DIGITAL NEWS REPORT IRELAND 2022

Institiúid DCU um Meáin Todhchaí, Daonlathas agus Sochaí
DCU Institute of Future Media, Democracy and Society

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
University of Oxford

Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann
Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

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Colleen Murrell, Kirsty Park,
David Robbins, Dawn Wheatley

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BAI FOREWORD

This year's Digital News (Ireland) Report is being published at what could be considered the beginning of a post-Covid world. While the threat of the virus has receded, and societies across the globe exit lockdowns and resume some of their pre-Covid lives, it isn't surprising to see news consumption in Ireland and in many other countries drop and return to pre-Covid levels.

Worryingly, the 2022 Report highlights that the number of people avoiding the news is increasing, perhaps due to the perception that there is too much news coverage of the pandemic and politics, or a feeling that news consumption is having a negative effect on people's moods. However, the research shows that there are some positives for news broadcasters and producers in Ireland. Trust in news in Ireland is considerably higher than other markets, with over half of those surveyed agreeing or strongly agreeing that they can trust news most of the time. In addition, while the smartphone is the principal means by which Irish people access news in the morning, Irish audiences still have a grá for radio and, globally, Ireland has the greatest number of people tuning into radio for news first thing in the morning.

Plurality in news and current affairs provision for Irish audiences is a central theme of the BAI's Statement of Strategy 2021-2023, and the Digital News (Ireland) Report continues to be an important reference point for the BAI in tracking media plurality in Ireland. The report provides insights that shape a range of BAI activities including a number of core functions such as licensing and compliance.

Additionally, the BAI has begun using the data in support of other key areas of its work such as Diversity, and, in early 2022, the Authority published a supplemental report drawing on this data which examined the impact of gender and diversity on media consumption in Ireland. This report 'Gender and Diversity in Ireland 2016 – 2021 & Internationally 2021' provided insights on how gender impacts engagement with news and news systems in Ireland. Building on the success of this initiative, the BAI and FuJo are planning a second such report later this year, which will examine how non-Irish communities in Ireland consume news.

Plans for a news consumption project in collaboration with our European colleagues at the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) are also in train. Given the prevalence of misinformation and disinformation across Europe (most recently in relation to the war in Ukraine), understanding trends in news and media plurality continues to be of critical importance and the Reuters Digital News project makes a valuable contribution to this complex and challenging conversation in Ireland and internationally. Furthermore, the continuing expansion of the number of countries examined adds to the richness of the dataset each year.

The Digital News Report Ireland continues to be funded by the BAI and is undertaken by our partners at FuJo in Dublin City University. The BAI wishes to thank the researchers Professor Colleen Murrell, Dr Kirsty Park and all the team at DCU for their hard work and commitment to the publication of this year's annual report. It is timely to note that FuJo, DCU, was chosen by the European Commission to be part of the first ever network of hubs established by the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) to fight disinformation. Given the presence of major digital platforms in Ireland, and, consequently, Ireland's role in the regulation of the European activities of such platforms, the availability and analysis of Ireland-specific data on digital news provides a valuable contribution to related European developments such as the EU's revised Code of Practice on Disinformation, as well as to European legislative developments in this regard.

Meanwhile, the BAI is facing into its own period of change, with the imminent enactment of the Online Safety and Media Regulation (OSMR) Bill 2022, which will result in the dissolution of the Authority and the establishment of a new media regulator, Coimisiún Na Meán. While the Digital News (Ireland) Report will be published in 2023, it is likely that 2022 will be the last year the Digital News Report is published by the BAI. BAI work at national and European levels, in contributing to the establishment of the new regulator and to the development of the expanding body of media legislation, is ongoing. In supporting projects such as the Digital News (Ireland) Report, the BAI continues to pursue its objective of being an informed regulator, ready to anticipate and respond to change, as well as being ready to adapt to the regulatory challenges ahead.

Celene Craig
Chief Executive Officer
June 2022

DCU FUJO FOREWORD

Welcome to the eighth Digital News Report Ireland 2022, which gathers together the latest information and analysis regarding the nation's evolving media landscape. This is part of the global Reuters Digital News Report which is in its eleventh year and is the largest ongoing comparative study of digital news consumption, taking in 46 markets.

Looking back, the 2021 report showed a surge of interest in news media as locked-down consumers watched ongoing breaking news reports and entire press conferences on television, on their radio or via online platforms. Politicians, public servants and health professionals spoke directly to the audience via these live feeds, with journalists sometimes critiqued for their style of questioning. COVID-19 news was local, national and international; holding us all hostage to the crisis unfolding.

However, 2022 finds a world exhausted after two years of the pandemic and its dominance of the news agenda. Interest in news generally is down on last year as is trust in media, but both are still relatively high in Ireland. The country's news consumers demonstrate important differences from other comparable markets: for example in terms of trust in the media, an adherence to listening to the radio in the morning and in having a lower level of political and media polarisation.

In this report we cover the same areas that we always covered – related to people's media habits, the devices they use to access news and whether or not they subscribe, or intend to subscribe to different types of media and platforms. This year we have put in a separate section on one of the media's greatest challenges and opportunities, that of climate change reporting. We have also added a section on Ukraine from the Reuters global report. As the main data collection was done prior to Russia's invasion, the Reuters Institute decided to do further sampling in five countries to see if the war had resulted in more interest in news.

This report also incorporates six essays on issues relevant to Ireland and connected to the report from DCU media researchers. The topics cover the implications of forthcoming EU media legislation, media polarisation, radio and podcast listening, climate change reporting, Generation Z's media habits and Ukraine reporting. We hope that alongside the global Digital News Report, this focused research report on Irish consumers will be helpful to media owners, journalists, academics, teachers and those who focus on media policy.

We would like to thank our sponsors at the Broadcast Authority of Ireland (BAI), in particular Ciarán Kissane and Deborah Molloy, both of whom have taken an active interest in the report during the course of the year. We would also like to thank our academic colleagues at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism including Nic Newman, Rasmus Kleis, Richard Fletcher, Kirsten Eddy and Craig Robertson. And finally we would like to thank the printers, Neogen, and YouGov for conducting the survey.

Colleen Murrell
Full Professor of Journalism at DCU
and member of the Institute of Future Media, Democracy and Society (FuJo)
June 2022

METHODOLOGY

This global study has been commissioned to understand how news is currently being read, viewed, or listened to, with a particular focus on digital news consumption and devices used to access the news. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University has run this comparative study for eleven years and in 2022, 46 countries took part. A comprehensive online questionnaire was designed - with input from global stakeholders - to capture all aspects of online news consumption. Samples were assembled using nationally representative quotas for age, gender, region and education. The data in all markets were also weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data.

This project is made possible with the support and work of the following organisations: the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), the Google News Initiative, BBC News, Ofcom, the Dutch Media Authority, the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, The Korea Press Foundation, Edelman UK, the Hans Bredow Institute, University of Navarra, Roskilde University, University of Canberra, the Centre d'études sur les médias, Roskilde University, the Open Society Foundations, Fundación Gabo, NHK and the Reuters News Agency.

The research in Ireland is designed to understand Irish news consumers' use and interest in different forms of media and media content. Results here are reflective of broad consumption trends in Ireland and are not equated to the data collected by news organisations regarding their individual digital readerships.

- Research was conducted via YouGov using an online questionnaire between 25/01/2022 and 10/02/2022. Overall, 2,016 people were sampled in Ireland. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Irish adults aged 18+.

- It is important to remember that online samples tend to under-represent the news consumption habits of people who are older and less affluent, meaning online use is typically over-represented and traditional offline use under-represented. In this sense, it is better to think of results as representative of the online population. In Ireland, internet penetration represents 92 per cent of the population.

- One should also note that online surveys rely on recall, which is often imperfect or subject to biases. We have tried to mitigate these risks through careful questionnaire design and testing. Despite other limitations, surveys are able to capture media consumption across platforms, including social media, messaging apps, and websites. They are also a good way of tracking activities and changes over time – in a consistent way.

- Please bear in mind that some of our survey-based results will not match industry data, which are often based on different methodologies, such as web-tracking. The accuracy of these approaches can be high, but they are also subject to limitations.

- A fuller description of the methodology, panel partners, and a discussion of non-probability sampling techniques can be found on the Reuters Institute website along with the full questionnaire (https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022).

AUTHORSHIP AND RESEARCH ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prof Colleen Murrell is a full professor of journalism at DCU's School of Communications. She teaches broadcasting and researches international newsgathering, transnational broadcasting, and digital and social media news. She was an academic at several Australian universities before taking up her job at DCU. She is a former news editor for a number of international news organisations including the BBC, ITN, AP, TF1, ABC and SBS.

Dr Kirsty Park is a post-doctoral researcher at DCU's Institute for Future Media, Democracy and Society (FuJo) and the Disinformation Lead at the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) Ireland Hub. Her research focuses on political communication, disinformation trends and platform regulation.

Dr Dave Robbins is an assistant professor of journalism in DCU's School of Communications. He worked for 25 years at senior level in national print and broadcast media. He also worked as a ministerial advisor and in local politics. Dave is the director of DCU's Centre for Climate and Society. His research focuses on media representations of climate change and on environmental communication.

Dr Dawn Wheatley is an assistant professor in the School of Communications in DCU, focusing on journalism, social media, and political communication. She worked as a production journalist in national newspapers before turning to academic research and teaching. Dawn is particularly interested in sources and diversity of voices in the news, journalistic reporting practices, and audience customisation habits on social and mobile media.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

By Colleen Murrell, Kirsty Park, David Robbins, and Dawn Wheatley

The publication of this year's Reuters Digital News Report Ireland 2022 finds us all very much hoping that the COVID-19 pandemic is losing its strength and that peace will return to Ukraine. The data in this report reflect news consumers who feel battered and bruised by the events of the last two years. It's as if there has been a collective turning away from this one overwhelming news story which has kept us transfixed until now.

YouGov gathered the data for this year's Digital News Report between the last week of January and the first week of February 2022. In Ireland, this period followed on shortly from 21st January, the date that Taoiseach Micheál Martin announced, "the lifting of almost all COVID-19 restrictions" following "an unprecedented health emergency".

Two days earlier, on January 19th, 12,138 new daily cases had been announced and 52 people had died in the previous week, bringing the overall total of those killed by the virus in Ireland to 6,087. Ireland's population was hoping the worst of Omicron was over, but the horror and exhaustion of the previous two years had not yet subsided.

The 2021 Reuters Digital News Report (Ireland) had some good news for the media, which saw audiences and readers return in higher numbers as they followed press conference updates on television, radio and online. The audience had also reported more trust in mainstream media brands and some distancing from social media in terms of pandemic news.

The 2022 Reuters Digital News Report (Ireland) is perhaps not such a happy read for media companies, with the data showing that interest in news is down, and consumers are demonstrating tactical news avoidance on issues – such as the pandemic – which they see as depressing or liable to lower their mood. Nonetheless, Irish consumers still have a considerable interest in news.

At the back of this report you will find six essays by Dublin City University media researchers. Eileen Culloty examines new EU legislation heading our way and David Robbins asks if reporters in Ireland are doing a good job at reporting on climate change. Tetanya Lokot, a DCU academic from Ukraine, explores how the Russian invasion is being covered by local and international journalists. Colleen Murrell finds that radio listening is still important for Irish audiences and that podcasting is changing how some audio stories are heard. Dawn Wheatley warns against incorporating the kind of polarising content that is prevalent in some countries. And Kirsty Park finds that Generation Z is the cohort with the least interest in news, the least engagement with news brands and the most likely to avoid news.

Here are some of our report's main findings:

- In comparison to last year, there is a distinct fall in the number of Irish consumers who are 'extremely interested' in news (down 6 percentage points) and those who are 'very interested' in news (-7pp). Nonetheless, the overall interest in news for Ireland across these two categories is 57%. We therefore compare favourably to markets such as North America (47%), the UK (43%) and Europe (49%).

- Irish consumers named local news – regional, city or town – as the area of news in which they are most interested. 67% declared an interest in local news. Coming in second was international news (63%) and third, news about COVID-19 (50%).

- 83% of Irish consumers access news at least once a day via any platform.

- Although Irish consumers remain very engaged with news, 41% of people say they select to 'often or sometimes' avoid the news. This number is up 9pp from 2019. The most common reason cited was 'too much coverage of subjects like politics/coronavirus' (43%) followed by the news having 'a negative effect on my mood' (41%).

- 18-24 year-olds are the age cohort most disinterested in news and least engaged with news brands. In the 2016 Digital News Report, 53% of this group reported being extremely or very interested in news, but that figure has declined to 25% in this year's report.

- In 2021 we reported that 41% of consumers cited television as their MAIN source of news, which was up 8pp from 2020. As we predicted then, this did turn out to be a blip related to COVID-19 lockdowns, and in 2022 that number has dropped back to 35%.

- For the first time in Ireland, the smartphone has taken prime position as the FIRST DEVICE that most consumers reach for to access news in the morning (35%). There are significant differences in age groups, with 46% of the 18-24 cohort turning first to the smartphone versus only 19% of those aged 65+. For the latter cohort, 46% still turn on the radio first thing in the morning.

- More than half of respondents say they 'tend to agree' (46%) or 'strongly agree' (6%) with the statement about trusting 'most news most of the time'. A further one in four respondents (25%) are neutral on the question of trust.

- When you combine the figures for people who 'tend to agree' and 'strongly agree' that most news is trustworthy most of the time, the figures for Ireland (52%) are considerably higher than those in other markets, such as the UK (34%), North America (34%), and EU countries (42%).

- RTÉ News remains the most trusted news brand in Ireland at 74%. The Irish Times is the second most trusted brand at 71% with local or regional radio coming third at 70%. Local or regional newspapers tied fourth on the list, with a 69% trust score.

- For the first time, the Digital News Report asked this year's respondents how politically divided they perceived the news organisations in their country to be. Most respondents in Ireland believe the main news outlets to be close together (62%), which is higher than the EU average (51%), North America (42%), and the UK (35%).

- There is still concern about fake news and misinformation. 58% of Irish consumers are concerned, compared to EU respondents at 48%. In the UK and North America the numbers of people concerned are higher (61% and 60% respectively).

- For Irish consumers COVID-19 is the topic associated with the most false or misleading information, with 42% saying they had seen something related to the pandemic, although this is down from 49% in 2021.

- Subscription payments have remained steady in Ireland this year, with 16% of respondents having paid for online news content. It is younger audiences who are more likely to make payments, with almost one in four of the under 35s paying for news in the previous year (24% of 18-24s, and 23% of 25-34s).

- 34% of respondents in Ireland said they had registered with a news outlet over the previous year, such as by providing an email address or setting up an account to expand access to content.

- Irish consumers were asked this year how they thought different online companies used their personal data. They believe online retailers to be the most trustworthy, with 39% of respondents agreeing that they trusted these companies to use their data responsibly, compared with 35% for news organisations and 26% for social media sites.

- The top five most frequently used traditional news brands are: RTÉ TV News, RTÉ Radio News, Sky News, BBC News and Virgin Media TV News. The top five most frequently used digital brands are: RTÉ News Online, The Journal.ie, Independent.ie, Irishtimes.com, and BreakingNews.ie.

- WhatsApp continues to be the most used social media application for any reason, with 70% of respondents using it.

- Academics, scientists and other experts are by far the most trusted sources on news about the environment, and they feature in news coverage of climate change across all the markets compared in our survey. Trust in these sources is relatively high in Ireland (49%), but in the UK the authority of scientists and academics is even more widely accepted (57%).

- Nine out of ten people are paying attention to climate change coverage in the media. 44% of respondents believe that the news media should focus on governments and large corporations, while 21% believe the focus should be on what ordinary citizens can do.

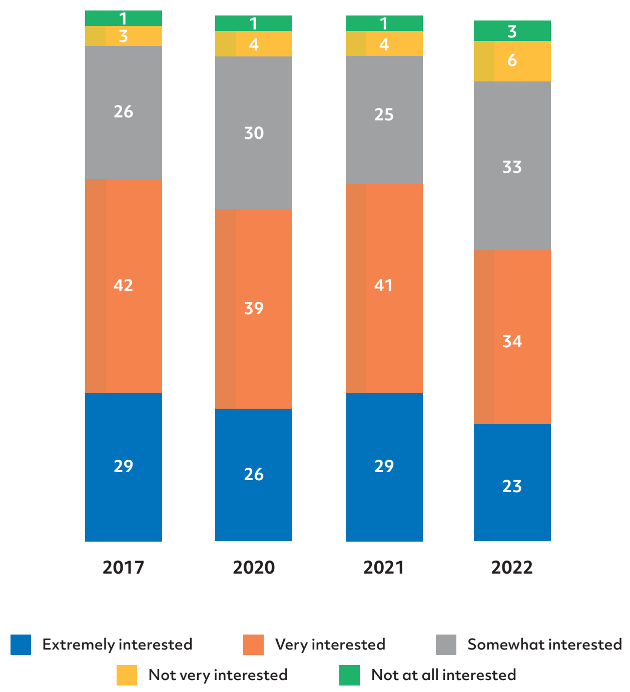
SECTION ONE

IRISH NEWS CONSUMERS

This section profiles Irish news consumers. News consumers are categorised according to their interest and engagement with news and technology.

This section documents the kinds of devices used to access news, the frequency of access, and the reasons some consumers choose to avoid the news.

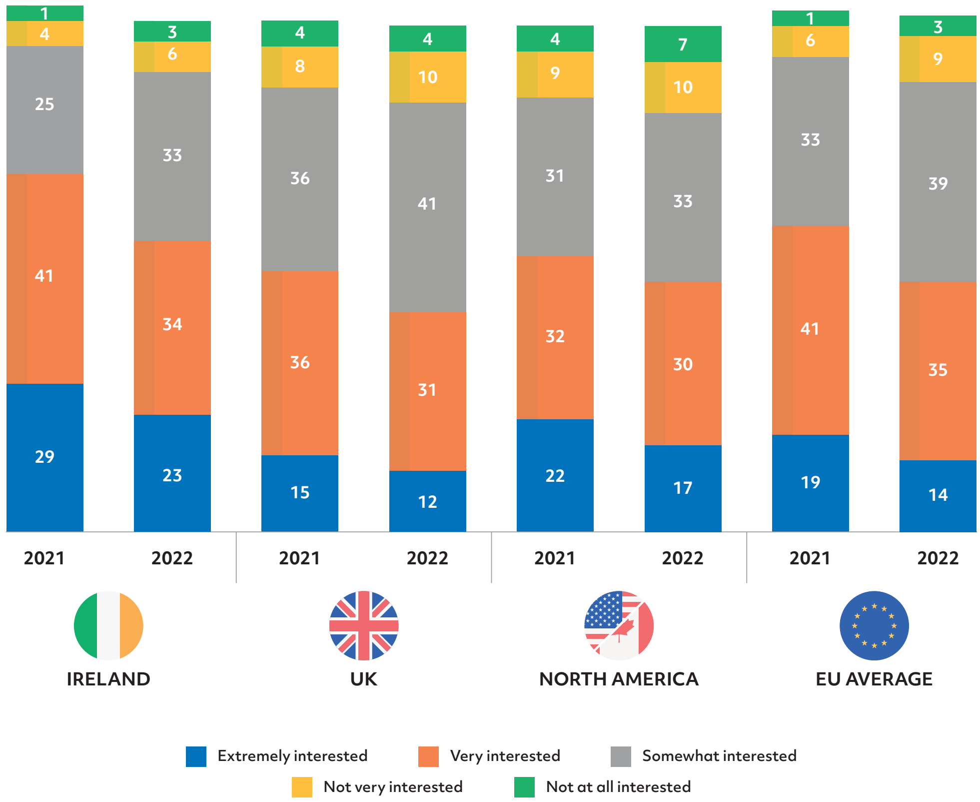
FIG 1: INTEREST IN NEWS



Q. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?

From 2017 to 2021, Irish consumers' interest in news remained generally high. It is worth noting that the timing of the surveys (carried out in the first two months of each year) can have an effect on results. For example, in 2020 the survey data was carried out *before* the effects of COVID-19 had been felt in the community. In 2021 the number of people who were extremely interested or very interested in news grew - no doubt, in response to the third lockdown and the need to keep abreast of the latest information relating to health updates and vaccines. In early 2022 when this survey was in the field, the number of people extremely interested or very interested in news fell back quite considerably. This could be related to news exhaustion (see later data on news avoidance) following two years of intensive and worrying global and local news, related to the pandemic. This year's survey was carried out *before* the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and it is possible that interest in news might have been higher if the survey had been carried out in March. Nonetheless, there is a distinct fall this year in the 'extremely interested in news' cohort down 6 percentage points (-6pp) ,and the 'very interested in news' cohort (-7pp).

FIG 2: INTEREST IN NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?

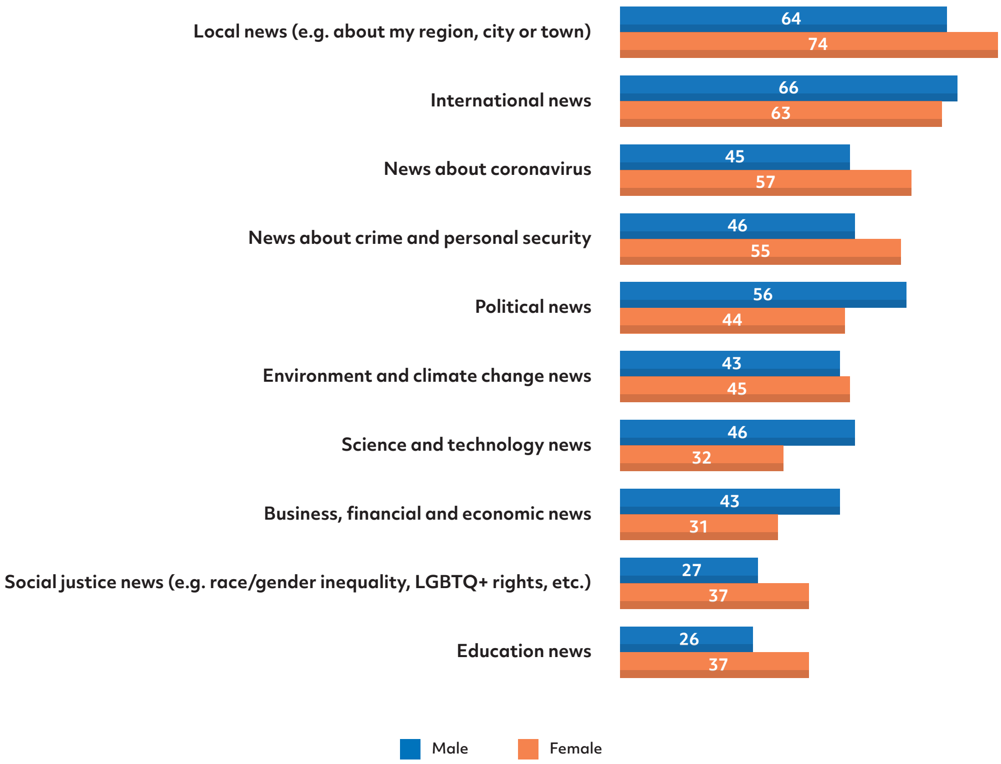
In analysing our survey results, we often compare the Irish findings to results from the UK, North America and other EU countries as a whole. Interest in news across all of these regions has slipped over the past year. Ireland's results are the most stark, revealing a 13 percentage point drop between 2021 and 2022 in the combined 'extremely interested' and 'very interested' in news groups. Nonetheless, compared to the other regions, Ireland still shows a higher number of 'extremely interested' or 'very interested' in news consumers in 2022 (57%). The trends are the same across all markets, but Ireland, which had the highest number in 2021, has fallen the most. In these combined categories the other markets register: UK (43%); North America (47%) and Europe (49%).

FIG 3: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS

Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

The great interest shown in local news (67%) should be a happy announcement for local media, whether online, in print, on radio or television. Irish consumers have strong connections with their locale and take an interest in their surroundings and neighbours. But consumers are not just interested in Irish news as they also demonstrate a strong interest in international news (63%). News about COVID-19 is high up the agenda (50%). The widespread lockdowns related to COVID-19 were sometimes set at a national level and at other times at a county-level in Ireland and it has been important to stay across news updates. The other categories reflect that consumers are interested in crime and personal security (49%), political news (49%) and climate change and the environment (43%).

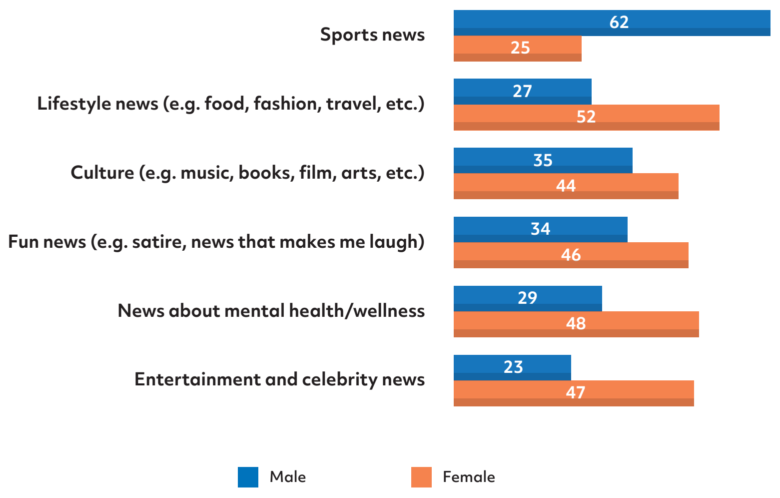
FIG 4: INTEREST IN HARD NEWS BY GENDER



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

The first of our subset charts looks at 'hard news'. The data show that women are more interested than men in the categories of local news (+10 percentage points); news about COVID-19 (+12pp); crime and personal security (+9pp); climate change (+2pp); social justice and education (+10pp). Women are less interested than men in international news (-3pp); political news (-8pp); science and technology news (-12pp); and business, financial and economic news (-12pp). There have been a number of high-profile, violent crimes against women and the high interest women are showing in the category of crime and personal security could be affected by the related media coverage.

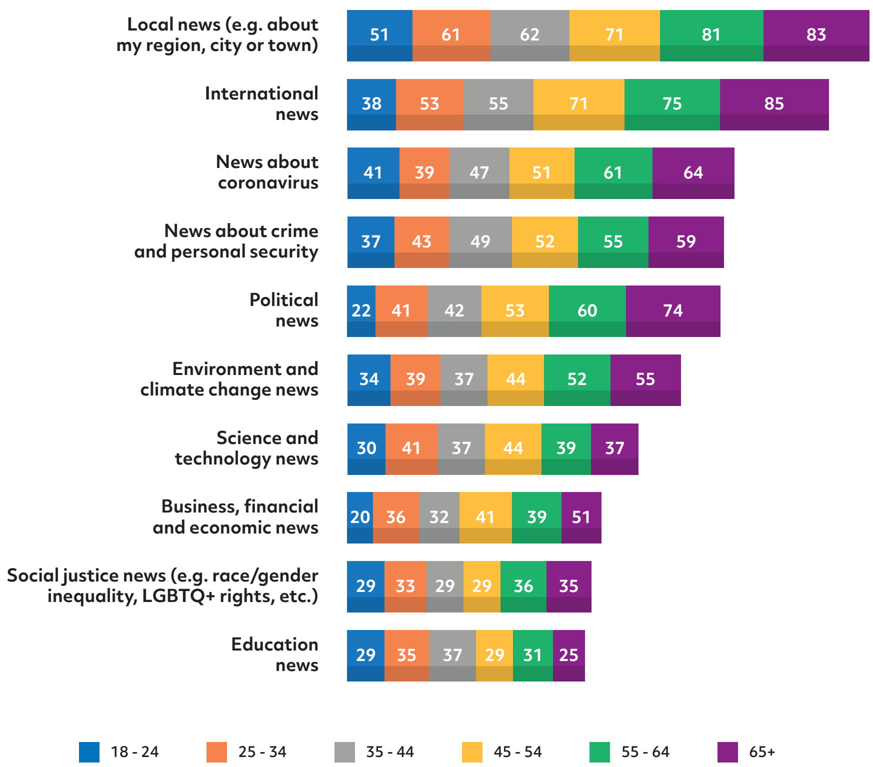
FIG 5: INTEREST IN SOFT NEWS BY GENDER



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

In our subset chart relating to 'soft news', women are more interested than men in most of the categories: lifestyle news (+25pp), culture (+9pp); fun news (+12pp); news about mental health and wellness (+19pp) and entertainment and celebrity news (+24pp). The only soft news category in which men lead the charge is sports news (+37pp). It is possible that women might become more interested in sports news over time due to the growing media broadcasting and reporting of women's sports.

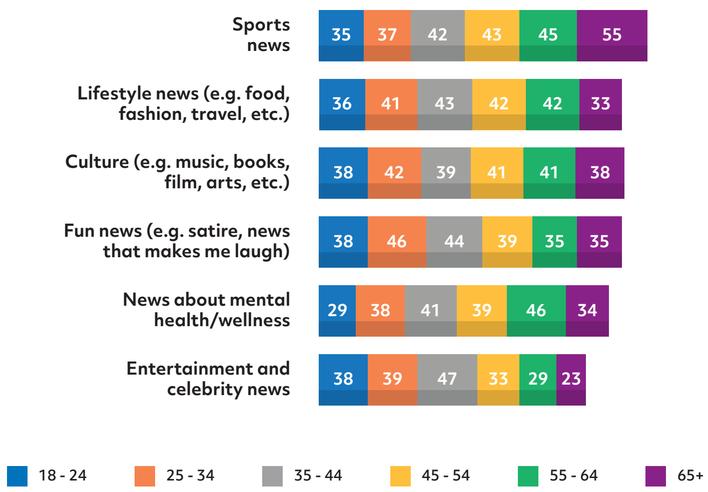
FIG 6: INTEREST IN HARD NEWS BY AGE



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

In this subset chart, we have broken down the interest in 'hard news' by age. All age cohorts have a strong interest in local news, with this topic leading in each age group. Older consumers (45 years and above) have a much higher interest in international news than their younger counterparts. The numbers are closer on the subject of news about COVID-19 and crime and personal safety. There are bigger differences between the ages on the subject of politics with the 65+ age group at 74%, and the youngest group, 18-24 years, at just 22%. Despite a commonly-held belief that it is the young who are principally interested in issues related to the environment and climate change, interestingly the data show that it is older groups who appear to be more interested in this news. Climate change is seen to be of interest by 55% of the 65+ cohort, and 34% of the 18-24 years cohort. Business is of more interest to the older cohorts, but social justice is more evenly spread across the generations.

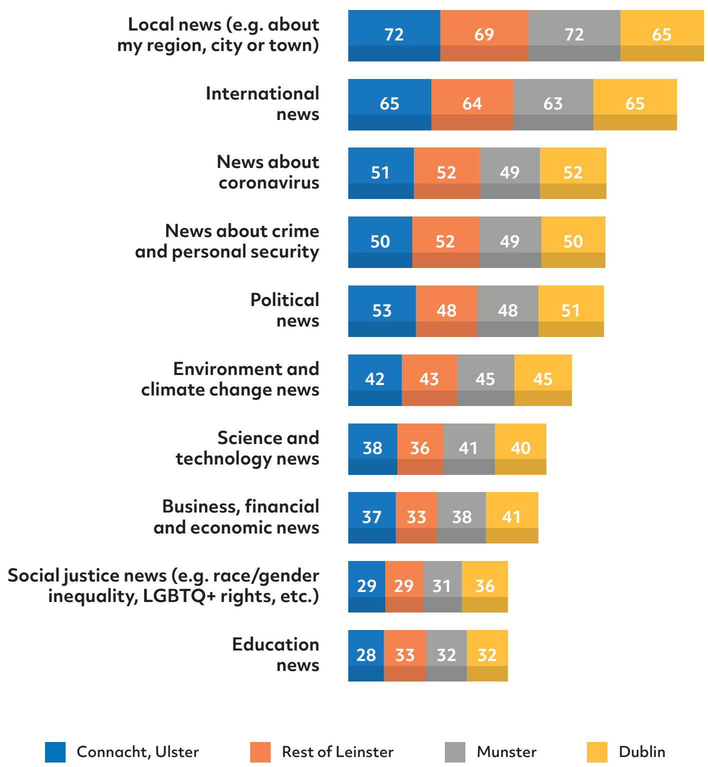
FIG 7: INTEREST IN SOFT NEWS BY AGE



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

In this subset chart, we examine interest in 'soft news' by age group. The younger generation of 18-24 year olds appear to be fairly evenly interested in all the available categories of soft news. There are however some surprising findings, with the 65+ group being the most interested in sports (55%), compared to the youngest group (35%). The two eldest cohorts (55-64 and 65+) are the least interested in entertainment and celebrity news. Given the slanting of this type of news coverage towards young celebrities, this is not so surprising.

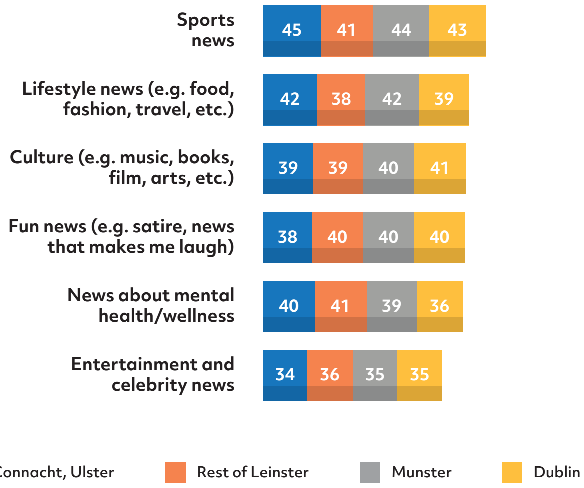
FIG 8: INTEREST IN HARD NEWS BY REGION



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

In this subset chart, we look at the categories of 'hard news' followed by people in different parts of the country. There are only minor differences found across most categories, with a few exceptions. When it comes to local news those in Dublin are the least interested (65%) a gap of 7pp compared to those in Connacht, Ulster and Munster. This may reflect the fact that the capital is more likely to be featured in national news coverage as well as being home to major news brands like RTÉ or the Irish Times. Political news is highest in Connacht and Ulster (polled as one region) while interest in business, financial and economic news was highest in Dublin (41%), reflecting the capital's role in the finance sector, an 8pp difference compared to the rest of Leinster which polled the lowest at 33%. Interest in social justice news is also highest in Dublin (36%), 5pp more than the rest of Leinster and 7pp more than the rest of the country.

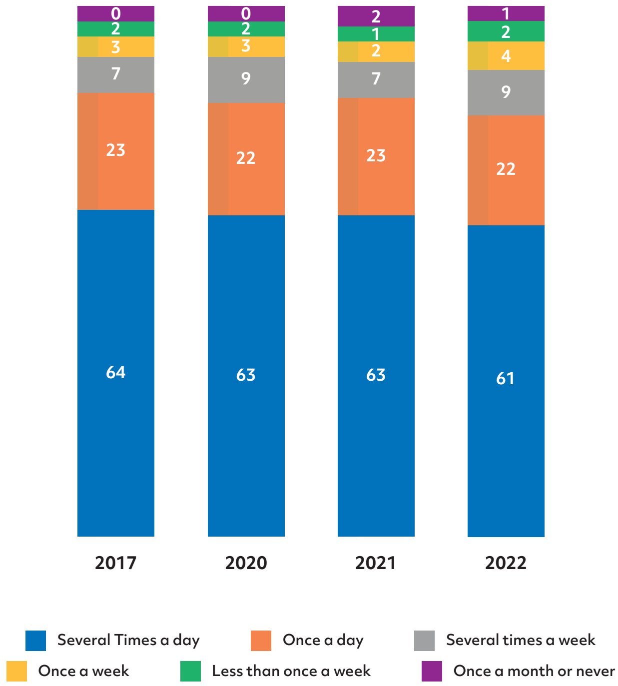
FIG 9: INTEREST IN SOFT NEWS BY REGION



Q. Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply.

In this subset chart, we look at the categories of 'soft news' followed by people in different parts of the country. When it comes to 'soft news' there are no major differences found between different parts of the country. Across all regions, news consumers are most interested in sports news, with Connacht, Ulster and Munster showing slightly higher levels than Dublin and the rest of Leinster, and they are the least interested in entertainment and celebrity news. Interest in news about mental health/wellness show the most variation, with Dublin indicating the lowest interest at 36% compared to 41% for the rest of Leinster.

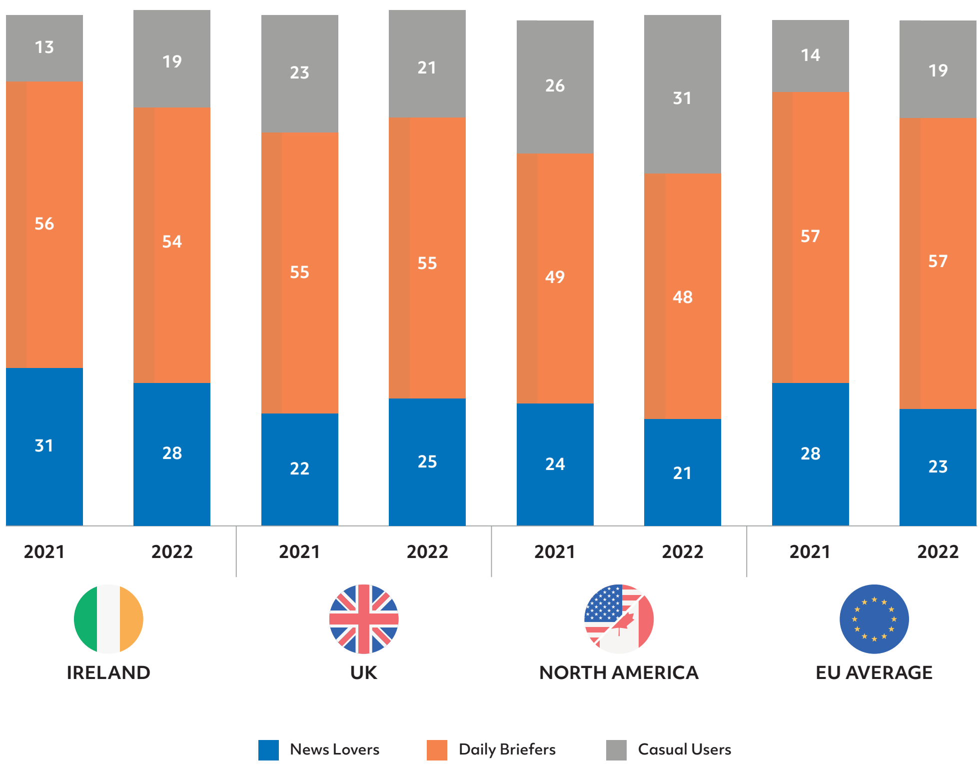
FIG 10: FREQUENCY OF ACCESS NEWS



Q. 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).

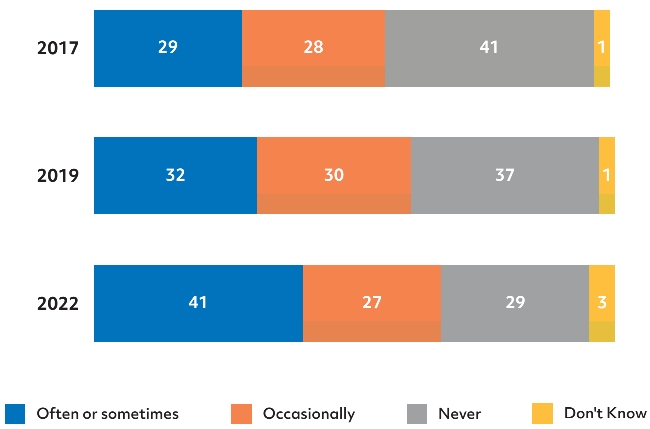
This is a generalised question to find out how often our respondents access news. Since 2017 the percentage of people accessing news 'several times a day' and 'once a day' has stayed remarkably constant. There is a slight drop off this year of two percent in the 'several times a day' category and one percent in the 'once a day' category but overall this is negligible considering the dominating presence of the COVID-19 story over the past two years. 83% of Irish consumers still access news at least once a day. The category of 'once a month or never' was introduced in 2021 and was formerly a 'screen out' question.

FIG 11: CONCEPTUAL GROUPS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



In this subset chart (of those people who are interested in news), we divide news consumers into three conceptual groups based on their interest in and frequency of accessing news. 'News lovers' are those who indicate that they are *extremely interested* in news and access it more than five times per day. 'Daily briefers' access news less than five times a day but are *very or extremely interested* in news content. 'Casual users' access news once a day or less frequently and are somewhat interested in news. This chart shows dips in interest among the news lovers for Ireland (-3pp); North America (-3pp); and Europe (-5pp). However in the UK we see a rise in interest among this group of news lovers (+3pp). Some of this increased news interest among those who are *very or extremely* keen on news in the UK might be down to the availability of a rich news diet of government leadership dramas in 2021-2022 related to ongoing investigations into aspects of the handling of COVID-19.

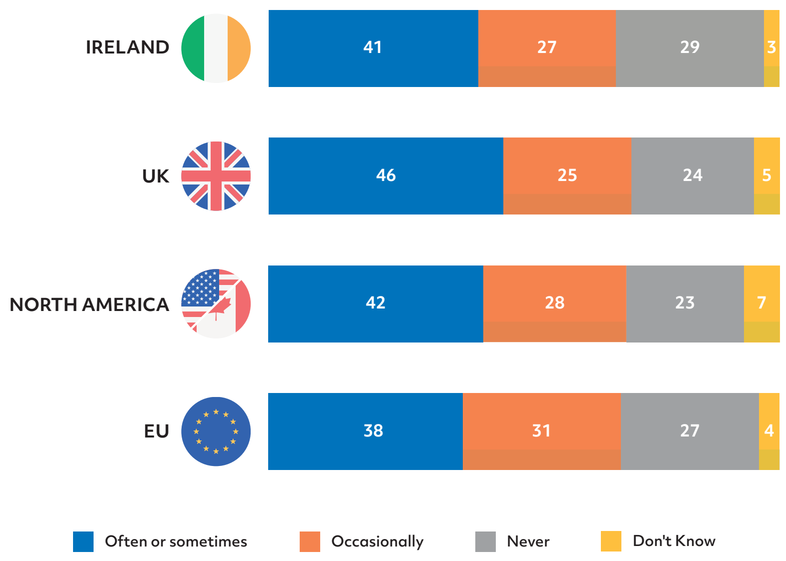
FIG 12: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY YEAR



Q. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days?

Although Irish consumers remain very engaged with news, there is also a considerable rise in the number of people who select to 'often or sometimes' avoid the news, particularly since the arrival of the pandemic in Ireland in early 2020. The percentage of people in this category was 29% in 2017, 32% in 2019 and 41% (+9pp) in 2022. In the category of 'occasional avoiders' there is not much change. In the category of people who 'never' avoid the news, there is also a large drop from 41% in 2017, and 37% in 2019 to 29% in 2022. This means that in 2022, 68% of Irish consumers say that they actively try to avoid news *often, sometimes or occasionally*.

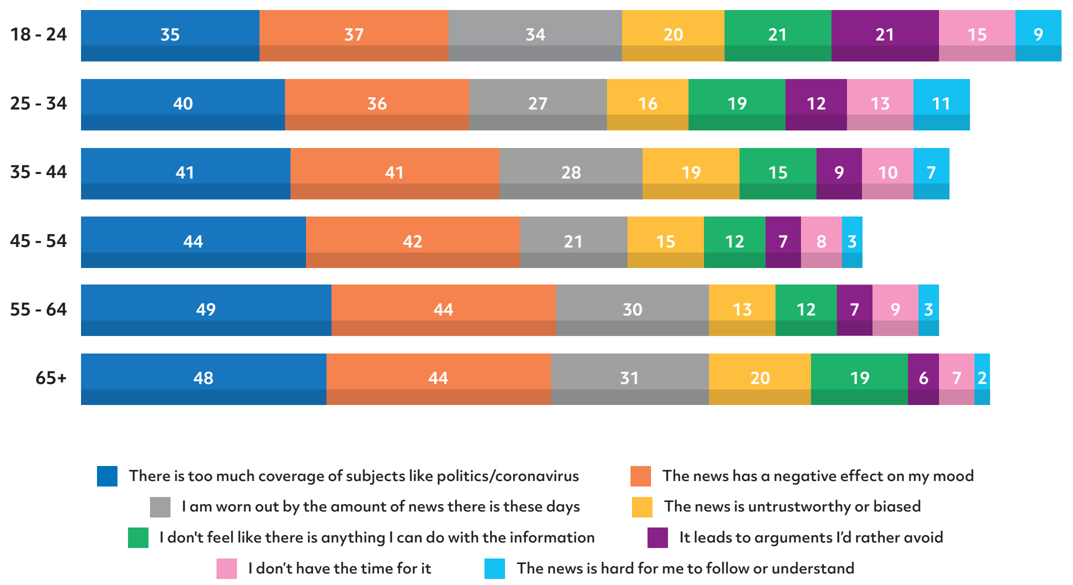
FIG 13: INTERNATIONAL NEWS AVOIDANCE



Q. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days?

In this chart we broaden our examination to compare Ireland's data with that from the UK, North America and Europe. Now we can see that in the category of those who 'often or sometimes' avoid the news, the British lead the field with 46%. The Irish category of people who 'often or sometimes' avoid news (41%) is more in keeping with North America (42%) and Europe (38%).

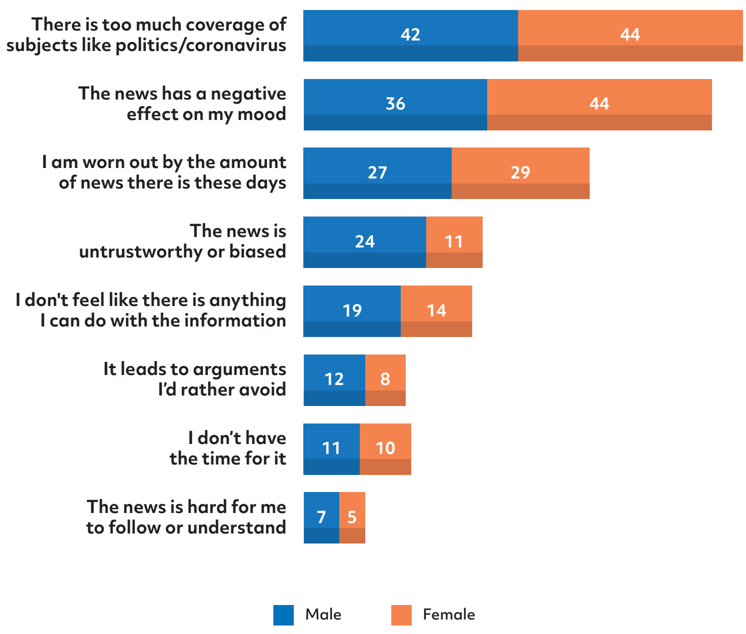
FIG 14: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY AGE



Q. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply.

Now that we know that 41% of Irish consumers 'often or sometimes' avoid the news, and a further 27% of consumers 'occasionally' avoid the news, this question examines the reasons cited by the different age cohorts. In 2022 the perception that there is 'too much coverage of subjects like politics/coronavirus' has attracted the largest numbers in all age categories, except for the 18-24 year old cohort (35%) which selected the 'negative effect on my mood' as the highest, with 37%. The negative effect on mood also had high numbers across all age categories, in particular among the 65+ age group (44%). Obviously these two answers could also be related - the first causing the second. Being 'worn out by the amount of news' affects all age groups to a large extent, including the oldest (31%) and the youngest (34%) cohorts. After those top three answers, the numbers are lower for news being 'untrustworthy or biased', but still that leaves one in five of the oldest and the youngest cohort citing this as a reason for avoiding news. Interestingly, 18-24 year-olds also feel there is nothing that can be done with the information (21%), that news 'leads to arguments' (21%), they don't 'have time for it' (15%) and that news is 'hard to follow or understand' (9%).

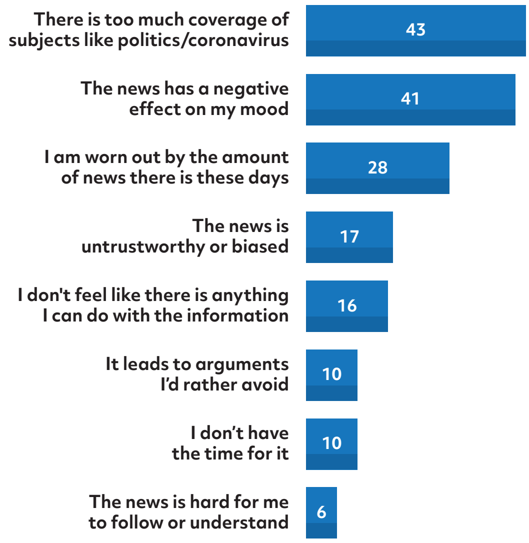
FIG 15: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS BY GENDER



Q. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply.

In this subset of people who say they avoided news, there were almost equal numbers of men (42%) and women (44%) who thought there was too much coverage of subjects like politics/coronavirus. There was a bigger gap in the sexes on the subject of the 'news having a negative effect on my mood' as 44% of women believed this to be the case, compared to 36% of men. The biggest differential between the sexes was in the answer related to trustworthiness and bias, where men (24%) were twice as likely as women (11%) to give this as a reason to avoid news.

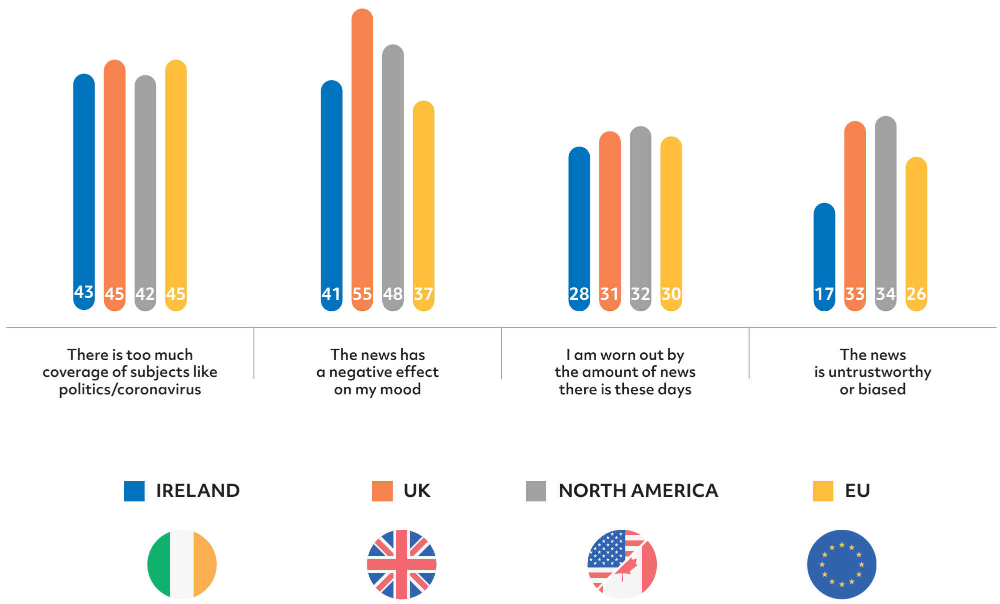
FIG 16: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS



Q. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply.

The reasons most often cited for news avoidance by all Irish consumers were: too much coverage of subjects like politics/coronavirus (43%), news having a 'negative effect on my mood' (41%) and being 'worn out by the amount of news there is these days' (28%). These are all answers that one would expect following two years of a global pandemic and the all-consuming nature of that global news story. Having spent a large amount of time in 2021 in lockdowns, glued to television news updates, it is not surprising that people have had a surfeit of bad news. The notion that there is nothing 'I can do with this information' (16%) betrays a feeling of futility, related to the previous responses. Irish consumers are still also bothered by news being 'untrustworthy or biased'(17%) which makes news engagement problematic.

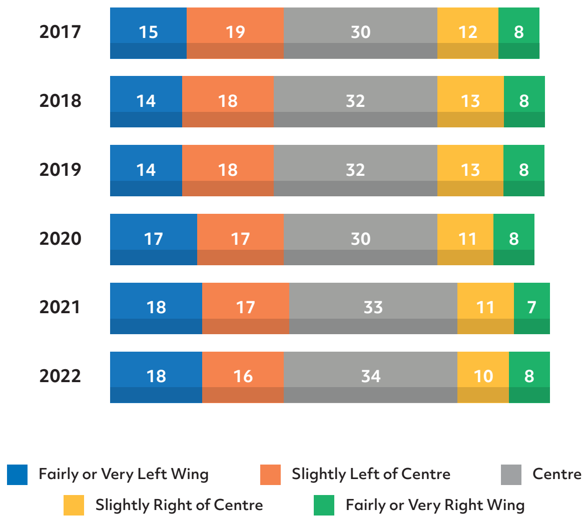
FIG 17: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS INTERNATIONAL



Q. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply.

In this subset of charts on news avoidance, we are looking at the four top answers across our selected markets. These answers relate to politics/coronavirus, the negative effect on mood, being worn out by the amount of news and news being untrustworthy or biased. The numbers are similar across the markets in the first category regarding politics/coronavirus, with a maximum difference of +3pp between regions. In the second category, both the UK (55%) and North America (48%) have significantly higher numbers of people for whom news has a negative impact on their mood. In the third category of being 'worn out' by news, there are only 4 percentage points of difference between all selected markets. In the last category of the news being 'untrustworthy or biased', Ireland is significantly less pessimistic at 17% than the UK (33%), North America (34%) and Europe (26%).

FIG 18: POLITICAL LEANING OF IRISH SURVEY BY YEAR



Q. Some people talk about 'left'; 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. (Generally, socialist parties would be considered 'left wing' whilst conservative parties would be considered 'right wing'). With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale?

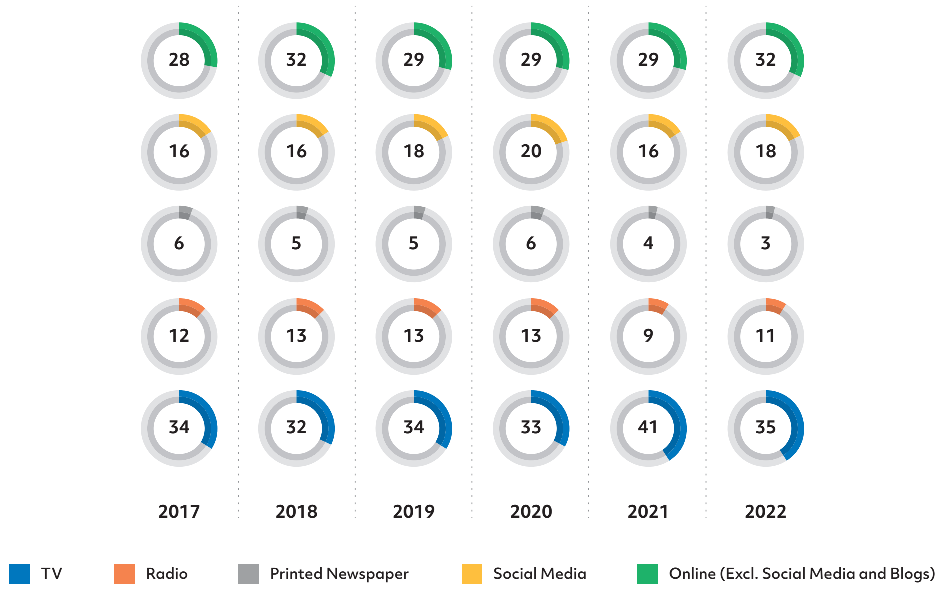
Irish news consumers tend to the centre of politics and are some of the least polarised politically among those surveyed in this report. Looking back over the past few years, the numbers in the different political categories have not changed much. The difference between 2017 and 2022 shows the centre has moved from 30% to 34%. The combined total of the 'slightly right of centre' and 'fairly or very right wing' has fallen by 2 percentage points (18%). Those choosing 'slightly left of centre' and 'fairly or very left wing' has stayed the same (34%). If you were to combine the centre with the 'slightly left of centre' and 'slightly right of centre' then Irish media consumers with centrist views add up to 60% of the population.

SECTION TWO

SOURCES AND DEVICES

This section details the main sources and devices used by Irish news consumers as well as the types of news they prefer.

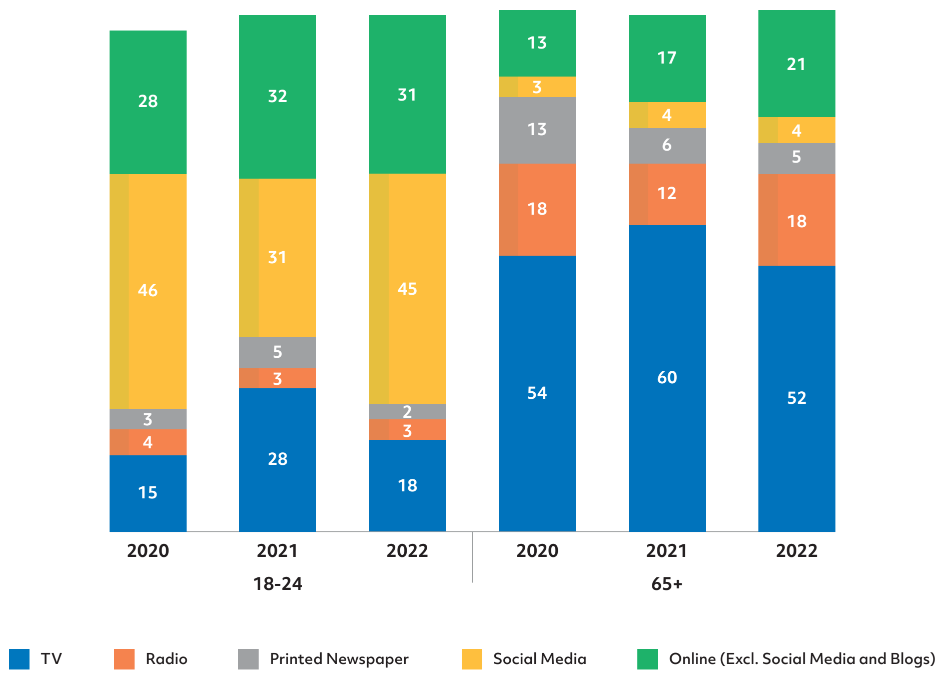
FIG 19: MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS BY YEAR



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

In 2021 we reported a considerable rise in the number of Irish consumers who cited television as their MAIN source of news, up eight percentage points from 33% to 41%. We did question at the time if this was just a 2021 blip, related to Ireland's three major COVID-19 lockdowns and the fact that people were for large parts of the day confined to their houses and checking for government and health updates on TV. This has proven to be the case, because in 2022 the number of people watching television as their main source of news has dropped dramatically from 41% to 35%. Print continues to fall (-1pp) but the other three media types are up. Online (excluding social media) is up 3 percentage points while social media (+2pp) and radio (+2pp) also increased.

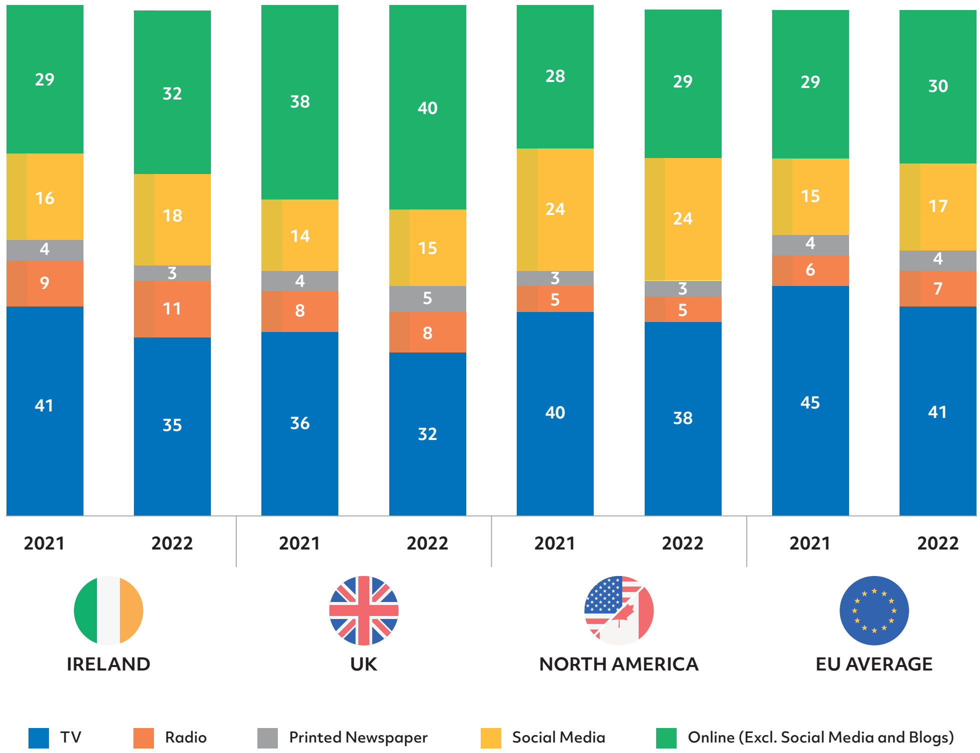
FIG 20: MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS BY AGE GROUP



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

In this chart we have selected the youngest cohort (18-24 year olds) and the oldest cohort (65+) to compare the main sources of news between the two age groups across the last three years. Here we can see stark differences between the youngest and the oldest respondents. For the younger generation, social media fell back in 2021 (-15pp) at the height of lockdowns, when even this group watched more television than in previous years. Now social media use as a MAIN source of news has jumped back up for this group (+14pp) and television viewing as a main source of news is down 10pp. In the 65+ cohort, social media as a main source of news hardly resonates, with a stable 4%. The older cohort listens to more radio than the younger one and listenership here is up 6pp. Television viewing as a main source of news is down 8pp to 52%. In 2021 older people's newspaper reading fell 7pp; we believe this was hastened by difficulties buying newspapers during lockdowns and fears of touching print at this time. However newspaper reading hasn't picked up again so far in 2022, and is down a further 1pp.

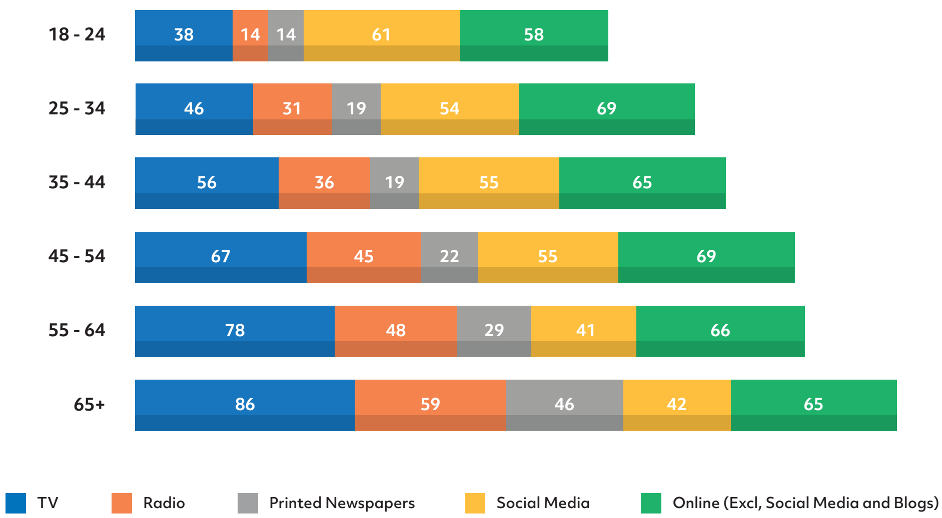
FIG 21: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



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

Here we are comparing the Irish data to that from the UK, North America and Europe. Now we can see that television viewing as a main source of news is down in all markets in the last year, although with the biggest annual drop here in Ireland (-6pp). Social media as a main source of news is similarly down, except in North America where it remains at 24% compared to Ireland's 18%. The UK has the highest percentage of people selecting online (excluding social media and blogs) at 40% in 2022. All markets have seen modest upswings in this category of one or two percent. Irish consumers are noticeably more avid radio listeners (11%) compared to the UK (8%), North America (5%) and Europe (7%).

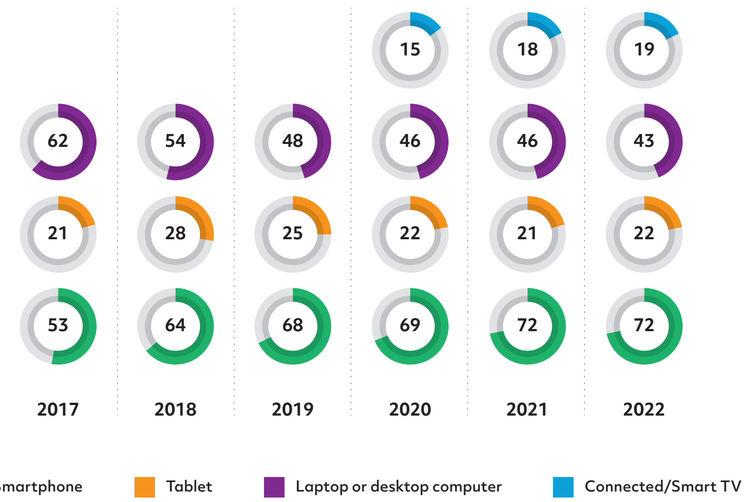
FIG 22: ANY SOURCE NEWS BY AGE GROUP



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

In this chart, we can see Irish responses to a question concerning ALL sources of news (not just MAIN sources). The data are also broken down into age cohorts. The online category (excluding social media and blogs) is mostly consistent across the age groups, with five of the six age cohorts ranging from 65% to 69%. The youngest cohort of 18-24 year-olds scored 58%. Elsewhere there is a trend in respect of TV, radio and printed newspapers, wherein the older the age group, the more the consumers use these traditional media. Regarding social media, the youngest age group (18-24) cite social media the most (61%); the next three age groups (25-54 years) are all similar (ranging from 54% to 55%) and then the numbers drop for those aged 55-64 (41%) and those aged 65+ (42%).

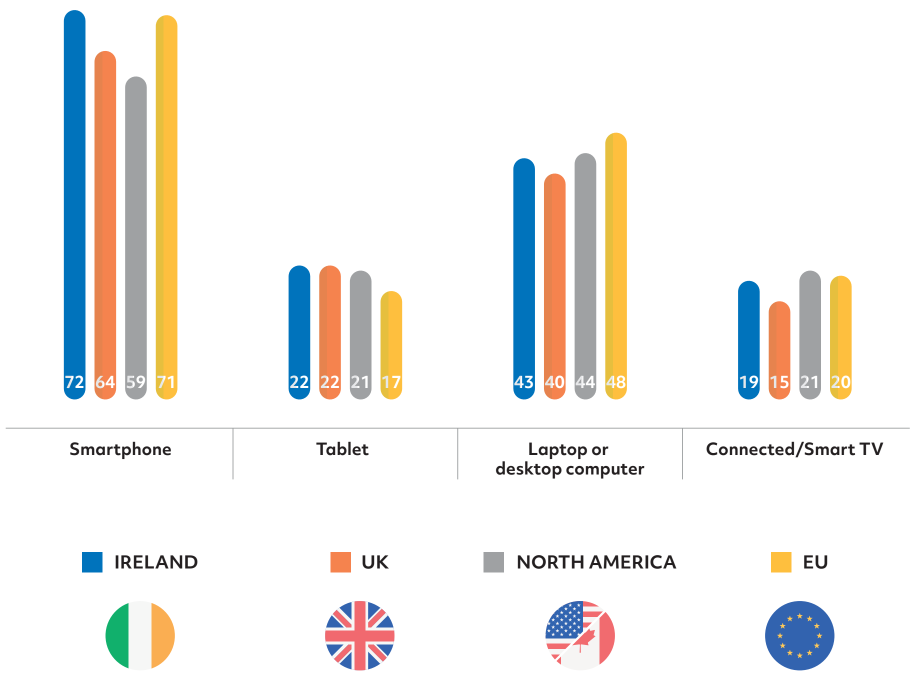
FIG 23: DEVICES USED TO ACCESS NEWS IN LAST WEEK



Q. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week?

The devices used to access news in the previous week show that numbers remain the highest by a long way for the smartphone, at 72%. This hasn't changed over the last year. There had been a steady increase from 2017 and it will be interesting to see if this is now levelling off, or if supply problems during COVID-19 lockdowns affected this softening of numbers. The laptop or desktop computer has seen a further fall (-3pp). Tablets are hovering around their 2017 levels, and connected/smart TVs continue to rise slowly.

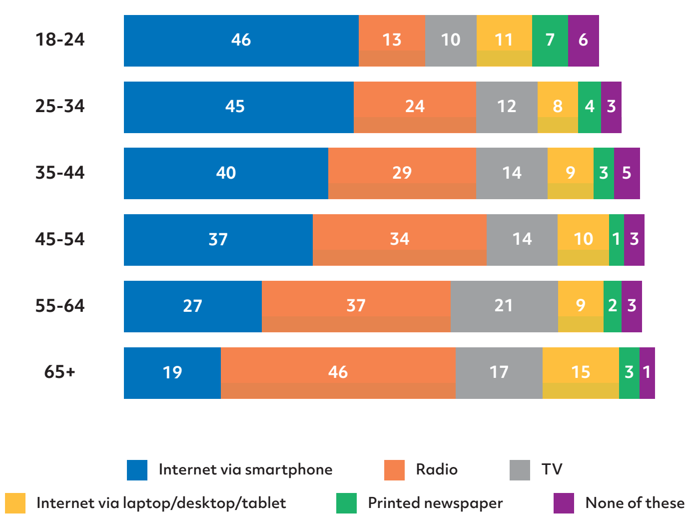
FIG 24: DEVICES USED FOR NEWS INTERNATIONAL



Q. Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week?

In this international comparison, Irish and European consumers show similar levels of smartphone use for news in the previous week, with Ireland at 72% and Europe at 71%. Tablet use is particularly low in the European market (17%) however European laptop or desktop use is the highest of all four markets at 48%. North America is surprisingly the lowest on using smartphones to access news in the previous week at 59%. Connected/Smart TV use for news is similar in Ireland (19%), North America (21%) and Europe (20%) but quite a bit lower in the UK (15%).

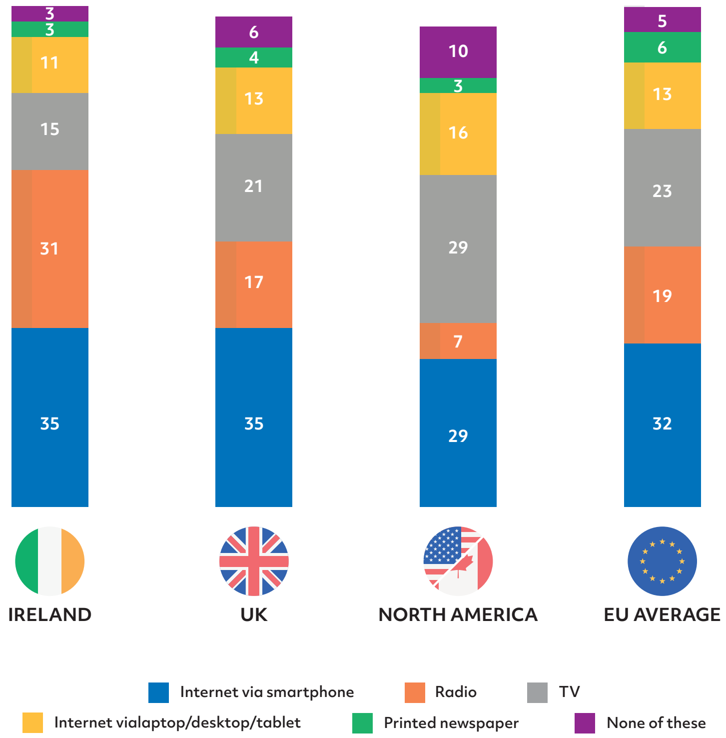
FIG 25: FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR NEWS BY AGE



Q. What is the FIRST way you typically come across news in the morning?

For the first time in Ireland, the smartphone has taken prime position as the FIRST DEVICE that most consumers reach for to access news in the morning (35%). When we extract a subset to delve into this total to examine age cohorts, we find that the percentages are highest for the four youngest age cohorts: 18-24 yrs (46%), 25-34 yrs (45%), 35-44 yrs (40%) and 45-54 yrs (37%). For the two oldest cohorts, radio is still the go-to device first thing in the morning, with 55-64 yr-olds (37%) and 65+ (46%). Radio listening dwindles slowly down the age groups, with only 13% of 18-24 year olds reaching out for their radio first thing. Printed newspapers are low in all groups. Surprisingly, 'internet via laptop/desktop/tablet' as a category is highest among those aged 65+ (15%). The percentages for those switching on the television first thing in Ireland are fairly similar across most age groups, with the 18-24 year-olds coming in last at 10% and the 55-64 year-olds leading the pack at 21%.

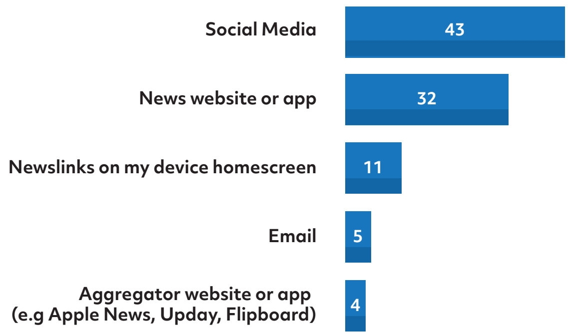
FIG 26: FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. What is the FIRST way you typically come across news in the morning?

In this international comparison, Ireland and the UK are both on 35% for using smartphones as the first device to access news in the morning. Thereafter there are significant differences. Radio listening is by far the highest in Ireland (31%), compared to European countries (19%), the UK (17%) and North America (7%). The North American competitive market for television morning news programmes is demonstrated here (29%), compared to Europe (23%), the UK (21%) and Ireland (15%). In Ireland, morning television isn't a very competitive sphere for news. While Virgin Media offers a solid mix of news and light entertainment on its 'Ireland AM' show, RTÉ's offerings are a mix of teleshopping, recycled programming and Euronews.

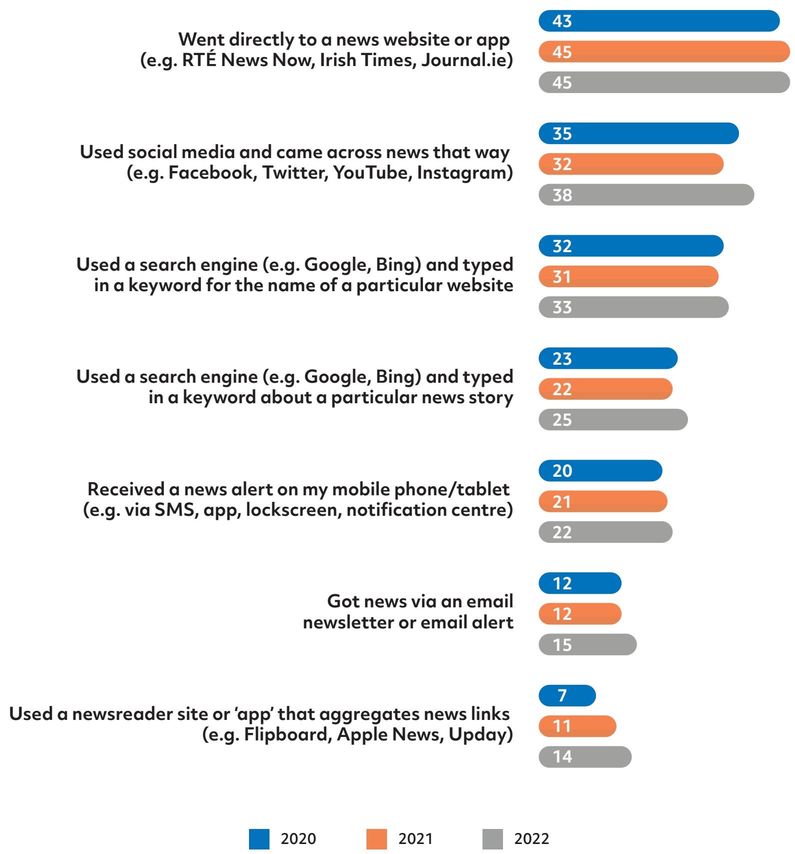
FIG 27: FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR NEWS DISCOVERY ONLINE



Q. You mentioned that your FIRST contact with news in the morning is using internet via laptop/desktop/smartphone/tablet, in which ONE of the following places do you typically find your first news?

In this subset of Irish consumers who selected having a first contact with news in the morning via a laptop/desktop/smartphone or tablet, the highest number of people selected social media as their one bridge to news (43%). Social media platforms have long argued that they are not news outlets, and yet the majority of this subset of Irish consumers clearly treat them as such. News websites or apps come second (32%), with newslinks on homescreens coming third (11%). Many news organisations use email these days to try to entice both subscribers and non-subscribers towards their websites. However only a small number of consumers in Ireland are using these emails for this purpose.

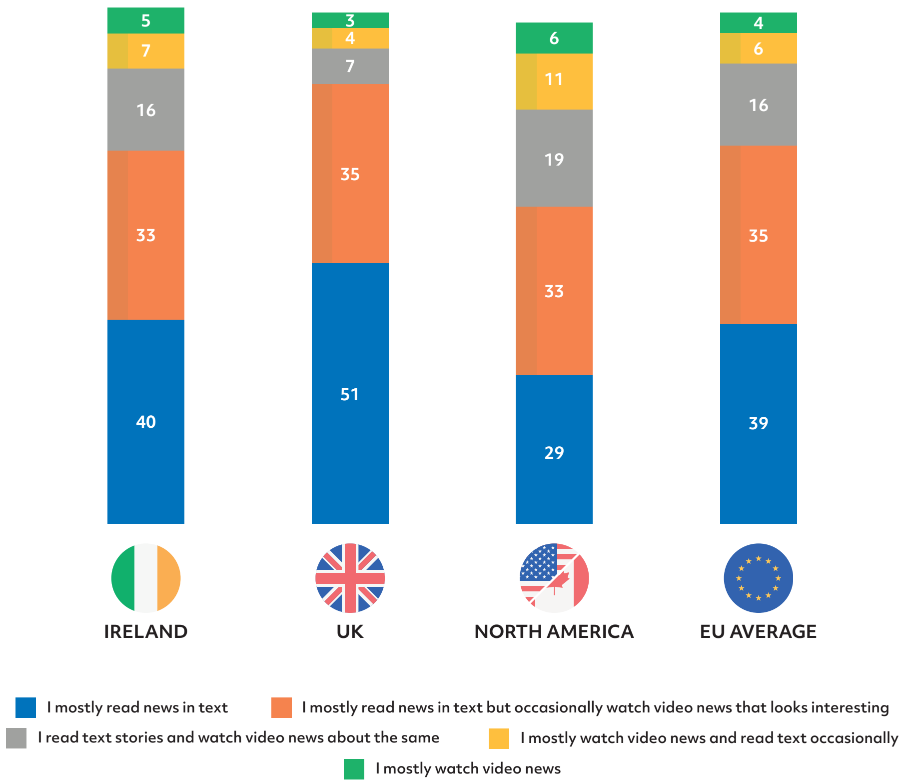
FIG 28: WAYS PEOPLE FOUND NEWS ONLINE



Q. 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.

Here we are looking at the *many ways* that people who get their news online, find stories. Most people say they go directly to a news website or app; this number (45%) is unchanged from last year and is still the most frequently used method of accessing news online. The use of social media to find news has rebounded from a dip last year and was recorded as the second most common route to news. The strongest, progressive growth was the use of a newsreader site or aggregator app, which has doubled over the last two years (although beginning from a low base).

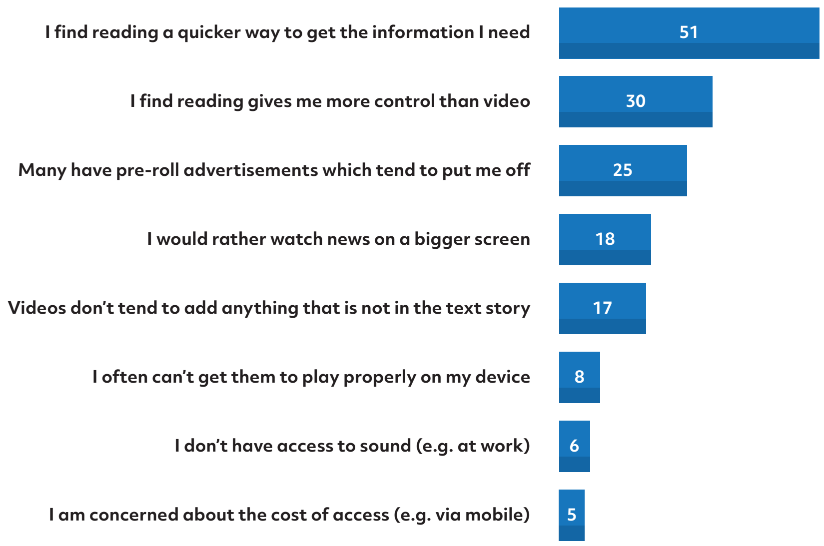
FIG 29: NEWS HABITS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. In thinking about your online news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one.

Online news habits remain very text focused. The UK leads in this regard, with 51% preferring to read news in text, and a further 35% saying they mostly read text but 'occasionally watch video news that looks interesting'. For Ireland, the mostly text group is 40%, and the mostly text but occasional video watchers are 33%. In this regard Ireland is similar to the European cohort with mostly text (39%) and mostly text but occasional video (35%). North America has fewer in the mostly text by itself (29%), and more in the occasional video group (33%). The numbers in the combined groups who 'mostly watch video news' and who 'mostly watch video news and read text occasionally' are small: North America (17%), Ireland (12%), EU (10%) and the UK (7%).

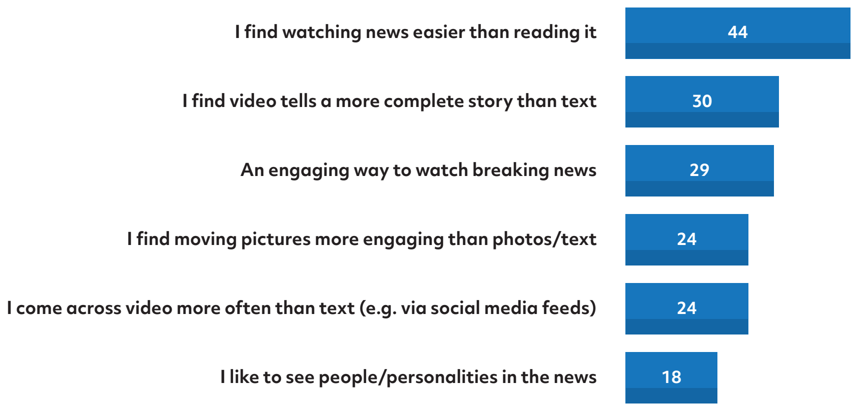
FIG 30: REASONS FOR PREFERRING TEXT



Q. You say you prefer to read news in text rather than watch online video… What are the main reasons for this? Please select all that apply.

In this subset chart we examine the reasons given by Irish consumers for why they prefer to read news in text rather than watch it in a video. Among these Irish consumers who prefer text, they say they find it a quicker way to get the information needed (51%). Regarding how they feel about the video format, these consumers feel that they have less control (30%) and the pre-roll advertisements also put them off (25%). This last reason will not cheer up advertisers or companies wanting to make money off the back of advertising. The lack of 'access to sound' at work is a conundrum for the multitaskers. It may be disappointing for news organisations to see that 'videos don't tend to add anything that is not in the text story' (17%) because often the video has been chosen by news outlets for its visual appeal.

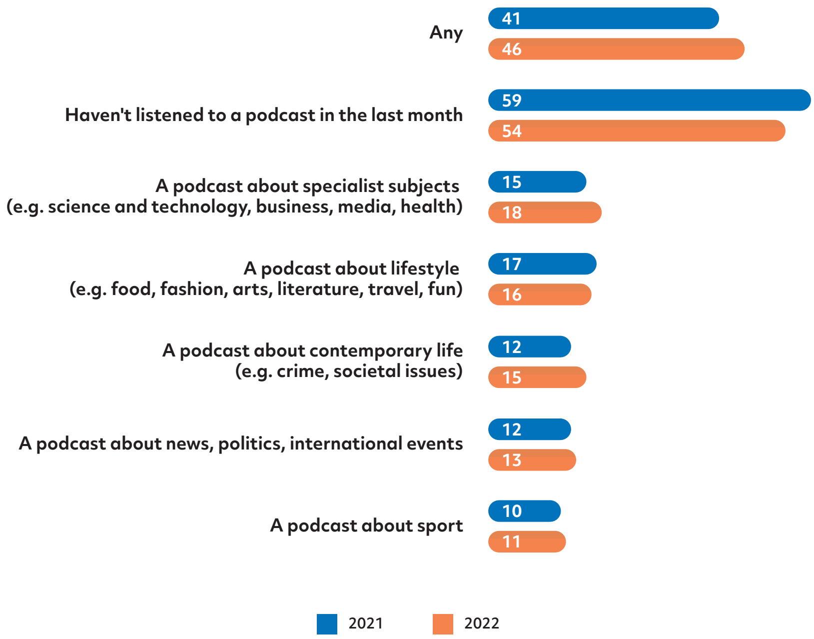
FIG 31: REASONS FOR PREFERRING VIDEO



Q. You say you prefer to watch online news video rather than read it in text… What are the main reasons for this? Please select ALL that apply.

The Irish consumers who prefer video to text are a very small number. In this subset chart, the most often cited reason is that respondents find watching news easier than reading it (44%). The second most cited reason is that people find video tells 'a more complete story than text' (30%). Close behind, many find video an 'engaging way' to watch breaking news (29%). Coming in last is liking 'to see people/personalities in the news' (18%).

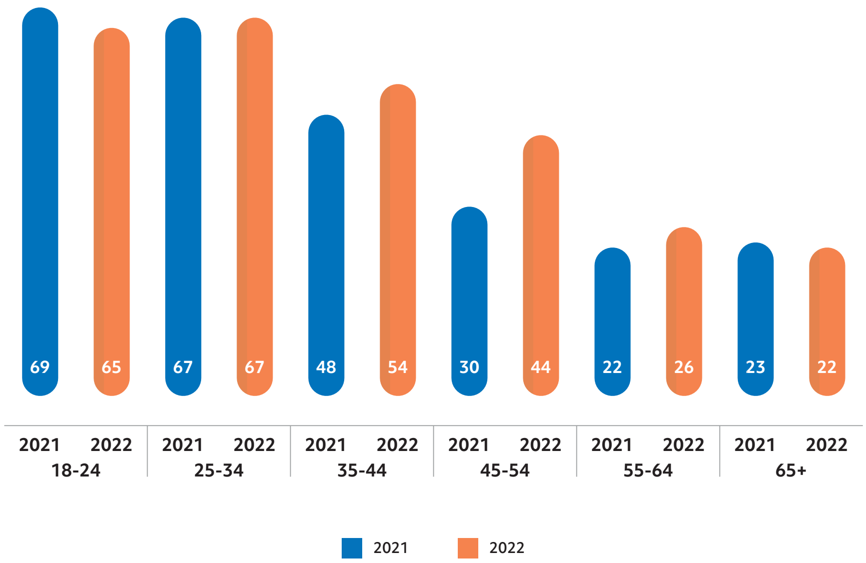
FIG 32: TYPES OF PODCASTS LISTENED TO IN THE LAST MONTH



Q. 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?

Before getting too carried away with the podcast viewing figures, it is important to first note that the majority of respondents say they have not listened to a podcast in the last month (54% in 2022). For those who have listened to podcasts in the last month, the numbers are up (46% of respondents). The highest audience is for specialist subjects - for example science and technology, business, media and health (18%). There are plenty of these in the Irish market, mostly as chat show programmes, rather than narrative podcasts. The next categories are lifestyle (16%) and contemporary life - including crime (15%). The podcasts concerning news, politics and international events come in at 13%, and sport at 11%. This latter category is very well catered for, particularly via commercial media.

FIG 33: AGE GROUPS LISTENING TO PODCASTS IN THE LAST MONTH



Q. 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?

When you delve into the podcasting statistics for age, the highest number of listeners in 2022 are the two youngest age cohorts. For the last two years, the 25-34 year-olds have registered 67%. For the youngest cohort the numbers have dropped slightly this year from 69% to 65%. The numbers have risen for the next three age groups, in particular among 45-54 year-olds (+14pp) and dropped by one percentage point for the 65+ age group (22%).

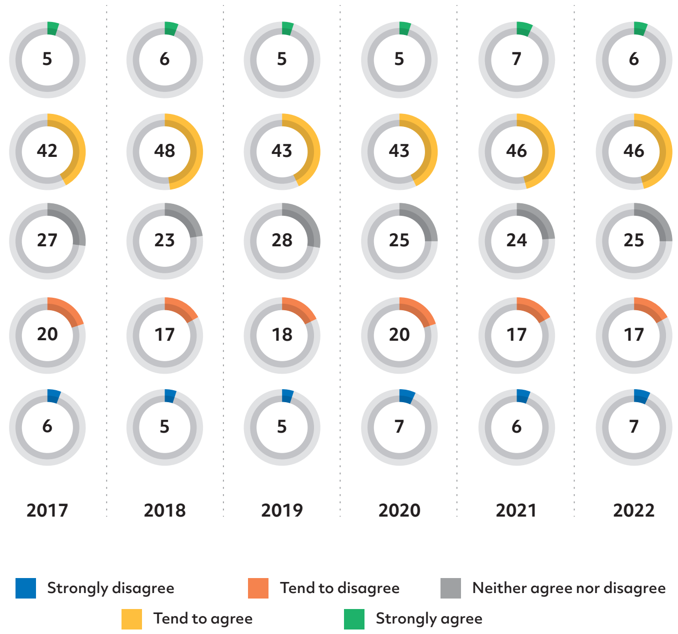
SECTION THREE

ATTITUDES, TRUST AND PAYMENTS

This section outlines attitudes to news among Irish news consumers. It details their attitudes towards trust, including how much they trust different news brands.

This section also explores the issue of disinformation, and how consumers feel about paying for news access.

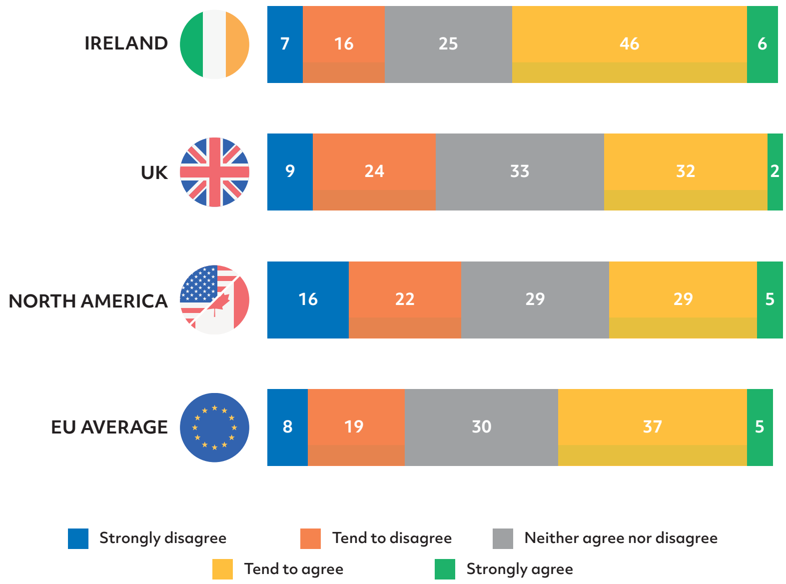
FIG 34: TRUST MOST NEWS MOST OF THE TIME



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

Levels of trust have remained broadly in line with last year's figures, with more than half of respondents saying they either 'tend to agree' (46%) or strongly agree (6%) with the statement on trusting most news most of the time. Looking back on the figures from the previous five years, it appears that trust levels have started to settle down after the fluctuations which were more evident in 2017-2019. It is also worth noting that one in four respondents (25%) appears neutral on this question of trust, suggesting that it is perhaps not a particularly relevant or important issue for a substantial portion of the audience, despite concerns in recent years about misinformation and disinformation.

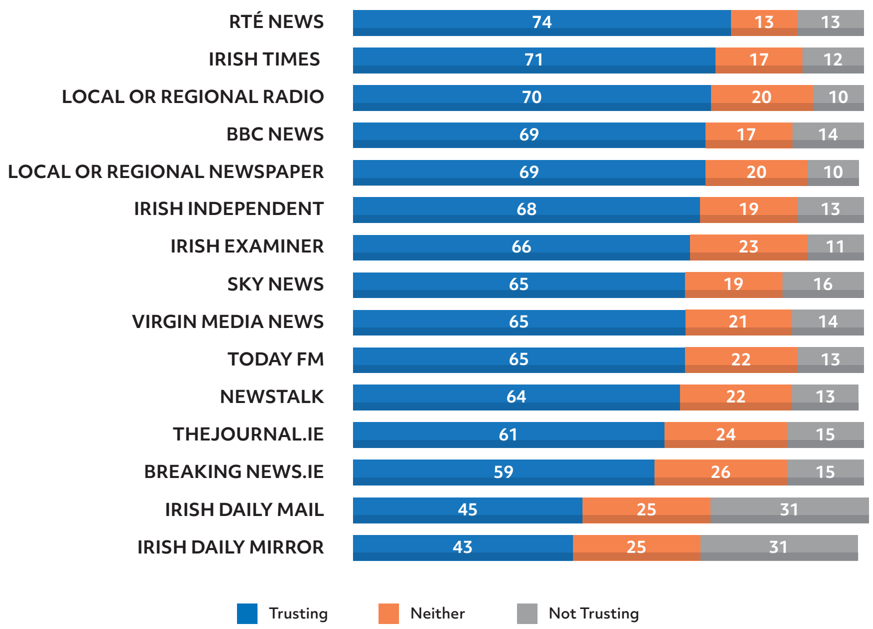
FIG 35: YOU CAN TRUST MOST NEWS MOST OF THE TIME INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

The level of trust in Ireland is quite starkly ahead of the UK and North America: Ireland's combined trust (those who tend to agree or strongly agree, combined to 52%) is close to 20 percentage points ahead of the UK and North America, both of which are on 34%. Yet even within the EU countries (42%) Irish audiences are more trusting than the EU average. At the other end of the scale, audiences are most actively distrusting of news media in North America, where one in three (38%) respondents say they disagree that you can trust most news most of the time: this is similar to the UK figure (33%), both of which are much higher than Ireland (23%). It is worth noting that the one in four Irish respondents saying they 'neither agree nor disagree', (while a substantial proportion), is actually lower than the other three geographic regions presented here. It seems that Irish audiences lean towards being more trusting of the news media.

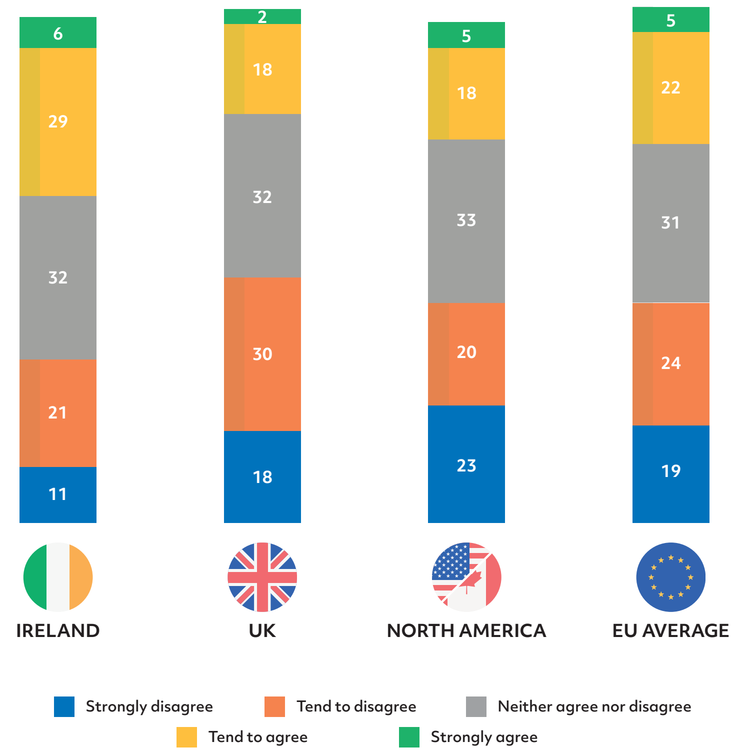
FIG 36: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS



Q. How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is?

RTÉ remains the most trusted brand in Ireland, with three in every four people (74%) familiar with RTÉ saying they are trusting of the public service broadcaster, although this has dropped from 78% in 2021. Local radio (70%) and local newspapers (69%) are also among the top five most trusted sources, but there has been a general decline in trust evident across all individual brands, despite overall trust in the news media generally remaining steady this year, as shown in the previous results. The Irish Times is the most trusted newspaper brand and second overall, but it has fallen by 6 percentage points from 77% to 71%, while the Irish Independent is down from 74% to 68%. Local or regional newspapers tied fourth on the list (69%) with BBC News. The BBC is down from 76% in 2021 to 69% this year, while Sky News is down from 72% to 65%. So while the order of most trusted outlets remains broadly in line with previous years, the overall level of trust has declined: the figures here in 2022 are more in line with pre-pandemic figures, and are returning to levels following last year's Covid bump.

FIG 37: THE NEWS MEDIA IN MY COUNTRY IS INDEPENDENT FROM UNDUE POLITICAL OR GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE MOST OF THE TIME

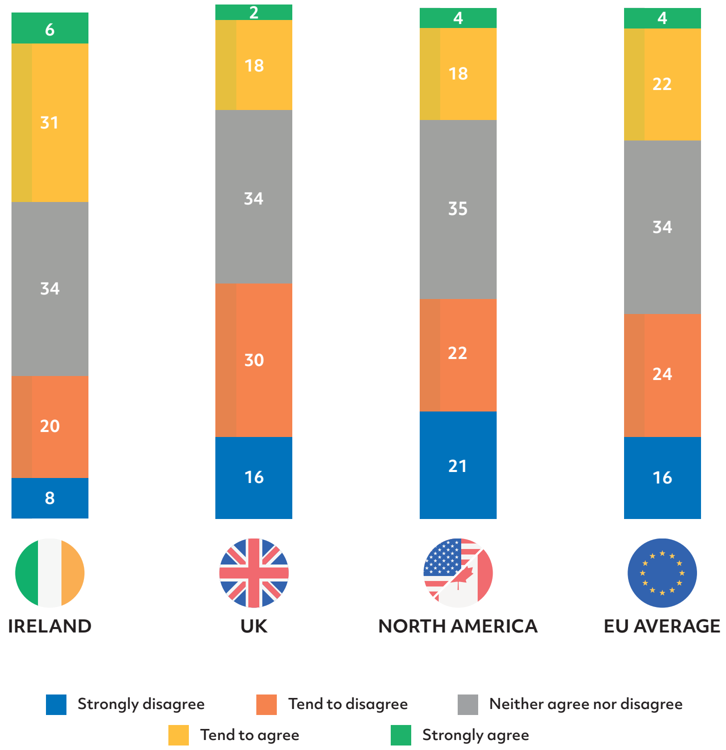


Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time.

The results for Ireland are split quite evenly three ways: those who agree (35%), those who neither agree nor disagree (32%), and those who disagree (32%). Despite these close results, we can see some gaps appear as Irish audiences are more optimistic than others on this topic: the 35% who agree with this statement represent a higher figure than the UK (20%), North America (23%) and the EU average (27%). The UK is the most mistrusting here, with almost half the population (48%) saying they disagreed with the statement, suggesting respondents feel they live in a very politicised media environment which is not present to the same extent in Ireland.

When posed another related statement regarding political interests of news organisations, respondents were asked the extent to which news organisations prioritise what is best for society compared with prioritising political viewpoints. In Ireland, a third (34%) felt that 'some put their own political views first, some put what's best for society first', while a similar percentage (31%) took a more negative view saying that most or all prioritise their own political views. One in four (25%) are more optimistic, saying that most or all news organisations prioritise what is best for society ahead of their own political views. Overall, Irish audiences were more positive about news organisations' intentions than those in the UK, North America and EU.

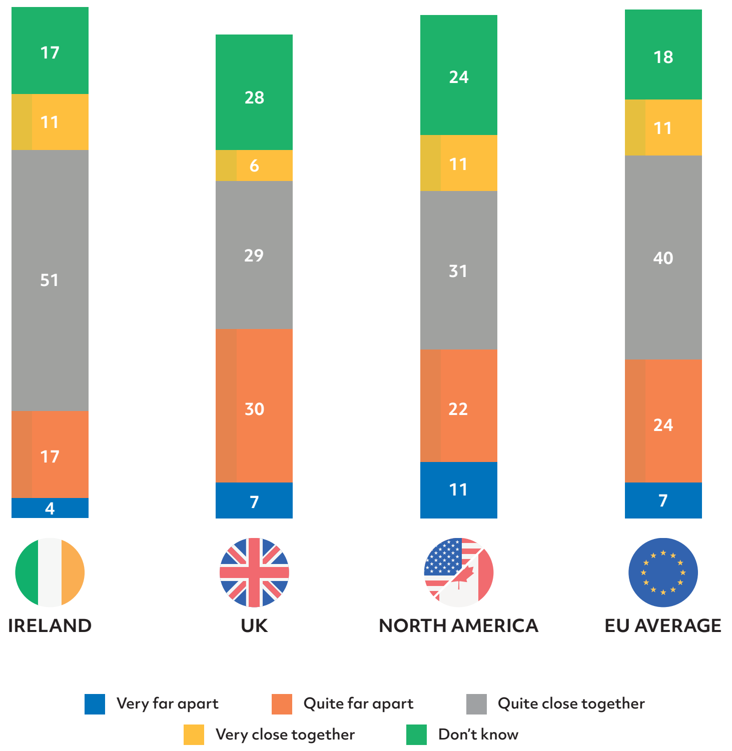
FIG 38: THE NEWS MEDIA IN MY COUNTRY IS INDEPENDENT FROM UNDUE BUSINESS OR COMMERCIAL INFLUENCE MOST OF THE TIME



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time.

Respondents were also asked the same question about whether the news media in Ireland is 'independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time', and again the results show that Irish audiences are most in agreement with this statement (37%) when compared with the other regions included here. Again, there was broadly a three-way divide among Irish respondents, as 34% neither agreed nor disagreed, while 28% disagreed. The more emphatic disagreement here came from respondents in North America, where 21% said they strongly disagreed with the statement. Respondents were also asked the additional question about the prioritising of commercial interests by news organisations. In Ireland, a third (31%) felt that 'some put commercial interests first, some put what's best for society first' showing the most moderate middle ground when compared with the UK, North America and EU average. Conversely, 25% said that either most or all 'put what's best for society first', while 33% said either all or most put commercial interests first.

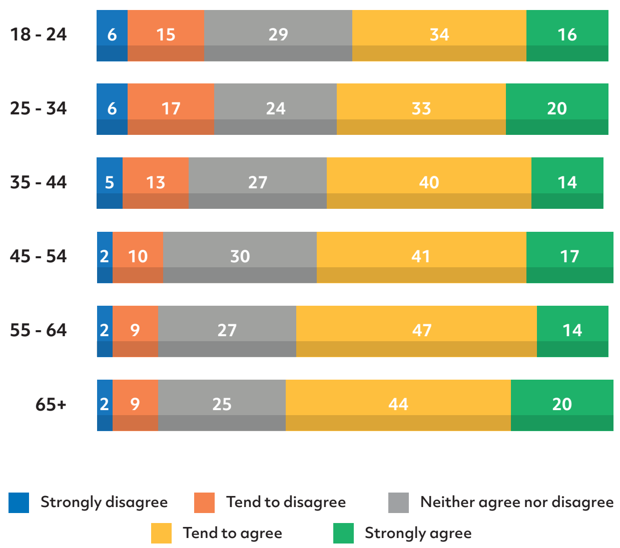
FIG 39: HOW POLITICALLY CLOSE TOGETHER OR FAR APART ARE THE MAIN NEWS ORGANISATIONS IN YOUR COUNTRY?



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: In your view, how politically close together or far apart are the main news organisations in your country?

For the first time, the Digital News Report asked this year's respondents how politically divided they perceived the news organisations in their country to be. Most respondents in Ireland believe the main news outlets in the country to be close together (62%) which is higher than the EU average (51%), North America (42%), and the UK (35%). Audiences in the UK are the most likely here to say far apart, with 37% believing in such division, compared with 21% in Ireland. This suggests that Irish audiences do not see the same level of division among news outlets here.

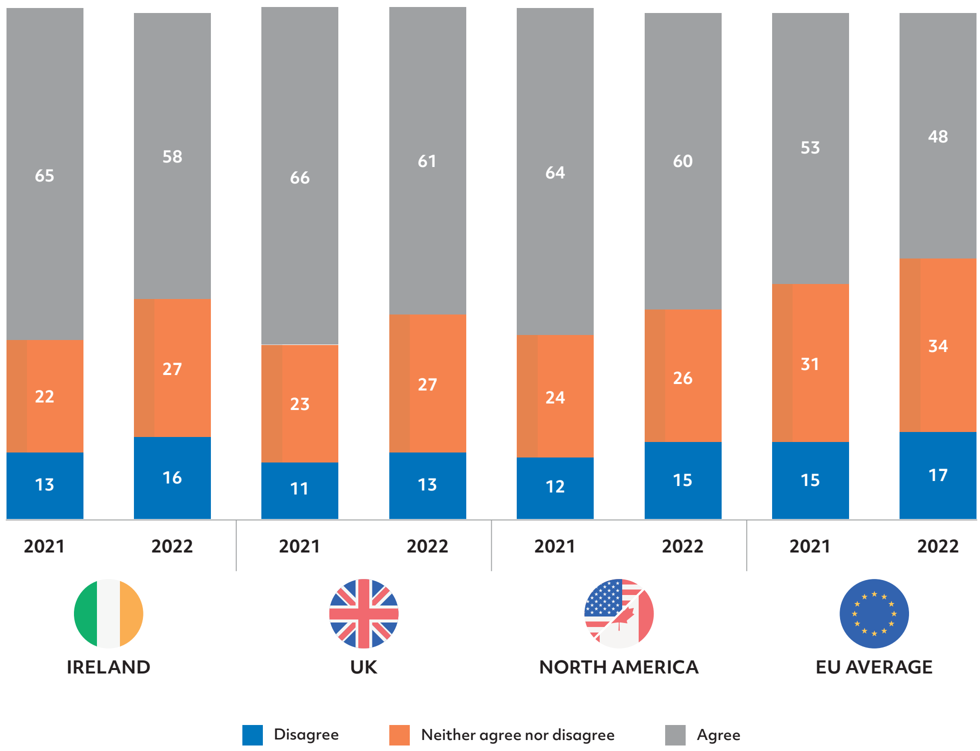
FIG 40: CONCERN ABOUT REAL AND FAKE NEWS BY AGE GROUP



Q. 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.

People were asked about their concern with real and fake news, and the results show that attitudes are - broadly - associated with age. Over 65s are more worried, with 64% saying they either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree' that they are concerned with what is real online, compared with 50% of the 18-24 year olds. The 25-34 year olds deviate slightly from the trends: they have the highest total for any age group for 'disagree/strongly disagree' (23%), while the one in five (20%) who say they 'strongly agree' is the same as among the over 65s. Overall, the figures remind us that concern about misinformation prevails across all ages.

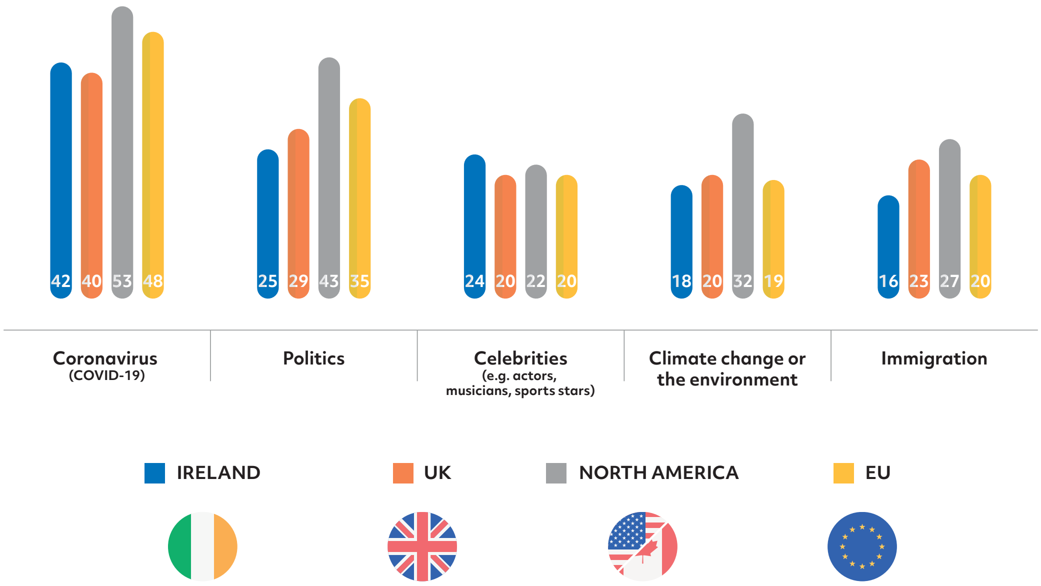
FIG 41: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. 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.

Concern about fake news and misinformation remains an issue and Irish audiences are more worried than the EU average: 58% of Irish respondents said they felt concerned compared with 48% for EU respondents. The UK and North America have slightly higher levels of concern among audiences (61% and 60% respectively). Although these figures remain high, it is worth noting that concern seems to be declining overall, with a 7 percentage point decrease on last year's figure in Ireland (65% in 2021). This is perhaps associated with COVID-19 being less of a major news story this year and the potential decline in some of the associated speculation and misinformation regarding the spread of the virus and the effects of the vaccine, which was more prevalent in early 2021.

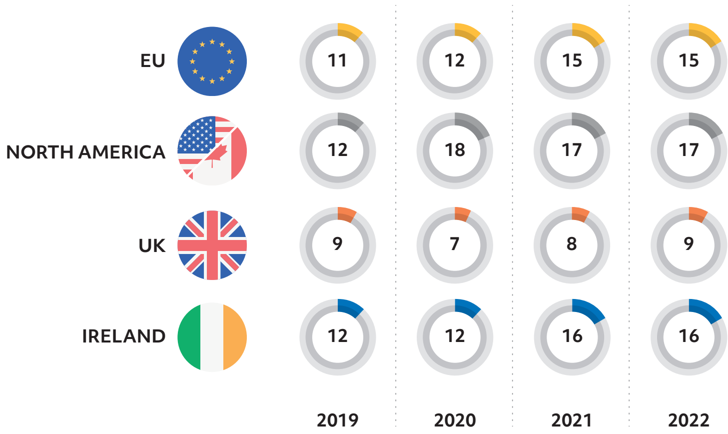
FIG 42: TOPICS OF FALSE OR MISLEADING NEWS SEEN IN THE LAST WEEK



Q. Have you seen false or misleading information about any of the following topics, in the last week? Please select ALL that apply.

For Irish news consumers COVID-19 is the topic where most false or misleading information is seen, with 42% having seen something related to the pandemic, although this is down from 49% in 2021. This was followed by politics at 25%, down from 28% last year, while untrue celebrity stories (24%) are seemingly more prevalent than fake climate or immigration stories. False or misleading information about COVID-19 is highest in all of our selected countries indicating that it remains a key topic for unreliable news even two years into the pandemic. For North America, misleading information is also common regarding politics (43%) and climate change/ environment (32%), higher than elsewhere.

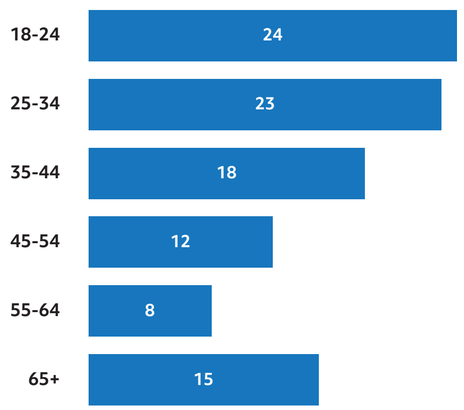
FIG 43: PAYING FOR NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. 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).

Subscription payments have remained steady in Ireland last year, with 16% of respondents having paid for online news content, the same as 2021. The levels across North America (17%) and the EU average (15%) also did not change. While there was a slight increase (+1pp) in the UK, at 9%, it is still quite a distance off the others featured here. Among Irish audiences, the figure for paying for news has steadily increased from 7% in 2015, the year Ireland first participated in the Digital News Report.

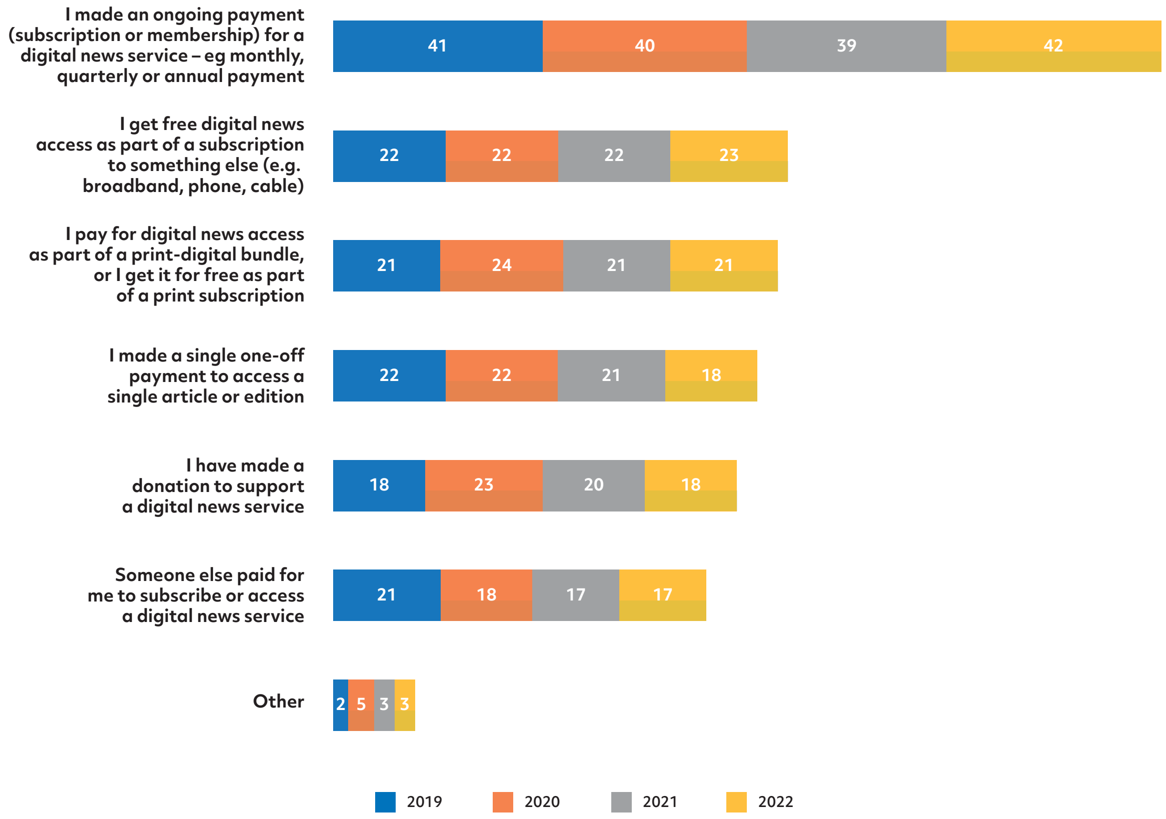
FIG 44: PAYING FOR NEWS BY AGE GROUP



Q. 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).

When the results regarding paying for news are broken down by age, we see that it is younger audiences who are more likely to make payments, with almost one in four of the under 35s having paid for news in the previous year (24% of 18-24s, and 23% of 25-34s). The age cohort least likely to pay are the 55-64-year-olds (8%), but it is important to note that the figures are not simply pointing to a straightforward generational division: the figure for payment actually increases to 15% among the over 65s.

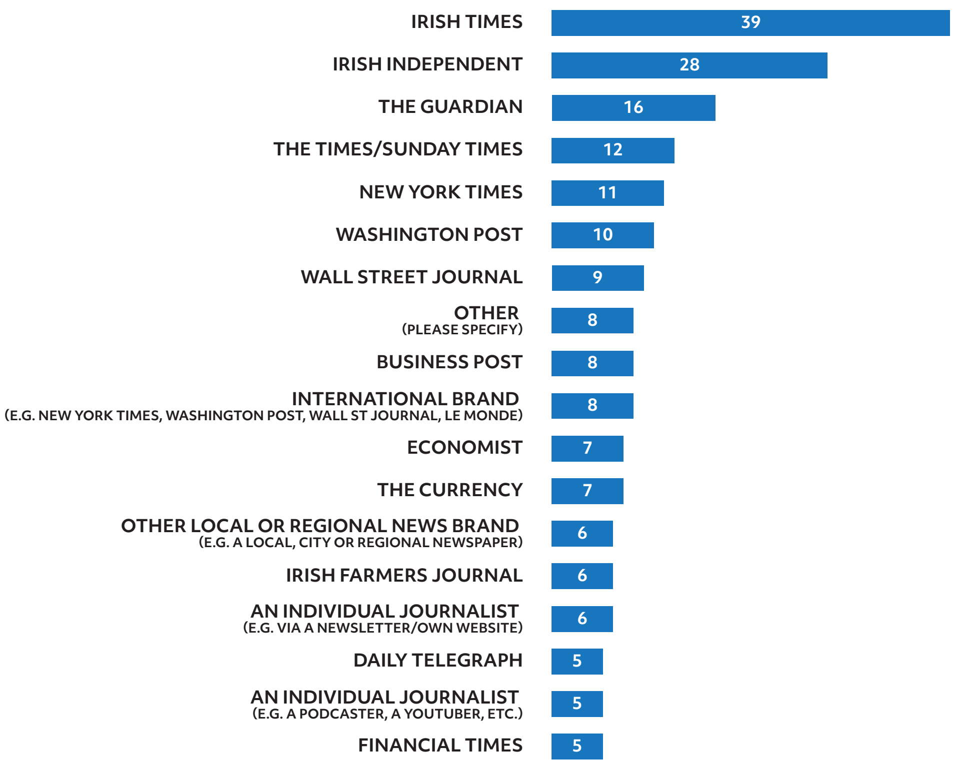
FIG 45: METHODS OF PAYING FOR NEWS BY YEAR



Q. 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.

Respondents who said they had paid for online news at some point over the past year were asked about the methods of paying for that content. The most popular means was through a regular payment, e.g. a monthly or annual subscription, through which 42% of respondents who had paid for news had made a payment. This figure has remained steady over the past four years: it was 41% in 2019, dipped slightly to 39% in 2021, but then increased by 3 percentage points over the past 12 months. Elsewhere, around one in five use alternative methods of payment such as access via other subscriptions such as a broadband provider (23%), or online news access coming as part of a print-digital bundle (21%). One-off payments are declining slightly, down from 22% in 2019 to 18% in 2022, suggesting some audience members are shifting towards more regular payments to news organisations. For 17%, payment had come via someone else who had paid for the subscription, possibly a family member or as a gift.

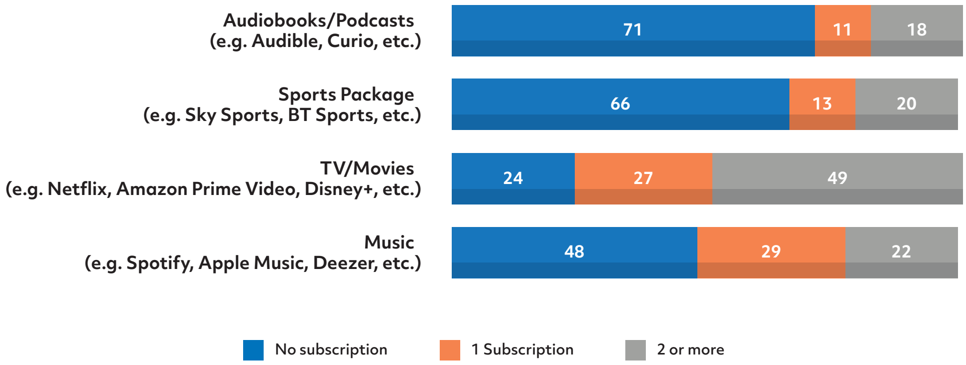
FIG 46: MOST PAID SUBSCRIPTIONS/MEMBERSHIPS



Q. 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.

Among those who said they subscribed to a digital news service, domestic news producers were the most popular, specifically newspaper-brand titles. Some 39% of those who had paid for some kind of news subscription had signed up to the Irish Times, followed by the Irish Independent at 28%. More special interest Irish producers such as The Currency (7%) and the Irish Farmers' Journal (6%) are also present on the list. Among the international brands, The Guardian - which has subscriptions and memberships - is the most commonly supported outlet at 16%, with the US-based New York Times (11%) and the Washington Post (10%) also relatively popular.

FIG 47: NUMBER OF ONLINE SUBSCRIPTIONS BY CATEGORY

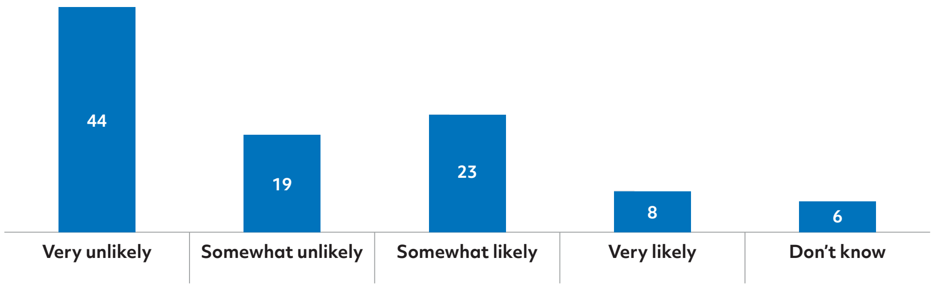


Q. There are many different online media subscriptions you can pay for these days. How many of the following online media subscriptions do you currently have, if any, that you pay for with your own money?

TV/movie subscriptions are the most popular services for audiences to subscribe to, with 76% having one or more subscription in this category, compared with 51% for music, 33% for Sports, and 29% for audiobooks/podcasts. For those who only have a single subscription, it is most likely to be a music subscription, to a service like Spotify or Apple Music, while multiple subscriptions are most common for TV/Movies: these two results can be linked to the fact that most streaming services will have comprehensive catalogues of music, whereas television and film rights are more exclusively tied to single streaming services at any given time. In fact, the full results show that 17% of those with a TV/movie subscription actually have four or more subscriptions, which might mean services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney+ which all offer different content.

In a related question, respondents were asked if they expect the number of online media subscriptions they pay for with their own money to increase, decrease, or stay the same? Two-thirds (64%) said it would likely remain the same, but almost one in five (18%) said it was likely to actually increase, while 9% said decrease.

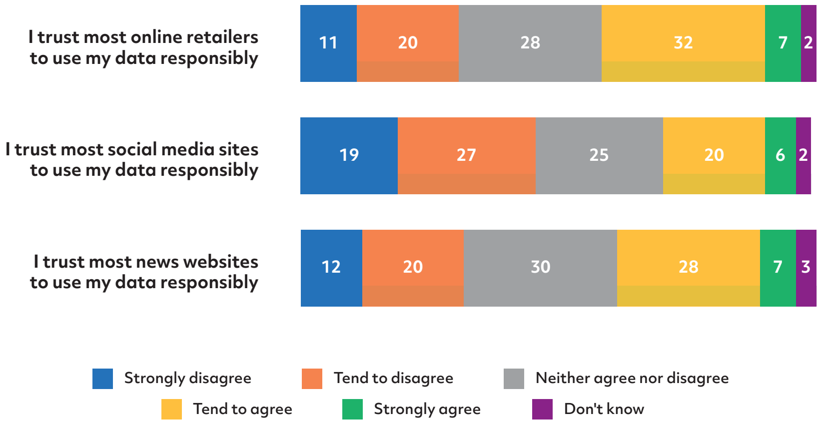
FIG 48: LIKELIHOOD OF PAYING FOR NEWSLETTER YOU LIKE IN THE FUTURE



Q. Most email newsletters are currently free, but how likely or unlikely is it that you'd be prepared to pay in the future for a newsletter that you like?

Recipients who receive email newsletters were asked some additional questions. Firstly, as shown above, they were asked about the potential monetisation of newsletters and whether they would be likely to pay for a newsletter they like in the future: 31% said they would be somewhat or very likely, while 63% said they were unlikely to do so. Other related questions also showed that 63% of their newsletters come from mainstream news outlets and their journalists, while 18% are from alternative news outlets. A further 15% are from specialist publications such as trade publications, and 14% are from individual journalists operating on their own, such as via the Substack platform. In another question, respondents were asked why they like newsletters: the main reason, among 64%, was convenience, followed by content I can't get anywhere else (21%); access to diverse viewpoints (19%); informal tone (19%); and personality of authors (13%).

FIG 49: ATTITUDES TO TRUST IN USING PERSONAL DATA RESPONSIBLY



Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements?

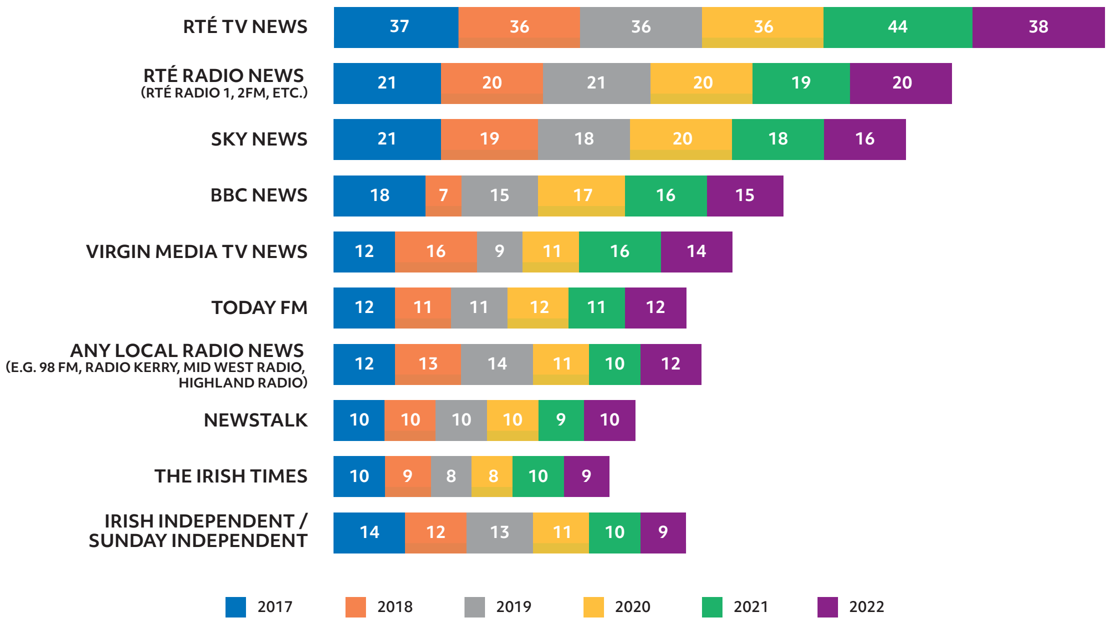
The gathering and use of personal data online has come to public attention in recent years, and 2022 was the first time the Digital News Report asked respondents about their attitudes towards it. In an initial question, 34% of respondents in Ireland said they had registered with a news outlet over the previous year, such as by providing an email address or setting up an account to expand access to content. The survey then focused on the distinction between how online retailers, social media, and news websites use data, as shown above. Online retailers were considered the most trustworthy, with 39% of respondents agreeing that they trusted these companies to use their data responsibly, compared with 35% for news organisations and 26% for social media sites. Social media sites evoked the strongest negative reaction with almost half of audiences (46%) saying they disagreed with the idea that these organisations use their data responsibly. For news websites, one in three (30%) were somewhat indifferent when thinking about how their data is used, saying they neither agree nor disagree.

SECTION FOUR

BRANDS AND DISCOVERY

This section outlines the main sources and brands used by Irish news consumers. It provides a breakdown of consumption patterns across traditional and digital brands, selected types of news, how Irish consumers find news online, and on social media.

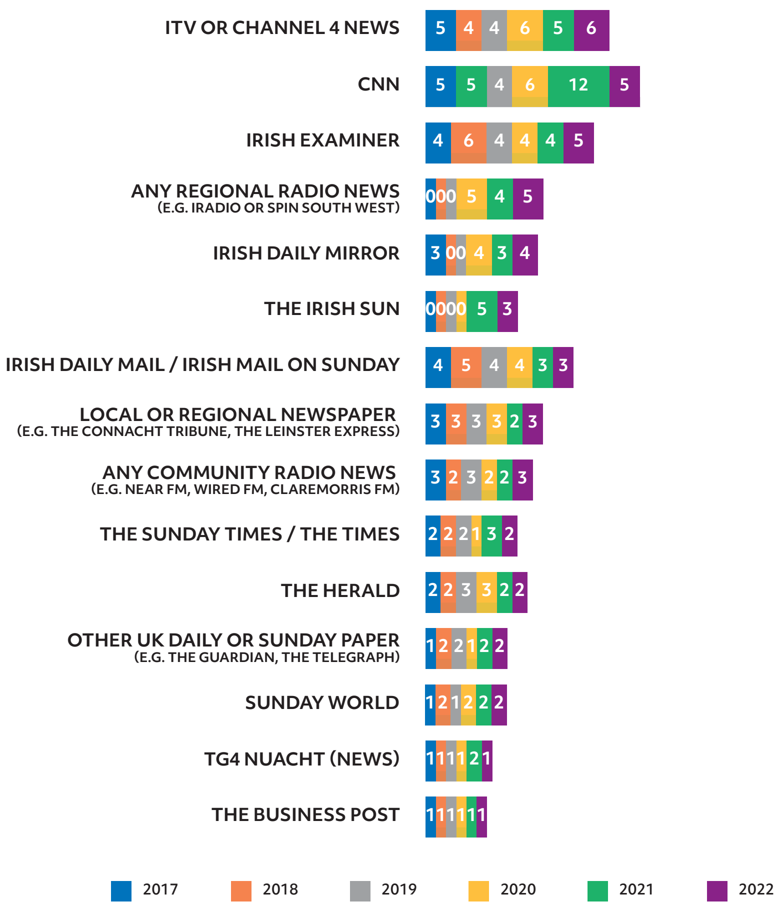
FIG 50: TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL BRANDS



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news offline in the last week… Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

Most of the major news brands saw a decrease in their audiences over the last year. The decline for RTÉ TV News is striking (-6pp), but not surprising, as audiences return to their pre-Covid news consumption patterns. The brand continues to perform strongly, and is still attracting audiences slightly above its 2017 levels. Local radio stations have also performed well, increasing their audience share by two percentage points, perhaps indicative of a turn away from global stories towards more local news. There is good news for Bauer Media brands Newstalk and Today FM, both of which recorded a 1pp increase in their audiences. However, the Irish Times and Mediahuis titles the Irish Independent and Sunday Independent saw a 1pp decline. In general, it appears that the "Covid bump" in demand for news is declining.

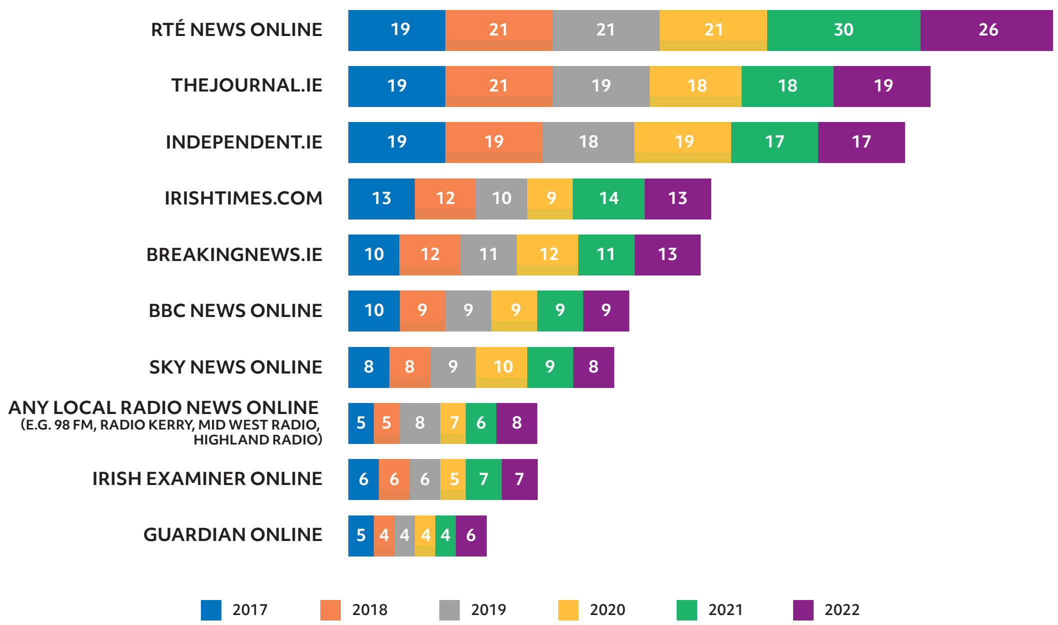
FIG 51: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL BRANDS (11-25)



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news offline in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

Looking outside the top 10 news brands, the tight nature of the Irish media landscape becomes evident, with US and UK brands competing with regional radio, the Irish editions of UK newspaper titles, and Irish brands such as the Sunday World and the Irish Examiner. Most brands performed steadily, retaining their share of audiences and readers. There was a marked drop in those watching CNN, down 7pp to 5%, which may be reflective of a post-Covid return to consumption of national and local news coverage, and a turn away from international coverage. There was some adjustment in the competitive tabloid market, with the Irish Daily Mirror increasing from 3% to 4%, while the Irish Sun dropped from 5% to 3%. The Irish Examiner recorded a slight increase, from 4% to 5%.

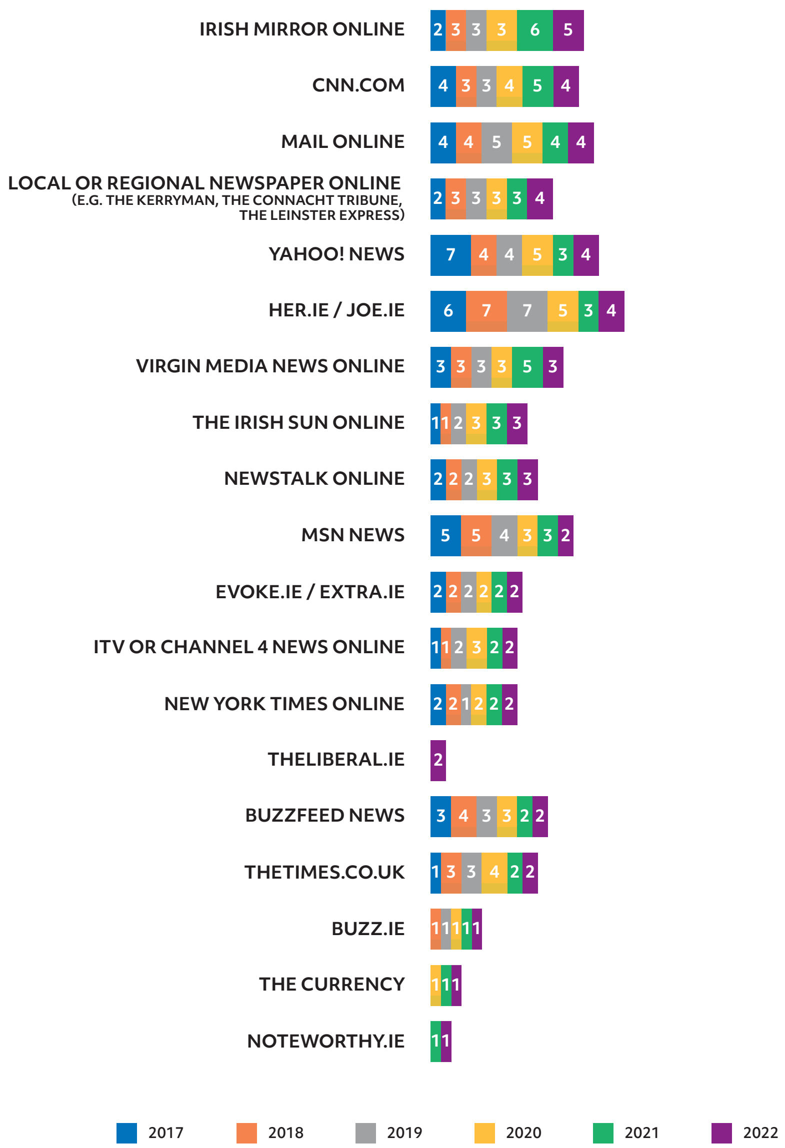
FIG 52: TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news online in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

RTÉ News online continues to dominate the digital news space, although it has seen its audience drop by four percentage points. Digital native The Journal.ie continues to perform steadily, and recorded a slight increase in consumers accessing its services, from 18% to 19%. BreakingNews.ie, the free news site now owned by the Irish Times (following its takeover of the Examiner group), recorded an increase of two percentage points, from 11% to 13%. The audience for local radio also increased, from 6% to 8%. And the Guardian online recorded an increase of two percentage points. Elsewhere, many brands held steady at their 2021 audience share.

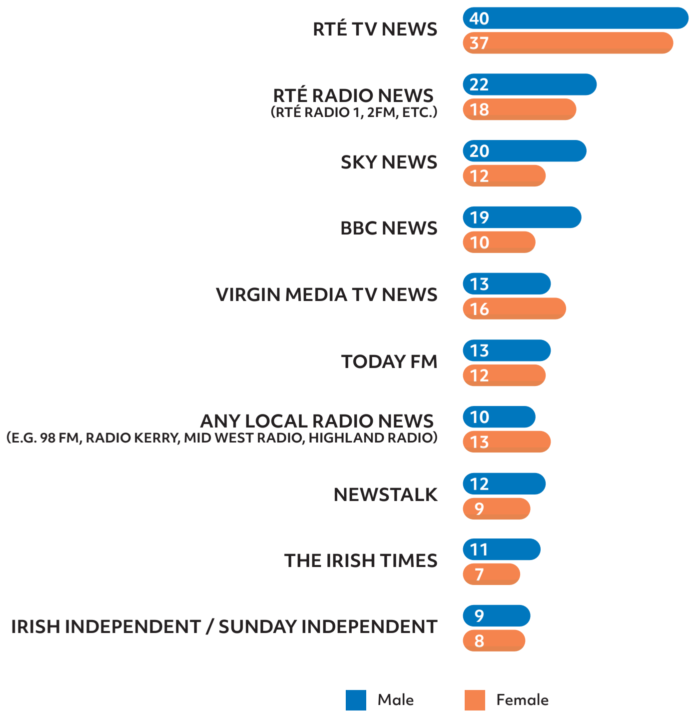
FIG 53: MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS (11-29)



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news online in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

When we look outside the top 10 digital brands, we see a wide range of Irish-based and international brands competing for audience share, with six brands holding steady around the 4% or 5% mark. There is some encouragement for two digital start-ups - subscriptions-based business news platform The Currency, and crowd-funded investigative team Noteworthy.ie - which have held their 1% share of the audience. Local and regional newspapers saw an increase of one percentage point, from 3% to 4% as did the Her.ie/Joe.ie stable of news sites (3% to 4%), which were acquired by investment company Greencastle Capital from Maximum Media in 2020.

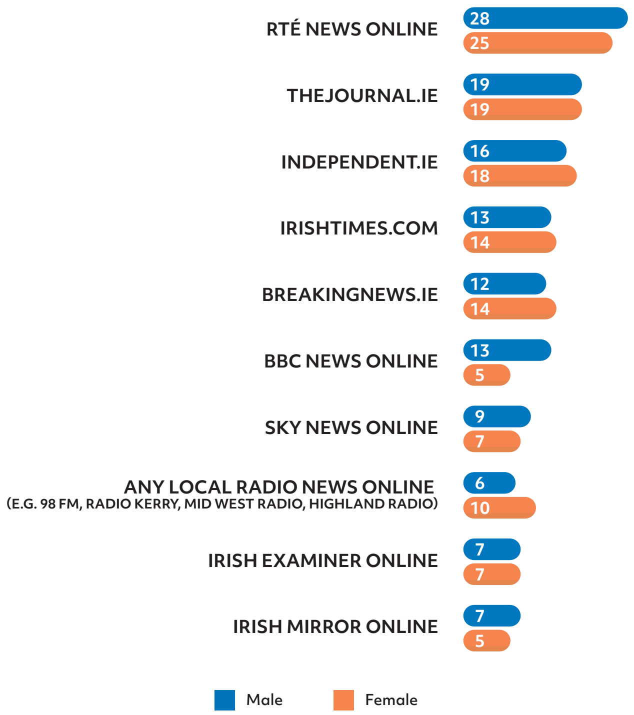
FIG 54: TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL BRANDS BY GENDER



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news offline in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

The audience for most traditional news brands skews slightly male. However, the gender split is most marked for two UK-based operations - the BBC, whose male audience is nine percentage points larger than its female one, and Sky News, where the difference is eight percentage points. Notably, Virgin Media TV News attracts more female than male viewers (16% vs 13%). Other brands, such as the Irish Times (11% male; 7% female) and RTÉ Radio News (22% male; 18% female), face a challenge to attract more women to their offerings. These findings resonate with the data from section one of the report, which found that male news consumers are more drawn to hard news, and females are more likely to consume 'softer' news content.

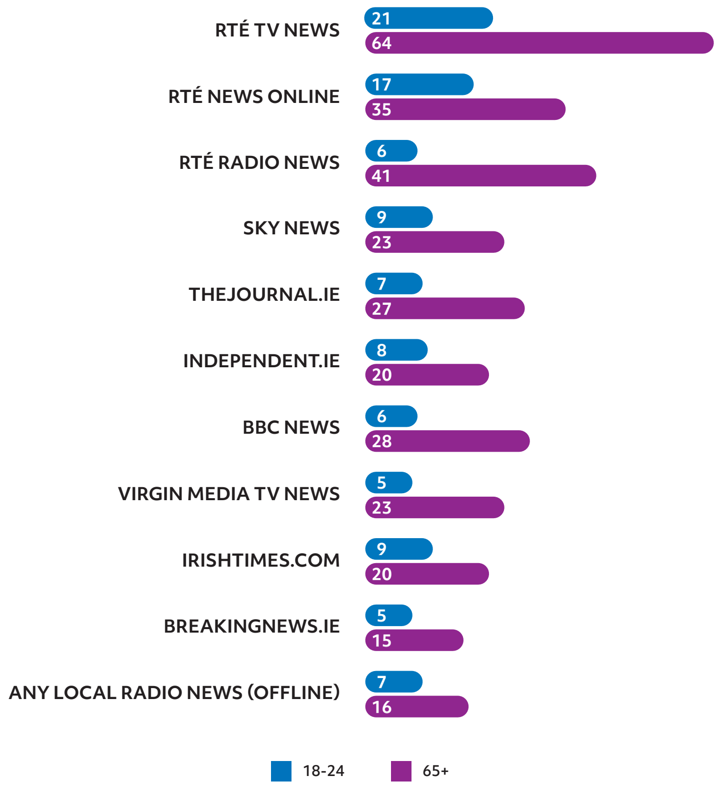
FIG 55: TOP 10 MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS BY GENDER



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news online in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

There is more gender balance in the audiences for digital news brands, with several major brands attracting a majority female audience. The Irish Times website is slightly more popular among females than males (by one percentage point), in contrast to its print offering, which skews male in its readership. Local radio also attracts a majority female audience, with a difference of four percentage points between female and male listeners. The independent.ie news website, and BreakingNews.ie, are also more popular with women, both by two percentage points. The digital offerings of UK companies Sky News online and BBC News online, have larger male audiences. Sky News online skews male by two percentage points, while the BBC's digital platform attracts more than twice as many men as women.

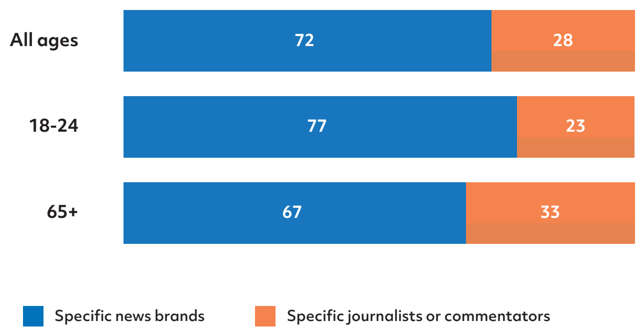
FIG 56: MOST FREQUENTLY USED BRANDS AGE COMPARISON



Q. You said you have used the following brands to access news in the last week... Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply.

If we look at the audiences for major news brands by comparing two age cohorts (18-24 and 65+), we see that the audiences for news content across all platforms fall overwhelmingly into the 65-plus age bracket. In general, news organisations attract three times as many older people compared to those aged under 25. The audience age difference for broadcasters is especially striking, with Sky, RTÉ, and Virgin failing to attract large, younger audiences while being popular with those aged 65 and over. The results for RTÉ TV News are typical: their audience in the 65-plus age bracket is greater than the audience in the 18-24 age bracket by 43 percentage points. The contrast is equally stark when it comes to RTÉ Radio news, where the difference, on a smaller overall audience, is 35pp. It is clear from these findings that news delivered on linear platforms such as TV and radio face a daunting challenge in attracting younger audiences, who do not consume linear TV or radio news and have moved to other platforms and channels for their information.

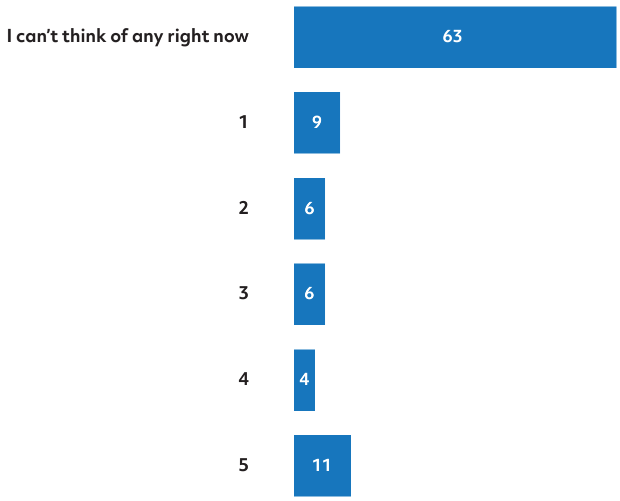
FIG 57: MOST ATTENTION PAID TO BRANDS OR INDIVIDUALS ONLINE



Q. When looking for news online, which of the following do you tend to pay most attention to?

In the United States, there has been a trend for well-known journalists to leave their news organisations and bring their audiences with them to other platforms, such as Substack and Patreon, where they establish subscription-based newsletters, reporting, and commentary. However, even in the USA, Reuters data show that just 7% of news subscribers pay for one or more journalist emails. Such a phenomenon is unlikely to occur much in Ireland, as news consumers overwhelmingly follow brands rather than individual journalists. Nearly three quarters of online news consumers follow favoured brands rather than individual journalists, reporters, or commentators. Those in the 65-plus age group are slightly more likely to seek out a particular journalist, but in general, the phenomenon of the ‘celebrity journalist’ is not very evident.

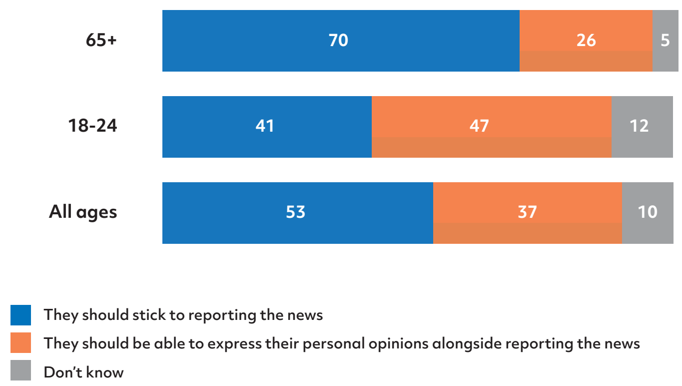
FIG 58: NUMBER OF JOURNALISTS RESPONDENTS REGULARLY PAY ATTENTION TO AND CAN NAME



Q. Please type in the names of up to five journalists that you regularly pay attention to (e.g. news presenters, columnists, or reporters)

Nearly two thirds of respondents cannot name a journalist or commentator whose work they follow. There is a small cohort (11%) who are highly engaged news consumers and can name five journalists to whom they regularly pay attention. The journalists in Ireland who are named most often are broadcasters. Even the most highly cited journalist is still only being named by 6% of respondents. The named journalists include: Claire Byrne, Matt Cooper, Pat Kenny, Gavan Reilly, Zara King, Richard Chambers, Fintan O'Toole, Brian Dobson, Miriam O'Callaghan, Sarah McInerney and Caitríona Perry.

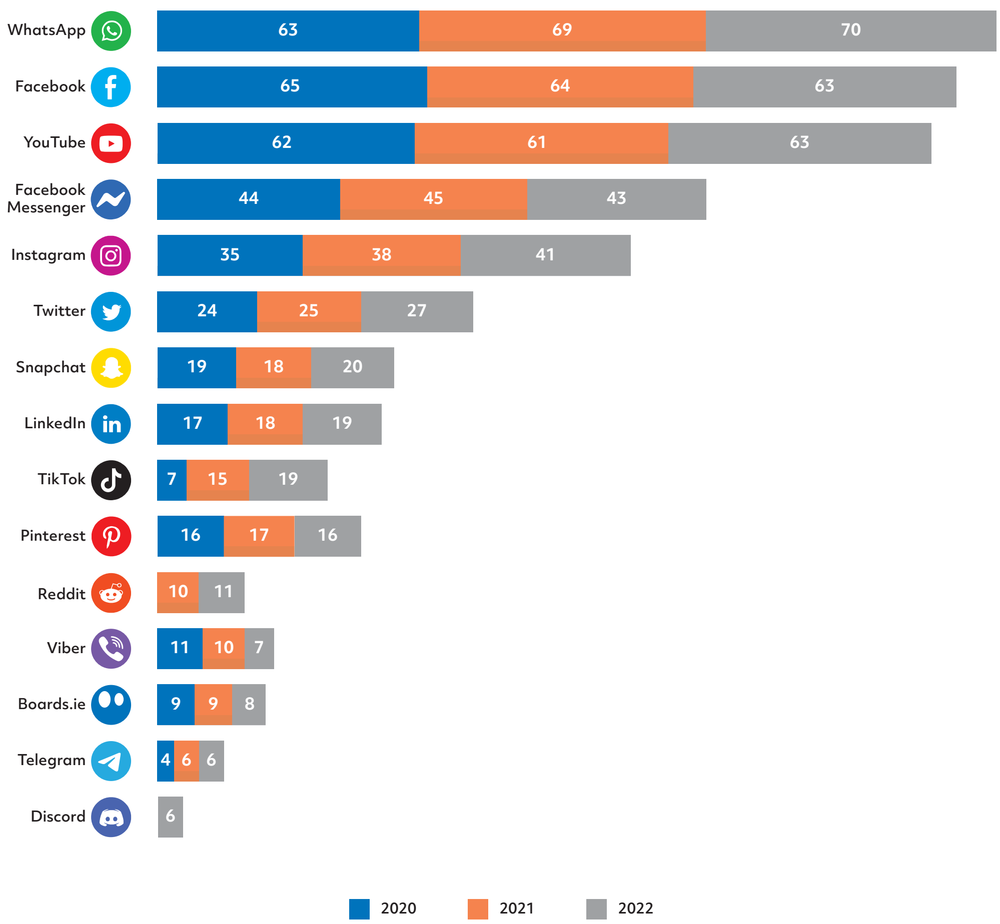
FIG 59: VIEWS ON JOURNALISTS' USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA



Q. Which of the following comes closest to how you think journalists should use social media like Twitter and Facebook?

A large majority of people aged 65 and over (70%) generally believe journalists should use social media to only post breaking news or other factual reporting. Those aged 18-24 have a more relaxed view of journalists' social media use, with nearly half (41%) of this age group supporting the posting of commentary and opinion. The older cohort have a more traditional view of the normative roles of journalists: that news and comment should be clearly separate. Younger people are more accepting of journalists having a viewpoint on topics and issues.

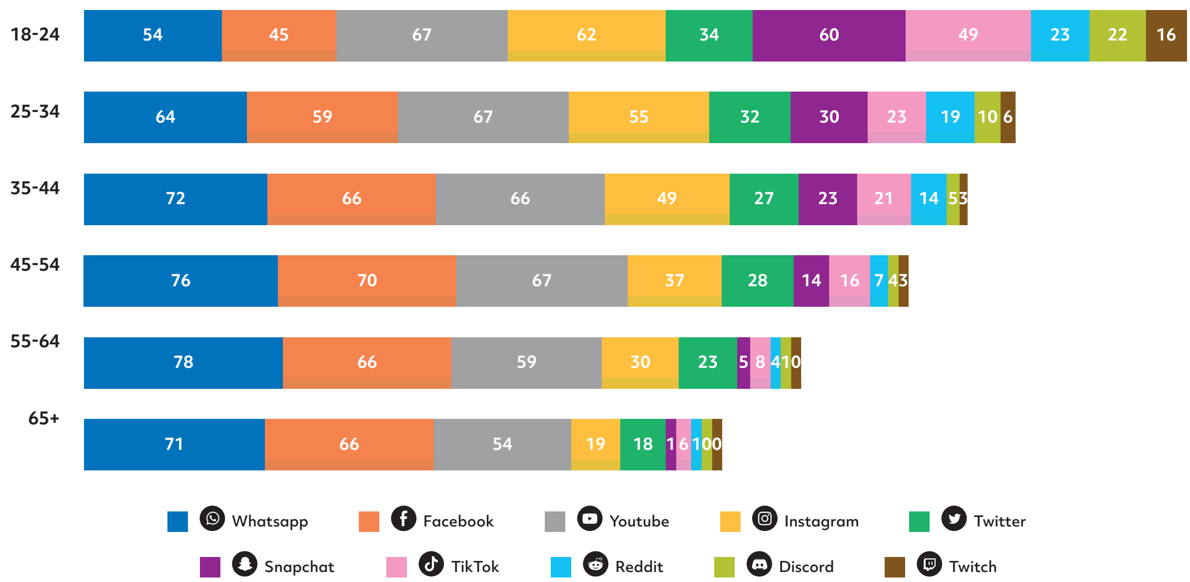
FIG 60: SOCIAL MEDIA USED FOR ANY REASON BY YEAR



Q. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? Please select all that apply.

WhatsApp continues to be the most used social media application in Ireland for any reason, with 70% of respondents using it. The popularity of the app continues to grow, although the rate of growth has slowed in 2022 to one percentage point, compared to six percentage points in 2021. Facebook has suffered a slight, 1pp decline in usage. TikTok recorded an increase of 4pp to 19%, but its influence is greater than that figure suggests, as content from TikTok is often shared on other social media platforms. Instagram recorded further steady growth in usage, up 3pp from last year, which was in turn an increase of 3pp from the previous year. LinkedIn also continues to increase its user numbers, recording a 1pp increase in each of the last three years.

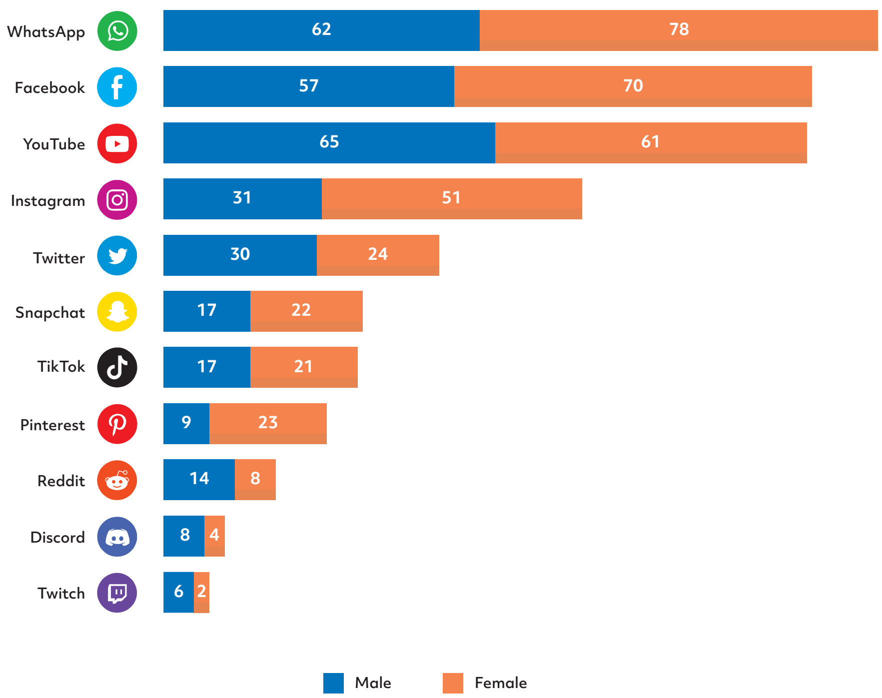
FIG 61: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY AGE



Q. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? Please select all that apply.

WhatsApp usage is relatively evenly distributed across all age groups, whereas Facebook is more popular among those in four major age groups: 35-44 (66%), 45-54 (70%), 55-64 (66%), and 65-plus (66%). The generational divide becomes more apparent with apps such as TikTok and Snapchat: 60% of those aged 18-24 are on Snapchat, compared with 1% of those aged 65 and 5% of those in the 55-64 age group. Almost half of the 18-24 cohort use TikTok, compared with 6% of the 65+ age group. Newer social media channels such as Discord and Twitch have recruited a substantial younger audience (22% and 16% respectively), but are largely unused by older audiences.

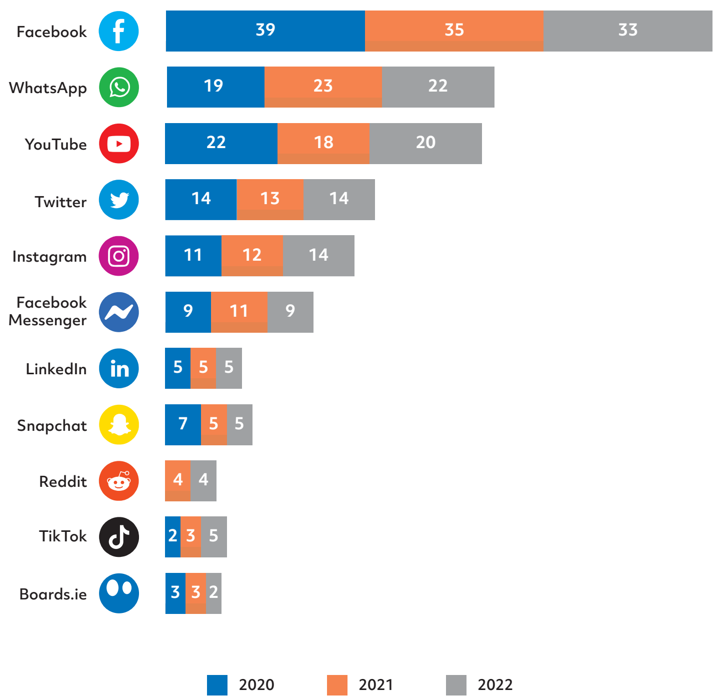
FIG 62: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY GENDER



Q. Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week? Please select all that apply.

Women use three of the four top scoring social media platforms more than men – these include WhatsApp (78% to 62%), Facebook (70% to 57%) and Instagram (51% to 31%). It's only with Youtube that men outnumber women (65% to 61%). Going down the list, men outnumber women on Twitter (30% to 24%), and thereafter women outnumber men on Snapchat (22% to 17%), TikTok (21% to 17%), and Pinterest (23% to 9%). Predictably men outnumber women on Reddit (14% to 8%). With the two newer platforms Discord and Twitch there are also more men than women.

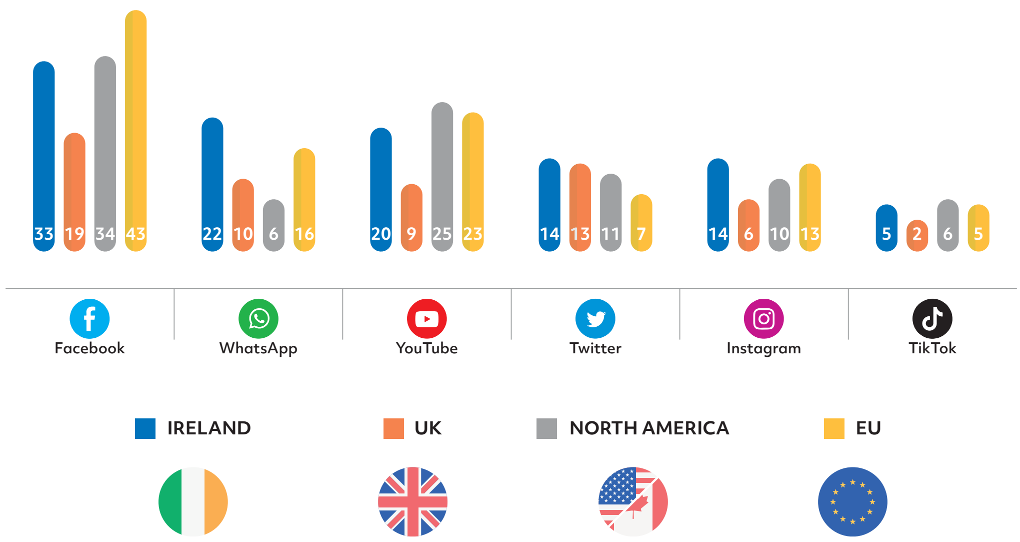
FIG 63: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS BY YEAR



Q. 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.

Although WhatsApp is the most popular social media network for any reason, when it comes to consuming news on social channels, Facebook is by far the most popular among Irish users. However, both WhatsApp and Facebook saw modest declines of one and two percentage points respectively, when it comes to sharing and accessing news content. The trend towards Instagram as a source of news continues, with an increase of two percentage points. Although starting from a low base, TikTok also recorded an increase among those using it as a news source, as professional news media organisations continue to experiment with content and tone on the platform.

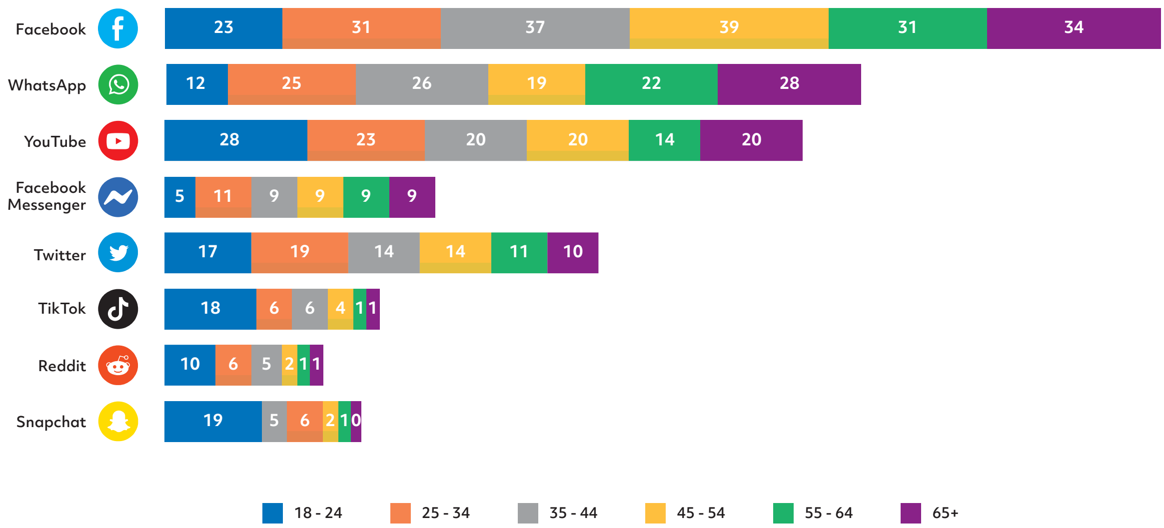
FIG 64: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Q. 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.

Irish users favour Facebook (33%) the most for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news. This number is dwarfed by the EU (43%) but similar to the North America (34%). WhatsApp use for these purposes is highest in Ireland (22%), with only 6% using it for news in North America. Use of Instagram for accessing news content among Irish users is also comparatively high, at 14%, compared to the UK (6%),North America (10%) and the EU average (13%). Twitter use for news is comparatively high in Ireland, with 14% of respondents accessing news on this platform, compared with 7% in the EU. The trend towards the use of closed, private messaging apps for sharing and consuming news is confirmed by these figures.

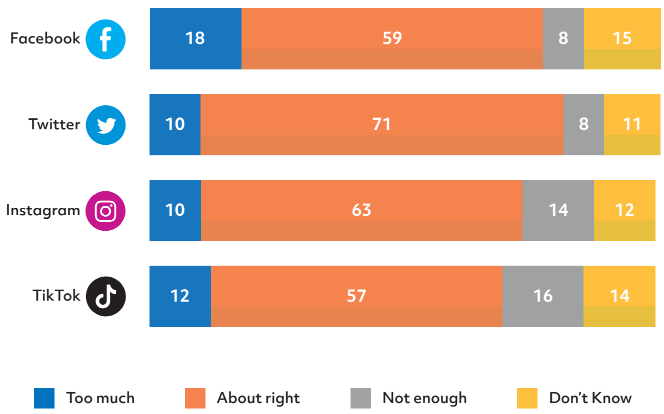
FIG 65: SOCIAL MEDIA USED FOR NEWS BY AGE GROUP



Q. 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.

Facebook is more popular with older news consumers, yet continues at attract users from all age cohorts. It is most popular with the 45-54 age group (39%), and is also used widely by those aged 35-44 (37%), and 25-34 (31%). Despite a widespread perception that younger people have moved on from the platform, a significant proportion (23%) of those aged 18-24 still use Facebook to access news content. Previously, we have seen that WhatsApp is popular with Irish news consumers. Here, we see this popularity particularly among those aged 65+ (28%), the 35-44 year olds (26%) and those aged 25-34 (25%). Meanwhile, YouTube, Snapchat and TikTok continue to be more popular with younger users as a news source.

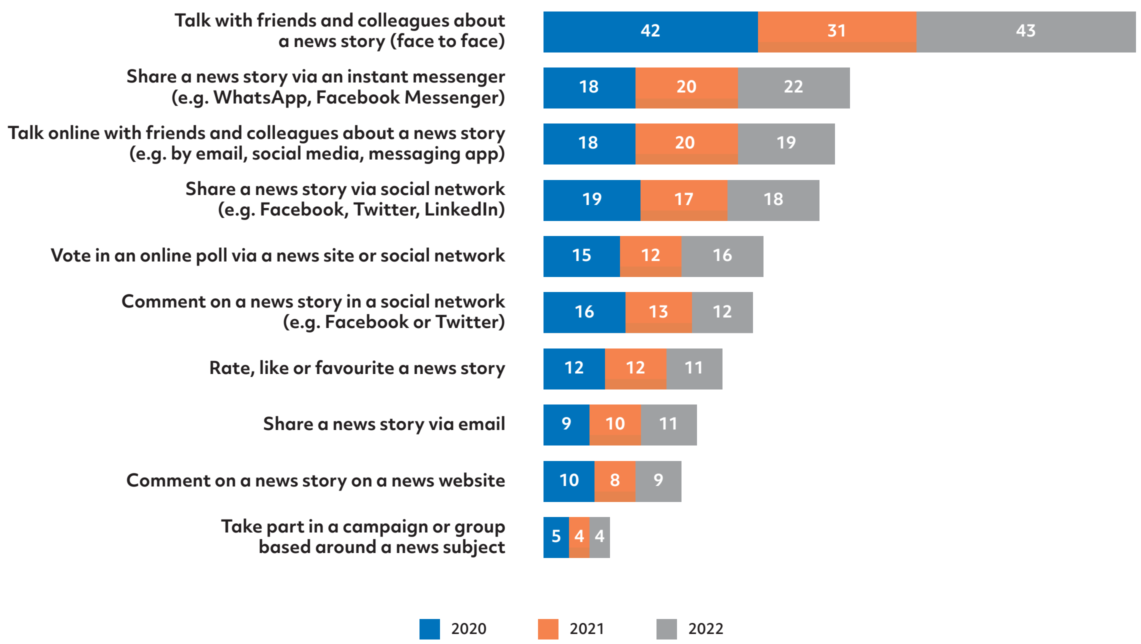
FIG 66: VIEWS ON THE AMOUNT OF NEWS OUTLET CONTENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



Q. Do you think that the amount of content you see from news outlets on [platform name] is too much, about right, or not enough?

Meta, the company that owns Facebook and Instagram, has made many changes to its algorithms in recent years. In general, the trend has been to promote personal content and to de-emphasise content provided by news organisations. They seem to have been successful, as large majorities of users on both platforms agree that the amount of content from news outlets is about right. Users of news platform Twitter are happy with their amount of news content. And TikTok users, while also happy, have a larger proportion of users (than those on other platforms) who would like to see more news content.

FIG 67: PARTICIPATION WITH NEWS. I USE IT TO...



Q. During the average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select ALL that apply.

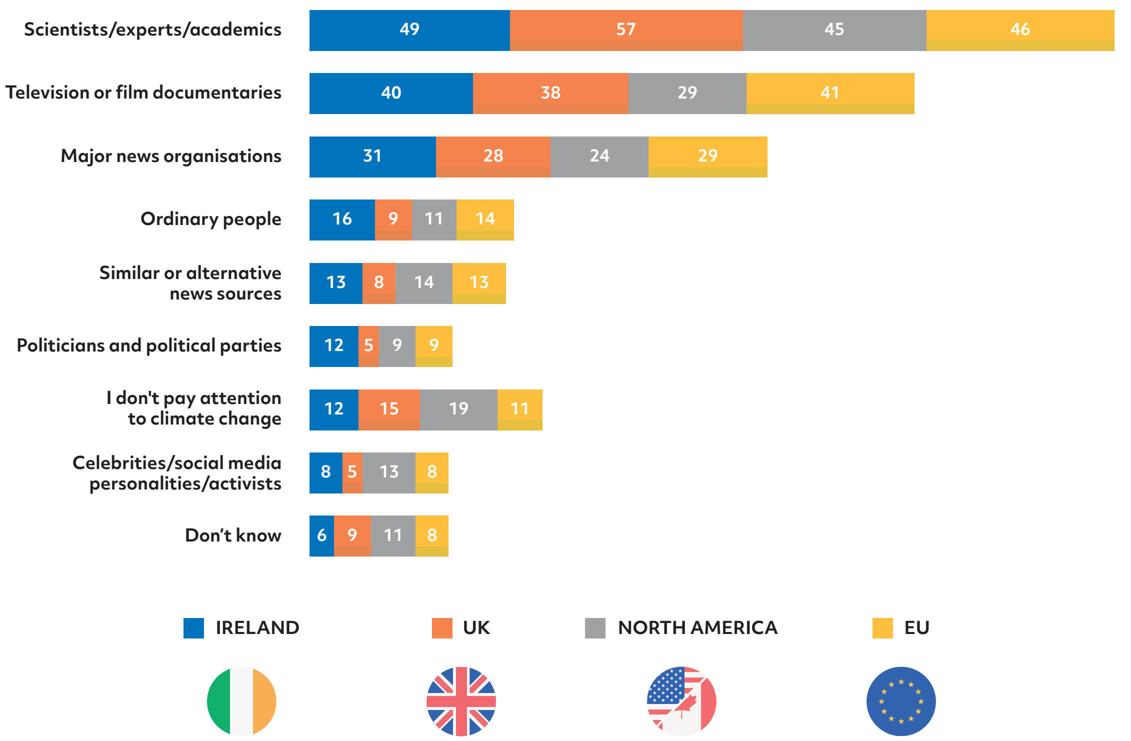
Irish people are nearly twice as likely to engage in a face to face conversation about something in the news (43%) as they are to share it over a messaging service (22%). Real-life social interactions concerning the news have increased sharply since 2021, when COVID-19 measures reduced social interaction. The increasing role of closed messaging apps in the news ecosystem is supported by the finding that people are more likely to share news via WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger than to share it via a social network such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn (22% vs 18%). The interactive functions of news websites are underused by Irish news consumers - only 9% comment on a news website.

SECTION FIVE

CLIMATE CHANGE

This section examines the sources people pay attention to in news about climate change. It also explores public attitudes to the positions news organisations adopt regarding climate action. These attitudes are then broken down by age and by political leaning.

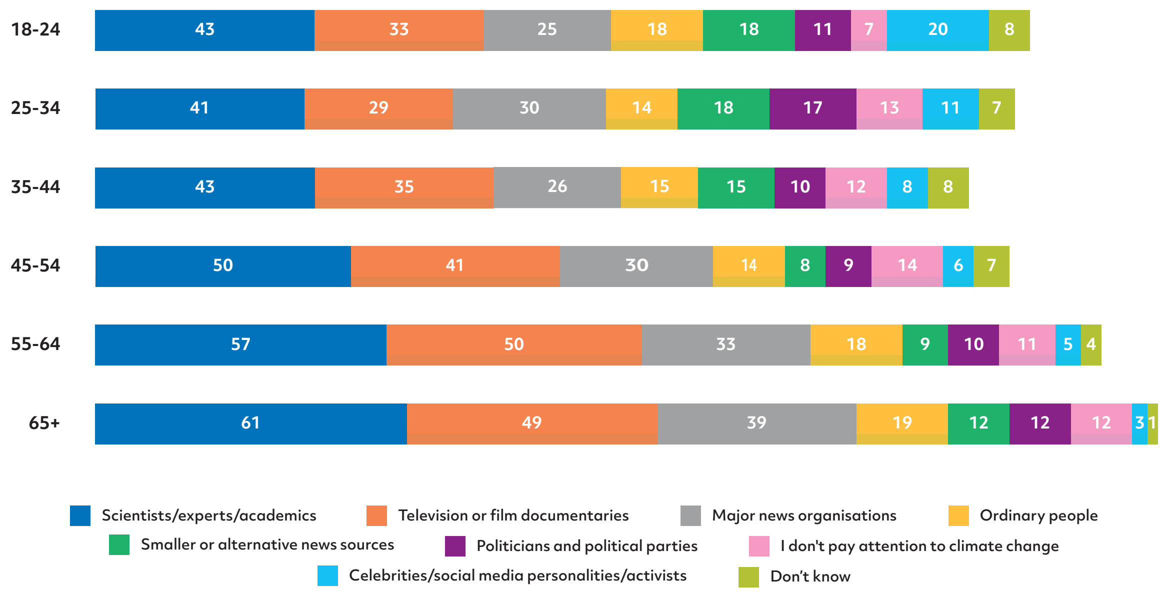
FIG 68: SOURCES OF MOST ATTENTION PAID TO CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS



Q. When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? Please select all that apply.

Academics, scientists and other experts are by far the most trusted sources featuring in news coverage of climate change across all the territories surveyed. Trust of these sources is relatively high in Ireland (49%), but in the UK the authority of scientists and academics is even more widely accepted (57%). Television or film documentaries are also valued sources of climate-related information, especially in Ireland (40%) and the EU (41%), but less so in North America (29%), where the media is more polarised on the subject of climate change. Mainstream media are still influential sources, particularly in Ireland, while celebrities, influencers, and campaigners do not receive much attention when they feature in the news. 12% of Irish consumers say they “do not pay attention to climate change”.

FIG 69: SOURCES OF MOST ATTENTION PAID TO CLIMATE CHANGE BY AGE



Q. When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? Please select all that apply.

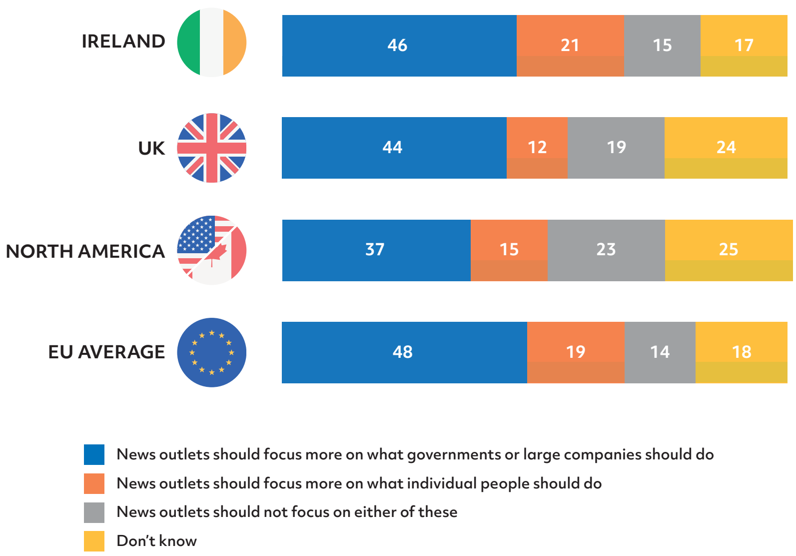
Researchers across academic disciplines are trusted sources of climate change information across all age groups in Ireland. Television or film documentaries are favoured by older cohorts, particularly those aged 55-64 (50%) and those 65+ (49%). Younger people (18%) also pay attention to small, independent, or alternative news media, more so than older people (12%). Those aged 65+ are more likely to ignore climate change in the news (12%) than younger people (7%). Celebrities and influencers have a much greater role in informing those aged 18-24 about climate change (20%) than those aged 65+ (3%).

FIG 70: I DON'T PAY ATTENTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE - BY REGION

A breakdown by region of those who answered that they did not pay attention to climate change

Around one in 10 Irish people are disengaged when it comes to consuming news about climate change, which means that nine in 10 are paying attention to the issue. These findings confirm recent research commissioned by the Irish Environmental Protection Agency, 'Climate Change in the Irish Mind' (2022), which showed high levels of public interest in climate change, and of support for climate action. However, the reasons for avoiding climate-related news content may be manifold: people may switch off due to reasons related to eco-anxiety, or may feel they already know enough about the topic to have made their minds up about it. Although there is a slight increase in disengagement from climate news outside the capital, the data do not support the notion that there is a rural-urban divide when it comes to interest in climate change.

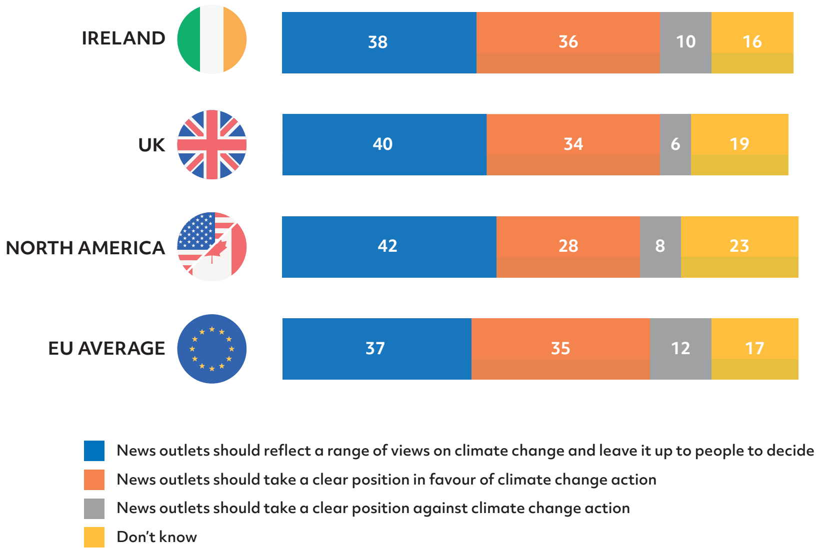
FIG 71: ATTITUDES TO NEWS COVERAGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Q. Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view?

Lifestyle changes by individuals and households, while important, will not reduce emissions on the scale required. Changes made by large-scale emitters such as company and industry sectors (energy, transport, agriculture) are much more impactful. The distinction between the responsibilities of the 'big players' and those of individuals and families in tackling climate change is relatively well understood in Ireland, with 46% of respondents agreeing that the news media should focus on governments and large companies, compared to 21% who believe the focus should be on what ordinary citizens can do. Some 32% of Irish respondents either don't know, or don't agree with either of these approaches. This suggests that there is a need for increased environmental, climate, and carbon literacy among the public.

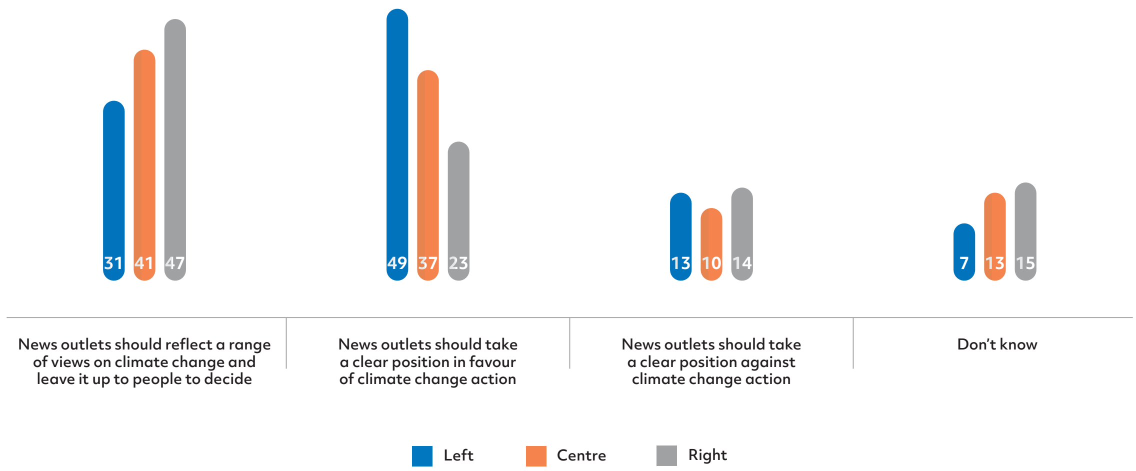
FIG 72: ATTITUDES TO NEWS OUTLET VIEWS ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Q. Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view?

There is considerable support for the notion that the media should provide a 'public square' where different views about climate change can be presented, leaving the public to make their own judgement, with 38% of respondents in favour of this approach. This finding suggests that a sizeable section of the public have a traditional view of the role of the media when it comes to climate change: they should present a variety of views without taking a side. However, there is also a large cohort (36%) who believe the media should take a clear stance in support of climate action. The proportion of respondents who either don't know, or who believe the media should oppose climate action is smaller in Ireland (26%) than in North America (31%) and in the rest of the EU (29%).

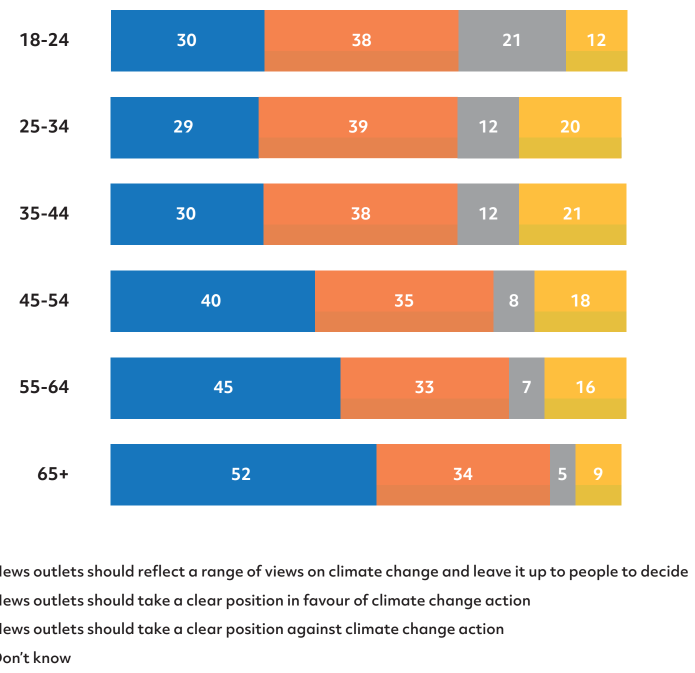
FIG 73: ATTITUDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE COVERAGE BY POLITICAL LEANING



Q. Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view?

When we look at the question of the media's stance on climate action through the lens of political orientation, we see that those on the right of the political spectrum are more in favour of the media presenting a range of opinions and leaving it to the individual to decide (47%), compared to those on the left (31%). Those identifying as right-wing are also more likely to support the notion of the media opposing climate action (14%) than people in the centre (10%). There is also a surprising amount of opposition to climate action among those on the left (13%). However, nearly half (49%) of those on the left of the political spectrum believe the media should take a stance in favour of climate action.

FIG74: ATTITUDES TO CLIMATE CHANGE COVERAGE BY AGE



Q. Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view?

A concerning finding of our report is that 21% of respondents aged between 18 and 24 believe the media should take an editorial stance against climate action. This figure is considerably higher than in other age cohorts; for instance, only 5% of those aged 65 and over hold similar anti-climate action views. This finding is somewhat at odds with the widespread perception that the younger generation, who are young enough to have experienced the 'Fridays for Future' school strikes, and to have been influenced by campaigner Greta Thunberg, overwhelmingly support climate action. The proportion of respondents who believe the media should advocate for climate action is relatively consistent across all age groups, ranging from 33% (55-64) to 39% (25-34). Support for the view that the media should present a range of views on climate change is strongest in the 65-plus age category (52%).

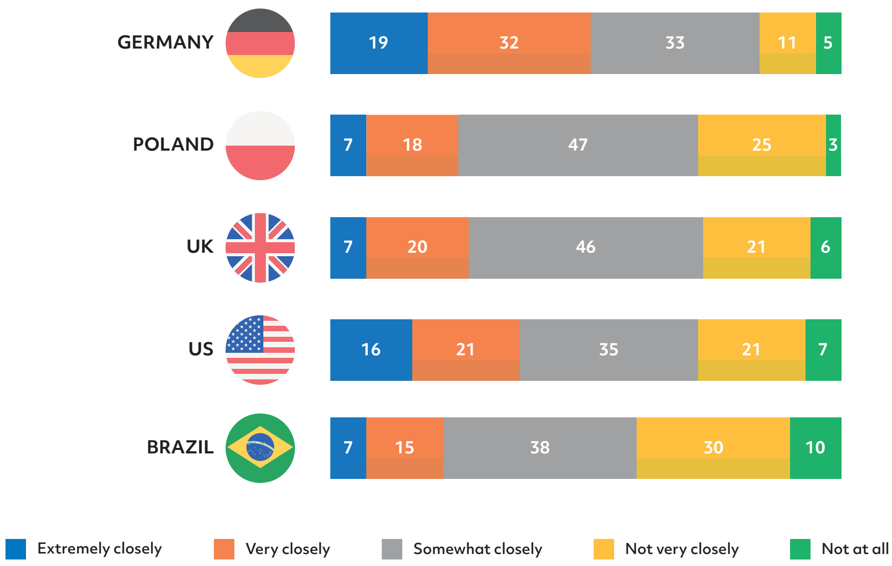
SECTION SIX

UKRAINE NEWS - USERS RESPONSE

The Reuters Digital News Report team at the University of Oxford decided to carry out a separate follow-up survey on how consumers have been accessing news about the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

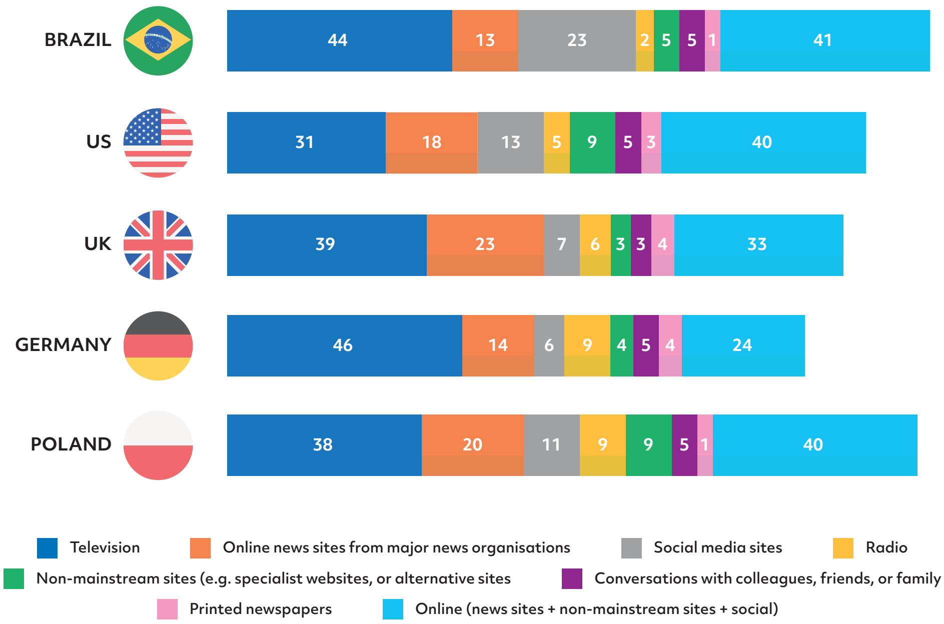
Fieldwork was carried out between late March and early April 2022, roughly one month after the Russian invasion began. Data were gathered in five countries representing different levels of proximity to the conflict. These countries were: Poland, Germany, the UK, Brazil and the USA.

FIG 75: LEVEL OF ATTENTION PAID TO NEWS ABOUT THE CONFLICT



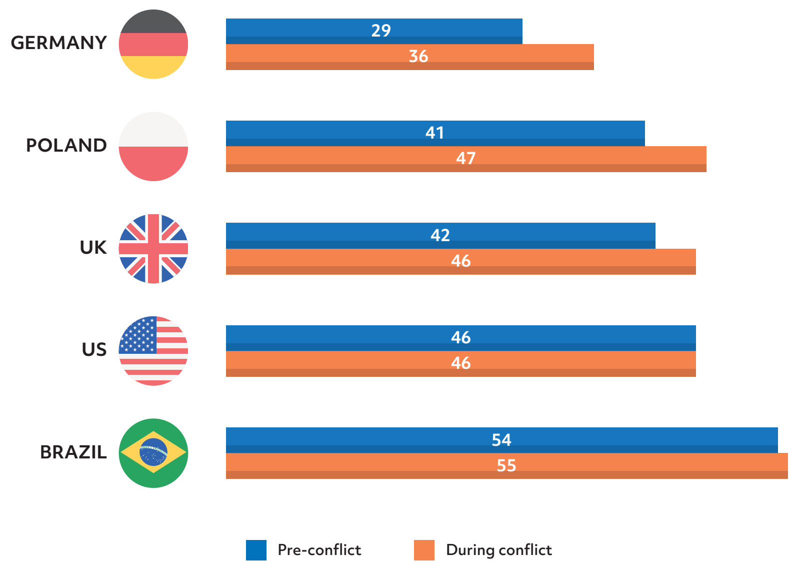
The country with the highest number of news consumers who followed the Ukraine conflict 'extremely closely' was Germany (19%), followed by the US (16%). Surprisingly, only 7% of users in Poland, (a country which borders Ukraine), followed the conflict extremely closely, along with the UK and Brazil on level pegging. German users followed the conflict the most across the three categories of 'extremely closely', 'very closely' and 'somewhat closely' at 84%. Polish consumers scored 18% in the 'very closely' and a much larger percentage in the 'somewhat closely' category (47%), making a total of consumers following the Ukraine conflict in Poland of 72%. This total is similar to that of the UK and the US. Brazil - having neither proximity nor a particular interest in the conflict - registered 60% overall interest.

FIG 76: SOURCES OF ATTENTION FOR NEWS ABOUT THE CONFLICT
PROPORTION WHO SAY THEY PAY MOST ATTENTION TO EACH SOURCE FOR NEWS ABOUT THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE CONFLICT - SELECTED COUNTRIES



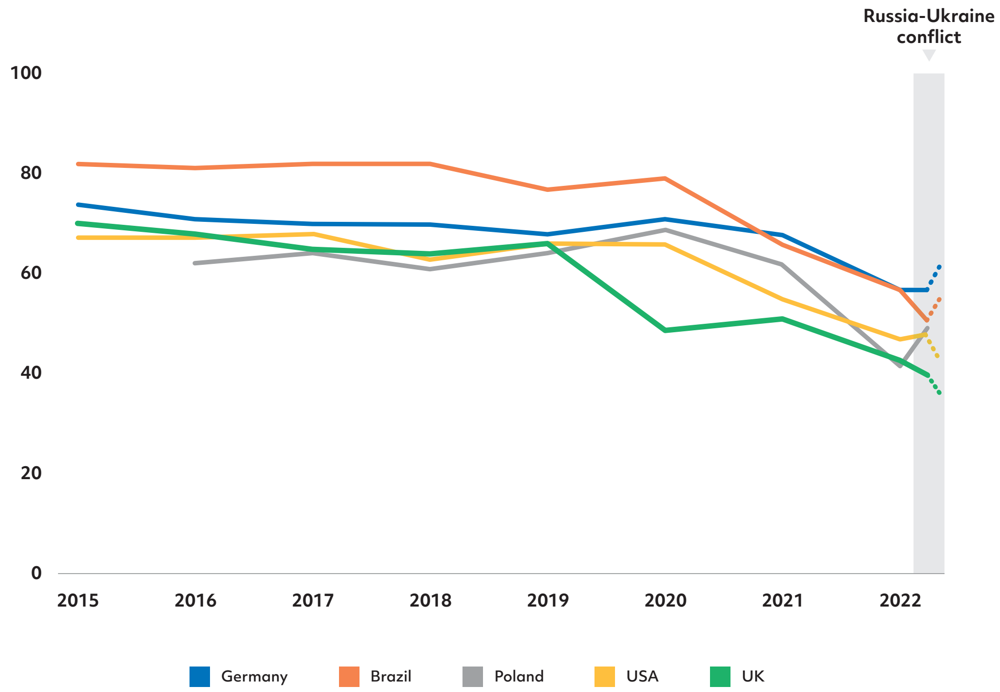
Television is the preferred medium for following news about the Russia-Ukraine conflict in each of the selected countries - with Germany in the lead (46%) and Brazil close behind at 44%. Television is a medium to which audiences turn when there are large events unfolding, as has been demonstrated previously. Television was a favourite source of news at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Major news organisation online sites rate second for most – in particular in the UK (23%) followed by Poland (20%). For Brazil, it is social media sites that come in second (23%). Printed newspapers are in the least used category across all countries. When you combine all the online sites (including major news sites, non-mainstream news sites, plus social media), then the numbers are: Brazil (41%), US (40%), Poland (40%), the UK (33%) and Germany (24%).

FIG 77: NEWS AVOIDANCE AND THE CONFLICT
PROPORTION WHO SOMETIMES OR OFTEN AVOID THE NEWS - SELECTED COUNTRIES



The proportion of consumers who said they often or sometimes avoided the news after the start of the conflict, shows increases in four of the five countries. These are Germany (+7pp), Poland (+6pp), the UK (+4% pp) and Brazil (+1pp). The US stayed the same at 46%. Brazil had the highest percentage of users who avoided news both before and after the start of the conflict: the final tally being 55%. The data in the larger report have shown that one of the main reasons for news avoidance is if it has a major effect on a person's mood, and therefore it is unsurprising if war turns people off news watching one month after the start of an invasion.

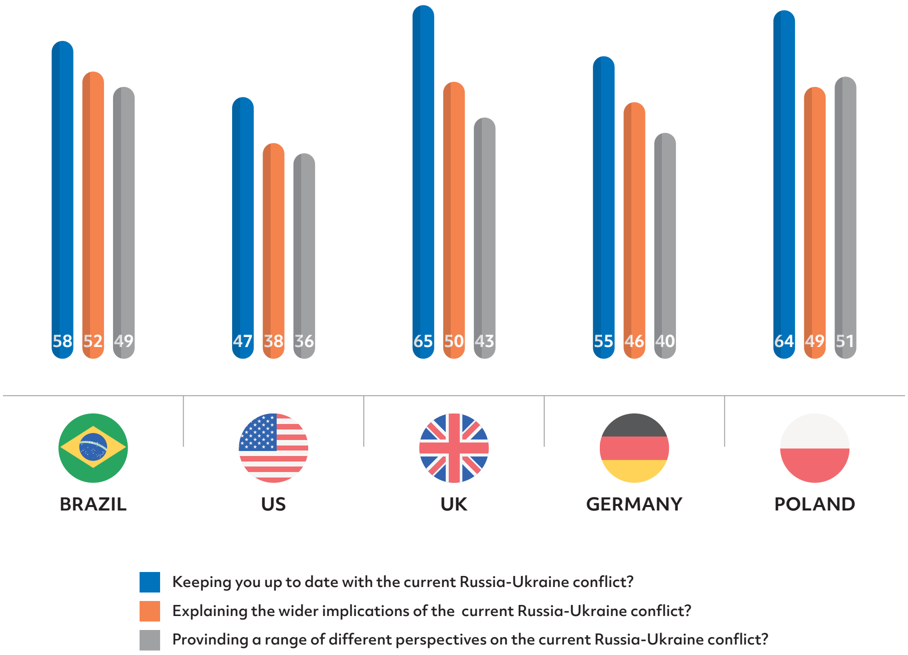
FIG 78: LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE NEWS
PROPORTION EXTREMELY OR VERY INTERESTED IN NEWS (2015-2022) - SELECTED COUNTRIES



Q. How do people feel about the news media's coverage of the conflict?

Over the past eight years the level of interest in news is on a downward trajectory in these countries. Since the conflict in Ukraine, interest has gone up slightly in Germany, Brazil and Poland. This demonstrates that news avoidance and news interest do not cancel each other out. People can still be interested in news, while also screening out depressing subjects they would rather avoid.

FIG 79: ARE NEWS MEDIA DOING A GOOD JOB OF...



In a question about the usefulness of media in doing a good job of reporting Ukraine, news consumers were mostly happy. In terms of keeping audiences up to date with the conflict - the highest levels of satisfaction are in the UK (65%) and Poland (64%). The other three countries are also generally happy with being kept up to date: Brazil (58%), Germany (55%) and the US (47%). In terms of whether or not the media are doing a good job of explaining the wider implications of the conflict, the numbers here are slightly down from the previous category: Brazil (52%), UK (50%), Poland (49%), Germany (46%) and the US (38%). In terms of providing a range of different perspectives, Poland scores the highest (51%), Brazil (49%), UK (43%), Germany (40%) and the US (36%). There is certainly room here for the media to improve the range of perspectives in coverage terms and to explain the wider implications of such conflicts.

Irish Radio still making a noise

Prof Colleen Murrell

Interest in news is down in Ireland in 2022, according to this year's Reuters Digital News Report; but it is down from a high point of news engagement which focused on COVID-19 stories, beginning with the first lockdown in March 2020. To put this into context, in comparison with figures from the UK, North America and the EU, only 9% of those surveyed in Ireland are 'not very interested' or 'not at all interested' in news. And when the morning alarm goes off, the largest number of Irish consumers reach for their smartphones (35%) for their first news contact.

Radio news in the morning is still very important. Radio comes in at second place (31%) as the medium for first news engagement. While only 13% of those aged 18-24 listen to radio news first, this number rises to 37% for those aged 55-64 and 46% for those aged over 65. In the early morning, in broadcast news terms, there is less competition from television than there is in some other countries. Early morning television in Ireland is a confusing media space: while Virgin Media offers a solid menu of news and light entertainment on its 'Ireland AM' show, RTÉ's offerings are a mixture of teleshopping, recycled programming and Euronews. Printed newspapers come in last as a first point of news contact and COVID-19 lockdowns have not helped in this regard.

Radio news is an agenda setter for the rest of the media, in the way that printed newspapers used to be. RTÉ's Morning Ireland is the place for politicians to ensure their messages get aired, despite robust interviewing by a cast of forthright and probing presenters. It would be informative and interesting to hear more radio correspondents' on-the-road reports on air, but these are heavy on resources and early morning radio news in Ireland is mostly covered by multiple phone interviews.

Radio – and audio generally - benefits from being a medium you can listen to while getting dressed, showered, and grabbing breakfast. Now that commuting is back on the agenda, you can keep listening to radio news on the bus, in the car and while walking or cycling. In this year's list of *most frequently used* traditional media brands, RTÉ Radio News comes in second (after RTÉ TV news) and has retained its market share over the past six years. Today FM comes in sixth, local radio news is seventh and Newstalk is eighth.

People also have a very high degree of trust in radio news. When asked to name the news brands they trusted most, the 'local/regional radio' category was trusted by 70% of those surveyed, coming in third being RTÉ news, and the *Irish Times*. In the trust category, Today FM scored 65% and Newstalk 64%. We all hope COVID-19 is waning and yet, should it continue to play an important role in our lives, our respondents care about how it is covered. In our survey, it remains the subject our respondents say attracts the most false or misleading news. This is a higher number than news about politics, celebrities, climate change or immigration. Setting a trustworthy agenda on this issue therefore remains a core necessity.

Aside from listening to traditional radio news programming, Ireland also continues to demonstrate a strong interest in podcasting. The number of people who say they have listened to a podcast over the past month rose five percentage points this year to 46% with the most popular categories being 'specialist subjects' (science and technology, business, media and health). This was followed by 'lifestyle', 'contemporary life' (including crime), 'news, politics and international events', and finally 'sport'. The highest number of podcast listeners are found in the 25-34 year-old cohort, but the highest jump in numbers is in the 45-54 year-old group.

Podcasting is seen as a more intimate way in which to listen to audio programming, in the belief that people listen to podcasts on their own and through headphones, while out on a walk or commuting. With anxiety about the general state of the economy and the health service in the wake of the pandemic it is perhaps not surprising that business and health are top of the list of interests.

Most podcasts in Ireland are in the chat or interview format, rather than the narrative format, unless related to cold case crimes. Popular podcasts can be found in all sectors – public service media, commercial media, and increasingly on the online sites of print newspapers. Many are hosted by big names in the Arts and comedy worlds – such as the '2 Johnnies Podcast', 'The Blindboy Podcast', or 'An Irishman Abroad with Jarlath Regan'. For podcasts more closely associated with news, you can switch to RTÉ, commercial radio stations such as Newstalk or Today FM, or newspaper sites. At RTÉ, podcasts can be weekly stand-alone series, such as 'World Report' or 'Your Politics', or they can be snippets from radio programmes such as 'Today with Claire Byrne' that are repurposed and then rebroadcast as 'podcasts'. Similarly, on Newstalk or Today FM you can find podcast series but also podcasts that could be classified as 'programmes streamed later'.

Irish podcasts do not tend to feature as highly as they should as winners in global awards for podcasting that specialise in the narrative and storytelling formats. At the New York Festivals Radio Awards 2022, there were only a handful of finalists in the podcast section[1] and two Silver awards for 'Unusual Suspects' by GoLoud and RTÉ's Doc on One for the 'Gunplot' series. There were winners and finalists from Ireland in other sections such as in Documentary, Culture and the Arts, Features, Profiles/Community Portraits and National or International Affairs – but these were all for radio programmes rather than for podcasts.

In the 2021 annual Journalism Awards, sponsored by NewsBrands Ireland[2] , there was only one category of 'podcasts' for awards, with no separation between subject categories or formats. However, in 2022, the brand new Irish Podcasting Awards[3] are open for applications in multiple podcast categories. According to the website of this new organisation, it will 'work closely with the British Podcast Awards and Australian Podcast Awards to share best practice, and all have similar aims to grow awareness of podcasts from their home countries'. There will be 20+ categories and awards and all formats are welcome. Here's to celebrating a burgeoning creative future for Irish podcasting.

Colleen Murrell is a Full Professor in Journalism at the School of Communications at DCU.

1 https://radio.newyorkfestivals.com/winners/List/a38e6f40-0a53-4e6c-a6ee-634bcce860e0
2 http://journalismawards.ie/previous-winners/winners-2021/3
3 https://www.theirishpodcastawards.ie/

The Gen Z Challenge for News Brands

Dr Kirsty Park

This year's report shows that 18–24-year-olds, the upper age band of the generation known as Gen Z, are the most disinterested in news, least engaged with news brands, and most likely, along with 24–34-year-olds, to avoid news. It would be easy to dismiss these findings as the recurring issue of younger people being less interested in news generally, but it does appear to be part of a growing trend in which younger people are disengaging from mainstream news in a different way than they used to.

In the 2016 Digital News Report[4], 53% of 18–24-year-olds in Ireland reported that they were extremely or very interested in news, but that figure has steadily declined each year with only 25% in this year's report claiming the same. When it comes to avoiding news, Gen Z cite reasons such as a negative effect on mood, being worn out with the amount of news there is, and a sense of helplessness about what to do with the information. While we have seen both a national and international trend towards news avoidance as the pandemic reaches its latter stages, the disconnect between young people and news may go deeper than that. Young people are consistently engaging less with established news brands and, troublingly, 20% avoid news because they feel it is untrustworthy or biassed.

An interview and usage-based study from Reuters[5] found a disconnect between traditional news brands which take a view of news as being 'what you should know' and younger audiences who also see it as what is 'useful, interesting and fun to know', qualities the authors note are not associated with most news brands. Indeed, in last year's Digital News Report[6] 18–24-year-olds were much more likely to report coming across news while on social media rather than seeking it out on news websites or apps. Unsurprisingly, Gen Z engages with news on social media more than any other generation, but the main motivations they gave for using platforms like TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram for news were incidental i.e., that they came across news while there for other reasons and that those platforms are a fun and entertaining way to pass the time.

The differences in behaviour, motivation and interest among Gen Z are likely not something they will simply grow out of, but rather represent a generational difference among a cohort who have grown up in a highly saturated and individualised media environment. A look at the social media data from this year highlights the vastly different online world which Gen Z is occupying. Almost one in five 18–24-year-olds reported using Discord, a platform which is practically non-existent among the upper age groups and absent from many mainstream media discussions about social media. We see a similar situation with other platforms which are heavily skewed towards youth usage such as Twitch, Reddit, TikTok and Snapchat.

4 https://fujomedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Digital-News-Report-Ireland-2016.pdf
5 https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/how-young-people-consume-news-and-implications-mainstream-media
6 https://fujomedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/15651_DNR_2021_Web.pdf

The question is which news brands will make an effort to both understand and reach these younger, emerging news consumers? Attempts to do so often focus on short-form, video-based content. On TikTok, brands like the Washington Post[7] have focused on creating humorous, informal content with Joe.ie[8] or Newstalk[9] taking a similar approach by using a variety of content styles such as vox pops or humorous takes on news stories. Other brands, such as Sky News[10], focus on breaking down their broadcast news stories into short clips, with RTÉ News[11] and Virgin Media[12] News both taking a similar approach here.

However, the answer for news producers may not be as simple as resorting to video either. 18–24-year-olds in this year's report consume podcasts at a higher level than other groups and show a preference for text due to the speed with which they can gather information. Virgin Media News is one of the latest to embrace the podcast trend, launching a weekly podcast featuring three of their well-known journalists who are particularly active on social media discussing 'the world of news and how it's made', a format that appears to be targeting a youth audience in a new way.

The challenge for news brands is to figure out how to engage younger audiences in an attention economy where traditional news has already lost its footing with a generation who are inundated with endless streams of information, shaped by algorithms designed to cater to their individual interests. One study of Danish youth consumers[13] found that young people judge the value of news services based on the ease by which they can access what they want. In other words, they are willing to engage, but it needs to be easy to find and in a format which suits them. This has implications for the design of news websites and apps, as well as content formats.

Just as news companies were faced with a challenge of early adoption and adaptation as print media declined, so there is a similar challenge and opportunity now. Learning how to reach Gen Z with news they find engaging may be an act of future proofing for news organisations and it undoubtedly requires innovation and a willingness to think beyond traditional methods of creating news. Most of all, it will require listening to younger people to understand their motivations, interests, and desires when it comes to what news they want and how they want to consume it.

Dr Kirsty Park is a Post-Doctoral Researcher at DCU's Institute for Future Media, Democracy and Society.

7 https://www.tiktok.com/@washingtonpost
8 https://www.tiktok.com/@joedotie
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EU Plans to Safeguard Journalism and Media Freedom

Dr Eileen Culloty

The EU has ambitious plans to safeguard journalism and media freedom through a range of new acts and recommendations. As ever, it is the tricky issue of enforcement that will determine whether there is a bridge or a chasm between rhetoric and reality.

Safeguarding media freedom

Historically, news media have played a central, if imperfect, role in democracy by informing the public while holding the powerful to account. To fulfil that role, news media must be able to operate free from threats or undue influence. As indicated by the Digital News Report, Irish confidence in the news media's independence from political and commercial influence is greater than the EU average; although, notably, a third of Irish news consumers have no opinion on this crucial matter.

In its annual review of media freedom[14], Reporters Without Borders highlighted the (longstanding) issues that threaten media freedom in Ireland including: the concentration of media ownership, the failure of successive governments to reform the 2009 Defamation Act, and the financial precarity facing media outlets. The EU-wide picture[15] is characterised by the continued erosion of media freedom with increased government control over media, the murder and intimidation of journalists, and growing public hostility towards media.

To counteract these trends, EU institutions will implement a suite of new acts and recommendations including the European Media Freedom Act and the Recommendation on Safety of Journalists. At the same time, the EU is updating the rules that govern how tech companies operate within the region through the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Digital Services Act, and the Digital Markets Act. It is a busy time for media policymakers. To complicate matters, Ireland is updating the Broadcasting Act with an Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill, which will establish a new media regulator. Ultimately, this new structure will have to be updated as new EU rules and frameworks are adopted.

Proposed rules and frameworks

The European Media Freedom Act has the ambitious goal of safeguarding the pluralism and independence of the media in the EU's internal market. A first draft is expected in Autumn 2022. However, current proposals have been criticised for their narrow focus on the economic dimension of media and the EU's single market. For example, the Act is expected to harmonise internal market rules by establishing an EU-wide framework for direct and indirect State support to the media sector. However, as the NGO Article19 argues[16], focusing solely on the economic market fails to address the role of independent journalism as a public good that needs protection in its own right. This is an important criticism considering that it is questionable whether the free market can sustain a plurality of independent media. Afterall, the digital market is tipped in favour of tech companies which have captured the audience and the advertising market.

14 https://rsf.org/en/country/ireland
15 https://rsf.org/en/classement/2022/europe-central-asia
16 h ttps://www.article19.org/resources/eu-article-19s-recommendations-european-media-freedom-act/

More concrete proposals for action stem from the Recommendation on "the protection, safety and empowerment of journalists"[17]. It called on Member States to address a wide range of issues including access to information, protections for female and minority journalists, and the threat of spurious legal cases or SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation). SLAPPs aim "not to succeed in court, but to drain their targets of money, time, and energy in an effort to discourage them from reporting further on a particular person or issue"[18]. When investigative journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia was murdered in 2017, she faced more than 40 defamation cases in her native Malta and the threat of libel action in the UK. The latter is an example of "defamation tourism", which the EU hopes to challenge by asking national courts to dismiss cross-border defamation cases that lack substance.

The EU rules will apply to cross-border cases only, but governments are advised to provide safeguards against SLAPPs in national law. Within Europe, Ireland is highly unusual in hearing defamation cases before a jury, which tends to result in incredibly large awards. Such large pay-outs have been criticised for their potential chilling effect on media reporting and the incentivisation of SLAPPs. The Minister for Justice recently commissioned a major review of Ireland's defamation laws, which called for the removal of juries in defamation cases.

Beyond news media, the EU is implementing new frameworks for tech companies through the Digital Services Act and Digital Markets Act. These acts will establish standards for how online platforms operate across a range of areas including content moderation and competitive practices. Tech companies will need to participate in independent audits to assess the systemic risks of their practices while providing regulators and third-party researchers with much-needed access to data. If the tech companies fail to meet their obligations, financial penalties (up to 6% of global revenue) will apply. These proposals will need to be voted into law and are unlikely to be enforced across the EU until 2024 at the earliest.

In the meantime, individual states must implement the appropriate structures and roles including a Digital Services Coordinator to oversee the compliance of the online platforms established in the state. Ireland's Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill will likely need to be updated to reflect the requirements of new EU rules.

17 https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/recommendation-protection-safety-and-empowerment-journalists
18 https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2020/09/ireland-notified-by-council-of-europe-over-legal-action-against-media-outlet/

Enforcement
From an Irish perspective, one of the most notable features of the new EU packages is the move away from the country-of-origin principle. Under that principle, a company offering services across the EU is subject to laws and regulations in the country in which it is based or headquartered. Consequently, when it comes to data protection, Ireland is the lead regulator for Google, Meta, Microsoft, and other companies that have their European headquarters here. Few argue that Ireland has managed this responsibility well.

The European Commission has stepped in to prevent Ireland becoming the primary regulator for the Digital Services Act. The Commission itself will perform that role. As Johnny Ryan, a senior fellow at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties observes, Ireland had "the chance to become the key location for digital regulation, which would make us a central player in the world's digital economy … [but] the EU clearly regards Ireland as having failed in its role as the primary regulator"[19]. For its part, it remains to be seen whether the Commission's enforcement will live up to the promise of a new era for tech accountability and user protections and whether calls to protect media freedom will have the desired effect of shoring up European democracies.

Eileen Culloty is an Assistant Professor in the School of Communications at DCU.

19 https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/ireland-blew-its-chance-to-be-super-enforcer-for-online-content-across-eu-1.4863504

Our News Media Are Not Perfect But We Should Resist Importing Partisan Conflict

Dr Dawn Wheatley

The history of Ireland's media consumption habits is punctuated by a familiar language but with those international twangs: TV dramas from *Dallas* to *Breaking Bad*, Sky Sports, late-night US chat shows, and British tabloids – the influence of UK and American media culture is unquestionable. However, this does not mean we exist in an exclusively imperialised or derivative media state, especially when it comes to news. Yet again, this year's Digital News Report has shown us that domestic radio and TV news consumption remains strong among Irish audiences, and our native newspaper brands' recognition and reach prevail.

Nevertheless, it is in fluid online spaces, as users scroll through social media feeds, where we always see more fragmentation and blurred social and geographic boundaries. Much of the mainstream conversations around journalism and news consumption in these digital spaces over the past six years has been dominated by two key issues: polarised audiences and misinformation, both of which conjure up a barrage of Brexit and Trumpian examples which brought these issues to the fore in 2016. The temptation may be to map those socio-political experiences from the UK and US onto Ireland, given our exposure to their news media, but this year's Report provides further evidence for why this is a problematic template to follow – while there are even reasons to be optimistic.

The issue of polarisation has concerned many as audiences seemingly exist in their own digital social silos, built around their own self-selected media choices coupled with algorithms and recommended content continually nudged by technology companies. The effect this has on perceptions of "the other side" is important to understand, and to explore whether audiences really feel that kind of division we hear so much about, and if it translates to news outlets. Respondents were asked about their perception of how politically close together or far apart the main news organisations in Ireland are: 62% of people said either "quite" or "very" close together, suggesting most of the Irish audience do not actually perceive their news providers as ideologically opposed, a stark contrast to only 35% in both the UK and the US who believe news outlets are close together; Ireland is also above the EU average of 51%. Even at a basic level of political ideology, 34% of this year's survey respondents described themselves as in the centre (compared with 20% in UK and 22% in US): in a European context, only Germany and the Czech Republic had higher for their "centre" categories. When this is expanded to include centre-right and centre-left, this middle ground captures 60% of Irish news consumers.

Regarding misinformation, 2022's results actually show a seven percentage point annual decline from last year for those who say they are concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet (58%). Although clearly not a resolved problem, this suggests that audiences are feeling more confident in navigating digital spaces and some of the perils associated with misleading and inaccurate information. Perhaps the post-Brexit/2016 US election "fake news" frenzy, coupled with the questionable Covid information flows that followed, have somewhat settled in terms of public panic.

These two factors of misinformation and perceived polarisation will affect the trust that audiences have in the news as an institution. More than half (52%) of Irish respondents agreed that “you can trust most news most of the time”, which is higher than the UK (34%) and the US (26%), positioning us closer to European neighbours like Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Norway and the Netherlands, which all sit between 50%-56%. Even among specific brands, in Ireland, three in every four people (74%) say they have trust in RTÉ. This collective support or endorsement towards a media institution cannot be taken for granted: in the US last year, the most trusted specific brands were CBS News and ABC News, both at 48%.

These results are just a sample of what is covered in the report, but all point in a similar direction: media culture from the UK and US, and the narratives associated with these social and political contexts, cannot be simply imported into the Irish landscape. This is not to suggest that our media institutions should ever be beyond reproach, but the figures instead reiterate the broad consensus and middle ground underpinning our news-consuming public, which is likely the envy of many countries currently feeling defined by ideological division and politicised news media.

Ireland has a core middle ground and relative cohesion – facilitated and reinforced by a multi-party electoral system – which lies in stark contrast to the binaries and polarisation evident elsewhere. Furthermore, the results from this year’s report serve as a reminder that ideological tensions and conflict which can flourish online do not necessarily translate into fragmented offline media: the tribal nature of many online interactions are not representative of people’s entire media diets, nor do they capture the media habits of the majority, let alone the political values of all.

That said, as audiences have so many options and alternatives, news producers should not take this confidence in them for granted: the skeleton of moderate cohesion underpinning Irish audiences should be fleshed out with responsible and considered news content that avoids fuelling conflict and division, but which a provides fair, verified and responsible critique of those under scrutiny. News producers may be tempted to reach for the extreme edges in some hunt for “two sides” or balance, or to replicate the partisan and ideological hostility which is a staple of US and UK news; the risk is that in doing so, they overlook – and potentially isolate – the majority of their audience.

Dr Dawn Wheatley is an Assistant Professor in the School of Communications at DCU.

We Are All Climate Reporters Now

Dr David Robbins

This past year has been a busy one for climate change reporters. We have had the UN climate conference in Glasgow, the landmark IPCC Assessment Report[20], the recent World Meteorological Organisation's 'State of the Climate' Report[21], and, a little closer to home, the 'turf wars' – a controversy over a proposed ban on the commercial extraction of peat for domestic heating.

It has also been a time when a Nieman Lab headline – "If you're not a climate reporter now, you soon will be" – came true, as events such as the Ukraine war threw up climate-related issues like energy security and global food supply, and climate broke out of the environment silo and spread to other newsroom 'beats'.

Media reflects on its role

It was also a year when the Irish media engaged in some critical reflection on the role of journalism in the climate crisis. At a DCU Centre for Climate and Society conference in May, RTÉ's director of news and current affairs, Jon Williams, spoke about how public pressure had helped the organisation re-examine how it reported on climate change. The DCU centre has also been engaging with media organisations – Bauer Media, the Examiner Group, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, and RTÉ – on how to broaden and deepen their climate coverage.

These interventions have focused on interrogating newsroom cultures and journalistic routines that lead to reflexive framings and approaches. "How did we cover this last time? or "how do we usually do this?" are common newsroom questions which require critical examination in a climate crisis. We have also started to see self-critical analysis of the media, in the form of op-ed reflections on the limitations of standard media framings of conflict[22], drama, and economic cost. There is a sense that the media have woken up to the notion that they are not bystanders in this crisis.

What readers want

The media have certain normative roles to play when it comes to climate change: informing the public; warning them of dangers; holding authorities to account; and investigating climate issues. But what is less clear is what the public want from the media when it comes to climate coverage. This year's Reuters Digital News Report provides some insights. A sizeable cohort, especially among older age groups, have a traditional view of the media: that they should present a variety of views and allow individuals to make up their own minds. A similarly sized group take a different view: that news outlets should take a clear editorial stand in favour of climate action.

These responses, I suggest, relate more to people's views around the role of the media than to any potential support for – or opposition to – actions to reduce carbon emissions. A lot of people want the media to remain impartial and play the 'honest broker', while a lot of others want more advocacy.

Journalism that takes a side

This question of activist journalists, or advocacy journalism, is set to become more central as the climate debate moves on from questioning the reality of climate change to questions around specific climate actions. The media will play a central role in informing the public about carbon budgets, emissions targets, and particular policy measures.

20 https://www.ipcc.ch/assessment-report/ar6/
21 https://library.wmo.int/index.php?lvl=notice_display&id=22080#.YozXGGDMIUY
22 https://www.independent.ie/opinion/comment/information-battle-on-climate-crisis-has-been-won-but-a-new-frontier-beckons-41674693.html

These debates – which US climatologist Michael Mann calls "The New Climate Wars" – will pit the forces of inertia and delay against those calling for policies that align with what science tells us is necessary. It may well be that media organisations will have to pick a side: align with those who want them to present all-sides-of-the-argument coverage, or move with those who demand that the media take a stand in favour of climate action. The public also wants news organisations to focus on the roles of government and on large corporations in reducing emissions rather than on the actions individuals can take. It seems that Irish people understand to a large extent that it is big systems such as energy, transport, and agriculture that have to change in order to tackle the climate crisis.

Need for environmental literacy
However, there is still some work to be done by the media, especially public service media, in increasing literacy around climate, carbon, and the environment generally. Some 32% of respondents either do not know whether the media should be focussing on government and business or do not think they should. This suggests there is still a constituency among the public which does not have an appreciation of from where Ireland's emissions originate.

Climate and the environment come in at number six in the list of topics of which Irish news consumers are interested. There is considerable demand for climate-related news content, and some news organisations, including Bloomberg[23], Forbes[24], the UK Times[25], and The Sun[26], have introduced dedicated climate channels or employed 'green teams', while Sky News has a daily climate programme[27].

The 'Greta generation'
Despite the widespread impression that younger people are more engaged with these topics, the demand for climate news is greater among the older age groups. Some 55% of those aged 65 and over want to read news reports about climate, compared to 34% of those aged 18-24. The notion that younger people, the 'Greta generation', are highly engaged and motivated by climate-related issues, is further undermined by another of the report's findings: 21% of those aged 18-24 believe that news outlets should take a clear editorial stance in opposition to climate action. This figure contrasts with the 5% of those aged 65 and above who take a similar view.

The data in the climate change section of this year's report also dispels the notion that there is a rural-urban divide on the climate question. People in Munster are just as interested in climate news as people in Dublin (both 45%), and those in Connacht and Ulster (42%) and the Rest of Leinster (43%) are not far behind. The report gives clear cues to the media concerning climate coverage. Legacy media outlets will be heartened to see the high levels of demand and engagement from older news consumers. And there is a large cohort of younger people to be won over with innovative coverage. There are already signs that the media are rising to these challenges.

Dr David Robbins is an Assistant Professor in the School of Communications at DCU. He is also the director of the DCU Centre for Climate and Society.

23 https://www.bloomberg.com/green
24 https://www.forbes.com/sustainability/
25 https://www.thetimes.co.uk/environment
26 https://www.thesun.ie/topic/green-team/
27 https://news.sky.com/topic/daily-climate-show-9341

Coverage of Russia's War in Ukraine Reinforces Existing Challenges for Media Freedom and Impactful Journalism

Dr Tetyana Lokot

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February and the escalation of Europe's biggest war in the 21st century has garnered massive media attention. Ukrainian journalists, citizens and officials have been working non-stop to witness the tragedies of Russian aggression and provide context, often using social media such as Telegram, Twitter or YouTube for live reporting of events on the ground. Foreign media professionals have also been working in and around Ukraine to document the impact of the humanitarian crisis, the human rights atrocities and war crimes. They have also reported on the displacement of millions of Ukrainian civilians as well as other political and economic impacts of the war on a global scale.

The crisis unfolding around the war has reinvigorated debates about key challenges of reporting on conflicts. First among these is the challenge of creating impactful journalistic content that captures the public interest and holds global attention. Closely tied to it is ensuring the security of independent journalists working in conflict zones. Third is the struggle to counteract disinformation and malicious propaganda while prioritizing freedom of information in a highly charged environment. None of these challenges are new, yet the present moment shows that the impact of such crises on media coverage and news interest can differ greatly depending on proximity to the conflict and other factors.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has notably changed how both Ukrainian and foreign media have been covering the simmering eight-year conflict after the 2014 Russian occupation of Crimea and parts of eastern Ukraine's Donbas region. Since February, many more Western outlets have sent reporters to Ukraine and surrounding countries. In May 2022, *The Washington Post* established a new Kyiv bureau[28] – a first for the newspaper – to ground its Ukraine coverage, which had previously been done from the Moscow office.

To satisfy the heightened interest in Ukrainian affairs, veteran local media organisations such as *Ukrainska Pravda* and *NV (Novoe Vremya)* rolled out new and improved English-language versions. *The Kyiv Independent*, a new website launched by a small team who left the *Kyiv Post*, became Ukraine's fastest growing English-language publication, with editor-in-chief Olga Rudenko named one of *TIME Magazine's* 2022 Next Generation Leaders.[29]

28 https://www.washingtonpost.com/pr/2022/05/11/isabelle-khurshudyan-max-bearak-lead-new-washington-post-bureau-kyiv/
29 https://time.com/6174883/olga-rudenko-kyiv-independent/

These positive developments have been overshadowed by the tragic deaths of journalists working in Ukraine. According to Ukrainian media NGO the Institute of Mass Information, since 24 February, 29 Ukrainian and foreign journalists and media workers have died in Ukraine, with at least seven of them killed while doing their work.[30] In territories occupied by Russia, independent journalists have been prevented from working, threatened, or detained. Media freedom organisations have highlighted the need for more economic support, especially for regional media, and safety training and gear for local reporters and fixers, with campaigns launched by the likes of the Media Development Foundation[31] and support hubs opened by the Institute of Mass Information and Reporters Without Borders.[32]

Russian state media outlets RT and Sputnik have been banned across the EU and restricted on social media as conduits of state war propaganda and disinformation. Meanwhile, within Russia itself, new draconian censorship laws have forced the remaining independent media into exile, preventing journalists in the country from reporting accurately about the war.

The turbulent events of the war and their coverage seemingly had an uneven impact on media consumption and news attitudes globally. A follow-up survey[33] commissioned by the DNR in March-April 2022 to assess how Russia's war in Ukraine might be changing news habits, polled people in five countries: Brazil, Germany, Poland, the UK, and the US. The survey found that, while a majority of the respondents in each country were following news of Russia's war in Ukraine at least 'somewhat closely', geographical proximity – and immediate impact – were factors. Attention was highest in Germany (with 84% following the news extremely closely, very closely or somewhat closely), as well as in Poland, which borders Ukraine (72%), and the UK (73%). These countries are close to the conflict and there, the economic and political fallout is already affecting the lives of ordinary citizens. In Brazil, both politically and geographically farther from the conflict, around 40% of news consumers were either not following it 'very closely' or not following it at all.

Although not all changes in news consumption can be attributed to extensive coverage of the conflict, the follow-up survey found little evidence of the reversal of the key trends in the pre-war DNR survey – namely, decreases in news interest and increases in news avoidance. In fact, in Germany, Poland, Brazil and the US, the proportion who said they sometimes or often actively avoid the news had increased since the start of the war. We know news avoidance can stem from the negative effect war coverage has on people's mood, so it is not surprising that the devastating events of Russia's war in Ukraine have caused more people to turn away from it.

30 https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/medijni-zlochyny-rosiyi-u-vijni-proty-ukrayiny-onovlyuyetsya-i44098
31 https://www.sos.mediadevelopmentfoundation.org/en
32 https://rsf.org/en/ukraine-after-lviv-rsf-opens-second-press-freedom-centre-kyiv
33 See Section Six of this report

Despite the increase in news avoidance, the proportion who said they access news several times a day increased in Poland by 6pp, as did the overall level of interest in news in the country (also by 6 pp). This highlights that news avoidance and news interest are not mutually exclusive. Yet it raises concerns about the impact of the courageous work of frontline reporters, as it does not seem to have affected trust in news (apart from a 4pp increase in the UK). Across the five countries, nearly half or more of the respondents believed news media to be doing a good job with coverage and keeping people up to date. At the same time, they felt the media had not performed quite as well for explaining the wider implications of the conflict or providing a different range of perspectives on it.

In Ukraine itself, the war brought its own challenges for assessing media consumption and interest in news. According to 2021 research by Detector Media, television remained the most common media channel for Ukrainians to access news about Ukraine and the world,[34] mirroring DNR's own findings for the countries in its follow-up survey in 2022. However, more recent surveys reveal that Russian military attacks on communications infrastructure and mass displacement of Ukrainian civilians have seen almost one third of Ukrainian news consumers lose access to TV viewing in their homes.[35]

A significant proportion of Ukrainians have shifted their media consumption to online platforms, mixing digital TV broadcasts with online news websites and social media channels. They have prioritised mobile access over desktop[36] (reflecting the loss of stable fixed connections) and have been devoting more time to online news – with many Ukrainian media outlets reporting a 75-300% growth in traffic by April 2022.[37] Despite heightened news consumption, the top visited websites are still google.com, YouTube and Facebook. Ukrainian media outlets also run active channels on messenger apps such as Telegram, where many Ukrainians go to get news updates, real-time air raid alerts, and latest casualty numbers. Overall Ukrainians' time spent online has dropped, perhaps indicative of the overall information fatigue.

While Ukrainians' media consumption or news avoidance have been affected by the war far more directly than for media audiences elsewhere, the complex hybrid media environment nonetheless reinforces the value of in-depth reporting and the need for more journalistic efforts to explain the far-reaching implications of the conflict. Enabling local and foreign independent journalists to provide clear and contextualized coverage in a variety of forms and on multiple platforms, and giving them the resources to do so safely, should become the key task for media organisations and others supporting free expression and media development worldwide.

Dr Tetyana Lokot is an Associate Professor in DCU's School of Communications.

34 https://detector.media/infospace/article/196477/2022-02-15-media-consumption-in-ukraine-change-in-media-needs-and-defeat-of-russian-propaganda/

35 https://detector.media/rinok/article/197651/2022-03-19-tretyna-ukraintsiv-vtratyla-dostup-do-telebachennya-vdoma/

36 https://detector.media/rinok/article/197341/2022-03-10-shcho-vidbuvaietsya-z-ukrainskoyu-tele-ta-internet-audytoriieyu-pid-chas-viyny/

37 https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/cherez-vijnu-trafik-deyakyh-ukrayinskyh-media-zbilshyvsya-na-300-imi-i45225