

Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Ireland) 2018



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Jane Suiter, and Paul McNamara



Institute of Future
Media & Journalism



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BAI Foreword

Promoting a plurality of voices, viewpoints outlets and sources in Irish media is a key element of the BAI's mission as set out in the Strategy Statement 2017-2019. Fostering media plurality remains a central focus for media regulators across Europe as we adapt to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving media landscape. In such an environment, timely, credible relevant data is essential to facilitate an informed debate and evidence-based decision making.

Since it was first published in 2015, the Reuters Institute Digital News Report for Ireland has established itself as an invaluable source of current consumption and impact data in relation to news services in Ireland. As such, it has supported a more comprehensive understanding of, and debate about, the current position and evolving trends in media plurality. Each year the BAI, with its partners in DCU and Reuters, aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the current news environment through this Report.

While the 2018 results indicate an increase in citizens' willingness to pay for news, the overall challenge of funding quality news provision remains unresolved. The fact that younger audiences are more willing to pay is a particularly interesting finding in this Report. The BAI recognises the sustainability challenges facing the Irish media sector and is working with stakeholders to address these through a range of initiatives.

The 2018 Report also provides evidence that recent revelations, which were driven by well-funded quality investigative journalism, are having an impact on audience trust in social media. Linked to this is the finding that more action on digital literacy is required, a conclusion also reflected in the recently agreed new European Directive on Audio Visual Media Services. The BAI has also been active in this area for several years and the findings in this Report should be of particular interest to the BAI sponsored Irish Media Literacy Network. Finally, Irish people's love for radio is reflected in our relatively high consumption of podcasts across a range of content genres. This was a new area for the 2018 Report and its evolution will be interesting to track in further reports.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the teams in DCU, the BAI, and Reuters who are working on this research project. We have agreed a new partnership arrangement that will ensure that this Digital News Report for Ireland will continue to be produced annually until 2020.

Michael O'Keeffe

CEO, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland

June 2018

DCU FuJo Foreword

Welcome to the fourth 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 puts the Irish data in an international context and delves deeper into specific issues. We hope this will be 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, is 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, visit: www.fujomedia.eu

Dr Jane Suiter
Director, DCU FuJo
June 2018

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. To provide an international comparison, core questions were asked of a nationally representative audience in 37 countries.

This is a study for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. It is made possible with the support of the following organisations: Hans Bredow Institute, Hamburg, Navarra University, Spain, Roskilde University, Denmark, University of Canberra, Dublin City University, University of Laval, Montreal, University of Tampere, Finland, University of Bergen, Norway.

Method

- The research was conducted online in January/February 2018.
- The data was weighted to targets set on age, gender, region, newspaper readership, and social grade to reflect the total population. The sample is reflective of the population which has 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.

Country	Starting Sample	Non News Users (%)	Final Sample Size	Total Population	Internet Penetration
Ireland	2078	3.4	2007	4,749,153	94%

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

Authorship and Acknowledgements

Eileen Culloty is a post-doctoral researcher at DCU's Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) where she works on projects relating to media coverage of conflict and information literacy. Her research interests examine visual and factual digital media.

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, he started Pollwatch, one of the most prominent set of predictions ahead of the European elections.

Jane Suiter is the Director of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at Dublin City University. She is coordinator of a Marie Curie European Training Network on 'Harnessing Digital and Data Technologies for Journalism'. 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 an assistant professor of journalism at the School of Communications, DCU, Chair of its MA in Journalism programme, and a former Head of School. A former national newspaper journalist at INM, he worked for the business section of the Irish Independent and the news sections of the Evening Herald and the Sunday Independent.

David Robbins is a member of the Institute for Future Media and Journalism (FuJo) at DCU. He is an assistant professor at the School of Communications, DCU. He is a former national newspaper journalist at INM.

We are also very grateful to the following 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 **Elizabeth Farrelly** and **Ciaran Kissane**, Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

Executive Summary

Interest in News: Interest in news consumption remains high in Ireland across all demographics. Seventy percent or more of Irish consumers declared themselves extremely or very interested in news for each of the last four years of this survey.

Consumption Patterns: There is little change in overall news consumption patterns. The main sources of news for Irish consumers are television (56 percent), social media (53 percent), radio (45 percent), and the online versions of newspapers (44 percent). The decline of print newspapers continues, falling from 40 percent in 2017 to 35 percent in 2018. Although Ireland is broadly similar to the UK in terms of television and online newspapers, Irish consumers are more likely to engage with news via blogs and radio. The Irish commitment to radio also translates into a growing interest in podcasts, which is examined by the survey for the first time this year. At 38 percent, Irish news consumers listen to more podcasts than consumers in the US (33 percent) and the UK (18 percent). Podcasts are primarily consumed by younger age-groups although radio is still more popular than podcasts as a source of news among all age groups.

News Brands: There is little change in consumers' preferences for news brands. Among traditional brands, television brands dominate consumption with RTÉ TV News the most popular source of news at 51 percent. RTÉ Radio News is the leading radio brand at 31 percent and the Irish Independent is the leading newspaper at 25 percent. Among online brands, TheJournal.ie is the most popular (34 percent) followed by RTÉ News Online (33 percent) and Irish Independent Online (30 percent).

Social Media: In line with international trends, there is a slight decline in the use of social media for news. As a news source, Facebook has fallen from 71 percent in 2015 to 67 percent in 2018. In the US, the decline is more dramatic; dropping nine percentage points between 2014 and 2018. Other social media platforms show slight increases. However, as with much social media, it is often unclear how consumers determine what is and isn't news. For example, Instagram as a source of news has grown from 12 percent in 2015 to 26 percent in 2018.

Paying for News: Over the last four years, there is a slight, but steady increase in consumer payment for news. Payment rose from 7 percent in 2015 to 12 percent in 2018. This places Ireland in line with the EU average. An encouraging sign for the news media is the growth of payments among 24-34 year olds (19 percent), which increased six percentage points over the past year. Among those who do not pay for news, there is growing willingness to start paying for news through a subscription (20 percent) or donation (22 percent).

Trust: At 71 percent, Irish consumers are more trusting of “most news” than the EU average (62 percent). When asked to consider the news they specifically choose to consume, trust among Irish consumers increases to 78 percent. As in previous years, we find that older consumers are more trusting of news media. The most trusted Irish news brands are RTÉ News and BBC News closely followed by The Irish Times. Irish consumers have low trust in social media (28 percent), which is comparable to the lowest levels of trust in social media – 19 percent in the US and 17 percent in the UK.

Disinformation: In light of high-profile controversies about online disinformation, this year’s report introduced new questions to assess consumers’ level of concern about, and exposure to, disinformation. Across Europe, concern about fake news varies widely, ranging from 30 percent in the Netherlands to 71 percent in Portugal. Some 57 percent of Irish consumers are concerned about “fake news”, which is similar to the UK (58 percent). Although 61 percent of Irish consumers are very or extremely concerned about stories that are made up for political or commercial reasons, only 17 percent recalled seeing this kind of disinformation. Thus, there is an interesting gap between concern and exposure, which is most likely due to the high-level of media attention given to the “fake news” issue over the past two years.

In terms of addressing disinformation, Irish consumers believe that it is the responsibility of news media outlets and government to take action. Some 63 percent believe the government should do more while 76 percent believe journalists and media companies should do more. The picture is similar internationally with respondents attributing greater responsibility to journalists (75 percent) than governments (64 percent).

Digital Literacy: A related set of new questions examined the capacity of consumers to evaluate online content. Internationally, consumers have a limited understanding of how news appears in their social media feeds. Only 27 percent were aware of the role of algorithms while 73 percent either did not know the answer or assumed that social media companies employ journalists. In Ireland, only 28 percent understand the role of algorithms. Moreover, the survey reveals that most people do not understand standard media practices; only 36 percent of Irish consumers were able identify who writes a media press-release for an organisation.

Section One

Irish News Consumers

This section profiles Irish news consumers. News consumers are categorised according to their interest and engagement with news and technology as well as their political leaning and levels of news and digital literacy.

Interest in News

Irish consumers' interest in news was consistently high over the last four years. Seventy percent or more declared themselves extremely or very interested in news each year. Predictably, the Irish election year of 2016 saw a slight increase in interest levels. Interest in news increases with age. The younger the consumer, the more likely they are to be only somewhat interested in news.

Fig1. Interest in news 2015 – 2018 (%)

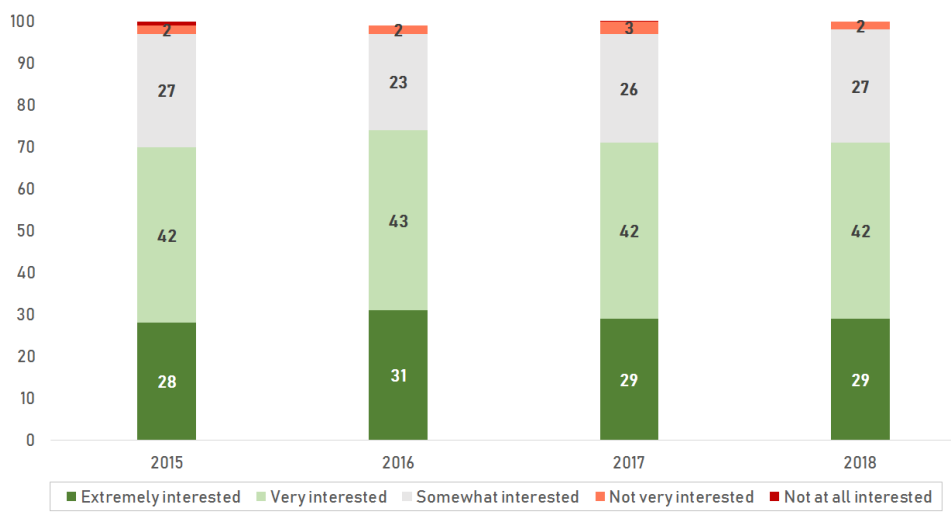
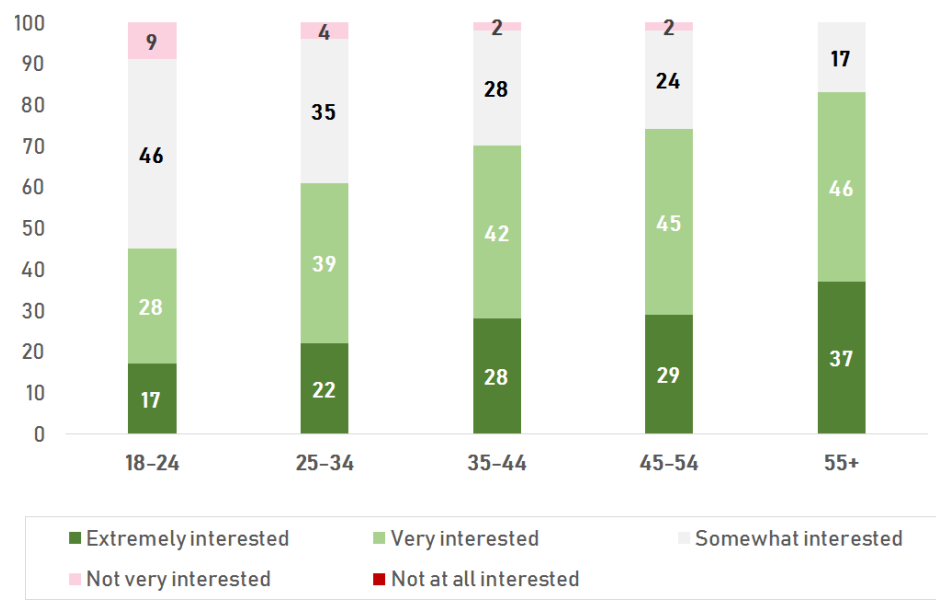


Fig2. Interest in news by age 2015 – 2018 (%)



Frequency of News Access

A clear majority of Irish consumers access news several times a day and this jumped considerably in the last year. Some 66 percent of consumers check the news several times a day and a further 22 percent at least once a day. Those accessing news less than once a day represent only around 10 percent of consumers. Those most likely to access news several times a day are men over 35 (75%).

Fig 3. Frequency of news access 2015 – 2018 (%)

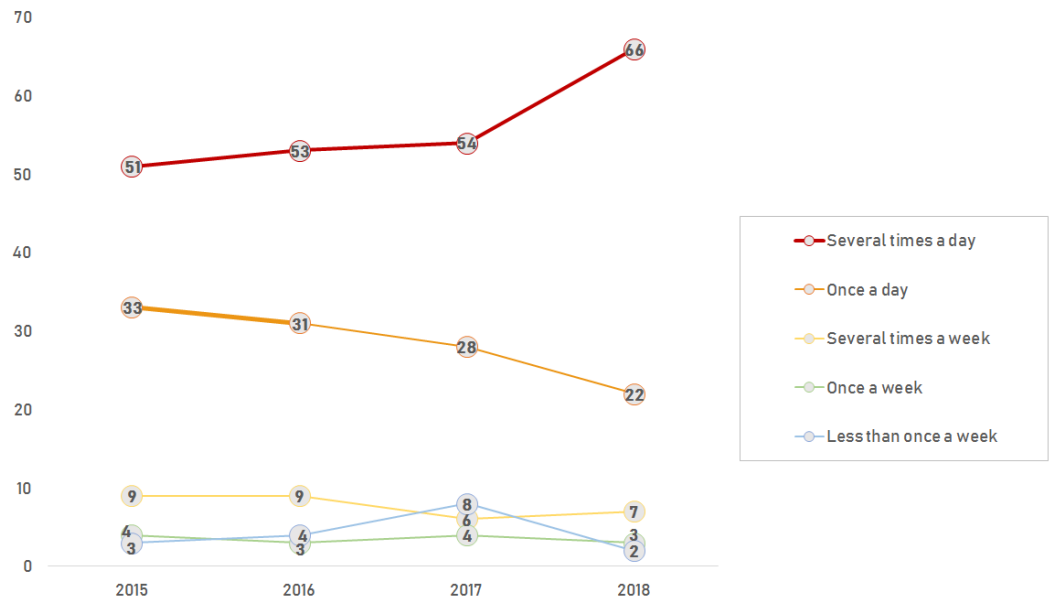
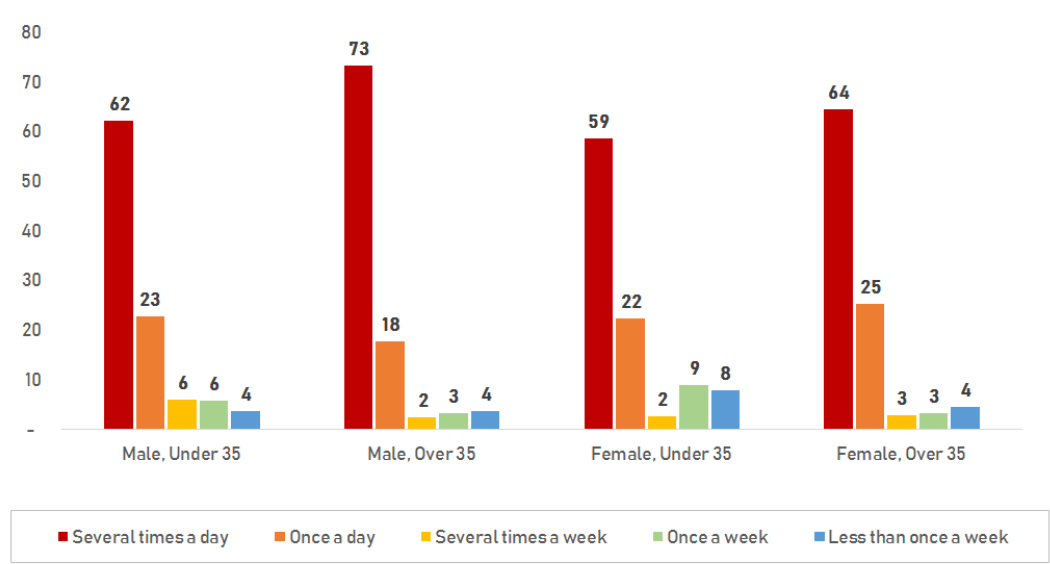


Fig 4. Frequency of news access by age and gender (%)



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.

In line with the increase in frequent news users, we also see a small rise in News Lovers over the last four years to 25 percent. However, the number of so-called Daily Briefers has remained static at 45 percent. There has been a corresponding drop in Casual Users at 30 percent. Those in full time education are most likely to be casual users.

Fig 5. Conceptual news groups 2015 – 2018 (%)

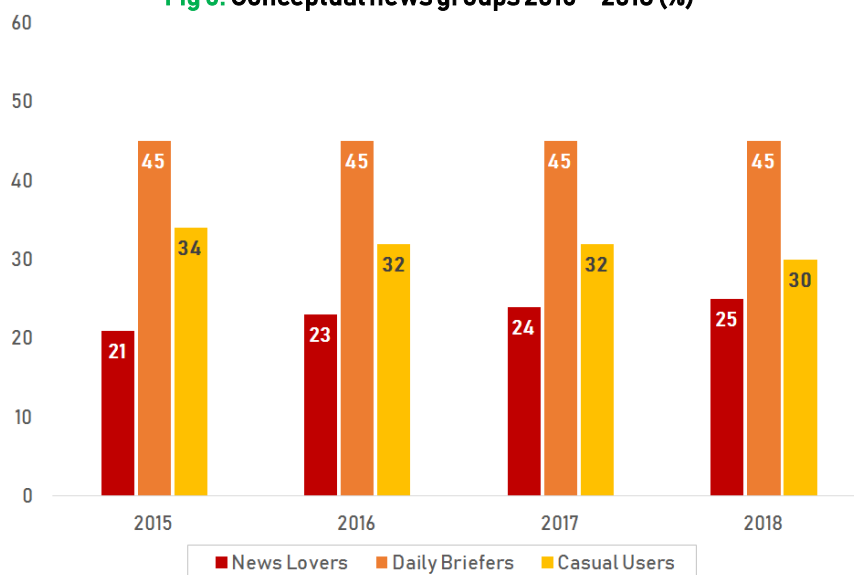
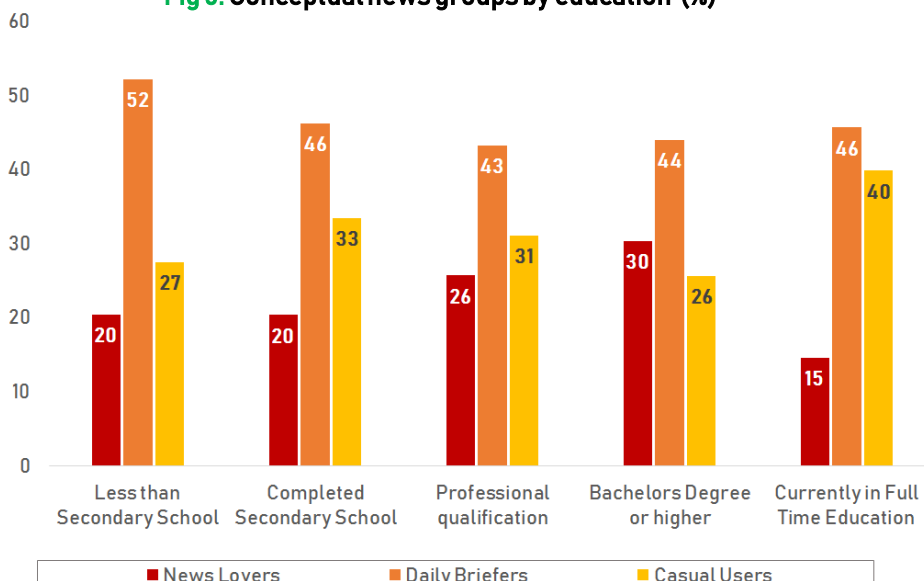


Fig 6. Conceptual news groups by education (%)



Digitalists and Traditionalists: Digitalists are those who mainly consume news via smartphones, tablets and computers. Traditionalists are those who mainly consume news via newspapers, radio and TV.

Digitalists rose four percentage points to 27 percent whereas Traditionalists fell four percentage points and Mixed [Half and Halvers] increased by a single percentage point. Digitalists are concentrated in younger age groups with 39 percent of 18–24 year olds, but also in the highest income category of over €100,000 (47 percent).

Fig 7. Digitalists and traditionalists 2017–2018 (%)

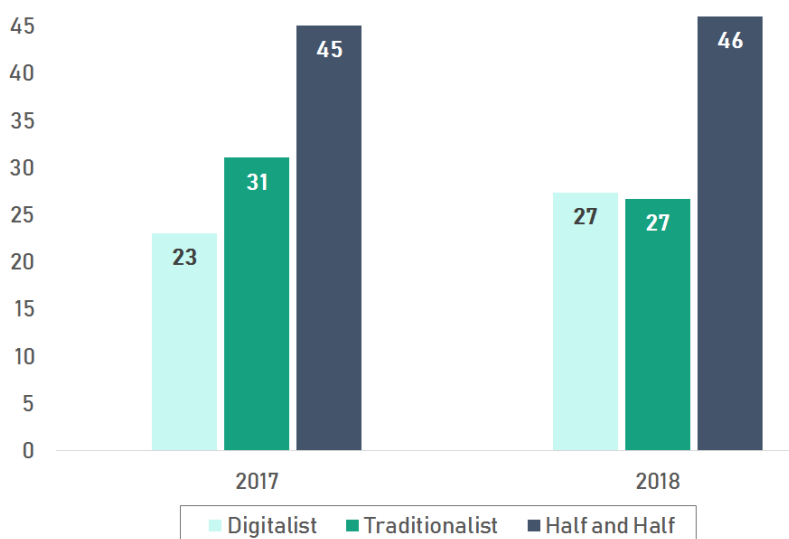


Fig 8. Digitalists and traditionalists by age (%)

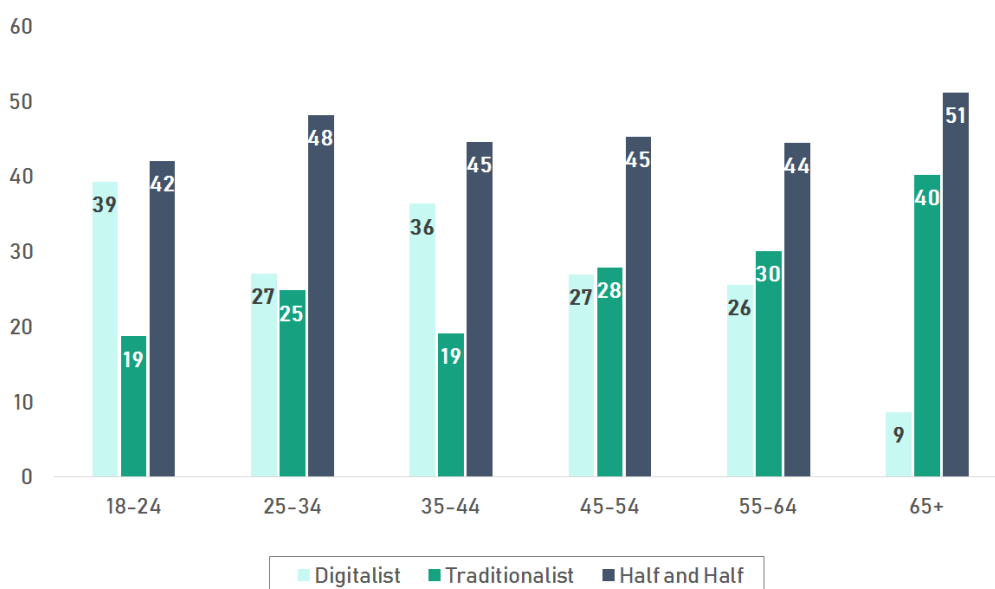
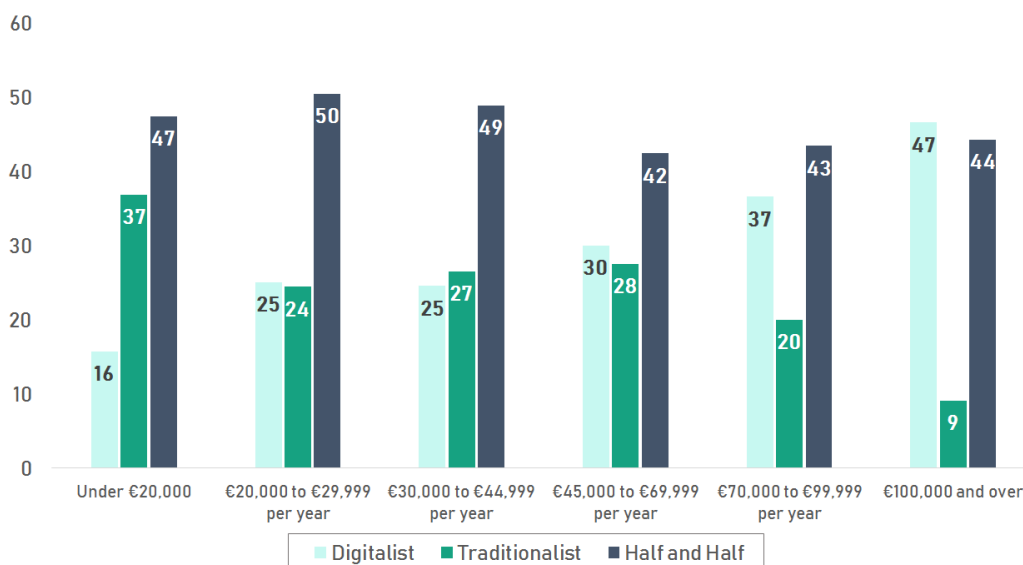


Fig 9. Digitalists and traditionalists by income (%)



Participation Groups Positive Participators respond frequently to news by writing, sharing or commenting. Reactive Participators are less active and may share or 'like' news. Passive Consumers don't engage digitally but talk about news with friends.

Overall, some 46 percent of respondents were Passive Consumers, compared with 28 percent who were Positive Participators. Older people, those with secondary education and those who are centrists are more likely than their comparators to be Passive Consumers. The most Positive Participators are concentrated among those currently in full-time education.

Fig 10. Participation groups 2017-2018 (%)

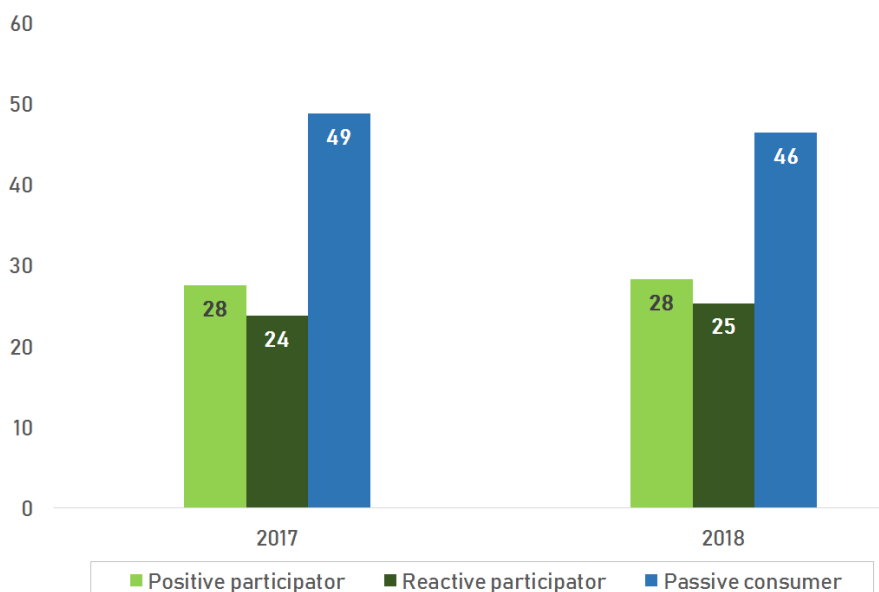


Fig 11. Participation groups by age (%)

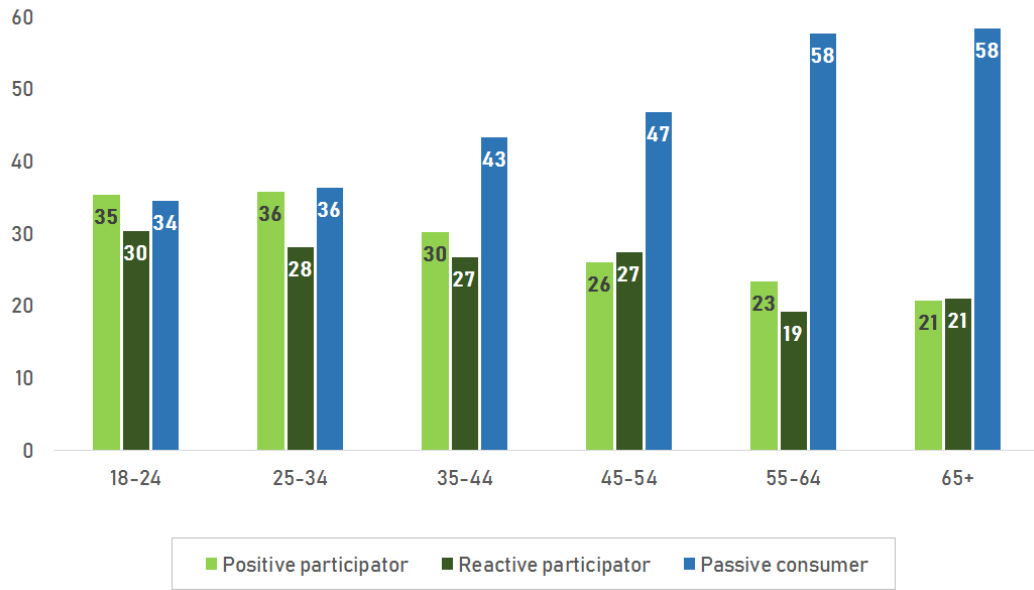
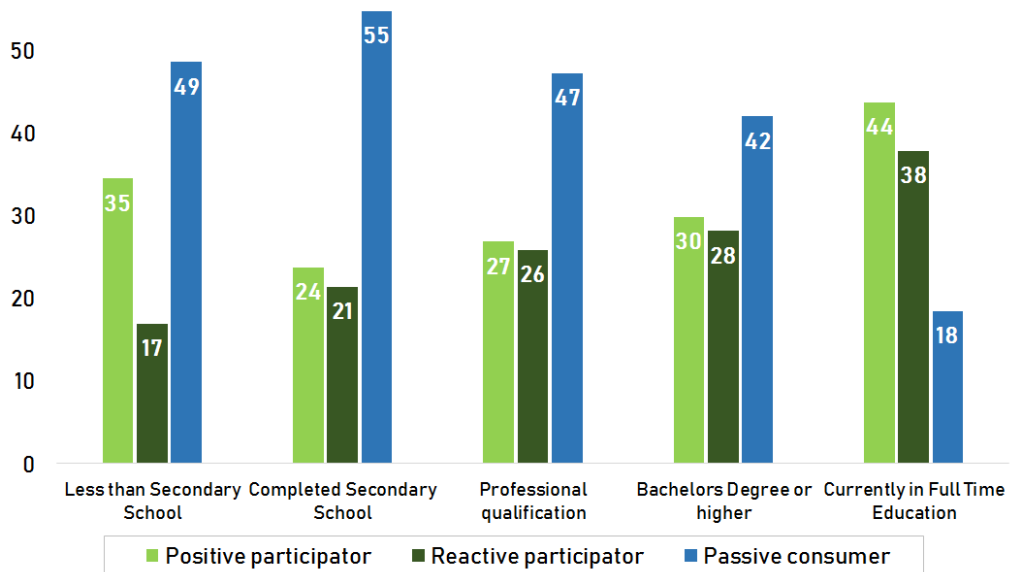


Fig 12. Participation groups by education (%)



News and Digital Literacy

Amid concerns about online disinformation, survey respondents were asked questions about news literacy for the first time. To evaluate understanding of social media algorithms, respondents were asked to identify how Facebook determines which news stories to show people. Only 28 percent of Irish respondents could identify the correct answer (by computer analysis of what stories might interest you). This is equal to the EU average. However, some 33 percent did not know the answer and 30 percent believed such decisions are made by editors and journalists working for news organisations or Facebook itself.

Fig 13. Understanding of social media algorithms (%)

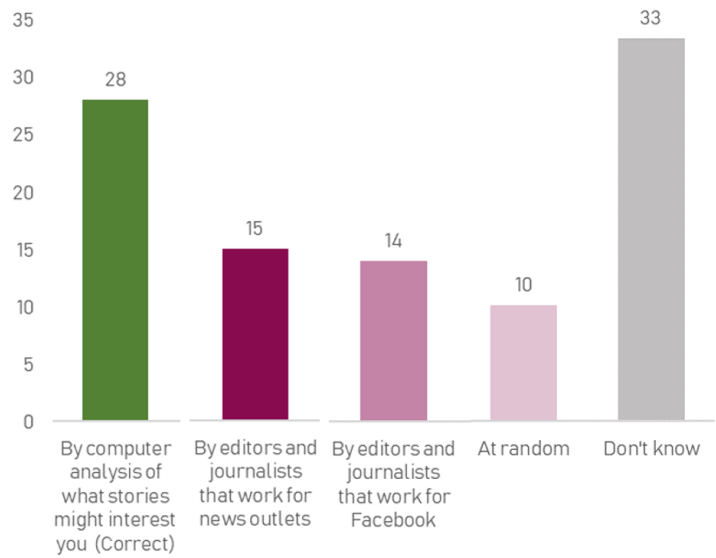


Fig 14. Understanding of social media algorithms by age (%)

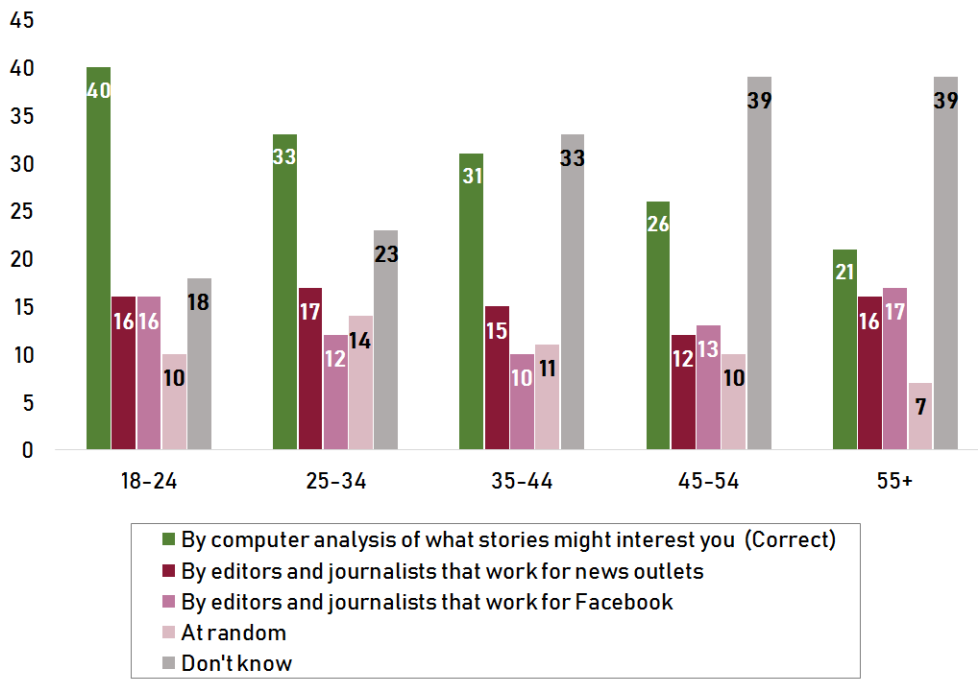
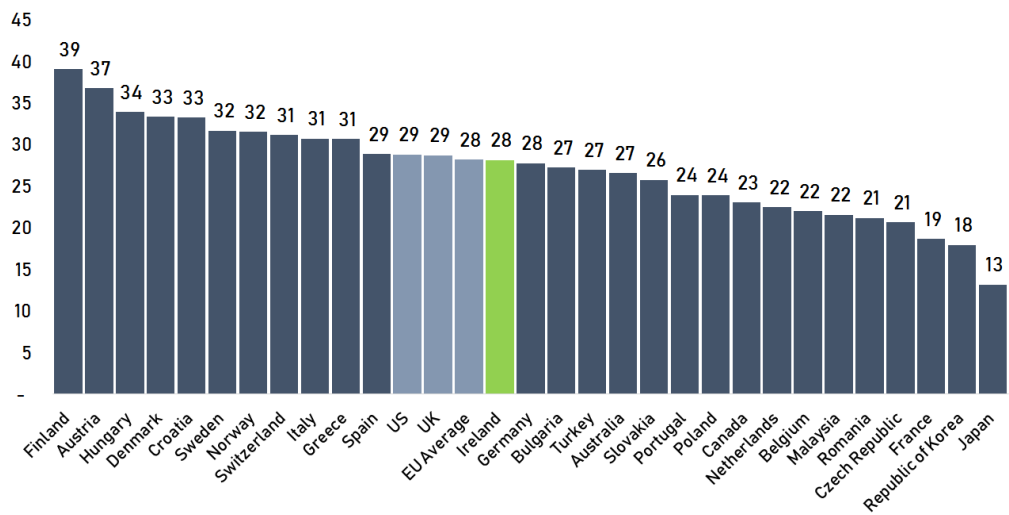


Fig 15. Correct understanding of social media algorithms – international (%)



To evaluate understanding of news media practices, respondents were asked to identify who is typically responsible for writing a press release. The correct answer (a spokesperson for an organisation) was identified by 36 percent of Irish respondents, which is higher than the EU average. However, it is still noteworthy that in every country surveyed, including the Nordics which did best, most people do not understand common news media practices.

Fig 16. Understanding of news media practices (%)

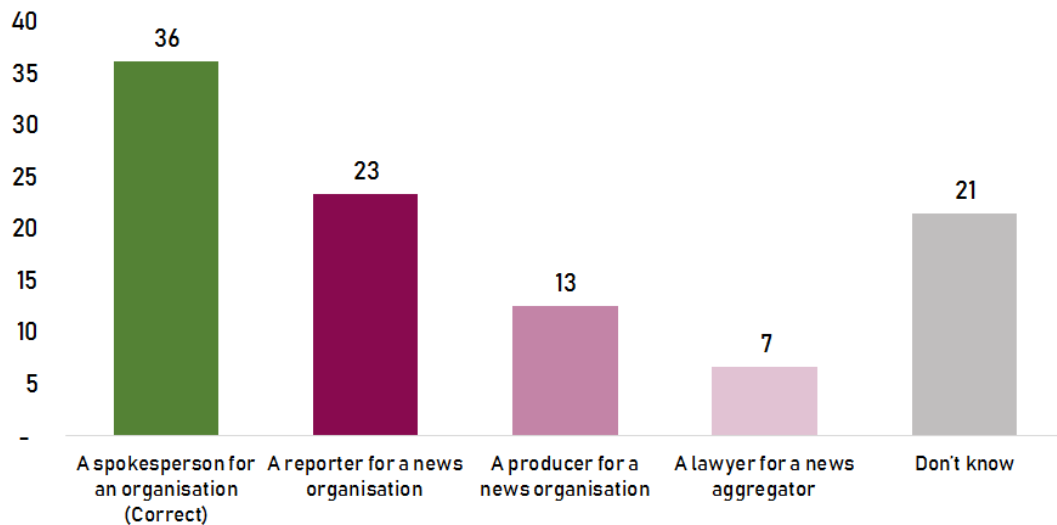


Fig 17. Understanding of news media practices by age (%)

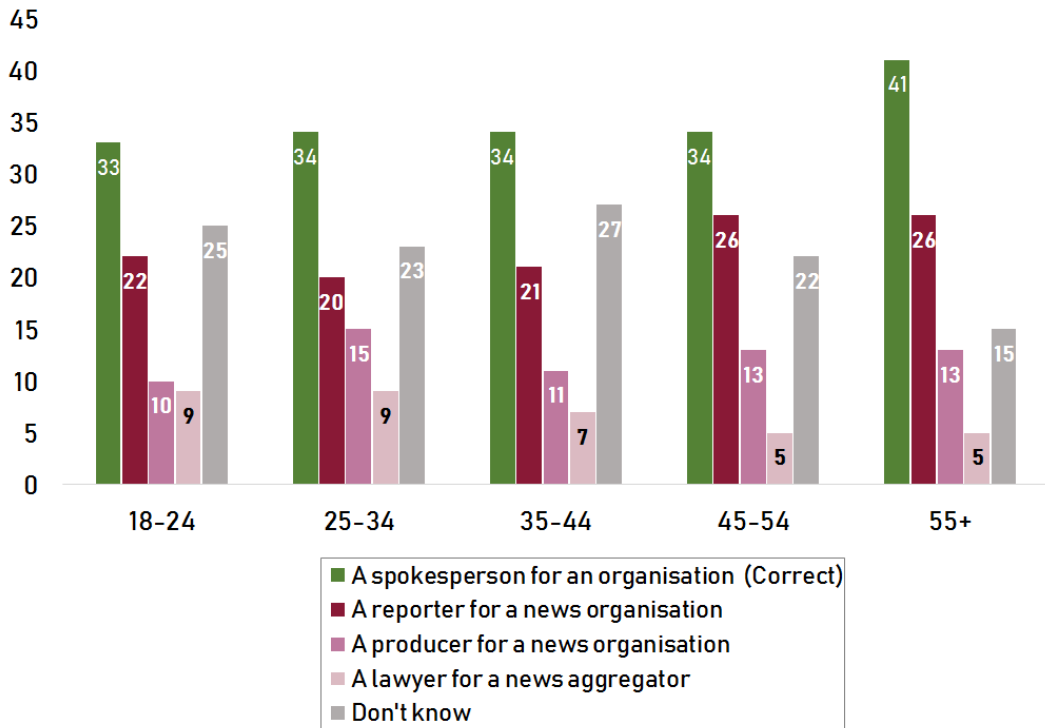
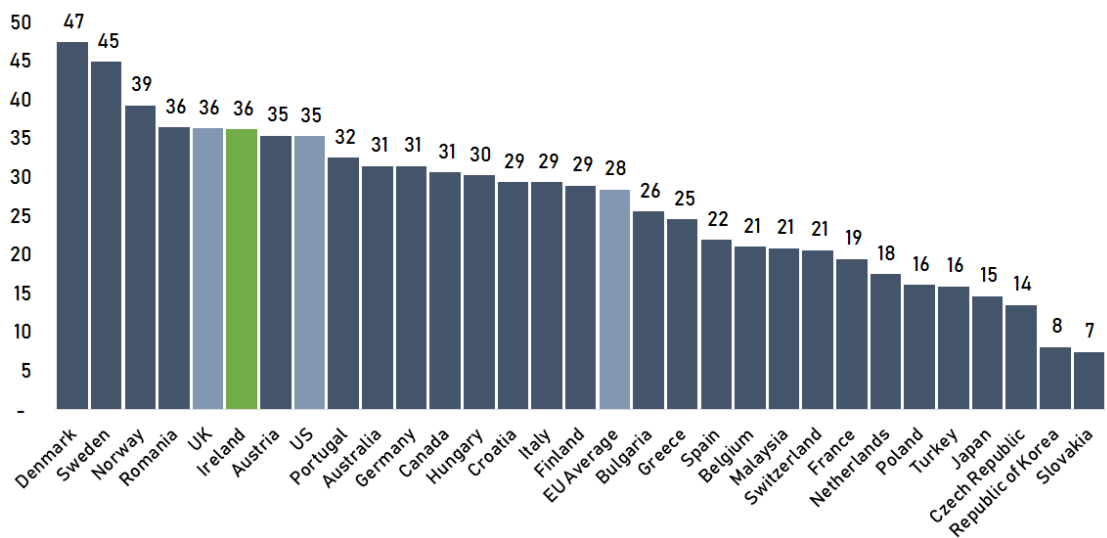


Fig 18. Correct understanding of news media practices – international (%)



Political Profile

The number of respondents who report as centrists, at 30 percent, is broadly in line with nationally representative samples. However, the sample appears to be slightly skewed to the left. The political leaning of the consumers of various Irish news brands is largely unremarkable. In fact, the more popular brands tend to be consumed by both the most left- AND the most right-wingers. For example, the Daily Mail has almost equal numbers on the left wing (30 percent) and on the right wing (28 percent). This is close to the Irish Independent (34 percent and 27 percent). The Irish Times online and The Journal have similar numbers of those who self-place somewhere on the right wing but more on the left wing (44 percent and 27 percent and 44 percent and 24 percent). In contrast, the Times (Ireland) has 47 percent left wing and only 17 percent right wing, while The Guardian records 69 percent left wing and just 11 percent right wing. There are few differences between the various platforms, with most showing similar leaning patterns.

Fig 19. Political leaning of survey respondents (%)

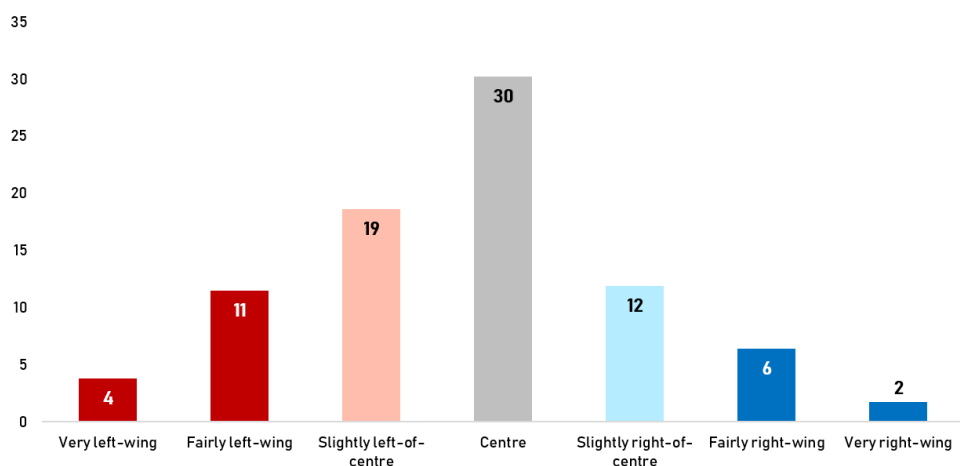


Fig 20 Political leaning by platform (%)

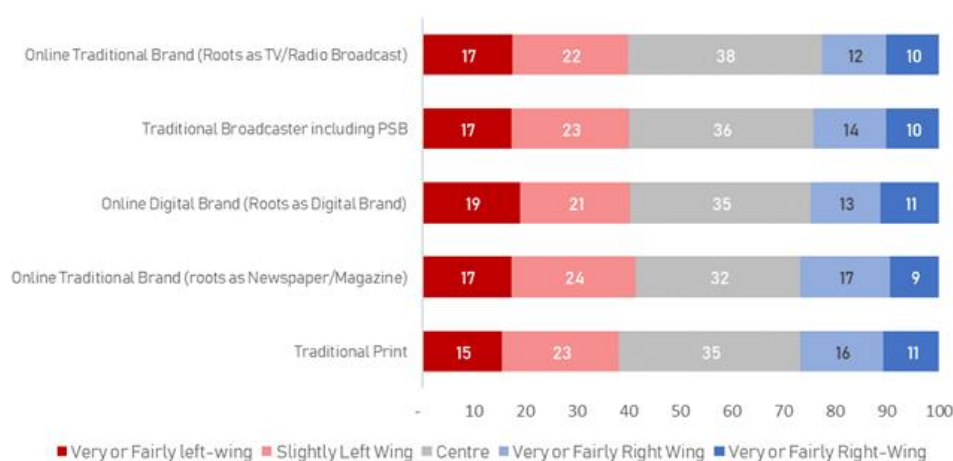
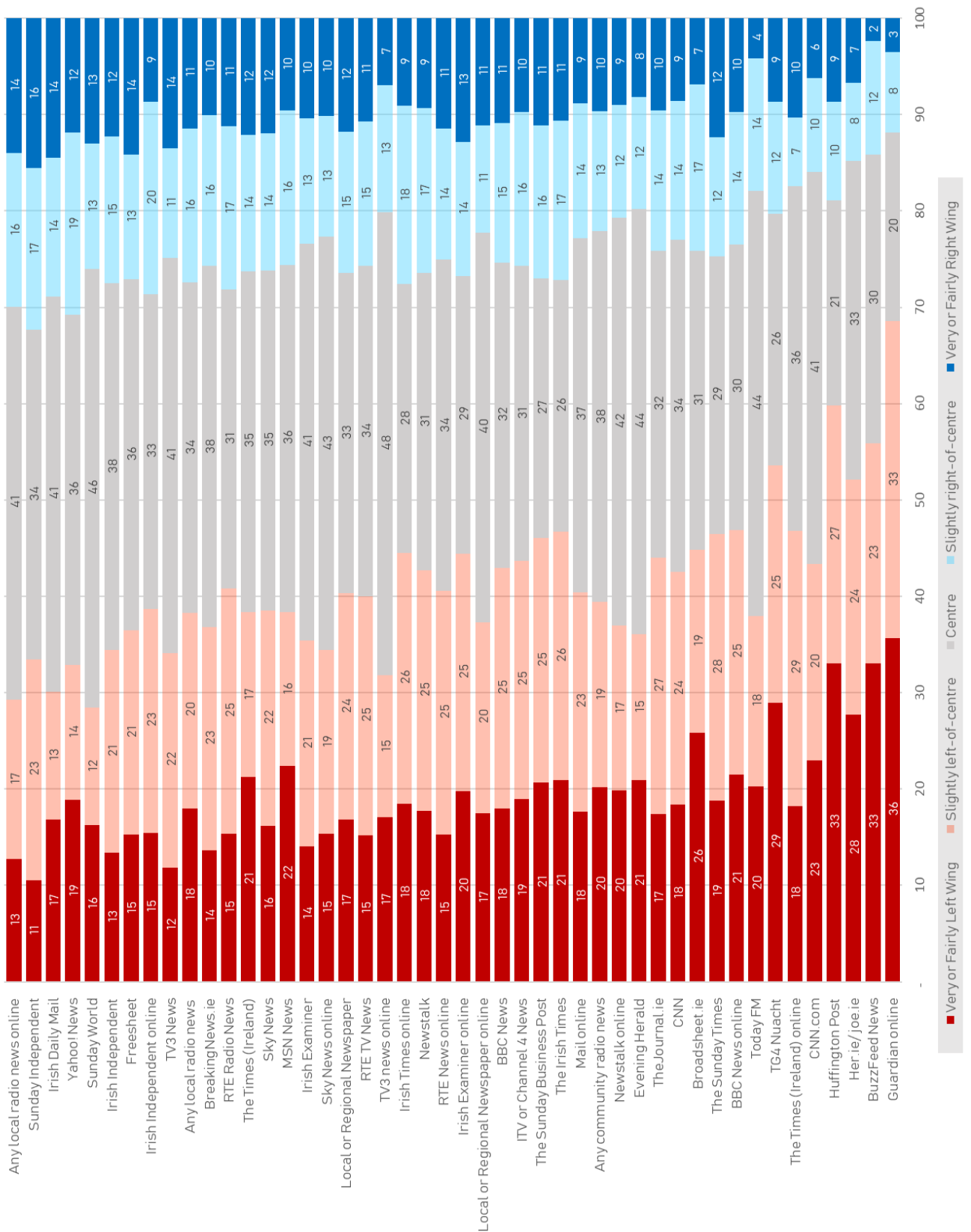


Fig 21. Political leaning by news brands (%)



Section Two

Attitudes and Preferences

This section outlines the attitudes and preferences of Irish news consumers. It includes preferences for platforms and devices as well as attitudes towards trust, disinformation, and paying for news.

Platforms and Devices

TV, radio and social all stabilised over the past year. However, newspapers continued to decline sharply from 40 percent to 35 percent in the period under review. Indeed, they have fallen a whopping 14 percentage points since 2015. Older people are more likely to consume legacy media for news while younger groups rely more on social media.

In terms of TV audience share, there is a remarkable 40 percentage point difference between the 55+ age group (89 percent) and the 18-24 age group (49 percent). The gap between these two groups is also striking for radio and newspapers. A similar pattern exists for social media, with a 36 percentage point difference between the oldest and youngest cohorts. Age differences are comparatively insignificant for online media generally.

Fig 22. Platforms for news 2015 – 2018 (%)

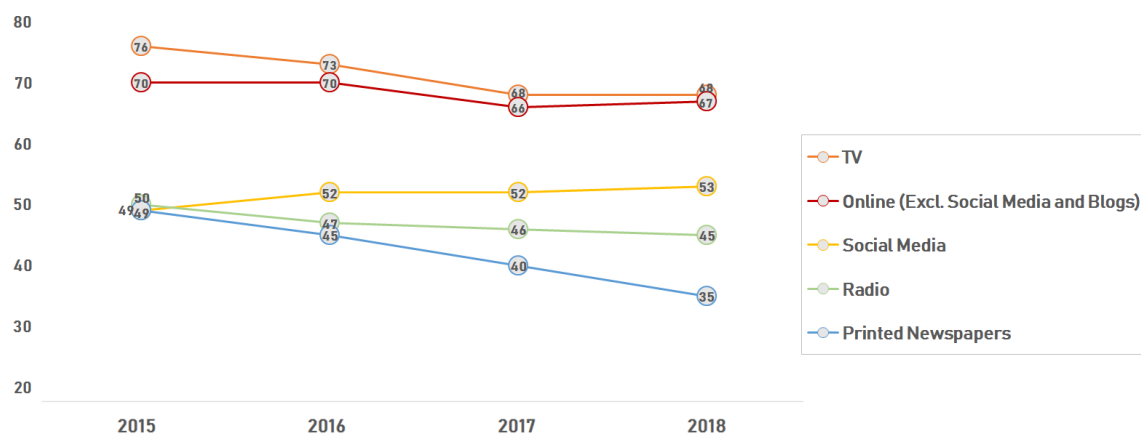
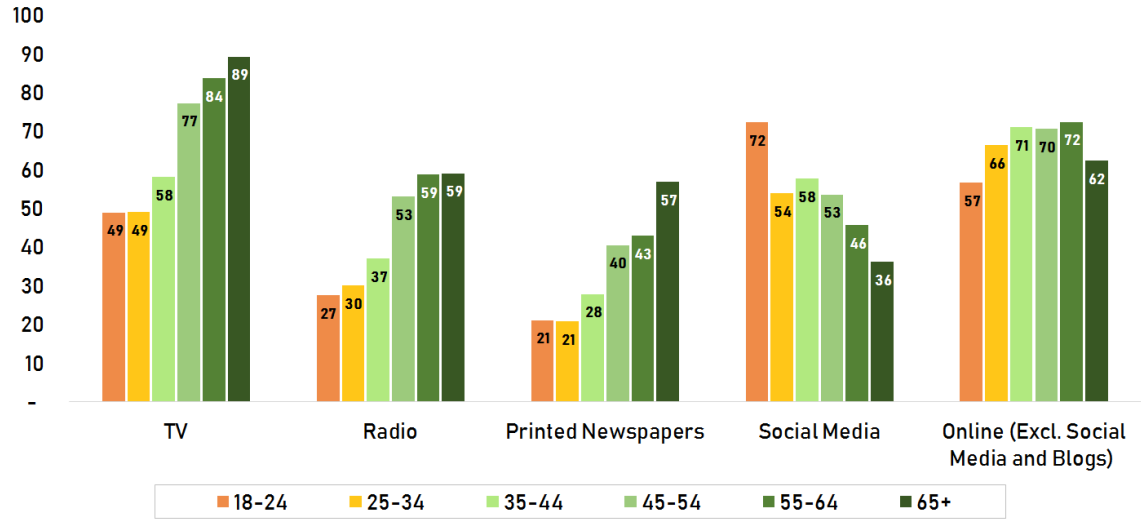
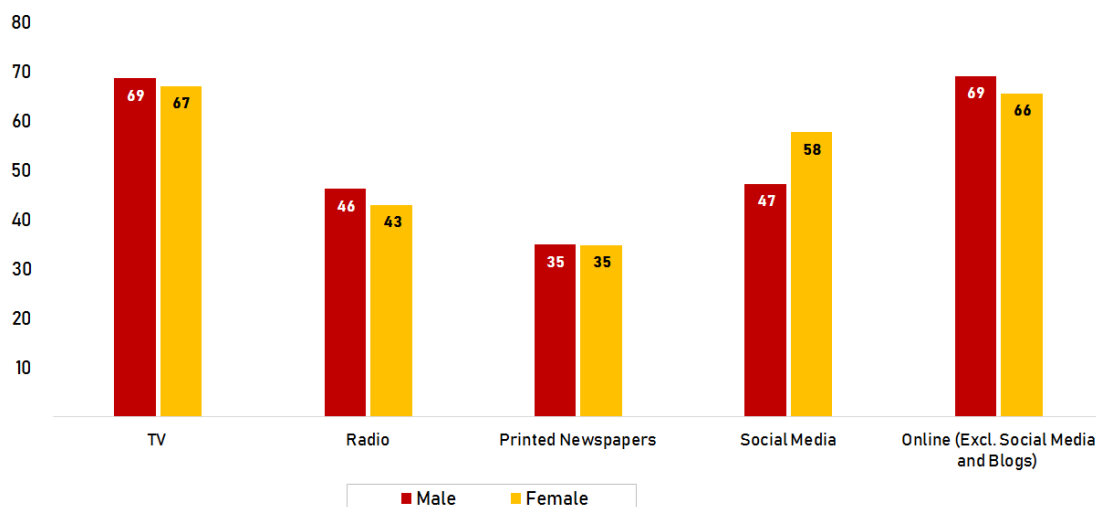


Fig 23. Platforms for news by age (%)



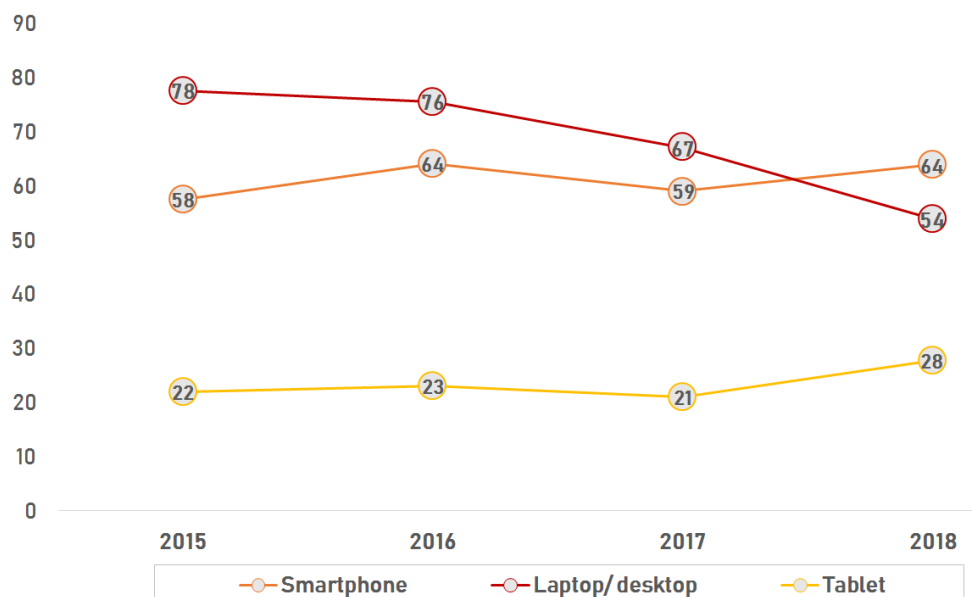
As a source of news, social media is more popular among women (58 percent) than men (47 percent), while radio is slightly more popular among men (48 percent) than women (43 percent). All other categories were broadly balanced between genders.

Fig 24. Platforms for news by gender (%)



Desktops, laptops, smartphones and tablets are all popular. However, there has been a clear move from computers to tablets and smartphones. The former have fallen from 67 to 54 percent over the past year while tablet use for news has increased to 28 from 21 percent and smartphones have continued their steady rise to 64 percent.

Fig 25. Weekly reach by device (%)



Trust in News

As in the three previous years, more news consumers agreed in 2018 that most news can be trusted most of the time than the reverse assertion. Slightly under a quarter of those surveyed distrusted the news, with a similar percentage remaining neutral on the issue. Over half trusted the news. This figure increases to 59 percent when consumers are asked specifically about trust in the news they consume. However, there was scepticism about news on social and search where only 19 percent felt they could trust news on social and 33 percent on search. This perhaps reflects the publicity around Cambridge Analytica and concerns around Brexit and the US Presidential election.

Fig 26. Trust in news 'most of the time' 2015 – 2018 (%)

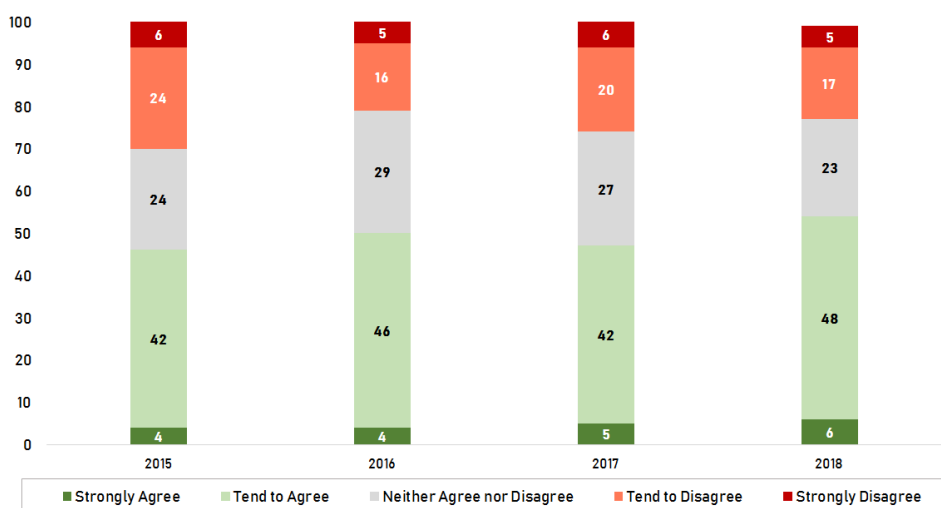
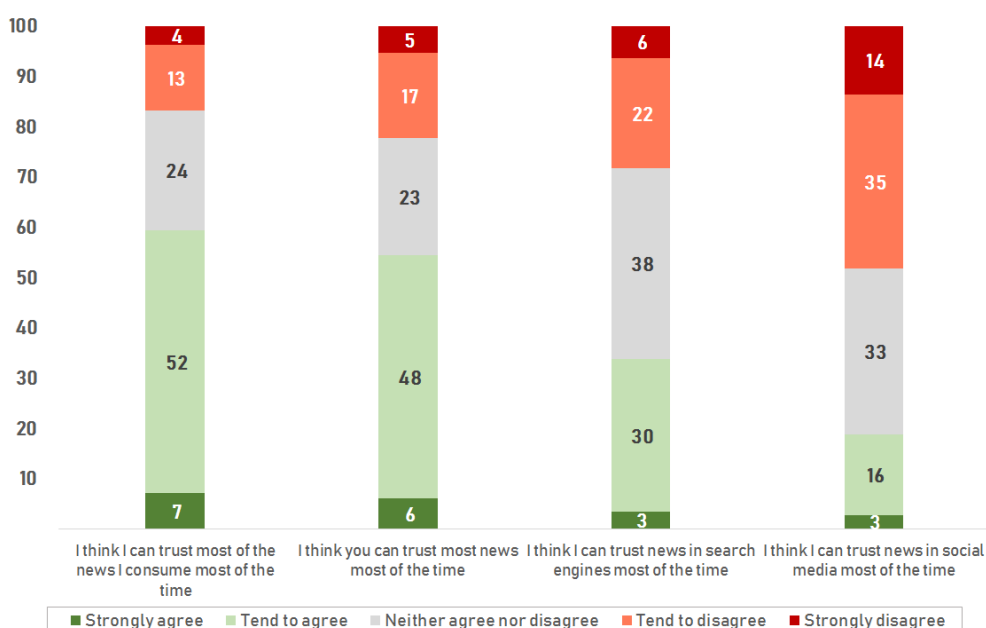


Fig 27. Trust in news by consumption type (%)



There are also clear demographic differences. At 70 percent among over 65s, older news consumers are more likely to trust news compared with 44 percent in the 18–24 year-old group. Examining trust by political leaning, those who self-identify as slightly right wing tend to trust the news media at over 55 percent, whereas those on the left have lower levels of trust at 48 percent or less. This is particularly notable for those who self-identify as very or fairly left wing where levels of trust are 38 percent. This could be related to concerns about ‘mainstream’ media.

Fig 28. Trust in news ‘most of the time’ by age (%)

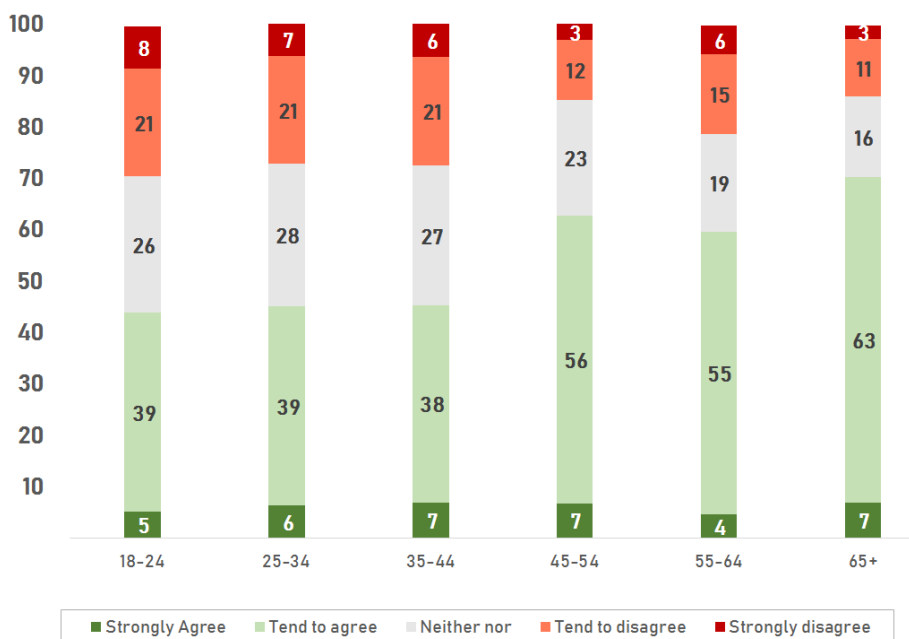
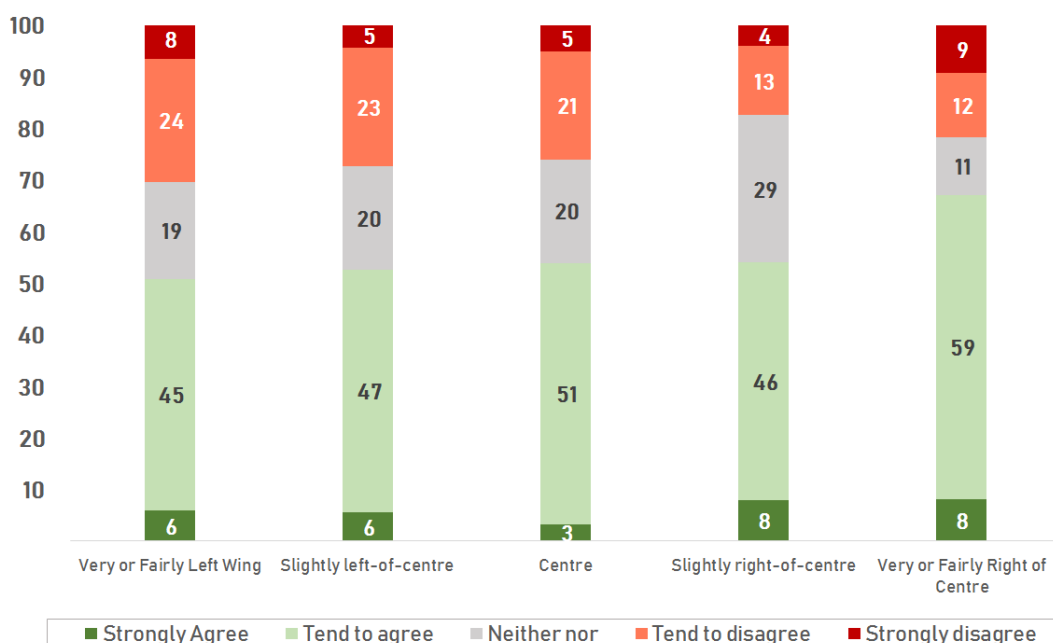
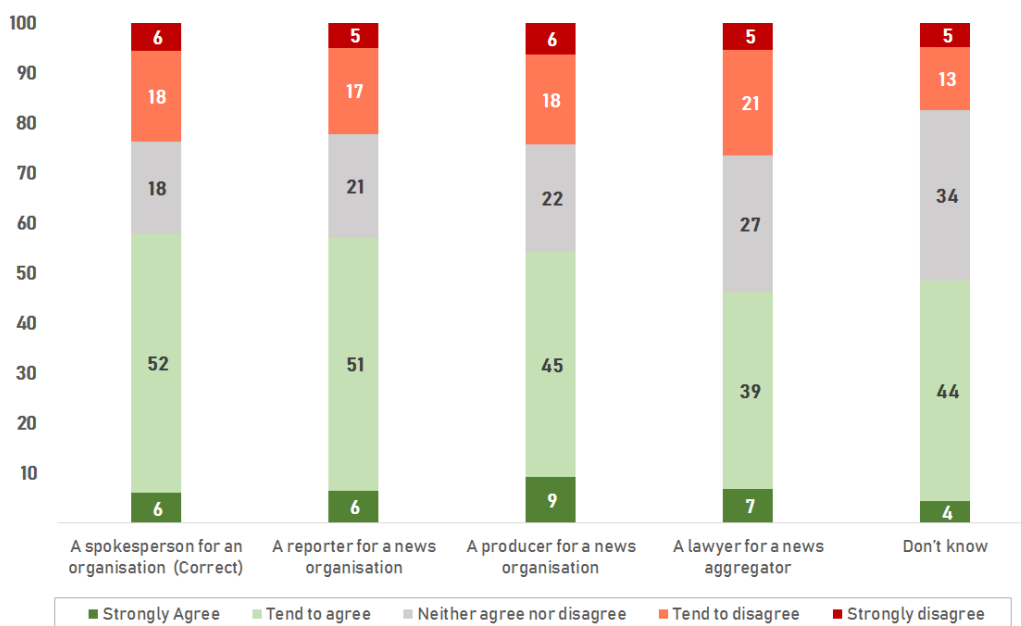


Fig 29. Trust in news ‘most of the time’ by political leaning (%)



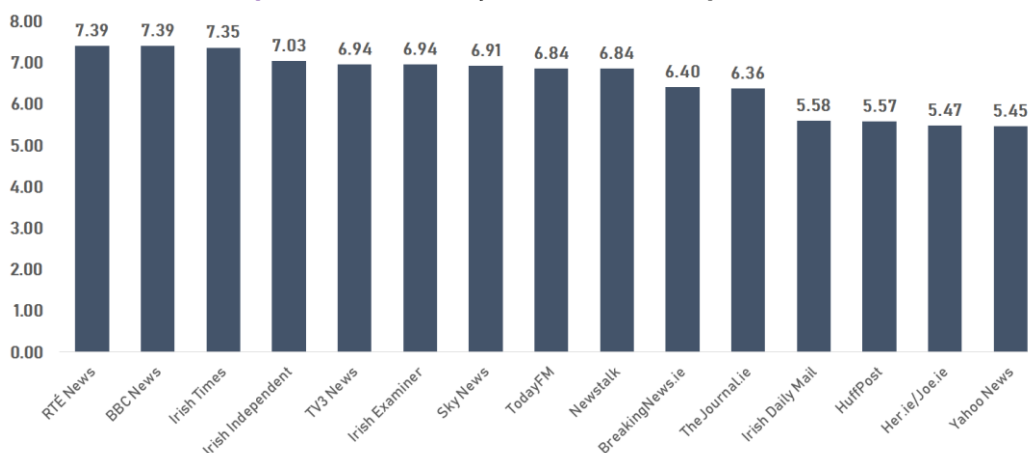
News literacy was measured by asking respondents to correctly identify who writes press releases. Correct answer: a spokesperson for an organisation. Of those who answered correctly, some 58 percent trust the media most of the time. However, a majority of those who thought that reporters write press releases trusted the media most of the time (57 per cent). It would appear there is not much correlation between trust in news and news literacy.

Fig 30. Trust in news 'most of the time' by news literacy (%)



The most trusted brands were the public sector broadcasters RTE News and BBC News both on an average score of 7.39, very closely followed by the Irish Times at 7.35. Other brands such as the Irish Independent, TV3 News, the Irish Examiner, Today FM and Newstalk all come in between 6.84 and 7.03. Online brands such as Her.ie/Joe..ie and the Irish Daily Mail are last trusted at between 5.47 and 5.58.

Fig 31. Trust in news by brand (0-10 average score)



At 71 percent, Irish consumers are much more trusting of news than the EU average of 62 percent. Ireland is broadly in line with countries such as Germany and Belgium and ahead of the UK figure of 62 percent. Irish news consumers are also more trusting of news they personally consume (78 percent) and are in line with the UK but well below the Netherlands (91 percent), Denmark (87 percent) and Finland (85 percent).

Fig 32. Trust in news ‘most of the time’ – international (%)

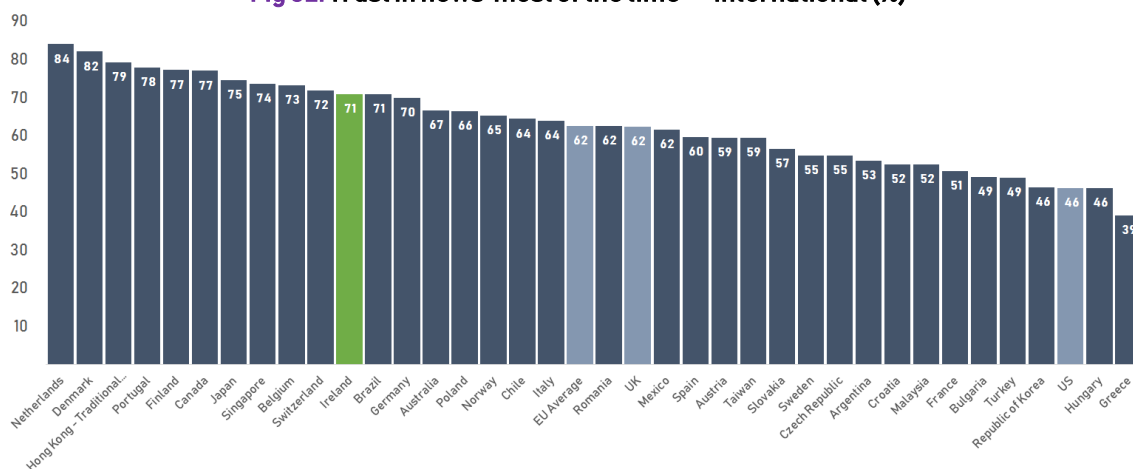
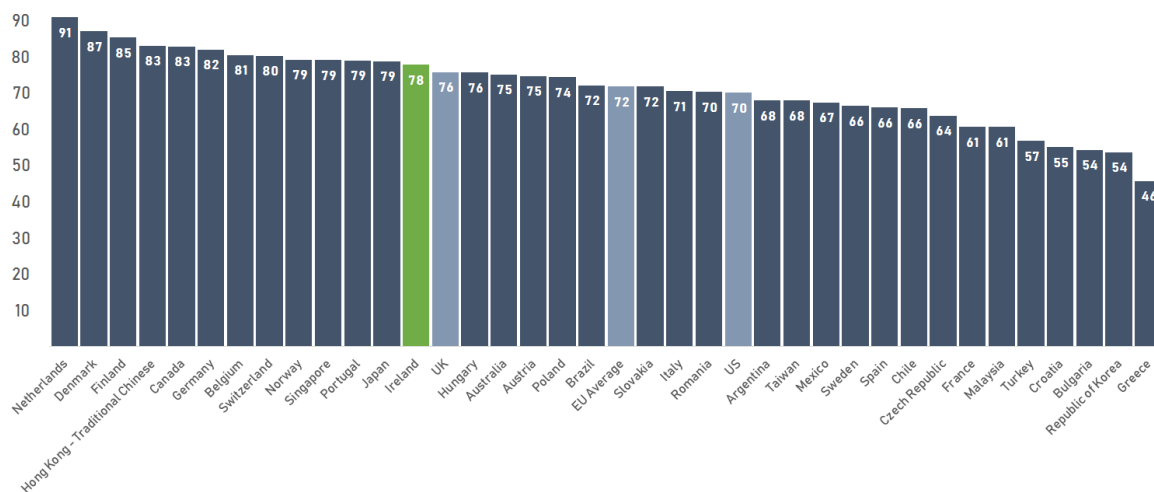
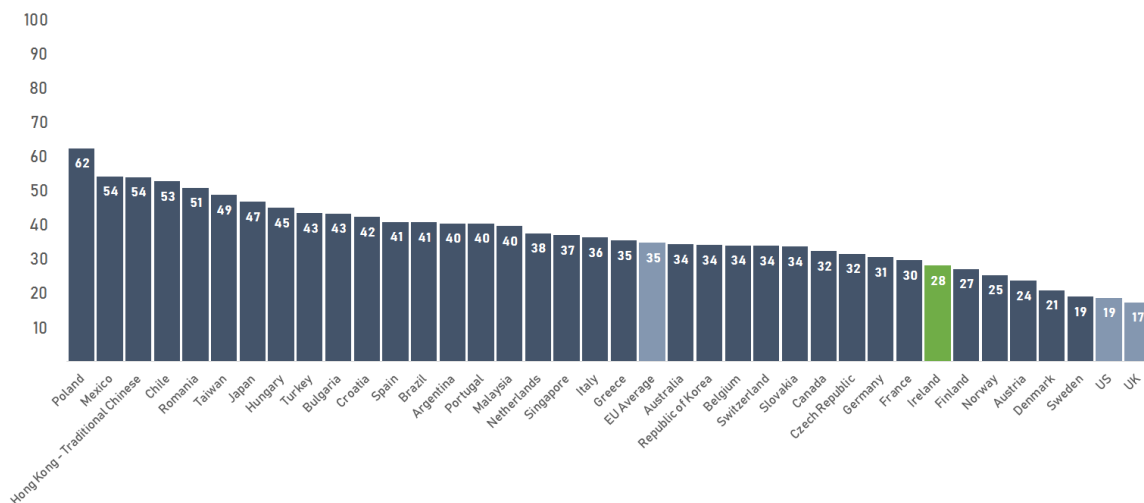


Fig 33. Trust in news ‘I personally consume’ – international (%)



There are clear impacts from social media news controversies and the Irish are almost as untrusting of news on social (28 percent) as news consumers in the UK (17 percent) and the US (19 percent). News consumers in the Nordics are also generally untrusting of news on social and well below the EU average of 35 percent.

Fig 34. Trust in news on social media – international (%)



Concern about Disinformation

Some 57 percent of Irish news consumers are concerned about fake news or disinformation, with 15 percent unconcerned, figures broadly similar to the UK. In contrast, some 85 percent of Brazilians are concerned but just 30 percent of the Dutch. Stories made up for political or commercial reasons impact Irish consumers hard, with 61 percent very or extremely concerned, followed closely by facts being spun (59 percent) and poor journalism (50 percent). The most common way for people to come across the term ‘fake news’ was its use by politicians to discredit news media they do not like (37 percent) and poor journalism (36 percent). Far fewer (17 percent) came across news that was made up for political or commercial reasons.

Fig 35. Concern about “fake news” on the internet – international (%)

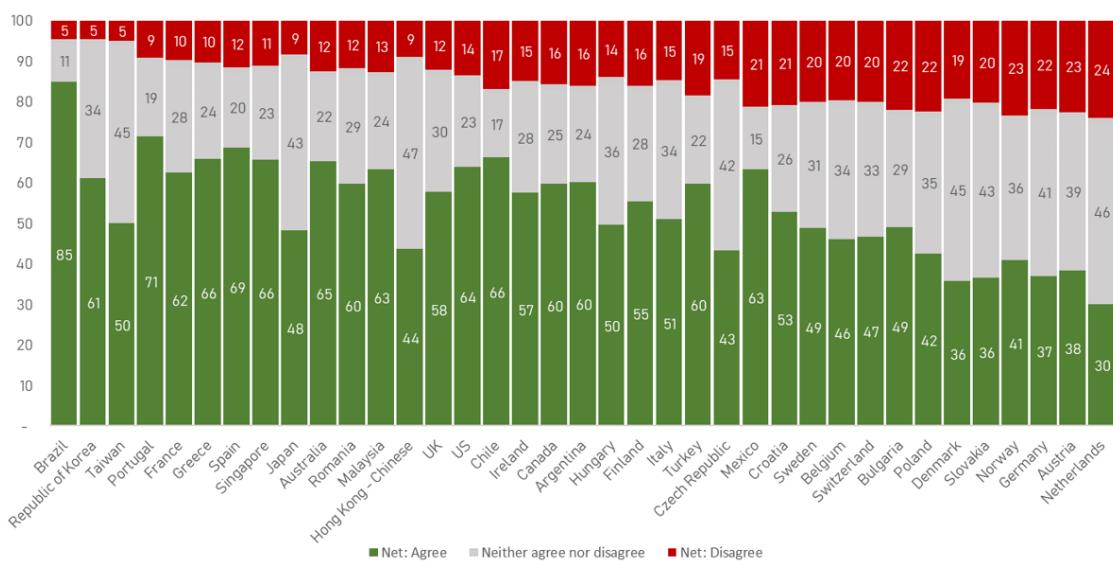


Fig 36. Concern about different types of “fake news” (%)

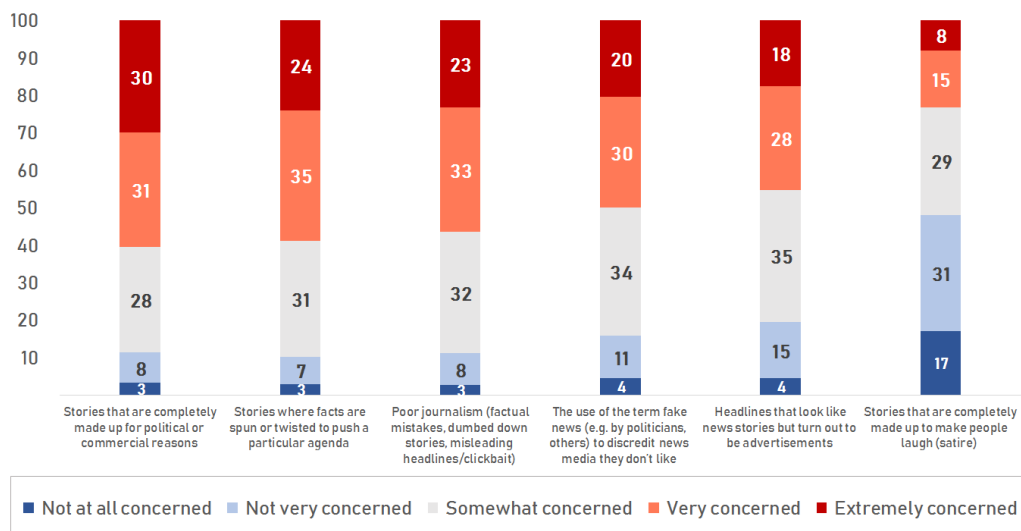
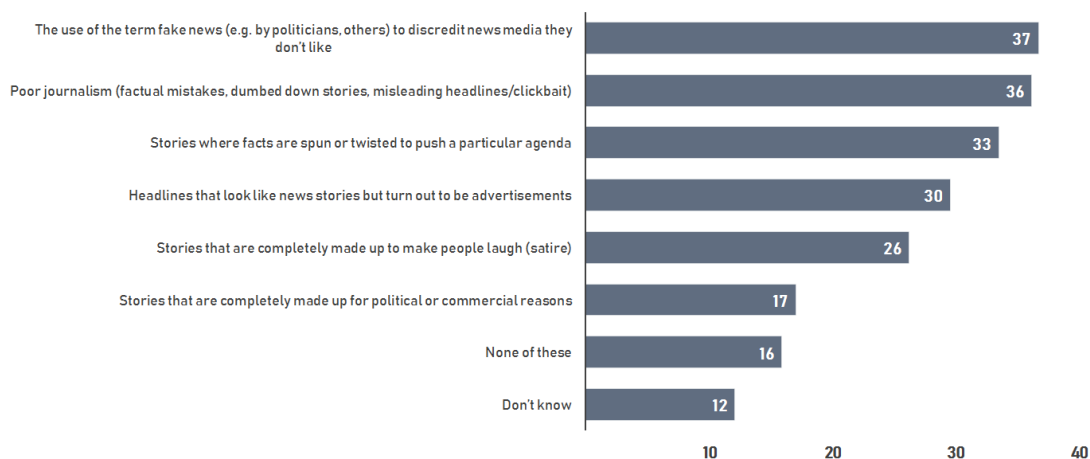
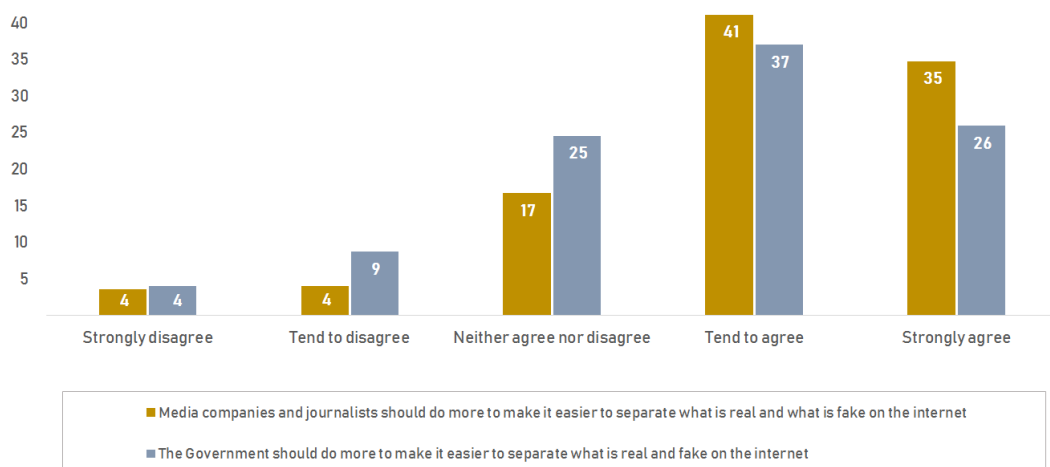


Fig 37. Exposure to different types of “fake news” (%)



On remedial action against fake news, news consumers are more likely to suggest media companies and journalists should do more to separate real from fake news rather than government. News consumers clearly prefer action to the status quo or non-action. Some 63 percent believe the government should do more while 76 percent believe journalists and media companies should act.

Fig 38. Taking action on “fake news” (%)



Paying for News

Payment for online news has increased over each of the last three years, reaching 12 percent in 2018. Younger consumers are more likely to pay for news than older ones and the rise is particularly marked in the 25–34 year age group (19 percent) and 35–44 year olds (15 percent). Willingness to pay for news was still highest in households with gross income in excess of €70,000 but has increased in households with income between €30,000 and €49,000. In international terms, Ireland remains mid-table, above the UK (7 percent) but below the US (17 percent).

Fig 39. Payment for news 2015–2018 (%)

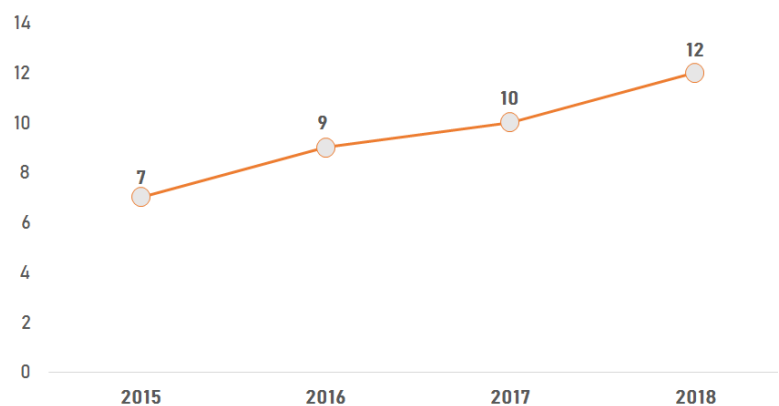


Fig 40. Payment for news by age group 2017–2018 (%)

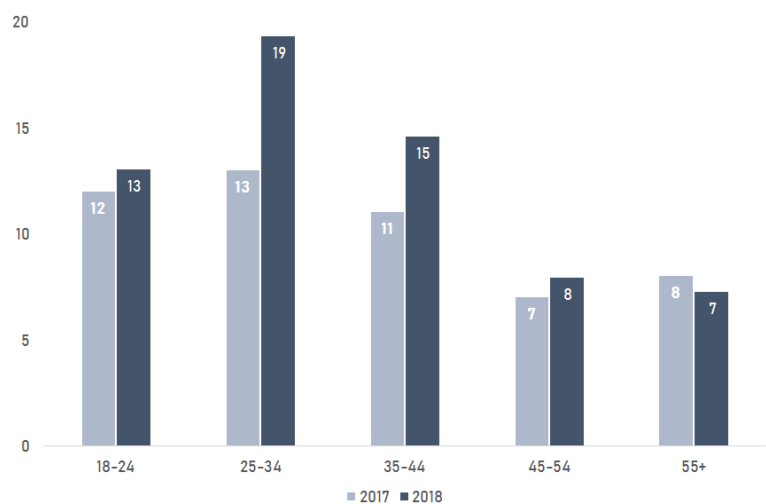


Fig 41. Payment for news by income 2017–2018 (%)

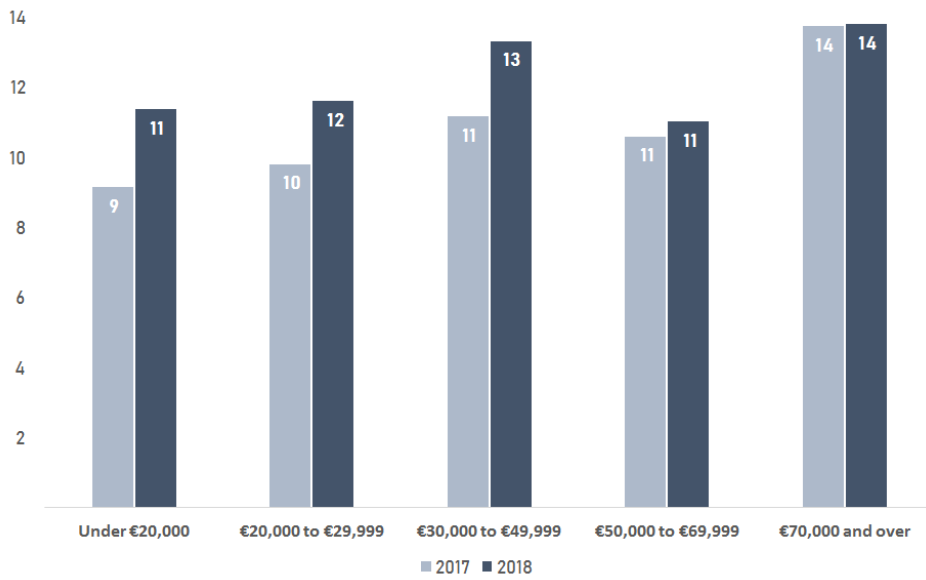
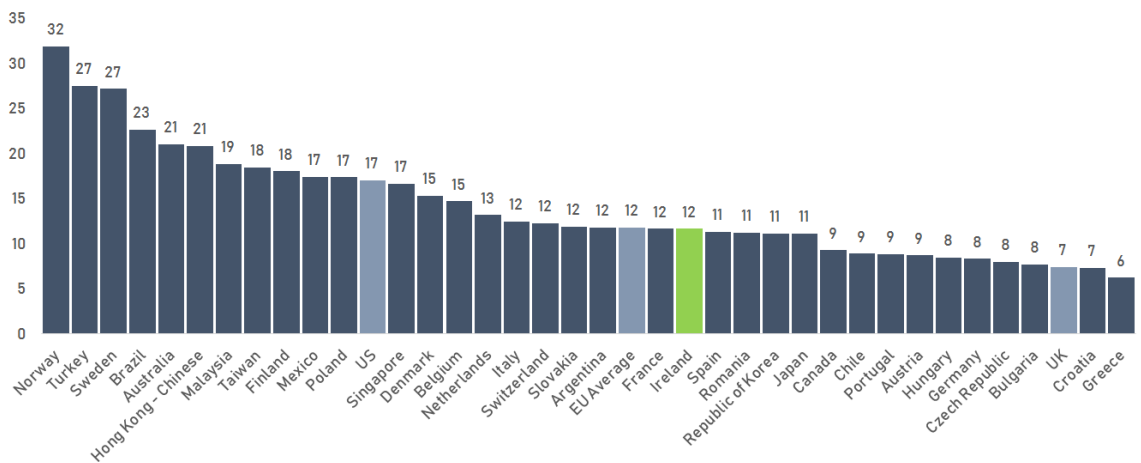


Fig 42. Payment for news – international (%)



Over three quarters of Irish news consumers make ongoing payments of one sort or another to digital companies which include a news service (77 percent) the same as the EU average but below the US (84 percent) and the UK (87 percent). The most likely method of payment was as part of a regular subscription. There is also an increase in likelihood to purchase a subscription in 2018 (22 percent) from 2017 (12 percent). And some 22 percent would consider making a donation, although only 2 percent had. That compares with 26 percent in the US and 20 percent, on average, in the EU.

Fig 43. Methods of payment for news – international (%)

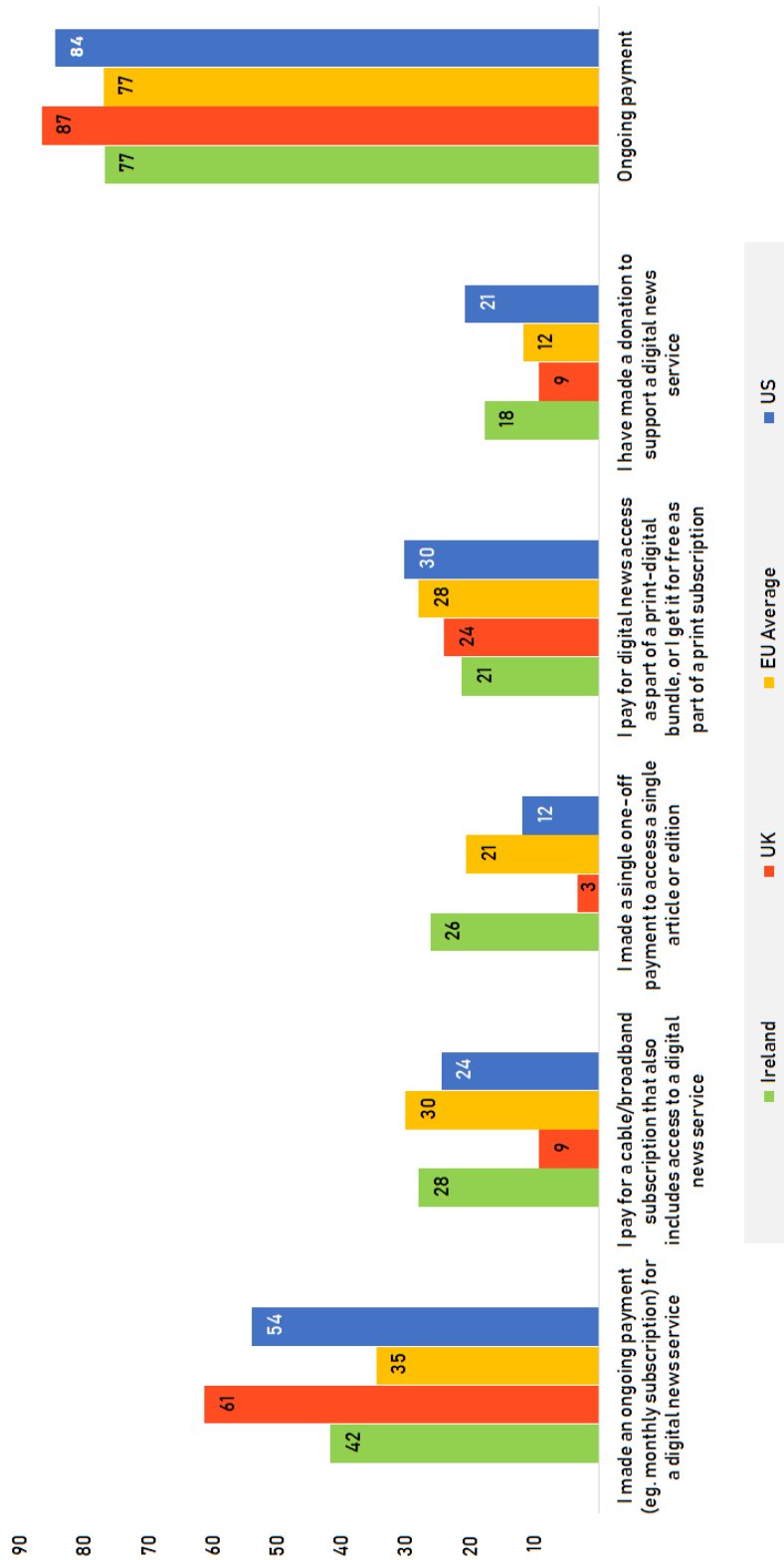


Fig 44. Likely to start paying for online news by subscription 2017–2018 (%)

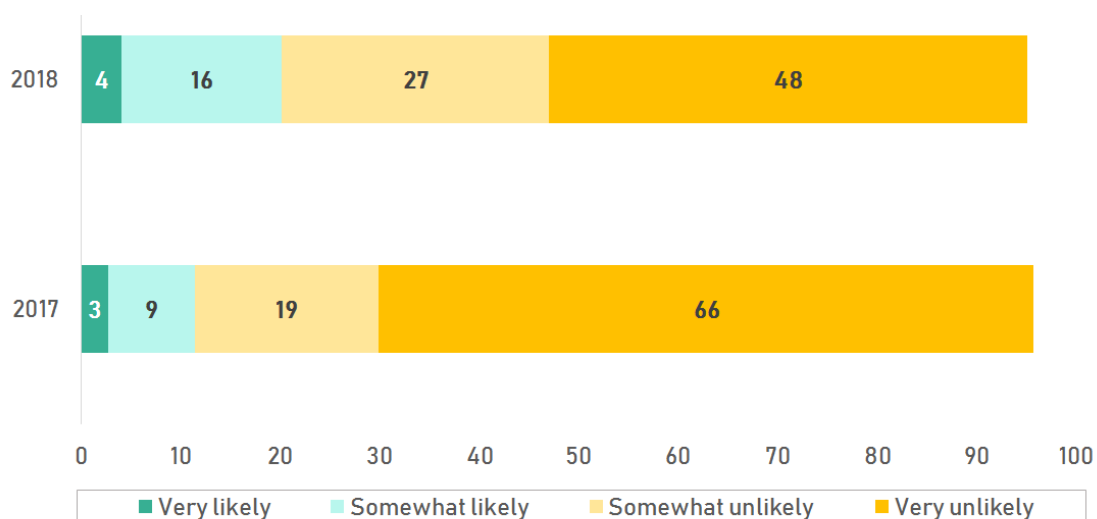
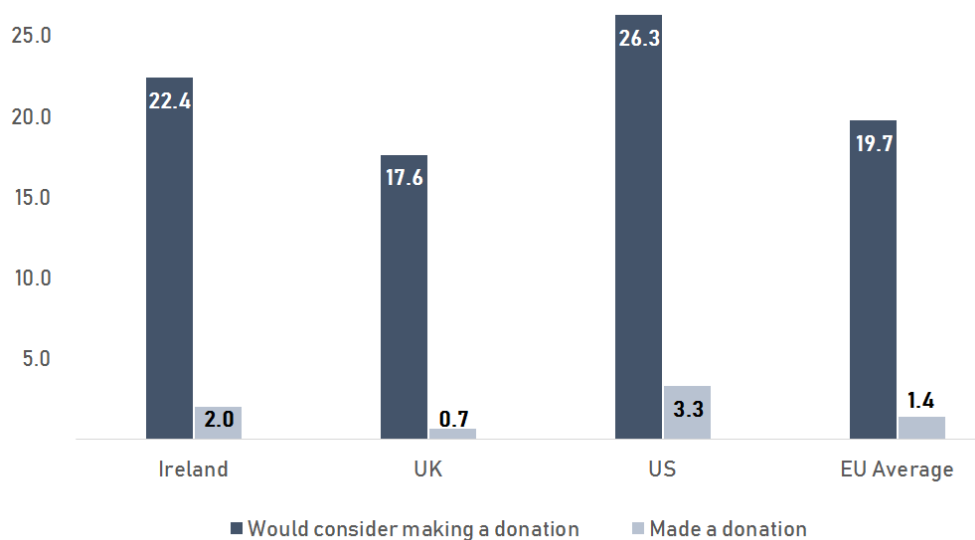


Fig 45. Current and likely news donations (%)



Section Three

Sources, Brands, and Engagement

This section outlines the main sources and brands used by Irish news consumers. It provides a breakdown of consumption patterns across traditional and digital brands as well as digital formats for accessing news.

Main Sources of News

The main news sources and brands have changed somewhat in Ireland over the past year. Newspapers continued their decline. Social media is broadly static (53 percent) as is television (56 percent) compared to the EU average of 66 percent. Unsurprisingly, Ireland's radio news consumption in the past week figure (45 percent) is higher than the UK (34 percent) and the EU average (36 percent). Some 13 percent of Irish consumers use radio as their main source of news compared to just 5 percent in the US and 8 percent in the UK.

Fig 46. Main sources of news 2017 – 2018 (%)

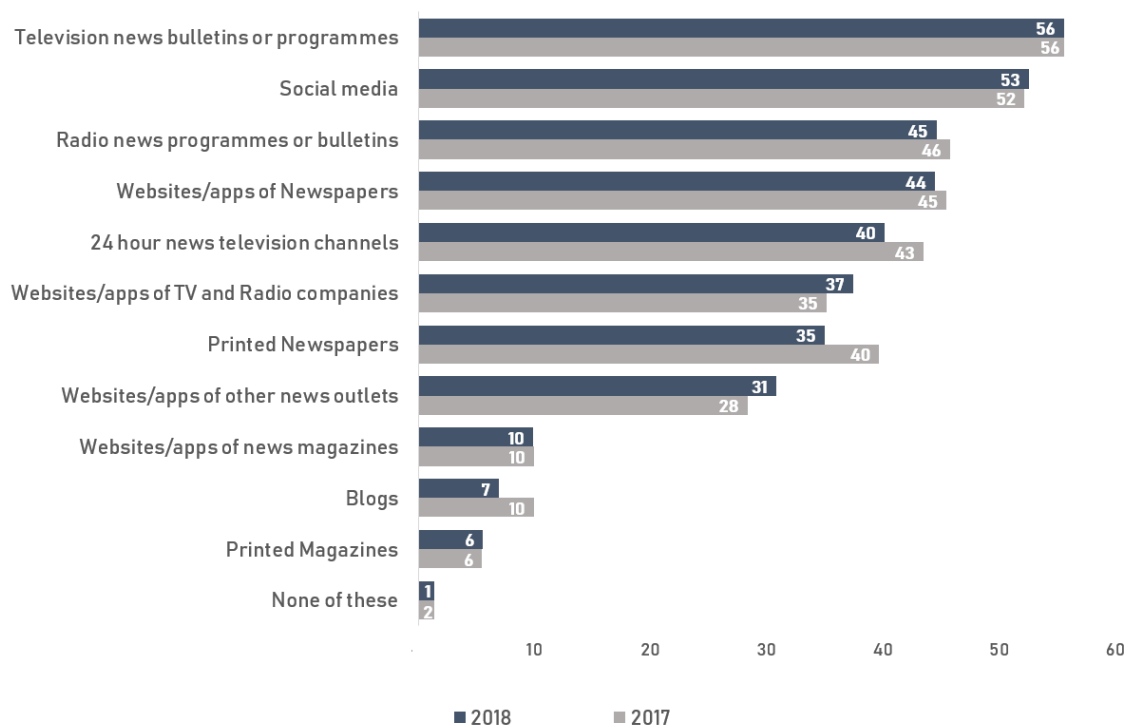
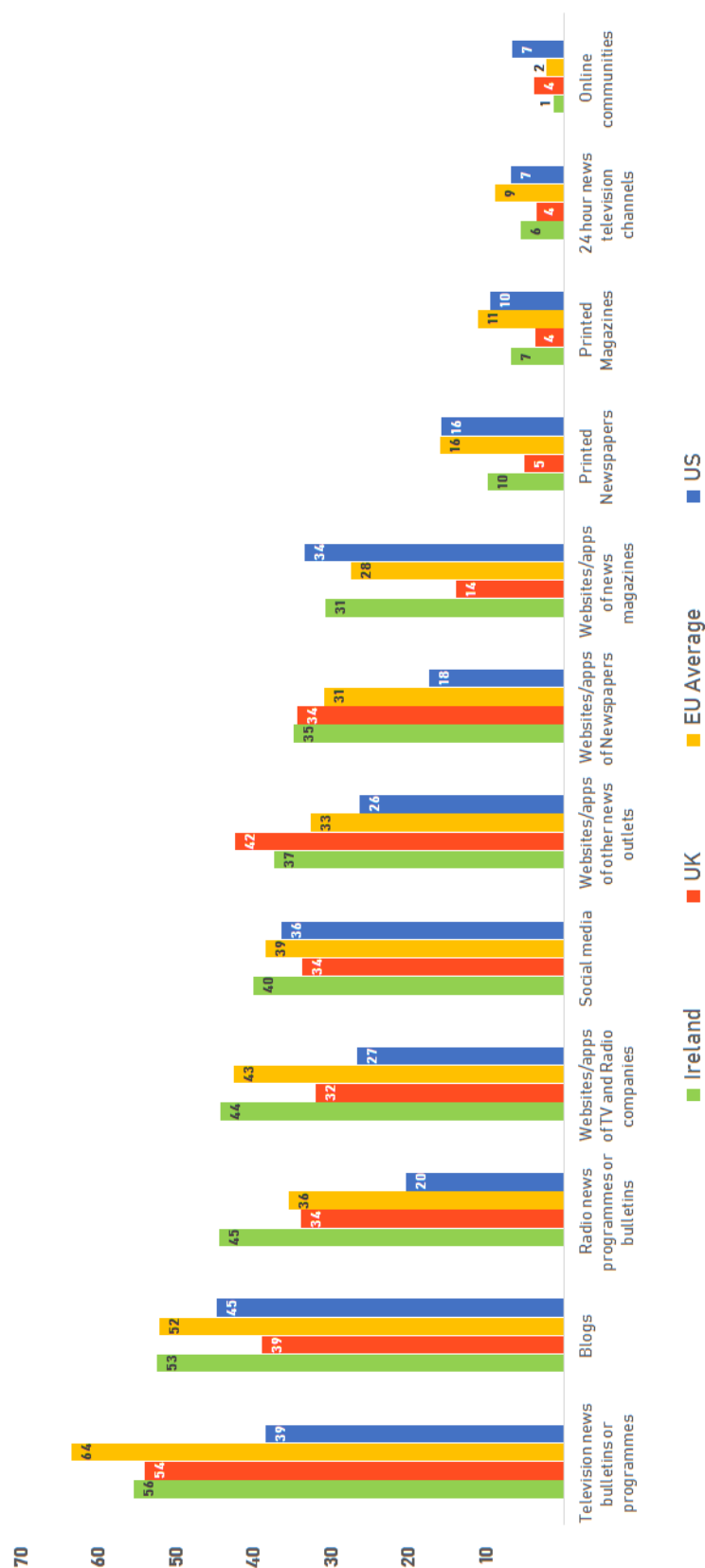


Fig 47. Main sources of news 'in the past week' – international (%)



Of the countries surveyed, Ireland ranks joint first with Germany, at 45 percent, for using radio as a source of news, compared with just 20 percent in the US. When it comes to using radio as the main source of news, Ireland sits in top spot.

Fig 48. Radio as a source of news 'in the past week' – international (%)

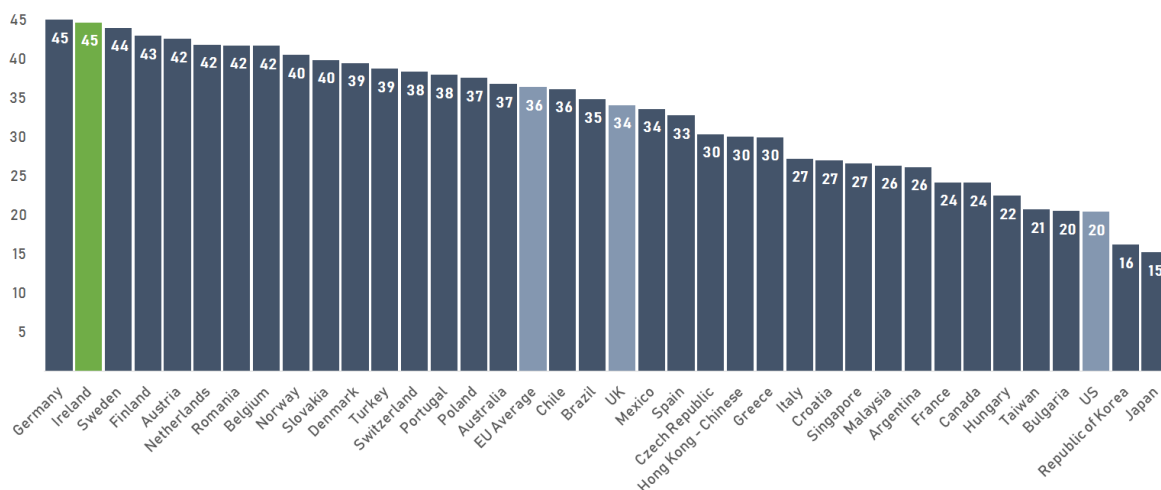
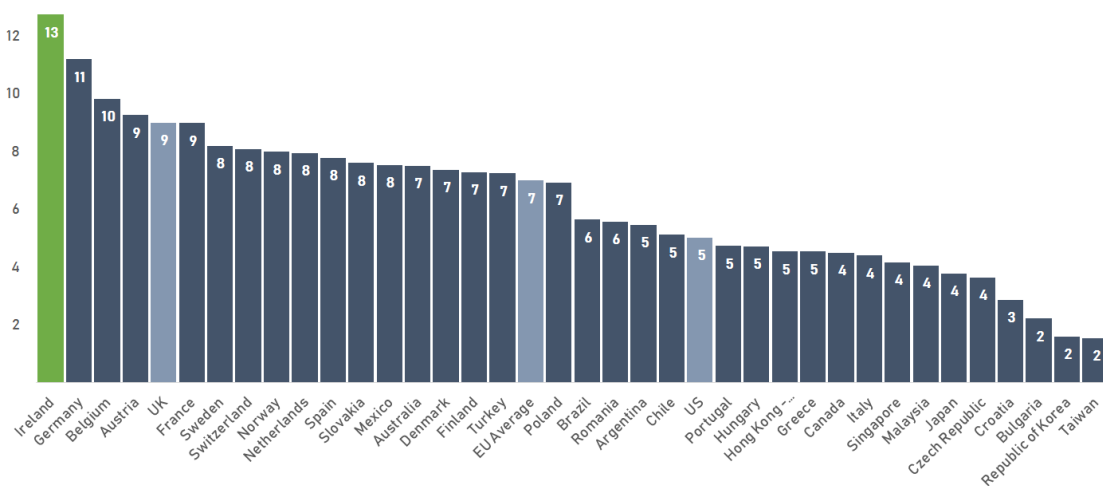


Fig 49. Radio as a main source of news – international (%)



Online News Brands

TheJournal.ie (34 percent), RTÉ News Online (33 percent) and Irish Independent Online (30 percent) lead the table here. This is a two percentage point increase for TheJournal.ie and RTÉ. Breakinnews.ie (24 percent) overtook The Irish Times Online (21 percent). These figures suggest a period of relative stability in digital brands following one of growth

Fig 50. Leading digital sources of news (change since 2017 in brackets)

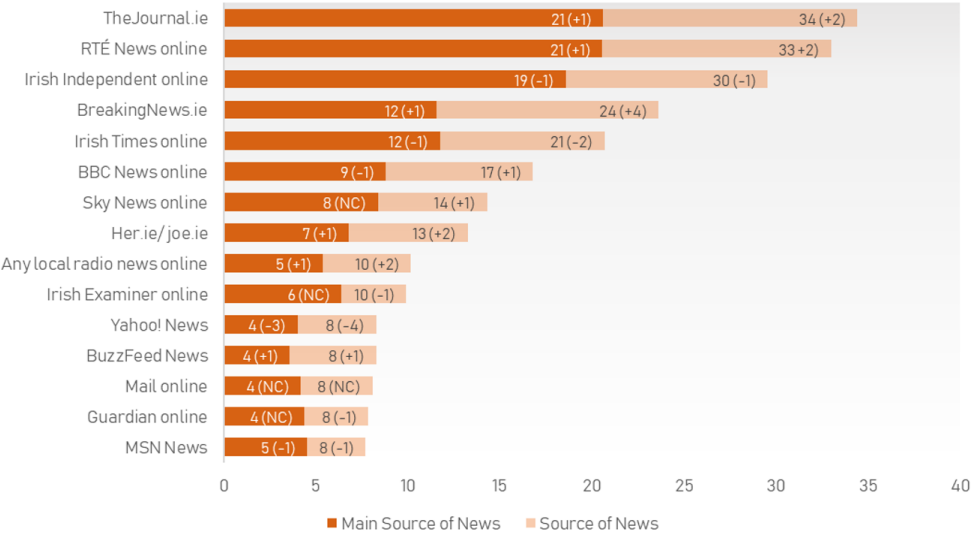


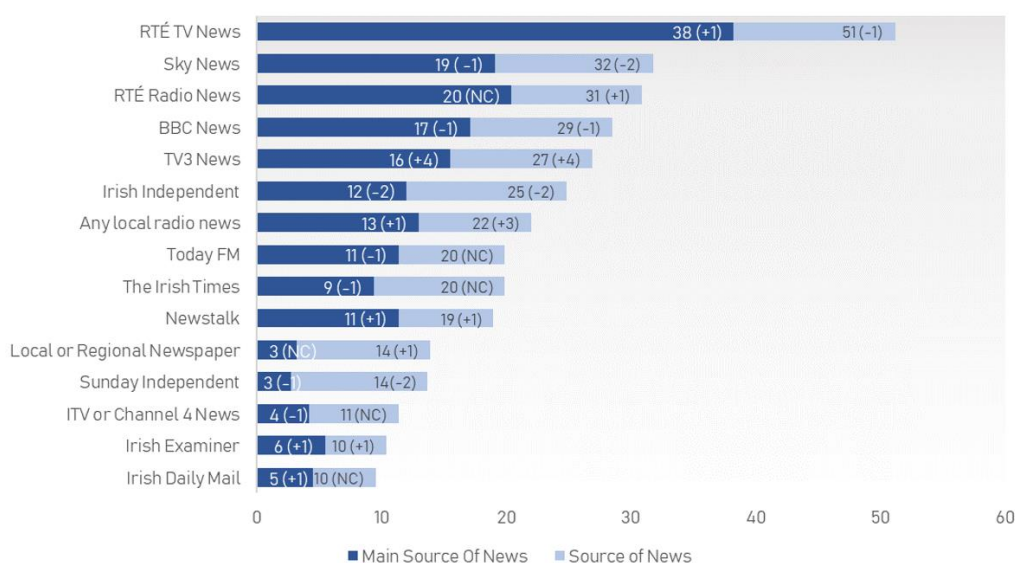
Fig 51. Digital sources of news by age and gender (%)

	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
TheJournal.ie	34	35	32	29	36	38	35
RTÉ News online	36	30	23	23	32	36	41
Irish Independent online	30	29	21	26	30	34	31
BreakingNews.ie	21	27	17	22	25	30	23
The Irish Times online	22	19	20	17	19	21	24
BBC News online	21	12	16	19	16	16	17
Skynews online	16	12	16	11	17	18	12
Her.ie/joe.ie	9	17	25	18	14	14	5

Traditional News Brands

The three main sources of traditional news in 2017 were all in TV or Radio: RTÉ at 51 percent, Sky News at 32 percent and BBC News at 29 percent and RTÉ Radio News at 31 percent. The top three newspapers were the Irish Independent at 25 percent, The Irish Times at 20 percent and the Sunday Independent at 14 percent. Changes from 2017 were, in general, minimal and typically ranged circa +/- one percentage point. In terms of those who are receiving news on TV, there are age differences with older people more likely to consume news on each channel with 8 percentage point differences for the top three brands RTÉ, Sky and BBC.

Fig 52. leading traditional sources of news (change since 2017 in brackets)



Breakdown by gender throws up fascinating findings. In TV, more men than women watch Sky News and BBC News. The same applies to RTÉ News and Newstalk in radio; and to the Irish Independent in print. Broadly, in TV, audience share increases with age. For example, the largest cohort of all, at 72 percent, watching RTÉ TV News, is also the oldest. Similarly, RTÉ Radio News captures the largest and oldest audience at 49 percent in the 55+ category. A similar pattern is seen at the Sunday Independent with its highest percentage readership level being in the 55+ category. A greying audience must be of some concern to media managements in each of these news organisations.

Fig 53. Television brands by age and gender (%)

	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
RTÉ TV News	52	50	35	31	40	58	72
Sky News	35	28	28	24	28	36	37
BBC News	32	25	19	18	24	28	41
TV3 News	24	30	17	15	25	32	35
ITV or Channel 4	12	11	10	7	9	13	15
TG4 Nuacht	4	3	4	5	3	4	3

Fig 54. Radio brand by age and gender (%)

	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
RTÉ Radio News	33	28	17	16	23	32	49
Local radio news	20	24	21	18	19	30	23
Today FM	20	20	25	20	25	24	12
Newstalk	23	15	11	12	19	19	25
Community radio news	6	6	8	6	3	9	5

Fig 55. Newspaper brand by age and gender (%)

	Male	Female	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+
Irish Independent	28	22	22	20	25	28	27
The Irish Times	21	19	26	18	18	16	22
Local or Regional	12	16	8	10	12	21	15
Sunday Independent	14	13	5	8	8	15	23
Irish Examiner	11	10	11	8	9	13	11
Irish Daily Mail	8	11	12	10	7	10	9

Gateways to Online News

Consumers were asked about seven access routes to news in 2018. Direct access via a news website or app was the most popular at 47 percent (up 2). Social media, at 35 percent, was unchanged on the 2017 and 2016 figures. The next most common routes to news were via search engine to a specific website [29 percent, up one] and via search engine to a specific news story [22 percent]. Then came mobile news alerts (17 percent, up four) and email alerts or newsletters at 12 percent. These patterns are broadly in line with international averages. However, there are distinct age differences. Young people are far more likely to get news on social (57 percent) than older groups (22 percent) and vice versa for going directly to a news website (27 percent for the youngest age groups and 53 percent for the oldest). There are also clear gender differences, with women more likely to find news on social (42 to 28 percent) while men go directly (51 to 44 percent).

Fig 56. Gateways to online news 2016-2018 (%)

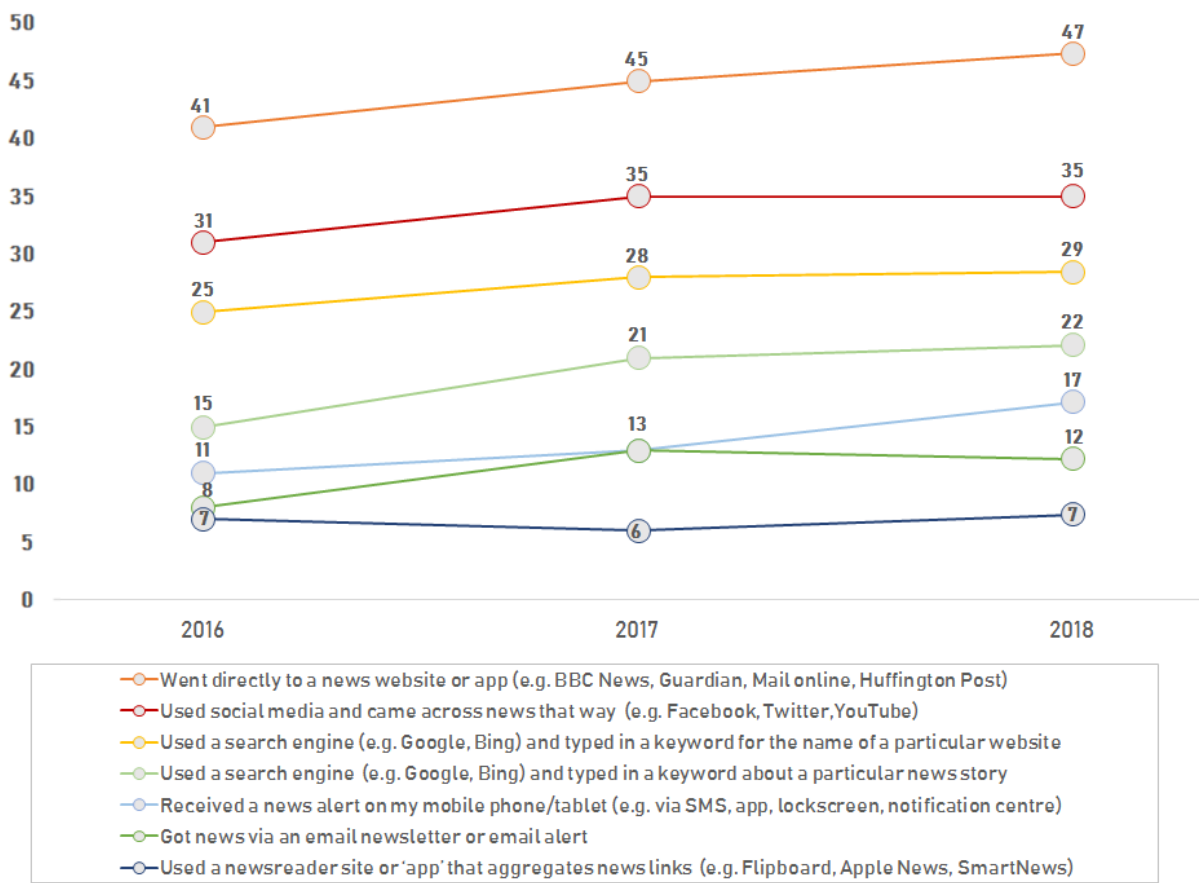


Fig 57. Gateways to online news – international (%)

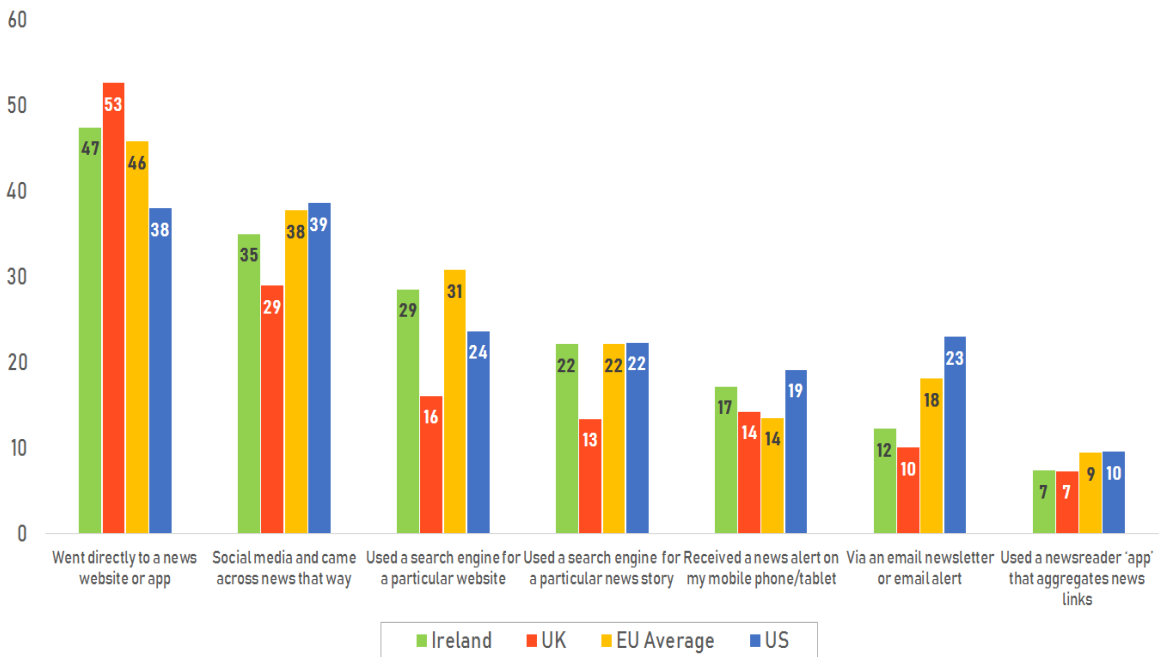


Fig 58. Gateways to online news by age (%)

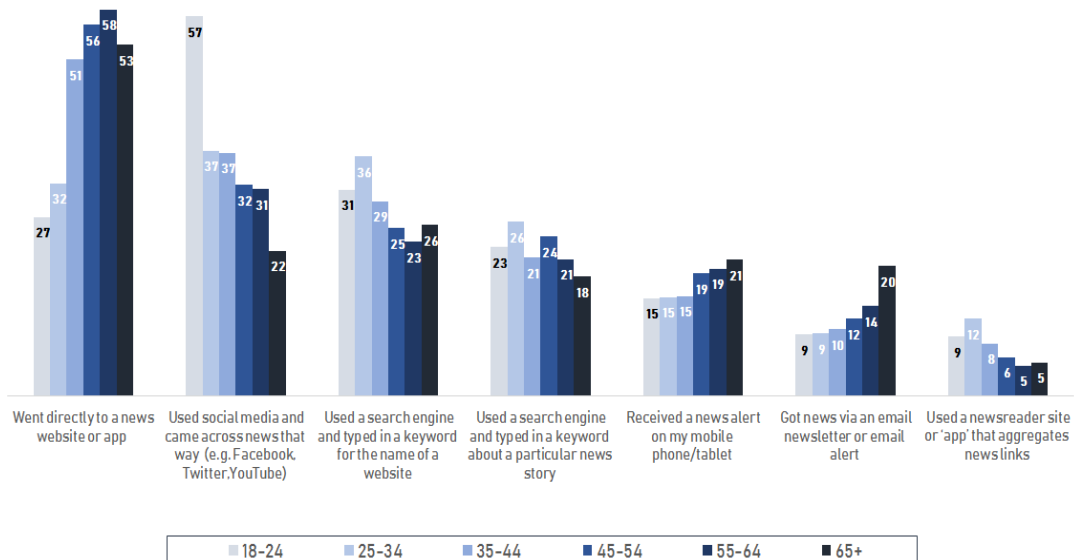
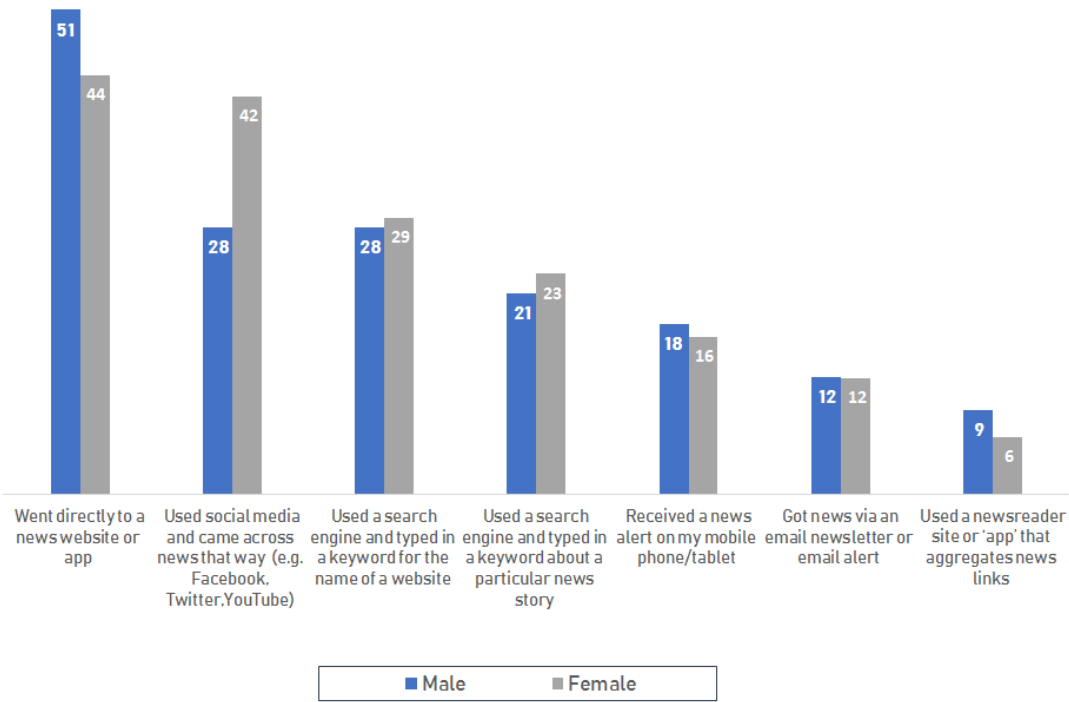


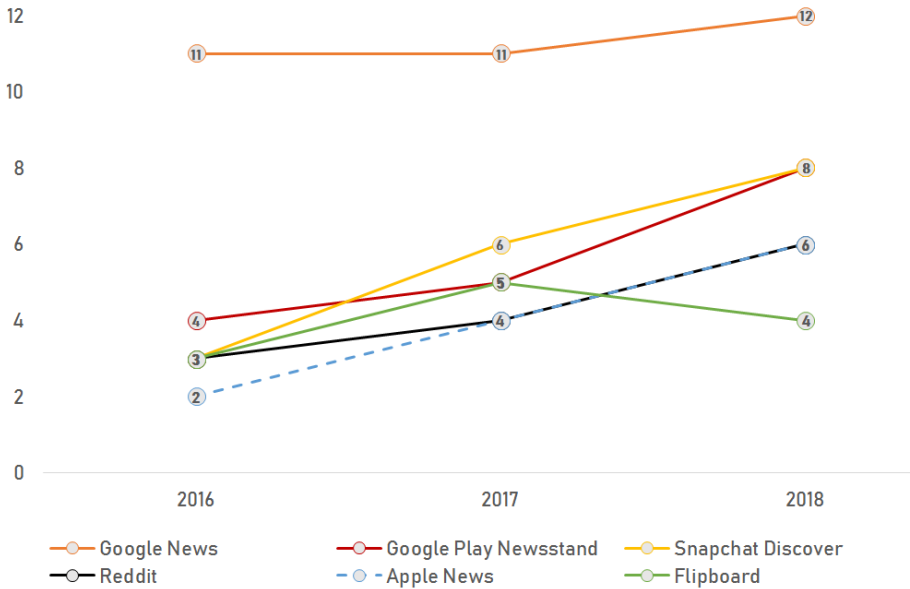
Fig 59. Gateways to online news by gender (%)



News Aggregators and Apps

Use of news apps and aggregators is increasing slightly each year. Google News remains ahead of its competitors as the leading news aggregator.

Fig 60. News aggregators and apps (%)



Online News Formats

Most Irish consumers prefer to read news in text form (40 percent). This is broadly in line with international norms but slightly above the EU average (38 percent). A further 33 percent mostly read news in text but sometimes watch enticing video. Between three and eight percent of news consumers watch video mostly.

Fig 61. Formats of online news consumption (%)

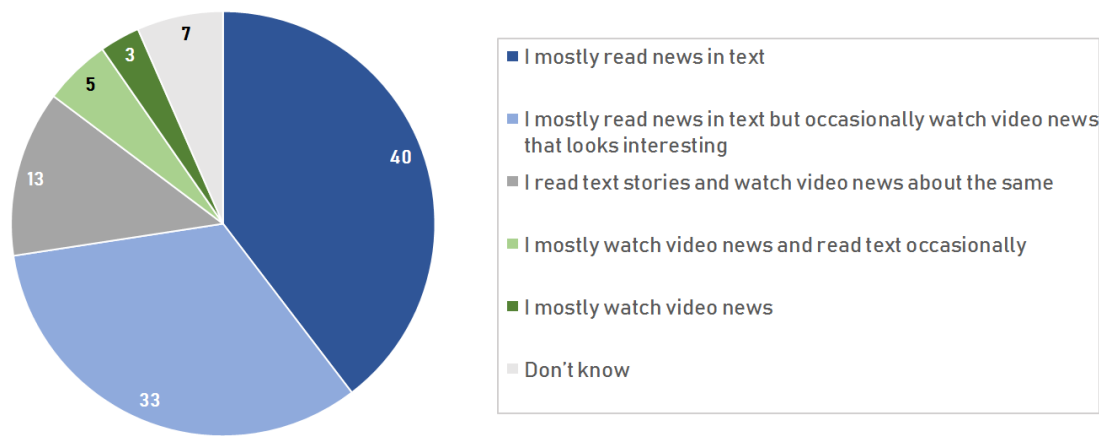
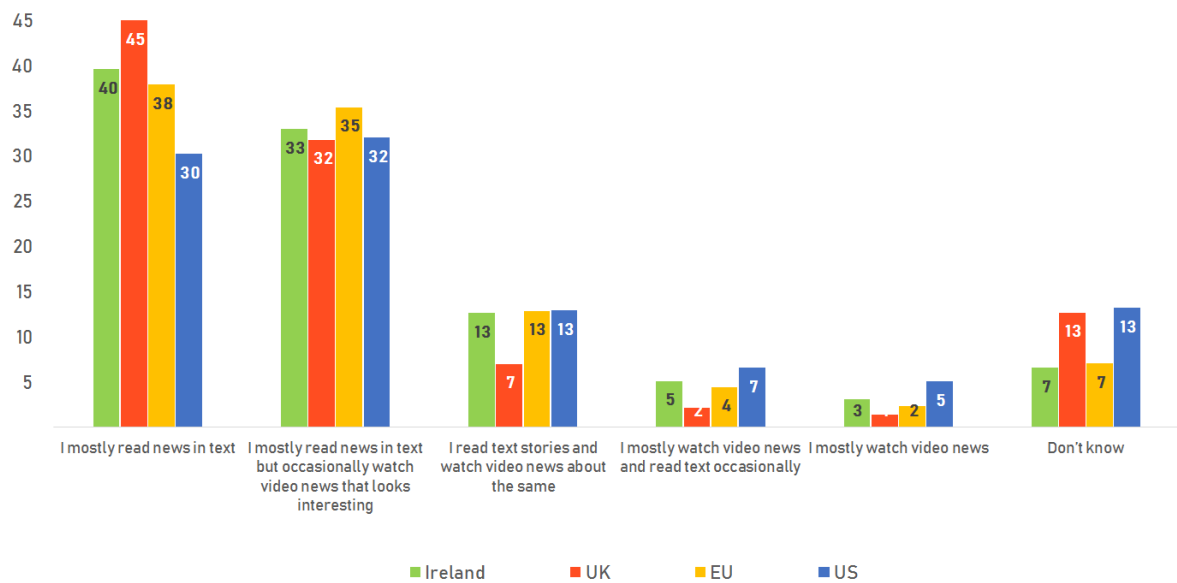


Fig 62. Formats of online news consumption- international (%)



Video News

Where video is consumed, most view a short clip on either a newssite or app or on Facebook (both 29 percent). More Irish news consumers would prefer to see fewer online news videos (24 percent) than to see more (17 percent), mirroring international patterns.

Fig 63. Video news consumption (%)

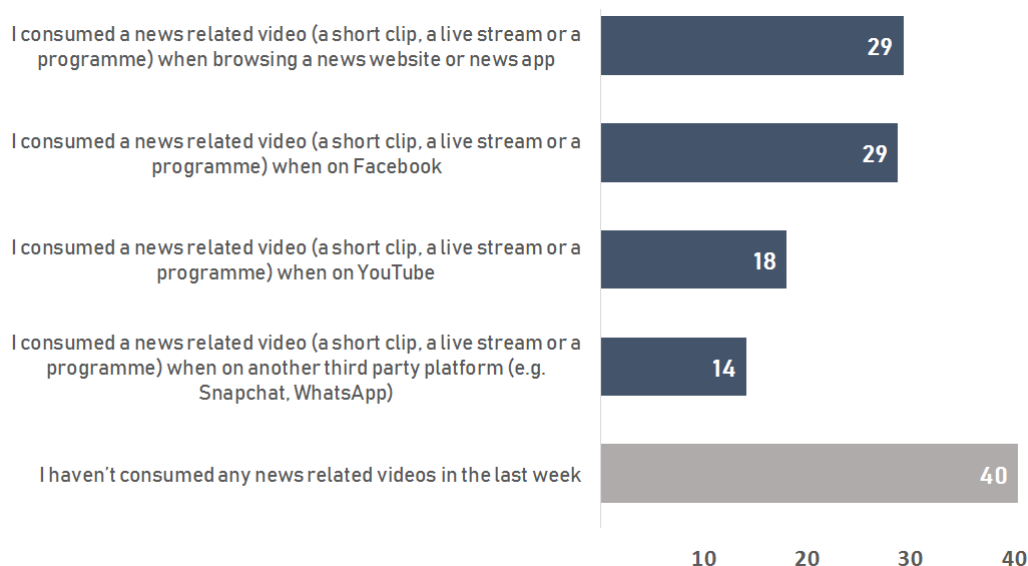
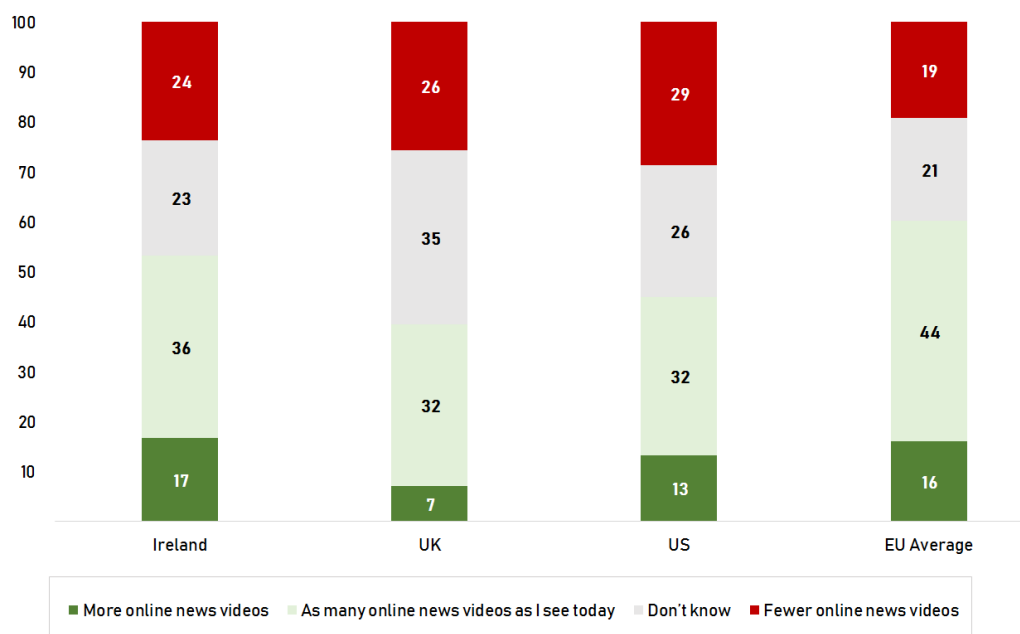


Fig 64. Preferences for video news (%)



Podcasts

As with radio, Irish news consumers listen to more podcasts (38 percent) than average in the EU (27 percent), the US (33 percent) and the UK (18 percent). Sports podcasts (11 percent) are particularly popular compared to an EU average of just six percent. The most popular podcasts, however, focus on technology, science and health (14 percent), the same level as in the US but higher than the EU average (11 percent). Podcasts on news and international events (12 percent) are also more popular than in the UK or EU but behind the US (15 percent).

Fig 65. Podcast consumption – international (%)

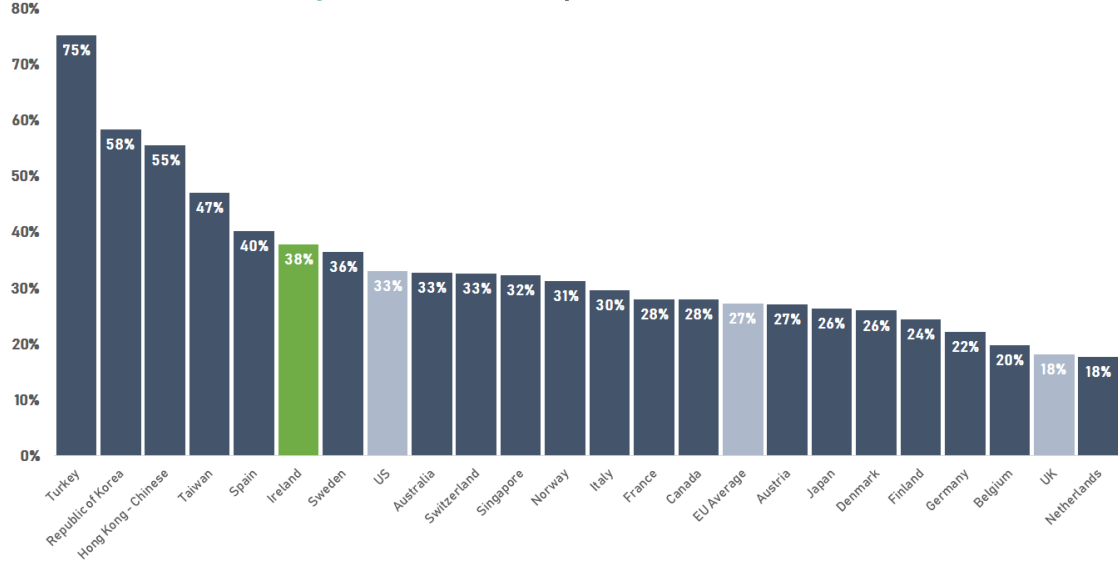
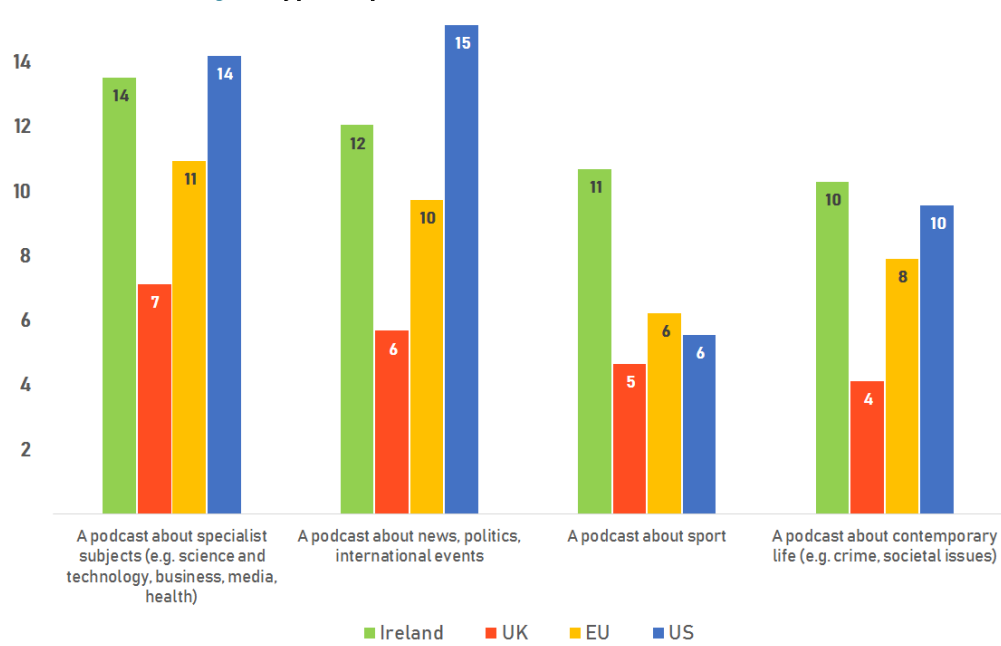


Fig 66. Types of podcast consumed – international (%)



Radio podcasts (44 percent) are almost as popular as radio news (46 percent) among men, but far less so among women at 31 percent compared to 43 percent. The differences are more marked among younger groups with 59 percent listening to podcasts for news in the past month compared with 27 percent listening on radio. Among the over 55s, only 21 percent listened to podcasts and 59 percent to radio, making clear the demographic challenge which lies ahead for Irish radio stations.

Fig 67. Podcasts (last month) and radio consumption by gender (%)

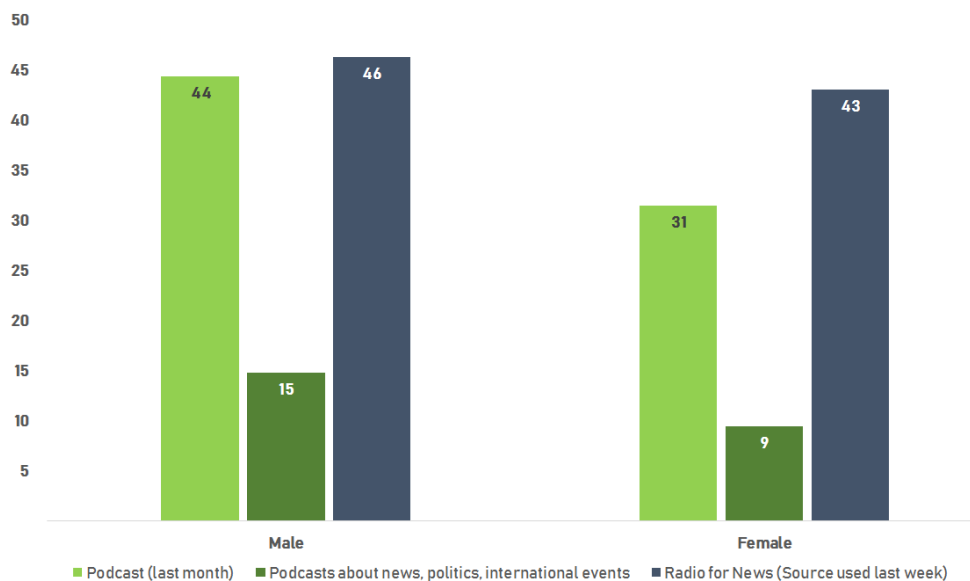
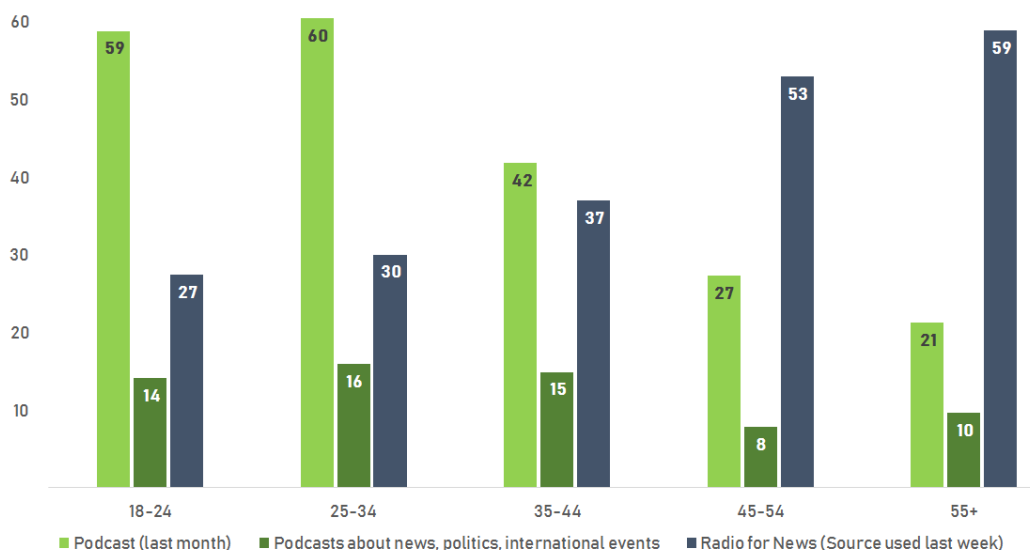
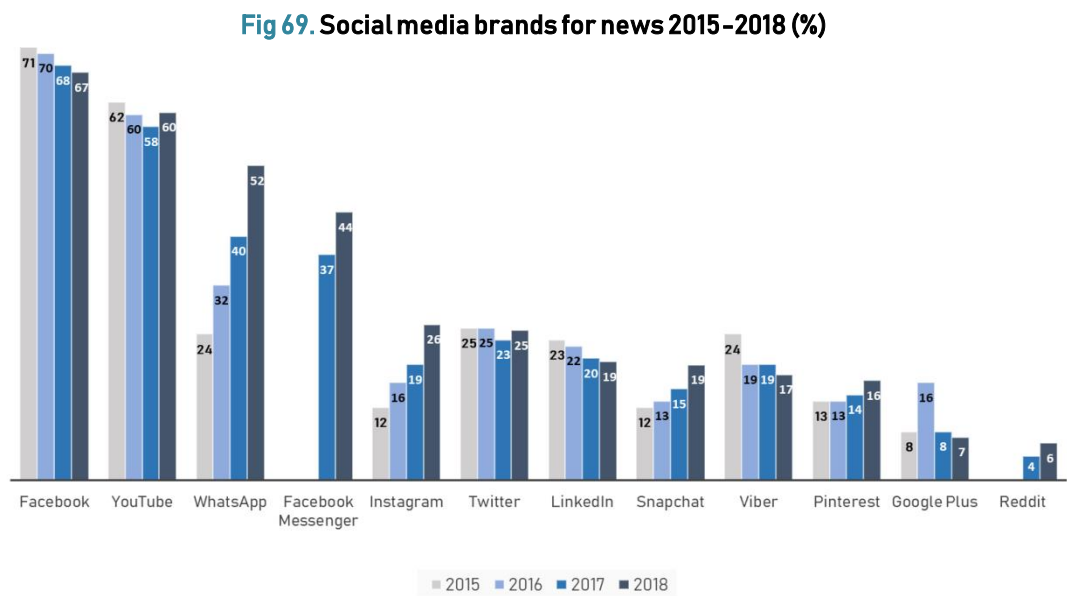


Fig 68. Podcasts (last month) and radio consumption by age (%)



Social Media Brands

Facebook use for news is in steady but very slow decline to 67 percent, while its daughter company, WhatsApp, is increasing its penetration at a rapid pace to 52 percent from just 24 percent in 2015. This is concerning for news producers, transparency campaigners and others as it's completely opaque as to what is being shared on its closed app. Facebook's other offerings such as Facebook Messenger is also increasing its penetration for sharing news stories (44 percent) as is its image sharing site Instagram (26 percent). All other social platforms



Participation in News

The Irish are still most likely to talk with friends and family (41 percent) when sharing news and then to share a story on social media (20 percent). In the past year, the former is up two percentage points while the latter is down two. Following that come online polls and comments and talking online with friends and family (14 percent). Most patterns are broadly the same as last year. Individual behaviour on Facebook and WhatsApp is of note. Just 19 percent of Facebook users clicked into a story compared with 15 percent who just read the headline. A similar consumption pattern occurred on WhatsApp.

Fig 70. Participation in news 2017-2018 (%)

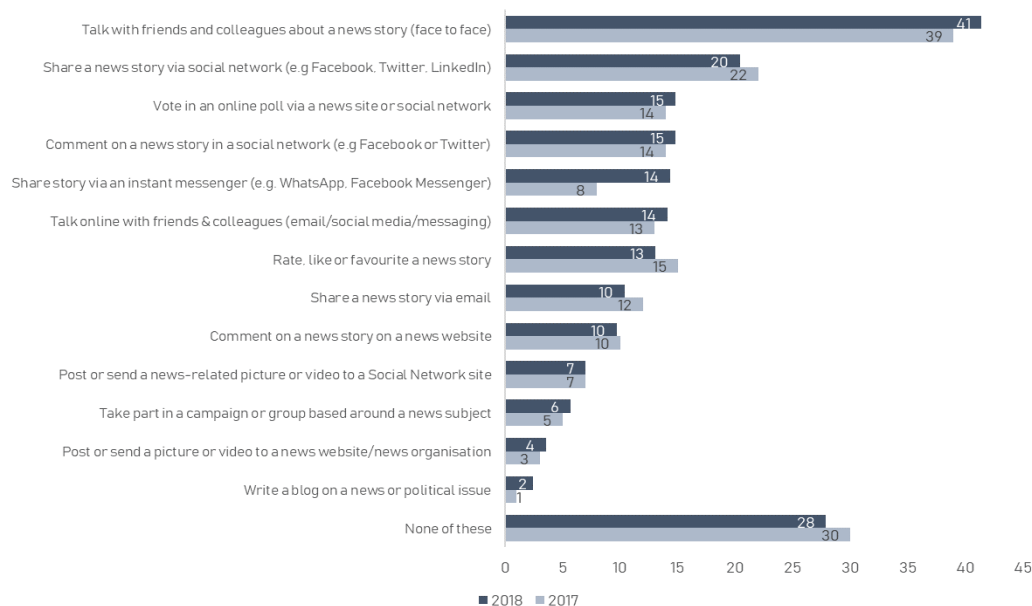
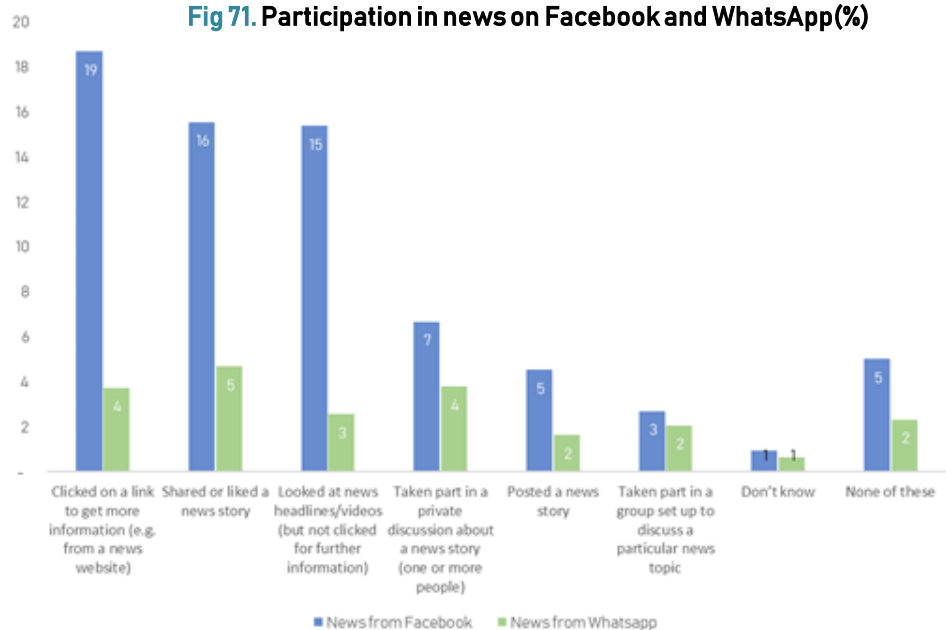


Fig 71. Participation in news on Facebook and WhatsApp (%)



Comment:

“Fake News” and Digital Literacy

Dr Eileen Culloty, Dublin City University

The phrases “post-truth” and “fake news” are the lexical legacy of the 2016 Brexit referendum and US Presidential Election. Since then, journalists have exposed the operation of Russian bots on Twitter and the misuse of Facebook data for pseudo-psychological claims about “micro-targeted” advertising. More recently in Ireland, Facebook and Google suspended foreign advertising amid concerns that outside actors would take advantage of our unregulated online campaigning arena.

Amid this ongoing news story about online manipulation, it is not surprising that Irish news consumers are concerned. Some 57 percent of are concerned about “fake news on the internet” and 61 percent are very or extremely concerned about “stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons”. However, when asked about their exposure to disinformation, only 17 percent had encountered stories that were “completely made up”. This suggests that concern is primarily driven by news about “fake news”. Indeed, Irish consumers report that most of the fake news they have been exposed to is use of the term “fake news” by politicians, presumably referring to media coverage of Donald Trump.

The survey highlights some of the confusion that stems from ill-defined terms such as “fake news”. To overcome this confusion, a report by First Draft introduced a new definitional framework for thinking about “information disorder” (Wardle & Derakhshan 2017). It distinguishes three kinds of disordered information: mis-information is the sharing of false information without harmful intent; dis-information is the deliberate sharing of false information to cause harm; and mal-information is moving private information into the public sphere to cause harm. This framework is useful because it allows us to distinguish between unintentional mis-information such as poor journalism (a concern for 56 percent of consumers) and the deliberate manipulation of content through fabricated stories (a concern for 61 percent), distorted facts (a concern for 59 percent), and advertorials (a concern for 46 percent).

When considering public attitudes towards addressing “fake news”, it is worth remembering the lack of conceptual clarity around the definition of the term. For example, 76 percent believe journalists and media companies should do more to address the problem. This makes sense if poor journalism and biased journalism are included in the definition of “fake news”. However, it’s not clear what journalists are supposed to do about the propagandistic use of the term “fake news” by politicians or the complete fabrication of stories that are created for sharing in social networks. “Fake news” means different things to different people and so the public perception of the problem is amorphous.

Since 2016, there has been a renewed interest in digital literacy (as well as media literacy and information literacy) as a potential corrective to “fake news”. It is hoped that digital literacy will equip media consumers with the necessary skills to negotiate the online environment; increased support for digital literacy initiatives across Europe was a key recommendation of the European Commission’s “high-level expert group on fake news” (European Union 2018).

The findings of the survey certainly support the need for greater attention to digital literacy. Only 27 percent of Irish consumers are aware that the news in their Facebook feeds is determined by algorithms. The majority (73 percent) either didn’t know or assumed journalists were employed in the process. Moreover, 33 percent think journalists and news outlets write press-releases for organisations; only 36 percent correctly identified the role of a PR spokesperson.

This basic lack of understanding is worrying for the news media because it suggests that the public are largely removed from the important conversations that developed over the last few years about the sustainability of news media, the power of online conglomerates, and the implications for democratic societies. In this scenario, we all have something to be very concerned about.

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Comment: Trust in News

Dr Jane Suiter, Dublin City University

Declining trust in press and journalism has been a global phenomenon in recent years with a myriad of potential causal factors being cited. Recent studies have found that those who are older, centrist and tend towards the consumption of traditional media tend to trust both their own media and media in general more than others. Indeed, Irish news consumers who are relatively centrist are more trusting of news than the EU average at 71 percent. This is ahead of the UK and indeed the EU average at 62 per cent and broadly in line with countries such as Germany and Belgium.

But other factors also matter; in particular concerns about disinformation, perhaps particularly in referendum and election campaigns where perceived political bias is a concern.

If we also look at the recent Abortion Referendum exit poll data, conducted by Behaviour & Attitudes for RTÉ in conjunction with DCU and others, some interesting patterns emerge. In particular, those who rarely or never watched TV news voted 79 percent YES and 21 percent No compared with those who watched TV news 7 days who voted 64 percent Yes. In terms of newspaper readership, there is a similar pattern: those who rarely or never read newspaper voted 75 per cent Yes while those who read a newspaper 6 or 7 days a week voted 66 per cent Yes. Thus, those that regularly consume traditional media are representative of the rest of the country, those who tend to consume news online or on social media are even more liberal than the rest of the country, at least on this issue. There are also differences in levels of trust; those who are more trusting of media were more likely to vote Yes. However, almost all of these differences across platforms are accounted for by age.

In terms of worries, Irish news consumers are most concerned about stories that are made up for political or commercial reasons with 61 percent very or extremely concerned. There is particular evidence of scepticism about obtaining news online; only 19 percent felt they could trust news on social media and 33 percent on online search. In terms of “fake news” or disinformation, some 57 percent of Irish news consumers are concerned about disinformation, which is broadly similar to the UK. And most believe that both the government and the media itself should do more to address the issue. Some 63 percent believe the government should do more while 76 percent believe journalists and media companies should do more.

This perhaps reflects the publicity around Cambridge Analytica in the Brexit referendum as well as concerns around the US Presidential election. Some of these players were also involved in the Irish abortion referendum and indeed trust in social media appears to have fallen further in the months in the lead in to the recent Abortion Referendum amid further publicity regarding advertising and micro targeting of

potential voters on social media. Efforts such as the Transparent Referendum Initiative (TRI), which gathered all Facebook related abortion advertising into an open source database and tracked its origins, may have had an impact here.

Thus, while exit polls found that large numbers of people visited sites such as Facebook and Twitter daily (49 per cent), trust differed widely. In the exit poll, 19 per cent reported the highest levels of trust in TV news, 10 per cent in newspapers and 18 per cent in radio news. Overall, all were trusted far more than they were distrusted in line with findings from the Digital News Report. In contrast, just 2 percent reported the highest levels of trust in social media and 5 per cent on news websites and apps. These numbers were fairly consistent across all age groups and regions.

Of course, we still find that people are, in general, more trusting of news they personally consume. At 78 percent, this is high even if well below the Nordics. But it is here that the news brands have the potential to differentiate themselves. The most trusted brands were the public sector broadcasters RTÉ News and BBC News both on an average score of 7.39 , very closely followed by the Irish Times at 7.35. Other brands such as the Irish Independent, TV3 News, Irish Examiner, Today FM and Newstalk all come in between 6.84 and 7.03. Online brands such as Her.ie/Joe..ie and the Irish Daily Mail are the least trusted at between 5.47 and 5.58.

The report also highlights the difference between those who identify as centre left versus centre right with the former having lower levels of trust. Thus, the clear message from these data would seem to be that to build trust among younger cohorts a first step may be for traditional media to represent more liberal views more often.

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<http://banda.ie/wp-content/uploads/RTE-Exit-Poll-25th-May-2018.pdf>

Comment:

The Popularity of Podcasts

Dr David Robbins, Dublin City University

Podcasting is a young medium; it began in 2000 when a new version of Rich Site Summary (RSS) feed technology allowed for the dissemination of audio files. However, it did not become widely popular until 2010–2011. In the US, podcasts account for 2 percent of the total “share of ear” of all audio media sources (Webster 2015). In terms of the overall consumption trends tracked by the Digital News Report, Irish podcast consumption (38%) is higher than the US (33%) and the UK (18%). In part, the popularity of podcasts among Irish consumers seems a natural outgrowth of the Irish love of radio.

Some of the success of podcasting relies on the fact that it is “asynchronous” (podcasts can be accessed at any time), “interactive” (users must download and play an episode, and can decide “what, when and how” in relation to what podcast they will listen to), and “demassified” (the user decides what portion of the podcast to listen to). In many ways, the study of podcasts as a medium lends itself to the “uses and gratifications” approach, which seeks to answer the question “what do people do with the media?” rather than the more usual “what do the media do to people?” focus of much communications research.

The relative popularity of podcasting in Ireland is also related to the fact that podcasting facilitates the dissemination of niche and specialist content (especially sports, crime and business). Moreover, consumers can “binge-listen” to multiple episodes in the same way that consumers of video streaming services can “binge-watch” box-sets.

As a growing market, the range of Irish-focused podcasts is extensive. The Irish podcast sector has three main components: podcasts offered by independent media companies (such as The Blindboy Podcast produced by Blindboy of the Rubberbandits, The Second Captains Podcast produced by Second Captains media company, and the Irish History Podcast produced by Fin Dwyer); legacy media organisations providing podcasts featuring in-house expertise from their correspondents (Inside Politics from The Irish Times is an example), and radio stations repurposing radio content as podcasts. For example, The Irish Times offer 14 podcasts, and the Irish Independent offer 10 from their respective platforms. Radio stations such as RTÉ Radio, Newstalk and Today FM podcast sections of popular shows, or offer entire programmes as podcasts.

It is difficult to obtain data on the most popular podcasts among Irish listeners. Apple offers an RSS feed from iTunes, and a search API to developers. Accessing these tools, it is evident that US and UK podcasts are popular among Irish listeners (for example, Dan Snow’s History Hit, Desert Island Discs, Serial and The Doorstep Murder are among the most downloaded podcasts from iTunes in Ireland).

Irish-produced content is also popular, with The Blindboy Podcast (Blindboyboatclub), GAA on Off The Ball, Rugby on Off The Ball (both Newstalk), The Left Wing from INM, The Architects of Business (Joe.ie), The Women's Podcast (Irish Times), the Irish History Podcast and The Second Captains Podcast (both independent) all in the top 20*.

Podcasting is a growing medium and is particularly popular in Ireland, where there is a strong existing tradition of radio listenership. The social element of podcasts, whereby users can interact and connect around them, discuss them on social media and share recommendations on iTunes and on podcasting apps all "harken back to golden-age images of radio as a shared activity" (Markman 2015: 241). Podcasts use the established audio conventions of radio drama, radio documentary and audio books. In addition to creating a vibrant new medium of its own, podcasts may help to revive linear radio too.

*Podcasts charts available at <https://podcast.okihika.com/IE/0>.

References

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