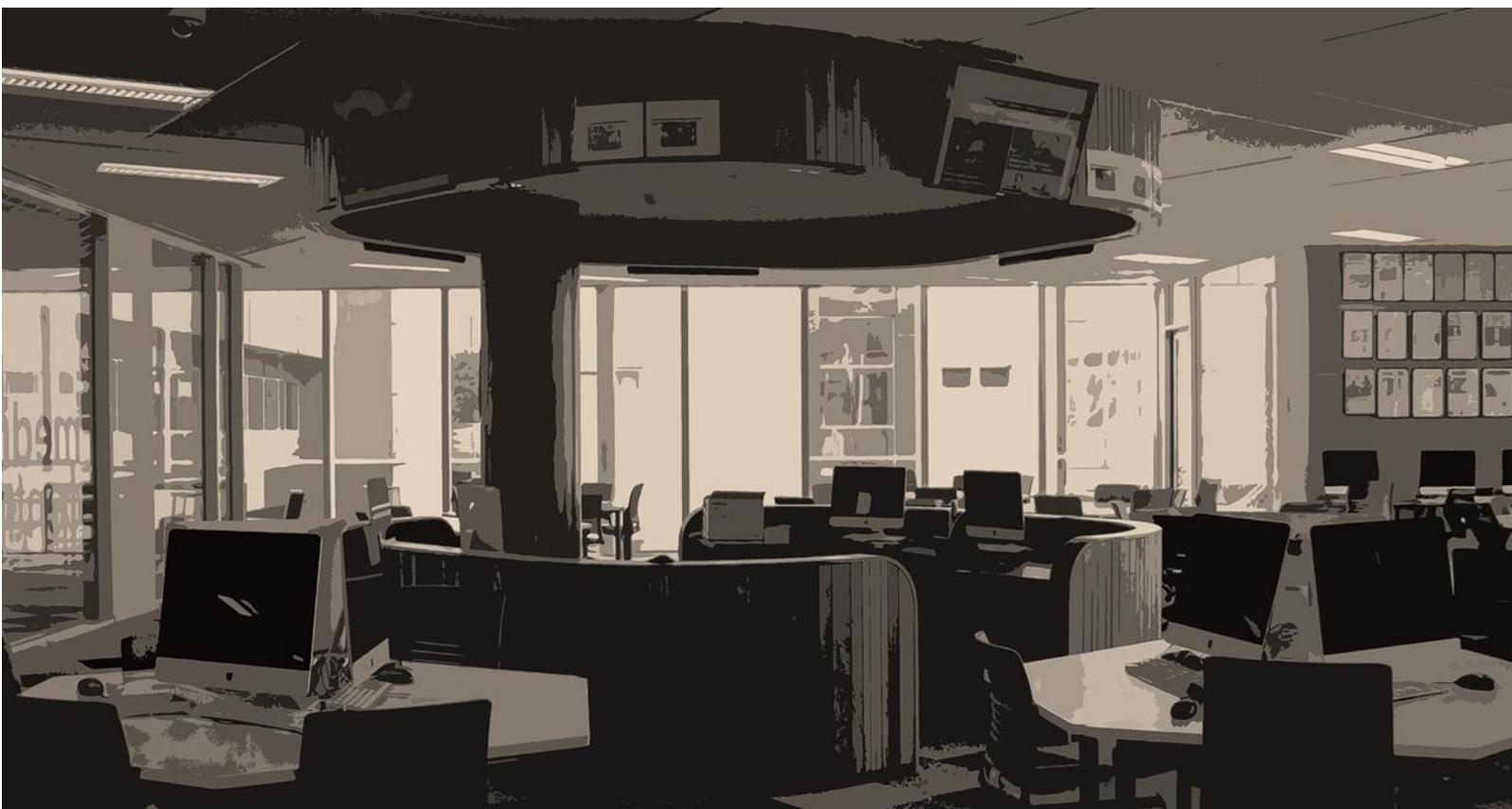


TRUST IN NEWS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND 2024



AUT RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
JOURNALISM, MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

AOTEAROA

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About this report

This is the fifth report about trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand produced by the AUT research centre for [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) (JMAD). The trust survey that informs the report was completed in collaboration with the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#). With permission from the institute’s researchers, we used the same survey questions to investigate trust in news and a comparable sampling method to the one used in their annual [Digital News Reports](#) to measure news trust. This allows us international comparisons with Aotearoa New Zealand about levels of trust in the news. In 2023, the Reuters survey covered 46 countries. Our 2024 survey also asked New Zealanders about their news consumption, news sources, news avoidance, misinformation and paying for news. These questions in our survey mirror those in the Reuters study, allowing us international comparisons about these related issues. As in 2020-2023, survey data for our 2024 report was collected by New Zealand online market research company Horizon Research Ltd. The production of this report was funded by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT).

Awards: In 2023, the report authors received a special recognition at the AUT Te Ara Auaha research excellence awards for their trust in news in New Zealand project.

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About the JMAD research centre: <https://www.jmadresearch.com/>

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Authorship



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Dr Greg Treadwell is the Academic Adviser for Journalism and a senior lecturer in the Screen, Audio and Journalism department at the School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Greg is also member of JMAD research centre. His work has been published in multiple books and academic journals, including the *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, and *Pacific Journalism Review*. He is also a co-author of JMAD's *New Zealand Media Ownership* report.

Methodology

This report on trust in the news in Aotearoa New Zealand is the fifth produced by the AUT research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD). It is based on a survey comprising 11 questions, most of which mirror those asked by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in its annual international survey. Questions concerning news trust, news interest and news avoidance match those asked for the Reuters Institute's annual [Digital News Report](#). In 2023, the Reuters Institute conducted a survey of 46 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia/Pacific and Africa, and our international comparisons are made against this group.

In 2024, 15 New Zealand news brands were included in our study, but this time MediaWorks was excluded because its flagship radio station, Today FM, was taken off air in 2023. While Warner Bros Discovery announced in February 2024 it would close down Newshub, the closure had not materialised by the time of writing. Hence results concerning the news brand are included.

Survey sample and data: The data for this research was collected by [Horizon Research Ltd](#), a company specialising in online polling. The results in this report are drawn from a national online survey of 1,033 New Zealand adults (18 years of age or over) who are members of Horizon Research's HorizonPoll (adult general population), Horizon Research Māori (Māori, 18+ years) panels and a third-party 18+ panel. The survey was carried out from February 12 to February 16, 2024. The sample is weighted on age, gender, highest educational qualification, personal income, ethnicity and region to match the New Zealand adult population. It has a maximum margin of error at a 95% confidence level of $\pm 3\%$ overall.

What the survey captures

Our survey captures data that has been gathered from New Zealanders. In general, surveys reflect people's perceptions because they capture people's self-reported behaviour. They don't necessarily reflect how the people actually behave "due to biases and imperfect recall."¹ As Nieman et al. note, surveys "are useful for capturing people's opinions, but these are subjective and aggregates reflect public opinion rather than objective reality."

¹ Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C.T. and Nielsen, R.K. (2023). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2023/methodology>

Overview

New Zealand context

Since our first *Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* report in 2020, general trust in news in New Zealand has continued to decline. In 2020, 53% of New Zealanders said they trusted the news in general. In 2024, that figure was at 33%. In five years, general trust in the news has fallen 20%. The Acumen Edelman Trust barometer in 2023 showed that 58% of New Zealanders trusted businesses, 51% the government and 41% the media.² While there is no single reason to explain the decline in news trust, this section provides some context to the 2024 trust-in-news report. In February 2024, Newsroom co-editor Mark Jennings captured the situation concerning trust in news and media:

“In my 22 years as head of TV3 news and seven years as co-editor of Newsroom, I’ve seen the public trust in the media decline to a point where it is impacting our democracy.”³

From 2023 to 2024, New Zealand’s news media faced increasing hostility from multiple fronts while also facing financial turmoil. In a select committee hearing considering the *Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill* that would mandate Google and Meta to pay for news, Stuff owner Sinead Boucher said journalism was “in a fight for its life” and was “clinging on by its fingertips . . . against some of history’s biggest companies.”⁴ In February 2024, in an opinion piece on *The Conversation*, Dr Greg Treadwell (co-author of this report), observed that while journalism in Western democracies had “been on a roller coaster in recent decades, in Aotearoa New Zealand this week it threatened to

² The Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer (2023). <https://acumennz.com/the-acumen-edelman-trust-barometer/2023/>

³ Democracy in danger when lies go unchecked (2024, February 7). Newsroom.

<https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/02/28/newshub-to-close-down-newsroom-in-june/>

⁴ Peacock, C. (2024, February 18). MPs urged to take sides in media vs big tech tussle. RNZ Mediawatch.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mediawatch/audio/2018926484/mps-urged-to-take-sides-in-media-vs-big-tech-tussle>

come right off the rails.”⁵ Warner Bros Discovery had just announced the closure of Newshub, a free-to-air broadcaster that had, in one form or another, been the main opposition to publicly owned TVNZ since 1989. There would be 200 jobs lost in its news operations. As a result, the country would be left with an even more concentrated media market, with less diversity and fewer voices in the news. Shortly after the Newshub announcement, TVNZ announced that it was cutting up to 68 jobs, many of those affecting news and current affairs reporting.⁶ The new centre-right government in Aotearoa New Zealand has indicated it is not interested in rescuing New Zealand media, with Cabinet ministers stating that investing more money into media was not a priority. Commenting on the Newshub closure, Broadcasting Minister Melissa Lee said it was a “commercial decision by Warner Bros Discovery. The parent company, which is worth billions, feel that, you know, it just wasn't viable. And it's not something that the Government can actually go in there and rescue.”⁷ Similarly, Finance Minister Nicola Willis said: “I don't think in the list of priorities New Zealand has right now that we would want to be investing more money into media.”⁸

These comments came on the back of the public’s reception to government involvement in the media. In 2022, the JMAD trust in news report noted that one of the main reasons for distrust in news media was the government’s support for news media, in particular the \$55 million *Public Interest Journalism Fund* that was launched during the pandemic and that included direct monetary

⁵ Treadwell, G. (2023, February 28). With the end of Newshub, the slippery slope just got steeper for NZ journalism and democracy. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/with-the-end-of-newshub-the-slippery-slope-just-got-steeper-for-nz-journalism-and-democracy-224625>

⁶ TVNZ to cut up to 68 jobs in restructure (2024, March 7). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mediawatch/audio/2018928632/government-keeps-media-problems-at-arm-s-length>

⁷ Broadcasting Minister Melissa Lee fronts after denying hiding following Newshub news (2024, March 6). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/511013/broadcasting-minister-melissa-lee-fronts-after-denying-hiding-following-newshub-news>

⁸ McConnell, G. (2024, March 14). What role does the Government have in saving New Zealand media? *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/politics/350202492/what-role-does-government-have-saving-new-zealand-media>

support for newsroom roles and projects.⁹ The scheme was disestablished in June 2023. The new government's hesitancy in helping news media from the public purse may partly stem from this public response. The scheme also came under attack from politicians, especially during the 2023 General Election campaign. *The Detail* podcast observed: "... a Deputy Prime Minister who's virtually declared war on journalists; and the failure of government MPs to call out lies – it's all helping to further deteriorate the levels of trust in the Fourth Estate."¹⁰ In a Government press conference, the Deputy Prime Minister had reportedly questioned then editorial independence of RNZ and TVNZ: "Well, we'll see the speed at which TVNZ and RNZ – which are taxpayer-owned – understand this new message. We'll see whether these people, both the media and journalists – are they independent? Well, isn't that fascinating, I haven't seen evidence of that in the last three years."¹¹ Newsroom co-editor Mark Jennings says news media is at the heart of a democracy, "yet we see some of the most important figures in democracy – politicians – attacking the media."¹² During the 2023 general election, the news media and its future frequently featured in the campaign as politicians made clear their views of the media and the public funding of news. In February 2023, the Labour-led government abandoned its planned merger of publicly funded television broadcaster TVNZ and the public interest radio broadcaster RNZ, with Prime Minister Chris Hipkins saying the "support for public media needs to be at a lower cost and without such significant structural change."¹³ News outlets reported that more than \$16 million was spent

⁹ Myllylahti, M. & Treadwell, G. (2023). Trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand. AUT Centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy. https://www.imadresearch.com/files/ugd/a95e86_0a9149d3627840b79baf05899be1585f.pdf

¹⁰ Democracy in danger when lies go unchecked (2024, February 7). Newsroom. <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/02/28/newshub-to-close-down-newsroom-in-june/>

¹¹ Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters attacks state-funded media independence (2023, November 27). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/503394/deputy-prime-minister-winston-peters-attacks-state-funded-media-independence>

¹² Democracy in danger when lies go unchecked (2024, February 7). Newsroom. <https://newsroom.co.nz/2024/02/28/newshub-to-close-down-newsroom-in-june/>

¹³ Watch: TVNZ/RNZ merger scrapped, income insurance and hate speech laws delayed (2023, February 8). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/political/483875/watch-tvzn-rnz-merger-scrapped-income-insurance-and-hate-speech-laws-delayed>

preparing the failed merger of TVNZ and RNZ, and additional funding for RNZ.¹⁴ After the merger was abandoned, the Government allocated \$25.7 million to RNZ to “strengthen news and current-affairs coverage through a free multi-media digital platform to reach new audiences, expand regional coverage to be truly national, [and] establish a new initiative to prioritise Māori and Pacific content.”¹⁵

In June 2023, RNZ made headlines when it was reported one of its digital journalists had altered news stories from Reuters concerning the Russian invasion of Ukraine by “inserting pro-Russian sentiment into news stories”, prompting RNZ chief executive Paul Thompson to apologise for the situation. He said that the case was a “serious breach” of the organisation's editorial standards and “really, really disappointing.”¹⁶ An independent inquiry found that while stories published on RNZ’s website breached its editorial standards, the panel accepted that the journalist responsible for the inappropriate editing “genuinely believed he was acting appropriately to provide balance and accuracy, and was not motivated by any desire to introduce misinformation, disinformation or propaganda.”¹⁷ While the independent inquiry found “inappropriate editing of the type that was identified constitutes a serious breach of trust and damaged RNZ’s reputation for accurate and balanced journalism”, it also noted that the leadership of RNZ had overreacted while commenting on the case: “The way the journalist’s errors were framed at the time by RNZ’s leadership contributed to public alarm and reputational damage which the panel believes was not helpful in maintaining public trust.”¹⁸ At the same time as journalistic independence and integrity were

¹⁴ Pullar-Strecker, T. (2023, February 8). More than \$16m spent on TVNZ/RNZ merger before it was called off. Stuff. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/131175405/more-than-16m-spent-on-tvznrnz-merger-before-it-was-called-off>

¹⁵ RNZ to receive \$25m a year in funding boost (2023, April 6). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/487441/rnz-to-receive-25m-a-year-in-funding-boost>

¹⁶ RNZ chief executive apologises after pro-Russian sentiment added to stories (2023, June 12). RNZ. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/491824/rnz-chief-executive-apologises-after-pro-russian-sentiment-added-to-stories>

¹⁷ Akel, W., Clark, L. and Sunderland, A. (2023, July 28). Independent external review of RNZ editorial processes. https://www.rnz.co.nz/assets/cms_uploads/000/000/429/RNZ_Independent_Panel_Review_Report.pdf

¹⁸ Akel, W., Clark, L. and Sunderland, A. (2023, July 28).

questioned, research by journalism scholars Susan Fontaine and Cathy Strong showed journalists were increasingly dealing with online and physical abuse when conducting their work.¹⁹ The researchers surveyed 128 journalists and visual journalists working in Stuff – one of the country’s two largest news publishers – and found that none of the journalists were “untouched by abuse, threats or violence related to their job, most commonly delivered via work email on a daily or weekly basis.”

International context

Internationally, trust in news declined in 2023. The Reuters Institute’s *Digital News Report 2023* – a benchmark for our research – found that on average, trust in news fell from 42% in 2022 to 40% in 2023 across the 46 markets in its study.²⁰ Finland has remained the country with the highest level of trust in news (69%), whereas Greece has the lowest level of trust (19%). Reuters’ report finds that public media brands are “amongst those with the highest levels of trust in many Northern European countries” but their audience reach has been declining as younger audiences have moved to other platforms to consume news. According to a Gallup survey, trust in news in the US has plummeted to the “lowest historical reading, previously recorded in 2016”, meaning only 32% of Americans trust the mass media to report news in full and accurately.²¹

According to the Reuters survey, Facebook has remained the most-used social network, but “its influence on journalism is declining as it shifts its focus away from news.” The Reuters report

¹⁹ Fontaine, S. and Strong, C. (2024). An Intersectional Analysis of Aotearoa New Zealand Journalists’ Online and Offline Experiences of Abuse, Threats and Violence. *Journalism Studies* 25(2), 160-180. DOI: [10.1080/1461670X.2023.2289913](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2023.2289913)

²⁰ Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C.T. and Nielsen, R.K. (2023). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism. [https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital News Report 2023.pdf](https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-06/Digital%20News%20Report%202023.pdf)

²¹ Brenan, M. (2023, October 19). Media confidence in U.S. matches 2016 record low. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/512861/media-confidence-matches-2016-record-low.aspx>

observes an important trend concerning news, finding that younger audiences “pay more attention to celebrities, influencers and social media personalities than journalists” on social media platforms, especially on TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. Worryingly, interest in the news continues to decline in many markets. Some countries have experienced a sharp decline in news interest. For example, the proportion of those who say they are interested or very interested in the news has fallen by 36% in Argentina and Spain, 27% in the UK, 23% in France, 22% in Germany and 18% in the US. Bunking this trend is Finland where news interest has increased slightly from 64% to 65%.

Furthermore, the Reuters Institute’s report notes that news avoidance, the proportion of people avoiding news to some extent, “remains close to all-time highs at 36%” across the markets. The report found 53% of those avoiding the news were doing it in “a broad-brush or periodic way”, tuning out of news programmes or scrolling past news on social media. It also found that many (52%) take specific actions to avoid the news, including turning off news notifications on their phones or social media apps, checking news less often and avoiding certain topics such as the war in Ukraine.

The 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer shows that distrust of journalists, government leaders and business leaders has increased. Approximately 64% (+3% from 2023) of those surveyed say distrust in journalists and reporters has increased because they are “purposely trying to mislead people by saying things they know are false or gross exaggerations.” Of those surveyed, 63% trust business leaders, 59% NGOs, 51% their government and 50% the media.²² The report finds that media is distrusted in 15 countries out of 28, including the UK, the US, Sweden, Australia, Germany and Italy. The barometer also scopes trust in news sourced from different media sources, finding that 68% of

²² Edelman Trust Institute (2024). 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer. Global report. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2024-01/2024%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_FINAL_1.pdf

those surveyed trust news and information from search engines, 62% trust news and information from traditional media and 44% trust news and information from social media.

Summary of key findings

Trust in news in New Zealand

- Trust in the news in New Zealand continues to decline. From 2020 to 2024, general trust in news declined by 20%; trust in search engines (-4%) and social media (3%) has also fallen in the same period
- From March 2023 to March 2024, general trust in the news continued to fall (-9%), and trust in news people themselves consumed also declined (-8)
- In the same period, general trust in news declined from 42% to 33% and trust in the news people consumed themselves fell from 53% to 45% (Table 1)
- From March 2023 to March 2024, almost all the major Aotearoa New Zealand news brands suffered declines in their levels of trust. This was especially the case with broadcasters: trust in Whakaata Māori fell 14.6%, TVNZ 9.4% and Newshub 7.8%
- In 2024, *The Otago Daily Times* was perceived as the most trusted brand. It was followed by RNZ and NBR (2nd); TVNZ, Newsroom, other commercial radio stations and BusinessDesk were jointly ranked as the 3rd most trusted brands
- Those who say they don't trust and/or avoid the news are most concerned about the negativity of news, including its impact on their mental health, and what they perceive as political bias and opinion masquerading as news

Trust in news compared internationally

- Compared internationally, trust in news in New Zealand has fallen well below an international average of 40% (Table 2)
- When in 2020, trust in news in New Zealand was substantially higher compared to the Reuters international average (53% to 42%), in 2024 it was substantially lower than the international average (33% to 40%)
- In 2024, general trust in news in New Zealand was at the same level as the UK (33%) and very close to the US (32%) (Figure 1)

Table 1: Trust in news in New Zealand in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 (%)

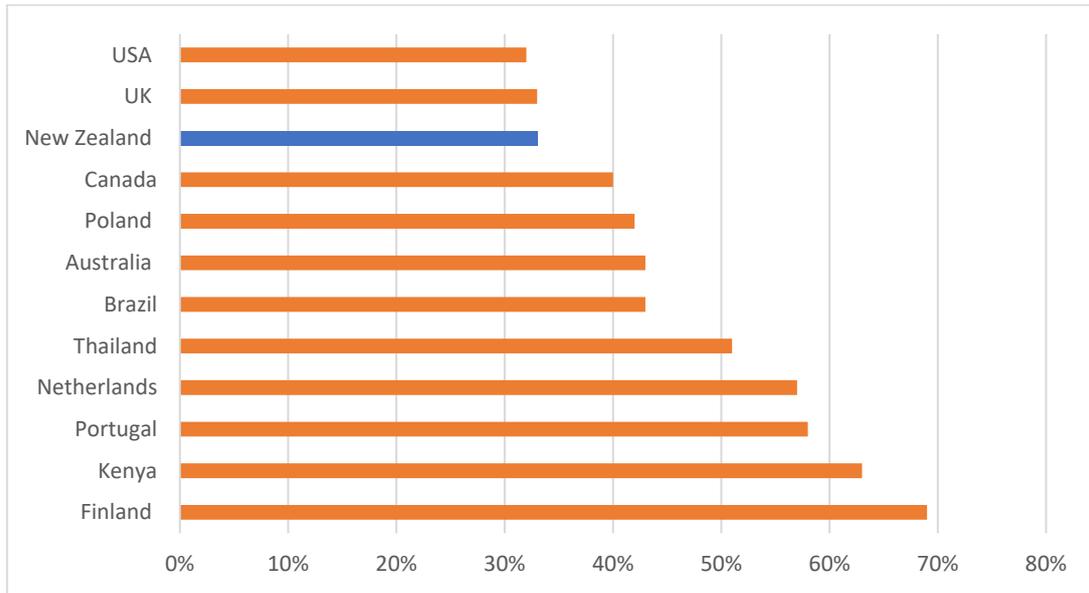
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change % 2020- 2024	Change % 2023- 2024
Overall trust in news	53%	48%	45%	42%	33%	-20%	-9%
Trust in news I use	62%	55%	52%	53%	45%	-17%	-8%
Trust in news in search	27%	26%	23%	25%	23%	-4%	-2%
Trust in news in social	16%	14%	15%	14%	13%	-3%	-1%

Table 2: Trust in news in general compared to international average

Reuters 2019	Reuters 2020	Reuters 2021	Reuters 2022	Reuters 2023	JMAD 2020	JMAD 2021	JMAD 2022	JMAD 2023	JMAD 2024
Int. average	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZ				
42%	38%	44%	42%	40%	53%	48%	45%	42%	33%

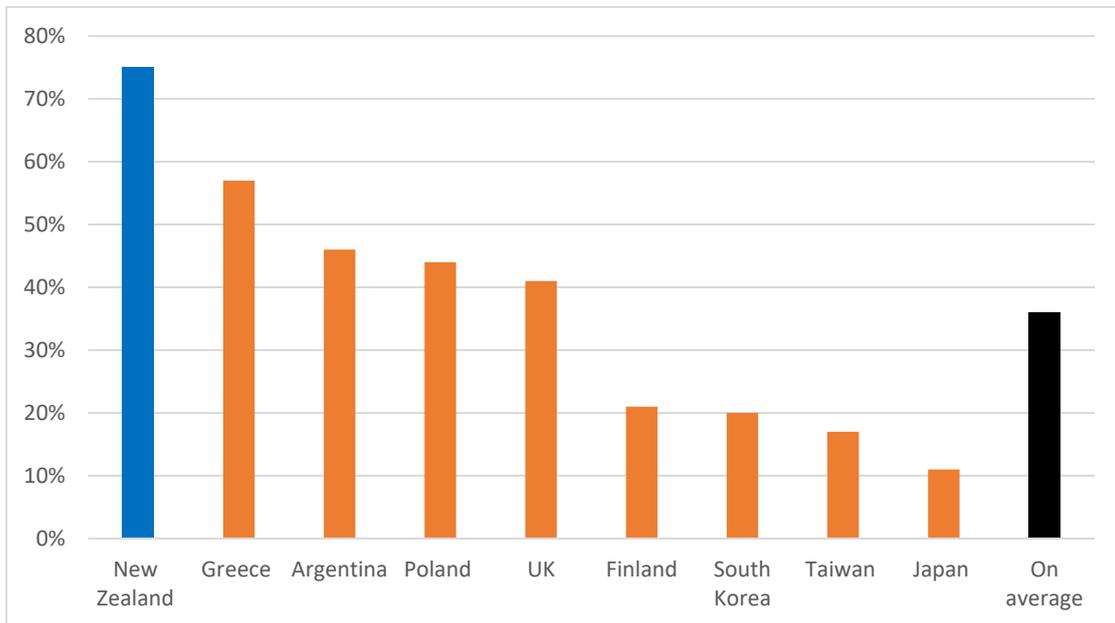
Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Reports

Figure 1: Proportion of those who trust most news most of the time



Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2023

Figure 2: Those who avoid news often or sometimes in selected media markets

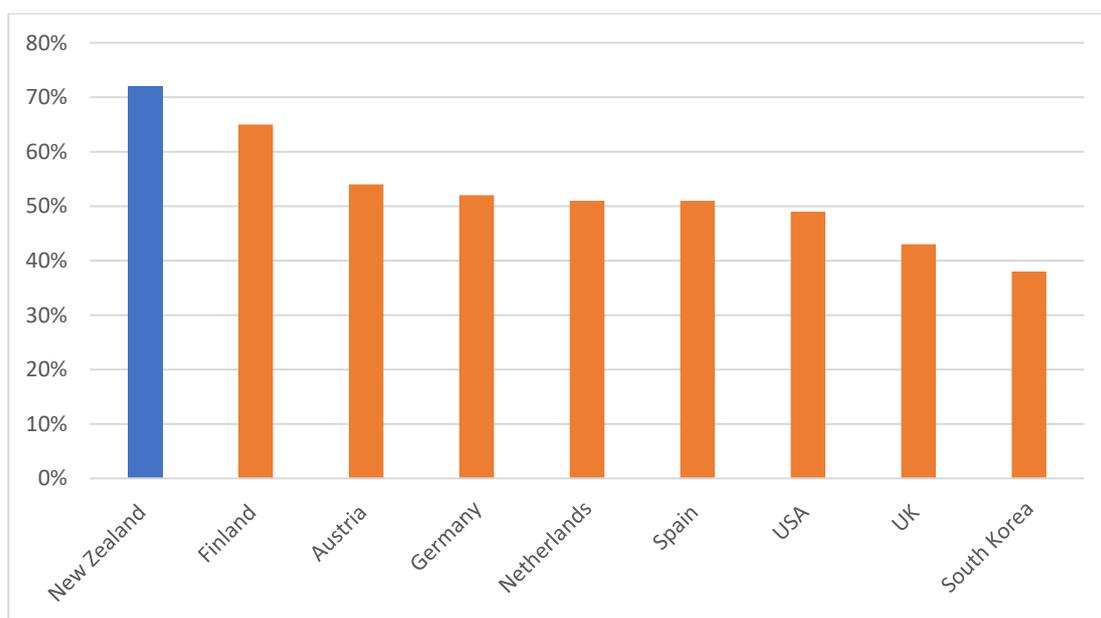


Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2023

News interest and news avoidance

- In 2024, approximately 75% of those surveyed said they actively avoid the news to some extent; this is compared to 69% in 2023
- Of those avoiding the news, 16% said they avoid news often, 42% sometimes and 17% occasionally
- When compared internationally, news avoidance in New Zealand is stronger than in some comparable markets (Figure 2)
- On the other hand, the proportion of those who are highly interested in news is higher in New Zealand than in many comparable markets (Figure 3)
- Of those surveyed, 72% (3%) are either extremely interested (33%) or interested (39%), and 22% are somewhat interested in the news

Figure 3: Those who are highly interested in news in selected media markets



Sources: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2023

Detailed survey findings

Consumption, interest and sources of news

As in 2023, this year we scoped New Zealanders' interest in the news (**Q1**).²³ Based on our sample, 94% (-1%) of New Zealanders are interested in the news to some extent. Approximately 72% are either highly interested or interested in the news. However, the level of news avoidance increased from 2023 by 7% to 75% and remains high when compared internationally. In the Reuters study, the international average for news avoidance stood at 36% in 2023. Of those surveyed, 25% said they never avoid the news, with 42% of respondents avoiding news occasionally or sometimes, and 16% avoiding news often. In 2024, we asked New Zealanders about news avoidance (Q2 and Q2.1)²⁴ and reasons for news avoidance. The reasons for news avoidance are discussed in the Qualitative Findings section (page 23).

The next two questions asked New Zealanders about their sources of news. We first asked what news media New Zealanders used as a source of news (**Q3**)²⁵. To better understand news consumption on social media, we then asked which social media sources people used to access/consume news (**Q4**)²⁶.

²³ **Q1.** Overall, how interested would you say you are in news? 1 extremely interested/2 interested/3 somewhat interested/4 not interested/5 not interested at all.

²⁴ **Q2.** Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Never/Sometimes/Occasionally/Often and **Q2.1.** Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news?

²⁵ **Q3.** Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past week as a source of news?
TVNZ/Newshub/RNZ/Commercial radio/Indigenous media/NZ Herald online/Stuff online/Other online news sites/Printed newspapers/Alternative news sites/Blogs/Social media/None of these.

²⁶ **Q4.** Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past week for news? Facebook/Facebook Messenger/ Twitter/Instagram/Snapchat/WhatsApp/YouTube/Telegram/TikTok/None of these

Table 3: Sources of news in the past week

Source of news	2022	2023	2024	2023-2024
TVNZ	64%	65%	58%	-7%
Stuff (online)	64%	59%	51%	-8%
Newshub/TV3	49%	51%	43%	-8%
NZ Herald (online)	48%	45%	42%	-3%
Social media	43%	45%	42%	-3%
RNZ	32%	32%	30%	-2%
Other online news sites	31%	26%	26%	–
Commercial radio	21%	20%	21%	+1%
Printed newspapers	19%	19%	19%	–
Alternative news sites	13%	13%	14%	+1%

Of the news outlets, TVNZ has remained the biggest source of news and Stuff has maintained its 2nd position for the 3rd year in a row. Social media, as a whole, has become the fifth most used source of the news. When taking social media platforms into account, Facebook has overtaken Stuff as the second most used news source (Tables 3 & 4). YouTube has become the 6th most used news source; it is now used more often as a source of news than RNZ. In 2024, most of the news sites lost some ground as sources of news, although there was a slight increase for alternative news sites (+1%). While Facebook lost some of its relevance as a news source, Instagram gained importance as a news source (+4%), and so did TikTok (+3%).

Table 4: Use of social media as a source of news

	2023	2024	2023-2024
Facebook	56%	53%	-3%
YouTube	32%	33%	+1%
Instagram	18%	22%	+4%
Facebook Messenger	22%	18%	-4%
Tiktok	12%	15%	+3%
Twitter / X	17%	14%	-3%
WhatsApp	10%	9%	-1%
Snapchat	6%	6%	–
Telegram	5%	3%	-2%

Overall trust in news and news brands

Q5²⁷ asked New Zealanders about both their trust in the news generally and their trust in the news they personally consumed, and **Q6**²⁸ asked about their trust in news found via social media and search engines. Based on our sample, in 2024, trust in the news in general dropped significantly from 42% in 2023 to 33% in 2024 (-9%). In five years, trust in the news in general has fallen by 20%, as seen in figure 5. In 2024, trust in news people consume themselves also fell significantly, from 53% to 45% (-8%). Trust in social media fell from 14% in 2023 to 13% in 2024, and trust in news in search from 25% in 2023 to 23% in 2024. We also asked people why they trusted or didn't trust the

²⁷ **Q5.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: a) I think you can trust most news most of the time b) I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

²⁸ **Q6.** It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. a) I think I can trust news in social media most of the time b) I think I can trust news in search engines most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

news and the reasons for the news avoidance are analysed in the Qualitative Findings section (page 22).

Figure 4: Trust in news in general in 2020-2024

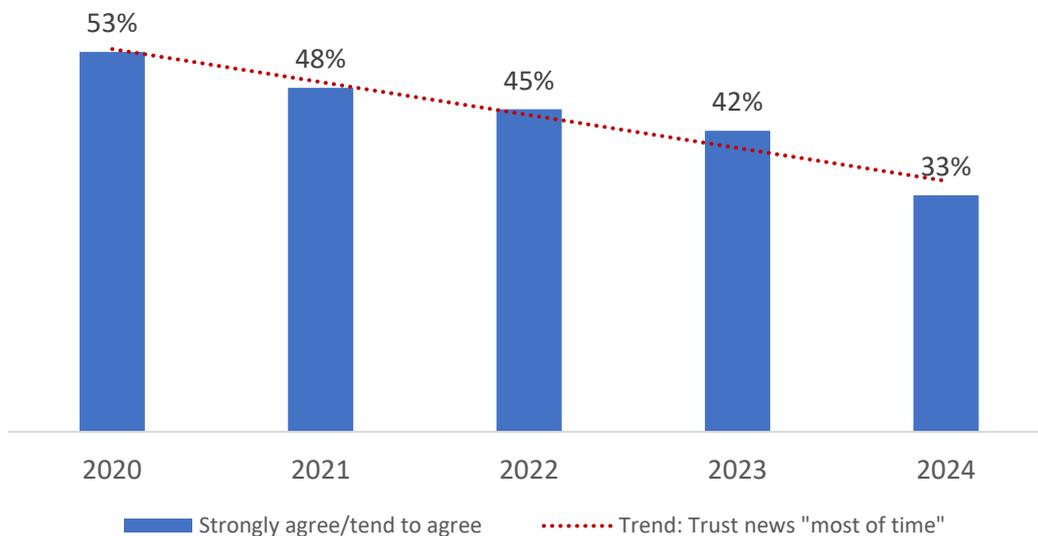


Figure 5: Trust in news people consume themselves in 2020-2024

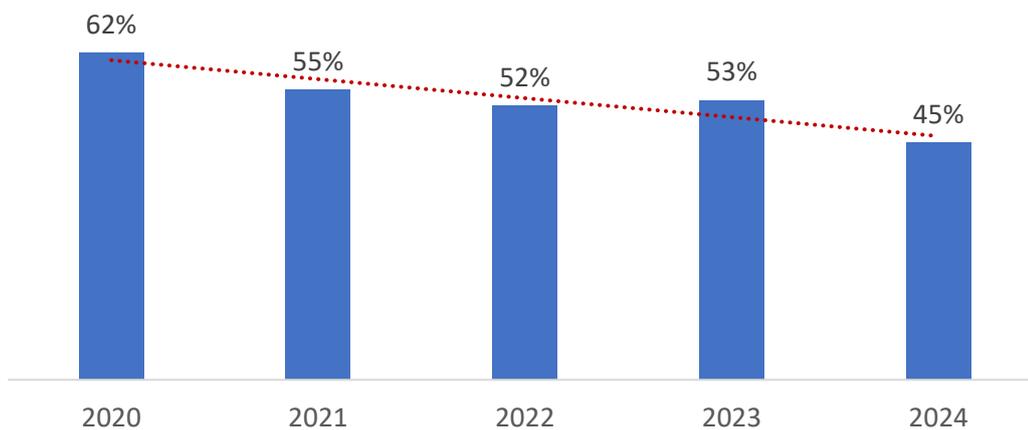


Table 5: Trust score (0-10) for New Zealand news brands

Brand	Trust score 2020	Trust score 2021	Trust score 2022	Trust score 2023	Trust score 2024	Change % in 2023-24
Otago Daily Times	n.a	n.a	6.0	5.3	5.0	-5.7%
RNZ	7.0	6.8	6.2	5.3	4.9	-7.5%
NBR	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.2	4.9	-5.8%
TVNZ	6.8	6.6	5.9	5.3	4.8	-9.4%
Newsroom	6.4	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.8	-5.9%
Other commercial radio	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.1	4.8	-5.9%
BusinessDesk	n.a	n.a	5.3	5.0	4.8	-4.0%
Newshub	6.6	6.3	5.8	5.1	4.7	-7.8%
NZ Herald	6.3	6.2	5.7	5.0	4.7	-6.0%
NewstalkZB	6.2	5.7	5.7	4.9	4.7	-4.1%
Stuff	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.0	4.6	-8.0%
Interest.co.nz	n.a	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.6	-11.5%
The Spinoff	5.4	5.2	5.2	4.6	4.4	-4.3%
Whakaata Māori (Māori TV)	n.a	6.3	5.6	4.8	4.1	-14.6%
Crux	n.a	n.a	4.4	4.2	4.0	-4.8%
Iwi Radio	n.a	5.7	5.0	4.5	3.9	-13.3%

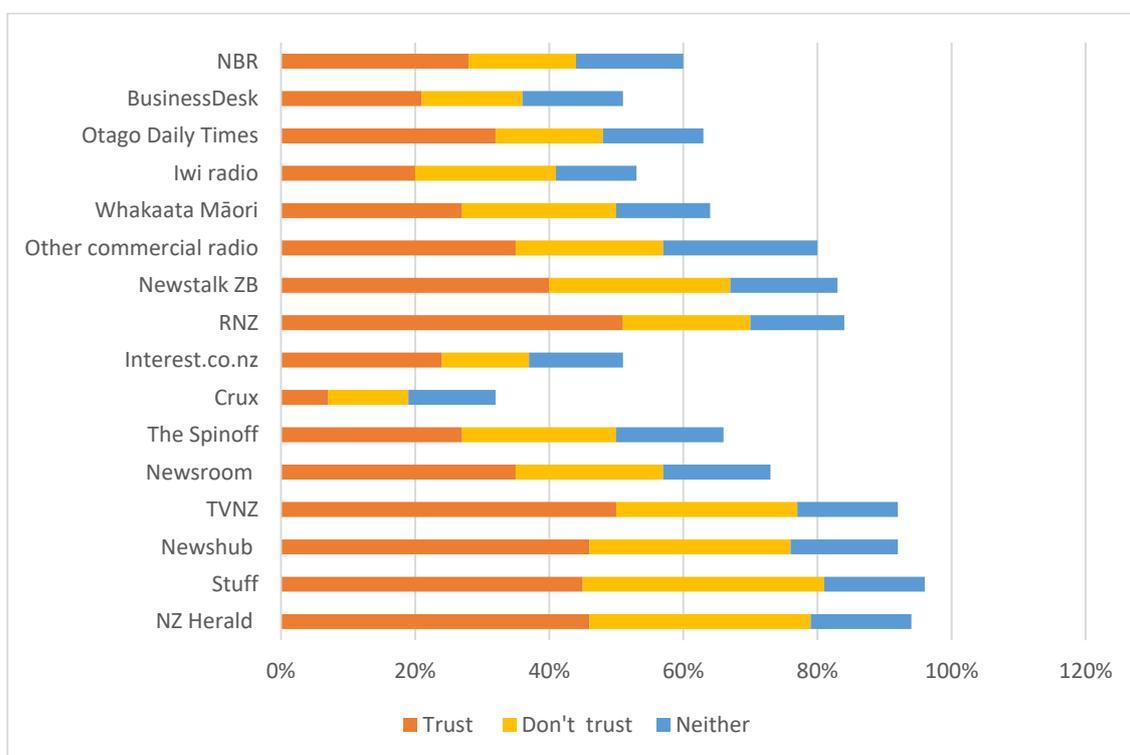
As we did in 2023, we scoped the public view of the trustworthiness of prominent news New Zealand news outlets **(Q7)**.²⁹ Using a scale of 0-10, where 0 was not trustworthy at all and 10 completely trustworthy, respondents were asked to rate their level of trust in 17 news brands/media. Mean scores were calculated from those who knew of each news source, with those

²⁹ **Q7.** How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is? Please use the scale below, where 0 is 'not at all trustworthy' and 10 is 'completely trustworthy'. NZ Herald/Stuff/Newshub/TVNZ/Newsroom/The Spinoff/Crux/Interest.co.nz/RNZ/Newstalk ZB/ Māori Television/Iwi radio stations/Otago Daily Times/BusinessDesk.

who were not aware of a brand excluded. In 2024, we removed Today FM (MediaWorks) from the results because of its closure.

As seen in Table 5, all the major news brands experienced declines in trust in 2024 when compared to the previous year(s). All brands included in our survey dropped in trust scores, with RNZ (-7.5%), Whakaata Māori (-14.6%), iwi radio (-13.3%) and *interest.co.nz* (-11.5%) experiencing the steepest declines in trust. In 2024, the *Otago Daily Times* was the most trusted news brand with a trust score of 5 out of 10. RNZ and NBR were jointly the second most trusted news brands (4.9 out of 10), and TVNZ, Newsroom, other commercial radio stations and BusinessDesk were jointly 3rd most trusted news brands (4.8 out of 10). When analysing trust scores including those who trust, don't trust or do neither, the proportion of those who trust the brand compared to those who don't trust the brand tends to be larger (Figure 8).

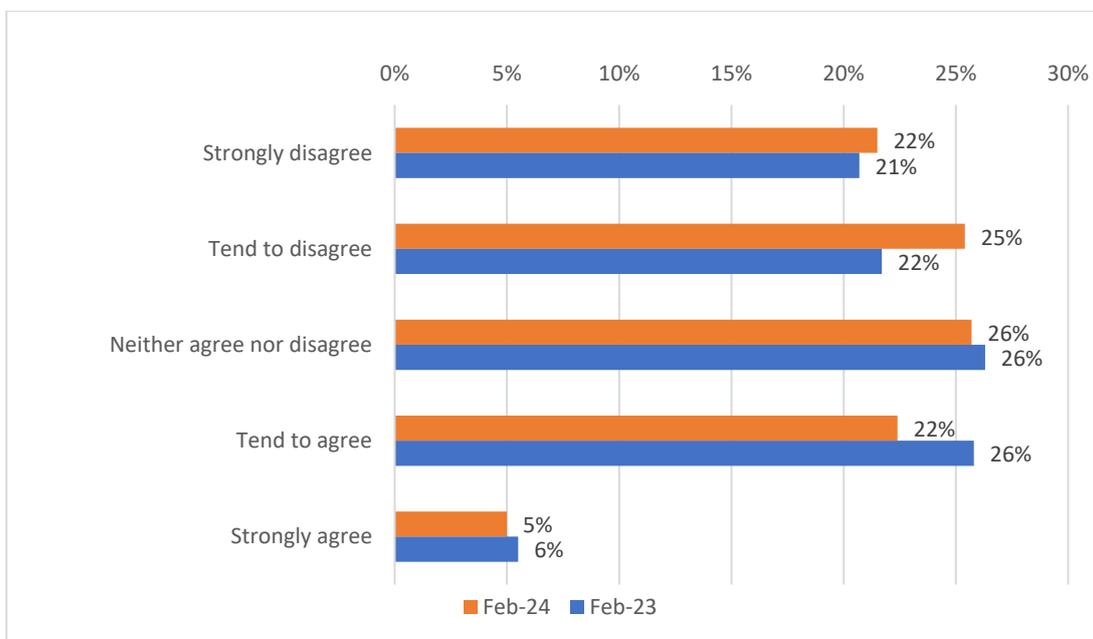
Figure 6: Proportion of those who trust, distrust or do neither per news brand



Concerns of influence, misinformation and poor journalism

In relation to their trust in news, we asked New Zealanders whether they believed that the news media was independent of undue political or government influence most of the time (Q8).³⁰ In 2024, approximately 27% agreed the news media was independent of undue political and government influences, whereas in 2023 the figure was 32%. The proportion of those who strongly or tend to disagree with this view increased from 43% to 47%. Approximately 26% of those responding did neither agree nor disagree (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Independence of media from political and government influences



³⁰ Q8. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statement. The news media in New Zealand are independent from undue political or government influence most of the time: Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Tend to agree/Strongly agree

Q9³¹ asked New Zealanders whether they were concerned about what was real and what was fake news on the internet. Approximately 84% of respondents were concerned about fake news with 56% of people being very or extremely concerned about fake news. **Q10**³² asked to what extent respondents were concerned about poor journalism. “Poor journalism” was defined as making factual mistakes; dumbed-down stories and misleading headlines/clickbait. Approximately 92% of respondents were concerned about poor journalism, down from 94% in 2023. Additionally, 96% of respondents were concerned about “stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda”, and 89% of respondents were concerned about “stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements.”

Paying for news

As we did in 2023, we also asked New Zealanders about paying for news and online content (**Q11**)³³. We asked which news services respondents had paid for (**Q11a**)³⁴ and which ones they had supported financially (**Q11b**)³⁵. In 2024, approximately 24% (+1%) of New Zealanders had paid to access online news content (Figure 8). The proportion of those who have paid for online news content or accessed a paid-for online news service in the past year is higher than the international

³¹ **Q9.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: “Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.” 1 Strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

³² **Q10.** To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following: Poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait)/Stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda/Stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements/Stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire)/term fake news. Scale: Not at all concerned/Not very concerned/Somewhat concerned/Very concerned/Extremely concerned.

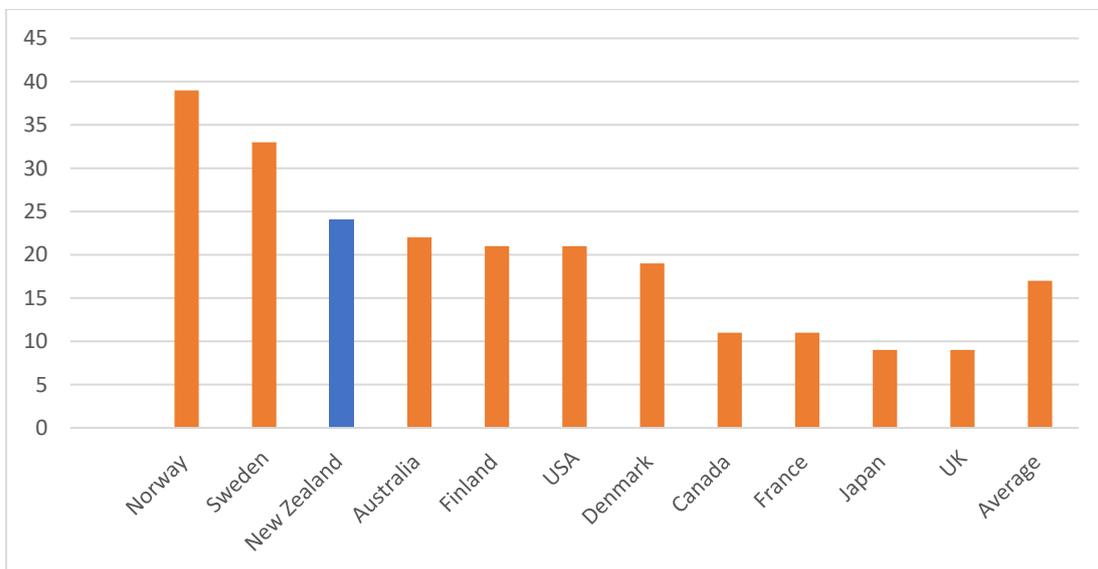
³³ **Q11.** Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid-for online news service in the past year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition).

³⁴ **Q11a.** In which of these ways, if any, have you paid for news services you value in the past year? Print newspaper subscription only/Digital and print newspaper subscription/Digital subscription only/Monthly or annual membership/Donation (fixed amount)/None of these/Other (please specify)

³⁵ **Q11b.** Which of these news services have you supported financially in any way during the past year? *The NZ Herald/The Dominion Post/The Otago Daily Times/The Press/The Spinoff/ Newsroom/ Scoop/NBR/ Stuff/BusinessDesk/Reuters/Bloomberg/Other (please specify)*

average of 17%. When compared to some major markets, the proportion of those paying for online news content is the 3rd highest, after Norway and Sweden.

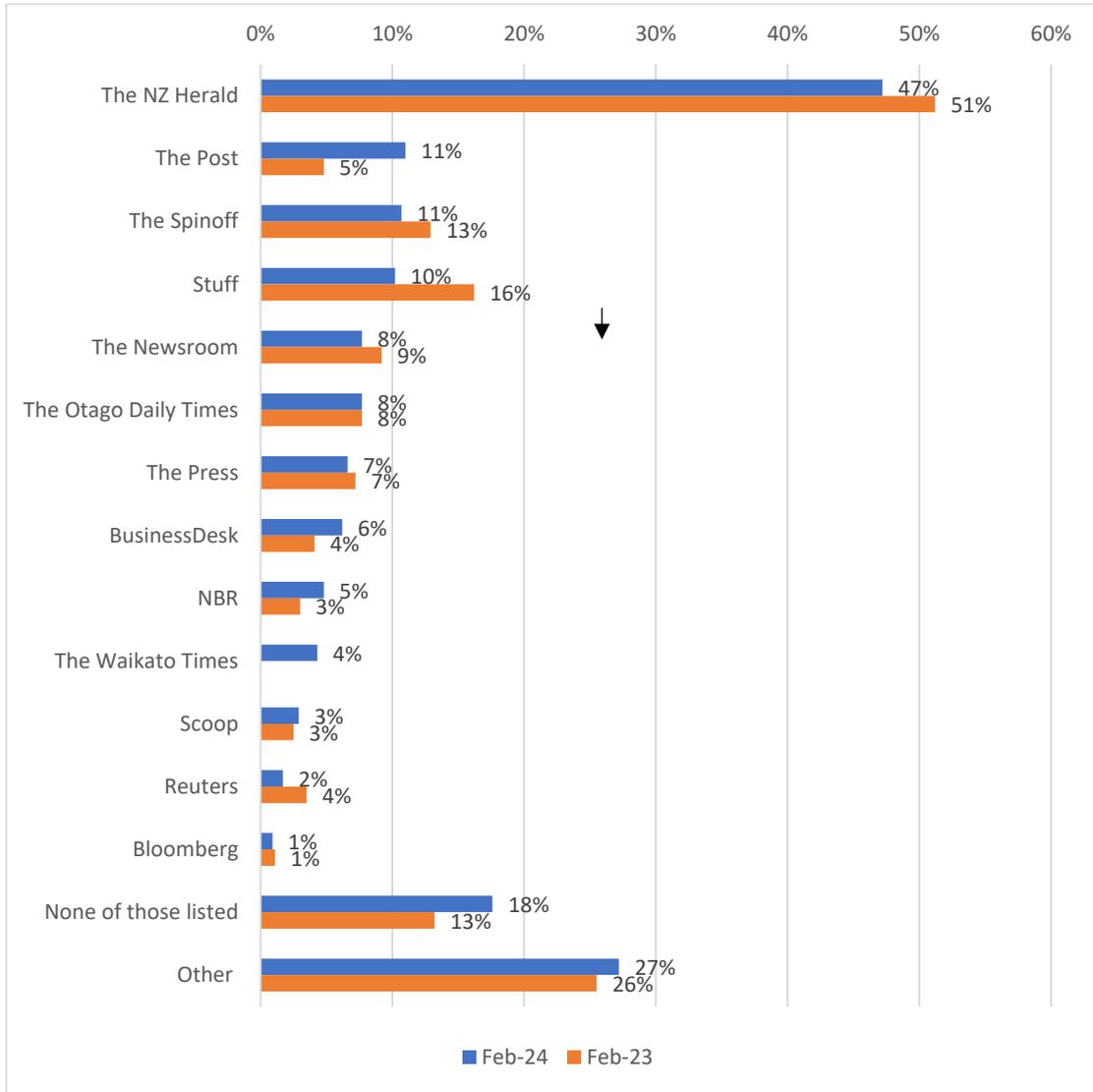
Figure 8: Proportion of those who have paid for online news



Source: Reuters Digital News Report 2023, JMAD

Of the respondents who paid for content in the past year, 54% (+6%) paid for digital-only, followed by 31% (+2%) paying for monthly or annual membership (Figure 9). The proportion of those who paid for digital and print subscription declined from 29% to 26% and the proportion of those donating to news sites fell slightly from 18% to 17%. Approximately 47% (-4%) of respondents supported the *NZ Herald* financially (paid for its products), and 10% (-6%) supported Stuff. However, since our 2023 survey, Stuff introduced digital subscriptions for three titles, *The Post*, *Waikato Times* and *The Press*. Approximately 11% of those surveyed have financially supported *The Post* (+6%), 7% *The Press* and 4% *The Waikato Times*. Of those surveyed, 8% (no change) had supported *The Otago Daily Times*. Both BusinessDesk and NBR have each added 2% more digital subscribers.

Figure 9: Those who have financially supported a news brand in the past year

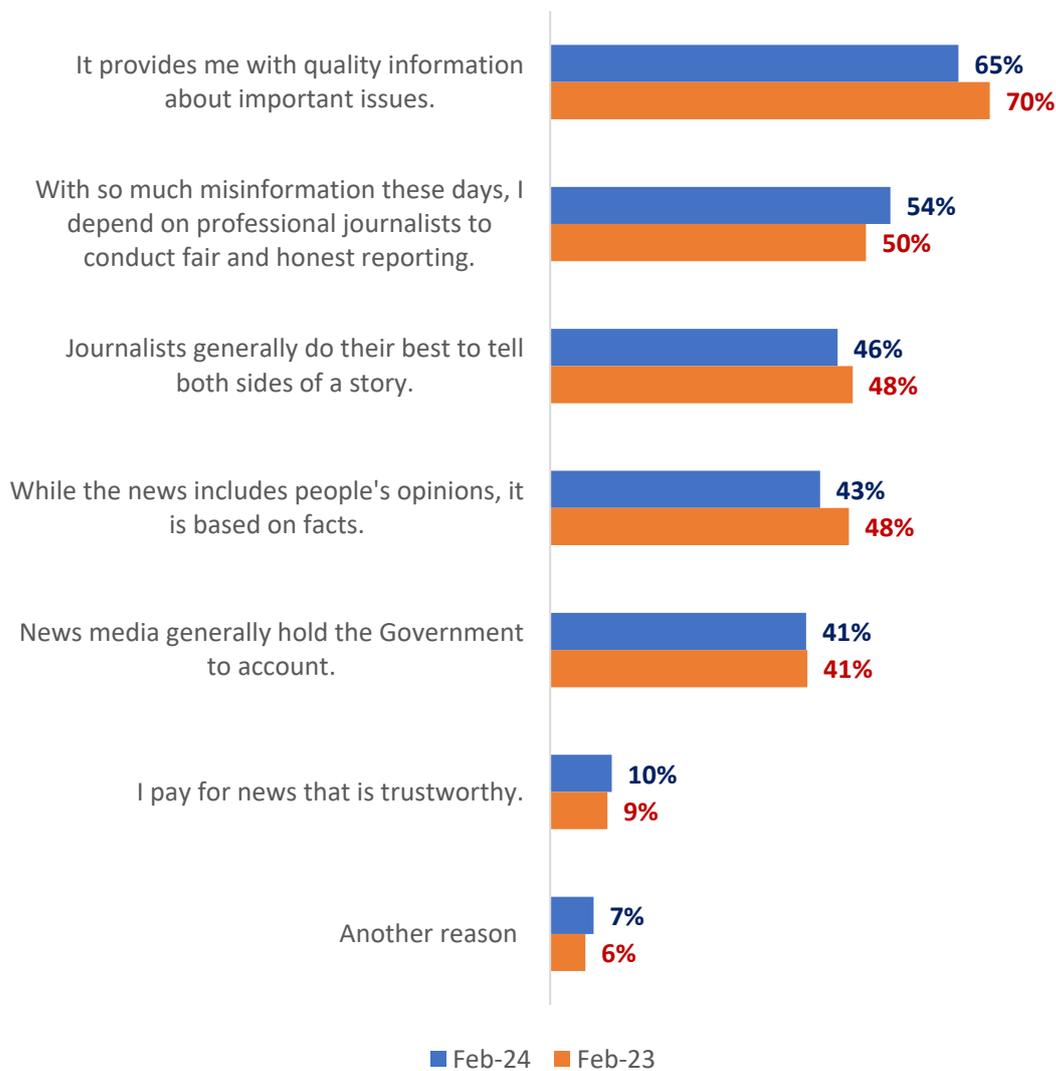


Qualitative findings

Reasons for trusting the news

We asked people who trusted the news to tell us why they trusted it. Approximately 65% (-5%) of news trustors agreed that journalists “provide me with quality information about important issues” and 54% (+4%) said that they depend on journalists not to misinform them via “fair and honest reporting.” Almost half of them (46%) trust news because “journalists do their best to tell both sides of stories” and any opinions expressed are based on facts. Approximately 41% said they trust the news media to “hold the Government to account” (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Reasons for trusting the news in 2024



Qualitative comments

We asked if there were any other reasons they trusted the news. Among the responses was some acknowledgement that journalists could be trusted to verify the accuracy of their information if you chose quality news outlets. Generally, however, among these responders it was accepted you had to seek out reliable and trustworthy news organisations yourself these days.

“The sites I get news from provide accurate news, and opinions are clearly indicated.” (Male, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Broadly trustworthy, but increasingly lacks nuance and is [sic] proactively seeks to frame things negatively or sensationally.” (Male, 35-44, NZ European/Pākehā)

“NZ news is reasonably honest in comparison to overseas particularly USA.” (Female, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

“I am hyper-vigilant to mis and disinformation. I want to stay hopeful and optimistic, so I maintain a media diet that includes headlines and then I go looking for more thoughtful comment and good news. I only trust public-funded media.” (Female, 45-54, NZ European/Pākehā)

“I seek out news from reputable sources that I believe is trustworthy.” (Female, 35-44, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

“I check multiple local national and international sites. I rely others calling out misrepresentations in the comments sections.” (Female, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

A stronger theme, however, was the perception among those who claimed to trust it, that news itself needed to be fact-checked now. The news to these respondents was no longer trustworthy by default. Even those who said they trusted the news did so in strongly conditional ways.

“It provides me with base info to fact check.” (Female, 25-34, NZ European/Pākehā)

“It gives general information, which I can then search more into if I want more information on the topic, whether correct or incorrect info was given by the news.” (Female, 25-34, NZ European/Pākehā, Māori)

“I cross check with trusted experts on social media.” (Female, 55-64, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

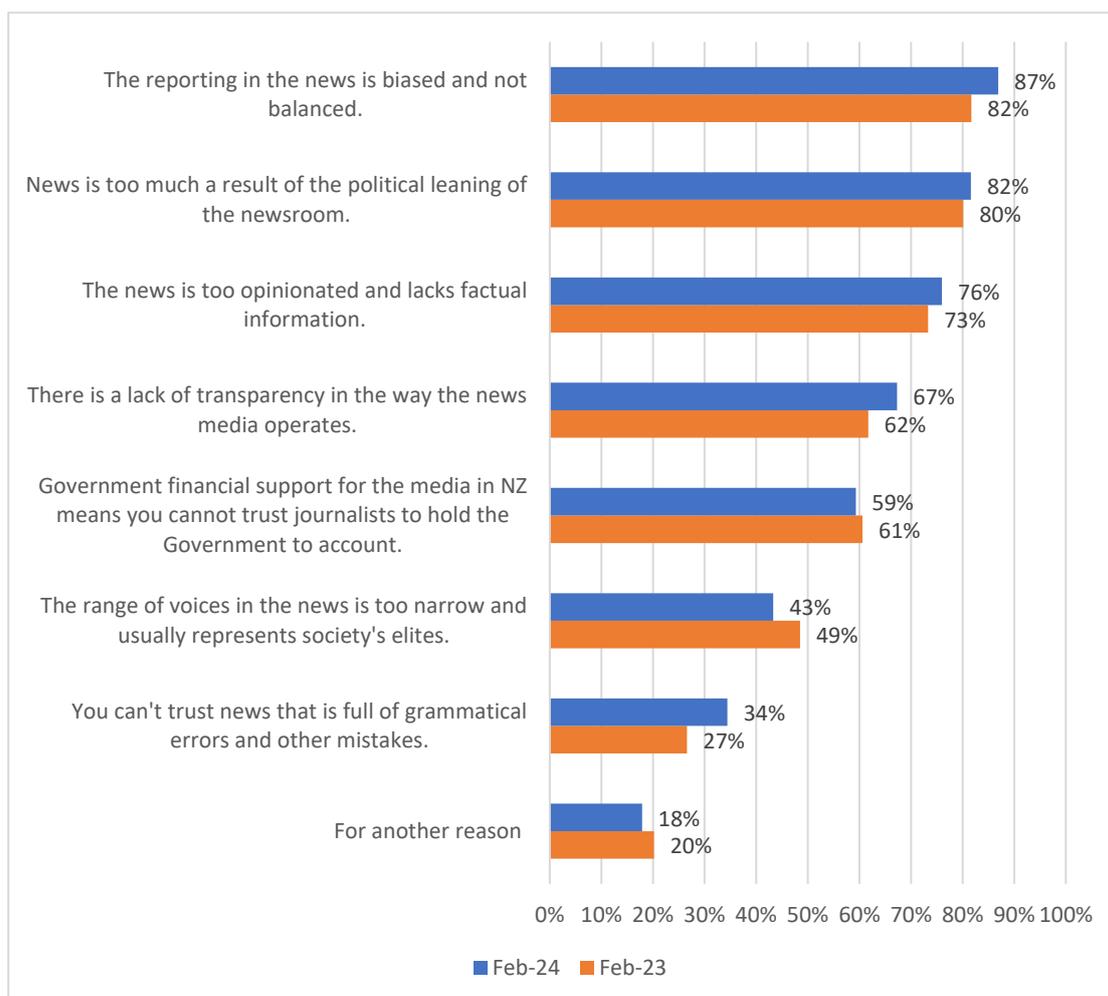
“While sceptical of some stories at times being unbiased I believe what I see until proven otherwise.

Social media is quick to jump on anything that may be incorrect.” (Female, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

Reasons for distrusting the news

A main reason given for not trusting the news is that it is biased and unbalanced. Approximately 87% (+5%) of those surveyed believe that this is the case (Figure 11). Additionally, 82% (+2%) believe that the news reflects the political leaning of the newsroom and 76% (+3%) regard news as too opinionated, lacking in actual information. The proportion of those who believe that the “Government financial support for the media in NZ means you cannot trust journalists to hold the Government to account” has dropped from 61% to 59%.

Figure 11: Reasons for not trusting the news



Qualitative comments

Asked if there were any other reasons they did not trust the news, respondents provided a variety of reasons that we considered thematically. Allegations of poor journalism, including bias, made up the strongest theme, with allegations of left-wing bias strongly outnumbering allegations of right-wing bias. Many respondents shared the view that mainstream news was “clearly biased to the left” (Male, 55-64, NZ European/Pākehā). Claims were also made by some that the news media was captured by government funding through the pandemic-related *Public Interest Journalism Fund*. At present, this theme is weaker than last year. Allegations of poor journalism also included claims of

sensationalism and clickbait, opinion masquerading as news, and capture by corporate and commercial interests. Others objected to the use of te reo Māori, which they perceived as exclusionary, and what they saw as too much coverage of Māori issues. A smaller number objected to the way the news reported on te ao Māori.

“The news in NZ is ALWAYS skewed to the left. It is quite sick to be honest. But more and more people are seeing through the lies now.” (Male, 35-44, ethnicity not supplied)

“It's almost entirely owned and/or controlled by outspoken right-wing interest groups and people with strong links to them.” (Male, 35-44, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

“The news appears to be based on what the government's [sic] want you to hear.” (Male, 55-64, NZ European/Pākehā)

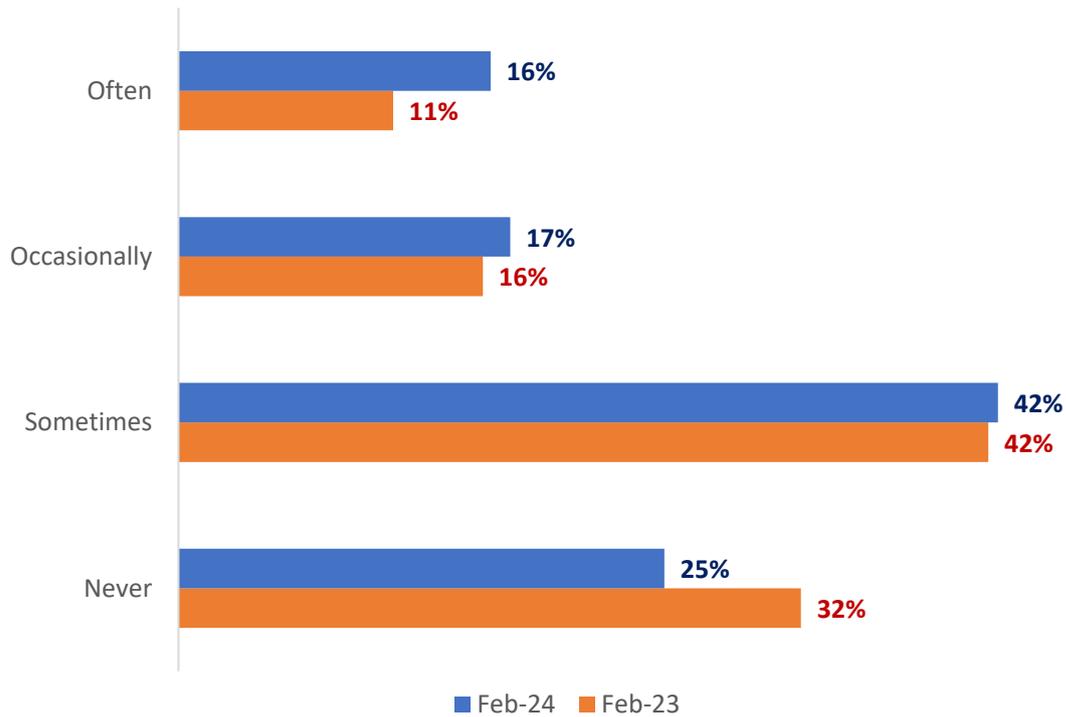
“Our media personalities overtly fawn over left wing politicians like Chloe Swarbrick and are overtly hostile to conservative politicians like David Seymour.” (Male, 35-44, Other European)

“It is too sensationalist and far too superficial. I mean the workd [sic] can be falling apart and we are hearing about Taylor Swift on prime time news. Not enough comprehensive international commentary and FAR too much about media personalities.” (Female, 55-64, NZ European/Pākehā)

Reasons for news avoidance

In 2024, approximately 75% of respondents said they actively avoid to the news to some degree (*often/sometimes/occasionally*). This is a significant increase from the 68% in 2023 who said they at least occasionally actively avoided the news. The proportion of those who avoid the news often grew from 11% in 2023 to 16% in 2024 (figure 12).

Figure 12: Proportion of those who actively avoid the news



Qualitative comments

We asked respondents to tell us about any other reasons they found themselves actively avoiding the news (occasionally/sometimes/often). An analysis of 665 responses found the reasons supplied for news avoidance fell largely into two camps with clear crossover between the two. Firstly, news avoiders told us the news was too negative and depressing, with most of those people saying it was actually bad for their mental health. Secondly, they told us the news they were avoiding was biased and too opinionated. A lesser but significant issue among news avoiders was that news was repetitive, boring or irrelevant to them.

‘Doom and gloom’. Negative news, including both the subject matter and its delivery, is the main reason given for avoiding the news by 42% of those who responded. Of those, 56% cited a threat of some sort to their mental health from the news. Some were brief (*“It’s all too depressing”*) while others more explicit (*“Too overwhelming with the horrific situation in Gaza etc”*). Many blamed the

state of the world for this negativity but also the way it was reported, with news selection a significant issue for respondents.

“I scroll past a lot of the conflict going on in Gaza. Not because I don't care, but it can be a bit much to stomach, and it's constant and miserable.” (Male, 25-34, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

“It can be something of a mood-killer, especially given the state of the world, local politics, prospects for the future etc.” (Male, 25-34, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Distressing content including children in war zones and racism.” (Female, 65-74, Māori)

“To not spiral into depression.” (Male, 35-44, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

“It's all too much at times. The media are constantly giving us updates about things that they think will get our attention, not necessarily things that we need to be focusing on.” (Female, 25-34, Māori)

“Because it can be distressing and overwhelming and depressing, and if it's something like the Israel/Palestine genocide, it is happening in another country, doesn't actually effect [sic] me and I have no ability to do anything about it.” (Female, 45-54, NZ European/Pākehā)

“I find the emphasis on negativity quite soul destroying.” (Male, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

Biased and opinionated. An almost equivalent number of news avoiders cited the quality of journalism as a main reason for their news avoidance. Forty-three per cent of comments emphasised a perception of poor journalism in some way.

An alleged bias in the news was central to the concerns of these news avoiders; 136 accused the media of an unspecified bias, with 38 others citing a left-wing bias and four accusing it of a right-wing bias. The overall tenor of comments would suggest an antipathy in many news avoiders to what they see as a left-wing bias in the news. One of the most significant findings from this qualitative part of the study, though, is the strength of antagonism towards reporting perceived as overloaded with opinion. Comments often either had no hope of neutrality from journalists or urged more balanced coverage.

“Lack of balance, too much opinion and propaganda rather than straight news.” (Female, 65-74, Other)

“The news is too much ‘peoples opinions’ these days. I just want the facts of events. I’m not interested in social politics and whinging.” (Female, 45-54, Other European)

“I can’t stand ‘opinion’ dressed as ‘news’ Msm often comes across very ideological Left wing and often I feel I’m being preached at.” (Female, 45-54, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Because the standard of reporting is poor, to [sic] much opinion reporting rather than the facts, to [sic] much emotional overlay and bias.” (Male, 65-74, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Far too much opinion, not enough facts or hard hitting journalism. I am tired of opinion writers and presenters shoving their opinions and reckons down New Zealand’s throat. There’s businesses flat out into corruption, and high profile people hiring/supporting gang members, but it’s brushed aside for news and opinions on banning phones in schools, or fried food.” (Male, 25-34, Māori, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Its more opinion pieces than factual investigative journalism. It never shows two sides of a story or even better, 3 sides. It is many times patronising and assumes we are all as thick as two short planks. I’m only as thick as one short plank.” (Female, 35-44, NZ European/Pākehā)

Boring and repetitive. A lesser theme comprised respondents’ perceptions the news was boring, repetitive or irrelevant. Some associated news strongly with politics, which they found boring. Others thought the news should be more in depth.

“It’s too repetitive and the same issues are being discussed almost daily.” (Male, 45-54, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Its the repetition of news that to me, is petty and trite and not really news at all.” (Male, 45-54, NZ European/Pākehā)

“Sometimes its the same ole stuff all day, also depends on what is in the news, I have to admit these days the news is very depressing, so I like to catch up on the headlines either online or radio and then decide whether to make a point of listening to a full news coverage.” (Female, 75+, NZ European/ Pākehā)

“Overexposure to the same news stories. Feeling fatigued with some of the coverage. Frustration at the method and extent of some coverage.” (Male, 18-24, NZ European/Pākehā)

Others (n=39) simply cited an inability to trust the news media as their reason for avoiding the news, with two of those citing “misinformation”. A small number accused the media of having been bought by the previous Labour government and being still in service to its politicians now in the Opposition.

Demographic findings

Our surveys collect some demographic data from those who participate in them. Data analysis from 2020 to 2023 shows that people aged 18-24 years had the most trust in news compared to other demographic groups. Approximately 47% of those surveyed in this age group expressed at least some trust in the news.³⁶ In 2020-2023, those who were 55-64 years old were the least trusting in the news with 51% expressing mistrust in the news. The age group was also the most concerned about poor journalism and fake news.

In 2024, of those in the age groups of 55-64 and 65-74, 47% said that they were extremely interested in news, the same figure for those under 35 was 22% (Figure 13). However, those in the age group 55-64 were also the most avid news avoiders (Figure 14). Those who were 18-24 years old were less likely to avoid the news than those over 24 years old (excluding those who were 70+).

³⁶ Doctoral Candidate Haley Jones at the AUT School of Communication Studies was analysing demographic data from 2020 to 2023 when working as a JMAD Research Assistant in July 2023.

Figure 13: Proportion of those who are extremely interested in news

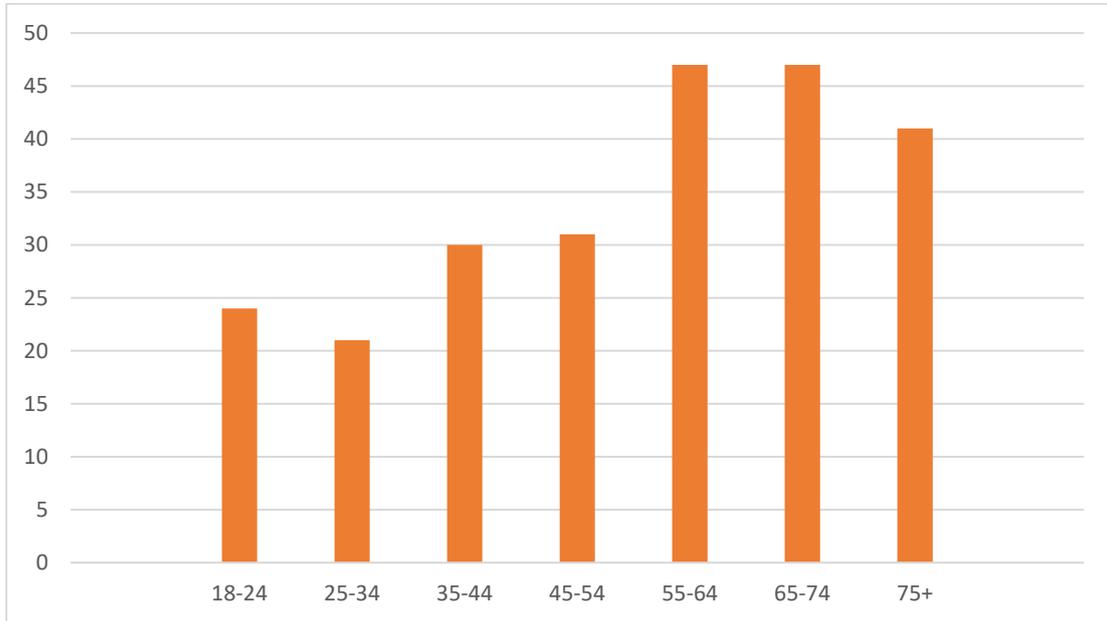
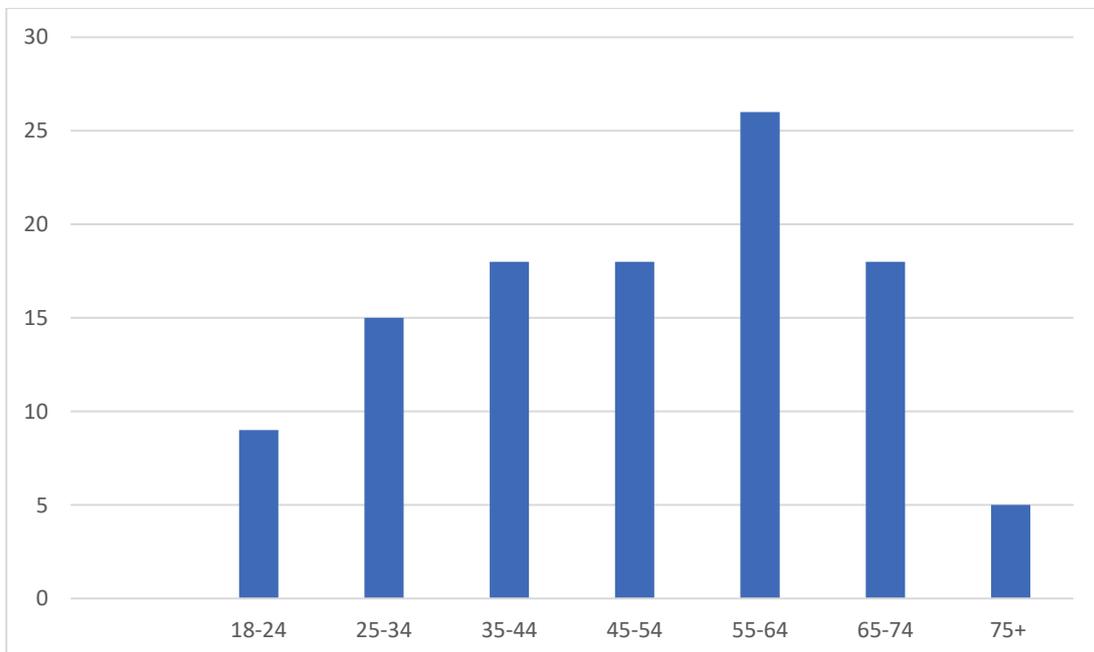
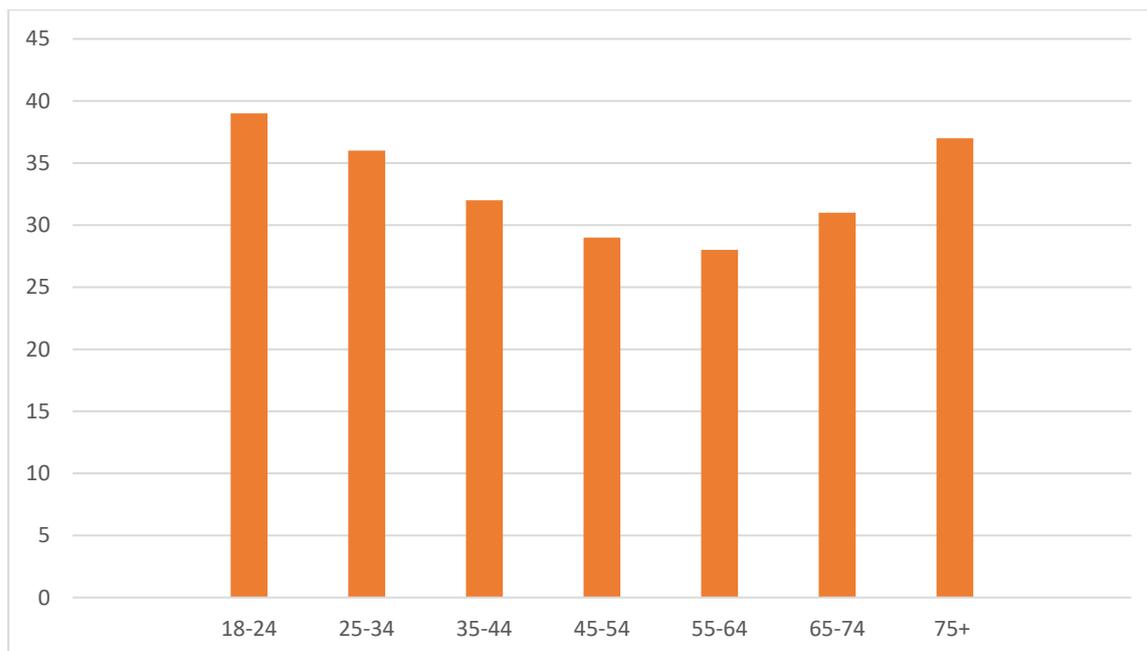


Figure 14: Proportion of those who avoid news often



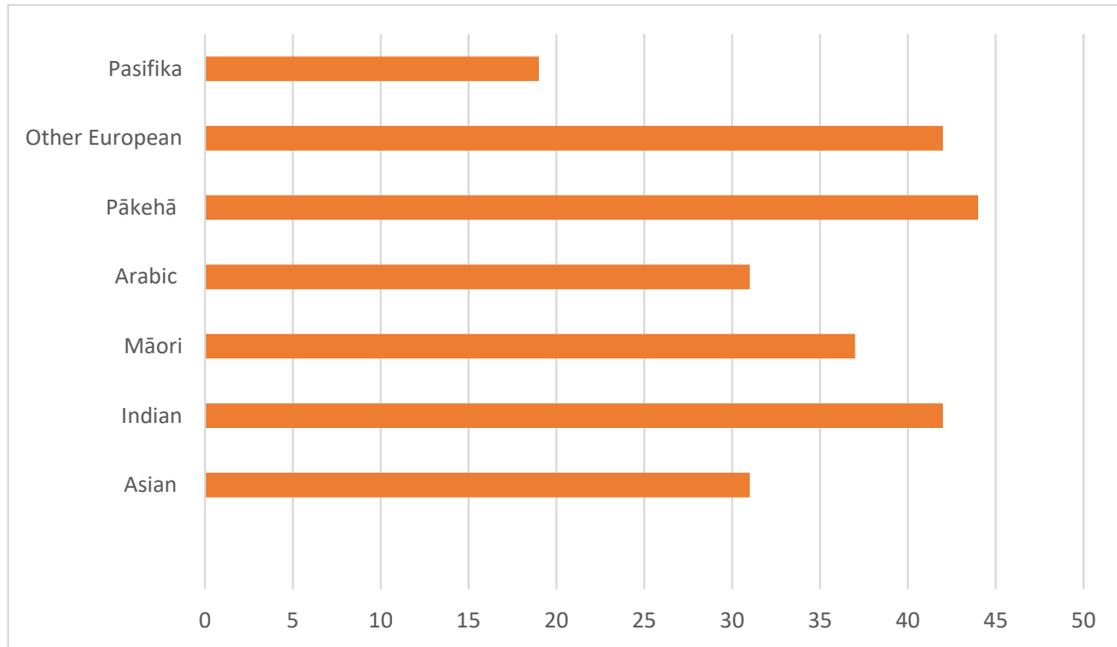
Those who strongly agree or tend to agree that news can be trusted come from the 18-24 years age group (39%) and 75+ age group (37%) (Figure 15). Those who are least trusting the news are 55-64 years old (figure 15).

Figure 15: Proportion of those who strongly/tend to agree that news can be trusted



When analysing news trust by ethnicity, in 2024 a proportion of those who said they strongly or tend to disagree that news can be trusted came from the NZ European/ Pākehā background (44%), followed by Other European (42%) and Indian ethnicities (42%).

Figure 15: Proportion of those who strongly/tend to disagree that news can be trusted by ethnicity





Based at the Auckland University of Technology's School of Communication Studies, the [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) research centre (JMAD) was established in 2010 to promote research and advance knowledge about the media and communication industries, news, and journalism's professional practices. Since 2011, JMAD has published ten annual *New Zealand Media Ownership* reports which track changes in media ownership and key trends and events in New Zealand media. Furthermore, since 2020, JMAD has produced annual *Trust in News in New Zealand* reports. Additionally, since 2014 the AUT Media Observatory has provided regular measurement and analysis of news and has produced three reports concerning New Zealand election coverage.