AI, journalism and news media in Aotearoa New Zealand

JM&D AUT RESEARCH CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM, MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

AOTEAROA

Table of Contents

About this report

This 2026 baseline report on artificial intelligence (AI), journalism, and news media in Aotearoa New Zealand is the first of its kind produced and published by the AUT Journalism, Media and Democracy research centre (JMAD). The report offers a glimpse into New Zealand's AI-assisted digital news media landscape. The author acknowledges that AI tools, principles, and guidelines are rapidly evolving as new technological tools and services are employed by news media organisations.

The report considers some values and risks of AI to news media and journalism, and evaluates ethical and legal issues arising from AI usage. It also explores how AI is used in New Zealand newsrooms, offering some case studies. The report suggests some key policy areas that should be addressed.

Author

Dr Merja Myllylahti is an associate professor in the Screen, Audio and Journalism department at the AUT School of Communication Studies. She is also co-director of AUT Journalism, Media and Democracy research centre (JMAD). In 2023, her book *From Paper to Platform: How tech giants are redefining news and democracy* was published by Bridget Williams Books. Otherwise, Merja's research has been published in international books and academic journals, including *Journalism Studies*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journal of Media Business Studies,* and *Media and Communication.* She is research blogger for the International News Media Association (INMA), and board trustee of the Better Public Media Trust.

Recommended citation: Myllylahti, M (2026). AI, journalism and news media in Aotearoa New Zealand. AUT Journalism, Media and Democracy research centre. https://www.jmadresearch.com/general-9

Related book chapter: Myllylahti, M. (2026). Mapping how AI may determine the value of news in fragmented and fiercely competitive media markets. In Flew, T., Stepnik, A. and Koskie, T. (eds). *Valuing news: digital platforms and journalism futures*. Palgrave. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-95-2341-2

Methodology

The information for this report comes from a variety of sources. Some was gathered from interviews and background briefings, conducted in October-December 2025. Quantitative, publicly available data about New Zealand news sites' web traffic sources was collected in March 2025, and it was compared to data published in a 2018 study of New Zealand news sites' traffic.[1] The website traffic data was gathered from the digital analytics company SimilarWeb's free service platform. The report also used 2023 and 2024 data gathered for a study of answer engines and their links to news sites.[2] Furthermore, the report utilises publicly available data from news articles and reports, including reports from the International News Media Association[3], Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Tow Research Centre, AUT Journalism, Media and Democracy research centre, and the European Union. It also uses academic articles and reports and publicly available analytical data and statistical information as a source.

Key terms

In general, we can understand *generative AI* as a machine-learning model that creates new content such as text, images, audio and video from large datasets that it is being trained on. GenAI uses algorithms to make sense of data sets to make meaning and respond to queries or prompts.[4]

---

[1] Myllylahti, M. (2018). An attention economy trap? An empirical investigation into four news companies' Facebook traffic and social media revenue. *Journal of Media Business Studies*, *15*(4), 237–253. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1527521

[2] Myllylahti, M. (2024, July 8). AI search tools and chatbots may make NZ news less visible and reliable – new study. The Conversation. https://theconversation.com/ai-search-tools-and-chatbots-may-make-nz-news-less-visible-and-reliable-new-study-233980

[3] Note: Author is a research blogger for the International News Media Association (INMA) https://www.inma.org/author/Dr-Merja-Myllylahti

[4] Zewe, A. (2023, November 9). Explained: Generative AI. https://news.mit.edu/2023/explained-generative-ai-1109

Artificial intelligence can be defined as an "act of computationally simulating human activities and skills in narrowly defined domains, typically the application of machine learning approaches through which machines learn from data and/or their own performance." [5]

In this report, AI is understood *in a journalistic context* as "a set of tools that affect journalistic workflow changing the way news is gathered, and content is created and distributed." [6]

AI search refers to AI search engines that are powered by AI technologies such as natural language processing, machine learning and large language models. In AI searches, news often appears as AI-generated summaries of a topic, drawing information from multiple sources. These search engines include Google, Perplexity, ChatGPT Search, and Brave.

AI assistants or *new answer engines* provide direct answers to user queries using AI and natural language processing. They are designed to give direct, detailed answers to questions prompted by users by searching the web, identifying sources, and synthesising information into responses.[7] These include ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, Google Gemini, Perplexity AI, and Claude.

[5] Simon, F. (2024). Artificial Intelligence in the news. How AI retools, rationalises, and reshapes journalism and the public arena. Tow Centre for Digital Journalism https://towcenter.columbia.edu/sites/towcenter.columbia.edu/files/content/Tow%20Report_Felix-Simon-AI-in-the-News.pdf?ref=theethicaldroid.com

[6] Myllylahti, M. (2026). Mapping how AI may determine the value of news in fragmented and fiercely competitive media markets. In Flew, T., Stepnik, A. and Koskie, T. (eds). *Valuing news: digital platforms and journalism futures*. Palgrave. https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-95-2341-2

[7] Myllylahti, M. (2026)

Summary of key observations

AI used in day-to-day newswork

- AI tools are widely used in day-to-day news and content production, with commercial media outlets Stuff and NZME experimenting more widely with AI tools than the publicly owned broadcasters RNZ and TVNZ
- In general, New Zealand newsrooms are using AI tools in some content writing and editing; some are allowing journalists to write a first draft of a simple story with AI-assistance
- AI is commonly used for transcription and summarising stories or documents, and to some extent for content moderation and personalising/recommending content

Ethics and principles of AI usage

- All major newsrooms, including NZME, Stuff, RNZ and TVNZ, have published AI principles and/or ethics
- AI principles emphasise the importance of human oversight and the need to follow journalism principles and ethics when using AI in news production
- However, transparency of usage appears to be a tricky issue: News organisations don't disclose exactly how AI is used in content production, and some editors feel that "the ship has sailed" in terms of tagging or labelling AI content
- Editors also believe that as ChatGPT is used mainly as a "replacement for Google search", it is not necessary to tell the audience how AI is used

AI usage and trust

- AI tools are widely used by New Zealanders, but their trust in AI-generated journalism is low
- Approximately 8% of New Zealanders are comfortable consuming news produced by AI with some human oversight
- Roughly 26% of New Zealanders are comfortable with news that is produced mainly by human journalists with AI assistance

Newsroom benefits and risks

- While AI offers newsrooms many declared benefits, risks exist, for example, in relation to website traffic and IP protection
- While an editor says, “machines make mistakes, so do humans”, AI-assisted journalism carries a substantial risk to the audience’s trust
- Declared benefits of AI usage include time saving and wider and deeper news coverage as well as better personalisation
- Some news organisations imply that their subscriptions have increased because of AI, but it is unclear how much real monetary value is created with AI-assistance as this kind of revenue is not reported

No licensing deals, no regulation

- At the time of writing, none of New Zealand’s news organisations had a licensing or copyright deal with AI companies using their news content to train AI models
- The New Zealand Government has not implemented any regulations for AI companies. Copyright law is not used to mandate AI providers to compensate news organisations or news creators for their content

Overview

AI usage in newsrooms

New generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are fundamentally changing how news is gathered, produced, and distributed, and this affects the entire cycle of news production. As news organisations rapidly employ some AI tools in their daily work, it is important to understand how these are used, what the associated risks are, and what value is created. This snapshot report covers some relevant aspects of these issues.

In 2023, a survey of 105 news organisations in 46 countries revealed that approximately 85% of newsrooms had experimented with AI "to help with tasks such as writing code, image generation and authoring summaries."[8] Roughly two thirds of news media companies believed that generative AI "presents new opportunities for journalism."

By 2024, 35% of news media organisations in the European Union had already adopted AI technologies.[9] A 2024 survey of 221 journalists, editors and newsroom managers in more than 70 countries across the Global South and emerging economies, found that more than 80% of journalists were using AI in their profession, with 52.4 % saying "AI had significantly impacted their work."[10]

While there is no reliable statistical or survey data of the use of AI in New Zealand newsrooms, there is evidence that the major news organisations, including NZME, Stuff, RNZ, and TVNZ, are using or experimenting with some AI tools.

---

[8] Beckett, C. (2024, September 4). Journalism and AI: a global survey. Medium. https://charliebeckett.medium.com/journalism-and-ai-a-global-survey-a1491a036092

[9] European Union (2025). The European media industry outlook. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0104f736-8935-11f0-9af8-01aa75ed71a1/language-en

[10] Radcliffe, D. (2025). Journalism in the AI Era: A TRF Insights survey: Opportunities and challenges in the Global South and emerging economies. Thomson Reuters Foundation. https://www.trust.org/resource/ai-revolution-journalists-global-south/

In general, newsrooms are using AI tools to identify trends and patterns, automate transcripts, summarise articles, and share content. AI also used to create liquid content – for example to turn text into audio and vice versa - and to translate news stories into other languages. Additionally, AI is used to personalise advertising and to obtain subscriptions.[11] The technology is said to help newsrooms simplify tasks, create efficiencies, free journalists from routine tasks, allow personalisation, create traffic, and boost subscriptions, among other things. However, relying on AI for the whole chain of news production creates risks and ethical concerns related to journalistic autonomy, disinformation, bias, trust, fair compensation, copyright, licensing, creator protection, and platform power.

AI, audience and trust

Audiences are also increasingly experimenting with AI tools. A study of six countries (Argentina, Denmark, France, Japan, the UK, and the US) found that roughly 24% of their citizens used AI to get information. While more people are getting news via generative AI systems, including AI search and answer engines, consuming news via AI platforms has remained "a minority activity." [12] People mainly used AI to research topics, ask for advice or answer factual questions - only 6% of citizens in these countries used AI to get news. Similarly, a study by Pew Research Centre shows that about one-in-10 adults in the United States get their news from answer engines. Approximately 9% of adults get their news either often or sometimes from answer engines such as ChatGPT or Gemini.[13]

[11] Myllylahti, M. (2025a). AI & news – so where is the beef. A lecture at the University of Hamburg, Germany, July 3, 2025.
[12] Simon, F., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025). Generative AI and news report 2025: How people think about AI's role in journalism and society. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism. DOI: 10.60625/risj-5bjv-yt69
[13] Lipka, M. and Eddy, K. (2025, October 1). Relatively few Americans are getting news from AI chatbots like ChatGPT. Pew Research Centre. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/10/01/relatively-few-americans-are-getting-news-from-ai-chatbots-like-chatgpt/

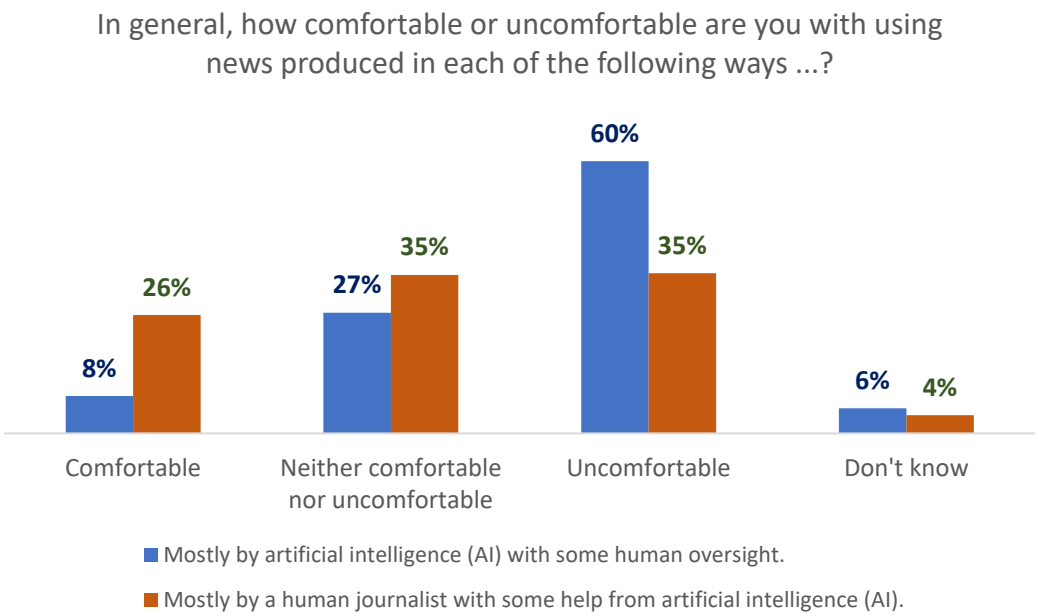
In New Zealand, usage of AI is also continuing to rise. A 2025 survey of 1,000 people by telecommunications company One NZ found that 77% of New Zealanders have "knowingly interacted with AI-powered services from businesses or organisations in the past 12 months."[14] Approximately 40% of those surveyed had used AI assistants or new answer engines such as ChatGPT and Perplexity.

The survey reveals a significant generational gap: 90% of 18 to 34-year-olds had interacted with AI compared to 60% of people aged 55 years and older. Approximately 6 in 10 of those surveyed say they would not use a company if they were concerned about use of AI, "highlighting the need for secure and transparent AI practices."

According to KPMG, New Zealanders are more worried than optimistic or excited about AI. Approximately 34% of people "are willing to trust" AI, with 48% "accepting or approving" AI.[15] Trust is one of the key issues in AI adaptation, especially for news and journalism. A report by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that only 12% of respondents in Argentina, Denmark, France, Japan, the UK, and the US were comfortable with news made entirely by AI.[16] Approximately 21% were comfortable with AI news that has human oversight and 43% if a human leads news production with some AI help.

[14] One NZ (2025). AI trust report. New Zealanders' attitudes towards AI in 2025. https://content.vodafone.co.nz/f3/fd/876a4b034b65a9e9a186644ff71c/one-nz-ai-trust-report.pdf
[15] KPMG (2025). Trust, Attitudes and Use of Artificial Intelligence: A Global Study 2025. https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/nz/pdf/2025/05/trust-attitudes-and-use-of-ai-new-zealand-snapshot.pdf
[16] Simon, F., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025).

Figure 1: How New Zealanders perceive news produced by AI/with AI assistance



Source: JMAD Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand report 2025[17]

The *JMAD Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* report 2025 shows that only 8% of New Zealanders are comfortable consuming news produced by AI with some human oversight.[18] As seen in Figure 1, approximately 26% of people are comfortable with news produced mainly by human journalists with AI assistance.

[17] Myllylahti, M. and Treadwell, G. (2025). Trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand. JMAD. https://www.jmadresearch.com/_files/ugd/a95e86_be69ce3448e64af4969c09df872454e9.pdf
[18] Myllylahti, M. & Treadwell, G. (2025).

AI principles and ethics

General principles and ethics

As noted, use of AI comes with some risks and ethical dilemmas, such as whether to disclose how newsrooms use AI in news gathering and production. These risks relate to journalistic autonomy and principles, trust and transparency, and verification of information.

The 2023 Paris Charter on AI and Journalism states that journalists using AI should follow professional ethics, prioritise human agency, and maintain transparency in their use of AI systems. The charter says that "any use of AI that has a significant impact on the production or distribution of journalistic content should be clearly disclosed and communicated to everyone receiving information alongside the relevant content."[19] Furthermore, media outlets should keep a "public record of the AI systems they use and have used, detailing their purposes, scopes, and conditions of use."

A recent study analysing AI guidelines of news publishers in Western Europe and North America shows that most have already started to adapt their general ethical guidelines and principles to include key points of transparency and human oversight.[20] However, how the principles and ethics of AI are developed and used is dependent on national and organisational context.

[19] Reporters Without Borders (2023, November 10). Paris charter on AI and journalism. https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/medias/file/2023/11/Paris%20charter%20on%20AI%20in%20Journalism.pdf

[20] Becker, K. B., Simon, F. M., & Crum, C. (2025). Policies in Parallel? A Comparative Study of Journalistic AI Policies in 52 Global News Organisations. *Digital Journalism*, *13*(9), 1578–1598. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2024.2431519

New Zealand media

In New Zealand, the E tū union has issued a statement about AI principles in relation to journalism, saying that "AI can't tell a fact from a lie. It can even create its own lie and amplify it", and therefore, newsrooms should always give primacy to "real journalists and human sources."[21] The union says news companies "must respect the rights of content creators and their sources", and that business needs should not trump fundamental journalism principles of telling the truth with integrity. New Zealand's main media corporations have published their principles and ethics of AI use, and somewhat explained how AI is used in newswork. However, the principles themselves do not reveal much about how AI assistants and tools are used in everyday work (the section about AI usage in this report deals with this.) While AI principles and ethics call for transparency and openness, and labelling on AI content, some editors in New Zealand believe that in terms of tagging AI content "the ship has sailed." Some of them argue that as ChatGPT is used mainly as a "replacement for Google search", it is not necessary to tell the audiences how the AI is used in the process.

RNZ

Publicly owned public interest broadcaster RNZ published its AI principles in August 2024. They allow journalists to use AI in research, but emphasise the need to deliver journalism that is in the public interest. RNZ allows journalists to use AI for transcription and finding sources, but not for content creation, including text.[22] The public interest broadcaster says that generative AI "should not be used to create news stories, current affairs or factual

[21] E tū (2024, August 29). E tū National Media Delegates Committee statement on the use of AI in journalism. https://etu.nz/e-tu-national-media-delegates-committee-statement-on-the-use-of-ai-in-journalism/
[22] RNZ (n.d.). RNZ Artificial Intelligence Principles. https://www.rnz.co.nz/assets/cms_uploads/000/000/490/AI_Principles.pdf

journalism for RNZ."[23] RNZ principles do not allow the use of AI to generate images or visuals, stating that photos and video should not be manipulated beyond cropping and editing for colour, contrast, and brightness. RNZ says that any content created with the help of AI needs to be checked by humans, and the usage of the technology needs to be labelled and explained properly: “Anything made with AI will be labelled and explained as such, and all RNZ’s editorial policies and processes apply. Disclosures should be precise in language without being confusing to our audience.”

TVNZ

Publicly owned TVNZ released documents outlining its newsroom practices and ethical guidelines in August 2024, and these included principles for AI use in news and current affairs reporting. In the documents, it emphasises that AI is not allowed to generate “whole stories or images.” The broadcaster says, “transparency is key.”[24] It also states that AI should only be used as a journalistic tool and its usage should adhere to professional ethics and practices of journalism. In a specific statement related to AI, TVNZ says human oversight is essential to use of generative AI and that reporters will “never rely solely on AI-generated research.”[25] The broadcaster notes that if its reporting includes “significant elements generated by AI in a piece of work”, this will be disclosed to audiences.

[23] Paterson, J. (2025, September 18). Trust and Tech: Where should RNZ draw the line on AI? RNZ. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/573390/trust-and-tech-where-should-rnz-draw-the-line-on-ai
[24] TVNZ releases documents showing how newsroom works (2024, August 26). *1News*. https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/08/26/tvnz-releases-documents-showing-how-newsroom-works/
[25] TVNZ news and current affairs generative AI statement (2024, August 26). 1News. https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/08/26/tvnz-news-and-current-affairs-generative-ai-statement/

Stuff

Commercial news outlet Stuff outlines principles for AI use in its editorial code of practice and ethics. These principles were already stated in November 2023. The company says any content generated by AI must meet the same standards of accuracy, fairness and balance as any other journalistic content it publishes or broadcasts.[26] Its policy on generative AI emphasises transparency, information verification and human control. Stuff aims to ensure that journalistic standards are met when using AI by putting responsibility for usage on humans – editors, news directors, producers and content creators.[27] Stuff points out that how AI is used and content is created must adhere to New Zealand law, standards and codes of the New Zealand Media Council and Advertising Standards Authority as well as Stuff's own editorial code and its charter.

NZME

Commercially operating news company NZME published its AI principles in May 2024. The company states that generative AI "can provide journalists with powerful tools", and that the *NZ Herald* and other NZME publications "use AI to improve our journalism."[28] NZME allows its newsrooms to use AI tools for research and editing, including generating headlines and summaries. AI may also be used to process publicly available information such as press releases — all with appropriate human oversight. The technology can also be used for writing articles from press releases. NZME says that it is labelling AI produced content and

[26] Stuff (2023). Stuff editorial code of practice and ethics. https://www.stuff.co.nz/about-us/350112952/stuff-editorial-code-practice-and-ethics#:~:text=Human%20oversight%20and%20fact%20checking,content%20written%20by%20professional%20journalists.

[27] Lynch, K. (2025, February 14). Stuff and the machines – our policy on generative AI. Stuff. https://www.stuff.co.nz/about-us/360580995/stuff-and-machines-our-policy-generative-ai

[28] NZ Herald and our use of AI (2024, May 27). *NZ Herald.* https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/nzme-nz-herald-and-our-use-of-ai/UOS6EQNOMNFM7CMIDHABIWBTPM/

will disclose "if generative AI is used to write an entire article, or to produce graphics or illustrations." It does not allow the generation of photos or videos with AI tools to accompany news articles. All AI-generated work must be checked before being processed for publication. The company's editorial code of conduct and ethics states that newsrooms use AI technology "where appropriate", when it can be verified and when it meets the standards for trustworthiness and quality.[29] It says content produced with the assistance of AI "will always" be approved and overseen by editors and senior newsroom staff.

The Spinoff

The digital media outlet *The Spinoff* has a more cautious approach to AI than some of the main news organisations. It does not use technology for editorial writing or editing, and states that audiences "will not read words on *The Spinoff* that have been generated using Generative AI."[30] It says the use of AI always requires human oversight and "constant, rigorous checking." However, it says that AI tools can be used to generate "alternative text for images." *The Spinoff* allows its staff to use AI tools to analyse and summarise publicly available documents and datasets. However, "outputs, such as facts, data analysis, or quotes, are reviewed by writers and editors." The outlet observes that "it is well-documented that generative models of large language models, such as Google Gemini, Claude, and Chat GPT, make many mistakes."

[29] The NZME/NZ Herald editorial code of conduct and ethics (2025, September 15). The NZ Herald. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/the-nzmenz-herald-editorial-code-of-conduct-and-ethics/3EQIG43VYBFWBOLYGEEAFM3NAM/

[30] The Spinoff (2025, May). May 2025. https://thespinoff.co.nz/about-us/use-of-generative-ai

AI use in newsrooms

Usage in New Zealand newsrooms

Generative AI is widely used and experimented with in New Zealand newsrooms, but there is still little information on how it is used in everyday news gathering, production and distribution. A recent report from AI Forum New Zealand found that in the media, marketing and education sectors, AI tools are used to draft articles, create learning materials and to summarise data and information.[31] Based on research conducted for this report, we can summarise in Table 1 how AI is used in New Zealand newsrooms and/or in content production in broadcasting (as of November 2025).

Table 1: AI usage in New Zealand news/content production 2025-2026

	Some content writing, writing headlines, summaries	Editing content, incl. spelling/ grammar	Transcribing, generating audio from text or vice versa	Some image or video creation/ editing	Researching, searching, analysing	Summarising large documents and data	Content moderation, incl. social media	Personalising content/ recommend
Stuff	*V*	*V*	*V*		*V*	*V*		
NZME	*V*	*V*	*V*		*V*	*V*	*V*	*V*
RNZ		*V*	*V*		*V*	*V*	*V*	
TVNZ*	*V*			*V*				*V*

Note: Stuff allows use of AI to write some single source content, headlines, captions with human oversight; NZME allows AI to write content for *BusinessDesk* automated articles only; *TVNZ data refers to other content creation than news, for example, TVNZ+ allows AI to write programme captions.

[31] AI forum New Zealand (2025). AI in action. Exploring the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on New Zealand's Productivity. https://aiforum.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/AI-Forum-Productivity-Report_Website_Aug-2025.pdf

An international report about the use of AI in public service media shows (PSM) that the usage of AI among public broadcasters is growing. However, a report from the Public Media Alliance which includes *RNZ,* found the use of AI tools by PSMs is "less pronounced than expected, although there was evidence that they provided vital infrastructure."[32] The report shows that the "second most cited area of current AI use" in public media organisations, was image generation and editing. The report says AI tools allow media companies to improve the efficiency of image editing.

RNZ is using AI to monitor its social media comments, although humans still have the oversight of moderation.[33] RNZ says that the AI tool Sense helps the broadcaster monitor comments and AI is used to "identify and categorise harmful content within social media sections." The AI tool allows for hiding comments rather than deleting them, "allowing moderation decisions to be reviewed by an RNZ staff member and checked for fairness." RNZ states that this ensures that there is "appropriate oversight of this assistive use of AI."

RNZ Director of AI Strategy & Implementation Patrick Crewdson says that while RNZ has published a guide of AI principles, it is a "living, dynamic document", and RNZ expects principles to "evolve over time."[34] Currently, RNZ journalists are allowed to use AI to transcribe interviews and other audio, " for the purpose of generating notes that will then be checked for accuracy." Journalists can also use AI tools to search and research, analysis

[32] Wright, K. and Porter, K. (2025). How public media organisations use AI: Industry report. Public Media Alliance. https://www.publicmediaalliance.org/how-public-media-organisations-use-ai-industry-report/
[33] RNZ (2025, September 17). RNZ to introduce social media monitoring tool to allow for more conversation [Media release]. https://www.rnz.co.nz/media/279
[34] Patrick Crewdson, RNZ Director of AI Strategy & Implementation, personal communication, December 3, 2025

and summarising documents. They can also be used for idea generation as part of planning journalistic content, and for checking spelling and grammar. Furthermore, AI offers tools to clean up audio and improve audibility.

RNZ newsrooms are not using AI to generate media – including video, audio, images and text – that are intended for publication or broadcast. However, in the specific case of true crime podcast *Nark*, journalists were allowed to create a voice clone for a deceased person, to let him speak in his exact words.[35] RNZ newsrooms are not using AI for subbing or editing content, or "manipulating media in such a way that it is no longer an accurate depiction of reality." Crewdson says that RNZ has "a strong culture of referring up, so journalists will escalate any new use cases or points of uncertainty to a senior editor."

TVNZ uses AI tools to some extent, and in 2024 released a statement on their usage in news and current affairs operations. It says the broadcaster "does not use AI to generate whole stories or images."[36] Furthermore, it states that "if we use tools that utilise generative AI, the final product will always be checked by humans." In practice, for television programmes TVNZ+ uses "a mix of human-created captions and AI-generated captions" with AI-generated captions being used when human-created captions aren't available. The broadcaster states that "while AI captions are improving, we know they may not always be

[35] Watkin, T. (2025, October 29). Nark: How (and why) we used AI to recreate a dead man's voice. RNZ. https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/nark/577167/nark-how-and-why-we-used-ai-to-recreate-a-dead-man-s-voice)
[36] TVNZ (2024, August 26). TVNZ news and current affairs generative AI statement. https://www.1news.co.nz/2024/08/26/tvnz-news-and-current-affairs-generative-ai-statement/

as accurate as human-created captions."[37] AI is also used for personalising viewing recommendations for its audiences.[38]

TVNZ also uses WSC Sports, an "AI-powered automation platform to fuel a new era of content operations" to create highlights of cricket matches, and to deliver content across all of its digital platforms and to create AI-generated clips in digital advertising and campaigns.[39] This means that highlights from cricket matches can be automated as well as AI being used to automate graphics (for example, resizing, and cropping). The technology allows the broadcaster to create different content types such as match recaps and it enables "multi-platform publishing across the entire TVNZ digital ecosystem, including TVNZ+, 1News.co.nz website and social media."

Stuff Group is using AI tools in its day-to-day news gathering and reporting, for example to process press releases from a single source, such as police or fire services. AI can be used to write the first draft of an article based on a single source press release, which is then fed into Stuff's content management system after human producers have checked that it is ready for publication and it adheres to the company's code of ethics.[40] (Keith Lynch, Stuff Digital Editor-in-Chief, personal communication, October 20, 2025).

---

[37] TVNZ (n.d.). Which TVNZ+ shows have captions/subtitles?https://helptvnz.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/360019822831-Which-TVNZ-shows-have-captions-subtitles#:~:text=Nearly%2060%25%20of%20the%20content,@able.co.nz

[38] Keall, C. (2023, December 1). TVNZ's ambitious new digital ad revenue target - and the Amazon AI tools it hopes will help. https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/tvnzs-ambitious-digital-ad-revenue-target-and-the-aws-clean-rooms-and-amazon-personalisation-ai-tools-it-hopes-will-help/BD4QHGSZGVD7RA2PS4YKCAFHOM/

[39] How TVNZ uses AI to create and distribute cricket content across its digital properties at scale (n.d.). https://wsc-sports.com/case/tvnz/#:~:text=TVNZ%20adopted%20WSC%20Sports'%20AI,wicket%20to%20milestone%20player%20moments

[40] Keith Lynch, Stuff Digital Editor-in-Chief, personal communication, October 20, 2025

According to Stuff Digital Editor-in-Chief Keith Lynch, AI allows journalists to create actual journalism instead of spending time on "repurposing content." He says that journalists are encouraged to use AI and ChatGPT as a tool – for example to summarise information – and more importantly as a search engine and research tool. He acknowledges that AI makes mistakes and its usage comes with risks, which are addressed and mitigated through human control.

Stuff is not using AI tags or labels in the stories that have utilised AI, as AI is primarily seen as a journalistic tool. Lynch says that more important than labelling the stories is to make sure that the content journalists produce is "accurate, timely and newsworthy."

Stuff is also experimenting with AI to summarise large legal documents and court papers. While AI is able to write a story, for example on court decisions, stories and facts are always checked by human producers to determine whether the story is suitable for publication. The news outlet is also testing how good AI is in turning scripts into a video or TV content among other things.

NZME states that journalists are using AI in their day-to-day work to "leverage AI to augment key workflows."[41] In practice, NZME is using AI editing tools, and the technology is used by *BusinessDesk* to generate news stories based on the NZX companies' market announcements. These stock market related stories are labelled as AI produced. NZME has personalisation tools related to the *NZ Herald's* online audience and AI is used to convert newspaper articles from text to audio.

[41] Matt Martel, NZME Managing Editor, Audience and Platforms, personal communication October 30, 2025

NZME has an “editorial innovation unit” embedded in its newsroom and it is working with product, technology and data science teams to deliver technological tools. One of these tools is *First Look* that helps edit content, including correcting grammar, and it can make suggestions for example for search optimised headlines. The *First Listen* tool can transcribe video and audio from interviews, *Polaris* manages “slots on the homepage” to optimise content for those who are accessing NZME content for free or those who are subscribers. Also, its *First Cut* tool helps producers to get articles ready for print newspapers.

Matt Martel, NZME Managing Editor, Audience and Platforms, says that “everything we do has human oversight, and is reviewed by experienced newsroom team members prior to being published.” However, it also uses “AI to check AI, before human overview.” He says that NZME is “happy with what we’ve achieved and the way we’ve done it”, referring to the use of AI. He says that, for example, the text to speech tool has improved accessibility significantly to its news as audiences are also now able to listen to journalism. “We've developed world-first text-to-speech technology that intelligently recognises and pronounces te reo Māori words within English text, switching pronunciation between the two languages.”

Case studies

BusinessDesk and Today in Business

As observed, NZME-owned business news website *BusinessDesk* uses AI to write news stories based on the information released on the New Zealand stock market, NZX. AI creates articles from the basic NZX announcements, and it will “not add context or any other information to the article.”[42] The *NZ Herald* has also launched and then closed the

[42] Matt Martel, NZME Managing Editor, Audience and Platforms, personal communication October 30, 2025

experimental *Today in Business* podcast that summarised the day's business news with the help of AI. AI was used to write and voice the whole podcast, and to check the content that it was generating. In practice, AI wrote a first draft of content based on "journalist-created and edited articles." The draft was then fact checked by a second AI model, and then, the original AI model re-checked any changes to ensure no new errors or context changes have been introduced. Finally, the last step saw one of business editors checking it before publication.[43]

Waikato Times

Stuff's regional masthead *Waikato Times* uses AI as a tool for local news reporting. It's Democracy.AI tool helps journalists to scan and report on public documents such as minutes of local council meetings. In 2025, the tool won the "*Best Use of AI*" at the International News Media Association global awards.[44] Stuff owner and publisher Sinead Boucher says that the technology "enables reporters to spend more time out in the field talking to real people." The *Waikato Times* Editor, Jonathan MacKenzie, says that AI is especially good at summarising council submissions, shortening the stories, and finding angles to the stories.[45] He believes that AI provides value as it helps the newsroom to cover more stories, adding breadth to the news coverage that matters to people. However, he says that news production cannot be fully automated, and you will still need human oversight to make sure that stories are accurate.

[43] Matt Martel (2025)
[44] Stuff's AI tool wins at International News Media Association awards (2025, June 10). StopPress. https://stoppress.co.nz/news/stuffs-ai-tool-wins-at-international-news-media-association-awards/
[45] Myllylahti, M. (2026).

VoxPop AI News Engine

New Zealand entrepreneurs Peter Fowler and Andrew McMillan have built and piloted an AI-native newsroom VoxPop AI News Engine that is being tested in the United States and New Zealand. The news engine uses AI to rewrite news stories from press releases and official statements that are delivered to it via e-mail. According to Fowler, the engine takes approximately three minutes to produce concise news stories that follow a standard journalistic structure. All stories can be linked back to the original sources, and they have a human oversight. [46]

Fowler says that the tool is especially good at delivering accurate emergency information and it is also good with straight factual data. However, it is less promising when using political press releases as AI lacks an understanding of nuances and contexts. An example was its emergency reporting on the magnitude 8.8 earthquake that struck off the coast of Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula on July 30, 2025. VoxPop's AI news engine filed the first story "just 9 minutes after the earthquake occurred, using official data from the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center" outperforming "major media email alerts by 60+ minutes during the critical first hour."[47] Fowler says that the news engine was able to produce timely and reliable information about "a major unfolding global event." He says that the AI news engine was able to "successfully publish well ahead of human editorial chains", proving that automated news systems can break stories about significant geo-events.

[46] Peter Fowler, Vox-Pop co-founder, personal communication May 6, 2025
[47] Peter Fowler, Vox-Pod co-founder personal communication July 31, 2025

AI and news visibility

Accuracy of AI search and assistants

Increasingly, news audiences find information via search engines that are powered by AI technology or through new answer engines and assistants such as ChatGPT. Most often, AI-powered search engines offer information as a summary that is drawn from multiple sources. A good example of this is Google Overview. Approximately "50% of Google searches already have AI summaries, a figure expected to rise to more than 75 percent by 2028."[48] New answer engines provide direct answers to user queries using AI and natural language processing. They are designed to give direct, detailed answers to questions prompted by users, and by searching the web, identifying sources, and synthesising information into responses. These include ChatGPT (OpenAI), Gemini (Google), Copilot (Microsoft), Claude (Anthropic), and Perplexity.

The answers AI search and assistant engines provide are somewhat problematic, as an American study that examined eight generative AI search tools shows. The research included ChatGPT Search, Perplexity, Perplexity Pro, DeepSeek Search, Microsoft's Copilot, xAI's Grok-2, Grok-3 and Google's Gemini.[49] The study found that answer assistants failed to properly link to original sources and correctly link to news articles. They often cited fabricated or broken URLs and "collectively, they provided incorrect answers to more than 60 percent of queries."

[48] McKinsey & Company (2025, October 16). New front door to the internet: Winning in the age of AI search. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/new-front-door-to-the-internet-winning-in-the-age-of-ai-search

[49] Jaźwińska, C. and Chandrasekar, A. (2025). AI Search Has a Citation Problem. Columbia Journalism Review. https://www.cjr.org/tow_center/we-compared-eight-ai-search-engines-theyre-all-bad-at-citing-news.php

Similarly, an international study co-ordinated by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and led by the BBC, found that AI assistants "routinely misrepresent news content no matter which language, territory, or AI platform is tested."[50] The study included ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, and Perplexity. It found that "at least 45% of all AI answers had at least one significant issue", with "31% of responses showed serious sourcing problems – missing, misleading, or incorrect attributions." Approximately one fifth of the responses had major issues with accuracy, "including hallucinated details and outdated information."

A study by Myllylahti (2024) backs these findings. Her study collected three months of data from AI search engines and assistants, analysing their responses in 2023 and in 2024. AI search engines were prompted to offer the "main news in New Zealand today", and chatbots were asked to provide links and sources to news stories. Her findings show that AI search assistants "increasingly link to random, non-news sources such as industry forums and press releases." Google Gemini and Microsoft Copilot chatbots also failed to give links to the specific news stories, and gave no sources in the answers they provided.[51]

Traffic and links to news sites

AI search and search assistants affect how news is searched for and found and how traffic is directed to news sites. An article by consultancy firm McKinsey & Company asserts that "unprepared brands may experience a decline in traffic from the traditional search channels: anywhere from 20 to 50 percent."[52] However, recent reports from news industry

[50] BBC (2025, October 22). Largest study of its kind shows AI assistants misrepresent news content 45% of the time – regardless of language or territory. https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/2025/new-ebu-research-ai-assistants-news-content
[51] Myllylahti, M. (2024).
[52] McKinsey & Company (2025, October 16). New front door to the internet: Winning in the age of AI search. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/new-front-door-to-the-internet-winning-in-the-age-of-ai-search#/

sources show that search referrals have not substantially changed due to AI search engines and assistants. The data from analytics company Chartbeat, for example, found that search referrals for 565 US and UK news publishers "have changed little since 2019 – making 19% of traffic in July 2025."[53] Similarly, an INMA blog noted that Google's AI Overview has not substantially dented news publishers' traffic, "but publishers should remain alert" regardless.[54]

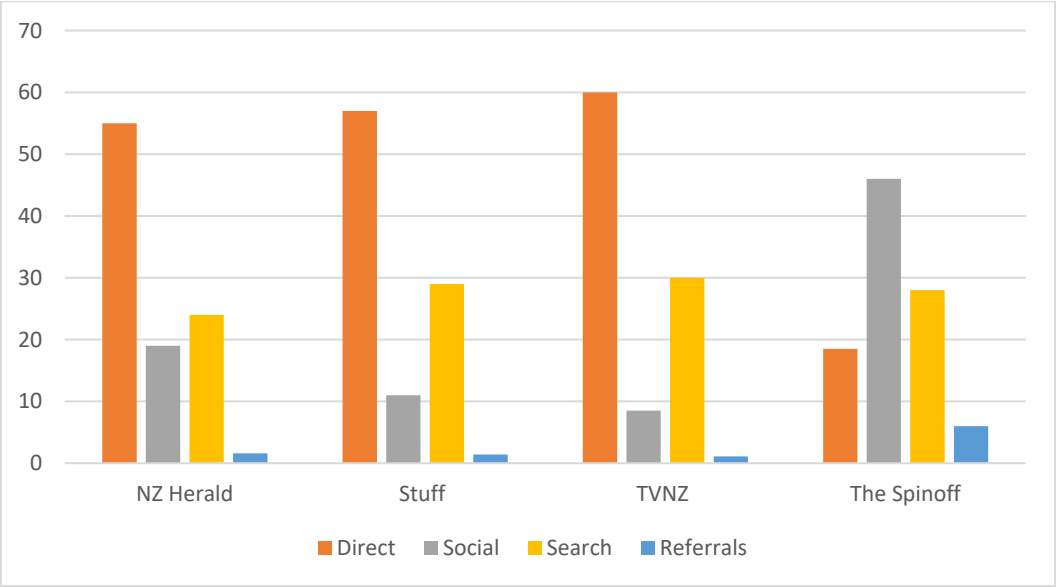
In New Zealand, overall traffic to news sites dropped between 2018 and 2025, but search has become a more important referral source as social media has become less relevant. In 2025, Yahoo, Wikipedia, Reddit, and ChatGPT have emerged as sources of traffic for New Zealand news sites.[55] As seen in Figure 2 and Figure 3, for *stuff.co.nz,* referrals from other sources than organic search and social have become more prevalent, while for *nzherald.co.nz* search traffic has increased in importance.

[53] Tobitt, C. (2025, August 14). Publisher traffic sources: Google steady but social and direct referrals are down. *PressGazette*. https://pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/publisher-traffic-sources-2019-2025/

[54] Ten Teje, S. (2025, August 11). Google's AI Overview is not yet harming traffic, but publishers should remain alert. INMA blog. https://www.inma.org/blogs/big-data-for-news-publishers/post.cfm/google-s-ai-overview-is-not-yet-harming-traffic-but-publishers-should-remain-alert

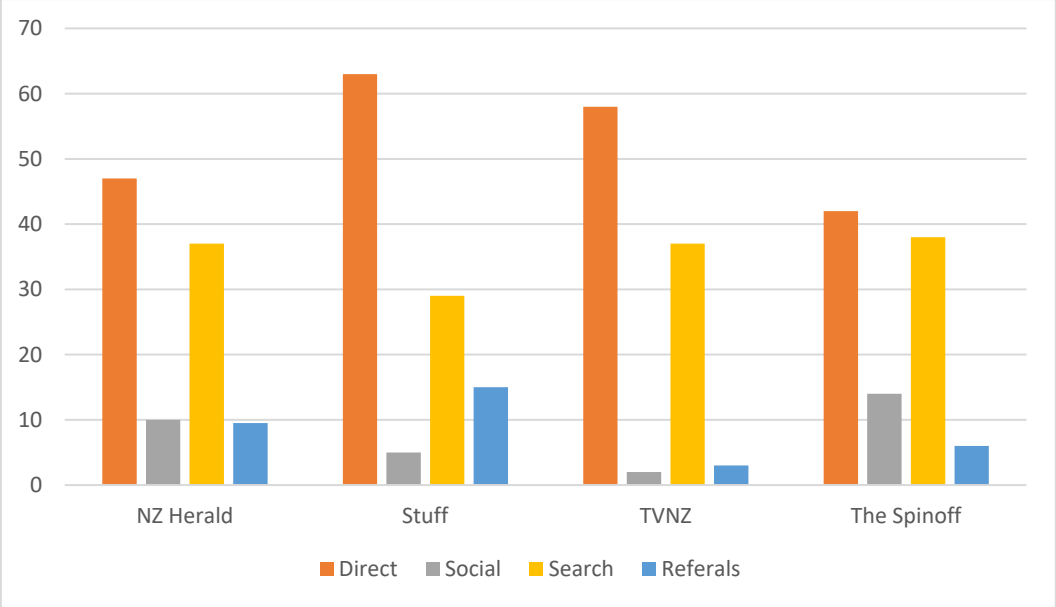
[55] Myllylahti, M. (2025b). Title: It is not just Google AI that is crushing the search, the nature of it is also changing. Paper accepted for the AANZCA Turning tides conference, Sunshine Coast, November 26, 2025. https://aanzca.org/aanzca-25-conference/

Figure 2: Website traffic sources of New Zealand news sites in March 2018



Sources: SimilarWeb; Myllylahti, 2018

Figure 3: Website traffic sources of New Zealand websites in March 2025



Source: SimilarWeb

AI risks and value

Risks and value propositions

While newsrooms acknowledge risks related to AI use, in general, news managers believe that AI is helping journalists to do their work more efficiently, freeing them to do more investigations and personalised content. For example, the NZME's Bidi system allows *BusinessDesk* to rewrite and publish articles from the NZX announcements "within about 30 seconds", freeing journalists to do other work.[56] *BusinessDesk* reporters are actively monitoring NZX announcements, selecting "the ones where we can add value to spend time on." According to Stuff Digital Editor-in-Chief Keith Lynch, using AI to assist reporting from press releases frees journalists "to focus on delivering unique journalism – the kind of reporting AI cannot do."[57]

Similarly, AI can assist journalists to "sift through thousands of documents to look for certain keywords or topics, for research purposes." NZME, for example, has a tool that is able to read "the entire Budget in minutes and suggest topics for journalists to explore."

How AI helps news media organisations to deliver real monetary value and revenue is still unclear. A report by the International News Media Association (INMA), authored by Somali Verma, says "67% of publishers now use AI for content placement, often seeing revenue gains of 5%-20%." The report notes that the *NZ Herald's* AI-driven homepage system Polaris "has cut homepage curation time while lifting click-through rates by 15%", meaning that more people are engaging with its content.[58]

[56] Matt Martel (2025)
[57] Keith Lynch (2025)
[58] Verma, S. (2025). Inside the Shift Toward AI-Driven News Operations. INMA. https://www.inma.org/report/inside-the-shift-toward-ai-driven-news-operations

Stuff says that AI tools have been driving its traffic, reader engagement and subscriptions.[59] For example, by using the Democracy.AI tool, the *Waikato Times* newsroom has been able to generate more local stories and has launched "a new section on its subscription website called Ratepayers' Roundup, significantly boosting traffic, engagement and reader satisfaction" (Stuart, 2025). Stuff says that during the pilot period, the *Waikato Times's* "digital subscriptions more than doubled."

None of the world's largest news organisations publish information about the value of AI deals or how AI contributes to their revenue and bottom line. However, it has been publicly stated that Rupert Murdoch's News Corp is being paid more than US$250m over five years by OpenAI. This amount represents roughly 2.5 per cent of News Corp's total revenue of US$10.09 billion in 2024.[60]

Use of AI carries risks related to law, ethics, mis- and disinformation, trust and transparency. It can also contribute to "lazy journalism", as a few publishers put it. However, NZME Managing Editor for Audience and Platforms, Matt Martel, says that the company places **"**huge importance on our audience trusting our brands, newsroom and journalism. We need to ensure we can achieve the quality and accuracy demanded by ourselves and our audiences and this expectation governs our approach."

[59] Stuart, S. (2025, June 16). Stuff's Democracy.AI provides a custom tool helping New Zealand's underserved communities. INMA blog. https://www.inma.org/blogs/ideas/post.cfm/stuff-s-democracy-ai-provides-a-custom-tool-helping-new-zealand-s-underserved-communities

[60] (Myllylahti, M., 2026).

Copyright and licensing

Media and AI deals

Internationally, the pace of licensing, copyright and other content payment arrangements between AI companies and news publishers is accelerating. The number of lawsuits against AI companies has also grown. The Tow Centre for Digital Journalism has an updated tracker for all current deals between AI companies and news organisations as well as ongoing lawsuits against AI companies.[61] The relationship between AI companies and news publishers is captured by News Corp chief executive Robert Thomson, who warns AI companies against using its unlicensed content. He describes News Corp's AI strategy as one of "wooing and suing" to ensure that the corporation gets a fair deal for its data and content usage from AI corporations.[62]

In December 2025, Google and Meta announced multiple AI deals with news publishers. They allow Meta to provide real-time news and updates in its AI chatbot which links to articles and websites from selected publishers. Meta made deals with CNN, Fox News, Fox Sports, Le Monde Group, People Inc, The Daily Caller, The Washington Examiner, USA Today and the USA Today Network of regional news brands.[63]

Similarly, in December, Google announced AI deals with multiple publishers. However, these were cash deals rather than content licensing deals as Google was "piloting a new

[61] AI Deals and Disputes Tracker (2025, December 15). Tow Centre for Digital Journalism. https://tow.cjr.org/ai-deals-lawsuits/
[62] 'Wooing and suing' defines News Corp's AI strategy (2025, November 10). Digwatch. https://dig.watch/updates/wooing-and-suing-defines-news-corps-ai-strategy
[63] Meta strikes multiple AI deals with news publishers (2025, December 6). Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/business/meta-strikes-multiple-ai-deals-with-news-publishers-axios-reports-2025-12-05/

commercial partnership programme with a range of news publishers globally."[64] The publishers included in the programme are *Der Spiegel*, *El País*, *Folha de S. Paulo*, *Infobae*, *Kompas*, *The Guardian*, *The Times of India*, *The Washington Examiner* and *The Washington Post*. Google says that as part of a pilot, new features will be added and experimented with in Google News, promising "clear attribution and link to articles" that are featured in its AI-powered article overviews.

At the time of writing, none of New Zealand's news organisations had a licensing or copyright deal, or cash payment arrangement with AI companies to compensate for the usage of their content in their search functions and assistants. Neither Google nor Meta has licensing deals with New Zealand news organisations. Matt Martel says that NZME is "keeping a close eye on what is being done in other jurisdictions around monetisation models to ensure global providers are paying publishers for the content they are currently using but not paying for."

[64] Stein, R. and Zaidi, J. (2025, December 10). Supporting the web with new features and partnerships. Google blog. https://blog.google/products/search/tools-partnerships-web-ecosystem/

Policy and regulatory issues

No platform specific AI regulation

In early December 2025, the European Union announced it would investigate Google for its use of online content for AI purposes. According to the European Commission, it was "investigating whether Google had breached EU competition rules by using the content of web publishers, as well as content uploaded on the online video-sharing platform YouTube, for AI purposes."[65] The Commission will examine the extent to which the content of Google's AI Overviews and AI Mode is extracted from web publishers' content "without appropriate compensation and without the possibility for publishers to refuse without losing access to Google Search."

In Australia, the Albanese Government has ruled out the introduction of a copyright exemption for AI companies training their models on work created by Australians. The Government rejected calls from the tech sector to change the country's copyright laws to give developers freedom to use creative works for AI development. [66] In a statement, the Government said that it "stands behind Australia's creative industries and, by ruling out a Text and Data Mining Exception, is providing certainty to Australian creators", adding that it has "no plans to weaken copyright protections when it comes to AI."

New Zealand does not have any platform-specific AI regulatory policy in place. In 2023, the Government introduced the Fair Digital News Bargaining Bill that was designed to mandate Alphabet/Google and Meta to pay news publishers for the use of their content in their

[65] Nicol-Schwarz, K. (2025, December 9). Google hit with EU antitrust investigation over use of online content for AI. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2025/12/09/google-hit-with-eu-antitrust-probe-over-use-of-online-content-for-ai.html

[66] The Hon Michelle Rowland MP (2025, October 26). Albanese Government to ensure Australia is prepared for future copyright challenges emerging from AI. [Media release]. https://ministers.ag.gov.au/media-centre/albanese-government-ensure-australia-prepared-future-copyright-challenges-emerging-ai-26-10-2025

services and platforms. In 2025, the legislation was abandoned. While the current Government has not withdrawn the Bill formally, Media and Communications Minister Paul Goldsmith says that it is "clear that a law change designed to assist the media was shelved because of concerns over how US President Donald Trump might respond."[67]

While the NZ Government launched a framework supporting "the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies across the New Zealand Public Service" in July 2025, its approach to AI regulation follows the neo-liberal tradition. The Government states that "Cabinet has agreed to a light-touch, proportionate and risk-based approach to AI regulation." It says regulatory intervention should only be used to "unlock innovation or address acute risks", and "existing mechanisms" should be used instead of "developing a standalone AI Act." [68]

However, a group of New Zealand academics and experts have called for greater governance of AI, stating that "81% of New Zealanders believing regulation is required. Specifically, 89% want laws and action to combat AI-generated misinformation."[69] A letter to Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Leader of Opposition Chris Hipkins states that "only 44% of New Zealanders believe the benefits of AI outweigh the risks, the lowest ranking of any country." The experts write that New Zealand needs AI regulation and a national AI oversight body to consider laws and policies that are needed to ensure that AI is used ethically and safely, benefiting "generations to come."

---

[67] Pullar-Strecker, T. (2025, December 10). Goldsmith admits Fair Digital Media Bargaining Bill shelved because of Trump. *The Post*. https://www.thepost.co.nz/business/360912473/goldsmith-admits-fair-digital-media-bargaining-bill-shelved-because-trump

[68] Public Service AI Framework (2025). https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/technology-and-architecture/artificial-intelligence/public-service-artificial-intelligence-framework

[69] A call to the NZ Parliament to regulate AI. https://regulateai.nz/

Policy areas to consider

While the Government is reluctant to regulate tech platforms, including AI companies, there are areas that should be considered in terms of policing and regulating AI companies and their products.

These include:

- Frameworks are needed to ensure fair payment for the use of journalistic content in training AI models and systems
- Copyright protection for content creators, including journalists, working in news organisations or on different platforms (including YouTube, Substack and so on)
- Ensuring transparency of data usage in AI training systems and tools
- Creating effective tools needed to tackle AI biases and misinformation, scams and fake information
- Safeguards needed for the ethical use of AI and maintaining trust in news/journalism
- Enhancing visibility of news and credible information in AI search and AI assistants' answers, with appropriate and correct attribution to the sources

Based at the Auckland University of Technology's School of Communication Studies, AUT 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 multiple 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. This report is the first JMAD report considering AI and its usage in New Zealand newsrooms, and implications of this to journalism, audiences and wider society.