



DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: **AUSTRALIA 2019**



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DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: AUSTRALIA 2019

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METHODOLOGY

This report is part of a long running international survey co-ordinated by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, an international research centre in the comparative study of journalism based at Oxford University. The *Digital News Report* (DNR) delivers comparative data on media usage in 38 countries and across six continents. The News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra is the Australian partner institute and author of the *Digital News Report: Australia*. This is the fifth annual Australian DNR.

The survey was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire at the end of January/beginning of February 2019. The sample was drawn from a panel of 72,242 online Australians. The final sample is reflective of the population that has access to the internet. To be included, respondents must have consumed news in the past month. As a result, 11% of the initial survey respondents were excluded.

The data were weighted to targets based 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, region, and for the first time, education.

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE

Panel size	72,242
Starting sample size	2224
Total number of non-news users removed	214
Final sample size	2010

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 those with limited formal education). The survey in Australia was conducted in English and does not represent the linguistic diversity of Australia.

Core questions were asked in all 38 countries in order to provide an international comparison. The questionnaire and the overall project methodology were consistent across all territories.

EDUCATION QUOTA

In the 2019 survey a quota for education has been introduced. This was to improve the accuracy of the data because we know that levels of education are linked to many different aspects of media use. This year, and hereafter, the data will be weighted to education to ensure the data is as robust as possible.

The 2019 education question now reflects the categories in the United Nations' International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). In the past, the lower educated population had been underrepresented. It should be noted that the introduction of this new education quota could have had a slight impact on this year's data, particularly relating to trust, payment, and sources used for news.

However, where this has occurred, we have provided additional analysis. The categories we used in the Australian survey are summarised in the following table.

2019 PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES		CODE
	Argentina	ARG
	Australia	AUS
	Austria	AUT
	Belgium	BEL
	Brazil (urban)	BRA
	Bulgaria	BUL
	Canada	CAN
	Chile	CHL
	Croatia	CRO
	Czech Republic	CZE
	Denmark	DEN
	Finland	FIN
	France	FRA
	Germany	GER
	Greece	GRE
	Hong Kong	HK
	Hungary	HUN
	Ireland	IRE
	Italy	ITA
	Japan	JPN
	Korea, South	KOR
	Malaysia	MYS
	Mexico	MEX
	Netherlands	NLD
	Norway	NOR
	Poland	POL
	Portugal	POR
	Romania	ROU
	Singapore	SGN
	Slovakia	SVK
	South Africa (new)	RSA
	Spain	SPA
	Sweden	SWE
	Switzerland	SUI
	Taiwan	TWN
	Turkey	TUR
	UK	UK
	USA	USA

WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION? IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN FULL-TIME EDUCATION PLEASE PUT YOUR HIGHEST QUALIFICATION TO DATE

LEVEL

- I did not complete any formal education
- Early childhood education
- Primary education
- Lower secondary education (High School, Yr 10)

LOW

- Upper secondary education (Yr 12, HSC, Baccalaureate or other Senior Secondary Certificate of Education)
- Post-secondary, non-tertiary education (generally vocational/ professional qualification of 1-2 years, e.g. VET (Vocational Education and Training) Certificates I-IV)

MEDIUM

- Short-cycle tertiary education (vocational education and training, studying towards a non-academic degree, e.g. TAFE, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Associate Degree)
- Bachelors or equivalent level degree
- Masters or equivalent level degree
- Doctoral or equivalent level degree

HIGH

GENERATIONS

This year's report has a strong focus on the difference in news consumption between age groups. To improve our understanding of changing consumption habits over the life span, we have adopted a generational approach to our analysis.

This provides more meaningful analysis than evenly spaced age groups. For the purpose of reliable international analysis, we have adopted the generational categories used by the PEW Research Center.¹ In this year's sample the maximum age of the respondents was 90.

Instead of using PEW's Greatest and Silent Generation categories, we merged the two and used '73+'. The age span calculation is based on the respondent's age as of December 2018. This is because the fieldwork was conducted in early 2019 and most people would not have reached their birthday at the time of the survey.

BIRTH YEARS	GENERATION	ABBREVIATION USED	AGE SPAN
1901 - 27	Greatest Generation	73+	91+
1928 - 45	Silent Generation		73 - 90
1946 - 64	Baby Boomers	BB	54 - 72
1965 - 80	Generation X	X	38 - 53
1981 - 96	Generation Y, Millennials	Y	22 - 37
1997 -	Generation Z, Post-millennials	Z	18 - 21

REGIONS

While the data are weighted according to the population size of each State and Territory, the data have also been analysed by postcode. This is important because it allows our report to reflect the geographic diversity of Australia and the differences in news consumption between urban and rural populations.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics geographic classifications are used to analyse the data based on the groupings of major cities, inner region, outer region, remote, and very remote.

However, because of the small number of participants from remote and very remote areas, we combined news consumers outside of major cities as 'regional'.

Core sponsors of the international survey include:

Google, BBC News, Ofcom, Edelman UK, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, the Dutch Media Authority (CvdM), the Korea Press Foundation, the Hans Bredow Institute, Hamburg University, the University of Navarra, **the University of Canberra**, Le Centre d'études sur les médias, Université Laval in Canada and Roskilde University in Denmark.

AUTHORS



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SORA PARK is the Associate Dean of Research for the Faculty of Arts & Design and an 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. She has written widely on how digital media is transforming communication, media and society. Her recent book, *Digital Capital* (Palgrave Macmillan) examines how people access, use, and engage with digital technology.



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 by the University of Canberra in April 2018.



GLEN FULLER is an Associate Professor of Communication and Journalism and Head of the School of Arts & Communication 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. His other research interests include journalism and media industry innovation. He has worked in the magazine industry in a number of positions.



YOONMO SANG joined the University of Canberra and the News & Media Research Centre in August 2018 as an Assistant Professor. Prior to this, he taught at Howard University in Washington DC in the USA. His research examines the intersections of new media technologies and the law, focusing on how socio-cultural and technological changes advantage and/or disadvantage different stakeholders. He is on the editorial boards of three journals: *Social Media + Society*, *Communication Law Review*, and the *Journal of Media Law, Ethics, and Policy Research*.

DESIGNER



MEGAN DEAS designs and produces the annual *Digital News Report: Australia*. She is also the News & Media Research Centre's Research Development Officer, and was the Communication & Media collection editor at Analysis and Policy Observatory (APO) from 2015-2018. Her PhD was awarded by the Australian National University in December 2018. Her thesis examined popular press photography and the construction of an Australian national identity in the postwar era. Megan's research focuses on photojournalism and popular opinion.

CONTRIBUTORS



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TERRY FLEW is an internationally recognised leader in media and communications. He is Professor of Communication and Creative Industries in the Creative Industries Faculty at the Queensland University of Technology. He is a Chief Investigator with the Digital Media Research Centre, and is the author of 12 books, 59 book chapters and 92 refereed academic journal articles.



DARYL KARP is the Director of the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House (MoAD). She is the former Head of Television Factual Programs for the ABC and a former CEO of Film Australia. She is a Fellow in the Institute of Company Directors (FAICD), a Director of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) Australia and the Australian Children's Television Foundation.



KAREN MIDDLETON is Chief Political Correspondent for The Saturday Paper. She is the author of *An Unwinnable War: Australia in Afghanistan* (2011), on the political backstory to Australia's military commitment, and *Albanese: Telling it Straight* (2016), on the life and career of recently-elected Labor leader Anthony Albanese. She was previously Chief Political Correspondent for SBS Television.



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). Nic is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and a consultant on digital media.



MARK RYAN operates a consulting business which advises the Judith Neilson Family Office, the Lowy Family Group and major public companies. He is a former journalist and political adviser and for the past 25 years has been a senior executive of Westfield Corporation, adviser to the Lowy family and a number of major public companies and institutions. He is a director of the Lowy Institute.



ROD SIMS was appointed Chair of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in August 2011. Rod has extensive business and public sector experience. Immediately prior to his appointment to the ACCC, he was the Chairman of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal of New South Wales, and Commissioner on the National Competition Council.



HEDLEY THOMAS is an investigative journalist for *The Australian* newspaper and an author. He has won seven Walkley awards, two of which are Gold Walkleys. He is best known for his work on the podcast series 'The Teacher's Pet'. The series has had about 50 million downloads in its first year and went to no.1 on iTunes charts in the USA, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report contains good and bad news for the Australian news media.

On the positive side, Australian news consumers think the news media are doing a good job helping them to understand events and keeping them up to date. There has also been a steady increase in the number of 'heavy' news consumers since 2016.

On the negative side, the number of Australians with high interest in news has fallen, news avoidance has risen, and many Australians think the news is often too negative and not that relevant to their lives.

Meanwhile, paying for online news continues to be low (14%), and faced with a choice many would prefer to subscribe to a video streaming service such as Netflix (34%) rather than online news (9%).

Though concern about fake news remains relatively high, there are signs that Australian news consumers are taking action to verify news sources they don't trust.

This year, Australian news consumers delivered a mixed report card for the news media. We asked new questions about how well the news media are performing in relation to scrutiny, relevance, negativity, keeping them up to date, and explaining events.

Two thirds of Australian news consumers agree the news keeps them up to date. This compares favourably to the global average of 62%.

More Australians also consider **the news media to be doing a good job at helping them understand what is going on in the world (57%)**, compared to the average of other countries (51%). It is also performing slightly better (45%) than the global average (42%) when it comes to holding those in power to account.

However, **Australian news consumers are more likely to think the news is too negative (44%)** compared to the international average (39%). Australians are also more likely to agree that the news is not relevant to them (28%) compared to the international average of 25%.

Fake news continues to be a source of concern for 62% of Australian news consumers, which is above the global average of 55%. On the bright side, this year's data indicate **news consumers are adopting verification techniques** such as checking stories against other sources, choosing more reliable brands and not sharing a dubious story.

This is good news and reflects heightened awareness about the risks of the online information environment. However, this self-reported shift towards fact checking reveals a divide along education and income lines.

Those who are less privileged are not as likely to check the veracity of news sources. More needs to be done to encourage all news consumers to embrace greater online vigilance, not just the wealthy and educated.

Following the global trend, many Australians would rather pay for video streaming services (34%) than online news (9%). When asked to provide their top three digital subscription choices, news was not listed by most of the Australians surveyed.

Our preference for video streaming services over news is higher than the average of other countries (28%). Our preference for news is also lower than the global average of 12%.

When it comes to paying for online news generally, Australians are slightly more likely to pay (14%) than the global average (13%). The data reveal a **gender 'paying' gap** with 17% of men paying for online news compared to 10% of women. Regardless of gender, **83% of news consumers encounter unwanted paywalls at least once a month.**

This year's report shows a **decrease in trust and an increase in news avoidance** among Australian news consumers. The number of Australians who try to avoid the news has increased from 57% to 62% since 2017.

Almost all (88%) of the news consumers who say they are worn out by the amount of news try to avoid news. Women are more likely to avoid news than men, and those who rely on social media as their main source of news are more likely to avoid the news.

Globally there has been an overall drop in trust and Australia maintains a slightly higher general trust in news (44%) compared to the global average (42%).

While we are consuming more news than in the past, **Australians are the 'lightest' news consumers** in the survey. That means we have the highest percentage of people consuming news once a day or less (48%), compared to 34% globally.

Our interest in news has fallen and we are not very interested in politics. Those who say they are highly interested in news has declined from 64% in 2016 to 58% in 2019; and **only 35% say they are interested in politics.** While TV remains the most popular way to consume news, more than half of Australians use their mobile phone for news (58%).

Differences in news consumption can be observed within demographic groups. This year we have provided snapshots at the back of the report highlighting key differences based on region, gender, generation, education and income.

The data reveal ongoing differences in news consumption between regional and metropolitan Australians. **Regional news consumers are less interested in news and politics than urban consumers, and are less likely to pay for online news.**

Consumption of newspapers is falling faster in regional areas and reliance on TV for news is much higher than in the cities. While increasing numbers of regional news consumers are accessing news online, fewer watch online news video. These findings likely reflect improving connectivity, the loss of local newspapers, and lower incomes and education in regional areas.

This report also highlights a **generational divide** among Australian news consumers who use social media as their main source of news. Since 2016 it has risen among Gen Z and fallen across other generations.

Almost **half of Gen Z (47%) use social media as their main source of news, and one-third of Gen Y (33%)** do. Whereas **older generations continue to rely on traditional offline sources of news.**

Although **younger Australians are more likely to avoid news and choose a video streaming service such as Netflix instead of subscribing to a news service**, Gen Y is the most likely to pay for online news (17%). Two thirds of Gen Z and Y rely mainly on their mobile phones to access news compared with 47% of Gen X and 26% of Baby Boomers.

One of the biggest divisions between news consumers stems from differences in education and income. Consistently, **those with lower education and income consume less news, are less interested, are less likely to pay, and are less likely to fact-check news**.

In part, this year's findings reflect 12 months of turbulence in the Australian news media. The news media landscape was marked by takeovers, closures, job losses and a leadership crisis at the national public broadcaster.

Data breaches and a lack of algorithmic transparency increased public and political debate about the role and responsibilities of Google and Facebook.

This general environment of turbulence in the news media was echoed in the corridors of power, with a third prime minister installed in as many years. When this year's survey was in field (end January/beginning February 2019) a federal election was pending, and two thirds of those who participated said they had low interest in politics.

Combined, this climate of instability sets the backdrop for this year's report and reflects a degraded news environment, which can be seen in some of the findings.

Trust in news, particularly news on social media, has fallen; interest in news has declined along with the number of channels people use to access news; more people are avoiding news; and many prefer to subscribe to entertainment services such as Netflix, rather than news.

On the positive side, most Australians feel the news media are doing a good job keeping them up to date and helping them understand what is going on in the world, albeit often through topics that are too negative.

KEY FINDINGS

NEWS MEDIA PERFORMANCE (Chapter 4)

- **Two thirds of Australian news consumers (66%) agree the news media keeps them up to date.**
- Less than half (45%) agree that journalism is holding the powerful to account.
- 44% agree the news media are often too negative.
- 28% agree the topics chosen by the news media **do not** feel relevant to them.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND NEWS (Chapter 5)

- **Two thirds (65%) have low interest in politics.**
- Left-wing news consumers are much more likely to fact-check than right-wing.
- More than half (53%) of right-wing orientated news consumers perceive the news to be too negative compared to 41% of left-wing consumers.
- News consumers who “don’t know” their political orientation use the fewest number of news brands.

AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD (Chapter 1)

- **Australians are less interested in news and politics than the global average.**
- Australians are the ‘lightest’ news consumers. 48% consume news once a day or less compared to 34% globally.
- Australians would much rather pay for video streaming services such as Netflix than subscribe to news compared to news consumers in other countries.
- Australians are less likely to check the accuracy of a story than in other countries.

PAYING FOR NEWS AND DIGITAL CONTENT (Chapter 3)

- **Paying for online news (14%) is close to the global average (13%).**
- More Australians would rather subscribe to video streaming services (34%) than online news (9%).
- There is a gender paying gap; 17% of men pay for online news compared to 10% of women.
- 83% of news consumers encounter unwanted paywalls at least once a month.

FAKE NEWS AND FACT CHECKING (Chapter 7)

- **62% of Australian online news consumers remain concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.**
- 36% of news consumers say they have checked a news story for accuracy.

- 26% of people concerned about fake news have started using more reliable news sources.
- People who access five or more news brands are the most likely to fact-check.

NEWS ACCESS AND AVOIDANCE (Chapter 2)

- **News avoidance has risen among Australian news consumers from 57% in 2017 to 62% in 2019.**
- Most Australians are **not** worn out by news, but those who are avoid it.
- The number of heavy news users has increased from 42% to 52% since 2016; however, those with a high interest in news have fallen from 64% to 58% since 2016.
- More than half use five or more news brands (54%).
- More than half of Australians access news via their mobile phones (58%).

TRUST IN NEWS (Chapter 6)

- **Trust in news has fallen globally, including in Australia.**
- **Distrust in social media has risen** from 45% in 2018 to 49% in 2019 and **trust in social media has fallen** from 24% to 18%.
- Those who trust news avoid it less and are less worn out by it.
- Trust is much higher among those who access online brands directly (65%).

SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS (Chapter 8)

- **Using Facebook for news has decreased since 2016 (-9), while YouTube (+4), Snapchat (+3), and Instagram (+4) have risen.**
- There has been a drop in online news engagement across all sharing, commenting and liking activity.
- The most popular mode of sharing news continues to be talking face-to-face with friends and colleagues (37%).

PODCASTS AND SMART SPEAKERS (Chapter 9)

- The use of voice-activated speakers is growing rapidly, but not for accessing news.
- 27% of Australian news consumers listen to podcasts, which is lower than the global average (36%).
- Most people listen to podcasts at home (58%).
- The most popular motivation for Australians to listen to a podcast (50%) is ‘to learn something’.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28: Prime Minister Scott Morrison and ABC Chair Designate Ita Buttrose arrive at a press conference in Sydney. Prime Minister Morrison announced the Government has recommended to the Governor-General that Ita Buttrose be appointed as the next Chair of the ABC.

IMAGE: DAN HIMBRECHTS/AAP IMAGE



1 AUSTRALIA AND THE WORLD

- Australians are less interested in news and politics than the global average.
- Australians are the lightest news consumers.
- Australians, like consumers in most other countries, would rather pay for video streaming services such as Netflix than subscribe to online news.
- Australians are more likely to think the news is negative and less relevant than in many other countries; but, better at keeping them up to date and scrutinising the powerful.
- Australians are less likely to check the accuracy of a story than in other countries.

This year 38 countries participated in the global Reuters Institute Digital News survey. In this chapter, we compare Australian news consumer behaviour against that of news consumers in other countries.

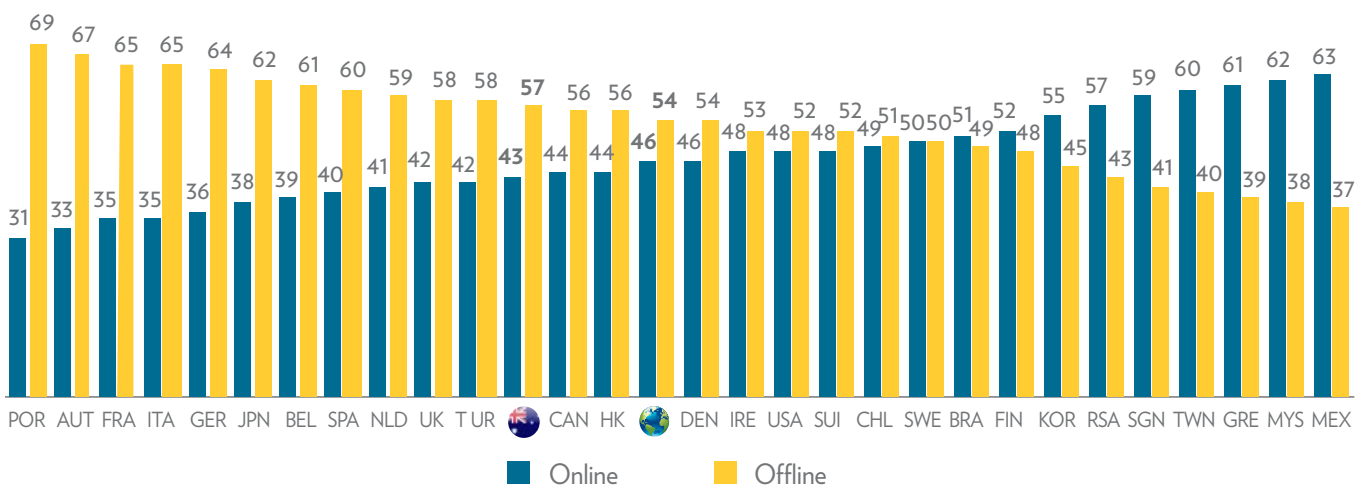
GLOBAL SIMILARITIES

ONLINE SOURCES TAKE OVER AS MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS

While there is a big shift globally away from traditional offline sources to online sources as people's **main** source of news, in Australia offline news remain dominant as the **main** source. More than half (57%) of Australian still use

offline sources as the **main** source of news which is slightly higher than the global average (54%). This compares to 43% of Australians who mainly use online sources, which is below the global average of 46% (see **figure 1.1**).

FIGURE 1.1: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS – OFFLINE VERSUS ONLINE, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)



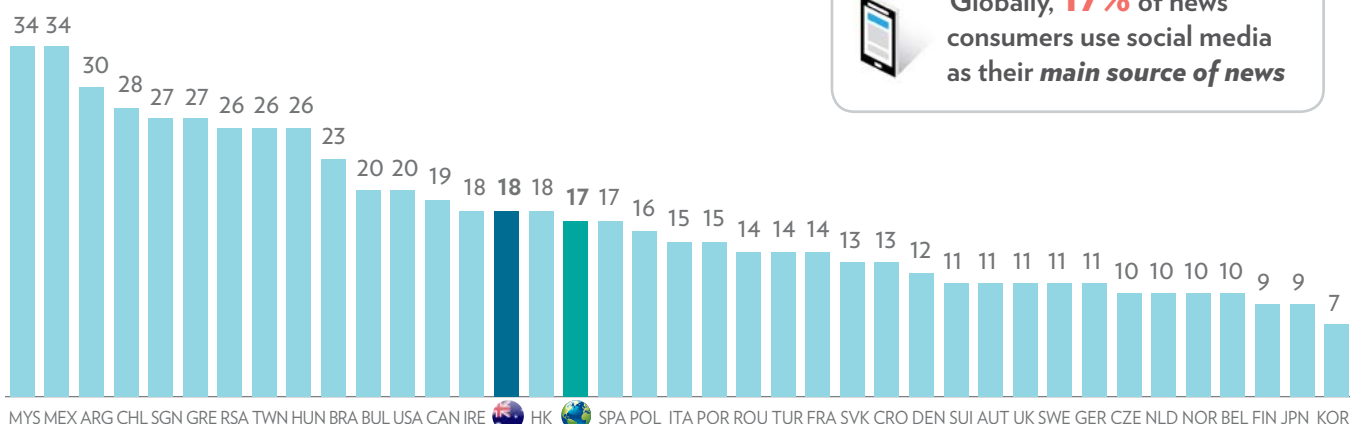
Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? Television news bulletins or programmes; 24-hour news television channels; Radio news bulletins or programmes; Printed newspapers; Printed magazines; Websites/apps of newspapers; Websites/apps of news magazines; Websites/apps of TV and Radio companies; Websites/apps of other news outlets; Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogs.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS RISING AS A MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

Globally, the use of social media as a general source of news has remained stable over the past 12 months at 54%. However, across the 38 countries surveyed, the use of social media as a **main** source of news has risen slightly

from 15% in 2018 to 17% in 2019. In Australia the use of social media as a main source of news has remained relatively stable at 18% (17% in 2018), close to the global average (see **figure 1.2**).

FIGURE 1.2: SOCIAL MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



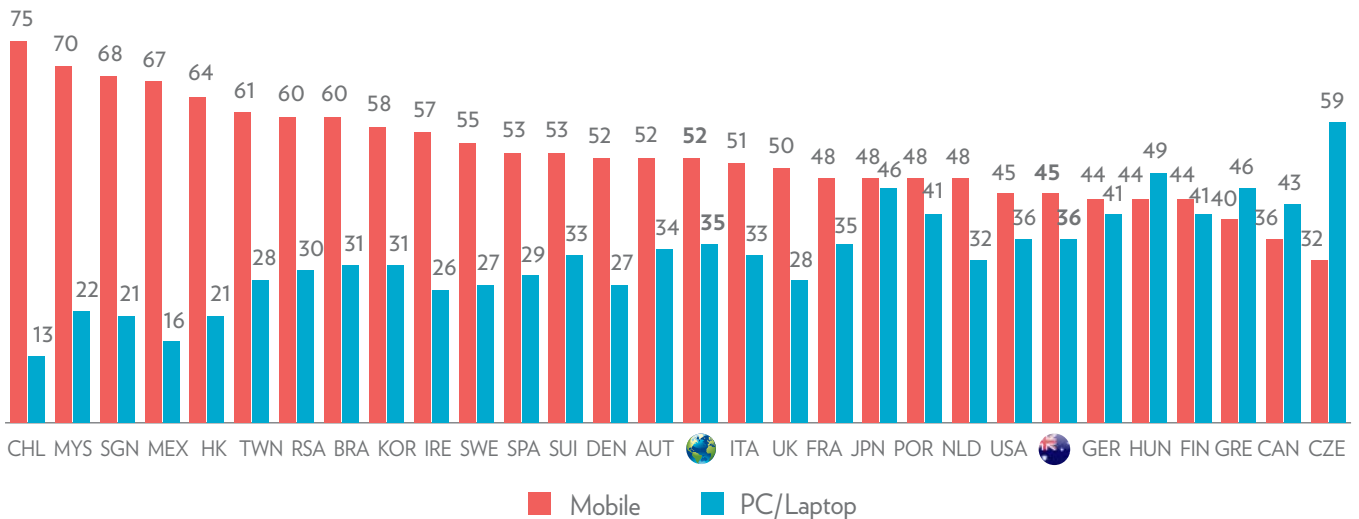
Globally, **17%** of news consumers use social media as their **main source of news**

THE USE OF MOBILE PHONES FOR NEWS INCREASES GLOBALLY

Mobile phones are increasingly becoming the main device for accessing news for Australians. Over the past twelve months there has been a sharp rise in the use of smart phones for news from 36% in 2018 to 45% in 2019.

Despite this significant rise, the use of mobile phones in Australia as the **main** device to access news is below the global average (52%) (see **figure 1.3**).

FIGURE 1.3: MAIN DEVICE FOR NEWS, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)



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? Smartphone made by Apple (iPhone); Smartphone by another manufacturer (e.g. Samsung, LG, HTC, Sony, Nokia Lumia, etc.); Other internet connected phone (e.g. older BlackBerry, Nokia feature phone etc.); Laptop or desktop computer (at work or home); Tablet Computer made by Apple (e.g. iPad, iPad Air or iPad mini); Other tablet computer (e.g. Samsung Galaxy, Kindle Fire HD, Google Nexus etc.); Ebook reader (e.g. other Kindle device, Kobo etc.); Connected TV (only select if you have used an ON DEMAND news service such as a red button news service, digital text or a news app via your TV); Smart TV (only select if you have used an ON DEMAND news service such as a red button news service, digital text or a news app via your TV); Smart watch or wristband that connects to the internet; Voice activated connected speaker (e.g. Amazon Echo, Google Home, Apple HomePod); None of these; Don't know.

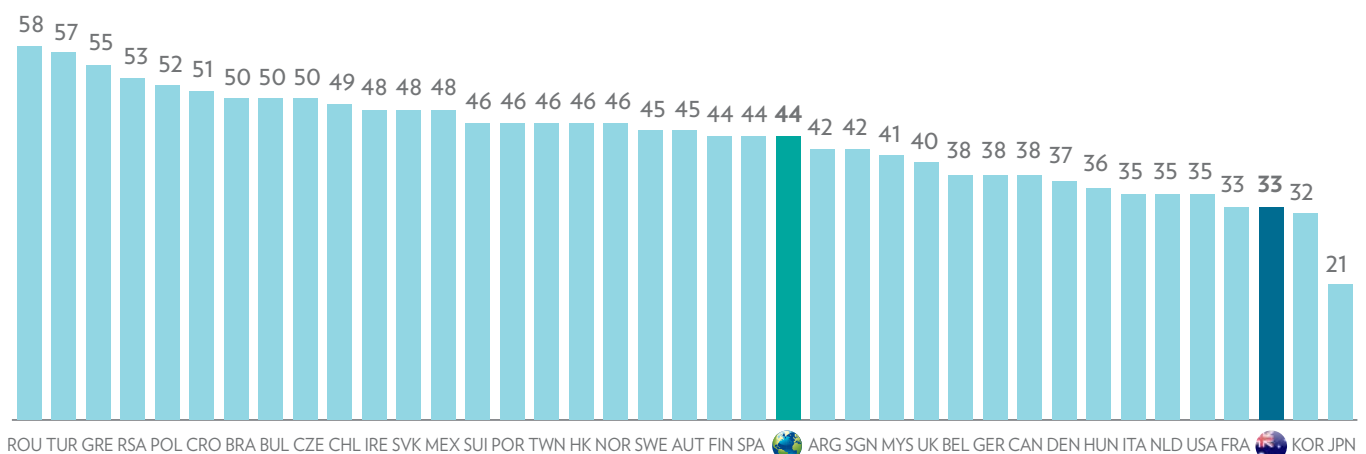
GLOBAL DIFFERENCES

AUSTRALIANS USE FEWER NEWS SOURCES THAN NEWS USERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

Compared to news consumers in the other 37 countries surveyed, Australians are among the least likely to use 4 or more sources (or channels) to access news. Only one third (33%) of Australian news consumers say they use 4 or more sources to find news. This is well below the global average of 44% and the global leader Romania (58%).

Australia ranks 36th out of 38 countries for the number of sources used to discover news (see **figure 1.4**). Australians are also much more likely than most other countries to use just one channel to find news (see Chapter 2: News Access and Avoidance for more information).

FIGURE 1.4: FOUR OR MORE SOURCES (CHANNELS) TO ACCESS NEWS (%)

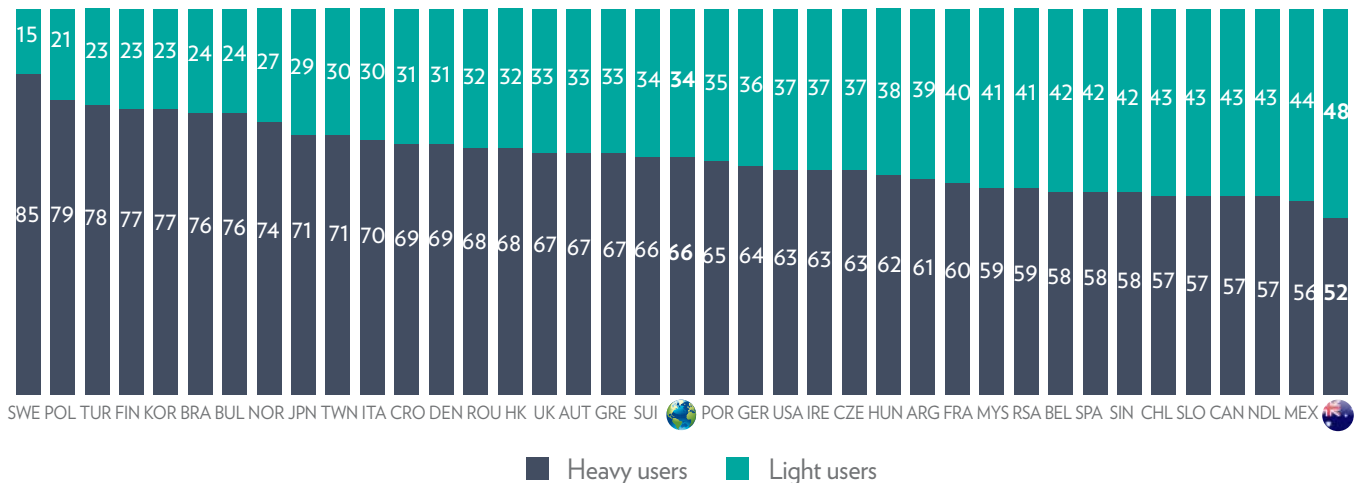


AUSTRALIANS ARE THE LIGHTEST NEWS CONSUMERS OUT OF 38 COUNTRIES

Not only do Australians access news from fewer sources, they also access news less often than all of the countries in the survey. Australia also has the highest number of 'light' news consumers who access news once a day or less (48%), which is considerably above the global average of 34%. Australia also has the lowest number of 'heavy' news

consumers who access news more than once a day (52%), compared to the global average of 66%. In contrast to Sweden where 85% are 'heavy' news consumers and only 15% are 'light' news consumers, Australia ranks very poorly (see **figure 1.5**).

FIGURE 1.5: HEAVY & LIGHT NEWS CONSUMERS (%)



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). More than 10 times a day; Between 6 and 10 times a day; Between 2 and 5 times a day; Once a day; 4-6 days a week; 2-3 days a week; Once a week; Less often than once a week; Less often than once a month; Never; Don't know.

ATTITUDES TO NEWS

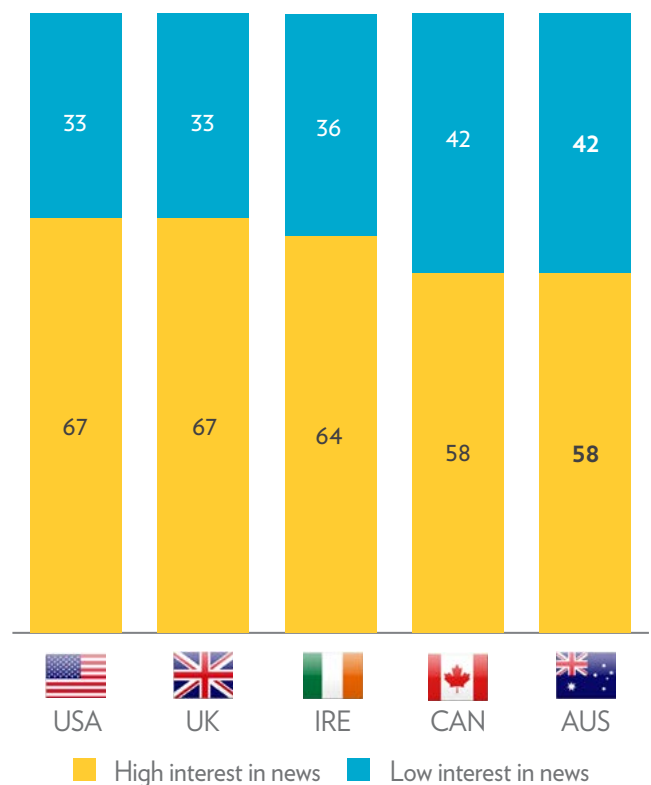
Some of the biggest differences we see between Australia and the other 37 countries in the survey appear in consumer attitudes towards news.

NEWS INTEREST: AUSTRALIANS ARE LESS INTERESTED IN NEWS

News consumers in Australia are less interested in news than news users in many other countries. 58% of Australians say they have a high interest in news which is below the global average (60%). Compared to all other countries Australia ranks 22nd out of 38 for interest in news.

However, when compared to other English-speaking countries with similar western democratic systems (UK, US, Canada and Ireland), Australians and Canadians are the least interested in news (see **figure 1.6**).

FIGURE 1.6: INTEREST IN NEWS (%)



Australia ranks **22nd** out of 38 countries for **interest in news**

Q1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know.

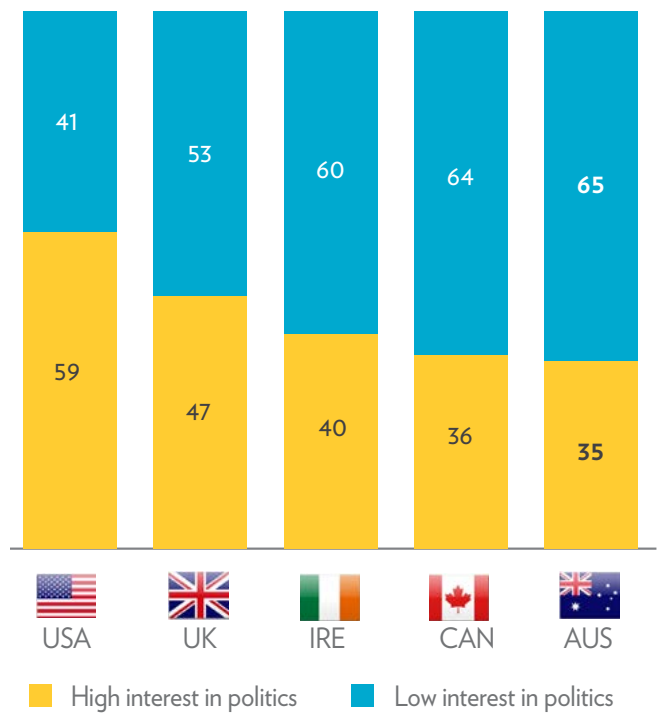
POLITICS: AUSTRALIANS HAVE LOWER INTEREST IN POLITICS

Australians are also slightly less interested in politics (35%) than the 38-country average (37%). Turkish news consumers have the highest interest in politics (67%) and Taiwan has the lowest (19%).

Again, when compared to other English-speaking countries with similar western democratic systems, Australians are the least interested in politics, whereas news consumers in the US are the most interested (see **figure 1.7**).



FIGURE 1.7: INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)



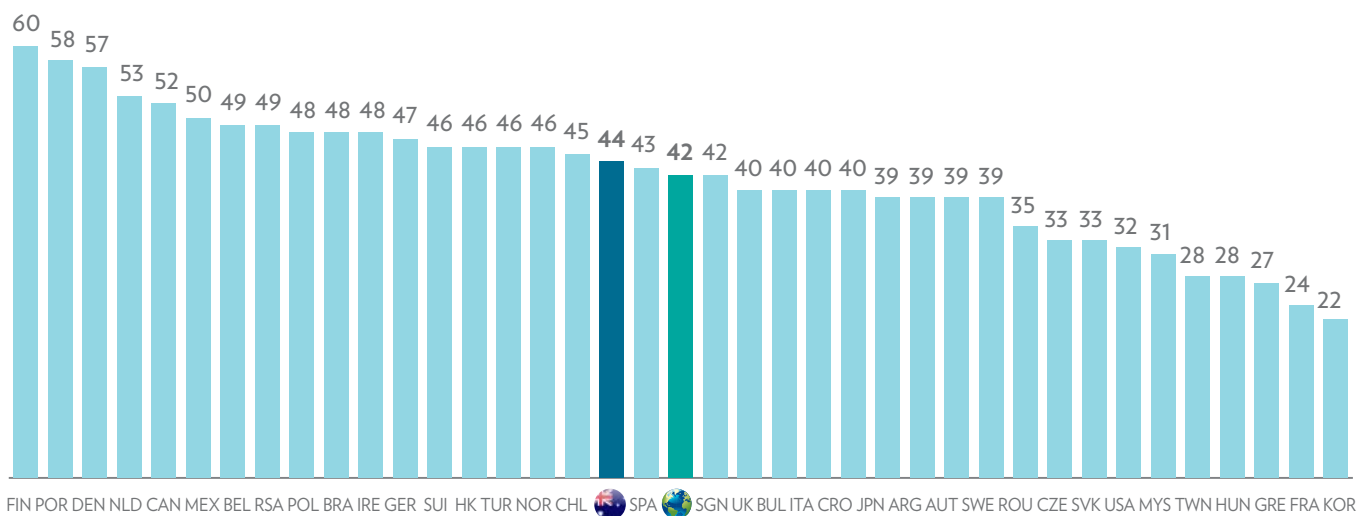
Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know.

TRUST: AUSTRALIANS' TRUST IN NEWS HAS FALLEN BUT IS HIGHER THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE

General trust in news has fallen by an average of 2% across all countries from 2018. In 2019 Australians' general trust is 44%, but it is still above the global average of 42%, which places Australia 18th out of 38 countries for trust. Finland has the highest trust in news and Korea the lowest – a shift

from last year, when Korea and Greece had the lowest trust. Compared to other English-speaking countries with similar political systems, Australia is firmly in the middle below Canada (52%) and Ireland (48%) but above the UK (40%) and the US (32%) (see **figure 1.8**).

FIGURE 1.8: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS (%)



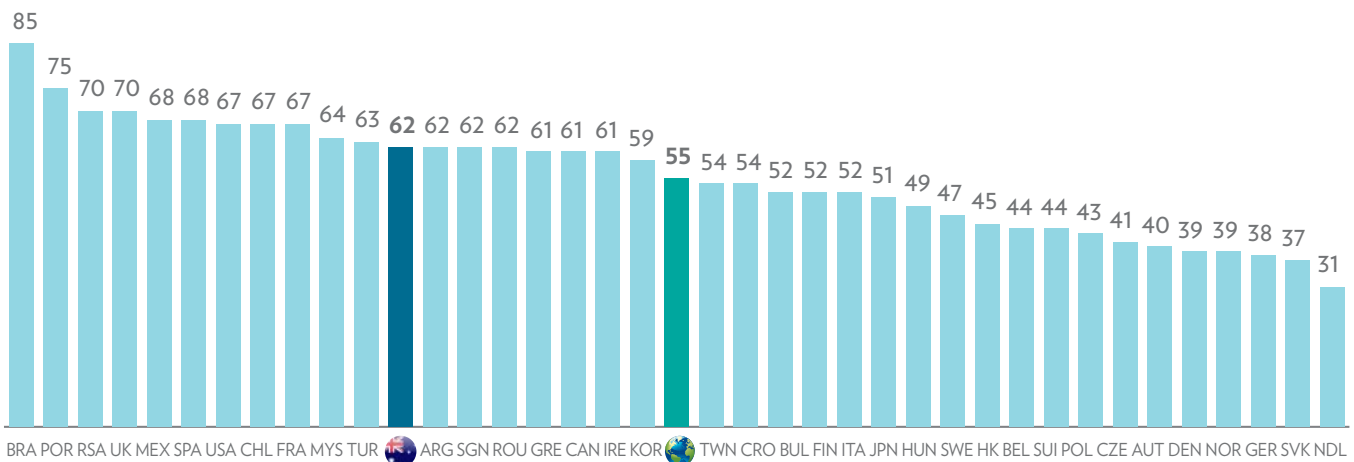
Q6_2016. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. First we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within your country. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time; Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

FAKE NEWS CONCERN: AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS REAL OR FAKE ON THE INTERNET

Australians continue to be more concerned about fake news than news consumers in other countries. In 2018, 67% of Australian news consumers said they were concerned about political misinformation, compared to a global average of 45%.

In this year's survey, we asked if people were concerned about what is real or fake on the internet. Australians show a higher level of concern about the veracity of online information (62%) than the global average (55%) (see **figure 1.9**).

FIGURE 1.9: CONCERN ABOUT FAKE NEWS (%)



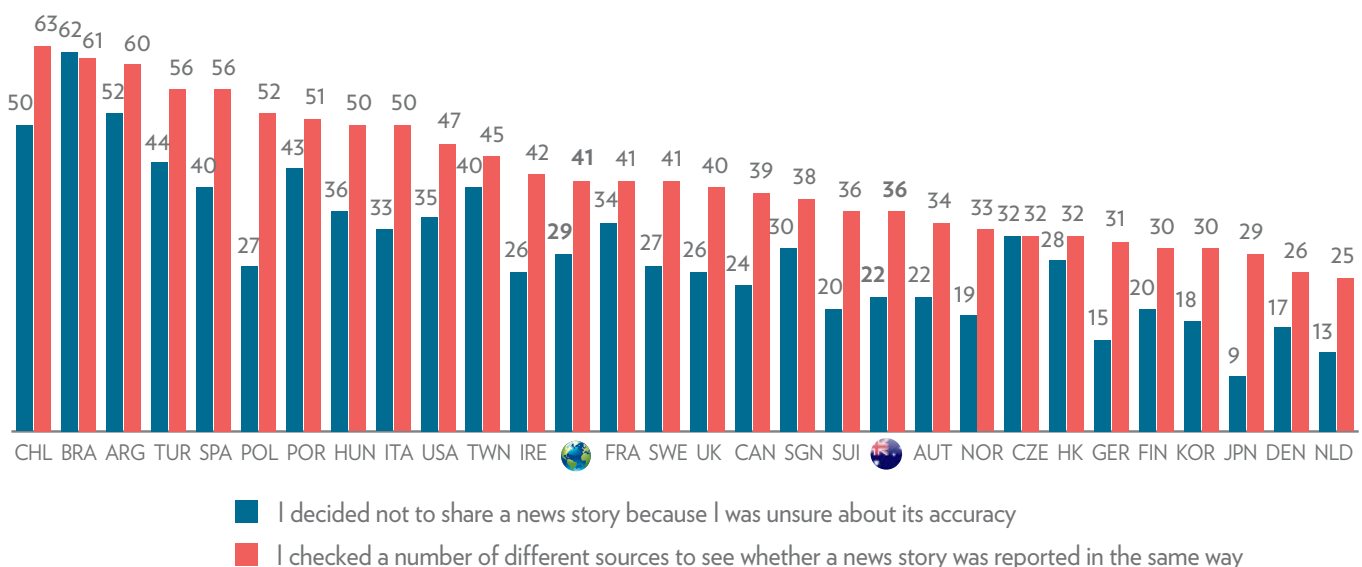
Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet." Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

FACT-CHECKING: AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO SHARE A DUBIOUS STORY

Despite their higher level of concern about what is real or fake on the internet, Australians are more likely to share a dubious story without checking it. This year we asked survey participants what action they take, if any, when they think they have encountered fake news. The results show

Australians are less likely to check the veracity of a story by checking with alternative sources (36%) compared with 41% globally. In addition, only 22% of Australian participants say they would NOT share a story if they thought it was dubious compared to the international average of 29% (**figure 1.10**).

FIGURE 1.10: FACT-CHECKING ACTIVITIES, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)



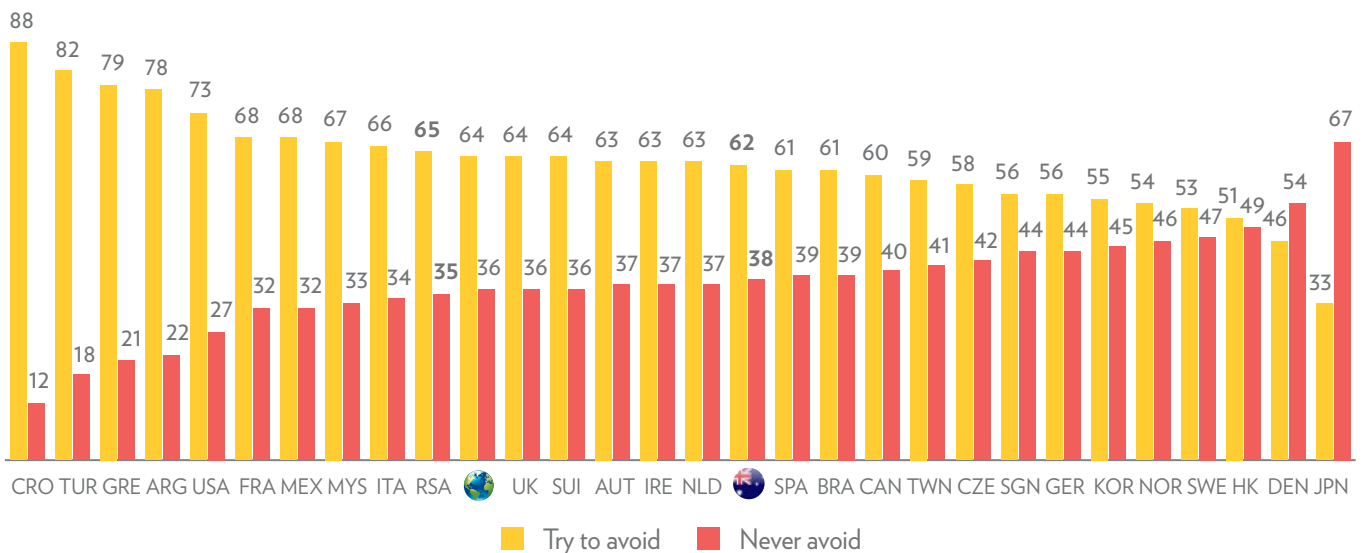
Q_LIT_2019. Have you done any of the following in the last year? Please select all that apply. I decided not to share a news story because I was unsure about its accuracy; I checked a number of different sources to see whether a news story was reported in the same way; I started relying more on sources of news that are considered more reputable; I stopped using certain news sources because I was unsure about the accuracy of their reporting; I discussed a news story with person I trust because I was unsure about its accuracy; I stopped paying attention to news shared by someone because I am unsure whether I trust that person; None of these; Don't know.

NEWS AVOIDANCE: AUSTRALIANS ARE SLIGHTLY LESS LIKELY TO AVOID NEWS

This year's survey reveals that news avoidance among Australian news consumers has increased by 5% since 2017 (up from 57%). Despite this, Australians are still slightly less likely to avoid news than their global counterparts.

Almost two thirds of Australians (62%) say they actively try and avoid news sometimes, often or occasionally compared to the global average of 64% (see **figure 1.11**).

FIGURE 1.11: NEWS AVOIDANCE, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)



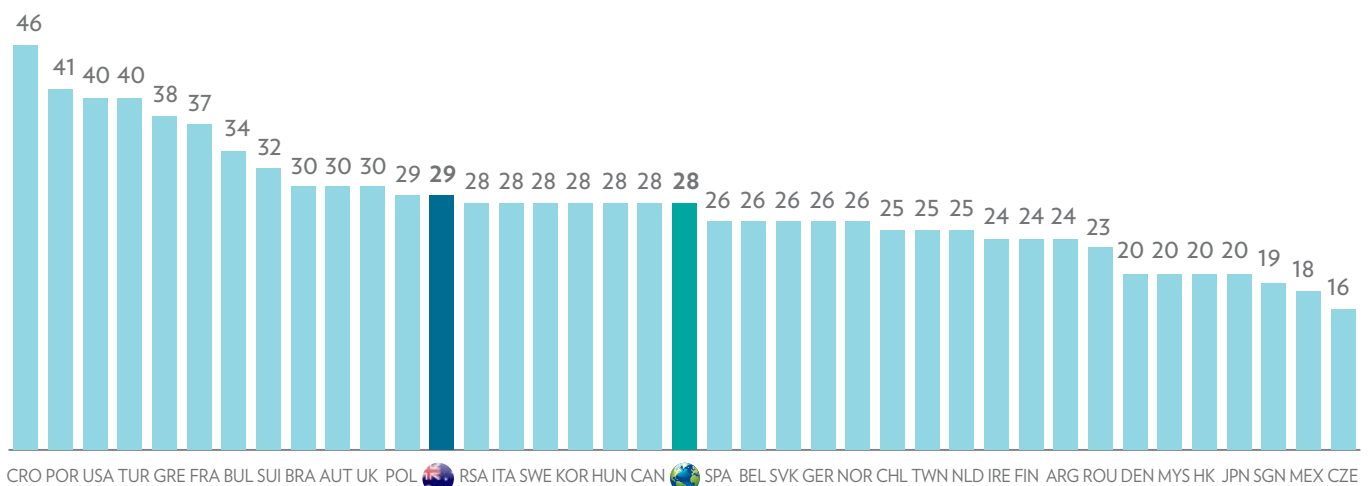
Q1d_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Often; Sometimes; Occasionally; Never; Don't know.

NEWS FATIGUE

Despite the enormous number of online information sources available, globally, consumers say they are not worn out by news. Of the 38 countries surveyed, an average of just 28% agree they are fatigued by the amount of news. This closely reflects the sentiment in Australia where 29% say they are worn out by news (see **figure 1.12**).



FIGURE 1.12: NEWS FATIGUE (%)



Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days." Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

HOW ARE THE AUSTRALIAN NEWS MEDIA PERFORMING?

This year, survey participants were asked if the news media in their country are doing a good job. They were asked about five elements: scrutiny, relevance, negativity, keeping them up to date, and explaining events. The Australian news media have received a mixed report card, and the results vary significantly compared to the global average.

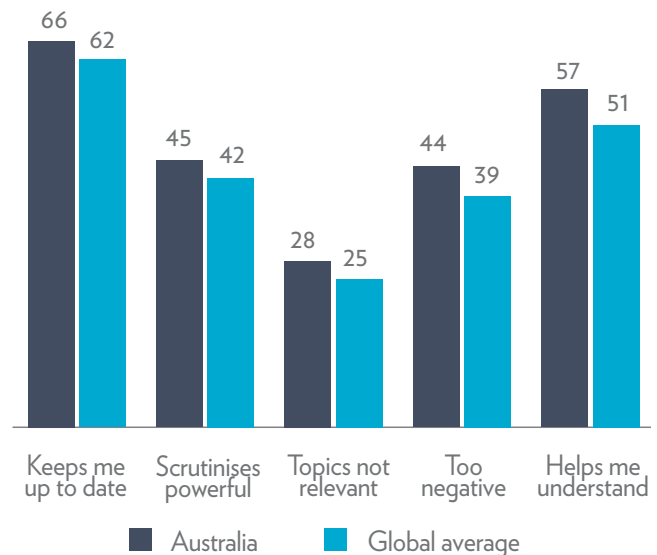
AUSTRALIAN NEWS MEDIA ARE BETTER AT KEEPING PEOPLE UP TO DATE AND EXPLAINING THE NEWS, BUT ARE MORE NEGATIVE

Two thirds of Australian news consumers (66%) agree the news keeps them up to date. This compares favourably to the global average of 62%. More Australians (57%) also consider the news media to be doing a good job at helping them understand what is going on in the world, compared to the average of other countries (51%). It is also performing better (45%) than the global average (42%) when it comes to holding those in power to account.

However, Australian news consumers are also more likely to think the news is too negative (44%) compared to the global average (39%). Australians are also slightly more likely to agree that the news is not relevant to them (28%) compared to the international average of 25% (see **figure 1.13**).

When compared to other English-speaking countries with similar media and political systems to Australia (UK, US, Ireland and Canada) a less positive picture emerges (see Chapter Four: News Media Performance).

FIGURE 1.13: PERCEPTION OF NEWS PERFORMANCE (%)



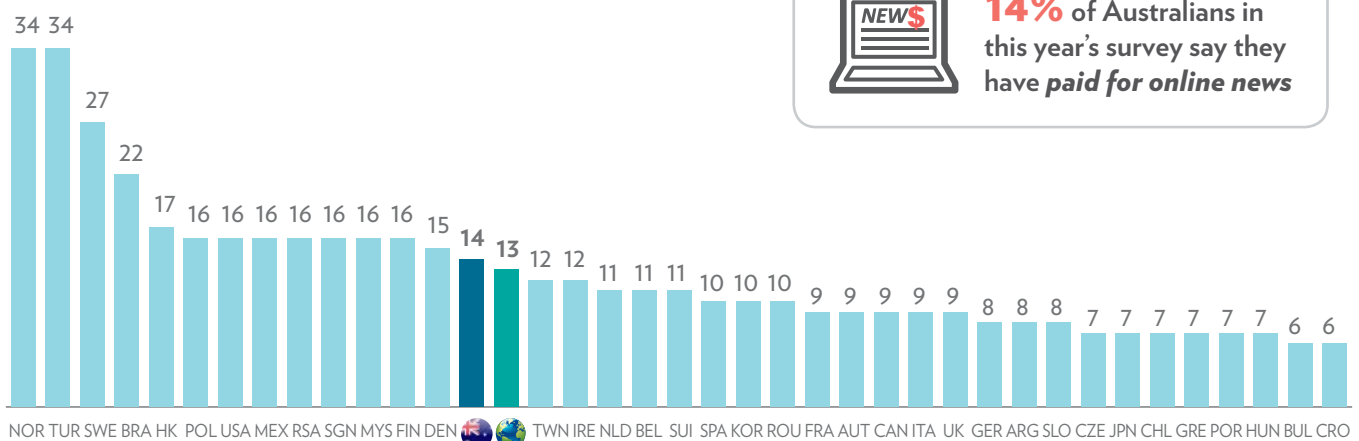
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses; The topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to me; The news media often takes too negative view of events; The news media keeping me **up to date** about what's going on; The news media helps me **understand** the news of the day - Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS

Australians are just as likely as news consumers in other countries to pay – or more accurately, not to pay – for online news. As **figure 1.14** below shows, 14% of Australians in this year's survey say they have paid for online news, which

matches the global average. However, this rate of payment is well below that of the Norwegians and Turks, who are the most likely to pay for online news (34%).

FIGURE 1.14: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)



14% of Australians in this year's survey say they have **paid 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): Yes; No; Don't know.

GLOBALLY, NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PAY FOR VIDEO STREAMING SERVICES SUCH AS NETFLIX THAN NEWS

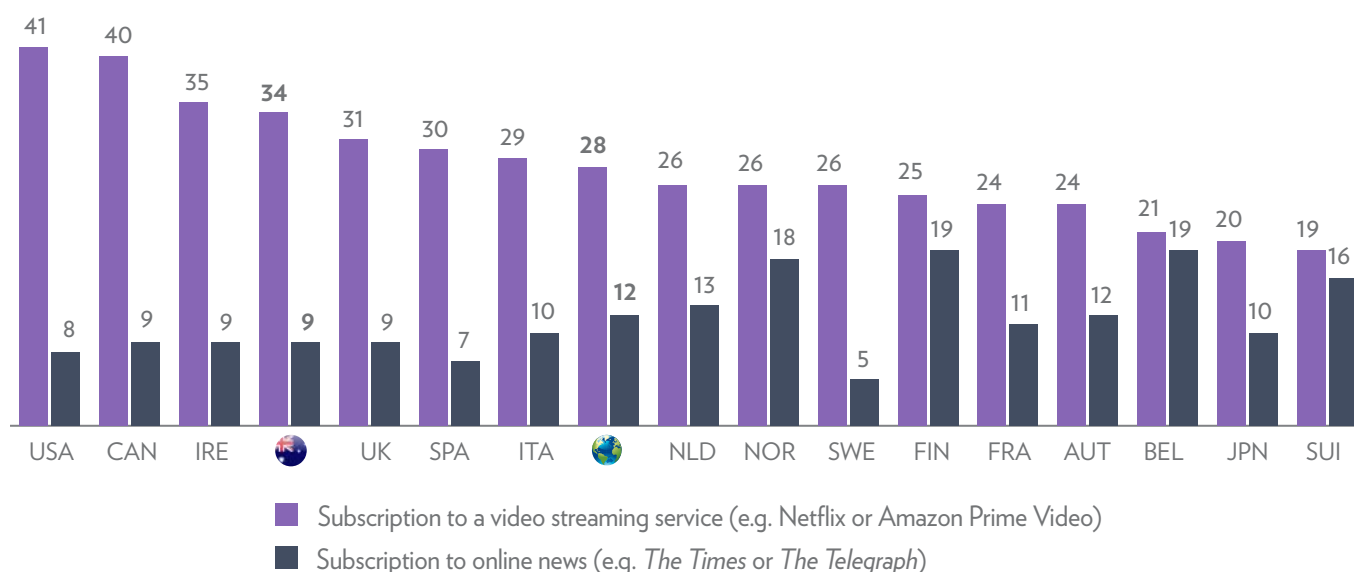
When given the choice between paying for one online subscription service per year, Australians are much more likely to choose video streaming services instead of news when compared to news consumers in 14 other countries.

Slightly more than one third (34%) of Australians say they would prioritise a subscription for video compared to an average of 28% across other countries. Just 9% of Australians say subscribing to an online news service

would be their top priority, compared to an average of 12% of news consumers in other countries. However, the preference for video services was starkest in the US, where 41% of news consumers said they would choose Netflix over news (8%).

This contrasts strongly with news consumers in Switzerland who are almost equally interested in subscribing to news (16%) and video streaming (19%) (see **figure 1.15**).

FIGURE 1.15: ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION FIRST PREFERENCE, SELECT COUNTRIES (%)



Q_VALUE_2019_A. If you could only have one for the next 12 months, which one of the following would you choose? Subscription to a music streaming service (e.g. Spotify or Apple Music); Subscription to an online gaming service (e.g. PlayStation Plus or Xbox Live Gold); Subscription to an online sports event or channel (e.g. Sky Sports or BT Sport); Subscription to a video streaming service (e.g. Netflix or Amazon Prime Video); Subscription to online news (e.g. The Times or The Telegraph); Subscription to a service for storing data, photos, backups etc. (e.g. Dropbox or iCloud); Subscription to an online dating service (e.g. Match.com or Tinder Gold); None.

SUMMARY

Australia is part of the global trend towards increasingly using online news sources and embracing mobile technologies for news. However, this year's survey clearly shows Australian news consumers have lower interest in news and politics, are the lightest news consumers, and are less likely to check the veracity of a story despite having high concerns about fake news. Australians are also more likely to avoid news than news consumers in other countries.

Given the choice between paying for video streaming or news, Australians are much more likely to choose streaming their favourite sitcom over a subscription for an online newspaper. This continues to augur badly for a news industry still struggling for financial security.

On the positive side, Australians are more likely to think the news media are good at keeping them up to date and explaining the day's events than in many of the countries surveyed. Compared to the global average, Australians are slightly more likely to think the news media are holding the powerful to account. But when it comes to negativity, Australia rates poorly.

COMMENTARY

News industry finally faces up to new realities

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

This year's report comes against the backdrop of political and economic instability, along with intensifying concerns about giant tech companies and their impact on society. News organisations have taken the lead in reporting these trends, but also find themselves challenged by them – further depressing an industry reeling from more than a decade of digital disruption.

Platform power – and the ruthless efficiency of their advertising operations – has undermined news business models contributing to a series of high-profile layoffs in traditional and digital media operations. Australia has not been immune to these trends with a year of takeovers, closures and job losses – following the absorption of Fairfax papers by Nine Media and global cuts at Vice and BuzzFeed.

In many parts of the world political polarisation has encouraged the growth of partisan agendas online, which together with clickbait and various forms of misinformation is helping to further undermine trust in media – raising new questions about how to deliver balanced and fair reporting in the digital age.

Against this background we are seeing some real shifts of focus. News organisations are increasingly looking to subscription and membership or other forms of reader contribution to pay the bills in a so-called 'pivot to paid'.

Platforms are rethinking their responsibilities in the face of events (e.g. Christchurch attacks) and regulatory threats, with Facebook rebalancing its business towards messaging apps and groups – the so-called 'pivot to private'. Meanwhile audiences continue to embrace on-demand formats with new excitement around podcasts and voice technologies – the so-called 'pivot to audio'.

“Platforms are rethinking their responsibilities in the face of events and regulatory threats, with Facebook rebalancing its business towards messaging apps and groups – the so-called 'pivot to private'.”

As elsewhere, Australian publishers are wrestling with new challenges and opportunities. But how does the market compare with the rest of the world and where should they look for inspiration?

From clicks to commitment

Around the world publishers are moving away from clicks and chasing audiences on third party platforms like Facebook and Google. Instead, most have started to focus on building commitment and relationships with users who may ultimately pay.

But the move to online news has significantly weakened that direct relationship between readers and publishers. In Australia just a quarter of our sample (24%) say they prefer to access a website or app directly – down 5% on a year ago.

Over half (55%) prefer to access news through either search engines, social media, or news aggregators, where large tech companies typically deploy algorithms rather than editors to select and rank stories.

“The move to online news has significantly weakened that direct relationship between readers and publishers.”

Australia's dependence on these third-party platforms is at a similar level to the United States and Canada – as consumers *pick and mix* their gateways to news. But this pattern is in sharp contrast to Northern European countries like Norway and Finland, where we see much greater brand loyalty and a *mainly direct* traffic model.

Here, almost two thirds prefer to start their news journeys with a news website or app. Elsewhere, preferred access is often *social first*, with over four in ten (42%) preferring this route in Chile and many other Latin American markets. In parts of Asia, publishers are *deeply aggregated*. In South Korea half (48%) say they prefer news via a search portal like Naver or Daum and 27% via a news aggregator. Just 4% prefer to go directly to a news website or app, by far the lowest in our survey.

It is no co-incidence that countries with a *mainly direct* model have also been the most successful in charging customers for online news. Over a third (34%) pay for some online news in Norway compared with 14% in Australia and 10% in South Korea. Developing greater loyalty is now key priority for publishers using techniques such as email newsletters and mobile alerts combined with more insight into the needs of each user.

Building trust will be critical for building a sustainable future

Reader based models (such as subscription or the contribution model pioneered by the *Guardian*) will require more trust as they require real commitment and a higher level of quality. Trust metrics are not perfect but they can be seen as proxy for how much consumers value individual brands – or the news media in general.

Australia is broadly in line with our international average with just over four in ten (44%) saying they trust the news most of the time, but that still leaves the majority indifferent or openly hostile to the media.

“Reader based models will require more trust as they require real commitment and a higher level of quality.”

Concern about misinformation in Australia (62%) is higher than our survey average, but this may be more due to concerns about clickbait and agenda filled news rather than Russian bots or completely fabricated news.

Support for this view comes from a series of questions we ask about attitudes to the news media. While two thirds (66%) of our sample think that the news media does a good job keeping them up to date, a smaller number thinks it does a good job in explaining the news (57%).

On top of that over a quarter (28%) say they feel worn out by the amount of news these days while more than four in ten (44%) feel the news media often takes too negative a view of events. The Australian media are seen as amongst the most negative in our survey along with the UK – another country with a tabloid media sector that takes few prisoners.

If the media is to build trust and persuade more readers to pay for news there is much work to do. The media will need to spend more time thinking about how to help readers make sense of a complex world and less time just bombarding people with information. More constructive and distinctive journalism will also help, but even this may not be enough.

New formats; text may not be enough

The core problem with text based digital news coverage is that it has so far proved less effective at absorbing people's time than traditional formats such as print and broadcast. This is why more publishers are looking to create content in different formats and why media convergence has become such a hot topic.

Successful brands like the New York Times are increasingly playing across print, digital, video and audio. In the United States, Vice is producing a nightly TV show for HBO while Vox Media has created a documentary series for Netflix. The Guardian also now represents its brand via TV documentaries, live events and a successful new daily news podcast.

Across our survey, over a third (36%) now use a podcast monthly. The figure in Australia is slightly lower (27%) but this still represents a significant opportunity with listenership

heavily weighted to younger age groups. Other new audio opportunities are emerging with the reach of voice activated speakers growing from 2% to 8% in the last year. Australia is unusual in that Google home devices are far more widely used than Amazon Alexa which are much more popular in the UK and United States.

This year's report sees the news industry at yet another crossroads. Publishers are pushing hard to distinguish high-quality journalism from the mass of information that is now published on the internet – and more and more of them are looking to charge for that difference.

Some of the biggest brands have already shown they are able to attract a large number of paying subscribers, but the road ahead will be more challenging for many other publishers. Loyalty and the ability to forge direct connections will be critical, but this may be hard to achieve just through the desktop or mobile web where news access tends to be fleeting and distracted.

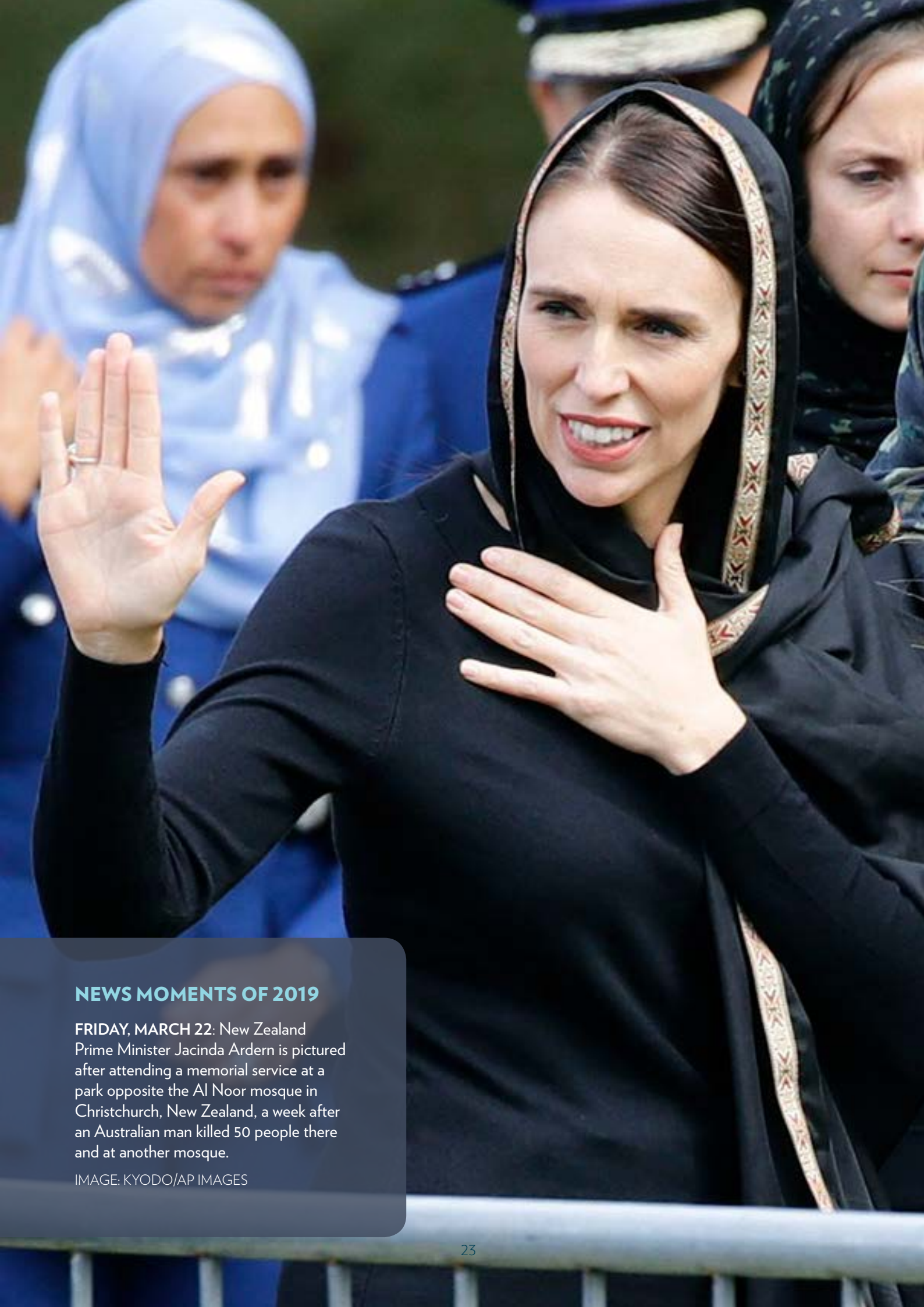
That's why publishers are showing such interest in podcasts, longer form video, and even live events – more immersive formats that allow a brand personality to be expressed more fully while maintaining the choice and control demanded by a younger generation.

Wider changes are also in the air as subscription-based bundled businesses like Netflix, Spotify, Amazon (and now Apple) edge into the news market. But the relationship with these subscription players is unlikely to be any easier than with existing ad-focused models we've been used to. Platforms will want to take a substantial cut in revenue in return for distribution and will ultimately own the relationship with the customer.

“This year's report sees the news industry at yet another crossroads. Publishers are pushing hard to distinguish high-quality journalism from the mass of information that is now published on the internet – and more and more of them are looking to charge for that difference.”

Established forms of distributed discovery like search and social media continue to be important, but newer platform products and services such as private messaging, and voice systems are starting to make an impact too. It is a crucial question whether publishers can in fact use these new platform services in ways that are mutually beneficial and deliver sustainable returns for publishers.

Despite the greater opportunities for paid content, it is likely that most commercial news provision will remain free at the point of use, dependent on low margin advertising, a market where big tech platforms hold most of the cards. This is where competition for attention will be most acute, where journalistic reputation will be most at risk, and where diversified revenue streams and smart strategies will be most critical for survival.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

FRIDAY, MARCH 22: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is pictured after attending a memorial service at a park opposite the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, a week after an Australian man killed 50 people there and at another mosque.

IMAGE: KYODO/AP IMAGES



2 NEWS ACCESS AND AVOIDANCE

- The number of Australians who try to avoid the news has increased from 57% to 62% since 2017.
- Most Australians are *not* worn out by news, but those who are avoid it (88%).
- The number of 'heavy news users' has increased from 42% to 52% since 2016; however, the number of Australians with high interest in news has declined from 64% to 58% since 2016.
- More than half use 5 or more news brands (54%).
- Mobile continues to rise as the main device for news: more than half of Australians access news via mobile phones (58%).

HEAVY' AND 'LIGHT' NEWS CONSUMERS

AUSTRALIANS ARE ACCESSING NEWS MORE BUT ARE THE 'LIGHTEST' NEWS CONSUMERS

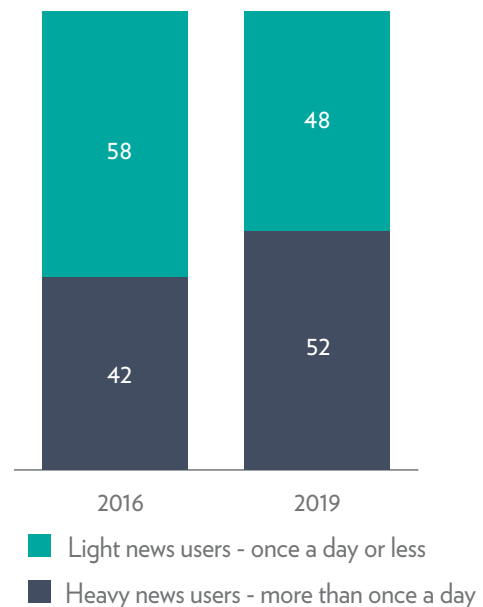
There has been a gradual overall increase in news consumption in Australia since 2016 despite year-on-year fluctuations. More than half of those surveyed are 'heavy' news users who access news more than once a day (52%). This marks a 10% rise since 2016 (see **figure 2.1**).

However, compared to the average of other countries (66%), the percentage of heavy news consumers in Australia is low. In addition, Australia has the highest percentage of 'light' news consumers in the survey (48%) compared to 34% globally (See Chapter One: Australia and the World for more).

GEN Z ACCESSES NEWS LESS THAN OTHER GENERATIONS

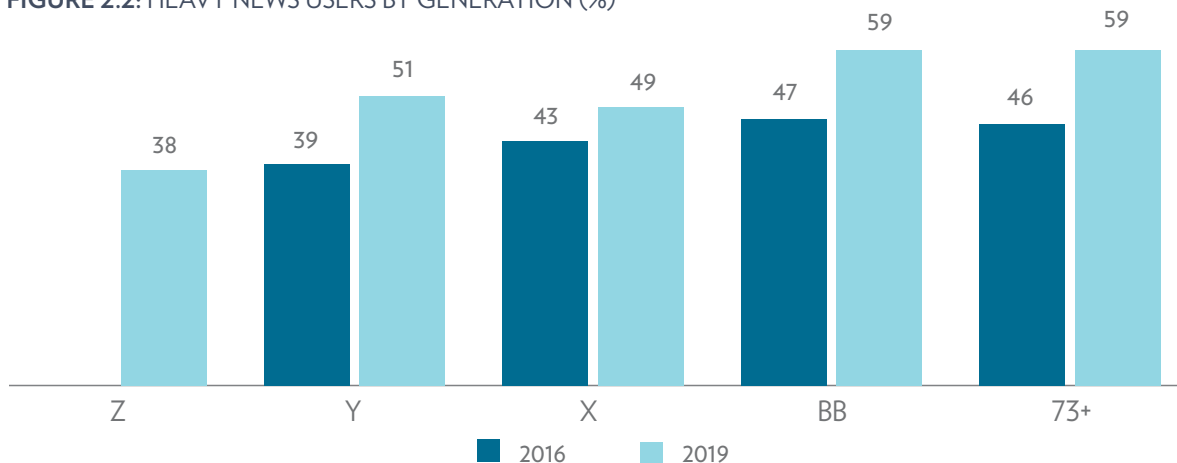
In 2019, Gen Z are the least likely to be 'heavy' news consumers and access news more than once a day. Across the generations*, the number of heavy news users has risen since 2016 (see **figure 2.2**).

FIGURE 2.1: 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.

FIGURE 2.2: HEAVY NEWS USERS BY GENERATION (%)



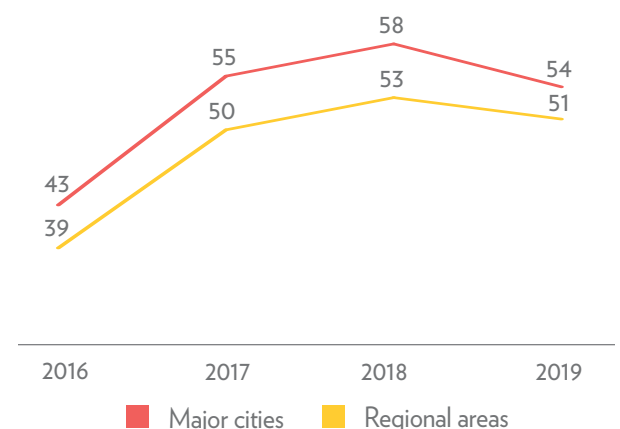
*The Gen Z cohort in 2016 was too small to be included here.



The number of 'heavy news users' has increased by **10%** to 52% since 2016

There is a continuing gap between cities and regions. News consumers in regional areas access news less often than those in major cities (see **figure 2.3**).

FIGURE 2.3: HEAVY NEWS USERS BY REGION (%)

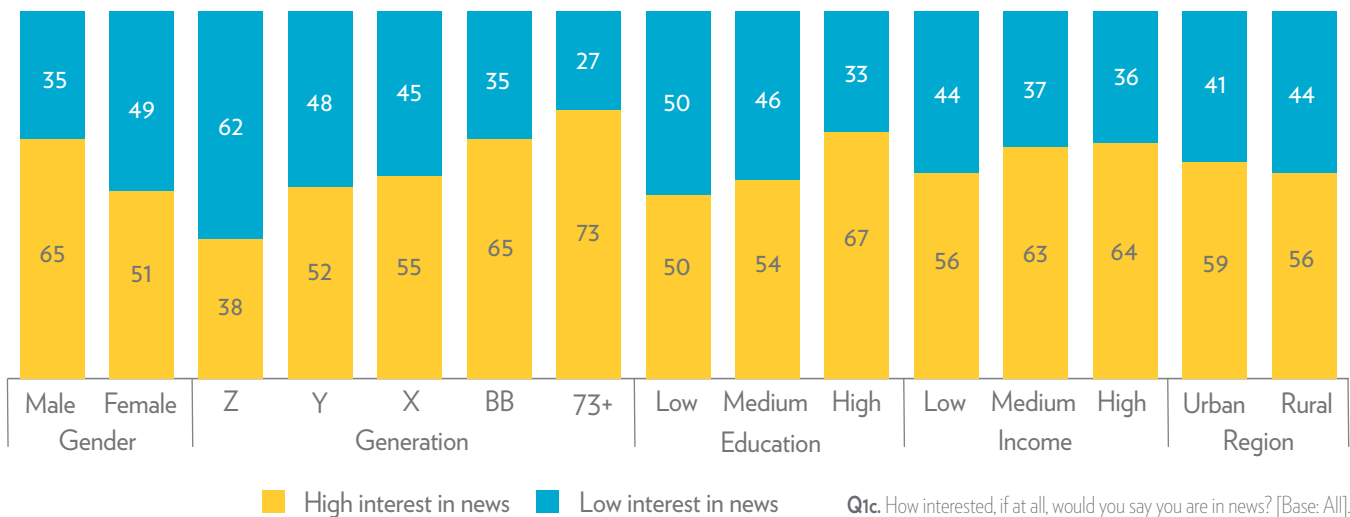


INTEREST IN NEWS

About 58% of Australian respondents say they are extremely or very interested in news – a decline of 6% since 2016 (see **figure 2.4**). Older consumers are more

interested in news than younger, and men are more interested in news than women. Those with higher education and incomes are also more interested in news.

FIGURE 2.4: INTEREST IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



SOURCES TO ACCESS NEWS

AUSTRALIAN NEWS CONSUMERS USE A LIMITED NUMBER OF SOURCES TO ACCESS NEWS

The number of sources (channels) used by Australian news consumers to access news has declined since 2016. One third of news consumers (33%) used four or more sources to find news in 2019, which is a decrease of 7% from 40% in 2016. More people are now using one or two sources to access news (45%) compared to 2016 (36%).

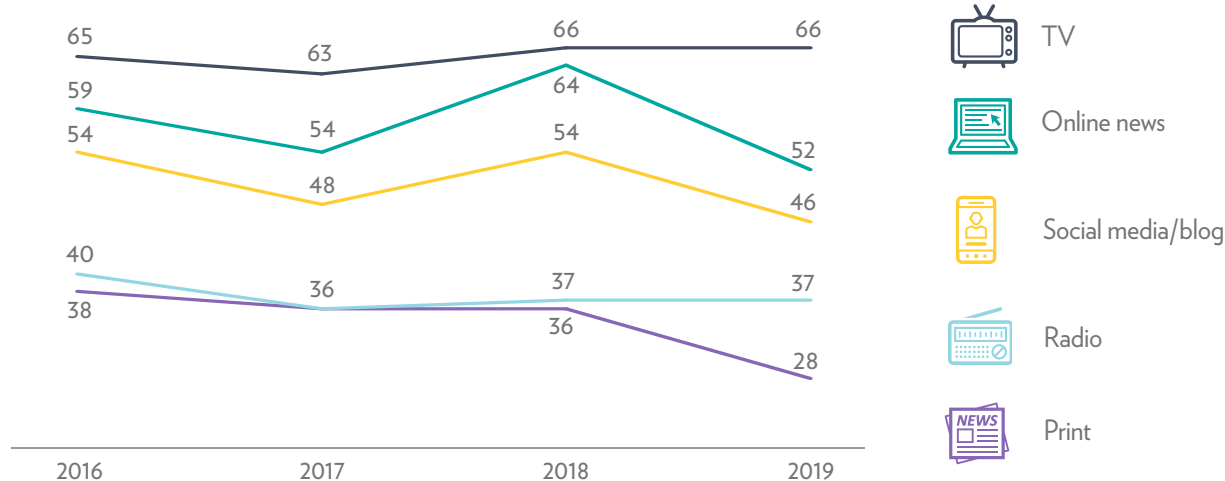
The percentage of Australians using just one source to access news is higher than the global average, and the percentage of Australians using four or more sources to find news is lower than the global average (See Chapter One: Australia and the World for more).

Two thirds of Australian news consumers say they watch TV news and 52% say they use online news sources. Almost half (46%) of news consumers say they access news on social media (see **figure 2.5**).



TV continues to be the *most popular way of accessing news for Australians*

FIGURE 2.5: GENERAL SOURCES OF NEWS (%)



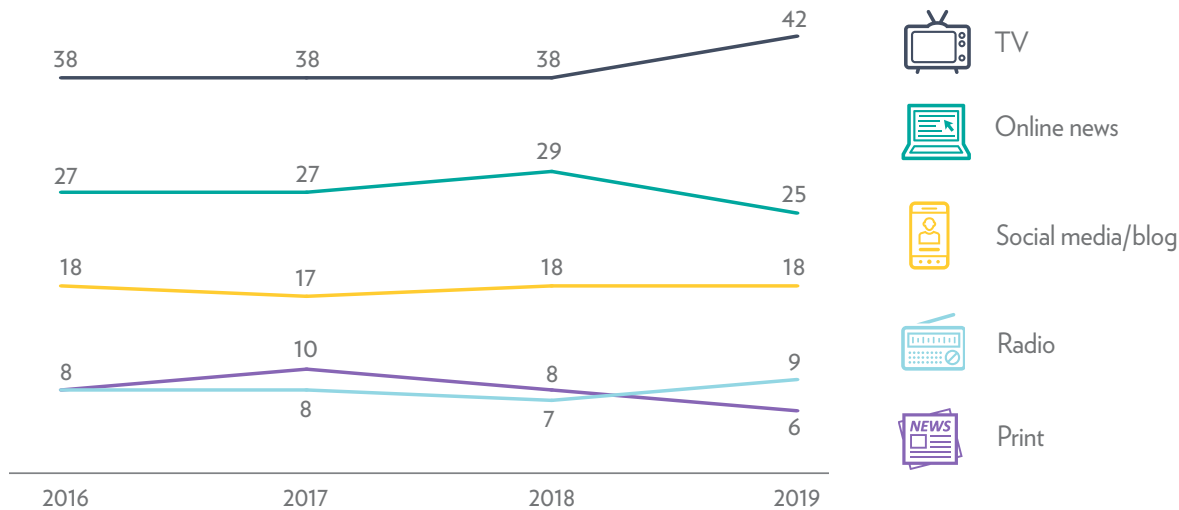
Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? (Please select all that apply) [Base: All].

TV REMAINS THE MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

Not only is TV the most general source of news it also continues to be the **main** source of news for most Australians (42%).

As **figure 2.6** shows, news access through TV, radio and social media have remained relatively stable over the last four years. In contrast, print has declined.

FIGURE 2.6: 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? *social media includes blogs; websites; include any websites or apps of offline and online brands.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS GEN Z'S MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

There are significant differences among generations in how they access news. Almost half of Gen Z (47%) use social media as their main source of news, whereas only 3% of 73+ say it's their main source.

While older news consumers prefer TV, Gen Y does not have such an overwhelming preference between social media (33%), online news (29%) and TV (26%) (see **figure 2.7**).

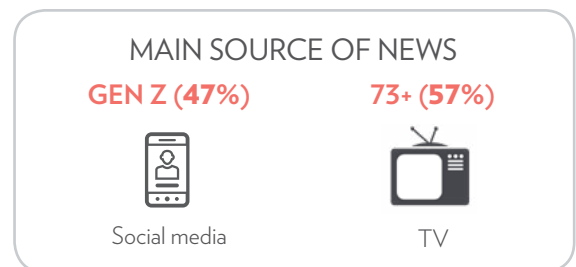
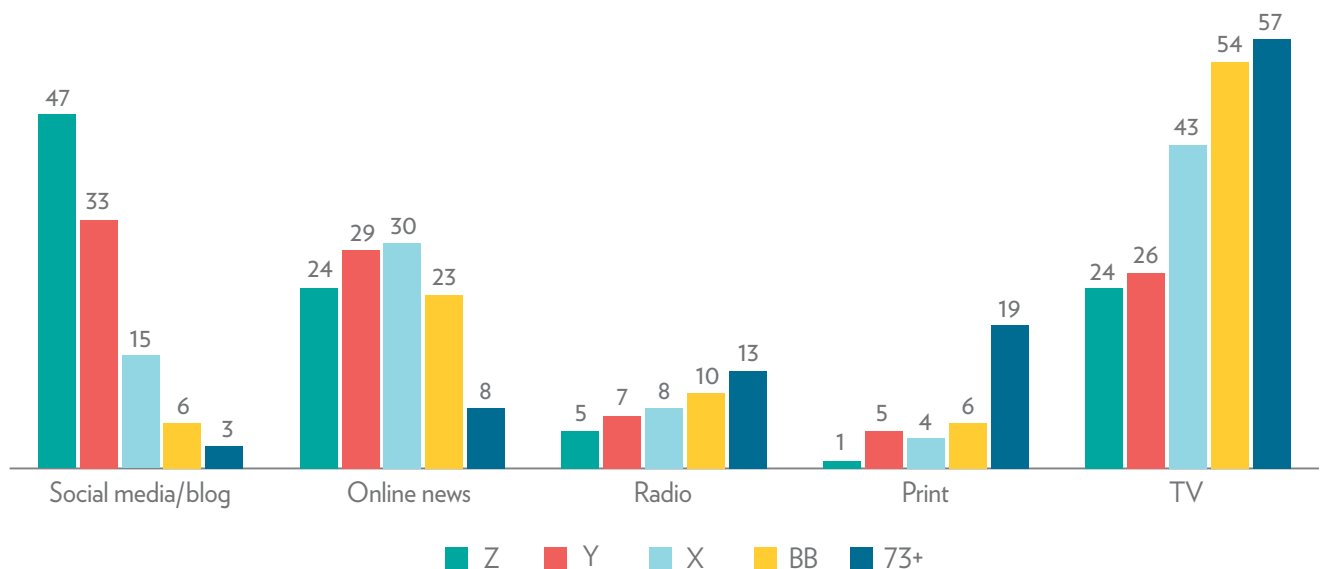


FIGURE 2.7: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY GENERATION (%)

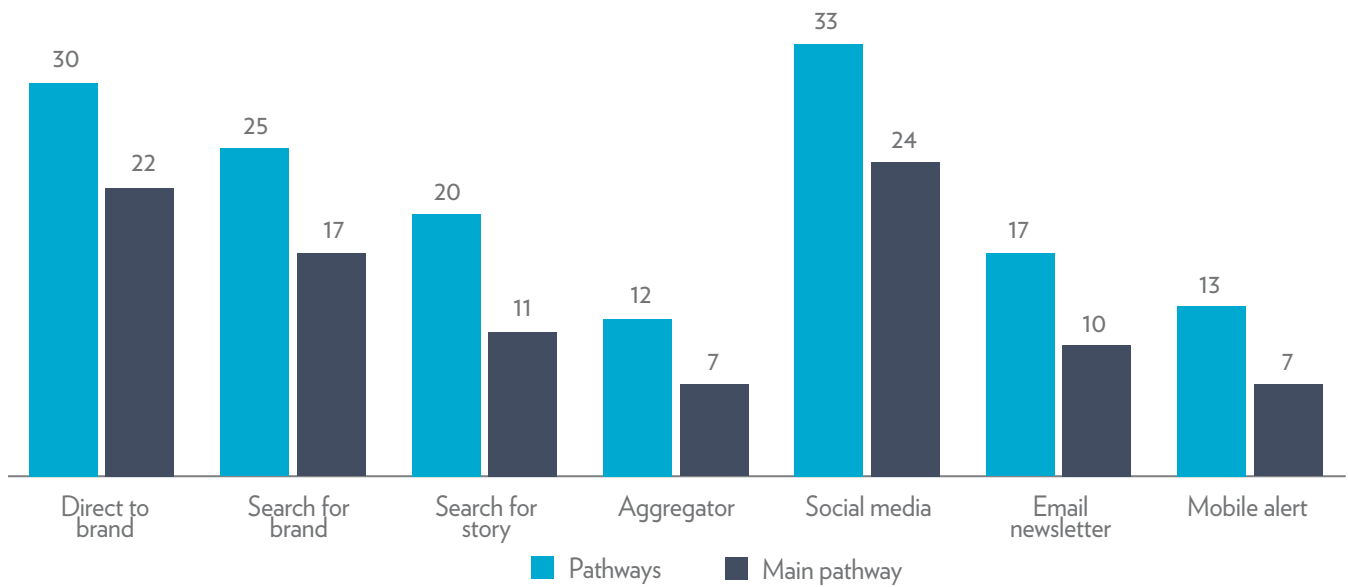


MOST PEOPLE ACCESS ONLINE NEWS VIA INDIRECT METHODS

Those who access news online were asked how they came across news. Almost half of news consumers (49%) go directly to brand websites or search for a news brand. However, the majority (62%) access online news via indirect methods, such as social media, news aggregators,

email newsletters and mobile alerts. These indirect methods have slightly increased since 2016 (60%, 2016; 62%, 2019) and social media (33%) is the most popular way of accessing online news (see **figure 2.8**).

FIGURE 2.8: PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS (%)



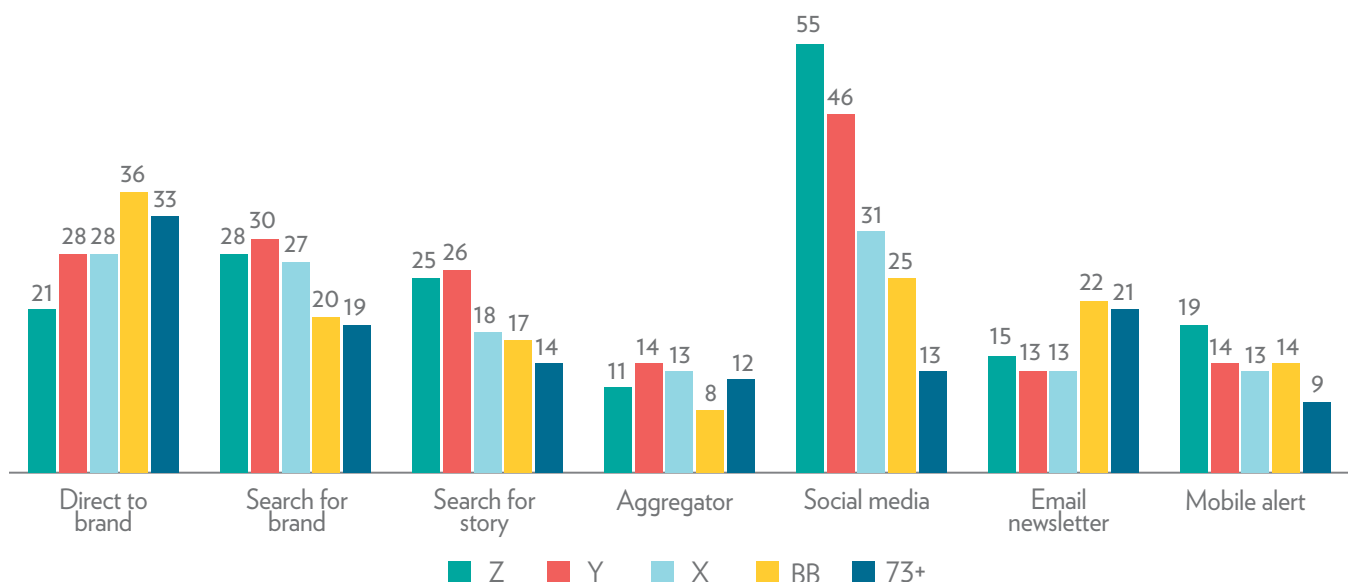
Q10. Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories? Please select all that apply.

OLDER NEWS CONSUMERS LIKE TO RECEIVE NEWS VIA EMAIL

There are distinct differences in pathways to online news by generation. Gen Z and Y are more likely to access news via social media, search engines and mobile news alerts. Gen Y are more likely to search news brands and stories.

Baby boomers and 73+ access online news via email newsletters and news brand websites more than younger generations (see **figure 2.9**).

FIGURE 2.9: PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS BY GENERATION (%)



EDUCATION AND INCOME DRIVE THE NUMBER OF NEWS SOURCES

Highly educated and affluent news consumers use larger numbers of sources to access news than those with lower incomes and education, as shown in **figures 2.10 and 2.11**.



Gen Z and Y are more likely to access news via social media, searches and **mobile news alerts**

FIGURE 2.10: EDUCATION LEVEL AND THE NUMBER OF NEWS SOURCES (%)

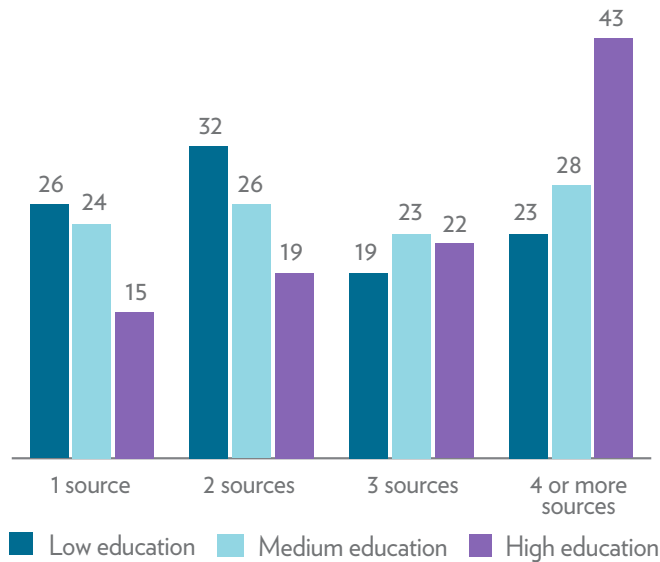
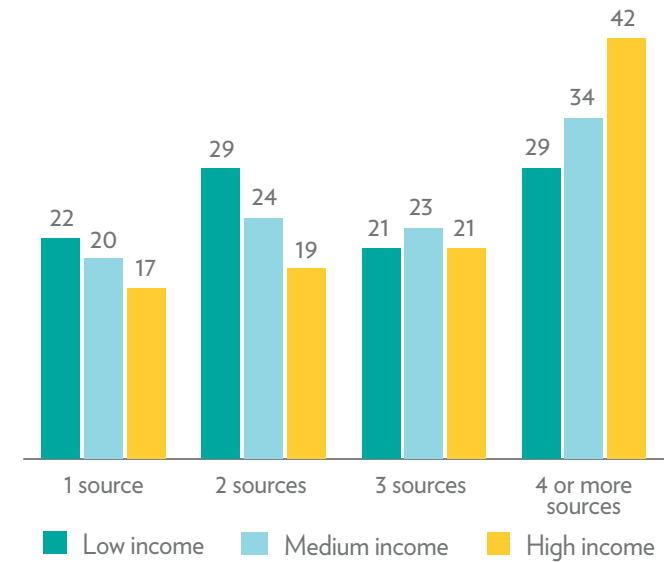


FIGURE 2.11: INCOME AND THE NUMBER OF NEWS SOURCES (%)



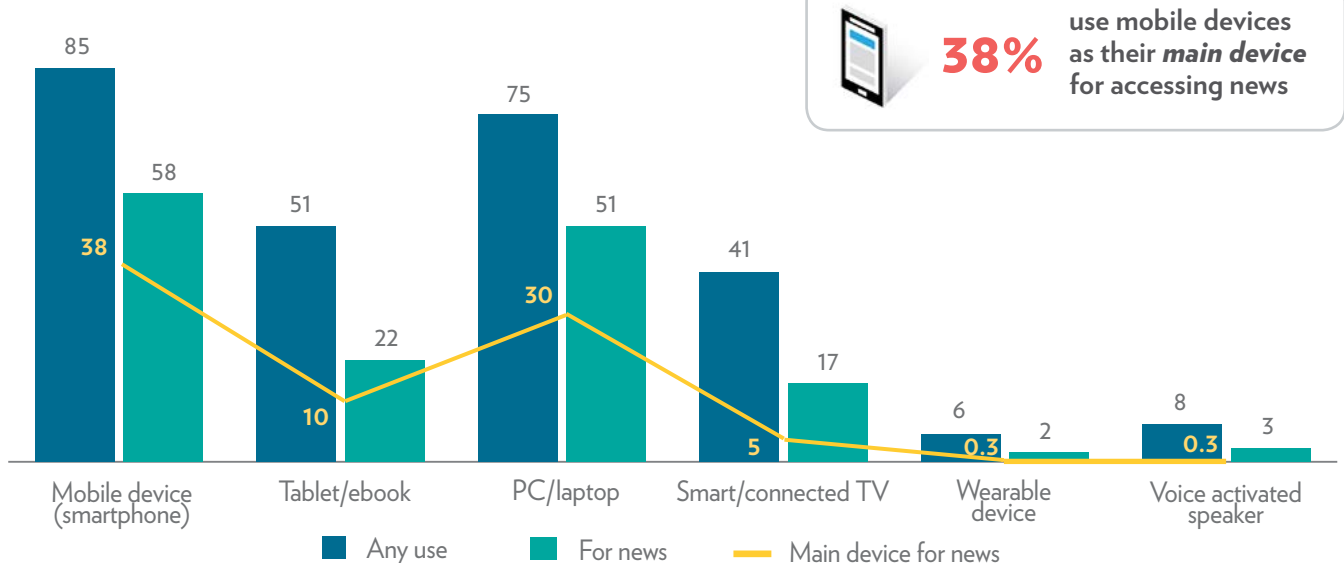
Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply: From the 11 options, we counted the number of sources - Television news bulletins or programmes, 24 hour news television channels, Radio news bulletins or programmes, Printed newspapers, 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.

MOBILE CONTINUES TO RISE AS THE MAIN DEVICE FOR NEWS

Those who use mobile phones as their main device for accessing news increased from 29% in 2016 to 38% in 2019 (see **figure 2.12**).

The proportion of news consumers who are using their desktop or laptop as the main device for accessing news is continually decreasing.

FIGURE 2.12: DEVICES FOR ACCESSING NEWS (%)



38% use mobile devices as their **main 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).

COMPUTERS FOR NEWS FALL AND MOBILE PHONES RISE

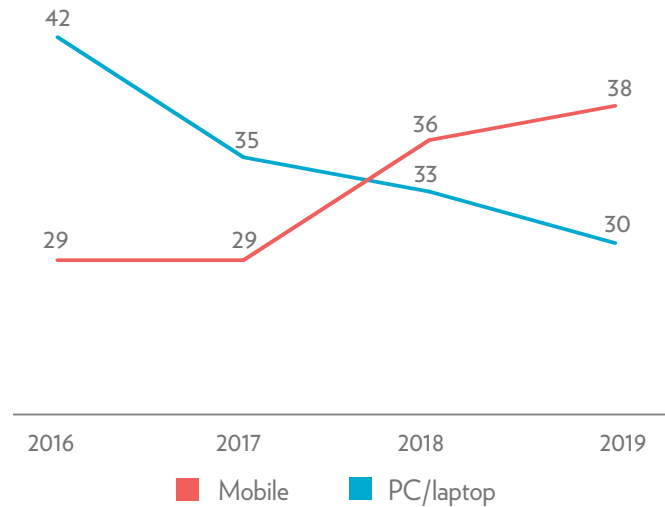
As **figure 2.13** indicates, over the last four years the use of laptop and desktop computers to access news has decreased considerably and the use of mobile phones has increased steadily.

DESKTOPS AND LAPTOPS REMAIN POPULAR FOR ONLINE NEWS AMONG OLDER PEOPLE

Using desktop or laptop computers to access online news is the most popular mode among people aged 73+ (60%), while using a smartphone is the most popular mode of accessing online news among the members of generation Z (64%) and generation Y (66%).

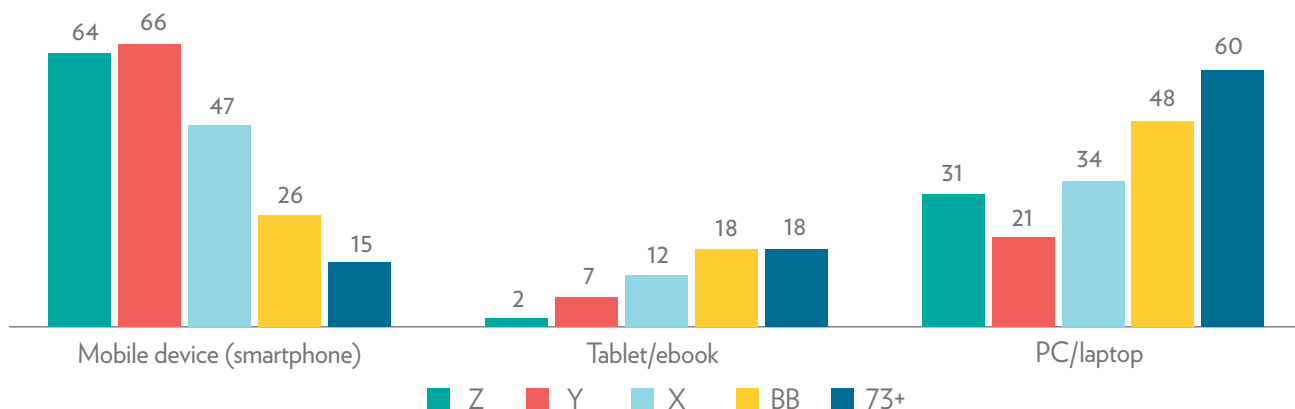
Tablets are not popular among young people but are often used by older generations as their main device for accessing online news (see **figure 2.14**).

FIGURE 2.13: CHANGES IN THE MAIN DEVICE FOR ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS (%)



UK866_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?

FIGURE 2.14: MAIN DEVICE TO ACCESS ONLINE NEWS BY AGE (%)

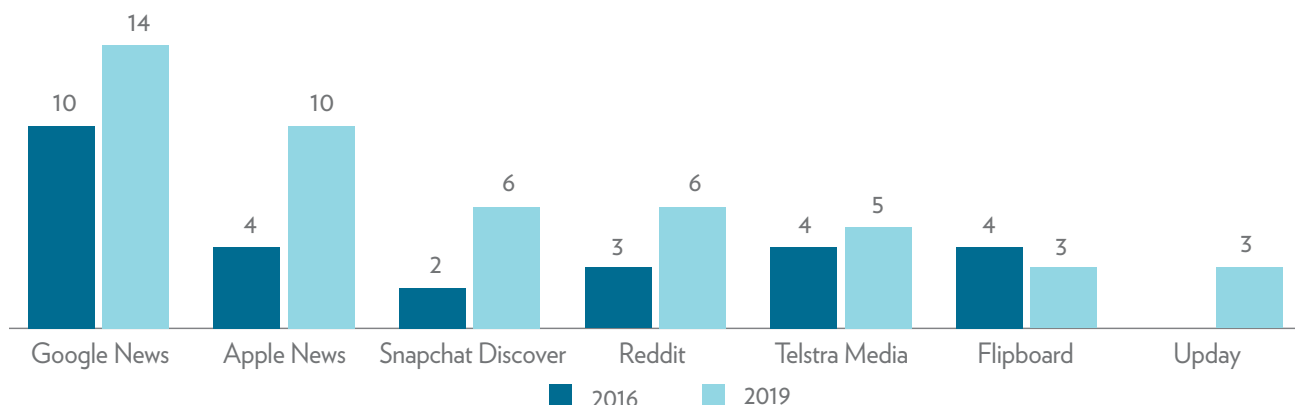


AGGREGATED NEWS CONSUMPTION IS ON THE RISE

The use of news aggregator apps is increasing in Australia. In 2016, 9% of news consumers said they came across news via news aggregator apps. This has risen to 12% this year.

When asked which news aggregator apps they use, Google News and Apple News were the most popular. Apple News has had the biggest growth since 2016 (see **figure 2.15**).

FIGURE 2.15: 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].

OFFLINE BRANDS

The following two tables show the percentage of news consumers surveyed who used different online and offline news brands. In relation to traditional offline news brands, free-to-air TV news services continue to be the most popular followed by regional or local newspapers (see **table 2.1**).

TABLE 2.1: NEWS ACCESSED VIA OFFLINE BRANDS IN THE LAST WEEK (%)

	N	%
Channel 7	792	39
Channel 9	746	37
ABC TV*	662	33
Channel TEN	472	24
A regional or local newspaper	401	20
SBS TV	305	15
ABC Radio*	303	15
Commercial FM Radio	259	13
Herald Sun	223	11
Daily Telegraph	208	10
Prime7	195	10
WIN Television	193	10
The Australian	167	8
Sky News	164	8
BBC News	164	8
Sydney Morning Herald	154	8
2GB	153	8
The Age	138	7
Courier Mail	126	6
Fox News	110	5
CNN	98	5
The Advertiser	94	5
Australian Financial Review	82	4
Southern Cross	71	4
Other newspapers or broadcast news channels from outside country	63	3
News channels or newspapers in languages other than English	41	2

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]

* For the first time we separated ABC TV and ABC Radio.

ONLINE BRANDS

The top three online news brands are News.com.au (25%), ABC News online (22%) and Nine.com.au (22%), which are all broadcast television-based brands (see **table 2.2**).

TABLE 2.2: NEWS ACCESSED VIA ONLINE BRANDS IN THE LAST WEEK (%)

	N	%
News.com.au	502	25
ABC News online (abc.net.au)	450	22
Nine.com.au	434	22
Yahoo!7	270	13
BBC News online	235	12
Sydney Morning Herald (smh.com.au)	218	11
The Age (theage.com.au)	167	8
Other regional or local newspaper website	167	8
Daily Telegraph (dailytelegraph.com.au)	162	8
BuzzFeed News	161	8
Guardian online	160	8
Herald Sun (heraldsun.com.au)	154	8
The Australian (theaustralian.com.au)	144	7
Channel TEN news online	136	7
CNN.com	129	6
Skynews.com.au	112	6
Courier Mail (couriermail.com.au)	111	6
HuffPost (Huffington Post)	103	5
New York Times online	93	5
Australian Financial Review (afr.com.au)	81	4
Vice News	74	4
Mail online	70	3
The Advertiser (adelaidenow.com.au)	70	3
Other online sites from outside the country	69	3
The Conversation	69	3
Junkee	43	2
The Saturday Paper online	38	2
Crikey	35	2
Other non-English online news sites	35	2

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.

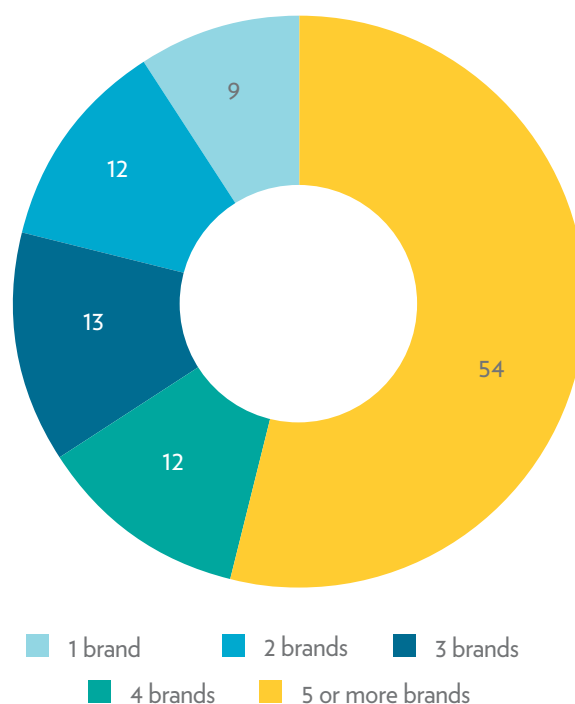
NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS USED

While Australians use a limited number of sources (or channels) to find news, more than half say they have consumed five or more online and offline news brands in the past week (54%).

As **figure 2.16** shows, a small portion (9%) are relying on just one news brand.



FIGURE 2.16: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS ACCESSED (%)

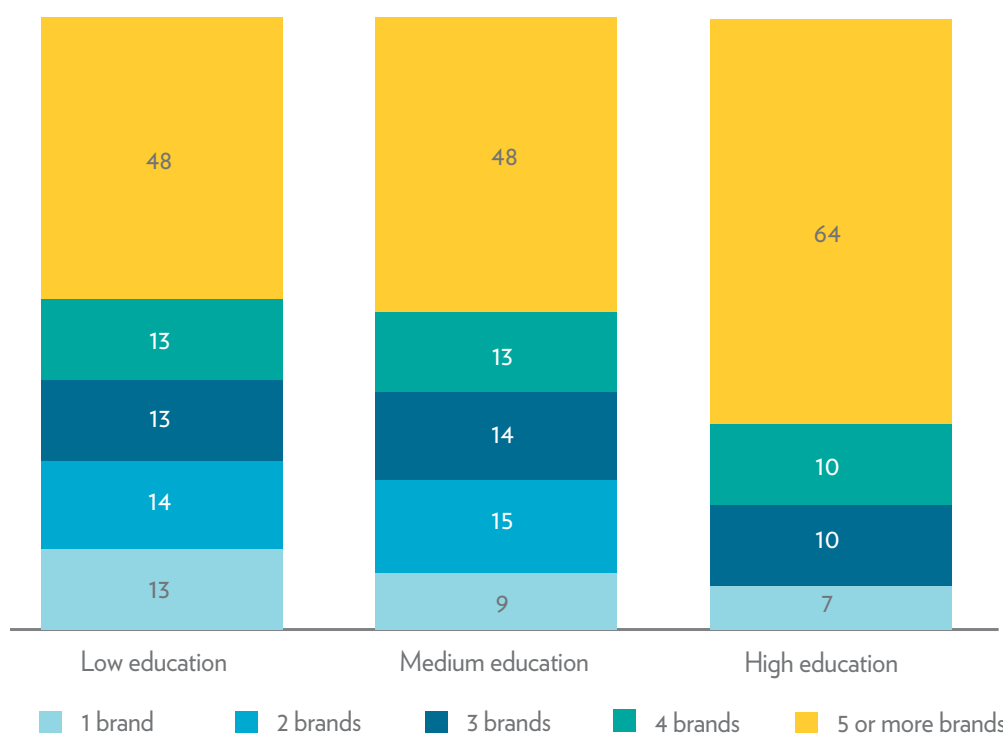


NEWS BRANDS & EDUCATION

Education is the key variable when it comes to understanding the number of news brands, both online and offline, that news consumers access. Highly educated news

consumers are more likely to have used five or more news brands in the last week (64%) when compared to low and medium educated news consumers (see **figure 2.17**).

FIGURE 2.17: EDUCATION LEVEL AND THE NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS (%)



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. 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]

* For the first time we separated ABC TV and ABC Radio.

NEWS AVOIDANCE

AUSTRALIANS AVOID NEWS MORE

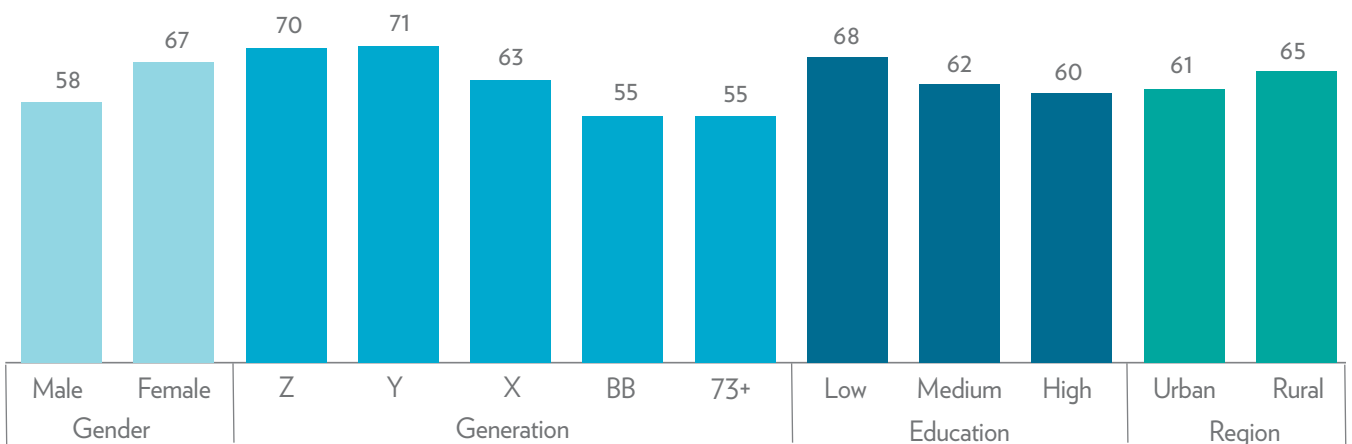
News consumers are avoiding news more than before. This year, 62% of news consumers said they avoid news occasionally, sometimes or often. This is a 5% increase from 2017.

Figure 2.18 shows clear variation across different demographics. Women (67%) are more likely to avoid news than men (58%). Younger generations are more likely to avoid news than older generations.

News consumers with low education (68%) say they avoid news more often than those with medium (62%) or high (60%) education. Regional news consumers (65%) say they avoid news more often than urban news consumers (61%).

 **Women (67%) are more likely to avoid news than men (58%)**

FIGURE 2.18: NEWS AVOIDERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



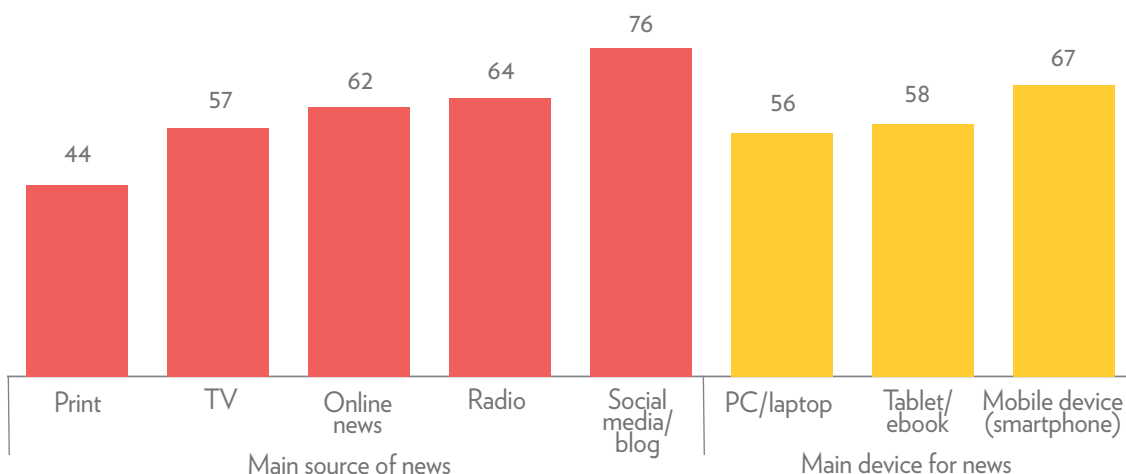
Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Avoid= Often, Sometimes, Occasionally. Do not avoid= Never.

NEWS AVOIDERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO USE MOBILE PHONES TO ACCESS NEWS

News consumers who mainly use mobile phones to access news are more likely to avoid news (67%) than those who mainly access news via computers (56%).

We also find those who rely on social media to access news are more likely to be news avoiders (76%) (see **figure 2.19**).

FIGURE 2.19: NEWS AVOIDERS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS AND MAIN DEVICE FOR NEWS (%)



Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Avoid= Often, Sometimes, Occasionally. Do not avoid= Never. Excluded 'don't know' responses. [avoiders: had occasionally, sometimes or often tried to avoid 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 who used a source of 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?

MAJORITY OF AUSTRALIANS ARE NOT WORN OUT BY THE VOLUME OF NEWS

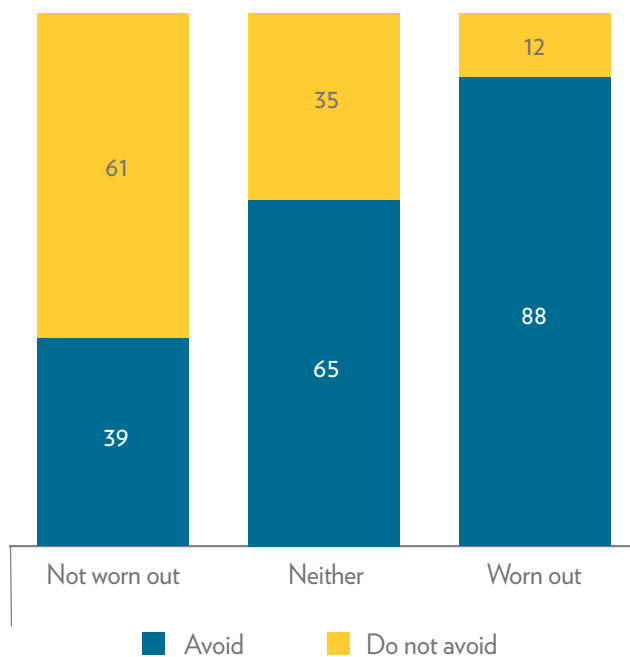
More than a quarter of respondents (28%) say they feel worn out by the amount of news.

However, 36% say they do not feel fatigued by the volume of news and a further 36% say they are neither worn out nor not worn out by news (see **figure 2.20**).

FATIGUE IS A DRIVER OF NEWS AVOIDANCE

Feeling worn out by the amount of news is an important factor in avoiding news. Most news consumers who agree they are worn out by the volume of news (88%) say they have tried to avoid news (see **figure 2.21**).

FIGURE 2.21: NEWS FATIGUE AND AVOIDANCE (%)

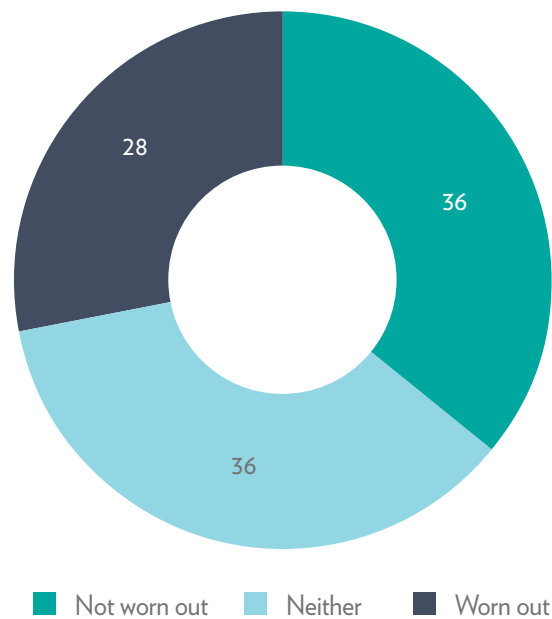


Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Avoid= Often, Sometimes, Occasionally. Do not avoid= Never. Excluded 'don't know' responses.
Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days."

Females are more likely to have news fatigue than males, and younger generations are more likely to feel worn out by the volume of news than older news consumers.

Interestingly, heavy news consumers and those who have higher interest in news are **less** likely to feel worn out by news (see **figure 2.22**).

FIGURE 2.20: NEWS FATIGUE (%)

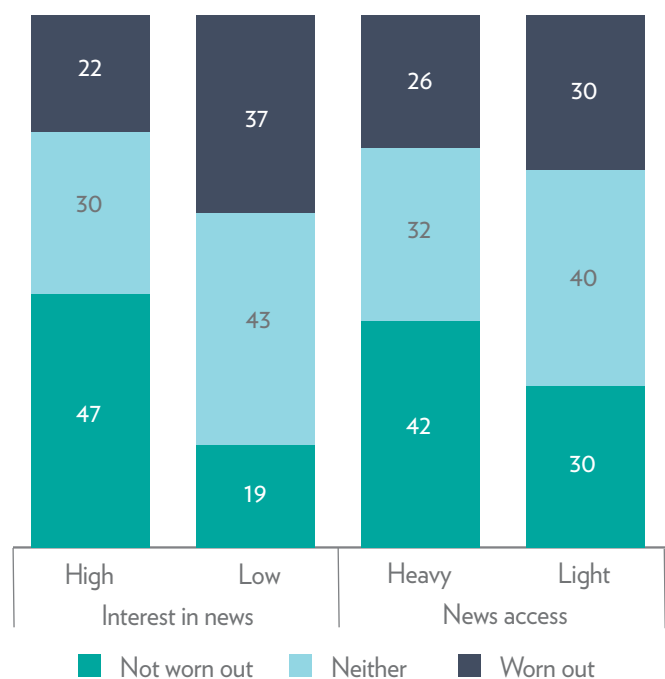


Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days."

88%

of consumers who are **worn out** by the amount of news have tried to **avoid news**

FIGURE 2.22: NEWS FATIGUE BY INTEREST IN NEWS AND NEWS ACCESS (%)



Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days."

SUMMARY

Australians are accessing news more frequently than before; however, the overall number of Australians who are extremely or very interested in news is declining. Also, news consumers are avoiding news more than before. This year the majority of news consumers (62%) say they have tried to avoid news, which is a 5% increase from 2017. The data reveal that news fatigue is a driver of news avoidance. While most Australians say they are not feeling worn out by news, almost all of those who do feel worn out (88%) say they have tried to avoid news.

The use of mobile phones to access news continues to grow rapidly. More than half of Australians access news via mobile phones (58%), and more than one third (38%) rely on mobile phones as their main device for news. While online news sources have overtaken traditional offline sources as the main source of news for Australians, TV continues to be the most popular.

There are significant differences among generations in how they access news. Almost half of Gen Z (47%) use social media as their main source of news, whereas only 3% of 73+ say it is their main source. Instead, older Australians are heavily dependent on TV for news. We also find distinct generational differences in the pathways to online news.

Gen Z and Y are more likely to access news via social media, search engines and mobile news alerts. Baby Boomers and those aged 73+ are much more likely to access online news via email newsletters and news brand websites than the younger generations. News access online via indirect methods has also slightly increased since 2016. In particular, the number of Australians who use news aggregators/apps and mobile alerts is on the rise.

In addition to the generational divide in news consumption, we also find a gulf between affluent, educated news consumers and those who are less well off. News consumers with higher education and incomes tend to access more news more often, are more interested in it and use five or more different news brands. This division based on income and education is visible throughout the report and poses challenges for the news media and policy makers.

COMMENTARY

Future-proofing journalism: Beyond the 'broken business model'

Mark Ryan, Board member, Judith Neilson Institute for Journalism & Ideas

Contrary to conventional wisdom, and to some of the findings in this year's report, journalism is in better shape than you might think. Perhaps not legacy media business models, but journalism itself – the reliable reporting of news and compelling storytelling – has a future. People's appetite for and access to quality news has never been stronger. Getting them to pay for it remains a challenge but there are signs that solutions to the 'broken business model' are emerging.

It's messy, to be sure. And job losses, news deserts and the relentless drift to online consumption of news will no doubt be features of the landscape for the foreseeable future.

“People's appetite for and access to quality news and commentary has never been stronger. Getting them to pay for it remains a challenge but there are signs that solutions to the 'broken business model' are emerging.”

But there are reasons to be optimistic. At the big end of town *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* are proving that people will pay for reliable, quality news. Smaller scale local operators are finding ways to make news pay. Some of it is happening through philanthropy; some communities are banding together to fund a local news platform.

And new, interesting ideas are being floated. Just one is the suggestion that local, publicly-funded libraries develop a news-gathering service. A recent article in the *Columbia Journalism Review* encouraged us to think about a funding mechanism that can enshrine journalism as a public service. It says the United States currently hosts more than 30,000 special service districts which fund everything from fire departments and sanitation services to hospitals. They are paid for by annual fees assessed in a geographic area and in turn deliver services to the communities that fund them. Maybe they can also fund local news platforms?

Before howls of protest erupt about government-funded, and government-influenced, news, let's agree ways and means can be found to safeguard the editorial independence and integrity of news services of this type. In the end, local taxpayers will determine whether the product is worth supporting.

One trend that seems to be with us to stay is the role of philanthropy in supporting journalism. This is especially evident in the USA where dozens of initiatives have sprung up over the past few years to replace failed commercial operations. And in the UK the emergency measure of the BBC redirecting some of its licence fee income to support regional journalism is being closely studied.

Formerly hyper competitive newsrooms have learned to collaborate where it makes sense to, sharing staff and costs and providing access to wider audiences that otherwise might have been beyond reach. These developments suggest those of us interested in the future of journalism should be open to the many options available to support quality journalism.

Sticklers for the purist “commercial only” model risk looking a gift horse in the mouth. They underestimate the potential for high wealth individuals to step up to support what they see as an indispensable pillar of democracy. If wealthy philanthropists will support cancer research, the arts and scientific research in perpetuity why not the fourth estate?

The most likely prospect is that journalism will in future be underpinned by a combination of commercial operators, local communities and philanthropists. It seems for now, at this moment of peak volatility in the media marketplace, to be the most likely way forward. Obviously, there are still challenges. In many ways the biggest of these is how journalists will do their jobs in future, rather than how (and whether) they are paid for them. As much as journalism needs new business models it also needs new model journalists.

We have been talking about this for a while now, especially about the way that digital is changing the profession. For one thing the opportunities provided by new digital tools and the economic pressures that have resulted in thinner newsrooms means that multi-skilling is king. As one journalist I spoke to said, these days you need to be a writer, an editor, a photographer, a videographer and a social media manager all at once.

“One trend that seems to be with us to stay is the role of philanthropy in supporting journalism.”

Just as media organisations are adjusting their business models they are also changing the ways they train their staff (including in many cases after years of under-investment). Most are starting to provide digital skills training for their staff, with a particular focus on technical topics such as social media and search optimisation.

The risk is, of course, that in adapting to new realities we forget old virtues. Even as they acquire new digital skills, journalists can't lose sight of the old analogue competencies, especially how to tell a good story and engage their readers.

This annual report does a great service. It provides a contemporary snapshot of the state of the industry but its lasting value will accrue over time as it accumulates a growing body of evidence about how people access information and make sense of the world around them.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

FRIDAY, MARCH 16: School students take part in a climate change strike in Brisbane. The strike is part of a global campaign to call for urgent action on climate change, with hundreds of thousands of students expected to strike worldwide.

IMAGE: DAN PELED/AAP IMAGE

A person wearing a dark suit and a light-colored shirt is holding a newspaper. The newspaper's masthead reads 'BUSINESS'. Below the masthead, there is a photograph of several people walking on a bridge or walkway, with their reflections visible in the water below. The text 'Issue 764 Monday, July 18, 2016' is visible in the top right corner of the newspaper. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the section header and a list of bullet points.

3 PAYING FOR NEWS AND DIGITAL CONTENT

- Paying for online news (14%) is close to the global average (13%).
- The majority of Australians would rather subscribe to video streaming services (34%) than online news (9%).
- There is a gender paying gap; 17% of men pay for online news compared to 10% of women.
- Trust in news and interest in politics are strong predictors of paying for news.
- 83% of news consumers encounter unwanted paywalls at least once a month.

This chapter examines three aspects of online news payment: paying for online news specifically; subscribing to digital services; and paywalls.

1. PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS AND DONATION

ONGOING NEWS SUBSCRIPTION IS STILL VERY LOW BUT STEADILY GROWING

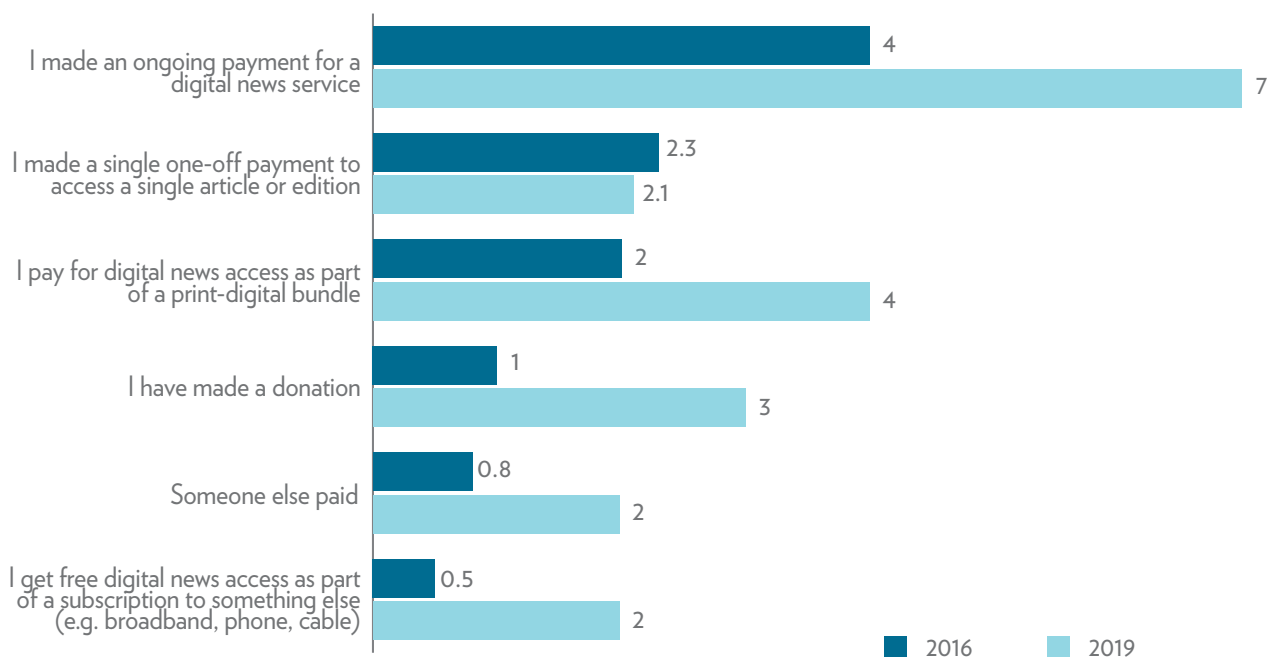
Fourteen percent of Australian online news consumers say they pay² for online news. This is close to the global average (13%) which ranges from 6% (Croatia) to 34% (Norway). Australia is ranked at 14th for online news payment among the 38 countries surveyed.

The most common method of paying is to make an ongoing payment for a digital news service (7%). There has been more than a two-fold increase in this group since 2016. These subscribers are news consumers who are prepared to pay solely for an online news subscription,

which clearly indicates a willingness to pay for the news itself. This group can be differentiated from those who make one-off payments for stories or those who pay as part of a bundled service.

While the number of paid subscribers to online news is still small, this gradual growth reflects a steady acceptance by news consumers of the need to pay for online news content. Similarly, there has been a steady but small growth (3%) in donations (see **figure 3.1**).

FIGURE 3.1: TYPES OF NEWS PAYMENT (%)



Q7ai. 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].

THE MAJORITY SUBSCRIBE TO ONLY ONE NEWS SERVICE

Of those who do pay, the vast majority only have one online subscription (55%). More than 90% subscribe to 3 or less news services, which reflects global subscription behaviour. Gen Y is most likely to subscribe to multiple news services.



7% of Australians made an ongoing payment for a **digital news service**

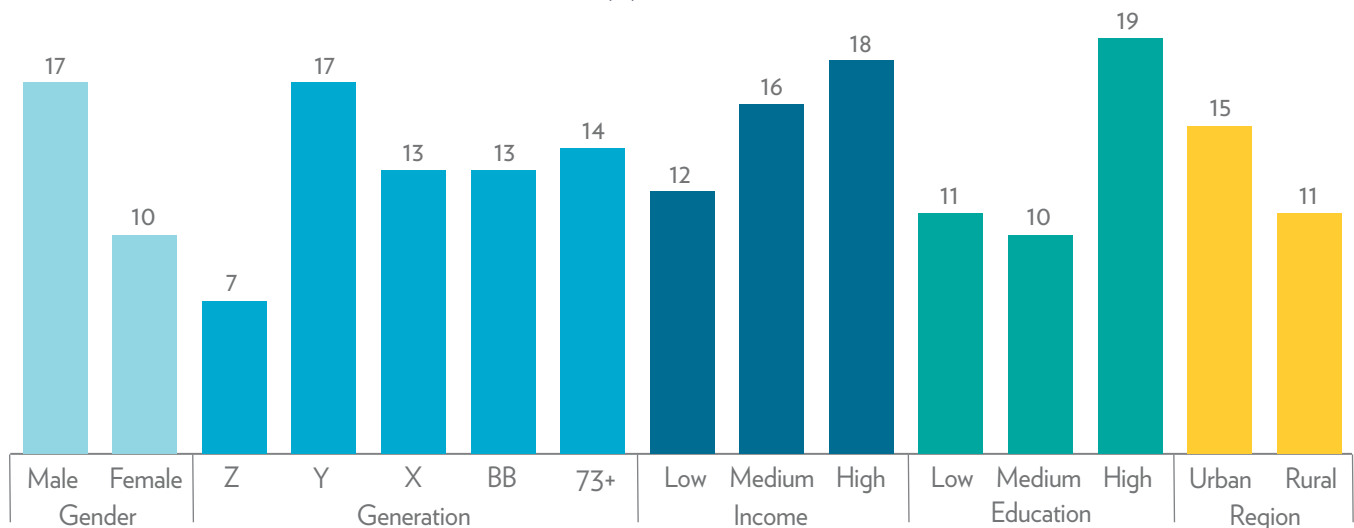
PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS

GENDER 'PAYING' GAP

The data reveal that gender, age, education and location impact on people's preparedness to pay for online news (see **figure 3.2**). Men (17%) are more likely to pay for online news than women (10%). This likely reflects that men tend to be more interested in news and access it more often. Members of Gen Y are more interested in news and are the highest payers (17%) among all generations.

Education is also a key factor. The more educated you are, the more likely you are to pay for online news. Those with higher education (19%) pay more than those with medium (10%) or low (11%) education. Urban news consumers (15%) pay more than regional news consumers (11%).

FIGURE 3.2: PAYING FOR NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



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): Yes; No; Don't know.

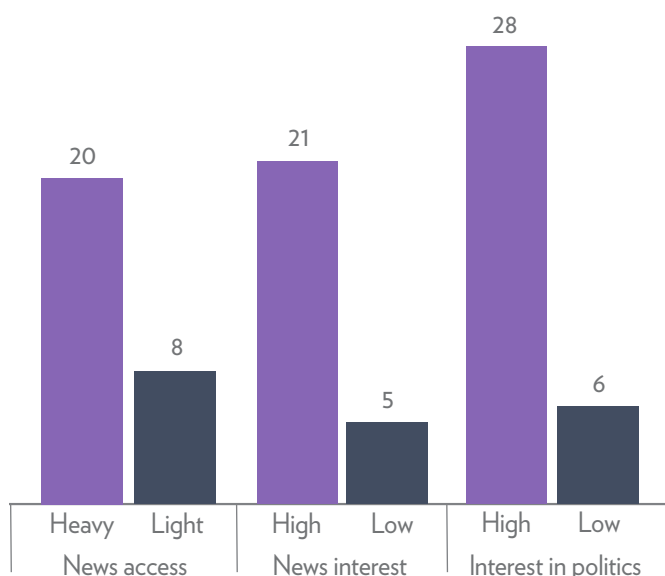
INTEREST IN POLITICS IS A STRONG PREDICTOR OF A PERSON'S WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR NEWS

Those who consume news more than once a day are more likely to pay for online news (20%) than light news consumers (8%). Those with high interest in news (21%) are also more likely to pay for it than those who are not interested (5%). However, interest in politics is a stronger predictor of paying for news.

Those interested in politics are much more likely to pay for news (28%) in comparison to those who are not interested in politics (6%) (see **figure 3.3**).

This is supported by data in the 2017 survey, which found those with high interest in political news were more likely to pay for online news, along with people who have a high interest in entertainment and arts news.

FIGURE 3.3: PAYING FOR NEWS BY NEWS ACCESS, INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICS (%)

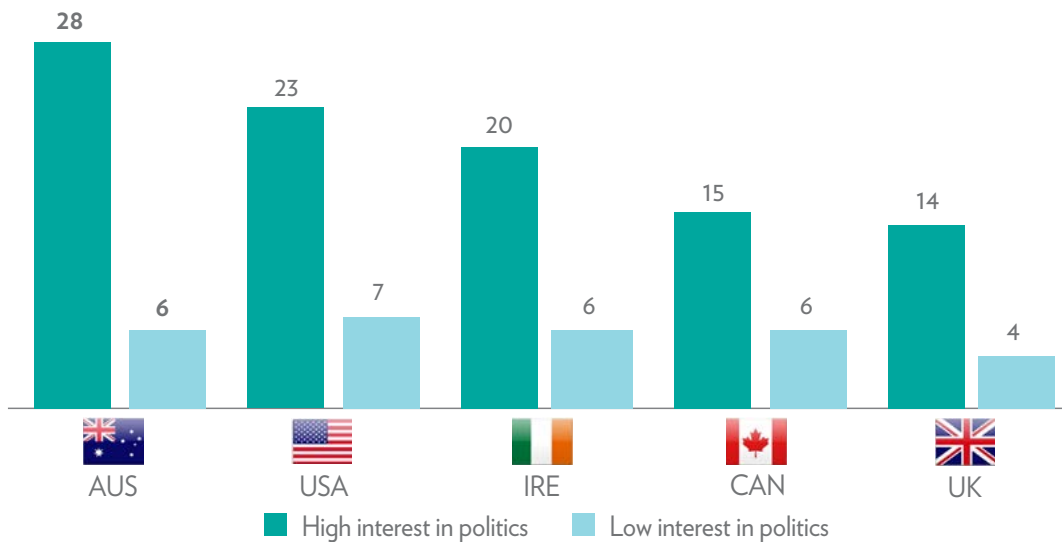


Q7a. Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition): Yes; No; Don't know. **Q1c.** How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know. **Q2_new2018.** How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know. **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). More than 10 times a day; Between 6 and 10 times a day; Once a day; 4-6 days a week; 2-3 days a week; Once a week; Less often than once a week; Less often than once a month; Never; Don't know.

This is true globally. Across all 38 countries in the survey, having a high level of interest in politics is more strongly correlated with paying for news than simply being interested in news.

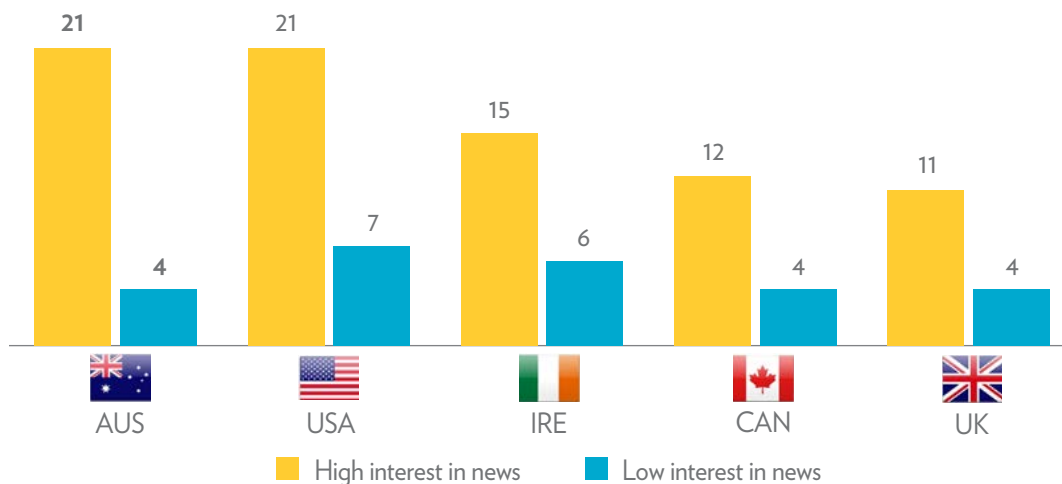
When compared with other English-speaking countries with similar political systems, those who pay for news are more likely to have a higher interest in politics (see **figure 3.4**) than in news (see **figure 3.5**).

FIGURE 3.4: HIGH INTEREST IN POLITICS AND PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS IN 5 COUNTRIES (%)



Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know.

FIGURE 3.5: HIGH INTEREST IN NEWS AND PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS IN 5 COUNTRIES (%)



Q1c. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know.

NEWS QUALITY AND PAY

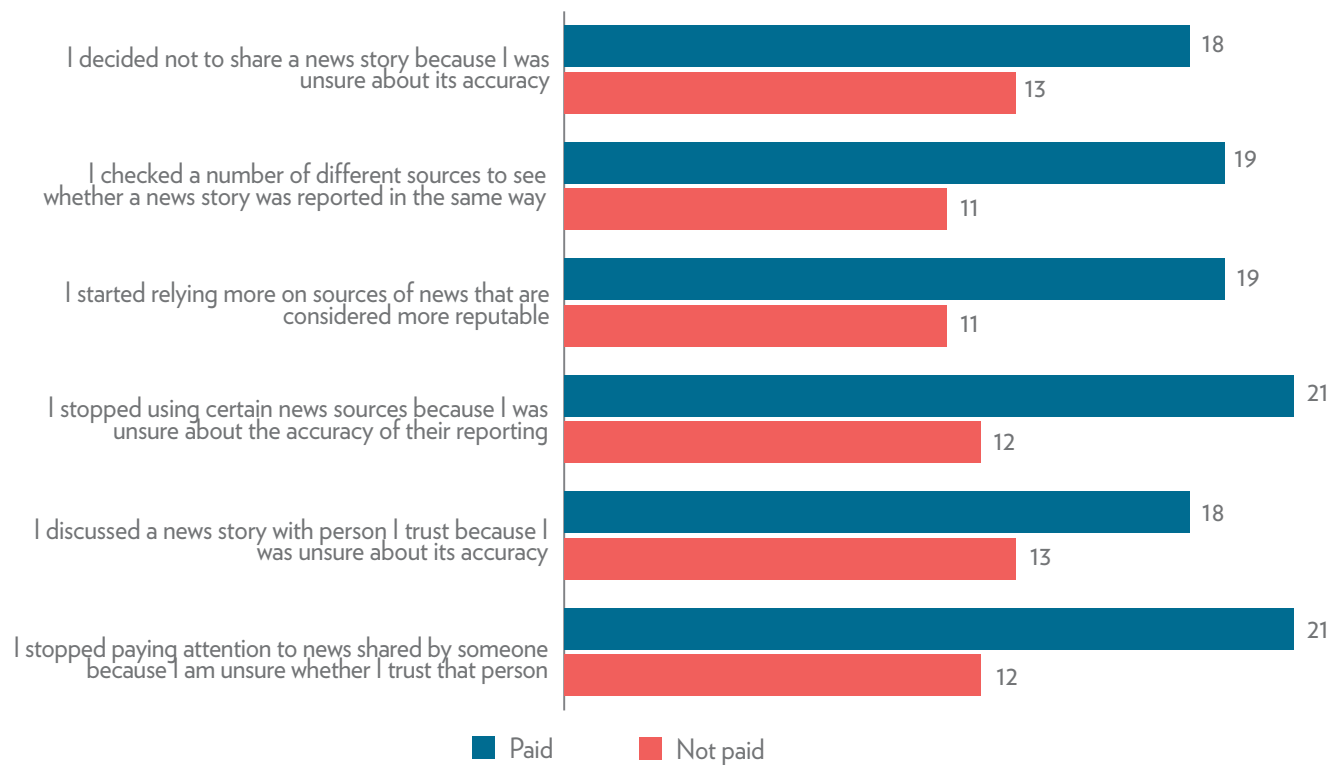
News consumers who are concerned about the quality of news are more likely to pay for it. This year we asked participants if they engaged in verification practices when reading news stories online.

The data show those who fact-check online information are more likely to pay for news. In particular, among those who say they stopped using certain sources because of uncertainty about the accuracy, 21% have paid for news.

Similarly, of the people who say they stopped paying attention to news shared by someone because they didn't trust the person, 21% have paid for news.

Compared to the overall figure of 14% who pay for online news, this data show that those who fact-check and pay for online news are more conscious and critical consumers who are aware of the variable quality of online news sources (see **figure 3.6**).

FIGURE 3.6: FACT CHECKING AND NEWS PAYMENT (%)

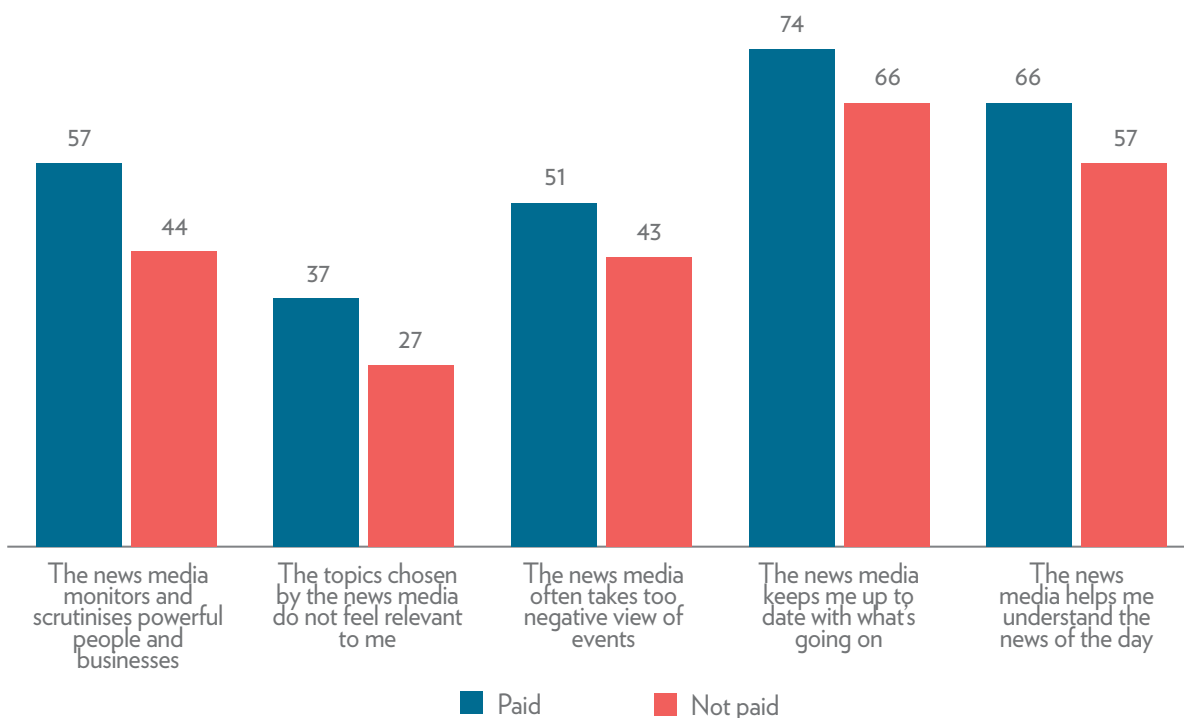


Q_LIT_2019. Have you done any of the following in the last year? Please select all that apply.

Further, those who pay for news are also more likely to think the news media fulfils its watchdog function and helps them understand events compared to those who do not pay for news. Interestingly, those who pay are also more likely to think the news is negative and not

necessarily relevant to their lives (see **figure 3.7**). This shows an acceptance that much news coverage is negative in nature and while it might not directly reflect their personal interests, it is still important and worth paying for.

FIGURE 3.7: NEWS MEDIA PERFORMANCE AND NEWS PAYMENT (%)

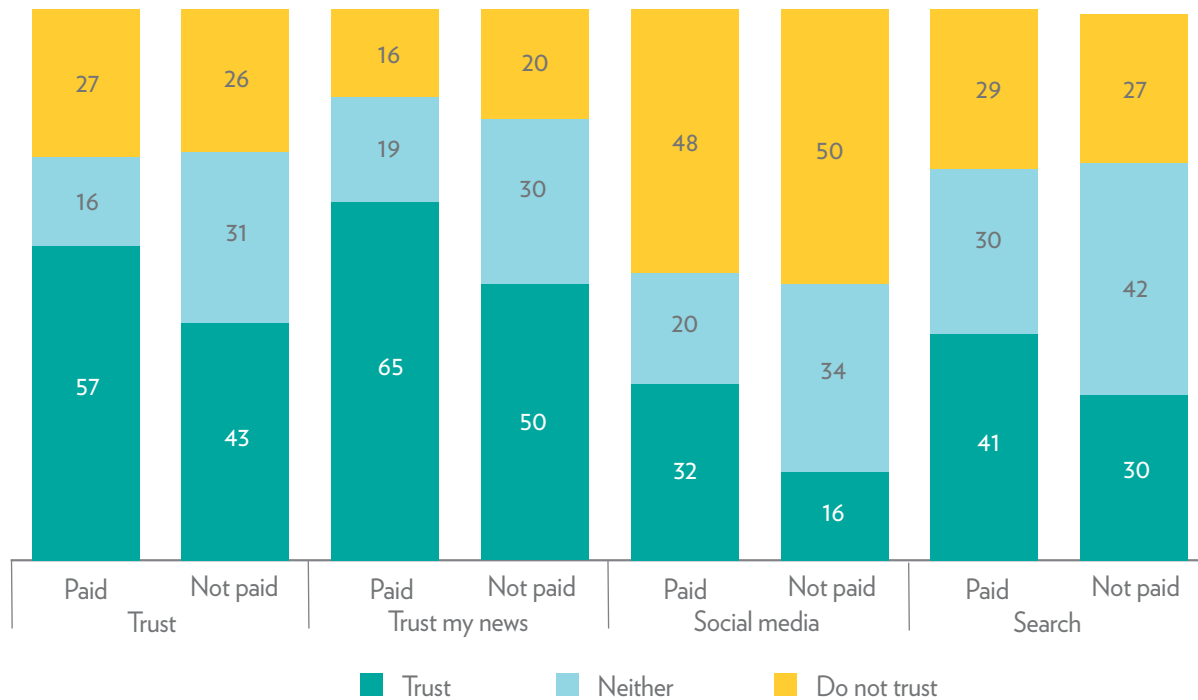


NEWS PAYERS HAVE HIGHER TRUST IN NEWS

Those who pay for news are more likely to trust news in general (57%) than those who do not pay for news (43%). The trust level in the news they consume is much higher

among paying news consumers (65%) than those who do not pay (50%) see **figure 3.8**.

FIGURE 3.8: TRUST IN NEWS BY PAYERS AND NON-PAYERS OF NEWS (%)



Q6_2016. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. First, we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within your country. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume. 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; 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.

PAYING NEWS CONSUMERS ARE WORN OUT BY NEWS

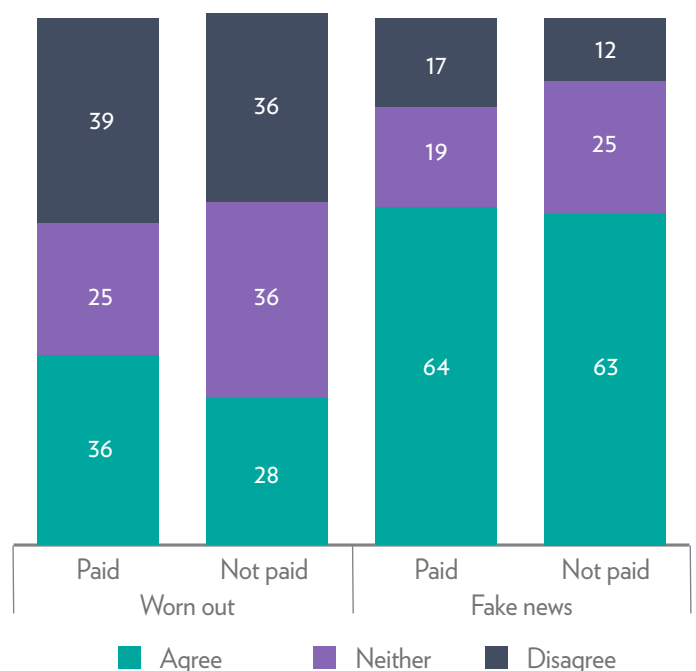
A higher number of paying news consumers say they are worn out by news (36%) compared to those who do not pay (28%).

However, there is little difference in concern about fake news between payers and non-payers of news (see **figure 3.9**).



There is little difference in concern about fake news between payers and non-payers

FIGURE 3.9: NEWS FATIGUE AND CONCERNS ABOUT FAKE NEWS (%)



Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days.": Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.": Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

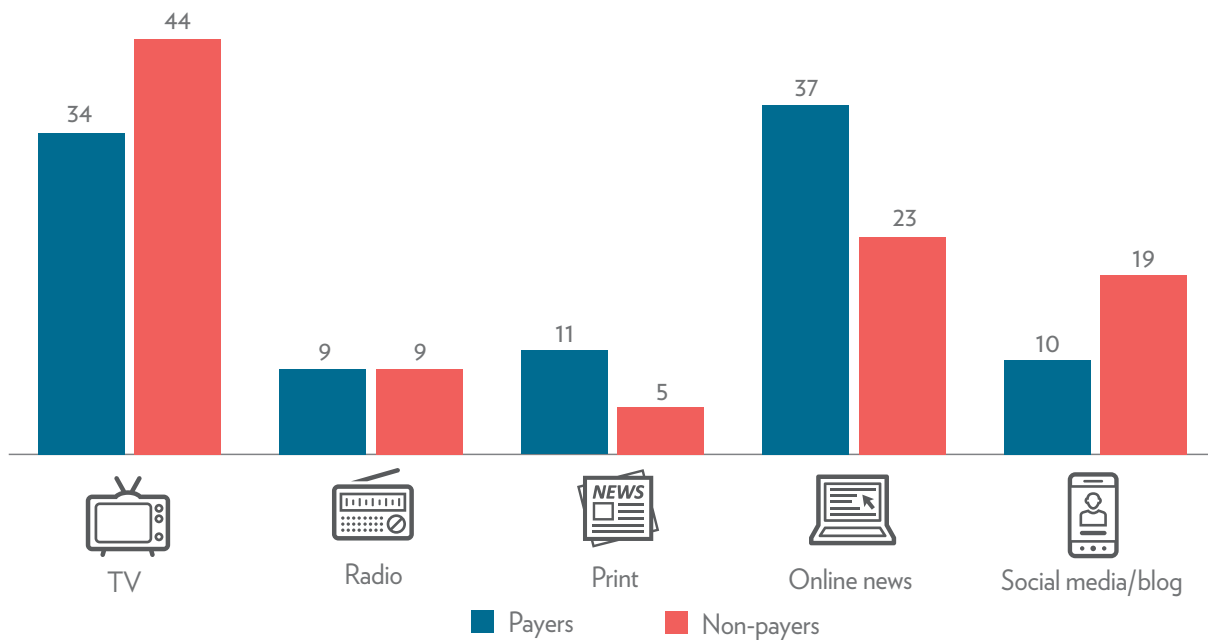
PATHWAYS TO NEWS

TV NEWS VIEWERS ARE LEAST LIKELY TO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS

Those who pay for online news are most likely to rely on online news sources to keep up to date (37%). In contrast, those who use TV as their main source of news are the

least likely to pay (44%). This reflects the long history of Australians having access to high quality free-to-air news (see **figure 3.10**).

FIGURE 3.10: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS OF PAYERS AND NON-PAYERS OF NEWS (%)

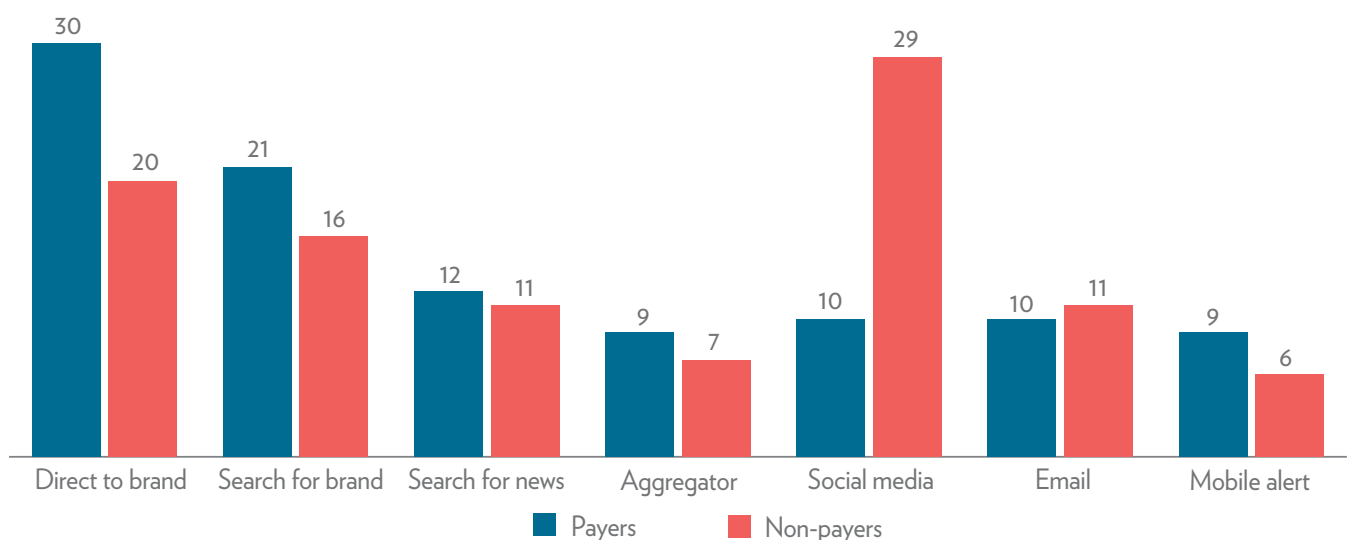


Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

The main pathways to access online news among those who pay are going directly to the brand website (30%) or searching for brands (21%). Among non-payers, almost one third (29%) say their main way of accessing online

news is social media. Those who pay, value the reputation of news brands and are news seekers, whilst those who don't pay are more likely to encounter news while on social media (see **figure 3.11**).

FIGURE 3.11: MAIN PATHWAYS TO ONLINE NEWS AMONG PAYERS AND NON-PAYERS (%)



Q10a_new2017. Which of these was the MAIN way in which you came across news in the last week? Went directly to a news website or app (e.g. smh.com.au or theaustralian.com.au); Used a search engine (e.g. Google or Yahoo) and typed in a keyword for the name of a particular website; Used a search engine (e.g. Google or Yahoo) and typed in a keyword about a particular news story; Used a newsreader site or app that aggregates news links (e.g. Google News or Telstra media); Used social media and came across news that way (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); Got news via an email newsletter or email alert; Received a news alert on my mobile phone/tablet (e.g. via SMS, app, lock screen, notification centre); Other; Don't know.

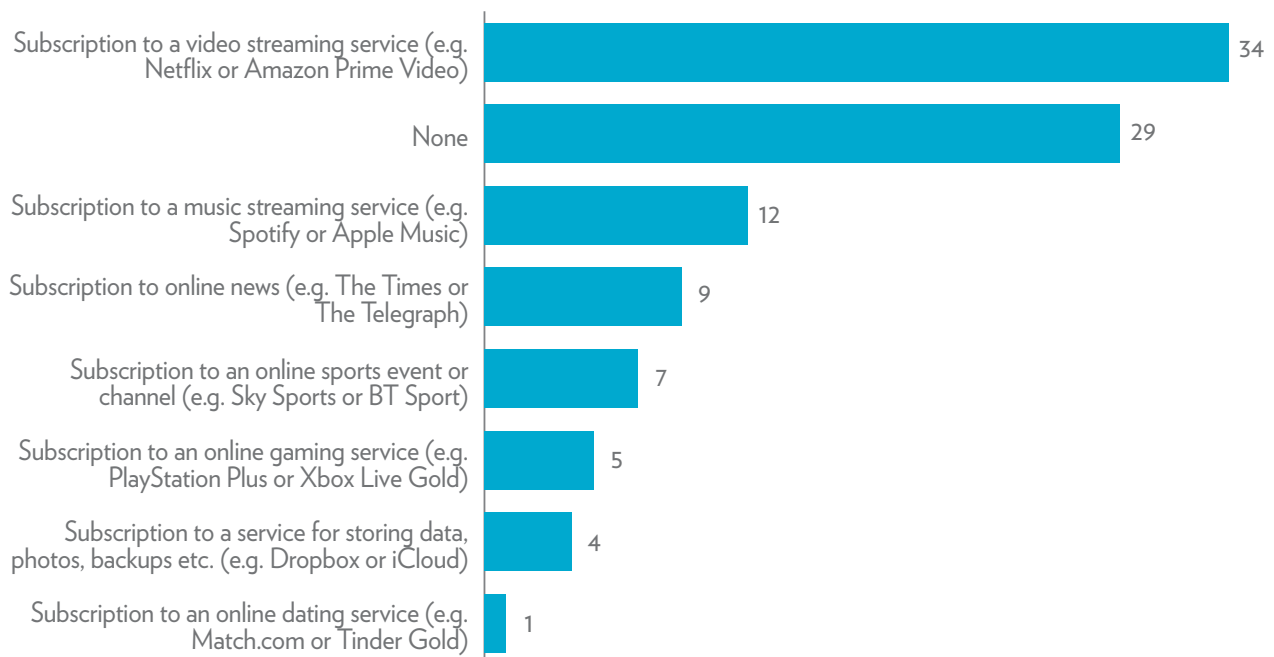
2. PAYING FOR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE WILLING TO PAY FOR VIDEO STREAMING SERVICES THAN NEWS

Australian news consumers would rather pay for entertainment services than news. This year we asked survey participants to choose which subscription services they would pay for if they could select just one. Only 9% of Australian news consumers chose online news subscription

as their first priority from seven different types of digital subscription services. Video streaming services were the most popular first choice (34%), followed by music streaming services (12%). Almost one third (29%) didn't want to pay for any of the services (see **figure 3.12**).

FIGURE 3.12: FIRST SUBSCRIPTION CHOICE (%)



Q. VALUE_2019_A. If you could only have one for the next 12 months, which one of the following would you choose? Subscription to a music streaming service (e.g. Spotify or Apple Music); Subscription to an online gaming service (e.g. PlayStation Plus or Xbox Live Gold); Subscription to an online sports event or channel (e.g. Sky Sports or BT Sport); Subscription to a video streaming service (e.g. Netflix or Amazon Prime Video); Subscription to online news (e.g. The Times or The Telegraph); Subscription to a service for storing data, photos, backups etc. (e.g. Dropbox or iCloud); Subscription to an online dating service (e.g. Match.com or Tinder Gold); None.

A similar question was asked in 2017. While it is not possible to make a direct comparison, we can confirm a consistent trend in digital content subscription among Australian consumers. In 2017, almost half (44%) of news

consumers did not pay for any digital content. About one fifth had paid for video (e.g., Netflix), 14% had paid for a music or audio file (one-off), and 9% had paid for an ongoing music subscription.

NEWS NOT POPULAR EVEN AS THE SECOND CHOICE

Among those who selected music as their first choice, 13% chose online news as their second choice. Among those who chose sport as their first choice, 23% chose news as their second choice. Those who prefer online gaming as their first choice were the least likely to select online news as their second choice (3%).

Overall, digital subscription consumers appear to be unwilling to subscribe to news even as their second choice among the various digital content subscription options.



Australians would prefer to subscribe to *online video* and *music* services than news

GENDER AND SUBSCRIPTION

This year's data show women are more likely to choose video and music streaming than men, and men are more likely to choose sport and gaming (see **table 3.1**).



TABLE 3.1: FIRST CHOICE OF DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION BY GENDER (%)

	ALL	MALE	FEMALE
Subscription to a music streaming service (e.g. Spotify or Apple Music)	12	10	13
Subscription to an online gaming service (e.g. PlayStation Plus or Xbox Live Gold)	5	6	3
Subscription to an online sports event or channel (e.g. Sky Sports or BT Sport)	7	12	2
Subscription to a video streaming service (e.g. Netflix or Amazon Prime Video)	34	28	39
Subscription to online news (e.g. The Times or The Telegraph)	9	9	8
Subscription to a service for storing data, photos, backups etc. (e.g. Dropbox or iCloud)	4	4	4
Subscription to an online dating service (e.g. Match.com or Tinder Gold)	1	2	1
None	29	28	30

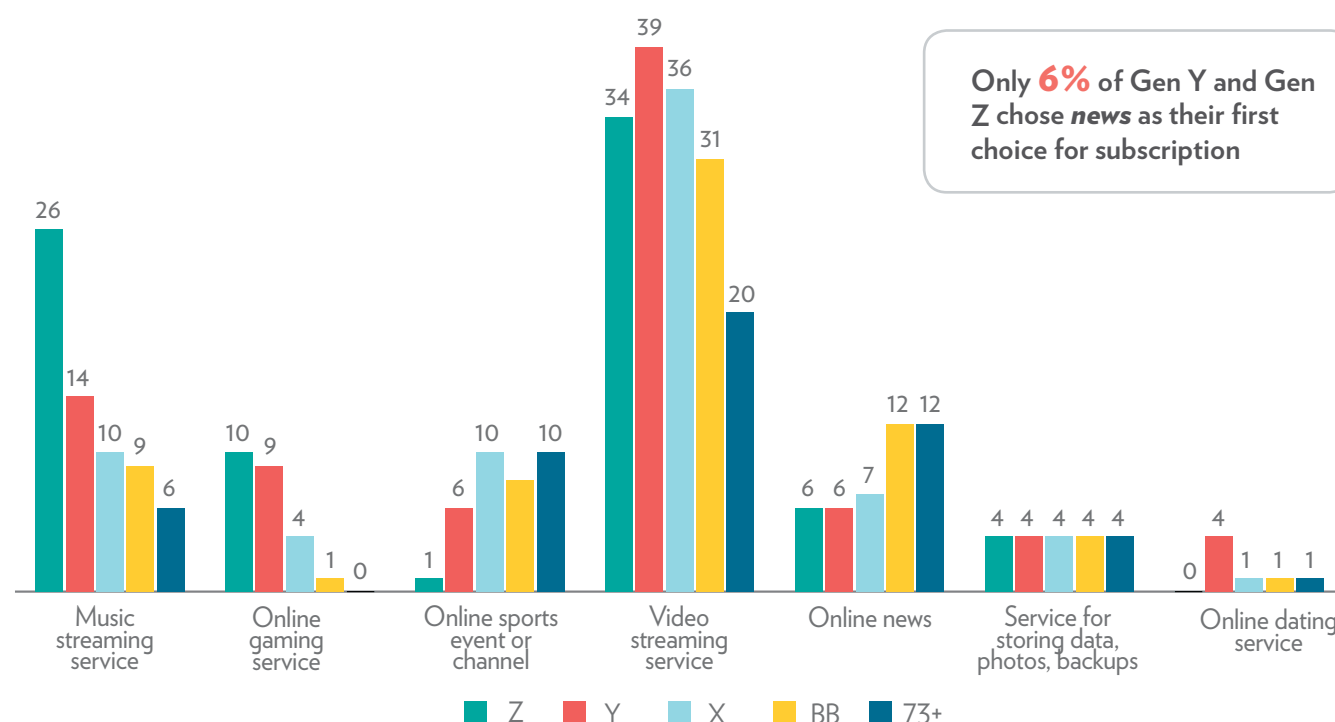
Q_VALUE_2019_A. If you could only have one for the next 12 months, which one of the following would you choose?: Subscription to a music streaming service (e.g. Spotify or Apple Music); Subscription to an online gaming service (e.g. PlayStation Plus or Xbox Live Gold); Subscription to an online sports event or channel (e.g. Sky Sports or BT Sport); Subscription to a video streaming service (e.g. Netflix or Amazon Prime Video); Subscription to online news (e.g. The Times or The Telegraph); Subscription to a service for storing data, photos, backups etc. (e.g. Dropbox or iCloud); Subscription to an online dating service (e.g. Match.com or Tinder Gold); None. This question was repeated for second and third choice.

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION IS GENERATION-DRIVEN

Younger people are less likely to choose news and more likely to subscribe to music or video services; only 6% of Gen Y and Gen Z chose news as their first choice; 34% of Gen Z and 39% of Gen Y chose video streaming

services as their first choice. While Baby Boomers and those aged 73+ also prioritise video services, they are more likely to subscribe to news than younger generations (see **figure 3.13**).

FIGURE 3.13: GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN FIRST CHOICE OF SUBSCRIPTION (%)



Older generations are less likely to subscribe to digital services generally. Almost half of 73+ were non-subscribers, whereas more than 80% of Gen Z were willing to subscribe to a digital content service (see **table 3.2**).

TABLE 3.2: NON-SUBSCRIBERS BY GENERATION (%)

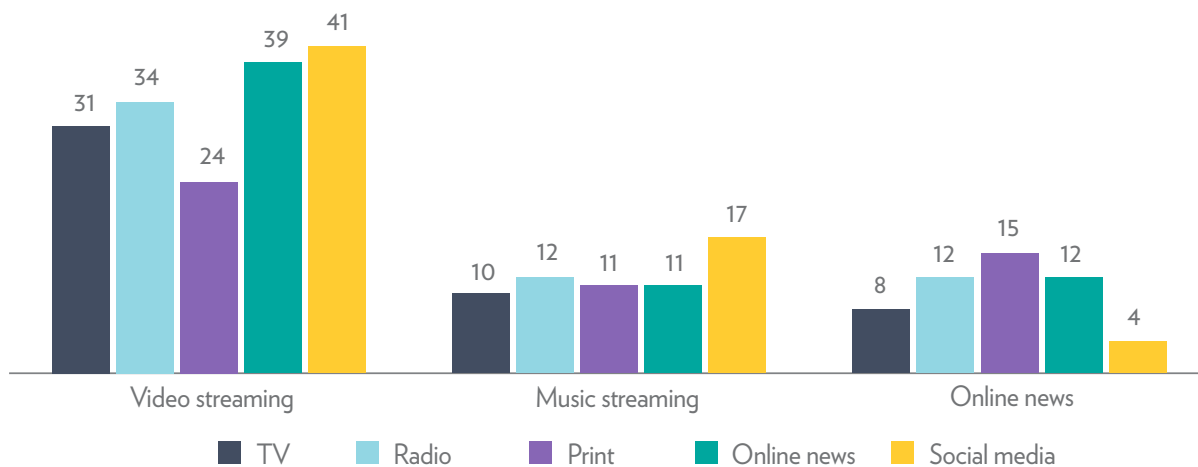
	Z	Y	X	BB	73+
Non subscriber	19	19	29	36	47

NEWSPAPER READERS ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS MORE THAN MUSIC

While video streaming is the most preferred type of paid digital content among all consumers, those who use social media as their main source of news have the highest preference for video subscription (41%) and are the least

likely to subscribe to news. Among those who rely on print newspapers as their main source of news, 15% say they would be willing to pay for online news if given one choice (see **figure 3.14**).

FIGURE 3.14: DIGITAL CONTENT PREFERENCE BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



SMARTPHONE USERS ARE MOST WILLING TO PAY FOR DIGITAL CONTENT

Those who use digital devices to access news are more willing to subscribe to digital content in general. If we combine the first, second and third choices, 81% of those who mainly use smartphones, 75% of those who mainly use tablets and 67% of those who mainly use computers to access news are willing to subscribe to one or more of these services.

Depending on which device they mainly use to access news, consumers prioritise different digital content.

Those who mainly access news via smartphones choose video (83%) over music (70%). News (37%) is their third preference.

Those who access news mainly on their tablets choose video first as well (75%), but their second choice is news (52%). Similarly, video is the first choice for those who access news mainly on computers (80%) and their second choice is also news (49%) (see **table 3.3**).

TABLE 3.3: MAIN DEVICE TO ACCESS ONLINE NEWS AND THE TYPE OF DIGITAL SERVICES THEY ARE WILLING TO SUBSCRIBE TO, ALL THREE CHOICES COMBINED (%)

	SMARTPHONE	TABLETS	COMPUTERS
Music streaming service	70	48	48
Online gaming service	22	18	18
Online sports event or channel	22	37	36
Video streaming service	83	75	80
Online news	37	52	49
Service for storing data, photos, backups	35	34	27
Online dating service	8	8	5
None of these	19	25	33

3. PAYWALLS

AUSTRALIANS FREQUENTLY ENCOUNTER PAYWALL BARRIERS TO NEWS CONTENT

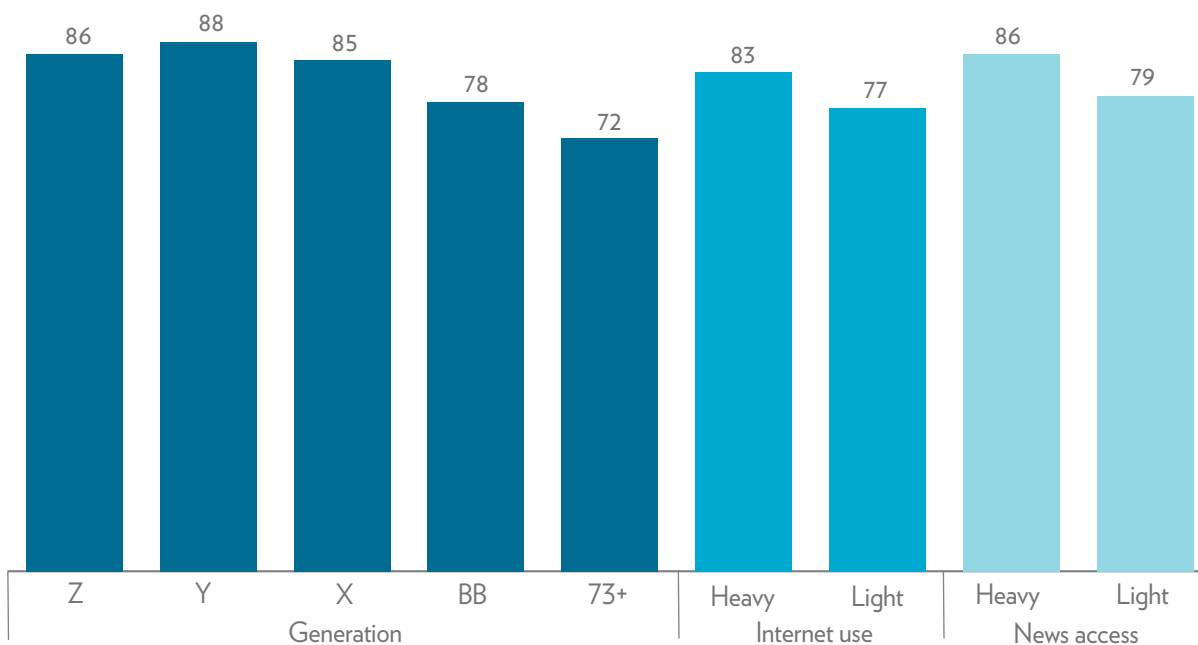
An overwhelming majority (83%) of Australian news consumers encounter messages asking them to pay at least once a month. For 52% of participants, it happens at least weekly. Only 17% say they have never encountered such messages.

Heavy news users, heavy internet users, and younger users are more likely to encounter these barriers when they click on a link expecting to read an article.

That is because members of Gen X, Y and Z use online sources of news more (see **figure 3.15**).

Almost half (45%) of those who encounter messages asking for payment say they are worn out by news. This is an indicator of their high levels of news consumption. In contrast, only 24% of those who never encounter these messages say they are worn out, which indicates lower levels of news consumption.

FIGURE 3.15: PAYWALL MESSAGE ENCOUNTERS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH (%)



Q7_SUBS3. How often do you click on a link, expecting to read an article, and find yourself asked to pay for a subscription instead? Several times a day; Most days; About Weekly; About Monthly; It has never happened; Don't know.

NEWS CONSUMERS SAY PAYWALL BARRIERS ARE ANNOYING AND NEWS SHOULD BE FREE

We asked survey respondents how they feel about paywall barriers when accessing news online. The views were diverse, but most responses can be grouped into three main viewpoints:

- (1) unfair and annoying
- (2) necessary for quality journalism
- (3) information that is critical to citizens should be free, such as local news.



83% of Australian news consumers encounter messages asking them to pay *at least once a month*

I do understand that the organisations need to be able to make profits, however, this can be seen as annoying and inconvenient for the consumer and is likely to repel potential customers.

Female, 18, currently do not pay for news

I understand they need to adapt the way they make money as they have more competition, but it is annoying.

Male 20, currently do not pay for news

I think it's terrible. Important news should be available to everybody, not to just those that can afford it.

Male, 43, current news subscriber

It is unfair because they are already making money from advertising

Male, 47, currently do not pay for news

I understand they are wanting to make money, but I will not pay for news that I can get elsewhere for free

Female, 53, currently do not pay for news

It's annoying, I understand they need to make money, but I don't see any value in spending money on news when half the time I can't be sure it's fair, balanced or accurate.

Male, 39, currently do not pay for news

Understandable because it costs money to produce quality journalism, but generally not the best idea in this day and age, especially since they are usually very overpriced. I usually get frustrated and just stop using that service. I would only pay if I could expect very high quality and un-biased investigative journalism.

Female, 31, currently do not pay for news

It makes news much more trustworthy.

Male, 41, current news subscriber

Provided the cost is not ridiculous, I am happy to pay a fair amount for news information in order to ensure that journalists remain employed, as we need gatekeepers and today, nothing worthwhile is free.

Male, 65, current news subscriber

News organisations are businesses, it's fair enough to expect people to pay for quality content. Problems arise because the only quality news is increasingly behind a paywall, restricting public access to trustworthy news sources.

Male, 19, currently do not pay for news

Justified for articles that aren't of high importance to communities, but for news articles about local events (i.e. government, terrorist attacks) I believe that it isn't ethical to expect to have to pay.

Male 20, current news subscriber

I feel it is not justified. Media has other means of obtaining funding and should concentrate on those. People deserve free, unbiased, easily accessible, news. Without this the result is poor governance

Male, 75, currently do not pay for news

SUMMARY

Australian news consumers are reluctant to pay for digital subscription services such as video and audio streaming. One third of news consumers say they would choose not to subscribe to any digital content services. Even among those who are willing to pay for digital subscription services, news is a low priority. The majority would rather pay for a video streaming service such as Netflix than news.

The data show perceptions of quality have an impact on willingness to pay for online news. Those who trust the news brands they use are more likely to pay. Interestingly those with a high interest in politics are also much more likely to pay than those who do not. There are generational differences in digital subscription as well. Younger generations are more prepared to pay for digital content such as video and music, but this hasn't yet translated into paying for news.

Those who mainly use their mobile phones to access news are more likely to be willing to pay for digital content. However, those who have a high willingness to pay for digital content do not necessarily have an appetite to pay for online news. While many of Australian news consumers understand that quality journalism needs to be supported and that news companies must have a profitable business model, they also believe that essential information should be provided free of charge to everyone and not just to those who can afford to pay.

It is also clear that when forced to choose, many would prioritise subscribing to digital entertainment services over subscribing to news. This complexity partly explains why paying news consumers are not increasing as rapidly as the overall growth of digital news consumers.

COMMENTARY

Global digital platforms as gateways to information and influence

Rod Sims, Chairman, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission

What a difference a year makes.

The past 12 months have seen the world's digital giants in the spotlight, with penalties levied against Facebook for the Cambridge Analytica data breach, the abhorrent live streaming of the Christchurch massacre on social media, and concerted efforts by Facebook, Google, Twitter and others to stem the deluge of disinformation on social media platforms.

In December 2018 the ACCC released a preliminary report for our Digital Platforms Inquiry. This examines a range of competition and consumer issues in general, and the impact the digital platforms have had on media and advertising markets in particular, including their impact on news and journalism for Australian consumers. In that draft, we were grateful to incorporate the findings of the *Digital News Report: Australia 2018* in relation to how Australians are accessing news. Our preliminary report has sparked public discourse, and global interest, about the role digital platforms play in our society.

What is clear from this year's findings is that the way people access news continues to shift to online, including through social media, search engines and news aggregators. In 2018, offline news remained dominant as Australians' main news source, but 57% of Australians now rely on the internet for most of their news, which exceeds the global average of 54%.

The fact that consumers are increasingly accessing news online, including via Facebook and Google, has presented a quandary for Australian media businesses, which need to use the platforms to reach audiences but, at the same time, are rivals for consumers' attention. Our Inquiry also examines important questions to be asked about the role the global digital platforms play in the supply of news and journalism in this country, what responsibility they should hold as gateways to information and business, and the extent to which they should be accountable for their influence.

“The fact that consumers are increasingly accessing news online ... has presented a quandary for Australian media businesses, which need to use the platforms to reach audiences but, at the same time, are rivals for consumers' attention.”

This report also highlights that consumer trust in the news has fallen worldwide, including in Australia. This trust is correlated with methods of news access. Almost half of Australian news consumers (49%) distrust the news they read on social media.

The report shows that news consumers have less trust not only in news in general but also in the news they use.

The trust level of those who access online news by indirect methods (via search engines, social media and aggregator applications) has dropped from 52% in 2018 to 42% this year. Meanwhile, distrust has grown. Of those who access news directly (for example, by visiting a news brand website, searching for a news brand, or receiving notifications or alerts from a news brand), 55% say they trust their sources, down from 59% in 2018.

Age matters when it comes to trust in the news. Older people are much more likely to think the news media are succeeding in their watchdog capacity, whereas just 35% of generations Z and Y agree. This difference in perception is closely related to the type of news consumed. People who rely on newspapers are the most likely to agree that journalism is holding the powerful to account, and those who rely on social media for news (predominantly younger people) are the least likely to feel this way. Generations Z and Y are much more likely than older consumers to use social media as their main news source. Gen Z accesses news less than other generations, and almost half of these young people use social media as their main source of news.

There are also issues with the role of digital platforms in determining what news and information is accessed by Australians, how this information is provided, and its range and reliability.

There is no denying that digital platforms are having a profound impact on Australian news media and advertising. The effects of digital platforms on the supply of news and journalism is particularly significant. News and journalism generate broad benefits for society through the production and dissemination of knowledge, the exposure of corruption, and holding governments and other decision makers to account.

We believe it is important that governments and the public are aware of, and understand, the implications of the operation of these digital platforms, their business models and their market power. This conversation is happening around the world. Our final Digital Platforms Inquiry report will make recommendations to government about the role of digital platforms in our society, and what safeguards need to be put in place, to ensure that there is a level of responsibility and oversight commensurate with the power they hold and the impact they have on Australian news and journalism.



4 NEWS MEDIA PERFORMANCE

- Two thirds of Australian news consumers (66%) agree the news media keeps them up to date.
- Less than half (45%) agree that journalism is holding the powerful to account.
- 44% agree the news media are often too negative.
- Gen Z women find news less relevant than other generations.
- People aged 73+ think the news media holds the powerful to account (58%) compared to 35% of Gen Z.

A MIXED SCORECARD

This year we asked news consumers to reflect on how the news media are performing in five key areas: applying scrutiny to those in power; relevance of stories; tone of the news; keeping them up to date; and helping them understand what is going on in the world. Australian news consumers gave the news media a mixed report card.

AUSTRALIAN NEWS CONSUMERS THINK THE NEWS MEDIA ARE BETTER AT BREAKING NEWS BUT ARE TOO NEGATIVE

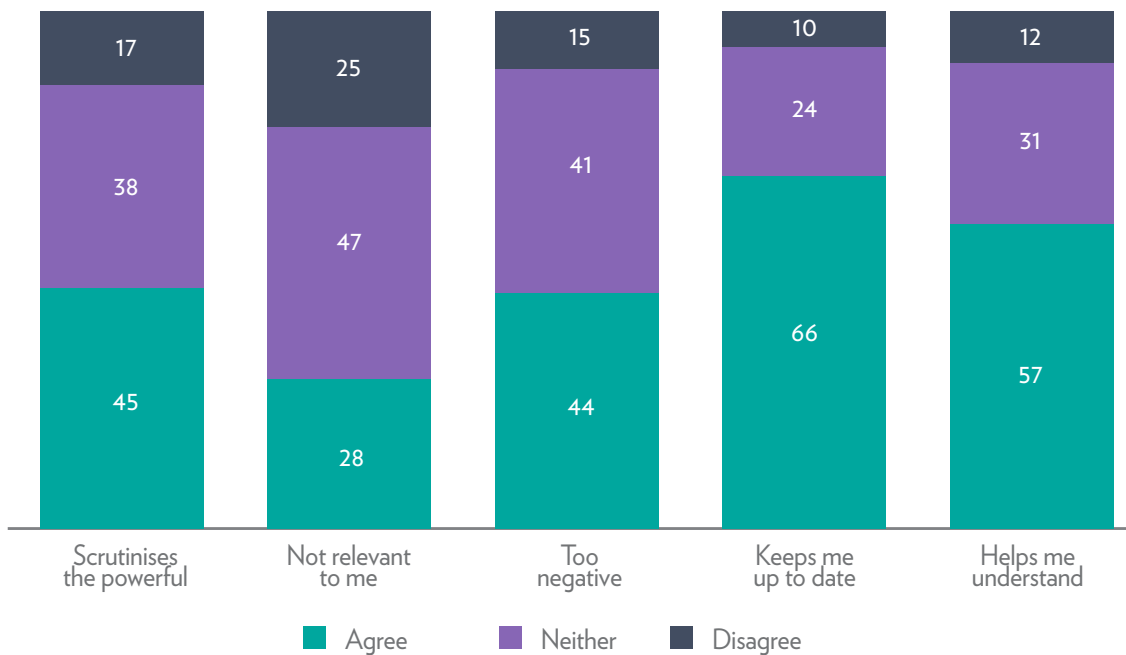
On the positive side, two thirds of participants think the news is doing a good job of keeping them up to date.

Almost 60% agree that the news media are doing a good job of explaining events and helping them understand what is going on. On the downside, 28% of news consumers think the news is not relevant to them.

Less than half (45%) perceive the news media to be performing its watchdog role and holding those in power to account.

A similar number (44%) also think news is often too negative in its coverage (see **figure 4.1**).

FIGURE 4.1: NEWS MEDIA PERFORMANCE (%)



Q15_2019: We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses; The topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to me; The news media often takes too negative view of events; The news media keeping me "up to date" about what's going on; The news media helps me "understand" the news of the day. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

HOW DO WE COMPARE TO US, UK, CANADA & IRELAND?

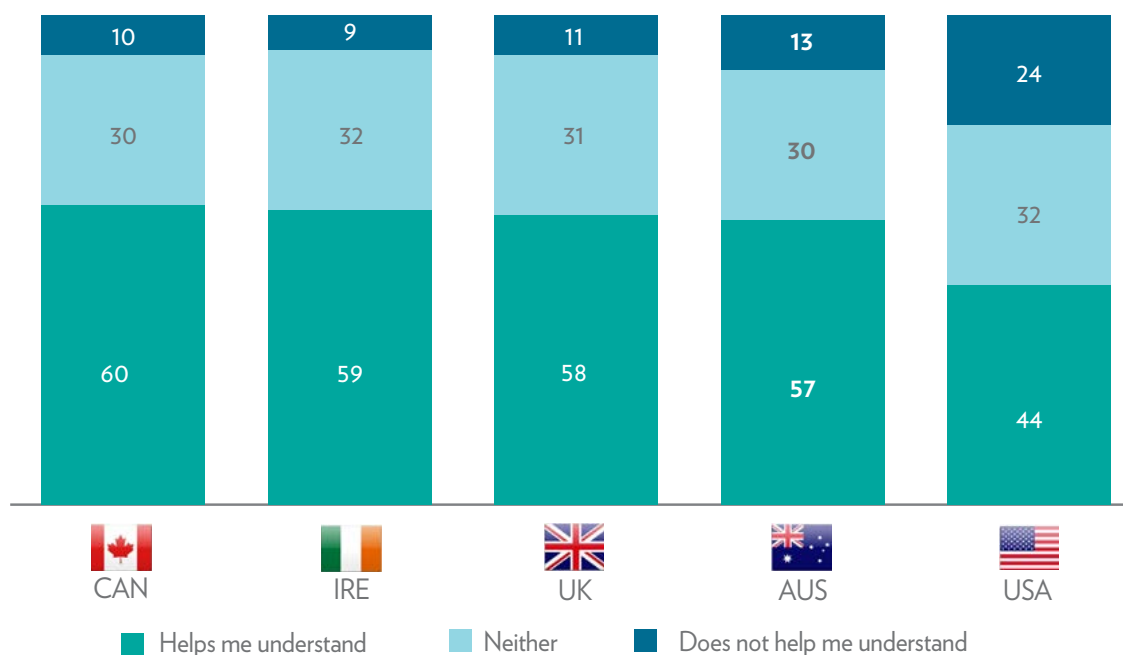
When compared to other English-speaking countries with western democratic political systems (UK, US, Ireland and Canada) a less positive picture emerges.

AUSTRALIA RANKS SECOND LOWEST FOR KEEPING CONSUMERS UP TO DATE

Australia ranks fourth out the five countries for explaining events and helping news consumers understand the news

of the day. Only the US received a lower score (44%) (see **figure 4.2**).

FIGURE 4.2: THE NEWS MEDIA HELPS ME UNDERSTAND THE NEWS OF THE DAY (%)



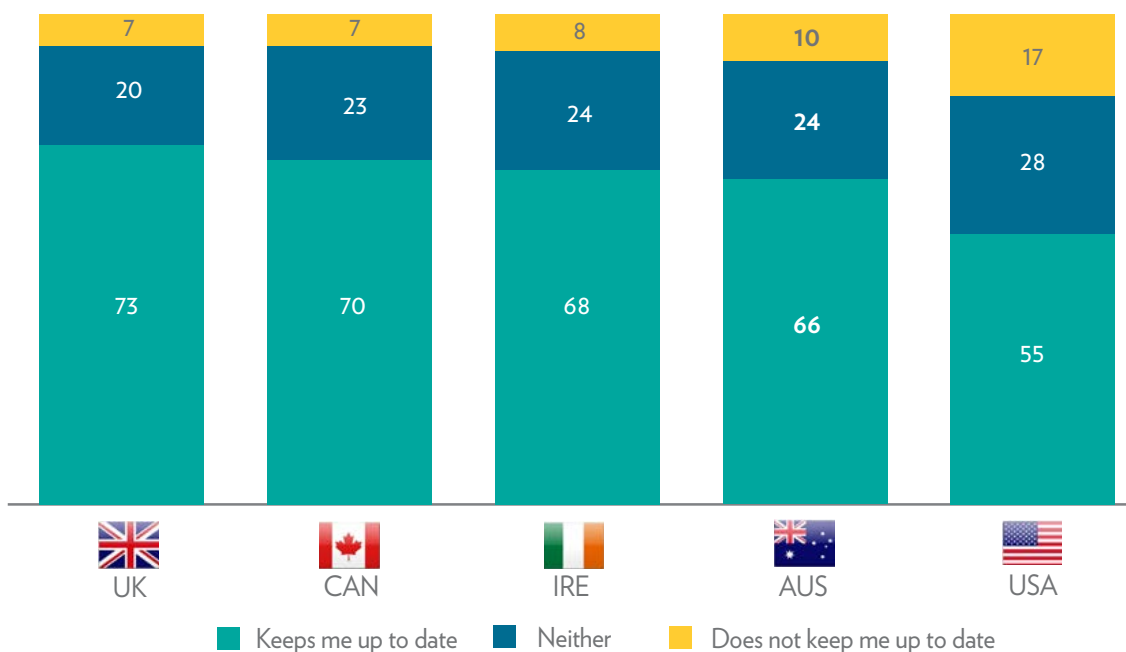
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media helps me **understand** the news of the day. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

While two thirds of Australians think the news media are performing well in keeping them up to date, this compares poorly against the UK, where nearly three quarters agree (73%) the news media does a good job of keeping them informed.

Again, only the US ranks lower than Australia (55%) (see figure 4.3).

66% of Australians think the news media are *performing well* in keeping them up to date

FIGURE 4.3: THE NEWS MEDIA HELPS KEEP ME UP TO DATE (%)



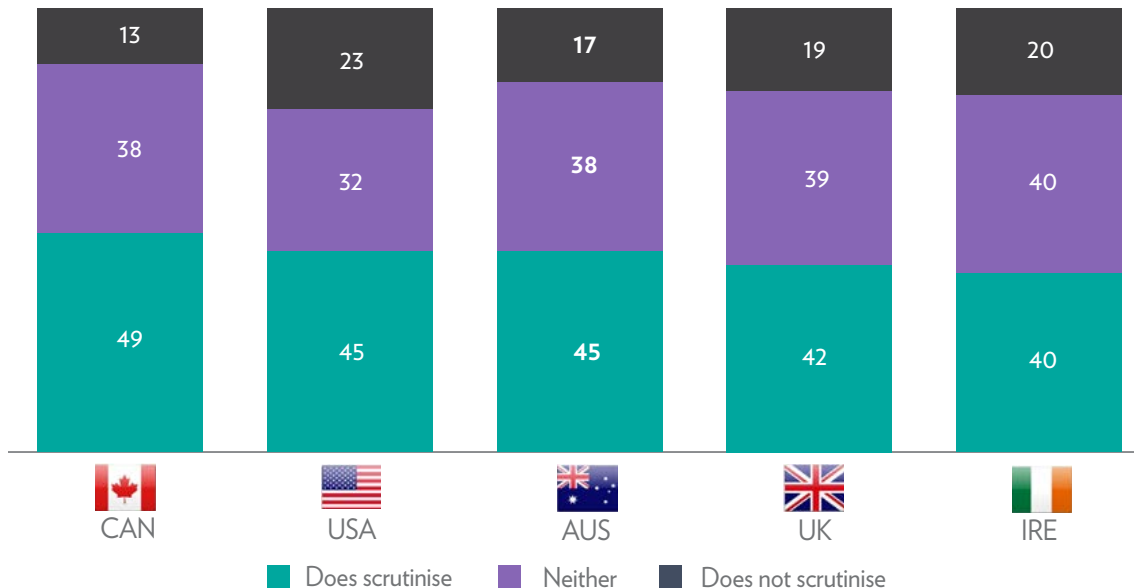
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media keeping me **up to date** about what's going on. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

AUSTRALIA COMES IN CLOSE THIRD FOR SCRUTINISING THE POWERFUL

When it comes to scrutinising those in power, the Australian news media sits in third place, closely behind the US, with Canada in first place. While 45% of news consumers in both Australia and the US agree the news

media are successfully scrutinising those in power, a higher number of Australians are ambivalent (38%), which pushes us to 3rd place (see **figure 4.4**).

FIGURE 4.4: THE NEWS MEDIA SCRUTINISES THE POWERFUL (%)



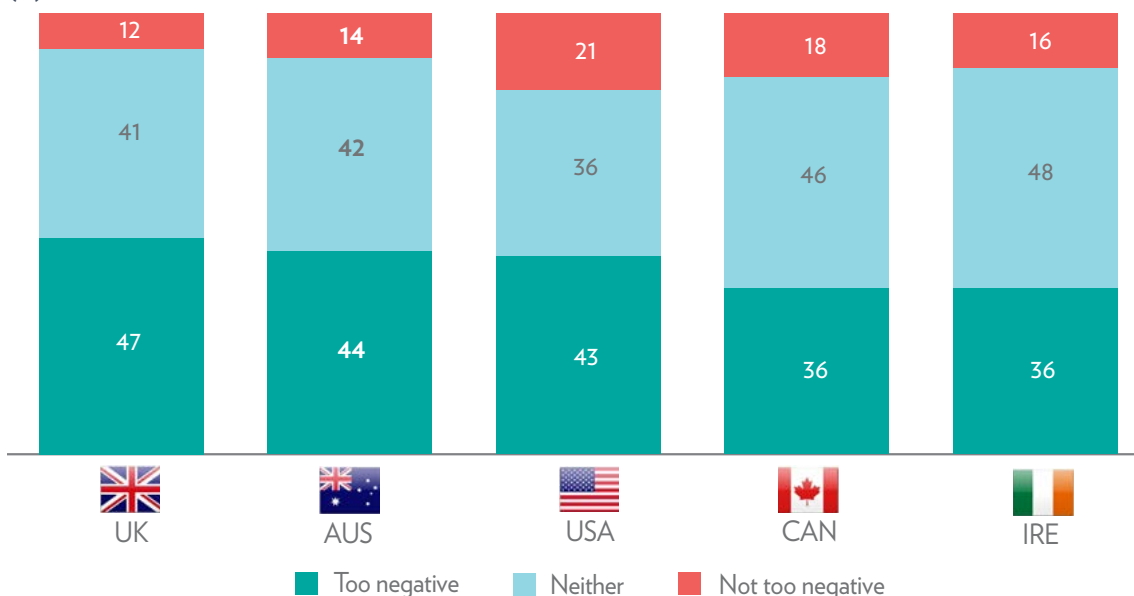
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

AUSTRALIA RANKS SECOND FOR NEGATIVITY AND NOT BEING RELEVANT

In relation to negativity and relevance, Australia ranks poorly. Australia has the second highest ranking for perceived negativity out of the five English-speaking

countries, beaten only by the UK which has been bogged down in the divisive Brexit debate (see **figure 4.5**).

FIGURE 4.5: THE NEWS MEDIA ARE OFTEN TOO NEGATIVE (%)

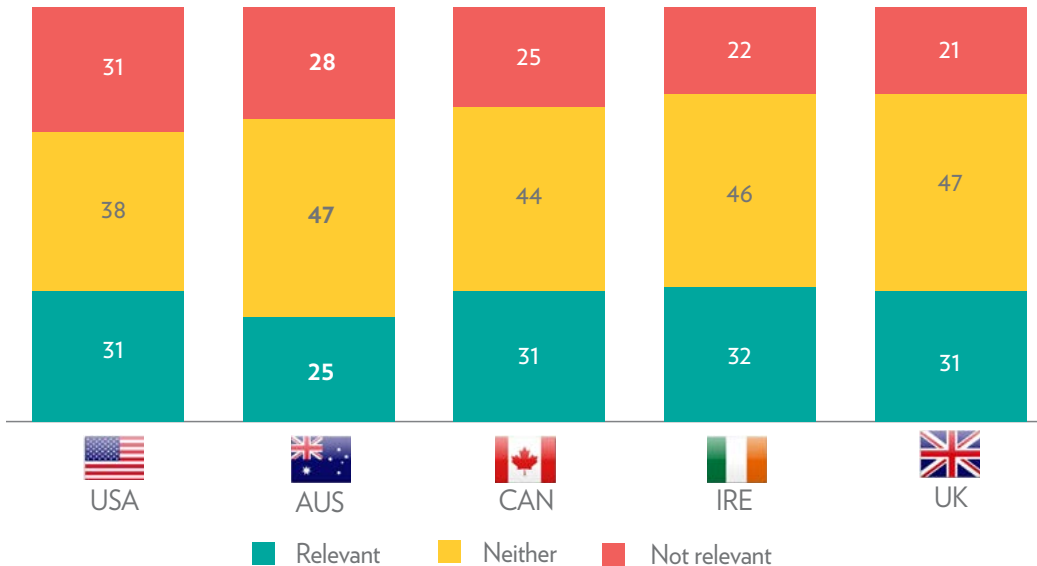


Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media often takes too negative view of events. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

In relation to relevance, Australia ranks second highest for topics chosen by the news media that are not perceived to be relevant to news consumers (see **figure 4.6**).

28% of Australian news consumers think topics covered by the news are **not relevant to them**

FIGURE 4.6: TOPICS CHOSEN ARE NOT RELEVANT TO ME (%)



Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to me. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

IS JOURNALISM PERFORMING ITS WATCHDOG ROLE?

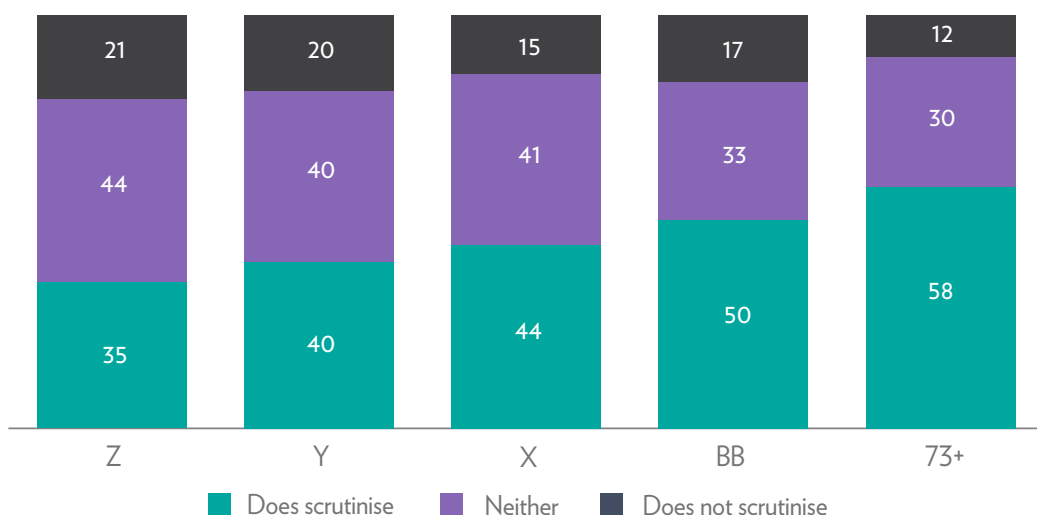
There are differences in perceptions of how well the news media are performing according to age, gender, education, news interest and access.

OLDER NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO AGREE THAT NEWS MEDIA HOLD THE POWERFUL TO ACCOUNT

While 44% agree that news media are applying scrutiny to those in power, this perception is much higher among older people.

Those aged 73+ are much more likely to think the news media are performing their watchdog role (58%), in comparison to just 35% of Gen Z and Y (see **figure 4.7**).

FIGURE 4.7: THE NEWS MEDIA SCRUTINISES POWERFUL BY AGE (%)



Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

This generational difference is closely related to the type of news consumed. People who rely on newspapers (older generations) are the most likely to agree that journalism is holding the powerful to account (59%), and those who rely on social media for news (younger people) are the least likely to agree (34%).

Heavy news consumers with a high interest in news are much more likely to agree (51%) that news media are scrutinising the powerful, in comparison to light news users (39%) or those with low interest in news (37%).

Those with a high interest in politics are especially likely to agree (55%) in contrast with 40% of people with a low interest in politics.

Those who perceive journalism is fulfilling its watchdog role also have higher trust in news generally (58%) compared to those who don't agree (36%). Those who think journalism is applying scrutiny are also less likely to avoid news (43%) compared to those that don't agree (49%).

News consumers with higher education and middle incomes are also more likely to agree the news media are fulfilling its watchdog role in democracy.

Women are slightly less likely to think the news media scrutinise the powerful (42%) compared to men (48%). Gen Z women are the least likely to think the news media are performing their watchdog role (30%) (see **figure 4.8**).

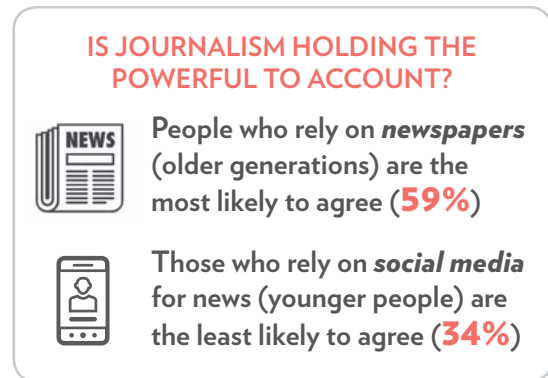


FIGURE 4.8: THE NEWS MEDIA SCRUTINISES POWERFUL, BY AGE AND GENDER (%)



Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The news media monitors and scrutinises powerful people and businesses. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

IS THE NEWS RELEVANT TO ME?

YOUNGER GENERATIONS FIND NEWS LESS RELEVANT

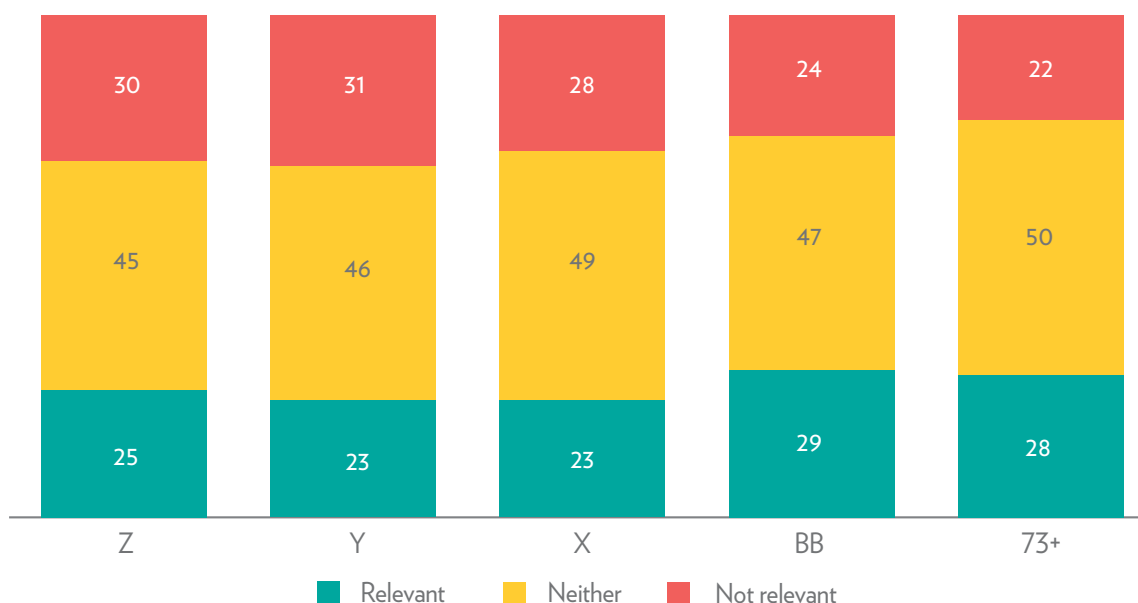
The issue of relevance is quite polarising among Australian news consumers. Almost equal numbers of those surveyed consider the topics chosen by the news media to be relevant (25%) and not relevant (28%) to their lives.

Almost half of respondents (47%) say they neither agree nor disagree with the statement: 'the topics chosen by the news media are not relevant to me'.

Again, perceptions of relevance are closely tied to age. Older people find the news more relevant to them than younger people.

30% of Gen Z and Y agree the news is not relevant to them, compared to 24% of Baby Boomers and 22% of those aged 73+ (see **figure 4.9**).

FIGURE 4.9: RELEVANCE OF NEWS TOPICS BY AGE (%)



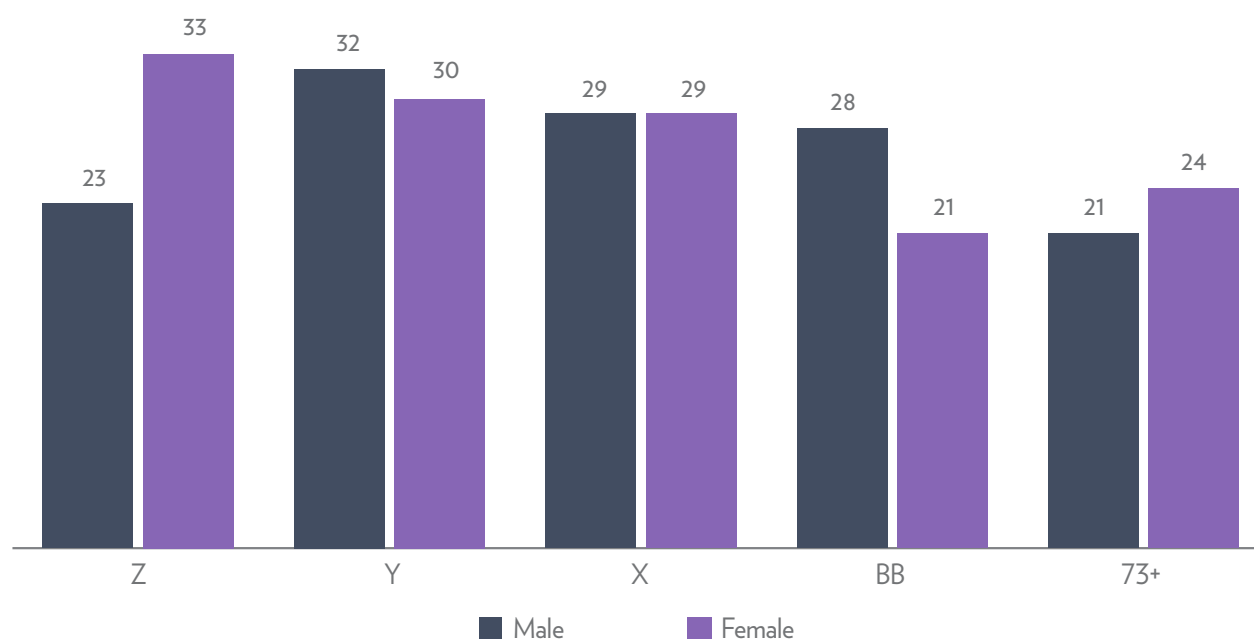
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to me. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

GEN Z WOMEN FEEL THE NEWS IS LESS RELEVANT TO THEM THAN YOUNG MEN

Within generations, there are gender differences when it comes to relevance. One third of Gen Z women agree that the topics chosen by the news media are not relevant to them, compared with 23% of Gen Z men (see **figure 4.10**).

30% of Gen Z and Y think that the news is **not relevant** to them

FIGURE 4.10: THE NEWS MEDIA DOES NOT FEEL RELEVANT TO ME (% OF AGREE/STRONGLY AGREE)



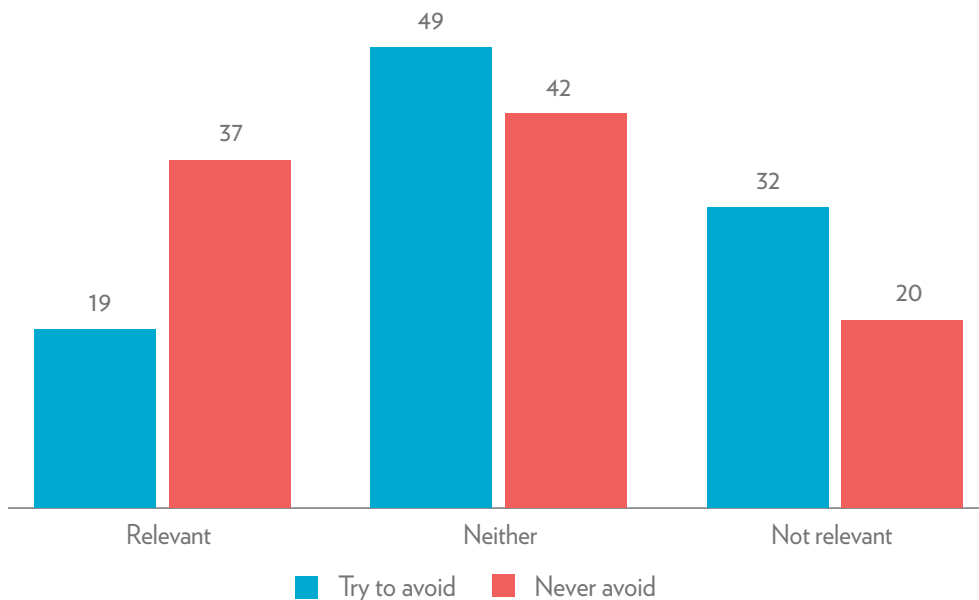
Q15_2019. We are now going to ask you whether you think the news media in your country is doing a good job or not. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: The topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to me. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; strongly agree.

RELEVANCE IS STRONGLY LINKED TO NEWS AVOIDANCE AND TRUST

Unsurprisingly, there is a strong link between news consumers' perceptions of news relevance, news avoidance and trust in news.

As **figure 4.11** shows, those who agree the news is not relevant to them are more likely to avoid news (32%) versus 19% who disagree and think the news is relevant to them.

FIGURE 4.11: RELEVANCE BY NEWS AVOIDANCE (%)

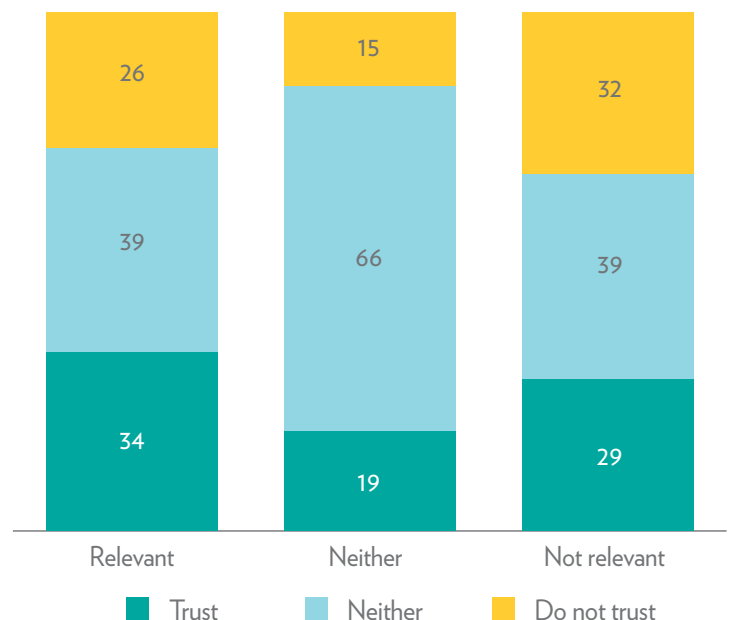


Those who agree the news is **not relevant to them** are more likely to avoid news

Similarly, those who think news is relevant are more likely to have higher trust in news (34%) compared to those who find news not relevant (29%).

Those who neither agree nor disagree that news is relevant (66%) are also ambivalent about their general trust in news (see **figure 4.12**).

FIGURE 4.12: RELEVANCE BY GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS (%)

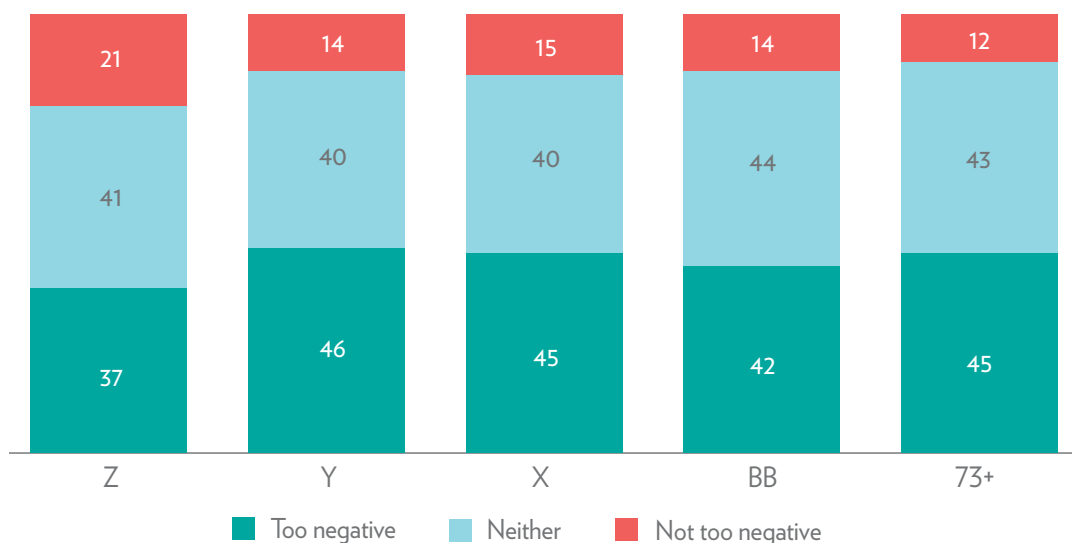


IS THE NEWS TOO NEGATIVE?

OLDER PEOPLE FIND THE NEWS MORE NEGATIVE THAN YOUNGER PEOPLE

According to 44% of news consumers, the topics chosen by the news media are often too negative. 37% of Gen

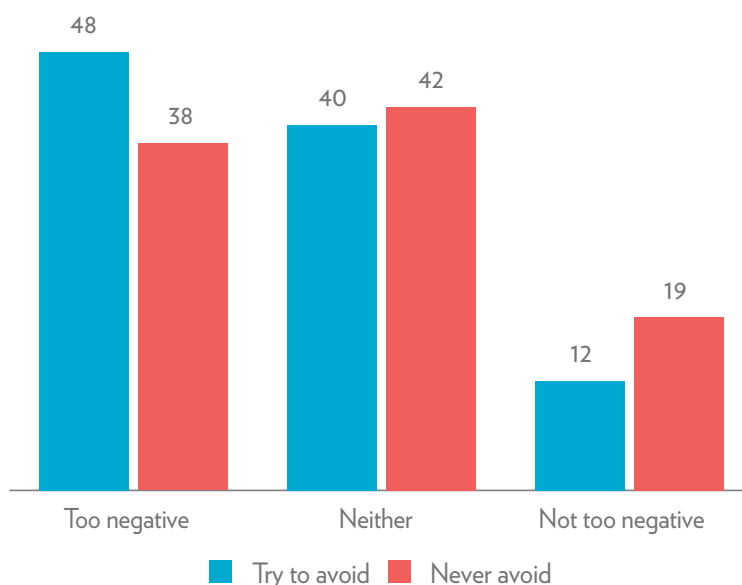
Z think the news is too negative compared with 45% of people aged 73+ (see **figure 4.13**).

FIGURE 4.13: TOPICS CHOSEN BY THE NEWS MEDIA ARE OFTEN TOO NEGATIVE BY AGE (%)

NEGATIVITY IS LINKED TO NEWS

Like relevance, perceptions of negativity in the news are strongly linked to lower trust in news and news avoidance (see **figure 4.14**).

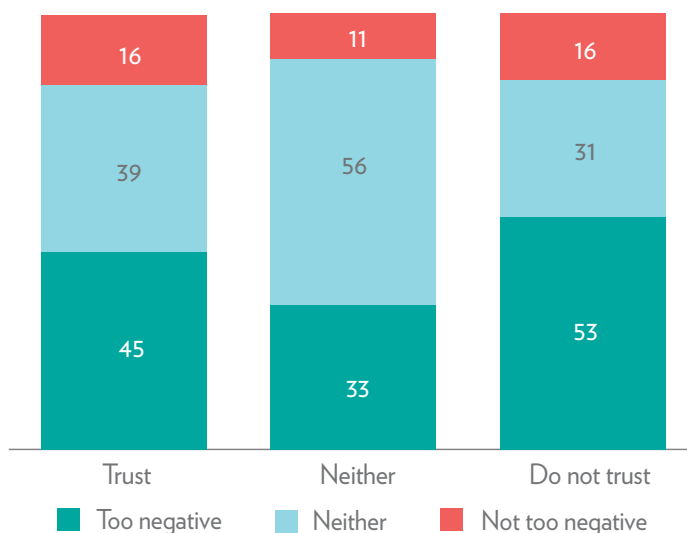
Almost half (48%) of those who avoid news find it is too negative compared to 38% of those who do not avoid news.

**FIGURE 4.14: NEGATIVITY BY NEWS AVOIDANCE (%)**

NEGATIVITY IS LINKED TO LOWER TRUST

More than half of those who do **not** trust the news generally (53%) find it too negative, compared to those who **do** trust news generally (45%) (see **figure 4.15**).

Those who **do not trust the news (53%)** find it more negative than those who **do (45%)**

FIGURE 4.15: NEGATIVITY BY GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS (%)

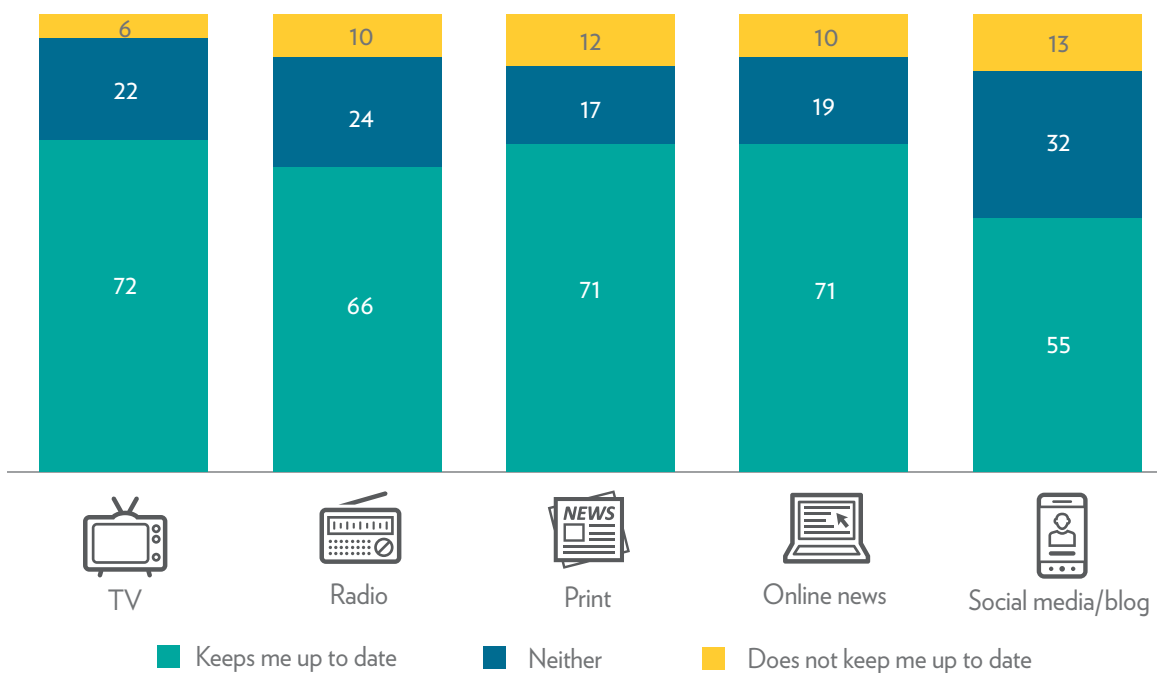
DO THE NEWS MEDIA KEEP YOU UP TO DATE WITH WHAT IS GOING ON?

TV NEWS USERS ARE MOST LIKELY TO FEEL THE NEWS KEEPS THEM UP TO DATE

More than two thirds of news consumers agree that the news media keeps them up to date with what is going on. Those who rely on social media are the least likely to agree that news keeps them up to date (55%); and TV news users are most likely to feel the news keeps them up to date (72%) (see **figure 4.16**).

Again, this varies according to generation. Baby Boomers (72%) are much more likely to agree than Gen Y (60%). This is likely a reflection that older people perceive news to be more relevant to them and they are more likely to rely on TV and newspapers as their main sources of news.

FIGURE 4.16: KEEPS ME UP TO DATE BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



The amount of news consumed also strongly influences news consumers' perception of being kept up to date. Heavy news users with high interest in news and politics (75% respectively) are much more likely to agree that news keeps them up to date, than light news-users (58%) and

those who have low interest in news (55%) and low interest in politics (62%). Unsurprisingly, news avoiders are less likely to agree they are kept up to date (60%), than those who never avoid news (78%).

DOES THE NEWS HELP ME UNDERSTAND THE NEWS OF THE DAY?

NEWSPAPER READERS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO THINK THE NEWS MEDIA HELPS THEM UNDERSTAND EVENTS. SOCIAL MEDIA USERS ARE THE LEAST LIKELY

More than half (57%) of news consumers agree the news media helps them understand the news of the day. Once again, younger people are less likely to agree. Less than half of Gen Z (48%) think the news media are good at explaining events and helping them understand the news, compared to 59% of Baby Boomers.

Education and income also related to this question. Highly educated news consumers are more likely to think the news helps them understand what is going on (60%), compared to the low educated (55%). Similarly, 64% of high-income earners agreed the news media helps them understand what is going on, compared with 54% of low-income earners.

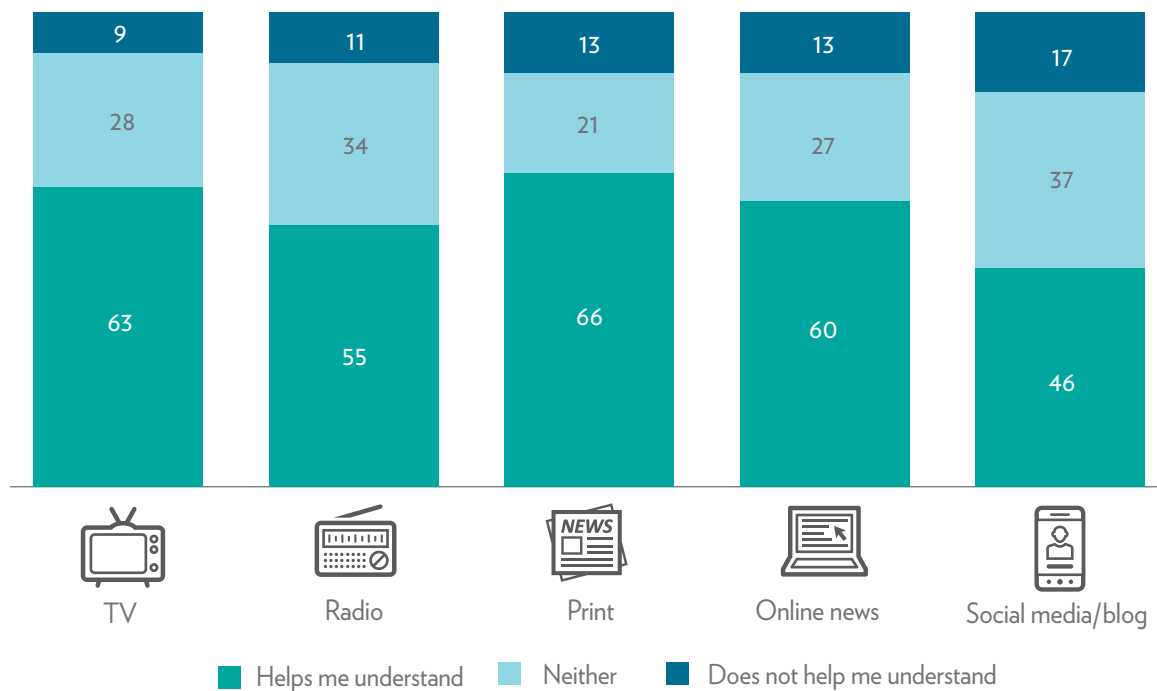
The data show that heavy news users (65%), with a high interest in news (66%) and politics (64%) are more likely to agree that news helps them understand events, compared to light news users (50%), with a low interest in news (56%) and politics (53%).

People who avoid news (52%) are also much less likely to agree that the news keeps them up to date, than those who never avoid (68%) the news.

Combined, this helps explain why Australians are lighter news consumers than people in other countries.

As **figure 4.17** shows, people who mainly access news through newspapers are more likely to believe that the news media helps them understand the news of the day, compared to those who mainly access news via social media.

FIGURE 4.17: NEWS MEDIA HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND THE NEWS OF THE DAY, BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



SUMMARY

Amidst debate about fake news and the ongoing financial viability of journalism, this year's questions about the performance of the news media are both timely and revealing. On the one hand the majority of the Australian news consumers surveyed agree that the news media are doing a good job of keeping them up to date and helping them understand events.

On the other hand, less than half think news organisations are holding the powerful to account, and a similar number consider the news to be too negative. Compared to similar countries to Australia (US, UK, Canada and Ireland), Australia rates relatively poorly across four of the five criteria. The data show that perceptions of news performance are strongly influenced by age and gender.

Younger news consumers are the least likely to feel the news is relevant to them, particularly Gen Z women, which points to opportunities for more content that speaks to this age group. Significantly, the data also show that Australian news consumers who rely on legacy media for their main source of news, such as TV and newspapers, are more likely to think journalism is performing well.

This highlights the ongoing importance of well-resourced traditional news brands as part of the hybrid mix of online and offline news sources.

COMMENTARY

An existential crisis facing traditional media?

Karen Middleton, Chief Political Correspondent, The Saturday Paper

This year's *Digital News Report* reinforces the existential crisis facing traditional media in Australia and across the news-consuming world: they are viewed as less and less relevant, especially by younger generations.

The survey is conducted online and in English, so it doesn't capture those who don't use computers or those who only consume news in other languages. The former is a small and diminishing percentage of the population, the latter possibly larger.

Particularly significant is that more than half of respondents do not believe the Australian news media are adequately holding those in power to account. Given this is a key role, that is a worry.

“More than half of respondents do not believe the Australian news media are adequately holding those in power to account. Given this is a key role, that is a worry.”

Only 44% believe the news media are properly scrutinising the powerful, placing Australia third after Canada and the United States and just ahead of the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Support for their accountability role is highest among older Australians, with 58% of those aged over 73 believing media are doing a reasonable job. Among the young – those designated as generations Y and Z – support plunges to a meagre 35%.

Unsurprisingly, these figures are tied strongly to news consumption, with news junkies more likely to endorse the media's efforts. Support is also highest among those who rely on traditional, or legacy, media, rather than social media.

While 57% say the media help them understand the news, a concerning 48% of youth say they don't. Young women have the least confidence and least interest in news – a specific demographic challenge for those trying to grow the news market.

“Young women have the least confidence and least interest in news – a specific demographic challenge for those trying to grow the news market.”

High levels of ambivalence are also of concern. Across all ages, the groups with no view on the personal relevance of news are larger than those either side. Together, the ambivalent and those who say it's irrelevant represent a substantial uninterested majority. Australia ranks second-worst, after the US, on this score. Interest in news and politics tend to correlate and two-thirds of respondents have no interest in the latter – a message to Australia's leaders too.

“Interest in news and politics tend to correlate and two-thirds of respondents have no interest in the latter – a message to Australia's leaders too.”

People aged over 73 are the most politically engaged – still only at 50% – and those aged under 54 the least, at 30%. Again, this reinforces what media owners and politicians already know: that captivating coming generations is their greatest challenge. More encouraging, 75% of those with a high interest believe the media keep them up to date. These figures also reveal an opportunity.

Of the increasing numbers relying only on social media for news, 55% of believe it doesn't keep them up to date. Most are so-called Generation Z – an opening for any traditional media that can give them somewhere else to turn.

The survey also shows 44% of respondents believe news is too negative. It's perhaps encouraging that this figure isn't higher and that it is lowest among young people. This criticism is neither new nor easy to address. News' very nature tends to make it heavily negative. By definition, news is something people don't already know and much of what is unexpected – disrupting the status quo – is either a bad surprise, a critique or some suggested wrongdoing.

Negative news often presents itself more readily – and spontaneously – than does the positive. While media can always look harder for positive, people-based stories, these are often seen as less pressing, even by those consuming them.

While the figures on consumers' political orientation are not terribly surprising, interestingly, those who lean right are more concerned about negativity than those who lean left. Increasing polarisation of the media themselves may be having an impact and how consumers feel about their news may relate directly to who is providing it.



5 POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND NEWS

- Nearly two thirds of Australians (65%) say they have a low interest in politics.
- Left-wing news consumers are much more likely to fact check than right-wing. Those who are undecided about their political orientation are the least likely to fact-check.
- News consumers who “don’t know” their political orientation use the fewest news brands.
- More than half (53%) of right-wing orientated news consumers perceive the news to be often too negative compared to 41% of left-wing consumers.

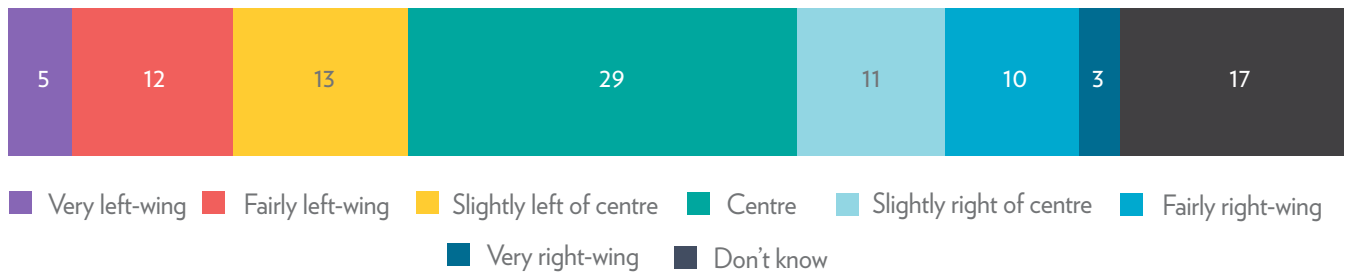
POLITICAL ORIENTATION

In this year's survey 30% of news consumers identified as left-wing (very & fairly left-wing, plus slightly left-of-centre); 29% identified as centre (centre only); and 24% identified as right-wing (very and fairly right-wing, plus slightly right-of-centre). A further 17% did not know their political orientation (see **figure 5.1**).



17% of survey respondents **"don't know"** their political orientation

FIGURE 5.1: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS (%)



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?

POLITICAL ORIENTATION BY DEMOGRAPHICS

Further analysis of political orientation highlights clear divisions based on gender, education and age.

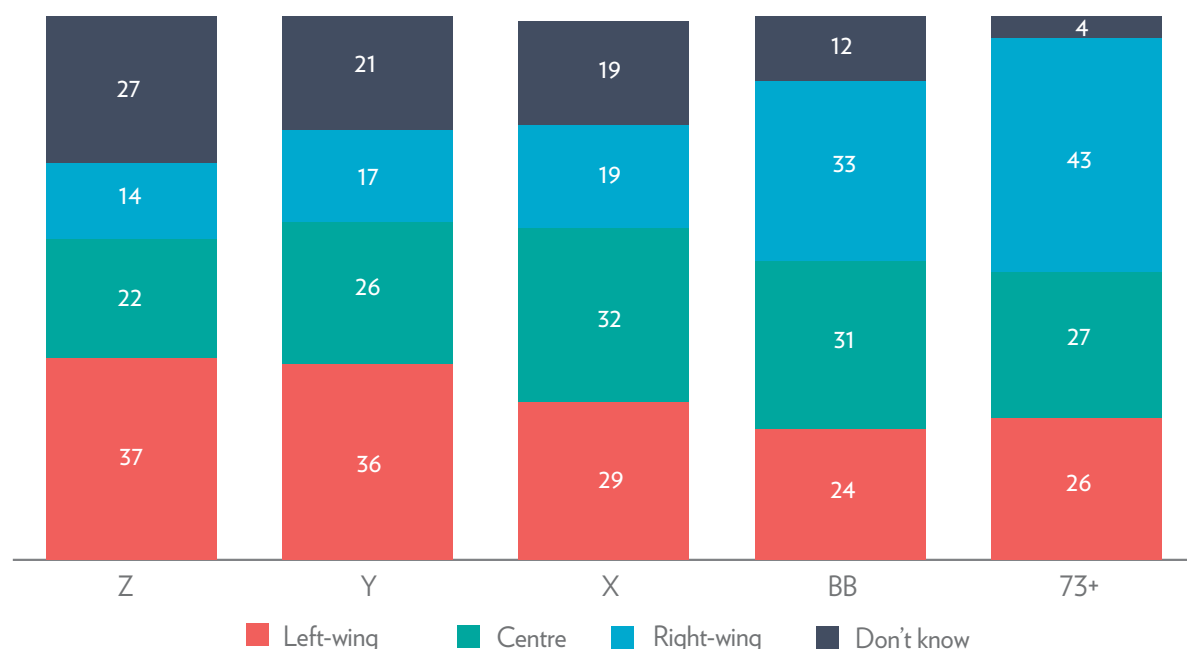
Older generations have a higher proportion of right-wing news consumers; 43% of 73+ say they are right-wing, compared to 14% of Z Gen. The younger generations have a higher proportion of 'Don't knows' (Gen Z, Y and X) (see **figure 5.2**).

In relation to gender, there were more right-wing oriented men (30%) compared to women (18%). More than double the number of women (24%) said they "don't know" their political orientation compared to men (10%).



24% of females and **10%** of males **"don't know"** their political orientation

FIGURE 5.2: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY GENERATION (%)



Almost one third (26%) of news consumers with low education said they “don’t know” their political orientation. This is a high figure compared to those with medium (17%) and high (12%) levels of education.

News consumers with lower levels of education are also more likely to identify with the centre of politics (35%) than either left (19%) or right (21%) (see **figure 5.3**).

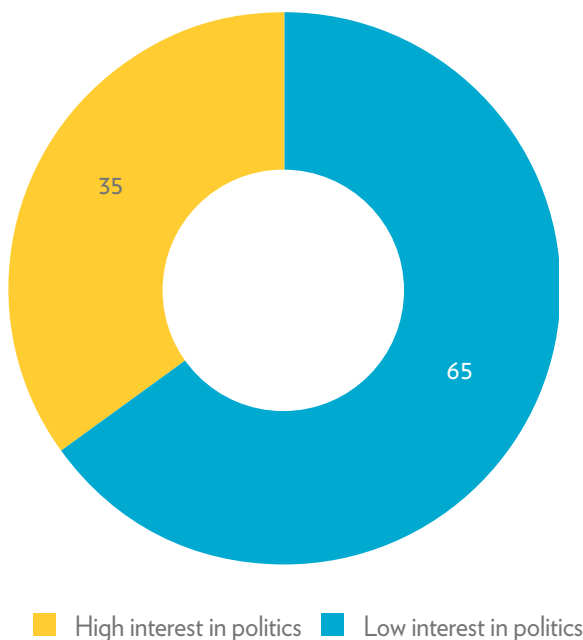
These demographic differences are important and help explain significant variations in news consumption behaviour across the political spectrum that are described in this chapter.

INTEREST IN POLITICS

TWO THIRDS OF AUSTRALIANS HAVE A LOW INTEREST IN POLITICS

This year, we asked participants if they were interested in politics. Just 35% said they are extremely or very interested in politics and almost two thirds (65%) said they have low interest in politics, but this changes with age (see **figure 5.4**).

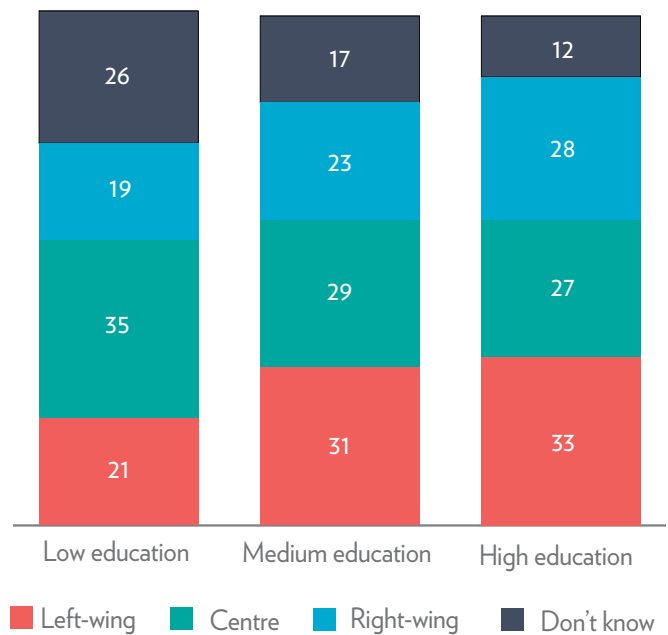
FIGURE 5.4: INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)*



Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? *High interest = extremely or very high interest. Low interest = somewhat, not very or not at all interested.

Older news consumers are more interested in politics than younger. Those aged 73+ are the most interested in politics (50%) and those aged under 54 are the least interested (approximately 30%).

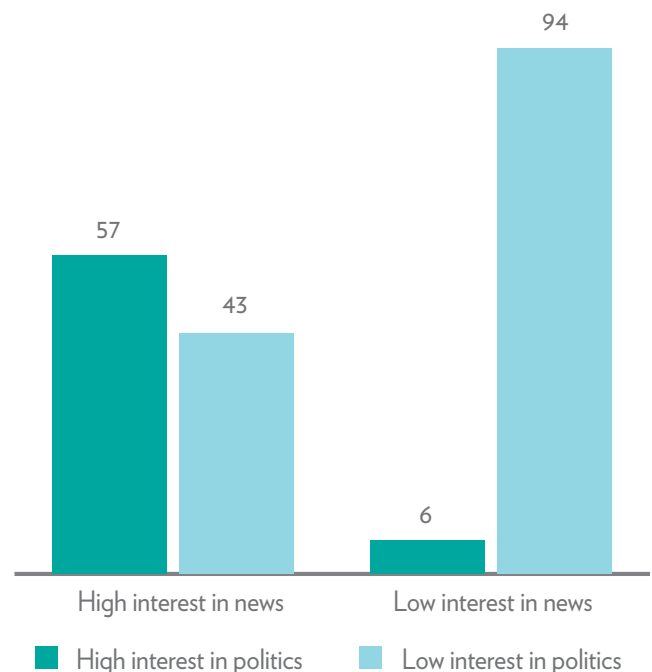
FIGURE 5.3: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY EDUCATION (%)



HIGH INTEREST IN POLITICS IS LINKED WITH A HIGH INTEREST IN NEWS

There is a strong correlation between interest in politics and interest in news (see **figure 5.5**). Those who have a high interest in politics are more likely to be interested in news (57%), while those who have a low interest in politics also have low interest in news (94%).

FIGURE 5.5: INTEREST IN POLITICS BY NEWS INTEREST (%)



POLITICAL ORIENTATION & NEWS BRANDS

CONSUMERS WHO “DON’T KNOW” THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION USE THE FEWEST NEWS BRANDS

When it comes to news from different news brands or outlets, both left-wing and right-wing news consumers use on average the same number of brands (6) (see **figure 5.6**). Centre-oriented news consumers and those who responded “don’t know” use the least number of news brands.

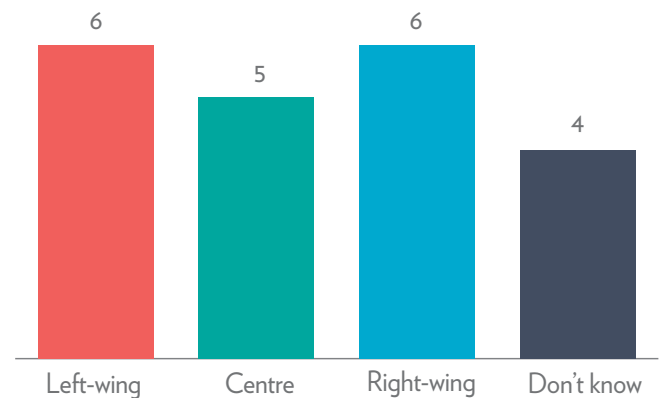
Interestingly, the very right-wing (not shown in figure 5.6) use the highest number (8), which is more than double the average number of brands consumed by those who responded “don’t know” (4).

It should be noted that **figure 5.6** does not tell us whether the news brands consumed reflect similar or diverse perspectives.

The following figures (see **figures 5.7 to 5.10**) show a range of news brands based on the political orientation of their consumers. **Figure 5.7** illustrates the political orientation of TV news consumers.

It shows that free-to-air commercial TV news consumers are more likely to be centre and right-wing in their political orientation. Commercial TV news providers also attract

FIGURE 5.6: POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS (%)



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. 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.

a high proportion of news consumers who “don’t know” if they are left or right-wing. Fox News and SKY News attract a higher proportion of right-wing news consumers.

FIGURE 5.7: TV NEWS AND AUDIENCE POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

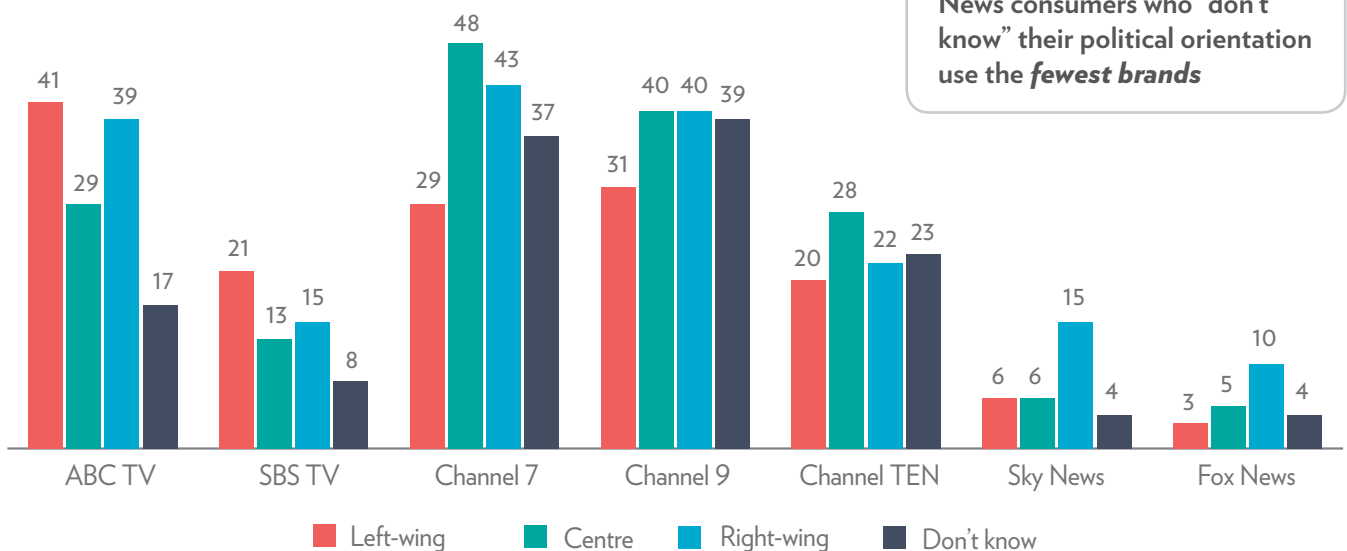
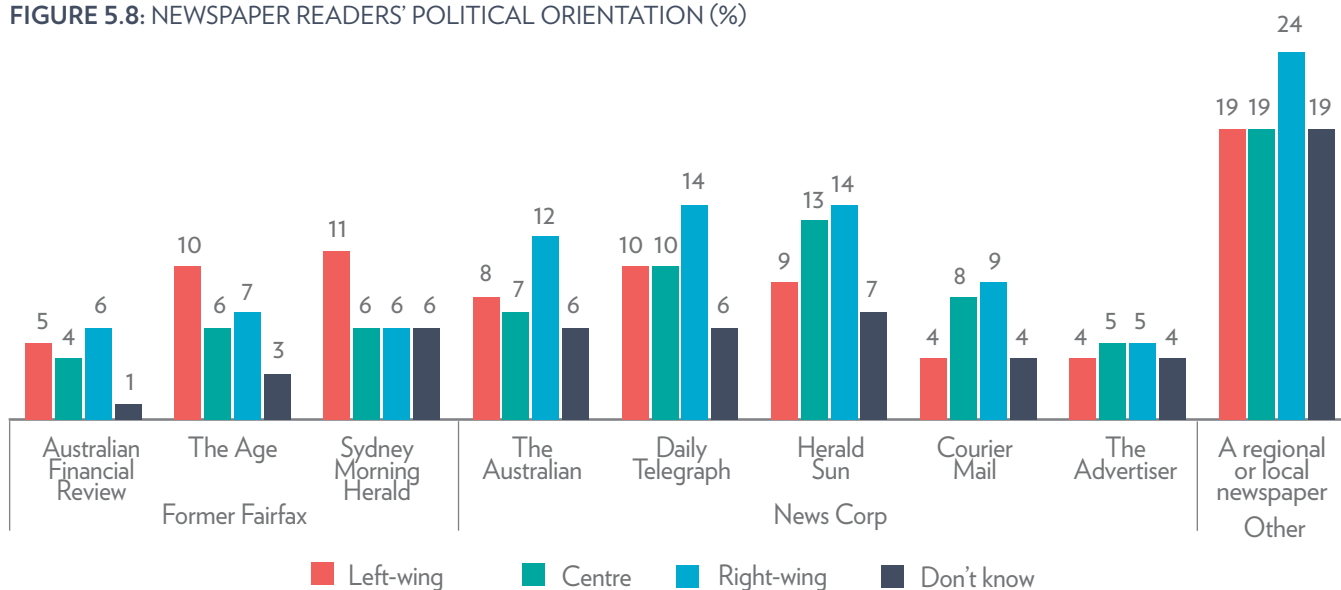


Figure 5.8 shows the political orientation of news consumers who read print newspapers. It highlights the well-recognised polarization among newspaper consumers in Australia. Left-wing oriented consumers are more likely to read papers in the former Fairfax stable (*The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*), and News Corp owned papers tend to attract more right-wing oriented news consumers.

Those who “don’t know” are more likely to read the local or regional newspaper. Given the more conservative political orientation of Channel 9 TV news consumers, it will be interesting to see if the orientation of the audience for former Fairfax mastheads changes over time following the takeover by Nine Entertainment Company.

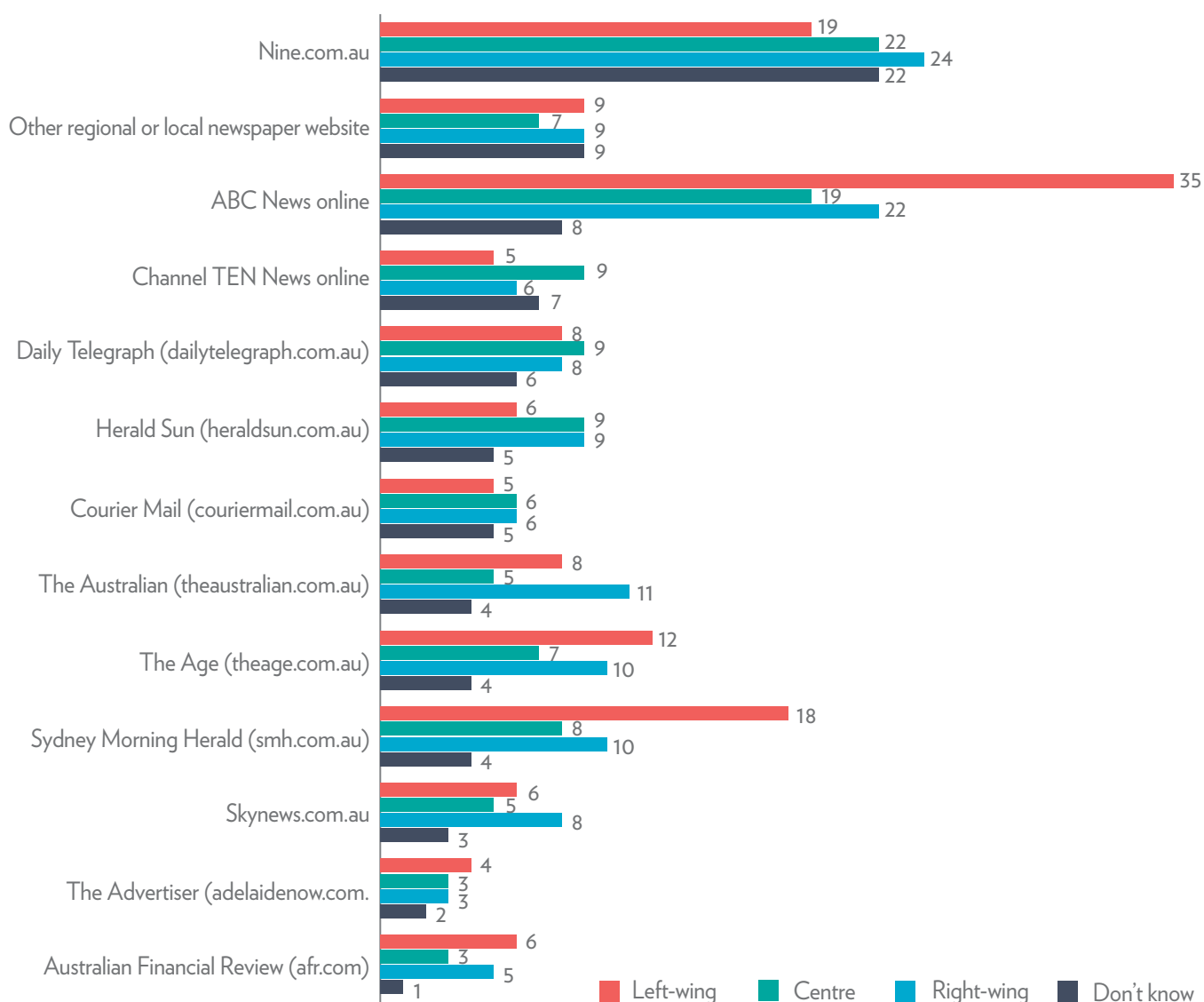
FIGURE 5.8: NEWSPAPER READERS' POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



When it comes to the online versions of traditional offline news brands, including both print and TV brands, similar

patterns can be seen in the political orientation of their news consumers, as **figure 5.9** indicates.

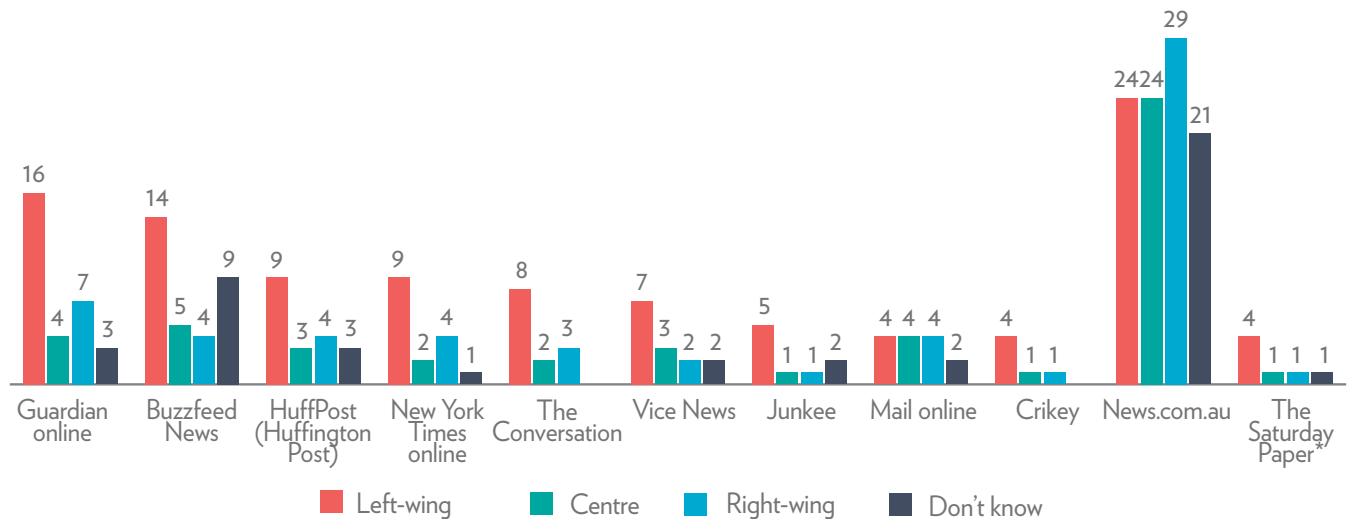
FIGURE 5.9: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY TRADITIONAL BRANDS (ONLINE) (%)



However, for **online only** news brands, consumers are much more likely to be left leaning, which likely reflects a greater proportion of younger and more educated online news consumers (see **figure 5.10**).

The exception is News.com.au, which attracts an audience from across the political spectrum, though has a higher proportion of right-wing consumers.

FIGURE 5.10: POLITICAL ORIENTATION OF NEWS CONSUMERS BY ONLINE ONLY BRANDS IN AUSTRALIA (%)



*The Saturday Paper does have a print version, however in the survey it was only listed among online news brands.

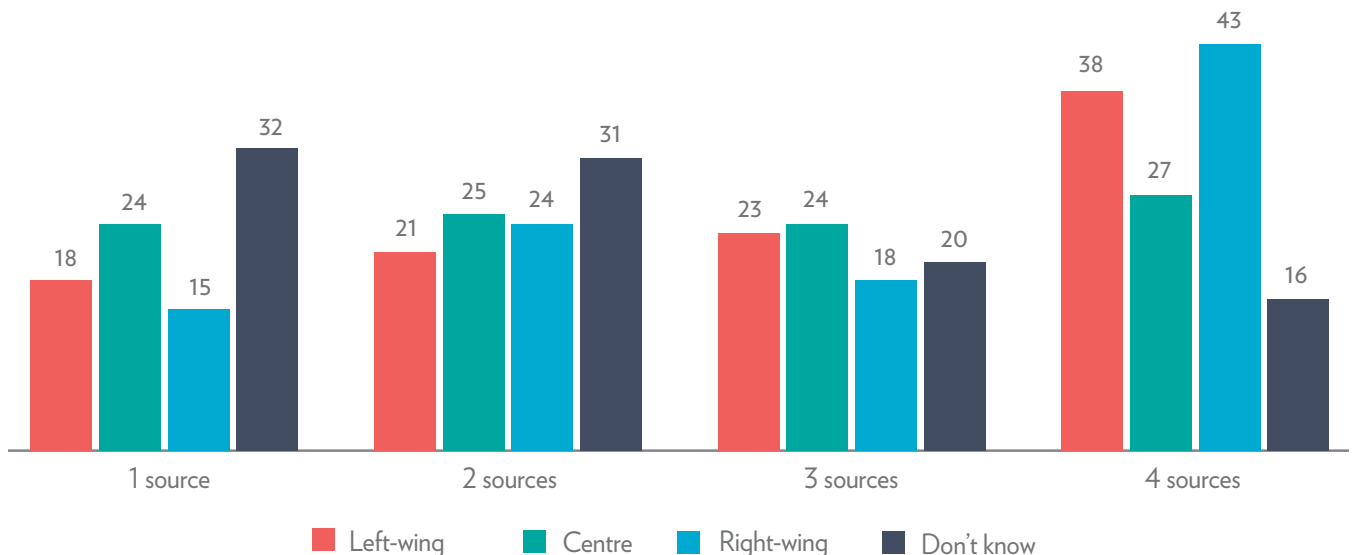
POLITICAL ORIENTATION & NUMBER OF SOURCES

There is a difference in the number of sources (or channels) used to access news based on a news consumer's political orientation. **Figure 5.11** shows that right-wing news consumers are more likely to use four or more sources to find news.

Those who "don't know" their political orientation are more likely to use only one or two sources (channels) to find news. As Chapter Seven: Fake News and Fact-checking shows, those who say they "don't know" if they are left-wing or right-wing, are also less likely to verify news found online.

Right-wing news consumers are more likely to access news via more channels than left-wing

FIGURE 5.11: POLITICAL ORIENTATION BY NUMBER OF SOURCES USED TO ACCESS NEWS (%)



POLITICAL ORIENTATION & PERCEPTIONS OF PERFORMANCE

RIGHT-WING ORIENTED NEWS CONSUMERS THINK THE NEWS IS MORE NEGATIVE

More than half (53%) of right-wing orientated news consumers perceive the news to be often too negative compared to 41% of left-wing consumers (see **figure 5.12**).

IS THE NEWS TOO NEGATIVE?

53% of *right-wing oriented* news consumers think so

Right-wing news consumers are also more likely to think the news media holds the powerful to account (see **figure 5.13**).

Fifty-six percent of right-wing news consumers think the news media are holding the powerful to account compared 43% of centre and 46% of left-wing news consumers.



Centre and left oriented news consumers are *less likely to think* the news media holds the powerful to account

FIGURE 5.12: NEWS IS TOO NEGATIVE BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

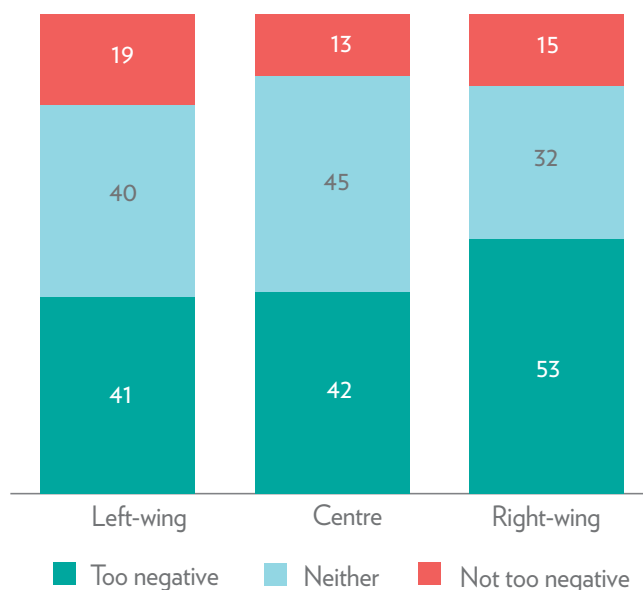
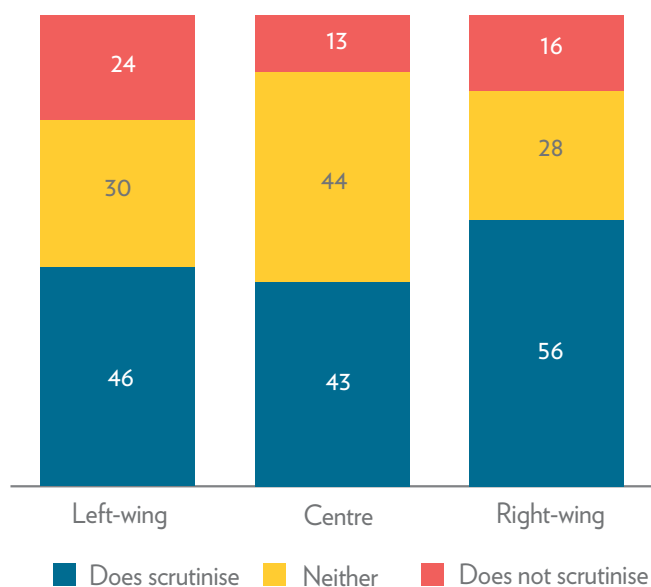


FIGURE 5.13: SCRUTINY BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)



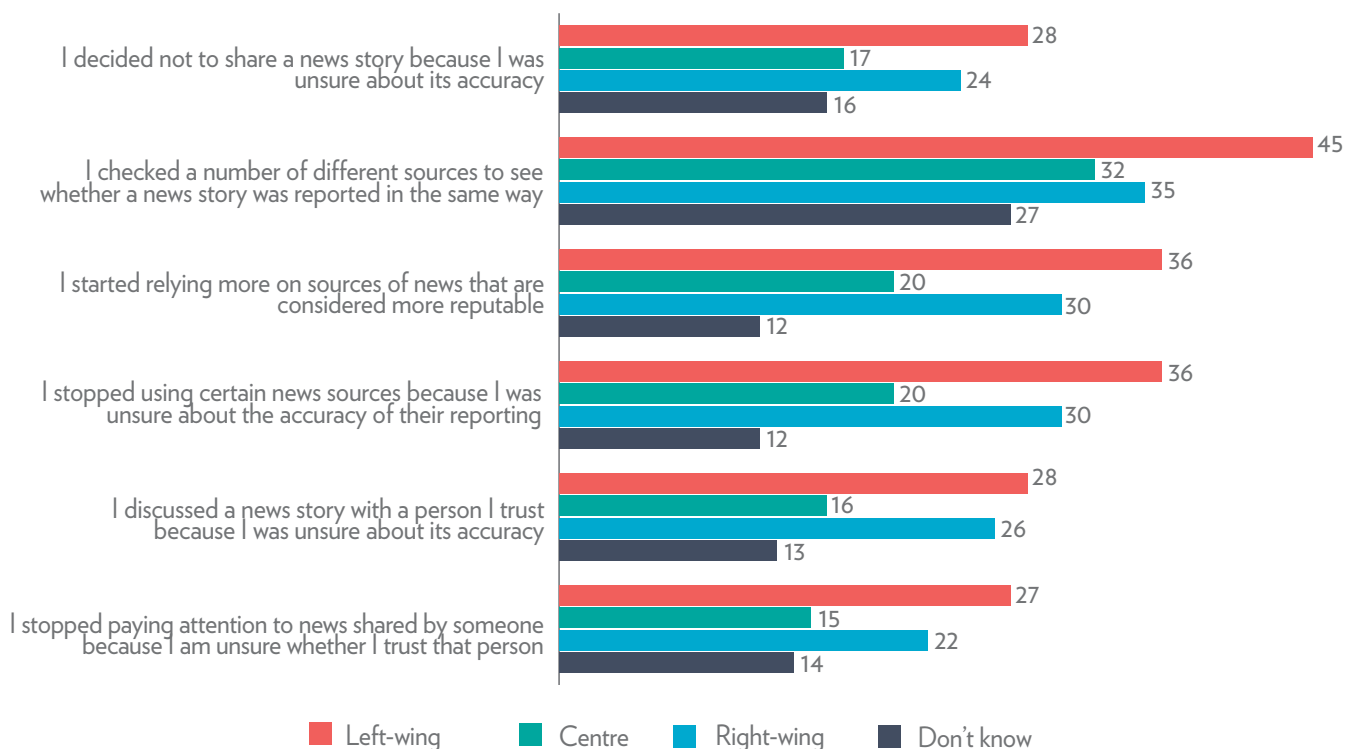
POLITICAL ORIENTATION AND FACT-CHECKING PRACTICES

News consumers who indicate a political orientation (left, centre, or right) are more likely to take part in fact-checking and verification practices compared to news consumers who responded “don’t know” (see **figure 5.14**).

Overall, left-wing news consumers are more likely to perform fact-checking and verification practices than both centre and right-wing oriented news consumers.

The largest difference between left and right-wing news consumers can be seen in relation to those who say they have checked several different sources to see if a news story was reported in the same way.

Forty-five percent of left-wing news consumers say they have checked with different sources, compared to 35% of right-wing news consumers.

FIGURE 5.14: VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

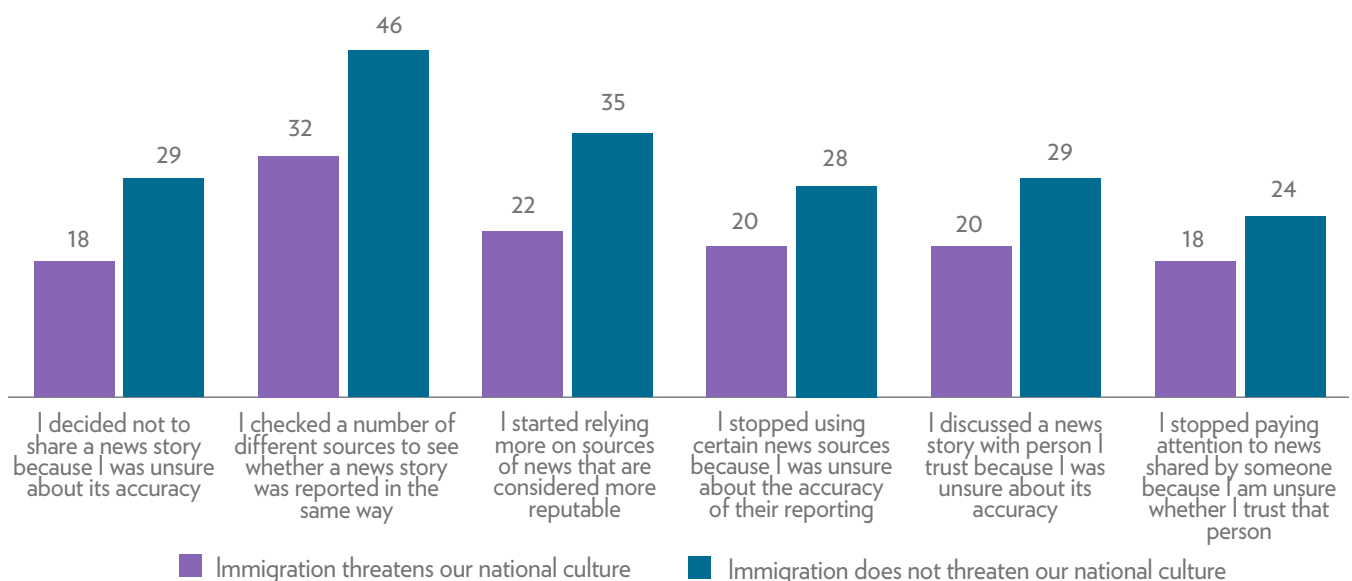
FACT-CHECKING AND VIEWS ON IMMIGRATION

This year we also asked a series of questions about the political process. They included questions about whether news consumers agreed with a series of statements about citizen involvement in political decisions and one about immigration.

In the context of the 2019 Australian federal election, where the Liberal and National Coalition was led by Scott Morrison, who in a previous government was responsible

for strict border policies, the responses to the statement about immigration take on additional interest. In **figure 5.15** below, they are analysed in the context of news fact-checking and verification practices.

Those news consumers who agreed with the statement that immigration is a threat to national culture are more likely to be right-wing and much less likely to perform fact-checking and verification practices.

FIGURE 5.15: VERIFICATION BY RESPONSES TO IMMIGRATION AS THREAT (%)

Q2 2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Immigration threatens our national culture. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

SUMMARY

In the context of the 2019 Australian Federal election, the findings here might help provide some insights into the news consumption behaviour of Australians along partisan lines. Left-wing oriented news consumers continue to be more interested in news and politics than centre and right-wing oriented news consumers. But there is a large section of news consumers who “don’t know” their political orientation.

This group has low interest in politics and news, uses the fewest brands, and accesses them via the fewest channels (sources). They are more likely to be female, younger and have low education and incomes. Importantly, in an online political environment tainted by fake news and partisan misinformation, this group also fact-checks and verifies stories the least.

Those who responded “don’t know” are possibly aligned with the population of undecided voters and may help explain their voting behaviour. According to this data they are possibly making voting decisions based on the fewest number of sources and are less likely to check them. This reflects a significant population of disengaged news consumers.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

SUNDAY, MAY 26: After the Liberal and National Coalition was returned to power after the Australian Federal election held on May 18, Prime Minister Scott Morrison announces his cabinet for the 46th Parliament in the Prime Ministers Courtyard at Parliament House in Canberra.

IMAGE: ROHAN THOMPSON/AAP IMAGE



6 TRUST IN NEWS

- Trust in news has fallen globally, including in Australia.
- Almost half of Australian news consumers (49%) distrust news on social media.
- Those who trust news, avoid it less and are less worn out by it.
- Trust is much higher among those who access online brands directly (65%).
- Those with low interest in politics have higher trust in TV.

GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS HAS FALLEN

In this chapter we explore news consumers' trust in news. Each year survey participants are asked about their level of trust in news generally. Over the past twelve months, general trust in news has fallen approximately 2% across the 38 countries surveyed, but in Australia it has dropped 6% from a high of 50% in 2018 to 44% in 2019.

This is still above the global average of 42% and places Australia 18th out of the 38 countries for general trust in news. Compared to other English-speaking countries with similar political systems, Australia is firmly in the middle below Canada (52%) and Ireland (48%) but above the UK (40%) and the US (32%).

The drop in general news trust among Australian news consumers corresponds with an increase in the number of people who say they 'neither trust nor distrust' the news, which has risen from 25% in 2018 to 30% in 2019.

This ambivalence toward news indicates less confidence by news consumers not only in news in general but also in the news that they use. Despite these fluctuations, the percentage of Australians who distrust the news has remained relatively constant over the last four years at approximately 25% (2016, 25%; 2017, 25%; 2018, 25%; 2019, 26%) (see **figure 6.1**).

TRUST IN THE 'NEWS I USE' HAS ALSO FALLEN

In this year's survey, all measures of trust in news show a drop from 2018. While trust in the 'news I use' always scores more highly than general trust, it has also decreased from 55% to 51% over the past twelve months (see **figure 6.2**).



In this year's survey all measures of trust in news show a drop from 2018

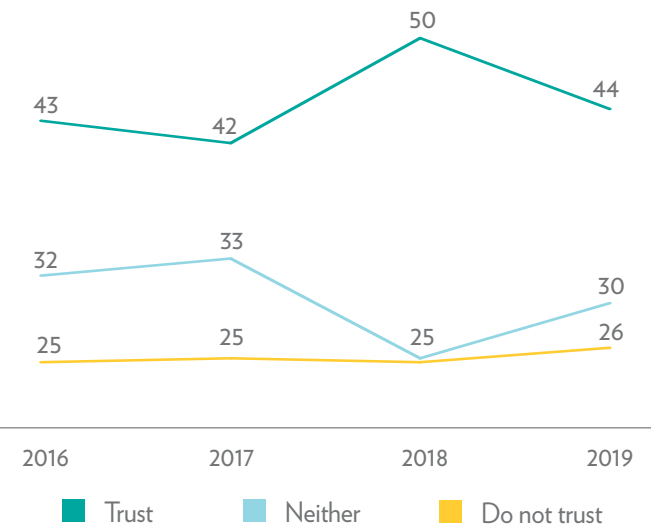
ALMOST HALF OF NEWS CONSUMERS DISTRUST NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Trust in news found on social media and search engines is lower than general trust in news. Only 18% of news consumers say they trust news on social media and 32% say they trust news found via search engines.

The distrust level remains high in news on social media with almost half of news consumers saying they distrust news found on social media (49%) (see **figure 6.3**).

Q6_2018. 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.

FIGURE 6.1: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS (%)



Q6_2016. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. First, we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within your country. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

FIGURE 6.2: TRUST IN MY NEWS (%)

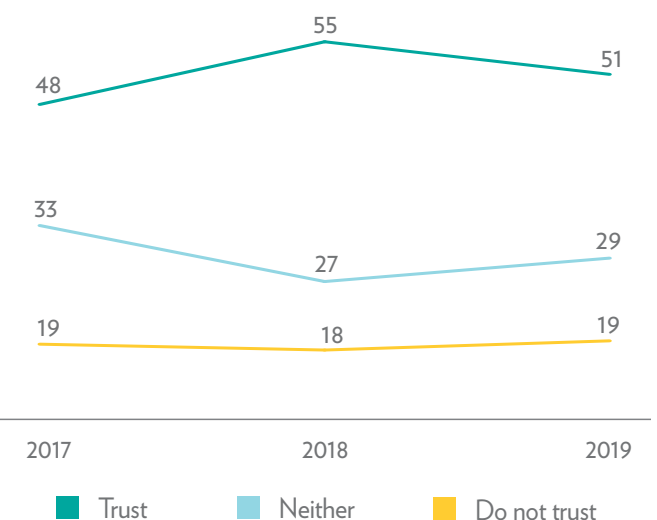
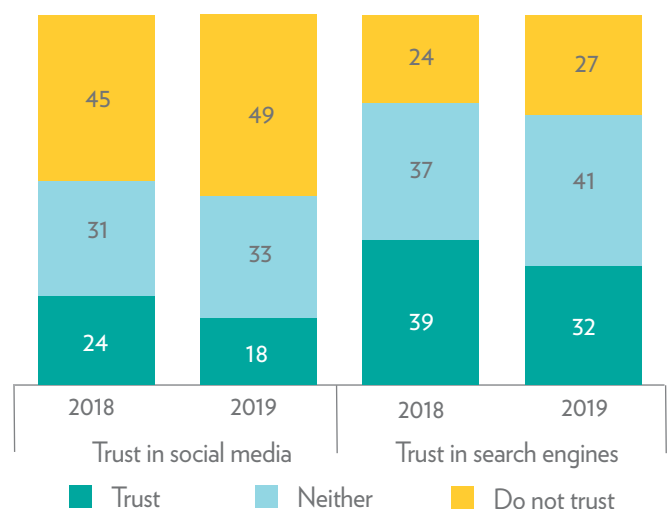


FIGURE 6.3: TRUST IN NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND SEARCH ENGINES (%)



GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS & MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

Those news consumers who rely on television (54%) and newspapers (56%) for news report higher levels of trust in news in general compared to news consumers who rely on radio (41%), online news (44%), or social media (27%) as their main source of news.

Levels of distrust in news in general largely follow a similar inverse pattern. News consumers who use social media as their main source of news are also more likely to say they neither trust nor distrust news in general (35%) (see **figure 6.4**).

Similarly, those who access online news via direct methods (going to a brand website, searching for a brand, or receiving notifications/alerts) have a higher level of trust (63%), though this is lower than in 2018 (67%).

There has been a slight increase in consumers who neither trust nor distrust (2018, 20%; 2019, 21%), however, levels of distrust in the news has also increased (2018, 13%; 2019, 16%) (see **figure 6.5**).



Only **27%** of those who rely on social media for news **trust the news**

TRUST IS MUCH HIGHER AMONGST THOSE WHO ACCESS NEWS DIRECTLY

In last year's report, we identified a relationship between news consumers' trust levels and the way they access news online. **Figure 6.5** shows that those who access news directly are much more likely to trust the news they use (63%) compared to indirect methods (48%).

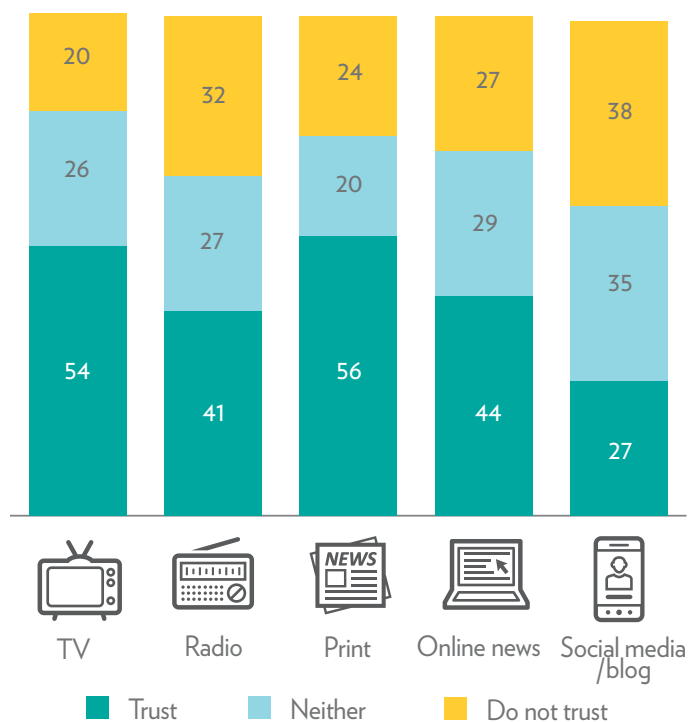
The trust levels of those who access online news by indirect methods (via search engines, aggregator apps and social media) has sharply decreased from 56% in 2018 to 48% this year.

At the same time, levels of distrust have increased (2018, 18%; 2019, 22%) and the number of those who say they neither trust nor distrust the news they consume has also increased (2018, 26%, 2019, 30%). This indicates there is increased uncertainty among news consumers about the trustworthiness of online news.

INCREASE IN **DISTRUST** IN NEWS VIA INDIRECT METHODS

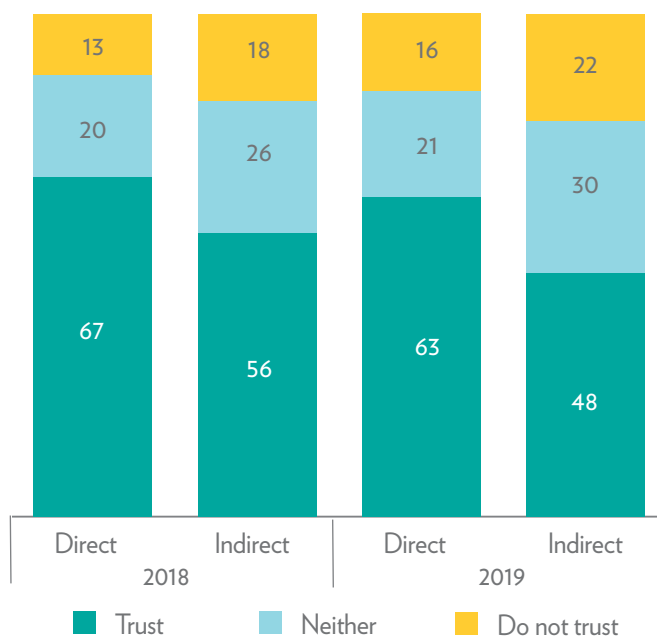
2018 **18%**  2019 **22%**

FIGURE 6.4: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE (%)



Q6_2016. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

FIGURE 6.5: TRUST IN NEWS I USE BY MAIN WAY OF ACCESSING ONLINE NEWS (%)



Q6_2016. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. Please indicate your level of agreement 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? Direct includes going to brand website, searching for brand, notifications/alerts; indirect includes search engines, aggregator apps and social media.

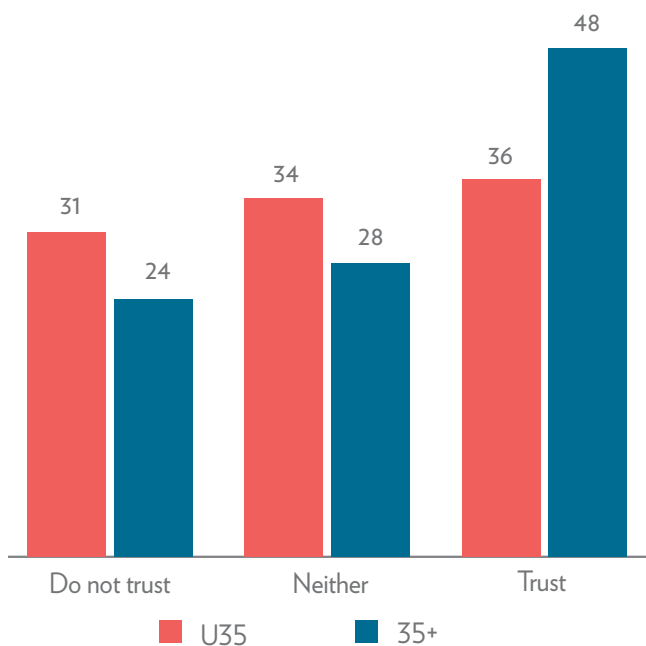
NOT EVEN SOCIAL MEDIA USERS HAVE HIGH TRUST IN NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Those who mainly use social media for news have only slightly higher levels of trust in news on social media (22%) than those who use other platforms as the main source of news. (see **figure 6.6**).

OLDER NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE TRUSTING

There is a clear relationship between age and perceptions of general trust in news. News consumers aged 35 years or older are far more likely to trust news in general compared to those aged under 35, with 48% of older news consumers responding positively compared to only 36% of younger news users (see **figure 6.7**).

FIGURE 6.7: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY AGE (%)

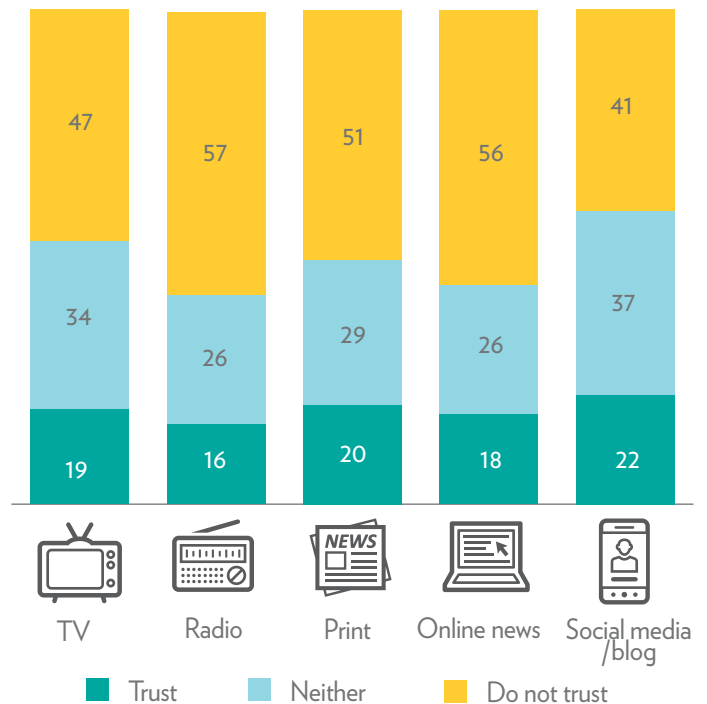


Those news consumers aged under 35 are more likely to both distrust news and be ambivalent.

There is a big shift in the levels of trust amongst the younger generations. There are large drops in the levels of general trust in news among Gen Y from 53% in 2018 to 37% in 2019.

The decline in trust among Gen Y goes some way to explaining the fall in trust overall, particularly with a minor drop among Gen X (2018, 49%; 2019, 46%) (see **figure 6.8**).

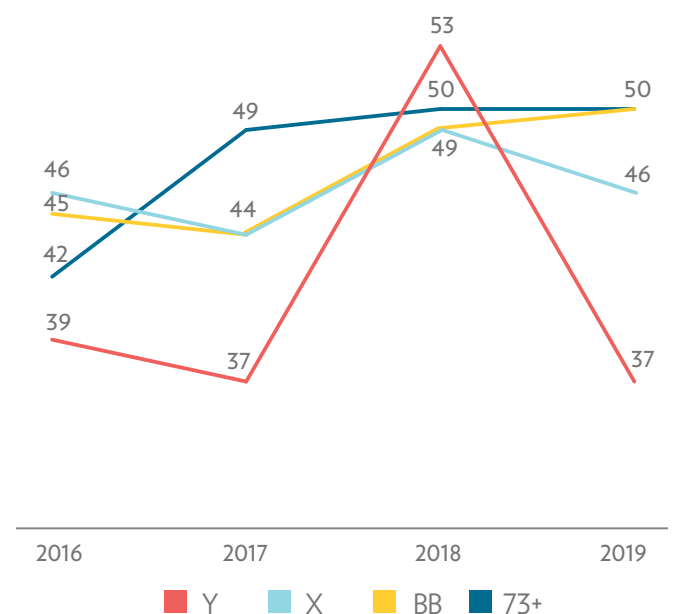
FIGURE 6.6: TRUST IN SOCIAL MEDIA BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



Q6_2018_2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time. Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

General trust in news among Gen Y consumers has dropped from 53% in 2018 to 37% in 2019

FIGURE 6.8: TRUST IN NEWS IN GENERAL BY GENERATIONAL COHORTS (%)*



*Gen Z has been excluded from this graph due to small sample size in 2016.

TRUST IN ESTABLISHED BRANDS

ABC NEWS IS THE MOST TRUSTED BRAND

This year we again asked about trust in a limited number of news brands. Australians continue to trust established news brands more than newer online-only brands.

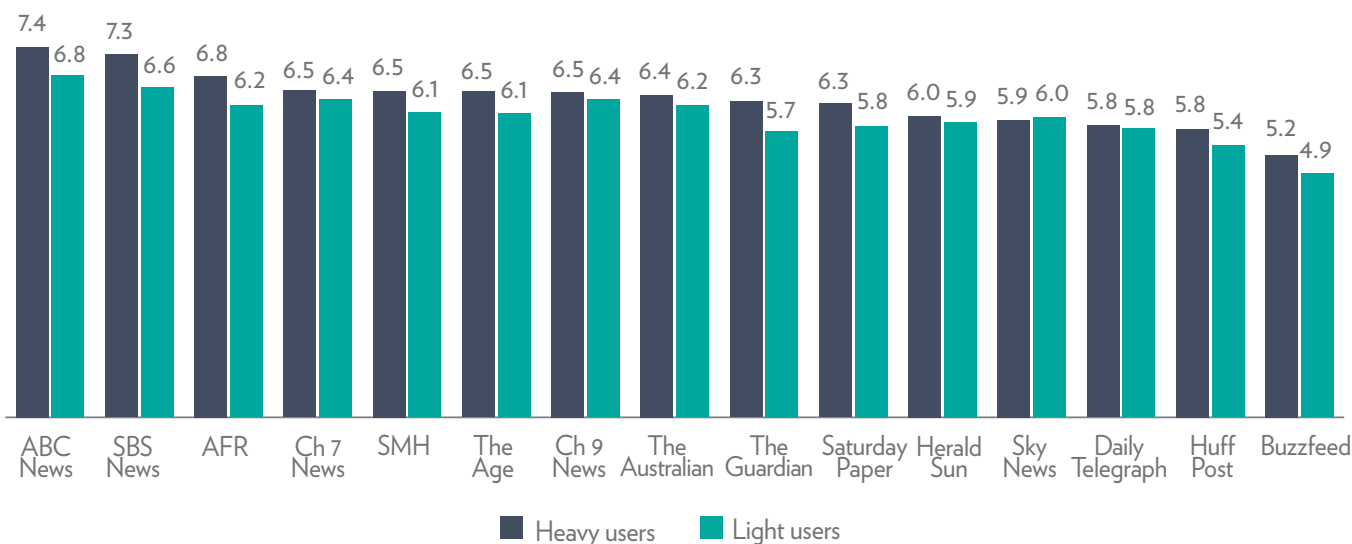
Participants were asked to give each brand a score out of 10, with 0 being 'not at all trustworthy' to 10 being 'completely trust worthy'.

ABC News continues to be ranked the most trusted news brand overall with online site BuzzFeed ranked the least trusted. A long-term pattern across almost all brands indicates that heavy news consumers respond with higher levels of trust.

Two news brands where this pattern is not reflected are Sky News and *The Daily Telegraph* where light news consumers show equal (*Daily Telegraph*) or higher (Sky News) levels of trust compared to heavy news consumers of the same brand.

Both Sky News and *The Daily Telegraph* are associated with opinion-based tabloid journalism. Channel 7, Channel 9, and the Herald Sun also generated responses with little difference between those who have heavy and light levels of news access (see **figure 6.9**).

FIGURE 6.9: TRUST IN BRANDS BY NEWS ACCESS (%)



THOSE WITH LOW INTEREST IN POLITICS HAVE HIGHER TRUST IN TV

There is a similar pattern when trust in news brands is compared to interest in politics. The long-term pattern shows those news consumers with a high interest in politics generally have higher levels of trust in news.

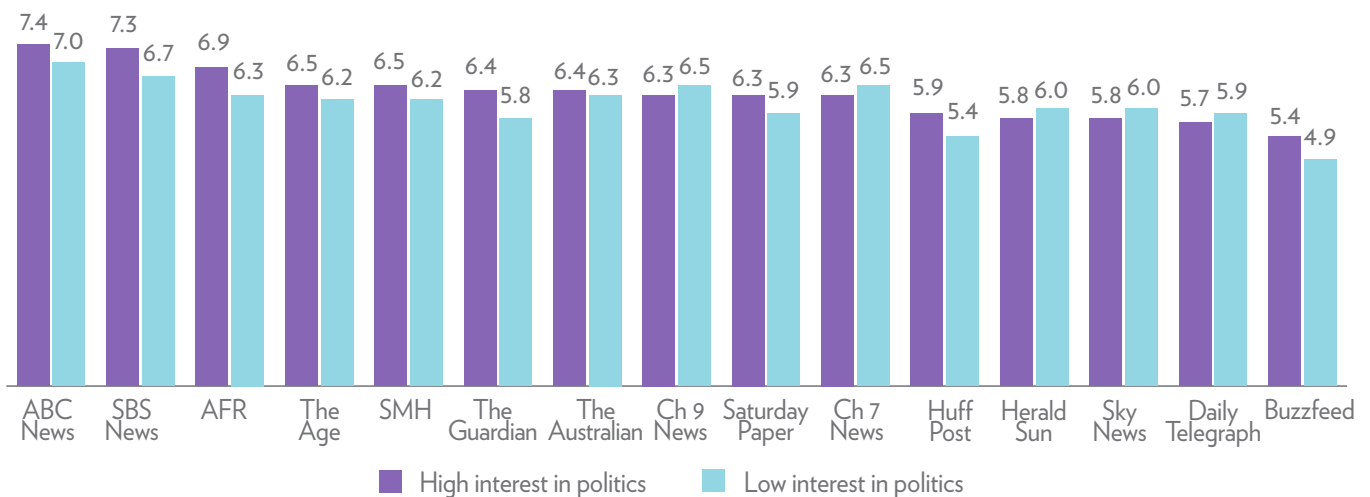
However, there is a slight difference between trust levels in some news brands by interest in politics that follow this pattern.

A pattern of high trust and high interest in politics is repeated for brands with high trust overall (ABC News, SBS News, *Australian Financial Review*) and those that come primarily from a print background (*The Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Guardian*). A new pattern has been identified, however, that is the inverse.

There is a relationship between low interest in politics and higher levels of trust in brands for news consumers of associated with commercial television news (Channel 9 News, Channel 7 News, Sky News) and tabloid journalism (*Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph*) (see **figure 6.10**).



News consumers with a high interest in **politics have higher levels of trust in news**

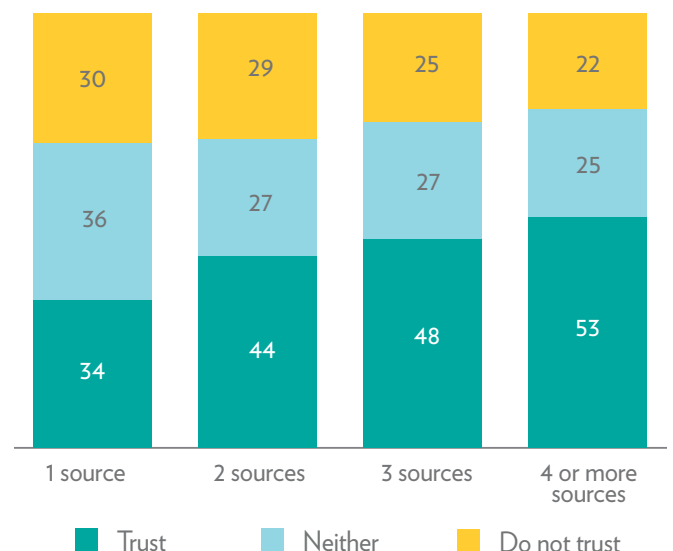
FIGURE 6.10: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS BY INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)

THOSE WHO USE 4+ SOURCES TRUST NEWS MORE

Consistent with previous years, those news consumers that access news via four or more sources of news report higher levels of trust (53%) and lower levels of distrust (22%) (see **figure 6.11**).

The majority of those who have accessed news via only one source in the last week report that they neither trust nor distrust news in general (36%).

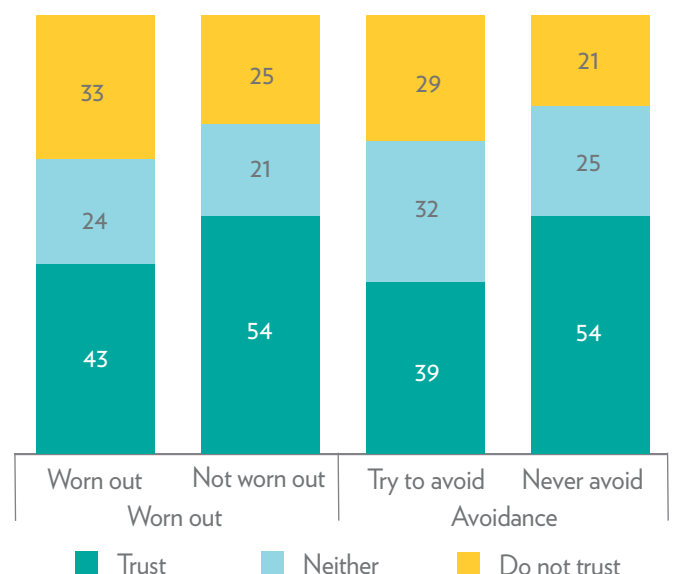
Among those respondents who accessed only one source of news, the main sources of news were television (bulletins and 24 hours news, 43%) and social media (40%).

FIGURE 6.11: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY NUMBER OF SOURCES (%)

PEOPLE WHO TRUST NEWS AVOID IT LESS

Trust is much higher among those news consumers who engage with news. News consumers who are not worn out by the news report higher levels of trust (54%) and lower levels of distrust (25%) compared to those who say they are worn out by the news (43% trust and 33% distrust).

Further, news consumers who say they never avoid news (54%) compared to news consumers who say they try to avoid (39%) report higher levels of trust (see **figure 6.12**).

FIGURE 6.12: TRUST, NEWS FATIGUE, AND NEWS AVOIDANCE (%)

Those who access news via **4 or more sources** report **higher levels of trust** in news

SUMMARY

Australian news consumers do not trust news via social media sources (**figure 6.5**). News consumers also largely do not trust or are sceptical of the trustworthiness of news via indirect methods (**figure 6.6**). Low trust in news via social media means that to get trust back in their news, news consumers seek out news via multiple sources, which results in general trust in news being higher among those accessing two or more news sources (**figure 6.11**).

Furthermore, we know that, in general, those who have greater levels of interest in news and politics, have greater levels of trust in news. The relationship between news consumers, interest in news, and trust is largely congruent with a broader understanding of the public sphere where an increase in the number of sources of news will result in increased quality of the public sphere. Where does this leave the many news consumers who access news via only one source?

Among these, television news, both news bulletins and 24-hour news, is the main source of news for many Australian news consumers and therefore plays a large role in the formation of the Australian public sphere. News consumers who indicate television news is their main source of news have one of the highest levels of general trust in news (**figure 6.4**). When we examine the detail regarding trust in news brands, some of the assumed relationships between trust in news, consumption of news (heavy or light), and interest in politics begin to break down.

Those news consumers who have a low interest in politics and light consumption of news have higher levels of trust in television news compared to those who have higher levels of interest in politics and heavy consumption of news (**figures 6.9 and 6.10**). A critical question is therefore: when news consumers with low interest in politics and light levels of news consumption have high levels of trust in their single source, does 'trust' remain a useful barometer of the quality of the public sphere?

Accessing quality information is not a problem when audiences can consume multiple news outlets, which is the case when engaging with digital news or social media as a single source. Poor quality information sources may circulate via social media (so-called 'fake news'), but even if social media is understood as an algorithmic 'echo chamber', news consumers that rely on social media as their main source of news will likely be exposed to stories from various news publishers or broadcasters.

A more complex image of news consumption and trust is emerging where accessing a single high trust source (such as from one television news brand) may indicate a poorer information environment when compared to news consumers being far more sceptical of news accessed via a low trust source such as social media. This is also reflected in the findings of Chapter Seven: Fake News and Fact-checking (see **figure 6.11**) and the much higher levels of verification and fact checking practices by younger news consumers because they are much more likely to use social media as their main source of news.

PORTRAITS OF TRUST

The 'Trusters' (44%)

Those who trust news in general are more likely to:

Have higher interest in news.

Access news more than once a day.

Be male.

Access news via multiple sources.

Earn higher incomes.

Be older, with those aged 54+ years displaying the highest trust.

Rely on television or newspapers (print and online) for their main source of news.

The 'Distrusters' (26%)

Those who distrust news are more likely to:

Have a medium income.

Have a lower interest in news.

Access news once a day or less.

Be aged between 18-37 years.

Often avoid the news.

Rely on social media as their main source of news.

The 'Neithers' (29%)

Those who say they neither trust nor distrust the news are more likely to:

Be aged between 18-21 years
(18-21 **38%**, 22-37 **32%**, 38-53 **29%**,
54-72 **27%**, 73+ **26%**).

Be female.

Use social media as their main source of news.

Have a much lower interest in news.

COMMENTARY

Trust, Democracy and a Free Press

Daryl Karp, Director, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

Around the world, democracy is in decline. For the thirteenth consecutive year, the annual review by Freedom House, *Freedom in the World* recorded a decline in global freedom, in every region and type of political system, from mature democracies to authoritarian regimes.³

Australia is not immune. Despite our world class governance processes⁴ and an independent Australian Electoral Commission, satisfaction in democracy has almost halved over the past decade, dropping from 86% in 2007 to 41% in 2018.⁵ Australia sits below the median satisfaction rating when compared with other advanced industrial democracies despite 27 years of economic growth.⁶

“Despite our world class governance processes and an independent Australian Electoral Commission, satisfaction in democracy has almost halved over the past decade.”

Trust is at an all-time low

Data from 2018 show trust in our members of parliament and political parties at an all time low, declining by 50%, from 41 to 21% between 2007 and 2018.⁷ Only one in five Australians trust MP's ‘a little bit’ or ‘very much’.

Trust is also low for business people, journalists and trade unionists, with trust figures ranging from 31% to 26%. Indeed if current trends continue by 2025 fewer than 10% of Australians will trust their politicians and political institutions placing the legitimacy of government at risk.

We at the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) are so concerned with the current trends, that we have established the *Democracy 2025 – bridging the trust divide* initiative to drive a national conversation on how we can rebuild trust and strengthen democratic practice in Australia (see: democracy2025.gov.au). The issue of freedom of the press is a critical component of this process of reflection.

A shared narrative is essential to the health of democracy

The importance of a shared narrative – broad agreement around what took place and what did not – cannot be understated as a foundation stone for civic discourse and trust building. A recent report published by the RAND Corporation coins the term “truth decay”⁸ to describe the loss of trust in data, analysis and objective facts in political

life – and identifies four factors that underpin this narrative. While it focuses largely on the American market, the trends apply equally to Australia:

- Increasing disagreement about facts and analytical interpretations of facts and data.
- Blurring of the line between opinion and fact.
- The increasing relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact.
- Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information.

How Australia compares

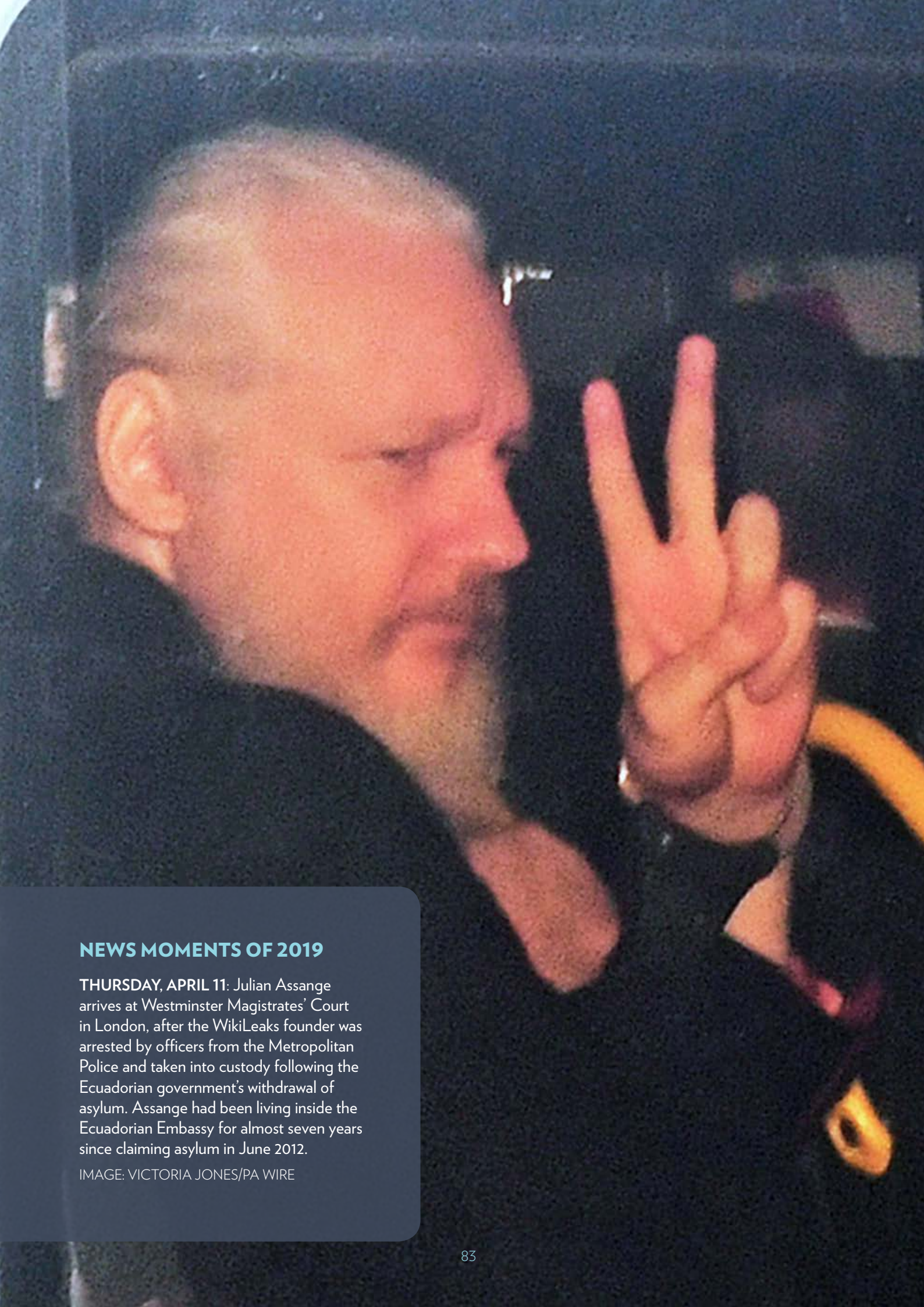
This year, Australia dropped out of the top 20 of the 2019 *World Press Freedom Index*, which assesses the level of press freedom afforded to journalists.⁹ The Index, produced by *NGO Reporters Without Borders*, placed Australia at 21 out of 180 countries. The disturbing combination of toxic social media, news by algorithm, declining civic discourse and information being used as a weapon in a war of ideas has serious implications for governments and the public alike.

“The disturbing combination of toxic social media, news by algorithm, declining civic discourse and information being used as a weapon in a war of ideas has serious implications for governments and the public alike.”

Truth, Power and a Free Press

To this end, MoAD will open a new permanent gallery, *Truth, Power and a Free Press* later in 2019. Although it will highlight the critical role of a free and trusted press as a fundamental check and balance on government in a healthy democracy, we also share the RAND Corporation's concern that “the challenge posed by Truth Decay is great, but the stakes are too high to permit inaction”.¹⁰

Hence, the gallery will define truth decay as a multi-dimensional problem requiring a diverse response from media, government, business, knowledge institutions, the community sector and citizens themselves. Citizen empowerment through education will be front and centre of the exhibition; promoting the importance and necessity of facts, data, and analysis in civic and political discourse and in Australian public life more generally.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

THURSDAY, APRIL 11: Julian Assange arrives at Westminster Magistrates' Court in London, after the WikiLeaks founder was arrested by officers from the Metropolitan Police and taken into custody following the Ecuadorian government's withdrawal of asylum. Assange had been living inside the Ecuadorian Embassy for almost seven years since claiming asylum in June 2012.

IMAGE: VICTORIA JONES/PA WIRE



7 FAKE NEWS AND FACT-CHECKING

- **Most online news consumers in Australia (62%) remain concerned about what is real or fake on the internet, which is higher than the global average (55%).**
- **Concern about fake news is higher among those interested in politics (70%) compared to 58% with low interest in politics.**
- **Concern about what is real, or fake is strongly linked to news avoidance and news fatigue.**
- **26% of people concerned about fake news have started using more reliable news sources.**
- **Fact-checking is strongly linked to higher education, income, number of brands and interest in politics.**

FAKE NEWS

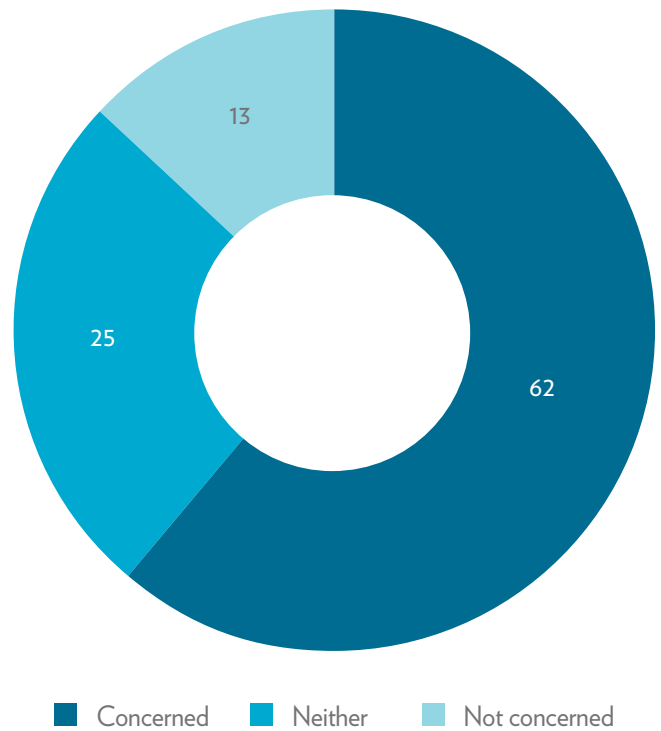
In the context of the ongoing global debate about the spread of fake news, we asked news consumers again this year if they were concerned about what is real or fake on the internet. In 2019, 62% said they were concerned about discerning fact from fiction (see **figure 7.1**).

This is in line with the *Digital News Report: Australia 2018*, which found 65% of news consumers were concerned about fake news. Australians show a higher level of concern about the veracity of online information than the global average (55%).



62% of news consumers are concerned about what is *real or fake* on the internet

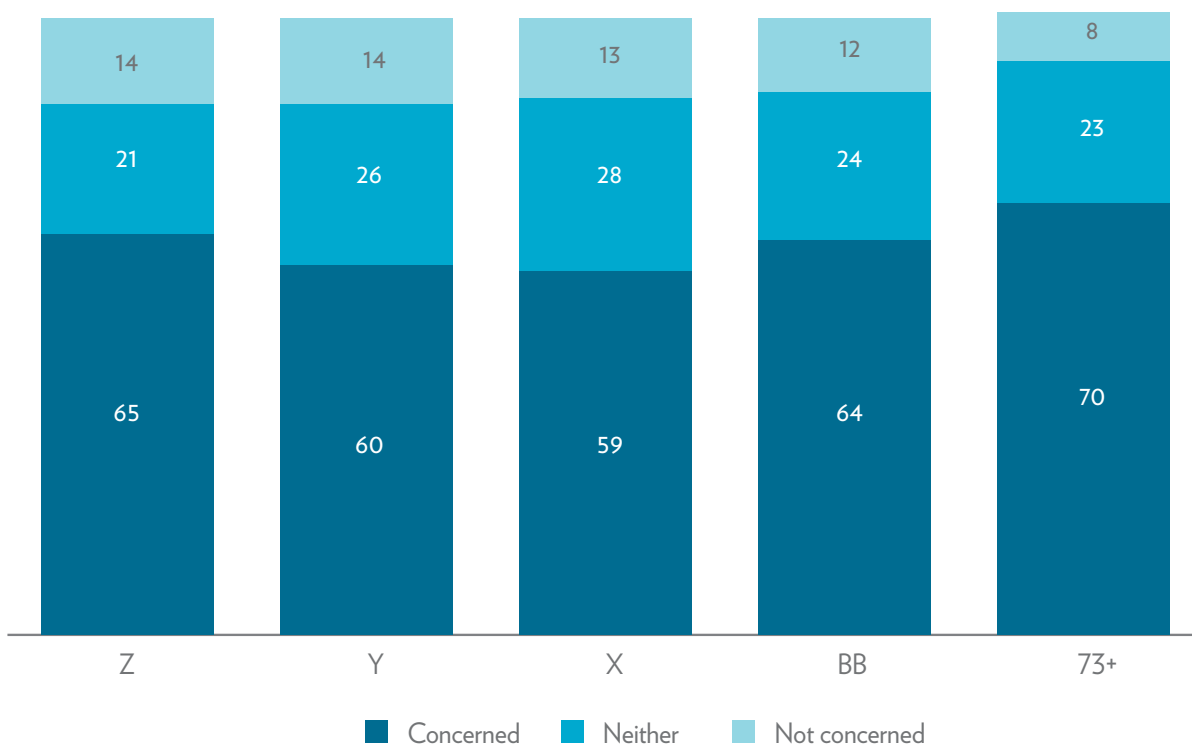
FIGURE 7.1: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE (%)



There is little difference between men and women when it comes to concern about news being real or fake online. However, there are differences across age, education and region. Those aged 73+ are the most concerned about what is real or fake on the internet, followed by Gen Z and Baby Boomers (see **figure 7.2**).

Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet." Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

FIGURE 7.2: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY GENERATION (%)



HIGHER EDUCATED ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS FAKE OR REAL ONLINE

Education is also related to levels of concern about what is real and fake online. Those with higher education levels are more likely to be concerned than those with low or medium education (see **figure 7.3**).

Like last year's results, heavy news users and those with a higher interest in news are also more likely to be concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.

REGIONAL AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IS REAL OR FAKE ON THE INTERNET

Differences in levels of concern about fake news can be found between news consumers from regional parts of Australia and those who live in major cities.

Those who live in regional, rural and remotes areas are more likely to say they are concerned about what is real and fake online (65%) compared to 60% of news consumers in the cities (see **figure 7.4**).

FIGURE 7.3: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY EDUCATION (%)

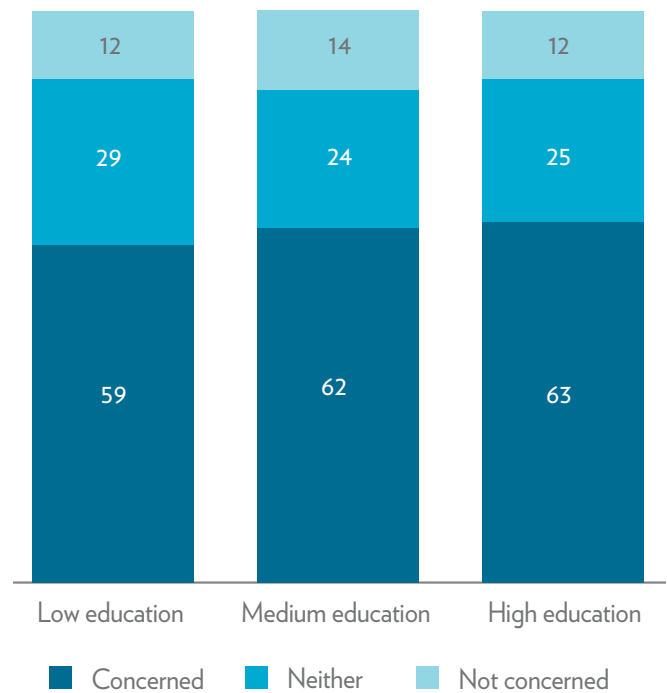
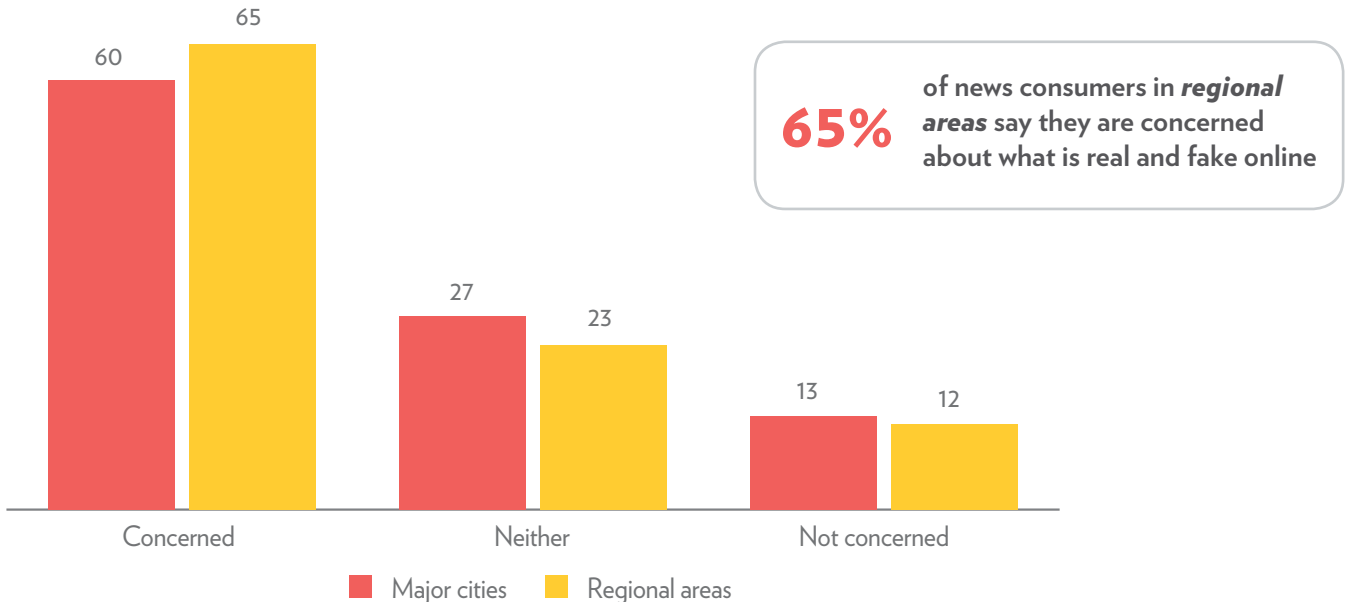


FIGURE 7.4: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY REGION (%)

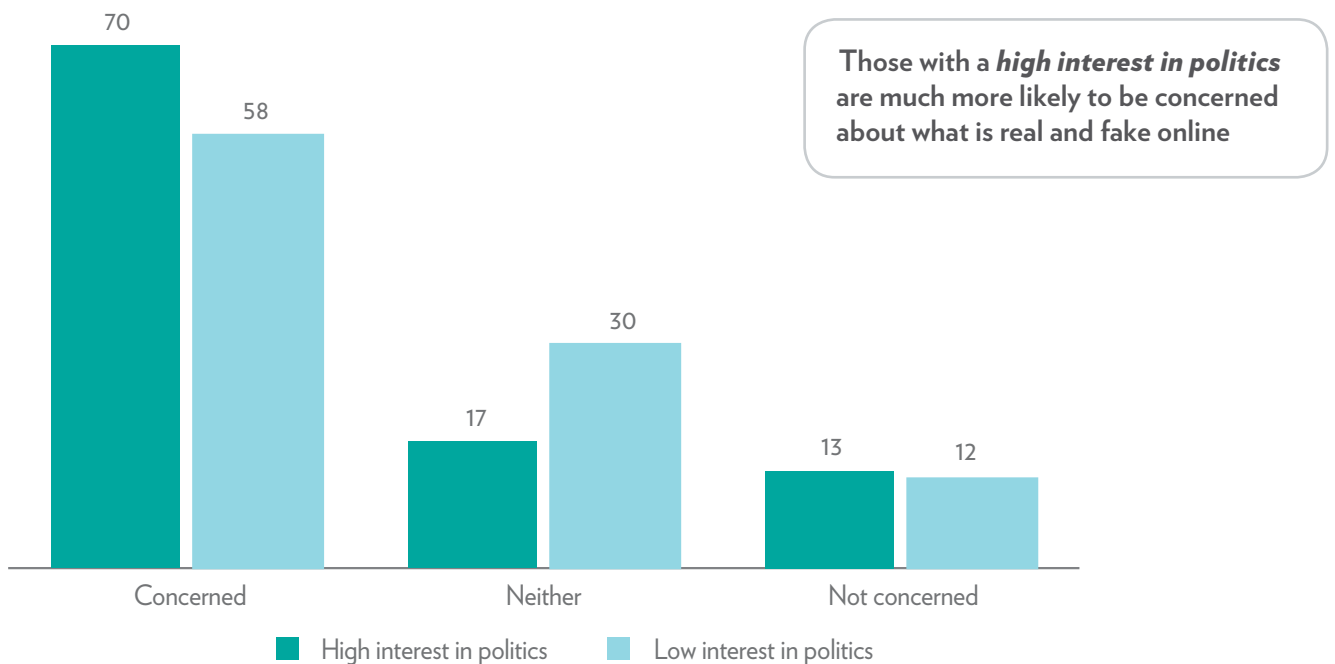


Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet." Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

INTEREST IN POLITICS IS STRONGLY LINKED TO CONCERN ABOUT FAKE NEWS

The largest difference in levels of concern is related to interest in politics (see **figure 7.5**). Those with a high interest in politics are much more likely to be concerned about what is real and fake online (70%). In comparison, 58% of those with low interest in politics say they are concerned.

This likely reflects the high level of public debate about political misinformation and foreign interference in the 2016 US election, and concern about possible interference in the Australian federal election, which was pending at the time of the 2019 survey.

FIGURE 7.5: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. Q2_new2018. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? Extremely interested; Very interested; Somewhat interested; Not very interested; Not at all interested; Don't know. Extremely and very interested were recoded into 'high interest in politics'; Somewhat, not very and not at all interested were recoded into 'low interest in politics'.

RIGHT-WING ORIENTED NEWS CONSUMERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE CONCERNED

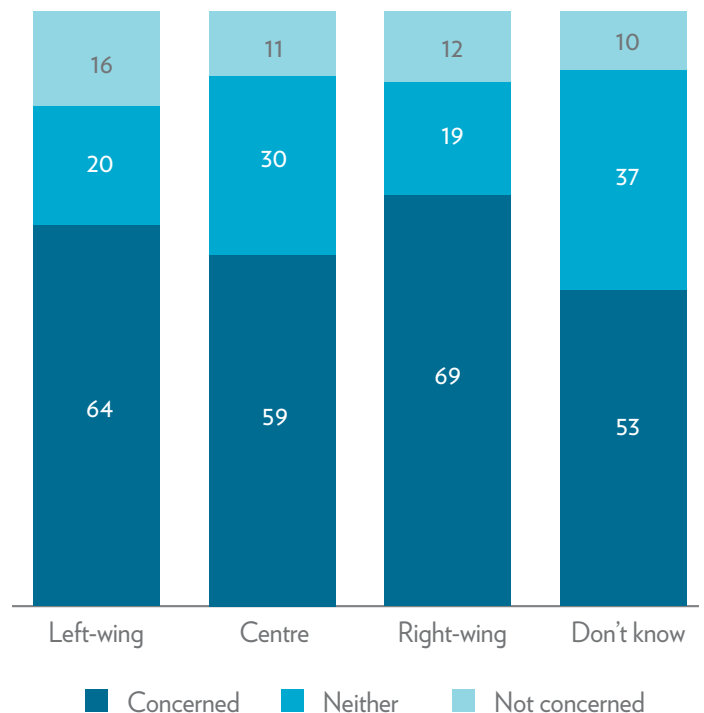
To a lesser extent, political orientation also appears to be linked to concern about what is real or fake online (see **figure 7.6**).

Right-wing news consumers are slightly more likely than left-wing, and much more likely than centre-oriented news consumers, to be concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.

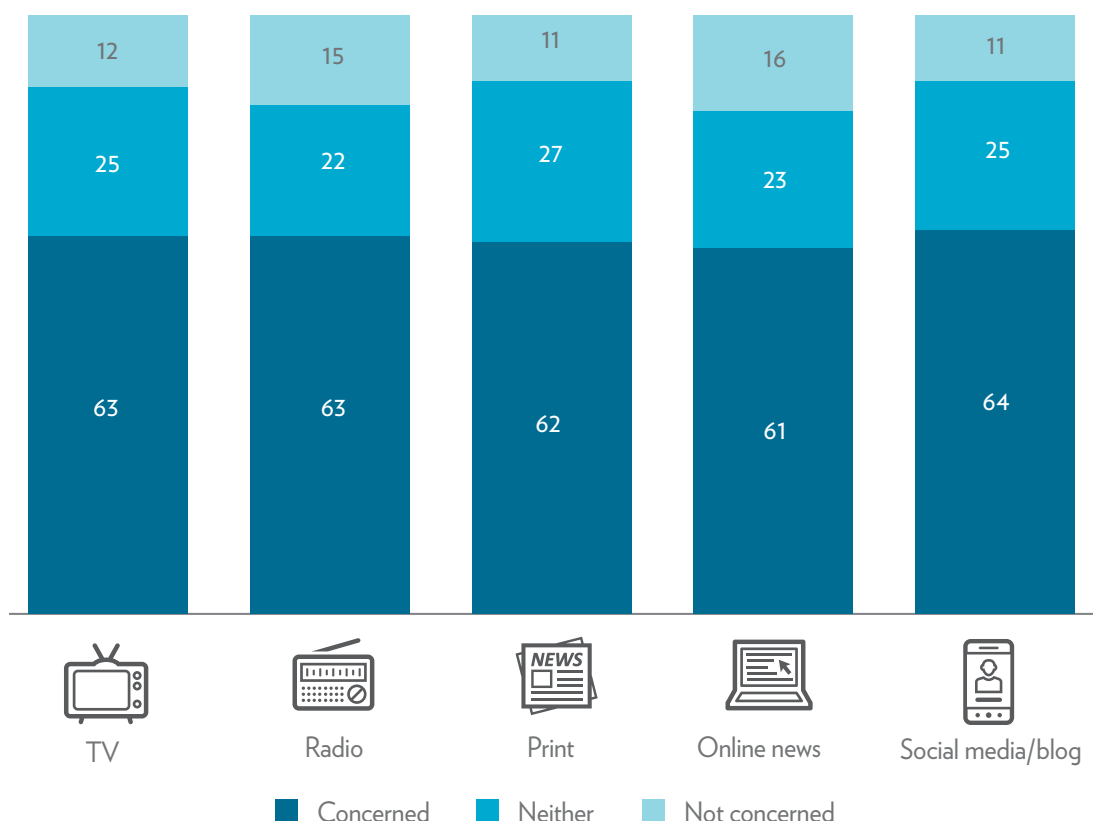
WHERE PEOPLE GET NEWS IS NOT THE CAUSE OF FAKE NEWS CONCERNS

Perhaps the least expected finding is the lack of difference between those who rely on social media and traditional sources of news, and levels of concern about what is fake or real.

The data show those who rely on TV and radio for news are almost as likely to be concerned about what is real or fake on the internet, as those who rely on social media (see **figure 7.7**).

FIGURE 7.6: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. 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? Very left-wing; Fairly left-wing; Slightly left-of-centre; Centre; Slightly right-of-centre; Fairly right-wing; Very right-wing; Don't know.

FIGURE 7.7: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

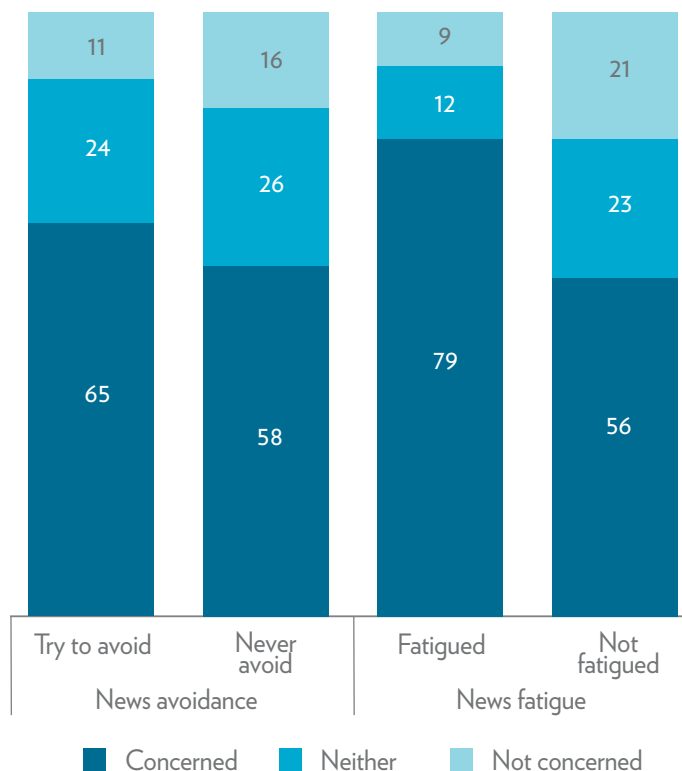
Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

CONCERN ABOUT FAKE NEWS IS STRONGLY LINKED TO NEWS AVOIDANCE AND NEWS FATIGUE

The data show a clear correlation between concern about what is real and fake online and actively avoiding news. Those who avoid news often, sometimes or occasionally are more concerned about fake news (65%) than those who do not avoid news (58%).

Even more striking is the connection between being worn out by news and concern about what is real or fake.

Seventy-nine percent of news consumers who are worn out by news are concerned about the veracity of online content, compared to merely 9% of news consumers who say they are not concerned (see **figure 7.8**).

FIGURE 7.8: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY NEWS AVOIDANCE & FATIGUE (%)

Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree. Q1d1_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Often; Sometimes; Occasionally; Never; Don't know. Q1e_2019. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. "I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days". Strongly disagree; Tend to disagree; Neither agree nor disagree; Tend to agree; Strongly agree.

FACT CHECKING

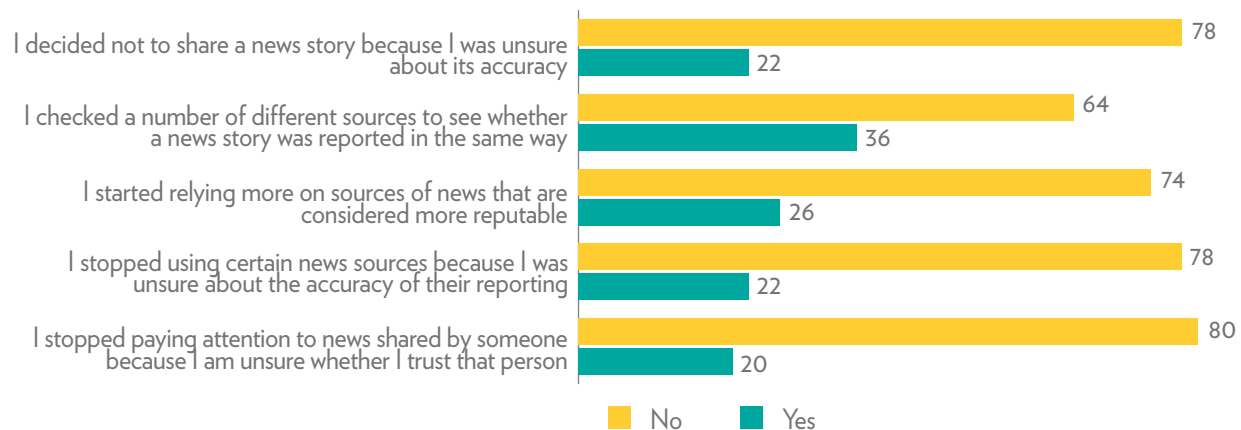
In response to the public concern about the need for citizens to verify the news they use online, we asked participants what fact-checking activities they have engaged in over the past 12 months, if any, when deciding to read or share a story online.

Most Australian news consumers did not adopt any news verification behaviours, however 36% said they did compare the reporting of a story across news outlets to

check its accuracy, and 26% said they began to use more reliable news sources (see **figure 7.9**). It should be noted that these figures only reflect changed behaviour in the past year.

Compared to the 37 other countries in the survey, Australians are less likely to employ verification techniques than news consumers in two thirds of the participating countries (see Chapter One: Australia and the World).

FIGURE 7.9: VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES (%)



Q.LIT_2019. Have you done any of the following in the last year? Please select all that apply. I decided not to share a news story because I was unsure about its accuracy; I checked a number of different sources to see whether a news story was reported in the same way; I started relying more on sources of news that are considered more reputable; I stopped using certain news sources because I was unsure about the accuracy of their reporting; I discussed a news story with person I trust because I was unsure about its accuracy; I stopped paying attention to news shared by someone because I am unsure whether I trust that person; None of these; Don't know.

THOSE CONCERNED ABOUT FAKE NEWS ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO SHARE DUBIOUS STORIES

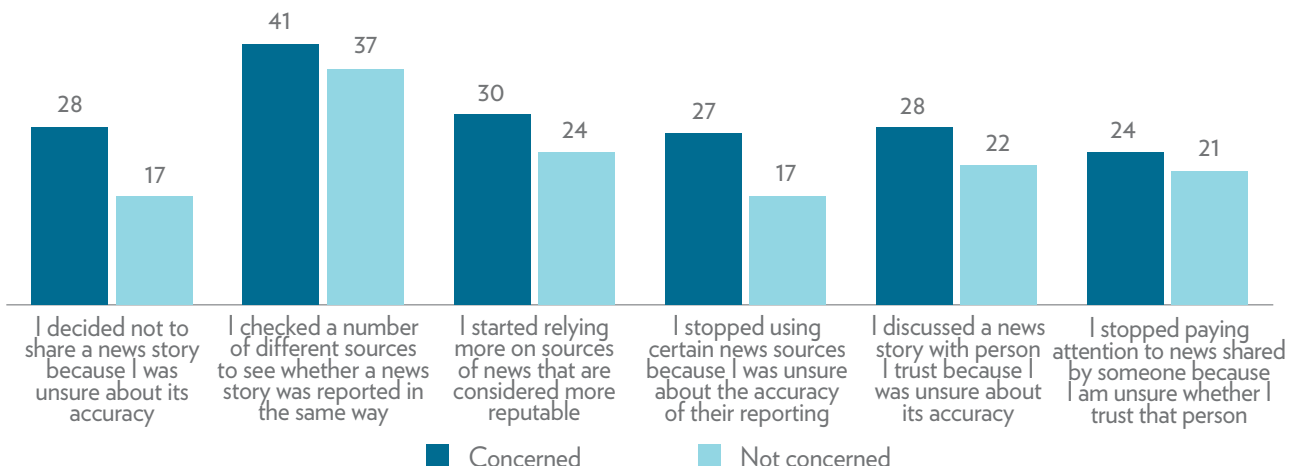
Those who are concerned about what is real or fake online say they are much more likely to engage in verification activities than those who are not concerned (see **figure 7.10**).

Twenty-eight percent of those who are concerned say they would not share a story they had doubts about, compared to 17% of people who are not concerned.

A similar number of those concerned (27%) say they have stopped using news sources they are unsure about, and 30% say they have started using more trustworthy news sources.

This signals a shift in news consumer behaviour and points to the possible success of attempts to raise public awareness about the online information environment.

FIGURE 7.10: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE BY VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES (%)

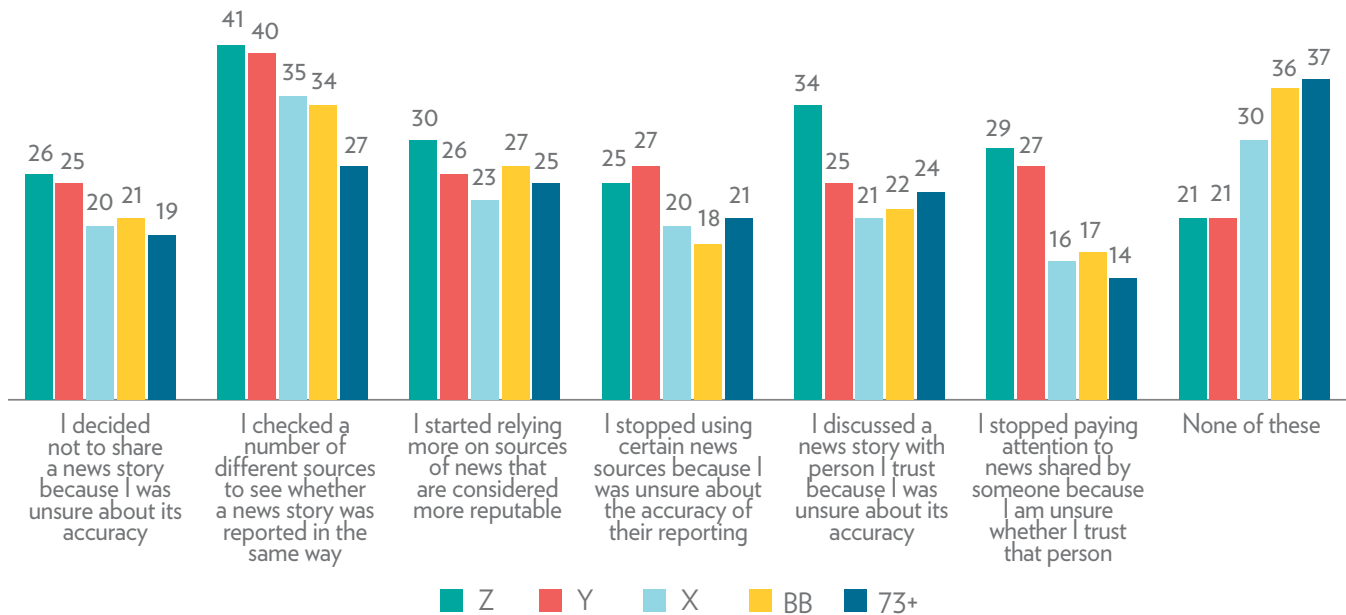


MEMBERS OF GEN Z ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO FACT-CHECK

Despite the data showing that news consumers aged 73+ are more concerned about what is fake and real on the internet, younger generations are more likely to verify online news than older (see **figure 7.11**). This largely reflects that younger news consumers are more likely to

access news online than older people and younger people are likely to be more confident in their digital literacy. This may also reflect that younger news consumers are more skeptical about the information they encounter online as revealed in their lower trust levels in news.

FIGURE 7.11: VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES BY GENERATION (%)

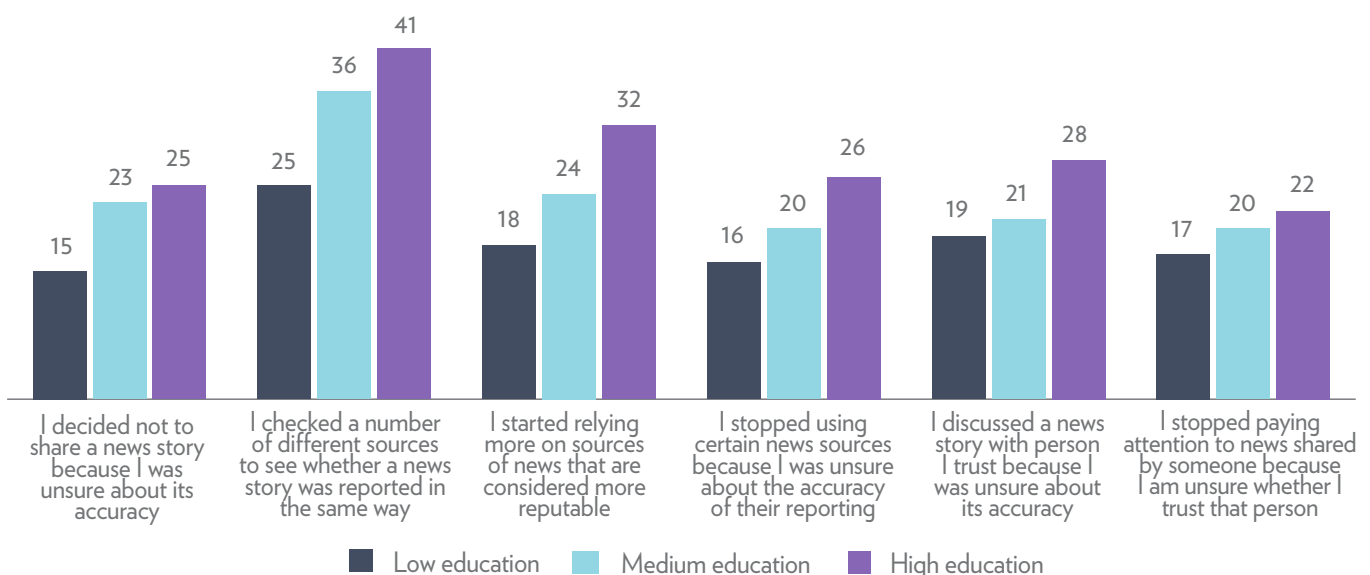


INTEREST IN POLITICS AND HIGHER EDUCATION IS LINKED TO VERIFICATION

Those with high interest in politics, higher education and incomes are most likely to engage in each of these verification activities, particularly checking a story against a range of other news outlets (see **figure 7.12**). Those who pay for news are the most likely to say they have started relying on more reputable sources in the past 12 months.

Almost half (49%) of paying news consumers say they check multiple sources whereas only 35% of non-paying news consumers do so. Nearly one third (30%) of those who pay for online news say they started using more trustworthy news sources compared to 24% of non-paying news consumers.

FIGURE 7.12: VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES BY EDUCATION (%)



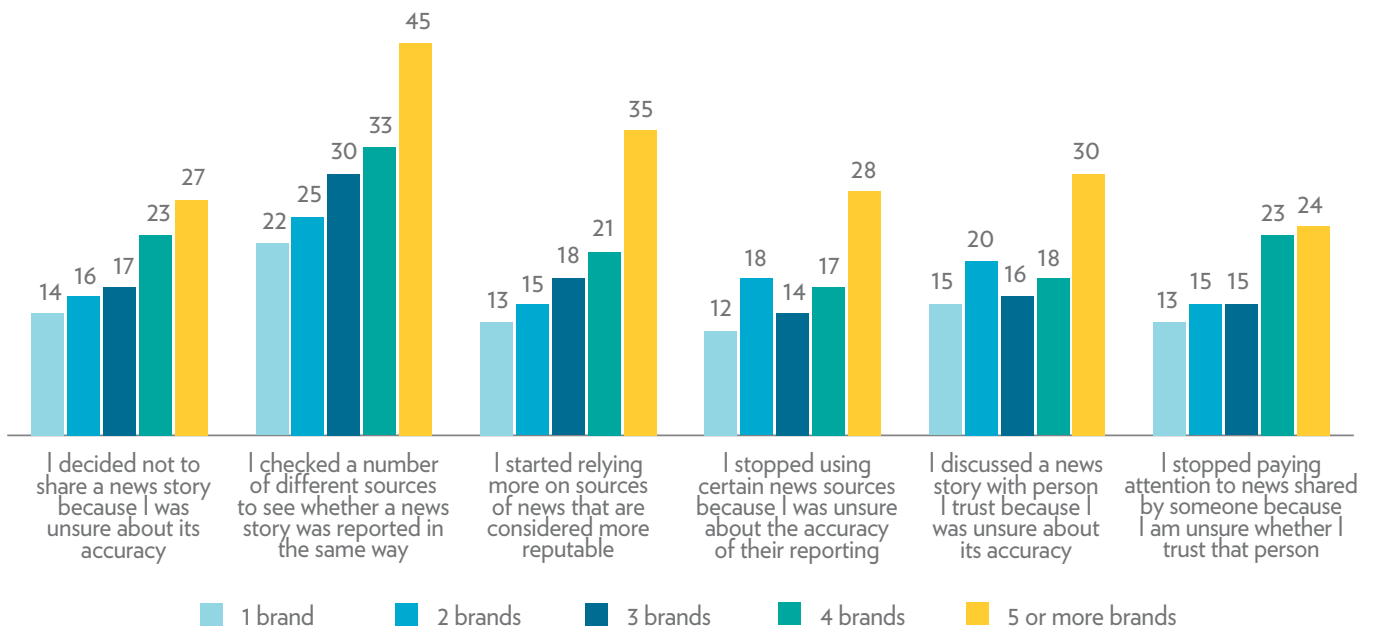
NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS USED LINKED TO VERIFICATION

Correspondingly, those who use five or more news brands are considerably more likely to employ at least four of the six verification behaviours asked about. As **figure 7.13** shows, those who use just one, two or three news brands are the least likely to do so.



Those who have low education and use only **1-3** news brands are the **least likely to fact-check**

FIGURE 7.13: VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES BY NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS CONSUMED (%)



SUMMARY

The level of concern about fake news among Australian news consumers has remained relatively stable over the past 12 months. This year's data reveal that many who are concerned about what is real and fake on the internet are starting to take action to counter this concern by engaging in various fact-checking behaviours.

The high level of public debate about 'fake news' appears to have triggered changes in the online behaviour of many of those surveyed. The data show that 36% of news consumers say they have checked a news story against other news sources for accuracy. More importantly, 20% say they have stopped sharing dubious content; 22% say they have stopped using unreliable brands; and 26% say they have turned to more reputable news outlets for information.

This is all good news and reflects heightened awareness about the risks of the online information environment. However, this self-reported shift towards verification reveals a divide along education and income lines. Those who are less privileged are not as likely to check the veracity of news sources. More needs to be done to encourage all news consumers to embrace greater online vigilance, not just the wealthy and educated.

Interestingly, younger generations who are less affluent are more likely to fact-check, which possibly reflects their greater use of social media and the increasing complexity of understanding news literacy in the digital environment.

COMMENTARY

Rebuilding trust in the news

Terry Flew, Professor of Creative Industries, Queensland University of Technology

There is considerable evidence of a crisis of trust in liberal democracies. From the annual Edelman Trust Barometer data and other public opinion surveys, to the rise of populist movements appealing to widespread distrust of the ‘political class’, perceptions of a decline in the trust that people have in political, economic and social institutions, is widespread. Distrust of the media is an important element of this.

Trust in the media is important to societal trust for at least two reasons. First, reliable sources of factual information are a prerequisite for developing informed opinions on matters of public importance, and citizens rely upon the producers and distributors of news for that foundational knowledge.

Second, shared expectations and values around what the news media, and journalists who work for it, should be doing are part of what links us as a polity and culture. What Stephen Coleman has referred to as ‘a joint investment in the values of a commonly experienced world’ is essential to being able to ‘talk to as well as about one another ... at a basic level of recognition and respect’¹¹.

The *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* has documented a decline in trust in news in Australia in 2019. Moreover, this is most marked among younger Australians, with those under 35 being 25% less likely to trust the news than those over 35.

Notably, the number of those who distrust the news is relatively constant at around 25%, which is in itself an alarming number. What the 2019 survey registers is greater ambivalence around news: the number of news consumers that are unsure whether they trust or distrust news has increased, even among those who are regular news consumers, as well as ‘news avoiders’.

“What the 2019 survey registers is greater ambivalence around news: the number of news consumers that are unsure whether they trust or distrust news has increased, even among those who are regular news consumers, as well as ‘news avoiders’.”

There is a duality around trust attitudes in the 21st century. While public opinion surveys routinely register declining trust in long-established institutions (politicians and political

parties, established churches, mainstream media), people are at the same time increasingly trusting strangers in more and more spheres of their personal lives in the digital economy.

We trust strangers to drive us around in cars, live in our properties, and deliver us meals, and we also trust social media to be the custodians of our personal experiences, as we record them on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other digital platforms.

In the news sphere, this means accessing our news and information about the world through ‘social news’, or online sites that are liked, recommended and shared by our social media groups, rather than relying solely – or even primarily – upon the traditional journalistic gatekeepers. In that respect, the low level of trust in social media, even among those primarily reliant upon it as a primary news source, is a matter of public concern.

The concern about social media as conduits for ‘fake news’ is notable throughout the Asia-Pacific, with Australia having some of the highest levels of distrust of news in general, and from social media in particular.

“The concern about social media as conduits for ‘fake news’ is notable throughout the Asia-Pacific, with Australia having some of the highest levels of distrust of news in general, and from social media in particular.”

The digital environment has enabled new news providers to enter the Australian news market, which is among the most concentrated in terms of ownership in the world. New entrants such as *Guardian Australia* and *The Saturday Paper* have established respectable, but not outstanding, reputations for being trusted news sources, while online-only site such as *Buzzfeed* and *Huffington Post* are struggling for credibility among news consumers.

With a trend internationally back towards news subscriptions, and towards accessing news directly from a main source, these sites may struggle to become competitive news brands in a difficult and highly competitive news environment.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

THURSDAY, APRIL 11: Australian actor Geoffrey Rush leaves the Supreme Court in Sydney alongside his wife Jane Menelaus. Justice Michael Wigley found in Geoffrey Rush's favour in his defamation case against a Sydney newspaper publisher and journalist.

IMAGE: PAUL BRAVEN/AAP IMAGE



8 SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS

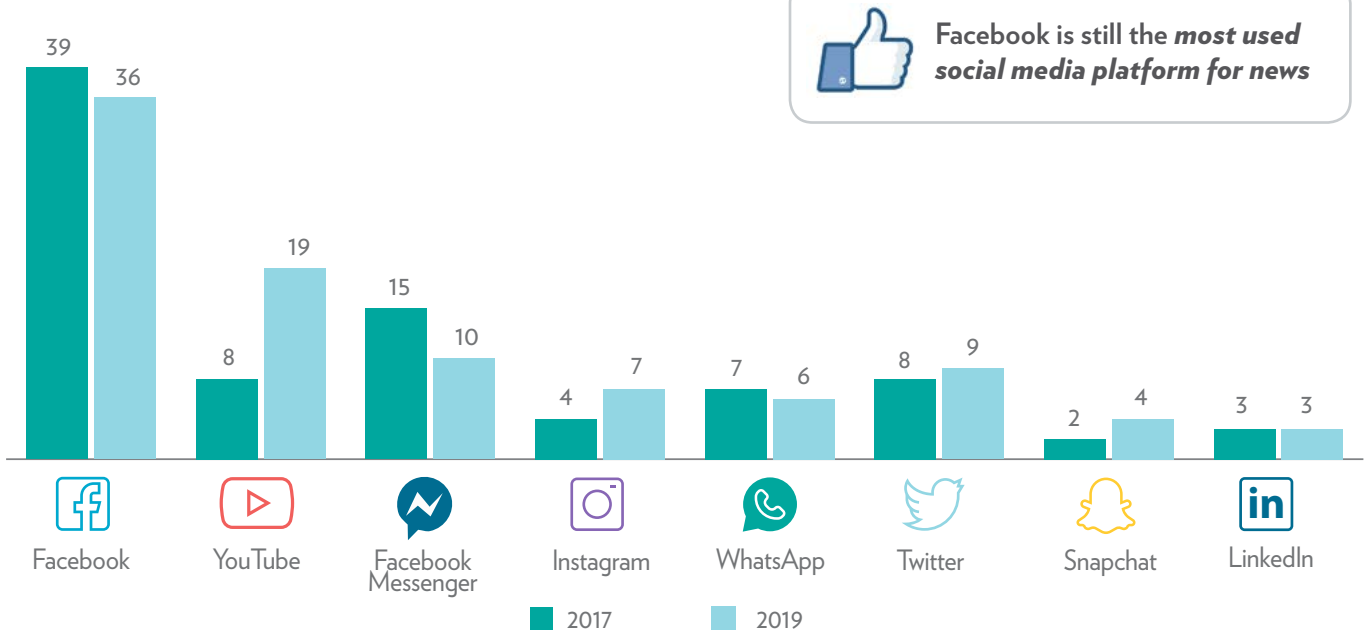
- The use of Facebook for news has fallen since 2017 (-3%); however, the use of YouTube (+11%) and Instagram (+3%) for news is on the rise.
- There has been a drop in all types of online news engagement; sharing, commenting and 'liking'.
- Members of Facebook groups about news or politics are active sharers of news on social media (60%).
- Talking face-to-face continues to be the most popular mode of news sharing.
- Almost half of Gen Z (47%) and one third of Gen Y (33%) use social media as their main source of news.

DECREASE IN FACEBOOK FOR NEWS

Social media use for news overall is relatively stable, however, within the different brands there has been significant movement. Facebook is still the most used social media platform for news, but there has been a small drop in its use for news from 39% in 2017 to 36% in 2019.

On the other hand, the use of YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram for news has risen and messaging apps are becoming a popular way to access news. In contrast, Facebook Messenger is used less to access news compared to previous years (see **figure 8.1**).

FIGURE 8.1: SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS (%)



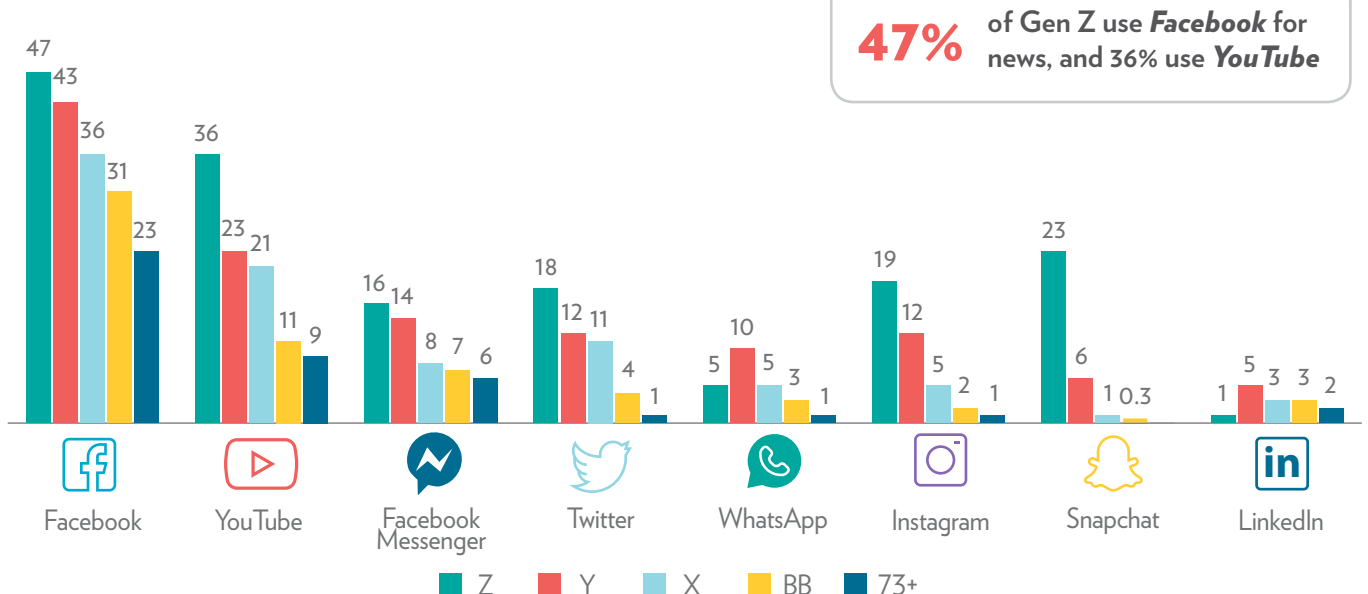
Q12A. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? Please select all that apply. Q12B. Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week? Please select all that apply.

GENERATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Gen Z leads the assorted generations in using social media platforms for news. Almost half of Gen Z (47%) use Facebook for news, one third (36%) use YouTube

and nearly one quarter (23%) use Snapchat. As shown in **figure 8.2**, members of Gen Y are the most active users of WhatsApp and LinkedIn for news.

FIGURE 8.2: SOCIAL MEDIA BRANDS FOR NEWS BY AGE (%)



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.

SOCIAL MEDIA IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING THE **MAIN** SOURCE OF NEWS FOR GEN Z AND Y

Gen Z and Y are much more likely than older generations to use social media as their **main** source of news. Among Gen Z, this has increased from 43% in 2018 to 47% in 2019. The use of social media by Gen Y as their main source of news has also increased from 30% in 2018 to 33% in 2019.

In contrast, older generations are relying on it less and less. Only 3% of 73+ say their main source of news is social media (see **figure 8.3**).

SOCIAL MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

Gen Z

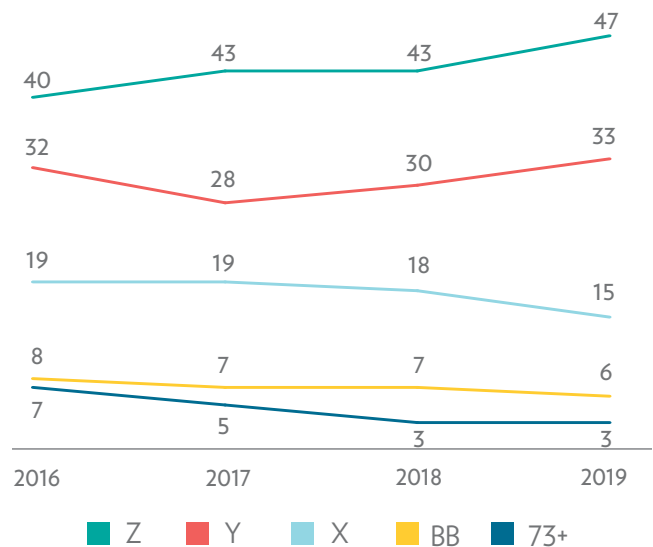
47%



73+

3%

FIGURE 8.3: SOCIAL MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)



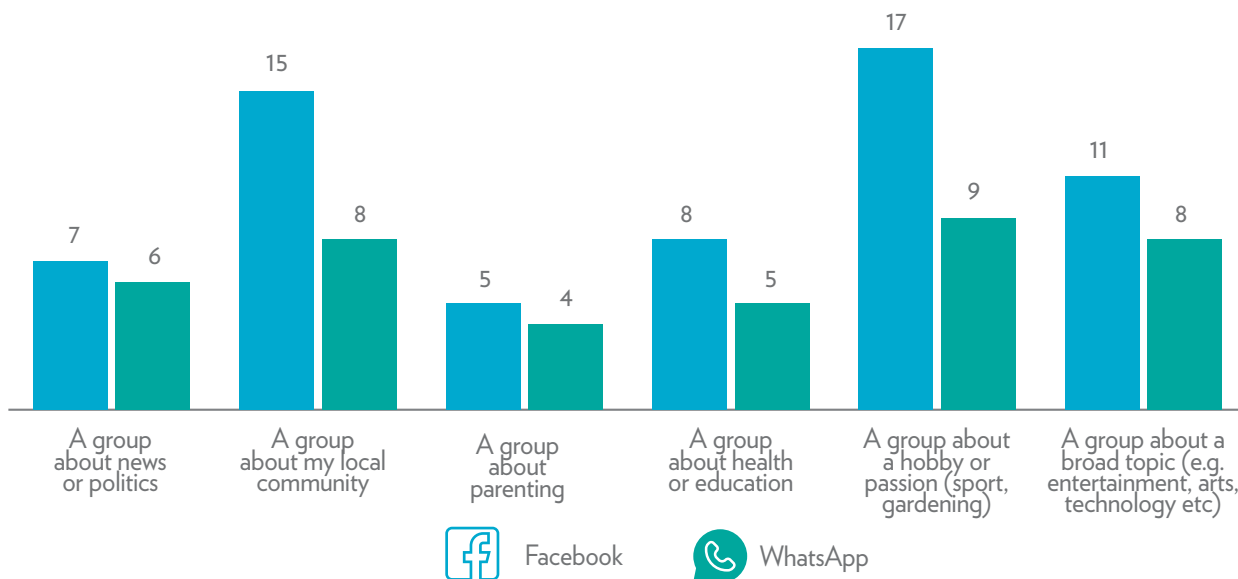
Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your **MAIN** source of news?

AUSTRALIANS PREFER PUBLIC GROUPS ON FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP FOR DISCUSSING HOBBIES RATHER THAN NEWS

Survey participants were asked if they had joined either a private or public group on platforms such as Facebook or WhatsApp. More than half of Facebook users (59%) say they have joined and participated in a Facebook group and 68% of WhatsApp users says they are involved in a group on WhatsApp. They were also asked about the main topics of discussion within those groups.

As **figure 8.4** shows, the most popular public groups on Facebook and WhatsApp are related to hobbies and local community issues, whereas public groups about news and politics are less popular (7%: Facebook; 6%: WhatsApp). However, those who join groups about news and politics share news more (see **figure 8.9**).

FIGURE 8.4: PUBLIC GROUPS ON FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP (%)



Q12_2019_FB. Facebook allows you to set up, join and participate in groups, where you can discuss news or related topics with likeminded people. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past month on Facebook itself (Note: we're not talking here about messages sent via Facebook Messenger). Please select all that apply. Q12_2019_WA. WhatsApp allows you to set up, join and participate in groups, where you can discuss news or related topics with likeminded people. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past month on WhatsApp. Please select all that apply. **Groups with people I know well:** A private group set up for chat with family, A private group set up for chat with workmates, A private group set up for chat with friends; **Groups which includes people I don't know:** A group about news or politics, A group about my local community, A group about parenting, A group about health or education, A group about a hobby or passion (e.g. sport, gardening), A group about a broad topic (e.g. entertainment, arts, technology), Another group, I haven't joined a Facebook group, Don't know.

PRIVATE GROUPS ARE MORE POPULAR THAN PUBLIC GROUPS ON WHATSAPP

Private groups on WhatsApp are used more than private groups on Facebook to talk about news or related topics with family, friends and workmates. **Figure 8.5** shows that 33% of WhatsApp users say they have joined and participated in a private group to chat about news or related topics with family.

This possibly reflects findings in last year's report that many Australians did not feel comfortable expressing their views online. As an alternative, private groups can provide a closed environment where people feel safe to openly express their opinion about news and events.

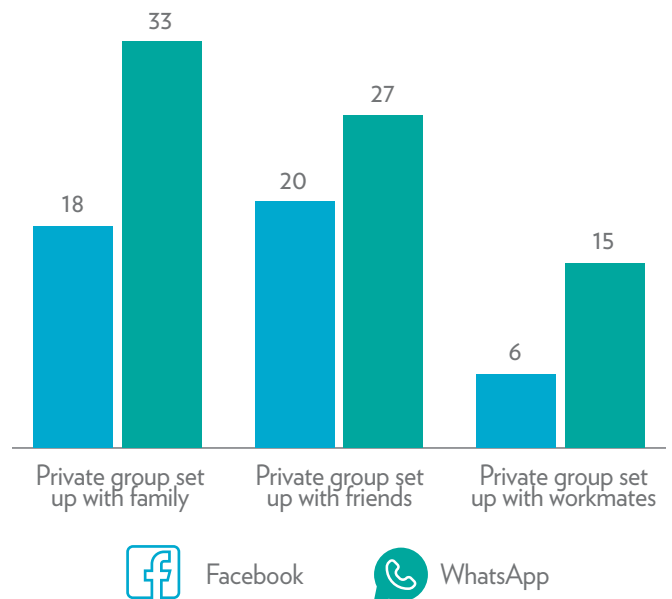
ONLINE NEWS ENGAGEMENT

DECLINE IN ONLINE NEWS ENGAGEMENT

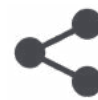
There has been a slight decline in most types of online news engagement from 2016 to 2019. While 63% of Australian news consumers have engaged in one or more online or offline news-sharing activities, there has been a slight overall drop in the past few years.

This corresponds with a decline in Facebook use for news and is possibly due to increased concern about the unreliability of the online information environment. As **figure 8.6** shows, sharing on social media fell from 22% in 2016 to 16% in 2019. Sharing a news story via email also decreased from 11% in 2016 to 9% in 2019.

FIGURE 8.5: FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP PRIVATE GROUPS (%)

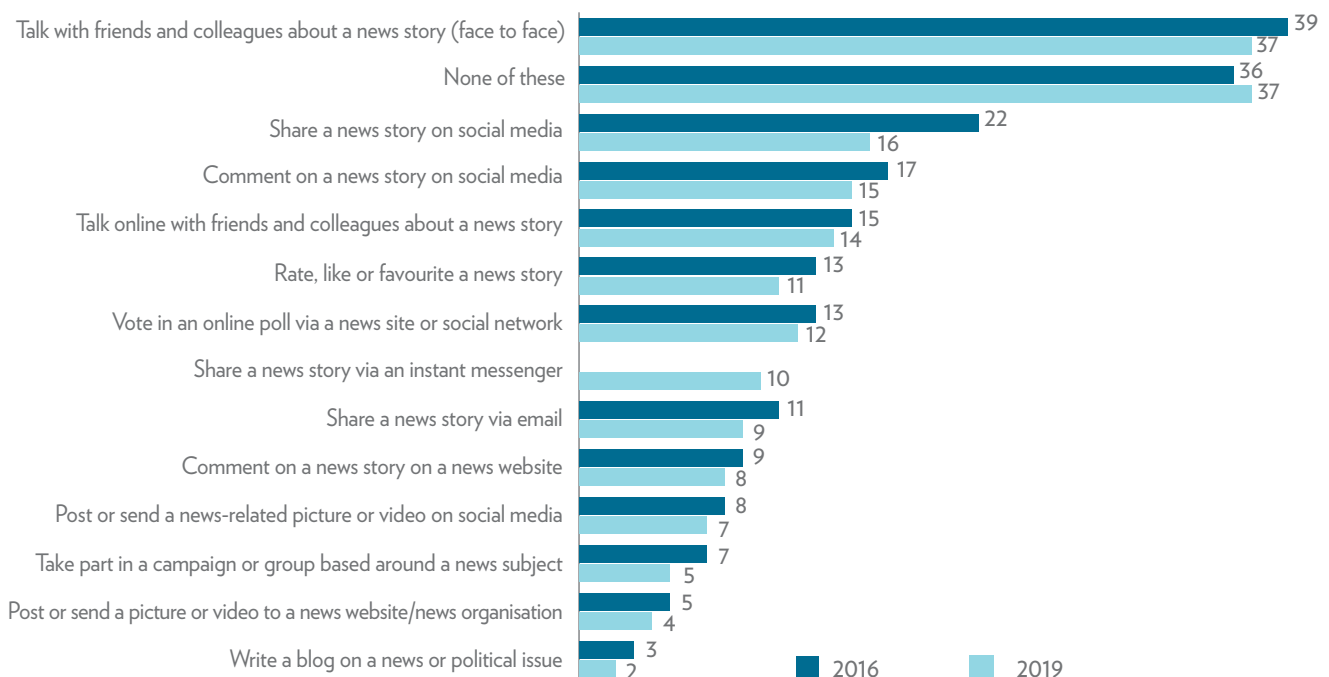


Q12_2019_FB. Facebook allows you to set up, join and participate in groups, where you can discuss news or related topics with likeminded people. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past month on Facebook itself (Note: we're not talking here about messages sent via Facebook Messenger). Please select all that apply. **Q12_2019_WA.** WhatsApp allows you to set up, join and participate in groups, where you can discuss news or related topics with likeminded people. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past month on WhatsApp. Please select all that apply.



Sharing on social media decreased from 22% in 2016 to 16% in 2019

FIGURE 8.6: NEWS ENGAGEMENT (%)

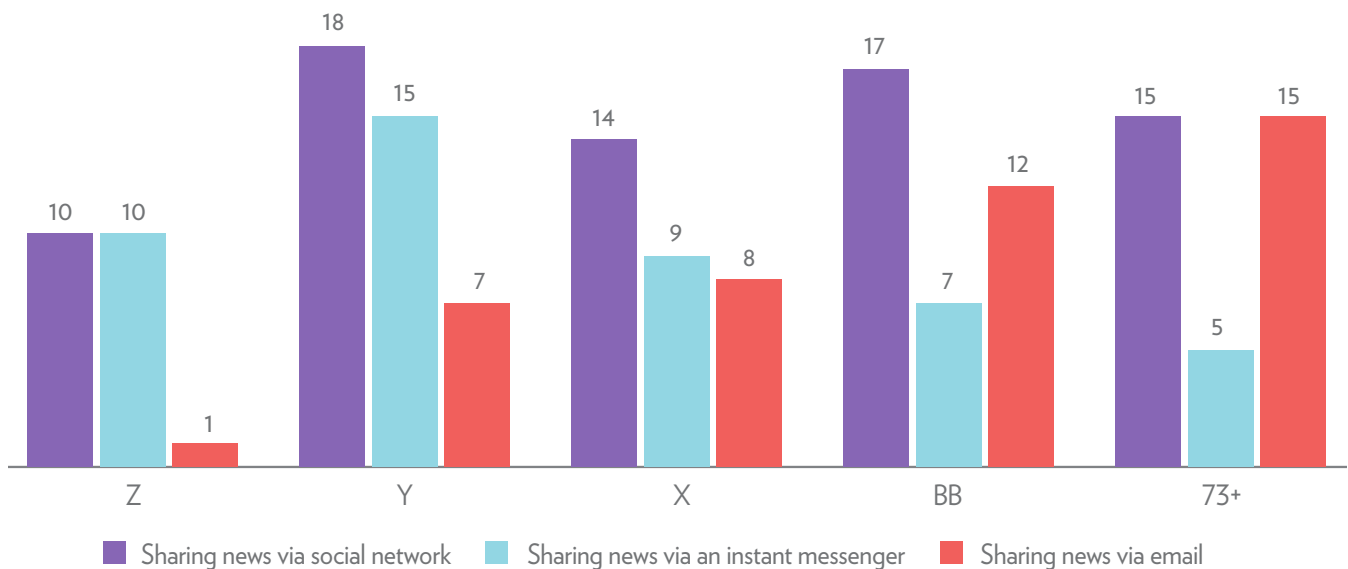


Q13. During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply [Base: All]. Note: In 2016, an item about sharing a news story via an instant messenger was not included in the survey.

Across all age groups, sharing news via social networks is the most popular method of news sharing, particularly among Gen Y (18%) and Baby Boomers (17%). Older generations are just as likely to share news via social media platforms as they are to share it via email, however they are the least likely to share news via an instant messenger. Gen Y are

the most active sharers of news on instant messaging apps. These news-sharing behaviours, largely reflect the primary way each generation generally communicates online. Older generations tend to use email more, whereas younger generations habitually use instant messaging apps and social media for general communication (see **figure 8.7**).

FIGURE 8.7: GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN NEWS SHARING (%)

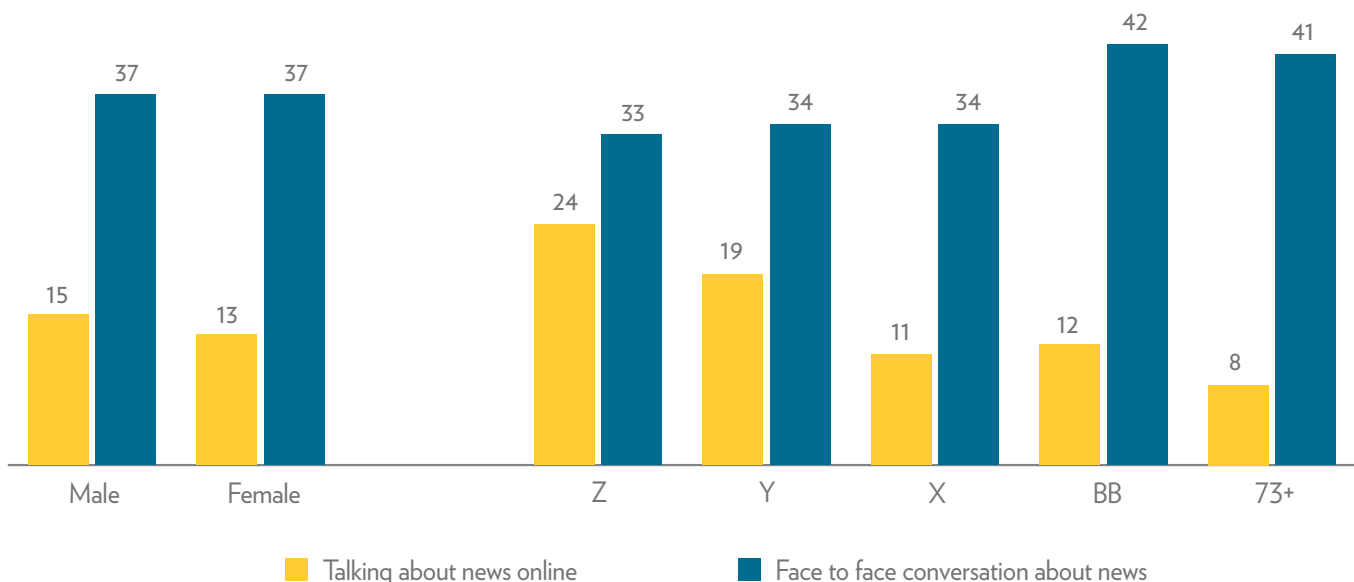


PEOPLE PREFER TALKING ABOUT NEWS FACE-TO-FACE THAN ONLINE

When we focus on talking about news, rather than other forms of digital engagement, Australian news consumers overwhelmingly prefer to talk about news offline than online. This is true across all age cohorts. There is very little difference between men and women in talking about news face-to-face or online.

Members of Gen Z are the most likely to talk about news online (24%), followed by Gen Y (19%) (see **figure 8.8**). This reflects the development of new forms of engagement facilitated via social media platforms and the preference of younger cohorts for these mediated forms of sociality.

FIGURE 8.8: TALKING ABOUT NEWS (%)



FACEBOOK AND WHATSAPP GROUP MEMBERS ARE MORE ACTIVE SHARERS OF NEWS

News consumers who have joined Facebook and WhatsApp groups to discuss various topics tend to be more active sharers of news on both social media and messaging apps (see **figures 8.9** and **8.10**).

Those who have joined a Facebook group about news or politics are the most likely to share news via social media (60%). This is a much higher figure compared to those who are not a member of a group about news or politics (17%) who share news.

Those who joined a Facebook group about parenting (38%) or health and education (36%) share news more than those who haven't joined those groups (19% and 19% respectively). Again, this likely reflects a reluctance by Australians to express their political views online.

The 2018 survey found 45% of news consumers said they would think very carefully about expressing their political beliefs on social media because it could change the way their family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances think of them.

FIGURE 8.9: SHARING ACTIVITIES BY FACEBOOK GROUP (%)



Those who join a Facebook group about news or politics are the **most likely to share news** via social media

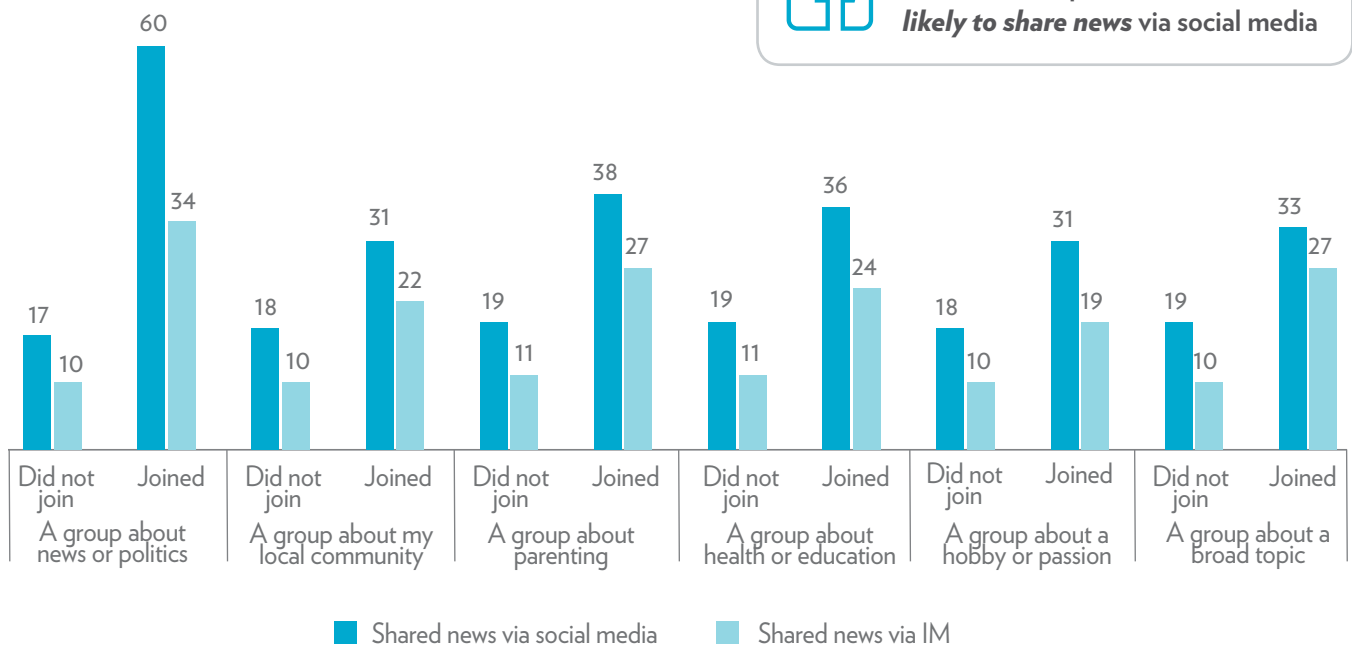
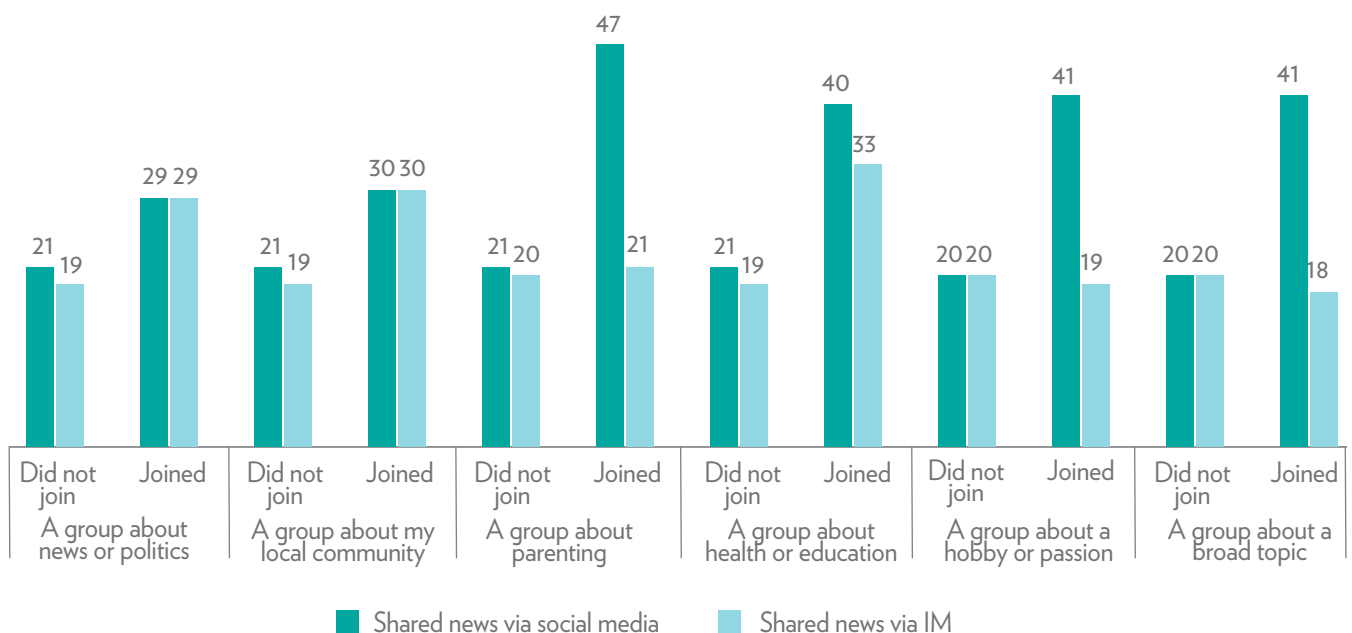


FIGURE 8.10: SHARING ACTIVITIES BY WHATSAPP GROUP (%)



SUMMARY

The rapid growth in the use of social media platforms for accessing news is continually creating an environment where social endorsements or so-called social signals such as comments, 'likes', or shares play a key role in the sharing and consumption of online news. Younger news consumers, Gen Z and Y are more likely to engage with these social endorsements, while sharing a news story via email is more popular among older news consumers.

However, this year we see a drop in most types of engagement activities. This possibly reflects growing awareness of fake news and the unreliability of many online information sources. The increasing consciousness about the risks of online information is reflected in our chapter on fake news and fact checking, which finds news consumers are turning to more reliable news sources and deciding not share stories they are dubious about. It is also reflected in the use of private social media groups for discussing news and other topics of interest.

Indeed, in response to the uncertainties of the online environment we are also seeing younger people increasingly use messaging apps to share and communicate about politics and news. Gen Z leads the use of social media platforms for news although Gen Y leads the use of WhatsApp and LinkedIn for accessing news.

As reported in the *Digital News Report: Australia 2018*, people who are worried about expressing their political views tend to choose messaging apps over open social media platforms. Despite the increasing use of mobile phones to access news, talking face-to-face with friends and colleagues about a news story continues to be the most popular mode of sharing news across all age groups.

COMMENTARY

**In an age of mistrust, readers are retreating into private spaces.
Can the media follow? Should it?**

Ariel Bogle, Technology Reporter, ABC News

In 2017, Mark Zuckerberg revealed he was a member of Facebook groups that discussed the Puli dog breed (“basically a walking mop”) and the game Civilization. Publicist-approved anecdotes? Of course. But they offered insight into how Facebook would seek to market itself following the 2016 US presidential election and the years of critical headlines that followed.

The new message was “meaningful communities” rather than “open and connected”: A move away from the cacophonous NewsFeed, bustling with Russian agents and brands, and into groups, where, ideally, genuine communication and relationships would flourish. Spaces that would feel special and unsurveilled, yet still firmly ensconced in Facebook’s network.

The 2019 *Digital News Report: Australia* suggests that news consumers are choosing these closed spaces. A majority of Facebook and WhatsApp users said they have joined and participated in a public or private group (59% and 68%, respectively). This comes as 62% of those surveyed said they’re concerned about what is real or fake on the internet.

Social media is increasingly the main source of news for Gen Z and Y, but the growing use of more curated platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp overall suggests Australians are seeking greater control over what content reaches them.

Likewise, by creating dedicated groups on Facebook or messaging apps, where membership is often restricted and comes with community-defined rules of behaviour, they are choosing protected spaces in a media landscape riddled with mistrust.

“The growing use of more curated platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp overall suggests Australians are seeking greater control over what content reaches them.”

This poses a difficulty for news outlets. Organisations like the ABC have followed the trend, creating groups dedicated to debunking false science (I’m pretty sure that’s not science...) or investigating cold cases (ExposedABC),

but the *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* suggests the industry must work harder to convince readers to join them in these dedicated environments.

The more popular public group topics are hobbies and local community issues, the study found, rather than news or politics.

The other difficulty for the news media, and the social media platforms, is that misinformation and bullying flourishes just as much in private environments as in public. WhatsApp, for example, now limits users to forwarding a message only five times to cut down on the spread of “misinformation and rumors”.

Is it the role of journalists to follow readers into these walled-off rooms? An added challenge is that closed groups, including those used for political organising, are difficult to scrutinise and report on.

It’s also unclear if we’re wanted there. As the *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* finds, many of those who said they are concerned about sorting real from fake online are also more likely to be worn out by the news cycle or even avoid it. Social media and messaging groups often seem to flourish because they seem organic - sheltered from Facebook’s NewsFeed algorithm or a news outlet’s editorial agenda.

“Social media and messaging groups often seem to flourish because they seem organic - sheltered from Facebook’s NewsFeed algorithm or a news outlet’s editorial agenda.”

Perhaps this offers a clue to publishers, on and off social media. Readers must feel more included and invested in the editorial process to build trust, and engaging in more intimate spaces may offer this opportunity. At risk of following Facebook’s pied piper, this is a journey that cannot be ceded to Zuckerberg and his video games.



9 PODCASTS AND SMART SPEAKERS

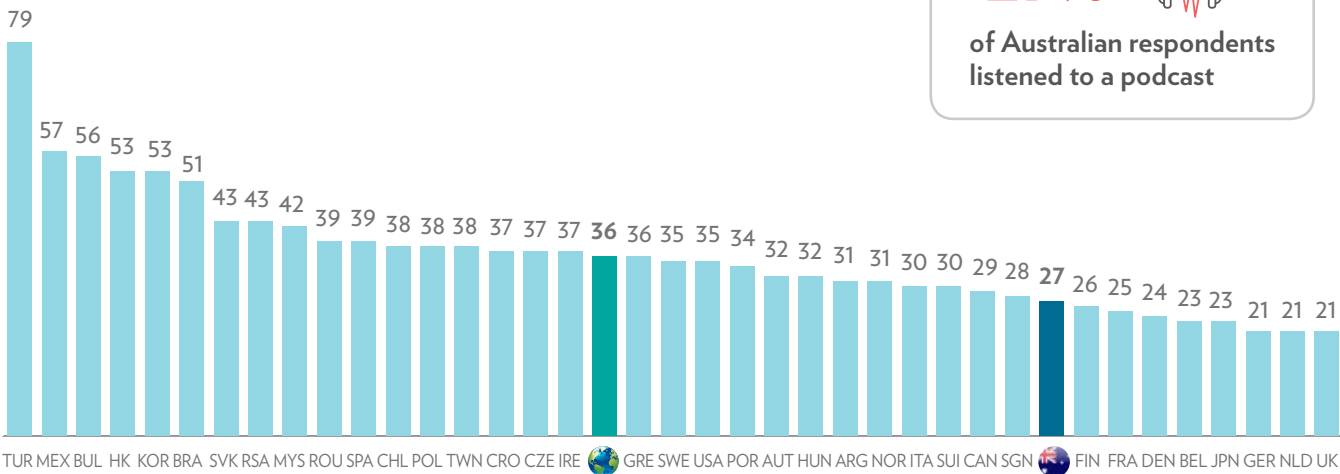
- 27% of Australian news consumers have listened to a podcast, lower than the global average (36%).
- Gen Y leads podcast consumption (43%).
- Most people listen to podcasts at home (58%).
- The most popular motivation for Australians to listen to a podcast (50%) is 'to learn something'.
- The use of voice-activated speakers is growing rapidly, but not for accessing news.

PODCAST USE IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

About 36% of the global survey population accessed a podcast in the last month. In Australia, the average was less, with 27% saying they had listened to a podcast. This is somewhat higher than in the UK (21%), which has one of the

lowest rates of podcast use. In contrast, in some countries, such as Turkey (79%), Mexico (57%), Bulgaria (56%), Hong Kong (53%), and South Korea (53%), more than 50% of consumers reported listening to a podcast (see **figure 9.1**).

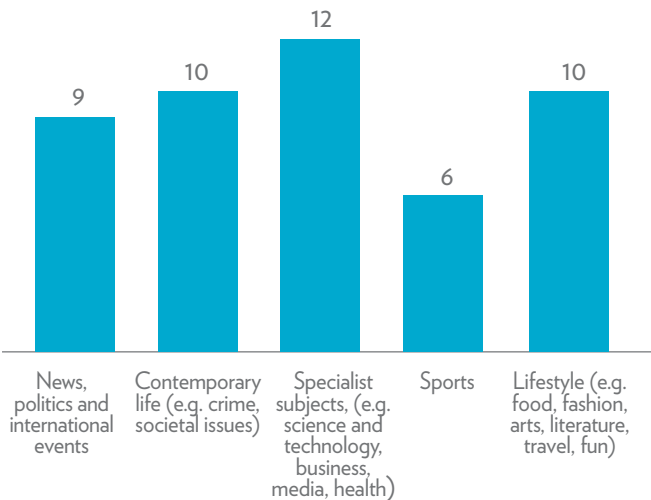
FIGURE 9.1: PODCAST USE GLOBAL COMPARISON (%)



SPECIALIST PODCASTS ARE THE MOST POPULAR

Science and technology, business, media, and health topics are the most popular among Australian podcast listeners (12%), closely followed by contemporary life (10%) and lifestyle (10%) (see **figure 9.2**).

FIGURE 9.2: PODCAST LISTENING BY GENRE (%)



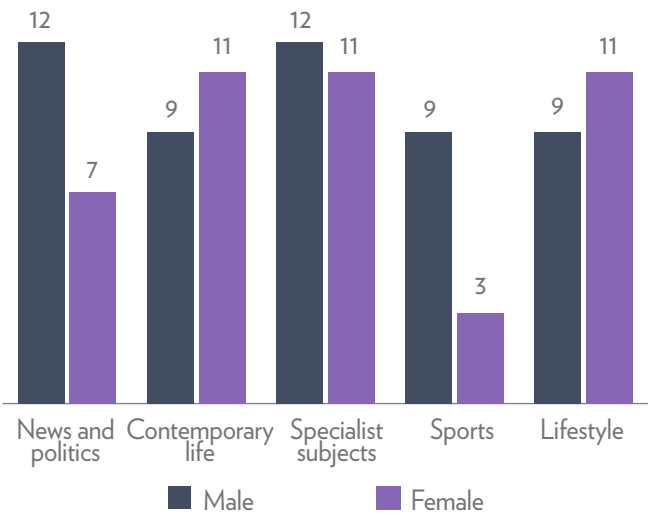
Q11F_2018. A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. A podcast about news, politics, international events; A podcast about contemporary life (e.g. crime, societal issues); A podcast about specialist subjects (e.g. science and technology, business, media, health); A podcast about sport; A podcast about lifestyle (e.g. food, fashion, arts, literature, travel, fun); I haven't listened to a podcast in the last month.

WOMEN PREFER PODCASTS ABOUT LIFESTYLE AND MEN PREFER PODCASTS ABOUT POLITICS

There is a gender difference when it comes to different types of content. Male news consumers are much more likely to tune into podcast programs about 'news and politics' and 'sport'.

In contrast, podcasts about lifestyle and contemporary life (for example crime and social issues) appeal more to female news consumers (see **figure 9.3**).

FIGURE 9.3: PODCAST GENRES BY GENDER (%)



PODCAST LISTENING HAPPENS AT HOME AND ON-THE-GO

The majority of podcast listening occurs at home (58%). Less than one third of podcast listeners tune in while traveling on public transport (29%) or driving their cars (23%).

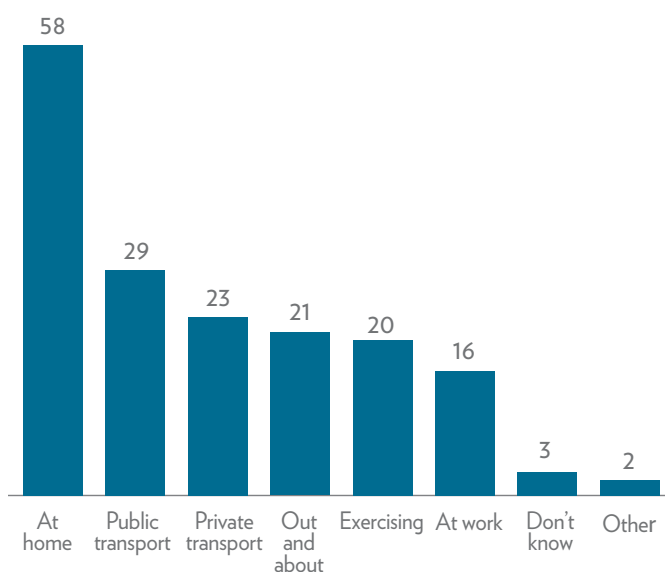
People also like to listen to podcasts when they are 'out and about' (21%), exercising (20%), and in the workplace (16%) (see **figure 9.4**).

GEN Y ARE THE BIGGEST PODCAST CONSUMERS

Young people are much more likely to listen to podcasts than older generations. Regardless of genre, Gen Y is the biggest consumer of podcasts.

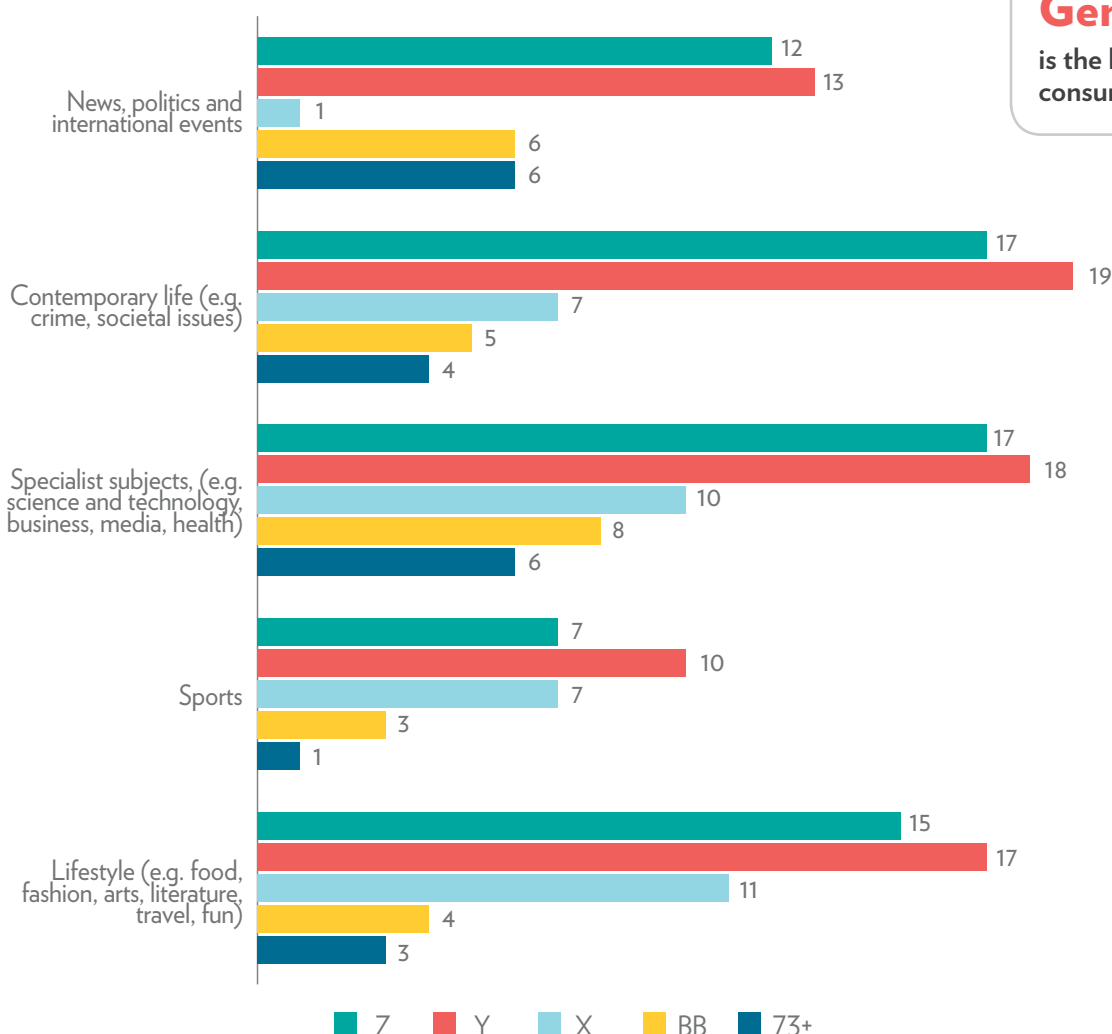
Globally, young audiences are more likely to tune into podcasts. Australia is no exception. The growth in smartphone use for accessing news is contributing to the increasing popularity of podcasts (see **figure 9.5**).

FIGURE 9.4: PODCAST CONSUMPTION BY LOCATION (%)



Q11F_podcast_location. In what circumstances do you tend to consume podcasts regularly? Please select all that apply. At home (including getting ready, whilst doing housework, ironing, cooking etc.); Private transport (e.g. car, bike); Public transport (e.g. train, bus, plane); At work; Exercising (e.g. at the gym, running); Out and about (i.e. going to the shops, at a park etc.); Other; Don't know.

FIGURE 9.5: PODCAST GENRES CONSUMED BY AGE (%)



Gen Y



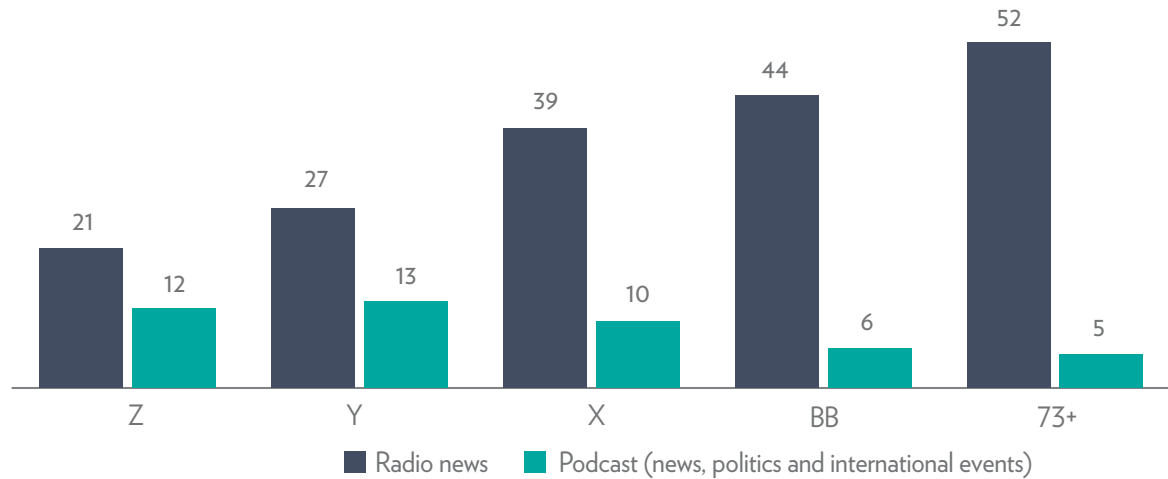
is the biggest consumer of podcasts

GEN Z AND Y LISTEN TO NEWS & POLITICS PODCASTS MORE THAN OLDER PEOPLE

To see whether podcasts may be a substitute for radio news, we compared younger and older generations' use of podcasts with their consumption of radio news. Older news consumers are more likely to listen to radio news and less likely to listen to podcasts about news, politics, and international events.

In contrast, younger news consumers are more likely to listen to podcast programs about news, politics, and international events and less likely to listen to radio news. More than half (52%) of people aged 73+ used radio as a source of news in the last week, while only 21% of Gen Z did (see **figure 9.6**).

FIGURE 9.6: PODCAST (NEWS, POLITICS, AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS) VS RADIO BY AGE (%)



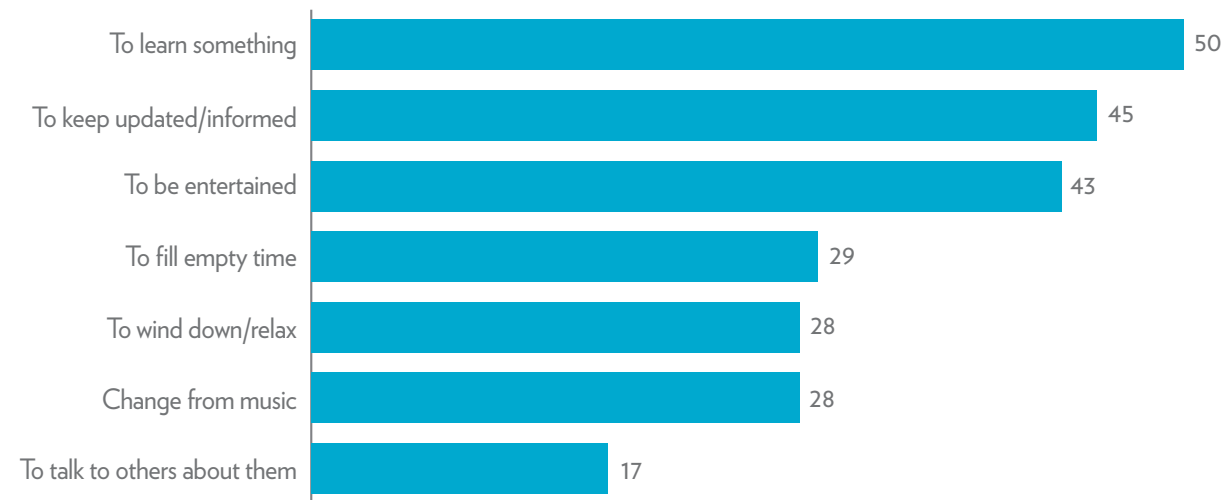
Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news?: Q3_Radio. Radio news bulletins or programmes such as ABC radio news, Mix FM or Triple J; Q11F_2018. A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. A podcast about news, politics, international events.

PEOPLE LISTEN TO PODCASTS TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW

Australian news consumers listen to podcasts for a range of reasons. Half say they do it to learn something new, 45% say they listen to keep up to date, and 43% say they tune in to be entertained (see **figure 9.7**).

Non task-oriented motivations, such as winding down, filling empty time and wanting a change from listening to music, ranked lower. However, as **figure 9.8** shows, motivations change depending on your age.

FIGURE 9.7: REASONS FOR LISTENING TO PODCASTS (%)



Q11F_podcast_reason. Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you listen to podcasts? Please select all that apply. To keep updated/informed about topics I'm interested in; To learn something; To be entertained; To fill empty time; To wind down/relax; As a change from listening to music; To talk to other people about them; Other; Don't know.

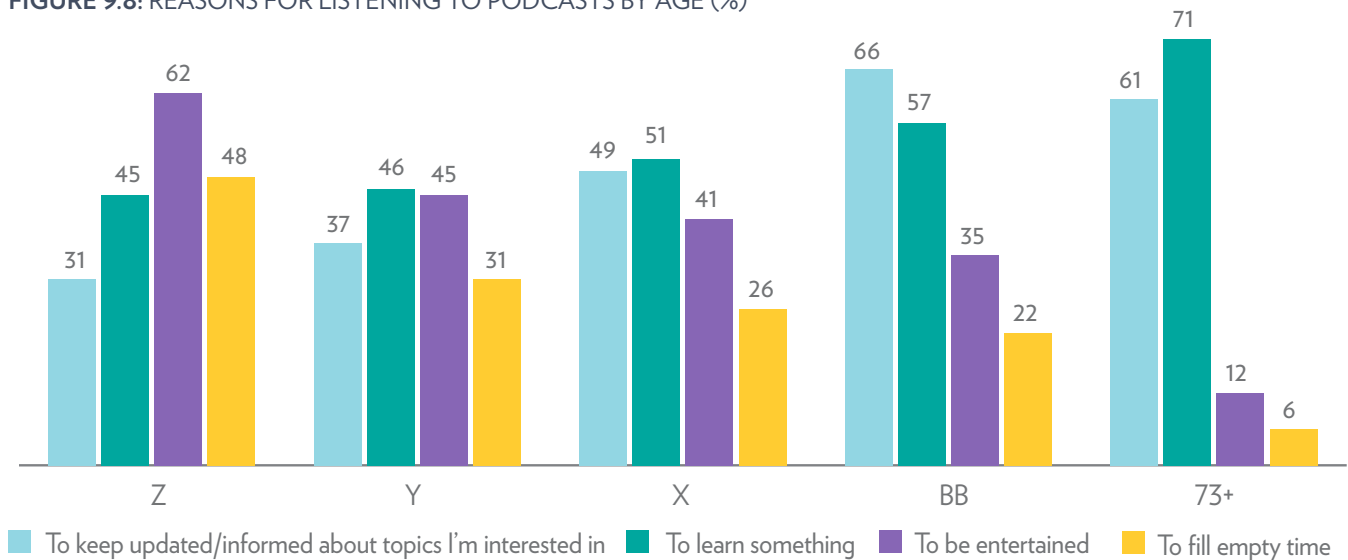
GEN Z LISTENS TO PODCASTS FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Gen Z is more likely to use podcasts for entertainment or to fill in time. In contrast, Baby Boomers and those aged 73+ are much more likely to listen to a podcast to learn something new and keep up to date (see **figure 9.8**).



48% of Gen Z listen to podcasts *to kill time*, compared to just **6%** of those aged 73+

FIGURE 9.8: REASONS FOR LISTENING TO PODCASTS BY AGE (%)



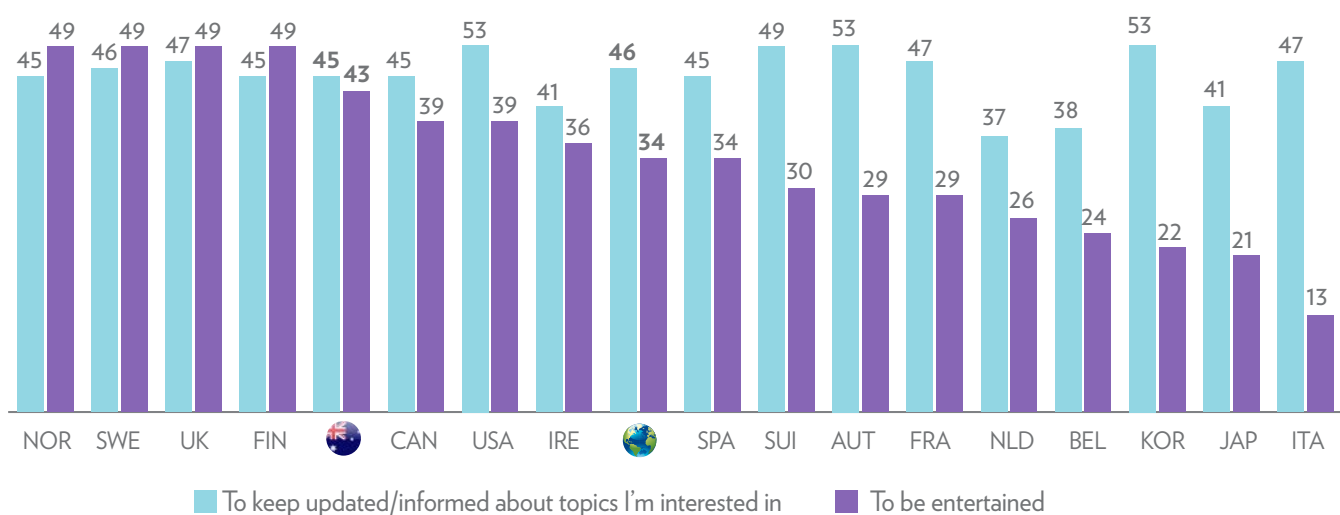
Q11F_podcast_reason. Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you listen to podcasts? Please select all that apply. To keep updated/informed about topics I'm interested in; To learn something; To be entertained; To fill empty time; To wind down/relax; As a change from listening to music; To talk to other people about them; Other; Don't know.

AUSTRALIANS WANT TO BE ENTERTAINED BY PODCASTS MORE THAN LISTENERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES

In comparison to other countries, Australians are more likely to use podcasts as an entertainment medium. As **figure 9.9** shows, Australians' desire to be entertained by

podcasts is higher than the global average. In contrast, Australians' desire to be informed by listening to podcasts (45%) is very close the global average (46%).

FIGURE 9.9: REASONS FOR LISTENING TO PODCASTS, COUNTRY COMPARISON (%)



Q11F_podcast_reason. Which, if any, of the following are reasons why you listen to podcasts? Please select all that apply. To keep updated/informed about topics I'm interested in; To learn something; To be entertained; To fill empty time; To wind down/relax; As a change from listening to music; To talk to other people about them; Other; Don't know. *Note: Reasons for listening to podcasts were only asked in 17 countries.

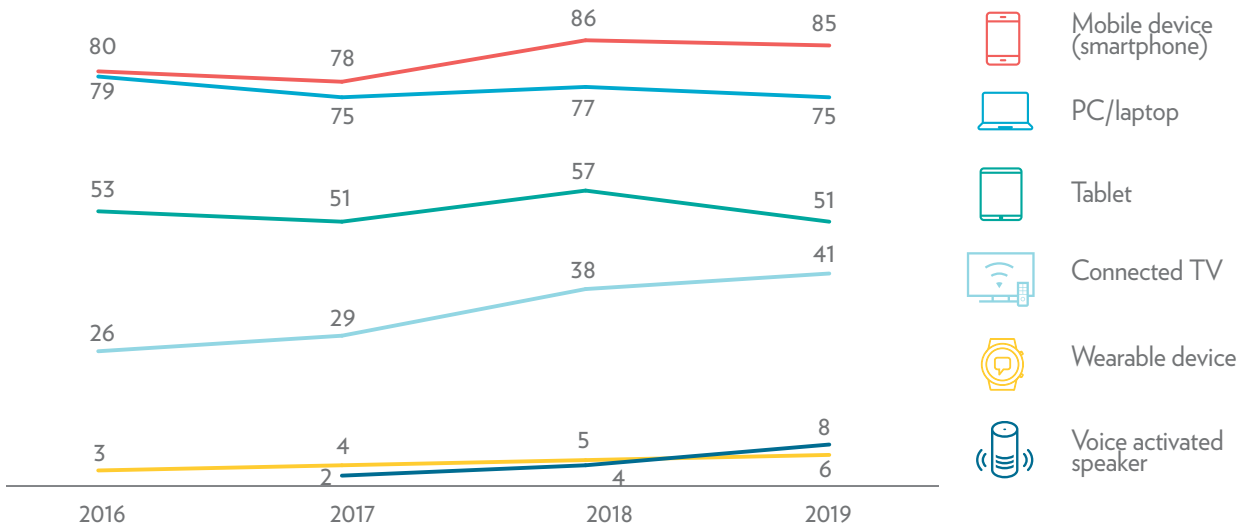
VOICE ACTIVATED SPEAKERS

GLOBAL SMART SPEAKER PENETRATION IS GROWING RAPIDLY

Globally, the general use of smart-speakers or voice activated speakers (e.g., Amazon Echo, Google Home, and Apple Homepod) is growing rapidly. In many parts of the world, there has been a continuous increase in the use of voice activated devices over the past four years.

In several countries, for example, the use of smart-speakers for any purpose has more than doubled. This trend can also be seen in Australia, where the use of smart speakers has increased from 2% in 2017 to 8% in 2019 (see **figure 9.10**).

FIGURE 9.10: SMART DEVICE OWNERSHIP (%)



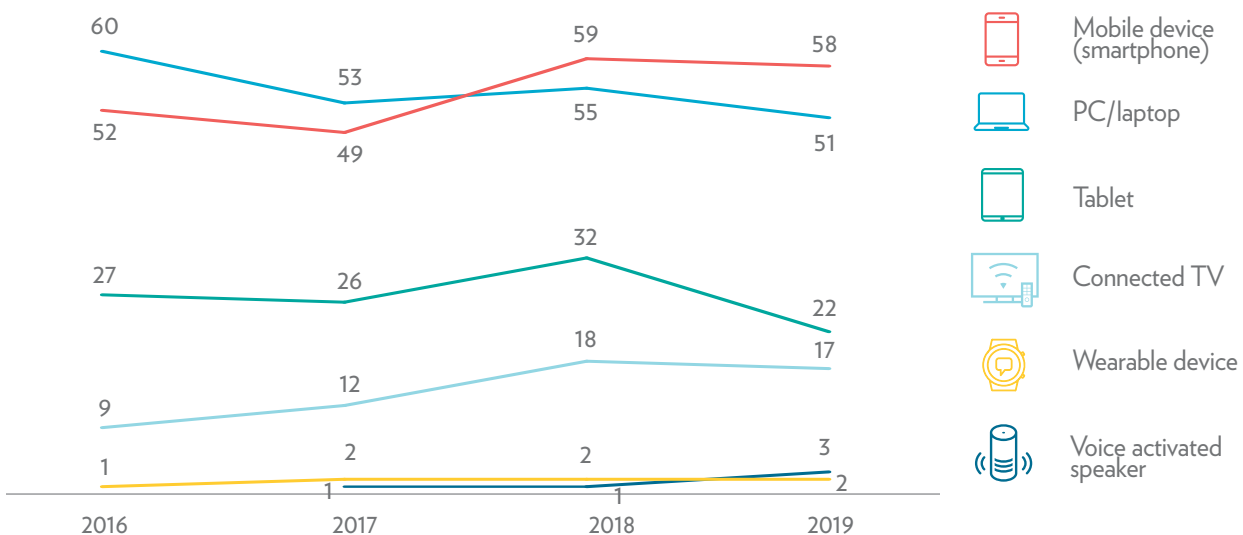
Q8A. Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use? Please select all that apply.

TAKE UP OF SMART SPEAKERS FOR NEWS IS SLOW

Although people's use of voice activated speakers for general purposes is growing, only 3% of Australian news consumers have used them to access news in the last week. This marks a small increase from 1% in 2017.

There has also been an increase in the use of smart TVs for accessing news during the past four years. In contrast, the use of laptops (51%) and tablets (22%) for news has fallen (see **figure 9.11**).

FIGURE 9.11: SMART DEVICES USED FOR NEWS (%)



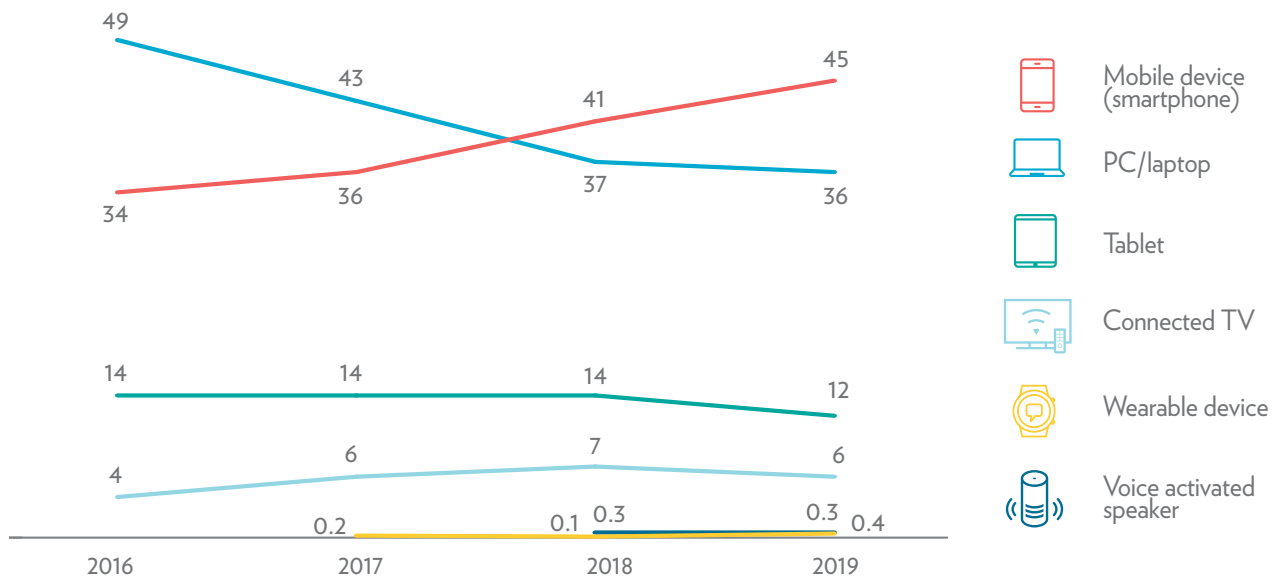
Q8B. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week? Please select all that apply.

In addition, less than 1% of news consumers (0.3%) use voice devices as the main device for news (see **figure 9.12**).



Less than **1%** of news consumers use voice devices as their *main device for news*

FIGURE 9.12: MAIN DEVICE FOR NEWS (%)



SUMMARY

The use of smartphones has been increasing worldwide. In Australia, ownership of mobile phones has risen rapidly. Correspondingly, news consumers are increasingly using their mobile phones to access news generally. For 45% of Australians it has become their main device for consuming news. This increase in the use of smartphones as the main way to access news mirrors the steady decline in the use of personal computers (desktop or laptops) as the main source of news.

The use of smart speakers is also increasing worldwide. In Australia, the use of smart speakers for any purpose has increased from 4% to 8% over the past 12 months. However, the use of smart speakers for news purposes is very low.

While less than one third of Australian news consumers have listened to a podcast in the last month, it is much more popular among young people under the age of 35. Regardless of genre, Gen Y is leading podcast consumption, but is closely followed by Gen Z.

In relation to preferred genres, the data reveal there are gender differences. Female listeners prefer podcast programs about true crime, society and lifestyle such as fashion, food, and arts, whereas male listeners prefer news and politics, or sports.

As more and more news organisations embrace podcasting, it will be interesting to see if the appetite for them in Australia grows in line with global trends, or whether we hit saturation.

COMMENTARY

Podcasts: Netflix without the eye candy

Hedley Thomas, National Chief Correspondent, *The Australian*

Who remembers the first podcast they heard? Not me. But I do recall where I was when I first heard the strange word. I was at my desk in the newsroom of *The Courier-Mail* near my then colleague, political commentator Dennis Atkins. It was either 2004 or 2005. Dennis was talking knowledgeably about how he was listening and learning from what sounded to me like a weirdly-named gizmo. Dennis called it a 'podcast'.

To my tin-ear the concept sounded like a fad. Sure to fizzle out. Dennis tried to impress on me how brilliant it was to listen to a 'podcast' on his 'iPod' while out walking. And I would have said something like: 'wtf'?

“Who remembers the first podcast they heard? Not me.”

There's a web site (<https://internationalpodcastday.com/podcasting-history/>) which includes a brief history of the podcast. From this I can see that Dennis must have been an early convert. In February 2004, *The Guardian* published a presciently-headlined article - 'Audible Revolution' - in which the journalist Ben Hammersley reported: 'Online radio is booming thanks to iPod, cheap audio software and weblogs. But what to call it? Audio blogging? Podcasting? GuerillaMedia?'

The Guardian's question would soon be answered and a name for the new media upstart settled. As Dennis had confidently asserted, it's a podcast.

Despite Dennis's glowing endorsement and patient explanation, I was none the wiser about podcasts when I left *The Courier-Mail* to go to *The Australian* in 2006. I didn't listen to podcasts. Technology isn't my strong suit. It's embarrassing to acknowledge that I didn't know where to find these podcasts or how to get them. Live radio, particularly in the car, continued to hold sway for this luddite.

The next time the word podcast was mentioned in the company of Dennis, it was May 2018 at a restaurant lunch hosted by the Walkley Foundation near the old Gasworks in Newstead, Brisbane. When Dennis asked what I was up to I mentioned I'd been working for months on an investigation into an alleged murder - and that it was for a podcast.

I can't recall if I reminded Dennis about his own trailblazing conversion all those years ago. The lunch was held in honour of our friend and colleague, *The Australian's* Trent Dalton

(author of the brilliant and best-selling book *Boy Swallows Universe*). It was a few days from the launch of episode one of *The Teacher's Pet*, and Dennis and Trent wished me well.

This short potted personal history of podcasting and its intersection with journalism and newsrooms has reinforced for me how far the medium has come in one and a half decades. And how even a technology numbskull can (eventually) work it out.

The appeal and penetration of the podcast in daily life has been astonishing. The opportunities for important, relevant and gripping journalism are vast and exciting. But why is the podcast surging? One reason, I suggest, is that many of us have become lazy consumers of news, current affairs and long-form journalism.

We've become time-poor, unfocused and only occasional readers of books and magazines and newspapers. Because we're mostly digital, now - and it's splintering our concentration span as we switch between Facebook and news web sites and email and Twitter and Instagram, all on our smartphones. We still want to know what's going on - but we're distracted and we're not putting in anything like the effort we once did to properly consume stuff through conventional print platforms.

Enter the podcast and the ability to listen to what you want, just when you want it. No effort - no reading. It's Netflix without the eye candy.

“Enter the podcast and the ability to listen to what you want, just when you want it. No effort - no reading. It's Netflix without the eye candy.”

The rise of the podcast is great for journalism and listeners. And for sure - parts of the market are crowded. True crime is arguably overcrowded. It's also going to take a lot more effort to effectively monetise podcasting. But it's an exciting time to be giving it your best. I just wish I'd got on the wave when Dennis first told me about the newfangled podcast some 15 years ago.



NEWS MOMENTS OF 2019

SATURDAY, MAY 18: Kate Miller-Heidke of Australia performs the song “Zero Gravity” during the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest grand final in Tel Aviv, Israel.

IMAGE: SEBASTIAN SCHEINER/AP



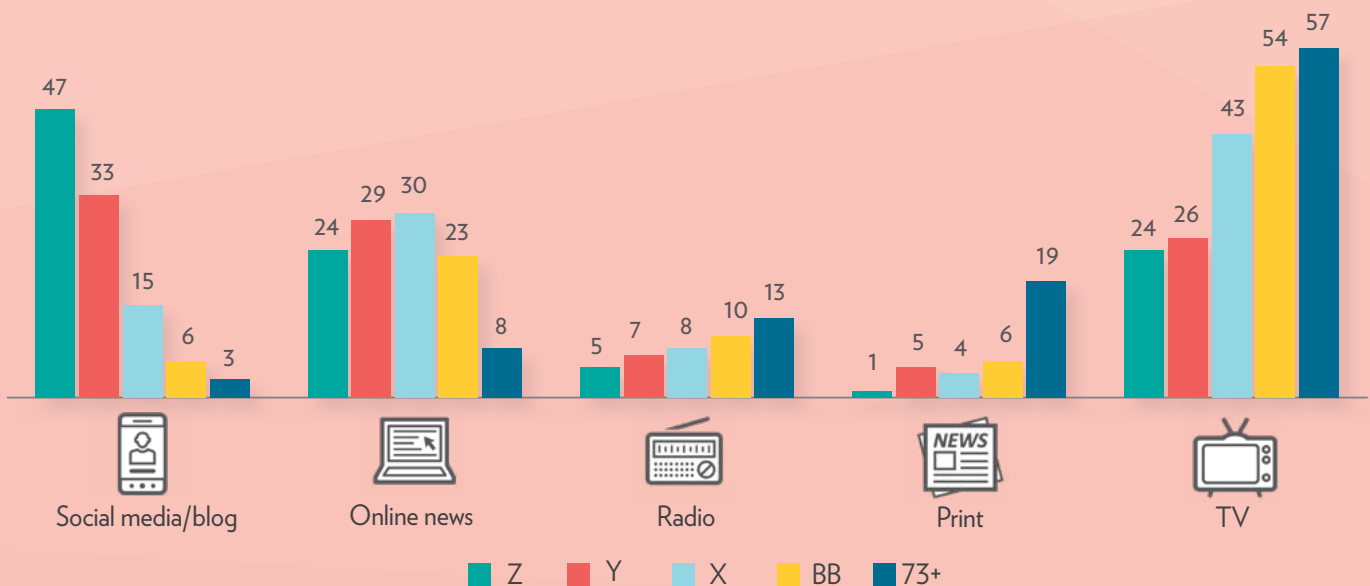
DEMOGRAPHIC SNAPSHOTS

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES SNAPSHOT

The *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* highlights an increasing shift in news consumption between younger and older Australians. This snapshot provides some of the key differences.

Gen Z and Y are more likely to use social media as their main source of news

- Almost half of Gen Z (47%) use social media as their main source of news, whereas only 3% of 73+ say it is their main source.
- Instead, older Australians are heavily dependent on TV for news.



Gen Y more likely to share news via messaging apps (15%)

- Baby Boomers are more likely to share news via email (17%).



Gen Z and Y avoid the news more

- 70% of Gen Z and 71% of Gen Y avoid the news, compared to 55% of those aged 73+.

Gen Z are more likely to think news is not relevant to them (30%)

- In contrast, 22% of those aged 73+ think the news is not relevant to them.



Gen Z are the least likely to be interested in politics

- Those aged 73+ are the most interested in politics (50%) and Gen Z the least interested (29%).

Gen Z have the lowest interest in news and are the lightest news consumers

- 38% of Gen Z say they are interested or very interested in news compared to 73% of those aged 73+.
- The majority of Gen Z (62%) access news once a day or less.

Those aged 73+ are the most concerned about what is real or fake online

- The 73+ age group is followed by Gen Z (65%) and Baby Boomers (64%).



Gen Y are the most likely to pay for online news

- 17% of Gen Y pay for online news, compared to 7% of Gen Z and 14% of those aged 73+.

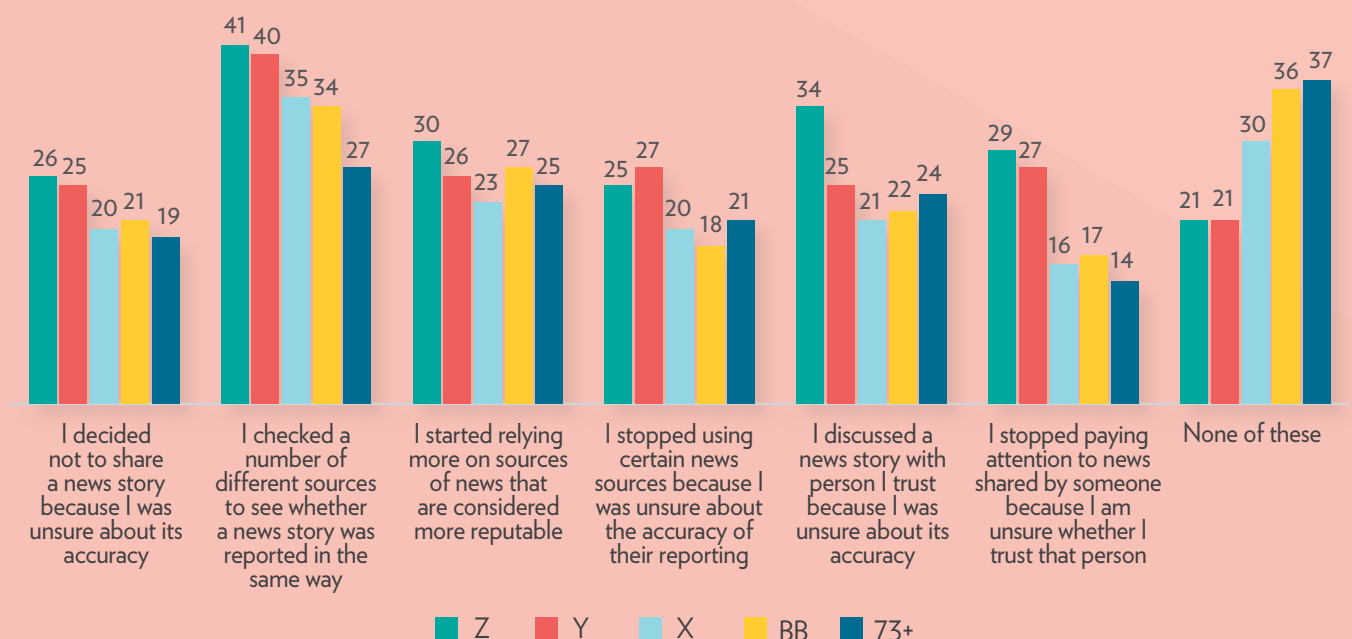
Gen Y are the most likely to listen to podcasts

- Those aged 73+ are the least likely to listen.



Members of Gen Z are the most likely to employ verification activities

- Despite the data showing that news consumers aged 73+ are more concerned about what is fake and real on the internet, younger generations are more likely to verify online news than older.
- This largely reflects that younger news consumers are more likely to access news online than older people, and younger people are likely to be more confident in their digital literacy.
- This may also reflect that younger news consumers are more skeptical about the information they encounter online as revealed in their lower trust levels in news.

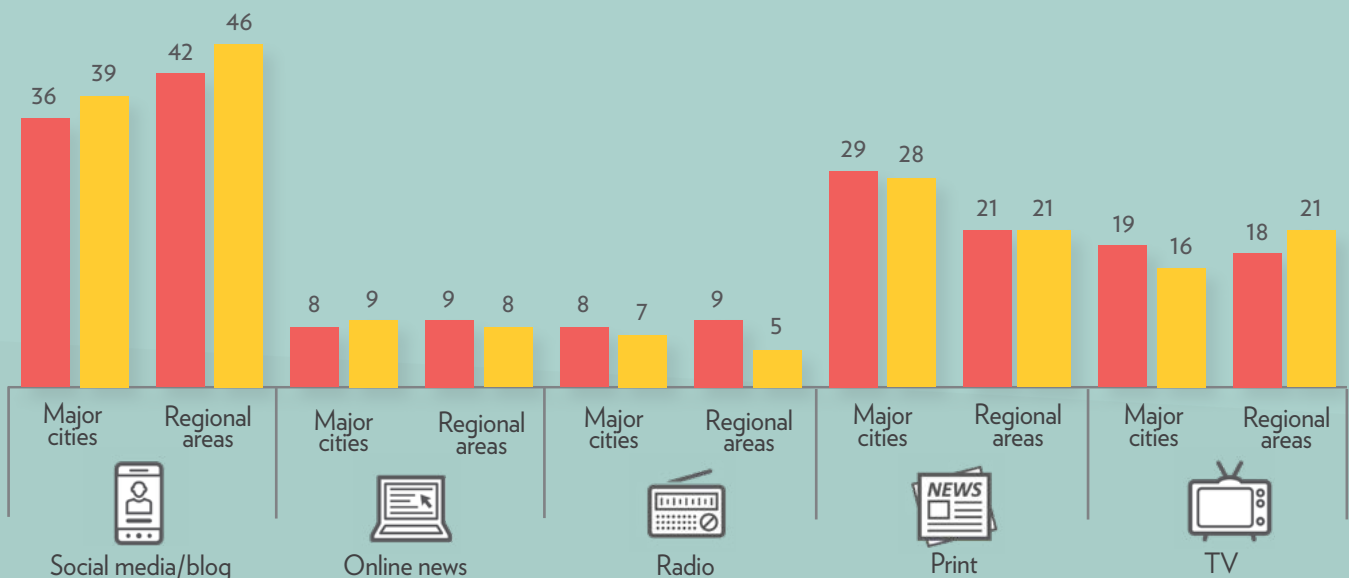


REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

This fact sheet provides an overview of key differences in news consumption between Australians who live in regional, rural and remote areas and those who live in major cities. We have grouped the data into two main categories of regional and major cities.¹²

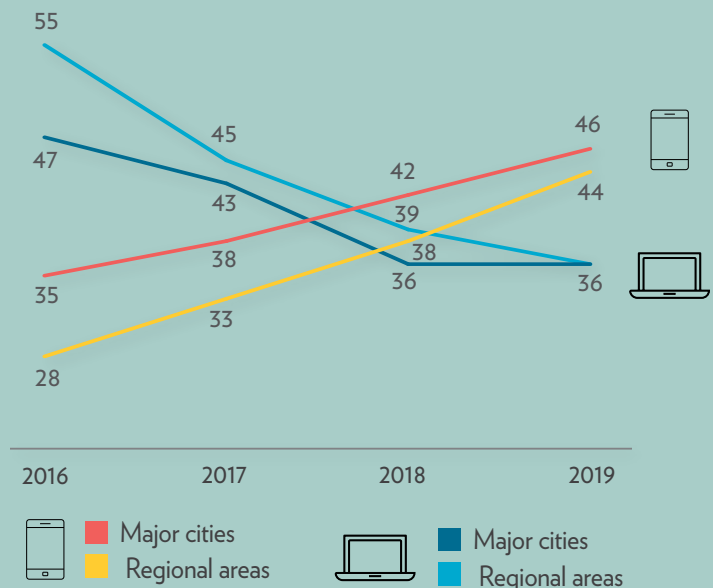
TV news is more popular in the regions than in the cities

- Consumers in regional Australia are much more likely to rely on TV as their main source of news (46%) than news users in cities (39%).
- Regional news consumers are also slightly more likely to rely on social media for news (21%) than people in the cities (18%).
- Reliance on newspapers as a main source has remained steady in the cities but has dropped in regional areas since 2016.



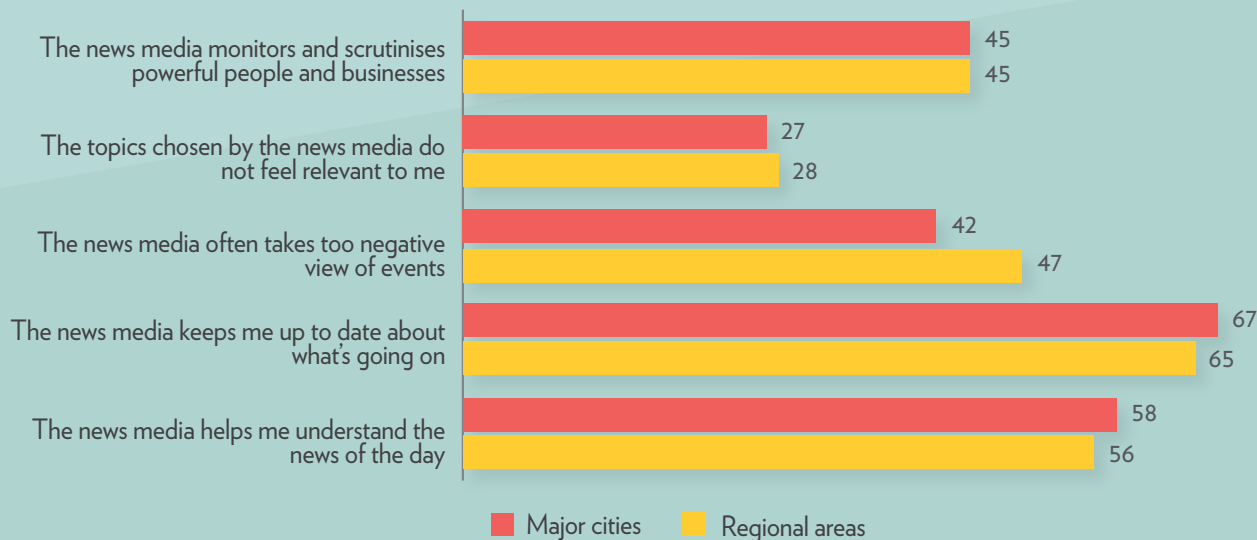
The drop in PCs for news and the rise in mobile phones has been faster in regional areas than cities

- News access via laptop or desktop computers has decreased more sharply in regional areas (from 55% in 2016 to 36% in 2019) than in cities (from 47% in 2016 to 36% in 2019).
- On the other hand, the use of smartphones for news has also risen much more rapidly in regional areas than in cities.



News seen to be more negative by regional news consumers

- There is little difference between regional and urban news consumers in their assessment of how well the news media are performing, except for negativity.
- News consumers in regional parts of the country are more likely to think the topics chosen by the news media are too negative, compared to those who live in major cities.



Interest in news and politics is slightly lower among regional news consumers

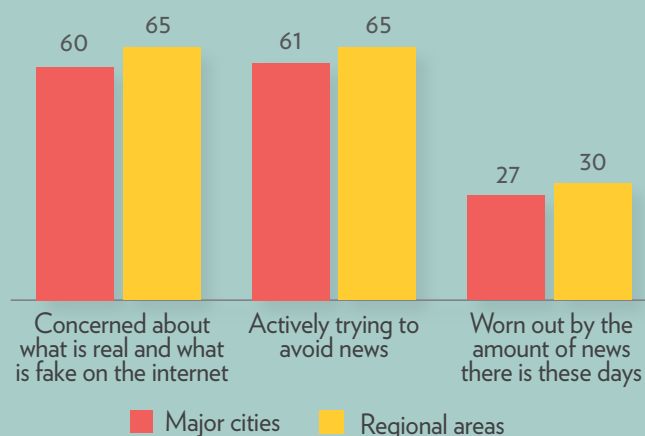
- In 2019, 37% of major city news consumers say they have high interest in politics compared to 32% of regional news consumers.
- Similarly, a slightly larger percentage (59%) of those who live in cities say they have high interest in news compared to 56% of regional consumers.
- Those who live in the cities are also slightly more likely to access news more than once a day (54%) compared to those who live in regional areas (51%).
- However, regional (90%) and major city (92%) news consumers are almost as likely to be heavy internet users.

Regional news consumers are less likely to pay for news

- In 2019, only 12% of regional news consumers say they pay for online news, compared 16% of those who live in major cities. A similar gap was recorded in 2016.

Regional news consumers are more likely to avoid the news

- News consumers in regional, rural and remote parts of Australia are slightly more likely to avoid the news, feel worn out by it and be concerned about what is real and fake on the internet.

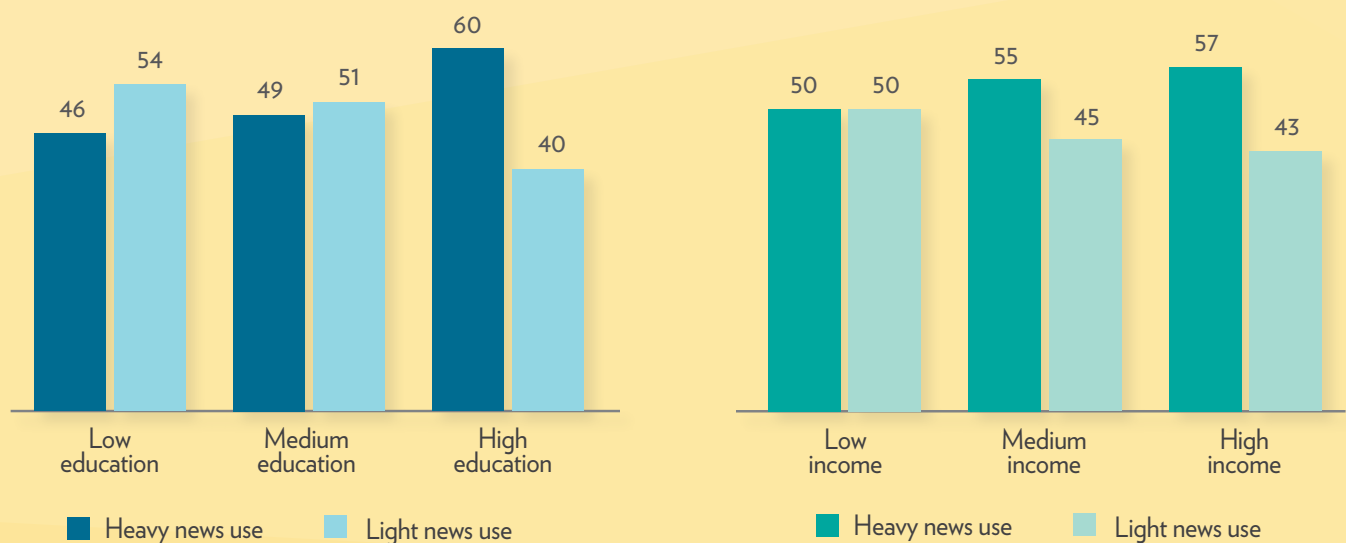


EDUCATION & INCOME SNAPSHOT

This fact sheet provides an overview of key findings in relation to the impact of education and income on news consumption in Australia. This year's report highlights significant differences in news consumption, literacy and paying for news based on income and education levels.*

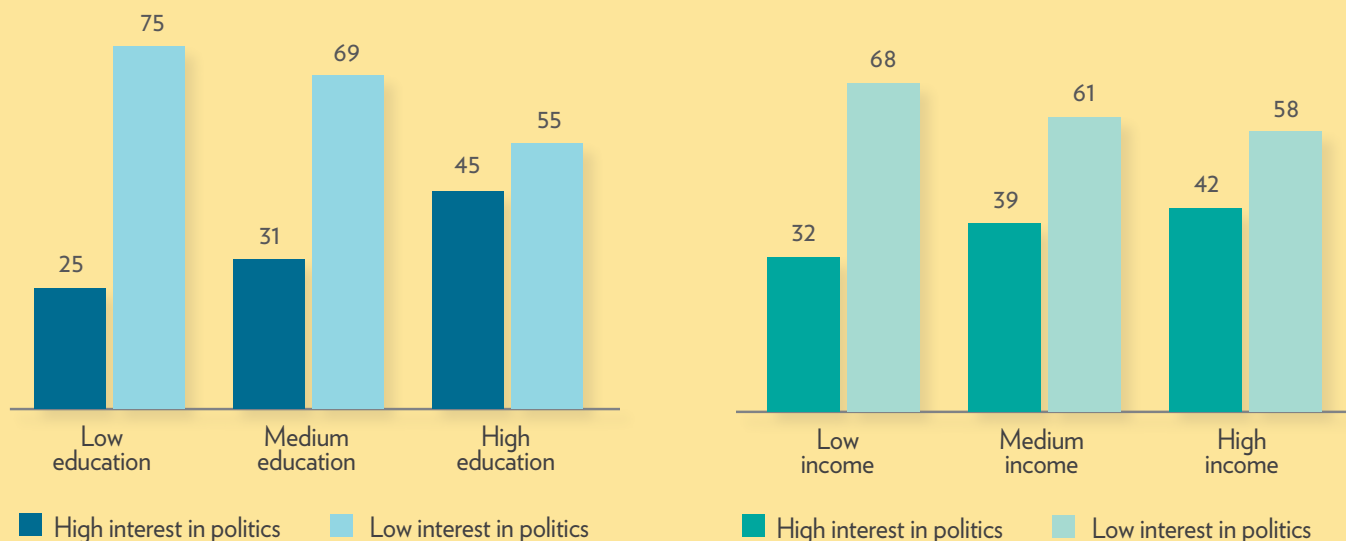
The amount of news consumed increases with education and income

- Heavy news consumers (those who access news more than once a day) are more likely to be more educated and earn a higher income.



The level of income and education reflect degree of interest in politics

- Those with lower education and incomes have lower interest in politics



*Education categories: Highly educated (university or above); Medium education (upper & post-secondary) and low education (year 10 or below).

TV is main source of news for those with low education and low income

- While TV remains the main sources of news for Australians, it is particularly so for those with lower levels of education (51%) and income (49%) compared to those with high education (40%) and income (36%).
- In comparison, those with higher levels of education and income are more likely to rely on online sources of news (31%; 35%) in comparison to those with lower education (15%;19%).



The more educated you are, the more likely you will pay for online news

- 11% of those with low levels of education pay for online news compared to 19% with high education.
- Similarly, those with low incomes are less likely to pay (12%) than those with high incomes (18%).

Highly educated news consumers have lower trust in news on social media

- 59% of those with higher education distrust news on social media compared to 39% of those with low education.

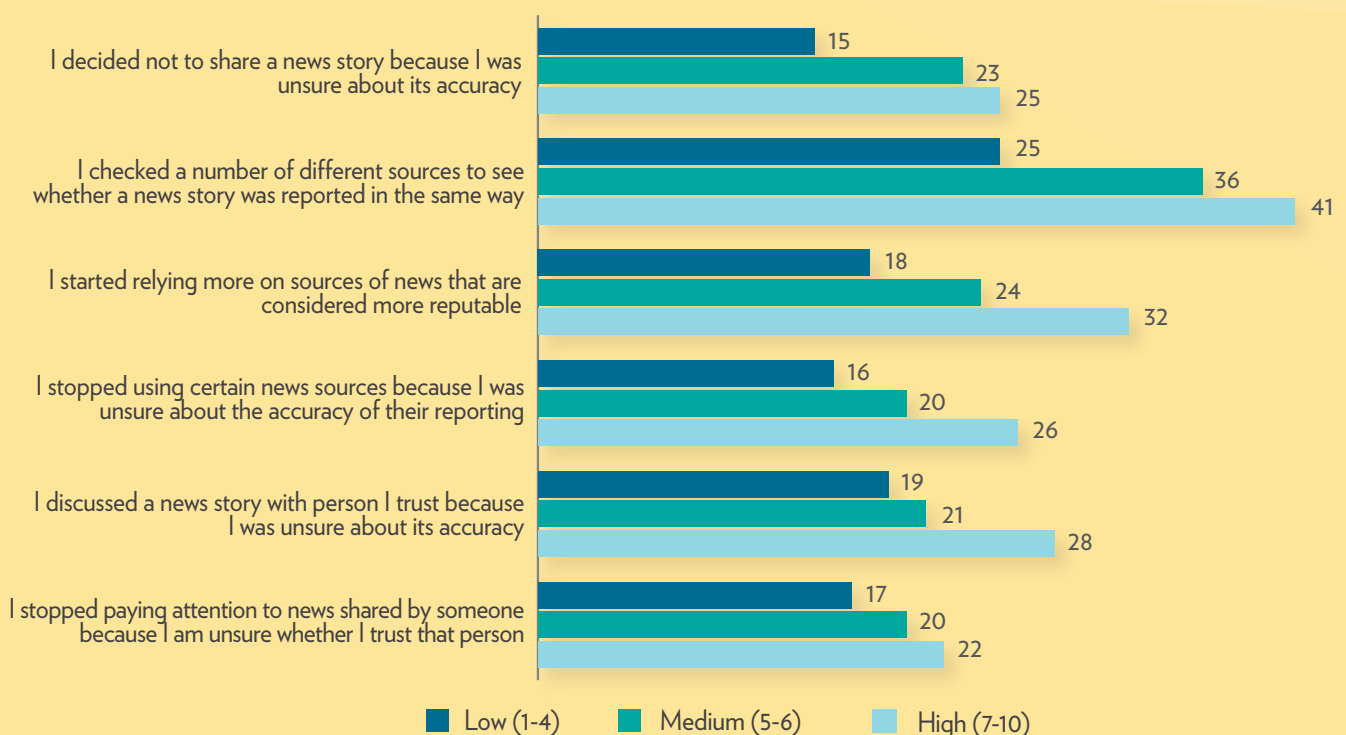


News avoidance: Low educated and low-income earners are more likely to avoid news

- 68% of those with low education try to avoid compared to 60% of those with high education.
- Conversely, 64% of those with low incomes avoid news, compared to 59% with high incomes.

The highly educated are more likely to fact check

- Those with lower education and incomes have lower interest in politics.

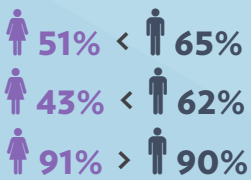


GENDER SNAPSHOT

The *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* finds significant variations in news consumption based on gender. This snapshot provides some of the key differences.

Women are less interested in news than men

- Women are much less likely to be highly interested in news.
- Women are less likely to be heavy news consumers.
- But women are just as likely to be heavy internet users as men.



Women prefer news on TV and social media and men prefer news online

- 45% of Australian women use TV as their main source of news compared to 39% of men.
- 23% of women rely on social media for news compared to just 14% of men.
- 30% of men rely on online sources of news, whereas only 21% of women do.



Women are incidental news consumers

- Men are more likely to access news directly by going straight to a brand website or app, whereas women are more likely to access news indirectly and are exposed to news while on social media.

Men access more news sources than women

- 38% of men use 4 or more sources of news compared to just 27% of women.
- 25% of women use just one source of news compared to 17% of men.



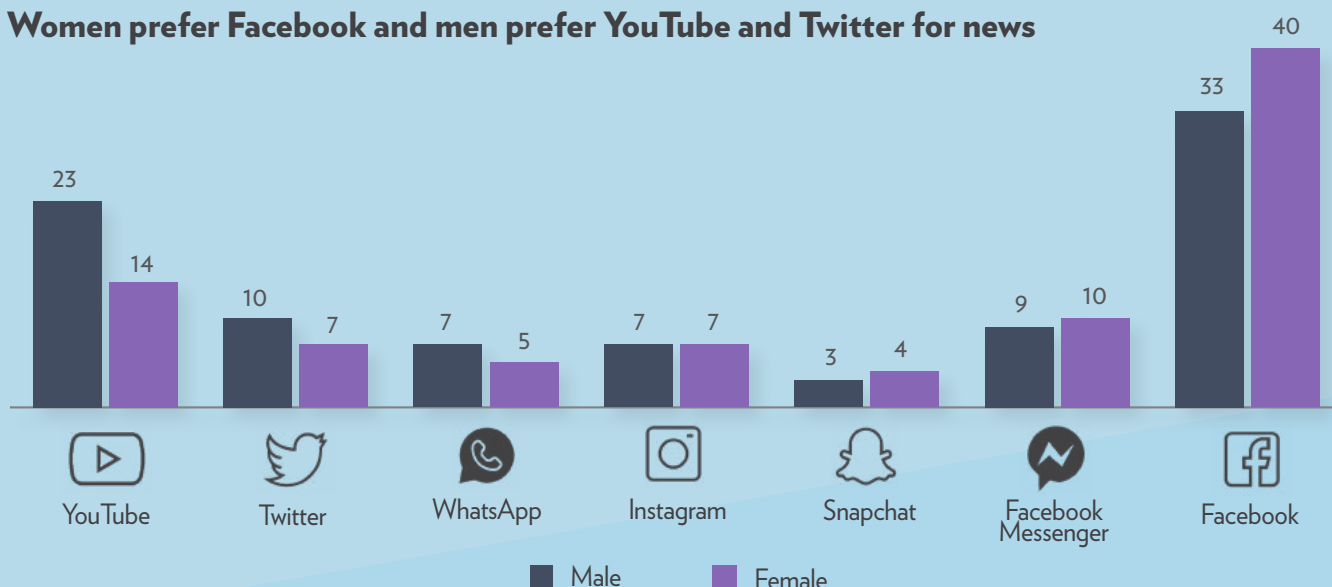
Women are more likely to avoid news and feel worn out by it than men

- 67% of female news consumers have tried to avoid news compared to 58% of men.
- 32% of female news consumers feel worn out by news compared to 25% of men.

A higher proportion of women access news on mobile phones compared to men



Women prefer Facebook and men prefer YouTube and Twitter for news



Women have lower interest in politics than men

- 45% of male news consumers say they have a high interest in politics compared to only 25% of female news consumers.



Men have higher trust in news

- Men have slightly higher general trust in news (47%) to women (42%).
- Men also have higher trust in the news they use (54%) than women (49%).
- Men and women trust news found via social media (18%) and search equally (32%).

Women prefer podcasts about lifestyle and men prefer podcasts about politics

- Male news consumers are much more likely to tune into podcast programs about 'news and politics' (12%) compared to 7% of women.
- Similarly, 9% men listen to sports podcasts, compared to 3% of female listeners.
- In contrast, women are more likely to listen to podcasts about crime and lifestyle (11%) compared to 9% of men.



Men are more likely to fact-check news

- 74% of men having adopted any of news verification behaviours, 67% for women.
- However, women in younger generations (Gen Z, Y and X) are comparable with men in checking accuracy of a story by comparing multiple sources.

Gen Z women find news less relevant to them

- 33% of Gen Z women feel that the topics chosen by the news media do not feel relevant to them, whereas only 23% of Gen Z men feel news media topics are irrelevant to them.

ENDNOTES

METHODOLOGY

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

CHAPTER THREE: PAYING FOR NEWS AND DIGITAL CONTENT

2 Last year, the report recorded an unusually large increase in payment from 13% in 2017 to 20% in 2018. This sudden peak was possibly in response to high levels of concern about fake news and the public seeking quality journalism sources. It was also possibly partly due to the successful membership drive by the *Guardian Australia*. An adjustment in the education quota in the 2019 international survey might have also had a small impact on the apparent drop this year. However, the return to 14% in 2019 is much closer to the level of payment by Australian news consumers recorded from 2015-17 which was steady at around 13% and is closer to the international average.

COMMENTARY: TRUST, DEMOCRACY AND A FREE PRESS

- 3 Freedom House (2019), *Freedom in the World*, retrieved 21 May 2019 from: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019/>.
- 4 Australia is ranked in the top 10 for four out of six of the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators. Retrieved 21 May 2019 from: <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/#home>
- 5 Stoker, G., Evans, M., and Halupka, M. (2018), Democracy 2025 Report No. 1. *Trust and Democracy in Australia: democratic decline and renewal*, Canberra, MoAD, retrieved 21 May from: <https://democracy2025.gov.au>.
- 6 See the 2019 *Edelman Trust Barometer*, retrieved 21 May 2019 from: <https://www.afr.com/leadership/australians-show-surprise-leap-of-faith-in-edelman-trust-survey-20190122-h1abwv>
- 7 Stoker, G., Evans, M., and Halupka, M. (2018), op. cit.
- 8 Kavanagh, J. and Rich, M.D. (2018), *Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of the Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life*, Santa Monica, Calif, RAND Corporation. Retrieved 21 May from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2300/RR2314/RAND_RR2314.pdf
- 9 Reporters Without Borders (2019), *2019 World Press Freedom Index*, retrieved 21 May from: <https://rsf.org/en/ranking-table/>
- 10 Kavanagh, J. and Rich, M.D. (2018), op. cit.

COMMENTARY: REBUILDING TRUST IN THE NEWS

- 11 Coleman, Stephen (2012), 'Believing the News: From sinking trust to atrophied efficacy', *European Journal of Communication* 27(1), p. 37.

REGIONAL SNAPSHOT

12 These two groups are based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics geographic classifications of major cities, inner region, outer regional, remote and very remote. Due to the small number of respondents in remote and very remote areas, we combined all non-major city areas under 'regional'.

BACKGROUND TO THE DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: AUSTRALIA 2019

This is the fifth 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.

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The *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* can be downloaded from the News & Media Research Centre's website: <http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia-2019>

NEWS & MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

The N&MRC researches digital news consumption and the impacts of digital technology on public discourse and democratic participation. Our research occurs in three hubs: the **Digital News+ Lab**, **Critical Conversations Lab**, and the **Media Cultures Lab**.

The Centre conducts both critical and applied research projects with partners and institutions in Australia and internationally.

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



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