

TRUST IN NEWS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND 2023



AUT RESEARCH CENTRE FOR
JOURNALISM, MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

AOTEAROA

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About this report

This is the fourth report about trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand produced by the AUT research centre for [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) (JMAD). The study behind the report was completed in collaboration with the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#). With permission from the institute's researchers, we have used the same survey questions to investigate trust in news and a comparable sampling method to the one used in their annual [Digital News Reports](#) to measure news trust. This allows us international comparisons with Aotearoa New Zealand about levels of trust in the news – in 2022, the Reuters survey covered 46 countries. Our 2023 survey also asked New Zealanders about their news consumption, news sources, misinformation and paying for news. These questions in our survey mirror those in the Reuters study, allowing us international comparisons about these related issues. As in 2020-2022, survey data for our 2023 report was collected by New Zealand online market research company Horizon Research Ltd. The production of this report was funded by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and it has ethics approval from the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEK).

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

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Authorship



Dr Merja Myllylahti is a senior lecturer 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's research centre for Journalism, Media and Democracy (JMAD). Between 2011 and 2020, Merja authored, co-authored and co-edited 10 *New Zealand Media Ownership* reports, published by JMAD. Her research has been published in international books and academic journals, including *Journalism Studies*, *Digital Journalism*, *Journal of Media Business Studies*, and *Pacific Journalism Review*.



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

Methodology

This report on trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand is the fourth produced by the AUT research centre for [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) (JMAD). It is based on a survey of 11 questions, most of which mirror those asked by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism Reuters in its annual international survey. The questions concerning news trust match exactly those asked for the Reuters' annual [Digital News Report](#). In 2022, the Reuters Institute conducted a survey of 46 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia/Pacific and Africa, and our international comparisons about news interest, news avoidance, consumption, trust and news payments are made against this group. In 2023, our survey for the first time asked questions about news avoidance and political influence in the media to match new questions introduced by Reuters. In 2023, 15 New Zealand news brands were included in our study.

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 1,120 New Zealand adults (18 years of age or over) who are members of a Horizon Research Ltd respondents panel and a third-party research panel, which together represent the New Zealand population at the 2018 New Zealand Census. The survey was carried out from February 13 to February 18, 2023, and has a maximum margin of error at a 95% confidence level for the total sample of $\pm 2.9\%$.

Overview

New Zealand context

During 2022 and early 2023, trust became a focal point of discussion in New Zealand as controversies arose from legal reforms and the General Elections loomed. In 2022, the Labour Government had been planning to merge Crown-owned broadcasters RNZ (public interest broadcaster) and TVNZ (commercially funded), and trust became a crucial part of the debate around the creation of the new entity. *The Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media Bill* was to create a new Crown-owned radio and TV broadcaster called Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media (ANZPM).¹ In 2022, Broadcasting Minister Willie Jackson argued the combined broadcaster would strengthen the country's public media, and public trust in it.² Others, including TVNZ CEO Simon Power, disagreed and said the proposed legislation was not strong enough to support trust in the media system. Power pointed out that the intended Bill needed to make sure that ANZPM was "totally free from political influence and is seen to be so."³ Additionally, Sir Peter Gluckman and Anne Bardsley argued that by rushing the Bill, the Government was in fact eroding public trust: "... the effect of such cavalier law-making is loss of trust, at a time when sustaining trust is of utmost importance. Not only is trust the bedrock of democracy, but also society generally."⁴ In February 2023, the Government, led by new Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, abandoned the costly merger, stating that "work on the TVNZ-RNZ public media entity will stop entirely. Support for public media needs to be at a lower cost and without such significant structural change." In the aftermath, the

¹ Aotearoa New Zealand Public Media Bill. Government Bill (146-1).

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/bill/government/2022/0146/latest/LMS647920.html?src=gs>

² Jackson, W. (2022, July 26). Public media entity Bill gets first reading in the House.

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/public-media-entity-bill-gets-first-reading-house>

³ Pullar-Strecker, T. (2022, August 31). TVNZ boss supportive of merger with RNZ but says law change poorly constructed. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/business/129734339/tvz-boss-supportive-of-merger-with-rnz-but-says-law-change-poorly-constructed>

⁴ Gluckman, P. and Bardsey, A. (2022, December 8). The trust to pass new laws is eroding the public's trust. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/130690768/the-rush-to-pass-new-laws-is-eroding-the-publics-trust>

Government would “provide Radio New Zealand with additional funding to strengthen its public media role”.⁵ Since 2020, RNZ and TVNZ have ranked highly in our annual trust surveys, although in 2022 and 2023, trust in the Crown-owned brands substantially weakened. However, in 2023 RNZ and TVNZ remain among the top three most trusted news brands.

Since our first *Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* report was published in 2020, general trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand has declined. In 2020, 53% of New Zealanders trusted news in general. In 2023, the same figure was 42%. In December 2022, a NZ Herald poll revealed that New Zealanders considered media (38%) as the most untrustworthy institution of those sampled⁶. The Government was distrusted by 33% of responders and big businesses by 30% of Kiwis. Additionally, the Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer 2022 showed that 41% of New Zealanders trust the media and 57% trust the Government. In contrast to JMAD’s survey, the Acumen poll showed that trust in media grew from 31% in 2020 to 41% in 2022 (JMAD’s research shows a decline of 8% in 2020-2022). The Acumen poll ascertains trust in the media whereas the JMAD poll surveys trust in news and news brands. Furthermore, the survey shows that 58% of New Zealanders trusted “traditional media”, 49% search engines, 34% “owned media” and 19% social media. Of those surveyed 36% trusted journalists.⁷

At the same time as trust in the news is low, abuse of journalists has become more sinister. In early 2023, *Stuff* journalist Paula Penfold, who has received death threats for her work on disinformation,

⁵ Hipkins, C. (2023, February 8). Government takes new direction with policy refocus. [Announcement] <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/government-takes-new-direction-policy-refocus>

⁶ Gabel, J. (2022, December 11). Rebuilding better: poll reveals what Kiwis trust the most. *NZ Herald*. <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/rebuilding-better-poll-reveals-the-key-institutions-most-trusted-by-kiwis/QSZZBUTYBZGNPOL255PQKIO3UM/>

⁷ Acumen (2022). Trust in New Zealand. Acumen Edelman Trust Barometer New Zealand. <https://acumennz.com/>

wrote that civil discourse in New Zealand had become “ugly”.⁸ She said that while online and physical abuse did not stop journalists from publishing their stories, there was “a chilling effect. Good people leave the profession” and that journalists were “forced to spend too much time having to think about our security and putting measures in place to keep ourselves safe – time we should be able to spend on journalism.” A 2022 survey conducted for the *Worlds of Journalism Study of New Zealand* journalists shows that journalists were increasingly under attack. Journalists reported “threats, bullying, stalking, and rape and death threats” and “particularly females, have serious concerns about their safety on the job.”⁹

In January 2022, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced her resignation ahead of the 2023 General Elections and Chris Hipkins was swiftly announced as the new Prime Minister. In November 2022, a Newshub-Reid poll had shown Ardern’s popularity dropping. The poll showed that Labour Party had 32.3% support and National 41% support from voters, being the “lowest level of support for Labour since Jacinda Ardern became the leader in mid-2017.”¹⁰ The poll also showed that the “frosty reception” from voters had extended to the Prime Minister, with her popularity as the preferred PM tumbling below 30%. After Ardern left her job, many blamed social media attacks for her departure. In an interview, former PM Helen Clark said New Zealand had “become very polarised” and had “taken on a lot of the worst aspects of American politics.”¹¹ A study by the

⁸ Penfold, P. (2023, January 15). Abuse of journalists shows how ugly our civil discourse has become. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/300776395/abuse-of-journalists-shows-how-ugly-our-civil-discourse-has-become>

⁹ Worlds of Journalism Study 2.0. Journalists in Aotearoa/New Zealand. (2022). Massey University. <https://www.farmersweekly.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Worlds-of-Journalism-Study-2.0.-Journalists-in-Aotearoa-New-Zealand.pdf>

¹⁰ Lynch, J. (2022, November 6). Newshub-Reid research poll: Jacinda Ardern’s personal popularity plummets into 20s. Newshub. <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2022/11/newshub-reid-research-poll-jacinda-ardern-s-personal-popularity-plummets-into-20s.html>

¹¹ Helen Clark calls for change in political debate, says NZ has become hugely polarised (2023, January 20). RNZ. <https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/politics/2023/01/helen-clark-calls-for-change-in-political-debate-says-nz-has-become-hugely-polarised.html>

University of Auckland shows that during 2019-2022, Ardern was “the target of 93% of toxic posts against seven high profile politicians and officials, with a total of 5,438 abusive messages.”¹²

International context

Internationally, trust in news declined in 2022. The Reuters Institute’s *Digital News Report 2022* – a benchmark for our JMAD survey – found that trust in news had fallen “in almost half the countries in our survey, and risen in just seven, partly reversing the gains made at the height of the Coronavirus pandemic”. Approximately 42% of those surveyed said they trusted most news most of the time. The survey found big differences between countries: trust in the news was highest in Finland (69%), whereas trust in news in the US fell to the lowest level the survey has recorded (26%).¹³ The Reuters survey also found that consumption of traditional media – including TV and print – continued to decline. Additionally, interest in news fell “sharply” across the markets, from 63% in 2017 to 51% in 2022.

More worryingly, the survey found that the “proportion of news consumers who say they avoid news, often or sometimes, has increased sharply across countries”, adding that “a significant proportion of younger and less educated people say they avoid news because it can be hard to follow or understand.” Another Reuters report found that 72% of news publishers were “worried about increasing news avoidance – especially around important but often depressing topics like Ukraine and climate change.”¹⁴

¹² Macdonald, N. (2023, January 23). Nine out of 10 hateful posts tracked in darkest corners of the internet targeted Ardern – new study. *Stuff*. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/131038776/nine-out-of-10-hateful-posts-tracked-in-darkest-corners-of-the-internet-targeted-ardern--new-study>

¹³ Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Robertson, C.T., Eddy, K. and R.K. Nielsen. Digital News Report 2022. (2022). Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Digital_News-Report_2022.pdf

¹⁴ Newman, N. (2023). Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2023. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/journalism-media-and-technology-trends-and-predictions-2023>

The Edelman Trust Barometer 2023 reported that people surveyed in 28 countries were worried about their finances and economic situation. Still, 62% of respondents trusted business, more than those who trusted their government (51%).¹⁵ Approximately 42% of respondents trusted media (unchanged from 2022). Those concerned about polarisation and divisions in societies, and hence weakened social fabric, dropped from 65% in 2022 to 62% in 2023. The report notes that “a lack of faith in societal institutions triggered by economic anxiety, disinformation, mass-class divide and a failure of leadership has brought us to where we are today – deeply and dangerously polarized.” (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023).

A 2022 Pew study also revealed that in the United States, “adults under 30 are now almost as likely to trust information from social media sites as they are to trust information from national news outlets.”¹⁶ Approximately 50% of those surveyed trusted information they got from social media sites, and roughly 56% trusted information from national news organisations. Local news outlets were the most trusted information sources among all age groups (71%). A report from the Knight Foundation, published in February 2023, said 50% of Americans feel most national news organizations intend to mislead, misinform or persuade the public.¹⁷

¹⁵ Edelman Trust Barometer (2023). Global Report. https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2023-01/2023%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_Jan19.pdf

¹⁶ Liedke, J. and Gottfried, J. (2022). U.S. adults under 30 now trust information from social media almost as much as from national news outlets. Pew Research Centre. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/10/27/u-s-adults-under-30-now-trust-information-from-social-media-almost-as-much-as-from-national-news-outlets/>

¹⁷ Knight Foundation (2023). American views 2022: Part 2, trust media and democracy. <https://knightfoundation.org/reports/american-views-2023-part->

Key findings 2023

Trust in news in New Zealand

- In 2023, general trust in news in New Zealand continued to fall (-3%), but trust in news people themselves consumed increased slightly, indicating that people trust the news they choose themselves the most.
- In 2023, general trust in news declined from 45% to 42%. However, trust in news people consume themselves increased from 52% to 53%.
- From 2020-2023, general trust in news fell by 11%, and trust in news people consume themselves fell by 9% (table 1).
- In 2023, major news brands suffered a considerable decline in trust. Trust in RNZ fell 14.5%, Whakaata Māori 14.3% and Newstalk ZB 14%. Smaller brands such as interest.co.nz, BusinessDesk and Crux were less impacted (table 4).
- In 2023, RNZ, the Otago Daily Times and TVNZ were equally regarded as the most trusted news brands. In 2022, RNZ was the most trusted news brand followed by the other two. In 2023, the top three were followed by interest.co.nz, NBR, Newshub and Newsroom.

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

	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change % 2020-2023	Change % 2022-2023
Overall trust in news	53%	48%	45%	42%	-11%	-3%
Trust in news I use	62%	55%	52%	53%	-9%	+1%
Trust in news in search	27%	26%	23%	25%	-2%	+2%
Trust in news in social	16%	14%	15%	14%	-2%	-1%

Trust in news compared internationally

- When compared internationally, trust in news in New Zealand has fallen continuously, whereas in comparable markets it has somewhat fluctuated (table 2).
- The trust gap between New Zealand and 46 countries surveyed by Reuters has disappeared. In 2023, general trust in the news was at the same level as Reuters' international average, at 42%.

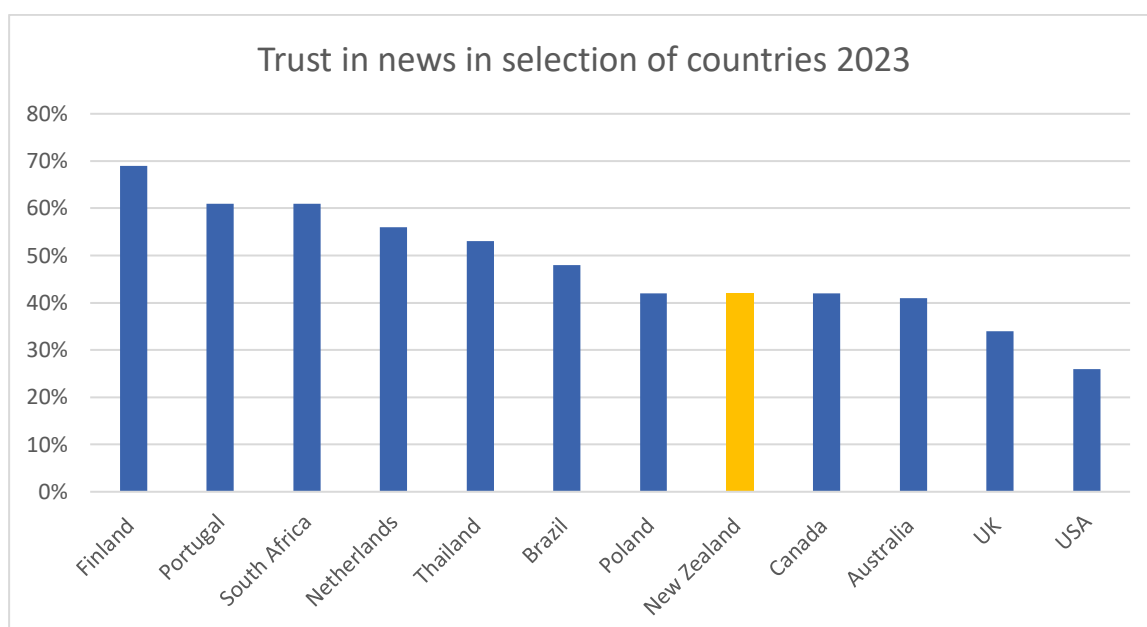
Table 2: Trust in news internationally and in New Zealand 2020-2023

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

Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2022

- General trust in the news in New Zealand is higher than in Australia, the UK and the US, and at the same level as in Canada and Poland.
- In New Zealand, 23% of those surveyed have paid for online news content or for access to online news. This is higher than the Reuters survey's international average of 17%.

Figure 1: Trust in news in general in comparable markets

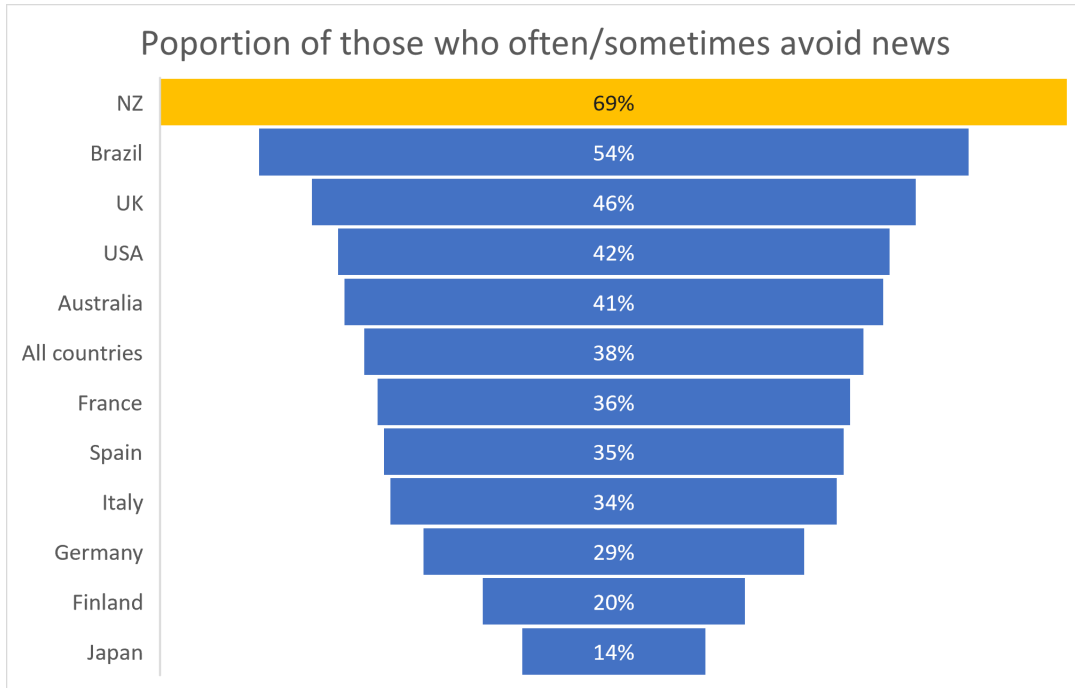


Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2022

News interest and news avoidance

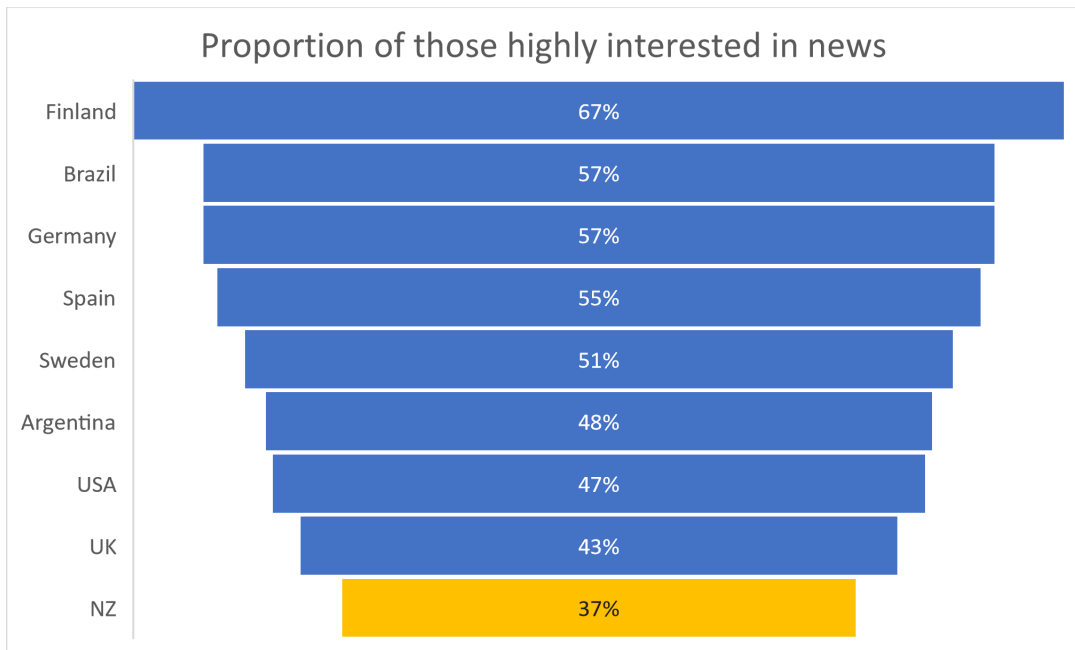
- In 2023, we asked New Zealanders for the first time about news avoidance. Approximately 69% of those surveyed said that they actively avoid news often (11%), and 58% sometimes or occasionally.
- When compared internationally, news avoidance in New Zealand is on a higher level than in other comparable markets (figure 2).
- On the other hand, New Zealanders are interested in the news with 75% expressing their interest. Approximately 37% are extremely interested, 38% interested and 20% somewhat interested in the news.

Figure 2: Those who actively avoid news often or sometimes



Source: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2022

Figure 3: Those who are highly interested in news



Sources: JMAD, Reuters Digital News Report 2022

Detailed findings

Consumption, interest and sources of news

As in 2022, this year we scoped New Zealanders' interest in the news (Q1).¹⁸ Based on our sample, 95% of New Zealanders are interested in the news to some extent. Approximately 75% are either highly interested or interested in the news. However, the level of news avoidance is high when compared internationally. In 2023, we asked New Zealanders for the first time about news avoidance (Q2 and Q2.1)¹⁹ and reasons for news avoidance. Of those surveyed, 32% said they never avoid the news, with 58% of respondents avoiding news occasionally or sometimes, and 11% avoiding news often.

“Depressing information. Disproportionate amount of negative to positive news.” (Female, 25-34, NZ European/Pakeha)

*“It's very negative and divisive and you don't really know what to believe anymore with \$\$
And it's just depressing hearing about war, disease, poverty etc.” (Female, 25-34, other European)*

“New Zealand news media is basically right wing spin machine now. I get more reliable information from finding primary sources myself.” (Male, -44, Māori/NZ 35European)

“There is an obvious media bias. Too much space given to Hosking, Hawkesby and many others. I do not feel better informed by reading their opinions dressed up as news and it just makes me upset.” (Female, 65-74, NZ European)

The reasons people say they avoid the news are familiar: news feels depressing and biased, and it increases anxiety. Many of those responding found news repetitive, boring and overly dramatic.

Many commented that “same news keeps circulating in different channels” making them avoid

¹⁸ Q1. Overall, how interested would you say you are in news? 1 extremely interested/2 interested/3 somewhat interested/4 not interested/5 not interested at all.

¹⁹ Q2. Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? Never/Sometimes/Occasionally/Often and
Q2.1. Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news?

certain news/news channels. Above is a sample of answers to the question of why New Zealanders are avoiding the news. The next two questions asked New Zealanders about sources of news. We first asked what news media New Zealanders used as a source of news (Q3²⁰). To understand better news consumption on social media, we then asked which social media sources people used to access/consume news (Q4²¹).

Table 3: Sources of news in the past week

Source of the news	2022	2023
TVNZ	64%	65%
Stuff (online)	64%	59%
Facebook	n.a.	56%
Newshub/TV3	49%	51%
NZ Herald (online)	48%	45%
RNZ	32%	32%
YouTube	n.a.	32%
Other online news sites	31%	26%
Facebook Messenger	n.a.	22%
Commercial radio	21%	20%
Printed newspapers	19%	19%
Alternative news sites	13%	13%
Instagram	n.a.	18%
Twitter	n.a.	17%

²⁰ Q3. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past week as a source of news? TVNZ/Newshub/RNZ/Commercial radio/Indigenous media/NZ Herald online/Stuff online/Other online news sites/Printed newspapers/Alternative news sites/Blogs/Social media/None of these.

²¹ Q4. Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past week for news? Facebook/Facebook Messenger/ Twitter/Instagram/Snapchat/WhatsApp/YouTube/Telegram/TikTok/None of these

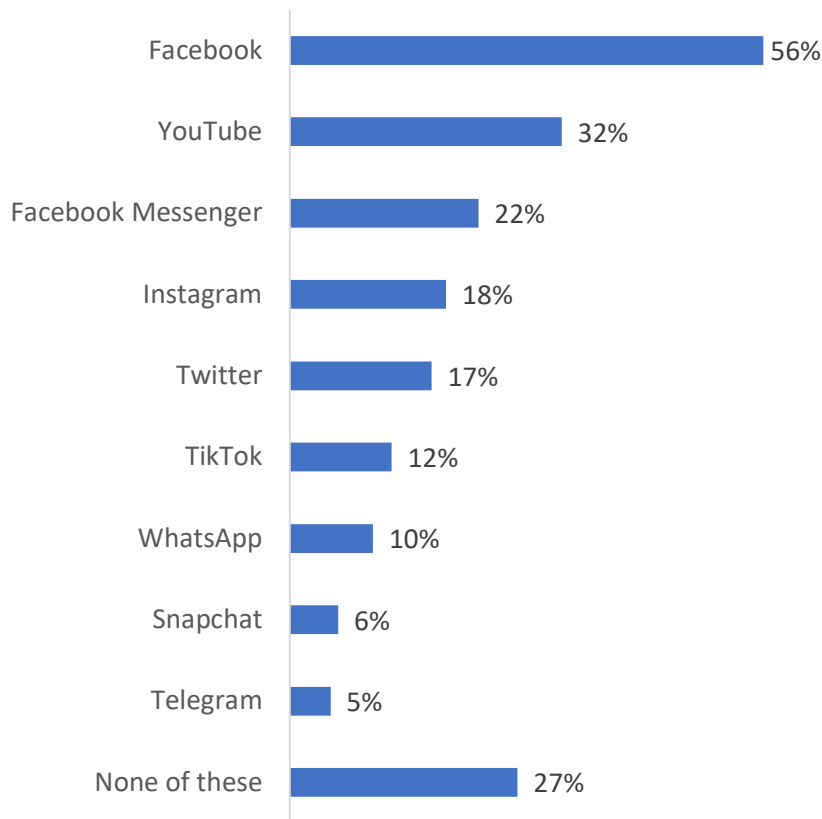
While TVNZ and Stuff were the main sources of news for the second year in a row, Facebook has become the third most important news source for New Zealanders (tables 3 & 4). Many respondents said they followed postings by the news media on social media, but many were also relying on citizen reporters posting relevant information on community pages. Here are a couple of comments related to news sources:

“My main news sources are social media – it used to be mainly Twitter but now it’s Mastodon. I mostly only look at the official news sources when someone links an article. Other than that, I like watching government stand-ups and get info straight from the source when possible.” (Another gender, 45-54, Asian)

“If you want very local news Facebook community groups are fantastic. During the great flood 2 weeks ago I was able to see photos and video of what was going on just down the road from me. This was faster than any news outlet. And it was local and real.” (Female, 55-64, NZ European)

Fewer people were using Stuff and NZ Herald as their news sources, but TVNZ and Newshub increased their importance as sources of information. Based on our sample, TVNZ was mentioned as a source of news by 65% of those surveyed, followed by Stuff (59%), Facebook (56%), Newshub (51%) and NZ Herald (45%). Of social media outlets, Facebook was the most used followed by YouTube, Facebook Messenger, Instagram and Twitter. Approximately 13% of those surveyed used alternative news sites, 12% TikTok, 10% WhatsApp and 5% Telegram (figure 4).

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



Overall trust in news and news brands

Q5²² asked New Zealanders about both their trust in the news generally and their trust in the news they consumed, and **Q6**²³ asked about their trust in the news found via social media and search engines. Based on our sample, in 2023, trust in the news in general dropped from 45% in 2022 to 42% in 2023. In a period of four years, trust in the news in general has fallen by 11%, as seen in figure 5. In 2023, trust in news people consume themselves increased slightly to 53%. Trust in social

²² **Q5.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: a) I think you can trust most news most of the time b) I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

²³ **Q6.** It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. a) I think I can trust news in social media most of the time b) I think I can trust news in search engines most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

media fell from 15% in 2022 to 14% in 2023, but trust in news in search increased from 23% in 2022 to 25% in 2023.

Figure 5: Trust in news in general in 2020-2023

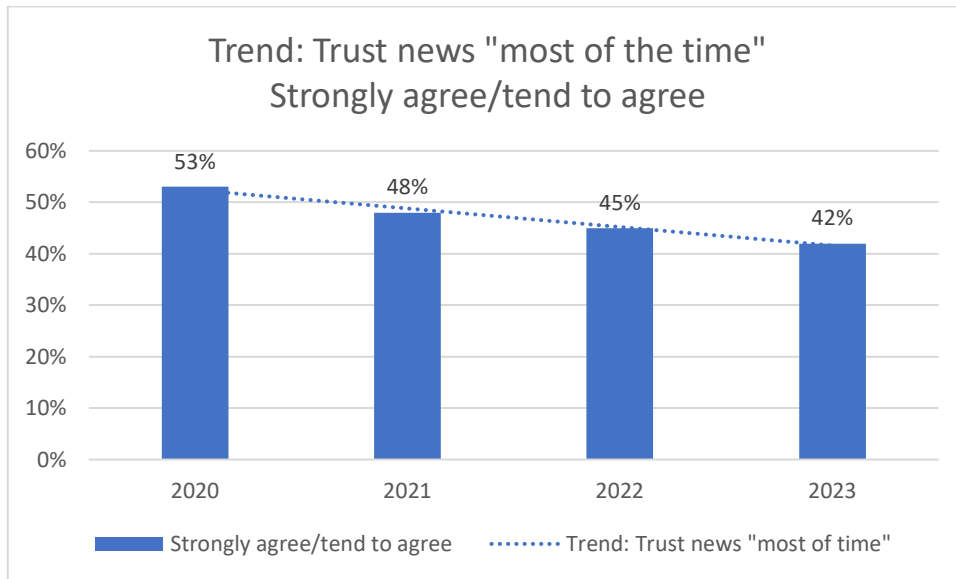
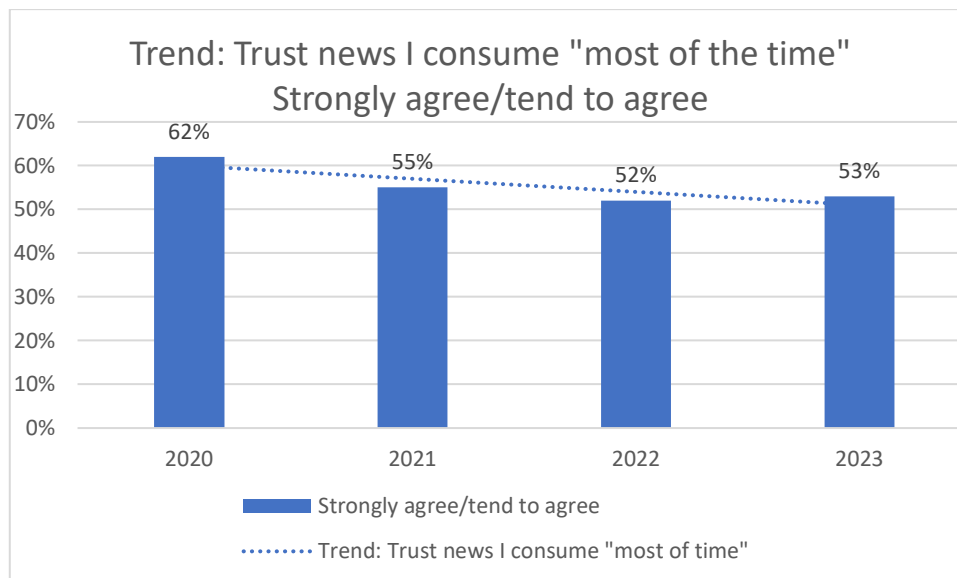


Figure 6: Trust in news people consume themselves in 2020-2023

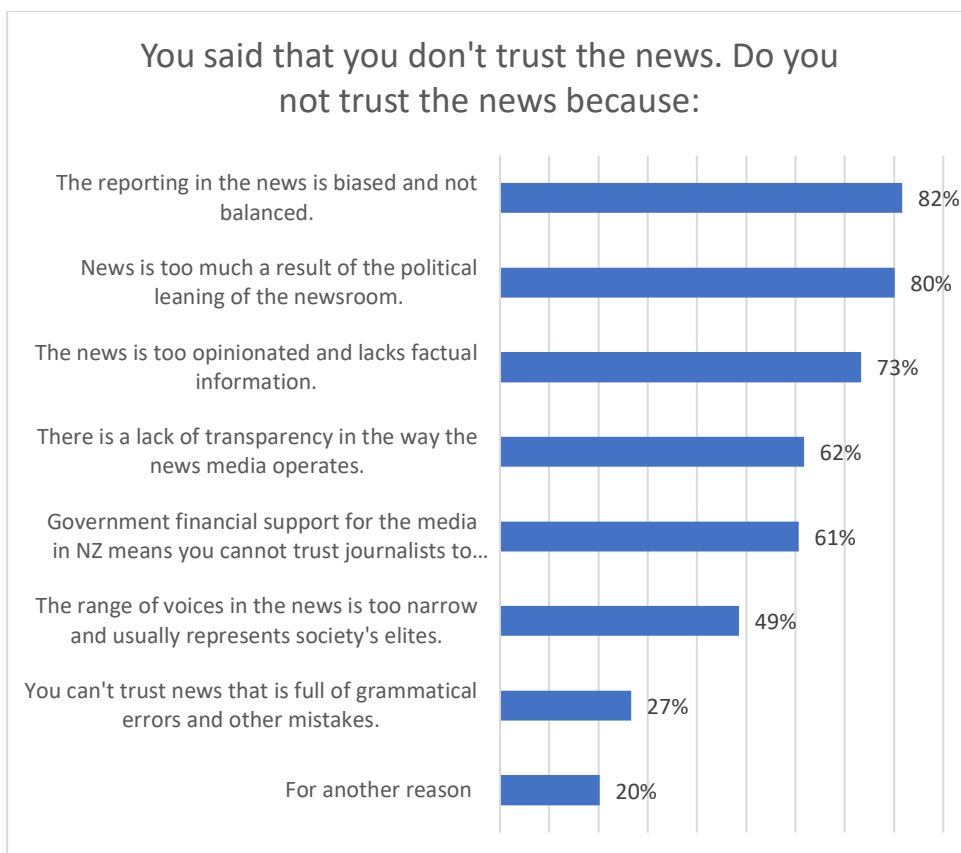


When we asked why people trust the news, approximately 70% agreed that journalists “provide me with quality information about important issues” and 50% said that they depend on journalists not to misinform them via “fair and honest reporting.” Less than half (48%) trusted news because

“journalists do their best to tell both sides of stories” and opinions expressed are based on facts.

Approximately 41% of those responding said that they trust the news to “hold the Government to account” (figure 7).

Figure 7: Reasons not to trust the news in 2023



When we asked people why they don't trust the news, the main reasons for mistrust were biased and opinionated reporting, lack of facts and politicisation of newsrooms – they were seen as having a political leaning (figure 6). Respondents also believed there was not enough transparency in how media operated and that because of governments' funding of journalism, you could not trust the news. Also, the news was seen as lacking diversity in voices. Some respondents commented that the media was not providing positive news and supporting positive change, and therefore was not to be trusted. Here is a sample of comments:

“I think media outlets have an obligation to support stories that encourage positive change in things that are unarguably true – for example climate change. Having diverse opinion is valuable but honestly the world is burning so I really don't want to read some clickbait bullshit article about how plant based burgers taste like cardboard – people are out here doing their best so either support the effort to make a positive change or shut the hell up.” (Female, 25-34, other European)

“There are so many untruths being promulgated. Don't know who to trust anymore, expect [sic] myself.” (Female, 65-74, NZ European)

“It's getting harder to find the unbiased truth.” (Male, 75+, NZ European)

“It's hard to trust the news when views or opinions that go against the opinion or theme of the media / government are silenced. There should always be room to ask questions and learn more. I lost my trust in the media when the government called itself the one source of truth and wouldn't allow any real scientific or political rebuttal.” (Female, 35-44, NZ European)

Similarly to 2022, we scoped the trustworthiness of prominent news New Zealand news outlets (Q7).²⁴ Using a scale of 0-10, where 0 was not trustworthy at all and 10 completely trustworthy, respondents were asked to rate their level of trust in 17 news brands/media. Mean scores were calculated from those who knew of each news source, with those who were not aware of a brand excluded. In 2023, we added the National Business Review (NBR) and Today FM (MediaWorks) to our survey. In 2022, we added the Otago Daily Times, BusinessDesk and Crux to the survey.

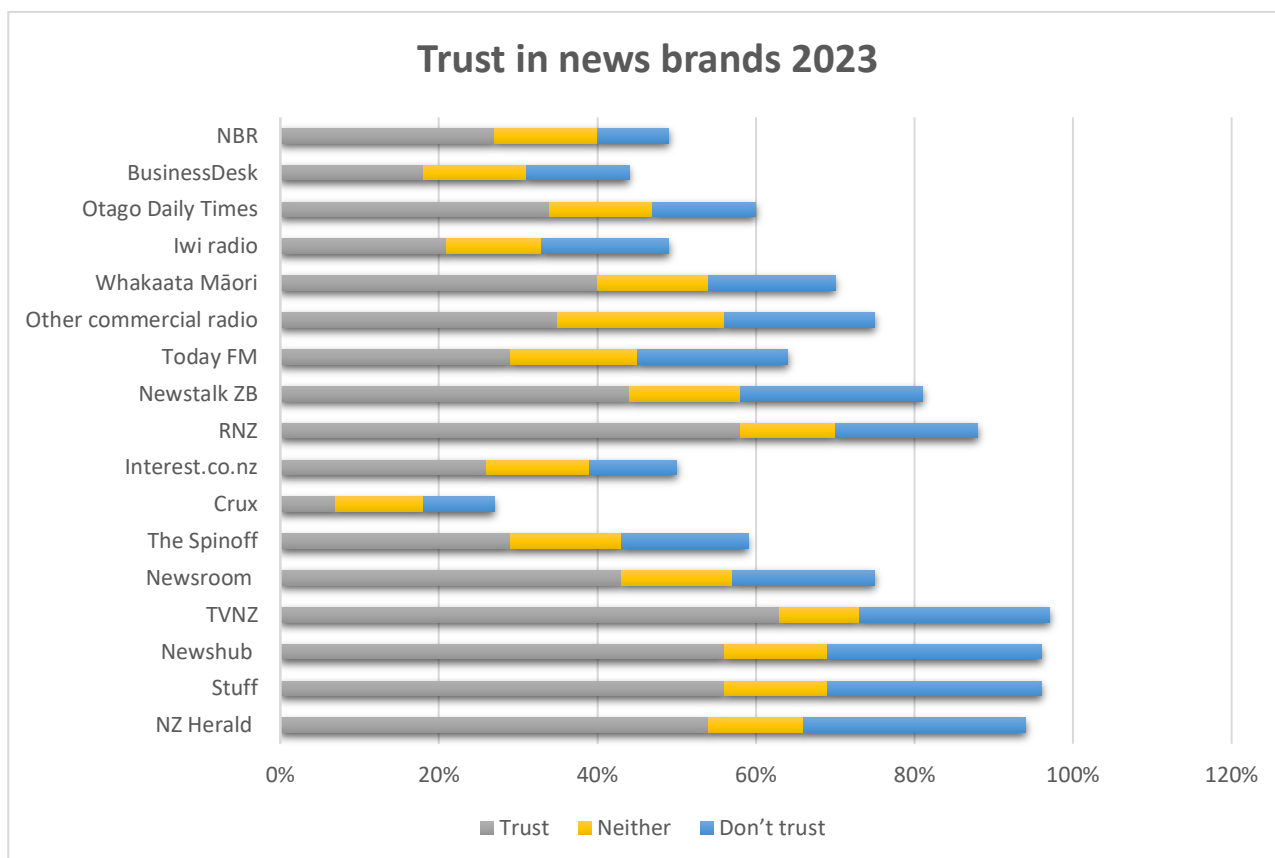
²⁴ Q7. How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is? Please use the scale below, where 0 is 'not at all trustworthy' and 10 is 'completely trustworthy'. NZ Herald/Stuff/NewsHub/TVNZ/Newsroom/The Spinoff/Crux/Interest.co.nz/RNZ/Newstalk ZB/ Māori Television/Iwi radio stations/Otago Daily Times/BusinessDesk.

Table 4: Trust score (0-10) for New Zealand news brands

Brand	Trust score 2020	Trust score 2021	Trust score 2022	Trust score 2023	Change % in 2022-23
RNZ	7.0	6.8	6.2	5.3	-14.5%
Otago Daily Times	(not included)	(not included)	6.0	5.3	-11.7%
TVNZ	6.8	6.6	5.9	5.3	-10.2%
Interest.co.nz	(not included)	5.7	5.5	5.2	-5.5%
NBR	(not included)	(not included)	(not included)	5.2	
Newshub	6.6	6.3	5.8	5.1	-12.1%
Newsroom	6.4	6.2	5.7	5.1	-10.5%
Other commercial radio stations	(not included)			5.1	
NZ Herald	6.3	6.2	5.7	5.0	-12.3%
BusinessDesk	(not included)	(not included)	5.3	5.0	-5.7%
Stuff	6.1	6.0	5.7	5.0	-12.3%
Newstalk ZB	6.2	5.7	5.7	4.9	-14.0%
Whakaata Māori (Māori TV)	(not included)	6.3	5.6	4.8	-14.3%
Today FM	(not included)	(not included)	(not included)	4.7	
The Spinoff	5.4	5.2	5.2	4.6	-11.5%
Iwi Radio	(not included)	5.7	5.0	4.5	-10.0%
Crux	(not included)	(not included)	4.4	4.2	-4.5%

As seen in table 4, all the major news brands saw substantial declines in trust in 2023 when compared to the previous year/years. All brands included in our survey dropped in trust scores, with RNZ (-14.5%), Whakaata Māori (-14.3%) and Newstalk ZB (-14%) experiencing the steepest declines in trust. Trust in smaller brands including interest.co.nz, BusinessDesk and Crux were less impacted. In 2023, RNZ, the Otago Daily Times and TVNZ were the most trusted news brands, each having a trust score of 5.3 out of 10 (figure 8). In 2022, RNZ was the most trusted brand followed by the other two. In 2023, interest.co.nz and the NBR were jointly ranked as the 4th most trusted brands, followed by Newshub, Newsroom and 'other commercial radio stations'.

Figure 8: Those who trust, distrust or do neither in 2023

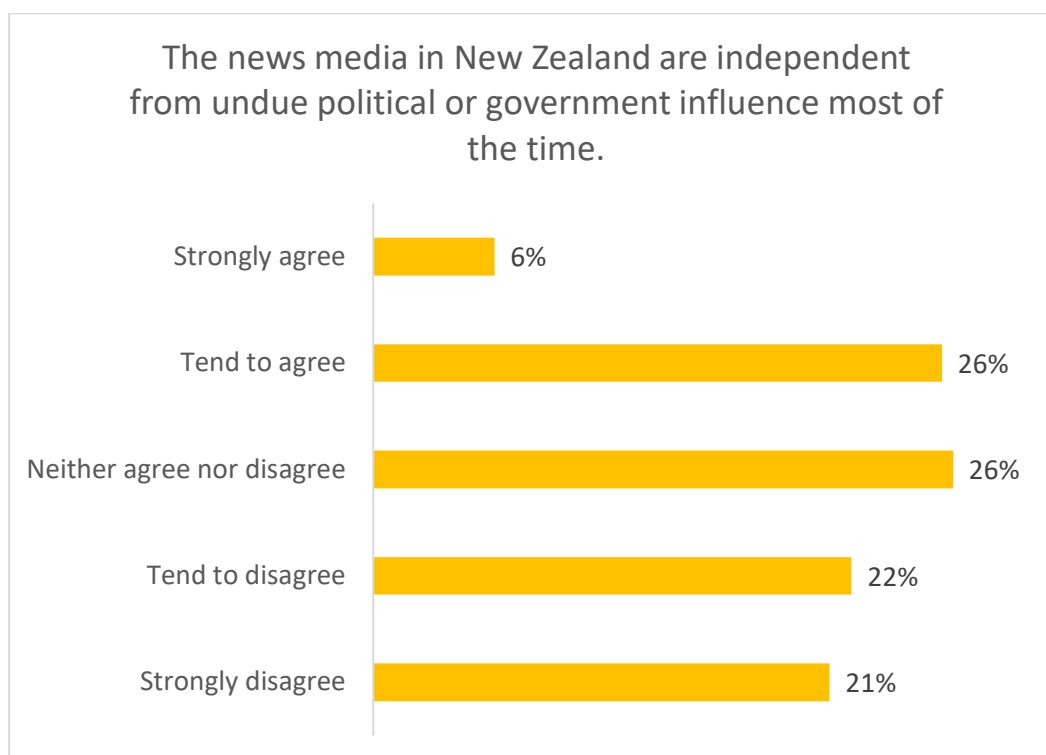


Concerns of influence, misinformation and journalism

In relation to the trust in news, we asked New Zealanders whether they believe that news media is independent of undue political or government influence most of the time **(Q8)**.²⁵ Approximately 32% agreed that news media is independent of the political and government influences whereas 43% strongly disagreed with this view. Approximately 26% of those responding did neither agree nor disagree (figure 9).

²⁵ Q8. Thinking about news in general, do you agree or disagree with the following statement. The news media in New Zealand are independent from undue political or government influence most of the time: Strongly disagree/Tend to disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Tend to agree/Strongly agree

Figure 9: Independence of media from political and government influences



These comments highlight some of the views about political and governmental influence in the news and news media.

“It’s hard to trust the news when views or opinions that go against the opinion or theme of the media / government are silenced. There should always be room to ask questions and learn more. I lost my trust in the media when the government called itself the “one source of truth” and wouldn’t allow any real scientific or political rebuttal” (Female, 35-44, NZ European)

“It is not government influence that’s the problem, it’s the political right and their big money interests that are the problem” (Male, 35-44, Māori/NZ European)

“Mainstream media are losing credibility because they have become government puppets who no longer report the real truth. They’re not even interested in investigating real truth. They simply repeat the government narrative and I think that’s shocking and unacceptable” (Female, 45-54, NZ European)

“It seems that various news outlets stack their publications with political opinion. The opinion spills over into news reporting. There is much less factual reporting too much of what the journalist thinks rather than knows” (Male, 55-64, NZ European)

Q9²⁶ asked New Zealanders whether they were concerned about what was real and what was fake news on the internet. Approximately 86% of respondents were concerned about fake news with 58% of people being very or extremely concerned about fake news.

Q10²⁷ asked to what extent respondents were concerned about poor journalism. “Poor journalism” was defined as making factual mistakes; dumbed-down stories and misleading headlines/clickbait. Approximately 94% of respondents were concerned about poor journalism, up from 91% in 2022 and 2021 and 90% in 2020. Additionally, 94% of respondents were concerned about “stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda”, and 89% of respondents were concerned about “stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements”.

As we did in 2022, we also asked New Zealanders about paying for news and online content (**Q11**)²⁸. We asked which news services respondents had paid for (**Q11a**)²⁹ and which ones they had supported financially (**Q11b**)³⁰.

²⁶ **Q9.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: “Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.” 1 Strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

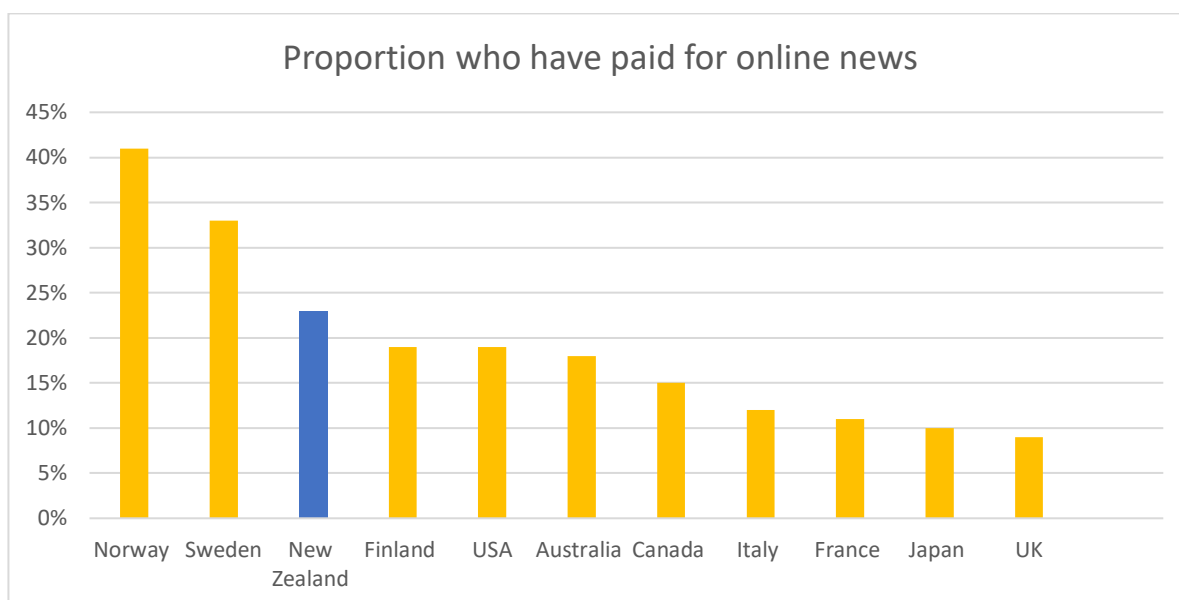
²⁷ **Q10.** To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following: Poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait)/Stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda/Stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements/Stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire)/term fake news. Scale: Not at all concerned/Not very concerned/Somewhat concerned/Very concerned/Extremely concerned.

²⁸ **Q11.** Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid-for online news service in the past year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition).

²⁹ **Q11a.** In which of these ways, if any, have you paid for news services you value in the past year? Print newspaper subscription only/Digital and print newspaper subscription/Digital subscription only/Monthly or annual membership/Donation (fixed amount)/None of these/Other (please specify)

³⁰ **Q11b.** Which of these news services have you supported financially in any way during the past year? *The NZ Herald/The Dominion Post/The Otago Daily Times/The Press/The Spinoff/ Newsroom/ Scoop/NBR/ Stuff/BusinessDesk/Reuters/Bloomberg/Other (please specify)*

Figure 9: Proportion of those who have paid for online news



Source: Reuters Digital News Report 2022, JMAD

In 2023, approximately 23% of New Zealanders had paid to access online news content (figure 9).

This proportion is higher than Reuters' international average of 17%. New Zealand ranks third after Norway and Sweden when measured for online news payments, as seen in figure 8. Of the respondents who have paid for content in the past year, 49% paid for digital-only, followed by 29% paying for monthly or annual membership and 29% for digital and print subscription.

Approximately 51% of respondents have supported the NZ Herald financially (paid for its products); 16% has supported Stuff, 13% The Spinoff, 9% Newsroom, 8% Otago Daily Times, 5% BusinessDesk and 3% NBR. Additionally, 26% of New Zealanders have financially supported other news organisations including The New York Times and the Guardian.

Here are a few comments about paying for news in New Zealand:

"I don't subscribe for news but I donate (Stuff, the Guardian)" (Female, 65-74, NZ European)

"I support NZ Herald only grudgingly. My main source is the NYT" (Female, 65-74, NZ European)

"I would happily pay for a subscription to a mainstream newspaper but don't feel the quality is worth spending money on. I do support The Spinoff for this reason" (Male, 35-44, NZ European)



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