

Talking to the Nation

How to speak to modern Britain

Charlesbye



Foreword

Welcome to the inaugural edition of Talking to the Nation. The aim of this report is simple: to make it easier for the government, businesses and individuals to find their audiences and navigate the modern media landscape.

This study looks in-depth at how people interact with news, how media and news outlets shape the views of individuals, and what lessons can be learned.

The research has found that for many cynical Britons, content and values are now more important than facts. This is particularly true for Generation TikTok, whose understanding of the world is increasingly shaped by news feeds they freely admit they don't trust.

The government's response to tackling disinformation has been to unleash a suppression strategy - demanding harmful 'fake news' is removed from social media channels via last year's Online Safety Act. From our research, it's clear this strategy alone is destined to fail.

In an era where 'truth' is an increasingly debated fact, the departure of young people from sources they trust to sources they want to believe has huge ramifications for us all.

Britain is entering a post truth media age - with the outcomes already apparent in a nation facing increased vaccination scepticism and rising antisemitism. This is being fuelled by online 'influencers' and cyberspace conspiracy theorists reaching mainstream audiences.

This report also uncovers not just what news people consume, but why they are consuming it and the impact this is having on the quality of national debate. This is particularly important as we enter 2024, the year when a quarter of the world heads to the polls and emerging technologies, such as AI creating deepfakes, threaten to reshape the relationship between the media, politicians and electorates.

If the government, businesses or campaign groups want to start changing public opinion on difficult issues they need to try to win the argument where the debate is happening instead of regulating those they oppose into silence or abandoning the playing field.

To win the disinformation war, organisations must restructure their communication function to reflect the challenges of the modern world - investing time and money to increase expertise in the latest technological advances and focus on serious strategic communication methods.

It is not too late to turn the tide. If we are to succeed we should stop trying to shut down the argument and try to win it instead.

Thank you.

Lee Cain
Founding Partner, Charlesbye Strategy

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About Charlesbye

Charlesbye is a strategic communications and research company that provides data-driven insights to help organisations shape public opinion, manage crises, enhance reputations and move people to action.

Our deep political and media roots have been forged inside Downing Street and tested by the cut and thrust of some of the UK's biggest political and public health campaigns.

Our insights and strategies are used by CEOs and leading politicians across the world because we translate their goals into action, via insight.

Glossary

AB	those with higher and intermediate managerial, administrative and professional occupations.
C1	those with supervisory, clerical, and junior managerial, administrative and professional occupations.
C2	those with skilled manual occupations.
DE	semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations; unemployed and lowest grade occupations.
Outlet	a specific place where individuals get their news, such as the BBC.
Active News Consumers	individuals who actively follow or have an awareness of news and current events.
Passive News Consumers	individuals who find out what is going on in passing, or do not choose to consume any information about the news.
Traditional Media	content that is distributed through established channels.

Introduction

Talking to the Nation is the single biggest study of the UK's media habits. Through focus groups and a poll of 8000 Britons, we have uncovered what different ages, genders, socio-economic bands and voters read, watch and listen to across the media. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods, we have unpacked a thorough and detailed analysis of the state of the media, where the different demographics of modern Britain receive their news, and why they have chosen those outlets.

However, we also wanted this report to be of practical use and to give actionable insight to government, businesses and campaign groups who may wish to use our findings to target a specific audience and improve the impact of their message.

For this purpose, we have broken down our sample into nine unique media profiles, detailing the characteristics and routines that identify how different audiences consume news.

We hope by uncovering nine unique media profiles we will aid organisations in locating not just where their audience is but how best to reach them - tailoring their core messages to the platforms used by their audience to consume news.

Methodology

In compiling this report, Charlesbye conducted a nationally representative poll of 8000 Britons. This poll was followed by eight focus groups. The focus groups were recruited from specific demographic groups identified in the poll. We recruited along these demographic lines because the data highlighted interesting areas that warranted further investigation. The table below shows the demographic breakdowns of the eight groups that were recruited.

	Groups							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Location	Any	Any	London	Non-London	London	Non-London	Any	London
Gender	Male	Female	50/50	50/50	50/50	50/50	50/50	50/50
Socio-Economic Grade	n/a	n/a	AB	AB	DE	DE	n/a	n/a
Pay to consume news	No	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Most trusted news source	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	TV/news paper	Social media/ from a friend

Key Findings

This section of our report will investigate the data, and how different demographics interact with the media. The data collected through our poll has informed the demographic markers that define our nine unique media profiles. These nine profiles, which can be found in more detail later on in this report, are:

Disengaged and Disconnected

Missing Millennials

Generation TikTok

The Six O'Clockers

The Generalists

Netizens

Avid Traditionalists

Silver Surfers

Digital News Addicts

The way these groups interact with the media informs how they view the world, who they listen to, and what they trust. Understanding the demographics that are most likely to read The Times or scroll Instagram is vital to determining how businesses, governments and individuals can reach, engage and influence their target audiences.

Trust issues

Social media platforms, such as Instagram and TikTok, have graduated from being primarily social networks to insurgent news channels with individuals given the means to reach mass audiences, something that was previously reserved for major broadcasting outlets. At the forefront of this shifting dynamic is Generation Z - the demographic that is hearing the news from digital platforms.

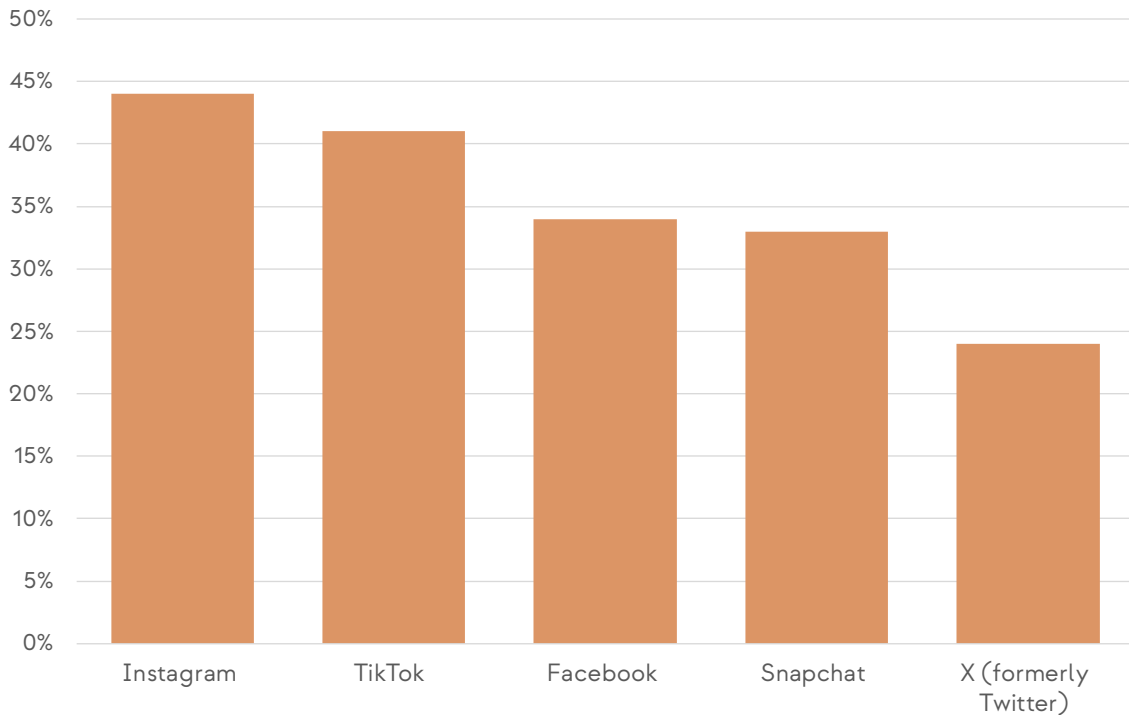


Figure 1 - The top 5 most consumed news sources by 18-24 year olds daily

However, while viewing numbers may be large, trust in social media's content lags far behind, a deficit that is not seen across traditional news outlets. Generation TikTok is the first group to be consuming news primarily from sources they trust less than others, creating what we have defined as a post-truth generation.

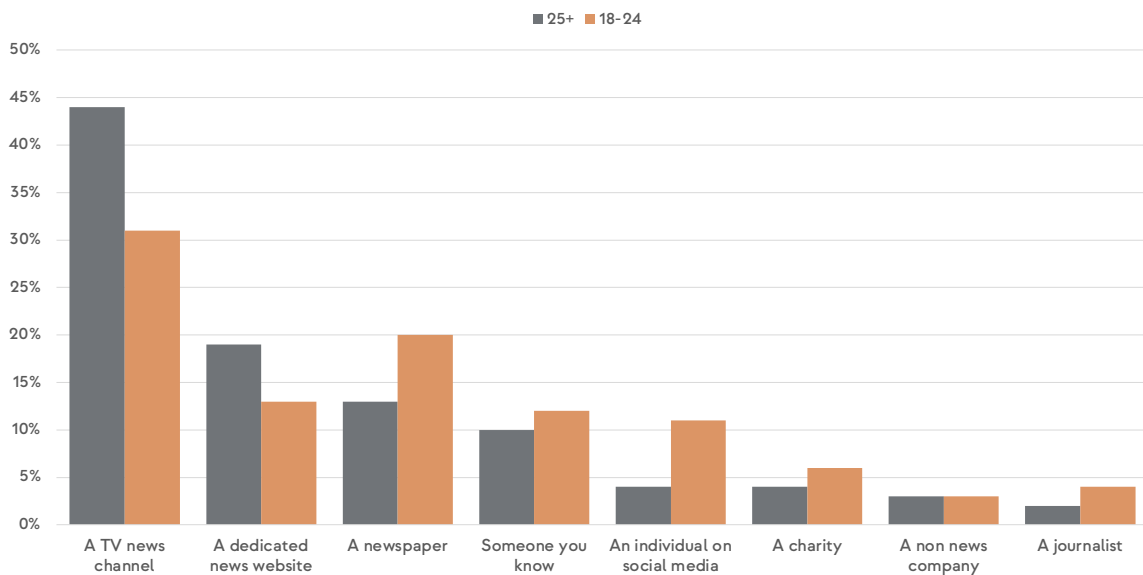


Figure 2 - The most trusted single source of news for those aged 18-24 and 25+

Respondents aged 18-24 years old are twice as likely to consume news on a daily basis from TikTok as they are from the BBC. Yet qualitatively, we heard repeatedly that there was an inherent distrust of this content, a strong belief that these formats are at the forefront of fake news.

“I genuinely think social media is going to be the complete downfall of this world.”

Generation TikTok, 23, Female

The entertainment value of social media means that despite their trust deficit, these outlets enjoy far higher viewership amongst 18-24 year olds than traditional media.

“I’m addicted. Straight up, I’m addicted to it. I try and delete it, try and go on to other things, try and increase my attention span, but I can’t.”

Generation TikTok, 20, Female

It was also revealing that much of the content from social media sites was consumed ‘passively’, meaning the audience were not logging on specifically for news but digesting news stories as a by-product of swiping for entertainment.

Deepfakes

We ran a series of focus groups presenting participants with AI generated deepfake material of widely known politicians. These had circulated online in the weeks before we carried out our research.

The first clip was a fake audio recording of London Mayor Sadiq Khan calling for Armistice Day to be re-scheduled due to a pro-Palestinian march.

The second AI recording purports to capture Labour Leader Sir Keir Starmer abusing his employees and was released ahead of the Labour Party Conference last October.

When participants were asked for their views on the clips, all assumed the material was genuine, even when probed. All groups voiced their concerns about the (false) conduct of the politicians.

“That’s a bit aggressive. You wouldn’t expect someone who’s the leader of the Labour Party to behave in that way.”

Six O’Clocker, 38, Male

“How can we expect him to lead our country in a genuine way? So now that I’ve seen that clip, it’s negative. It’s a negative impression of him.”

Avid Traditionalist, 60, Male

However, we found participants who were naturally inclined to be sympathetic towards either Mr Khan or Sir Keir found justifications to defend what they had listened to. Those ideologically opposed to the politicians were considerably more harsh and caustic in their views.

Even when the recordings were revealed to be fake, those who were opposed to either Mr Khan or Sir Keir defended the sentiment of the deepfake if it reinforced their existing values or prejudices.

“We get emotional sometimes, and if it had been true, it really wouldn't have affected the way I thought about this fella.”

Netizen, 40, Female

What is striking is the level of susceptibility to deepfakes even when their content becomes increasingly extreme, and the imagery or audio used lacks sophistication. As they do not need to be state of the art to deceive, deepfakes will increasingly become a weapon for conspiracy theorists and small interest groups.

TV news remains highly watched, and highly trusted

Broadcast news is the most consumed, and the most trusted form of news, across all gender and socio-economic groups. It is only amongst young people that social media is consumed more than TV - despite Gen Z trusting their newsfeeds less than TV. BBC News is the most-watched TV channel and is frequently referred to as a barometer for quality and trust - noticeably increasing with older demographics. Whether through inherited habits or a preference for regulated news, mainstream broadcast channels enjoy a uniquely high level of interaction.

“I feel that there's a lot of fake news out there, and I'm not saying the BBC doesn't have fake news, but I would say that 99% of the time I would believe the BBC.”

Generalist, 51, Female

“I'd trust a TV news channel the most. I think there's a level of governance around there. There are expectations around what they can and can't report.”

Netizen, 34, Male

Divergence of the ages

Age is where we find some of the starkest differences between the demographics tested. Starting from a macro level, the general trend we see is the older you are, the more likely you are to consume news on a daily basis.

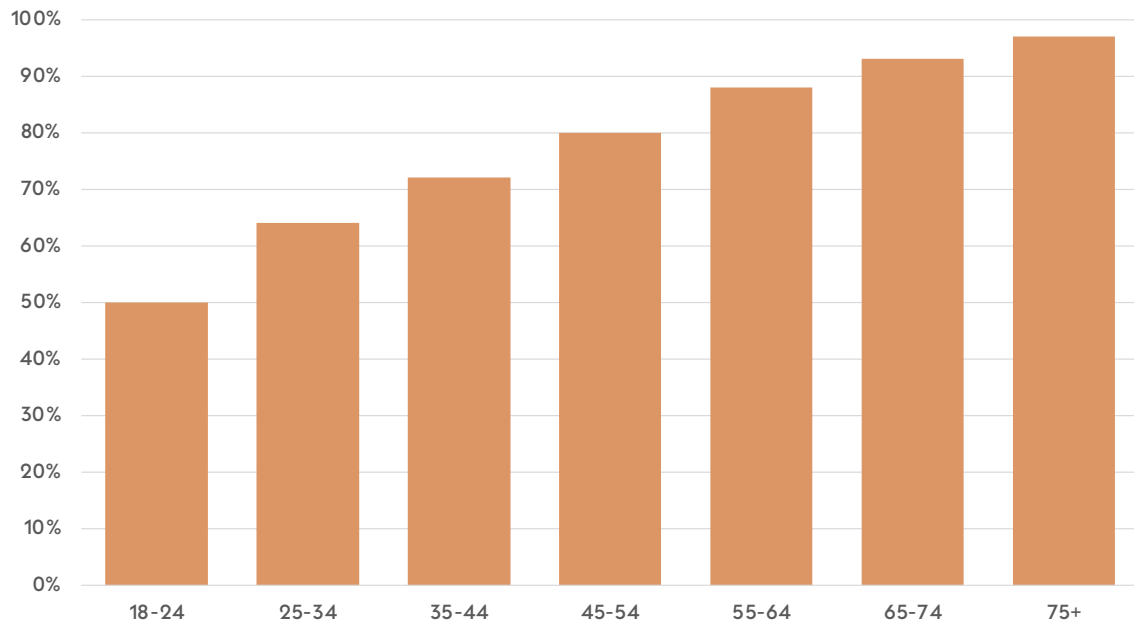


Figure 3 - Age groups' daily consumption of news

"It's on until I go to sleep sometimes. Most of the time I'm actively watching it, but at times it's on in the background."

Generalist, 61, Male

"I read stuff online and I watch the news on TV every day. I will most days get the Metro or the Evening Standard and read those."

Avid Traditionalist, 66, Female

Age is also where the division between digital and traditional media is at its most significant. The Millennial generation may have been the first to traverse the digital frontier, but for Generation Z social media has superseded all other media to become their primary news source. Their usage of social media far outstrips that of any other age group for any other outlet.

We have also observed that traditional media is failing to engage younger audiences. Similar numbers of those aged 18-24 have at some point consumed news from selected traditional media compared to the rest of the sample.

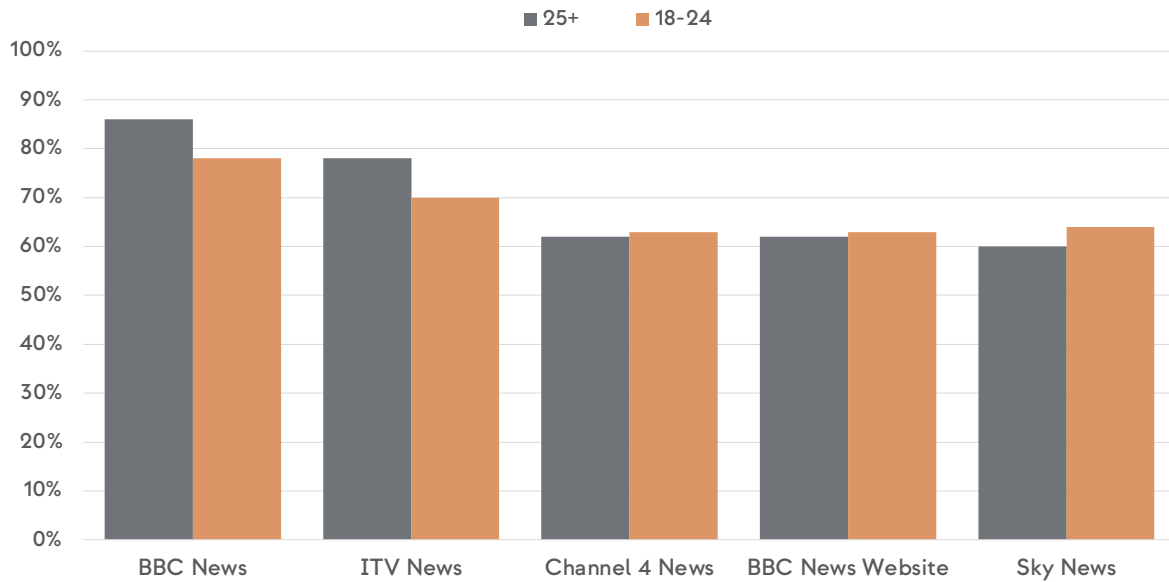


Figure 4 - The percentage of different age groups who have ever consumed news from a certain outlet

However, these trends do not continue in the same way when the daily consumption of these news outlets is analysed.

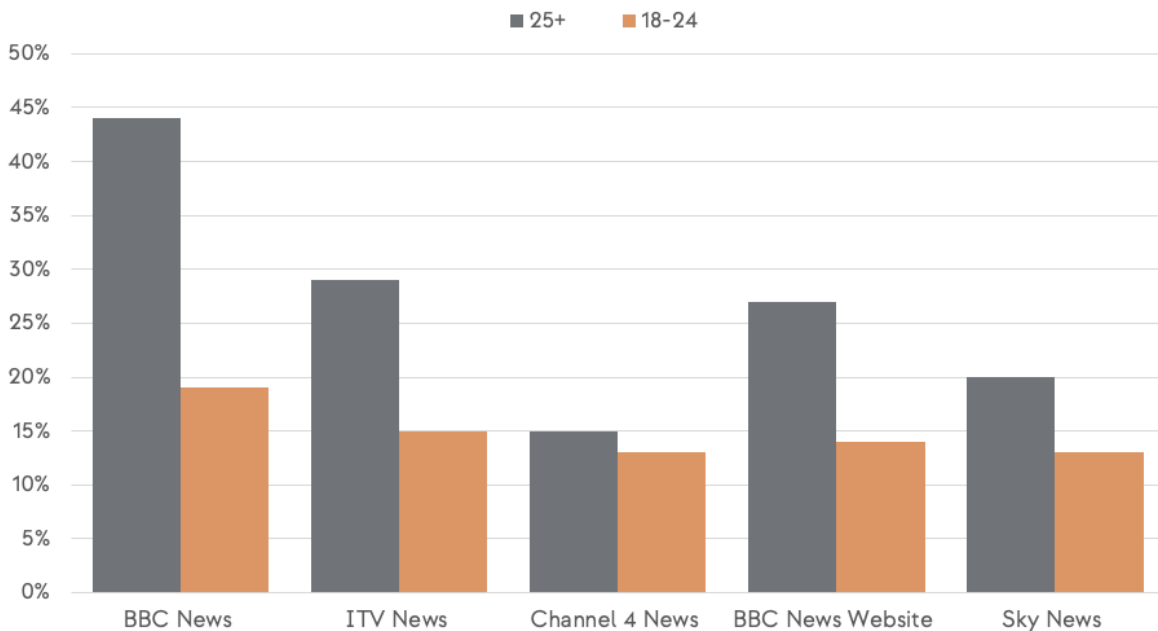


Figure 5 - The percentage of different age groups who consume news on a daily basis from a certain outlet

Qualitatively, younger respondents told us that it was convenience and ease of access that prompted them to flock to social platforms, and away from traditional ones. There were also concerns raised that traditional media outlets like the BBC or newspapers were merely mouthpieces of the government, rather than providing factual information.

“It’s because of convenience for me [as to why I use social media the most], because my phone tends to always be in my hand, so it’s easily accessible for me.”

Generation TikTok, 20, Male

Trust is one area that truly unites the ages. Whilst social media views tick up amongst young people, they join older viewers in their distrust of what they are watching or reading. Only 11% of 18-24 year olds rank an individual on social media as their most trusted news source, compared to 31% who trust TV news the most. Nearly half (44%) of the rest of the sample also trust TV news the most. Generally, traditional media enjoy much higher levels of trust, with individuals qualitatively pointing to certain news brands’ longstanding place in society or their personal relationship with them. With social media platforms seen interchangeably as entertainment, misinformation, or unvarnished news, their utility is muddled.

“The BBC’s got a reputation which seems to have lasted... so I don’t see why we wouldn’t trust it.”

Six O’Clocker, 49, Male

“I definitely use social media the most...I definitely think that social media is the number one reason how misinformation is spread...I think it’s absolutely awful, but I am subject to doom scrolling.”

Generation TikTok, 21, Female

The gender news gap

Our research has identified a clear gender consumption gap in the UK. Men are more likely to consume news on a daily basis, and are more likely to be active consumers of news compared to their female counterparts.

“I love watching the news every day. I just love watching the news. I wouldn’t say I was obsessed with it, but I do like to watch enough of it to be able to understand what’s going on.”

Digital News Addict, 34, Male

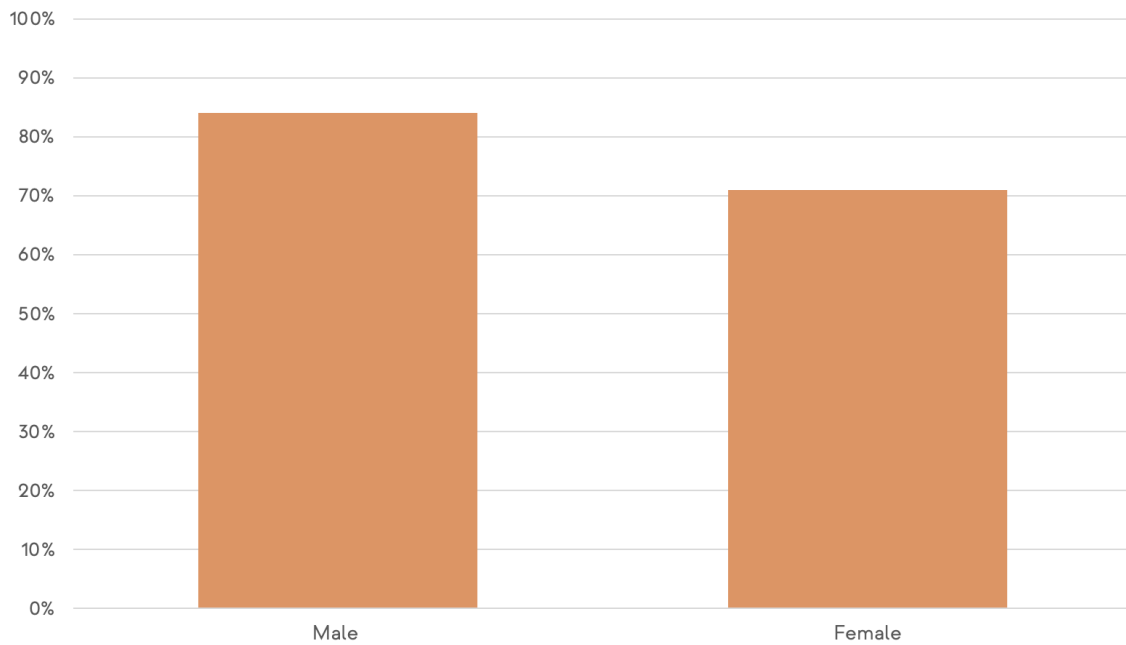


Figure 6 - Daily consumption of news by gender

Across almost every topic, be that politics, sport, climate or culture, men are tuning in far more proactively than women. Female engagement falls furthest behind in sport and technology news.

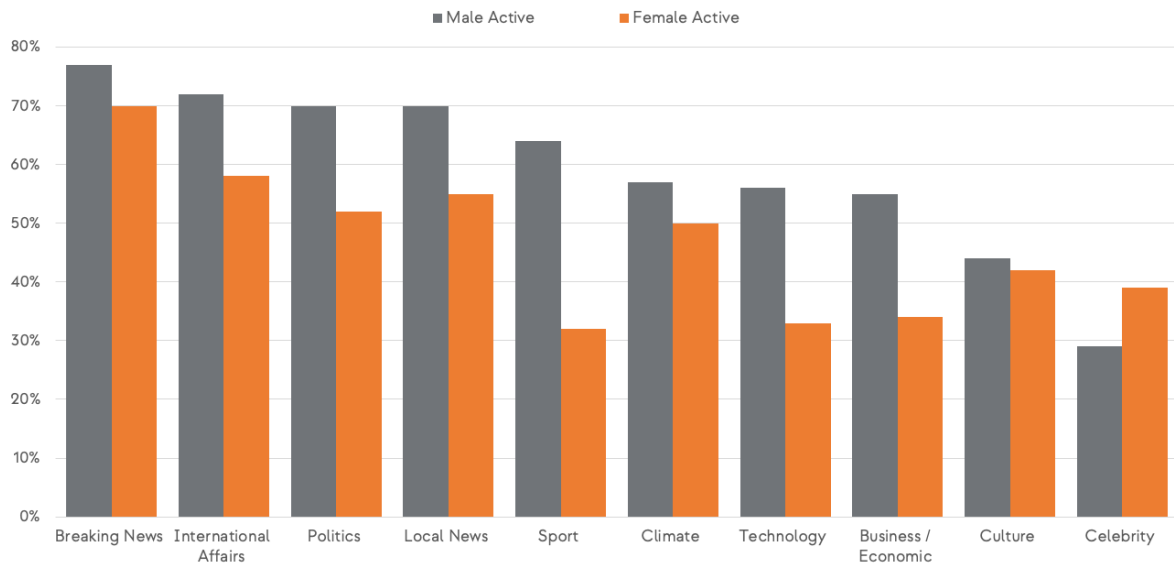


Figure 7 - Active news consumption between men and women per subject

Several themes are driving a lack of female engagement. Women are more likely to be consuming news from social media, meaning that news is a by-product of their scrolling. This was reiterated in focus groups, with many female respondents describing their interactions with the news as passive - either background noise or coming across news on social media sites.

“I’m on Instagram, a lot of the time the news will come through Instagram or Twitter.”

Generation TikTok, 25, Female

“When it’s on the telly, I can still do what I need to do. I don’t have to necessarily watch it. I can just listen.”

Missing Millennial, 41, Female

The social split

Higher socio-economic groups are watching and reading more news than those from lower segments. The ABs, those working in managerial professional roles, are more likely to factor news into their everyday routine, scanning news websites on the way to the office or flicking through a paper on the train home.

“I spend a lot of time on news websites, but it's quite quick, it's sort of Apple News in between calls and stuff. When I turn on a TV news channel, I might listen to three or four of them at different times.”

Digital News Addict, 34, Male, AB

“It’s not necessarily every night, it would just be if we sit down to dinner and want to watch that, I’ll put it on. It just depends on the mood that we’re in and what we want to have on.”

Disengaged and Disconnected, 50, Male, DE

There is a big divergence in the consumption from print media news by differing groups. Those on the higher end of the socio-economic spectrum are more likely to read newspapers in general. Outlets like The Guardian and The Times have high levels of AB readership, but lower levels of C1, C2 and DE readership. Titles like The Sun (online and print), however, enjoy similar levels of readership across all socio-economic groups.

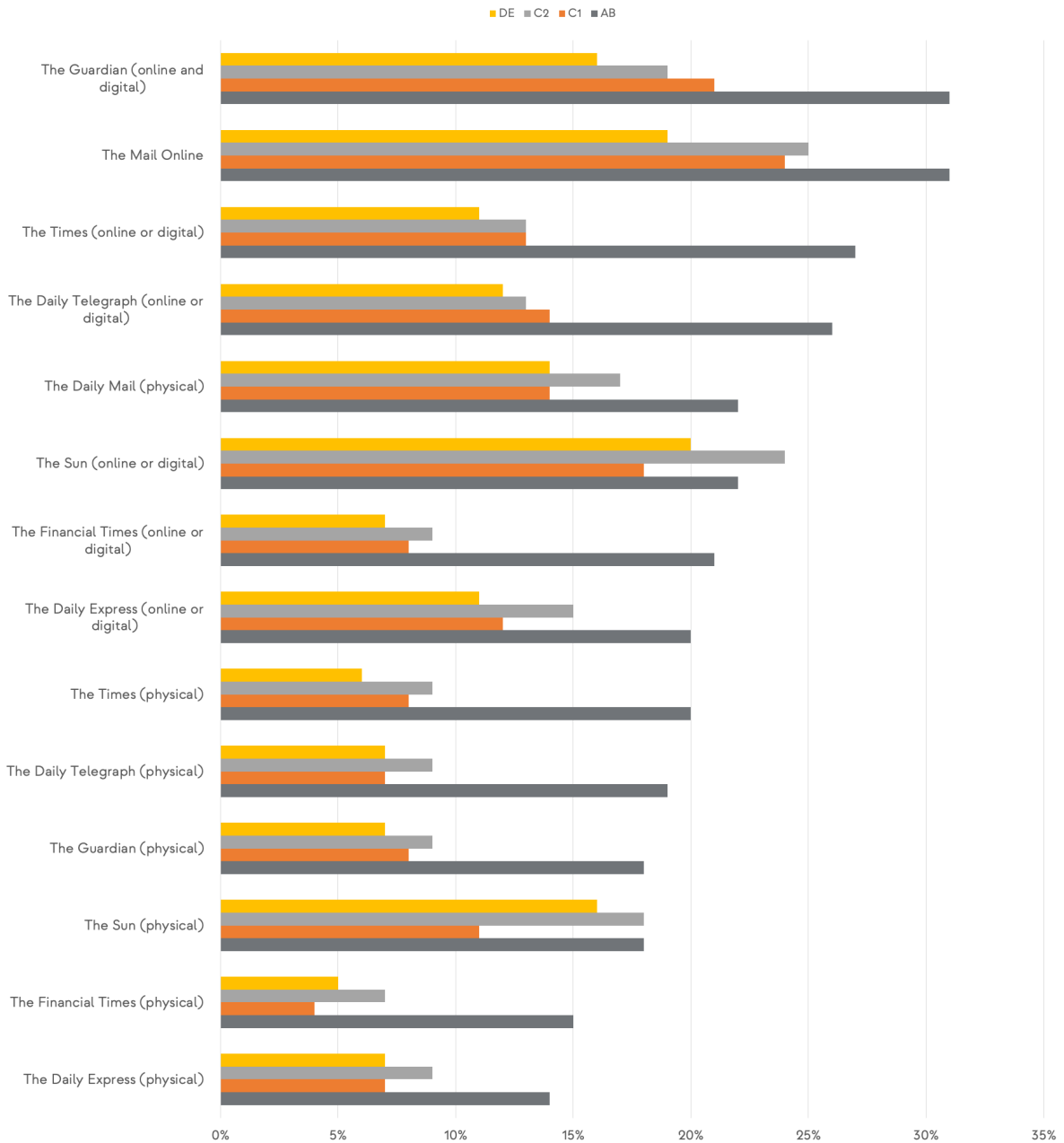


Figure 8 - Weekly consumption of national newspapers by socio-economic group

When considering the issue of trust, these groups continue to diverge. Those on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum are more likely to trust news from an individual on social media or from someone they know compared to those in higher groups.

“It’s hard to verify the veracity of the content of information. And that goes to the heart of that.”

Digital News Addict, 44, Female, AB

"I just feel like I don't trust the news like I used to...instead I'd go on social media."

Missing Millennial, 29, Male, DE

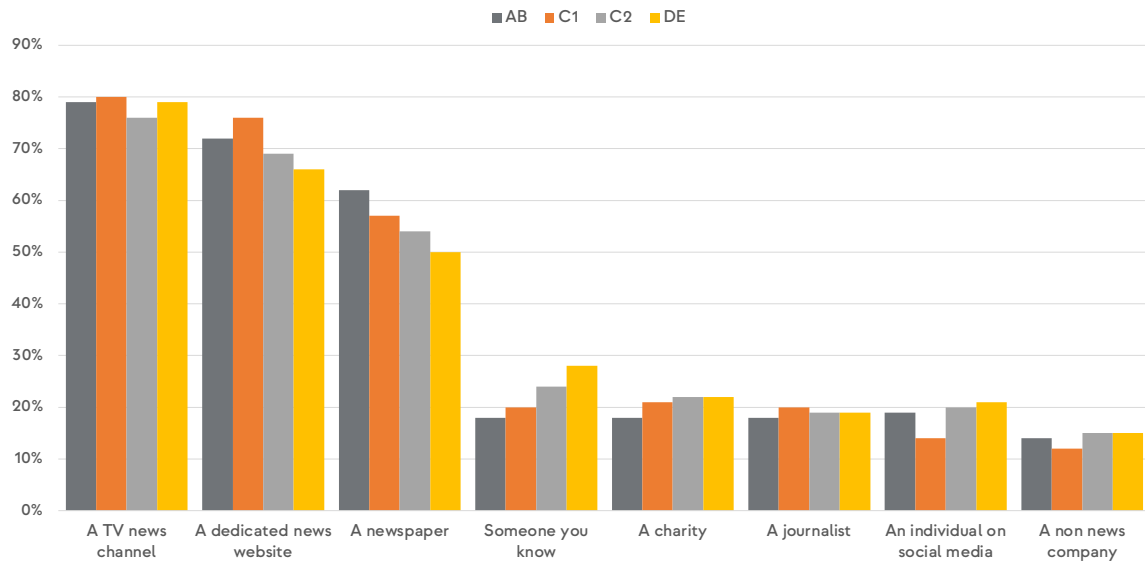


Figure 9 - Top three most trusted news source by socio-economic group

Political parties revert to type

There is little difference between how frequently 2019 voter groups consume news. About 80% of Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat voters consume news on a daily basis.

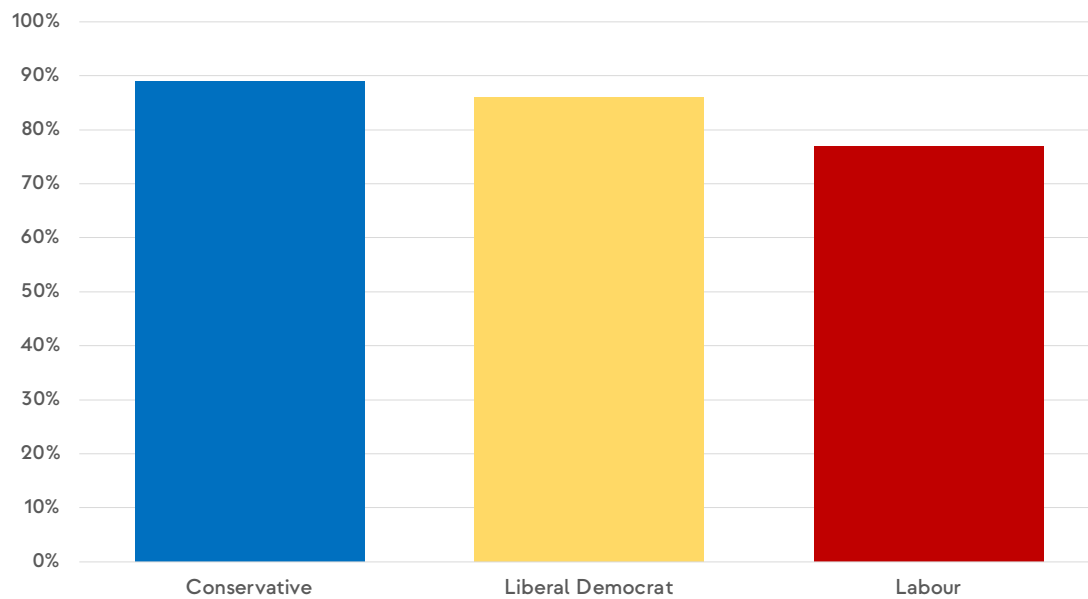


Figure 10 - Percentage of daily news consumption by 2019 vote

However, it is Conservative voters who are most plugged into traditional news outlets. These individuals are also slightly more likely to trust what they read here, whereas Labour voters are more likely to be sceptical about traditional media platforms.

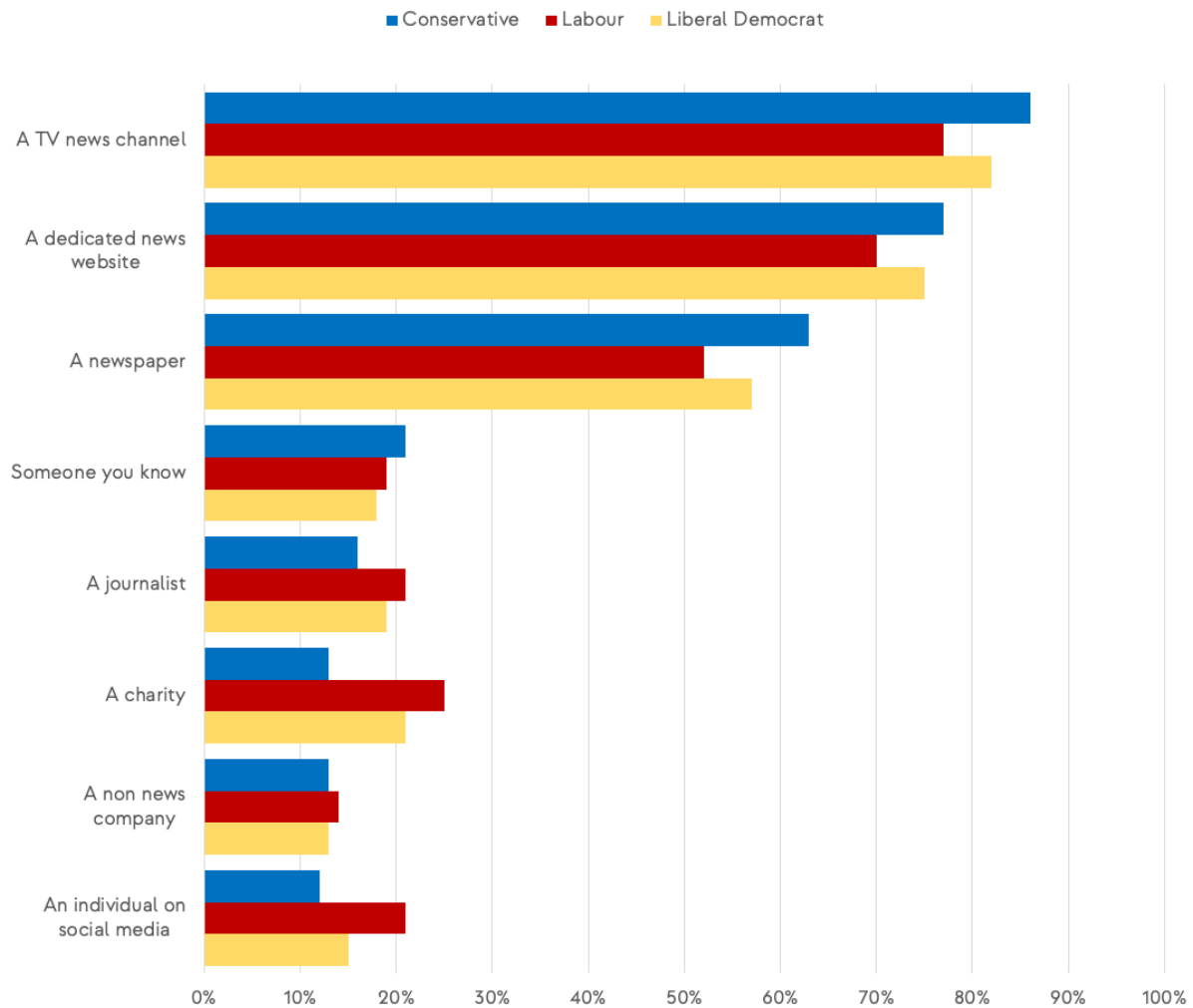


Figure 11 - Top three most trusted news portals depending on 2019 vote

Labour voters are far more likely to be found online, getting their news from social media websites and unofficial channels. Whether charities, campaigners, or their circle of friends, Labour voters refer much more frequently to these non-news channels.

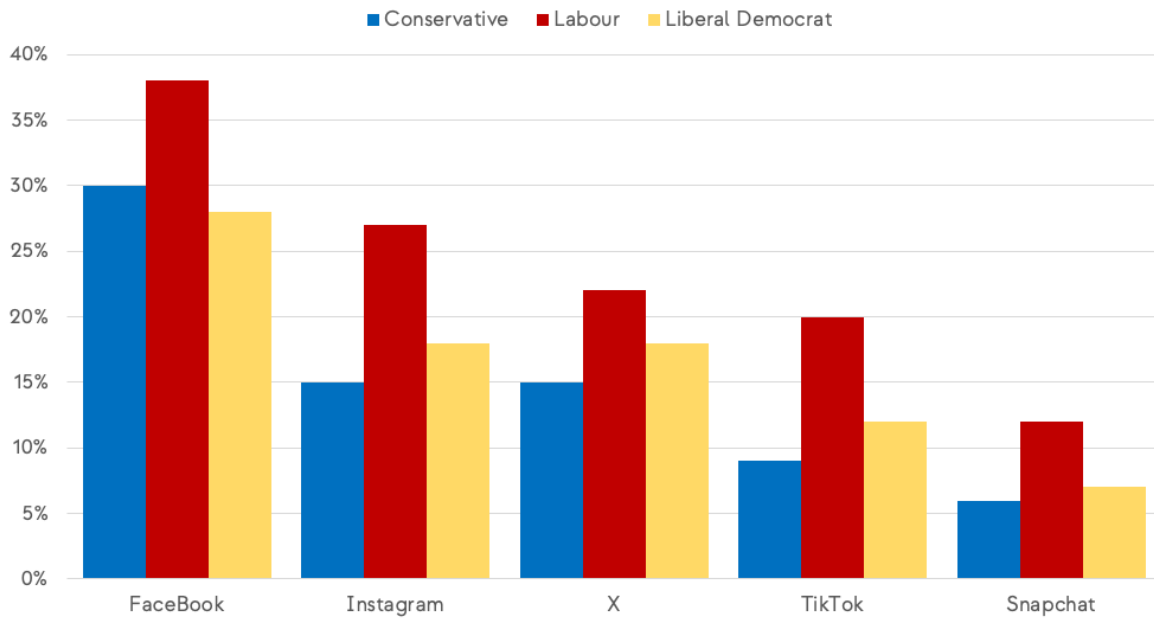


Figure 12 - Daily news consumption on social media by 2019 vote

As politicians seek to set out their stall for the next five years, it will be important to remember that only a small proportion of voters receive their news from paid-for sources. Both Labour and Conservatives will need to step outside of their comfort zone to appeal to those with opposing views. It is a grave error for political parties to detach themselves from social media sites like TikTok that drive the conversation amongst huge parts of the electorate.

Recommendations

Prioritisation

The single most important piece of advice for organisations who want to connect with an audience is to first understand them. It is incredibly difficult to develop an impactful message when you have no idea what people think or why they think it. All too often communicators move straight into how they should execute their message without spending time researching public opinion and developing what arguments you need to prioritise to best frame your message. Good public opinion research is a navigational tool for organisations to help them understand what to say, how to say it and who to say it to when talking to the nation.

Simplification

All organisations, whether political parties, businesses or campaign groups, are in a battle to shape public opinion. Most are failing. Many try and say too much or make what they say too complicated. Why make it more difficult for your audience to understand your message? Da Vinci's words remain as true today as ever: 'simplicity is the ultimate sophistication'.

Repetition. Repetition. Repetition.

Why do politicians repeat the same simple message or slogan endlessly, especially during general elections? Because it works. It consistently amazes people in the public eye how few people hear their biggest announcements. The modern world is incredibly noisy - with everyone bombarded by unprecedented levels of information via their phones, TV, newspapers, social media, family members, and work. To be able to cope with this onslaught people, entirely sensibly, filter out a huge amount of what they are presented with as it has little relevance to their lives. This means that despite our modern media environment, organisations still have a very small window to grab the attention of their audience. Staying on message is critical to success.

Go to your audience

News consumption in the UK is fragmented. This study, the largest of its type, has discovered different segments of the population are receiving news in different ways - and often through more than one channel as they try to make sense of a media landscape that is increasingly difficult to navigate. Once you've created a powerful message, organisations need to execute it in a way that appeals to their audience on the platform they are using - whether they are a Silver Surfer or part of Generation TikTok - and use the best means of reaching them via earned or paid media strategies.

Newspapers continue to set the agenda

Despite declining circulation, newspapers still play a critical role in shaping the public debate. Their content still leads the conversation on broadcast and social media platforms. While polling numbers may make their impact look diminished, it can be easy to forget that big stories often begin in a newspaper and disseminate to other platforms.

TV is highly trusted and highly consumed

TV news is the most trusted form of news amongst all age groups. It is also amongst the most consumed, especially BBC and ITV News. The fact that people can watch raw footage or images of the news adds to its authenticity. Getting messages through broadcast is the single most effective way to reach a range of different audiences, ages and genders.

Talk direct

Audiences feel more sceptical about the information they receive the more distant it is from the source. Many feel the news they read in newspapers has been skewed by the organisation that is delivering it. Whereas direct content means the viewer can form an opinion on an issue for themselves. Businesses, politicians and individuals should take advantage of new technologies and platforms to communicate directly with target audiences using their own channels.

Facebook reigns online

Individuals of all ages use social media for news. This can be directly from someone they know on the platform, or articles shared from news outlets directly to the site. Predominantly visual social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram enjoy high engagement from younger audiences. What differentiates Facebook from the other social media platforms is the ubiquity of consumption across the ages. It ranks in the top five most consumed weekly media outlets across all ages apart from those over 75, where it is seventh. The only other outlet that matches these numbers is the BBC.

Trust your local

The death of local news has been widely publicised, and the number of local papers and radio stations has fallen significantly in recent years. Our findings, however, suggest that local news, despite significantly reduced readerships, remains a powerful tool for informing the public. News that is personally relevant to consumers makes it more likely to be engaged with. Local news ticks this box, and with data showing that nearly a fifth of all age groups engage with this form of news every week, telling your local story is sometimes overlooked as a form of effective communication.

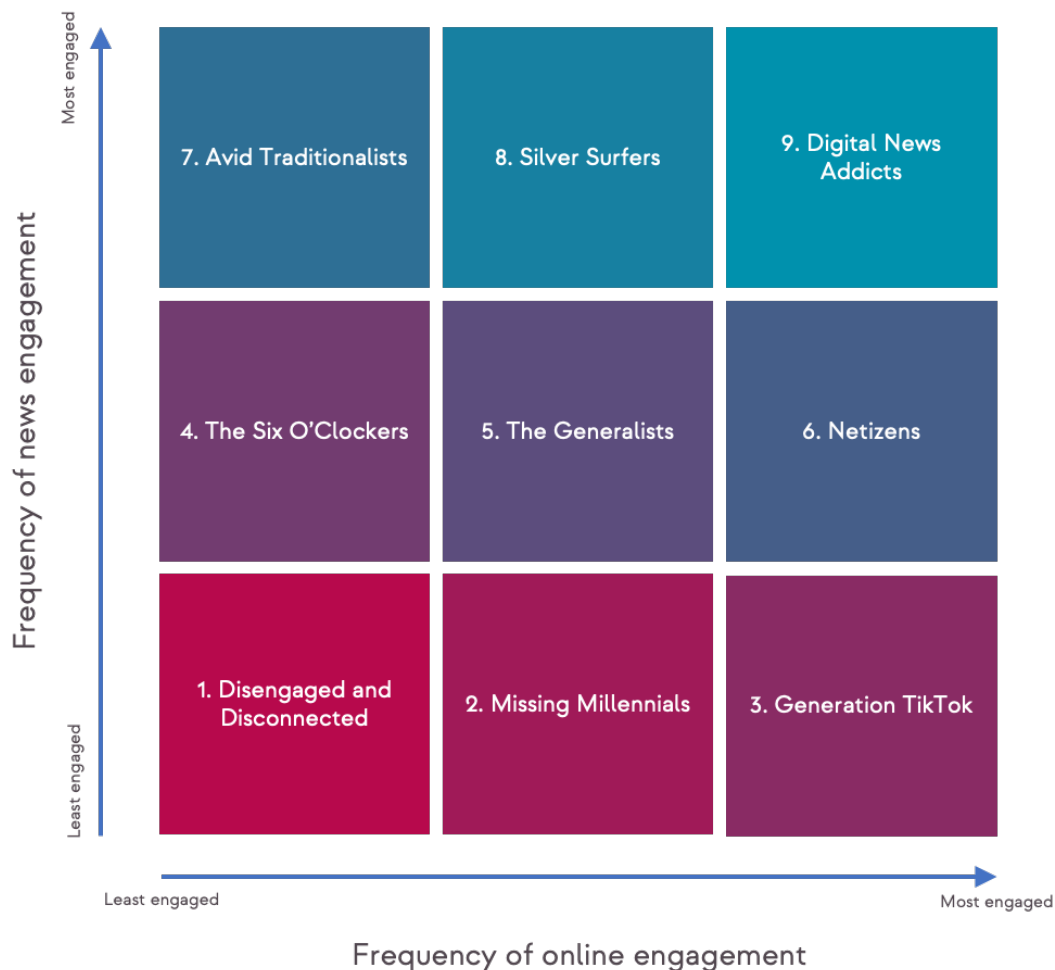
Grow trust in the BBC

Whilst quantitatively individuals rank traditional media as more trustworthy than social media, in focus groups many, especially young people, are sceptical of all types of news outlets. With the prevalence of deepfakes and misinformation on the rise, it is integral we have a national broadcaster people feel they can trust. The government and other opinion formers should look to grow the faith that the public has towards regulated media like the BBC, rather than seek to disparage it. Its role in an increasingly fractured media landscape will be more important than ever before.

What does it mean?

Our relationship with the news is complex and fragmented. Every single metric, be it gender, age, or where you live, must be judged against numerous other metrics if we are to arrive at any sort of meaningful picture of our preferences and predilections. It is not enough to post on TikTok in the hope that young people will engage with you. It is not enough to automatically assume older generations are paying for The Telegraph. Our findings reveal a complex web of media consumption.

Targeting, influencing and engaging the right people is only possible if you have a close understanding of where your audience is. Charlesbye has delved beyond this data to develop nine media profiles that will support targeted, intuitive and strategic communications campaigns.



Our nine profiles have been created by mapping news engagement against online engagement. Using scales of frequency and format, we've been able to identify what demographics certain news consumers have in common, and what it says about their relationship with the news. For example, Avid Traditionalists will engage a lot with TV news, but won't be looking online. Compare that to Generation TikTok who rarely proactively engage with traditional media but passively consume news via social media channels. Our profiles help to bring clarity to a complex set of findings and provide a map for government, businesses and campaign groups to navigate the modern media environment.

Who are in these profiles and how might you engage with them?

The profiles we have identified tell us which demographics are likely to be in which groups. Further information on the makeup of the profiles can be found below. To go further than this and put these findings to use, we have also identified the best ways to engage with these different segments. As expected, the correct method to interact with a particular profile will change as you move from segment to segment.

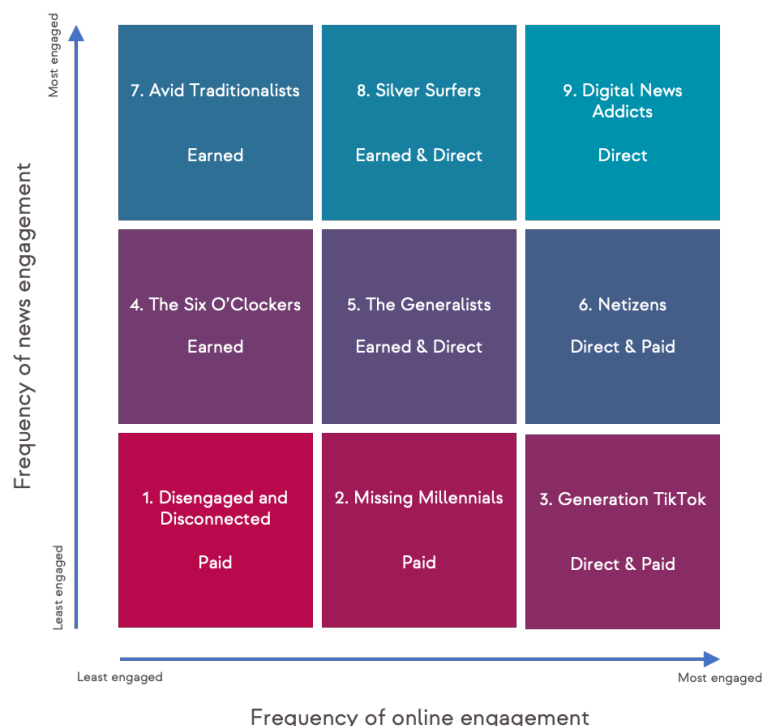
At a high level, there are three ways to interact with the population.

Through earned media content - such as press releases and broadcast media appearances

Through paid media content - such as advertising in a newspaper or on social media

Through direct communication - businesses, politicians or individuals talking directly to their audience through social media or on personal websites

The graph below builds on the nine profiles that we have identified and outlines the most effective way of engaging with them. In the more detailed explanations of the profiles, we have also charted specific outlets that these profiles are likely to receive their news from.



1 Disengaged and Disconnected



Frequency of news engagement **Low**

Frequency of online engagement **Low**

The Disengaged and Disconnected do not regularly watch the news or read a newspaper and spend little time online.

When these individuals do pick up news, they are likely to do so from unconventional sources. These include conversations at work or the pub, as this set of individuals has high trust levels in news delivered by someone they know. They have low levels of trust in journalists and any active news consumption that does occur is likely to be through traditional media sources rather than from social networks.

Key demographics

This group will likely be in the lowest socio-economic brackets, C2, D and E. This segment was the least likely to vote in the 2019 election, reflecting their general disengagement with politics, the news and lack of online presence. They are middle-aged and are more likely to be women than men.

This group is likely to be:

Middle-aged

Female

Earning incomes lower than the national average

How to interact with the Disengaged and Disconnected:

Paid media

Above-the-line advertising, leaflets and other physical campaigning routes

2 Missing Millennials



Frequency of news engagement **Low**

Frequency of online engagement **Medium**

Missing Millennials are not particularly engaged with the news and do not regularly keep up to date with it. They are more likely to be on social media than others, and when they do get their news, it is from a split of platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, and more traditional channels, like TV news and news websites. They are most likely to consume news a couple of times a week.

Key demographics:

This group is a mix of generations, but the demographic that is best represented are millennials, between the ages of 25 and 45. However, there are a range of different ages and incomes represented. They generally do not have degrees and have lower than average incomes. However, this is likely due to being at an earlier stage of their career and yet to reach their full earning potential, rather than being a distinctive characteristic of this group.

This group is likely to be:

- Aged between 25 and 45
- Non-university graduates
- Earning incomes lower than the national average

How to interact with Missing Millennials:

- Paid media
- Instagram or Facebook
- Post from official sources on social media
- Free traditional media, such as the BBC News website or Mail Online

3 Generation TikTok



Frequency of news engagement **Low**

Frequency of online engagement **High**

Generation TikTok is predominantly made up of young women who are heavy users of social media. They are more likely to trust the news that they see on social media compared to any other group. They also get the majority of their news from social media sources. The group also has the highest density of non-licence fee payers, reflecting their shift away from more traditional media outlets like TV news and newspapers, to social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

Key demographics:

This is the youngest group in the cohort, with a high number of students represented. Generation TikTok is likely to lean towards visual platforms to get their news - such as TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat. They prefer these platforms to more text-heavy platforms like X and Reddit. When they do consume news it is done passively, as a by-product of their scrolling.

This group is likely to be:

Generation Z

A higher than average percentage of non-licence fee payers

Female

How to interact with Generation TikTok:

Paid media and direct communication

Instagram and TikTok

Less likely to be on X, formerly Twitter

Not on traditional media and unlikely to pay for news

4 Six O'Clockers



Frequency of news engagement **Medium**

Frequency of online engagement **Low**

The Six O'Clockers are not avid consumers of news, nor do they keep up to date with an 'always on' news cycle, but they do engage with it once a day and often via traditional formats. They have a high degree of trust in broadcast outlets, which they use as their primary source of news. They also read the newspaper once a day or listen to the radio in the morning whilst doing other things.

Key demographics:

There is an equal split in The Six O'Clockers between males and females. This group is on the older end of the age spectrum - they are likely to either be retired or at the end of their full-time careers. They are below average on both income and educational scales.

This group is likely to be:

- Older
- Non-university graduates
- Lower incomes than the national average

How to interact with The Six O'Clockers:

- Earned media and direct communication
- BBC or ITV News bulletins - not 24-hour rolling news
- The Today Programme
- Traditional newspapers

5 The Generalists



Frequency of news engagement **Medium**

Frequency of online engagement **Medium**

The Generalists check the news through a range of different outlets and sources. They engage with news in a traditional manner but will also use social media to check what is going on. Generalists are predominantly concerned with staying in touch with news developments, rather than demonstrating a commitment to one platform or brand of media.

Key demographics:

This group is likely to be geographically spread out, without being too concentrated in one area. They are middle-aged, earn reasonably well and are currently in full-time employment. They are more likely to be female rather than male. They are likely to be daily consumers of news but are not checking to see what's going on more than once a day.

This group is likely to be:

Middle-aged

In full-time work

Earning above the average national income

How to interact with The Generalists:

Earned and direct communication

The Sun, The Daily Mail and The Guardian

Sky News

Social media platforms like X, formerly Twitter, and Facebook

6 Netizens



Frequency of news engagement **Medium**

Frequency of online engagement **High**

Netizens are heavy users of the internet, but not just to seek out news, they use it to communicate with friends or watch videos online. When they do engage with the news, it tends to be passively when scrolling through social media but will also occasionally check online news outlets.

Key demographics:

Netizens represent the archetype of the online generation. They are mainly millennials or younger, are more likely to be female rather than male, and in full-time work. They are more highly educated than the average participant.

This group is likely to be:

- Millennials or younger
- Female
- University educated or higher
- Full-time employed

How to interact with Netizens:

- Direct communication and paid media
- X, formerly Twitter, TikTok and Instagram
- News websites, apps and social media accounts

7 Avid Traditionalists



Frequency of news engagement **High**

Frequency of online engagement **Low**

Avid Traditionalists are likely to be very interested in and proactively engaged with the news, checking it regularly. They are likely to do this predominantly through television – more than 80% consume news from the TV at least once a day. They also use online news websites multiple times throughout the day. However, other than Facebook, this group is not active on social media and do not use it to get their news.

Key demographics:

This group is likely to be older and retired. They are likely to be male rather than female by a ratio of almost two to one. They are spread across the country and income bands. This cohort was the most likely to vote Conservative in 2019.

This group is likely to be:

- Older
- Retired
- Male

How to interact with Avid Traditionalists:

- Earned media
- The Times and The Telegraph
- Local radio
- 24-hour rolling news

8 Silver Surfers



Frequency of news engagement **High**

Frequency of online engagement **Medium**

Silver Surfers get their news through traditional media channels, but they are happy to use the digital versions of these brands to stay up to date. This group, instead of mindless scrolling or connecting with friends, will tend to use social media for specific news purposes. They are engaged with X, but not with other social media platforms.

The demographics of this group

This group is likely to be 45-65, on the older end of the middle age range. They are more likely to be male than female, and compared to the avid traditionalists, are a mix between full-time employed and retired.

Those in this group are likely to be:

45-65

Male

Full time employed

How to interact with Silver Surfers:

Earned media and direct communication

Times Online and Mail Online

News apps

X, formerly Twitter

9 Digital News Addicts



Frequency of news engagement **High**

Frequency of online engagement **High**

Digital News Addicts are very active consumers of news and check for updates multiple times a day. They do this through a variety of different sources, but predominantly online. They are heavy users of X, but also frequent other text-heavy social media platforms like Reddit and LinkedIn. Nearly half of this group consume news from a newspaper at least once a day, and they are also the group that is most likely to pay for news.

The demographics of this group

There is a high proportion of Londoners amongst the Digital News Addicts. They are likely to be wealthier than the national average, highly educated and in full-time work. They are slightly more likely to be male than female. This group was most likely to vote Labour in 2019.

Those in this group are likely to be:

- Based in London
- Wealthy and likely to have a University degree
- Male

How to interact with Digital News Addicts:

- Direct communication
- Evening Standard, Metro or Guardian Online
- X, formerly Twitter, Reddit and LinkedIn rather than TikTok and Snapchat
- BBC News and Sky News App
- Channel 4

About the authors

Lucia Hodgson



Lucia spent a decade in the heart of Westminster, including serving as Deputy Press Secretary in Downing Street under Prime Minister Boris Johnson. She oversaw parliament's response to the bullying and harassment crisis, wrote speeches for some of the UK's most senior politicians, and managed media during Brexit, the 2019 leadership contests and general election.

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George's insights have been fundamental to informing campaigns at a local, national and international level for FTSE 100 companies, political parties and for high-profile individuals - including research on the 2019 general election campaign. George leads the qualitative and quantitative research stages of our clients' campaigns.

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Charlie has worked on numerous high profile campaigns for national and international clients, including Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's leadership campaign. Charlie works within Charlesbye's insight and research unit and supports clients with media advice and strategies.

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Alicia works across the communications, public affairs and research teams at Charlesbye. Her experience spans across the music investment, energy and education sectors. Alicia supported the research stages of Talking to the Nation.

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