DIGITAL NEWS REPORT:
AUSTRALIA 2023

Cite as: Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjianto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). *Digital News Report: Australia 2023*. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

The *Digital News Report: Australia 2023* can be downloaded from the News and Media Research Centre's website: **http://www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia**

DIGITAL NEWS REPORT:
AUSTRALIA 2023

UNIVERSITY OF
CANBERRA

NEWS AND MEDIA
RESEARCH CENTRE

CONTENTS

METHODOLOGY

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

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

Fieldwork was conducted between mid-January and the end of February 2023 by YouGov plc. Online samples were of around 2000 in each country and are designed to be nationally representative with quotas on age, gender, and region. Education quotas were also applied in all markets except Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, India, South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya.

In Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United States and United Kingdom, we also applied additional political quotas based on vote choice in the most recent national election. The data in all markets were weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data.

Data from India, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are representative of younger English speakers and not the national population, because it is not possible to reach other groups in a representative way using an online survey. The survey was fielded mostly in English in these markets and restricted to ages 18 to 55 in India, Kenya and Nigeria. Findings should not be taken to be nationally representative in these countries and we have applied caution when comparing across these countries.

In this report, we mainly compare 33 countries that have comparable samples.

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE

The survey was conducted by YouGov using an online questionnaire between 10 January and 12 February 2023. The sample of 2025 participants is drawn from an online panel consisting of 441,866 adult Australians.

The final sample is reflective of the population that has access to the internet. The data were weighted to targets based on age, gender, region, education level, and voting history to represent the total population based on Australian Bureau of Statistics census data.

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

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE	
Panel size	441,866
Total number of non-news users in the sample (unweighted)	146
Total sample size	**2,025**

2023 Participating Countries

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

* Included in the 33 countries in our comparative analysis

EDUCATION QUOTA

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

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

GENERATIONS

News consumption is closely tied to age. To improve our understanding of changing consumption habits over the life span, we use a generational approach to our analysis. This provides more meaningful analysis than evenly spaced age groups. For the purposes of reliable international analysis, we have adopted the generational categories used by the PEW Research[1]. In this year's sample the maximum age of the respondents was 92. Instead of using PEW's Greatest and Silent Generation categories, we merged the two and used '77+'. The age span calculation is based on the respondent's age as of December 2022. This is because the fieldwork was conducted in early 2023 and most people would not have reached their birthdays at the time of the survey.

Birth years	Generation	Abbreviation used	Age span
1901–27	Greatest Generation	77+	94+
1928–45	Silent Generation		77–93
1946–64	Baby Boomers	BB	58–76
1965–80	Gen X	X	42–57
1981–96	Gen Y, Millennials	Y	26–41
1997–	Gen Z, Post-millennials	Z	18–25

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

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

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

POLITICAL WEIGHTING

This year, Australia was included in the 13 countries where political weighting was applied. In Australia, political weighting was based on vote choice in the 2022 federal election.

CHANGES TO QUESTIONS

This year the questions for mobile devices were simplified and the responses to some questions were randomised for the first time. This may have had an impact on the data, and we are interpreting the results with caution.

ROUNDING

When calculating percentages, we round the figures, which means in some cases the total may not add up to 100%.

AUTHORS

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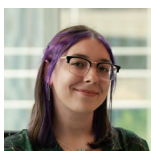
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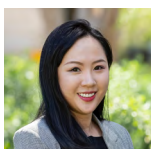
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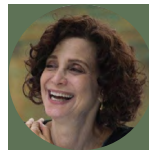
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is good news for the industry this year. The number of people paying for online news continues to grow, placing Australia among the top countries globally. One in five Australians pay for online news and those who already pay are increasing the number of their subscriptions. The top reason consumers pay is to gain access to higher quality news than they find with free sources.

This year's data confirms Australians' desire for high quality and trustworthy news while they struggle with the overwhelming volume of information and misinformation. Recognition of the role that algorithms play in filtering the news appears to be high. Consumers are sceptical of news curation enabled by algorithms, but they are also unsure about journalists and editors selecting the news for them. Many are also worried about missing out on important information due to the personalisation of news in online environments.

What Australian news consumers do want is positive news, watchdog journalism, and news stories that suggest solutions. For paying news consumers these are particularly important priorities.

In the lead up to this year's survey, the news was dominated by a series of high-profile events. Audiences turned to the news to stay up to date about the war in Ukraine, a federal election, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, and rising inflation. It is in this environment that we see a slight increase in news trust among Australian consumers, bucking the global trend. However, the financial stress of the cost-of-living crisis is also taking its toll. Australians who are impacted by rising interest rates are more likely to avoid news and cancel their news subscriptions.

There is still a large proportion of Australians who say they avoid news, and there has been a drop in the overall level of interest in news. Almost one in three news avoiders say they are checking news less often or scrolling past it when they see it.

These attitudes are reflected in the continued decline in news consumption, particularly among women. The fall in news interest and consumption has been larger among women than men, resulting in a widening gender gap. This year, Australia has the widest gender gap globally in news consumption. The trust gender gap is also widening.

News access on traditional news mediums — TV, newspaper, radio — also fell slightly this year, consistent with the slowing down of advertising expenditure in Australia.[1] The decline in the use of regional newspapers reflects the ongoing uncertainty of the sector with many regional news outlets contracting or closing.[2]

In an increasingly digitalised news environment, Australian news consumers report an overall positive experience of engaging with news online or on social media. They also value publicly funded media with the majority saying it is important for society and for them personally. Trust in and access of the public broadcasters remains high.

Australians continue to gravitate towards new technology such as smart TVs, voice activated speakers or wearable devices. According to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), 73% of Australian households own a smart TV.[3] Due to this high penetration, about half (49%) of the respondents in our study report using the device generally in the past week and one in three (29%) use it for news.

Overall, the data show a growing digital news audience where subscriptions are driven by quality, and interest in positive and solutions focused journalism is strong. But there is also significant complexity, with widening gaps appearing between different segments of news audiences.

[1] https://mumbrella.com.au/australian-ad-spending-decline-continues-into-february-with-8-6-percent-dip-smi-782175#:~:text=Australian%20ad%20spending%20decline%20continues%20into%20 February%20with%208.6%20percent%20dip%3A%20SMI,-April%203%2C%202023&text=Ad%20spend%20in%20Australia%20has,according%20to%20Standard%20Media%20Index.
[2] Dickson G. 2023. Australian News Data Report: Public Interest Journalism Initiative. https://anmp.piji.com.au
[3] https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2023-02/report/communications-and-media-australia-how-we-watch-and-listen-content

OVERVIEW

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN LOSE INTEREST IN NEWS

High interest in news in Australia has fallen to 53% (-11 since 2017, -1 since last year). Women's interest has fallen further to a record low (43%, -6). Twelve months of war in Ukraine, cost-of-living pressures, interest rate rises, and a federal election may have contributed to this steep decline.

Women (30%) are less likely than men (54%) to say they find finance and economics news easy to understand. Australia has the highest gender gap in finance news among the countries surveyed, which mirrors similar differences in male and female news interest and access.

People want more positive stories in the news. When asked about their level of interest in a range of news types, more than half (56%) say they are very or extremely interested in positive news stories. Stories that offer solutions, breaking news, and news that investigates abuses of power are also of high interest to 50% of participants, followed by news that helps explain complex stories (47%).

MANY AUSTRALIANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT NEWS ALGORITHMS

Australians are concerned they might miss out on important information (61%) or challenging viewpoints (57%) because their news is selected by editors or algorithms. Globally, Australians are the second most likely to be concerned about this.

People are least supportive of having news automatically selected for them based on their friends' consumption; 46% don't think it is a good way to get news. People prefer news algorithms to select news based on their past consumption (35%) than for journalists and editors to select them (29%). Younger people are more comfortable with algorithms choosing their news instead of journalists and editors.

Concern about news algorithms seems to be related to trust. The more you trust news, the more comfortable you are with algorithms or editors choosing your news.

AUSTRALIANS VALUE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

This year's data confirms Australians' strong support for public service media (PSM) such as the ABC and SBS. Sixty percent recognise the importance of public broadcasters to Australian society and more than half (52%) say it's important to them personally. Australians value the role of PSM more highly than audiences in other countries with strong publicly funded media such as the UK and Canada.

Support for PSM is divided along political and socio-economic lines. People with high levels of education and income, along with left-leaning audiences, are the most likely to think publicly funded media are important to society. Gen Z is the least likely to see PSM as important to them personally. Despite the important role of PSM in regional areas we found little difference in attitudes toward them between metropolitan and regional respondents.

People who say they are concerned about misinformation are much more likely to consider public service media to be important to society (67%) compared to those who are not concerned (48%). This reflects an appreciation for the commercial and political independence of the national broadcasters, which consistently receive high trust scores in the survey.

MORE AUSTRALIANS ARE PAYING FOR NEWS

Australians are now among the most likely globally to pay for online news. One in five (22%, +4) Australians pay for online news, which is higher than the average of developed news markets in the survey (16%). The biggest increase has been among those who pay for three or more news services (34%, +15).

The top reason for paying for online news is to access higher quality news compared to that available on free sources (44%), followed by convenience and ease of use (37%) and a desire to help fund good journalism (33%).

There is a lot of churn, with 56% of existing subscribers making changes to their subscription in the past year. More than a quarter (26%) cancelled one or more news subscriptions. Key reasons for cancelling relate to the price and changes to cost-of-living. Those who say they are greatly affected by the cost-of-living crisis are more likely to have cancelled a news subscription. More than one-fifth of people who don't pay say they would if it were cheaper. But more than half (53%) say nothing would make them pay.

NEWS ACCESS CONTINUES TO DECLINE

Heavy news consumption has declined in Australia by 4 percentage points (48%) since last year. About 7% continue to say they either rarely or never consume news. With women's news access falling by 11 percentage points to 41%, Australian women are among the lightest news consumers in the world.

There has also been a significant drop in heavy news use among Gen Z (36%, -10), continuing a challenge for news outlets to appeal to these persistently less engaged audiences.

Traditional news media — TV, print and radio — continue to decline. While TV remains the most popular source of news (58%), its audience is shrinking. However, online and social media outlets don't appear to have picked up the straying audiences. Instead, Australians are consuming fewer news brands.

This year's report also points to a change in online news behaviour. There was a jump in the number of people who say they use search engines to find news stories (30%, +8). The rise in search reflects the increasingly fragmented nature of the news environment and that younger generations are much less likely to go directly to news websites, which suggests they are less attached to individual news brands.

CRITICISM OF THE MEDIA LOWERS TRUST IN NEWS

More than half (54%) of Australians report seeing or hearing criticism about journalists or news media, while about one-third (37%) say they have not. Men, people with high levels of education or income, and Gen Y are more likely to have heard criticism of the news media and journalists.

Importantly, media criticism seems to be related to trust. People who often hear criticism of the news media are more likely to distrust news (37%) than those who don't (21%).

In Australia, we are most likely to hear criticism of the news media from colleagues, friends, and family (44%). In contrast, globally, politicians or political activists are the most common source of criticism (40%), with USA recording the highest (58%).

AUSTRALIANS ARE CAREFUL TALKING ABOUT POLITICS

Australians are generally more comfortable discussing politics in person, than online. More than one-third (37%) say they don't discuss politics online or on social media, compared to 22% who say they don't talk about politics in person or on the phone. When they do talk about politics either online or offline, they are careful about what they say.

These findings are strongly divided along gender and partisan lines. Women are much less likely to discuss politics than men, and left-wing oriented consumers are much more likely than right-wing or centre to talk about politics both online and offline.

Women's reluctance to talk about politics also reflects their overall lower interest in it. The proportion of women who say they are very or extremely interested in politics has fallen to 21% (-3). In contrast, men's interest in politics has risen sharply to 49% (+9), lifting the overall proportion of Australians with high interest in politics to 35% (+3). The run of federal and state elections in the lead up to this survey, combined with rising interest rates and cost of living pressures, may have contributed to this increasing gender gap.

TRUST IS UP SLIGHTLY BUT GAPS ARE EMERGING

Australians' general trust in news rose by 2 percentage points to 43% but remains relatively close to the long-term trend of trust hovering in the low 40s. Trust gaps between certain groups have emerged. This year the division between men and women is the widest in the world (+9) caused by a steep rise in trust in news among Australian men (48%, +8) and a drop among women (39%, -3).

The trust gap is also increasing based on age and education. Trust in news generally is growing among people with higher levels of education, while it is falling among the oldest and youngest generations.

There is also a widening gap (-25) in trust in the news people choose to consume between those who pay for news (71%) and those who don't (46%). This suggests that people are increasingly prepared to pay for brands they trust.

Respondents who say they have had a positive experience engaging with online news report higher levels of trust in news (65%) than those who have had a negative experience (26%). This indicates that trust is affected by a range of factors including peoples' experiences of engagement with the news.

YOUNG PEOPLE SCROLL PAST NEWS TO AVOID IT

News avoidance remained steady this year (69%, +1) with Australia 6 percentage points above the global average.

The survey shows people are more likely to make reactive decisions to avoid news when they come across it rather than pre-emptively managing the volume or type of news.

The most common ways of avoiding news were 'checking the news less often' (32%), 'ignoring, scrolling past' (31%), and 'avoiding particular news sources' (30%). Fewer people avoid news by steering clear of particular news topics or times and places where they might encounter news. Social media users, young people and women are the most likely to scroll past or ignore news, whereas men and older people are more likely to reduce the amount and type of news of they consume when they want to avoid it.

People who distrust news are more likely to avoid it (76%) compared to those who trust news (64%). More than one-third of those who trust news never avoid it. Those affected by the changes in cost-of-living are also more likely to avoid news.

MEN AVOID SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES AND WOMEN AVOID SPORTS NEWS

The gender gap continues in people's news avoidance behaviour. Men are much more likely to avoid stories about social justice issues, entertainment and climate change, whereas women avoid news about sport. This data reveals that a certain amount of news avoidance is event and issue based, with respondents who might be interested in news generally still choosing to avoid topics they personally dislike. Globally, European audiences avoid news about the war in Ukraine the most.

AUSTRALIANS ARE DIVERSIFYING THEIR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

The overall use of social media platforms for news has been on the rise, with the largest growth among YouTube (23%, +4) and WhatsApp news users (10%, +4). Instagram (26%, +6) and TikTok (17%, +4) are increasingly popular news platforms for Gen Z. Almost one in ten Australians are now using TikTok to get news (8%, +3) which is close to the global average (9%, +3).

Depending on the platform, audiences pay attention to different news sources. On Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube people pay most attention to news from mainstream media and journalists. In contrast, TikTok news users pay more attention to news from ordinary individuals and social media personalities.

There is also variance in the types of topics accessed on different platforms. Twitter users are more likely to pay attention to national political news, while TikTok, Instagram and Facebook users prefer entertainment, celebrity and fun news.

NEWS PODCASTS GROW STEADILY

The popularity of podcasts is on the rise in Australia. Thirty-eight percent (+5) of respondents say they have listened to a podcast in the last month. While podcasts on specialist subjects are the most popular, there has been an increase in the use of news podcasts since 2019 (14%, +5).

Gen X men increased their listening the most with 28% (+16%) now listening to news podcasts.

Podcast listeners are more inclined to pay for news than non-listeners. This year we found the percentage of podcast listeners who pay for news has substantially increased to 44% (+7).

Spotify (34%) and YouTube (28%) remain the most popular platforms for podcast listening. This suggests a preference for bundling other content such as videos, music and podcast consumption together.

KEY FINDINGS

CHAPTER 1
NEWS AVOIDANCE AND INTEREST

- High interest in news in Australia has fallen to 53% (-11 since 2017).
- Women's interest in news is at a record low of 43% (-16 since 2017).
- News avoidance remains high (69%, +1) and above the global average (63%).
- More than half of people are interested in positive stories (56%).
- Australians are most likely to avoid news stories about social issues (36%) and least likely to avoid stories that make them laugh (8%).

CHAPTER 2
POLITICAL INTEREST, ORIENTATION AND TALK

- Australians' interest in politics has risen (35%, +3).
- Women's interest in politics falls (21%, -2) and men's rises (49%, +9).
- Online news audiences are more politically fragmented than offline.
- People are more careful talking about politics online than face-to-face.
- People who are concerned about misinformation are more careful when they talk about politics online.

CHAPTER 3
VIEWS OF JOURNALISM

- More than half of Australians say they often see or hear criticism of the news media and journalists (54%), which is higher than the global average (50%).
- The more news you consume the more criticism of journalists you hear.
- People who often hear criticism of the news media are more likely to distrust news (37%) than those who don't (21%).
- 60% think public service media are important to society.
- Public service media is less important personally to people with low education and Gen Z.

CHAPTER 4
NEWS ALGORITHMS, CURATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- News consumers continue to prefer reading news (48%) to watching news (22%) online.
- Almost half (46%) do not want algorithms to choose their news for them based on news consumption of friends.
- 35% prefer algorithms to choose their news based on past consumption compared to editors and journalists selecting the news (29%).
- 61% say they are worried they might miss important information because of news personalisation.
- One in four Gen Z say they watch news related videos on TikTok.

CHAPTER 5
NEWS ACCESS

- Heavy news consumption has declined (48%, -4).
- Women's news access falls the most (41%, -11), Australia now has the widest gender gap (19pp) in news consumption internationally.
- Print as a main source of news has increased among Gen Z (8%, +5).
- Regional and local newspapers continue to decline in use (-4).
- For the first time, smart TVs are a more popular device for news (29%) than tablets (23%).

CHAPTER 6
SOCIAL MEDIA AND PODCASTING

- The use of Instagram (26%, +6) and TikTok (17%, +4) for news continues to rise among Gen Z.
- TikTok news users pay most attention to ordinary people or celebrities as news sources.
- Podcast use is rising (38%, +5) and Australia is now above the global average (36%).
- Podcast listening has increased the most among Gen X men (52%, +15).
- News podcasts have grown steadily since 2019 (14%, +5).

CHAPTER 7
TRUST AND MISINFORMATION

- Trust in news rises slightly to 43% (+2), above the global average (40%).
- Women lose trust in news (39%, -3), while men's trust increases (48%, +8).
- Trust in Guardian Australia rises (+6).
- Concern about misinformation rises to 69% (+5), compared to the global average (54%, +2).
- People who are concerned about misinformation value public service media.

CHAPTER 8
PAYING FOR NEWS

- More Australians are paying for online news (22%, +4).
- 41% (+13) of those with high education pay for online news.
- Quality is the top reason people pay for online news.
- Those who think publicly funded media are important are twice as likely to pay for news (32%) than those who don't (15%).
- 22% of non-payers will pay if news subscriptions are cheaper.

CHAPTER 9
AUSTRALIA AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

- 80% of Australians say they have been affected somewhat or a great deal by changes to cost-of-living.
- Those affected by cost-of-living are more likely to cancel news subscriptions.
- Mainstream media are the most popular source of finance and economic news.
- Australia has the highest gender gap in understanding news about finance (male 54%; female 30%).
- Globally, people with low education are the least likely to pay attention to finance news.
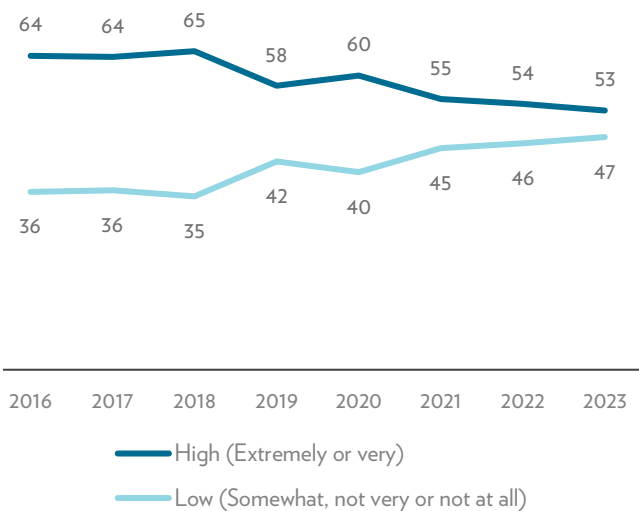
1 NEWS AVOIDANCE AND INTEREST

- High interest in news in Australia has fallen to 53% (-11 since 2017).

- Women's interest in news is at a record low of 43% (-16 since 2017).

- News avoidance remains high (69%, +1) and above the global average (63%).

- More than half of people are interested in positive stories (56%).

- Australians are most likely to avoid news stories about social issues (36%) and least likely to avoid stories that make them laugh (11%).

NEWS INTEREST

Interest in news continues to fall in Australia. The proportion of people who say they are extremely or very interested in news is 53% (-1), marking an 11 percentage point drop since 2016 (see **figure 1.1**).

Globally, the survey finds the proportion of people who say they are very or extremely interested in news has also fallen (see **figure 1.2**). Despite the steady decline locally, high interest in news in Australia has declined less than in other English-speaking democracies since 2021 and is above the global average of 49%.

FIGURE 1.1: INTEREST IN NEWS 2016–2023 (%)

[Q1c] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Excluded respondents who access news once or month or less and non-users. [Base: N=1,848]

**FIGURE 1.2:** INTEREST IN NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)
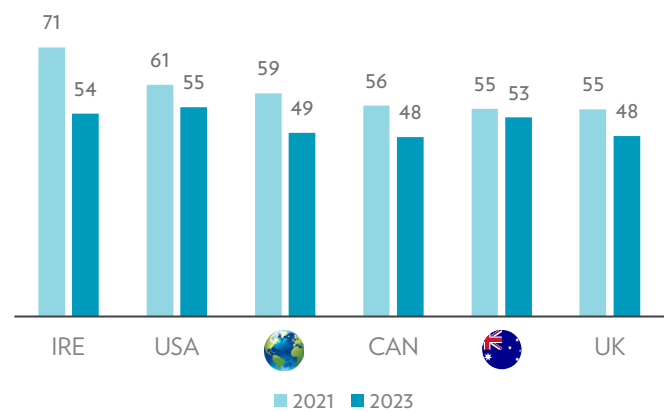
*Excluded don't know and very low/non news users. Global average is among 33 countries. [Base: N=62,940]

WOMEN'S INTEREST IN NEWS HITS RECORD LOW AS MEN'S RISES

Interest in news continues to be divided along socio-economic lines. Older people, those with high levels of education and income, and those who live in the city continue to have higher interest in news than younger people, those with lower levels of education and income, and those who live in regional areas (see **figure 1.3**).

FIGURE 1.3: INTEREST IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
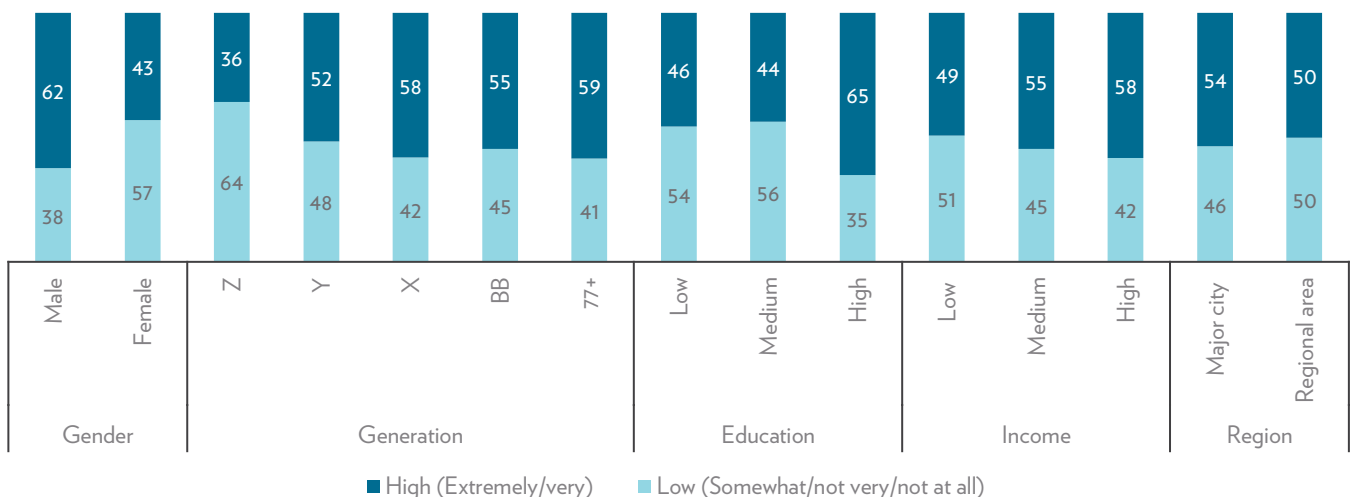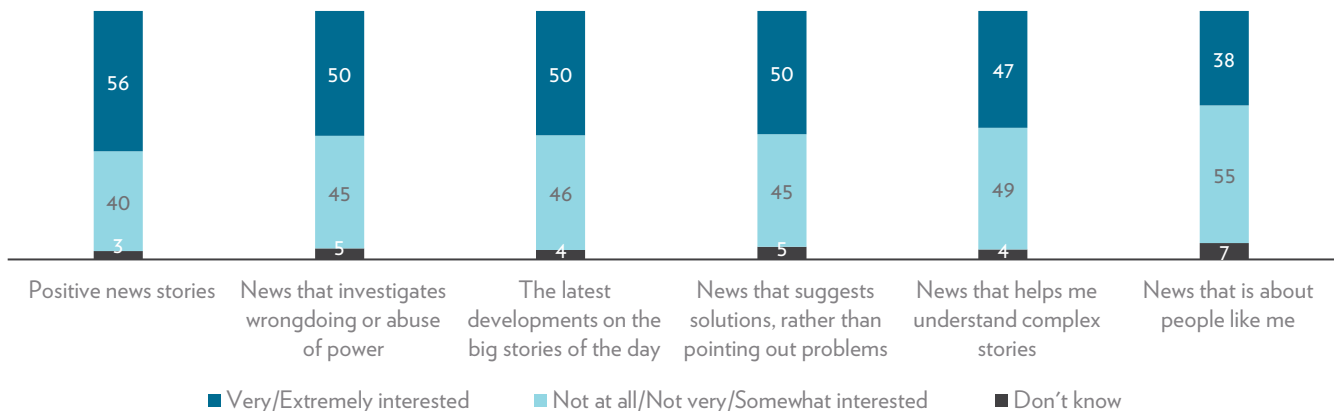

[Base: N=1,848]

One of the biggest shifts is in the difference between men and women. Since the survey began, women have generally recorded lower levels of interest in news than men. This year, the proportion of women saying they are very or extremely interested in news hit a record low of 43% which marks a 16 percentage point decline since 2017 (see **figure 1.4**). Men's interest in news has also declined over the same period but only by 6 percentage points.

The gendered decline in news interest this year can be partly explained by the types of stories dominating the news cycle over the previous twelve months, such as the war in Ukraine and politics which are of less interest to women.

FIGURE 1.4: HIGH INTEREST IN NEWS BY GENDER 2017–2023 (%)

*Excluded don't know, and very low/non news users for 2021–2023 for consistent comparison with previous years. [Base: N=1,848]

MORE THAN HALF ARE INTERESTED IN POSITIVE NEWS STORIES

This year, participants were asked about their level of interest in a range of news types. More than half (56%) say they are very or extremely interested in positive news stories, the most popular of the six options offered. Stories that offer solutions, breaking news, and news that investigates abuses of power are of high interest to 50% of participants, followed by news that helps explain complex stories (47%). News about people like me was the least popular of the options (38%) (see **figure 1.5**).

WOMEN PREFER POSITIVE NEWS STORIES

Men are more interested in all news types than women, reflecting their overall higher interest in news. The difference is largest in relation to news that investigates wrongdoing, breaking news, and stories that explain complex issues (see **figure 1.6**).

Out of the six options provided, positive news stories are the most popular among women (55%), though still lower than men (58%).

FIGURE 1.5: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS (%)

[News_interest_2023] How interested are you, if at all, in the following types of news? [Base: 2,025]

FIGURE 1.6: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS BY GENDER (% VERY OR EXTREMELY INTERESTED)
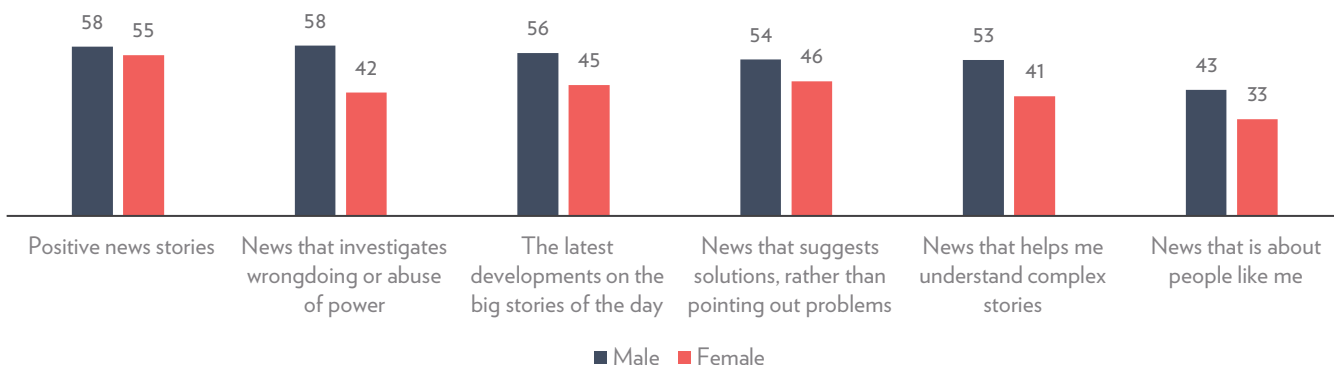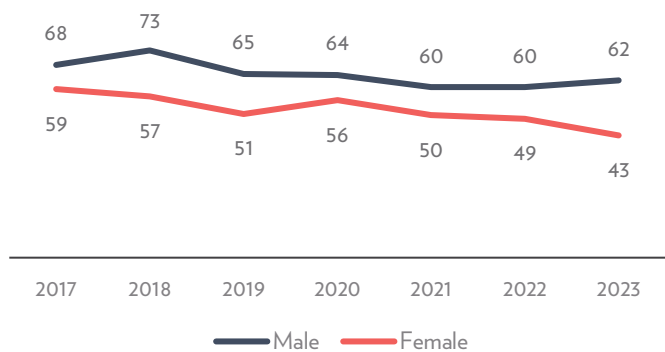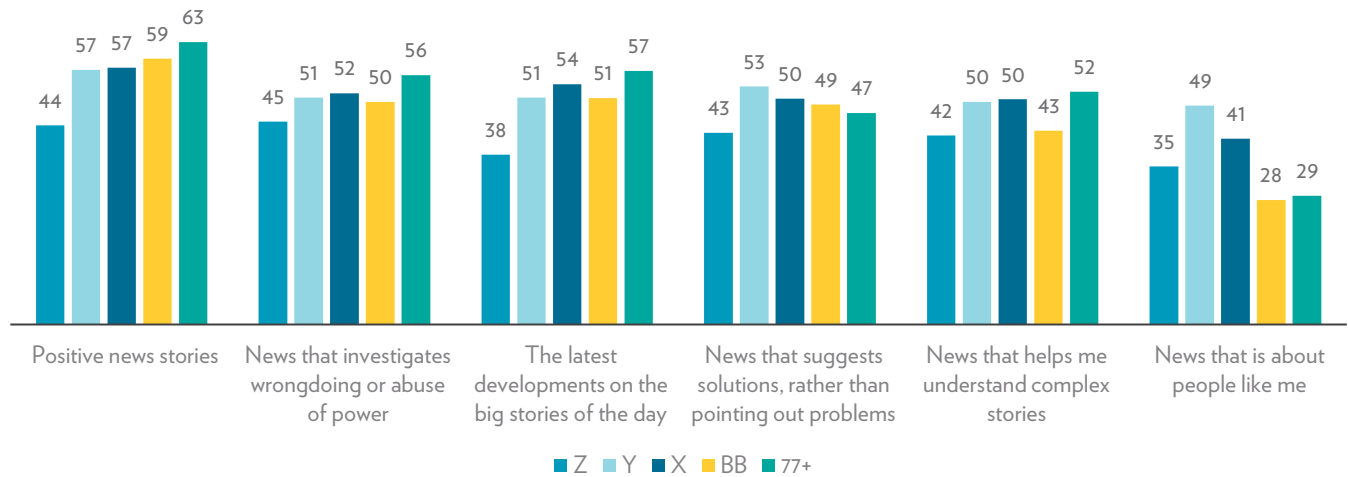
OLDER PEOPLE ARE MORE INTERESTED IN POSITIVE STORIES THAN YOUNGER

While interest in positive news stories is high across most of the generations it is higher among older respondents. This reflects that older generations are more interested in news generally. Almost two-thirds of those aged 77+ say they are interested in news stories that are positive compared to 44% of Gen Z (see **figure 1.7**).

FIGURE 1.7: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS BY GENERATION (% VERY OR EXTREMELY INTERESTED)

PEOPLE WHO DON'T PAY FOR NEWS ARE MOST INTERESTED IN POSITIVE NEWS STORIES

People who pay for news are much more likely to be highly interested in all news types than those who do not pay for news. But the data show positive news stories are the most popular among people who don't pay for their news (52%), followed by news that suggests solutions, rather than pointing out problems (45%). Perhaps increasing the array of positive and solutions focussed news might be a way to entice more people to pay (see **figure 1.8**).

FIGURE 1.8: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS BY PAYING FOR NEWS (%)
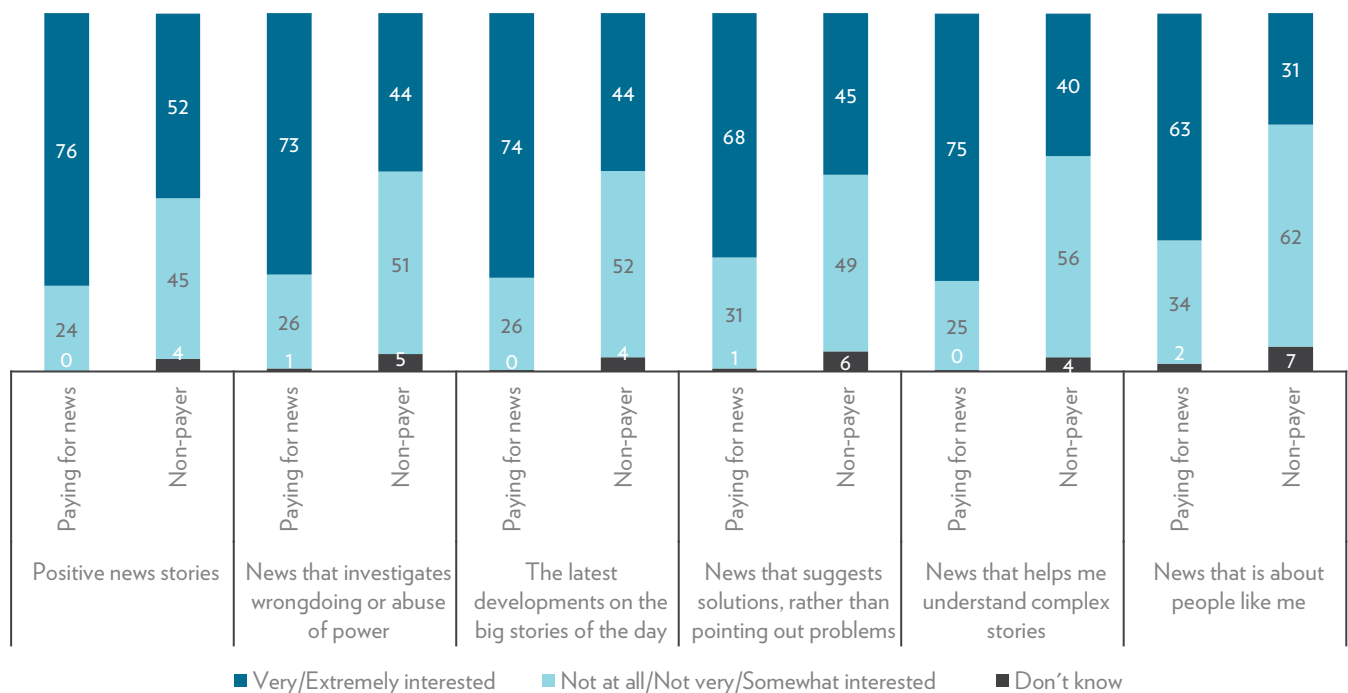
NEWS AVOIDANCE

NEWS AVOIDANCE REMAINS STEADY

This year's data show the proportion of people who say they often, sometimes or occasionally avoid news has remained relatively steady, bringing the total of people who avoid news to 69% (+1).

Research[1] tells us that people avoid the news because they find it too negative, upsetting, and overwhelming. Given the news over the past twelve months has been dominated by the war in Ukraine, cost of living 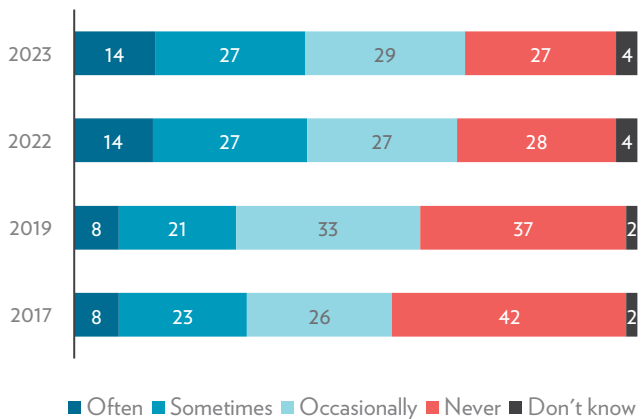pressures, rising interest rates, and a federal election, it is not surprising to still see such high levels of news avoidance (see **figure 1.9**).

FIGURE 1.9: NEWS AVOIDANCE 2017–2023 (%)

[Q1di_2017] Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? [Base: N=2,025]

The proportion of Australians who avoid news is 6 percentage points above the global average (63%) placing Australia 11th among the 33 countries below (see **figure 1.10**).

> **69% (+1)**
> **News avoidance**

FIGURE 1.10: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY COUNTRY (% OFTEN, SOMETIMES OR OCCASIONALLY)
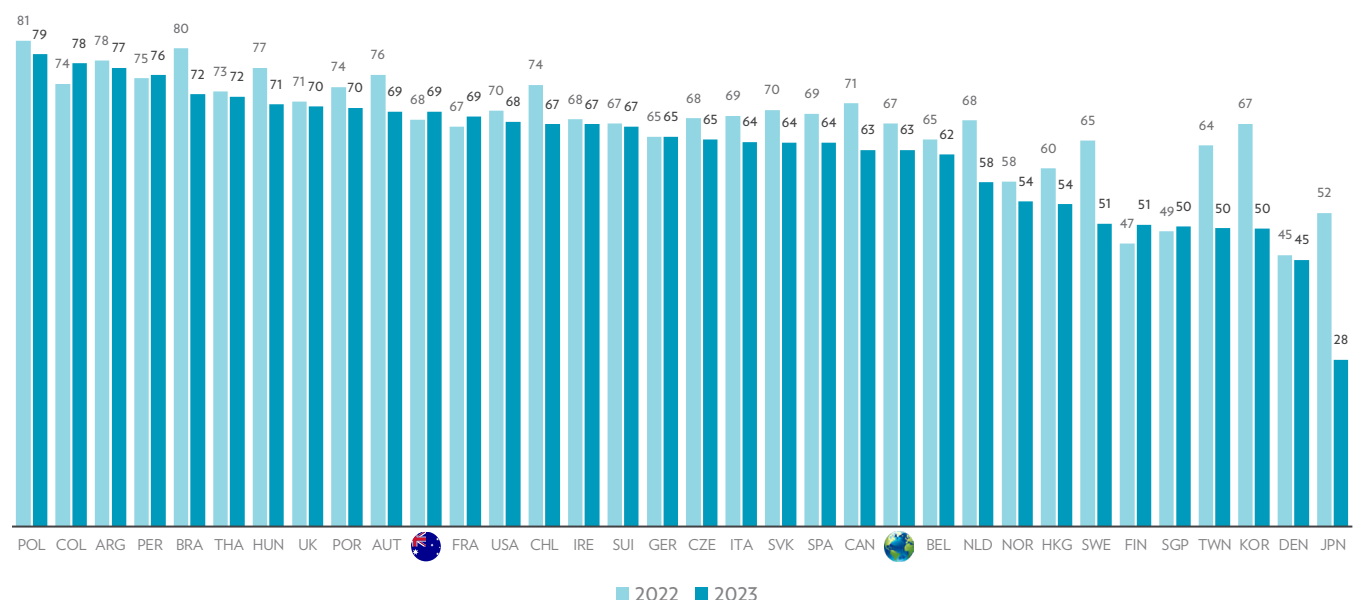
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

[1] Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., K., McCallum, K. & Nolan, D. (2022). *Digital News Report: Australia 2022.* Canberra: News and Media Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.25916/1xkk-jb37
Park, S., McCallum, K., Holland, K., McGuinness, K., Lee, J., Fisher, C. & John, E. (2022). *COVID-19: Australian News and Misinformation Longitudinal Study.* Canberra: News Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. doi:10.25916/0673-7f38

WOMEN AND GEN Y ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO AVOID NEWS

Mirroring previous surveys, women (72%, +2) are more likely to avoid news than men (67%, +1), and those aged 77 and above are the least likely (58%, -1). The proportion of Gen X who avoid news has risen (72%, +7) from 2022 (see **figure 1.11**).

77%
of *Gen Y*
avoid news

FIGURE 1.11: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

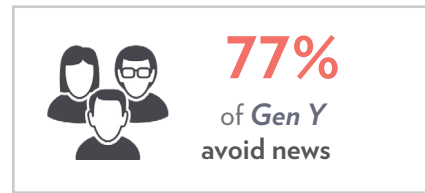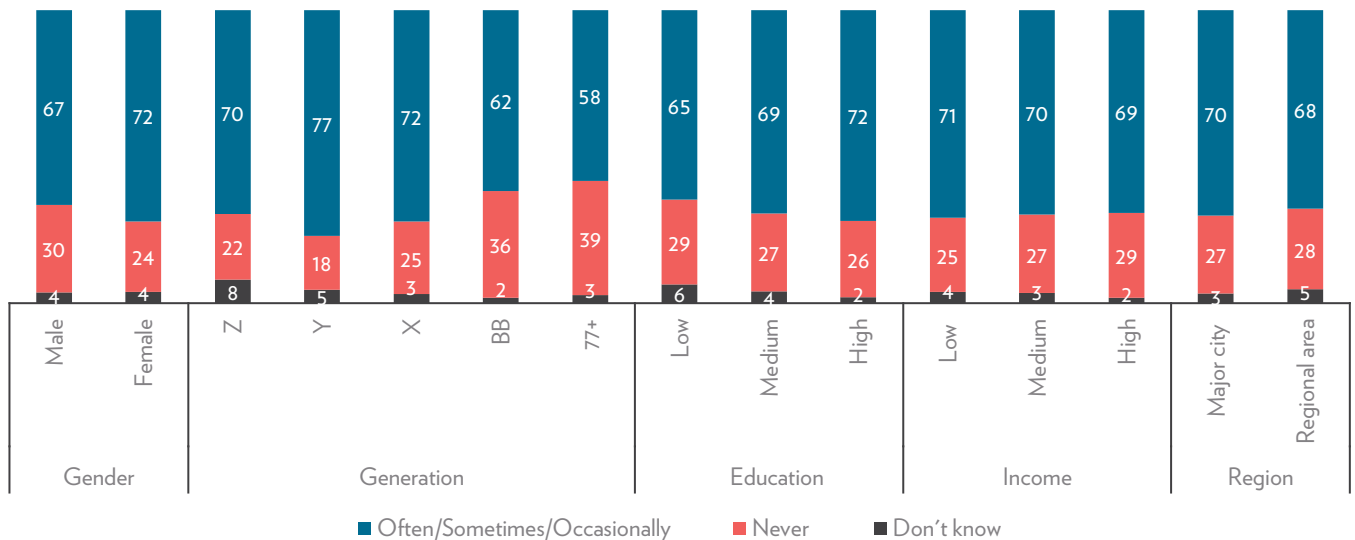|	Often/Sometimes/Occasionally	Never	Don't know
Male (Gender)	67	30	4
Female (Gender)	72	24	4
Z (Generation)	70	22	8
Y (Generation)	77	18	5
X (Generation)	72	25	3
BB (Generation)	62	36	2
77+ (Generation)	58	39	3
Low (Education)	65	29	6
Medium (Education)	69	27	4
High (Education)	72	26	2
Low (Income)	71	25	4
Medium (Income)	70	27	3
High (Income)	69	29	2
Major city (Region)	70	27	3
Regional area (Region)	68	28	5

THOSE WHO DISTRUST NEWS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE AVOIDERS

Light news consumers are more likely to avoid news (74%) than heavy news consumers (65%). Those with low interest in news tend to avoid news more (78%) than those who have high interest in news (62%) (see **figure 1.12**).

People who distrust news are also more likely to avoid it (76%) compared to 64% who trust news. More than one-third of those who trust news never avoid it (see **figure 1.13**).

FIGURE 1.12: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST (%)

	Often/Sometimes/Occasionally	Never
Heavy (More than once a day) — News access	65	33
Light (Once a day or less) — News access	74	21
High (Extremely/very) — Interest in news	62	37
Low (Somewhat/not very/not at all) — Interest in news	78	18
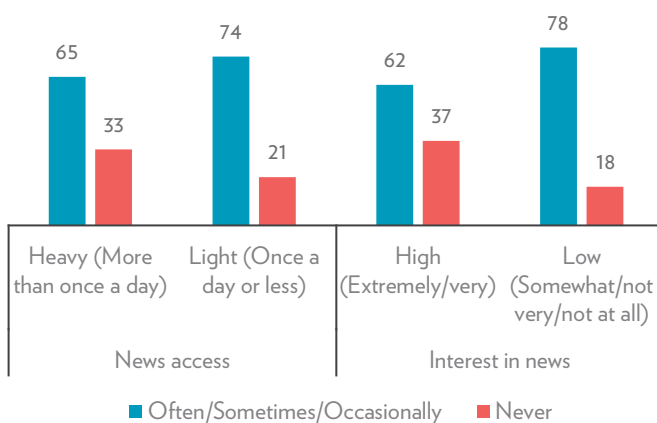
FIGURE 1.13: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY TRUST IN NEWS (%)

	Often/Sometimes/Occasionally	Never	Don't know
Distrust	76	21	3
Neither	71	23	7
Trust	64	34	2
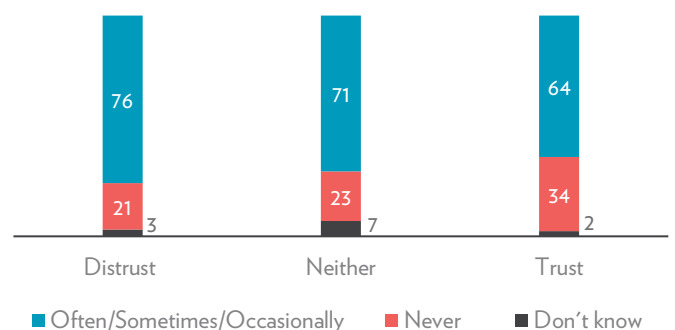
News consumers who had a negative experience of engagement with news online or on social media are more likely to say they avoid news (76%) compared to those who had a positive experience (71%) (see **figure 1.14**).

It is notable that the proportion of avoiders among those who don't see news online or on social media (62%) is lower than those who do engage with online news.

**FIGURE 1.14:** NEWS AVOIDANCE BY NEWS ENGAGEMENT SENTIMENT (%)
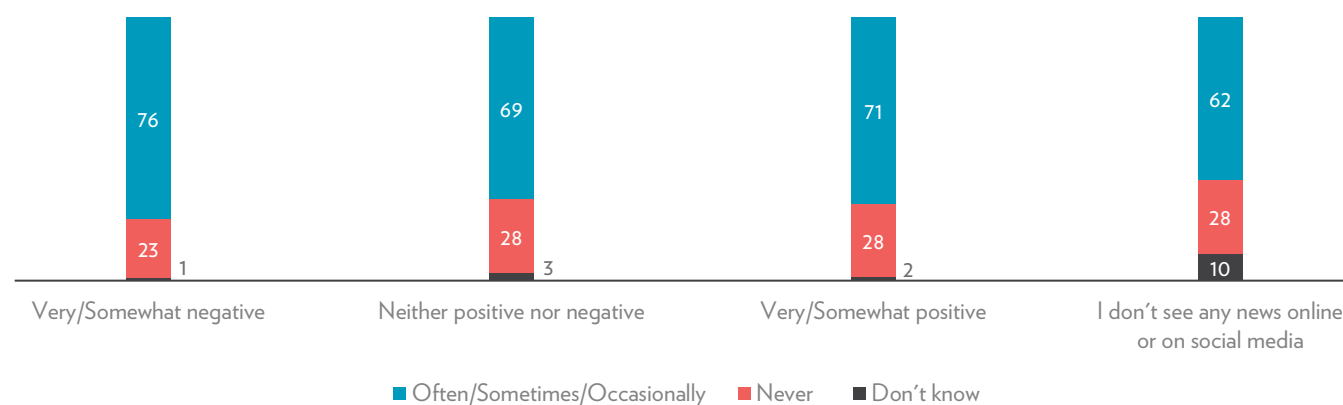
[Q1_Participation_2023] How positive or negative is your experience of engagement with news online or on social media (e.g., reading or posting comments, talking to people about news, etc.)? [Base: N=2,025]

AVOIDERS TEND TO CHECK NEWS LESS AND SCROLL PAST

When seeking to avoid news, people are most likely to check the news less often (32%), followed by ignoring, scrolling past, or changing channels when they see the news (31%), and avoiding particular news sources (30%), and topics (23%). They are less likely to avoid news by prioritising other non-news activities (23%), turning off

their news notifications (19%), quarantining parts of the day from news (17%) or avoiding places where they might encounter it (12%) (see **figure 1.15**). This suggests that people are more likely to make reactive decisions to avoid news when they encounter it, rather than pre-emptively plan to avoid news.

FIGURE 1.15: AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS (%)
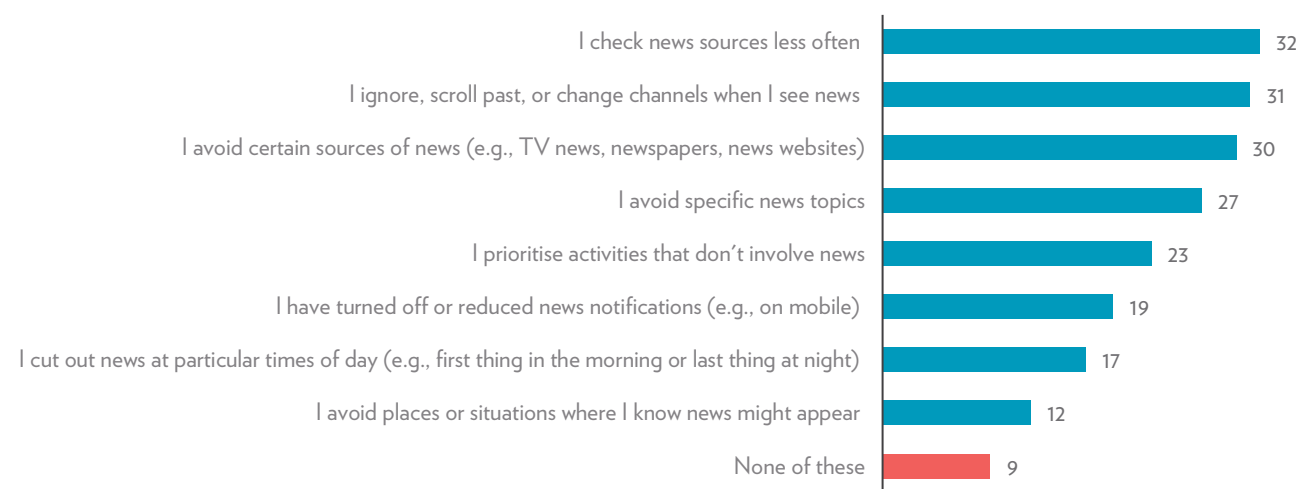
[Avoidance_behaviours_2023] You said that you try to actively avoid news. Which of the following, if any, do you do? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who said they often/sometimes/occasionally avoided news, N=1,406]

SOCIAL MEDIA USERS SCROLL PAST NEWS TO AVOID IT

People who mainly use social media for news are the most likely to ignore or scroll past news when they see it (46%). This reflects that social media users are more likely to bump into news while on platforms doing other things. Print news users are most likely to avoid certain sources of news (37%), whereas TV users are most likely to change channels (27%), and online news users are most likely to check news sources less often (38%) (see **figure 1.16**).

FIGURE 1.16: AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

Legend: TV, Radio, Print, Online news, Social media
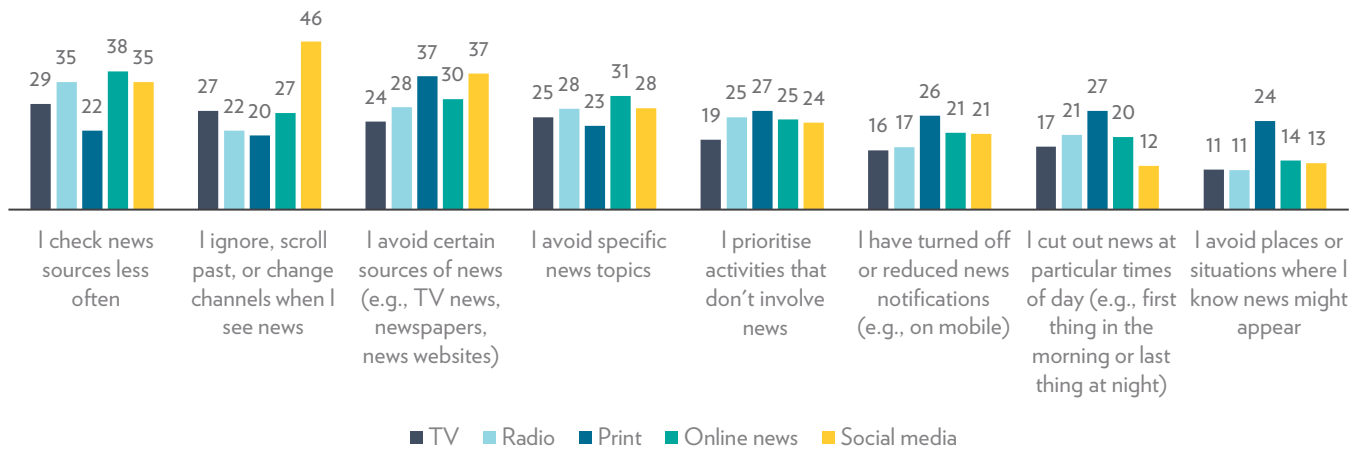
Men are more likely to pre-emptively avoid news by cutting it out at certain times of the day, avoiding places where they might encounter it and prioritising other activities. In contrast women are more likely to scroll past news or ignore it when they bump into it (see **figure 1.17**).

Gens Z and Y are much more likely to avoid news by scrolling past than older generations. In contrast, older generations are more likely to check news less often or avoid specific news topics (see **figure 1.18**).

FIGURE 1.17: NEWS AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS BY GENDER (%)

Legend: Male, Female
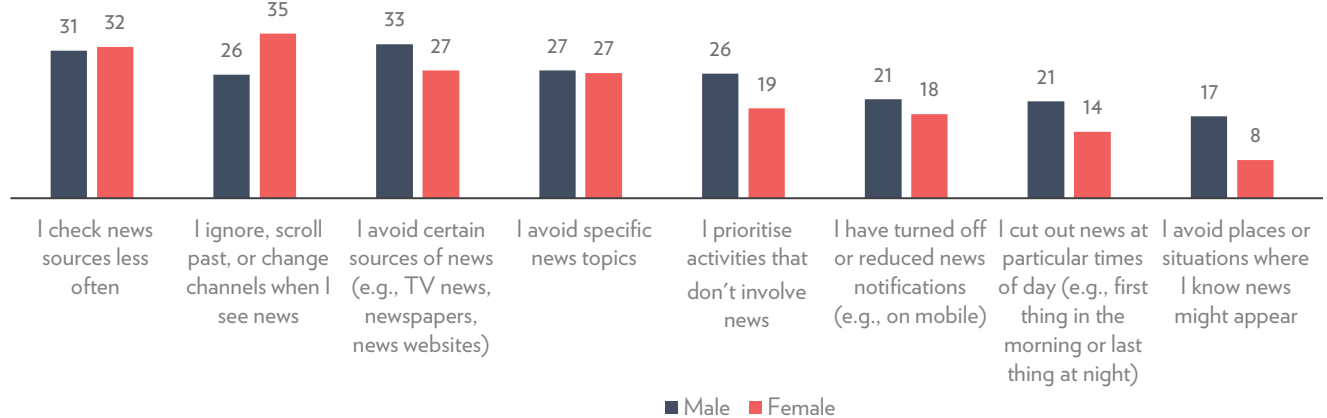
FIGURE 1.18: NEWS AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS BY GENERATION (%)

Legend:
- I ignore, scroll past, or change channels when I see news
- I prioritise activities that don't involve news
- I have turned off or reduced news notifications (e.g., on mobile)
- I avoid places or situations where I know news might appear
- I avoid certain sources of news (e.g., TV news, newspapers, news websites)
- I check news sources less often
- I avoid specific news topics
- I cut out news at particular times of day (e.g., first thing in the morning or last thing at night)

SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES ARE THE MOST AVOIDED NEWS TOPICS

We asked those who say they avoid specific news topics to reduce their news consumption, which topics they are avoiding. They are most likely to avoid news stories about social justice issues, such as gender and racial inequality, and LGBTQ+ rights; 36% avoid stories on social justice issues, followed by sports, and celebrity news (32%) and the War in Ukraine (31%). Almost one-quarter say they avoid news about politics and business (24%) and news about Covid-19 (26%). Fun stories that make people laugh, like satire, are the least avoided (11%) (see **figure 1.19**).

FIGURE 1.19: NEWS AVOIDANCE TOPICS AMONG THOSE WHO AVOID SPECIFIC TOPICS (%)
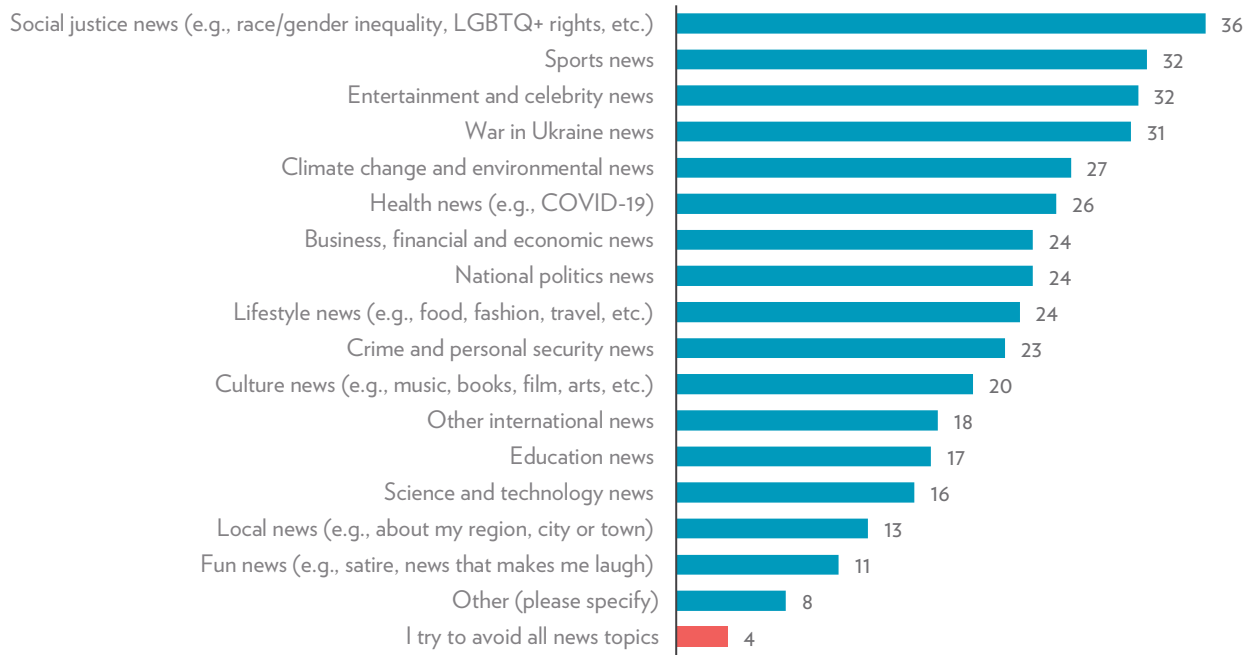
[Avoidance_topics_2023] You said that you try to actively avoid specific news topics. Which of the following news topics are you trying to avoid? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who said they avoided specific topics (N=376)]

TOPICS AVOIDED GLOBALLY — WAR IN UKRAINE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUES

Globally, people who avoid specific news topics are most likely to shy away from stories about the war in Ukraine, particularly among European countries. In contrast, topic avoiders in the USA, Australia, Canada, and the UK are more likely to avoid social justice news stories (see **figure 1.20**). This is possibly due to the volume of coverage of these issues in different countries.

FIGURE 1.20: NEWS AVOIDANCE TOPICS AMONG THOSE WHO AVOID SPECIFIC TOPICS BY COUNTRY (%)
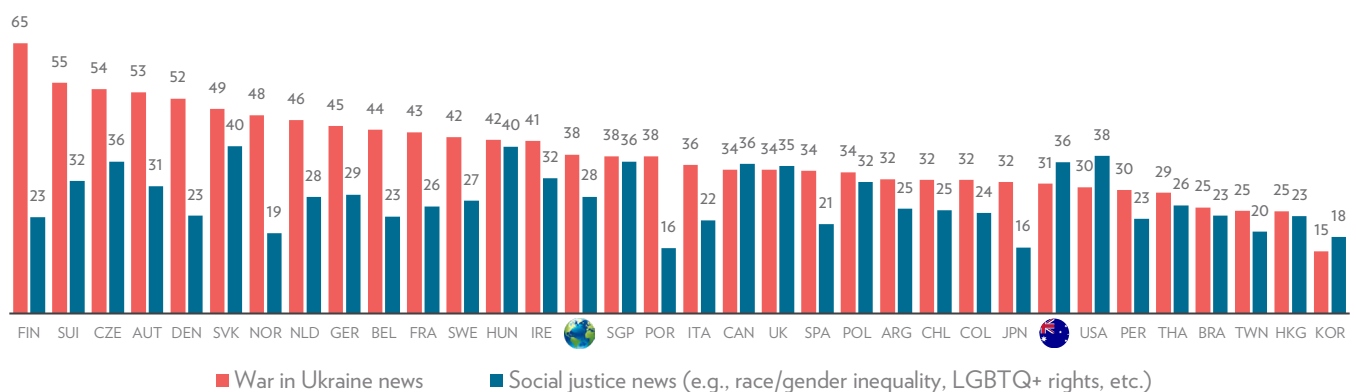
AVOIDANCE OF NEWS TOPICS IS GENDERED AND GENERATIONAL
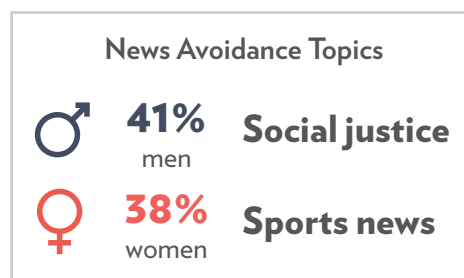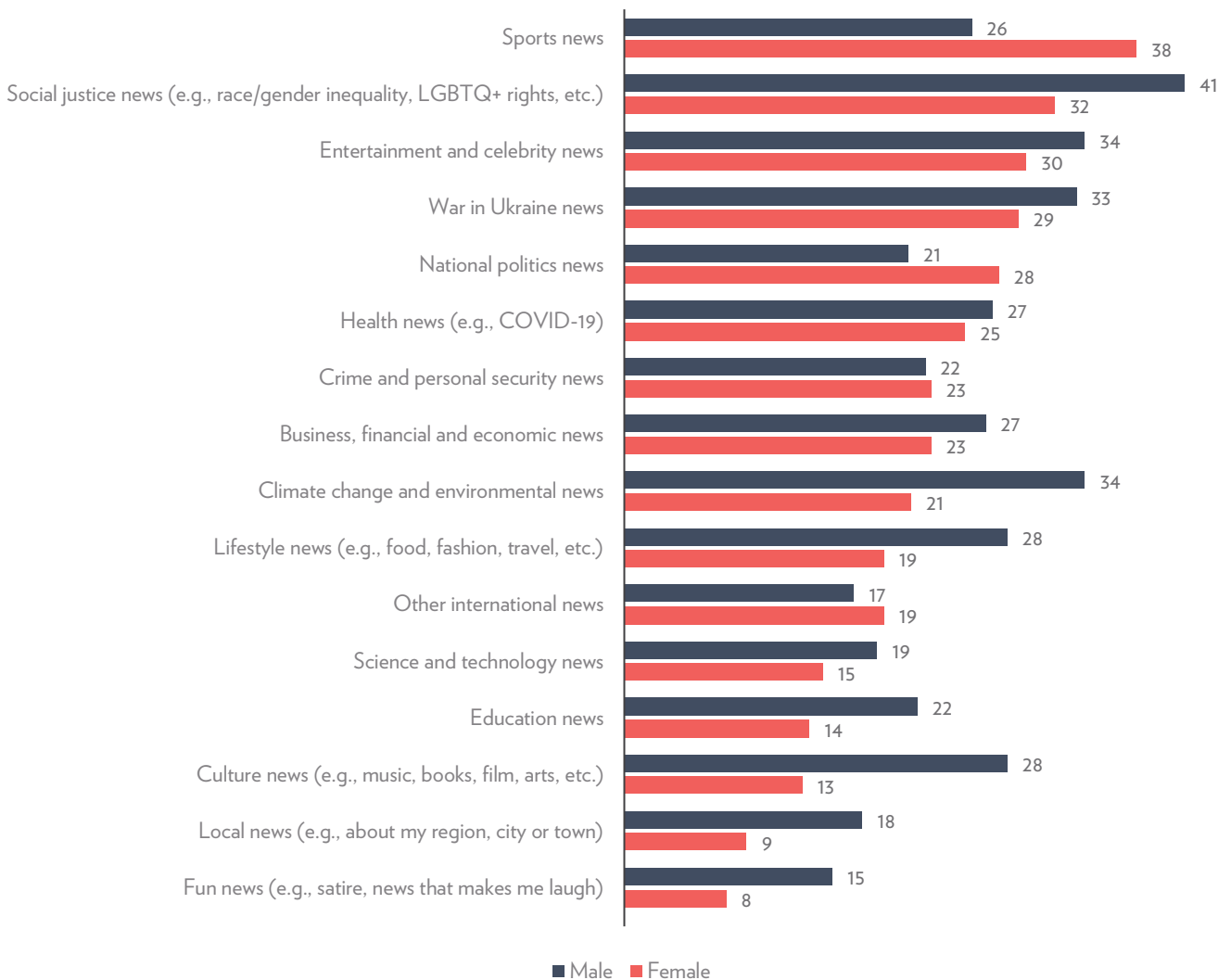
Women are much more likely than men to avoid news about sport and politics. In contrast, men are much more likely than women to avoid stories about social justice issues, climate change, culture, local and fun news

(see **figure 1.21**). These findings reflect data from 2022[2] that showed men and women have different levels of interest in news topics.

FIGURE 1.21: NEWS AVOIDANCE TOPICS BY GENDER (%)

Topic	Male	Female
Sports news	26	38
Social justice news (e.g., race/gender inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, etc.)	41	32
Entertainment and celebrity news	34	30
War in Ukraine news	33	29
National politics news	21	28
Health news (e.g., COVID-19)	27	25
Crime and personal security news	22	23
Business, financial and economic news	27	23
Climate change and environmental news	34	21
Lifestyle news (e.g., food, fashion, travel, etc.)	28	19
Other international news	17	19
Science and technology news	19	15
Education news	22	14
Culture news (e.g., music, books, film, arts, etc.)	28	13
Local news (e.g., about my region, city or town)	18	9
Fun news (e.g., satire, news that makes me laugh)	15	8

■ Male ■ Female

News Avoidance Topics

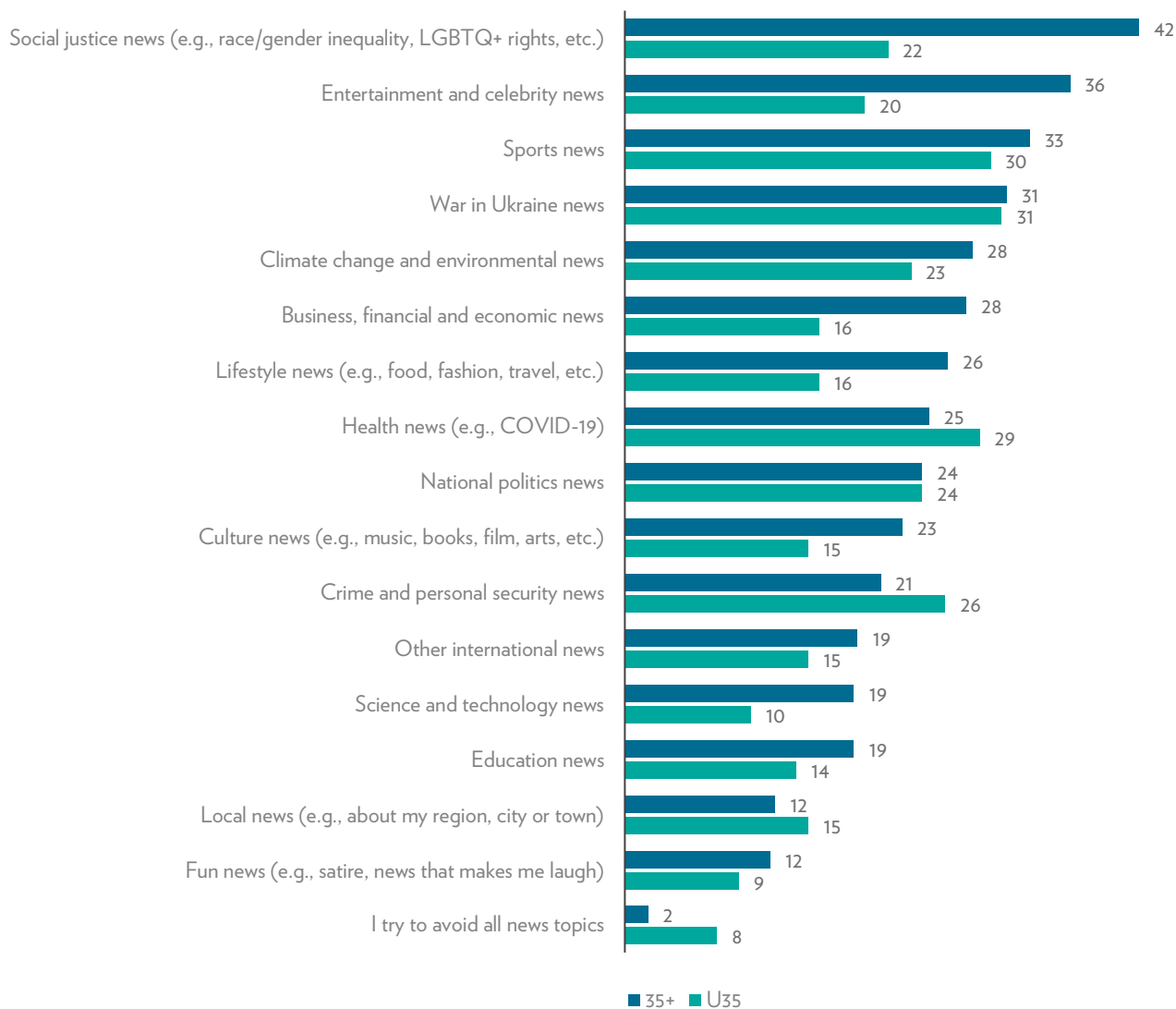♂ **41%** men **Social justice**

♀ **38%** women **Sports news**

[2] Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J. Y., McCallum, K. & Nolan, D. (2022). *Digital News Report: Australia 2022.* Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

People aged 35+ are more likely to avoid news about social justice issues, entertainment and celebrity news, and lifestyle; while those under 35 years of age are more likely to avoid news stories about crime, health and local issues. News about politics is equally avoided by under and over 35s (see **figure 1.22**)

FIGURE 1.22: NEWS AVOIDANCE TOPICS BY AGE (%)

Topic	35+	U35
Social justice news (e.g., race/gender inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, etc.)	42	22
Entertainment and celebrity news	36	20
Sports news	33	30
War in Ukraine news	31	31
Climate change and environmental news	28	23
Business, financial and economic news	28	16
Lifestyle news (e.g., food, fashion, travel, etc.)	26	16
Health news (e.g., COVID-19)	25	29
National politics news	24	24
Culture news (e.g., music, books, film, arts, etc.)	23	15
Crime and personal security news	21	26
Other international news	19	15
Science and technology news	19	10
Education news	19	14
Local news (e.g., about my region, city or town)	12	15
Fun news (e.g., satire, news that makes me laugh)	12	9
I try to avoid all news topics	2	8

■ 35+ ■ U35

News Avoidance Topics

35+ **Social justice** 42%

U35 **Ukraine war** 31%

AVOIDANCE OF NEWS TOPICS IS POLITICALLY DIVIDED

Right-wing oriented news consumers are more likely to avoid stories about social justice issues and climate change than Centre and left-wing news consumers. In contrast, left-wing consumers are more likely to avoid stories about crime, national politics, and news about the war in Ukraine (see **figure 1.23**).

FIGURE 1.23: NEWS AVOIDANCE TOPICS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

Social justice news (e.g., race/gender inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, etc.)
- Left-wing: 22
- Centre: 34
- Right-wing: 56

Climate change and environmental news
- Left-wing: 16
- Centre: 26
- Right-wing: 47

Entertainment and celebrity news
- Left-wing: 32
- Centre: 29
- Right-wing: 36

Sports news
- Left-wing: 33
- Centre: 30
- Right-wing: 32

War in Ukraine news
- Left-wing: 33
- Centre: 32
- Right-wing: 27

Culture news (e.g., music, books, film, arts, etc.)
- Left-wing: 15
- Centre: 23
- Right-wing: 26

Lifestyle news (e.g., food, fashion, travel, etc.)
- Left-wing: 26
- Centre: 21
- Right-wing: 24

Health news (e.g., COVID-19)
- Left-wing: 23
- Centre: 34
- Right-wing: 24

Science and technology news
- Left-wing: 11
- Centre: 18
- Right-wing: 23

Business, financial and economic news
- Left-wing: 24
- Centre: 28
- Right-wing: 21

National politics news
- Left-wing: 25
- Centre: 20
- Right-wing: 20

Education news
- Left-wing: 17
- Centre: 16
- Right-wing: 20

Fun news (e.g., satire, news that makes me laugh)
- Left-wing: 12
- Centre: 9
- Right-wing: 17

Other international news
- Left-wing: 21
- Centre: 16
- Right-wing: 16

Local news (e.g., about my region, city or town)
- Left-wing: 11
- Centre: 15
- Right-wing: 15

Crime and personal security news
- Left-wing: 30
- Centre: 23
- Right-wing: 14

■ Left-wing ■ Centre ■ Right-wing

SUMMARY

This year, the data show interest in and avoidance of news have remained steady. However, after twelve months of war in Ukraine, cost of living pressures, interest rate rises and a federal election, women's interest in news has fallen to a record low. In contrast to the diet of heavy and depressing news, the data point to signs that more than half of audiences want more positive stories. Interestingly, among those who don't pay for news, positive stories are also ranked the most popular. This possibly offers an avenue for attracting audiences to pay for news.

We delved deeper into the phenomenon of news avoidance to understand more about the ways in which people try to avoid the news. The results reveal a split along generational and gender lines. Young people and women are more likely to scroll past or ignore news, whereas men and older people are more likely to reduce the amount and type of news of they consume.

Similar divisions can be found in relation to topics of news. Almost one third of avoiders choose to avoid specific topics. These people are strongly split by age, gender, and political orientation. This data reveals that a certain amount of news avoidance is event and issue based, with respondents who might be interested in news generally still choosing to avoid topics they personally dislike. For older or younger people, men and women, or those on different ends of the political spectrum, issues of avoidance differ. Issues that have become political lightning rods such as climate and social justice are particularly predictive of avoidance among a small group of people.

This reinforces the fact that avoidance is a complex and situational behaviour, one likely to change in light of unfolding events and political controversies. This year's data is particularly interesting in the context of federal politics and the current lead up to the Voice to parliament referendum.

COMMENTARY

AUDIENCES WANT NEWS THAT *COVERS* SOLUTIONS

Tina Rosenberg, Co-founder, Solutions Journalism Network

What do news consumers (and news avoiders) want? Heading the list in the *Digital News Report: Australia 2023* is 'positive news'.

To which many journalists would say: "uh oh."

Journalists have long tended to define 'news' as failure, disaster, dysfunction and corruption. The audiences journalists serve believe that this definition is too narrow. Journalists are starting to agree. We're recognizing that our relentless focus on the negative drives news avoidance and, more important, paints a distorted picture of the world.

However, journalists don't see positive news stories as the way out. Positive news stories make people laugh or feel warm inside. These are the stories about the found engagement ring, the life-changing tip for the waitress in the diner, the individual act of kindness or courage.

> **To many journalists — perhaps most journalists — positive news stories are entertainment, not real news. They don't give society information it needs to improve.**

Given that I'm co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network, it will not surprise that I think solutions reporting is a better strategy.

In the *Digital News Report: Australia*, solutions journalism was wanted, but not as much as positive news. Other surveys, such as the BBC World Service's survey of their under 35 global audience, have found that 'more solutions journalism' is the top content request. It's possible that the reason solutions journalism didn't do as well in the *DNR: Australia* was the wording of the question. It asked people if they wanted "news that suggests solutions rather than pointing out problems." Suggesting solutions sounds like advocacy. That's not what people want from the news, and it's certainly not what journalists would feel comfortable doing.

I wonder if "news that *covers* solutions" would have been more popular than "news that *suggests* solutions." My guess is yes. And it's also a more accurate description of solutions journalism. Solutions journalism can provide a sense of power and hope that positive news can't. That's because it covers responses to our problems that are systemic, not individual — and therefore, offer real paths forward.

As an example, take coverage of Hepatitis C, which a few years ago became a curable disease — if you happened to have, say, $20,000. A positive news story about that cost might look at a group of friends' successful GoFundMe to buy medicine for someone with Hep C. Inspiring, right? Fun to read?

A solutions story on this topic offers so much more. Australia cured thousands of people by negotiating a Netflix-style pricing model for Hep C drugs. That story is feel-good and offers realistic hope — hope with teeth. And such stories matter. Other countries learned about Australia's innovation, and followed. They learned from what worked — and didn't — about Australia's strategy.

On a smaller scale, a positive news story about a dog saved during a flood would make readers feel good. But solutions stories can do that as well — for example, one about a dog saved because of new no-kill animal shelters in the community, and how those shelters work (and the challenges they haven't yet solved.) That story does more than feel good. It's hope with (many and sharp) teeth.

Don't expect journalists to try to engage audiences through positive stories. All around the world, though, journalists are doing solutions reporting. The latest Reuters Institute's global survey found that 73 percent of news leaders believe solutions journalism is an important way to combat news avoidance, while 48 percent think that telling positive stories is an important way.

Solutions journalism is a way to re-engage our communities in the news, while telling necessary truths about the world.

COMMENTARY

CONSTRUCTIVE JOURNALISM CAN ADDRESS AVOIDANCE AND THE CYCLE OF NEGATIVITY IN NEWS

Cynara Vetch, Project Lead, International Projects and Partnerships, Constructive Institute

The news culture has always been driven by an "if it bleeds it leads" agenda, it has always had a negativity bias, but this has been exacerbated by digital disruption. The internet has impacted the news industry beyond business models and distribution channels, the content of news is also being shaped by our digital world. Research has shown that news headlines are getting more negative, stressing anger and fear over neutral facts[1]. This is all heightened by social media algorithms and analytics which use sensationalism and outrage to drive an economy of attention.

News avoidance is a growing trend and it isn't just being driven by fake news, it is also factually accurate "Junk News" that is pushing audiences away from a regular, consistent news diet.

Junk News[2] as described by Heba Aly of The New Humanitarian[3] is simplistic, superficial coverage of complex stories. It is shocking click bait headlines, consumed compulsively in the short term but ultimately don't provide a balanced picture, with the necessary insights for audiences to engage actively with the issues. It can be damaging and ultimately is causing many to turn away to "healthier" sources of information.

At the same time it's getting harder and harder to serve up the broccoli of need-to-know news that is in the public interest. Newsrooms are competing for the attention of their audiences with countless other sources of information and entertainment. Journalists are having to fill the limitless space of online sites and 24 hour broadcast schedules. No wonder many editorial teams have resorted to more sharply angled, emotive and sensationalist journalism.

This is a problem for society and a problem for the news industry, the overwhelming supply of negative and shocking news content, always on and always on hand, is driving people away. News avoidance grows year on year and is a global phenomenon. Australia is no exception, in fact a staggering 69% of Australians avoid the news, higher than the global average. This poses a real dilemma for journalists as they struggle to garner and maintain attention for some of the biggest stories of our time. The good news is that there are a multitude of great journalists, and concerned media organisations, exploring journalism approaches that will serve society and retain their audiences.

At the Constructive Institute we argue that constructive journalism is one such approach.

Constructive journalism should not be equated with positive news.

It remains the core role of the news industry to update society with current and accurate information about events that impact the lives of its audiences. Car crashes, crime and conflict remain central to news coverage. So too does the investigative journalism function of holding truth to power. Reporters continue to have the responsibility to uncover abuses of privilege. What constructive journalism offers is an additional layer of reporting once the other two have been tackled. It is a layer which asks "What Now?" and points to the future.

This additional layer is particularly needed during times of protracted crisis such as Covid 19, Climate Change and currently the ongoing Ukraine war. It is in these times that audiences turn to professional, balanced and impartial reporting. In the months after the outbreak of the pandemic trust in news rebounded strongly in most countries and trusted news organisations reported vastly increased usage. However these figures died off after a year with some audiences saying they found the coverage "repetitive, confusing, and even depressing"[4]. A recently launched report by the European Broadcasting

[1] https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0276367
[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Gb936ol6k&ab_channel=TEDxTalks
[3] https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/
[4] https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/dnr-executive-summary

Union (EBU)[5] warns against "climate catastrophe journalism" which contributes to climate anxiety and causes media users to stop engaging with news stories on the topic. It may be a similar pattern with Australians experience of ongoing Ukraine coverage, it was the one of the most avoided topics by respondents in the country.

The Bonn Institute is our sister organization in Germany. Considering their proximity to the Ukraine they wanted to know how to meet the information needs of media users and ensure they didn't "tune out" from coverage of the war. The needs identified by both media audiences and journalists aligned with constructive characteristics[6]. Firstly a solutions focus which tackles the cycle of negativity and goes beyond the problem. Context and nuance, where the journalism zooms out and provides a digestible analysis over and above fatalities and injuries. Lastly Democratic Conversation which engages media users and those affected into discussion. It creates spaces for debate across divisive issues and agency rather than helplessness.

The public's right to know remains central to journalism's mission, but if unrelenting coverage of the worst of our world leads to fear and apathy amongst audiences it is time for a different approach. From Climate Change to conflict in Ukraine constructive journalism offers some answers.

[5] https://www.ebu.ch/guides/open/report/news-report-2023-climate-journalism-that-works
[6] https://www.bonn-institute.org/en/publications/war-reporting

2 POLITICAL INTEREST, ORIENTATION AND TALK

- Australians' interest in politics rises (35%, +3).

- Women's interest in politics falls (21%, -2) and men's rises (49%, +9).

- Online news audiences are more politically fragmented than offline.

- People are more careful talking about politics online than face-to-face.

- People who are concerned about misinformation are more careful when they talk about politics online.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

In this year's survey 30% identified themselves as being slightly, fairly or very left-wing; 31% identified with the centre of politics, and 24% as slightly, fairly or very right-wing. While there are limitations to this traditional measure of political orientation, it does serve as a useful proxy to help gauge the impact of ideological differences on news consumption habits (see **figure 2.1**).

FIGURE 2.1: POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

7	14	9	31	10	9	5	15

- ■ Very left-wing
- ■ Fairly left-wing
- ■ Slightly left-of-centre
- ■ Centre
- ■ Slightly right-of-centre
- ■ Fairly right-wing
- ■ Very right-wing
- ■ Don't know

[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'). [Base: N=2,025]

INTEREST IN POLITICS

ONE THIRD OF AUSTRALIANS ARE HIGHLY INTERESTED IN POLITICS

Around two-thirds of respondents say they are somewhat, not very, or not at all interested in politics (65%), and one-third say they are extremely or very interested in politics (34%)(see **figure 2.2**).

FIGURE 2.2: INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)

14	20	30	21	14	1

- ■ Extremely interested
- ■ Very interested
- ■ Somewhat interested
- ■ Not very interested
- ■ Not at all interested
- ■ Don't know
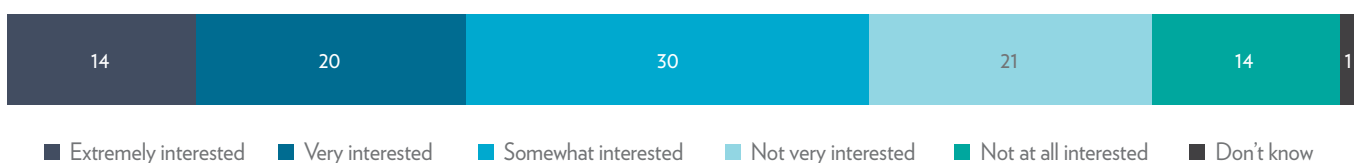
[Q2_new2018] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in _politics_? [Base, N=2,025]

This measure is important because it closely correlates with trust in news, interest in news and people's willingness to pay for news. Almost half of those who are interested in politics pay for news (47%) compared to 10% of those who are not interested in politics. The higher a person's interest in politics, the more likely they are to be heavy news consumers who pay for it. They are also more likely to trust news (see **figure 2.3**).

FIGURE 2.3: NEWS ATTITUDES BY INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)

	Trust news	Trust my news	High interest in news	Heavy news consumers	Pay for online news
High interest in politics	55	68	86	70	47
Low interest in politics	38	43	31	40	10

- ■ High interest in politics
- ■ Low interest in politics
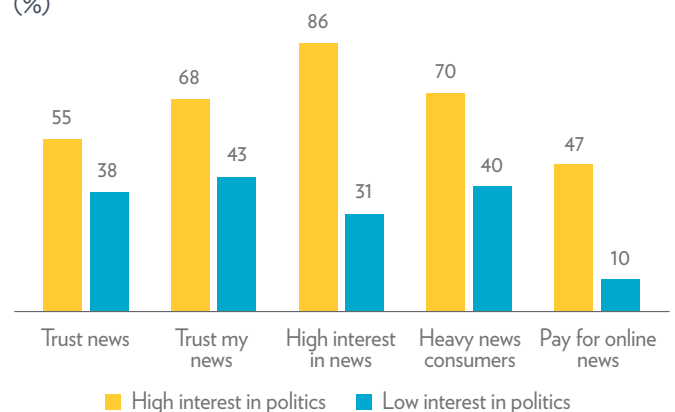
INTEREST IN POLITICS HAS RISEN

Levels of interest in politics have remained relatively steady since 2019. However, there has been a small increase among people who are very or extremely interested in politics (+3) and an equivalent decrease among those with low interest (-3) since 2021 (see **figure 2.4**). This slight rise in political interest might reflect that several elections were held across Australia in the lead up to and soon after the 2023 survey was in the field.

This year, the level of high interest in politics in Australia (35%) is higher than the global average (26%). The USA recorded the highest level of interest (42%) and Taiwan the lowest (13%) (see **figure 2.5**).

FIGURE 2.4: INTEREST IN POLITICS 2016-2023 (%)

*Excluded don't know
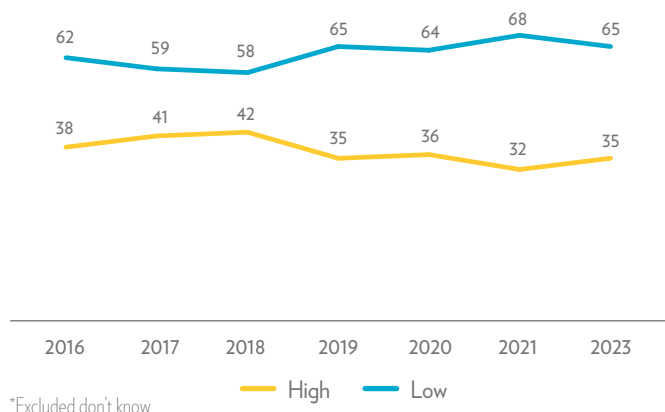
FIGURE 2.5: HIGH INTEREST IN POLITICS BY COUNTRY (%)
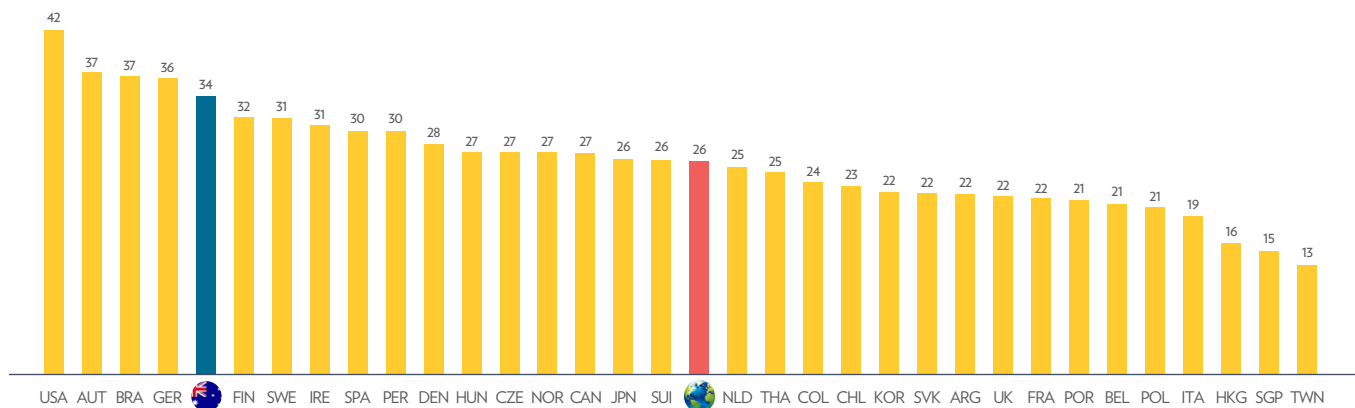
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N= 67,276]

WOMEN'S INTEREST IN POLITICS FALLS AND MEN'S RISES

Women are less interested in politics in 2023 than they were in 2021. One-fifth of women surveyed say they are extremely or very interested in politics (21%, -3) compared to 49% of men which has increased 9 percentage points since 2021 (see **figure 2.6**). This reflects similar patterns in the levels of news consumption and interest in news, where women's interest in and access of news has declined, and men's risen.

FIGURE 2.6: INTEREST IN POLITICS BY DEMOGRAPHICS 2021-2023
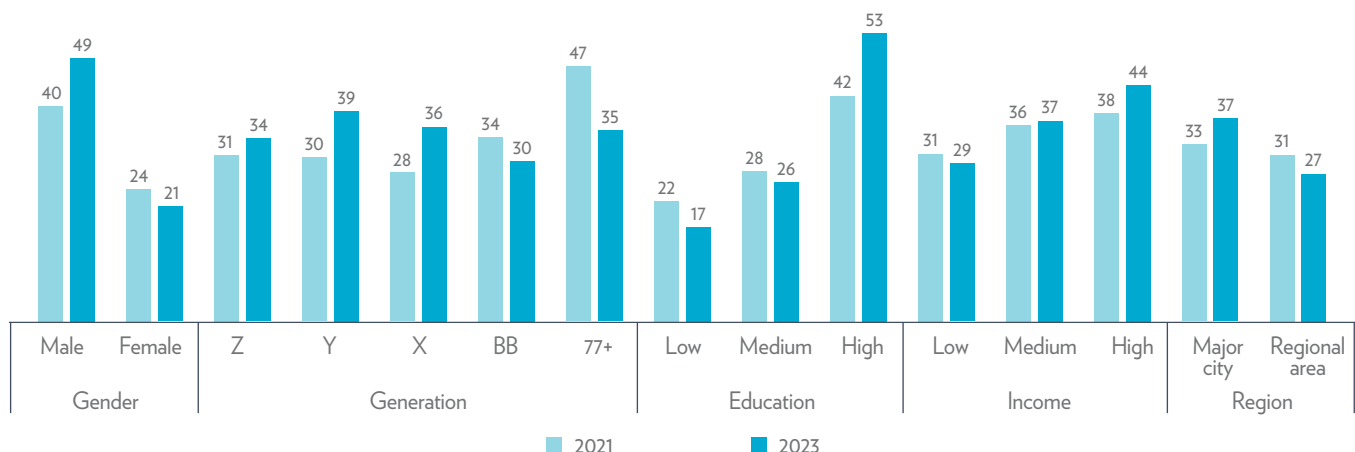
POLARISATION OF AUDIENCES

ONLINE AUDIENCES ARE MORE POLITICAL FRAGMENTED THAN OFFLINE

Figures 2.7 and **2.8** provide a visual representation of the political orientation of audiences and the news brands they use. The brands are plotted on an axis from left-wing to right-wing based on the self-identification of respondents across the political spectrum.

Figure 2.7 highlights the established trend of online news audiences leaning further to the left of the political spectrum than offline audiences. This is partly due to younger generations mainly using online sources of news, compared to older generations who still largely rely on traditional offline platforms. **Figure 2.7** also shows how fragmented online audiences are along political lines. Among online brands the spread of left-wing audiences is fairly even with Crikey, the Conversation and Guardian Australia attracting the most left-wing readers. In contrast, right-wing audiences tend to cluster closer to the Centre with Skynews.com.au being an outlier.

In contrast, **figure 2.8** reveals a more cohesive and centred view of Australian audiences who use traditional offline platforms, such as television, radio and print newspapers.

FIGURE 2.7: POLARISATION OF ONLINE NEWS AUDIENCES (%)
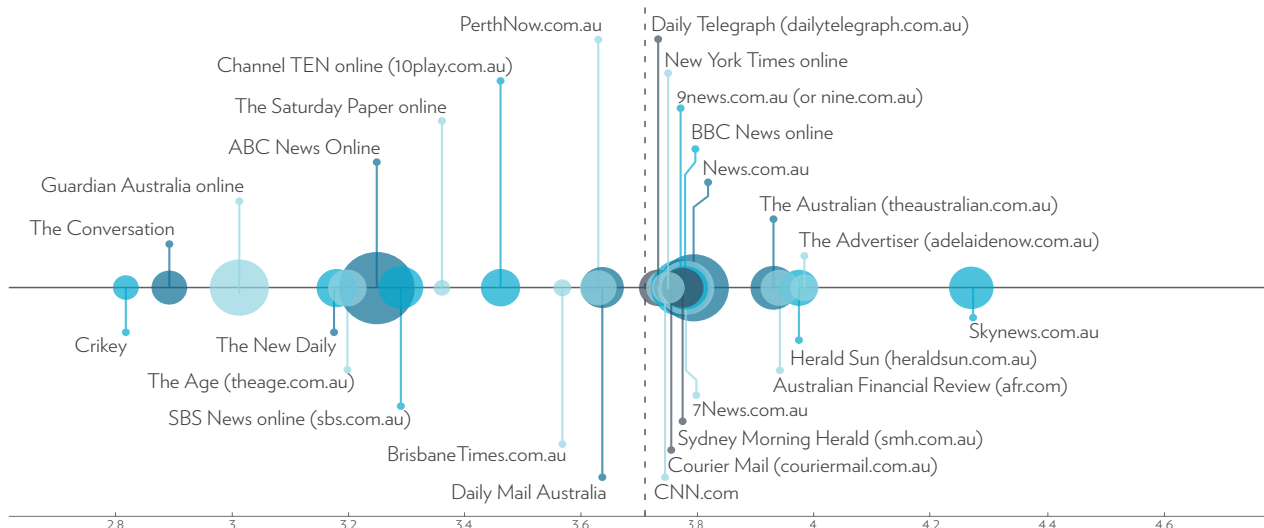
FIGURE 2.8: POLARISATION OF OFFLINE NEWS AUDIENCES (%)
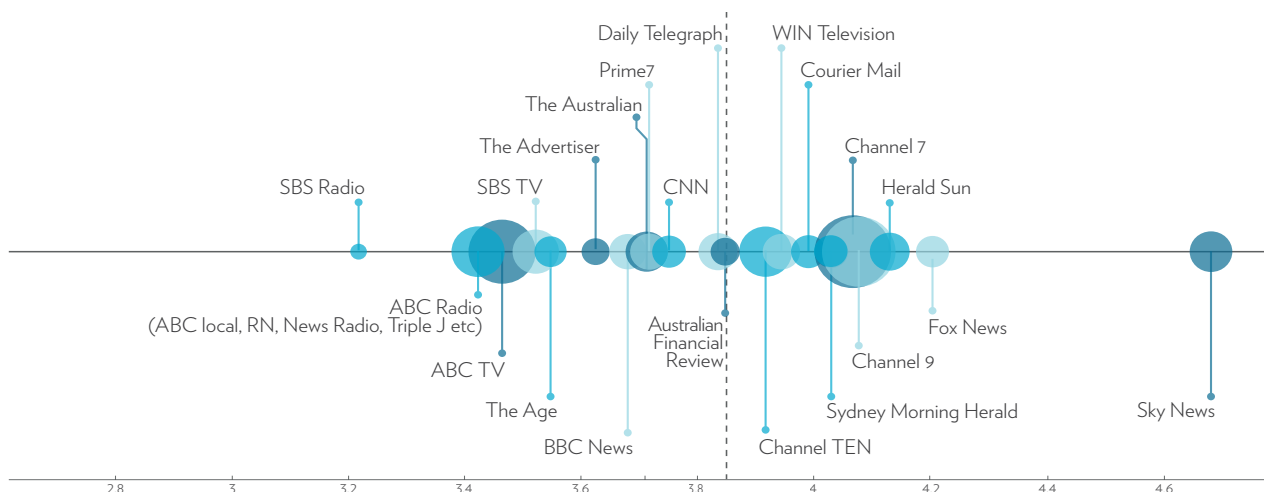
Note: Polarisation charts are based on each brand's audience reach (size of circle), placed on a scale between 1 to 7 based on the distance from the total brands' mean score for each brand. The scale 1 to 7 reflects respondents' self-reports of their political orientation that ranges from 1 'Very left-wing', 2 'Fairly left-wing', 3 'Slightly left-of-centre', 4 'Centre', 5 'Slightly right-of-centre', 6 'Fairly right-wing' and 7 'Very right-wing'. Those who don't know were excluded from the analysis.

The following figures give a detailed breakdown of the political orientation of the audiences of different news brands. Among TV news providers, Sky News continues to have the highest proportion of right-wing oriented viewers (50%), followed by Fox News (39%). The national broadcasters ABC and SBS have the largest proportion of left-wing oriented viewers (42%). Audiences for Channels 7, 9, and 10 tend to be fairly evenly spread across the political spectrum (see **figure 2.9**).
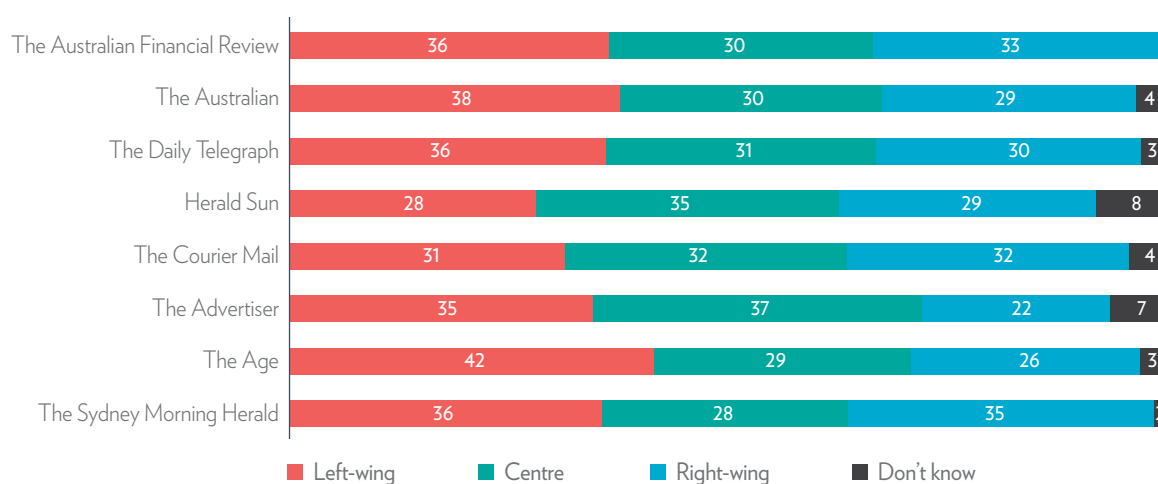
FIGURE 2.9: TV NEWS VIEWERS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

	Left-wing	Centre	Right-wing	Don't know
ABC TV	42	29	22	6
SBS TV	42	30	24	4
Channel 7	25	34	27	15
Channel 9	25	35	27	14
Channel TEN	29	33	26	12
Sky News	23	23	50	5
Prime7	30	34	25	11
WIN Television	28	36	28	8
Fox News	29	30	39	3
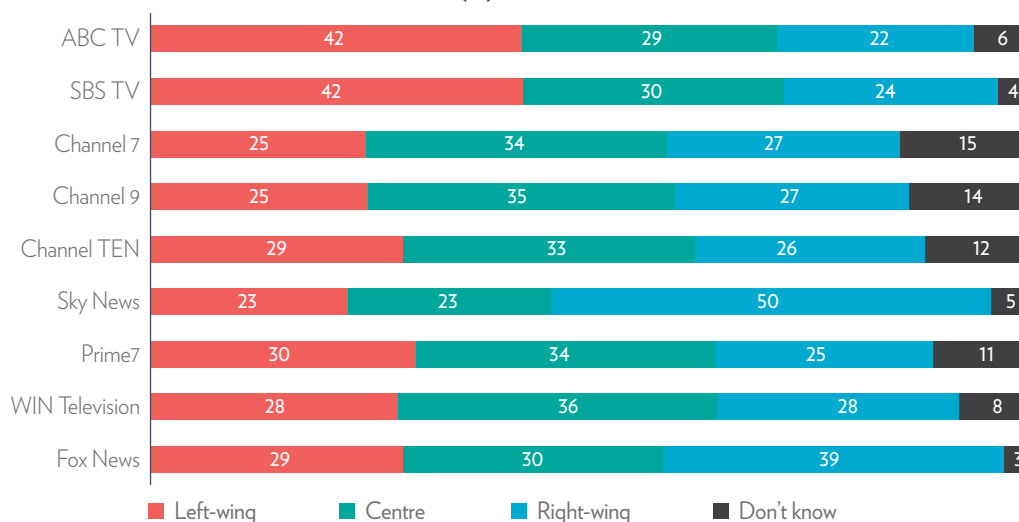
The Age newspaper has the highest proportion of left-wing readers (42%) followed by *The Australian* (38%), *The Australian Financial Review, Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* (36%). Interestingly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* had the largest right-wing audience (35%) among the print newspapers, followed by *The Australian Financial Review* (33%), *The Courier Mail* (32%), *The Australian* and *Herald Sun* (29%) (see **figure 2.9**).

FIGURE 2.10: NEWSPAPER READERS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

	Left-wing	Centre	Right-wing	Don't know
The Australian Financial Review	36	30	33	1
The Australian	38	30	29	4
The Daily Telegraph	36	31	30	3
Herald Sun	28	35	29	8
The Courier Mail	31	32	32	4
The Advertiser	35	37	22	7
The Age	42	29	26	3
The Sydney Morning Herald	36	28	35	2

Among online news brands, The Conversation (65%), Crikey.com (62%) and Guardian Australia (60%) continue to have larger proportions of left-leaning audiences, and

Skynews.com.au (41%) has the largest proportion of right-leaning audience (see **figure 2.11**).

FIGURE 2.11: ONLINE NEWS WEBSITE USERS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)
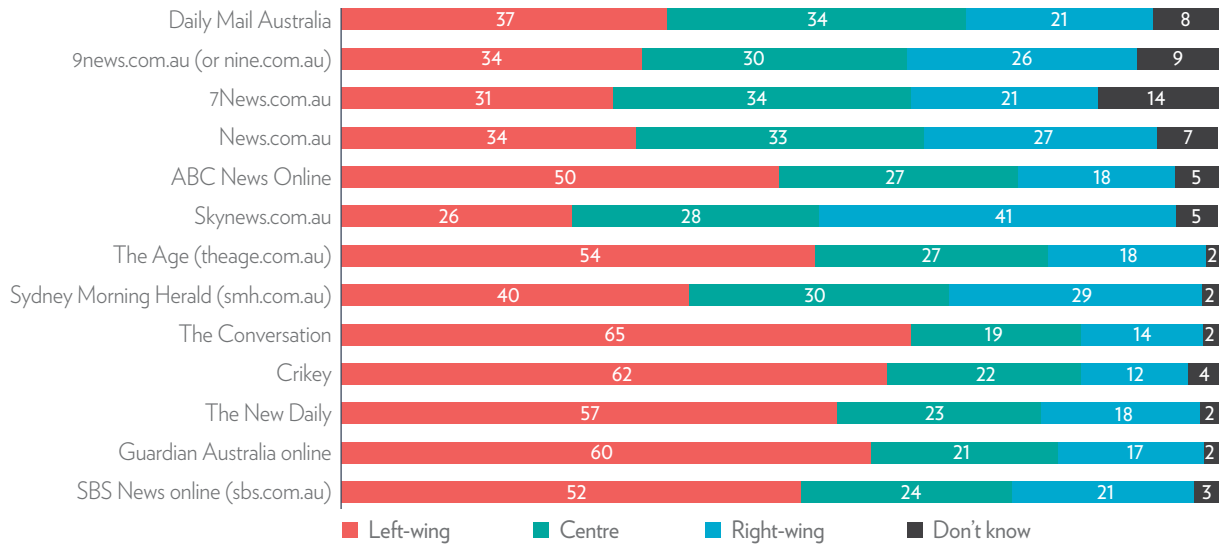
CHANNEL 7 IS MORE POPULAR AMONG RIGHT-WING AND CENTRE AUDIENCES, WHILE LEFT-WING PREFER THE ABC

Across the political spectrum the top five news brands were all television (see **table 2.1**). Among left-wing oriented audiences, the public broadcasters ABC and the SBS were the most popular, followed by the commercial stations 7,

9 and 10. For right-wing consumers, the channels 7 and 9 ranked 1st and 2nd, followed by the public broadcasters, with Sky News coming in 5th.

TABLE 2.1: TOP 5 OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS USED BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

	Left-wing		Centre		Right-wing		Don't know	
1	ABC News	46	Channel 7	38	Channel 7	37	Channel 7	33
2	SBS News	32	Channel 9	37	Channel 9	35	SBS News	31
3	Channel 7	28	ABC News	32	ABC News	32	Channel 9	28
4	Channel 9	26	SBS News	25	SBS News	22	ABC News	16
5	Channel TEN	15	Channel TEN	17	Sky News	21	Channel TEN	12

Left-wing respondents are more likely to say they accessed ABC News Online (40%) and Guardian Australia (29%) compared to other online brands. Centre and right-wing respondents also use ABC News Online (22%; 18%), but

their top source of news continues to be news.com.au (24%). News.com.au, 9news.com.au and ABC News are popular among all political affiliations (see **table 2.2**).

TABLE 2.2: TOP 5 ONLINE NEWS BRANDS USED BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

	Left-wing		Centre		Right-wing		Don't know	
1	ABC News Online	40	News.com.au	24	News.com.au	24	7News.com.au	12
2	Guardian Australia online	29	ABC News Online	22	ABC News Online	18	News.com.au	10
3	News.com.au	25	7News.com.au	16	9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	17	9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	9
4	9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	18	9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	15	Skynews.com.au	14	ABC News Online	8
5	SBS News online (sbs.com.au)	15	Guardian Australia online	10	The Australian (theaustralian.com.au)	13	Daily Mail Australia	4

TALKING ABOUT POLITICS

PEOPLE ARE MORE CAREFUL TALKING ABOUT POLITICS ONLINE THAN FACE-TO-FACE

This year we asked respondents about how careful they feel they have to be when discussing politics with people online such as through social networks or messaging groups. People are more likely to say they talk about politics in person (78%) than online (63%). More than one-third (37%) of respondents say they don't discuss politics online or on social media, compared to 22% who say they don't talk about politics in person or on the phone (see **figure 2.12**).

FIGURE 2.12: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS (%)

	Very careful	Somewhat careful	Not very careful	Not at all careful	I don't talk about politics online	Don't know
Online	23	25	8	5	37	2
Offline	18	33	16	9	22	2
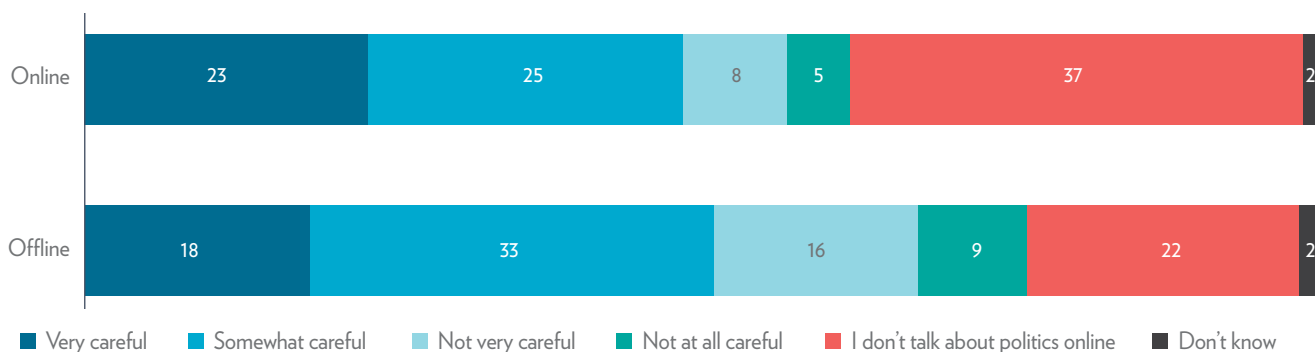
[Q2_Participation_2023] When talking about politics with people _online_ (e.g., via social networks or messaging groups), how careful do you feel you have to be with what you say? [Base, N=2,025]
[Q3_Participation_2023] When talking about politics with people _offline_ (e.g., face to face, on the phone), how careful do you feel you have to be with what you say? [Base: N=2,025]

Among those who talk about politics, a higher proportion say they are somewhat or very careful online (76%) than face-to-face (65%) (see **figure 2.13**). In contrast, those who talk about politics offline are more likely to be not very or not at all careful (32%) compared to online (21%). In the context of concern about political incivility among users in the online environment, this data reflects differences in perception about the amount of care that is needed when discussing politics in person or online.

FIGURE 2.13: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS AMONG THOSE WHO DISCUSS POLITICS (%)

- Very/Somewhat careful
- Not very/Not at all careful
- Don't know

Online: 76, 21, 3
Offline: 65, 32, 3
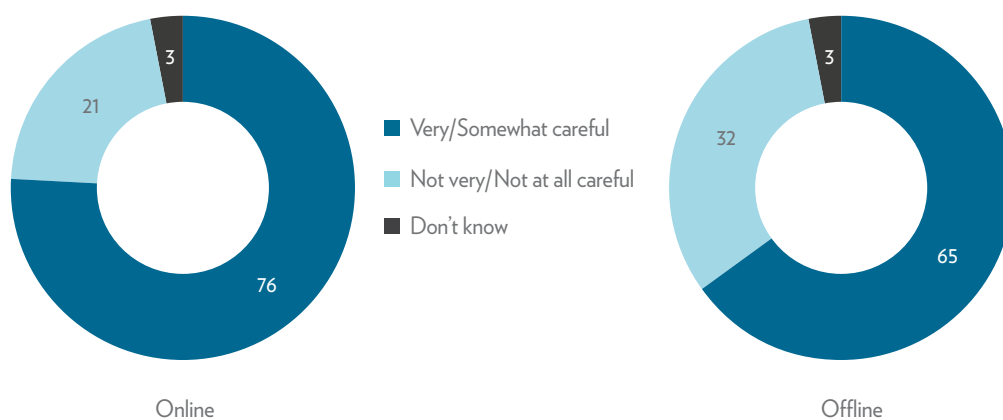
[Base: excluded those who don't talk about politics - online n=1,285; offline n=1,582]

This pattern is replicated across all countries in the survey. **Figure 2.14** shows people are generally more relaxed talking about politics face-to-face than online or on social media. In some countries the comfort gap between offline and online is substantial, including in Denmark (-34), Norway (-32), and Finland (-29). However, in other markets the gap is narrower, particularly in markets where there are challenges to freedom of speech and freedom of the press[1].

FIGURE 2.14: NOT VERY/NOT AT ALL CAREFUL TALKING ABOUT POLITICS OFFLINE/ONLINE (%)

Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N= 67,280]
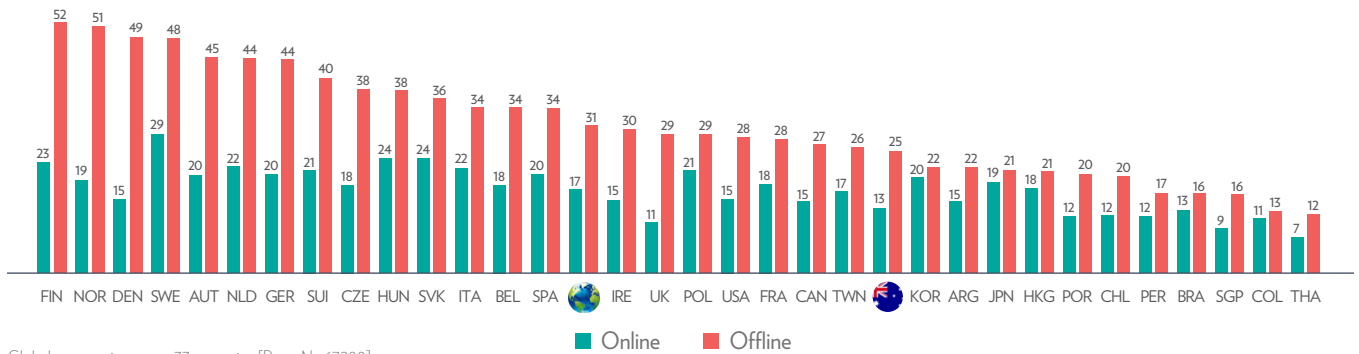
WOMEN ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO DISCUSS POLITICS ONLINE THAN MEN

Women are much less likely to discuss politics online than men. Forty-four percent of women say they don't talk about politics on social media, in messaging apps and other online spaces compared to 29% of men. More than half of men (52%) say they are very or somewhat careful when they do talk about politics online compared to 45% of women. This largely reflects that men are more interested in politics than women and therefore more likely to engage in online political discussion.

Gen Z and Y are the most likely generations to talk about politics online. Gen Y (58%) is the most careful about online political talk. Their caution possibly reflects concerns about the potential negative impacts that online partisan discussion may have on professional and personal relationships as found in the *Digital News Report: Australia 2018*. In contrast, Baby Boomers and those aged 77+ are the least likely to be cautious (36%) when talking about politics online. This reflects that more than half of these older generations say they do not talk about politics online and therefore do not need to be careful about what they say.

People with high levels of income and education are much more likely to participate in online political discussion and are also the most likely to be careful about what they say when they do. More than half of respondents with low levels of education say they do not talk about politics online (57%) (see **figure 2.15**).

FIGURE 2.15: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS ONLINE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

[1] https://rsf.org/en/index
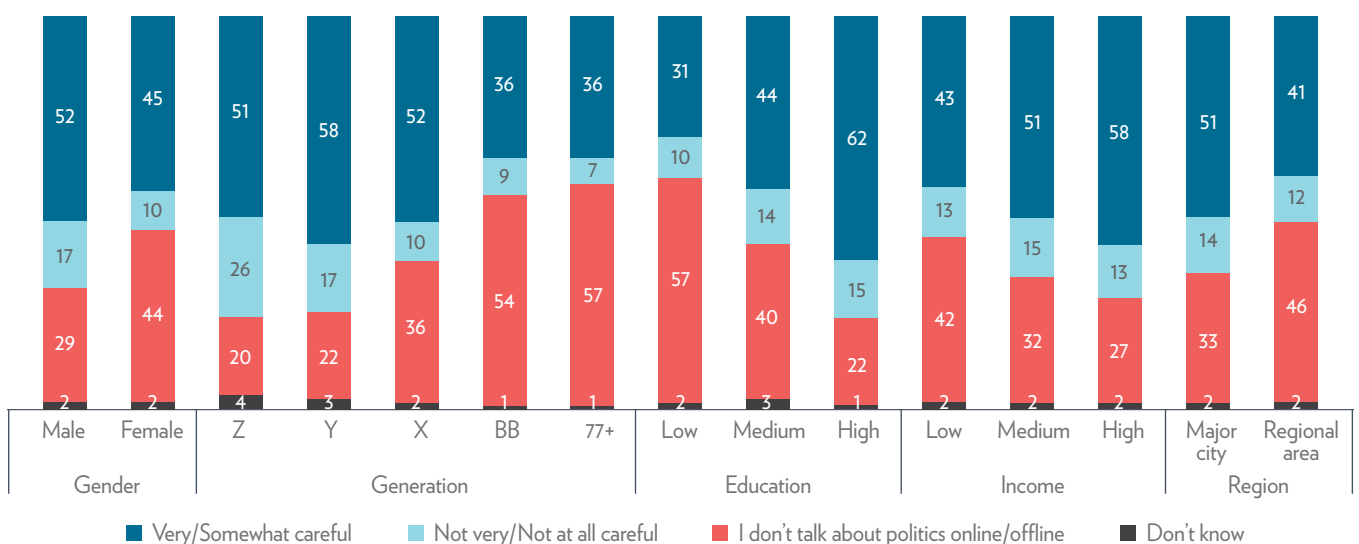
WHEN DISCUSSING POLITICS ONLINE WOMEN ARE MORE CAUTIOUS THAN MEN

Among those who do participate in political discussions online, women tend to be more cautious than their male counterparts. **Figure 2.16** shows that 79% of women who engage in online political discussions say they are careful compared to 73% of men.

FIGURE 2.16: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY GENDER (% AMONG THOSE WHO TALK POLITICS ONLINE)

Male

Female

- Very/Somewhat careful
- Not very/Not at all careful
- Don't know

[Base: men (N=698), women (N=586)]

Among those who talk about politics online, a higher proportion of Gen X (82%) and older people (79%) say they are very or somewhat careful compared to only 64% of Gen Z. About one-third (32%) of Gen Z say they are not careful when talking about politics online (see **figure 2.17**).

FIGURE 2.17: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY GENERATION (% AMONG THOSE WHO TALK POLITICS ONLINE)

Gen Z

Gen Y

- Very/Somewhat careful
- Not very/Not at all careful
- Don't know

Gen X
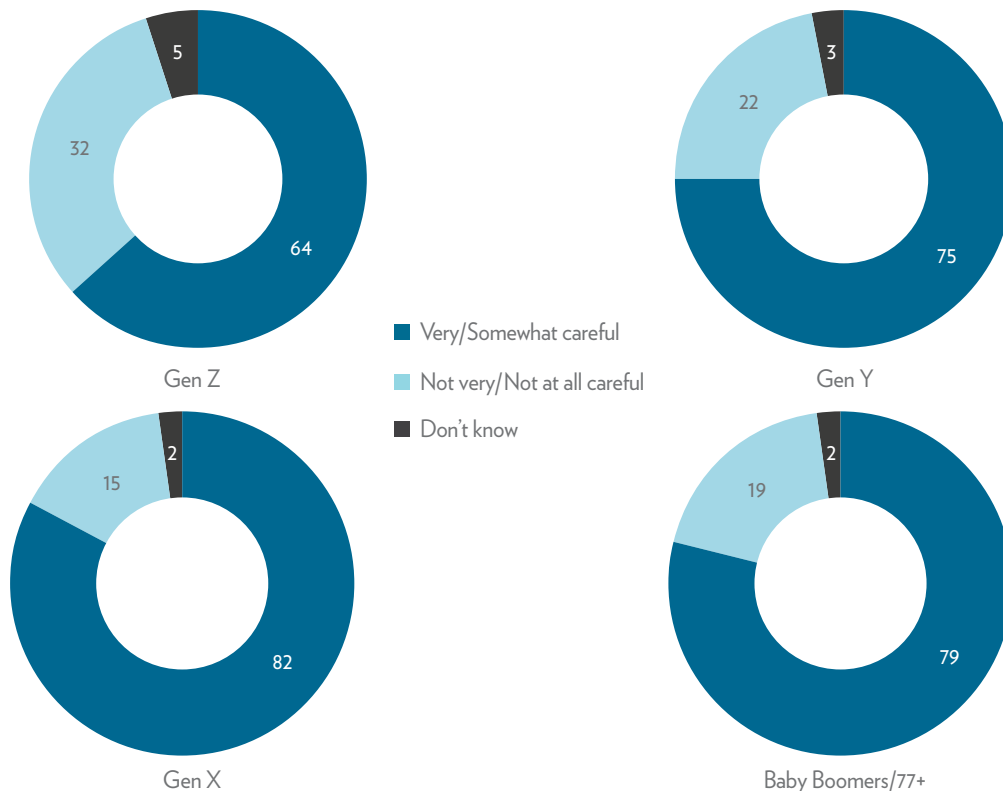
Baby Boomers/77+

[Base: Gen Z (N=197), Gen Y (N=438), Gen X (N=327), Baby Boomers/77+ (N=321)]

PEOPLE PREFER TALKING ABOUT POLITICS IN PERSON THAN ONLINE

Overall, people are much more open to talking about politics in person than online, particularly those who live in regional areas, women and older generations.

Correspondingly, a higher proportion say they are careful when they do talk about politics face-to-face or over the phone (see **figure 2.18**).

FIGURE 2.18: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS OFFLINE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Legend: ■ Very/Somewhat careful ■ Not very/Not at all careful ■ I don't talk about politics online/offline ■ Don't know
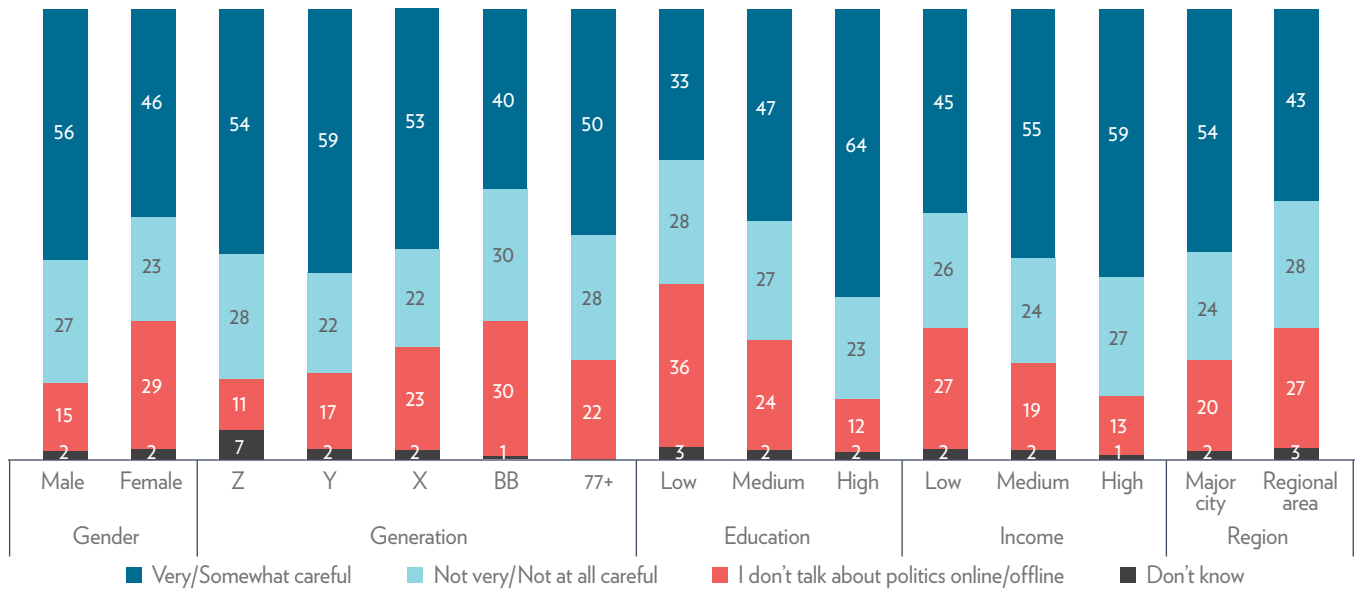
SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS USERS ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Most of the respondents who use social media platforms for news say they are very or somewhat careful in their discussions of politics online. The proportion is particularly high among those who use Instagram for news compared to users of other social media platforms. In contrast, those

who use Twitter (18%) or Facebook Messenger (20%) are more likely to say they are not very or at all careful. Notably those who use Facebook for news (19%) are more likely to say they do not talk about politics online (see **figure 2.19**).

FIGURE 2.19: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY CARE TALKING ABOUT POLITICS (%)

Legend: ■ Very/Somewhat careful ■ Not very/Not at all careful ■ I don't talk about politics online/offline ■ Don't know
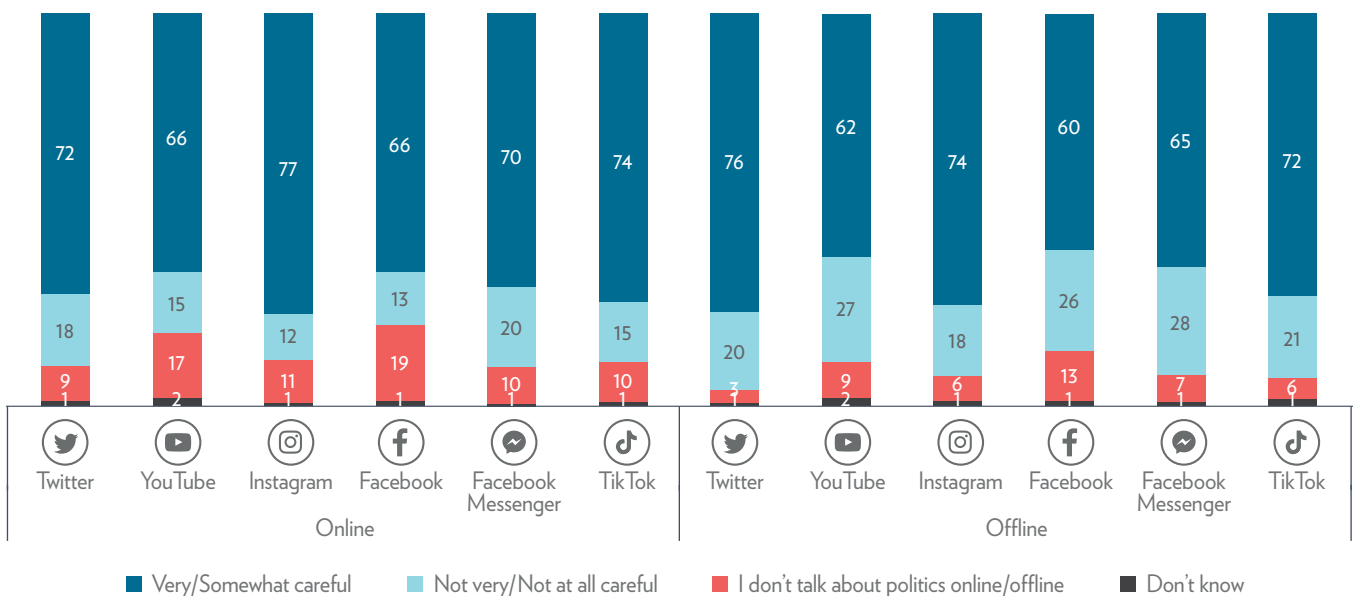
LEFT-WING ARE MORE CAREFUL WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Bigger differences emerge when the data is analysed by the political orientation of audiences. People who identify as left-wing are much more likely to talk about politics online (77%) than right-wing respondents (63%). When they do talk about it, left-wing respondents are more likely to say they are very or somewhat careful (59%) compared to right-wing (50%) and centre (48%). In the offline environment both left-wing and right-wing respondents say they are more careful when talking about politics in person or over the phone. Almost two-thirds of left-wing (63%) and more than half (55%) of right-wing respondents say they are very or somewhat careful discussing politics away from the internet (see **figure 2.20**).

FIGURE 2.20: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY POLITICAL AFFILIATION (%)
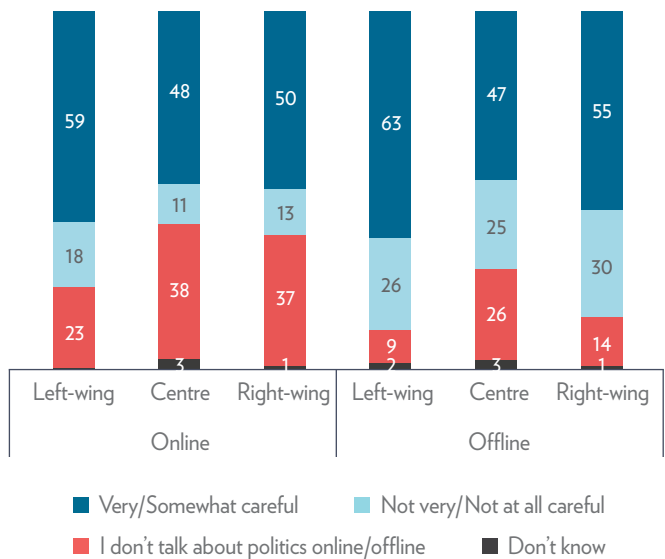
PEOPLE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT MISINFORMATION ARE MORE LIKELY TO TALK ABOUT POLITICS IN PERSON THAN ONLINE

People who are concerned about misinformation are much less likely to talk about politics online that in person. More than one-third (34%) of respondents who say they are concerned about misinformation refrain from discussing politics online, compared 18% who avoid talking about politics face-to-face.

People who are concerned about misinformation are also more likely to be careful when talking about politics both online and offline. More than half of those who are concerned about misinformation (54%) say they take care when they talk about politics online compared to 43% who are not concerned; and 58% say they are careful when they discuss politics in person compared to 40% who are not worried about misinformation.

People who are not concerned about misinformation are much more likely to say they are not careful when talking about politics online (25%) than people who are concerned (11%) (see **figure 2.21**). This highlights differences in the perceived risk of talking about politics on social media and other online spaces for those who are concerned about misinformation.

FIGURE 2.21: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION (%)
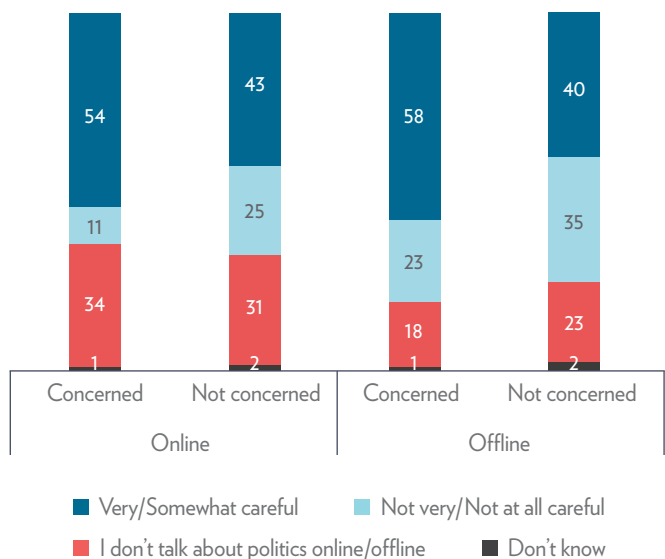
PEOPLE WHO PAY FOR NEWS ARE THE MOST CAREFUL WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS

The data reveal stark differences between people who pay and don't pay for their news and the level of care they take when talking about politics. Three-quarters (74%) of people who pay for their news say they are careful about what they say about politics both online and offline. In contrast only 42% of people who do not pay for their news say they are careful about discussing politics online, and 44% do not talk about politics online at all (see **figure 2.22**).

These differences highlight that heavy news consumers and people with high levels of interest in news and politics are much more likely to pay for news. As **figure 2.23** shows, those with high interest in politics are also much more likely to be careful when talking about politics both online and offline. Though, a larger proportion of both those with high and low interest in politics are more relaxed about political talk face-to-face.

FIGURE 2.22: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY PAYING FOR NEWS (%)
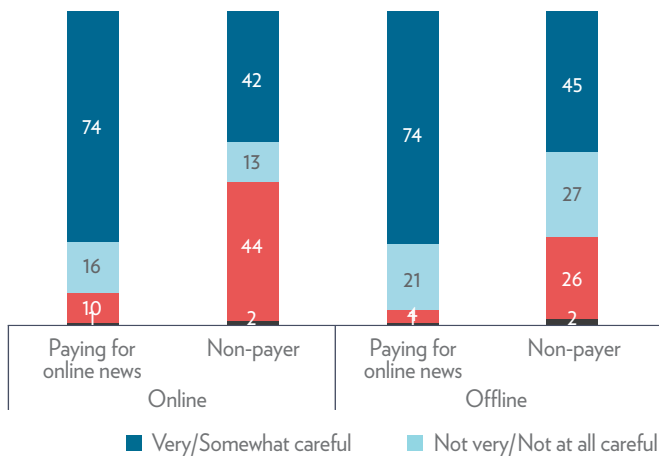
FIGURE 2.23: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS BY INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)

Legend: ■ Very/Somewhat careful　■ Not very/Not at all careful　■ I don't talk about politics online/offline　■ Don't know
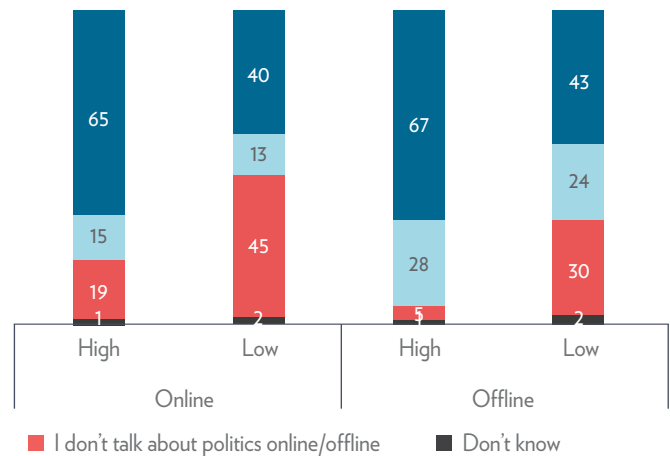
SUMMARY

This year we explored differences in attitude toward talking about politics in online spaces versus in person. The data show that people are generally more comfortable discussing politics in person, than online. But when they do, they are more careful online.

The findings are strongly divided along gender and partisan lines. Women are much less likely to discuss politics in any environment, and left-wing oriented consumers are much more likely than right-wing or centre to talk about politics both online and offline. These results echo research into concern about incivility in online spaces, that finds trolling and hate speech along partisan lines and that women are regularly targeted for their views and appearance.

Women's reluctance to talk about politics also reflects their overall lower interest in it. The proportion of women who say they are very or extremely interested in politics has fallen to 21% (-3). In contrast, men's interest in politics has risen sharply to 49% (+9), lifting the overall proportion of Australians with high interest in the survey to 34%. This reflects a similar increase in men's interest in news generally in 2023.

Chapter 1 tells us that men are much more interested in politics and economic news than women, who are much more likely to avoid these topics. The run of federal and state elections in the lead up to this survey, combined with rising interest rates and cost of living pressures, may have contributed to this gender gap.

Those who use social media platforms for news are more likely to talk about politics both offline and online, compared to the average. They are also much more likely to be somewhat or very careful. The presence of misinformation online could be a factor in this, as those who are more concerned about it are also more careful discussing politics. Overall, social media news users appear to be particularly conscious of the pitfalls of debating politics in online spaces.

COMMENTARY

NEWS AUDIENCES ARE SICK OF THE POLITICAL BLAME GAME

Michelle Ainsworth PSM, Editor of Politics, ABC

In at least one way the major political parties and the Australian media face a similar challenge: How to engage with an electorate -- or in the media's case an audience -- who overwhelmingly say they have little or no interest in politics.

In this year's *Digital News Report: Australia,* just one third of Australian respondents fessed up to being interested in politics. As a political journalist from way back, this sends shivers down my spine, because the policies our lawmakers pass ultimately affect every single one of us at various stages in our lives. As a political observer it's hard not to link the shift in our political landscape – and the subsequent slump in support for the major parties - with an increasingly polarised media audience.

This slide in support played out in last year's federal election when Labor and the Coalition attracted just 68.5% of first preference votes. One in three Australians voted for a minor party or an independent, and Labor won government with a primary vote of 32.8%.

> **There's still hope for us in the fourth estate because there was a small increase in the number of people saying they are "very" or "extremely" interested in politics.**

Thanks to those political junkies Australia ranks above the global average on the measure of interest in politics. However, Australia is also experiencing a decline in trust in democratic institutions, like many other western countries, and with it a decline in trust in news.

Rising polarisation has led to the fragmentation of online audiences along political lines. The report highlights the now established trend of online news audiences leaning further to the left of the political spectrum than traditional broadcast audiences. Among online news brands Guardian Australia, the Conversation and Crikey continue to attract the most left-wing readers, while right-wing audiences gravitate towards news.com.au and then onto Sky News.

The report found those to the political left were more likely to have accessed ABC News Online, with *The Age*

newspaper attracting the highest proportion. While centre and right-wing observers preferred news.com.au for their political news they do access the ABC's digital news. Older television audiences too are split, with the left-wing favouring public broadcasters ABC and SBS while Channel 7 is favoured by right-wing and centre leaning audiences.

As we've seen overseas, especially in the United States, media outlets that continue to pursue polarising rather than impartial political stories are contributing to the growing divide between opinionated groups. This in turn leads to a further decline in trust in the media.

As the ABC's Editor of Politics, it does concern me that women report being less interested in politics than they were two years ago. These figures repeat similar patterns in the levels of news consumption and interest in news mentioned in mentioned in Chapter 1 and Chapter 5.

One of the many benefits of news organisations providing news online is that we can access real-time analytics on what our audience is reading. What I've observed is that women are just not interested in the traditional argy bargy political confrontation story of the day.

> **They do, however, read stories about social issues that affect their lives – such as the cost of living, the housing crisis and health and education.**

They are sick of the blame game and look to the media to provide them with solutions for the daily problems they grapple with.

A new question in this year's report looked at how guarded people were when discussing politics with online communities such as social networks or messaging groups. Given the polarising and often nasty online political discourse it's hardly surprising that we still feel more relaxed talking about politics face-to-face with neighbours, colleagues, or friends than online. Women remain much less inclined to discuss politics in any environment, which may reflect their overall lack of interest in politics.

For those of us whose main game is political reporting there is plenty to ponder about the type of political discourse we wish to foster.

This year's referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament offers an opportunity for media organisations to encourage a national conversation on the next step on Australia's long walk towards reconciliation. The challenge is to not fall back into old habits and report these complex and important issues as simply another "Yes versus No" political contest. It's our role to facilitate a constructive discussion about the proposal and provide an opportunity for voices around the country to be shared in a fair and accurate way.

3   VIEWS OF JOURNALISM

- More than half of Australians say they often see or hear criticism of the news media and journalists (54%), which is higher than the global average (50%).

- The more news you consume the more criticism of journalists you hear.

- People who often hear criticism of the news media are more likely to distrust news (37%) than those who don't (21%).

- 60% think public service media are important to society.

- Public service media are less important personally to people with low education and Gen Z.

MEDIA CRITICISM

MORE THAN HALF OF PEOPLE HEAR CRITICISM OF THE NEWS MEDIA AND JOURNALISTS

This year we asked respondents how often, if at all, they see or hear people criticising journalists or the news media. They were given five options: Very often, quite often, not very often, almost never and never. More than half (54%) said they 'very' or 'quite' often hear people criticising the news media or journalists. More than a third (37%) say they rarely hear the news media being criticised and 9% didn't know (see **figure 3.1**).

Hear *media criticism*

54% 🇦🇺 **50%** 🌍
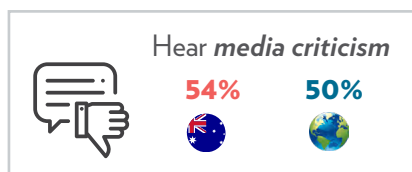
FIGURE 3.1: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM (%)

- Almost never/Not very often
- Quite/Very often
- Don't know
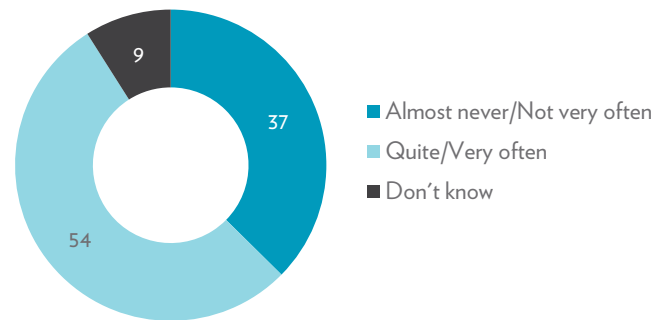
[Q1_Criticism_2023] How often, if at all, do you see or hear people criticising journalists or the news media. [Base: N=2,025]

AUSTRALIANS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HEAR CRITICISM OF THE NEWS MEDIA THAN GLOBAL AVERAGE, BUT LESS THAN THE USA

Australian audiences are more likely to say they see or hear criticism of the news media and journalists 'very' or 'quite' often (54%) than the global average of 33 countries in the survey (50%). However, the proportion of those who hear criticism in Australia is less than in several countries

including the USA (58%), Brazil (65%) and Peru (71%). Japanese respondents were the least likely to say they hear or see criticism often (22%) (see **figure 3.2**).

FIGURE 3.2: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY COUNTRY (%)

- Quite/Very often
- Almost never/Not very often
- Don't know
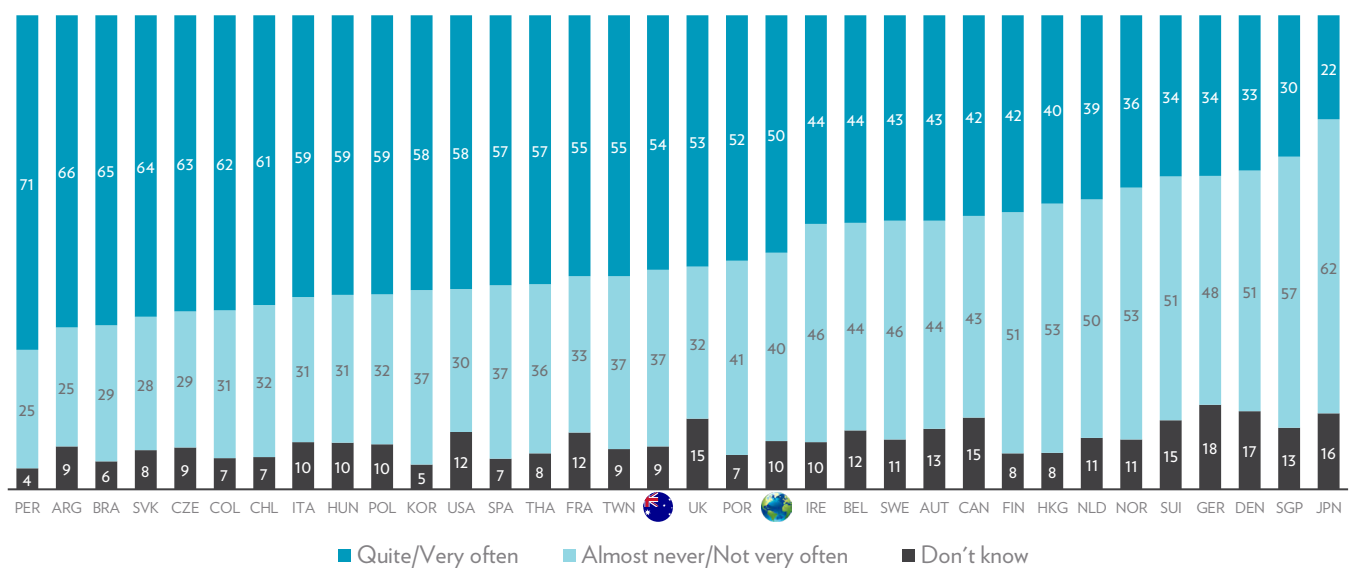
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

THE MORE NEWS YOU CONSUME THE MORE CRITICISM OF JOURNALISTS YOU HEAR

More than sixty per cent (62%) of people who access news more than once a day hear criticism of news media and journalists compared to 48% of those who consume news once a day or less. A similar distinction is found based on high and low levels of interest in news and politics (see **figure 3.3**). In addition, people who pay for news are more likely to see or hear criticism of news media and journalists (74%) compared to people who don't pay (42%). This reflects their higher levels of interest in and consumption of news among those who pay.

Men, people with high levels of education and income, and Gen Y are more likely to experience criticism of the news media and journalists (see **figure 3.4**). Those living in regional areas are also less likely to see a lot of criticism (47%) compared with those in major cities (56%).

FIGURE 3.3: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY NEWS ACCESS, INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICS
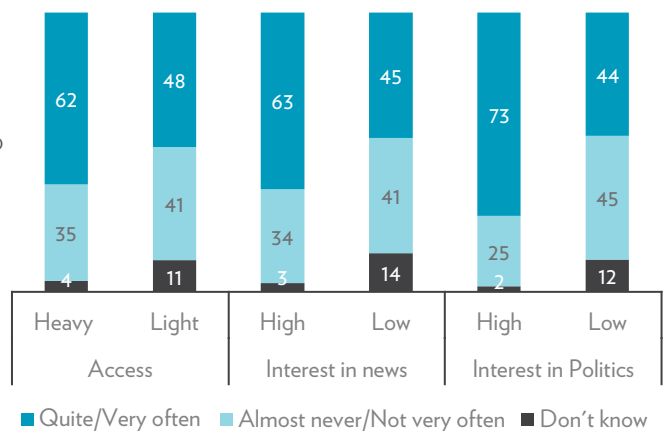
FIGURE 3.4: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
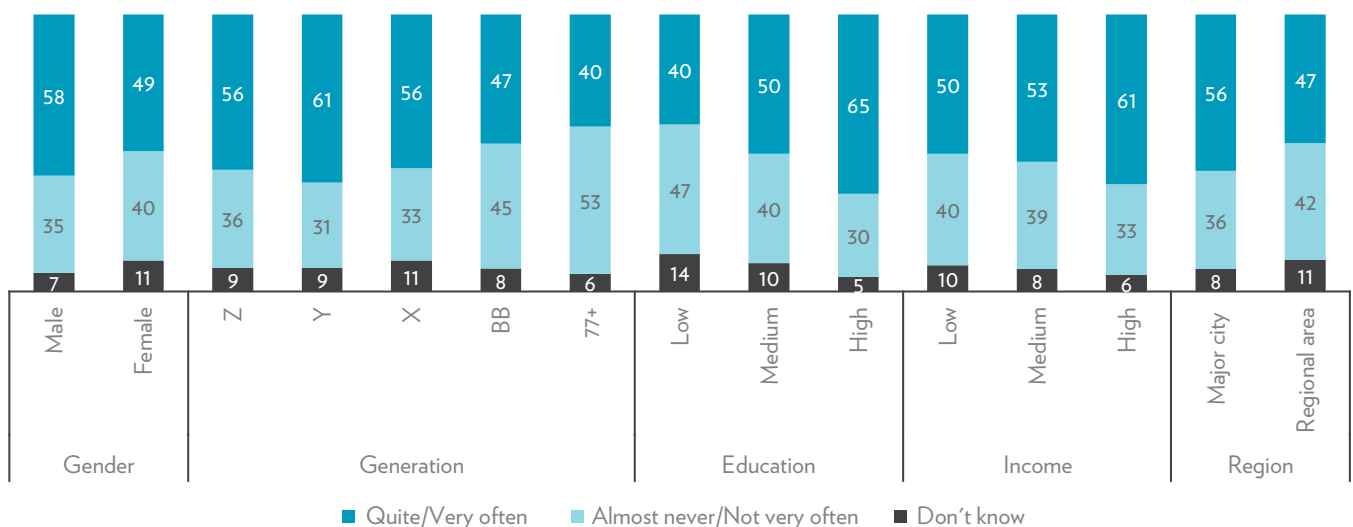
PEOPLE WHO OFTEN HEAR CRITICISM OF JOURNALISTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO TRUST NEWS

People who say they see criticism of journalists 'very' or 'quite' often (41%) are less likely to say they trust news, compared with those who rarely encounter it (50%). Importantly, distrust in the news people choose to consume is much higher among those who see a lot of criticism (25%), while those who don't see journalists being criticised very often are less likely to say they distrust their news (15%) (see **figure 3.5**). This suggests that public criticism of the news media and individual journalists may have the effect of increasing audience distrust in all news, including the news they personally choose to use.

FIGURE 3.5: TRUST IN NEWS AND TRUST IN MY NEWS BY EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM (%)
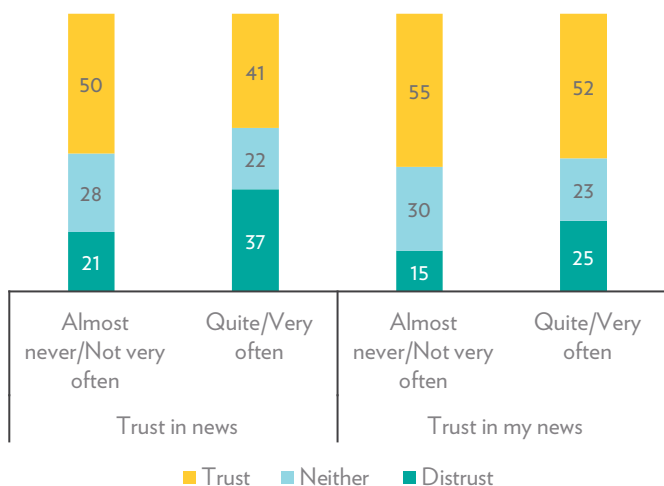
The data suggest that this is also the case internationally, with criticism and distrust having an inverse relationship across all countries sampled. For example, those in the USA who say they see a lot of criticism of news are much more likely to say they distrust news (47%) compared with those who rarely see criticism (36%) (see **figure 3.6**).

FIGURE 3.6: DISTRUST IN NEWS BY EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY COUNTRY (%)

■ Quite/Very often ■ Almost never/Not very often
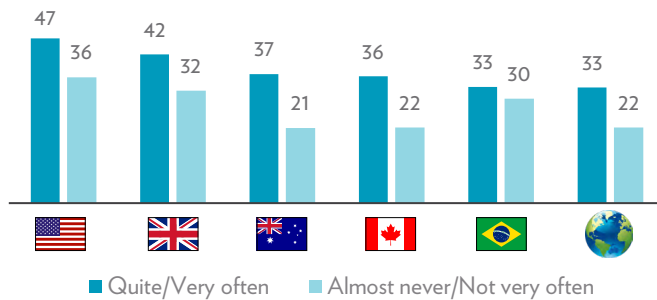
People who mainly use print news sources are the most likely to say they hear criticism of the news media and journalists (67%) compared to TV (52%) and radio (46%) users (see **figure 3.7**). This possibly reflects that newspapers traditionally have dedicated specialist media reporters and coverage of media issues.

Left-wing news consumers are slightly more likely to say they hear people criticising the news media and journalists (65%) than right-wing (61%). Centre oriented consumers are the most likely to say they rarely hear criticism. This reflects their overall lower levels of interest in and consumption of news (see **figure 3.8**). It's possible this also reflects the partisan nature of criticism directed towards news media and journalists.

FIGURE 3.7: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

■ Quite/Very often ■ Almost never/Not very often ■ Don't know
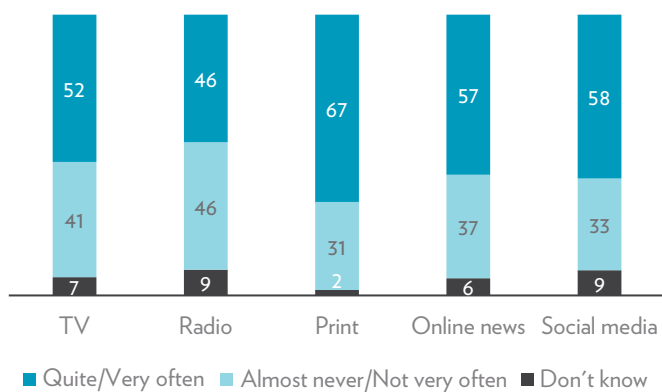
FIGURE 3.8: EXPERIENCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

■ Quite/Very often ■ Almost never/Not very often ■ Don't know
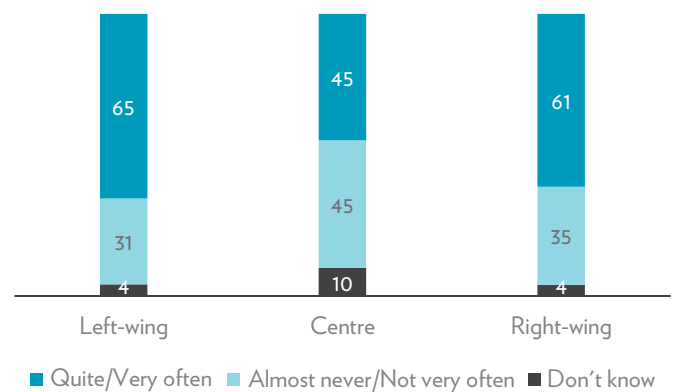
COLLEAGUES, FRIENDS, AND FAMILY ARE THE BIGGEST SOURCE OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM

Colleagues, friends, and family are the biggest source of criticism about the news media and journalists in Australia (44%), followed by ordinary people (40%), politicians or political activists (38%), celebrities, comedians and social media influencers (35%), and other journalists and news organisations (30%) (see **figure 3.9**).

FIGURE 3.9: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM (%)
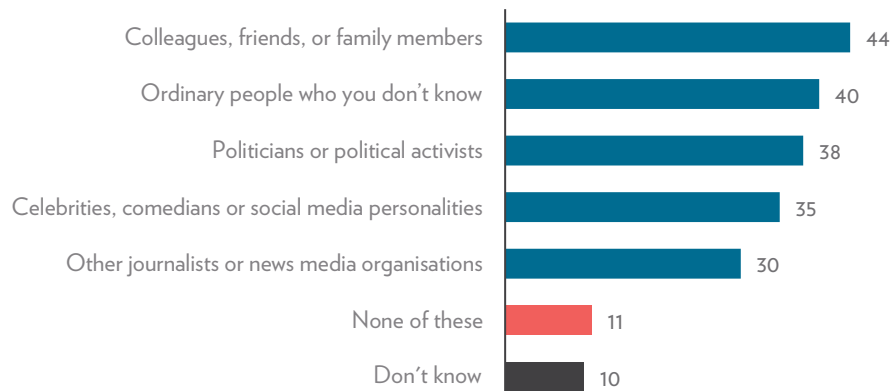
[Q2_Criticism_2023] Which of the following, if any, have you seen or heard criticising journalists or the news media in Australia in the last year? Please select all that apply. [Base: Among those who heard media criticism N=1,661]

In contrast, globally, politicians or political activists are the most common source of criticism of the news media and journalists, with USA recording the highest score (58%). Australia (38%) sits below the global average (40%) in relation to politicians being a source of criticism. In the UK, respondents are most likely to hear criticism of the news media from celebrities, comedians or social media personalities (see **figure 3.10**).

FIGURE 3.10: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY COUNTRY (%)
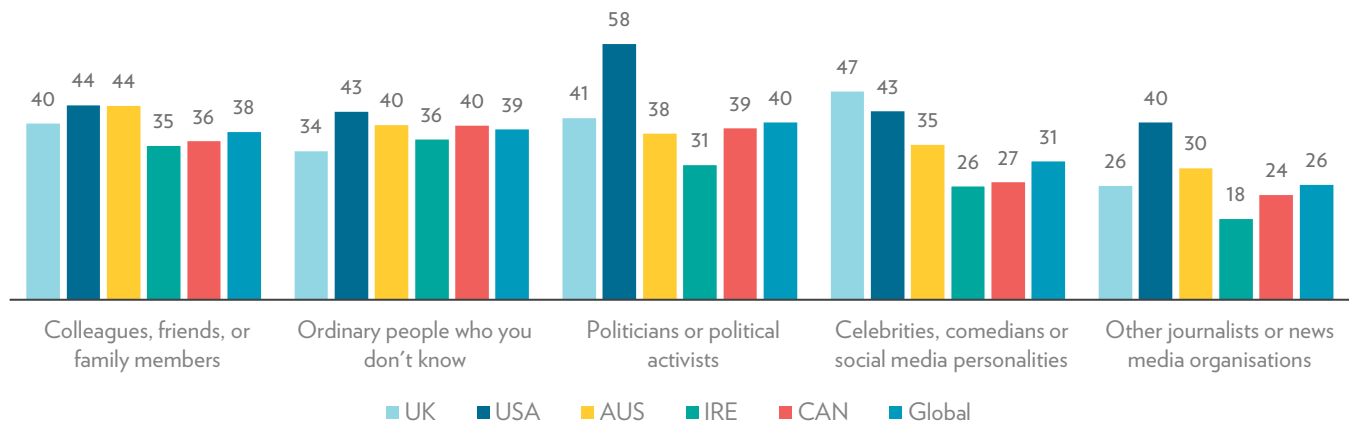
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

Men are overall more likely to be aware of criticism of the news media and journalists than women. This is clearly shown in relation to hearing criticism about the news media from politicians with 42% of men saying they hear criticism from political actors compared to 33% of women (see **figure 3.11**). This reflects men's higher interest in politics and news than women's (see **figure 3.4**).

FIGURE 3.11: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY GENDER (%)
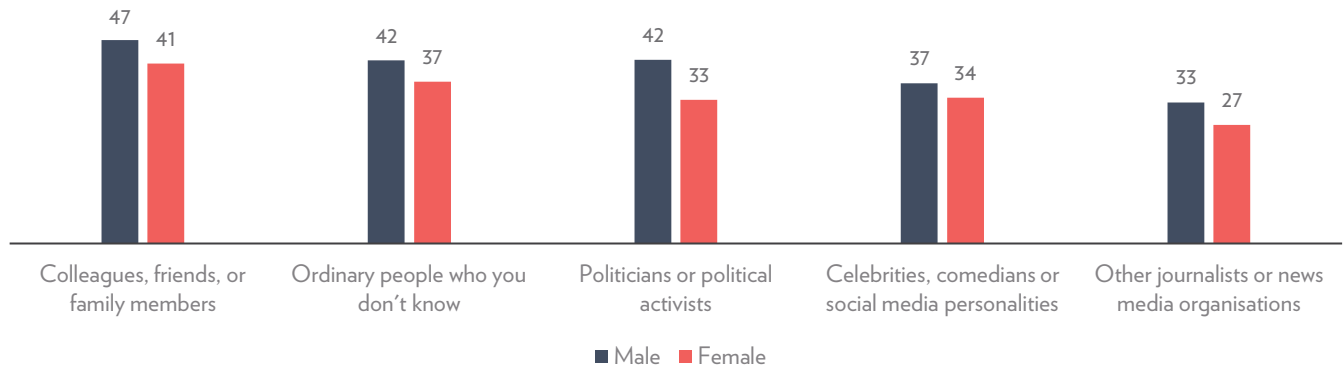
People aged 35+ are more likely to hear criticism of the news media from politicians and political activists, while those aged 35 and under say colleagues, friends and family members are the biggest source of criticism (see **figure 3.12**). This may reflect younger generations' high use of social media.

FIGURE 3.12: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY AGE (%)
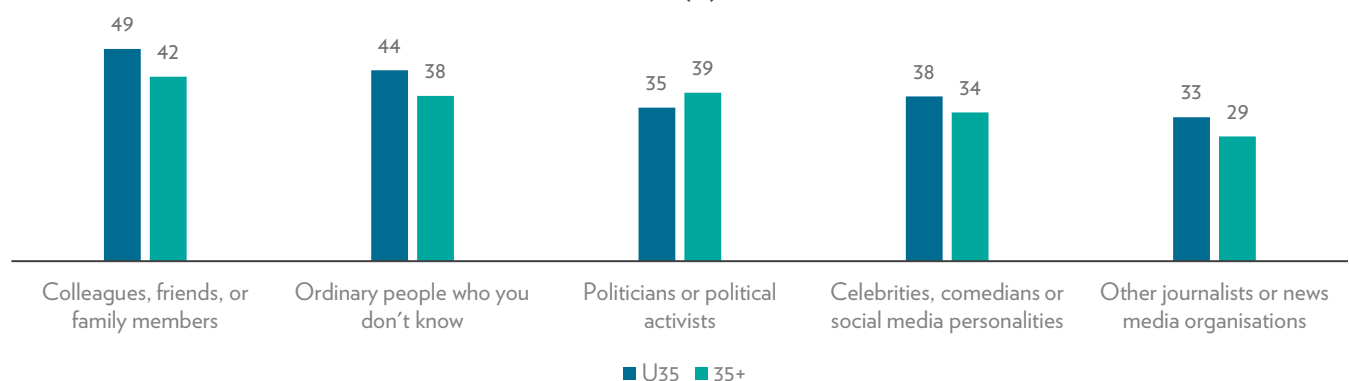
People who mainly use radio as a source of news are most likely to say they hear criticism of the news media from ordinary people they don't know (see **figure 3.13**). This possibly reflects the feature of talk back radio where members of the public phone in to express their opinion. Online and social media users are most likely to hear criticism of the news media from colleagues, family and friends followed by ordinary people. Whereas print users are most likely to hear criticism about journalists and the news media from politicians and activists.

FIGURE 3.13: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)
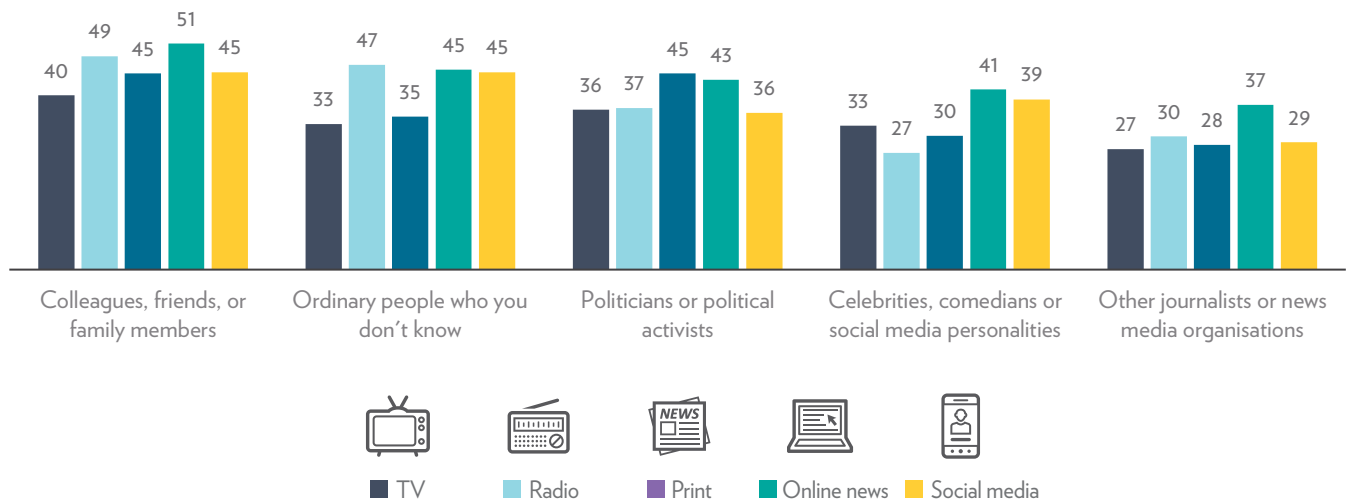
Left and right leaning audiences are just as likely to hear criticism of journalists and the news media from politicians (44%) (see **figure 3.14**). However, left-wing audiences are more likely to experience criticism from celebrities, comedians or on social media (42%) than right-wing (35%).

52% LEFT-WING
hear criticism from *people they know*

FIGURE 3.14: SOURCES OF NEWS MEDIA CRITICISM BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)
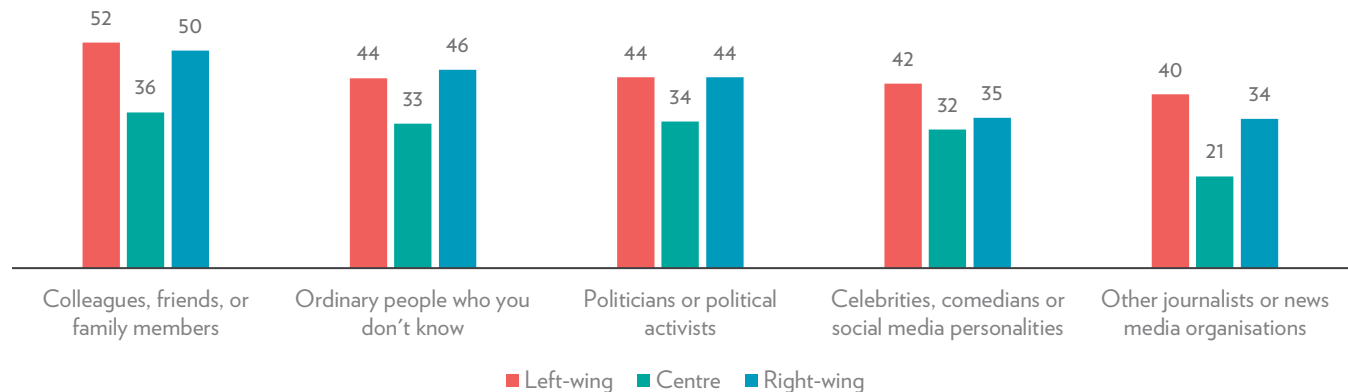
PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

SIXTY PERCENT THINK PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO SOCIETY

This year we asked respondents how important publicly funded news services such as the ABC and SBS are to them personally and to society (see **figure 3.15**). Almost two-thirds say public service media (PSM) are 'very' or 'quite' important to society and 52% say they are important to them personally. Around one quarter are non-committal about the importance of PSM to themselves or the community. The remainder think it is unimportant or say they don't know.

Even among those who say public service media are not important to them personally, many say they are valuable to society. About one-third (30%) of those who say PSM are neither important nor unimportant to them, say they are important to society. One in five (17%) of those who think they are unimportant to them personally still appreciate their value to society (see **figure 3.16**).

A similar pattern was found across other countries where audiences judged the importance of PSM to be more important to society than to themselves personally. In comparison with other countries in the survey Australians' opinions about the personal importance of PSM matches the global average (52%) and is slightly above the global average for its importance to society (Global 58%; AU 60%) (see **figure 3.17**). Finnish audiences have the most positive view about the role of PSM in their lives and for society, and Japanese have the least positive view. Interestingly, respondents in countries with strong PSM such as the UK and Canada are less likely to think PSM played a very important role for them personally or for society compared to the global average.

FIGURE 3.15: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA (%)

Legend:
- Very/quite important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Very/quite unimportant
- Don't know

Important personally: 52, 27, 18, 3
Important to society: 60, 23, 14, 3
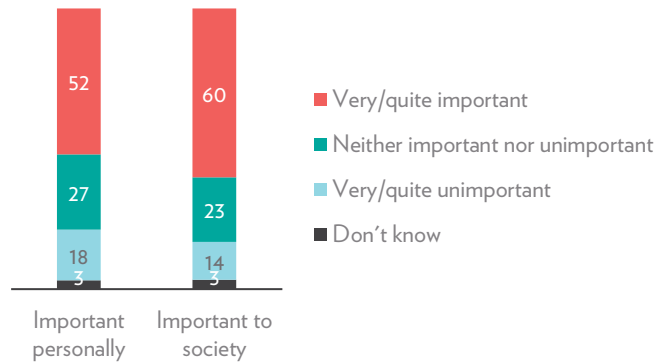
[Q1_PSM_2023g_1] How important, or not, are publicly funded news services such as ABC or SBS to you personally…? [Q1_PSM_2023g_2] In your opinion, how important, or not, are publicly funded news services such as ABC or SBS to society? [Base: N=2,025]

FIGURE 3.16: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA TO SOCIETY BY IMPORTANCE PERSONALLY (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)
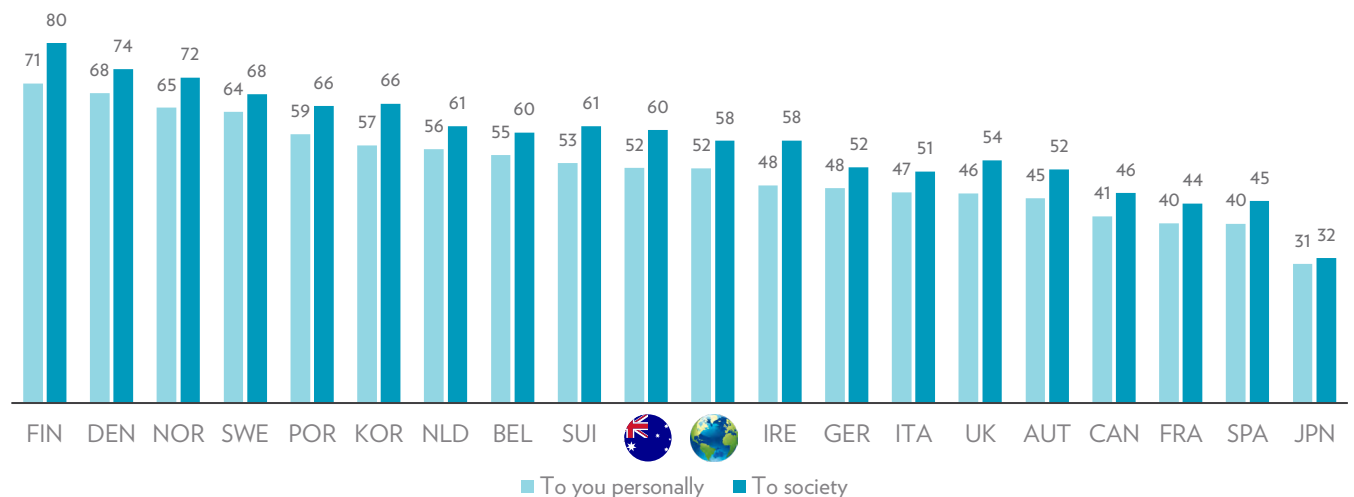

Very/quite unimportant: 17
Neither important nor unimportant: 30
Very/quite important: 94
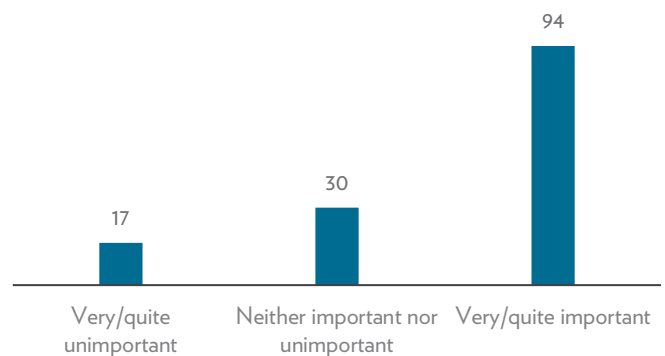
FIGURE 3.17: IMPORTANCE OF PSM TO YOU PERSONALLY AND TO SOCIETY BY COUNTRY (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)

Country	To you personally	To society
FIN	71	80
DEN	68	74
NOR	65	72
SWE	64	68
POR	59	66
KOR	57	66
NLD	56	61
BEL	55	60
SUI	53	61
AUS	52	60
Global	52	58
IRE	48	58
GER	48	52
ITA	47	51
UK	46	54
AUT	45	52
CAN	41	46
FRA	40	44
SPA	40	45
JPN	31	32

Global average is among 22 countries [Base: N=38,793]

PSM IS MOST IMPORTANT TO HIGHLY EDUCATED

Across all demographics, Australians deem PSM to be more important to society than to themselves personally (see **figure 3.18**). People with high levels of education (72%) and income (69%) are the most likely to think publicly funded media like the ABC and SBS are important to society. Respondents with low levels of education are the least likely to think PSM are 'very' and 'quite' important to the community (47%). They are also the least likely

to think PSM are important to themselves personally (38%), followed by Gen Z (43%). There is little difference between regional and metropolitan respondents' attitudes towards publicly funded media with 51% saying it is important to them personally and slightly fewer regional consumers saying it is important to society (59%) than city dwellers (61%).

FIGURE 3.18: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY DEMOGRAPHICS (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)
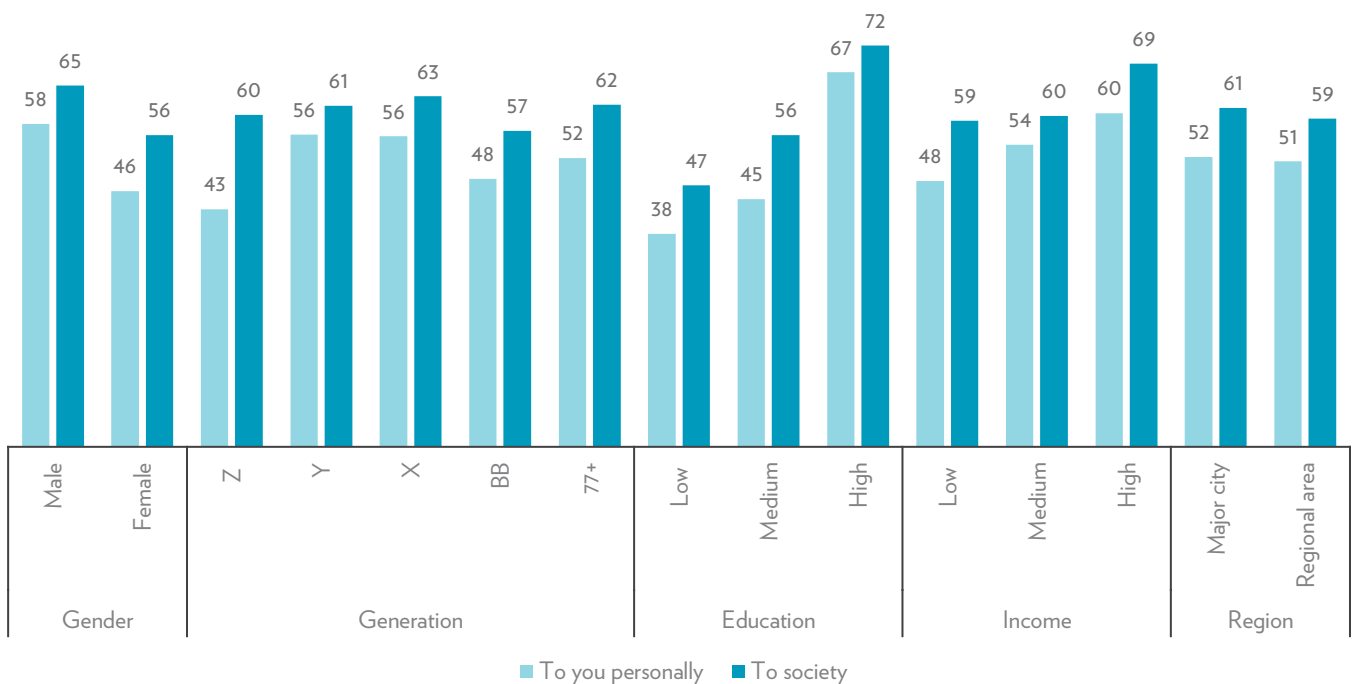
In line with findings that people with higher levels of education are the most likely to value the role of publicly funded media, heavy news consumers and people who are highly interested in news are much more likely to value the role of PSM personally and for society. Almost three-quarters of respondents with high interest in news consider publicly funded media to be important to society (73%), compared to 49% of people with low interest in news. People who consume news more than once a day are more likely to consider PSM personally important (63%) than light news users (45%) (see **figure 3.19**). These results reflect that people with higher levels of education are more interested in news and consume it more often.

FIGURE 3.19: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY NEWS ACCESS, INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICS
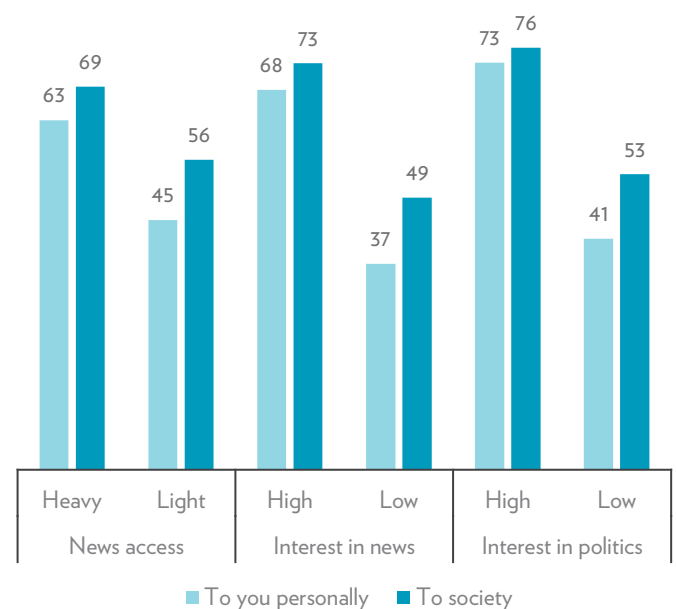
PSM IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT SOCIALLY AND PERSONALLY TO LEFT-WING AUDIENCES THAN RIGHT-WING

The data reveal large differences in opinion about the importance of publicly funded media based on political orientation. Left-wing audiences are much more likely deem PSM to be important personally and socially (74%; 80%) than centre (50%; 58%), and right-wing (43%; 51%). People who don't know their political orientation are the least likely to consider publicly funded media to be important to them personally (27%) and society (41%) (see **figure 3.20**). This could reflect that those who don't know their political orientation are less likely to get their news from public broadcasters.

FIGURE 3.20: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)

People who mainly use online news sources are the most likely to view PSM as important to society (69%), followed by TV (65%), radio (60%), social media and print users (56%) (see **figure 3.21**). People who mainly get their news from social media are the least likely to consider PSM to be important to them personally (41%) reflecting higher use of these platforms for news by women and young people.

FIGURE 3.21: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)
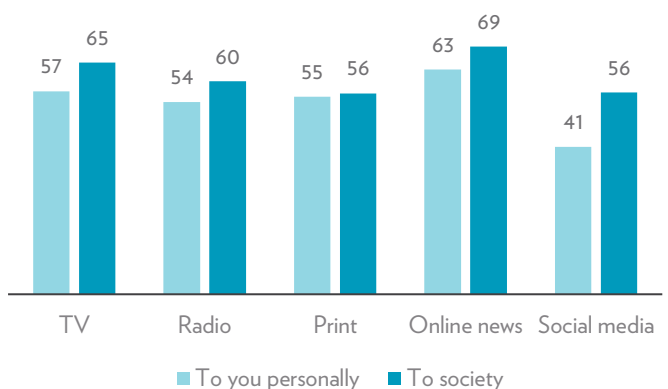
Not surprisingly, people who personally use public service media as a source of news are much more likely to value its contribution to society and their own lives than those who do not use it. Around three-quarters of PSM users value their role of publicly funded media in society (77%) and to them personally. People who don't use PSM are more likely to value their contribution to society (45%) than to themselves (34%) (see **figure 3.22**).

FIGURE 3.22: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA USERS (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)
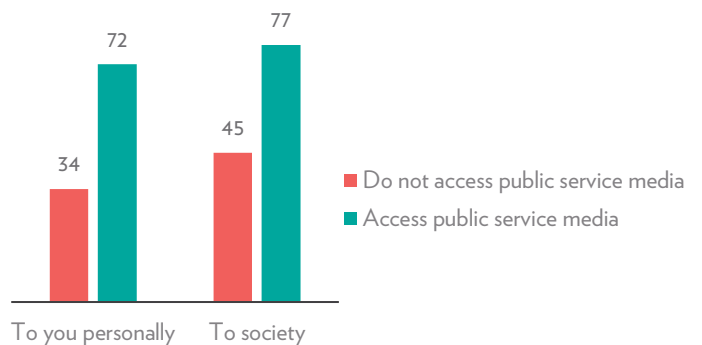
*Access public service media includes those who use any of ABC or SBS news

THOSE WHO TRUST NEWS VALUE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA MORE THAN DISTRUSTERS

Almost three-quarters of people who trust the news generally think publicly funded media are very important to society (74%), and two-thirds consider them important personally (67%). In contrast, half of people who say they don't trust the news most of the time think PSM are important to society, and fewer (40%) consider them important to themselves (see **figure 3.23**).

FIGURE 3.23: IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA BY TRUST IN NEWS (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)

- Distrust
- Trust

To you personally   To society
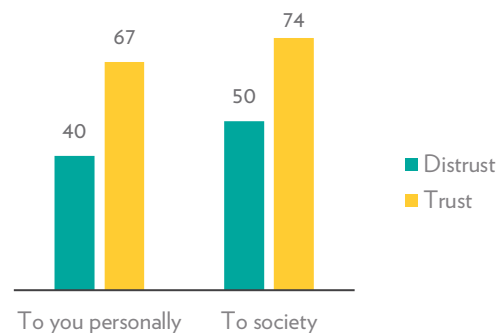
SUMMARY

Compared to other countries, Australians say they are slightly more likely to hear criticism of the news media and journalists from ordinary people, than politicians. This contrasts starkly with the US and Brazil where criticism of the news media has played a central role in the campaign strategies of populist leaders. While Australian politicians do have a track record of disparaging the news media in Australia, so far it has not gone to the extremes seen elsewhere. The data reflect this, given that Australians are more likely to see media criticism coming from colleagues, friends and family.

There is a relationship between media criticism and trust. The more people encounter criticism of news organisations and journalists, the more likely they are to distrust both news in general and the news they personally consume. This suggests that criticism about news media can undermine the trust in all news and not just the brands that are targeted, generating a spiral of cynicism.

The funding of public service media (PSM) in Australia is a traditional political football, however it always finds refuge in its broad community support. This year's data confirms that the majority of people surveyed think PSM like the ABC and the SBS are important to themselves personally and even more to society generally. Australians also value the role of PSM more highly than audiences in other countries with strong publicly funded media such as the UK and Canada.

However, support for PSM is uneven. Those with lower education are much less likely to say they support public service media compared to highly educated. Women and those with low incomes are less likely to think the role of PSM is important. PSMs also struggle to attract younger audiences, with Gen Z being least likely to say it is important to them personally.

This year's findings suggest left-leaning audiences are most likely to be supportive of PSM's role. It is important to note that age and education are just as likely to predict support for PSMs as political orientation.

People who say they are concerned about misinformation are much more likely to consider public service media to be important to society compared to those who are not concerned. And those who don't think PSM is important to them personally still think they are important to society. These findings reflect Australians' appreciation for the commercial and political independence of the national broadcasters, which consistently receive high trust scores in the survey.

COMMENTARY

AMID WIDESPREAD DISTRUST, PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT

Matthew Ricketson, Professor, Deakin University

Journalists have never been particularly popular. There is no point pretending otherwise. John Gorton, Australia's prime minister between 1968 and 1971, famously described them as "slimy white things that crawl out of sewers".

He is far from alone in his invective but what has changed in recent years is the alarming extent to which ordinary people, often incited by populist, authoritarian political leaders such as Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, have added physical violence to their verbal attacks.

Marina Dias, a Brazilian journalist now working for *The Washington Post*, was in Brasília on January 8 this year when *bolsonaristas*, angered at Bolsonaro's loss in the presidential elections, yelled at her, chased her, pushed her to the ground, and kicked her repeatedly. The Committee to Protect Journalists estimates she was one of at least forty journalists targeted during the riots[1].

This is useful context in which to assess the views of journalism and journalists outlined in this chapter of the *Digital News Report (DNR): Australia 2023* which reports that Australians are more likely to see or hear criticism of the news media than people in many other countries surveyed but not more than in both Brazil and the US.

The report's data is broken down by age, gender, education and income, which tells us something about people's perceptions of the news media but perhaps the most striking figures are about people's views of public service media outlets such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS).

We already know from previous editions of the *DNR: Australia* dating back to 2018 that the ABC is seen as more trustworthy than any other news media outlet in Australia. That trend continues in this year's report.

Usefully, respondents this year were asked how important, or not, publicly funded news services such as the ABC

were to them personally and to society. For the first question, 52% answered 'very' or 'quite' important, while for the second, the figure was 60%.

That says something about people's perceptions of the value of public service media, which was regarded by media scholars as fusty, old-fashioned and destined to fade at the dawn of the digital media age.

> **Instead, the reverse has occurred as many public broadcasters proved themselves unexpectedly nimble in adapting to the possibilities created by new communication technologies.**

During the same period their commercial broadcast rivals have gradually lost audiences to online media and, especially, streaming services while the nation's big newspaper companies have struggled to find a new business model to offset the loss in advertising revenue to stand-alone classified sites.

The rise of social media and with it the potential for the proliferation of misinformation and disinformation has first swamped then weakened many people's perception of the trustworthiness of the news media.

The DNR data tells us people aged 35 and over are more likely to hear criticism of the news media from politicians and political activists while for those aged under 35 colleagues, friends and family members are the biggest source of criticism of the news media.

> **What it does not tell us, and what they may not know is what is the source of this criticism? It may well be originally from politicians or from other news media outlets.**

[1] Schwarcz, L. & Dias, M. (2023). The fight for good information, *Columbia Journalism Review* (17 April) https://www.cjr.org/in-conversation/a-journalist-and-an-anthropologist-on-brazil.php.

Similarly, the people least likely to consider public service media to be important to them personally are those who consume most of their news via social media. Again, they may well not know the original source of much of the news they are consuming. The ABC actually has a strong presence in online and social media, according to its latest annual report[2]. Its content reaches 17 million monthly unique viewers on YouTube, the number of its Instagram users grew 15% in the last year and the ABC's podcasts recorded a monthly average of 33 million unique downloads — up 22% compared to 2020–21.

At a time when one of the world's most powerful media companies, News Corp, has shown itself to have cared less about truth than knowingly continuing to broadcast lies to retain their audience, public service media remains of critical importance.

[2] https://about.abc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2021-22-ABC-Annual-Report.pdf

4 NEWS ALGORITHMS, CURATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- News consumers continue to prefer reading news (48%) to watching news (22%) online.

- Almost half (46%) do not want algorithms to choose their news based on friends' news consumption.

- 35% prefer algorithms to choose their news based on past consumption compared to editors and journalists selecting the news (29%).

- 61% say they are worried they might miss important information because of news personalisation.

- One in four Gen Z say they watch news related videos on TikTok.

NEWS ALGORITHMS

ALMOST HALF DO NOT WANT ALGORITHMS TO CHOOSE NEWS FOR THEM BASED ON THEIR FRIENDS' NEWS CONSUMPTION

News websites, mobile apps and social networks make decisions about what content to show you. These decisions can be made by editors and journalists or by computer algorithms analysing information about what other content you have used, or based on what you and your friends share and interact with on social media. We asked respondents to answer questions with this in mind. The first question we asked was about their preferences in relation to news algorithms.

Australians are split in their views about automatic curation based on their past news consumption. About one-third (35%) agree that having stories automatically selected on the basis of their past consumption is a good way to get news. An equal number of respondents disagree. However, when it comes to news selected by editors or journalists, only 29% say they prefer this option and 36% say they don't think it is a good way to get news. Furthermore, almost half of respondents (46%) do not think having stories automatically selected for them based on their friends' consumption is a good way to get news (see **figure 4.1**).

FIGURE 4.1: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE (%)

■ Agree   ■ Neither   ■ Disagree
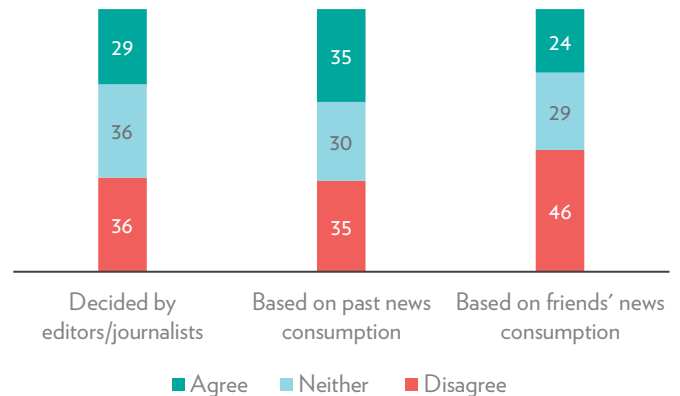
[Q10D_2016a] Every news website, mobile app or social network makes decisions about what content to show to you. These decisions can be made by editors and journalists or by computer algorithms analysing information about what other content you have used, or on the basis of what you and your friends share and interact with on social media. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements [Base: N=2,025]

AUSTRALIA IS NOT THE ONLY COUNTRY TO PREFER ALGORITHMS OVER EDITORS

Globally news consumers favour news stories that are selected based on what they have consumed in the past (30%) over stories that are selected by editors or journalists (27%). Brazil tops the preference for both news selected by editors and news based on past news consumption. UK was lowest on both types of news curation with only 14% saying news selected by editors or journalists is a good thing, and

20% saying personalised news based on past consumption is a good way to get news. Australia is slightly above the global average for both types of curation (see **figure 4.2**). Across all countries, audiences expressed lowest support for algorithms selecting their news based on their friends' consumption (18% global average).

FIGURE 4.2: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE BY SELECTED COUNTRIES (%)

■ Having stories selected for my by editors and journalists is a good way to get news
■ Having stories automatically selected for me on the basis of what I have consumed in the past is a good way to get news
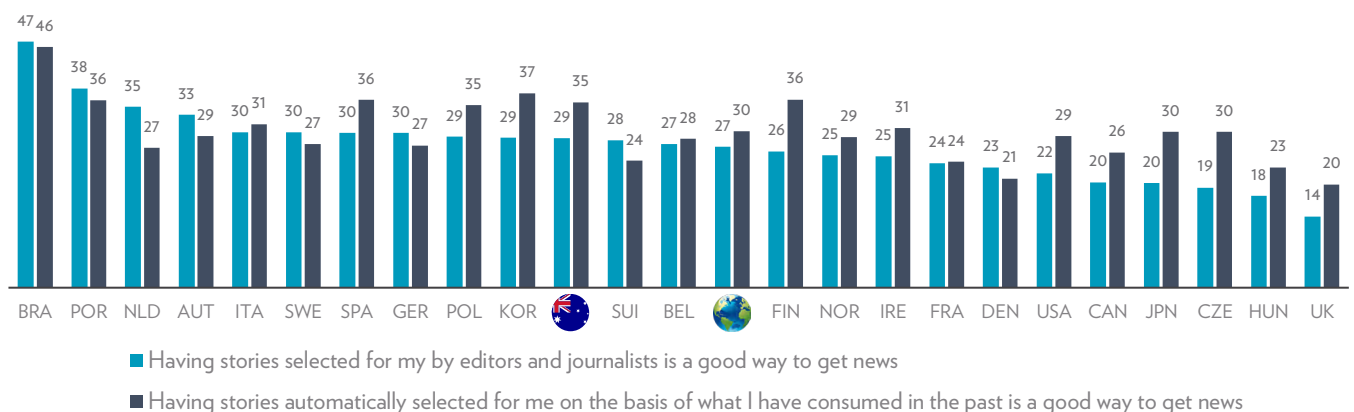
Note: Global average among 24 countries [Base: N=48,998]

YOUNGER GENERATIONS ARE MORE COMFORTABLE WITH NEWS ALGORITHMS

Younger people are more comfortable with algorithms choosing their news than journalists and editors. About half of Gen Y (51%) and 41% of Gen Z agree that having stories automatically selected based on what they have consumed in the past is a good way to get news. In contrast, 42% of Gen Y and 32% of Gen Z think having stories selected by editors and journalists is a good way to get news online. However, both Y and Z are less supportive of algorithms choosing their news based on their friends' habits.

Less than one-fifth (19%) of Baby Boomers think news personalisation based on their history of news consumption is a good idea. Even fewer think stories selected by editors and journalists (14%) or personalisation based on their friends' consumption (10%) are good ways to get news. Women are also more sceptical about news personalisation based on algorithms and editors than men. (see **figure 4.3**).

FIGURE 4.3: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)
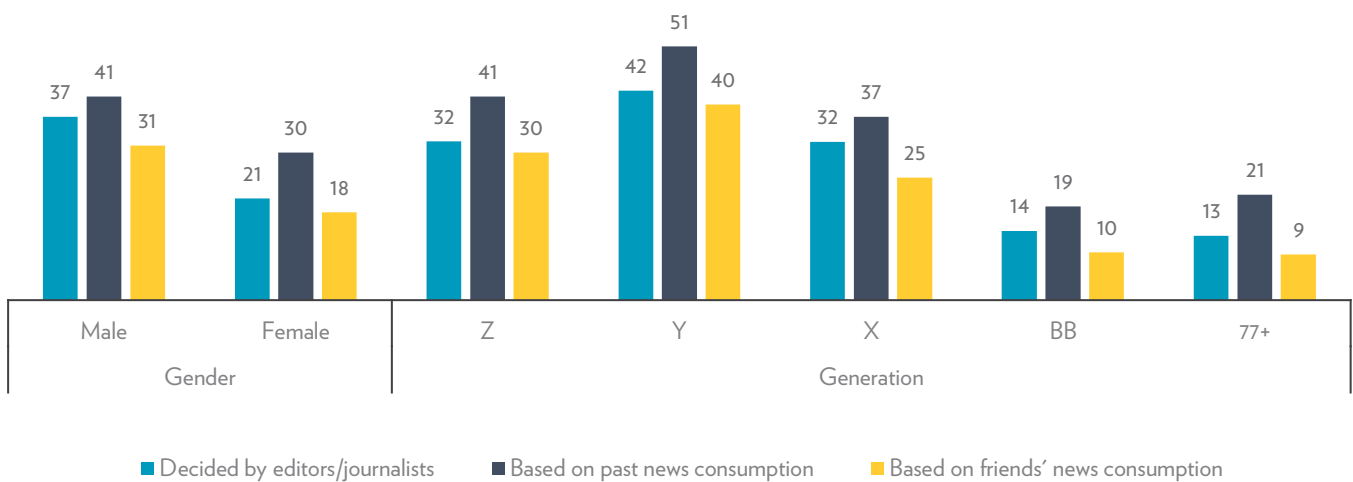
Those with high education, high income and people who live in the city are more positive about having their news selected for them either through traditional editorial or algorithmic processes. In contrast, those with low education and income, or living in regional areas, are less likely to hold a view on this (see **figure 4.4**).

FIGURE 4.4: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE BY EDUCATION, INCOME, AND REGION (%)
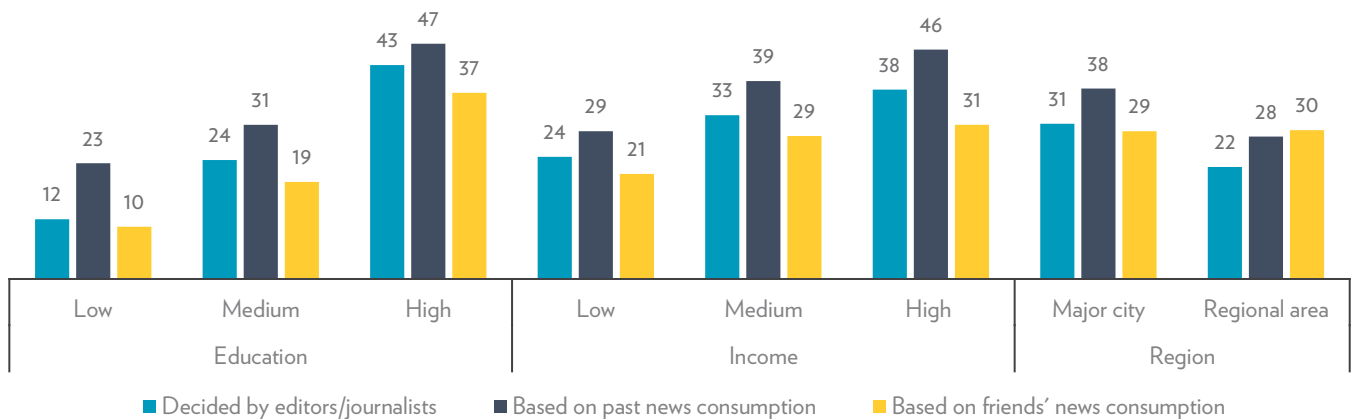
Heavy news consumers are the most supportive of their news being selected by algorithms based on their past consumption. Among heavy news consumers 42% agree that algorithmic news curation based on their past consumption is a good idea and 34% want news stories selected by editors or journalists. However, this may be a reflection of the higher proportions of light news consumers who are unsure or undecided (see **figure 4.5**).

Those who trust news in general are much more likely to have a positive view about news algorithms compared to those who say they don't trust news. Nearly half (49%) of those who trust news say stories automatically selected based on their past consumption are a good way to get news compared to 21% who don't trust the news; and 44% of people who trust the news agree stories selected by editors and journalists are a good thing compared to 16% of people who do not trust the news (see **figure 4.6**).

FIGURE 4.5: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE BY NEWS ACCESS (%)

FIGURE 4.6: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE BY TRUST IN NEWS (%)
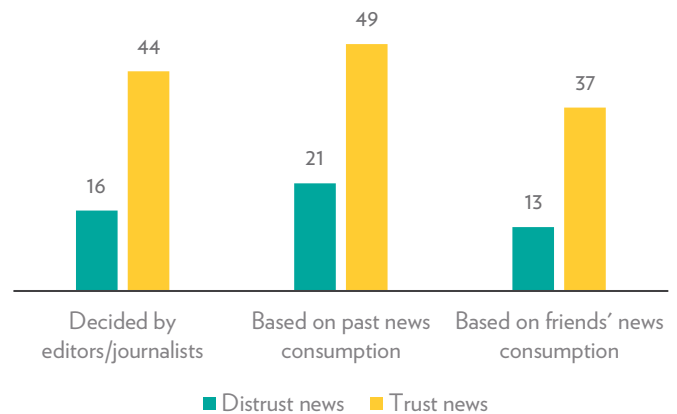
MANY AUSTRALIANS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT PERSONALISATION OF NEWS

Personalisation of news is often related to concerns that people may end up only being exposed to information and ideas that are similar to their own. We asked if Australians were concerned about this. Many people worry they might miss out on important information (61%) or challenging viewpoints (57%) because their news is personalised (see **figure 4.7**).

61%
fear **missing out**

FIGURE 4.7: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS (%)
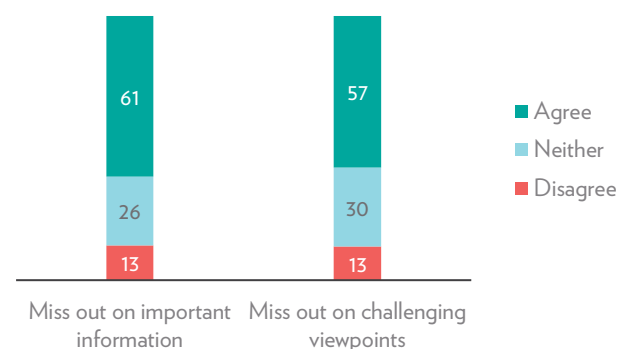
[Q10D_2016b] Now when thinking about more personalised news, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. I worry that more personalised news may mean that I miss out on important information. I worry that more personalised news may mean that I miss out on challenging viewpoints. [Base: N=2,025]

AUSTRALIANS ARE AMONG THE MOST CONCERNED ABOUT NEWS PERSONALISATION IN THE WORLD

Australians are the second most likely to say they worry about missing out on information and viewpoints because of personalisation. Global news consumers are slightly more concerned about missing out on important information (49%) than missing out on challenging viewpoints (46%). There are stark differences in the level of concern across the 24 countries we compared, with 63% of UK news consumers and 61% of Australian consumers expressing concern about missing out on important information, but only 37% of German and 36% of Japanese news consumers say they are worried about this (see **figure 4.8**).

FIGURE 4.8: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)
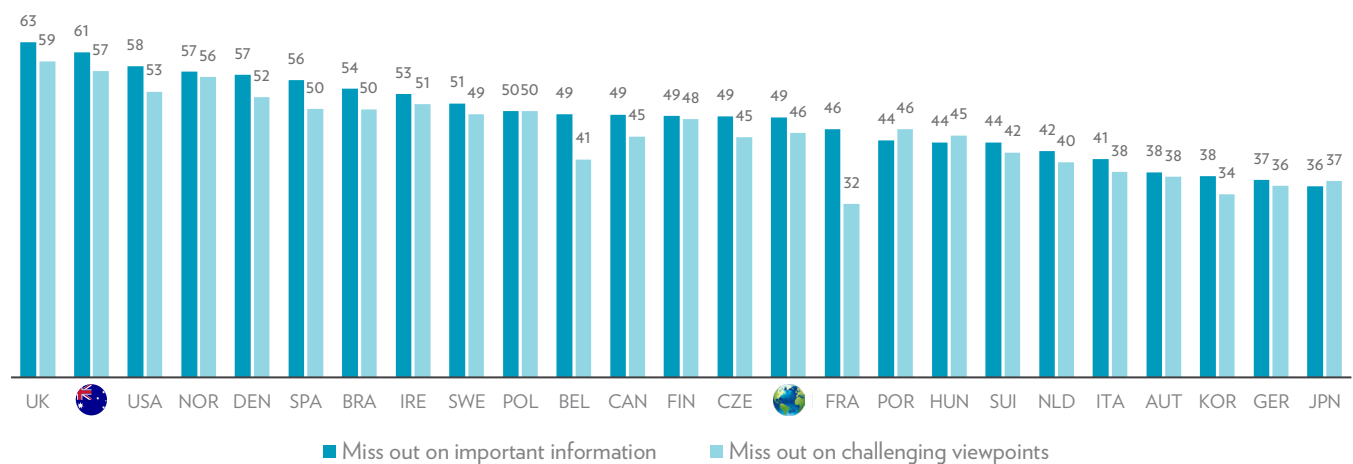
Note: Global average among 24 countries [Base: N=49,003]

YOUNGER PEOPLE AND MEN ARE MORE WORRIED ABOUT PERSONALISATION LIMITING INFORMATION

Younger generations are more concerned about missing out on important information or challenging viewpoints due to algorithms and personalisation; 63% of Gen Z are worried about missing out on information and 69% are worried they might miss out on challenging viewpoints (see **figure 4.9**). This may be because they are more familiar with the online news environment and are aware of both positive and negative impacts of algorithmic and editorial customisation of news.

FIGURE 4.9: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)
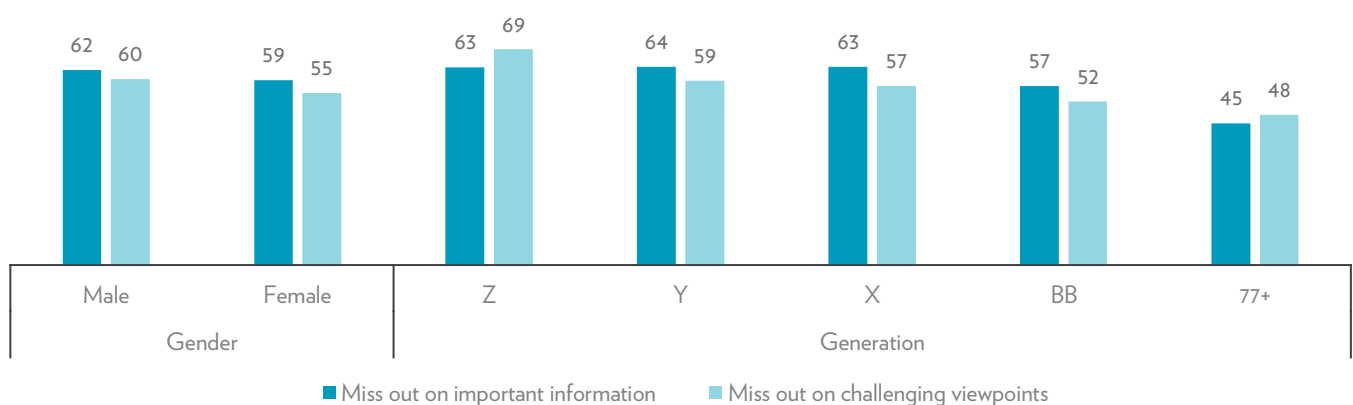
Those with high education, high income and city dwellers are more concerned about the impact of news personalisation. This may be related to the levesl of media literacy about how algorithms work (see **figure 4.10**).

FIGURE 4.10: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS BY EDUCATION, INCOME AND REGION (%)

Miss out on important information   Miss out on challenging viewpoints
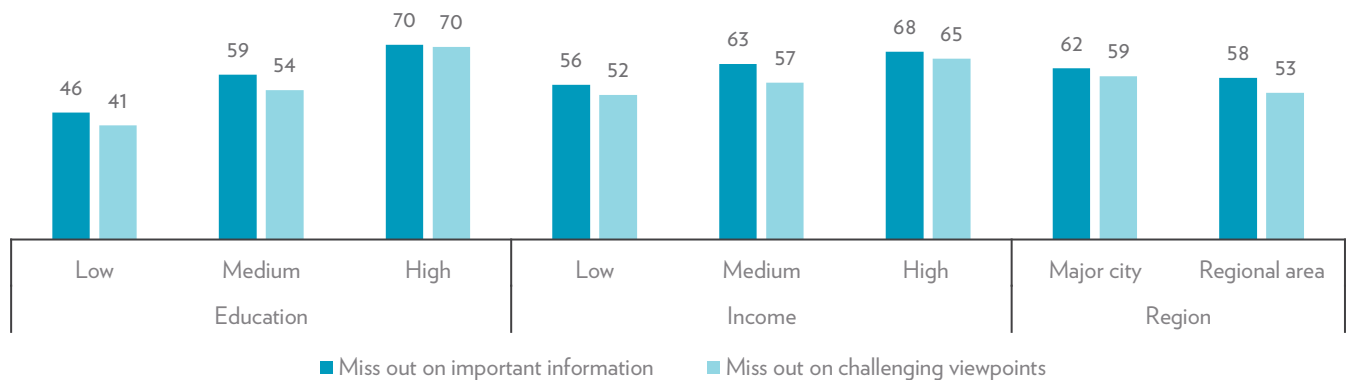
LEFT-WING CONSUMERS ARE MORE WORRIED ABOUT PERSONALISATION

Concern about personalised news is higher among left-wing consumers, and lower among those in the centre and people who don't know their political orientation. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of left-wing and 65% of right-wing consumers are worried about missing out on important information due to the personalisation of news (see **figure 4.11**).

FIGURE 4.11: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

Miss out on important information
Miss out on challenging viewpoints
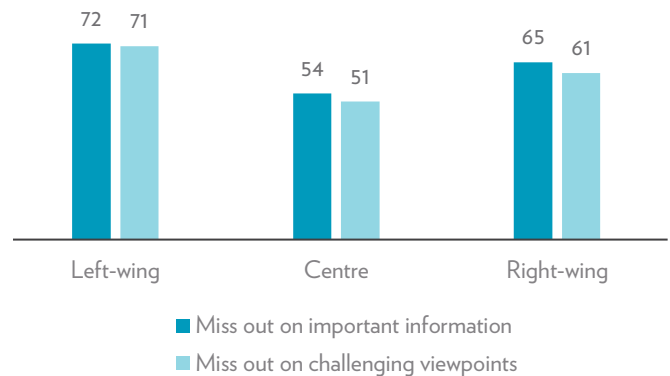
PEOPLE CONCERNED ABOUT NEWS PERSONALISATION TEND TO ACCESS A GREATER VARIETY OF NEWS BRANDS

Those who are worried they might miss out on important information or viewpoints are much more likely to access a greater variety of news brands offline and online. Almost two-thirds (60%) of those who are worried about missing out on important information access four or more news brands compared to 47% of those who are not worried. Similarly, 62% of those who are worried that they might miss out on different viewpoints use four or more news brands compared to only 44% of people who are not worried (see **figure 4.12**).

This may mean that respondents who are concerned about the limiting effects of news personalisation are accessing multiple sources of news to overcome this. This is also related to the fact that heavy news consumers are much more likely to be concerned about personalisation (67%) than light news consumers (57%).

FIGURE 4.12: NUMBER OF BRANDS BY CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS (%)

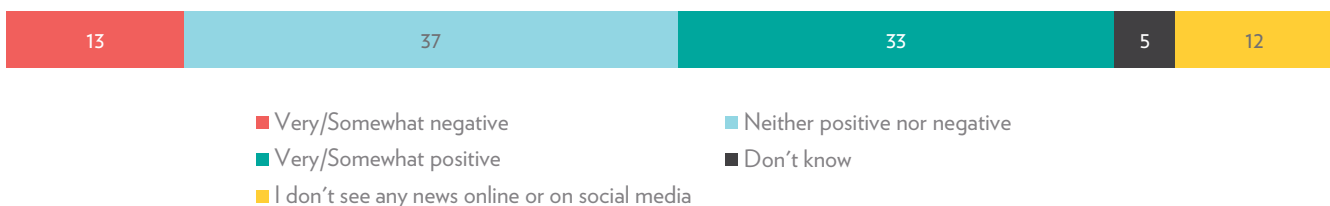None   1 to 3 brands   4 or more brands
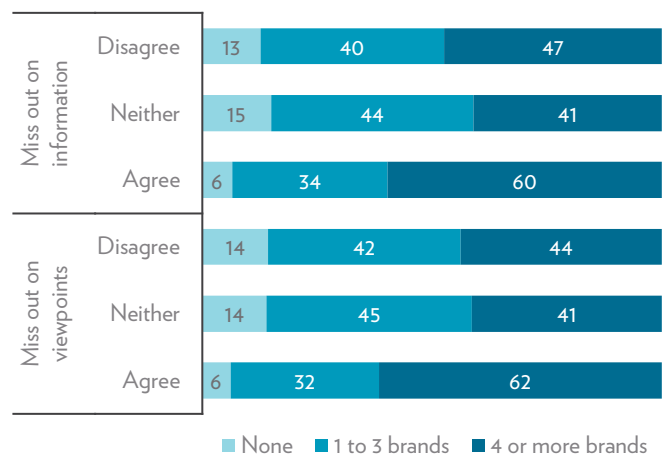
EXPERIENCES OF NEWS ENGAGEMENT

MOST DO NOT HAVE NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES ENGAGING WITH NEWS ONLINE

We asked respondents about their experience of engagement with news online or on social media. Engagement with news includes activities such as reading or posting comments and talking to people about news in digital spaces. Only around one in ten (13%) report having a somewhat or very negative experience. Whereas one-third (33%) of respondents say they have had a positive experience, and 37% say they have had neither a positive nor a negative experience (see **figure 4.13**).

FIGURE 4.13: NEWS ENGAGEMENT SENTIMENT (%)

13	37	33	5	12

■ Very/Somewhat negative

■ Very/Somewhat positive

■ I don't see any news online or on social media

■ Neither positive nor negative

■ Don't know

[Q1_Participation_2023] How positive or negative is your experience of engagement with news online or on social media (e.g., reading or posting comments, talking to people about news, etc.)? [Base: N=2,025]

Men (40%) and Gen Y (43%) are more likely to report having positive experiences engaging news online than women (27%), Baby Boomers (22%) and 77+ (17%). Those with high education (49%), and city dwellers (35%) are more likely to report having a positive experience. While Gen Z are likely to report having positive experiences with online news (35%), they are also most likely to report having negative experiences (19%), suggesting higher levels of online engagement in general (see **figure 4.14**).

FIGURE 4.14: NEWS ENGAGEMENT SENTIMENT BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

	Male	Female	Z	Y	X	BB	77+	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Major city	Regional area
I don't see any	11	13	5	6	9	21	24	21	13	6	17	11	5	11	15
Don't know	3	6	7	4	5	4	8	6	6	2	4	3	3	4	6
Positive	40	27	35	43	36	22	17	17	26	49	28	38	43	35	29
Neither	33	41	35	35	38	40	36	44	40	31	38	36	35	38	37
Negative	13	14	19	12	12	13	15	12	15	13	14	12	14	13	14
	Gender		Generation					Education			Income			Region	

■ I don't see any news online or on social media ■ Don't know ■ Positive ■ Neither positive nor negative ■ Negative

AUSTRALIAN CONSUMERS ARE MORE POSITIVE ABOUT ONLINE NEWS EXPERIENCES THAN GLOBAL NEWS CONSUMERS

Globally, 28% of news consumers say they have had positive experiences engaging with online news and Australian consumers are higher than the global average (33%). Respondents in Hungary have the highest percentage of those who have had a negative experience (41%) among the 33 countries, and those in Thailand have the highest percentage of those who have had a positive experience (50%) (see **figure 4.15**).

FIGURE 4.15: POSITIVE VS NEGATIVE NEWS ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE BY COUNTRY (%)
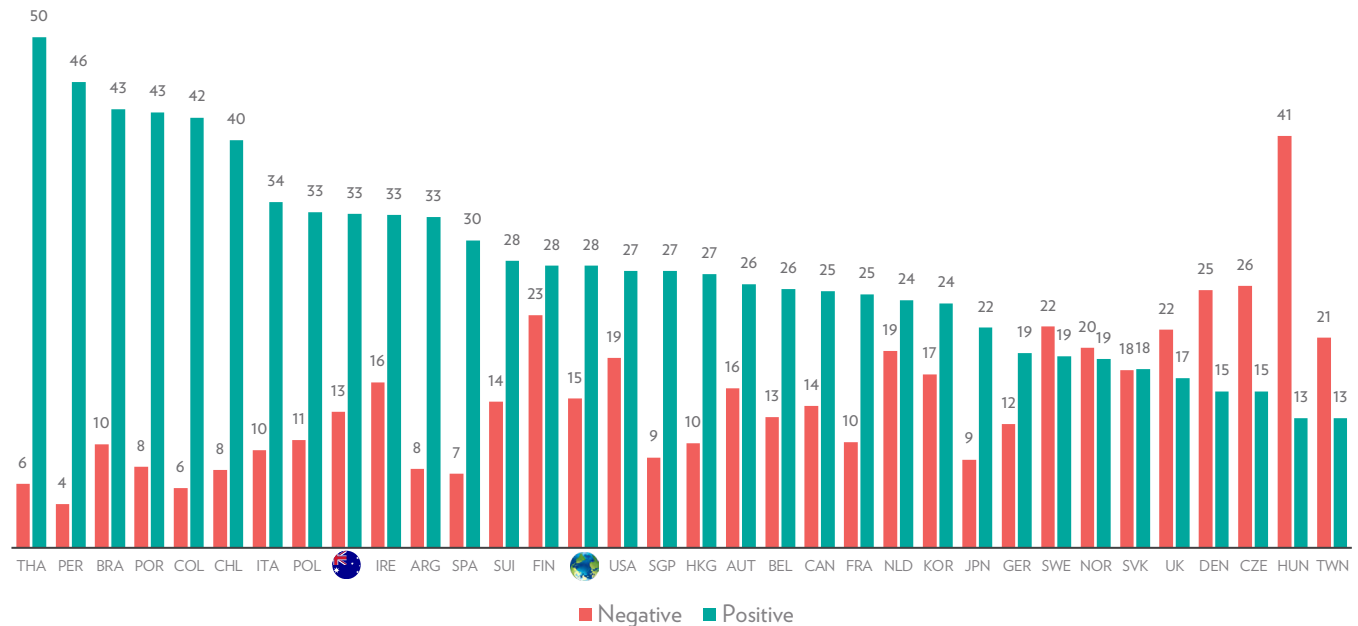
Note: Global average among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

NEWS CONSUMERS PREFER TEXT TO VIDEO

We asked respondents if they prefer to watch, read, or listen to news online. Forty-eight percent of respondents say they would rather read, 22% prefer watching and 11% prefer listening. One in five (18%) say they 'don't know' which format they prefer (see **figure 4.16**).

Read	Watch
48% >	**22%**
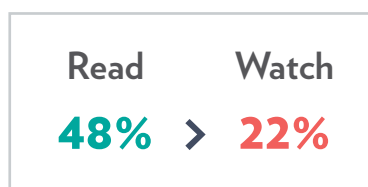
FIGURE 4.16: ONLINE NEWS PREFERENCE (%)

- I prefer to read the news
- I prefer to watch the news
- I prefer listening to the news
- Don't know
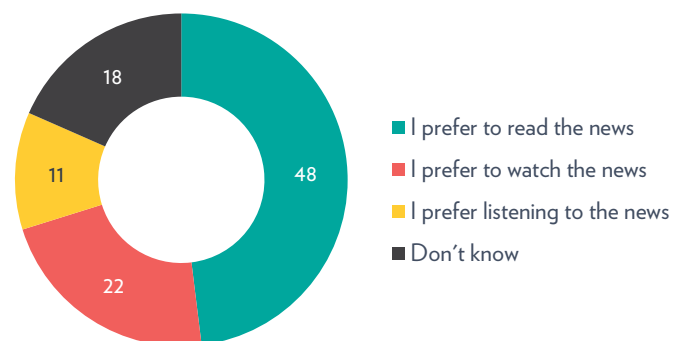
[OPTQ11D_2020] In thinking about your online habits around news and current affairs, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one. [Base: N=2,025; N=2,131 for 2020]

HEAVY NEWS CONSUMERS PREFER TEXT-BASED NEWS

Heavy news consumers prefer to read rather than watch or listen to news online compared with light news consumers, with 56% saying they prefer to read news. A much higher proportion of light news consumers (22%) say they don't know which mode they prefer, compared to only 9% of heavy news consumers (see **figure 4.17**).

Australia is slightly lower than the global average for both text and video news consumption preferences. Finnish audiences (75%) are the most likely to prefer reading news online. Peru was the top country for video news (41%). Only two countries — Peru and Thailand — had more news consumers saying they prefer to watch news instead of reading news online (see **figure 4.18**).

FIGURE 4.17: ONLINE NEWS PREFERENCE BY NEWS ACCESS (%)
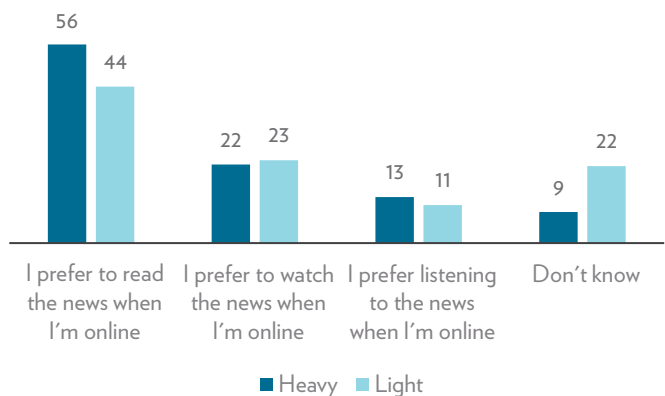
Note: Excluded very low and non-users of news [Base: N=1,922]

FIGURE 4.18: PREFERENCE FOR TEXT VS VIDEO NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)
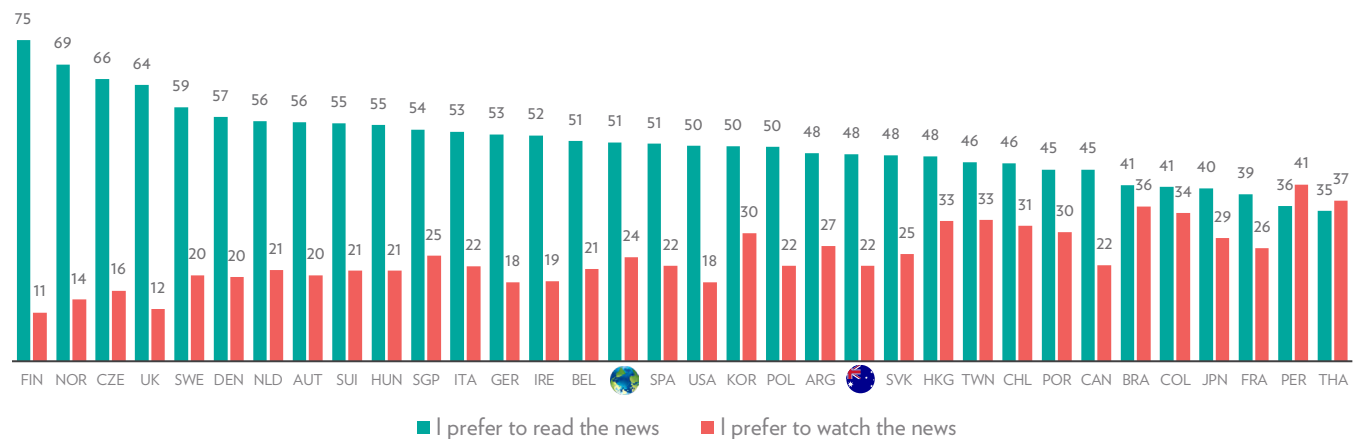
Note: Global average among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

There are differences in preference between online text and video news based on education and income. Those on low incomes are more likely to have no preference (24%) than medium (15%) and high income (9%) earners. A similar pattern can be found among those with low and high education. Those with high (51%) and medium education (50%) are much more likely to prefer text-based news than those with low education (38%). Women (8%), Baby Boomers and older (6%; 5%), those with low education (9%) and income (10%), and those in regional areas (7%) are less likely to prefer listening to the news online (see **figure 4.19**).

FIGURE 4.19: ONLINE NEWS PREFERENCE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
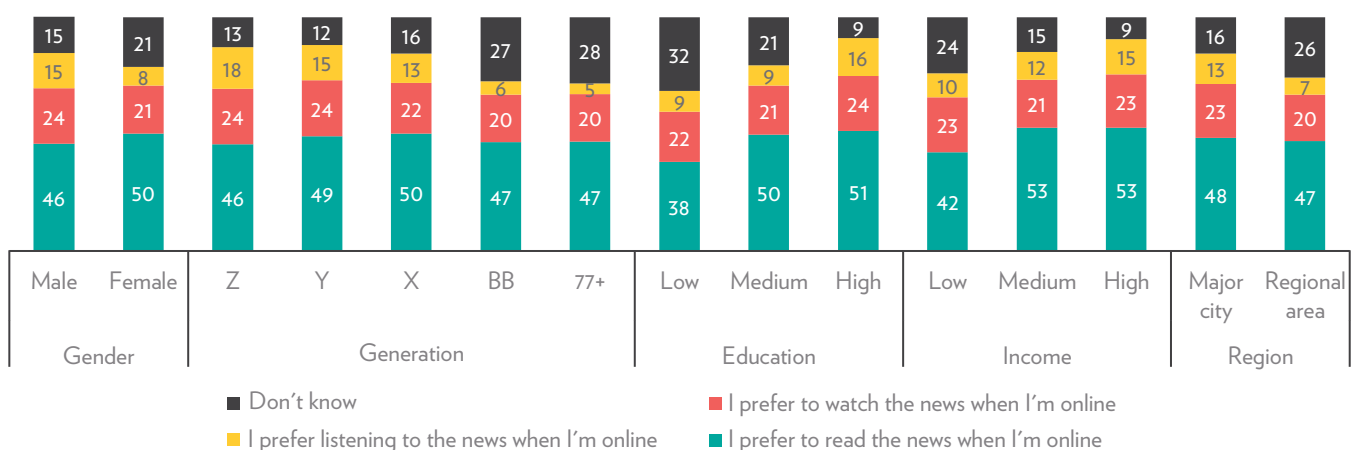
TV AND SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMERS PREFER WATCHING NEWS

The majority of people who mainly use online news prefer text-based news (67%) and only 15% prefer video. Consumers who rely on TV news still prefer text-based news when they are online (41%) but are also among the most likely to prefer watching video (27%). Those who mainly use radio and print (21%) are more likely to say they prefer to listen to online news (see **figure 4.20**).

FIGURE 4.20: ONLINE NEWS REFERENCE BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)

- Don't know
- I prefer listening to the news when I'm online
- I prefer to watch the news when I'm online
- I prefer to read the news when I'm online

TWITTER AND TIKTOK USERS CONSUME NEWS-RELATED VIDEOS THE MOST

We asked respondents whether they consumed news-related videos on news websites or social media platforms in the past week. Almost two-thirds (63%) of respondents say they watched a news-related video (a short clip, a live stream or a full episode) while online or on social media. This is three times higher than the number of people who say they prefer to watch news videos online (22%) (see **figure 4.16**).

More than a quarter of respondents say they consumed an online news-related video while browsing a news website (27%) or on Facebook (29%) (see **figure 4.21**). When we examine the usage among social media users, the percentage is much higher; 45% of Twitter users and 43% of TikTok users say they have accessed video news while on the platforms in the past week.

FIGURE 4.21: NEWS-RELATED VIDEO CONSUMPTION BY PLATFORM (%)

- Platform users (for any purpose)   - All respondents
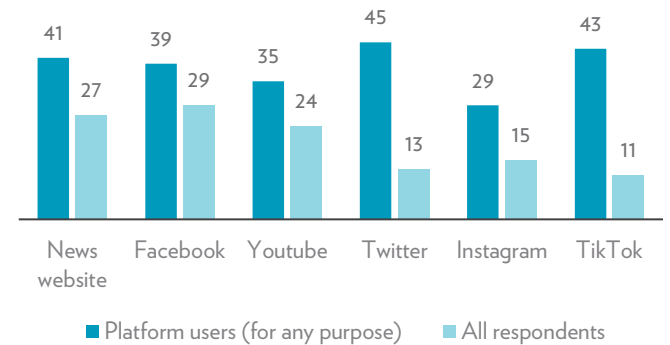
[Q11_VIDEO_2018a] Thinking about when you used online news-related video (a short clip, a live stream, or a full episode) over the last week, which of the following did you do? Please select all that apply. I consumed a news-related video when browsing/on...[Base: N=2,025] [Platform user Base: News website= 1,878; Facebook=1301; YouTube=1160; Twitter=396; Instagram=847; TikTok=395]

There are demographic gaps between preference for modes of online news consumption and self-reported consumption. Men (32%), Gen X (32%), those with high education (38%) and high income (36%) are more likely to say they have consumed news-related videos on a website in the past week (see **figure 4.22**). This is despite those groups being much less likely to say they preferred to watch news online generally (see **figure 4.19**).

FIGURE 4.22: NEWS-RELATED VIDEO CONSUMPTION ON NEWS WEBSITES BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
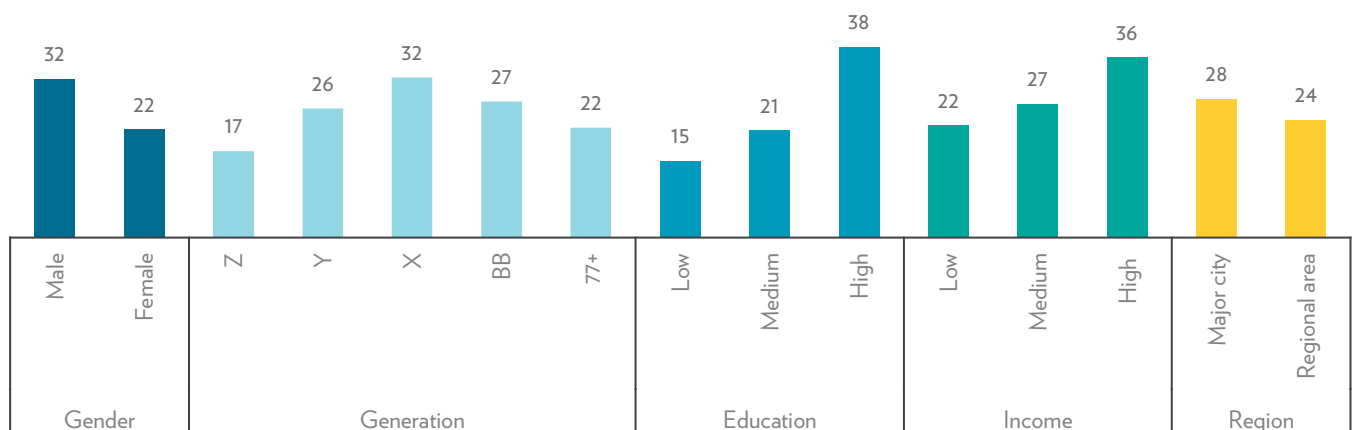
ONE IN FOUR GEN Z SAY THEY WATCH NEWS RELATED VIDEOS ON TIKTOK

Gens Y and Z are more active video news consumers on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. About one-third of Gen Z say they consume news-related videos while on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram and about a quarter watch news videos on TikTok (see **figure 4.23**).
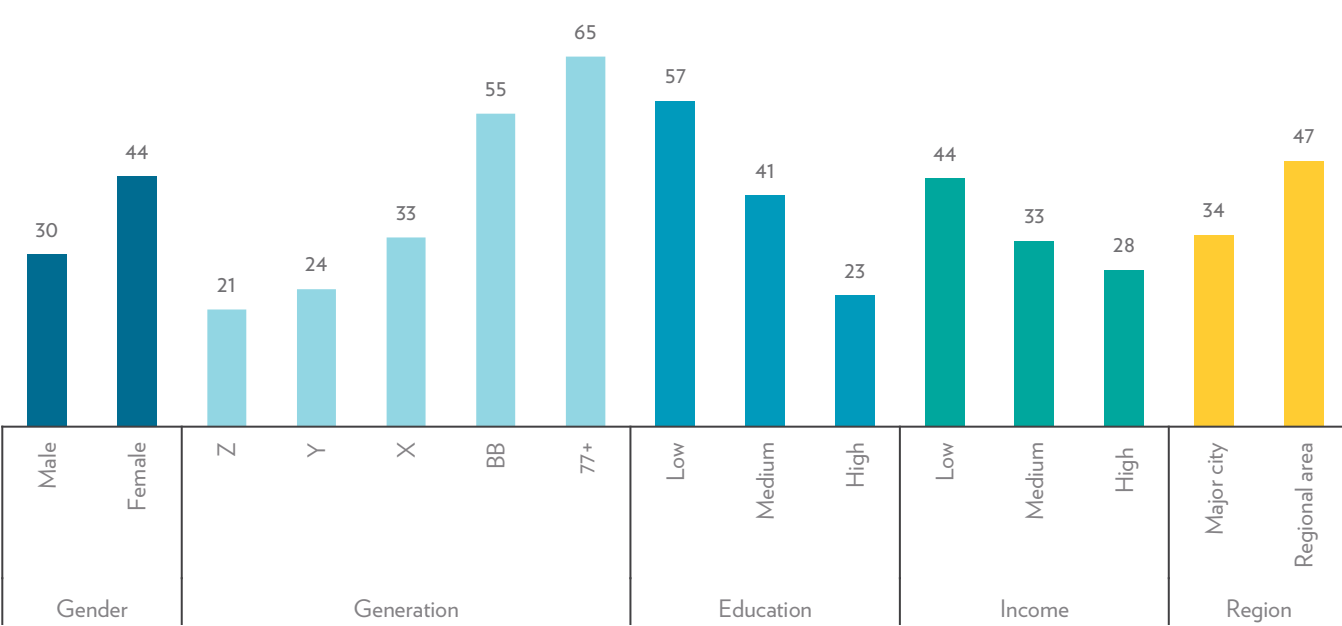
FIGURE 4.23: NEWS-RELATED VIDEO CONSUMPTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS BY GENERATION (%)

*[Base: N=2,035]
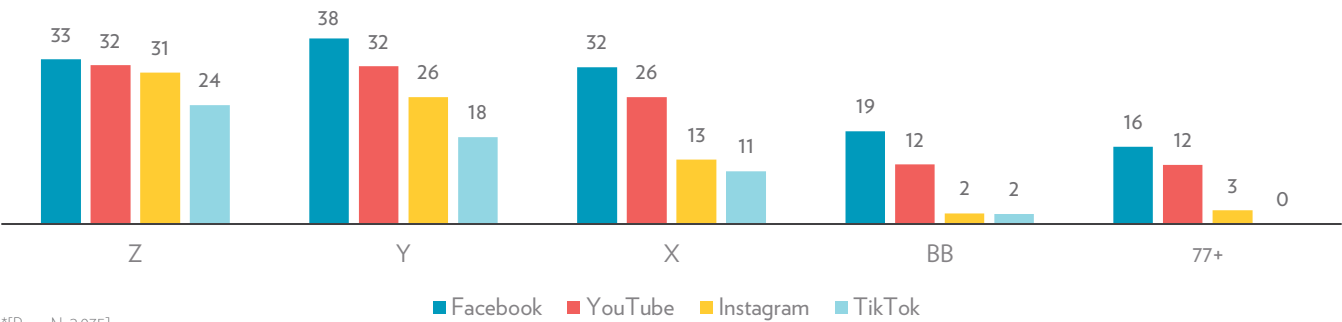
WOMEN AND OLDER AUSTRALIANS ARE LESS LIKELY TO HAVE WATCHED NEWS-RELATED VIDEOS ONLINE

Older generations are much more likely to not have seen a news-related video online or on social media. While 30% of men say they did not watch a news-related video in either of those places, 44% of women say the same. News-related video consumption on news websites and social media is lowest among those aged 77+ (65%) and those with low education (57%) and income (44%). Respondents in regional areas are also less likely to consume news-related video in online spaces (47%) compared to around one-third of participants in the city (34%) (see **figure 4.24**).

FIGURE 4.24: DID NOT CONSUME ANY NEWS-RELATED VIDEO ONLINE BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Australia is below the global average when it comes to news-related video consumption on news websites or on social media, with 63% saying they accessed video news in the past week compared to the global average of 67%.

Respondents in Thailand are the most active news-related video consumers (91%) and Germany has the smallest proportion (45%) using news videos on news websites and social media platforms (see **figure 4.25**).

FIGURE 4.25: CONSUMED NEWS-RELATED VIDEO ONLINE BY COUNTRY (%)
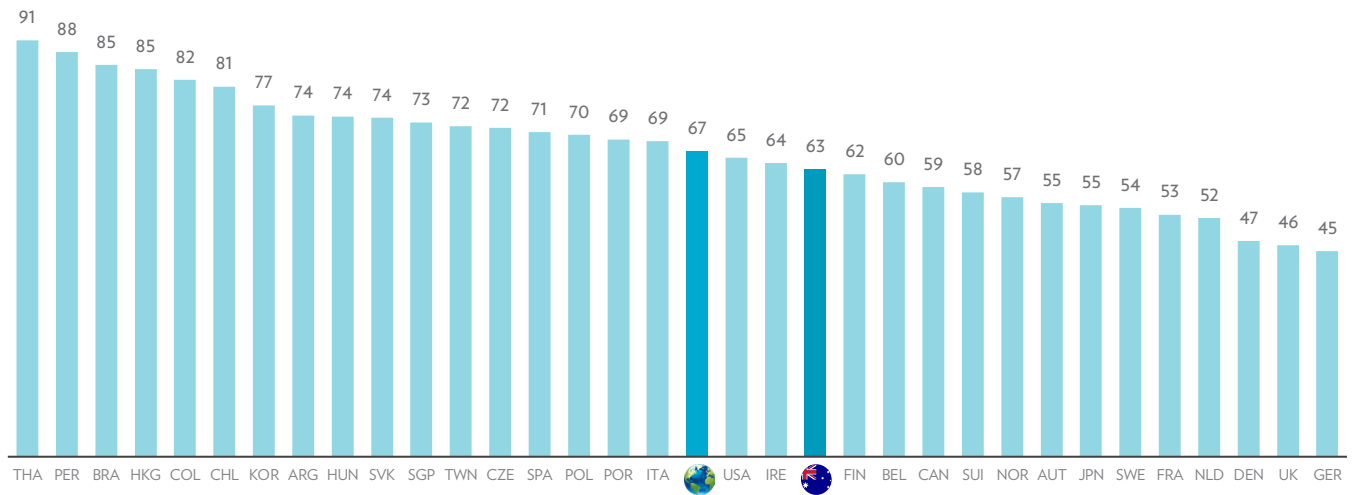
Note: Global average among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

SUMMARY

This year we asked questions about audiences' perception of algorithms and the impact of personalisation on the digital news environment. More people prefer algorithmically curated news based on their past consumption than news selected by editors or journalists. Respondents are least likely to say they want their news automatically curated based on their friends' consumption patterns. Younger people are more positive towards personalisation through algorithms, but they are also more concerned about missing out on important information as a result of personalisation.

Many Australians say they are concerned about personalisation limiting their information diet. Australians are equally worried that they might miss out on important information as well as challenging viewpoints. Compared to global audiences, Australians are much more concerned about the impact of news personalisation.

We found that those who are worried about missing out on important information or viewpoints are much more likely to access multiple news brands, which reflects higher media literacy among heavy news consumers and possible efforts on their part to counter the limiting effects of personalisation.

When asked if their experience engaging with news online or on social media is positive or negative, more people say it is positive. Interestingly, the data show there isn't a link between concern about the possible negative impacts of personalisation and their preference for the way their news is curated, whether by algorithm or an editor.

News consumers continue to prefer text-based news content over video. However, when looking at self-reported consumption, online news-based videos are very popular, particularly on TikTok among younger generations.

Overall, the data suggest that Australians are relatively split on whether automatic curation is a good way to get news and are concerned that they might miss out on important information and challenging viewpoints. This is partly reflected in the way different demographics prefer different modes and platforms for news consumption. The takeaway is that Australian news audiences are sceptical on the whole about the way online news is selected.

COMMENTARY

NEWS AUDIENCES ARE SHIFTING THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON EDITORIAL PERSONALIATION

Dave Earley, Audience editor, The Guardian Australia

When it came to thinking about algorithms ahead of this year's *Digital News Report: Australia*, the landscape was looking bleak: Elon Musk seems intent on destroying what made Twitter's algorithm valuable; TikTok and its extraordinarily powerful and addictive recommendation engine is being threatened with bans around the world, and; there is the ever present backdrop of years of monumental declines in Facebook referral, brought about by algorithm changes that radically deprioritised the appearance of news on the platform.

For years, any discussion of an algorithm as it relates to news consumption and social media traffic to news websites has invariably been referring to one thing, the Facebook News Feed. It was a boon of traffic referral for publishers but, for many of the small digital news startups that relied on it for 70% or more of their audience, turning off the tap was a death knell. BuzzFeed News was a pioneering juggernaut of this period and its closure in April has been described by many as the end of an internet era.

> **It's not the end of algorithms — their influence has grown considerably — but it may be the end of the social media referral model.**

This has been clear for some time, but what we are working with now is a future where publishers have to manage the tension between using the algorithms of platforms that help us reach audiences where they are, while knowing that those platforms are not going to drive traffic directly back to news websites at scale.

Even with the current disruption happening on some of the major social platforms, the use of social media for news is still rising, particularly among Gen Z on visual platforms like Instagram and TikTok. It's little surprise then that our population is more comfortable with algorithms choosing their news (35%) than journalists and editors (29%). And yet despite that preference, the *DNR: Australia 2023* also shows that a full 61% of Australians are worried they might miss important information when their news is algorithmically curated.

It's tempting to see the preference for algorithms over editors as a reflection of low levels of trust in the media, but questions about algorithms were first asked in the *DNR: Australia 2016* report and the results are illuminating. Seven years ago, 22% of Australians said they would prefer stories selected by journalists or editors. That figure is now 29%. Conversely, in 2016, 33% of respondents said news selected by an algorithm was not a good way to get news. That figure has now risen to 35%.

PREFERENCE FOR NEWS CURATION 2016–2023 (%)

■ Prefer　■ Don't prefer

	Prefer stories based on past news consumption		Prefer stories selected by editors/journalists	
	2023	2016	2023	2016
Prefer	35	33	29	22
Don't prefer	35	33	36	39
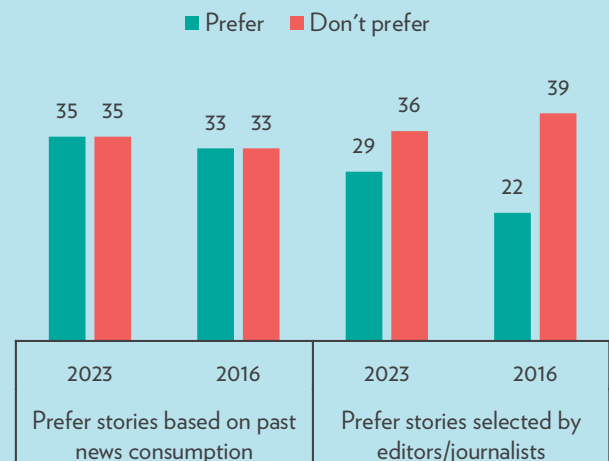
> **The report indicates not only that there is now broad literacy on this subject, but that since 2016 we have actually seen a gradual shift towards editorial preference rather than moving further away from it.**

What factors could be contributing to this shift?

In that time, we have seen some major news stories that brought intense global focus on algorithms. In 2016 Facebook changed the algorithm to rank friends above publishers, Britain voted to leave the EU and Donald Trump was elected president. A month later Facebook

announced measures to address fake news after widespread criticism of the content that had flourished on the platform in both of those political campaigns. Then in 2018 the Cambridge Analytica files, revealed by the Guardian, brought Facebook into the spotlight again.

Part of the preference for algorithms to curate our news requires a trust, or at the very least an acceptance, threshold. Users are willing to tolerate a certain level of discomfort if they accept that the benefits of personalisation outweigh the negatives they are increasingly aware of. What major incidents like Cambridge Analytica did was break past that trust and acceptance threshold. For perhaps the first time for many of them, social media users found themselves considering whether they could still trust the way algorithms were deciding their consumption of all content, not just news.

Stories like Cambridge Analytica were monumental revelations, but the figures seem to indicate there has still only been a slight shift over time to a greater preference for stories selected by editors and journalists. While there likely won't be a move away from social media use for news and a large return to the era of the destination homepage, publishers who do have that strong direct relationship with readers will continue to fare better than those who do not, just as they did when the firehose of Facebook traffic slowed to a trickle.

Moving forward, it would be a mistake for publishers to think that off-platform algorithmic curation of news is somehow less important because Facebook or other platforms send less traffic to our websites than they did before. We have always tried to reach audiences on non-referral platforms, and the increasing use of TikTok and Instagram for news by younger generations makes it more important than ever that we take the news to where the users are, present it in a way that engages them, and do that regularly to cultivate a relationship that builds trust. It's why I launched one of the first news Twitter accounts in Australia in 2007, and why Guardian Australia was one of the first Australian publishers, if not the first, to join TikTok in 2019.

For those of us who have specialised in audience growth for decades, this is what we have always done to get the news to people in the spaces they frequent, and we will continue to do so. It's just one string in the bow of audience development, but it's the trust you cultivate in those spaces that makes the effort worthwhile. Whatever their motivation, when people feel the need to seek out news, they are more likely to choose the brands they trust, no matter where that trust was formed. This is why, having just celebrated our 10th birthday in May, it's particularly pleasing in *DNR: Australia 2023* to see Guardian Australia record the largest rise in trust in Australian news brands, up 6% on 2022.

NEWS MOMENTS

12 December 2022 | Two police officers and a neighbour were shot and killed on a property near Wieambilla in Queensland in what was later revealed to be a religiously motivated terrorist attack. Both police officers, Rachel McCrow and Matthew Arnold, were recent recruits to the Queensland Police Service and were stationed in the nearby small town of Tara. Alan Dare was shot after going to the property to investigate a fire that had been started. In March of 2023, he was posthumously awarded the Queensland Police Bravery Medal.

IMAGE: JASON O'BRIEN / AAP IMAGE

5 NEWS ACCESS

- Heavy news consumption has declined (48%, -6).

- Women's news access fell the most (41%, -11). Australia now has the widest gender gap (19pp) in news consumption internationally.

- Print news consumption has increased among Gen Z (8%, +5).

- Regional and local newspapers continue to decline in use (-4).

- For the first time, smart TVs are a more popular device for news (29%) than tablets (24%).

AUSTRALIAN'S NEWS ACCESS HAS DECLINED

There has been a notable decrease in news consumption since last year. Less than half of Australians access news more than once a day (48%, -6). The proportion of light news consumers has risen to 44% (+5) and those who use news less than once a month or not at all (7%) remain unchanged from 2022 (see **figure 5.1**).

FIGURE 5.1: NEWS ACCESS 2021–2023 (%)

- Heavy (More than once a day)
- Light (Once a day to less than once a week)
- Extremly low/non-users (Less than once a month or never)
- Dont know
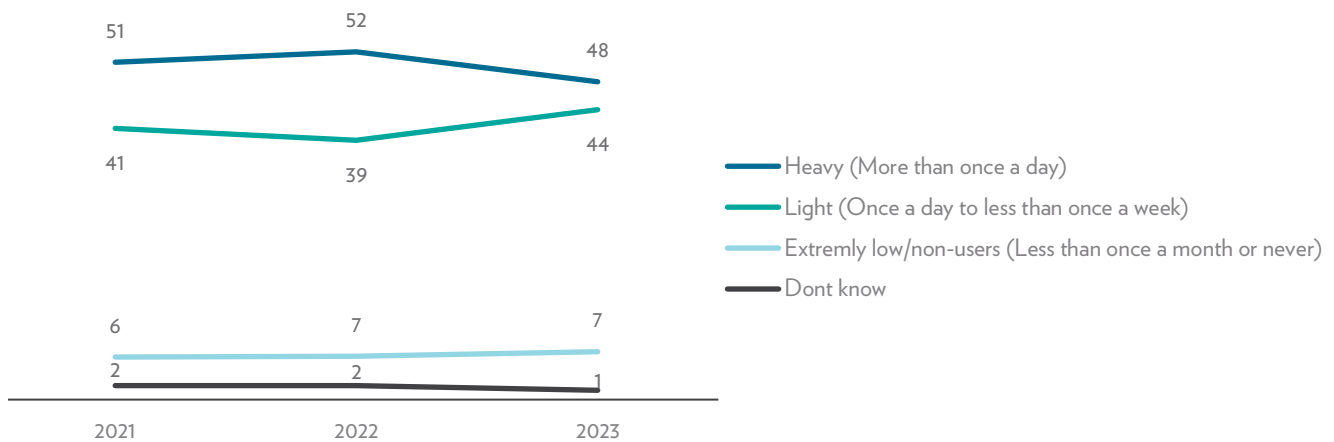
[Q1b_NEW] Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online) [Base: N=2,025].

NEWS CONSUMPTION DECLINED ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHICS EXCEPT FOR MEN

The data show that men's heavy news consumption has remained stable (60%), whereas women's has decreased significantly, with only 41% (-11) accessing news more than once a day. News consumption declined across all generations, except for Gen X, whose news consumption remained unchanged (54%). Only about one-third (36%) of Gen Z access news more than once a day, which is a 10 percent point decrease from last year (see **figure 5.2**).

FIGURE 5.2: NEWS ACCESS BY GENDER AND GENERATION 2022–23 (%)

- Light (Once a day or less)
- Heavy (More than once a day)
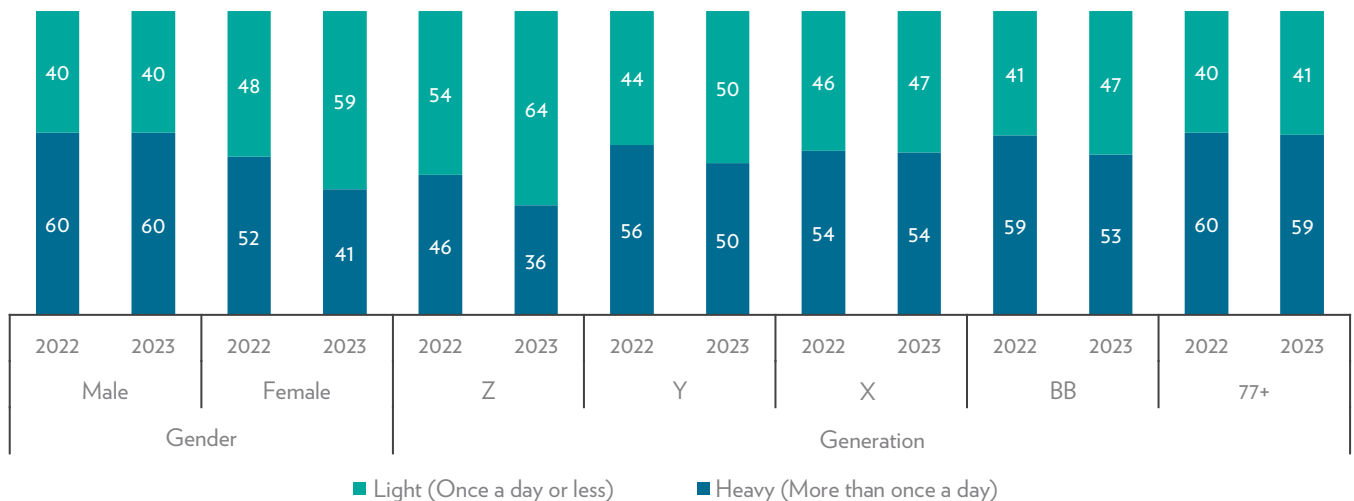
*Excluded non-users and don't know responses

Those with higher education and income levels have reduced their news consumption. **Figure 5.3** shows that while news use by those with low education levels has remained unchanged, news consumers with medium (43%, -10) and high (61%, -5) education levels accessed news less frequently than last year.

High income earners (57%) are more likely to be heavy news consumers than those with low (45%) and medium

(43%) income levels. However, the proportion of heavy news consumption among high income earners has decreased substantially (65%, -8).

City dwellers (57%) are more likely to be heavy news consumers than those who live in regional areas (52%), which remains unchanged since 2022.

FIGURE 5.3: NEWS ACCESS BY EDUCATION, INCOME AND REGION 2022–23 (%)
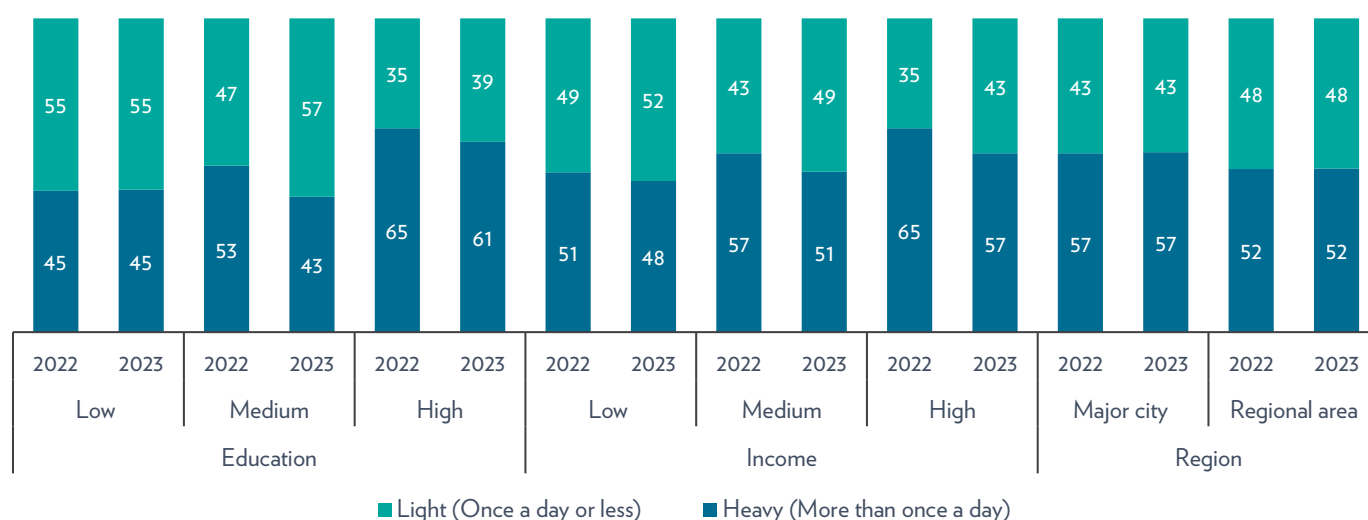
AUSTRALIA'S GENDER GAP IN NEWS CONSUMPTION IS THE WIDEST GLOBALLY

Globally, the proportion of heavy news consumers has declined (60%, -4). Overall, Australia has the second lowest proportion of heavy news consumers (48%), which is 12 percentage points lower than the global average. However,

the gender gap in news consumption is particularly significant in Australia, which has the lowest proportion of female heavy news consumers (41%) in the world, and a gender gap of 19 percentage points (see **figure 5.4**).

FIGURE 5.4: GENDER GAP IN HEAVY NEWS ACCESS BY COUNTRY (%)
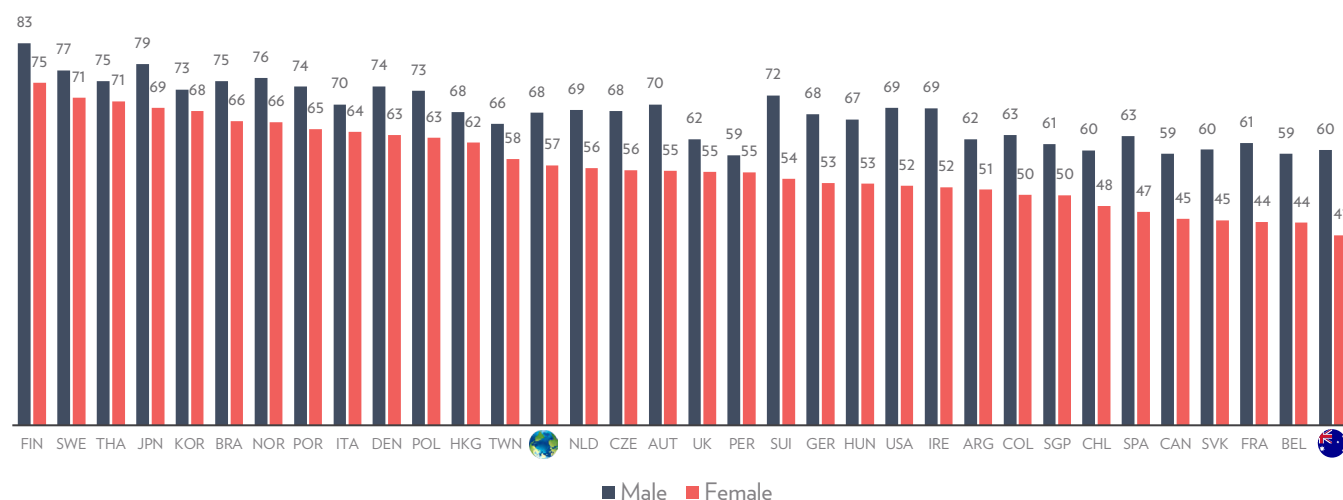
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279] Excluded non-users and don't know responses

TV, RADIO AND PRINT CONTINUE A STEADY DECLINE

TV news audiences continue to decline, with 58% (-2) of respondents saying they used TV as a source of news in the last week. Radio and print news has declined to 24% (-2) and 19% (-3) respectively since last year.

In contrast, online news and social media have remained steady. Slightly more than half of respondents (51%, +2) use online news, and 45% (+1) use social media as a source of news (see **figure 5.5**).

FIGURE 5.5: GENERAL SOURCES OF NEWS 2016–2023 (%)
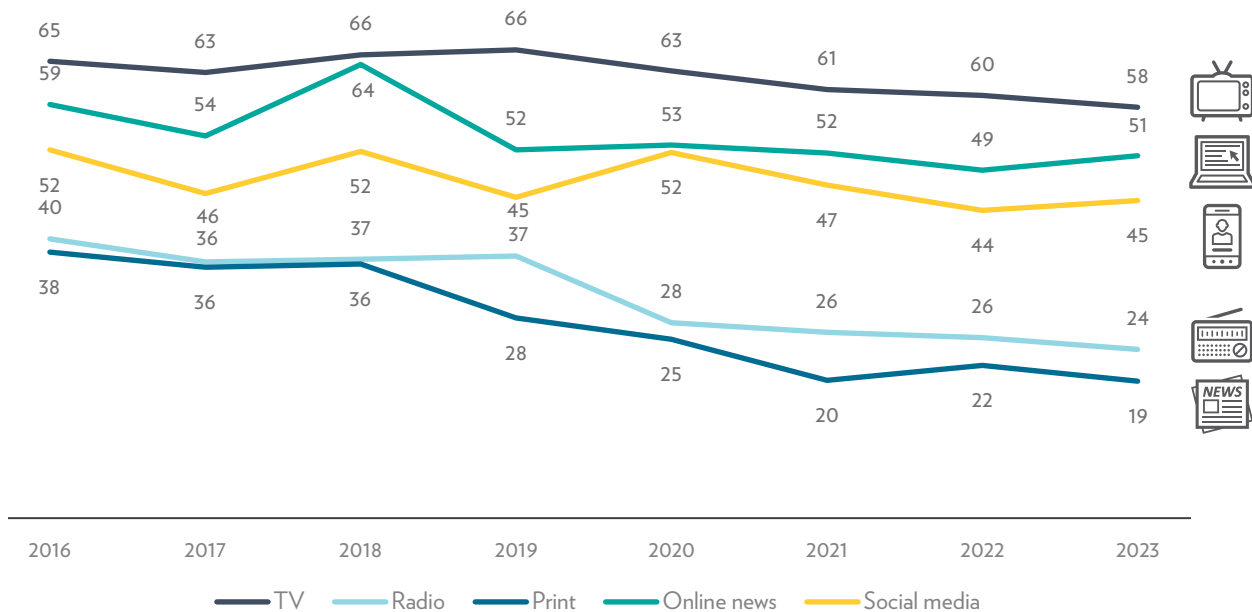
[Q3] Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025].

MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

TV continues to be the most popular main source of news (40%) followed by online news (27%) and social media

(22%). Only a very small proportion say they mainly use print or radio (6%) for news (see **figure 5.6**).

FIGURE 5.6: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS 2016–2023 (%)
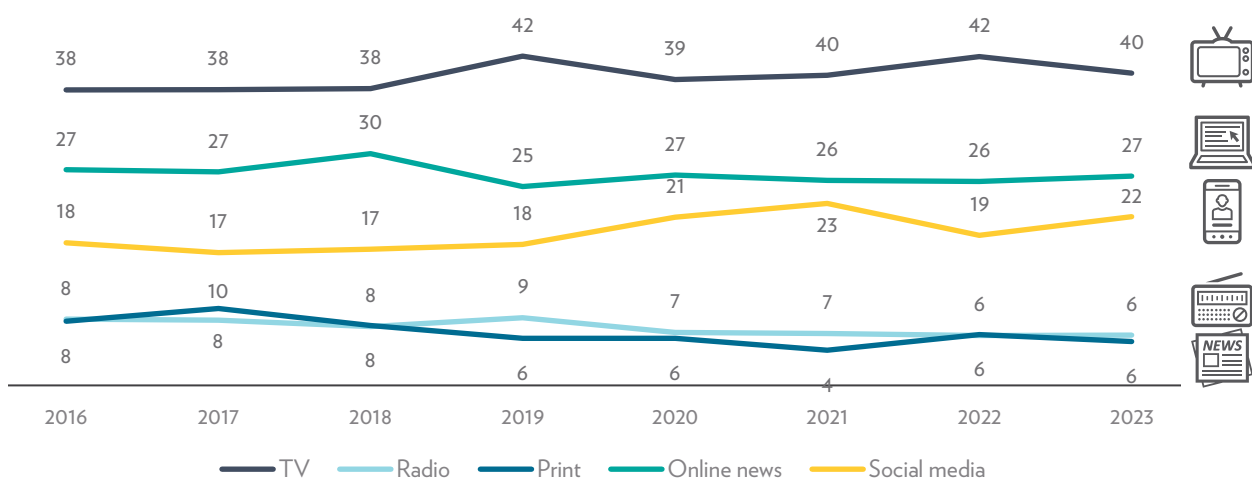
[Base: N=1,877] Excluded don't know.

ONLY ONE IN THREE IN GEN Z USE TV FOR NEWS

There are substantial differences between the generations in the general sources of news they use. Younger generations are more likely to use social media and online news, whereas older generations are more inclined to use traditional media such as television, radio, and print. The gap is most prominent between social media and TV use.

The majority of Gen Z gets their news from social media, while less than one-third of Baby Boomers (31%) and those aged 77+ (28%) do the same. In contrast, most people aged 77+ say they watch TV news, compared to only one-third of Gen Z (33%) (see **figure 5.7**).

FIGURE 5.7: GENERAL SOURCES OF NEWS BY GENERATION
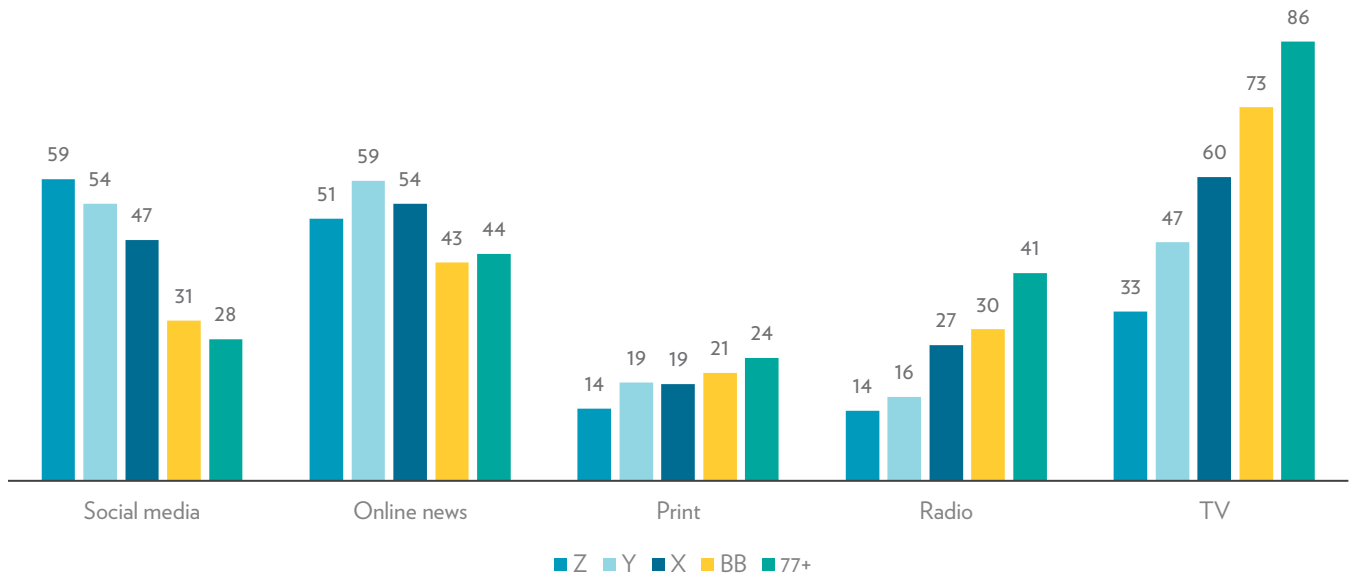
ONE IN TEN GEN Z USE PRINT AS THEIR MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS

This year, the use of print as a main source of news has decreased across all generations except for Gen Z. **Figure 5.8** shows that almost one in ten Gen Z (8%) say they rely on print for news, which is a 5 percentage point increase since 2022. Gen Z have also reduced their reliance on social media for news (43%, -3). TV remains the most

popular main source of news (61%, -5) among those aged 77+, who are turning to online news sources (16%, +4). Gen Y news consumers are roughly split between social media (31%), online news (31%) and TV (29%) as their main sources (see **figure 5.8**).

FIGURE 5.8: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY GENERATION (%)
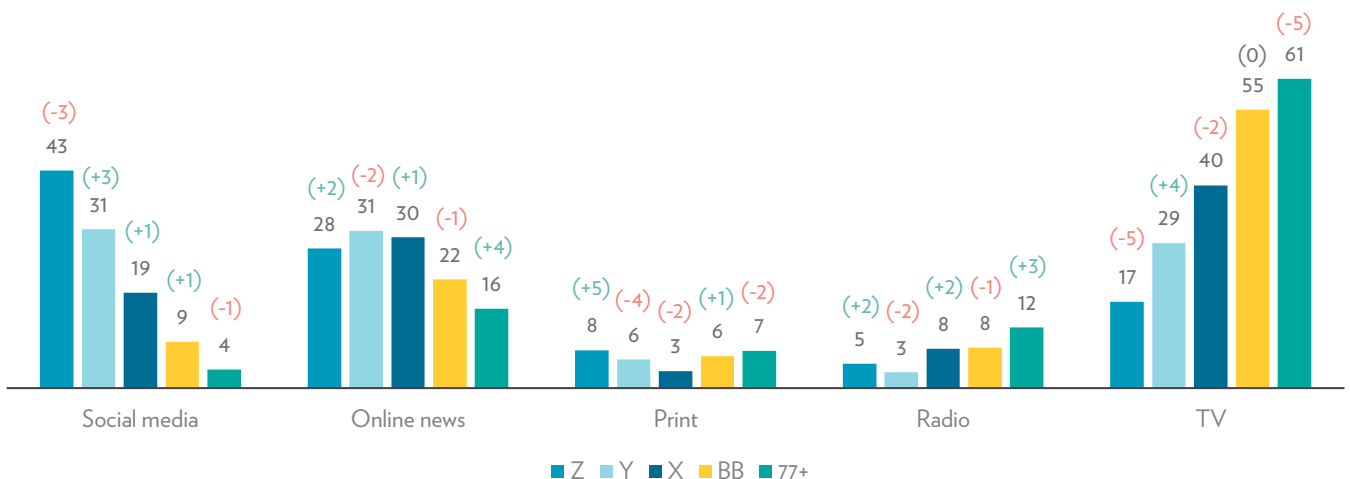
[Q4] You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? [Base: Those who used at least one source of news, N=1,877].

TV STILL MOST LIKELY TO BE THE MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS FOR LOW EDUCATION AND INCOME

This year our data show that those with high education and income levels are more likely to rely on online sources for news (33%) than people with low or medium levels of income and education. In contrast, TV is mainly preferred by those with low levels of education (52%) and income (46%) (see **figure 5.9**).

Consistent with previous years, we found that women are more likely to rely on social media (27%) for news, whereas

men tend to prefer online news (31%). News consumers living in regional areas are more likely to rely on TV as their main source of news (46%) compared to city dwellers (38%). However, news consumers in major cities are more likely to use social media (22%) or online sources (28%) as their main sources of news than those in regional areas (20%; 24%).

**FIGURE 5.9:** MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
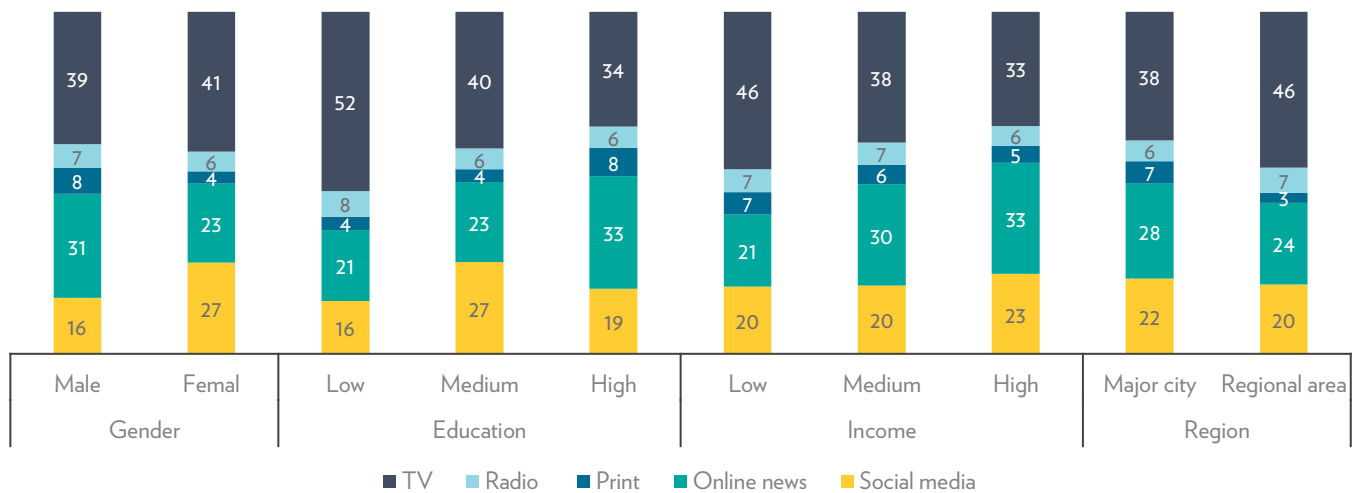
OFFLINE NEWS SOURCES REMAIN DOMINANT IN ONE-THIRD OF THE COUNTRIES

In Australia, offline sources remain the dominant main source of news (52%) which is higher than the global average (48%) (see **figure 5.10**). However, when it comes

to general sources of news, online news use (71%) is higher than offline (68%) in Australia.

**FIGURE 5.10:** MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY COUNTRY: ONLINE VS OFFLINE (%)
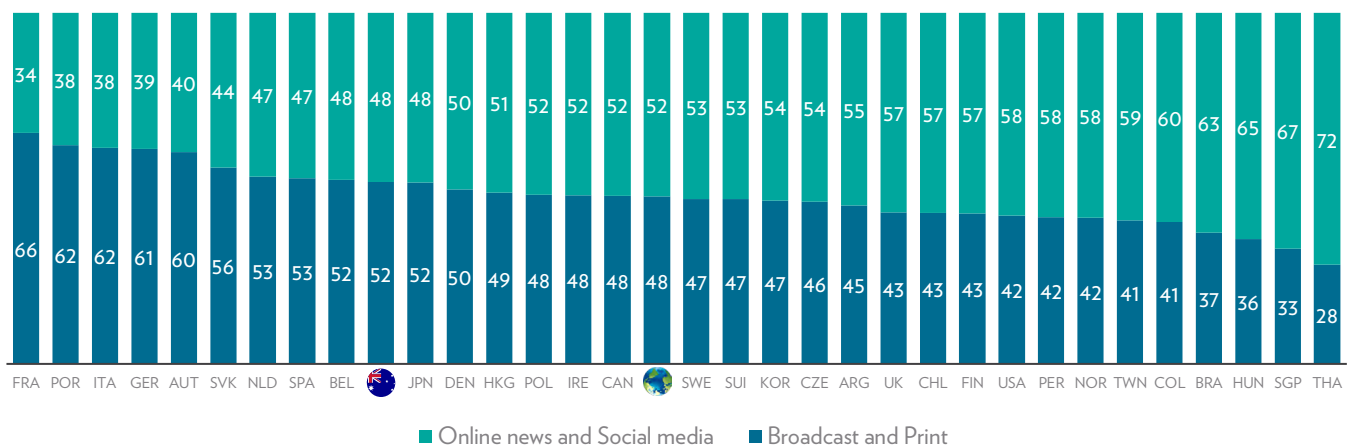
Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=63,110]

In most countries there has been an increase in the use of social media as a main source of news. In some markets over a third of news consumers say they mainly use social media for news, most notably Thailand (50%) and Peru (40%). However, the global average remains around one in five (22%), matched by Australia. Japan (9%), Sweden (9%) and Finland (11%) continue to be the least likely to use social media as a main source of news (see **figure 5.11**).

FIGURE 5.11: SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY COUNTRY 2021–2023 (%)

Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=63,110]
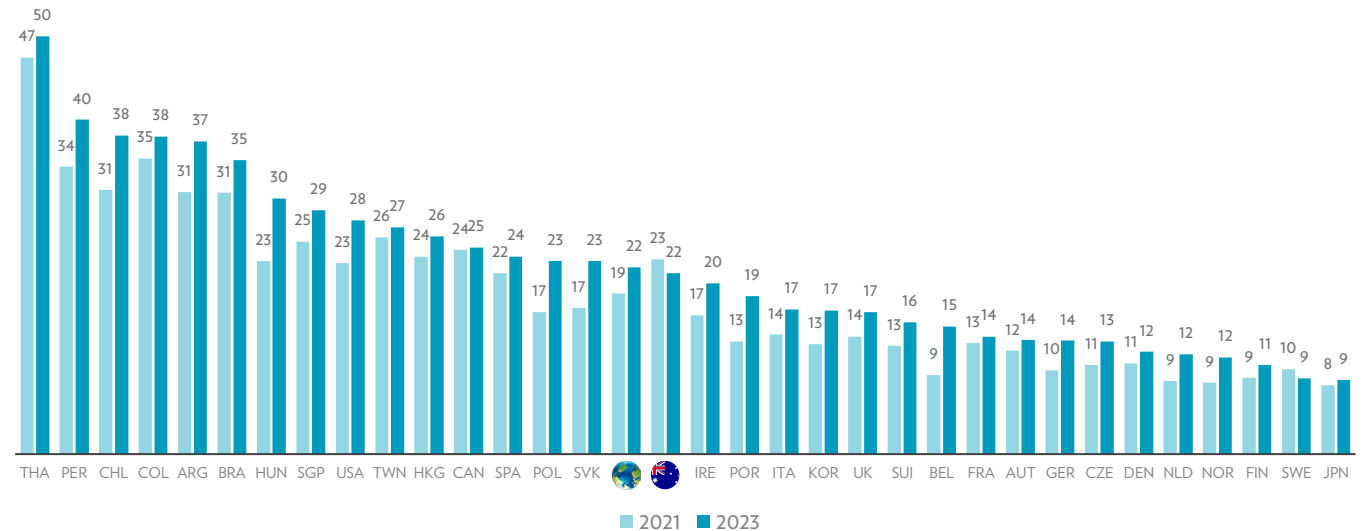
REGIONAL NEWSPAPER CONSUMPTION CONTINUES TO FALL

This year saw a continued decline in the use of regional and local newspapers (10%), with a 4 percentage point decrease compared to the previous year (14%) (see **figure 5.12**). It is worth noting that regional consumers are more than twice as likely to read their local newspaper (16%) compared to those who live in the city (7%).
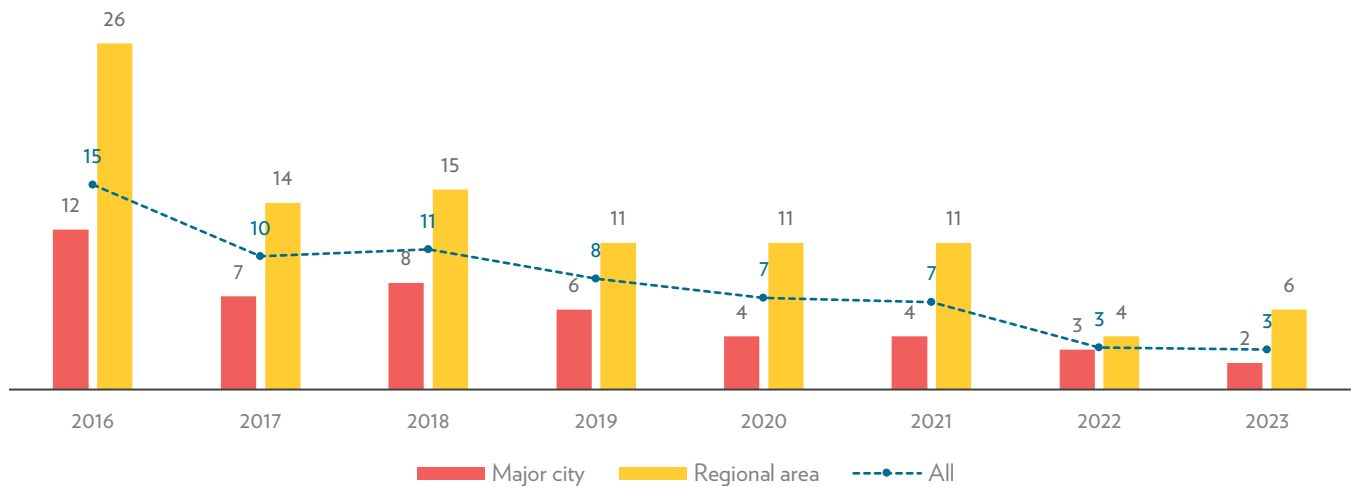
FIGURE 5.12: REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER USE 2016–2023 (%)
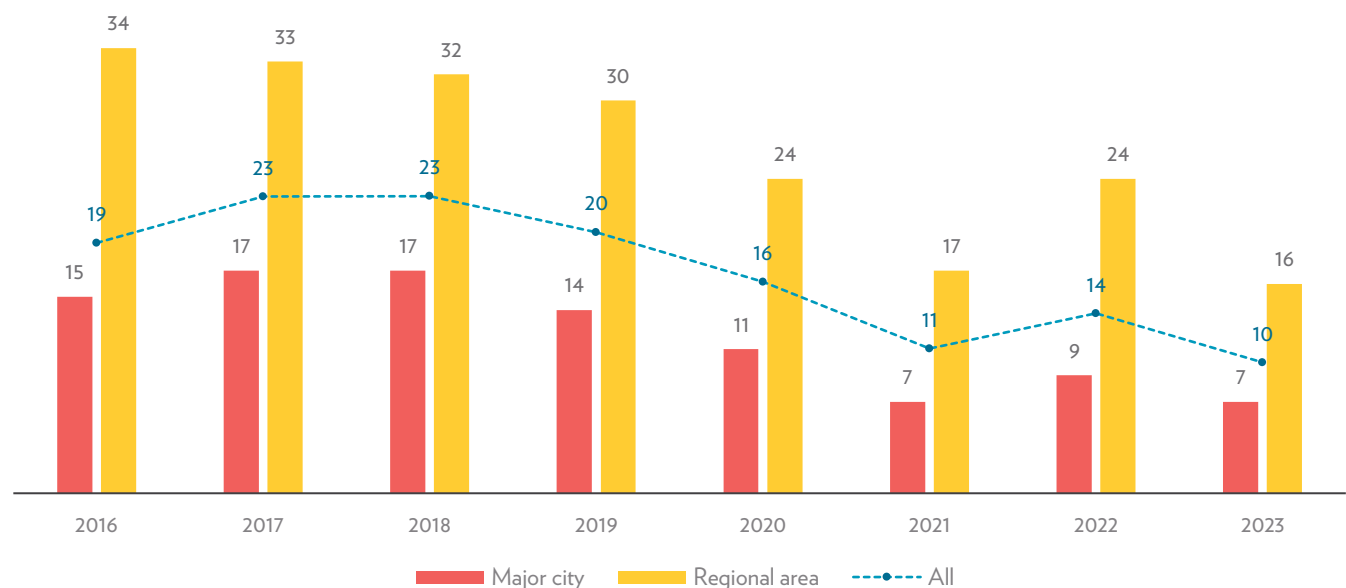
[Q5A] Which of the following brands have you used to access news offline in the last week (via TV, radio, print, and other traditional media)? A regional or local newspaper.

Meanwhile, the use of local newspaper websites remains low at only 3%. Those who live in regional areas (6%) have slightly increased their use of regional or local newspaper websites (+2) (see **figure 5.13**).

**FIGURE 5.13:** REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER WEBSITE USE 2016–2023 (%)

[Q5B] Which of the following brands have you used to access news **online** in the last week (via **websites, apps, social media, and other forms of Internet access**)? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025].

There was a notable decrease in the use of regional newspapers among women, older generations and those in regional areas. As shown in **figure 5.14**, only 9% (-6) of women and a 10% (-2) of men say they read regional or local newspapers. Only 13% of those aged 77+ say they do, which is a 12 percentage point fall from last year. While regional newspaper readership has declined across all education and income levels, the decrease is more pronounced among those with low and medium levels of education and income. Those in major cities (7%, -2) have reduced their use of regional or local papers, but in regional areas (16%, -8) the decline has been more severe (see **figure 5.14**).

FIGURE 5.14: REGIONAL OR LOCAL NEWSPAPER USE BY DEMOGRAPHICS 2022–2023 (%)
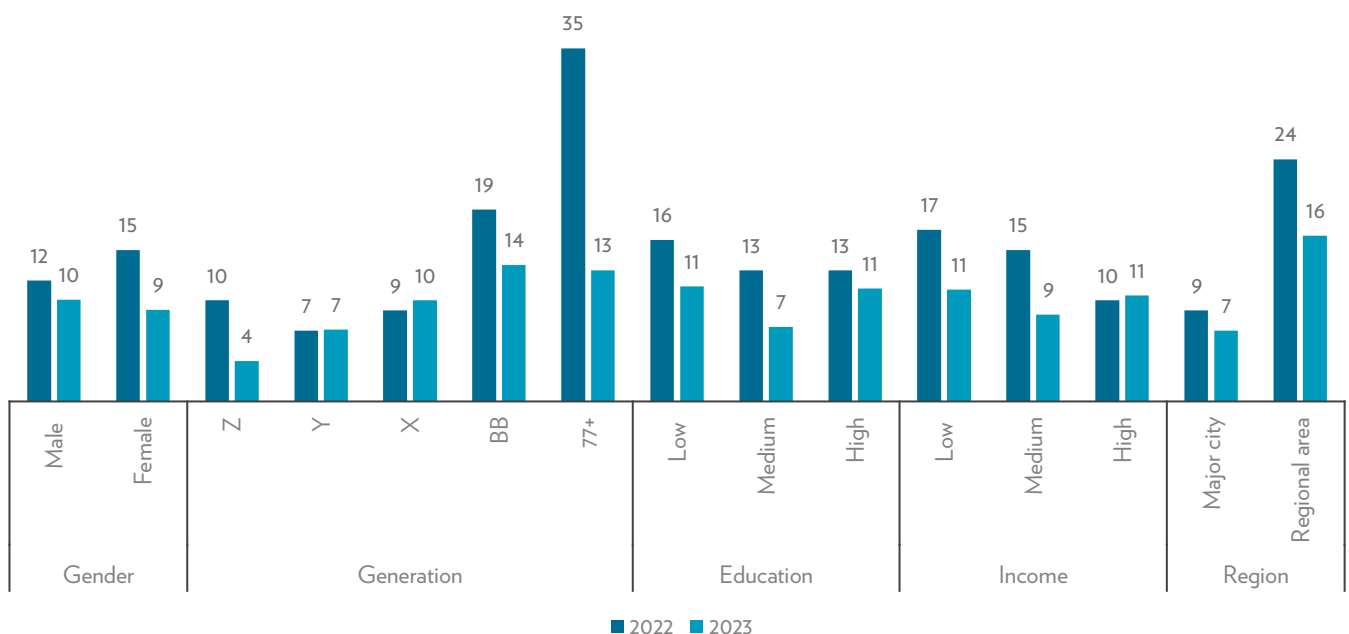
BROADCAST NEWS BRANDS DECLINE

The survey recorded a fall in the proportion of people watching all free-to-air TV news services. While Channel 7 (-3) and ABC News (-6) remain the most popular offline news brands (34%) among the brands listed in the survey their viewership dropped. Other free to-air TV news such as Channel 7 (-3), Channel 9 (-3), Channel Ten (-4), SBS News (-2), and Sky News (-2) also experienced a decline. There has been a slight increase in the number of news consumers reading newspapers such as *The Australian* (10%, +2) and *The Australian Financial Review* (5%, +1) over the last 12 months (see **table 5.1**)

GUARDIAN AUSTRALIA GAINS GROUND IN THE ONLINE NEWS MARKET

ABC News online continues to be the most popular online news brand in this survey, with 24% of respondents saying they have used it in the last week. However, this is a slight decrease of 2 percent points from last year. News.com.au (22%) has maintained a stable position in the online news market for the last three years of this survey. Guardian Australia (15%, +3) and theaustralian.com.au (9%, +2) have grown slightly. Overall, online news brands have remained relatively stable over the last 12 months (see **table 5.2**).

TABLE 5.1: OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS

	N	%	(+/-)
Channel 7	688	34	-3
ABC News*	681	34	-6
Channel 9	647	32	-3
Channel TEN	310	15	-4
SBS News*	298	15	-2
Commercial FM radio (e.g. Triple M, Nova)	248	12	1
Sky News	200	10	-2
The Australian	197	10	2
A regional or local newspaper	194	10	-4
The Daily Telegraph	172	9	-
Herald Sun	172	9	-
Prime7	162	8	-3
WIN Television	160	8	-
BBC News	158	8	-1
Commercial AM radio (e.g. 2GB, 2UE)	147	7	-1
The Courier-Mail	140	7	-
CNN	133	7	2
The Sydney Morning Herald	132	7	-
Fox News	128	6	1
The Age	123	6	-
The Australian Financial Review	110	5	1
The Advertiser	106	5	-
Other capital city newspapers (The Canberra Times, The Mercury, NT News)	93	5	-
Other newspapers or broadcast news channels from outside Australia	72	4	1
News channels or newspapers in languages other than English	43	2	-1

* ABC and SBS News include both TV and Radio news audiences.

TABLE 5.2: ONLINE NEWS BRANDS

|	N	%	(+/-)
ABC News online	488	24	-2
News.com.au	443	22	-
9news.com.au (or nine.com.au)	310	15	-1
Guardian Australia	295	15	3
7News.com.au	282	14	-1
BBC News online	187	9	-
The Australian (theaustralian.com.au)	176	9	2
SBS News online (sbs.com.au)	175	9	1
Skynews.com.au	166	8	-1
Daily Mail Australia	159	8	1
Sydney Morning Herald (smh.com.au)	159	8	-1
Daily Telegraph (dailytelegraph.com.au)	137	7	1
The New Daily	138	7	1
CNN.com	134	7	1
Channel TEN online (10play.com.au)	132	7	-
The Age (theage.com.au)	129	6	-1
Australian Financial Review (afr.com)	125	6	1
Herald Sun (heraldsun.com.au)	125	6	-1
PerthNow.com.au	122	6	-
Courier Mail (couriermail.com.au)	118	6	-
The Conversation	114	6	1
New York Times online	112	6	1
The Advertiser (adelaidenow.com.au)	89	4	-
Crikey	82	4	-
BrisbaneTimes.com.au	72	4	1
The Saturday Paper online	72	4	1
Other regional or local newspaper website	65	3	-
Other online sites from outside Australia	58	3	1
Other non-English online news sites	30	2	-

AUSTRALIANS ARE CONSOLIDATING THE NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS THEY USE

Figure 5.15 shows that Australian news consumers are increasingly relying on a narrower range of news brands. Twenty three percent of respondents say they only use 1 to 2 news brands, which is a 3 percent point increase from last year. In contrast, the proportion who use 7 or more news brands has been continually declining, down to 26% of respondents in 2023.

Men (35%) are more likely than women (18%) to say they use 7 or more news brands. Older generations are more likely to rely on fewer news brands. The majority of Baby Boomers (55%) and those aged 77+ (61%) use 4 or fewer brands while less than half of Gen Z (44%), Y (43%) and X (49%) do the same (see **figure 5.16**).

News consumers with high levels of education and income, and city dwellers are more likely to say they use 7 or more news brands compared to other groups.

FIGURE 5.15: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS 2017–2023 (%)
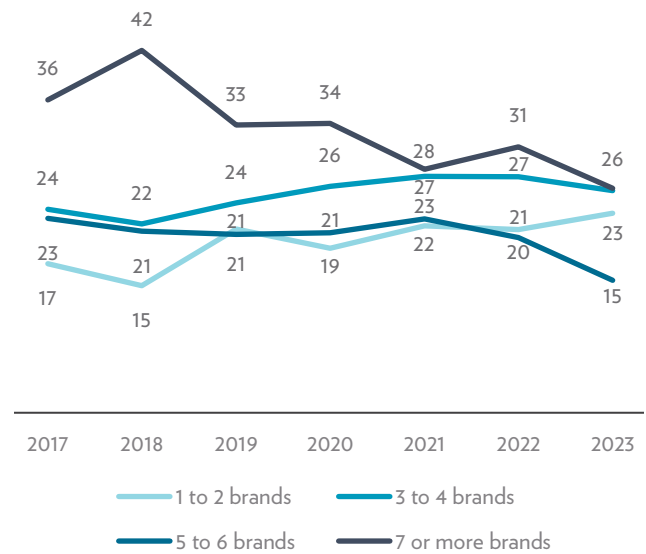
*The number of news brands used was calculated by adding up both online and offline brands that respondents accessed in the past week.

FIGURE 5.16: NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
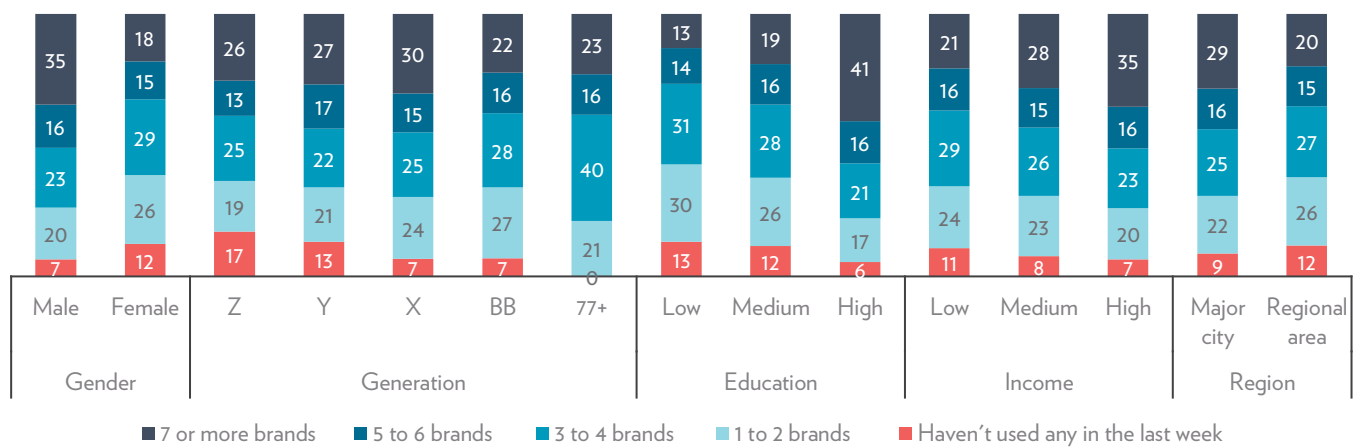
Those who mainly use social media are most likely to say they haven't used any news brands in the last week (17%) compared to those who rely on other mediums. They are also most likely to say they only use 1 to 2 brands to get news (28%) compared to those who use print and online news (16%) as their main sources (see **figure 5.17**).

**FIGURE 5.17:** NUMBER OF NEWS BRANDS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS (%)
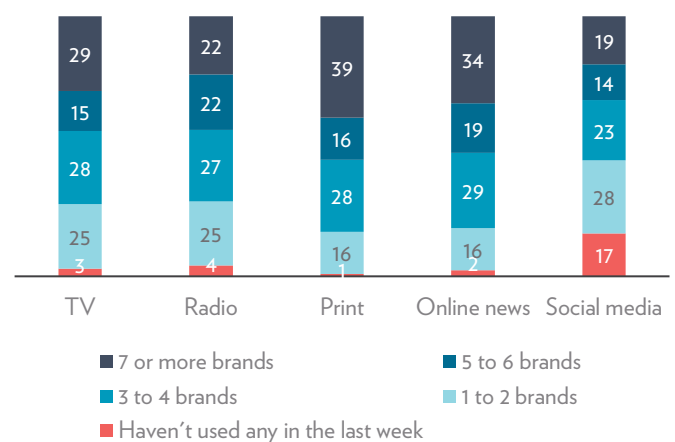
DEVICES FOR NEWS

Mobile phones remain the most used device for any purpose (83%), followed by computer/laptops (69%). Almost half of Australians (49%) use a smart TV or a tablet, whereas one in five (19%) use wearable devices or voice activated speakers.

Overall, 58% of respondents use mobile phones to access news and this is the most popular device for news. Less than half of respondents use a computer for news (40%), with only 29% using a smart TV and 23% using a tablet. Wearable and voice devices are becoming more popular but are still only used by 6% and 7% for news (see **figure 5.18**).

FIGURE 5.18: DEVICES USED FOR ANY PURPOSE AND NEWS (%)
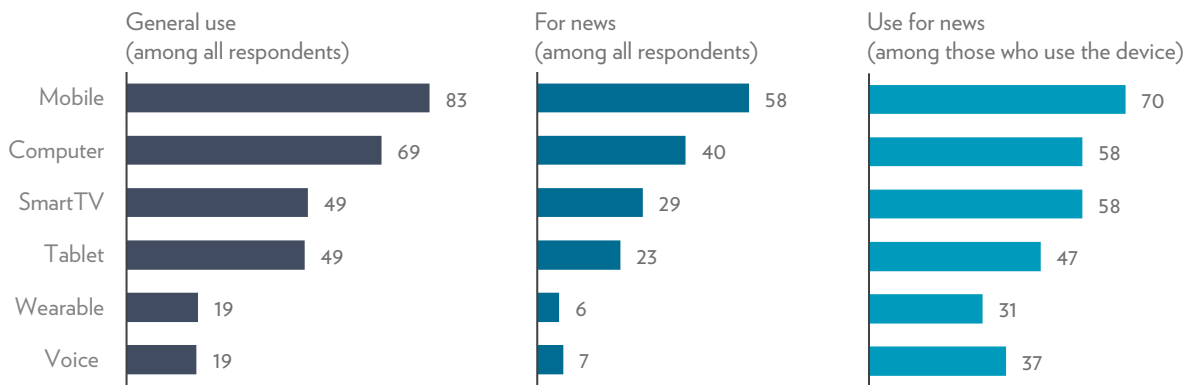
[Q8A_2023] Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use (for any purpose)? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,025] [Q8B_2023] Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news _in the last week_? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,025]. [Base: mobile (N=1,168), computer (N=1,406), tablet (N=459), smart TV (N=1,001), wearable (N=122), voice (N=144)]

ONE IN FIVE USE WEARABLE DEVICES AND VOICE ACTIVATED SPEAKERS

The use of wearable devices and voice activated speakers has notably increased among Australians. One in five Australian (19%) uses such devices for any purpose. There has been a significant increase in the use of smart TVs for news consumption. Nearly one third of respondents (29%)
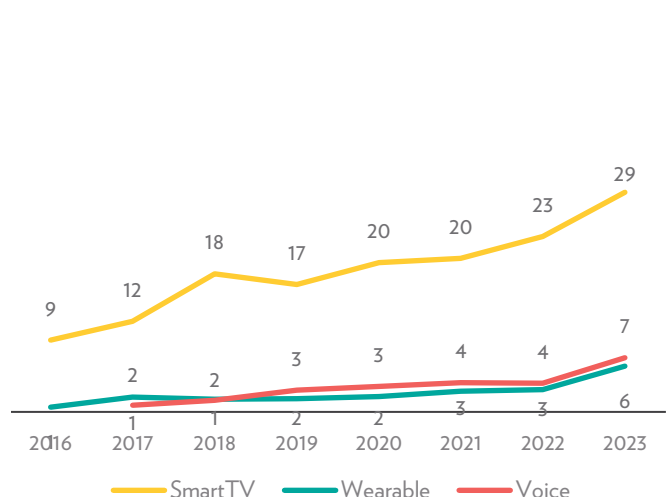
now get their news via smart TV. The use of wearable devices and voice activated speakers for news has also increased by 3% respectively compared to last year (see **figure 5.19** and **figure 5.20**).

FIGURE 5.19: SMART TV, VOICE AND WEARABLE DEVICES FOR ANY PURPOSE 2016–2023 (%)
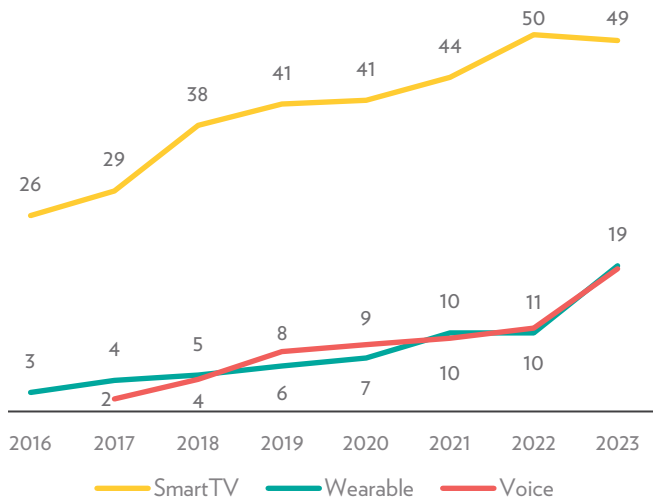
As below figure 5.17.

FIGURE 5.20: SMART TV, VOICE AND WEARABLE DEVICES FOR NEWS 2016–2023 (%)

MEN, GEN Y AND HIGHLY EDUCATED USE WEARABLES AND VOICE-ACTIVATED SPEAKERS TO GET NEWS

The use of wearable devices and voice-activated speakers for news is more popular among men (10%), Gen Y (11%) and those with high education (12%) and high income (13%) than with other news consumers (see **figure 5.21**).

The number of devices used has an impact on news access. Heavy news consumers (16%) are more likely to use five or more devices compared to light news consumers (12%) (see **figure 5.22**)

FIGURE 5.22: NUMBER OF DEVICES BY NEWS ACCESS (%)

	1-2 devices	3-4 devices	5-6 devices
Light news access	43	45	12
Heavy news access	38	46	16
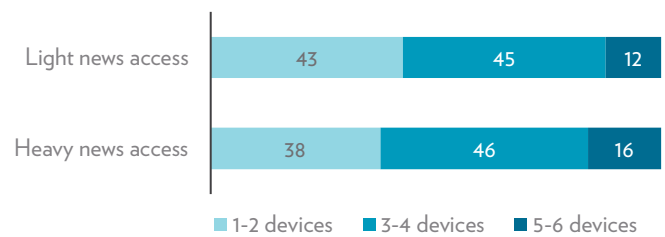
*Respondents who did not use any device listed in the survey were excluded [BASE: N=1,970].

FIGURE 5.21: VOICE AND WEARABLE FOR NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)


■ Wearable ■ Voice
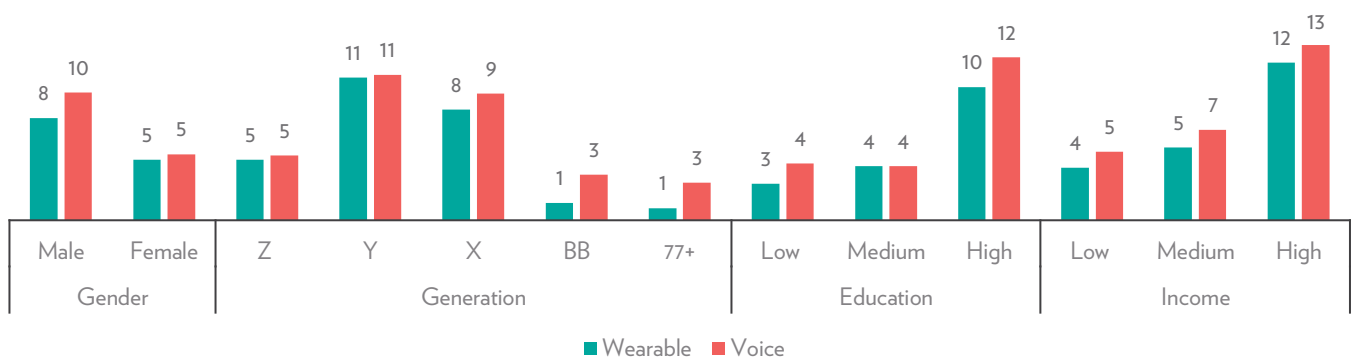
SEARCH ENGINES FOR NEWS ARE ON THE RISE

Half of Australian news consumers (50%) go directly to news websites to find news stories, which is a 3 percentage point increase from the previous year. The proportion of news consumers who find news on social media has continued to increase for the last few years.

There has been as significant increase in the use of search engines to find news stories (30%, +8). However, the use of

mobile news alerts, email newsletters and news aggregators has remained steady (see **figure 5.23**). The rise in searching for news by keywords possibly reflects the increasingly fragmented nature of the news environment, and the niche catering of brands to particular topics and issues.

FIGURE 5.23: PATHWAYS TO NEWS 2021–2023 (%)

■ 2021 ■ 2022 ■ 2023
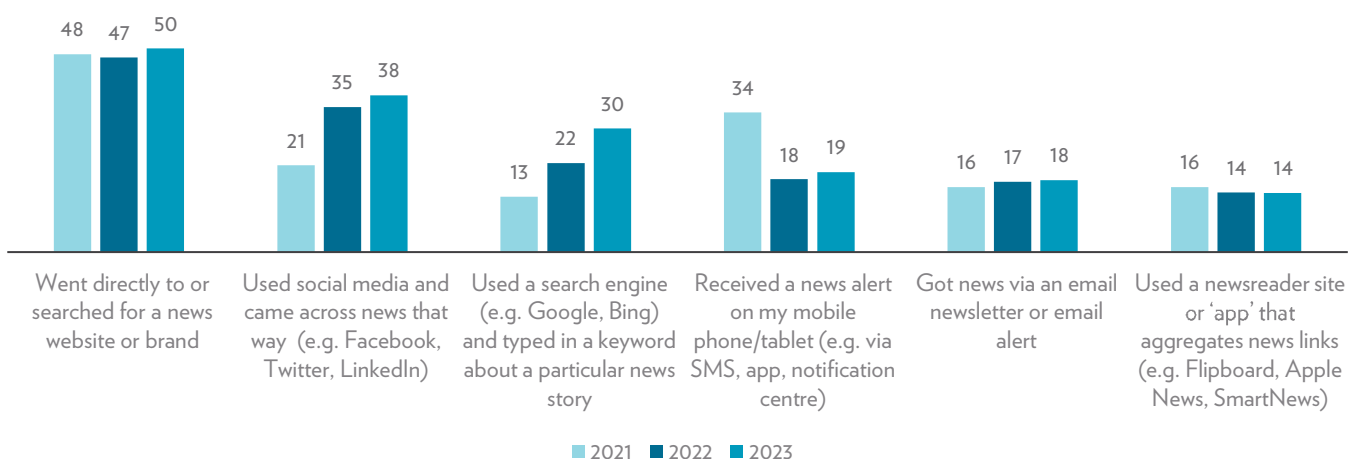
[Q10] Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,025].

Figure 5.24 shows that direct access to news websites or brands is more pronounced among older generations. Gen Z is proportionally less likely to go directly to a news website or brand (20%) than other generations and is also the most likely to use a search engine to search for a keyword about a particular story (34%). This suggests that younger respondents are less attached to any news brands.

FIGURE 5.24: DIRECT TO BRAND VS KEYWORD SEARCH BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Direct to brand ■ Search
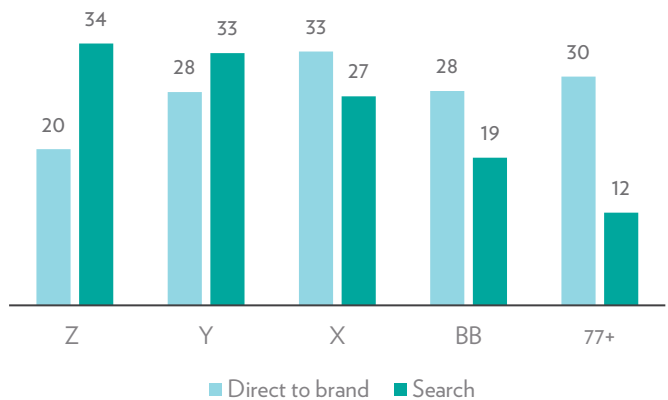
SUMMARY

Globally, Australians are the second most infrequent news users. The percentage of Australians accessing news more than once a day has declined by 6%, with less than half (48%) now being considered heavy news consumers, which is well below the global average (60%).

While news consumption has remained stable among men, women's news consumption has substantially decreased, with only 41% of them accessing news more than once a day. Those with high education and income also decreased their consumption of news, but not to the extent that women have.

This emerging gap is the largest among the countries in the survey, suggesting that news consumption in Australia is unusually gendered.

As print, TV and radio continue to decline, regional and local newspaper use has reached a particular low point. Readership of regional newspapers has decreased to 10% this year from 14% in 2022. The decrease is more pronounced among women, older generations, and regional residents.

However, a notable increase in print use was found among Gen Z, with one in ten (8%) now relying on print for news. This proportion is higher than for other generations.

Smart TVs have overtaken tablets as a preferred device for accessing news and continues to grow. There has also been an increase in the use of voice and wearable devices for news. Additionally, there seems to be a shift in how audiences are accessing news in an increasingly fragmented media environment, with the proportion of those searching for news via keywords increasing. Compared to other generations, Gen Z are the most likely to take this approach, while being less likely to go directly to news websites or brands.

Overall, the data suggest audiences are decreasing their news consumption, changing their preferred news devices, consolidating the number of news brands they use, and changing the ways in which they seek out information on events and issues.

NEWS MOMENTS

28 January 2023 | Ash Barty presents the winners trophy at the women's final of the Australian Open in Melbourne Park. After winning Wimbledon in 2021 and the Australian Open in 2022, Barty announced she would be retiring from tennis at the age of 26. Since retiring, Barty has visited remote communities as part of the Racquets and Red Duct program, in her capacity as Tennis Australia's First Nations Ambassador.

IMAGE: JAMES ROSS / AAP IMAGE

6 SOCIAL MEDIA AND PODCASTING

- The use of Instagram (26%, +6) and TikTok (17%, +4) for news continues to rise among Gen Z.

- TikTok news users pay most attention to ordinary people or celebrities as news sources.

- Podcast use is rising (38%, +5) and Australia is now above the global average (36%).

- Podcast listening has increased the most among Gen X men (52%, +15).

- News podcasts have grown steadily since 2019 (14%, +5).

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

FACEBOOK STILL MOST COMMON SOCIAL PLATFORM FOR NEWS, BUT TIKTOK AND YOUTUBE ARE GROWING FASTER
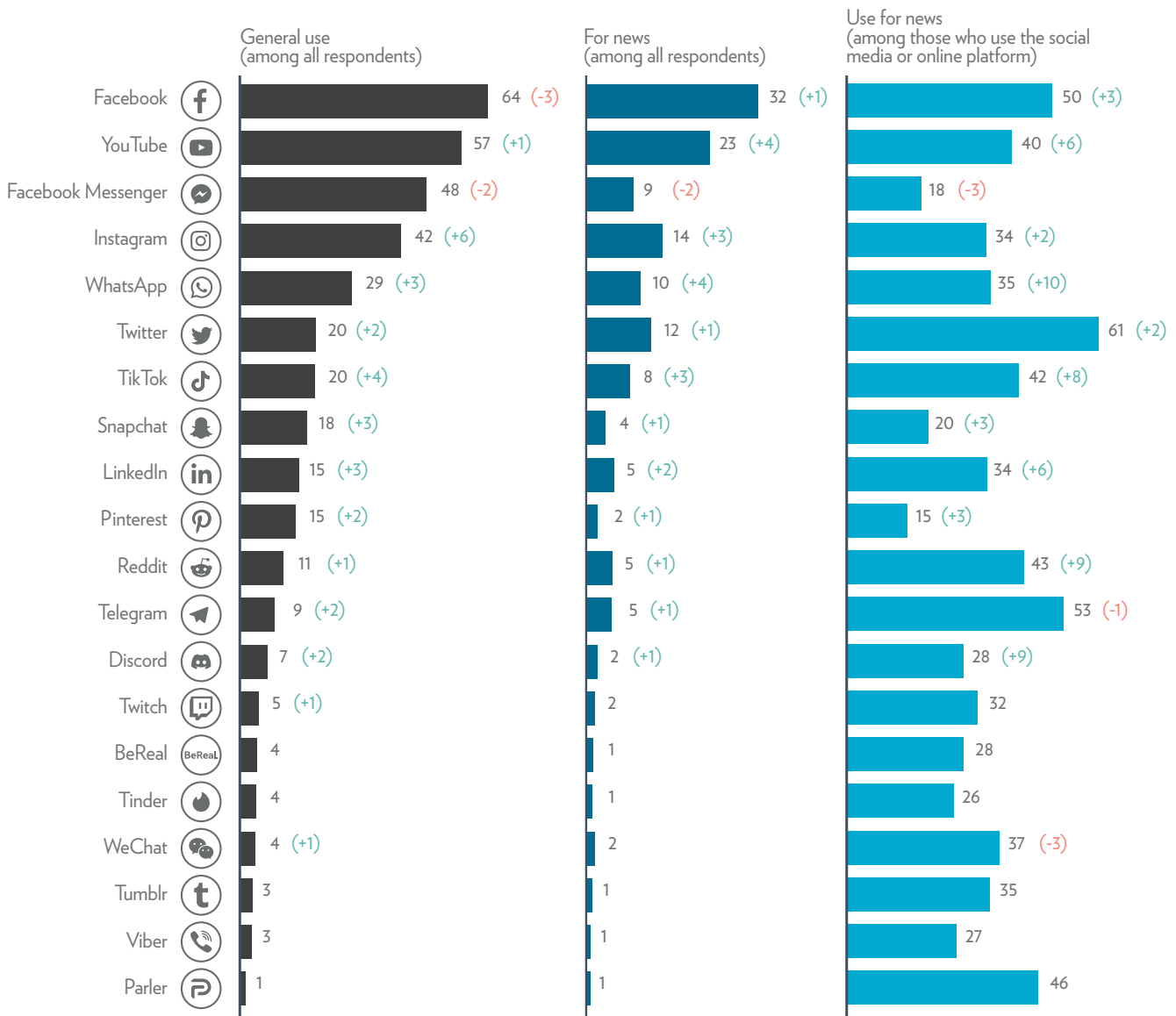
Facebook remains the most popular social media platform for general use (64%, -3), but continues to fall. In contrast, the reach of Instagram (42%, +6) and TikTok (20%, +4) increased. YouTube (57%, +1) and Twitter (20%, +2) use also rose slightly since last year (see **figure 6.1**).

Overall, the use of social media platforms to access news has been on the rise. The use of YouTube for news increased by 4 percentage points to almost one in four

respondents (23%) in the past year. The use of WhatsApp (10%, +4), Instagram (14%, +3) and TikTok (8%, +3) for news has also grown.

Half of Facebook users (50%) say they use the social media platform for news. However, this was only a 3 percentage point increase from last year. The use of TikTok (42%, +8) and YouTube (40%, +6) and Reddit (43%, +9) for news is increasing at a faster rate by those platform users.

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

	General use (among all respondents)	For news (among all respondents)	Use for news (among those who use the social media or online platform)
Facebook	64 (-3)	32 (+1)	50 (+3)
YouTube	57 (+1)	23 (+4)	40 (+6)
Facebook Messenger	48 (-2)	9 (-2)	18 (-3)
Instagram	42 (+6)	14 (+3)	34 (+2)
WhatsApp	29 (+3)	10 (+4)	35 (+10)
Twitter	20 (+2)	12 (+1)	61 (+2)
TikTok	20 (+4)	8 (+3)	42 (+8)
Snapchat	18 (+3)	4 (+1)	20 (+3)
LinkedIn	15 (+3)	5 (+2)	34 (+6)
Pinterest	15 (+2)	2 (+1)	15 (+3)
Reddit	11 (+1)	5 (+1)	43 (+9)
Telegram	9 (+2)	5 (+1)	53 (-1)
Discord	7 (+2)	2 (+1)	28 (+9)
Twitch	5 (+1)	2	32
BeReal	4	1	28
Tinder	4	1	26
WeChat	4 (+1)	2	37 (-3)
Tumblr	3	1	35
Viber	3	1	27
Parler	1	1	46

[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. [Base: N=2,025]

INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK CONTINUE TO RISE AS A SOURCE OF NEWS AMONG YOUNGER GENERATIONS

Facebook and YouTube remain the most popular social media platforms for news across all generations. Among Gen Z, Instagram is on the rise with 26% (+6) using it for news. Similarly, there was an increase in their use of TikTok for news (17%, +4). Twitter is still a popular source of news among Gen Y (18%). However, there has been a decrease in its use for news among Gen Z (-3), with only 11% saying they use Twitter for news (see **figure 6.2**).

**FIGURE 6.2:** SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM USE FOR NEWS BY GENERATION (%)
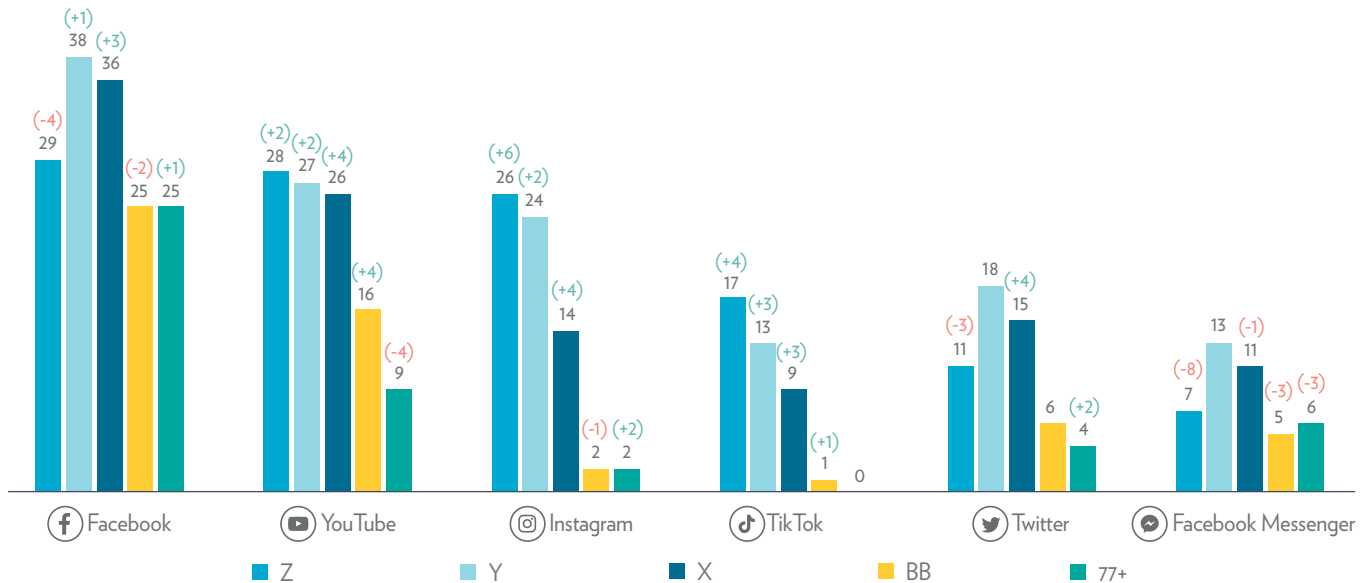
TWITTER, INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK USE INCREASING FASTER AMONG HIGHLY EDUCATED

Those with high education are more likely to use all social media platforms for news. However, people with low levels of education are the least likely to use Twitter (4%), Instagram (4%) and TikTok (3%), compared to those with high education (Twitter, 21%; Instagram, 23%; TikTok, 11%) (see **figure 6.3**).

FIGURE 6.3: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY EDUCATION (%)
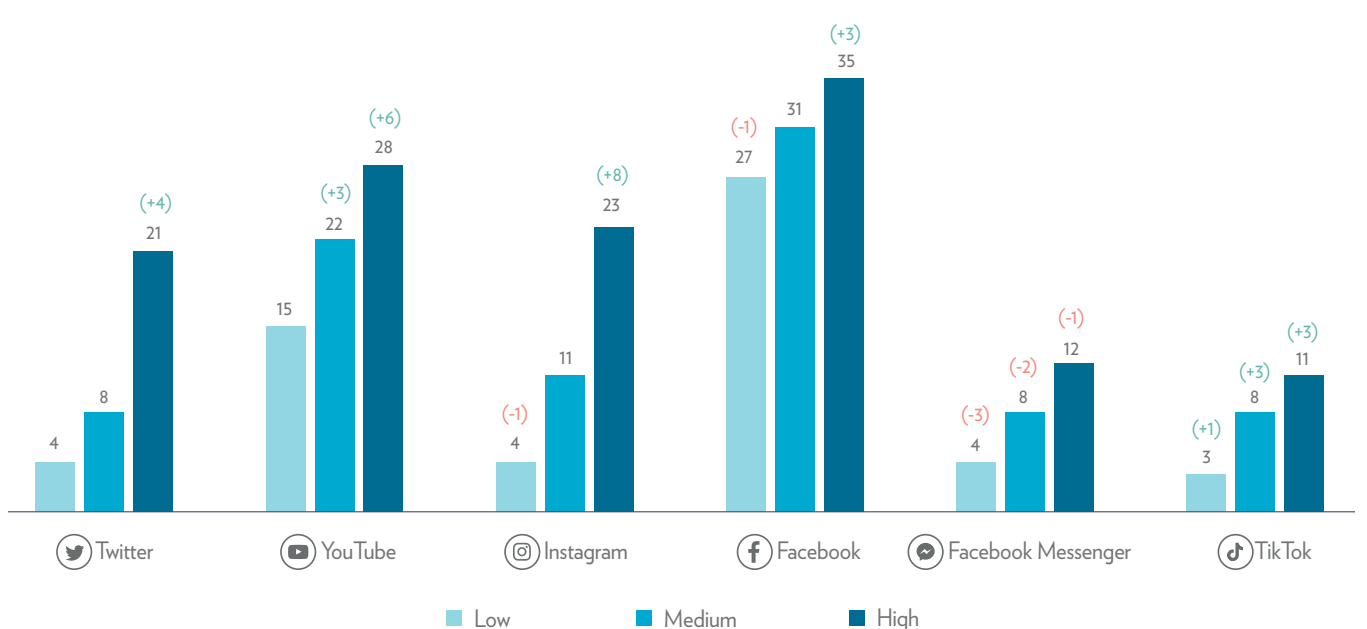
Australians' use of TikTok for news (8%, +3) is around the global average (9%, +3). In some other markets, TikTok use for news is increasing at a much faster rate. Chile (18%), Columbia (20%) and Peru (30%) have doubled their use of TikTok for news in the past year. However, in markets such as Korea (4%), the UK (3%) and Japan (3%) it is barely used at all and there are limited signs of growth (see **figure 6.4**).

FIGURE 6.4: TIKTOK USE FOR NEWS BY SELECTED COUNTRIES 2022-2023 (%)

Global average is among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]
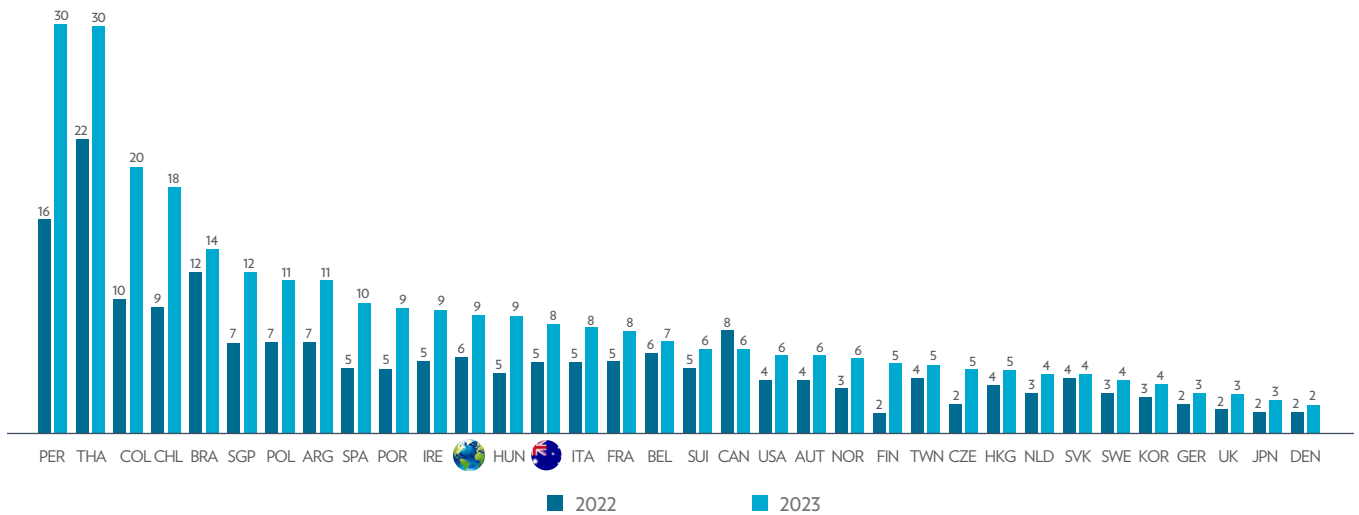
LEFT WING CONSUMERS CONTINUE TO FAVOUR TWITTER, INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK FOR NEWS

The use of social platforms for news differs by political orientation. Left-wing news consumers favour Twitter (19%), Instagram (18%), and TikTok (11%) more than those who identify as right-wing or centre. This could be attributed to the fact that younger generations, who are more likely to use these platforms, tend to lean left politically.

On the other hand, right-wing news consumers are slightly more likely to use Facebook for news (34%) than those who identify as left-wing (31%) or centre (31%) (see **figure 6.5**). YouTube is used equally by left and right-wing consumers to access video news.
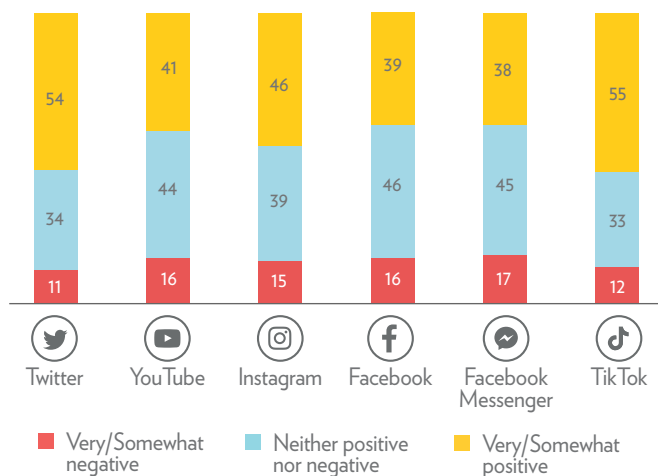
FIGURE 6.5: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)
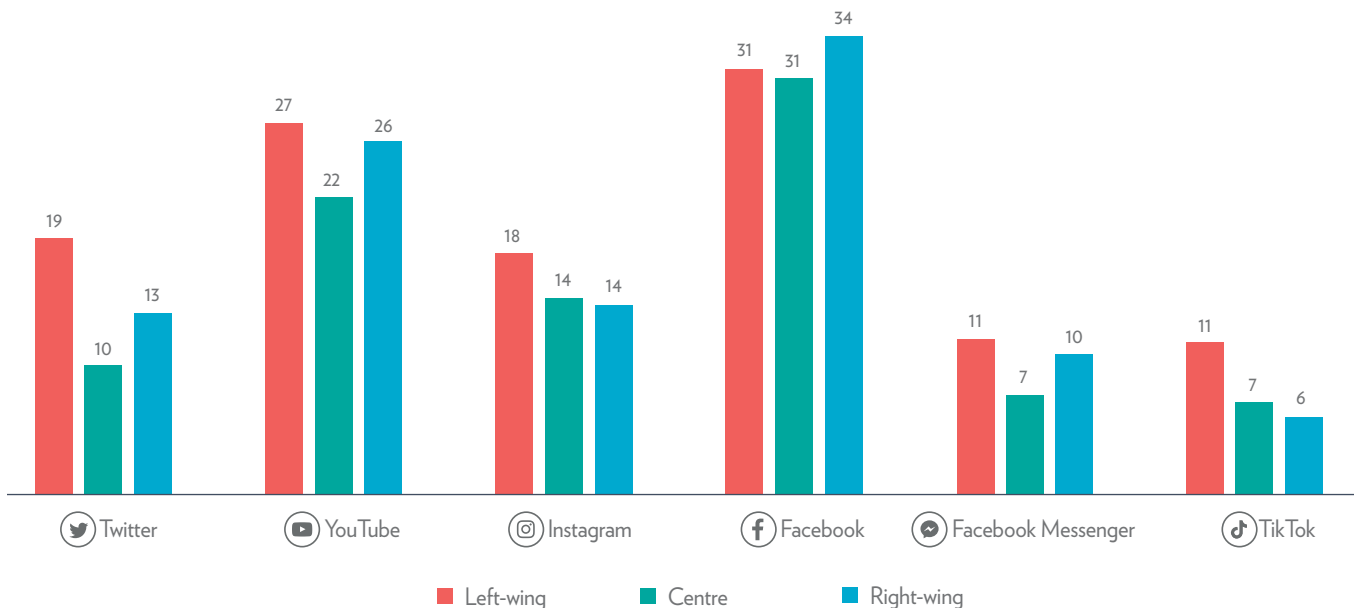
TIKTOK USERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO REPORT POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH ONLINE NEWS

Those who use social media platforms are the happiest with their online news experiences (see **Chapter 4**). This is particularly the case among TikTok (55%) and Twitter (54%) users, with more than half saying they have positive online news experiences. Respondents who use YouTube, Facebook or Facebook Messenger for news are less likely to report a positive experience with online news (see **figure 6.6**).

PEOPLE ARE USING MORE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS

The majority of respondents (60%) use at least one social media platform for news on a weekly basis, which is a 4 percentage point increase from last year. Nearly one in five respondents (17%, +3) use 3 or more platforms to get news (see **figure 6.7**).

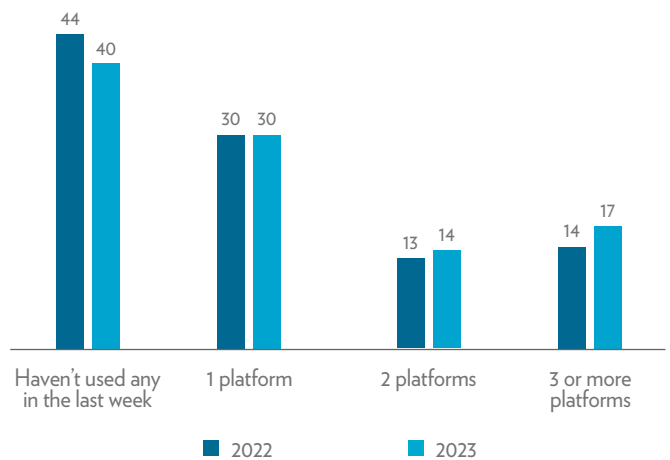**FIGURE 6.6:** SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM USE AND ENGAGEMENT SENTIMENT (%)

*Those who said 'I don't know' or 'I don't see any news online or on social media' were excluded.
[Base: N=1,692]

**FIGURE 6.7:** NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS (%)

MEN AND GEN Y USE MULTIPLE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS

Those who say they haven't used any social media platforms are concentrated among Baby Boomers (59%) and those aged 77+ (62%). In contrast only 21% of Gen Z say they haven't used any. Men tend to use a greater variety of social media platforms to get their news. Almost a quarter of men (24%) use 3 or more platforms compared to only 11% of women. Gen Y use a greater variety of social media platforms for news than other generations, with nearly one third (29%) using 3 or more platforms (see **figure 6.8**).

FIGURE 6.8: NUMBER OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS FOR NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)
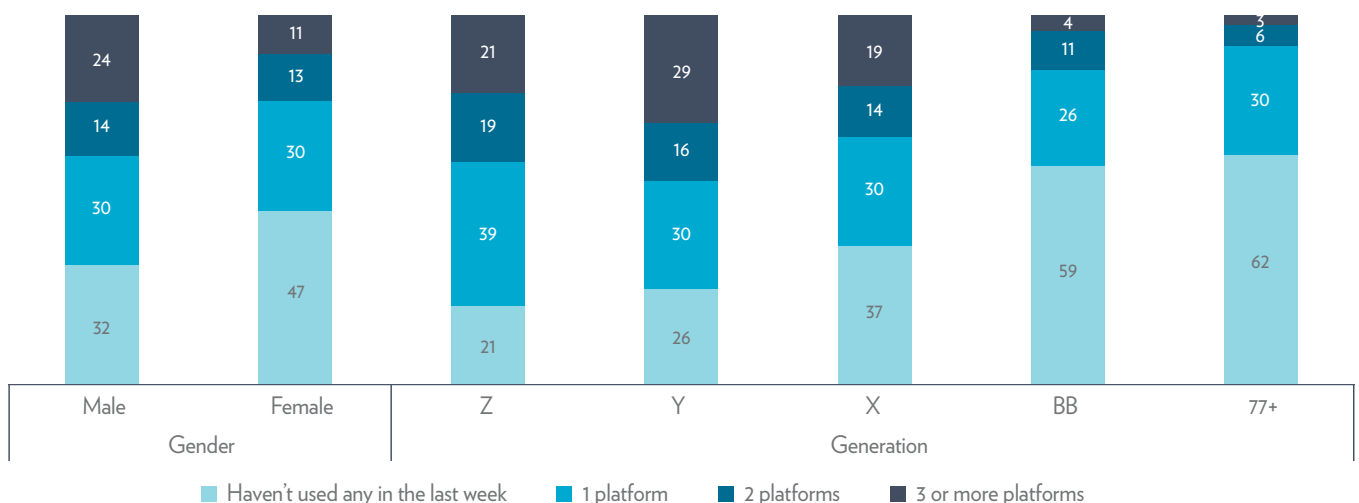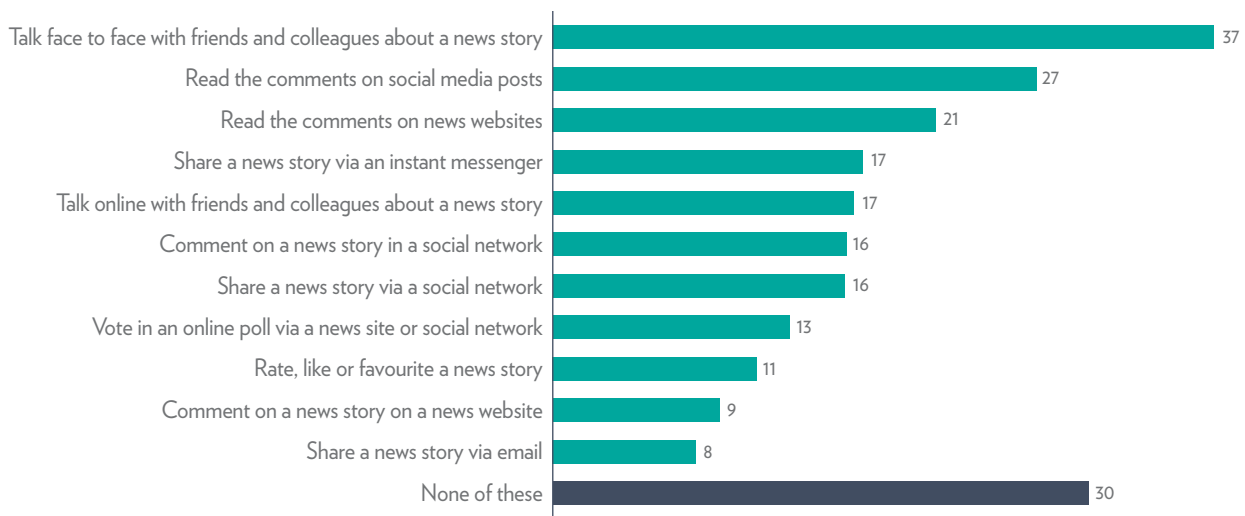
NEWS CONSUMERS PREFER READING COMMENTS OVER SHARING AND LIKING

This year we asked new questions about online news engagement and whether news consumers read comments on social media posts or on news websites. More people read comments than share or like a story.

The majority of respondents (70%) say they share or participate in news coverage in one or more ways. The most common method of engagement with news is face-to-face conversations with friends and colleagues about a news story (37%). News consumers are more likely to read the comments on social media posts (27%) or news websites (21%) than actively engage with news through commenting, sharing, or liking (see **figure 6.9**).

FIGURE 6.9: INTERACTIONS WITH NEWS (%)

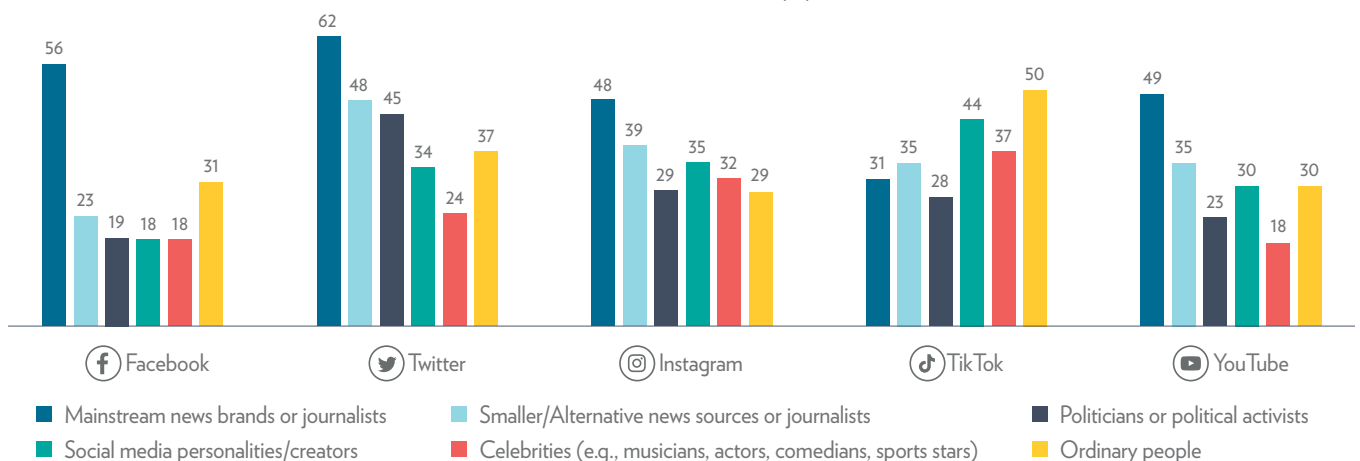|	
Talk face to face with friends and colleagues about a news story	37
Read the comments on social media posts	27
Read the comments on news websites	21
Share a news story via an instant messenger	17
Talk online with friends and colleagues about a news story	17
Comment on a news story in a social network	16
Share a news story via a social network	16
Vote in an online poll via a news site or social network	13
Rate, like or favourite a news story	11
Comment on a news story on a news website	9
Share a news story via email	8
None of these	30

[Q13] During an _average week_ in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS USERS MOSTLY PAY ATTENTION TO MAINSTREAM NEWS

This year, we asked those who say they use social platforms for news what news sources they pay the most attention to there. Facebook (56%), Instagram (48%), Twitter (62%), and YouTube (49%) news users say they mostly pay attention to mainstream media and journalists. However, TikTok news users are more likely to say they pay attention to ordinary individuals (50%) and social media personalities/creators (44%) (see **figure 6.10**).

FIGURE 6.10: SOURCES OF NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY PLATFORM (%)

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	TikTok	YouTube
Mainstream news brands or journalists	56	62	48	31	49
Smaller/Alternative news sources or journalists	23	48	39	35	35
Politicians or political activists	19	45	29	28	23
Social media personalities/creators	18	34	35	44	30
Celebrities (e.g., musicians, actors, comedians, sports stars)	18	24	32	37	18
Ordinary people	31	37	29	50	30

- Mainstream news brands or journalists
- Smaller/Alternative news sources or journalists
- Politicians or political activists
- Social media personalities/creators
- Celebrities (e.g., musicians, actors, comedians, sports stars)
- Ordinary people

[Q12_Social_sources] You said that you use [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube] for news... When it comes to news on [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube], which of these sources do you generally pay most attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: Facebook (N=432), Twitter (N=124), Instagram (N=140), TikTok (N=80), YouTube (N=294)]

Among people who say they use Facebook for news, those under the age of 35 are more likely to say they pay attention to all sources of news except for ordinary people. In contrast, people aged 35+ (33%) are more likely to say

they look to ordinary people as a source of news, followed by alternative news sources (23%), politicians or political activists, social media personalities, and celebrities (17%) (see **figure 6.11**).

FIGURE 6.11: SOURCES OF NEWS ON FACEBOOK (%)

[Base: Facebook (N=432)]
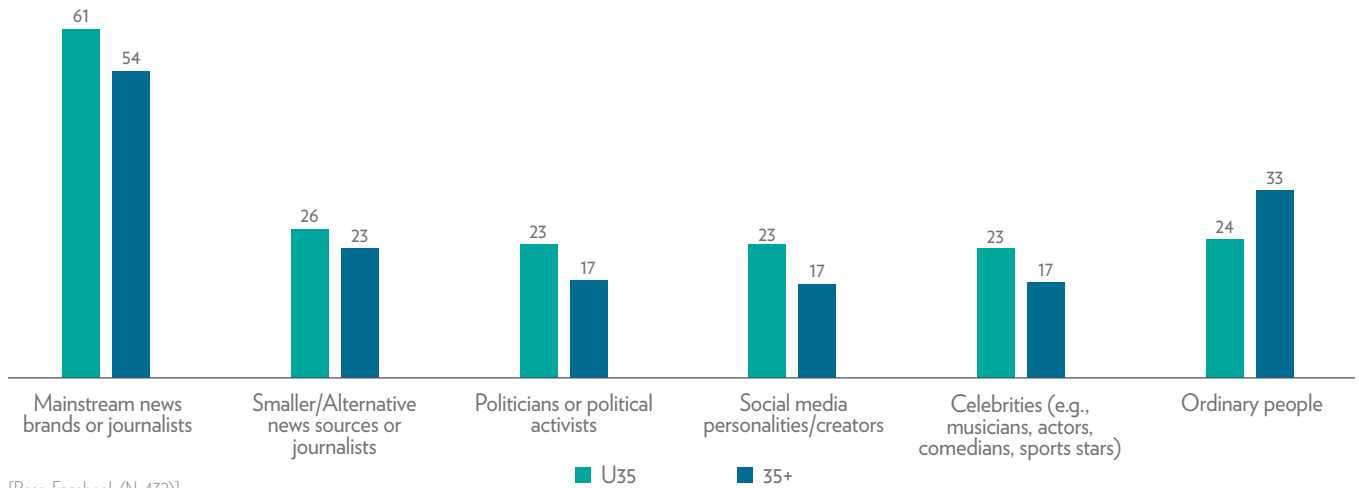
TIK TOKERS PREFER SOCIAL JUSTICE STORIES

We also asked respondents about the topics of news they pay the most attention to while on social media platforms. The results reveal significant differences in audience interests. Twitter users are much more likely to pay attention to national political news (59%), whereas TikTok (51%), Instagram and Facebook (42%) users tend to be interested in entertainment, celebrity and lifestyle news.

TikTok news users are most likely to say they pay attention to social justice news (42%) compared to users of other platforms (see **figure 6.12**). This reflects TikTok's younger audience and their higher interest in social justice issues.

**FIGURE 6.12:** NEWS TOPICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY PLATFORM (%)
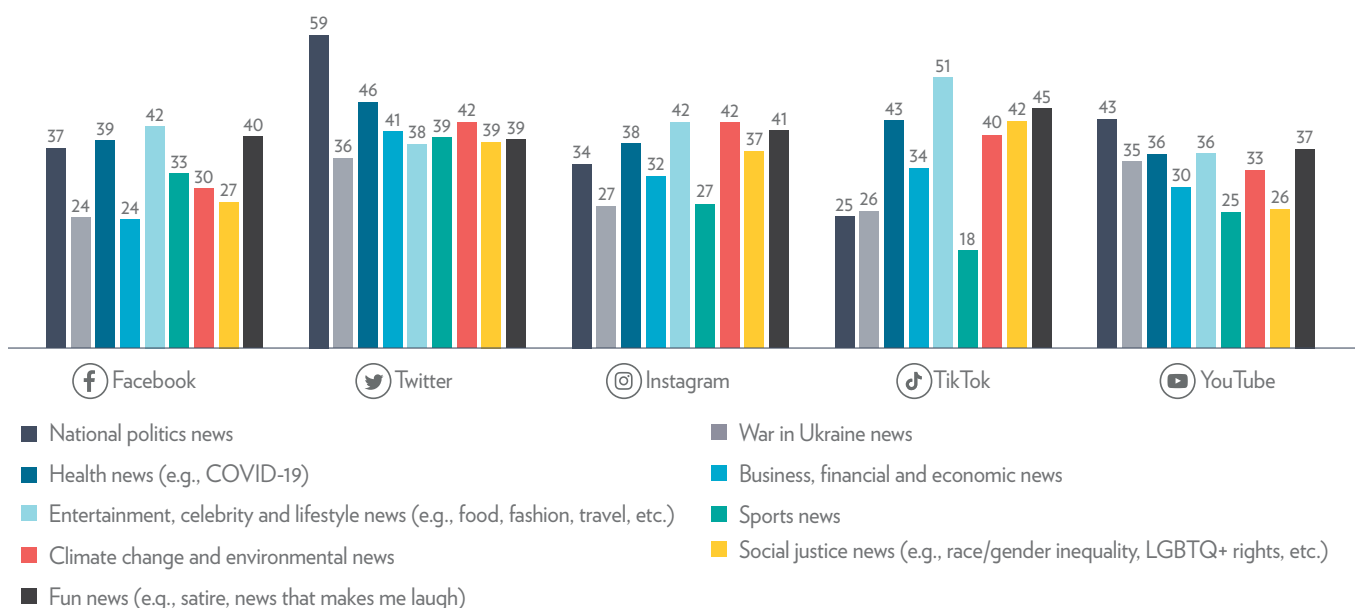
[Q12_Social_ subjects] You said that you use [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube] for news... When it comes to news on [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube], what types of content do you mostly pay attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: Facebook (N=432), Twitter (N=124), Instagram (N=140), TikTok (N=80), YouTube (N=294)]

NEWS AGGREGATORS

APPLE NEWS IS ON THE RISE

This year, the use of news aggregator websites and apps has increased overall. In 2022, Apple News remains the top news aggregator, with nearly one in five respondents (18%) using it. Sixteen percent of respondents use Google News, and 9% use Snapchat Discover and Upday (see **figure 6.13**).

**FIGURE 6.13:** NEWS AGGREGATOR USE 2020 – 2023 (%)
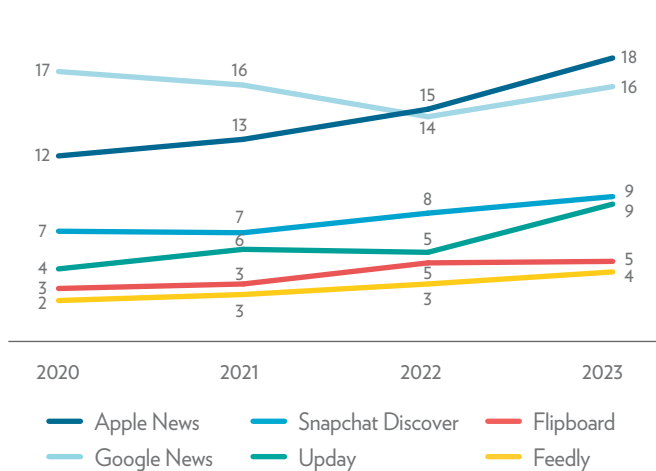
[Q10c_2016] When using the internet for news, have you used any of the following sites or mobile apps that aggregate different news links in the last week? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who have listened to a podcast in the last month (N=763)]

APPLE NEWS IS POPULAR AMONG GEN Z

Over the past four years, the popularity of Apple News has increased substantially among Gen Z from 14% in 2020 to 24% in 2023. In contrast, the use of Snapchat Discover has significantly declined from 25% to 17% over the same period. Upday continues to grow among Gen Z, with one in ten (10%) using it to get news (see **figure 6.14**).

FIGURE 6.14: GEN Z'S NEWS AGGREGATOR USE 2020 - 2023 (%)
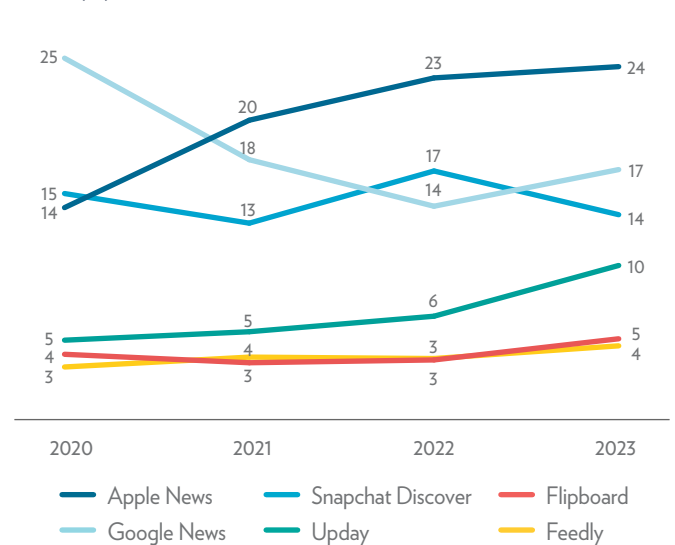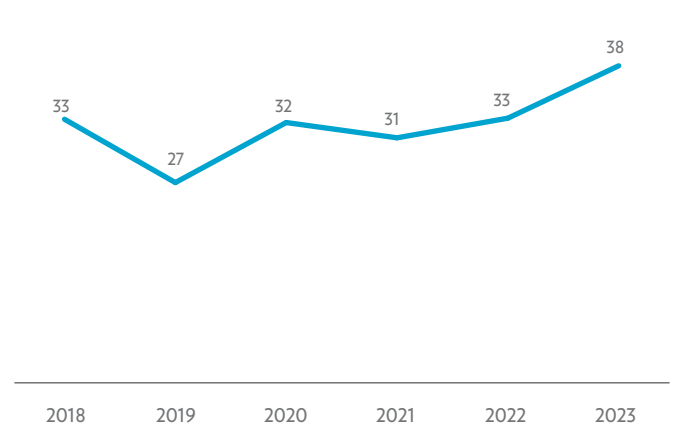

PODCAST USE

PODCAST LISTENING CONTINUES TO GROW

The popularity of podcasts is on the rise in Australia. Thirty eight percent (+5) say they have listened to a podcast in the last month (see **figure 6.15**). This is higher than the global average for podcast listeners in 24 countries (36%).

FIGURE 6.15: PODCAST LISTENING 2018-2023 (%)

[Q11F_2018] A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the _last month_? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

PODCAST LISTENING SOARS AMONG GEN X MEN

There has been a significant increase in podcast listening among men in the past year. Nearly half (47%, +9) listen to podcasts. In contrast, the use of podcasts among women has remained unchanged (29%). Notably, the use of podcasts among Australian men (47%) is much higher than the global average (40%) (see **figure 6.17**).

This can mainly be attributed to the growing popularity of podcasts among Australian Gen X men. There has been a 15 percentage point increase since last year. In contrast there were no significant changes to podcast listening among women (see **figure 6.16**).

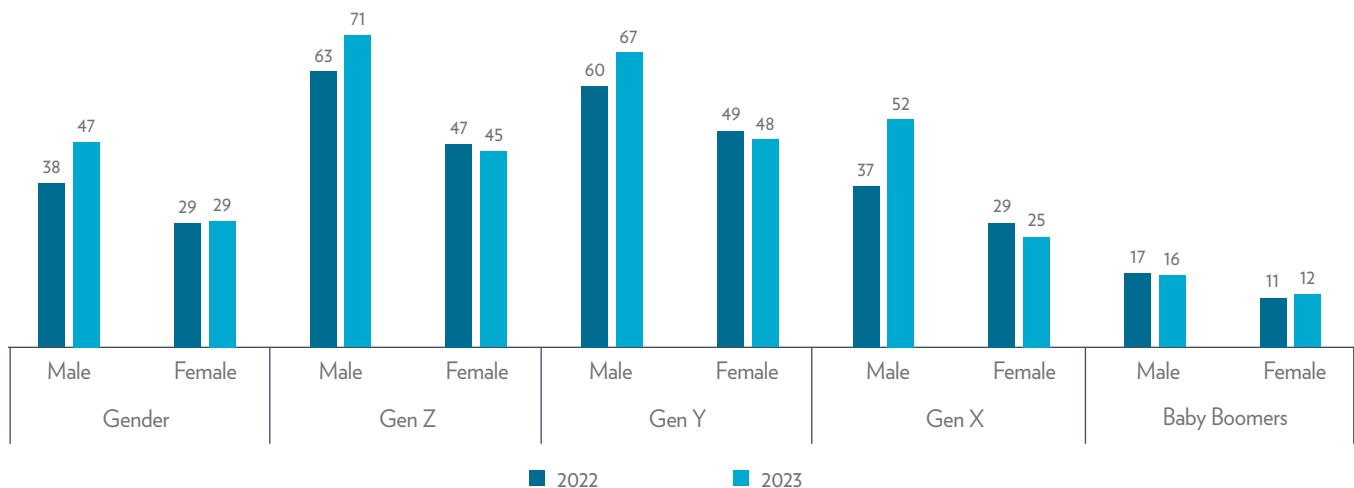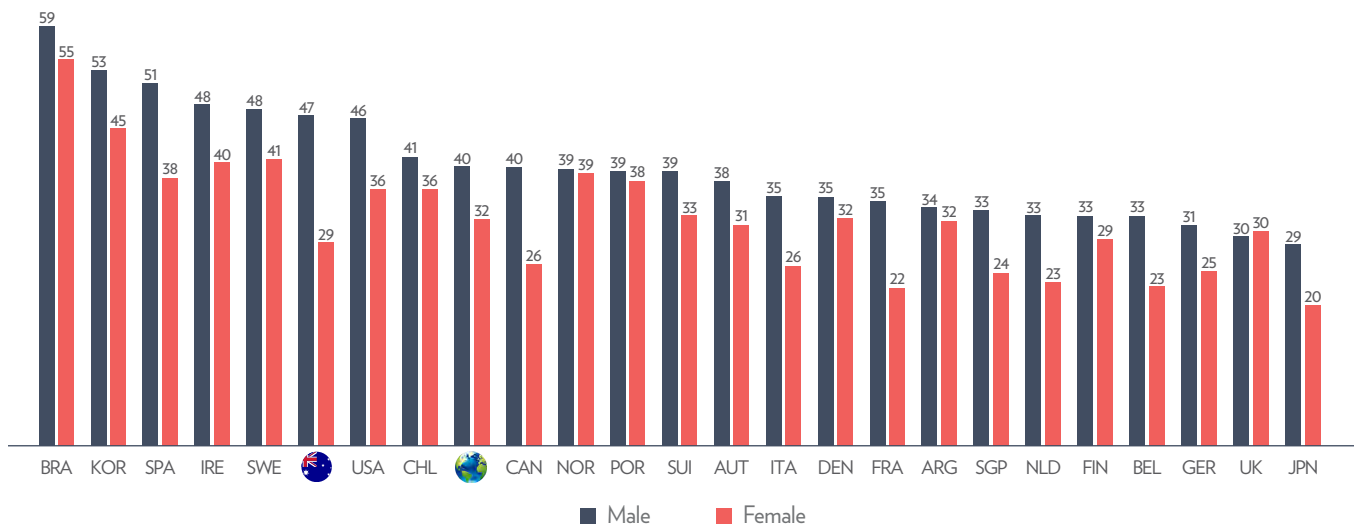**FIGURE 6.16:** PODCAST LISTENING BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

**FIGURE 6.17:** PODCAST LISTENING BY GENDER AND COUNTRY (%)

Global average is among 24 countries [Base: N= 48,975]

PODCASTS ARE POPULAR AMONG HIGHLY EDUCATED AUSTRALIANS

An increasing number of highly educated Australians are turning to podcasts as a source of information and entertainment. The majority of respondents with high education levels listened to a podcast in the last month (58%, +16). However, the use of podcasts among those with low or medium education levels has slightly decreased.

High income earners (54%) are more likely to listen to podcasts than medium (39%) and low income (31%) earners. Respondents living in major cities (42%) are more likely to listen to podcasts than people living in regional parts of Australia (27%) (see **figure 6.18**).

FIGURE 6.18: PODCAST LISTENERS BY EDUCATION, INCOME AND REGION (%)
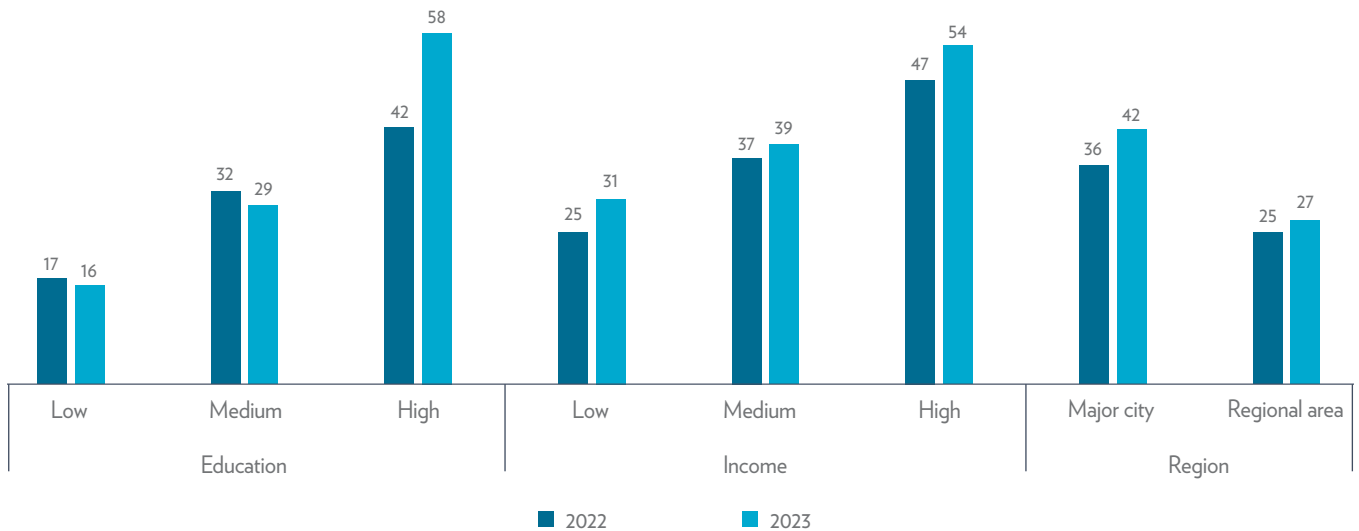
PODCAST LISTENERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO PAY FOR NEWS

Podcast listeners are more inclined to pay for news than non-listeners. This year we found the percentage of podcast listeners who pay for news has substantially increased to 44% (+7) over the past 12 months (see **figure 6.19**). This increase is mainly related to the rise in podcast usage among men who are also more likely to pay for news (see **Chapter 7**).

FIGURE 6.19: PAYING FOR NEWS BY PODCAST LISTENING 2022-2023 (%)
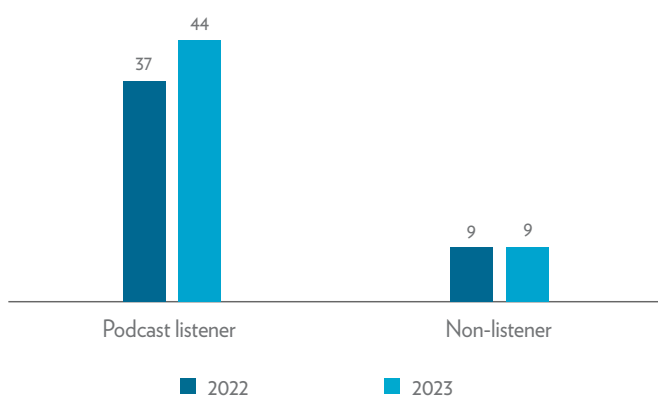
MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF PODCAST LISTENERS SAY THEY INCREASED THEIR LISTENING TIME

Among those who listen to podcasts, more than one-third (37%) say they spent more time listening to podcasts in the last year. A similar proportion of listeners (40%) say they spent the same amount of time, while 19% say they reduced their listening time (see **figure 6.20**).

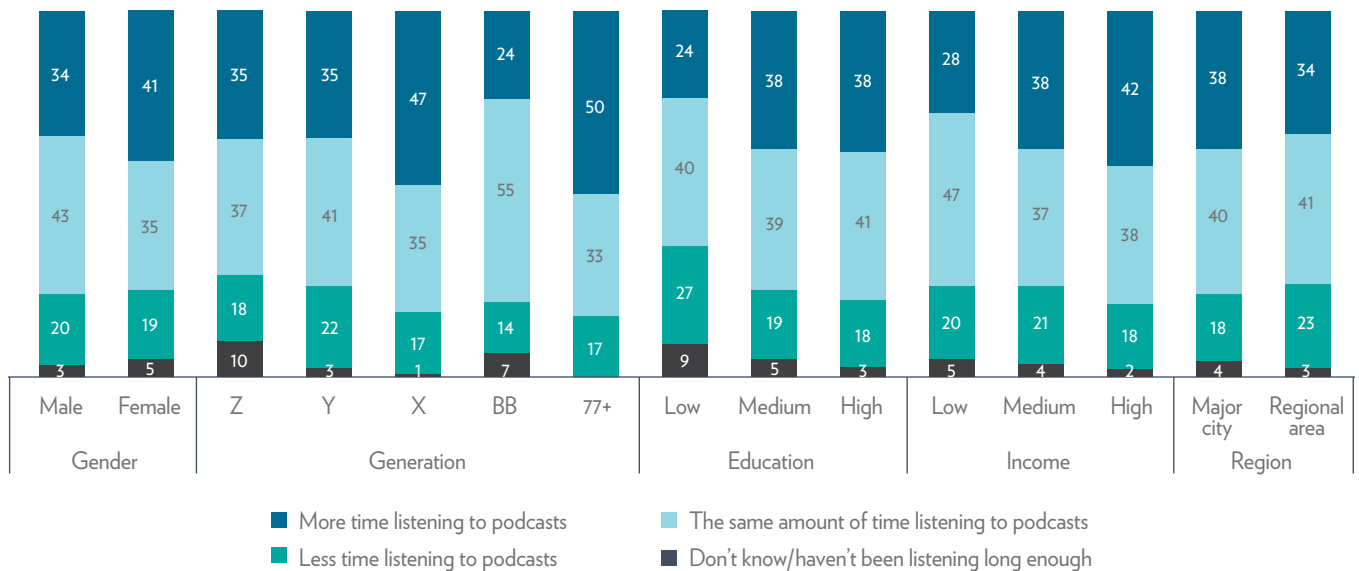**FIGURE 6.20:** CHANGE IN PODCAST LISTENING (%)
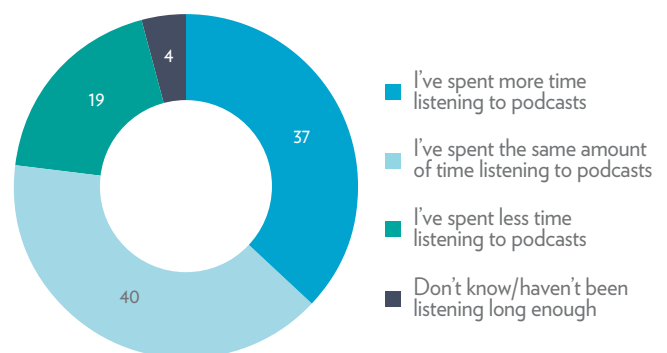
[Q1_Podcasts_2023] Thinking about your podcast listening... how has it changed in the last year? [Base: Those who have listened to a podcast in the last month (N=763)]

WOMEN INCREASED THEIR TIME SPENT LISTENING TO PODCASTS

The proportion of women who use podcasts did not increase, but 41% say they have increased their time spent listening in the past year. Almost half of Gen X (47%) say they spent more time listening to podcasts. Those with high education (38%) and income (42%) levels as well as city dwellers (38%) also say they have increased their podcast listening in the past year (see **figure 6.21**).

FIGURE 6.21: CHANGE IN PODCAST LISTENING BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

Legend:
- More time listening to podcasts
- The same amount of time listening to podcasts
- Less time listening to podcasts
- Don't know/haven't been listening long enough

NEWS PODCASTS GROW AND SPECIALIST CONTENT IS THE MOST POPULAR

There has been a steady increase in the use of news podcasts since 2019 (14%, +5). The most popular podcasts are about specialist subjects such as science and health, with one in five podcast users reporting they have listened to one of these in the last month. There has been a significant increase in lifestyle podcast listening, with 17% (+6) of respondents accessing podcasts on subjects such as food, fashion, and travel (see **figure 6.22**).

FIGURE 6.22: PODCAST SUBJECTS 2019-2023 (%)
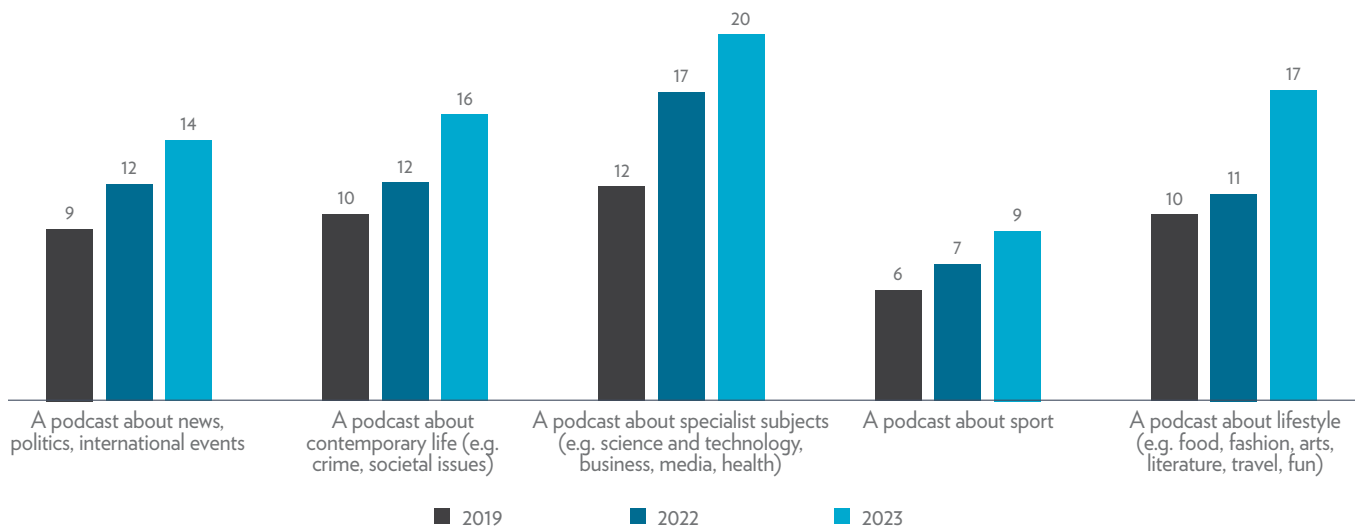
Legend: 2019, 2022, 2023

[Q11F_2018] A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who have listened to a podcast in the last month N=763]

TOP TEN NEWS PODCASTS IN AUSTRALIA

Analysis by Nic Newman, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

We asked podcast listeners to name up to three news podcasts they listen to regularly. More than two-thirds (71%) named at least one podcast and 29% said they couldn't think of any right now.

In Australia, news organisations have invested heavily in original podcasts in the last few years. The majority of

the top-ten listings are deep-dive, explanatory podcasts, including Full Story from the *Guardian*, ABC News Daily, and 7am from Schwartz media. A wide range of US and British podcasts make this a particularly crowded market, with 46% of the most-listened-to shows originating from outside Australia. ABC News makes up around a quarter of the mentioned podcasts, ahead of the BBC (in second place).

TABLE 1: TOP TEN PODCASTS IN AUSTRALIA

	Various presenters	Samantha Hawley	
	Guardian Australia	ABC News Daily	

	Podcast Name	Producer	Type	Av episode length
1	**Full Story/Today in Focus**	Guardian Australia	Deep dive	23m
2	**Joe Rogan Experience**	Joe Rogan/Spotify	Extended chat	3hr 10m
3	**ABC News Daily**	ABC News	Deep dive	13m
4	**7am**	Schwartz Media	Deep dive	21m
5	**The Quicky**	Mamamia	Deep dive	21m
6	**Sky News Daily**	Sky News	News round up	20m
7	**The Daily**	New York Times	Deep dive	24m
8	**The Front**	The Australian	Deep dive	12m
9	**Jordan B Peterson**	The Daily Wire	Extended chat	1hr 34m
10	**Global News podcast**	BBC News	Extended chat	31m

59% of podcast hosts people are paying most attention to are men

**25%** of named podcasts come from the ABC (public broadcaster)

46% of podcasts listened to originate from outside Australia

[Q2_Podcasts_2023] You say that you have listened to a news podcast in the last month... which news podcasts do you listen to regularly? [Base: News podcast listeners N=285]

GEN X MEN INCREASINGLY TURN TO PODCASTS ABOUT NEWS, POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Gen X men have increased their consumption across all podcast genres, but their use of podcasts about news, politics, and international events has increased the most (28%, +16). They also greatly increased their consumption of lifestyle podcasts (+14) (see **figure 6.23**).

**FIGURE 6.23:** GEN X MEN'S PODCAST LISTENING BY TOPIC 2022–2023 (%)
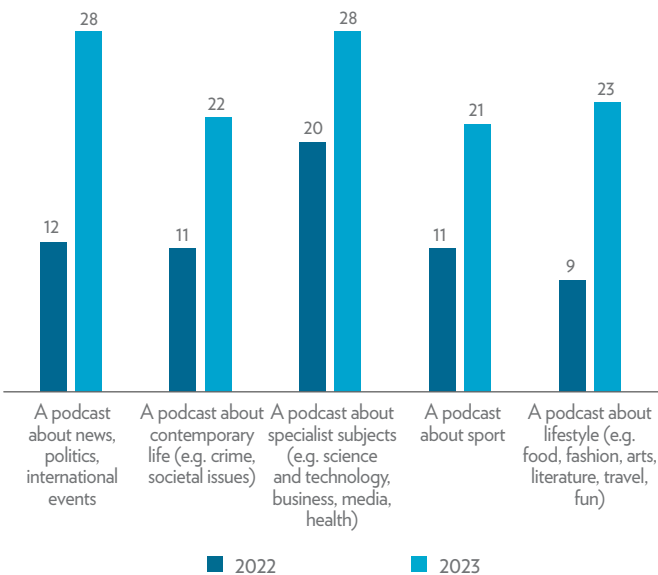
MEN AND HIGHLY EDUCATED LEAD THE GROWTH IN NEWS PODCAST LISTENING

Young people (20%) are more likely to listen to news podcasts than over 35s (12%). However, the proportion of over 35s using news podcasts has grown by 3 percentage points. One in five men (20%, +5) listen to news podcasts; as do one-quarter of people with high education (+8) (see **figure 6.24**). Although podcast audiences are typically highly educated and younger, there seems to be an emerging shift towards older male listenership.

FIGURE 6.24: PODCAST ABOUT NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS 2022-2023 (%)
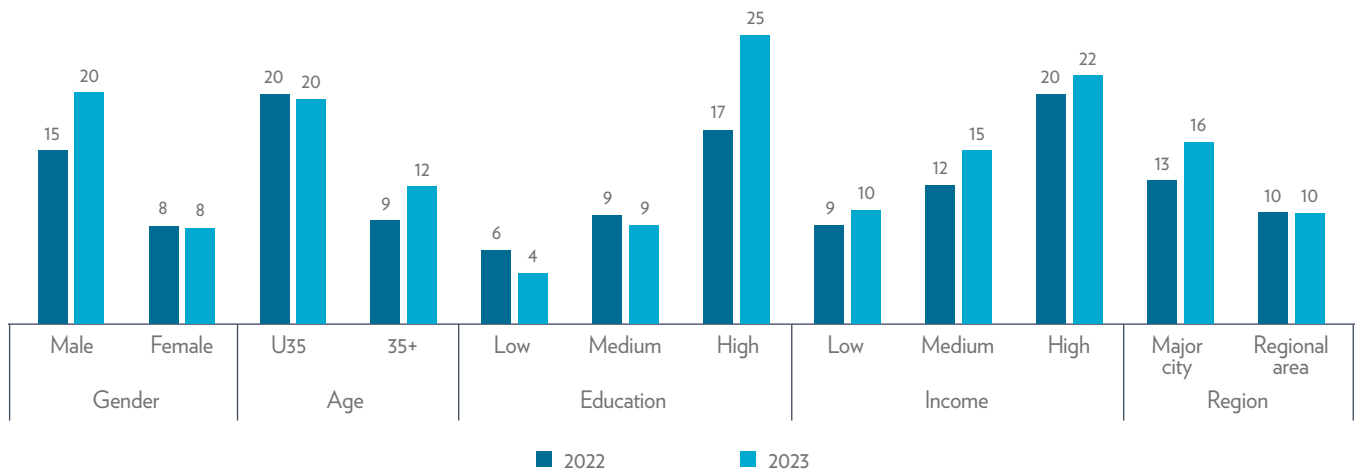
NEWS PODCAST LISTENERS ARE HEAVY NEWS CONSUMERS
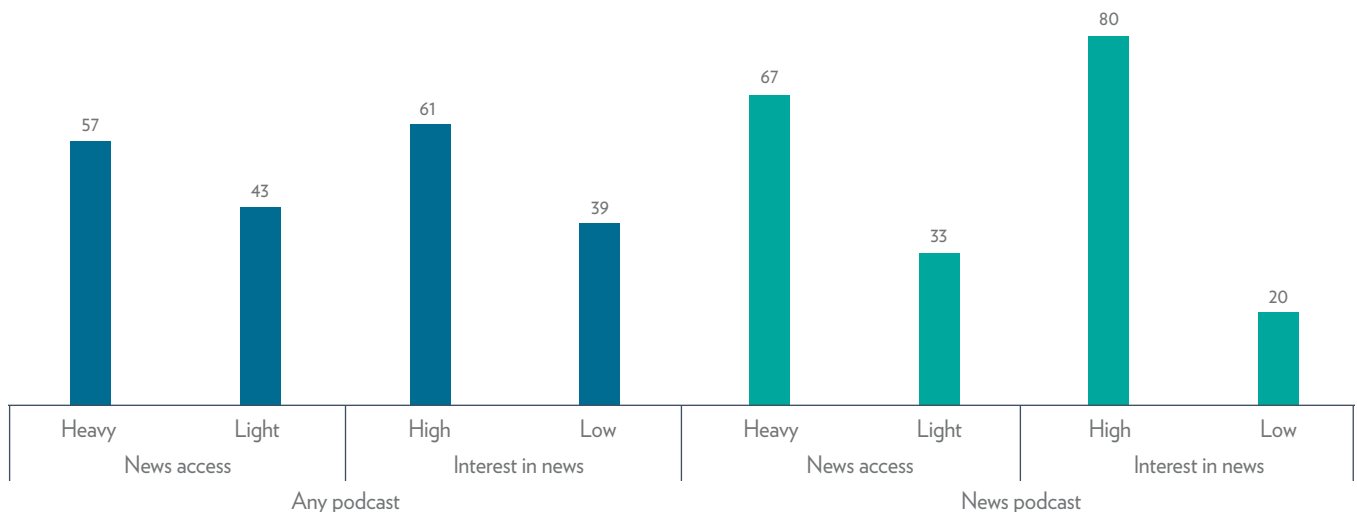
News podcast listeners are more likely to be heavy news consumers and interested in news compared to non-listeners. Most of the respondents who say they have listened to a news podcast in the last month are heavy news consumers (67%) and have a high level of interest in news (80%) (see **figure 6.25**).
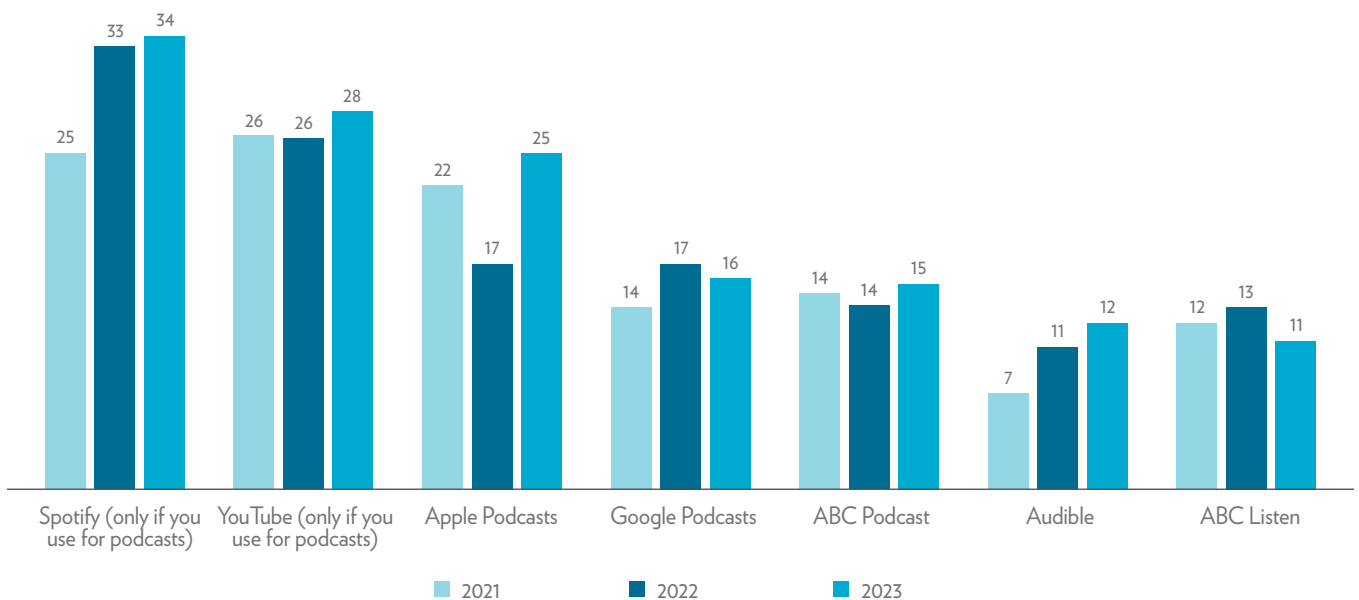
FIGURE 6.25: ANY VS NEWS PODCAST USE BY NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST IN NEWS (%)

SPOTIFY CONTINUES TO BE THE MOST POPULAR PLATFORM FOR PODCAST LISTENING

Spotify continues to be the most popular platform for podcast listening (34%). YouTube is the second most popular platform (28%) and is slightly ahead of Apple Podcasts (25%) (see **figure 6.26**).

FIGURE 6.26: PODCAST PLATFORMS 2021-2023 (%)

[POD2] Which of the following apps or websites do you mainly use to find and play podcasts? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who have listened to a podcast in the last month (N=763)]

There are gender and generational differences in podcast platform use. Women (46%) and listeners under the age of 35 (38%) tend to prefer Spotify compared to men (25%) and those 35 and over (30%). In contrast, men (34%) and listeners aged 35 and above (33%) are more likely to listen to podcasts via YouTube than women (19%) and listeners under the age of 35 (22%). Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts are much more popular among men (28%; 19% respectively) than women (19%; 10% respectively) (see **figure 6.27**).

FIGURE 6.27: PODCAST PLATFORMS BY GENDER AND AGE (%)
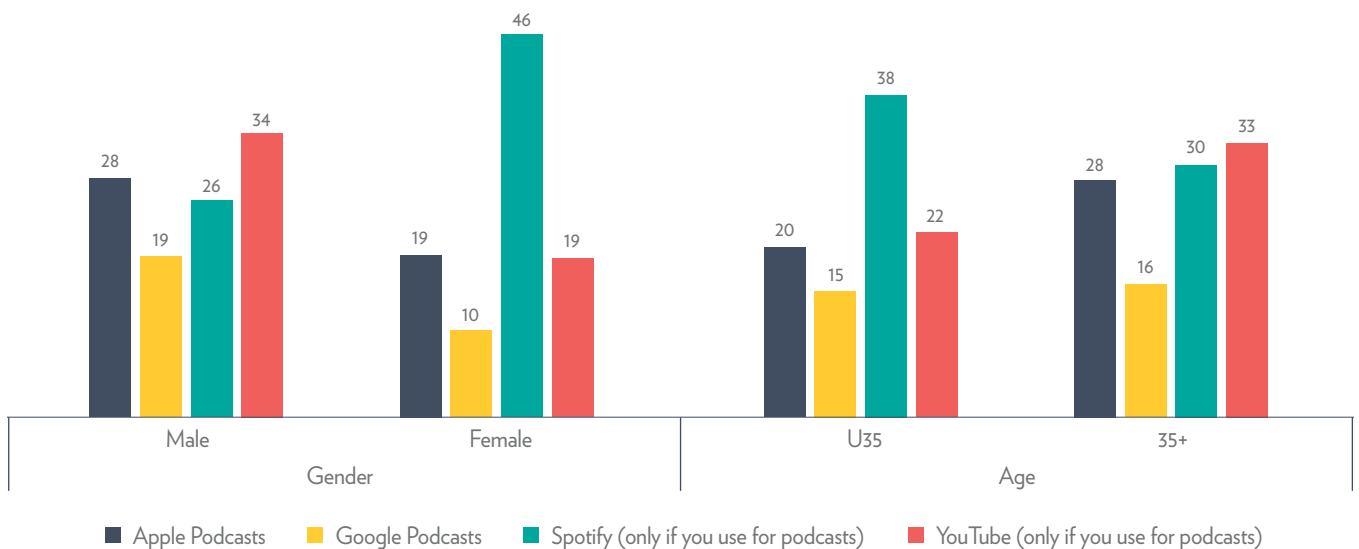
SUMMARY

This year the data show the use of social media platforms for accessing news is on the rise, with TikTok and YouTube users increasingly finding news on these platforms. While Facebook and YouTube continue to be the most popular social media platforms for news across all generations, there has been a notable increase in the use of Instagram and TikTok for news among Gen Z and those with high levels of education.

Social media users generally report a positive experience engaging with news online, particularly TikTok and Twitter users. TikTok users are also more likely to pay attention to ordinary people or celebrities as sources of news, compared to those on other platforms. Instead, those who use Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube for news are more focused on mainstream journalists and news organisations as sources of news.

Podcasts are gaining popularity in Australia, with more than one-third of respondents (38%) reporting they have listened to a podcast in the last month, which is 2 percent points higher than the global average. The increase in podcast listenership can mainly be attributed to the large uptake of podcasts, especially news podcasts, among Gen X men. This could create opportunities for news producers, as older male consumers are also the most interested in news content generally.

Finally, Spotify remains the most popular platform for podcast listening, followed closely by YouTube. This suggests a preference for bundling other content such as videos, music and podcast consumption together instead of using separate apps or websites for each. It is also possible these platforms provide an improved experience when discovering podcasts to listen to with their recommendation algorithms and their extensive libraries of content.

COMMENTARY

PODCASTING ALLOWS INDEPENDENT VOICES TO FLOURISH

Claire Kimball, Founder and Managing Director, The Squiz

When The Squiz developed the first Aussie short-form and agenda-free morning news podcast back in 2018, we did it for two reasons.

The first was that it was a way for our small team - and by 'small' I mean it was commercial director Kate Watson and me - to stretch the newsletter content that was a full-time job to produce each weekday.

The second was we surveyed our database, and they told us they were starting to listen to podcasts. They liked our conversational writing style and thought it would translate well into audio. So like all good publishers, we wanted to meet our audience where they were - and where they increasingly could be.

What a boon it turned out to be because as far as underpinning the business, the Squiz Today podcast became the product that drew significant interest. That gave us the confidence to raise capital, add to the team, and do more.

Creating a new channel also helped us refine lock into our content model that had worked successfully with our initial offer - a morning newsletter that curated the top news stories. The discipline and restraint we put into that endeavour - selecting 10 relevant stories across Australian and international news, boiling down complicated topics into 130 words, and delivering it in a consistent voice that doesn't take itself too seriously - well, it's a lot to pull off on one platform let alone two. But we were clear on what our audience wanted and decided it was worth a go.

> **We're now 5 years into podcasting, and we're seeing the medium start to mature, commercial support increase, and the offering grow.**

But at least twice in recent times, I have been told by significant web/social-focused news publishers that podcast is a fad that won't last the distance.

Like social audio app Clubhouse, they reckoned podcasting will have its moment before fading into obscurity. When pressed on why they believe that's the case, they said the pandemic pastime of 2 middle-aged white blokes ranting for hours would not be a long-term thing. That was their view of what a 'podcast' is.

There is evidence pointing to why that impression of podcasting has taken hold for some thanks to numbers on the volume of podcasts that were produced during the pandemic. The low barrier for entry saw the medium become a creative outlet for locked-down people with something to say. Podcast search engine Listen Notes reported[1] that in 2020, more than a million new shows were launched.

I for one haven't forgotten the cultural cord that was struck when podcasting stars including Leigh Sales, Osher Günsberg and Adam Liaw begged Aussies to consider their actions and "don't start a podcast"[2] on ABC TV's faux lifestyle show At Home Alone Together.

Following that extraordinary time, Listen Notes recently reported that just 219,000 new shows were launched in all of 2022, drawing comments from podcast naysayers along the lines of what my industry colleagues had predicted.

But industry experts like Podnews publisher editor James Cridland say those numbers don't tell an accurate story[3]. He says while there's been "a reduction in low-quality 'one-show-and-done' podcasts", the overall number of podcasts that listeners can access is growing each year. That points to an industry that's "healthy and growing," he says.

> **What we believe we're likely to see is the continued professionalisation of podcasting and the further development of 'podcasting' as distinct from 'audio on demand'.**

[1] https://www.listennotes.com/podcast-stats
[2] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hN0njKleK5M
[3] https://podnews.net/article/down-or-not

There are several shows in the latter category (which are repackaged highlights from the country's popular radio shows) feature highly on the Australian Podcast Ranker for audience and downloads. But more and more, shows made specifically for the medium are drawing big audiences.

To us and the millions of listeners in Australia, podcasting has provided a unique opportunity for our independent voice to be heard and prosper. Advertisers are seeing the benefit of this too. Industry figures from 2022[4] show that podcast advertising accounts for nearly 40 per cent of the online audio advertising market claiming $82.5 million, and there is confidence more is to come given listener numbers continue to rise.

Developing a loyal audience is a big task for any news publisher, and it's particularly hard when you're outside the major outlets that have big existing audiences to tap into and redirect into new offerings. But our business model focusing on small engaged audiences - now grown to more than 400,000 Australians who engage with our content across a month - has held us in good stead. And podcasting has been critical in allowing us to do this.

We also have a focus on serving content to busy, educated women. As far as female podcast listeners are concerned, it isn't a surprise that this report finds that younger generations are embracing podcasts while Gen Xers are in decline and Baby Boomers are basically static. Our experience is that many Gen X women are too busy for podcasts, and, like the men, female Baby Boomers are loyal to traditional formats and our newsletter products are more convenient for them.

For us, the two platforms go hand in hand. Through those channels, we have created a business with a highly engaged audience that we can speak directly to. And so can anyone looking to give independent publishing a try - just as long as their products are good ones and they have the plan and discipline to execute.

---

[4] https://www.afr.com/companies/media-and-marketing/podcasts-now-make-82-5m-in-ads-but-it-could-be-double-20230226-p5cnng

COMMENTARY

NEWS PODCASTING OFFERS A RARE BRIGHT SPOT FOR AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT BUT DISCOVERY AND MONETISATION REMAIN A STRUGGLE

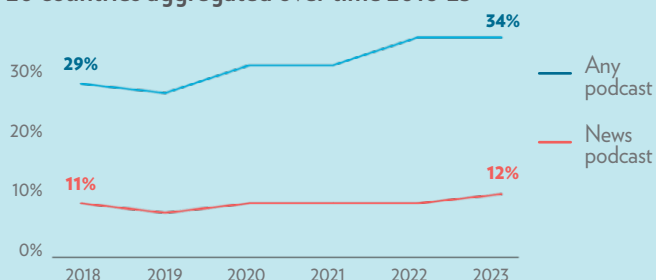**Nic Newman,** Lead Author of the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*

Over the last few years, much has been written about a so-called *golden age* of podcasting, which many date from the launch of the true crime show Serial (2014) and a subsequent wave of 'deep-dive' news podcasts such as The Daily from the *New York Times* (2017). But fragmented listening and limited public measurement systems mean it has been hard to identify what is working. In this year's report we have used online survey methodologies to identify some of the most popular news podcasts and formats across a number of countries.

NEWS PODCAST USE STABLE AS OVERALL PODCAST MARKET GROWS

Since 2018, our survey has tracked monthly podcast use in 20 countries[1] with a well-developed podcast industry. Across these markets, overall usage has grown from just over a quarter of our sample to about a third (34%), but news podcasts have grown more slowly despite a significant increase in supply (Newman and Gallo 2019). News jostles for attention with lifestyle and specialist shows, many of which also deal with news-related subjects such as business, technology, and health.

PROPORTION THAT LISTENED TO A PODCAST IN THE LAST MONTH (2018–2023) – SELECTED MARKETS

20 countries aggregated over time 2018-23

Different types of podcast (2023)

15% Specialist subjects (e.g. science and tech, business, media, health)

13% Lifestyle (e.g. food, fashion, arts, litersture, travel, fun)

12% News and current affairs

11% Contemporary life (e.g. crime, societal issues)

7% Sports, fitness etc

Q11F_2018. A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe, or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. *Base: Total sample in each country-year ≈ 2000*

[1] The countries are UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Japan, Singapore, Canada, plus Argentina (since 2019).

Podcasting may not yet be a mass market medium, but its audience profile is extremely interesting to publishers and to advertisers. Listeners tend to be richer, better educated, and crucially *much younger* (see chart below). Our report this year finds that younger people in most countries are more likely to say they prefer to listen to news content when compared with older groups – partly because they spend so much time with mobile phones. But people of all ages find podcasts a convenient format when commuting, walking the dog, in the gym, or doing mundane tasks at home such as cleaning.
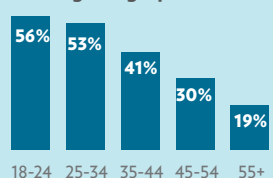
PROFILE OF THOSE THAT LISTENED TO A PODCAST IN THE LAST MONTH – AVERAGE OF SELECTED COUNTRIES

Podcast listeners are younger, richer, received more education

Listeners to podcasts more likely to be men

38%   30%

Younger age profile

56% 18-24   53% 25-34   41% 35-44   30% 45-54   19% 55+

Better educated

25% Low   31% Medium   43% High   46% Degree
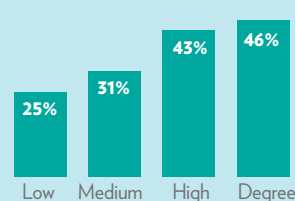
Richer/Higher income

41%
34%
35%
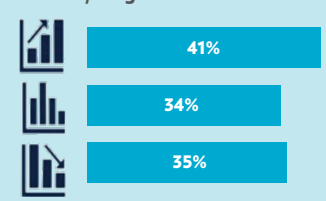
Overall consumption of news podcasts is highest in the United States (19%), as well as Sweden (17%), Ireland (14%) and Australia (14%). Usage is lower in many large European countries such as France (9%) and the United Kingdom (8%). This difference to some extent reflects the vibrancy and range of news podcast production and monetisation in the United States, which in turn has driven public awareness and strong consumption. In many European countries, the existence of high-quality output from commercial and public service radio may have made it harder for an independent podcasting sector to gain traction.

PROPORTION THAT LISTENED TO A NEWS PODCAST IN THE LAST MONTH – SELECTED COUNTRIES
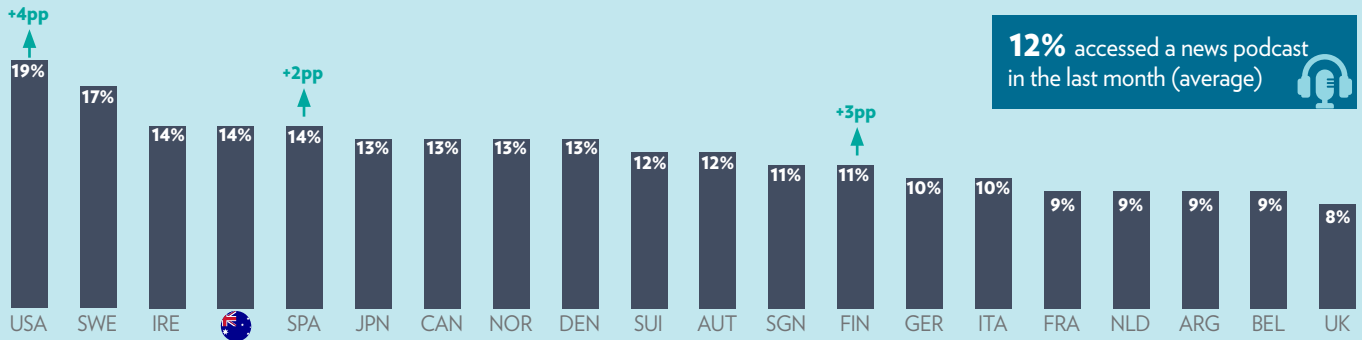
12% accessed a news podcast in the last month (average)

+4pp				+2pp									+3pp							
19%	17%	14%	14%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%	12%	12%	11%	11%	10%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%
USA	SWE	IRE	🇦🇺	SPA	JPN	CAN	NOR	DEN	SUI	AUT	SGN	FIN	GER	ITA	FRA	NLD	ARG	BEL	UK

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 podcasts have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply. *Base: Total sample in each country ≈ 2000.*

DIFFERENT TYPES OF NEWS PODCASTS AND COUNTRY COMPARISONS

In addition to exploring levels of consumption, we asked survey respondents in 12 countries including Australia, to name the news shows they used most often and coded these responses by publisher, type, and origin country[2]. In categorising these shows, we extended a typology first developed for our 2019 report *News Podcasts and the Opportunities for Publishers* (Newman and Gallo, 2019), which identified four podcast groups in ascending length order: News Round-ups, Deep Dive podcasts, Narrative Documentaries, and Extended Chat.

Across countries, we find that personality-led 'extended chat' programmes like The Joe Rogan Experience are mentioned most often, along with 'deep dives' such as The Daily from the *New York Times*. Short news rounds-ups like 5 Things from CNN are also popular, often forming part of morning routines. By contrast, longer documentary series such as the investigation by ITV News into lockdown parties in Downing Street are mentioned more rarely. In some countries, we find uneven distribution, with a few big shows dominating and a very long tail, but in others listening is more evenly spread. There is considerable cross-border listening – around 50% in some English-speaking markets.

NEWS PODCAST TYPOLOGY WITH EXAMPLES OF EACH

1. News round-ups (typically 1-10 minutes): Podcasts that update audiences briefly with multiple stories.

2. Deep-dive/explanatory (typically 20 minutes): Examines one, or two subjects in detail, narrative style with sound design.

3. Documentary (30-40 min episodes): Narrative style series, same subject over multiple episodes.

4. Extended chat (up to 4 hours): Round table discussions, informal style, personality-led.

TOP TEN NEWS PODCASTS - USA

Michael Barbaro
The Daily, New York Times

Joe Rogan
Spotify

	Podcast Name	Producer	Type	Av episode length
1	The Daily	New York Times	Deep dive	24m
2	Joe Rogan Experience	Joe Rogan/Spotify	Extended chat	3hr 10m
3	Pod Save America	Crooked Media	Extended chat	1hr 15m
4	Up First	NPR	News round up	13m
5	Ben Shapiro Show	Daily Wire	Extended chat	1hr 8m
6	Rachel Maddow Show	MSNBC	Extended chat	45m
7	Dan Bongino Show	Cumulus Podcast Network	Extended chat	55m
8	Morning Wire	Daily Wire	News round up	14m
9	NPR Politics podcast	NPR	News round up	15m
10	Apple News Today	Apple News	Extended chat	10m

64% of podcast hosts people are paying most attention to are men

10% of named podcasts come from public broadcaster NPR

6% of podcasts listened to originate from outside the United Sataes

Q2_Podcasts_2023. You say that you have listened to a news podcast in the last month... which news podcasts do you listen to regularly? *Base: Those that listened to a news podcast in the last month = 418. Note: Open-ended question. Respondents could type in up to three podcasts.*

[2]Typically, between 200 and 700 shows were mentioned in each country. Note that recall methodologies will inevitably produce different results from industry data.

The United States seems to be replicating a long tradition of outspoken radio talk shows in this on-demand format. This genre is dominated by male hosts, most often from the right (e.g. Ben Shapiro, Dan Bongino), but sometimes from the left (e.g. Rachel Maddow). By contrast news round-ups (e.g. Up First, Apple News Today) and deep dives (e.g. The Daily) tend to have a more neutral tone. Hosting duties are often shared between men and women, but overall, we found these shows to be equally gender-balanced.[3]

TOP TEN NEWS PODCASTS – UK

Alastair Campbell and Rory Stewart
Goalhanger podcasts

Adam Fleming
Newscast, BBC News

	Podcast Name	Producer	Type	Av episode length
1=	The Rest is Politics	Goalhanger podcasts	Extended chat	43m
1=	Newscast	Joe Rogan/Spotify	Extended chat	31m
1=	The News Agents	Global Media	Extended chat	35m
4	Americast	BBC News	Extended chat	42m
5	Today in Focus	The Guardian	Deep dive	29m
6	Ukrainecast	BBC News	Extended chat	32m
7	The NS Podcast	New Statesman	Extended chat	24m
8	Joe Rogan Experience	Joe Rogan/Spotify	Extended chat	3hr 10m
9	The Trawl	Jemma Forte and Marina Purkiss	Extended chat	35m
10	Oh God What Now	Podmasters	Extended chat	1hr 6m

75% of podcast hosts people are paying most attention to are men

31% of named podcasts come from the BBC (public broadcaster)

6% of podcasts listened to originate from outside United Kingdom

Q2_Podcasts_2023. You say that you have listened to a news podcast in the last month... which news podcasts do you listen to regularly? *Base: Those that listened to a news podcast in the last month = 418. Note: Open-ended question. Respondents could type in up to three podcasts.*

In the UK, the top three podcasts are politically focused extended chat shows, two of which are daily. The BBC has created a number of original podcasts, such as Newscast and Ukrainecast, as well as repackaging versions of popular radio shows, but is facing competition from commercial broadcasters, newspapers, and other disrupters. The Rest is Politics is hosted by a former Conservative politician and a former Labour spin doctor, while The News Agents (Global Radio) is presented by three former BBC correspondents who were lured from the Corporation with big money deals and the opportunity to express more of their personal opinions. With the exception of Joe Rogan, the bulk of shows in the list are created and produced in the UK.

We find a slightly different position in Australia. Here, deep-dive, explanatory podcasts make up the bulk of the top-ten listings, including Full Story from the *Guardian*, ABC News Daily, and 7am from Schwartz media. A wide range of US and British podcasts make this a particularly crowded market, with 46% of the most-listened-to shows originating from outside Australia. National broadcaster ABC News makes up around a quarter of the mentioned podcasts, ahead of the BBC in second place (see list of top news podcasts elsewhere in this report).

Other English-speaking markets we analysed show a similar profile, with a mix of deep-dive and extended chat podcasts as well as a strong male bias in hosting. In Canada and Ireland, we find that the percentage of consumption from outside the country is even higher (about 50% in each case).

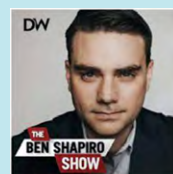## DOMESTIC PODCASTS OUTPERFORMED BY MANY US-BASED RIVALS IN CANADA

frontburner #CBCNEWS
Deep dive

ÇA S'EXPLIQUE
Deep dive

The Decibel
Deep dive

THE BEN SHAPIRO SHOW
Extended chat (US)

POD SAVE AMERICA
Extended chat (US)
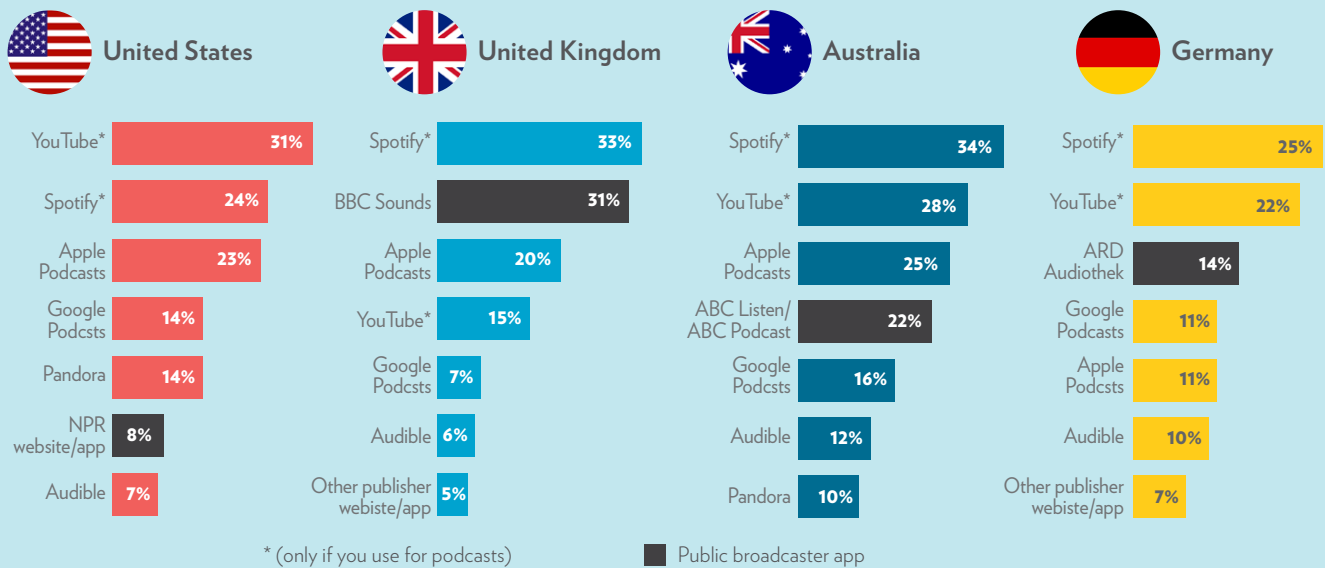
Jordan B. Peterson Podcast
Extended chat

PLATFORM ACCESS FOR NEWS PODCASTS AND THE RISE OF VIDEO PODCASTING

In larger countries, it is proving harder for publishers to compete with tech platforms as they struggle to offer the comprehensive range of content or the level of user experience desired by consumers. One exception is BBC Sounds in the UK, which has a similar reach to Spotify for podcasts, partly due to very strong promotion via its other channels. The popularity of YouTube for podcasts reflects the growing importance of video. In the United States, cable talk shows are routinely repackaged as podcasts, while the BBC's Newscast is now filmed for television and digital distribution.

[3] Many programmes have dual male/female hosts, but for the purpose of this exercise we identified the *first* voice heard on each podcast on a particular day and categorised accordingly.

PROPORTION OF PODCAST LISTENERS THAT USE EACH PLATFORM FOR PODCASTS – SELECTED COUNTRIES

United States

Platform	%
YouTube*	31%
Spotify*	24%
Apple Podcasts	23%
Google Podcsts	14%
Pandora	14%
NPR website/app	8%
Audible	7%

United Kingdom

Platform	%
Spotify*	33%
BBC Sounds	31%
Apple Podcasts	20%
YouTube*	15%
Google Podcsts	7%
Audible	6%
Other publisher webiste/app	5%

Australia

Platform	%
Spotify*	34%
YouTube*	28%
Apple Podcasts	25%
ABC Listen/ABC Podcast	22%
Google Podcsts	16%
Audible	12%
Pandora	10%

Germany

Platform	%
Spotify*	25%
YouTube*	22%
ARD Audiothek	14%
Google Podcasts	11%
Apple Podcsts	11%
Audible	10%
Other publisher webiste/app	7%

* (only if you use for podcasts)   ■ Public broadcaster app

POD2. Which of the following apps or websites do you mainly use to find and play podcasts? Please select all that apply. *Base: Those that listened to a podcast in the last month in USA = 891, UK = 607, Australia = 773, Germany = 574.*

CONCLUSION

Categorising the variety of news podcasts across countries is a complex and imperfect task, but across markets we find that 'extended chat' formats o attract most audience attention and are attractive to publishers because they are relatively cheap to produce, but 'deep-dive' podcasts – such as The Daily from the *New York Times* – also attract significant reach. In most cases, however, attention remains highly fragmented, with a relatively small audience for any one news podcast or publisher. This, in turn, makes podcasts hard to monetise through direct advertising, especially in smaller markets, leaving all but the biggest providers dependent on large platforms such as Spotify or YouTube.

Our data capture the vibrancy of the podcasting scene across countries, but current levels of audience growth are unlikely to match the amount of content now being produced, let alone the new shows in the pipeline. In this context, it is vital that news podcasts stand out – with high-quality content, strong formats, and engaging hosts still being the most important ingredients for success.

7 TRUST AND MISINFORMATION

- Trust in news rises slightly to 43% (+2), above the global average (40%).

- Women lose trust in news (39%, -3), while men's trust increases (48%, +8).

- Trust in Guardian Australia has increased (+6).

- Concern about misinformation has risen to 69% (+5), compared to the global average (54%, +2).

- People who are concerned about misinformation value public service media.

GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS REMAINS STABLE, BUT DISTRUST GROWS

In 2023 Australians' trust in the news rose by 2 percentage points to 43% but remains relatively close to the long-term trend of trust hovering in the low 40s. Distrust in news has also risen slightly (31%, +2) marking a 6 percentage point increase since 2016. There has been a fall (-3) in the proportion who say they neither trust nor distrust the news (26%) and this remains close to the long-term trend (see **figure 7.1**).

Trust in the news people personally use has also remained steady (51%, +1) while there has been a small decline in the proportion of people who neither trust nor distrust the news the use (27%, -2) (see **figure 7.2**).

FIGURE 7.1: TRUST IN NEWS 2016-2023 (%)
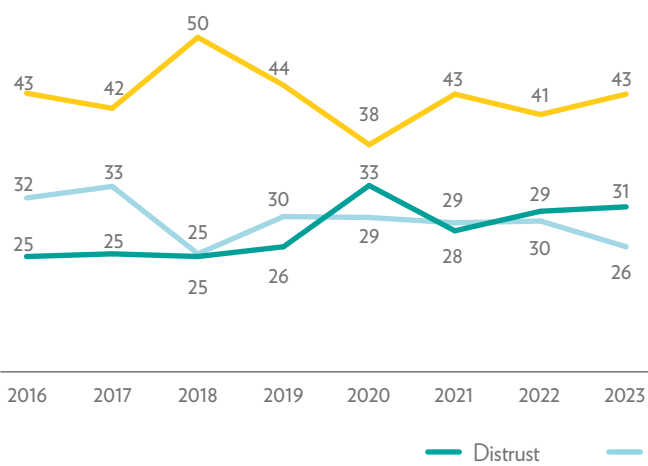
**FIGURE 7.2**: TRUST IN MY NEWS 2017-2023 (%)
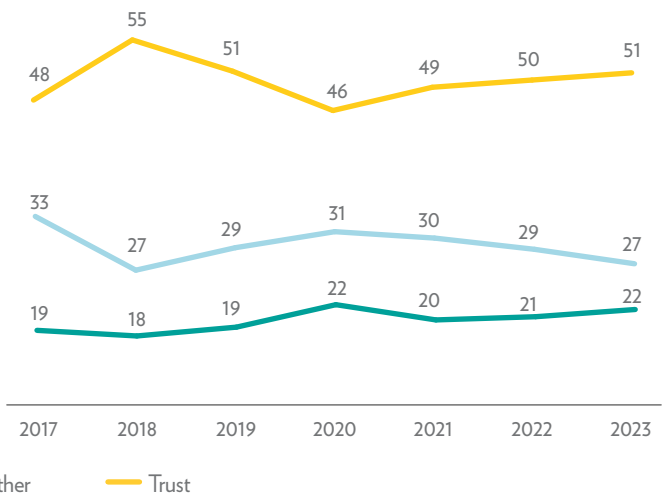
[Q6_2016] We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. First we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within your country. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume - I think you can trust most news most of the time [Base: N=2,025]

[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 - I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time [Base: N=2,025]

AUSTRALIANS' TRUST IS HIGHER THAN THE GLOBAL AVERAGE

Despite big differences in levels of trust globally, Australia (43%) sits higher than the global average of 40%. However,

Australians' general distrust in news (31%) is also higher than the global average (28%) (see **figure 7.3**).

**FIGURE 7.3**: GENERAL TRUST IN NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)
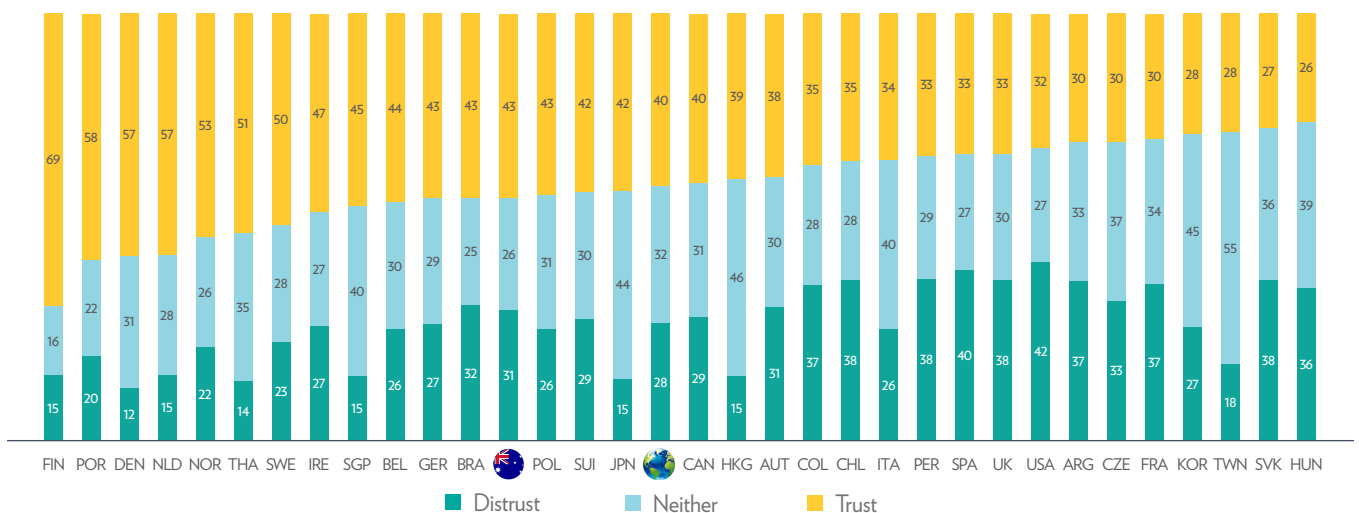
[Base: N=67,278] *Among 33 countries

OLDEST AND YOUNGEST GENERATIONS ARE LOSING TRUST IN NEWS

Trust levels are shifting depending on the generation. For older Australians, those aged 77+, general trust in news has continued to fall from the 'Covid trust bump' high in 2021 to 43% (-13). Similarly, trust has decreased by 7 percentage points among Gen Z since 2021.

In contrast, trust in news among Gen X has risen to 48% (+5) and Y to 43% (+7). This possibly reflects the media's intense focus on the economy and interest rates over the past twelve months, fuelled by the cost-of-living crisis. Trust among Baby Boomers has remained stable since 2020 (see **figure 7.4**).

**FIGURE 7.4**: TRUST IN NEWS BY GENERATION 2020-2023 (%)
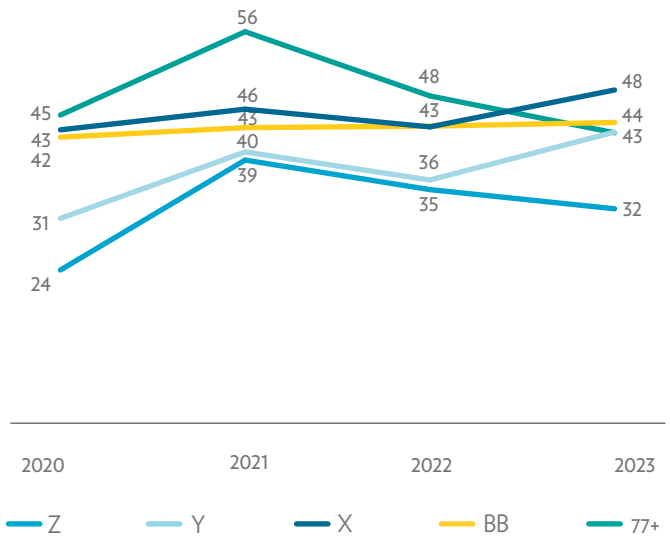
TRUST IN NEWS AMONG MEN WENT UP

Education, income and gender are strongly related to news trust. Trust in news is highest among those with high education levels (49%) as well as medium (48%) and high income (47%) earners. Trust levels among men have increased by 8 percentage points since 2022 and fallen among women (-3). Regional consumers are less trusting of news in general (41%) compared to those living in the city (44%) (see **figure 7.5**). This reflects other findings in this year's study that show increasingly divergent news consumption patterns between women and men.

**FIGURE 7.5**: TRUST IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS 2022-2023 (% WHO TRUST NEWS)
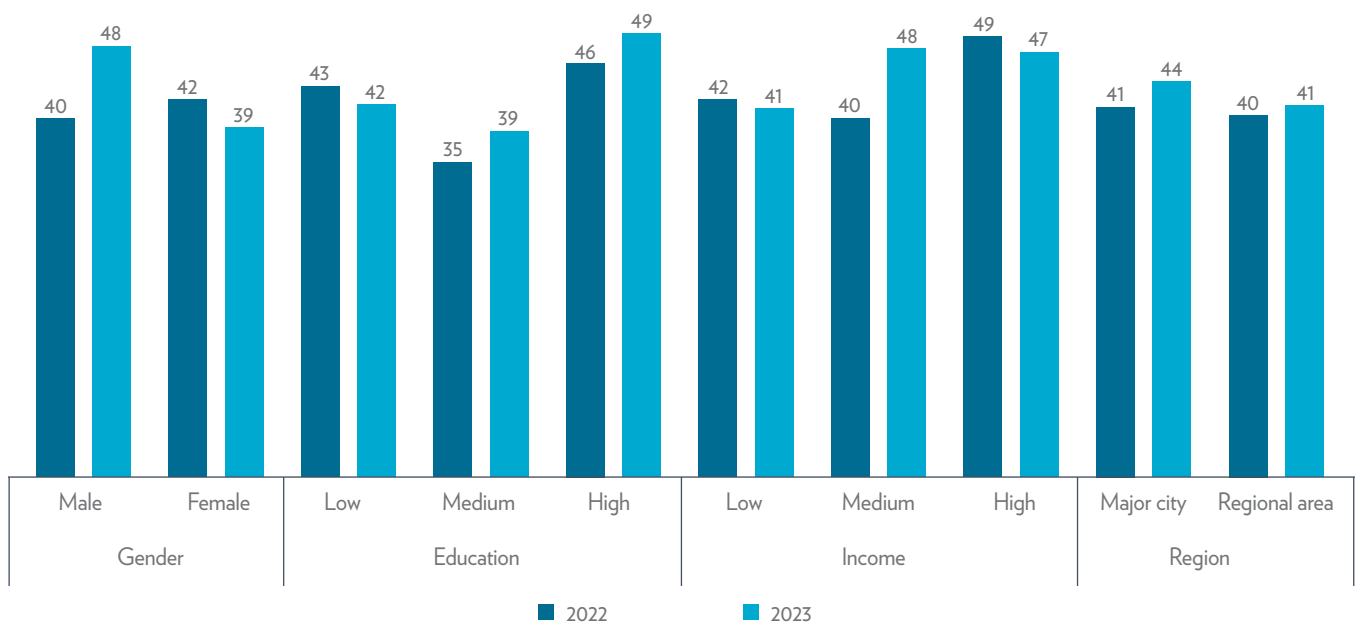
AUSTRALIA'S GENDER GAP IN TRUST IS WIDEST GLOBALLY

The large gap in news trust between men and women in Australia is unusual globally. On average, men are more trusting of news than women internationally, with some countries having around a 5 percentage point gap (Canada, Czech Republic, and Peru). However, Australia's gap of 9 percentage points makes us one of the most

gendered populations in terms of trust in news (see **figure 7.6**). The low levels of trust in news among Australian women reflects their low levels of news consumption. Globally, men are heavier news consumers than women, but Australian women are the lightest news consumers among women in the global survey (see **Chapter 5**).

FIGURE 7.6: GENDER GAP IN TRUST IN NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)
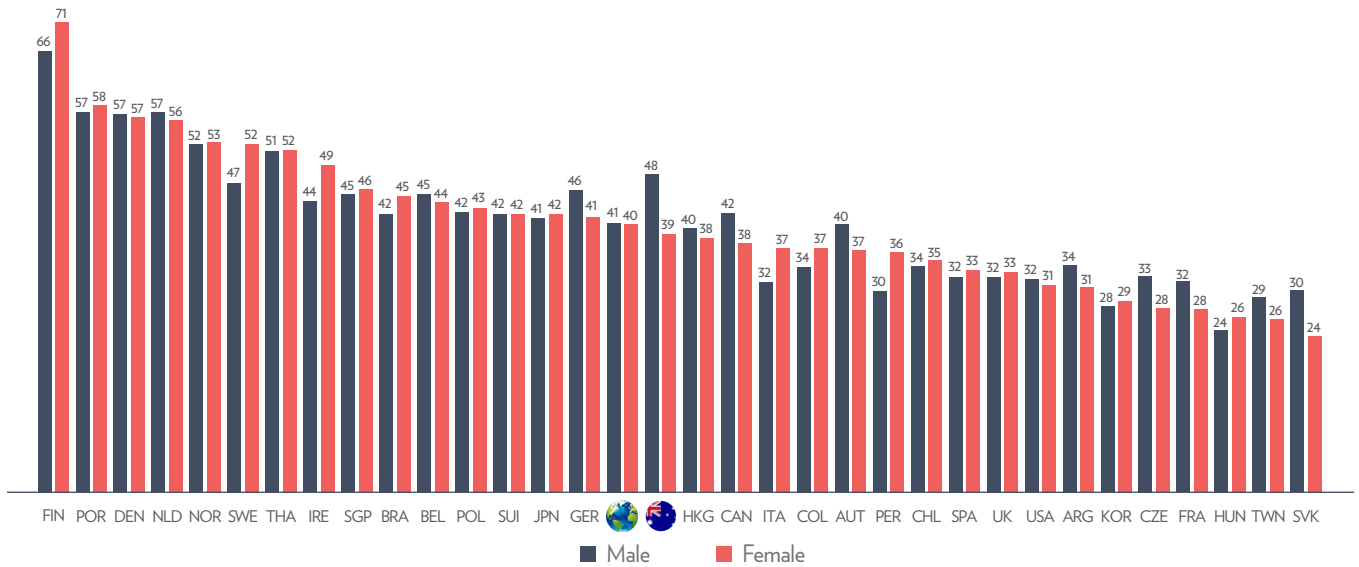
TRUST RISES AMONG HEAVY NEWS CONSUMERS

Heavy news consumers and those with high interest in news continue to have higher levels of trust in news. This year shows an increase in trust (51%, +6) and fall in distrust (27%, -2) among heavy news consumers. In contrast there has been a 4-percentage point rise in distrust among light news consumers (33%) and little change in trust (see **figure 7.7**).

TRUST RISES EVENLY ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

The small rise in general trust in news of two-percentage points is reflected evenly across the political spectrum, with left, centre and right-wing audiences all recording a 2-point lift. Right-wing identifying consumers continue to have higher trust in news in general, while left-wing trust the news they personally consume more, though this is down slightly from last year (59%, -2) (see **figure 7.8**).

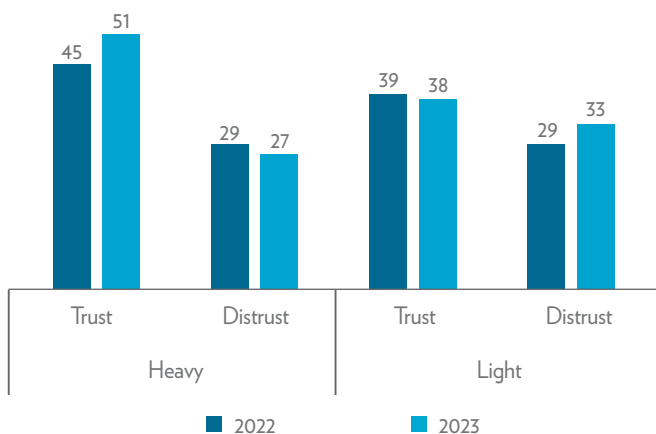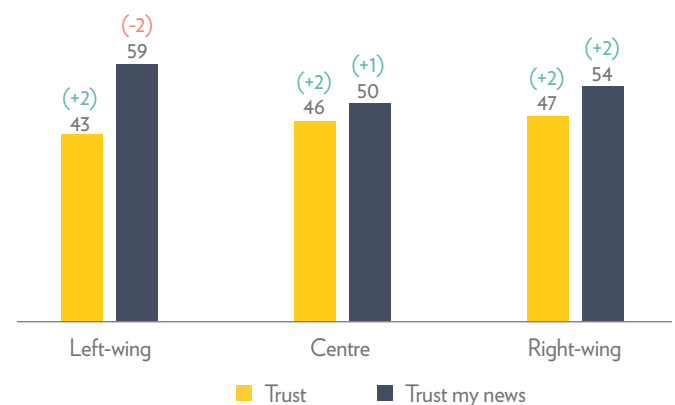**FIGURE 7.7**: TRUST IN NEWS BY NEWS ACCESS (%)

FIGURE 7.8: TRUST IN NEWS GENERALLY VS TRUST IN MY NEWS BY POLITICAL ORIENTATION (%)

GAP IN TRUST GROWS BETWEEN THOSE WHO PAY FOR NEWS AND THOSE WHO DON'T

Among those who pay for news, trust in the news they use has gradually risen over the past three years. This coincides with the increase in the proportion of people who pay for news. In contrast, for those who don't pay for news their trust in the news they choose to consume has remained relatively stable. This likely reflects that consumers are making a conscious decision to purchase news from the brands they trust (see **figure 7.9**).

FIGURE 7.9: TRUST IN MY NEWS BY PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS 2019-2023 (%)
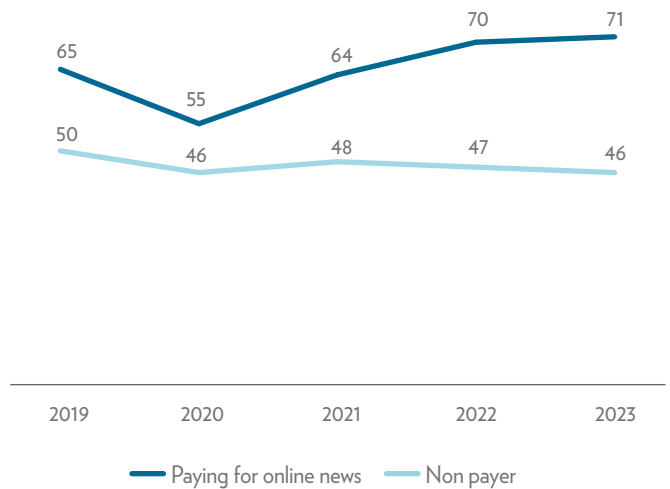
PRINT AND TV USERS CONTINUE TO HAVE HIGHER TRUST IN NEWS

Despite declining audiences for TV news and newspapers, people who rely on these traditional platforms as their main sources of news continue to have higher trust in news than people who mainly get their news from social media and online sources (see **figure 7.10**).

FIGURE 7.10: TRUST IN NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS 2020-2023 (%)

TRUST GAP

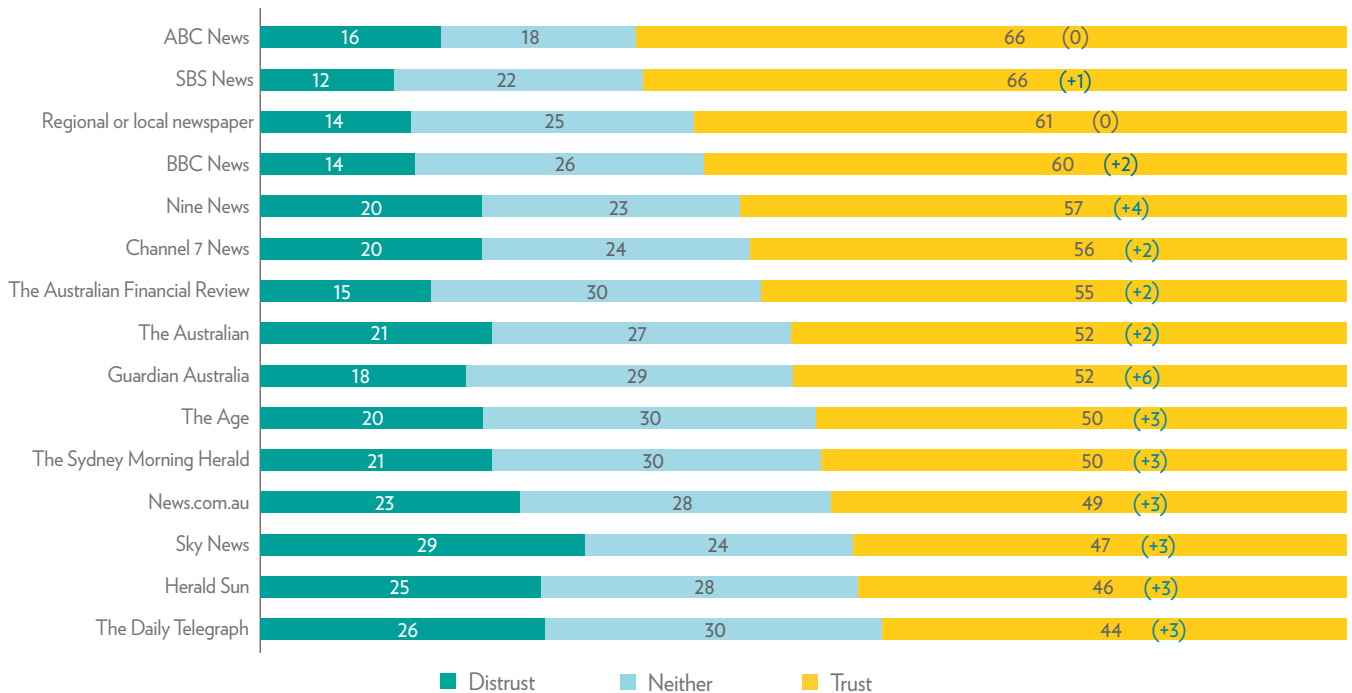| Payers | **71%** |
| Non-payers | **46%** |
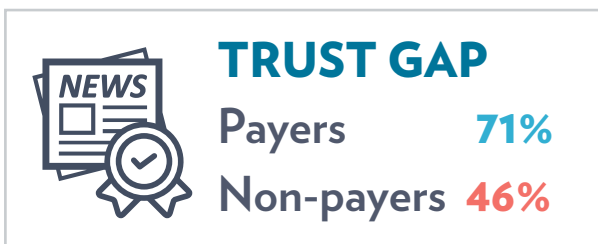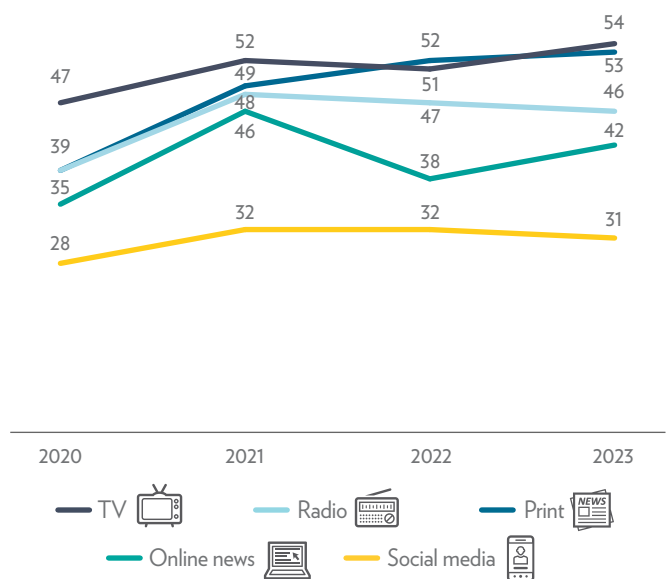
TRUST IN BRANDS

TRUST RISES FOR GUARDIAN AUSTRALIA

We asked respondents their level of trust in 15 news brands. Australia's public broadcasters remain the most trusted for news. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents ranked the ABC and SBS as their most trusted brands. While most news brands asked about in this question recorded a small rise in trust this year, Guardian Australia (52%, +6) and Nine News (57%, +4) had larger increases (see **figure 7.11**).
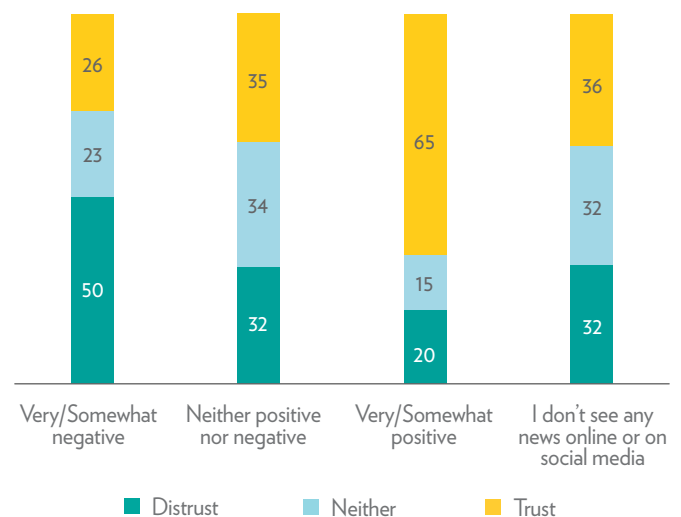
FIGURE 7.11: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS (%)

	Distrust	Neither	Trust
ABC News	16	18	66 (0)
SBS News	12	22	66 (+1)
Regional or local newspaper	14	25	61 (0)
BBC News	14	26	60 (+2)
Nine News	20	23	57 (+4)
Channel 7 News	20	24	56 (+2)
The Australian Financial Review	15	30	55 (+2)
The Australian	21	27	52 (+2)
Guardian Australia	18	29	52 (+6)
The Age	20	30	50 (+3)
The Sydney Morning Herald	21	30	50 (+3)
News.com.au	23	28	49 (+3)
Sky News	29	24	47 (+3)
Herald Sun	25	28	46 (+3)
The Daily Telegraph	26	30	44 (+3)

POSITIVE ONLINE NEWS EXPERIENCE IS LINKED TO HIGHER TRUST IN NEWS

This year we asked respondents to reflect on their experience of engaging with news online and on social media, such as reading and posting comments or talking about news (see **Chapter 4**). People who say they have positive experiences engaging with news in online spaces are much more likely to say they trust news (65%) compared to those who have negative experiences (26%) (see **figure 7.12**). This is possibly because those who say they have had a positive online news experience are more likely to be heavy news consumers who tend to have higher trust in news.

FIGURE 7.12: TRUST IN NEWS BY EXPERIENCE OF ONLINE NEWS ENGAGEMENT (%)

	Very/Somewhat negative	Neither positive nor negative	Very/Somewhat positive	I don't see any news online or on social media
Trust	26	35	65	36
Neither	23	34	15	32
Distrust	50	32	20	32

[Q1_Participation_2023] How positive or negative is your experience of engagement with news online or on social media (e.g., reading or posting comments, talking to people about news, etc.)? [Base: N=2,025]
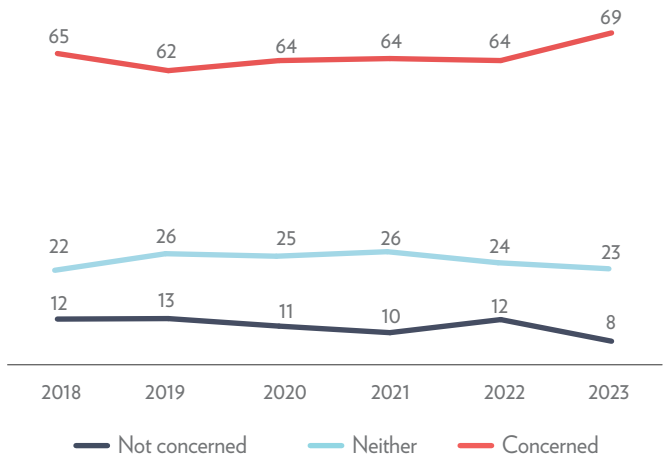
MISINFORMATION

CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION HAS INCREASED

Concern about misinformation among Australian audiences has jumped to 69% (+5) since 2022. This rise follows five years of reasonably steady levels of concern, sitting around the low 60s. This increase in concern about misinformation is mirrored in a fall in the number who say they are not concerned about misinformation (8%, -4) (see **figure 7.13**). This rise might partly reflect concern about data hacking of major companies such as Optus and Medibank at the end of 2022, concern about truth and lies during the Australian federal election, and concerted disinformation campaigns around Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Globally, there has been a small rise in concern about misinformation (54%, +2). Australians are now among the most worried about misinformation in the survey (69%), on par with USA, Brazil and the UK, and behind only Portugal (71%) (see **figure 7.14**).

FIGURE 7.13: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION 2018-2023 (%)

[Q_FAKE_NEWS_1] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. [Base: N=2,025].

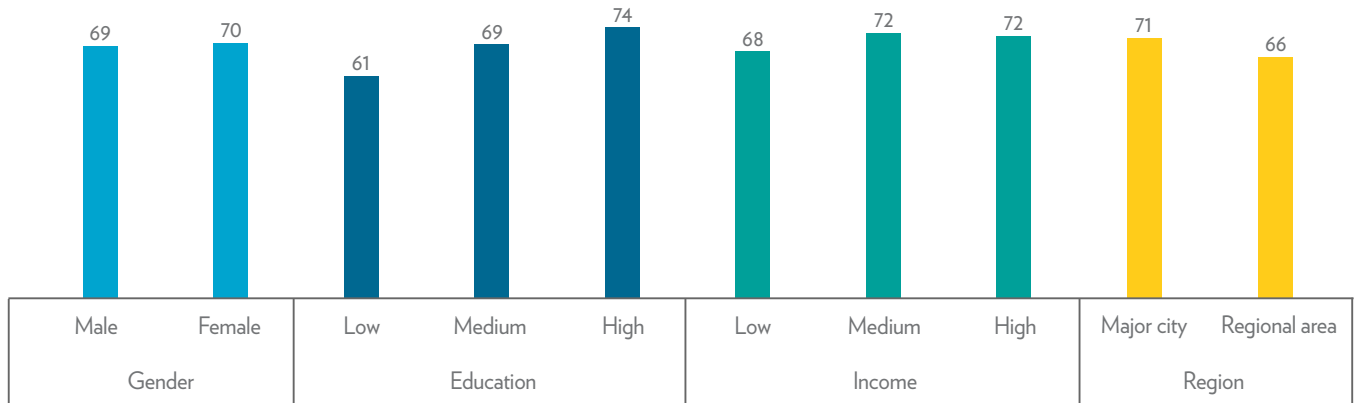FIGURE 7.14: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION BY COUNTRY 2022-2023 (%)
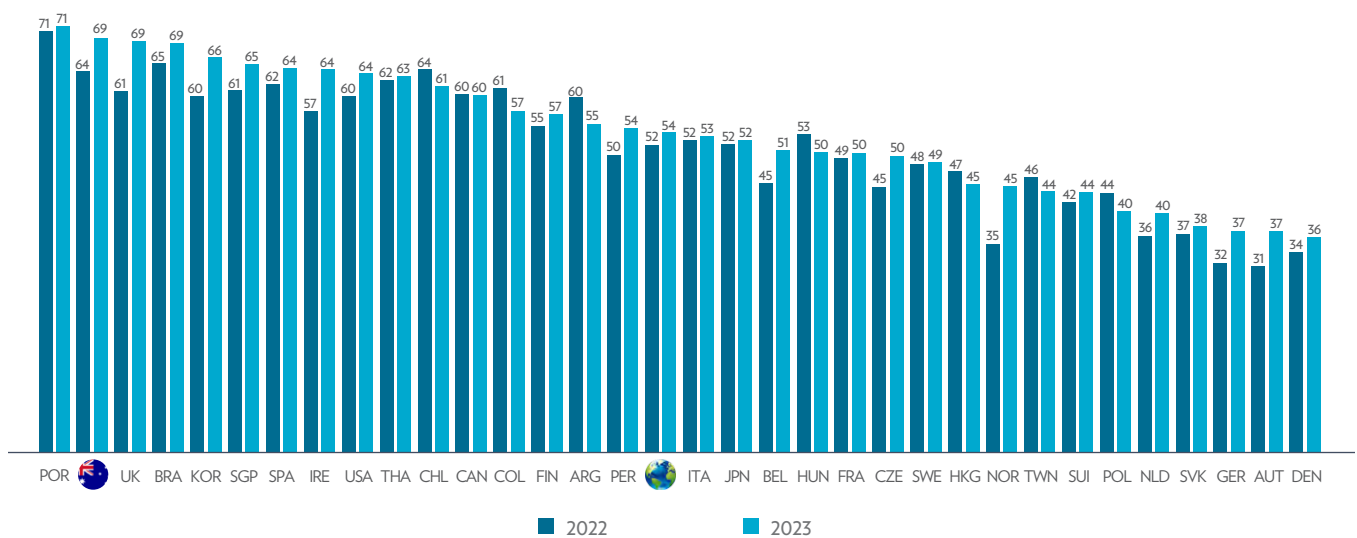
Note: Global average among 33 countries [Base: N=67,279]

CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION IS SHARED ACROSS ALL DEMOGRAPHICS

Consistent with other years, Australians with higher levels of education are more concerned about misinformation (74%) than those with low (61%)(see **figure 7.15**).

People with higher levels of education tend to be heavier news consumers who are also more worried about misinformation (75%) than light (66%). This suggests that people with greater exposure to news also have greater awareness of the risks of the online information environment.

FIGURE 7.15: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

As **figure 7.16** shows, concern about misinformation increased most among Gen X, Y and Z and fell slightly among those aged 77+. This likely reflects that younger generations spend more time in the online environment and are therefore more likely to be exposed to misinformation.

FIGURE 7.16: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION BY GENERATION 2021-2023 (%)
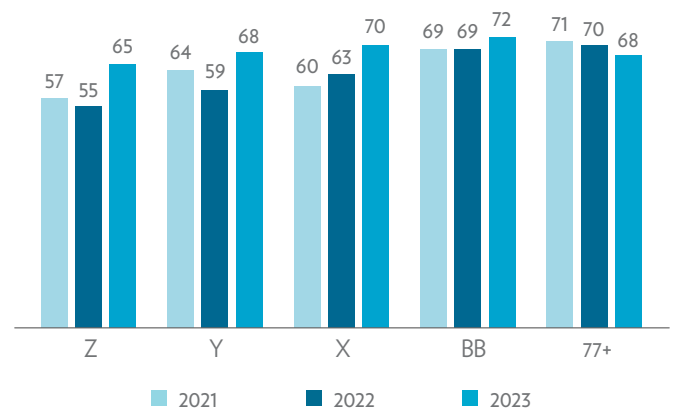
PEOPLE WHO HAVE NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES ONLINE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT MISINFORMATION

Those who say they have had a very or somewhat negative experience online are more likely to be concerned about misinformation (80%), than people who have had a positive (75%) or neutral experience (66%). On the other hand, those who say they don't see news online or on social media are less concerned about misinformation (56%). This suggests that greater engagement with news in the online environment increases awareness of misinformation and its risks.

FIGURE 7.17: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION BY EXPERIENCE OF ENGAGEMENT WITH ONLINE NEWS (%)
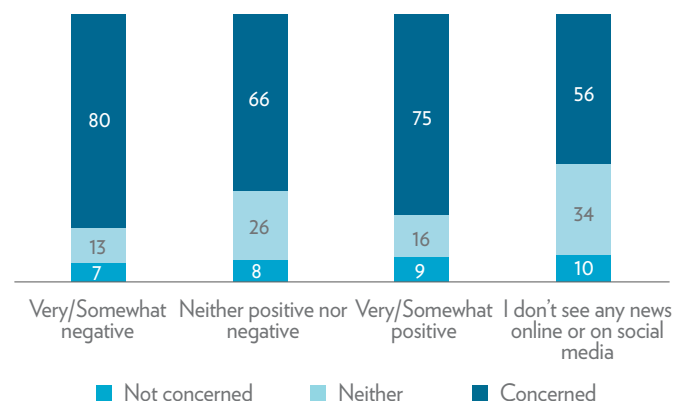
PEOPLE WHO ARE CONCERNED ABOUT MISINFORMATION VALUE PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA

People who say they are concerned about misinformation are much more likely to consider public service media, such as the ABC and the SBS, to be very or quite important to society (67%) compared to those who are not concerned (48%). Studies show that conceptions of misinformation are broad and can include poor quality journalism, bias and sensationalism. The findings in **figure 7.18** possibly reflect an appreciation for the commercial and political independence of the national broadcasters, which consistently receive high trust scores in the survey.

FIGURE 7.18: CONCERN ABOUT MISINFORMATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA (%)
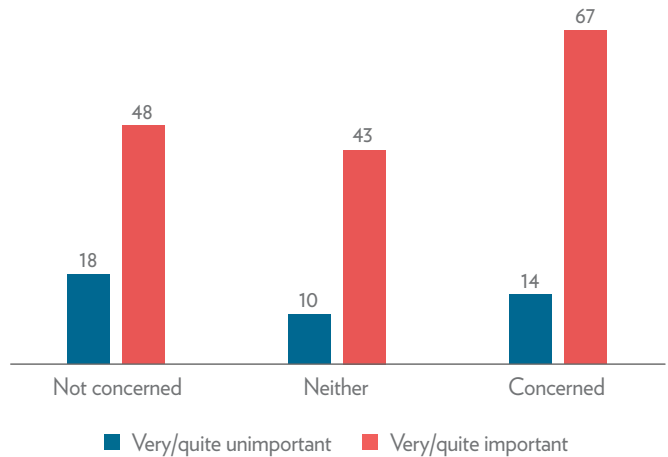
[Q1_PSM_2023g_2] In your opinion, how important, or not, are publicly funded news services such as ABC or SBS to society? [Base: N=2,025]

SUMMARY

In a busy news year, Australians' trust in news rose slightly to 43% (+2), above the global average (40%). This bucked the trend globally which saw trust in news decline on average (-2). This is largely attributed to an increase in news trust among Australian men.

The rise has not been consistent. Among certain groups, particularly women, trust in news has fallen. This year's survey shows that women are more interested in positive news than men, who are more interested in news about the economy and politics than women. High levels of news coverage about state and federal elections, rising interest rates and the cost of living might have contributed to these differences.

News companies will be able to take heart from the gradual increase in trust in news among people who are paying for it. This suggests an increase in satisfaction with the quality of the news being offered by the brands they subscribe to. In other good news, most brands in our survey recorded a small increase in trust.

We asked about people's experience of the news and found those who have positive experiences engaging with news online and on social media are more likely to say they trust news. Further, people who have negative experiences are more likely to be concerned about misinformation. This reinforces the need for platforms, news outlets, and the government to take practical steps to reduce the amount of misinformation and online incivility, such as hate speech.

Concern about misinformation has risen in Australia for the first time in three years. Globally, Australians are now among the most concerned about misinformation. This might reflect domestic worries about data privacy linked to a series of data breaches at major companies such as Optus and Medibank at the end of 2022, truth and lies during the Australian federal election, concerted disinformation campaigns around Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing debate about Australia's relationship with China.

The data show the complexity of understanding trust in a media environment where economic and political uncertainty are now the norm. Overall, after years of bad news, the small lift in trust will likely be welcome news to an industry experiencing ongoing financial difficulty.

COMMENTARY

TO REGAIN TRUST NEWSMAKERS NEED TRANSPARENCY, INDEPENDENCE, AND A LOCAL FOCUS

Claire Stuchbery, Executive Director, Local and Independent News Association[1]

While any rise in Australia's trust in news is heartening, it's worth acknowledging that edging above the global average is a relatively low bar. Our levels of trust have increased, but so have our levels of distrust. How are both of these things true? Well, this year's survey results show there are fewer people sitting on the fence as neither trusting or distrusting news, perhaps attributable to lighter engagement in news from women and young audiences, perhaps not. What is clear are linkages between trust and public media, and trust and local media.

In Australia, the ABC and SBS have topped the trust tally by producing high quality news content with independent rigour. Government investment in news reporting has interesting parallels with levels of trust globally, including in Australia. The highest levels of trust in news are regularly reported from the most publicly funded sources of news. Twitter has attempted to discredit some news sources with short-lived 'state-affiliated' and 'government-funded' labels (introduced and hastily removed in April 2023), but in democracies, government funding leads to higher levels of audience trust through increased capacity to produce high-quality independent news. It is also worth noting correlations between high levels of trust in news and high levels of trust in Government reported by countries such as Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Germany and sitting just above the global average on both fronts, Australia[2].

Governments across Europe have invested in public interest journalism programs and those countries report some of the highest levels of trust in news. Denmark for example, reporting the third highest level of trust in news, has a government funded program in which newspapers and digital publications that publish political and cultural content and employ at least three journalists are entitled to an editorial. The Dutch Government spent €35 million in 2020 in grants, contributing up to 50% of investigative journalism costs. This year the Netherlands ranks 4th in the world for trust in news. Coming in at number 6 on

the global trust scale is Norway where every newspaper with a circulation of less than 6,000 receives aid from the government and others are awarded grants proportionate to audience reach[3].

> **In Australia, the third position for trust in news is occupied by regional or local newspapers informed by local reporting.**

There is a strong correlation between local news reporting and trust in news. Reporters who are familiar with local communities are inherently more relatable to audiences than news content drawn from centralised or remote sources, incorporating local knowledge and perspectives that contribute to a trusted voice. Conversely, as extreme weather events become increasingly common, we're seeing audiences turn to local news sources for timely and relevant emergency information informed by local experience. Anderson et al[4] highlight the challenge community-newsgathering represents to mainstream journalism challenges: "By drawing from the lived experiences of community members, this approach rejects the notion that institutional and professional authority are the sole sources of credibility and trustworthiness. Community journalists are deeply embedded within their communities and are in constant contact with their many rhizomatic connections."

> **Among LINA's member publishers, 42% launched since 2019 responding to a need for clear, accurate and high-quality news, supported by editorial controls in a way that local social media groups and other online forums rarely are.**

Fifty-three per cent of LINA members are owned or run by female leadership, perhaps reflective of a disengagement from female audiences from mainstream news sources.

[1] The Local & Independent News Association (LINA) is a national industry association supporting hyperlocal and independent digital news publishers.

[2] OECD. (2022). https://data.oecd.org/gga/trust-in-government.htm

[3] Cairncross, F. (2019). *The Cairncross Review: A Sustainable Future for Journalism*, London: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, UK.

[4] Anderson, Hl, Backhaus, B., Bedford, C. & De Souza, P. (2022). Go join that radio station up there: The role of Australian community radio in journalism and education training, *Australian Journalism Review*, 44(2).

Given the growing number of independent, local online news sites across Australia, it would be good to see future reviews measuring levels of trust in this emerging sector of the news media.

Online access to news continues to grow as audience preferences shift to online distribution channels, overtaking television as the main source of news in Australia in 2020[5]. It is pleasing to see positive outcomes from increased opportunity to discuss news topics online and engage with other readers reported in this year's survey. Increased engagement can also increase trust. Correlations between trust in news and revenue for publishers are unsurprising and cyclical, and are not wholly restricted to paywalls, but also include voluntary contributions from supporters and donors investing in free and equitable access to local news.

Moving forward, the outcomes of the *Digital News Report: Australia 2023* suggest newsmakers should turn their attention to young audiences and addressing valid audience concerns about misinformation. However linkages between TikTok news distribution, for example, and other forms of entertaining news sources and trust or audience loyalty are as yet unproven. As Australia warily observes the increasing polarisation of politics and the growing spread of misinformation, we are reminded that "the fate of communities and local news organisations are intrinsically linked, journalistically and economically."[6] News services need higher visibility of their editorial independence and verification processes to reassure audiences; and financial support to produce high-quality public interest journalism without fear or favour.

[5]Roy Morgan. (2020). *It's Official: Internet is Australia's Main Source of News,* https://www.roymorgan.com/findings/its-official-internet-is-australias-main-source-of-news-tv-remains-most-trusted

[6]Abernathy, P. (2023). *Why Local News Matters, And What We Can Do to Save It,* New York State Bar Association, New York.

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8 PAYING FOR NEWS

- More Australians are paying for online news (22%, +4).

- 41% (+13) of those with high education pay for online news.

- Quality is the top reason people pay for online news.

- Those who think publicly funded media are important to them personally are twice as likely to pay for news (32%) than those who don't (15%).

- 22% of non-payers would pay if news subscriptions were cheaper.

PAY CONTINUES TO RISE

More than one in five (22%) Australians now pay for online news. Paying for online news has risen 9 percentage points since 2021, after a period of stagnation (see **figure 8.1**).

PAYING FOR NEWS IS STAGNANT GLOBALLY

While there has been a 4 percentage point increase in Australia in 2023 (22%), globally the proportion of people who pay for news remains similar to last year (16%, -1). There has been a small increase in Finland (+2) and the US (+2), and a decrease in Belgium (-4), Canada (-4) and Germany (-3). There is little change in all other countries (see **figure 8.2**).

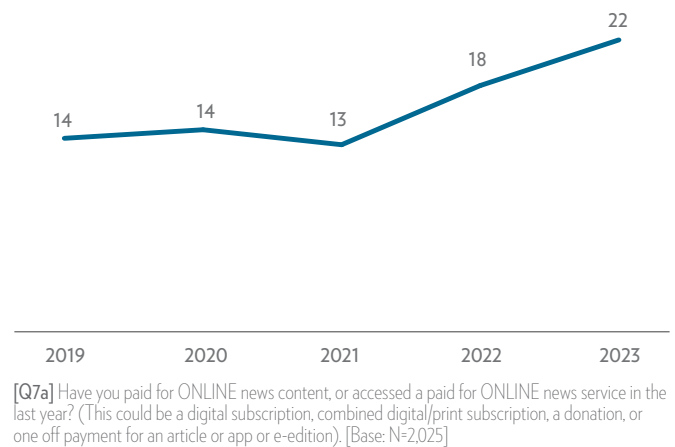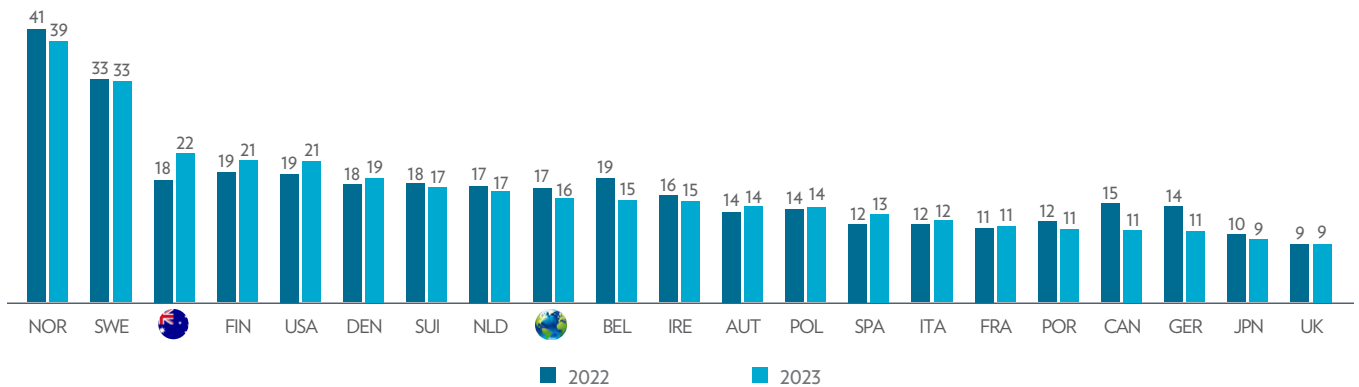**FIGURE 8.1:** PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS 2019-2023 (%)

[Q7a] Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription, a donation, or one off payment for an article or app or e-edition). [Base: N=2,025]

FIGURE 8.2: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY COUNTRY (%)


[Base: N= 37,863]

PEOPLE WITH HIGH EDUCATION INCREASINGLY PAYING FOR NEWS

Men (32%) are much more likely to pay for news compared to women (13%) and the gap has widened from 7 percentage points last year to 19 percentage points this year. One in four of those in Gen X now pay for online news, which is an increase of 8 percentage points since last year. Baby Boomers (12%) and those aged 77 and older (14%) are least likely to pay for news. There has been a 13 percentage point increase in pay among people with high levels of education (41%). This continues a trend of growth in this cohort (see **figure 8.3**).

FIGURE 8.3: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

[Base: N=2,025]
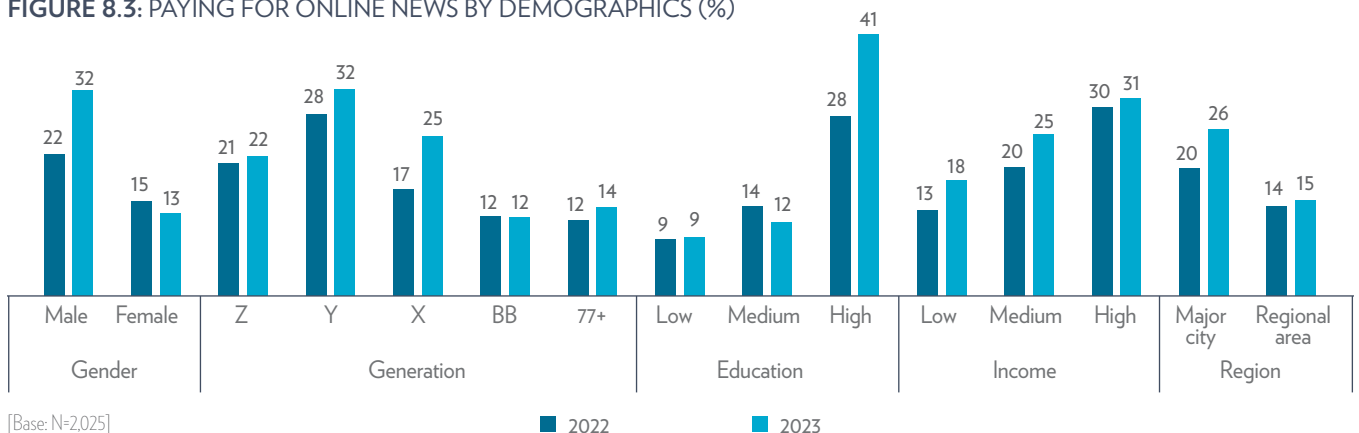
STEADY GROWTH IN ONGOING SUBSCRIPTIONS

The growth in payment for news is mainly reflected in different types of ongoing subscriptions. There was an increase in the number of subscribers who pay for digital news access as part of a print-digital bundle (8%, +3). There was also a slight increase in the number of monthly, quarterly or annual subscribers (11%, +2), those who get free digital news access as part of a subscription to something else (e.g. broadband, phone, cable) (7%, +2) and those who donated to support a news service (6%, +2). There was minimal growth in one-off payments and payments by others (+1) (see **figure 8.4**).
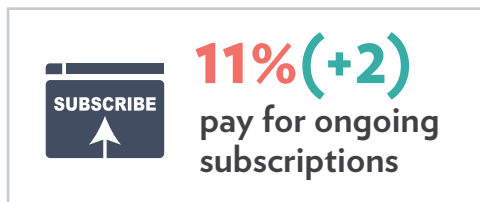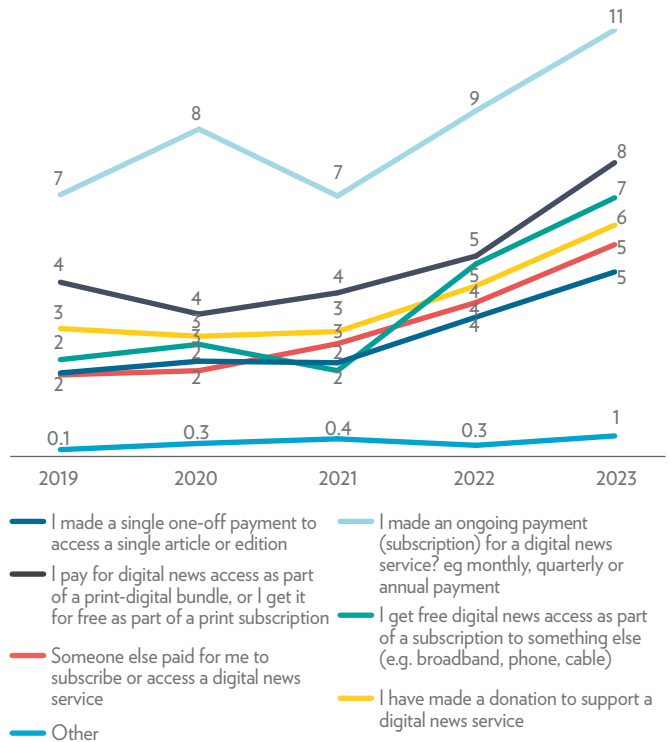
11% (+2)
pay for ongoing subscriptions

FIGURE 8.4: PAYMENT TYPE 2019-2023 (%)

— I made a single one-off payment to access a single article or edition
— I pay for digital news access as part of a print-digital bundle, or I get it for free as part of a print subscription
— Someone else paid for me to subscribe or access a digital news service
— Other
— I made an ongoing payment (subscription) for a digital news service? eg monthly, quarterly or annual payment
— I get free digital news access as part of a subscription to something else (e.g. broadband, phone, cable)
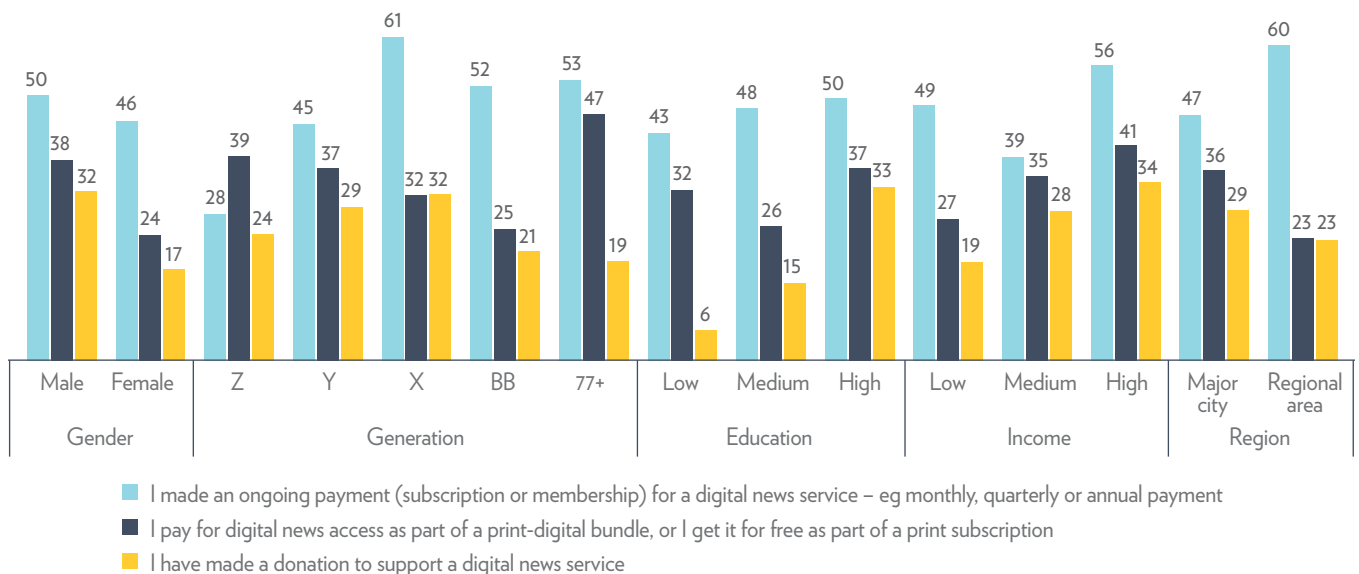— I have made a donation to support a digital news service

[Q7ai] You said you have accessed paid for ONLINE news content in the last year... Which, if any, of the following ways have you used to pay for ONLINE news content in the last year? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

ONGOING SUBSCRIPTION IS HIGHER AMONG REGIONAL CONSUMERS

The method of payment differs between demographic groups. Regional news consumers are much more likely to pay for an ongoing subscription or membership (60%) than people in the cities (47%). Those with high income

and education are more likely to make donations to news organisations (34%; 33%) compared to people with low income and education (19%; 6%) (see **figure 8.5**).

FIGURE 8.5: ONGOING PAYMENT, PRINT-DIGITAL BUNDLE AND DONATION AMONG PAYERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)

■ I made an ongoing payment (subscription or membership) for a digital news service – eg monthly, quarterly or annual payment
■ I pay for digital news access as part of a print-digital bundle, or I get it for free as part of a print subscription
■ I have made a donation to support a digital news service

[Base: N=450]

INCREASE IN PAY AMONG TV NEWS AUDIENCES

As with previous years, those who say their main source of news is print are the most likely to pay for online news (47%, +2), followed by people who rely on online news sources (31%, +3). This year, the proportion of TV users paying for news increased by 8 percentage points (23%) (see **figure 8.6**).

PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA AUDIENCES ARE MORE WILLING TO PAY FOR NEWS

This year we asked about news consumers' attitudes towards publicly funded media. Those who think publicly funded media are personally important to them are twice as likely to pay for news (32%) than those who say it is not important (15%). Similarly, those who think public service media are important to society are much more likely to pay for news (29%) than those who don't (15%). We compared those who access ABC or SBS News (TV, online and radio) with those who don't. Those who access any of the public broadcasting channels are much more likely to pay for news than people who use commercial news media (see **figure 8.7**). This is interesting in light of concern from the commercial news sector about public service media siphoning off their paying audience.

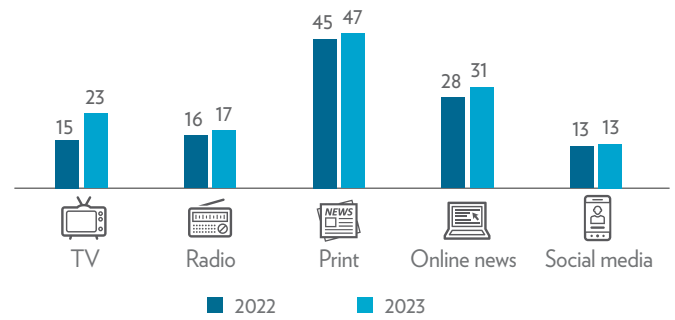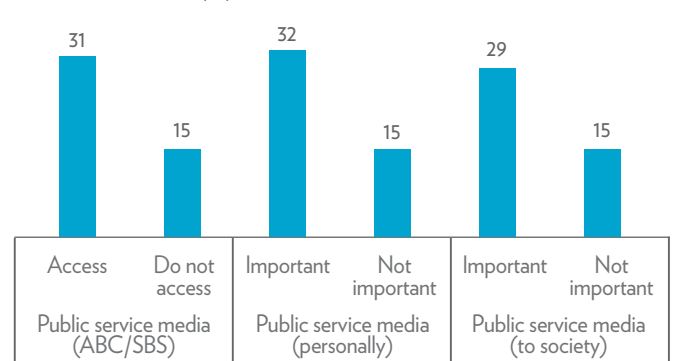**FIGURE 8.6:** PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS 2022-2023 (%)

TV: 15 / 23
Radio: 16 / 17
Print: 45 / 47
Online news: 28 / 31
Social media: 13 / 13

■ 2022 ■ 2023

[Base: N=2,025]

FIGURE 8.7: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA (%)

Public service media (ABC/SBS) — Access: 31, Do not access: 15
Public service media (personally) — Important: 32, Not important: 15
Public service media (to society) — Important: 29, Not important: 15
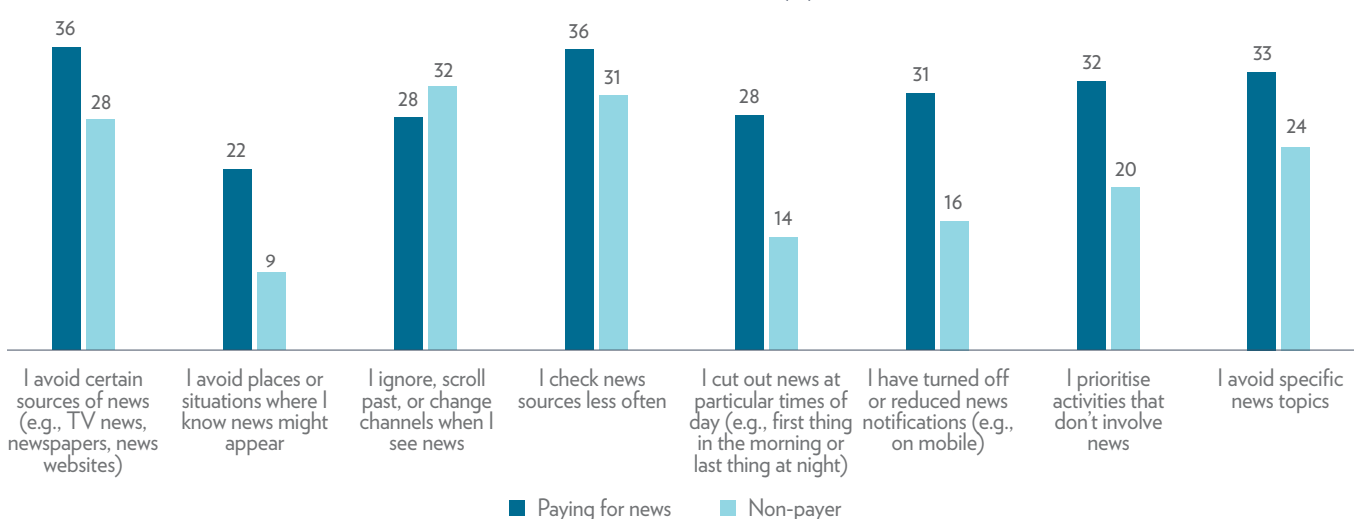
[Base: N=2,025]

PEOPLE WHO PAY FOR NEWS ARE MORE LIKELY TO AVOID IT THAN NON-PAYERS

People who pay for news tend to be heavy news consumers with very high interest in news. Counter-intuitively, the data show they are also more likely to avoid news (76%) than non-payers (68%). This suggests that heavy news consumers may be more discerning and take breaks from time to time. As **figure 8.8** shows, people who pay for news avoid news pre-emptively by deciding to reduce when, where and how often they consume news, as opposed to non-payers who are more likely to avoid reactively by ignoring news when they see it and scrolling past.

FIGURE 8.8: NEWS AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS BY PAYING FOR NEWS (%)

I avoid certain sources of news (e.g., TV news, newspapers, news websites): 36 / 28
I avoid places or situations where I know news might appear: 22 / 9
I ignore, scroll past, or change channels when I see news: 28 / 32
I check news sources less often: 36 / 31
I cut out news at particular times of day (e.g., first thing in the morning or last thing at night): 28 / 14
I have turned off or reduced news notifications (e.g., on mobile): 31 / 16
I prioritise activities that don't involve news: 32 / 20
I avoid specific news topics: 33 / 24

■ Paying for news ■ Non-payer

[Base: N=1,406]

NEWS SUBSCRIBERS ARE INCREASING THEIR NUMBER OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Among those who subscribe to a digital news service, 43% subscribed to one, 24% to two and 34% to three or more. However, the proportion of those who have three or more subscriptions has more than doubled since 2022. Whereas those saying they only have one subscription has consistently declined (see **figure 8.9**).

Of the 315 respondents who subscribe to an ongoing digital news subscription, we asked which brands they were subscribing to. The top brand was *The Australian* followed by Guardian Australia and *Daily Telegraph*. Apple News+ is also among the top brands people subscribe to (see **table 8.1**).

FIGURE 8.9: NUMBER OF NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS 2021-2023 (%)
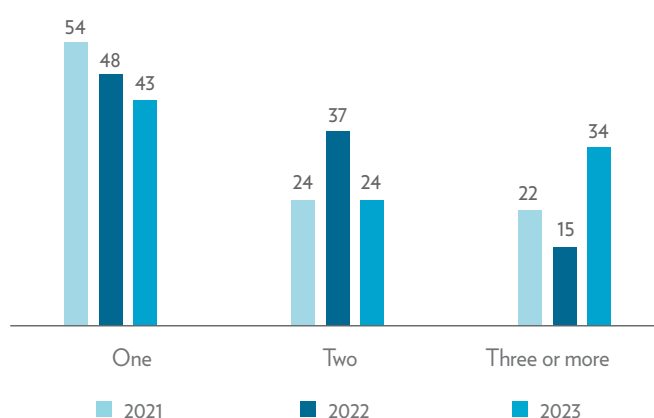
[Q7_SUBS] You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year. How many different news providers do you pay money to in this way? [Base: N=315]

TABLE 8.1: DIGITAL NEWS SERVICE SUBSCRIBERS BY PUBLICATION

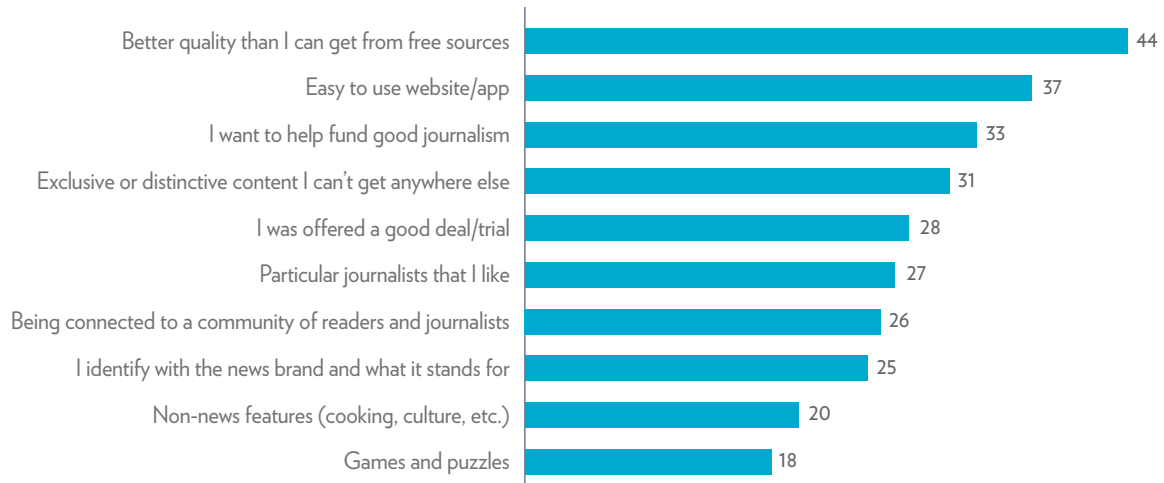| Brand	N	%	Brand	N	%
The Australian	75	7	The Monthly	35	3
Guardian Australia	68	7	International brand	35	3
The Daily Telegraph	62	6	*The Mercury*	34	3
The Sydney Morning Herald	60	6	Crikey	34	3
The Australian Financial Review	55	5	*The Canberra Times*	33	3
Apple News +	55	5	Other local or regional news brand	28	3
The Courier-Mail	51	5	Perth Now	27	3
The Age	47	5	WA Today	26	3
The Saturday Paper	46	5	*The Newcastle Herald*	25	2
Herald Sun	44	4	Other	20	2
Brisbane Times	43	4	An individual journalist (e.g. via a newsletter/own website)	11	1
The Conversation	38	4	An individual journalist (e.g. a podcaster, a youtuber, etc.)	11	1

[Q7_SUBS_name_2022] You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year... Which of the following did you subscribe to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=315]

QUALITY DRIVES NEWS PAYING

This year we asked respondents why they do or do not pay for online news. The top reason for paying is to access higher quality news than they can get from free sources (44%), followed by having an easy to use website/app (37%), wanting to help fund good journalism (33%) and

having access to exclusive content they can't get elsewhere (31%). People are less likely to subscribe to news services for non-news features such as cooking, culture, games and puzzles (see **figure 8.10**).

FIGURE 8.10: REASONS FOR PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)

Reason	%
Better quality than I can get from free sources	44
Easy to use website/app	37
I want to help fund good journalism	33
Exclusive or distinctive content I can't get anywhere else	31
I was offered a good deal/trial	28
Particular journalists that I like	27
Being connected to a community of readers and journalists	26
I identify with the news brand and what it stands for	25
Non-news features (cooking, culture, etc.)	20
Games and puzzles	18

[Q1_Pay_2023] You said that you have _paid for access to online news_ in the last year_ What are the most important reasons for this? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=315]

YOUNG AND OLD HAVE DIFFERENT REASONS FOR PAYING

Younger news consumers are more likely to subscribe to news services for non-news related reasons than those aged 35 and older. Older respondents are more likely to give news content-related reasons for subscribing. More than one-third of subscribers under 35 (34%) say they were offered a good deal, 31% subscribed for non-news

features such as cooking and culture, and 29% liked being connected to a community of readers. On the other hand, subscribers aged 35+ pay for better quality news than they can get for free (47%) and to access content from journalists they like (31%) (see **figure 8.11**).

FIGURE 8.11: REASONS FOR PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY AGE (%)

|	U35	35+
Easy to use website/app	32	40
Better quality than I can get from free sources	38	47
Exclusive or distinctive content I can't get anywhere else	34	30
I identify with the news brand and what it stands for	27	25
Particular journalists that I like	20	31
Non-news features (cooking, culture, etc.)	31	15
Games and puzzles	19	17
Being connected to a community of readers and journalists	29	25
I was offered a good deal/trial	34	26
I want to help fund good journalism	34	32

[Base: N=315]

OVER HALF HAVE CHANGED THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS

Among existing news subscribers, 38% say they maintained the same news subscriptions from last year, while more than half (56%) have changed their subscriptions. Among those who have changed, 23% took out additional subscriptions and 26% cancelled them. About one-third of subscribers (33%) say they managed to negotiate a cheaper price (see **figure 8.12**).

FIGURE 8.12: CHANGE IN NEWS SUBSCRIPTION BEHAVIOUR (%)
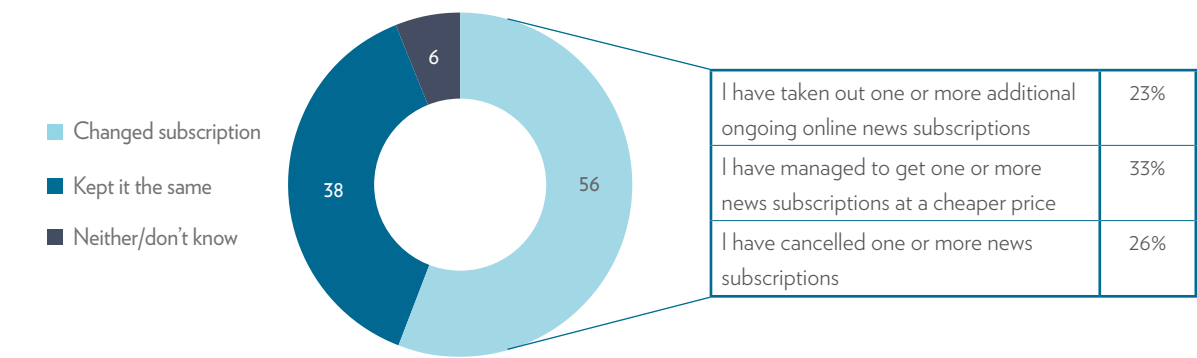
I have taken out one or more additional ongoing online news subscriptions	23%
I have managed to get one or more news subscriptions at a cheaper price	33%
I have cancelled one or more news subscriptions	26%

[Q2_Pay_2023] Still thinking about paying for online news... and thinking specifically about ongoing online news subscriptions... which, if any, of the following have you done in the last year? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=315]

GLOBALLY MORE ARE CANCELLING THAN TAKING OUT NEW SUBSCRIPTIONS

Almost one in four Australians already paying for online news (23%) have taken out one or more additional online news subscriptions, and this is the highest proportion globally. However, Australian news payers are also equal highest in terms of cancelling one or more news subscriptions, along with the USA, Italy and Finland (33%).

Globally, among all respondents the trend is towards cancellations (29%), with few countries reporting high proportions of new subscribers. This suggests there is a lot of movement in the Australian subscription market compared with others (see **figure 8.13**).

FIGURE 8.13: CHANGE IN NEWS SUBSCRIPTION BEHAVIOUR AMONG PAYERS BY COUNTRY (%)

I have taken out one or more additional ongoing online news subscriptions

I have cancelled one or more news subscriptions

[Base: N=6,367]

DISTRUST IS RELATED TO CANCELLED SUBSCRIPTIONS GLOBALLY

Among existing subscribers, those who distrust news in general are significantly more likely to have cancelled one or more news subscriptions in the past year (35%) compared to those who say they trust news (26%). A similar pattern was found among those who trust the news they consume. Those who trust the news they use are less likely to have cancelled a subscription (26%) compared to those who distrust the news that they consume (38%). Those who trust news in general are more likely to keep

their ongoing subscriptions (30%) compared to those who do not trust news (20%). Similarly, those who trust the news they use are much more likely to maintain their subscriptions (31%) compared to those who don't trust them (18%). On the other hand, there was very little difference among those who trust or distrust news in their subscription behaviour. This may mean that trust is related to maintaining existing subscribers (see **figure 8.14**).

FIGURE 8.14: CHANGE IN NEWS SUBSCRIPTION BEHAVIOUR AMONG PAYERS BY TRUST (GLOBAL) (%)
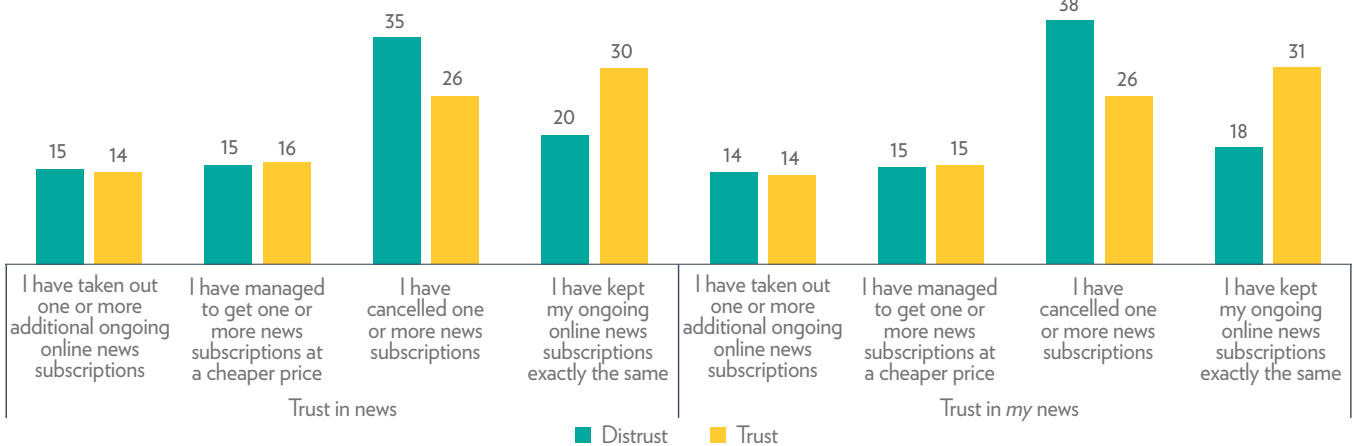
Note: Due to the small number of cases in Australia (n=315), this analysis was conducted with the data from 20 countries. [Base: N=6,367]

HIGH INCOME EARNERS, THOSE WITH HIGH EDUCATION AND YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE TRIALLING ADDITIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Among existing subscribers, women, those aged 35 and over, people who have low levels of education and income, and regional news consumers are more likely to have kept their subscriptions the same as last year. Those with high

incomes, high education and younger people (U35) are more likely to have taken out additional news subscriptions compared to other groups (see **figure 8.15**).

FIGURE 8.15: CHANGE IN NEWS SUBSCRIPTION BEHAVIOUR AMONG PAYERS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
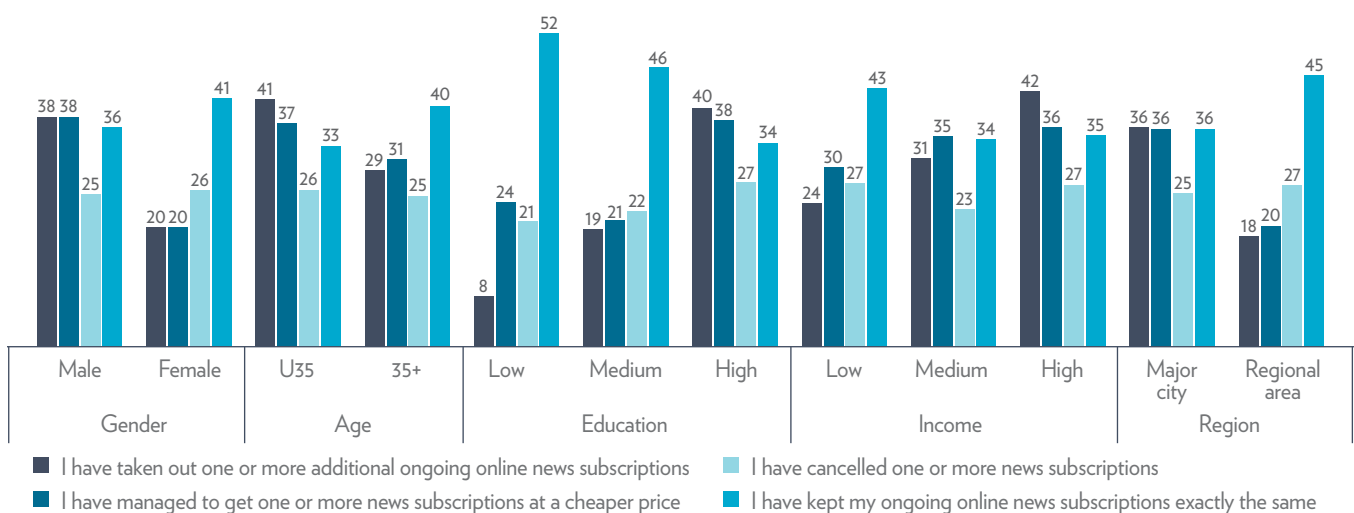
[Q2_Pay_2023] Still thinking about paying for online news... and thinking specifically about ongoing online news subscriptions... which, if any, of the following have you done in the last year? Please select all that apply. Changed = either new subscription, negotiated cheaper price or cancelled. [Base: N=315] Please note the sample size for respondents with low education levels is too small (n=25).

TOP REASONS FOR CANCELLATION

We also asked why people had cancelled their subscription in the past year. In open text responses, the top two reasons cited were cost and content quality:

> *"It was because of the cost-of-living pressure and I wanted to save money"*
> *"It was far too expensive"*
> *"Financial reasons"*
> *"I cancelled because as a household we're cutting back generally on expenditure. We now buy the paper (not online) occasionally."*
> *"Political bias"*
> *"Sensationalising news...lying about events"*

YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD PAY IF THE NEWS WAS MORE RELEVANT AND CHEAPER

Those who have lower interest in news and access it less frequently are unlikely to be convinced to pay. Low income and education groups are less likely to say they could be convinced to pay in the future, with 61% and 59% of these groups saying none of the reasons provided were sufficient incentives.

Incentives to pay for news differed by generation. Younger generations are much more likely to consider paying if the subscription was cheaper; 27% of Gen Z vs 8% of 77+. They are also more likely to pay if the content was more relevant to them (23% of Gen Z vs 4% of 77+).

Younger people are also more sensitive to the amount of advertising and wish to access multiple news websites with one subscription (see **figure 8.17**).

ONE IN FIVE AUSTRALIANS WOULD PAY FOR NEWS IF IT WERE CHEAPER

We asked those who do not subscribe or donate to online news what might make them pay. More than half (53%) say none of the reasons listed would convince them to pay. However, one in five (22%) say they would be willing to pay if it were cheaper, indicating cost is an issue. Fewer respondents say 'relevant content' (14%) and 'fewer advertisements' (11%) would encourage them to pay (see **figure 8.16**).

FIGURE 8.16: INCENTIVES TO PAY AMONG NEWS NON-PAYERS (%)
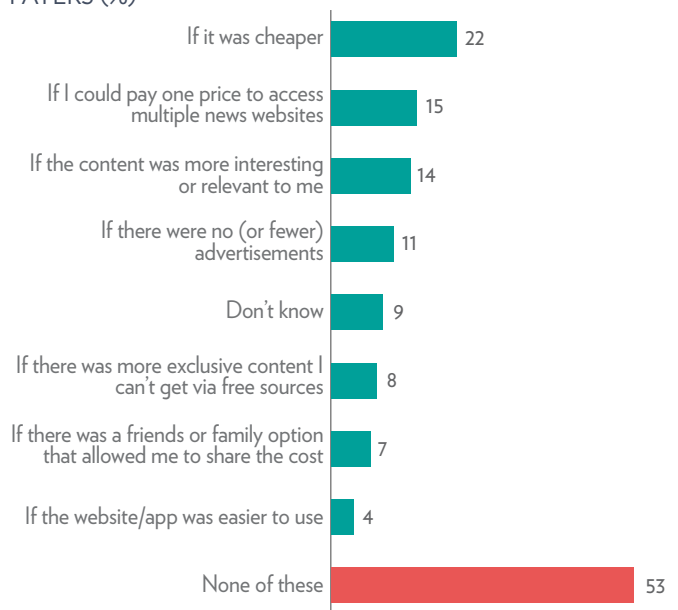
[Q4_Pay_2023] You say you _don't currently subscribe or donate_ to an online newspaper or other news service. Which of the following, if any, would most encourage you to pay? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=1,513]

**FIGURE 8.17:** INCENTIVES TO PAY AMONG NON-NEWS PAYERS BY GENERATION (%)
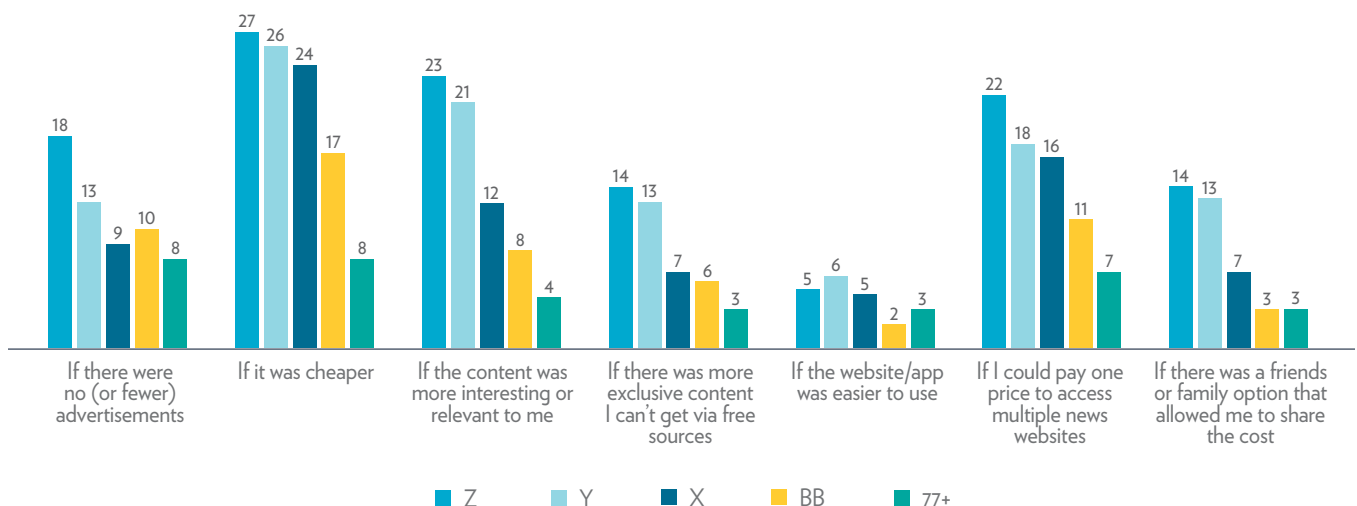
[Base: N=1,513]

COST-OF-LIVING PRESSURES INFLUENCE SUBSCRIPTION

This year we included questions about respondents' experiences of the cost-of-living crisis and their use of finance and economics news. Among those who currently don't pay for news, price is an important factor in enticing them to pay in the future, particularly among those who have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis. One in four

(23%) of those who have been affected by cost-of-living changes say they would consider paying for news in the future if it were cheaper, whereas only 13% of those who were not affected by changing living costs are willing to consider paying (see **figure 8.18**).

FIGURE 8.18: INCENTIVES TO PAY AMONG NON-NEWS PAYERS BY COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS (%)
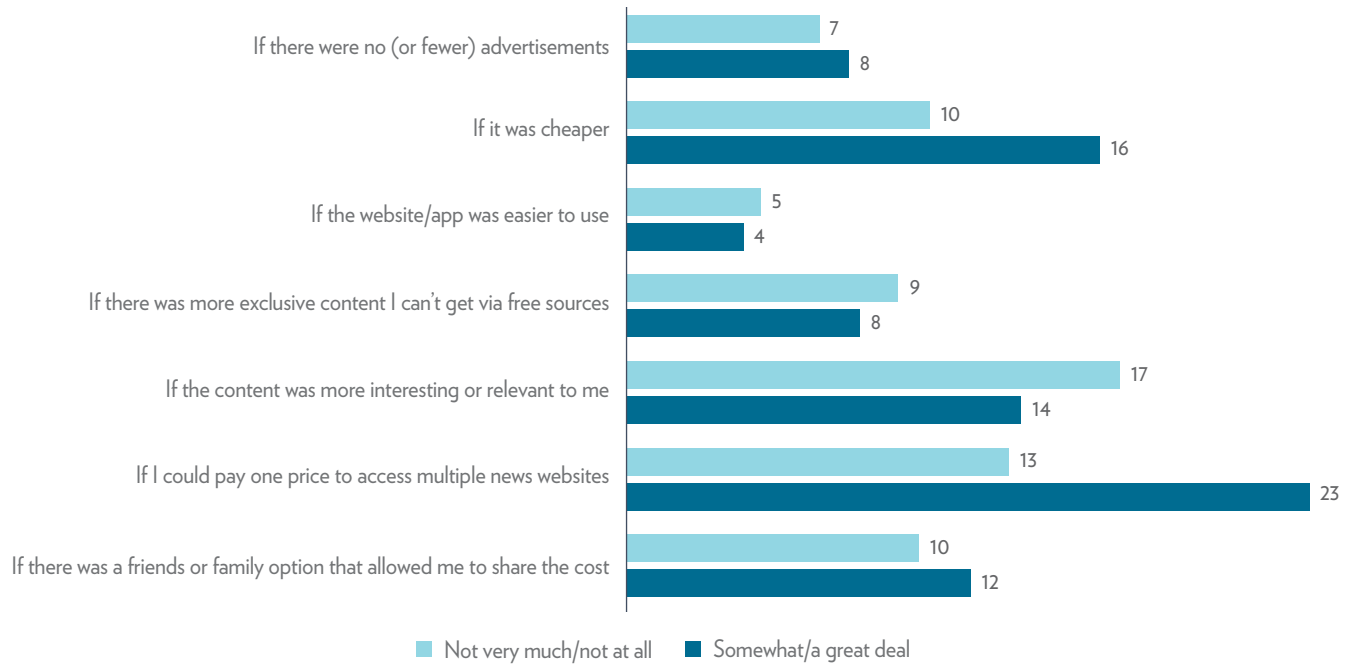
[Q1_Finance_2023] How much, if at all, have you been affected by changes to the cost-of-living (e.g., cost of energy, fuel, food) in the last year? [Base: N=1,513]

SUMMARY

This year's data reveals promising signs that digital news subscriptions are gradually growing in Australia. Furthermore, news consumers are acquiring the habit of subscribing to multiple digital news outlets. Since last year, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of Australians paying for online news, particularly in the form of ongoing subscriptions. One in five Australians paid for online news and one in ten for an ongoing monthly, quarterly or annual subscription.

Cost-of-living pressures have taken a toll. Nearly half of subscribers have cancelled, renegotiated or added new subscriptions, indicating there is high churn among those who pay for news. One of the key reasons for cancelling is related to the cost. This is compounded by those who are experiencing financial difficulties during the global cost-of-living crisis.

Cost is also an important incentive to encourage non-payers to consider taking out a subscription. However, more than half of non-payers say nothing will entice them to pay in the future.

While digital news subscriptions are slowly on the rise it is hard to predict at what point it will peak. The majority of Australian news consumers are still content with freely available news.

However, people who value the role of public service media in society and their own lives are much more likely to pay for news, and not just rely on the public broadcasters supplying it for free. This might soothe concerns about public service media cannibalising commercial news audiences.

COMMENTARY

HIGH STANDARDS, TRUST, AND BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUDIENCE ARE KEYS TO GROWING SUBSCRIPTIONS

John-Paul Moloney, Managing Editor, *The Canberra Times*

There are moments you look back on through your career that make you think about how far things have come. One of those was my first day sitting at my desk at *The Canberra Times*, near the end of 2000.

I'd been hired as a cadet, but specifically as the cadet to be attached to the strange internet-thingy that was our homepage. Before that day, our IT department had the task of 'uploading' our stories to the site. It would be kind to say that meant an eclectic content mix. A small story from page 13 could be leading the site, for no other reason than it was the first or last thing they laid their cursor on. The upload topped out at about half a dozen news stories per day. You wouldn't want to be 'giving away' any more than that, would you?

My university education had been based on grappling with 'digital convergence' and the internet-disrupted future fast arriving, but the newsroom I entered seemed pretty unfazed. Mine was literally one of two computers connected to the internet, and that was only so I could make this new editorial problem of the website go away early each morning and leave the grown-ups to the real business of the paper.

My job today has many similarities but many, many differences to that of the editor who hired me. On a big screen above my desk our homepage analytics dashboard is showing how many subscribers are reading our top stories, and, crucially, how long they're spending reading them. As I write this, a deep-dive piece at the end of a compelling court case is leading the way with an impressive two-minute engagement time.

> **We produced that story with precisely that goal of high engagement in mind. It's the kind of story that brings in new subscribers and, crucially, keeps them with us.**

Even as cost-of-living pressures bite, we are continuing to grow and build loyalty in our digital subscriber family. *The Canberra Times*' churn, at about 2 per cent, remains very low by industry standards and indicates that, while our readers are not immune to cost-of-living concerns, they prioritise their news subscription. It survives the wallet squeeze, when some other discretionary spends may not.

Why is that the case? In large part, we attribute that to the need-to-know factor. The best way to be an informed Canberran, or member of any community, is to be a subscriber to the organisation that provides the most extensive, timely news offering about the place.

As the *Digital News Report: Australia 2023* makes clear, people pay for subscription journalism because they judge it as being better than what's offered by most free sites. That's little wonder. It takes a lot of money to staff a newsroom with the heft to not only break news but dig for it.

There is no way The Canberra Times could resource its expansive journalism based on advertising alone, and certainly not based on digital advertising alone. If we did, we'd be forced to operate like some free news sites. With fewer journalists and less opportunity to specialise, they tend to largely follow up stories already reported, turn around government announcements and churn press releases. This gives their users a sense of what's happening, but to a large extent it is downstream re-reporting of news broken through enterprise paid for by subscribers.

But increasingly our subscription focus extends beyond this transaction of payment for information. We are working hard to build a relationship with our subscribers, so they understand that we see them as partners in creating important journalism for our city. Each week I write directly to our subscribers about topics we've covered that week, giving them insight into how and why we've told particular stories.

We tell them how we've investigated the problems in the health sector, or how we've campaigned to address wrong, and how it's been their support that's made it possible. I'm gratified when I hear back from them about how much they value our work. It's heartening sometimes to read them back.

Some I hold most dear come from the darkest days of the pandemic. We saw some of our greatest subscriber growth during this time. What's remarkable about that is the fact all our COVID coverage was being provided free. No one was being forced to subscribe, but still many decided to, anyway. Some told me they saw themselves as investing their community's well-being by supporting informative, trustworthy journalism.

This matter of trust is critical to our future in growing our digital subscriptions.

High journalistic standards. A mature and sensitive approach to difficult stories. Being unflinching in holding power to account. Trust built over almost 100 years is our most valuable commodity and it's something we work to protect every day.

Being trusted not only makes us feel good about the work we do, it's also the glue that binds us to our subscribers.

9 AUSTRALIA AND THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

- 80% of Australians say they have been affected somewhat or a great deal by changes to cost-of-living.

- Those affected by cost-of-living are more likely to cancel news subscriptions.

- Mainstream media are the most popular source of finance and economic news.

- 30% of Australian women say they understand finance news, compared to 54% of men. This is the largest gender gap globally.

- Globally, people with low education are the least likely to pay attention to finance news

COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

RISING COST-OF-LIVING AFFECTS 80% OF AUSTRALIANS

War, market uncertainty, rising interest rates and national debt have significantly impacted cost-of-living in many countries in the last year. As such, in 2023 we asked questions about respondents' experiences of the cost-of-living crisis and their use of finance and economics news.

In Australia, around a third (34%) say they have been affected a great deal by changes to the cost of living (e.g. increasing cost of fuel, food or energy). Almost half (46%) say they have been somewhat affected. Only a small proportion say they have not been affected at all (2%) or very much (15%) (see **figure 9.1**).

FIGURE 9.1: IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS (%)

■ A great deal　■ Somewhat　■ Not very much　■ Not at all　■ Don't know

[Q1_Finance_2023] How much, if at all, have you been affected by changes to the cost of living (e.g., cost of energy, fuel, food) in the last year? [Base: N=2,024]

Compared to other markets, Australians (34%) are slightly above the global average (32%) in saying they have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis a great deal. There is a lot of variation in the global data. In countries such as Portugal (59%), Hungary (53%) and Argentina (51%) the

proportion saying they have been affected a great deal is much higher. In contrast, Hong Kong (12%), Switzerland (19%) and Denmark (19%) boast the fewest saying they have been greatly impacted (see **figure 9.2**).

FIGURE 9.2: IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS BY COUNTRY (%)

■ A great deal　■ Somewhat　■ Not very much/Not at all　■ Don't know
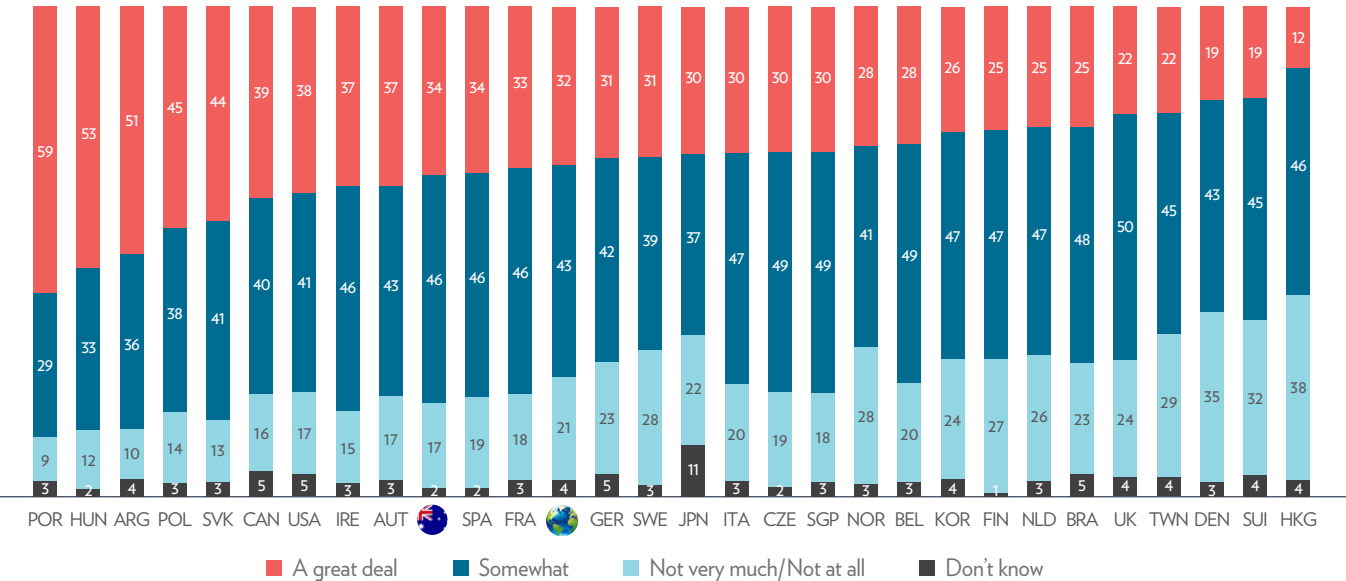
*Global average among 29 countries [Base: N=59,196]

In Australia, women (37%) are more likely than men (31%) to report being greatly affected by the rise in cost-of-living. Gen Z (19%) are the least likely to say they have been affected a great deal compared to other generations, and Gen X (42%) are the most likely. Education and region are not strong predictors for this measure. However, those with high incomes (30%) are less likely than those on low incomes (40%) to say they have been affected a great deal (see **figure 9.3**).

FIGURE 9.3: IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
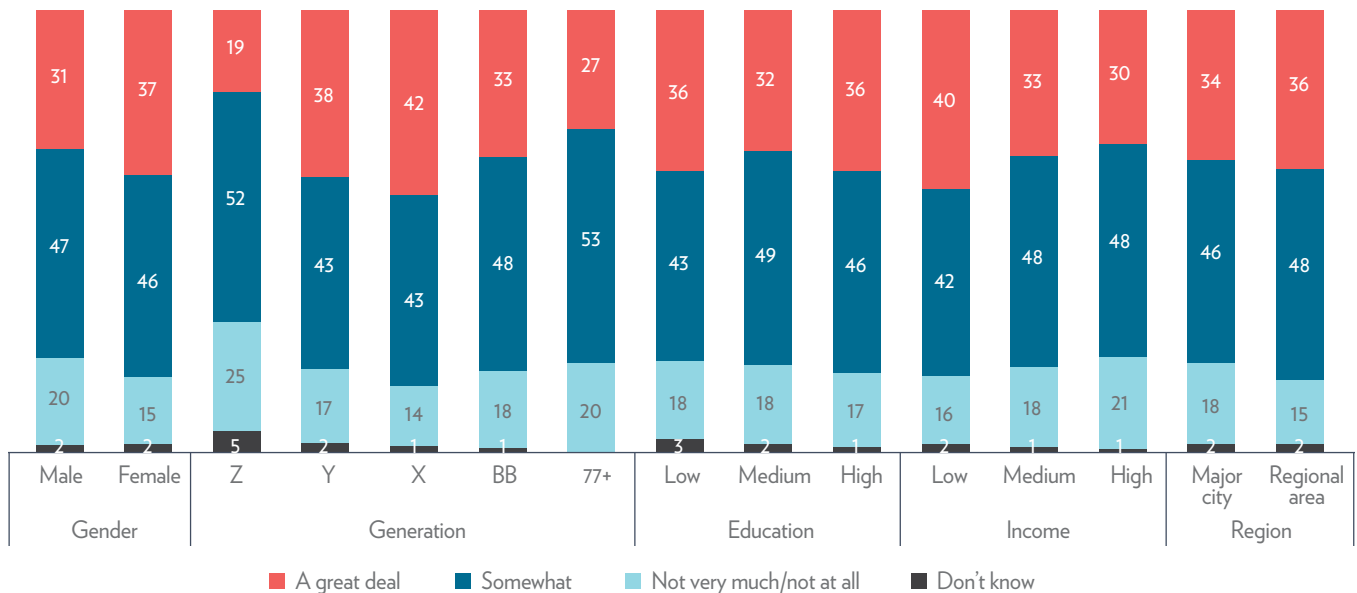
GEN Z ARE GLOBALLY LEAST LIKELY TO SAY THEY HAVE BEEN AFFECTED

The large gap between Gen Z and other generations in saying they have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis appears to be a global phenomenon. As **figure 9.4** shows, in all markets Gen Z (20%) are much less likely than Gen X (36%) to say they have been affected a great deal. This reflects that people in their 40s and 50s are more likely to have financial pressures of supporting families with housing costs and other living expenses.

FIGURE 9.4: IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS BY GENERATION BY COUNTRY (% AFFECTED A GREAT DEAL)
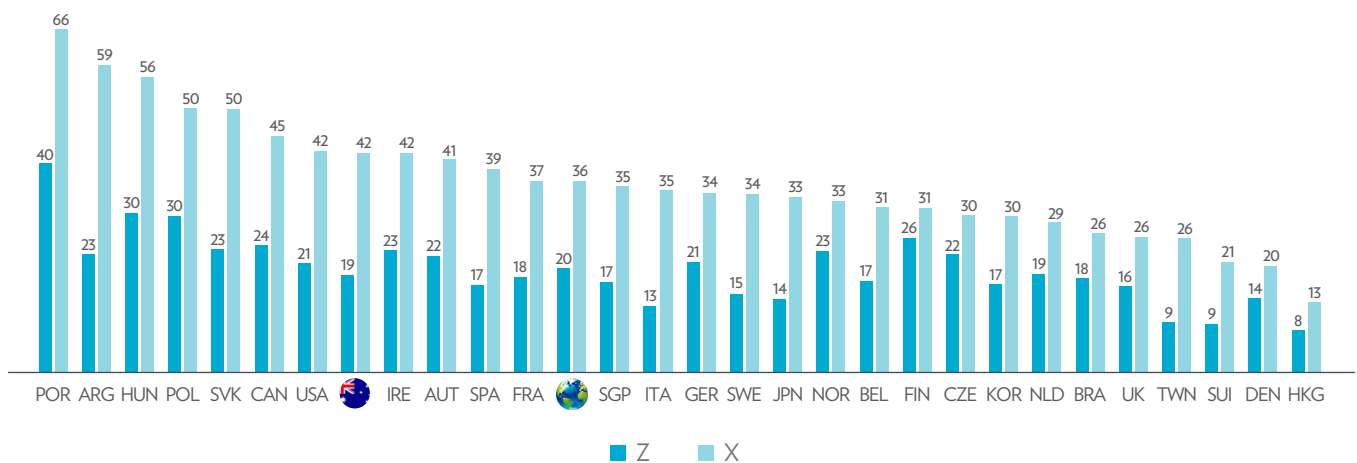
*Global average among 29 countries [Base: N=59,196]

THOSE AFFECTED BY COST-OF-LIVING ARE MORE LIKELY TO CANCEL NEWS SUBSCRIPTIONS

People who say they have been affected a great deal by changes to cost-of-living are slightly more likely to say they have cancelled one or more news subscriptions in the past year (13%) compared with those who say they have been somewhat (8%) or not very/not at all impacted on (11%) (see **figure 9.5**). However, those who have been affected a great deal are also most likely to be already paying for news

(27%) and have taken out additional subscriptions (10%). This likely reflects that those who say they have been affected the most are also the most interested in news. Those who say they have been greatly affected are more likely to say they have high interest in news (55%) and high interest in politics (39%) compared to those who have been not very or not at all affected (43%; 29%) (see **figure 9.6**).

FIGURE 9.5: NEWS PAYING BEHAVIOUR BY IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS (%)

- Pay for news online
- I have taken out one or more additional ongoing online news subscriptions
- I have cancelled one or more news subscriptions
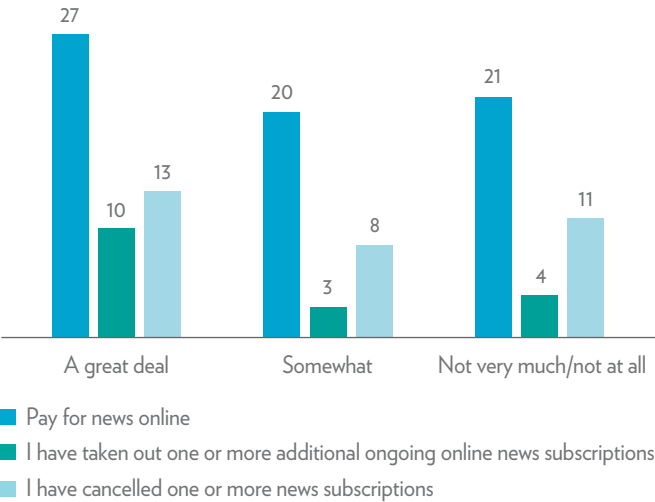
[Base: N=2,025]

FIGURE 9.6: INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICS BY IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS (%)

- High   - Low
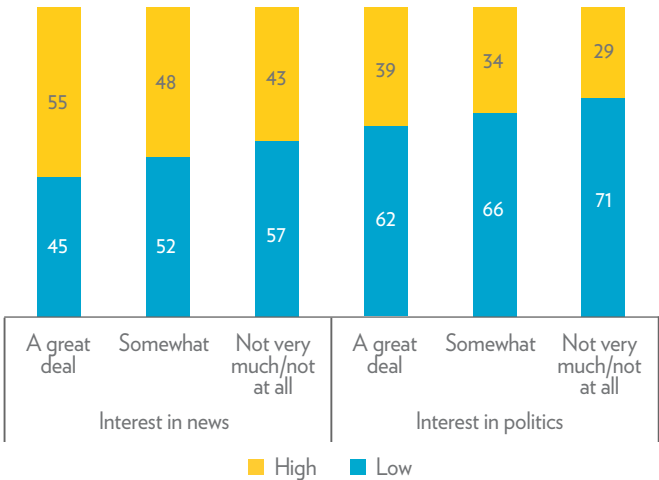
NEWS AVOIDANCE LINKED TO IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING

Respondents who say they have been affected by changes to cost-of-living are more likely to avoid news. Those who say they have been affected a great deal are much more likely to say they often, sometimes or occasionally avoid news (80%) compared to those who have not been very much or at all affected (59%) (see **figure 9.7**).

**80%** avoid news if affected 'a great deal'

FIGURE 9.7: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS (%)

- Often/Sometimes/Occasionally   - Never   - Don't know
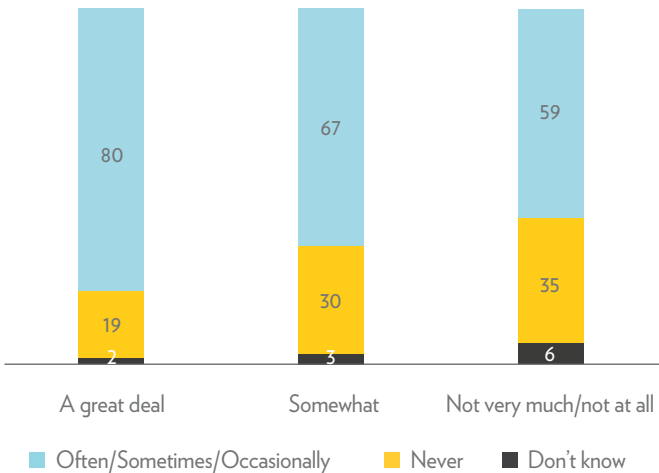
This appears to be a global trend, with most markets reporting a clear gap in news avoidance between those most and least by the cost-of-living crisis. Globally, among those who say they are greatly affected 67% avoid news, compared to only 56% of those who are not at all or not very affected. In Australia, the difference in news avoidance between those who are affected a great deal and those who are not is much higher than the global average (see **figure 9.8**).

FIGURE 9.8: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY IMPACT OF COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS BY SELECTED COUNTRIES (% AVOIDING NEWS)

Legend: A great deal / Somewhat / Not very much/not at all
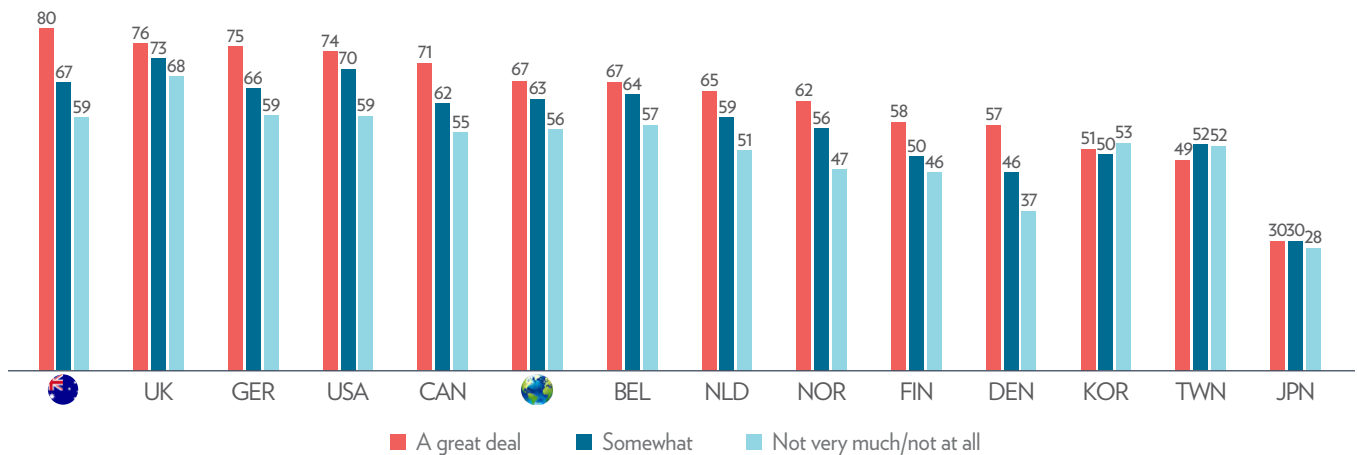
*Global average among 29 countries [Base: N=59,196]

FINANCE AND ECONOMICS NEWS

MAINSTREAM MEDIA ARE THE TOP SOURCE OF FINANCE NEWS

We asked respondents what sources of news and information they pay a lot of attention to when it comes to their personal finances and/or the wider economy. Forty-two percent say they pay a lot of attention to mainstream media for news and information about finance and the economy. The second most common source is family, friends or colleagues (37%), with only around one in five paying attention to experts (22%) or specialist business/finance websites or magazines (21%). A further one in five (22%) say they don't pay any attention to news about finance or the economy (see **figure 9.9**).

FIGURE 9.9: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION (%)

Mainstream media (e.g., TV, radio, online websites)	42
Family, friends, or colleagues	37
Experts with an independent public profile (e.g., their own social channels or TV shows)	22
Specialist business or financial news websites/magazines	21
Social media personalities/creators	16
None of these – I don't pay attention to news about personal finances and the wider economy	22
Don't know	5
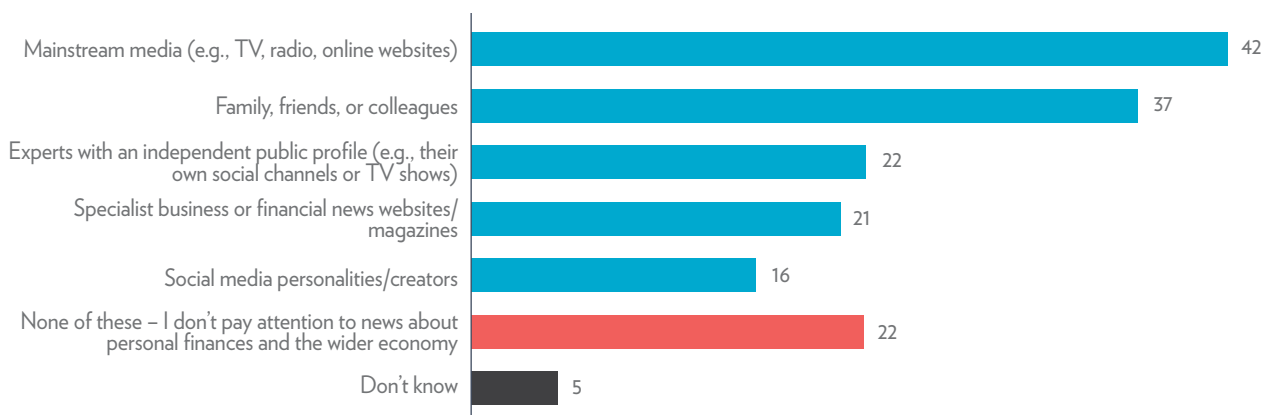
[Q2_Finance_2023m] Thinking about news or information related to _your personal finances and/or the wider economy_ which of the following sources, if any, do you pay a lot of attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

Globally, people pay most attention to mainstream media (41%), family, friends and colleagues (34%), specialist business or financial news websites (23%), experts with an independent public profile (21%), and social media personalities (11%). In most markets the mainstream media are more popular for finance and economic news and information than family, friends and colleagues. In Hungary (42%), Slovakia (40%), France (33%) and Italy (29%) people say they pay more attention to information from family, friends and colleagues than from mainstream media. Australia is one of the countries with a high proportion of respondents saying they don't pay any attention to financial and economics news (see **figure 9.10**).

FIGURE 9.10: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY COUNTRY (%)
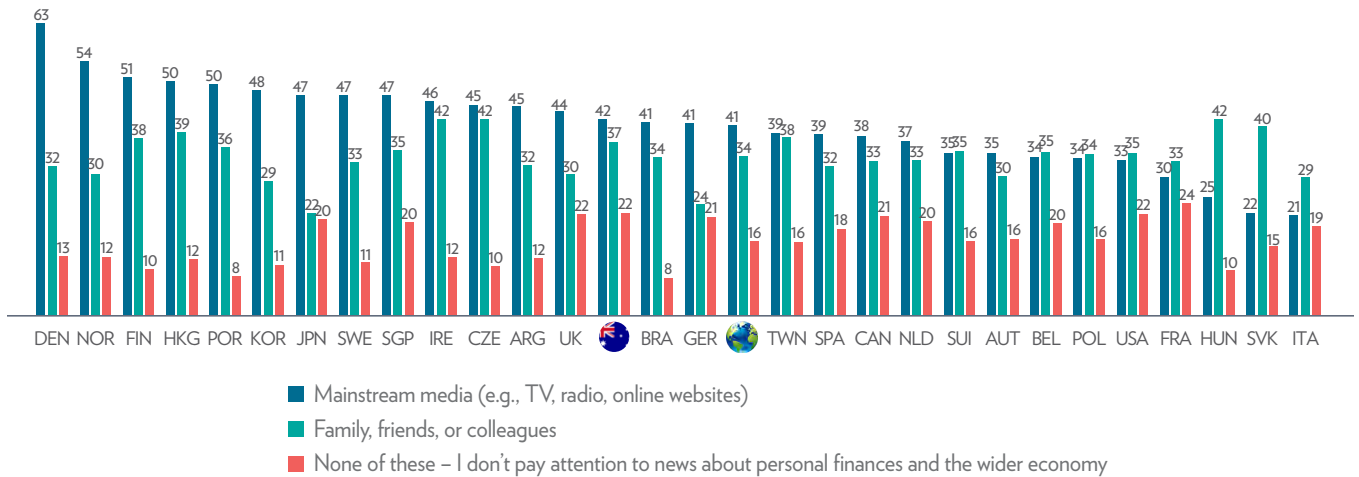
*Global average among 29 countries [Base: N=59,192]

MEN AND WOMEN PAY ATTENTION TO DIFFERENT SOURCES OF FINANCIAL NEWS

There are gendered variations in the sources Australians pay attention to for finance and economics news. While men (43%) and women (41%) are about equal in paying attention to mainstream media, men are much more likely to say they pay a lot of attention to specialist business or finance news and experts with an independent public profile compared to women. Women are also slightly more likely to say they don't pay attention to this kind of news at all (24%) than men (19%) (see **figure 9.11**). It is likely these findings reflect the fact that men express a higher overall interest in news and higher interest specifically in business, financial and economic news compared with women[1].

**FIGURE 9.11:** SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY GENDER (%)
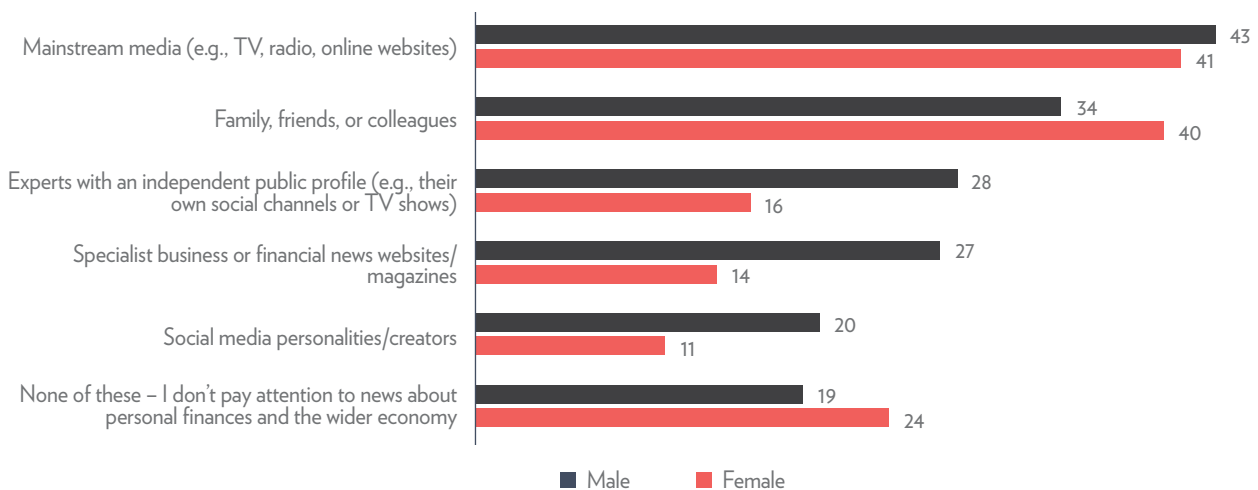
[1] Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., K., McCallum, K. & Nolan, D. (2022). *Digital News Report: Australia 2022.* Canberra: News & Media Research Centre. https://doi.org/10.25916/1xkk-jb37

Younger and older respondents differ in the sources of financial news they pay most attention to. Younger generations tend to access a variety of sources of news about finance and economics, whereas older generations rely mostly on mainstream media. Younger generations are more likely to get financial information and news from family, friends and colleagues and social media personalities than older generations. Almost half (45%) of those aged 77+ don't pay any attention to finance and economics news (see **figure 9.12**)

FIGURE 9.12: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY GENERATION (%)
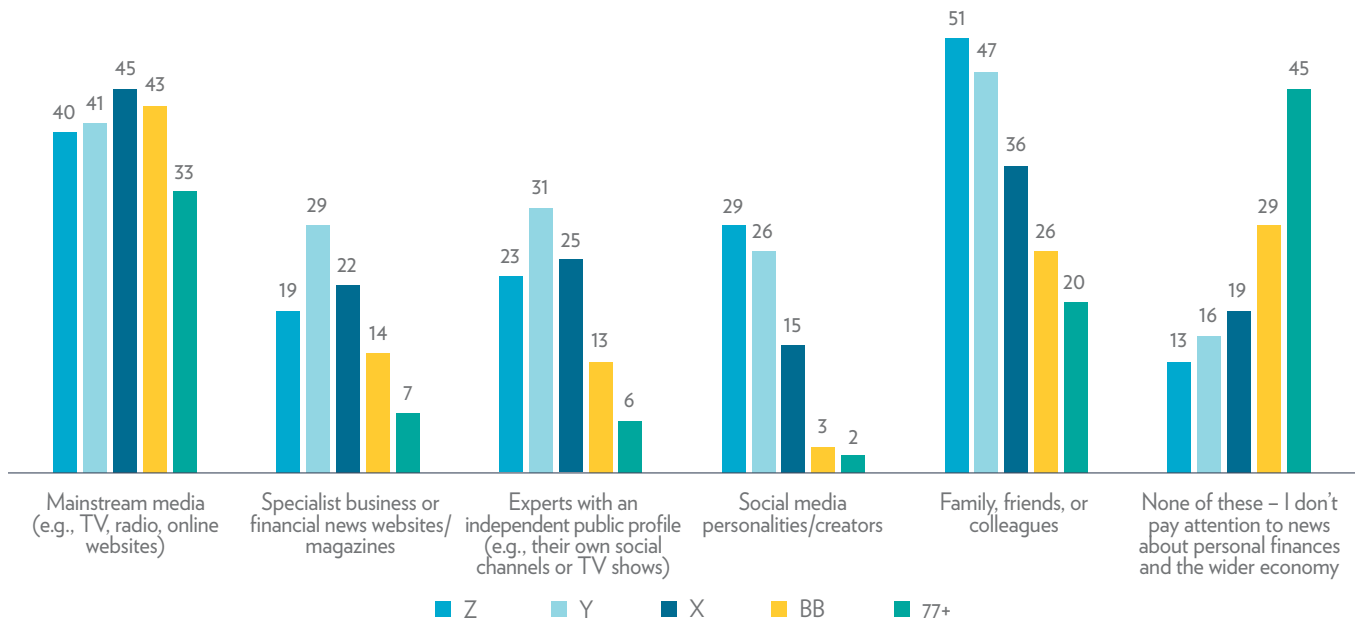
THOSE WITH LOW EDUCATION SWITCH OFF FINANCE NEWS

Education is a strong predictor of sources of finance news that respondents pay attention to. Those with low education are much more likely to say they don't pay attention to news about finance and the economy (38%) compared to those with high education (11%). Those with high education are much more likely to pay attention to specialist business or finance news (33%), experts (35%), and social media personalities (26%) than those with low or medium education (see **figure 9.13**).

FIGURE 9.13: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY EDUCATION (%)
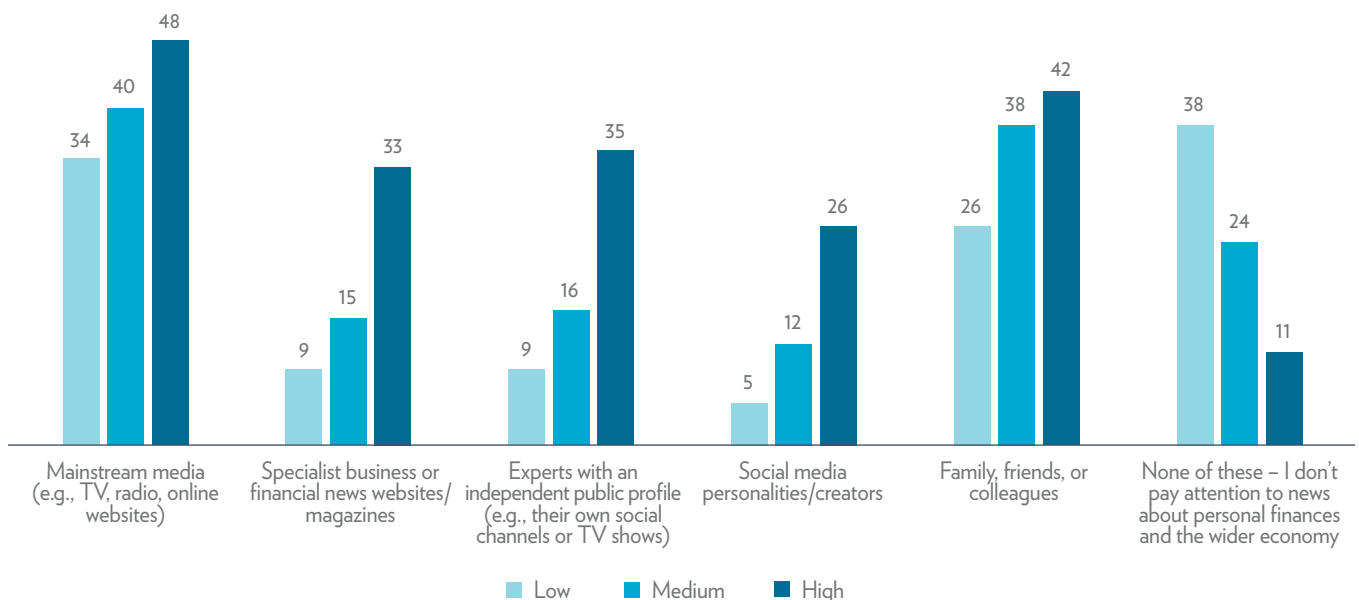
Selection of finance news sources appears to relate to interest in news and politics. Those with higher levels of interest pay greater attention to all sources of finance news than those with low levels of interest. Among those with high interest in news 53% pay attention to mainstream media whereas only 32% of light news consumers do. Almost one-third (30%) of those with low interest in news don't pay any attention to finance news. (see **figure 9.14**).

FIGURE 9.14: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY INTEREST IN NEWS AND POLITICS (%)

- ■ Mainstream media (e.g., TV, radio, online websites)
- ■ Specialist business or financial news websites/magazines
- ■ Experts with an independent public profile (e.g., their own social channels or TV shows)
- ■ Social media personalities/creators
- ■ Family, friends, or colleagues
- ■ None of these – I don't pay attention to news about personal finances and the wider economy
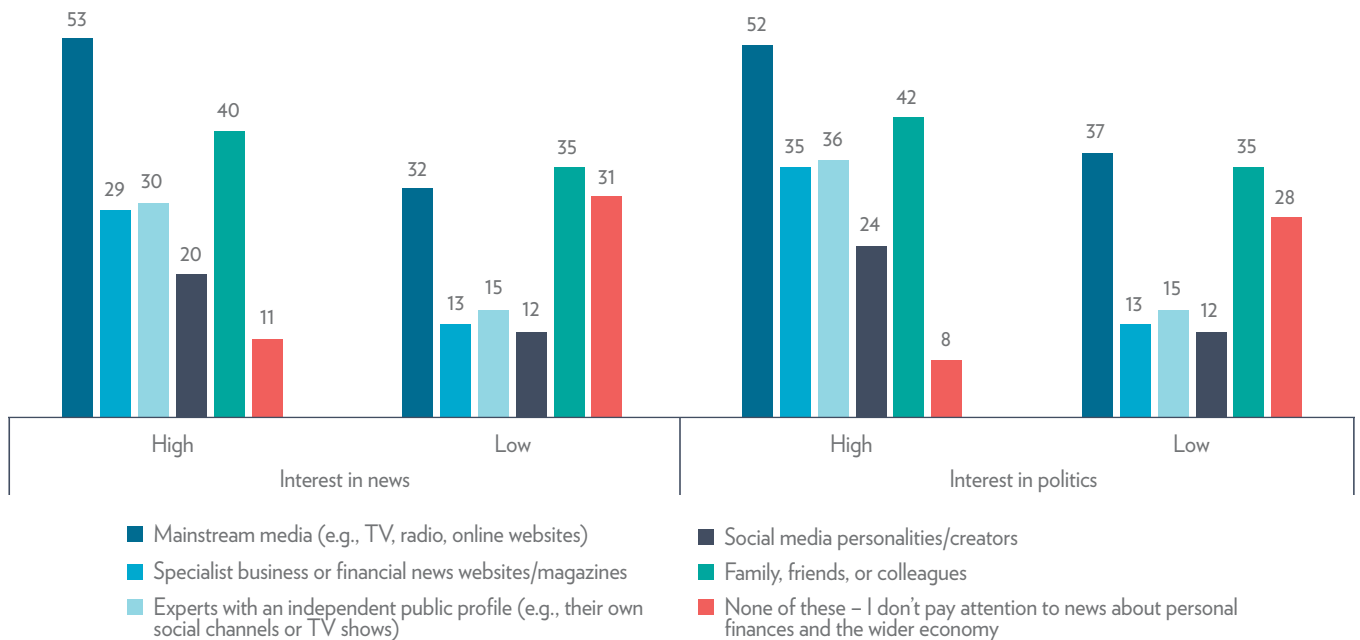
AUSTRALIANS ARE SPLIT ON WHETHER THEY FIND IT EASY TO UNDERSTAND FINANCE AND ECONOMICS NEWS

In light of changes in cost-of-living, we asked respondents questions about how easy or difficult it was for them to understand news about finance and the economy and apply that news to their daily life.

Few respondents say it is very easy to understand news about finance and the economy (14%) or apply it to their daily life (12%). Less than one-third (28%) say it is somewhat easy to understand, and 23% say it is somewhat easy to apply. In both questions, respondents are most likely to say it is neither easy nor difficult to understand (29%) or apply (36%), suggesting many respondents are uncertain on this topic (see **figure 9.15**)

FIGURE 9.15: UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY (%)

- ■ Very easy
- ■ Somewhat easy
- ■ Neither easy nor difficult
- ■ Somewhat difficult
- ■ Very difficult
- ■ Don't know
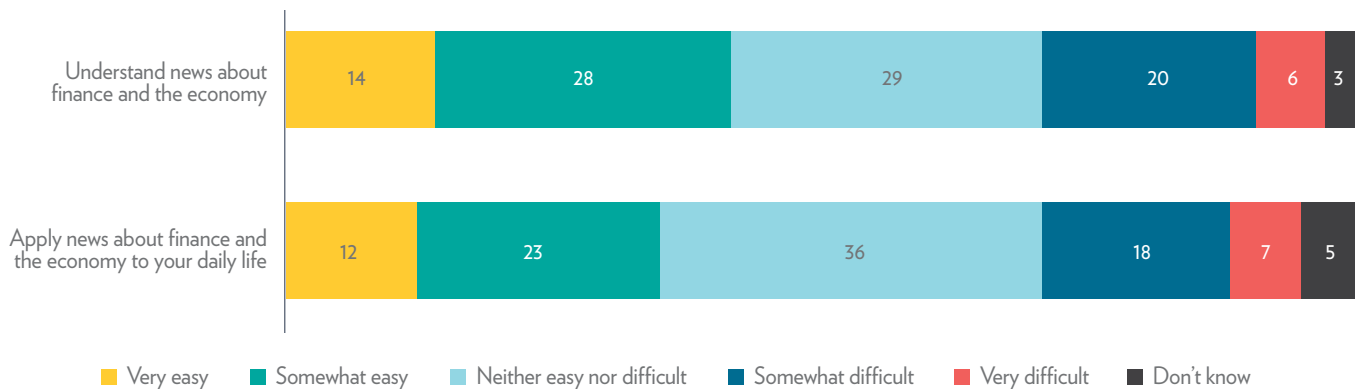
[Q3_Finance_2023_1] How easy or difficult do you find it to _understand_ news about finance and the economy? [Q3_Finance_2023_2] How easy or difficult do you find it to _apply_ news about finance and the economy _to your daily life_? [Base: N=2,025]

AUSTRALIANS FIND FINANCE NEWS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND THAN MANY GLOBAL AUDIENCES

Compared to other markets, Australians (42%) are higher than global average (32%) in saying it is easy to understand news about finance and the economy. In many countries around a third of respondents say it is neither easy nor difficult. French (15%), Japanese (20%) and Italian (20%) respondents are the least likely to say they find it very or somewhat easy to understand (see **figure 9.16**).

FIGURE 9.16: UNDERSTANDING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY COUNTRY (%)
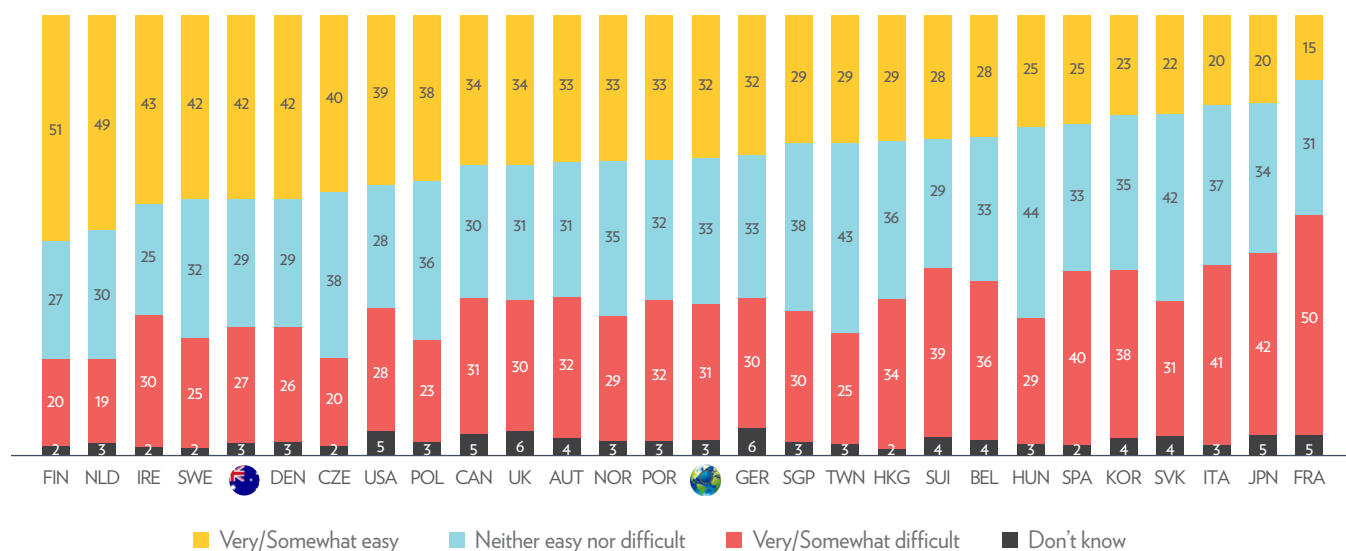
*Global average among 27 countries [Base: N=55,131]

Australians (35%) are also above the global average (28%) in saying that it is very or somewhat easy to apply news about finance and economy to their daily lives (see **figure 9.17**).

Easy to understand
42% > 32%

FIGURE 9.17: APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY COUNTRY (%)
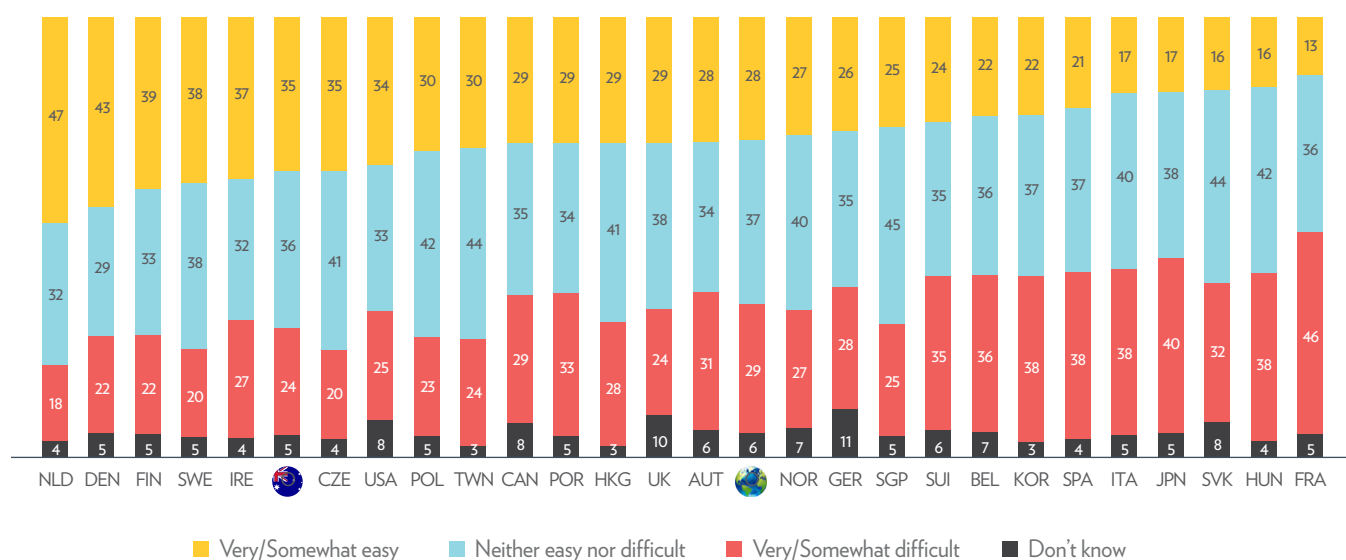
*Global average among 27 countries [Base: N=55,129]

MEN, HIGHLY EDUCATED, AND HIGH INCOME EARNERS ARE MORE CONFIDENT THEY UNDERSTAND FINANCE NEWS

In Australia, responses to these questions appear to be linked to gender, generation, education and income. Men (54%) are substantially more likely than women (30%) to say they find it very or somewhat easy to understand news

about finance and the economy. Similarly, those with high education and income (55%) are much more likely than those with low education (27%) and income (36%) to say finance news is easy for them to understand (see **figure 9.18**).

FIGURE 9.18: UNDERSTANDING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
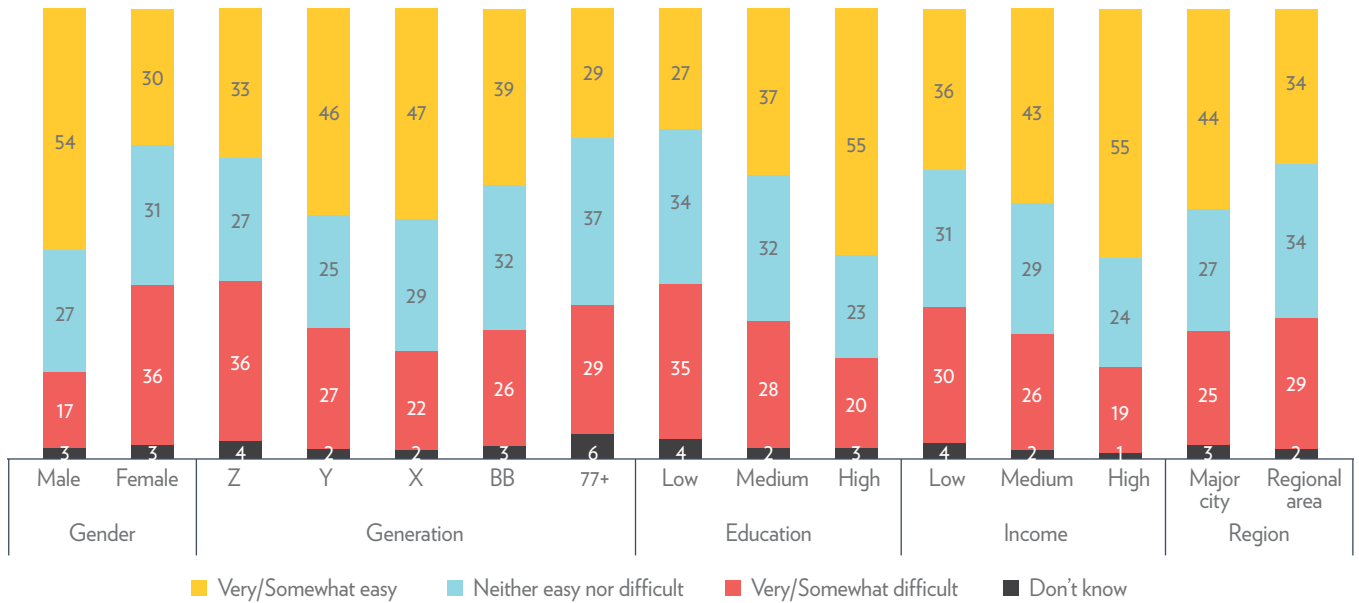
A similar pattern can be seen when asked about how easy or difficult it is to apply that news to their daily life. Men (46%) are much more confident than women (25%) that they can easily apply finance and economic news. Those

with high education (49%) and income (48%) are also more likely to say it is easy to apply to their daily life compared to people with low education (21%) and income (28%) (see **figure 9.19**).

FIGURE 9.19: APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)
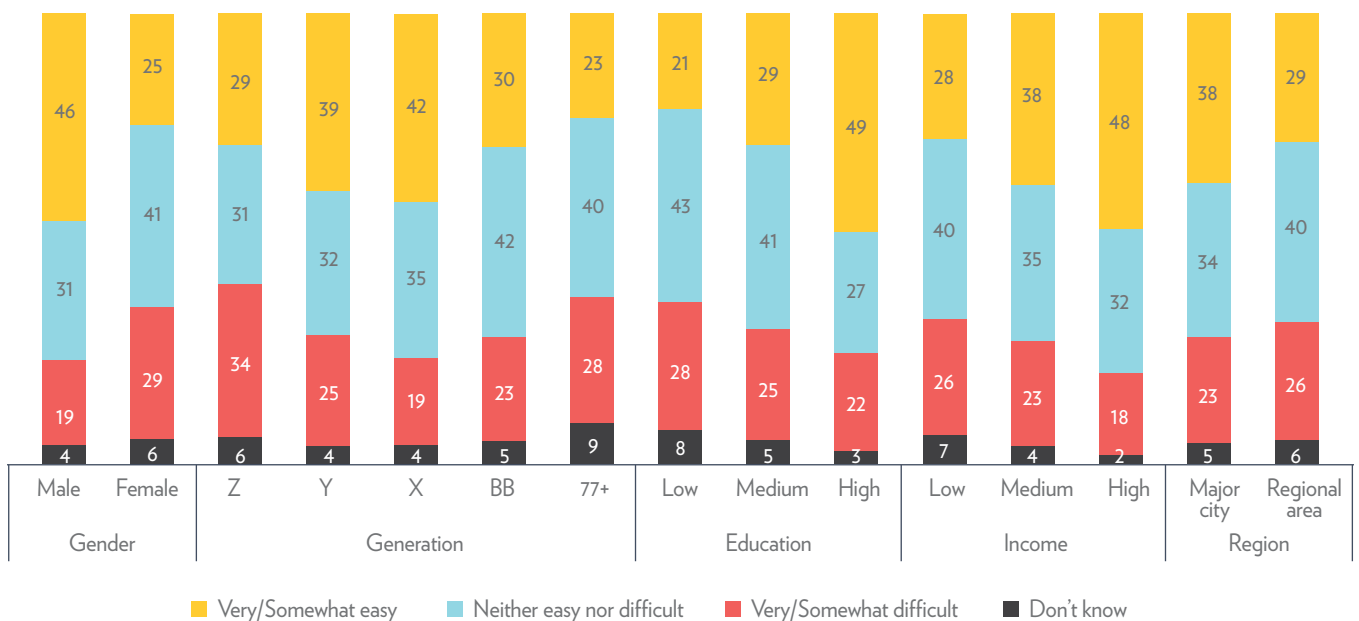
AUSTRALIA HAS THE HIGHEST GENDER GAP IN UNDERSTANDING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE

These gender and education gaps are global phenomena. As **figure 9.20** shows, men are consistently more likely than women to say they find finance and economics news very or somewhat easy to understand. Australia has the highest gender gap among the countries surveyed, which mirrors

similar differences in male and female news interest and access (see **Chapters 1** and **5**). The smallest gender gap is in Finland which has high levels of media literacy, interest in and consumption of news.

FIGURE 9.20: UNDERSTANDING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY GENDER BY COUNTRY (% VERY/ SOMEWHAT EASY)
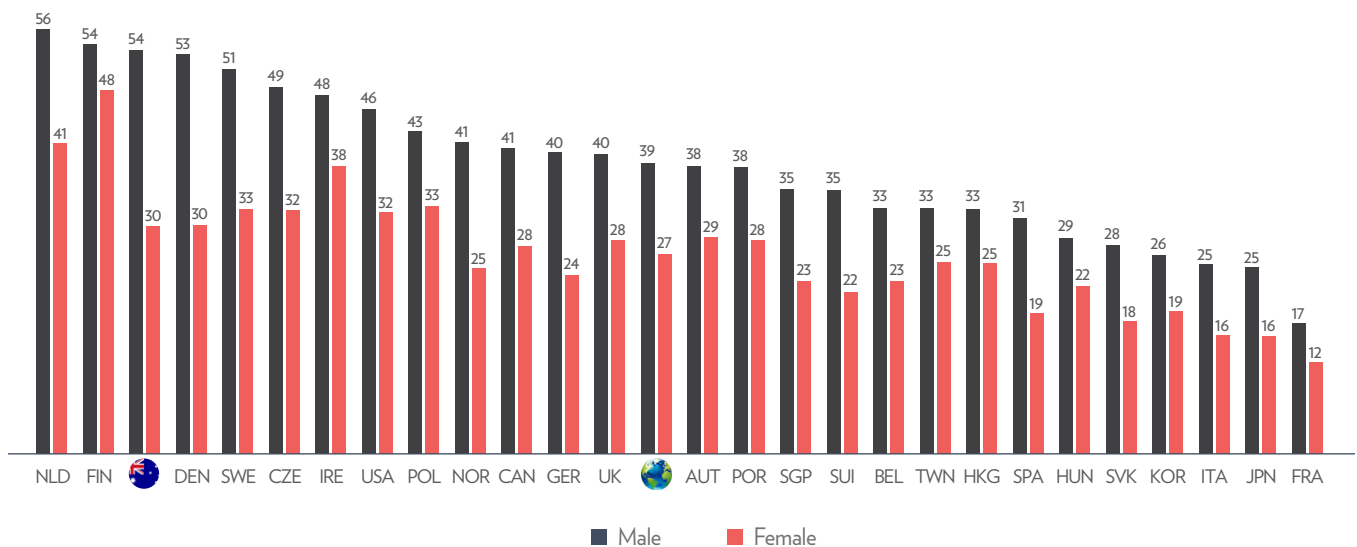
Globally, those with high education are consistently more likely to say they find it somewhat or very easy to apply news about finance and the economy to their life. Globally

35% of those with high education say they can apply finance news to their daily life but only 20% of those with low education say they can (see **figure 9.21**).

FIGURE 9.21: APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY EDUCATION BY COUNTRY (% VERY/ SOMEWHAT EASY)
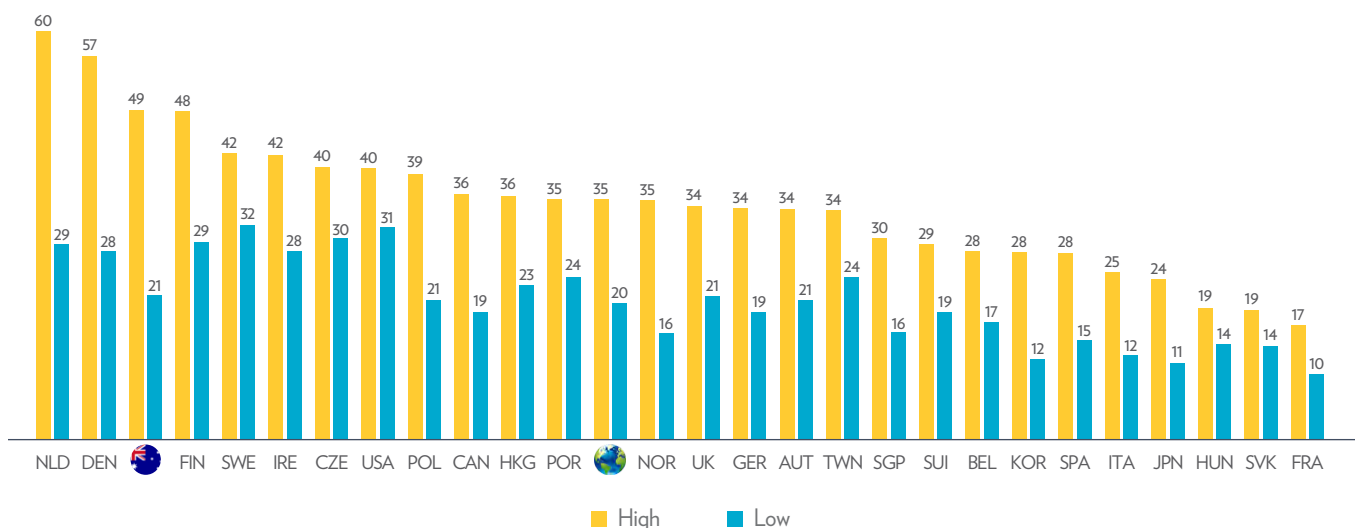
Heavy news users (51%), people with high interest in news (55%) and politics (64%) are much more likely to say they find it very or somewhat easy to understand finance and economics news. Interest in politics seems to have a stronger relationship with people's understanding of finance news than general interest in news (see **figure 9.22**).

Similarly, heavy news users (43%), those highly interested in news (47%), and highly interested in politics (55%) are more likely to say it is somewhat or very easy to apply finance and economics news in their daily life (see **figure 9.23**).

FIGURE 9.22: UNDERSTANDING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY NEWS ACCESS, INTEREST IN NEWS AND INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)
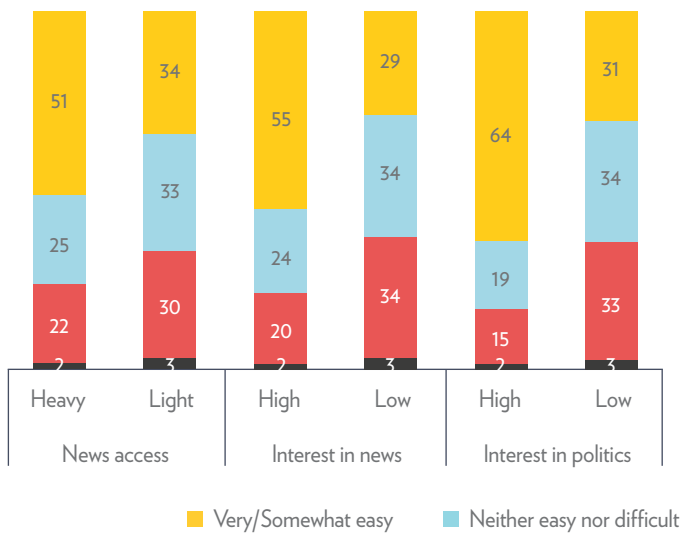
FIGURE 9.23: APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY BY NEWS ACCESS, INTERST IN NEWS AND INTEREST IN POLITICS (%)
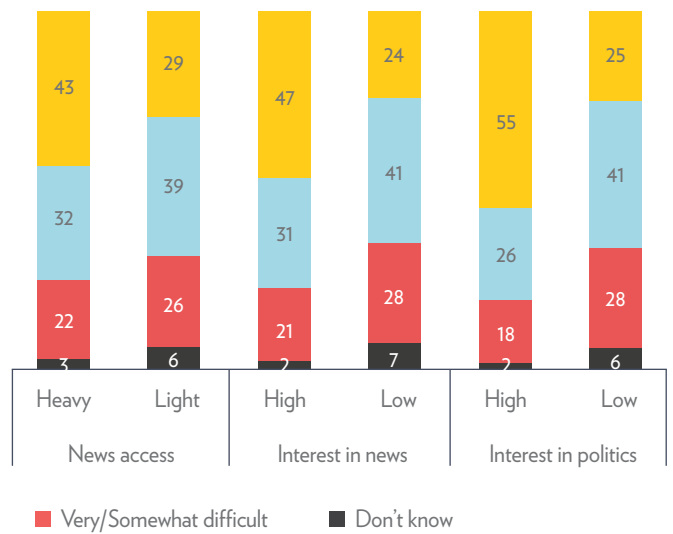
Respondents who find it easier to understand and apply news about finance and the economy are more likely to say public service media (PSM) are important to them personally and to society. Around two-thirds (64%) of those who say it is very or somewhat easy to understand news

about finance and the economy say PSM are important to them personally, compared to only 44% of those who say it is very or somewhat difficult for them to understand (see **figure 9.24**).
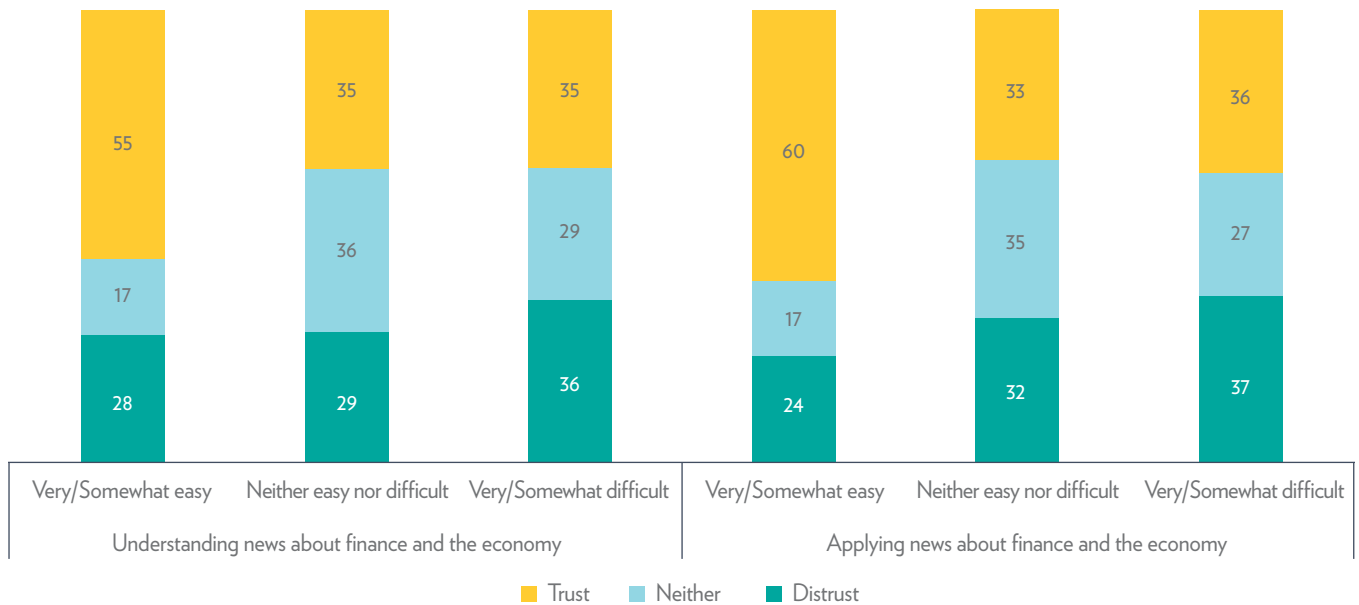
FIGURE 9.24: IMPORTANCE OF PSM BY UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY (% VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)
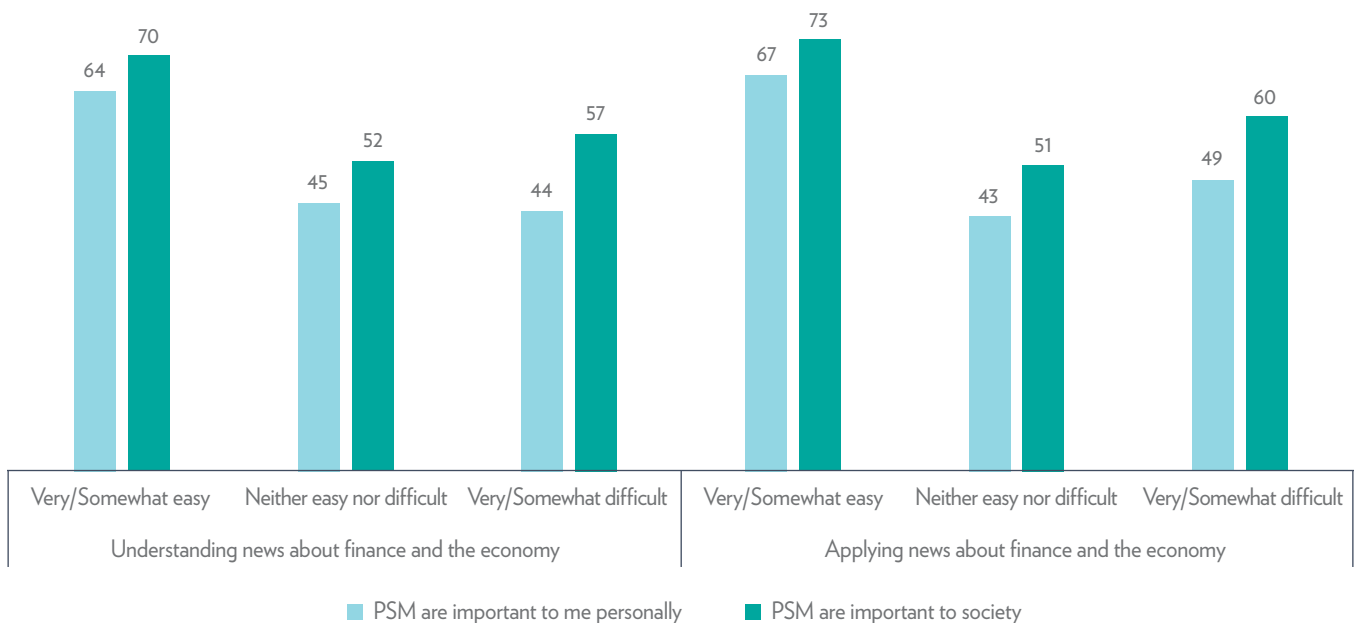
Those who find it easy to understand and apply news about finance and the economy are much more likely to trust news. Among those who find it very or somewhat easy to understand news about finance and the economy 55% say they trust news, compared to 35% who find it neither easy nor difficult, or very or somewhat difficult. The link is slightly stronger for applying news compared with understanding (see **figure 9.25**).

FIGURE 9.25: TRUST IN NEWS BY UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY (%)


PEOPLE WHO SAY THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND FINANCE NEWS ARE MORE LIKELY TO AVOID NEWS

Those who find it more difficult to understand and apply news about finance and the economy are more likely to say they avoid news (see **figure 9.26**). Over three-quarters of those who find finance or economic news very or somewhat difficult to understand (78%) and apply (79%) say they avoid news in general.

FIGURE 9.26: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY (%)
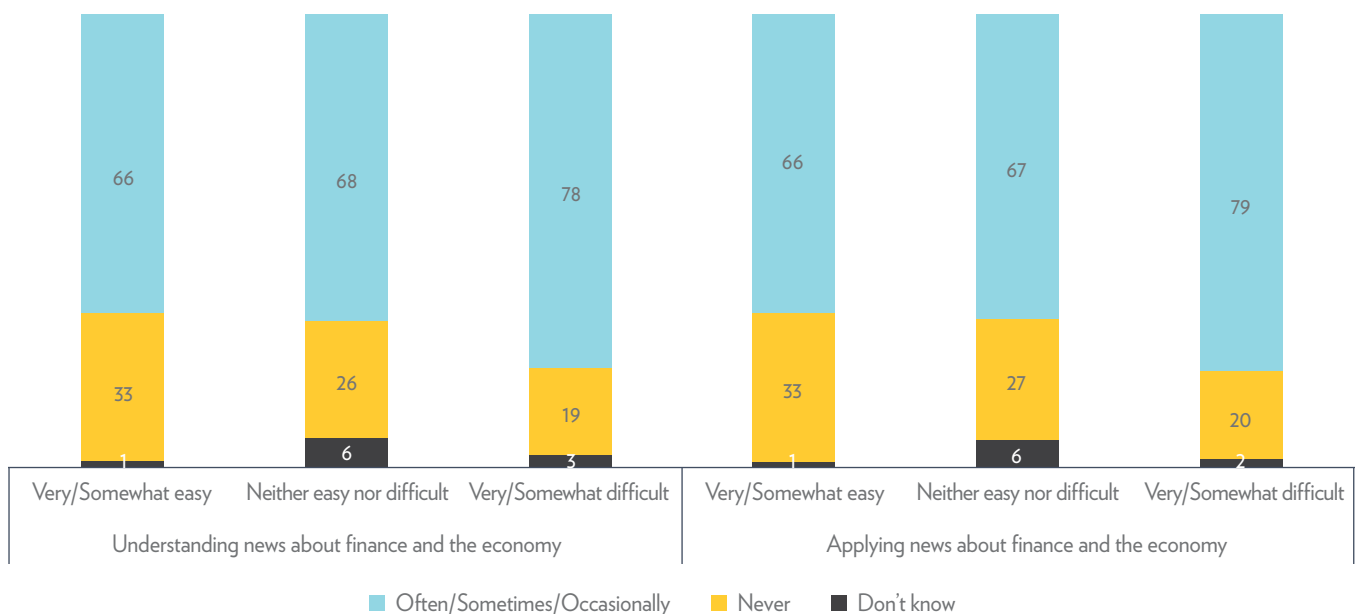
SUMMARY

The data suggest that changes in cost-of-living are being unevenly felt both in Australia and abroad. While most Australians say they have been affected somewhat or a great deal, women, people with lower incomes and middle generations are more likely to say they have been greatly affected.

Those who say they are feeling the cost-of-living crisis more acutely approach news differently. They are more likely to cancel a news subscription. They are also more likely to avoid news, which is a global trend. At the same time, they are still more interested in news than those who say they are less affected.

This suggests a complex relationship between news consumption and global economic circumstances. Changes to cost-of-living could be prompting those most affected to become more interested in news. However, it is also possible that those who are already highly interested are consuming more news, thereby making them more conscious of or concerned about the global cost-of-living crisis.

Mainstream news appears to be the most popular source of news and information about finance and the economy, followed by family, friends and colleagues in Australia and globally.

Where people get news about finance differs considerably by generation. Younger generations rely on family, friend and colleagues as well as social media celebrities. Older generations predominantly rely on mainstream news.

When asked whether they find finance and economics news easy to understand and apply, Australians are split. Women, Gen Z, those 77 and older, and people with low education and low income, are much more likely to say they find it difficult to understand news about the economy and apply it in their daily lives. Globally, Australia has the largest gap between men and women when it comes to understanding and applying financial news. Globally there is also a sizeable education gap in people saying they can understand and apply finance and economics news.

It's possible that this reflects the traditional audience for finance and economics news; middle-aged men with higher incomes. Whether the topic itself is unappealing, or there is something about the way it is presented, those who are most vulnerable to the winds of economic change seem the least connected to the news media's reporting of financial issues.

This has consequences for how different groups engage with information about the economy. News organisations may need to change their approach if they want to appeal to these missing segments of the audience.