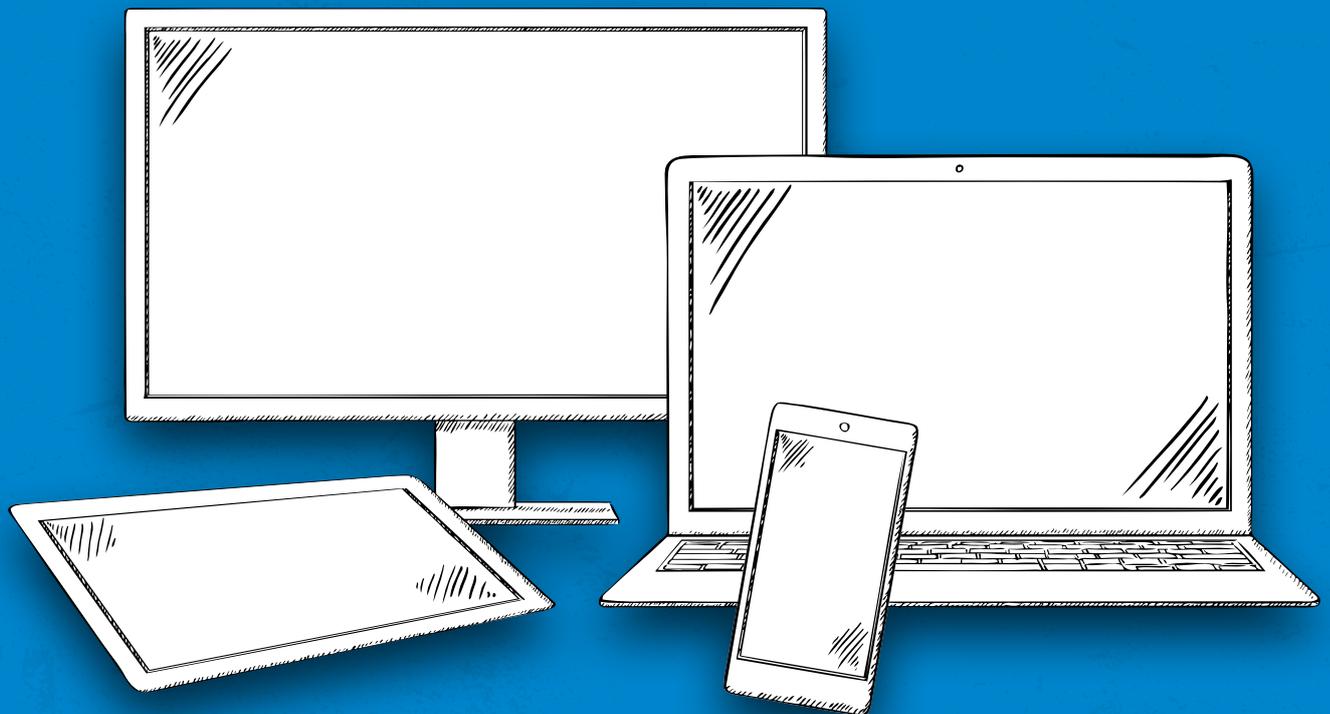


# The Changing Habits And Attitudes Of News Consumption Of UK Adults

A Whitepaper by Tickaroo





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# Executive Summary

Last year we commissioned the strategic insight agency Opinium to survey 2,000 UK adults to better understand their media consumption habits and attitudes. Once again, we worked with Opinium to survey a further 2,000 UK adults in 2023 to see how their news consumption habits might have changed in the past 12 months.

A lot can happen in a year. With the rapid technological progress and popularity of social platforms like Twitter and TikTok, news consumption habits have changed dramatically, forcing media outlets to discover innovative methods to keep consumers engaged in this digital era.

With the UK population becoming increasingly adept with technology and the recent rise in AI-based tech like ChatGPT, traditional media outlets are constantly playing catch up and looking for new ways to digitise and evolve news delivery in the new digital world. Challenged with falling attention spans and the rise of fake news is no easy feat, so this report aims to give insights into Brits' current news consumption habits in the UK.

It revealed an increase in news being consumed on mobile, a reduction in attention spans (with shorter-form content preferred) and a decrease in political news consumption. But perhaps surprisingly, it showed that younger populations tend to feel more positive when reading the news – an exciting proof point suggesting that publications are on the right path to connecting with tech-savvy and sceptical readers like Gen Zers and finding ways to verify facts from fiction in an ever-crowded web sphere.

Let's dive deeper into the data and see how it compares to our 2022 survey results.

Chapter 1:

## Frequency Key Findings

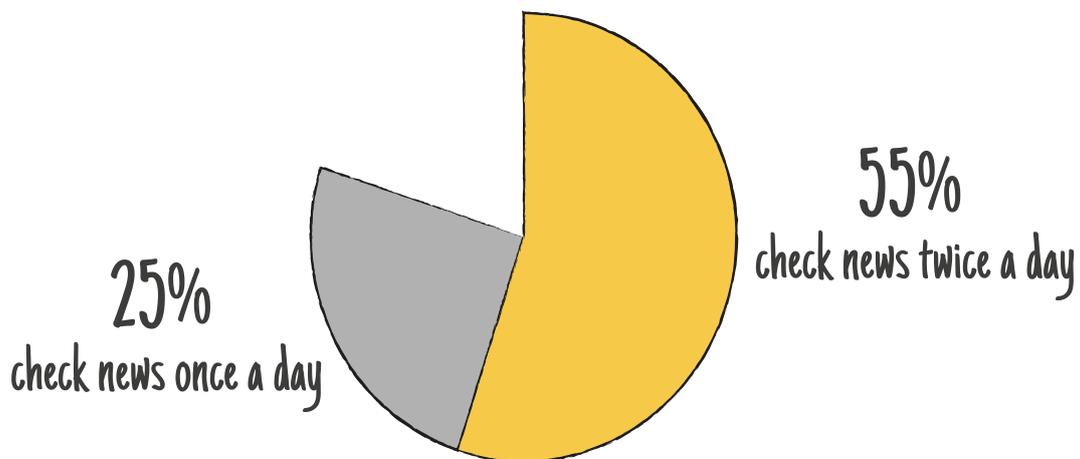
How often do UK audiences check the news? In our study, we asked numerous questions regarding the frequency of news consumption amongst our participants. Here are some of our key findings.



## News Consumption Remains High...

With a plethora of breaking news stories around us - from groundbreaking elections to devastating earthquakes to economic turbulence - staying in the know is imperative.

The majority of adults in the UK (55%) check the news at least twice a day, and a further quarter (25%) check the news at least once a day.

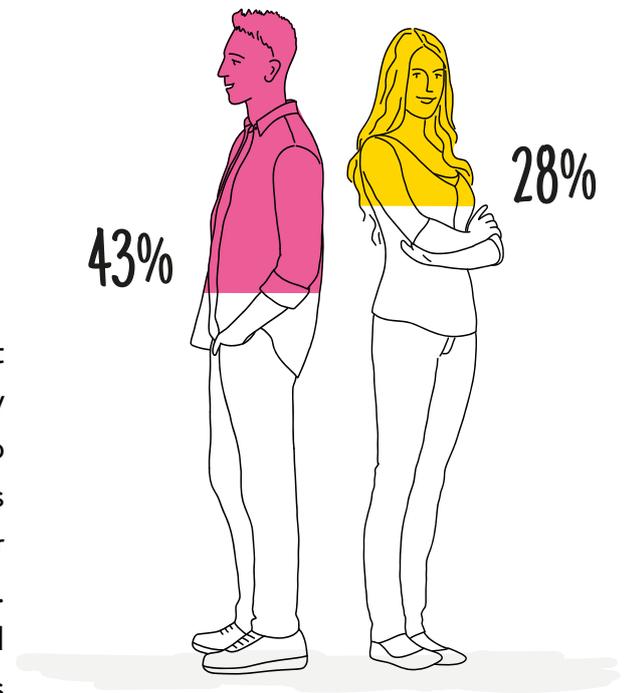


The latter numbers highlight a 2% increase compared to 2022 results, showing that today's news continues to be an essential aspect of everyone's lives despite research showing a growing trend of news avoidance - due in part to negativity biases, a never-ending news cycle, poor website functionality, aggressive news commentators, audiences news literacy, and news relevancy.

### ...However, Preferences Differ Based on Age and Gender

Digging deeper, 61% of men check the news at least twice daily, whilst less than half of women check the news twice (49%). However, these numbers differ if people check for live news updates as opposed to online news, with only a third (35%) of respondents checking for live news updates once a day, with men doing so more than women (43% vs 28%).

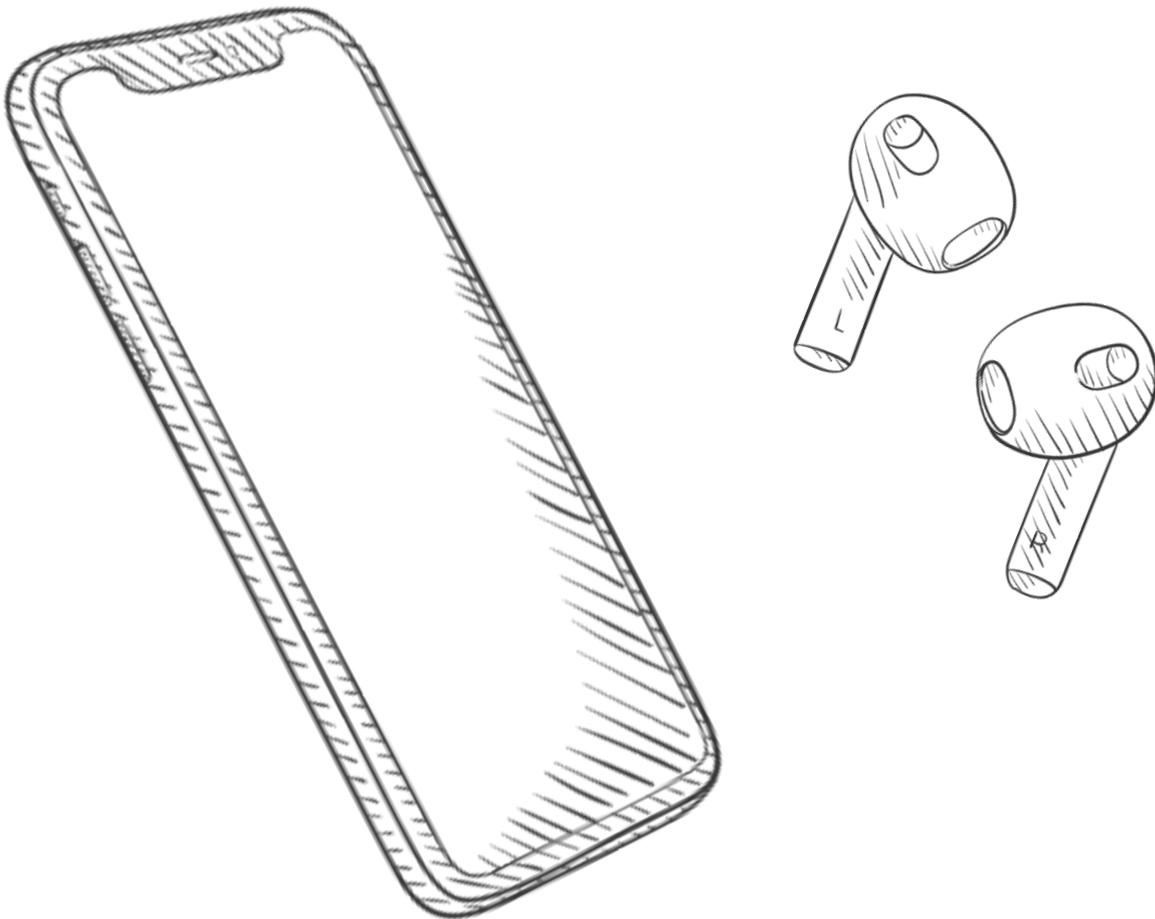
Subscriptions continue to be one of the most important revenue channels for publications; nearly half (45%) of 18-34-year-olds pay for a subscription to a news outlet. It promises to see that most subscribers to news outlets are aged 18-34, with the most popular publication in this group being The Daily Mail at 17%. In comparison, The Guardian only stands at 8% of total subscribers - a not to differing reporting styles resonating with a mix of audiences.



Percentage of men and women checking live news updates twice a day

## Chapter 2: **Source Key Findings**

Where do UK audiences consume news? In our study, we asked a variety of questions regarding the channels and devices which news consumers are using to catch up on the news. Here's what we found.

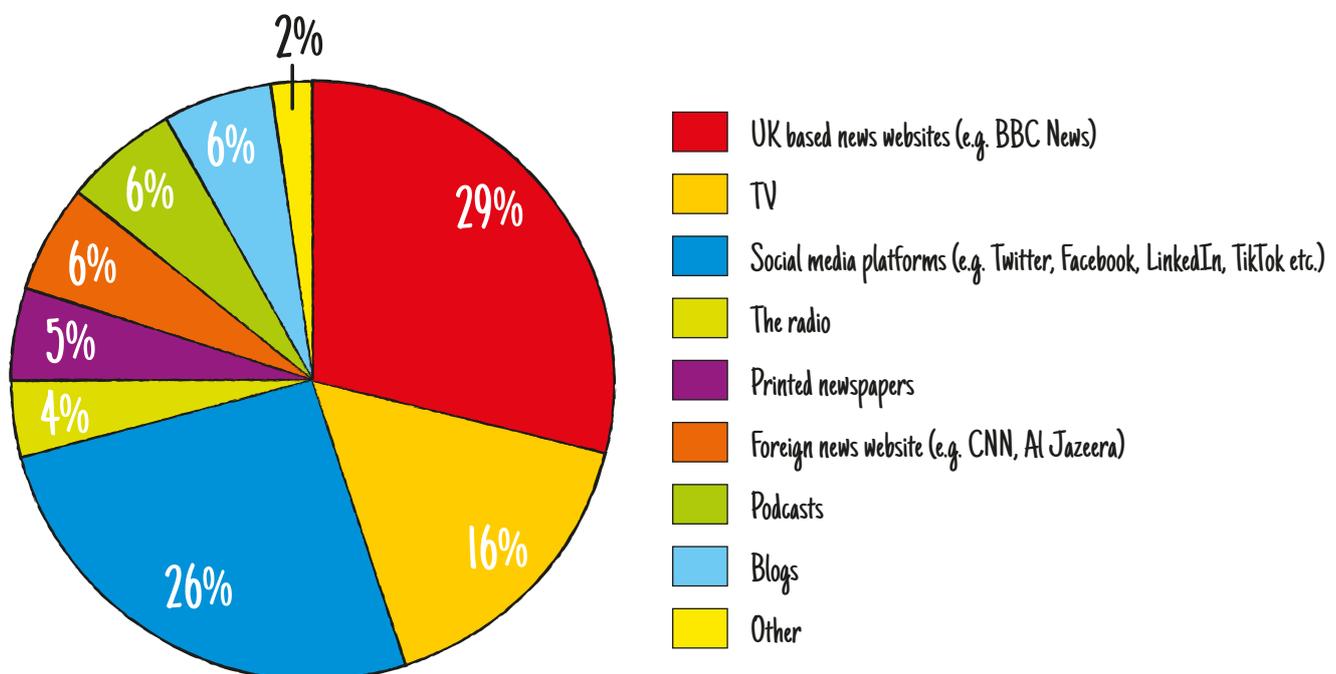


## Increased Dependence on Mobile Is Visible in News Habits

With mobile phones dominating every aspect of our lives, it is no surprise that two-fifths of UK adults (39%) consume news primarily on their phones – a slow but steady rise by 1% compared to 2022 (38%). Moreover, the habits of aimless scrolling and shorter attention span are more vivid this year, as 41% of UK adults that check the news are most likely to do so while watching TV – a rise of 5% compared to last year. The second most likely place is while at their desks, with 15% of UK adults doing so – an interesting trend affecting everyone, whether working remotely or in the office.

## Social Media Continues to be Primary News Source

As always, social media use is rising, with players like Mastodon - an open-source software for self-hosted social networking services - entering the social arena. This type of consumption nearly doubles for younger age groups, with a quarter of those aged 18-34 (24%) saying social media is their primary source. Generally, one in five (21%) of UK adults head to social media.



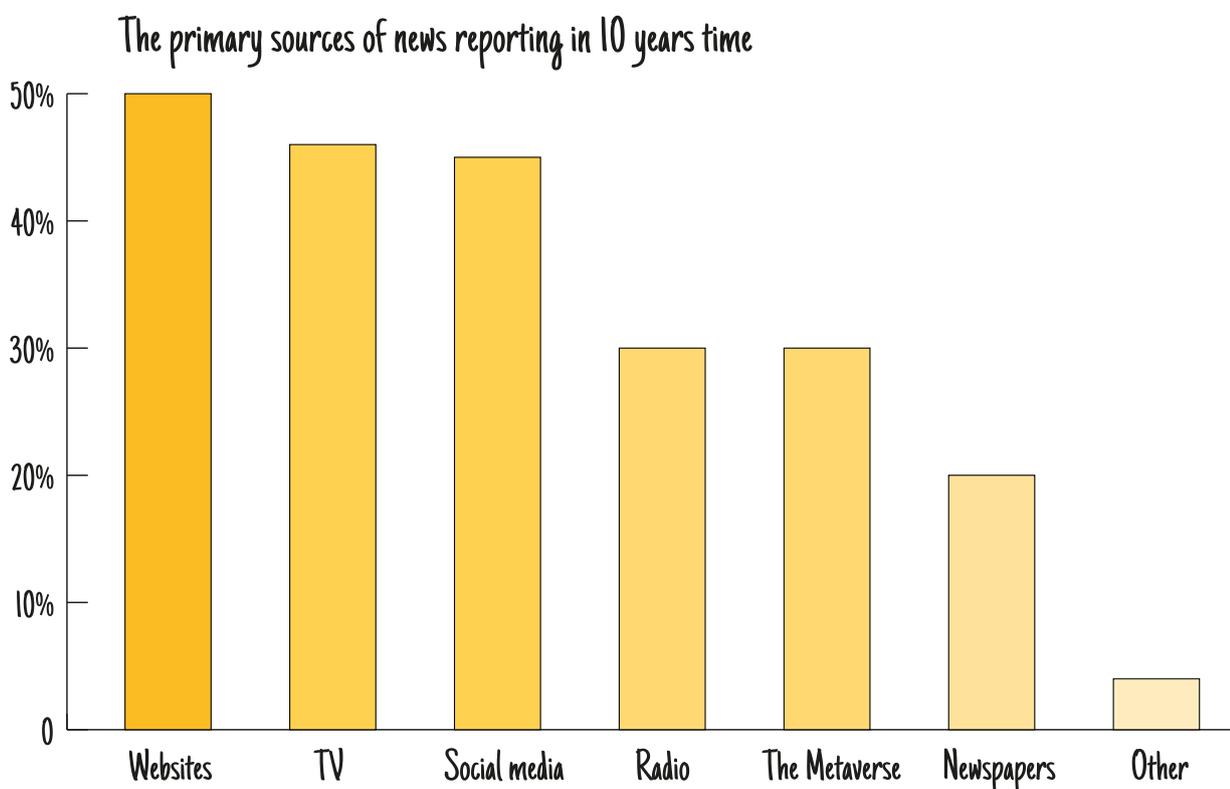
Primary sources of news consumption for Gen Z

## “Older” Mediums Not Yet Irrelevant...

Interestingly, newspapers, TV, and radio also play a significant part in people's lives – a quarter of UK adults (24%) said TV was their primary source of news. However, these numbers dropped for 18-34-year-olds (16%). In addition, only 5% of UK adults still use the radio as their primary news source – perhaps due to the growing popularity of podcasts and music streaming.

## ...But Many Believe It's Only a Matter of Time

Gazing into the crystal ball, UK adults predict that in 10 years, the primary sources of news reporting will be: websites (50%), TV (46%), and social media (45%). Only three in ten think the news will still be reported via radio (30%). Interestingly, the number of people giving significance to VR news reporting has risen by 3% compared to 2022 (30% vs 27%). Even fewer people (20% vs 25% in 2022) believe that newspapers will be relevant in 10 years. This further proves that ever-changing channels of news consumption depend on technology advancements – as people get more comfortable with VR and AI, the ways they consume news would likely be influenced too.



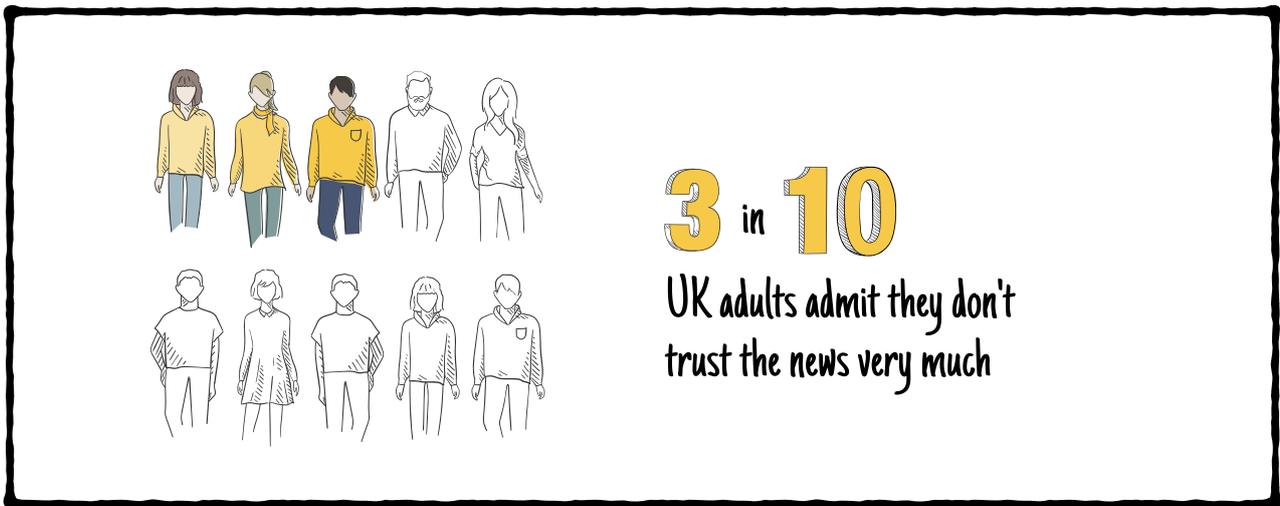
## Chapter 3: **Trust Key Findings**

Do UK audiences trust the news providers they are consuming? Or are they looking to other sources? In our study we asked audiences how they perceive the trustworthiness of the news they are consuming. Let's dive in.

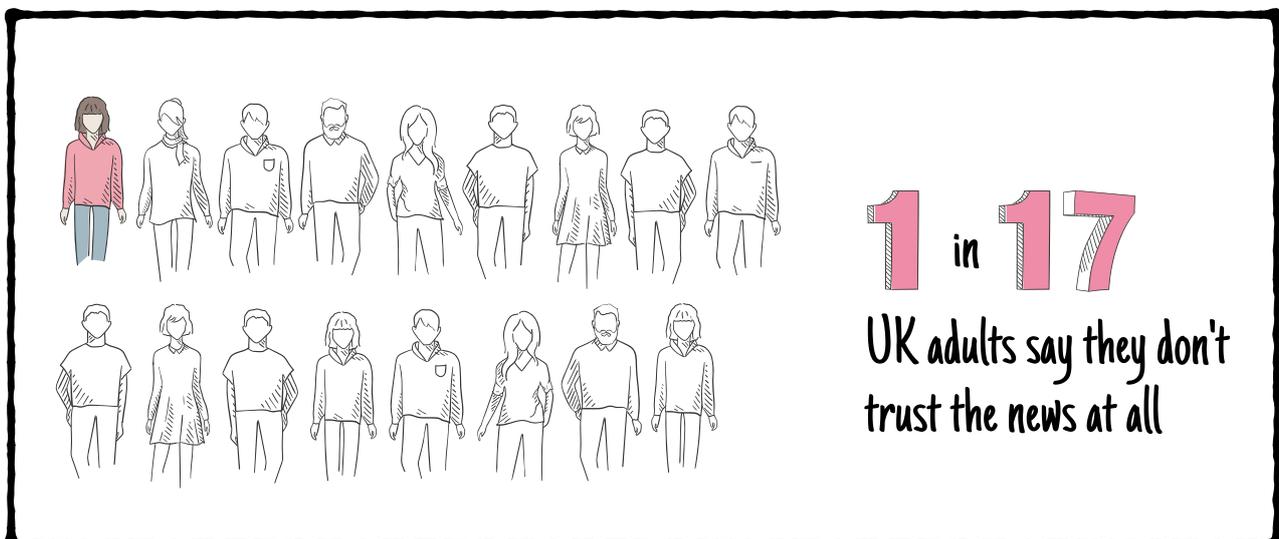


## The Media Must Still Work to Regain Trust

Fake news has dominated media titles and shaped history since Octavian waged a smear campaign against Antony to become the first Roman Emperor. Whilst most people remain concerned about fake news, attitudes are still staggered, with three in ten UK adults (31%) admitting they don't trust the news very much, most trusting it a fair amount (perhaps retaining some scepticism) (55%), while one in seventeen don't trust the news at all (6%).



More work needs to be done by the publications, especially when targeting Gen Zs, as both trust and doubt are higher amongst those aged 18-34 compared to those aged 55+. Only 14% of Gen Zs trust media a great deal compared to 5% of Boomers, whilst 35% of Gen Zs don't trust media very much compared to 29% of Boomers. The reasons for not trusting the news are varied, with the most common reason being the perception that journalists create spin (43%), followed shortly by misreporting (42%) and fake news (34%).



## People Prefer UK-based News Outlets

Interestingly, UK-based news websites such as BBC News are the primary source of the UK's news (37%), followed by TV (27%) and social media (14%). More than two in five adults (45%) would first turn to a UK-based news website to learn more about a big breaking story, with a quarter (24%) turning to TV. However, these numbers shift by generation, with 45% of people aged 18-34 turning to social media first and only a third (32%) heading to news websites. This shows an interesting trend change compared to 2022, as more people are checking websites (an increase of 5%) and fewer people are watching the news on TV (a decrease of 9%).

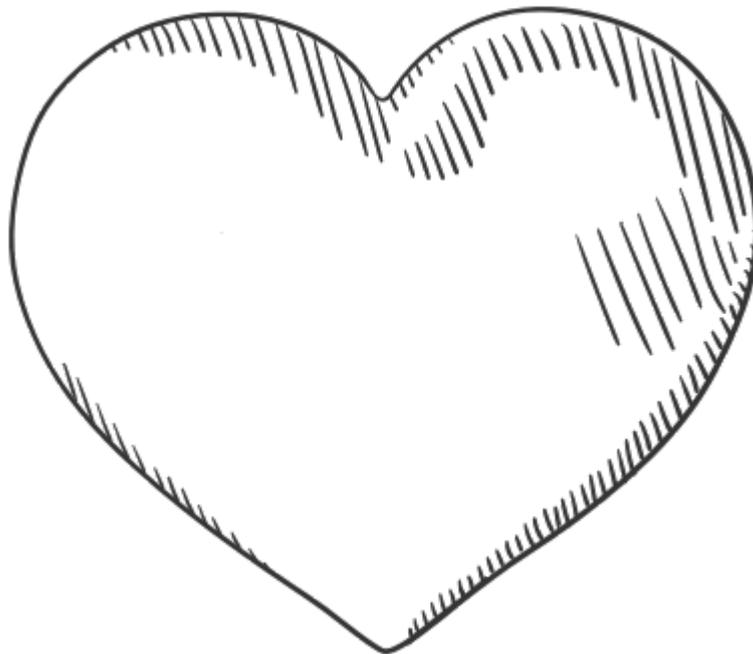


Find out how publishers can leverage the increase in audiences coming to their websites for news updates [here](#).

Chapter 4:

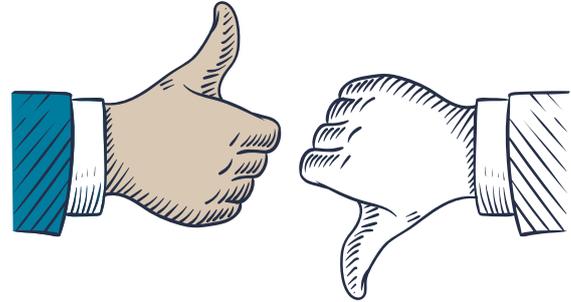
## **Preference Key Findings**

What kinds of news do UK residents want to read or watch? From formats to topics, we asked UK audiences questions related to their news consumption preferences. Here's what they shared.

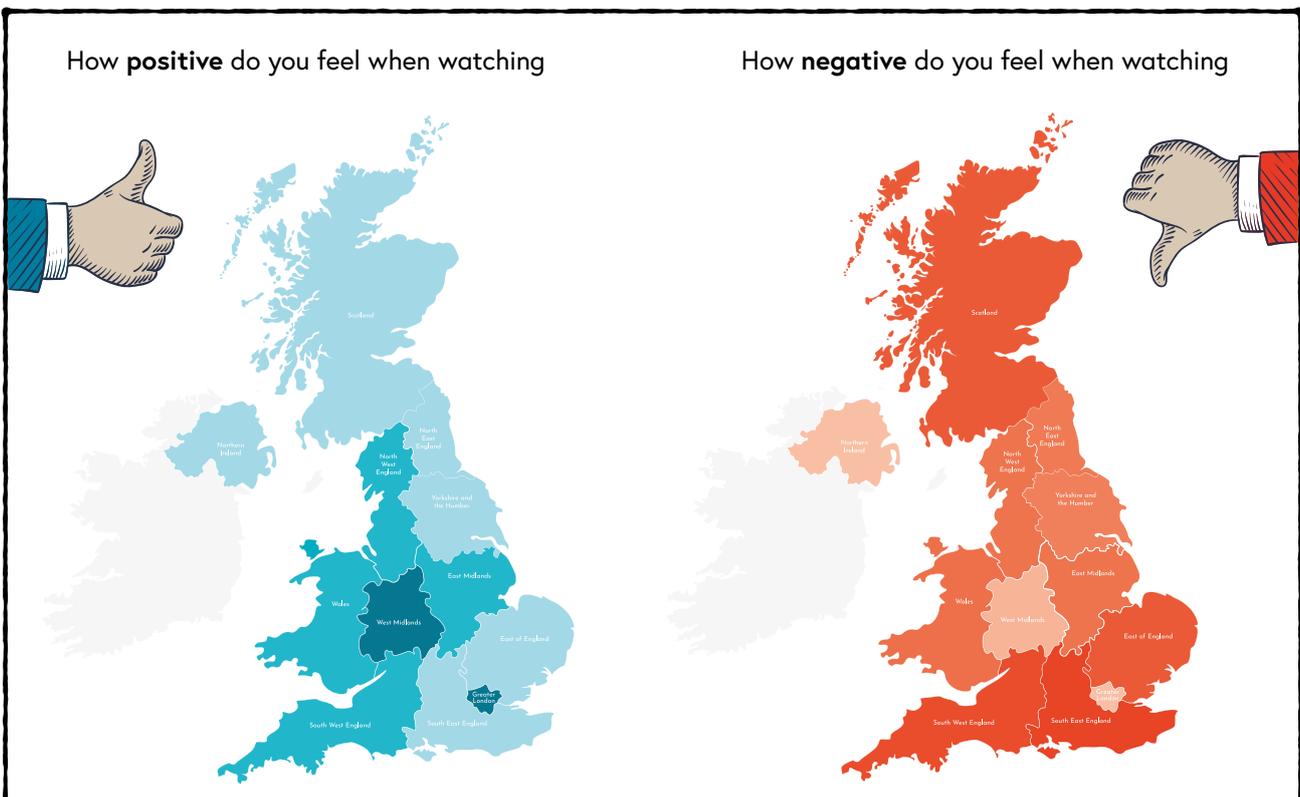


## Younger Audiences Feel More Positive After Reading the News

Unsurprisingly, the news makes different groups of UK consumers feel varying levels of positivity and negativity after watching or reading it. However, despite the world's current doom and gloom discussed by most media outlets, the younger audiences are the most likely to feel positive after watching or reading news, with nearly a third saying so (32%) and only just over a third saying they feel negative (36%).



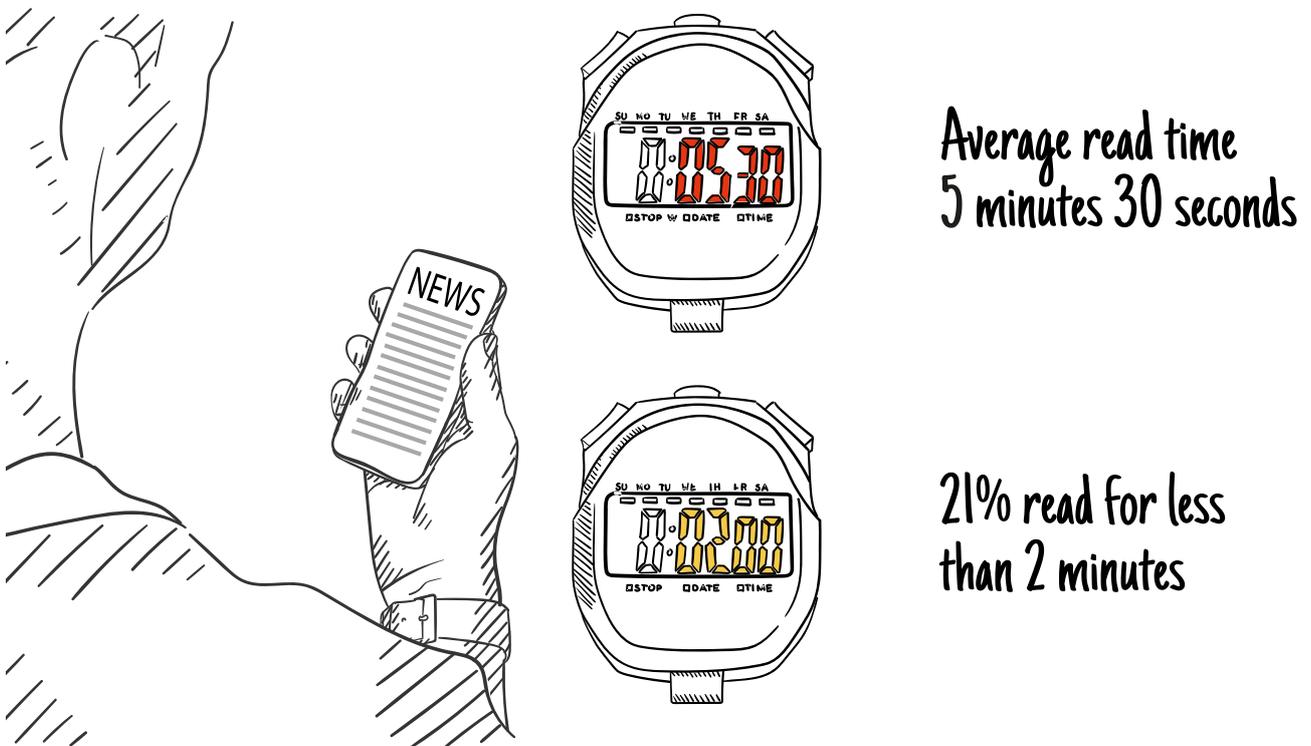
This is an interesting trend, as Gen Zs are perceived to be the most distrusting generation and, according to [McKinsey research](#), tend to have the least positive life outlook compared to older generations. However, when it comes to news consumption, those aged 55+ were most likely to feel negative, with 52% saying so. Breaking these numbers down further by gender, women were also less likely to feel positive after consuming news compared to men (15% vs 23% respectively). Those in London and the West Midlands were the most likely to feel positive (30% each), and those in the Southeast and East of England were the most likely to feel negative (55% and 54%, respectively).



Total UK adults positive and negative views on news consumption by region.

## People Have Even Shorter Attention Spans

It's getting harder for publications to capture the readers' attention as, on average, UK news readers will read an article for just under five and a half minutes, with a fifth of readers spending less than 2 minutes reading (21%). These numbers are much worse compared to 2022 (5 minutes and 42 seconds), which shows a reduction in attention span.



When looking at the word count, the average ideal length of an article is 346 words, with a quarter of UK adults preferring an article to be 100-299 words long (24%), but three out of ten prefer 300-599 words (29%). Conversely, less than one in ten prefer an article under 100 words or 600 or more (8% and 7%, respectively).

## Short Live News Updates is the Most Preferred Style of Reporting

A third of respondents prefer TV news bulletin-style news reporting (33%). However, this is a generation preference, as those aged 18-34 have more diverse choices, with the most preferred being short live news updates (26%).

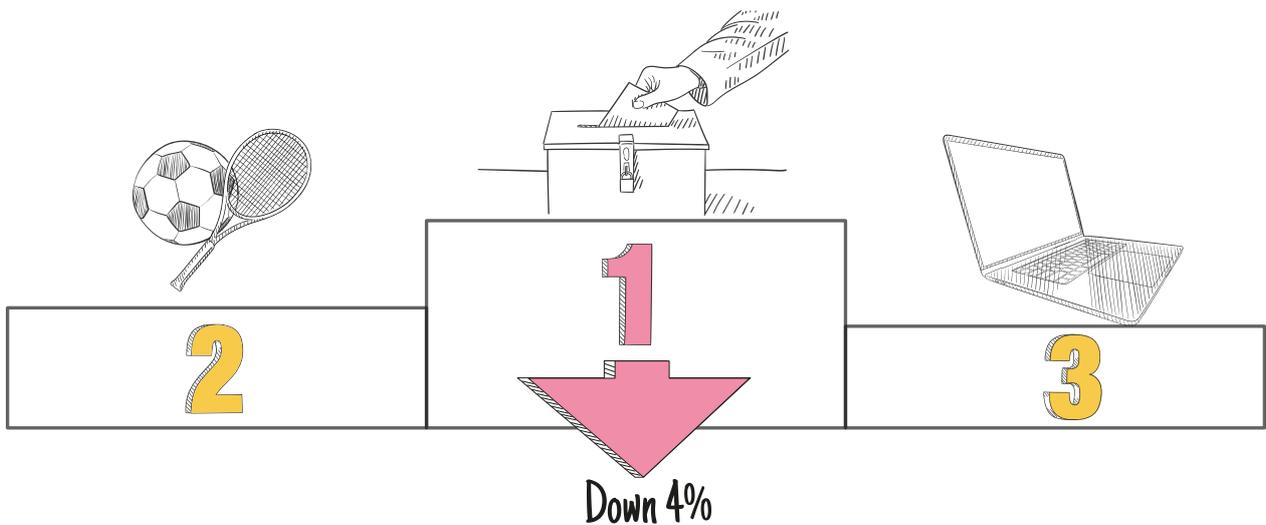
A large, stylized graphic of the number '26%' in a vibrant pink color. The numbers and the percentage sign are rendered in a 3D, blocky font with a white outline and a hatched shadow effect, giving them a pop-art or hand-drawn appearance.

*of 18-34 year olds prefer short live news updates*

This suggests that consumers want to consume news content in different formats, preferring short bites of information and a mix of media that mimics the social media experience, including videos, graphics, and audio clips – something for publications to consider.

## Politics Remains On Top

Finally, the topic news consumers are most likely to be interested in is politics, followed by sports and tech. Interestingly, people paying attention to politics have dropped by 4% compared to 2022 and stayed the same for sports and tech – with no exciting changes happening in the three industries, consumers' attention is shifting elsewhere to more diverse topics.



## Conclusion

Our research indicates that consumers increasingly turn to their phones and social media sites for the latest news updates. As a result, publishers and content creators must continue adapting to evolving media habits to deliver authentic, relevant content for their target audiences. Even though they are challenged by the lack of trust from consumers who are hypersensitive to fake news, overall, it's refreshing to see that authenticity in the news is heading in the right direction.

Therefore, content creators need to find ways to show the validity of their news stories, delivering bite-sized news that will keep consumers engaged. Using new reporting methods like live blogging can support their efforts by engaging and responding to live updates and audience reactions in a very authentic manner. In addition, consumers can turn to live blogging journalism for succinct and captivating news content on topics of interest, fostering healthier news consumption habits.



## Finding New Ways to Reach Your Audiences

Having the right technology partner to facilitate this solution's smooth and seamless adoption is critical to creating valuable content. To learn more about Tickaroo's publishing tools and the Marketplace, you can start a [free 14-day full-feature trial of our Live Blog software](#).

Our team will be happy to address any questions you may have.

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