



**NEWS AND WELLBEING:
OLDER GENERATIONS
AND NEWS
CONSUMPTION**

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AND NEWS CONSUMPTION**

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NEWS & MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

The News and Media Research Centre specialises in research exploring news consumption, the changing media environment, and the impacts of social and digital media on society. It is the home of the annual *Digital News Report Australia*.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report examines the connection between information and news consumption and the wellbeing of 562 older Australians living in the national capital, Canberra. It explores how their use and perceptions of news have changed over their lifetime and identifies some of the barriers and opportunities for older Canberrans to staying informed.

KEY FINDINGS

1. OLDER CANBERRANS ARE AMONG THE HIGHEST NEWS CONSUMERS IN THE COUNTRY.

The older Canberrans in this survey consume more news and are more interested in news than older Australians generally. Eighty three percent access news more than once a day which is much higher than the national average of 56% and 90% say they are very or extremely interested in news, compared to just 60% nationally¹. For older Canberrans international news is the most popular topic (80%), followed by local news (74%), weather (72%) and politics (72%).

2. TELEVISION IS THE MOST POPULAR SOURCE OF NEWS FOR OLDER CANBERRANS.

Almost all participants (95%) said they watch TV news, followed by radio (82%) and newspapers (81%). More than half (58%) get news from websites and just 18% access news via social media platforms. However, the survey highlights huge variation in news consumption and attitudes toward the news between age groups. Those in their 50s use online news sources more (90%) than those in their 80s (40%) and 90s (14%). People in their 80s are much more likely to use print newspapers (87%) compared to those in their 50s (52%). Those in their 50s are much more

¹National comparative data is drawn from the *Digital News Report: Australia 2020*

likely to access news via social media sites (68%) compared to just 6% of those in their 80s and 90s.

3. THERE IS HIGH CONFIDENCE WITH EMAIL BUT LOW CONFIDENCE WITH VIDEO APPS.

Email and information searching are the top online activities. Almost all of the participants use the internet for email (93%) and searching for general information (91%). Three-quarters do their banking online, two-thirds shop online and 69% access news via the internet. However, confidence conducting these activities is not as strong as the participation. Eighty-five per cent of respondents expressed high confidence in being able to email, but only 67% said they were very confident searching for information. Older Canberrans were least confident about playing online games, using social media platforms, and listening to podcasts. Only one-third said they were very confident using video chat applications like Skype or Zoom. However, confidence varies by age group. Those in their 80s and 90s have lower confidence across the majority of activities than other age groups, particularly in relation to instant messaging, video chat apps and social media.

4. PRIVACY CONCERNS ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO USING THE INTERNET.

For 41% of participants, concerns about privacy stop them from using the internet. A lack of assistance is a barrier for around

one-fifth of the older Canberrans surveyed (22%), followed by a lack of skills (14%). The type of barrier to online activity varies depending on the age group. Almost half of people aged 80+ said they were concerned about online privacy, compared to less than one-third of those in their 50s.

5. NEWS PROVIDES IMPORTANT SOCIAL CONNECTION.

The survey reveals that news plays a major role in older peoples' wellbeing. Almost two-thirds (63%) reported feeling more connected to the community when they access the news and a similar number (61%) said they feel isolated when they do not access the news. This is particularly true for women, heavy news consumers and those who have difficulty concentrating for long periods of time. Older Canberrans who think that news helps them feel more connected to their community are also more likely to engage in social activities. Those who are confident in maintaining a friendship and joining in community activities are also more likely to be heavy news users. Conversely, those who have difficulty maintaining friendships are the least likely to access a lot of news.

6. PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS ARE MORE LIKELY TO FEEL ISOLATED WITHOUT NEWS.

Canberrans who feel physically able are generally heavier news consumers than those who have moderate to high difficulty with a range of activities. The latter group are more

likely to say they feel isolated without access to news. This is particularly the case for older Canberrans who have trouble concentrating for long periods of time. For these people, news is also very important in helping to maintain a sense of connection to the wider community.

7. NEWS IS LESS RELEVANT AND TRUSTWORTHY THAN 10 YEARS AGO.

Older Canberrans think news is less relevant today than ten years ago. While the survey participants say they are consuming more news now than when they were younger, only 8% think the news is more trustworthy than in the past. In addition, older Canberrans trust news less than their peers nationally.

In the context of the COVID-19 outbreak and the Royal Commission into Aged Care, the findings in this report are particularly relevant to policy makers and service providers dealing with the needs and wellbeing of older Australians.

CONCLUSION

Older Canberrans are mostly confident online users with a big appetite for news. They are the most interested in news and consume more of it in comparison to Australian news consumers generally. However, this confidence is not uniform and highlights the diversity of digital literacy needs among older Canberrans across age groups.

Uniquely, this report highlights the important role that news plays in social connectedness and reducing feelings of isolation for elderly Canberrans. When asked if accessing the news helped them feel more connected to the community, almost two-thirds (63%) agreed. Around 60 per cent said they feel more isolated when they do not access the news. It also underscores the important role

of news as a source of common, shared information to discuss with friends and family, particularly for women and those with physical limitations. For older Canberrans with cognitive limitations, such as difficulty concentrating, access to news increases a sense of connection to community and the absence of news increases feelings of isolation. It will be fascinating to see how these findings compare to other parts of the country if we are able to expand this research in the future.

While the peak of the coronavirus may have passed, the need for ongoing social isolation measures continues, particularly for older people who are more vulnerable to serious illness from the virus. As a result, older Australians will continue to be more reliant on news as a source of information, entertainment, social connection and companionship.

Importantly, the report shows that people aged 70 and above are less inclined to use video streaming applications such as Zoom, Facetime or Skype. The survey shows these older Canberrans lack the confidence to do so. During social isolation these are important tools to maintain social contact and this is an area of skill development that needs more attention to help older Australians maintain their mental health and wellbeing during major health events such as COVID-19. Trying to teach older people how to use these applications has now been made much harder due to remote online learning. As a result, those who did not have those skills prior to social isolation measures were implemented

are socially disadvantaged. Given the ongoing nature of COVID-19, teaching these video chat skills should be a priority.

Recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aged Care also highlighted the need to improve the wellbeing of residents. Based on the findings in this report, ensuring good Internet connectivity, access to computers and quality news sources, plus training in the use of video chat applications could help improve social interaction for aged care residents by reducing feelings of isolation and increasing social connectedness.

Further, the report finds that older Canberrans deem the news to be less relevant and trustworthy than it was ten years ago. Older Canberrans are discerning news consumers who perceive a general reduction in editorial quality and coverage of stories that reflect their needs, plus a rise in opinion. Given the high level of news consumption by older Canberrans, these findings suggest more could be done to report on issues that speak to the needs and interests of this dedicated and highly engaged audience.

We hope the findings of this pilot study faithfully reflect the perspectives of the Canberra residents who participated, and that it is useful to industry and policy makers as they seek new ways forward to improve the wellbeing of older Australians.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of focus on young people's use of digital media and its impact on their information consumption, civic engagement and wellbeing. However, less attention has been paid to the news and information habits of older generations, how this has changed over time and what impact it has on their wellbeing and social connectedness.

This research project aims to help fill the gap in our understanding of the relationship between news consumption and older people's wellbeing. The first phase of this project examines the impact of news consumption on the health and wellbeing of older Canberrans; how news consumption has changed over their lifetime; and the barriers and opportunities for older Australians to stay informed.

The goal is to identify ways to reduce the barriers and improve opportunities for senior residents in the ACT to stay informed and connected. Evidence from this research will be provided to government and industry to inform policies that improve the quality of life for Canberra's ageing population. In the coming months we hope to expand this project to other parts of the country.



What is meant by wellbeing?

There is growing research into wellbeing, which includes physical and mental health, cognitive functioning and material wellbeing, among other indicators. A person's psychological or subjective wellbeing can be impacted by interrelated factors, such as life satisfaction and mood (Dodge, Daly and Sanders, 2012). These components are influenced by a range of issues such as autonomy, purpose in life, positive relationships with others and social connectedness.

Social connectedness is a multidimensional construct comprising three key components: socialising, social support and sense of belonging. It is seen as a "key contributor to overall quality of life and...important for health and wellbeing" (Rogers and Mitzner, 2017 p 135). Older people are recognised as being at higher risk of loneliness and social isolation (Frieling, Peach & Cording, 2018). In this study, wellbeing and social connectedness are understood in relation to participants' responses to questions about feelings of isolation, connection to community, engagement in a range of social activities and level of difficulty associated with a range of physical, learning and social activities.

BACKGROUND

Australia, like many other countries, has an aging population. Almost one third (7.9 million) are aged 50 and above, with the proportion of people aged 65 continuing to rise (ABS, 2018). While there is great diversity in the socioeconomic backgrounds, lifestyle, and digital experience of older Australians, many share common experiences. Aging comes with a range of life challenges including health, employment, and socialising. Older Australians also tend not to feel valued, and often feel that they don't have a voice in society (Newgate, 2018). Many older people may lack digital confidence and feel isolated from digital society as technologies are rapidly introduced into our daily lives. As a result, the way in which older Australians are adapting to changes in the media environment has become an area of growing interest and concern.

It is well established that a so-called 'digital divide' exists between older and younger generations. International research shows that younger generations are increasingly embracing new digital platforms and older citizens are largely maintaining use of more traditional and offline platforms such as television, newspapers, and radio (Ljuslinder & Lundgren, 2017; Mosberg Iversen, Blaakilde, Wilinska, & Sandvik, 2017; Nimrod, 2017; Westlund & Weibull, 2013). That

trend is echoed in Australia, as evidenced by the annual *Digital News Report: Australia* (Watkins, 2015; Watkins et al., 2016; Watkins et al., 2017; Park et al., 2018; Fisher et al., 2019). The report shows that younger people are increasingly relying on social media platforms for news, while older Australians are continuing to rely on legacy media.

Several studies have examined older people's media use and consumption habits. Some take a uses and gratifications approach to identify older people's motivations for using media and the needs that different media satisfy (Hofer, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 1982). This approach posits that people turn to media when their needs or desires cannot be met in other ways. Another area of research takes a life-span perspective to investigate the links between selective and compensatory media use and subjective wellbeing, social integration and subjective health (Hofer & Eden, 2020; Van Der Goot, Beentjes & Van Selm, 2006, 2015). Others deploy the idea of media repertoires or diets to investigate the set of media offerings older people use and the extent to which ICTs have displaced traditional media among this group (Nimrod, 2017). Research has shown, for example, that TV serves a variety of functions for older people: as a means of isolation reduction, companionship, communication

substitution, social and parasocial interaction, time consumption, ordering the day and connection to the surrounding environment (Rubin & Rubin, 1982). Newspapers have also been described as a “substitute for decreasing social contacts” and there is some evidence that older adults’ use of newspapers may facilitate interpersonal communication in as much as it keeps them updated, although this also depends on having social contacts to interact with (Hofer, 2017, p. 389).

While older people are regularly framed as belonging to a ‘mass-media media generation’ (Hepp, Berg, & Roitsch, 2017), the research also shows that older generations are increasingly embracing online opportunities, which has been accompanied by concern about digital skills. Caution is needed in regard to drawing conclusions about patterns of media use based on age alone (van der Goot, 2016) and to appreciate the diversity of older media audiences and users (Mares & Woodard, 2006). Research conducted for National Seniors Australia challenges the perceived stereotype that seniors struggle with digital media literacy and highlights heterogeneity among older Australians in their digital interactions (Maccora et al., 2019). Research also shows that older Australians are excited about the opportunities created by digital media, but also frustrated about assumptions that are made about them and their desire to participate (YourLink, 2019). At the same time, this study also found that 64% of seniors rated their confidence with technology as less than 5 out of 10.

The 2019 Australian Digital Inclusion Index identifies those aged 65+ as the least

digitally included age group, with inclusion diminishing as age increases (Thomas et al., 2019). Research also shows that older generations, in general, have lower digital news literacy and are more concerned about and vulnerable to fake news (Park et al., 2018). As news consumption is increasingly occurring via digital platforms, the inability to fully engage with digital technology is a barrier to accessing news and participating in society. In this context, efforts are underway to improve the digital literacy skills of older Australians, and studies have been conducted to examine what interventions can be used to increase elderly online participation (Poscia et al., 2018). Jones et al. (2015) found that using volunteers to train older citizens to use the internet led to an increase in social contact for participants.

In addition, studies into varied consumption habits across generations discovered that the use of different media technologies has a social impact (Tapscott, 2008). Some have raised concerns that the growing use of digital technologies for information is dividing the community and leading people into information filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2018).

There is also recognition of the impact news and media can have on a person’s mood. With an explicit focus on young people, research has examined the impact of constantly being online and the resultant ‘fear of missing out’ on mental health and wellbeing (Vorderer et al., 2016; Hefner et al., 2018; O’Connell, 2020; Steele et al., 2020). During times of social and personal stress, individuals are encouraged to turn off the news to avoid the steady diet of

negative information which has been shown to increase worry and anxious thoughts (Bodas, Siman-Tov, Peleg, & Solomon, 2015; Johnston & Davey, 1997). The impact of negative news on people's wellbeing was highlighted in a recent Australian study of news consumption during the coronavirus pandemic (Park, Fisher, Lee, & McGuinness, 2020). Park et al. (2020) found more than half of news consumers experienced increased anxiety in response to the volume of news about the negative health and economic effects of COVID-19. For approximately one-quarter of Australian news consumers, it also found that stories about the health pandemic helped reduce feelings of isolation during social distancing restrictions and provided an important source of information to share with friends, family and colleagues, particularly for people living on their own, many of whom were elderly (Park, Fisher, Lee, & McGuinness, 2020).

Further, research into media portrayals of older people identifies a wide range of frames from healthy and active ageing through to depictions of elderly people as frail and an economic burden headed for the care home (Jolanki, 2009; Jönson & Jönsson, 2015; Rozanova Miller & Wetle, 2016). However, little attention is paid to the relevance of the news and media content to the lives of older people. Overall, research focussing on the impact of news and media consumption on older generations is limited and is yet to consider the particular impact of news and media consumption on older people's wellbeing, particularly within Australia. This initial Canberra-based study aims to help fill this gap in news consumption research and lay the foundation for wider national and international studies.



METHOD

This report documents findings from a survey of Canberrans aged 50 and older (N=562). The survey was sent to the 1200 members of a local advocacy group for older Canberrans, called the Council on the Ageing ACT (COTA ACT). It was sent in May 2019 via COTA's email newsletter and a print version was posted to members with a prepaid return envelope. There was a 50% response rate (596 surveys), of which we used the 562 completed responses. These comprised 118 online responses and 478 paper surveys. Participants were asked about their level of social activity, physical wellbeing and news consumption habits. (See the Appendix for a copy of the survey questionnaire).

The survey participants were also asked if they were willing to be interviewed to explore some of the issues in more depth. There was a very positive response. An initial ten interviews were conducted with participants from each age group (50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s). Quotes from these interviews feature in this report and reflect some of the variety of sentiment about news. The interviews are ongoing and will serve to further elaborate the role and significance of news in the everyday lives of older Canberrans.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Of the respondents, 43% were male and 57% were female. The age distribution in the survey is not representative of the population of older people in Canberra. A higher proportion of people in their 70s and 80s filled out the survey than those aged in their 50s and 60s. This is a likely reflection that many people in their 50s and 60s are still working and therefore have less time to fill out the survey, compared to people in their 70s, 80s and 90s who are less likely to be in fulltime employment (see Table 1).

>>

Table 1. Respondent demographics

		N	%
Gender	Male	239	43
	Female	324	58
Age	50s	31	6
	60s	102	18
	70s	227	40
	80s	171	30
	90s	32	6
Education	Primary education	6	1
	High School (Yr 10)	54	10
	Upper secondary education (Yr 12)	83	15
	Bachelors or equivalent level degree	225	40
	Postgraduate degree	170	30
	Prefer not to answer	25	4
Employment	Full-time	25	4
	Part-time	38	7
	Retired	434	77
	In unpaid position	21	4
	Other	6	1
	Prefer not to answer	39	7
Income	Under \$50,000 per year	168	30
	\$50,000 to \$99,999 per year	199	35
	\$100,000 and over	122	22
	Prefer not to answer	74	13
Total		563	100

Nearly three-quarters (70%) have university education. More than half (40%) have undergraduate education, with one-third (30%) holding a post graduate qualification. This is much higher than the ACT average of 37% and the Australian average of 22% (ABS 2016 Census)². This reflects the cohort of participants is more educated than the general community.

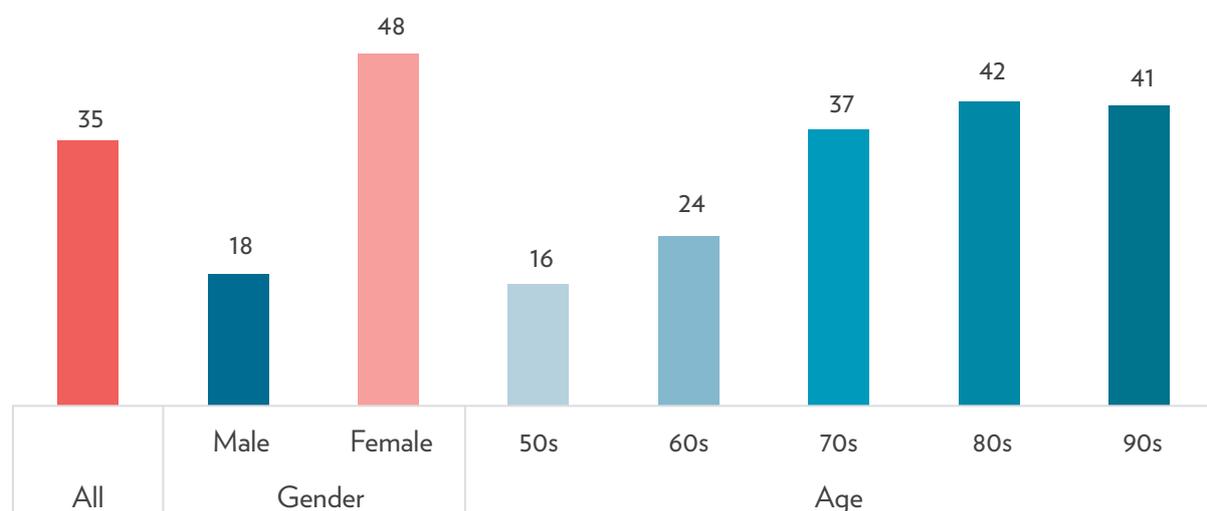
A majority (77%) are retired, and more than half (55%) earn \$50,000 and over per year. People in the ACT also have the highest average earnings in Australia \$1,517.00 pw compared \$1,288.00 nationally. In the age bracket 55+, the gap is slightly larger with ACT employees earning \$1,605 per week compared to the national average of \$1,373³.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Slightly more than one-third (35%) of survey participants live on their own, 48% of whom are women. Those in their 80s and 90s are more likely to be living alone (see Figure 1). Almost two-thirds (65%) live with others. That includes 52% living with a spouse, 10% who live in a retirement community, 8% living with their adult children, 2% who live with children under the age of 18, 1% living with grandchildren and 1% who live with housemate(s).

>>

Figure 1. Living alone by age and gender (%)



² https://quickstats.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quickstat/CED801

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6306.0Main+Features1May%202018?OpenDocument>



SECTION

01.



**INTERNET
USE**

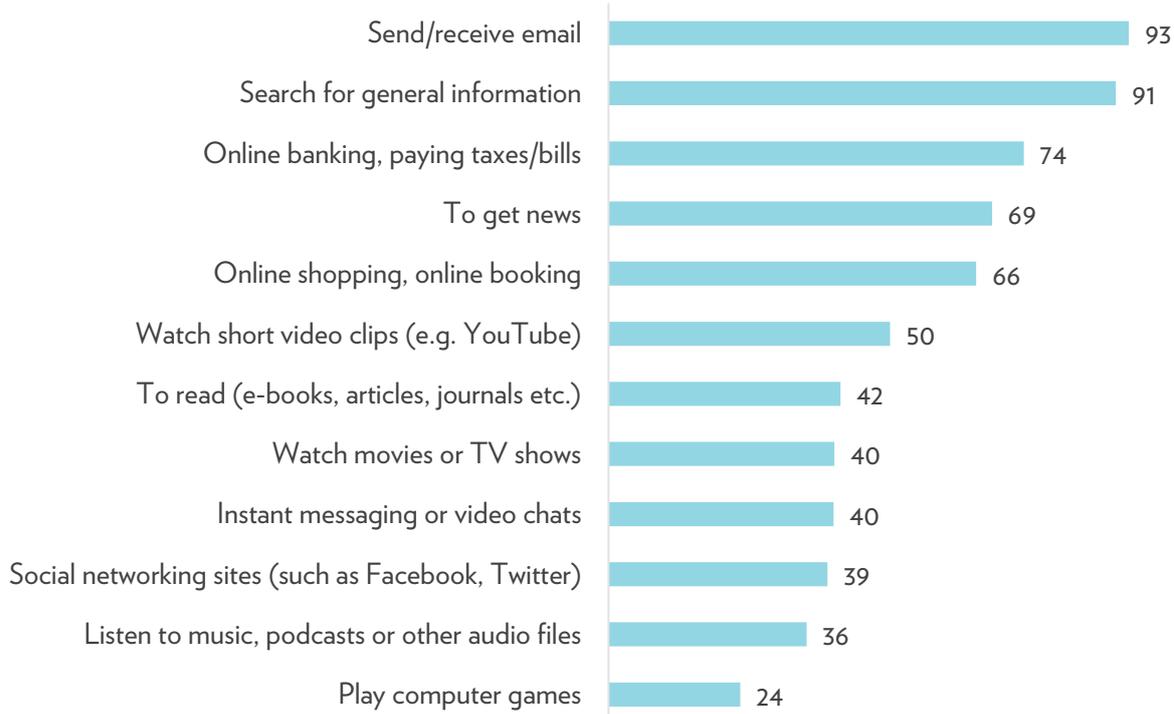
We asked the survey participants a range of questions about how and when they use the internet and whether there were any obstacles preventing them from doing so.

Only 5% of survey participants said they did not have access to the internet, meaning 95% do have internet access. This is higher than the national internet penetration rate of 88%⁴. Participants mainly use the internet for email (93%), searching for general information (91%), online banking (74%), accessing news (69%) and online shopping (66%).

They are much less likely to use the internet for watching television or movies and to use video chat and messaging applications like Skype, Facebook Messenger or Zoom (see Figure 2). In the context of social isolation and the COVID-19 pandemic, this is important.

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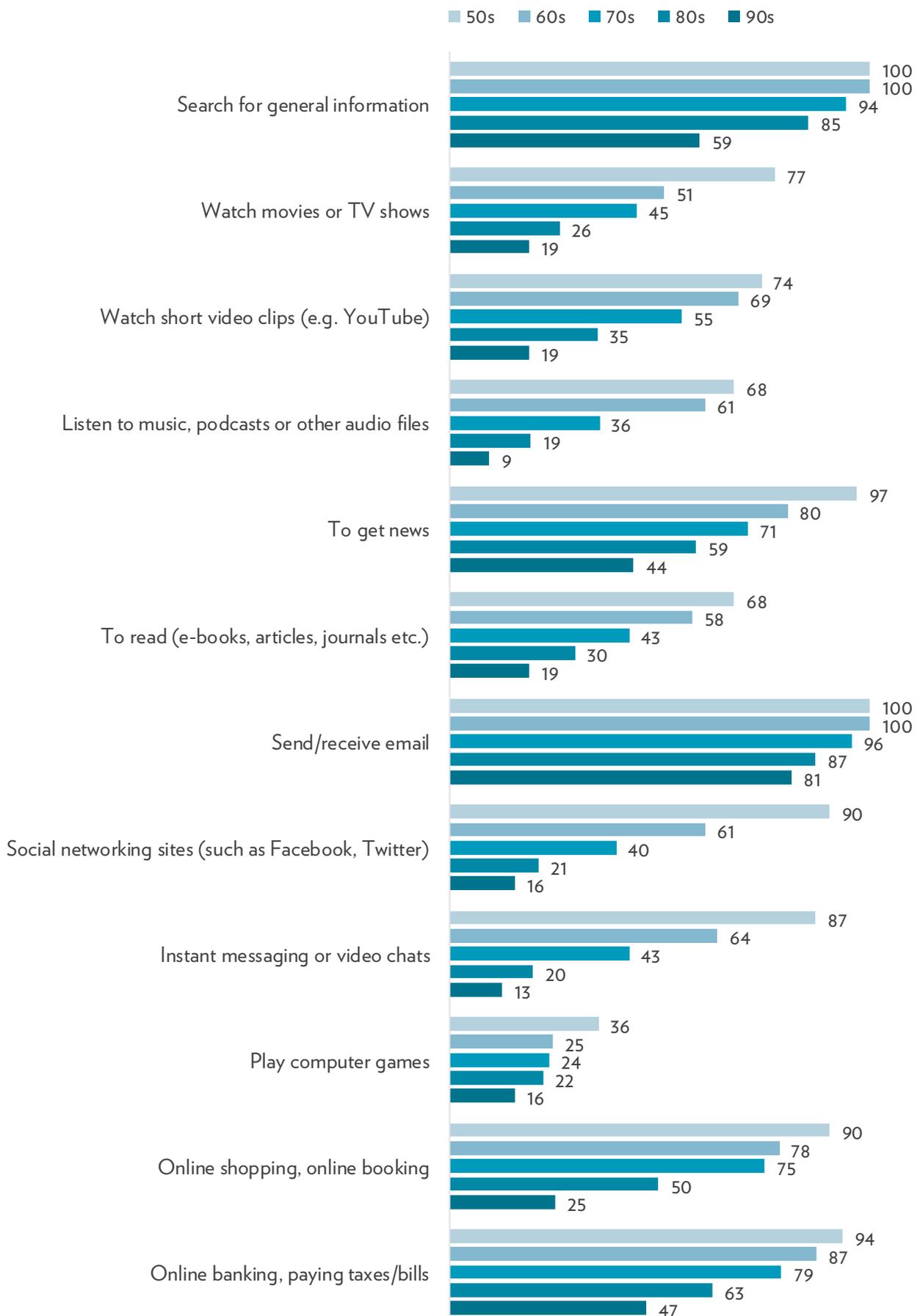
Figure 2. Internet use for a range of activities (%)



However, internet use for these activities differs between age groups. Figure 3 shows the majority of Canberrans surveyed in their 50s use the internet for the full range of activities listed, but this drops off significantly by each decade. While almost all email and search for information online, less than half of those aged 70+ use the internet to watch TV

and video and around 20% of those in their 80s use social media and video messaging apps, even fewer in their 90s. A quarter of those aged 90+ use the internet for online shopping and less than half for banking compared to more than 90% of participants in their 50s.

⁴ <https://prosperitymedia.com.au/australian-internet-statistics-2020/>

**Figure 3. Internet use for following activities by age group (%)**

Q6. Do you use the internet for any of the following activities? Please include online activities on all of your devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones. Please select all that apply.

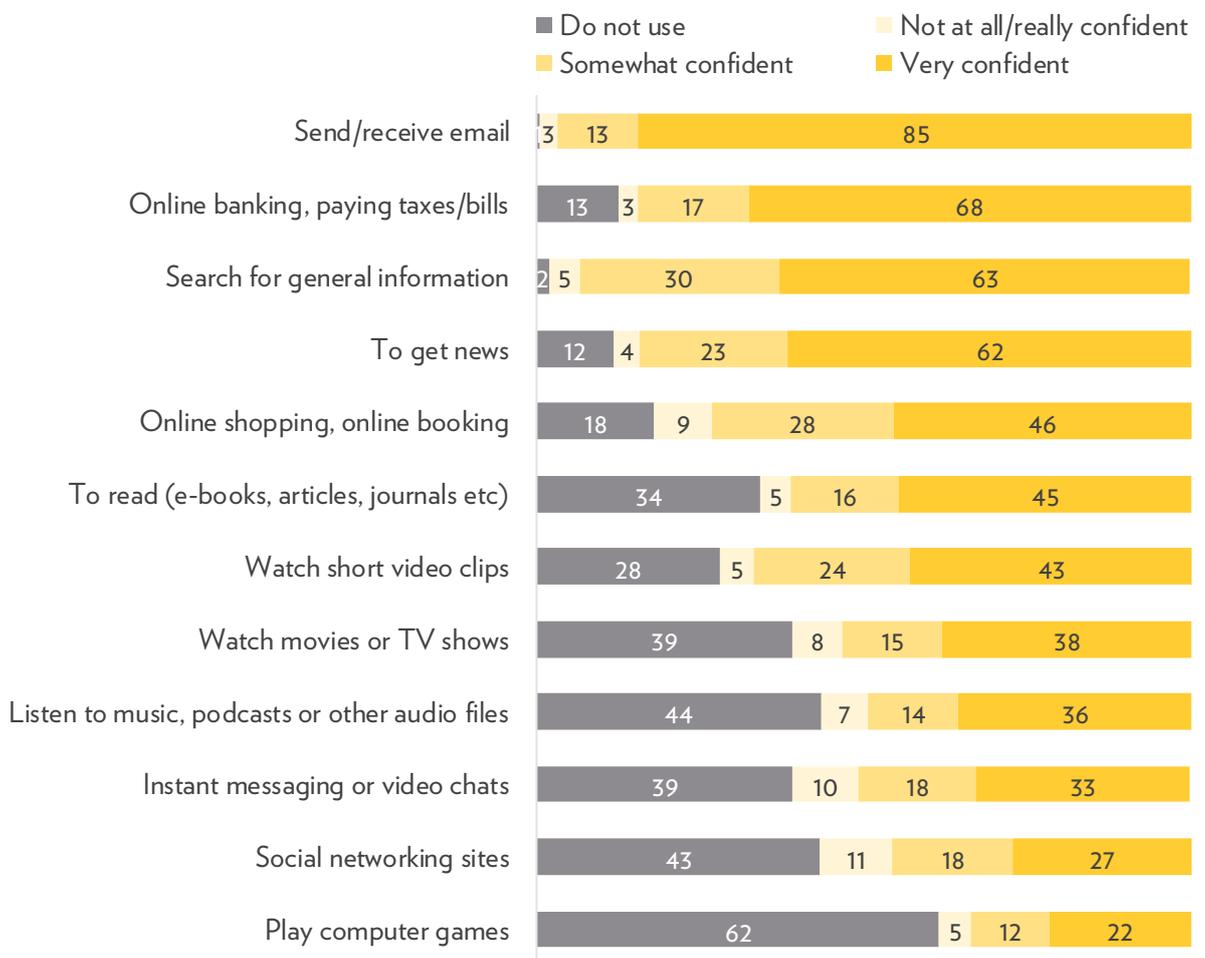
CONFIDENCE USING THE INTERNET

Participants expressed high confidence in being able to use email (85%), but only slightly more than two-thirds (68%) said they were very confident searching for information on the internet. They were least confident about playing online games, using social media platforms, listening to podcasts, and using video chat applications like Skype (see Figure 4). While only small numbers of participants said they were ‘not confident’ doing these activities, a larger number said they were only ‘somewhat’ confident, which

implies their confidence could be improved. The remainder said they did not use the internet for any of these purposes. It is possible that non-use could be linked to lack of interest and confidence and knowledge of how to do those activities. In relation to video messaging apps specifically, one-third said they were very confident, 18% were somewhat confident, 10% not confident, and 39% said they did not use them. This suggests two-thirds of respondents could benefit from training to use these video conversation tools.



Figure 4. Confidence using the internet for a range of activities (%)



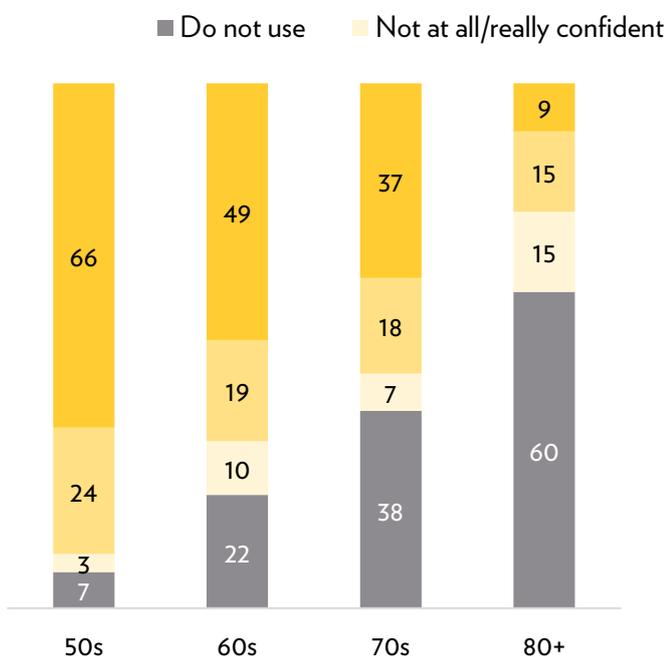
Q7. How confident are you in doing these online activities: Do not use, Not confident at all, Not really confident, Somewhat confident, Very confident. *Total may not add up to 100 due to rounding

The levels of confidence vary with age. Figures 5a and 5b. show the level of confidence of participants by age in relation to using video chat and messaging apps and social media platforms. Those aged in their 80s and 90s have lower confidence than other age groups for both instant messaging, video chat apps and social media. In relation to messaging apps and video chat tools specifically, two-thirds of participants in their 50s said they were very confident using messaging and video chat tools, compared

to just 9% in their 80s and 90s (see figure 5a). In contrast, 60% of those aged 80+ said they did not use messaging apps and social media, compared to just 7% of people in their 50s. Across all age groups, up to one-quarter said they were somewhat confident, suggesting additional support might be valuable for these older Canberrans as well as for those with low to know confidence, and those who are yet to use these tools.

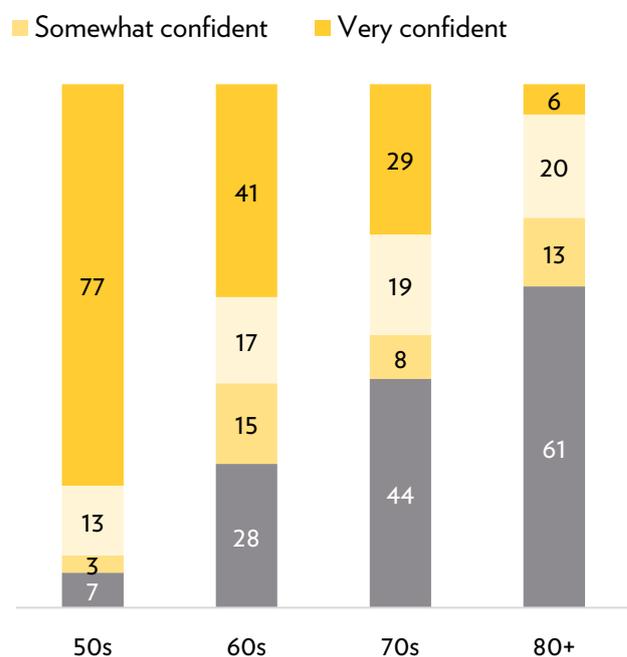
>>

Figure 5a. Confidence using messaging apps and video chat by age group (%)



>>

Figure 5b. Confidence using social media by age group (%)



A similar pattern in confidence levels can be seen in relation to using social media platforms. More than three-quarters of those in their 50s said they were very confident using social media compared to only 6% of people in their 80s and 90s. However, 15% of

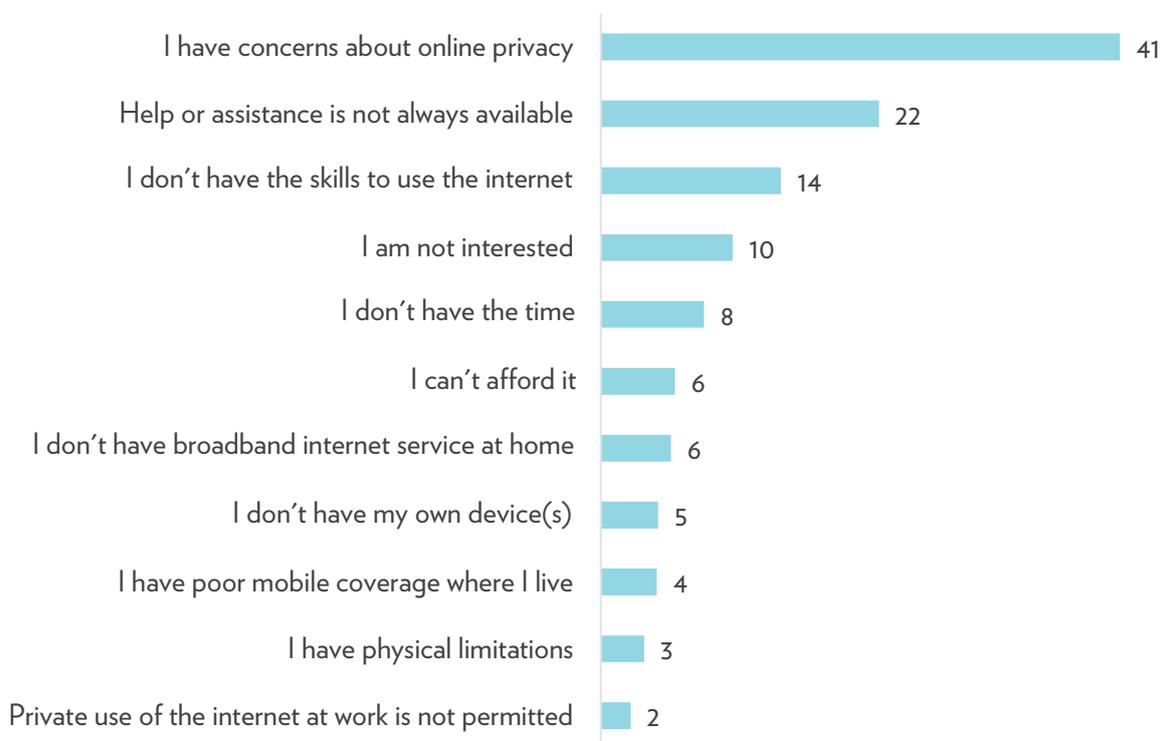
participants in their 60s were not confident, compared to 8% in their 70s. This variety highlights the diversity of digital literacy needs among older Canberrans across the generations.

BARRIERS TO USING THE INTERNET

Concern about online privacy was identified as the biggest barrier to using the internet by the older Canberrans in the survey (see Figure 6). Forty one percent said concerns about privacy stopped them from using the internet, followed by a lack of assistance (22%) and a lack of skills (14%). Only 6% said they did not have access to the internet at home or could not afford it. This is lower than the national average of 9.6% or 2.5million Australians who have no internet connection (ABS) ⁵.

>>

Figure 6. Barrier to using the internet (%)

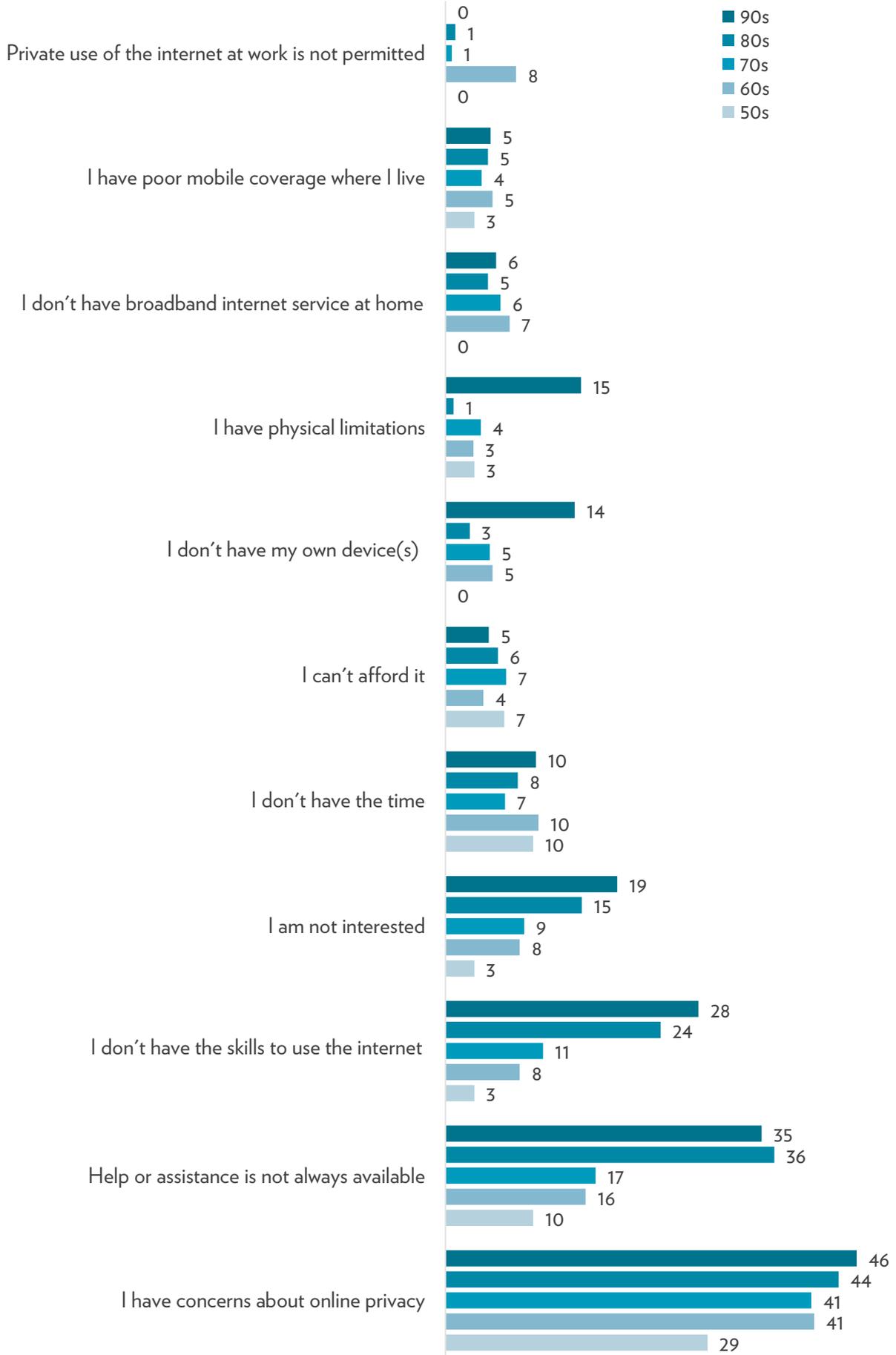


Q9. How much of the following prevents you from accessing or using the internet? Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Significantly

Concern about online privacy increases with age (see Figure 7). Those in their 50s were much less concerned than those aged 60 and above. This reflects that younger Canberrans are more accustomed to the culture of online commerce than consumers in older age groups.

Lack of assistance was an issue for more than one-third of Canberrans aged 80+ compared to just 10% of those in their 50s and around 16% for those in their 60s and 70s. This highlights the existence of need for support across all age groups, not just those in their 80s and 90s.

⁵ <https://theconversation.com/australias-digital-divide-is-not-going-away-91834>

**Figure 7. Barriers to using the internet by age group (%)**

Q9. How much of the following prevents you from accessing or using the internet? Not at all, Slightly, Moderately, Significantly.



SECTION

02.



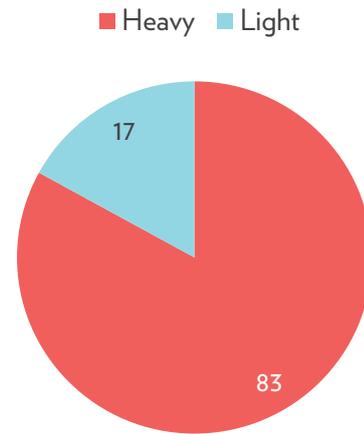
**NEWS
CONSUMPTION**

Survey participants were asked a range of questions about the type of news they consume, how often and how they perceive the quality of news.

FREQUENCY OF NEWS ACCESS

Older Canberrans are among the heaviest news consumers in the country (see Figure 8). More than 80% said they accessed news more than once a day, and only 17% said they accessed news once a day or less. In contrast, the *Digital News Report: Australia 2020* found only 56% of Australian news consumers are ‘heavy’ news users who access news once a day or more. High news use is associated with higher levels of education and income. Given the ACT has the highest proportion of tertiary educated and high-income residents, many of whom who work in the public service and education sector, this finding is not surprising.

>> **Figure 8. Frequency of news access (%)**



Q10. Typically, how often do you watch, read or listen to the news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online). *excluded ‘never’/‘don’t know’ (7) responses

>> **Figure 9. Frequency of news access by age group (%)**



Q10. Typically, how often do you watch, read or listen to the news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online).

Interestingly the highest news consumers in this survey of older Canberrans were those aged in their 50s (see Figure 9). This likely reflects these ACT residents are still working and need to be up to date with current news and events for their employment. Slightly fewer Canberrans aged 90 and older are ‘heavy’ news consumers (74%), but still much higher than the national average.

INTEREST IN NEWS

“

I like to know what's going on in the rest of the world.

”

Male, 80s

“

I've always had an interest in international and domestic affairs. I worked for the government for over 30 years. So that was part of my job... I've just kept it up.

”

Female, 60s

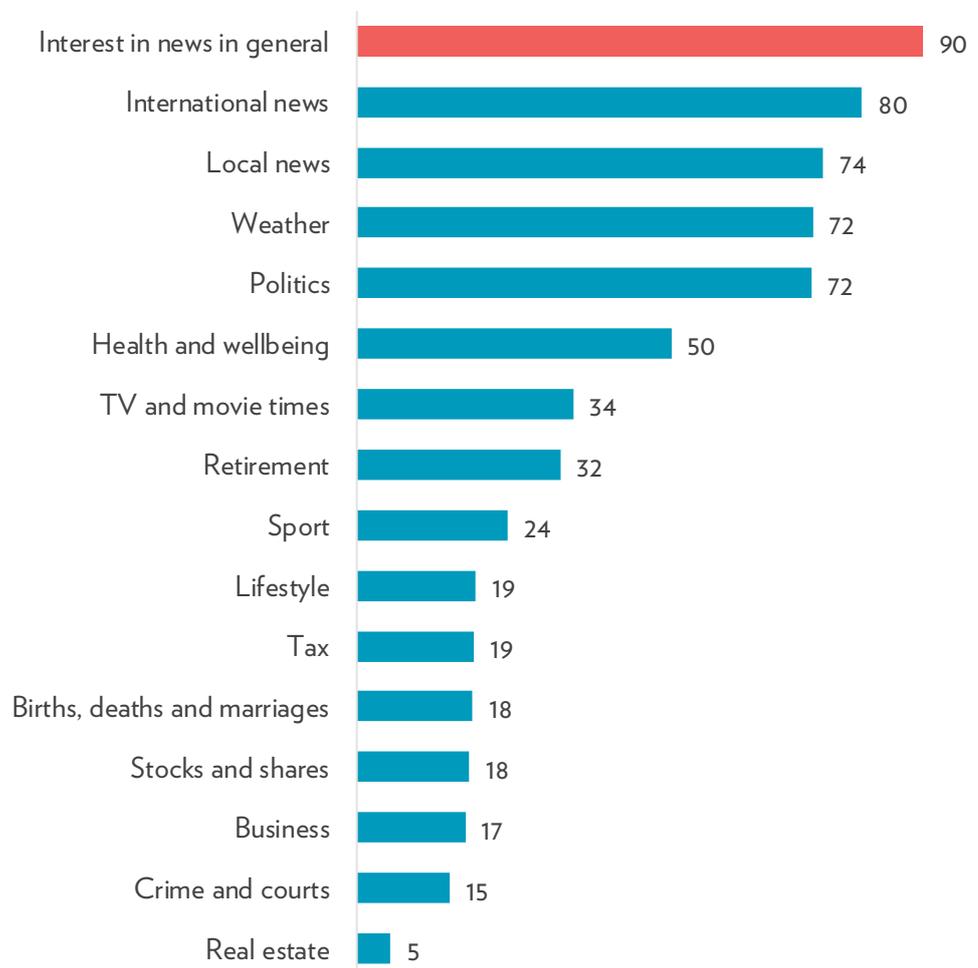
Ninety per cent of survey participants said they were very or extremely interested in news (see Figure 10). This is considerably higher than the wider Australian population, where 63% of Baby Boomers and 79% of people aged 74+ say they are highly interested in news (*Digital News Report Australia: 2020*). Again, this high level of interest reflects the high level of education of the participants in the survey and that many

older Canberrans have worked in the APS, at universities or in the Armed Forces and have continued their interest in public affairs after retirement.

The most popular news topics selected were international news (80%), followed by local news (74%), the weather (72%) and politics (72%). Stories about crime and real estate ranked lowest.

>>

Figure 10. Interest in news (high interest) (%)



Q 14. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news on the following topics? Not at all interested, Not very interested, Somewhat interested, Very interested, Extremely interested

SOURCES OF NEWS

“

The radio's always on. ...The TV tends to go on at half past six.

Male, 90s

”

“

WIN News starts from 6.00 to 7.00. I switch to SBS World News at 6.30. Just to see what's going on with the rest of the world. ...Probably about 7.00, I record all my current affair commentaries, so I can watch it when I like.

Male, 80s

”

“

I don't use Facebook for news. I wouldn't dream of getting my news from that source.

Female, 80s

”

“

I tend not to watch a lot of television, or maybe I just find I can't be bothered sitting through hours and hours of stuff, even the news. So, I tend to use electronic media.

Male, 60s

”

“

Each one suits a different purpose... If I want something immediate, get the headlines, just find out, you know, that the stock exchange has plummeted or gone under. Okay, that's TV. That's the radio. But if I want a deeper understanding then I want to read a proper analysis.

Female, 60s

”

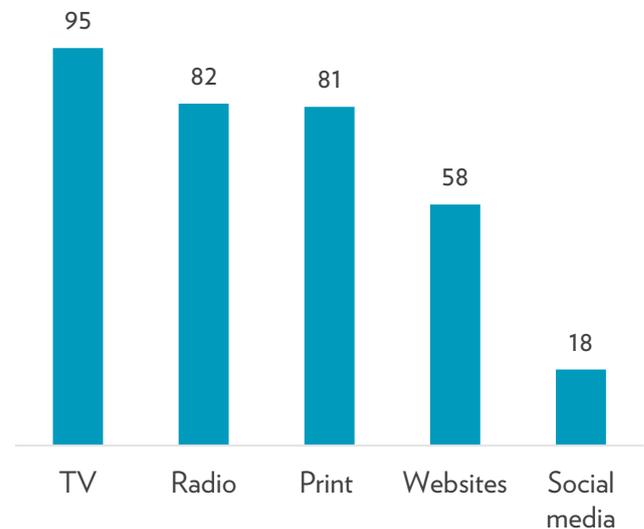
TV IS THE MOST POPULAR SOURCE OF NEWS FOR OLDER CANBERRANS

Older Canberrans favour traditional news sources. TV is the most popular with 95% saying they watch TV news, followed by listening to radio news (82%) and reading newspapers (81%). More than half get news from websites (58%) and just 18% access news via social media (see Figure 11).

When we analyse this based on age, a different picture emerges. Figure 13 shows, almost all of those surveyed in their 50s use online news sources (90%) compared to 40% of those in their 80s and 19% of those in their 90s. Participants in their 80s are the most likely to rely on print newspapers (87%) compared to 52% in their 50s. Two-thirds of participants in their 50s use social media to access news, compared to just 6% of participants aged 80 and 90s (see Figure 12).



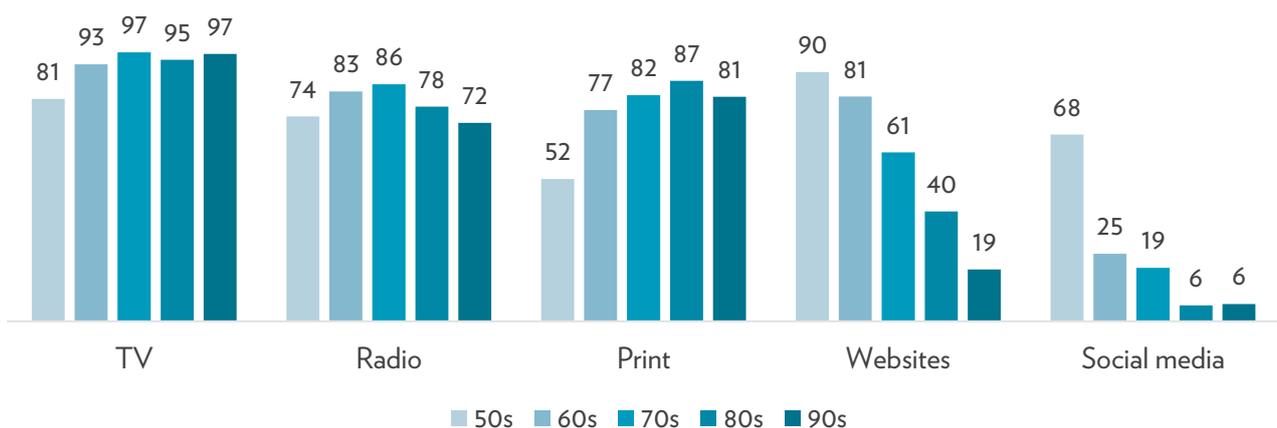
Figure 11. General sources of news (%)



Q11. Which, if any, of the following news sources have you used in the last week? Please select all that apply



Figure 12. Source of news by age (%)



SECTION

03.



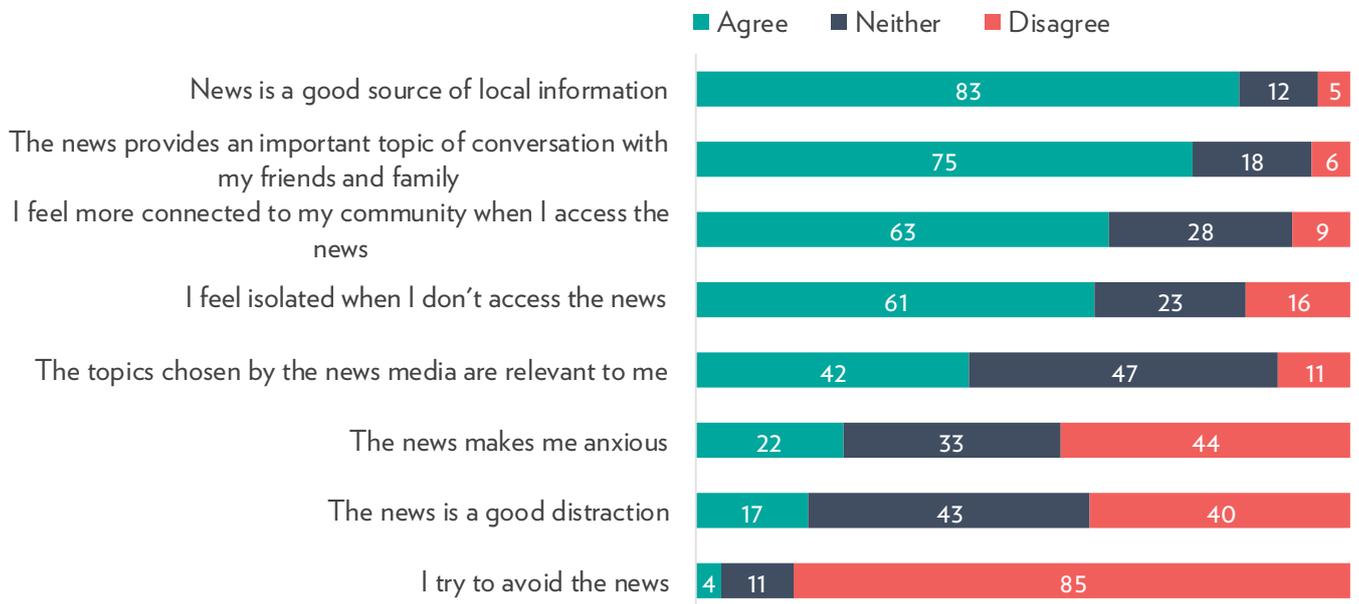
**NEWS
AND
WELLBEING**

The survey participants were asked a series of questions about their social activities, physical wellbeing, social connectedness and news consumption.

The analysis reveals that news plays a major role in older peoples’ wellbeing. Almost two-thirds (63%) reported feeling more connected to the community when they

access the news and a similar number (61%) said they feel isolated when they do not access the news (see Figure 13).

>> **Figure 13. Social wellbeing and news consumption (%)**



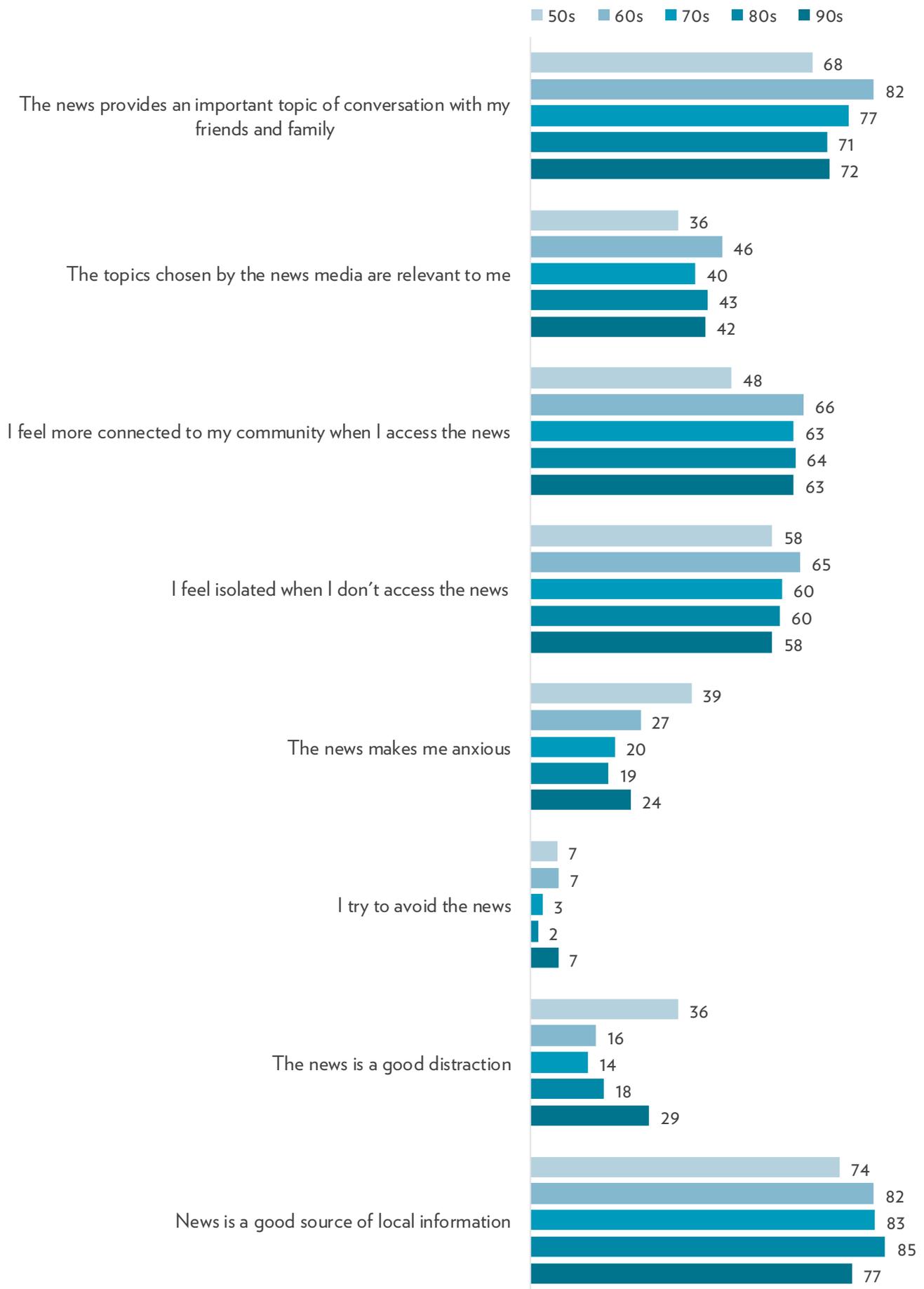
Q 18. We are now going to ask you how the news impacts on your everyday life. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to agree, Strongly agree.

For those in their 50s news plays a less important social role than for other age groups (see Figure 14). Those in their 50s are less likely to think news is a good source of local information and they are less reliant on it for a topic of conversation. Less than half of those in their 50s (48%) said they feel more connected to their community when they access news compared to two-thirds in their 60s and a similar number in their 70s, 80s and 90s. Those in their 60s are more likely to

feel isolated when they don't access the news (65%) – but this is consistently high across all age groups, highlighting the important role news plays in people’s sense of wellbeing and connectedness with the community. Interestingly, the older you are the less anxious the news makes you. People in their 50s find the news more anxiety inducing than those in the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s. For participants at both ends of the older-age spectrum, news was considered to be a good distraction.

>>

Figure 14. Social wellbeing and news consumption by age (% of agree/strongly agree)



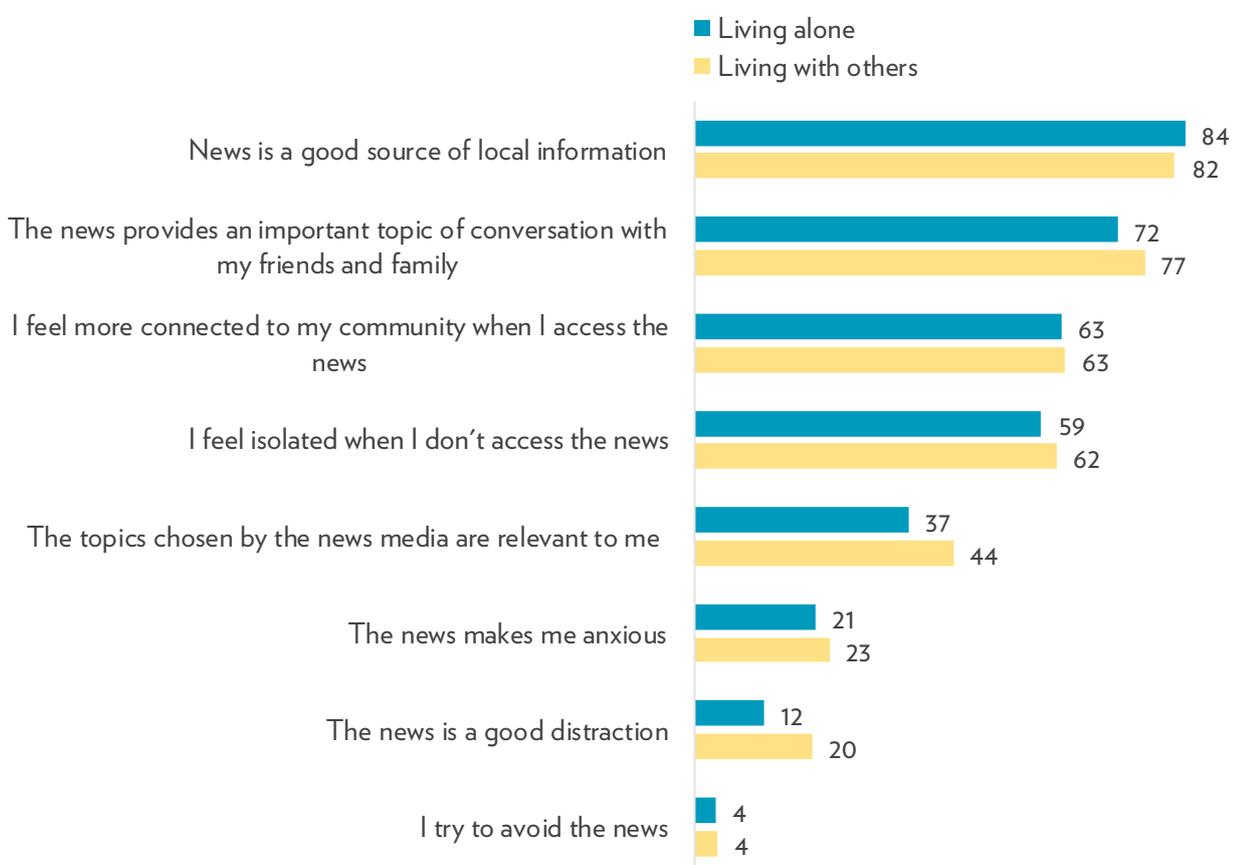
PEOPLE LIVING ALONE FEEL LESS ISOLATED WITHOUT THE NEWS

Whether you live with others or on your own appears to only have a small impact on the social role of news in a person's life. Figure 15 shows those surveyed who live alone are slightly less likely to think the news makes them anxious (21% < 23%), and slightly less likely to feel isolated when they don't access the news (59% < 62%). This suggests those who live on their own are possibly more autonomous and more comfortable with less stimulation and the company of news, than those who are accustomed to living

with others. For those living alone, news is less likely to provide topics of conversation. Furthermore, those living alone say news is less relevant to them. This possibly suggests that the news media is not adequately representing issues that directly impact on the lives of this cohort of older people. It will be interesting to see how these findings compare to the responses of older Australians in other parts of the country if we are able to expand this research in the future.

>>

Figure 15. Social wellbeing and news consumption by living situation (% of agree/strongly agree)

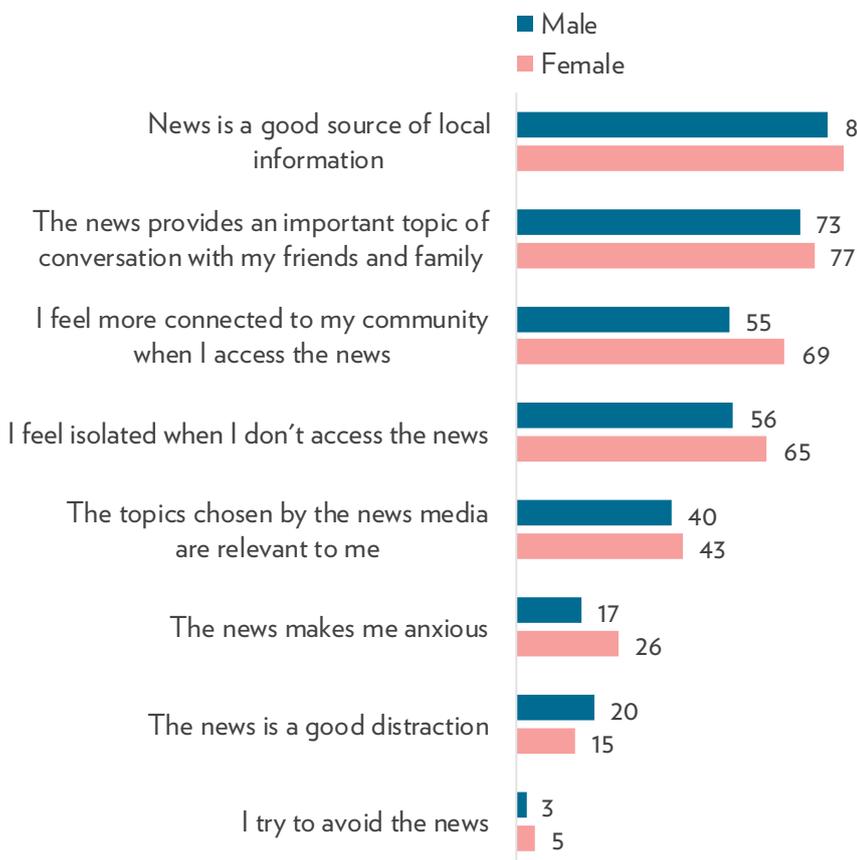


WOMEN RELY ON NEWS MORE THAN MEN TO FEEL CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITY

As Figure 16 shows, women are more likely than men to feel connected to the community when they access the news. Conversely, women are more likely than men to feel isolated if they do not access the news. This possibly reflects that more women in the survey live on their own, and therefore rely on the news more as source of company and connection. It also possibly reflects that social interaction and staying in contact with family and friends is more important to women than men. The data also show that women are more likely than men to say the news makes them feel anxious.

<<

Figure 16. Social wellbeing and news consumption by gender (% of agree/strongly agree)

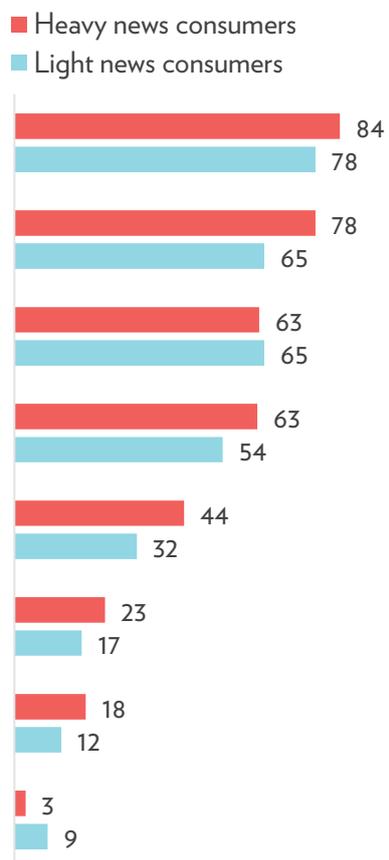


HEAVY NEWS CONSUMERS FEEL MORE ISOLATED WITHOUT NEWS

People who normally access news more than once a day (63%) are also more likely to feel isolated when they don't access the news than those who access news once a day or less (54%) (see Figure 17). For these people, the news provides an especially important topic of conversation with family and friends. Heavy news consumers also find the news more relevant to them, and a good distraction, but are also more likely to say the news makes them anxious.

>>

Figure 17. Social wellbeing and news consumption by news access (% of agree/strongly agree)



If I meet new people, you don't always want to talk about the weather or real estate. Sometimes [news will] provide a lead in. Sometimes something like that will spark a conversation and you often find that somebody else has read it, so you can talk, and they will have read something a bit wider in that topic.

”

Female, 60s

“

*Most of my family, kids, and friends, and relations tend to be interested in events, and politics, and war and peace, and all the other big things.
...If they're not interested in news, it doesn't help you.*

”

Male, 90s

“

Of course, news helps with connection.

”

Male, 90s

“

The times when I felt really disconnected from society was when I was in hospital...there was no TV in the room. And so, I had no news and it drove me insane because I didn't know what was happening in the outside world. Nothing. And when I'm overseas and I'm missing Australian news, then I really miss that, too.

“

I suppose it makes me better informed, but I don't know that that makes me better connected.

”

Female, 50s

“

Well I belong to a book club of friends... and when we have our book, no matter what the book is, we can always seem to extract from it, without even trying, something that is politically relevant to the current situation, or something that's happened recently – it's just interesting playing with the connections.

”

Female, 80s

”

Female, 60s

“

I'm feeling a little bit more disconnected from Canberra news. And that's why I'm sort of thinking, oh, will I re-subscribe to The Canberra Times?

”

Female, 80s

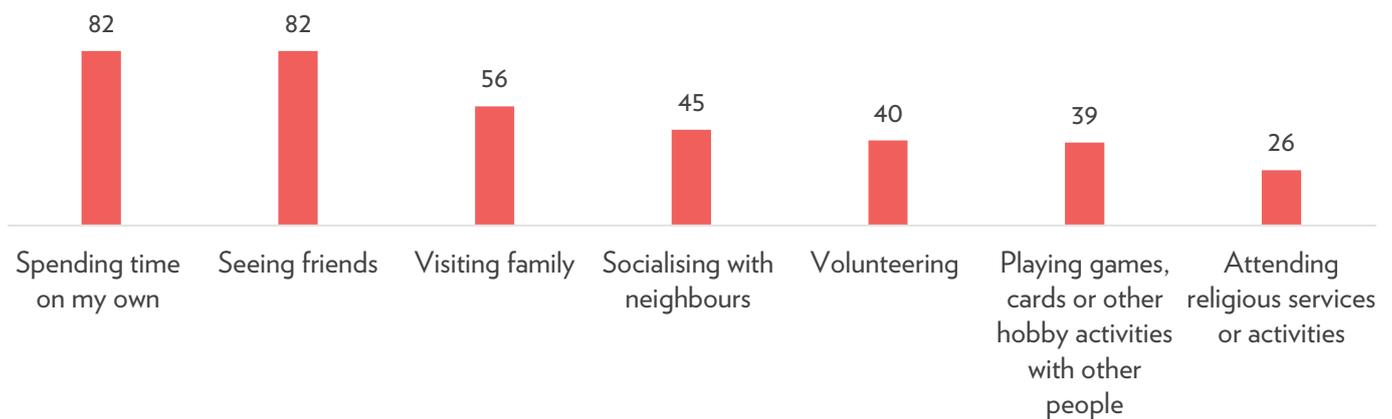
IMPACT OF NEWS ON EVERYDAY LIFE/ SOCIAL CONNECTION

SOCIAL ACTIVITY & NEWS CONSUMPTION

To explore the connection between wellbeing and news consumption further, we asked what social activities participants engage in. The top two were spending time alone and spending time with friends (82%), followed by visiting family (56%) and socialising with neighbours (45%) (see Figure 18).

>>

Figure 18. Social activity (%)

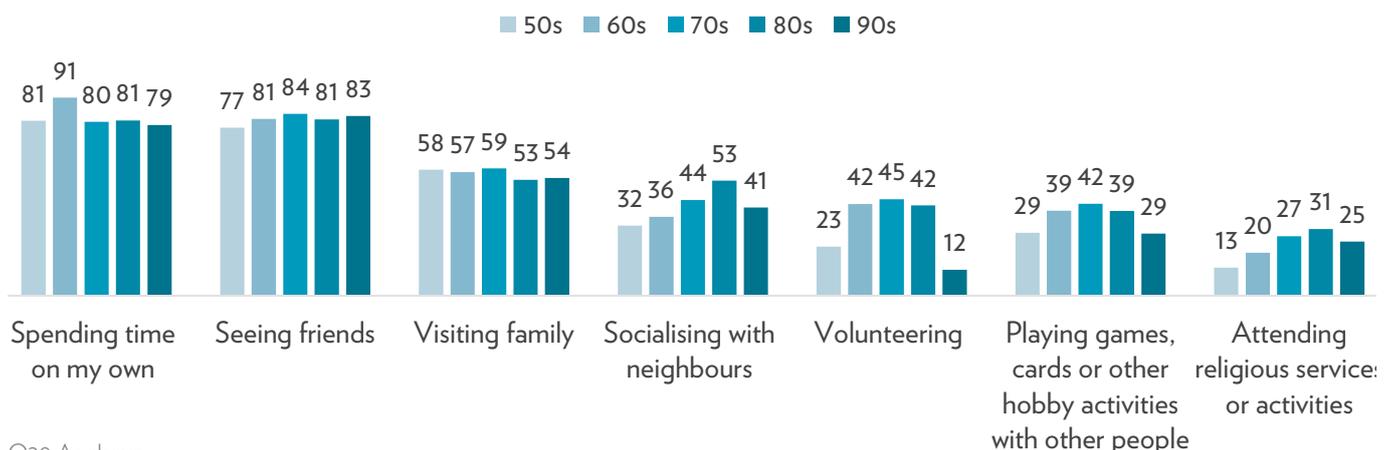


Q20. How often do you engage in the following activities? Figure reflects 'frequently' engaging these activities at least fortnightly or more often.

Those in their 60s report spending more time on their own but were also more likely to socialise with friends than those in their 50s (see Figure 19). Those in their 80s are the most likely to spend more time socialising with neighbours and participate in religious activities. Those in their 50s are more likely to be working and have limited time to socialise with friends and neighbours. Socialising with neighbours increase with age until they are in their 90s. Volunteering and participating in group activities are also more common among people in their 60s, 70s and 80s.

>>

Figure 19. Social activity by age (%)

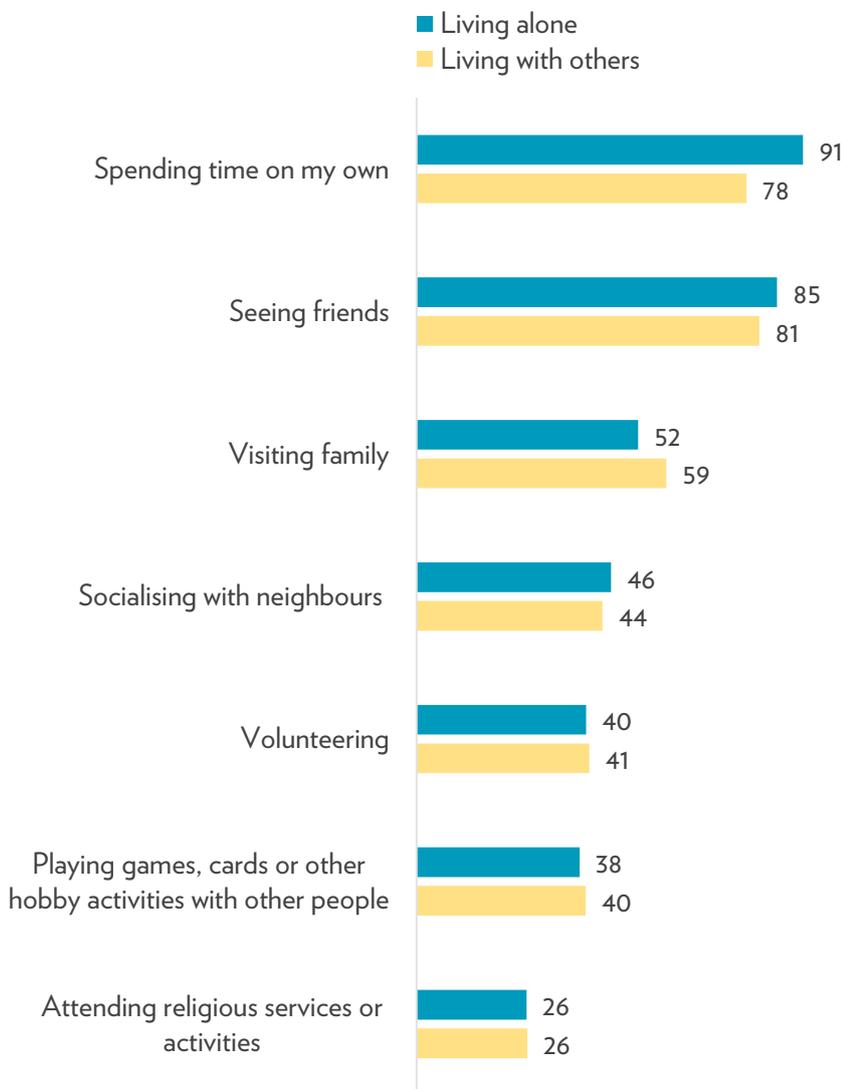


Q20 As above

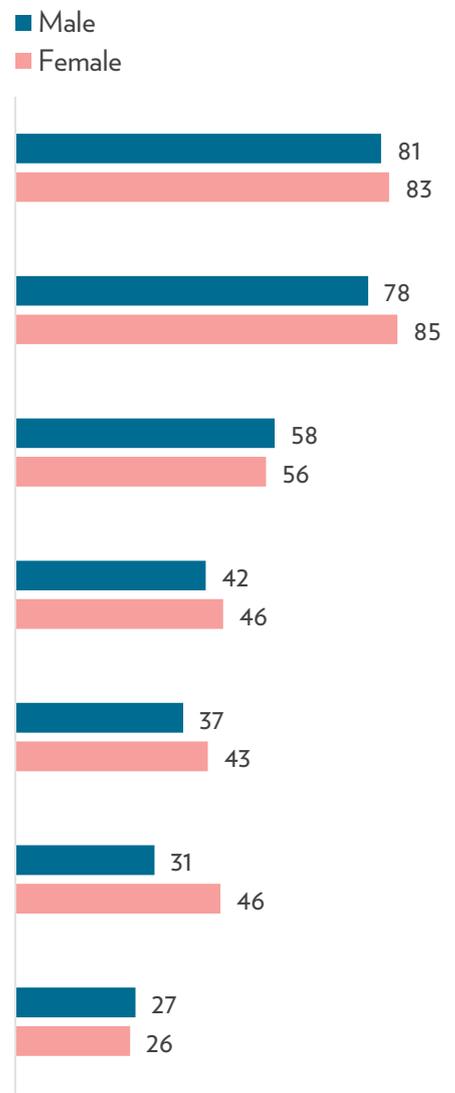
Those who live alone are more likely to spend time on their own and slightly more likely to spend time with friends and neighbours. However, they also tend to visit family less frequently (see Figure 20).

The data reveal differences based on gender. Women are slightly more likely than men to visit friends, socialise with neighbours and volunteer. Women are also much more likely to share hobbies with other people than men (see Figure 21).

>> **Figure 20. Social activity by living situation (%)**



>> **Figure 21. Social activity by gender (%)**



Q. How often do you engage in the following activities? Figure reflects 'frequently' engaging these activities at least fortnightly or more often.

SOCIAL ACTIVITY, WELLBEING AND NEWS CONSUMPTION ARE CONNECTED

Across all activities, those who say news helps them feel connected to the community are more likely to say they participated socially and are less likely to spend time on their own (see Figure 22).

Similarly, participants who said they feel less isolated when they access news were also

more likely to engage in most social activities than those who did not agree that news made them feel less isolated (see Figure 23). For people spending a lot of time on their own, consuming news was slightly less likely to help them feel less isolated, though for many it was deemed useful.



Figure 22. Social activity and feeling more connected with news (%)

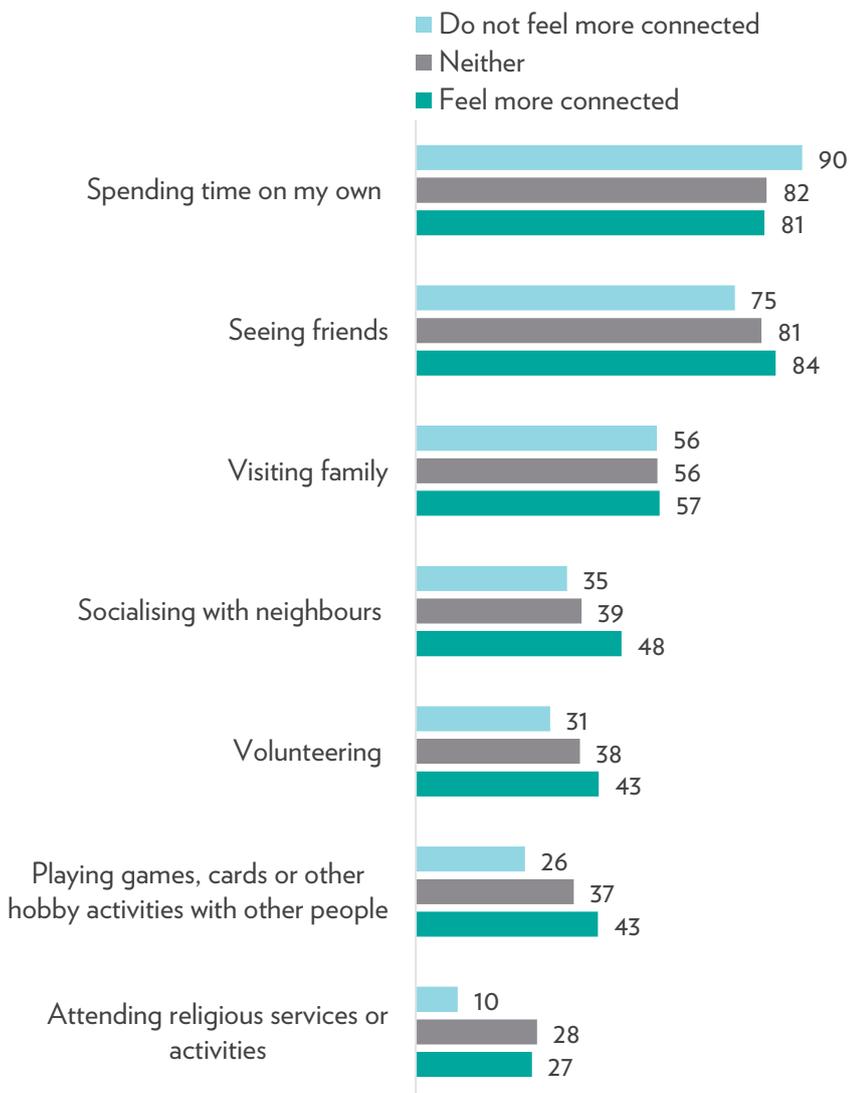
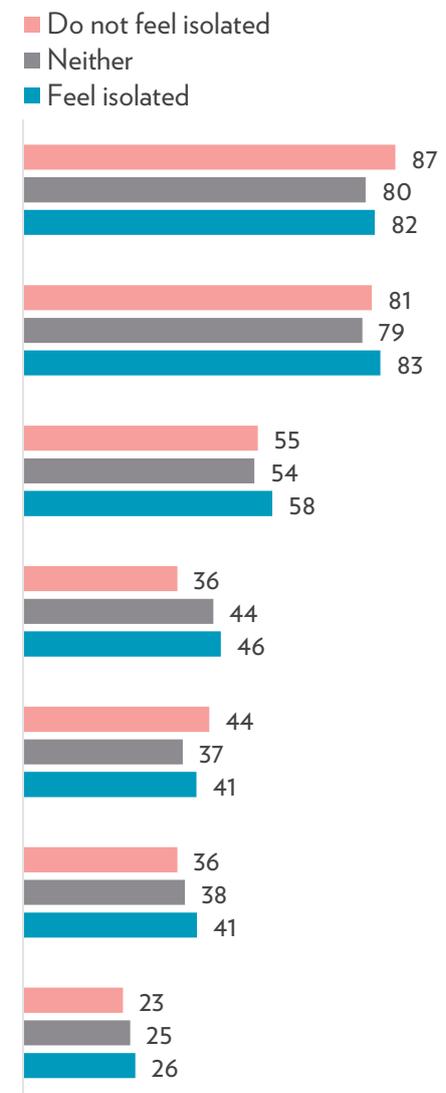


Figure 23. Social activity and feeling isolated without news (%)



Q20. How often do you engage in the following activities? Figure reflects 'frequently' engaging these activities at least fortnightly or more often. Q 18. We are now going to ask you how the news impacts on your everyday life. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to agree, Strongly agree. 'I feel more connected to my community when I access news.'

We also correlated participants’ level of difficulty engaging in certain activities with their news consumption. Figure 24 shows most of the participants had few difficulties, the greatest related to standing for long periods of time, followed by participating in community events. These factors were chosen based on World Health Organisation ⁶ and adapted to apply in the current study.

>>
Figure 24. The level of difficulty (%)



Q 21. Considering your current health and wellbeing how difficult do you find the following activities? Please circle the level of difficulty in the below table.

Figure 25 shows, older Canberrans who feel physically able consume more news than those who have moderate to high difficulty with the range of activities listed. Those who are confident in maintaining a friendship and joining in community activities are more likely to be heavy news users, who access news more than once a day (84%). This suggests those with higher levels of news consumption are more likely to be using news as a social function.

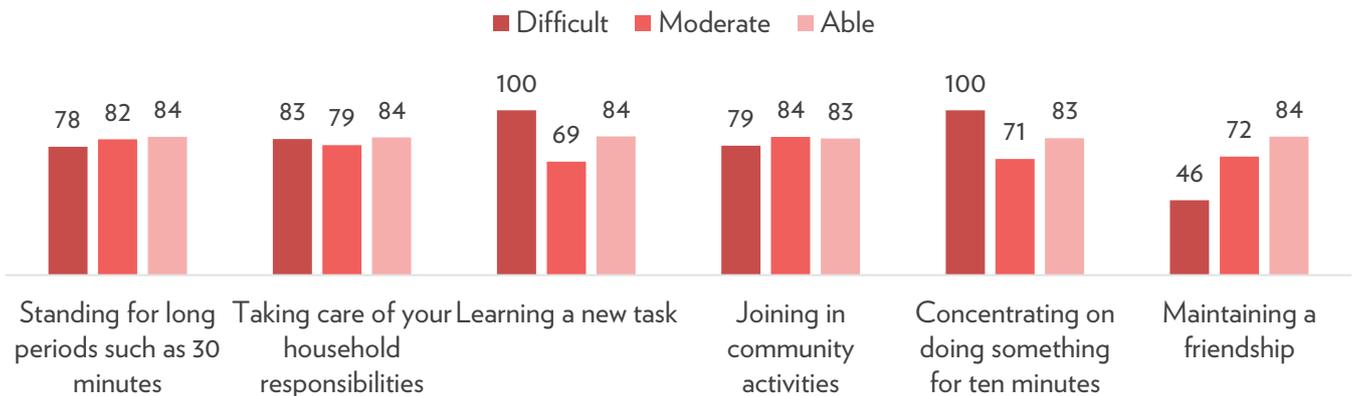
Conversely, those who have difficulty maintaining friendships are the least likely to be heavy consumers of news (45%). This possibly reflects a generally lower interest in social engagement and staying connected through sharing information.

While there is no causal link here, it is possible that a greater knowledge of news and current events could facilitate easier social interaction and the maintenance of friendships for these older Canberrans.

Those who have cognitive difficulties such as learning a new task and concentrating on doing something for ten minutes are also more likely to be heavy news users (100%). For these people, news is possibly a routine activity they can perform easily out of habit. Also, the concise nature of news stories and formulaic presentation of news items might also make it easier to concentrate for short periods of time (see Figure 26).

⁶ World Health Organization Disability Assessment Schedule (WHODAS 2.0) is a generic assessment instrument developed by WHO to provide a standardised method for measuring health and disability across cultures.

>>

Figure 25. Physical limits and heavy news use (%)

Q21. Considering your current health and wellbeing how difficult do you find the following activities? Please circle the level of difficulty in the below table; No Difficulty, Mild Difficulty, Moderate Difficulty, Severe Difficulty, Extreme Difficulty or Cannot Do. Q10. Typically, how often do you watch, read or listen to the news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online). 'Heavy' news consumption means accessing news more than once a day.

FEELINGS OF ISOLATION ARE MORE PRONOUNCED WITHOUT NEWS FOR PEOPLE WITH COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Older Canberrans who experience moderate to a lot of difficulty performing certain cognitive activities are also more likely to say they feel isolated when they don't access news (see Figure 26). This is particularly true for people who have difficulty concentrating on doing something for more than ten

minutes and those who have difficulty learning new tasks. For those people, it is possible that the brevity of news stories may be appealing because they only require short bursts of concentration, and the habit of news consumption is well established and does not require the acquisition of new skills.

>>

Figure 26. Physical limitations and feelings of isolation when not accessing news

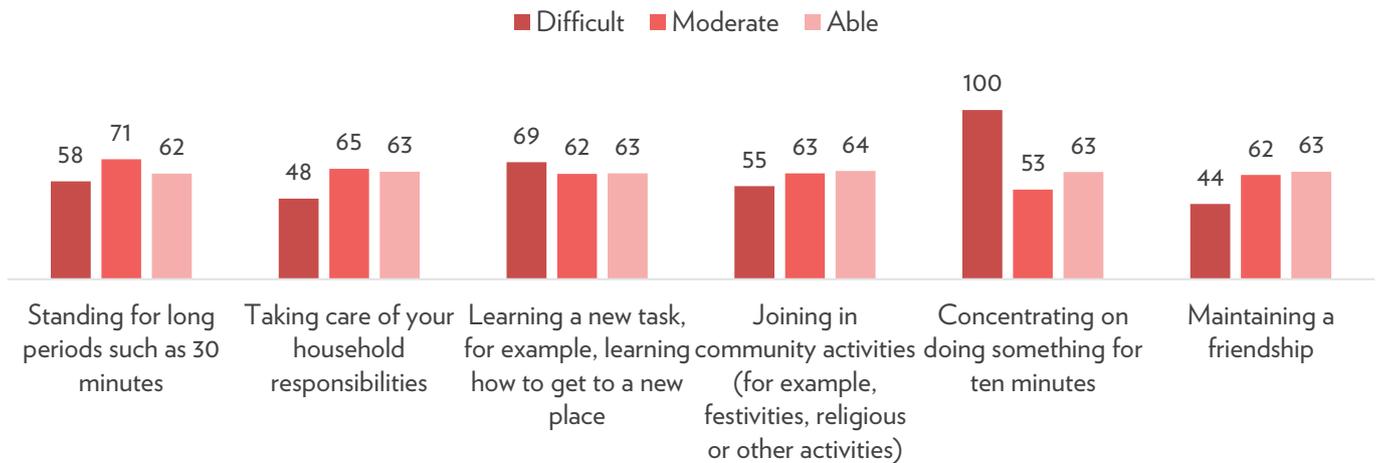
Q21. As above

Similarly, for those who have trouble concentrating, news is especially important to help them feel connected to the community (see Figure 27). All of the participants with low concentration agreed that they felt more connected to the community when they accessed news. The formulaic, repetitive and

concise nature of news stories on radio, TV and in print, may be providing regular and predictable updates about what is happening in the wider community and helping these older Canberrans maintain a sense of belonging and social connectedness.



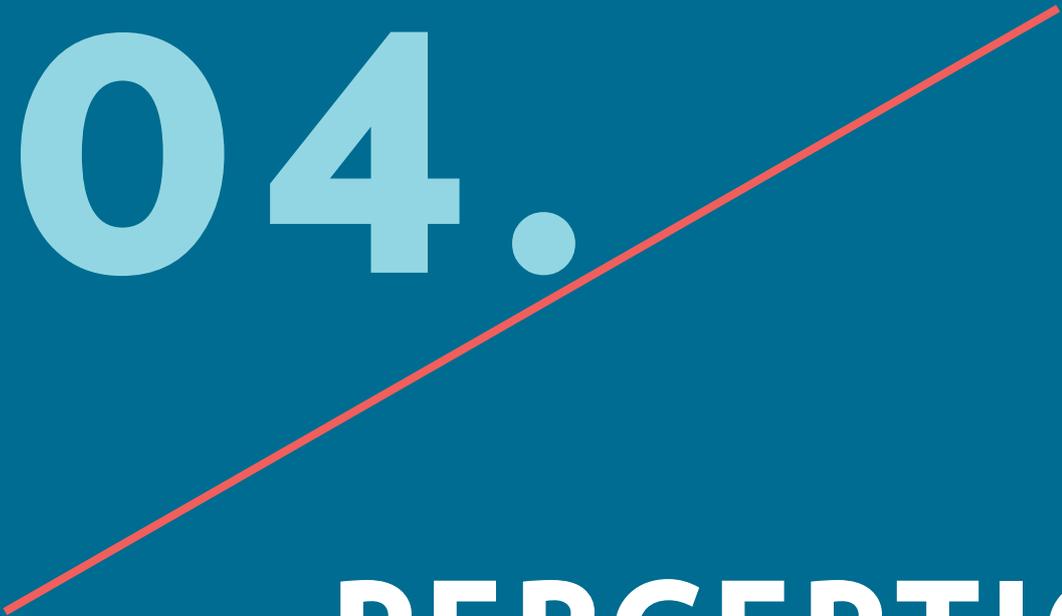
Figure 27. Physical limitations and connection with community through news



Q21. Considering your current health and wellbeing how difficult do you find the following activities? Please circle the level of difficulty in the below table; No Difficulty, Mild Difficulty, Moderate Difficulty, Severe Difficulty, Extreme Difficulty or Cannot Do. Q 18. We are now going to ask you how the news impacts on your everyday life. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to agree, Strongly agree. 'I feel more connected to the community when I access the news'.

SECTION

04.



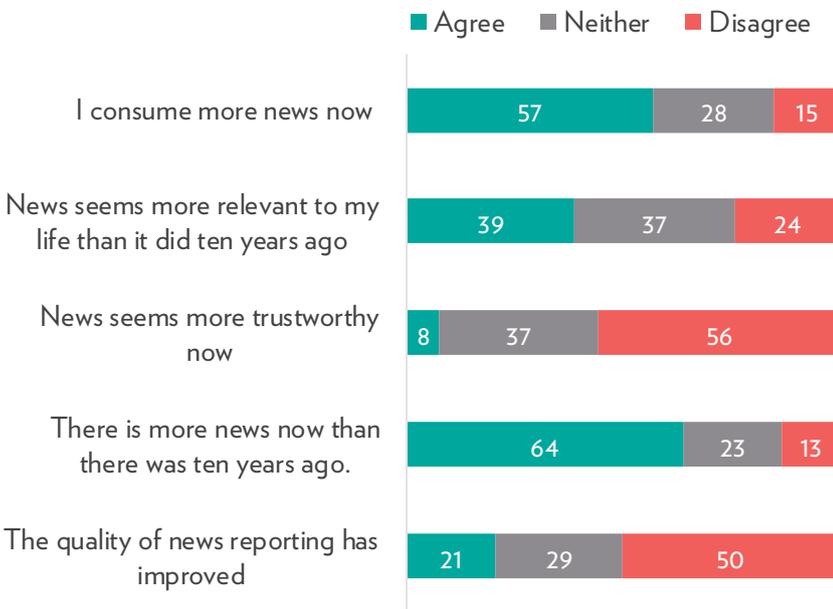
**PERCEPTIONS
OF NEWS
QUALITY
OVER TIME**

We asked the survey participants to reflect on the quality of news and whether it has changed over time.

Figure 28 shows, almost two-thirds think there is more news available today than there was ten years ago and more than half have increased the amount of news they consume over that time. Despite this, only one-fifth believe that the quality of news reporting has

improved during the same period. Only 8% think the news has become more trustworthy over the past ten years, 39% consider the news to be more relevant to them now than it was then (see Figure 28).

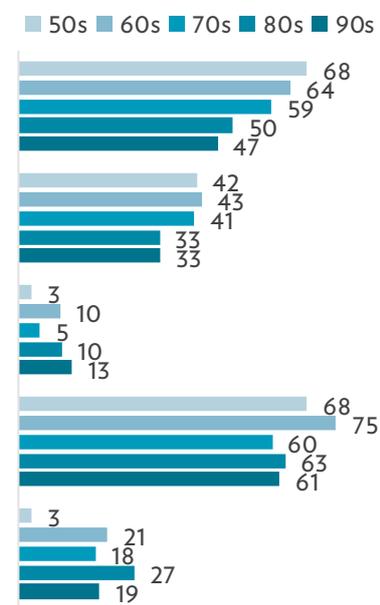
>> **Figure 28. Perceptions of news quality over time (%)**



Q. 15 Looking back ten years, has your news consumption changed? Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Strongly disagree, Tend to disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Tend to agree, Strongly agree.

Perceptions of changing news quality also vary depending on age (see figure 29). People aged 70+ are less inclined to think there is more news now than ten years ago and those in their 60s are most likely to think the amount of news available has grown. Those in their 50s and 60s are the most likely to say they have increased the amount of news they are consuming. This might be a reflection that people in the 60s age bracket may be recently retired or have reduced their

>> **Figure 29. Perceptions of news over time by age group (%)**



level of employment leaving more time to consume news. Those aged 80+ are the most likely to think the quality of news reporting has improved over the past decade, but they are the least likely to think the coverage is more relevant to their lives than it was ten years ago. It should be noted, this survey was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic which has generated a lot of news coverage about older Australians who are more vulnerable to the virus.

I HAVE MORE TIME FOR NEWS...

“

I never had time for news years ago.

”

Male, 80s

“

I only retired in June 2018, so we have more time to be able to think about news, whereas when you're at work it's just, you know, what you pop into now and again. Whereas now, I can actually think about what I want to read and how it would impact on me.

”

Female, 60s

THERE IS MORE NEWS THAN TEN YEARS AGO...

“

I mean, in a sense I feel overexposed to the news, because it's the same stories, and it's just occasionally someone will pick up something that the others have missed, and can be quite interesting looking at things, from a perspective that's fresh.

”

Female, 80s

“

There's too much. ...I'm just getting more of the same stuff. But I'm not that much better informed

”

Female, 60s

“

They're just filling in the time, because they've got to fill in time.

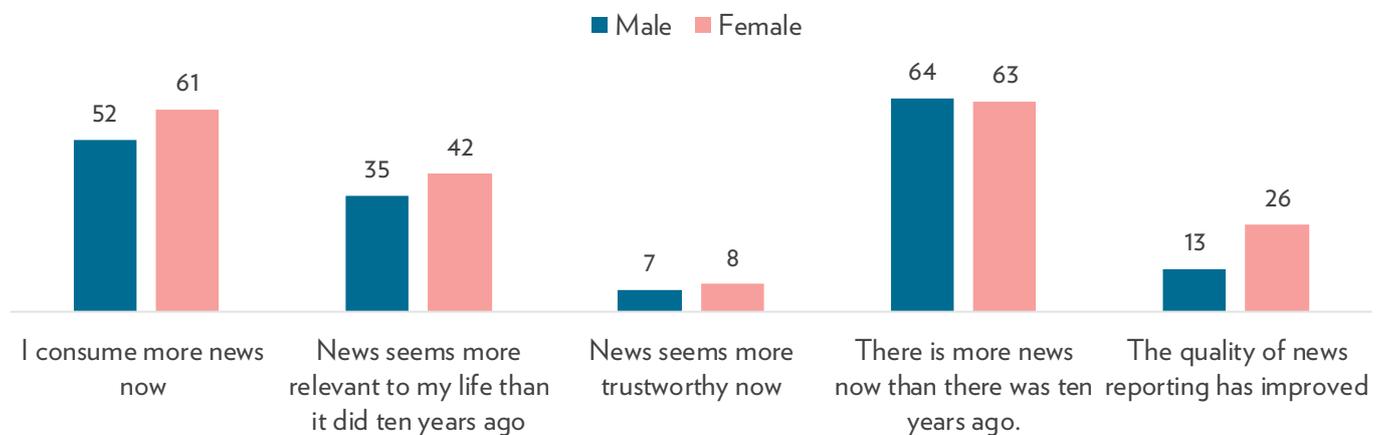
”

Male, 80s

There are differences in perception of news performance based on gender too (see Figure 30). Older women are more likely to perceive changes in the news media than men. More women said they have increased the amount of news they consume, that it is more relevant to them, and the quality of news has improved over the past ten years. This is interesting, because women

traditionally consume less news than men and are less interested in it (*Digital News Report: Australia*). This difference possibly reflects that as women age, they find they have more time and perhaps fewer caring responsibilities, which allows them to engage with news more and critically reflect on its role in their lives.

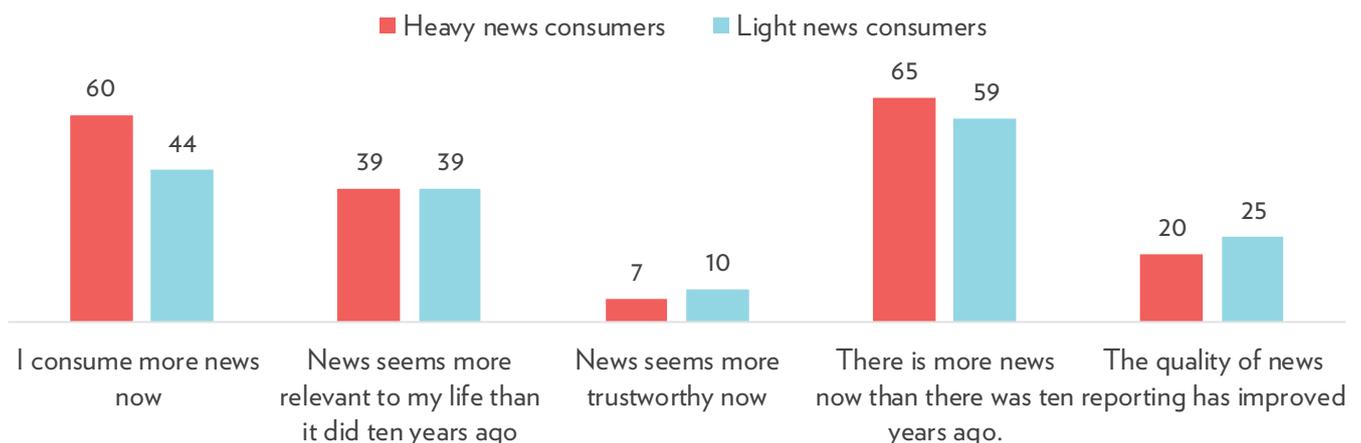
>> **Figure 30. Perceptions of news over time by gender (%)**



Perception of news performance also varies depending on whether you are a light or heavy consumer of news. Heavy news consumers (65%) are more likely to have increased their news intake and think there is

more news now than ten years ago, but they (20%) are also slightly less likely to think the quality of news has improved over the past decade than light news consumers (25%) (See Figure 31).

>> **Figure 31. Perceptions of news over time and news access (%)**



NEWS IS LESS RELEVANT TO ME...

“

So, I will be sitting watching the news and up comes a car crash in America. And it's not news, really, that I'm remotely interested in. It's really sad. I'm sorry that somebody died. But it's a car crash in America. It's not what should be on our national news service. ...I think the balance is wrong.

”

Female, 60s

“

When I was working...what was happening, was very highly relevant; a lot of the stuff, there's no relevance to me at all. Like, if I didn't hear the news for a day or a week or whatever, it probably wouldn't have much impact on me. Like I don't go to work, and I retired about seven years ago. It doesn't matter, most of it, it's irrelevant. ...I mean, there's not too much news...that you need to know about it now. If you heard it in a few hours, it probably wouldn't affect you. If you didn't hear it at all, if you didn't hear it for a few days.

”

Male, 80s

DECLINE IN QUALITY...

“

TV news and current affairs shows have gone downhill.

”

Female, 60s

“

I just want the key facts and that's all and that's I'm really worried about.

”

Male, 80s

“

There are good journalists around. It's very hard — because the whole environment of journalism's changed so much... Just the speed of it all... There's sort of a lot of silliness around, far more of that, just quite preposterous. I suppose it's called entertainment, but I don't even understand why people feel that's entertaining.

”

Female, 80s

“

The balance has shifted, and papers are often more opinion than they are fact.

”

Female, 50s

TRUST IN NEWS

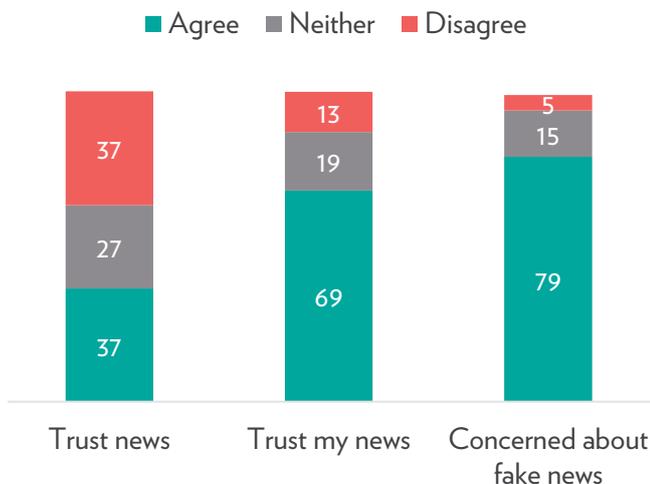
Older Canberrans are less trusting of news generally, and more trusting of the news they use (see Figure 32). Older Canberrans are also less trusting of news than their counterparts nationally. Only 37% of older people in the survey said they trust most news most of the time, compared to around 43% of Australians aged 50 and above ⁷. In contrast, the majority of older Canberrans in this survey (69%) said they trust the news they choose to consume, which is much higher than Australians generally (46%).

This reflects higher levels of education and a healthy scepticism about news media more broadly, and a high level of discernment when selecting which news sources to rely on.

Older Canberrans are also more concerned about ‘fake news’ than the wider Australian population. Most in the survey (79%) said they were concerned about ‘fake news’, compared to 62% of Australians who are concerned about what is real or fake on the internet (*Digital News Report: Australia 2019*).

>>

Figure 32. Trust in news (%)



Q. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. In this survey we define ‘trust’ as being able to rely on the news as a reliable and credible source of information. Please indicate your level of agreement 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.

Q. We are now going to ask you about ‘fake news’. Fake news refers to stories that look like traditional news but are fabricated for political and commercial purposes. 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.”

⁷ *Digital News Report: Australia 2020*

“

You can't just believe everything you hear on the radio or read in the newspaper...there is good stuff as well. But you have to learn to work out what's going to be reliable... So how do you do that? 75 years of reading, and listening.

”

Male, 90s

“

As long as you know what it is that you're reading, what your source is, and what their biases are, then you can pick where you want your balance to lie.

”

Female, 60s

“

I'd say more of what is out there is less trustworthy. I think, like most people, you tend to read from the sources that you agree with.

”

Female, 80s

“

I'm sceptical about what I've read.

”

Male, 80s

FAKE NEWS AND DECLINING NEWS TRUST

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that the ACT has the most affluent and educated population in the country. This is strongly reflected in the cohort of older Canberrans who chose to participate in this survey. The proportion of people in this study who have a university education is substantially higher than the broader Australian population. We know from the *Digital News Report: Australia* that older people and those with higher levels of education are more engaged with news. Even so, the level of interest in news stated by the participants in this survey is the highest we have recorded.

This is partly a reflection of the way we recruited participants for the study through COTA ACT. The fact that these participants are members of COTA ACT suggests they are already highly engaged. Those who did not participate in the study may well have lower levels of news consumption and have higher social needs. The perspectives of these older Canberrans are not reflected here and further research needs to be done to reach these older citizens.

Because of this, our study cannot claim to be representative of all older people in the ACT region. However, the results of this survey and preliminary interviews do highlight differences in news consumption between

age groups of older Canberrans. The study also underscores the important role that news plays in the lives of older citizens.

It is clear that the older Canberrans in this survey are confident internet users who regularly shop and bank online and remain in contact with people via email. However, those in their 70s and 80s are less confident about using social media and video chat platforms, such as Skype, to stay in contact with others. This is an area of digital literacy that needs further attention, particularly to assist people through extended periods of social isolation as we have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report also highlights the important role of news in reducing feelings of isolation and increasing social connection with friends, family and the wider community. This is especially true for women, heavy news consumers and those with physical limitations. Most of the older Canberrans surveyed said news increases their sense of connection and the loss of news amplifies their feelings of social isolation. This highlights the need for good internet connectivity and access to a variety of quality online and offline news options for older generations, to maintain their social wellbeing.

This is important for governments and service providers to take note of. In light of the Royal Commission into Aged Care and the recommendations to improve the wellbeing of residents, ensuring consistent access to news is part of that solution.

The Canberrans in this survey also offer valuable insights relevant to news producers

about the changing nature of news and the value it holds for them. Over the past ten years, they perceive an increase in the volume of news but also a drop in its quality, relevance and trustworthiness. Importantly for news editors, those in their 80s and 90s consider the news to be less relevant to them now. Given that older Australians are the heaviest news consumers, it is important that their needs and interests are reflected in the news sources they pay for. After decades of loyalty, news organisations need to ensure they are not simply chasing the attention of younger audiences but are also honouring the loyalty of older news consumers.

We wish to thank the 562 Canberrans who generously gave up their time to fill out this survey, a copy of which can be found at the end of this report. We are especially grateful to Jenny Mobbs and COTA ACT for partnering with us to conduct this pilot study. We will continue to conduct further interviews with Canberra residents and hope we can extend our research to other parts of the country in the future. We would welcome the partnership of sponsors to take this important research nationally.

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THE CHANGING NEWS ENVIRONMENT SURVEY

DO YOU READ, WATCH OR LISTEN TO NEWS? WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?

Researchers at the University of Canberra are conducting a study on older generation's news preferences and consumption, and how this has changed over time. If you are aged 50 or older, we are keen to understand how you feel about the news environment nowadays. The survey will take about 15 minutes of your time.

The researchers will fulfil their responsibilities for preserving the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants and carry out the research in accordance with the procedure outlined and approved by the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Canberra (Approval Number 1768).

This includes:

- Voluntary participation – If you choose to participate you may opt-out of the study at any time.
- Anonymity of questions – no names will be used on questionnaires.
- Confidentiality – the completed questionnaires will be only seen by the researchers.
- The anonymous results of this survey will be reported and may be used for future studies.

By filling out this survey, you are agreeing to these terms.

For any questions regarding the survey, please contact: Sora Park 0448-556-269 or Caroline Fisher 0438 947 805

DEMOGRAPHICS

1. What year were you born?

1	9		
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If you were born on 1970 or later, please **STOP** here. We are looking for Australians aged 50 or above.

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

SECTION 1. NEWS AND INTERNET ACCESS

3. Do you have access to the internet (on a mobile phone, tablet or computer)?

Yes

No → If you have answered 'no' to this question, please proceed to **Q8 on page 4**.

4. You say you have access to the internet, which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use to access the internet (for any purpose)? Please select all that apply.

- Mobile phone
- Laptop or desktop computer
- Tablet computer or e-book reader
- Smart TV or connected TV
- Smart watch or wristband that connects to the internet
- Voice activated connected speaker (e.g. Amazon Echo, Google Home, AppleHomePod)
- None of these

5. 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).

- Less often than once a week
- Once a week
- 2-3 days a week
- 4-6 days a week
- Once a day
- Between 2 and 5 times a day
- Between 6 and 10 times a day
- More than 10 times a day
(select this if you feel like you are always connected to the internet)
- Don't know

6. Do you use the internet for any of the following activities? Please include online activities on all of your devices such as computers, tablets and smartphones. Please select all that apply.

- Search for general information
- Watch movies or TV shows
- Watch short video clips (e.g. YouTube)
- Listen to music, podcasts or other audio files
- To get news
- To read (e-books, articles, journals etc.)
- Send/receive email
- Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter)
- Instant messaging or video chats (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Skype)
- Play computer games
- Online shopping, online booking
- Online banking, paying taxes/bills

7. How confident are you in doing these online activities?

	Do not use	Not confident at all	Not really confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Search for general information	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Watch movies or TV shows	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Watch short video clips (e.g. YouTube)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Listen to music, podcasts or other audio files	<input type="checkbox"/>				
To get news	<input type="checkbox"/>				
To read (e-books, articles, journals etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Send/receive email	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Instant messaging or video chats (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Skype)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Play computer games	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Online shopping, online booking	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Online banking, paying taxes/bills	<input type="checkbox"/>				

8. Please list any online activities you would like assistance with.

9. How much of the following prevents you from accessing or using the internet?

	Not at all	Slightly	Moderately	Significantly
I can't afford it	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have broadband internet service at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private use of the internet at work is not permitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have poor mobile coverage where I live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have the skills to use the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help or assistance is not always available	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have concerns about online privacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have my own device(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have physical limitations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am not interested	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. How often do you watch, read or listen to the news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online).

- Never → *If you don't access news, please proceed to Q 13 on page 6.*
- Less often than once a month
- Less often than once a week
- Once a week
- 2-3 days a week
- 4-6 days a week
- Once a day
- Between 2 and 5 times a day
- Between 6 and 10 times a day
- More than 10 times a day
- Don't know

- 11. Which, if any, of the following news sources have you used in the last week?
Please select all that apply.**

- TV
- Radio
- Print newspaper or magazine
- Websites
- Social media
- Other (please specify): _____

- 12. Please list the main news organisations that you get your news from (please write the name of the TV or Radio stations, newspapers or websites. For example, ABC TV, The Daily Telegraph, Sky TV etc).**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- 13. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?**

Not at all interested	Not very interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
<input type="checkbox"/>				

- 14. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news on the following topics?**

	Not at all interested	Not very interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
Weather	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Stocks and shares	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Births, deaths and marriages	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	Not at all interested	Not very interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
TV and movie times	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Politics	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Health and wellbeing	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Retirement	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Crime and courts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sport	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Business	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local news	<input type="checkbox"/>				
International news	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tax	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Real estate	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Lifestyle	<input type="checkbox"/>				

15. Looking back ten years, has your news consumption changed? Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
I consume more news now	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
News seems more relevant to my life than it did ten years ago	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
News seems more trustworthy now	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is more news now than there was ten years ago.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The quality of news reporting has improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 16.** We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. In this survey we define ‘trust’ as being able to rely on the news as a reliable and credible source of information. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
I think you can trust most news most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 17.** We are now going to ask you about ‘fake news’. Fake news refers to stories that look like traditional news but are fabricated for political and commercial purposes. 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.”

Not at all interested	Not very interested	Somewhat interested	Very interested	Extremely interested
<input type="checkbox"/>				

- 18.** We are now going to ask you how the news impacts on your everyday life. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
The news provides an important topic of conversation with my friends and family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The topics chosen by the news media are relevant to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel more connected to my community when I access the news	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel isolated when I don’t access the news	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
The news makes me anxious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I try to avoid the news	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The news is a good distraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
News is a good source of local information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 19.** We are now going to ask you about where you get your information more broadly. Imagine that you and a friend are discussing an issue, and you need some factual information about that issue (e.g., a historical date, taxation, or an economic figure).

From the list below, which are the top 3 methods you would use to look for the information. Please select the top 3 methods in order of preference by writing the numbers 1 to 3 in the box. If you do not usually check, please tick the box 'none of these' below.

- Look it up via Google or other search engines
- Look it up at a specific website (e.g., Wikipedia, Australian Tax Office)
- Send a text, message or call someone on your mobile phone
- Send an email to someone who is likely to have this information
- Use social network sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Look it up in a printed encyclopedia or reference book
- Turn on the TV or radio
- Other– please specify: _____
- None of these

SECTION 2. SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND HEALTH

20. How often do you engage in the following activities?

	Never	Less than once a month	Every three to four weeks	Fortnightly	Weekly or more
Visiting family	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Socialising with neighbours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing games, cards or other hobby activities with other people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteering	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spending time on my own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attending religious services or activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify: _____)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. Considering your current health and well-being how difficult do you find the following activities? Please circle the level of difficulty in the below table.

No Difficulty	Mild Difficulty	Moderate Difficulty	Severe Difficulty	Extreme Difficulty or Cannot Do	
0	1	2	3	4	
Standing for long periods such as 30 minutes	0	1	2	3	4
Taking care of your household responsibilities	0	1	2	3	4
Learning a new task, for example, learning how to get to a new place	0	1	2	3	4
Joining in community activities (for example, festivities, religious or other activities)	0	1	2	3	4
Concentrating on doing something for ten minutes	0	1	2	3	4
Maintaining a friendship	0	1	2	3	4

SECTION 3. OTHER INFORMATION

22. Where do you live most of the time? Please enter your 4-digit postcode.

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23. What languages do you speak at home?

- English
- Mostly a language that is not English
- A mix of English and another language

24. What is your highest level of education?

- I did not complete any formal education
- Primary education
- High School (Yr 10)
- Upper secondary education (Yr 12)
- Bachelors or equivalent level degree
- Postgraduate degree

25. What is your employment status?

- Full-time work
- Part-time work
- Unemployed
- Retired
- In unpaid position (housework, volunteer or community service, military service, etc.)
- Other
- Don't know

26. What is your household income level?

- Under \$50,000 per year
- \$50,000 to \$99,999 per year
- \$100,000 and over
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

27. What is your current living situation? Please select all the people you are currently living with.

- Partner/spouse
- Adult children
- Children under 18
- Grandchildren
- Housemate(s)
- Living in a retirement community
- Living in assisted living facility
- Living alone

28. What is your marital status?

- Single/never married
- Married/domestic partnership
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

29. Finally, we would like to know if you would be interested in participating in an interview conducted by the research team. We would like to learn more about how Australians consume news. The interviews will last about 45 minutes to one hour. You will be interviewed at the location of your choice. You can also choose to come to the interview session with a friend. If this is something you might be interested in, let us know your contact information and we will be in touch.

Name	
Email	
Phone	

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY. PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED PREPAID RETURN ENVELOPE TO SEND THE QUESTIONNAIRE BACK TO US.



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