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CANBERRA

DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: **AUSTRALIA 2018**



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by Sora Park, Caroline Fisher, Glen Fuller and Jee Young Lee

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METHODOLOGY

This study has been commissioned by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford to understand how news is being consumed in 37 countries. Research was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire at the end of January/beginning of February 2018.

In Australia, this is the fourth annual survey of its kind. The News & Media Research Centre (N&MRC) at the University of Canberra is the Australian partner institute.

2018 PARTICIPATING TERRITORIES	Bulgaria	Germany	Malaysia	Slovakia
	Canada	Greece	Mexico	Spain
	Chile	Hong Kong	Netherlands	Sweden
	Argentina	Croatia	Norway	Switzerland
	Australia	Czech Republic	Poland	Taiwan
	Austria	Denmark	Portugal	Turkey
	Belgium	Finland	Japan	UK
	Brazil (urban)	France	Korea, South	USA

The data were weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data on age, gender, and region to represent the total population of each country. In Australia, a quota based on Australian Bureau of Statistics census data was set using gender, age and region. The sample is reflective of the population that has access to the internet. Any respondent who said that they had not consumed any news in the past month was filtered from the results to ensure that irrelevant responses did not impact on data quality.

As this is an online survey, the results will 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 and cultural diversity of Australia.

Total starting sample size	2,190
Total number of non-news users removed	164
% of non-news users removed	7.5%
Final sample size	2,026

Core questions were asked in all 37 countries in order to provide an international comparison. The questionnaire and the overall project methodology were consistent across all territories. In fourteen countries, respondents this year were only able to take the survey using a desktop or laptop computer.

Although all other quotas were met (e.g. age, gender, region), it is possible that the figures for device use in those countries may have been affected. The countries affected were Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Brazil, Spain, Canada, Czech Republic, Poland, Portugal, Austria, South Korea, Switzerland, Hungary, and Turkey. It is important to keep in mind that many people use multiple devices and the dataset still contains smartphone and tablet users who also use a computer.

AUTHORS



Caroline Fisher is an Assistant Professor of Communication & Journalism at the University of Canberra. She researches in political communication and journalism with a focus on politicians' use of social media and the citizens who follow them, journalist - source relations, and trust in news media. Together with Jee Young Lee she is the recipient of a Top Paper award in the Journalism Division of the International Communications Association 2018 conference. She is a former ABC journalist and media adviser to former Queensland Premier Anna Bligh.



Glen Fuller is an Associate Professor of Communication & Journalism at the University of Canberra. He conducts research at the intersection of media, technology and culture. His focus is the role of specialist media in scenes and the relation between media and enthusiasm (affect), both in the context of technology, experience and the shifting composition of relations. Other research interests include journalism and media industry innovation, and discourse and media events. He has worked in the magazine industry in a number of different positions.



Jee Young Lee is the Chief Statistical Analyst for the *Digital News Report* project. She provides statistical analysis for the annual report, maintains the Digital News+ Lab's *Digital News Report* Update blog, and provides services to members who wish to use the *Digital News Report* data. She also works for the Graduate Research Office at the University of Canberra as a statistical support advisor providing graduate students with specialised statistical assistance and research design. Jee was awarded her PhD from the University of Canberra in April 2018.



Sora Park is the Director of the News & Media Research Centre, Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Canberra. She has written widely on the economics of television, newspaper markets and other information industries. Her research focuses on digital media users, media markets and media policy and has written widely on how digital media transforming communication, media and society. Her recent book, *Digital Capital* (Palgrave Macmillan) examines how people access, use, and engage with digital technology, and the resulting inequalities in digital society.

DESIGNER



Megan Deas designs and produces the annual *Digital News Report: Australia*. She is also the News & Media Research Centre's Research Support Officer. Since 2015 she has edited the Communication and Media collection of Analysis and Policy Observatory, hosted by the N&MRC. Megan curates the collection's repository of reports, podcasts, websites and infographics, making it a dynamic and evolving resource for industry practitioners, academics and policymakers alike. Her PhD thesis examined popular press photography in the postwar era, and is currently under examination.

CONTRIBUTORS



Dan Andrew has 15 years' experience as a Media Planner and Buyer, working across some of the largest advertisers and campaigns in Australia. He is currently a PhD candidate with the News & Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. His thesis is looking at the impact of Programmatic Advertising on the interdependent relationship between the media, advertisers and audiences.



R. Warwick Blood is Emeritus Professor at the University of Canberra. He is an authority on risk communication, in particular the news reporting and portrayal of health issues such as suicide, mental illness, obesity and influenza. He has conducted research in these areas for government departments including the Department of Health and Ageing, the Australian National Council on Drugs, and for the National Depression Initiative, *beyondblue*.



Kate Holland is a Senior Research Fellow at the News & Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. She conducts research on health news and communication, the media-related practices of health actors, and the impacts of media on public understandings of health and illness. Other research interests include stigma, health resistance and activism, biocommunicability, media criticism, and research ethics.



Michael J. Jensen is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Governance and Policy Analysis, University of Canberra. He has a background in political communication and has published books with Cambridge University Press and Palgrave concerning online political behaviour. His work concerns the use of digital communication technologies in the development of new forms of political organization within political campaigning and protest movements.



Greg Jericho is the economics writer for *Guardian Australia*. His regular "Grogonomics" column has become known for its use of graphs to analyse economic policy and to fact check politicians' statements. His writing for the column won the Walkley Award for Commentary Analysis, Opinion and Critique in 2016. He has also lectured in political communication at the University of Canberra since 2013.



Kerry McCallum is a Professorial Research Fellow at the News & Media Research Centre. She conducts research on political communication with a focus on media, public opinion and policymaking practice in Australian Indigenous affairs and related social policy. Recent funded projects have investigated the relationships between news media representation, the ‘mediatized’ practices of policymakers, journalists, and Indigenous policy advocates.



Kellie Riordan is manager of ABC Audio Studios, a podcast production house responsible for some of Australia’s most popular podcasts. ABC Audio Studios is part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Kellie was a visiting fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University in 2014, where she published a widely-regarded paper on editorial standards in the digital age. She’s been a journalist and media manager for more than 20 years.



Nic Newman is a journalist and digital strategist who played a key role in shaping the BBC’s internet services over more than a decade. He was a founding member of the BBC News Website, leading international coverage as World Editor (1997-2001). He has played a key role in developing the social media strategies and guidelines for the wider BBC. Nic is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and a consultant on digital media.



Mathieu O’Neil is Associate Professor of Communication at the University of Canberra. He researches the diffusion of innovation and activism on the Internet, work in the digital economy, and organizational and environmental communication. His research has been published in *Social Networks*, *Information, Communication and Society*, and *Organization Studies*, amongst others. He is the founding editor of the online *Journal of Peer Production*.



Franco Papandrea is an Adjunct Professor at the News & Media Research Centre. He is an established expert with decades of experience in communication and media policy, media economics, and the industrial organisation of media. He advised the two foremost Australian public inquiries into newspapers: the House of Representatives Select Committee on the Print Media 1991, and the Independent Inquiry into Media and Media Regulation 2011.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Australia, we see a rapid pace towards digital and mobile news. For the first time, **Australians' use of online news has surpassed traditional offline news sources.**

At the same time, the majority of Australians still rely on television news, which is the most trusted source of news.

Australians are also accessing more news more often. The number of people accessing it more than once a day has risen 15% since 2016.

This is the first year that **mobile phones are being used more than computers to access online news**. Almost 60 percent of Australians are using their smart phone to access news. There is also a steady growth in the use of news apps and news alerts or notifications. Voice-activated digital assistants like Amazon Echo and Google Home also continue to grow rapidly, opening new opportunities for news audio. Podcasts are a popular method of accessing news. These changes are mainly driven by younger news consumers.

Trust in news is also improving. Over the past twelve months general trust in news has risen from 42% to 50%. However, trust in news on social media remains low at 24%. Trust is highest in established news brands; public broadcasters and print newspapers. Those who access brands directly via websites also have higher levels of trust in news. This shows that consumers seek quality, credibility and reputation in news.

We also find that Australian news consumers are **increasingly willing to pay for quality news from established brands they trust**. There has been a 10% rise in the number of people paying for news in the past two years, with Australia showing the largest increase in donating to news organisations out of the 37 countries surveyed.

Australians are also very concerned about fake news and feel it is the job of news organisations, rather than Google or Facebook, to fix it. While concern was highest about political misinformation, the most experienced form of fake news was ‘poor journalism’. Concern about fake news may be driving the increase in donations; those who experience fake news are less likely to pay, but those who are worried about fake news are donating more.

We discovered that **trust is closely related to news consumers’ experiences of fake news**. Australians who access news via social media and search engines feel they encounter more fake news, and have lower trust in news. However, those with higher news literacy also report experiencing more fake news, possibly because they are better at discerning the quality of reporting. There are signs news consumers are adopting strategies to manage their exposure to misinformation, by accessing trusted sources directly via brand websites and apps, using news aggregators to get tailored news, and following news sources directly on social media.

While social media is the main source of news for 18-25 year olds, **Australians are reluctant to express their political views on social media** because they are worried it could change the way others think about them. This indicates a strong awareness about how information

on social media can be widely shared and misused by others. Concern about this is higher in Australia than in many other countries.

This year’s report shows there is a clear **generational divide**. Younger people rely heavily on social media and online news with overall higher trust for these sources. Younger news consumers are more likely to access online news via social media or search engines and less likely to go directly to a website or app. They are also more active sharers online. Those under 35 treat news as social content and their news consumption is embedded in other social media and online activities. They are more aware of social cues, such as likes and shares, in the online environment than older news users. Self-curation practices of filtering relevant news are largely adopted among young people. In contrast, older news consumers tend to replicate their traditional unidirectional habit of news consumption even when they access news online.

We also see significant gender differences. Women are much more likely to use social media to find news and less likely to go directly to a website or app than men. There were gender differences in sharing activities as well. Women like to talk face-to-face and engage in ‘light’ sharing activities such as ‘likes’ or sharing news on social media. Men engage in more active methods of news engagement such as commenting on news. When sharing, women use social media and men use email. Women are also more likely to be mobile news consumers.

The digital divide is affecting how regional Australians access news. News consumers in regional areas rely more on offline platforms, particularly television news. They also rely heavily on local and regional newspapers for news, almost twice as much as urban consumers. Mobile news consumption is also lower among regional news consumers. This suggests that internet connectivity may be a factor in accessing news online.

This report documents a number of firsts: The first time online sources have surpassed offline. The first time mobile phones have become the main way to access news. It also marks an increase in accessing and paying for news. However, it is also clear there is a strong link between trust in news, concern about fake news, and people being prepared to pay for it. With the majority of news users saying ‘poor quality’ journalism was the main type of fake news they experienced, there is an opportunity here for news organisations to continue to improve the quality of their reporting with a view to encouraging more people to pay for it.

KEY FINDINGS

News Access (Chapters 5/6)

- For the first time, access to online news (82%) has overtaken traditional offline sources (79%).
- Mobile phones have overtaken computers/laptops as the main way to access online news in Australia. 59% of Australian news consumers use smartphones for news, 36% (+7%) of news consumers access news mainly on mobile phones.
- More than half (58%) of 25-34 year olds use podcasts for news and information.

Fake News (Chapter 3)

- Almost three-quarters of Australian news consumers (73%) have experienced fake news and are very concerned about it. Poor journalism (40%) is the most commonly experienced type of fake news but news consumers are the most worried about politically and commercially fabricated stories (67%).
- Most respondents (81%) believe that media companies and journalists have responsibility to stop the problem of fake news. The majority (68%) also believed the government can do more to combat fake news.

Political Views (Chapter 9)

- Australians worry about how others will think of them if they express their political views online; 45% of news consumers are concerned that expressing their political views on social media could change the way their family and friends think about them. Younger people are more worried (58% of 25-34 year olds).

Trust (Chapter 2)

- Trust in news has risen to 50% (+8%). 55% (+7%) trust the news they use most of the time. In contrast, only 24% of news consumers trust news they find in social media and 39% trust news they find via search engines.

News Literacy (Chapter 4)

- The majority of respondents (68%) have low and very low news literacy.
- Audiences for *The Guardian* and ABC have higher news literacy.

- 76% of people who rely on social media for news have low or very low news literacy.

Social Media (Chapter 5)

- Facebook for news has flattened, but other social media and messenger apps have risen: YouTube (+5%), Instagram (+5%), Snapchat (+3%), WhatsApp (+3%).
- Social media is now the main source of news for 18-24 year-olds (36%).
- There has been a 6% increase in the use of social media for news, from 46% in 2017 to 52% in 2018.

News Participation & Engagement (Chapter 8)

- 82% of consumers engage in news sharing.
- Talking face-to-face is still the most popular way to share news.
- News alert use has increased by 10% since 2016.

Paying for News (Chapter 7)

- There has been a steady increase in paying for online news from 10% in 2016 to 20% in 2018, however the majority of Australians still don't and won't pay for news.
- Donations to digital news services have increased and almost half of 25-34 year olds (46%) are considering donation in the future.

Political Orientation & Polarisation (Chapter 9)

- There is an increase in news consumers subscribing to the direct feeds of politicians on social media (2016: 11% -> 2018: 22%).
- Australian news consumers are slightly more polarized than the global average.
- Readers of online newspapers are less polarised than print newspaper readers. Left-wing oriented news consumers turn to online and social media news sources more than right-wing consumers.
- ABC TV News attracts viewers evenly from across the political spectrum. In contrast, ABC News Online attracts a more left-wing audience.

NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 15, 2017:
Supporters of the 'YES' vote are seen celebrating during a street party outside of the Victorian Trades Hall building in Melbourne following the result of the nationwide marriage equality survey. Australians gave same-sex marriage their approval with a 61.6 per cent 'yes' vote.

IMAGE: AAP Image/James Ross



1 AUSTRALIA & THE WORLD

- Consumption of online news has overtaken traditional sources in Australia as it has in many other countries.
- Australians have higher trust in news than most countries ranking 11th out of 37 countries.
- Australian news consumers are more concerned (45%) about what others might think when expressing political views on social media than the global average (38%).
- The majority of Australian news consumers have encountered fake news as found in other countries.

This year, 37 countries participated in the global digital news survey. How does Australia fare? We compared Australian news consumers against select countries in relation to their access of traditional vs digital news sources, trust in news, political polarization, news literacy, fake news, and paying for news.

MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

The overall consumption of news via online platforms in Australia has surpassed the consumption via offline platforms. However, when asked about the main source of news, Australians still preferred offline news. About 53% of Australians use offline and 47% use online sources as their primary source of news, as **figure 1.1** indicates. Only in 9 out of 37 countries, consumers cited online news as their primary source of news: Mexico, US,

Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Greece, Sweden, Norway, and Croatia. However, when we examine the growth in online news access, there is a clear trend of global news consumers slowly switching to online news platforms to get news. In most countries consumers who say their primary source is online news is increasing. In Singapore there was a 7% increase, in Australia 3%, and in Sweden a 5% increase since 2017.

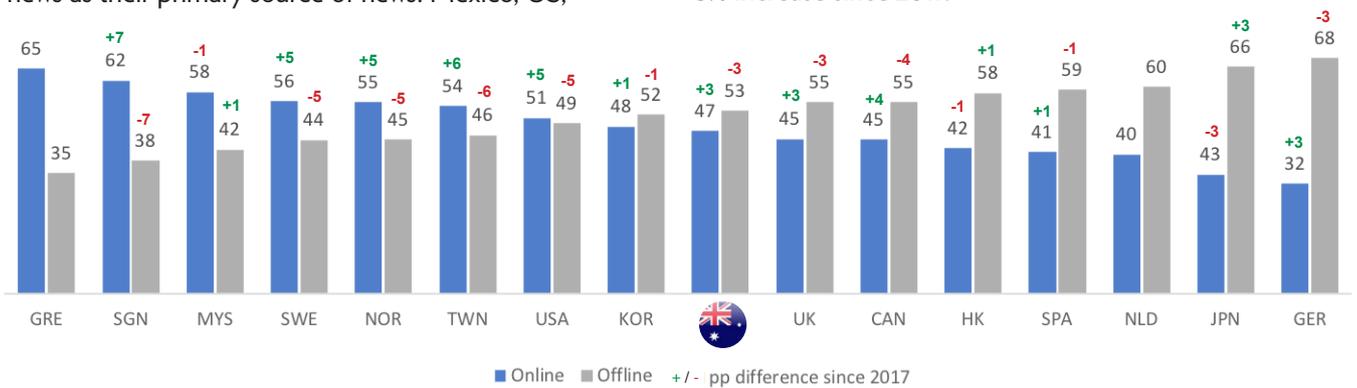


FIGURE 1.1: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS: ONLINE VS OFFLINE PLATFORMS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

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: All who used a source of news]. Red and green figures indicate the change in percentage from 2017. Countries with no red or green figures indicate no change since 2017.

ALL SOURCES OF NEWS

We can see a trend of online news surpassing offline news consumption. In 21 of 37 countries, news consumers are consuming online news (websites, apps, social media and blogs) more than traditional sources such as newspapers, magazines, TV and radio (see **figure 1.2**). Australia is one of them, with 82% of people consuming news via online

platforms and 79% accessing news via offline platforms. In Australia, online news consumers increased by 8%. Globally, the pattern was very similar with an average of 83% using online news brands and 82% consuming traditional offline news sources.

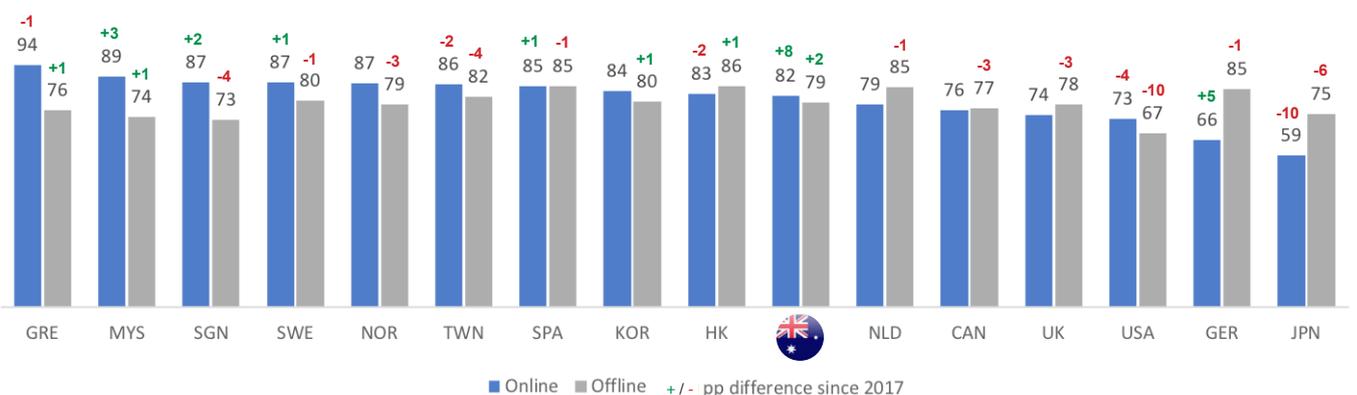


FIGURE 1.2: ALL SOURCE OF NEWS: ONLINE VS. OFFLINE PLATFORMS , SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? (Please select all that apply. Online includes Websites/apps of newspapers, Websites/apps of news magazines, Websites/apps of TV and Radio companies, Websites/apps of other news outlets, Social media, Blogs; Offline includes Television news bulletins or programmes, 24 hour news television channels, Radio news bulletins or programmes, Printed newspapers, Printed magazines [Base: All]. Red and green figures indicate the change in percentage from 2017. Countries with no red or green figures indicate no change since 2017.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

More than half (54%) of global news consumers use social media to access news and 15% use social media as their main source of news. The trend in Australia is very close to the global average with 52% of consumers using social media for news and 17% using it as the main source (see figure 1.3).

Overall, social media use for news has not grown, with some countries experiencing a decline. In the US there was a 6% decrease and in the UK 2% decrease. However, in Australia there was a 6% increase in the use of social media for news.

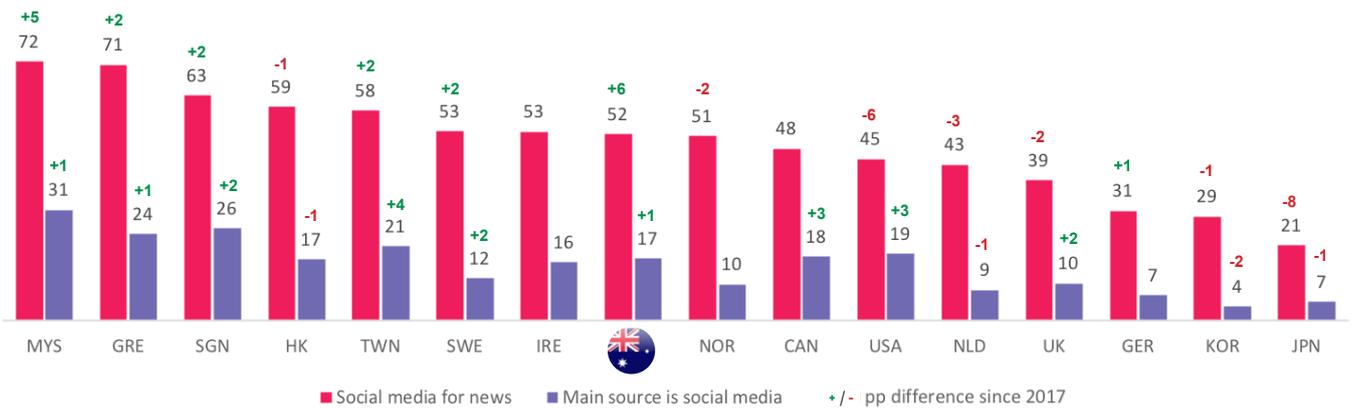


FIGURE 1.3: SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

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: Those who use social media]. Red and green figures indicate the change in percentage from 2017. Countries with no red or green figures indicate no change since 2017.

MESSAGING APPS FOR NEWS ON THE RISE

In most of the 37 countries, news consumption via Facebook is declining. Social media use for news seem to have plateaued overall. News consumers are turning to more private spaces to access and share news and messaging apps are used more for news. In Australia, we see some growth in all social media as well as messaging apps, compared to other countries. We compared six countries in the uses of social media brands for news (see table 1.1).

In the US, Facebook for news was decreased by 9% and in Korea 3% and in the UK 2%. Messaging apps are increasingly used for news. In Australia WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are amongst the more popular. In Korea Kakao Talk for news grew by 20%. Social media app use coincides with the increase in mobile phone penetration. Where there is an increase in mobile phone use, there is also an increase in the use of social media for news.

	AUS	UK	USA	HK	SWE	KOR
Facebook	41 (+2)	27 (-2)	39 (-9)	56 (+2)	36 (0)	25 (-3)
Facebook Messenger	11 (+3)	3 (-2)	3 (-2)	8 (+1)	9 (+1)	2 (-1)
WhatsApp	10 (+3)	5 (0)	5 (0)	38 (+2)	3 (0)	1 (0)
Instagram	9 (+5)	1 (-1)	1 (-1)	9 (+3)	7 (+1)	7 (+1)
Snapchat	5 (+3)	2 (+1)	2 (+1)	3 (+1)	2 (0)	1 (0)
Line	1 (0)			6 (+2)		2 (-1)
Kakao Talk	1 (+1)					31 (+20)
Smartphone use	86 (+8)	82 (+6)	82 (+6)	87 (+7)	88 (+2)	84 (+3)

TABLE 1.1: SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS USED FOR NEWS IN SELECT COUNTRIES (% , CHANGE FROM 2017)

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: Those who use social media]. Smartphone use is the percentage of respondents using any type of smartphone. Numbers in brackets indicate the change from 2017.

TRUST IN NEWS

Australia’s trust in news is higher than the global average and is ranked 11th out of the 37 countries; 50% of Australian news consumers said they had trust in news generally, and 55% said they trust the news they consume

(see **figure 1.4**).The global average is 44% and 51% respectively. Portugal had the highest trust in news (62%) and Korea the lowest (25%).



FIGURE 1.4: TRUST IN NEWS (%)

Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think I can trust most news most of the time [Base: All]

This year, we asked about trust in news on social media. Globally this average was much lower than trust in news in general (see **figure 1.5**). Only 23% of global news consumers trust news on social media.

Australia was very close to the global average with 24% trusting news on social media. Mexico and Chile had the highest trust in news on social media (40%) and the UK and Denmark had the lowest (12%).

ONLY 23% OF GLOBAL NEWS CONSUMERS TRUST NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

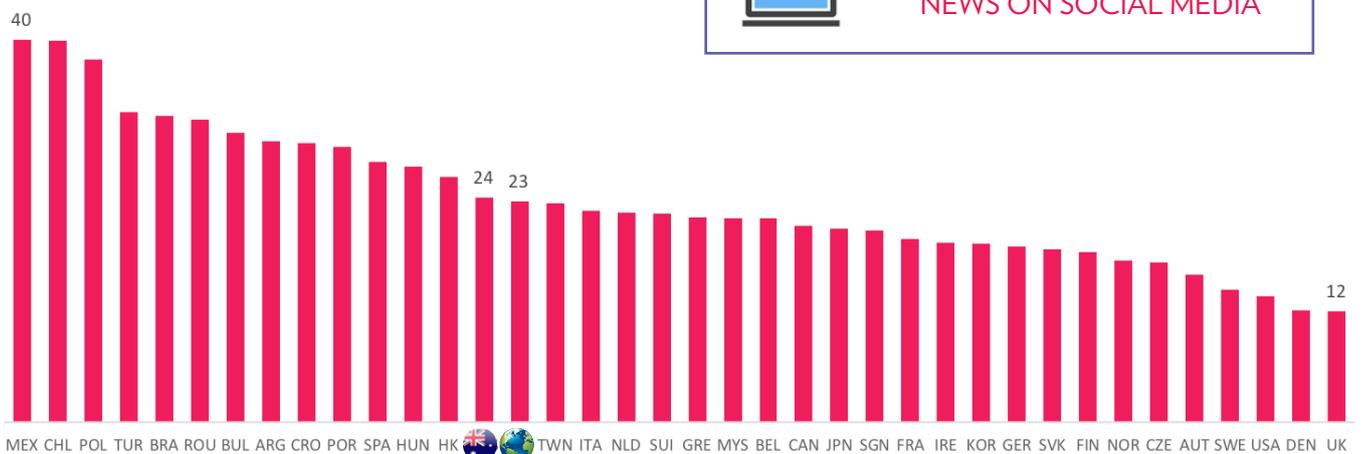


FIGURE 1.5: TRUST IN NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)

Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time [Base: All]

HOW IMPORTANT ARE COMMENTS, LIKES OR SHARES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

In general, younger people (under 35) are more likely to take into account the number of comments, likes and shares on social media, than older news consumers, when they make a decision about whether a news story is worth their time.

However, in countries such as Korea and Hong Kong, the situation was reversed and older cohorts considered the responses on social media posts to be important (see figure 1.6).

Australia's older news consumers are not much affected by others on social media (26%), whereas the young cohort regard others' reaction to news as an important factor in deciding what news to consume.

45% OF THOSE UNDER 35 THINK LIKES, SHARES OR COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT



FIGURE 1.6: IMPORTANCE OF COMMENTS, LIKES OR SHARES ON SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS DECISIONS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

Q12C_2018_4. When looking at stories in social media, the number of comments, likes or shares is very important in helping me decide whether information is likely to be worth my time. % of respondents that agreed with the statement.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL VIEWS

About 60% of Australian news consumers identify themselves as 'centre' in their political orientation. This compares to 83% of news consumers in Germany and 35% in France. The proportion of centre orientation in Australia is close to the global average of 60%, as can be seen in figure 1.7.

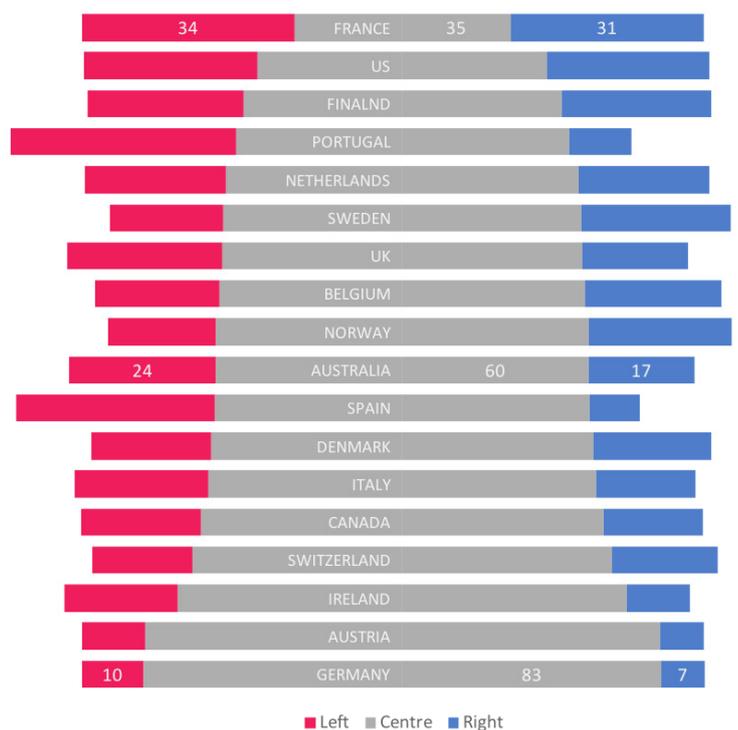


FIGURE 1.7: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

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: All]. *Polarisation was measured by the variance of each countries score out of 7. Centre % is the percentage of those who answered 'lightly left-of-centre', 'centre', and 'slightly right-of-centre'. Note: Respondents who answered don't know to Q1F were excluded.

EXPRESSING POLITICAL VIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Australian news consumers are more concerned about what others might think when expressing political views on social media than in many other countries (see figure 1.8). Australia ranks 10th out of 37 countries for concern about the reaction of friends and family to posting political opinion.

Brazil, Turkey, Korea, Singapore and Malaysia have the highest level of concern about what friends and family might think. News consumers in Chile are least worried, with only 19% saying they are careful of what they say on social media because of friends and family.

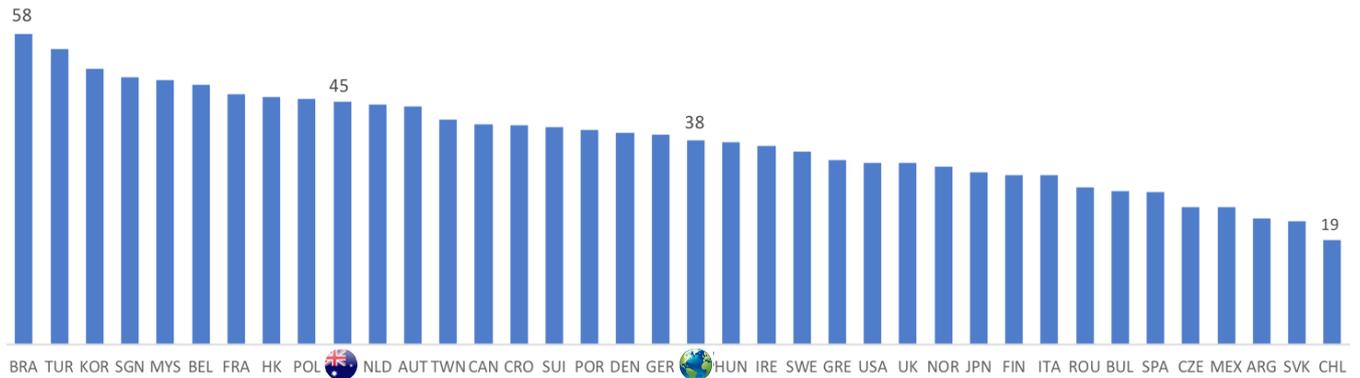


FIGURE 1.8: THE IMPACT OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY ON POLITICAL EXPRESSION (%)

Q13a_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Q13a_2018_2. I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make friends or family think differently about me. Figure indicates the percentage of respondents that agreed to the statements [Base: All].

NEWS LITERACY

In this report we measure news literacy by asking news consumers about their understanding of the news environment. Australians’ news literacy is relatively low in comparison to other countries, as shown in figure 1.9. Denmark had the highest proportion of news consumers equipped with high news literacy with half (51%) of

the news consumers having high or very high news literacy levels. France had the lowest, with 84% of news consumers in the low and very low news literacy group. Australia was about mid-range, with 32% in the high and very high group and 68% in the low and very low group.

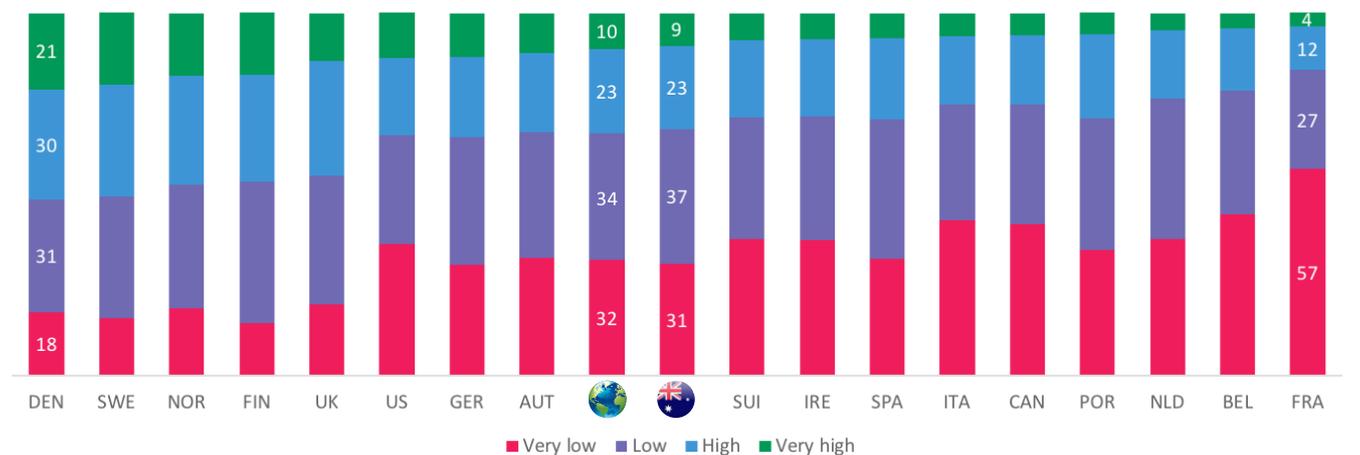


FIGURE 1.9: NEWS LITERACY, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

Q14_2018a_combined. News Literacy [Base: All]. Questions asked are described in detail in Chapter 4.

FAKE NEWS

The majority of global news consumers say they have experienced fake news (see **figure 1.10**). In some countries, the experience of fake news is more than 90%. The lowest was in the Netherlands where about half of

news consumers said they had encountered one or more types of fake news (48%). In Australia 73% of consumers said they had experienced one or more types of fake news, which is close to the global average (74%).

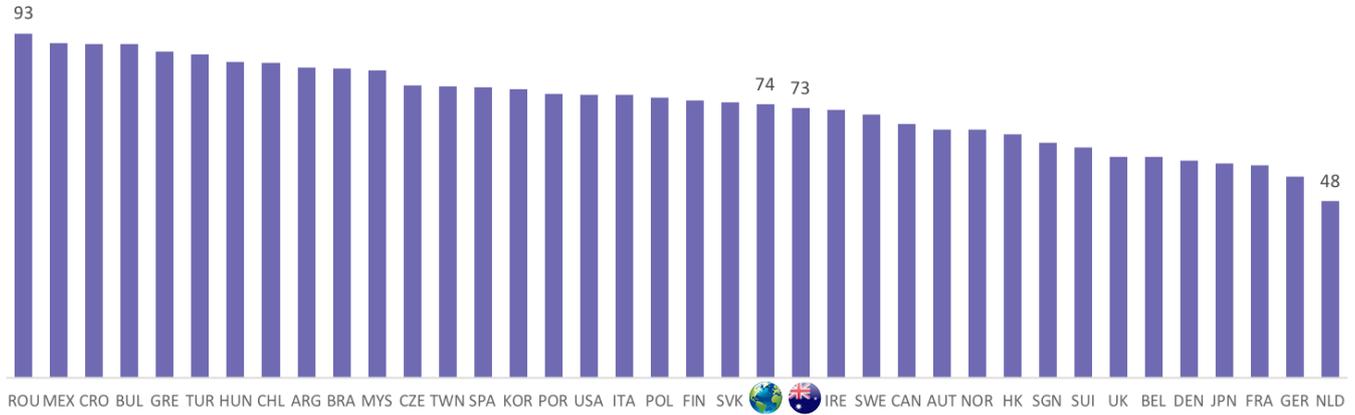


FIGURE 1.10: FAKE NEWS EXPERIENCE (%)

Experience: Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories; Misleading, headlines/clickbait); Stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda; Stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons; Headlines that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements; Stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire); The use of the term fake news (e.g. by politicians, others) to discredit news media they don't like. Experience % is the proportion of respondents who have encountered any of the 6 types of misinformation [Base: All].

Globally, concern about political misinformation is much higher than people's reported experience of it. In Australia 67% of news consumers are worried but only

25% say they have encountered it. News consumers in Greece are highly concerned (74%), and consumers in Taiwan are not (20%) (see **figure 1.11**).

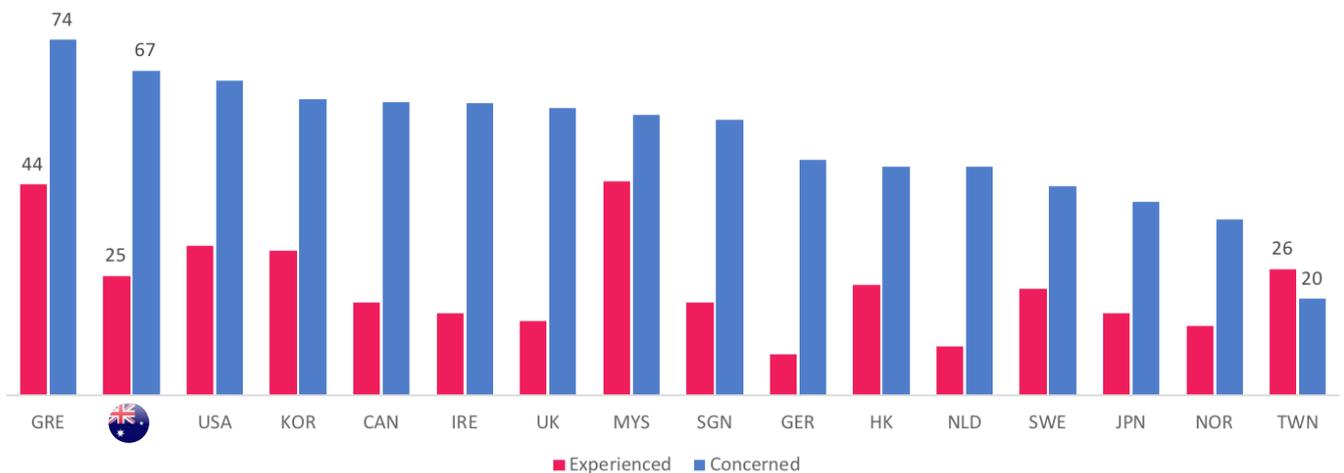


FIGURE 1.11: STORIES THAT ARE COMPLETELY MADE UP FOR POLITICAL OR COMMERCIAL REASONS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)

Experience: Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories; Misleading, headlines/clickbait); Stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda; Stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons; Headlines that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements; Stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire); The use of the term fake news (e.g. by politicians, others) to discredit news media they don't like. Experience % is the proportion of respondents who have encountered any of the 6 types of misinformation [Base: All].

PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS

In Australia, the percentage of consumers who pay for online news is also among the highest with 20% having paid for online news in the last year (see **figure 1.12**).

Norway has the highest percentage of paying online news consumers (31%), and Greece has the lowest (6%). Australia is higher (20%) than the global average (14%).

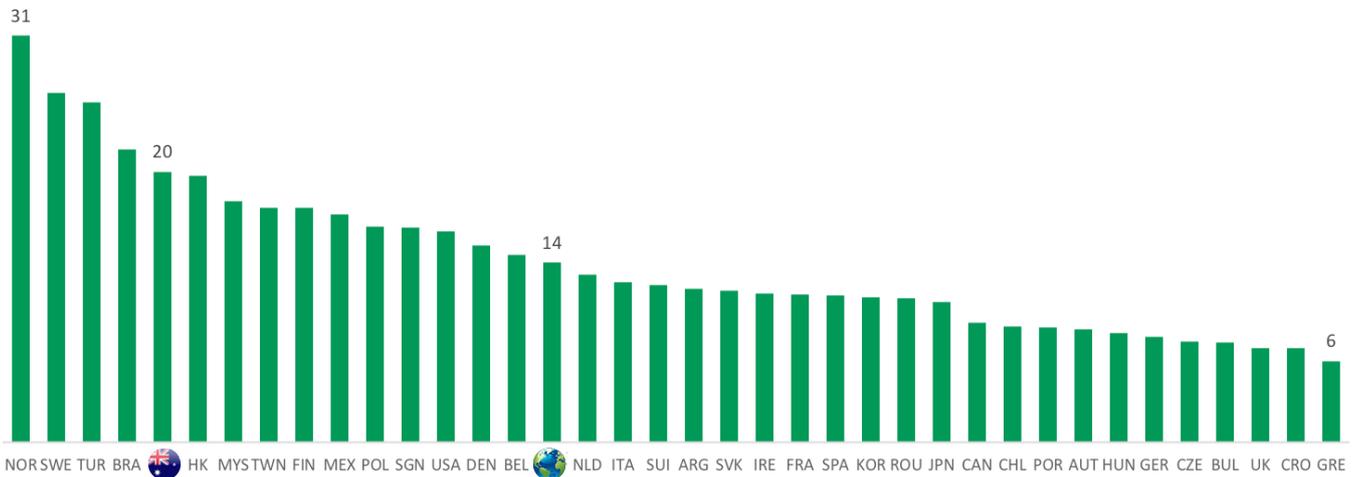


FIGURE 1.12: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)

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 or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition).

DISCUSSION

Australia is close to the global average in many indicators including the main source of news, experience in fake news, political orientation and polarization, and news literacy. However, trust in news is among the highest but trust in social media is similar to the global average.

Australians are more prepared to pay for online news. Donation to digital news services is the highest among all countries surveyed this year. News consumers in Australia are more worried about fake news than the global average and are worried about what other people might think if they express political views on social media.

In contrast to the trend in other countries, social media for news is growing in Australia particularly among younger news consumers.

COMMENTARY

FAKE NEWS IS COMPLICATED AND POORLY UNDERSTOOD; BUT THE RUSH TO REGULATE MAY HAVE DAMAGING CONSEQUENCES

Nic Newman

Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

This year’s report finds a deep disconnect between audience perceptions of fake news, and how it is often seen by politicians or media regulators. This matters because an incomplete diagnosis may already be leading governments across the world to legislate in ways that could have far-reaching consequences for free speech.

In focus groups (UK, US, Brazil, Germany this year) we find that ordinary people spontaneously raise the issue of ‘fake news’ in a way they didn’t a year ago. This is not surprising given extensive use by some politicians to describe media they don’t like – and widespread coverage by the media itself.

More than half of our global sample (54%) expresses concern or strong concern about ‘what is real or fake’, when thinking about online news.

There are significant country variations with Brazil (85%), Spain (69%), and the US (64%) at the top end. These are all polarised countries where recent or on-going election or referendum campaigns have been affected by disinformation and misinformation.

Though this has not been the case in Australia, it is interesting to note that the headline rate is amongst the highest in our survey (65%). By contrast, there is much less concern in Germany (37%)¹ and the Netherlands (30%)² where recent elections passed off largely without alarm and where politicians have largely avoided accusing the media of fake news.

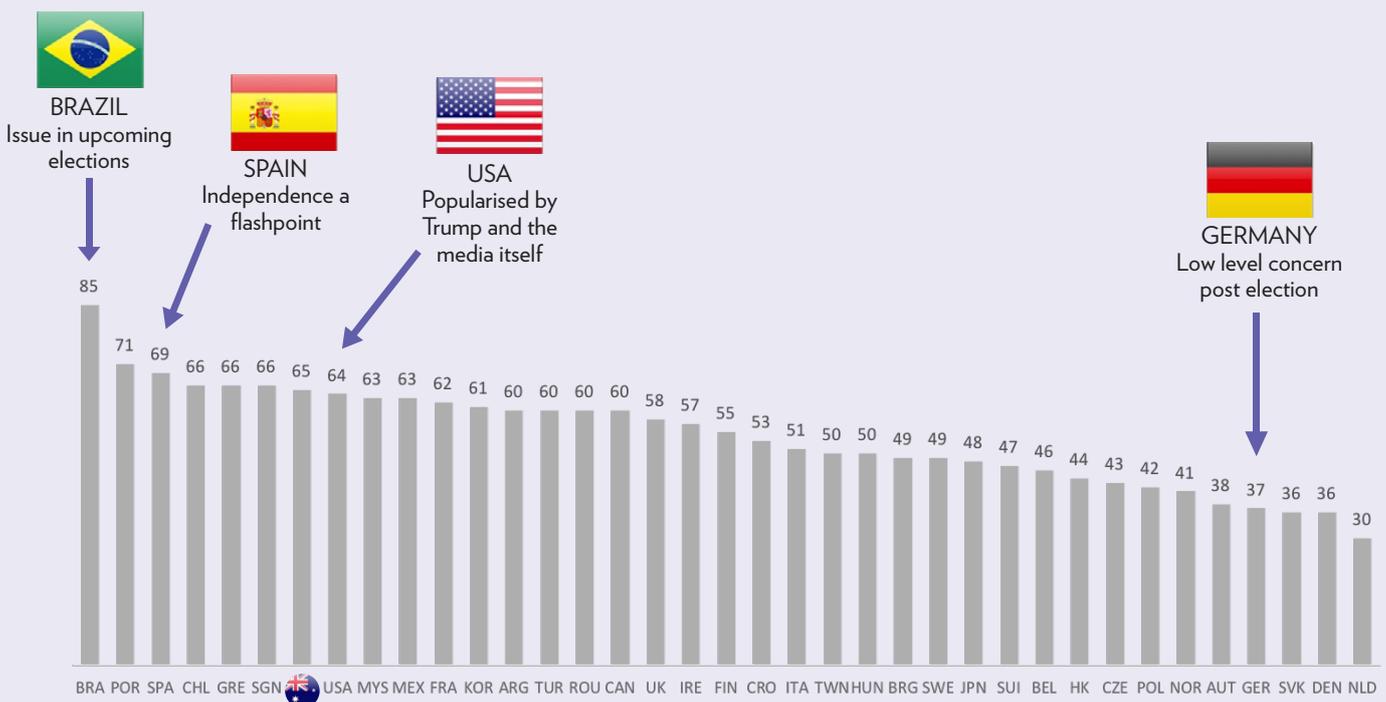


FIGURE 1.13: LEVEL OF CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ON THE INTERNET WHEN IT COMES TO NEWS, ALL MARKETS (%)

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 [Base: Total sample in each market].

But behind the headlines, we find different levels of concern for different types of fake news, such as completely ‘made up’ stories, biased or partisan journalism, clickbait, and even satire. A key finding here is that while audiences worry about

fabricated or ‘made up’ news (58%), they mostly struggle to find examples of when they’ve actually seen this (26%). Of all our five categories this is the biggest single gap between perception and experience (see figure 1.16).

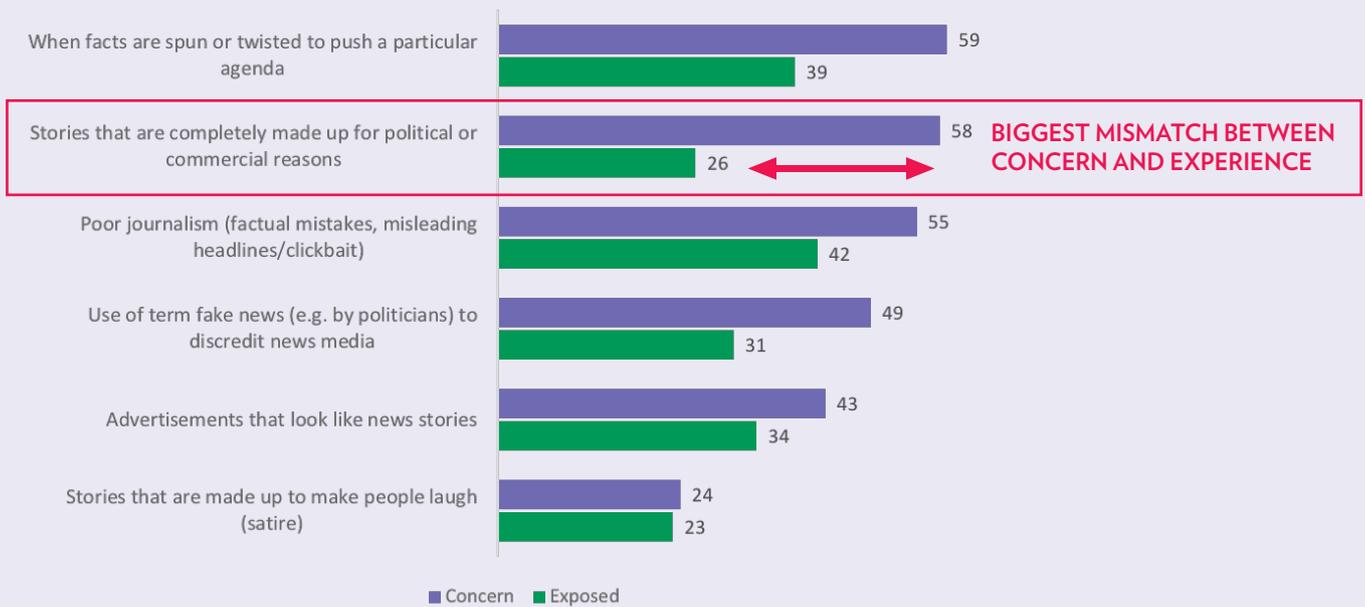


FIGURE 1.14: CONCERN OVER – AND EXPOSURE TO – FAKE NEWS, ALL MARKETS (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_2_1-6. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following. Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the last week which of the following have you personally come across? [Base: Total sample in all markets].

In terms of everyday experience, we find that when consumers talk about fake news they tend to mean bias, clickbait and other types of poor (mainstream) journalism.

“I see fake news every day. I mean for example, some of the stuff is just mediocre and over exaggerating and it’s not always what it seems.”

(F, 30-45, US)

Even in the United States, examples of completely ‘made up news’ tend to be historic rather than current:

“I think during the election, the biggest thing I disliked about Facebook was the amount of fake stories that were on there. And I think since then it has gotten so much better.”

(M, 30-45, US)

Because of the problems of definition it is hard to recognise fake news in the first place or to know objectively if the problem is better or worse.

Our wider findings this year suggest that in many countries, people are using social media for news less in many countries. But audience perception is another thing entirely and the danger is that talking up fake news may also be undermining trust in any kind of news.

Weaponisation by politicians

In countries like the US, Hungary and Malaysia more than four in ten said they had heard politicians or others using the term ‘fake news’ in the last week to undermine the media. A label to describe false information spread in social media has been turned into a weapon with which to beat news organisations that are critical of government in United States, Hungary and Malaysia amongst others.

The Malaysian government has introduced a new anti-fake news law that carries a six-year jail sentence. Free speech campaigners are worried that an unclear definition of the term could provide cover for authoritarian governments to muzzle the press.



In the USA **49%** came across this in the past week



In Hungary **44%** came across this in the past week



In Malaysia **41%** came across this in the past week

FIGURE 1.15: HEARING POLITICIANS ETC USING FAKE NEWS TO UNDERMINE MEDIA

Mixed picture for government regulation of content

Across countries respondents think that media companies and journalists have the biggest responsibility (75%) to sort out the problems of fake news - not surprising given that most of the content they describe as fake news is generated by them. Consumers also think that tech companies like Google and Facebook should do more to prevent misinformation (71%).

But there is a much more mixed picture when it comes to government intervention.

While six in ten (61%) agree that governments should do more, it is striking that sentiment is much more in favour of action in Europe (60%) and Asia (63%) than in the United States (41%).

MORE SUPPORT IN EUROPE



72%

The Catalonia crisis and alleged use of Russian bots has escalated the issue with politicians demanding action



61%

French President Emmanuel Macron is proposing legislation to ban fake news on websites and in social media during elections



59%

New law already in place demands tech platforms to remove offensive and illegal content within 24 hours

LESS INTEREST IN USA



41%

Congressional investigations into Russian interference in US election using social and digital media

FIGURE 1.16: AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO MORE TO COMBAT MISINFORMATION, SELECTED MARKETS (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_4_2_3. Please indicate your agreement with the following statement. The Government should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and fake on the internet [Base: Total sample in each market].

In the United States, focus group participants were extremely wary of government interference, preferring to solutions that encouraged users of the platforms to behave more responsibly.

“Well it’s free speech, right.”

“Yeah it’s what our country is based on, right?”

“You can’t have the government doing that.”

(M, 20-29, US)

In many Asian countries, on other hand there is more genuine concern about the potential destabilising effects of passing extreme content distributed through social media sites like Facebook. While in Germany, one of the first to implement legislation, many are hopeful that regulation will have a positive impact:

“If the trolls stop posting inadequate comments and debates that would be great.”

(M, 20-29, DE)

This research is a timely reminder that there is no clear agreement on where the limits of free speech should be set. In the design of their software, US technology companies have long reflected a perspective that is heavily influenced by the first amendment, but that is now running up against European and Asian traditions that are more mindful of the historic dangers of unregulated free speech. Striking the right balance, particularly at a time of greater polarisation, will be critical for society but also for journalism.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

TUESDAY MAY 22, 2018: South Korean President Moon Jae-in (L) and U.S. President Donald Trump (R) shake hands during a meeting at the White House in Washington DC. During their talks, Moon and Trump agreed to work closely together to hold the U.S.-North Korea summit scheduled for June 12 in Singapore.

IMAGE: AAP Image/Yonhap News Agency



2 NEWS TRUST

- Trust in news has risen from 42% in 2017 to 50% in 2018.
- Trust in news on social media is low at 24% and lowest amongst older Australians.
- People with lower news literacy are more likely to trust news on social media.
- Trust remains highest in established news brands.
- Trust in news is an important factor in paying for news.

TRUST IN NEWS

Trust in news was measured by asking if news consumers think they can trust most news most of the time. Those who agreed with this statement were included in the ‘trust’ category, those who neither agreed nor disagreed were labelled as ‘neither’ and those who disagreed were included in the ‘distrust’ group. The definition of trust in operation here is the assumed common understanding of trust based on the quality of reliability.

Overall trust in news has risen from 42% in 2017 to 50% in 2018. Trust in ‘news I use’ has also increased from 48% to 55%. This jump in general news trust corresponds with a reduction in the number of people who ‘neither trust nor distrust’ the news, which has fallen from 33% in 2017 to 25% 2018.

Interestingly, the number of people who distrust the news has remained constant at 25%. This suggests that some of the previously ambivalent news consumers have developed a stronger sense of trust in the news over the past 12 months.

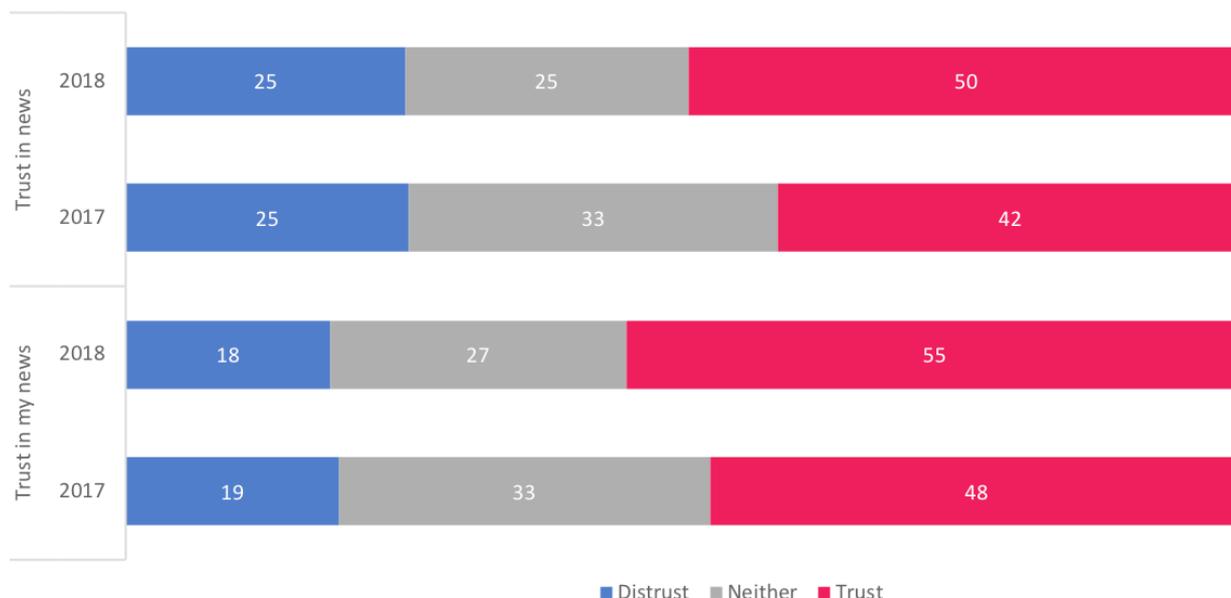


FIGURE 2.1: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS AND TRUST IN THE NEWS CONSUMERS USE (%)

Q6_2016_1/2. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I think I can trust most news most of the time; I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time. [Base: All].

TRADITIONAL NEWS CONSUMERS TRUST NEWS MORE

Australians who rely on traditional news sources continue to have higher trust in news than those who mainly use social media and online sources of news, and that level of trust has risen since 2017.

Trust in news by consumers who rely on TV has jumped from 50% in 2017 to 58% in 2018; newspapers from 52% to 57%; and radio from 48% to 53%.

Trust by those who rely on social media for news has also risen from 32% in 2017 to 37% in 2018; and from 37% to 46% by those who mainly use online news. These increases reflect the overall rise in trust in both ‘my news’ and news generally.

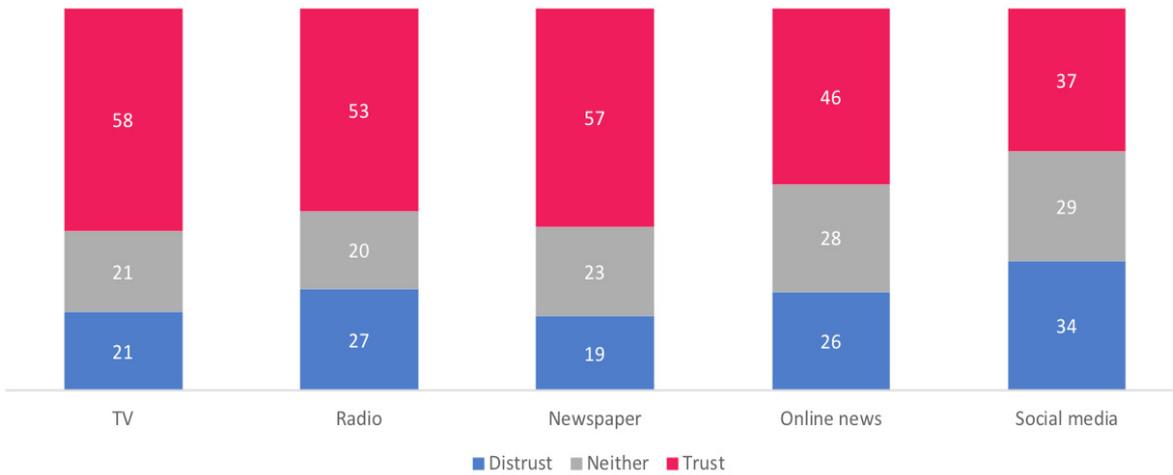


FIGURE 2.2: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

*Online includes websites/apps of print, TV and radio, websites/apps of online news; social media includes social media and blogs.

SOCIAL MEDIA & SEARCH ENGINES NOT TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES OF NEWS

In contrast, the overall perception of social media as a trustworthy platforms for news is low at 24% (see figure 2.3). This figure of 24% reflects a possible decline from 2017 when survey participants were asked whether social media helped them distinguish fact from fiction, and only 27% agreed they could.

Whilst the questions were different, they both asked consumers about their perception of the reliability of news on social media. On both occasions the level of perceived trust accorded to news on social media was much lower than that for traditional news.

24% OF RESPONDENTS PERCEIVE SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TRUSTWORTHY PLATFORM FOR NEWS

In response to concern about the dominance of major search engines such as Google, this year respondents were also asked if they thought they could generally trust the news they accessed via search engines. While the majority (39%) said they could, this approval was matched by a similar level of ambivalence (37%).

These differences in trust between news on social media, search engines and news overall reflect findings in the Edelman Trust Barometer 2018. The Edelman data shows trust in traditional and online news sources in Australia is higher (52%) than news accessed via social media and search engines (35%).

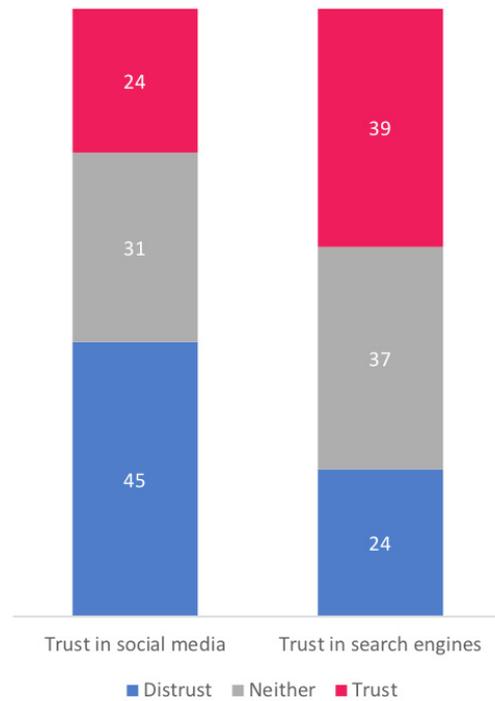


FIGURE 2.3: TRUST IN NEWS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEARCH ENGINES (%)

Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news on social media most of the time. Q6_2018_3. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news on search engines most of the time [Base: All].

TRUST & PATHWAYS TO NEWS

The data shows that consumers' trust levels are influenced by the way they access online news (see figure 2.4). Two thirds of those who access news by going directly to a known-brand (going straight to the website, searching for a particular brand or receiving a notification from a news service they subscribe to) are more likely to trust news than those who access it indirectly (via a news aggregator, searching for a story, or bumping into it on social media). This higher level of trust in brands accessed directly reflects the higher level of trust consumers have in 'my news' rather than news in general.

59%

OF RESPONDENTS WHO ACCESS ONLINE BRANDS DIRECTLY TRUST NEWS



YOUNGER CONSUMERS ARE LESS TRUSTING

There are small differences across key demographics in relation to trust in news. The biggest difference is reflected by age group. 18-24 year olds are less likely to trust the news or be ambivalent about it, whereas 25-34 year olds have the highest general trust in news.

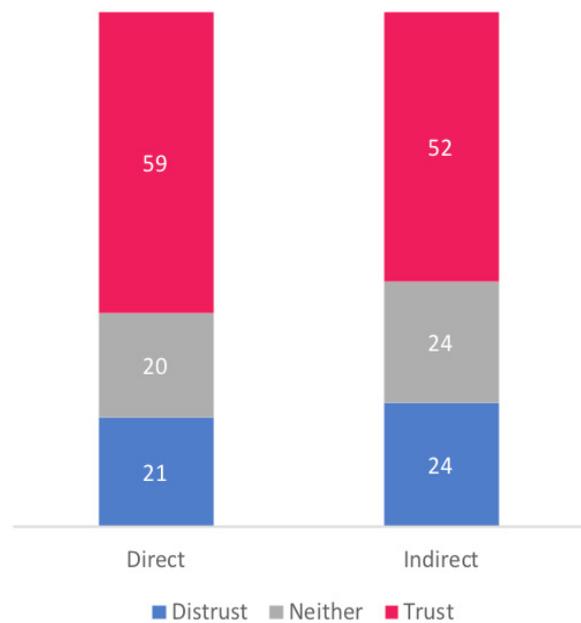


FIGURE 2.4: GENERAL TRUST AND MAIN WAY OF ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS (%)

Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think I can trust most news most of the time. Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the MAIN way in which you came across news in the last week? [Base: All who came across news in the last week] [Base: All who came across news in the last week]; Direct includes going to brand website, searching for brand, notifications/alerts; indirect includes search engines, aggregator apps and social media.

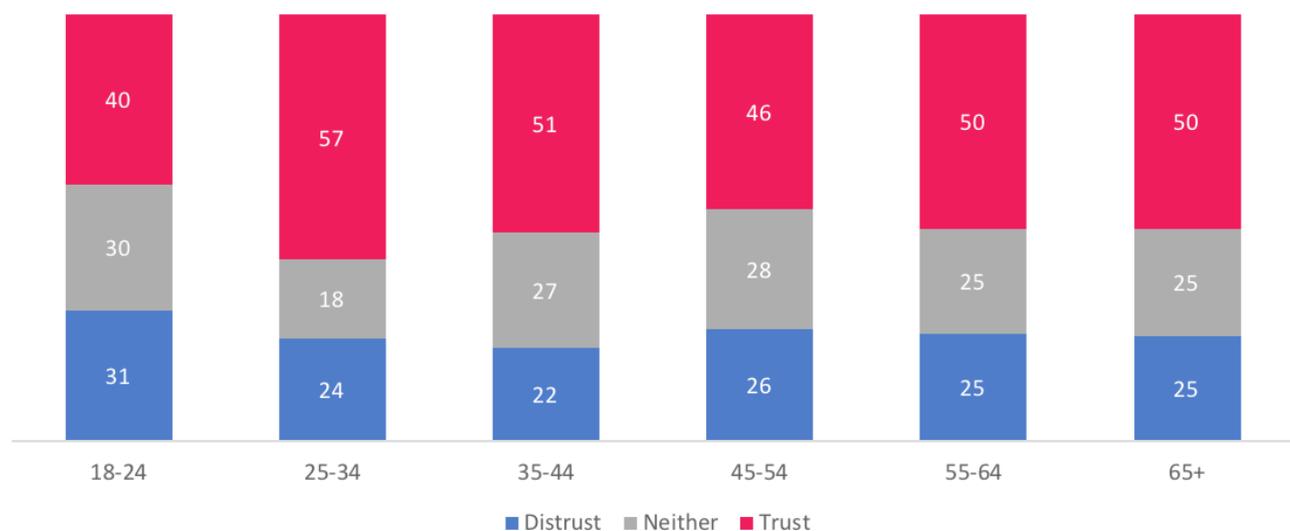


FIGURE 2.5: GENERAL TRUST BY AGE (%)

Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think I can trust most news most of the time [Base: All].

25-34
YEAR OLDS HAVE THE HIGHEST
GENERAL TRUST
IN NEWS

When it comes to news on social media and via search engines 18-34 year olds have the highest trust, and those aged 35+ have the lowest. These figures partly reflect that young people use both social media and search engines more for accessing news than older Australians and are therefore more likely to trust them as pathways to news (see figure 2.6).

There is a minority of under 35 news consumers who use traditional offline platforms (TV, radio or print) as the main source of news. As figure 2.7 shows, those under 35 years of age who mainly use traditional platforms to access news are also more trusting of news in general (69%) compared to those aged 35+ who use traditional platforms (54%).

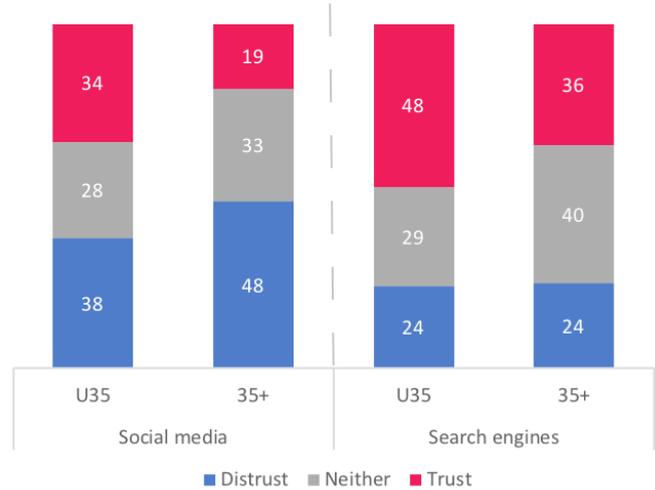


FIGURE 2.6: TRUST IN NEWS IN SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEARCH ENGINE BY AGE (%)

Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time/ I think I can trust news in search engines most of the time [Base: All].

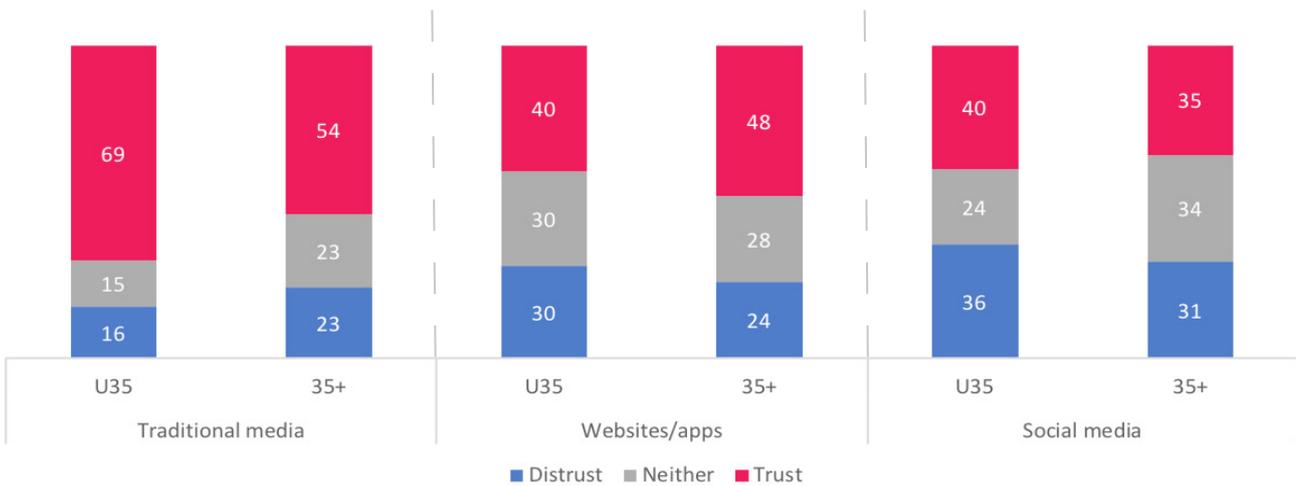


FIGURE 2.7: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY AGE AND MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think you can trust most news most of the time. Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the MAIN way in which you came across news in the last week? [Base: All who came across news in the last week] [Base: All who came across news in the last week]; Direct includes going to brand website, searching for brand, notifications/alerts; indirect includes search engines, aggregator apps and social media.

UNDER 35s WHO MAINLY ACCESS NEWS VIA OFFLINE MEDIA (40% OF U35)

- 63%** access news more than once a day (56% of the whole sample)
- 74%** are very/extremely interested in news (65% of the whole sample)
- 60%** are very/extremely interested in politics news (42% of the whole sample)
- 70%** have accessed news via websites/apps (64% of the whole sample)
- 68%** have accessed news via social media/blogs (54% of the whole sample)

TRUST IN ESTABLISHED BRANDS

Australians continue to trust established news brands more than newer online-only brands (see **figure 2.8**). Participants were asked to give each brand a score out of 10, with 0 being ‘not at all trustworthy’ to 10 being ‘completely trust worthy’. ABC News ranked the most

trusted news brand overall with online site Junkee ranked the least trusted. This shifts slightly when age is taken into account. Under 35’s deemed BuzzFeed the least trustworthy but they considered all online news brands to be more trustworthy than news consumers aged over 35.

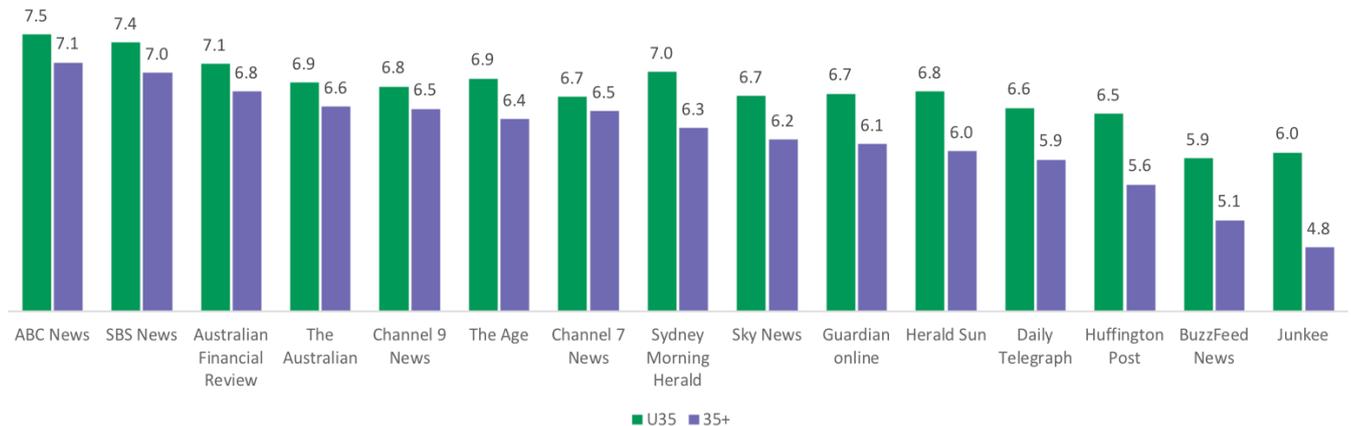


FIGURE 2.8: TRUST IN NEWS BRAND BY AGE (%)

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.’ [Base: All].

TRUST INCREASES WITH NUMBER OF NEWS SOURCES

The number of news sources a consumer uses is a strong predictor of trust (see **figure 2.9**). The greater the number of sources used, the higher the level of general trust in news. 33% of those who use only one source trust the news in comparison to 57% of those who use four or more sources.

TRUST, NEWS ACCESS & INTEREST

Those who have a high interest in news and access it often are also much more likely to have higher general trust in news (see **figure 2.10**). 55% of those who access news more than once a day (heavy users) trust news as opposed to 43% of those who access news only once a day or less (light users). Similarly, 58% of those with high interest in news also trust news in contrast with 34% with low interest.

Again those with a high interest in political news specifically (58%) are more likely to trust news than those who are not interested in politics (44%). The same is true on social media, where those with a high interest in politics (35%) are more likely to trust the news on social media than those who are less interested (15%).

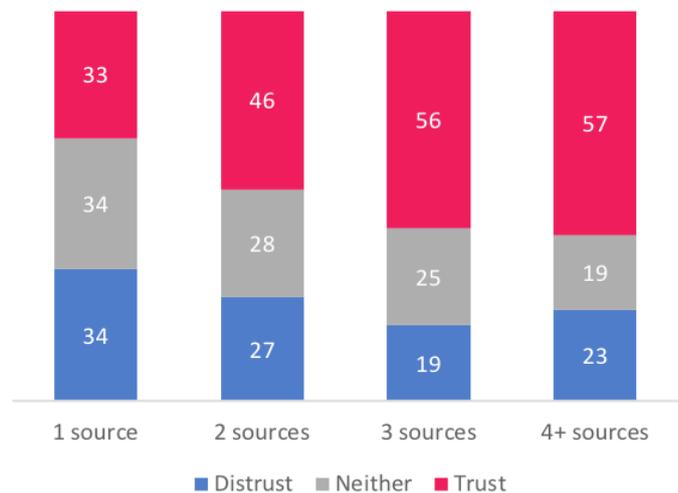


FIGURE 2.9: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY NUMBER OF SOURCES (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply: From the 11 options, we counted the number of sources - Television news bulletins or programmes, 24 hour news television channels, Radio news bulletins or programmes, Printed newspapers, Printed magazines, Websites/apps of newspapers, Websites/apps of news magazines, Websites/apps of TV and Radio companies, Websites/apps of other news outlets, Social media, and Blogs.

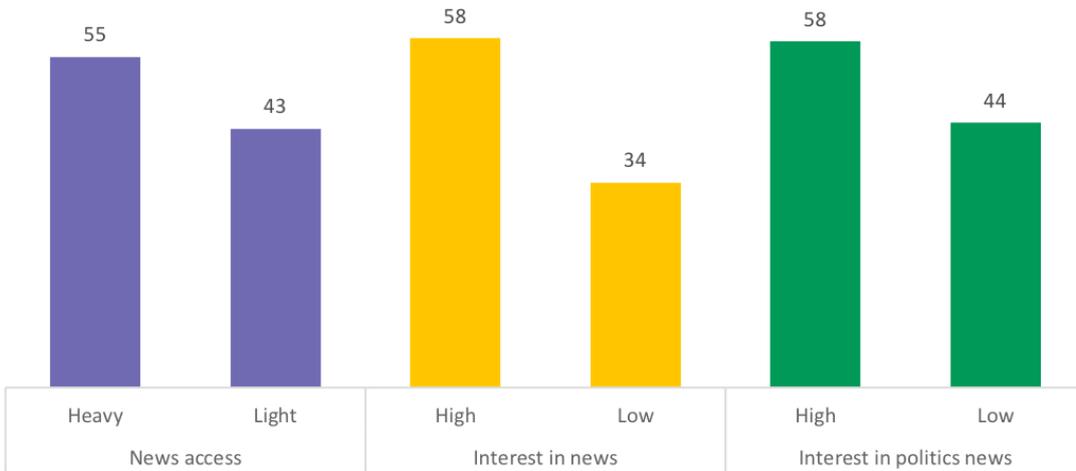


FIGURE 2.10: GENERAL TRUST LEVEL BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST IN NEWS (%)

Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? - I think you can trust most news most of the time. 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). Q1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news about politics? [Base: All].

HIGH NEWS LITERACY CONSUMERS DO NOT TRUST SOCIAL MEDIA

Analysis of the data reveals that news literacy is a strong predictor of trust in news (see figure 2.11). In this survey news literacy was measured by asking the participants a range of questions about the news environment.

Depending on how many questions they answered correctly, they were labelled as having very high, high, low or very low news literacy (See Chapter 4 for full detail on news literacy).

When correlated with trust the data shows that people with higher news literacy are likely to have higher trust in news generally and lower trust in news from social media.

Conversely those with lower news literacy are more likely to have higher trust in news on social media and lower trust in news generally. This suggests that those with lower news literacy are less discerning when it comes to news on social media than those with higher news literacy.

ONLY **8%** OF THOSE WITH VERY HIGH NEWS LITERACY TRUST NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

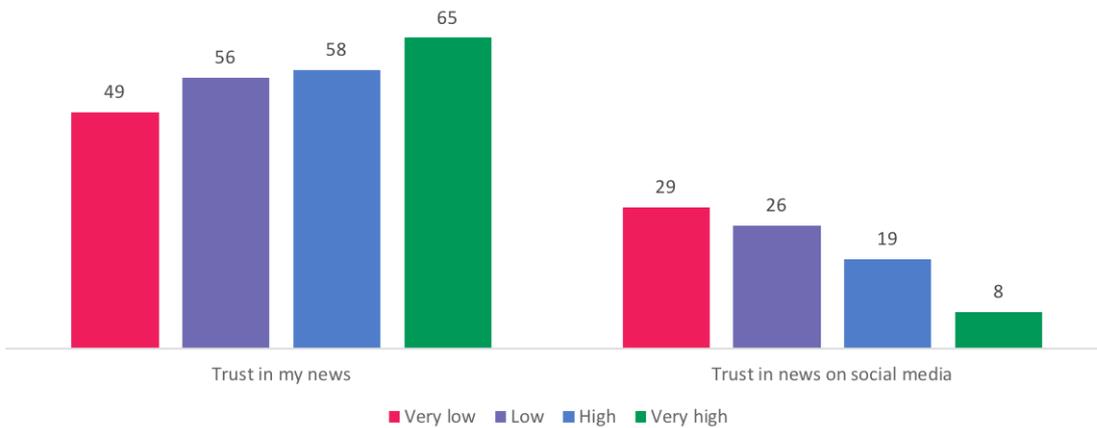


FIGURE 2.11: TRUST AND NEWS LITERACY (%)

Q6_2016_2. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time. Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time. [Base: All].

TRUST LEADS TO PAYMENT FOR NEWS

Our data shows that trust is related to willingness-to-pay for news. People who pay for print newspapers or online news sources are much more likely to trust news than people who do not pay for it. **Figure 2.12** shows that 52% of those who trust news in general reported having paid for printed newspapers in comparison to 30% of those who distrust news.



THOSE WHO TRUST NEWS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PAY FOR PRINT NEWSPAPERS OR ONLINE NEWS THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT TRUST NEWS

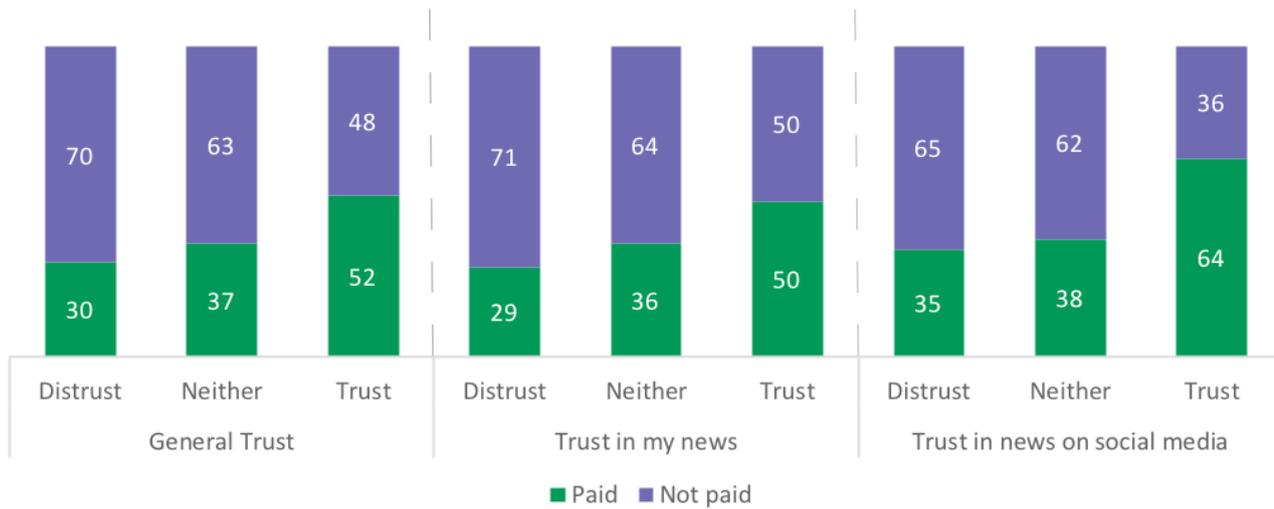


FIGURE 2.12: TRUST LEVEL BY USE OF PAID NEWSPAPER (%)

Q7. Have you bought (paid for) a printed newspaper in the last week? (This could be an ongoing subscription or one off payment for a physical copy). Please select all that apply.

Similarly, **figure 2.13** highlights that 29% of those who trust news in general reported having paid for digital news, versus 14% of those who distrust news.

29%

OF THOSE WHO TRUST NEWS IN GENERAL HAVE PAID FOR DIGITAL NEWS

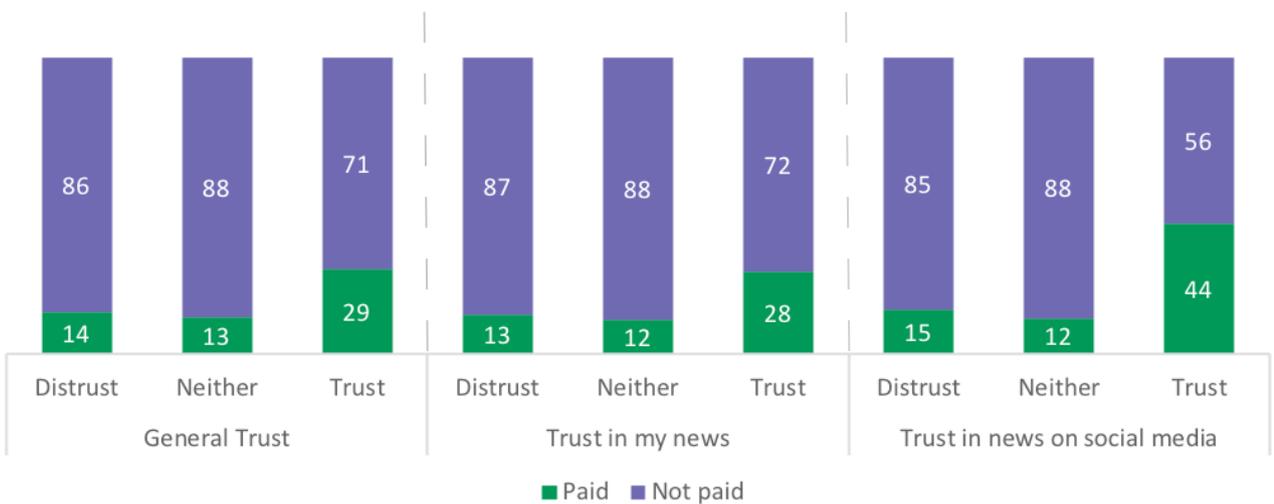


FIGURE 2.13: TRUST LEVEL BY USE OF PAID DIGITAL NEWS (%)

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 or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition) [Base: All]. Figures have been rounded up or down.

Again, 78% of people who made a donation for news trust news in general, compared to 48% of those who do not donate, as **figure 2.14** shows.

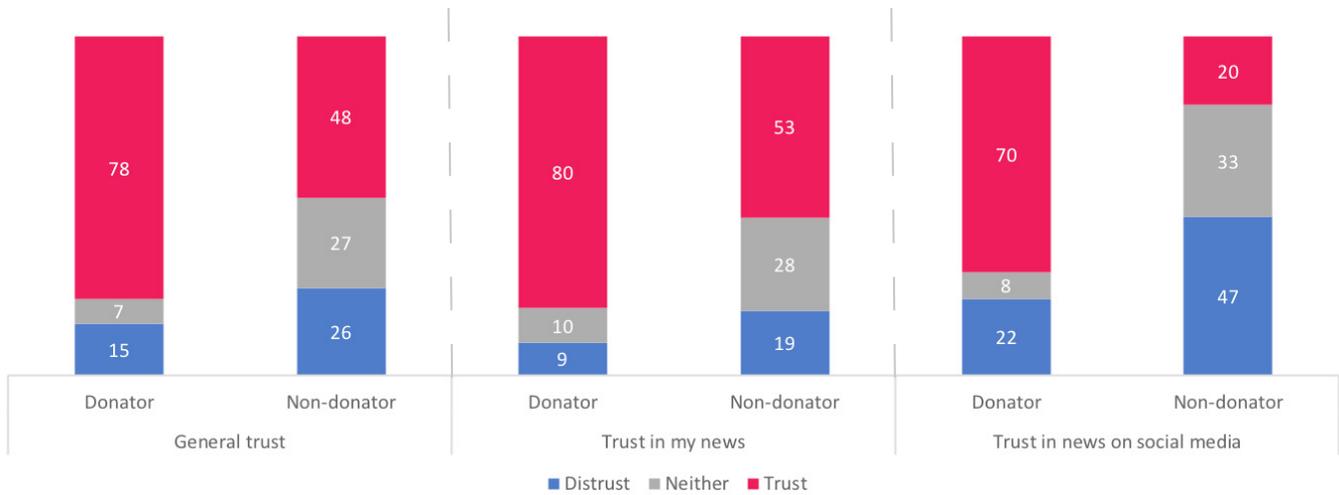


FIGURE 2.14: DONATION TO A NEWS OUTLET AND TRUST (%)

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. [Donators= those who have made a donation to support a digital news service, 138 respondents] [Non-donators= 1887 respondents]. Figures have been rounded up or down.

DISCUSSION

This year’s report records a significant 8% rise in trust in news from 42% in 2017 to 50% this year. It also records low trust in news found on social media. These results are possibly a reflection of ongoing public discussion about ‘fake news’ and growing awareness about the unreliability of information on social media. This has translated into an increase in trust in established news brands.

The data clearly shows that trust in news is strongly correlated with news interest, frequency of use, news literacy and the number of news sources used. That means those with the highest trust in news also use it often, have a high interest in it, have good knowledge of the news environment and seek information from a range of sources. The opposite is also true. Low interest, use, literacy and only one source of news, also relate to lower trust in news.

This report also underlines the enduring power of established media brands as the most trusted sources of news. It is clear that newer online-only news sources are less trusted than traditional brands that have an online presence. Those who access known-brands directly have higher trust in news than those who don’t.

This trust also translates to payment for news. The data clearly shows that people who trust news generally are much more willing to pay for it; and those who do not trust it are less willing. This signals to news organisations that improvements in news quality need to be part of the solution to building a stronger financial future.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

THURSDAY AUGUST 17, 2017: One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson takes off a burqa during Senate Question Time at Parliament House in Canberra. The senator took her seat in the chamber during question time wearing the full face garment, drawing anger from other senators for what they regarded as a 'stunt'.

IMAGE: AAP Image/Lukas Coch



3 FAKE NEWS

- The majority (73%) of Australian news consumers have experienced one or more types of fake news.
- Australians are the most worried about politically and commercially fabricated stories (67%) and spun stories to push an agenda (66%).
- Respondents' concern about politically or commercially made-up stories is much higher (67%) than their reported experience of it (25%).
- 12% of news consumers don't know if they have encountered fake news or not.
- News consumers (81%) think it is the responsibility of media companies and journalists to combat fake news.

CONCERN ABOUT “FAKE NEWS” HIGHER THAN ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF IT

In a response to the global concern about fake news, this year we asked about news consumers’ experience of and concern about misinformation. We asked about six types of fake news:

- (1) poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait);
- (2) stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda;
- (3) stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons;
- (4) headlines that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements;
- (5) stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire); and
- (6) the use of the term fake news (e.g. by politicians, others) to discredit news media they don’t like.

The survey shows that 65% of news consumers are concerned about fake news they encounter online. The majority (73%) report having experienced one or more types of fake news in the last week. Heavy news consumers (82%) experience fake news more than light news consumers (62%). It is notable that 12% of respondents didn’t know if they had encountered any of the six types of fake news or not.

The most common type of fake news that news consumers experience is ‘poor journalism’, closely followed by stories that are twisted to push an agenda. People are more worried about fabricated stories for political and commercial reasons than about satire or advertisements that are disguised as news.

The level of concern is higher than the actual experience of each type of fake news. The biggest concern is about politically or commercially fabricated stories (67%), and stories where facts are twisted or spun for a particular purpose (66%), even though only 25% and 38% of news consumers reported actually encountering these types of fake news, respectively. More than half (55%) of those who don’t know if they have encountered fake news are still concerned about it.

73%

OF RESPONDENTS REPORT HAVING EXPERIENCED ONE OR MORE TYPES OF FAKE NEWS IN THE LAST WEEK

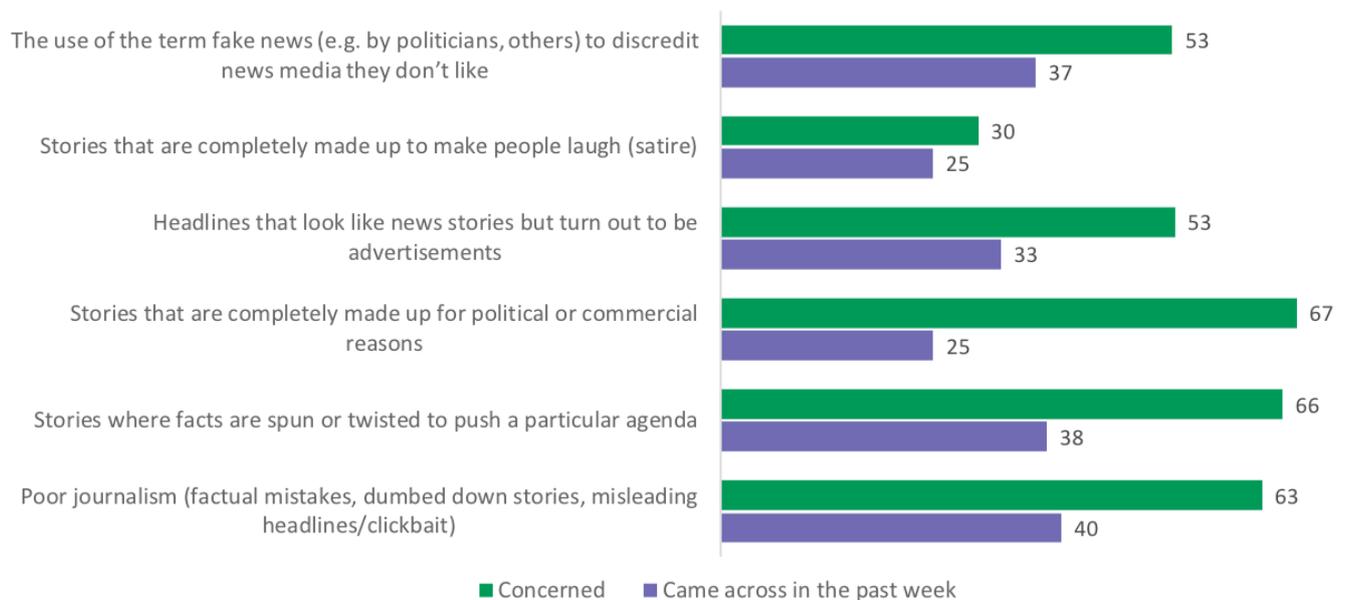


FIGURE 3.1: EXPERIENCE OF AND CONCERN ABOUT FAKE NEWS (%)

Questions: Q_FAKE_NEWS_1 Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. (Strongly disagree to strongly agree)/Q_FAKE_NEWS_2. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following? (Not at all concerned to extremely concerned)/ Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Included in concerned 'very and extremely concerned' only [Base: All].

DO WAYS OF ACCESSING NEWS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

People encounter different levels of fake news depending on their main source of news, as **figure 3.2** indicates. Those who use websites and apps mainly encounter poor journalism (49%) more than any other platform including social media (39%).

“Completely made-up” fake news was less common overall, but those who use newspapers as the main source encountered it more (28%) compared to TV (24%) or online (26%).

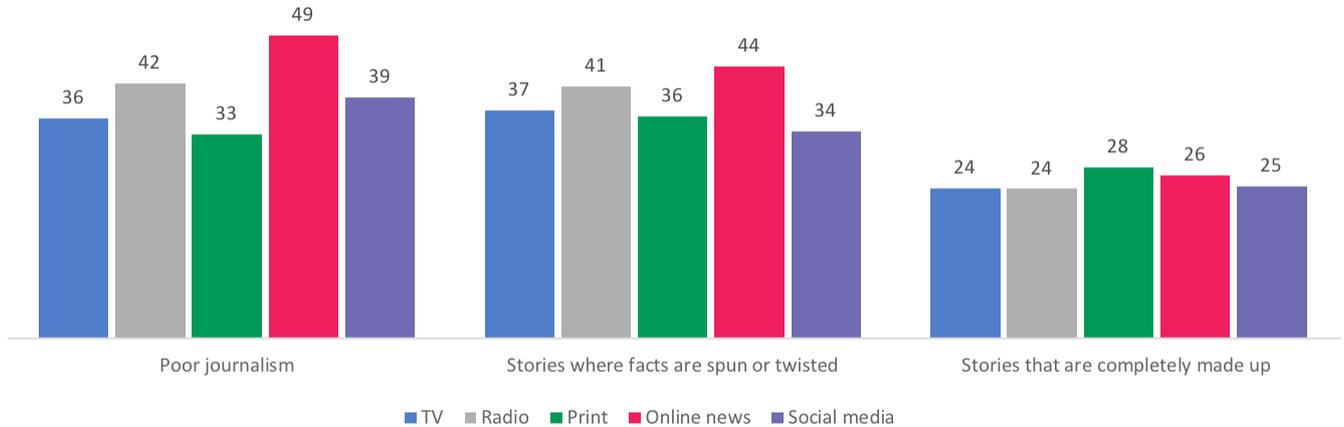


FIGURE 3.2: EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

Q4. You say you’ve used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? TV (Television news bulletins or programmes, 24 hour news television channels), Radio (Radio news bulletins or programmes), Newspaper (Printed newspapers, Printed magazines), Online news (Websites/apps of newspapers, Websites/apps of news magazines, Websites/apps of TV and Radio companies, Websites/apps of other news outlets) and social media (Social media, Blogs). [Base: All]

The number of news sources consumers use is an important factor in determining the experience of fake news. Those who access more sources encounter more fake news. Half of news consumers (50%) who use four or more sources experienced poor journalism, 52% experienced spun stories and 34% experienced fabricated stories. This is higher than those who only use one source, where only 26% encountered poor journalism, 22% spun stories and 14% fabricated stories (see **figure 3.3**).

THOSE WHO ACCESSED MORE NEWS SOURCES ENCOUNTERED MORE FAKE NEWS

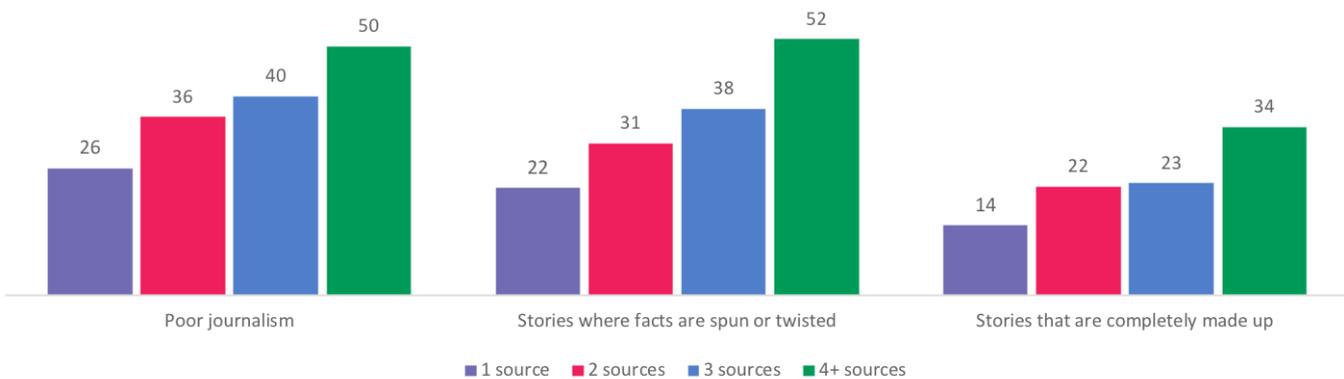


FIGURE 3.3: EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS BY NUMBER OF SOURCES (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply: From the 11 options, we counted the number of sources - Television news bulletins or programmes, 24 hour news television channels, Radio news bulletins or programmes, Printed newspapers, Printed magazines, Websites/apps of newspapers, Websites/apps of news magazines, Websites/apps of TV and Radio companies, Websites/apps of other news outlets, Social media, and Blogs.

DISTRUST IN NEWS IS FUELED BY FAKE NEWS

Fake news experience is correlated with distrust in news. Those who experienced fake news distrust the news significantly more than those who haven't experienced fake news. 35% of those who experienced poor journalism

did not trust news in general. Similarly, 33% of those who experienced stories where facts were spun or twisted, or were fabricated distrusted news. Details are provided in figure 3.4.

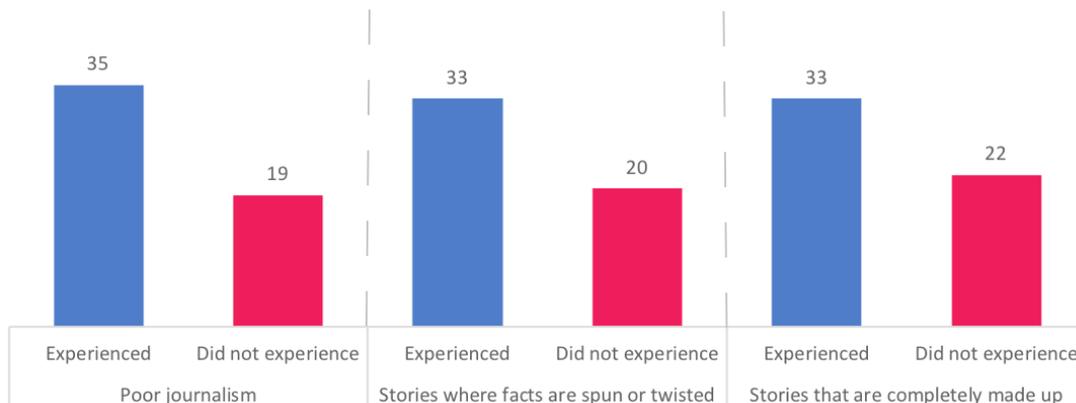


FIGURE 3.4: EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS AND DISTRUST IN NEWS BY EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS (%)

Q6_2016_1/2. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? I think you can trust most news most of the time; I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time. Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time. Q6_2018_3. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in search engines most of the time [Base: All].

MEN ARE MORE EXPOSED TO FAKE NEWS

Men are more exposed to fake news than women in all types of fake news. The proportion of women who said they didn't know if they had been exposed or not was 13%, compared to 10% of men (see figure 3.5). This is due to the fact that men are more frequent users of news.

13% OF FEMALE RESPONDENTS DO NOT KNOW IF THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED FAKE NEWS

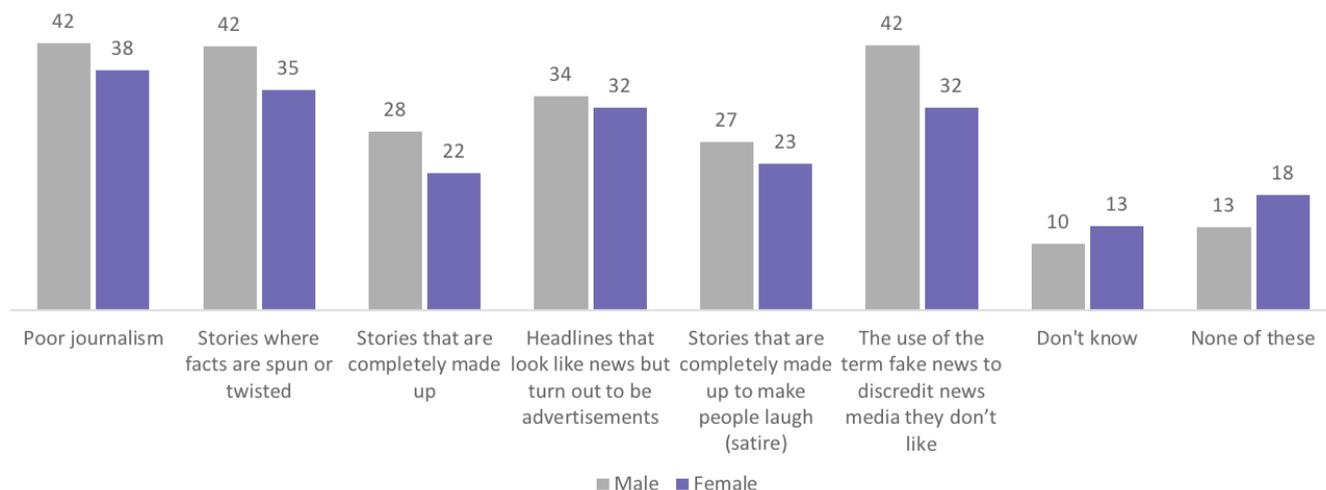


FIGURE 3.5: EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS BY GENDER (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Included in concerned 'very and extremely concerned' only [Base: All].

There is very little difference in the experience of fake news between under 35 and 35+ age groups, except young people significantly encounter satire more than older people, as seen in **figure 3.6**.

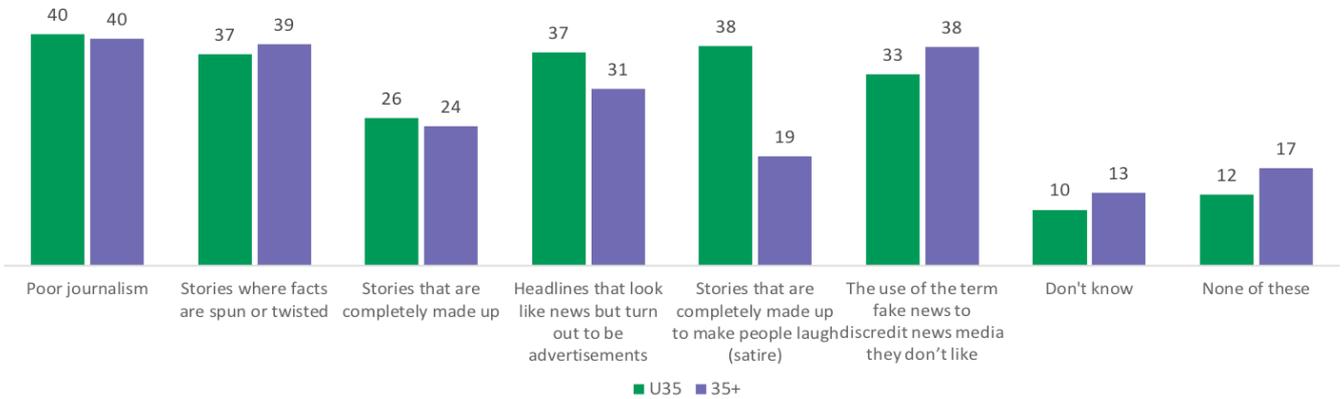


FIGURE 3.6: EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS BY AGE (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Included in concerned 'very and extremely concerned' only [Base: All].

WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT FAKE NEWS?

Women, the more educated, heavy internet users, heavy news users and those interested in news and political news are more concerned about fake news. Those who have right-wing political orientation and those with higher news literacy are more concerned. Respondents who access news mainly via computers, and those who access

online news via search engines and social media are more concerned. Older news consumers are more concerned about fake news than younger news consumers. The types of fake news younger Australians worry about are satire and the misuse of the term fake news.

AUSTRALIANS WANT TO SEE ACTION TO COMBAT FAKE NEWS

News consumers think media companies and journalists (81%) are responsible for taking action to reduce fake news, more so than social media companies (75%) or the government (68%). Older Australians think that media

companies, journalists, government and technology companies should do more to reduce the amount of misinformation, as **figure 3.7** indicates.

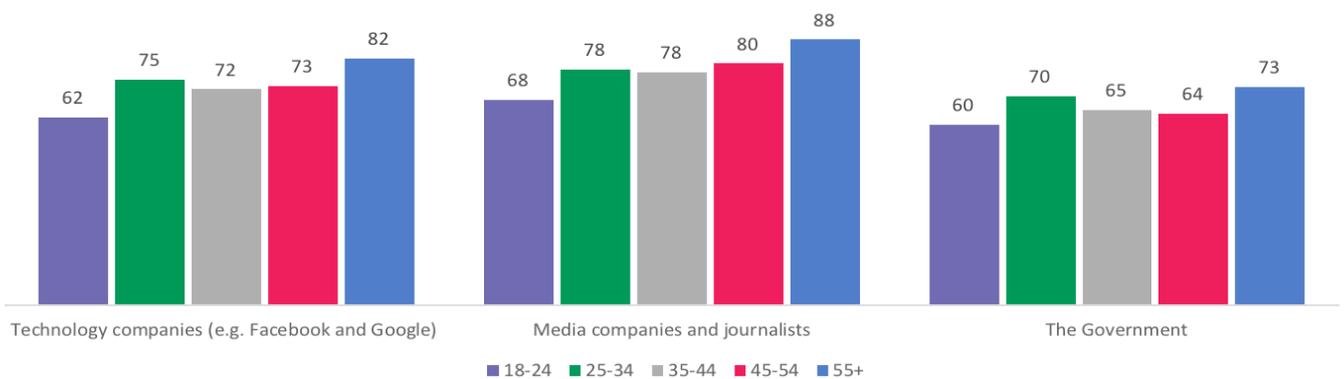


FIGURE 3.7: RESPONSIBLE PARTIES IN REDUCING MISINFORMATION ONLINE (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_4_2. Any action to decrease/reduce the amount of misinformation (in the media or in social media) is likely to have the consequence of reducing, to some extent, the range of real or legitimate news or opinion available. With this in mind, please indicate your agreement with the following statements: Technology companies (e.g. Facebook and Google) should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet; Media companies and journalists should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet; The Government should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and fake on the internet. [Base: All].

DISCUSSION

Australian news consumers are much more concerned about fake news than their actual experience of it. They are most worried about stories that are completely made up for political and commercial reasons, even though less than one-third experience it. Stories that are twisted or spun to push an agenda are also of concern to the majority of Australians. This disconnect between concern about and experience of fake news is a reflection of the intense debate that has surrounded the use of the term 'fake news' by prominent political figures.

Patterns of news access are related to the amount of fake news people encounter. Those who mainly use social media and search engines to get news are more likely to experience fake news. News consumers who access more sources also encounter more fake news. Those who reported to have experienced fake news distrust the news significantly more than those who haven't.

Although the majority of news consumers were mostly concerned about twisted or fabricated news stories, the highest experience in fake news was related to poor journalism. Many news consumers reported that they don't know if they have encountered fake news or not.

In reducing fake news, the majority of news consumers thought media companies, journalists, social media companies and the government all have significant roles in taking action. Given that people are highly concerned about fake news, it is not surprising that people are expecting a societal level of action in dealing with these matters.

COMMENTARY

FAKE NEWS, REAL PROBLEMS: WHAT IS DISINFORMATION AND HOW DO WE CONFRONT IT?

Michael Jensen

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Although fake news has made headlines in recent years and was named 'word of the year' by Macquarie Dictionary in 2016, propaganda and the manipulation of information and images are not new.

Past instances include doctored Stalinist and Maoist photographs where purged apparatchiks were 'disappeared'; the second Tonkin Gulf incident; the East German and Soviet 'Operation INFEKTION' which spread the rumour that AIDS had been developed by the US military;¹ the Australian 'children overboard' affair;² and so forth. What is new today is that digital networks greatly facilitate the production and diffusion of fake news.

The means of creating deceptive information has become 'democratised', dissemination occurs much faster, and it is possible to filter out attitude-challenging content entirely. During highly polarised periods of the past, such as the United States in the late 18th century,³ readers of the time's hyper-partisan press still shared common reference points – for example, the Bible, or Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* manifesto. In contrast, some contemporary information networks are potentially impermeable to outside reach.

We define fake news as the intentional distribution of an informational claim in the absence of the factual predicates which would justify its belief. We distinguish misinformation or accidentally incorrect claims from fake news, which is a form of disinformation owing to its strategic and deceptive aims.

There can be economic motives to spreading fake news (driving web traffic and ad revenue) as well as domestic political and even international security dimensions, whereby fake news is weaponised as a form of information warfare.

There has been considerable debate as to whether the growth of digital news consumption breeds algorithmically driven 'filter bubbles' and self-selected 'echo chambers', or whether ease of access gives rise to greater source diversity in news consumption.⁴

“The means of creating deceptive information has become ‘democratised’, dissemination occurs much faster, and it is possible to filter out attitude-challenging content entirely.”

Studies relying on survey data suggest the heaviest consumers of digital news have the most diverse news diets,⁵ whereas network-based studies tend to show that engagement with news sources is ideologically balkanised.⁶

To the extent that news environments are balkanised, the infusion of fake news contributes to polarisation as 'the network structure is so dense that any misinformation spreads almost instantaneously within one group, and so segregated that it does not reach the other'.⁷

The era of limited and professional journalistic outlets may be behind us as the news cycle accelerates and the news space is increasingly crowded. Our data show that Australians are particularly aware that reports may be fabricated for political or commercial gain.

“The era of limited and professional journalistic outlets may be behind us as the news cycle accelerates and the news space is increasingly crowded.”

These fears may be just the beginning as 'deepfakes' (the use of deep learning algorithms to produce realistic but false audio and video) can be produced with readily available software and little training.⁸ Deepfakes cast doubt on the reality of a situation and have an impact even if successfully disproven as it is hard to unsee what has already been seen.

There is no easy or singular solution to the threat posed by fake news to democracies today. We will mention three broad categories of responses. In terms of news literacy, grammatical errors, mistakes regarding noncontroversial facts, lack of sourcing, factual claims being linked to a political agenda, and links to sources which do not back up the claims of the article, are often indications that a news story is dubious at best.

At the collective level, the 'wisdom of the crowd', once decried as unreliable, could now be advanced as the means to vet information claims: the Wikipedia model could conceivably be applied in other domains, such as social media channels.

Finally, regulations requiring transparency with respect to the algorithms that govern the operation of online social networks would provide citizens with increased ability to understand how information reached them, and to assess its reliability.

NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

TUESDAY APRIL 10, 2018: 100 life-sized cutouts of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg sit on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. The advocacy group Avaaz placed the cutouts on the lawn to bring attention to the alleged hundreds of millions of fake accounts still spreading disinformation on Facebook ahead of Zuckerberg's hearing before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation and Senate Judiciary Committees.

IMAGE: AAP Image/CrowdSpark/Eleni Padden





4 NEWS LITERACY

- 68% of news consumers have low or very low news literacy and only 9% have very high news literacy.
- 76% of people who rely on social media for news have low or very low news literacy.
- The level of news literacy is strongly related to interest in news and how often it is used.
- Those with higher news literacy say they experience fake news more than those with lower literacy.
- ABC and *Guardian Australia* audiences have higher levels of news literacy than other brand consumers.

MEASURING NEWS LITERACY

This year, survey respondents were asked three questions to better determine their level of news literacy. The questions tested the participants' knowledge of the news environment (see box below).

Whilst it is only three questions, academic research¹ in this area suggests that knowledge of media industries, media content, effects, the real world, and the self are all essential elements of measuring an individual's news media literacy.

In that context these questions about funding to the public broadcaster, who is responsible for writing a press release, and the way Facebook selects news for people, are all important for understanding the context and creation of news.

Based on the number of questions answered correctly respondents were ranked from having very low news literacy to very high news literacy. 0 correct = very low news literacy; 1 correct = low news literacy; 2 correct = high news literacy; and 3 correct = very high news literacy.

The survey shows that 31% of news consumers have very low news literacy, 37% have low news literacy, 23% with high news literacy, and 9% very high news literacy (see **figure 4.1**).

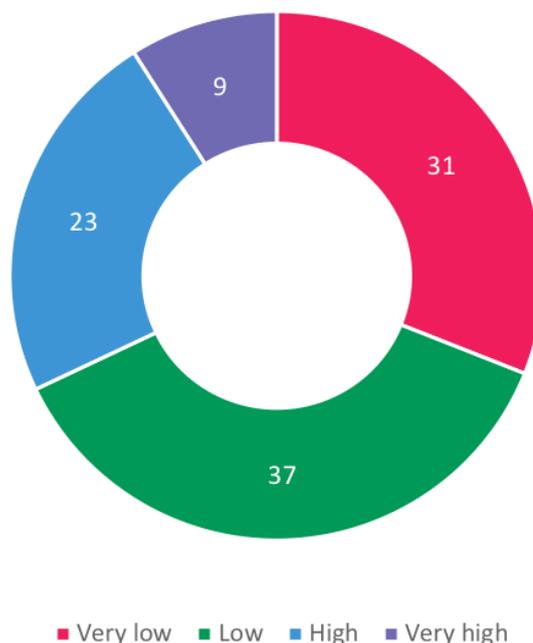


FIGURE 4.1: NEWS LITERACY (%)
Q14_2018a_combined. News Literacy [Base: All].

QUESTIONS ASKED TO MEASURE NEWS LITERACY

Q1: Which of the following news outlets does NOT depend primarily on advertising for financial support? Please select one only. (1) Channel 7 (2) ABC (correct answer) (3) Herald Sun (4) Sydney Morning Herald (5) Don't know. Answers: 52% correct; 17% incorrect; 31% didn't know.

Q2: Which of the following is typically responsible for writing a press release? Please select one only. (1) A reporter for a news organization (2) A spokesperson for an organization (correct answer) (3) A lawyer for a news aggregator (4) A producer for a news organization (5) Don't know. Answers: 31% correct; 43% incorrect; 26% didn't know.

Q3: How are most of the individual decisions made about what news stories to show people on Facebook? Please select one only. (1) By computer analysis of what stories might interest you (correct answer) (2) By editors and journalists that work for Facebook (3) By editors and journalists that work for news outlets (4) At random (5) Don't know. Answers: 27% correct; 37% incorrect; 36% didn't know.

	FUNDING FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTER	PRESS RELEASE	FACEBOOK ALGORITHM
Correct	52	31	27
Incorrect	17	43	37
Don't know	31	26	36

TABLE 4.1: PERCENTAGE OF CORRECT ANSWERS FOR NEWS LITERACY QUESTIONS (%)

OLDER PEOPLE, THE MORE EDUCATED & MEN HAVE HIGHER NEWS LITERACY

A demographic analysis of the literacy findings revealed that men, those with higher education levels, and aged 45+ are more likely to have higher news literacy than other news users. It also showed that news consumers in regional and remote parts of Australia are more likely to have lower news literacy than those in major cities.

This might reflect a lack of quality news sources in these parts of the country. It might also reflect that the topics asked were less relevant to news consumers in regional and remote Australia than those who live in urban areas (see figure 4.2).

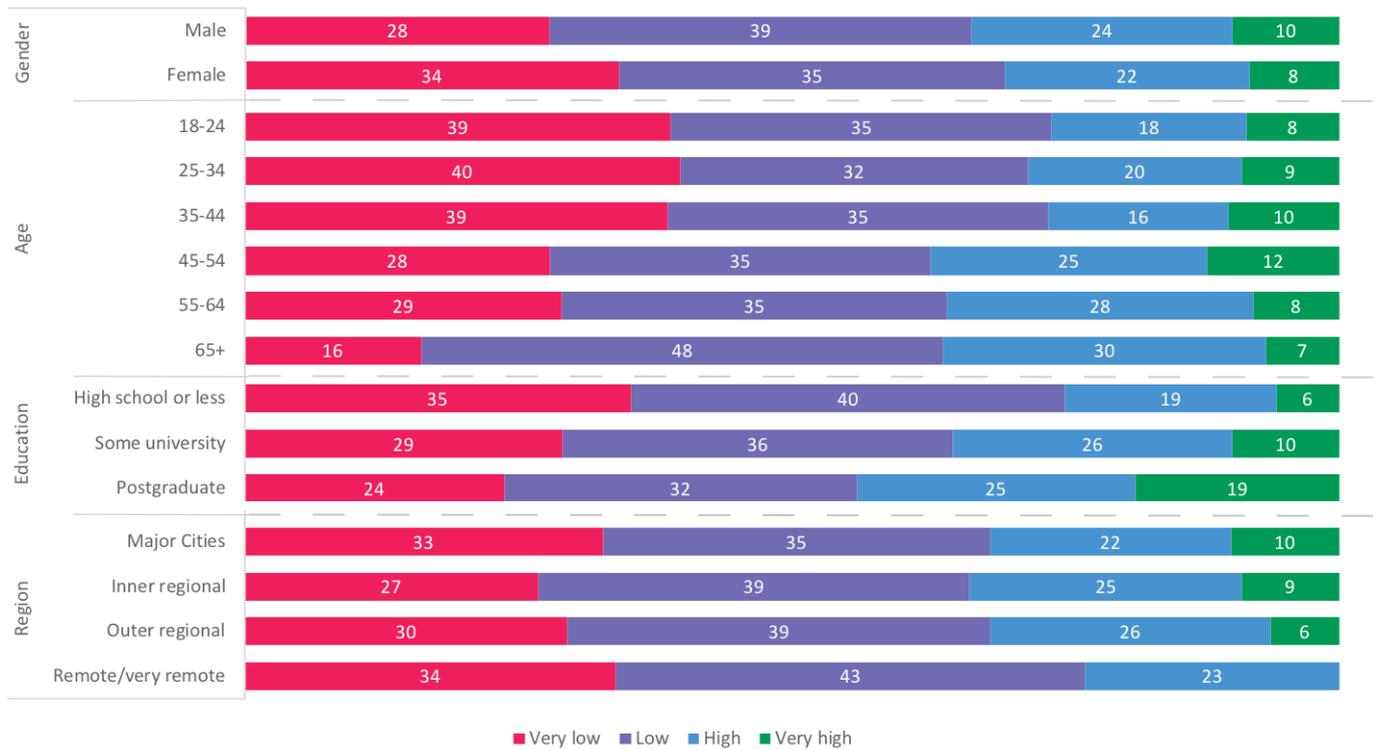


FIGURE 4.2: NEWS LITERACY BY GENDER, AGE, EDUCATION AND REGION (%)
 Q14_2018a_combined. News Literacy [Base: All].

MORE FREQUENT NEWS USERS HAVE HIGHER NEWS LITERACY

We found a positive correlation between news literacy, frequency of news use, and interest in news. Figure 4.3 shows those who use news more than once a day are more likely to be news literate than news consumers who use news less than once a day.

Similarly, those with higher interest in news recorded higher levels of news literacy. Conversely, news consumers who use news less often and have lower levels of interest in news were less likely to be news literate.

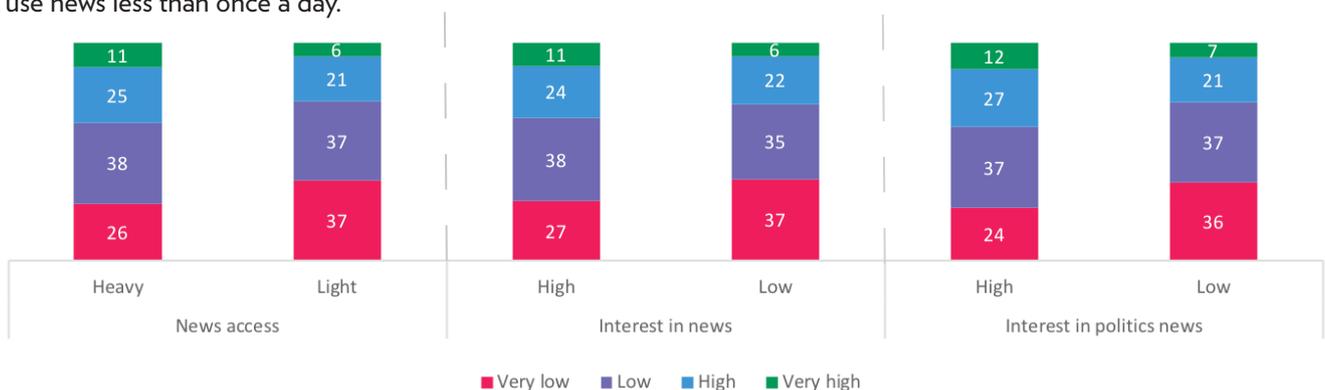


FIGURE 4.3: NEWS LITERACY BY FREQUENCY OF NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST IN NEWS (%)
 Q14_2018a_combined. News Literacy [Base: All].

Political orientation is also related to news literacy, as **figure 4.4** shows. Those who identify themselves as ‘right wing’ are slightly more likely to have low or very low news literacy (68%) than ‘left-wing’ (63%) and ‘centre’ (65%).

LOWER NEWS LITERACY AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Those who mainly access news via social media are less likely to be news literate than those who rely on traditional media or news websites/apps for their news. See **figure 4.5** for more information.

Three quarters (76%) of social media news consumers recorded a very low or low level of news literacy compared to 58% of people who mainly use online news sources, and 70% of those who rely on TV, radio and printed newspapers.

76%

OF SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMERS HAVE **LOW** OR **VERY LOW** LEVELS OF NEWS LITERACY

THOSE WITH HIGH NEWS LITERACY ACCESS NEWS BRANDS DIRECTLY

Among those who use online news sources, differences in news literacy are reflected in the way consumers found news. **Figure 4.6** shows that those with high and very high news literacy are much more likely to go directly to a news website or app to find news (41%) compared to 23% of those with very low literacy. Those with lower news literacy are more likely to reach news via social media and search engines.

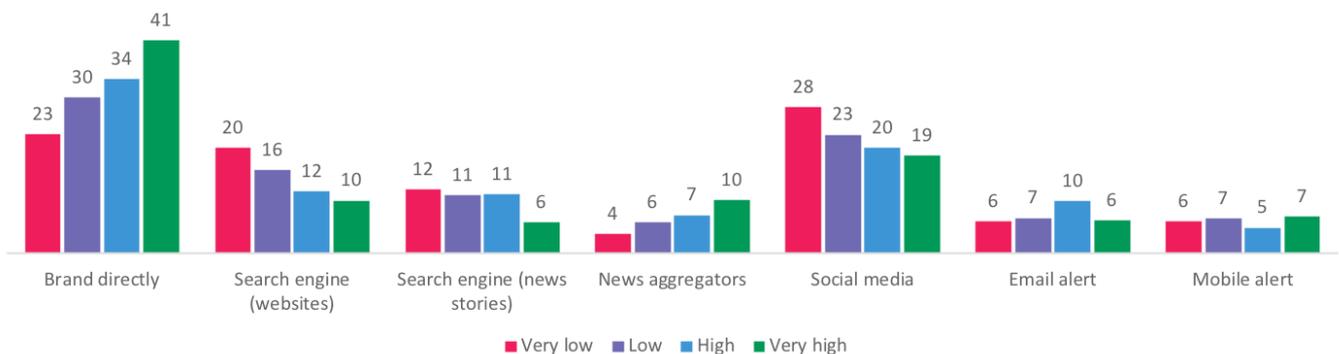


FIGURE 4.6: NEWS LITERACY AND WAYS OF ACCESSING NEWS (%)

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. Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the MAIN way in which you came across news in the last week? (% is out of all news consumers N=2026).

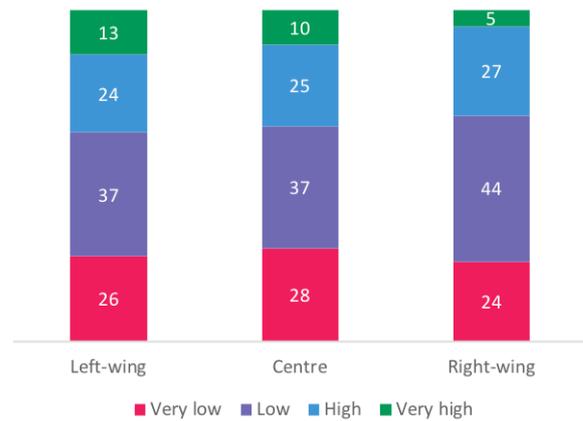


FIGURE 4.4: NEWS LITERACY BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

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? Q14_2018a_combined. News Literacy [Base: All].

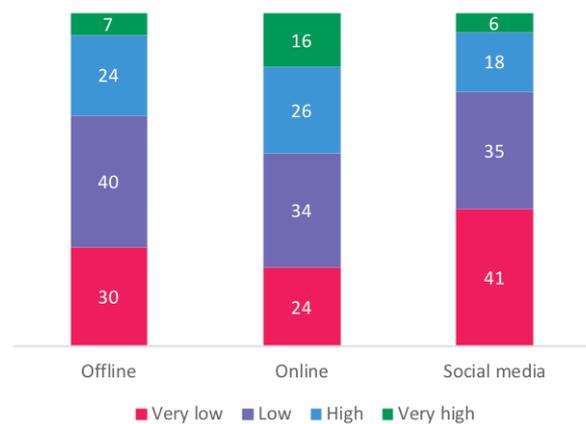


FIGURE 4.5: NEWS LITERACY AND MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

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: All].

NEWS LITERACY & SELECTING NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

As mentioned above, people with lower news literacy are more likely to rely on social media for news. Furthermore, when deciding what news items to read on social media, people with lower news literacy are more likely to pay attention to the number of likes, shares and comments on a story, compared to those with higher news literacy (see figure 4.7).

Those with higher news literacy are more likely to consider the news brand of the story as the most important characteristic in deciding whether to invest their time in reading the story. This reflects the way that those with higher news literacy tend to access news by going directly to brand websites or apps.

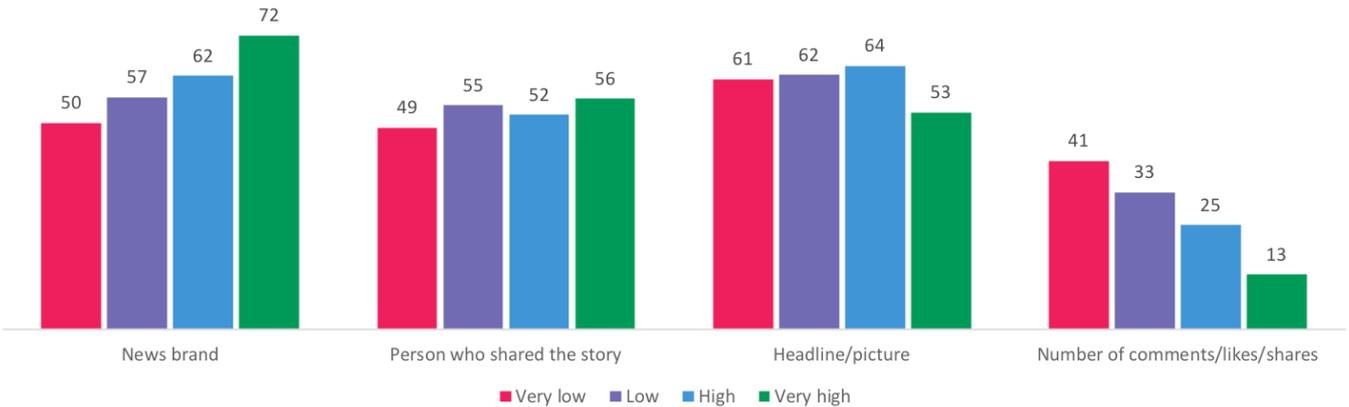


FIGURE 4.7: NEWS LITERACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOUR (%)

Q12C_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: When looking at stories in social media, the * is very important in helping me decide whether information is likely to be worth my time (*news brand, headline or picture, person who shared the story, number of comments, likes or shares) [Base: Those who have used a social media site for news in last week].

NEWS LITERACY & NUMBER OF SOURCES

Highly news literate respondents use more sources of news than those with low news literacy. As figure 4.8 shows, the level of news literacy grows in proportion to the number of sources used. Those who use the least number of news sources have the lowest level of news literacy.



NEWS CONSUMERS WITH HIGH NEWS LITERACY ARE LESS LIKELY TO CONSIDER LIKES, SHARES OR COMMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

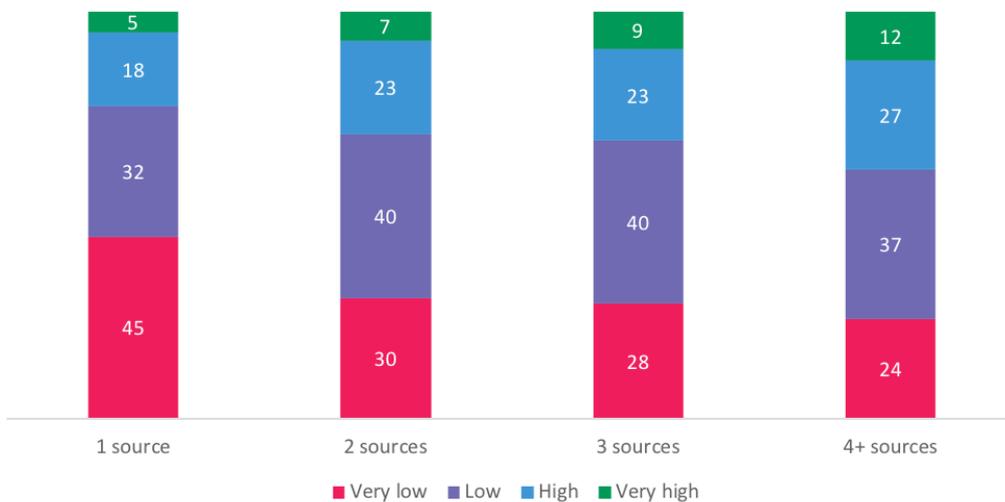


FIGURE 4.8: NEWS LITERACY AND NUMBER OF NEWS SOURCES (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply [Base: All].

NEWS LITERACY & NEWS BRANDS

Not only do those with higher literacy consume a larger number of news sources, they also access some brands more than others. *Guardian Australia* and the ABC (TV and Online) have the largest proportion of news consumers with high literacy as a share of their audience

and Junkee and the *Daily Telegraph* have the lowest. Please note, the online versions of newspapers are not included here and might reflect different levels of news literacy to the print audiences (see **figure 4.9**).

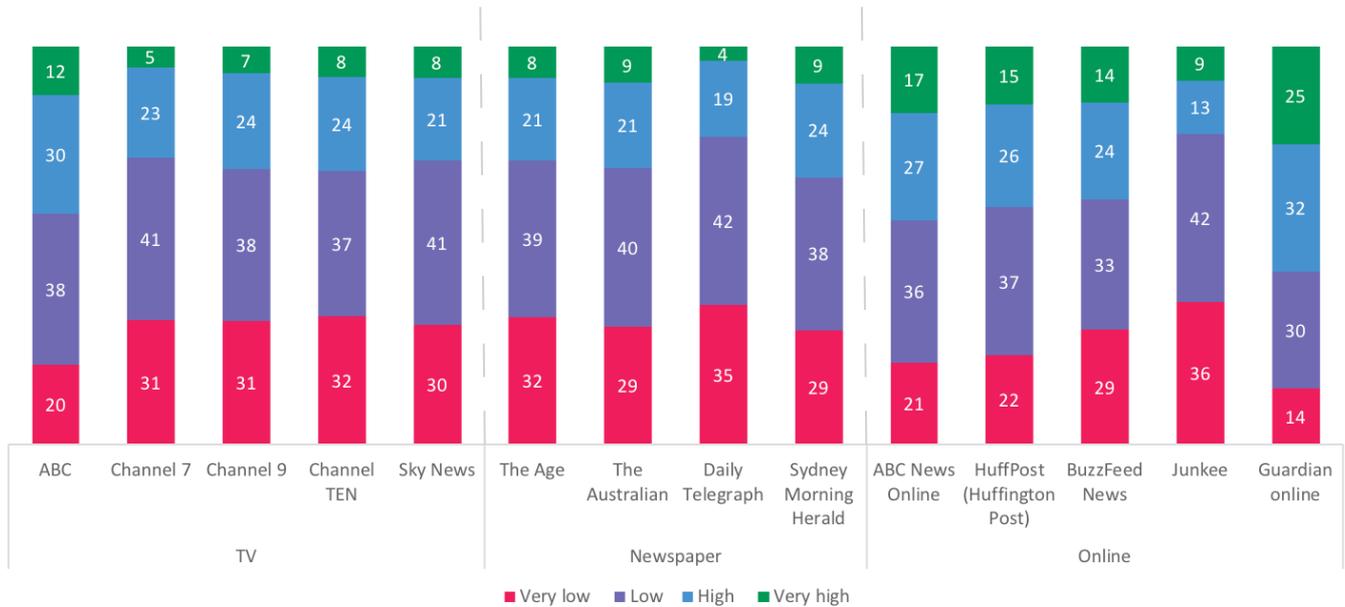


FIGURE 4.9: NEWS LITERACY AND NEWS BRAND (%)

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)?/ Q5B. Which of the following brands have you used to access news online in the last week (via websites, apps, social media, and other forms of Internet access)? [Base: All]

CONSUMERS WITH HIGH NEWS LITERACY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT FAKE NEWS

As described in the chapter on fake news, respondents were asked about six types of ‘fake news’ including satire, poor journalism, advertising, political misinformation, spin, and references to ‘fake news’ in media coverage. The data shows that news literacy is related to experience of fake news. **Figure 4.10** reveals that those with higher

news literacy report having experienced more fake news than those with lower literacy. This suggests that news consumers with lower literacy possibly have greater difficulty identifying misinformation and spotting fake news than those with higher news literacy.

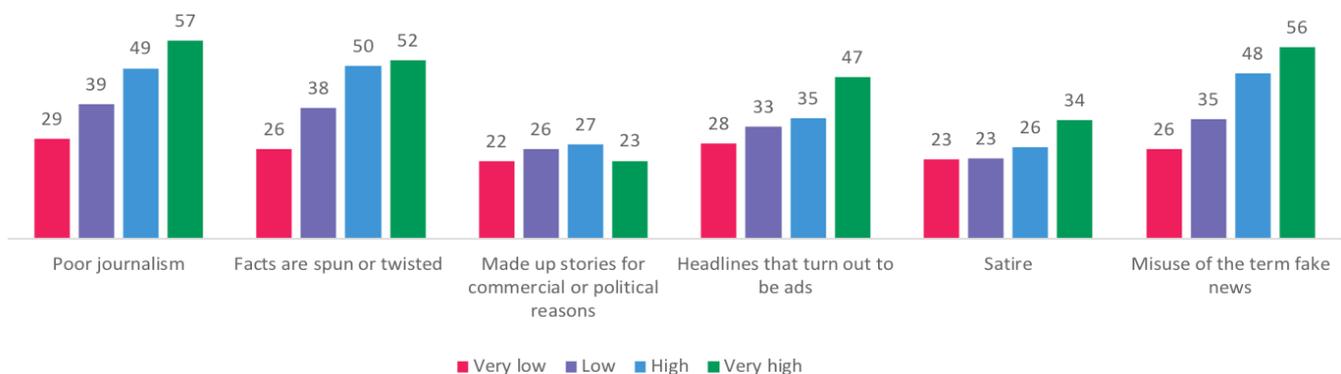


FIGURE 4.10: NEWS LITERACY AND EXPERIENCE OF FAKE NEWS (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_3. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply. Included in concerned ‘very and extremely concerned’ only [Base: All].

As well as experiencing more fake news, those with higher news literacy are more concerned about fake news in all of its forms, except for satire, which they are not so worried about. This again suggests that news consumers

with higher literacy can distinguish humour from other types of fake news such as poor journalism, political spin and advertising.

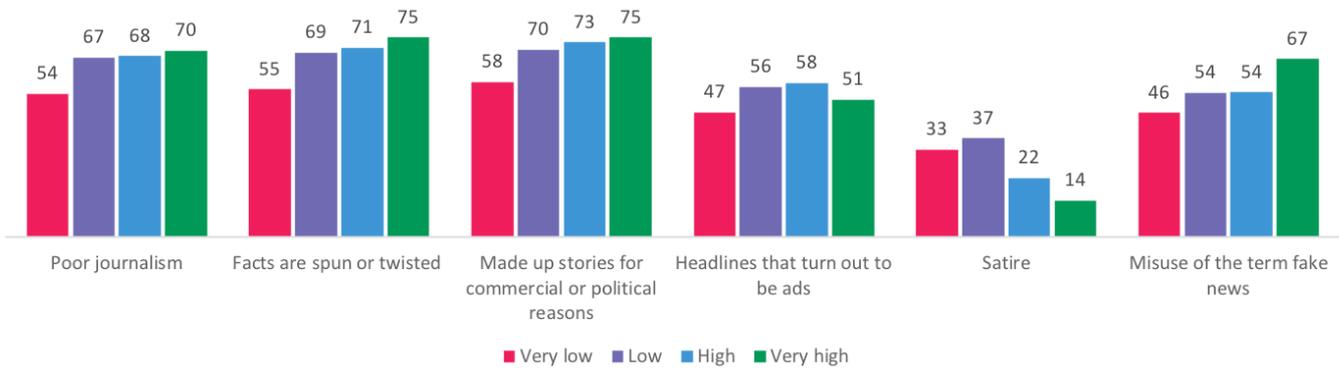


FIGURE 4.11: NEWS LITERACY AND CONCERN ABOUT FAKE NEWS (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_2. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following? (Not at all concerned to extremely concerned) [Base: All].

DISCUSSION

The findings in this section show that news literacy is directly related to how often people access the news, how interested they are in it, how many sources of news they use, and the platforms they rely on. Lower news literacy strongly indicates low interest, low access and the use of few sources. Conversely, higher news literacy strongly indicates high interest, high access and more sources. It is also clear that social media users are also more likely to have lower news literacy.

As a measure of news literacy, the answers to the three the questions are revealing. Question 1 asked participants to identify which Australian news outlet is not supported by advertising revenue. Only half (51%) understood that the ABC is free of advertising and funded by taxpayers, the rest of the survey respondents either did not know or got it wrong.

In Question 2 less than one third (31%) understood that a spokesperson for an organization is responsible for the production of a press release, as opposed to a journalist or news producers (38% combined). This is a very interesting result. It possibly reflects that the term ‘press release’ is an old label and has been largely replaced by ‘media release’ to reflect all news media, not just newspapers. It also possibly suggests that news consumers do not perceive a clear distinction between journalism and public relations roles. Twenty years ago only public relations professionals produced ‘press releases’ to make announcements and notify the media about upcoming events. However, in the age of digital media journalists now promote their work through social media, and news organisations send out news alerts and notifications to consumers, effectively assuming a former public relations function. In that context a ‘press release’ could be seen as information released **by** the media, rather than **to** the media. The shift in professional behaviour of journalists and news organisations in response to the rise of digital media might have created confusion in the minds of news consumers about who is responsible for producing a ‘press release’.

Lastly, the answers to Question 3 about Facebook are also interesting. Given the enormous public debate about Facebook and the role algorithms play in the selection of news, it is surprising that only 27% were aware of this. That means 73% of those Australians surveyed do not understand how story selection works on Facebook. Given that 52% said they had accessed news via social media in the last week, the low level of awareness about how it functions is concerning.

COMMENTARY

NEWS LITERACY: KEEPING PACE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Greg Jericho

Economics writer, *Guardian Australia*

Amid all the concern and worry about the force of the internet and digital media in driving fake news, it is clear that media consumers are now more knowledgeable and demanding of information than in the past. This has occurred for two reasons – the ability of the internet to give space to non-journalists to provide analysis on events, and because the internet provides tools that have improved media consumers' ability to understand information.

The first amateurs to really take to blogging in the early years of this century were those who had an affinity for statistics. From economists making use of all the freely available data, to those delving into the plethora of sporting statistics or political polls, the statistical bloggers had a weapon that negated the access that gave traditional journalists their advantage.

While bloggers were unable to pick up the phone and talk to politicians or interview the coach or star player of a team, they were able to analyse data and statistics to a level well beyond most journalists. Their work revealed just how much political and sporting coverage was based on “the vibe” or instinct, rather than sophisticated analysis. The sports-data nerds – like Nate Silver in America – discovered that some athletes who were revered in the media for certain traits that had been considered important, either did not actually possess those traits when compared to the average player, or that those traits in reality had little impact on the result.

Similarly where 1 or 2 percentage point movements in the polls were recounted by journalists as definitive proof of a government's success or failure over the previous fortnight, the statisticians were able to show the movements were either not significant or not important in predicting the next election result. Many in the traditional media pushed back – annoyed that their monopoly on interpreting events was under attack.

But the bloggers won. They won because the data literacy of readers increased with the improved information presented to them, and because the format of digital news media itself encouraged better literacy of data.

Sports coverage now includes as a matter of course mention of all manner of statistics beyond what was standard a decade ago – whether it be the Moneyball data in baseball or mentions of “meters gained” in the AFL. There remains the odd journalist who bemoans the rise of data, but readers devour it – because they are intelligent enough to decide for themselves if they believe the data is important.

Ten years ago political polling coverage rarely contained mention of margin of error, and instead journalists would scoff at the data nerds who considered such things important. Now mention of this statistical term is de rigeur of any article about the latest polling numbers.

News consumers' digital literacy is such that whereas once they were content to be provided with whatever the editor and journalist chose, now they demand more – because more is available, whether it be on traditional media outlets that make use of the greater space available on a webpage compared to a print newspaper, or from newer organisations such as *FiveThirtyEight* in the United States, which is devoted to using data to tell stories previously the domain of he-said-she-said reporting.

“The data literacy of readers increased with the improved information presented to them, and because the format of digital news media itself encouraged better literacy of data.”

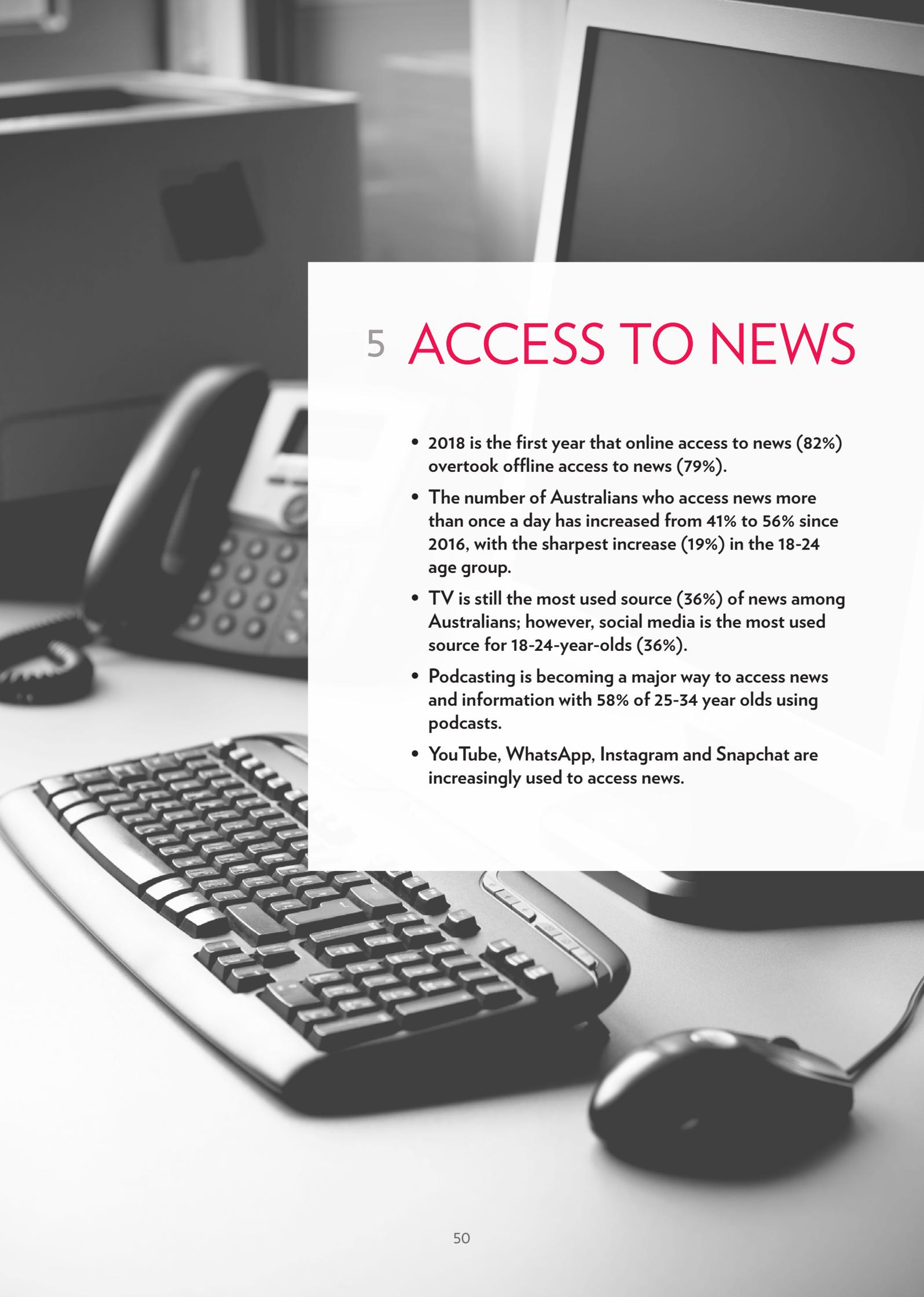
As a writer on economics for a news site that is only published online, my readers demand more than just a copy of what would appear on paper. Readers expect links to source documents or speeches. And they love graphs. In the days of print-only media graphs were often poorly drawn, with vague scaled axes and often were used more to present the point the journalists wished to convey rather than information for the reader to digest and consider.

But digital tools have improved with the demand for greater data use. I now use an online tool that renders graphs interactive – allowing readers to move lines and bars and see for themselves what is going on. The digital media brought about first the rise of the amateurs whose tools were co-opted by traditional media, which has in turn led to the rise of data journalism – where the numbers are used to tell a story.

Previously, for example, the five-yearly census would see newspapers would use pictographs to represent the population – or perhaps use a few pie charts to show what makes up the “average Australian”.

The online space however allows for the rendering of complex data on a map that is scaleable and able to be broken down into geographical or electoral boundaries, is colour coded, interactive and informative. Once the question was what is lost moving from print to digital; now the answer is clear that much has been gained – more information, better presented and with greater depth of analysis.

And the news and data literacy of readers has easily kept pace.



5 ACCESS TO NEWS

- 2018 is the first year that online access to news (82%) overtook offline access to news (79%).
- The number of Australians who access news more than once a day has increased from 41% to 56% since 2016, with the sharpest increase (19%) in the 18-24 age group.
- TV is still the most used source (36%) of news among Australians; however, social media is the most used source for 18-24-year-olds (36%).
- Podcasting is becoming a major way to access news and information with 58% of 25-34 year olds using podcasts.
- YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Snapchat are increasingly used to access news.

AUSTRALIANS ARE ACCESSING NEWS MORE OFTEN

The frequency of news consumption among Australians has increased. The majority (56%) of respondents were heavy news users – those who access news more than once a day - which is an increase by 15% from 2016 (see figure 5.1).

While there were no differences between men and women in the frequency of internet use, news access was considerably lower among women; 65% of men and 48% of women are heavy news users. The 18-24- year-olds are the lightest news consumers.

However, their news consumption was increased by 19%, from 28% in 2016 to 47% in 2018, the largest increase among all age groups.

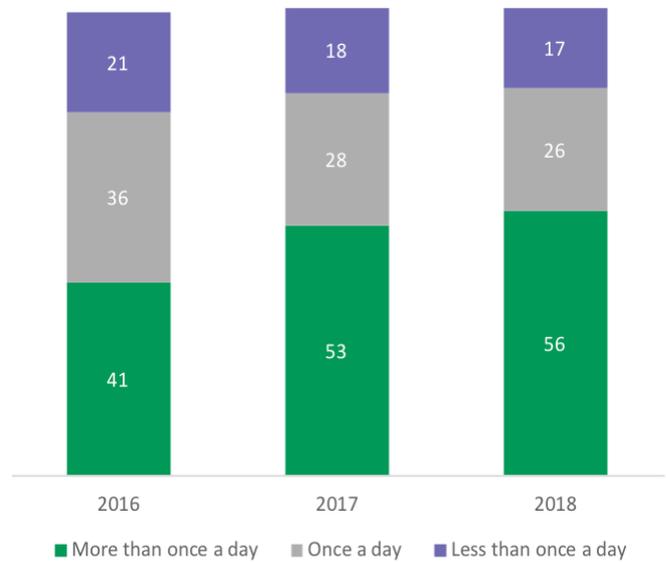


FIGURE 5.1: FREQUENCY OF NEWS ACCESS (%)

Q1b: Typically, how often do you access news. By news we mean national international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via radio, TV, newspaper or online (net: more than once a day) [Base: All; About 2% of respondents replied 'don't know' to this question each year.

19% **IN HEAVY NEWS CONSUMERS AMONG 18-24 YEAR OLD COHORT SINCE 2016**

MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS IS TV BUT SOCIAL MEDIA IS CATCHING UP

TV remains the main source of news for 36% of Australian news consumers. Online news is mainly used by (29%) and social media (17%). However, an increasing number of people use online and social media as their main news source (see figure 5.2)

There is a significant age difference in the use of social media for news (see figure 5.3). Among the 18-24-year-old age group, 36% used social media as the main source of news.

Older Australians seem to be slowly embracing social media as a news source. This is indicated by a slight increase in using social media as the main news source among the 55+ age group.

As found in previous years, higher income and more educated groups use online news more, and lower income and less educated use TV more as the main source of news.

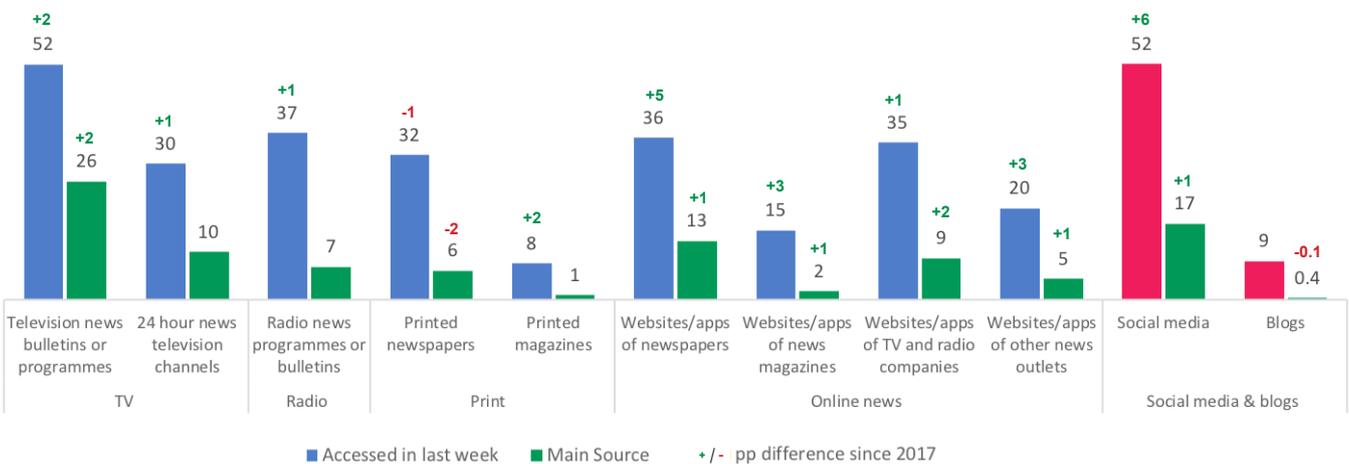


FIGURE 5.2: SOURCE OF NEWS BY PLATFORM AND MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? (Please select all that apply). Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? No red or green figures indicate no change since 2017. [Base: All].

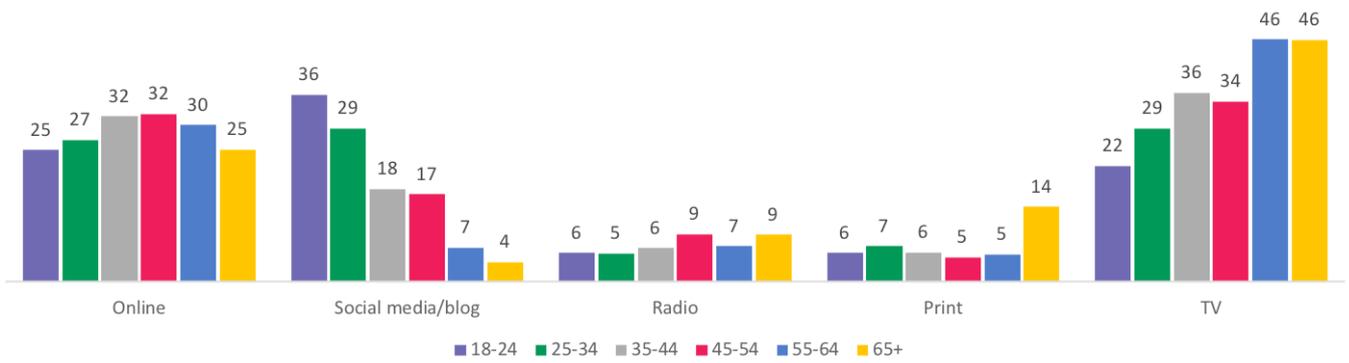


FIGURE 5.3: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY AGE (%)

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 includes blogs; websites include any websites or apps of offline and online brands.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

MALES

12%

FEMALES

22%

Female participants (22%) are more than male participants (12%) likely to use social media as their main source of news, whereas males nominate newspapers (9%) and online news (31%) as their main source of news more than females (see figure 5.4).

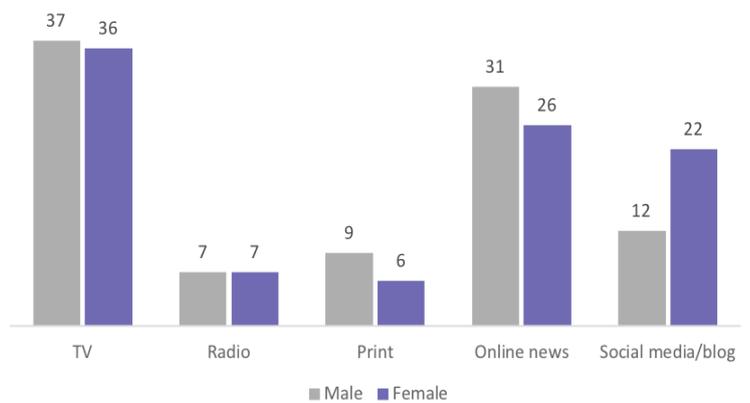


FIGURE 5.4: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY GENDER (%)

Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

News consumers in regional areas rely more on offline platforms; 48% of remote and very remote news consumers said TV was the main source of news in contrast to 34% of major cities residents, who said their

main source of news was TV. Regional news consumers' access to online news is lower than that of urban news consumers, suggesting a regional digital gap. See figure 5.5 for more details.

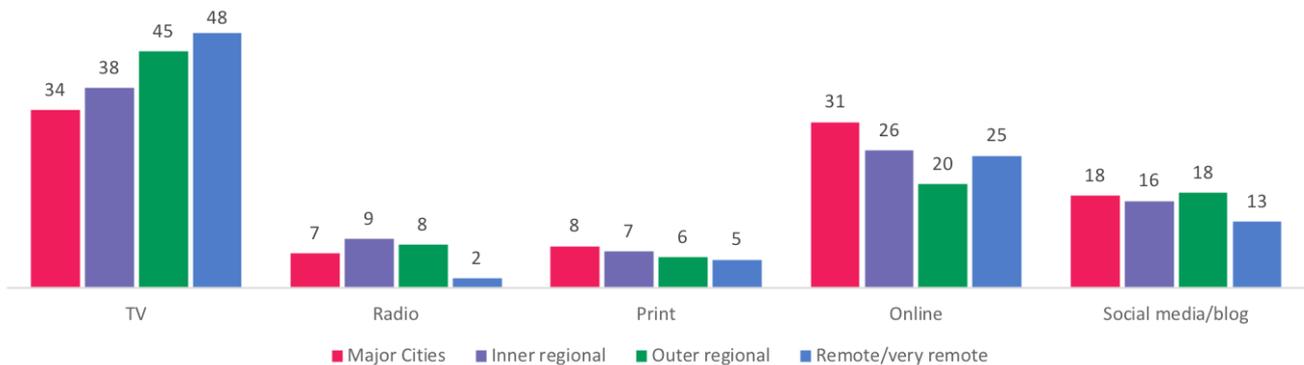


FIGURE 5.5: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY REGION (%)

Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

ONLINE NEWS OVERTAKES OFFLINE

We asked whether news consumers had accessed any offline and online news platforms in the past week. There was an increase in the users of TV, online and social media news, with the largest increase in the use of online news from 54% in 2017 to 64% in 2018.

This year is the first year that online (websites, apps, social media, blogs) overtook offline news sources, with 82% of news consumers going online for news (see figure 5.6).

TV was the most used news with 66% of respondents watching TV news (bulletin programs and 24-hour news channels). About 64% reported using websites and apps online (including offline and online brands) and 54% used social media or blogs.

Radio and print uses were lower at 37% and 36% respectively, as table 5.1 indicates.

NEWS SOURCE	ACCESSED LAST WEEK
TV	(+3) 66
Radio	(+1) 37
Print	(0) 36
Online	(+10) 64
Social media/blogs	(+6) 54

TABLE 5.1: NEWS ACCESS BY PLATFORM (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? (Please select all that apply).

OFFLINE BRANDS

As with previous years, the top news channels were Channel 7 (41%), ABC (40%) and Channel 9 (36%). At the time of survey the Winter Olympics was broadcast on Channel 7, which may have had an impact on news consumption. See table 5.2 for more information.

TABLE 5.2: NEWS ACCESSED VIA OFFLINE BRANDS IN THE LAST WEEK

Q5a. Which of the following brands have you used to access news in the last week (via TV, radio or print only)? Please select all that apply. [Base:

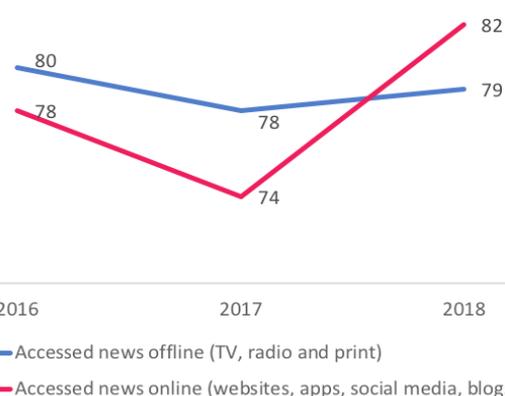


FIGURE 5.6: OFFLINE VS. ONLINE PLATFORMS (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? (Please select all that apply).

TRADITIONAL PLATFORMS	N	%
Channel 7	822	41
ABC	817	40
Channel 9	733	36
Channel TEN	483	24
A regional or local newspaper	460	23
SBS	376	19
BBC News	281	14
Herald Sun	277	14
Sydney Morning Herald	249	12
Daily Telegraph	246	12
CNN	231	11
WIN Television	227	11
The Australian	227	11
Sky News	214	11
Prime7	200	10
The Age	200	10
Courier Mail	190	9
Triple J	184	9
Triple M	175	9
Fox News	168	8
Radio National	134	7
Australian Financial Review	129	6
The Advertiser	117	6
Southern Cross	109	5
2GB	91	4

Nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents accessed regional or local newspapers in the last week. Further analysis reveals that there were significant differences in demographics among regional and local news consumers (see figure 5.7).

Readers of local and regional newspapers are more likely to be females, 35+, lower education, less income and in regional/rural areas. It is notable that rural news consumers' access to regional and local papers (32%) is almost double that of urban consumers (17%).

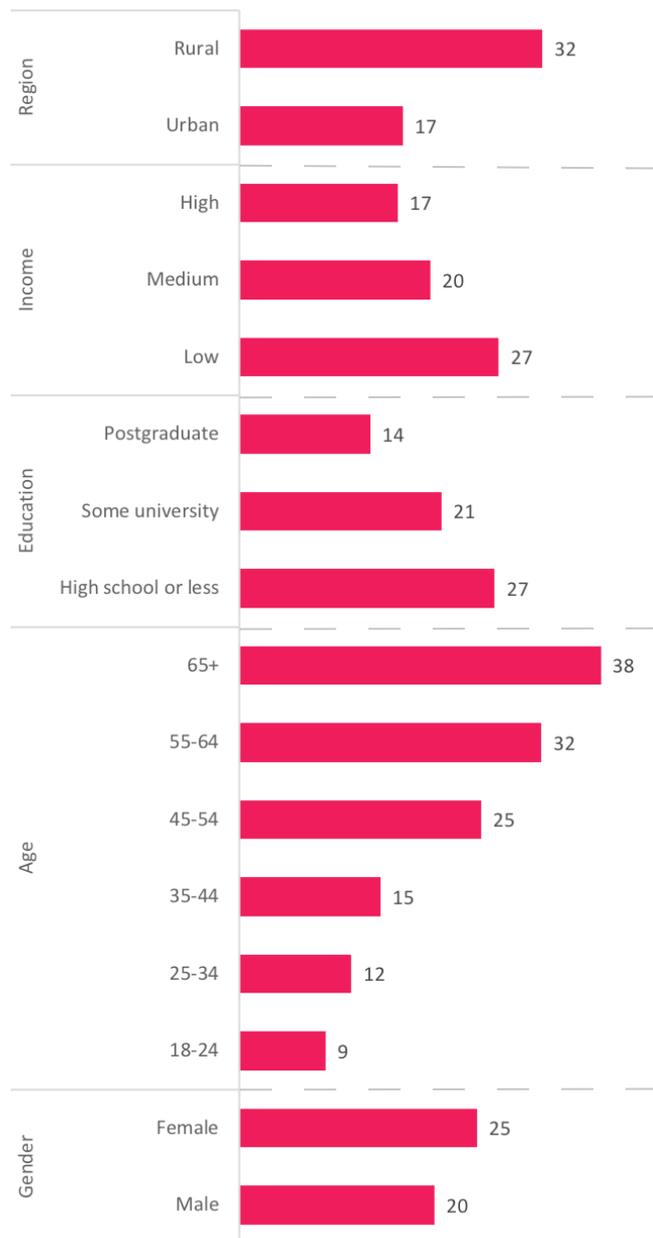


FIGURE 5.7: REGIONAL AND LOCAL NEWSPAPER READERS (%)

Q5a. Which of the following brands have you used to access news in the last week (via TV, radio or print only)? Please select all that apply [Base: All who have used regional and local newspaper to access news in the last week].

ONLINE BRANDS

ABC Online is the most accessed online brand, closely followed by News.com.au (16% of respondents had not accessed any of these online brands) (see table 5.3).

ONLINE NEWS BRANDS	N	%
ABC News Online	536	27
News.com.au	529	26
nine.com.au	476	24
Yahoo!7	347	17
Sydney Morning Herald (smh.com.au)	333	16
BBC News Online	284	14
Daily Telegraph (dailytelegraph.com.au)	234	12
Buzzfeed News	217	11
Herald Sun (heraldsun.com.au)	216	11
Other regional or local newspaper website	213	11
The Australian (theaustralian.com.au)	209	10
CNN.com	208	10
The Age (theage.com.au)	208	10
Skynews.com.au	180	9
Huffpost (Huffington Post)	174	9
Channel TEN news online	169	8
The Guardian	163	8
Courier Mail (couriermail.com.au)	160	8
The New York Times	151	7
Australian Financial Review (afr.com)	132	6
The Conversation	98	5
The Advertiser (adelaidenow.com.au)	98	5
MailOnline	95	5
Vice News	91	4
GetUP!	66	3
Junkee	49	2
The Fair Go	35	2

TABLE 5.3: NEWS ACCESSED VIA ONLINE BRANDS IN THE LAST WEEK

Q5b. Which of the following brands have you used to access news in the last week (via websites, apps, social media, and other forms of Internet access)? Please select all that apply.

INCREASE IN SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS

Unlike in other countries, the use of social media for news in Australia is rising. Facebook is still the most used social media for news (41%), followed by YouTube (20%), which is a 5% increase since 2017 (see **figure 5.8**).

Messaging app use is also on the rise; Facebook Messenger use increased from 8% to 11%, and WhatsApp from 7% to 10%, since 2017. This reflects news consumers' preference for accessing news that is shared within closed social networks.



The survey revealed that mostly younger news consumers use social media for news. More than half of those under 35 used Facebook for news, as **figure 5.9** indicates.

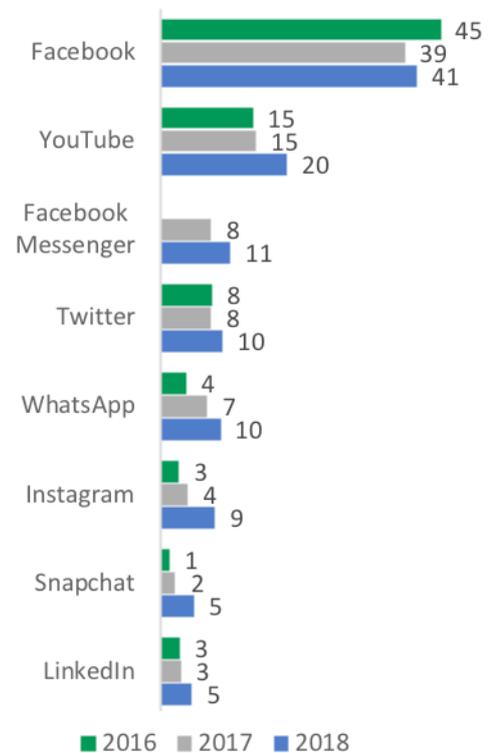
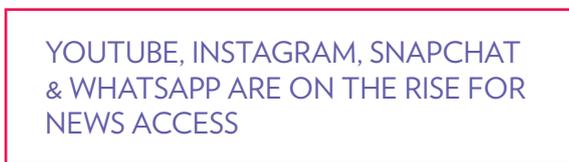


FIGURE 5.8: SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS (%)

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? Please select all that apply.

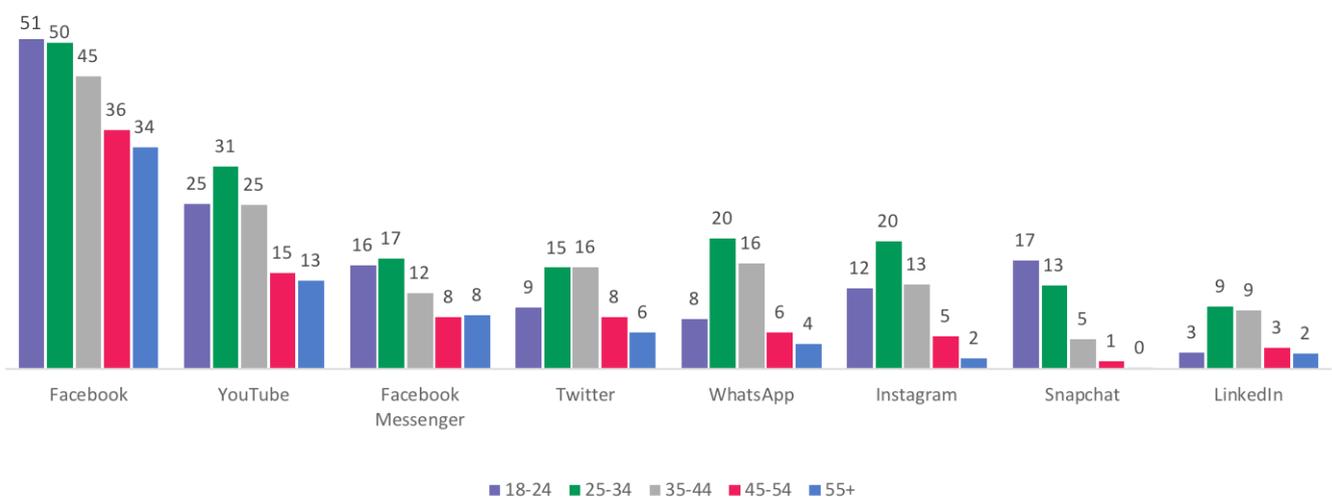


FIGURE 5.9: TOP EIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS BY AGE (%)

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? Please select all that apply.

MOBILE USERS ACCESS NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA MORE

The use of social media was influenced by the type of device. Those who mainly use their mobile phones or tablets to access news used social media more than those who access news via computers.

Among mainly mobile phone users, about 53% used Facebook to access news and 24% used YouTube for news. **Figure 5.10** provides more details.

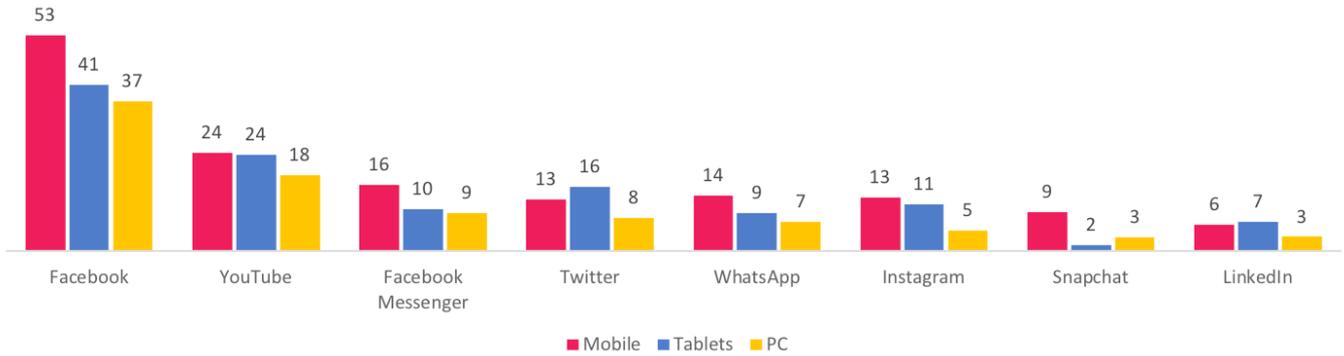


FIGURE 5.10: TOP EIGHT SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS BY MAIN DEVICE USED FOR NEWS (%)

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.

NEWS APPS HAVE BECOME A MAJOR METHOD OF ACCESSING NEWS

With the increase in mobile device use, news apps have become a major method of accessing news. About 79% of news consumers have used a news app; 34% have used a news app in the last day and 18% used it in the last week. Many news consumers also use apps that aggregate various news sources.

The use of news aggregator apps is on the rise with 55% saying they have used them. Google News and Apple News are the most popular apps, with 16% and 14% of news consumers accessing news via these apps respectively (see **figure 5.11**).

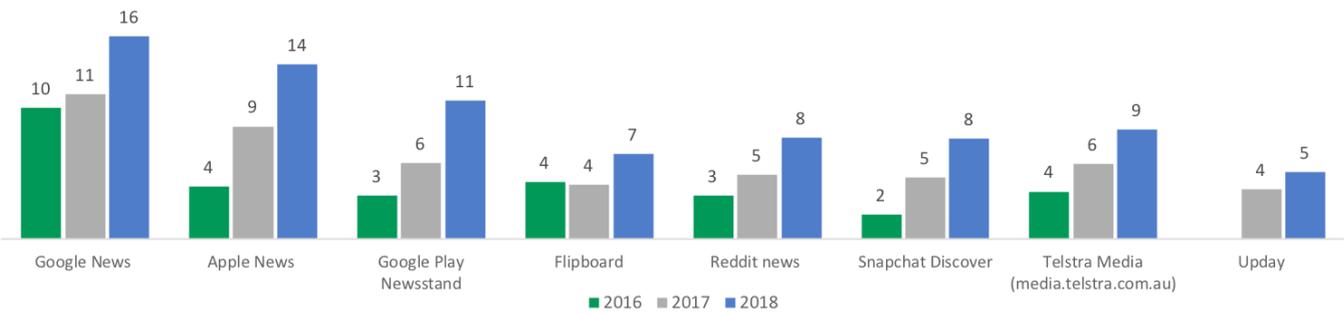


FIGURE 5.11: USE OF NEWS AGGREGATOR APPS (%)

Q10c_2016. When using the internet for news, have you used any of the following sites or mobile apps that aggregate different news links in the last week? [Base: All who use the internet for news].

Snapchat is increasingly used by younger news consumers as a source of news. 14% of news consumers under 35 use Snapchat for news and 20% use Snapchat Discover as a news aggregator service. The use of Snapchat for news and Snapchat Discover have increased by 7% among the under 35 age group (see **figure 5.12**).

20% OF RESPONDENTS AGED UNDER 35 USE SNAPCHAT DISCOVER

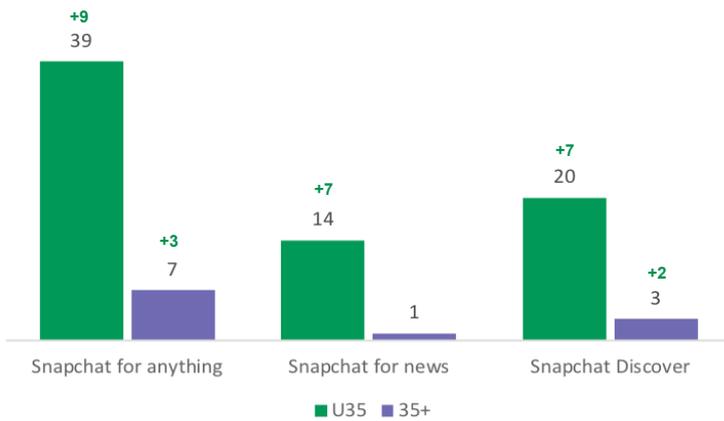


FIGURE 5.12: SNAPCHAT FOR NEWS BY AGE (%)

Q12A. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? [Snapchat]/ Q12B. Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week? [Snapchat]/ Q10c_2016. When using the internet for news, have you used any of the following sites or mobile apps that aggregate different news links in the last week? [Snapchat Discover- the section of Snapchat with branded content from brands like CNN, Cosmopolitan etc] [Base: All].

PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS

When people access news online via digital devices, the most popular way of getting news was through social media (38%) followed closely by going directly to brand websites (37%)

and going directly to the news brands (16%) (see figure 5.13 for more information).

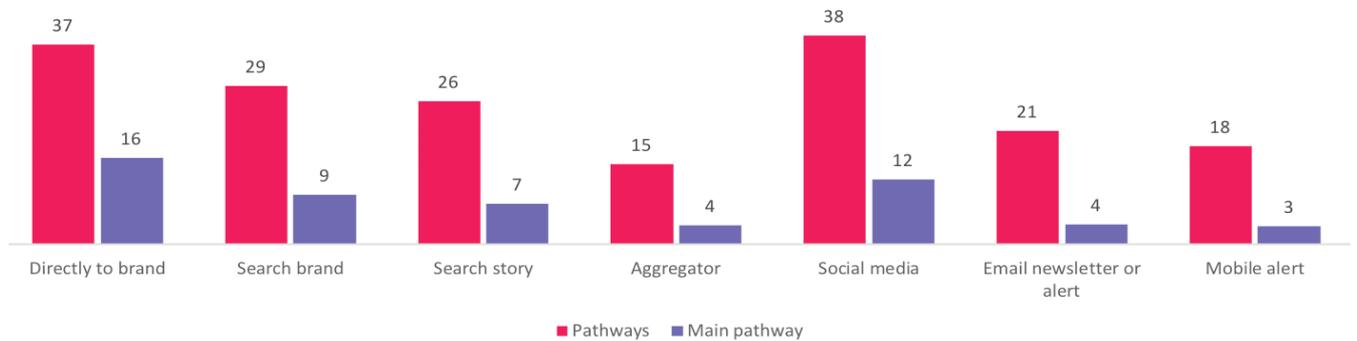


FIGURE 5.13: PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS (%)

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. Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the MAIN way in which you came across news in the last week? (% is out of N=2026).

The most common pathway to online news for younger people is through via social media. Branded entry was consistent across all age groups, with about half of the news consumers accessing online news by going directly to brand websites or searching for brands (see figure 5.14).

61% OF 18-24 YEAR OLDS ACCESS ONLINE NEWS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

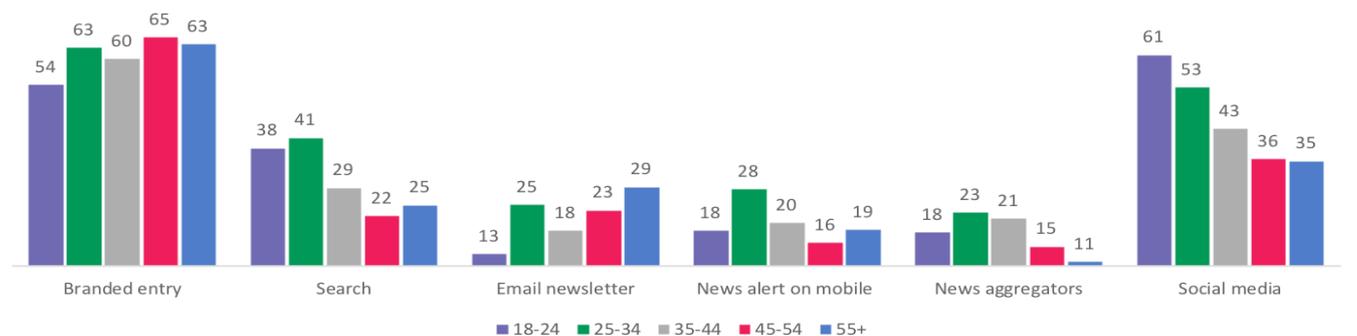


FIGURE 5.14: PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS BY AGE (%)

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. * Branded entry includes directly to brand, keyword search for brand.

88% ACCESS NEWS VIA DIGITAL DEVICES

Australians are increasingly relying on digital devices to access news. In 2016, 85% of news consumers used a digital device to access news. This has increased to 88% in 2018.

New devices have been added to the mix. In 2018, 18% used smart or connected TV, 2% used wearable devices and 2% used voice-activated speakers to access news in the last week.

Voice activated speakers have started to emerge as a device to access news (see **figure 5.15**). Overall, computer use has remained stagnant since 2017, while other digital devices have continued to grow in the past three years.

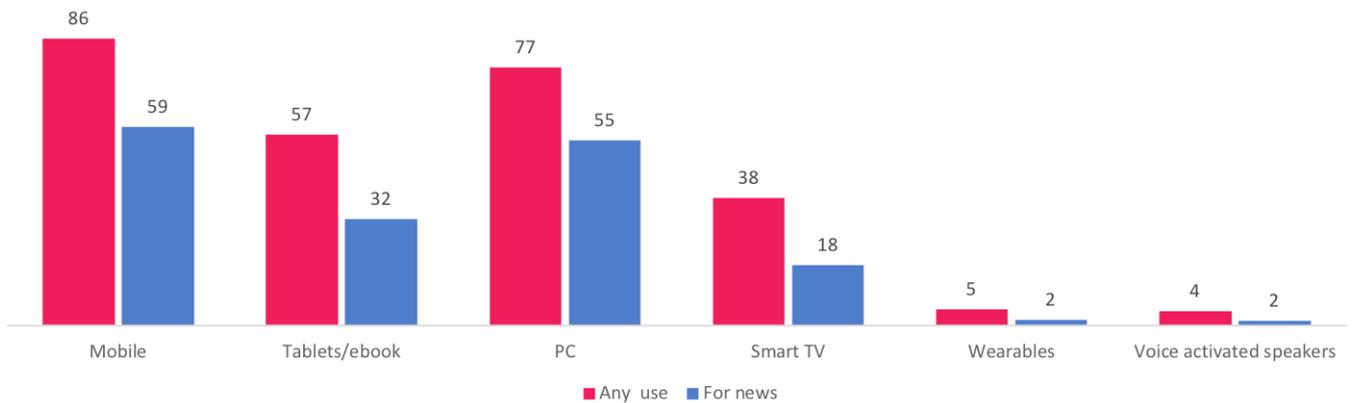


FIGURE 5.15: DEVICE FOR ACCESSING NEWS (%)

Q8A. Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use(for any purpose)? Please select all that apply. Q8B. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week? Please select all that apply. UK8b6_5. You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your MAIN way of accessing online news? (% out of N=2026, all news consumers).

More significant changes were observed in the main device people use for news, with computer use decreasing and mobile phones significantly rising. Tablet use has not changed significantly (see **figure 5.16**).

1 IN 3 USERS OF VOICE ACTIVATED SPEAKERS USE THEM FOR NEWS

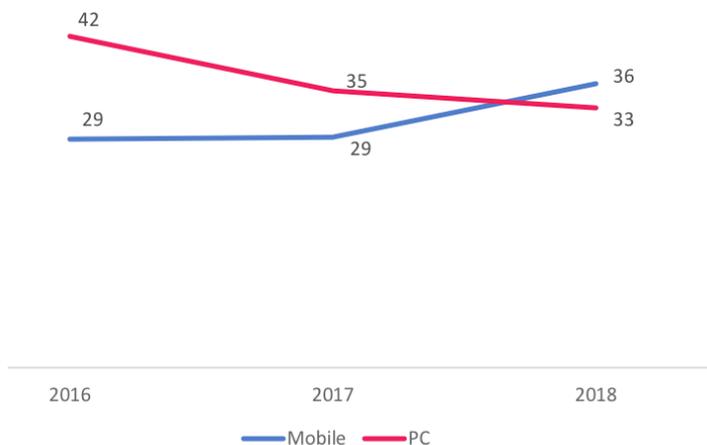


FIGURE 5.16: CHANGES IN THE MAIN DEVICE FOR ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS (%)

UK8b6_5. You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your MAIN way of accessing online news?

PEOPLE PREFER TEXT OVER VIDEO

The majority of news consumers (74%) have watched a news video clip while online. Overall, men consume more video than women. However, women watch more news clips on Facebook compared to men (see [figure 5.17](#)).

Considering the industry's push in video-based news, it is surprising that only 9% of news consumers mainly watch video news. About one-third (32%) of news consumers

mostly read online news in text and about one-third (37%) read news in text and occasionally watch video news.

When asked about the amount of news video they would like to see, 38% were happy with the amount they see now, 21% said they wanted less video and 22% said they wanted more video news.

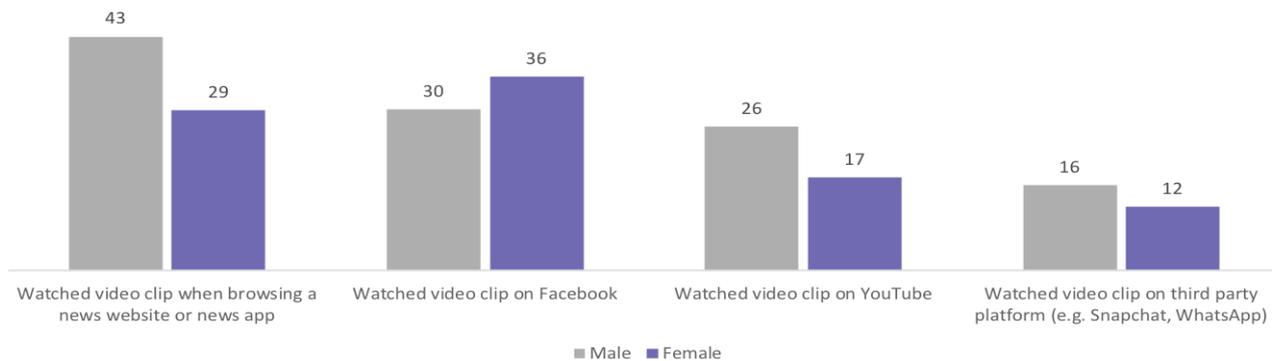


FIGURE 5.17: NEWS VIDEO CLIPS WHILE ONLINE BY GENDER (%)

Q11_VIDEO_2018a. Thinking about consuming online news video (of any kind) over the last week, which of the following did you do? Please select all that apply; I consumed a news related video (a short clip, a live stream or a programme) when browsing a news website or news app; I consumed a news related video (a short clip, a live stream or a programme) when on Facebook; I consumed a news related video (a short clip, a live stream or a programme) when on YouTube; I consumed a news related video (a short clip, a live stream or a programme) when on another third party platform (e.g. Snapchat, WhatsApp); I haven't consumed any news related videos in the last week.

THE RISE OF PODCASTING

Podcasting is now a popular method of accessing news, especially among those under 35, with 53% listening to podcasts in the last month. This is almost twice as many as 35+. The emergence of voice-activated speakers and the growth in mobile devices for news are allowing news consumers to access on-demand audio news.

Overall, 33% have listened to a podcast in the last month. The most popular among different genres is podcasts about specialist subjects (e.g. science and technology, business, media, health), with 16% of consumers using them in the last month. Lifestyle (14%) and politics (13%) were also popular among listeners (see [figure 5.18](#)).

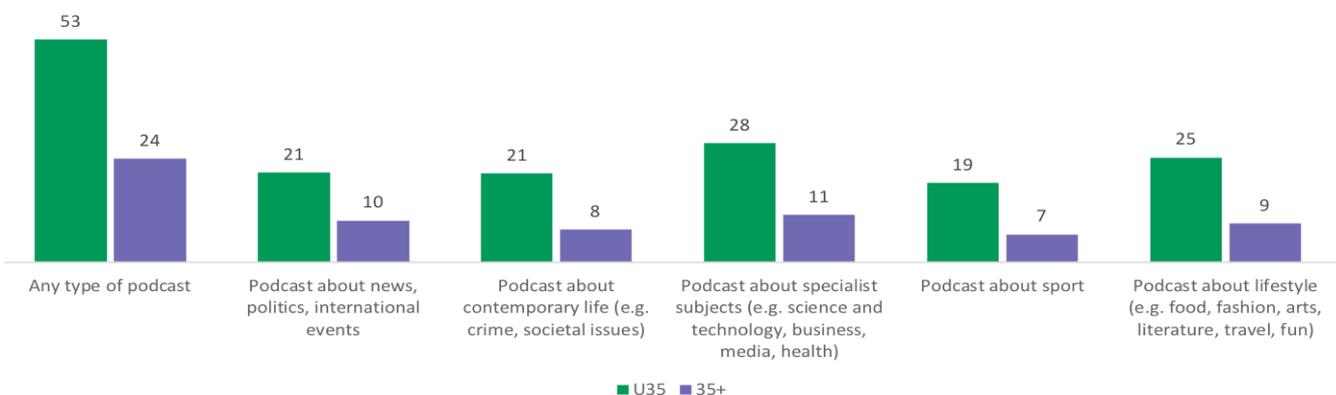


FIGURE 5.18: PODCAST CONSUMPTION BY AGE (%)

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: All].

The following commentary by R. Warwick Blood provides an in-depth analysis of these findings.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

GENERATIONAL SHIFTS IN NEWS CONSUMPTION

R. Warwick Blood

Emeritus Professor, News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

The *Digital News Report: Australia 2018* reveals significant changes in Australian's news access and consumption pointing to greater use of digital technology, particularly mobile phones and tablets as a way of accessing news sources.

Overall, from 2016 to 2018 participants have increased their frequency in news consumption. Heavy news users were increased by about 14%, with the biggest increase among the 18-24 year old age group who have been the lightest news consumers in recent years. Respondents in higher income households and those with more formal education are more likely to access news sources more than once a day compared to those in lower income households and less formal education.

For the first time in our four years of surveys the number of participants using digital platforms (websites, apps, social media, blogs) as a news source surpassed those accessing traditional platforms (TV, radio and print) as news sources. About 79% reported accessing traditional news source in 2018 compared to about 82% accessing digital platforms – the reverse trend of our 2016 and 2017 surveys where traditional media were paramount.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the USA, TV news bulletins and 24-hour news channels are the main nominated source of news for Australian participants consistent with our 2016 and 2017 surveys. But there is an increasing use of online and social media as the nominated main source of news for participants from 2017 to 2018. High income households and those with more formal education use online news more than lower income households and those with less formal education who prefer TV as their main source of news.

Age differences are predictive of main news use. About 71% of 18 to 24-year olds use social media for news, and about 38% of this age group nominate social media as their main source of news compared to older participants who nominated TV news. In our 2016 report we noted research by Nielsen and Sambrook (2016) which used multiple data sources to question the long-term sustainability of traditional broadcast TV news in countries like the UK and the USA. Nielsen and Sambrook¹ argued that a young generation who enjoys digital on-demand social and mobile video viewing may never prefer live scheduled news programming on a single device even as they grow older. Our 2018 data shows that only about 25% of the 18-24 age group still nominate TV as their main source of news.

To gauge the relative importance of competing news brands participants in 2016, 2017 and 2018 were presented with a list of traditional news brands, and a list of online news brands, and were asked to report which they had used in the week before the survey. The findings are strikingly stable from 2016 to 2018. Reflecting the continuing importance of TV news for Australian audiences, the ABC, SBS and the three commercial newscasts (Channels 7, 9 and 10) are the most endorsed across the three surveys. Both CNN and BBC News, available via pay

subscription services, have increased usage from 2016 to 2018. A similar pattern is evident for online news brands. 'News.com.au', ABC News Online, ninemsn remain dominant from 2016 to 2018 although all three news brands have shown increased usage. No new online platform has yet to emerge to challenge the dominance of these three brands.

Local or regional newspapers remain important as a traditional news brands particularly among women and older audiences. But there has been a decline in use of regional or local newspaper websites. However, an examination of social media brands and the devices Australians use to get their news underlies the continuing transition to digital technologies.

“For the first time in our four years of surveys the number of participants using digital platforms as a news source surpassed those accessing traditional platforms as news sources.”

To assess the relative importance of social media news brands, participants were asked to nominate from a list which brands they had used in the week before the survey. Facebook and YouTube are the most accessed social media news brands. Participants report increased use of all brands except for the dominant Facebook whose use is relatively stable from 2016. Younger respondents are the principal users of social media news brands.

The device used to get news is predictive of the level of social media news use. Participants in mobile environments – mobile phones and tablets – access social media news brands more than those using computers. Facebook and YouTube are the most used news brands by mobile users.

The rise in the use of mobile devices is coupled with the use of news apps as a popular way of getting the news. The use of news aggregators is also increasing with Google News and Apple News the most used. Mobile phones are the preferred device for aggregator users; nearly half of the participants used mobile phones compared to about a quarter of participants who used computers. Google News and Apple News were the most popular aggregators among the 25-34 old age group.

Overall, the 2018 Digital News Report shows that digital devices – mobile phones, smart TVs and tablets – are becoming increasingly popular as a way of accessing news. Computer use has decreased from 2016 to 2018 while mobile phone use has increased. Predictably, regional participants use computers as their main device for accessing news compared to urban dwellers who use mobile phones. In the context of consumer, social and potential regulatory pressures on Facebook and similar providers, and the imminent rollout of 5G mobile networks, these trends will be directly examined in the *Digital News Report: Australia 2019*.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

TUESDAY MARCH 27, 2018: Australian cricket captain Steve Smith departs from Cape Town International airport, South Africa. Smith and vice-captain David Warner were each banned for 12 months by Cricket Australia after an investigation into the attempted ball tampering during the third test against South Africa. Teammate Cameron Bancroft received a nine month ban.

IMAGE: EPA/Nic Bothma



6 MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS

- 36% of news consumers access news mainly via mobile phones, an increase from 29% in 2017.
- 60% of mobile news consumers mainly use social media and online news sources.
- Females (39%) and news consumers under 35 years of age (53%) are more likely to be mobile news consumers.
- Mobile news consumers listen to podcasts, watch video news and use YouTube for news more.
- Mobile-only news consumers are less interested in news and access news less often.

36% RELY ON THEIR MOBILE PHONE FOR NEWS

People are increasingly relying on smartphones for everyday internet use and news access, as **table 6.1** indicates. Among Australian news consumers, 36% say they access online news mainly through mobile phones. This chapter closely examines this group of ‘**mobile news consumers**’.

While mobile is the main device used by these consumers for online news, the majority also use other digital devices such as laptops or tablets to access news (see **table 6.1**). We call these people ‘**multi-device news consumers**’. They make up about 85% of mobile news consumers and 30% of all respondents.

In contrast, a small proportion (15%) of ‘mobile news consumers’ only access online news on their mobile phones. We define these people as ‘**mobile-only news consumers**’. It should be noted that both groups also access offline traditional news such TV, radio and/or print newspapers.

Table 6.1 shows that the number of mobile-only news consumers is decreasing and the number of multi-device news consumers is growing. This indicates that despite the convenience and popularity of mobile phones to access the internet, they are not sufficient to conduct all online activities.

	2016		2017		2018	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total respondents	2021	100	2004	100	2026	100
Digital news consumers*	1726	85	1615	81	1785	88
Mobile news consumers	580	29	581	29	721	36
Mobile-only news consumers	149	7	123	6	108	5
Multi-device news consumers	431	21	458	23	613	30

TABLE 6.1: MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS

* Digital news consumers refer to those who used any of the following devices to access online news in the last week; smartphone, tablet/ebook, computer/laptop, connected/smart TV, wearable (smartwatch), or voice activated speaker. Voice activated speakers was not asked in 2016.

PROFILE OF MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS

As **figure 6.1** shows, females (39%) and news consumers under 35 years of age (53%) are more likely to be mobile news consumers. They are more educated, have higher

incomes and live in urban areas. Females (6%) and under 35’s (8%) are also more likely to be mobile-only news consumers.

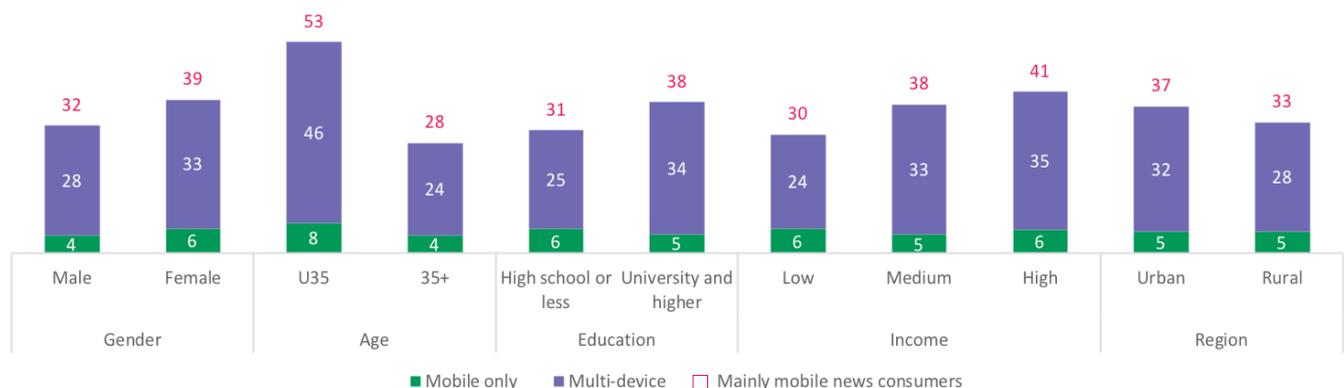


FIGURE 6.1: PROFILE OF MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS (%)

Q8A. Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use (for any purpose)? Please select all that apply. UK8b6_5. You’ve said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your MAIN way of accessing online news? [Net % for mainly mobile news consumers: % of those who chose mobile devices] (Smartphone made by Apple (iPhone), smartphone by another manufacturer (e.g. Samsung, LG, HTC, Sony, Nokia Lumia, etc.) and other internet connected phone (e.g. older Blackberry, Nokia feature phone etc.) as their main device to access online news). Figures are rounded up or down.

As shown in **figure 6.2**, multi-device news consumers access news more frequently and are more interested in news and political news, compared to mobile-only news consumers.

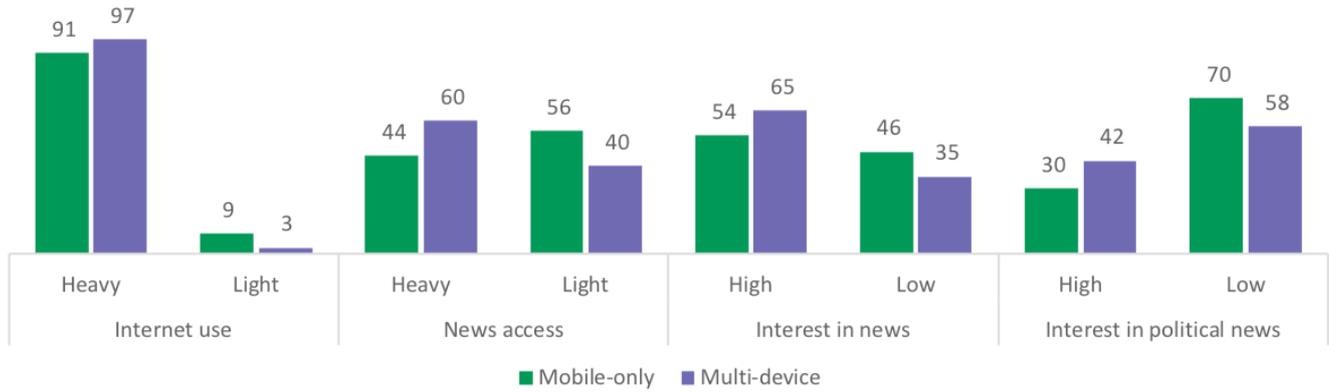


FIGURE 6.2: FREQUENCY OF INTERNET AND NEWS CONSUMPTION (%)

Q1_aNEW. How often do you access the Internet for any purpose (i.e. for work/leisure etc.)? This should include access from any device (desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile) and from any location (home, work, internet café or any other location). Heavy = those who access the internet more than once a day. 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). Heavy = those who access news more than once a day. Q1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? High = those who said they were extremely interested or very interested in news, Low= those who said they were somewhat interested, not very interested or not at all interested. Those who answered 'don't know' were excluded. Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news about politics? High = those who said they were extremely interested or very interested in news, Low= those who said they were somewhat interested, not very interested or not at all interested. Those who answered 'don't know' were excluded [Base: All].

MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS' NEWS ACCESS

Mobile news consumers access online and offline news differently to general news consumers. Mobile news consumers are less likely to use TV as the main source of news compared to the general population. Instead they use online and social media (60%) as their main source.

Multi-device news consumers also rely on online and social media for news. In contrast, mobile-only news consumers accessed a smaller number of both offline and online news platforms (see **figure 6.3**).

Mobile news consumers use news aggregator apps more than general news consumers. Mobile-only news consumers are more likely than multi-device news consumers to use news aggregator apps, with 63% of mobile-only news consumers using news aggregator apps in the last week in contrast to 57% of multi-device news consumers.

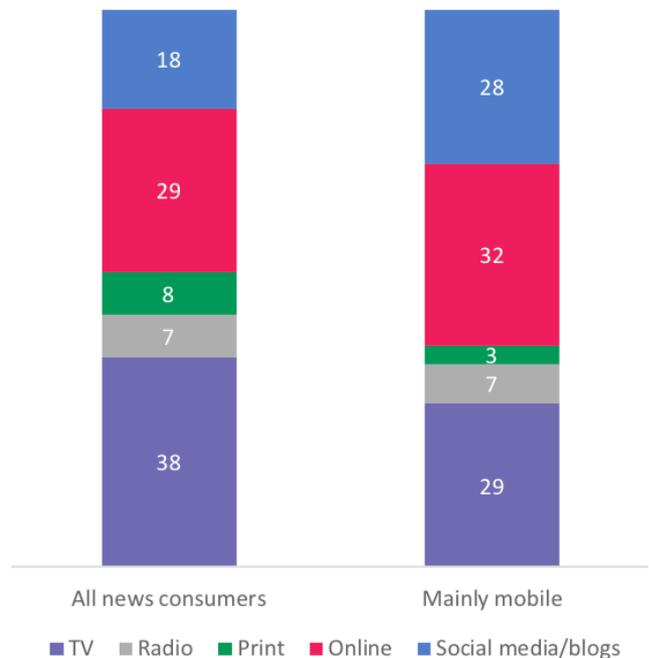


FIGURE 6.3: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS AMONG MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS (%)

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: All].

MOBILE-ONLY USERS ACCESS NEWS VIA AGGREGATOR APPS MORE

There was a notable increase in the number of users of Google News, Apple News, Reddit and Snapchat Discover among mobile-only news consumers, as figures 6.4 and 6.5 indicate.

This suggests that those who only access online news on their smartphones increasingly rely on news aggregators for news.

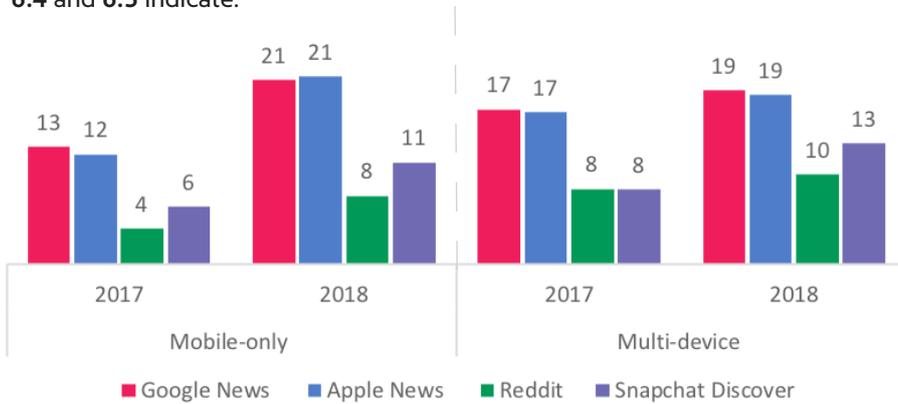


FIGURE 6.4: INCREASING NEWS AGGREGATOR APP USE (%)

Q10c_2016. When using the internet for news, have you used any of the following sites or mobile apps that aggregate different news links in the last week? Please select all that apply. [Base: All]

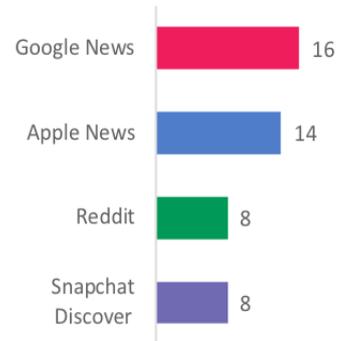


FIGURE 6.5: NEWS AGGREGATOR APP USE, ALL RESPONDENTS 2018 (%)

Multi-device news consumers watch TV less and watch more news videos

Multi-device news consumers (74%) are more likely than mobile-only news consumers to watch news-related videos online, higher than the overall average of news consumers (63%). However, mobile-only users' news video consumption was lower (61%) than the general population (see figure 6.6).

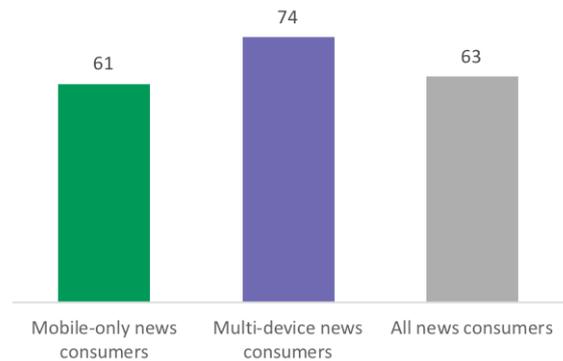


FIGURE 6.6: MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS' VIDEO NEWS CONSUMPTION (%)

Q11_VIDEO_2018a. Thinking about consuming online news video (of any kind) over the last week, which of the following did you do? Among respondents, those who said they consumed at least one types of news related video clip.

Multi-device news consumers primarily consumed video news while on Facebook (45%) or on a website or app (41%). Mobile-only news consumers generally watch less video content but when they do so, it is also through Facebook (28%) or websites and apps (22%). See figure 6.7 for more information.

Less use of video content suggests mobile-only news consumers prefer data-light online content. This may be due to the data costs of mobile internet subscription.

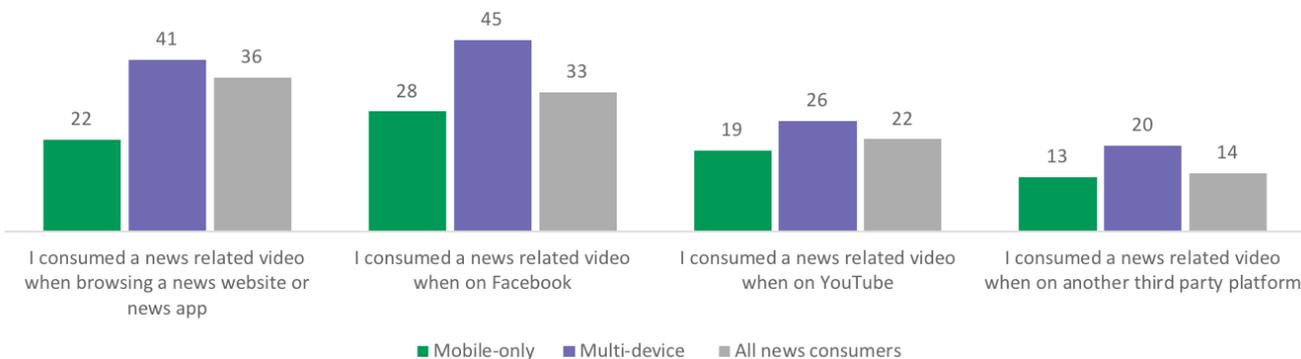


FIGURE 6.7: NEWS RELATED VIDEO CONSUMPTION (%)

Q11_VIDEO_2018a. Thinking about consuming online news video (of any kind) over the last week, which of the following did you do? Please select all that apply. [Base: All].

Use YouTube for news more

There is an increasing number of news consumers using YouTube as a news source (see Chapter 5 for Access to News). Mobile news consumers used YouTube news (24%) more than the general population (20%). **Table 6.2** provides more details.

This was higher among multi-device news consumers (25%) and lower among mobile-only news consumers (19%) compared to the general population. This reflects that mobile-only news consumers use less video content.

	YOUTUBE USE IN GENERAL	YOUTUBE FOR NEWS
Mobile news consumers	66	24
Mobile-only	44	19
Multi-device	70	25
All respondents	57	20

TABLE 6.2: MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS' YOUTUBE FOR NEWS (%)

Q12_A. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? [YouTube] [Base: All] Q12_B. Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week? [YouTube] [Base: All].

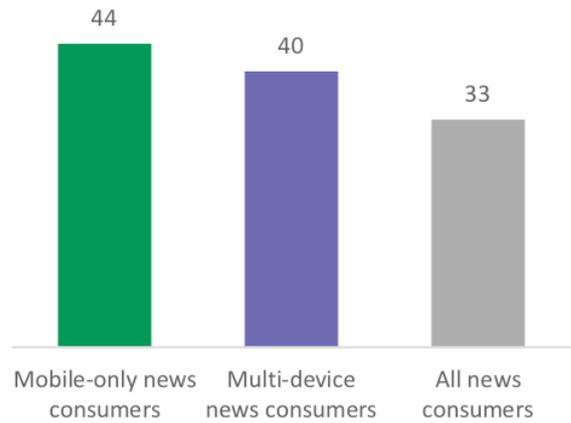
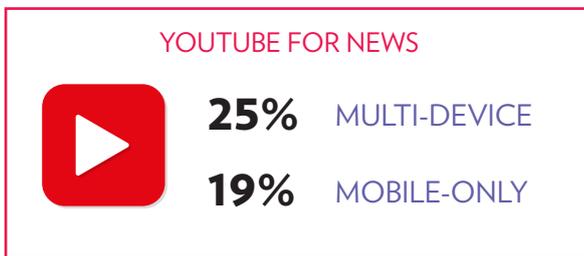


FIGURE 6.8: PODCAST USE AMONGST MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS (%)

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: All].

Mobile-news consumers listen to more podcasts

Mobile news consumers access more podcasts compared to general news consumers, especially on the topics of social issues, science and technology, business, media and health, suggesting the convenience of mobile phones in listening to podcasts.

Both mobile-only and multi-device news consumers listen to podcasting more than the general population (see **figures 6.8** and **6.9**).

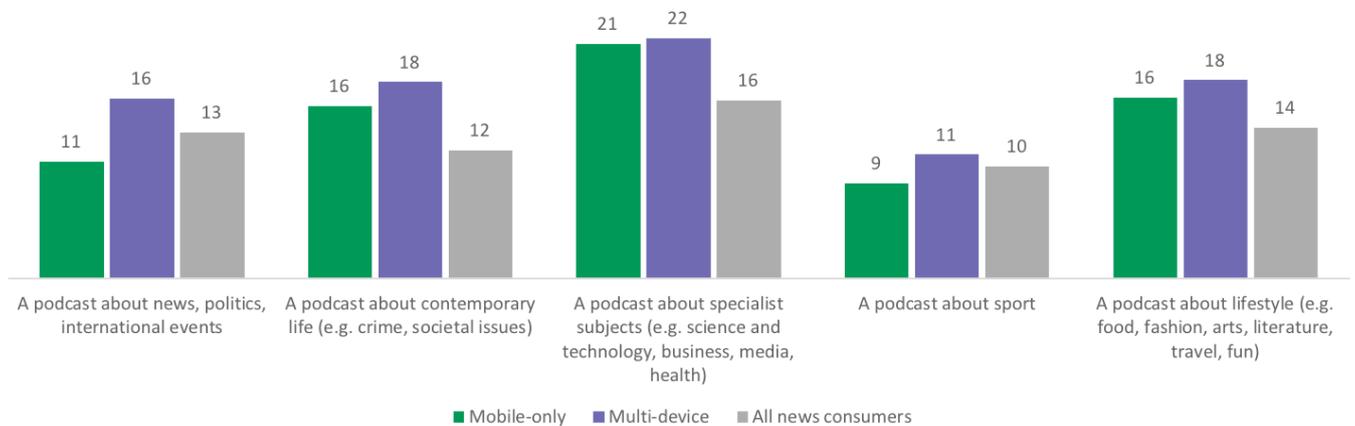


FIGURE 6.9: TYPE OF PODCAST ACCESSED BY MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS (%)

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: those who have listened to any of these types of podcast in the last month].

MOBILE NEWS CONSUMERS SHARE AND ENGAGE MORE

Mobile news consumers share and engage more with news online compared to general news consumers. Within mobile news consumer group, multi-device users are more active in all of the sharing and commenting activities (see **figure 6.10**).

Mobile-only news consumers are more actively engaged compared to the general population but not as active as multi-device news consumers.

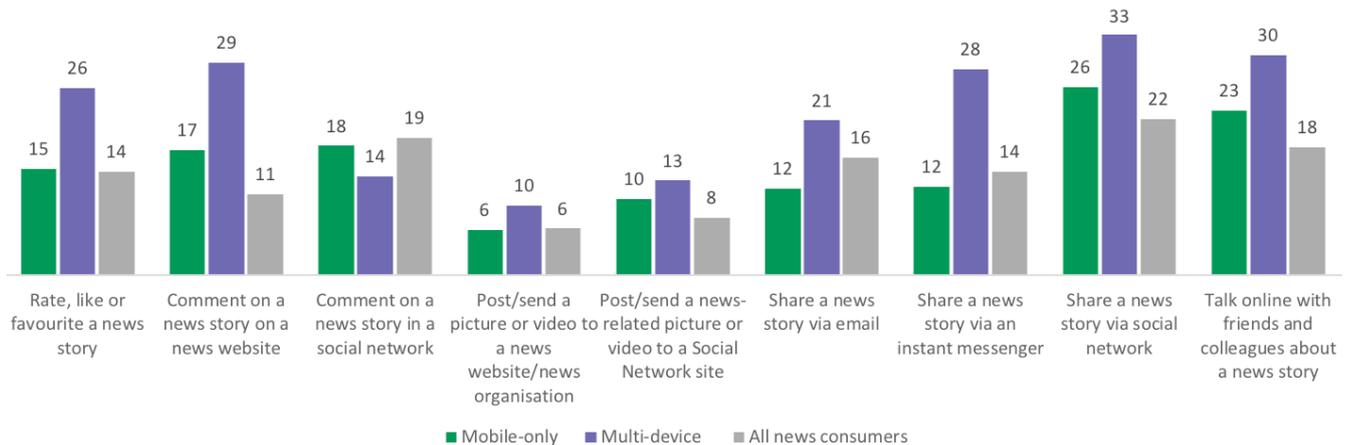


FIGURE 6.10: ONLINE NEWS PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT (%)

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: All].

DISCUSSION

This year's data show an 8% rise in mobile phone ownership (78% in 2017; 86% in 2018). News consumption via mobile phones continue to grow significantly from 49% in 2017 to 59% in 2018. News consumers who mainly access news on mobile phones – mobile news consumers – has grown by 6%.

The data suggests that mobile news consumers have actively embraced digital news with 60% of them saying their main source of news is online or social media. Compared to the average news consumer, mobile news consumers consume more YouTube and video-based news, listen to more podcasts, and use aggregator apps more. They are also more engaged with online news through commenting and sharing activities. Females and younger news consumers are more likely to be mobile news consumers.

A subgroup of mobile news consumers, namely mobile-only consumers, however, show a somewhat different pattern of news consumption. They use YouTube and video-based news significantly less than the average news consumer but are active listeners of podcasts. They also use news aggregator apps more. This suggests that mobile-only news consumers are reluctant to use data-intensive services.

Given that younger, less educated and lower income are generally mobile-only news consumers, this implies that it is an affordability issue. Those who only have access to the internet via phones are more likely to be using mobile internet (2G/3G/4G) which is still considerably more expensive than fixed line services. This suggests that mobile-only news consumers may not have continuous access to the internet which may limit their online activities.

COMMENTARY

THE MOBILE PHONE AS THE NEW TRANSISTOR RADIO

Kellie Riordan

Manager, ABC Audio Studios

Podcasting, now a teenager, has evolved rapidly over its short life thanks to constant changes in technology, distribution mechanisms, content format and style – always inexorably linked together.

In 2004, podcasting first emerged from two critical developments: Apple's iPod took hold right as broadband internet exploded. Writing for *The Guardian* in that year, tech journalist Ben Hammersley coined the phrase 'podcasting' to describe the downloading of an audio file for listening at a convenient time. By mid-2005 when Apple added podcasts to its iTunes store and users were able to download and categorise audio files into genres and chronological order, podcasting took off.

Radio stations saw this opportunity to turn linear programs into downloadable files, leading to podcasting's first big success stories including *Planet Money*, *RadioLab* and *This American Life* in the US and *Conversations* in Australia. But it wasn't until a decade later, with the so-called second wave of podcasting, that the medium truly developed its own voice and exploded into mainstream consciousness thanks to several key developments.

In 2014 the global podcast hit *Serial* launched as a serialised documentary about a 1999 murder of a school student in Baltimore. The serialised format seemed fresh, but so did the style and tone of the podcast. *Serial* host Sarah Koenig emphasised the more intimate and conversational style made famous by *This American Life* host Ira Glass. This new style felt less like a traditional one-to-many broadcast and more like an intimate one-to-one conversation thanks to it being consumed right there in your earbuds.

A few weeks before *Serial* launched, Apple updated its mobile operating system and added a native podcast app, one that couldn't be deleted. This transformed the mobile phone into a personalised radio, one that was always in your pocket.

The advent of audio-on-demand also meant consumption shifted from scheduled broadcast to the more ubiquitous podcast. New forms of distribution meant re-thinking the audio medium. Digitally-native podcasts in turn gained momentum and in 2014 US production houses Gimlet and Radiotopia dedicated themselves to creating pure podcasts (as opposed to turning linear programs into "catch-up radio").

Today podcast listening, while still smaller than radio listening, is growing steadily and recent announcements from Google point to further refinements. "We want to create an environment on Android where it's just as easy to get started [as an iPhone], and it's actually the best experience for discovering and listening to podcasts," Google Podcasts Product Manager Zack Reneau-Wedeen announced in May 2018. Google's plans include giving podcasts as much prominence as text, image and video in search results and also making the listening experience as seamless across devices and contexts with Google Assistant.

According to Deloitte's 2017 mobile consumer survey, Android has a 65 per cent market share in Australia compared to Apple's mobile operating system at 35 per cent.

The market's hunger for podcasts in all matter of genres and topics, styles and formats is also rapidly growing. According to this year's *Digital News Report*, nearly a third (32 per cent) of Australian respondents have listened to a podcast in the last month, and this aligns with research done by Edison for the *Infinite Dial Report 2018* which shows at least a quarter of those surveyed have listened to a podcast in the past month.

“New forms of distribution meant re-thinking the audio medium.”

Across all 23 countries surveyed for the *Digital News Report*, an average of 34 per cent listened to a podcast in the past month, with listening much higher in countries such as Turkey and Korea (driven by news, politics, and international events podcasts) and Hong Kong (driven by lifestyle podcasts). In Australia, listening is higher among men (38.1 per cent) who prefer podcasts about news and politics, sports, and specialist subjects, whereas women (accounting for 27.5 per cent) prefer podcasts about lifestyle and specialist subjects.

The number of podcasts a listener consumes in a week is also interesting. On average according to the *Infinite Dial* research, five podcasts are listened to a week, with 18 per cent of people listening to six to ten podcasts. At home listening still dominates, closely followed by consumption while driving.

Podcast listening certainly skews younger. While many traditional Australian radio stations are finding it difficult to stem the downward trend in time spent listening (TSL) particularly for younger demographics, those same age groups are still embracing listening, they're just doing it via on-demand audio. The *Digital News Report* shows Australians aged 18-44 are the biggest podcast consumers, with 58.3 per cent of listeners aged 25-34.

And it's this opportunity to grab a younger audience – one that's been increasingly difficult for legacy media organisations to attract or retain – that's seen growth both in the number of independent podcast networks (Planet Broadcasting, Auscast Network, and the Ear Buds Network) and in the type of organisation dabbling in podcasting. In 2016, *The Australian* newspaper's Bowraville investigation became the first podcast to win a Walkley Award, the country's most prestigious journalism prize. This win ended a five-year run of the ABC winning in the audio documentary category. In the last 12 months, more non-traditional audio producers have entered the podcasting space as they recognise podcasting's ability to reach both specialist and niche audiences, as well as younger ones.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

THURSDAY APRIL 26, 2018: Dover responsible manager and owner Terry McMaster leaves the Federal Court with the aid of paramedics after collapsing while being questioned during the Royal Commission into Misconduct in the Banking, Superannuation and Financial Services Industry in Melbourne.

IMAGE: AAP Image/Stefan Postles

7 PAYING FOR NEWS

- The majority of Australians still don't and won't pay for news.
- Paying for online news has increased by 10% since 2016.
- Those who use TV as their main source for news (16%) were the least likely to pay for news content online in the future.
- Those who use online news as their main source of news (28%) were the most likely to pay for news content online in the future.
- Those who are concerned about fake news are more likely to pay for news.
- News consumers with higher news literacy are willing to pay for news.

PAYING FOR PRINTED NEWSPAPERS

While there is a small increase in the number of Australians paying for news, the large majority of Australians do not pay for the news they consume. In 2018, 40% of news consumers paid for a printed newspaper in the last week (see **figure 7.1**).

It is worth noting that almost 75% of those who paid for online news in 2018 also reported buying a newspaper, however this has fallen from 81% in 2016.

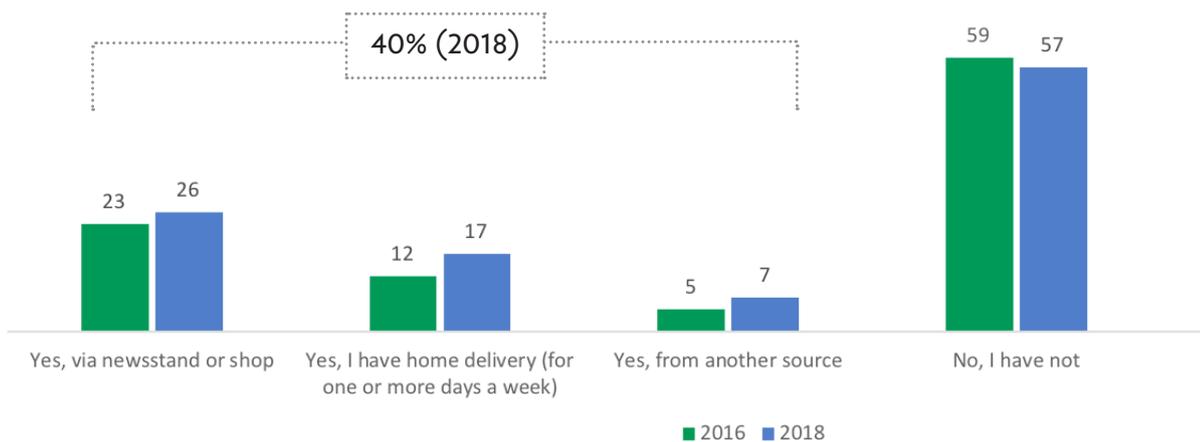


FIGURE 7.1: PAID FOR PRINTED NEWSPAPER IN THE LAST WEEK (%)

Q7. Have you bought (paid for) a printed newspaper in the last week? (This could be an ongoing subscription or one off payment for a physical copy). Please select all that apply [Base: All].

Males (46%) continue to be more likely than females (34%) to buy a newspaper particularly in the 65+ age cohort. While older Australians continue to be the most likely to buy a printed newspaper, the proportion of over-65-year-olds doing so has fallen to 53% from 57% in 2016. In aggregate, older age groups (35+ years) reported a decline in buying a printed newspaper from 43% in 2016 to 40% in 2018. **Figure 7.2** provides more details.



20%

OF RESPONDENTS
PAY FOR ONLINE
NEWS

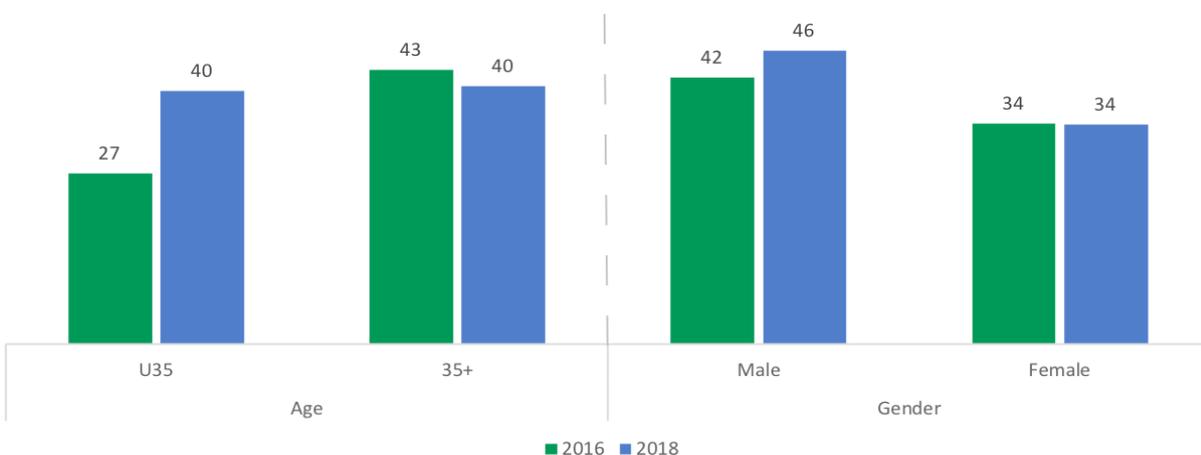


FIGURE 7.2: PAYING FOR PRINTED NEWSPAPER BY AGE AND GENDER (%)

Q7. Have you bought (paid for) a printed newspaper in the last week? (This could be an ongoing subscription or one off payment for a physical copy). Please select all that apply [Base: All].

PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS

There has been a 10% increase in the number of Australians paying for online news in the past two years from 10% in 2016 to 20% of news consumers in 2018 (see **figure 7.3**). However, the overwhelming majority continue to access online news for free.

Males (25%) are more likely to pay for online news than females (16%). This is perhaps unsurprising given that more Australian men access and are interested in news than women.

The number of older Australians (35+) paying for digital news has risen from 8% in 2016 to 17% in 2018 (**figure 7.4**). Among the younger news consumers (under 35) there has been a substantial increase in purchasing newspapers and paying for online news.

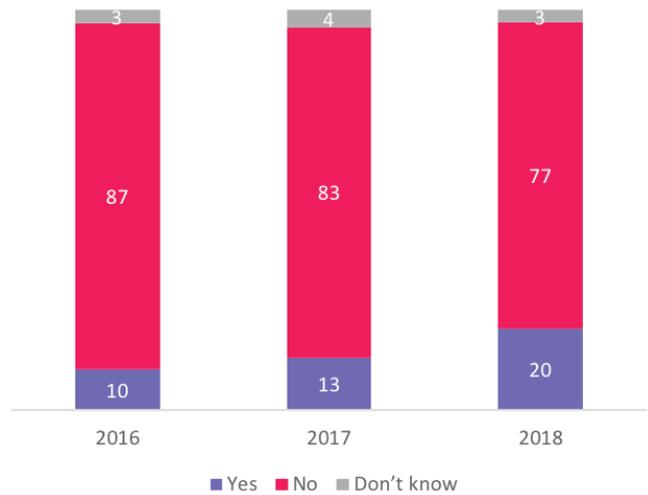


FIGURE 7.3: PAID FOR ONLINE NEWS BETWEEN 2016 AND 2018 (%)

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 or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition) [Base: All].

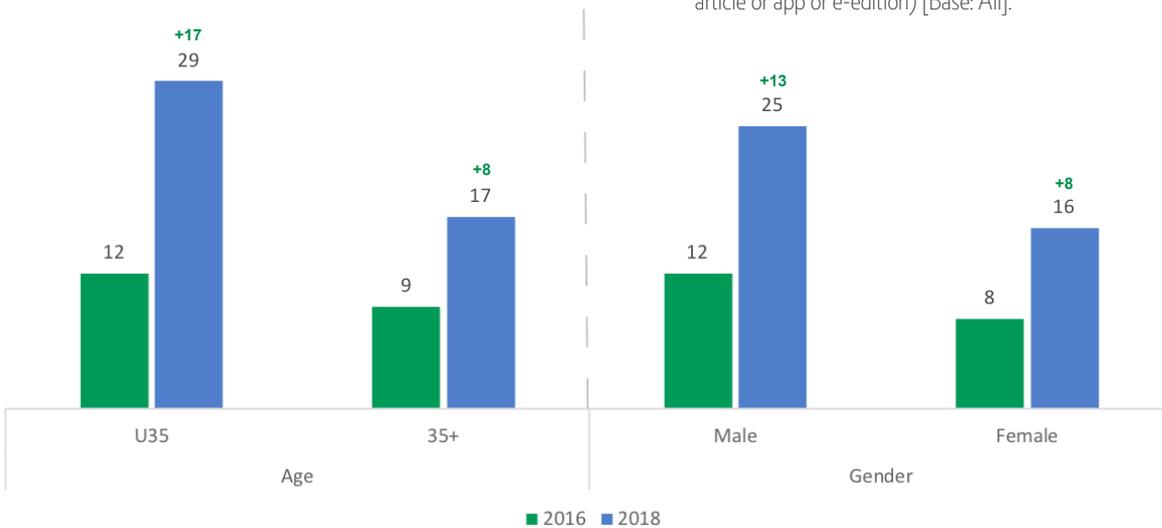


FIGURE 7.4: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY AGE AND GENDER (%)

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 or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition) [Base: All].

When paying for digital news Australians are most likely to subscribe to an online news provider. 88% of paying digital news consumers reported subscribing to a digital news service in the last year (see **figure 7.5**).

There has also been an increase in donations to news media organisations. Some online news organisations, such as the *Guardian Australia* and *The Conversation*, ask readers to donate and become a member, rather than subscribe. Out of those paying for digital news, the rate of news consumers who reported donating to support a digital news service increased from 25% in 2017 to 33% in 2018.



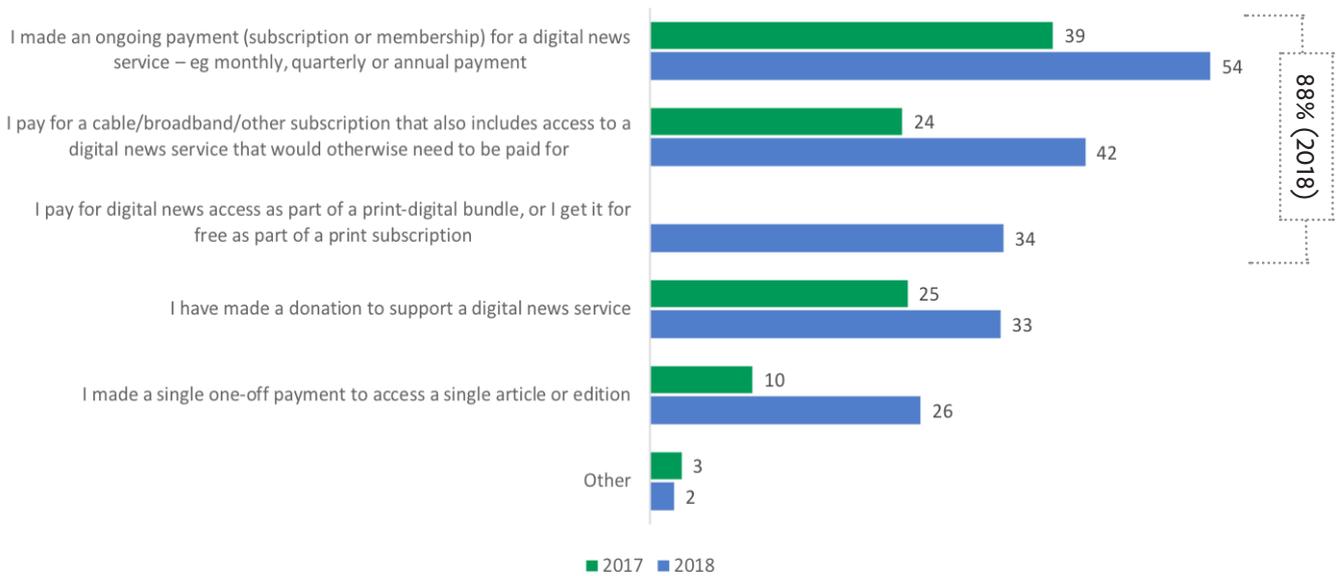


FIGURE 7.5: TYPE OF PAYMENT FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)

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: All who paid for online news].

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS USERS ARE LEAST LIKELY TO PAY FOR NEWS

Figure 7.6 shows news consumers who use print media as their main source of news are more likely than others to have paid for online news in 2018 (33%), an increase of 12% from 2016.

There has been an increase in the numbers of social media news users paying for news. However, they are still the least likely to pay for online news (11%).

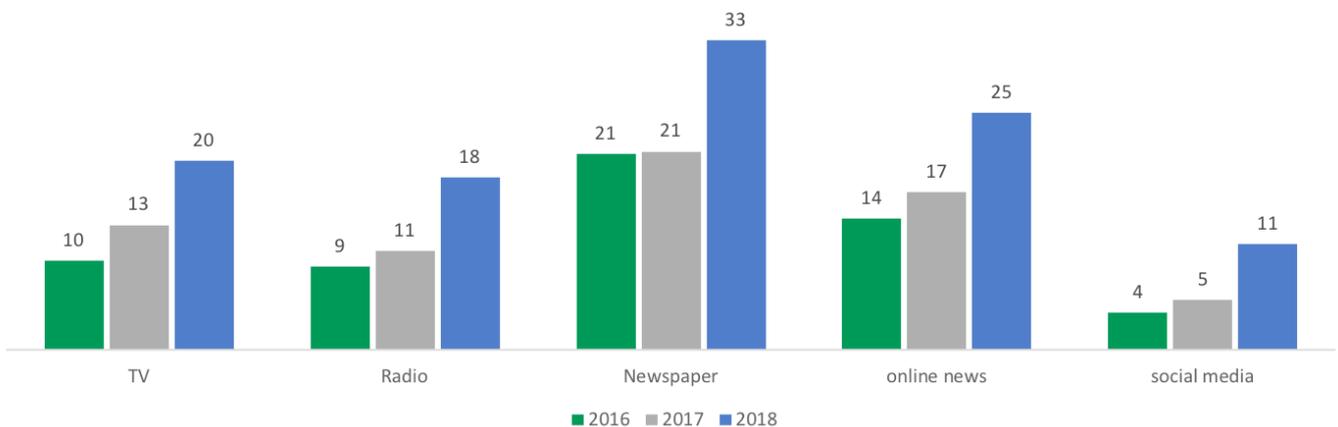


FIGURE 7.6: PROPORTION PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

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. Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

WHO WILL PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS IN THE FUTURE?

Consumers relying on online news (28%) were the most likely to pay for digital news in the future (see figure 7.7). It is notable that those who mainly receive news on social media (22%) are as likely to pay for digital news in the

future as newspaper readers (21%). On the other hand, those who rely on TV for news (16%) are the least likely to pay for news content online in the future.

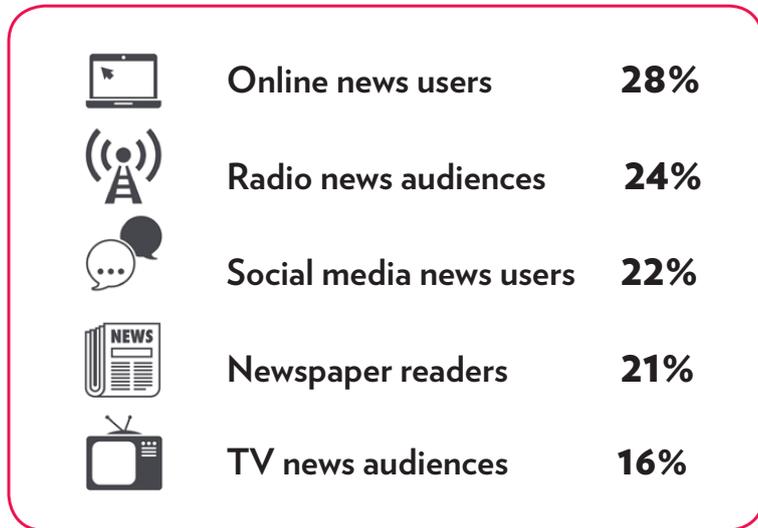


FIGURE 7.7: WILLINGNESS TO PAY IN NEXT 12 MONTHS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

Q7aiv. You said you have not paid for online digital content in the last year...How likely or unlikely would you be to pay in the next 12 months for online news from particular sources that you like? 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: All who have not paid for online news].

DONATING TO NEWS ORGANISATIONS

27% of the respondents said they would consider making a donation to a news outlet; 28% also agreed that news organisations should ask the public for donations. Younger (25-34-year-olds) and more educated news

consumers are more likely to consider making a donation and more likely to agree that news organisations should ask for donations (see figure 7.8).

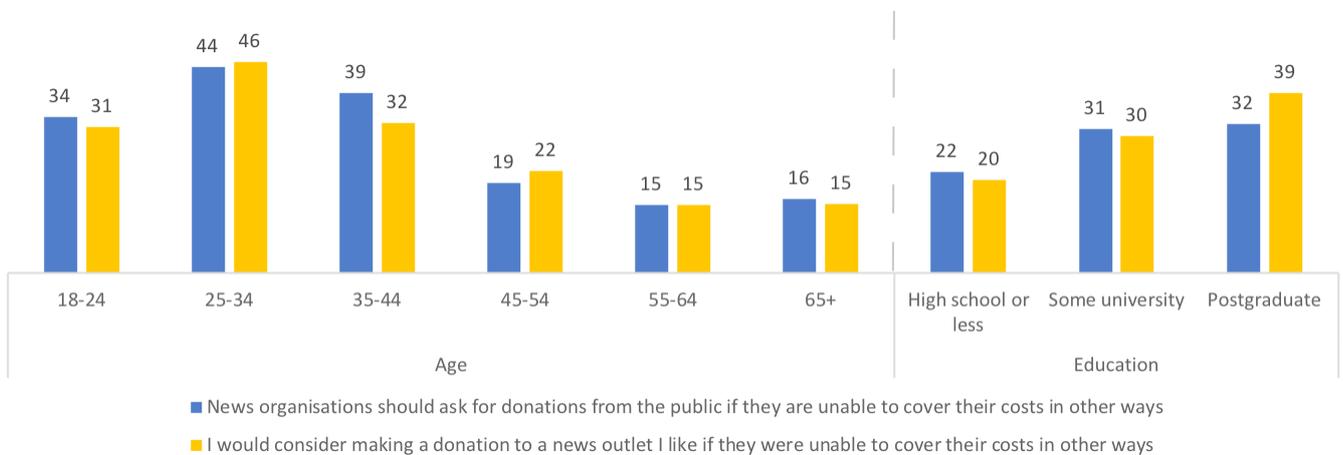


FIGURE 7.8: DONATING TO NEWS ORGANISATION BY AGE GROUP AND EDUCATION LEVEL (%)

Q7c_DONATE. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. [News organisations should ask for donations from the public if they are unable to cover their costs in other ways][I would consider making a donation to a news outlet I like if they were unable to cover their costs in other ways] [Base: All].

FAKE NEWS IMPACTS ON THE DECISION TO DONATE

Those who have experienced fake news and have concerns about it are more likely to donate to support news companies (see **tables 7.1 to 7.3**). This willingness to donate is related to news consumers' appetite for quality

news. We already know from last year's survey that about one-quarter of the people who pay for online news do so because they want to help fund journalism.

	ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT POOR JOURNALISM		HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED POOR JOURNALISM	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Made a donation to support a digital news service	36	27	31	35
Willing to donate in the future	29	22	27	26

TABLE 7.1: FAKE NEWS AND PAYING FOR NEWS: POOR JOURNALISM (%)

	ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT TWISTED STORIES		HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED TWISTED STORIES	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Made a donation to support a digital news service	36	27	37	31
Willing to donate in the future	29	22	32	23

TABLE 7.2: FAKE NEWS AND PAYING FOR NEWS: TWISTED STORIES (%)

	ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT MADE-UP STORIES		HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED MADE-UP STORIES	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Made a donation to support a digital news service	35	27	40	29
Willing to donate in the future	30	20	33	25

TABLE 7.3: FAKE NEWS AND PAYING FOR NEWS: MADE-UP STORIES (%)

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: Those who made a donation to support a digital service]. Q7c_DONATE. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement 'I would consider making a donation to a news outlet I like if they were unable to cover their costs in other ways' [Base: Those who agreed the statement]. Q_FAKE_NEWS_2. To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following: poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait) [Yes=% of respondents who were very/extremely concern, No=% of respondents who were somewhat/not very/not at all concerned]. Q_FAKE_NEWS_3- required. In the LAST WEEK which of the following have you personally come across? Please select all that apply [Yes=% of respondents who experienced, No=% of respondents who did not experience].

DIGITAL NEWS AND AD-BLOCKING

Not only are news consumers reluctant to pay for news content, they also don't advertising appearing on their screens. There has been an increase in the number of news consumers who installed ad-blocking software from 24% in 2016 to 33% in 2018 (see **figure 7.9**).

Younger news consumers are more likely to use an ad blocker, with 47% of under-35-year-olds currently using one.

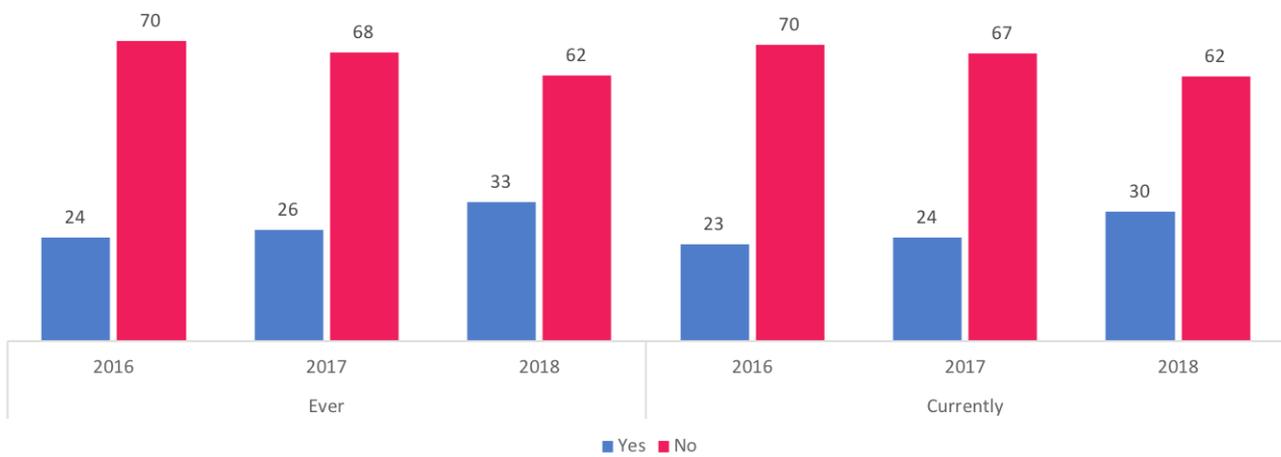
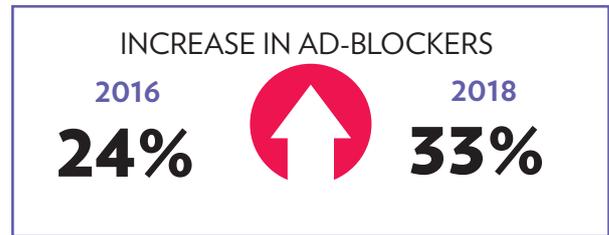


FIGURE 7.9: INCREASING AD-BLOCKING SOFTWARE USE (%)

QAD2. Have you ever downloaded software on any of your personal devices that allows you to block adverts on the internet (e.g. Adblock Plus)? QAD3. And do you currently use software on any of your personal devices (e.g. laptop, smartphone etc.) that allows you to block adverts on the internet (e.g. Adblock Plus)? [Base: All] [‘Don’t know’ answer was excluded].

The following commentary by Franco Papandrea provides an in-depth analysis of these findings.

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

PONDERING DEVELOPMENTS IN PAYMENT FOR NEWS

Franco Papandrea

Adjunct Professor, News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

With an extensive menu of free sources of news to choose from, it is not surprising that demand for paid news is weak. While the results of the 2018 survey reinforce this state of affairs, there are some emerging signs of change in the paying for news habits of some groups.

The ongoing downward spiral of printed newspaper circulation is the mirror image of the increasing consumer shift to online platforms to access news over the past decade. But, while newspaper print runs are decreasing, their overall readership is not. The combined print and online readership of newspapers has been growing steadily in recent years. The results of the survey broadly reflect these trends.

The identified small increase in the proportion of those who had paid for printed newspaper concurrently with a more substantial increase in the proportion of those paying for online news between 2016 and 2018 provide a refreshing glimmer of hope to newspaper publishers. The finding confirms industry trends of healthy increases in combined newspaper readership across the all platforms that may eventually stem continuing losses in subscription revenue.

Fairfax, for example, from 2014 onwards has been reporting robust annual rises in digital subscription revenues from its main mastheads (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Australian Financial Review*) concurrently with annual declines of between five and nine per cent in overall (print and online) subscription revenues.¹

“The ongoing downward spiral of printed newspaper circulation is the mirror image of the increasing consumer shift to online platform to access news over the past decade.”

On the more specific question of paying for news, the survey found a small overall increase in the proportion of respondents who had paid for a printed newspaper ‘last week’ and a substantial increase in the proportion that paid for online news ‘last year’ (now over 20% — 13% in 2017). The growth of online paid access is not entirely from new customers. A significant proportion of customers have paid for access to both print and online platforms. In 2018, 38% of those who had paid for a newspaper had also paid for online news (a sharp increase on the 22% that did so in 2016).

Traditionally the distribution of Australian buyers of newspapers has been skewed towards the upper half of the age scale. While older consumers, particularly males, retain their status as the likeliest buyers of printed newspapers, the proportion doing so is diminishing in part due to a transition to online access of newspapers.

More interestingly, the survey results show an increased incidence of newspaper buying among younger cohorts (other than those aged 18-24). In their case, the increased propensity of paying for access is evident across both print and online formats potentially signalling a partial shift of preference in the type of news they consume. A similar shift noted in other recent surveys² has been tentatively attributed to concerns about fake news.

“The survey results show an increased incidence of newspaper buying among younger cohorts.”

Unfortunately, the 2018 survey did not collect information on factors that influence paying for online news. The following have consistently been identified in the 2017 survey and other research as important motivators for paid access to online news: convenience to access news from a variety of sources and on a variety of devices; getting news from a particular source; access to specialist or in-depth information; and ‘getting a good deal’ in the form of combined print and online subscriptions and promotional discount offers. Another important motivating factor identified in 2017, and evident in this year’s results on type of payment for online news, is “want to help fund journalism”.

Almost 34% of those who had paid for online news (7% of the population) reported they had made a donation to support a digital news service — a proportion significantly higher than that reported in other countries — and substantially higher than that recorded last year. The reasons for the jump are not readily apparent.

Several factors are likely to have contributed to the reported jump in the donations. A substantial proportion of respondents to the survey were positively predisposed to donations to news outlets unable to cover their costs in other ways. Over a quarter of all respondents said they would consider a donation to an outlet and a similar proportion agreed with the proposition that outlets in such a situation should ask for donations from the public.

In addition, in the year before the survey, both the fake news phenomenon and the ostensible decline of the Australian media's investigative journalism capacity attracted substantial public debate and attention. On 10 May 2017, the Senate established a Select Committee to conduct an inquiry on the Future of Public Interest Journalism. Its proceedings, including a series of public hearings involving high profile witnesses from news and social media, and its report in February 2018, which was sympathetic of tax-deductible donations, are likely to have had some influence on prospective supporters.

Heightened sensitivity to fake news in the wake of the US presidential election would also have helped foster donations in support of reliable news. The 2018 survey found that two out of three respondents agreed with the propositions "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet" and only 13% disagreed. As the question referred specifically to concern about fake news on the internet, it is particularly interesting that the main source relied upon for news had little impact on the level of concern expressed.

The high level of concern about fake news on the internet was also a factor in the reported improvement in willingness to pay for online news. An increased proportion of those paying for online news has combined with a strengthening future willingness to pay of the remainder (i.e., those currently not paying) to produce a significantly improved outlook. More specifically, in 2018, in addition to the 20% (13% in 2017) already paying for online news, a further 15% (10% in 2017) indicated a willingness to do so in the next 12 months.

“The high level of concern about fake news on the internet was also a factor in the reported improvement in willingness to pay for online news.”

Overall, the survey findings suggest that while news publishers are not out of the woods just yet, they do have some significant opportunities to improve their future sustainability with strategies closely attuned to the needs of consumers who are either already paying for news or have some disposition to doing so in the not too distant future.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2017-2018

FRIDAY MAY 11, 2018: Jessica Mauboy, representing Australia with 'We Got Love', performs during rehearsals for the Grand Final of the 63rd annual Eurovision Song Contest at the Altice Arena in Lisbon, Portugal. The Grand Final of Eurovision 2018 was held on May 12.

IMAGE: EPA/Jose Sena Goulao



8 NEWS PARTICIPATION & ENGAGEMENT

- Talking face-to-face with others is still the most popular mode of sharing news in all age groups.
- News consumers under 35 are more likely to respond to online social cues such as comments, likes or shares when selecting news.
- Women prefer sharing news on social media compared to men, while men share via email more than women.
- News consumers increasingly use messaging apps for sharing news.
- Younger news consumers increasingly rely on news alerts and notifications to get news.

MORE PEOPLE ARE SHARING NEWS

Sharing news is an increasing trend. The majority of news consumers (72%) engaged in one or more news sharing activities. More than half (57%) interacted with news online either by commenting, sharing, rating, voting or writing about news.

Talking face-to-face about news is still the most popular way of sharing news and is increasing. News consumers

who didn't participate in any type of news engagement activities decreased from 35% in 2017 to 28% in 2018.

The most common methods of online news engagement are sharing news stories on social media (22%) and commenting on a news story on social media (19%). Sharing on messaging apps increased from 9% in 2017 to 14% in 2018, as **figure 8.1** shows.

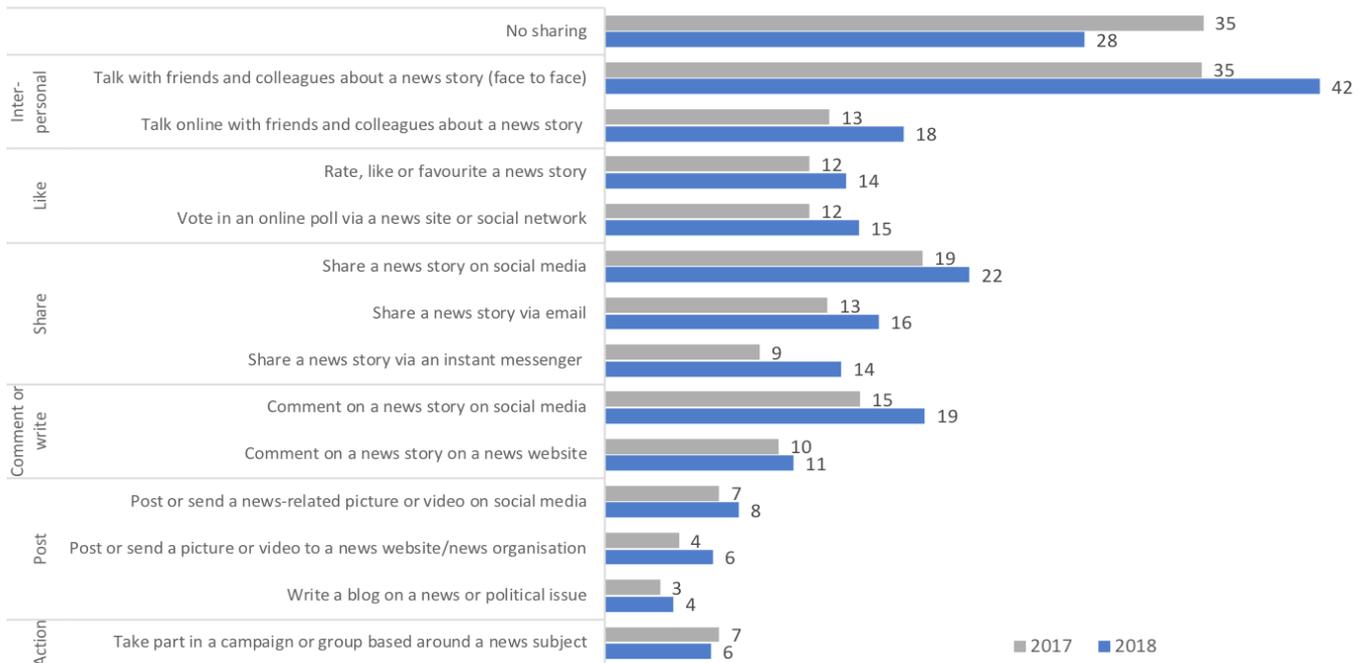


FIGURE 8.1: NEWS ENGAGEMENT (%)

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: All].

TALKING ABOUT NEWS

News consumers prefer to talk about news face-to-face than online. While this is true for all age groups and both men and women, there are slight differences in their preferences. About 47% of women talk about news offline and 37% of men do, indicating women like to talk about

news offline more than men. However, there is no difference in talking about news online between men and women. Older people tend to talk about news face-to-face more compared to younger people. This was reversed online (see **figure 8.2**).

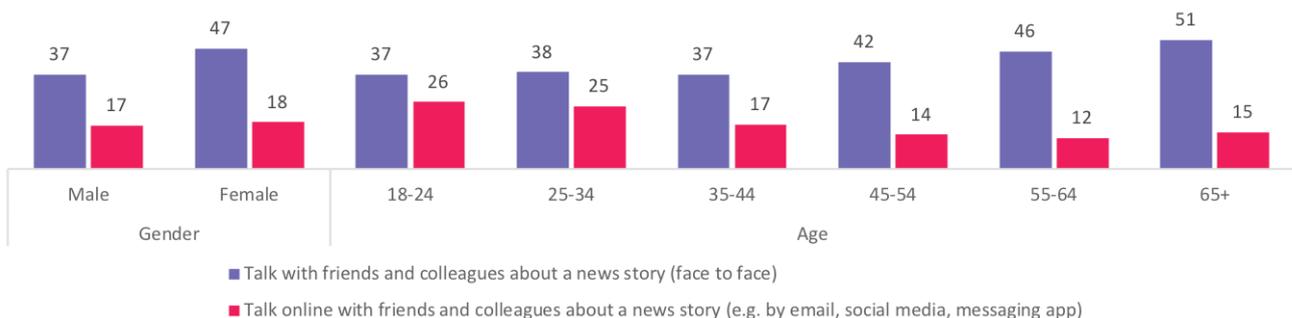


FIGURE 8.2: TALKING ABOUT NEWS OFFLINE AND ONLINE BY GENDER AND AGE (%)

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: All].

Gender differences are noticeable in online sharing activities. Men prefer sharing stories via email (19%) or messaging apps (16%) compared to women who prefer social media (24%). **Figure 8.3** provides more details.

Younger news consumers, in general, share more news online compared to older consumers and the preferred platform differs among age groups.

Social media and messaging apps are used more to share news by younger news consumers; email is used more by older news consumers. The youngest cohort 18-24-year-olds are the least likely to use email to share a story (see **figure 8.4**).

News consumers who follow news organisations or journalists are more active sharers of news online. They are also more active in talking with their friends and colleagues offline about news (see **figure 8.5**).

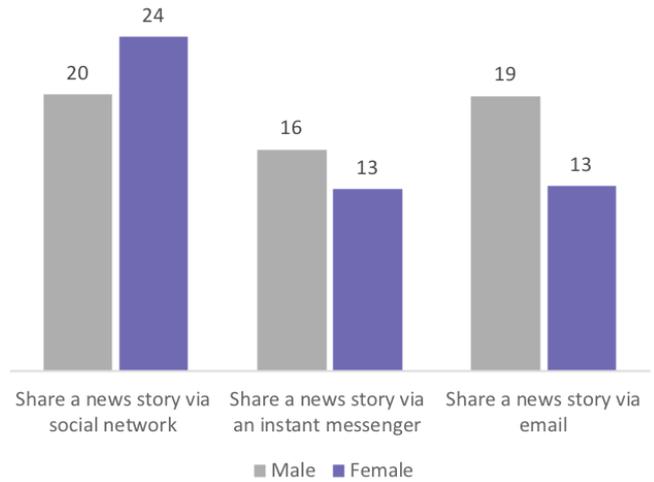


FIGURE 8.3: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN SHARING (%)

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: All].

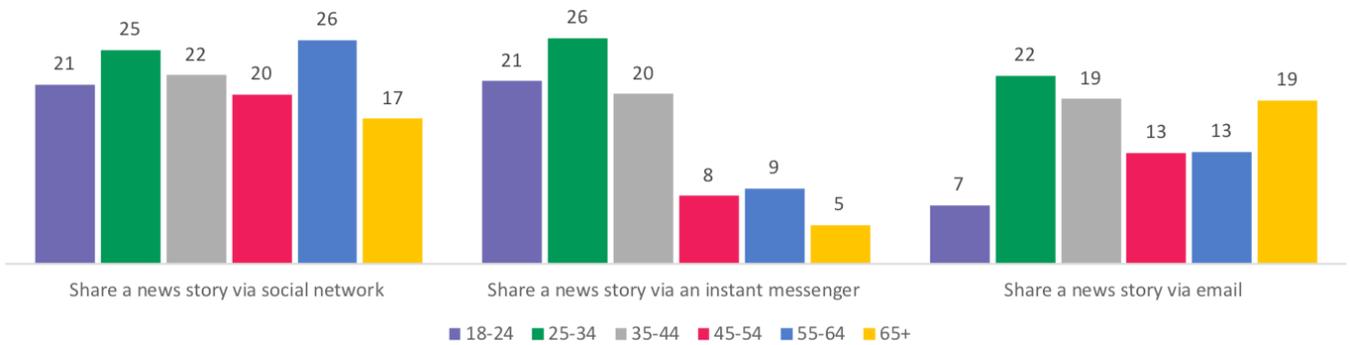


FIGURE 8.4: AGE DIFFERENCES IN SHARING (%)

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: All].

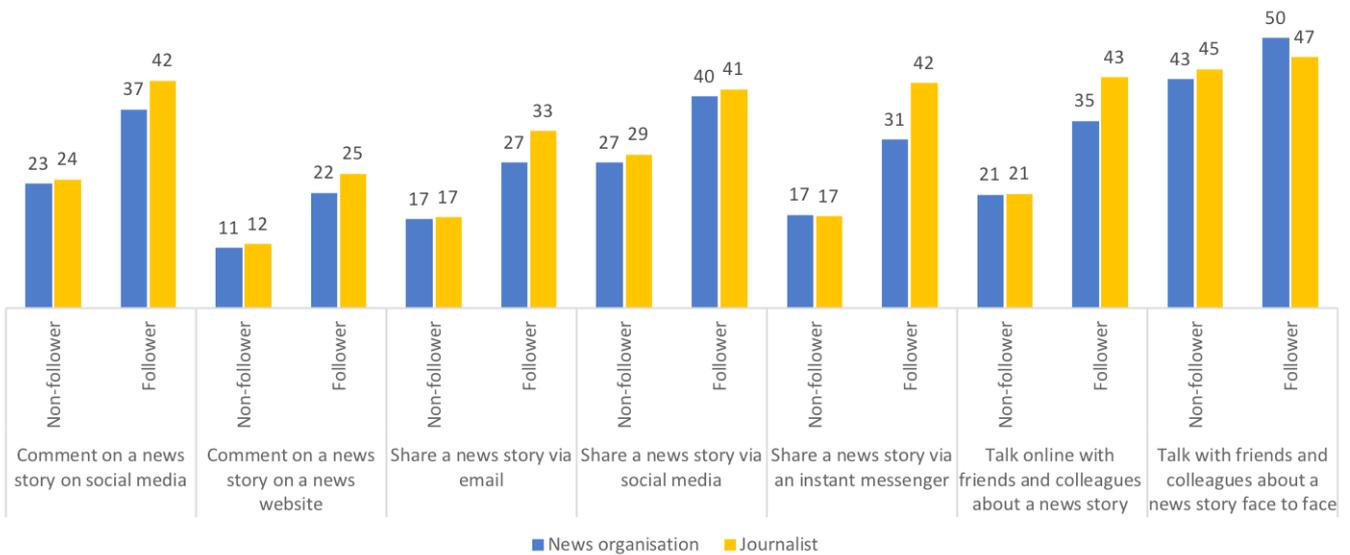


FIGURE 8.5: FOLLOWING NEWS AND SHARING BEHAVIOUR (%)

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: All].

NEWS PARTICIPATION ON FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP

One of the promises of social media is that news itself becomes social; news users don't simply access news, they access the conversation about news. The data on news consumers who use Facebook and WhatsApp indicates that the conversation has shifted from the 'public' space of feeds and comment threads of Facebook, to the private discussion groups of WhatsApp.

WhatsApp users are more than three times more likely to take part in a group discussion about a particular news topic (36%), compared to only 11% of Facebook users. Similarly, only 20% of Facebook users have taken part in private discussions about news topics, while 37% of WhatsApp users have.

Facebook users are more likely to use the platform in a less participatory, more passive way compared to WhatsApp users. Facebook users are still using Facebook as a channel to discover news, as **figure 8.6** indicates.

They are more likely to click on a link or look at news headlines or videos. In contrast, WhatsApp users are more likely to share, 'like', or post a news story (see **figure 8.7**).

Across all measures, younger users of Facebook and WhatsApp are much more likely to use both platforms in active, participatory ways. Under-35-year-old WhatsApp users are twice as likely to take part in a group discussion compared to over-35-year-olds (U35 51% vs 35+ 23%) and more likely to take part in a private discussion (U35 47% vs 35+ 27%). There is a similar divide between generations of Facebook users, although it is not as stark.

On the other hand, rather than having an online conversation about news, older users of Facebook and WhatsApp are more likely to take advantage of the built-in platform tools for participating. Older users are more likely to share or like a news story on Facebook (44% vs 39%).

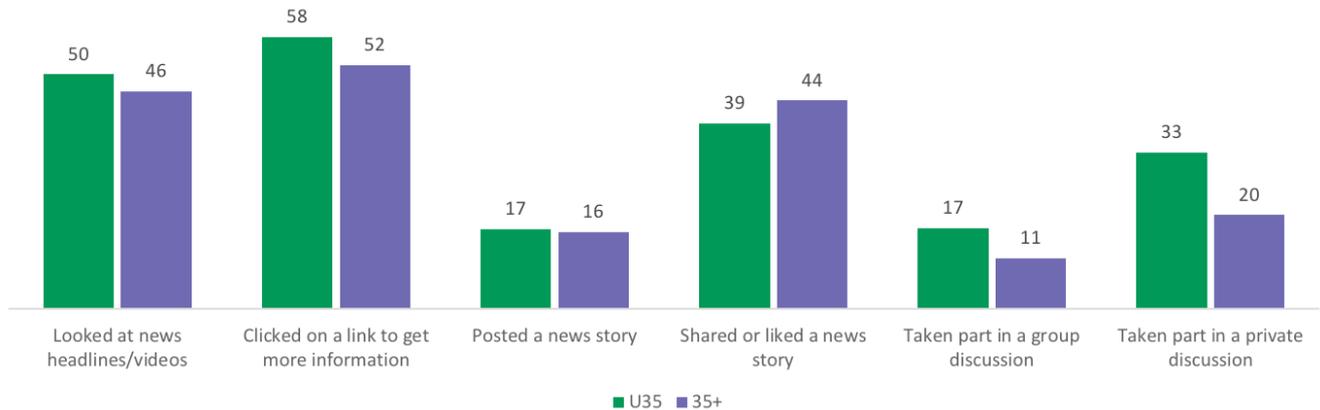


FIGURE 8.6: NEWS ENGAGEMENT ON FACEBOOK (%)

Q12_2018_FB. Thinking about the news you get via Facebook, which of the following have you done in the last week. Please select all that apply [Base: Those who use FB in last week for news].

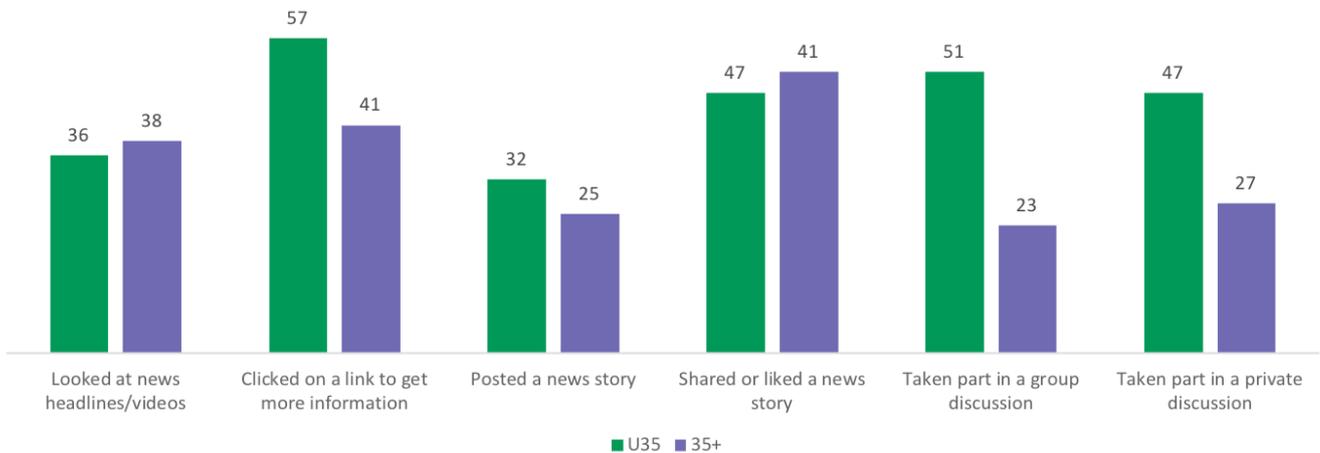


FIGURE 8.7: NEWS ENGAGEMENT ON WHATSAPP (%)

Q12_2018_WA. Thinking about the news you get via WhatsApp, which of the following have you done in the last week. Please select all that apply [Base: Those who use WhatsApp in last week for news].

DECIDING WHAT NEWS TO CONSUME ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Across the entire sample, brand and headline are more important in deciding whether the content is worth engaging with. The person who shared the story and the

number of comments, likes or shares are not as important (see figure 8.8).

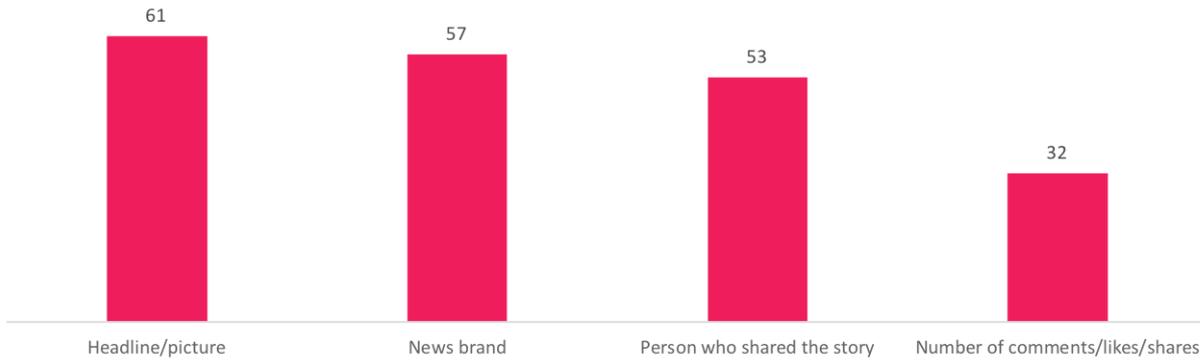


FIGURE 8.8: DECISIONS TO LOOK AT NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)

Q12C_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: When looking at stories in social media, the ___ is very important in helping me decide whether information is likely to be worth my time (*news brand, headline or picture, person who shared the story, number of comments likes of shares) [Base: Those who have used a social media site for news in last week].

Women are more likely than men to engage with content based on the headline or picture, whereas men are more likely to engage based on the number of comments, likes or shares. Those with postgraduate education are the most likely to engage with content based on the news brand (see figure 8.9).

61% OF RESPONDENTS AGREE THAT BRAND AND HEADLINE/PICTURES ARE IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO ENGAGE WITH ONLINE NEWS

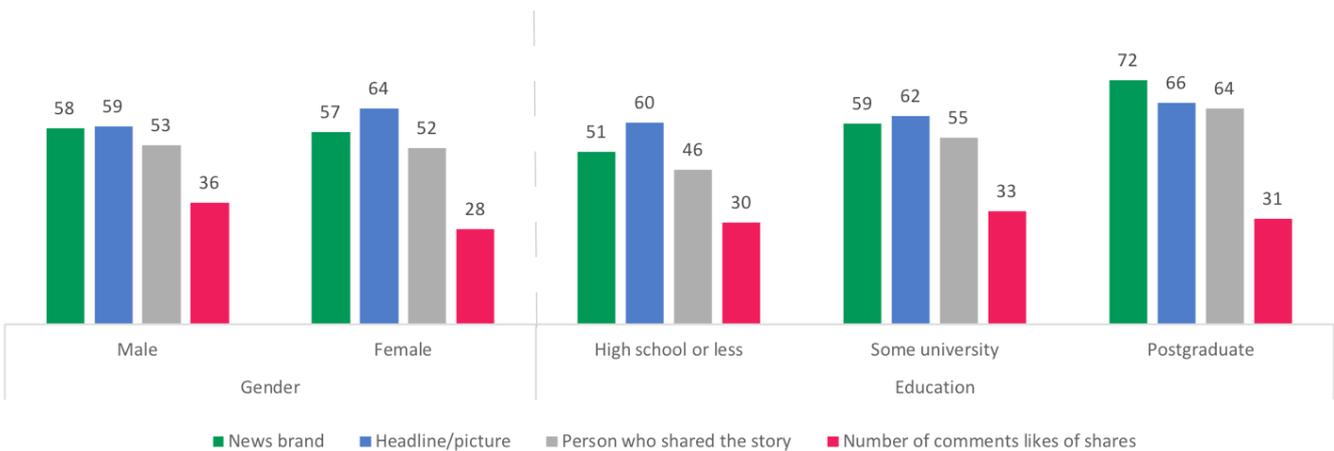


FIGURE 8.9: DECISIONS TO LOOK AT STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Q12C_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: When looking at stories in social media, the ___ is very important in helping me decide whether information is likely to be worth my time (*news brand, headline or picture, person who shared the story, number of comments likes of shares) [Base: Those who have used a social media site for news in last week].

The under-35-year-old age group is more likely to respond to social signals when consuming news on social media than older people.

Compared to younger news consumers, older people are just over half as likely to take into account the person who shared the story on social media (see figure 8.10).

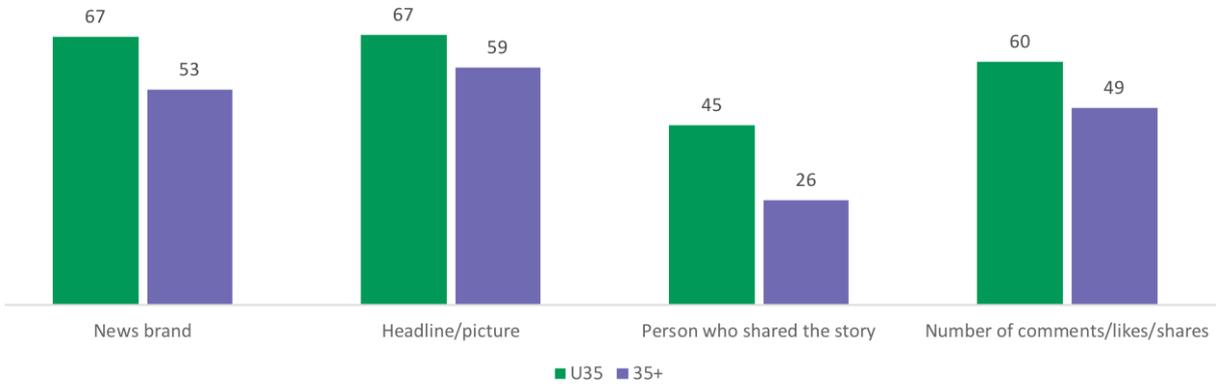


FIGURE 8.10: DECISIONS TO LOOK AT STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY AGE (%)

Q12C_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: When looking at stories in social media, the ___ is very important in helping me decide whether information is likely to be worth my time (*news brand, headline or picture, person who shared the story, number of comments likes or shares) [Base: Those who have used a social media site for news in last week].

NEWS ALERTS & NOTIFICATIONS AS GATEWAYS TO NEWS

News alerts allow news consumers to filter and navigate the flood of information accessible via social media and other online platforms.

About 18% of respondents received a news alert on their mobile devices in the last week. This has increased 5% a year since 2016 (see **figure 8.11**).

Those with higher levels of education and income are more likely to use news alert services. The age group with the highest rate of news alert use was the prolific 25-34-year-old age group (27%). **Figure 8.12** provides more information.

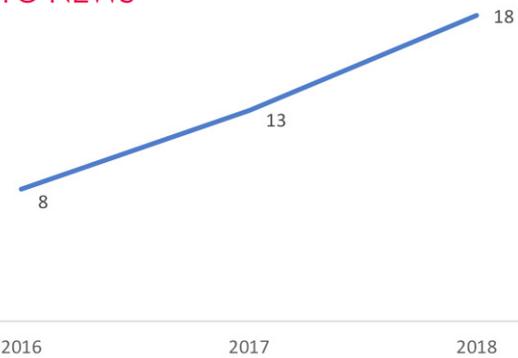


FIGURE 8.11: INCREASE IN THE USE OF NEWS ALERTS (%)

[% of those who chose 'Received a news alert on my mobile phone/tablet (e.g. via SMS, app, lockscreen, notification centre)']. 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 [Base: All].

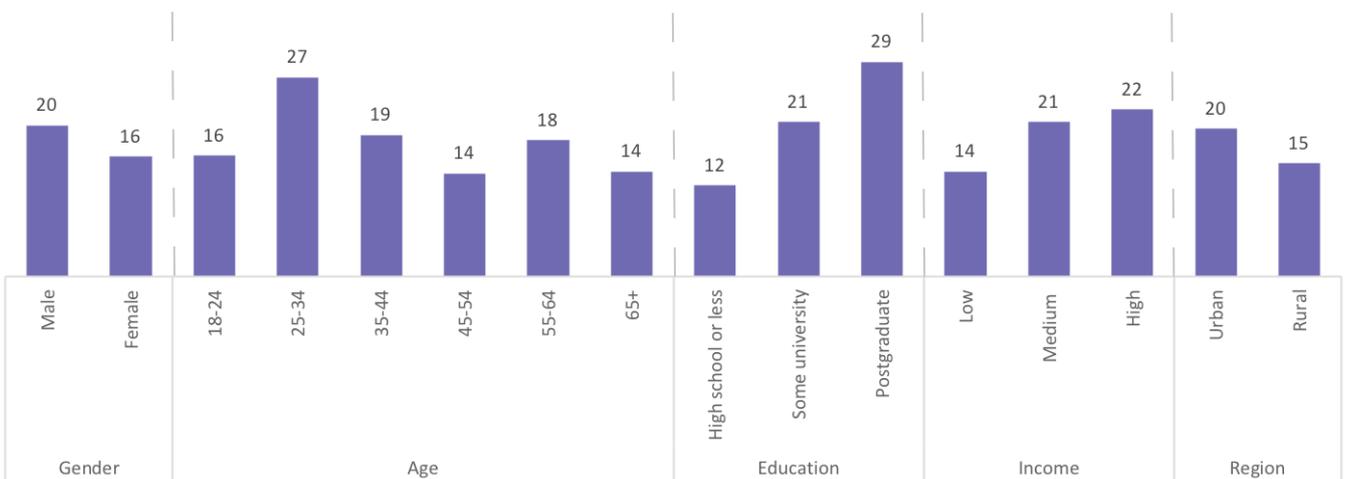


FIGURE 8.12: NOTIFICATION USERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

[% of those who chose 'Received a news alert on my mobile phone/tablet (e.g. via SMS, app, lockscreen, notification centre)']. 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 [Base: All].

Perhaps unsurprisingly, use of news alerts correlates with internet use, interest in news and interest in political news. Among those who already use mobile alerts, almost 60% are happy with the number of notifications, 27% feel they get too many, 11% want to get more (see **figure 8.13**).

THOSE WITH HIGHER LEVELS OF EDUCATION AND INCOME ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE NEWS ALERT SERVICES 

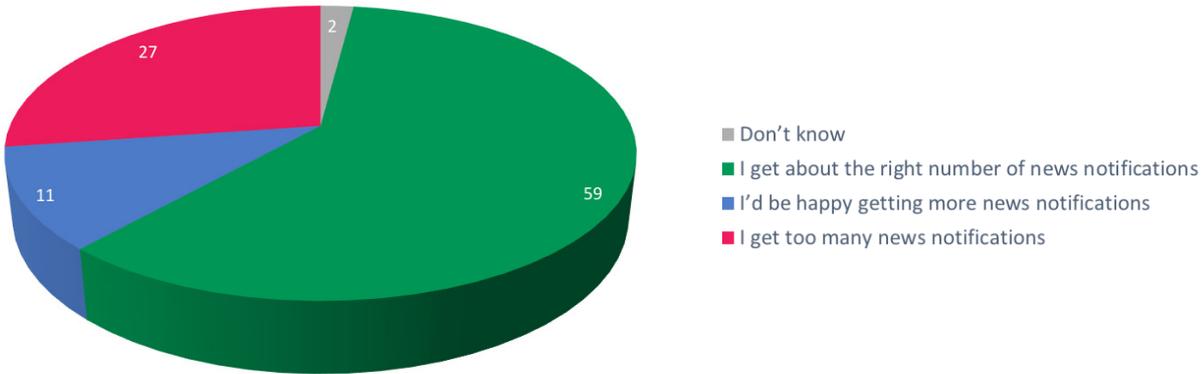


FIGURE 8.13: CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION OF NEWS ALERT FREQUENCY (%)

Q10b_2018_2. Thinking about the news notifications you currently receive, which of the following statements do you most agree with? Please select one only. I get too many news notifications; I get about the right number of news notifications; I'd be happy getting more news notifications.

Among those who do not receive alerts, we asked what would encourage them to use the services. 40% feel that nothing would encourage them to install alerts or notifications for news. Being able to control the number of alerts (26%) and personalised alerts (22%) were regarded as important factors.

About one-third (33%) of the under-35 age group said they wanted to be able to control the number of alerts and personalise the service, as **figure 8.14** indicates.

40%
OF THOSE WHO DO NOT USE NEWS ALERTS FELT THAT NOTHING WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO USE NOTIFICATIONS

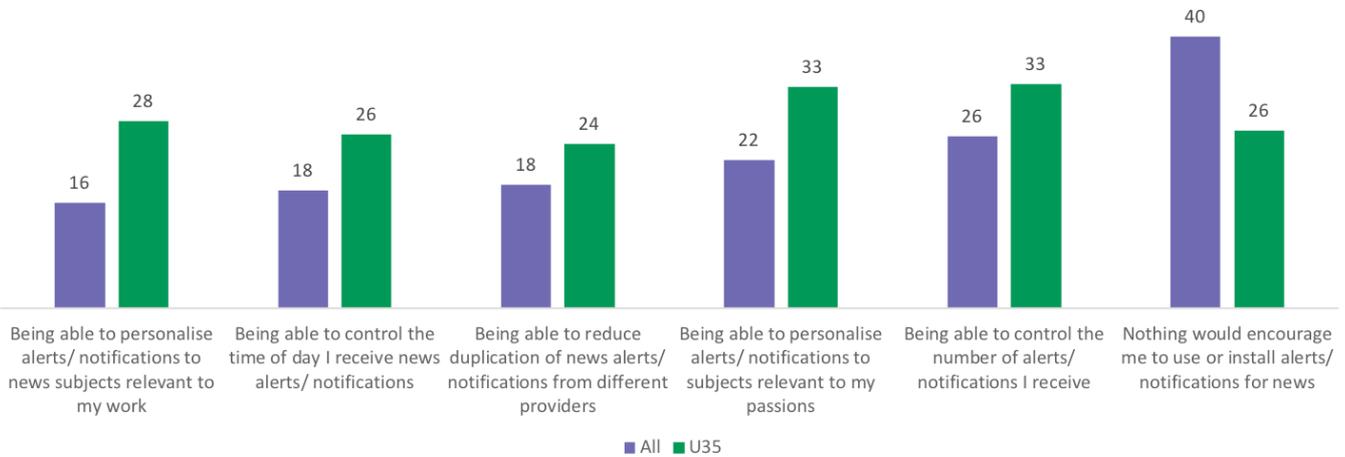



FIGURE 8.14: INTENT TO RECEIVE NEWS ALERTS (%)

Q10b_2018_4. You use a mobile device but said you have not received a mobile notification in the last week, which of the following features would encourage you to use or install alerts/ notifications for news? [Base: Those who use a smartphone and/or tablet but have not received a news alert via mobile in the last week].

Those who have paid for digital news are likely to receive alerts from more than four news organisations (see **figure 8.15**).

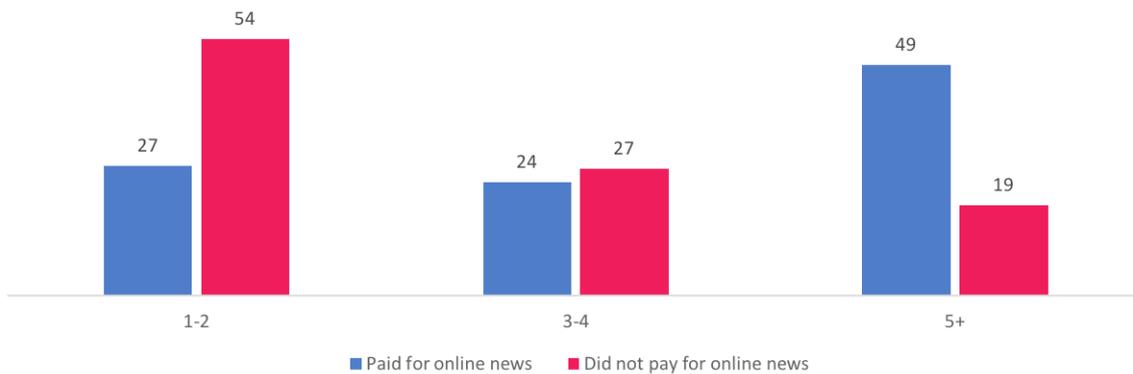


FIGURE 8.15: NUMBER OF ALERTS FROM NEWS ORGANISATIONS AND USES OF PAID DIGITAL NEWS (%)

Q10b_2018_1. You say you received a news alert on your mobile phone/tablet in the last week. In an average week, roughly how many different news organisations do you get news alerts from? 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 or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition) [Base: Those that receive news alerts in the last week].

DISCUSSION

There is a general trend towards younger news consumers treating ‘news’ more as a form of social or ‘informative content’ with new habits of consumption compared to older audiences that repeat broadcast and print-based habits of consumption when using online news. For younger news consumers, news consumption is a practice embedded in other online social or ‘participatory’ practices. The interaction with online news performed by younger audiences is visible on the platform in the form of social signals (comments, ‘likes’, or shares) and participatory practice, such as private online discussions about a news topic. In comparison, older news consumers sharing news via talking with someone face-to-face which is not visible.

An emerging concern for news consumers is how to navigate the potential excess of information available through social media and other networked media channels. This includes not only the broad range of information in an absolute sense, but annoying experiences common for any heavy news consumer, such as the ‘same’ news story appearing in one’s feed countless times after a news event.

News consumers are also developing practices for the purposeful engagement with news sources, such as ‘social criteria’ for selecting news to read in feeds and setting up news alerts for news organisations or other sources. This suggests a critical disposition of news consumers towards curating their own information ‘feeds’ by actively selecting the news sources that contribute to their feeds and then sending algorithmic signals through what they engage with.

COMMENTARY

WHY ADVERTISING IS NO LONGER ENOUGH TO FUND QUALITY NEWS CONTENT

Dan Andrew

PhD Candidate, News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra

When reading news content on the *Guardian's* website, visitors are exposed to the following message at the end of news articles that summarises the current state of news media in Australia:

Since you're here ...

... we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the *Guardian* than ever but advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike many news organisations, we haven't put up a paywall – we want to keep our journalism as open as we can. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The *Guardian's* independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters – because it might well be your perspective, too.

"I appreciate there not being a paywall: it is more democratic for the media to be available for all and not a commodity to be purchased by a few. I'm happy to make a contribution so others with less means still have access to information."

Thomasine, Sweden

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps fund it, our future would be much more secure. For as little as \$1, you can support the *Guardian* – and it only takes a minute. Thank you¹

This plea for donations highlights the reality facing commercial news organisations as the cost of producing quality news content requires significant investment in resources that need to not only be recovered but profited from to justify the financial expense. While the 2018 *Digital News Report* reveals less reluctance amongst news consumers to directly pay for online news content, the most common way commercial organisations receive reimbursement for producing news content is by selling advertising placements to advertisers wanting to reach those audiences.

While the *Guardian's* request for donations states that "advertising revenues across the media are falling fast", this is due to the decreasing cost of advertising online rather than the amount being spent on online advertising. Online advertising revenue was predicted to account for more than 50% of total Australian advertising expenditure in 2017² as online advertising expenditure continues to grow, with an

estimated Australian revenue in 2017 of AUS\$7.9 billion, up 7% year-on-year from 2016.³

In the pre-digital age, advertising revenue to fund the production of content was substantial enough to justify the investment but with the increase in competition of news providers and new advertising technologies the cost of advertising placements has been devalued. Advertisers welcome competition amongst media platforms as it reduces the cost of placing commercial messages targeting consumers, yet mass advertising always resulted in cost inefficiencies as not everyone exposed to the ads were relevant audiences.

The introduction of "programmatic advertising" has allowed advertising to be targeted to individuals based on their interests and online behaviours thereby vastly reducing audience wastage. Instead of placing an ad on a news publishers' website and hoping that some of the audience exposed to the message will find it relevant, programmatic advertising uses data collected about the individual visitor to auction off the advertising placements available on the website to advertisers who believe the visitor will be most relevant for their advertising message, a process that occurs in the fraction of a second it takes for the website to load for the online viewer.⁴

The adoption of programmatic advertising has been a double-edged sword for online news organisations. Programmatic advertising allows the same advertising placements to be auctioned to the highest bidder every time the website is visited, resulting in online news platforms becoming a more cost efficient alternative to the mass advertising media news platforms, such as television, radio and newspapers.

"The adoption of programmatic advertising has been a double-edged sword for online news organisations."

However this targeted auction process also increases competition for advertising revenue as programmatic advertising targets the individual based on what they are consuming rather than being tied to content they are viewing. The greater the number of programmatic advertising opportunities available, the less valuable those ad placements have become to advertisers.

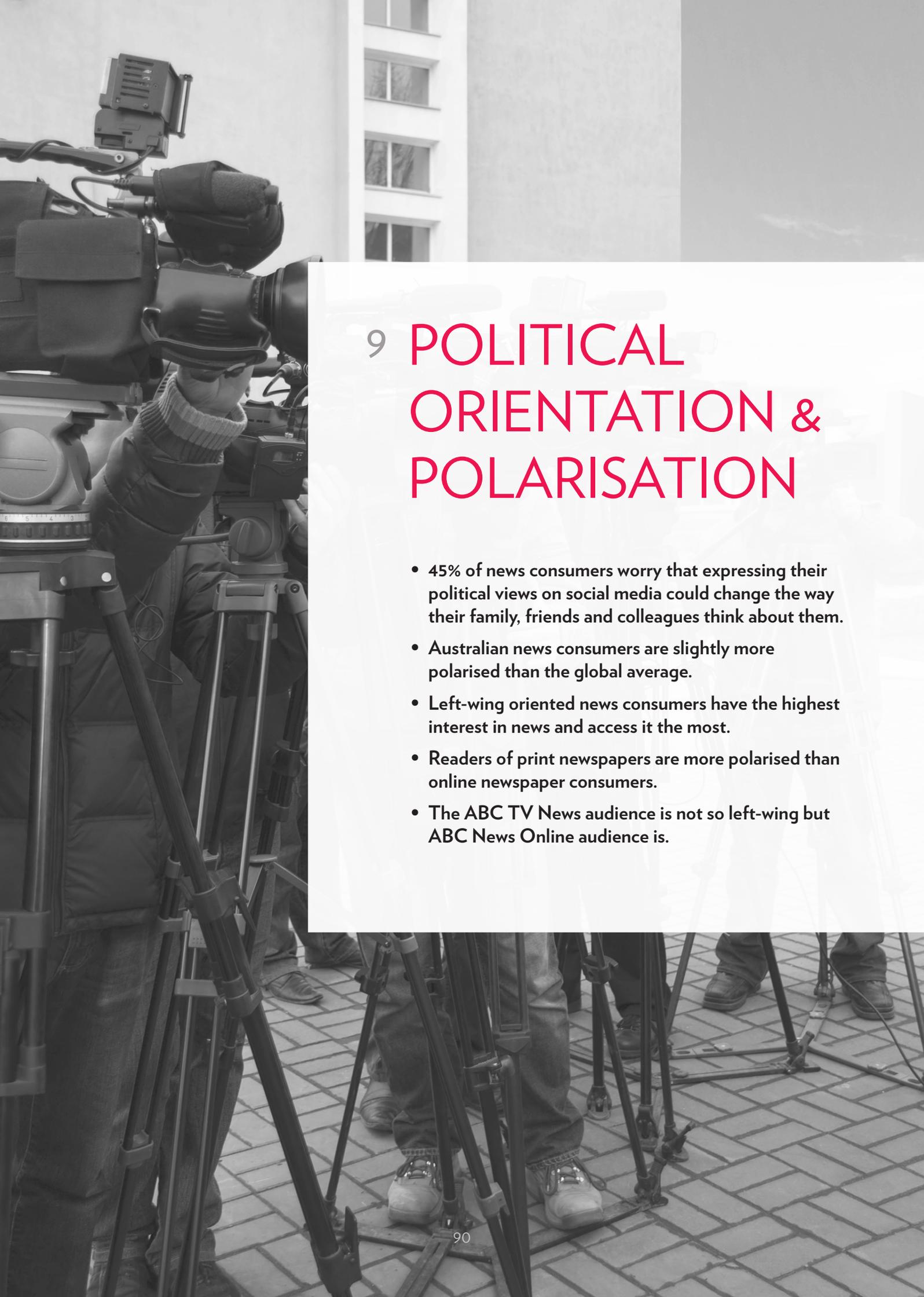
Online news platforms are no longer just competing with other news organisations where audiences may be but with any website that allows programmatic advertising that individual audiences are actually viewing online. These can include news aggregate sites that use the resources of other news platforms, click-bait sites and fake news sites.

“Online news platforms are no longer just competing with other news organisations where audiences may be but with any website that allows programmatic advertising that individual audiences are actually viewing online.”

Despite recent concerns about the role of programmatic advertising in supporting and encouraging the spread of fake news stories and efforts made by third party companies involved in facilitation of programmatic advertising to restrict advertising revenue provided to fake news sites,⁵ a recent study found that 75% of fake news stories viewed contained advertising, with the majority of the ad placements being provided by programmatic advertising.⁶

News organisations that endeavour to produce quality news content should be concerned that those exposed to poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait) were more likely to disagree with the idea of donating to news organisations, as this year’s data indicate.

With only 26.7% of all respondents being prepared to consider donating to news outlets, coupled with the decreasing revenue from advertising for news organisations and the increase of news consumers actively avoiding indirectly paying for news content through the use of ad-blocking software, the *Guardian’s* plea for donations may end up not being enough to ensure not only their commercial viability, but for all commercial news organisations that strive to produce quality news content—an outcome that can only impact the quality of news coverage for all Australians.



9 POLITICAL ORIENTATION & POLARISATION

- 45% of news consumers worry that expressing their political views on social media could change the way their family, friends and colleagues think about them.
- Australian news consumers are slightly more polarised than the global average.
- Left-wing oriented news consumers have the highest interest in news and access it the most.
- Readers of print newspapers are more polarised than online newspaper consumers.
- The ABC TV News audience is not so left-wing but ABC News Online audience is.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF AUSTRALIAN NEWS CONSUMERS

In this year's survey we have taken a closer look at the relationship between the way Australians consume news and their political orientation.

The survey participants were asked to identify themselves along the political spectrum from very left-wing to very right-wing. On the 'left' side of the political spectrum 24% identified as being 'very' or 'fairly' left-wing.

On the 'right' side of the spectrum 17% identified as either 'very' or 'fairly' right-wing; and slightly more than half of Australian news consumers (60%) oriented themselves around the 'centre' of politics.

That group includes those who describe themselves as being either 'centre', 'slightly left-of-centre' or 'slightly right-of-centre' (see **figure 9.1**).



FIGURE 9.1: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS (%)

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? *Note: Respondents who answered don't know to Q1F were excluded.

AUSTRALIAN NEWS CONSUMERS MORE POLARISED THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE

Whilst the vast majority of participants identify as 'centre', 40% identify strongly with the left or right side of politics. This reflects a slightly higher degree of political

polarisation amongst Australian news consumers than the global average of the 37 countries surveyed (see Chapter 1).

PROFILE OF LEFT, CENTRE AND RIGHT NEWS CONSUMERS

When analysed across age, gender, education and income, some interesting trends emerge. News consumers who identify as fairly or very left-wing are more likely to be 25-34 years old (29%), female (56%), slightly more likely to have a post-graduate qualification (13%) than right-wing news consumers (7%), and be middle income earners.

News consumers who identify as being fairly or very right-wing are more likely to be aged 65+; male (56%), and equally likely to have low or high education and income levels.

News consumers who orient themselves around the centre of the political spectrum are more likely to be 35-54 years old, male (55%), less likely to have a university education, and slightly more likely to be low income earners.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION, ACCESS & INTEREST IN NEWS

The data shows that political orientation strongly relates to interest in and access of news. As **figure 9.2** demonstrates, news consumers who identify as left-wing have the highest interest in news, and also access it the most often. Centre oriented news consumers have the lowest interest in news

and access it less often than both left and right-wing news consumers. In relation to political news specifically, only 40% of those in the 'centre' are highly interested, compared to 60% of news users who identify as 'left' and 56% of those who identify as 'right'.

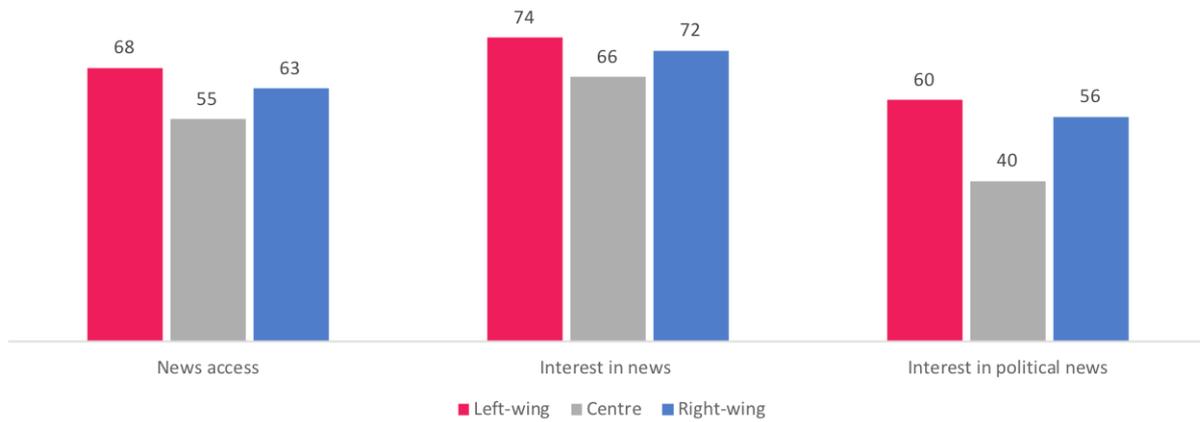


FIGURE 9.2: HIGH NEWS ACCESS, HIGH INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICAL NEWS BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION (% of those who access news more than once a day and are extremely/very interested in news and political news)

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? 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). 1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news about politics? [Base: All].

POLITICAL ORIENTATION & NEWS SOURCES

Participants were asked which sources they used in the last week. There was little difference between left-wing and right-wing oriented consumers in their access of traditional news platforms.

However, left-wing news consumers are more likely to access digital news sources – online and social media – than right-wing news consumers. See figure 9.3 for more information.

NEWS CONSUMERS WHO IDENTIFY AS **LEFT-WING** HAVE THE HIGHEST INTEREST IN NEWS AND ACCESS IT THE MOST OFTEN

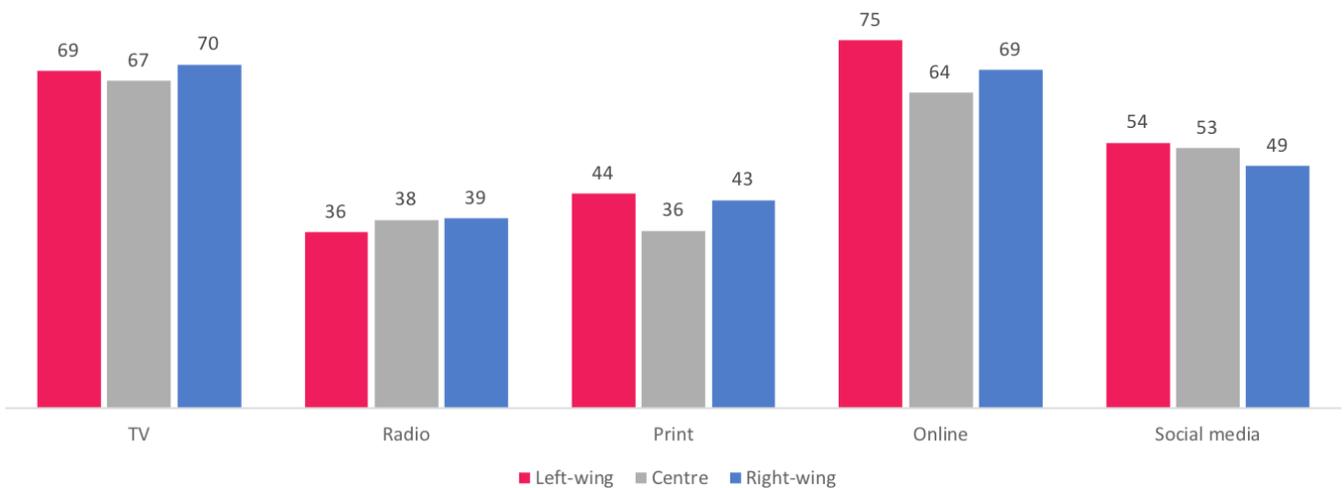


FIGURE 9.3: SOURCE OF NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

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? 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). 1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news about politics? [Base: All].

POLARISATION & NEWS BRANDS

Given concerns around increasing partisanship in the news media, particularly in the US, we analysed the news brands Australians used against their political orientation. Some expected and unexpected results emerged.

ABC TV NEWS CONSUMERS ARE BALANCED ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Commercial TV audiences more polarised than ABC

Despite strong perceptions of the ABC being left wing, **figure 9.4** shows the national broadcaster’s TV news attracts viewers evenly from across the political spectrum.

Contrary to perception that Fox News caters primarily to right-wing audiences, the data shows that left-wing consumers (7%) are only slightly less likely to watch it

than centre (9%) and right-wing consumers (10%). In contrast, there is much stronger polarisation amongst news consumers who use Channels 7, 9 and Sky News. They attract much a larger percentage of right-wing viewers than left-wing. More details are provided in **figure 9.4**.

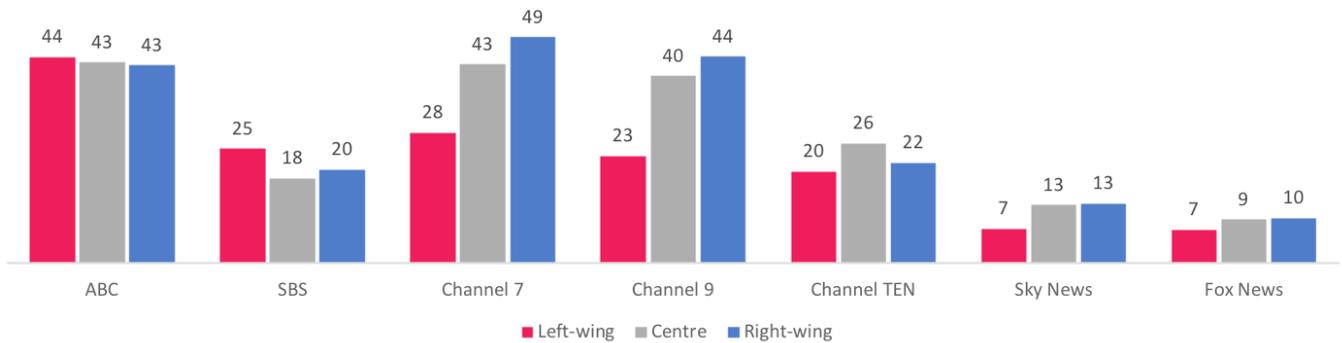


FIGURE 9.4: TV NEWS AND POLITICAL POLARISATION (%)

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? 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)? Please select all that apply.

Among print newspapers, some audiences are more polarized than others. The *Australian Financial Review*, *The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Courier Mail* and *The Advertiser* had higher proportion of left-wing readers (see **figure 9.5**). In contrast, right-wing oriented news

consumers are much more likely to read the local paper, the *Herald Sun* and *The Australian*. Readers of the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Courier Mail* are the least polarized of print newspaper consumers.

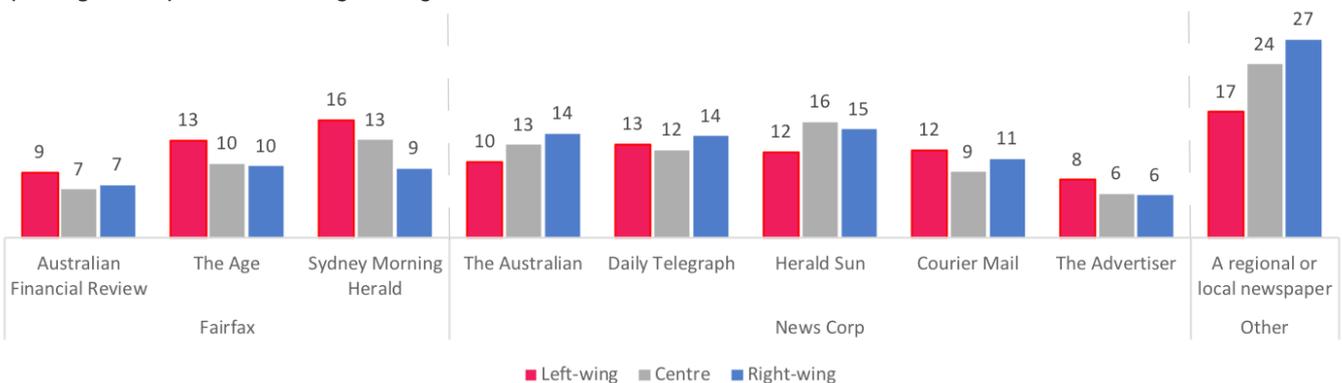


FIGURE 9.5: NEWSPAPER READERS’ POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

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? 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)? Please select all that apply.

“Readers of online newspapers are less polarized than print newspaper readers.”

However, online we see a different picture (see figure 9.6). Readers of online newspapers are less polarised than print newspaper readers. Consumers are much more evenly spread across the political spectrum for all online newspapers. However for the ABC, the opposite is true. Offline it attracts a cross-partisan audience, but online it leans strongly to the left.

In relation to the online versions of traditional offline brands, left-wing oriented news consumers are more likely to access online news sources than centre and right-wing news users. This is clearly demonstrated by the figures for ABC News Online, which attracts a much larger left-wing audience than its TV news service.

Only News.com.au, nine.com.au and Yahoo 7 attract significantly higher percentages of right-wing news consumers than centre or left. Interestingly, offline, *The Australian* newspaper attracts a slightly higher percentage of right-wing and centre readers (12%) than left-wing (10%), whereas online the audience is more evenly spread across the spectrum (see figures 9.6 and 9.7).

Online-only brands have the most polarised audiences

Consumers of online-only brands are the most polarised. Those who identify as left-wing are much more likely to use online-only brands than right-wing news consumers, particularly BuzzFeed News and The Conversation.

Right-wing oriented news consumers are bigger users of news.com.au and Yahoo!7. Perhaps most surprisingly, more left-wing oriented news users access the Liberal Party’s website The Fair Go, than news consumers who identify as centre or right-wing.

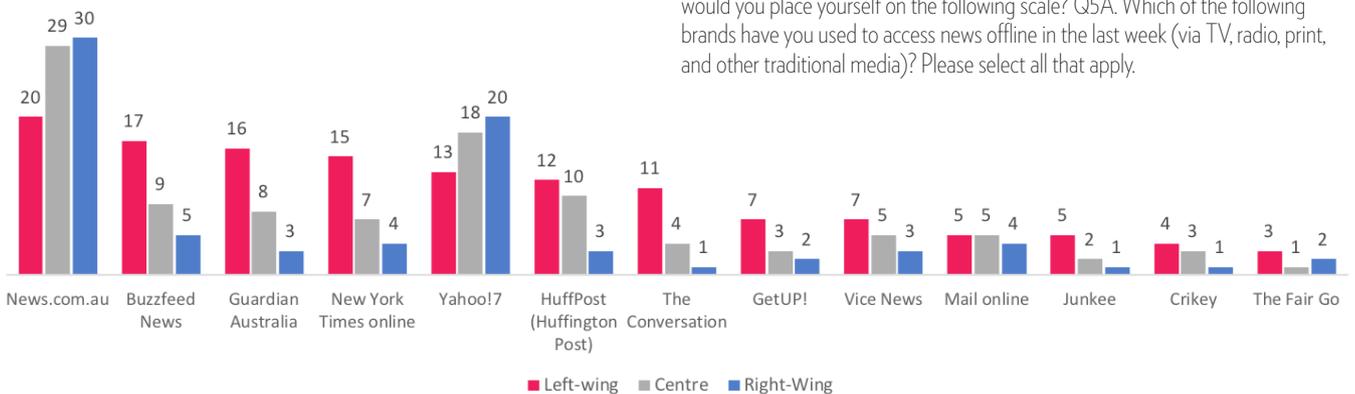


FIGURE 9.7: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY ONLINE ONLY BRANDS IN AUSTRALIA (%)

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? 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)? Please select all that apply.

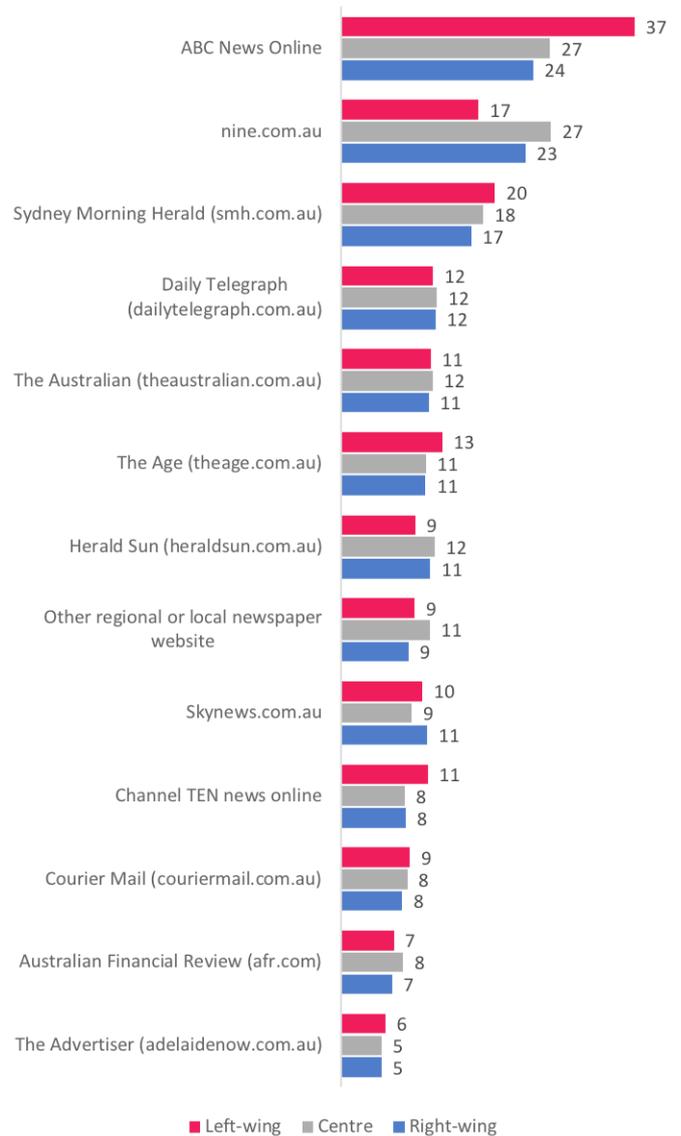


FIGURE 9.6: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY TRADITIONAL BRANDS (ONLINE) (%)

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? 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)? Please select all that apply.

Australians worry about expressing their political views on social media

Australians are worried about expressing their political views on social media. **Figure 9.8** shows that 41% of news consumers say they would think very carefully about expressing their political beliefs on social media

because it could get them in trouble with authorities; and 45% worry it could change the way their family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances could think about them.

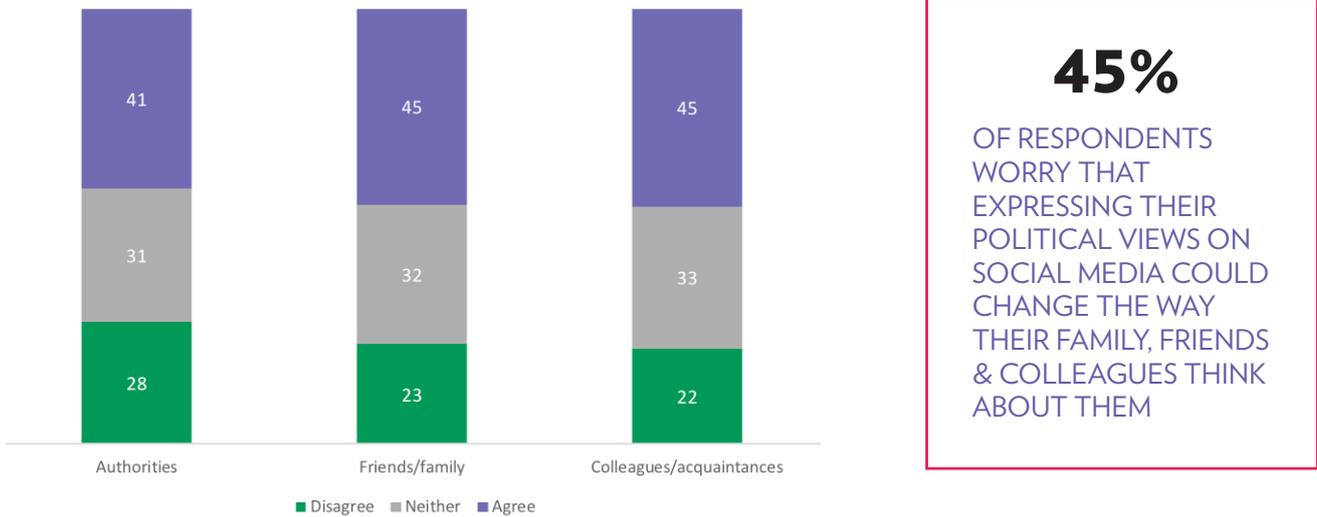


FIGURE 9.8: EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL VIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)

Q13a_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements [I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could get me into trouble with the authorities][I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make friends or family think differently about me][I tend to think carefully expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make work colleagues or other acquaintances think differently about me].

Interestingly, as **figure 9.9** reveals, those who identify as left-wing are more reluctant to express their political beliefs on social media because it could change the way colleagues and acquaintances think about them; and or get them into trouble with authorities.

Left and right-wing oriented news consumers were equally concerned about the impact that expressing their political views might have on the way they are perceived by friends and family.

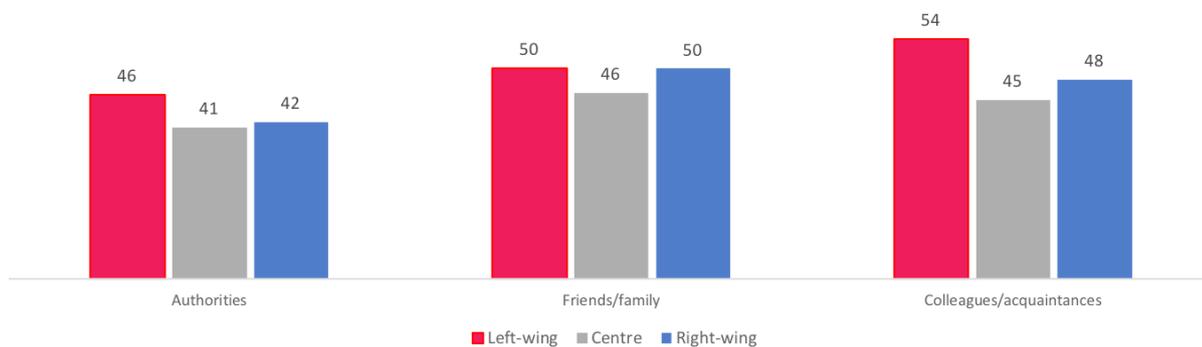


FIGURE 9.9: RELUCTANCE TO EXPRESS POLITICAL VIEWS AND POLITICAL ORIENTATIONS (%)

Q13a_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements [I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could get me into trouble with the authorities][I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make friends or family think differently about me][I tend to think carefully expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make work colleagues or other acquaintances think differently about me]. 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?

Younger people are also more worried about what others might think if they express their political views on social media (see **figure 9.10**). Among the 25-34 age group, 61% said they were careful about expressing their political views because this could make colleagues or acquaintances think differently about them. They were also worried about friends and family (58%) and authorities (57%).

There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, it might simply signal that for many young social media users who have a lower interest in news, they prefer to keep

social media ‘social’ and not a place for political debate. Alternatively, it might reflect that younger generations who are more active social media users are also aware of the openness of digital platforms and the impact one’s social media activity on one’s reputation.

Furthermore, because they are more active on social media they might also be aware of the combative nature of some social media networks where trolling and online abuse is quite common, and therefore they are choosing to keep their political views to themselves.

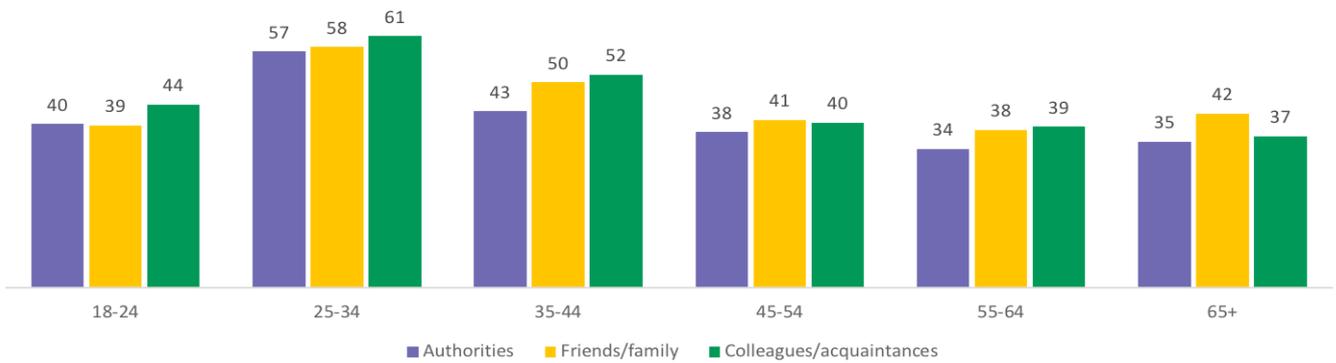


FIGURE 9.10: EXPRESSION OF POLITICAL VIEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY AGE (%)

Q13a_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements [I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could get me into trouble with the authorities][I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make friends or family think differently about me][I tend to think carefully expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make work colleagues or other acquaintances think differently about me].

Left-wing news consumers engage with online news more

Left-wing oriented news consumers engage with online news more than those who identify as centre and right-wing, as **figure 9.11** indicates. They are more likely to share a story and comment on it than right and centre oriented news consumers.

They also talk about news with others both face-to-face and online, more than news consumers who identify with the centre and right-wing of politics.

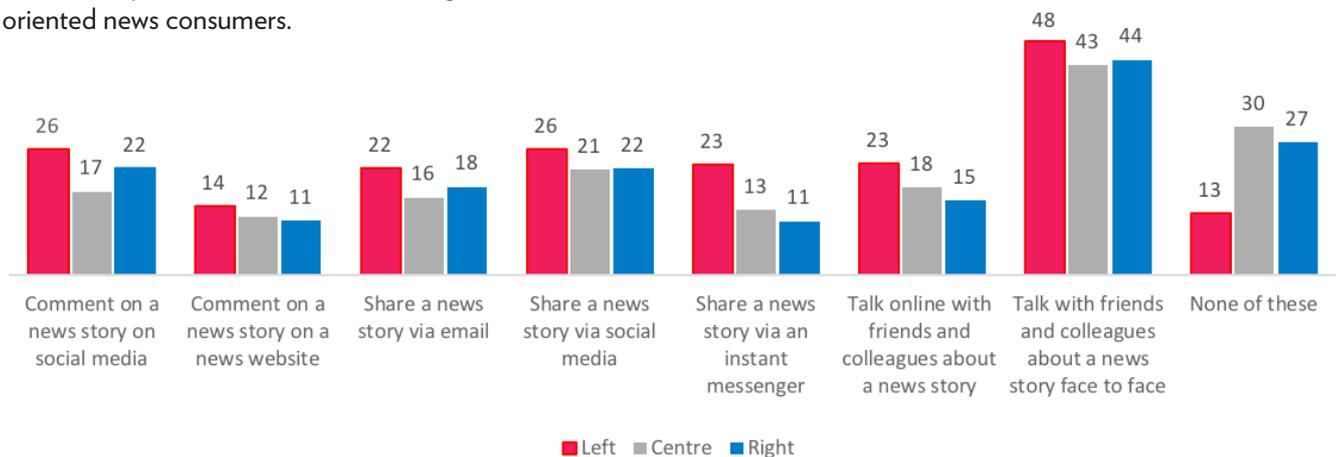


FIGURE 9.11: POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND SHARING NEWS (%)

Q13a_2018. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements [I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could get me into trouble with the authorities][I tend to think carefully about expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make friends or family think differently about me][I tend to think carefully expressing my political views openly on the internet because this could make work colleagues or other acquaintances think differently about me].

FOLLOWING POLITICIANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the ways people on social media express their political interests is by following politicians and political parties on social media. As shown in **figure 9.12**, there has been an 11% increase in the number of social news consumers subscribing to the direct feeds of politicians since 2016. This increase is in line with an overall rise in the use of social media for news.

22% OF SOCIAL MEDIA USERS FOLLOW POLITICIANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

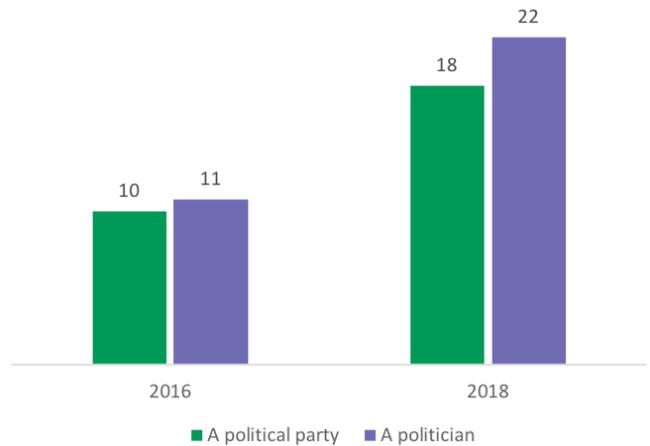


FIGURE 9.12: FOLLOWING POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL PARTIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA (%)

Q12_2018. When accessing news through social media like Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, have you subscribed to or followed any of the following? Please select all that apply. [A news organisation, a journalist, a political party, a politician, a campaigning group, None of these] [Base: All who have used a social media site for news in the last week based on responses to Q12B].

Figure 9.13 shows the rise in following of politicians and political parties is echoed across other groups. There has been an 11% increase in the number of those who follow news organisations, a 9% increase in those who follow journalists, and a 7% rise in following campaigning groups.

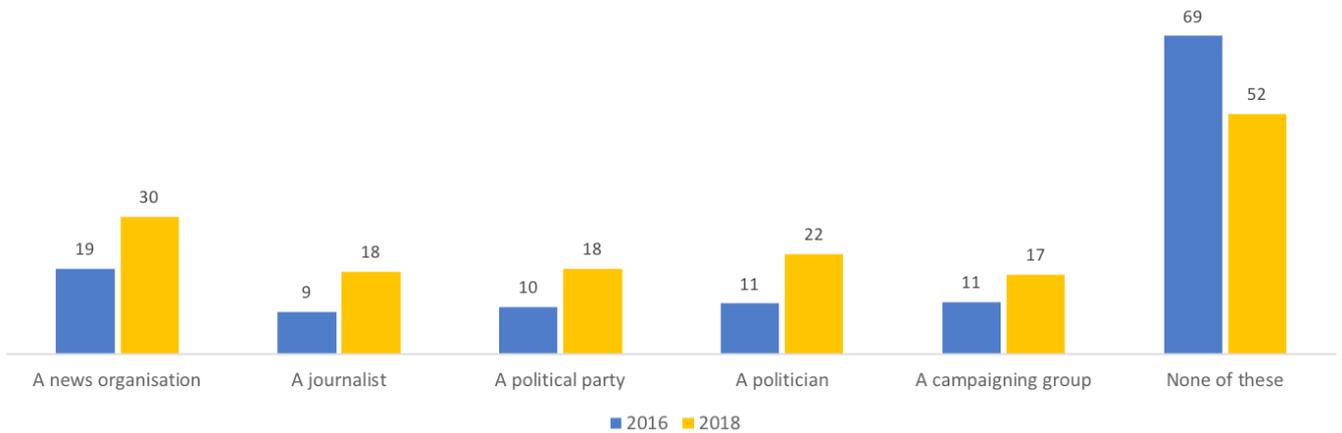


FIGURE 9.13: FOLLOWING (GENERAL) (%)

Q12_2018. When accessing news through social media like Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, have you subscribed to or followed any of the following? Please select all that apply. [A news organisation, a journalist, a political party, a politician, a campaigning group, none of these] [Base: All who have used a social media site for news in the last week].

As observed in last year’s survey, there is a strong correlation between political orientation and following politicians on social media. Those who identify as fairly or very left-wing and fairly or very right-wing are much more likely to follow politicians and parties than those who identify with the ‘centre’ of politics (see **figure 9.14**).

FOLLOWING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

LEFT-WING > **RIGHT-WING**

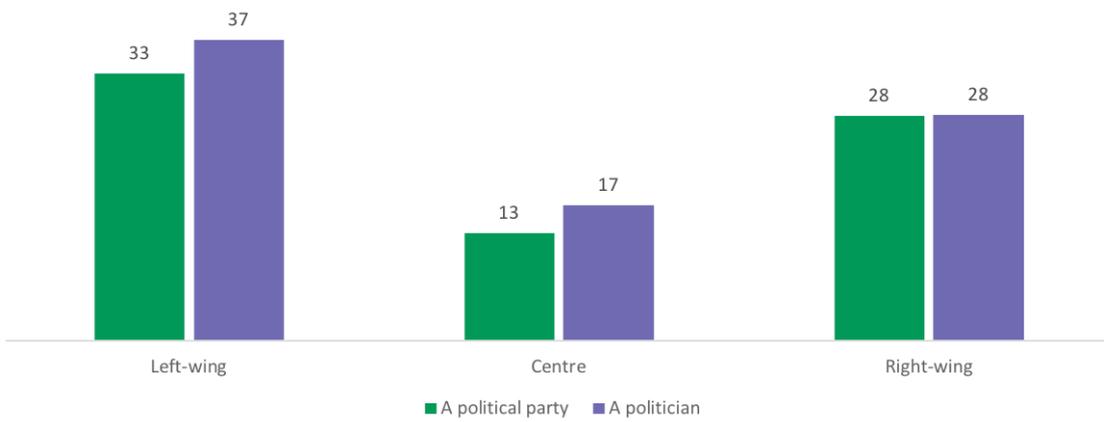


FIGURE 9.14: FOLLOWING POLITICIANS ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

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? Q12_2018. When accessing news through social media like Facebook, YouTube or Twitter, have you subscribed to or followed any of the following? Please select all that apply. [A news organisation, a journalist, a political party, a politician, a campaigning group, None of these].

Those who follow politicians and political parties on social media are much more likely to be male (24%) than female (14%), 25-30 years old and have some university or postgraduate education (approx. 25%). They are also more likely to be middle income earners, who access news several times a day, have a high interest in news generally and political news specifically.

While they access news via their mobile phone and tablet, their main source of news is more likely to still be TV or newspapers. They have higher news literacy and are also much more likely to have higher general trust in news, than those who do not follow.

As figure 9.15 shows, those who follow politicians and political parties on social media also tend to access news by an average of five different news platforms, and an average of 11 different news brands, which is significantly higher than those who do not follow.

FOLLOWERS CONSUME AN AVERAGE OF **11** NEWS BRANDS

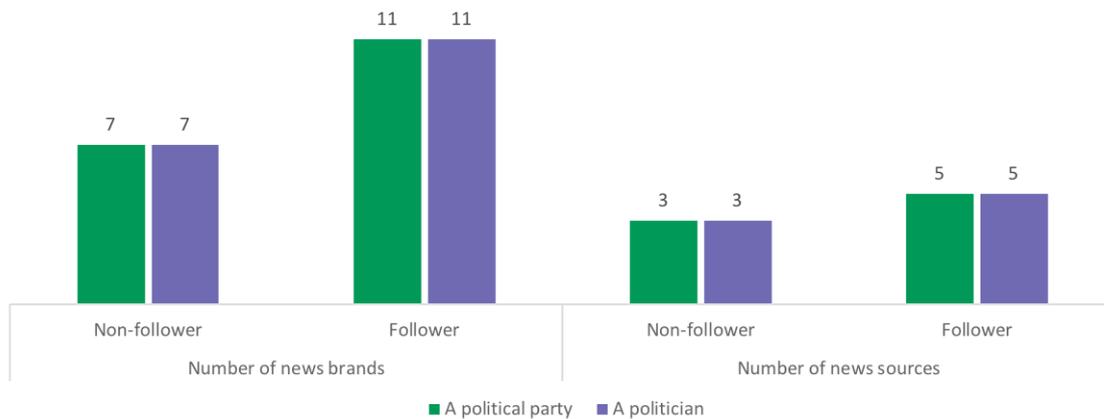


FIGURE 9.15: AVERAGE NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS AND NEWS PLATFORMS USED BY FOLLOWERS AND NON-FOLLOWERS (%)

Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last wee as a source of news? Please select all that apply. 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)? Please select all that apply. 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)? Please select all that apply.

DISCUSSION

One of the most interesting findings is that Australian news consumers, particularly younger Australians, are reluctant to express their political views on social media. If they do, they are worried it could change the way their family, friends and colleagues could think about them. The level of worry is higher in Australia than in other countries. Why?

One possible interpretation could be that Australians are early adopters of social media and heavy users of it, especially younger people. Because of this they understand the online environment, and are aware of trolling and how combative it can be. Therefore they might opt to not reveal their political beliefs to avoid attracting negative responses online. Their familiarity with social media might also mean they are more careful about managing their reputation online. Alternatively, they might simply want to preserve social media for social interaction and not spoil it by engaging in political discussion.

The data also shows strong partisan identification by Australian news users with particular news brands on both sides of the political spectrum. Polarisation is reflected most clearly in the readers of print newspapers and viewers of commercial TV. Right-wing oriented consumers are more likely to read the Australian newspaper and watch news on Channel 9 or 7. In contrast, those who identify as left-wing are more likely to read Fairfax papers and watch SBS. Interestingly, ABC TV News attracts a strongly cross-partisan audience, but ABC News Online attracts a heavily left-wing audience.

This shift in orientation of the audience from offline to online is reflected across all traditional news brands. Generally speaking, the consumers of digital versions of newspapers and TV news are less polarised. There are a larger number of left and centre consumers of these traditional brands online flattening the polarisation seen offline.

However, polarization returns amongst the consumers of online-only brands such as Huffington Post, Guardian Australia and BuzzFeed News. The majority of these online only brands attract strong left-wing audiences, with the exception of consumers of news.com.au and Yahoo!7 which are more right-wing. The dominance of left-wing news consumers using online-only news sites partly reflects that left-wing oriented news consumers are more interested in news and access it more frequently.

COMMENTARY

CHALLENGING DIGITAL EXCLUSION

Kerry McCallum

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The *Digital News Report: Australia* provides a valuable annual snapshot of news consumption across 37 nations. Now in its fourth year for Australia, the survey has become a staple for those of us invested in understanding the news habits of Australian news consumers.

Along with media professionals, advertisers and policymakers, Media Studies academics eagerly await the release of the *Digital News Report* figures to get a better handle on what people are doing with the news. Through the study of news consumption, we also glean insights into transformations in the news industries and how technological innovation is driving news consumption behaviours.

The *Digital News Report* survey uses a sophisticated online sampling strategy to capture a representative sample of news consumers. The survey examines variables of age, income, political orientation, education, and regional/urban location and investigates factors such as where and how people access media, trust in the news, and news sharing.

While surveys such as the *Digital News Report* provide a broad and generalizable representation of digital news consumption habits, they cannot capture the nuanced media practices of diverse communities of practice. Our research has been concerned with the news-related practices of groups not identified through the *Digital News Report*. A long history of scholarly research has investigated not just how people use news but the impacts of news content on individuals and communities.

“While surveys such as the *Digital News Report* provide a broad and generalizable representation of digital news consumption habits, they cannot capture the nuanced media practices of diverse communities of practice.”

Studies of discourse and framing can provide insights into news media’s role in privileging some voices over others and perpetuating existing societal power structures. Questions of trust in the news, for example, are so much more immediate for those who are by definition left outside of the mainstream news audience.

Holland’s ARC-funded research on Mediating Mental Health examines how mental health consumers, advocates and professionals respond and contribute to mental health news. This qualitative research provides an in-depth understanding of the various ways people experiencing mental distress feel marginalised by news reporting, the ways in which actors in the mental health field seek to bypass mainstream news organisations, and areas for improvement in news quality in terms of the topics covered, the sources privileged and the ways in which audiences are addressed.¹ It also provides insight into how journalists navigate reporting in this area in the context of pressures within the media industry and the affordances of digital media.²

McCallum and colleague’s work intersects with an emerging body of Indigenous-led research and practice that challenges dominant understandings of Indigenous representation in the news. Mapping what we term Indigenous Participatory Media, we show how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the nation are mobilising a range of media forms to reveal, resist and shift a dominant discourse steeped in ‘deficit’.³

Resisting the pervasive and powerful discourse of negativity that permeates news about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,⁴ new research is showing how diverse Indigenous media is building a culture of inclusivity, belonging and connection, giving Indigenous people a voice and reaffirming strengths in communities.⁵

These research projects open up possibilities for new research bringing together the findings of the *Digital News Report: Australia* with qualitative methodologies and critical perspectives on the news.

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BACKGROUND - DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: AUSTRALIA 2018

This is the fourth in a series of annual reports which tracks changes in news consumption in Australia over time – particularly within the digital space – in order to understand how offline and online media are used together. A particular emphasis is on news discovery via social networks and news consumption via mobile devices. The Australian study was conducted with approval from University of Canberra Human Research Ethics Committee SSD/CUREC1A/14-224.

The Australian survey forms part of a global study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Sponsors of this year's global study include Google, BBC Global News, Ofcom, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, Korea Press Foundation, Edelman UK, and academic sponsors at the Hans Bredow Institute, Hamburg, Navarra University in Spain, Roskilde University in Denmark, the School of Journalism at the Paris Institute of Political Science, and the University of Canberra, Australia.

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The News & Media Research Centre investigates the evolution of media, content and communication and the impact of online and mobile systems. Our core research themes are: **News Futures, Political and Public Engagement, Digital Health and Everyday Cultures.**

The Centre conducts both critical and applied projects with partners and institutions in Australia and internationally and hosts the Communication & Media section of *Analysis and Policy Observatory*.

More information at: www.canberra.edu.au/nmrc

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