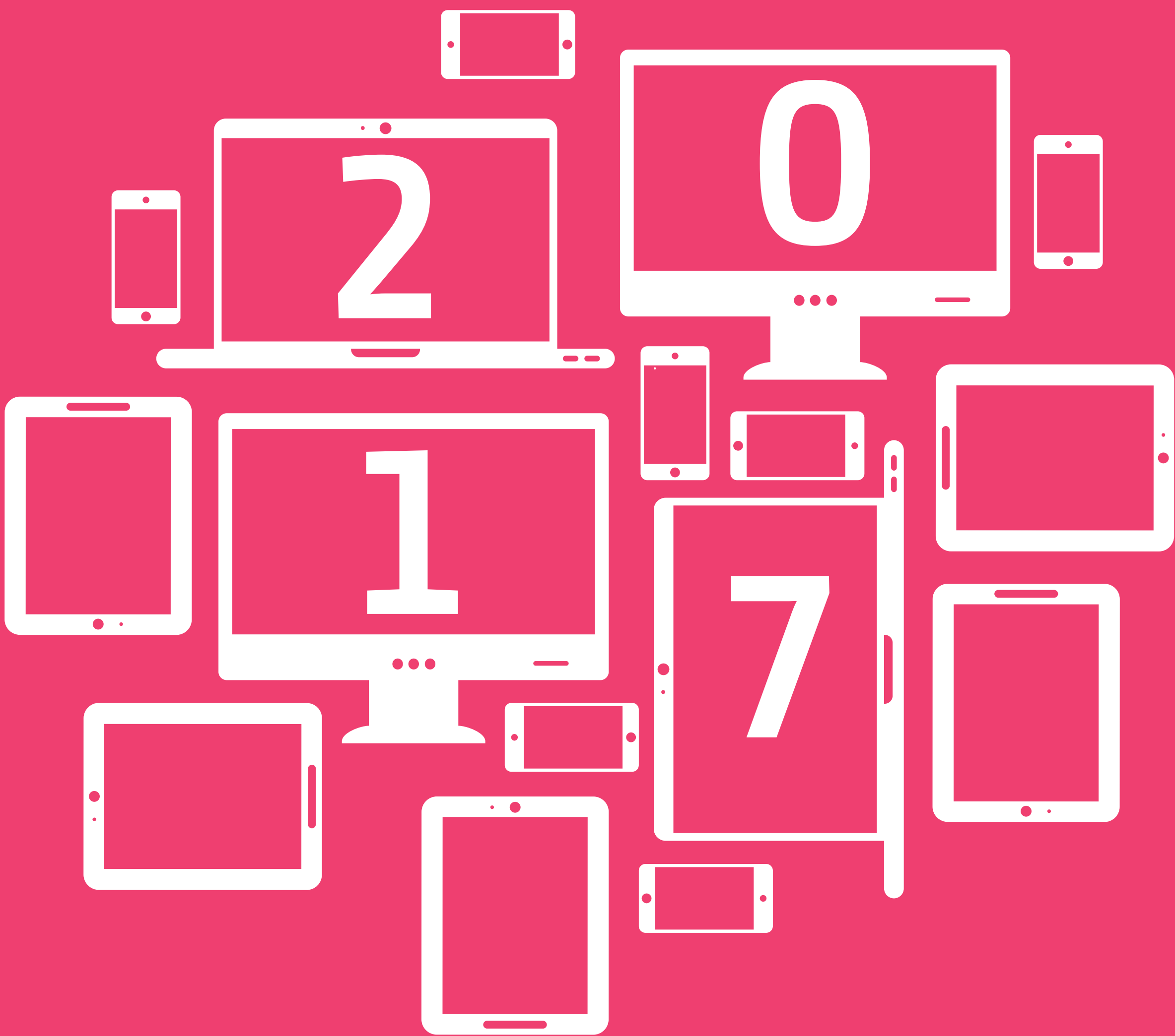
Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Ireland)



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THE INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE MEDIA & JOURNALISM

DCU Institute for Future Media & Journalism

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

BAI
ÚDARÁS CRAOLACHÁIN NA hÉIREANN
BROADCASTING AUTHORITY OF IRELAND

Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017 (Ireland)

Paul McNamara, Kevin Cunningham, Eileen Culloty *and* **Jane Suiter**

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BAI Foreword

Unfolding events over the last 12 months have highlighted again the importance of credible news for the functioning of a democratic society. Promoting a plurality of voices, viewpoints, outlets and sources in Irish media is central to the BAI Mission as set out in our new Strategy Statement 2017-2019. The provision of contemporary research on how audiences are interacting with the array of news outlets and sources available today supports the achievement of the objectives and outcomes that flow from this Mission. In this context, the Reuters Digital News research project is a critical building block both in terms of what it tells us about the position today but perhaps more importantly about where we are headed.

The BAI is delighted to partner with the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) in Dublin City University to publish this third Ireland specific report to accompany the larger global report published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. While there are many similarities in how our digital societies are developing across the globe, there are equally country specific trends that need to be identified and understood. This local and global perspective on similar issues is one of the most valuable aspects of this research project.

As you will see from the report, the 2017 data again highlights the challenging environment for traditional media and the growth of digital offerings fuelled by new technology and the more digital literate society. The generational and demographic divides identified in previous reports continue to be a concern for the effective operation of media pluralism in a democratic society. These are complex challenges that require imaginative solutions. The first step in this process is recognising and accepting current realities and this research project is making a significant contribution here.

As with previous reports, the data poses as many questions as it answers and the debate in relation to some of these areas is developed in the text and the accompanying essays. For example, the research shows that Ireland's level of trust in news is higher than the international average. However, trust needs to be balanced by an ability to critically evaluate the information being provided. Dr Jane Suiter's essay further analyses the story of trust in news in Ireland.

This report is part of a growing body of research being supported by the BAI in the context of its commitment to ensure that the mix of voices, opinions and sources of news available for Irish audiences remains strong. For more information please see our website www.bai.ie.

Michael O'Keeffe
BAI Chief Executive
June 2017

Digital News Report (Ireland) Foreword

Welcome to the third annual Irish Digital News Report which has been designed to capture the changing ecology of news in Ireland. As the largest on-going comparative study of news consumption in the world, the international report is an important indicator of shifting global trends.

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.

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.

Through the annual Irish Digital News Report and associated research projects, the DCU FuJo Institute is establishing a critical knowledge base for the Irish media industry. For more information about this work, please visit www.fujomedia.eu

Jane Suiter
Director, Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo)
June 2017

Methodology

This study has been commissioned to understand how news is currently being consumed globally with a particular focus on digital news consumption and devices used to access the news.

Core questions were asked in all 36 countries to a nationally representative audience to provide an international comparison. This is a study for the Reuters Institute made possible with the support of the following organisations and academic partners from the Hans Bredow Institute, Hamburg, Navarra University in Spain, Roskilde University in Denmark, University of Canberra, Dublin City University, University of Laval in Montreal, University of Tampere in Finland, University of Bergen in Norway.

Method:

- The research was conducted online in January/February 2017.
- The data was weighted to targets set on age and gender, region, newspaper readership and social grade to reflect the total population. The sample is reflective of the population who have access to the internet. Respondents were screened out if they had not accessed news in the last month.
- A comprehensive online questionnaire was designed with input from all stakeholders to capture all aspects of news consumption.
- The 36 markets were split into three sets according to geography.

Country	Starting sample	Non News user %	Final Sample Size	Total population	Internet penetration
Ireland	2,083	3.9	2,002	4,713,993	77%

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: Trust in the Media and Politics, Climate Change in Irish Media, EU COST research on populist political communication in the media and an Irish Research Council project on the Irish citizens assembly. A former journalist, Jane was previously Economics Editor at The Irish Times.

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, Chair of its MA in Journalism programme, and is a former Head of School. He formerly worked as a business journalist at the Irish Independent and as a news journalist at the Evening Herald.

Kevin Cunningham leads on Targeting and Analysis for the British Labour Party. His work focuses on campaign strategy. With Michael Marsh of TCD and Simon Hix of LSE, Kevin also started pollwatch, the most prominent set of predictions ahead of the Europe elections. He completed his PhD at Trinity College, Dublin.

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 misinformation and digital literacy. Her research interests examine visual and factual digital media.

Caroline Fisher is an Assistant Professor in journalism at the University of Canberra. Her research interests examine political communication, trust in news media, and transparency in journalism. Prior to academia she was a reporter, presenter and producer for ABC News and Radio National; and, spent three years as a ministerial media adviser to Anna Bligh in the Queensland government.

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

The Irish digital media market is in a phase of consolidation with few major developments over the past 12 months. In terms of yearly comparisons, it is worth noting that data collection for the previous 2016 report occurred during the general election campaign and we may assume that the election increased interest in, and exposure to, news. Consequently, a period of consolidation with relatively small changes is to be expected.

The slow decline of TV and newspaper consumption continues, particularly among middle-aged groups between 35 and 45. Online news consumption remains flat while mobile is down a little from last year. There is little change regarding the devices people use to access news; as in previous years, there is a slight decrease in the popularity of computers.

The major consumption shift is in the use of private messenger apps, such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, which are used more in Ireland than in many other countries. Other platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, have lost some traction for news consumption since 2015. The popularity of WhatsApp in particular has grown significantly over each of the past three years. In terms of general use, rather than news use specifically, some 40 percent are now using WhatsApp, 37 percent use Facebook Messenger, 19 percent use Viber and 15 percent use Snapchat.

In recent years, the Irish broadcasting market underwent a number of changes. UTV was taken over twice in a ten month period: first by ITV in October 2015 and then by Liberty Global in July 2016. In September, UTV's radio holdings were acquired by News UK. The local radio station TXFM (formerly Phantom), in which Communicorp had a stake, closed in October 2016. No other local or regional radio stations closed and no new stations were launched.

There were no closures in the newspaper sector and a new national newspaper was launched in June 2017. The Times Ireland digital edition expanded into newspaper format, going against the more usual hardcopy to online trend. However, comparing the last six months of 2016 with the same period a year earlier, all major titles suffered a decline in circulation. The two major newspapers of record, The Irish Times and the Irish Independent, were both down 10 percent. In September 2016, Independent News and Media announced its intention to acquire the regional newspaper group Celtic Media. However, both companies abandoned the planned takeover by mutual consent in June 2017, just ahead of a ministerial determination on the proposed acquisition. The BAI had conducted a media merger examination of the proposal earlier in the year and presented its report to the Minister for Communication in May 2017.

Although overall print sales declined by around 6 percent, there is strong growth for digital editions. The Irish Times Digital Edition, a digital replica of the daily newspaper, doubled its readership between the first half of 2015 and the first half of 2016. Maintaining the metered paywall model, new subscription packages were introduced in February 2015. Independent News and Media increased its digital revenue by around 20 percent, which goes some way to offset the continued decline in print advertising.

Within the digital-only sector, Maximum Media, owners of Her.ie and Joe.ie, are expanding into the UK market while moving away from their original online magazine formats in favour of video and podcast content. More broadly, the central debates about digital media in Ireland concern the circulation of fake news, particularly in relation to the UK's European Union referendum and the US presidential election.

Fake news and misinformation received considerable attention by all major newspaper titles with over 100 stories addressing the issue between October 2016 and March 2017. In addition, a very small right-wing site, TheLiberal.ie, was accused of manufacturing news on race riots, among other controversies, and is currently the subject of legal action.

Another major issue concerns the role of the Irish data protection commissioner in protecting the privacy of European citizens. The court case 'Data Protection Commissioner v. Facebook Ireland Limited & Maximilian Schrems' concluded on March 15, 2017, but judgment was reserved for a later date. In these proceedings, a referral is sought to the Court of Justice of the European Union concerning the validity of allowing the transfer of personal data from the EU to the US.

Section One
Irish News Consumers

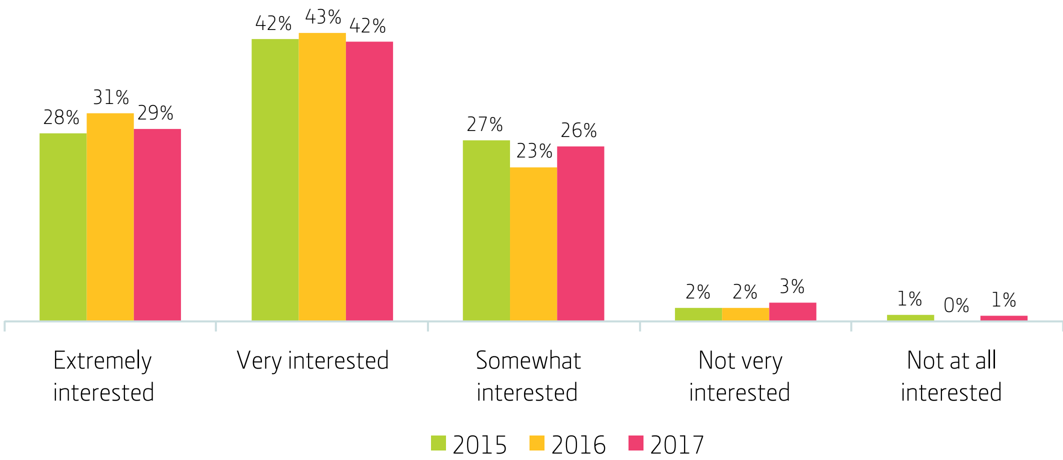
This section describes the context of news consumption in Ireland and introduces the Irish news consumer. The levels of interest and engagement with news in Ireland are reported along with demographic breakdowns. Conceptual groups based on engagement, participation and digitalism provide insight into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

1.1 Interest and access

Interest in News

Irish consumers' interest in news was consistently high over the last three years. Seventy percent or more declared themselves extremely or very interested in news each year. At the other end of the spectrum, those not very or not at all interested in news were in low single percentage points each year. Predictably, the Irish election year of 2016 saw a slight increase in interest levels in news. Interest in news increases with age. The older the consumer, the greater the interest.

Fig. 1 Interest in news 2015 – 2017



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%	29%	30%	34%
Very interested	33%	39%	39%	43%	48%
Somewhat interested	42%	30%	29%	25%	17%
Not very interested	7%	4%	2%	2%	1%
Not at all interested	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%

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

Avoiding the News

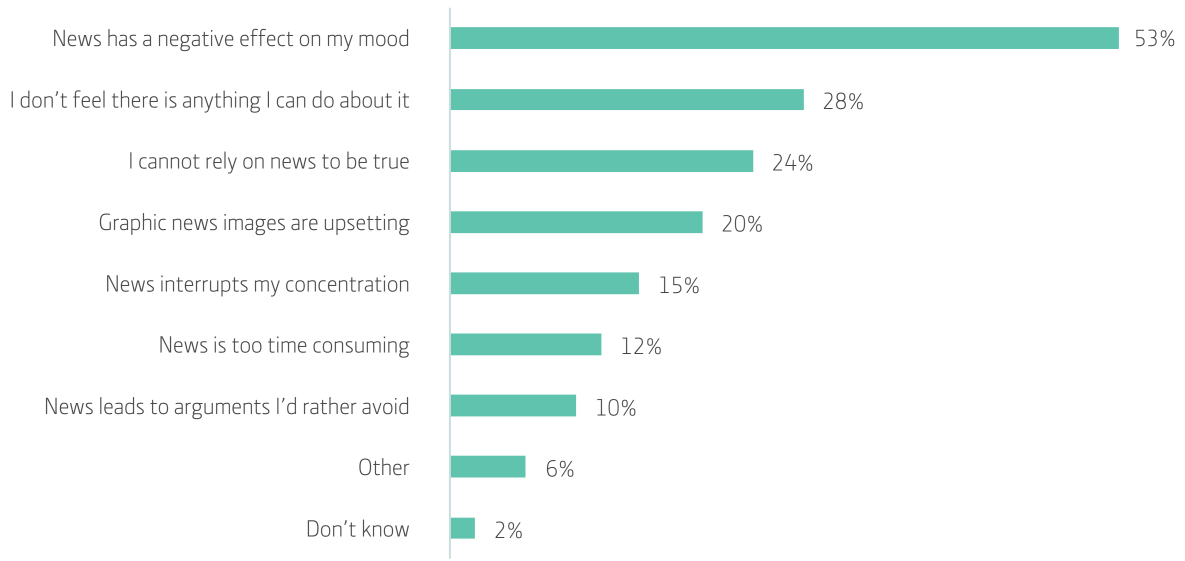
Younger people are more likely to avoid the news than older groups. Forty-one percent of Irish consumers never avoid the news. The three main reasons for avoiding the news are its negative impact on mood (53 percent), a perceived inability to do anything about the issues covered in the news (28 percent), and a perceived lack of certainty about the truth of news (24 percent).

Fig. 3 News avoidance by age 2017

	18–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55+
Often	6%	7%	6%	3%	2%
Sometimes	32%	31%	28%	19%	21%
Occasionally	33%	31%	28%	29%	23%
Total Ever Avoid	71%	69%	62%	51%	46%
Total Never Avoid	27%	29%	36%	47%	54%
Don't Know	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%

Do you actively avoid the news?

Fig. 4 Reasons for avoiding the news 2017

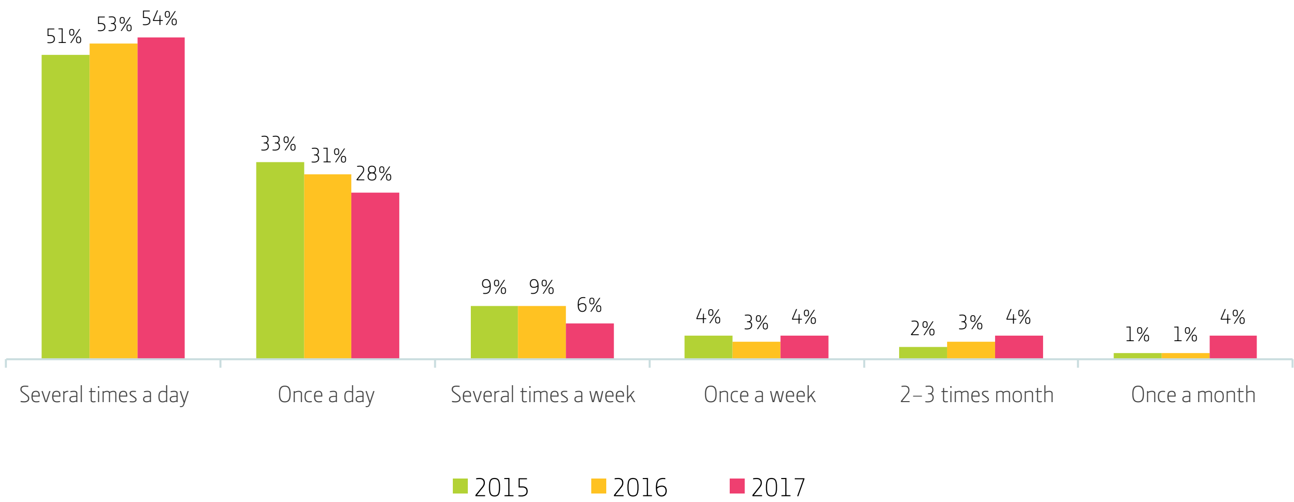


Why do you avoid the news?

Frequency of Access

The majority of Irish consumers access news several times a day. There is a small increase over the last three years. Some 80 percent of consumers check the news several times, or at least once, a day. Those accessing news less than once a day represent approximately 20 percent of consumers. There is relatively little difference across age cohorts as to how often news is accessed.

Fig. 5 Frequency of access



Typically, how often do you access news whether national, international, or regional/local news?

Fig. 6 Frequency of access by age 2017

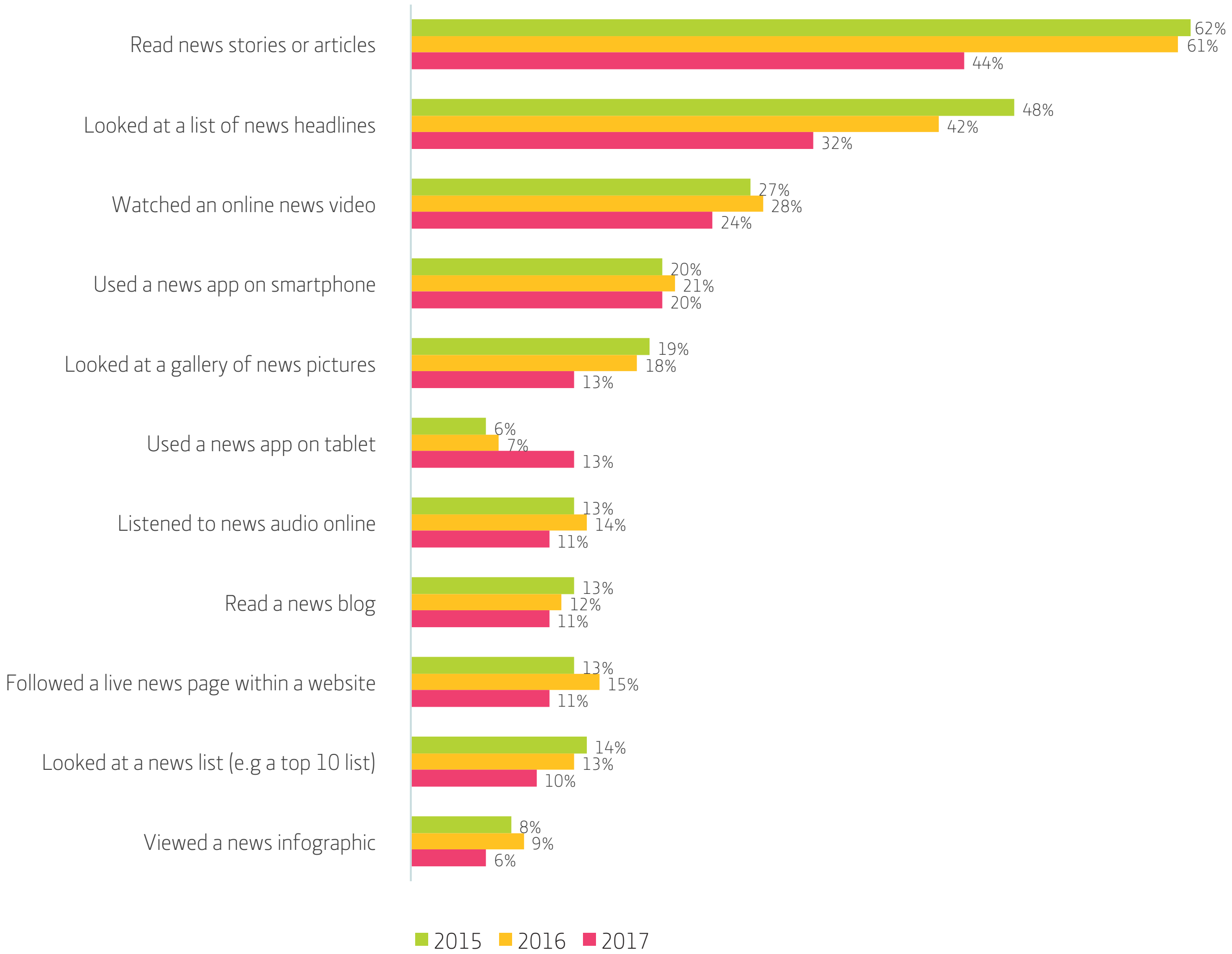
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
More than 10 times a day	4%	4%	9%	13%	7%
Between 6 and 10 times a day	7%	7%	9%	10%	14%
Between 2 and 5 times a day	47%	37%	33%	34%	26%
Total: Several Times a day	58%	48%	51%	57%	47%
Once a day	30%	30%	28%	25%	27%
2-3 days a week	5%	7%	6%	7%	9%
4-6 days a week	2%	5%	5%	5%	7%
Once a week	3%	5%	5%	4%	7%
Less often than once a week	4%	4%	5%	2%	3%

Types of News Accessed

The Irish access news in numerous ways. The most popular is to read a news story. This method dropped significantly in 2017 to 44 percent from over 60 percent in both 2016 and 2015. This reflects the time poverty of the modern news consumer which creates a reluctance to invest precious seconds and minutes in certain activities. To assist consumer time management, some news and content websites now inform their audience in advance how long a story or feature will take to read.

Scanning headlines was the next most popular way to access news, although this too has seen a steady decline in recent years. Using an app on a smartphone to access news remained steady across the three years surveyed in the 20 to 21 percent range. Infographics, at 6 percent in 2017, down from 9 percent the previous year, was the least popular of the 11 ways surveyed to access news.

Fig. 7 Types of online news accessed 2015–2017



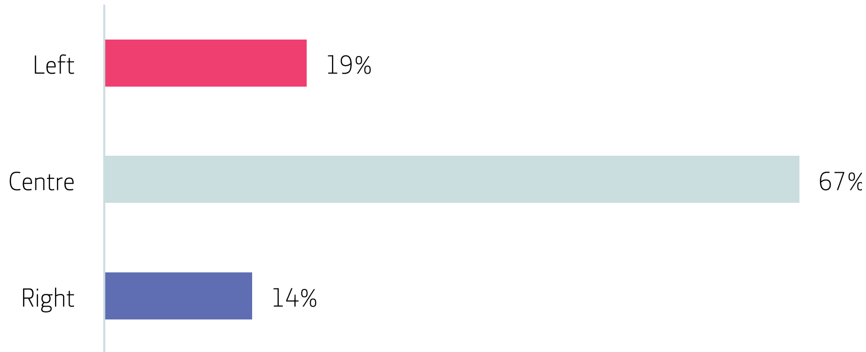
What type of news do you consume?

1.2 Political Profile

Political Leaning

More consumers declared themselves in each of the three political categories in 2017 than in the previous year. These increases are noteworthy and may indicate voter dissatisfaction with the perceived effectiveness of the Coalition Government's decision-making capacity since taking office in 2016. Nonetheless, Ireland is notably less partisan and more centrist than most other countries. This is likely due to the long-standing hegemony of the two centrist parties Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil.

Fig. 8 Political leaning



Where would you place yourself on the political scale of 'left', 'right' and 'centre'?

Political Leaning by News Brands

The political leaning of the consumers of various Irish news brands is largely unremarkable. Consumers of The Irish Times, TheJournal.ie and Today FM are the most left-wing whereas consumers of RTÉ Radio, Sky News and Irish Independent Online are the most right-wing. It would be unwise to read too much into these figures as the variance across major news brands is relatively small.

Fig. 9 Political leaning by news brands

Medium	Outlet	Very/Fairly left-wing	Slightly left-of-centre	Centre	Slightly right-of-centre	Very/Fairly right-wing
TV	RTÉ TV News	17%	23%	37%	15%	9%
	TV3 News	18%	18%	40%	13%	11%
	Sky News	17%	17%	38%	15%	12%
Newspaper	Irish Times	22%	27%	27%	15%	9%
	Local Paper	16%	20%	40%	14%	11%
	Irish Independent	14%	20%	40%	15%	11%
Radio	Today FM	21%	22%	36%	13%	8%
	Newstalk	18%	24%	33%	16%	9%
	RTÉ Radio 1, 2FM	17%	24%	30%	18%	10%
Online	TheJournal.ie	23%	23%	32%	15%	7%
	RTÉ News Online	17%	23%	35%	16%	9%
	Irish Independent Online	17%	22%	35%	16%	10%

Where would you place yourself on the political scale of 'left', 'right' and 'centre'?

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy refers to citizens' belief that they can understand and influence political affairs. Fifty-four percent of Irish news consumers felt they had a good understanding of political issues. Almost 30 percent were unable to declare the extent of their political understanding while some 16 percent indicated they did not have a good understanding of Irish political issues. Given the amount of political news in Irish media, these figures should give publishers cause for concern. The current extensive political coverage is apparently not providing some news consumers with sufficient clarity on political matters.

The figures are even more disappointing in relation to consumers' perception of their efficacy and ability to participate in politics. In total, some 66 percent felt they were not qualified to participate in politics or were unable to declare their abilities in this area.

Fig. 10 Perceptions of political understanding

Strongly agree	11%
Tend to agree	43%
Neither agree nor disagree	29%
Tend to disagree	11%
Strongly disagree	5%

To what extent do you agree with the statement 'I feel that I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues facing our country'?

Fig. 11 Perceptions of political efficacy

Strongly agree	8%
Tend to agree	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	35%
Tend to disagree	19%
Strongly disagree	12%

To what extent do you agree with the statement 'I consider myself well-qualified to participate in politics'?

Political Engagement

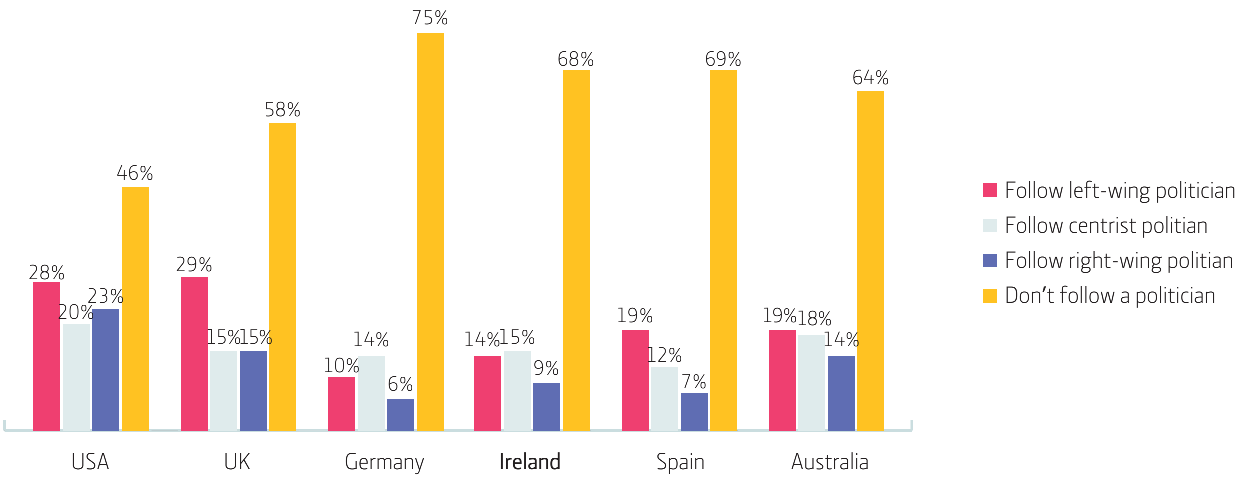
In a sample of six countries [Australia, Germany, Ireland, Spain, UK, USA], 37 percent of social media users 'followed' at least one politician or political party. Some 63 percent did not. National differences are striking here. Having employed social media on political campaigning for over a decade, the USA leads the list with 54 percent following a politician, equating to more than a third of the entire national online population. This contrasts sharply with Germany where just 25 percent do so. The level in the USA is more than twice that in Germany. The results for the other countries were: UK: 42 percent; Australia: 36 percent; Ireland: 32 percent; and Spain: 31 percent.

Fig. 12 Following politician/political party on social media Ireland

Yes, I follow a politician/political party on social media	32%
Yes, I follow Left leaning politicians/parties	53%
Yes, I follow Centre leaning politicians/parties	30%
Yes, I follow Right leaning politicians/parties)	43%

Do you follow a politician or political party on social media?

Fig. 13 Following politician/political party on social media International



Do you follow a politician or political party on social media?

In Ireland there are clear gender differences in following politicians on social media with only 26 percent of women doing so compared with 39 percent of men. Both are least likely to follow parties of the right. There are also clear age differences with the greatest numbers of those in the 25-34 age bracket following a party on social media (45 percent).

Fig. 14 Following politician/political party on social media by gender

	Male	Female
I don't follow a politician/political party	61	74
I follow a politician/political party on social media	39	26
I follow a politician/political party of the left	17	12
I follow a politician/political party of the centre	20	11
I follow a politician/political party of the right	12	7

Do you follow a politician or political party on social media?

Fig. 15 Following politician/political party on social media by age

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
I don't follow a politician/political party	64	55	69	72	77
I follow a politician/political party on social media	36	45	21	28	23
I follow a politician/political party of the left	19	18	14	11	11
I follow a politician/political party of the centre	14	23	15	14	10
I follow a politician/political party of the right	14	13	8	7	6

Do you follow a politician or political party on social media?

Of particular note to news organizations is the fact that 68 percent of respondents across the six countries surveyed indicated some level of dissatisfaction with media coverage of politics. In Ireland, political followers indicated that: (1) they preferred to hear directly from chosen politicians [48 percent]; (2) the information from politicians is more detailed than that from news providers [38 percent]; (3) media coverage is unfair and does not report on the politicians followed by respondents [29 percent]; and (4) the media tends to ignore the politician followed [25 percent]. See Page 99 *Bypassing the News Media: Politicians and Public Regaining Control?*

Fig. 16 Reasons for following politician/political party on social media

Partisan support	I like a particular politician/political party	46%
	I want to show others who I support politically	23%
Dissatisfaction with news media	I prefer to hear directly from a politician/political party rather than have news filtered by others	48%
	These feeds provide me with more detailed information than I can get via the news media	38%
	I don't think the news media report the views of politicians/political parties fairly	29%
	The mainstream news media tend to ignore the politician/political party I follow	25%

Do you follow a politician or political party on social media?

1.3 Conceptual Groups

News Lovers, Daily Briefers, and Casual Users

News Lovers are extremely interested in news and access news content more than five times a day. Daily Briefers are very or extremely interested in news but access news content less than five times a day. Casual Users are somewhat interested in news and access news content once a day or less frequently.

The number of News Lovers and Daily Briefers increases with age whereas the opposite occurs with Casual Users. The percentage distribution of these three categories of news consumers has remained consistent over the last three years. The usage levels of news consumers in the three categories does not vary widely across those with low, middle and high incomes. Dublin has the highest percentage of News Lovers and the lowest of Casual Users. The reverse is true in Munster.

Fig. 17 Conceptual groups 2015-2017

	2015	2016	2017
News Lovers	21%	23%	24%
Daily Briefers	45%	45%	45%
Casual Users	34%	32%	32%

Fig. 18 Conceptual groups by age

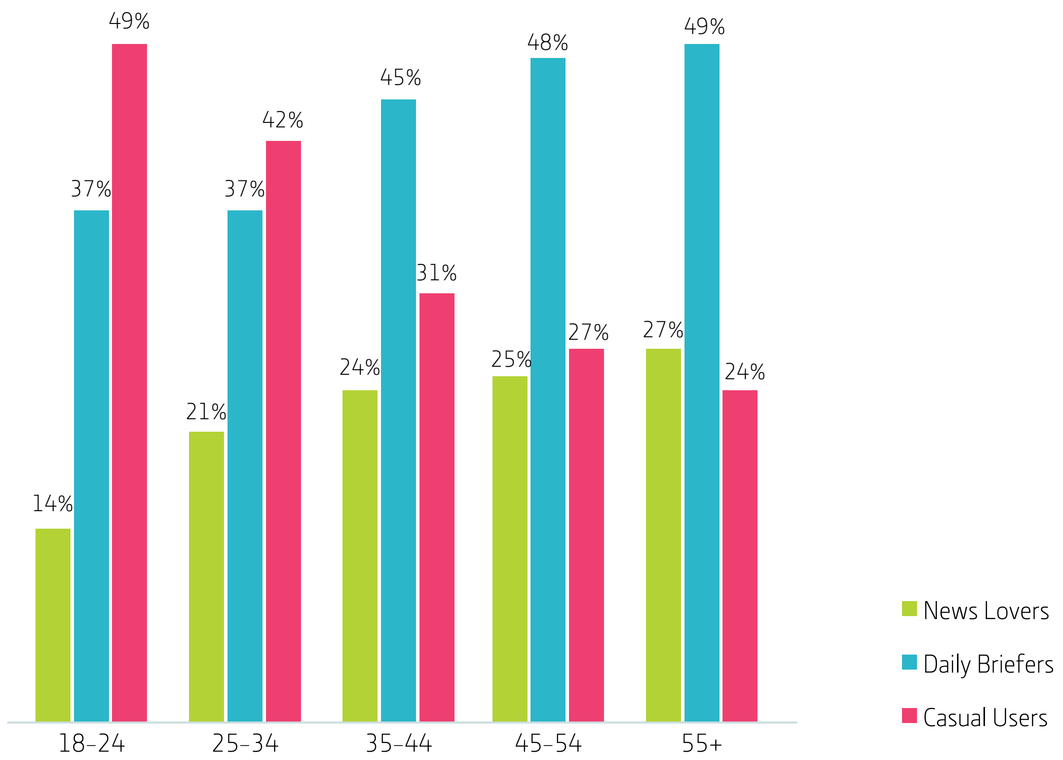


Fig. 19 Conceptual groups by income

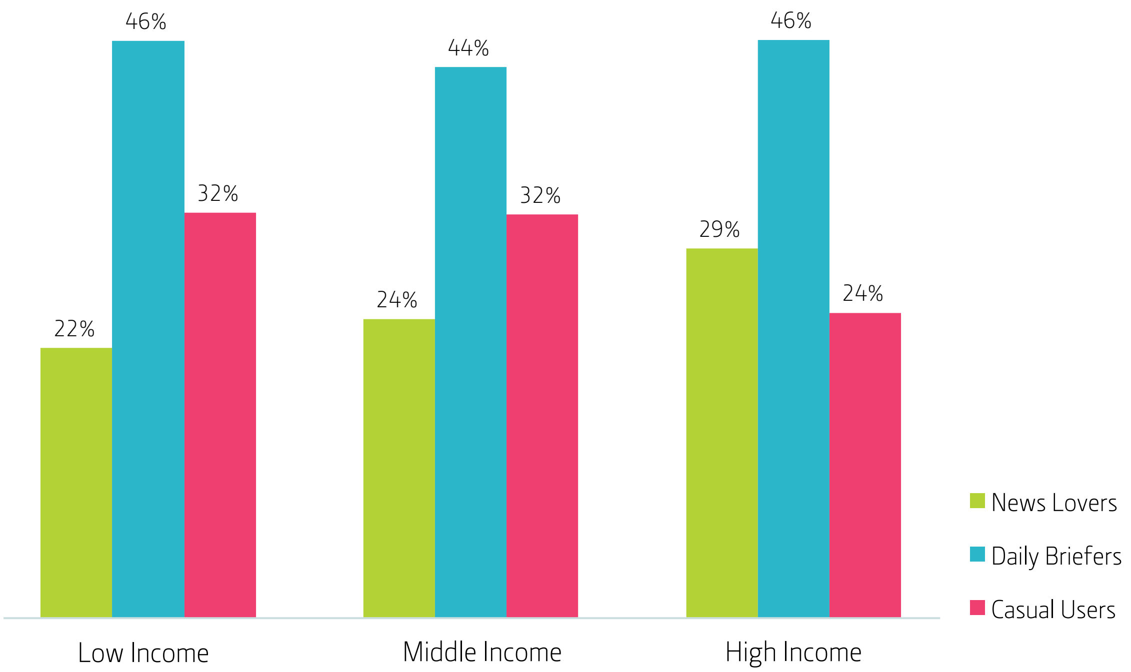
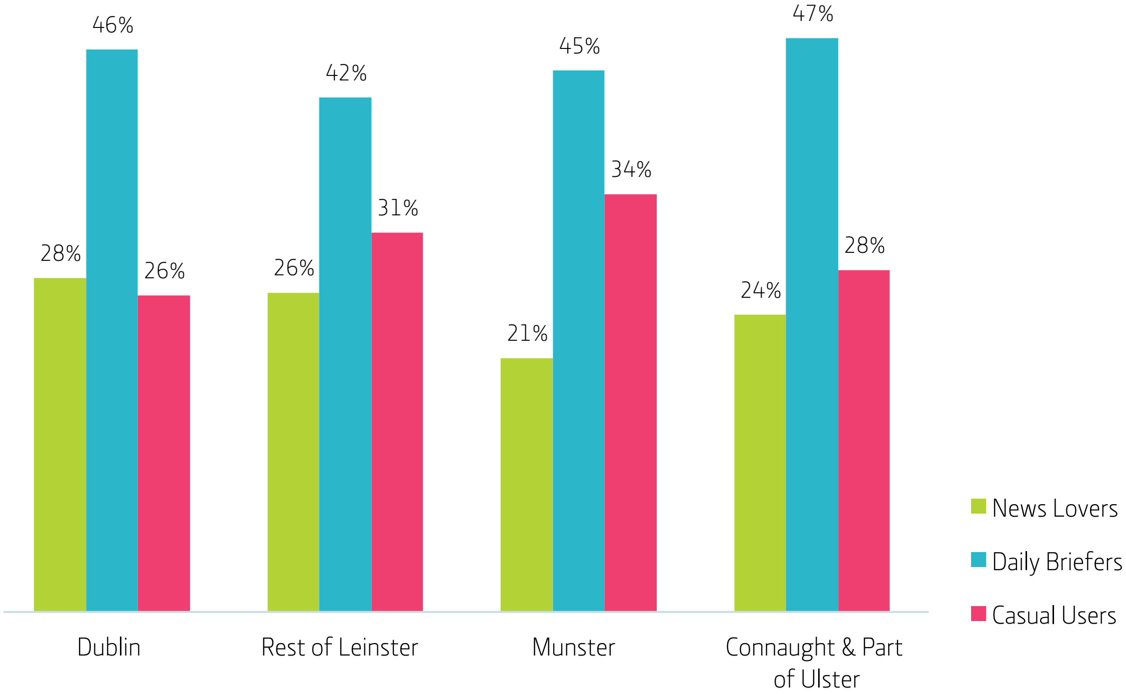


Fig. 20 Conceptual groups by location



Digitalism and Traditionalism

Digitalists are those who consume news via smartphones, tablets and computers. Traditionalists mainly use newspapers, radio and TV. In 2017, Digitalists fell four percentage points to 23 percent whereas Traditionalists grew two percentage points and Mixed [Half and Halfers] increased by a single percentage point.

Fig. 21 Digitalism and traditionalism

Digitalist	23%
Half and Half	45%
Traditionalist	31%

These findings merit further investigation. For instance, are traditional media, favoured by audiences with lower incomes and lower levels of education, seeing more rapidly declining audience figures? If so, why? Clearly, it is not always due to a transfer to digital offerings by news providers. Younger news consumers are more likely to be Digitalists. Older news consumers are more likely to be Traditionalists. The Mixed Half and Halfers ranged from 40 percent. Dublin had the highest percentage of Digitalists at 24 percent, although the figure was broadly similar across the four geographic areas surveyed. Connaught and Part of Ulster had the highest percentage of Traditionalists at 36 percent.

Fig. 22 Digitalism and traditionalism by age

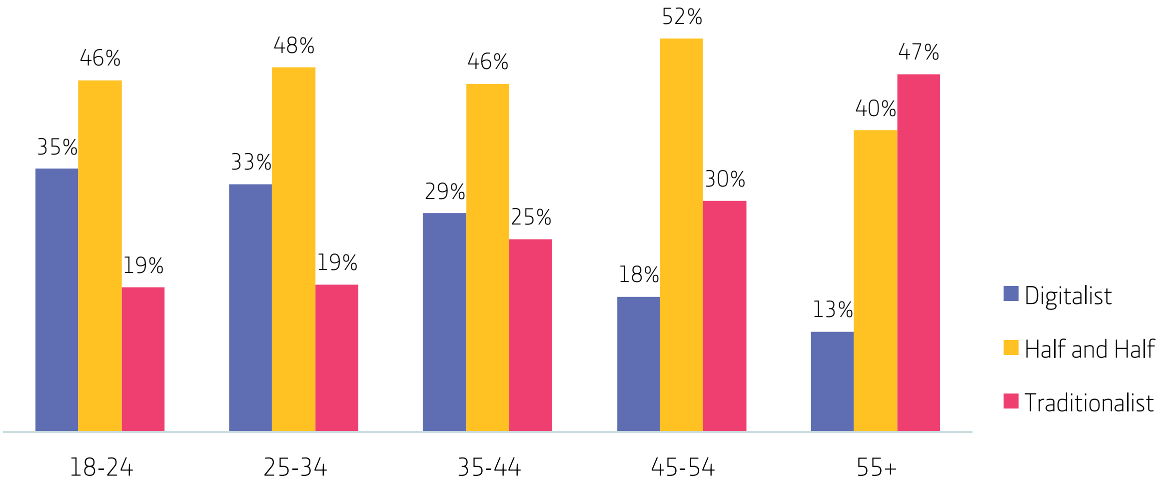


Fig. 23 Digitalism and traditionalism by location

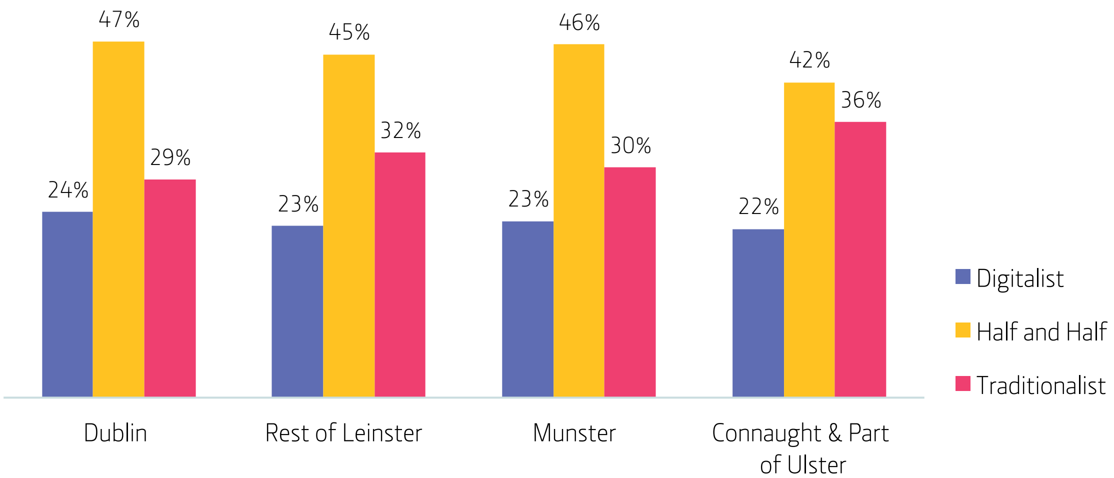


Fig. 24 Digitalism and traditionalism by income

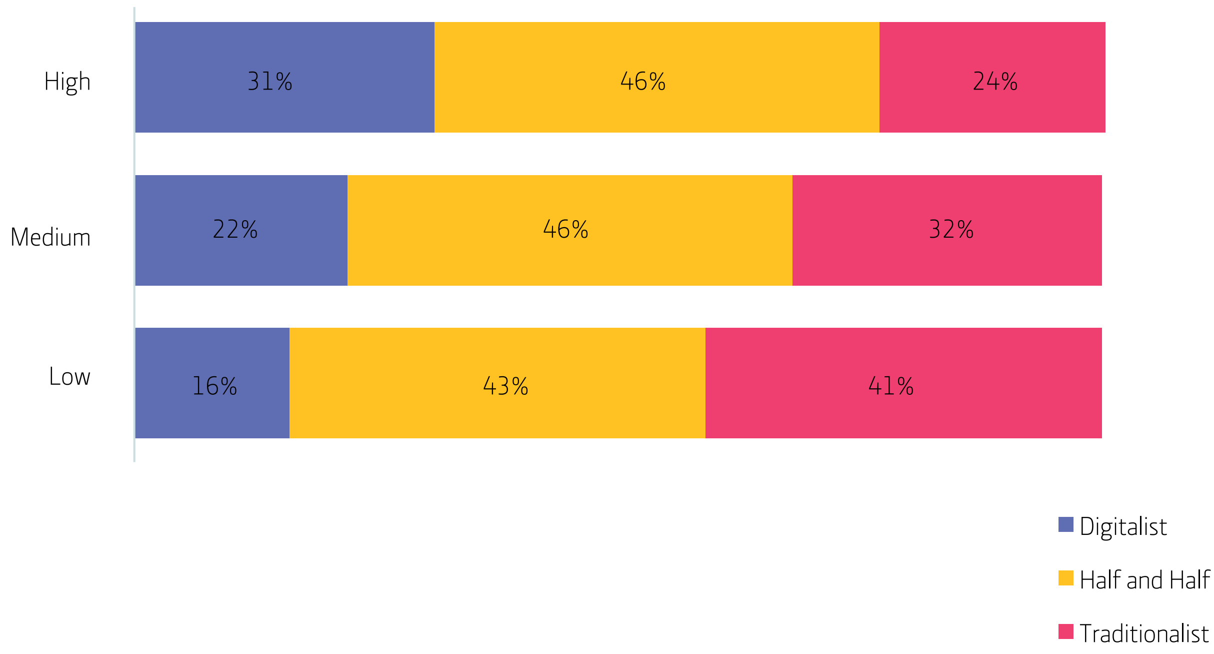
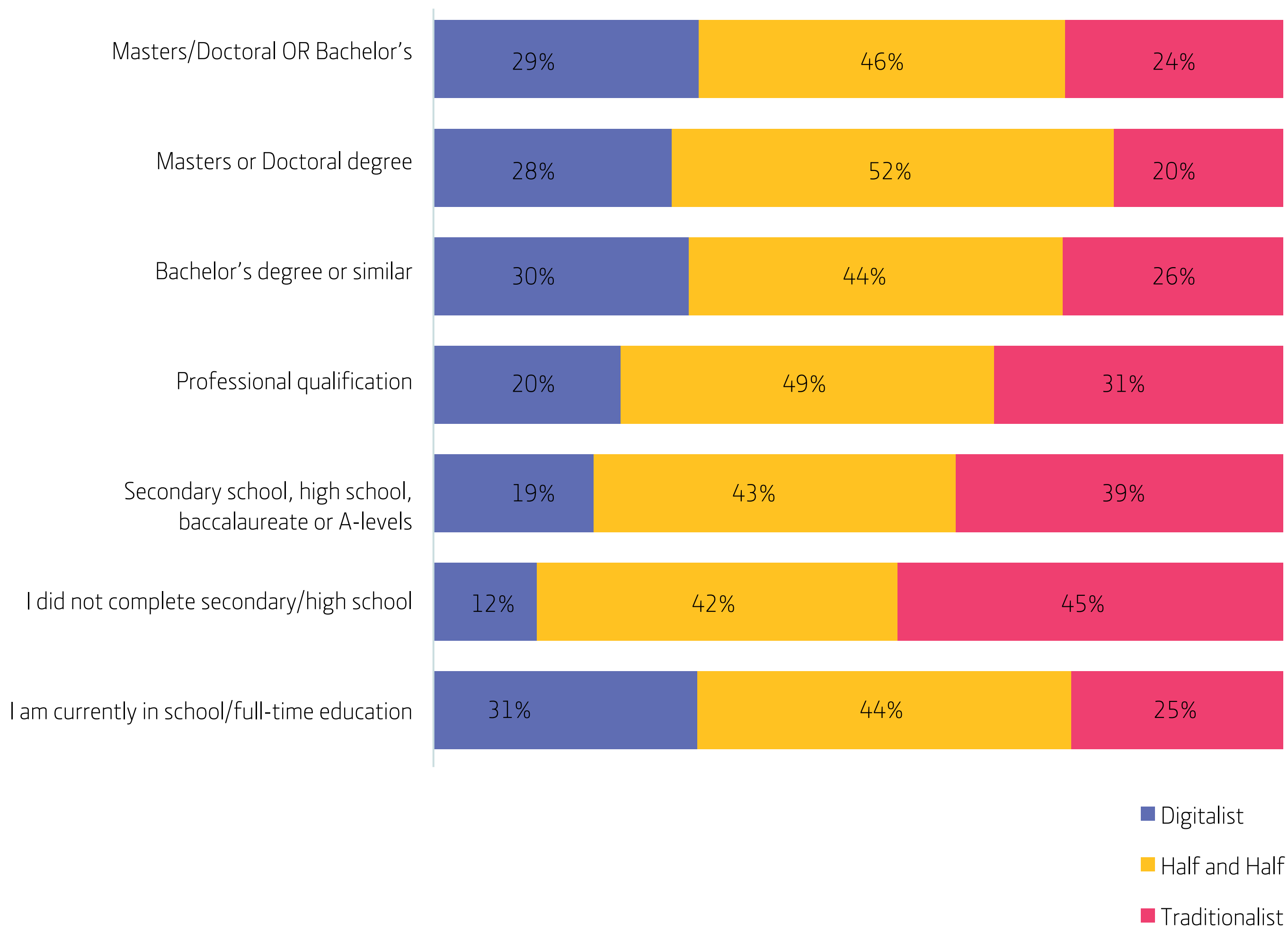


Fig. 25 Digitalism and traditionalism by education



Participation in News Coverage

Positive Participants respond frequently to news by writing, sharing or commenting. Receptive Participators are less active and may share or 'like' news. Passive Consumers don't engage digitally but talk about news with friends. Female and male participation in news produces broadly similar patterns across age categories. The young tend to be more active than their older counterparts. Men in the 25-34 age group are the most active at 36 percent as are women in the same age category at 32 percent. Men in the 55+ age group are the most passive at 59 percent with their female counterparts at 55 percent.

Fig. 26 Participation in news coverage

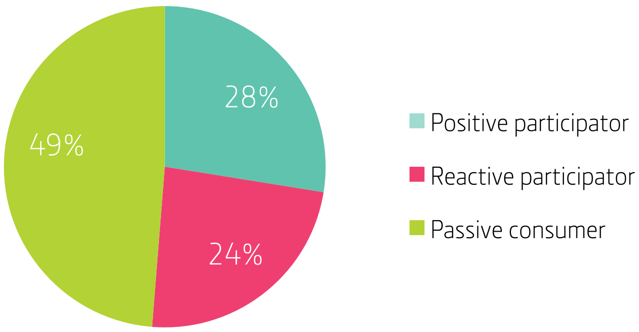
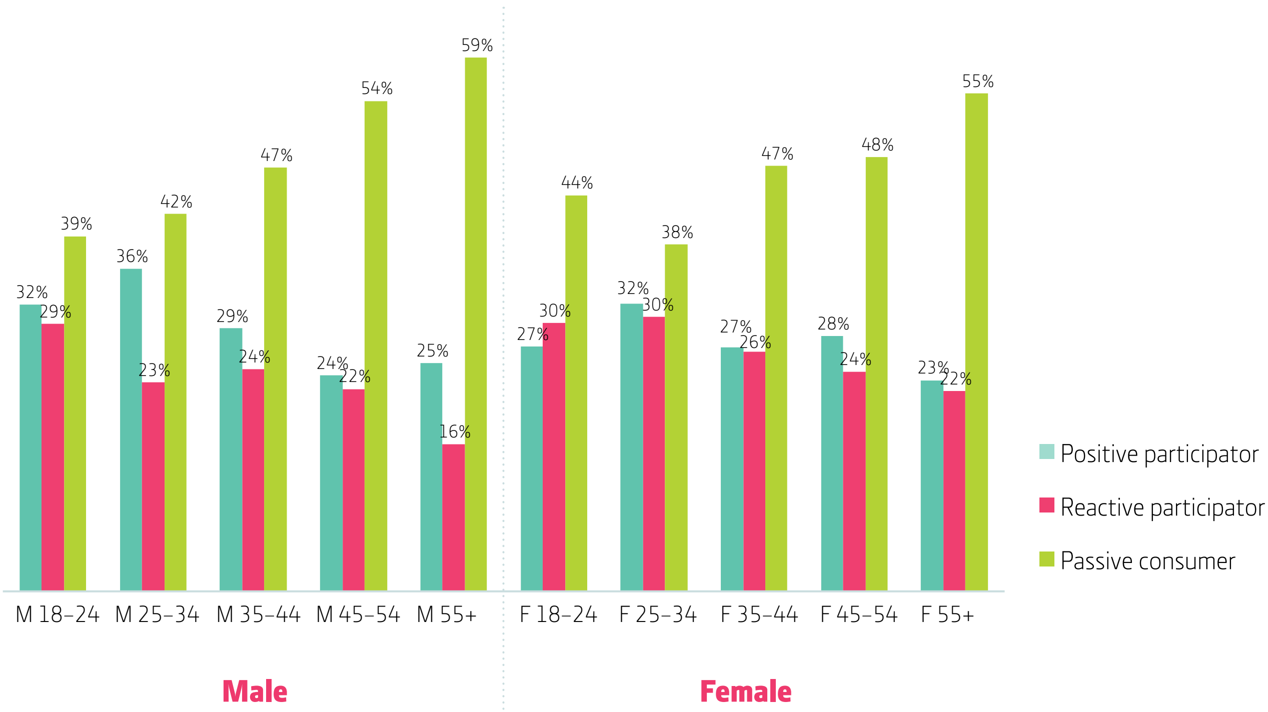


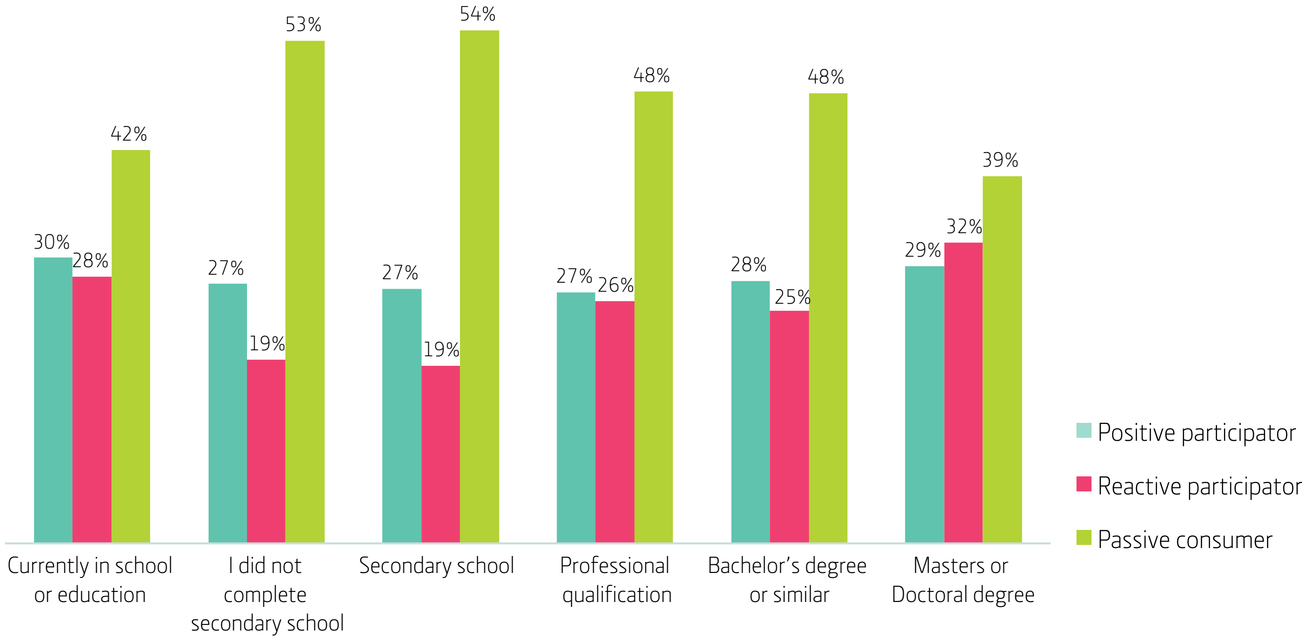
Fig. 27 Participation in news coverage by age and gender



It is interesting to note that the figures for Positive Participants in news are similar across all educational categories, ranging from 27 percent to 30 percent. The largest percentage of Passive Consumers of news falls in the 'Did Not Complete Secondary School' and 'Did Complete Secondary School' categories at 53 percent and 54 percent respectively.

Younger groups who use social media tend to be more left-aligned and tend to use social media as a mechanism to express criticism of conservative politicians and/or governments.

Fig. 28 Participation in news coverage by education



News consumers on either end of the political spectrum are Positive Participants with 36 percent declaring themselves very left-wing and 46 percent very right-wing. Active users are politically engaged and more decided. One predictor of passive news consumption is whether an individual knows friends' political views.

Fig. 29 Participation in news coverage by political leaning

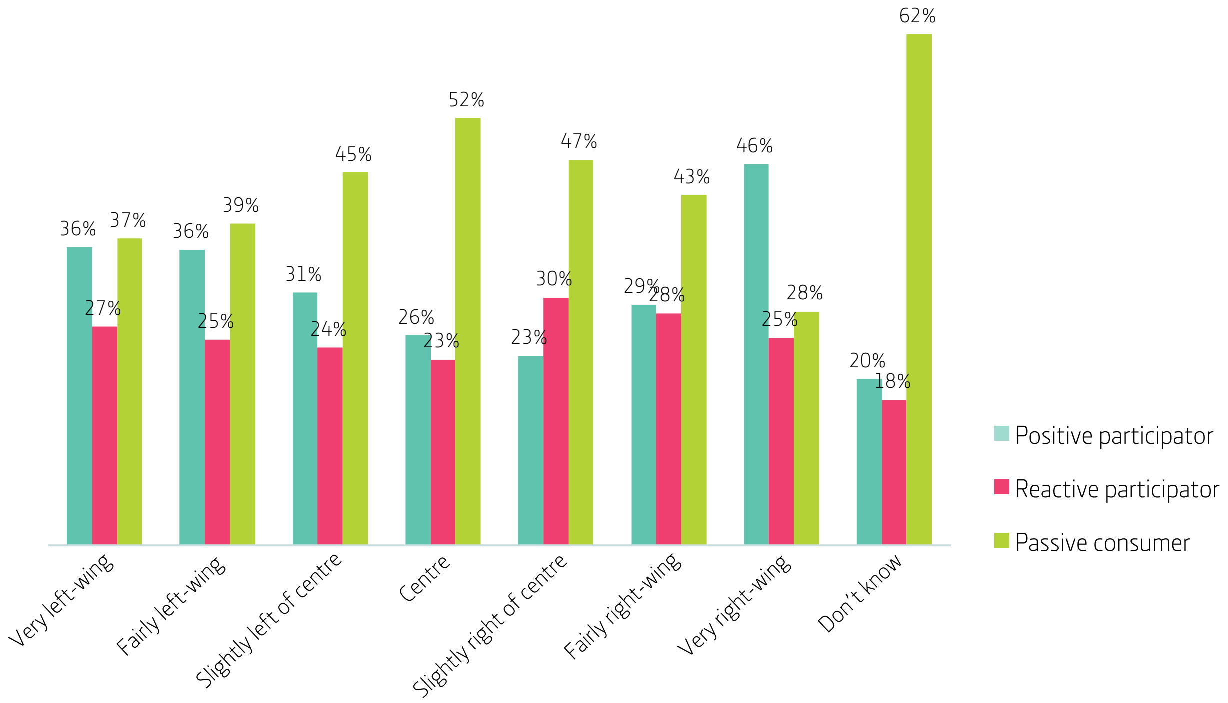


Fig. 30 Influence of friends' political views

	Almost all of my close friends share my political views	Most all of my close friends share my political views	Around half of my close friends share my political views	Most all of my close friends do not share my political views	Almost all of my close friends do not share my political views	I don't really know what most of my close friends think about politics	Don't know	Most share	Most don't share
Positive Participator	37%	34%	32%	36%	31%	16%	16%	34%	34%
Reactive Participator	27%	24%	26%	30%	31%	21%	11%	24%	30%
Passive Participator	36%	43%	42%	35%	39%	63%	75%	41%	36%

1.4 Conclusion

Irish consumers have a strong interest in news, with the majority accessing it several times a day. The most popular way to access news was to read a story.

Current political news coverage is not providing some consumers with sufficient clarity on political matters. Substantially fewer women follow politics on social media than men. In 2017, the number of Digitalist news consumers fell whereas the number of Traditionalists increased.

Young news consumers are more active than older ones when it comes to writing about, sharing and commenting on news. Younger groups who use social media tend to be more left-aligned.

Section Two
Platforms and Devices

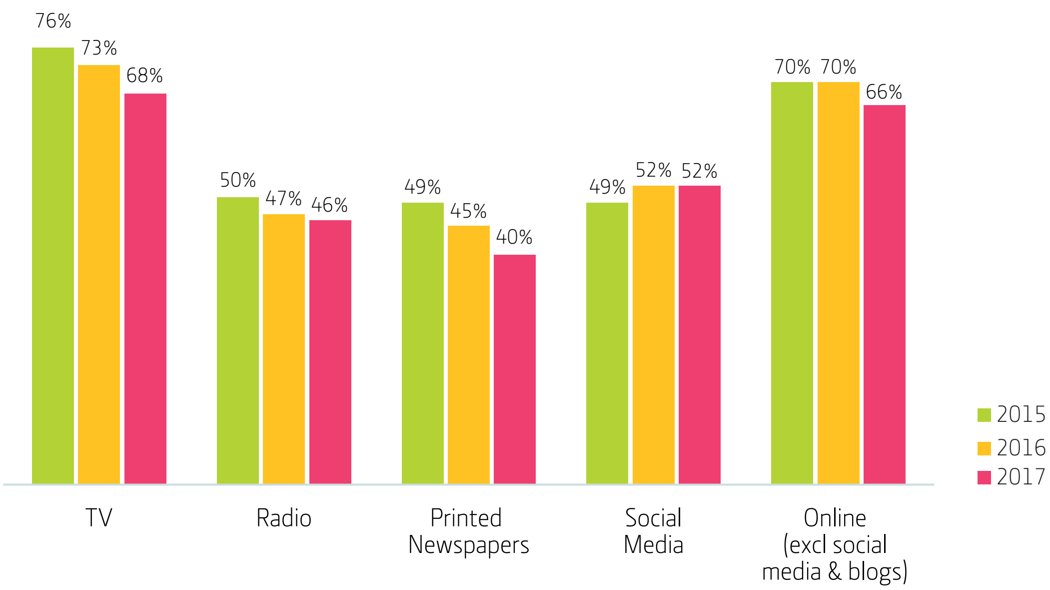
This section describes the use of both traditional and digital news platforms and the demographics of consumers who use various platforms. Findings in relation to devices and platforms include a section on social media and a section on smartphones.

2.1 Platforms

Platforms for News

Over the past three years TV has declined slightly in popularity for news, dropping 8 percentage points to 68 percent. Radio and printed newspapers both also saw declines. Social media grew a little over the period but has remained steady at 52 percent over the past year.

Fig. 31 Platforms for news 2015-2017

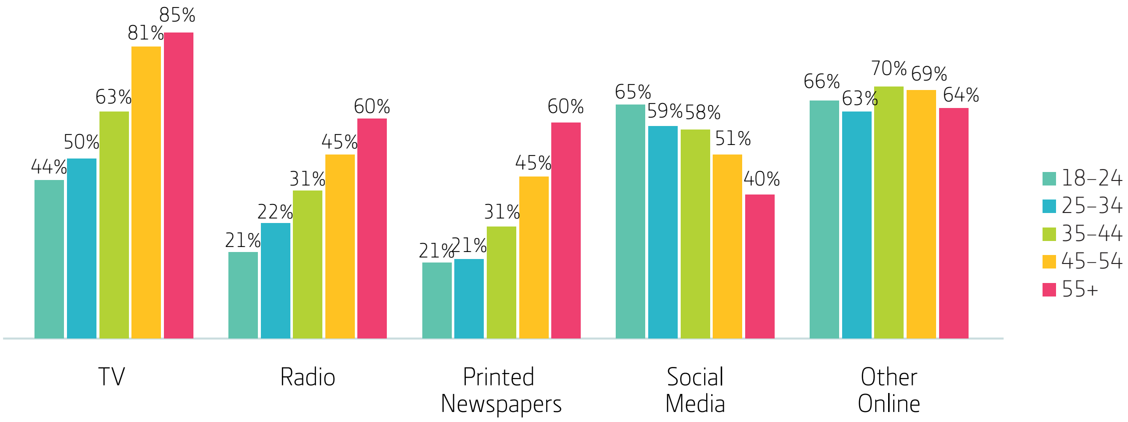


Which, if any, platforms have you used in the last week as a source of news?

Platforms for News

Legacy media are broadly more popular with older age groups while younger age groups are more likely to rely on social media for news. In terms of TV audience share, there is a 41 percentage point difference between the 55+ age group (85 percent) and the 18-24 age group (44 percent). The gap between these two age groups is also striking for radio and printed newspapers with a respective difference of 39 percentage points for both. Age differences in audience share are closer for social media with a 25 percentage point difference between the oldest and youngest cohorts. Age differences are comparatively insignificant for online media generally.

Fig. 32 Platforms for news by age group 2017

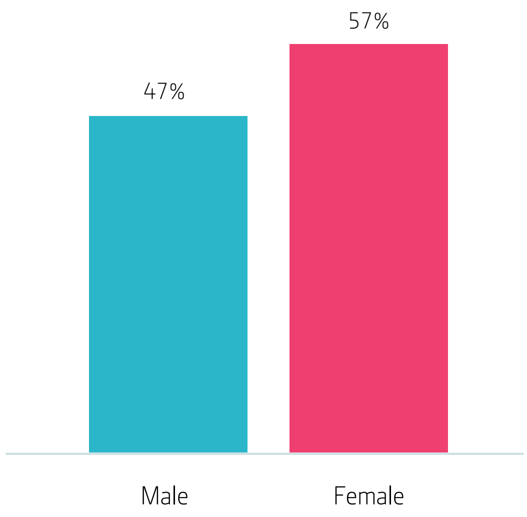


Which, if any, platforms have you used in the last week as a source of news?

Social Media for News

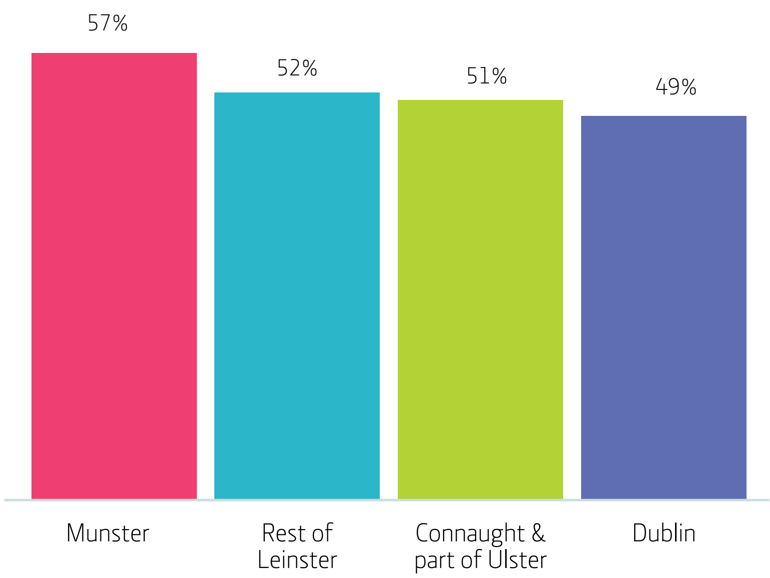
As a source of news, social media is more popular among women (57 percent) than men (47 percent). Regional variances are also evident with people in Munster (57 percent) more likely to use social media for news than people in Dublin (49 percent).

Fig. 33 Social media for news by gender 2017



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

Fig. 34 Social media for news by region 2017



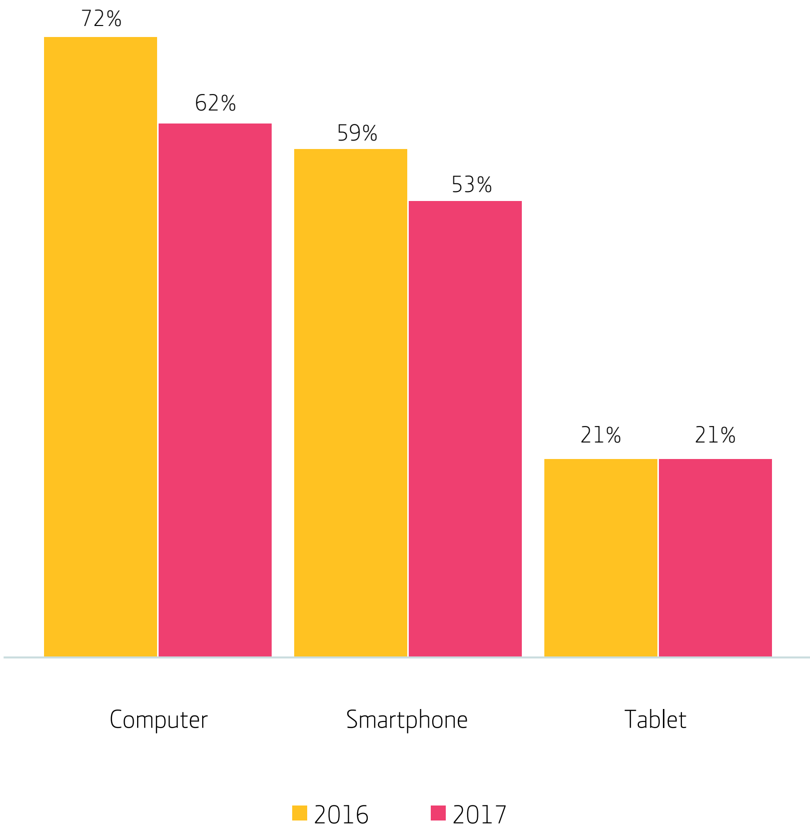
Which, if any, platforms have you used in the last week as a source of news?

2.2 Devices for News

Digital Devices for News

Two of the three devices fell back in 2017, with computers down 10 percentage points, smartphones down six and tablets steady on 21 percent. At 62 percent, computers remained the most popular device on which to access news, with smartphones next at 53 percent and tablets a distant third. Multi-device usage is common.

Fig. 35 Digital devices for news, 2016-2017

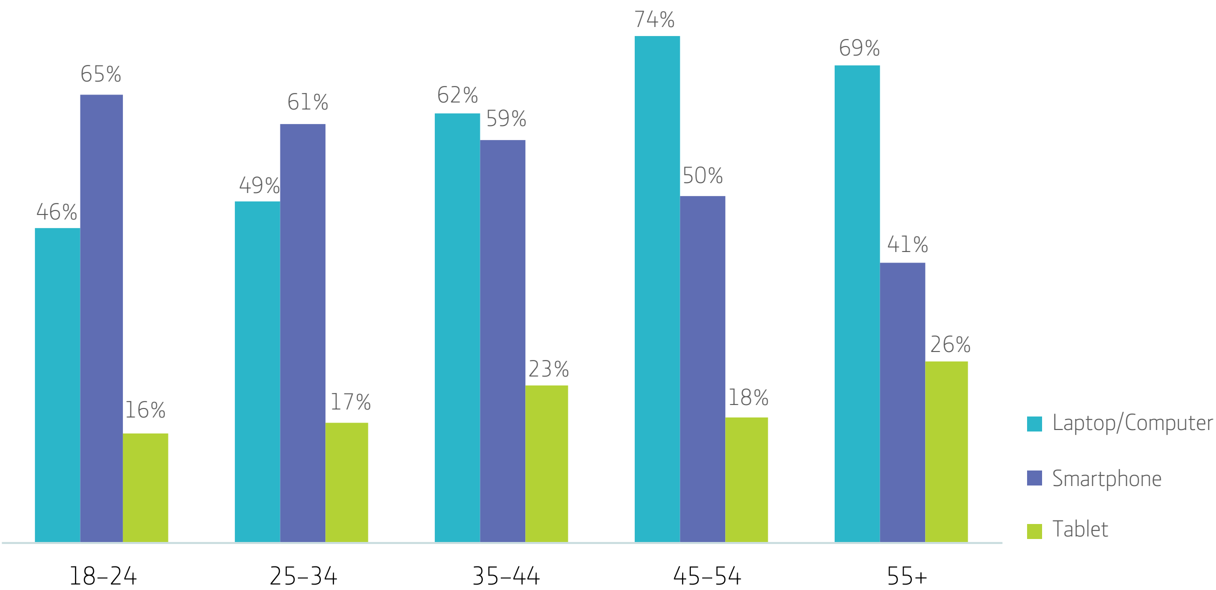


What devices do you use when accessing the news?

Smartphone Use for News

Smartphone use ranged from 65 percent to 41 percent across the five age cohorts surveyed, with younger consumers making more use than older. Computer or laptop use ranged from 46 percent to 74 percent, with older cohorts making greater use of these devices. Use of tablets showed less variance across age groups, ranging from 16 percent to 26 percent with greater use being made by older groups. Smartphones and computers are much more popular than tablets. This is perhaps surprising given the functional flexibility and utility of the tablet.

Fig. 36 Smartphone use for news by age



What devices do you use when accessing the news?

Where Devices are Used

Computers and laptops, smartphones and tablets are all popular for use in communal spaces in the home, but smartphones are used more frequently in personal spaces such as the bedroom. Smartphones are the dominant device for use when travelling and out and about. In terms of weekly reach, computers and laptops are still the dominant devices, but this influence has been declining steadily.

Fig. 37 Where devices are used

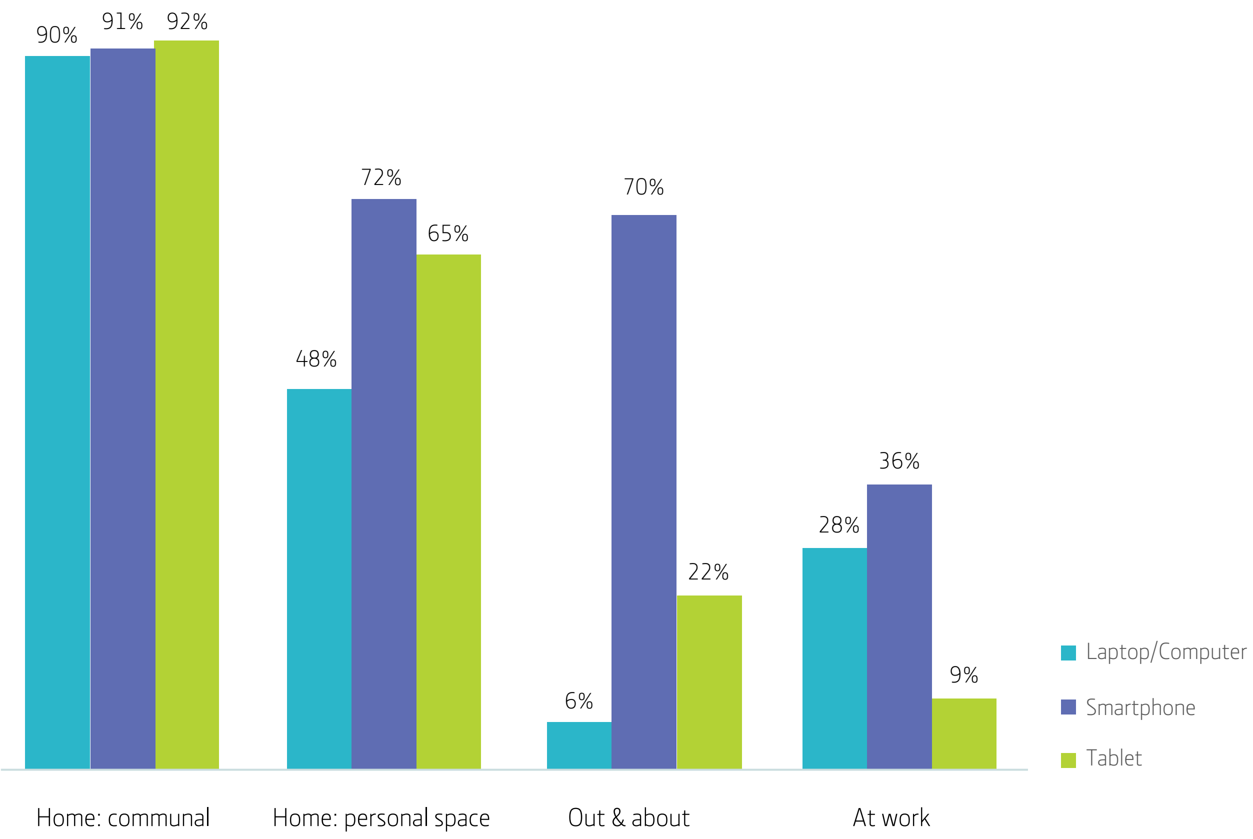
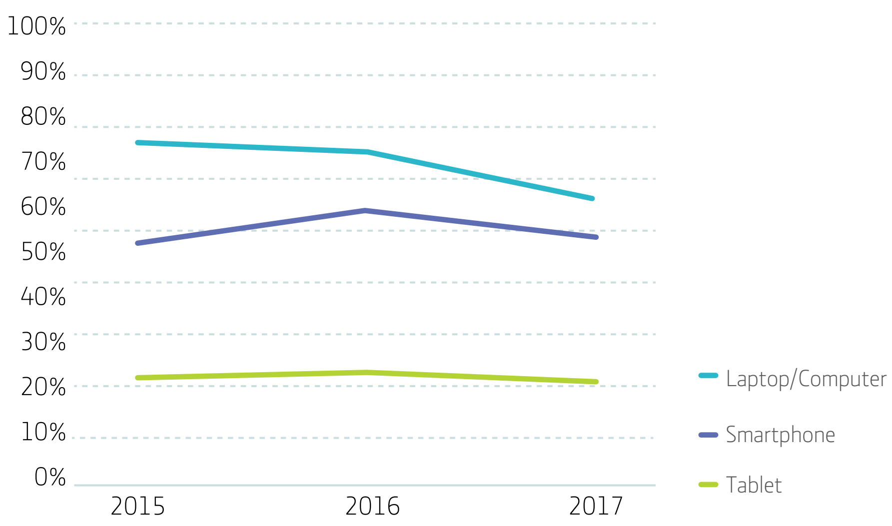


Fig. 38 Weekly reach by device



2.3 Conclusion

Legacy media are more popular with older groups. There is a huge difference in uptake of TV, radio and newspapers between older and younger cohorts, the latter relying far more on social media.

As a source of news, social media is more popular among women than men. The use of computers, smartphones and tablets to access news declined in the period under review in an environment in which multi-device usage is common.

Older groups favour computers and tablets whereas younger consumers prefer smartphones.

Section Three
News Preferences and Trust

Irish news consumers' preferences, attitudes and trust are 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

Most categories of news offered by content providers experienced a decline in consumer interest in the period under review. This downturn may indicate that news organizations need to rethink their news menus for today's audiences given the vast array of topics readily available in the global digital news environment. Of particular note is the 5 percent decline in interest in sport and 4 percent declines in international and political news. These last two are noteworthy as both the US presidential election campaign and the Irish general election campaign took place in 2016. Even larger falls in interest in crime, health and business news merit scrutiny.

The differences in interest levels in various types of news from 2016 to 2017 were: Regional -6 percent; International -4 percent; Crime etc. -9 percent; Health etc. -9 percent; Science etc. +1 percent; Political -4 percent; Lifestyle -2 percent; Business etc. -8 percent; Sport -5 percent; Arts -6 percent; Entertainment -2 percent.

More consumers were not interested in some news categories than were interested. Indeed, 44 percent were not interested in celebrity and entertainment news, 42 percent were not interested in sports news and 37 percent were not interested in arts and culture news. Business news interested 34 percent but failed to interest 29 percent. Political news interested 41 percent whereas it failed to interest 26 percent.

Fig. 39 Interest in news categories

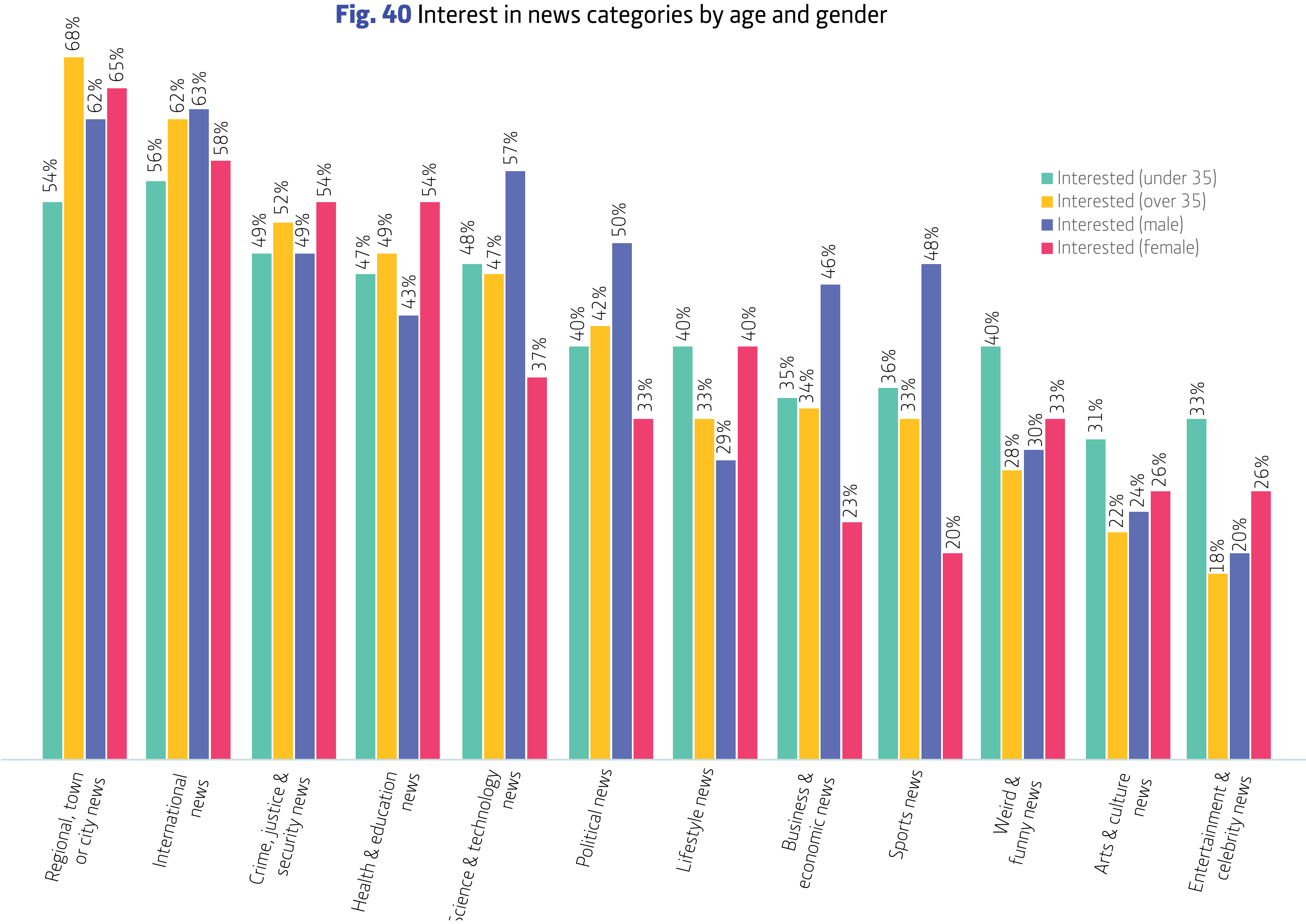
	Regional, Town, or City News	Interna-tional News	Crime Justice, and Security	Health and Edu-cational News	Science and Technology News	Political News	Lifestyle News	Business and Economic News	Sports News	Weird and Funny News	Arts and Culture News	Enter-tainment and Celebrity News
Interested	64%	60%	51%	48%	47%	41%	35%	34%	34%	31%	25%	23%
Not Interested	7%	7%	12%	13%	16%	26%	25%	29%	42%	25%	37%	44%

Interest in News Categories by Age and Gender

Examining interest in these news areas by consumer age cohort and gender is worthwhile. In general, the harder the news the greater the level of interest from older consumers. Apparently, the older the audience the more serious it becomes. These figures may also indicate that dumbing down news may not be a wise strategy for Irish news providers. See, for example, the relatively low levels of interest in entertainment news across audience age and gender categories.

News providers might also reconsider their menu offerings in the areas of business and sport where female interest levels are much lower than male. Is it wise to allocate so much of the available news space to these areas given the lack of appetite among the female audience? In addition, it is sometimes suggested that entertainment and arts news is aimed more at a female than a male audience. Given that these areas interest just 26 percent of women, do such assumptions about content need to be reexamined?

Fig. 40 Interest in news categories by age and gender



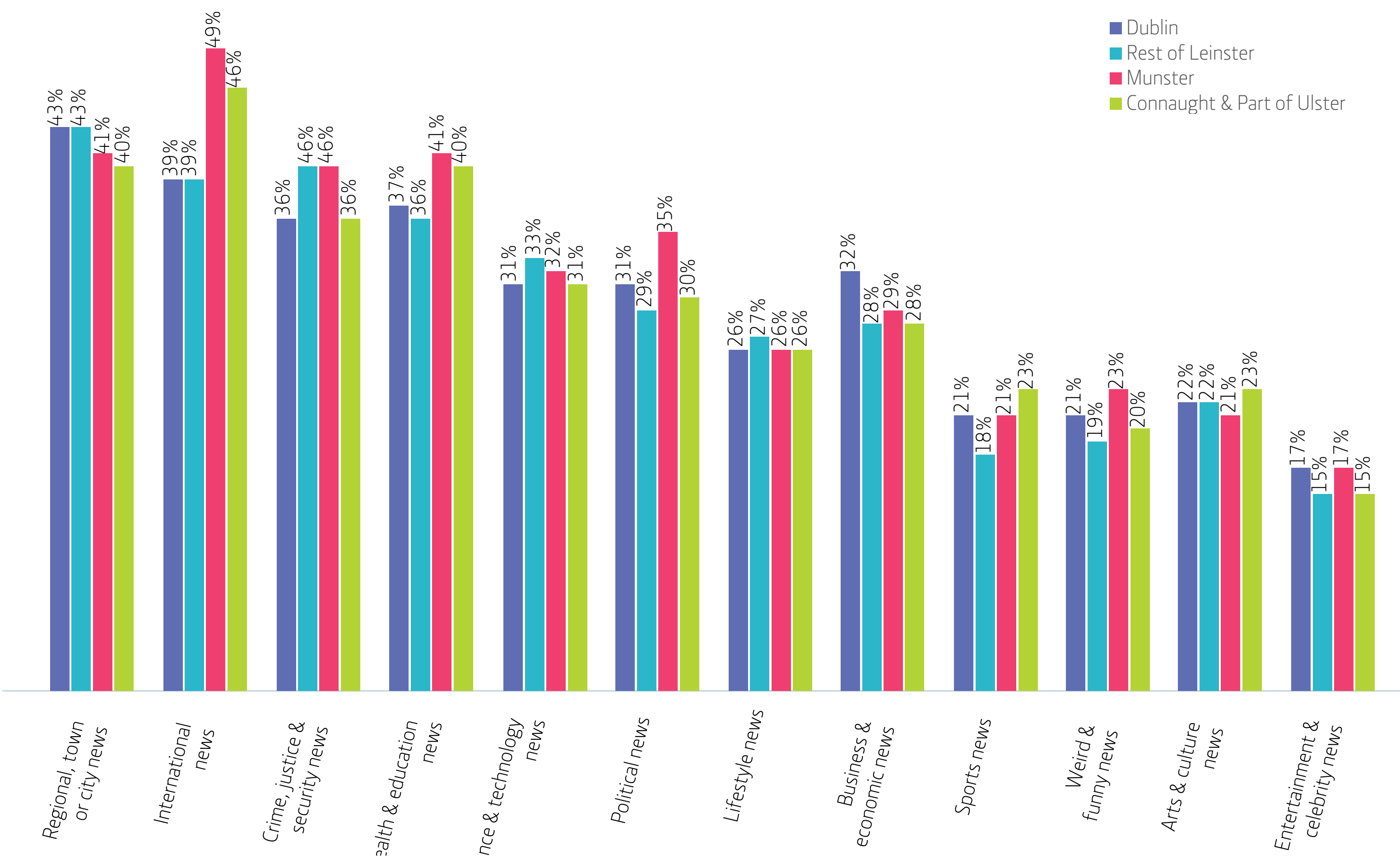
Which types of news are you interested in?

Interest in News Categories by Region

Munster news consumers were most interested in international, health, education, crime, security, political, weird and entertainment news. The interest levels of news consumers in Dublin and the Rest of Leinster were very similar across all categories. Their news interest peaked, at 43 percent, on region, city and town news.

Interest in business was strongest in Dublin while interest in sports, arts and culture news was highest in Connaught and Part of Ulster. The category of news which garnered least interest by far throughout the country, at 16 percent, was entertainment and celebrity news. This begs the question as to why news gatekeepers use so much of it. Feeding consumers what they don't want is not a sustainable strategy, even if the material is cheap to source, occasionally cheerful to read and sometimes salacious.

Fig. 41 Interest in news categories by region



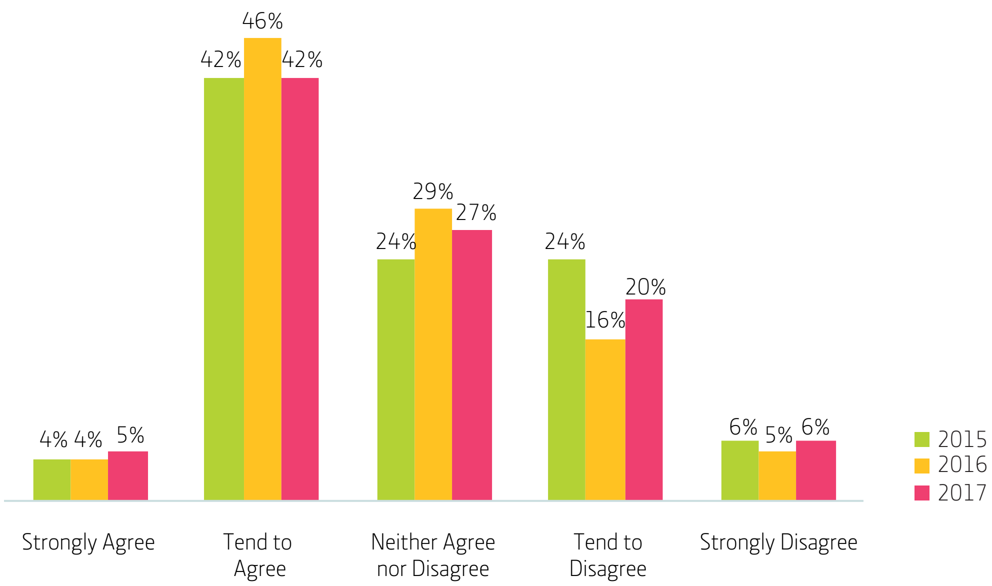
What types of news are you interested in?

3.2 Trust in News

Trust in News

As in the two previous years, more news consumers agreed in 2017 that most news can be trusted most of the time than the reverse assertion. Slightly over a quarter of those surveyed distrusted the news, with a similar percentage remaining neutral on the issue. Almost half trusted the news. This figure increases slightly when consumers are asked specifically asked about trust in the news they consume. This perhaps suggests that the publicity about fake news in the period under review did not impact Irish news consumers in a major way.

Fig. 42 Trust in news 2015-2017

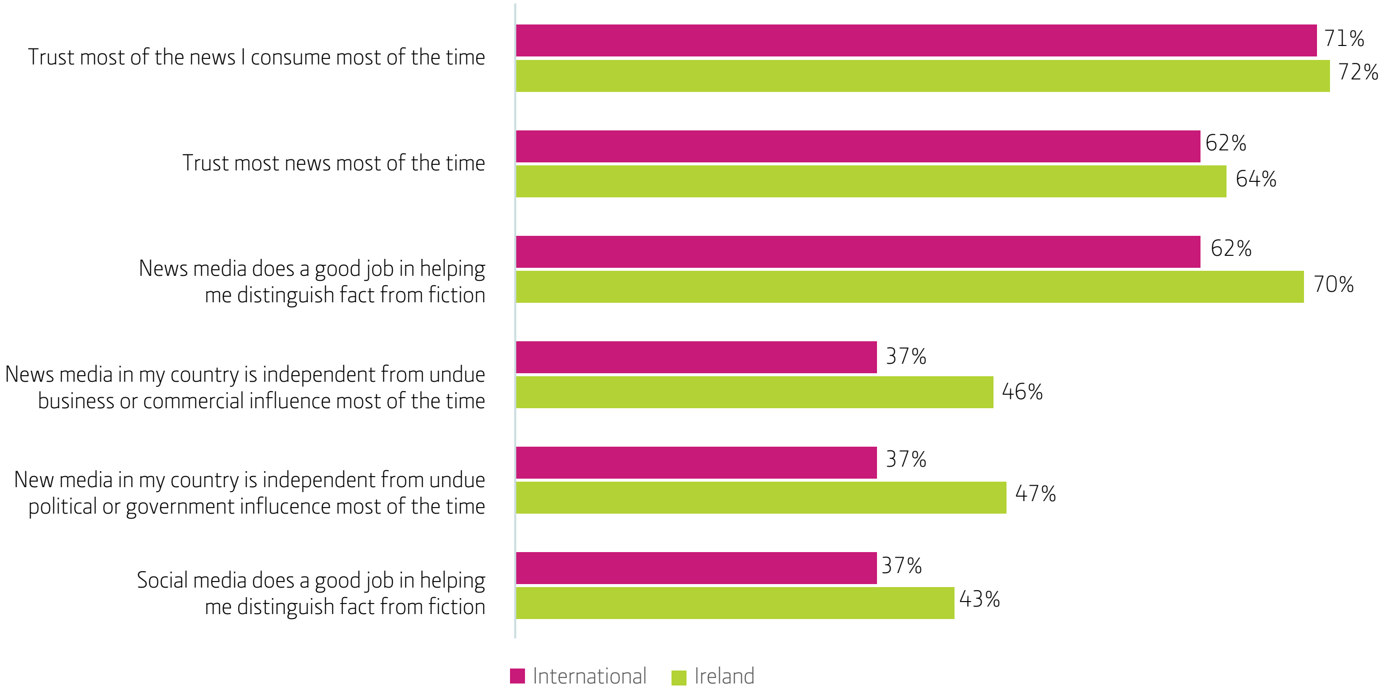


Do you agree with the statement 'I think you can trust most news most of the time'?

Trust and Perceptions of Influence

Ireland's news consumers have higher levels of trust in the news media than the international average. Some 43 percent of Irish consumers agree that social media does a good job distinguishing fact from fiction, compared to an international average of 37 percent. And more Irish news consumers believe Irish news is free of undue commercial and political influence than the international average. Some 72 percent of Irish news consumers trust most of the news they receive most of the time and 70 percent say the news industry does a good job helping them distinguish fact from fiction.

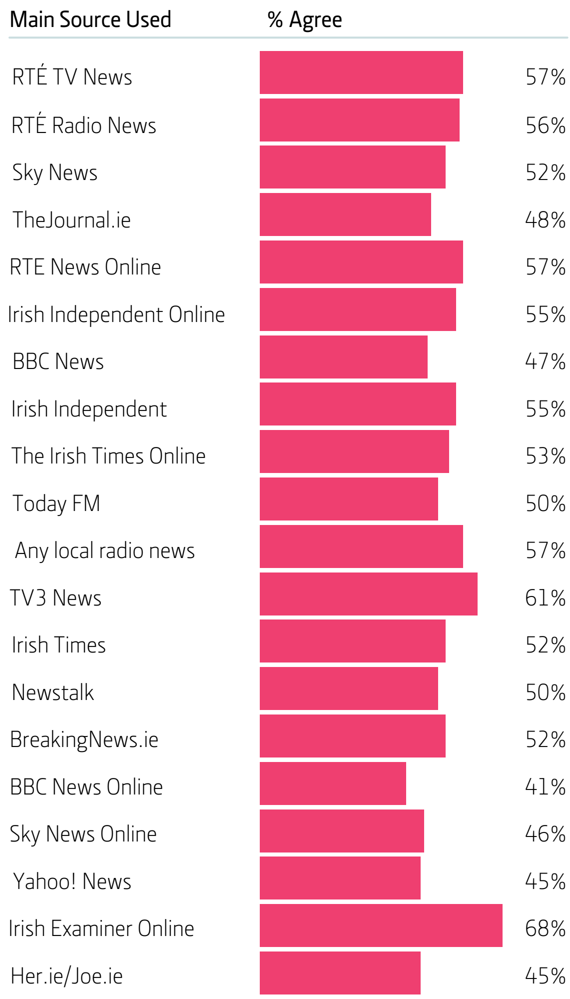
Fig. 43 Irish and international perceptions of trust



Trust in News by Brand

Considering trust in terms of the most frequently used news sources, the online version of the Irish Examiner newspaper was trusted by 68 percent of consumers and TV3 News was trusted by 61 percent of consumers. These brands were followed by RTÉ TV News, RTÉ News Online and local radio news at 57 percent.

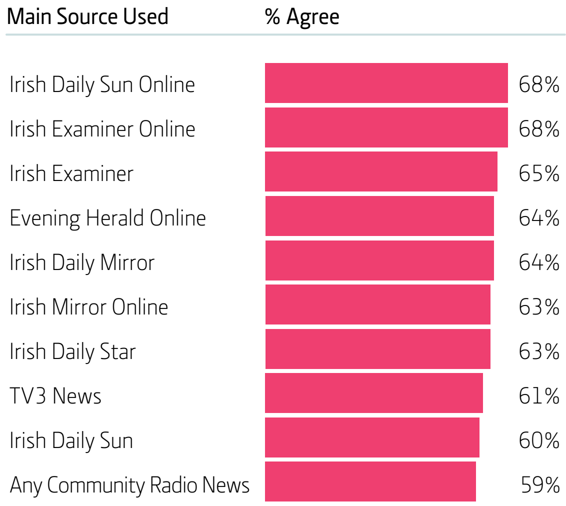
Fig. 44 Trust by most frequently used brands



Trust in News by Brand (continued)

The variance in trust displayed by consumers in news brands is of note. Consumers of the online versions of the Irish Daily Sun and Irish Examiner are the most trusting at 68 percent. Community radio also scores highly for consumer trust at 59 percent.

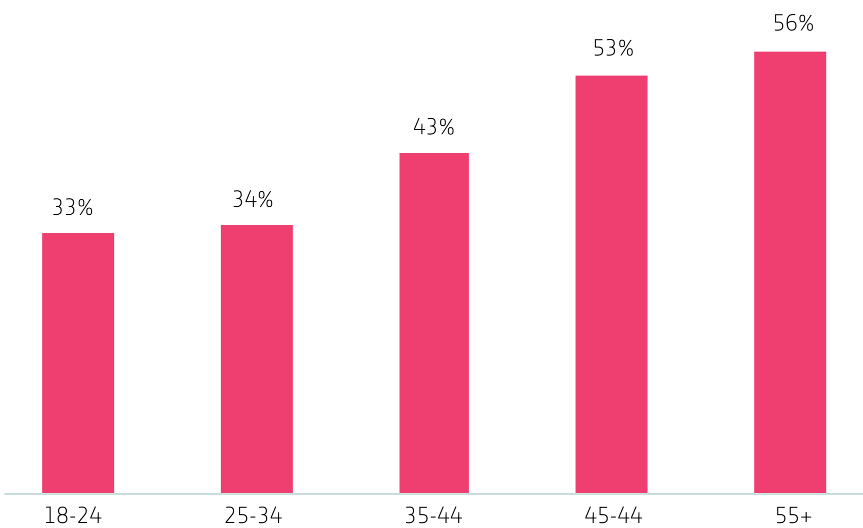
Fig. 45 Most trusted brands by brand consumers



Factors Influencing Trust

Age is a significant factor in trust. The older the consumer the more they tend to trust the news. Thus, only 33 percent of 18-24 year olds do so, compared with 56 percent of those aged over 55.

Fig. 46 Trust in news by age



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

3.3 Conclusion

Consumer interest in many categories of news declined. Some 44 percent of consumers indicated they were not interested in celebrity and entertainment news. And 42 percent were not interested in sports news.

With just 16 percent interested in celebrity and entertainment news, the dumbing down of news as a marketing strategy needs to be questioned.

Female interest levels in business and sports news is much lower than male. The harder the news the greater the level of interest from older consumers.

Irish consumers have higher levels of trust in news than the international average. Almost half of Irish news consumers trust most of the news most of the time.

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.

4.1 Main Sources of News

Sources of News

A breakdown of the sources of traditional news used in Ireland in 2017 shows that the country roughly mirrors the international average, with one notable exception. That is the relative dominance of the public service broadcaster, RTÉ. Some 66 percent of respondents indicated they use RTÉ as a main source of traditional news compared to an international average of 49 percent. This RTÉ dominance continued through its online news offering where it registered 34 percent compared to an international average of 20 percent.

Fig. 47 Main sources of news 2017

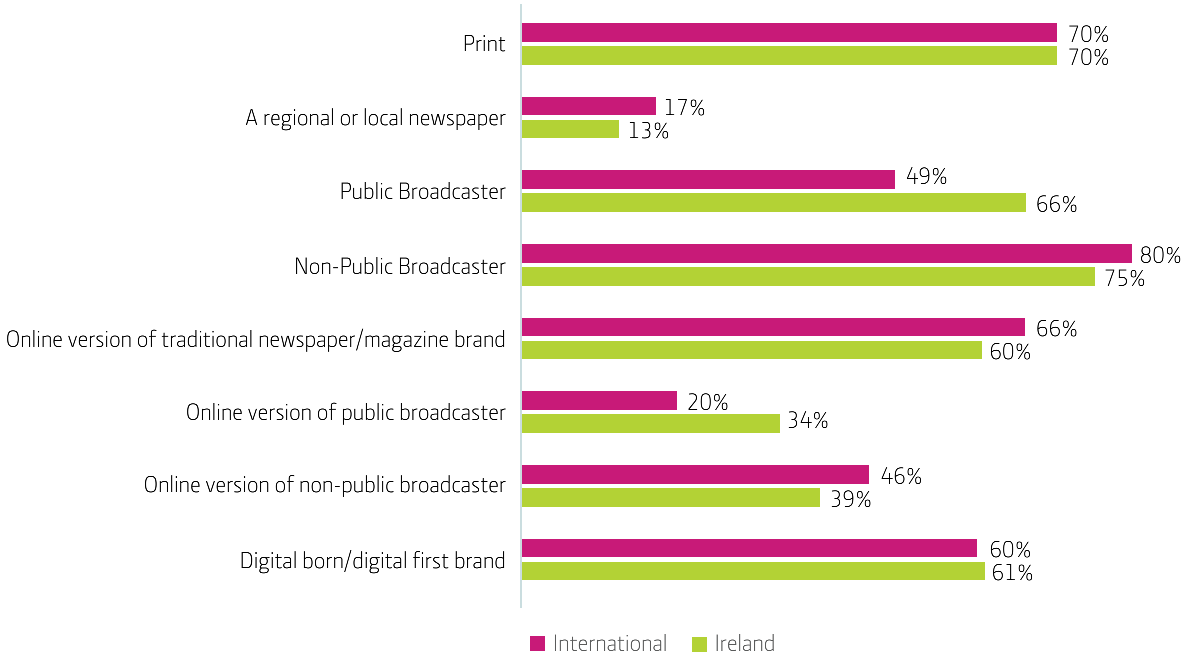


Fig. 48 Main sources of news – traditional and online 2017

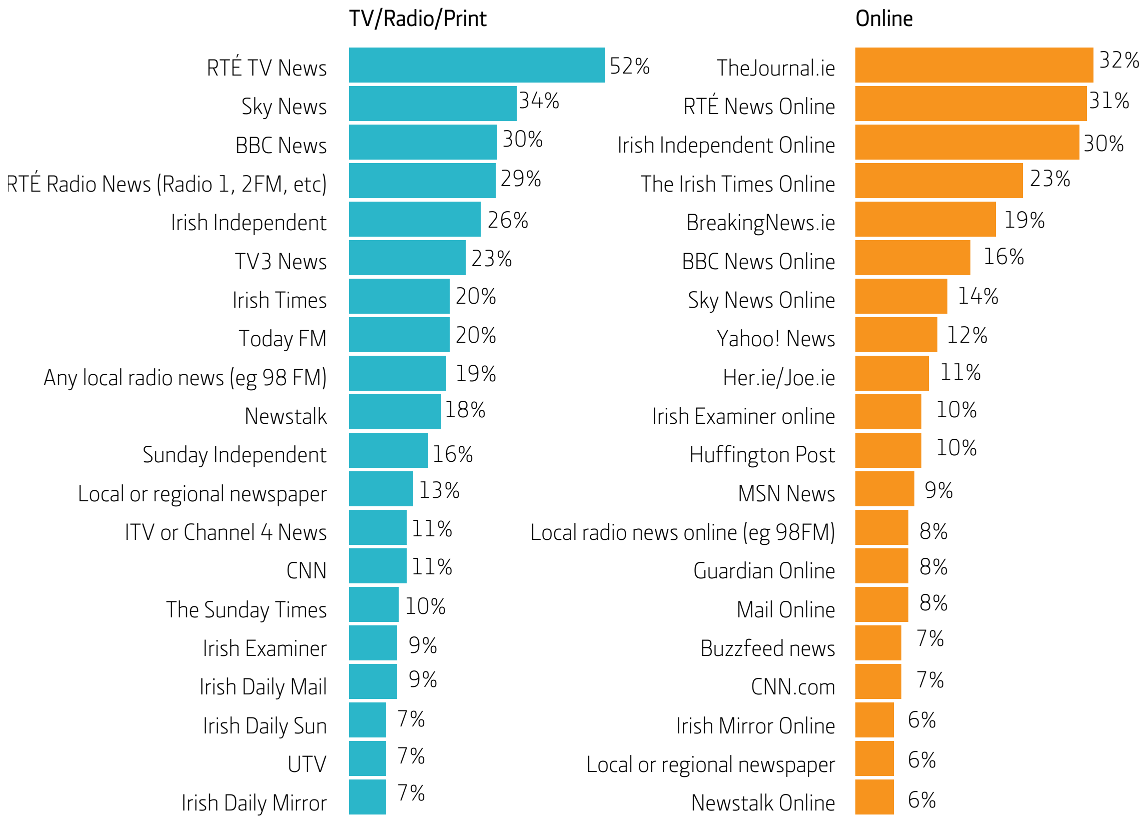
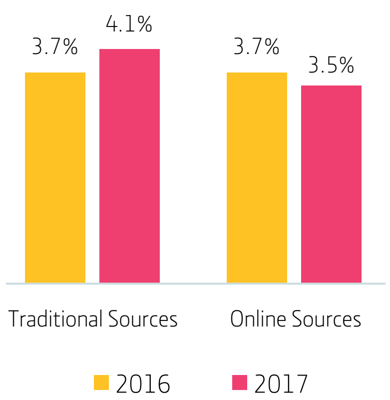


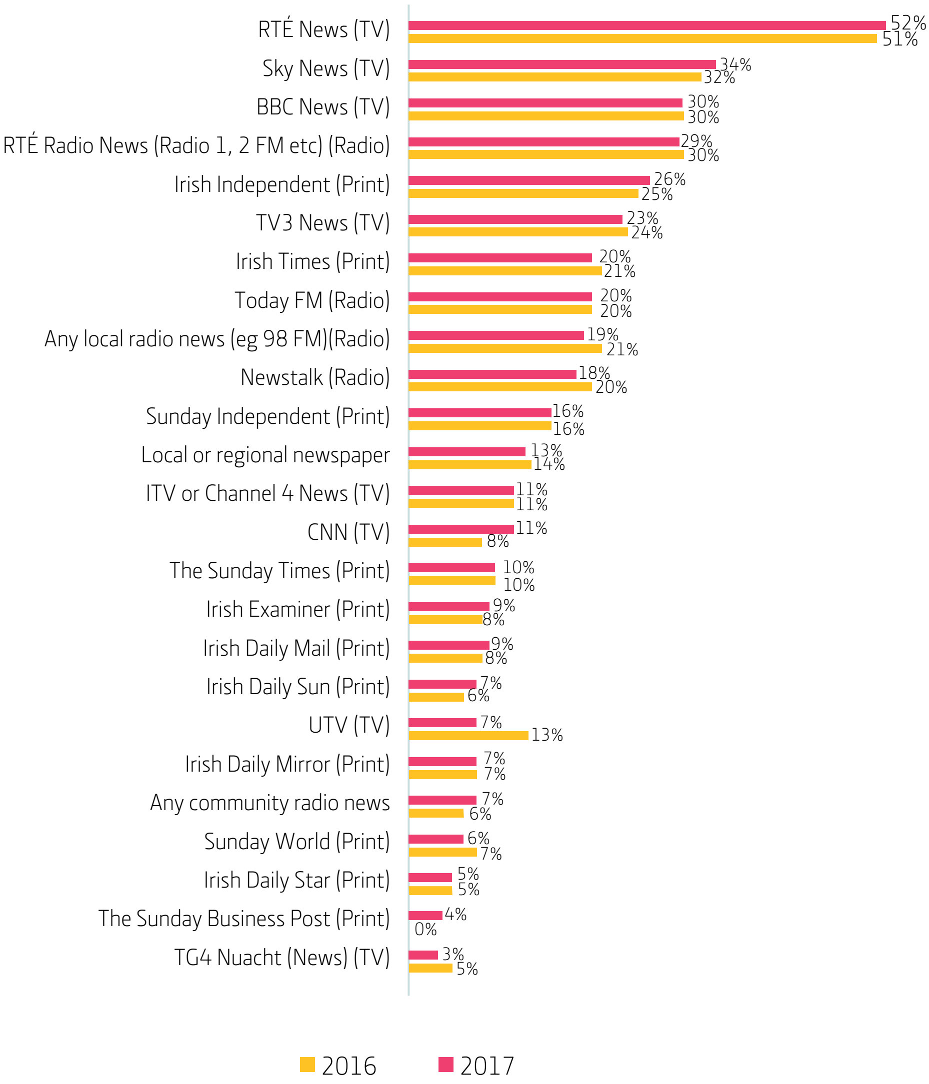
Fig. 49 Average number of news sources used 2016-2017



Traditional Sources of News

The three main sources of traditional news in 2017 were all in TV: RTÉ at 52 percent, Sky News at 34 percent and BBC News at 30 percent. The top three newspapers were the Irish Independent at 26 percent, The Irish Times at 20 percent and the Sunday Independent at 16 percent. Changes from 2016 were, in general, minimal and typically ranged circa +/- one percentage point.

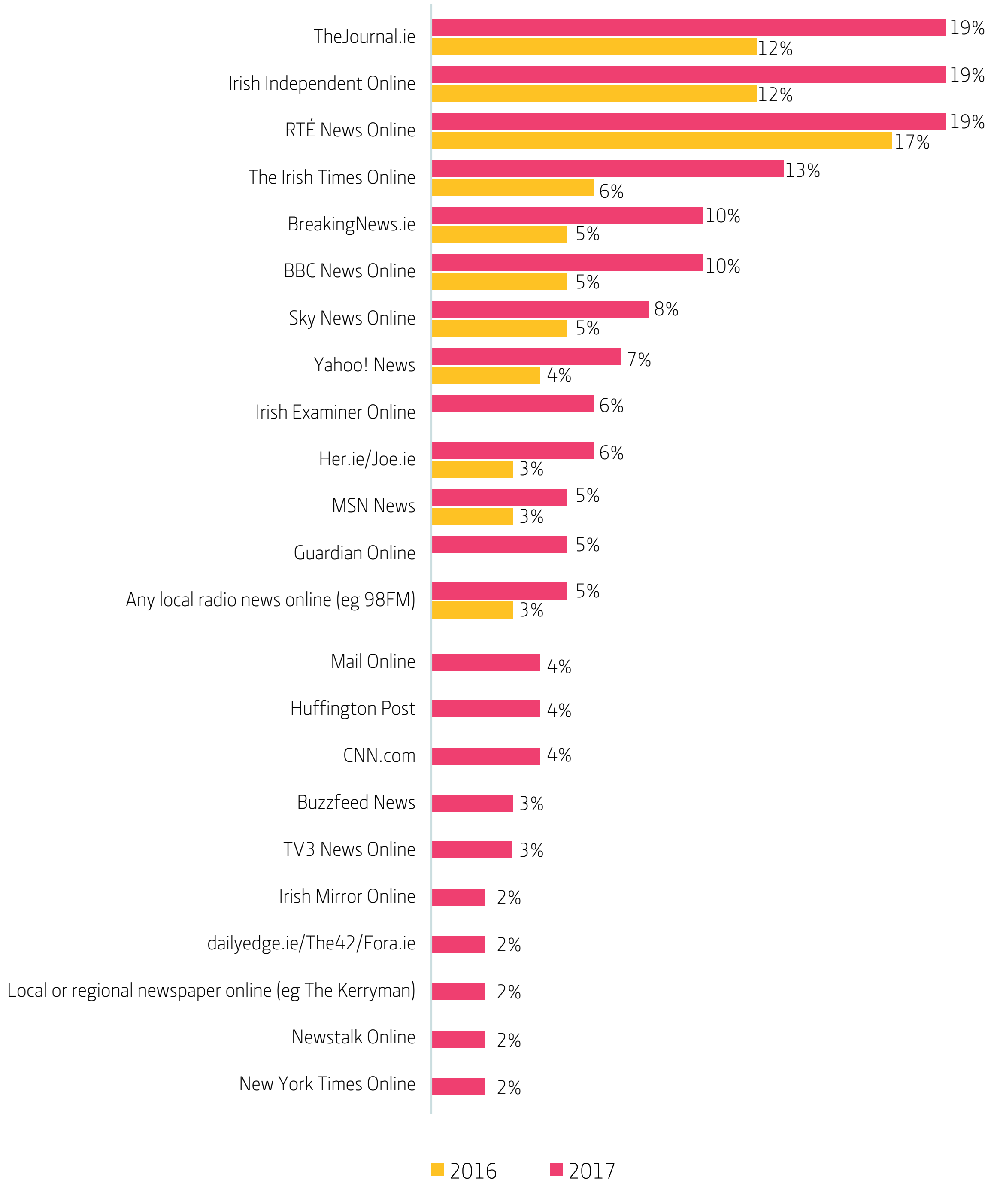
Fig. 50 Main sources of news by traditional brands 2016-2017



Digital Sources of News

TheJournal.ie, Irish Independent Online and RTÉ News Online jointly led the table here, each on 19 percentage points. This is a seven percentage point increase for TheJournal.ie and Irish Independent Online and a two point improvement for RTÉ. The Irish Times Online, in fourth place, saw a seven percentage point increase. These figures paint a picture of growth in digital brands, perhaps indicating that consumers are relying more on a single favoured online brand rather than, as in the past, looking to a number of brands. Where figures were gathered for both 2016 and 2017, all news brands showed healthy increases.

Fig. 51 Main sources of news by digital brands 2016-2017



Traditional Sources of News

The national public service broadcaster, RTÉ, was the news brand most used by consumers in 2017. For RTÉ TV News, the results across the five age categories surveyed ranged from 16 percent in the 18-24 age group to 59 percent in the 55+ group. This service is used far more by the two oldest age groups than the three younger ones. A similar pattern is evident for RTÉ Radio News but far fewer consumers use it compared to its sister TV service.

TheJournal.ie is, at 17 percent, the most popular news brand in the 18-24 age group. RTÉ TV occupies second place at 16 percent. Her.ie/Joe.ie is the third most popular in this age group at 15 percent. In the 25-34 age category, TheJournal.ie shares the top spot with RTÉ TV News, each at 18 percent. Third place is shared by Irish Independent Online, BBC News and Today FM, all at 14 percent.

The 35-44 age group is topped by RTÉ TV News at 28 percent with second place shared by Sky News, TheJournal.ie and the Irish Independent Online, all at 21 percent.

RTÉ TV News tops the 45-54 age group by a considerable distance at 44 percent, followed by RTÉ News Online at 25 percent and Sky News at 24 percent. The legacy broadcast sector is particularly strong in the 55+ age group with RTÉ TV News on top at 59 percent, followed by RTÉ Radio News at 37 percent, BBC News at 28 percent, with Sky News and RTÉ News Online both on 26 percent.

In general, the older the audience the more loyal it tends to be to legacy media. This finding should be of concern to those in legacy media responsible for building audience share. All newspapers on the list attract highest usage, as sources of news, from the oldest 55+ cohort. For example, The Irish Times attracts the five age groups as follows: 55+ [15 percent]; 45-54 [8 percent]; 35-44 [8 percent]; 25-34 [10 percent]; 18-24 [7 percent]. It should be remembered that the 55+ category potentially covers three or four decades in the life of the consumer, whereas each of the others accounts for a single decade or less.

Fig. 52 News brands by age group 2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
RTÉ TV News	16%	18%	28%	44%	59%
RTÉ Radio News (RTÉ Radio 1, 2FM, etc.)	9%	9%	13%	20%	37%
Sky News	12%	12%	21%	24%	26%
TheJournal.ie	17%	18%	21%	19%	20%
Irish Independent online	10%	14%	21%	22%	24%
RTE News Online	7%	11%	18%	25%	26%
BBC News	6%	14%	11%	19%	28%
Irish Independent	8%	10%	13%	12%	19%
The Irish Times Online	5%	11%	14%	11%	17%
Today FM	7%	14%	17%	16%	7%
Any local radio news (e.g. 98 FM)	10%	7%	11%	12%	16%
TV3 News	5%	5%	9%	18%	16%
Irish Times	7%	10%	8%	8%	15%
Newstalk	4%	7%	10%	11%	14%
BreakingNews.ie	3%	6%	10%	15%	12%
BBC News Online	5%	11%	10%	11%	10%
Sky News Online	8%	6%	9%	14%	6%
Yahoo! News	5%	6%	9%	8%	6%
Irish Examiner Online	2%	5%	4%	10%	7%
Her.ie/ Joe.ie	15%	10%	6%	3%	1%
MSN News	3%	4%	7%	7%	5%
CNN	3%	5%	6%	4%	7%
ITV or Channel 4 News	0%	2%	3%	8%	8%
Guardian Online	2%	7%	6%	4%	4%
Any local radio news online (e.g. 98 FM)	2%	2%	3%	7%	7%
Irish Examiner	1%	2%	3%	6%	7%
Mail Online	6%	2%	5%	4%	4%
Irish Daily Mail	4%	2%	3%	3%	6%
Huffington Post	6%	3%	4%	4%	3%
CNN.com	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%
Sunday Independent	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%
BuzzFeed News	11%	5%	3%	1%	1%
TV3 News Online	4%	3%	4%	3%	2%
None of these in the past week (Online)	14%	13%	12%	11%	17%
None of these in the past week (Traditional)	17%	14%	8%	3%	3%

RTÉ is the clear leader in the TV brands group where it comfortably tops all five age groups. While RTÉ also heads the Radio Brands group, it does not have the same dominance in this arena. Indeed, Today FM tops two of the five groups. RTÉ Radio News has a strong lead in the 55+ group at 37 percent compared to just 7 percent for Today FM.

Fig. 53 Television brands by age group 2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Television					
RTÉ TV News	16%	18%	28%	44%	59%
Sky News	12%	12%	21%	24%	26%
BBC News	6%	14%	11%	19%	28%
TV3 News	5%	5%	9%	18%	16%
CNN	3%	5%	6%	4%	7%
ITV or Channel 4 News	0%	2%	3%	8%	8%

Fig. 54 Radio brands by age group 2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Radio					
RTÉ Radio News (Radio 1, 2 FM etc)	9%	9%	13%	20%	37%
Today FM	7%	14%	17%	16%	7%
Any local radio news (eg 98FM)	10%	7%	11%	12%	16%
Newstalk	4%	7%	10%	11%	14%

The Irish Independent heads the Newspaper Brands Group where it has a small lead over The Irish Times, with other titles some distance behind the lead pair.

Fig. 55 Newspaper brands by age group 2017

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Newpaper					
Irish Independent	8%	10%	13%	12%	19%
The Irish Times	7%	10%	8%	8%	15%
Irish Examiner	1%	2%	3%	6%	7%
Irish Daily Mail	4%	2%	3%	3%	6%
Sunday Independent	2%	2%	3%	3%	6%

The Online News Brands group is headed by TheJournal.ie with the Irish Independent Online second and RTÉ News Online third. In the 18-24 age group, TheJournal.ie tops the list at 17 percent, followed by Her.ie/Joe.ie at 15 percent with Buzzfeed News next at 11 percent and the Irish Independent Online one point lower. In the 55+ category, RTÉ News Online tops the list at 26 percent, with the Irish Independent Online second at 24 percent and TheJournal.ie third at 20 percent. The Irish Times Online comes next at 17 percent, its strongest showing across the various age categories.

Fig. 56 Online brands by age group 2017

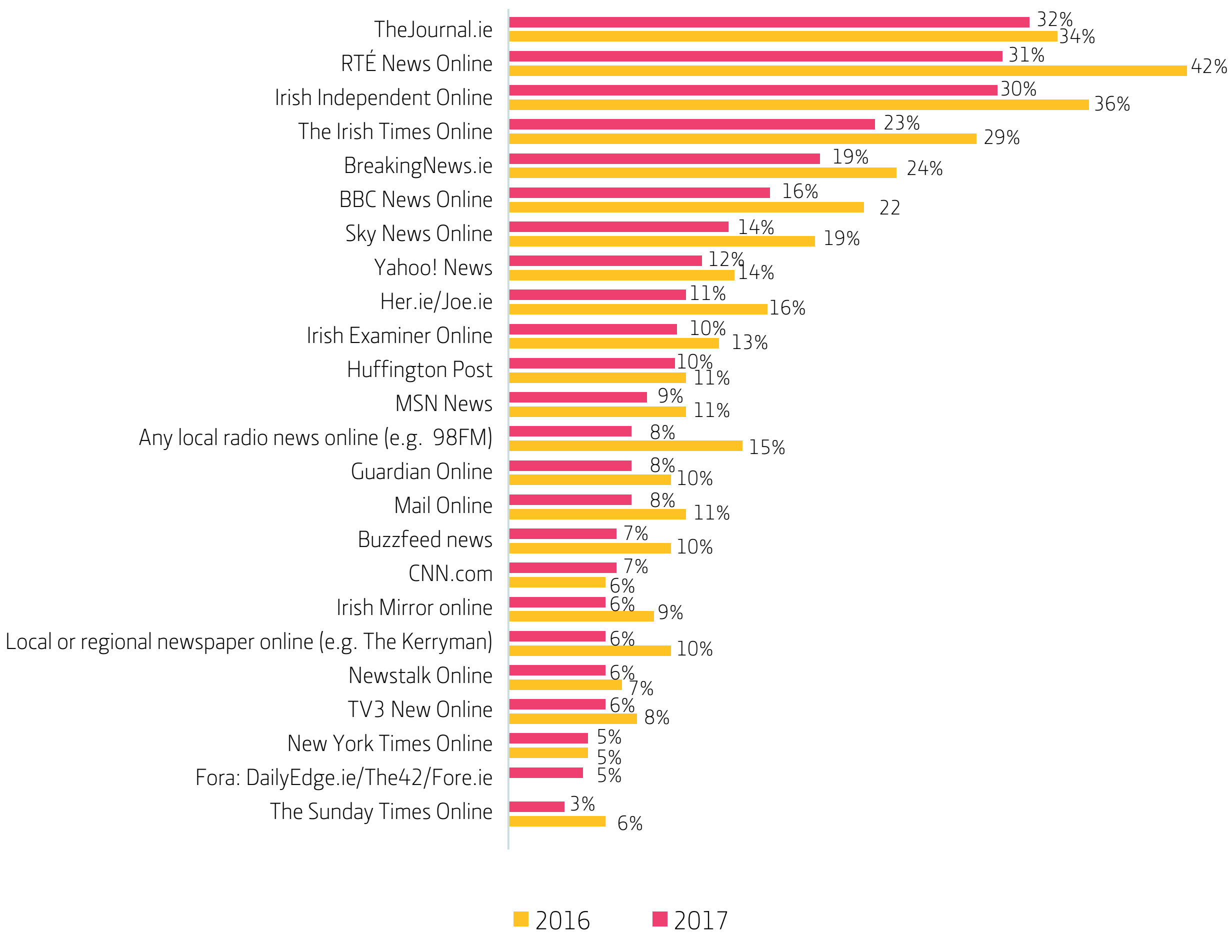
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
TheJournal.ie	17%	18%	21%	19%	20%
Irish Independent online	10%	14%	21%	22%	24%
RTÉ News Online	7%	11%	18%	25%	26%
The Irish Times Online	5%	11%	14%	11%	17%
BreakingNews.ie	3%	6%	10%	15%	12%
BBC News Online	5%	11%	10%	11%	10%
Sky News Online	8%	6%	9%	14%	6%
Yahoo! News	5%	6%	9%	8%	6%
Irish Examiner Online	2%	5%	4%	10%	7%
Her.ie/ Joe.ie	15%	10%	6%	3%	1%
MSN News	3%	4%	7%	7%	5%
Guardian Online	2%	7%	6%	4%	4%
Any local radio news online (eg 98 FM)	2%	2%	3%	7%	7%
Mail Online	6%	2%	5%	4%	4%
Huffington Post	6%	3%	4%	4%	3%
BuzzFeed News	11%	5%	3%	1%	1%
CNN.com	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%

4.2 Digital Sources of News

Digital Brands

Engagement with digital brands mostly declined in 2017. The top three online news sites accessed were: TheJournal.ie at 32 percent [-2 percent]; RTÉ News Online at 31 percent [-11 percent]; and Irish Independent Online at 30 percent [-6 percent]. The Sunday Times Online access fell three percentage points from 6 percent to 3 percent. The results indicate that the previously dominant position of RTÉ is eroding.

Fig. 57 Digital brands accessed 2016-2017



Digital Preferences and Brand Attributes

Consumer preferences for digital brands provide interesting insights. For instance, the online offerings of legacy newspaper brands score best as sources of: (1) accurate and reliable news [30 percent]; (2) as aids to understanding complex issues [31 percent]; and (3) for providing strong viewpoints and opinions [32 percent]. Digital born brands score best for providing amusing or entertaining copy [40 percent]. This perhaps begs the question: do online legacy brands need to lighten up to attract younger better-educated audiences seeking amusing, stimulating and entertaining content in addition to a diet of intellectually stimulating serious news?

The top three online news providers for accurate and reliable news are The Irish Times [39 percent], RTÉ News [37 percent] and Irish Independent [26 percent]. For helping consumers understand complex issues, RTÉ News tops the list at 33 percent, with the Irish Independent second at 30 percent and The Irish Times third at 29 percent.

RTÉ News is again top for providing strong viewpoints and opinion at 35 percent, followed by the Irish Independent at 30 percent and TheJournal.ie at 27 percent. Her.ie/Joe.ie is best for providing amusing or entertaining news at 43 percent with TheJournal.ie second at 28 percent. RTÉ News [7 percent] and The Irish Times [13 percent] rank the lowest in this category, reinforcing their status as providers of serious news.

Fig. 58 Preferences for digital sources by consumer type 2017

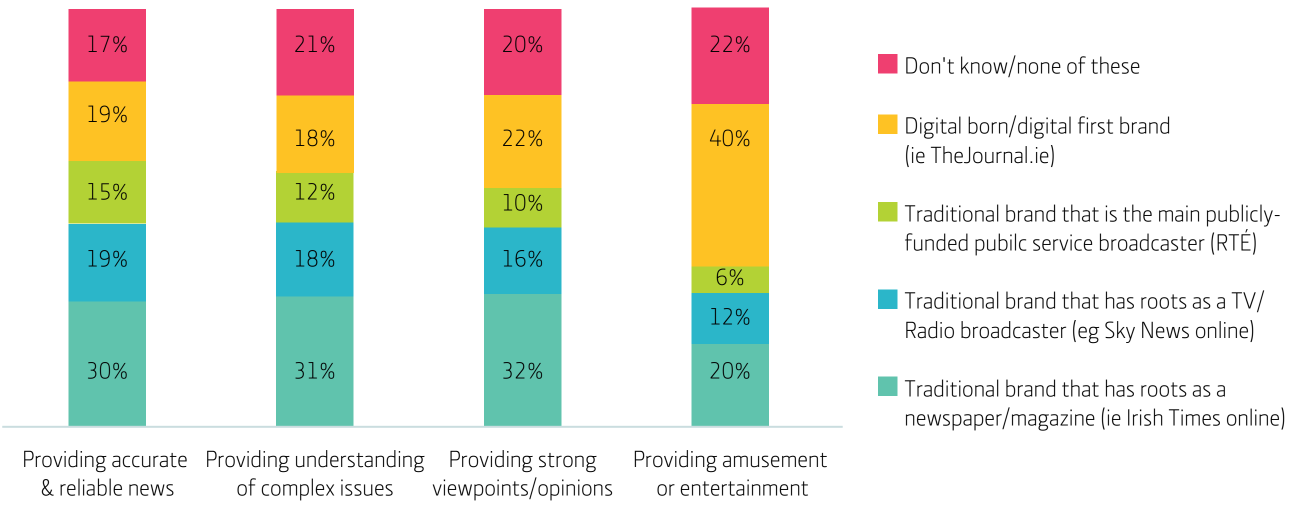


Fig. 59 Consumer preferences for digital new brands 2017

Among The Irish Times News Consumers

39% think it is best for accuracy
29% think it is best for understanding complex issues
23% think it is best for strong opinions
13% think it is best for amusement and entertainment

Among RTÉ News Consumers

37% think it is best for accuracy
33% think it is best for understanding complex issues
35% think it is best for strong opinions
7% think it is best for amusement and entertainment

Among Irish Independent News Consumers

26% think it is best for accuracy
30% think it is best for understanding complex issues
30% think it is best for strong opinions
16% think it is best for amusement and entertainment

Among TheJournal.ie New Consumers

21% think it is best for accuracy
20% think it is best for understanding complex issues
27% think it is best for strong opinions
28% think it is best for amusement and entertainment

Among Joe.ie News Consumers

6% think it is best for accuracy
7% think it is best for understanding complex issues
10% think it is best for strong opinions
43% think it is best for amusement and entertainment

4.3 Conclusion

Compared to the international average, a higher percentage of Irish consumers looked to the public service broadcaster, RTÉ, as their main source of traditional news.

The older the audience the more loyal it tends to be, in general, to legacy media. Engagement with digital brands mostly declined in the period under review. However, the top digital sources of news, TheJournal.ie, Irish Independent Online and RTÉ News Online, all showed growth over the previous period.

The online offerings of legacy newspaper brands scored best for accurate news, as aids to understand complex issues and for providing strong viewpoints and opinions.

Section Five
Paying for News

This section identifies categories of Irish consumers willing to pay for online news and other categories who are not. Various payment methods for online news are outlined. And the reasons why some consumers are willing to pay for online news are discussed as are the reasons why others are not willing to pay up. The Irish attitude to ad blockers is considered, as is consumer tolerance to the length of ads.

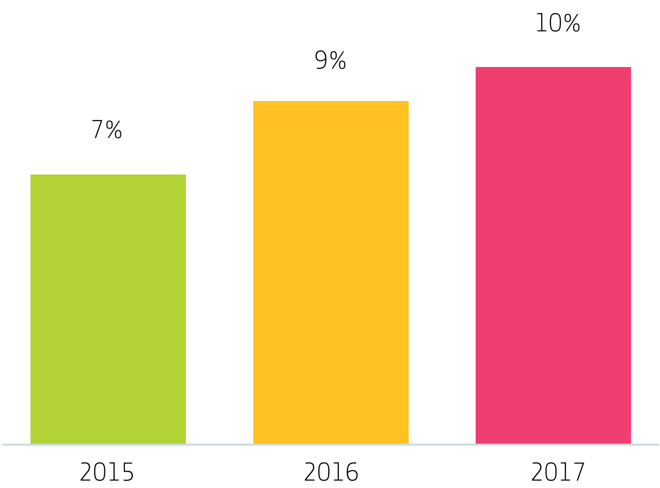
5.1 Paying for News

News Payments

Consumer willingness to pay for online news has increased marginally over each of the last two years, reaching 10 percent in 2017. Younger consumers are more likely to pay for news than older ones. The category most inclined to pay for news was the 25-34 age group. The least inclined was the 45-54 age group.

Willingness to pay for news was highest in households with gross income in excess of €100,000 and lowest in households with gross income below €20,000. Broadly, younger and wealthier consumers are more likely to pay for online news while poorer and older people are less inclined to do so.

Fig. 60 Online news payment 2015-2016



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

Fig. 61 Payment for news by age group

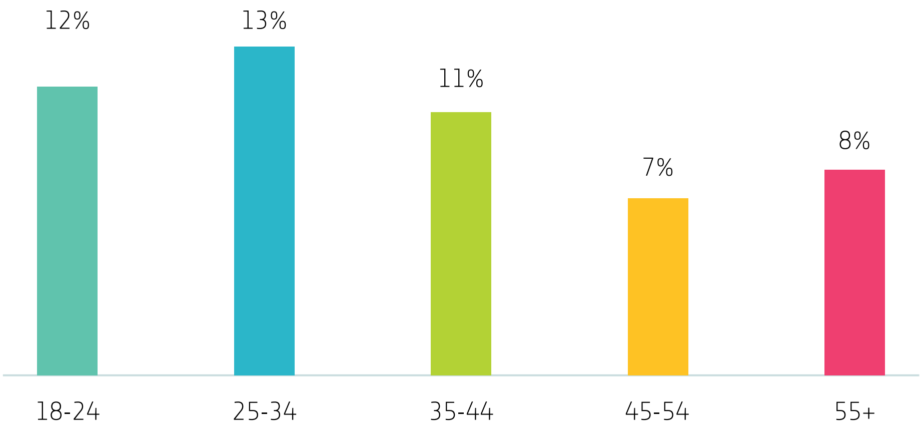
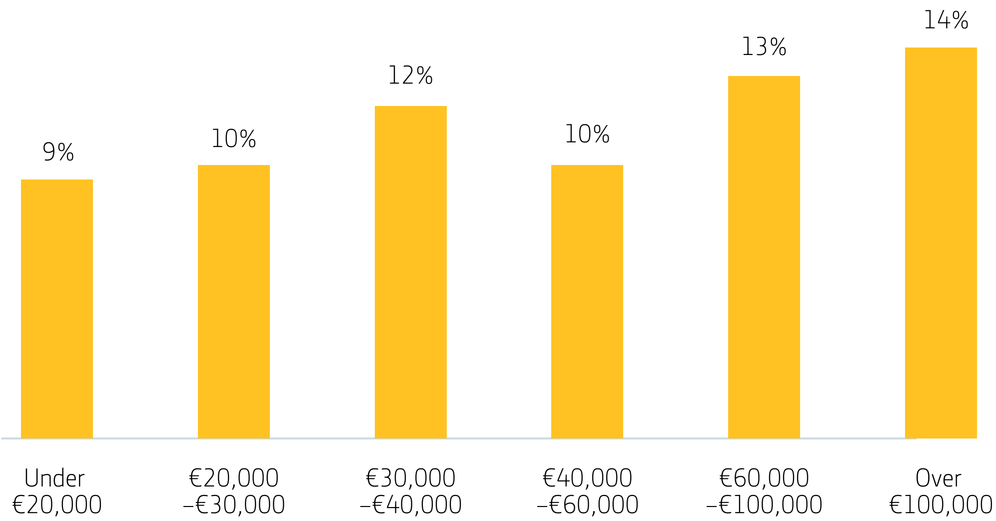


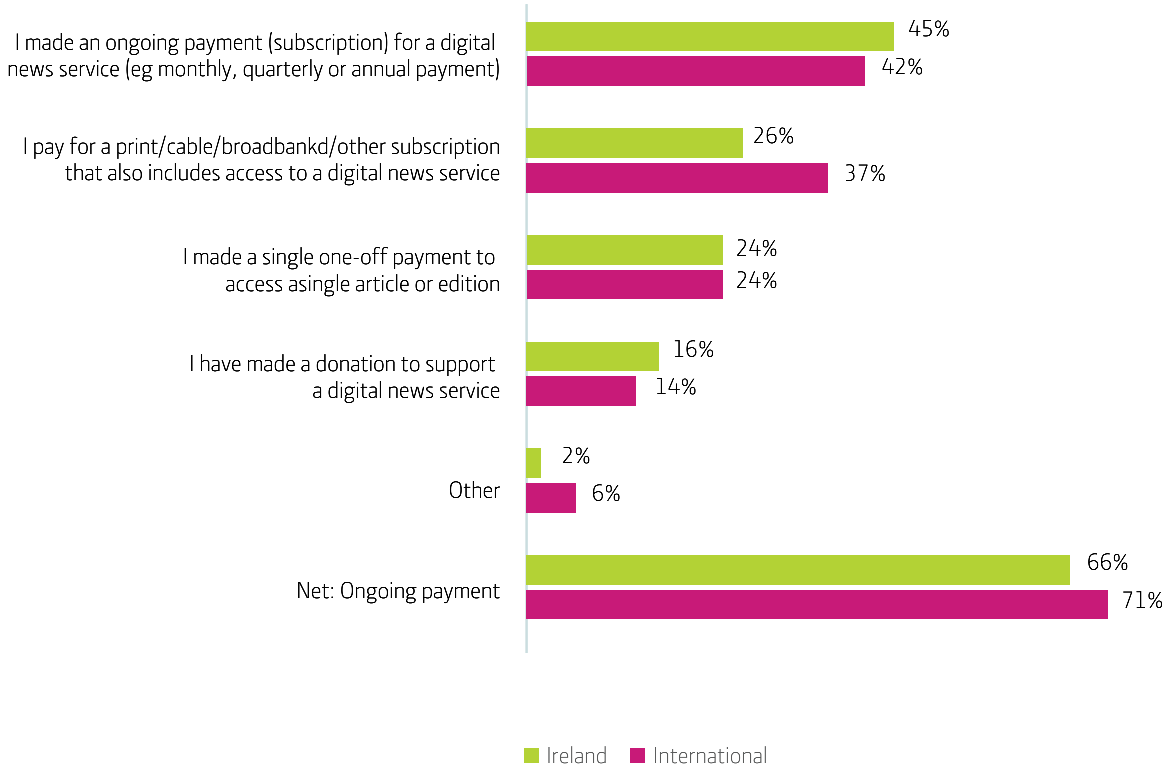
Fig. 62 Payment for news by income



News Payment Methods

Two thirds of Irish news consumers make ongoing payments of one sort or another to digital companies which include a news service compared to 71 percent of their international counterparts. Many broadband, phone, TV, radio and home entertainment bundles include news elements. But the latter are not usually the main reason subscribers purchase such packages. For example, in 2016 Eir foisted a sports news package on some subscribers to its digital bundles at additional cost even though some customers had little interest in it. Withdrawing from the new contract would have necessitated subscribers changing provider and being inconvenienced in the process.

Fig. 63 News payment methods 2017



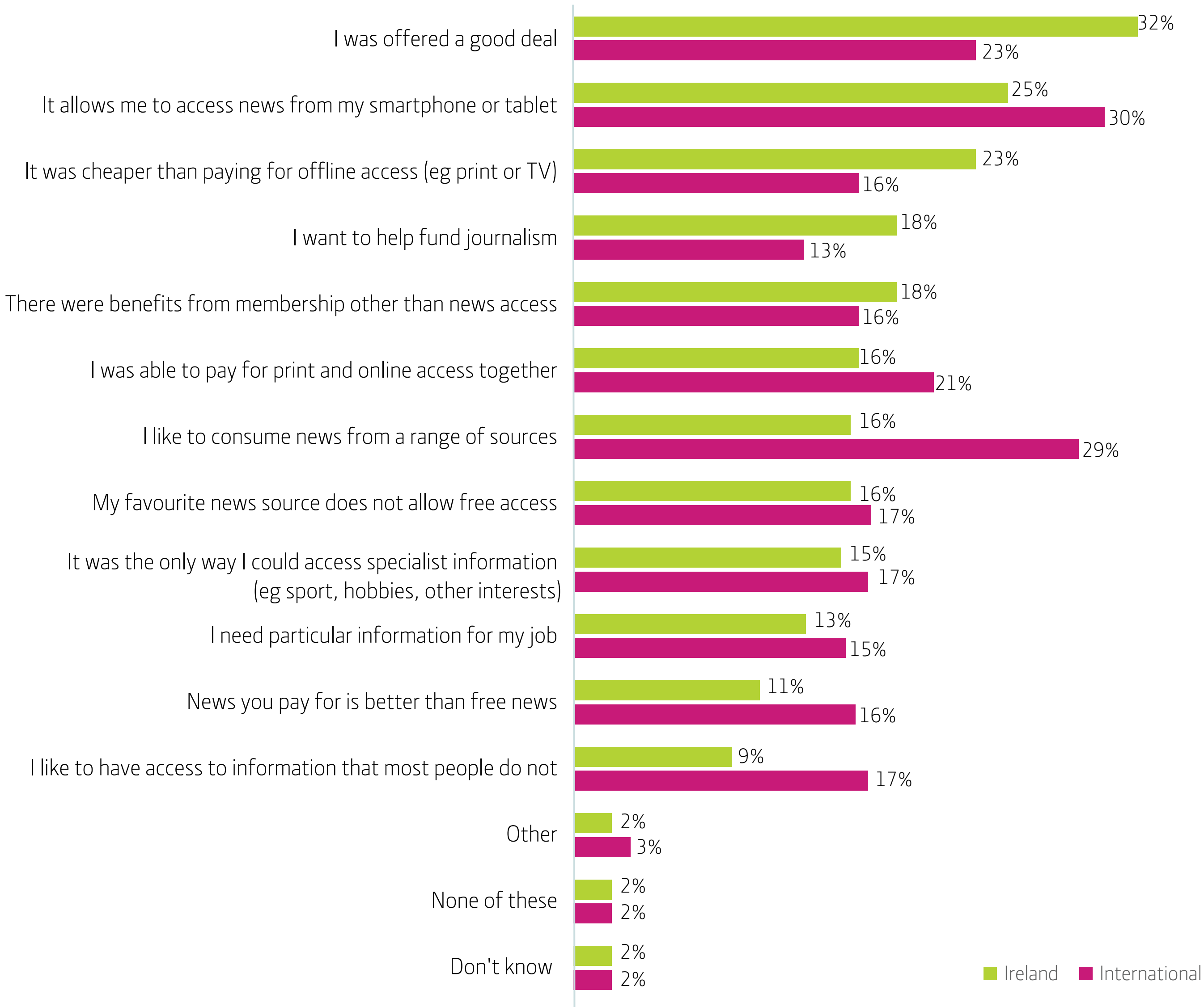
5.2 Attitudes Towards Paying for News

Why People Pay for Online News

Irish consumers gave numerous reasons as to why they pay for online news. Value-for-money was an important factor with almost a third of respondents indicating that being offered a good deal influenced their decision to buy. The fact that some online news was cheaper than legacy content was also an important factor as were benefits other than news access. These reasons are not surprising in a country which has undergone a severe decade-long austerity programme resulting in substantial reductions in the take-home salary of many workers.

The main reasons Irish consumers pay for news include gaining access to: breaking news; reportage of recent events; explanatory and analysis news; and news archives. Compared to their international counterparts, Irish consumers are less likely to pay for breaking news but more likely to pay for comment and opinion. And fewer Irish consumers are willing to pay for news related to hobbies, sport or work-related stories.

Fig. 64 Reasons for paying for online news 2017



There are numerous reasons why consumers won't pay for online news. In Ireland, the main ones are (1) that a lot of news is available free; (2) that online news is assumed to be not worth paying for; (3) that legacy news is preferred; and (4) that consumers can't afford to pay for it.

Fig. 65 Reasons for not paying for online news 2017

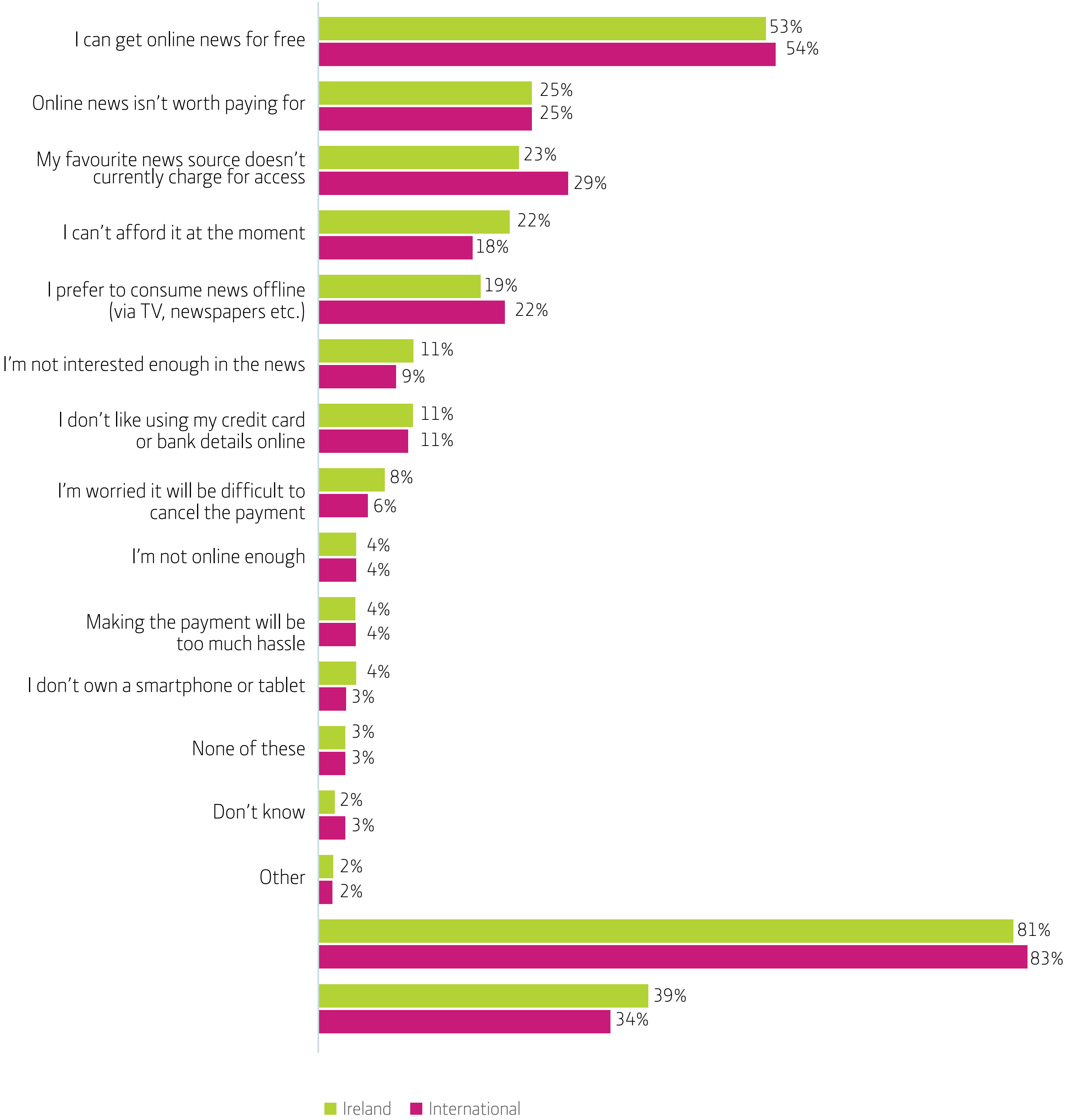
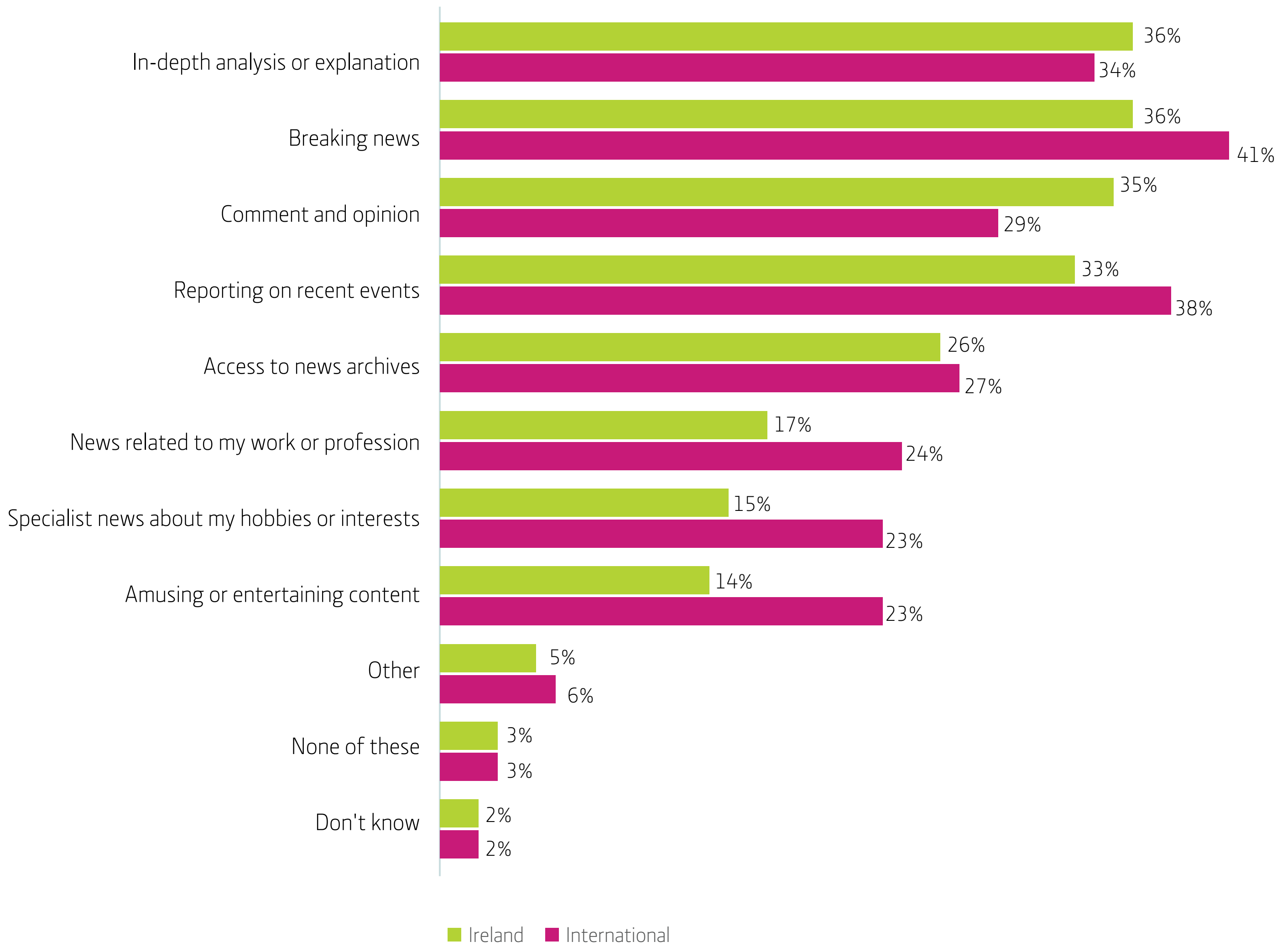


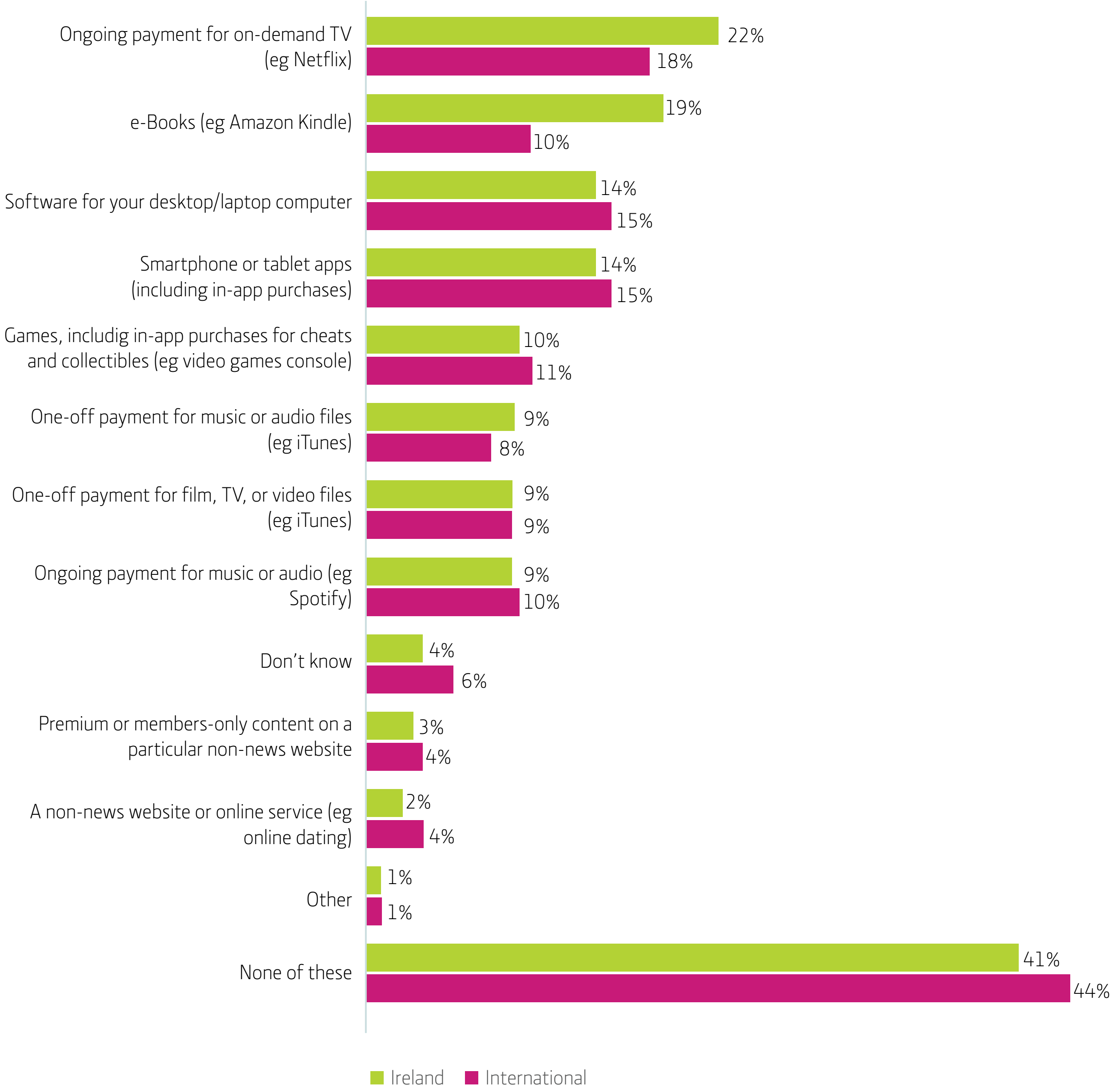
Fig. 66 Perceptions of online news worth paying for 2017



Paying for Digital Media Generally

The most common reason Irish consumers [22 percent] pay for online content is to access TV, film and video on services such as Netflix. The next most common reason is to access e-books on services such as Amazon Kindle. The Irish subscription rate here, at 19 percent, is almost twice the international average of 10 percent. Purchasing software and apps for computers, tablets and smartphones comes next at 14 percent. Gaming related purchases followed at 10 percent.

Fig. 67 Payment for digital media 2017

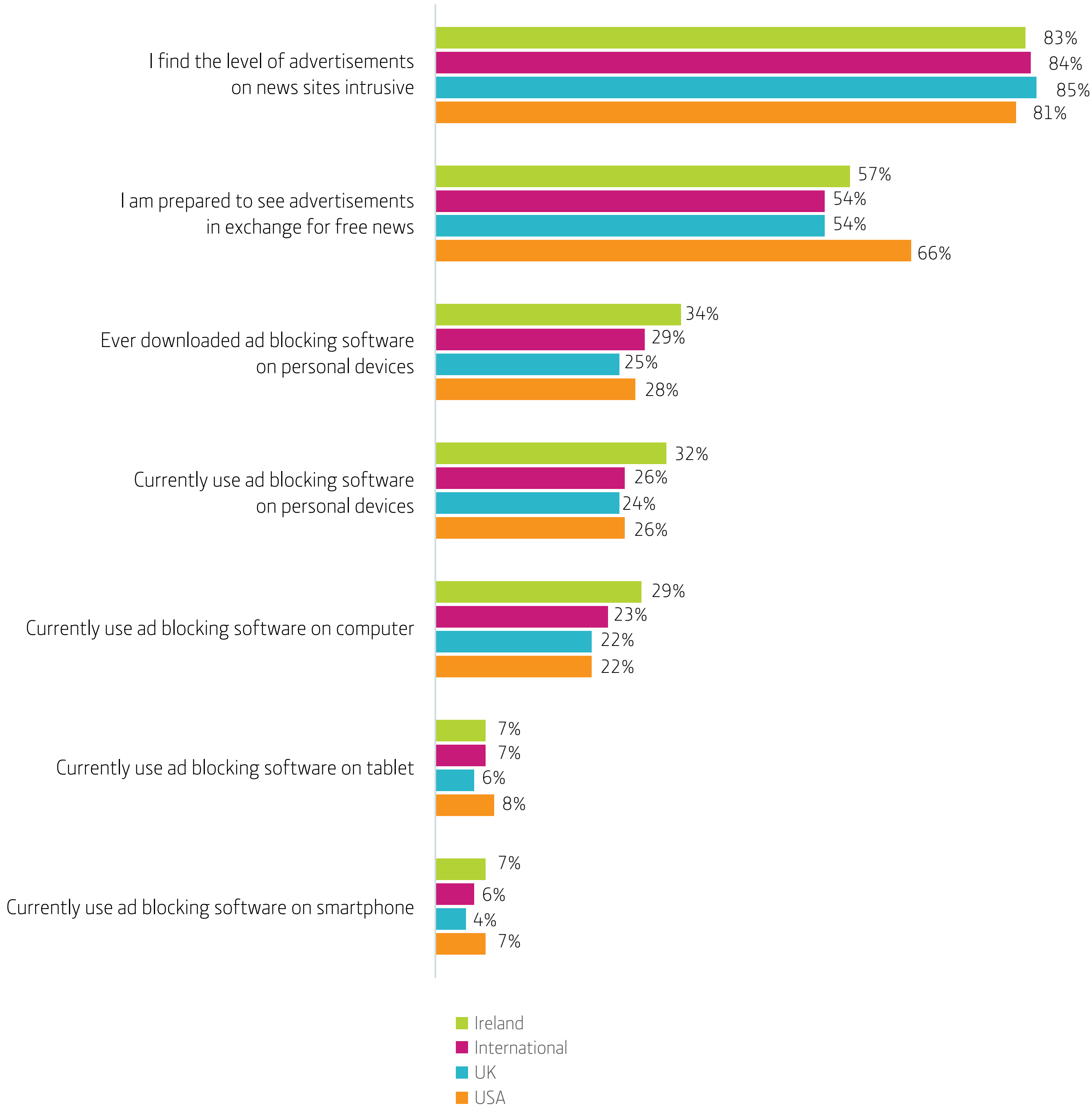


Which of the following types of digital media (if any) have you paid for online in the last year?

Advertising and Ad Blockers

Irish news consumers, in common with their international counterparts, find ads on digital news services annoying and intrusive. Some 57 percent are willing to endure the ads in return for free news. Approximately one third of news consumers have downloaded and use ad-blocking software. Some 34 percent have downloaded ad blocking software on personal devices compared to an international average of 29 percent. And just short of a third use ad-blocking software compared to the international average of 26 percent.

Fig. 68 Attitudes towards advertising and ad blockers Ireland and International



The percentage use of ad blockers by various age cohorts is predictable. The young use ad blockers much more extensively than older groups as follows: 18-24: 49 percent; 25-34: 40 percent; 35-44: 33 percent; 45-54: 30 percent; 55+: 22 percent. The older the consumer the less likely they are to use ad blockers. The perceived technical hassle of downloading ad blocker software is the most likely reason for reluctance on the part of older consumers to use it. Consumers in Connaught and Part of Ulster, at 37 percent, used blockers most while those in Munster, at 26 percent, used them least.

Fig. 69 Ad blocker use by age

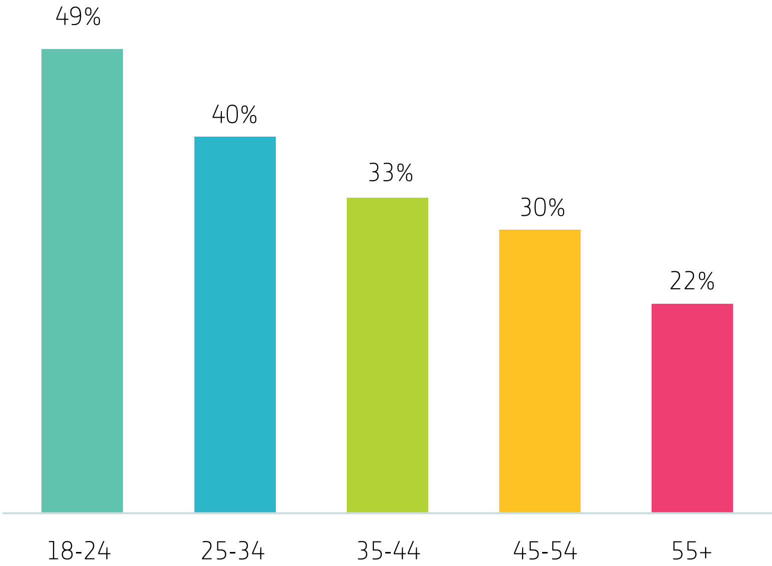
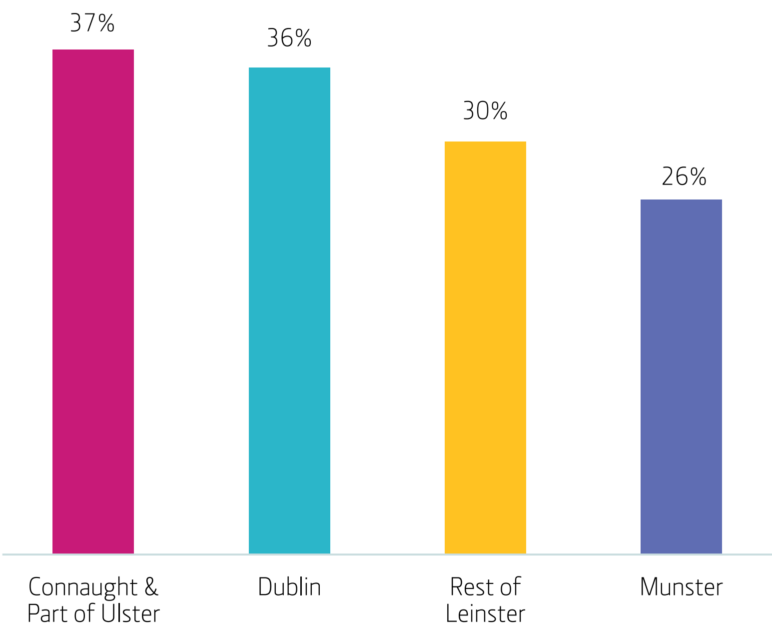


Fig. 70 Ad blocker use by region



5.3 Conclusion

Although younger and wealthier consumers are more likely to pay for online news, the total number of people willing to do so is small at 10 percent.

The main reasons Irish consumers pay for online news are to access: breaking stories; reportage of recent events; explanatory and analysis news; and news archives.

The main reasons they don't want to pay for it are because a lot of news is available free; it is assumed much of it is not worth paying for; and legacy news is preferred; and it is too expensive.

Irish news consumers find ads on digital news services annoying and intrusive. Over a third of them have downloaded ad-blocking software. The older the consumers, the less likely they are to use ad-blocking software.

Section Six
Gateways to News

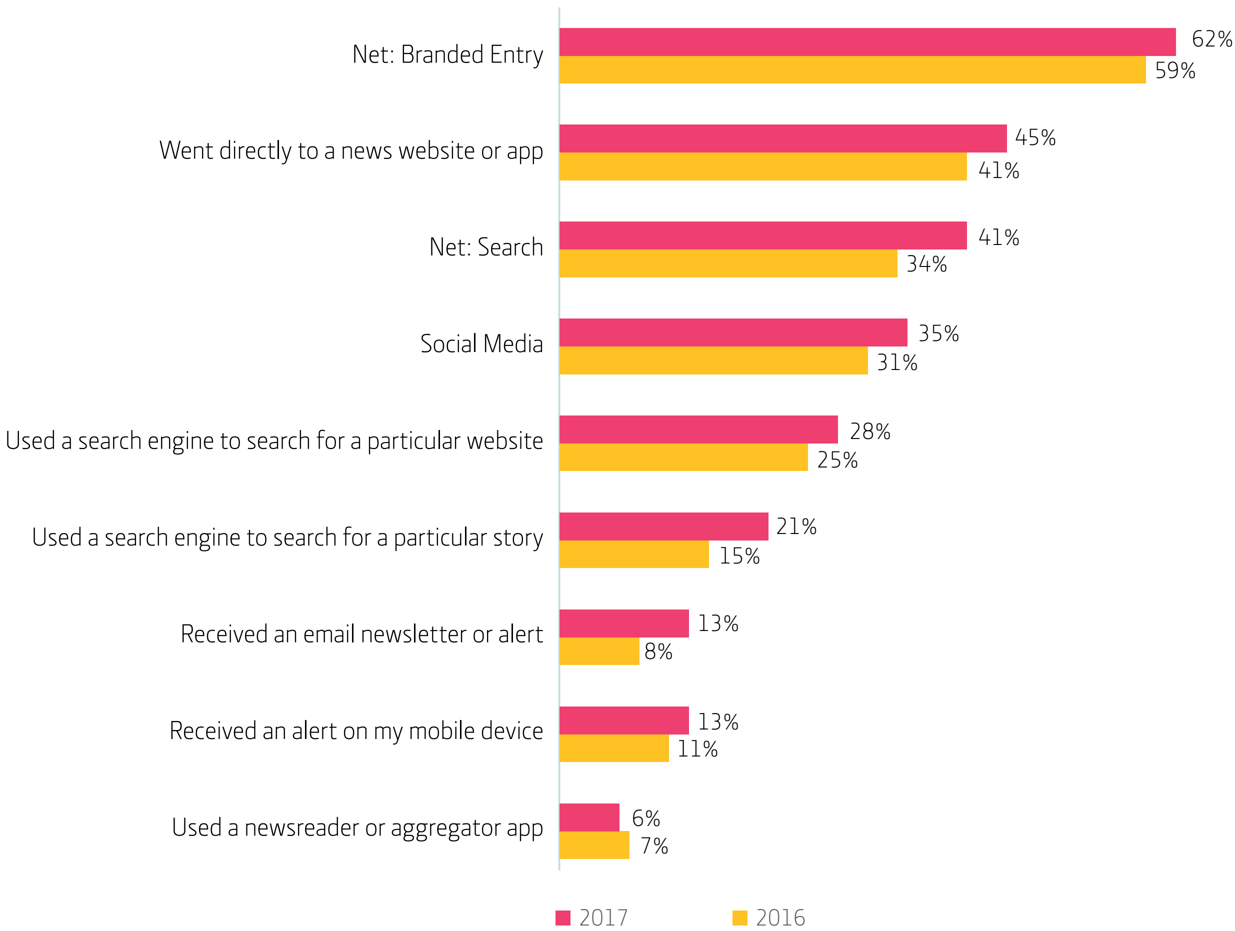
The gateways to Irish digital news and attitudes to gatekeepers who promote news on digital news platforms are examined here. The methods by which different genders and age groups access news and consumer engagement with video news are also outlined.

6.1 Gateways to News

Gateways to Online News

Consumers were asked about seven access routes to news in 2017. Direct access via a news website or app was the most popular at 45 percent. Social media, at 35 percent, was up four percentage points on the 2016 figure. The next most common routes to news were via search engine to a specific website [28 percent] and via search engine to a specific news story [21 percent]. Then came mobile news alerts and email alerts, both 13 percent. Specific story searches are increasingly driving traffic. But brand loyalties remain a powerful attraction. Of the seven gateways surveyed, 'Branded Entry' at 62 percent was the most popular.

Fig. 71 Gateways to online news 2016–2017

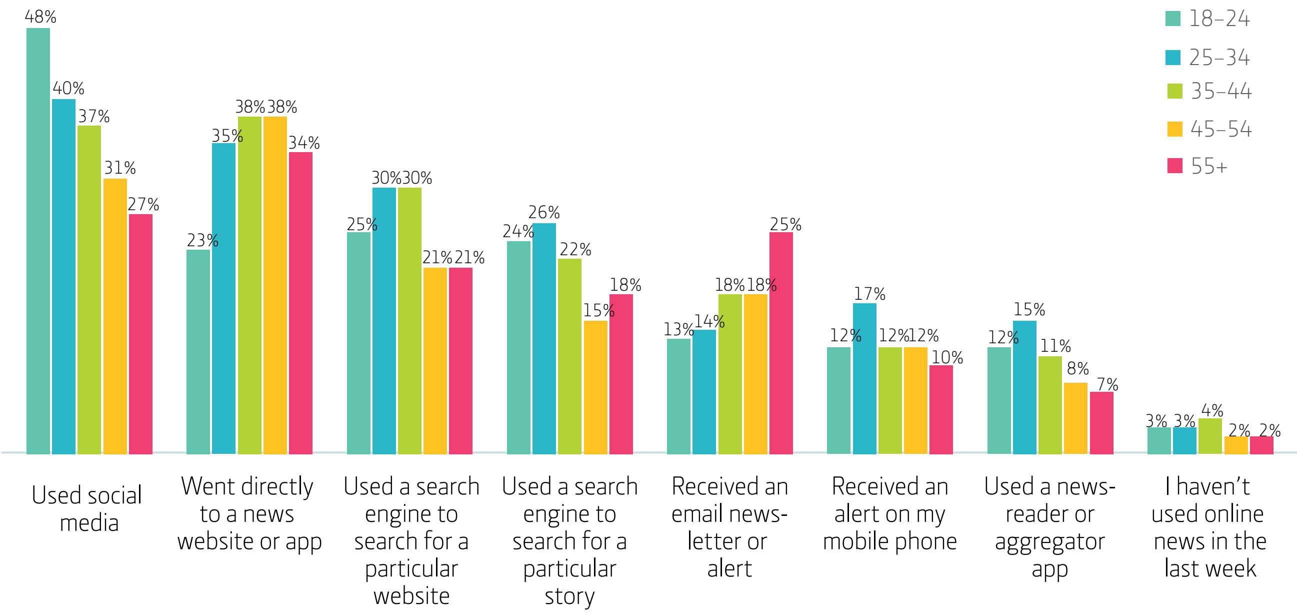


How have you come across online news?

Gateways to News by Age Group

Five age groups were asked to specify their use of seven gateways to news. The youngest cohort [18-24] made by far the heaviest use of social media at 48 percent. This perhaps indicates the young have a more serendipitous appetite for news than older cohorts who prefer a more direct approach. Some 25 percent of the 55+ age cohort got their news via an email newsletter or email alert, indicating this group prefers a targeted approach to locating news. Email newsletters tend to have a more traditional and less dynamic structure which appears to better suit the older audience.

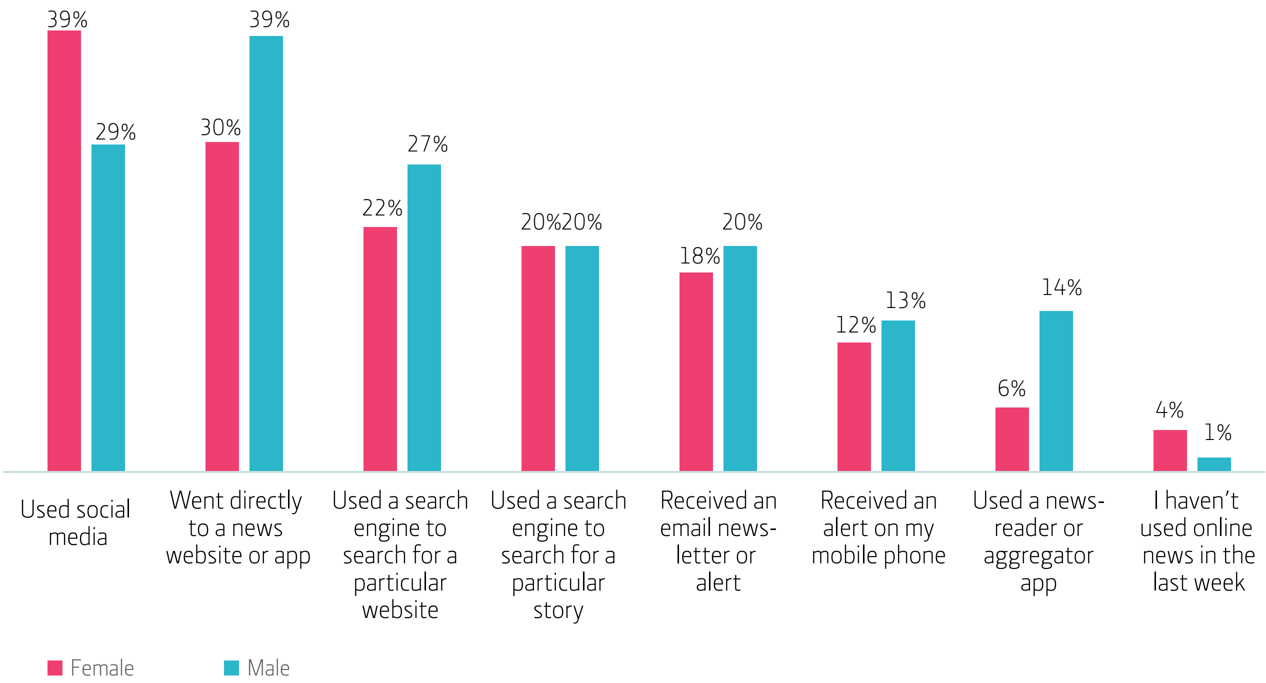
Fig. 72 Gateways to news by age 2017



Gateways to News by Gender

Far more women [39 percent] used social media to find news than men [29 percent] whereas the reverse was true in the case of a direct route to a website or app. In the latter case, the figure for males was 39 percent and for females 30 percent.

Fig. 73 Gateways to news by gender 2017



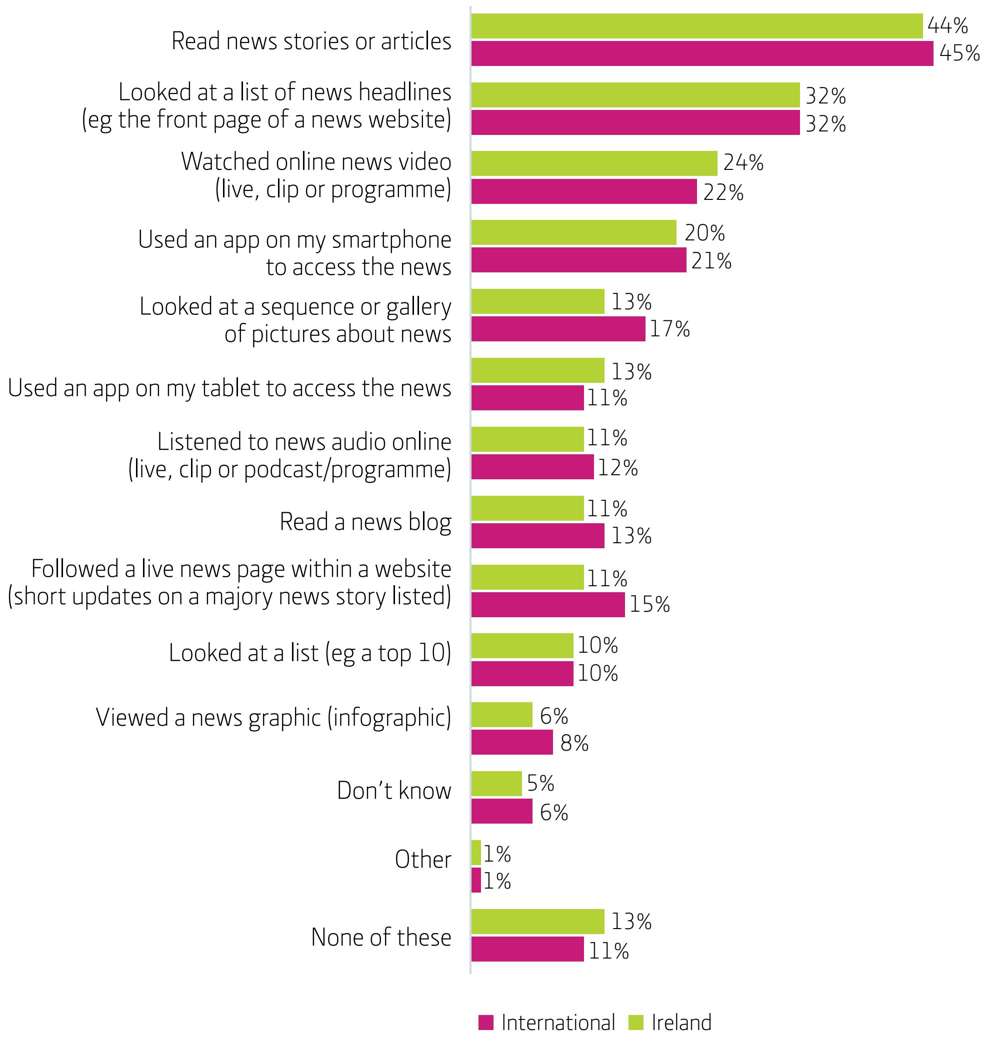
6.2 Ways of Consuming News

Forms of Access

Irish news consumers use the various routes to news in roughly the same percentages as international news consumers. The similarities in the figures are striking across all categories, except for consumption of photo gallery news. Although even here the difference is not large, the reason may be that news photo galleries feature less commonly on Irish digital news sites than on those outside Ireland.

The most common way to consume a story was to read it [44 percent Irish and 45 percent international]. This is clearly a hangover from the legacy media period. Video news consumption was twice as popular as audio consumption.Interestingly, infographic consumption was low among both Irish and international respondents. This begs the question as to whether expensive investment in infographic story-telling wipes its face when it comes to building an audience to capture additional market share.

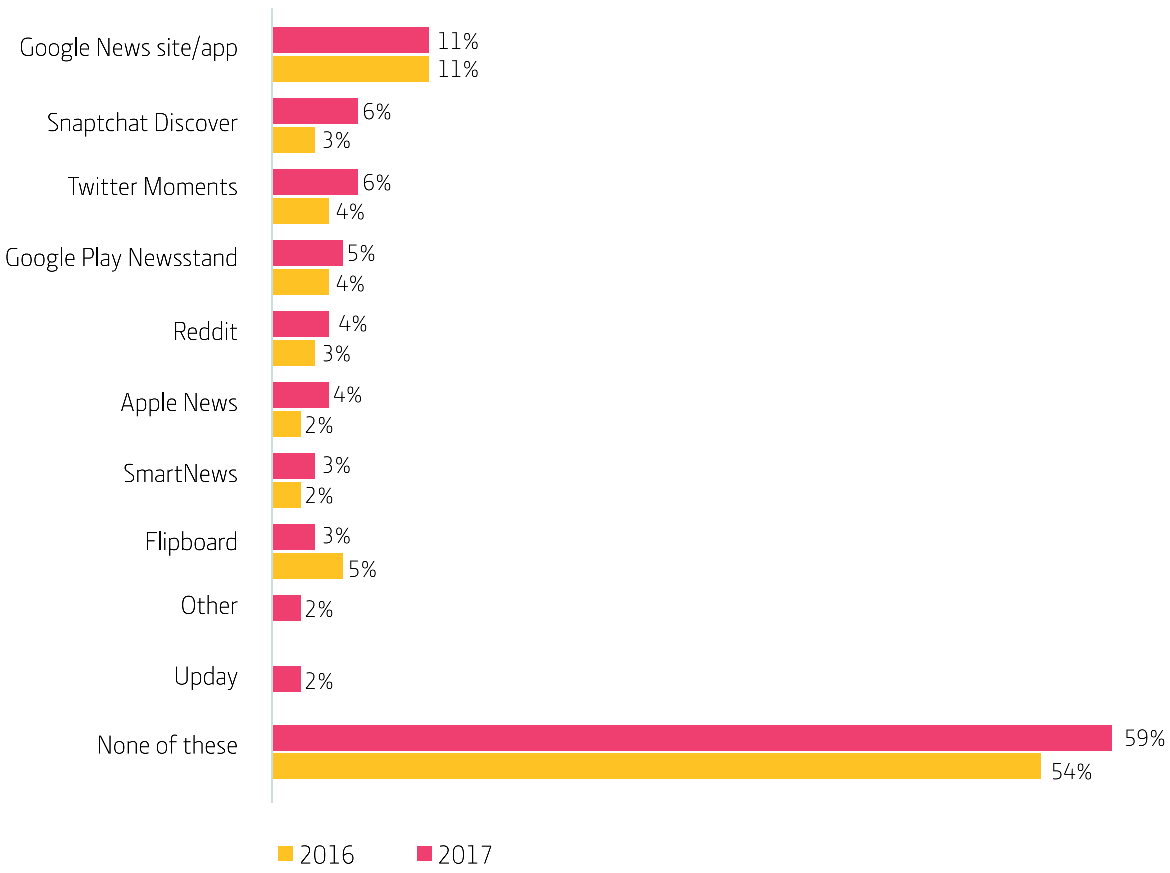
Fig. 74 Ways of consuming news 2017



News Aggregators and Apps

The 2017 figures for news aggregators and apps used show, in general, minor growth on the 2016 figures. It should be noted that the absence of Facebook and Twitter detracts from this figure as both are, in fact, specialist news aggregators. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this graph is the number of respondents who don't use any ofthe aggregators or apps specified in the question. This group increased from 54 percent in 2016 to 59 percent in 2017.

Fig. 75 News aggregators and apps 2016–2017

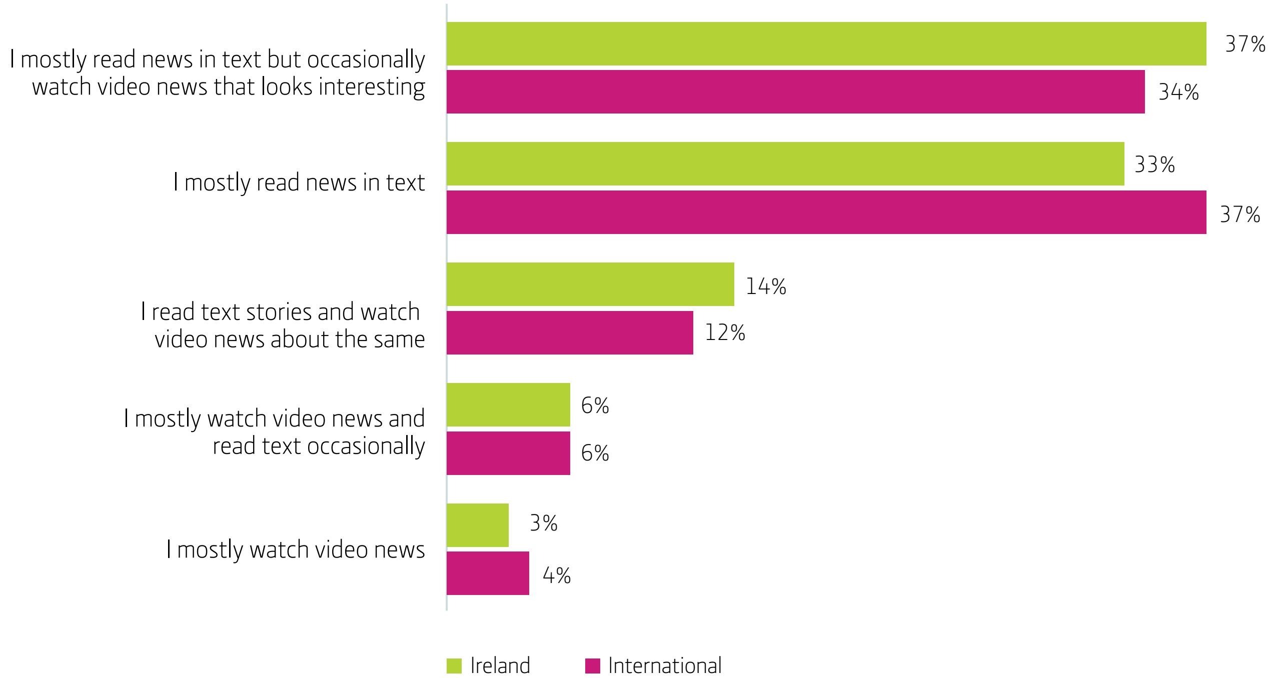


Which news aggregators and apps have you used?

News Formats

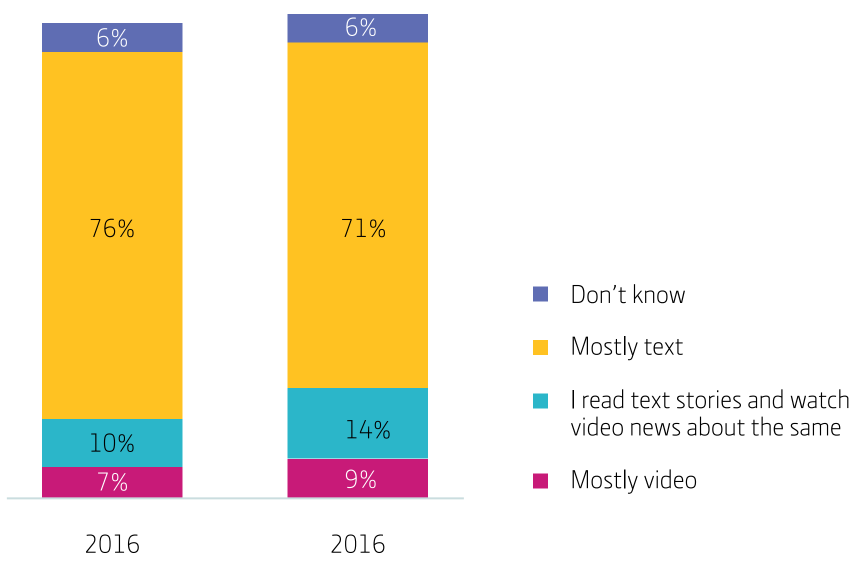
Irish consumers are broadly in line with their international counterparts when it comes to the consumption of text and video news. Text-based stories are still easily the most dominant medium. In 2017, 37 percent of Irish consumers indicated they mostly consume text with only occasional video news and 33 percent mostly consume text in isolation. Just 3 percent consume mostly video news, in line with the international average.

Fig. 76 Irish and international formats of online news consumption 2017



Which news formats do you mostly consume?

Fig. 77 Formats of online news consumption 2016–2017



Which news formats do you mostly consume?

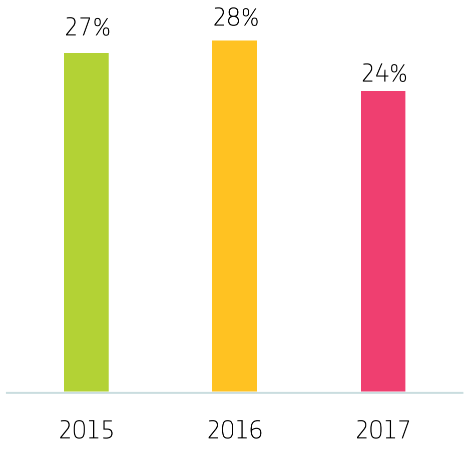
6.3 Video News

Video News Consumption

Consumption of video news decreased in 2017 to 24 percent, from 28 percent the previous year and 27 percent in 2015. Facebook's recent decision to push video news may generate a turnaround in consumption of this type of news next year.

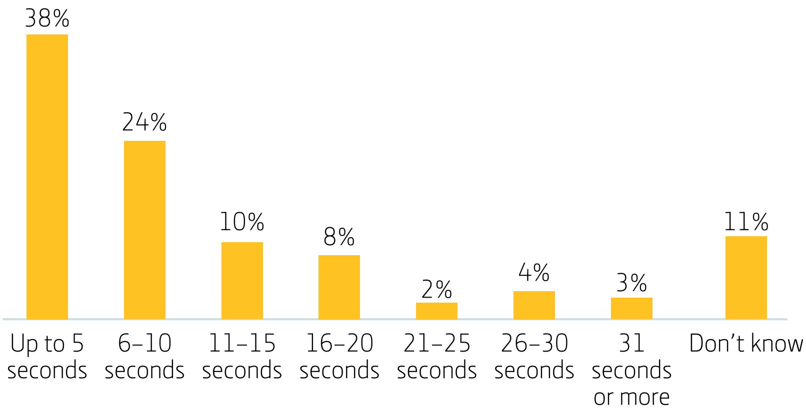
Pre-roll ads on video news continue to be resisted by consumers. Just 3 percent felt they could tolerate ads lasting over half a minute. And a whopping 86 percent demanded ads lasting half a minute or, preferably, much less. The limits of toleration were: 5 seconds or less – 38 percent; 6-10 seconds – 24 percent; 11-15 seconds – 10 percent; 16-20 seconds – 8 percent; 21-25 seconds – 2 percent; 26-30 seconds – 4 percent; over 31 seconds – 3 percent.

Fig. 78 Video news consumption 2015–2017



Do you watch online video news?

Fig. 79 Perception of fair duration for pre-roll ads 2017

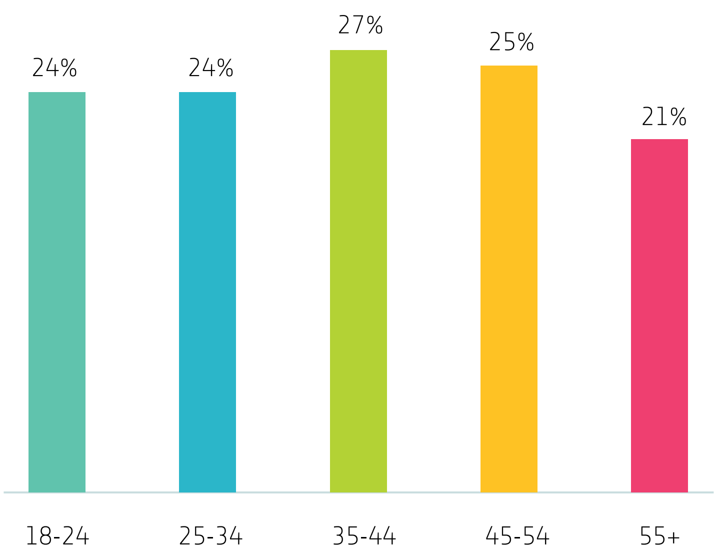


What advert length would be fair for a two minute news video?

Video News by Demographics

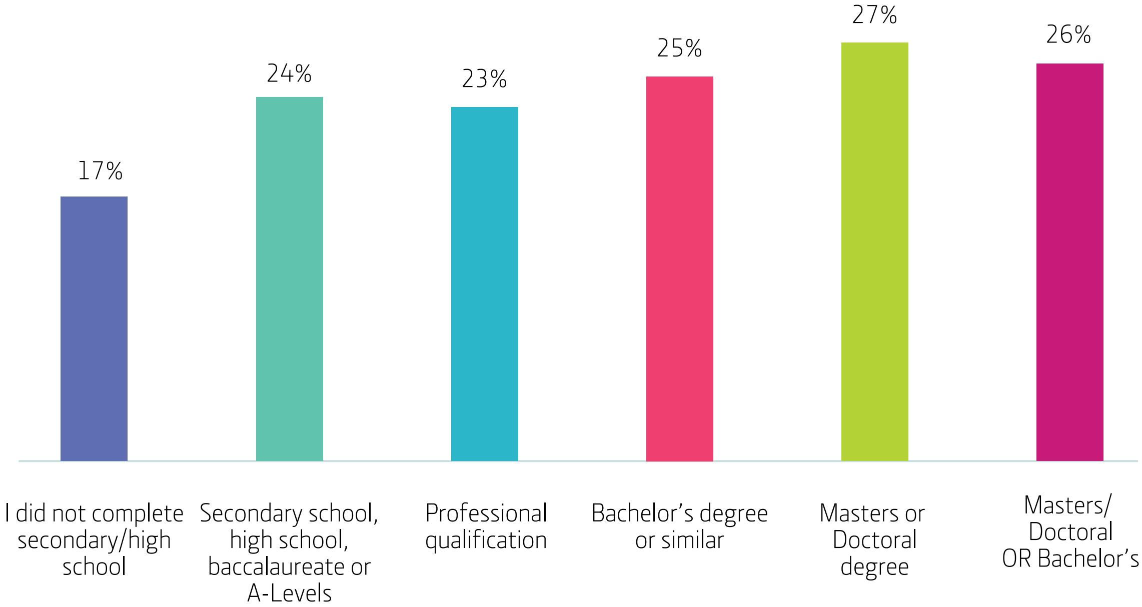
Consumption of video news was evenly spread across the five age categories, with usage weakest in the oldest group at 21 percent and strongest in the 35-44 cohort at 27 percent.

Fig. 80 Video news by age group 2017



The percentage usage of video news across consumers of varying education levels produced interesting findings. The lowest uptake, at 17 percent, occurred at the lowest education level, which is counter-intuitive. Thereafter, the results at the other five levels were similar, ranging from 23 to 27 percent. One explanation might be that certain popular media use less video news output and, as a result, their less-educated audience has limited choice when it comes to the consumption of video news. And some legacy media have been slow to incorporate video news in their digital offering for a variety of logistical, technical and financial reasons.

Fig. 81 Video news by education level 2017



6.4 Conclusion

The most common routes to news in 2017 were via social media or directly through a news website or app. Younger consumers used social media to access news while older cohorts preferred a more direct targeted approach using an email newsletter or email alert. Women preferred to find news via social media whereas men took more direct approaches.

Text-based stories are easily the most consumed news format. Consumption of video news decreased in the period under review. Pre-roll ads on video news continue to be resisted. Where present, for consumers, it was a case of the shorter the better. The devices most used to access video news were voice-activated connected speakers and smart watches.

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.

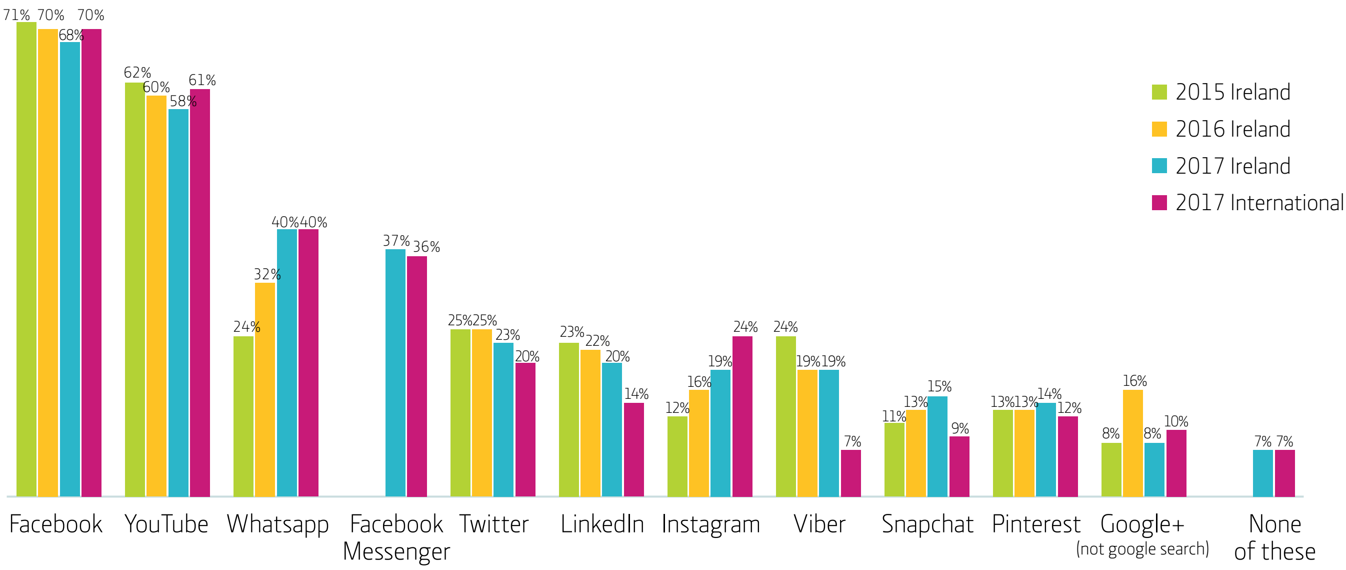
7.1 Social Media for News

Social Media Brands

Facebook and YouTube were the leading social media brands for any purpose in 2017 at 68 percent and 58 percent respectively. Both have seen small declines over the last two years. WhatsApp experienced solid growth of eight percentage points each year over the same period to 40 percent in 2017.

Instagram and Snapchat each increased usage since 2015, with the former at 19 percent in 2017 and the latter at 15 percent. Twitter, LinkedIn and Viber saw marginal declines in recent years with the latter down five percentage points since 2015. Irish consumers use Twitter and Snapchat more than the international average but use Instagram less.

Fig. 82 Social media brands for any purpose 2015–2017



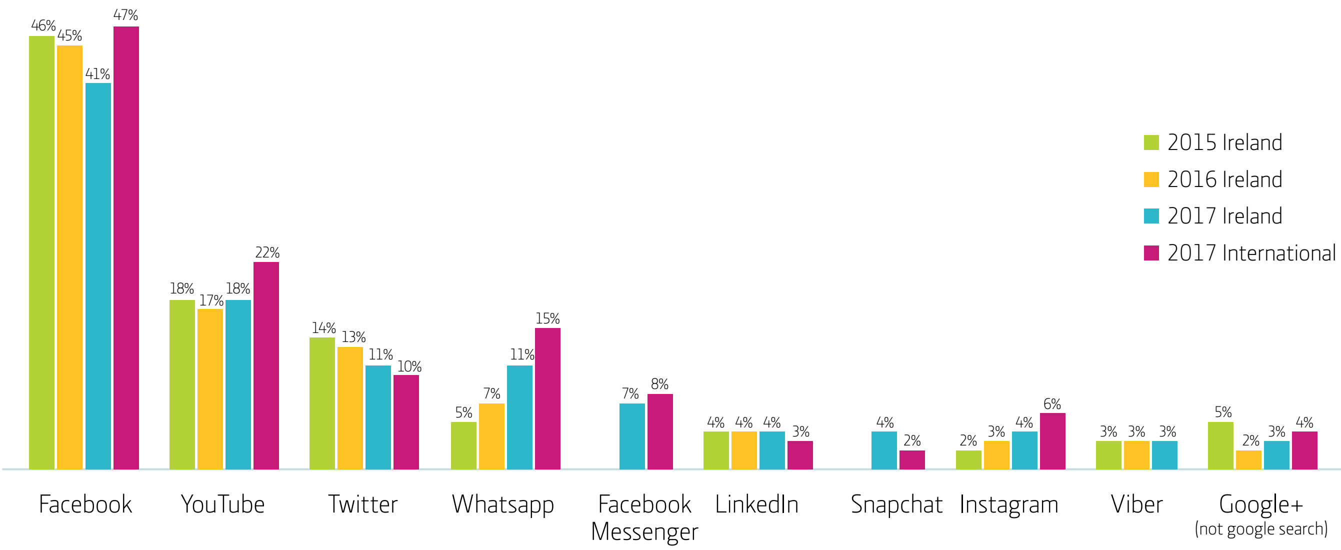
Which social media brands do you use?

Social Media Brands for News

The dominant brand for news in Ireland in the period under review is Facebook at 41 percent. It is far ahead of its nearest rivals, YouTube at 18 percent, Twitter at 11 percent and WhatsApp, also at 11 percent. The other brands in the social media news market, Facebook Messenger, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Instagram, Viber and Google Plus, have relatively small penetration compared to the big four.

Excluding Twitter, LinkedIn and Snapchat, Irish news consumers use the other social media brands for news slightly less than their international counterparts. The international average usage for Facebook is 47 percent compared to Irish usage of 41 percent. The average international audience had a higher opinion of YouTube as a source of news, at 22 percent, than its Irish counterpart.

Fig. 83 Social media brands for news 2015–2017

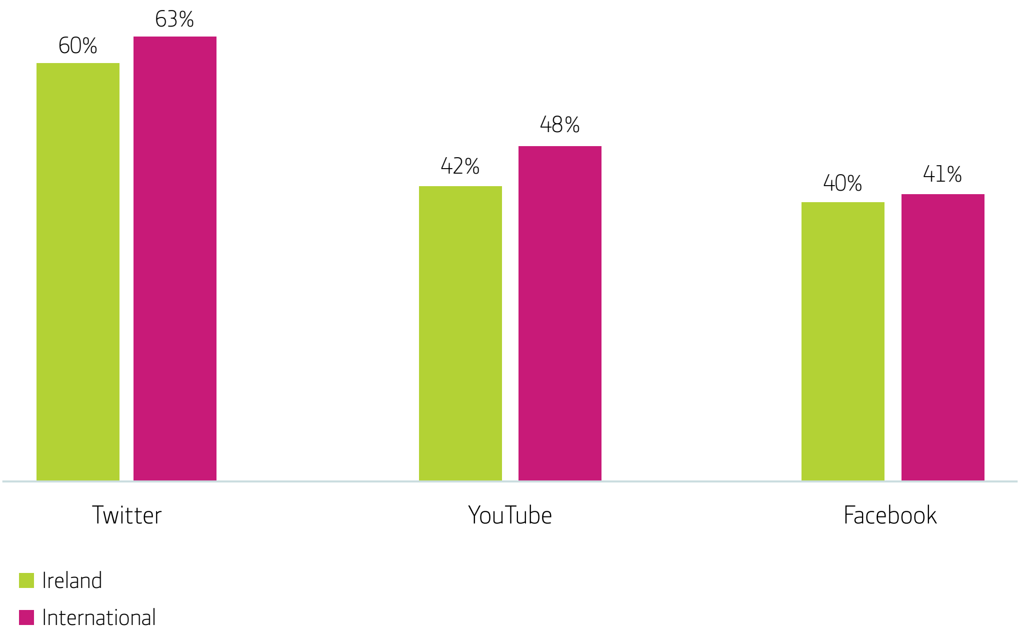


Rank	Brand	Any purpose	Use for news
1	Facebook	68%	41% (-4)
2	YouTube	58%	18% (+1)
3	Twitter	23%	11% (-2)
4	WhatsApp	40%	11% (+4)
5	Facebook Messenger	37%	7%

What do People Value about News on Social Media?

Irish consumers tend to place slightly lower value on social media as a news source than their international peers. Forty-eight percent of international YouTube consumers find it a useful source of news in contrast to 42 percent of Irish consumers.

Fig. 84 Usefulness of social media for accessing news



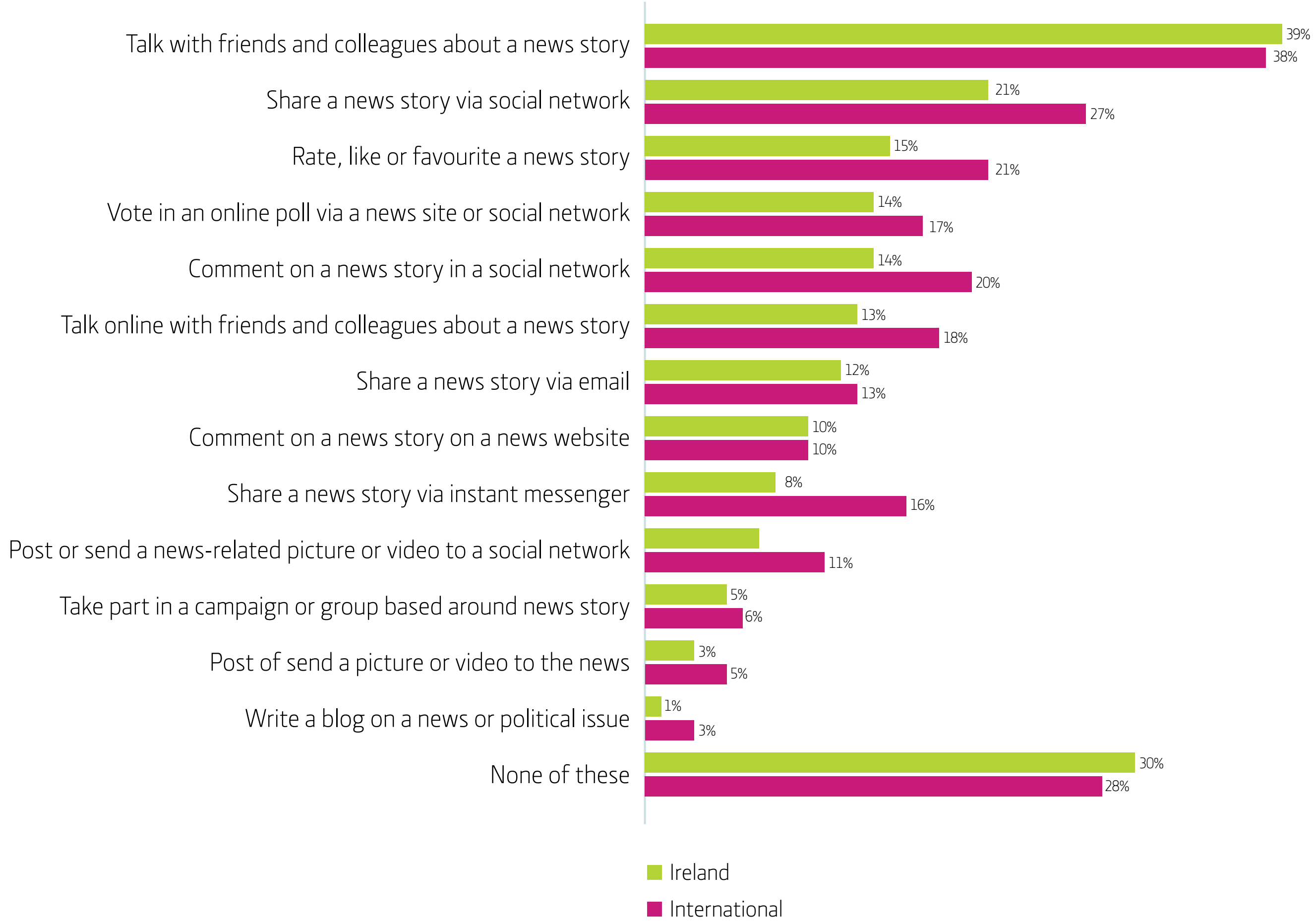
Are social media a useful way of getting news?

7.2 Online Engagement with News

Participation with News

The most common ways Irish consumers share or participate in news were: (1) talking with friends and colleagues [39 percent]; (2) sharing a story on a social network [21 percent]; (3) rating, liking or 'favouriting' a story [15 percent]; (4) voting in an online poll on a news site or social network [14 percent]; and commenting on a story in a social network [14 percent].

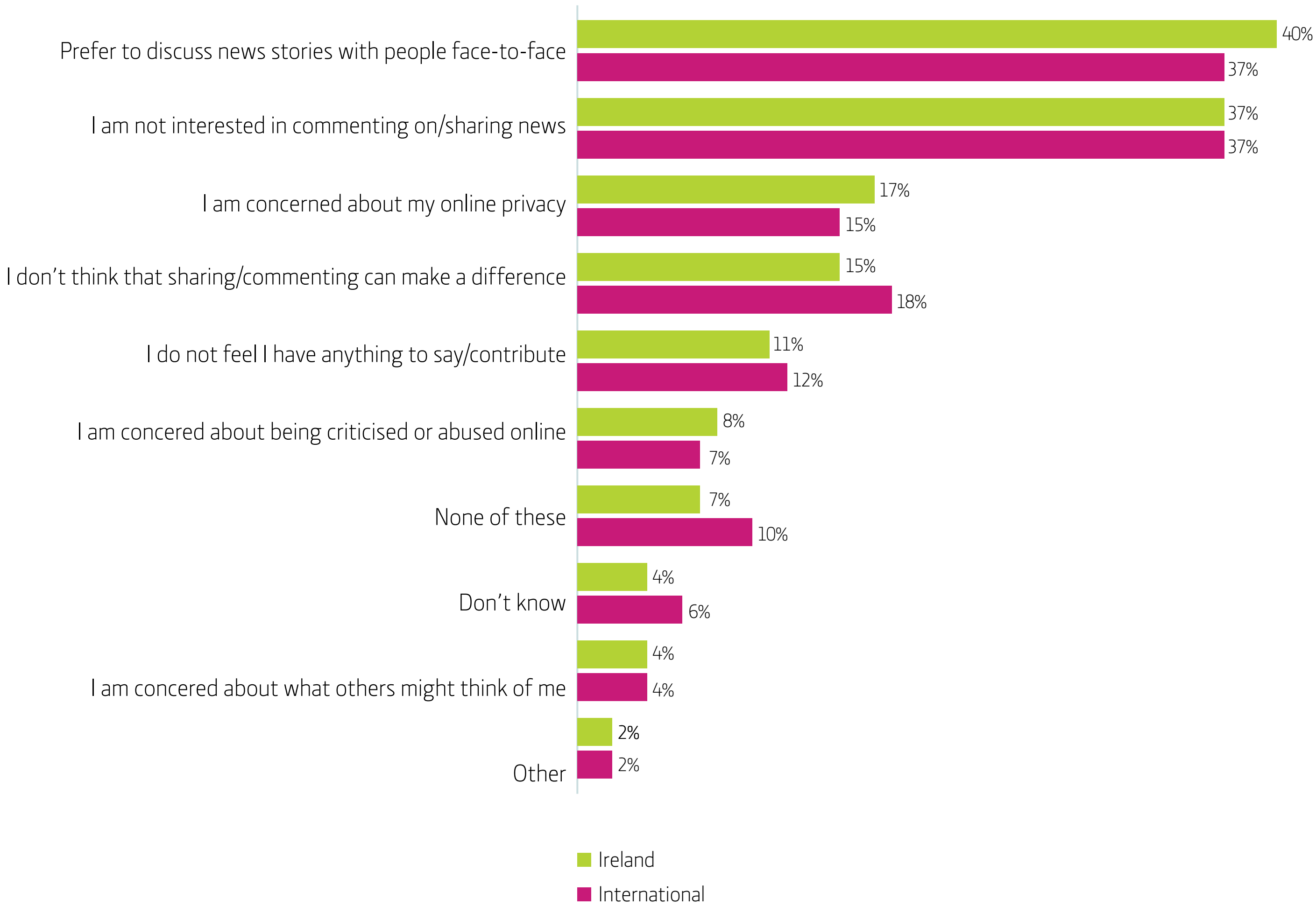
Fig. 85 Participation in news Ireland and international 2017



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

The most common reasons Irish consumers don't share or comment on news stories online were: (1) they prefer face-to-face discussion [40 percent]; (2) they are not interested in commenting or discussion online [37 percent]; (3) they are concerned about online privacy [17 percent]; (4) they feel sharing and commenting makes no difference [15 percent]; (5) they have nothing to say or contribute [11 percent]. The percentage of Irish consumers not participating in news sharing is similar to the international average figure.

Fig. 86 Reasons for not sharing or commenting on news online Ireland and international



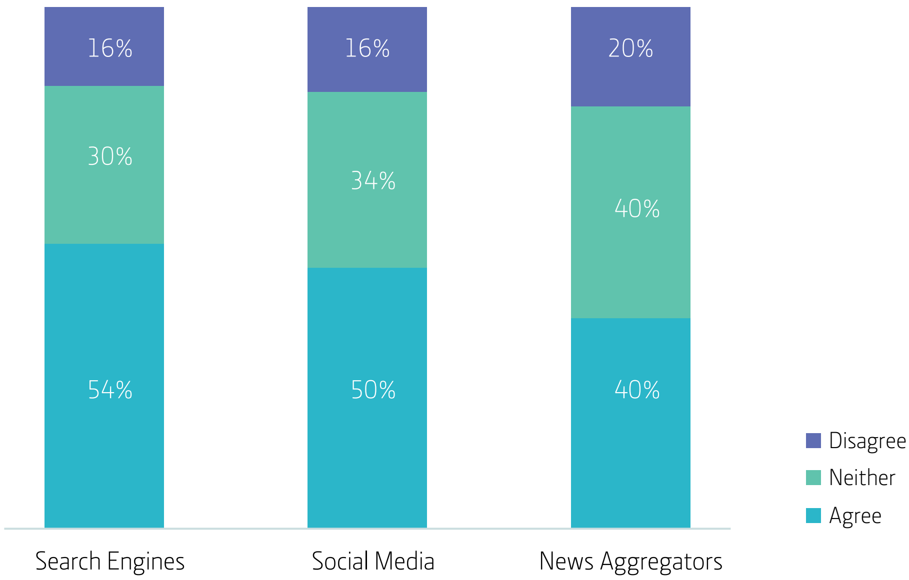
Why do you not share or comment on online news?

7.3 Social Media Filter Bubbles

Serendipitous News Exposure

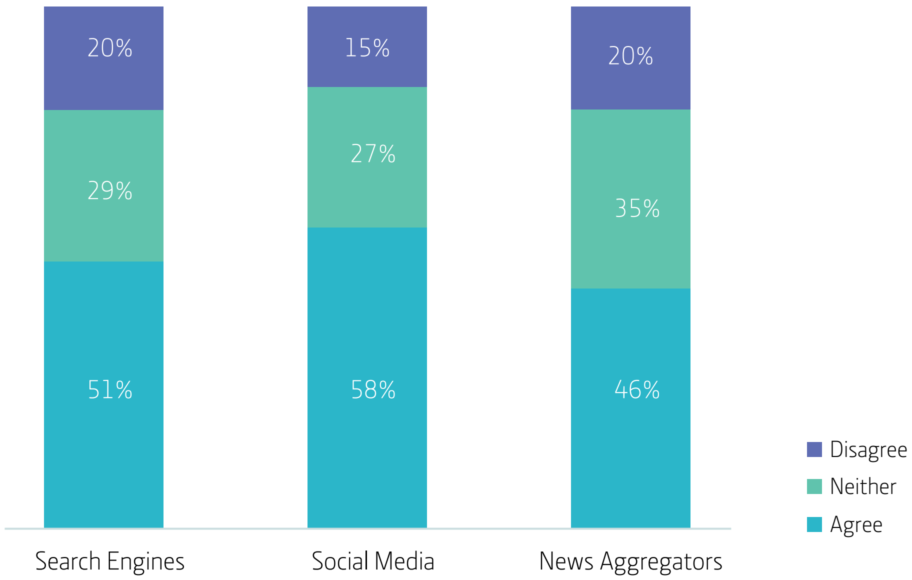
A slight majority [54 percent] of search engine users reported they saw news they would not normally see, as did half of social media users and 40 percent of news aggregators. A fifth or less of the users of these search platforms disagreed with this general assertion. A variant of the above question, focused on news that did not interest the consumer or did not relate to the topic search, gave rise to broadly similar results. Consumers are more likely via search engines to see news from outlets they wouldn't normally use than via social media and news aggregators. Consumers are likely to see news they are not interested in via social media than via search engines and news aggregators.

Fig. 87 Serendipitous exposure to news outlets via online platforms 2017



When accessing news from search engines, social media, and aggregators, do you often see news outlets that you would not normally view?

Fig. 88 Serendipitous exposure to news stories across online platforms 2017



When accessing news from search engines, social media, and aggregators, do you often see news stories that you are not normally interested in?

7.3 Conclusion

Facebook and YouTube were the leading social media brands for any reason in 2017, with the former at the top by some distance. Irish news consumers use Twitter and Snapchat more than the average of their international counterparts.

Some 41 percent of Irish Facebook users employ it as a route to news. The equivalent figure for their Twitter counterparts is only 11 percent. The most common way for Irish consumers to share or participate in news is by talking with friends and colleagues.

A slight majority of search engine users reported they saw news they would not normally use, as did half of social media users and 40 percent of news aggregator users.

Trust and Distrust in the News Media

Dr Jane Suiter, Dublin City University

We've been looking at why people do and do not trust the news media over the past few years of this series. One thing is evident: there are clear issues around trust of news media and these have been reasonably consistent both in Ireland and internationally.

One clear hypothesis is that the rise of social media has led to increased distrust of news media. The possible reasons for this are myriad but include the speed of dissemination of false news, the filter bubbles which social media can engender, and the algorithmic triggering of negative emotions. Given that the plurality of people now receive their news from social media, these effects are all compounded.

News media have been in something of a bind driven by the nature of that relationship and the extent to which it is either symbiotic or parasitic. Social media, of course, give news media reach, but they also too often fail to differentiate between the fake, the quality, and the commercially motivated.

We also know that the plurality of people do not understand the nature of algorithms and personalisation (Powers 2017) and indeed there are even questions as to whether Facebook does (Grohol 2017). However, for the news media there are encouraging signs. The New York Times added some 308,000 (net) new digital subscribers in the first three months of 2017, a record gain that has been partly attributed to the Trump presidency (Stelter 2017). The same was true of The Economist and The Washington Post among others.

What this all points to is a possible realisation on the part of news media consumers that there is a difference between quality news and algorithmically generated serendipitous news on social media. If that can be built upon more widely that would be a chink of light for the beleaguered industry.

To unpack some of this we added some open-ended questions on why people do or do not trust media and crucially do and do not trust social media. These were asked alongside the questions about separating fact and fiction which is of course a core task of all news media. This question was also asked in the UK, US, France and Germany. More analysis looking at all five countries will follow.

As we saw earlier (see page 43) Ireland's news consumers have higher levels of trust in the news media than the international average. And more Irish news consumers believe Irish news is free of undue commercial and political influence than the international average. In addition, some 43 percent of Irish consumers agree that social media does a good job distinguishing fact from fiction, compared to an international average of 37 percent.

Very encouragingly for Irish news media three times as many respondents give reasons for trusting the news media as for distrusting it. And most people trust either because they believe in the professional standards, such as verification and sourcing and so on, or they simply believe the news media is generally unbiased.

The kind of responses we see are that “they have reliable sources”, “they back up what they say with evidence”, “they call out fake news” and so on. In terms of people’s reasons for not trusting the news the largest category was a belief that journalists were unwilling to reveal the news with typical comments that “there is a lot of scaremongering”, or “they reveal one side” or “they tend to dramatize everything”.

Reasons to trust the news media	%	Reasons NOT to trust the news media	%
There are multiple news sources available and you can cross-check things.	10%	The news media have a political bias.	7.5%
The news media has professional standards and verification practices.	27.9%	The news media have a commercial bias.	5.5%
I don’t necessarily trust the media but trust ‘this brand or that brand’.	5.3%	The news media are prone to sensationalism and exaggeration.	3.3%
The news media are generally unbiased and independent. (that’s my experience).	28.8%	Journalists are not able or are not willing to reveal the trust (keep things back or are just bad).	11.7%
Total	**72%**		**28%**

The word cloud overleaf is testament to this. We can see that the kinds of words people were using to describe why to trust the media were “sources” “fact” “think” and “check”. These are all the core of the standard journalism norms and ones that should be reinforced even at times when the business model is under pressure.

In terms of the negatives, the largest was the belief that journalists played to agendas and kept information back. Some of this is no doubt inevitable but a greater focus on transparency among the news media would be helpful to address these concerns. A similar number felt that the media either had a political or commercial bias, but again these are very low numbers. Lower indeed than in many other countries where the media is clearly more polarised.

Interestingly, when we turn to the reason why people trust or do not trust social media we see that the pattern is reversed. Here we can see that 68 percent of people give reasons as to why they distrust social media while 32 percent give reasons to trust. Turning first to those who trust social media, the major reason is the belief that the news here is unfiltered and comes from ordinary people including their friends. However, this only accounts for 11 percent of those who give a reason for trusting or distrusting social media. Very few believe in either crowd sourcing and even fewer in the access it gives to multiple professional sources.

Far more people give reasons as to why they distrust social media with the two major reasons being that news on social media is unverified, and often hearsay or indeed fake. The sort of comments which respondents made here include "anyone can post rubbish", "too much false information", "opinion not facts", "so many conspiracy theories" and "too many fake news stories" or a "lot of fake news and half-truths".

The word cloud (opposite) again points to some of these. Once again there is an emphasis on "facts" but this time it is more often accompanied by the word "fake", "false" and "opinion".

This is just the start of this investigation. But the initial findings are encouraging for news media producers. At times of uncertainty people still want to feel that they can rely on an information source. They are still largely willing to believe in news media that produce credible, well sourced, verifiable and transparent news. This is an important finding and underlines the point that news media should focus on these attributes and ways of differentiating themselves. Separating their product from social may also be key.

Reasons to trust social media	%	Reasons NOT to trust social media	%
Social media allows for different/alternative views to be aired	8.0%	News on social media just consists of people's opinions.	13.7%
Social media allows access to multiple professional news sources in an easy way	1.3%	News on social media is unverified, and is often nothing more than hearsay and gossip.	21.6%
Social media makes it easier to comment and discuss on the news, which makes it easier to work out what is true	7.8%	News on social media comes from individuals who are biased (propaganda).	7.8%
News on social media is fact-checked by the users.	3.9%	News on social media encourages clickbait and sensationalism.	4.5%
News on social media is democratic and unfiltered in that it comes from ordinary people (rather than journalists), some of whom are trusted friends	11.3	News on social media is often fake news.	20.6%
Total	32.3%		67.7%

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Paying for Journalism: A Shared Responsibility?

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2016 was a bleak year for journalism and media freedom. Across the world, news media are threatened by creeping authoritarianism, regressive legal measures, and a "post-truth" culture of misinformation. In the US, attacks on the legitimacy of journalism are the central feature of President Trump's rhetoric. Meanwhile, journalists in Europe are increasingly exposed to intimidation and legal pressures (Machlin 2016).

The factors undermining journalism in western democracies are complex and wide-ranging. They relate to anti-terror and surveillance laws, the policies of social media platforms, and rising social and political polarisation. In the wake of Brexit and the US presidential election, a mini publishing industry emerged to examine this unfolding crisis. To date, much of the discussion focuses on the failures and responsibilities of politicians, technology companies, and news outlets.

Less attention is given to the public's responsibility towards journalism; particularly, the public's responsibility to pay for the online journalism it consumes. Protecting media freedom and funding sustainable journalism are two sides of the same coin because quality journalism cannot survive without the financial resources to conduct investigations, fight legal cases, and pay the salaries of journalists.

Yet, media freedom and paying for journalism are often discussed in isolation. Consequently, the news media operate in a deeply paradoxical environment: there is widespread recognition that good journalism is vital to democracy, but large numbers of people are unwilling to pay for it.

The Digital News Report reveals the extent of this gap in Ireland. Irish interest in news is consistently high and consumers rely on social media (52%) and online media generally (66%) as key sources of news. Yet, payment for online news has increased only marginally over the last three years, reaching 10 percent in 2017. This places Ireland in line with the international findings which reveal that, on average, only 13 percent pay for online news.

In part, this reluctance to pay stems from the culture of free content that pervades online. Since the advent of the internet, we have become accustomed to getting information for free. The highly competitive nature of online English-language media compounds the problem as Irish news media are left to compete with all the other English language publishers. When asked why they do not pay for online news, 53 percent of Irish respondents say it is because news is available for free and 25 percent believe it is not worth paying for.

Over the past three years, levels of payment for online news have been low in all English-speaking countries. The UK remains the lowest at 6 percent. However, in the US, the so called "Trump-bump" is reflected in a seven percentage-point increase in online subscriptions and a three-fold increase in donations to news outlets. Moreover, 29 percent of those who pay in the US do so because they want to help fund journalism. A desire to fund journalism is found among 18 percent of Irish respondents, which is relatively positive when compared to the 13 percent international average.

With so few people willing to pay for news, advertising is a key alternative revenue source for news media, but this fragmented market is also beset with problems. Online advertising generates far less revenue than traditional offline advertising and 56 percent of Irish respondents find adverts on news sites intrusive. Although younger people are less concerned about the intrusiveness of adverts, this attitude is negated by the fact that they are more likely to have an ad-blocker installed. Among the 36 countries surveyed, Ireland has one of the highest rates of ad-blocker penetration at 29 percent.

Perhaps the most positive sign in the digital news report is that most new payments, particularly in the US, come from younger age-groups. In Ireland, the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups are most likely to pay for online news, at 12 percent and 13 percent respectively. Although the numbers paying are still low, this runs contrary to expectations that younger cohorts are unwilling to pay for online content. Despite growing up with free online entertainment, younger age-groups have developed the habit of paying for some media. In part, this may be because the creative industries have successfully, and somewhat aggressively, asserted their right to be paid for content they produce. The question now is whether news media can make the same case and whether the "Trump bump" is a temporary response to an extraordinary year or a lasting trend.

The Washington Post's new slogan reminds readers that "democracy dies in darkness". A less dramatic message might suffice elsewhere: journalism is a vital service and we have a shared responsibility to pay for it.

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Bypassing the News Media: Politicians and Pubic Regaining Control

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Politicians around the world are increasingly using social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to communicate directly with voters. US President Donald Trump's use of Twitter to announce policy and his personal opinion is a prime example of this.

As this year's Digital News Report shows, there is also a growing appetite amongst online news users to consume this information directly from politicians and parties, without it being filtered and edited by journalists. This ability to bypass the gatekeeper has the potential to turn the traditional relationship between journalists, politicians and the public on its head.

In a traditional media environment dominated by mass media platforms – such as newspapers, television and radio – politicians and journalists were dependent on each other to fulfil their roles. The relationship was often described as 'symbiotic' whereby politicians were forced to rely on journalists to have their policies and perspectives relayed to the public; and the reporter was dependent on the politician for stories and information. The relationship can also be adversarial due to the desire each side has to control the release and presentation of information. This tension arises from the 'watchdog' role of journalism based on the idealised 18th Century conception of the press as members of the 'fourth estate', whose job it is to safe guard democracy by scrutinising those in power and holding them to account.

However, in the current 'hybrid' media system (Chadwick, 2013) that includes both traditional and digital media platforms, the constraints of mutual dependence have been removed. Digitization means that anyone with access to the internet, including politicians, can publish via blogs and social media without needing to depend on mainstream journalists to reach the audience. This has also freed the audience from needing to rely on the news media to access information.

In the traditional battle for control of information, the balance of power has now tipped in favour of politicians and other high profile figures, many of whom have much larger audiences than news organisations.

This ability to bypass the news media is a phenomenon called 'disintermediation'. It is also referred to as 'direct representation' or 'self-representation', or 'self-publishing'. Disintermediation means not being 'mediated' or having your message edited, interpreted or filtered by the news media.

Being able to publish directly to citizens using digital media platforms has been heralded for its potential to increase citizen and politician participation in the political process by allowing politicians and citizens to talk directly to each other about policy and thereby facilitate a more dialogic and deliberative democracy.

At a time of cuts to newsrooms and an increasing reliance on public relations materials by journalists, this ability of politicians and other authorities to broadcast to the public without scrutiny can also have possible negative consequences. In the US we have seen US President Donald simultaneously abuse the news media as 'fake news' and masterfully counter critical mainstream coverage of his policies using social media to reach his army of followers. Acknowledging the benefits of this tactic, Trump is reported to have said: "It's great. It's like owning a newspaper but without the losses".

He is not alone. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also successfully used social media to bypass critical media since his election in 2014. Populist Australian politician, Pauline Hanson, threatened to bypass the mainstream media if journalists didn't give her a "fair go". She no longer speaks to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and uses social media to reach her followers instead.

Taoiseach Enda Kenny used a direct YouTube video to announce the Irish general election in 2016 rather than make the statement in the Dáil. As one Irish political commentator put it: "Don't underestimate the attraction to politicians of 'disintermediation', the ability to communicate directly with audiences without having to rely on broadcasters and newspapers. You can choose the time and terms of engagement of your policy statement, without any awkward questions or rebuttals. You can move fast, and you can attempt to create a bit of suspense and drama" (Linehan, 2016).

At a time of low levels of trust in the news media and concern about 'fake news' and unreliable online information, this trend of self-publication by politicians might serve to further muddy the waters for citizens attempting to discern fact from fiction, and non-partisan information from spin.

At the moment in Ireland, the number of people choosing to follow politicians is a minority activity. But the motivations for those people who do, point to issues of dissatisfaction with the way mainstream news organisations are covering politics. These consumers would prefer to see the unedited information first-hand and have control over how they interpret it. Issues of fairness and completeness of political reporting also feature in the responses.

So long as the traditional news media continue to attract the largest mass audience in this hybrid media system, politicians will maintain their traditional relationship with journalists and submit their policies and comments to scrutiny from the gatekeepers. However, if the size of the news audience on social media overtakes it, and people solely rely on social media for their news information, then the ability of politicians and others in power to publish their partisan views unchecked could raise serious questions about the ongoing relevance of the political news media by undermining its democratic 'watchdog' role.

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