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# **News Consumption in the UK: 2022**

Overview of research findings

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# 1. Key findings from the report

This report provides the findings of Ofcom's 2021/22 research into news consumption across television, radio, print, social media, podcasts, other websites/apps and magazines. It is published as part of our range of market research reports examining the consumption of content, and attitudes towards that content, across different platforms.

The aim of the News Report is to inform understanding of news consumption across the UK and within each UK Nation. This includes sources and platforms used, the perceived importance of different outlets for news, attitudes towards individual news sources, international and local news use.

This report also provides an understanding of current affairs consumption among adults and news consumption among 12-15 year olds.

Fieldwork for the adults' survey this year took place from 6th November - 5th December 2021 and 7th March - 3rd April 2022. Fieldwork for the Teens survey this year took place from 5th November – 6th December 2021 and 6th March – 4th April 2022. However, the majority of the 2022 News Report uses combined online and face to face adult data from March/April 2022 only, which is compared with 2020, 2019 and 2018 data, but cannot be compared with 2021 data due to methodology differences (because of the Covid-19 pandemic).

The primary source for this report is Ofcom's News Consumption Survey. The report also contains information from BARB for television viewing.

### What we have found – in brief

**TikTok's reach for news has increased from 2020 (1%) to 2022 (7%).** Half of its user base (for news) are aged 16-24.

**Reach of TV (74%), and internet (66%) platforms remains steady.** There is some evidence of longer term erosion of radio reach (40% in 2022 down from 44% in 2018).

**Different age groups consume news very differently;** younger age groups are much more likely to use the internet and social media for news, whereas their older counterparts favour print, radio and TV.

**Reach of print/online newspapers has seen a decrease from 2020 (47%) to 2022 (38%).** The decrease is driven by decreases in print (online newspaper reach remains steady) which have likely been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Five of the top six TV channels (including BBC One which remains the top news source across platforms) saw decreased reach from 2021 among online adults.

**Attitudes towards news generally remain consistent with 2020** (across measures such as quality, accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality) for TV, radio, social media, newspapers and online, with TV performing strongest, and social media performing least well.

**Social media is overtaking traditional channels for news among teens.** Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are now their top three most used sources for news. Meanwhile many sources have seen decreases since 2021, with reach of BBC One/Two decreasing to 24% in 2022 (down from 35% in 2021).

## 2. Overall summary of findings

### Overall summary - Adults

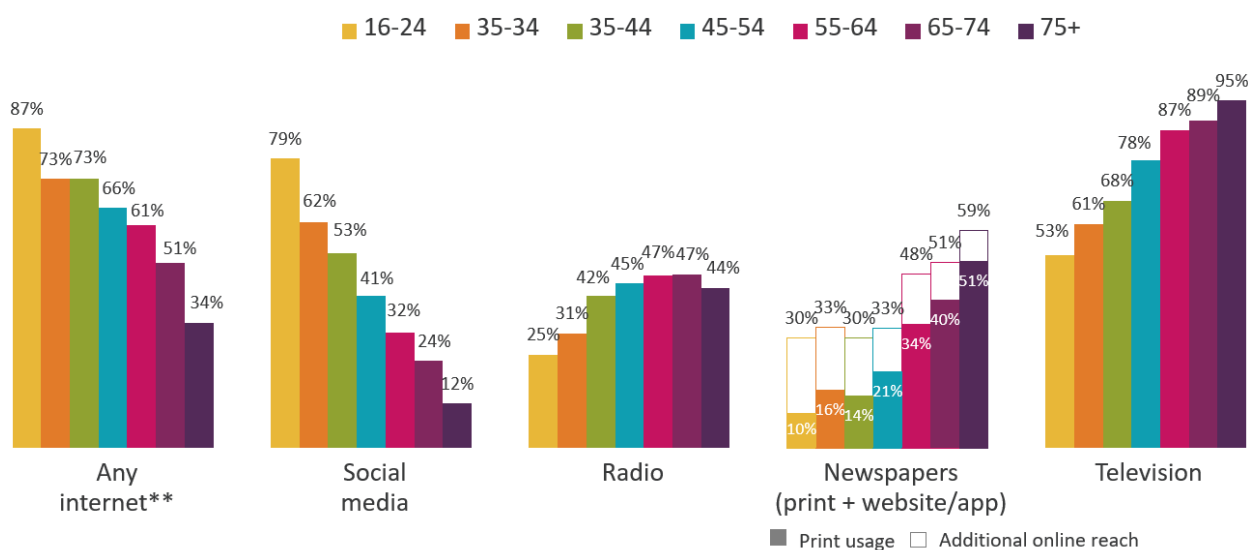
#### Platforms used for news

Reach of TV (74%), and internet (66%) platforms remains steady. There is some evidence of longer term erosion of radio reach (40% in 2022 down from 44% in 2018).

Reach of print/online newspapers decreased from 2020 (47%) to 2022 (38%), with the previous trend of steady decreases likely exacerbated by the pandemic. Newspaper reach doubles for younger groups when online newspaper reach is added to print.

The differences between platforms used across age groups are striking; younger age groups continue to be more likely to use the internet and social media for news, whereas their older counterparts favour print, radio and TV.

Figure 1: Use of main platforms for news nowadays 2022 – by age



Source: Ofcom News Consumption Survey 2022 – COMBINED F2F & ONLINE sample

Question: C1. Which of the following platforms do you use for news nowadays?

Base: All Adults 16+ 2022 W2\* – Aged 16-24=442, 25-34=385, 35-44=520, 45-54=463, 55-64=412, 65-74=346, 75+=223

2022 W1 data not shown because face-to-face fieldwork was not possible during Covid-19 pandemic.

\*\*Internet figures include use of social media, podcasts and all other websites/apps accessed via any device

At a platform level, attitudes towards news provision (measures such as quality, accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality) remain consistent with 2020, with TV performing strongest, and social media performing least well. A smaller proportion of social media users rate the sources they use as highly important to them.

## Top sources used for news

The BBC remains the news organisation with the highest cross-platform audience reach (76%) among those following news.

BBC One remains the top source by reach for adults (53%). YouTube (8%) has seen growth from 2020 (appearing on the 'top 20' list for the first time) while both ITV and Google see decreases in reach. There is significant variation in the top sources used across age groups - among younger groups social media sources are particularly prevalent (Instagram is the top source among 16-24s with a reach of 46%).

BBC One remains the top single most important news source (selected by 21% of adults using news), although this has declined over the long term from 27% stating this in 2018. Almost 4 in 10 (39%) of 16-24s selected a social media channel as their most important news source.

## Television

BARB data shows that people turned to TV channels for news at the start of the pandemic and then turned away as it progressed.

News Consumption Survey data (among online adults) supports this; from 2021 to 2022 BBC One, ITV, BBC News Channel, Sky News Channel and BBC Two all saw decreases in reach.

Viewer attitudes (measures such as quality, accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality) towards TV channels' news provision are generally consistent with 2020.

## Radio

At a channel level, longer term, reach of Capital and Heart for news appears to be decreasing, as does BBC local radio in England. BBC listeners generally rate BBC highly across attitudes particularly high quality (78%), trust (75%) and accuracy (74%).

## Newspapers

While the reach of print newspapers is decreasing, online newspaper reach remains steady. The Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday remains the most widely-read news title overall, whilst The Guardian/ObsERVER and Daily Mail/Mail on Sunday are the most widely-read digital titles.

## Social Media

TikTok's reach for news has increased from 2020 (1%) to 2022 (7%). Half of its user base (for news) are aged 16-24. Users of TikTok for news get more of their news on TikTok from 'other people they follow' than from 'news organisations'.

Social media platforms continue to score relatively poorly on attributes, such as 'trust', but most do perform better on 'offers a range of opinions'. Although not as trusted as other platforms, around a third of users of social media sites do trust them for news.

### Other online sources

The BBC website / app remains the most used 'other website/app', used by 23% of UK adults, followed by Google (search engine) used by 12% of UK adults, a decrease from 2020. YouTube, Yahoo News' and Apple News' reach all have increased since 2020. 13% of UK adults say they use news aggregators. The reach of podcasts small overall (10%). Regular users of BBC Sounds for news (2% of all adults) gave it high ratings for quality (78%), accuracy (75%) and trust and impartiality (both 70%). Attitudes towards online sources' news provision (measures such as quality, accuracy, trustworthiness and impartiality) remain consistent with 2020.

### Local news

TV remains the most popular platform for accessing local news and people are still highly satisfied with the quality of this news. 42% of online UK adults who follow news say they watch regional/local broadcasts on BBC TV and 23% watch them on ITV/ITV WALES/UTV/STV (a decrease from 32% in 2020). Four in five of these viewers are satisfied with the quality of news that these channels provide.

### News consumption in the nations

TV remains the most common platform for accessing news about respondents' own nation. BBC One is the most used news source in Wales for accessing news about the nation, whereas STV is most used in Scotland and UTV the most used in Northern Ireland. BBC One is the most used news source in England for accessing news about the respondents' region.

### Current Affairs

As in 2020, six in ten adults (64%) think it is important for 'society overall' that broadcasters provide current affairs programming, more than those who say it is important to them personally (53%).

## Overall summary – 12-15-year-olds

**As in 2020, just under six in ten 12-15s claim to be either ‘very’ or ‘quite’ interested in news.**

Among the four in ten who are not interested in the news, the main reason is it is ‘too boring’ (39% although this has decreased since 2021).

**Talking with family (65%) and watching TV (59%) continue to be the most common ways to find out about the news,** although the reach of TV news has decreased from 65% in 2021.

**Replacing more traditional news sources, Instagram (29%), TikTok (28%) and YouTube (28%) are now the top three most used sources of news across all platforms.** TikTok reach increased from 22% in 2021.

**24% of 12-15s claim to use BBC One/Two for news in 2022, a decrease from 35% in 2021.** Longer term, reach of BBC One/Two has declined from 45% in 2018.

**YouTube (28%), Facebook (22%), Sky News (19%) and WhatsApp (17%) have all also seen decreases in reach since 2021.** Longer term, reach of Facebook has declined from 34% in 2018.

**A significant proportion of 12-15s (9%) still select BBC One/Two as their most important news source** – however this represents a decrease from 14% in 2021. Similar proportions select TikTok (7%), YouTube (7%) and ITV/ITV WALES/CITV/UTV/STV (7%) this year.

**Family, radio and TV are perceived as the most truthful news sources, while social media and friends are perceived to be the least truthful.** Almost four-fifths (79%) of 12-15s said the news they heard from family was either ‘always’ or ‘mostly’ accurate, compared to 72% for radio, and 65% for TV. Fewer believe news stories on social media (30%) or from friends (37%) are accurate.

**While teens remain more sceptical about news on social media than other sources, significant proportions of those who use social media sources for news do trust them,** including half of YouTube (51%) and Twitter (52%) users.



## A1. Industry currency

BARB (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board) is the official industry currency for TV consumption. It uses a continuous panel of approximately 5,300 UK homes and tracks television viewing among all people aged 4+ in these homes using meters attached to every working television set in the home.

## A2. Methodology

### Adults Survey

From December 2017 until March 2020, Jigsaw Research conducted a mixed methodology approach, combining online and face to face interviews. However, during the last two years of research, Jigsaw were unable to do this consistently, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since online methodologies tend to underrepresent low/non internet users, Jigsaw conducted a combination of online and telephone interviews during November/December 2020, March/April 2021 and November/December 2021, to ensure that these groups had the opportunity to express their views. In March/April 2022, Jigsaw reverted to the preferred methodology of conducting online and face to face interviews, to be consistent with previous and future years.

In total, the face to face survey achieved 1,086 interviews, with the nations over-represented during fieldwork. This data has been weighted to correct for this over-representation, with weights being applied by age, gender and socio-economic group (SEG) within nation, to provide a representative view of all UK adults. The online and face to face data has been combined to provide a snapshot of opinion across both methodologies during March/April 2022. The 1,717 online interviews collected in November/December 2021 have not been included in the combined data.

We compared the online data collected in November/December 2021 with the online data collected in March/April 2022 and while we did observe some statistically significant differences there were no indications of strong seasonal effects. We therefore took the decision that a combined face-to-face and online dataset based on March/April 2022 data alone was preferable to a dataset based on online data from November/December 2021 and March/April 2022 and face to face data from March/April only, as less weighting was required. This 2022 combined online and face to face adult data can be compared with 2018-2020 data but cannot be compared with 2021 data due to methodology differences.

To ensure that any trend data within this publication is comparable, we have also decided to publish the online data separately, as we did in 2021. The 3,423 online interviews have been weighted by age, gender, nation/region, working status and ethnicity to ensure they are representative of 'recent' internet users, as found in the ONS Internet Users research (published on 6th April 2020).

Statistically significant differences year-on-year are shown at a 99% confidence level for the online and face to face data and a 95% confidence level for the online (only) data.

The survey has approximately 200 codes for different potential sources for news, as well as the option to allow respondents to nominate their own sources which yields a further 800 or so, including regional sources. This gives us a bottom-up measure of what people consider they use for news (about their nation, the UK, and internationally) and will not necessarily include every possible outlet. The survey therefore provides a granular range of news sources. These individual news sources are then aggregated into various groups or "nets" relating to their owner or publisher.

This is a recall-based survey. As such, it is likely to provide somewhat different results to other types of measurement. It may underestimate some online news consumption activity. It is likely to be harder for respondents to recall ad-hoc online news consumption compared to, say, the purchase of

a newspaper or the watching of an evening television bulletin. On the other hand, respondents show through such surveys which news sources resonate with them.

## Teens Survey

The methodology used for the 12-15s study is largely unchanged over the last 5 years.

In total, 500 interviews from 5<sup>th</sup> November – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021 have been combined with 501 interviews from 6<sup>th</sup> March – 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

Quotas were set on age, gender, socio-economic group (SEG) and nation to ensure the sample was representative of the UK and the data has also been weighted on age, gender, SEG and nation. Statistically significant differences year-on-year are shown at a 95% confidence level.

Each wave of fieldwork was undertaken in three stages:

- Stage 1: Parents of 12-15 year olds were targeted, using an online panel.
- Stage 2: Parents were screened to ensure a representative sample of participants was recruited.
- Stage 3: The parent asked their (qualifying) teen to complete the rest of the questionnaire.