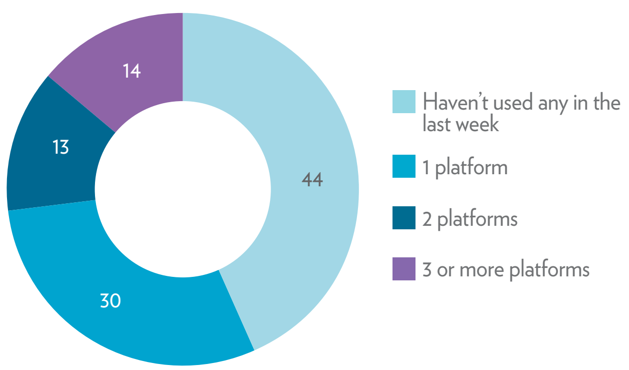
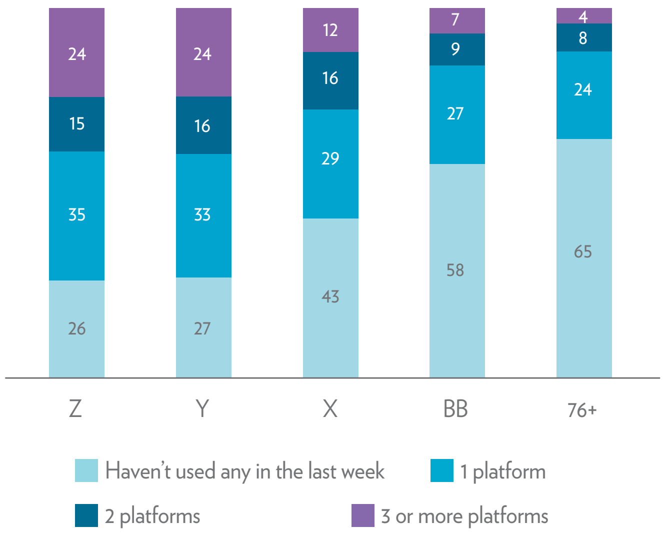


FIGURE 6.6: NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED FOR NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



TWO-THIRDS OF INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK USERS SEE NEWS LESS THAN HALF THE TIME ON THOSE PLATFORMS

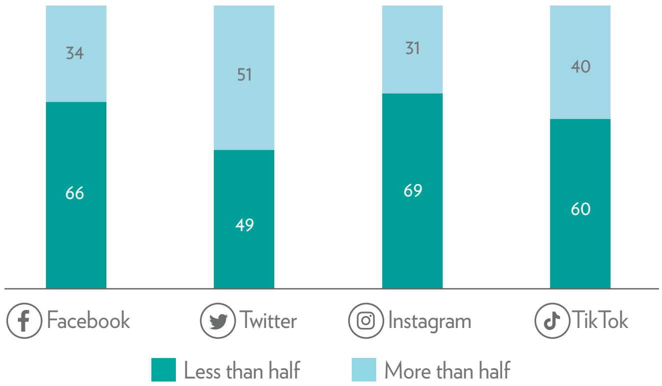
This year we asked those who use social media for news how much of the content in their feed comes from news outlets. **Figure 6.7** shows around two-thirds of Facebook (66%) and Instagram (69%) users say that less than half of their feed comes from news sources. In contrast, 51% of Twitter and 40% of TikTok users say more than half their feed contains news. This suggests Twitter users in particular are more likely to follow news media sources on the platform.

Across the board, most social media users say there is enough news on their platforms. The majority of Twitter (57%) and Instagram users (59%) think the amount of news they see on those platforms is about right (see **figure 6.8**). TikTok (24%) and Twitter (23%) users are somewhat more likely to find the amount of news to be too much compared with other social media users.

INTERACTION WITH NEWS HAS FALLEN DURING THE TWO YEARS OF COVID

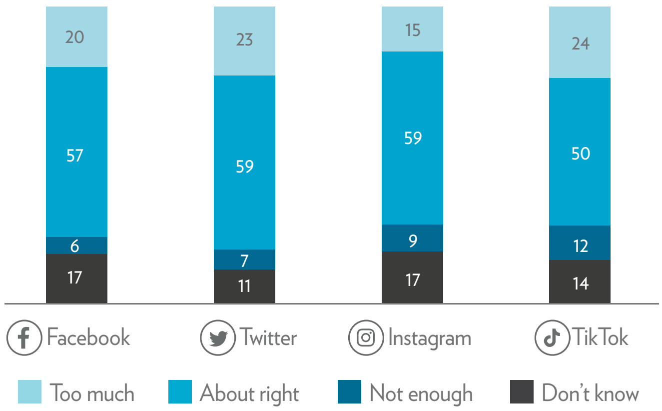
During the pandemic, Australians' interactions with news have decreased. In 2022, 63% say they share or participate in news coverage during an average week, which is 6 percentage points lower than in 2020. The most common activity is talking with friends and colleagues face-to-face about a news story (38%), which has increased slightly since last year (+2) (see **figure 6.9**). After a fall last year in news engagement, the data also show a slight increase in sharing activities.

FIGURE 6.7: PROPORTION OF SOCIAL FEED CONTAINING NEWS AMONG SOCIAL PLATFORM USERS (%)



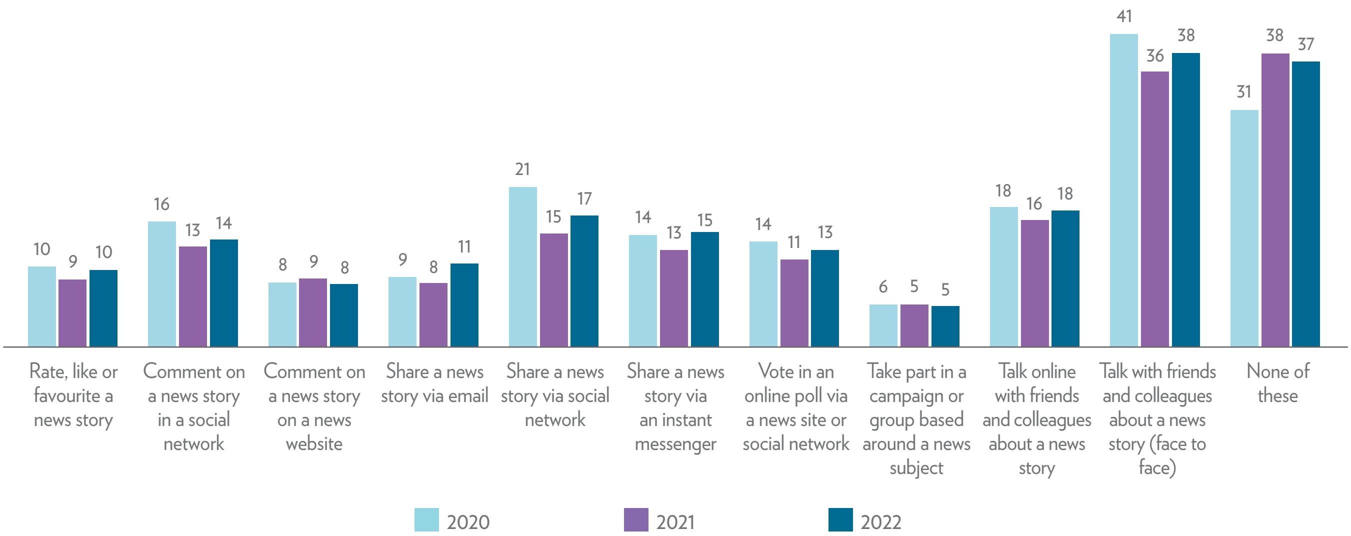
[Q12_Social_proportion_Facebook] You said that you use Facebook... how much of what you see on your Facebook feed come from news outlets? [Q12_Social_proportion_Twitter] You said that you use Twitter... how much of what you see on your Twitter feed come from news outlets? [Q12_Social_proportion_Instagram] You said that you use Instagram... how much of what you see on your Instagram feed come from news outlets? [Q12_Social_proportion_TikTok] You said that you use TikTok... how much of what you see on your TikTok feed come from news outlets? [Range 0%-100%] [Base: Facebook=672, Twitter=367, Instagram=720, TikTok=315]

FIGURE 6.8: BELIEF ABOUT AMOUNT OF CONTENT FROM NEWS OUTLETS ON SOCIAL PLATFORMS (%)



[Q12_Social_right size] ...and do you think the amount of content you see from news outlets on Facebook/Twitter/YouTube/TikTok is too much, about right, or not enough? [Base: Facebook=672, Twitter=367, Instagram=720, TikTok=315]

FIGURE 6.9: INTERACTIONS WITH NEWS 2020-2022 (%)



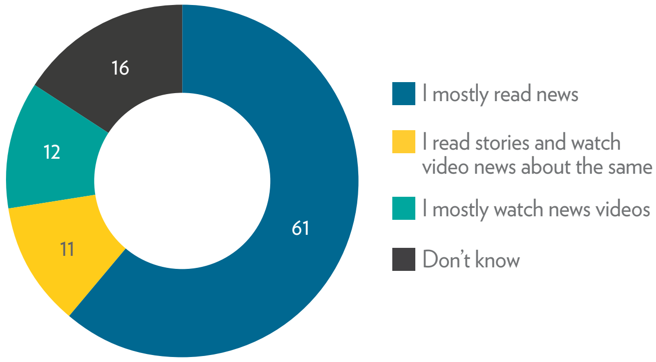
[Q13] During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038].

GEN Z PREFER TEXT TO VIDEO NEWS ONLINE

When online, Australians prefer to read news rather than watch it. **Figure 6.10** shows the majority of respondents (61%) say they mostly read news when they are online, whereas only 12% say they mostly watch news videos. Eleven percent say they read and watch about the same amount, while 16% say they do not know.

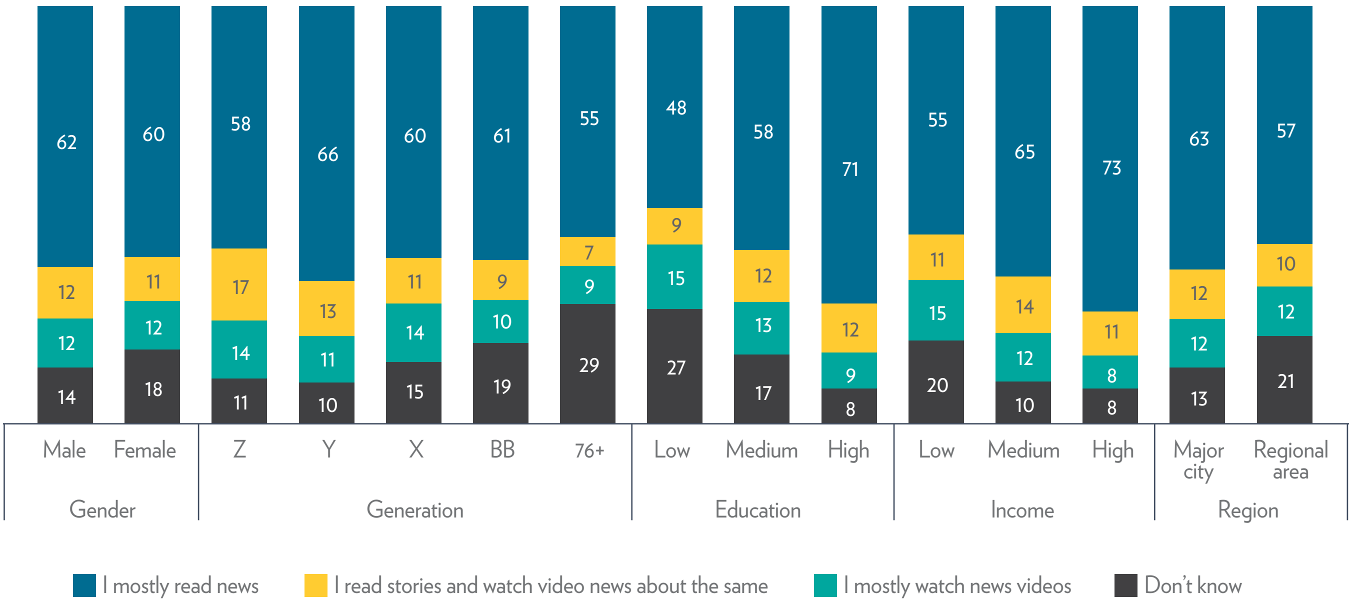
Two-thirds of Gen Y say they mostly read news online, whereas only 11% say they mostly watch news videos. News consumers with higher education and incomes are much more likely to read news than those with a low and medium education and incomes. City dwellers (63%) are more likely to read news than those in regional areas (57%). Men (62%) are slightly more likely to consume news via reading than women (60%) (see **figure 6.11**).

FIGURE 6.10: PREFERENCE FOR READING OR WATCHING ONLINE NEWS (%)



[OPTQ11D] In thinking about your online news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one. I mostly read news in text. I mostly read news in text but occasionally watch videos that look interesting. I read stories and watch video news videos about the same. I mostly watch video news and read text occasionally. I mostly watch video news. Don't know. [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 6.11: PREFERENCE FOR READING OR WATCHING ONLINE NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



News consumers who mainly use TV to get news are the least likely to say they read news online (53%) and second most likely to say they watch news videos (15%). Those who mainly access news via social media are more likely to say they mostly watch news videos (17%). The majority of people who mainly access news online prefer to read rather than watch news (85%) (see **figure 6.12**).

Those who mostly read news online are more likely to pay for news. Almost a quarter of news consumers who mostly read news online have paid for it, whereas only 8% of those who mostly consume video news have paid for online news in the past year (see **figure 6.13**).

FIGURE 6.12: PREFERENCE FOR READING OR WATCHING ONLINE NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

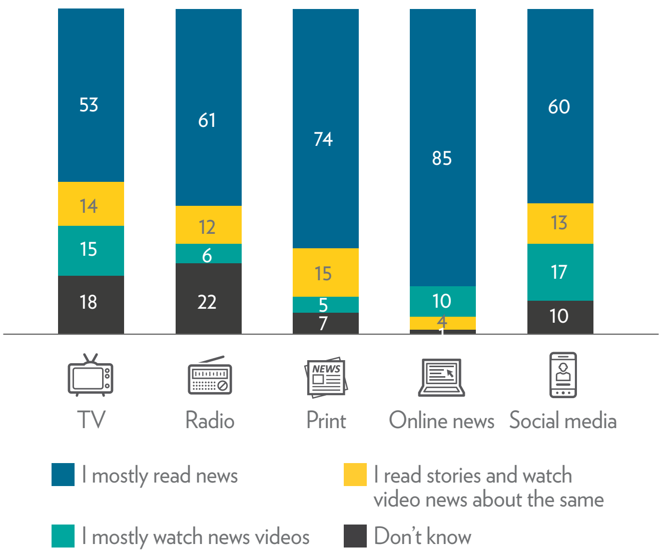
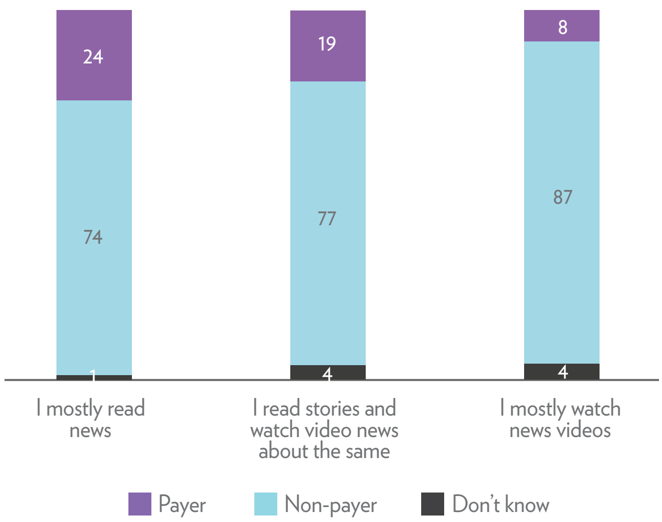


FIGURE 6.13: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY PREFERENCE FOR READING OR WATCHING ONLINE NEWS (%)

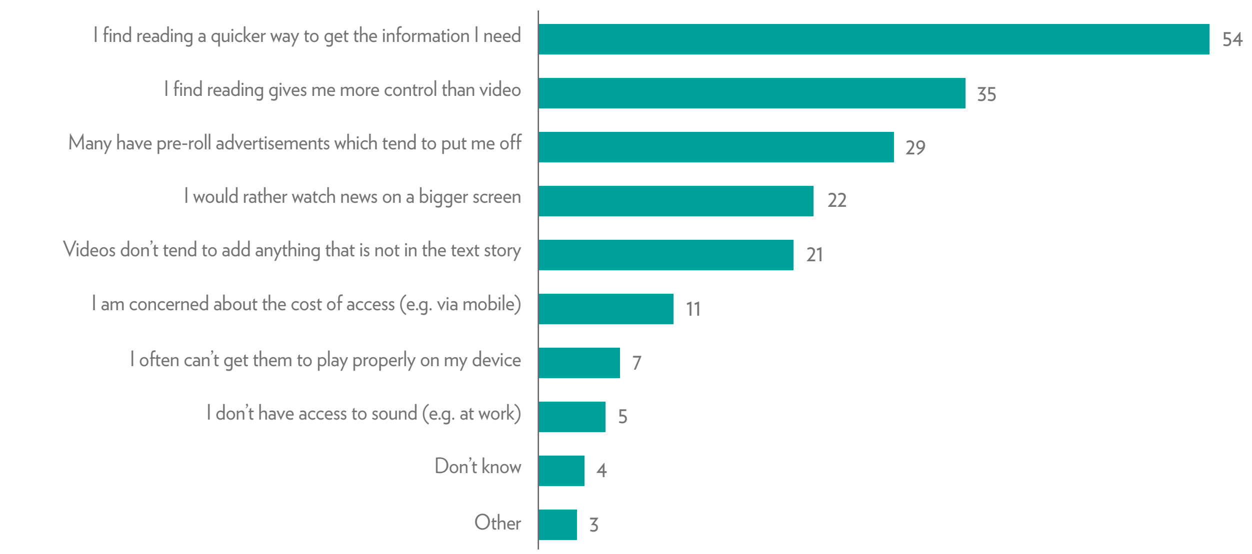


TEXT IS A QUICKER WAY TO GET NEWS

We asked respondents why they prefer to read news in text rather than watch videos online. **Figure 6.14** shows 54% said reading is a quicker way to get the information they need, and gives them more control than video (35%).

Almost one-third are put off by pre-roll advertisements (29%) and 11% are concerned about the mobile data costs associated with videos.

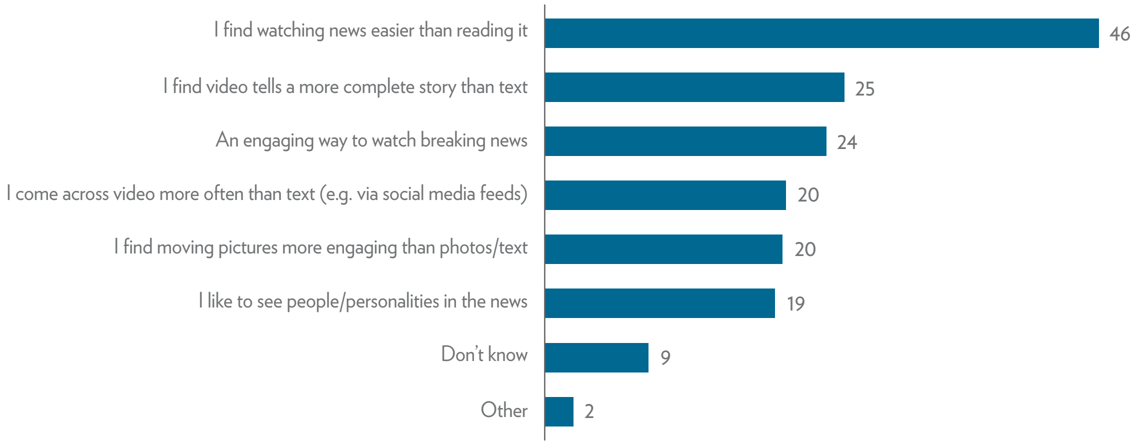
FIGURE 6.14: REASONS FOR PREFERRING READING ONLINE NEWS (%)



[OptQ11ai] You say you prefer to read news in text rather than watch online video... What are the main reasons for this? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=1,247]

We then asked respondents about the benefits of video over text. Nearly half (46%) say they prefer to watch news videos because it is easier than reading it. One-quarter find video news stories more comprehensive and 24% say it is an engaging way to watch breaking news. One-fifth say they prefer to consume news via video simply because they come across it more often, and an equal number of people say they find moving pictures more engaging (see **figure 6.15**).

FIGURE 6.15: REASONS FOR PREFERRING WATCHING ONLINE NEWS (%)



[OptQ11bi] You say you prefer to watch online news video rather than read it in text... What are the main reasons for this? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS REMAIN UNCHANGED IN THE PAST YEAR

When looking for news online, almost half of news consumers continue to go directly to or search for specific news websites. More than one-third come across news while they are on social media, 22% search for news stories, and 17% subscribe to email newsletters to get news (see **figure 6.16**).

Pathways to online news

47% direct to brand

35% social media

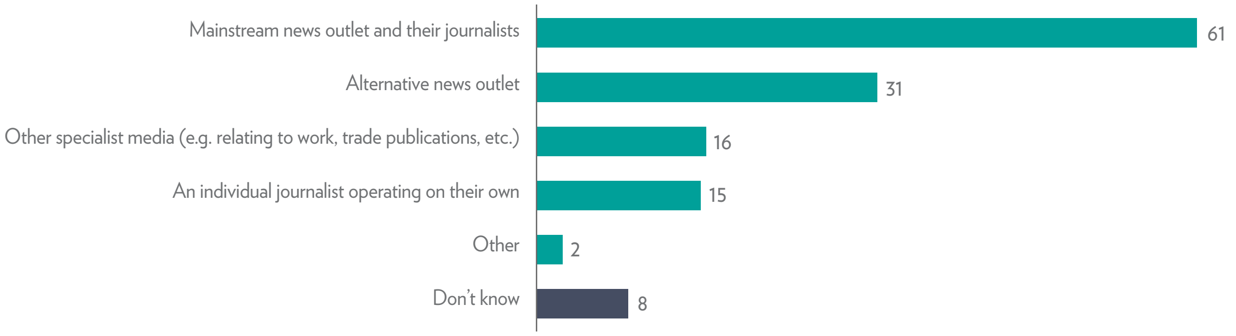
FIGURE 6.16: PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS (%)

[Q10] Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) _in the last week_, which were the ways in which you came across news stories? Please select all that apply.

EMAIL NEWS SUBSCRIBERS GET THEIR NEWS FROM MAINSTREAM SOURCES

Among those who subscribe to email newsletters, the majority of news consumers say they receive news from mainstream news outlets and their journalists (61%). Nearly one-third (31%) receive news from alternative news outlets, 16% from other specialist media, and 15% from an individual journalist operating on their own (see **figure 6.17**).

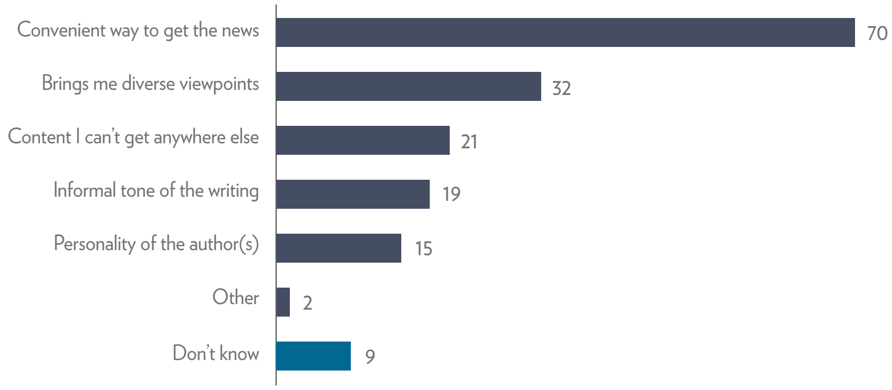
FIGURE 6.17: ORIGIN OF NEWS EMAILS (%)



[Email_SOURCES_2022] You say that you accessed news via an email newsletter or alert in the last week... Where do your emails come from? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=347]

We asked email newsletter subscribers why they use them. The top reason was 'convenient way to get the news' (70%) followed by 'brings me diverse viewpoints' (32%) and 'content I can't get anywhere else' (21%). Nineteen per cent say they like email newsletters because of the informal tone of the writing and 15% like the personality of the author(s) (see **figure 6.18**).

FIGURE 6.18: REASONS FOR LIKING EMAIL NEWSLETTERS (%)



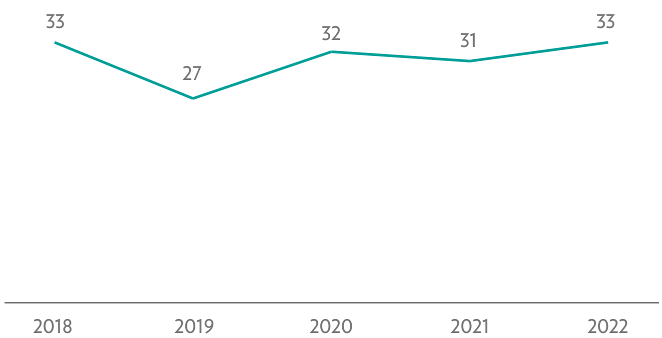
[QEmail_likes] What do you like about the email newsletter format? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=347]

PODCAST LISTENERSHIP IS ON THE RISE

A third (33%) of Australians say they have listened to a podcast in the last month, which is a 2 percent point increase from 2021 (see **figure 6.19**).

33% **listen to podcasts**

FIGURE 6.19: PODCAST LISTENING 2018-2022 (%)



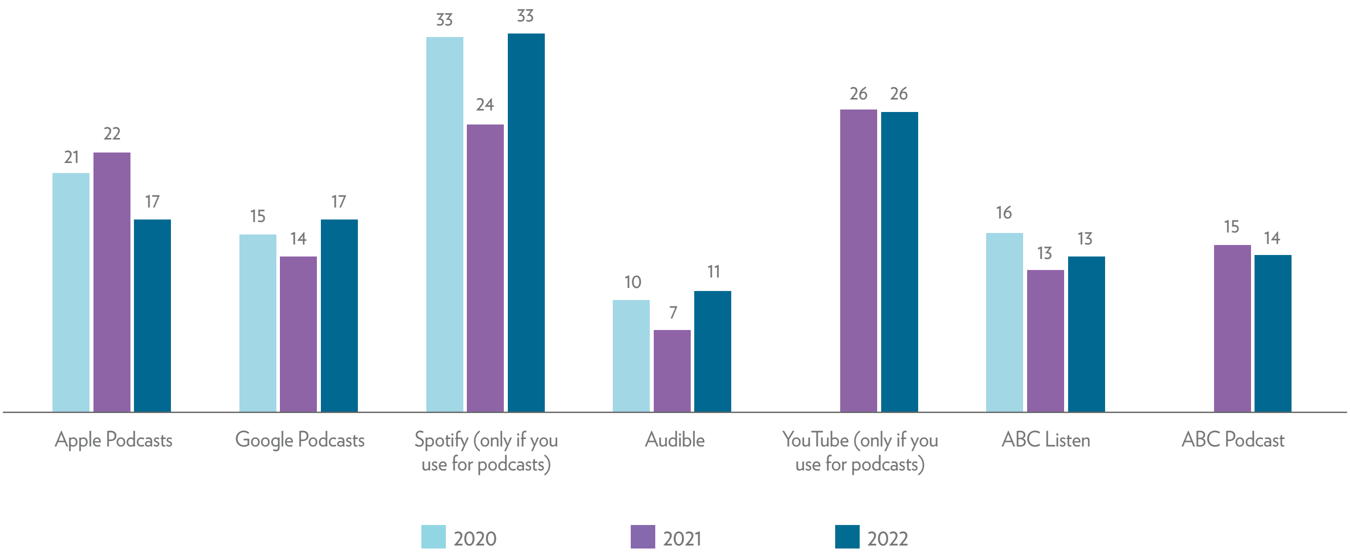
[Q11F_2018] A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. (Listened to a podcast) [Base: N= 2,038]

SPOTIFY IS THE MOST POPULAR PLATFORM FOR PODCASTS

This year Spotify (33%) has returned as the most popular platform for listening to podcasts (see **figure 6.20**). YouTube for podcast listening remained the same (26%), but Apple Podcasts dropped over the last year (-5).

Audible remains less popular than other platforms, with only 11% of podcast listeners using it as their primary means of accessing podcasts; however, there has been a notable increase since 2021 (+4).

FIGURE 6.20: PODCAST PLATFORMS 2020-2022 (%)

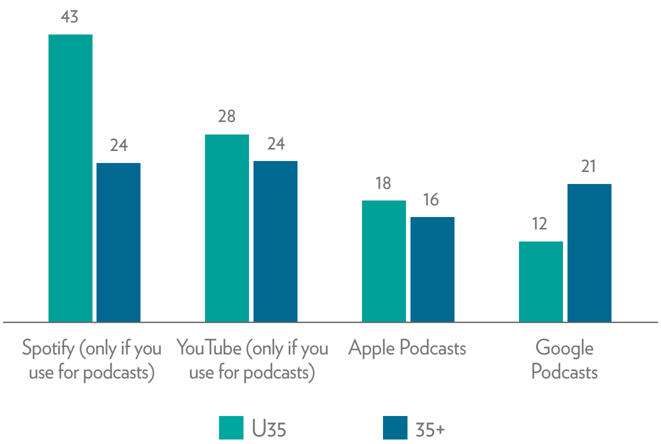


[POD2] Which of the following apps or websites do you mainly use to find and play podcasts? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

NEARLY HALF OF U35 USE SPOTIFY FOR PODCASTS

Nearly half of those under the age of 35 (43%) say Spotify is their main app to find podcasts, whereas only 24% of those 35 and above say so (see **figure 6.21**). However, Google Podcasts is more popular among those over 35, with 21% using it as their primary platform for podcasts, compared to only 12% of those under 35. While there is a distinct generational gap in the use of Spotify and Google Podcasts, YouTube and Apple Podcasts are used relatively equally among podcast listeners, regardless of age.

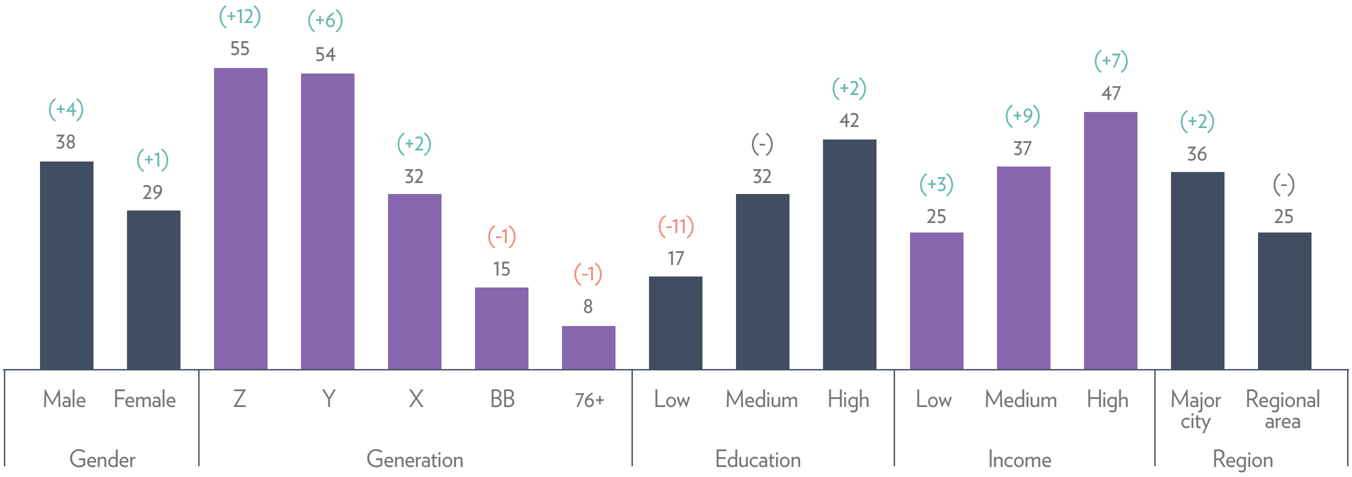
FIGURE 6.21: PODCAST PLATFORMS BY AGE (%)



MORE THAN HALF OF GEN Z AND Y LISTEN TO PODCASTS

Men (38%) are more likely to listen to podcasts than women (29%). Younger Australians are much more likely to listen to podcasts compared to older generations, with more than half of Gen Z (55%) and Gen Y (54%) saying they listened to a podcast in the last month. Those with higher education and income levels are more likely to listen; almost half of the 'highly educated' respondents (42%) and the 'high income earners' (47%) say they have listened to a podcast in the last month. Those who live in major cities (36%) are more likely to be podcast listeners than those in regional areas (25%). Notably, over the last year, podcast listening among Gen Z has increased by 12 percentage points (see **figure 6.22**).

FIGURE 6.22: PODCAST LISTENERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

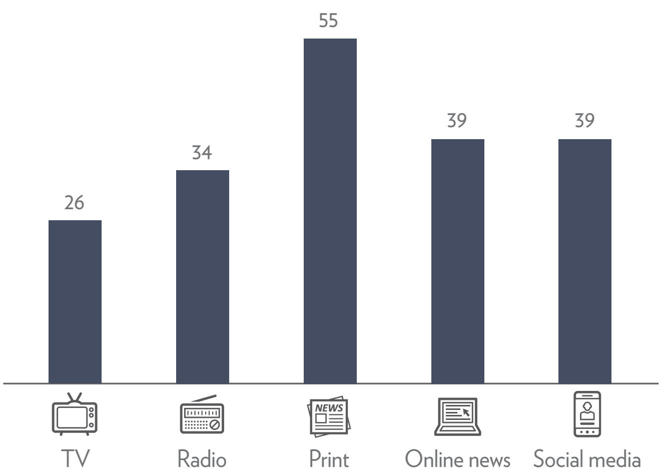


OVER HALF OF NEWSPAPER READERS LISTEN TO PODCASTS

News consumers who mainly use print for news are more likely to listen to podcasts (55%) compared to those who rely on other news media. News consumers who mainly use TV for news (26%) are the least likely to listen to podcasts (see **figure 6.23**).

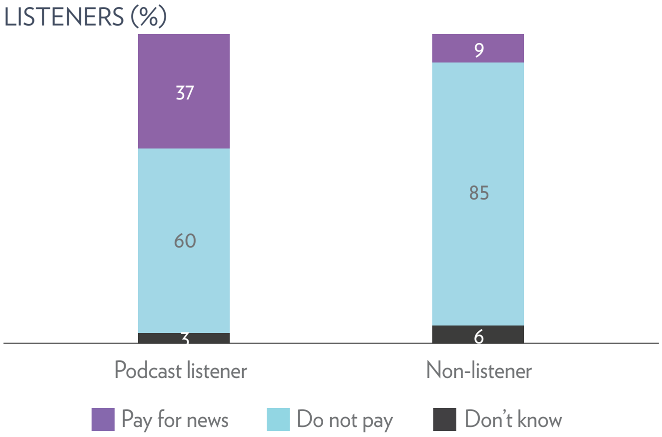
Podcast listeners are much more likely to pay for news (see **figure 6.24**). More than one-third of those who listen to a podcast say they have paid for news in the last year (37%), whereas only 9% of those who do not listen to a podcast have paid for news. Furthermore, the proportion of news consumers who subscribe to two or more digital news services is higher among podcast listeners at 66% compared to the national average (52%) (see **Chapter 8**).

FIGURE 6.23: PODCAST LISTENERS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



[Q4] You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? [Base: Those who used at least one source of news, N=1,868].

FIGURE 6.24: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY PODCAST LISTENERS (%)



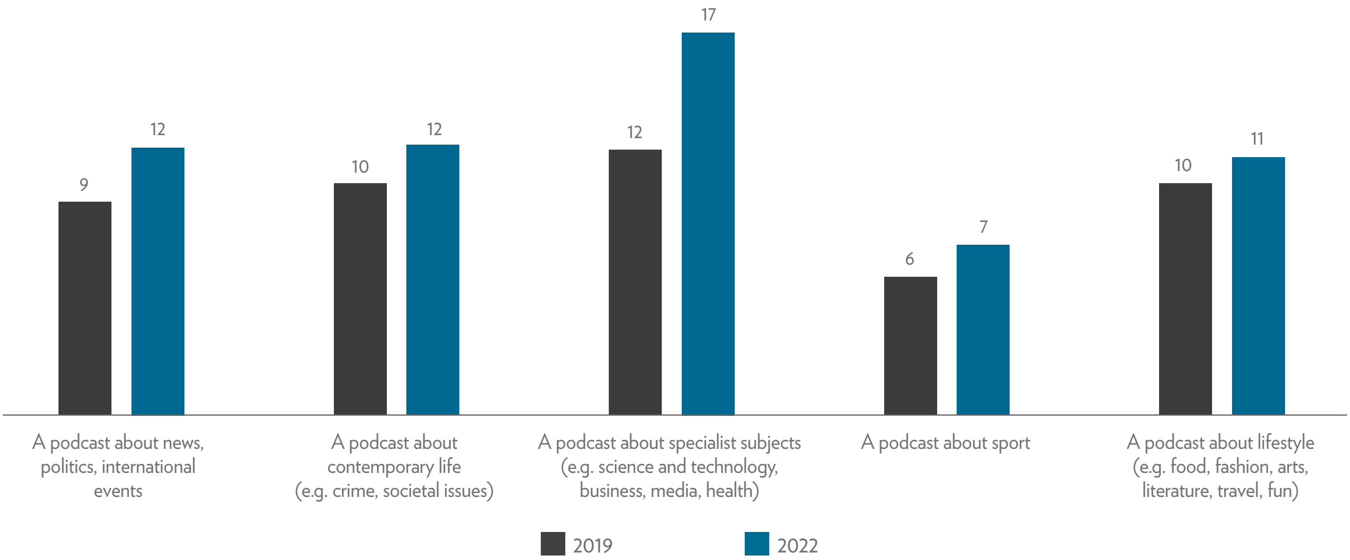
[Q7a] Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service _in the last year_? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription, a donation, or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition). [Base: Podcast listeners=670; Non-listeners=1,367]

NEWS PODCASTS

Podcast listenership on specialist subjects such as science and health has increased from 12% in 2019 to 17% this year (+5). The audience for news podcasts has also increased since 2019 (+3) (see **figure 6.25**). These two types of podcasts have increased the most.

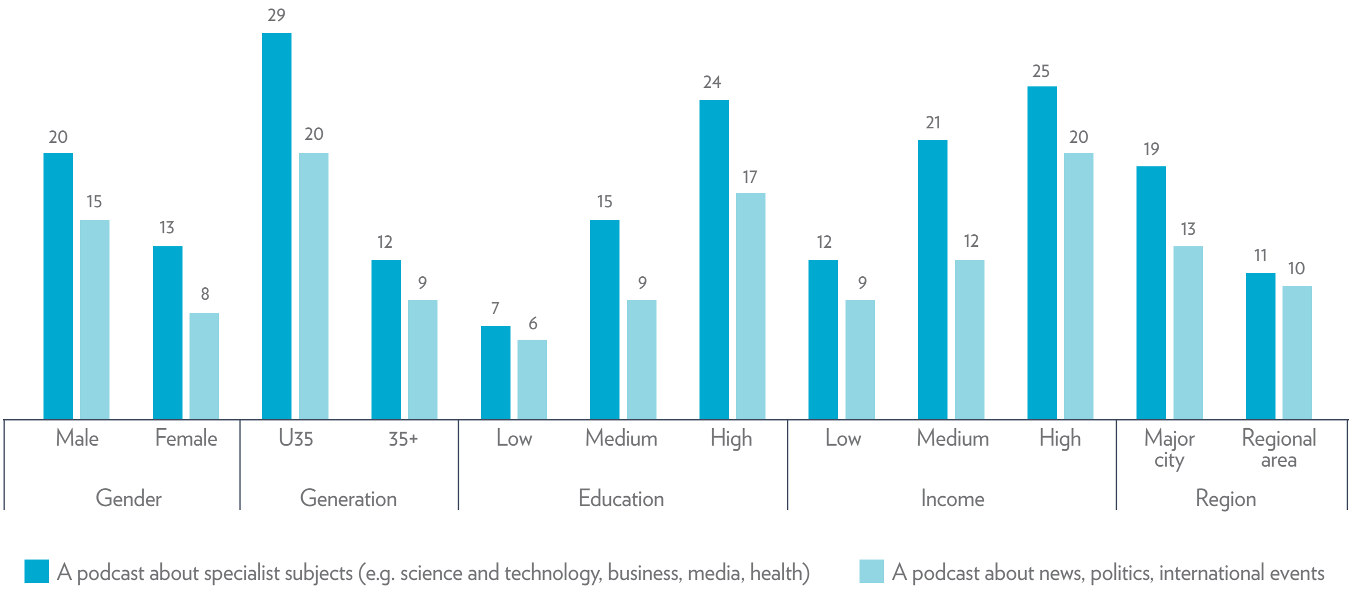
Figure 6.26 shows over a quarter of people under the age of 35 listen to podcasts about specialist subjects (29%), which is more than double among those aged 35 and above (12%). One in five of the younger cohort (U35) and high income earners listen to news podcasts (20%).

FIGURE 6.25: PODCAST SUBJECTS 2019-2022 (%)



[Q11F_2018] A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. [Base: N= 2,038]

FIGURE 6.26: PODCAST SUBJECTS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



SUMMARY

This chapter highlights an ongoing fall in news consumption on most social media platforms. Facebook for news has fallen the most, although it is still the most popular generally and for news. This downward trend presents a challenge for news outlets and journalists who have invested a lot of time and resources in developing a presence on social media.

The majority of social media users say the amount of news on their preferred platforms is about right and very few say they want more. Despite the investment in news video, there is a strong preference for text-based news among online news consumers, including those who mainly access news on social media. This is because, as respondents say, reading text is faster than watching video and gives users more control over how they find and access the content.

This is clearly evidenced by the 9 percentage point fall in the use of YouTube for news among those in Gen Z from 2021. On the other hand, while news consumption on TikTok and Instagram is growing, the numbers are still small.

There was a small increase in the use of podcasts for news (+2) this year but more than half of Gen Y and Z listen to podcasts generally. Encouragingly, 20% of U35 are listening to podcasts about news and politics compared to just 9% of those aged 35+. This presents an opportunity for growth among younger consumers.

COMMENTARY

WHY PEOPLE PREFER TO GET THEIR INFORMATION BY READING

Hal Crawford, Media consultant and commentator

It's a trope of modern life that people don't read anymore. But it's totally wrong. More people are reading, and they are reading more. You see them everywhere, a hand raised in front of them looking at their phones. Some of them are watching video, some listening to audio. A rare few are actually talking to someone else. What most of them are doing is reading. Email, the web, social media: despite big amounts of imagery, none of it would make any sense without the text.

What people really don't do so much anymore is read books. For people who love books, this is a bit sad. But I believe - and would love to see proved - that the net consumption of the written word has risen with the smartphone era. This year's *Digital News Report: Australia* offers an insight into why.

This year included a question to determine preferences for consuming news via text or video. The data is unequivocal: the majority of people (61%) prefer to get their online news in text form. Only 11% prefer news video. Considering that 27% either don't know or watch and read news about the same, that is a major win for the written word. This is not surprising to anyone who has been involved in trying to persuade online news audiences to consume video.

Around 2012 when I was the editor of the big Australian portal ninemsn, video news was heralded as the next big thing. This was a revelation borne of commercial necessity - video ad prices were high, normal display advertising was cheap and getting cheaper - and also dovetailed nicely with technological and network improvements.

We quickly discovered that audiences would not consume TV news that had been transplanted online.

A typical TV news story - 90 seconds, with an introduction from a studio presenter, a voiceover from a reporter and a piece to camera - is a format unsuited to digital platforms.

This was surprising to the TV networks, but it is understandable. A user's experience is to click the story link, then click the video, sit through the pre-roll ad, then watch 90 seconds just to get a small amount of information.

The alternative of getting news through text is much more efficient. People read faster than news reporters speak (most people read at around 250 words per minute while news presenters usually speak around 150 words/minute). Equally important to this bandwidth difference is content structure, with written news conforming much more closely than video news to the "inverted pyramid". A text story will almost always present the most important information first, where video news often withholds important data in order to encourage viewing through the piece. Information density is higher in text, and the reader can jump around at will.

So in general text wins.

There are two areas where video news has superpowers, however. Firstly, video (and more importantly, the audio that goes with it) has the power to connect emotionally to the audience in a way text cannot achieve. Watching and listening to video news is closer to real human experience than reading.

Secondly, there is a whole class of news that is predicated on the video itself: in effect, where the video is the news.

You can call this "event" video, where an extraordinary, important, or otherwise newsworthy event is caught on video. Text descriptions of such events - a volcano erupting, cars colliding, or a sportsperson making a brilliant shot - are so impoverished they often don't rate a mention.

There are more riches in this year's DNR Emerging News Habits (see **Chapter 6**) data which I would like to mention in passing. The first is the continuing rise of TikTok, which is interesting considering the limits of video as a news vehicle. Overall TikTok use has doubled since 2020, and now 13% of Gen Z use it for news. Every product influences its content profoundly, and on TikTok this is stark: the short, portrait-orientation videos encourage an illusion of instant understanding. I don't see TikTok as a promising mainstream news medium, but it would be unwise to dismiss a product on this kind of trajectory.

In terms of podcasts, I read the DNR data for overall use as being flat, which stands in contrast to the investments we are seeing in podcast content both in Australia and globally. The rise from 31% to 33% of people using podcasts over the past year is not enough to overcome the margin for error in the survey, and the big picture has been more or less the same for the five years of the DNR survey.

What is fascinating and clear is the rise of Spotify as a podcasting platform (moving from 25% to 33% to become the biggest platform) which coincides with massive investment by the Swedish company over the past two years. It's an area of ferocious competition, and it's good to know that a billion dollars in content spending can move the market.

NEWS MOMENTS

23 July, 2021 | After being postponed for a year due to the coronavirus pandemic the 2020 Summer Olympics are held in Tokyo, Japan. Organisers took major precautions to prevent the spread of the virus during the games, resulting in scenes of athletes competing in arenas emptied of spectators. Foreign spectators were barred from attending, and domestic audiences could only attend events outside of Tokyo.

IMAGE: JOE GIDDENS/ AAP IMAGE

7 TRUST AND MISINFORMATION

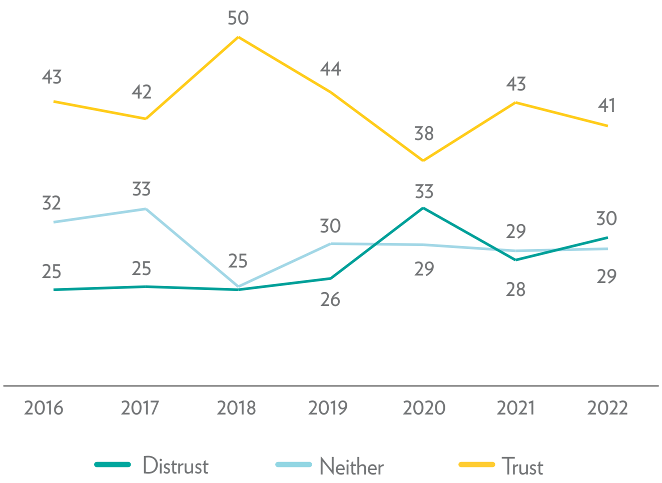
- Trust in news has fallen to 41% (-2) and distrust has risen to 30% (+2).
- Trust in news brands has declined across the board with commercial broadcasters suffering the most.
- Those who think news media put society first and are independent from commercial or political influence have higher trust in news.
- Less than one-third of respondents trust news websites with their personal data, and the majority did not register with websites to access online news.
- Those encountering Covid-19 misinformation increased (+3) since last year, and concern about misinformation remains high (64%).

DISTRUST IN NEWS IS STEADILY RISING

General trust in news (41%) is down by 2 percentage points and remains relatively close to the long-term trend. However, the proportion of those who distrust most news most of the time has increased by 5 percentage points since 2016 (30%). The 'Covid trust bump' has not been sustained, reflecting a persistent problem of declining news trust (see **figure 7.1**).

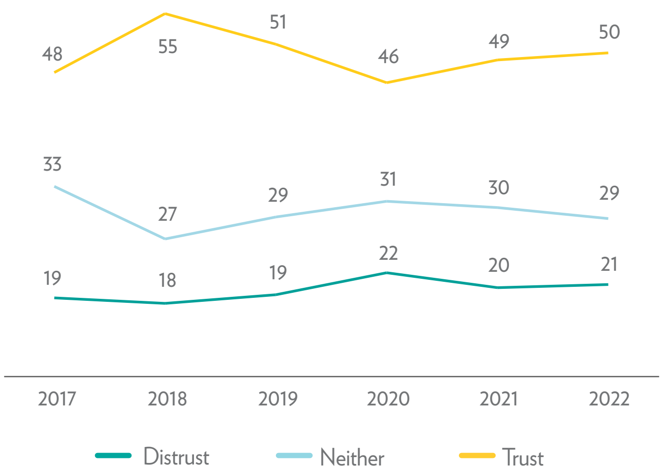
While general trust in news is declining over time, 'trust in news I consume' is relatively steady. The gap between trust in general news and 'trust in my news' may be widening, with people turning to news sources they trust (see **figure 7.2**).

FIGURE 7.1: TRUST IN NEWS 2016-2022 (%)



[Q6_2016_1] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time. [Base: N=2,038]

FIGURE 7.2: TRUST IN MY NEWS 2017-2022 (%)



[Q6_2016_6] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. [Base: N=2,038] *Trust in my news was not asked in 2016

STEEPEST DECLINE IN TRUST AMONG YOUNGEST AND OLDEST

Trust fell for some generations more than others. Those 76+ saw the steepest declines (-8), along with Gen Z (-4) and Gen Y (-4), while the middle generations stayed the same (see **figure 7.3**). In 2022, younger generations continue to have the lowest levels of trust.

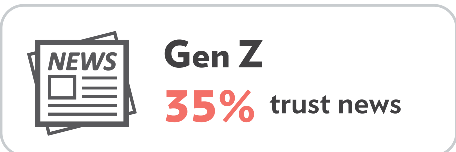
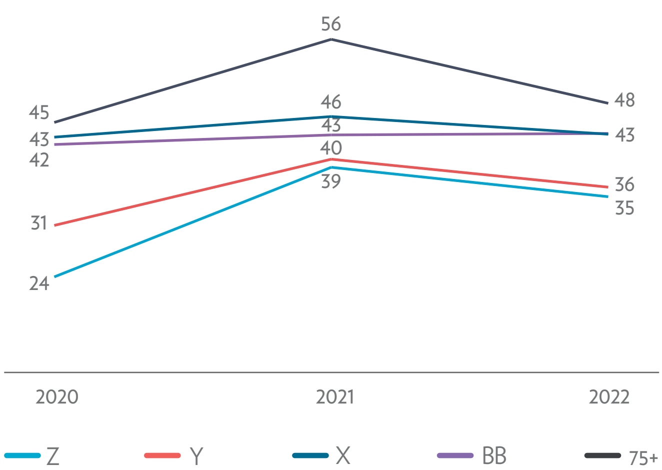
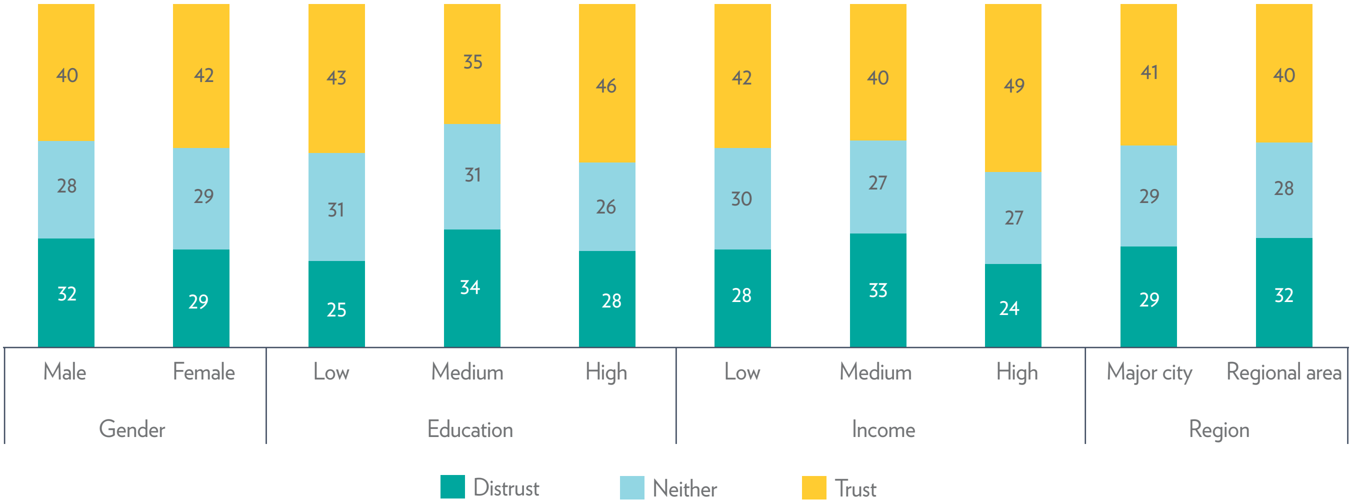


FIGURE 7.3: TRUST IN NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



Trust across other demographics has not changed significantly. Women are still slightly more trusting than men, and those with high incomes and education have higher trust in news. There is no difference between city and regional news consumers in their levels of general trust in news (see **figure 7.4**).

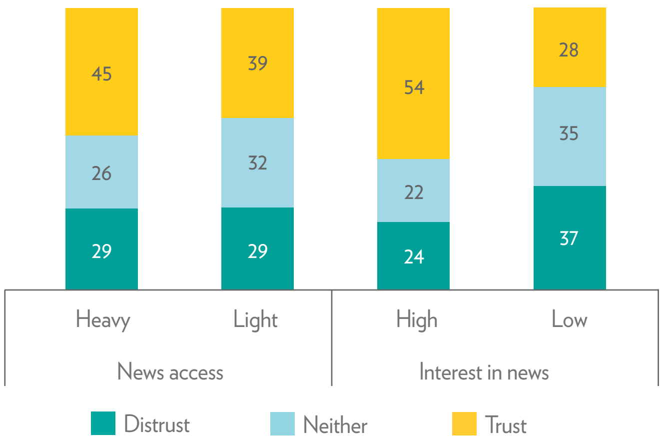
FIGURE 7.4: TRUST IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



Those who are heavy news users (45%) and who have high interest in news (54%) are more trusting of news generally. Those with low interest are more likely to distrust (37%), and both light news users and those with low interest are more likely to be undecided (see **figure 7.5**).

Left-wing
61%
Trust my news

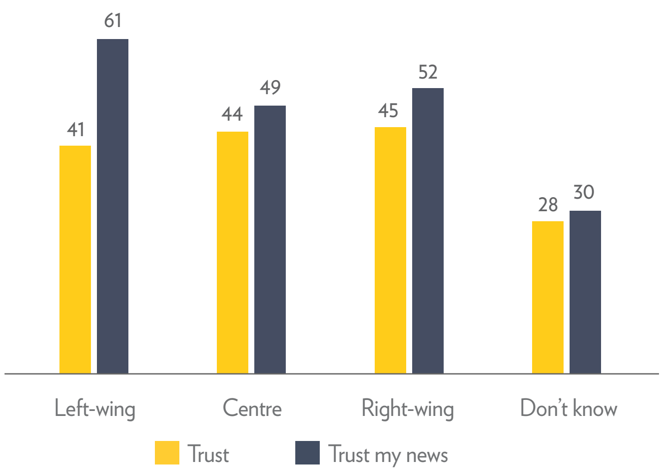
FIGURE 7.5: TRUST BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST IN NEWS



LEFT-WING NEWS CONSUMERS HAVE MUCH HIGHER TRUST IN THE NEWS THEY CONSUME

When we contrast trust in news generally and the 'news I consume', there is a wider gap among left-wing news consumers. Left-wing participants have lower trust in news generally, but their trust in the news they choose to consume is much higher than that of right-wing consumers (see **figure 7.6**). This suggests right-wing participants may be more trusting of mainstream offerings.

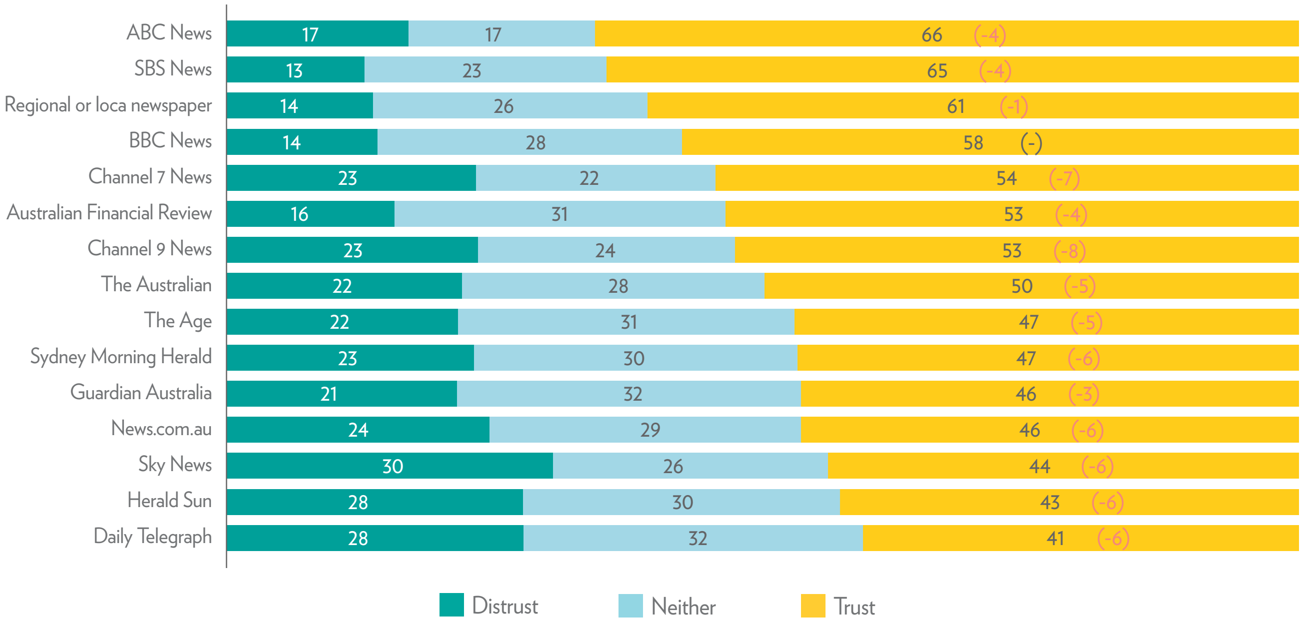
FIGURE 7.6: TRUST IN NEWS GENERALLY VS TRUST MY NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



TRUST IN COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS HAS FALLEN THE MOST

Trust in most news brands has declined with commercial broadcasters suffering the most. Amid crises such as Covid-19 and major flooding, accurate, up-to-date local news is critical to audiences' trust. Local or regional newspapers ranked third, after the two public broadcasters, confirming the importance of local news to Australian news consumers (see **figure 7.7**).

FIGURE 7.7: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS (%)



[Q6_2018_TRUST] How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is? Please use the scale below, where 0 is 'not at all trustworthy' and 10 is 'completely trustworthy'. Distrust= 0-4 Neither=5 Trust=6-10. [Base: N=2,038]

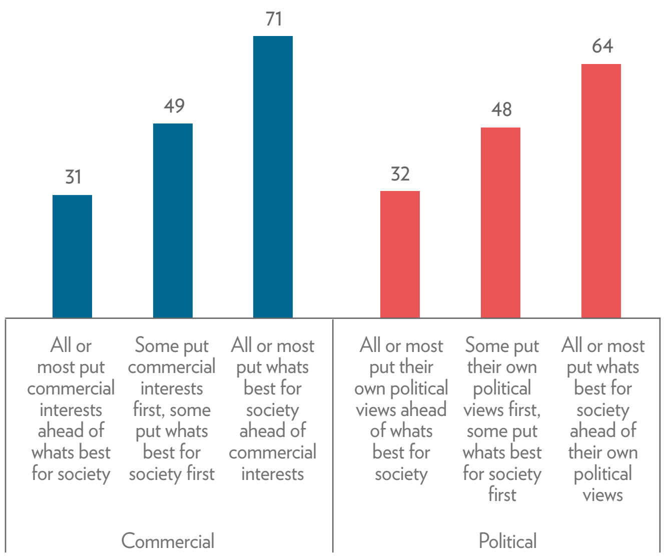
PUTTING SOCIETY FIRST INCREASES TRUST IN NEWS

This year we asked news consumers if they think news organisations put their own political and commercial interests ahead of what is best for society. Almost half of Australians think news media put their interests first (see **Chapter 2**).

Those who think all or most news media put what's best for society ahead of their commercial or political interests have substantially higher trust in news (71% and 64%) compared to those who think news media put their own interests first (commercial 31%; political 32%) (see **figure 7.8**).

This finding is supported by existing research[1] that finds distrust in news is linked to perceptions of politicisation and commercialisation of news outlets.

FIGURE 7.8: TRUST IN NEWS BY BELIEF IN NEWS ORGANISATIONS' PRIORITIES (%)



[Q_CYNICISM_A/B] Which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country?

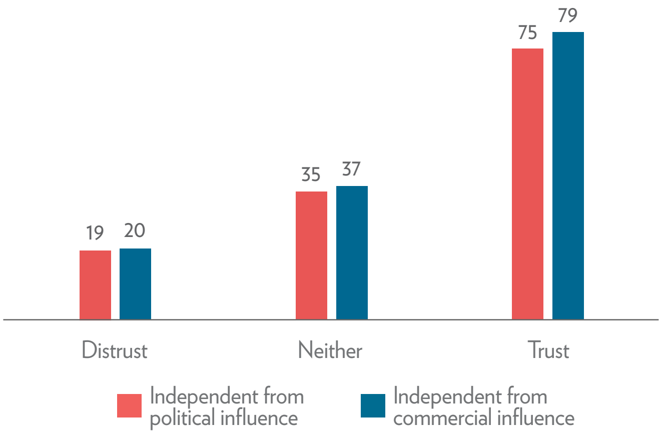
[1] Flew, T., Dulleck, U., Park, S., Fisher, C. & Isler, O. (2020). Trust and Mistrust in Australian News Media. Brisbane: Digital Media Research Centre. https://research.qut.edu.au/best/wp-content/uploads/sites/244/2020/03/Trust-and-Mistrust-in-News-Media.pdf; Newman, N. & Fletcher, R. (2017). Bias, Bullshit and Lies Audience Perspectives on Low Trust in the Media. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-11/Nic%20Newman%20and%20Richard%20Fletcher%20-%20Bias%2C%20Bullshit%20and%20Lies%20-%20Report.pdf

NEWS INDEPENDENCE IS A STRONG PREDICTOR OF TRUST IN NEWS

We asked news consumers whether they think that news media in Australia are independent from undue political influence or commercial influence (see **Chapter 2**).

Those who believe news media are independent from political or commercial influence are much more likely to trust news (76% and 80%), compared to those who don't think media are independent (20%) (see **figure 7.9**).

FIGURE 7.9: TRUST BY NEWS MEDIA INDEPENDENCE (%)

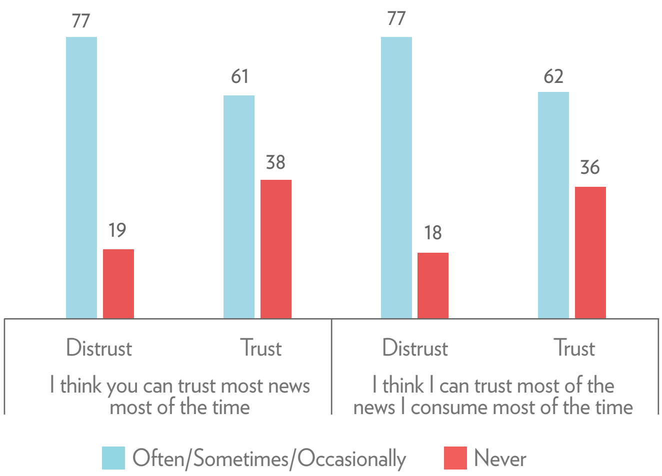


[Q6_2016B] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: [Q6_2016_4] The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time; [Q6_2016_5] The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time.

LOW TRUST IS LINKED TO NEWS AVOIDANCE

Public disengagement with current affairs is a key risk in participatory democracies. Distrust is a strong predictor of news avoidance. More than three-quarters of those who distrust news say they have avoided it compared to 61% of those who trust news (see **figure 7.10**).

FIGURE 7.10: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY TRUST (%)



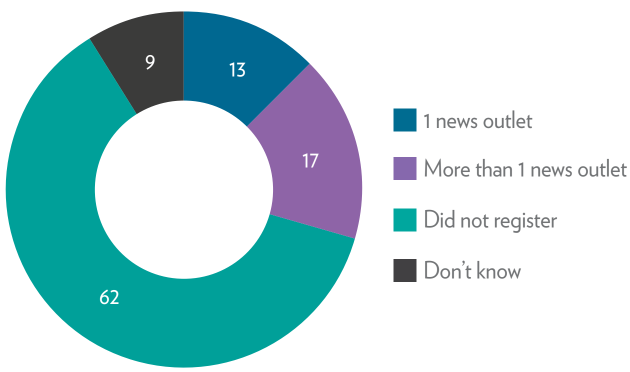
[Q1DI_2017] Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? *Don't know removed

REGISTRATION FOR NEWS WEBSITES

AUSTRALIANS ARE RELUCTANT TO SIGN-UP FOR ONLINE NEWS

We asked news consumers about registering with news websites. Less than one-third (30%) of respondents say they have registered to get full access to news content. Among those who signed up to a news website, 13% registered for one and 17% for two or more (see **figure 7.11**).

FIGURE 7.11: REGISTERING FOR NEWS ONLINE (%)



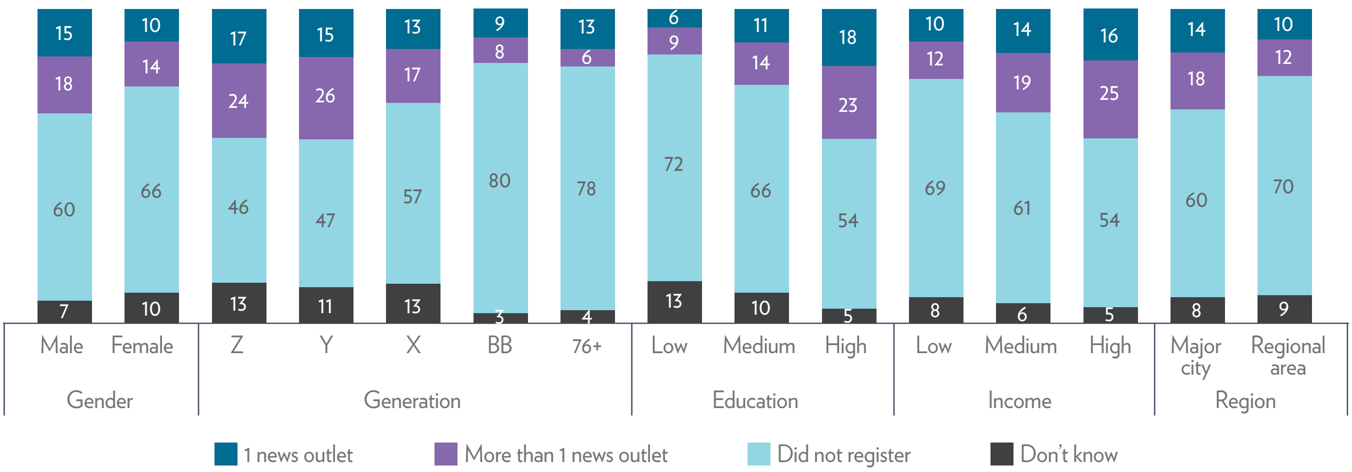
[REGISTER1] Some online news outlets now ask you to register (for example to give an email address or set up an account) before they will give you full access to their content. Have you done this in the last year?

YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE MORE COMFORTABLE SIGNING UP TO NEWS WEBSITES

Younger generations are much more likely to register on news websites to get access to news, with 41% of Gen Z and Y, and 30% of Gen X saying they have signed up in the past year, in contrast to only 17% of BB and 17% of 76+.

Younger generations are also more likely to sign up for more than one news website; 24% of Gen Z and 26% of Gen Y say they have registered for more than one news outlet (see **figure 7.12**).

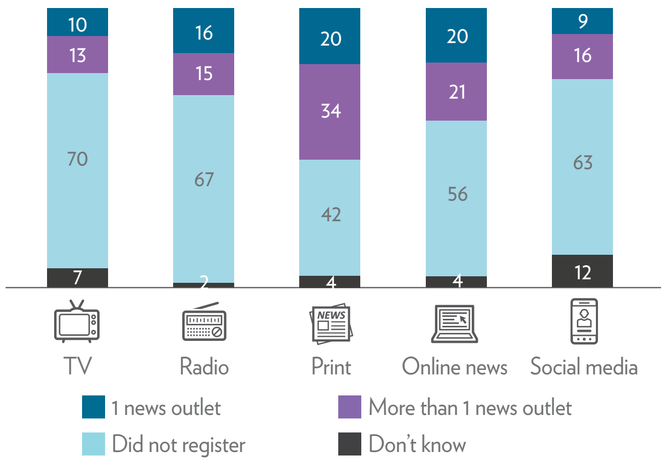
FIGURE 7.12: REGISTRATIONS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



PRINT NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO REGISTER TO GET ACCESS TO ONLINE NEWS

More than half of those whose main source of news is print have signed up for online news websites to get access to the news content (54%). Print customers are also much more likely to register for more than one news website (34%), compared to those who say their main source of news is TV (13%) or social media (16%) (see **figure 7.13**).

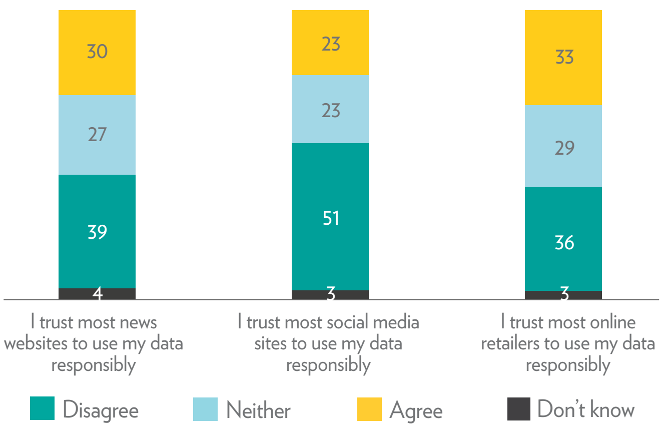
FIGURE 7.13: REGISTRATIONS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



AUSTRALIANS TRUST ONLINE RETAILERS WITH THEIR DATA MORE THAN NEWS OUTLETS

We asked how much respondents trust news websites, social media sites and online retailers to use customer data responsibly. About one-third (33%) say they trust online retailers to use their data responsibly, 30% trust news outlets and 23% trust social media companies (see **figure 7.14**).

FIGURE 7.14: TRUST IN ONLINE DATA USE (%)



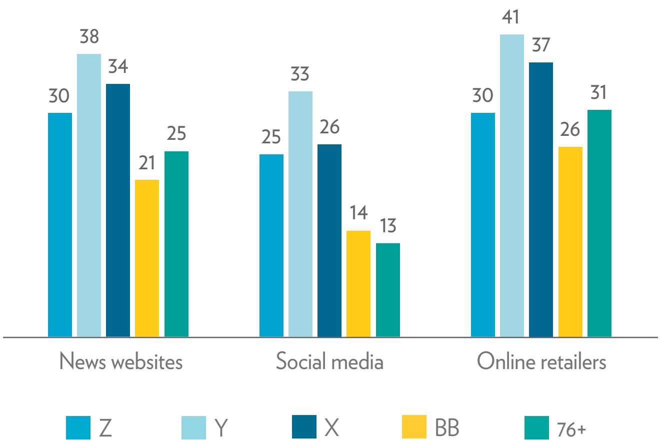
[REGISTER2] Different online sites these days often ask for personal data for a variety of reasons. With this in mind, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE MORE TRUSTING OF NEWS WEBSITES TO USE THEIR DATA RESPONSIBLY

Almost a third of Gen Z (30%), Y (38%) and X (34%) say they trust news outlets to use their customer data responsibly, in contrast only 21% of Baby Boomers and 25% of 76+ share that trust. This might partly explain why younger generations are more comfortable registering for news websites.

Compared to news websites and social media, older generations are much more trusting of online retailers with their data. Gen Y (41%) trust online retailers the most, while Baby Boomers (26%) trust them the least (see **figure 7.15**).

FIGURE 7.15: TRUST IN ONLINE DATA USE BY GENERATION (%)



Misinformation

Concern 64% | **Experience 62%**

CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION REMAINS UNCHANGED

The government and industry have made efforts to reduce the impact of false and misleading information through various measures. The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation was launched in February 2021 by Digital Industry Group Inc. (DIGI). Signatories committed to reduce the spread of misinformation by labelling or demoting content among other measures. Despite these efforts, the data show that the level of concern about online misinformation among news consumers remains largely unchanged since 2018 (64%) (see **figure 7.16**).

Concern is higher among older generations. Baby Boomers (69%) and those 76+ (70%) have the highest concern about misinformation, while Gen Z (55%) have the lowest. In 2022, younger generations' concerns decreased slightly, whereas older generations' levels of concern remained the same (see **figure 7.17**).

FIGURE 7.16: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION (%)

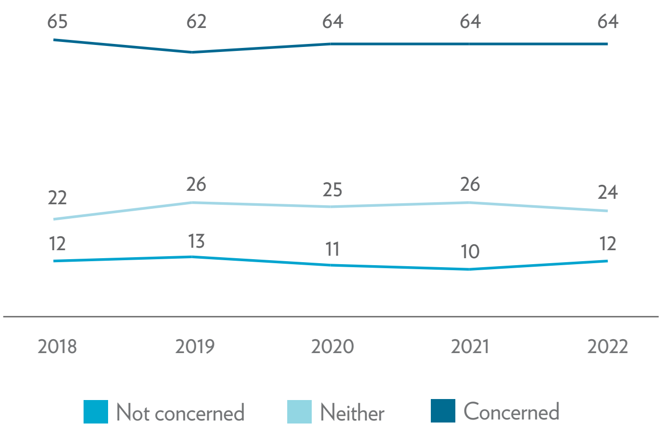
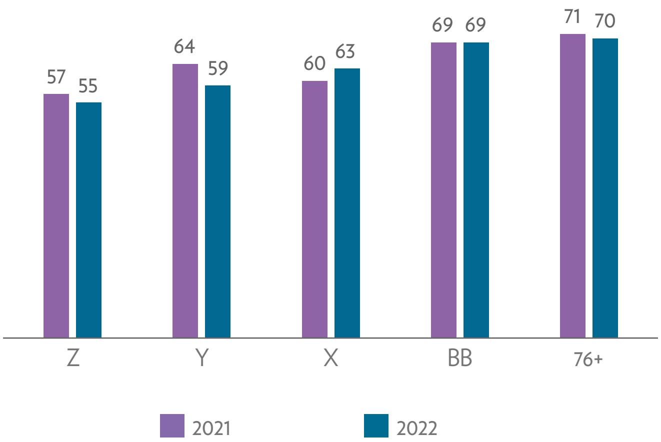


FIGURE 7.17: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION BY GENERATION (%)



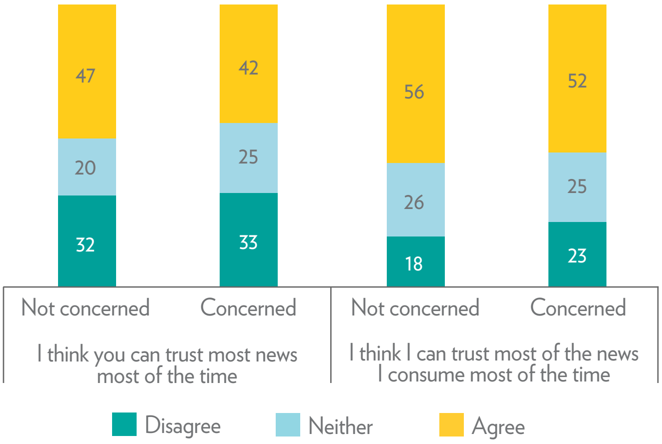
CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION IS LINKED TO LOW TRUST IN NEWS

Those who are more concerned about misinformation are less likely to trust news generally (42%) and the news they choose to consume (52%) compared with those who are not concerned (47%, 56%) (see **figure 7.18**).

Covid-19 misinformation

2021 **38%** → **2022** **42%**

FIGURE 7.18: TRUST IN NEWS BY MISINFORMATION CONCERN (%)



MORE PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING COVID-19 MISINFORMATION

We asked consumers if they had seen false or misleading information about 8 different topics. Almost two-thirds (62%) of respondents say they encountered online misinformation in the last week about at least one topic, which is a 3 percentage point increase from last year. Baby Boomers (+6) and Gen Z (+4) experienced increase in misinformation the most (see **figure 7.19**).

Forty-two per cent say they have experienced misinformation about Covid-19 (+4), which is an increase from 2021. One-third say they came across political misinformation, and 29% encountered misinformation about climate change. This year, fewer people say they encountered misinformation about celebrities (-5) (see **figure 7.20**).

FIGURE 7.19: MISINFORMATION EXPERIENCE BY GENERATION (%)

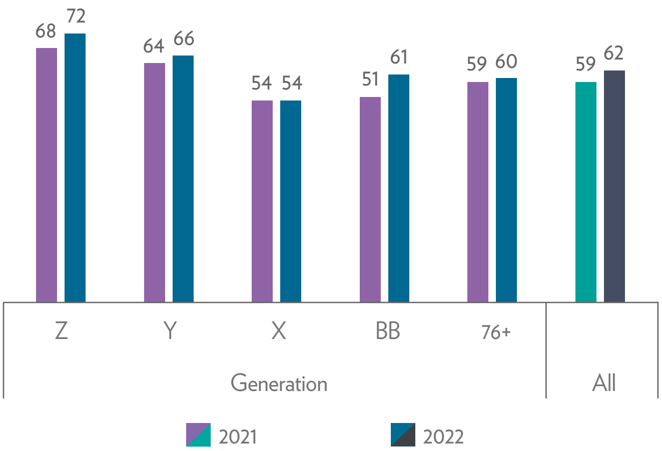
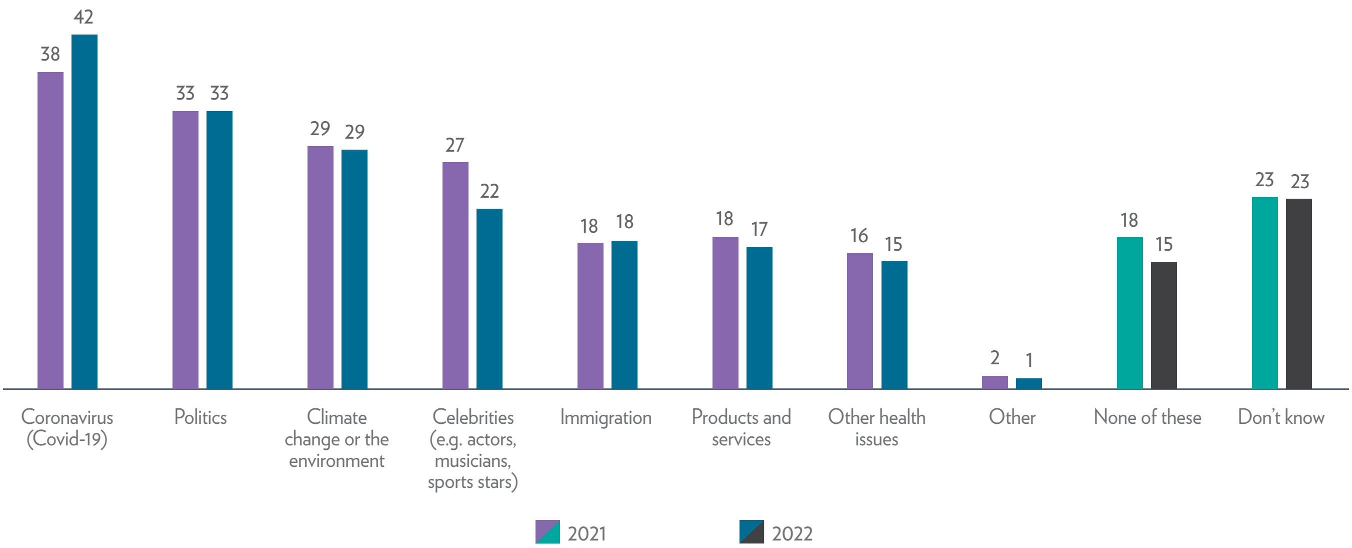


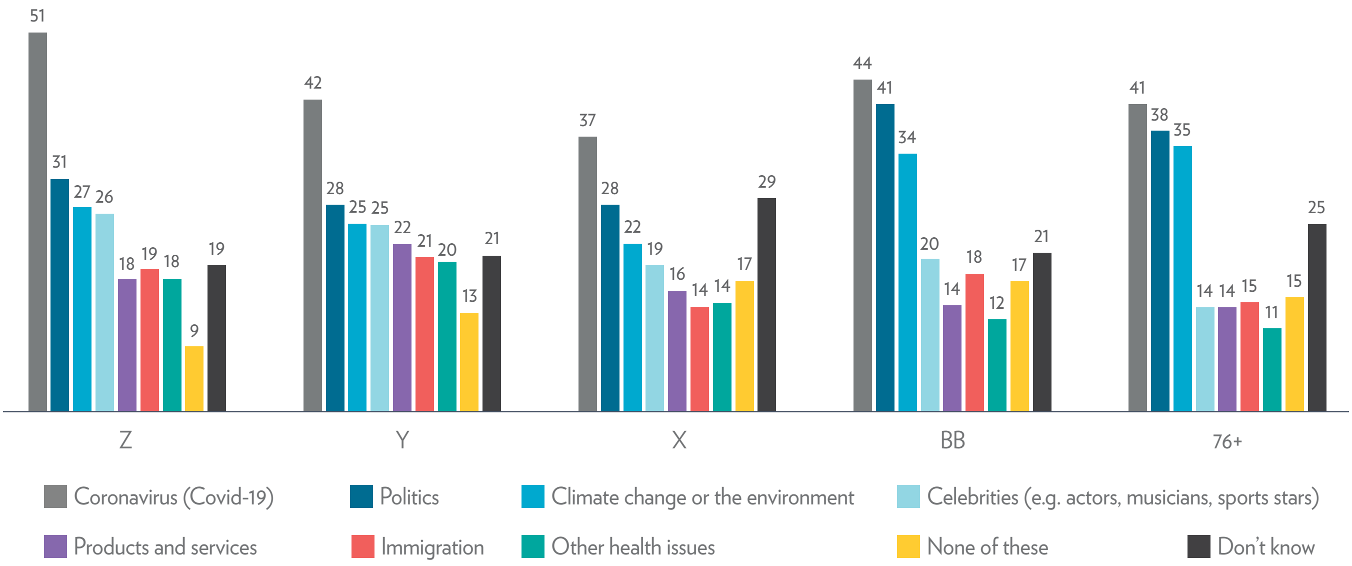
FIGURE 7.20: MISINFORMATION TOPICS (%)



MORE THAN HALF OF GEN Z ENCOUNTERED COVID-19 MISINFORMATION IN THE PAST WEEK

Gen Z is most likely to encounter misinformation about Covid-19 (51%, +11), followed by politics (31%, +4). Similarly, those aged 76+ are most likely to experience misinformation about Covid-19 (41%, +6) and politics (38%, +1) (see **figure 7.21**). This is possibly because younger generations spend more time on social media, and are encountering false information that has been labelled or removed by the platforms. This is reflected in a previous study that shows that Gen Z are more aware of platform interventions against Covid-19 misinformation[2].

FIGURE 7.21: EXPERIENCE OF MISINFORMATION TOPICS BY GENERATION (%)



SUMMARY

Covid-19 was an opportunity for news media to pause sensationalism and provide constructive reporting on essential matters. However, the increased trust in news about the virus in the early months of the pandemic has not been sustained. Instead, we see trust returning to a trend of gentle decline.

Many news consumers do not believe news media are independent, or that they put society first. These sceptics have very low trust in news. The data confirms that audiences' news trust is not only based on the quality and content of news but also the intentions of news media as to whether they put the needs of society ahead of their own commercial and political interests.

In a challenge to online news services, our data shows that the majority are reluctant to register with news websites and that more than a third of consumers don't trust them to use their data responsibly. In contrast, respondents were more comfortable sharing their data with online retailers.

The data shows that exposure to misinformation about Covid-19 has increased since 2021. This may mean that news consumers' awareness has grown but it may also indicate an actual increase in the volume of misinformation about the virus. Nonetheless, given that the level of concern remains high and steady, more needs to be done by the digital platforms, news media and governments to address the problem.

While there are signs of post-Covid recovery in the news sector in terms of advertising revenues and paid subscribers, trust in news is slower to recover.

[2] Park, S., McCallum, K., Holland, K., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., Fisher, C. & John, E. (2022). COVID-19: Australian News & Misinformation Longitudinal Study. Canberra: News Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

COMMENTARY

HOW CAN MEDIA REENGAGE THE PUBLIC'S TRUST IN PUBLIC INTEREST JOURNALISM?

Mandi Wicks, SBS Director of News and Current Affairs

In terms of news, the past two years have been defined by tragic bushfires, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and most recently by La Niña which saw record rainfall and severe flooding which devastated parts of the country, such as the Northern Rivers in NSW.

While these major news events have brought out some of the best journalism, delivering on the needs of audiences and providing important information in the public interest - it has failed to stem a growing wave of cynicism and mistrust of the media.

As the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022* makes clear, last year's "Covid trust bump", which saw consumer trust in media increase in 2021, is now evaporating.

Trust is returning to its pre-Covid levels and risks continuing the steady decline we have seen over several years.

According to the research, between a quarter and a third of Australians are questioning the independence of media and raising perceived red flags about issues of commercial or political influence.

The research has found those who think all or most news media put what's best for society ahead of their commercial or political interests have a significantly higher trust in news (71% and 64%) compared to those who think news media put their own interests first. Trust levels of those who think all or most news media put commercial or political interests ahead of what is best for society is 31% and 32% respectively.

It seems, when news breaks, the media is initially trusted to provide essential information, but it doesn't take long for the 'blame game' to set in – bushfires, floods, Covid-19, the vaccination roll out, higher cost of living – and audiences perceive that publishers retreat to their corners and reflect their political or commercial interests.

Also of significant concern is the lack of trust in media organisations to use customer data responsibly, with only 23% trusting social media and news websites to use data responsibly compared to 33% trust of retailers.

SBS and the ABC remain the most trusted news organisations in Australia. When it comes to distrust, SBS is the least distrusted, followed closely by regional and local newspapers, the BBC, *The Australian Financial Review* and the ABC. The survey seems to indicate trust is built through deep community connections and a consistent commitment to impartial public interest journalism.

The overall signs of growing distrust should be a concern for media organisations, governments and wider civil society organisations which all have an important stake in the question: 'Do Australians feel connected and engaged in the community and world around them?' When Australians don't feel connected, that disengagement with trusted and reliable news sources creates a fertile environment for misinformation. During the pandemic, some turned to unreliable news sources, often on social media platforms. We saw rising anti-vaccination sentiment and anti-lockdown protests that were fuelled, at least in part, by actors that typically had no real background in news or journalism but based their views and misinformation in conspiracy or social myth.

News organisations provide an essential service, and to maintain or build trust with audiences, we need to demonstrate this every day.

During the pandemic, SBS worked closely with communities and stakeholders to deliver crucial health and safety messages, in over 60 languages, through the SBS Multilingual Coronavirus Portal.

Since its launch, in March 2020, more than 11 million Australian unique visitors1 have accessed the Covid-19 information available through the portal, including updates on changing restrictions, the vaccination roll out, and rapid antigen testing instructions. At key moments SBS carried live in-language translations of significant media conferences and worked consistently to ensure the portal was a vehicle for communities to receive trusted, up to date health and safety information.

The pursuit of building trust with audiences will remain challenging. The research suggests that accurate and impartial news and analysis are key, along with a dogged determination to weed out misinformation and disinformation, particularly on social media platforms.

Australia claims to be the most multicultural and most multilingual country in the world. By increasing all forms of diversity in our newsrooms, we can also increase trust with audiences. Our reporting will be more diverse, more authentic, and audiences will feel more connected to sources which reflect their lives and give them a voice.

It is only through driving true connection to our audience and engaging with them in a way that restores trust that we can reverse the longer trend towards many Australians becoming disengaged with media and potentially our wider democratic society.

NEWS MOMENTS

1 October, 2021 | New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian resigns after the Independent Commission Against Corruption revealed it was investigating her for potential breaches of the law in failing to report corrupt conduct by her former partner NSW MP Daryl Maguire. Berejiklian would be replaced by conservative Dominic Perrottet.

IMAGE: DEAN LEWINS/ AAP IMAGE

8 PAYING FOR NEWS AND DIGITAL MEDIA

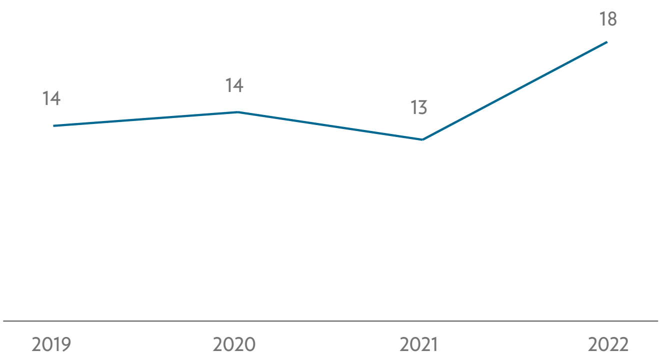
- More Australians are paying for online news (18%, +5).
- Almost one-third (28%) of Gen Y now pays for news (+12).
- There is a large growth in news consumers who pay for more than one news service (+13).
- News is the least popular type of digital media services people pay for.
- People who pay attention to journalists over news brands are more likely to pay for news.

PAYING FOR NEWS

PAY IS UP BY 5%

The slump in digital subscription during the pandemic has bounced back with 18% (+5) of news consumers saying they paid for online news in the past year (see **figure 8.1**).

FIGURE 8.1: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS 2019-2022 (%)

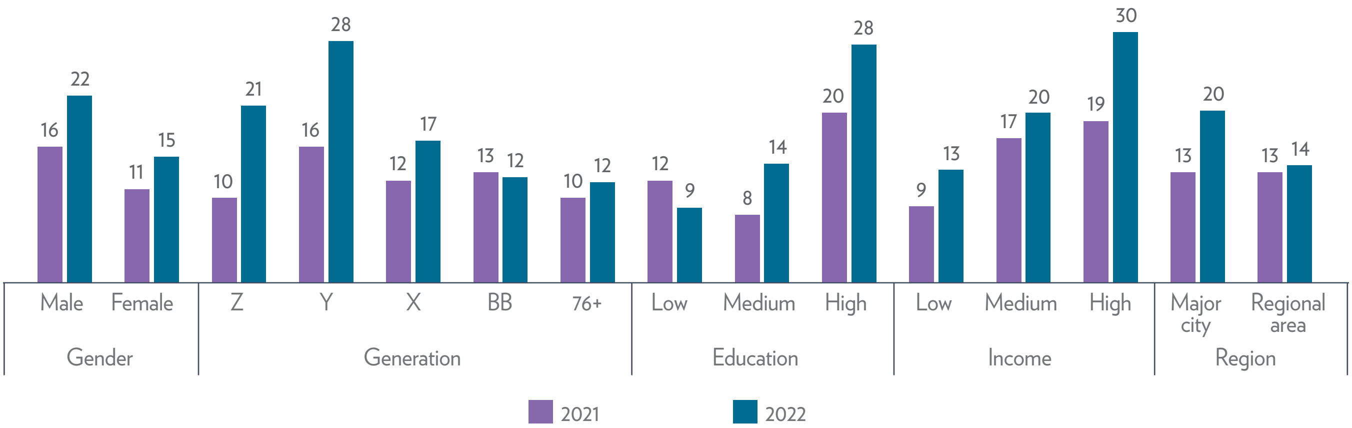


[Q7a] Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription, a donation, or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition). [Base: N=2,038]

ALMOST ONE-THIRD OF GEN Y PAYS FOR NEWS

Consistent with previous years, younger generations are much more likely to pay for news. There has been a 12 percentage point increase in pay among Gen Y (28%). There was also a substantial increase among high income earners (30%, +11). There was little increase among regional news consumers (14%, +1) (see **figure 8.2**).

FIGURE 8.2: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2022 (%)



SMALL INCREASE IN ONGOING SUBSCRIPTIONS

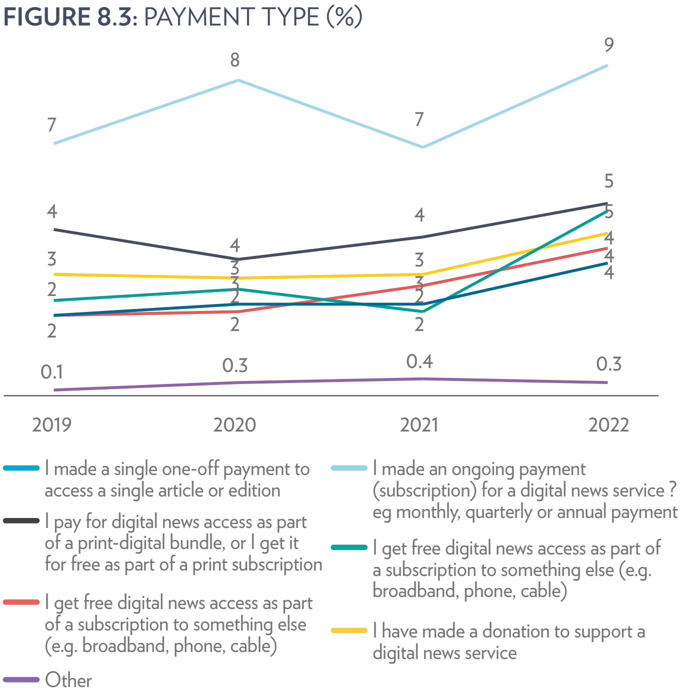
There was a slight increase (+3) in subscribers who get free digital news access as part of a subscription to something else (e.g. broadband, phone, cable) (5%), and an increase in ongoing subscriptions for online news (9%, +2) (see **figure 8.3**).

Pay

Online news 18%

Ongoing subscription 9%

FIGURE 8.3: PAYMENT TYPE (%)

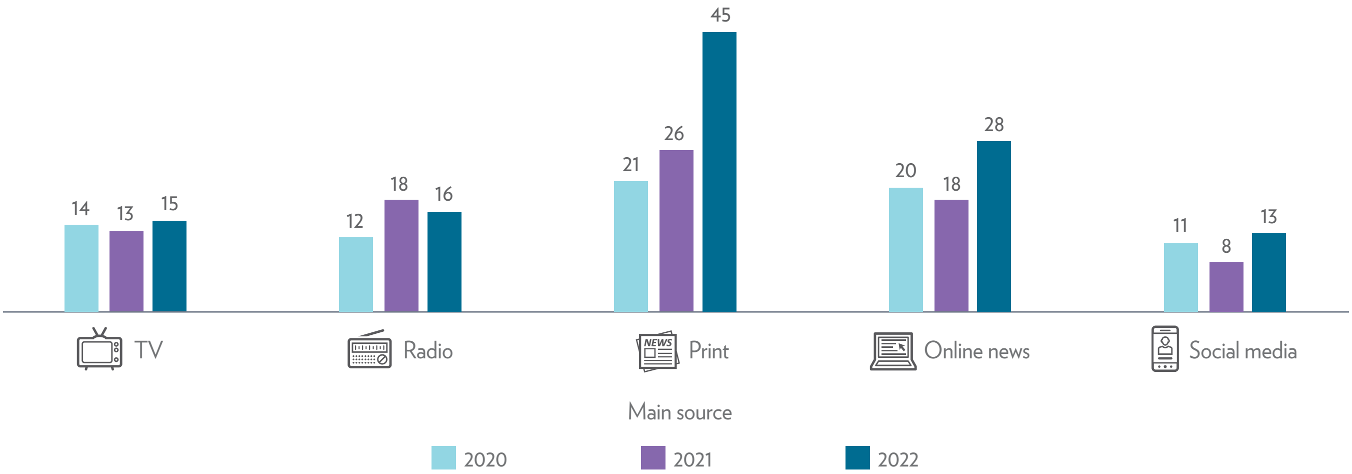


[Q7ai] You said you have accessed paid for ONLINE news content in the last year... Which, if any, of the following ways have you used to pay for ONLINE news content in the last year? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

NEARLY HALF OF PRINT NEWS USERS SUBSCRIBE TO AN ONLINE NEWS SERVICE

In 2022, nearly half of news consumers who use print (45%) as their main source of news say they paid for online news in the past twelve months, which has more than doubled since 2020. This possibly reflects an increase in print news consumption among younger, highly educated, high-income news consumers, who are the most likely to pay for news. There has also been a notable increase amongst those who mainly use online news (+10) and social media (+5) (see **figure 8.4**).

FIGURE 8.4: PAYING FOR NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

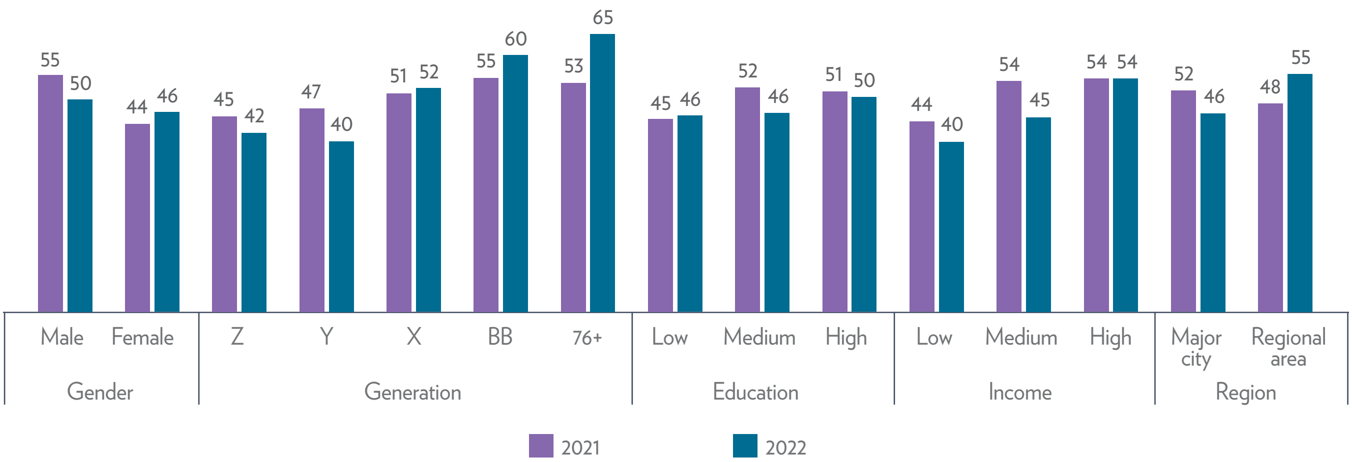


[Q7a] Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription, a donation, or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition). [Base: N=2,038]

ONGOING SUBSCRIPTION IS HIGHER AMONG OLDER GENERATIONS

While a higher proportion of younger generations pay for news overall, when we look at ongoing subscriptions, this is not the case. Older generations have a higher proportion of ongoing subscribers. Of those who pay, 65% of 76+ and 60% of Baby Boomers have ongoing subscriptions. In contrast only 42% of Gen Z and 40% of Gen Y pay for ongoing subscriptions. This suggests that younger generations are somewhat more likely to pay for news by donations (Gen Z 25%; Gen Y 30%) or have someone else pay for their online news (Gen Z 15%; Gen Y 35%) (see **figure 8.5**).

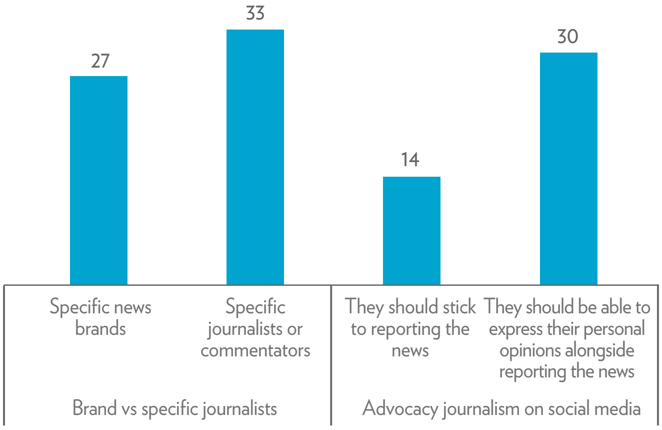
FIGURE 8.5: ONGOING PAYMENT (SUBSCRIPTION OR MEMBERSHIP) BY DEMOGRAPHICS AMONG THOSE WHO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)



THOSE PAYING ATTENTION TO JOURNALISTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PAY

More people pay attention to news brands over specific journalists (see **Chapter 4**), however those who do favour specific journalists are more likely to pay for news (33%) compared to those who favour brands (27%). Similarly, those who think journalists should be able to express their personal opinions on social media (30%) are twice as likely to pay for digital news compared to those who think journalists should stick to reporting (14%) (see **figure 8.6**). This is consistent with the findings from the *Digital News Report: Australia 2021* that those who prefer news media to take a position on issues were more likely to pay.

FIGURE 8.6: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY PREFERENCE FOR BRANDS OR JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALIST ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)



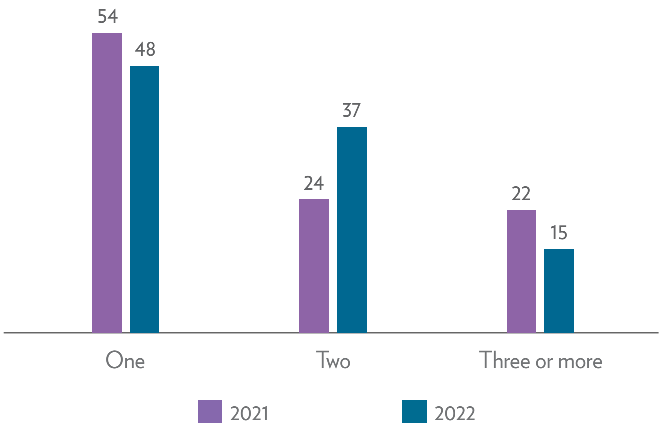
[Q_Journalists_1] When looking for news online, which of the following do you tend to pay most attention to? [Q_Journalists_4] Which of the following comes closest to how you think journalists should use social media like Twitter and Facebook? [Base: Specific news brands=885, Specific journalists=305, They should stick to reporting the news=1065, They should be able to express their personal opinion=694]

THOSE SUBSCRIBING TO TWO NEWS SERVICES HAS INCREASED BY 13%

Among those who subscribe to a digital news service, about half (48%) subscribed to only one, 37% subscribed to two and 15% subscribed to three or more services. In the past year, the number of people subscribing to one fell (-6) and those subscribing to two increased (+13), suggesting a rise in the number of subscriptions among those who used to subscribe to only one (see **figure 8.7**).

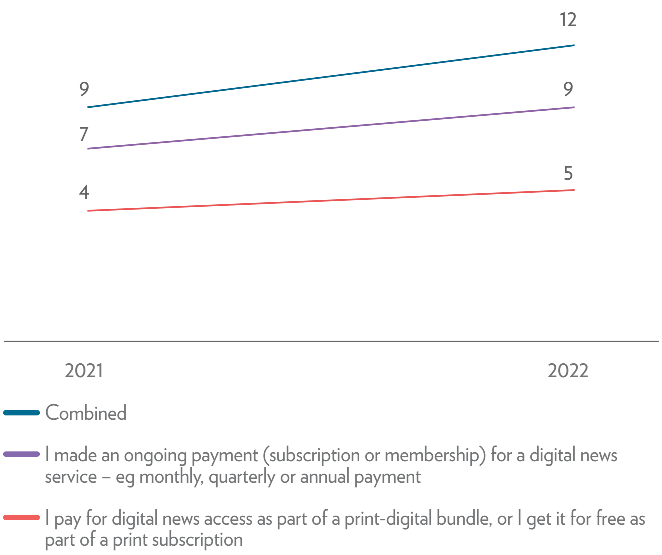
There are other signs of a modest but consistent growth in digital news subscriptions. Digital news subscription is growing faster than print/digital bundles, which indicates that people may be gradually converting to digital-only subscriptions (see **figure 8.8**).

FIGURE 8.7: NUMBER OF NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS 2021-2022 (%)



[Q7_SUBS] You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year. How many different news providers do you pay money to in this way? [Base: N=255]

FIGURE 8.8: COMBINED ONGOING PAYMENT FOR DIGITAL NEWS SERVICES 2021-2022 (%)

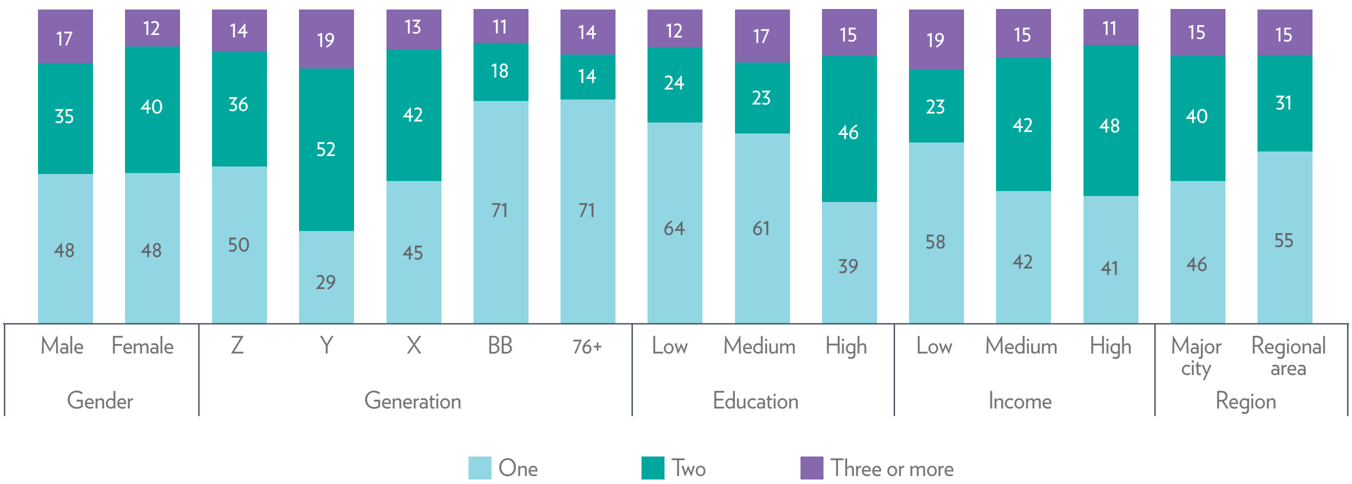


[Base: N=2,038]

YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SUBSCRIBE TO MULTIPLE NEWS SERVICES

Among those who subscribe to digital news, more than two-thirds (71%) of Gen Y subscribe to two or more services. News consumers with high education and incomes and city dwellers are more likely to subscribe to two or more services as well. Baby Boomers and those 76+ (71%) are most likely to subscribe to only one (see **figure 8.9**).

FIGURE 8.9: NEWS SUBSCRIBERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS AMONG THOSE WHO SUBSCRIBE (%)



[Base: N=255]

Of the 250 respondents who subscribe to an ongoing digital news subscription, we asked which brands they were subscribing to. The top brand was *The Australian* (24%) followed by the Guardian Australia (19%) and *Herald Sun* (18%) (see **table 8.1**).

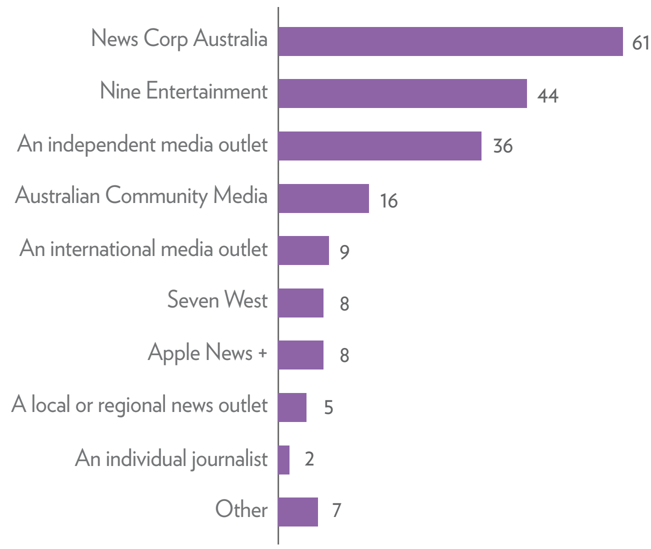
Overall, 61% subscribed to News Corp owned news services, 44% Nine Entertainment and 36% to independent news outlets such as the Guardian Australia, Crikey or The Saturday Paper. A small number (2%) subscribed to individual journalists' podcasts, YouTube channels, or newsletters (see **figure 8.10**).

TABLE 8.1: DIGITAL NEWS SERVICE SUBSCRIBERS BY PUBLICATION

Brand	N	%	Brand	N	%
The Australian	61	24	*Brisbane Times*	25	10
Guardian Australia	48	19	*The Mercury*	24	10
Herald Sun	45	18	Crikey	24	10
The Age	43	17	The Monthly	22	9
Daily Telegraph	41	16	*Canberra Times*	21	8
Courier-Mail	41	16	Perth Now	21	8
Australian Financial Review	40	16	Apple News +	21	8
Sydney Morning Herald	39	16	*The Saturday Paper*	19	8
The Advertiser	32	13	WA Today	18	7
Newcastle Herald	25	10	The Conversation	16	6

[Q7_SUBS_name_2022] You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year... Which of the following did you subscribe to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=250]

FIGURE 8.10: NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS (%)

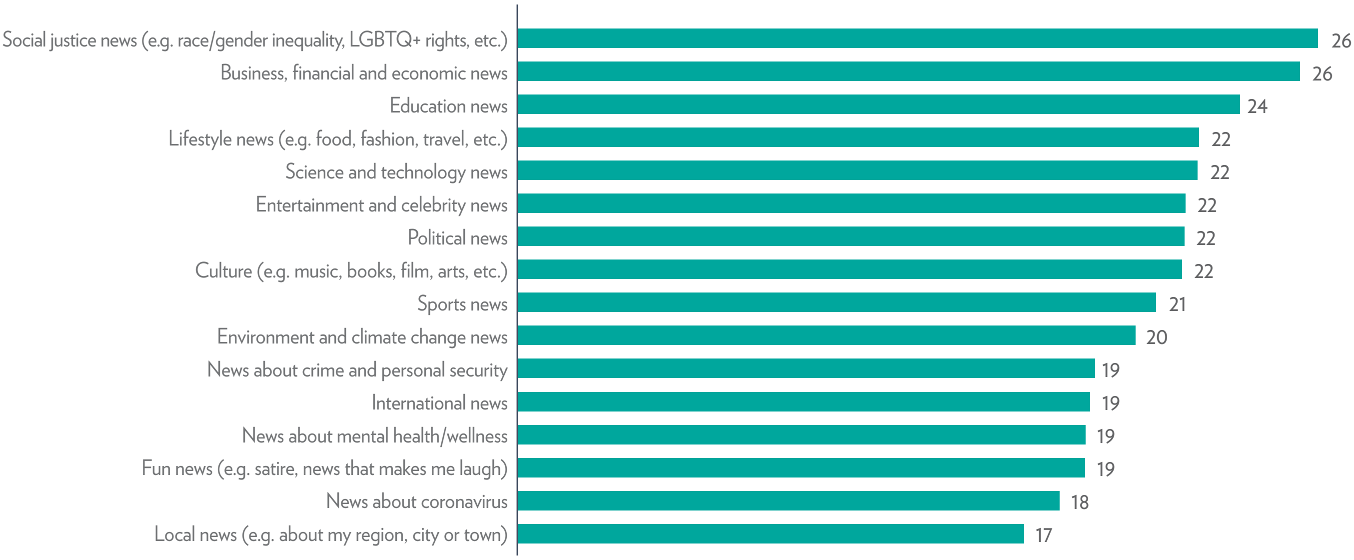


[Q7_SUBS_name_2022] You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year... Which of the following did you subscribe to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=250]

THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN SOCIAL JUSTICE, FINANCIAL, AND EDUCATION NEWS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO PAY FOR NEWS

News consumers who are interested in social justice news, business news, and education news are the most likely to pay for online news. Among those who say they are interested in social justice news, a quarter (26%) pay for online news. In contrast, only 17% of those who say they are interested in local news pay. Even though international and local news are the most popular topics, the proportion of people who pay is smaller. This implies that topics such as local news or Covid-19 news are essential news that news consumers think should be free to all, whereas business/finance, education, science, lifestyle topics are more specialist topics that they are willing to pay for (see **figure 8.11**).

FIGURE 8.11: PAY BY PROPORTION INTERESTED IN NEWS TOPICS (%)



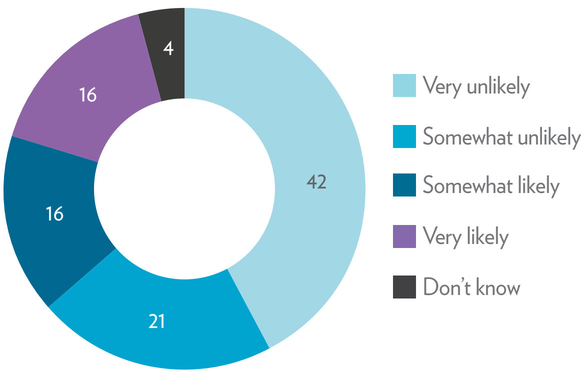
[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

THERE IS LITTLE INTEREST IN PAYING FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

About 17% of news consumers are getting news via email newsletters or alerts (see **Chapter 6**). The main reasons for getting newsletters or alerts are because of convenience and to get diverse viewpoints on issues. However, the majority of email newsletter subscribers think of it as a free add-on service. Among email newsletter subscribers, only 32% say they may pay for them in the future (see **figure 8.12**).

Email newsletter subscribers
42% **very unlikely to pay**

FIGURE 8.12: LIKELIHOOD TO PAY FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS IN THE FUTURE AMONG THOSE WHO SAY THEY ACCESS NEWS VIA EMAIL NEWSLETTERS (%)



[QEmail_pay] Most email newsletters are currently free, but how likely or unlikely is it that you'd be prepared to pay in the future for a newsletter that you like? [Base: N=347]

Those who already pay for news are more likely to pay for email newsletters in the future (see **figure 8.13**).

Similar to general digital news subscription, men, younger people, high income earners and city dwellers are more likely to pay for email newsletters in the future (see **figure 8.14**).

FIGURE 8.13: LIKELIHOOD TO PAY FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS IN THE FUTURE BY PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)

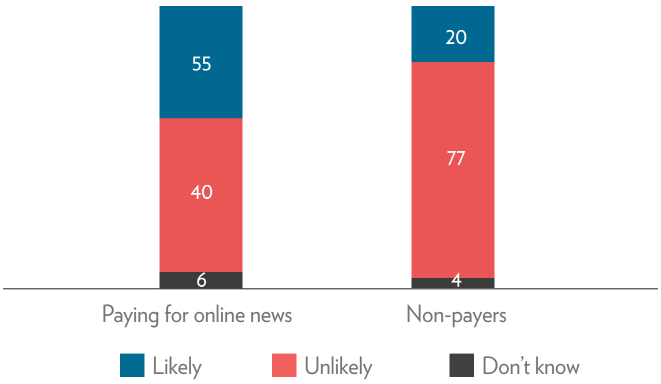
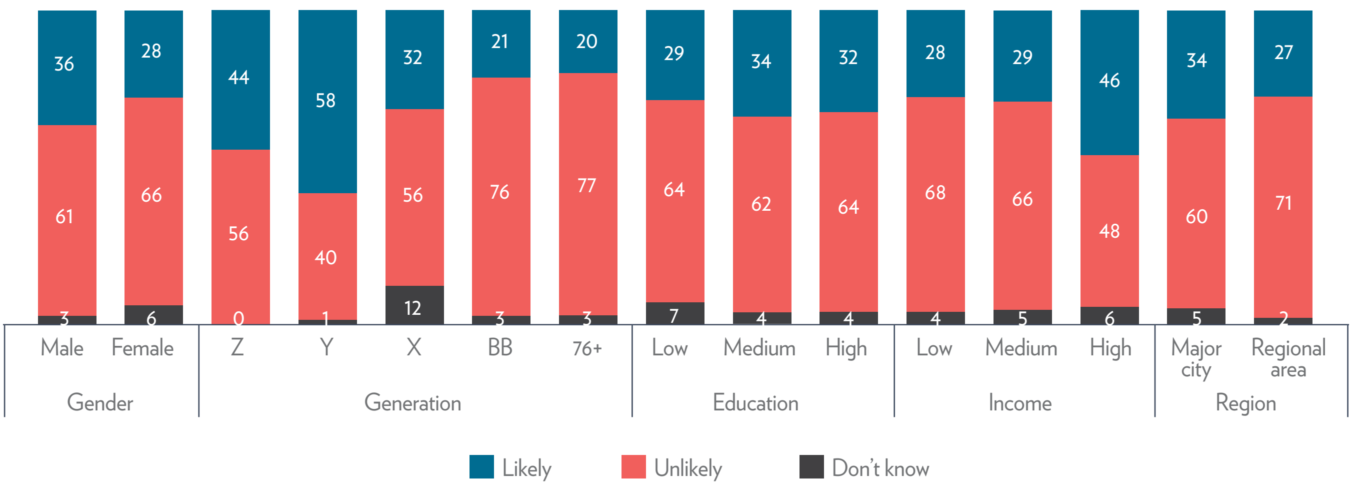


FIGURE 8.14: LIKELIHOOD OF PAYING FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS IN THE FUTURE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



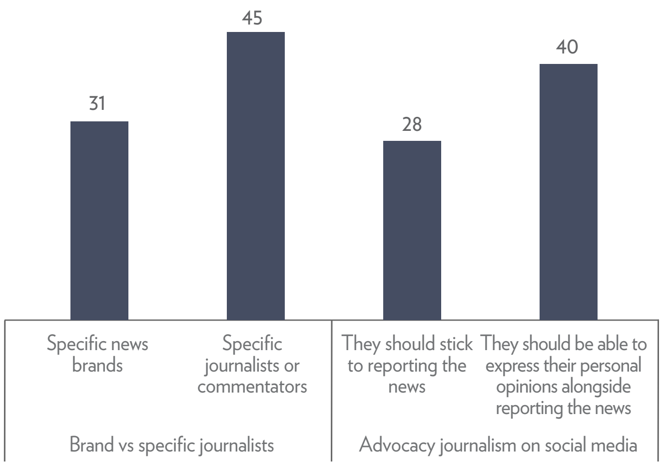
[QEmail_pay] Most email newsletters are currently free, but how likely or unlikely is it that you'd be prepared to pay in the future for a newsletter that you like? [Base: N=347]

Those who pay more attention to journalists or commentators rather than brands are the most willing to pay for newsletters in the future (45%). Those who support journalists expressing their opinions on social media are also much more willing to pay for newsletters (40%) compared to those who think reporters should stick to reporting (28%) (see **figure 8.15**).

58% of Gen Y

Likely to pay for newsletters

FIGURE 8.15: LIKELIHOOD OF PAYING FOR EMAIL NEWSLETTERS IN THE FUTURE BY PREFERENCE FOR BRANDS OR JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALIST ADVOCACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)



[Q_Journalists_1] When looking for news online, which of the following do you tend to pay most attention to? [Q_Journalists_4] Which of the following comes closest to how you think journalists should use social media like Twitter and Facebook? [Base: Specific news brands=885, Specific journalists=305, They should stick to reporting the news=1065, They should be able to express their personal opinions=694]

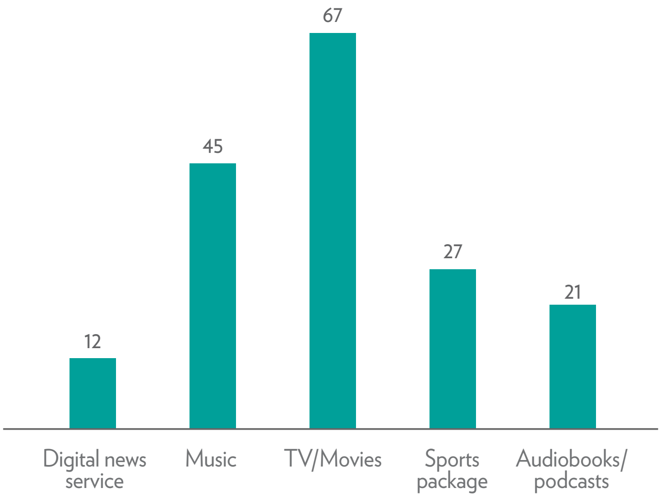
SUBSCRIPTION TO DIGITAL MEDIA SERVICES

TWO-THIRDS PAY FOR VIDEO STREAMING SERVICES

This year we asked respondents how many digital services they subscribe to including: music (e.g. Spotify, Apple Music, Deezer, etc.), TV/movies (e.g. Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, Disney+, Stan, Foxtel, etc.), sports packages (e.g. Kayo, Optus Sport, etc.), and audiobooks/Podcasts (e.g. Audible, Curio, etc.). More than two-thirds (67%) are paying for video streaming services, 45% are paying for music, 27% sport, and 21% audiobooks or podcasts. News is the least popular type of subscription service people pay for with only 12% paying for an ongoing subscription including print/digital bundles (see **figure 8.16**). This echos previous findings of the *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* which showed Australians prioritise subscriptions to entertainment services over news.

Gen Y are the most active subscribers to online media services; 84% subscribe to video streaming services, 43% subscribe to audiobooks/podcasts, and 18% to digital news services (see **figure 8.17**). The popularity of TV/Movies streaming across generations suggests the market may be approaching saturation.

FIGURE 8.16: ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS (%)



[Q_Sub_fatigue1] There are many different online media subscriptions you can pay for these days. How many of the following online media subscriptions do you currently have, if any, that you pay for with your own money? [Base: N=2,038] *Digital news service combines those who made an ongoing payment and who pay for digital news access as part of a print-digital bundle, or get it for free as part of a print subscription.

FIGURE 8.17: ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS BY GENERATION (%)

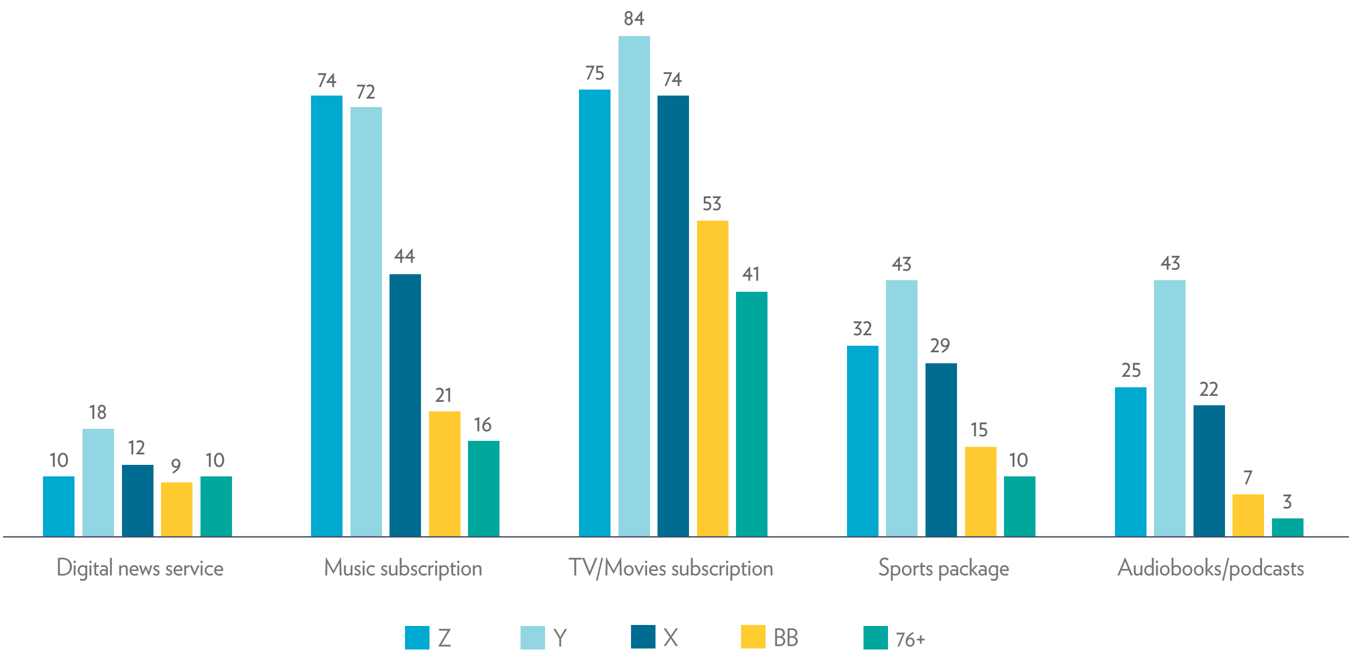
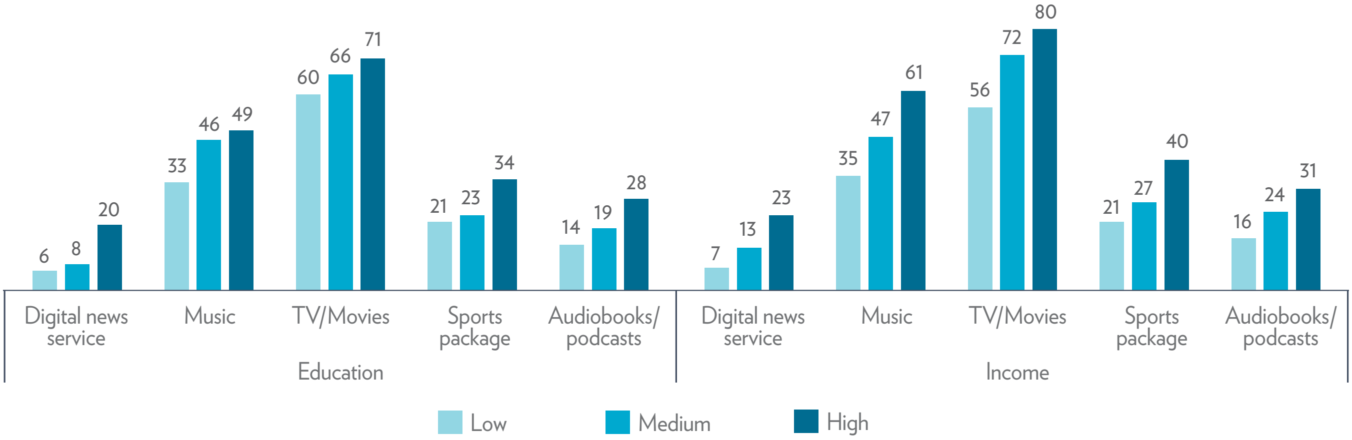


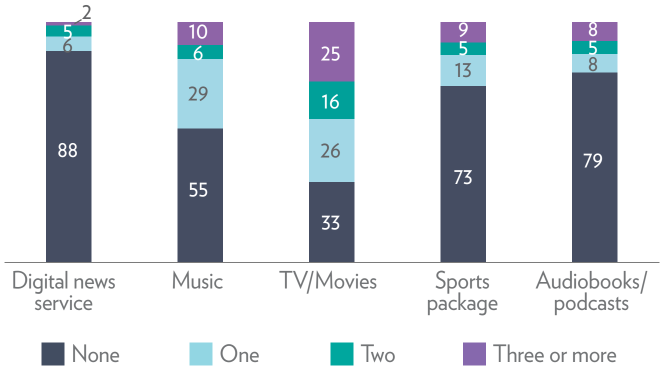
FIGURE 8.18: ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS BY EDUCATION AND INCOME (%)



There is a clear trend that education and income are significant factors in decisions to subscribe to online media. Those with high income (23%) and education (20%) are more than three times as likely to subscribe to a digital news service compared to those with low income and education (see **figure 8.18**).

A quarter of news consumers (25%) subscribe to three or more video streaming services. However, in all other types of online media services, only a small number of news consumers subscribe to more than one (see **figure 8.19**).

FIGURE 8.19: NUMBER OF ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS (%)

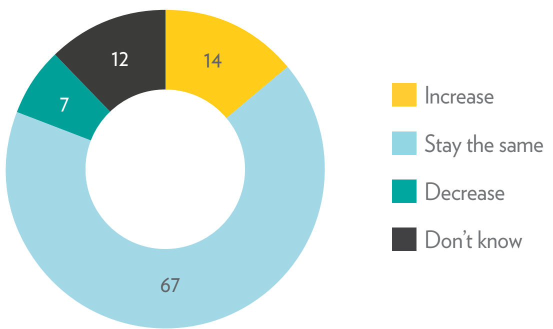


YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO INCREASE THEIR ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS

We asked respondents if they expect to change the number of their online media subscriptions. The majority (67%) say their subscription will remain the same, and only 14% say it will increase in the next year (see **figure 8.20**).

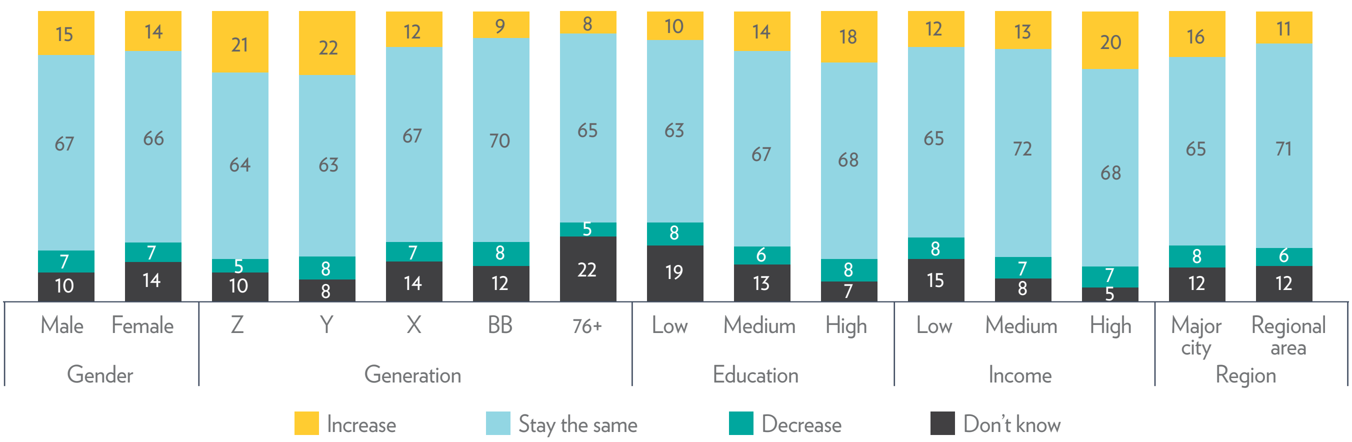
About one-fifth (21%) of Gen Z and 22% of Gen Y say they will increase their online media subscriptions in the next year. High income earners are also more likely to say they will increase their subscriptions (see **figure 8.21**).

FIGURE 8.20: INTENT TO PAY IN THE FUTURE (%)



[Q_Sub_fatigue2a] In the next year, do you expect the number of online media subscriptions you pay for with your own money to increase, decrease, or stay the same? [Base: N=2,038]

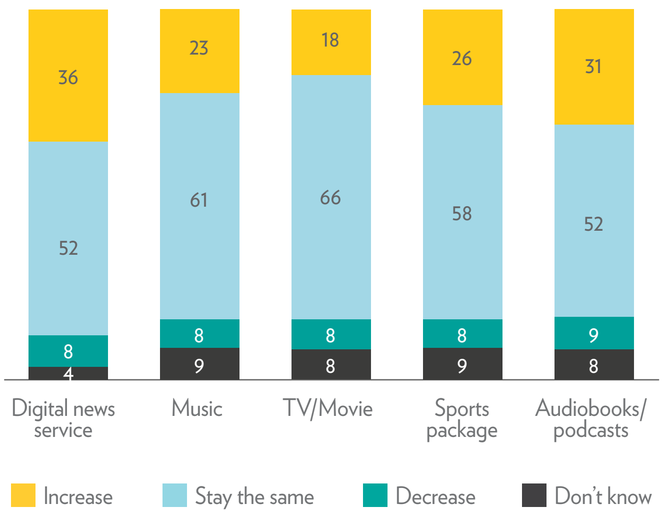
FIGURE 8.21: INTENT TO PAY IN THE FUTURE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



THOSE PAYING FOR NEWS SAY THEY WILL INCREASE THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS

Those who already pay for digital news services (36%) are the most likely to say they will increase their payment for all online media services in the coming year. While this does not necessarily mean they will increase payment in news services, it does show the capacity of digital news subscribers (see **figure 8.22**).

FIGURE 8.22: INTENT TO PAY IN THE FUTURE BY TYPE OF ONLINE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTION (%)



SUMMARY

This year's data reveal promising signs that digital news subscriptions are gradually growing, and news consumers are acquiring the habit of subscribing to digital news content. After a period of stagnation, there has been has been a 5 percentage point increase in the proportion of Australians paying for online news (18%). This rise is the highest among Gen Y (+12). However, very few indicate that they will increase the number of online media subscriptions they pay for in the near future. This may be a short-term lift.

Opinion appears to be linked to pay. Those who are interested in specialised news topics, or support journalists expressing their opinion on social media are more likely to pay for news. Income seems to be an important factor as well, reflecting the importance of affordability to subscribing to news.

Australians continue to prioritise entertainment over news when it comes to digital media subscriptions. People are much more likely to subscribe to video streaming services, music, sport or audiobooks/podcasts than to news. Subscription VOD household penetration in Australia has increased from 43% in 2018 to 70% in 2021[1]. With only one in ten paying for an ongoing subscription to a digital news service there is plenty of room for the market to grow.

There are signs of a post-Covid recovery in the media sector as advertising revenues are slowly bouncing back. However, it is clearly an uneven recovery, with print newspaper revenues declining[2]. More than 230 Australian newsrooms have seen consolidation or job losses since January 2019, of which 70% were in the regions[3]. On the other hand, there are signs of growth in news subscription. News Corp experienced a 25% digital subscriber growth in 2021[4] and Australian Community Media's digital subscriber base grew 49%[5]. This is reflected in this year's report with a growth in online subscriptions among print and online news consumers.

The above data suggest that paying for news in Australia continues to be complicated by shifting industry and market dynamics. It's likely there is no silver bullet to solving the crisis of funding journalism. However, the strong desire for opinion and specialist news as well as a growing appetite for paying for digital services suggests many possible roads to recovery.

[1] Media Consumer Survey 2021. https://www2.deloitte.com/au/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/media-consumer-survey.html

[2] PwC Australia. (2021). Australian Entertainment & Media Outlook 2021-2025. https://www.pwc.com.au/industry/entertainment-and-media-trends-analysis/outlook.html

[3] The Australian News Mapping Project https://anmp.piji.com.au/

[4] https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/news-corp-australia-lost-60-7-million-last-year-but-subscription-revenue-is-growing-20211104-p595v8.html

[5] https://mumbrella.com.au/acm-boasts-49-annual-growth-in-digital-subscribers-700474

COMMENTARY

JOURNALISM WORTH PAYING FOR

Lisa Davies, CEO, *AAP*

If the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022* is anything to go by, Australian consumers seem to be slowly understanding that journalism - especially online journalism - is worth paying for. This is not only good news for individual publishers but also for the sustainability of the media industry, which has struggled with digital disruption for two decades.

This year's report continues the increasing trend of news consumers saying they paid for online journalism in the past year. This is particularly noticeable with younger Australians, with almost one-third of GenY respondents now paying for news.

For publishers like Australian Associated Press (AAP), both these findings are encouraging. Predominantly a news wholesaler, we provide broad baseline content for print and digital outlets around the country and overseas, through our partner agencies. For our subscribers to survive in the long-term, they need readers to value their service. More and more, publishers are relying on AAP to provide a wide range of state and national content, allowing their editors to focus finite resources into the local journalism, opinion or investigative reporting that sets them apart from their competitors. It is especially encouraging to see a 13 percent increase in those who subscribe to two news outlets; and the findings that younger Australians are increasingly paying for news means that trajectory should continue.

The results appear to support AAP's recent decision to tentatively dip a toe into the water of the consumer-facing market, via our AAPNews platform (website and app). The project had its genesis in 2020 when AAP's then-shareholders, NewsCorp and Nine (formerly Fairfax Media) elected to dissolve the ownership agreement.

The public outcry for the 86-year-old company, a trusted and objective news service supporting more than 450 news organisations around the country, was profound.

Ultimately saved by a group of philanthropists and restructured as a not-for-profit company (with DGR status), AAP was also inundated with offers of support from the general public, asking how they could help. A donation was one immediate way, but the sentiment also led to the creation of a bespoke news platform for our supporters, for a fee. There is no intention for it to be Australia's number one news site, far from it - just a service with each day's major stories produced in line with AAP's unofficial motto: *no spin, no agenda, just the news.*

The *Digital News Report* also reveals that those who follow individual journalists (as opposed to a news brand) are more likely to pay for news. This is unsurprising, because news consumers want to feel aligned with an individual they respect, and an affinity with their views. A news consumer who follows a certain journalist, therefore, might subscribe to their outlet for direct access to their specific work, and if they are part of the increasing number of people subscribing to two news services then they might look to a generalist publication or service to provide a broader perspective on the daily news cycle. We would hope AAPNews is one such secondary platform, as we intend it to be complementary to existing news subscriptions.

It is heartening to see that among the digital news services most subscribed to are the major regional publications, including the *Newcastle Herald, The Mercury* and the *Canberra Times*. Indeed, the publisher of those three mastheads, Australian Community Media (ACM), has the fourth highest number of subscribers after NewsCorp Australia, Nine Entertainment, and a grouping of people who claim to subscribe to an independent media outlet.

This can only be good news for regional journalism, something AAP works incredibly hard to support.

Media diversity is increasingly under threat in this country, with the figures in the report clearly showing that NewsCorp and Nine are by far the dominant forces in the Australian media landscape. Without AAP and its services, the majority of regional publications (via ACM) and the smaller, independent new market entrants would likely be forced to close - cutting off millions of Australians from accessing factual, objective, independent journalism.

AAP's operating model of a combined commercial and not-for-profit business is unique. Generous philanthropic support allows us to not only increase the value of our service for subscribers by adding specialist reporting teams, but also reduce our reliance on government handouts. In building a sustainable model through a combination of our commercial business and philanthropic support, the national newswire can continue to be the primary supporter of media diversity and ensure Australia retains the robust democracy it deserves.

9 AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD

- More Australians are interested in local news (67%) than the global average (60%).
- Australians are among the least likely in the world to say they are interested in news about climate change and the environment (36%) and less likely to pay attention to it (18%).
- Australia goes against the global trend with an increase in the experience of Covid-19 misinformation to 42% (+4).
- Australians are slightly less interested in political news (45%) than the global average (47%) and are more likely to avoid news because there is too much coverage about politics and coronavirus (49%; 42% global average).
- Australians are among the most likely in the world to say they use news because they have a duty to keep themselves informed about the news (45%; 36% global average).

EXPERIENCE OF COVID-19 MIS- AND DISINFORMATION FALLS GLOBALLY, BUT RISES IN AUSTRALIA

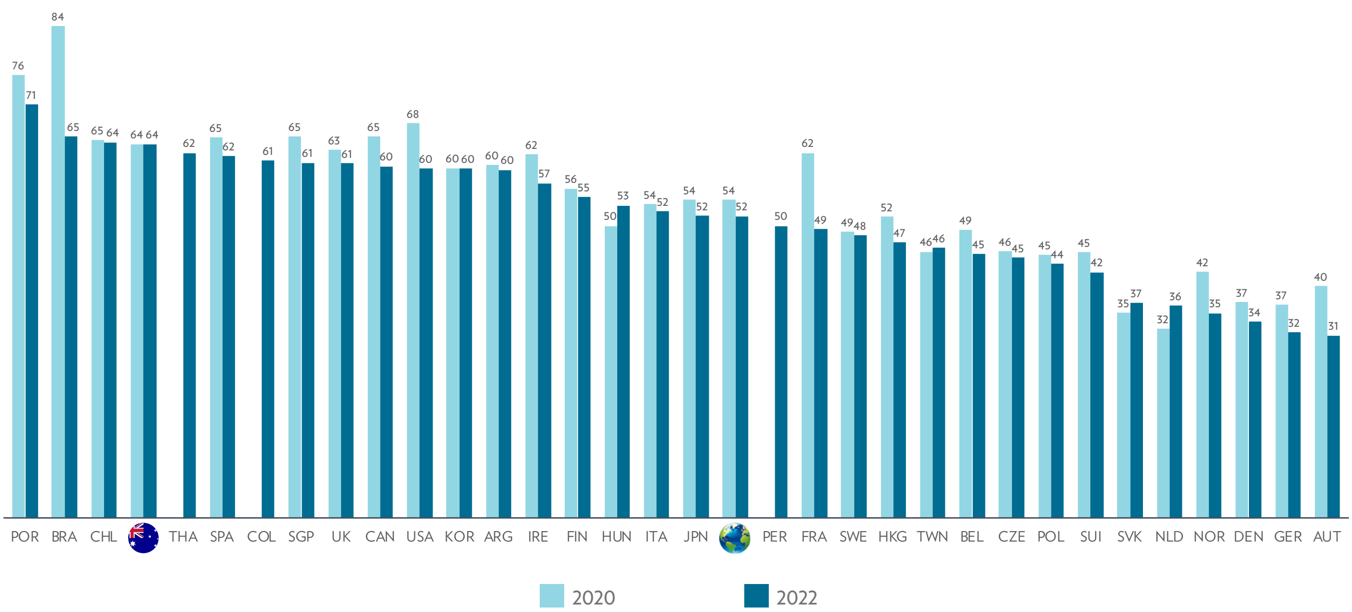
Last year, Australians' experiences of Covid-19 misinformation were among the lowest globally. This year, this has increased to 42% (+4), whilst in most other countries the experience fell (-6 global average) (see **figure 9.1**).

Although Australian respondents' experiences of misinformation have increased, their levels of concern remain stable (64%). Compared with other markets Australians are consistently much more concerned about mis- and disinformation. While concern peaked in Brazil at 84% in 2020 it has since dropped considerably (-19), as it has in France (-13), the United States (-8), and Canada (-5). Globally concern fell (-4) (see **figure 9.2**).

FIGURE 9.1: EXPERIENCE OF MISINFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19 2021-2022 (%)

[Q_FAKE_NEWS_2021a] Have you seen false or misleading information about any of the following topics, in the last week? Coronavirus (COVID-19) [Base: N=67,224]

FIGURE 9.2: CONCERN ABOUT MIS- AND DISINFORMATION 2020-2022 (%)



[Q_FAKE_NEWS_1] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet." Strongly agree/ Tend to agree. [Base: N=67,224]
*Note, 2020 figures are among 31 countries [N=60,026]

AUSTRALIANS ARE LESS INTERESTED IN AND CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE COMPARED WITH OTHER MARKETS

This year we asked respondents their level of concern about climate change in five markets. Concern about climate change has decreased in all five markets, since 2020, but more in Japan and the US. Australians (52%) are still less concerned about climate change than participants in Korea and the UK. However, Americans (46%) are among the least concerned about climate change (see **figure 9.3**).

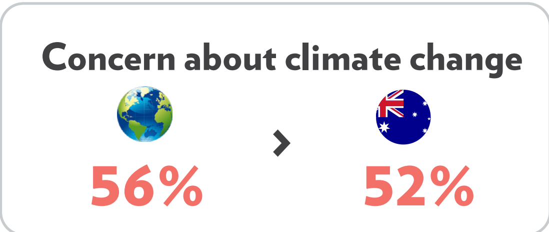
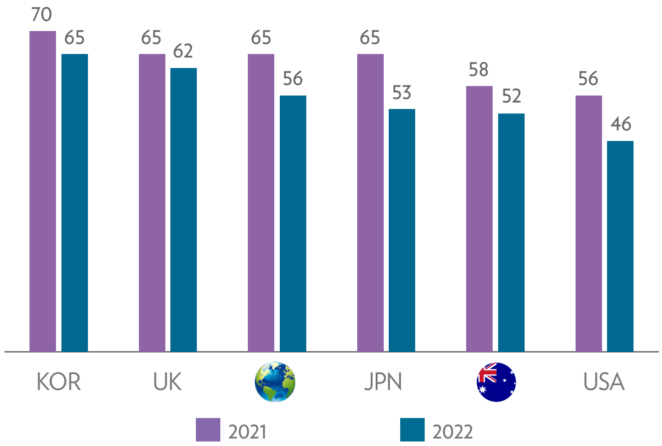


FIGURE 9.3: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE 2020-2022 (%)

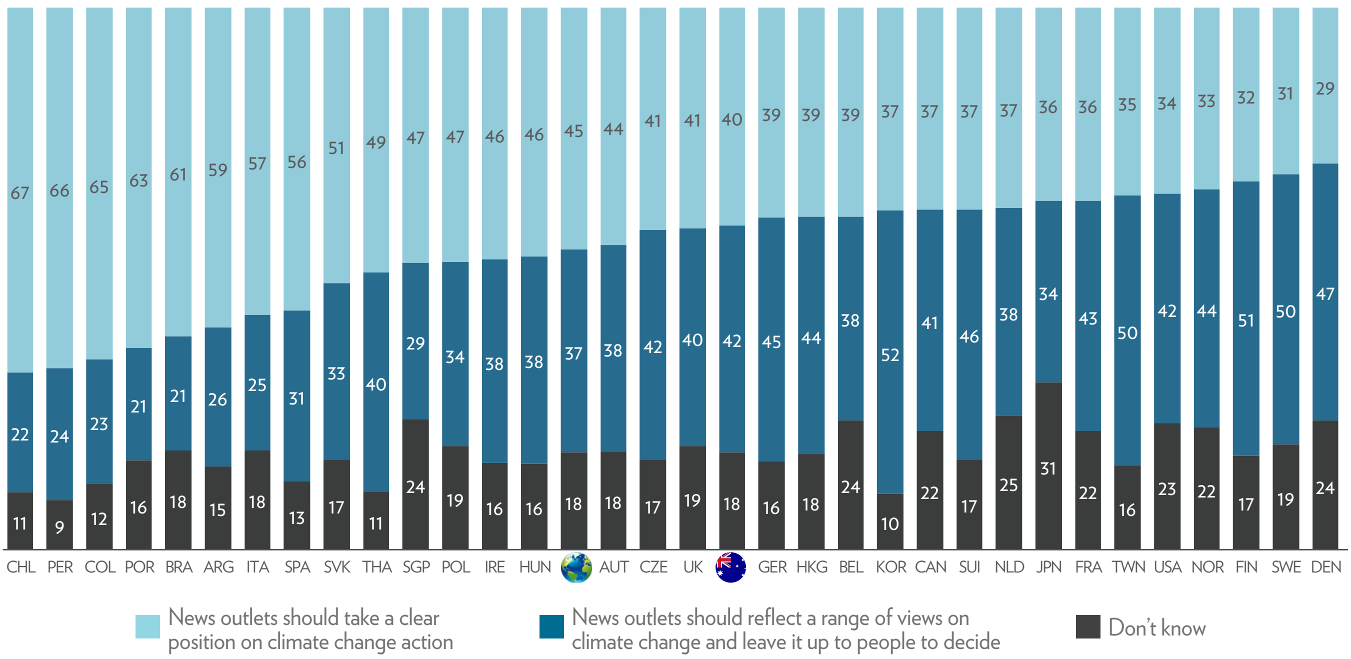


[C1_2020] How serious a problem, if at all, do you think climate change is? Extremely/Very serious [Base: N=10,525] *In 2022, this question was only asked in 5 markets

AUSTRALIANS ARE LESS SUPPORTIVE OF NEWS MEDIA TAKING A CLEAR POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION

Australians (40%) are less likely than the global average (45%) to say news outlets should take a clear position on climate change action. Compared with many other markets, Australians are more evenly split between those who believe news should take a position (40%) and those who say they should leave it up to people to decide (42%). Audiences in Chile (67%), Peru (66%), Columbia (65%), Portugal (63%) and Brazil (61%) are much more decisively in favour of taking a clear position on climate action (see **figure 9.4**).

FIGURE 9.4: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE (%)



[QAdvocacy_2022] Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view? [Base: N=67,224]

PROPORTION OF THOSE WHO DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS IS HIGHER THAN GLOBAL AVERAGE

Australians are among the most likely in the world to say they don't pay attention to climate change (18%). Globally, around 12% say that they do not pay attention (see **figure 9.5**).

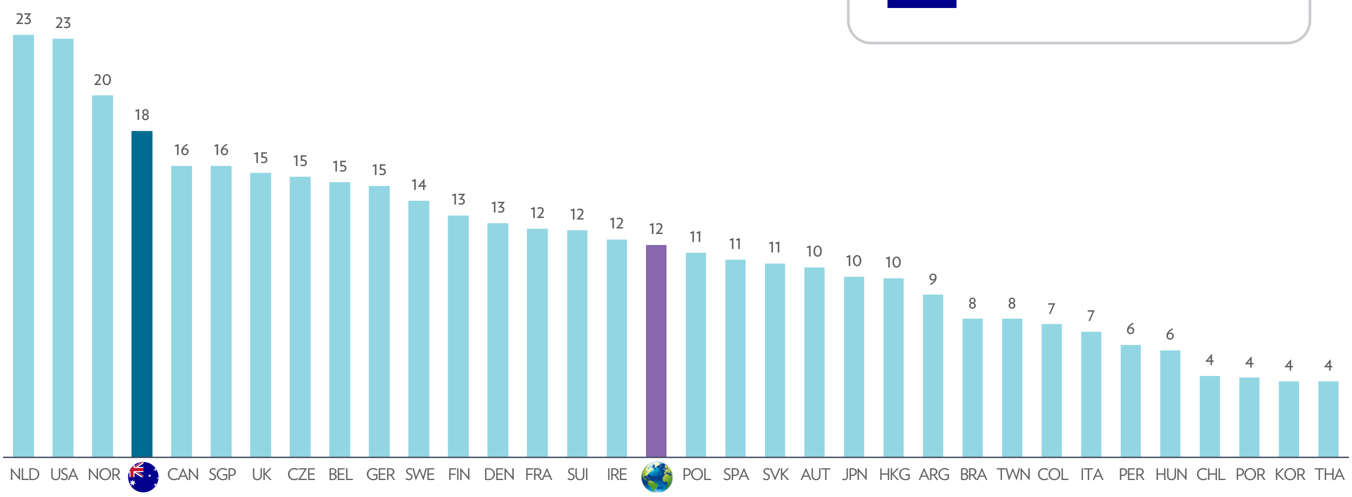
Don't pay attention

Netherlands 23%

USA 23%

Australia 18%

FIGURE 9.5: I DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS (%)

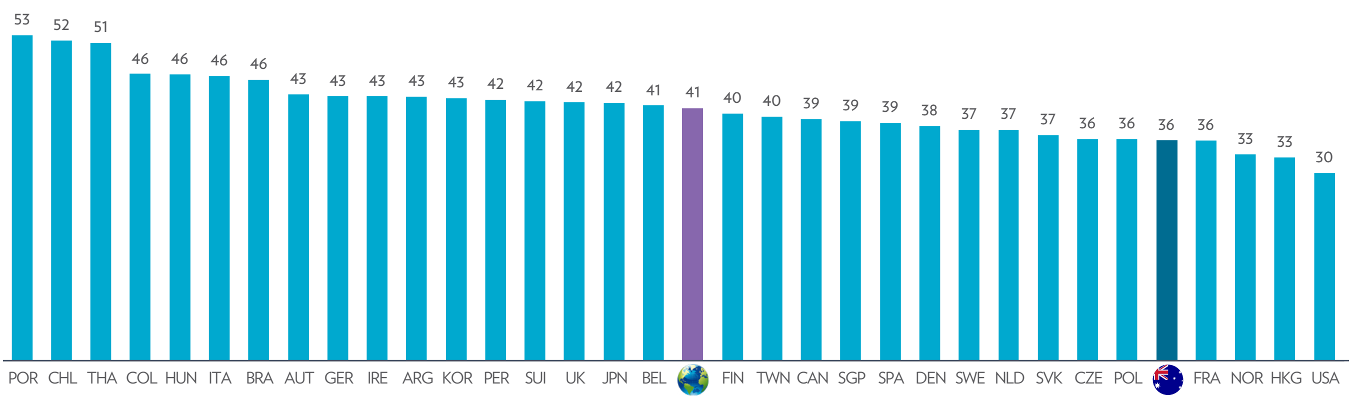


[C1_2022a] When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? 'I don't pay attention to climate change news'. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE AMONG THE LEAST INTERESTED IN NEWS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Australian audiences are also less interested in news about the environment and climate change (36%) compared with the global average (41%). News consumers in the US are the least interested (30%) (see **figure 9.6**).

FIGURE 9.6: INTEREST IN ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS (%)



[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? 'Environment and climate change news'. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE AMONG THE MOST INTERESTED IN LOCAL NEWS

By contrast, Australians are among the most interested in local news (67%) compared with the global average (60%). Fins (80%) and Swedes (73%) are the most likely to say they are interested in local news (see **figure 9.7**).

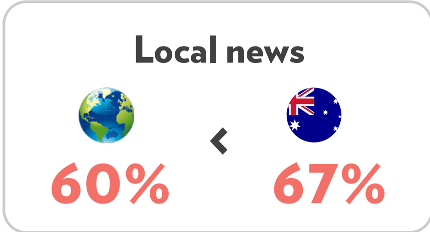
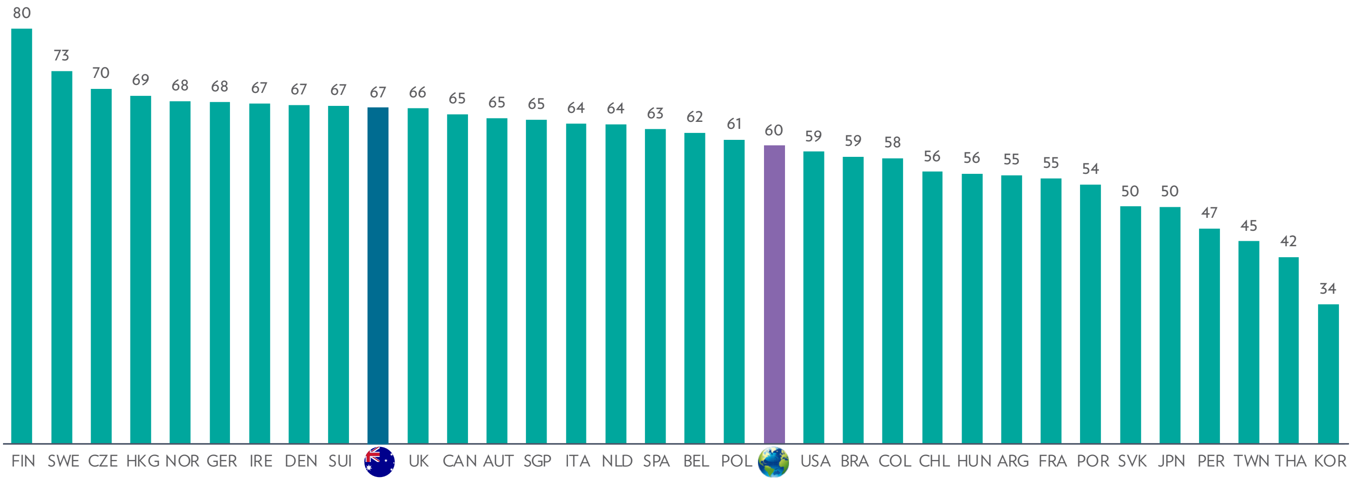


FIGURE 9.7: INTEREST IN LOCAL NEWS (%)

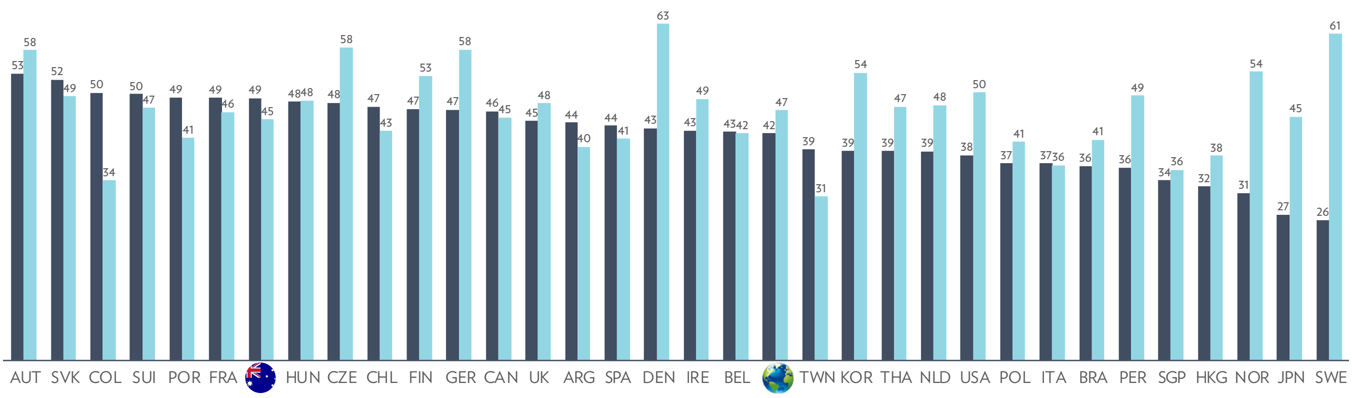


[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? 'Local News'. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO AVOID NEWS BECAUSE THERE IS TOO MUCH COVERAGE OF POLITICS AND COVID-19

Australians are more likely to avoid news because there is too much coverage of politics and coronavirus (49%) compared to the global average (42%). They are also slightly less interested in political news (45%; 47% global average). Interest in political news are much higher in Denmark (63%) and Sweden (61%) and much lower in Colombia (34%) and Taiwan (31%) (see **figure 9.8**).

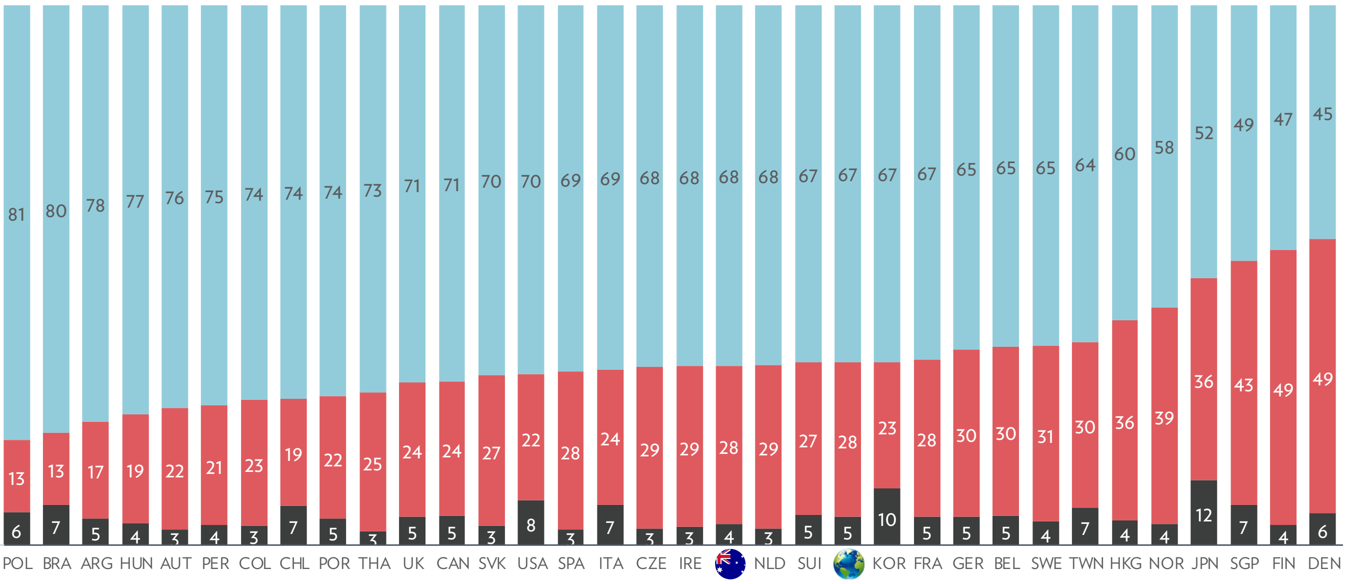
FIGURE 9.8: REASON FOR AVOIDING NEWS IS TOO MUCH COVERAGE OF POLITICS/CORONAVIRUS, AND INTEREST IN POLITICAL NEWS (%)



[Q1d_2022] Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? [Base: N=67,224] [Q1di_2017ii] Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? *Among those who avoid news [Base: N=45,301]

While Australians are more likely to say there is too much coverage of politics and Covid-19, they are only around average in terms of general news avoidance (68%). In some markets news avoidance is much less common, such as Denmark (45%) and Finland (47%) (see **figure 9.9**).

FIGURE 9.9: NEWS AVOIDANCE (%)

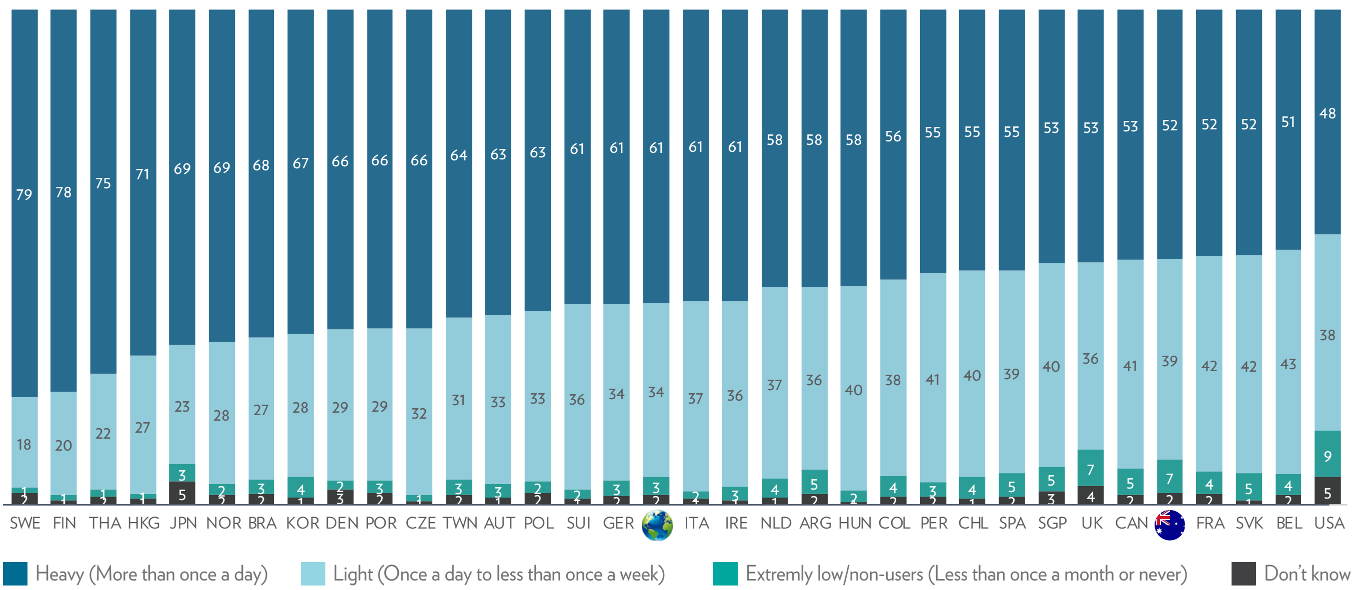


[Q1di_2017] Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE NO LONGER THE LIGHTEST NEWS CONSUMERS IN THE WORLD

While Australians are among the lightest news consumers in the world (52%) this year fewer Americans (48%) say they consume news more than once a day. Globally, 61% say they are heavy news consumers and this has fallen slightly since 2021 (-3). The heaviest news consumers continue to come from Scandinavian countries (see **figure 9.10**).

FIGURE 9.10: NEWS ACCESS (%)



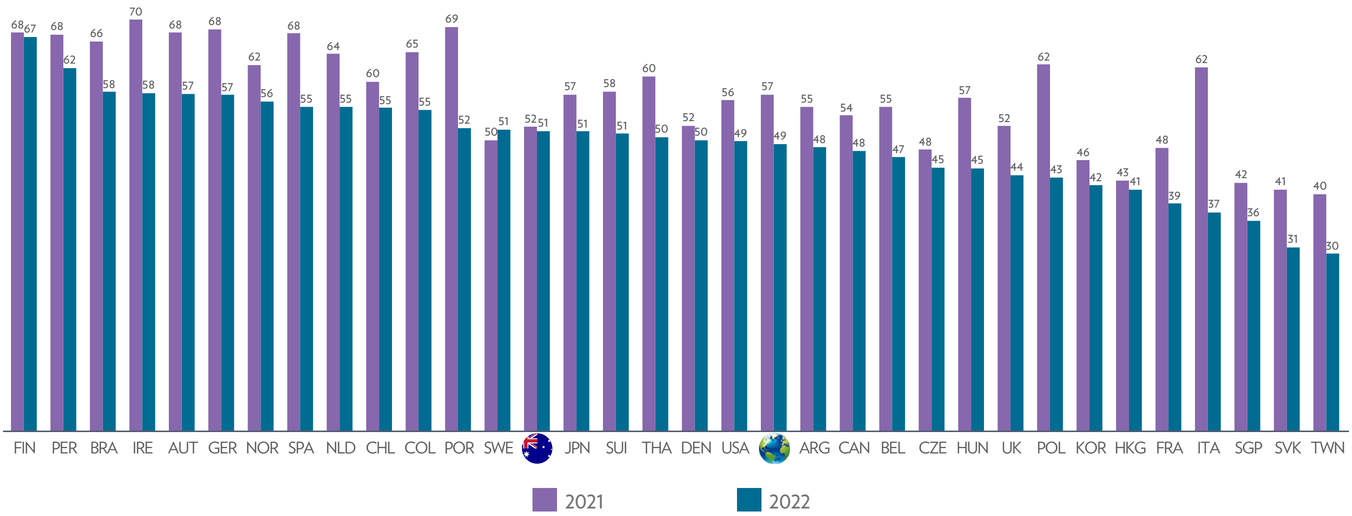
[Q1b_NEW] Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online) [Base: N=67,224]

INTEREST IN NEWS AND TRUST IN NEWS REMAIN STEADY IN AUSTRALIA, BUT SHIFT SUBSTANTIALLY ABROAD

Interest in news did not fall substantially between 2021 and 2022 in Australia. However, in many other markets news interest fell a lot. Falling levels of news interest are most noticeable in Italy (-25), Poland (-19) and Portugal (-17) (see **figure 9.11**).

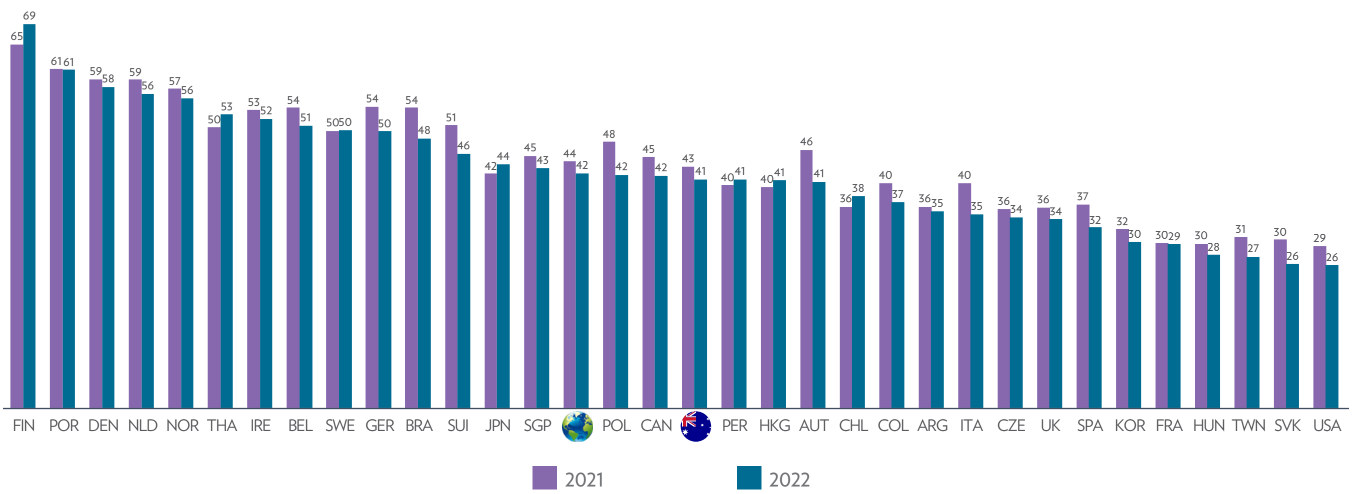
Trust in news remains steady in most markets, with a few notable exceptions. Australians (41%) general trust in news is close to the global average (42%). In the US trust fell to 26% (-3), making US audiences the lowest trusting among the 33 countries shown, alongside Slovakia (26%) (see **figure 9.12**).

FIGURE 9.11: HIGH INTEREST IN NEWS 2021-2022 (%)



[Q1c] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? *Extremely/very [Base: N=66,404]. *Figures includes very low/non news consumers.*

FIGURE 9.12: TRUST IN NEWS 2021-2022 (%)

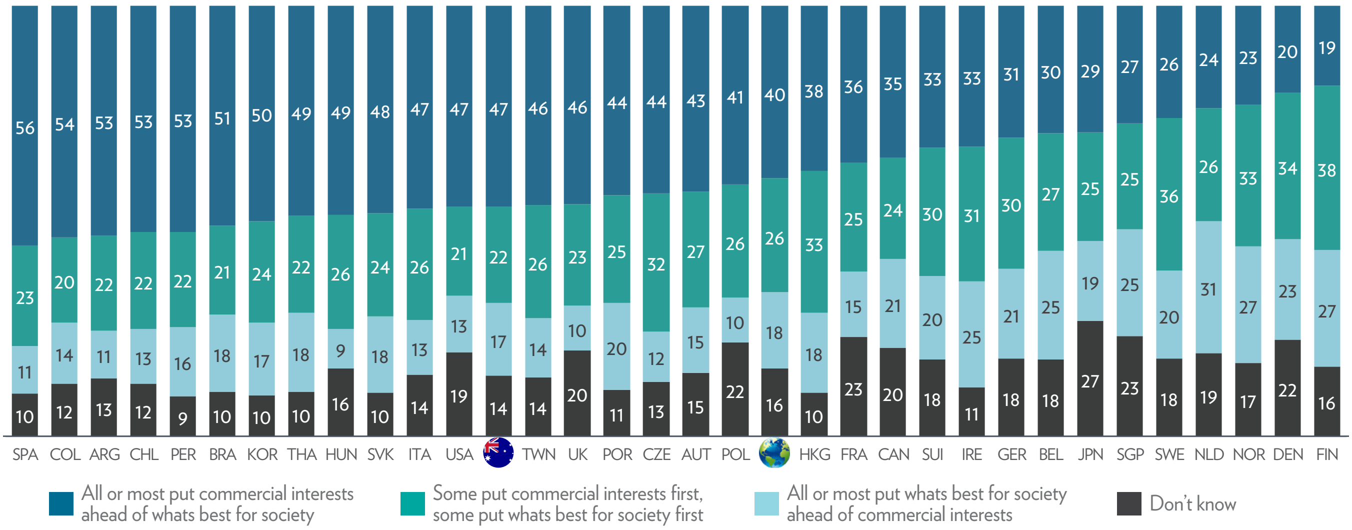


[Q6_2016_1] I think you can trust most news most of the time. Strongly agree/agree. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES OF NEWS ORGANISATIONS

Around 47% of Australians say all or most news organisations put their own commercial interests ahead of what is best for society. This is higher than the global average (40%). In some markets the proportion who say news organisations put their commercial interests first is quite low, including Finland (19%), Denmark (20%) and Norway (23%), typically countries with higher trust in news. The global average among those who say news organisations put what is best for society ahead of commercial interests is only 18%. Audiences in the Netherlands (31%) are the most optimistic about this (see **figure 9.13**). Australians are also more likely to say all or most news organisations put their political interests ahead of what is best for society (42%; 38% global average).

FIGURE 9.13: BELIEFS ABOUT NEWS MEDIA COMMERCIAL PRIORITIES (%)

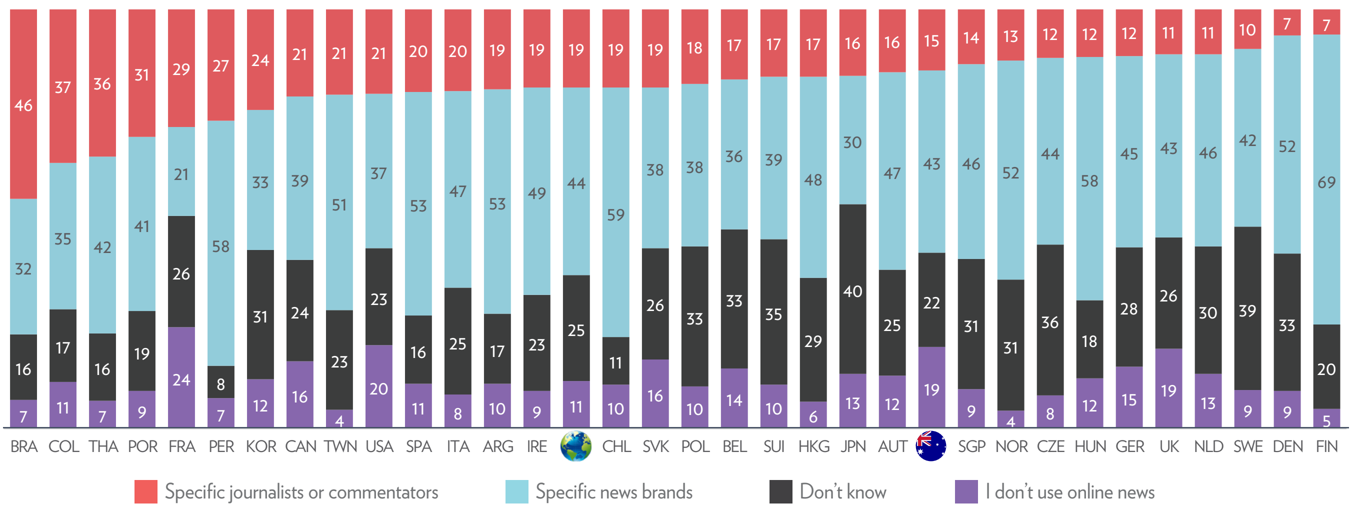


[Q_Cynicism_a] Which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country? [Base: N=67,224]

CONSUMERS IN MOST COUNTRIES PAY MORE ATTENTION TO SPECIFIC NEWS BRANDS THAN JOURNALISTS OR COMMENTATORS, INCLUDING AUSTRALIA

Australians (15%) are less likely than the global average (19%) to pay attention to specific journalists or commentators. With some countries such as Brazil (46%) and Colombia (37%) being more inclined towards specific journalists than news brands (see **figure 9.14**).

FIGURE 9.14: PREFERENCE FOR JOURNALISTS VS NEWS BRANDS (%)

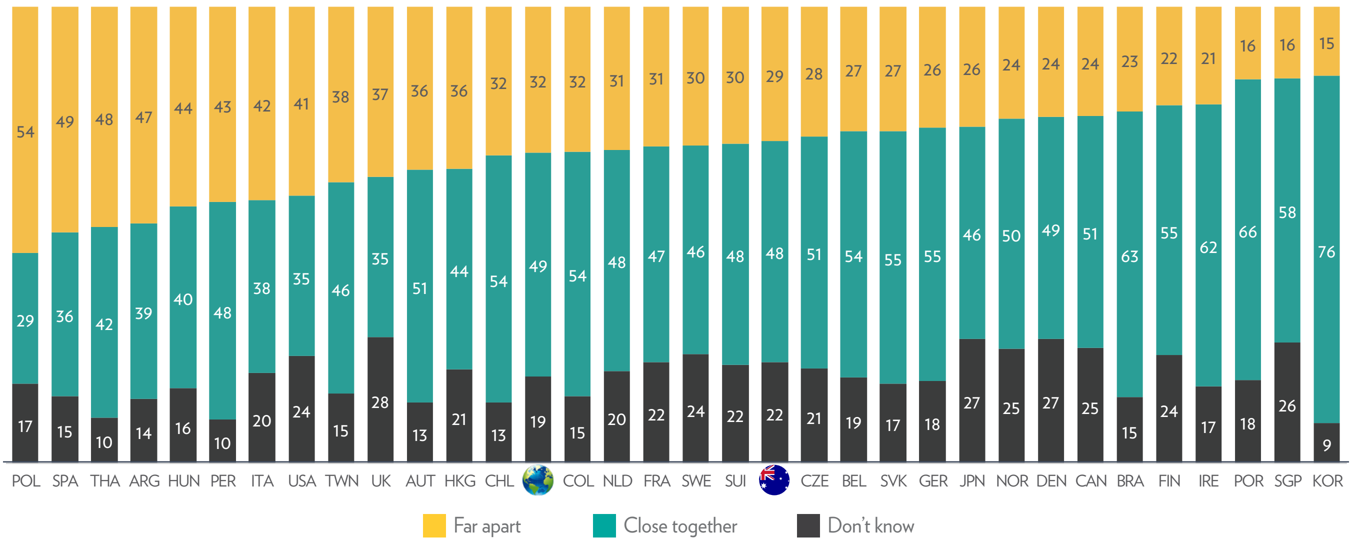


[Q_Journalists_1] When looking for news online, which of the following do you tend to pay most attention to? [Base: N=67,224]

IN MOST MARKETS AUDIENCES BELIEVE THEIR MEDIA ARE NOT POLARISED

Globally, only 32% of respondents say they believe news organisations in their country are far apart politically. This suggests in most markets, including Australia (29%), belief in media polarisation is uncommon. On average, almost half (49%) of global news consumers say news organisations in their country are politically close together. Polish consumers are the most likely to think their media is polarised. More people in the UK and the US think their countries media are politically far apart than close together (see **figure 9.15**).

FIGURE 9.15: BELIEF IN NEWS MEDIA POLARISATION (%)

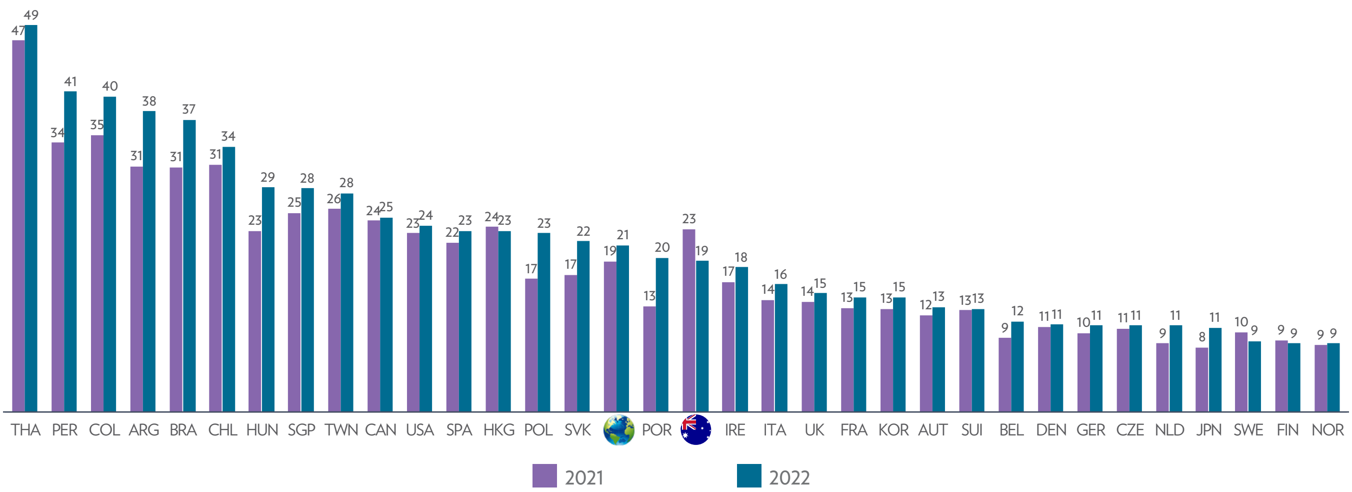


[Q_Polarisation] In your view, how _politically_ close together or far apart are the main news organisations in your country? [Base: N=67,224]

SOCIAL MEDIA INCREASES AS A MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS AROUND THE WORLD, BUT NOT IN AUSTRALIA

Social media continues to increase as a main source of news in many markets. In Peru (+6), Argentina (+7) and Brazil (+6) the rise since 2021 has been substantial. Australians (19%) are around the global average (21%) in the use of social media as a main source, but while the global average has risen slightly (+2) Australia has fallen (-4). Social media as main source fell in only two other markets, Hong Kong (-1) and Sweden (-1). Norway, Sweden and Finland (9%) continue to be among the least likely to use social media as a main source of news, while Thais (49%) are the most likely (see **figure 9.16**).

FIGURE 9.16: SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS 2021-2022 (%)

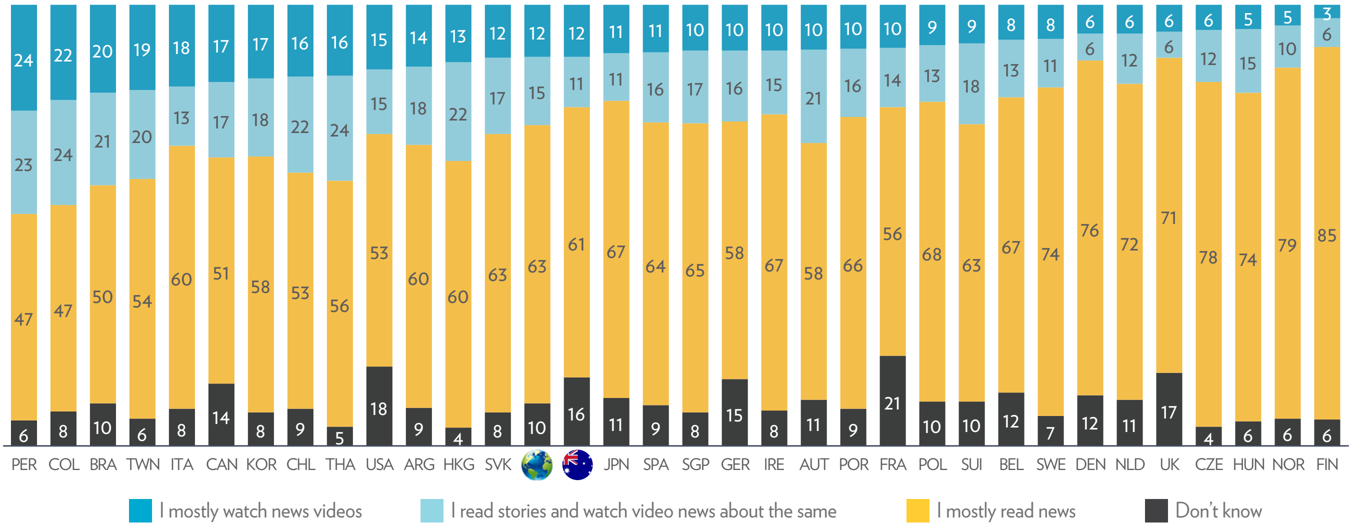


[Q4] You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube. [Base: N=63,447]

AUSTRALIANS PREFER TO READ NEWS THAN WATCH VIDEOS ONLINE, IN OTHER MARKETS PREFERENCES VARY WIDELY

Only around 12% of Australians say they mostly watch news videos while online rather than reading news stories. However, Australians are around average in this. Many countries are the same. In a handful of markets, such as Finland (3%), Norway (5%), and Hungary (5%), preference for watching news videos is particularly low. Conversely, Peruvians (47%), Colombians (47%) and Brazilians (50%) are the least inclined to say they mostly read news while online. Nevertheless, across all markets, preference for reading news is generally higher than that of news videos (see **figure 9.17**).

FIGURE 9.17: PREFERENCE FOR READING OR WATCHING ONLINE NEWS (%)



[OPTQ11D] In thinking about your _online_ news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE NOW ABOVE THE GLOBAL AVERAGE IN PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS

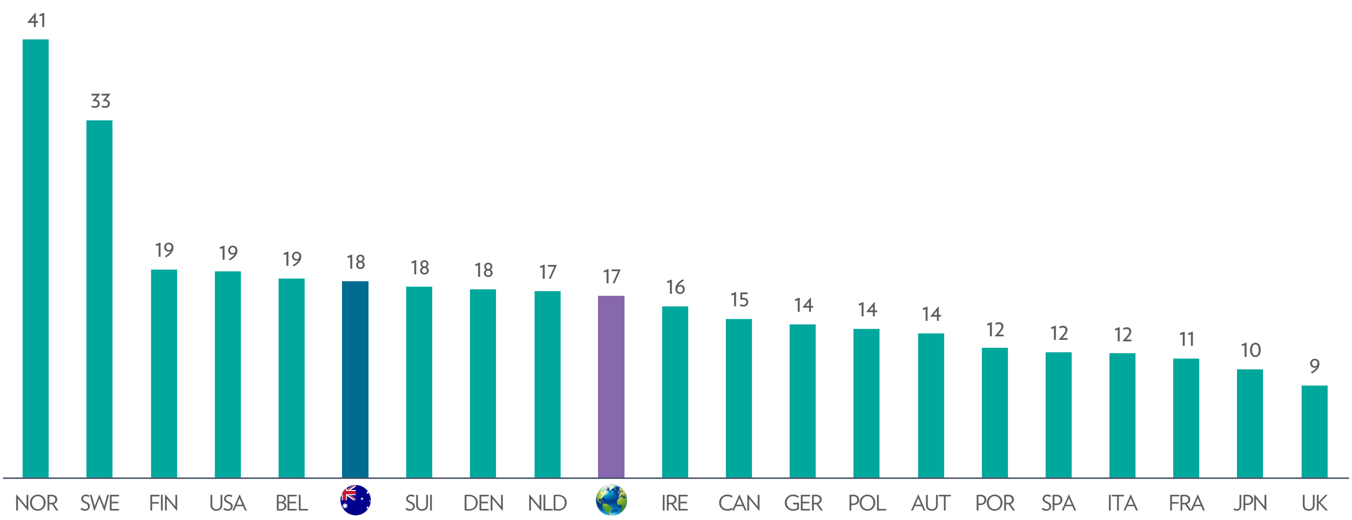
Globally, only 17% of respondents pay for online news. While paying for news increased to 18% in Australia in 2022, local audiences are still only just above average (18%) (see **figure 9.18**).

Pay for online news

Norway **41%**

Sweden **33%**

FIGURE 9.18: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)

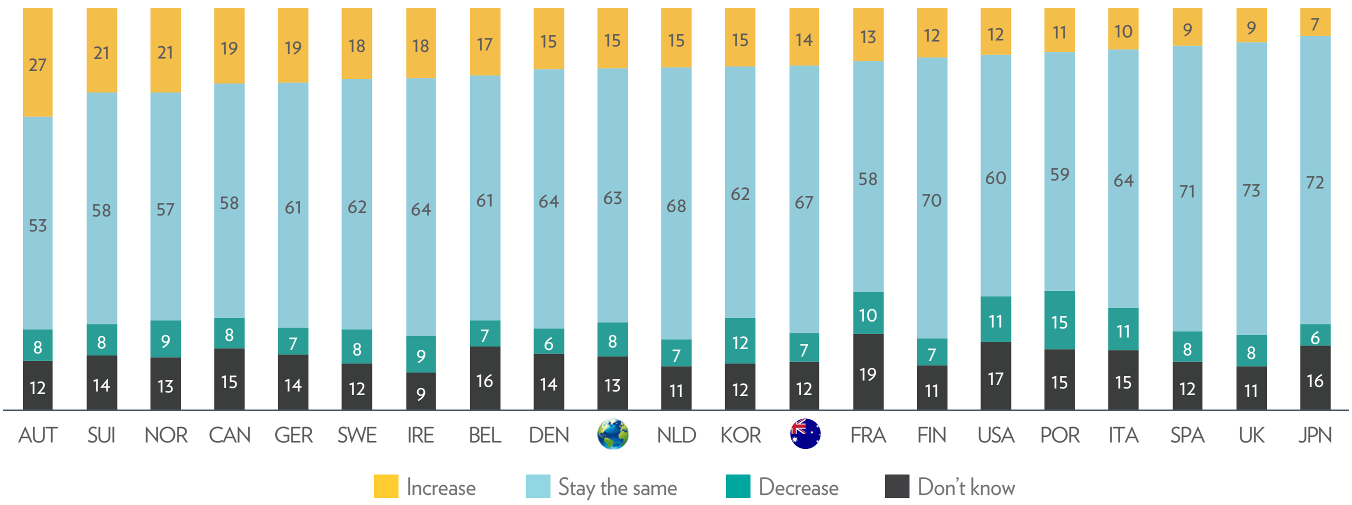


[Q7a] Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription, a donation, or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition). *Among 20 markets [Base: N=40,887]

MOST DO NOT INTEND TO INCREASE THEIR NUMBER OF MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS

Only 14% of Australian respondents say they intend to pay for more media subscriptions in the near future. This includes media services such as video and audio streaming. The majority in Australia (67%) and the world (63% global average) expect their current number of subscriptions to stay the same. This suggests the market for subscription media services is approaching saturation (see **figure 9.19**).

FIGURE 9.19: INTENT TO PAY FOR MORE MEDIA SUBSCRIPTIONS IN THE FUTURE (%)

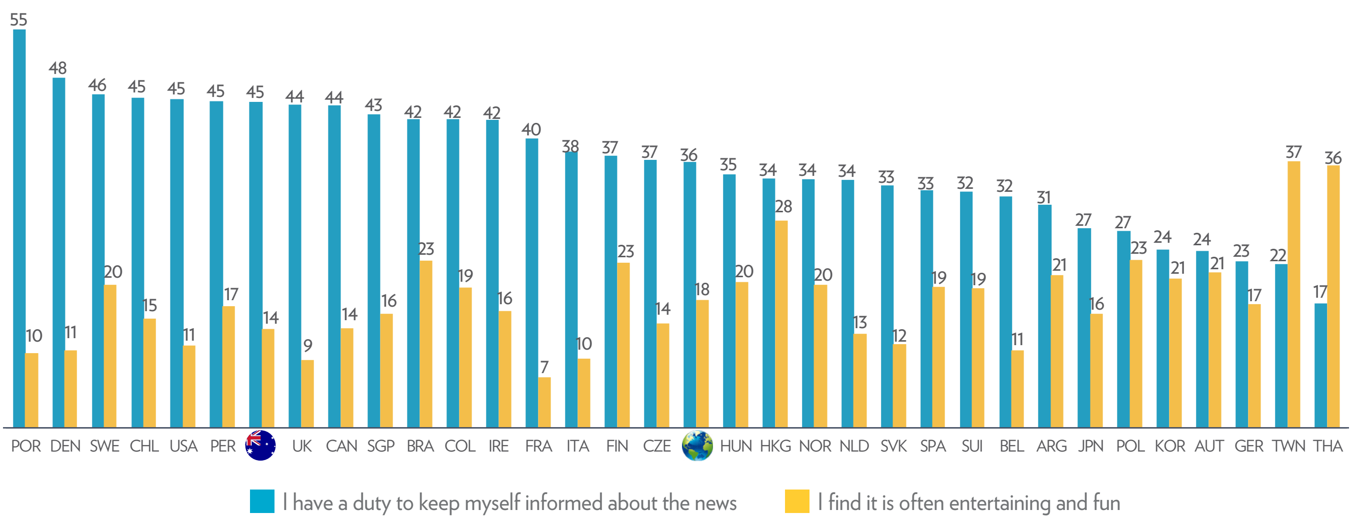


[Q_Sub_fatigue2a] In the next year, do you expect the number of online media subscriptions you pay for with your own money to increase, decrease, or stay the same? [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THEY FEEL A DUTY TO KEEP THEMSELVES INFORMED ABOUT THE NEWS

Australians are among the most likely in the world to say they use news because they have a duty to keep themselves informed about the news. They are also among the least likely to say they use news because it is often entertaining and fun (see **figure 9.20**).

FIGURE 9.20: REASONS TO KEEP UP WITH THE NEWS (%)

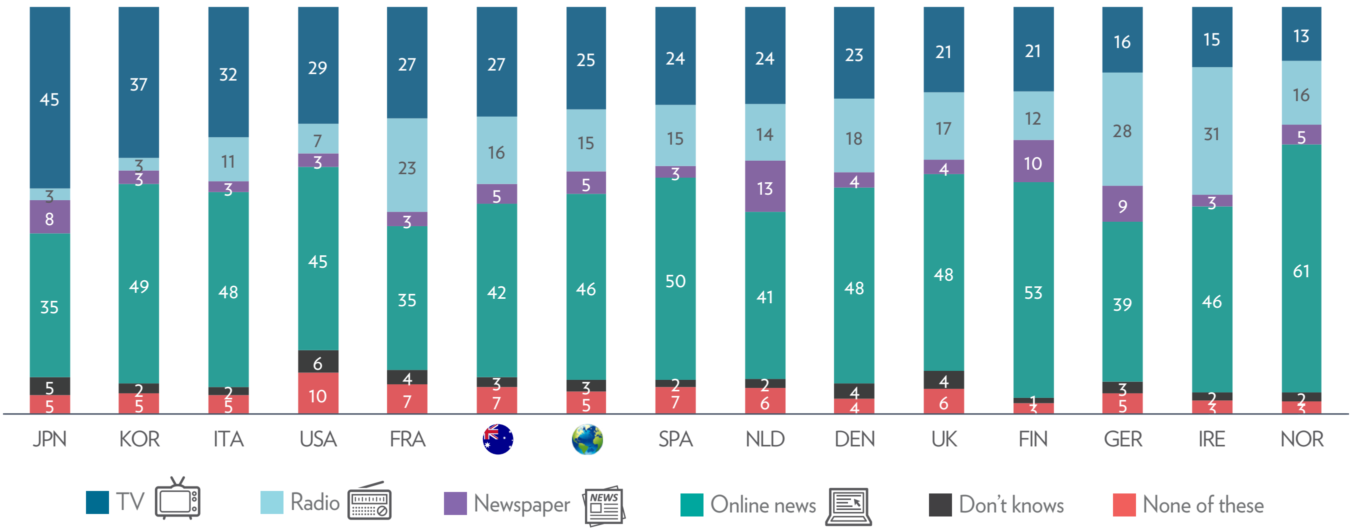


[QMotivations_2022a] Which, if any, are the most important reasons for you, personally, to keep up with the news? Please choose up to three options. [Base: N=67,224]

AUSTRALIANS MORE LIKELY TO USE ONLINE NEWS FIRST THING IN THE MORNING COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES, WITH FACEBOOK A SECONDARY SOURCE

Online news (46%) is the most popular first contact with news around the world, and Australia is close to the average (42%). Reflecting the decline of print, only a handful of markets boast a double-digit audience for morning newspapers, including the Netherlands (13%), Finland (10%) and Japan (8%). Irish (31%), German (28%) and French (23%) audiences are most likely to say their first contact with news is radio (see **figure 9.21**).

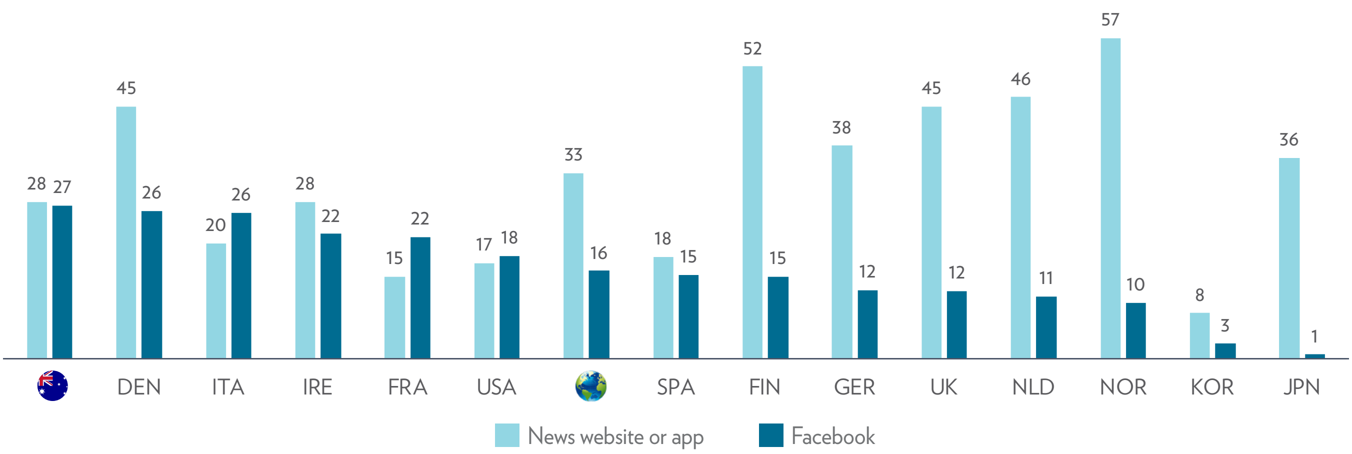
FIGURE 9.21: FIRST WAY YOU ACCESS NEWS IN THE MORNING (%)



[Q9c_new2016] What is the FIRST way you typically come across news in the morning? [Base: N=28,774]

Only around a quarter of Australians say they first come across news via their smartphone in the morning. This is below the global average of 32%. For those that use their smartphones first thing in the morning, Australians (27%) are among the most likely to go straight to Facebook compared to other countries. In Norway, 57% of smartphone news users go to a news website or app as their first point of contact (see **figure 9.22**).

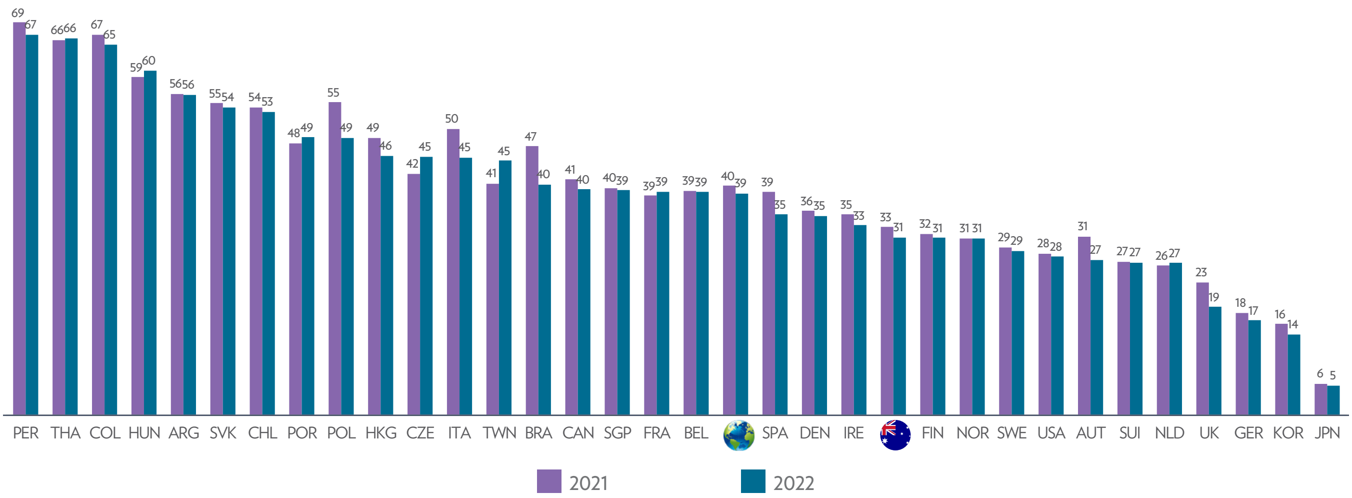
FIGURE 9.22: FIRST WAY YOU ACCESS NEWS ON A SMARTPHONE (%)



[Q9d_2016] You mentioned that your FIRST contact with news in the morning is using internet via smartphone. In which ONE of the following places do you typically find your first news? [Base: N= 9314]

While Facebook may be the first stop for many smartphone news users in Australia, globally Facebook use for news has continued to fall. Australians (31%) are among the less likely in the world to say they use Facebook as a source of news (see **figure 9.23**).

FIGURE 9.23: FACEBOOK FOR ONLINE NEWS 2021-2022 (%)



[Q12B] Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=67,224]

SUMMARY

Australians are no longer ranked the lightest news consumers globally and we are now slightly above the global average in paying for online news.

Interestingly, the use social media for news has fallen in Australia but growing in the rest of the world. This possibly reflects the high level of concern about misinformation among Australians which remains above the global average.

Despite a series of natural disasters over the past twelve months, Australians are less concerned about climate change than audiences in other countries and have lower interest in news about the environment, the climate crisis, and politics.

While Australia is on par with the rest of the world when it comes to general trust in news, we are more cynical about the priorities of news outlets. Australians are more likely to believe that news outlets put their commercial and political interests ahead of the public good.

The global data on polarisation is also revealing. While there is a lot of discussion about polarisation of media, audiences in the majority of the countries in the survey do not perceive their news media to be politically far apart. On the contrary, they consider them to be similar in their political orientation. This suggests that the polarisation trend in the US and UK, is not as pronounced in other countries including Australia.

COMMENTARY

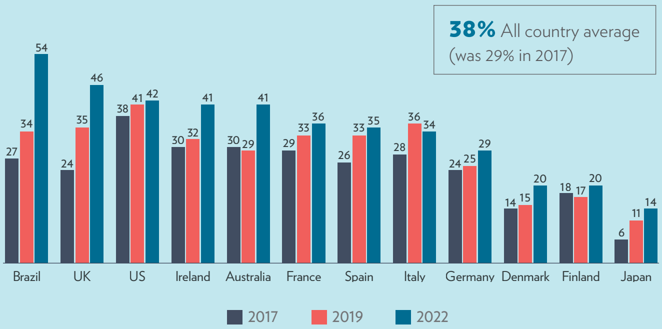
CHALLENGES MOUNT FOR THE NEWS INDUSTRY AS DEPRESSING STATE OF THE WORLD LEADS SOME TO TURN AWAY

Nic Newman, Lead Author of the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*

These are uncertain and unpredictable times – for ordinary people but also for journalists. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the subsequent cost of living crisis – not to mention climate change are all examples of important stories which journalism, at its best, can help us understand and respond to. But we also find that, in the face of a relentless and often depressing agenda, much of the public is turning away from news – or at least selectively avoiding it.

While the majority of people, across countries, remain engaged and use the news regularly, many others are choosing to ration or limit their exposure to certain types of news. In this year's data we find that the proportion that says they avoid the news, sometimes or often, has doubled in Brazil (54%) and the UK (46%) since 2017 – and increased in all other markets including Australia (41%). This type of selective avoidance seems to be less widespread in parts of Northern European and Japan but with younger and less educated people particularly affected.

PROPORTION WHO SOMETIMES OR OFTEN ACTIVELY AVOID THE NEWS (2017–22) (%)
SELECTED MARKETS



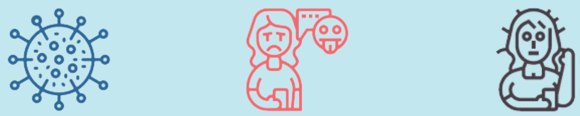
Q1di_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Base: Total 2017–22 samples (n≈2000)

Selective news avoiders give a variety of reasons for their behaviour. Across markets, many respondents say they are put off by the repetitiveness of the news agenda – especially around politics and Covid-19 (43%), or that they often feel worn out by the news (29%). Around a third – particularly those who are under 35 – say the news brings down their mood (36%), leads to arguments they would rather avoid (17%), or leads to feelings of powerlessness (16%).

"I actively avoid things that trigger my anxiety and things that can have a negative impact on my day. I will try to avoid reading news about things like deaths and disasters."

Male, 27, UK

MOST COMMON REASONS FOR NEWS AVOIDANCE
ALL MARKETS



43% say there is too much politics and Covid-19

36% say news has negative effect on mood

29% say they are worn out by amount of news

Q1di_2017ii. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news?
Base: All who avoid the news often, sometimes, or occasionally. All markets = 64120.

Although this survey took place before Russia's February invasion of Ukraine, subsequent polling in five countries during showed that, selective news avoidance has, if anything, increased further – with overall news consumption only up in countries closest to the conflict. These findings are particularly challenging for the news industry. Subjects that journalists consider most important, such as political crises, international conflicts and global pandemics seem to be precisely the ones that are turning some people off.

Beyond that, we find declining interest in the news in many countries, and lower trust – after a positive bump last year. Trust in down in almost half the countries in our survey, and up in just seven. Large numbers of people see the media as subject to political or cultural biases and only a small minority believe most news organisations put what's best for society ahead of their own commercial interest.

CHALLENGE OF REACHING YOUNGER AUDIENCES

A theme that runs through this year's report is the difficulty in engaging younger users with news – and especially social natives just coming into adulthood. Survey evidence combined with qualitative interviews confirms the importance of mobile and social platforms as a source of news for the 18-24 age group in particular and the much weaker connection they have with news websites and apps.

In this regard, our data show how this group is using Facebook in particular a lot less – and engaging more with visual networks like Instagram and TikTok where entertainment and social influencers play a bigger role. Across all countries, 40% of 18-24s use TikTok each week with 15% saying they use it to find, discuss or share news. The Russia/Ukraine conflict has increased the profile of the network globally as Ukrainians and news organisations document their experience of the war, (see picture). Usage is much higher in parts of Latin America, Asia, and Africa than it is in the United States Northern Europe or Australia. Telegram has also grown significantly in some markets, providing a flexible alternative to Meta-owned WhatsApp.

"When TikTok was launched, it was just about dancing, choreography; not today, even though the videos are fast, they bring immediate information."

Male, 24, Brazil

But many worry that this generation of social natives may be more vulnerable to propaganda and misinformation. News publishers have been increasing their investment in these new platforms, but some are not convinced that these short form, entertainment-based platforms are really the most effective place to deliver objective news or to drive sustainable revenue.

SUBSCRIPTION PROVIDES ANOTHER BARRIER TO NEWS

Our data also show how young people are less likely to pay for news online, setting up an additional challenge for industry as it pushes harder on subscription and membership strategies. Our research consistently shows that younger users like to access multiple sources and perspectives and don't want to be tied down to a single subscription. Most are also reluctant to register for news sites. Across our entire sample, only around a third (32%) say they trust news websites to use personal data responsibly – ahead of social media sites (25%) but at a similar level to trust in online retailers (33%).

We do see a growth in news subscriptions in some richer countries including Australia (18%, +5), Germany (14%, +5) and Sweden (33%, +3) but elsewhere there are signs that the market may be levelling off. The cost-of-living crisis has added to concerns about subscription fatigue with Netflix's numbers recently taking a major hit.

"I'm on a tight budget and with soaring inflation and gas prices going up and groceries prices are outrageous ... I have no extra money for media subscriptions."

Female, 62, USA

News may be different with its older and richer demographic but with wage inflation also a threat, publishers will be looking carefully at their costs this year.

Overall multiple health and political crises combined with generational change in platform preferences are accelerating changes in consumer behaviour, thereby creating further dilemmas for publishers. New formats and journalistic approaches may be necessary to engage users and to counter perceptions of negativity and news overload – especially with younger groups. Measures to rebuild trust – and the fraying connection that news media has with much of the public – feel increasingly urgent.

Although many publishers have had a relatively good year with increased revenue, future growth is likely to be challenged by the combined impact of inflation and rising energy prices, squeezing household budgets currently devoted to news media, but also potentially hitting advertising revenues, too. In this context, publishers will need to be even more focused on meeting the needs of specific audiences and demonstrating value to users.

NEWS MOMENTS

24 February, 2022 | Russia invades Ukraine sparking an ongoing conflict that has already cost tens of thousands of lives and displaced an estimated 7.7 million people at time of publication. Digital platforms have responded to a massive, organised disinformation campaign about the war by removing thousands of pages and channels. This includes disinformation aimed at discrediting and provoking hostility toward aid organisations providing support to Ukrainian civilians such as the Red Cross.

IMAGE: JONO SEARLE/ AAP IMAGE

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