Reuters Institute

Digital News Report 2016

(Ireland)

Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
University of Oxford

DCU Institute for Future Media & Journalism

Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann | Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

FuJo
The Institute for Future Media & Journalism

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2016 (Ireland)

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THE INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE MEDIA & JOURNALISM

DCU Institute for Future Media & Journalism

BAI Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

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BAI Foreword

2016 has been a busy year for news, with coverage of the general election and subsequent extended government formation process, the 1916 centenary celebrations and the potential exit of Great Britain from the EU. It is against this backdrop that research is now presented in this second Reuters Digital News Report for Ireland. The research, co-sponsored by the BAI, was conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) in Oxford. This study is part of an international research project covering 26 countries across the world which is tracking and examining the rapidly changing environment for news production and consumption. While the international dimension to this project is important, the additional analysis of the Irish data, undertaken by the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) in DCU, provides important insights into developments and trends in Ireland. In some instances, such as the growth of mobile, the results confirm trends identified in other research, while in others such as news sources, it provides new insights into shifts in how the news agenda is shaped.

The BAI believes independent research of this nature is vital to the ongoing discourse around how quality news is delivered to audiences and how audience access and value the available sources. The exploration of trust is a good example here and this year's data provides interesting breakdowns on what methods are trusted by audiences. As digital models break into more traditional methods of providing news, larger questions also arise about the future of the news industry in Ireland and how it will be funded and distributed.

It is the BAI's responsibility as the broadcasting regulator to ensure audiences have access to a diverse range of services, programming and perspectives. It is also our aim to be a trusted and informed voice in broadcasting. Independent research which tracks changes over time is vital in supporting the delivery of these services to the Irish public.

The BAI believes this report can also be hugely beneficial to a much wider audience – policy makers and the media; journalists and academics; statisticians and digital analysts. This research will aid in the ongoing discussion relating to the future of news journalism, how audiences access their news and the challenges for us all as we encounter the seismic shifts that digital news has and will likely continue to create.

Michael O'Keeffe
BAI Chief Executive
June 2016

Digital News Report (Ireland) Foreword

Welcome to the second annual Irish Digital News Report which has been designed to capture the changing ecology of news in Ireland. The international report is based on a survey of more than 50,000 people in 26 countries, which makes it the largest on-going comparative study of news consumption in the world. It has become the prime source for identifying change in the fast paced news environment as well as forecasting trends for the future. We find that Irish news consumption patterns are broadly similar to the rest of the world, and there is clear evidence about the role of social media in finding, sharing and discussing the news and about the growing role of smartphones in the news.

Half of all survey respondents (52%) now say they use social media as a source of news each week.The report shows the influential role played by Facebook in the distribution of online news with 45% using the network to find, read, watch, share, or comment on the news each week; more than twice that of its nearest rival.

TV news remains the most popular platform for accessing news in Ireland at 73%; although this is down three per cent from 2015. Online news websites are fast catching up at 70%.

There are also patterns which are peculiar to the Irish or at least more pronounced here; for example, an increased use of ad blockers and a propensity to consume international news from global providers. However, because this survey was conducted online it must be acknowledged that the results will under-represent the consumption habits of those who are not online. We wish to stress the importance of considering this in interpreting the data and analysis. Additional data will be posted on the FuJo website, including slide packs and charts. The international material is available on www.digitalnewsreport.org, along with a licence that encourages reuse subject to attribution to the Reuters Institute. The data set is large and highly informative. Not all points of interest that emerged could be included in this brief report. However, further research publications and posts will be forthcoming.

This report both puts the Irish data in an international context and delves deeper into specific issues. We hope this will build into an invaluable resource for academics, media owners, journalists, and those developing policy. A description of the methodology is available on the website along with the complete questionnaire. Our team, based at the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University, are hugely grateful to our sponsor, the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI), and our academic partners the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University as well as the international pollsters YouGov and their Irish partners Research Now. Other academic partners globally – Roskilde University, the Hans Bredow Institute, the University of Navarra, the Tow Center at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, and the University of Canberra – have also delved deeper into their own country reports and all of these offer interesting insights.

It is hoped that the annual Irish Digital News Report and associated research from the FuJo Institute will form a permanent knowledge base for the Irish media industry. We aim to make research available as widely as possible. Further information will be available on our website. We look forward to advancing on the 2016 findings next year.

Jane Suiter
Director, Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo)
June 2016

Methodology

Country	Final Sample Size	Total population	Internet penetration
Ireland	**2,003**	**4,625,885**	**83%**
USA	2,197	321,368,864	87%
UK	2,024	64,767,115	92%
Germany	2,035	81,174,000	88%
France	2,162	66,132,169	84%
Italy	2,195	60,795,612	62%
Spain	2,104	46,439,864	77%
Portugal	2,018	10,374,822	68%
Norway	2,019	5,165,802	96%
Sweden	2,030	9,747,355	95%
Finland	2,041	5,471,753	94%
Denmark	2,020	5,659,715	96%
Belgium	2,018	11,258,434	85%

Country	Final Sample Size	Total population	Internet penetration
Netherlands	2,006	19,900,726	96%
Switzerland	2,004	8,236,573	87%
Austria	2,000	8,584,926	83%
Hungary	2,056	9,849,000	76%
Czech Republic	2,014	10,538,275	80%
Poland	2,000	38,005,614	68%
Greece	2,036	10,812,467	63%
Turkey	2,157	77,695,904	60%
Korea, South	2,147	49,115,196	92%
Japan	2,011	126,919,659	91%
Australia	2,021	22,751,014	93%
Canada	2,011	35,675,834	93%
Urban Brazil	2,001	204,259,812	85%

Please note that Brazil and Turkey are representative of an urban population rather than a national population; as such the internet penetration is likely to be higher than stated above, which must be taken into consideration when interpreting results.

Source: Internet World Stats www.internetworldstats.com internet population estimate 2015

This report was commissioned by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) in association with the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University as a focused examination of Irish news consumption trends. Research into global news consumption can be found in the International Digital News Report 2016. Analysis for the Irish report was undertaken by researchers at the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University. Surveying was conducted by YouGov in cooperation with Research Now between January and February 2016.

– All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov.

– The total sample size was 2003 adults (over 18's) who consume news once a month or more.

AGE	
18-24	12%
25-34	22%
35-44	20%
45-54	17%
55+	29%

REGION	
Dublin	28%
Rest of Leinster	27%
Munster	27%
Connaught & Part of Ulster	18%

GENDER	
Male	50%
Female	51%

- The figures have been weighted to be representative of all ROI adults (aged 18+) in terms of age, gender and region.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between 29th January – 17th February 2016.
- The online survey was administered by YouGov. Panellists, selected at random from the base sample, were invited to take part via email.
- YouGov normally achieves a response rate of between 35% and 50% to surveys. However, this varies depending on the subject matter, complexity and length of the questionnaire.
- The responding sample is weighted to the profile of the sample definition to provide a representative reporting sample. The profile is derived from census data.
- The response rate for Ireland is estimated to be 15%. Response rates are influenced by a number of factors: it is a well-established market, younger panels often have higher response rates, and Ireland is a relatively small country resulting in a small panel size.
- Ireland's internet penetration is estimated at 85% (CITE). As an online survey these results exclude the 15% of the population without access to internet. Although the data has been weighted, results should be interpreted in this context.
- Some of the 2015 survey questions were amended for the 2016 report to enhance analysis of influential variables on consumption.
- To chart the changes in data, we systematically report the same data points as last year but in a revised order to allow for a more logical organisation and to focus on critical issues. The dataset presents a wide range of issues for examination and hundreds of graphs could be included. In analysing the most recent trends, we prioritised those issues that are of acute concern to the Irish news market in 2016.

This research is designed to understand Irish news consumers' use and value of news across a number of factors. Results here are reflective of the Irish news audience's broad consumption trends and are not equated to the data collected by news organisations regarding their own digital readerships.

Authorship and Research Acknowledgements

Jane Suiter is the Director of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University where she is also Chair of the journalism BA programme. She is currently working on several FuJo projects: Hearing Women's Voices, Climate Change in Irish Media, EU COST research on populist political communication in the media and an Irish Research Council project on the communication of referendums. A former journalist, Jane was previously Economics Editor at The Irish Times.

Niamh Kirk is a researcher with the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) as well as PhD researcher and academic tutor in Dublin City University's School of Communications. She was awarded an Irish Research Council postgraduate scholarship to pursue research into digital journalism and diasporas.

Paul McNamara is a member of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at DCU. He is a lecturer in journalism at the School of Communications and is a former Head of School. He formerly worked as a journalist at the Irish Independent and the Evening Herald.

Eileen Culloty is a post-doctoral researcher at the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) where she works on projects relating to media coverage of climate change and the refugee crisis. Her research interests examine visual and factual digital media.

Glen Fuller is an Assistant Professor of Communications and Journalism and a member of the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. His three main research interests involve the media of enthusiast discourse; the episodic reconfigurations of discourse within media events through the interaction of digital media and platforms and critical accounts of technological innovation; and the pedagogical implications of 'permanent disruption'. Glen is also the course convenor of journalism at the University of Canberra and an editor of The Fibreculture Journal.

Eugenia Siapera is the Deputy Director of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at DCU where she is also Chair of the MA in Social Media Studies programme. Her research interests concern social media, journalism, political theory, multiculturalism, cultural diversity and media.

We are also very grateful to the following people for their contributions and assistance: **Dr David Levy**, Director of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism; **Richard Feltcher**, Research Fellow at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism; **Nic Newman**, Research Associate at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism; and **Nuala Dormer** and **Ciaran Kissane**, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Executive Summary

News consumption is high in Ireland across all demographics, with 84% of people assessing some news every day and 53% accessing news several times a day. Among English-speaking countries, Irish news consumers have the highest levels of migration from traditional to digital news. Ireland has the highest level of primarily digital consumers (27%) and mixed traditional-digital consumers (44%) in the English speaking world.

Platforms: TV news remains the most popular platform for accessing news in Ireland at 73%; although this is down three per cent from 2015. The popularity of online news websites remains unchanged at 70%. Radio and print have declined slightly at 47% and 45% respectively. Use of social media rose three per cent at 52%. The 55+ age-group are the heaviest news consumers across television, radio, print and websites and 21% of this age group use social media to access news. In comparison, 25-34s are the group most likely to use social media to access news at 27%.

Devices: Some 82% of Irish people use computers weekly and 72% use computers to access news. Smartphone use is also high at 80%. Of these, 59% use smartphones to access news, up seven per cent from 2015. Among under-35s, 42% use smartphones to access news whereas 31% use computers. Computers remain the most popular device for online news for over-45s. The use of news apps on smartphones is relatively even across all age-groups ranging from 18% to 23% of consumers.

News Preferences: National and regional news dominate Irish news consumption. Levels of interest in different categories of news vary across gender and age groups. Only 32% of under-35s are keenly interested in politics in contrast to 52% of over-35s. Sport is the second most popular news category for under-35s at 57% while only 20% of over-35s are keenly interested in sport news. Women have a greater preference for health, education, and lifestyle news while men show a preference for sport, politics and business news.

Trust: Trust is news is highest among over-55s. Half of those surveyed do not trust the news in general and two-thirds believe that Irish news is not free from political or commercial influence. In line with international findings, the Irish trust editors and journalists (37%) less than news organisations (47%).

Brands: Amid the intense competition for audiences, levels of consumption for traditional news brands has declined since 2015. RTÉ TV News, Ireland's most popular traditional news brand, is down seven per cent at 51%. Sky News, the second most popular traditional brand, is down six per cent at 32%. Local and regional newspapers experienced the sharpest fall, down nine per cent at 14%.

However, many traditional news providers have increased the reach of their digital devices. RTÉ News Online is the most popular digital news brand, up eleven per cent at 42%. The Irish Independent online and The Irish Times online have also increased their reach at 36% and 29% respectively. Digital consumption of local and regional brands increased eight per cent at 10%.

Regarding brands that operate exclusively online, thejournal.ie and Her.ie/Joe.ie are among the top ten most popular digital news brands. Notably, thejournal.ie is now the third most popular brand ahead of The Irish Times online.

In terms of total reach across traditional and digital services, RTÉ has the greatest reach at 64% followed by Independent, News and Media at 44% and The Irish Times at 37% and Landmark Media with breakingnews.ie at 24%. For international brands, the BBC is still the most popular global news brand in Ireland.

Paying For News: Although newspaper circulation is generally falling, there is no significant change in the number of people paying for a printed newspaper (53%). Internationally, there is no significant increase in people's willingness to pay for news. In Ireland, 71% say they are unwilling to pay for news in the future. Among those who currently pay, 49% pay less than €50 in a year; a standard annual subscription to The Irish Times is €144. Those who pay tend to be high news consumers overall. They pay for some brands through a mix subscriptions (41%) and one-off payments (61%) while consuming other brands for free.

Among English-speaking nations, Ireland has the highest level of ad blocker use at 30%. Over half of 18-24s use some form of ad blocker. Ad blockers are more likely to be installed on computers (87%) than smartphones (24%). While the uptake of ad blockers on smartphones is low internationally, a third of international respondents say they plan to install one on their smartphone in the next year.

Over half of Irish respondents (54%) find adverts on news sites intrusive. Yet, 42% are willing to view ads in return for free access to news.

Gateways to News: To access online news, Irish consumers primarily seek out brands; 41% go direct to a news website or app and 35% use online search to find a preferred brand. Beyond brand access, 31% discover news on social media while 15% use search engines to find content relating to a particular news story. Generational and gender differences are apparent. Only 28% of 18–34s access news brands directly in comparison to 71% of over-35s. Among those who find news via social media, 64% are female and 36% are male.

Particular platforms and devices are clearly embedded in morning consumption routines. Most notably, morning radio is the first point of contact with news for 39% of consumers. The Internet is integrated into morning consumption for 38% of consumers and 21% use smartphones for morning news. For morning smartphone users, social media platforms are the most popular source of news (50%) while 30% use a news app or visit a news website.

Text remains the predominant format for consuming online news at 76%. Irish consumption of video-based news is still high by international levels but fewer than a third use video either as an accompaniment to text or as a primary format. Those who do not regularly use video identify technical issues (46%) and the convenience of reading (39%) as factors.

In terms of personalisation, Irish consumers tend to prefer automated news generated on the basis of past consumption (37%) over news selected by journalists and editors (26%). However, consumers are also concerned about the impact of personalisation in terms of missing out on important stories (62%) and missing out on challenging viewpoints (61%).

Social Media: As a news source, social media is primarily valued for breaking news and ease of access to a variety of sources. In line with international trends, Facebook remains the dominant social media platform in Ireland at 71% and the dominant social platform for news at 45%. However, there is a slight fall in overall use of established platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube while the messaging service WhatsApp rose two per cent.

Participation in news – that is, rating, sharing and commenting on stories – is high at 72% but only a third of news consumers on social platforms are brand aware in terms of noticing which news brands are responsible for creating the news content found on social platforms.

Section One
Irish News Consumers

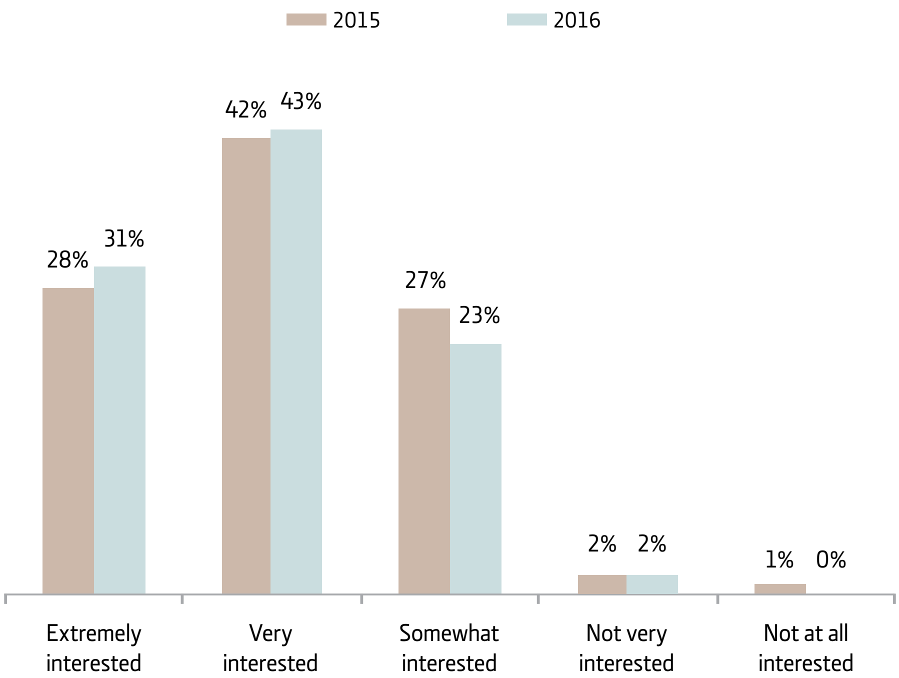
This section describes the wider context of news consumption in Ireland and introduces the Irish news consumer. The levels of interest and engagement with news in Ireland are reported along with a demographic breakdown by age. Conceptual groups based on engagement, participation and digitalism provide insight into the culture of digital news audiences in Ireland.

1.1 Interest and access

Interest in the news

Irish news users are above average in terms of engagement and interest in news and are more inclined to use digital rather than traditional news sources. However, the Irish do not engage with news as much as some peers in other countries surveyed for the international report. As would be expected in an election year, interest in news increased slightly from 2015 with 74% 'very' or 'extremely' interested in news. This is up from 70% in 2015.

Fig. 1 Interest in news 2015 & 2016



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

Fig. 2 Level of interest by age

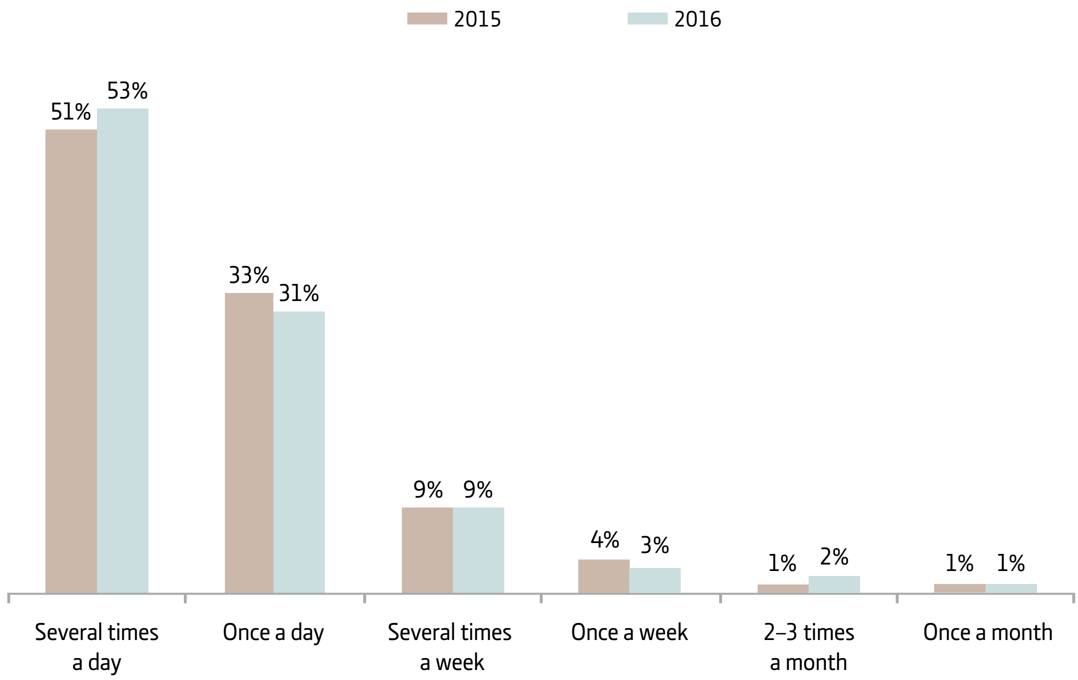
	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
Extremely interested	16%	25%	31%	29%	42%
Very interested	37%	41%	42%	51%	44%
Somewhat interested	41%	31%	25%	18%	13%
Not very interested	5%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Not at all interested	2%	0%	1%	–	–

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

Frequency of access

The level of interest in the news, correlated to frequency of news access, is also up on 2015. In line with the findings of the international report, older age groups still display higher levels of interest in the news in general. Irish news consumers check the news regularly with the majority accessing news media several times a day. Older groups check more regularly than younger people. And 69% of under-25s check the news at least once a day.

Fig. 3 Frequency of access 2015 & 2016



How often do you access the Internet for any purpose (i.e. for work/leisure etc.? This should include access from any device (desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile) and from any location (home, work, internet café or any other location).

Fig. 4 Frequency of access by age

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
More than 10 times a day	3%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Between 6 and 10 times a day	4%	7%	9%	9%	10%
2-5 times a day	27%	36%	43%	43%	47%
Once a day	35%	32%	29%	31%	29%
Several times a week	14%	13%	9%	6%	6%
Once a week	10%	3%	3%	4%	1%
2-3 times a month	4%	2%	1%	2%	1%
Once a month	1%	1%	1%	1%	–

How often do you access the Internet for any purpose (i.e. for work/leisure etc.)? This should include access from any device (desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile) and from any location (home, work, internet café or any other location).

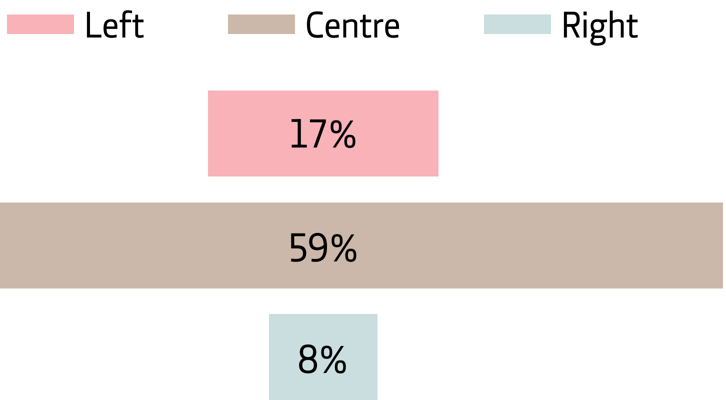
1.2 Political profile

Political Leaning

To contextualise the politics of the Irish digital news market, the political leaning of respondents was surveyed. While, on average, there is a larger lean to the left than the right, most indicate that they have no political leanings either way, with 59% indicating they are centrist.

The political leaning of Ireland's top news brands is a relatively evenly spread across the different titles although readers of The Irish Times online and thejournal.ie tend to be more left of centre than others.

Fig. 5 Political leaning



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?

Fig. 6 Political leaning by brands 2016

Frequency of Access 2016	RTÉ TV	TV3	RTÉ online	Independent/ Herald online	The Irish Times online	TheJournal.ie
Very/Fairly left-wing	14%	14%	15%	16%	21%	19%
Slightly left-of-centre	20%	18%	20%	20%	21%	23%
Centre	30%	33%	30%	30%	25%	27%
Slightly right-of-centre	16%	12%	15%	15%	15%	12%
Very/Fairly right-wing	10%	12%	10%	9%	9%	6%

1.3 Conceptual groups

The report focuses on conceptual groups based on a combination of engagement, digitalism and participation in news.

News Lovers

News Lovers represent highly engaged individuals who view the news several times a day. *Casual Users* consume news less frequently each day. *Daily Briefers* represent less engaged consumers who view news once a day or weekly.

Ireland has the seventh highest number of *News Lovers* internationally at 23% and is in the top third of surveyed countries. Ireland ranks high in *News Lovers*, but as in 2015, Brazil (29%) and Finland (24%) prove to have stronger news consuming cultures than Ireland. Turkey has a particularly high level of appreciation for news with the highest number of *News Lovers* at 37%.

Ireland has, with a two per cent increase on last year, the second highest level of *News Lovers* among English-speaking countries behind the USA. Significant political campaigns took place in both countries during the surveying period, with coverage of Ireland's national election and the Presidential primaries in the USA likely to have influenced the level of daily consumption.

Fig. 7 News Lovers – selected countries 2016

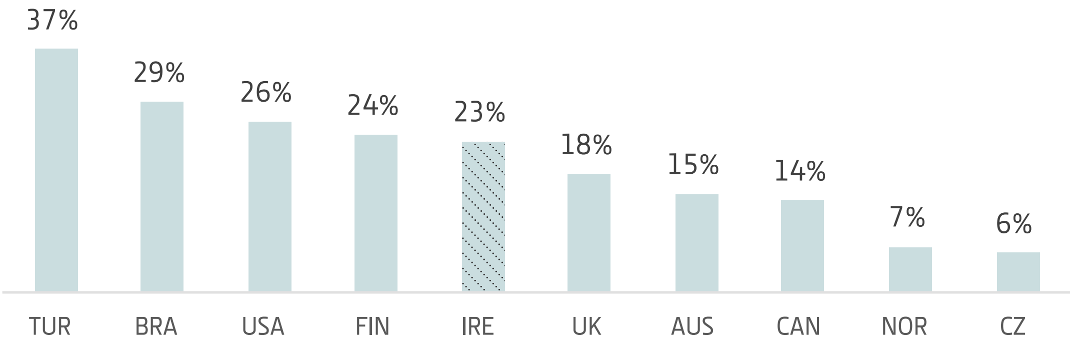


Fig. 8 News Lovers 2015 & 2016

	2015	2016
News Lovers	21%	23%
Daily Briefers	45%	45%
Casual Users	34%	32%

News Lovers (continued)

The increase is not evenly spread, however, but focused in two demographics – the 18-24 and the 55+ age group. The number of *News Lovers* in the 25-54 age groups fell.

Some 56% of News Lovers are male and 44% female. Dublin (25%), Leinster (23%) and Munster (22%) have the highest percentage. Connaught and Ulster have the highest percentage of casual users at 37%.

Fig. 9 News Lovers 2015 & 2016 (by age)

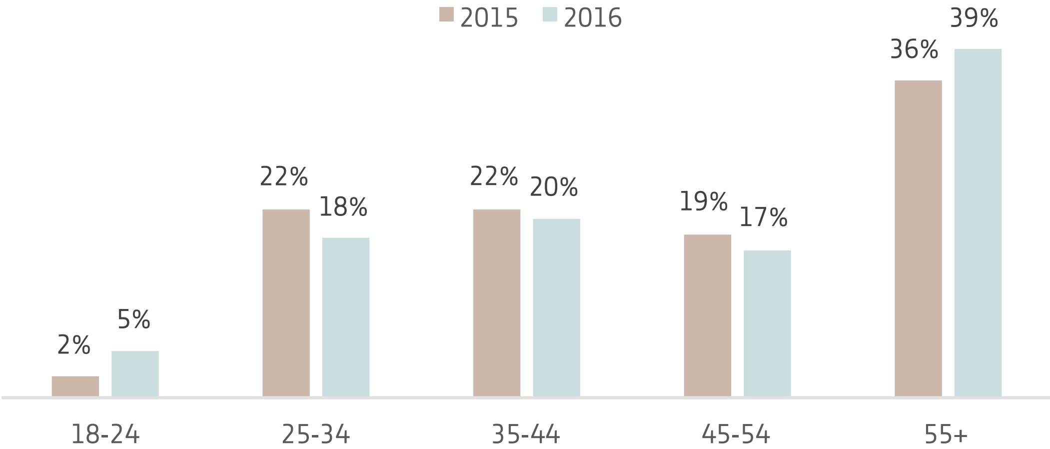


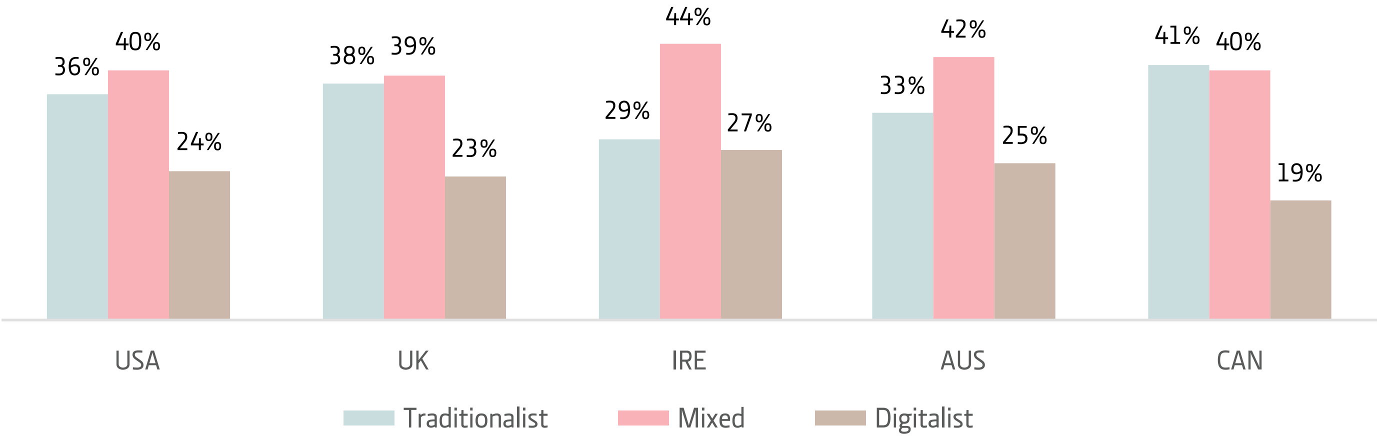
Fig. 10 News Lovers by location

	Dublin	Rest of Leinster	Munster	Connaught & part of Ulster
News Lovers	25%	23%	22%	21%
Daily Briefers	45%	45%	47%	42%
Casual Users	30%	32%	31%	37%

Digitalism

A conceptual group was created to assess how digital or traditional news consumers are. As in 2015, Ireland is the most digitally-engaged of the English-speaking nations and among the highest digital news consumers internationally. *Traditionalists* mainly use TV, radio and print while *Digitalists* are more engaged with online news via computers, smartphones and tablets.

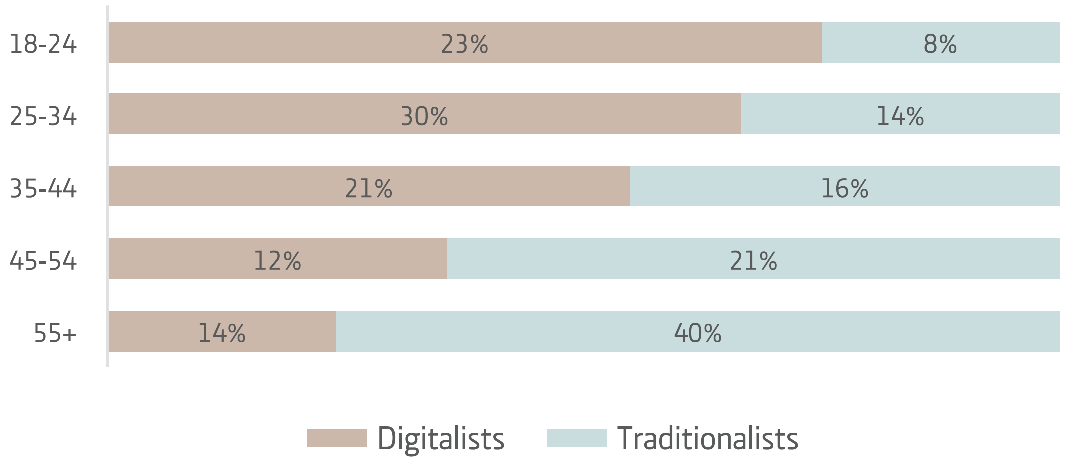
Fig. 11 Digital and traditional use 2016 – English-speaking countries



Differences in the media systems of English-speaking countries are highlighted by comparing their digital and traditional use. The UK and Canada have the most traditional news users at 38% and 41% respectively while Ireland has the fewest at 29%. The difference in the size of the digital and traditional market has important implications for where news producers, in particular global news producers, invest their resources. In English-speaking countries, conditions were advantageous to legacy producers who offer both traditional and digital formats. This is a challenging environment for new digital born news producers who seek to extend reach both within and beyond national boundaries.

The challenge of reaching and servicing different generations of Irish news consumers on different platforms is illustrated in the age breakdown. Younger age groups are more digitally engaged than older.

Fig. 12 Age groups of Digitalists and Traditionalists in Ireland 2016



Positive Participation

News consumers were asked about their main sources of news and then segmented by the main source of news and number of devices used to access news. In order to understand the various types of participation and engagement, respondents were divided into *Positive Participators*, *Receptive Participators* and *Passive Consumers*. *Positive Participators* are those who frequently respond to news, by writing, sharing or commenting. *Receptive Participators* are not so active; they might share or 'like' news. *Passive Consumers* do not engage digitally with news but do talk about it with friends.

Fig. 13 Participation in news coverage

During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage?	Proactive Participator	Reactive Participator	Passive Consumer
Write a blog on a news or political issue			
Take part in a campaign or group based around a news subject			
Comment on a news story in a Social Network	32%		
Comment on a news story on a news website			
Post or send a news-related picture or video to a Social Network site			
Post or send a picture or video to a news website/news organisation			
Share a news story via Social Network			
Share a news story via email			
Rate, like or favourite a news story		22%	
Vote in an online poll via a news site or social network			
Talk online with friends and colleagues about a news story			
Talk with friends and colleagues about a news story (face-to-face)			46%
None of these			

Positive Participation (continued)

While the Irish are among the most participative of the English-speaking nations, 46% are passive. Turkish, Greek and Spanish digital news users are more active in their national news discourses.

Fig. 14 Positive Participation International

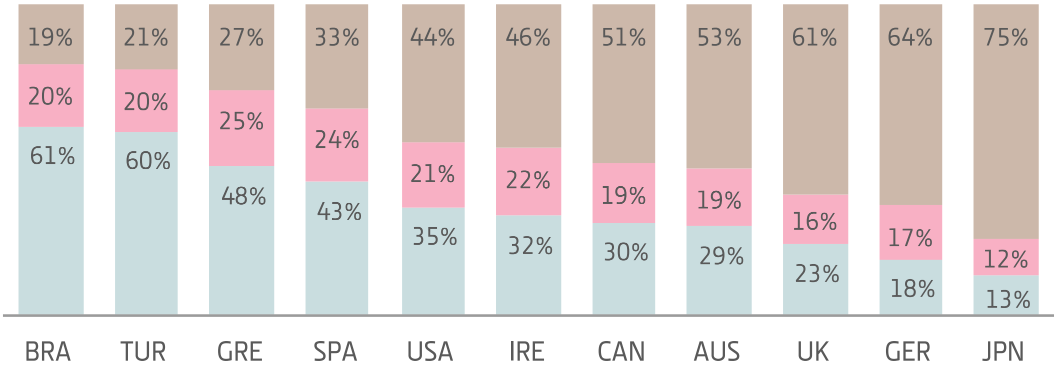


Fig. 15 Profile of positive participators

Male 48%
Female 52%

U35 39%
35+ 61%

News Lovers 27%
Daily Briefer 46%

Digitalist 31%

Education:
Masters/Doctoral 37%
Bachelors 25%

Politically left 23%
Politically centre 56%
Politically right 9%

1.4 Conclusion

Irish news consumers have above average interest and engagement with news and are among the most digitally engaged of surveyed countries. And they are not just passive consumers. Most participate in some way with their sources of news. In line with international findings, there are higher levels of digitalism among younger age groups and somewhat higher levels of traditional allegiances in older age groups. However, younger generations are less interested in news and participate less. More work could be done to engage older consumers in digital news media and to build interest among younger people. Older people are more interested and check news most regularly but they use traditional sources more than digital. Younger consumers are less interested and check news less often despite being more digitally inclined. Through digital media, the audience has greater influence on content production than ever before but not everyone is a Positive Participator.

Section Two
Platforms and Devices

2.1 Platforms

This section describes the use of both traditional and digital news platforms and the demographics of consumers who use various platforms. Findings in relation to devices and platforms include a section on social media and a section on smartphones.

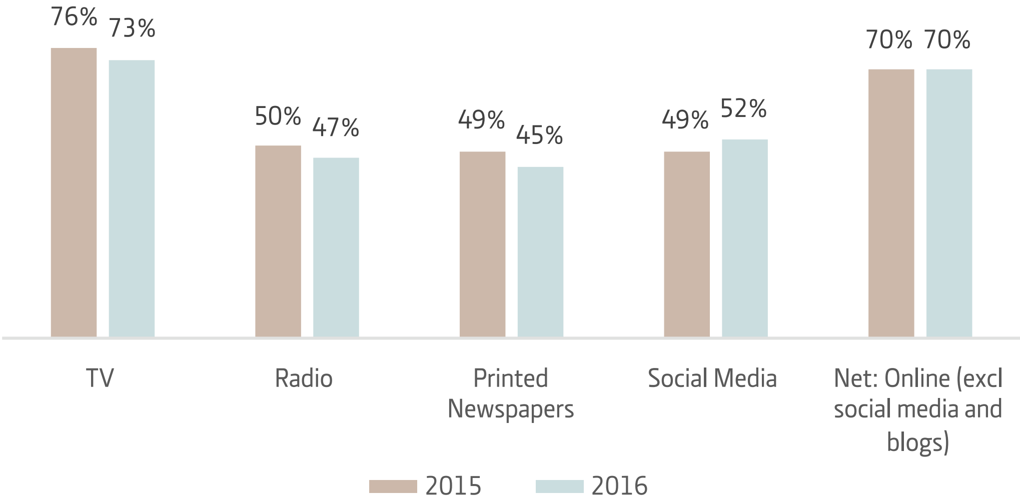
Platforms for news

TV was again the most used platform but social media is on the rise while online news has stabilised. As expected, younger age groups use more digital than traditional platforms.

In order to reach different demographic groups, news producers tailor news content for multiple platforms. The advantage that legacy producers have is clear with audiences and reputations built over generations. As legacy news brands extend their reach online, digital-born brands are entering traditional print and TV markets. The extended reach achieved by operating in both traditional and digital markets reveals a competitive environment for legacy and digital brands alike.

Digital platforms extended their reach, while traditional platforms contracted a little in 2016. The traditional platforms of TV, radio and print fell slightly while social media as a platform increased reach, a trend mirrored in international findings. There was no fluctuation in online use in general.

Fig. 16 Platforms for news

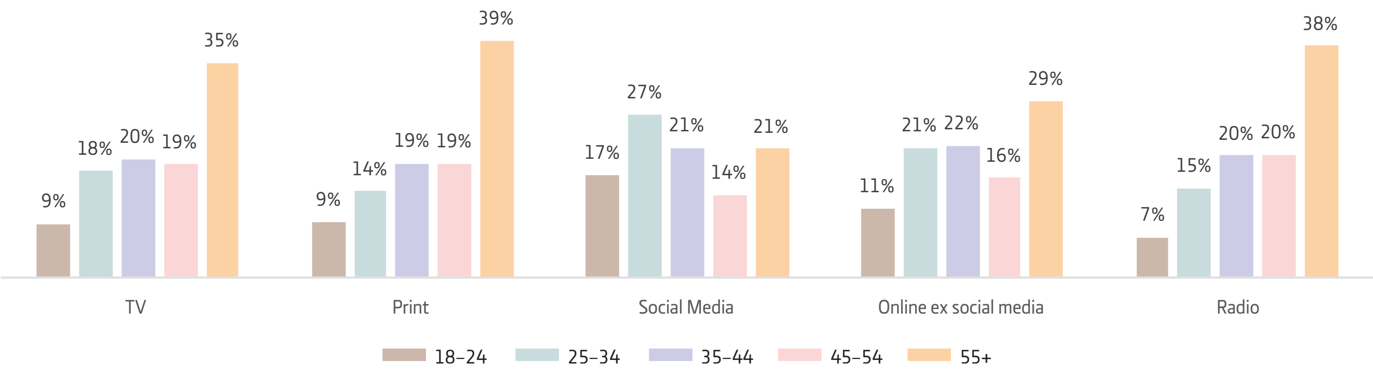


Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Note: Online (excl social media and blogs) incorporates those who use other online sources such as news websites, but not social media or blogs. TV incudes bulletins and 24 hour news channels.

Platforms for news (continued)

In a changing media market, there are questions over the resilience of traditional sources like TV and radio. Revenue from both traditional and digital sources is under pressure; international brands are driving prices down on TV and the revenue from digital news is much lower than from traditional sources. For legacy news producers there are strategic considerations as to where resources are focused. There is a tipping-point in legacy news organisations when resources are refocused more on online operations over traditional. Not every producer has reached this point but all are progressing towards it at different rates. TV and radio are still powerful platforms although social media is increasing in popularity. Some 85% of people surveyed get news from a broadcaster over a week. Legacy producers are experimenting in reshaping content to fit into an evolving news cycle.

Fig. 17 News platforms by age group 2016



Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Note: Online (excl social media and blogs) incorporates those who use other online sources such as news websites, but not social media or blogs. TV incudes bulletins and 24hour news channels and Print includes newspapers and magazines.

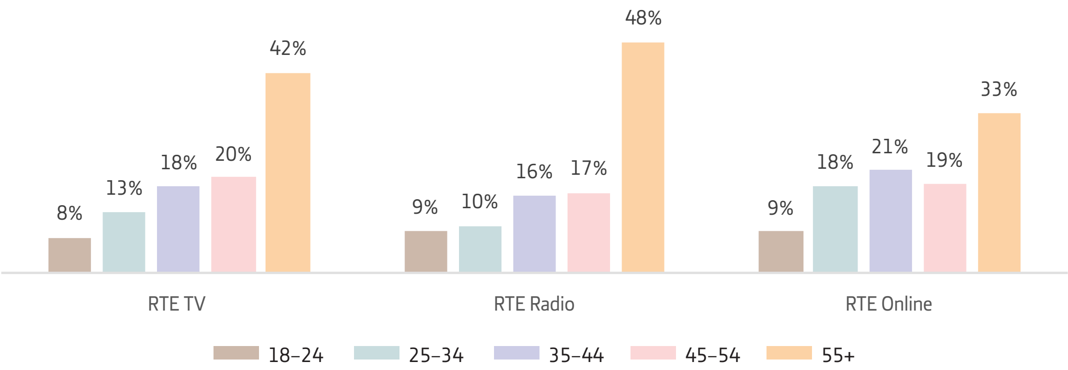
Platforms by age group

The current news habits of different generations may provide insight into when, or if, a tipping-point in traditional and digital news consumption might occur. There is higher news consumption on traditional news platforms by older age groups. However, social platforms are used more by 18-35s and, if this age group continues with its current patterns of use, it indicates that the role of social platforms for news consumption and production will grow.

RTÉ platforms by age group

The public service broadcaster has a particular remit to service the national news audience across all platforms and is three years into a five-year strategy that aims to improve and develop its digital content. RTÉ's reach in digital platforms increased in two main demographics; the youngest and oldest. Yet the 35-44 age group retains an allegiance to traditional sources. In contrast to an overarching trend found in international findings whereby younger people are moving away from TV (DNI 15), RTÉ TV shows a slight growth in the 18-24 age group.

Fig. 18 RTÉ platforms by age group 2016



Which of the following brands have you used in the past week for news?

Social media for news

News producers increased their presence on social media by placing more of their content on social platforms. But who is accessing social media for news? When social media use is broken down by gender, it reveals that Irish women are more inclined to get news via social media than men.

Fig. 19 Social media for news by age

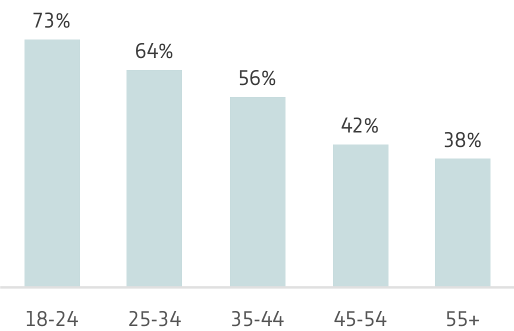
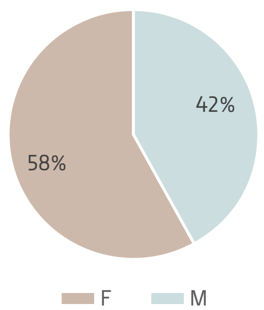


Fig. 20 Social media for news by gender



Have you used social media in the last week as a source of news?

Social media for news (continued)

Age and income are important factors driving social media use for news. As age increases, social media use for news decreases. Similarly, as income increases, social media use for news decreases. Social media is a useful channel for lower income earners as it does not incur print-subscription costs although it still incurs internet access and device costs.

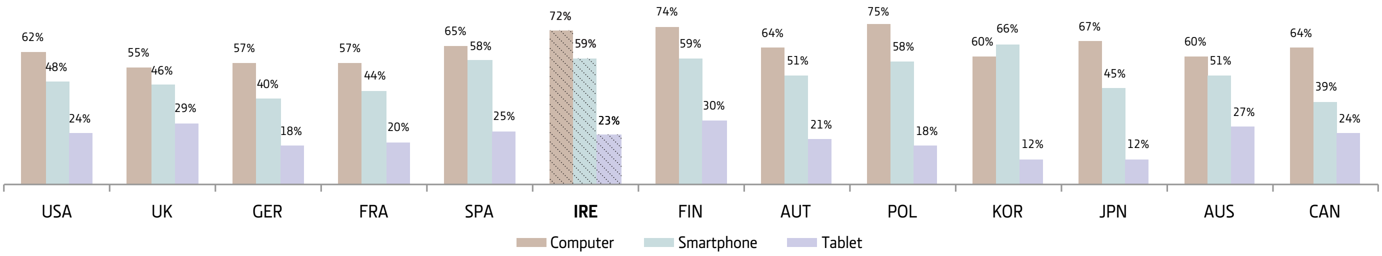
2.2 Devices for accessing news

In 2016, Ireland again has comparatively high levels of news access on digital devices. Computer use is still most popular for accessing news but with a slight decrease from 2015. There is a seven per cent increase in the use of smartphones, particularly in two demographics: the youngest and oldest. One device is not replacing another, rather multi-device use is the norm. Digital devices shape how news is consumed. As they evolve, journalism evolves with them. International findings show device use for news is complex. It is not the case that where laptop use is high, smartphone use is low. In Ireland and Finland, where the number of Positive Participators are high, use of laptops, (74% Finland and 72% Ireland) and smartphones (59% Finland and 59% Ireland) is also high.

Using digital devices for accessing news

Ireland has the sixth highest smartphone usage with 59% using one on a weekly basis, surpassed surpassed only in Europe by Sweden (69%), Norway (64%), Switzerland (61%), and Denmark (60%). The computer is still a popular device for Irish users at 72%, the third highest internationally. But the combination of computer and smartphone is the most prevalent with 40% of Irish digital news users moving between static and mobile devices to access news.

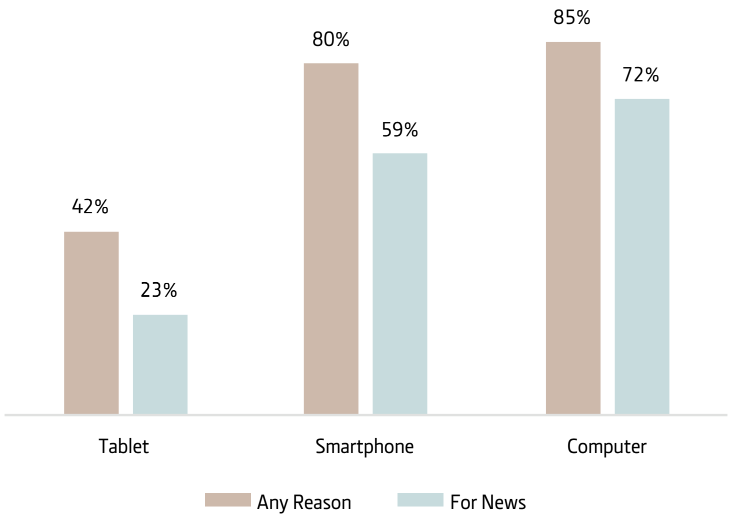
Fig. 21 Digital device use international 2016



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

Accessing news via a computer is the dominant method across almost all nations in 2015 and 2016. In Ireland, use of smartphones for news increased by seven per cent, while TV and computers fell.

Fig. 22 Digital device use, for any reason and for news 2016

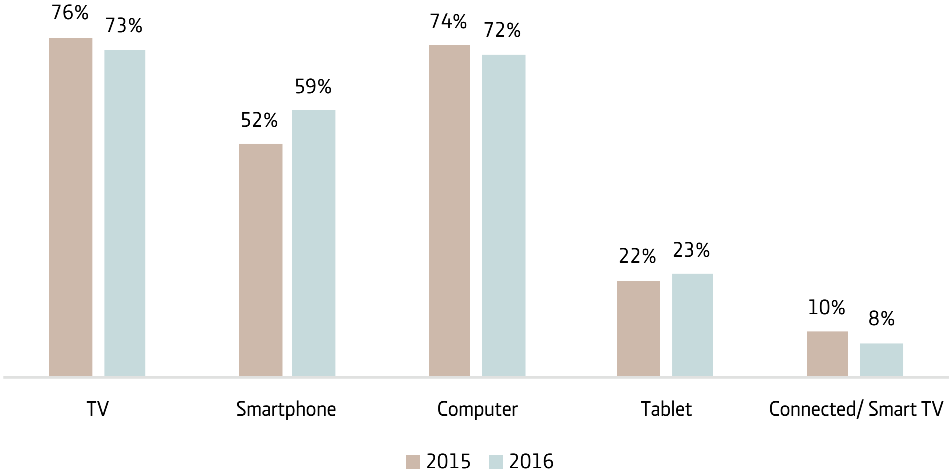


Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week?
Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use (for any purpose)?

Using digital devices for accessing news

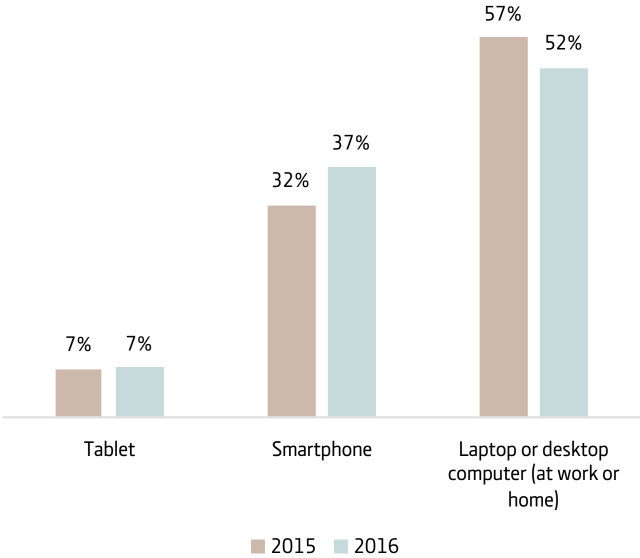
International findings indicate that tablet use for news has stagnated (DNR global 2016, www.digitalnewsreport.org). About half as many people who own a tablet use it for news. By comparison, almost three-quarters of smartphone owners use it for news and 72% of computer users use it for news.

Fig. 23 Devices for acessing news 2015 and 2016



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

Fig. 24 Devices for acessing news 2015 and 2016

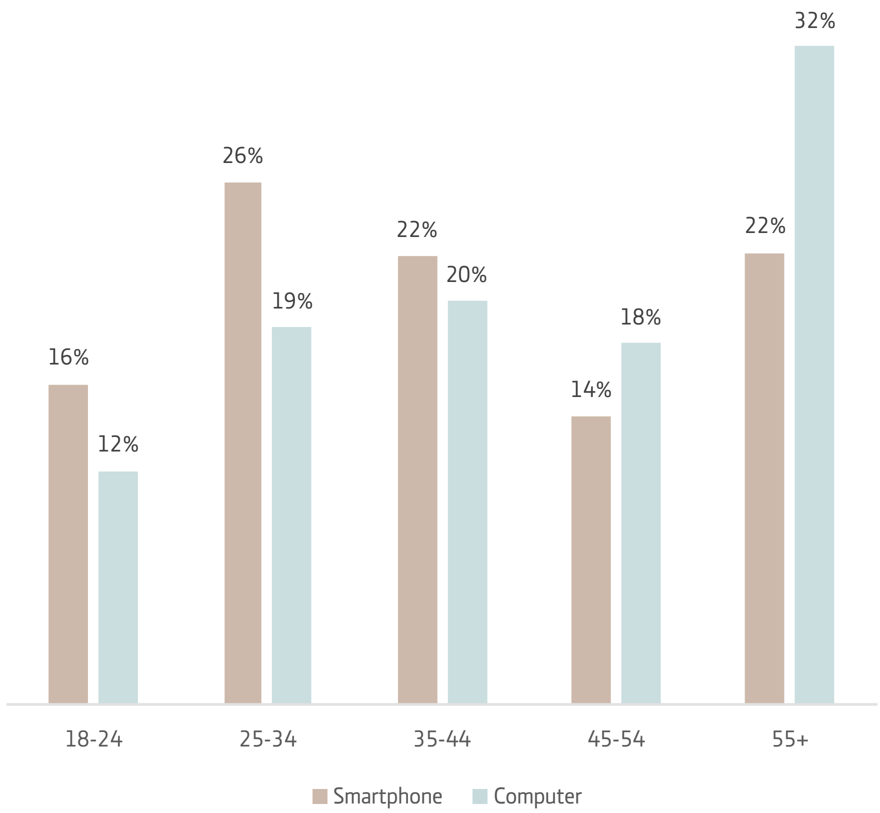


What was your MAIN way of accessing online news in the past week?

Using digital devices for accessing news

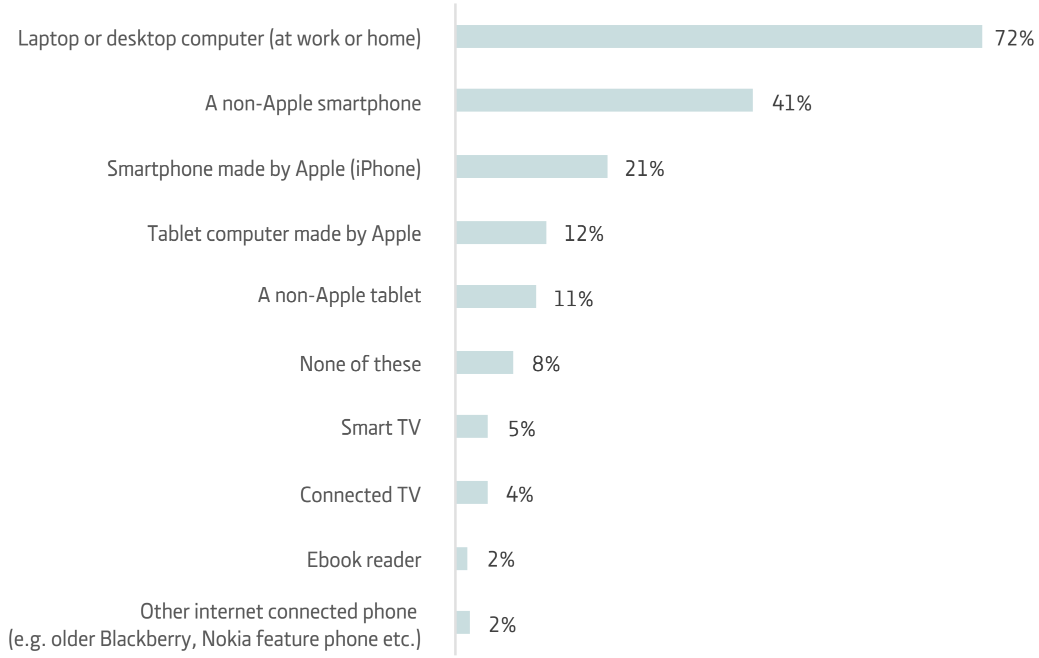
Headline figures can obscure important variances in the distribution of change across demographics. Smartphone use continues to be higher in younger age groups and computers among older age groups. Computer use for news is the primary platform for 45+ age groups while the smartphone is most common for under-35s.

Fig. 25 Devices used to access news online



Which of the following did you use to consume news last week?

Fig. 26 Devices used to access news online

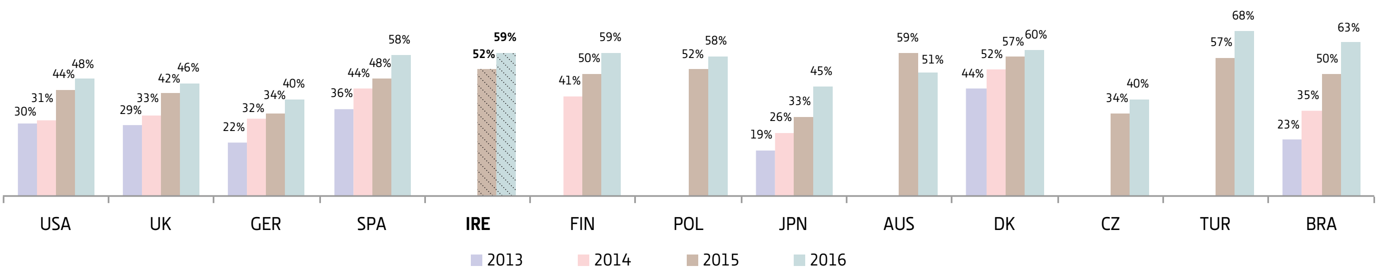


Which, if any, of the following devices did you use to access news in the last week?

Smartphone use for news

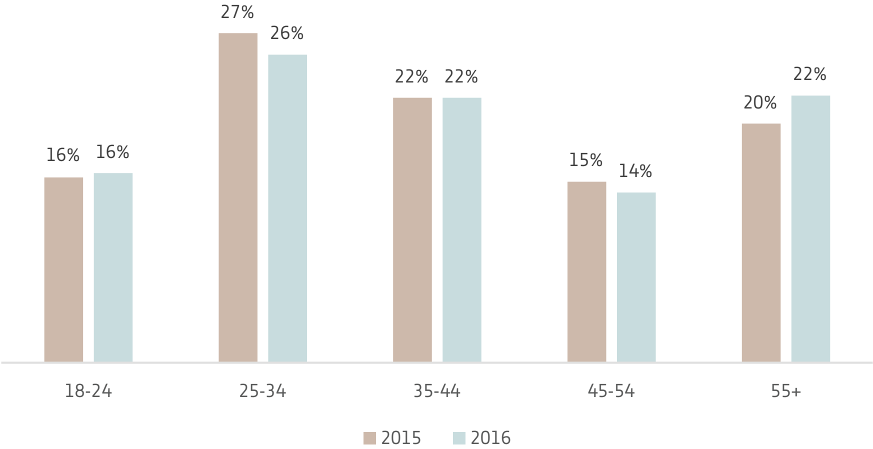
The 2015–2016 period saw a sharp rise in smartphone use in a number of countries. The largest increases are found in Spain, Austria, Japan, Portugal, Turkey and Brazil. Ireland joined the survey in 2015 and had the third highest level of smartphone general-use and for news. With five more countries now added to the survey, Ireland remains among the highest coming in fourth in 2016.

Fig. 27 Smartphone use for news – international



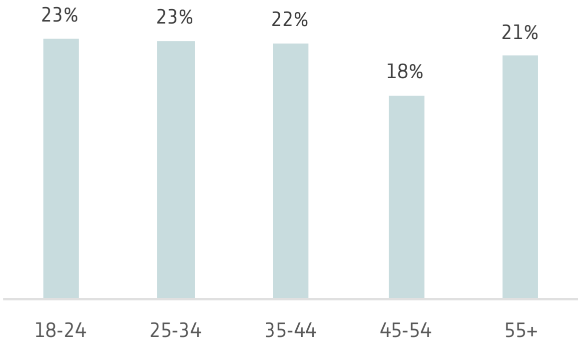
Selected countries based on high and low use.

Fig. 28 Smartphone use for news by age group



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

Fig. 29 Percent of age goups using apps via smartphone 2016



Thinking of the way you looked at news online (via any device) in the last week, which of the following ways of consuming news did you use?

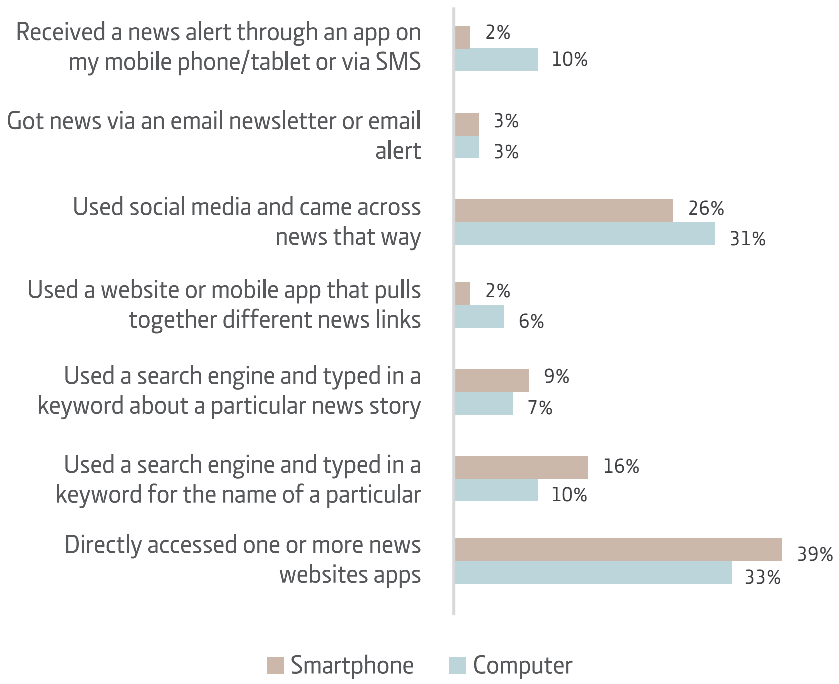
Smartphone use for news

Smartphones have varying data storage capacities which limit space for apps. Battery life and access to high speed internet also impact on smartphone users' choice of media consumption on their smartphones. News apps compete with a range of apps from other media industries that might appear on homescreens. The age distribution of those who use apps on their smartphone for news is fairly even.

Storage limits on smartphones impact the range of sources accessed. However, similar numbers of sources were accessed on both smartphones and other devices, indicating that investment in mobile friendly websites and apps paid off. The high level of 7+ sources by tablet users stands out. Tablets are designed specifically for app use and online browsing. Computers are largely designed for web browsing. Smartphones integrate both browsing and apps but face limitations.

How people find news on smartphones and computers was compared. While direct access to brands was comparable, aggregators and social media are most common on smartphones whereas search is most common on computers. This is an important consideration for news producers in terms of where they focus their search engine optimization (SEO) and native social distribution efforts.

Fig. 30 Gateways to news on smartphones and computers



What was the main way you came across news stories last week?

2.3 Conclusion

The role different platforms play in news distribution is evolving. As news organisations compete for audiences' attention on social media, there is increasing concern about who controls social distribution platforms. Brands that are tied to a single platform, such as radio or print, are developing into multimedia producers. This influences the range of choices audiences have across platforms as there is only so much time and space news consumption is allocated in consumers' lives. Platforms also influence the type of news produced; audio, video and text are distributed on different but overlapping channels and the formula for widest reach is across both traditional and digital platforms. Social media, which hosts all types of content within the platform, has had the sharpest rise in Ireland but it is important to stress the continued strength of radio and TV channels.

Ireland has comparatively high use of all digital devices. This is reflected in the high consumption of digital news. The five per cent increase in use of the smartphone for news in 2016 signals its growing importance. However, smartphones place limits on daily news consumption in terms of storage space, quality of internet connection and battery life limitations. On a smartphone, competition for attention comes from a wide range of sources. Computer use for news is still the most popular but there is further evidence of multiple device use between computer and smartphone.

Section Three

News Preferences and Trust

Irish news consumers' preferences, attitudes and trust is examined here. The consumer's interest in different types of news is outlined in addition to the platforms and formats that lead the daily agenda. Levels of trust in news are also described.

3.1 News categories

Interest in news categories

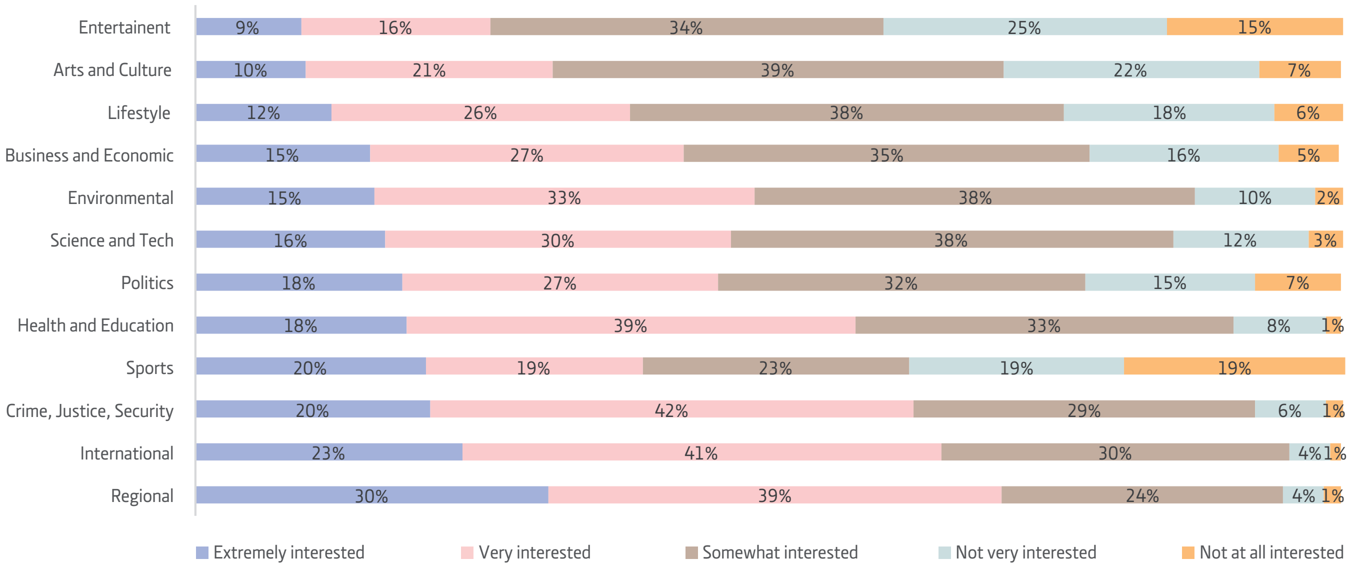
National news and regional news are the most popular news categories, ahead of international news which was top in 2015, perhaps unsurprising in an election and referendum year. A more serious attitude to news is found in 2016 with entertainment and lifestyle news falling in popularity. Consumer, gender and age differences across key news categories persist. Radio and online are the first points of contact for news in the morning, closely followed by social media. Trust increased, slightly, but is still low.

Fig. 31 News categories

	Regional	International news	Crime, justice, Security	Health & education	Politics	Environment	Science & Tech	Business & Economic	Sports	Lifestyle	Arts & culture	Entertainment
Interested	70%	64%	62%	57%	45%	48%	46%	42%	39%	37%	31%	25%
Not interested	5%	4%	8%	9%	22%	13%	15%	22%	38%	24%	29%	40%

How interested are you in the following types of news?

Fig. 32 Interest in news categories 2016



How interested are you in the following types of news?

Top news categories by age & gender

Certain demographic variations in news categories related to age and gender persist. Older people, in general, display higher levels of interest in most hard news categories and have less interest in softer news.

Fig. 33 Top news categories in under 35s and over 35s

u35	Category	35+
59%	Regional	**75%**
57%	Sports	**69%**
55%	International	**67%**
54%	Health and Education	**58%**
52%	Crime, Justice, Security	52%
52%	Science and Tech	51%
44%	Lifestyle	**47%**
43%	Environmental	43%
36%	Arts and Culture	34%
35%	Entertainment	28%
33%	Business and Economic	21%
32%	Politics	20%

How interested are you in the following types of news?

Fig. 34 Top news categories by gender

MALE	Category	FEMALE
68%	Regional	**71%**
67%	International	61%
63%	Crime, Justice, Security	61%
57%	Sports	20%
54%	Science and Tech	38%
53%	Politics	37%
52%	Business and Economic	33%
47%	Health and Education	**66%**
46%	Environmental	**50%**
26%	Arts and Culture	**36%**
25%	Lifestyle	**50%**
18%	Entertainment	**33%**

How interested are you in the following types of news?

Hard news categories are in general more popular than softer news categories. While social or cultural differences beyond news media control are no doubt a factor, it is arguably the responsibility of journalists to communicate effectively with different audiences about how and why news is relevant to them and to break through cultural and social conditions that predispose gender and age groups to types of news.

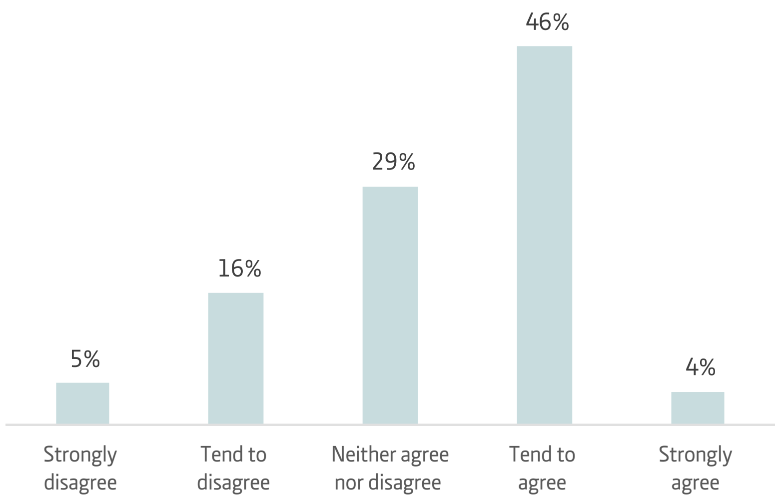
3.2 Trust in News

Trust in news and news makers

Respondents were asked to identify the extent to which they agreed with the statement 'I think you can trust most news most of the time'. Half agree, 29% are unsure, and 21% disagree.

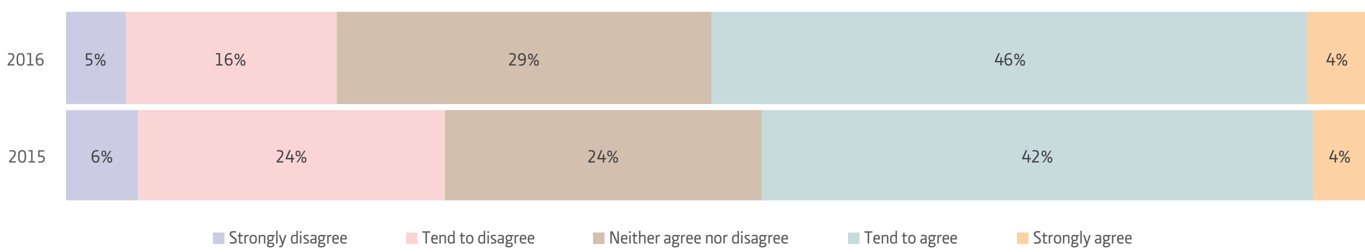
Trust in the news in Ireland increased by four per cent since 2015 with more people tending to agree most news can be trusted most of the time. However, trust is still comparatively low in Ireland compared to other countries.

Fig. 35 Trust in news 2016



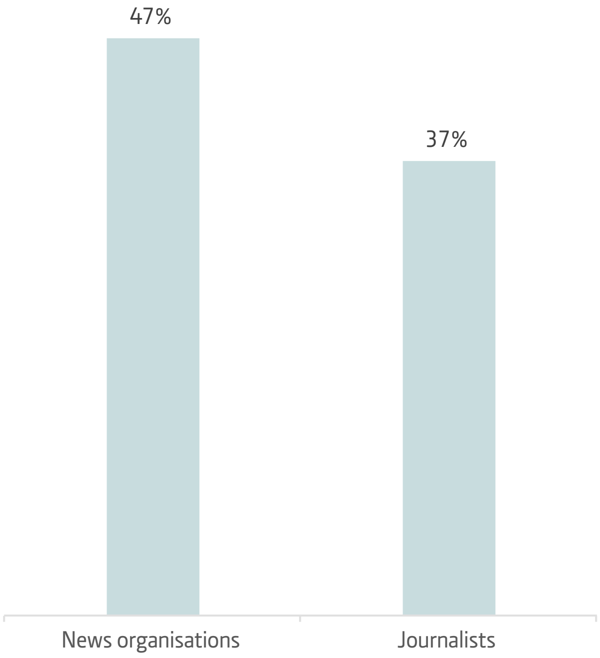
Do you agree with the statement 'I think you can trust most news most of the time'?

Fig. 36 Trust in news



Do you agree or disagree with the statement 'I think you can trust most news most of the time'?

Fig. 37 Trust in news organisations versus journalists

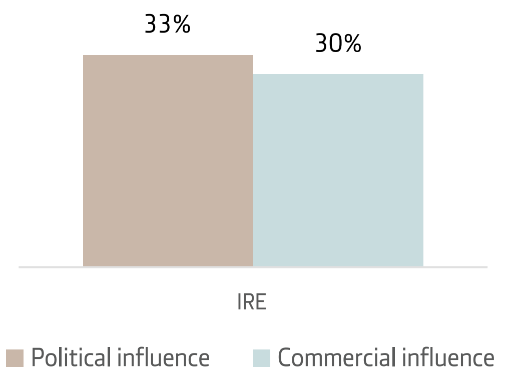


Do you agree or disagree with the statements: 'I think you can trust most news organisations most of the time' and 'I think you can trust most journalists most of the time'?

Factors affecting trust in news and news makers

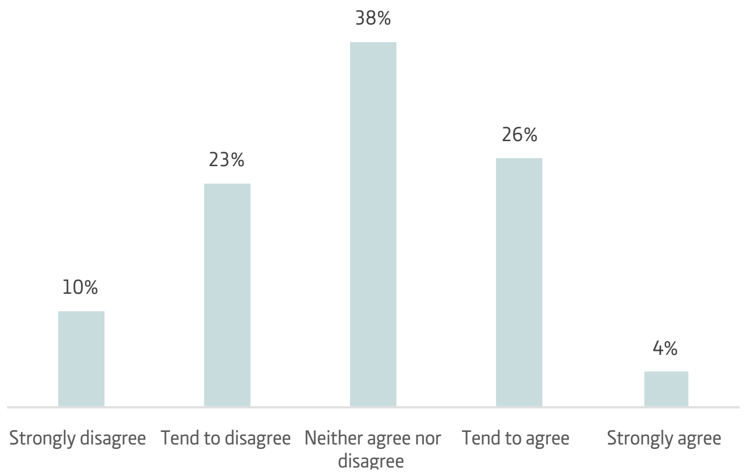
Fewer than half of Irish news consumers found news organisations or journalists trustworthy. Many trust neither. However, news organisations are often more trusted than individual journalists. Many factors influence trust in news media and journalists. In 2016 the Irish media were affected by a number of issues that could impact trust. These include injunctions against press organisations, a successful High Court challenge to how news titles operated comments sections and revelations of journalists' phone records being monitored by the police ombudsman. In general trust is higher among older people while younger groups are less trusting. This is broadly consistent with both international findings and with last year's findings.

Fig. 38 Believe news media are free from influence in Ireland 2016



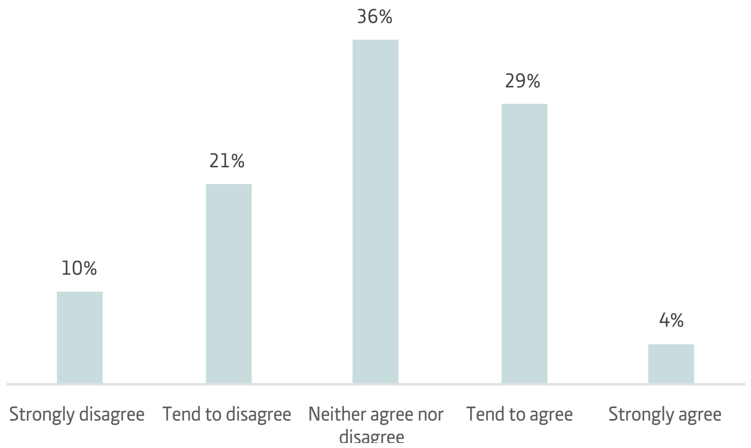
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: 'The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time' and 'the news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time'?

Fig. 39 Mostly free from commercial influence



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time'?

Fig. 40 Mostly free from political influence



Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time'?

Fig. 41 Trust in news by age group

	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
18-24	22%	17%	13%	8%	19%
25-34	30%	22%	26%	19%	19%
35-44	21%	19%	24%	19%	10%
45-54	9%	14%	14%	21%	14%
55+	18%	29%	22%	33%	38%

3.3 Conclusion

In an election year and following two referendums it is not surprising to see high levels of interest in national news in Ireland. Hard news is still favoured by both younger and older age groups. There are few differences among men and women. However, men have less interest in health and women less interest in business and economic news.

Trust in news is higher among older age groups and lower among younger groups. But only about 50% trust the news in general, fewer trust news organizations and fewer again trust journalists. The users of traditional brands are more trusting of news than the users of digital news, and in turn more trust traditional journalists than digital. However, legacy news organization have had long periods of time to build relationships and trust with news audiences. There is a lack of faith in the independence of the news media with some consumers believing commercial and political influences exist. This points to a need to build trust among news consumers, particularly the young and digital natives.

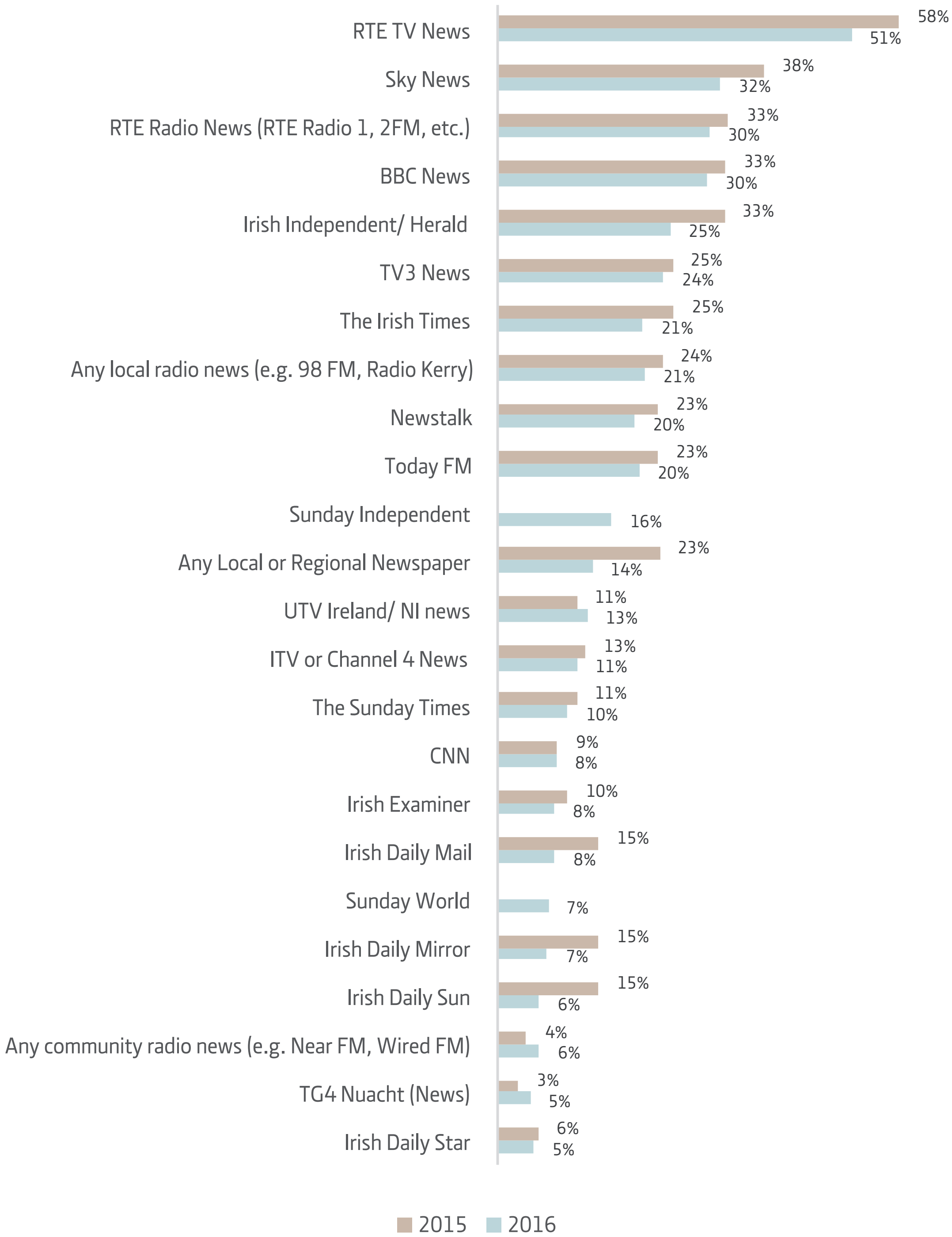
Section Four
News Brands

Irish readers' engagement with traditional and digital news brands is examined here. Consumers' use of different brands over a week and their favoured news brands are revealed. The age profile of those engaging with Ireland's top news brands is outlined as well as their combined reach across platforms. With news increasingly consumed on social media, brand awareness on social media is also studied.

Traditional brands

As the move to digital gathers pace, engagement with almost all legacy brands' traditional operations is down while engagement with all digital operations has increased. The audience age profile of the top Irish brands is quite similar. However, native and global digital-born brands captured a larger demographic of young Irish users.

Fig. 42 Traditional news brands 2015 and 2016



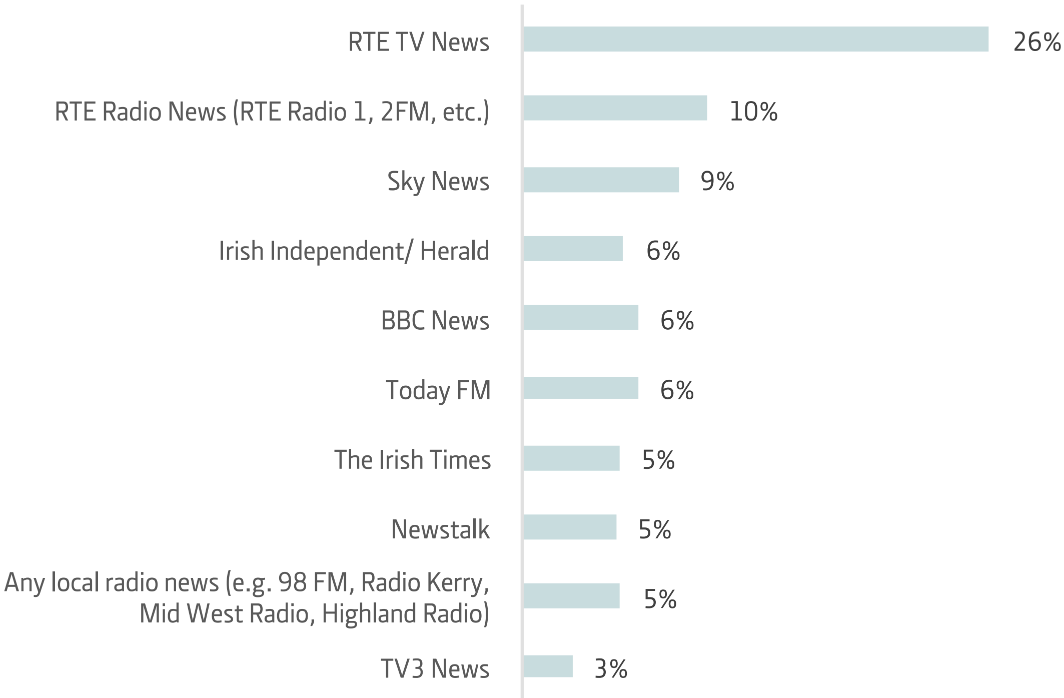
Which of the following brands have you used in the last week? Note: Independent/Herald combined with Sunday Independent in 2015; Newstalk and TodayFM combined in 2015; Irish Daily Mail, Irish Mirror and Irish Sun combined in 2015.

Traditional brands

The first part of 2016 saw increased use of digital devices and platforms and a drop in traditional platforms. Only the most recent broadcaster to enter the market, UTV Ireland, saw a rise of two per cent. However, engagement with digital news brands increased among all demographics. For broadcasters such as RTÉ, Sky News and BBC, audiences continue to be more engaged with the traditional side of their operations. Broadcasting is scheduled to fit into audience routines and habits and audiovisual news tends to be more trusted and valued for accuracy and reliability. However, the shift towards brands' digital operations continues in Ireland and internationally.

While Irish news consumers access a variety of brands, RTÉ had the highest use over a week as a main source of news; followed by Communicorp stations, Independent News and Media and The Irish Times. Together they are the dominant sources of Irish news for Irish consumers. High interest in international news is reflected in the high viewership of BBC and Sky News.

Fig. 43 Main source of news – traditional brands

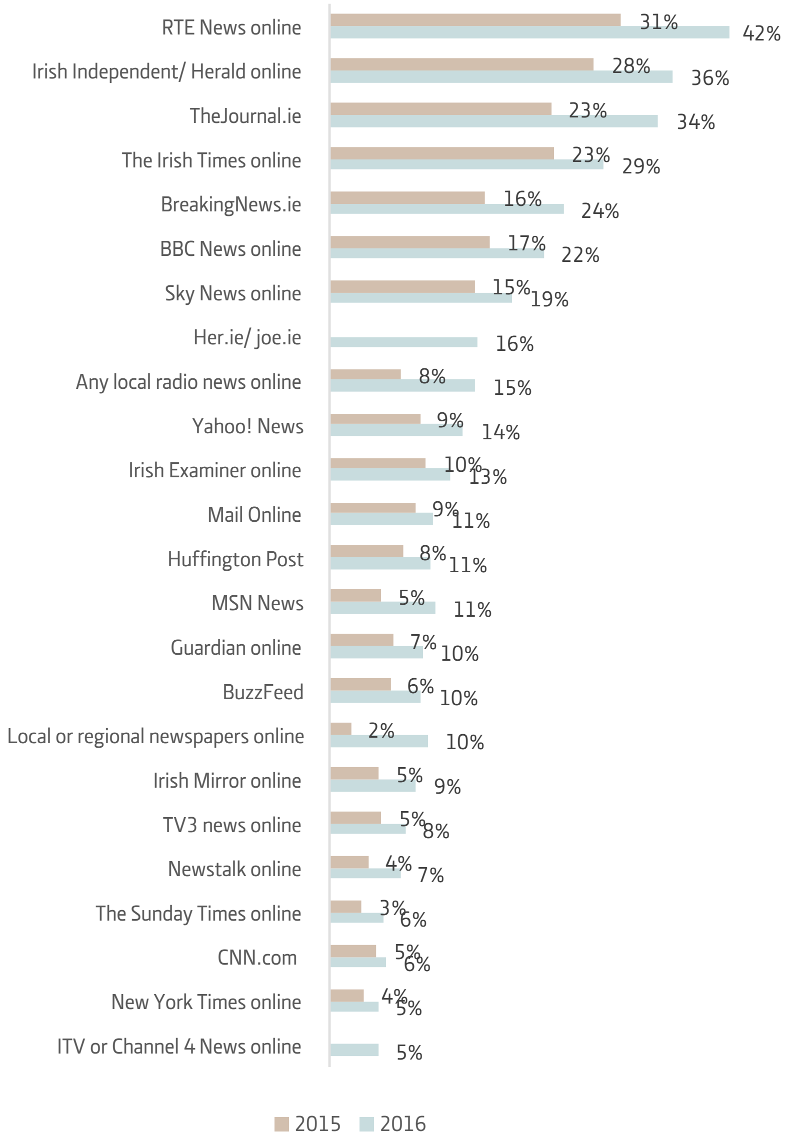


Which is your MAIN source of news when accessing TV, radio, or print (traditional or offline)?

Digital brands

With the exception of RTÉ, most brands reach larger audiences online than through traditional operations. For example, at Irish Independent/ Herald titles, 25% use traditional print newspapers while 36% engage online. At The Irish Times, 21% use print over a week compared to 29% digital. Since 2015 the audience for digital has increased with an 11% increase in engagement for thejournal.ie and RTE.ie. Independent/Herald online and breakingnews.ie each rose eight per cent. Local print and radio news increased online with local legacy news now competing against a growing number of digital-born local and regional news providers. The local news market in Ireland shrank considerably between 2007-2014 with title closures. Some of those that remained were restructured or found new owners. It may be that local news is finding a new life online.

Fig. 44 Digital news brands 2015 and 2016



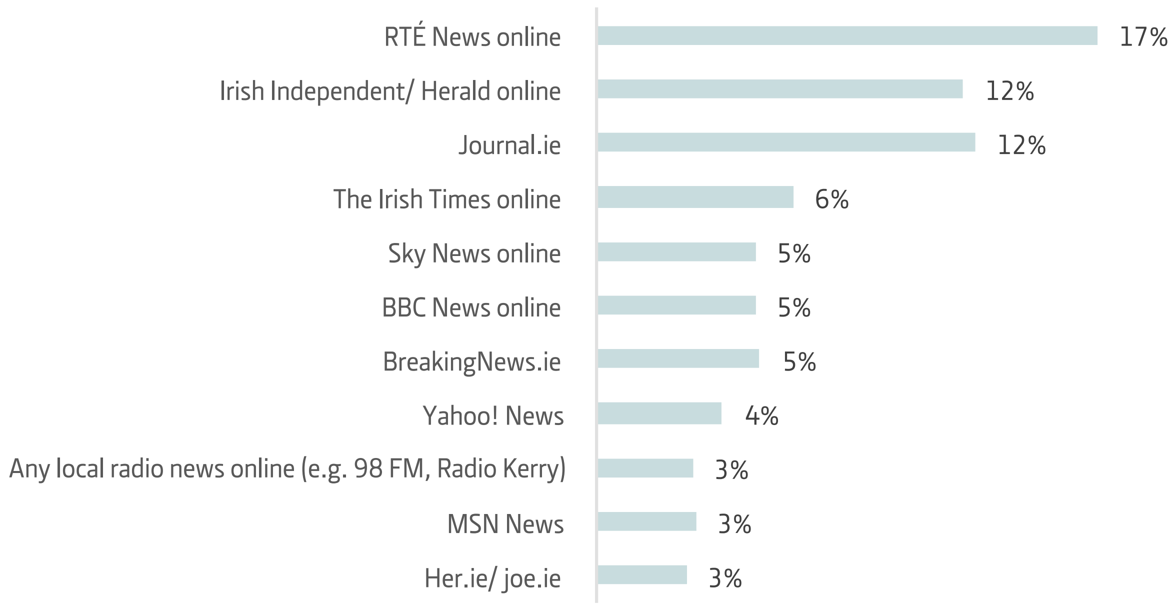
Which, if any, of the following have you used to access news in the last week?

Paying for digital news

High interest in national news is reflected in the domination of Irish titles in consumers' main brand picks. Four brands dominate the landscape as main sources of Irish digital news, each with a different parent company/ organisation: RTÉ, Irish Independent, The Irish Times and theJournal.ie.

Irish news consumers access multiple brands across a week and the diversity of voices about Irish life accessed by the audience each week is notable. Taking the top four news brands and examining how many users access different combinations of brands show that 13.8% of Irish consumers use all three RTÉ platforms: RTÉ Radio, RTÉ TV and RTÉ Online. Just 6.4% use all four of the most popular brands. Those who use only sources from within a single corporate structure such as INM amount to less than five per cent. Corporate structural reach was examined from another perspective, across both traditional and digital platforms. RTÉ has a 64% reach across TV, radio and online. INM has a 44% reach across both traditional and digital. The Irish Times in print and online reaches 37%.

Fig. 45 Main source of news – digital brands



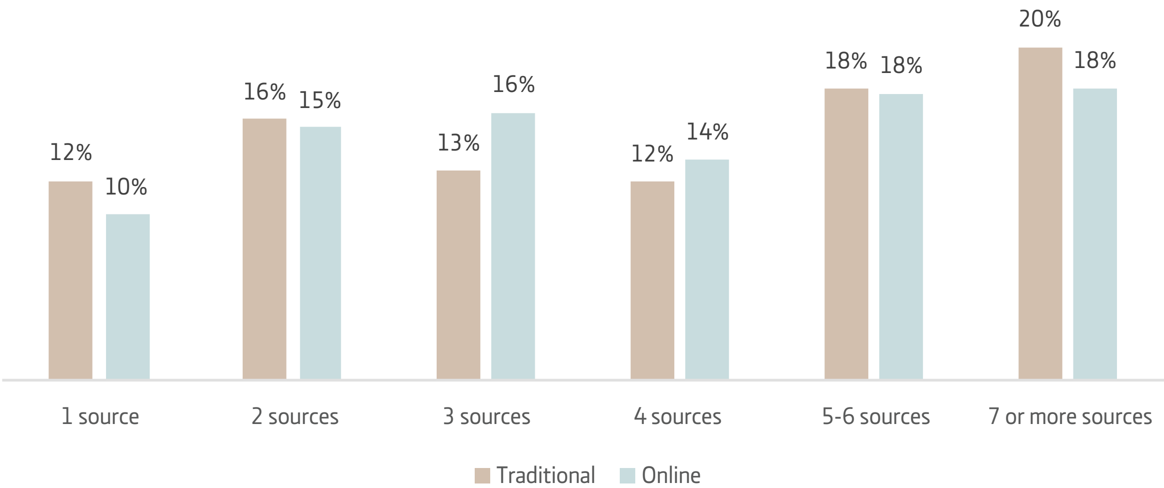
Which is your MAIN source of news when accessing online platforms (web, mobile, tablet, e-reader)?

Fig. 46 Brands' total reach across both traditional and online sources

Newstalk/ TodayFM News	22%
Irish Independent/ Herald/ Sunday Independent	44%
Sunday World	9%
RTÉ TV News	64%
TG4 Nuacht (News)	6%
The Irish Times	37%
TV3 News	27%
Irish Daily Sun	8%
The Sunday Times	14%
Irish Examiner	17%
Breakingnews.ie	24%
Irish Daily Mail	17%
UTV Ireland News	15%
TheJournal.ie	12%
The Sunday Business Post	6%

In 2015 there was some evidence that, despite the increased variety of choice offered by online news, consumers were largely gravitating to a few sources. A 2016 comparison of news sources shows that it is evenly balanced between traditional and digital.

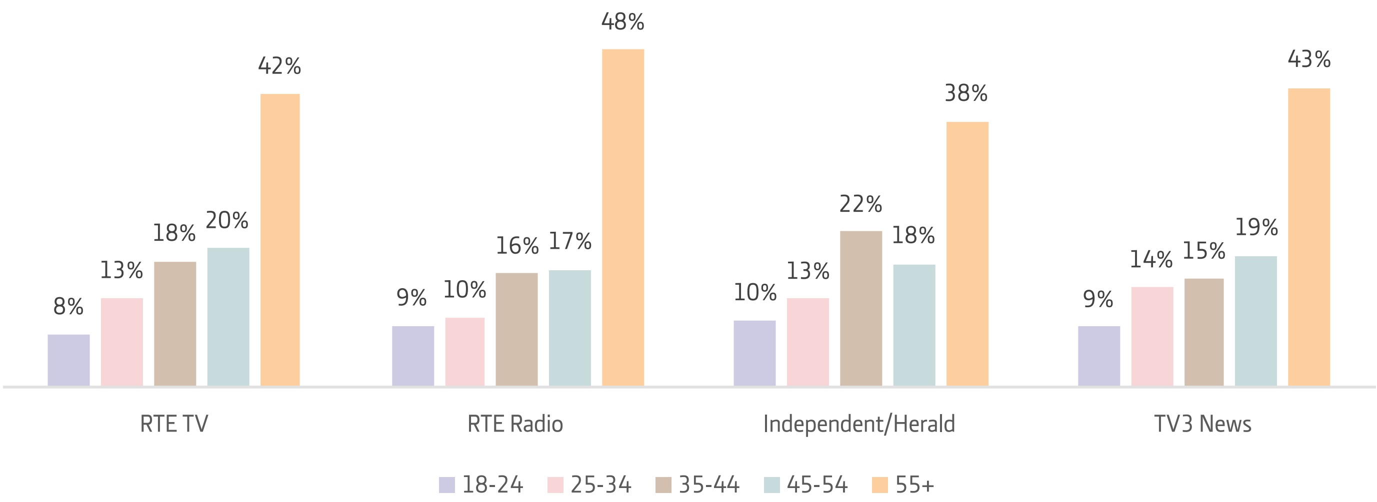
Fig. 47 Number of sources of news



Age profiles of Irish brands

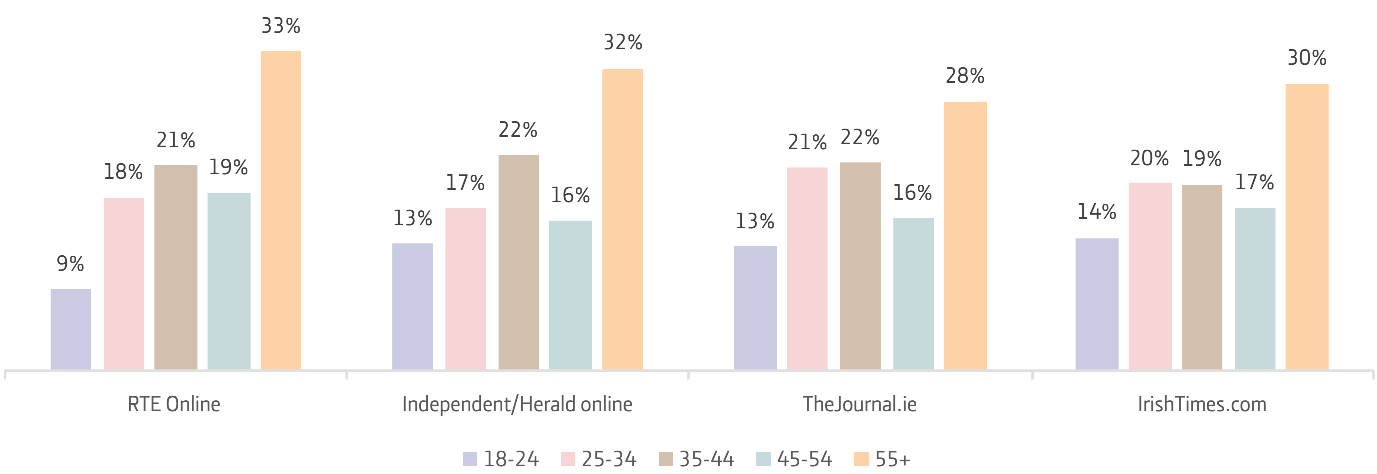
Unsurprisingly, over-55s most commonly use traditional brands while younger age groups more commonly use digital brands. This is particularly evident in the 18-24 and 25-35 age brackets, signalling the potential for a major movement in the dynamics of traditional and digital news consumption.

Fig. 48 Top Irish traditional brands' age profile



Which of the following traditional news media have you used in the last week?

Fig. 49 Top Irish online news brands age profile



Which of the following online news media have you used in the last week?

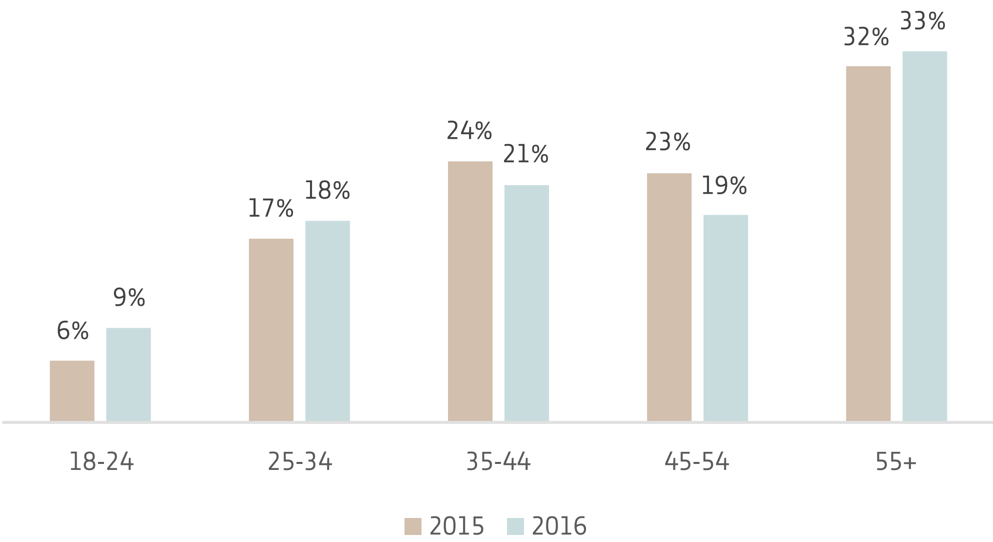
Fig. 50 Top four online news brands by age group

18–24	
Irish Independent / Herald online	39%
TheJournal.ie	37%
Her.ie / joe.ie	36%
BuzzFeed	36%

25–35	
RTÉ News online	35%
TheJournal.ie	33%
Irish Independent / Herald online	28%
The Irish Times online	26%

55+	
RTÉ News online	48%
Irish Independent / Herald online	39%
TheJournal.ie	34%
The Irish Times online	30%

Fig. 51 RTÉ Online age profile 2015 and 2016

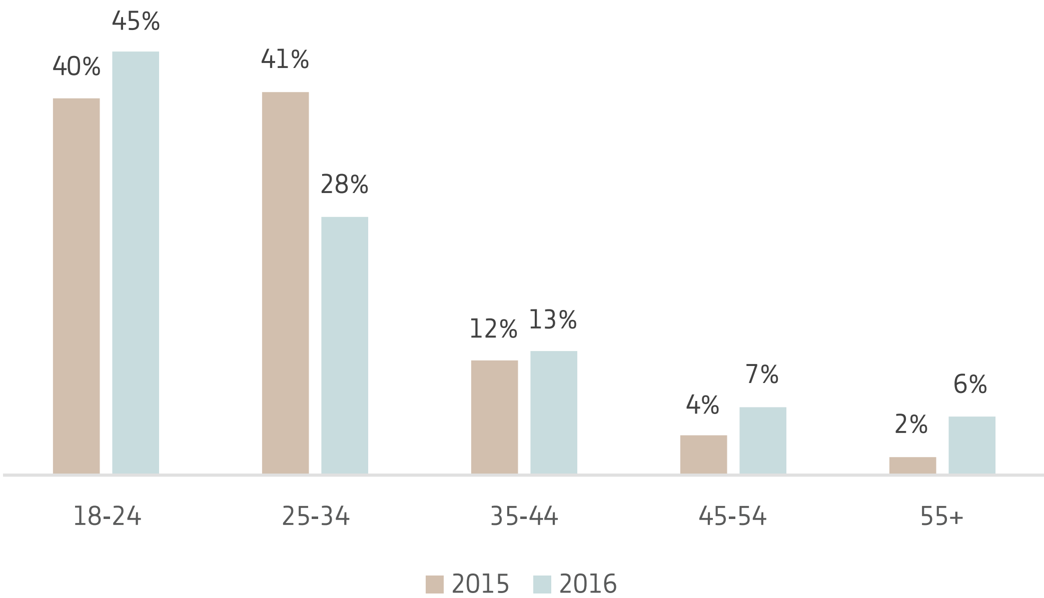


Have you accessed RTÉ news online in the last week?

Age profiles of Irish brands

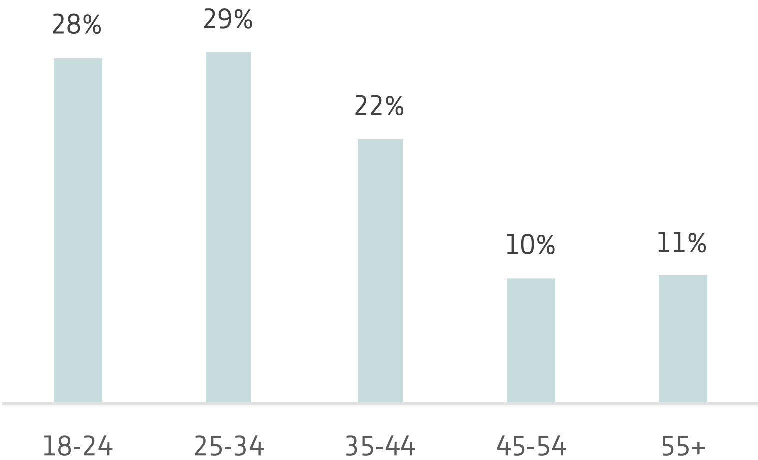
Digital born news outletss tend to be more widely used by younger users. The audience age profile of global, social media driven, news titles show they are more highly used by the 18-34 age group and drop off after 35. Buzzfeed had a four per cent increase in use over a week in the 18-24 age group. Although 2016 is the first year data was included for her.ie and joe.ie, they have a competitive digital presence and a strong base among younger users.

Fig. 52 Buzzfeed for news 2015 and 2016



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

Fig. 53 Her.ie / Joe.ie for news in 2016



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

4.4 Conclusion

The trend that is beginning to emerge is the contraction of traditional news brands and the expansion of digital. This situation presents tough choices for news producers regarding the allocation of resources and also for audiences in terms of where different types of news can be found. Ireland has a comparatively small media market and a limited number of brands dominate the media landscape. However, there is growth in Irish digital-born brands such as thejournal.ie and breakingnews.ie as well as Her.ie/Joe.ie. All are in the top ten digital news brands in use over a week, indicating an increasingly competitive and diverse digital news sector. Digital-born brands comprised three of the top four brands for the youngest age group surveyed. However, interest in hard news and national news increases with age. So the patterns of brand use by the 18-25 age group may adapt as they age.

Section Five
Paying for News

Attitudes to paying for news in Ireland are examined here. Because free digital news is typically funded by advertising, Irish news consumers were asked about ad blockers and their perceptions of advertising in online news. There have been changes in the digital news subscription market in the past year with The Irish Times introducing a metered paywall; The Sunday Times introducing a digital subscription package behind a full paywall; and thesun.ie removing its paywall.

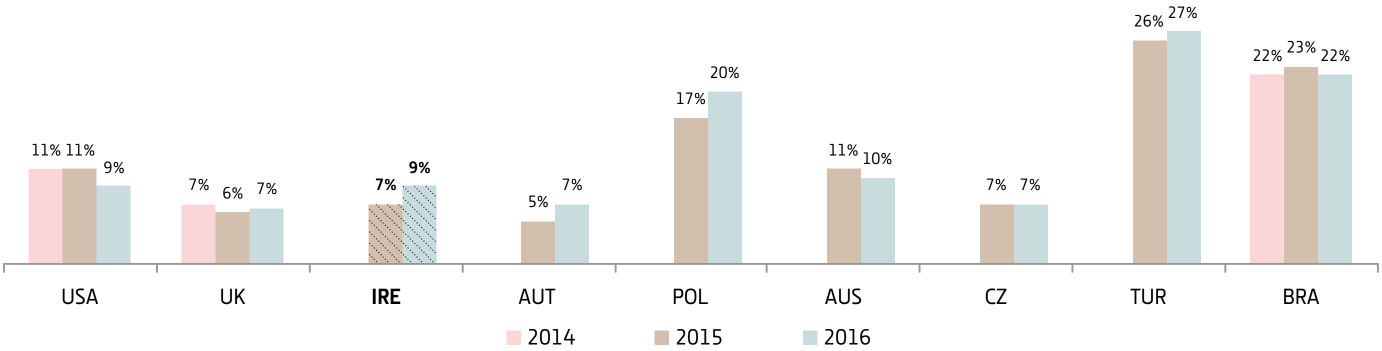
Digital news payments

Overall, digital payment for news is low at nine per cent. There was no major fall in paying for print. Younger people are only slightly more inclined to pay for digital news than older, but the numbers are still low. Digital advertising is regarded as intrusive but many consumers will put up with it in exchange for free news.

There was a two per cent increase in payments for digital news in 2016 from a year earlier and increases were reported in most surveyed countries. However, the increase is not statistically significant. In the English-speaking markets no country exceeded ten per cent of consumers paying for digital news.

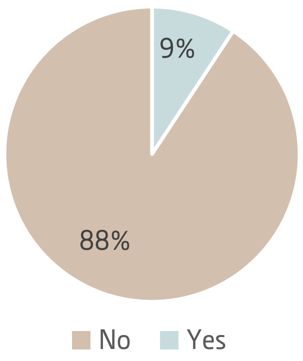
There is no increase in the willingness to pay for news. Indeed, it has fallen in some countries such as the USA and in Australia where titles abandoned paywalls. Increases were minor (1-2%) in many countries (Portugal, Ireland, UK, Austria). Internationally, the number of people who use digital news is considerably higher than the number willing to pay for it. The volume of free news, the strength of public service broadcasting and the level of engagement with different platforms and devices are emerging as influences on paying for digital news.

Fig. 54 Paid for online news during the year – selected countries



Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid for online news service in the last year ?

Fig. 55 Paid for online news during the year – Ireland



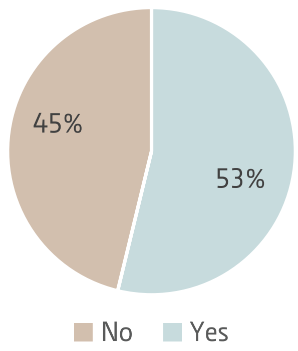
Have you paid for ONLINE news content, or accessed a paid for online news service in the last year?

Digital news payments

Digital news use was high again in 2016 but payment for it low. Those least likely to pay were in the 18-24 age bracket while those most likely to pay peaked in the 25-35 age group at 29%. Changes in the Irish news market account for the rise in online payments. There have been changes in the Irish news market that might account for the rise in online payments. One of Ireland's most popular digital brands, The Irish Times online, introduced a metered paywall in February 2015. Those who pay for news appear to be high news users across multiple brands. For example, 46% of those who pay for news use The Irish Times online over a week, 45% use the independent.ie and 51% use RTÉ.ie. The Sunday Times introduced a digital subscription package and app behind a full paywall, which includes a daily news edition. Some 15% of those who paid for news use The Sunday Times.

Payments for newspapers over a week decreased by one per cent. Many titles reported declines in readership and circulation. High-speed broadband reach extends to just over half the country (Eurostat, 2015).

Fig. 56 Paid for printed newspaper



Have you bought (paid for) a printed newspaper in the last week? (This could be an ongoing print subscription or one off payment for a physical copy).

How is digital news paid for?

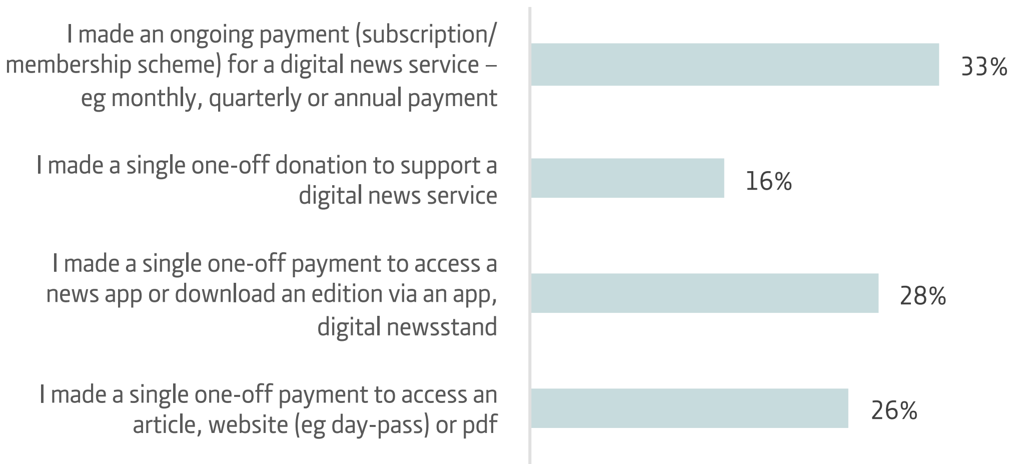
Of those who pay for digital news, 61% make one-off payments while 41% are on-going subscribers.

On-going payments for digital news services come in two forms. One is part of wider subscription packages which bundle TV and other digital services. There was a 13% increase in on-going payments for digital news services in 2016. Some increase was anticipated in this year's results with The Irish Times reporting rising levels of subscripxtions following the introduction of a new metered paywall.

Fig. 57 Method of paying for online news 2016

Which, if any, of the following ways have you used to pay for online news content in the last year?

Fig. 58 Ways of paying for online news



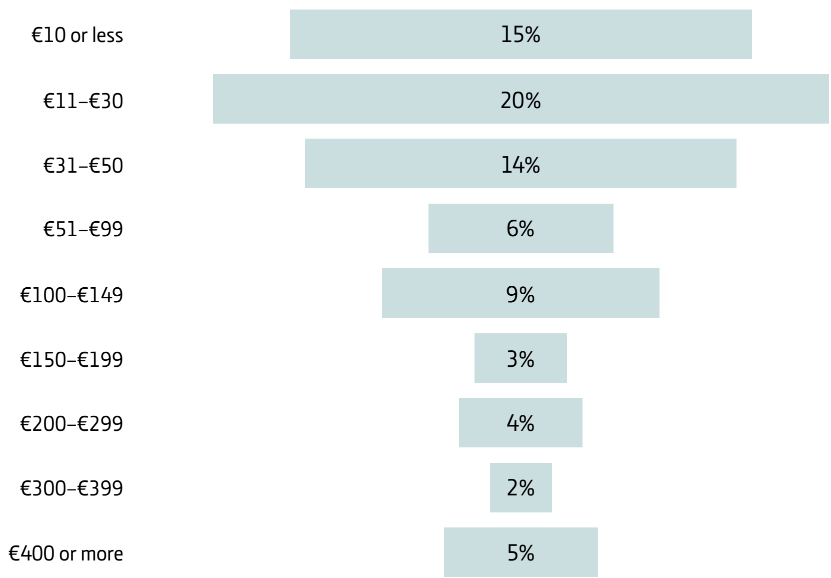
Which, if any, of the following ways have you used to pay for online news content in the last year?

How much was paid?

How much are Irish consumers willing to pay for news? Among those who paid, 35% spend less than €30 per year. Some 15% pay €150 or more per year, equivalent to the €144 standard subscription for The Irish Times. Some 11% pay €200 or more and 7% pay €300 or more.

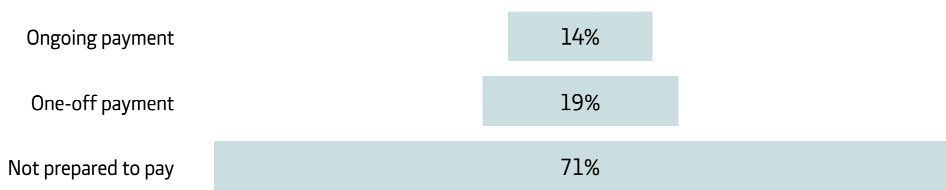
The combined reach of the public service broadcaster and the free digital news market likely impacts on attitudes to paying for news. Of those who do not currently pay, 14% say they would consider a news subscription. However, the vast majority say they would not be prepared to pay for online news. This raises questions about how journalism in Ireland will be funded and whether advertising is a viable long-term revenue stream.

Fig. 59 How much have you paid for online news in the past year?



How much have you paid for online news content, or for access to a paid for online news service in the last year?

Fig. 60 Willingness to pay for news



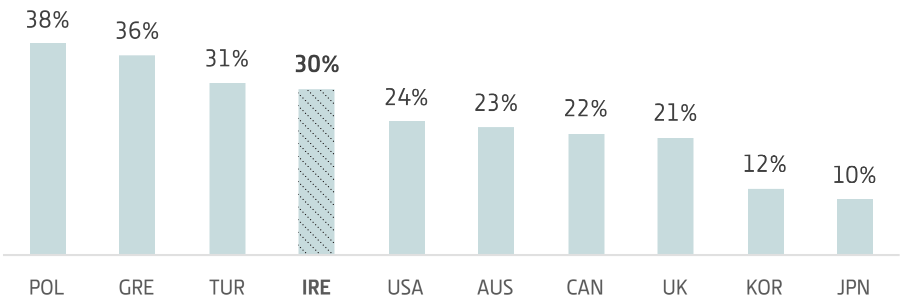
You say you don't currently pay for online news. In the future might you be prepared to pay for content in any of the following ways?

Ad blockers

As a major source of funding, advertising is problematic. Many digital consumers use ad blockers. Ad blockers enhance the news consumption experience by preventing advertising from interrupting consumption. Their use is widespread in most surveyed countries. Poland and Greece report the highest use at 38% while Japan and Korea have the lowest usage, at 12% and 10% respectively. At the same time, News Brands Ireland (formerly National Newspapers Ireland) reports advertising revenue for digital news increased in 2014.

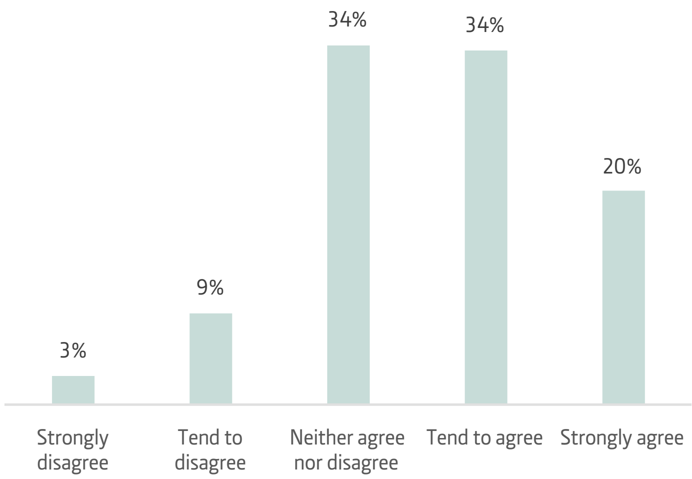
Ireland has the fifth highest level of ad blocker use among online news consumers, the highest in the English-speaking news market. Ireland is highly digitally engaged. But along with digital know-how comes the capacity to take control of unwanted ads.

Fig. 61 Use of ad blockers international 2016



Do you use software on any of your personal devices to block adverts on the internet (e.g. Adblock Plus)?

Fig. 62 Intrusiveness of adverts on news sites



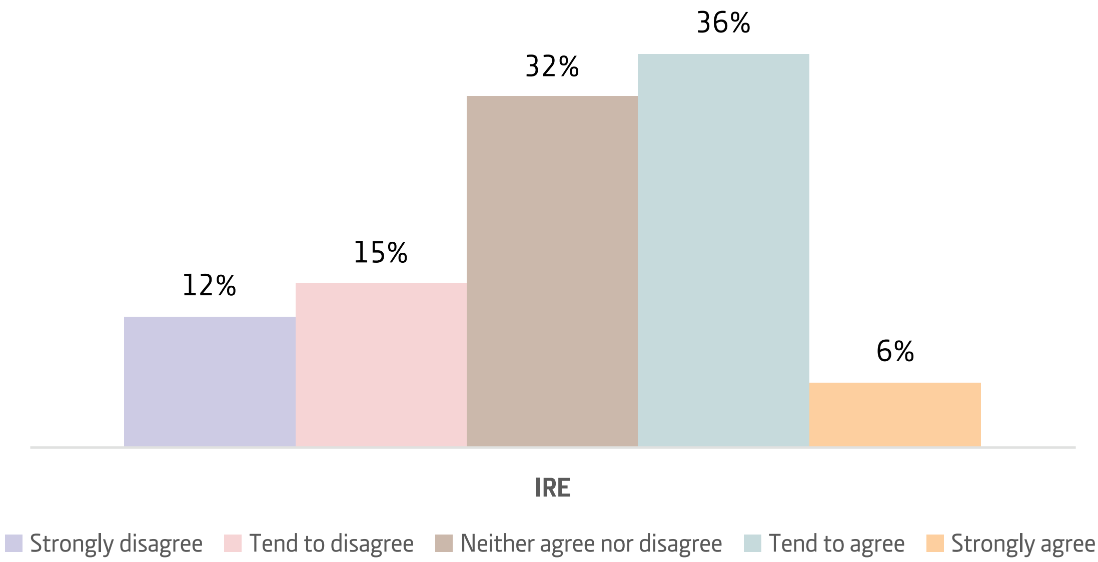
Do you find the level of advertisements on news sites intrusive?

Ad blockers

Internationally, there is widespread agreement that advertising is intrusive. However, there are varied attitudes to living with it in return for free access to news. In Ireland, 54% find advertisements intrusive. However, some 42% are willing to view ads in return for free access to news. And 27% were not prepared to view advertising. Irish news consumers have high usage of digital news but are largely unwilling to pay for it and actively avoid the adverts that often subsidize it, which creates a challenging environment for generating revenue from digital news.

There is a contradiction regarding consumers' attitudes to digital news. Although over-35s are the least happy with advertising and are less prepared to accept ads for free news, this age group has the lowest level of ad blocking. And although 18-24s are more willing to accept adverts in return for free news, 51% have ad blockers installed, while 28% of 35-44s use ad blocker software with 20% of over 55s doing so.

Fig. 63 Willingness to see advertisements in exchange for free news



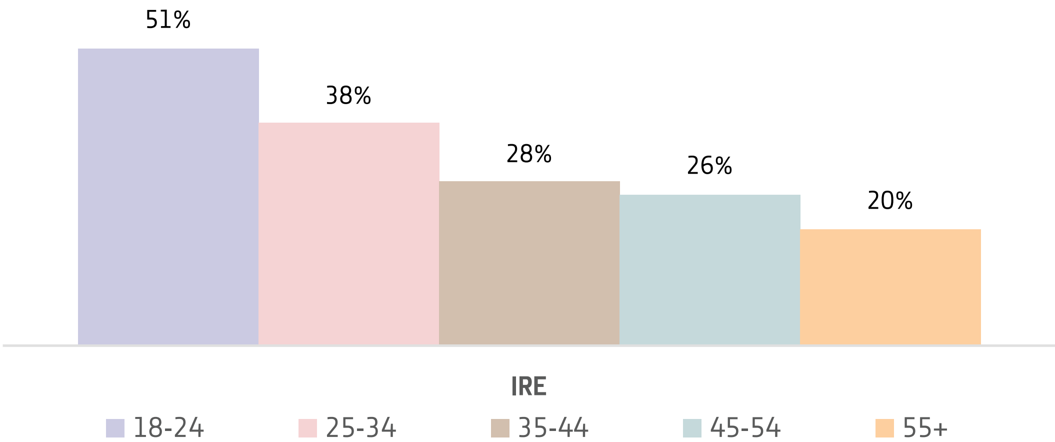
Do you agree with the following statement 'I am prepared to see advertisements in exchange for free news'?

Fig. 64

I find the level of advertisements on news sites intrusive	Ireland
Total	54%
U35	50%
35+	56%

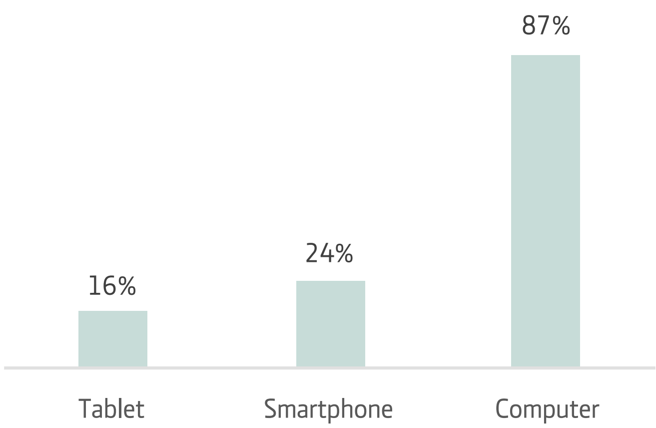
I am prepared to see advertisements in exchange for free news	Ireland
Total	42%
U35	44%
35+	41%

Fig. 65 Age Profile of those with ad blocker installed



Do you use software on any of your personal devices to block adverts on the internet (e.g. Adblock Plus)?

Fig. 66 Devices with ad blocker installed



On which of your devices do you use software that allows you to block adverts on the internet?

Ad blockers

The extent to which Irish users are willing to accept advertising in return for free news and the efforts they make to avoid having their attention 'sold' has implications for how journalism is funded. The way in which digital advertising is displayed can be counter-productive when it provokes a negative response in news consumers.

Conclusion

One of the most pressing questions for the economics of news production is whether subscriptions and advertising are viable future revenue streams. Subscription payments increased in 2016 but one-off payments are still more common. And the majority of Irish people say they are unlikely to pay for digital news. If digital news is not paid for by the consumer it tends to be subsidized by advertising. But the environment for this is hostile too. Irish news consumers find advertising intrusive and there are a high number using ad blockers compared to other countries. Although many Irish consumers are willing to accept adverts for free news, ads are detracting from the experience of news consumers. If advertising is to be an important part of funding Irish journalism, the right balance of integration into digital content must be established to avoid impairing engagement.

Section Six

Gateways to News and Methods of Consuming

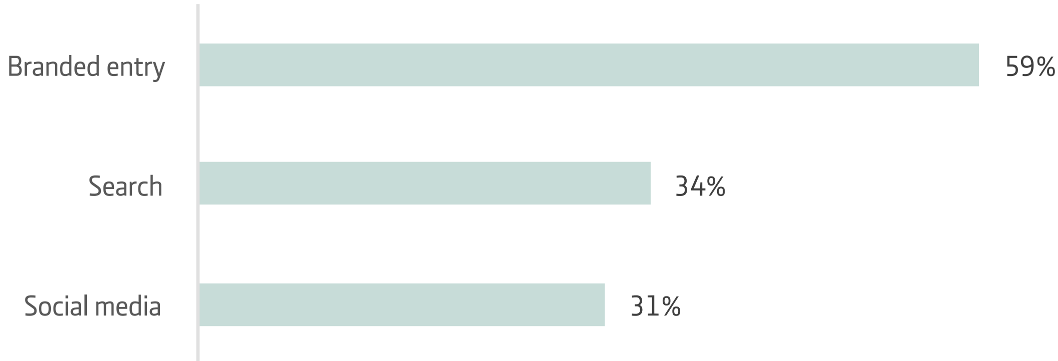
The gateways to Irish digital news and attitudes to gatekeepers who promote news on digital news platforms are examined here. The methods by which different genders and age groups access news and consumers' engagement with video news are also outlined.

Gateways to news

Direct access to news websites is the most common way of finding news. Using a search engine is second and discovery through social media third. Thus, going directly to news brands is more common than passive discovery. Computers are the most common way of searching for news and give direct access to brands, while tablets and smartphones are most popular for finding news on social media. Younger age groups tend to use social media for discovery while older age groups are more inclined to use apps and news websites.

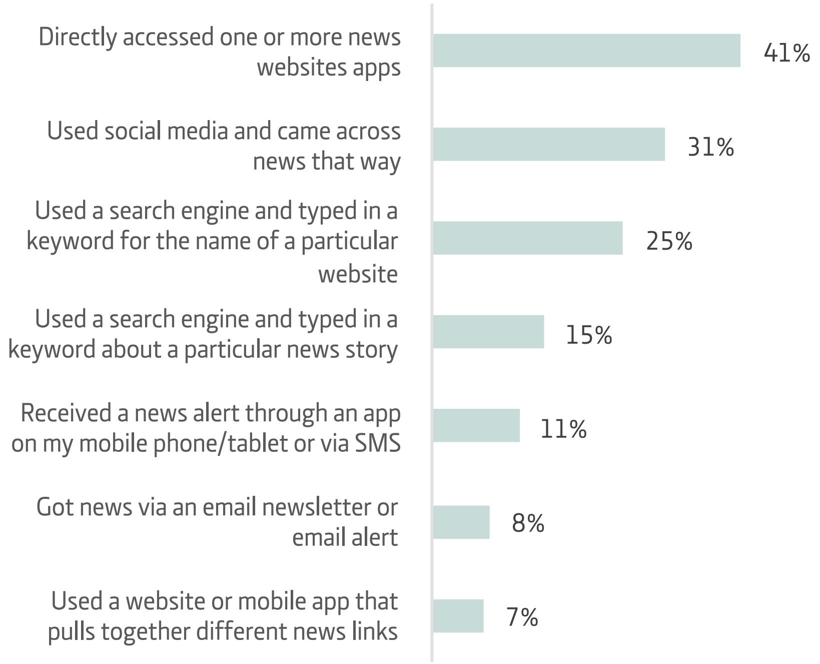
There are also gender differences in the use of some gateways. Women are more inclined toward social media and men toward aggregators. Use of video news is up and text reading slightly down in 2016. And there are mixed attitudes and some concerns about how news is distributed digitally. When online Irish consumers actively search for news they tend to seek out brands.

Fig. 67 Gateways to online news 2016



In which ways did you come across news in the last week?

Fig. 68 Gateways to online news



What were the ways you came across online news in the last week?

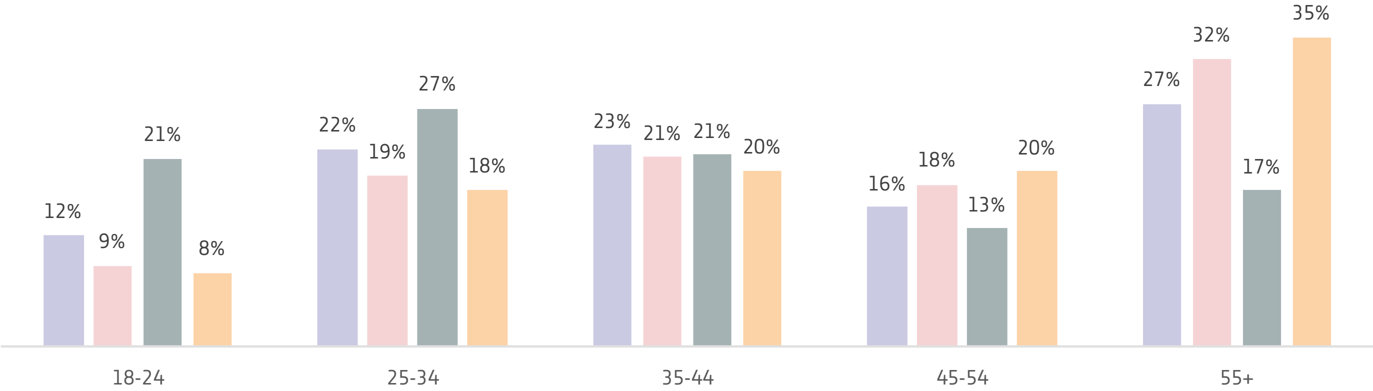
After branded entry, discovering news on social media (31%) was more common than using a search engine for a particular news story (15%). The role of social media as a form of discovering news online increased internationally. Irish news brands have moved in this direction dedicating resources to developing their engagement with social media, introducing social teams and social media or community editors as well as data analysts to optimise social media use.

Gateways to news by age group

Under-45s commonly find news through social media while older groups are more engaged with specific apps. As most people in Ireland are not brand aware on social media (Section Seven) and the 18-24 age group are high smartphone and social users (Section Three), the low levels of direct brand engagement found here are unsurprising. This points to a dilution of brand impact when news is distributed on Facebook and other social media. Tests show a correlation between low brand awareness and social media use for news.

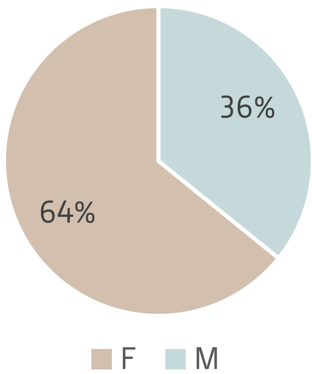
Gender differences in the gateways to news persist in 2016. Although both sexes use social media, more women find news on social media than men. This may be related to the types of news content that appeal to women and men and the categories of news that publishers push on social media. News producers report that softer news fares better for sharing and engagement than hard news on social media (Siaperia & Suiter, Social Media Research, June 2016) and women indicate higher levels of interest in soft news, celebrity, entertainment, arts and culture news.

Fig. 69 How different age groups access news



What were the ways you came across news in the last week?

Fig. 70 News accessed via social media by gender

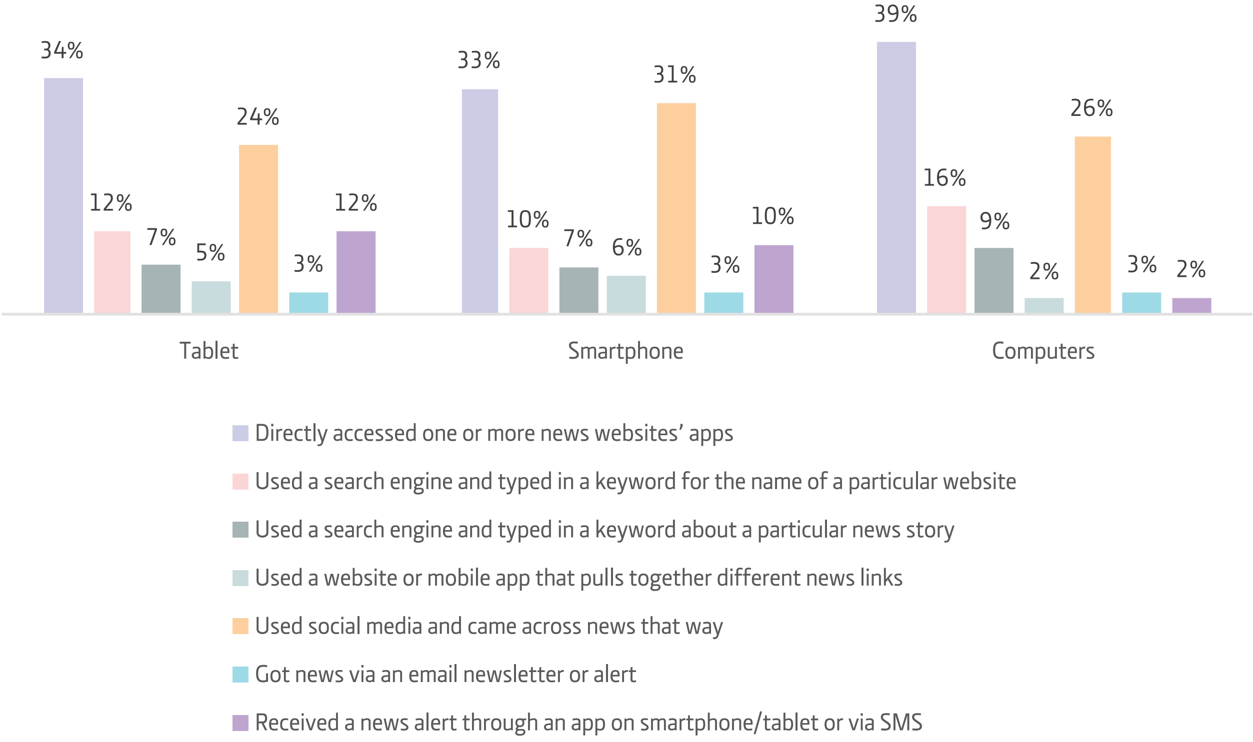


What were the ways you came across news in the last week?

Given the increased attention on social media distribution of news, further analysis of the data was undertaken to determine which brands have the farthest reach across social platforms. Some 28% of RTÉ online news, 29% of The Irish Times online users and 28% of Irish Independent users find news via social media. In contrast, some 40% of thejournal.ie users, 44% of Ireland Guardian users, 57% of Her.ie/Joe.ie users and 61% of Buzzfeed's users find news on social media.

The convenience of using different gateways to news can be enhanced or hindered by devices. News websites and content are often optimised for the device it is accessed on. Computers (39%) were preferred for direct access to websites and searching for brands (16%), while smartphones were preferred for finding news on social media (31%).

Fig. 71 Main ways for coming across news on digital devices

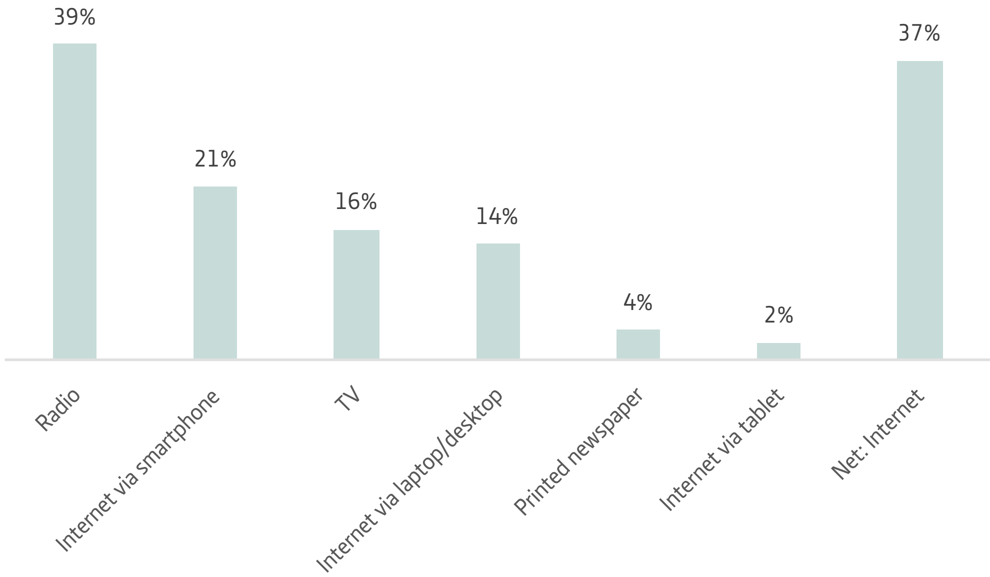


What was the main way you came across news in the last week?

What leads the news agenda for Irish audiences?

Platforms and devices play a role as gateways to news. The first point of contact with news media can be influential in setting the news agenda for the day. While digital platforms are most popular over a week, radio is where Irish consumers first encounter news in the morning.

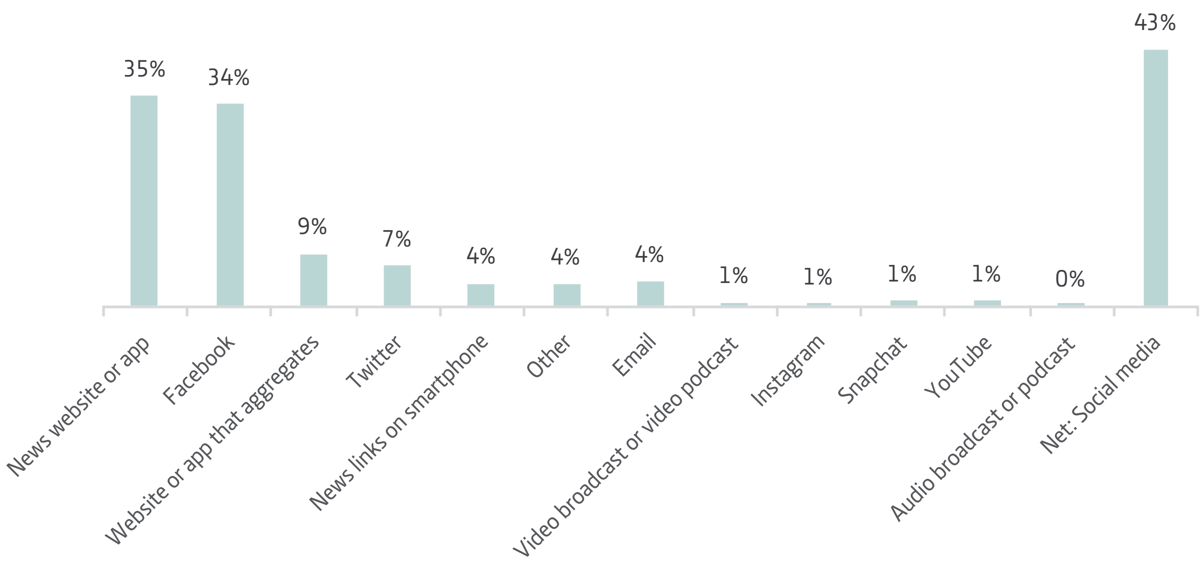
Fig. 72 First point of contact with news in the morning



What is the first way you typically come across news in the morning?

Social media is an important first contact with news for some 38% who used the internet in the morning.

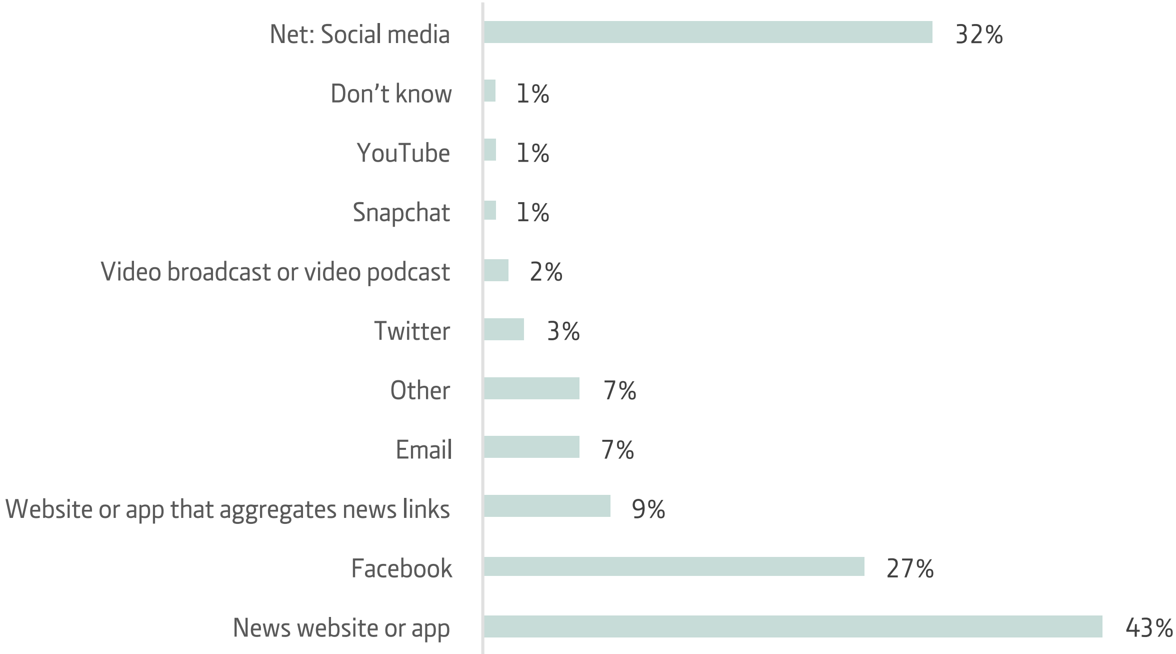
Fig. 73 Digital first point of contact



Typically, where do you first find online news in the morning?

However, social media use here must be contextualised. When social media general use and news use is compared, it is clear that social media brands are commonly used for the primary function of social interactions (DNR Ireland 15, www.fujomedia.eu). Overall, Facebook is particularly prominent for coming across news in the morning.

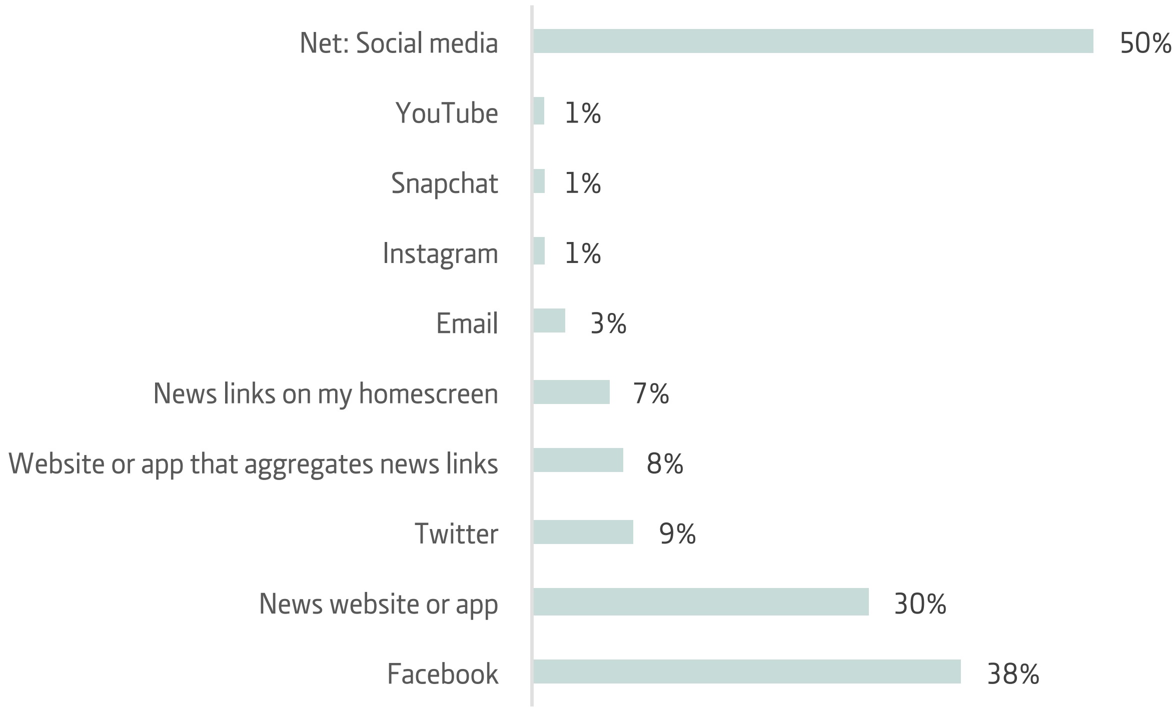
Fig. 74 First points of contact in the morning via computer



You mentioned that your first contact with news in the morning is using internet via laptop/desktop. Which of the following places do you typically find your first news?

Devices are also a factor in the first point of contact with news in the morning. On a computer, news websites (43%) are more popular than finding news on social media (32%). However, the reverse was true for those whose first interaction with the news was a smartphone. Morning smartphone users more frequently come across news on social media rather than a new website or app.

Fig. 75 First points of contact in the morning via smartphone

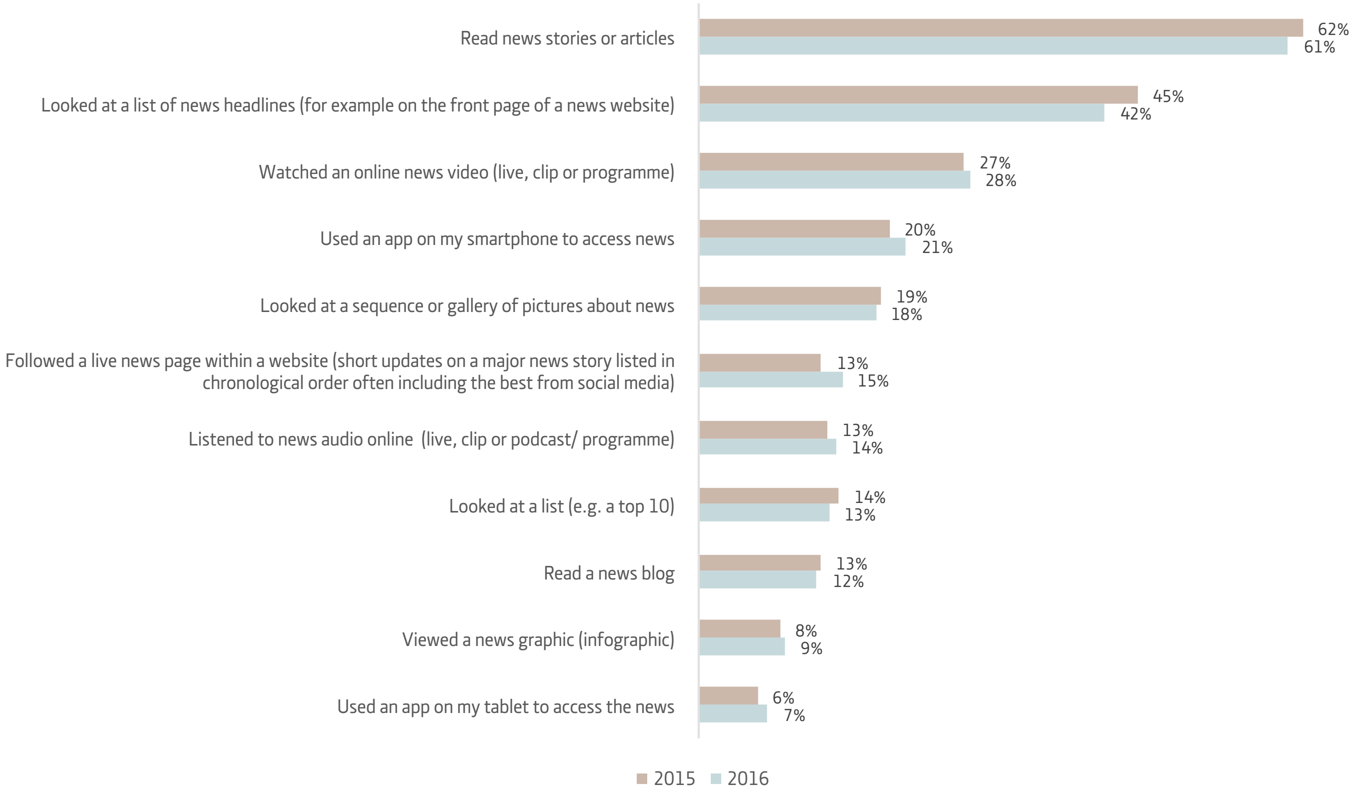


In which of the following places do you typically find your first news in the morning via smartphone?

Ways of consuming

Engagement with text for news decreased slightly while visual and audio media increased, hinting at a convergence of news types online. Online video and audio news grew in Ireland and internationally, although text based news is predominant.

Fig. 76 Ways of consuming digital news

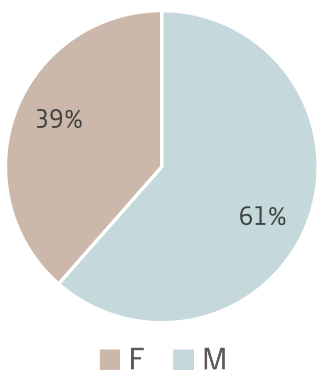


Which of the following ways of consuming news did you use in the last week?

Aggregators

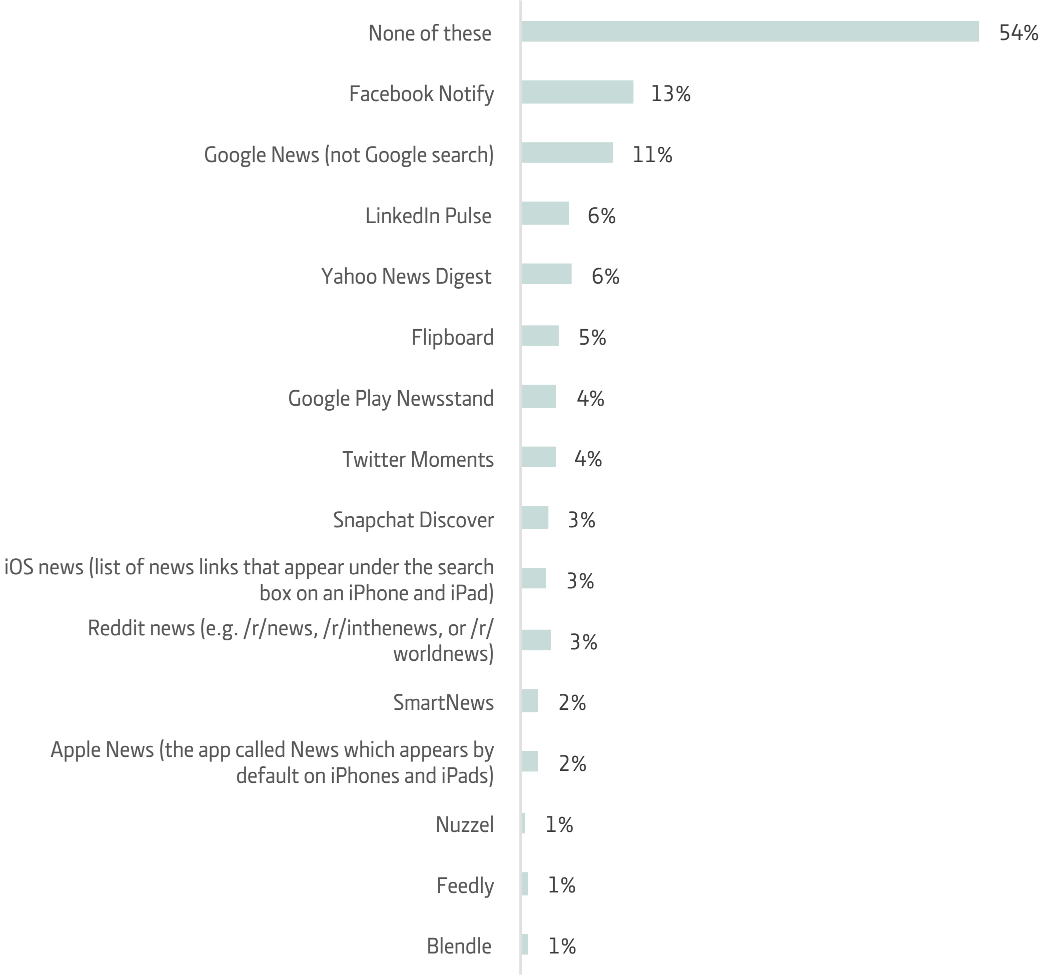
Aggregator use was comparatively unpopular at 7% and ranged between 4% and 10% in most surveyed countries except Japan where it was dominant at 43% and in Korea at 38%. Irish news consumers appear to prefer being more actively involved in selecting the news they consume.

Fig. 77 Website or mobile app use to pull together different news links



In the last week, how did you come across news?

Fig. 78 Use of aggregators and apps

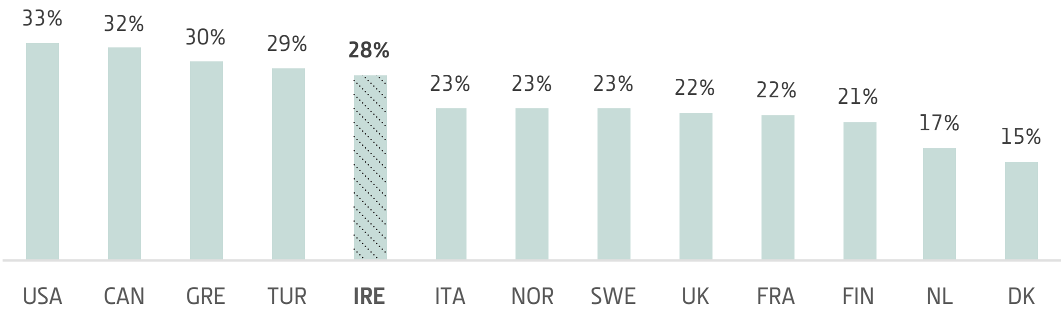


Have you used any of the following sites or mobile apps that aggregate different news links in the last week?

Video news

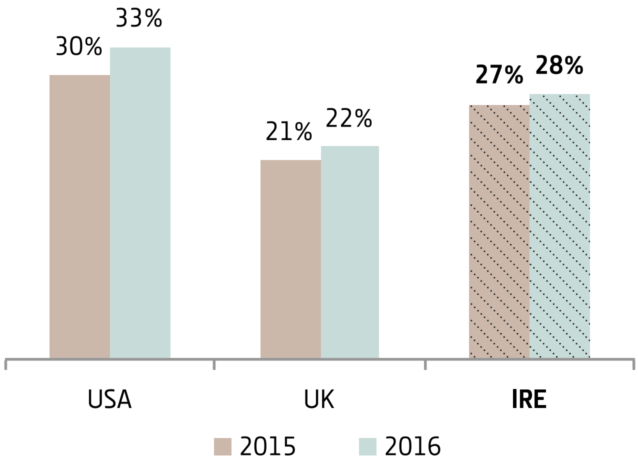
Internationally, online video news is not meeting some of the high expectations of its proponents. While publishers, platforms and social media have focused on developing video news, evidence from the international report finds that most consumers are resistant (DNR16, www.digitalnewsreport.org/). Yet, Ireland has high video use for news compared to international peers. However, fewer than a third used video for news. Slightly more Americans and Canadians use video news than Irish. In the UK there are six per cent fewer video news users than in Ireland. The Irish digital news market is smaller and most news producers have developed video content in the past year which may explain the comparatively higher figure.

Fig. 79 Video use for news international 2016



Did you view video news in the last week?

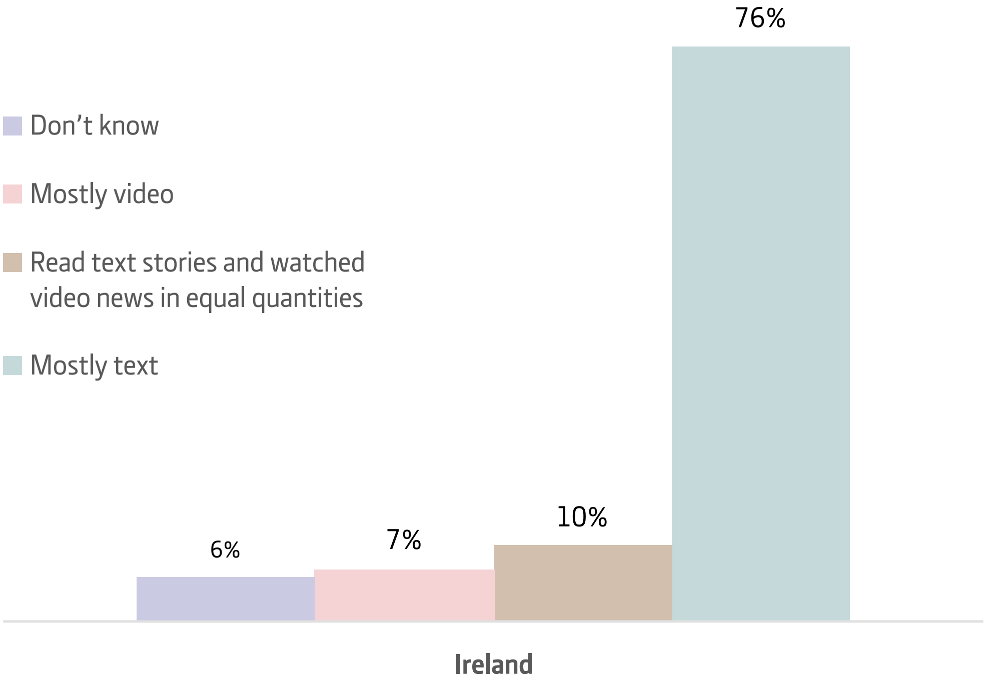
Fig. 80 Video News



Did you view video news in the last week?

Video use for news increased by one per cent in 2016. Video use for news was up slightly in Ireland from last year but text was still the dominant method of consuming news. There were no real age differences among those who preferred to consume video news.

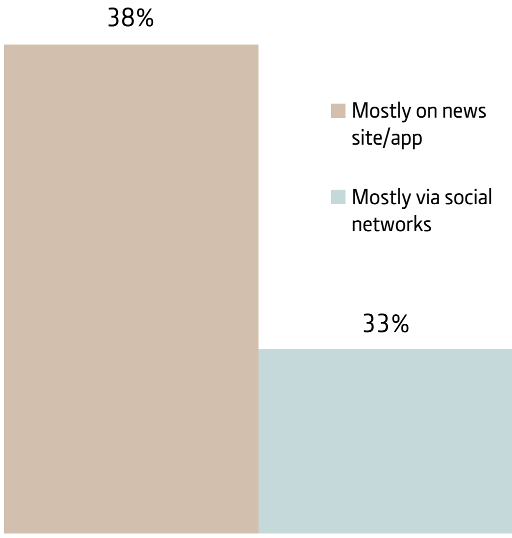
Fig. 81 Formats of news consumed



Which of the following ways of consuming news did you use in the last week?

Native video on a news website is again the most popular way of watching video news which is important for producers who have developed native mp4 players for their news titles and those who rely on off-platform players such as YouTube and Vimeo. However, the demand to put video content natively on social media is also present, with 33% of video consumers watching directly on social platforms where low brand awareness is common.

Fig. 82 Where video news is consumed



Which of the following statements best matches your consumption of online news video?

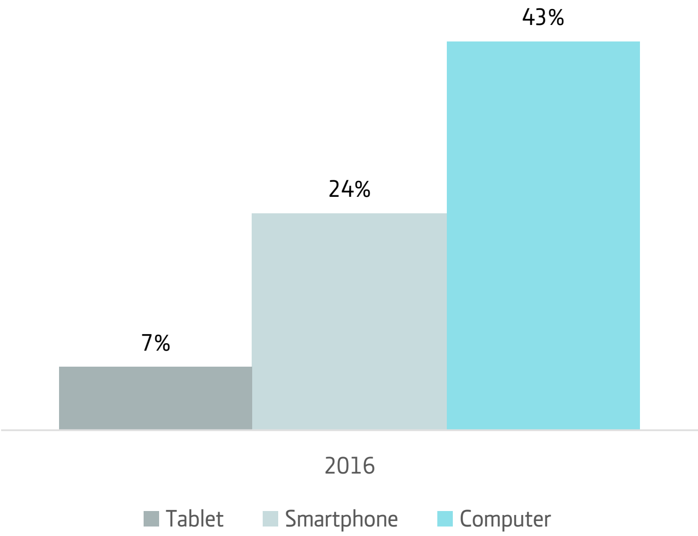
There are significant age differences between those who consumed video news on social networks and those who consume it on news websites and apps.

Fig. 83 Video consumption by age group

Social Networks		News site/app	
U 35	35+	U 35	35+
47%	25%	29%	42%

Which category best matches your consumption of online video news?

Fig. 84 Video news by digital devices



Which device best matches your consumption of online video news?

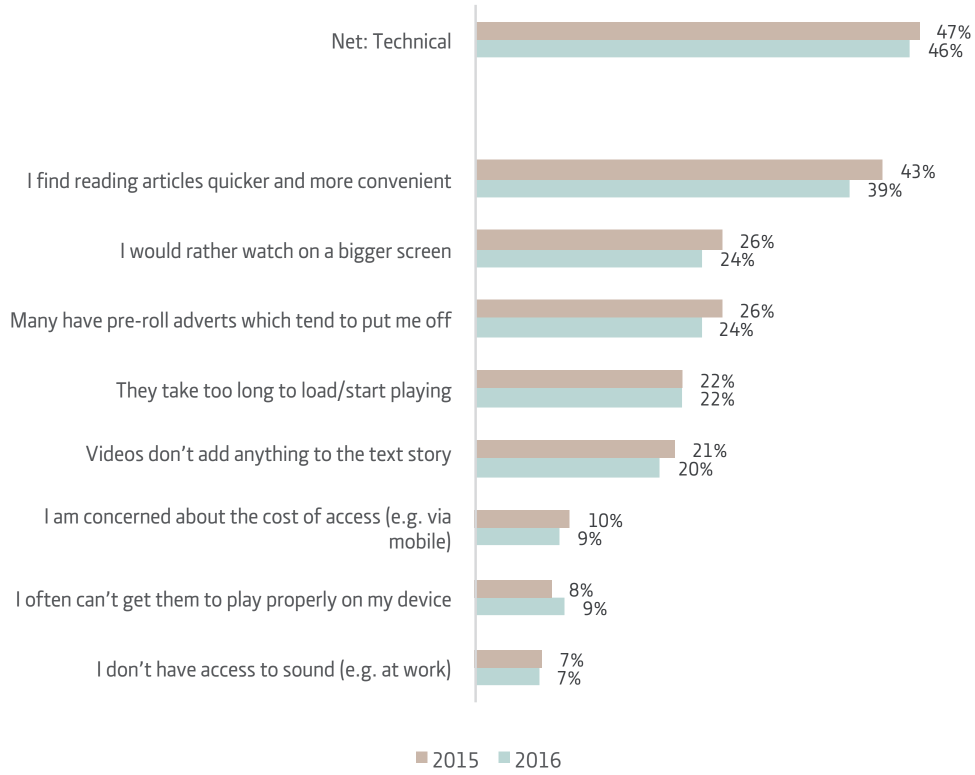
In addition, the under-35s were more likely to consume video news on a smartphone and older age groups on a computer.

Fig. 85 Video consumption by age group

Tablet		Smartphone		Computer	
U 35	35+	U 35	35+	U 35	35+
5%	8%	38%	17%	35%	48%

Which device best matches your consumption of online video news?

Fig. 86 Reasons for not watching online video news 2015 and 2016



You said you don't usually watch news videos online. Why not?

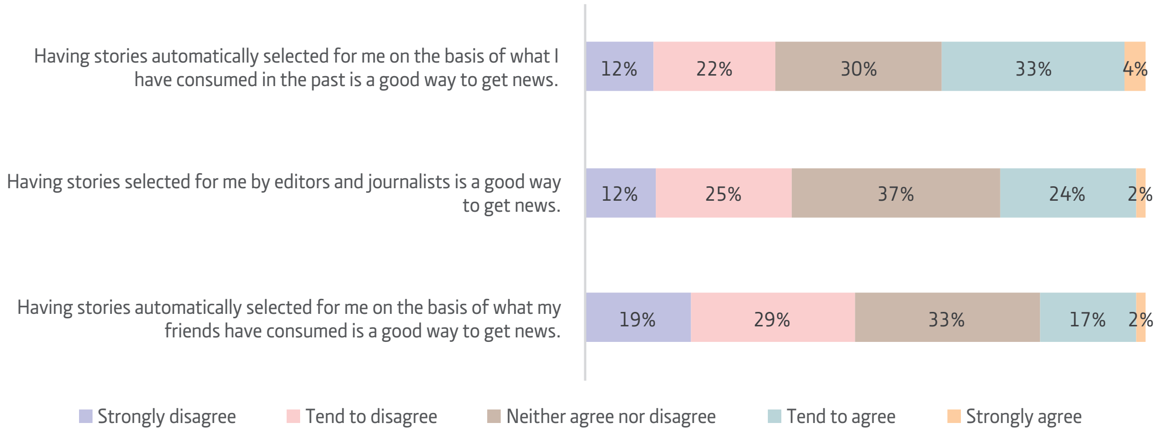
News consumers who indicate they do not watch video news were asked why. Technical factors such as load times, access costs and preference for text are the most common reasons.

A preference for larger screens on computers over smartphones is indicated, although this is less of a concern in 2016, decreasing by two per cent to 24%. The downside of advertising is reflected here with 24% citing pre-roll advertising as a deterrent.

Attitudes to gatekeepers

Some 37% of Irish consumers find the idea of news being automatically selected for them based on past history more appealing than allowing editorial choices dictate what news is promoted (26%). However, there are some concerns about the impact of algorithms.

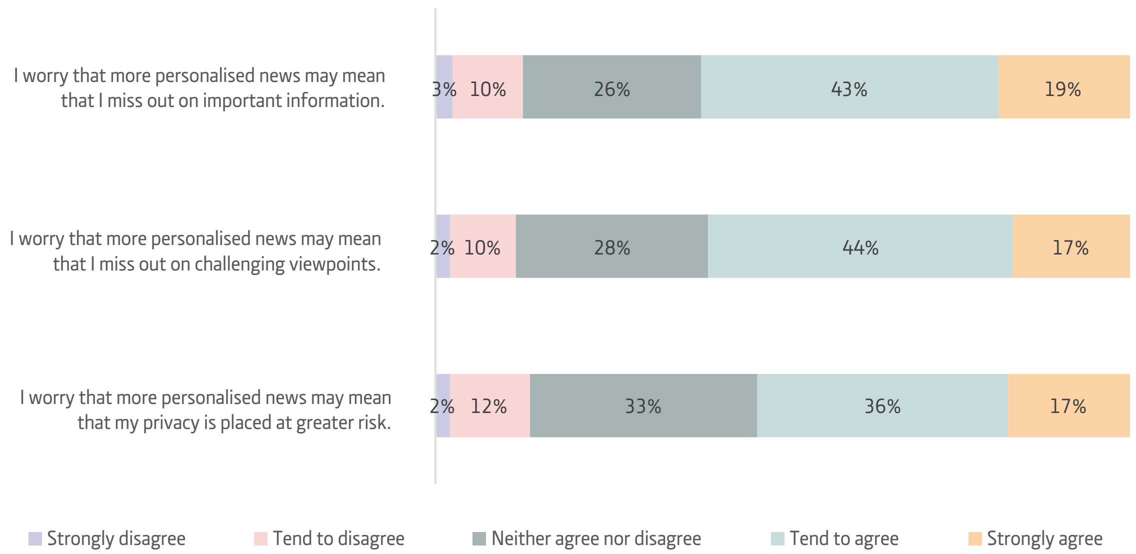
Fig. 87 Attitudes to digital gatekeepers



For personalised news, indicate your level of agreement with the statements above.

Most expressed concerns about personalised news based on past use and the impact it might have on the range and choices of news. Missing out on the news was a greater concern than how personal data was used to create personalised news.

Fig. 88 Attitudes to digital gatekeepers



For personalised news, indicate your level of agreement with the statements above.

Conclusion

Searching for news and the power of SEO (search engine optimisation) are important factors in news distribution at a time when social media's influence is strong and increasing. In contrast to SEO, not enough is known about the algorithms that promote and suppress news on social media users' news feeds. Text news is still most prevalent but video news output is increasing. News producers that were tied to one platform are becoming multimedia producers. Many use combinations of text, audio, video, graphics and pictures. Growth is seen in all these ways of consuming news in 2016. The first point of contact with news in the morning is radio. The internet is the second where Facebook is dominant.

Video, although growing, is rarely a main source of news. The main deterrent to its use is technical problems. Video news is viewed more on social media than on news websites and apps. This results in brands' content being used on platforms they have no control over and little financial return from.

Irish attitudes to gatekeepers show that algorithms are preferred to the traditional editorial structure. However, Irish audiences are concerned this might mean they miss out on important news or contrasting viewpoints. The multiplicity of brands offered online is undermined by the shrinking of the range of distribution channels on which people search or find news. Although the number of social platforms is growing, Facebook's dominance as a distribution channel is noteworthy.

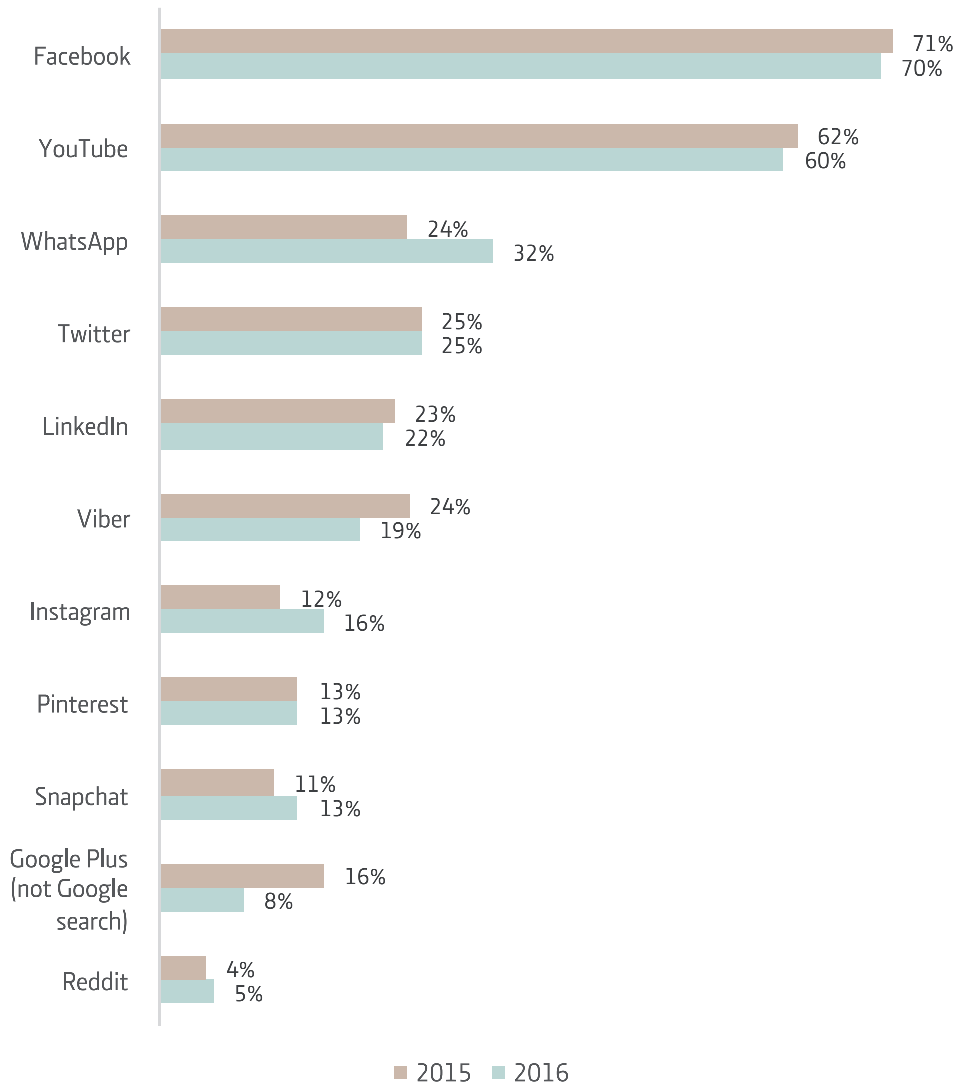
Section Seven
Social Media and Engagement

Social media brands used for news, social media news users, and some of the values around discovering news on social media are examined here. And the nature of Irish engagement with news on social media is outlined in terms of participation and sharing.

Social media brands

Facebook is dominant again in 2016, which saw no change in the top social media brands used for news. However, there is a slight drop in the use of these established brands for news and a notable increase in the use of messaging platforms. Social media is particularly valued for breaking news and for variety of content. Sharing and commenting is high in the English-speaking news market.

Fig. 89 Social media brand use 2015 and 2016



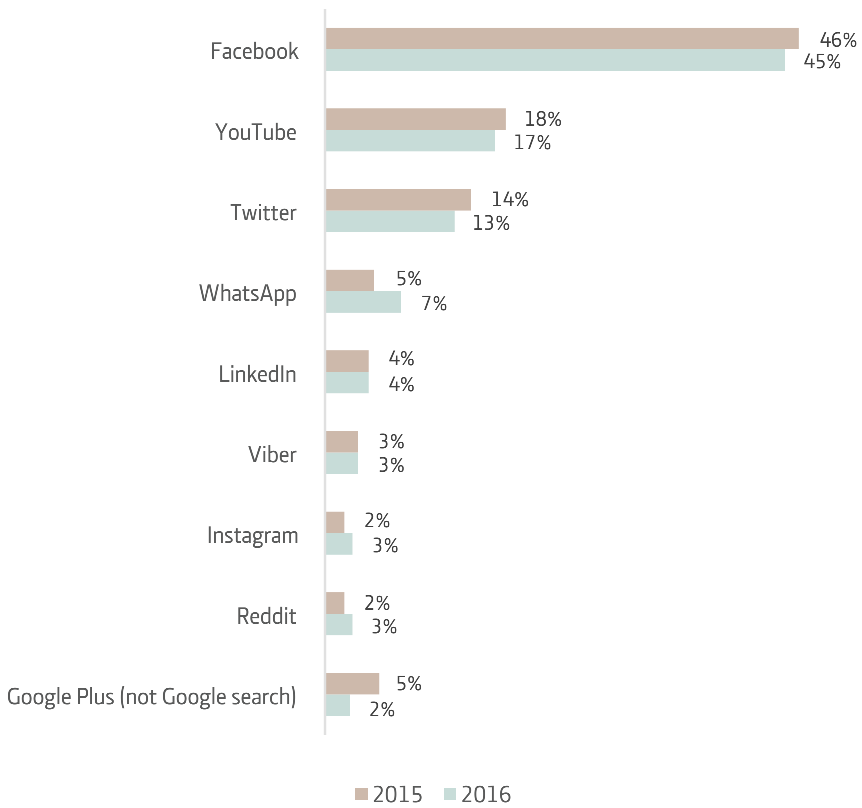
Which, if any, of the following have you used for any purpose in the last week?

Brands use for news

Internationally, Ireland has the eighth highest use of Facebook at 70%. The average use of Facebook for news in Ireland is 45%. This is similar to most other English-speaking nations – Canada (46%), USA (45%), and Australia (45%) – although the UK is notably lower at 28%. Facebook is a particularly prominent source of news in Brazil (69%), Greece (69%) and Turkey (64%) while Japan reports the lowest use at 14%. The popularity of Twitter and YouTube for news is similar across most English-speaking countries. However, YouTube is less popular as a news source in the UK (7%) than in Ireland (15%). WhatsApp is more popular for news in Ireland (7%) than in Australia (4%), UK (3%), Canada (2%) and USA (1%).

The global findings show that Facebook is the most widely used social media brand and also the most widely used brand for news. This is mirrored in Ireland. However, there is a slight decrease in the use of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube for news in contrast to increases for messaging platforms like WhatsApp and Snapchat. Viber, which was particularly popular in Ireland in 2015, lost out to competitors in 2016.

Fig. 90 Social media brand use for news over a week 2015 and 2016

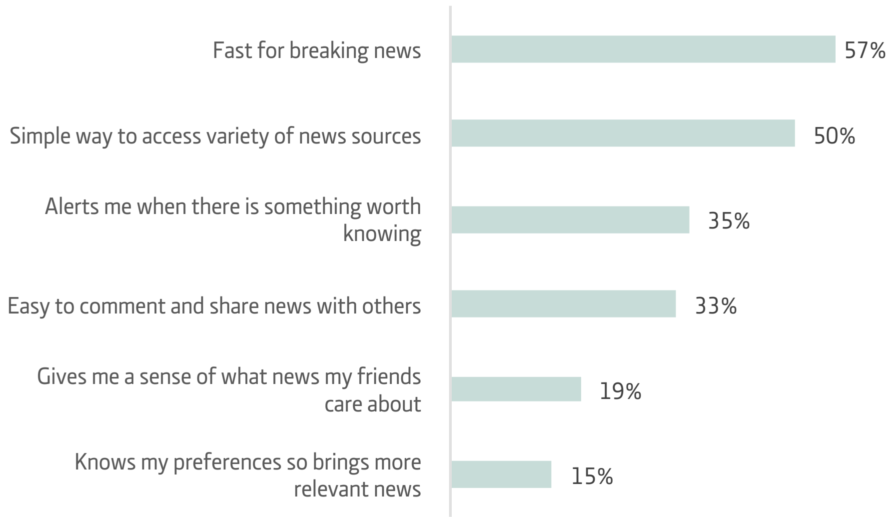


Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week?

What do people value about news on social media?

Among those who value social media for breaking news, 68% are Twitter users and 58% are Facebook users.

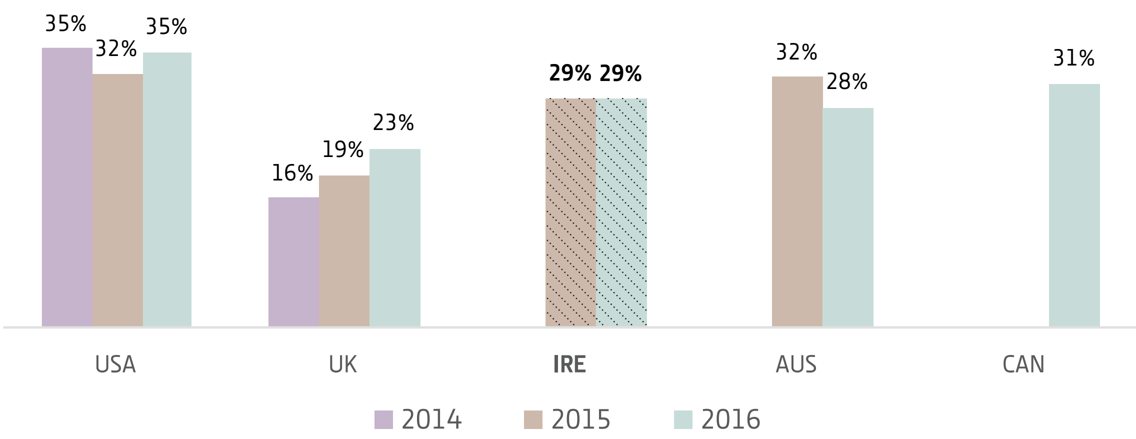
Fig. 91 Reasons for using social media for news 2016



What are the main reasons you use social media as a source of news?

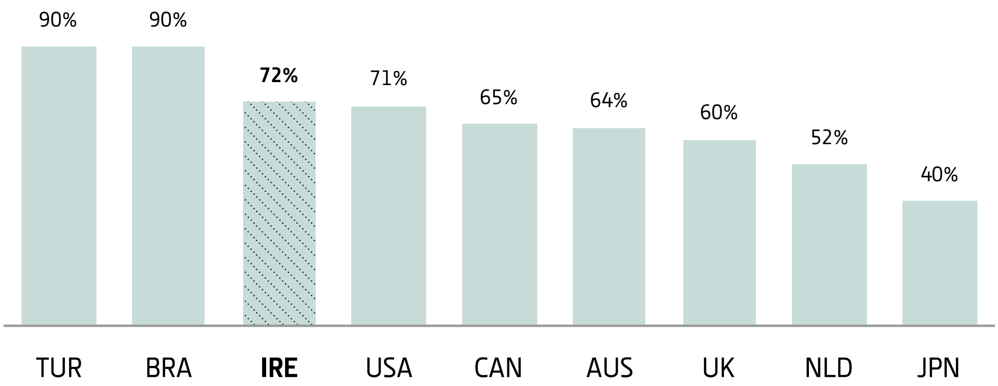
Social engagement with news

Fig. 92 Social engagement with news



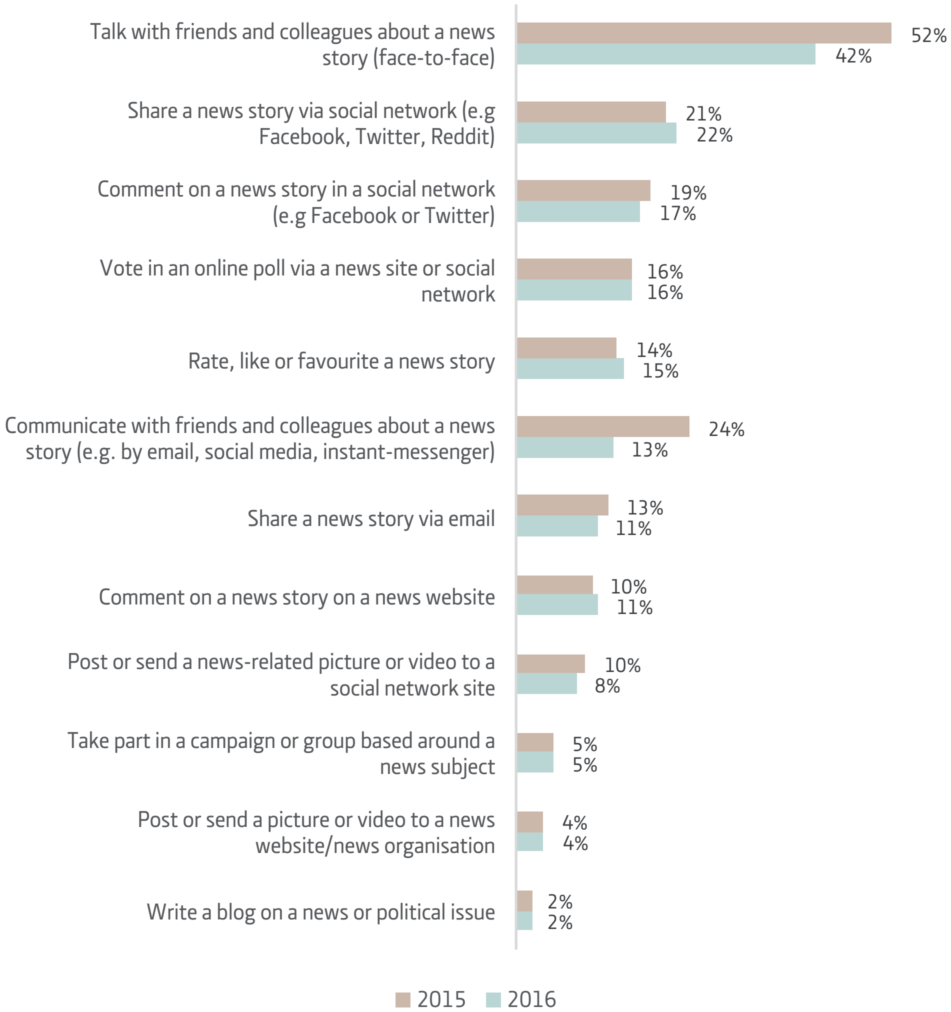
Do you participate in news coverage via social media?

Fig. 93 Participation in news – selected countries



During an average week do you share or participate in news coverage?

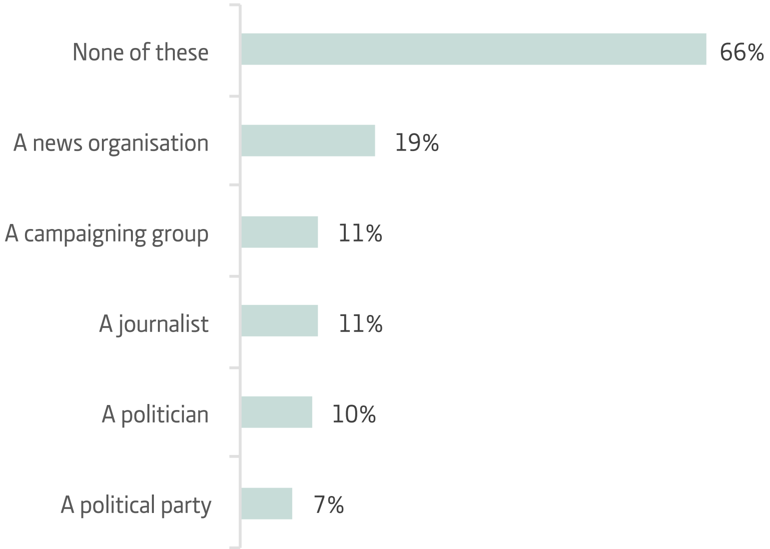
Fig. 94 Participation with news 2015 and 2016



During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage?

How consumers participate and engage with news is changing news distribution. Social engagement increases reach as users rate, share and comment on content. Participation in some types of news is down. There were fewer people talking about news in person or on instant messaging in the period under review. However, sharing news increased by one per cent as did commenting on news websites.

Fig. 95 Who or what do news consumers follow on social media?

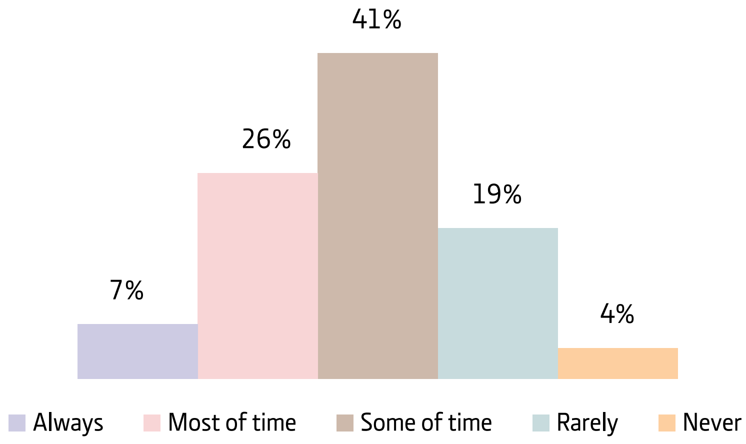


News organisations and journalists are investing more resources in distributing news on social media. But are social media users engaging? Twitter's reach and return for news publishers is not as valuable as once thought. Because its users have a high interest in news, it is regarded as an important place for news organisations and reporters to be seen. Facebook is seen as a more private platform for journalists, but news organisations report much higher engagement on their brand pages there (Siaperia, & Suiter, Social Media Research, June 2016).

So, who do Irish users follow on social media? Some 19% of social users follow news organisations. Journalists are less popular at 11%. Irish social media news users seem to prefer their political content mediated, with more following news organisations and journalists than politicians and political parties.

Brand awareness on social media

Fig. 96 Brand awareness on social media



When you use social media for news, how often do you notice the brand that supplied the content?

Social media brands are increasingly developing ways to make news content native on the platform, encouraging users to stay on the social media site and not click through to the website of the news producer. News producers are increasingly locating their content off their own websites and placing it on social media. But with few users aware of news brands on social media, there are questions for publishers about the return on investment when placing news content off-platform.

Fig. 97 Brand aware profile of social networks in Ireland 2016

	Facebook	LinkedIn	Twitter	YouTube	WhatsApp
Always	9%	5%	10%	9%	3%
Most of the time	28%	34%	39%	28%	30%
Some of the time	41%	40%	31%	45%	43%
Rarely	17%	19%	14%	15%	16%
Never	4%	–	2%	2%	4%
Don't know	2%	2%	3%	2%	4%

When you use social media for news, how often do you notice the brand that supplied the content?

Conclusion

News producers are increasingly relying on Facebook to reach the largest possible social media audience. But not enough is known about how Facebook selects news for users' timelines. News producers experiment with different posting patterns on Facebook to maintain optimum results in terms of reach. Facebook's analytics facilitate some understanding of how content performs and how it is engaged with.

News publishers tend to have presence on multiple platforms. Depending on available resources, they seek to engage audiences across different social-formats such as the lifestyle and visual-based Instagram; fun and video-based Snapchat; business and slideshow-based LinkedIn; and video-based YouTube. The speed of breaking news on social media is its most attractive feature for Irish audiences followed by the range of sources it offers.

The combined activities of sharing, commenting and liking news is a new engagement metric by which the success of news content is measured. It is good news for Irish news producers that Irish consumers are among the most actively engaged with news on social media in the English-speaking world.

However, only a third of Irish news users are categorised as brand aware on social platforms, the most pervasive of which are Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. A third say they are largely unaware of brands on social media. Most notice the producer of news content some of the time. This presents issues for news producers who want active brand aware communities on social media as brand identity is diluted in the vast sea of competing news and entertainment content on social media.

The Paradox of Activity: participation and ad blockers

Dr Glen Fuller, University of Canberra

In the two strategy documents produced by RTÉ in 2015 – the RTÉ Statement of Strategy 2015-2019[1] and the Public Service Statement 2015[2] – two main audiences are identified. The first is traditional audiences engaging with RTÉ content through traditional media technology (radio and broadcast television). The second involves 'new' audiences accessing RTÉ content through 'new media' technologies (video on demand services, online content via smartphone and so on). In both of these models the content itself is basically the same. There is a third type of audience emerging in all national markets that bypasses traditional technologies of access and traditional forms of media content.

New participatory media cultures are premised on producing, circulating and engaging with content in new ways. There is some recognition of this in the Statement of Strategy 2015-2019 document:

Audience behaviour is increasingly changing from passive reception to active content discovery. Broadcasters and media organisations must adapt to this new dynamic. The influence of social media in content discovery is growing.[3]

'Discovery' in this context does not (or should not) simply mean 'discovering' the broadcast-based content that RTÉ has always produced, for example. Plus, there are many different ways of being 'active'. Just over half of respondents to this year's Digital News Report: Ireland survey indicated that they use social media as a source of news (51.4%) but only 30.8% nominated social media as one of the ways they came across news. The difference between the two figures – 20.6% of total news consumers or 40% of social media users who use social media as a source of news – are discovering news somewhere else other than social media.

1 RTÉ Statement of Strategy 2015-2019
https://static.rasset.ie/documents/about/rte-statement-of-strategy.pdf

2 Public Service Statement 2015
https://static.rasset.ie/documents/about/rte-public-service-statement-english.pdf

3 RTÉ Statement of Strategy 2015-2019, page 4.
https://static.rasset.ie/documents/about/rte-statement-of-strategy.pdf

Irish journalists are amongst the heaviest users of social media in the world.[4] Does this mean that Irish news consumers are accessing news via journalists and news-based media enterprises with social media accounts? The 2016 survey data show 66% of respondents indicate they do not follow key groups which represent a significant slice of the explicitly political media participants in the public sphere e.g. a news organisation, journalist, political party, politician or campaigning group. This is not distributed evenly across all audience segments. A key difference is between those who actively engage ('positive participators') and those who engage very little online ('passive consumers'). The percentage of 'passive consumers' who do not follow any of these key groups is 84%, while only 47% of the 'positive participator' segment do not.

The Indecon analysis of the commercial context of Irish media in 2013 indicated expected growth in online advertising through to 2016 but did not specify the extent of this growth.[5] More recent figures indicate that Ireland's digital advertising market has grown faster than any other national market in Europe.[6] The core tension is now over to what extent audiences employ ad blocking software.[7] There has been a recent trend by news-based media companies to block access to those consumers use ad blockers.[8]

More than a third (36.5%) of 'positive participator' news consumers are currently using an ad blocker while just under one quarter (24.4%) of the 'passive consumer' segment currently use some version of ad blocking software. Ben Williams, communications and operations manager at Adblocker Plus's parent company Eyeo, has suggested that it is a form of user control.[9] Just how 'active' news-based media companies want their audiences to be?

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4 http://www.irishtimes.com/business/media-and-marketing/irish-journalists-among-world-s-heaviest-social-media-users-study-finds-1.2101471

5 Indecon Economic Analysis of the Advertising Market in Ireland http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/communications/Lists/Publications%20Documents/Five%20Year%20Review%20of%20Funding%20of%20PSB/Economic%20Analysis%20of%20Advertising%20Market%20-%20Indecon%20Report.pdf

6 Digital Adspend hits high of €340m with 29% growth in 2015, IAB & PwC Adspend Study reveals http://iabireland.ie/digital-adspend-hits-high-of-e340m-with-29-growth-in-2015-iab-pwc-adspend-study-reveals/

7 Irish audiences are evidently engaged with the technical, economic and social issues relating to ad blocking https://www.reddit.com/r/ireland/comments/2o5mew/rte_doesnt_seem_to_like_adblockers_anymore/

8 Ad blocking: Where will we be in five years' time? http://www.newsworks.org.uk/news-and-opinion/Page-32/ad-blocking-where-will-we-be-in-five-years-time-

9 Adblock Plus responds to UK culture secretary's 'ad blocking is a modern-day protection racket' jibe http://www.businessinsider.com.au/adblock-plus-responds-to-uk-culture-secretarys-ad-blocking-is-a-modern-day-protection-racket-jibe-2016-3?r=US&IR=T

Trust: a conundrum in the age of social media

Dr Jane Suiter, Dublin City University

If there is common factor underlying sentiment towards politics, pubic institutions and media in the past decade it is one of declining trust. It is all a long way from the mid 20^{th} century when the news media were among the most respected institutions. For example, a famous 1972 poll found that 72% of Americans trusted CBS Evening News anchor Walter Cronkite more than any other public figure[1]. Gay Byrne no doubt would have scored as high or higher.

This decline in trust in both media and politics has been accompanied by the fragmentation of both the news media and the party system. Just as anti-establishment politicians are on the rise so too are alternative news outlets. We now have a proliferation of talk shows, online news, opinion from Tumblr and Reddit and many entertainment-themed news options. The news media now compete with this cacophony of voices and demands for more partisan or entertaining styles of news. The news media also face a citizenry that is more critically engaged and a citizenry characterised by "sceptical knowing"as argued by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2010)[2]. At the same time, news media are under more fire from politicians, activists, and pundits. One result is that we now tend to trust fact checkers more than traditional media[3].

But why do the media need to be trusted? Is it as important as it was once thought to be? In many ways the question refers back to the normative ideal of an informed citizenry, willing to hold the government to account. A kind of democratic utopia. But of course there are few who argue that the mid 20^{th} century was such a place. even the normative ideals of the informed citizen may need to be augmented to reflect changing conceptions of trust in online and social media. As a result, simple questions about whether consumers trust the news media they

1 Why Is Everyone Mad at the Mainstream Media? Princeton University Press. Accessed http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/s9607.pdf 26 May 2016

2 Kovach, B. & Rosenstiel, T. (2010). Blur: How to know what's true in the age of information overload. Bloomsbury, New York

3 Reader `Tend to trust Fact checker more than mainstream media. Poynter http://www.poynter.org/2016/readers-trust-fact-checkers-more-than-traditional-media-but-not-blindly-new-study-finds/411960/ 26 May 2016

consume belies the complexity of the issue. As Fisher[4] asks Is the news consumer being asked if they trust the processes of journalism to produce reliable, accurate interpretation of events as suggested by Blöbaum[5]? Or perhaps they believe they are being asked if they trust the person who shared it with them or even the algorithm that recommended it to them. In addition, there are a myriad of reasons for choices in consumption of media. Tsfati and Cappella[6] argued that people use media for a range of reasons other than the desire to be informed including to be entertained.

In an ideal world we would devise more survey question which could really get to the heart of these questions. A start was made in this year's DNR where we asked questions not only about respondents overall trust in their main brand choice, but also in journalists.

The headline results look positive; overall trust in media in Ireland has increased a little from last year. Around 50% trust the news – up from 46% last year – placing Ireland 8th out of 26 countries in the Reuters DNI report. When we broke this down by brand there were few differences. Indeed, levels of trust in both traditional and newer digital brands were similar – between 46% and 48% – with broadcasters receiving only a slightly higher vote of confidence at around 52%. Again this is somewhat surprising as the presence of a large public sector broadcaster is sometimes expected to increase trust levels in journalism generally. In other words, the BBC effect. But in Ireland it appears there were few headline differences between brands either traditional, digital borns or broadcasters. In other words, there may be something more systematic happening[7].

At first glance it appears that the big difference is almost generational; or at least the differences between digitalists and traditionalists[8] may not do much to explain the low levels of trust. Ireland, like Australia, is an English-speaking, tech savvy nation with high rates of social media engagement and so on. These digitalists tend to trust less, while older news consumers tend to trust more.

But it is also important to take a step back. As Fisher[9] highlights, it is unclear what question respondents are actually answering when they are asked about trust. Trust in what exactly? As her research posits, trust is an amalgam of three components: *source credibility* or trust in the provider

4 Fisher Caroline (2016) The trouble with 'trust' in news media ANZCA conference July 2016 Newcastle University, New South Wales

5 Blöbaum, B 2014, Trust and Journalism in a Digital Environment: Working Paper: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Oxford University. Oxford, U.K.

6 Tsfati, Y. & Cappella, J 2005, Why Do People Watch News They Do Not Trust? The Need for Cognition as a Moderator in the Association Between News Media Skepticism and Exposure. Media Psychology, 7(3), 251-271

7 Of course, in some ways the question is limited as it asks only about the brand you consume. There may well be an element of confirmation bias here with respondents less likely to admit that they do not trust the main brand they consume. In addition, there were smaller numbers favouring the less popular brands so further measures may need to be developed to consider this.

8 In this research, digitalists are those who said an online source is their main source of news while traditionalists are those who said an offline source is their main source of news. Those in the midle are traditionalists who use two or more digital devices for news at or digitalists who have used one or fewer devices for news in the last week. Of course, to a certain extent these are arbitrary distinctions, but they do appear to be reaonsbale predictors of some expected behvaiours.

9 Fisher Caroline (2016) The trouble with 'trust' in news media. ANZCA conference, July 2016 Newcastle University, New South Wales

of the information; *media credibility*, also called medium or channel credibility, or trust in the medium through which the news information is relayed; and *message credibility* or trust in the information.

So how does this play out in Ireland? Are all of these elements important? Does one matter more than another? Our staring point is that some 47% trust news organisations (the medium) and 37% journalists (the source). In order to delve a little deeper into what actually lies being these headline results in Ireland we conducted some multivariate analysis. The results presented graphically below are preliminary but may be a useful direction for future research.

While we are led to believe that being a digitalist is important in terms of determining whether or not a person trusts the media, when we control for trust in the source (journalists) and trust in the medium (news organisations) in a multivariate model the impact disappears.

We thus need to understand what underpins trust in the organisation, our most important predictor for trust? Unsurprisingly trust in the journalist is important but so too is a belief that the organisation is free from political control. Interestingly, when it comes to overall levels of trust in a particular organisation, concerns around commercial control do not matter to a significant extent. In other words, it appears that concerns about political control are what matters – at least to Irish news consumers. They worry less about commercial control.

We thus turn to the third component of the model, trust in the message or information. This is modelled as the type of material which the person prioritises. The 12 types of news contained in this question include: international news, political news, regional news, business and economic news, entertainment and culture, lifestyle, health or education, arts and culture, sports, science and technology, crime and the environment.

The result here may be instructive: we find that those which have a significant impact on trust are an interest in crime and an interest in business news – both of which predict lower levels of trust. In other words, those who particularly seek out business or crime news display lower levels of trust than others. Nonetheless, the impact of all of these are dwarfed by the importance of the perception that an outlet is free from political influence, which has the largest independent influence even controlling for age, gender and whether or not a respondent is a digitalist.

Putting all this together we can tentatively say that in Ireland in 2016 the main factors which drive trust are trust in the journalist and trust in the medium, which was largely determined by a belief that it as free from political influence. Trust in the message is least significant among those whose primary interests lie in crime and business. That is a conundrum which will be very interesting to explore across other countries and with more varied methods.

Dr Jane Suiter, Director Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University

Stability Amidst Turmoil: publics and news consumption

Dr Eugenia Siapera, Dublin City University

A close examination of the Digital News Reports since 2012, reveals that rather than any kind of shift in direction or qualitative changes, we are witnessing the consolidation and intensification of trends that have been present for some time. Social media have now consolidated their presence as a main news source, mobile access is a given, video is steadily rising, and news consumers are still reluctant to pay for news. The relative stability in trends in news consumption allows a more in depth look into the continuities and patterns that have remained stable even at times of great turmoil for journalism and the news media. Adopting a macro perspective, looking at continuities in broader patterns of news consumption, may usefully complement more micro analyses focusing on small differences from one year to the next. Evidence suggests that interest in news has remained stable. Recorded news preferences are more or less the same and the gaps observed in previous years primarily in terms of age are still present. What is remarkable in this is not so much that things haven't changed in the last year or so but that these patterns have remained more or less stable across decades, even as the media landscape has been subjected to seismic changes.

Looking back at two decades of research on news consumption in the years 1986-2006 by the Pew Center, Michael Robinson (2007)[1] also noted limited changes in the appetite for news in the US public, which seems to follow a normal distribution: the majority are interested in the news with about one quarter being very interested and roughly about another quarter being uninterested. Similarly, in the Digital News Report we find high levels of interest in the news consistently across countries throughout the years in which the question was asked (2013-2016). Although patterns between the various countries differed. A similar consistency concerns the age of those interested: younger people tend to be less interested and older people more: it seems that interest in news grows with age.

1 Robinson, M., 2007, Two Decades of American News Preferences in the Pew Center for People and the Press, available at: http://www.pewresearch.org/files/old-assets/pdf/NewsInterest1986-2007.pdf

If we zoom into news preferences, the patterns are stable there as well. Publics tend to be more interested in local, national, international, and financial/business news than in entertainment and science and technology news. Again, in different countries the percentages vary, but there is continuity across the years. For example, the Irish public is very interested in business news and economics news, while there is less interest in news about entertainment and sport. And this is the same in Robinson's review of US news consumption patterns: in the years 1986-2006 there has been remarkably little variation in the kinds of news that interest the US public: money and politics top the list and tabloid or entertainment news are at the bottom, a pattern that is notably similar in the Digital News Report of the last few years. What's more gender divisions in news preferences tend to be relatively stable too. In Ireland, women seem to be less interested in politics and sport, and more interested in entertainment and health.

These continuities in patterns of interest and news preferences are important especially if we contrast them with the turmoil in the media in the last few decades. The last thirty years have seen immense changes in the media and media technologies, from the introduction of cable and satellite network news in the 1990s, to online news media in the early 2000s, to social media now. Through cable and satellite news, publics were able to watch the news whenever and wherever they were. Online news continued this trend but allowed news readers more control through interactive and customizable news items and hyperlinks. Finally, social media enabled users – no longer merely readers – to participate in the process of news-making and news distribution. The last few years of the Digital News Reports have shown what users have done with the various social media platforms, and traced the steady rise of social media as an important news source. The 2016 report is the latest in the line of reports that show the increasing dominance of Facebook and other social media platforms, which have begun occupying the space previously held by journalists and news publishers; a move that is rightly raising important questions regarding their role and the future of journalism (Bell, 2015)[2].

In the midst of all this turmoil and change, the overall stability in levels of interest in news and preferences for news is indeed remarkable. It seems that regardless of the extent to which they can participate, interact with, and explore the news, publics are not more, or less, interested in it. Moreover, it shows that regardless of the platform, packaging and style of the news – whether couched in Buzzfeed's youth-oriented style, the formal and detached style of public service news, or the 'affective'[3] news plus opinion/comment style of most social media platforms – publics are not moved to consume more news nor do they display higher levels of interest in the news. These observations point to the operation of an intrinsic kind of motivation[4] in news consumption: people consume the

2 Bell, E. (2015). The Rise of Mobile and Social News – and What it Means for Journalism, in the Digital News Report 2015, available at: http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/essays/2015/the-rise-of-mobile-and-social-news/

3 Papacharissi, Z. (2015). Toward new journalism(s): Affective news, hybridity, and liminal spaces. Journalism Studies, 16(1), 27-40.

4 See Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. Contemporary educational psychology, 25(1), 54-67.

news because they find it personally rewarding rather than because they are enticed by gimmicks or superficial or aesthetic factors.

If this is indeed the case, then it can explain how the main impact of the proliferation of platforms and types of news outlets has been the fragmentation of publics rather than any change in the degree of interest or in their preferences in certain kinds of news. From the point of view of the news public, accessing and consuming the news appears to be a seamless practice across platforms and often across news brands in ways that reflect or match their everyday routines. This echoes the findings of Couldry, Livingstone and Markham's (2010)[5] study on public connection, which showed that people have established routines around media use that follow their work or lifestyle patterns.

This may help account for one of the key findings of the Digital News Report in 2016. Despite relatively large numbers consuming news on social media, and despite a majority of respondents declaring an interest in the news, only 19% (in Ireland) follow a news brand on social and more tend to come across news through serendipity. Only 43% of those who claim to be very interested in news, are likely to notice the brand on social media; among those not interested in news only about 20% notice the brand. It seems that news publics are not so concerned with where their news comes from and they may not even register this at all. This is important if we take into account recent findings indicating that news publishers are putting a lot of effort in establishing and promoting their news brand across social media platforms (Siapera and Suiter, 2016)[6].

What might we conclude from all this? Publics appear very set in their ways and despite colossal changes in how news is produced, packaged and distributed, news interest remains stable. However, this is not necessarily bad news for publishers: it denotes that public interest in news is high and has remained so despite the many other kinds of contents circulating in social media. Moreover, it shows that journalism can focus on what it does best – producing news – and worry less about whether publics will be interested in it. This is not meant to discourage journalists and news publishers from thinking about creative and innovative ways of doing journalism, but to reassure them that what they are doing works. Now, whether they profit from it or not is a different question.

5 Couldry, N., Livingstone, S., & Markham, T. (2010). Media consumption and public engagement: Beyond the presumption of attention, Palgrave.

6 Siapera E. and Suiter, J., (2016) Doing journalism in a changing media ecosystem, paper presented at the Newsocracy conference, June 3, Dublin.

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