

Digital News Report Ireland 2024

Tuarascáil ar Nuacht Dhigiteach na hÉireann 2024



Institiúid DCU um Meáin Todhchaí,
Deonlathas agus Sochái
DCU Institute of Future Media,
Democracy and Society



Coimisiún
na Meán

Digital News Report Ireland 2024

Tuarascáil ar Nuacht Dhigiteach na hÉireann 2024

Colleen Murrell, Claire English,
David Robbins, Dawn Wheatley



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



Coimisiún
na Meán

Contents

Coimisiún na Meán Foreword	4
DCU FuJo Foreword	8
Methodology	10
Authorship and Research Acknowledgments	12
Executive Summary	14
Section 1: Irish News Consumers	20
Section 2: Sources and Devices	44
Section 3: Attitudes and Trust	56
Section 4: Brands and Discovery	72
Section 5: Digital Innovation: AI plus short news videos.....	98
Essay: Audiences are apprehensive of AI news, especially when AI is in the driver's seat Dr Amy Ross Arguedas.....	112
Essay: Ireland's young people: Scattered across platforms Prof Colleen Murrell.....	116
Essay: Why trust in news is not a one-size-fits-all Dr Dawn Wheatley	118
Essay: The greening of the media Associate Prof David Robbins.....	120
Essay: Will new regulatory powers address disinformation? Dr Eileen Culloty	122
Essay: Fundamentally incompatible? Irish public service media reliance on private capital Dr Roderick Flynn.....	124

Coimisiún na Meán Foreword

Now in its tenth year, this year's Digital News Report Ireland continues to provide an in-depth exploration of the Irish news and media landscape. As we confront challenges such as heightened concerns surrounding evaluating the truth in an AI-driven news environment, declining youth engagement and trust, and a persistent rise in news avoidance post-pandemic, the report continues to provide a valuable analysis that guides Coimisiún na Meán's commitment to sustain and fortify a robust, diverse, and credible journalism and news ecosystem.

As part of this commitment, Coimisiún na Meán recently concluded a public consultation on two new journalism schemes supporting high quality coverage, in both Irish and English, of local authorities and circuit and district court hearings. These schemes, and an ancillary funding measure, are due to commence this summer financed by a fund of €6 million allocated from the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media, Catherine Martin TD. A proposed Media Fund will support an additional four schemes addressing digital transformation, news reporting, access and training, and community media as recommended within the Future of Media Commission Report, and we look forward to working with the Department on the implementation of these schemes in the future.

Additionally, Coimisiún na Meán supports the industry in Ireland through a Sponsorship Scheme and Sectoral Learning and Development Programme which awarded almost €800k to over 50 projects so far this year. For example, An Coimisiún this year is continuing to support the Learning Waves Journalism Graduate Programme which provides internships to 10 graduates in local commercial radio stations, with a focus on news content for multiple platforms, scriptwriting for news, court reporting, and the promotion and creation of Irish language content.

It is encouraging to see that overall trust in news remains high in Ireland compared to other international regions. This year 46% of respondents reported that they can trust most news most of the time. 2024 has brought us two referendums as well as local and European elections and it is imperative that people can access reliable news so they can make informed decisions, free from interference or bias. In April, Coimisiún na Meán published its Guidelines in Respect of Broadcast Coverage of Elections. These Guidelines provide direction and advice to broadcasters as to how fairness, objectivity, and impartiality can be achieved in their coverage of elections. While the guidelines retain the moratorium on election coverage, An Coimisiún has committed to carrying out a review of the broadcast moratorium later this year.

The European Media Freedom Act (EMFA) has been adopted by the EU with the aim of protecting media pluralism and independence across the EU. The Act will come into force in Ireland in August 2025. The Digital News Report provides valuable information on the diversity of media sources being accessed by news consumers in Ireland, an important measure of media plurality. To promote public awareness and transparency around media ownership and diversity of content Coimisiún na Meán is supporting the ongoing development of the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) in Ireland, in collaboration with Dublin City University and the Global Media Registry. The MOM project seeks to provide an accessible, sharable database of media ownership and content information relating to television, radio, printed press, and online media. This work forms part of Coimisiún na Meán's larger strategy of policy development, research, licensing, and media literacy activities which promote media plurality and empower audiences to understand the media they use.

Another significant piece of EU regulation, the Digital Services Act (DSA), came into full force in February this year, introducing with it a range of responsibilities relating to online safety for Coimisiún na Meán as Digital Services Coordinator in Ireland. As we can see in this year's report, online platforms including social media continue to be a popular source of news, yet misinformation and the trustworthiness of sources are a real concern to news consumers in Ireland. Under the DSA, very large online platforms are required to address and mitigate the societal risks associated with mis/disinformation on their services. Coimisiún na Meán will continue its work to combat the harmful impact of disinformation through media literacy, research, and investigations, cooperation with national and EU stakeholders, and by ensuring that the platforms established in Ireland are complying with their legal responsibilities.

This year's report underscores various challenges and opportunities within the news ecosystem. We trust that it will not only inform the efforts of industry stakeholders in enhancing the quality and engagement of their offerings but also guide our own endeavours at Coimisiún na Meán as we seek to ensure a diverse, creative, and pluralistic media landscape in Ireland.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners at the DCU Institute of Future Media, Democracy and Society (FuJo) for the continued dedication and expertise they bring to the publication of this report each year, particularly to Professor Colleen Murrell, Dr Claire English, Dr Dave Robbins and Dr Dawn Wheatley.

Rónán Ó Domhnaill

Media Development Commissioner

Réamhrá Coimisiún na Meán

Anois ina dheichiú bliain, leantar le Tuarascáil na bliana seo ar Nuacht Dhigiteach na hÉireann ag cur mioniniúchta ar fáil maidir le tírdhreach nuachta agus meáin na hÉireann. Agus sinn ag tabhairt aghaidh ar dhúshláin amhail inní níos airde ó thaobh na fírinne a mheasúnú i dtimpeallacht nuachta atá faoi threorú IS de, rannpháirtíocht agus muinín na hóige atá ag titim, agus méadú leanúnach ar nuacht seachanta i ndiaidh na paindéime, leantar leis an tuarascáil seo ag cur anailíse luachmhaire ar fáil lena dtugtar treoir do ghealltanas Choimisiún na Meán chun éiceachóras iriseoireachta nuachta atá láidir, éagsúil agus inchreidte a neartú agus a chothú.

Mar chuid den ghealltanas seo, rinne Coimisiún na Meán comhairliúchán poiblí ar dhá scéim nua iriseoireachta lena dtugtar tacaíocht do thuairisciú ardchaighdeán, i mBéarla agus as Gaeilge araon, ar údarais áitiúla agus ar éisteachtaí na Cúirte Cuarda agus Dúiche. Beidh na scéimeanna seo, agus beart maoiniúcháin choimhdigh le tosú an samhradh seo arna maoiniú le ciste 6 milliún tugtha ag an Aire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus na Meán, Catherine Martin TD. Tabharfar le Ciste Meán Molta tacaíocht do cheithre scéim sa bhreis chun dul i ngleic le claochlú digiteach, tuairisciú nuachta, rochtain agus oiliúint, agus meáin phobail mar a mholtar laistigh de Thuarascáil an Choimisiúin um Thodhchaí na Meán, agus táimid ag súil le bheith ag obair leis an Roinn ar chur i bhfeidhm na scéimeanna seo.

Ina theannta sin, tugann Coimisiún na Meán tacaíocht don tionscal in Éirinn trí Scéim Urraíochta agus Clár Foghlama agus Forbartha Earnála a bhronn beagnach €800k chuig níos mó na 50 tionscadal go dtí seo i mbliana. Mar shampla, leanann an Coimisiún ag tacú le Clár Iriseoireachta do Chéimithe Learning Waves i mbliana lena gcuirtear ar fáil intéirneachtaí do 10 céimithe i stáisiúin raidió tráchtála áitiúla, le béim ar ábhar nuachta le haghaidh ardán iomadúil, scríbhneoireacht scrípte le haghaidh nuachta, tuairisciú cúirte, agus ábhar Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus a chruthú.

Is ábhar misnigh é a fheiceáil go bhfuil an mhúinín ghinearálta ó thaobh an nuachta de fós ard in Éirinn i gcomparáid le réigiúin idirnáisiúnta eile. Thuairiscigh 46% de na freagróirí gur féidir leo muinín a bheith acu as an gcuid is mó den nuacht an chuid is mó den am. Beidh dhá reifreann againn in 2024 mar aon le toghcháin áitiúla agus Eorpacha agus tá sé ríthábhachtach gur féidir le daoine nuacht iontaoifa a fháil d'fhonn cinntí eolacha a dhéanamh, saor ó chur isteach nó ó chlaontacht. I mí Aibreáin, d'fhoilsigh Coimisiún na Meán a threoirlínte maidir le Tuairisciú Craolta ar Thoghcháin. Cuirtear ar fáil leis na treoirlínte seo treoir agus comhairle do chraoltóirí maidir le cothroime, oibiachtúlacht agus neamhchlaontacht a bhaint amach agus iad ag tuairisciú ar thoghcháin. Cé go gcoimeádtar leis na treoirlínte seo an moratóir ar thuairisciú toghcháin, gheall an Coimisiún athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar mhoratóir craolacháin níos déanaí i mbliana.

Ghlac an tAontas Eorpach leis an nGníomh Eorpach um Shaoirse na Meán d'fhonn iolrachas agus neamhspleáchas sna meáin a chosaint ar fud an AE. Tiocfaidh an tAcht i bhfeidhm in Éirinn i mí Lúnasa 2025. Cuirtear ar fáil le Tuarascáil ar an Nuacht Dhigiteach eolas luachmhar ar éagsúlacht foinsí na meán a bhfuil rochtain ar thomhaltóirí nuachta in Éirinn orthu, tomhas tábhachtach ar iolrachas na meán. Chun feasacht phoiblí agus trédhearcacht a chur chun cinn maidir le húinéireacht na meán agus éagsúlacht ábhar, tá Coimisiún na Meán ag tacú le forbairt leanúnach an Mhonatóra ar Úinéireacht na Meán (MÚM) in Éirinn, i gcomhar le hOllscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath agus Clárann Dhomhanda na Meán. Féachann an MÚM bunachar sonraí inrochtana, inroinnte ar úinéireacht na meán agus ábhair a bhaineann le teilifís, raidió, meáin priontáilte, agus na meáin ar líne a chur ar fáil. Tá an obair seo mar chuid de ollstraitéis Choimisiún na Meán maidir le forbairt polasaí, taighde, ceadúnú, agus gníomhartha litearthachta na meán a chuireann iolrachas na meán chun cinn agus tugann sé cumhacht do lucht féachana na meáin a mbaineann siad tairbhe astu a thuiscint.

Tháinig píosa suntasach eile de rialachán an AE, an Gníomh um Sheirbhísí Digiteacha, i lán-fheidhm i mí Feabhra na bliana seo agus ag tabhairt isteach raon freagrachtaí leis maidir le sábháilteacht ar líne do Choimisiún na Meán mar Chomhordaitheoir Seirbhísí Digiteacha in Éirinn. Mar is féidir linn a fheiceáil i dtuarascáil na bliana seo, leanann ardáin ar líne, lena n-áirítear na meáin shóisialta de bheith ina fhoinse nuachta a bhfuil tóir orthu ach is fíor-ábhar inmí iad mífhaisnéis agus iontaofacht foinsí do thomhaltóirí nuachta in Éirinn. Faoin GSD, ní mór do na hardáin an-mhór ar líne aghaidh a thabhairt ar na rioscaí sochaíocha maidir le bréagaisnéis/mífhaisnéis ar a gcuid seirbhísí agus iad a mhaolú. Leanfaidh Coimisiún na Meán ar aghaidh lena chuid oibre chun troid i gcoinne an tionchair dhochraigh trí litearthacht sna meáin, taighde agus fiosrúcháin, comhoibriú le páirtithe leasmhara náisiúnta agus an Aontais Eorpaigh, agus trína áirithiú go bhfuil na hardáin a bunaíodh in Éirinn ag comhlíonadh a bhfreagrachtaí dlíthiúla.

Léirítear i dtuarascáil na mbliana seo dúshláin éagsúla agus deiseanna laistigh den éiceachóras nuachta. Tá súil againn go dtabharfaidh sé eolas, ní hamháin d'iarrachtaí páirtithe leasmhara tionscail chun cáilíocht agus rannpháirtíocht a gcuid dtairiscintí a fheabhsú, ach go dtreoróidh sé ár n-iarrachtaí freisin i gCoimisiún na Meán agus sinn ag iarraidh tírdhreach meán éagsúil, chruthaithigh agus iolraíoch a chinntiú in Éirinn.

Mar fhocal scoir, ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil lenár gcomhpháirtithe ag an Institiúid um Thodhchaí na Meán, Daonlathais agus Sochaí (FuJo) OCBÁC as an dúthracht leanúnach agus saineolas a thugann siad d'fhoilsiú na tuarascála seo gach bliain, go háirithe leis an Ollamh Colleen Murrell, an Dr. Claire English, an Dr. Dave Robbins agus an Dr. Dawn Wheatley.

Rónán Ó Domhnaill

Coimisinéir Forbartha na Meán

DCU FuJo Foreword

By Prof Colleen Murrell

Welcome to the 10th Digital News Report Ireland (2024) which analyses the latest data regarding the nation's evolving digital landscape. This is part of the global Reuters Digital News Report which is in its 13th year and is the largest, ongoing study of digital news consumption, taking in 47 markets.

For much of the past year stories about the public broadcaster RTÉ have been plastered all over the front pages of newspapers as reporters, politicians, commentators, and punters picked over the failings of the previous management team. A crisis stemming from secret payments to a star presenter rocked the organisation which found its internal processes surgically examined in front of a live and frequently hostile Oireachtas Media Committee.

Now that things have calmed down on this front it is hoped that trust in the media generally can be restored in the future. Trust is something that we probe in this report through various questions concerning media coverage and the latest iterations of artificial intelligence to enter the news landscape. The public is decidedly wary about letting AI lead reporting, and media companies will have to be transparent about its use of these new products.

In this issue we cover some of the report's hardy perennial subjects such as people's interest in news, how often people access news, the devices they use and the brands they choose. We also look at emerging trends which reveal the ongoing uneasy relationship between the mainstream media and social media, with the big tech companies continually experimenting to find new methods to keep their audiences engaged, and sometimes these are unhelpful to the news-focused media.

Misinformation and disinformation are growing, and we ask a series of questions to establish how difficult people find it to verify the online news that they read. In order to unpack the data on current media issues, we often dig deeper to understand the differences caused by age, gender and education. While it is usual to find that younger people are more at ease with online challenges, older people often surprise with their ability to adapt to new sources of information.

The report also incorporates six essays on issues relevant to Ireland and connected to the report. Five are written by DCU researchers: Dr Dawn Wheatley, Associate Professor Dave Robbins, Dr Roderick Flynn, Dr Eileen Culloty and me and another is written by a colleague Dr Amy Ross Arguedas at the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford.

We would like to thank our sponsors Coimisiún na Meán, and in particular our collaborators over the past year – Stephanie Comey, Dr Gillian Kingston, Dr Kirsty Park, Colm Coyne, Sinéad Crowley and Deborah Molloy Bergin. We would also like to thank our colleagues at the Reuters Institute in Oxford, in particular Nic Newman, Dr Craig Robertson, Dr Amy Ross Arguedas, Dr Richard Fletcher and Prof Rasmus Kleis Nielsen.

Réamhrá OCBÁC FuJo

Leis an Ollamh Colleen Murrell

Fáilte romhaibh chuig an 10ú Tuarascáil ar Nuacht Dhigiteach na hÉireann (2024) a dhéanann anailís ar na sonraí is déanaí maidir le tírdhreach digiteach athraithe an náisiúin. Tá sé seo mar chuid den Tuarascáil Dhomhanda Reuters ar Nuacht Dhigiteach atá ina 13ú bliain agus is í an staidéar leanúnach is mó ar thomhaltas nuachta digiteach, lena gclúdaítear 47 margadh.

Le cuid mhaith den bhliain seo caite bhí scéalta faoin gcráoltóir poiblí RTÉ clúdaithe ar fud na leathanach tosaigh agus tuairisceoirí, polaiteoirí, tráchtairí, agus na gealltóirí ag cíor trí lochtanna na foirne bainistíochta roimhe seo. Bhain géarchéim, a d'éascair as íocaíochtaí rúnda chuig réalt láithreoir, croitheadh as an eagraíocht ina ndearnadh scrúdú mionchúiseach ar a bpróisis inmheánacha os comhair Choiste Meán an Oireachtais Bheo a d'éirigh níos naimhdí de réir a chéile.

Anois agus rudaí tar éis socrú síos ar an taobh sin, táthar ag súil go bhféadtar muinín sna meáin go ginearálta a athneartú sa todhchaí. Déantar muinín an phobail a fhiosrú sa tuarascáil seo trí cheisteanna éagsúla a chur maidir le clúdach na meán agus maidir leis na leaganacha is déanaí a bhaineann le hintleacht shaorga sa tírdhreach nuachta. Tá an pobal thar a bheith airdeallach tús áite a thabhairt do IS i dtuairisciú na nuachta agus beidh ar na cuideachtaí meán a bheith trédhearcach maidir leis an úsáid a bhaineann siad as na táirgí nua seo.

San eagrán seo, clúdaímid cuid d'ábhair shíoraí chrua na tuarascála amhail an suim atá ag daoine sa nuacht, cé chomh minic a bhfuil rochtain acu ar nuacht, na gléasanna a úsáideann siad agus na brandaí a roghnaíonn siad. Féachaimid chomh maith ar threochtaí nua lena nochtar an caidreamh míshuaimhneach leanúnach idir na meáin phríomhshrutha agus na meáin shóisialta, leis na cuideachtaí móra teicneolaíochta ag triail go leanúnach modhanna nua a fháil chun a lucht éisteachta a choimeád gafa, agus uaireanta ní haon chabhair iad do na meáin atá dírithe ar nuacht.

Tá mífhaisnéis agus bréagaisnéis ag borradh, agus cuirimid sraith ceisteanna ar dhaoine lena fháil amach cé chomh deacair a bhíonn sé do dhaoine an nuacht a léann siad ar líne a fhíorú. D'fhonn ciall a spíonadh amach as na sonraí ar shaincheisteanna reatha sna meáin, is minic go dtochlaímid níos doimhne chun na difríochtaí atá ann mar gheall ar aois, inscne agus oideachas a thuiscint. Cé gur gnách é a aimsiú go mbíonn daoine níos óige ar a suaimhneas le dúshláin ar líne, is minic a chuireann daoine níos sine iontas ar dhaoine lena gcumas dul in oiriúint ar fhoinsí nua eolais.

Cuimsítear sa Tuarascáil sé aiste ar shaincheisteanna a bhaineann le hÉirinn agus a bhfuil baint acu leis an tuarascáil. Tá cúig cinn acu scríofa ag taighdeoirí OCBÁC: An Dr. Dawn Wheatley, an tOllamh Comhlach Dave Robbins, an Dr. Roderick Flynn, an Dr. Eileen Culloty agus mé féin agus tá ceann eile scríofa ag comhghleacaí an Dr. Amy Ross Arguedas ag an Institiúid Reuters in Ollscoil Oxford.

Ba mhaith linn ár mbuíochas a ghabháil lenár n-urraitheoirí Coimisiún na Meán, agus go háirithe lenár gcomhoibrithe le bliain anuas – Stephanie Comey, an Dr. Gillian Kingston, an Dr. Kirsty Park, Colm Coyne, Sinéad Crowley agus Deborah Molloy Bergin. Ba mhaith linn ár mbuíochas a ghabháil freisin lenár gcomhghleacaithe ag an Institiúid Reuters in Oxford, go háirithe Nic Newman, an Dr. Craig Robertson, an Dr. Amy Ross Arguedas, an Dr. Richard Fletcher agus an tOllamh Rasmus Kleis Nielsen.

Methodology

- The global Reuters Digital News Report is commissioned by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford. Here in Ireland researchers from the FuJo Institute at Dublin City University have regular input into the topics to be surveyed and the questions to be asked in the survey and then we analyse the data that are specific to Ireland, and to our selected comparative markets (the UK, the US and Europe).
- In Ireland the global report survey was conducted 75% by YouGov, and 25% by Dynata, using an online questionnaire at the end of January/beginning of February 2024. In Ireland 2034 people were surveyed using representative quotas for age, gender, region, and educational level. The data were weighted to targets based on census/industry accepted data.
- Regarding this type of polling, it should be noted 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 is under-represented. Our data are representative of the 92% online population.
- The use of a non-probability sampling approach means that it is not possible to compute a conventional 'margin of error' for individual data points. However, differences of +/-2 percentage points (pp) are unlikely to be statistically significant and should be interpreted with a high degree of caution. The same applies to tiny changes over time.
- It should also be remembered that surveys capture people's self-reported behaviour, which does not always reflect people's actual behaviour due to biases and imperfect recall.
- Some of our survey-based results will not match other industry data, which are often based on different methodologies, such as web-tracking.

Modheolaíocht

- Tá an Tuarascáil Dhomhanda Reuters ar an Nuacht Dhigiteach coimisiúnaithe ag Institiúid Reuters um Staidéar ar an Iriseoireacht in Ollscoil Oxford. Anseo in Éirinn, bíonn ionchur rialta ag taighdeoirí ón Institiúid FuJo ag Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath maidir leis na hábhair a ndéanfar suirbhéireacht orthu agus na ceisteanna a chuirfear sa cheistneoir agus ansin déanaimid anailís ar na sonraí a bhaineann le hÉirinn go sonrath, agus a bhaineann lenár margáí comparáideacha roghnaithe (an RA, na SAM agus an Eoraip).
- In Éirinn, rinne YouGov 75% den suirbhé tuarascála domhanda, agus Dynata 25%, trí úsáid a bhaint as ceistneoir ar líne ag deireadh mhí Eanáir/tús mhí Feabhra 2024. In Éirinn, rinneadh suirbhé ar 2034 duine lena mbaintear úsáid as cuótaí ionadaíochta le haghaidh aoise, inscne, réigiúin agus leibhéal oideachais. Ualaíodh na sonraí de réir spriocanna bunaithe ar shonraí daonáirimh/a ghlactar leo sa tionscal.
- Maidir leis an saghas suirbhéireachta seo, ba cheart a thabhairt faoi deara go ndéantar le samplaí ar líne gannionadaíocht de ghnáth ar nósanna tomhaltais nuachta daoine atá níos sine agus nach bhfuil chomh saibhir, lena gciallaítear go ndéantar ró-ionadaíocht ar úsáid ar líne de ghnáth agus go ndéantar gannionadaíocht ar úsáid thraidisiúnta as líne. Cuimsítear lenár sonraí 92% den daonra ar líne.
- Ciallaítear le húsáid cur chuige samplála neamhdhóchúlachta nach bhféadtar ghnáth 'lamháil earráide' a ríomh do phointí sonraí aonair. Ní dócha go mbeidh difríochtaí do +/-2 faoin gcéad nó níos lú suntasach ó thaobh staitistice de agus ba chóir iad a léiriú go cúramach. Baineann an rud céanna le mionathruithe thar am.
- Ba cheart a thabhairt faoi deara freisin go ngabhtar le suirbhéanna iompar féintuairiscithe na ndaoine, rud nach léiríonn i gcónaí iompar daoine i ndáiríre mar gheall ar chlaontachtaí agus cuimhne neamhfhoirfe.
- Ní mheaitseálfaidh cuid dár dtorthaí atá bunaithe ar shuirbhé le sonraí tionscail eile, a bhíonn bunaithe go minic ar mhodheolaíochtaí difriúla, amhail rianú idirlín.

Authorship and Research Acknowledgements

Prof Colleen Murrell researches international newsgathering, broadcasting, and digital and social media at DCU's School of Communications. She is a member of FuJo and the Biography and Life Writing Research Group. She is on the editorial board of The Conversation UK. Before joining DCU she worked as an academic and a journalist in Australia and before that as a news editor in London for news organisations including AP, the BBC and ITN.

Dr David Robbins is an associate professor of journalism in the School of Communications at DCU. He is the founding director of the DCU Centre for Climate and Society. Before coming to DCU David worked as a senior journalist and ministerial adviser in Ireland.

Dr Dawn Wheatley is an assistant professor in the School of Communications at 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.

Dr Claire English is a postdoctoral researcher at the School of Communications in DCU. She is an audience research specialist with experience working in news media organisations and market research. Claire's research interests include changing news consumption patterns, modes of civic engagement, audience fragmentation and media funding models.

Aitheantas Scríbhneoireachta agus Taighde

Déanann an tOllamh Colleen Murrell taighde ar bhailiú nuachta idirnáisiúnta, ar chraoltóireacht, ar na meáin shóisialta agus dhigiteacha ag Scoil Cumarsáide OCBÁC. Is ball í de FuJo agus den Ghrúpa Taighde Beathaisnéise agus Scríbhneoireachta Beatha. Tá sí ar bhord eagarthóireachta An Conversation UK. Sula ndeachaigh sí le OCBÁC, d'oibrigh sí mar acadóir agus iriseoir san Astráil agus roimhe sin mar eagarthóir nuachta i Londain d'eagraíochta nuachta lena n-áirítear AP, an BBC agus ITN.

Is ollamh comhlach iriseoireachta é an **Dr. David Robbins** i Scoil na Cumarsáide ag OCBÁC. Is é an stiúrthóir bunaidh é ar Ionad OCBÁC don Aeráid agus don tSochaí. Sula ndeachaigh sé le OCBÁC, d'oibrigh David mar iriseoir sinsearach agus comhairleoir aire in Éirinn.

Is ollamh cúnata í an **Dr. Dawn Wheatley** i Scoil na Cumarsáide ag OCBÁC, le díriú ar iriseoireacht, na meáin shóisialta agus cumarsáid pholaitiúil. D'oibrigh sí mar iriseoir léiriúcháin i nuachtáin náisiúnta sula ndeachaigh sí le taighde acadúil agus múinteoireacht. Tá suim ar leith ag Dawn i bhfoinsí agus éagsúlacht guthanna sa nuacht, cleachtais iriseoireachta agus tuarascálacha, nósanna saincheaptha lucht féachana ar na meáin shóisialta agus shoghluaiste.

Is taighdeoir iardhochtúireachta í an **Dr. Claire English** ag Scoil na Cumarsáide in OCBÁC. Is speisialtóir taighde lucht féachana í le taithí ag obair in eagraíochtaí nuachta na meán agus i dtaighde margaidh. Cuimsítear le suimeanna taighde Claire patrúin tomhaltais nuachta atá ag athrú, modhanna rannpháirtíochta saoránaigh, ilroinnt lucht féachana agus samhlacha maoinithe na meán.

Executive Summary

By Prof Colleen Murrell, Dr David Robbins, Dr Dawn Wheatley and Dr Claire English

This year's survey was conducted in Ireland against a background of economic challenges, street protests, continuing wars in Gaza and Ukraine and local and European elections. In terms of the media, the very point of the public broadcaster RTÉ has been debated in public and in the Dáil as a payment scandal has unfolded since the summer of 2023.

On top of financial worries, the media have had to face the challenges of rising misinformation and disinformation, relatively low levels of trust, and attacks by politicians, commentators, and members of the public.

The media have also had to deal with the changing strategies of big tech and assorted social media companies as they deprioritise news, and seek more entertaining formats, including video, to keep consumers on their platforms for longer. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is also unleashing a new set of changes that could further reduce traffic flows to news websites and apps.

The global Reuters Report has labelled these 'platform resets' showing that in many countries TikTok, Instagram Reels and YouTube are on the rise. While some of these factors can be seen in Ireland, others such as 'celebrity influencers' are much less of a phenomenon here.

At the back of this Irish report, you will find short articles on the following topics:

- Audience apprehension of AI news, by Reuters Institute researcher Dr Amy Ross Arguedas
- Tracking down Irish youth on multiple platforms, by Professor Colleen Murrell, FuJo & DCU
- Trust in media, by Dr Dawn Wheatley, FuJo & DCU
- The greening of the media, by Dr David Robbins, DCU
- Regulatory powers versus disinformation, by Dr Eileen Culloty, FuJo & DCU
- RTÉ's funding predicament, by Dr Roderick Flynn, FuJo & DCU

Highlights from the data:

- The good news is that Irish consumers retain their **interest in news**. If you add up all those who are 'extremely', 'very' or 'somewhat interested in news' then 88 percent are still engaged at some level. This is higher than in the UK, the US, or when measured against the European average.
- If you select only the two categories of 'extremely' or 'very' interested in news, then you can see stark differences between those who are aged 18-24, who register 30 percent and those who are 65+, who register 73 percent. There are also major differences between the genders with men registering 61 percent, and women 46 percent.

- There are several questions in the survey about political news in this time of local, EU and eventually national elections. **Interest in political news** comes in at third spot at 43 percent, behind local (61%) and international news (58%). This is down 6 percentage points (pp) from last year, registering only 37 percent interest from women and 30 percent from the under 35s.
- In terms of the **role of news**, traditional news values still rate the highest, with people wanting to be 'kept up to date with what's going on' (75%); 'learning about topics and events' (70%); and being 'engaged with issues in society' (68%).
- Some people say they suffer from **news and information overload**. 40 percent overall either 'strongly' or 'tend to' agree with the statement that they are 'worn out with the amount of news' with women scoring the highest.
- For those suffering from news fatigue, one solution is to simply avoid the news. **News avoidance** in the category of 'often or sometimes' has grown considerably in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year news avoiders total 44 percent, which has risen +10pp.
- **Trust in news** is down slightly overall, but selected outlets are up 1 to 2 percent. At the top of this ranking, RTÉ (+1pp) and The Irish Times (+2pp) remain the most trusted outlets, particularly notable given the turbulence within RTÉ over the past year.
- A new question on **trust** shows that audiences clearly prioritise journalistic standards as a key indicator of trust and reliability, coupled with transparency: people want open, quality news.
- In another of the more dramatic shifts in the survey across time, there is evidence of real concern about **what is real/what is fake online**. This is up +7pp on 2023.
- Respondents said they had seen the most **false or misleading information** in the previous week about the Israel-Palestine conflict (38%). This increased to 43 percent among the under 35s. Coverage of immigration was close behind, with 37 percent (38 percent for over 35s).
- There has been an increase of two percentage points (from 15% to 17%) among Irish news consumers who have **paid to access news content** in 2024. News subscriber numbers are behind the US, but ahead of the UK and European average. There has been a significant increase of 7pp in the number of people aged 18-24 paying for digital news content.
- For Irish people who **pay a regular subscription to a news provider**, The Irish Times remains the most popular choice, with 38 percent. However, this represents a drop of 3pp on last year, while the Irish Independent is closing the gap, having recorded a slight increase of 1pp to 33 percent. The Irish Examiner, which is owned by the Irish Times, introduced a paywall in 2021, and now attracts 10% of regular news subscribers.
- Most of the 17 percent of Irish news consumers who **pay to access digital news** are paying modest amounts for their main news subscriptions. More than half (59%) pay €10 or less per month, while 34 percent pay €5 or less.

- The **most frequently used (+3 times per week) traditional news brands** are RTÉ TV News; RTÉ Radio News; Sky News and regional or local radio news. The rest of the top ten are Virgin Media TV News; BBC News; Today FM; Newstalk; the Irish Independent and the Irish Times.
- The **most frequently used (+3 times per week) digital news brands** are RTÉ News Online; TheJournal.ie; Independent.ie; Irishtimes.com; Breakingnews.ie; BBC News Online; Sky News Online; any local radio news online; Irish Examiner online; Guardian online and TodayFM online.
- For the first time 'online, excluding social media' (33%) has overtaken TV viewing (31%) as **'the main source of news'**.
- 45 percent of news consumers **access online news** directly via websites or apps. Another 34 percent access news by searching for the name of a specific media outlet. Older age groups are more likely to navigate directly to a news site with 62 percent of those aged 65+ accessing news in this way, compared to 24 percent of those aged 18-24.
- **Social media for any use** (not just news) has fallen back slightly over the past year. The main platforms for any use currently, such as WhatsApp (69% -3pp), Facebook (59% -2pp) and YouTube (55% -4pp) have all witnessed declines in usage. TikTok, the video-sharing platform known for its viral content, also dropped in popularity last year (-2pp).
- **Social media for news.** The use of Facebook for news has dropped again this year (now 29%). Meanwhile, more Irish people are increasingly using the following sites for news-related purposes: WhatsApp (22%), YouTube (23%), and Instagram (17%).
- Users of Facebook, X/Twitter, and YouTube are likely to pay more attention to **established media brands and professional journalists** when it comes to news, whereas TikTok users are more likely to pay attention to celebrities, influencers, and ordinary people.
- Almost one in four (23-34%) of the under 35s are using **voice-assisted speakers and smart watches** for news.
- Ireland's love of **podcasts** continues, with 43 percent of respondents (-1pp) saying they had listened to a podcast over the previous month, compared with just 31 percent in the UK and a European average of 37 percent.
- **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is getting a lot more notice this year but only 44 percent of respondents say they have read or heard a 'large' or 'moderate' amount about it. A further 41 percent say they know 'a small amount' and 10 percent say they know 'nothing at all'. 56 percent of media consumers are uncomfortable with news being produced 'mostly by AI' with only 'some human oversight'.
- Respondents are very wary of **news produced mostly by AI** when it concerns the more serious topics of political news (54%) or crime coverage (53%). Respondents are less bothered by the implications of AI-led news production for softer topics - namely Arts and culture (36%), sports (34%) and celebrity and entertainment (34%).
- Almost two-thirds of people say they access a **short news video** once a week or more (61%). Alongside this, 42 percent accessed a live online video news stream in the past week, and 41 percent accessed a longer online news video.
- When it comes to **online video news clips**, in Ireland there is still demonstrable loyalty to news websites or apps (26%), which lead other online sites using video - such as YouTube (20%), and Facebook (19%). Other social media sites are not (yet?) as popular in this category - including Instagram (10%), TikTok (8%), X/formerly Twitter (7%), Snapchat (2%) and Twitch (1%).

Achoimre Feidhmiúcháin

Leis an Ollamh Colleen Murrell, an Dr. David Robbins,
an Dr. Dawn Wheatley agus an Dr. Claire English

Rinneadh suirbhé na bliana seo in Éirinn i gcomhthéacs dúshlán eacnamaíoch, agóidí sráide, cogáí leanúnacha in Gaza agus san Úcráin agus toghcháin áitiúla agus Eorpacha. Ó thaobh na meán de, pléadh bunús an chraoltóra phoiblí RTÉ go poiblí agus sa Dáil toisc go bhfuil scannal íocaíochta tagtha chun cinn ó shamhradh 2023 i leith.

Anuas ar imní airgeadais, bhí ar na meáin aghaidh a thabhairt ar mhífhaisnéis agus bréagaisnéis atá ag ardú, leibhéal muiníne réasúnta ísle, agus ionsaí ó pholaiteoirí, tráchtairí, agus daoine den phobal.

Bhí ar na meáin aghaidh a thabhairt freisin ar straitéisí na gcuideachtaí móra atá ag athrú nuair nach dtugann siad an tábhacht chéanna do nuacht agus iad ag lorg d'fhormáidí níos siamsúla, lena n-áirítear físeán, chun tomhaltóirí a choimeád ar a n-ardáin ar feadh tréimhse níos faide. Tá Intleacht Shaorga á tionscnamh sraith nua athraithe freisin a d'fhéadfadh sruthanna tráchta chuig suíomhanna gréasáin nuachta agus aipeanna a laghdú.

Tá na 'hathshocruithe ardáin' sin lipéadaithe ag an Tuarascáil Dhomhanda Reuters ina léirítear go bhfuil TikTok, Instagram Reels agus YouTube ag dul i méid. Cé go bhféadtar cuid de na gnéithe sin a fheiceáil in Éirinn, is annaimhe i bhfad gnéithe eile amhail 'tionchairí cáiliúla' a fheiceáil.

Ag deireadh na tuarascála Éireannaí seo, gheobhaidh tú ailt ghearra ar na hábhair seo a leanas:

- Eagla ar lucht féachana maidir le nuacht IS, le taighdeoir Reuters an Dr. Amy Ross Arguedas
- Daoine óige na hÉireann a aimsiú ar roinnt ardán, leis an Ollamh Colleen Murrell, FuJo agus OCBÁC
- Muinín sa nuacht, leis an Dr. Dawn Wheatley, FuJo & OCBÁC
- Glasú na Nuachta, leis an Dr. David Robbins, OCBÁC
- Cumhachtaí Rialála i gcoinne bréagaisnéise, leis an Dr. Eileen Culloty, FuJo & OCBÁC
- Cruachás maoiniúcháin RTÉ, leis an Dr. Roderick Flynn, FuJo & OCBÁC

Buaicphointí ó na sonraí:

- Is é an dea-scéal go gcoimeádann tomhaltóirí Éireannacha a **suim sa nuacht**. Má chuireann tú gach duine a bhfuil 'fíor-shuim' acu, 'an-suim' nó 'leibhéal suime' sa nuacht le chéile, tá 88% fós gafa ar leibhéal éigin. Tá sé sin níos airde ná sa RA, sna SAM, nó nuair a chuirtear i gcomparáid leis an meán Eorpach é.
- Mura roghnaíonn tú ach an dá chatagóir 'fíor-shuim' nó 'an-suim' agat sa nuacht, ansin is féidir leat difríochtaí soiléire a fheiceáil idir iad siúd atá 18-24 bliain d'aois, a chláraíonn 30 faoin gcéad agus iad siúd atá os cionn 65 bliain d'aois, a chláraíonn 73 faoin gcéad. Tá difríochtaí móra idir na hinscní freisin le fir ag clárú 61 faoin gcéad, agus mná 46 faoin gcéad.

- Tá go leor ceisteanna sa suirbhé faoi nuacht pholaitiúil san aimsir seo do thoghcháin áitiúla, AE agus ar deireadh thiar toghcháin náisiúnta. Tagann **suim i nuacht pholaitiúil** sa tríú háit le 43 faoin gcéad, taobh thiar de nuacht áitiúil (61%) agus nuacht idirnáisiúnta (58%). Tá sé seo síos 6 faoin gcéad ón mbliain seo caite, lena gcláraítear 37 faoin gcéad ó mhná agus 30 faoin gcéad ó dhaoine faoi 35 bliain d'aois.
- Maidir le **ról na nuachta**, rátáiltear luachanna traidisiúnta nuachta is airde fós, le daoine ag iarraidh a bheith 'suas chun dáta maidir le cad atá ag tarlú' (75%); 'ag foghlaim faoi ábhair agus imeachtaí' (70%) agus a bheith 'gafa le saincheisteanna sa tsochaí' (68%).
- Deir roinnt daoine go bhfulaingíonn siad ón **iomarca nuachta agus eolais**. Aontaíonn 40 faoin gcéad ar an iomlán 'go láidir' leis an ráiteas go bhfuil siad 'traochta leis an méid nuachta' nó go bhfuil 'claonadh acu' a rá go bhfuil, leis an scor is airde á fháil ag mná.
- Dóibh siúd atá ag fulaingt ó thuirse nuachta, réiteach amháin is ea an nuacht a sheachaint. Tá méadú mór tagtha ar **sheachaint nuachta** sa chatagóir 'go minic nó uaireanta' i ndiaidh na paindéime Covid-19. Suimítear le daoine a sheachnaíonn an nuacht 44 faoin gcéad, méadú +10 faoin gcéad.
- **Tá laghdú beag ar mhuinín sa nuacht** ar an iomlán, ach tá ionaid ar leith suas 1 faoin gcéad go dtí 2 faoin gcéad. Ag barr an rangaithe sin, is iad RTÉ (+1%) agus an Irish Times (+2%) na hionaid nuachta leis an muinín is mó fós, tá sé seo suntasach go háirithe i bhfianaise na corraíola laistigh de RTÉ le bliain anuas.
- Léirítear ceist nua ar **mhuinín** go dtugann lucht féachana tosaíocht ar chaighdeáin iriseoireachta mar phríomhtháscaire ar mhuinín agus iontaofacht, mar aon le trédhearcacht: tá nuacht oscailte agus ar ardchaighdeán ag teastáil ó dhaoine.
- I gceann do na hathruithe is suntasaí sa suirbhé thar am, tá faisnéis fíor-ímní ann ó thaobh **cad atá fíor/cad atá bréagach ar líne**. Méadú 7 faoin gcéad é seo ar 2023.
- Dúirt freagróirí go bhfaca siad **an t-eolas is bréagaí nó is míthreoraí** sa tseachtain roimhe sin maidir leis an gcoimhlint idir Iosrael agus an Phalaistín (38%). Méadaíodh sin go dtí 43 faoin gcéad i measc na ndaoine faoi 35 bliain d'aois. Bhí clúdach ar imirce díreach laistiar, le 37 faoin gcéad (38 faoin gcéad do dhaoine os cionn 35 bliain d'aois).
- Tháinig méadú 2 faoin gcéad (ó 15% go 17%) i measc tomhaltóirí nuachta na hÉireann a **d'íoc as rochtain a fháil ar ábhar nuachta** in 2024. Tá uimhreacha síntiúsóirí nuachta taobh thiar de na SAM, ach chun tosaigh ar mheán na RA agus ar mheán na hEorpa. Tá méadú suntasach 7% ar líon na ndaoine idir 18-24 bliain d'aois atá ag íoc as ábhar nuachta digiteach.
- Do dhaoine Éireannacha a **íocann síntiús rialta le soláthraí nuachta**, is é an Irish Times an rogha a bhfuil tóir is mó air fós, le 38 faoin gcéad. Is laghdú 3% é seo ón mbliain seo caite faraor, fad is atá an Irish Independent ag laghdú na bearna eatarthu, tar éis méadaithe bhig 1 faoin gcéad go 33 faoin gcéad a chlárú. Thug an Irish Examiner, atá faoi úinéireacht an Irish Times, balla íocaíochta isteach in 2021, agus meallann sé isteach 10% de shíntiúsóirí rialta nuachta anois.
- Íocann an chuid is mó den 17 faoin gcéad de thomhaltóirí nuachta na hÉireann a **íocann chun rochtain a fháil ar nuacht dhigiteach** méideanna meartha as a bpríomhshíntiús nuachta. Íocann níos mó ná leath de na tomhaltóirí (59%) €10 nó níos lú in aghaidh na míosa, agus íocann 34 faoin gcéad €5 nó níos lú.
- Is iad RTÉ TV News, RTÉ Radio News; Sky News agus nuacht raidió áitiúil nó réigiúnach **na brandaí nuachta traidisiúnta is mó a úsáidtear (+3 huaire in aghaidh na seachtaine)**. Is iad Virgin Media TV News; BBC News; Today FM; Newstalk; an Irish Independent agus an Irish Times an chuid eile de na deich mbranda is fearr.

- Is iad RTÉ News Online; TheJournal.ie; Independent.ie; Irishtimes.com; Breakingnews.ie; BBC News Online; Sky News Online; aon nuacht raidió áitiúil ar líne; Irish Examiner Online; Guardian online agus TodayFm online **na brandaí digiteacha nuachta is minice a úsáidtear (+3 huairé in aghaidh na seachtaine).**
- Den chéad uair chuaigh 'ar líne, gan na meáin shóisialta a áireamh' (33%) chun tosaigh ar fhéachaint teilifíse (31%) mar **'phríomhfhoinsé nuachta'**.
- Faigheann 45 faoin gcéad de thomhaltóirí nuachta **rochtain ar nuacht ar líne** go díreach trí shuíomhanna gréasáin nó aipeanna. Faigheann 34 faoin gcéad eile rochtain ar nuacht trí chuardach a dhéanamh ar ainm ionaid meán ar leith. Is mó an seans go nascleanann na haoisghrúpaí níos sine go díreach chuig suíomh nuachta le 62 faoin gcéad díobh siúd os cionn 65 bliain d'aois ag fáil nuachta sa chaoi seo, i gcomparáid le 24 faoin gcéad díobh siúd idir 18-24 bliain d'aois.
- Bhí laghdú beag ar **na meáin shóisialta le haghaidh aon úsáid** (ní hamháin nuacht) le bliain anuas. Tá laghdú tagtha ar gach ceann de na príomhardáin nuachta faoi láthair ó thaobh úsáide de, amhail Whatsapp (69% -3pc), Facebook (59% -2pc) agus Youtube (55% -4pc). Tháinig laghdú freisin anuraidh ar éileamh TikTok, an t-ardán comhroinnte físeán a bhfuil cáil air mar gheall ar a ábhar mearscaipthe (-2%).
- **Na meáin shóisialta le haghaidh nuachta.** Tá laghdú tagtha arís ar úsáid Facebook le haghaidh nuachta i mbliana (29% anois). San am céanna, tá níos mó Éireannaigh ag baint úsáid níos minice as na suíomhanna seo a leanas chun críocha nuachta: WhatsApp (22%), Youtube (23%), agus Instagram (17%).
- Is mó an seans go dtugann úsáideoirí Facebook, X/Twitter agus Youtube aird ar **bhrandaí seanbhunaithe na meáin agus iriseoirí proifisiúnta** maidir le nuacht, ach is mó an seans go dtugann úsáideoirí TikTok aird ar dhaoine cáiliúla, tionchairí, agus gnáthdhaoine.
- Tá beagnach duine as gach ceathrar (23-34%) do dhaoine faoi 35 bliain d'aois ag baint úsáid as **callairí guth-chuidithe agus uaireadóirí cliste** le haghaidh nuachta.
- Leanann an grá atá ag muintir na hÉireann ar **phodchraoltaí** ar aghaidh, le 43 faoin gcéad de na freagróirí (-1%) ag rá gur éist siad le podchraoladh le mí anuas, i gcomparáid le 31 faoin gcéad amháin sa RA agus le meán Eorpach de 37 faoin gcéad.
- Tá i bhfad níos mó aire tabhartha ar **Intleacht Shaorga (SI)** i mbliana ach ní dúirt ach 46 faoin gcéad de fhreagróirí gur léigh nó gur chuala siad méid mór nó measartha fúithi. Deir 41 faoin gcéad eile go bhfuil 'beagán' ar eolas acu fúithi agus 10 faoin gcéad eile 'nach bhfuil aon eolas' acu fúithi. Tá 56 faoin gcéad de thomhaltóirí nuachta míchompordach le nuacht á táirgeadh 'den chuid is mó ag IS' gan ach 'roinnt maoirseacht dhaonna'.
- Tá freagróirí an-airdeallach ar **nuacht a tháirgtear ag IS den chuid is mó** nuair a bhaineann sé le hábhair níos tromchúisí maidir le clúdach polaitiúil (54%) agus coireachta (53%). Is lú an buartha atá ar fhreagróirí maidir leis na himpleachtaí léiriúcháin nuachta atá faoi threorú IS ar ábhair níos boige - eadhon cultúr agus ealaíona (36%), spórt (34%) agus céiliúrán agus siamsaíocht (34%).
- Deir beagnach dhá thrian de dhaoine go mbíonn rochtain acu ar **fhíseán gearr nuachta** uair sa tseachtain nó níos mó (61%). Ina theannta sin, bhí rochtain ag 42% acu ar shruth nuachta físe bheo ar líne le seachtain anuas, agus bhí rochtain ag 41% acu ar fhíseán nuachta níos faide ar líne.
- Maidir le **gearrthóga físe nuachta ar líne**, tá dílseacht shoiléir ann fós do shuíomhanna gréasáin nuachta nó aipeanna (26%), a bhfuil tosach acu thar na suíomhanna gréasáin eile atá ag baint úsáid as físeán - amhail Youtube (20%) agus Facebook (19%). Níl an tóir chéanna ar na suíomhanna meán sóisialta eile (go fóill?) sa chatagóir seo - lena n-áirítear Instagram (10%), TikTok (8%), X/Twitter roimhe seo (7%), Snapchat (2%) agus Twitch (1%).

Digital News Report Ireland 2024



1

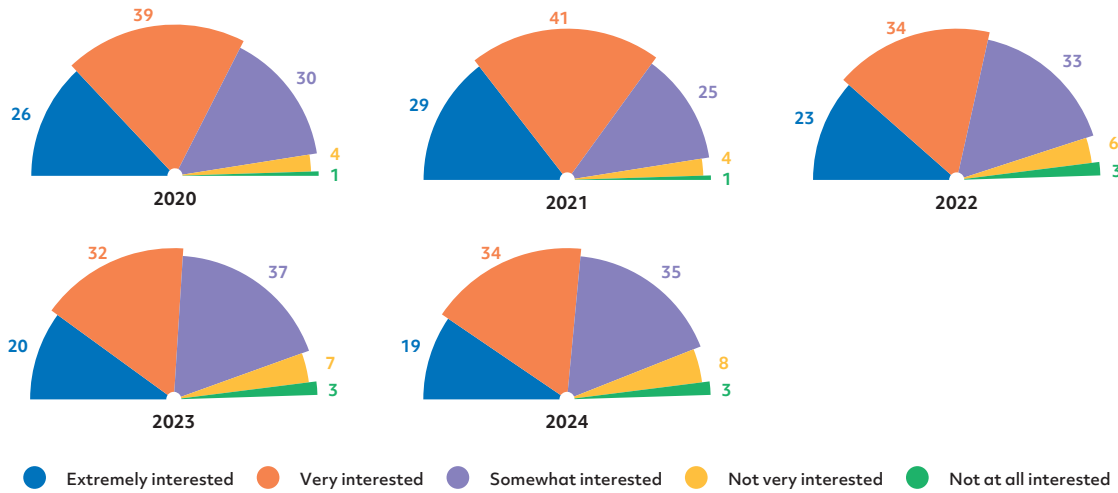
Irish News Consumers

This section examines Irish news consumers: it assesses their interest and engagement in news and its role in everyday lives.

This section documents how often consumers access news, the level of news fatigue and the reasons some consumers choose to avoid the news.

This section also asks how people define themselves politically.

FIG 1: INTEREST IN NEWS



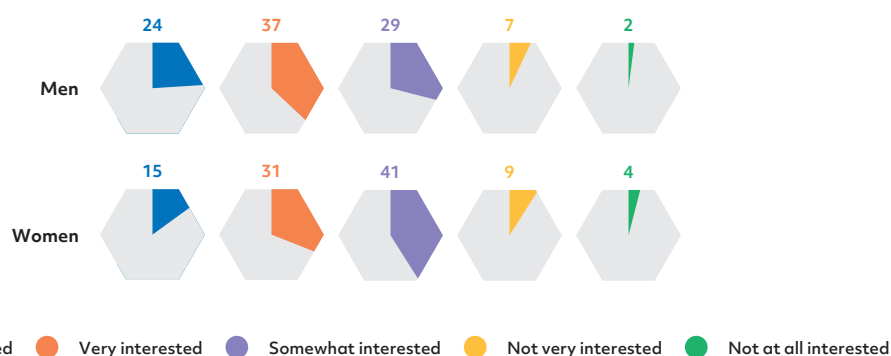
Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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

This chart shows that there is still a considerable appetite for news among Irish consumers. Only 3 percent declare themselves to be ‘not at all interested’, which hasn’t changed for the past three years. The highpoint for news remains the Covid year of 2021, (as the data for 2020 were collected in January and February of that year, prior to the pandemic in Ireland). In 2021 70 percent of people surveyed said they were ‘extremely’ or ‘very interested’ in news. This has dropped to 53 percent in 2024, up 1 pp from last year. Those who are ‘somewhat interested’ in news (35%) remain a significant portion of the total and there are many competitors for these peoples’ attention online.

FIG 2: INTEREST IN NEWS - GENDER

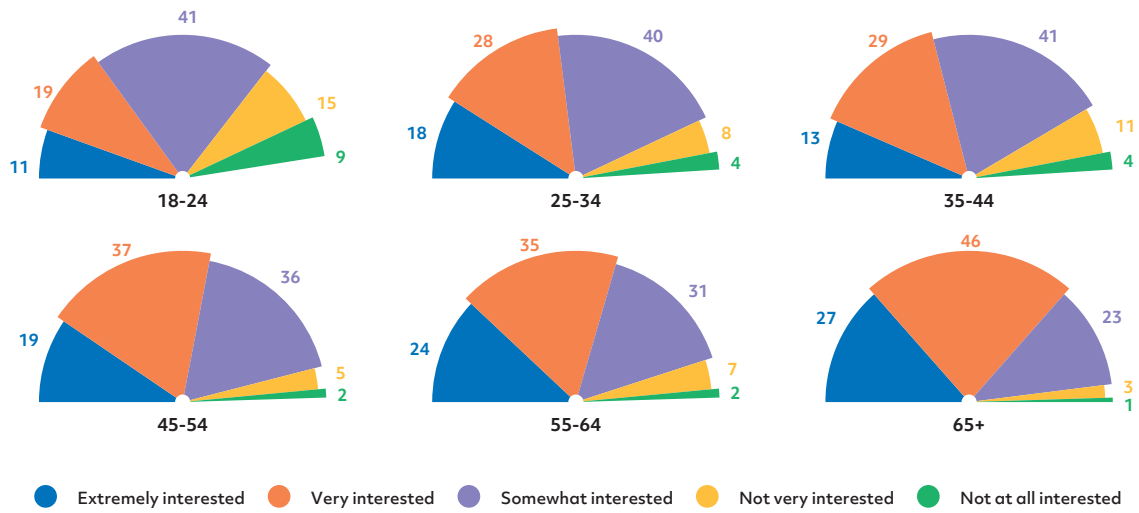


Base: All n=2034

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

There remains a significant difference between men and women in the 'extremely' and 'very interested' in news categories. 61 percent of men fall into this category (+4 pp), whereas only 46 percent of women do, which is the same as 2023. News publishers would be wise to do more to kindle women's interest in news, as 41 percent are nonetheless 'somewhat interested' in news. Some of this difference is explored in Fig 6, which delves into the types of news content that interest women.

FIG 3: INTEREST IN NEWS - AGE

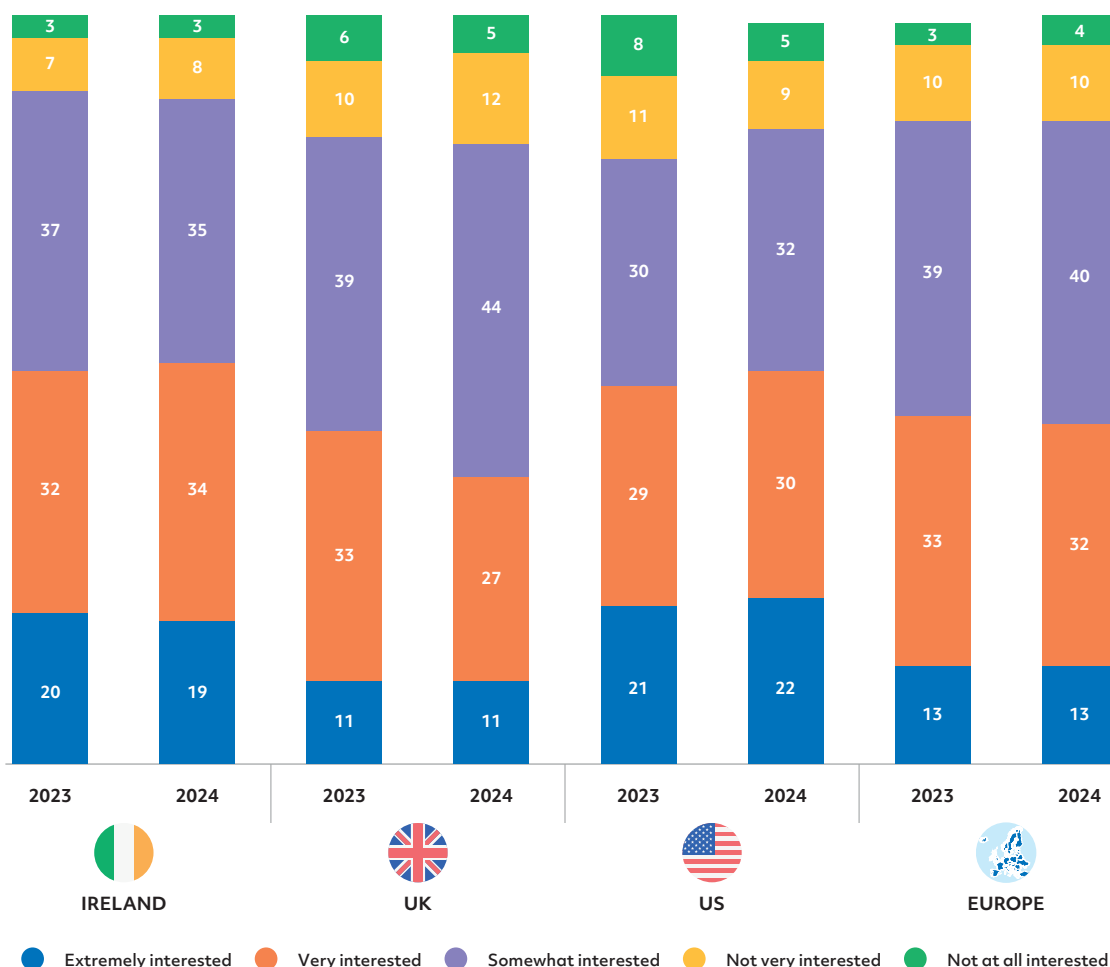


Base: All n=2034

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

Once again the starkest difference in interest in news by age groups is that between the 18-24 year-old cohort and the over 65+ aged cohort. Only 30 percent of young people fall into the category of 'extremely' and 'very interested' in news versus 73 percent of older people. Just as in the previous chart on gender and interest in news, the largest grouping of young people are those who are 'somewhat interested' in news (41%). This is another area of untapped potential - how to persuade this group to become more highly engaged with everyday news? All three younger cohorts (those aged 18-44) register a score of 'somewhat interested' in news of between 40-41 percent. The 18-24 year olds who are 'not very' or 'not at all interested' in news (24%) has grown by 4 pp this year - these people may prove much harder to engage.

FIG 4: INTEREST IN NEWS - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



Base: All n=2034

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

Ireland still ranks the highest in this international comparison with the UK, US and Europe. In the categories of ‘extremely’ or ‘very interested’ in news, Ireland scores 53 percent just pipping the US to the post with 52 percent. Europe comes next with 45 percent and the UK with 38 percent comes last, down a steep 7pp on last year. The long-term trend across the globe has been evident for the past decade, and our two previous charts reflect that women and young people in particular demonstrate a more lukewarm attitude to news. Back in 2015, 70 percent of Irish consumers declared themselves to be ‘extremely’ or ‘very interested in news’.

FIG 5: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS

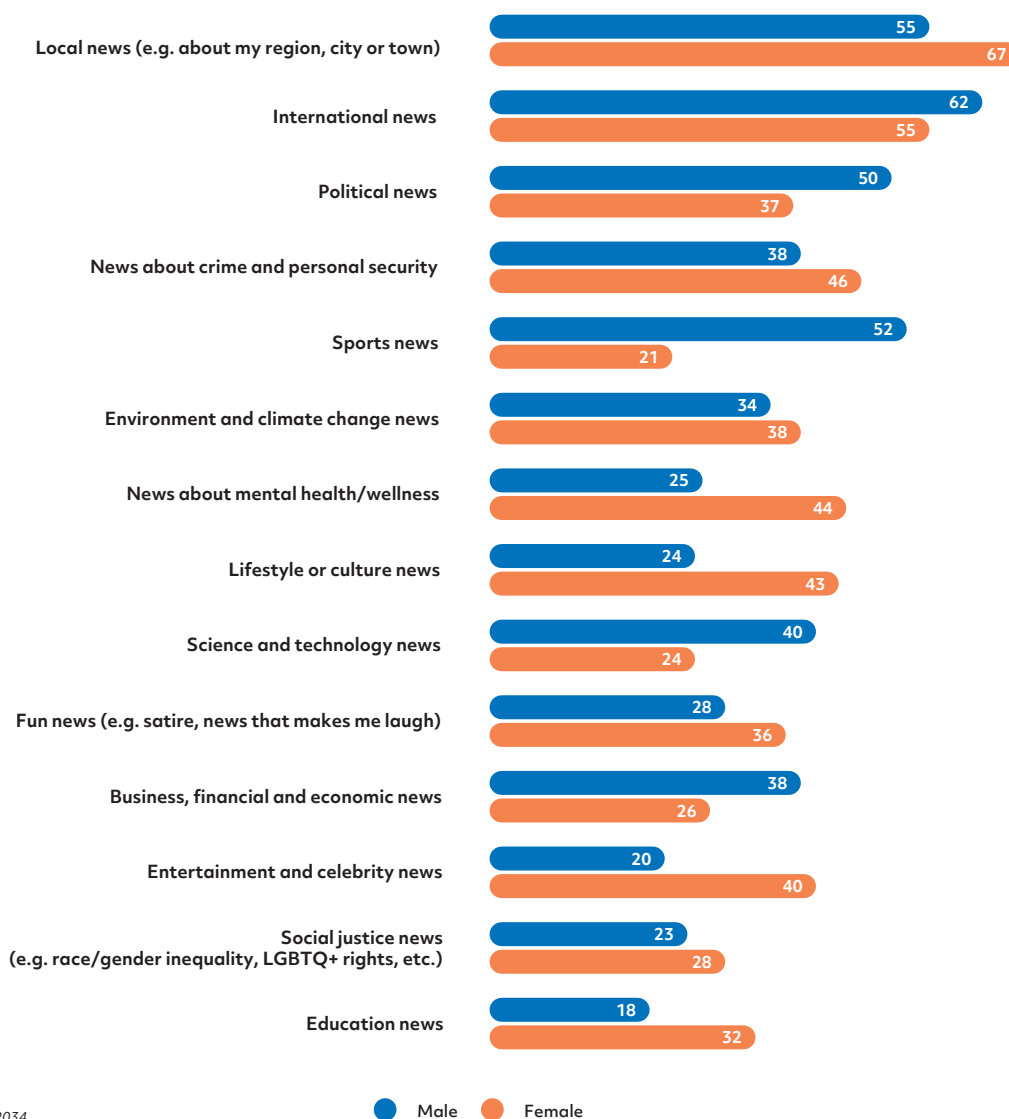


Base: All n=2034

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

This year we are returning to look more deeply into ‘user needs’ to ascertain consumers’ interest in many different types of news. A version of this question with most of these categories was last posed in 2022. Readers were asked to select all the categories that applied to them. The highest category is local news about respondents’ region, city or town (61%) down 6 pp from 2022. The second highest category is international news (58%), down 5 pp. In the 2022 survey, the next most important category was news about Covid-19, a category which is no longer in the options here. In 2024 the next category is political news (43%) down 6 pp and news about crime and personal security (42%) down 7 pp from 2022. After that comes sports news, which ties with environmental and climate change news (36%). In 2022 interest in environmental and climate change news was 43 percent. As we shall see in the following charts, these percentages are highly segmented between men and women and age groups. The other assorted categories cover the full range from ‘fun’ and ‘lifestyle’ to ‘business’ and ‘social justice’.

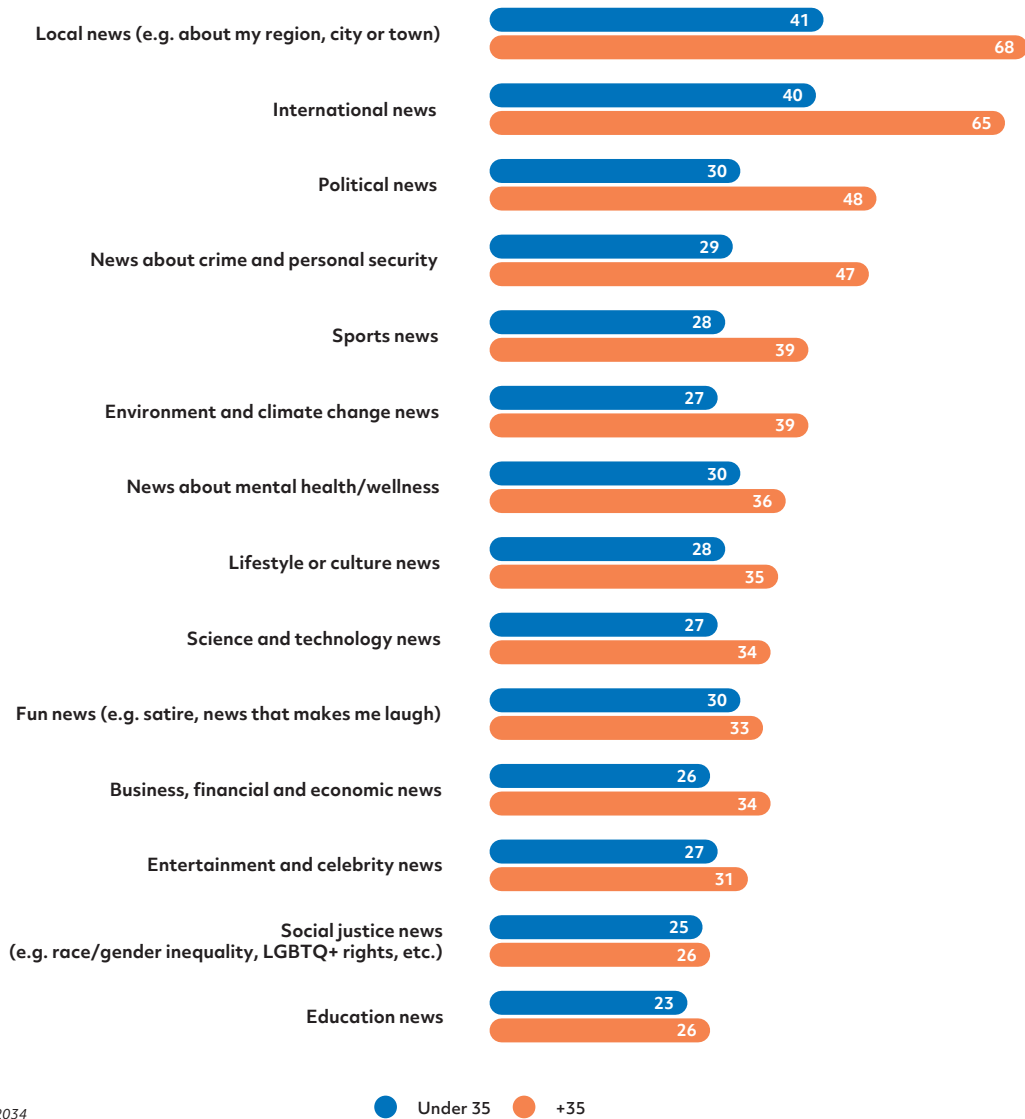
FIG 6: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS - GENDER



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

There are stark differences shown here between the types of news that mostly interest women and mostly interest men. Women are much more interested in the following topics than men: local news (67% vs 55%); crime and personal security (46% vs 38%); mental health (44% vs 25%); lifestyle/cultural news (43% vs 24%); fun news (36% vs 28%); entertainment and celebrity news (40% vs 20%); and education news (32% vs 18%). To a lesser degree there are also differences in the categories of environment (38% vs 34%) and social justice (28% vs 23%). Men on the other hand are more interested in international news (62% vs 55%); sports news (52% vs 21%); science and technology (40% vs 24%) and business and financial news (38% vs 26%). The biggest differences can be seen in sports (a 31 pp differential). Politicians heading towards a national election year will need to do more to generate engaging news for reporters with only 37 percent of women currently declaring an interest, compared to 50 percent of men. Overall this chart shows that women are more interested in their local communities but they are also looking for distraction via lifestyle, fun news and entertainment and celebrity news.

FIG 7: INTEREST IN TYPES OF NEWS - AGE



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

For this chart we have split the cohort into those under and those over 35 years of age. Here we can see that in every single category the 35+ group shows more interest in all the different types of news. The differences between the groups are stark in the following areas with the older group being more interested in: local news (68% vs 41%); international news (65% vs 40%); political news (48% vs 30%) and news about crime and security (47% vs 29%). This isn't the first time we have noted this but it is still perhaps surprising that the older cohort are more interested in environment and climate change news (39%) than the younger cohort (27%).

FIG 8: ROLE OF NEWS



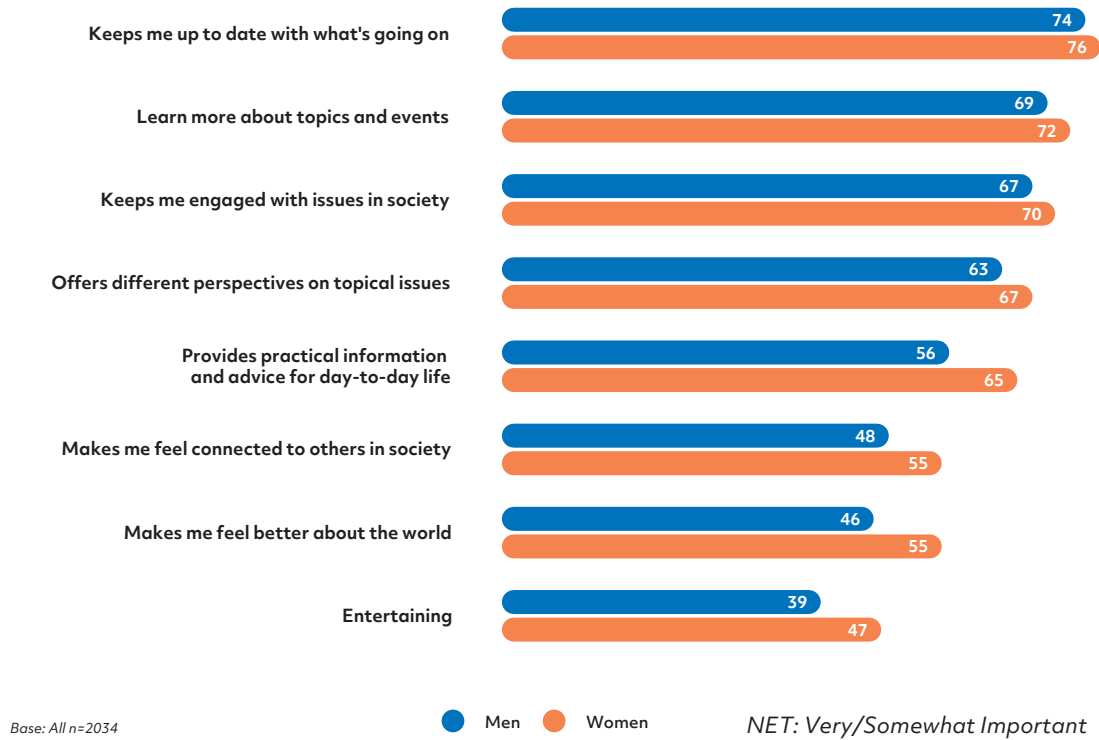
Base: All n=2034

NET: Very/Somewhat Important

Q: Thinking about the role that news plays in your life, how important or unimportant are each of the following? Please select all that apply

In a deeper dive into people’s perceptions of the value of news coverage, a further set of questions was asked to ascertain more about the role news plays in people’s lives. These percentages are related to people who believed each category was ‘very’ or ‘somewhat important’ to them. Traditional news values still rate the highest - in terms of wanting to be kept up to date with what is going on (75%); in learning about topics and events (70%); and being engaged with issues in society (68%). The following categories reflect that people are seeking out different perspectives on issues (65%); practical advice (60%) and a feeling of connection to others (52%). An intriguing 50 percent say that the role of news is to make them feel better about the world (50%) and 43 percent think its role is to be entertaining.

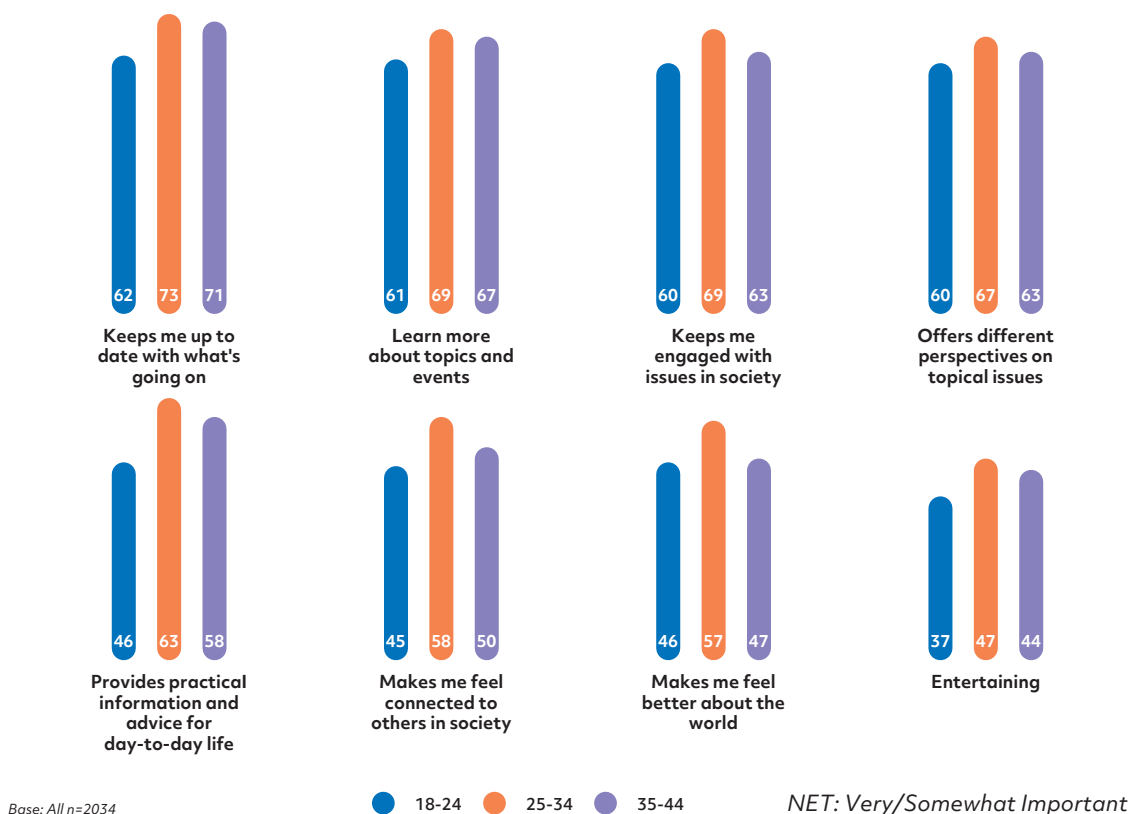
FIG 9: ROLE OF NEWS - GENDER



Q: Thinking about the role that news plays in your life, how important or unimportant are each of the following

Across all perceived 'roles of news', women choose the categories 'very' and 'somewhat important' more often than do men. The widest differential in perception of the role of news comes in the category of providing 'practical information and advice for everyday life': 65 percent of women thought this important versus 56 percent of men. The other category was 'makes me feel better about the world'. Here 55 percent of women thought this important versus 46 percent of men. This particular role is similar to questions asked in previous years about the importance of 'positive news'. In 2023 in answer to a slightly different question, 62 percent of women said they thought positive news was 'extremely' or 'very important'. In 2024 being kept up to date with what is going on won out in both categories: 76 percent for women and 74 percent for men.

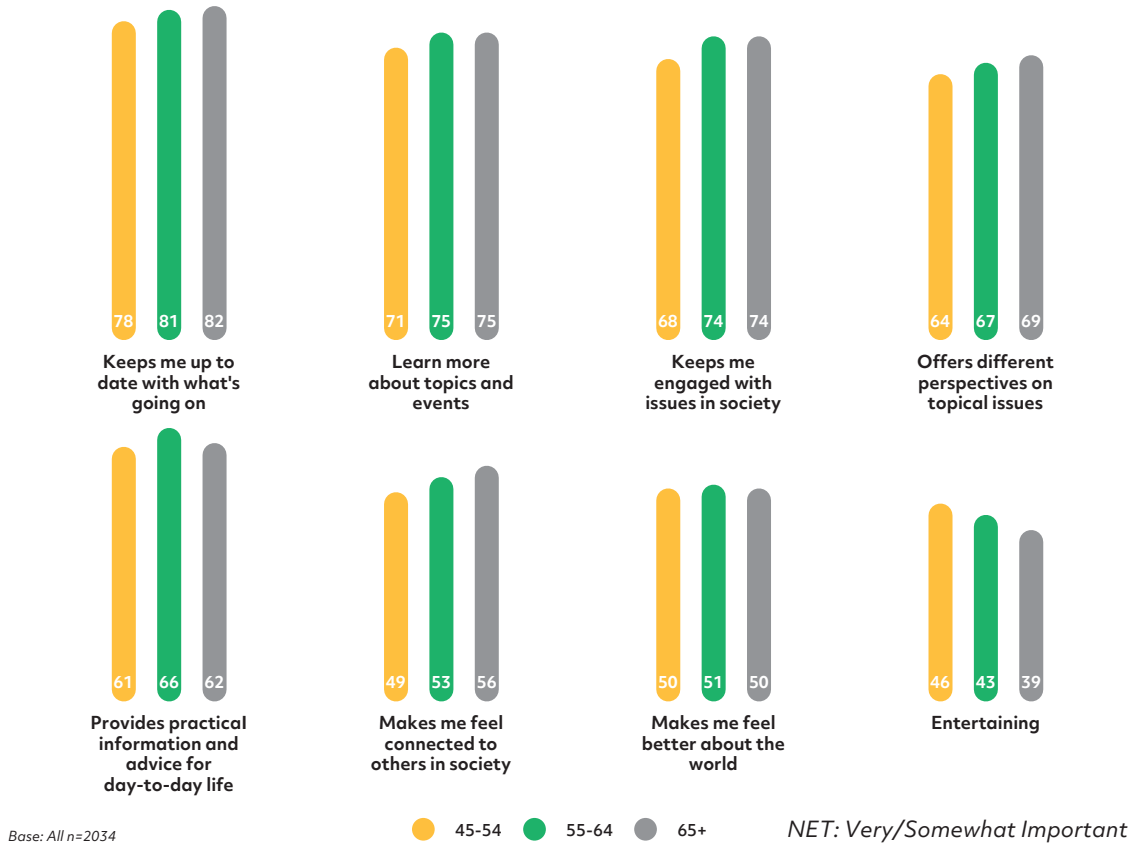
FIG 10: ROLE OF NEWS - AGE 18-44



Q: Thinking about the role that news plays in your life, how important or unimportant are each of the following

Here we have broken down the data for the three youngest cohorts. Across all categories, the 25-34 age group is the most engaged. 73 percent of this cohort say the role of news is to 'keep them up to date with what's going on'. The 35-44 year-olds are not far behind in this category (71%) and they are close followers for the top five categories. Regarding being kept up to date, only 62 percent of the 18-24 year-olds agree that this is 'very' or 'somewhat important'. The lowest percentage is for the category that states that the role of news is to be 'entertaining'. Only 37 percent of the youngest cohort believe this to be the case, perhaps revealing that they are mostly finding their entertainment elsewhere.

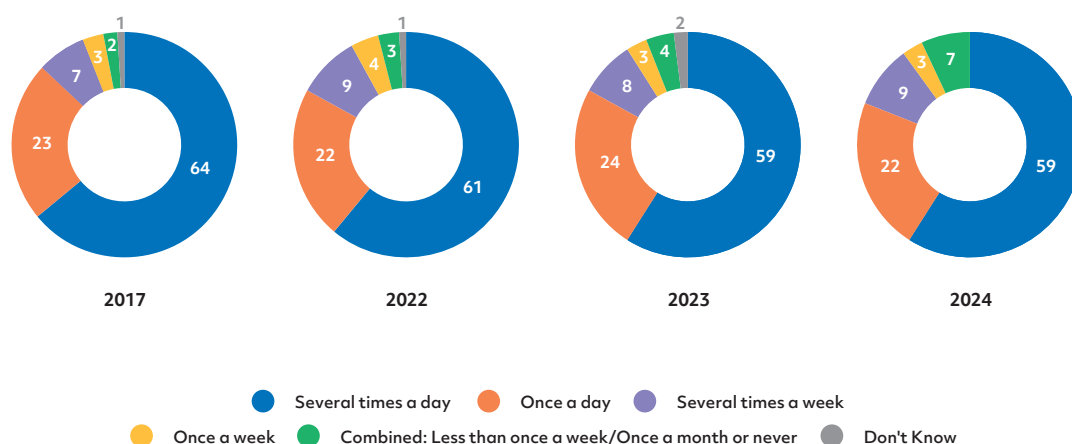
FIG 11: ROLE OF NEWS - AGE 45-65+



Q: Thinking about the role that news plays in your life, how important or unimportant are each of the following

Now we are looking at the three older cohorts to see how they perceive the 'role of news' in their lives. The 65+ group come in at the top of the categories for news keeping them 'up to date with what's going on' (82%); 'learning more about topics and events' (75%); keeping them 'engaged with issues in society' (74%); gaining 'different perspectives' (69%); and 'feeling connected to others in society' (56%). This group is closely followed by the 55-64 year-olds and indeed ties with them in two of these categories. All three groups have similar reactions to the idea that the role of news is to 'make me feel better about the world' (50%-51%) but in the oldest cohort only 39 percent think the role of news is to be 'entertaining'.

FIG 12: FREQUENCY OF ACCESS TO NEWS

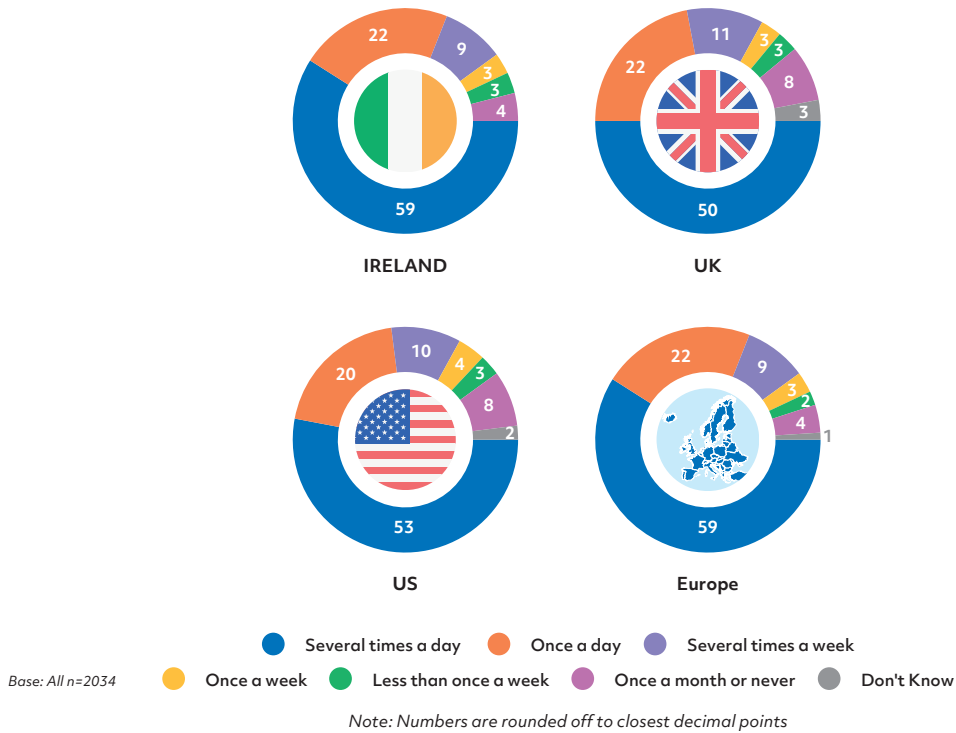


Note: Numbers are rounded off to nearest decimal points

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).

The number of people in Ireland who access news several times a day remains the same this year at 59 percent, but this is down 5pp from 2017. Those who access news once a day are down only 1 pp since 2017. The number of people in the combined categories of 'less than once a week/once a month or less/never' are up +5pp on 2017. When you combine the categories of 'several times a day' and 'once a day' then the total is 81 percent, down 6 pp from 2017 when they equalled 87 percent. At the height of Covid in 2021 these combined categories equalled 86 percent.

FIG 13: FREQUENCY OF ACCESS TO NEWS INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

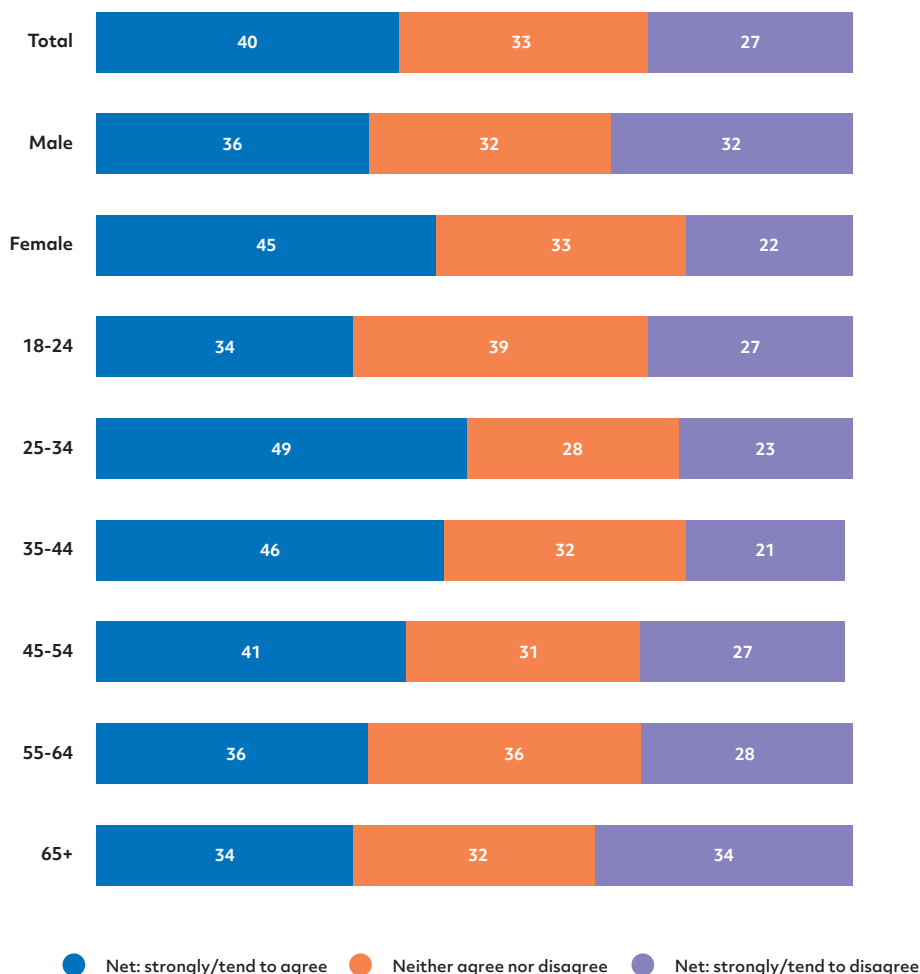


Q: Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online).

In our busy 24/7 day, the wide and variegated category of ‘news’ is compelling enough to mean that most people access it several times a day. When you compare Ireland to the UK, US and Europe in the combined categories of accessing news ‘several times a day’ and ‘once a day’, Ireland is tied with Europe at 81 percent. Interestingly for two countries with national elections this year, the UK and the US are quite a bit lower at 72 percent and 73 percent. Double the number of people in the UK and US (8%) only access news ‘once a month or never’.

FIG 14: NEWS FATIGUE

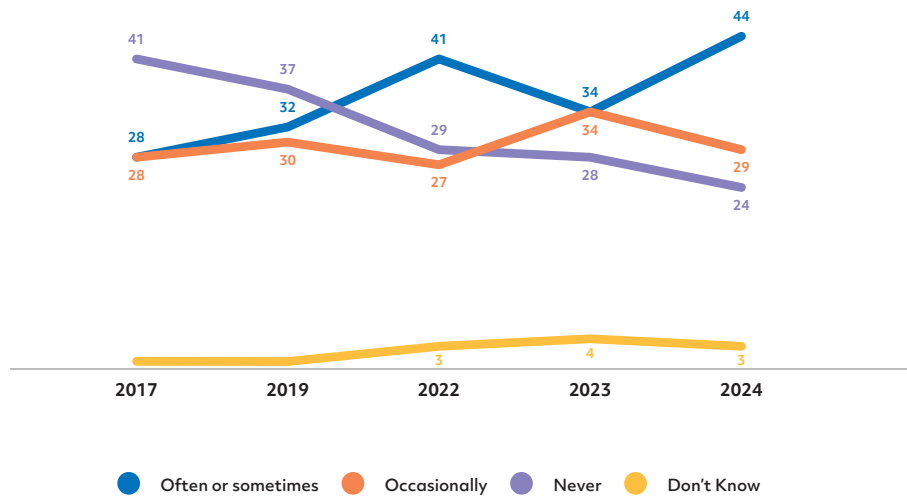
"I am worn out by the amount of news there is these days."



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

News and information overload is a common complaint these days. Here we can see that 40 percent of respondents either 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' with the statement that they are 'worn out with the amount of news'. When you break down the data then you find that women are the most worn out with the amount of news with 45 percent agreeing versus 36 percent for men. The genders have similar feelings when they are 'neither agreeing nor disagreeing' with the statement, but a much larger percentage of men versus women (32% vs 22%) 'strongly disagree' or 'tend to disagree' that they are worn out with the amount of news. The youngest cohort of 18-24 year-olds has the highest degree of nonchalance in this regard, neither agreeing nor disagreeing (39%) with the statement. On the other hand, the two age groups who feel the most worn out are the 25-34 year-olds (49%), followed by the 35-44 year olds (46%). The 65+ year-olds are more or less even in numbers across the three categories.

FIG 15: NEWS AVOIDANCE

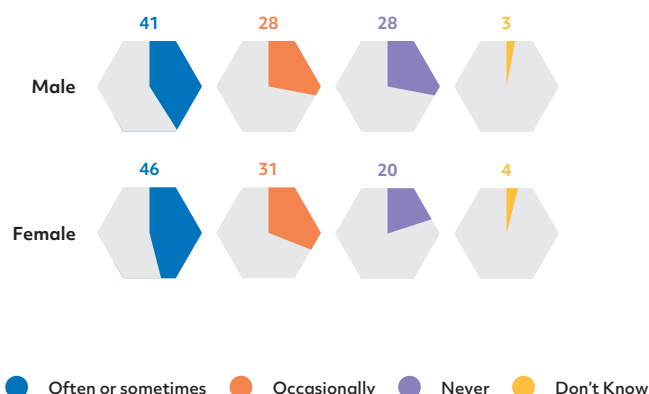


Base: All n=2034

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

For those suffering from news fatigue, one solution is simply to avoid the news. News avoidance in the category of 'often or sometimes' has grown considerably in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic when in 2022, 41 percent said they did this, which was up 9pp on 2019. Last year the number of news avoiders fell to 34 percent (-7 pp) but this year it has shot back up by a considerable amount (+10 pp) and is possibly the result of a succession of gloomy national and international news stories. The number of people who 'occasionally' avoid the news and who 'never' avoid the news is down. Back in 2017, 41 percent said they never avoided the news, whereas today this has dropped to 24 percent, down -17 pp.

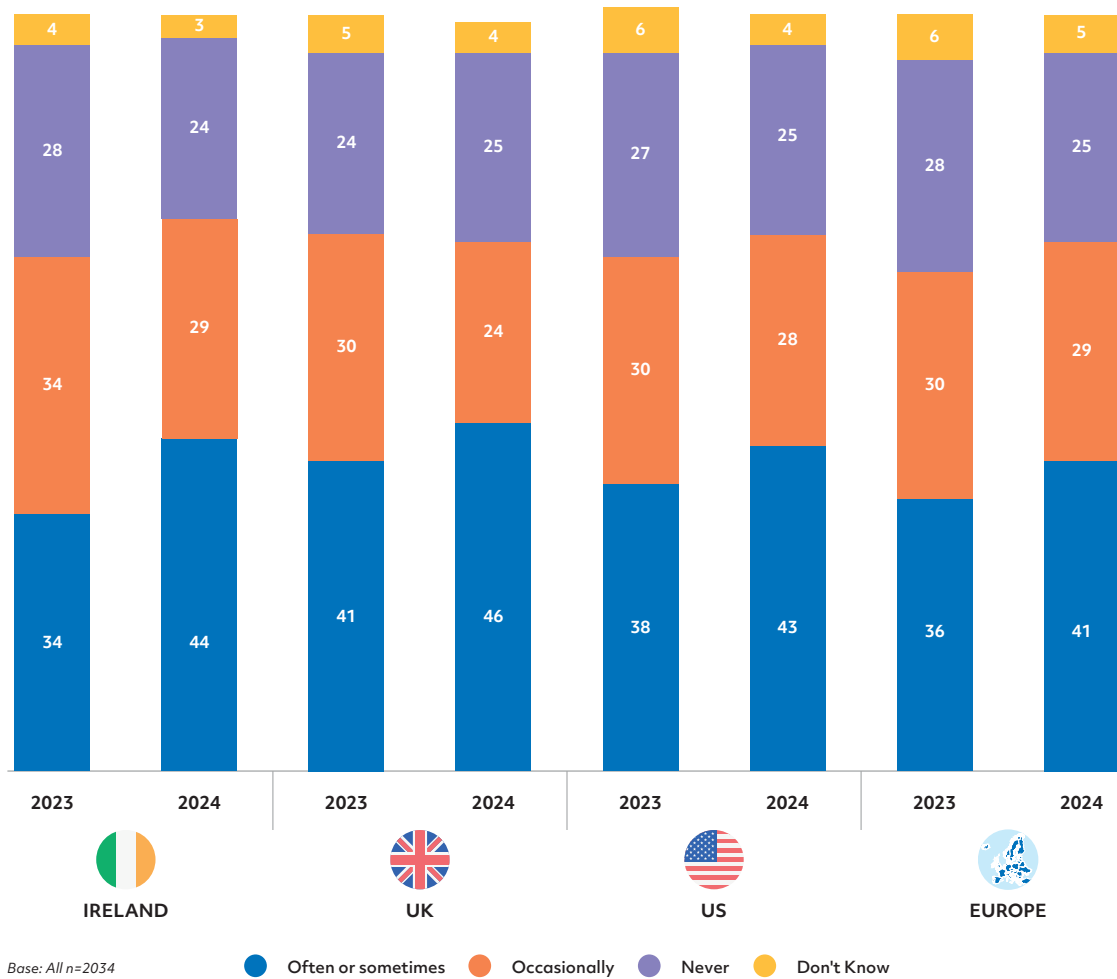
FIG 16: NEWS AVOIDANCE - GENDER



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

More women than men say they avoid news 'often or sometimes' or 'occasionally' (77%) at 8 pp higher than their male counterparts (69%). This chimes with related results about news interest and frequency of access that we have seen in other charts in this report and publishers would be wise to take these statistics on board if they are to woo more women to be media consumers. In Fig 2 of this report we saw that women scored lower in the 'extremely' and 'very interested' in news categories. Fig 6 demonstrated that women had very different tastes in the types of news they were interested in compared to men. In Fig 9 we saw that women also felt differently to men about the roles that news plays in their lives. And finally in Fig 14, women respondents also admit to more news fatigue than men.

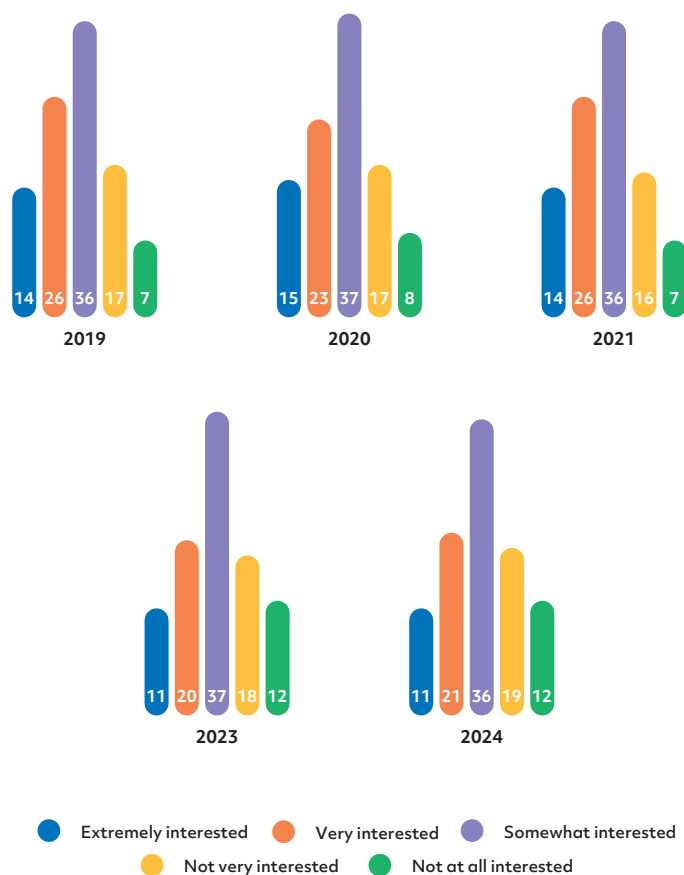
FIG 17: NEWS AVOIDANCE - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



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

The number of media consumers who 'often or sometimes' avoid the news is up in all countries in this comparison. Ireland has the largest jump (+10 pp) to 44 percent. The other countries are up 5 pp - with the UK now on 46 percent; the US on 43 percent and Europe on 41 percent. While Ireland's jump may seem extreme, it is now on a similar footing to its counterparts in this comparison. All countries' news avoidance in this category dipped last year (2023) but has sprung back. The total number of people in each country who say they 'often or sometimes' or 'occasionally' avoid news is very similar: Ireland (73%); the UK (70%); the US (71%) and Europe (70%).

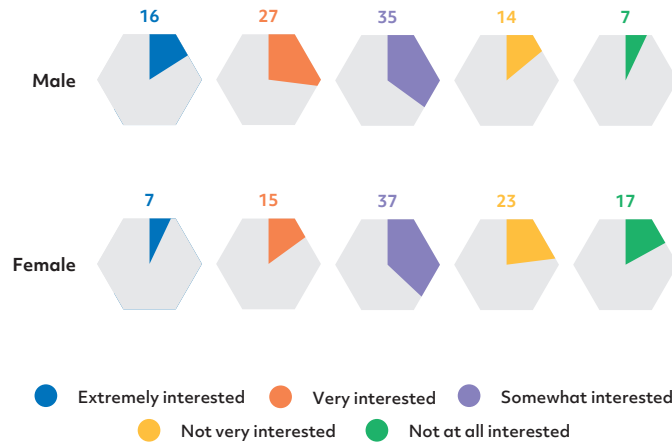
FIG 18: INTEREST IN POLITICS



Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?

By the time this report is published in June, local and European elections will have taken place in Ireland and a national election will be held within the year. The data gathered in January and February 2024 show that only 32 percent of Irish survey respondents are ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ interested in politics. This is down markedly from the last national election year (2020) when 38 percent of respondents professed a keen interest in politics, and the Covid-19 year (2021) when 40 percent did so. The ‘somewhat interested’ in politics category hasn’t moved much since 2019, with 36 percent falling into this category in 2024. To cast this chart in a more optimistic light, one can add up the three categories of ‘extremely’, ‘very’ and ‘somewhat interested’ to find that 68 percent of Irish respondents show an interest in politics. According to the global Reuters Digital News Report 2024 some social media platforms “are now explicitly de-prioritising political content” in favour of more light-hearted and engaging content.

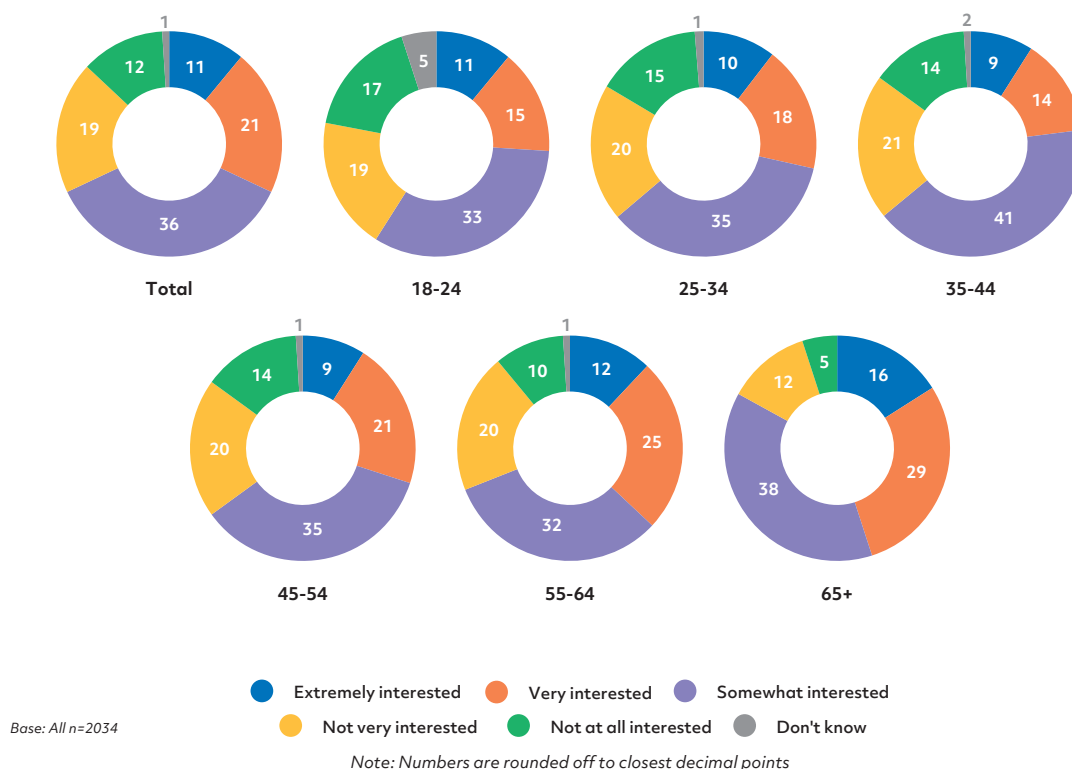
FIG 19: INTEREST IN POLITICS - GENDER



Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?

If you add together the people who are 'extremely interested', 'very interested' or 'somewhat interested' in politics then 78 percent of men have an interest in politics, compared to 59 percent of women, a 19 pp differential. This is a large gender divide, with 17 percent of women saying they are 'not at all interested' in politics, which is a 10 pp differential with men. With the 'somewhat interested' in politics category, there is a much smaller differential between the genders with 35 percent of men and 37 percent of women ticking this box.

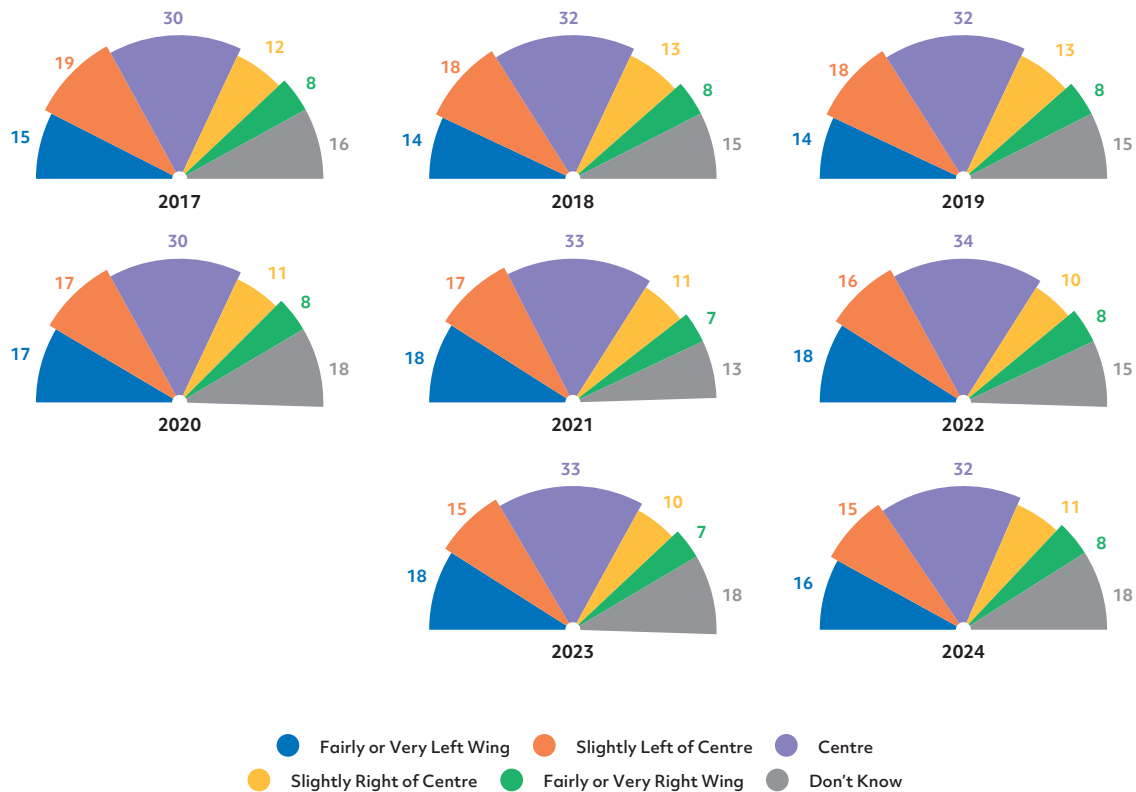
FIG 20: INTEREST IN POLITICS - AGE



Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics?

Generally speaking this chart shows that respondents mostly profess to be more interested in politics as they age. If we look at the two categories of people who say they are 'extremely interested' or 'very interested' in politics, only the 35-44 year-olds buck this trend (23%). For the over 65+ year-old cohort those who are 'extremely' or 'very interested' in politics total 45 percent. If you add in those that are 'somewhat interested' then a whopping 83 percent of the over 65+ cohort has an interest in politics. If you analyse the youngest cohort across these three categories (18-24 years), then the total is 59 percent. When we unpacked the data across the three categories back in 2020 (before the last national election), the 18-24 year olds totalled 58 percent.

FIG 21: POLITICAL LEANING OF IRISH SURVEY BY YEAR



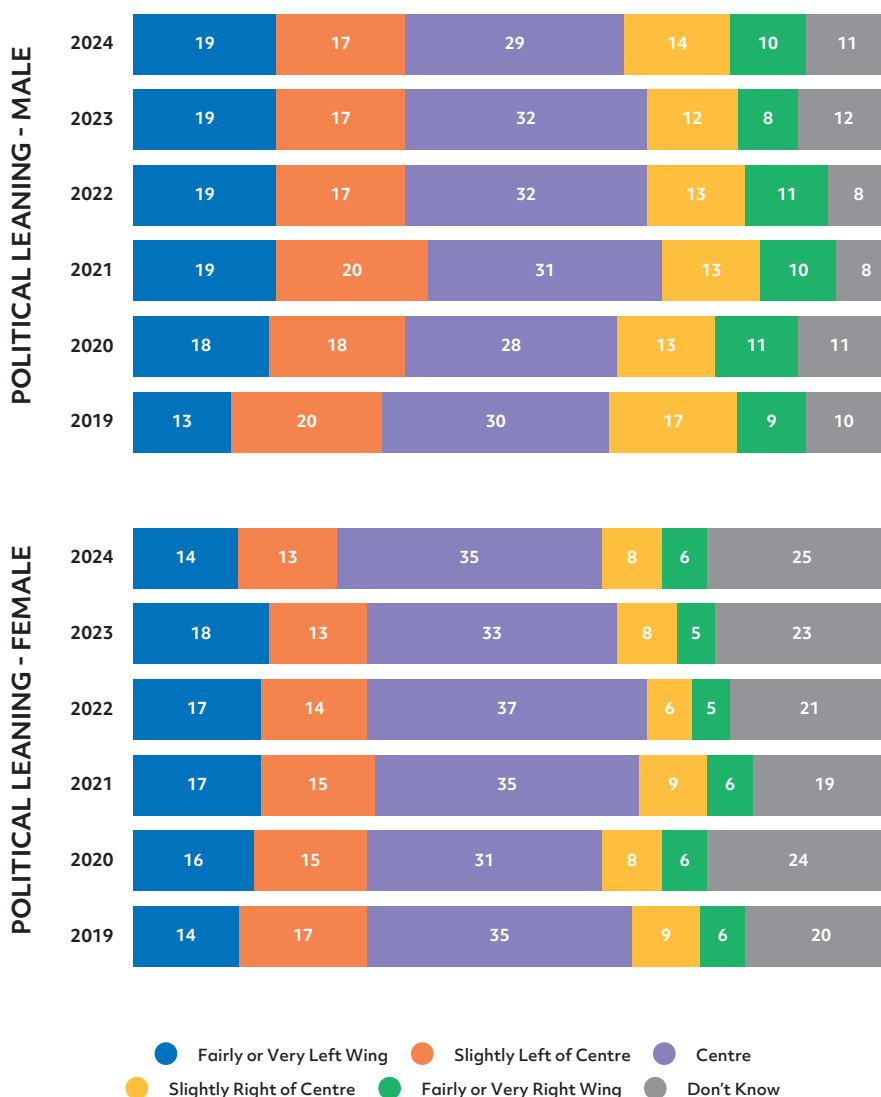
Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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?

According to the data across the last eight years of this survey, Ireland is a centrist nation politically speaking if you combine the categories of 'Centre', 'Slightly Left of Centre' and 'Slightly Right of Centre'. Despite a fractious year politically that included street riots in Dublin in November 2023, and many anti-migrant protests, this survey does not pick up on any significant changes towards the right wing in politics. People claiming to lean 'Fairly or Very Right Wing' have accounted for 7-8% of potential voters during this time. In terms of changes from 2023, they are mostly within the margin of error. There is a slight downswing of 2pp for those claiming to be on the Left (31%), and a slight upswing of 1 pp for those on the Right (19%).

FIG 22: POLITICAL LEANING OF IRISH SURVEY - GENDER



Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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?

More men consider themselves to be on the Left (36%) than women (27%). Over the past year women's affiliation with the Left has gone down -4 pp. Men are also more represented on the Right, with 24 percent versus women at 14 percent. Women form the majority of the 'don't know' category at 25 percent, versus men at 11 percent. Women are also represented in higher numbers in the single 'Centre' category (35%) than men (29%).

Digital News Report Ireland 2024



2

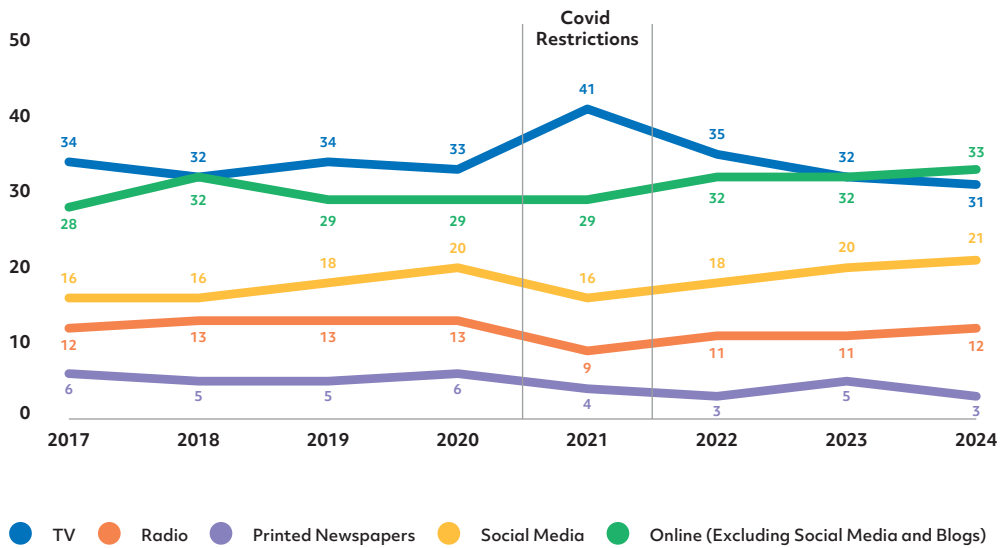
Sources and devices

This section explores what types of media consumers use as their sources of news and asks what is their main source of news.

This section also examines the devices used by Irish consumers to access news.

This section answers how many people listen to podcasts with a breakdown for age and gender and reveals the type of podcasts they enjoy.

FIG 23: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY YEAR



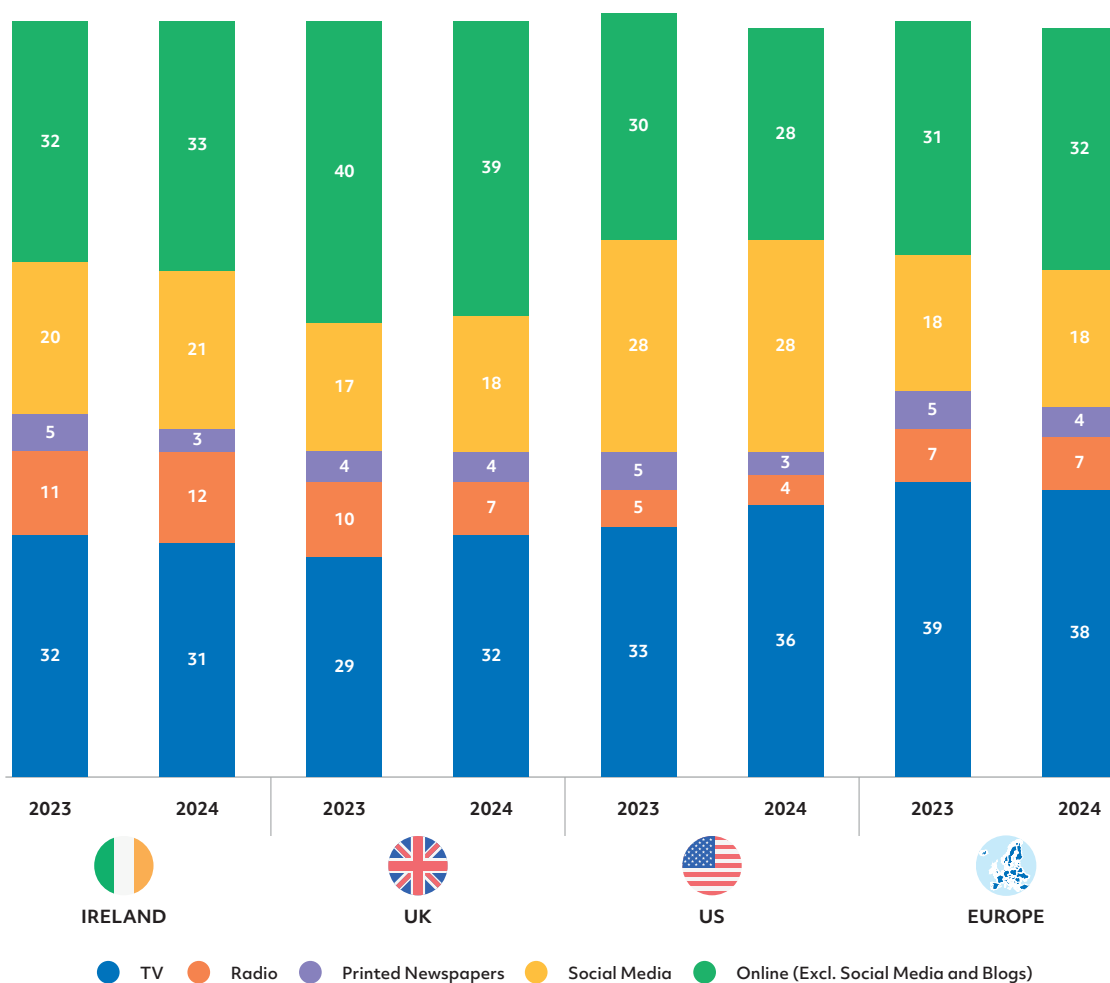
Base: All who used news sources in past week n=1933

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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

For the first time, the category of 'Online' - which excludes social media and blogs - has overtaken TV. One in three respondents - 33 percent - say 'Online', which includes websites and apps, is the main way they access news content. The decline in 'TV' (31%) since its recent peak during the Covid-19 survey of 2021 (41%) continues, but it is now even below the pre-Covid level of 32-34 percent. Elsewhere, 'Social Media' is at its highest level (21%) and has recovered from a Covid-19 dip. 'Radio' has remained stable and is at the same level as 2017 (12%), while 'Print' has dipped again and is the main source of news for just 3 percent of people.

FIG 24: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

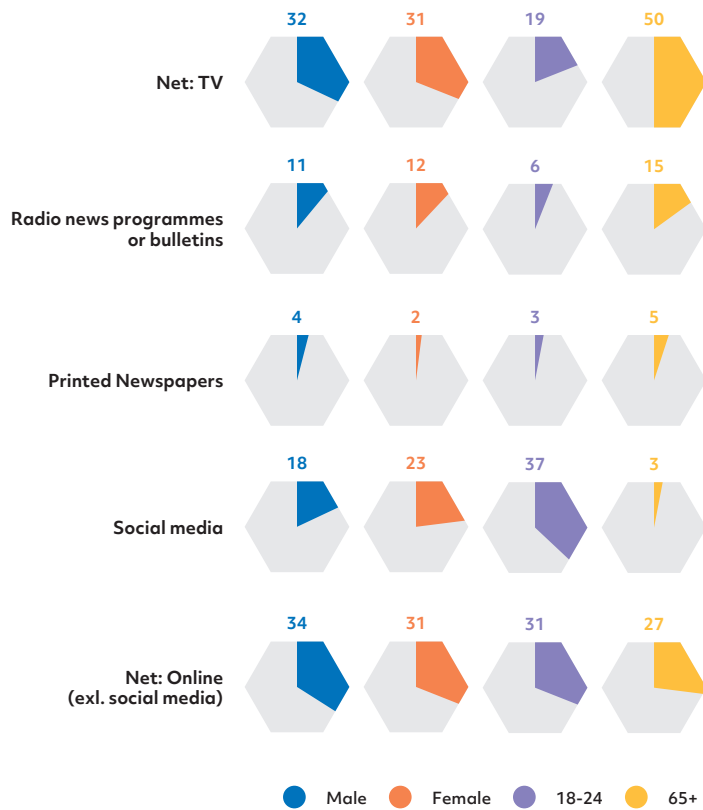


Base: All who used news sources in past week n=1933

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

The popularity of 'Online' (33%) as the main source of news in Ireland is echoed in the UK findings where it is even more striking (39%); however, these are out of sync with both the European and US landscapes where 'TV' remains the most popular source of news. Most notably, Ireland's affinity for radio remains strong: it is the main source of news for one in eight people in Ireland (12%) which is almost double the UK and European response (both 7%), and three times the US (4%). Ireland is also slightly above the UK and European average for 'Social Media', while the low response for 'Print' is apparent across all the regions included here, ranging from 3-4 percent.

FIG 25: MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS - GENDER AND AGE



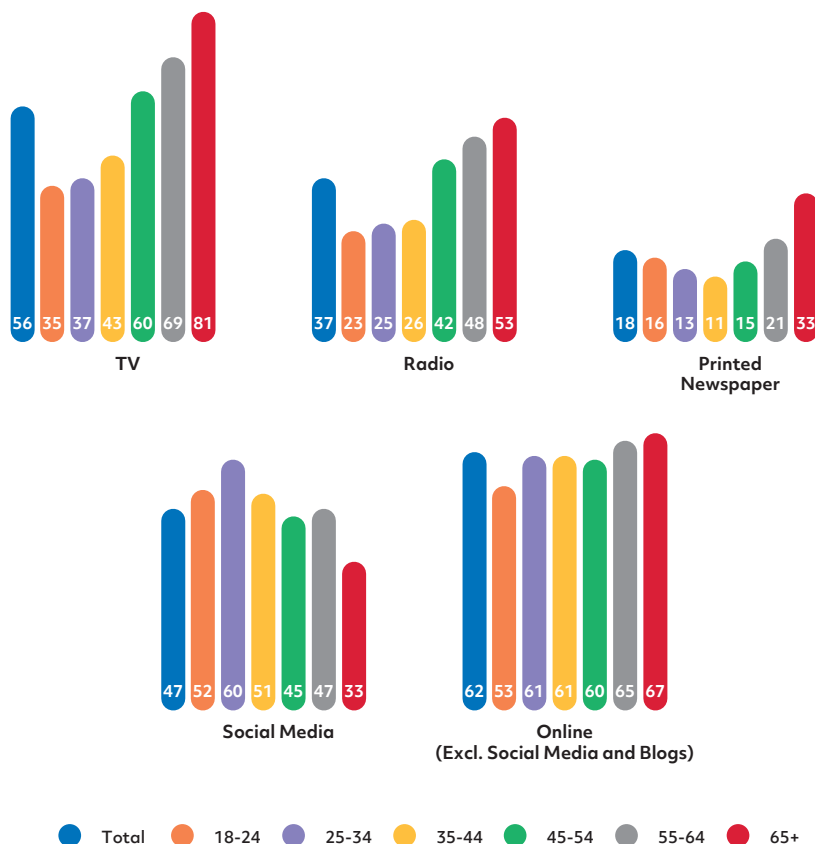
Base: All who used news sources in past week n=1933

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

It is useful to break down the 'main source of news' responses by age and gender to understand how audience trends vary: this chart uses men/women, and the youngest (18-24) and oldest (65+) age categories. In terms of gender, there is an interesting discrepancy between the two digital categories: women are 5 pp higher than men for 'Social Media', but men are 3 pp higher for the 'Online' category which excludes social media and blogs. This may suggest that men are more attached to specific brands and consume content via news outlets' websites and apps, whereas women consume more news in more mixed, fluid social spaces.

Regarding age, the two digital categories again shed some important light on the nuances of online news consumption. There is a wide gap between the 18-24s who cite 'Social Media' as their main source (37%) and the 65+ age group (3%), but the gap is minimal in the other 'Online' category: 31 percent (18-24s) vs 27 percent (65+). This indicates that older audiences are clearly engaged online, but may be drawn to the "official" websites and apps of news brands, rather than social media content. Elsewhere, perhaps unsurprisingly, older audiences are also more committed users of TV, radio and printed newspapers than their younger counterparts.

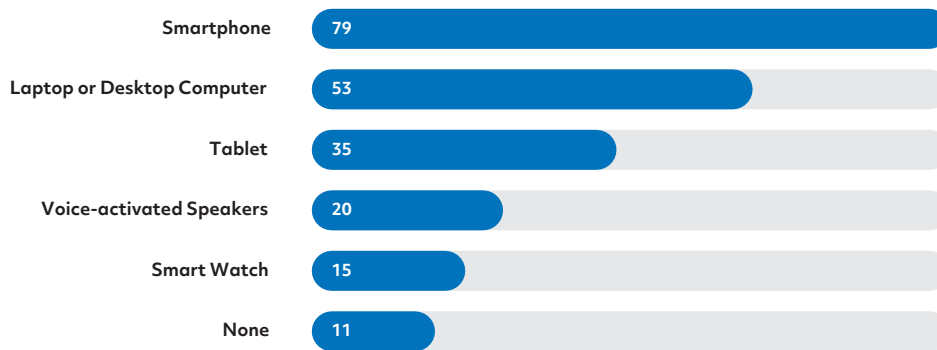
FIG 26: ANY SOURCE OF NEWS - AGE



Base: All who used news sources in past week n=1933

Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news?

This chart records the responses for any source of news, rather than just the main source of news as per the previous charts. Here, we can see higher levels across all sources. We can see that the total figures show 'Online' as the highest (62%), followed by 'TV' (56%), 'Social Media' (47%), 'Radio' (37%) and 'Printed Newspapers' (18%). When age is factored in, the traditional formats of 'TV', 'Radio' and 'Printed Newspapers' all show steady increases in consumption rates as audiences get older, while it is more inverted for 'Social Media'. However, one slight inconsistency with 'Social Media' is that the youngest age group of 18-24 is actually 8 pp below the slightly older 25-34 group.

FIG 27: DEVICES USED TO ACCESS NEWS LAST WEEK

Base: All n=2034

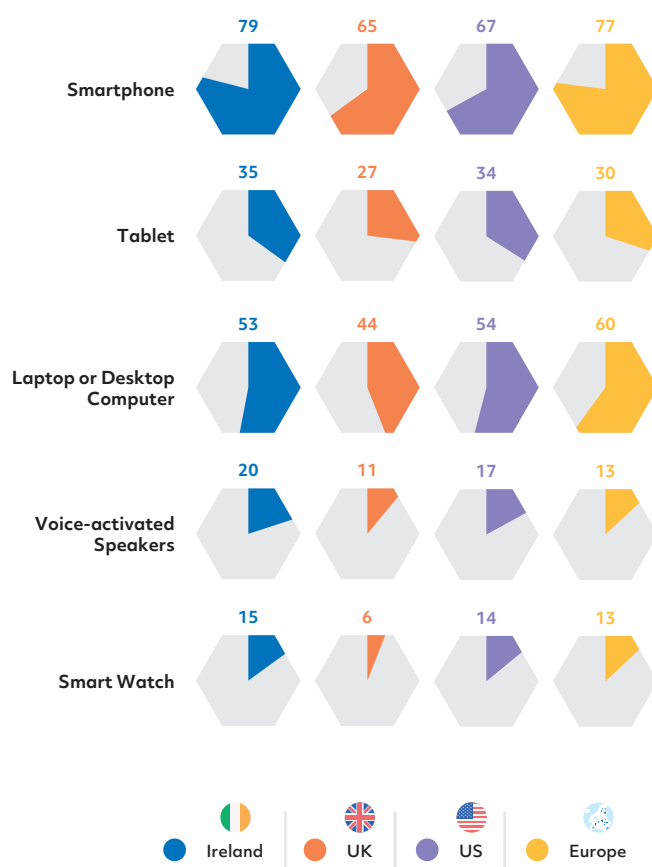
Note: In 2024 a new question structure and presentation was introduced and Connected/Smart TV removed

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

The physical devices which audiences use to access news also shape contemporary consumption patterns. This year, we can see that the smartphones dominate with almost four in every five people (79%) using the hand-held devices. Nevertheless, laptops and PCs remain important (53%), which is perhaps indicative of consumption during work hours among those who use computers, while tablets are used by one in three (35%). Among the newer devices available, voice-activated speakers - where users can ask the machine to perform tasks such as providing them with headlines, or stream radio news or podcasts - are used by one in five respondents (20%) and smartwatches, where notifications and emails can be read, are used by 15 percent.

In terms of age, smartphone use is most common among 35-44s (85%), and lowest among the 65+ (72%), but - perhaps surprisingly - it is not actually much higher (76%) among the 18-24 year olds, and instead peaks among those aged 25-54. Tablets are most popular among the 65+, used by 42 percent, compared with 29 percent of the 55-64s. Voice-activated speakers are most used by the under 44s, ranging between 22-24 percent among those age groups, while smart watches have a similar level of use (23-24%) among the 18-34 age groups, before dropping off substantially and reaching only 6 percent of the over 65s.

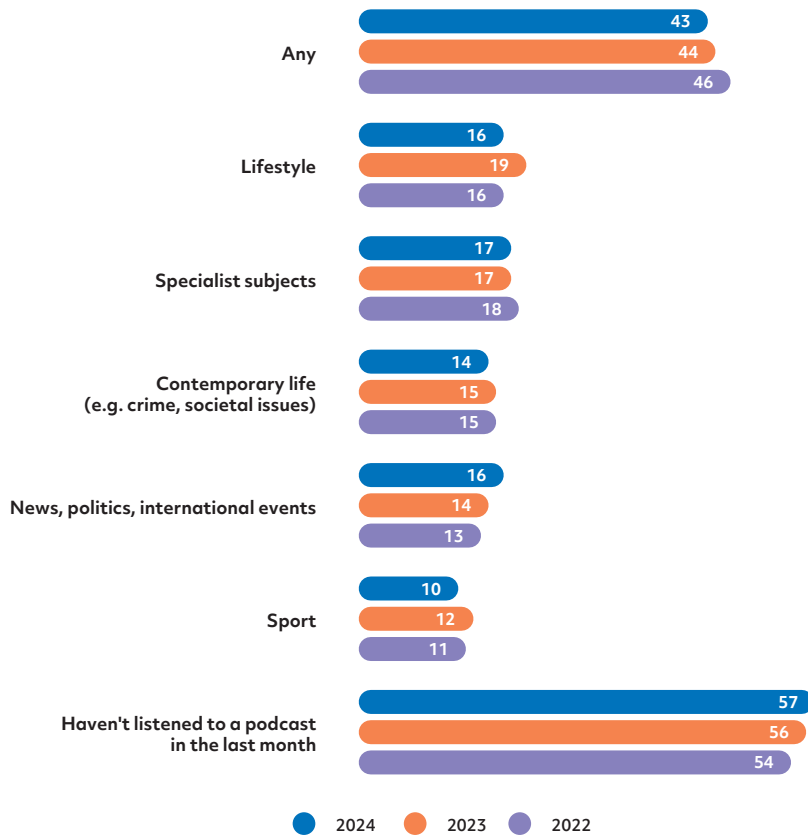
FIG 28: DEVICES USED TO ACCESS NEWS LAST WEEK - INTERNATIONAL



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

In the international context, Ireland’s heavy use of smartphones (79%) is close to - but slightly exceeds - the European average (77%), and is 14 pp higher than the UK (65%) and 12 pp higher than the US (67%). Ireland is actually notably higher than the UK across all five devices recorded here, while Ireland dips below the European average for laptops/desktops. Ireland’s relatively high use of voice-activated speakers may also be linked to their ability to easily stream radio content which, as noted in earlier results, is particularly popular in Ireland.

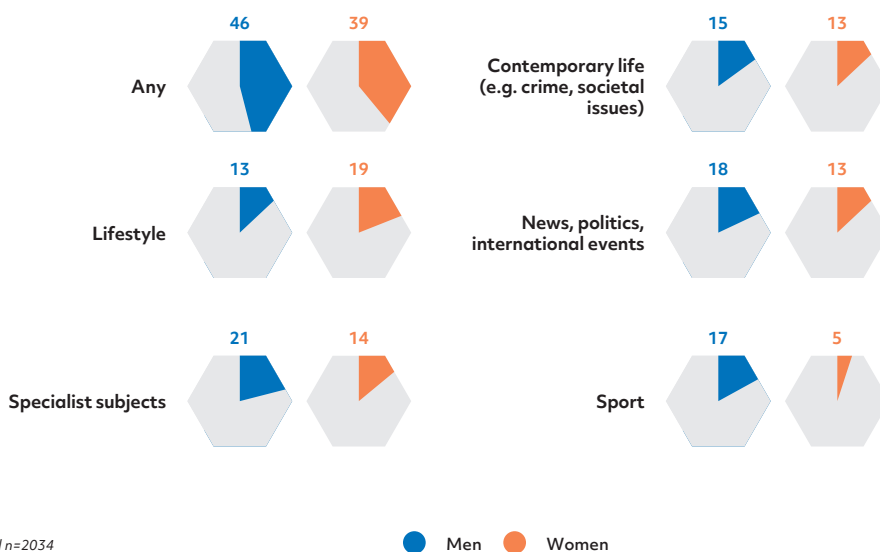
FIG 29: TYPES OF PODCASTS LISTENED TO IN THE LAST MONTH



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? Please select all that apply.

The 43 percent of respondents who have listened to any kind of podcast over the past month has declined over the past two years, down from 46 percent in 2022. However, an increase (+3 pp since 2022) is evident in the ‘news, politics, international events’ category, perhaps indicative of major events such as international conflict in Ukraine and Gaza, or the large number of elections taking place around the world in 2024. Lifestyle podcasts (eg, food, fashion, arts, literature, travel, fun) saw the largest drop (-3 pp) but any fluctuations are minimal and the figures remain broadly consistent across all categories.

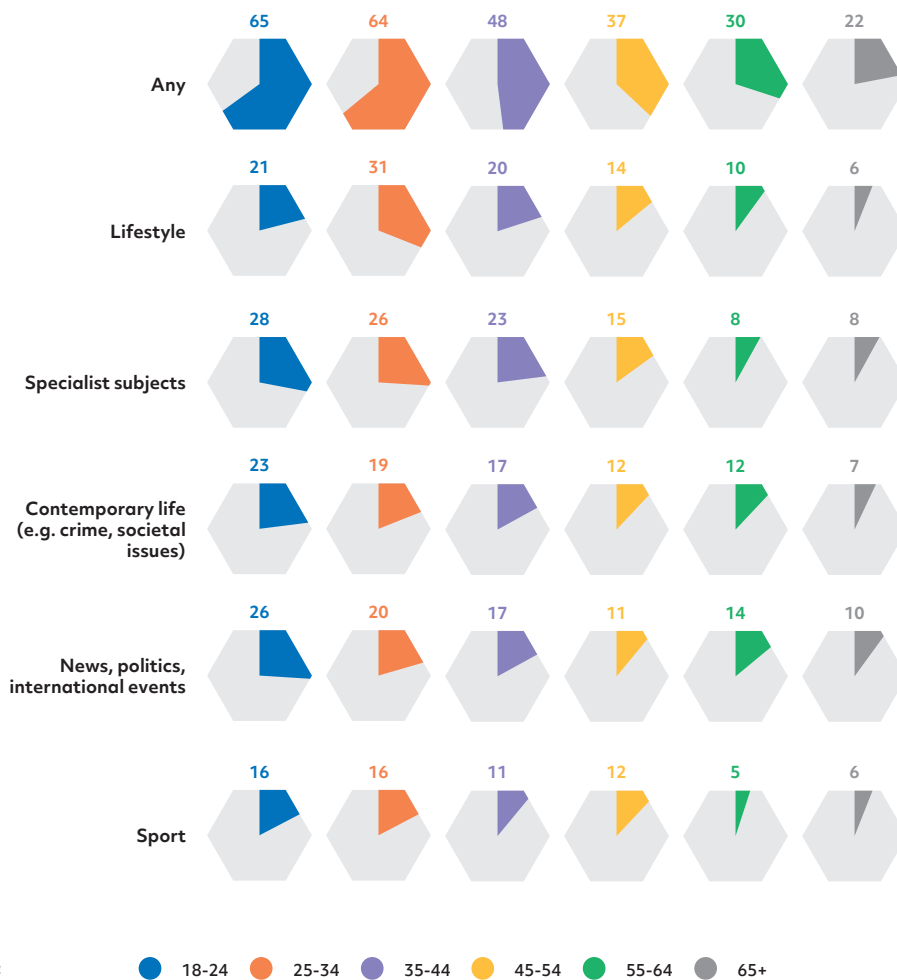
FIG 30: TYPES OF PODCASTS LISTENED TO IN THE LAST MONTH - GENDER



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? Please select all that apply.

Listening to podcasts is more popular among men (46%) than women (39%), and that pattern is evident across almost all categories, with the biggest gap in the sport category (17% of men listened to a sports podcast in the previous month, compared with 5% of women). The one category where women are higher consumers is lifestyle podcasts, where 19 percent of women listen compared with 13 percent of men.

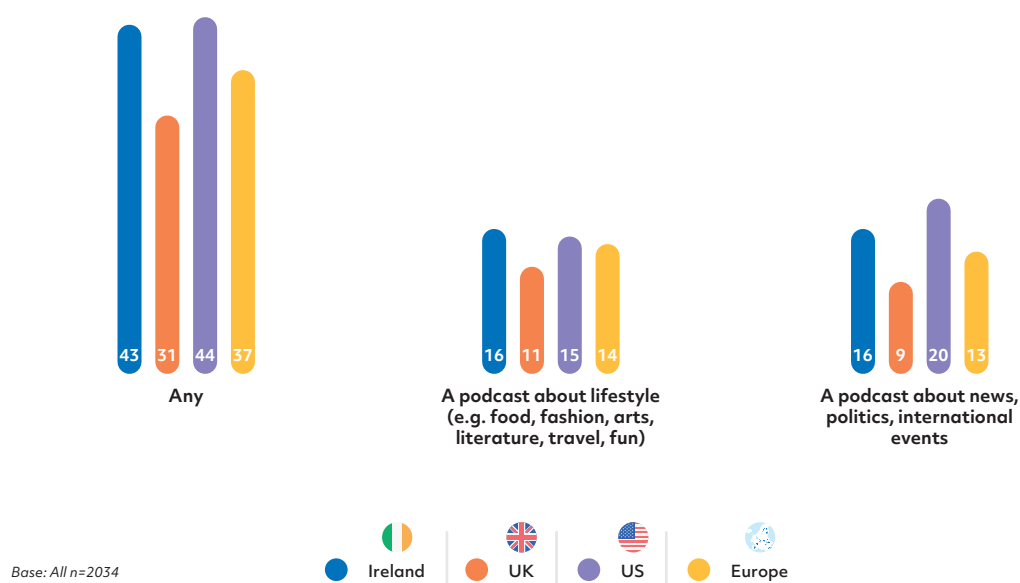
FIG 31: TYPES OF PODCASTS LISTENED TO IN THE LAST MONTH - AGE



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? Please select all that apply.

The age pattern for podcast listenership is clear, with the format being most popular among younger audiences. Regarding listening to ‘any podcast’, it reached 65 percent and 64 percent respectively among 18-24 and 25-34. The ‘lifestyle’ category slightly bucks the trend again, with its peak of 31 per cent among the 25-34 group, a notable 10 percent higher than 18-24, and 11 percent higher than the 35-44 ages. ‘News, politics, international events’ is the most popular category for the two age categories over 55.

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



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? Please select all that apply.

Ireland’s listenership of podcasts (43%) is above the European result (37%) and the UK result (31%), and just slightly below the US (44%). The ‘news, politics and international events’ listenership is highest in the US (20%), perhaps due to it being a US presidential election year, although that does not translate to the UK where the 9 percent figure comes despite it also being a general election year for British voters.

Digital News Report Ireland 2024



3

Attitudes and Trust

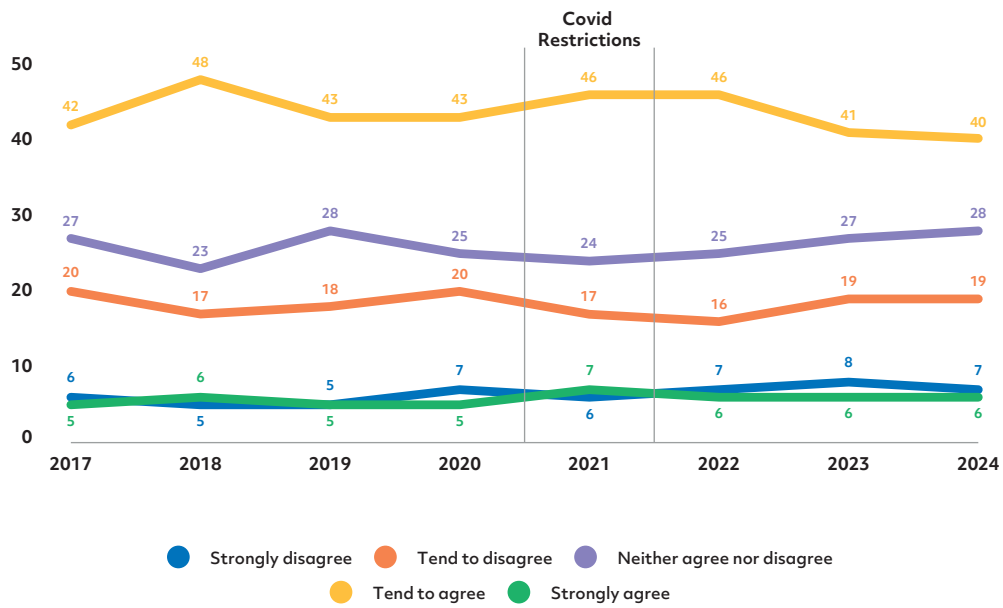
This section outlines attitudes to news among Irish news consumers. It asks how much they trust news generally, how much they trust particular brands and what factors affect their trust.

This section also examines how much trust is afforded to the news by people in different age groups and people with different political leanings.

It also asks about concern regarding what is real or fake on the internet and how easy it is to spot unreliable news.

FIG 33: TRUST MOST NEWS MOST OF THE TIME

"I think you can trust most news most of the time"



Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

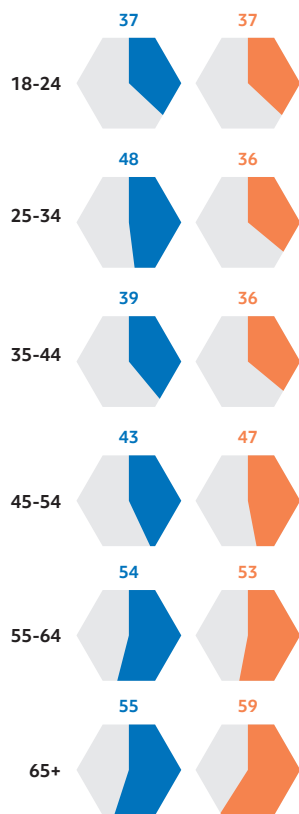
Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

Trust has been a central talking point over recent years, and the Covid-19 peak of the 2021 results (where ‘strongly agree’ and ‘tend to agree’ reached 53%) continues to decline, with the two trust categories reaching just 46 percent in 2024, a slight (-1 pp) drop on last year. Nevertheless, the most committed ‘strongly agree’ group has remained relatively stable since 2017; across all categories, trust levels broadly align with the 2017 levels. Among those who are more sceptical of news, the ‘tend to disagree’ and ‘strongly agree’ categories combined are 26 percent, up 3 pp since 2021. Those who are neutral - ‘neither agree nor disagree’ - account for just over one in four people (28%).

FIG 34:

TRUST NEWS GENERALLY - GENDER & AGE

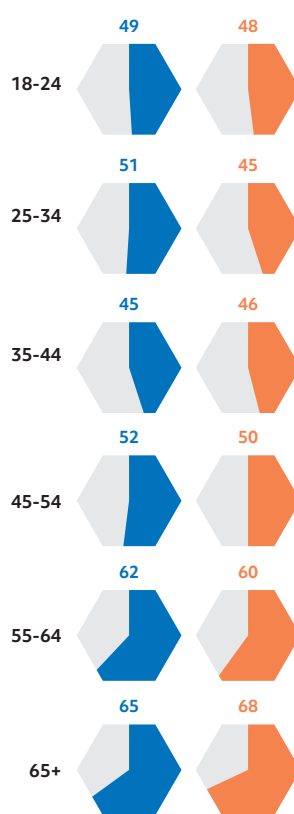
"I think you can trust most news most of the time"



Base: All n=2034

TRUST NEWS I CONSUME - GENDER & AGE

"I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time"



NET AGREE: Tend to agree/Strongly Agree

● Male ● Female

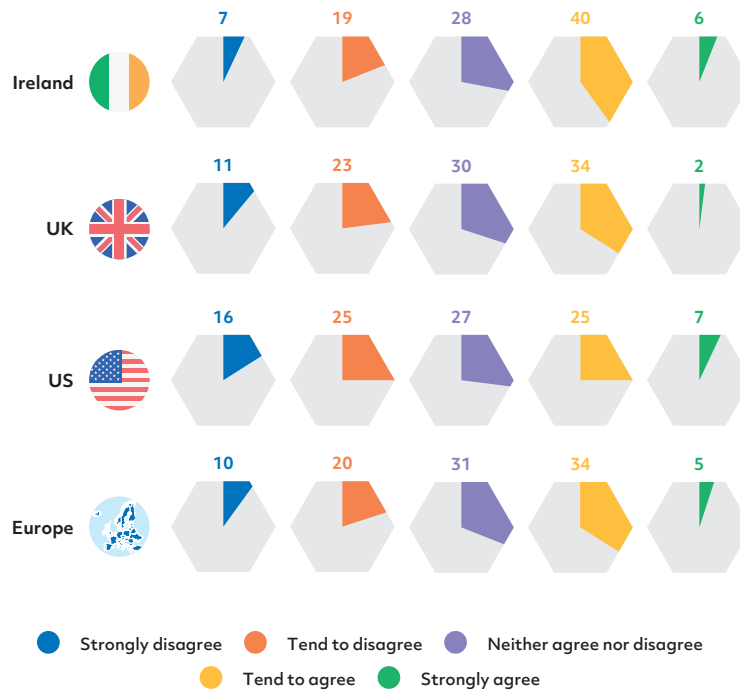
Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time.

Breaking the trust figures down by age and gender, it is clear that it fluctuates between cohorts. There are two charts above, with a subtle but important distinction:

- The first is the same as the previous chart, asking about 'trusting most news most of the time', which applies to news content in the broad, general sense. As per the previous chart, we find the overall figure is 46 percent. We can see that - overall - younger men are more trusting than younger women, with a particularly notable 12 percent gap in the 25-34 age group. However, this gender gap becomes less stark among older populations, with the 45-54 and 65+ women more trusting than their male counterparts in those age groups.
- The second chart asks about 'trusting most of the news I consume most of the time', which allows the respondent to consider the content which they read, listen to, or watch. The overall average across all respondents is 54 percent, suggesting people put more faith in the material they choose to consume. Similar gender and age patterns are evident within this question, with men under 35 more trusting than women of the same age, but across all age groups, the gap is relatively small.

FIG 35: TRUST MOST NEWS MOST OF THE TIME - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

"I think you can trust most news most of the time"



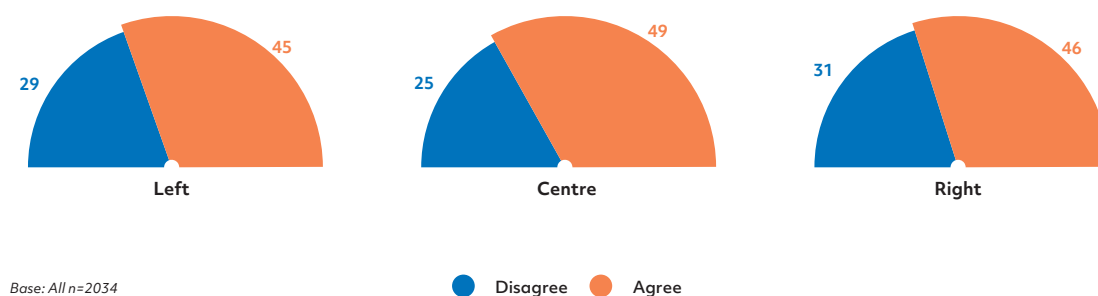
Base: All n=2034

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

Ireland's 46 percent level of trust in 'most news most of the time' is high by international standards: it compares well with a European average of 39 percent, a US rate of 32 percent and a UK rate of 36 percent. Because of this, we see that mistrust (26 percent) in Ireland is lower than elsewhere: it reaches 41 percent in the US, 34 percent in the UK, and a European average of 30 percent. The more neutral middle category is relatively steady, ranging between 27-31 percent across all regions presented here.

FIG 36: TRUST MOST NEWS MOST OF THE TIME - POLITICAL AFFILIATION

"I think you can trust most news most of the time"

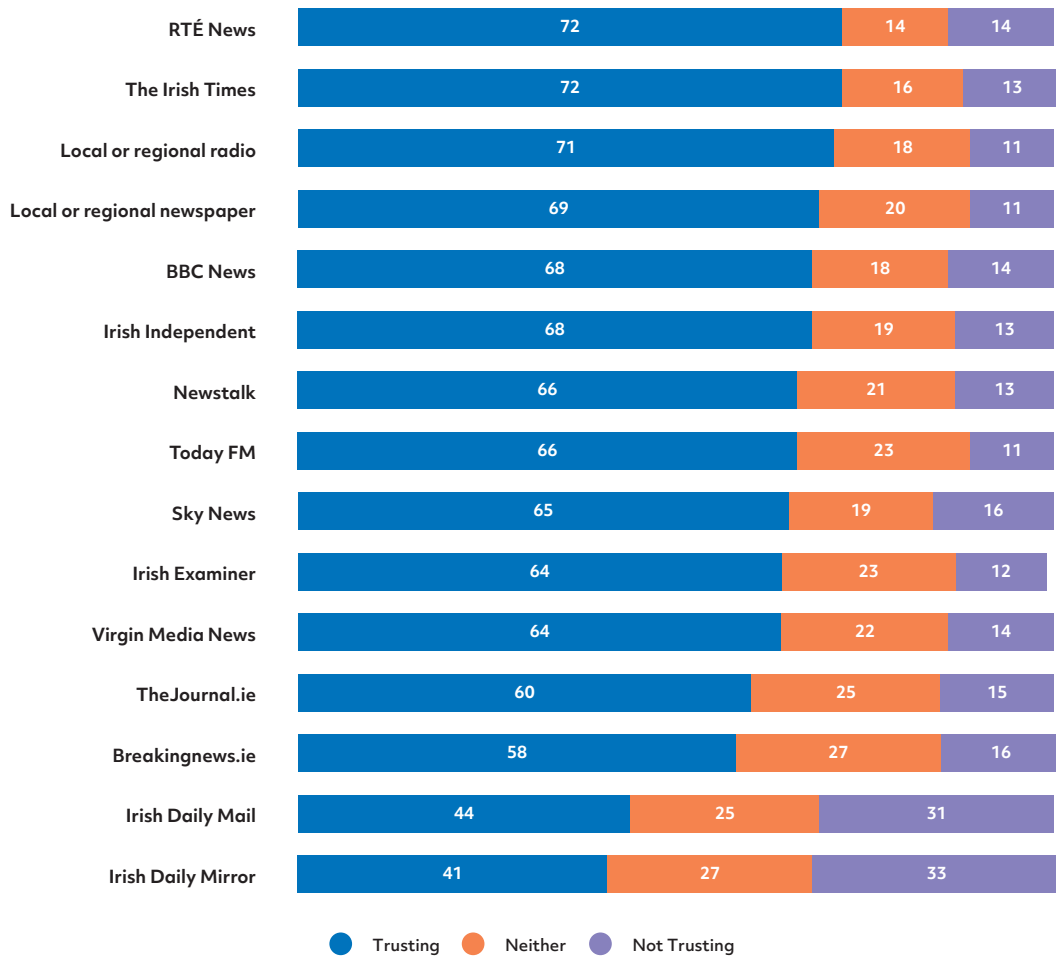


Q: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

Respondents are asked their political affiliation and when that is analysed in relation to the trust question, the results are relatively consistent. The centre category - which includes the response categories of 'slightly left of centre, centre, and slightly right of centre' is the most trusting, with 49 percent of respondents in those categories saying they 'strongly agree' or 'tend to agree' with the statement about trusting most news most of the time. It only varies slightly among those with stronger affiliations, dropping to 46 percent for those who are 'fairly/very right wing', and dropping to 45 percent for those who are 'very/fairly left wing'. Among individual affiliation results, the most trusting (those who 'agree' with the statement) is 'slightly left of centre' (53%) and those who 'disagree' with the statement the most are those who are 'very left wing' and 'very right wing', both at 32 percent.

It is important to note that the majority of respondents (58%) shown in this chart are in the 'Centre' category, 31 percent are in the 'Left' category, and 26 per cent are in the 'Right' category (see full breakdown in Figure 21).

FIG 37: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS



Base: All who have heard of brand, n=1808 to 2013

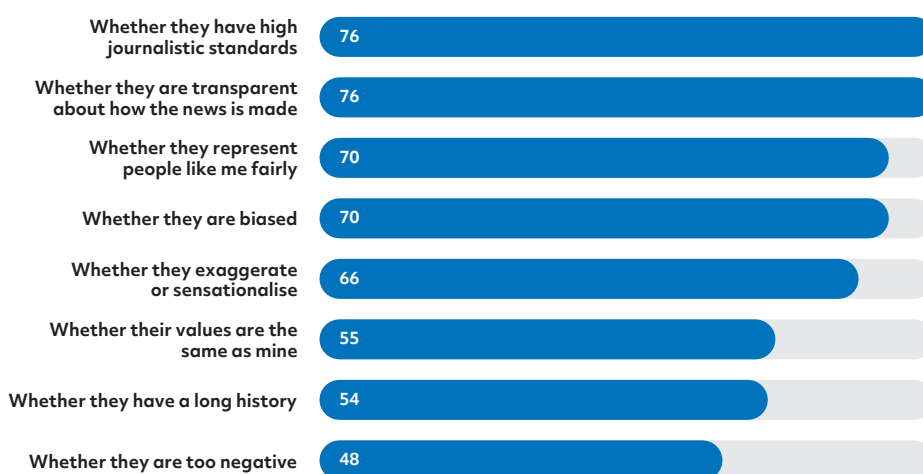
Note: ranking is based on 6-10 score to 2 decimal places

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

Although the overall figures for trust have fallen slightly, there is good news for individual brands as there are increases in trust across the majority of brands. RTÉ (+1) and The Irish Times (+2) remain the most trusted outlets, particularly notable given the turbulence within RTÉ over the past year. Elsewhere, the Irish Independent (+1), Newstalk (+2), Today FM (+2), Irish Examiner (+1), TheJournal.ie (+2), Breakingnews.ie (+3); Irish Daily Mail (+2) and the Irish Daily Mirror (+1) all see higher trust results than in 2023. BBC News, Sky News and Virgin Media News all remain steady, while local or regional radio (-1) and local or regional newspaper (-1) see very minor drops.

Please note that figures in the chart are rounded: RTÉ News average was 72.38 percent, while The Irish Times average was 71.65 percent.

FIG 38: FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISIONS ON WHICH NEWS OUTLETS TO TRUST



Base: All n=2034

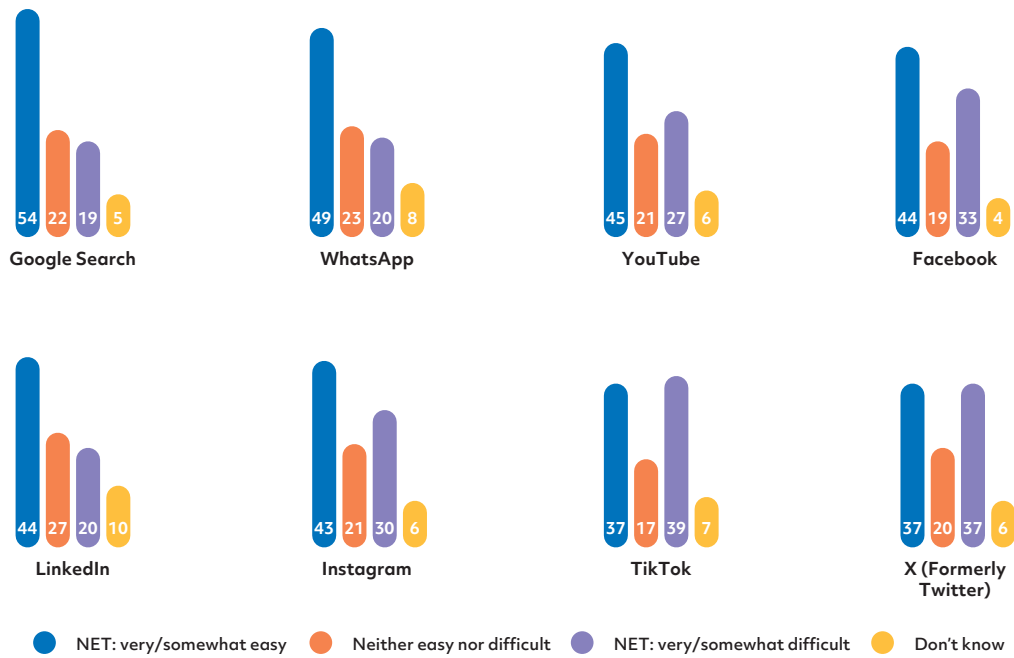
NET: Very/somewhat important

Q: Still thinking about trust in news...how important or unimportant are the following to you when it comes to deciding which news outlets to trust?

New questions were asked this year regarding what factors influence a news outlet’s trustworthiness. The figures above are those who responded ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ important. Three in four people (76%) see both ‘high journalistic standards’ and ‘transparency’ in how news is produced as important factors, and this is consistent across both men and women in their responses. The third most popular suggestion on the list, ‘whether they represent people like me fairly’, sees some gender-based divergence, with it being a bigger concern among women (73%) than men (68%). A similar pattern is repeated across the remaining factors where women are more concerned about all of these, ranging from just 1 percent difference for ‘Whether they have a long history’ (54% among men, 55% among women) to 6 percent for ‘whether their values are the same as mine’ (52% among men, 58% among women).

When age is factored in, the 18-24 age group is most concerned with ‘whether they are biased’ (70%). Only 67 percent said ‘high journalistic standards’ are a factor, and 61 percent said ‘transparency’ was a factor, indicating a notable gap between the overall response of 76 percent. The two oldest age groups 55-64 and 65+ are both equally concerned by ‘high journalistic standards’ and ‘transparency’ (84%). Most of the age breakdowns follow an order from high-low importance (or vice-versa), but ‘whether they are biased’ peaks at the youngest and oldest.

FIG 39: EASE OF DISCERNING TRUSTWORTHY NEWS CONTENT ON PLATFORMS

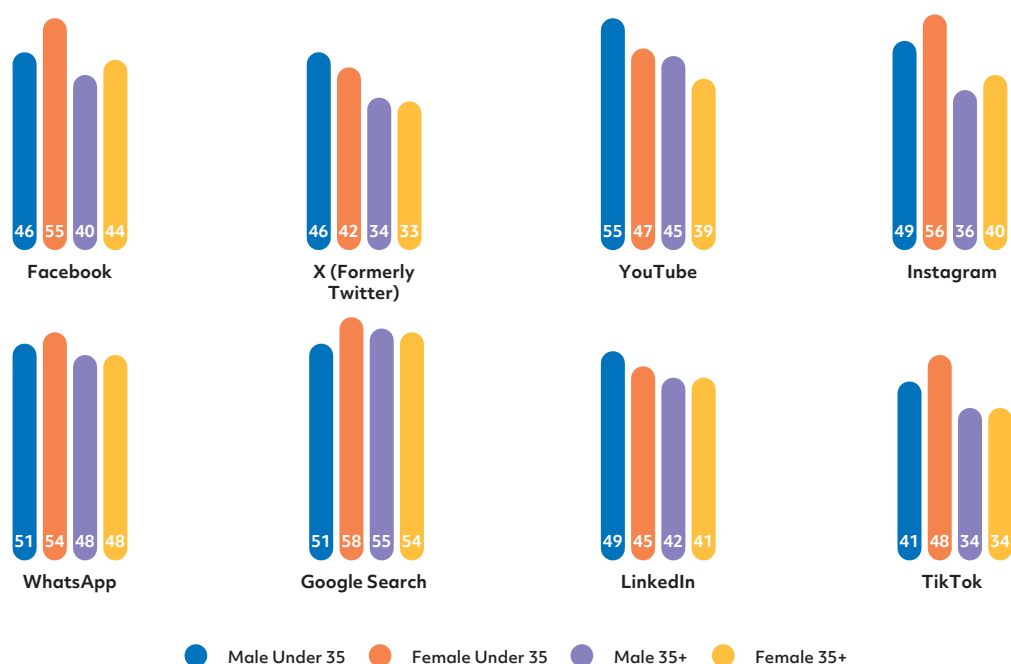


Base: Those who use the brand, n=1329 to 1974

Q: Still thinking about trust, how easy or difficult is it for YOU to tell apart trustworthy versus untrustworthy news and information on each of the following platforms?

Another new question this year related to discerning trustworthy and untrustworthy content on various online platforms. Google is the only platform on which more than half (54%) of respondents say they find it 'very' or 'somewhat' easy to identify trustworthy content on the search engine. Messaging app WhatsApp is the second easiest for respondents (49%), followed by YouTube (45%). At the other end, TikTok is the only platform in which more people said it was difficult (39%) rather than easy (37%), and the numbers are close on X (formerly Twitter). Elsewhere, LinkedIn bucks the trend slightly with the professional networking site having the largest proportion of respondents saying that identifying trustworthy content on the platform was neither easy nor difficult (27%).

FIG 40: EASE OF DISCERNING TRUSTWORTHY NEWS CONTENT ON PLATFORMS - AGE



Base: Those who use the brand, n=1329 to 1974

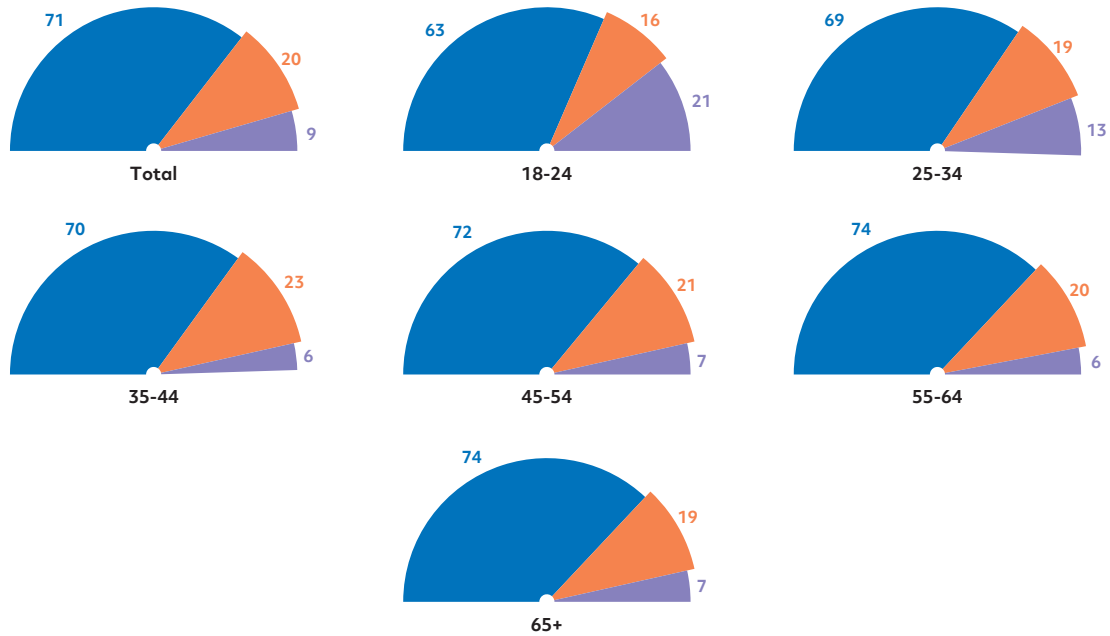
NET Very/Somewhat Easy

Q: Still thinking about trust, how easy or difficult is it for YOU to tell apart trustworthy versus untrustworthy news and information on each of the following platforms?

When the results about each platform are broken down by selected age and gender categories, as shown in the chart, the variations are clear: 55 percent of women under 35 are confident of identifying trustworthy news on Facebook compared with 40 percent of men aged 35+. The most stark age gap is evident for Instagram, where the under 35s perceive it as much easier to navigate in terms of trustworthiness than the 35+ ages: even among women, it ranges from 56 percent of women under 35 saying it is easy to tell apart trustworthy and untrustworthy information, compared with just 40 percent of women aged over 35. Overall, for all platforms, the younger cohorts consistently report more optimism than the older age groups.

FIG 41: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE - AGE

“Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.”



Base: All n=2034

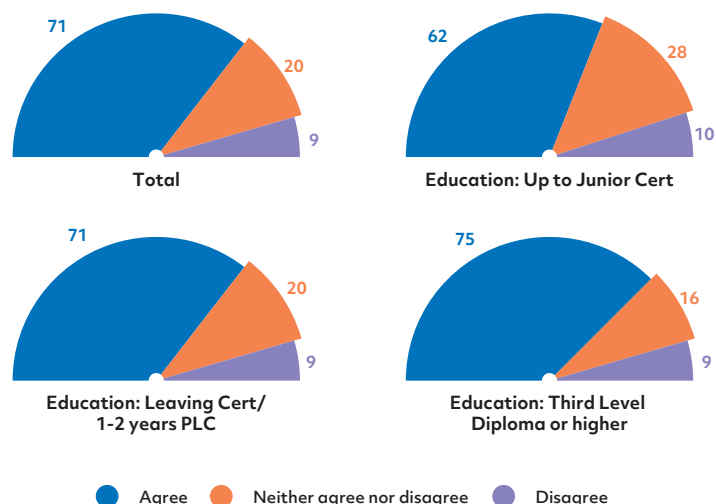
● Agree ● Neither agree nor disagree ● Disagree

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.”

The 71 percent of people who say they are concerned about real/fake content online is an increase on 2023 (+7 pp). There is a clear trajectory when respondents are broken down by age: the figure drops to 63 percent being concerned in the 18-24 group, and steadily increases up to 74 percent in the 55+ age groups. Related to this, the youngest age group also ‘disagrees’ most strongly (21%) and has the smallest ‘neither agree nor disagree’ result, perhaps indicating a strong sense of awareness among younger audiences. However, the response among the next age group, 25-34, is more in line with the overall result suggesting a leveling out in attitudes by the mid-20s.

FIG 42: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE - EDUCATION

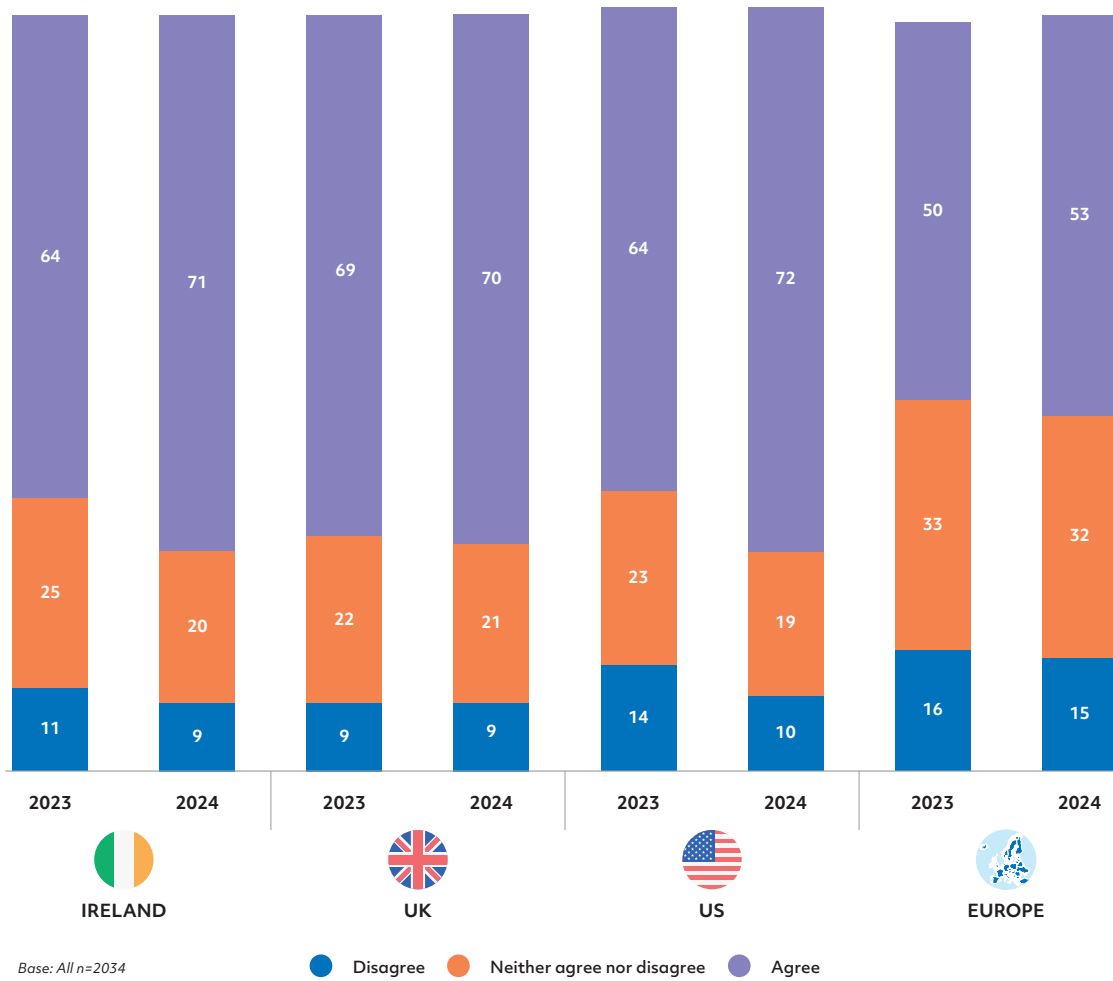
“Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.”



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.”

Education level can also be associated with levels of trust in online content. Those with lower levels of formal education, only up to Junior Cert, are least concerned with what is real and fake online (62%), but crucially, more than one in four (28%) are neutral or indifferent to the question, perhaps indicating a lack of interest or awareness. The concern levels increase alongside education levels, with those educated to third level or higher the most concerned about the accuracy of the online content they encounter. Across all levels of education, there is a 9-10 percent grouping that rejects the statement that they are ‘concerned’ with what is real or fake on the internet.

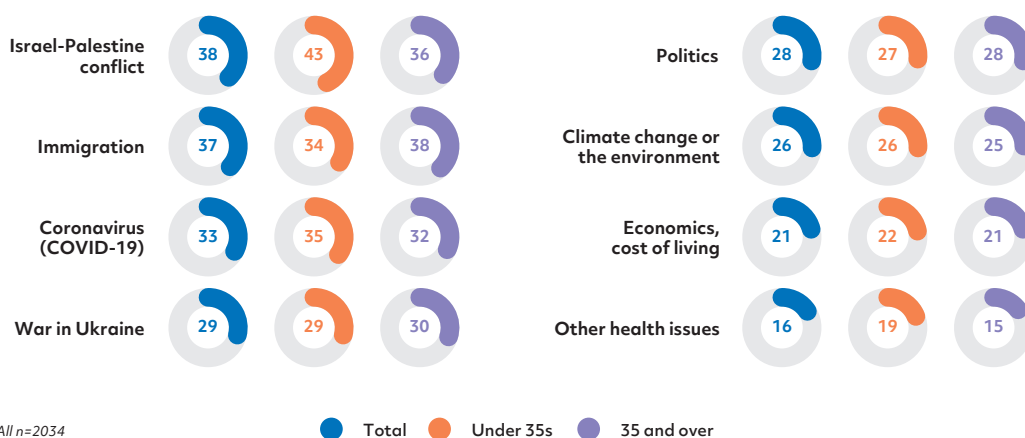
FIG 43: CONCERN ABOUT WHAT IS REAL AND FAKE ONLINE - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



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.”

Ireland’s 7 percent increase (71%) on 2023 in terms of level of concern with ‘what is real and fake’ is higher than the UK (+1), European average (+3) and US levels (+6). The European average is the highest for those who disagree with the statement (15%), while Ireland and the UK have the same level (9%). All regions’ figures have gradually increased over the years: for example, in 2019, concern in Ireland was at 61 percent, the UK was at 70 percent, and the European (EU) average was 51 percent.

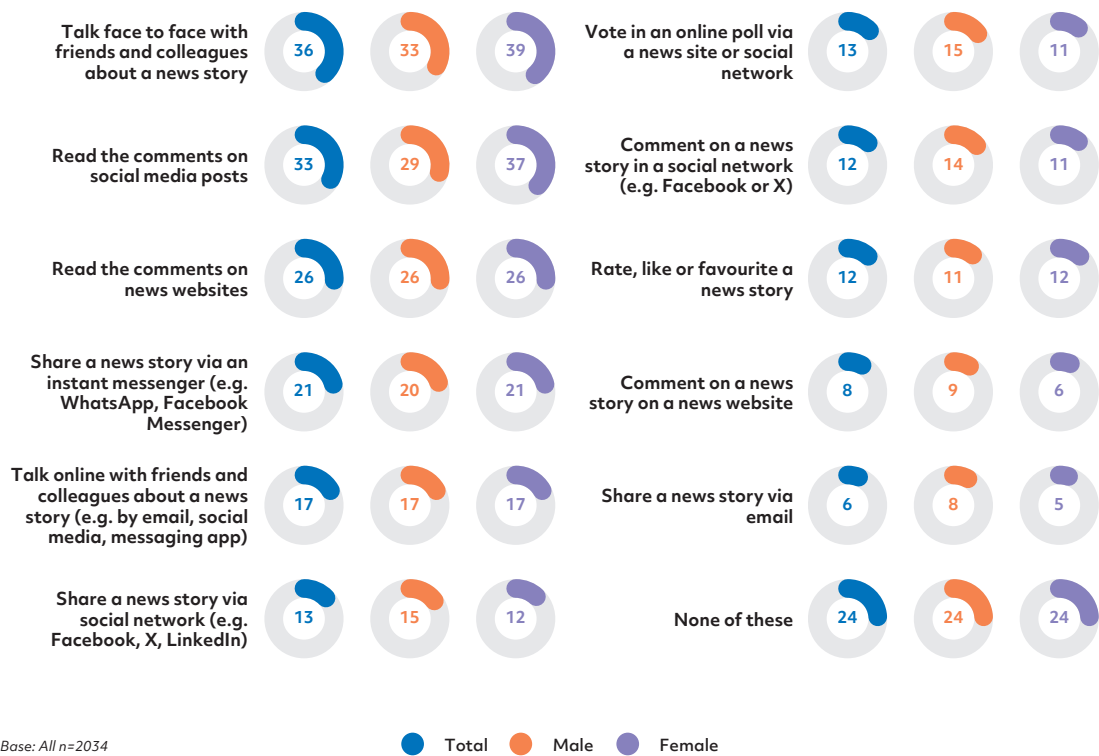
FIG 44: FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION ENCOUNTERED LAST WEEK - AGE



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

Respondents say the topic they have seen the most ‘false or misleading information’ about over the past week was the Israel-Palestine conflict, with more than one in three (38%) reporting that, and increasing to 43 percent among the under 35s. Immigration was closely behind, with 37 percent (and increasing to 38% among the over 35s). Elsewhere, after four years, the Covid-19 pandemic remains a concern for those consuming online content, with 33 percent still saying they have seen false or misleading content about the virus, while other health issues are relatively lower, at 16 percent. Almost one in five (18%) of over 35s said they hadn’t encountered false or misleading information about any of these topics, perhaps connected to slightly lower use of social media for news.

FIG 45: PARTICIPATION WITH NEWS



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

Participation and engagement with the news can come in many forms: some visible and public, and others in more private spaces. The most common form is simply talking ‘face to face’ with people (36%), followed by the ‘lurking’ practice of ‘reading comments on social media posts’ (33%) and ‘on news websites’ (26%). When gender-based patterns are factored in, the results show men are more likely than women to do the more visible actions such as ‘voting in an online poll’, ‘commenting on news stories’, and ‘sharing stories on social networks’, while women are more likely than men to talk face to face with friends and colleagues’, and simply read - rather than post - comments on social media.

Digital News Report Ireland 2024



4

Brands and Discovery

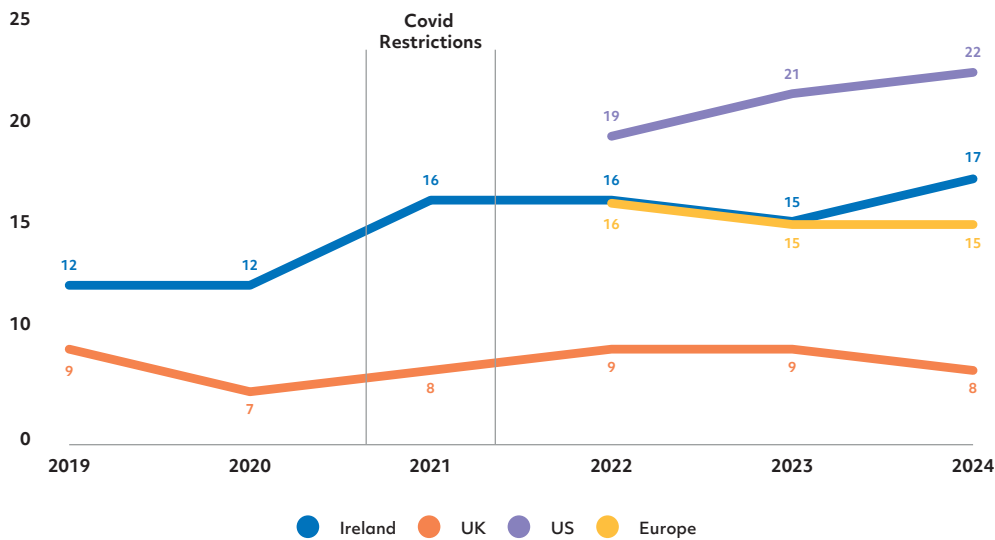
This section examines payment for online news and what non-payers consider would be a fair price for subscriptions.

It also looks at which are the digital brands that consumers pay for the most.

This section then outlines the most frequently used traditional and digital news brands in Ireland, with breakouts according to age and gender.

Finally this section reveals how Irish consumers find news online, and on social media.

FIG 46: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



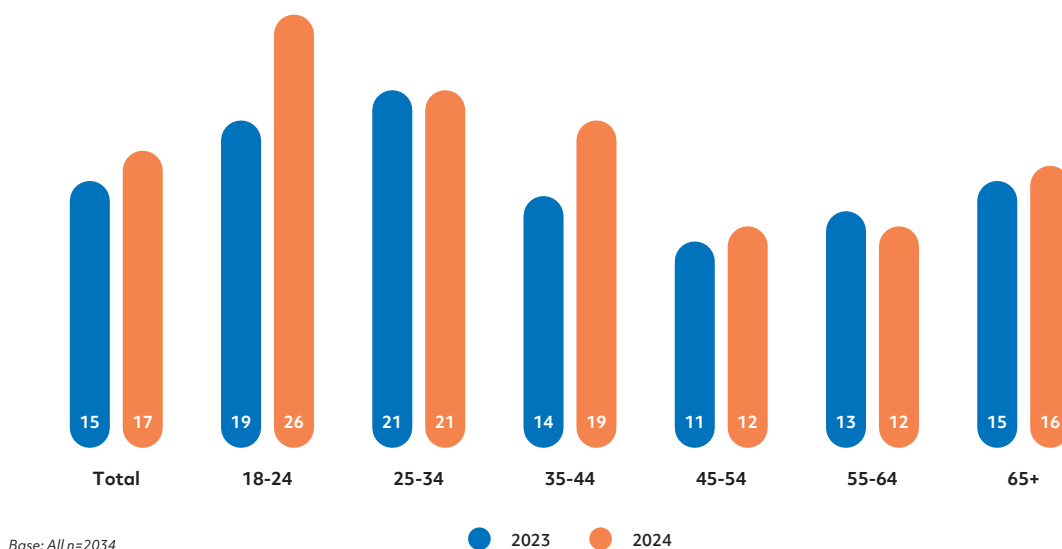
Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions. 2022 change in comparison data from North America (including Canada) to USA

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)

The question of the public’s willingness to pay for news is a key one for the media sector. Some publishers hoped that digital subscriptions could go some way to replacing revenue lost as print sales decrease. To some extent, that has happened, with an increase of two percentage points (from 15% to 17%) among Irish news consumers who have paid to access news content in the last year. This increase means that payment levels have now exceeded the previous high of 16% seen during the Covid pandemic. The US, where the public is more used to having multiple subscriptions for cable TV, music, and other digital content, is still ahead, with 22 percent of Americans paying for news in some form last year. The situation in the UK is more challenging for news publishers, as the percentage of the public prepared to pay for news has fallen one percentage point, from 9 to 8 percent.

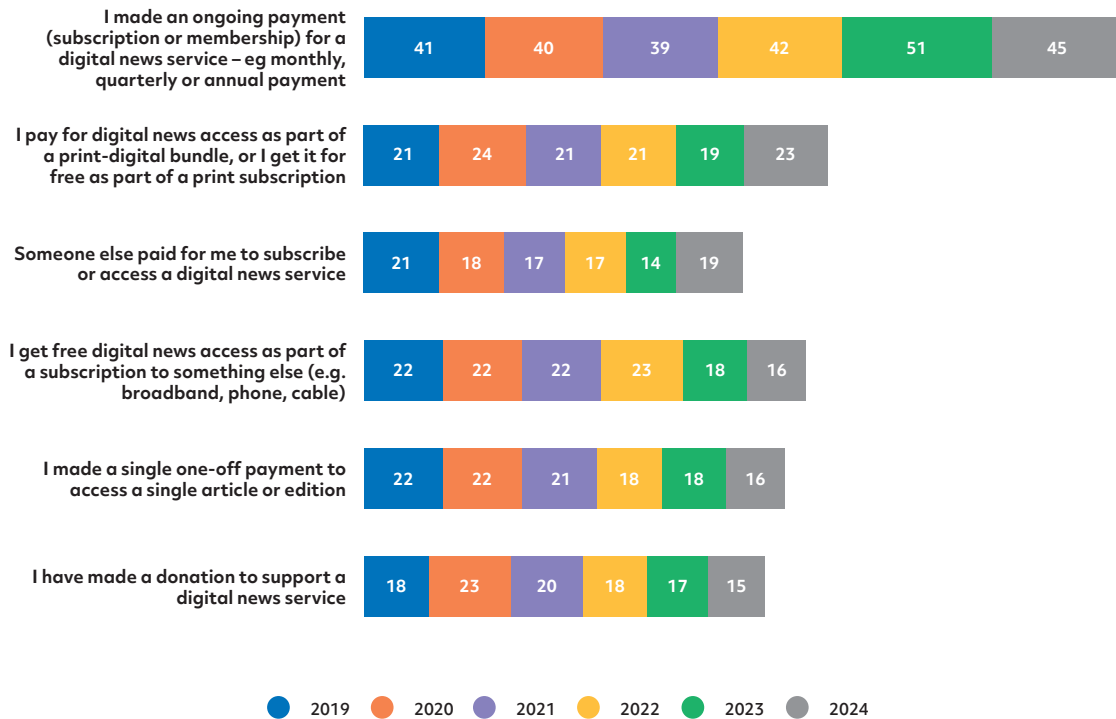
FIG 47: PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS - AGE



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)

Looking more closely at the 17 percent of Irish people who have paid to access news content in the last year, we see some encouraging signs for news companies. It had been hoped that younger people, who had grown up familiar with the idea of having to pay for streaming services such as Spotify and Netflix, would also be more likely to pay to access news online. There has been a significant increase of 7pp in the number of people in the 18-24 age bracket paying for digital news content. In fact, there have been increases, although at more modest levels, across most age categories, except for the 55-64 cohort, which saw a drop of one percentage point. Those in the 25-34 age bracket are no more likely to pay for news than they were last year. It would be good news for the media sector if those now aged 18-24 maintained or increased this level of news subscriptions as they grow older.

FIG 48: METHODS OF PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS



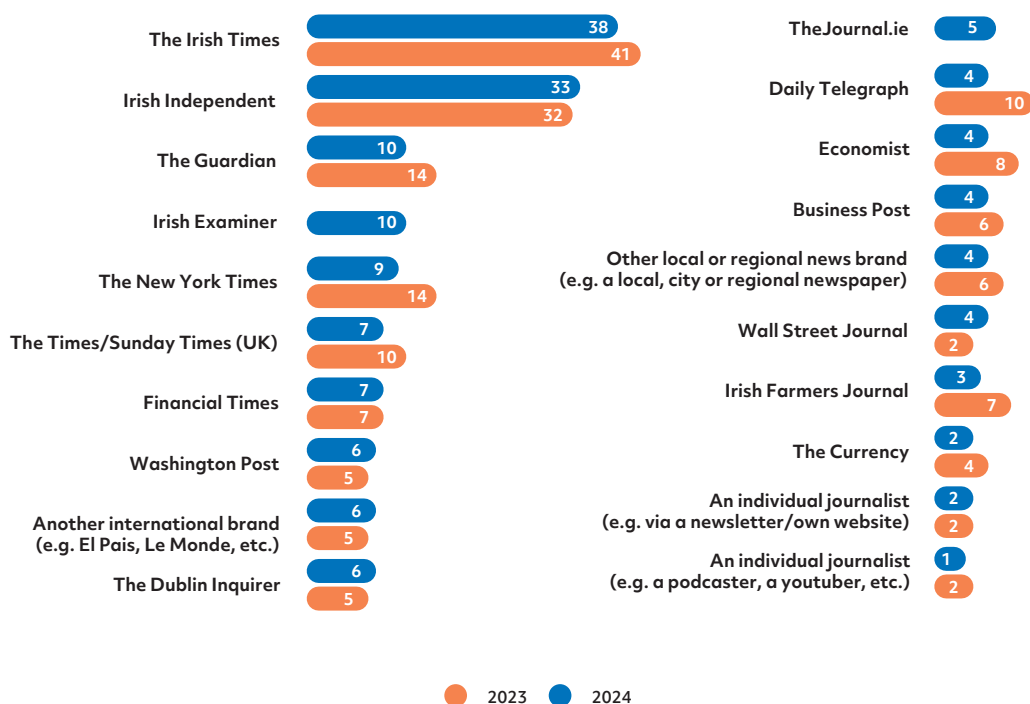
Base: All who have paid for online news in the past year, n=344

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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.

We have seen in previous charts that 17% of Irish people paid to access news online in the last year, and that there was a significant increase in the number of younger people (18-24) paying for news. Here, we examine how those payments to access online news are made. There has been a drop in the number of people paying regular digital subscriptions (down 6 pp), which is offset to some extent by a slight increase (+4 pp) in those who receive a digital subscription as part of a print-digital bundle or as a free add-on to a print subscription. The number of news consumers who access online content via a subscription paid for by someone else - most likely their employer - has also increased (+5 pp). Other payment categories experience a slight decline. Given that print sales are declining, those receiving digital access as part of a print subscription are also likely to fall in the longer term. Thus, the fall of 6 pp for those paying stand-alone regular subscriptions is concerning.

FIG 49: MOST PAID DIGITAL NEWS TITLES



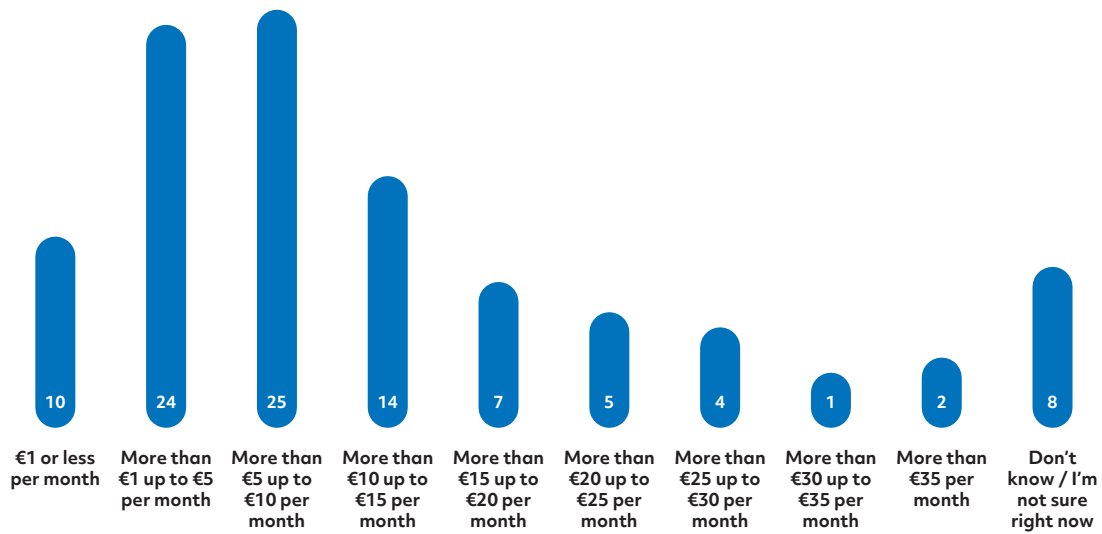
Base: Those who have made a regular payment to a digital news service in last year, n=221

Note: includes those who regularly pay a subscription, membership or donation to a digital news outlet (monthly, quarterly or annually) Irish Examiner and thejournal.ie added in 2024.

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.

For Irish people who pay a regular subscription to a news provider, the Irish Times remains the most popular choice, with 38 percent of news subscribers signing up with them. However, this represents a drop of 3 pp on last year, while the Irish Independent is closing the gap, having recorded a slight increase of 1 pp to 33 percent. The Irish Examiner, which is owned by the Irish Times, introduced a paywall in 2021, and has performed creditably, with 10% of regular news subscribers paying for their offering. The Journal.ie, which has introduced a subscription/donation option that can be paid monthly or annually, attracted 5 percent of subscribers. Last year, we noted that a significant slice of digital media spend by Irish news consumers goes to titles headquartered or owned abroad. This year, there has been a reversal of that trend. The New York Times (down 5 pp), the Daily Telegraph (down 6 pp), the Guardian (down 4 pp), and The Economist (down 4 pp), all recorded falls in subscription levels. It is possible that cost of living increases caused consumers to drop additional, more discretionary subscriptions. For Irish-based specialist or local news companies, the picture is mixed: the Dublin Inquirer recorded a slight increase (up 1 pp to 6%), but The Currency (down 2 pp to 2%) and the Irish Farmers Journal (down 4 pp to 3%) all saw their digital subscriptions fall. Among Irish people who pay for a regular subscription, most (54%) take out a single subscription, while 28 percent pay to subscribe to two news outlets, and 9 percent pay for three.

FIG 50: MONTHLY COST FOR MAIN ONLINE NEWS SOURCE



Base: All who have paid for online news in the past year, n=344

Q: You said that you pay for an online news subscription. How much does your MAIN online news subscription cost you per month?

Most of the 17 percent of Irish news consumers who pay to access digital news are paying modest amounts for their main news subscriptions. More than half (59%) pay €10 or less per month, while 34 percent pay €5 or less. Those who pay more, sometimes up to and above €35 per month, comprise 33 percent of Irish digital subscribers. The challenge for news publishers to generate sufficient levels of revenue from digital subscriptions is considerable. Other research by the Reuters Institute has found that low-price introductory offers can attract subscribers, but once the special offer ends and subscribers are asked to pay full price, cancellation levels are high. Competition among publishers to attract the cohort willing to pay for news is intense, particularly among general readership mainstream outlets. The Irish Times charges €14 per month for a digital only subscription, the Irish Independent asks around half that (€7.60) for similar access, the Irish Examiner's full sticker price is €10, and the Journal.ie suggests a payment of €10. For comparison, a Spotify Premium subscription is €10.99 per month.

FIG 51: FAIR PRICING FOR PEOPLE WHO DO NOT CURRENTLY PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS

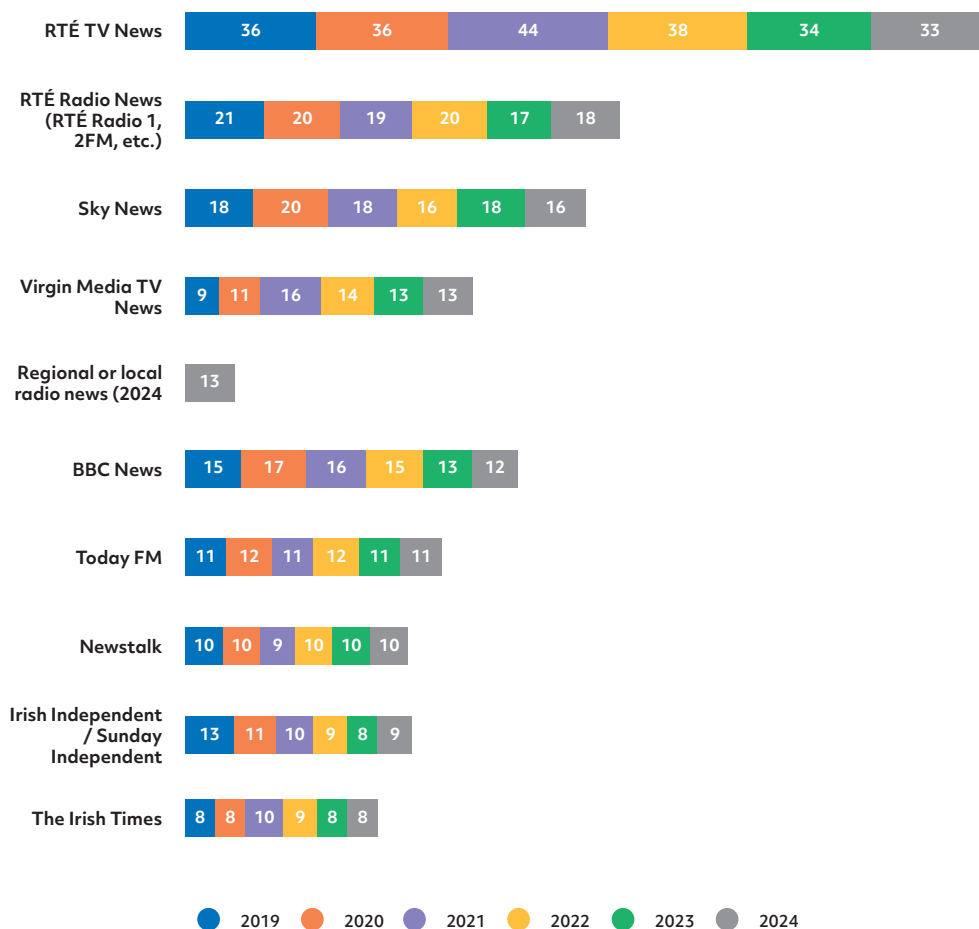


Base: Those who don't pay for online news, n=1616

Q: You said you don't currently pay for online news. If you were to pay for online news, what is a fair price that you would be happy paying, if anything?

The vast majority (83%) of Irish people do not pay to access digital news online. Could they be persuaded to, if the price was right? As this chart shows, the answer is: probably not. Almost half (46%) would never consider paying for online news, no matter how low the price might be. A small group (15%) would be prepared to pay €1 or less per month, and a quarter would pay up of €5 per month. Above that price point, and Irish news consumers become increasingly reluctant to pay. Willingness to pay for news is shaped by multiple factors, including the supply of high-quality free online news, such as the RTÉ News website and app - although it is paid for via the licence fee. It seems that journalists and news organisations have some way to go in persuading Irish news consumers that professional journalism is a public good worthy of payment.

FIG 52: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL NEWS OUTLETS - 3+ TIMES PER WEEK (1-10)



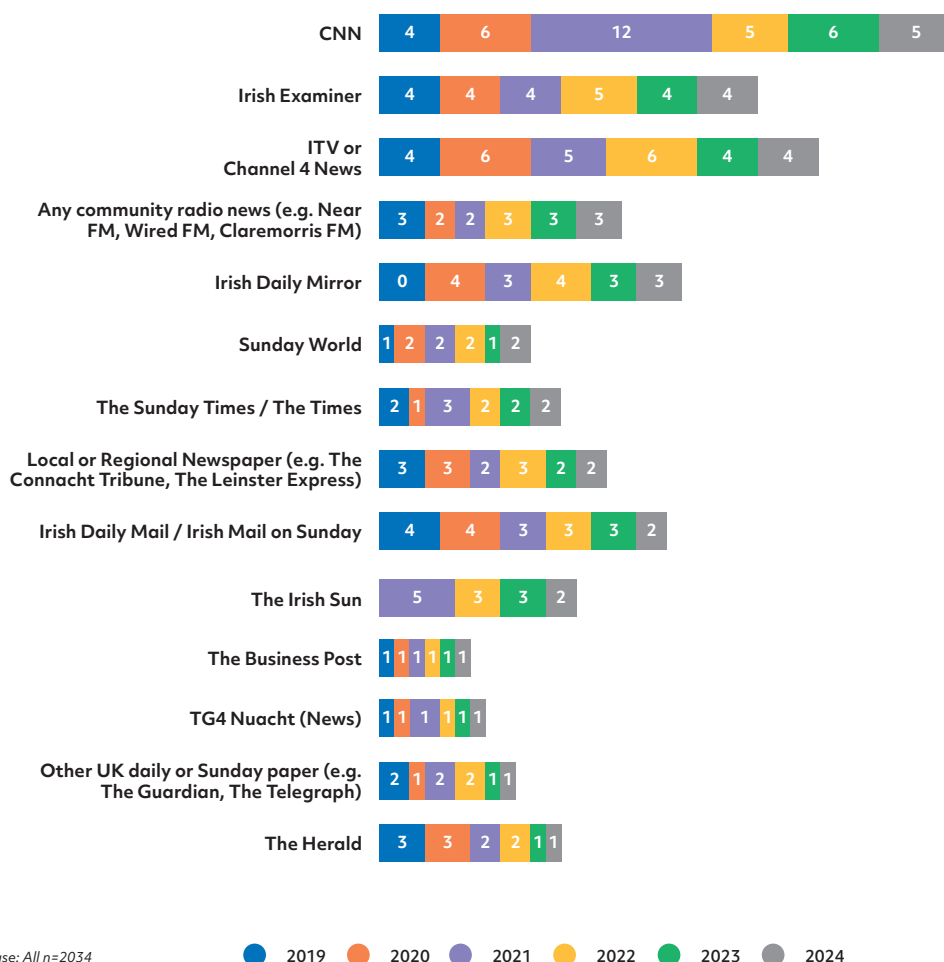
Base: All n=2034

Note: In 2024 Regional and local radio news were combined into a single code. 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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.

In looking at committed news consumers, those who watch, listen to, or read news content three or more times per week, we see that RTÉ TV news draws the highest audience (33%). This represents a modest decline of 1 pp from last year, and a fall of 11 pp from the height of the Covid pandemic, when 44 percent tuned in to RTÉ TV news to keep abreast of lockdown or vaccine developments. Some 18 percent also tune in to RTÉ radio offerings, providing further evidence of RTÉ’s central position in the media landscape. The number of Irish news consumers watching news content on Sky fell by 2 pp to 16 percent, while Virgin Media News held steady at 13 percent. Broadcasters occupy eight of the top 10 spots, with the Irish Independent and Sunday Independent (9%), and the Irish Times (8%) in 9th and 10th place respectively.

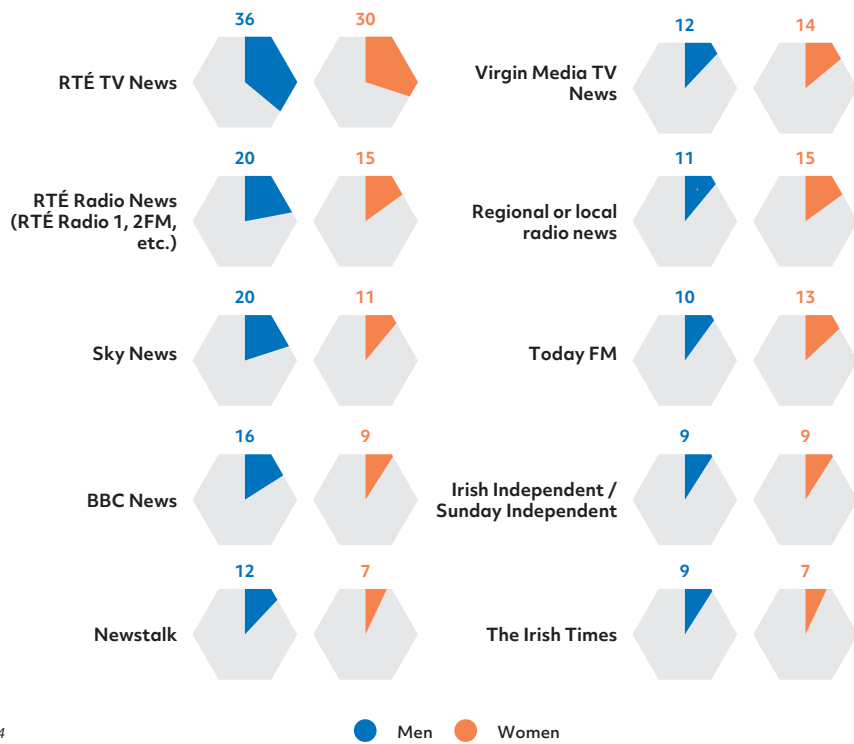
FIG 53: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL NEWS OUTLETS - 3+ TIMES PER WEEK (11-24)



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.

Continuing our look at the offline consumption of news (i.e. “linear” TV, radio, and printed newspapers) by committed news consumers who turn to their favoured news outlets three or more times per week, we see that, while broadcasters dominated the top 10 in our data, print newspapers feature heavily in the 11-24 spots. There is quite a tight contest for readers, viewers, and listeners here, with CNN, ITV/Channel 4, and the Irish Examiner each attracting 4 or 5 percent of these regular news consumers. Many Irish editions of UK-based newspapers (the Irish Sun, the Irish Daily Mail, the Times and Sunday Times) are level on 2 percent.

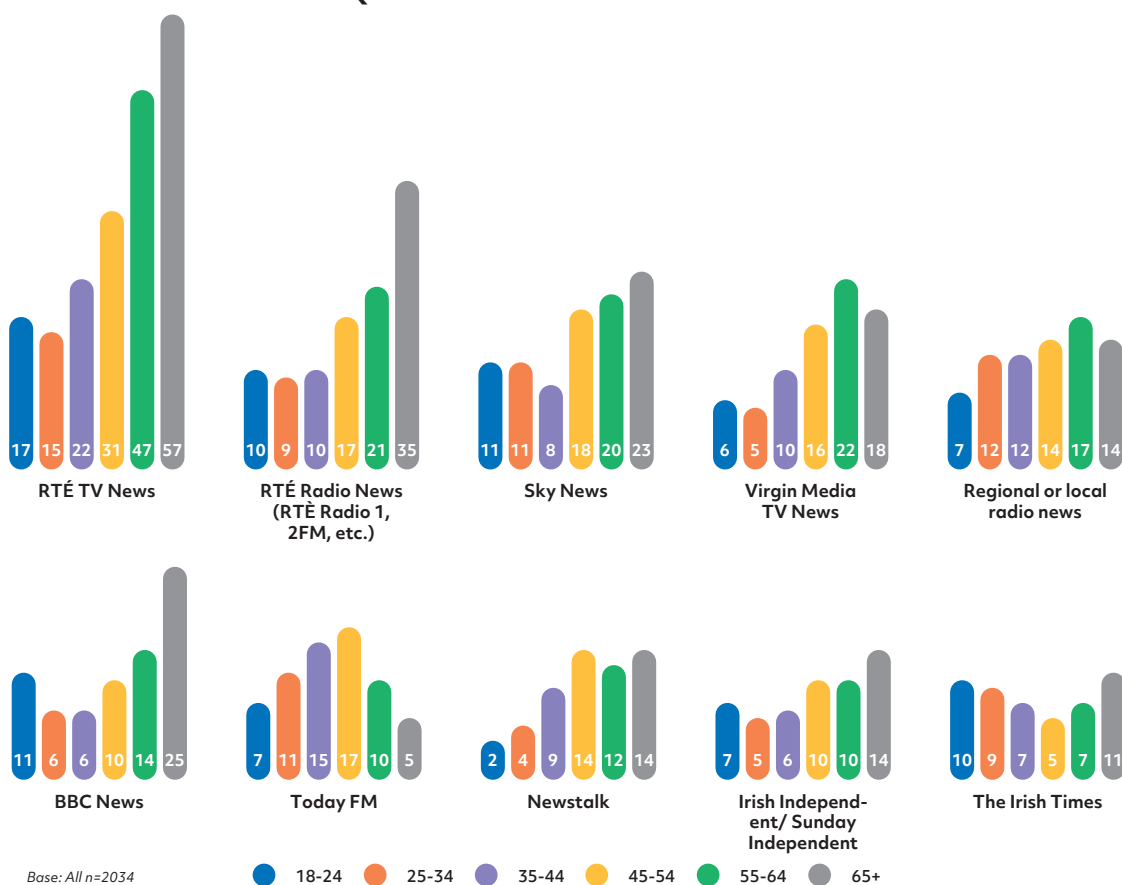
FIG 54: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL BRANDS - GENDER



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.

This year's findings continue a trend we have seen over the past few years, with the major news brands proving more popular with men. The biggest gaps appear for the UK broadcasters Sky News (+ 9 pp more popular with men) and BBC News (+ 7 pp more popular with men). For RTÉ, the gender gap appears to be widening: in last year's report, we noted that the gender gap was modest for both TV (+ 4 pp for men) and radio (+2 pp for men). This year, those gaps have increased, with TV now + 6 pp for men, and radio + 5 pp for men. Independent commercial outlets such as Virgin Media TV News and Today FM are more popular with women (+ 2 pp and + 3 pp respectively). Last year, the Independent titles were more popular with men (+ 4 pp), but now are equally popular with both men and women.

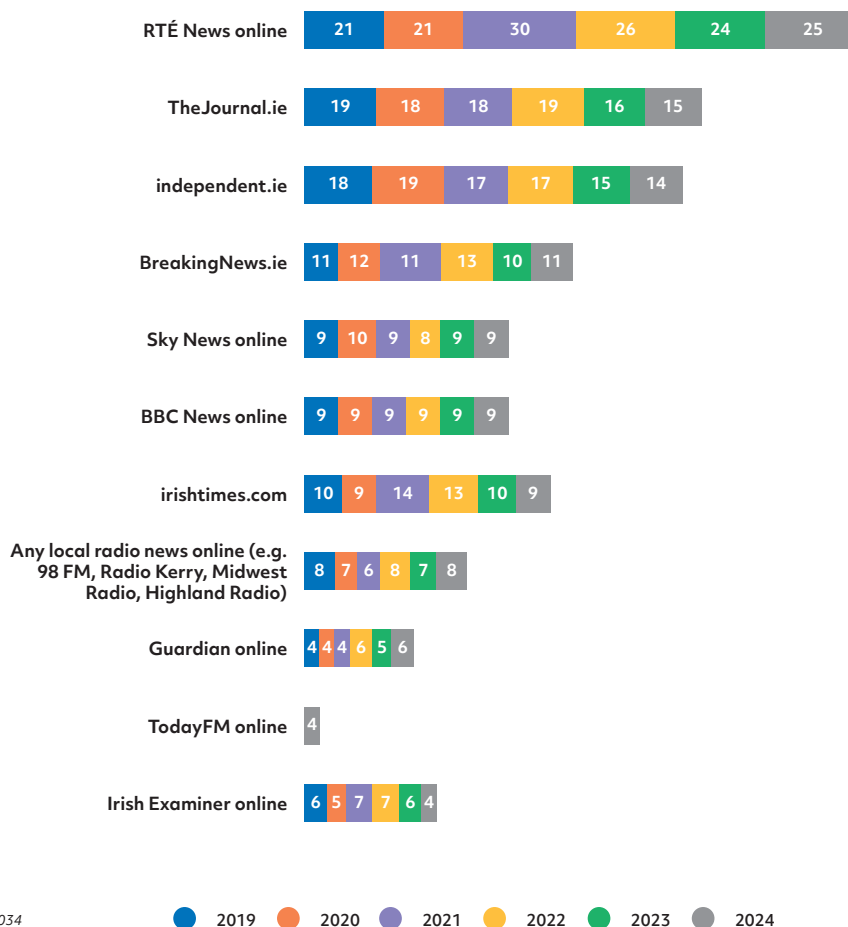
FIG 55: MOST FREQUENTLY USED TRADITIONAL BRANDS - AGE



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.

Traditional media brands still struggle to attract younger audiences. Only 17 percent of 18-24 year olds watch RTÉ TV News, compared with 57 percent of those aged 65 and over. This is an age gap of 40 pp, the largest such gap of any of the traditional brands. RTÉ radio also skews older, with 10 percent of those aged between 18 and 24 tuning in, compared with 35 percent of the 65+ cohort. Today FM’s audience peaks in the middle years of 45-54, and Newsalk, while not attracting younger listeners, has a relatively even demographic spread. This suggests that Bauer Media is doing a good job of attracting audiences across the different age groups. Data for the Irish Times is surprising: it is doing well among younger readers, but dips among of 35-44 and 45-64 age groups (the peak earning years), before recovering among those aged 65+.

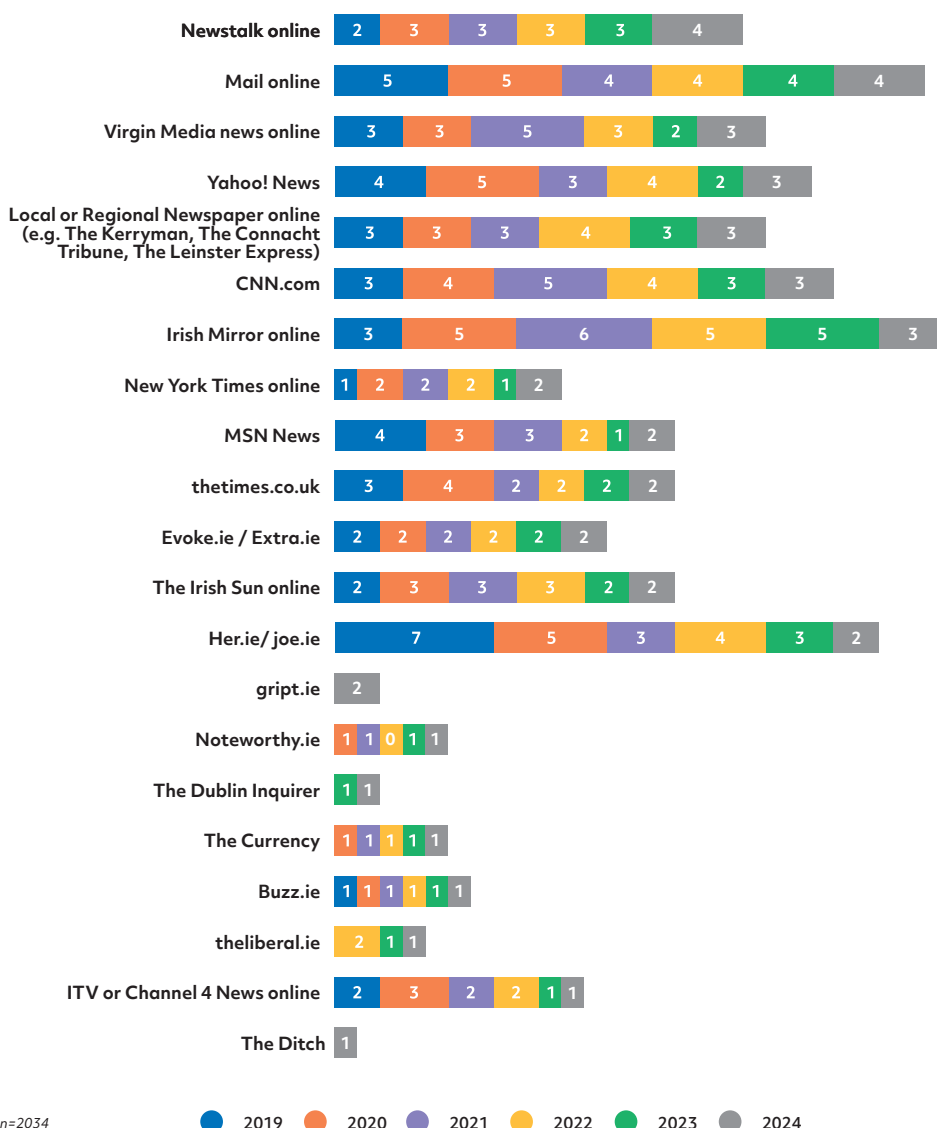
FIG 56: MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS - 3+ TIMES PER WEEK (1-11)



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 asked which digital brands they used to access news in the last week, 25% of Irish people said RTÉ News online, a slight increase on last year’s figure. The public service broadcaster remains Ireland’s most popular digital brand, with a quarter of the population using its online news platforms. The Journal.ie (15%) and Mediahuis’s independent.ie (14%) are fighting for second spot. Most brands held steady or fell back by 1-2 pp, except for BreakingNews.ie (owned by the Irish Times), which recorded an increase of 1 pp, and the Guardian, which also saw a 1 pp increase. The Irish Examiner online recorded a drop (- 2 pp) to 4 percent. Looking back to 2019, most brands have seen a decline, with the notable exception of RTÉ News online, which has increased from 21 percent to 25 percent over the previous five years.

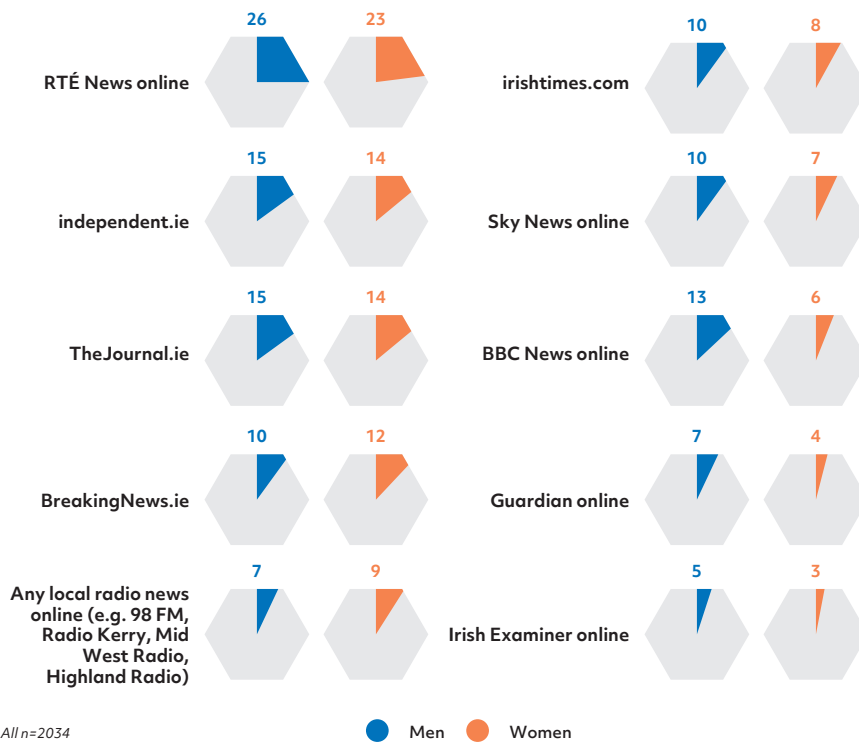
FIG 57: MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS - 3+ TIMES PER WEEK (CONTINUED)



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 a similar pattern among the other digital brands, which have generally remained consistent with last year. Some small changes of + 1 pp (Yahoo News) or - 1 pp Her.ie/Joe.ie are evident. We have included data on gript.ie, the controversial right-wing media outlet, for the first time in this year's Digital News Report. Some 2 percent of Irish news consumers use gript.ie three or more times per week. Smaller web-based outlets are holding steady in a crowded media environment: the Currency (a finance news outlet), the Dublin Inquirer (an independent publication focused on the capital), and Noteworthy.ie (a crowd-funded investigative unit, part the the Journal.ie), have all held steady at 1 percent.

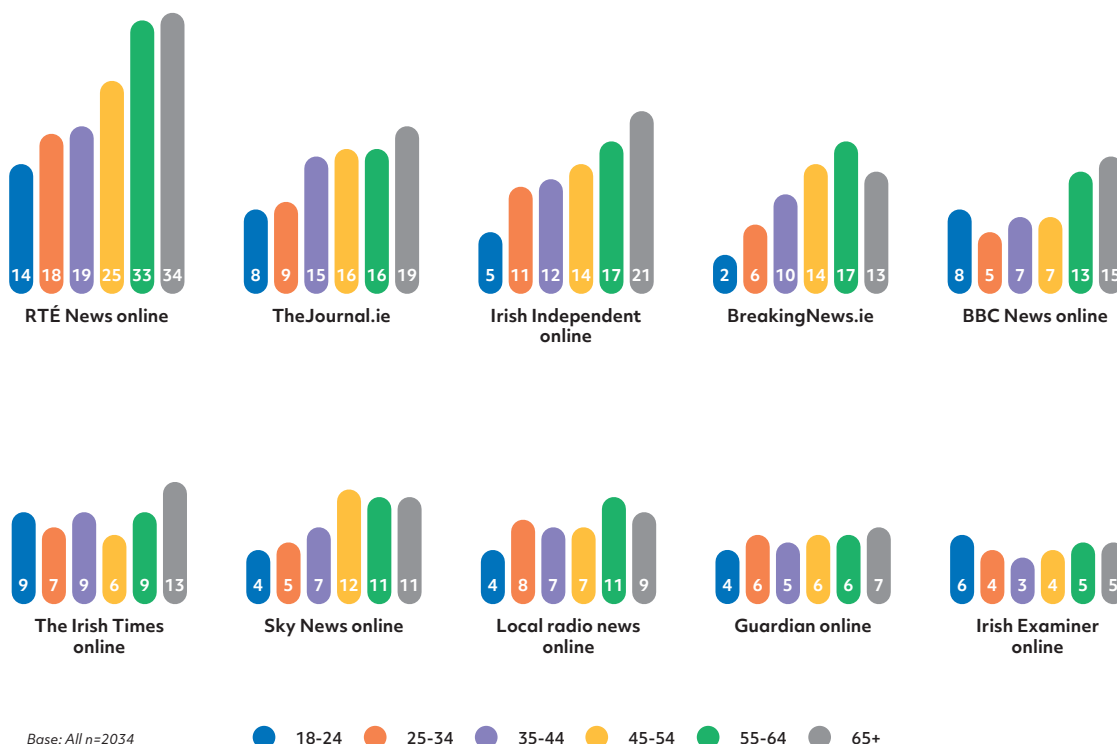
FIG 58: MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS - GENDER



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.

Digital brands show a similar pattern to traditional media when we look at their audiences by gender. Most of the brands listed here are more popular with men, although the gender gap is not as wide as with traditional brands. RTÉ News online is more popular with men by + 3 pp, while the BBC News online platforms show a more pronounced gender gap (+ 7 pp more popular with men). BreakingNews.ie is slightly more popular with women (+ 2 pp), as is local radio (also + 2 pp). Many digital news brands have work to do to attract more female news consumers.

FIG 59: MOST FREQUENTLY USED DIGITAL BRANDS - AGE



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.

In this chart, we break down the news consumers (who access digital brands three times a week or more) by age group. For some of the most popular news brands, such as RTÉ News online and the Irish Independent online, the audience skews older. In the case of RTÉ News online, 14 percent of 18-24 year olds access this brand three times a week or more, compared to 34 percent of those aged 65 or older - an age differential of 20 pp. For the Irish Independent, the gap between the youngest and oldest cohorts is 16 pp. Other brands, such as the Irish Times online, online local radio, the Guardian, and the Irish Examiner online, have a more even distribution across the age groups. In general, the Reuters Institute research over the years has found that audiences are more interested in, and consume more news in older cohorts, with younger audiences more likely to get their news from video sharing sites and social media.

**FIG 60: NEWS DISCOVERY:
THE WAYS PEOPLE FOUND NEWS ONLINE**

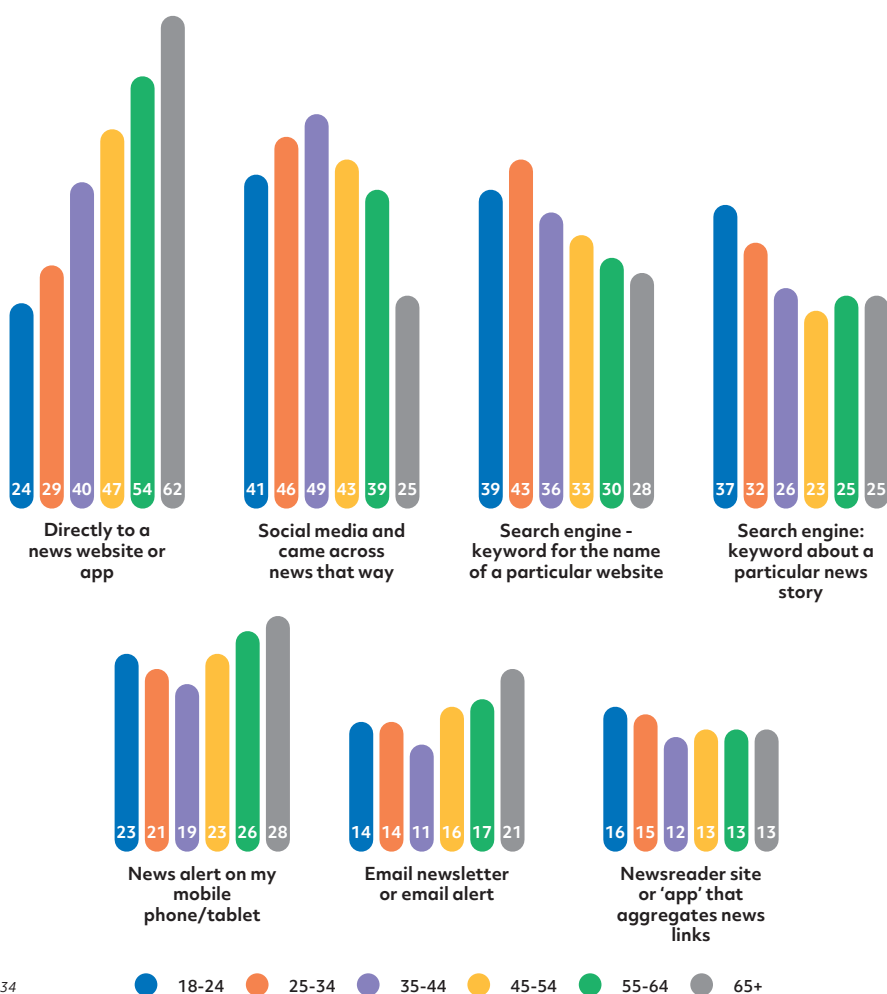


Base: All n=2034

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.

News producers have found that relying on social media to direct traffic to their websites or apps can be problematic: a sudden change in the news feed algorithm by a social media company can have serious consequences for media outlets. Thus they have sought to encourage consumers to go directly to their content online or via their apps rather than via social media or search engines. Our data show that they have been reasonably successful, with 45 percent of news consumers accessing online news directly. Another 34 percent access news by searching for the name of a specific media outlet, rather than by searching for a news story without regarding from which news organisation the content comes (27%). 41 percent access news by coming across it on social media. There is some encouragement for news organisations who are trying to attract more consumers via newsletters and alerts on smartphones or tablets: 23 percent access news in response to a phone/tablet notification, and 15 percent do so having received a newsletter or alert via email. We also looked for any gender differences in the ways people access news: men are more likely to navigate directly to a news website or app than women (48% vs 41%), whereas women are more likely to follow links posted on social media than men (45% vs 36%).

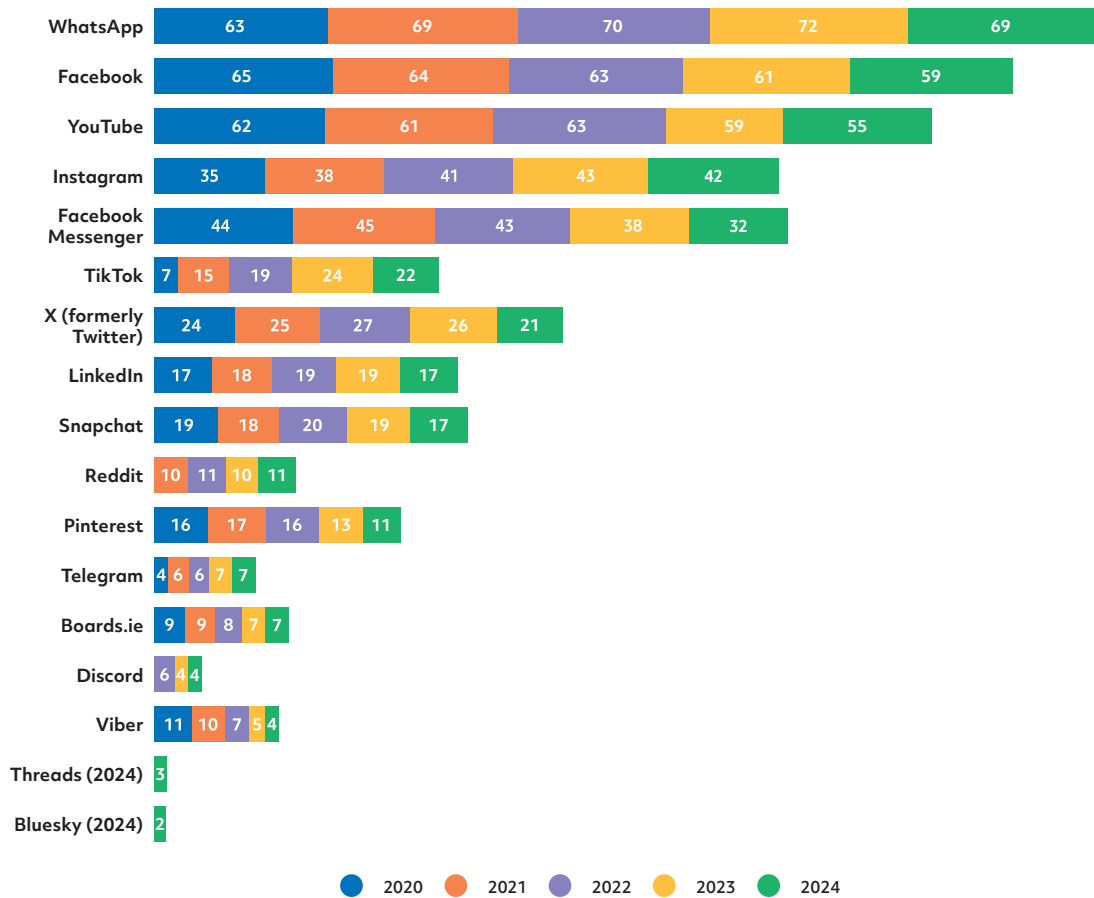
FIG 61: NEWS DISCOVERY - FINDING NEWS CONTENT ONLINE ANY PLATFORM



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.

In looking at how different age groups access news online, we find that older age groups are more likely to navigate directly to the website of a particular news organisation or via the organisation’s app, with 62 percent of those aged 65 and above accessing news in this way, compared to 24 percent of those aged 18-24. The 18-24 group is a key demographic for news organisations, and the news consumption patterns for this group show a variety of approaches to accessing online news. The most popular for this group is via social media (41%), but many search for the name of a specific news outlet (39%), suggesting a high level of news brand awareness among this cohort. A sizeable proportion of 18-24s search for a particular news item online, seemingly agnostic as to news provider. Surprisingly, older groups are more likely to access news via social media than 18-24 year olds, with 46 percent of 25-34 year olds, 49 percent of 35-44 year olds, and 43 percent of 45-54 year olds finding news via social media.

FIG 62: SOCIAL MEDIA USED FOR ANY REASON



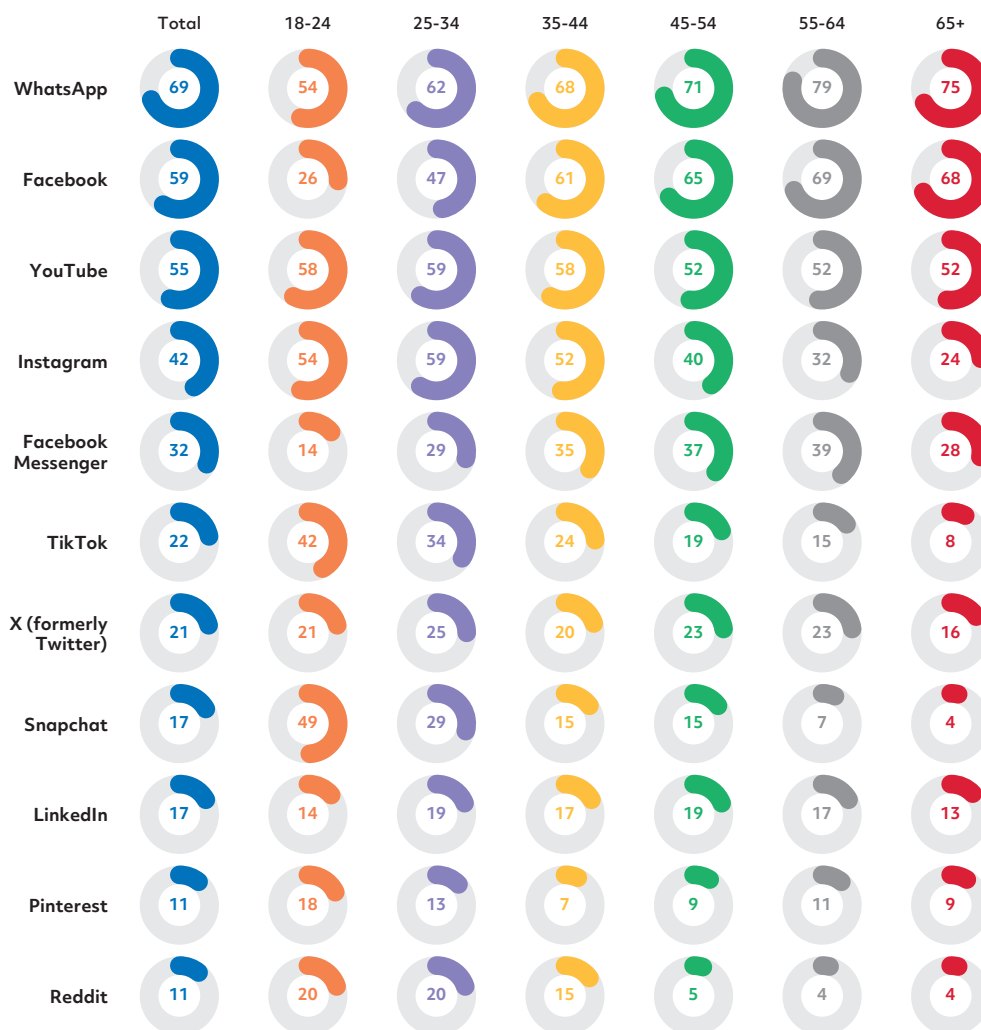
Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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

Usage of social media in general has fallen back slightly over the past year. The main platforms, such as WhatsApp (- 3 pp), Facebook (-2pp), YouTube (- 4 pp), Messenger (- 6 pp) and Instagram (- 1pp), have all witnessed declines. However, they still remain immensely popular with Irish people. Over two-thirds of us reported using WhatsApp over the past week (69%), while Facebook continues to attract a considerable user base (59%). TikTok, the video-sharing platform known for its viral content, dropped in popularity with Irish people (-2 pp). In the past year, news publishers have developed strategies to take advantage of the large audiences using WhatsApp. Many have established a presence on WhatsApp’s channel function, which was made available globally in September, 2023. For instance, the WhatsApp channel of the Irish Times has 50,000 followers, the Irish Independent’s has 38,000, and RTE’s has 36,000. The gradual fragmentation of the social media landscape is evident from the growing number of platforms available. Some of the newer and smaller players (Discord and Telegram) have held steady over the past year, and some new entrants into the social media space (Meta’s new X (formerly Twitter) rivals Threads and Bluesky) are beginning to attract Irish users.

FIG 63: SOCIAL MEDIA USED FOR ANY REASON - AGE

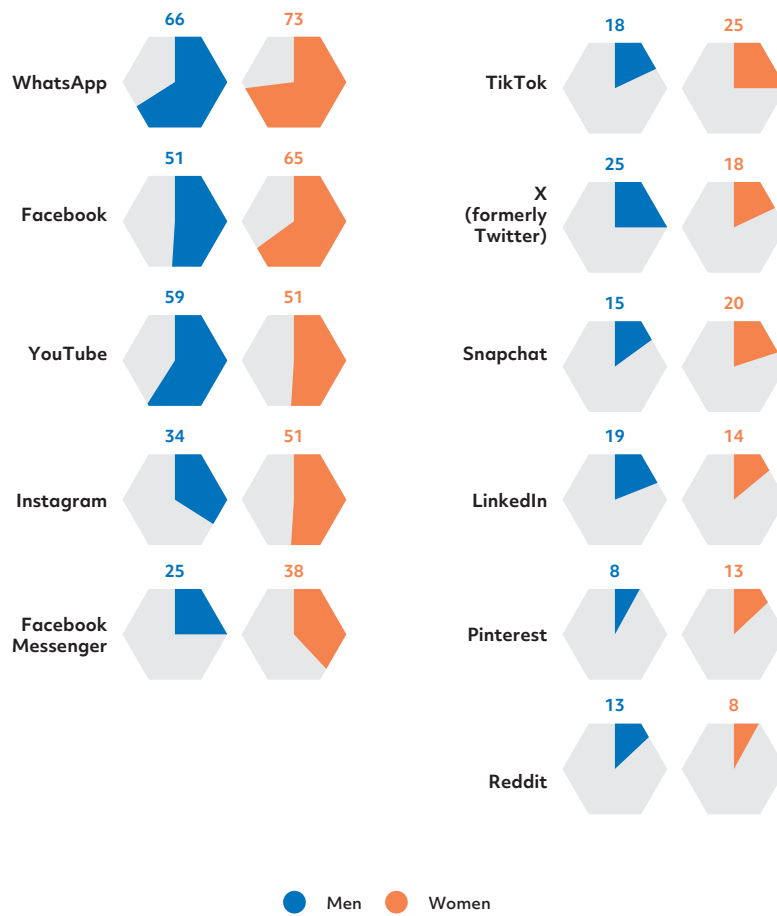


Base: All n=2034

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

The two most popular social media platforms in Ireland - WhatsApp and Facebook - show a noticeable age-related trajectory in terms of usage, with both more popular in the two highest age groups. Usage for both peaks in the 55-64 age group (79% and 69% respectively), before falling back slightly among those aged 65 and above (to 75% and 68% respectively). YouTube has a very broad usage base, and is more evenly spread in popularity across all age demographics. Usage for many of the other platforms skews younger: 42 percent of 18-24 year olds are on TikTok, compared to just 8 percent of those aged 65 or older, and 49 percent of younger people use Snapchat, compared to 4 percent of older people. For 18-24 year olds, Snapchat (49%) and WhatsApp (54%) are the preferred messaging platforms, while relatively few (14%) are using Facebook Messenger. X (formerly Twitter) attracts users across age categories (22%-25% across the groups) but is less attractive to people aged 65+ (16%). Instagram, often seen as a less combative digital space than X, is popular across the middle age groups, peaking among those aged 25-34 (59%) but still popular with 18-24 year olds (54%) and 35-44 year olds (52%).

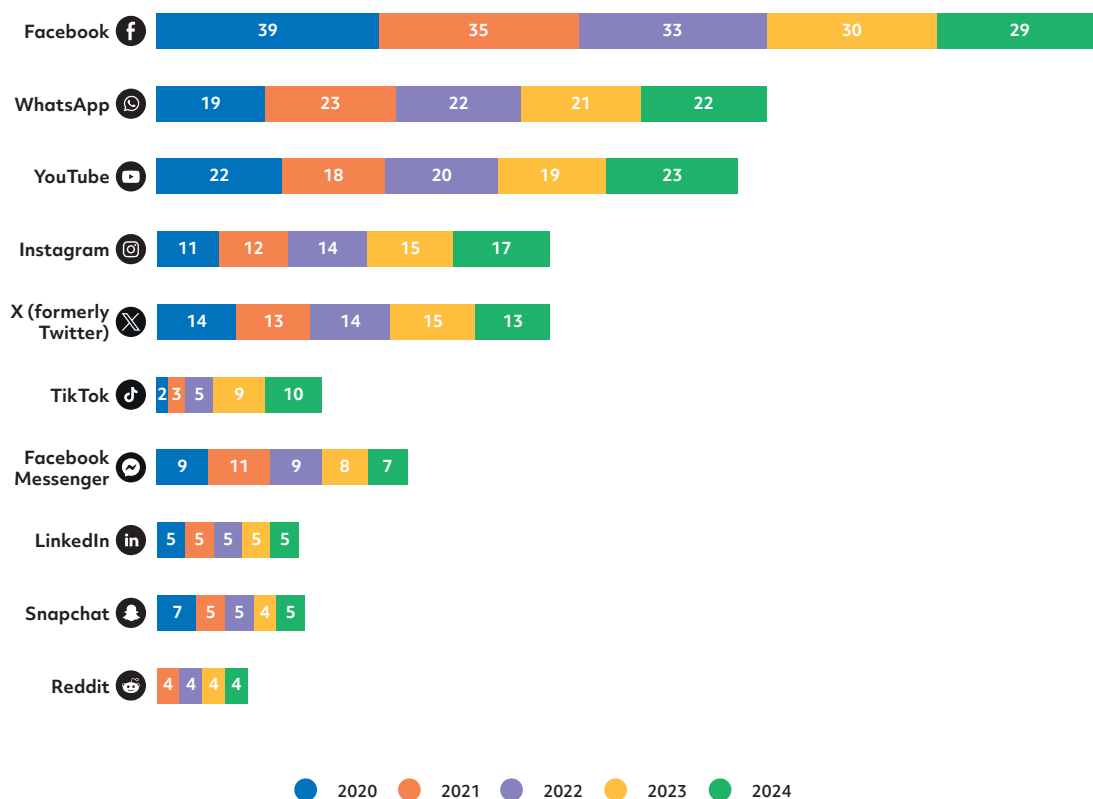
FIG 64: SOCIAL MEDIA USED FOR ANY REASON - GENDER



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

In contrast to what we find with traditional and digital news brands (most of which are more popular with men), social media platforms are often more popular with women. Almost three quarters (73%) of Irish women report using WhatsApp in the past week, and almost two thirds (65%) report using Facebook. The social media platforms whose usage base skews male are YouTube (59% male vs 51% female), X (formerly Twitter) (25% vs 18%), LinkedIn (19% vs 14%) and Reddit (13% vs 8%). The social media platforms whose offering is centred more around visual content, such as Instagram and Pinterest, are considerably more attractive to women than to men. There is a 17 pp gender gap for Instagram, and a 5 pp gap for Pinterest. These findings raise questions as to how media companies respond: do they follow the demographics and post more gender-targeted content on various platforms, or do they try to diversify their audiences on these platforms by posting a greater variety of topics in different media formats?

FIG 65: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS



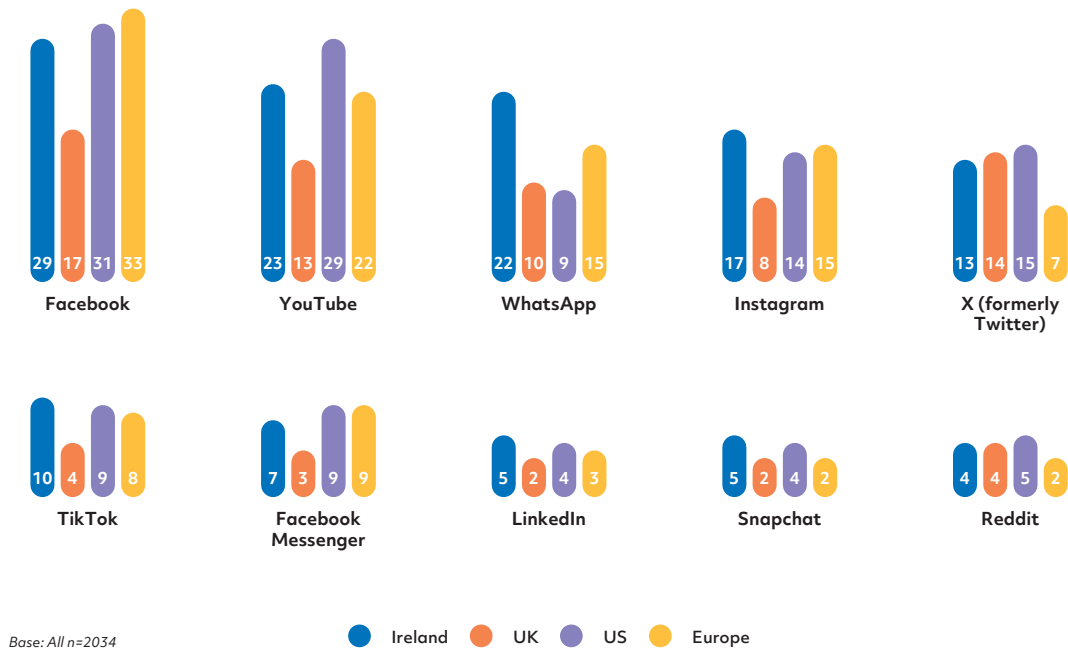
Base: All n=2034

Note: 2020 fieldwork completed Jan-Feb 2020 before pandemic restrictions

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.

Having looked at social media use for any reason previously, we now examine how Irish people use social media to consume, share, or discuss news. The picture revealed by our survey data is a complex one. The use of Facebook for news has continued to fall, as it has over the past four years. This is likely due to the de-prioritisation of news in users’ feeds as a result of changes to the Facebook algorithm. The Meta-owned platform has seen a fall of 10 pp since 2020. Meanwhile, healthy numbers of Irish people are using WhatsApp for news-related purposes, possibly as a result of the introduction of the channels function which allows news organisations to share content on the platform. The use of Instagram for watching/viewing/sharing/commenting on news has also increased (+ 2 pp), maybe because the photo-led platform has become a refuge for those fleeing the increasingly combative discourse on X/Twitter. It is also worth noting that the percentage of people using YouTube for news has also increased (+ 4 pp). In 2023, YouTube began to roll out a feature that suggested more news content to those watching news videos, and made funding available for the creation of news content on YouTube Shorts. This support for news content may explain the increase in the number of people using the video platform for news interactions.

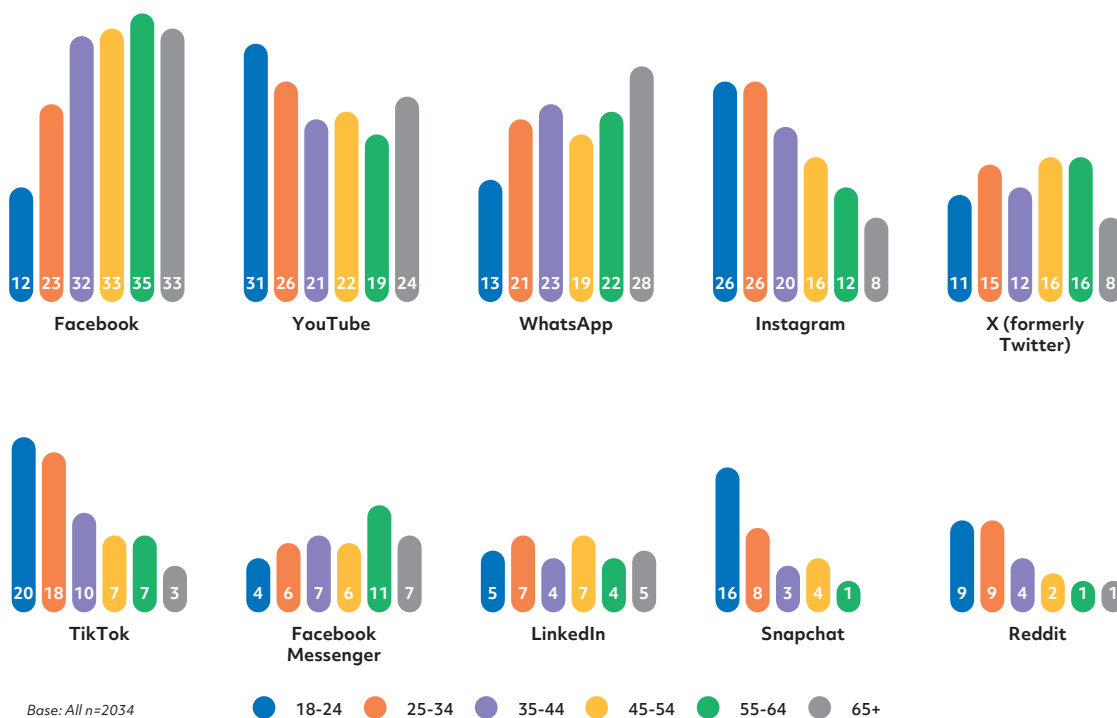
FIG 66: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS - INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON



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.

Ireland’s use of social media for news purposes is higher than the UK’s across all platforms examined here, and in the case of some of the platforms, the difference is striking. For instance, 22 percent of Irish people use WhatsApp for news purposes compared to just 10 percent in the UK (a gap of 12 pp), and 29 percent of Irish people use Facebook for news compared to 17 percent in the UK (a 12 pp gap). In fact, Irish people’s use of WhatsApp for news is considerably higher than in the US (9%) and Europe (15%) as well. Irish use of Instagram (17%) and TikTok (10%) is also higher than in the other territories compared. In the US, YouTube is a particularly influential platform, with 29 percent of Americans using the video sharing service for interaction with news. Generally, Irish use of social media for news is closer to European patterns than to US or UK ones. Our high usage levels across multiple platforms suggests that Irish people are relatively active on social media.

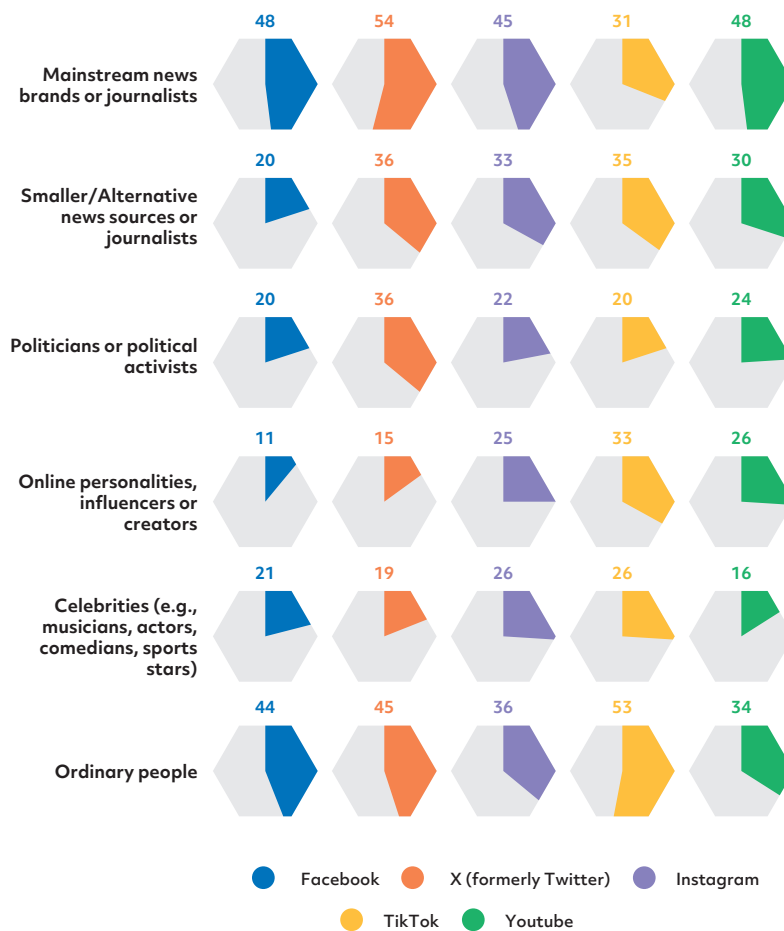
FIG 67: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS - AGE



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.

Some significant differences are apparent when we come to look at social media use for news among the different age groups. Facebook is very popular among the middle and older age groups of 35-44 (32%), 45-54 (33%), 55-64 (35%), and 65+ (33%), yet is not much used by younger people (12% of those aged 18-24). The reverse is the case for YouTube and Instagram, which are more attractive to younger news consumers than older ones. YouTube is most popular with 18-24 year olds (31%) and 25-34 year olds (26%). As we might expect, TikTok has a large user base among young people: 20 percent of those aged 18-24 and 18 percent of those aged 25-34 use it to view, share or comment on news videos, compared to just 3 percent of those aged 65 and above. Likewise, Snapchat is used mostly by young people to interact with news content (16% of 18-24 year olds compared to 0% in the 65+ age group).

FIG 68: SOURCES OF ATTENTION FOR NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



Base: Those who use the social media platform for news, n=107 to 401. Snapchat excluded due to low base size <50

Q: You said that you use [platform] for news... When it comes to news on [platform], which of these sources do you generally pay most attention to? Please select all that apply.

Users of Facebook, X/Twitter, and YouTube are likely to pay more attention to established media brands and professional journalists when it comes to news, whereas those using TikTok (and to some extent Instagram) for news are more likely to pay attention to celebrities, influencers and ordinary people. TikTok users in particular are drawn to content featuring or created by ordinary people (53%), and pay relatively little attention to mainstream news brands (31%) or politicians and activists (20%). These differences will be of interest to news publishers considering their content strategies for each of these platforms. Other research from the Reuters Institute has found that news organisations are wary of getting the tone and approach wrong when trying to engage younger audiences on TikTok. However, around half of all publishers taking part in the global Reuters Digital News Report are regularly publishing content on TikTok, and Irish news publishers are active on the platform. RTÉ News has 282,000 TikTok followers, while the Irish Times (17,800), Irish Independent (almost 60,000), Irish Examiner (5,000) and Journal.ie (3,200) all have a presence on the platform.

Digital News Report Ireland 2024



5

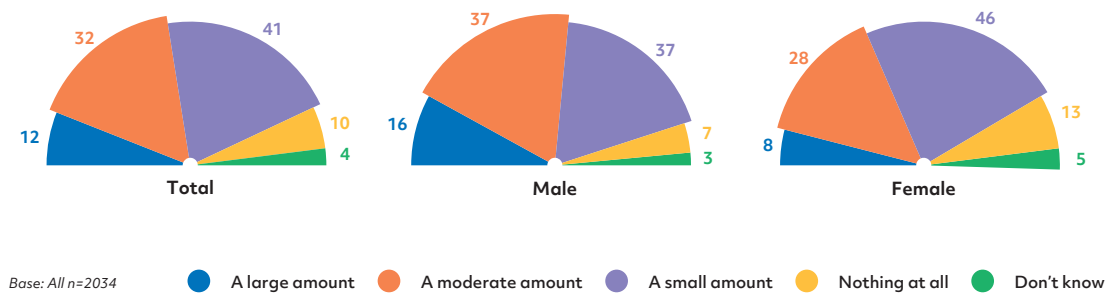
Digital Innovations: AI Plus Short News Videos

This section explores what Irish consumers know about artificial intelligence and its growing use by news media.

It queries how comfortable people are with AI use in different areas of news coverage.

And finally, this section investigates short news video usage.

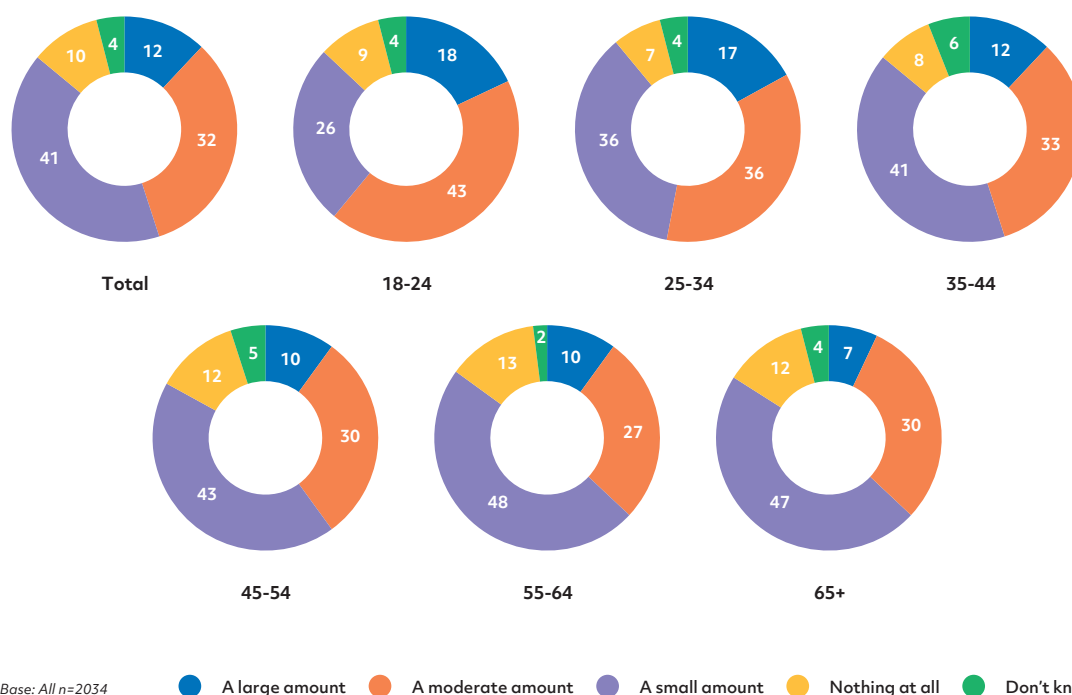
FIG 69: AI AWARENESS - GENDER



Q: How much, if anything, have you heard or read about artificial intelligence (AI)?

The public’s knowledge about Artificial Intelligence (AI) has grown in the past couple of years, in particular since the arrival of generative AI software such as ChatGPT. Although AI has been used by some media companies for years in such areas as sport or finance reporting, media consumers have not always been clear about its use and media companies have not generally informed their readers. For example 2024 is the first year that Pulitzer Prize winners have written about using AI for large data investigations. In the data here, we can see that only 44 percent of respondents say they have read or heard a ‘large’ or ‘moderate’ amount. A further 41 percent say they know ‘a small amount’ and 10 percent say they know ‘nothing at all’. Once again there is a difference between men and women with the former registering more knowledge about AI than the latter - in terms of ‘a large amount’ (16% vs 8%) and ‘a moderate amount’ (37% vs 28%).

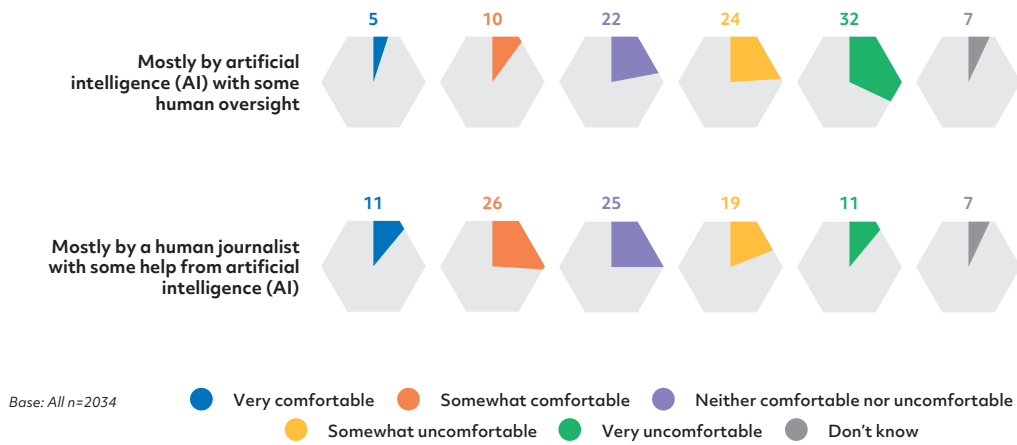
FIG 70: AI AWARENESS - AGE



Q: How much, if anything, have you heard or read about artificial intelligence (AI)?

Age is a surefire predictor of AI awareness, with 61 percent of those in the youngest cohort (18-24) claiming 'a large amount' or 'a moderate amount' of knowledge versus 37 percent of those who are 65+. However, when you add in 'a small amount' of knowledge for both of these groups then the difference is within the margin of error for those who know something about AI. In the category of respondents who know 'nothing at all' about AI, the numbers are in single figures for those under 45, and in double digits for those over 45 (12% or 13%). 60 percent of men under 35 say they know 'a large amount' or a 'moderate amount' about AI, compared to 53 percent of women. In the over 35 age bracket men score 50 percent, compared to women at just 31 percent.

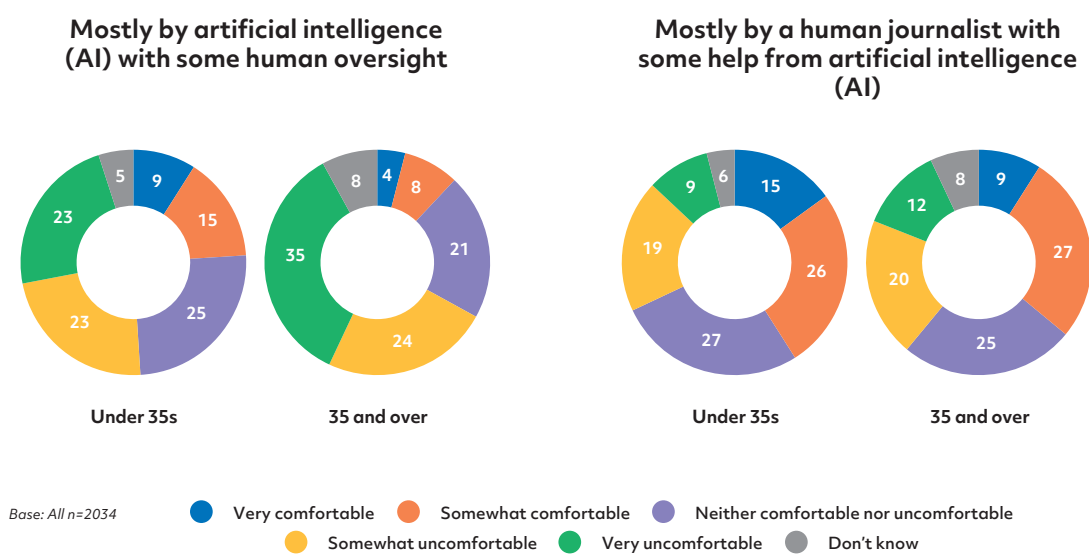
FIG 71: COMFORT WITH USING NEWS PRODUCED MOSTLY BY AI OR MOSTLY BY JOURNALISTS



Q: In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using NEWS produced in each of the following ways...? - Mostly by artificial intelligence (AI) with some human oversight.

The data here suggest that publishers need to beware before proceeding headlong into AI without a journalist being in charge of the production process. 56 percent of media consumers are uncomfortable with news being produced ‘mostly by AI’ with only ‘some human oversight’. Just 15 percent of respondents are ‘very comfortable’ or ‘somewhat comfortable’ with this option. On the other hand only 37 percent responded that they were ‘very’ or ‘somewhat comfortable’ with news produced ‘mostly by a human journalist’ with some help from AI.

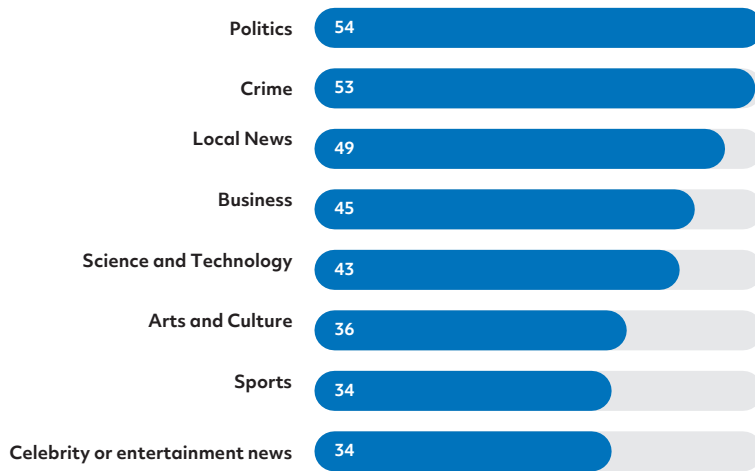
FIG 72: COMFORT WITH USING NEWS PRODUCED MOSTLY BY AI OR MOSTLY BY JOURNALISTS - AGE



Q: In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using NEWS produced in each of the following ways...?

On this issue there is a significant age differential between those who are under and over 35 years of age and who feel 'very uncomfortable' or 'somewhat uncomfortable' with AI being in charge of news production. 46 percent of younger people are uncomfortable with this option whereas this rises to 59 percent of the older group. For those who feel comfortable with this option it represents 24 percent of the younger group versus 12 percent of those older. With regards to those who prefer a journalist to be in charge of AI in news production it is 41 percent of the younger cohort versus 36 percent of the older one. There remains a significant percentage of people who are uncomfortable with having news produced mainly by a journalist 'with some AI input' - 28 percent for the younger respondents and 32 percent of the older ones.

FIG 73: LEVELS OF DISCOMFORT WITH TOPICS PRODUCED MOSTLY BY AI WITH SOME HUMAN OVERSIGHT



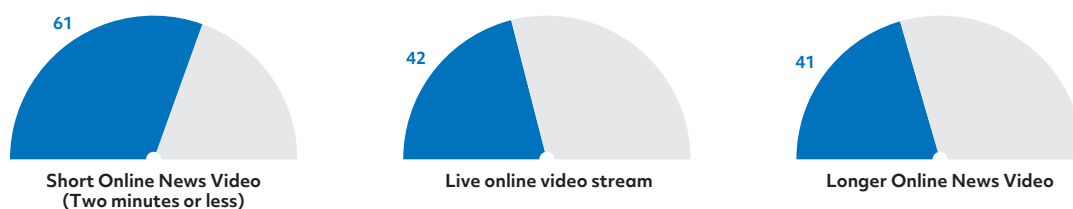
Base: All n=2034

NET: Very/Somewhat Uncomfortable

Q: In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using NEWS about each of the following topics produced mostly by artificial intelligence (AI) with some human oversight?

Comfort levels vary depending on the topic of the news story. Respondents are very wary of news produced mostly by AI when it concerns the more serious topics of political news (54%) or crime coverage (53%). In a year with local and European elections, it is a good indicator that people worry about the accuracy of consequential news topics. This chart shows that local news (49%), business (45%) and science and technology (43%) are also topics which worry respondents with regards to AI-led stories. For the less serious topics, respondents are less bothered by the implications of AI use - namely Arts and culture (36%), sports (34%) and celebrity and entertainment (34%). Interestingly when you break down the data further, those with the highest incomes are more likely to be worried about the coverage of politics (59%) than those with a moderate income (53%) and a lower income (47%). This is the same for the coverage of crime, with 58 percent of those on a higher income saying they are uncomfortable; 53 percent of those on a moderate income and 44 percent of those on the lowest income saying they are uncomfortable. Those on the highest income are the most uncomfortable across all the above topics, as are those respondents who profess to 'lean left' in politics. Those with the most education are also the most uncomfortable across the topics, except in areas such as celebrity/entertainment.

FIG 74: TYPES OF ONLINE NEWS VIDEO CONSUMPTION - VIEWED ONCE A WEEK OR MORE

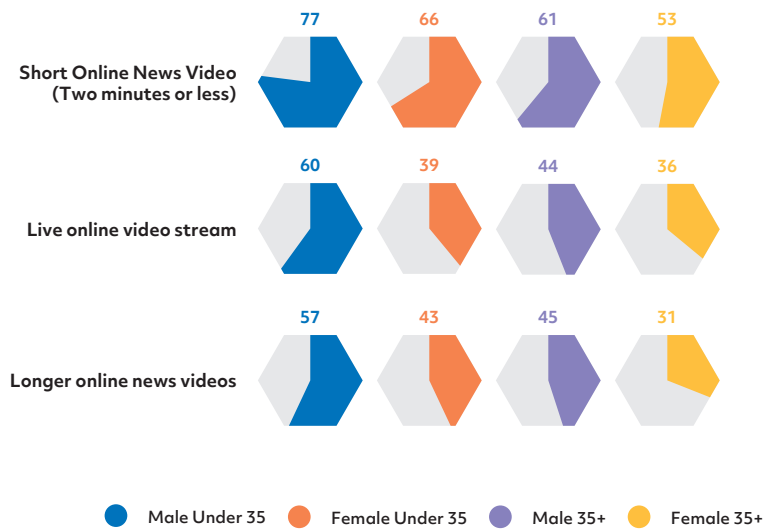


Base: All n=2034

Q: Thinking about when you have used online videos about news-related issues – e.g. via a computer, smartphone or tablet – how often, if at all, do you watch the following?

Previous data from this survey showed that respondents in Ireland mostly preferred to read their news in text form (40%) or ‘mostly read news in text but occasionally watch video news that looks interesting’ (33%). Respondents’ reasons for preferring text in the 2022 survey were that it was a quicker way to get the information, they felt they had less control over the video format and they did not like the pre-roll advertisements. Data in this year’s Global Reuters Digital News Report show that across all markets two-thirds (66%) say that they access a short news video at least once a week, while British viewers consume the least (39% weekly and just 9% daily). Ireland comes in at 27th place (out of 47 countries). Alongside this, 42 percent have accessed a live online video news stream in the past week, and 41 percent have accessed a longer online news video.

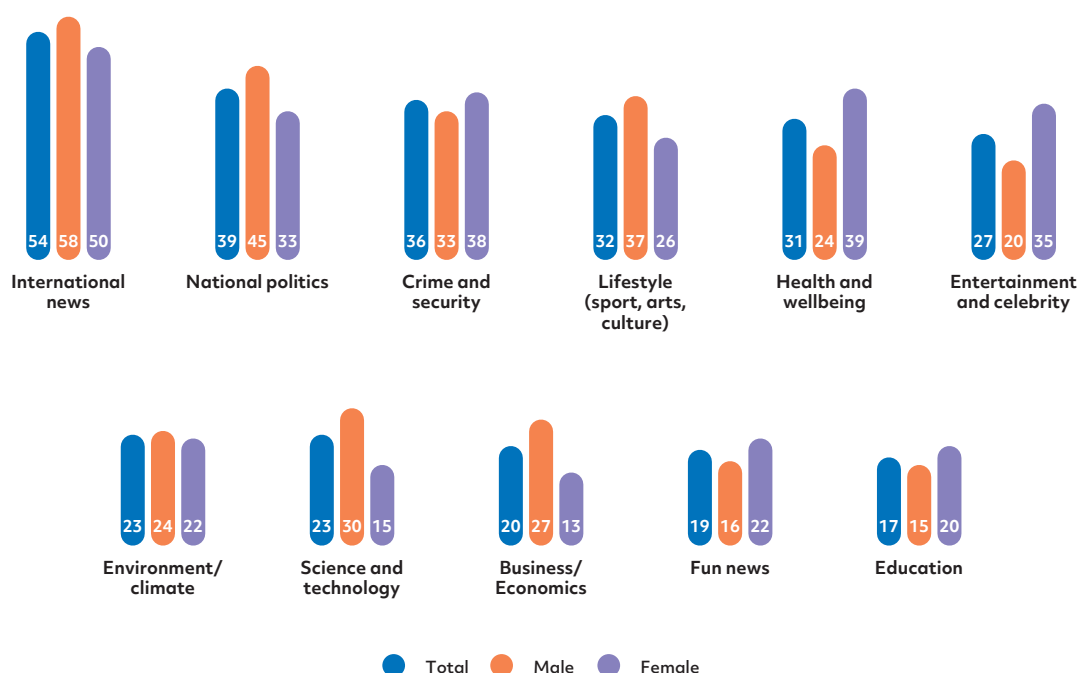
FIG 75: TYPES OF ONLINE NEWS VIDEO CONSUMPTION - VIEWED ONCE A WEEK OR MORE (GENDER AND AGE)



Q: Thinking about when you have used online videos about news-related issues – e.g. via a computer, smartphone or tablet – how often, if at all, do you watch the following?

In this chart we can see that men under 35 years consume the most of each video format. In the 'short online news video' category 77 percent of men and 66 percent of women in this age group say they have watched these. The biggest gender differential (21 pp) can be found in 'live online video streaming', with 60 percent of men aged under 35 years watching streaming versus only 39 percent of women in this age group. Men of all ages watch more 'longer online news videos' than women.

FIG 76: ONLINE NEWS VIDEO TOPICS - GENDER

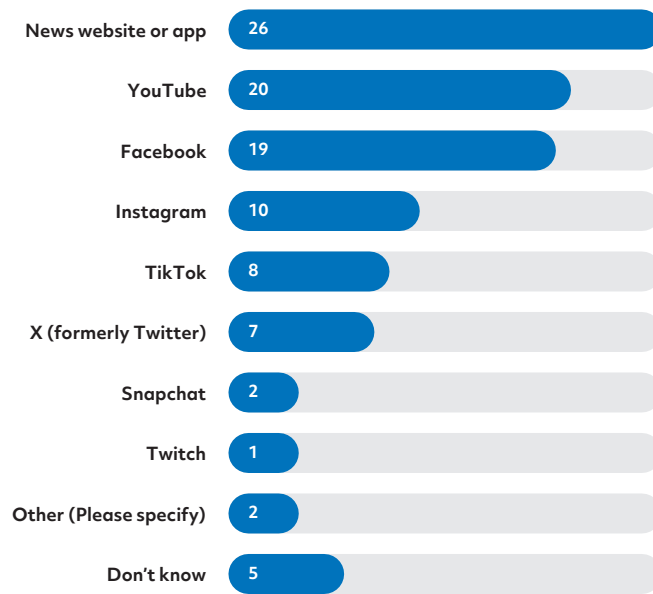


Base: All who consume news related videos, n=1688

Q: Thinking about when you have used online videos about news-related issues in the last few weeks, which of the following do you watch most often?

Here respondents were asked to choose categories of news they have watched as video. We can see that of the people who consume online news videos, the leading content topic is ‘international news’ (54%), followed by ‘national politics’ (39%) and ‘crime and security’ (36 percent). This content chimes with previous charts in this survey relating to ‘interest in types of news’ except that there the top category (Figure 5) was local news, which was not given here as an option to the question above. The results for women regarding video news are similar to previous charts in the 2024 survey, demonstrating that they are more interested than men in videos regarding ‘crime and security’ (38% vs 33%), ‘health and wellbeing’ (39% vs 24%), ‘entertainment and celebrity’ (35% vs 20%), ‘fun news’ (22% vs 16%), and ‘education’ (20% vs 15%). Men show a greater interest in ‘international news’ (58% vs 50%), ‘national politics’ (45% vs 33%), ‘lifestyle including sports, arts and culture’ (37% vs 26%), ‘environment/climate’ (24% vs 22%), ‘science and technology’ (30% vs 15%), and ‘business and economics’ (27% vs 13%).

FIG 77: ONLINE NEWS VIDEO SOURCES

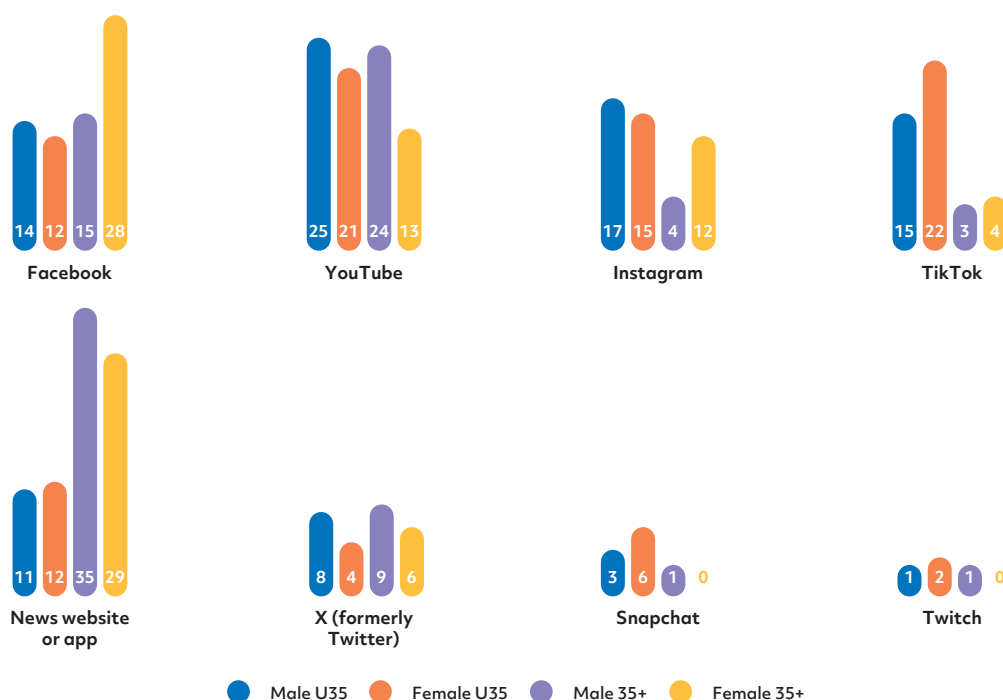


Base: All who consume news related videos, n=1688

Q: Which is the source you use most, when it comes to watching news related videos online?

When it comes to online video news clips, in Ireland there is still demonstrable loyalty to news websites or apps (26%) over other online sites which use video - such as YouTube (20%) and Facebook (19%). Other social media sites also show news video clips but they are not as popular in this category - such as Instagram (10%), TikTok (8%), X/formerly Twitter (7%), Snapchat (2%) and Twitch (1%). The loyalty evidenced here to news websites is likely to be related to the strength of Irish brands, a commitment to a positive user experience and a possible strategy to restrict the number of publisher videos that are posted to platforms such as Facebook and YouTube. As social media companies seek to retain more consumers on their sites, it is likely that they will include more video news clips - in particular of the viral type - to keep people more engaged on their platforms. Media companies will therefore find it harder to monetise their content on these sites.

FIG 78: ONLINE NEWS VIDEO SOURCES - GENDER & AGE



Base: All who consume news related videos, n=1688

Q: Which is the source you use most, when it comes to watching news related videos online?

This chart demonstrates neatly how loyalty to ‘news websites or apps’ is mostly down to older consumers. Men 35+ (35%) and women 35+ (29%) are the age category that mostly watch their online videos in this way, whereas the numbers for under 35s in this category are: men (11%) and women (12%). In terms of social media viewing, women 35+ are also by far the largest number of Facebook viewers (28%) with men 35+ trailing (15%). YouTube videos are watched mostly by men in the under 35s (25%) and over 35s (24%). Other data of note here is that women under 35s are the highest number of TikTok video news watchers (22%) up 7 pp over men in that age category. Instagram viewing has a mostly younger interest women, with men in this category (17%) and women (15%), but women over 35 surprise here as well with 12 percent interest. The over 35s show little interest in TikTok, Snapchat or Twitch.



6

Essays on Current Media Topics

Audiences are apprehensive of AI news, especially when AI is in the driver’s seat

By Dr Amy Ross Arguedas, Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

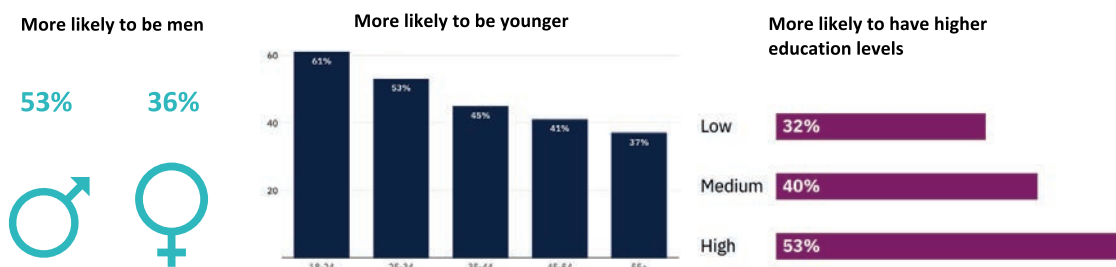
Artificial intelligence (AI) currently dominates conversations about innovation in journalism. The ChatGPT boom in late 2022 fast-tracked discussions about—and experiments with—generative AI and how it might make news production more efficient, creative, and accessible. This heightened interest in generative AI is not specific to newsrooms: one survey finds close to half of organisations in Ireland are already using some form of generative AI.¹ However, given the public-facing character of journalism and low levels of trust in news, publishers will likely face heightened scrutiny in their application of these technologies and ability to navigate AI generated information more generally, as we’ve seen in several widely publicised cases.²

This raises an important question: How do audiences feel about consuming news created with AI? In this year’s Digital News Report survey we included, for the first time, questions about AI and news, which we asked in 28 of the markets, including Ireland. We supplemented the survey with a qualitative study about AI in news in Mexico, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

How much information about AI are audiences encountering?

Documenting how much audiences have seen or heard about AI more generally provides important context for understanding their attitudes towards AI in the news. Our survey data suggest that while AI is a prominent subject in industry circles, public awareness of AI is relatively low, with only 44% of respondents in Ireland saying they have read or heard a large or moderate amount, 41% a small amount, and 10% nothing at all. AI awareness is not evenly distributed across the Irish population, either. We find significant gaps, which mirror cleavages across the 28 markets, with higher awareness among men, younger people, and those with more education.

DIFFERENCES IN PEOPLE WITH HIGHER AI AWARENESS – IRELAND



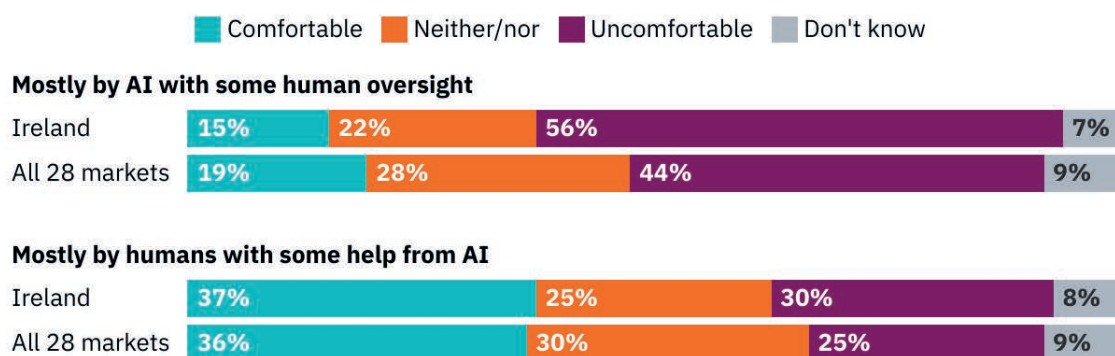
Q1_AIAwareness_2024. How much, if anything, have you heard or read about artificial intelligence (AI)? Base: 2,034.

1 <https://www.irishtimes.com/technology/2024/02/29/half-of-organisations-using-generative-ai-in-business/>
 2 E.g. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41191291.html> and <https://www.wired.com/story/cnet-published-ai-generated-stories-then-its-staff-pushed-back/>

How do audiences feel about using AI news?

Many news organisations have been using AI related technologies for mostly backend tasks for some time, but some have been experimenting with increasingly public-facing applications of generative AI, from AI generated text, to transforming news content to different formats (e.g. from text to audio), chatbots, and synthetic news readers. In our survey, we asked a simplified question to measure comfort levels across two broad kinds of AI content: news made mostly by AI with some human oversight and news made mostly by humans with the help of AI. Comfort levels are low in both scenarios, although lower when news is made mostly by AI, and we see greater discomfort in Ireland relative to the 28-market average.

COMFORT USING NEWS MADE MOSTLY BY AI AND MOSTLY BY HUMANS – IRELAND VS AVERAGE ACROSS 28 MARKETS



Q2_AIComfortlevel_2024. In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using NEWS produced in each of the following ways...? Mostly by artificial intelligence (AI) with some human oversight. Mostly by a human journalist with some help from artificial intelligence (AI). Base: Ireland = 2,034; All 28 markets where question was asked = 56,534.

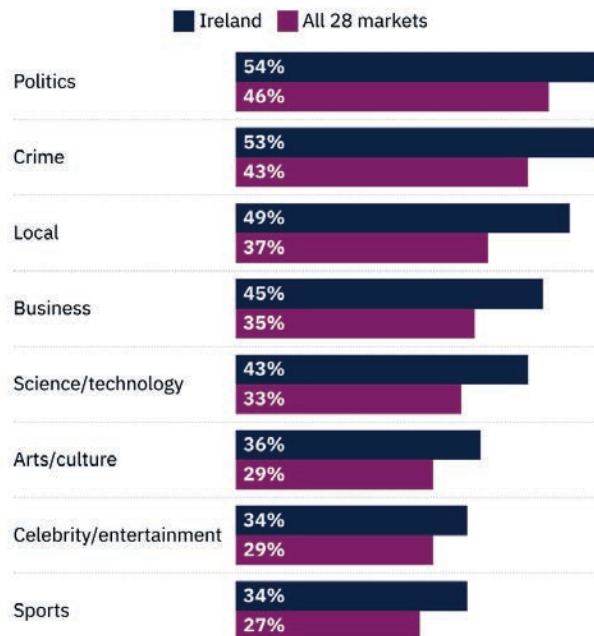
Our qualitative research shows people tend to feel better about AI uses that take place behind the scenes and those that improve their user experiences (e.g., accessibility), whereas they are most uneasy about the creation of news content itself, where concerns about accuracy and bias are prominent. We also find differences in comfort levels based on people’s AI awareness. Those who have heard or read more about AI tend to be more comfortable with its application in journalism in both scenarios, and given the gaps in AI awareness noted above, women, older respondents, and those with less education also tend to be less comfortable.

“When it comes to using AI as a tool, rather than getting it to do the entire work, I feel a lot more comfortable with it. Examples being: transcribing interviews, helping journalists prepare for interviews, automated fact-checking, and helping to identify stories.”

Male, 31, UK

Comfort levels also vary depending on the topic of the news story. People tend to be most uncomfortable when it comes to hard news topics such as politics and crime, and less uncomfortable when it comes to soft news topics such as sports or entertainment. Our qualitative findings show people see a greater potential for harm when it comes to more consequential topics, where the stakes are higher. We also see Irish respondents tend to be more uncomfortable across all 8 topics relative to the 28-market average.

PROPORTION UNCOMFORTABLE WITH USING NEWS MADE MOSTLY BY AI ABOUT THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS - IRELAND VS AVERAGE ACROSS 28 MARKETS



Q3_AIComfortlevel_2024_1/_2. In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using NEWS about each of the following topics produced mostly by artificial intelligence with some human oversight? Net: Not comfortable. Base: Ireland = 2,034; All 28 markets where question was asked = 56,534.

"I don't care if they're saying something about a celebrity, and I'm pretty sure that you can only be straightforward when it comes to sports ... When it gets to more complex stuff, international politics or elections, then there needs to be a greater level of control."

Male, 41, US

Conclusion

Audiences are currently apprehensive about the uptake of AI in journalism. The patterns we see in Ireland resemble those we find globally across 28 markets: people tend to be most uncomfortable when AI is in the driver's seat and when it comes to more serious and consequential news topics. The lower comfort levels we see in Ireland relative to the 28-market average suggests news organisations here will want to proceed with even greater caution. Mishaps in any kind of coverage may cause reputational damage at the brand level. As such, human oversight continues to be a critical component of AI applications across the board.

While we are uncertain about how public attitudes will evolve, the higher comfort levels among those with greater AI awareness suggests people may become more comfortable with AI news as they become more familiar with these technologies and use them in their everyday lives. In the meantime, gaps in awareness and comfort levels risk scaring-off segments of the public who in many cases already have strained relationships with news. Achieving buy-in will likely depend on how successfully publishers can demonstrate their responsible use of AI but also the added value for audiences.

Ireland's young people: Scattered across platforms

By Colleen Murrell, Full Professor of Journalism, DCU & FuJo

This year's Digital News Report Ireland reflects that young people are roaming widely in the online media landscape and are often only stopping briefly to graze and sample, before moving on and searching for the latest viral hit. News publisher websites need to hook them in quickly to retain their interest.

Only 30 percent of 18-24-year-olds say they are very or extremely interested in news. If you add in those who are 'somewhat interested' then the total is 71 percent. Perhaps it is this last group of the 'somewhat interested' who can still be swayed by compelling content? This age group says it likes international and local news the most, but it is also the age group with the least interest in political coverage or in politics in general. This is worrying in a year of local and European elections, with national elections around the corner.

So how do those aged 18-24-year-olds find news? At the moment it's social media and straightforward 'search' but this could be about to change. Last month Hugh Linehan³, writing in the *Irish Times*, warned that a "Googlepocalypse" is sweeping the US, in which a Google generative AI program (AI Overviews) will kill off the "link economy" and with it the last iteration of an "ecosystem that supported content creation and communication".

This software, which is currently having some teething problems around accuracy⁴ hasn't been rolled out in Ireland yet and this year's Reuters Report doesn't reflect that the older search function for news is dead. However, with the appearance of AI chatbot interfaces on the horizon, social media companies are spooked and are increasingly desperate to keep readers on their platforms through a mixture of algorithm tweaking and content change.

In our survey, respondents were asked to select all the ways they came across news online. The largest number of 18-24-year-olds said they discovered news via social media (41%), which suggests a certain passivity or potluck approach as most social media platforms have de-prioritised news. The next top choices were 'using a search engine for a keyword for the name of a particular website' (39%) or 'using a search engine for a keyword about a particular news story' (37%), both of which point to a more active searching model. A significantly smaller group (24%) said they went directly to a news website or app.

Nonetheless, some of this age group is willing to pay to receive 'an online news service' and subscriptions are up 7 percentage points from last year to 26%. These consumers are not necessarily rushing to traditional and digital media with their euros: two of the top four media brands they access regularly are free -- RTÉ News Online (14%) and BBC News Online (8%), plus the Irish Times (9%) and TheJournal.ie (8%).

When asked to select all the social media websites they used for *any* reason, (not just for news), the most popular choice was YouTube (58%), followed by Instagram and WhatsApp (54% each), Snapchat (49%), and TikTok (42%). Facebook trailed some way behind (26%) along with Facebook Messenger (14%). When asked about social media use for news then the deck of cards was shuffled and the numbers generally came down: Top was YouTube (31%), followed by Instagram (26%); TikTok (20%), Snapchat (16%) and WhatsApp (13%).

3 Hugh Linehan, 'A Googlepocalypse is sweeping the US – and its devastating effects are on their way to Ireland,' *Irish Times*, 24 May 2024

4 Kate Knibbs, 'Google Cut Back Overviews in Search Even Before Its 'Pizza Glue', *Wired*, 4 June 2024.

Although young people's loyalty right now is to social media, relying on it for news can be a perilous option when almost two thirds of them also say they are concerned about 'what is real and fake online'. Now with the growth of AI, we will all encounter more problems with trusting what we see and read in terms of mis- and dis-information. The combined 18-34 year age groups claim to have the most AI awareness but two-thirds of them also say they are uncomfortable with news produced mostly by AI, with only 'some human journalist oversight'.

In the meantime, big tech companies and media companies are trialling adjustments to content to try to lure and keep the young on their sites. One answer appears to be rolling out more short online news videos, which are particularly popular with young men (77%) and women (66%) under the age of 35, who watch these once a week or more. Smaller numbers also like watching *live* online video streaming and longer online news videos.

Those aged 18-24 enjoy the following video topics the most: International news, entertainment and celebrity, lifestyle (sports, arts), and education. They watch these videos mostly on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram; with Facebook, news websites or apps, X (Twitter), Snapchat and Twitch bringing up the rear.

Short news videos, especially those with viral popularity, represent the instant gratification end of today's media diets. They are engaging but not nourishing. Whereas our previous reports have pointed to evidence that news consumers prefer reading text to watching video, this is changing for younger consumers. Some studies have argued that 15 second TikTok videos are part of the problem that results in the shorter attention spans of teenagers, a phenomenon that Julie Jargon⁵, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, has labelled, "TikTok brain".

But all is not lost for the long-form category of news. Of the 65 percent of young people who listen regularly to podcasts, their favourite topics are: 'specialist subjects' (28%), 'news, politics and international events' (26%), 'contemporary life' (crime and societal issues), and sport (16%). Perhaps politicians hoping to engage young people in the run up to the national elections, should start up entertaining political podcasts and host them on social media sites?

5 Julie Jargon, 'TikTok brain may be coming for your kid's attention span', *Wall Street Journal*, 14 February 2024.

Why trust in news is not a one-size-fits-all

Dr Dawn Wheatley, Assistant Professor DCU & FuJo

Trust is often a gut feeling. It might be ease, reassurance and assuming something is reliable, coming from a familiar or respected voice. Alternatively, it might be a wary reaction or default scepticism towards the source. Such instinct can apply to everything: encounters with medical professionals, a stranger at your door or unknown phone number, and – of course – news content you encounter. Like most gut feelings, it may be irrational or entirely reasonable, based on past experiences.

For decades, critical media studies researchers have documented problems with news coverage in terms of corporate ownership, problematic representations of issues and individuals, and even what topics are deemed worthy of newsroom attention. Furthermore, for tuned-in news consumers, even a single incident may plant some legitimate seeds of doubt: perhaps it is unease at political correspondents crossing the barricade to work for politicians, or a story being “stealth edited”, where changes are made to an online report without being publicly documented.

Nevertheless, this year’s Digital News Report shows us that many audience members can overlook any such concerns as they continue to seek and find useful, reliable news content: 46% in Ireland feel broadly positive, stating they feel they can trust *most news most of the time*, higher than the European average (39%). Often, political ideology is mentioned as a driving force in mistrust, but the Irish results show that even on the fringes, trust levels only fluctuate slightly: the 46% rate of agreement in trusting most news only dipped slightly to 40% among those who described themselves as “very far left” and 41% among those “very far right” (see also Figure 41).

Instead, it seems that factors such as age, income and education level are more insightful. The most trusting age/sex demographic were women aged 65+, where it increased to 59%, while it dropped to 36% among both men aged 21-24 and women aged 18-20. When we consider income, a pattern emerges: trust in “most news most of the time” steadily increases from low income (39%) to medium (46%) to high (50%), and is echoed in education levels: lower education to Junior Certificate (41%) increases among mid-level (46% among those up to Leaving Cert/1-2 years of PLC) and higher education (48% among those with third-level diploma or higher).

The survey cannot explain to us why that is exactly, but it may be shaped by patterns evident elsewhere across those with lower education and income levels, such as higher video consumption, higher rates of social media as the main news source, paying less attention to mainstream news brands or journalists on social networks, and lower listenership of podcasts. These point to cohorts who are not being exposed to, or seeking out, news content in the same way: another crucial indicator is the “interest” in news figures which shows that respondents declaring as “extremely or very interested” in news are 46% of those on low income compared with 59% of high income, and 40% of those with lower education and 58% of those with higher education.

Fluctuation in trust levels is also evident in attitudes towards RTÉ: the overall figure of 72% saying they trust the brand dips to 64% of people with lower education and rises to 77% among those with high income. Yet despite the year that was, it is interesting to see that the RTÉ News brand actually increased by 1% overall in this year’s survey, suggesting a certain resilience for its editorial activities – although it may still be too soon to determine the long-term damage of the 2023 governance issues.

In May, BBC News published a piece headlined “How we are covering the UK General Election”, taking place next month. It explained how *“the BBC cannot, does not and will not pick sides in the election ... We want to be useful – and used. Trusted to deliver for everyone. And we know that your trust is earned – so during this election campaign our pledge to you is that we will work even harder to earn it.”* It goes on to explain measures such as “transparently explaining” when they make mistakes, and seeking suggestions for the big issues around the UK to make sure it “reflects the priorities of voters across the country”.

Do such public declarations do anything to ease the concerns of BBC cynics? Most likely not, as critics’ grievances are often based on editorial decisions lodged in their minds and which are difficult to displace. US philosopher Henry David Thoreau, writing in the mid-1800s, said that “we are always paid for our suspicion by finding what we suspect”, an apt reminder that if you are sceptical of journalists and mainstream news, you will always find reasons to reinforce that: reporters, editors and producers in all news outlets are fallible, subjective, and sometimes make questionable decisions. Therefore, public statements such as the BBC’s election declaration may never break through and convert people’s trust attitudes. Nevertheless, even producing such a statement at least recognises that trust in their brand can no longer be taken for granted and that contemporary, critical audiences expect more; a forthright statement acknowledging this can still be symbolically important.

Ultimately, news organisations must accept that they can no longer rely on the benefit of the doubt. This year’s results serve as an important reminder that news mistrust is not just a fringe issue or purely politically motivated. Instead, broad disconnects exist between mainstream news organisations’ content and the public: it appears that many people are simply not being exposed to sufficient levels of content which may give them an actual reason to trust. Rather than feeling like trust is being increasingly lost, perhaps it has just simply not yet been earned in the eyes of many audience members. Such an upended dynamic is something news organisations must accept and respond to by proactively engaging often-overlooked demographics in a relevant and meaningful way.

The greening of the media

By Associate Professor David Robbins, DCU & FuJo

How does the Irish media sector perform when it comes to sustainability? The answer is: we don't really know – yet.

We do know quite a lot about the broadcasting sector, which began to engage with the sustainability agenda via the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (the BAI, now expanded as Coimisiún na Meán) in 2020. A broadcasting sustainability network was established, and member organisations had to sign up to a charter and were encouraged to implement a sustainability roadmap.

The roadmap has three pillars, aligning with early conceptualisations of corporate sustainability as having environmental, social, and economic dimensions. It allows for organisations at different stages of their sustainability “journey” – bronze for beginners, silver for intermediate, and gold for advanced.

Although there were individual exemplars of best practice in Ireland (RTÉ), the UK (Sky) and elsewhere, this was believed to be the first sector-wide sustainability roadmap in the world.

Under the new Coimisiún, the broadcasting sustainability network is being expanded to encompass print and digital media and has been rebranded as Sustainable Media Ireland (www.sustainablemedia.ie). Although the expansion is in its early stages, all the major news publishers have been approached and interest in joining the initiative is reported to be high.

Meanwhile, in the wider media sector, makers of non-news content (mostly TV series and films) have been working on reducing the environmental impact of their activities for several years. Screen Greening, an initiative of Screen Producers Ireland, have been active for some time, lobbying to have a carbon calculator mechanism (such as the UK's Albert Project) used in Ireland. Recently, Coimisiún na Meán agreed to fund the operation of the Albert calculator for Irish users.

Joining Sustainable Media Ireland and signing up to the charter and roadmap are welcome steps that media companies can take, but they are voluntary. From next year, the EU will bring in mandatory sustainability reporting that will put carbon accounting on a par with financial accounting.

Large media companies will have to report on their sustainability performance in line with the EU's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) from next year, just as other corporate entities do. And the things they report on are laid out in the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS).

They will be required to include data on their performance in relation to climate change, pollution, water, biodiversity, the circular economy, their own workforce, communities affected by their operations, their consumers, and their business conduct.

After years of holding corporates and other bodies to account over their environmental performance, media organisations will have to look in the mirror, and reckon with their own Scope 1 (direct), 2 (indirect from purchased energy) and 3 (value chain) emissions.

When that happens, what will they see? Well, I suspect they will see an industry with a surprisingly large carbon footprint, comprised of polluting distribution chains for print media, and energy-intensive cloud storage for large digital assets across all media.

They will see a news media sector lacking in gender, class, and ethnic diversity, and often operating under outdated governance structures. The sector will struggle to cope with the considerable reporting burden imposed by the new regulations, given the precarious financial state of the media sector as a whole.

Economic sustainability is another important element of sustainability, and one the industry has long been concerned about. How can a news organisation care about the environment if it goes out of business?

Publishers have argued for a range of measures to make journalism more economically sustainable: reduced VAT rates, libel law reform to reduce legal exposure, reforming RTÉ funding so that commercial news organisations get a bigger slice of the advertising pie.

The government, without acceding to any of these requests, does seem predisposed to help the sector. For instance, acting on recommendations of the Future Media Commission, Coimisiún na Meán has begun to establish funding for public service journalism such as court and council coverage.

Social sustainability is the final leg on the sustainability stool. This relates to the contribution corporate entities make to their communities and to society at large. And here is where the media sector can make its most valuable contribution.

The media – both the creative and the news sectors – have immense influence when it comes to informing and engaging the public on environmental issues.

Up to now, news coverage of environmental topics such as climate change, has been volatile, exhibiting dramatic peaks at certain times, and fading away to almost nothing at others. Journalists have failed in a number of different ways in their commissioning, reporting, framing, and sourcing practices.

However, with a new focus on sustainability coming towards the media industry, reporters and editors have the chance to rise to this new challenge and to cover sustainability rigorously, cutting through the greenwashing, even if it may be coming from their own managements.

Dr David Robbins is an associate professor of journalism in the School of Communications at DCU, and co-director of the DCU Centre for Climate and Society.

Will new regulatory powers address disinformation?

By Dr Eileen Culloty, DCU

Disinformation has always existed, but it rose to the status of a global problem in 2016 when some blamed it for the Brexit referendum and the election of Donald Trump. The prevalence of disinformation during the pandemic cemented the idea that false information is a serious threat to social cohesion. In 2024, the problem seems worse than ever. Advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) means it is even easier to create and amplify manipulative content while national and international tensions provide fertile ground for disinformation to flourish. Earlier this year, experts consulted by the World Economic Forum ranked disinformation as the greatest immediate risk to global stability.

Expert concerns are mirrored by the public. In Ireland, 71% of DNR respondents reported feeling concerned about 'what is real and fake on the internet'. When this question was first posed in 2018, the figure was 57%. A high level of concern is replicated across all age groups, although Irish 18-24s are less concerned (63%) than the over 55s (74%).

It is difficult to know what exactly drives this concern. In part, it may be the volume of disinformation, or perceived disinformation, people are exposed to online. When asked about the kinds of false or misleading information they encountered in the week preceding the survey, respondents indicated the Israel-Palestine conflict (38%), immigration (37%) and, surprisingly, Covid-19 (33%). Yet, exposure alone is insufficient to drive concern. It must be accompanied by a sense that the disinformation is harmful in some way.

In public discourse, disinformation is frequently cited as a factor in troubling developments including declining vaccine uptake and aggression towards immigrants. At the same time, there are regular warnings about the need to protect the integrity of elections from information manipulation and 'deepfakes' created by generative AI. Little wonder then that people are concerned. Yet, the real challenge is to maintain a clear understanding of the risks without overstating them. In a recent talk at the Institute of International and European Affairs, Lutz Güllner of the European External Action Service argued that we should be wary of overhyping the threat of AI and deepfakes threats when there is ample evidence that most disinformation is much more simple.

There is also a risk of over-hyping counter-disinformation measures. Headlines tell us that the EU is "cracking down" on big tech and has "tough disinformation laws". This is true to an extent, but the media version of the story often creates a false impression about how it will happen. The misunderstanding seems to be the result of very effective framing on the part of the EU and wishful thinking on the part of those who don't have the time or capacity to read dense EU policy documents.

The EU has two primary mechanisms to address disinformation. The EU Code of Practice on Disinformation is a voluntary initiative that encourages platforms to take measures to counter the spread of disinformation. Being voluntary, there are serious questions about its effectiveness. In contrast, the Digital Services Act (DSA) is a directive that sets legal rules. It entered into force in August 2023. Put simply, the DSA states that major tech platforms can be fined up to six percent of their annual turnover if they fail to remove illegal content or if they fail to protect users from online harm.

The important thing to note is that most disinformation is not illegal. It is considered 'legal but harmful'. If a piece of content is illegal, it must be removed. Harm, however, is conceived more broadly as a consequence of platform design and practices. For example, the European Commission opened an investigation into whether Meta has failed to address "deceptive advertisements, disinformation campaigns and coordinated inauthentic behaviour". This investigation is not about individual pieces of content. It's about whether or not Meta has put sufficient resources into assessing and mitigating disinformation risks.

The difference here is between immediate and long-term impacts. Last March, the European Commission published a list of recommended measures for platforms "to mitigate systemic risks" during elections. If the platforms are unable to explain how they are assessing or mitigating risks, then they will be liable for fines. This will be a lengthy process. Ultimately, the DSA should reduce the volume of disinformation on major platforms, but it will likely take time.

Fundamentally incompatible? Irish public service media reliance on private capital

By Dr Roderick Flynn

As this year's Digital News Report is launched, RTÉ is four days from the first anniversary of the revelations regarding undisclosed payments to Ryan Tubridy. Reports from two expert committees and forensic accountants Mazars in early March 2024 affirmed the need for change in RTÉ governance, change which incoming Director-General Kevin Bakhurst had already initiated in summer 2023. However, the focus on the governance issues drew attention away from the more intractable issue of RTÉ's finances. Between June 2023 and February 2024, nearly 140,000 fewer households paid the broadcast licence fee than in the same period a year earlier, equivalent to a €22m loss of revenue. This compounds RTÉ's 15 year-long struggle with a collapse in advertising and sponsorship income. Having peaked at €245m in 2007, commercial revenues fell to €152m in 2022. (In inflation-adjusted terms the decline is even more precipitous: that €245m is equivalent to €287m in 2022.)

Concern about commercial revenue is nothing new at RTÉ which raised most of its income from commercial sources from 1965 until 2008. At its 2000 peak, fully 67.5% of RTÉ income was commercial. Even in 2022, it *still* sources 44% of its income from advertising and sponsorship (in contrast to the European Broadcasting Union average for PSMs of 18%). RTÉ has long chafed at this state of affairs: the 1967 Annual Report described the station's dependence on advertising sales as "an undesirable position for the national broadcasting service". Four years later it argued that "public service broadcasting cannot be financed primarily by commercial advertising" given the "vulnerability of its income to economic factors outside its control".

RTÉ's appeals to reduce this commercial reliance by increasing public funding have consistently fallen on deaf ears. In 1996, when the public element of RTÉ's funding had fallen to 35%, the licence fee of £1R70 hadn't been increased for a decade. The 2003 Broadcasting Amendment Act notionally indexed-linked the licence fee to the Consumer Price Index. However, increases were subject to Ministerial approval and that approval has not been forthcoming since 2008. An index-linked licence fee should have reached €197.40 by 2023. Instead, it remains at €160.

The failure of successive Irish governments to introduce a funding model appropriate to 21st media consumption patterns has been well rehearsed. Of the 50 recommendations made by the Future of Media Commission report in 2021, the only one not accepted by the government related to the primary question the Commission addressed: how to place RTÉ's funding on a sustainable basis.

How public service media are funded is not trivial. Advertisers seek very particular audiences – typically young and better-off. Advertising-reliant broadcasters logically focus on content that provides for those audiences to the detriment of material aimed at other categories of citizens. Commercial stations (including RTÉ) make much of their success within these demographics. As early as 1964 when the sale of advertising still accounted for a minority (48%) of its income, Radio Eireann declared as its aim the delivery of "a service to advertisers that will ensure their support". Decades of enforced reliance on commercial revenues cemented a commercial outlook into RTÉ's DNA. This has long been evident in its scheduling and, more recently in the revelation that close relationships between commercial sponsors and higher profile RTÉ staff have been treated as the norm.

Given this, the November 2023 decision of the government to grant €56m to plug RTÉ's 2023 and 2024 funding gaps might be regarded as positive steps. But the manner in which this direct Exchequer funding was conjured creates the potential for political leverage. Irish political culture (especially since the removal of Section 31 of the 1960 Broadcasting Act in 1994) militates against using such leverage to win favourable editorial treatment. But it is manifestly having an impact in other areas. Accessing the first tranche of the €56m was conditional on RTÉ's committing to substantial structural "reforms" - a polite term for reducing its workforce by more than 20% (400 people) by 2028.

Such precarious finances are highly problematic because Public Service Media in Ireland are overtly identified - *in law* - as bulwarks against the commercialisation of the public sphere. Ireland is a highly - and ever more - concentrated media market. In laying out the basis on which media concentration is regulated, the 2014 Competition and Consumer Protection Act overtly points to the "adequacy" of the role played by RTÉ and TG4 in protecting "the public interest in plurality of the media in the State". This means ensuring that Public Service Media are resourced on a transparent, objective basis with funds adequate to fulfil a clearly defined public service mission. A reliance on a shrinking advertising market and sporadic - and unreliable - bursts of State largesse falls far short of that requirement.

This raises a final point: what is that public service mission? The "New Direction" strategy document hastily produced by RTÉ in November merely rehearses the brief definition offered by the Future of Media Commission report. That definition relied on Reithian language from the 1920s ("to inform, to educate and to entertain") but it's questionable whether this is appropriate for an era characterised by near-universal access to media production technology, information/dis-information abundance, social fragmentation and the collapse of shared cultural signifiers. We need to scrutinize that changed context to move from an emphasis on what we're willing to pay for, to what Irish society actually needs from public service media. This may mean going beyond a focus on institutions to think about ways that a public service media sensibility might be embedded into the very fabric of Irish society. The spaces of the public sphere may include the still largely unidirectional content provision of print, radio, television and the internet but it also extends far beyond them. Grappling with the question of how to bring a public service sensibility to WhatsApp groups, Twitter/X storms and TikTok virals may be profoundly complex but a public service strategy which does not include these spaces seems like an exercise in futility.

