Press release embargoed until 15 June 2022 00.01 BST

Depressing agenda is leading many people to turn away from the news as younger audiences lean further into TikTok

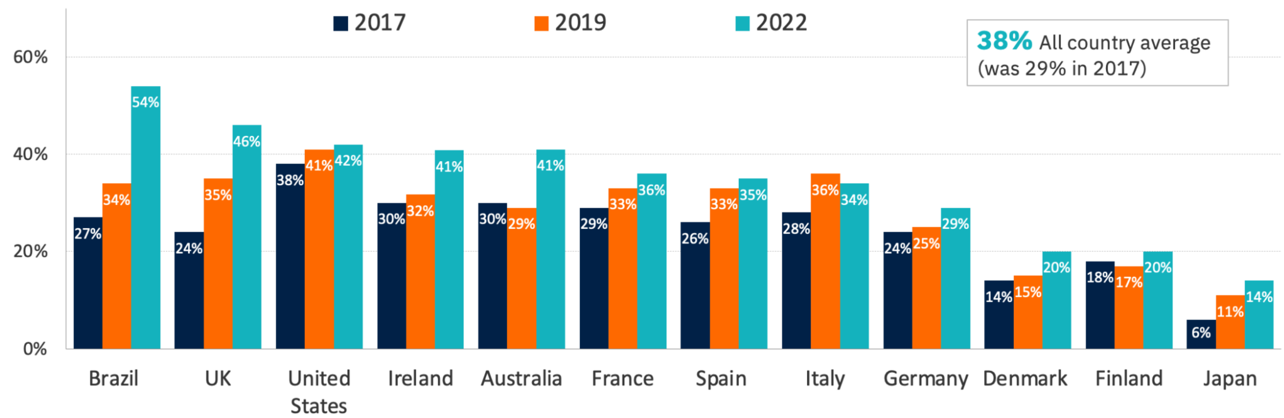
This year's Reuters Institute Digital News Report provides evidence that much of the public is turning away from – or at least *selectively avoiding* – important stories such as the pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the cost-of-living crisis. The report documents ways in which the connection between journalism and much of the public may be fraying, including a fall in trust following last year's positive bump, and declining interest in news. Our survey finds that younger audiences have a weaker connection with news brands, and are increasingly accessing the news via platforms such as TikTok. These are some of the conclusions of the report, which is based on an online survey of 93,432 people in 46 countries. The report is embargoed until Wednesday 15 June 00.01 BST. You can download a PDF version in this link. It will be live at www.digitalnewsreport.org/2022

Selective news avoidance on the rise

While the majority of people, across countries, remain engaged and use the news regularly, many others are choosing to limit their exposure to certain types of news. Overall, almost four in ten (38%) say they often or sometimes avoid the news – up from 29% in 2017. Avoiders have doubled in Brazil (54%) and the UK (46%) over five years.

Proportion that sometimes or often actively avoids the news

Selected markets. 2017-2022



Q1di_2017. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? *Base: Total 2017–22 samples (n≈2000)*

Across markets, many news avoiders say they are put off by the repetitiveness of the news agenda – especially around politics and COVID-19 (43%). Around 36% – particularly those under 35 – say that the news brings down their mood. Others say the news leads to arguments they'd rather avoid (17%) or leads to feelings of powerlessness (16%). A significant proportion of younger people say they avoid news because it can be hard to follow, suggesting that the news media could do more to simplify language and explain complex stories. Although the survey took place before the war of Ukraine, subsequent polling in five countries showed that news avoidance has, if anything, increased further.

Lead author Nic Newman says:

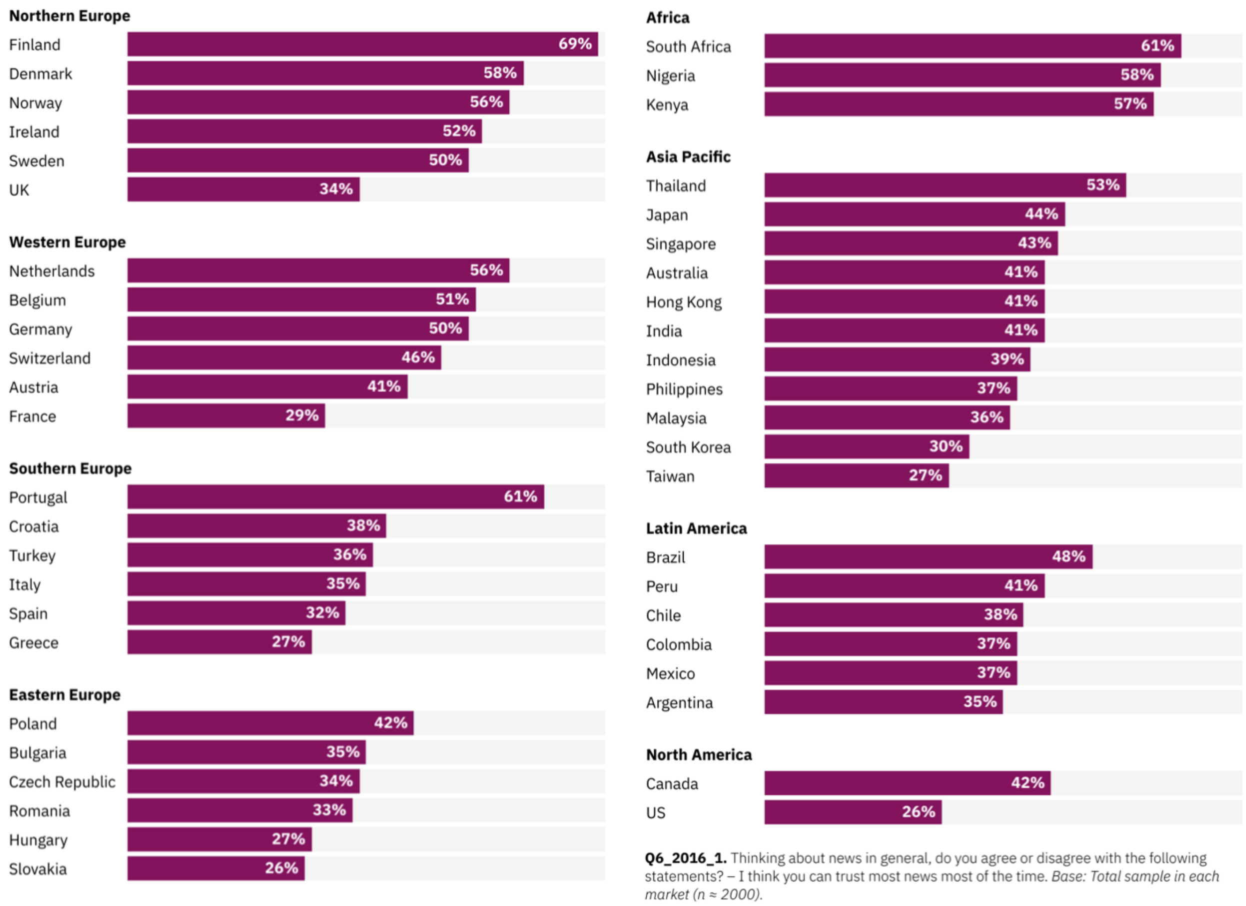
> *"These findings are particularly challenging for the news industry. Subjects that journalists consider most important, such as political crises, international conflicts and global pandemics, seem to be precisely the ones that are turning some people away."*

Trust falls back – after last year's bump

Trust in news has fallen in almost half the countries in our survey, and risen in just seven, partly reversing the gains made at the pandemic. On average, 42% say they trust most news most of the time. Finland remains the country with the highest levels of overall trust (69%), while the US has the lowest score (26%, -3) of all 46 countries, along with Slovakia.

Proportion that trusts most news most of the time

All markets



Q6_2016_1. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements? – I think you can trust most news most of the time. *Base: Total sample in each market (n ≈ 2000).*

Mixed picture over reader revenue

Despite significant increases in the proportion paying for online news in a handful of richer countries such as Australia (+5 points), Germany (+5) and Sweden (+3), there are signs that overall growth may be levelling off. Across a basket of 20 countries where payment is widespread, 17% paid for *any* online news, the same figure as last year. A large proportion of digital subscriptions go to a few national brands – reinforcing *winner-takes-most* dynamics. Just 5% of subscribers pay for a local title in the UK and 3% in Portugal, but the figure is much higher in Norway (53%) and Sweden (43%). Subscribers tend to be richer, older and better educated, and tend to pay for just one publication.

Proportion paying for news and a profile of ongoing digital subscribers

Selected markets

Country	% of people surveyed who pay for any online news	Top national titles for digital subscriptions	Median number of subscriptions	% of subscribers aged under 30	% of subscribers who pay for local titles	% of subscribers who pay for foreign titles
Norway	41 %	VG, Aftenposten, Dagbladet	1	14 %	53 %	3 %
Sweden	33 %	Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter	1	16 %	43 %	5 %
United States	19 %	New York Times, Washington Post	2	17 %	27 %	7 %
Finland	19 %	Helsingin Sanomat, Aamulehti	1	15 %	39 %	3 %
Belgium	19 %	Het Laatste Nieuws, Le Soir	1	26 %	16 %	8 %
Australia	18 %	The Australian, Guardian Australia, Herald Sun	2	16 %	36 %	9 %
Denmark	18 %	Berlingske, Politiken	1	20 %	20 %	5 %
Switzerland	18 %	Tages-Anzeiger, NZZ	1	18 %	39 %	14 %
Netherlands	17 %	De Telegraaf, AD, Volkskrant	1	34 %	38 %	7 %
Ireland	16 %	Irish Times, Irish Independent	1	19 %	6 %	48 %
Canada	15 %	Globe & Mail, Toronto Star	1	19 %	15 %	39 %
Germany	14 %	Bild, Der Spiegel	1	26 %	35 %	8 %
Austria	14 %	Kronen Zeitung, Der Standard	1	12 %	14 %	7 %
Spain	12 %	El País, El Mundo, La Vanguardia	1	28 %	5 %	8 %
Italy	12 %	Corriere della Sera, Il Sole 24 Ore, La Repubblica	1	17 %	14 %	6 %
Portugal	12 %	Público, Expresso	1	20 %	3 %	4 %
France	11 %	Le Monde, Le Figaro, L'Equipe	1	28 %	23 %	6 %
Japan	10 %	Nikkei, Asahi Shimbun Digital	1	13 %	n/a	n/a
UK	9 %	Telegraph, Times of London, Guardian	1	8 %	5 %	6 %

Q7a. Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid-for ONLINE news service in the last year? (This could be digital subscription, combined digital/print subs or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition). *Base: Total sample in each market (n≈2000).* **Q7_SUBS_name_2022.** You said you have paid a subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year... Which of the following did you subscribe to? Base: All that paid for an ongoing subscription/membership to a digital news service in the last year. Range: France = 139 to Norway = 647.

Mainly brands not individuals

Despite the growth of low-cost subscription and membership platforms, like Substack and Patreon – and the much reported success of some individual writers – our survey finds that the number of these subscriptions is still relatively modest, when compared with established news brands. Even in the United States, just 7% of news subscribers pay for one or more journalist emails – around 1% of our overall sample. The proportions are lower elsewhere (e.g. 5% of news subscribers in Spain, 2% France, 1% Germany).

Concern about subscription diets in face of rising household bills

The report finds some respondents rethinking the number of media subscriptions they can afford this year – which often includes multiple TV and film services like Netflix, as well as music, sports and books. While most say they expect to retain the same total number of subscriptions, around one in seven in the United States (14%) and Portugal (17%) say they expect to have *fewer,* as they look to save money on non-essential items.

Co-editor Rasmus Nielsen says:

> *"While many upmarket news providers have seen great success in building digital subscription businesses, it is not a model that will work for every publisher. A growing number of outlets are chasing the relatively small number of people prepared to pay for online news and local news struggle to build a critical mass of subscribers. Most fundamentally, much of the public – including people who happily subscribe to online video or music streaming services – do not find news worth paying for. It is therefore critically important, especially for those who believe journalism needs to serve the whole public, to think about how they can create a more compelling offer for a wider public and look beyond subscription-based models that primarily serve more privileged people."*

Young people and the news

A theme that runs through this year's report is the difficulty in engaging younger users with news. The report identifies a group of under 25s who have grown up with social media, whose behaviours and attitudes are not just different but *more different* than they were in the past. This group of 'social natives' define news in a different way, are less interested in traditional subjects like politics and have a weaker connection with news brands. Eight-in-ten (78%) of 18-24s access news via side door routes such as aggregators, search engines and social media each week.

The report also finds that these young 'social natives' have been switching allegiance away from Facebook towards visual networks like Instagram and TikTok, where entertainment and social influencers play a bigger role. Across all countries, 40% of 18-24s use TikTok each week, with 15% saying they use it to find, discuss or share news. Usage for news has doubled in some countries and is higher in parts of Latin America, Asia and Africa than it is in the United States, Northern Europe or Australia. Telegram has also grown significantly in markets such as Singapore, Italy, India, Kenya, providing an alternative to Meta-owned WhatsApp.

> *"When TikTok was launched, it was just about dancing, choreography; not today, even though the videos are fast, they bring immediate information."* ***Male, 24, Brazil***

Impact of the war in Ukraine

The report includes results of a follow-up survey, using the same methodology, conducted roughly one month after the start of the war in Ukraine in five countries: UK, US, Poland, Germany and Brazil. This showed that television news was usually relied on most heavily – especially in countries closest to the fighting, such as Germany and Poland. This is in line with previous research showing that people tend to turn to TV news at times of crisis.

However, the brutal nature of the conflict also seems to have contributed to significant increases in selective news avoidance in Germany (+7 points compared to pre-conflict levels), and Poland (+6) as well as in the United States (+4). Nearly half or more of respondents in all five countries agree that the news media is doing a good job in keeping people up to date on the latest news, but fewer respondents feel they are performing quite as well in explaining the wider implications of the conflict or providing a different range of perspectives on it. Although there may have been a surge in news use at the outbreak of the conflict (and at certain key moments), our data suggests overall news use hasn't substantially increased since the war began.

Other findings from the 2022 report

On misinformation. Global concerns about false and misleading information remain stable this year, ranging from 72% in Kenya and Nigeria to just 32% in Germany and 31% in Austria. People say they have seen more false information about Coronavirus than about politics in most countries, but the situation is reversed in Turkey, Kenya and the Philippines, amongst others.

On polarisation. There are large differences in news audience polarisation between countries – referring to the extent to which people on the political left and right selectively use particular news outlets. News audience polarisation is relatively high in the US and the UK, but lower in Norway and Germany. However, in all four countries, the degree of news audience polarisation has changed little since 2016, despite political upheaval and changes to elite discourse.

On the journalists people pay attention to. While social media have increased the profile of many digital journalists, we find that the most well-known journalists in most countries are TV anchors and presenters. When asked to name journalists they pay attention to, few people can name foreign correspondents, while newspaper columnists have higher name recognition in countries like the UK and Finland than in Brazil, the United States or France.

On journalists and social media. Around half of respondents or more in most countries feel that journalists should stick to reporting the news, but a sizable minority – especially younger audiences – believe they should be allowed to express their personal opinions on social media at the same time. These findings cast light on a growing debate about how journalists should interact in more informal spaces such as Facebook and Twitter.

On climate change coverage. Audiences in Australia and the US are much more polarised on the issue, express less interest, and pay less attention than news consumers in markets such as Chile or Portugal. Younger audiences, on average, are more likely than older ones to think news outlets should take a clear position in favour of climate change action rather than reflect a range of view and let people decide for themselves. Across all markets, more people say they pay attention to film and television documentaries (39%) than to major news organisations (33%) for information about climate change.

On news audiences' privacy concerns. With first-party data collection becoming more important for publishers with the imminent demise of third-party cookies, we find that most consumers are still reluctant to register their email address with news sites - just 28% across our sample. Only around a third (32%) say they trust news websites to use their personal data responsibly, similar to the percentage who say the same about online retailers (33%).

On online video. Despite the popularity of video formats, the report finds that all age groups, on average, say they still prefer to read news online rather than watch it. Respondents say they prefer reading online because it is quicker (50%) or gives them more control (34%). Around a third (35%) say they are put off by pre-roll ads that sometimes appear ahead of videos.

On podcasting. After last year's slowdown in part caused by restrictions on movement during the COVID-19 pandemic, growth in podcasts seems to have resumed, with 34% consuming one or more podcasts in the last month (average of 20 markets). Our data show Spotify continuing to gain ground over Apple and Google podcasts in countries such as the UK and Germany. YouTube is also benefiting from the popularity of video-led and hybrid podcasts.

Methodology

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Survey conducted in 46 markets: United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Belgium, Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Australia, Canada, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa.

Total sample size was 93,432 adults with around 2,000 per country. Fieldwork was undertaken at the end of January/start of February 2022.

A follow-up survey was conducted in five countries (UK, US, Germany, Poland and Brazil) in early April 2022 to understand the impact of the war in Ukraine on media consumption. Samples were around 1,000 in each case.

All surveys were carried out online. The data were weighted to targets based on age, gender and region to reflect the total population. Education and political quotas were also applied in some countries. The sample is broadly reflective of the population who have access to the internet. Note that data from India, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa are representative of younger English speakers and not the national population because it's not possible to reach other groups in a representative way using an online survey. The survey was fielded mostly in English in these markets, and restricted to ages 18–50 in Kenya and Nigeria. Findings shouldn't be taken to be nationally representative in these countries.

Contact

For more information and interview requests, please contact Eduardo Suárez at eduardo.suarez@politics.ox.ac.uk or Matthew Leake at matthew.leake@politics.ox.ac.uk.

More information on the 2022 Digital News Report

The research and report can also be found on our website from 15th June including slide-packs, charts, and raw data tables, with a licence that encourages reuse. A fuller description of the methodology is available along with the complete questionnaire.

Sponsors of this year's report include Google News Initiative, BBC News, Ofcom, Edelman UK, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland, the Fritt Ord Foundation in Norway, the Dutch Media Authority (CvdM), the Korea Press Foundation, the Open Society Foundations as well as our academic sponsors at the Leibniz-Institute for Media Research/Hans-Bredow-Institut, Hamburg, the University of Navarra in Spain, the University of Canberra, the Centre d'études sur les médias, Quebec, Canada, and Roskilde University in Denmark. The Japanese public broadcaster NHK and Reuters News Agency have joined the network of sponsors this year. The Fundación Gabo is supporting the translation of the report into Spanish.

About the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism is dedicated to exploring the future of journalism worldwide. The Institute receives core funding from the Thomson Reuters Foundation and is based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. It was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Journalist Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford almost 40 years ago. See http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/

About the authors

Nic Newman. Lead Author, Senior Research Associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford and a consultant on digital media.

Dr. Richard Fletcher. Author, Senior Research Fellow and Research Team Leader at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. He is a data and survey specialist primarily interested in global trends in digital news consumption.

Dr. Craig T. Robertson. Author, Research fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism whose interests include news trust and credibility, fact-checking and verification.

Dr. Kirsten Eddy. Author, Research fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. She studies the interplay of journalism, politics, and digital media, with a focus on moral and civic media and political discourse.

Prof. Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. Editor. Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and Professor of Political Communication at the University of Oxford, His work focuses on changes in the news media, political communication, and the role of digital technologies in both.

About YouGov

YouGov is an international market research agency and pioneer of market research through online methods. YouGov has a panel of 20 million people worldwide, including 2.5 million in the UK representing all ages, socio-economic groups and other demographic types.