

TRUST IN NEWS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND 2026



JM&D

AUT RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
JOURNALISM, MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

AOTEAROA

Table of Contents

About this report

Authorship

Methodology	1
Overview	3
New Zealand context	3
International context	5
Summary of key findings	8
Trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand	8
Trust in news compared internationally	9
News sources and news attention in New Zealand	9
News sources and news attention compared internationally	10
Trust in AI-produced news in New Zealand and internationally	11
Detailed survey findings	12
News interest and avoidance	12
News consumption and sources of news	14
Overall trust in news, social media and search	18
Trust in news brands	19
Journalism, trust and information verification	22
Trust in AI-produced journalism	24
Paying for news	26
Elements of trust and mistrust	28
Aspects of news trust	28
Reasons for mistrust and news avoidance	30
Media owners/boards influence and trust	32
Trust and political leanings	33
Some demographic findings	35

About this report

This is the seventh report about trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand produced by the AUT [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) research centre (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, news interest and avoidance, and a comparable sampling method to the one used in their annual [Reuters Digital News Reports](#) to measure news trust. This allows us international comparisons with Aotearoa New Zealand about levels of trust in the news. In 2025, the Reuters survey covered 48 countries. Similarly to the Reuters survey, in 2026 we asked New Zealanders about their trust in news, news consumption, news interests, news sources, news avoidance and paying for news. We added new questions to gain a better understanding of New Zealanders’ news consumption, and where they pay attention to news. We also scoped what role artificial intelligence (AI) and search assistants have in news trust and consumption; and to what extent AI searches and assistants are used as sources of news or information verification. We also added a question about the impact of news media managers or owners/boards on New Zealanders’ news trust and consumption patterns. The 2026 survey had 19 main questions and some sub-questions. In our 2026 report, we added *The Press*, *Waikato Times* and *The Post* to the survey because they are the main newspapers of Stuff Masthead Publishing. As in 2020-2025, survey data for our 2026 report was collected by New Zealand online market research company Horizon Research Ltd.

This research was funded by Auckland University of Technology (AUT). The survey (ref. 24/332) and focus groups (ref. 23/308) have ethics approval from the AUT Ethics Committee.

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Related academic articles & report:

Treadwell, G. and Myllylahti, M. (2025). Untethered: resisting unhelpful assumptions about news trust and trust in other social institutions. *Media International Australia*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X251356311>

Myllylahti, M. and Treadwell, G. (2021). In media we trust? A comparative analysis of news trust in New Zealand and other Western media markets. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2021.1948873>

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>

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Authorship



Dr Merja Myllylahti is an associate professor in the Screen, Audio and Journalism department at the School of Communication Studies, Auckland University of Technology (AUT). 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*, *Media and Communication*, *Journal of Media Business Studies*, *Media International Australia*, and *Pacific Journalism Review*.



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 *Media International Australia*, the *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, and *Pacific Journalism Review*. He is also a co-author of JMAD's *New Zealand Media Ownership* report.

Methodology

This report on *Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* is the seventh produced by the AUT Journalism, Media and Democracy research centre (JMAD). It is based on a survey of the Aotearoa New Zealand public comprising 19 questions, most of which mirror those asked by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in its annual international [Digital News Report](#). These included questions concerning news trust, news consumption, news interest, news avoidance and paying for news. In 2025, the Reuters Institute’s survey captured data “from almost 100,000 individual survey respondents”, covering 48 markets. With Serbia added to the 2025 survey, it was “the largest report” the institute has so far published.¹ Our 2026 report is also the largest and most comprehensive produced so far. In JMAD’s 2026 trust survey, more than 1,000 New Zealanders were asked their views and 18 Aotearoa New Zealand news brands were included in the survey.

What the survey captures

In general, surveys reflect people’s perceptions of things because they capture people’s self-reported views and behaviour. They don’t necessarily reflect how people actually behave “due to biases and imperfect recall.”² 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., Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism.

https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf

² Newman, N., Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025). Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2025. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism.

https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf

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 1,040 New Zealand adults (18 years of age or over) who are members of Horizon Research’s Horizon Poll (adult general population), Horizon Research Māori (Māori, 18+ years) panels, and a third-party 18+ panel. The survey was carried out from February 10 to February 17, 2026. The sample is weighted by 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.

Information about Horizon Research’s methodology, including sampling and participant recruitment, can be found [here](#).

Overview

New Zealand context

In 2025, there were major shifts in New Zealand’s media ownership as news companies sought to increase financial viability. In June, Stuff Group publisher Sinead Boucher sold 50% of Stuff Digital—publisher of the *stuff.co.nz* news site—to marketplace portal Trade Me. Sky acquired Discovery New Zealand, and MediaWorks became fully owned by investment company Quadrant Private Capital. During the year, Canadian businessman Jim Grenon lifted his ownership stake in NZME close to the takeover threshold.³ Ownership structures can affect news consumption and trust patterns and some aspects of media ownership and trust in New Zealand are scoped in this report.

At the same time as major ownership changes, local news coverage was shrinking. A report by journalism scholar Dr Gavin Ellis illustrates how the loss of local news coverage is threatening democracy and social cohesion. Ellis says many New Zealanders lost their trusted local news sources after Stuff and NZME closed 40 community newspapers in regions. He believes “it would be folly to think news deserts do not exist in New Zealand.”⁴ However, in the 2025 Budget, the Government allocated \$6.4 million (over the next four years) for council, community and court reporting across New Zealand. To afford that, the Government cut RNZ’s funding by \$18 million, stating that the “government-funded media must deliver the same efficiency and value-for-money as the rest of the public sector.”⁵ The Government also put trust

³ Hope, W., Baker, S., Daniels, R., Hoar, P., McEwan, R., Myllylahti, M., Mountfort, P., Middleton, A., Selman, J., D., Treadwell, G. & Watts, T. (2025). JMAD Aotearoa New Zealand media ownership report 2025. AUT Research Centre for Journalism Media and Democracy. <https://www.jmadresearch.com/new-zealand-media-ownership>

⁴ Ellis, G. (2025). News deserts: local journalism at risk. Koi Tū Centre for Informed Futures. <https://informedfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Koi-Tu-News-Deserts.pdf>

⁵ Goldsmith, P. (2025, May 22). Investing in local journalism. [media release] <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/investing-local-journalism>

in news at the core of its media policies, stating that it expects RNZ to “improve audience reach, trust and transparency.” A 2025 report by the Broadcasting Standards Authority shows the public expects more of publicly funded media than of commercial media. Approximately 34% of participants in its survey said they expect public broadcasters such as RNZ to be impartial, objective, balanced, accurate and accountable - providing quality and in-depth journalism.⁶

In 2026, New Zealanders’ trust in news in general improved significantly, with 37% of New Zealanders trusting the news compared to 32% in 2025. Despite the increase, trust levels have stayed well below the pre-Covid figures. In 2020, approximately 53% of New Zealanders trusted news in general. In 2026, a survey conducted by PR and communications agency Acumen found that 39% of New Zealanders trusted media (+4pp) compared to 35% in 2025.⁷

In the past few years, newsrooms have started to experiment with AI tools to help deliver their journalism. In early 2026, New Zealand newsrooms were commonly using AI tools for research, transcription, analysis, summarising documents, drafting or writing articles and creating headlines. However, a JMAD report found there was some lack of transparency in terms of disclosing the use of AI in news production, potentially affecting trust in news and journalism.⁸

In 2025, approximately 60% of New Zealanders were uncomfortable with news mostly produced by AI but with some human oversight, and this figure in 2026 was unchanged. In 2026, 11%

⁶ Broadcasting Standards Authority (2025). Public Trust in News Media Research. <https://www.bsa.govt.nz/assets/FINAL-BSA-Trust-in-News-Media-Report.pdf>

⁷ Currie, S. (2026, March 27). Media Insider: Mark Richardson’s TV exit; Troy Bowker v Sinead Boucher - war of words over Stuff print plant closure; Are Media CEO quits. *The NZ Herald*. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/media-insider/media-insider-mark-richardsons-tv-exit-troy-bowker-v-sinead-boucher-war-of-words-over-stuff-print-plant-closure-are-media-ceo-quits/premium/OYXOVOZODZESHME7Z7BL4LUN4M/>

⁸ 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>

(+3pp) of respondents were comfortable with news mostly produced by AI, but with some human oversight.

A pertinent issue facing news media is news avoidance. While New Zealanders said they had a high level of interest in news in 2026, active news avoidance had a significant increase. In 2026, 78% of New Zealanders avoided news to some degree compared to 73% in 2025.

International context

The Reuters Institute's *Digital News Report 2025* – a benchmark study for our research – found trust in the news remained stable in 48 countries included in its study (40%). Finland remained the country with the highest levels of overall trust in the news (67%) while Greece (22%) and Hungary (22%) had the lowest levels due to concerns about political influence.⁹ The Reuters survey found that while elections increased interest in news in some countries such as the United States, overall interest in news was falling. Their report notes that in “the United Kingdom interest in news has almost halved since 2015” (p.11).

Furthermore, the Reuters study found more evidence of a rise in news avoidance.

Approximately 40% of those surveyed said they sometimes or often avoid the news, up from 29% in 2017.” News avoidance was highest in Bulgaria (63%), Turkey (61%) and Croatia (61%), and lowest in Japan (11%), Taiwan (21%), Sweden and Hong Kong (26%), and Singapore, Denmark and Finland (27%).

⁹ Newman, N., Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025). Digital News Report 2025. Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf

Reuters also asked in its survey about people's views on the use of AI in news and journalism. The proportion of those who said they were comfortable with the news produced mainly with AI, was low: in the US, 19% of respondents were comfortable with AI-produced news with compared to 15% in Europe.¹⁰ Approximately 38% of Americans were comfortable with the news produced with "some help of AI", while 30% of Europeans felt the same way. There were big differences between the countries in how they perceive AI-produced news. Approximately 44% of survey respondents in India and 39% in Thailand said they were very or somewhat comfortable with news being produced mostly by AI, but with some human oversight. The same figure in Finland, Denmark and Belgium was 10%.

The 2026 Edelman Trust Barometer, including 28 countries, shows that on average, 54% (+2pp) of people trust media "to do what is right."¹¹ However, in 13 countries (15 in 2025), trust in media is below 50%, with Japan (35%) and Germany (41%) sitting at the bottom end of the scale. Additionally, social media improved its trustworthiness ranking with 50% of those surveyed trusting it (+2pp). Furthermore, a Gallup survey in the US found that Americans' confidence in the mass media has plummeted to a new low with "just 28% expressing a great deal or fair amount of trust in newspapers, television and radio to report the news fully, accurately and fairly."¹² The same figure in 2025 was 31%, and 40% five years ago.

¹⁰ Newman, N., Arguedas, A.R., Robertson, C.T., Nielsen, R.K. and Fletcher, R. (2025). Digital News Report 2025. The Reuters Institute for Study of Journalism, p. 28. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-06/Digital_News-Report_2025.pdf

¹¹ Edelman Trust Institute (2026). Edelman trust barometer. Global report. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2026-01/2026%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_01.21.26_0.pdf

¹² Brennan, M. (2025, October 2). Trust in Media at New Low of 28% in U.S. Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/695762/trust-media-new-low.aspx>

In Europe, the *EU Media Industry Outlook 2025* report found that a majority of Europeans do not trust the media, with “almost six in ten people report a lack of trust.”¹³ The report says distrust of media “might be linked to the fact that more than two-thirds of Europeans say they often come across news or information that they believe misrepresents reality or is even false.”

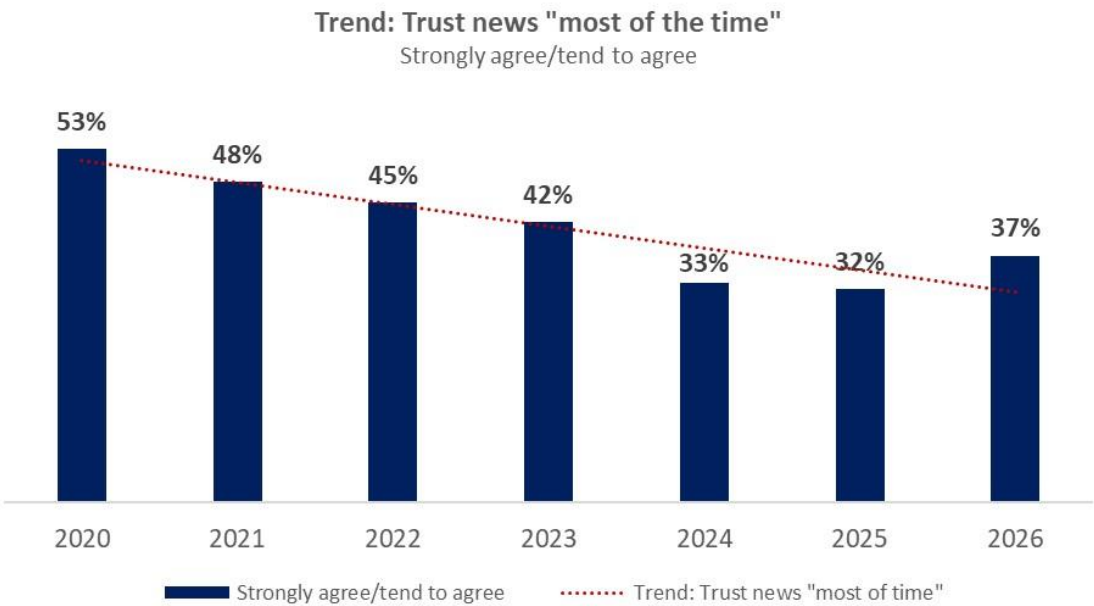
¹³ European Commission: Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, *The European media industry outlook – September 2025*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2025, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2759/0606593>

Summary of key findings

Trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand

- In 2026, New Zealanders’ trust in news in general and in the news they consume themselves increased significantly
- In 2026, approximately 37% of New Zealanders say they trust “most of the news most of the time” compared to 32% in 2025
- In 2026, trust in the news people consume themselves was 50% compared to 45% in 2025
- At the same time, trust in news on social media saw a significant leap from 13% in 2025 to 17% in 2026

Figure 1: Proportion of New Zealanders trusting “most of the news most of the time”

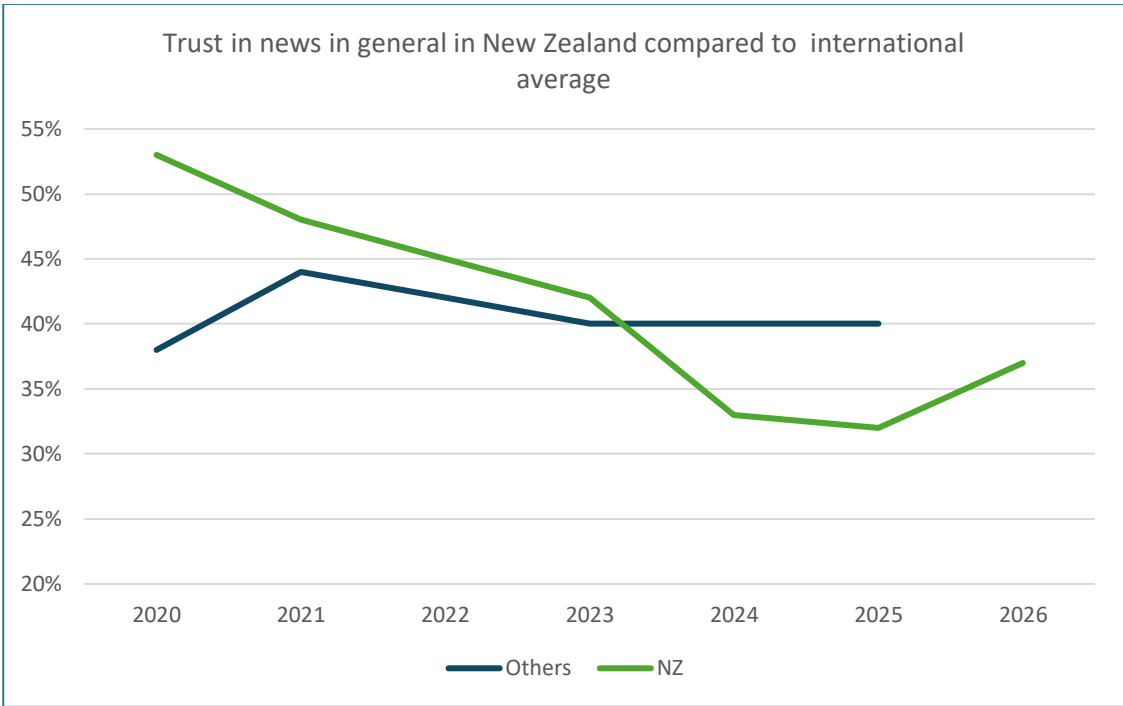


- In 2026, trust in all news brands increased, and RNZ was perceived as the most trusted news brand, followed by the *Otago Daily Times* (2nd) and TVNZ (3rd)
- Newsroom, Interest.co.nz, *The Listener* and the *Waikato Times* were jointly perceived as the fourth most trusted brands

Trust in the news compared internationally

- In 2026, general trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand was 37% compared to the 2025 Reuters Digital News Report’s international average of 40% (48 countries)
- Internationally, trust in news was highest in Finland (67%) and lowest in Greece and Hungary (both 22%)

Figure 2: Trust in news in compared to an international average of 48 countries (%)



Sources: JMAD, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

News sources and news attention in New Zealand

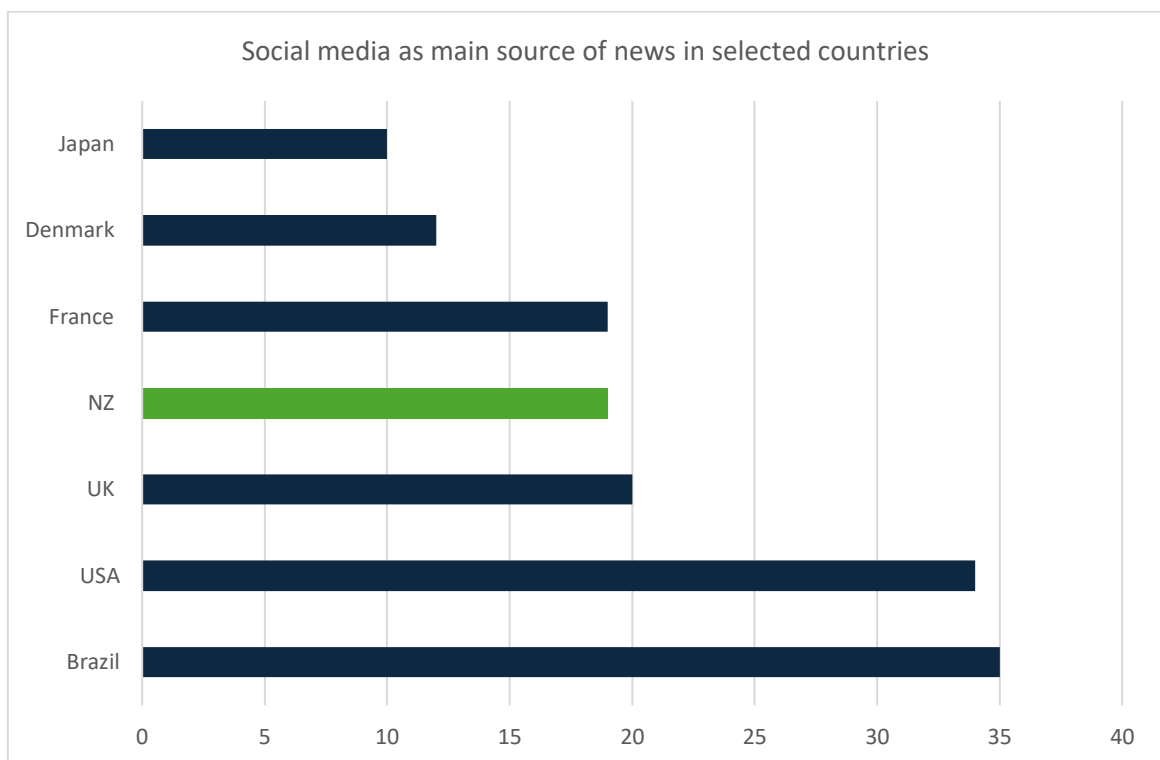
- In 2026, online news sites and apps were the main sources of news for 38% of New Zealanders
- TV was the main source of news for 20% of New Zealanders. However, 19% mentioned social media/video networks as their main source of news
- When asked what news sources New Zealanders pay most attention to, 61% of respondents mentioned traditional news media and journalists, with 33% paying

attention to other news media/journalists. Furthermore, 27% said they paid attention to content creators who mostly focus on news

News sources and news attention compared internationally

- In 2026, social media was the main source of news for almost one in five (19%) New Zealanders
- When compared internationally, social media was a less important news source than it was in Brazil, the US and the UK, but a more important source than in Japan and Denmark

Figure 3: Social media as the main source of news in selection of countries

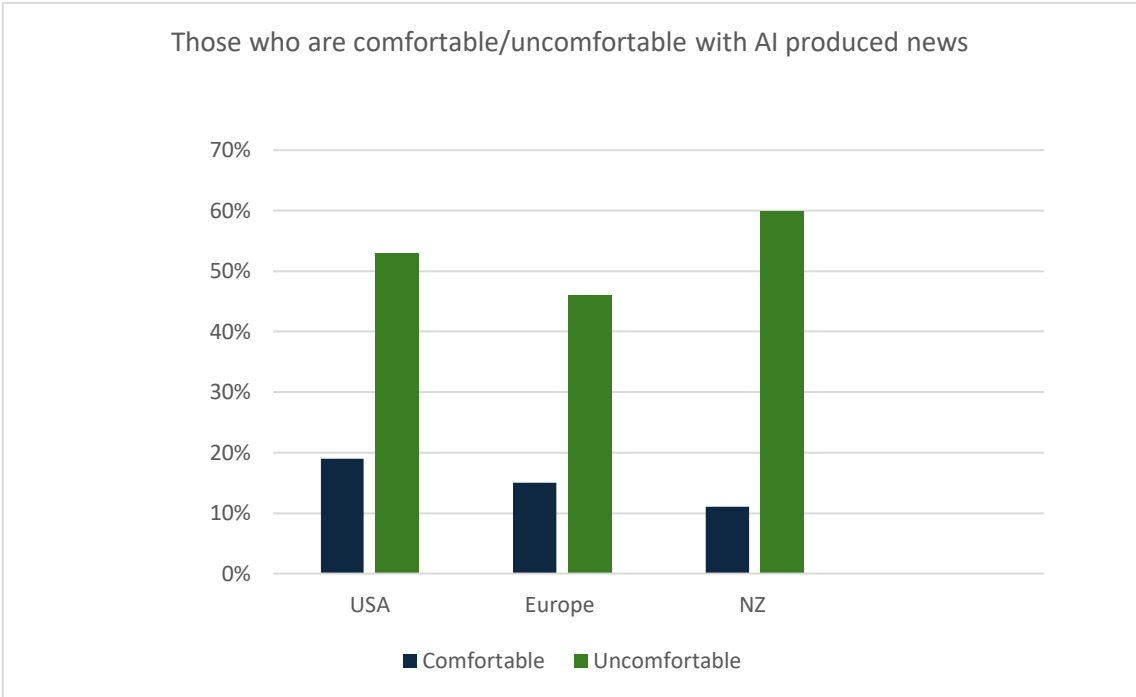


Sources: JMAD, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Trust in AI produced news in New Zealand and internationally

- Approximately 60% (unchanged) of New Zealanders are uncomfortable with news produced mainly by AI, but with some human oversight
- In 2026, the number of New Zealanders comfortable with the AI-produced news increased from 8% in 2025 to 11% in 2026
- When compared internationally, New Zealanders are slightly more uncomfortable with AI-produced news, with 53% of Americans and 46% of Europeans feeling uncomfortable with this mode of news production

Figure 4: Those who are (un)comfortable with news mainly produced by AI



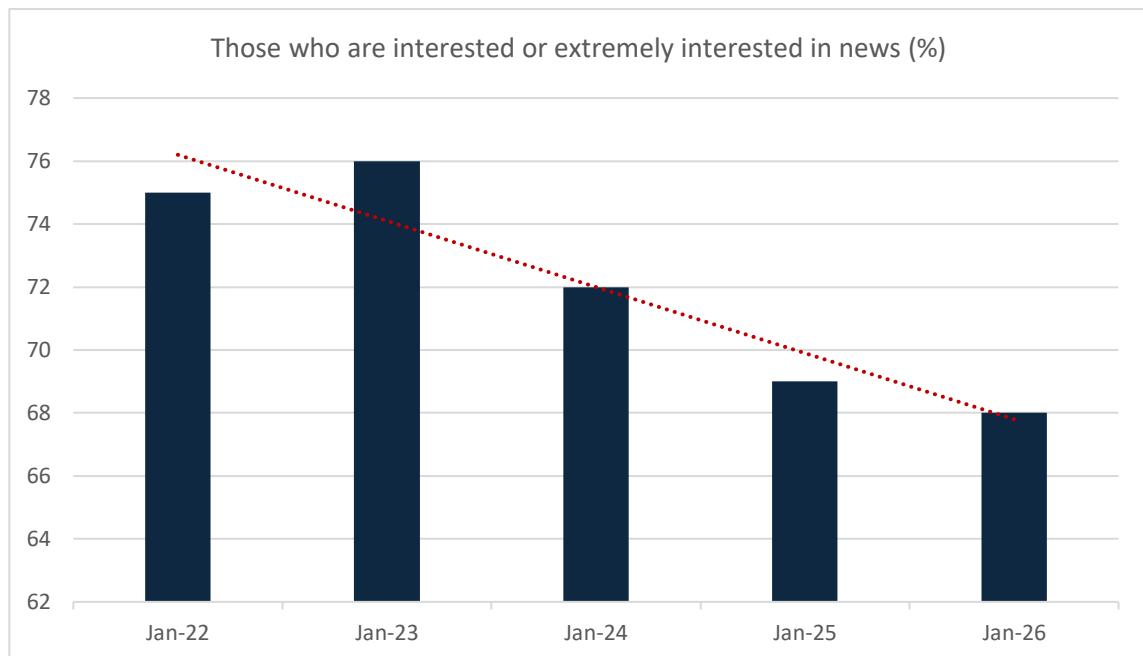
Sources: JMAD, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Detailed survey findings

News interest and avoidance

As in 2025, we scoped New Zealanders' interest in the news (**Q1**)¹⁴. Based on our sample, 91% (-1pp) of New Zealanders are interested in the news to some extent. Approximately 34% (+2pp) are extremely interested in the news. However, the proportion of those who are extremely/interested in news has dropped from 76% in 2023, to 69% in 2026.

Figure 5: Number of those extremely or interested in news in New Zealand



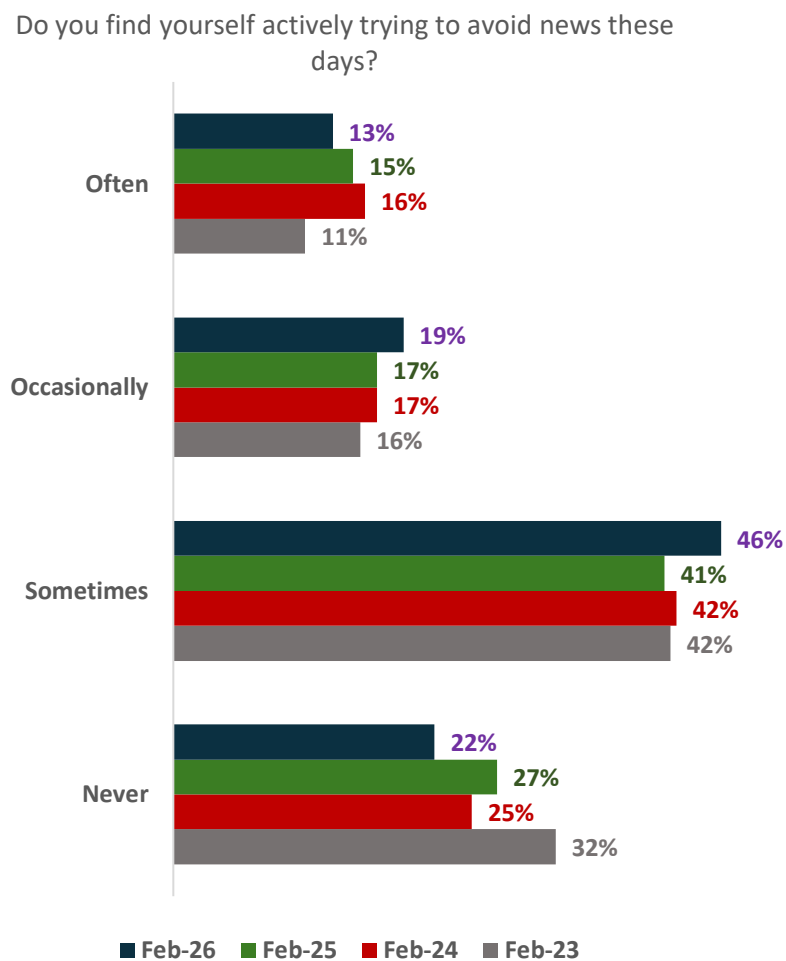
To gain more insight into news interest, we asked respondents what types of news they were interested in (**Q2**)¹⁵. The results show they are most interested in local news, with 74% of

¹⁴ **Q1.** Overall, how interested would you say you are in news? Extremely interested/Interested/Somewhat interested/Not interested/Not interested at all.

¹⁵ **Q2.** Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in? Please select all that apply. Sports news/Political news/Entertainment and celebrity/Business news/International news/Science and technology/Lifestyle & culture/Crime and security/Local news/Environment/climate change/Fun news/Social justice (race, gender, LGBTQ+)/News about mental health/Education/Other (Please specify)

expressing their interest compared to 72% in 2025. Approximately 71% are interested in international news (+1pp), political news (62%) and crime news 54% (-2pp). Interest in fun news has increased to 29% (+3pp), and interest in entertainment/celebrity news to 24% (+3pp).

Figure 6: The proportion of New Zealanders actively avoiding the news



We also asked New Zealanders if they were actively avoiding the news (Q7)¹⁶. Additionally, we asked those who said they were avoiding the news why they were doing so (Q7.1)¹⁷. The

¹⁶ Q7. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Never/Sometimes/Occasionally/Often

¹⁷ Q7.1. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply. It negatively affects my mood/I am worn out by news/There's too much coverage of conflict/war/There's too much coverage of politics/There's nothing I can do with the information/It leads to arguments I'd rather avoid/It does not feel relevant to my life/ It's too hard to understand/Other (Please specify)

analysis of the reasons for news avoidance is examined further in the Elements of trust and distrust section (page 32).

The proportion of New Zealanders actively avoiding news increased significantly from 2025, with 78% (+5pp) now saying they avoid the news to some degree. Approximately 22% said they never avoid the news, which is a significant drop from 27% in 2025.

News consumption and sources of news

We then asked our respondents what they used as news sources and how frequently they used each brand (Q3).¹⁸ On average, respondents use four sources of news in a week. Of the New Zealand news brands, 52% were using the *NZ Herald*, 51% *Stuff* and 50% TVNZ as a news source. The usage of the *NZ Herald* increased significantly from 2024 (+10pp), and RNZ is now used by 35% (+5pp) of New Zealanders. From 2024 to 2026, TVNZ had a decline as a news source, with 50% using it (-8pp), and ThreeNews usage dropped significantly from 43% in 2024 to 21% in 2026. Approximately 12% of respondents used the AI search assistant ChatGPT as a source of news, and 4% used other forms of AI as a news source.

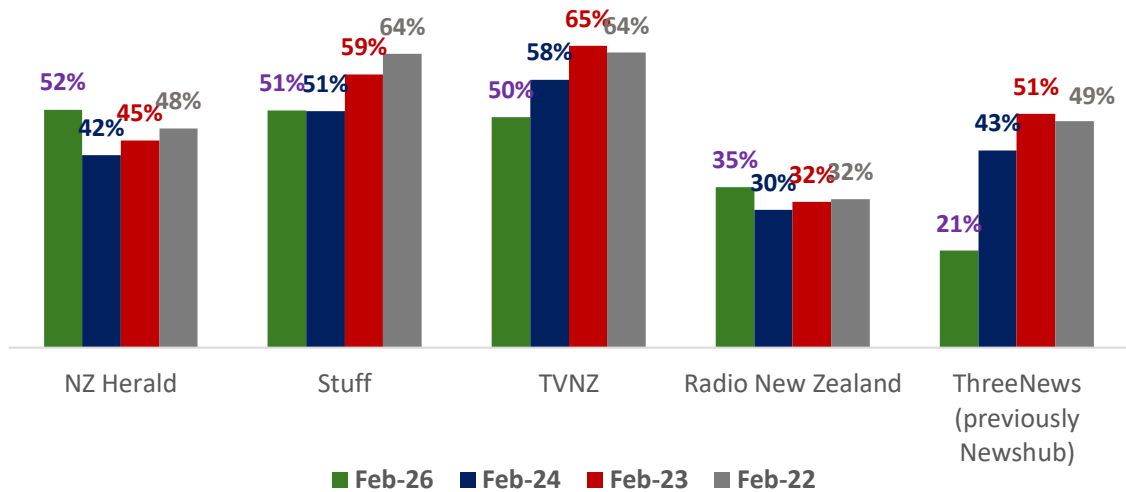
To better understand news consumption on social media platforms, we inquired about which social-media sources people used to access/consume news (Q4)¹⁹. Facebook was the most widely used source of news (61%), followed by YouTube (44%) and Instagram (28%).

¹⁸ Q3. How frequently do you use each of the following as a source of news - *Daily, A few times a week, Once a week, Rarely, Never*. NZ Herald /Stuff/ThreeNews/TVNZ/Newsroom/The Spinoff/The Listener/Crux/Interest.co.nz/Radio New Zealand/Newstalk ZB/Whakaata Māori (Māori TV)/Other commercial radio stations/Iwi radio stations /Otago Daily Times/BusinessDesk/NBR/Other

¹⁹ 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/Podcasts/None of these

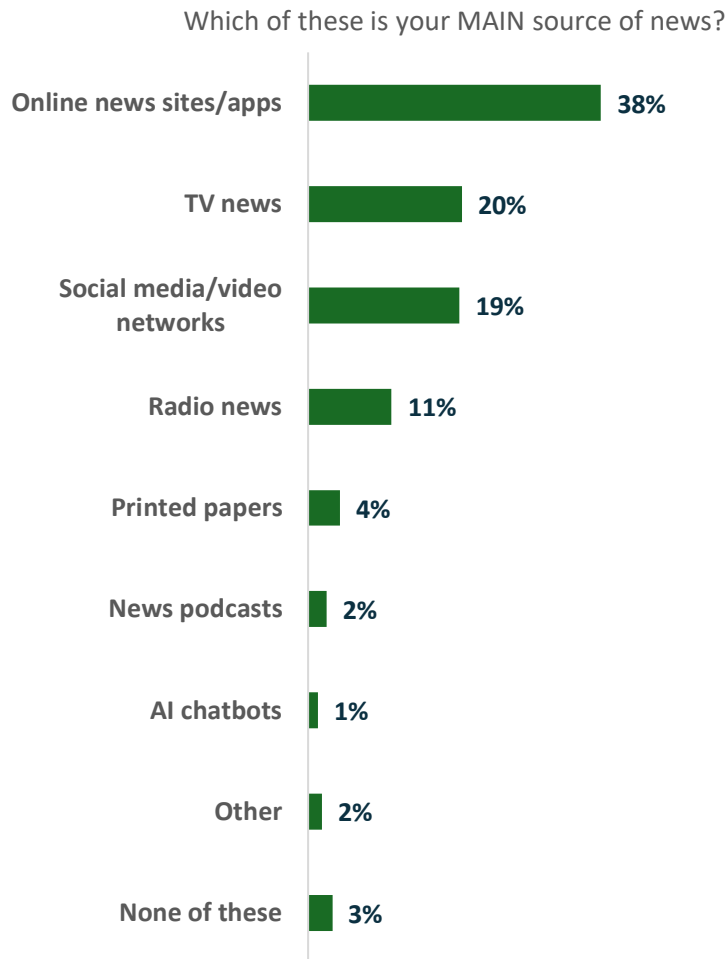
Figure 7: News brands used by New Zealanders weekly as a source of news

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



In 2026, we added a new question and asked New Zealanders specifically about their main source of news. Approximately 38% New Zealanders used online news sites as apps as their primary source of news. Of respondents, 20% used TV as their main news source, and social media/video networks were the main source for 19% of respondents.

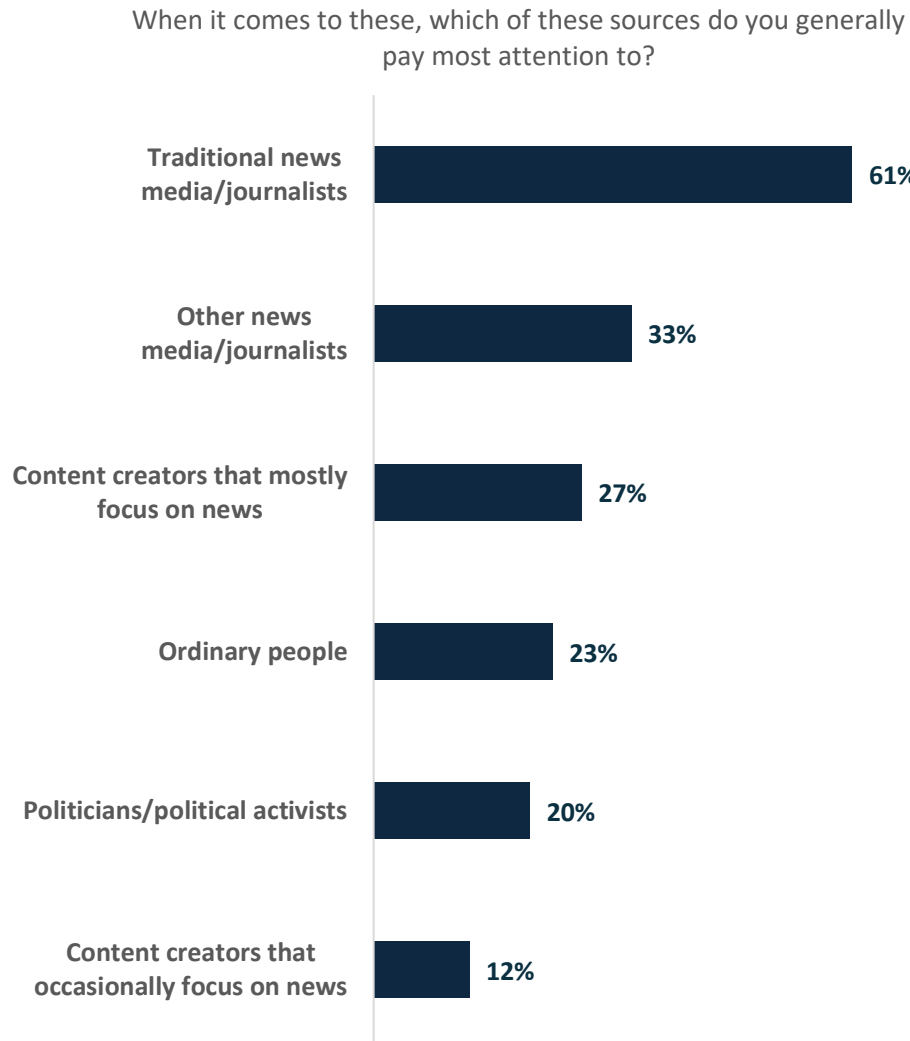
Figure 8: Main news sources of New Zealanders



To understand better who New Zealanders pay most attention to when they consume news, we added a new question to investigate this (Q6).²⁰ Approximately 61% of respondents paid most attention to traditional news media and journalists, and 33% paid most attention to other media and news journalists. Furthermore, 27% said that they paid most attention to content creators who mostly focus on news.

²⁰ Q6. When it comes to these, which of these sources do you generally pay most attention to? Traditional news media/journalists/Other news media/journalists/Politicians/political activists/Content creators that mostly focus on news/Content creators that occasionally focus on news/Ordinary people

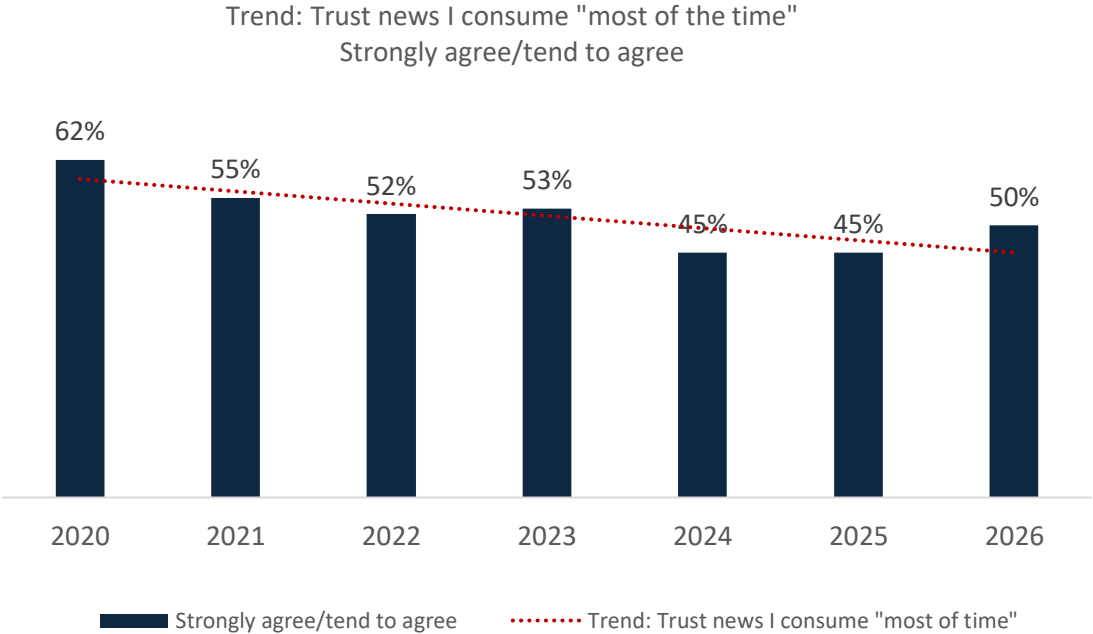
Figure 9: News sources that New Zealanders pay attention to



Overall trust in news, social media and search

As in previous surveys, Q8²¹ asked New Zealanders about their trust in the news generally and their trust in the news they personally consume. Overall, in 2026, trust in news increased significantly. Trust in news in general increased from 32% in 2025 to 37% in 2026 (page 9). As seen in Figure 10, approximately 50% of New Zealanders trust the news they personally consume, a significant increase from 45% in 2025.

Figure 10: Trust in news people consume themselves



²¹ Q8. We are now going to ask you about your trust in the news. First, we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within New Zealand. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume. 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/Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Tend to agree/Strongly agree

Furthermore, **Q9**²² asked about New Zealanders' trust in news found via social media and search engines. Trust in news in social media saw a significant increase from 13% in 2025 to 17%, and trust in news in search engines grew from 23% in 2025 to 26% in 2026.

Trust in news brands

As we did in 2025, we scoped the public's view of the trustworthiness of prominent New Zealand news outlets (**Q10**).²³ 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 18 news media/individual brands. Mean scores were calculated from those who knew of each news source, with those who were not aware of a brand excluded. In 2026, we added the *Waikato Times*, *The Post* and *The Press* to the survey.

To understand why people trust or don't trust the news, we asked questions (**Q10.1**)²⁴ and (**Q10.2**).²⁵ These are analysed in the Elements of trust and mistrust section (page 29). Evaluating trust in news brands is based on means score, and we can see in 2026 trust in all news brands improved from 2025 (Table 1). Trust scores for Crux and iwi radio were the most improved.

²² **Q9**. 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.

²³ **Q10**. How trustworthy would you say news is from the following brands? Please use the scale below, where 0 is 'not at all trustworthy' and 10 is 'completely trustworthy'. NZ Herald/Stuff/ ThreeNews/TVNZ/The Spinoff/Interest.co.nz/RNZ/Newstalk ZB/ Whakaata Māori (Māori TV)/Other commercial radio stations/Iwi radio stations/Otago Daily Times/BusinessDesk/NBR/The Press/Waikato Times/The Post/

²⁴ **Q10.1**. Thinking about trust in news ... you said that you don't trust news. Please tell us why not?

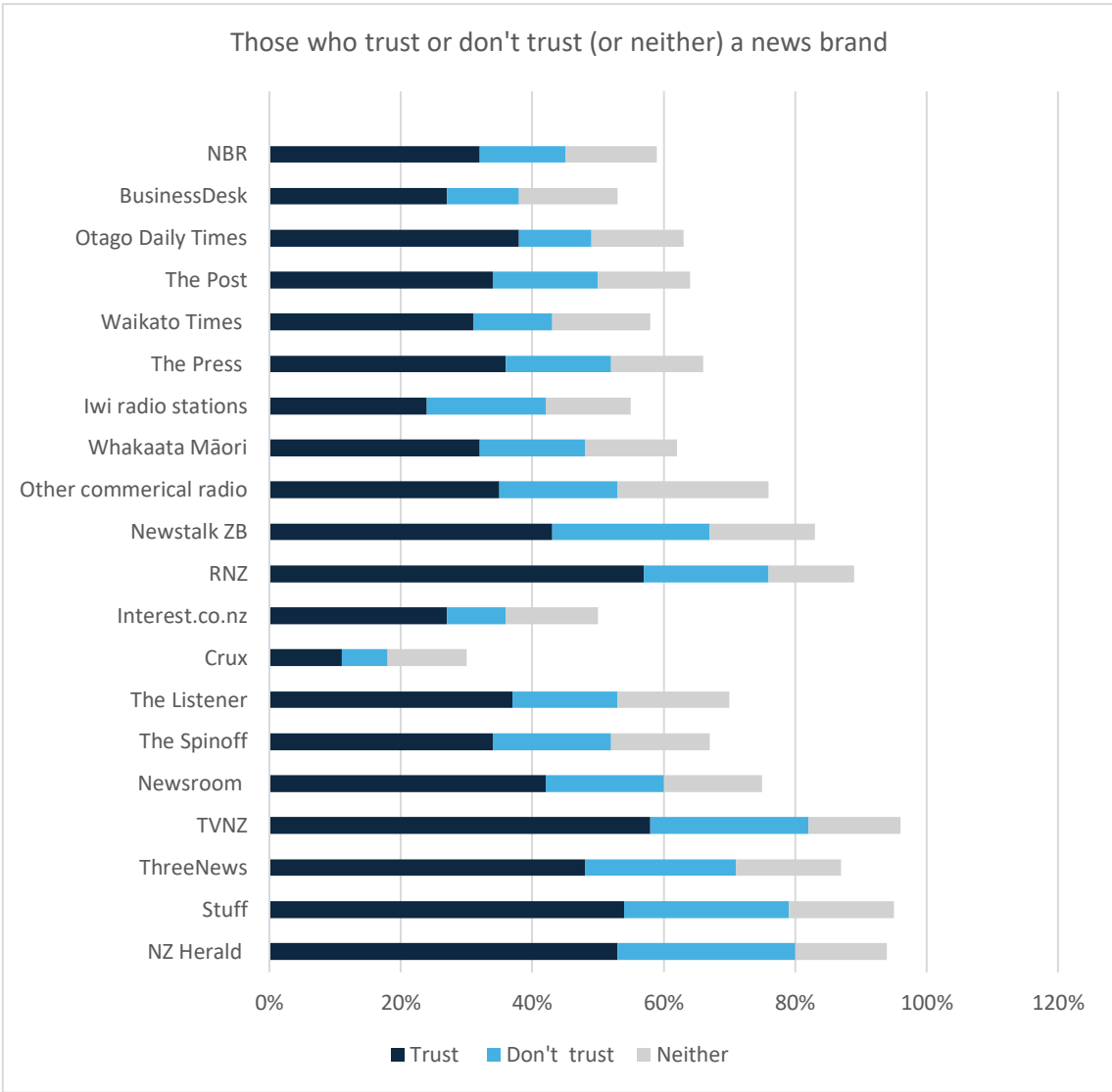
²⁵ **Q10.2**. Thinking about trust in news ... you said that you trust news. Please tell us what makes you trust news?

Table 1: Trust (0-10) for Aotearoa New Zealand news brands by mean score

Brand	Trust score 2020	Trust score 2021	Trust score 2022	Trust score 2023	Trust score 2024	Trust score 2025	Trust score 2026	Change in 2020-26 %	Change in 2025-26 %
RNZ	7.0	6.8	6.2	5.3	4.9	6.0	6.2	-11.4	+3.3
Otago Daily Times	n.a	n.a	6.0	5.3	5.0	5.9	6.0	n.a	+1.7
TVNZ	6.8	6.6	5.9	5.3	4.8	5.6	5.9	-13.2	+5.4
Waikato Times	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.8	n.a	n.a
Newsroom	6.4	6.2	5.7	5.1	4.8	5.5	5.8	-9.4	+5.5
The Listener	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.5	5.8	n.a	+5.5
Interest.co.nz	n.a	5.7	5.5	5.2	4.6	5.5	5.8	n.a	+5.5
The Press	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.7	n.a	n.a
The Post	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.7	n.a	n.a
NBR	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.2	4.8	5.6	5.7	n.a	+1.8
Stuff	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.0	4.6	5.5	5.7	-6.6	+3.6
BusinessDesk	n.a	n.a	5.3	5.0	4.8	5.5	5.7	n.a	+3.6
NZ Herald	6.3	6.2	5.7	5.0	4.7	5.5	5.7	-9.5	+3.6
ThreeNews	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a	4.7	5.5	5.7	n.a	+3.6
Newstalk ZB	6.2	5.7	5.7	4.9	4.7	5.4	5.5	-11.3	+1.9
The Spinoff	5.4	5.2	5.2	4.6	4.4	5.3	5.5	+1.8	+3.8
Other commercial radio	n.a	n.a	n.a	5.1	4.8	5.3	5.4	n.a	+1.9
Whakaata Māori	n.a	6.3	5.6	4.8	4.1	5.2	5.4	n.a	+3.8
Iwi radio	n.a	5.7	5.0	4.5	3.9	4.7	5.1	n.a	+8.5
Crux	n.a	n.a	4.4	4.2	4.0	4.6	5.0	n.a	+8.7

In 2026, RNZ was ranked as the most trusted brand, followed by the *Otago Daily Times* (2nd) and TVNZ (3rd). The *Waikato Times*, included in the survey for the first time, was jointly the fourth most trusted brand with Newsroom, *The Listener* and Interest.co.nz. *The Press* and *The Post*, also included in the survey for the first time, were equally fifth-ranked with NBR, Stuff, BusinessDesk, *NZ Herald* and ThreeNews.

Figure 11: The proportion of those who trust and don't trust each brand



When comparing the proportions of those who say they trust or mistrust each brand, we find that those who trust a specific news brand outnumber those who distrust it. For example, 57% of those surveyed say they trust RNZ, compared to 19% who say they don't trust the brand (Figure 11).

Journalism, trust and information verification

We asked New Zealanders again to what extent they were concerned about poor journalism (Q13)²⁶. "Poor journalism" was defined as making factual mistakes, dumbed-down stories and misleading headlines/clickbait. Approximately 92% (-1pp) of respondents were at least somewhat concerned about poor journalism, and 66% (-3pp) were extremely or very concerned.

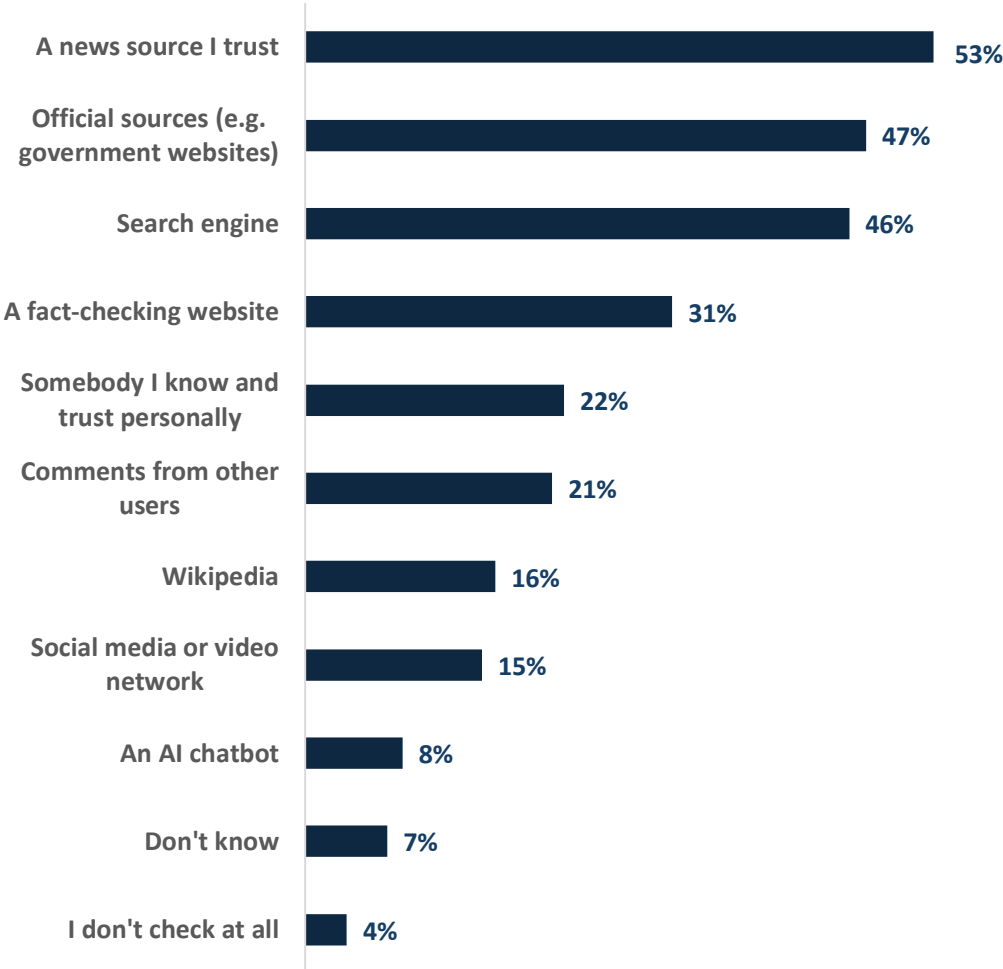
Additionally, there was a slight drop (from 92% to 90%) among those who were at least somewhat concerned about stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements. Approximately 93% of respondents were concerned about stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda. This represents a significant drop from 98%% in 2025. Approximately 75% of respondents were very or extremely concerned about this (-1pp).

²⁶ **Q13.** 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)/News being publicly discredited by politicians and others. Scale: Not at all concerned/Not very concerned/Somewhat concerned/Very concerned/Extremely concerned.

When asked (Q14) about how concerned New Zealanders were about “what is real and what is fake on the internet”, 74% of respondents were concerned about fake news, with 39% tend to agree with the statement and 35% strongly agreeing with it.²⁷

Figure 12: New Zealanders’ sources for verifying information of online news

Imagine you came across something important in the news online that you suspect may be false, misleading, or fake. If you decided you wanted to check it, where would you usually go?



²⁷ Q14. 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.” Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/tend to agree/strongly agree

To further examine how New Zealanders verify information in online news if they suspect it is false, misleading, or fake, we asked a new question in our survey (**Q16**).²⁸ Approximately 53% of respondents said they would check it through a news source they trusted, 47% would go through official sources, and 46% would check through a search engine. A small number of respondents, 8%, would use an AI chatbot to check the information.

Perhaps not surprisingly, there were differences across age groups in who would check a news story if they believed it was false, misleading or fake. Under 35-year-olds are more likely to check their information on social media or video networks.

Trust in AI-produced journalism

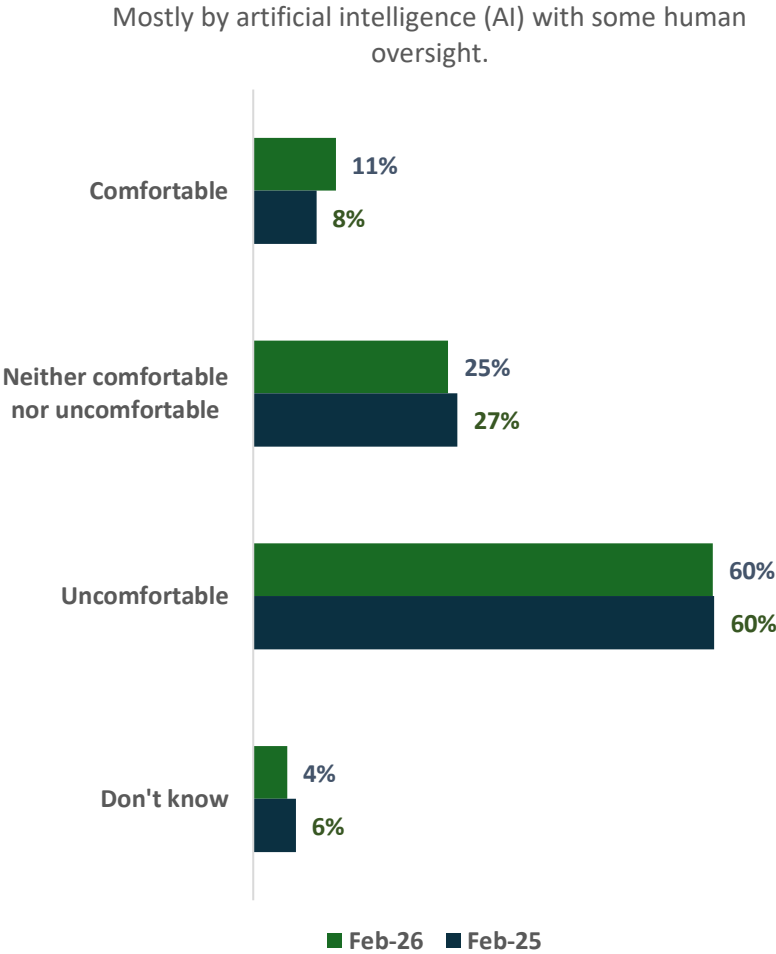
As artificial-intelligence tools become more ingrained in news gathering and production in 2025-2026, we asked New Zealanders how (un)comfortable they were with journalists using these tools (**Q17**).²⁹ We defined AI as a technology that allowed machines to think and learn like humans, and explained it was used in multiple areas in news production, including helping to write news stories in certain circumstances. Asked whether they were comfortable consuming news mostly produced by AI but with some human oversight, approximately 60% (unchanged) said they were uncomfortable with this form of news production. There was a small increase in those who would be comfortable with AI-produced news with human oversight with 11% (+3pp) comfortable with this form of news production.

²⁸ **Q16.** Imagine you came across something important in the news online that you suspect may be false, misleading, or fake. If you decided you wanted to check it, where would you usually go? Please select all that apply. A news source I trust/Official sources (e.g. government websites)/Search engine/A fact-checking website/ Somebody I know and trust personally/ Comments from other users/Wikipedia/Social media or video network/An AI chatbot/Don't know/I don't check at all

²⁹ **Q17** In general, how comfortable or uncomfortable are you with using - News produced in each of the following ways ...? Mostly by artificial intelligence (AI) with some human oversight or mostly by a human journalist with some help from artificial intelligence (AI): Comfortable/ Neither/Nor/Uncomfortable/Don't know

When we asked how comfortable people are with news that is produced mainly by human journalists with AI assistance, 27% (+1pp) of people were comfortable and 34% (-1pp) uncomfortable with the mode of production.

Figure 13: New Zealanders attitudes to AI produced news



Paying for news

As in 2025, we asked New Zealanders which news services they had paid for in the past year (Q18)³⁰ and which ones they had supported financially in any way (Q19)³¹. The number of people who had paid a digital subscription rose only slightly from 16% in 2025 to 17% in 2026. The number of people not paying for news services dropped from 49% in 2025 to 47% in 2026. Only 10% of New Zealanders paid for a print newspaper, down from 13% in 2025.

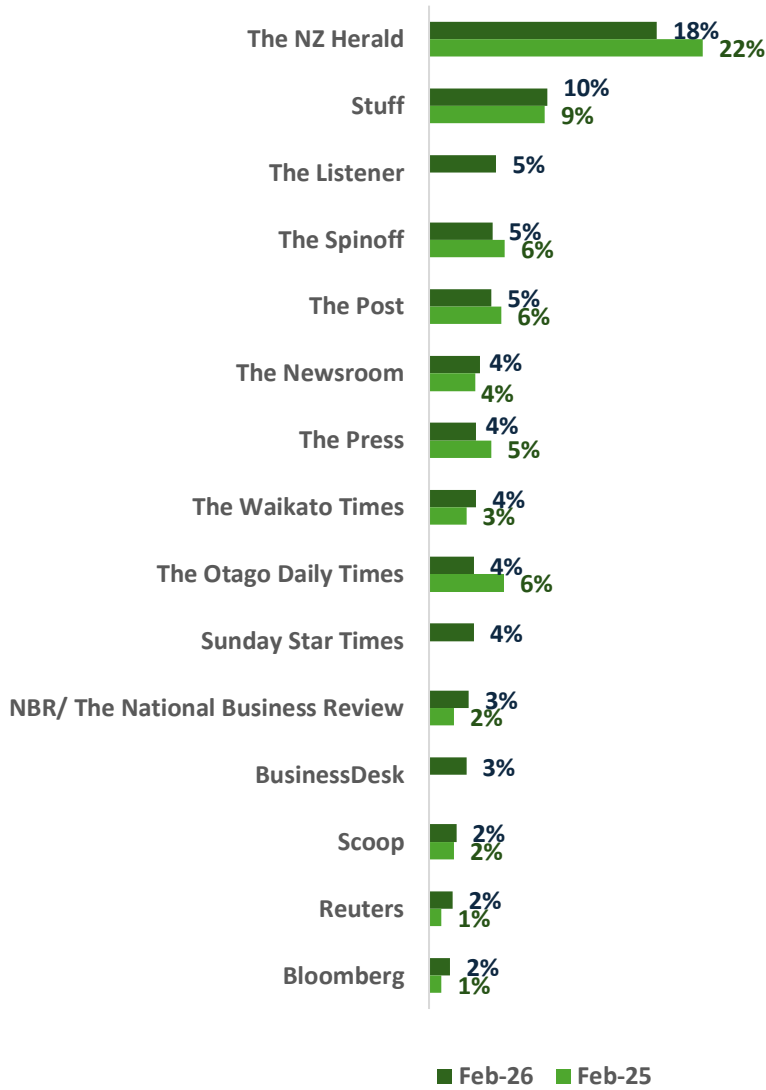
New Zealanders' highest level of financial support went to the *NZ Herald*, with 18% (707,000 adults) saying they supported the newspaper financially. However, there was a significant drop in financial support from 2025 when 22% of those surveyed said they supported the paper financially.

³⁰ Q18 In which of these ways, if any, have you paid for news services 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/I have not paid for news services in the past year/Other (please specify)

³¹ Q19. Which of these news services have you supported financially in any way during the past year? None of these/*The NZ Herald/The Post/The Otago Daily Times/The Press/The Spinoff/ Newsroom/ Scoop/NBR/ Stuff/BusinessDesk/Reuters/Bloomberg/Waikato Times/ Other/The Listener/Sunday Star Times/ Other (please specify)*

Figure 14: News brands New Zealanders have financially supported

Which of these news services have you supported financially in any way during the past year?



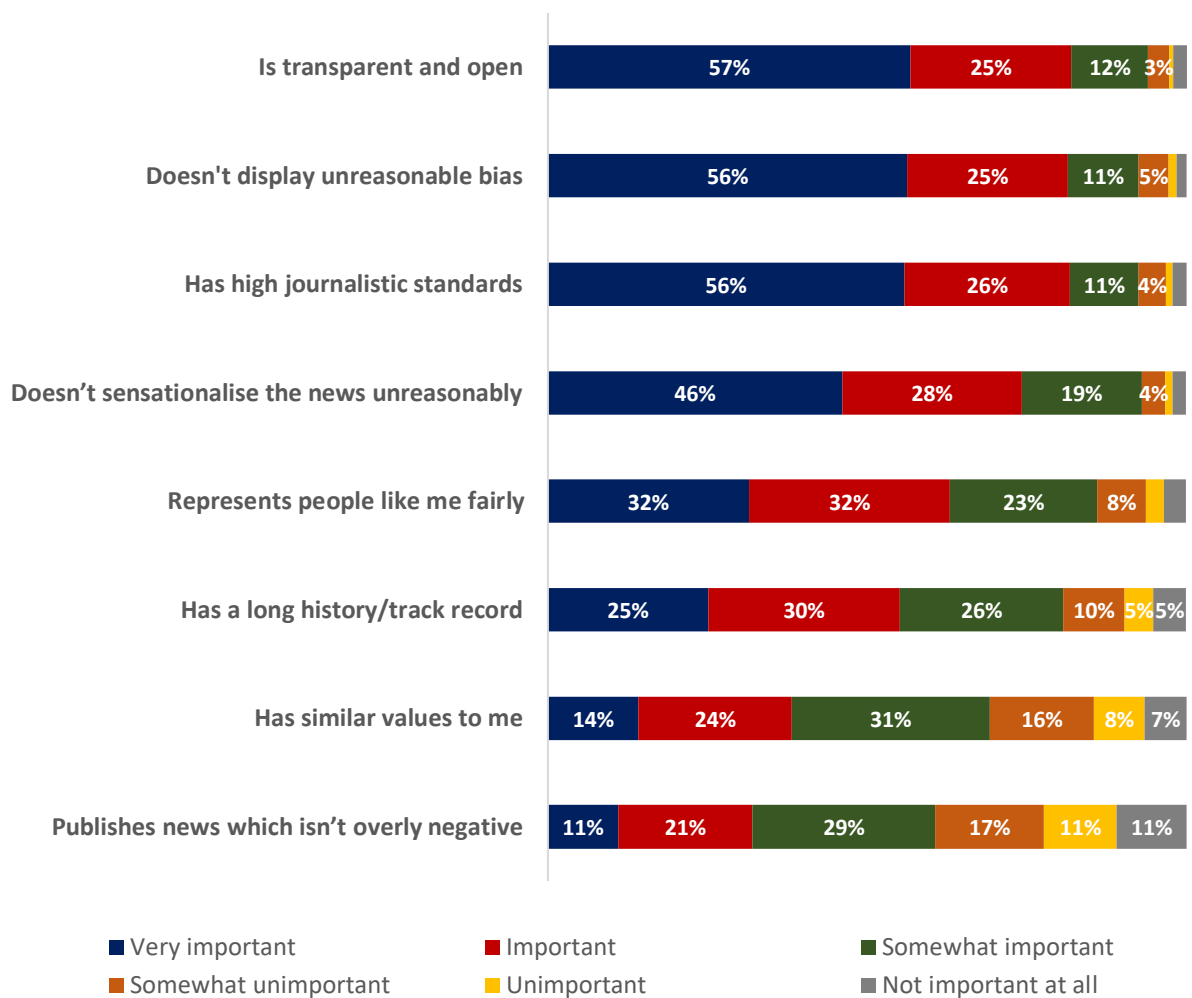
Elements of trust and mistrust

Aspects of news trust

To understand what aspects of news practice are the most important for New Zealanders in terms of trust, we asked the **Q11**.³²

Figure 15: Aspects that make New Zealanders trust a news brand

How important are the following to you when it comes to deciding which news outlets to trust?



³² **Q11.** Still thinking about trust in news ... how important are the following to you when it comes to deciding which news outlets to trust? That the outlet Is transparent and open/Has high journalistic standards/Represents people like me fairly/Doesn't display unreasonable bias/Has similar values to me/Doesn't sensationalise the news unreasonably/Has a long history/track record/ Publishes news which isn't overly negative. Scale:Very important/important/somewhat important/somewhat unimportant/unimportant/not important at all

The majority of those surveyed (82%) said transparency and openness are very important or important to them in terms of news trust. Approximately 82% said high journalistic standards are very important/important to them, and 81% said avoiding unreasonable bias was very important/important to them (Figure 15).

As in previous years, we asked people why they don't trust the news or what makes them trust the news (**Q10.1**)³³ and (**Q10.2**)³⁴. Out of the 338 qualitative comments from those trusting the news, some clear themes emerged. New Zealanders who trust the news do so because they trust journalists for their professionalism. They also trust journalists to verify information and base their reporting on evidence and facts. Furthermore, many New Zealanders acknowledge a lack of credibility in social-media content, and indicate that the rise of influencers and AI content makes them trust news media. These were a few comments made by respondents:

"Traditional news is run by professionals. It can be sued if it writes defamatory stories. It uses details that allow verification."

"Whilst I don't generally trust opinion pieces, traditional mainstream media are generally trustworthy. They may not necessarily tell the whole story or that will be a slant on it but generally speaking I don't expect they lie. Podcasters and influences (sic) don't pay a penalty for lying, and they lie frequently."

"On the whole, journalists and news staff are trained, believe in, and operate within a strong framework of ethics and checks and balances to be impartial (as much as possible within the constraints of budget). Non-journalist created news is less reliable at presenting facts of a story in a fair and balanced manner, therefore I trust the news."

"Journalists generally are trained and more likely to follow a process to verify source (as opposed to social media which I don't trust at all)."

³³ **Q10.1.** Thinking about trust in news ... you said that you don't trust news. Please tell us why not?

³⁴ **Q10.2.** Thinking about trust in news ... you said that you trust news. Please tell us what makes you trust news?

"I'm pretty confident at my age I can sniff out the real thing from bogus. Plus the sources are established sources not an influencer."

Many of our survey respondents say they trust the news if multiple news outlets report on the same issue or they can verify information by using a variety of news sources. Furthermore, live reporting and coverage on the events seem to improve New Zealanders trust in news. Here is a selection of comments on this:

"It does a lot of live coverage. They're right there as it happens."

"I just think you can't really lie to everyone about news that you can see happening around the world e.g. wars etc."

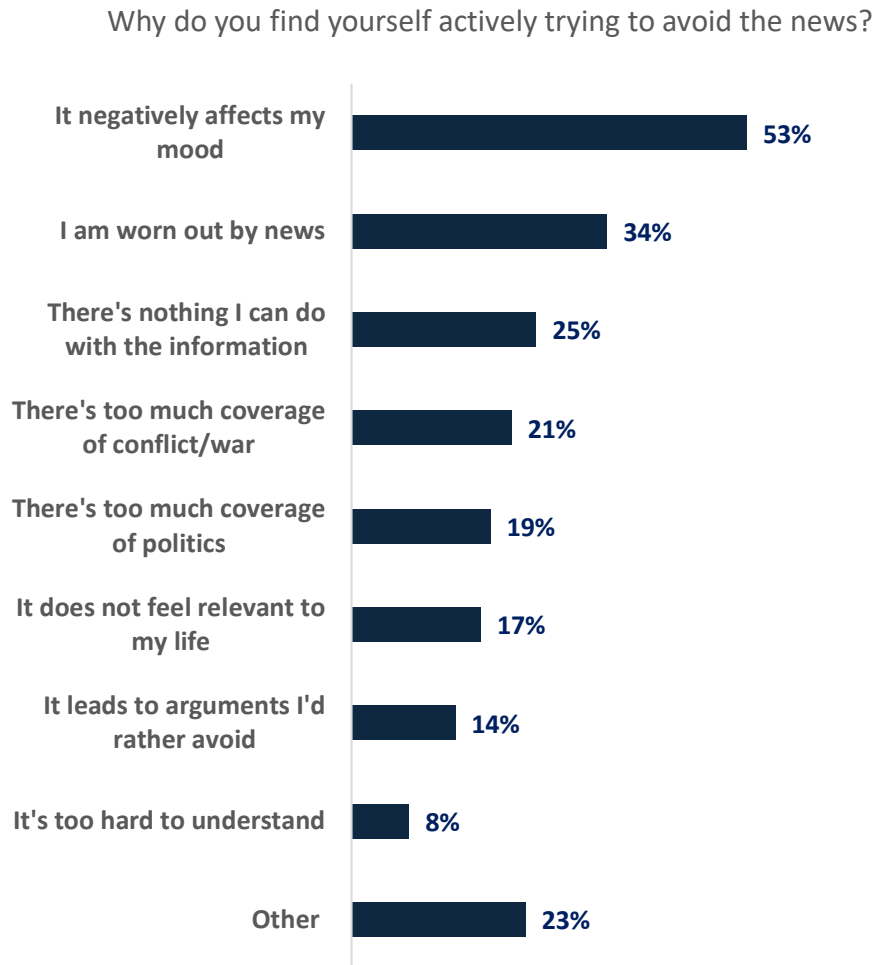
"I trust news when I can verify what I have read across multiple sources or can see their basis is a source I can trust. There is significant inaccuracy in reporting now and fake news which means I can't necessarily trust an individual article, but I am able to readily check multiple sources for the information now using searches and customized news feeds that mitigates this."

"I trust news because it usually comes from well-known sources with professional journalists and factchecking. I also trust it more when the same story is reported by multiple reliable outlets, with clear evidence, official statements, and balanced viewpoints rather than rumours or social media opinions."

Reasons for mistrust and news avoidance

As discussed above, 78% of New Zealanders are actively avoiding the news to some degree (*sometimes/occasionally/often*). This is a significant increase from 73% in 2025. When asked why New Zealanders were actively avoiding the news (**Q7.1**), 53% of respondents said they avoid the news because it negatively affects their mood, and 34% said they are worn out by the news.

Figure 16: Reasons why New Zealanders are actively avoiding the news



The 2026 survey gained 345 qualitative comments about mistrust in news and journalism. The main reasons for mistrusting the news were similar to our earlier surveys: media was not trusted because of perceived bias, both right wing and left wing. Additionally, opinion or opinionated pieces offered as news were eroding trust. Some typical comments were:

“Mainstream media is biased, woke, swings extremely to the left, and is by and large completely untrustworthy.”

“They use many types of bias. They don't give balanced coverage. Don't cover the parties outside of parliament. Rarely give voice to groups such as the conservative viewpoint.”

“A lot of reporting is biased or incentivised to show a right wing-friendly interpretation of issues. Misinformation is prevalent.”

“I find the reporters are very opinionated and should be impartial. It is up to me to have an opinion once I have been given the facts of what is being reported. I am so sick of it I have stopped watching TV news on any channel now.”

“It's too woke. Too political. Too much social agenda. Too much opinion where there should be fact. It also leaves out a lot of very important news. NZ news is boring and fails to properly educate.”

“It's now mostly opinion pieces framed as news. No longer any objective journalism - generally seems to take an angle.”

Media owners/boards influence and trust

In 2026, we asked for the first time how New Zealanders may respond if media owners/boards or managers were to directly interfere in editorial decisions (**Q15**).³⁵

Approximately 43% of survey respondents say their trust in the media would decline if owners/boards or managers were to interfere with editorial decisions. Furthermore, 27% would consider cancellation of a subscription/payment to the news outlet.

³⁵ Q15. Would direct involvement in editorial decisions by news media managers or owners/boards result in you doing any of the following? Cancelling a subscription/stop buying; Subscribing/Start to buy; Keep subscribing/keep buying; Increase my trust in the news outlet/Decrease my trust in the news outlet; None of these; Something else (please tell us what that is)

Table 2: Actions New Zealanders may consider if editorial independence is compromised

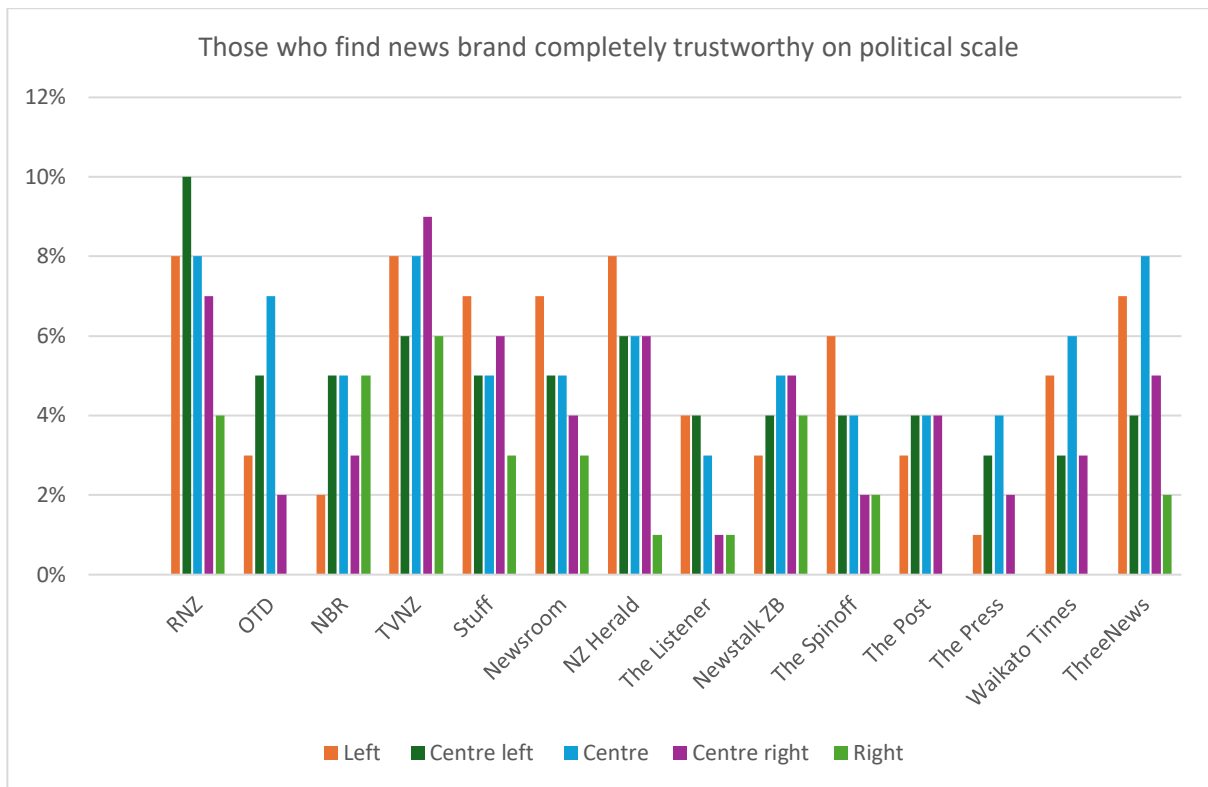
<i>Would direct involvement in editorial decisions by news media managers or owners/boards result in you doing any of the following?</i>	Total	Significantly more likely to do ▲	
Decrease my trust in the news outlet	43%	55+ year olds	53%
		Couple only (no children at home)	51%
		Voted Green Party in 2023	61%
		Left on the political scale	63%
		Centre left on political scale	55%
Cancelling a subscription/stop buying	27%	55+ year olds	38%
		Couple only (no children at home)	35%
		Living in Whanganui/Manawatu/Horowhenua	45%
		Voted Green Party in 2023	40%
		Left on the political scale	49%
Increase my trust in the news outlet	14%	Under 35 year olds	25%
		Two parent family 3+ children at home	31%
		Asian	27%
		Centre on the political scale	23%
Keep subscribing/keep buying	10%	Under 35 year olds	22%
		Two parent family 3+ children at home	22%
Subscribing/start to buy	8%	Under 35 year olds	15%
		Have personal income more than \$150k	16%
		Centre on the political scale	13%

Trust and political leanings

Additionally, we wanted to explore aspects of news trust based on political leanings, and asked our respondents to place themselves on a political scale (Q12)³⁶: left, centre left, centre, centre right and right. We included in our analysis those who either completely trusted or mistrusted each brand.

³⁶ Q12 Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale? Left/Centre left/Centre/Centre right/Right/None of these/I am not sure

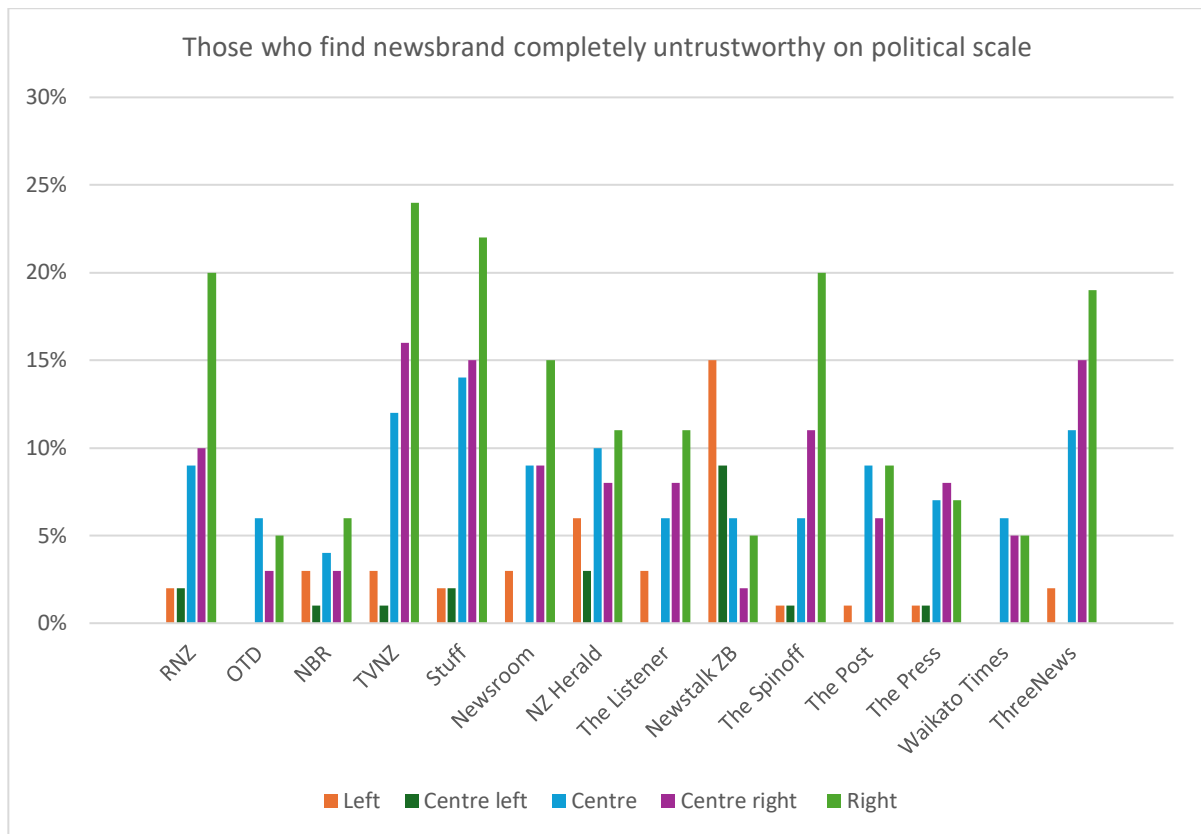
Figure 17: Trust in news brands based on respondent's political leaning



As seen in Figure 17, those who most trust RNZ sit mostly on the left, centre-left and centre; those who most trust TVNZ are on the left, centre and centre right; those who most trust the *NZ Herald* are mostly on the left, centre left, centre, and centre right; those who most trust *The Post* are on the centre left, centre, and centre right; those who trust *The Press* are on the centre and centre left; and those who trust the *Waikato Times* are on the left and centre.

Accordingly, those who most mistrust RNZ, TVNZ, Stuff, Newsroom, The Spinoff and ThreeNews are clearly on the right of the political spectrum. Most of those who mistrust the *NZ Herald* are on either right or centre, and those mistrusting Newstalk ZB tend to sit on the left of the political spectrum. Those who most mistrust *The Post* sit on the centre or right.

Figure 18: Mistrust in news brands based on respondent’s political leaning



Some demographic findings

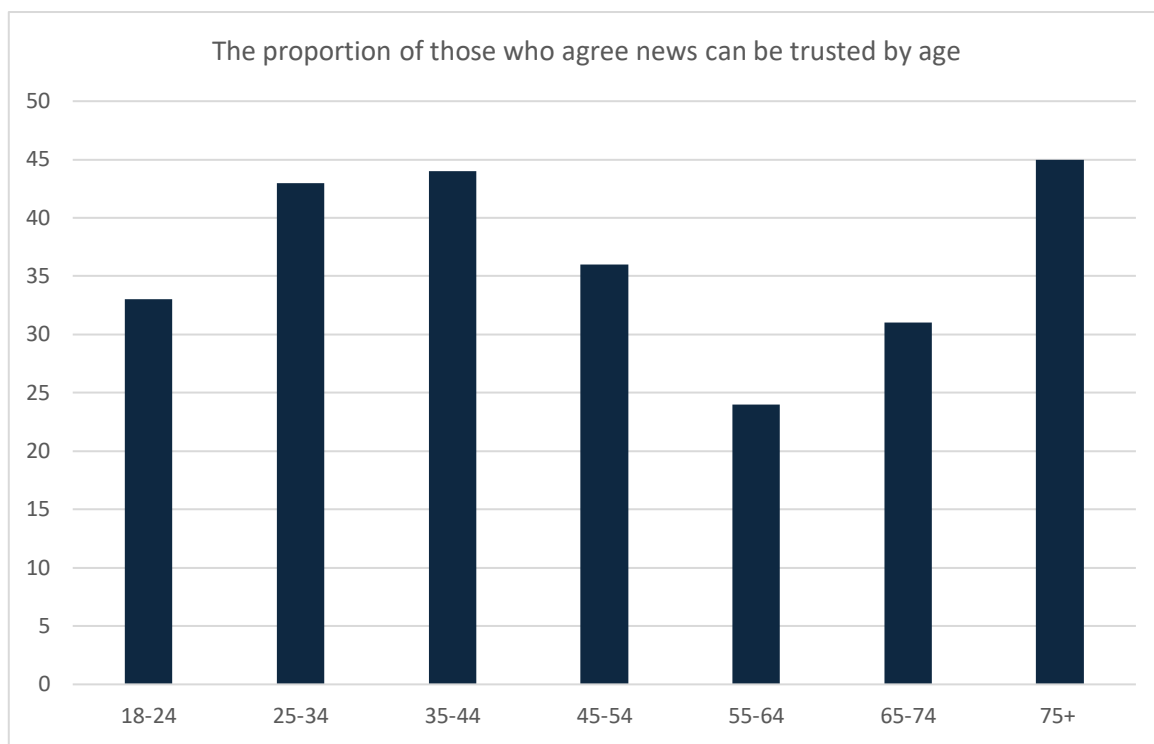
Among the data we collected from respondents were demographic details. This allows us to explore news mistrust and news avoidance by age, gender, political preference and so on.

Age. Age is often perceived as a likely determinant of news trust. Those who were more likely to trust news were 75+ years olds (45%), 35-44 years olds (44%) and 25-34 years olds (43%). Those who were most likely to mistrust news were over 55 years old, with 54% of those 55-64 year olds disagreeing that news can be trusted.

Of those who said they avoid the news often, 20% were 45-54 years old, 25% voted New Zealand First in the 2023 election, and said that they were “right” on the political scale (24%).

Those who were more likely never to avoid the news were 75+ year olds.

Figure 19: News trust in Aotearoa New Zealand by age (%)



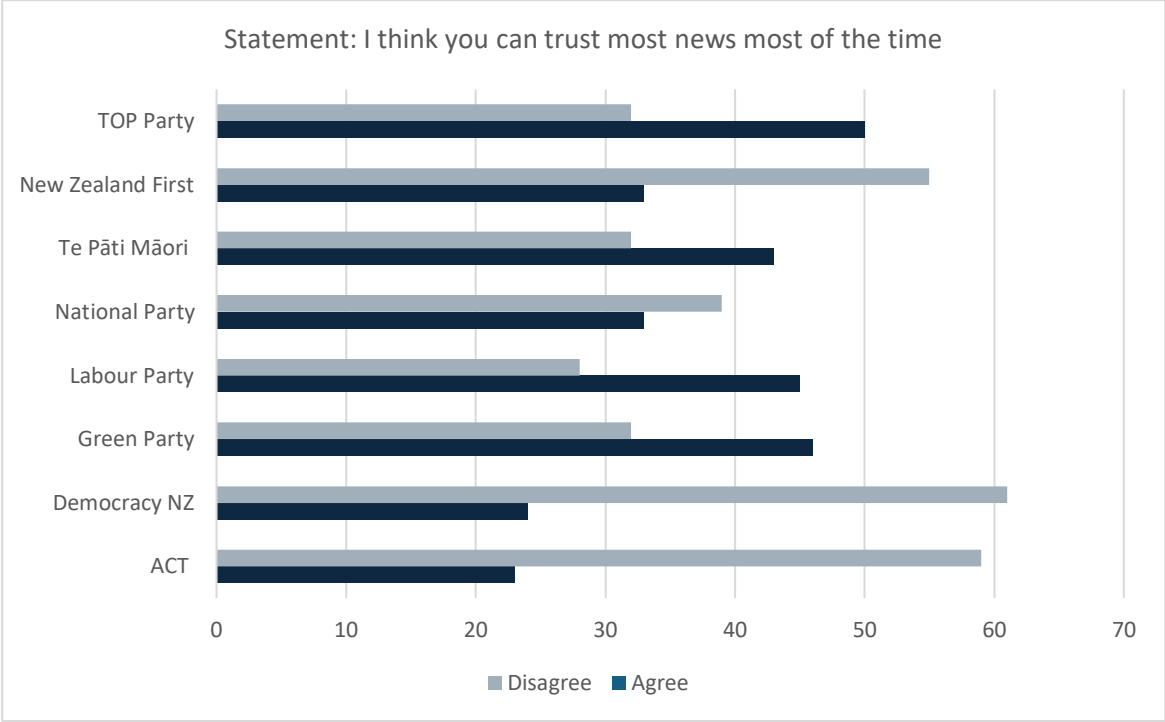
Those who were interested or extremely interested in news were generally over 55 years old, had a household income of over \$200,000, were a couple only and voted ACT in the 2023 elections. Respondents who were over 55 years old were more likely to use more sources of news in a week, on average using four sources. Those who were under 35 years old were more likely to use social media as a news source, using on average three social media sources as a news source.

Gender. Male and female respondents expressed somewhat different levels of trust in the news, with 35% of male respondents trusting the news compared to 39% of female respondents. Those who identified as ‘another gender’ trusted news less (21%).

Ethnic group. While some ethnicities were not represented by a statistically useful number of people, those who identify as Asian New Zealanders (41%), New Zealand European/Pākehā (39%) and Pasifika (36%) trust the news more than other ethnic groups. Only 9% of those who identify as Middle Eastern/Arabic trust the news with 65% of disagreeing that you can “trust most news most of the time.”

Political leaning. This year we asked respondents again how they voted in the party vote at the 2023 General Election. This meant we could see where the news trust sits among voters.

Figure 20: News trust in Aotearoa New Zealand by 2023 party vote (%)



As we can see in figure 20, those who trust the news the least tend to sit on the right on the political spectrum; those who in 2023 were voting for Democracy NZ, ACT and New Zealand First, were least trusting of news. A large proportion of National Party voters also distrusted the news with 39% of disagreeing with the statement “I think you can trust most news most of the

time.” Those most trusting the news voted for the TOP Party (50%), Green Party (46%), Labour Party (45%) and Te Pāti Māori (43%).



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 eleven 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.