

researchacma
Evidence
that informs

News consumer segmentation

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Executive summary

Context and background

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) undertook this research to deepen understanding of how Australians consume news within an increasingly complex information environment. The news segmentation seeks to identify groups of news users with distinct habits, motivations and attitudes, in order to better understand emerging trends and help inform policies to sustain and strengthen the diversity of news in Australia.

Methodology overview

A mixed methods design was employed that combined quantitative modelling and qualitative exploration. The segmentation was based on Survey 1 of the 2025 annual consumer survey, drawing on a nationally representative sample of 5,590 Australians aged 18+ about their news habits and attitudes towards news. Latent class analysis (LCA) was used to identify 7 distinct groups of news consumers in Australia. In-depth interviews were conducted with 35 participants across all segments to explore news consumption behaviours, motivations and attitudes in more detail. Segment labels are interpretive summaries of audience data and do not reflect an evaluation of the value or quality of news content or sources featured in the analysis.

Overall findings

The research suggests that Australians continue to engage with news, but the depth and style of engagement vary substantially. Common barriers to news consumption include the perceived negativity, repetition and bias in mainstream news. A key finding is that diverse and critical news consumption is concentrated among a relatively small proportion of the population. Due to the time taken to engage with multiple sources and verify information, these behaviours are more common among older Australians and audiences who prioritise news as part of their daily routine. However, even among more active consumers, the volume of information and effort required to maintain a diverse news diet and consistently cross-check sources is challenging.

For the majority of Australians, news consumption is shaped by habit, convenience and time constraints. Some rely on a limited set of familiar sources, especially public broadcasters, which are perceived to be trustworthy, while others turn to social media for convenience and accessibility. However, this introduces issues around misinformation and algorithmic bias.

Taken together, these insights suggest that the cognitive effort and time associated with navigating the modern news landscape present challenges. While Australians value being informed, many adopt lower-effort approaches, such as relying on familiar or trusted sources, or consuming news as it is presented to them, rather than actively seeking out a diverse range of content.

There is widespread demand for balanced reporting, clearer separation of fact and opinion, more diverse perspectives and stronger editorial standards. A central challenge for news producers, regulators and policymakers will be supporting a news media sector that is both trustworthy and adaptable to diverse audience needs, within an increasingly complex and disparate information environment.

The following news consumer segments were identified and analysed:

- **Sceptical passives – 2.1 hours per week, 13% of adults.** These consumers tend to engage minimally with news, accessing the least weekly of all segments, with 38% consuming no news in the past 7 days. They typically encounter news incidentally through social media, hold low trust in mainstream outlets and feel overwhelmed by negativity.
- **Online browsers – 3.3 hours per week, 14% of adults.** This segment is made up of light but frequent news consumers. They rely heavily on digital platforms, especially social media. Their engagement is reactive and cautious, shaped by scepticism towards news quality and fatigue from high volumes of emotionally charged content.
- **News neutrals – 6.5 hours per week, 23% of adults.** This segment is made up of moderate consumers who see news as practical rather than central to daily life. They access a mix of platforms but engage at a surface level only. Emotional fatigue, time pressures and concerns about distressing content shape their selective patterns.
- **Digital devotees – 8.4 hours per week, 15% of adults.** These consumers are digitally-oriented, accessing news actively across online formats. They value speed and breadth, are confident spotting misinformation and frequently crosscheck sources.
- **Trusting traditionalists – 14.0 hours per week, 20% of adults.** These consumers are older, highly engaged Australians who rely heavily on free-to-air (FTA) TV and radio. They have strong trust in mainstream journalism, appreciate routine and treat news as a social and civic anchor.
- **Diversity seekers – 13.9 hours per week, 10% of adults.** This segment is made up of high-volume, multi-platform consumers who actively seek diverse viewpoints. They demonstrate strong media literacy and a high willingness to pay for news. They value balance, depth and a wide range of perspectives.
- **News advocates – 30.2 hours per week, 5% of adults.** This segment is made up of the most intensive news consumers. They follow many topics, consult multiple sources and engage socially with news. They express strong trust in mainstream professional journalism, confidence in identifying bias and a desire for high editorial standards and broad international coverage.

About the research

Background

The ACMA's Media Diversity Measurement Framework (the Framework) assesses levels of diversity in the Australian news market at the source (ownership and control), content and consumption level. Within each level, data is collected against key indicators and published as part of the *News media in Australia* reporting series. As part of the 2025 annual consumer survey (ACS), there was a desire to gain a deeper understanding of news consumption in Australia and to develop a profile of 'news users' through segmentation analysis, to identify disparities in media access and better understand how and why different audience groups access and engage with news content.

While it is beyond the scope of this research to cover all types of news consumption (for example, the use of AI tools or emerging news formats and sources), the insights provide evidence that can help to inform policy interventions that support the critical role of news in informing citizens, promoting transparency and accountability and ensuring representation of diverse perspectives across Australia's media landscape. The key objectives of this research are to:

- understand the news habits of different audience segments – that is, the 'why' behind their news consumption behaviours and attitudes – including:
 - how they characterise their relationship with news
 - why they consume news via certain platforms, outlets and sources
 - why they consume the amount of news they do
- develop an understanding of:
 - how trust in news affects consumption for the different segments
 - how ease of access to news affects consumption for the different segments
 - the extent to which segments consume news more actively or passively.

Insights from the research will be used to inform future ACMA reporting as part of the *News media in Australia* series.

Methodology

Segmentation of news consumers in Australia was undertaken using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative modelling with qualitative interpretation to identify distinct patterns of news engagement and attitudes.

Quantitative approach – segmentation modelling

The quantitative segmentation was based on data from the 2025 ACS, specifically Survey 1: Broadcasting, online content and news. The ACS draws on a nationally representative sample of Australian residents aged 18+, recruited primarily through the Social Research Centre's probability-based panel, Life in Australia™. To enhance analytical robustness for key population subgroups, the sample was boosted with respondents from the i-Link non-probability online panel, including participants from smaller states, metropolitan and regional areas, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and young adults aged 18–24 years.

Survey fieldwork was conducted between 16 and 30 June 2025, using a mixed-mode design that combined online self-completion and telephone interviewing. A final sample of n = 5,590 respondents was achieved. Survey results were statistically weighted and calibrated to reflect the Australian adult population by household composition, age, highest level of education, gender, language spoken at home, geographic location and state or territory of residence.

Data used for segmentation modelling and profiling was drawn primarily from the News and Demographics modules, with selected variables from other modules (such as general media consumption habits) included where relevant to support interpretation and profiling. The News module captures detailed information on news sources accessed and relied upon, time spent consuming news across platforms and outlets, volume and types of news consumed, barriers to access, changes in news consumption, news encountered on social media and attitudes towards news more broadly.

Overview of latent class analysis

Segmentation was conducted using latent class analysis (LCA), a model-based statistical technique commonly applied in market and audience segmentation to identify unobserved (latent) groups of individuals who share similar behaviours, attitudes or characteristics, while remaining distinct from other groups. LCA was selected in preference to alternative clustering approaches (such as k-means or hierarchical clustering) because it is well suited to categorical survey data and allows for probabilistic class membership. The LCA model was developed using data from the 2025 ACS (Survey 1).

Model design and indicators

The LCA model incorporated 15 survey variables, comprising 3 key sets of indicators:

1. Time spent consuming news, measured as the number of hours respondents reported accessing news in the week prior to the survey across 12 sources:
 - FTA TV
 - FTA catch-up TV
 - Pay TV
 - radio (AM/FM/DAB+)
 - podcasts
 - print newspapers
 - news websites
 - news aggregators
 - search engines
 - social media
 - radio online
 - online newsletters.
2. Attitudinal statements reflecting respondents' views on news consumption and the Australian news landscape.
3. Reasons for not accessing news in the week before completing the survey, or for consuming less news than previously (asked only of those who reported doing so).

The inclusion of time-spent measures ensured consistency with a k-means segmentation model developed during exploratory analysis of the 2025 ACS. From a total of 26 attitudinal

statements included in the survey, 3 were selected for the final model based on both statistical and conceptual considerations. These statements were chosen to minimise inter-correlation, maximise variance and capture distinct dimensions of news attitudes, for example:

- **Interest:** 'I don't need to seek out news – if something important happens I'll hear about it'
- **Time:** 'I don't have time to access the news'
- **Trust:** 'I don't trust mainstream news'.

Model selection

An iterative modelling process was used to test solutions with varying numbers of latent classes using the same set of indicators. The final solution of 7 distinct news consumer segments was selected based on a combination of statistical model-fit criteria and profiling analysis, ensuring an appropriate balance between statistical robustness and interpretability for meaningful analysis.

Qualitative approach

The qualitative phase comprised in-depth interviews conducted across each of the identified segments to unpack the emotional and attitudinal dimensions of news consumption and behaviour. A total of 35 interviews were undertaken (n=5 per segment) between 22 September and 16 October 2025, using either telephone or Zoom video conferencing. Interviews were up to 40 minutes in duration, with participants receiving a \$70 GiftPay voucher as a thank you for their time. Participants were recruited from Life in Australia™ survey respondents who had opted in for further qualitative research. The sample was purposively selected to reflect the demographic composition and news-related attitudes and behaviours characteristic of each segment. Appendix 1 presents the demographic profile of the interview participants by segments.

The interview guide was developed in consultation with the ACMA and aligned with survey topics on news consumption habits and patterns, to provide further detail and gain deeper insight into survey trends. The main topics explored include:

- **News consumption patterns and motivations:** Types and levels of news consumed, reasons for engaging with or avoiding news, the role of news in daily life, alternative information sources for low/no news consumers and changes in consumption over time.
- **News access habits and source preferences:** Daily news routines, preferred platforms and their perceived pros/cons, trusted brands, use of diverse sources and experiences with both intentional and passive exposure to news.
- **Attitudes towards the Australian news environment:** How well current news meets personal needs, perceptions of content quality and delivery, tone, credibility, diversity of viewpoints, ease of understanding, comparisons between mainstream and alternative outlets and desired improvements.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed with participants' consent for analysis. Thematic analysis was conducted by systematically coding the interview transcripts to identify key themes and patterns. An Excel matrix was used to organise participants' responses, with rows representing individual participants and segments and columns representing codes or emerging themes. This structure allowed for comparison across segments to identify similarities and differences between groups, as well as within segments to explore variation or consistency among participants in the same group.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI)

This coding by interviewers and the research team was a manual process, however AI was used to match and collate interview quotes to this coding. All matching/thematic interpretations were reviewed, interpreted and validated by researchers. Human analysts remained responsible for confirming and selecting quotations to ensure accuracy, context and analytical rigour. AI was used as an analytical aid only, with all findings grounded in researcher judgement and systematic and traditional qualitative methods.

The Social Research Centre applies a structured, human-in-the-loop quality assurance model to AI-assisted research activities, ensuring that automated tools are used to support, rather than replace, expert judgement, with human oversight embedded at every critical stage. Consistent with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guide for assessing research involving AI, the Social Research Centre ensures that human agency and accountability are retained at all decision points, with AI outputs treated as advisory inputs rather than determinations.

Please refer to the ACMA's [AI transparency statement](#) to learn how the ACMA adheres to the Australian Government's policy for the responsible use of AI in government.

Reading this report

Table 1 below outlines the list of abbreviations and terms used in this report.

Table 1: List of abbreviations and terms

Abbreviation	Term
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACS	Annual Consumer Survey
The Framework	Media Diversity Measurement Framework
LCA	Latent Class Analysis
AM/FM/DAB+	Amplitude Modulation / Frequency Modulation / Digital Audio Broadcasting Plus
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
DINK	Dual Income, No Kids
TV	Television
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
AFR	Australian Financial Review
CNN	Cable News Network

ACS platform codes ¹	
FTA TV	Free-to-air TV
FTA catch-up TV	Free-to-air catch-up or streaming service
Pay TV	Subscription or Pay TV service
News website	Online news website or app
News aggregator	Online news aggregator or app, displaying news from multiple online sources
Search engine	Online search engine
Social media	Social media or communication website or app
Radio online	Radio via the internet or app (excluding podcasts)

For an overview of key terms and their full definitions, please see the [indicator 5 and 6 glossary](#), which informs reporting against the Framework on the diversity of news consumption for the *News media in Australia* reporting series.

Structure

Each segment chapter is made up of thematic sections, blending insights from both quantitative and qualitative data. *A day in the life* sections are fictionalised personas that represent an amalgam of key characteristics and behaviours for that segment. These sections do not represent individual respondents.

Rounding

Percentages in the charts or tables may not always add to 100% due to rounding.

Significance testing

Statistical testing was conducted at the 95% confidence level. Two types of comparisons are used throughout the report:

- **Comparison to total (average Australian adult):** Segment results are compared against the total Australian adult population excluding respondents within the segment being analysed. For in-text readability, this population is referred to as *average Australian adults* or *total population*. The colours and arrows indicate whether a segment result is significantly higher or lower compared to all other Australian adults.
-  or  = the result is significantly higher than all other Australian adults.
-  or  = the result is significantly lower than all other Australian adults.
- **Comparison between segments:** Where relevant, results are also compared across segments to identify relative positioning. References to a segment being the highest or lowest indicate that the result is significantly higher or lower than any other individual segment at the 95% confidence level.

¹ These terms are used when referring to quantitative data drawn from the ACS, however, more generic terms, such as 'TV', or 'radio' may be used when describing qualitative data as this reflects how participants themselves understand and report on these concepts

NET

Survey results relating to attitudes and motivations towards news are reported as NET agreement (combining 'agree' and 'strongly agree') or NET disagreement (combining 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree') throughout, unless otherwise specified.

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Our [research program](#) underpins our work and decisions as an evidence-informed regulator. It contributes to our strategic policy development, regulatory reviews and investigations and provides a regulatory framework that anticipates change in dynamic communications and media markets.

The research referenced in this report contributes to the 'News media in Australia – News consumption' research theme. More details can be found in the [ACMA research program](#).

Segments overview

The Australian news audience is divided into 7 distinct segments, highlighting the diversity in how Australians engage with news and the factors shaping their consumption patterns. Figures 1 and 2 below outline the demographic profiles, news habits and attitudes towards news for each segment.

Figure 1: News consumer segments

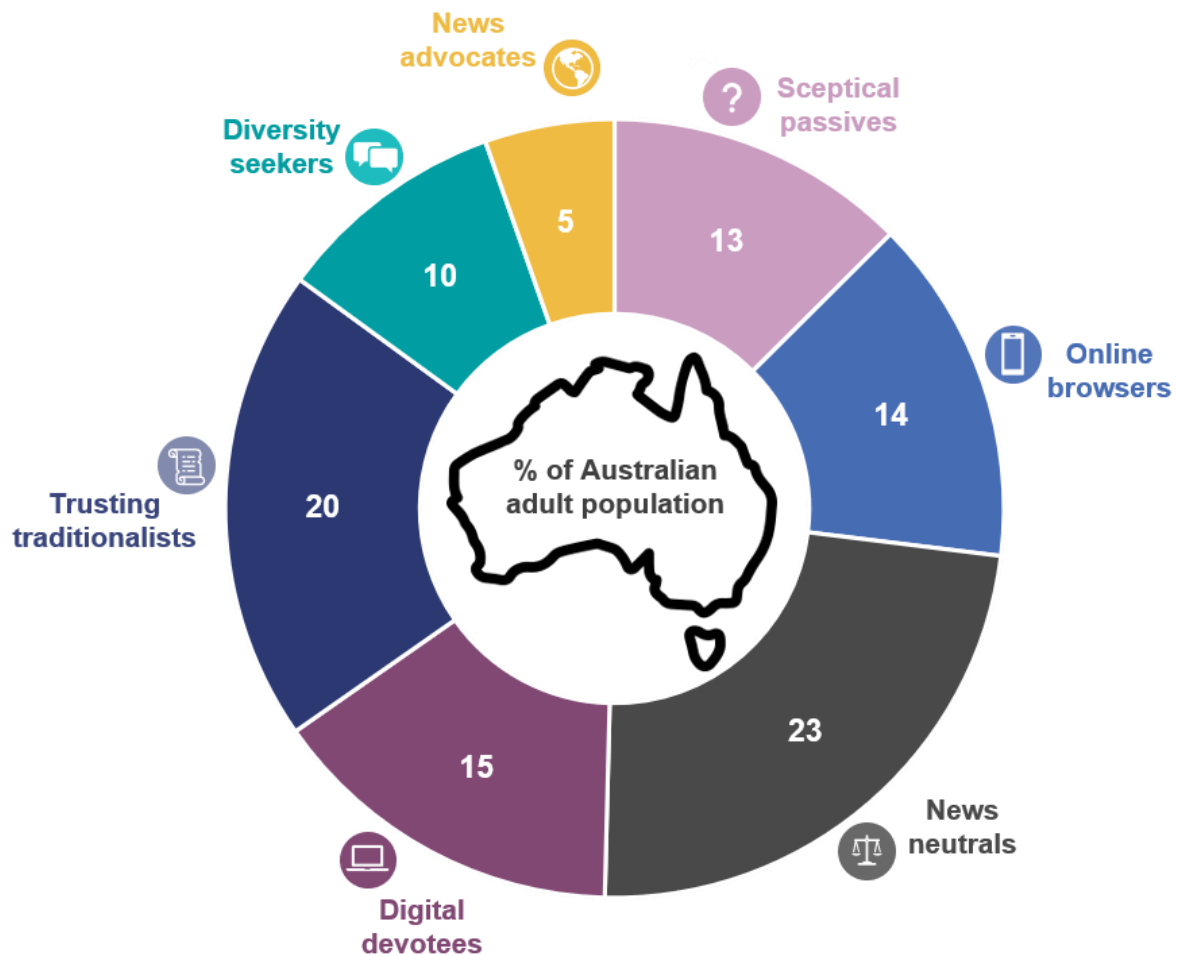


Figure 2: Segment profile overview

 Sceptical passives 13%	 Online browsers 14%	 News neutral 23%
Demographics • Aged 18-24 (23%), 25-44 (52%) • Female (59%) • Children in household (46%) • Employed (55%), employed casually (11%), student (9%)	Demographics • Aged 18-24 (18%), 25-44 (50%) • Female (57%) • Children in household (40%) • Employed (59%), student (8%) • Tertiary education (39%)	Demographics • Aged 18-24 (14%), 25-44 (44%) • Female (54%) • Children in household (40%) • Employed (55%)
News habits • Source of news: Online (51%), TV (12%), Audio (12%), Print (0%) • Low hours spent accessing news (2.1 hours/week)	News habits • Source of news: Online (99%), TV (45%), Audio (42%), Print (7%) • Low hours spent accessing news (3.3 hours/week)	News habits • Source of news: Online (60%), TV (51%), Audio (36%), Print (7%) • Low to moderate hours spent accessing news (6.5 hours/week)
News attitudes (NET Agree) • I don't need to seek out news - if something important happens, I'll hear about it (83%) • Too much news is just click bait / sensational (78%) • The news has become more biased than it used to be (68%) • I find the news too negative and / or distressing (67%) • I don't trust mainstream news (59%) • I often feel overwhelmed or worn out by the volume/constant stream of news (54%) • The news does not cover the issues that really matter to me (50%) • I don't have time to access the news (49%) • The range of topics covered in the news is limited in Australia (47%) • I rely on my friends and family to form my opinions on current issues, more than the news I consume (39%) • I find news stories difficult to understand a lot of the time (25%)	News attitudes (NET Agree) • Too much news is just click bait / sensational (70%) • I find the news too negative and / or distressing (50%) • I don't need to seek out news - if something important happens, I'll hear about it (48%) • I often feel overwhelmed or worn out by the volume/constant stream of news (44%) • I don't have time to access the news (19%)	News attitudes (NET Agree) • I don't need to seek out news – if something happens, I'll hear about it (45%) • The news does not cover the issues that really matter to me (27%) • I don't have time to access the news (18%) • I find news stories difficult to understand a lot of the time (17%)

 Digital devotees 15%	 Trusting traditionalists 20%
Demographics • Aged 25-44 (51%) • Male (56%) • Children in household (38%) • Employed (56%) • Tertiary education (46%)	Demographics • Aged 45-64 (35%), 65+ (56%) • Male (58%) • No children in household (87%) • Retired (55%) • Year 12 or below (32%), Certificate I to IV (27%), Advanced Diploma (20%)
News habits • Source of news: Online (95%), TV (23%), Audio (22%), Print (4%) • Low to moderate hours spent accessing news (8.4 hours/week)	News habits • Source of news: TV (96%), Audio (58%), Online (45%), Print (38%) • Moderate hours spent accessing news (14 hours/week)
News attitudes (NET Agree) • It's important to stay up to date with what's happening in the news (83%) • I am interested in a wide range of news topics (82%) • I am confident in my ability to spot biases and misinformation in news (73%) • The news has become more biased than it used to be (66%) • Too much news is just click bait / sensational (65%) • The news is my go-to for understanding current issues (65%) • I consult multiple sources to make sure I can trust a news story (63%) • I feel out of touch and uninformed if I haven't seen the news for a few days (54%) • I like to share news stories with friends and family (52%) • The range of topics covered in the news is limited in Australia (43%) • I don't trust mainstream news (39%) • News serves as the basis for a lot of my daily conversations (37%)	News attitudes (NET Agree) • It's so easy to access news these days (93%) • It's important to stay up to date with what's happening in the news (91%) • I am interested in a wide range of news topics (90%) • I have the resources I need to access the news I want when I want (87%) • The news is my go-to for understanding current issues (78%) • I am confident in my ability to spot biases and misinformation in news (73%) • I feel out of touch and uninformed if I haven't seen the news for a few days (66%) • The quality of Australian professional news sources is high (65%) • Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues (58%) • I only go to mainstream news sources to get my news (58%) • I like to share news stories with friends and family (57%) • Australia has some of the world's best journalists (56%) • News serves as the basis for a lot of my daily conversations (39%)

 Diversity seekers 10%	 News advocates 5%
Demographics • Aged 45-64 (38%), 65+ (30%) • Male (58%) • No children in household (72%) • Retired (30%) • Tertiary education (38%)	Demographics • Aged 65+ (36%) • Male (65%) • No children in household (74%) • Retired (33%)
News habits • Source of news: Online (99%), TV (93%), Audio (85%), Print (30%) • Moderate hours spent accessing news (13.9 hours/week)	News habits • Source of news: Online (91%), TV (84%), Audio (75%), Print (34%) • High hours spent accessing news (30.2 hours/week)
News attitudes (NET Agree) • It's important to stay up to date with what's happening in the news (95%) • I am interested in a wide range of news topics (92%) • It's so easy to access news these days (90%) • I have the resources I need to access the news I want when I want (88%) • I am confident in my ability to spot biases and misinformation in news (81%) • The news is my go-to for understanding current issues (81%) • I consult multiple sources to make sure I can trust a news story (73%) • I feel out of touch and uninformed if I haven't seen the news for a few days (68%) • I like to share news stories with friends and family (64%) • The quality of Australian professional news sources is high (55%) • Australia has some of the world's best journalists (53%) • News serves as the basis for a lot of my daily conversations (52%) • Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues (47%) • Where possible, I am willing to pay for the news content I want to access (27%)	News attitudes (NET Agree) • It's important to stay up to date with what's happening in the news (93%) • It's so easy to access news these days (92%) • I am interested in a wide range of news topics (92%) • I have the resources I need to access the news I want when I want (91%) • The news is my go-to for understanding current issues (81%) • I am confident in my ability to spot biases and misinformation in news (79%) • I consult multiple sources to make sure I can trust a news story (76%) • I like to share news stories with friends and family (71%) • I feel out of touch and uninformed if I haven't seen the news for a few days (66%) • The quality of Australian professional news sources is high (59%) • News serves as the basis for a lot of my daily conversations (58%) • Australia has some of the world's best journalists (53%) • Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues (51%) • The range of topics covered in the news is limited in Australia (44%) • Where possible, I am willing to pay for the news content I want to access (37%)

Note: Only demographic and news attitude results that over-index for the segment relative to the average Australian adult, best highlighting its distinct characteristics, are shown here for comparison.

Segments compared

Australia's news consumption patterns are evolving within an increasingly complex information environment shaped by several powerful structural forces. The rapid spread of mis and disinformation, the emergence of local news deserts and the growing influence of online platforms are reshaping how Australians access, engage with, interpret and trust news. Across the 7 news consumer segments identified in Australia, notable themes emerge that can help us to understand how different news consumers navigate the shifting landscape. These themes highlight key similarities and differences between segments in patterns of news engagement, preferred sources and formats, attitudes and motivations, barriers to access and shared priorities for how to enhance the overall news experience in Australia.

Levels of news consumption vary

'News neutrals' make up the largest share of Australian adults, followed closely by 'trusting traditionalists', while 'news advocates' represent the smallest but most intensive consumers.

At the high end, news advocates and 'diversity seekers' consume news at levels far above the total population, integrating it deeply into their routines and personal identity. Trusting traditionalists also maintain consistently high volumes, largely through traditional media habits formed over many years.² In contrast, 'sceptical passives' and 'online browsers' engage with very little news, often preferring to avoid in-depth coverage and instead consuming only what they are exposed to incidentally during the day. Sitting between these groups are 'digital devotees' and news neutrals, who maintain steady but moderate engagement, enough to stay aware of events without dedicating significant time or attention to news. There is a notable demographic shift across the segments as levels of consumption go up, from younger, mostly female Australians, to older, mostly male Australians.

Patterns of engagement: active, passive and incidental consumption

The segments also differ markedly in how actively they engage with news. Diversity seekers and news advocates are intentional, habitual consumers, often checking multiple sources and cross-referencing stories for deeper context. For them, news consumption is purposeful and integrated, shaped by curiosity, civic interest or professional relevance. Digital devotees adopt similarly active habits, though their engagement is often balanced against time constraints and an underlying caution about misinformation or bias.

In contrast, news neutrals display a more surface-level form of engagement. They aim to stay informed but do so in a pragmatic and light-touch way, often through morning headline scans, background TV, or occasional checks prompted by notifications. Online browsers and sceptical passives represent the most passive end of the spectrum. Their news routines are typically incidental, driven largely by algorithms on social media platforms rather than intentional searching. Online browsers rely on convenience, while sceptical passives, despite being exposed to social media content, maintain a deeply sceptical stance that limits active engagement beyond brief or superficial interactions.

² *Traditional media/traditional formats* refers to all TV, audio, and print platforms

Preferred and relied upon sources differ

Trusting traditionalists remain heavily oriented towards traditional formats, especially FTA TV and AM/FM/DAB+ radio, which fit naturally into their daily routines and feel reliable and easy to understand. Print newspapers still hold value for them, more so than for any other segment. Diversity seekers also rely on broadcast formats, but their habits extend far beyond TV or radio, switching fluidly across digital and traditional formats.

Digital channels dominate for digital devotees, who draw most of their news from online websites, apps, newsletters, aggregators and podcasts. They use social media more strategically, often to follow individual journalists, monitor real time updates or verify information. Online browsers rely on social media more than any other group, where news appears incidentally as part of their broader digital routines. Sceptical passives also encounter news mainly through social media but treat it with a mixture of caution and cynicism.

News neutrals sit somewhere between tradition and digital convenience: while they encounter plenty of news on social platforms, they tend to trust and rely more on established mainstream sources, such as TV bulletins or search results when seeking clarity. News advocates use a combination of online, TV and audio formats, across a range of outlets.

Notably, as seen in Figure 3 below, online formats feature in the news diets of nearly all segments, except for trusting traditionalists, who tend to skew older. This reflects both the growing reliance on digital platforms among younger audiences and the rising use of social media for news across the wider population. While other older skewing segments, such as diversity seekers and news advocates access traditional formats at high rates, their news diets are heavily informed by online sources. Younger skewing segments, on the other hand, access traditional media at low to moderate rates only.

Preferred news outlets differ

ABC and SBS on FTA TV emerge as key differentiators, being relied on more heavily among engaged segments such as diversity seekers and news advocates, who show higher trust in mainstream media and Australian journalistic standards. In contrast, they are used less by more passive segments such as online browsers and news neutrals. Seven Network on FTA TV is used more heavily among trusting traditionalists and less so among more digitally oriented audiences.

Online browsers tend to consume more news from commercial outlets, such as news.com.au, the 7NEWS and 9News websites/apps, as well as Triple J via AM/FM/DAB+ radio. While ABC and SBS remain among their top sources, they are used at lower levels than the average Australian. They also consume news via social media at the highest levels across segments, though platform choice broadly aligns with the average Australian, led by Facebook.

While Facebook leads social platforms across all segments, it is used more heavily by trusting traditionalists and less so by digital devotees, who instead consume more news via YouTube, X and Reddit compared to the average Australian. News advocates also consume more news via YouTube.

Diversity seekers tend to consume news primarily from public or editorially independent outlets across platforms, including ABC, SBS, *The Guardian*, Al Jazeera and *The Conversation* via websites/apps, as well as ABC and SBS on FTA TV, ABC iview and SBS

On Demand and the ABC News Daily podcast and ABC radio. They also supplement this with commercial digital outlets such as *The Age* and *The New York Times*. As the name suggests, diversity seekers have the most diverse news diets of Australian news consumers.

Attitudes and motivations towards news differ

Underpinning these behaviours are distinct attitudinal profiles. Trusting traditionalists, diversity seekers and news advocates see news as essential, both for understanding the world and participating in civic and social life. They place higher trust in mainstream journalism, express confidence in spotting misinformation and feel uneasy when they go without news for too long. Digital devotees also recognise the value of news and appreciate timely, credible updates, but display heightened awareness of bias and commercial influence in mainstream news, often prompting them to cross check stories or seek multiple perspectives.

News neutrals adopt a more ambivalent stance, acknowledging the importance of being informed while not feeling compelled to engage deeply or frequently. Online browsers share some of this ambivalence but tend to be more sceptical of professionalism and tone, often fatigued by the emotional weight or perceived sensationalism of online content. At the lowest end of the trust spectrum sit sceptical passives, who feel news is biased, negative and not personally relevant; their connection to news is reluctant and often shaped by avoidance rather than engagement.

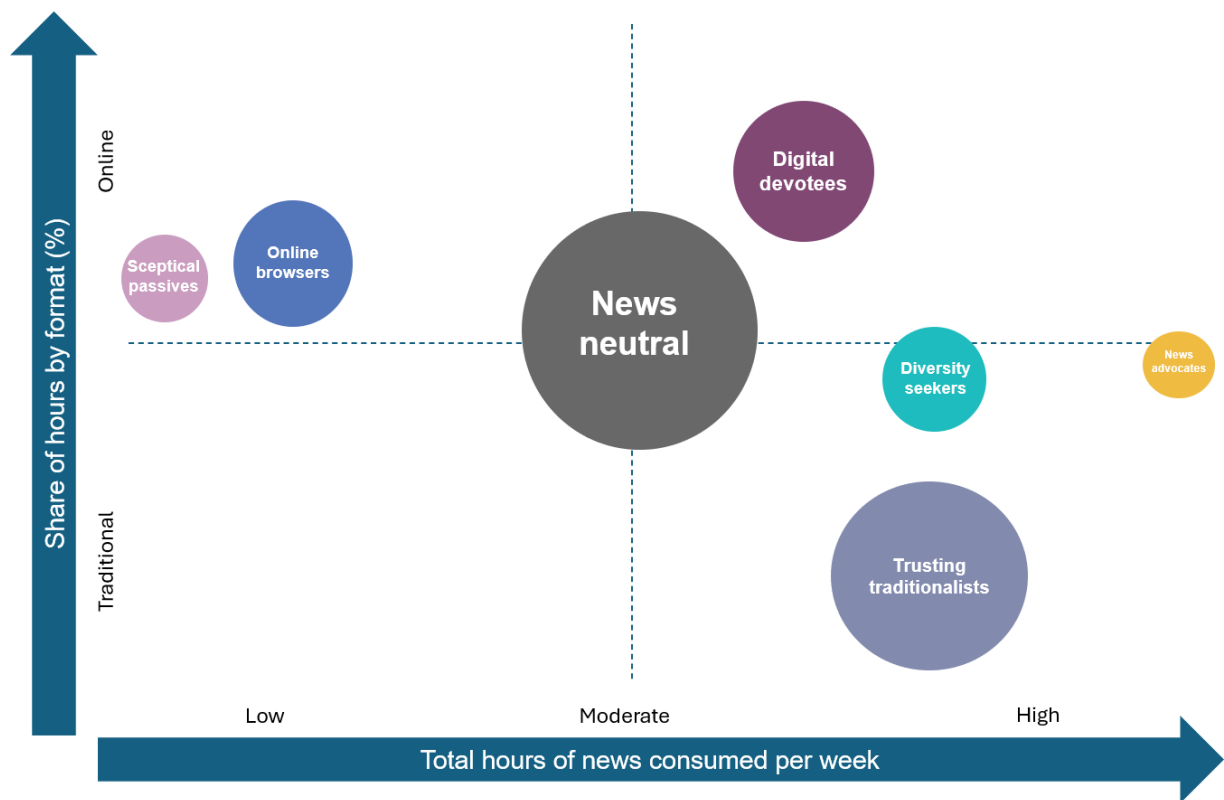
Barriers and opportunities for improvement

Barriers to news consumption differ across segments, though several unifying themes emerge. Emotional fatigue and distressing content pose the greatest obstacles for sceptical passives, online browsers and many news neutrals, who often describe news as overwhelmingly negative or unsuitable for children. These groups are more likely to disengage intentionally, turning away from news to protect their wellbeing. For sceptical passives this is pronounced, with 38% of the segment reporting that they did not access news in the past 7 days. Digital devotees can also feel overwhelmed by the pace and volume of digital updates, though their overall motivation to stay informed remains stronger.

For high engagement groups, including trusting traditionalists, diversity seekers and news advocates, the barriers tend to be more structural than emotional. These include gaps in local news coverage, paywalls, frustration with perceived declines in journalistic standards, bias and political leaning and sensationalism in mainstream news. Concerns about the blurring of opinion and fact, as well as the proliferation of misinformation, feature prominently among digital devotees, diversity seekers and news advocates, who invest significant effort in cross checking information.

Opportunities for improvement align closely with these barriers. Across several lower engagement segments, there is a shared desire for more balanced, less sensational and less distressing news, including more positive or solutions focused coverage. For high engagement segments, the strongest opportunities lie in improving diversity of perspectives, depth of reporting, transparency of editorial practices and restoring strong local news ecosystems. Many segments would appreciate clearer labelling of factual versus opinion content, improved visibility of source material and enhanced tools for verifying information. Reducing restrictive paywalls, addressing algorithmic repetition and strengthening journalistic standards also represent areas where improvements could increase trust and engagement across the entire news landscape.

Figure 3: Segment comparisons – source by hours



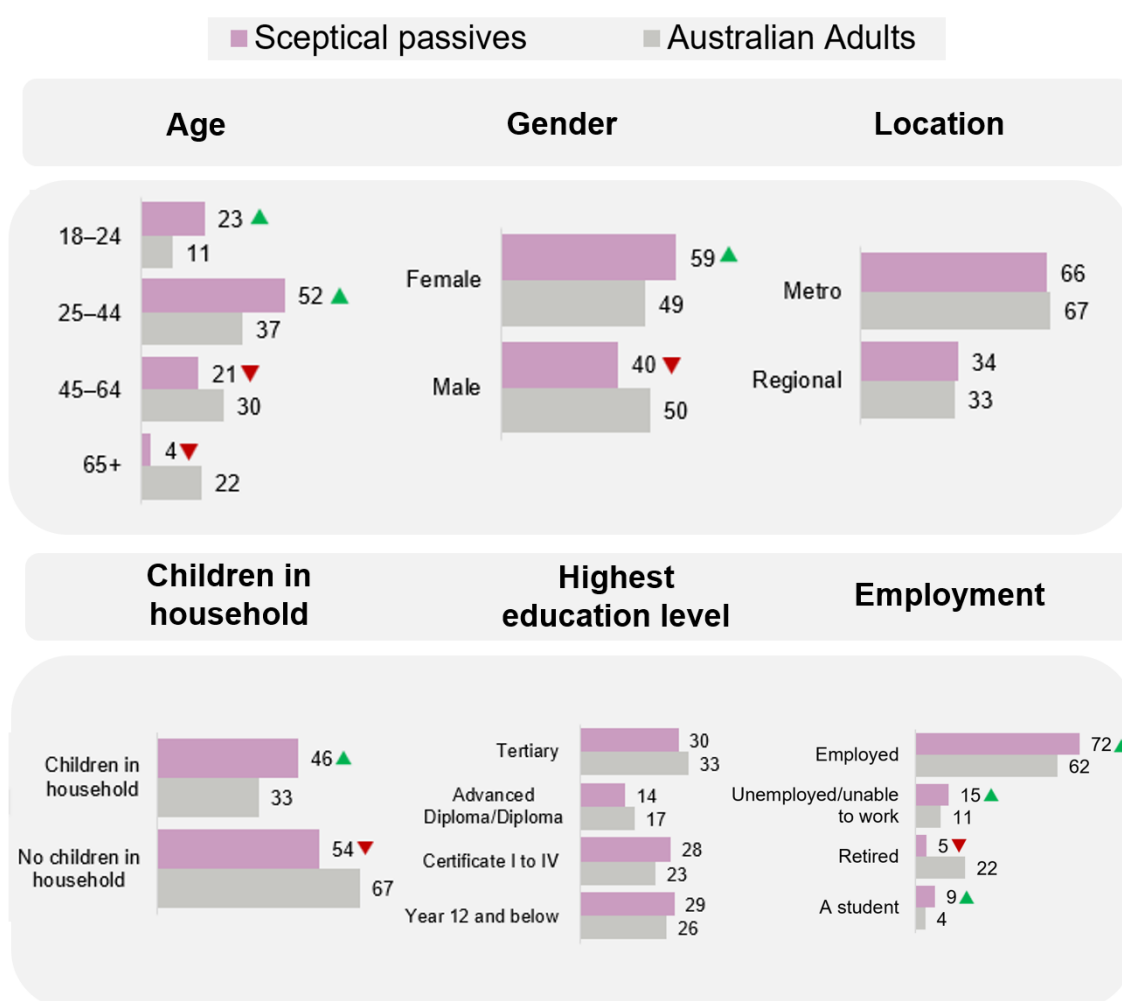
Segment 1: sceptical passives

The 'sceptical passives' segment makes up 13% of the Australian adult population and shows minimal engagement with news. They record the lowest weekly consumption rate among all segments (2.1 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total), with 38% consuming no news in the past 7 days. This segment is characterised by cynicism, disengagement and a passive and incidental approach to news consumption. They hold mixed views about the importance of staying informed and generally view news as nonessential. Compared to the average Australian adult, they exhibit lower skill levels in accessing news and identifying bias. They are generally distrustful of mainstream news, perceiving it as biased or overly negative, which contributes to their disengagement.

Demographic profile

- Sceptical passives tend to skew younger to middle-aged, with a higher share aged 18–24 (23% vs 11% total) and 25–44 (52% vs 37% total).
- They are more likely to be female (59% vs 49% total), employed (72% vs 62% total) and the most likely to have children in the household than any other segments (46% vs 33% total), especially younger children aged 0–12 (35% vs 23% total).
- Their distribution by location and highest education level are similar to that of the Australian adult population.

Figure 4: Sceptical passives demographic profile



Base: Total sample: sceptical passives (n=718), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

Three in 5 (61% vs 92% total) sceptical passives accessed news in the 7 days before the survey, averaging just 0.9 platforms accessed per person per week (vs 2.7 total), the lowest in terms of prevalence and diversity of platforms accessed compared to any other segment.

Online (51% vs 72% total) was the most common format, largely driven by news encountered via social media (43% vs 43% total), where Facebook was both the most commonly accessed and most relied on social media platform for news. A small group in this segment accessed news via online news websites (5% vs 39% total), search engines (5% vs 25% total), online newsletters (4% vs 12%) and news aggregators (2% vs 14%), all far lower than the total population.

Sceptical passives were less likely than any other segment to have accessed news via traditional formats, with no one having accessed news via print newspapers in the past 7 days before the survey (0% vs 15% total). One in 10 (12% vs 56% total) accessed news via TV, primarily through FTA TV (8% vs 51% total) and another one in 10 accessed audio news, mainly through radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (8% vs 37% total).

Figure 5: Sources of news accessed among sceptical passives

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	Online NET	51% ▼	Social media website/app (43%) Online news website/app (5%) ▼ Online search engine (5%) ▼ Online newsletters (4%) ▼ Online news aggregator/app (2%) ▼
	TV NET	12% ▼	Free-to-air TV (8%) ▼ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (3%) ▼ Subscription/Pay TV service (1%) ▼
	Audio NET	12% ▼	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (8%) ▼ Podcast (5%) ▼ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (1%) ▼
	Print	0% ▼	Print newspaper (0%) ▼
			Average # sources accessed: 0.9 ▼

Base: Total sample: sceptical passives (n=718).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown (<0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused', 38% for 'None' and <0.5% for 'Other'). Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Qualitative findings support this somewhat disassociated approach to news among sceptical passives. The segment is characterised by a passive approach to news, a preference for digital and social channels over TV or radio and a strong scepticism towards news. They rarely trust any single outlet, instead comparing information from multiple sources and relying on personal judgement.

Sceptical passives encounter news incidentally through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, rather than actively seeking it out. Local council or suburb pages on Facebook are a common source for community updates, crime and local events, while mainstream news outlets like 9 News, ABC, SBS and *The Sydney Morning Herald* are accessed via social media feeds or websites. When a topic sparks interest, participants often use Google to compare coverage across multiple outlets and if they want to ensure they can trust reporting, they turn to government websites or peer-reviewed sources.

'I normally just watch local news or it's just like whatever pops up on like my recommended. It's usually on Facebook or Instagram or TikTok, like the social medias. I don't really go out looking to watch the news or anything often.'
(Sceptical passives, Female, age 18–24, NSW, Capital city)

'I do consume a lot of social media, not mainstream like channel 7, channel 9 news. I will follow SBS News and ABC News ... Facebook, Instagram ... I don't watch TV.'
(Sceptical passives, Female, age 45–54, WA, Rest of state)

Alternative sources such as Reddit are occasionally used for niche interests (for example, music festivals), but not for mainstream news. Influencers may be followed for lifestyle or food recommendations, though these are not considered news in the traditional sense. Conversations with friends, family and community members also supplement their news consumption, especially for topics relevant to their personal lives or backgrounds.

'If I want reliable news, I would go to [my mum]. I don't know where she gets it from. She has these groups on Facebook that ... share news with each other.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, NSW, Rest of state)

News consumption patterns

Sceptical passives tend to take a low-key approach to news – they do not always have a set routine for seeking out news. Instead, news is encountered incidentally throughout the day while scrolling social media. They rarely visit news websites or turn on the TV specifically for news.

'It'll just come up in my feed. I'm not usually seeking [out news] unless I saw more information on current events. And then I'll go through 2 different sources. I guess, like, where did they get the information from and then go to that original source if I'm interested.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 45–54, WA, Rest of state)

Some approach news in short stints – news exposure typically happens in short bursts, several times a day, often for just a few minutes at a time. Though this usually occurs during downtime, such as breaks, commuting or while multitasking, rather than as a dedicated activity.

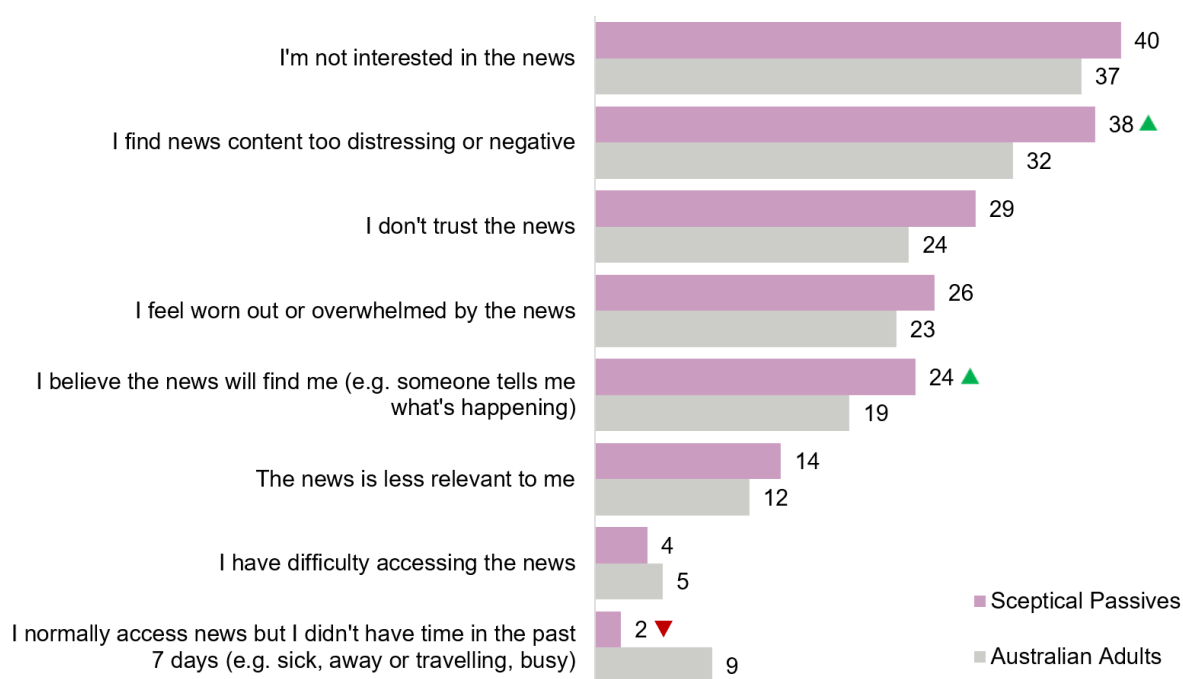
'Typically on a day I would (access news) say around 3 to 4 times ... probably for about like 2 to 5 minutes each time.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Sceptical passives selected an average of 3.3 news topics they prefer to follow or access, the lowest among all segments (vs 5.2 total), which aligns with their lower-than-average engagement across most topics, except for entertainment/celebrity and feel-good news stories.

International news was the news topic most commonly accessed or followed by sceptical passives (38% vs 64% total), followed closely by the weather (36% vs 58% total). Business and financial (8% vs 26% total) news ranked as the least popular within this segment.

Figure 6: Preferred news topics among sceptical passives



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: sceptical passives (n=436), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (1% for 'Other', 'Refused' and 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

Two in 5 (42%) sceptical passives reported consuming about the same amount of news as they did last year, another 2 in 5 (38%) noted a decrease in their news consumption and one in 5 (20%) stating an increase in their news consumption. Sceptical passives are the most likely to have reduced their news consumption this year compared to any other segment (38% vs 17% total). The common reasons for reducing news consumption include finding the content too distressing or negative (38%), feeling overwhelmed or worn out by it (35%) and losing interest in news (35%).

Qualitatively, some sceptical passives reported having stopped watching news or watching less news. This is due to perceived negativity in the news, sensationalism, lack of time, competing priorities and an attitude that the news will find them or they'll come across it incidentally.

'I just don't have a lot of faith (in news) and honestly, it's not just that, it really comes down to time as well.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, NSW, Rest of state)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

Sceptical passives are less likely than the average Australian to view news as an integral part of their lives and do not feel compelled to stay constantly up to date. They were the segment least likely to agree with the importance of staying up to date with news (38% vs 72% total) and the segment most likely to disagree that they feel out of touch and uninformed going without news for a few days (56% vs 31% total).

They were also the least likely to rely on news for understanding current issues (40% vs 16% total) and would much rather rely on friends and family for information (39% vs 17% total). This suggests a pattern of passive news consumption, with over 4 in 5 (83% vs 38% total) believing that they do not need to seek out news, expecting instead that important news will reach them without active effort, a sentiment more common in this segment than in any other.

News is not a prominent part of sceptical passives' daily conversations and social interactions. They were more likely than any other segment to disagree that news forms the basis of many of their daily conversations (55% vs 35% total) and to disagree that they enjoy sharing news stories with friends and family (44% vs 24% total).

Sceptical passives show the lowest interest in a diverse range of news topics compared to the total population. While half expressed interest in a broad range of topics (49% vs 74% total), this is the lowest proportion across all segments and is consistent with their lower number of preferred news topics (3.3 vs 5.2 total). They are also the most likely to feel that news does not cover the issues that really matter to them (50% vs 24% total) and feel that the range of topics covered in Australia is limited (47% vs 36% total).

Qualitatively, sceptical passives tend to view news as something that happens to them, rather than something they actively seek out. News is not a priority for them. Many describe themselves as 'occasional' or 'minimal' news consumers, engaging only when something catches their attention or feels personally relevant.

'(News is) not important at all. I've got a nine-month-old and a 2½ year old, so I'm sort of in my own little bubble.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, NSW, Rest of state)

'(News is) minimal. I try to focus on the local environment and things that are within my local control, really.'

(Sceptical passives, Female, age 45–54, WA, Rest of state)

Accessing and navigating news

Sceptical passives generally find news accessible (77% vs 83% total) and feel they have the resources to access it (76% vs 80% total), though to a lesser extent than the total population. They are more likely than both the average Australian and any other segment to find news stories difficult to understand a lot of the time (25% vs 12% total).

Their confidence in spotting bias and misinformation in news is lower than the total population (61% vs 67% total). Likewise, fewer report checking multiple sources before trusting a news story (48% vs 53% total), indicating a lower capacity or inclination to critically evaluate the news they consume.

Time is a greater barrier to news access for sceptical passives than for any other segment. Half agreed that they don't have time to access news, the highest proportion across all segments (49% vs 15% total).

Qualitatively, news is valued when it is accessible, concise and relevant to their lives, especially local events or issues that might affect them or their families. The ability to see diverse viewpoints (through comments, shares, or word of mouth) is appreciated, but participants remain cautious and selective in what they engage with.

Negative news

Sceptical passives tend to be more affected by negativity in the news than any other segment. Two-thirds felt that news is too negative or distressing (67% vs 42% total) and just over half often felt overwhelmed or worn out by the volume of news (54% vs 37% total), both the highest proportions of any segment.

Negativity and distressing content in the news are seen as barriers, leading some to disengage or avoid the news altogether.

'News is generally negative. I feel like it's always bad events that are always happening that make the news. I don't really see any positive events. But that might just be what I view, but, it's normally like, oh, like there's a death. There's a murder that happened.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 18–24, NSW, Capital city*)

Paying for news

Sceptical passives show a strong reluctance to pay for news, with just over two-thirds disagreeing that they would be willing to pay for the news they want to access, higher than the average Australian (70% vs 63% total).

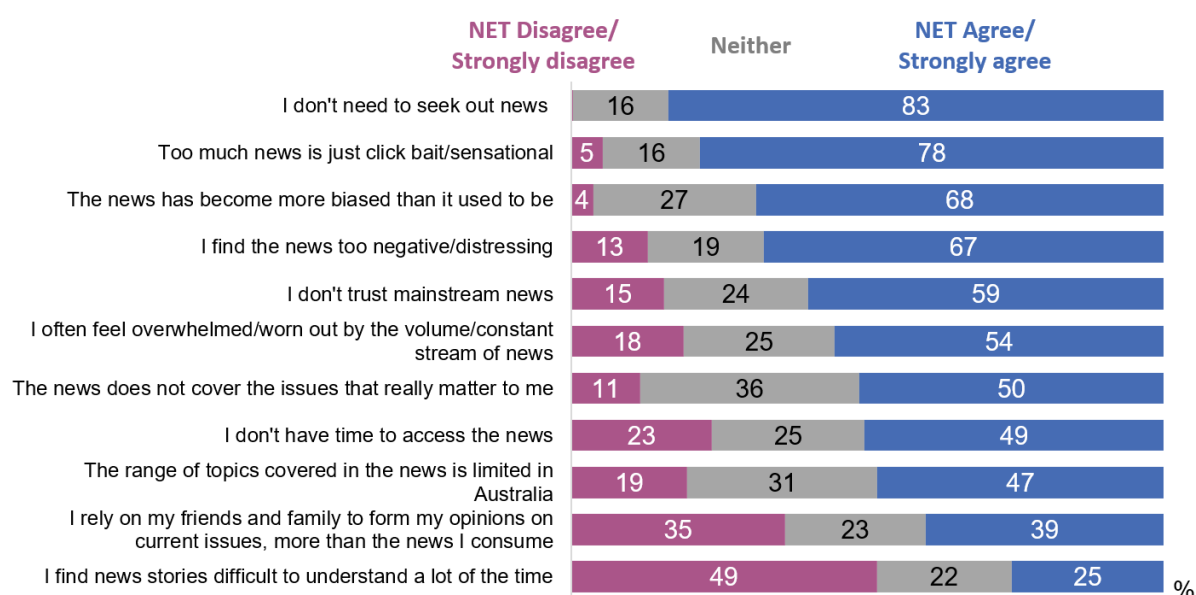
Quality and diversity of news in Australia

Sceptical passives tend to hold more negative views about the objectivity, quality, trustworthiness and diversity of news in Australia compared with the average Australian, which may contribute to their comparatively low volume and limited range of news consumption relative to other segments. They are more likely than any other segment to believe that much of today's news is clickbait and sensational (78% vs 58% total) and that news has become more biased than it used to be (68% vs 57% total). Their views on the quality of journalists, professional news sources and the diversity of perspectives in coverage of current issues in Australia are mixed but generally lean more negative than those of the average Australian adult.

They have the lowest level of trust in mainstream news among all segments, with 3 in 5 agreeing that they do not trust mainstream news (59% vs 29% total). Likewise, they are more likely than the average Australian to oppose relying solely on mainstream news sources (39% vs 30% total), preferring instead to form opinions on current issues through friends and family. This is also reflected in qualitative feedback, which highlights concerns about bias, sensationalism and the influence of government or corporate interests, leading them avoid relying on any single outlet and instead cross-checking information to form their own judgements.

'I feel like every news outlet would be biased towards some way, but when it is distressing, it is quite sad to see, like whatever's happening.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 18–24, NSW, Capital city*)

Figure 7: Top news attitudes among the sceptical passives



Base: Total sample: sceptical passives (n=718).

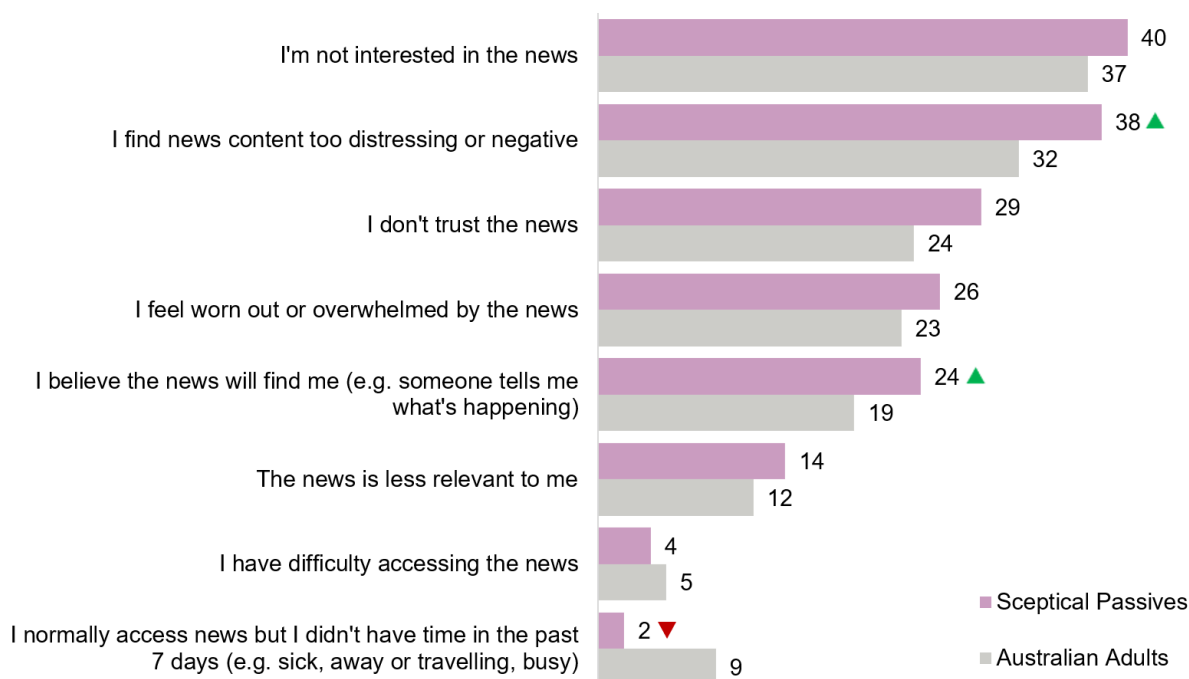
N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 1 to 6% for 'Not applicable', from 0% to <0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

News barriers and opportunities

Two in 5 (38% vs 8% total) sceptical passives did not access any news in the 7 days before the survey, the highest proportion among all segments. Within this group, the most common reason was lack of interest in news (40%), though this is broadly consistent with the total population. Sceptical passives were the most likely to cite news being too distressing or negative as a reason for not accessing it (38% vs 32% total). Additionally, a higher-than-average share believed that news would reach them without actively seeking it (24% vs 19% overall). The reasons for not accessing news in the 7 days before the survey largely mirror those cited for reduced news consumption this year, with common themes including lack of interest, finding news content distressing or overwhelming and low levels of trust.

Figure 8: Reasons for not accessing news in the 7 days before the survey among sceptical passives



Base: Did not access news in the 7 days before the survey: sceptical passives (n=280), Australian Adults (n=452).

N1b. What are the reasons you didn't access news in the past 7 days?

Note: Results for 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (1% for 'Refused' and 0% for 'Don't know' among sceptical passives). Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Qualitative interviews revealed a number of barriers to news access and opportunities for improving news for this segment.

Lifestyle changes and scheduling challenges

A number of participants reported that changes in personal circumstances, such as having young children, busier schedules, or shifting interests, have reduced the time and attention available for news.

'We don't watch a lot of TV at all these days with 2 young kids ... at the end of the day, I'd rather watch something bingy rather than news.'
(Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, NSW, Rest of state)

Less negativity and sensationalism in news

Sceptical passives described mainstream news as overly negative, distressing, or sensational, which led them to disengage with news overall. The prevalence of 'fear-based' stories and a lack of positive news were cited as reasons for avoiding traditional news sources. There is a clear call for news to be less focused on negative, distressing, or sensational stories and instead emphasise more on positive content and good news coverage, which they feel is currently lacking.

'I deliberately chose not to watch the news because it was just very negative. There weren't many positive news stories. Very fear based.'
(Sceptical passives, Female, age 45–54, WA, Rest of state)

More balanced and diverse coverage

Participants expressed a desire for news that presents multiple viewpoints, not just the dominant or most vocal perspectives. They want to see a broader range of stories and voices, including those from smaller groups or less represented communities.

'Ideally you would be able to have multiple viewpoints across these types of things ... I like a balanced view, both sides or, you know, it's not even 2 sides, not dualistic, it's multi.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 45–54, WA, Rest of state*)

'If you could incorporate more of Australia being a multicultural country, it would create more tolerance I feel, around different communities.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city*)

Greater objectivity and transparency

Growing scepticism about the reliability, objectivity and bias of news outlets is a significant barrier. Participants felt that news is 'one sided' or shaped by government and corporate interests, making them less inclined to engage. Presenting facts rather than opinions or agendas would help rebuild trust and encourage more engagement.

'I think they're just showing you what the big guys want you to see ... They're playing by their rules ... not just giving people both sides to the story.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 25–34, NSW, Rest of state*)

Improved control over news exposure on social media

Social media algorithms often push irrelevant or unwanted news content, even when participants indicate their disinterest in a news topic. This can lead to frustration and further news disengagement. They feel that social media algorithms should better respect user preferences, so unwanted topics don't keep appearing after being marked as 'not interested'. This would make news consumption less frustrating and more tailored to individual interests.

'The downside is sometimes it's like a few times I press like not interested, but it will still keep popping up like from the same topics or whatever. I think that's more of a like social media disadvantage rather than like news specifically.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 18–24, NSW, Capital city*)

'If I press like not interested in something, I don't think like another outlet should pop up again for that same topic.'
(*Sceptical passives, Female, age 18–24, NSW, Capital city*)

A day in the life: sceptical passives

Segment 1: sceptical passives – Meet Jamie: The news cynic

Jamie is 31 and lives in the outer suburbs, she has a busy household and 2 young children.

News isn't a priority in Jamie's daily routine, if anything, it's something that happens in the background. Most of Jamie's exposure to news occurs incidentally, while scrolling social media during short breaks or downtime. Local council pages and community groups pop up in her feed, offering updates on nearby events, traffic, or the occasional local scandal. Jamie doesn't follow any news outlets directly, but mainstream brands like ABC, SBS and Nine News sometimes appear thanks to the algorithm. TV news and radio are almost entirely absent from Jamie's life – if she does catch a segment, it's usually by accident or because someone else in the house put it on.

Jamie's attitude towards news is shaped by scepticism. Years of sensational headlines and fear-based reporting have left Jamie wary of mainstream outlets. She's quick to spot bias and rarely trusts any single source, preferring to cross-check stories with a quick Google search or by reading comments for alternative perspectives. Sometimes, Jamie will ask a friend or family member for their take, especially if it's a topic that feels personally relevant. Most of the time, news is not a priority.

The negativity and drama of mainstream reporting is a turn-off for Jamie and with a busy family life, there's little time or energy left for keeping up with current events. Even when Jamie tries to avoid certain topics, social media algorithms seem determined to push them back into view. Jamie would prefer news that's balanced, concise and relevant, with less doom and gloom and more practical updates. If news in Australia could offer more diverse voices, positive stories and respect for user preferences, Jamie might be tempted to pay more attention. For now, news plays a background role in her life.

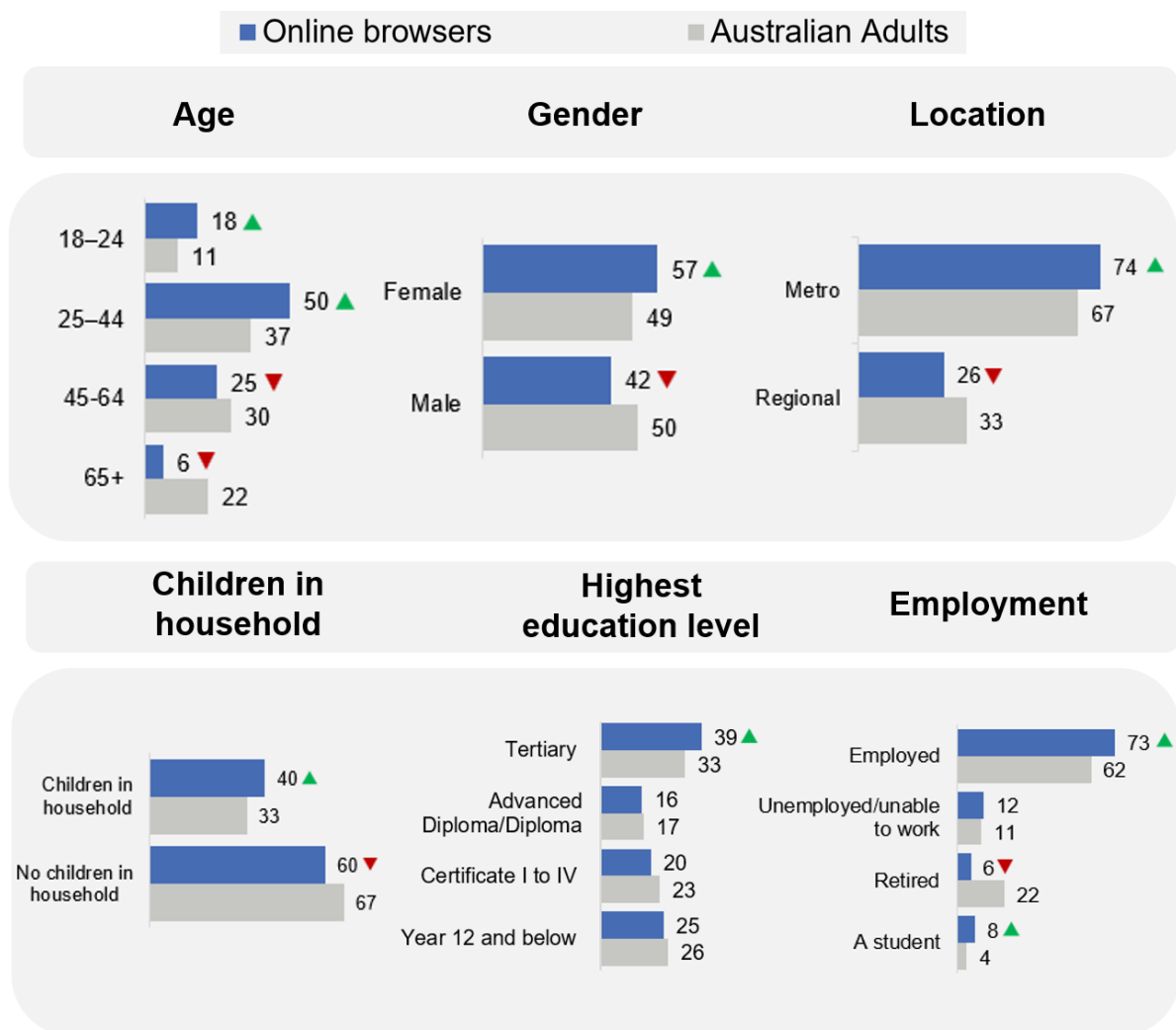
Segment 2: online browsers

The 'online browsers' segment makes up 14% of the Australian adult population and shows low levels of news engagement (3.3 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total). This segment tends to engage with news in a light, convenience-driven way, relying heavily on digital platforms, particularly social media. Their consumption fits around busy, fragmented routines and news plays a background role in their day-to-day lives. Attitudinally, they hold a more sceptical stance towards news than the average Australian. They are less convinced of the quality and professionalism of Australian news, less confident that journalism offers diverse perspectives and more sensitive to the volume and tone of online content, which can feel overwhelming or overly sensational.

Demographic profile

- Online browsers tend to skew younger to middle-aged, with a higher share aged 18–44 (68% vs 48% total).
- They are more likely than the average Australian to be female (57% vs 49% total), live in metropolitan areas (74% vs 67%), have a tertiary education (39% vs 33% total), have children in the household (40% vs 33% total) and be employed (73% vs 62% total).
- In this segment, a higher share of households earn \$150,000 or more annually (30% vs 24% total).

Figure 9: Online browsers demographic profile



Base: Total sample: online browsers (n=872), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

All (100% vs 92% total) online browsers accessed news in the past 7 days before the survey, averaging 3.3 platforms accessed per person per week (vs 2.7 total), notably higher than the total population.

Online browsers primarily accessed news through online formats in the 7 days before the survey. Social media (79% vs 43% total) was their most commonly used platform for news and the highest of all segments. They also show higher-than-average use of news websites (53% vs 39% total), search engines (51% vs 25% total) and news aggregators (21% vs 14% total).

This heavy reliance on social media for news is closely tied to their broader digital behaviour. Online browsers use a wider range of social media platforms than the total population for personal use, engaging with an average of 5.1 social media platforms in the 7 days (vs 4.1 total) before the survey. The social media platforms most accessed and relied on by online browsers for news largely mirror national patterns. Facebook remains their dominant choice, followed by Instagram and YouTube.

Traditional formats played a secondary, complementary role and were accessed at lower levels overall. Over 2 in 5 (45% vs 56% total) consumed news via TV formats, mainly through FTA channels (40% vs 51% total), though still at lower rates than the total population. Their use of audio formats was similar to the total population, led by radio (AM/FM/DAB+). A small group (7% vs 15% total) accessed news through printed newspapers, lower than the total population.

Qualitative data reinforces the survey finding that FTA TV and radio remain part of the news mix, but their role is secondary. News is often consumed passively, while commuting, at home when others have the TV on, or via radio in the car. These sources are not actively sought out but are part of the ambient media environment.

'It's more or less restricted to free-to-air news channels which I watch when I get time.'
(Online browsers, Male, age 35–44, NSW, Capital city)

News is sometimes discussed with family, friends, or colleagues, especially when relevant to work or local events. However, information from their personal networks is typically verified independently.

'Family and friends, yes – but I usually fact-check them.'
(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

'Mostly (get news) from work colleagues because we discuss international affairs, especially since we're scientists and interested in what's happening outside Australia.'
(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Figure 10: Sources of news accessed among online browsers

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	Online NET	99% ▲	Social media website/app (79%) ▲ Online news website/app (53%) ▲ Online search engine (51%) ▲ Online news aggregator/app (21%) ▲ Online newsletters (13%)
	TV NET	45% ▼	Free-to-air TV (40%) ▼ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (9%) Subscription/Pay TV service (3%) ▼
	Audio NET	42%	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (34%) Podcast (9%) Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (7%)
	Print	7% ▼	Print newspaper (7%) ▼
			Average # sources accessed: 3.3 ▲

Base: Total sample: online browsers (n=872).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown above (0% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused', 0% for 'None' and <0.5% for 'Other'). Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Qualitatively, online browsers rely heavily on digital platforms for news, favouring apps and websites over traditional print or broadcast platforms. Paid news apps (such as *The Australian*, *Australian Financial Review*, *The Wall Street Journal*) are used when accessible through work, while free aggregators (Apple News, ABC News app) are popular for convenience and breadth. Online search is a routine method for following up on stories or for verifying information.

Qualitative data suggests ABC is the most trusted and frequently used news brand, valued for impartiality and reliability. SBS, Channel 7, Channel 9 and international outlets are also mentioned, but there is a general wariness about bias, especially with commercial or politically affiliated sources. Paywalls and perceived bias can limit engagement with certain outlets.

'I'm committed to ABC as my go-to and sometimes SBS.'
(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

'I use *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Australian* and the *AFR* primarily. (Via) apps on my phone.'
(Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

'Other sources would be basically doing some Google searches and using a website that shows news articles from different newspapers. ... It's called Apple News.'
(Online browsers, Male, age 35–44, NSW, Capital city)

Social media sites such as Instagram or Facebook are frequent outlets for passive or incidental news exposure when deeper engagement is not preferred, often through algorithm-driven feeds or content shared by friends. However, while news via social media is valued by this segment for its convenience, accessibility and timeliness, there is a clear scepticism about the credibility of news encountered on these platforms. Online browsers tend to fact-check or seek confirmation from more mainstream outlets, such as ABC and The Australian, when encountering news on social media.

'A lot now comes through Instagram, friends sharing articles or snippets, it's easier to digest ...If it's not from a direct news outlet, it can be misleading.'
(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

News consumption patterns

Online browsers tend to integrate news consumption casually into their everyday activities, with a strong preference for digital platforms. Most begin their day by checking news apps or websites on their phones during their morning commute, often using paid subscriptions provided through work or free aggregators. This digital-first approach allows them to select topics of personal interest and to avoid topics of little relevance or sources they perceive as biased or unreliable.

Throughout the day, news exposure is often incidental, though during work hours, some will check for breaking news during downtime and may discuss current events with colleagues. At home, FTA TV news may be watched if a partner or family member has it on, but it is not a deliberate daily habit. Social media also plays a role, however, most will rarely follow news pages directly.

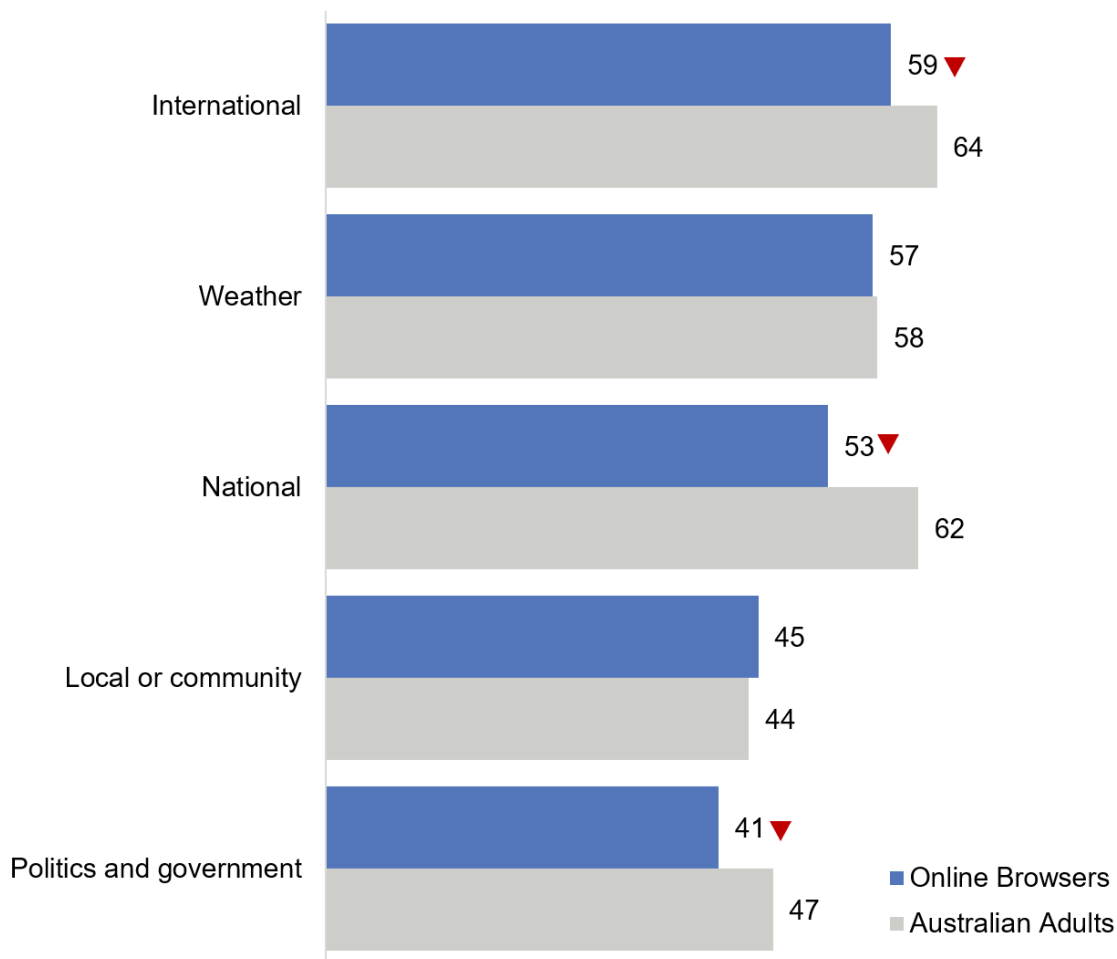
In the evening, participants might revisit news apps or websites, particularly for sports or current affairs and occasionally watch TV news if it happens to be on. Overall, their news consumption is selective and pragmatic, balancing the desire to stay informed with a conscious effort to avoid excessive or distressing content. Incidental exposure, whether through social media, radio, or conversations with family and friends, complements their routine but does not dominate it. This approach reflects a preference for control, credibility, convenience and a digitally driven approach in how they engage with news each day.

'(On the) morning commute, I browse an app that consolidates news from multiple sources, focusing on local. In the evening, I watch sports or current affairs.'
(Online browsers, Male, age 35–44, NSW, Capital city)

'I take public transport to work, so I often check what's happening on ABC News or access the website during that time.'
(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Online browsers selected an average of 5.1 news topics they prefer to follow or access, broadly in line with the national average (vs 5.2 total). The top topic accessed was international news, followed by weather and national news. They were less likely than the average Australian to access international (59% vs 64% total) and national (53% vs 62% total) news, politics and government (41% vs 47% total), sports (27% vs 35% total) and business or financial (20% vs 26% total) news. In contrast, they were more likely to engage with lifestyle and culture content (28% vs 23% total).

Figure 11: Preferred news topics among online browsers



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: online browsers (n=872), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (1% for 'Other', 0% for 'Refused' and <0.5% for 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

Half (51%) of online browsers reported consuming about the same amount of news this year. Notably more online browsers than the average Australian reported consuming less or a lot less news than they did a year ago (30% vs 17% total). Leading reasons for consuming less news include finding news content too distressing or negative (47%) and feeling overwhelmed (45%).

Aligning with the survey findings, qualitative discussions revealed that the main reasons for reduced news consumption include the emotional toll of negative content, frustration with bias and repetition, barriers like paywalls and changes in personal priorities or available time.

'All of the stories were heavy and I found it was healthier for myself and my mental health to remove myself from that, particularly with what's happening in the world and overseas. That's the main reason that's really reduced it in the last 6 to 12 months.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

‘There’s a lot of negative or quite confronting or emotionally difficult news, so I don’t like to expose myself to high levels of news because it can affect my mental health and wellbeing.’

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

For online browsers, news plays a meaningful but not central role in their everyday life. While two-thirds agreed it is important to stay up to date, this sits lower than the total population (67% vs 72% total). Just over two-thirds express interest in a wide range of topics (70%); however, they are less likely than the average Australian to feel out of touch if they go without news for a few days (34% vs 46% total). Engagement with news is part of how they make sense of the world, but not their only or dominant source. They are less likely than the average Australian to see news as their main way of understanding current issues (51% vs 58% total), yet this still outweighs their reliance on friends and family, suggesting that news competes with, rather than completely cedes ground to, other sources of information and influence. At the same time, their relationship with news is often more passive. They are more likely than the average Australian to feel they do not need to actively seek out news, trusting that important stories will reach them anyway (48% vs 38% total).

While news is present in their lives, it is not a major theme that comes up in social interactions. Online browsers are less likely than the average Australian to say that news forms the basis for a lot of their daily conversations (24% vs 33% total), or that they enjoy sharing news stories with friends and family (41% vs 47% total).

For online browsers, news serves primarily as a way to remain aware of current events without requiring significant engagement or in-depth exploration. Their approach is characterised by brief interactions, often scanning headlines or catching snippets on social media which provide just enough information to feel up to date. Rather than seeking comprehensive coverage or detailed analysis, online browsers prefer to maintain a general sense of what is happening in the world, using news as a convenient reference point in their daily life. In essence, news for online browsers plays a background role: it keeps them connected to broader trends, but rarely becomes a focal point of their attention or interests.

‘I like to be up to date with current stories and local and international news, but it could be every day that I’m reading some kind of news story or accessing information. So, probably an average level ... I have a superficial read on news, which is enough to stay aware of current events, without feeling the need to delve too deeply into topics.’

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Accessing and navigating news

Online browsers generally feel well-equipped to access news. Four in 5 agree both that news is easy to access (82%) and that they have the resources they need to get the news they want, when they want it (81%) – levels broadly in line with the total population.

Their ability to understand and evaluate news content is also similar to that of the average Australian. Two-thirds (65%) feel confident in spotting bias and misinformation in news and just over a half (57%) say they consult multiple sources before trusting a story.

Comprehension does not appear to be a challenge for most, with only one in 10 (11%) reporting that they often find news difficult to understand, which again is consistent with the total population.

Time is a greater barrier for online browsers, with one in 5 (19% vs 15% total) agreeing that they do not have the time to access news, which is higher than the average Australian.

Generally speaking, online browsers have broad and convenient access to news, primarily through digital channels. Their news consumption is often passive or incidental. Their view is that news is 'always there', making it easy to stay informed without deliberate effort. They value the accessibility and timeliness of digital news, appreciating that updates are available whenever they want and can be quickly checked during daily routines.

'It's ease of access. It's part of my daily routine, listening to the radio or scrolling social media. It's convenient and always there, even if I don't specifically look for news.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Negative news

Online browsers are noticeably more sensitive to the tone and volume of news than the average Australian. They are more likely to feel that much of today's news is just clickbait and sensational (70% vs 58% total) and more likely to say news is too negative or distressing (50% vs 42% total).

They also report stronger feelings of overload, with over 2 in 5 saying they often feel overwhelmed or worn out by the constant stream of news (44% vs 37% total).

Qualitative findings reinforce this, online browsers generally perceive the tone of Australian news as negative and, at times, overly sensationalised. There were mentions that news stories often focus on distressing or emotionally charged topics, which can be overwhelming and lead this segment to limit their exposure for wellbeing reasons. There is a desire for more balanced and positive news coverage, with some expressing frustration at the repetitive nature of news cycles and the prevalence of opinion-based reporting.

'A few days ago, I opened the news and literally every story felt doom and gloom.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

'There's a lot of focus on negative stories, which can be depressing and impact my mental health. I'd like to see more positive coverage.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Paying for news

Online browsers are more likely than most other segments to oppose paying for news, with 3 in 4 disagreeing that they are willing to pay for the content they want to access (73% vs 63%).

Qualitatively, online browsers also generally prefer free access to news and are reluctant to pay for news content. Encountering paywalls in news leads them to seek alternative sources, such as free news apps, social media, or public broadcasters like the ABC. The convenience and accessibility of free digital news are highly valued and paying for news is seen as a barrier rather than a necessity. Some acknowledge that their workplaces may provide access to paid news apps, but they are unlikely to subscribe or pay for the news themselves. This preference for free content aligns with their overall approach to news: incidental, light-touch and convenience-driven.

'I stopped [consuming some news sources] because I didn't want to pay for it, especially for local news that moved to paid services.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

'Nothing [is stopping me from accessing more news], not really, just anything behind a paywall.'

(Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Quality and diversity of news in Australia

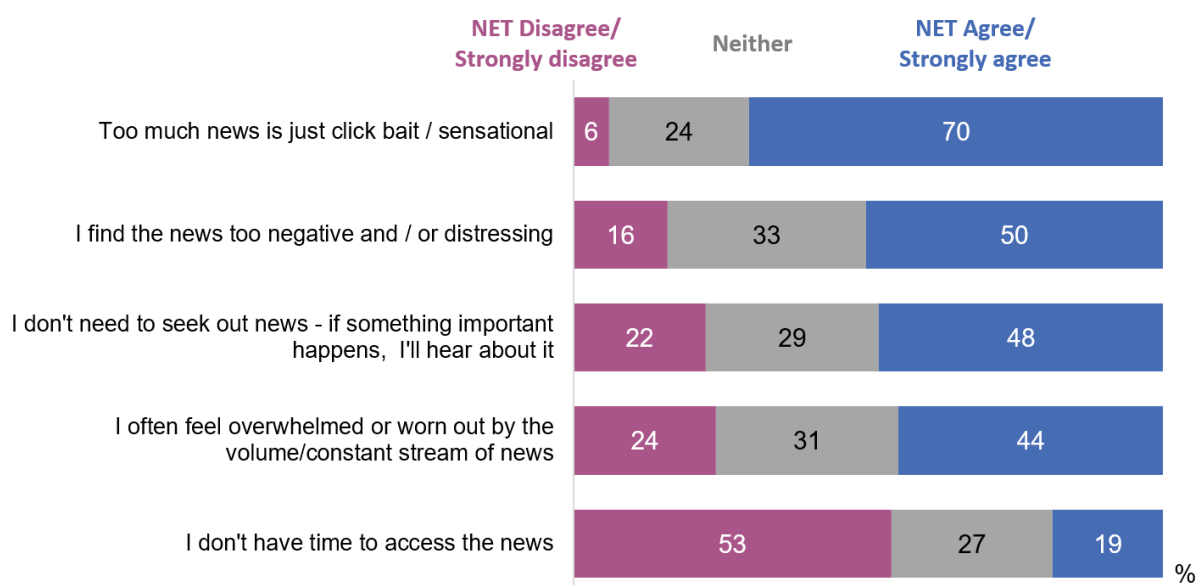
Online browsers are more sceptical about the quality of professional news in Australia. They are less likely than the average Australian to agree that the quality of Australian professional news sources is high (36% vs 44% total) and less likely to feel that Australia has some of the world's best journalists (28% vs 39% total).

They also report lower confidence in the diversity of perspectives in news, with 3 in ten (30% vs 38% total) agreeing that Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues, which is lower than the total population.

However, comparatively high rates of neutral responses across these measures may suggest that some online browsers simply feel unable to judge news quality or journalistic standards in Australia, potentially a reflection of their lower overall levels of news consumption.

The amount of news available is seen as sufficient and easily accessible, but the variety is sometimes considered limited, with major outlets dominating the landscape and influencing the tone and perspective of coverage.

Figure 12: Top news attitudes among online browsers



Base: Total sample: online browsers (n=872).

N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 0 to 1% for 'Not applicable', from 0% to <0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

News barriers and opportunities

All online browsers had accessed at least some news in the 7 days before the survey. While they are generally well-equipped and have the skills to access and critically evaluate news, their lower engagement stems from a passive approach to consumption, limited time, a tendency to avoid negative or distressing content and a perception that news has become overly sensational. These are outlined in more detail below.

Reduce negativity and sensationalism

The prevalence of negative or distressing news stories can be overwhelming, leading some to limit their news exposure for mental health reasons and to lessen emotional impact. Many would like to see a more balanced approach, with less focus on distressing or sensational stories and a greater mix of positive or uplifting stories.

'I used to read news every day, either online or watch it on TV, but I found it too depressing. All of the stories were heavy and I found it was healthier for myself and my mental health to remove myself from that, particularly with what's happening in the world and overseas.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

'There's a lot of negative or quite confronting or emotionally difficult news, so I don't like to expose myself to high levels of news because it can affect my mental health and wellbeing ... I'd like to see more positive coverage.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Increase impartiality, media diversity and reduce bias

Online browsers are highly sensitive to perceived bias, political leanings and ownership influence in news reporting. They value impartial, fact-based journalism and are wary of outlets that push opinions or agendas.

'[Mainstream news is] somewhat trustworthy but some bias due to ownership by News Corp.'

(Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Some feel that the variety and diversity of news outlets is restricted, with major outlets dominating the landscape and influencing the tone and perspective of coverage. News diversity could be improved by advocating for more independent, transparent and unbiased reporting, news that allows audiences to draw their own conclusions rather than being steered by editorial slant.

'Ideally, a fully unbiased news source would be best.'

(Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

'A lot of news is opinion-based rather than fact-based. I don't accept everything I see without checking.'

(Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city)

Broaden variety and depth

Some feel that news coverage is repetitive and lacks diversity in topics and perspectives. They want a broader range of stories and viewpoints. News could be improved by encouraging outlets to expand the range of topics, include more international perspectives and avoid repeating the same stories.

‘Coverage is good, but variety is slightly restricted. International coverage is limited.’
(*Online browsers, Male, age 35–44, NSW, Capital city*)

‘The same stories are often repeated every half hour on the radio.’
(*Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city*)

Increase fact checking and transparency in news

There is a desire for more visible fact checking and correction of errors, as well as transparency about sources and editorial processes. Outlets could support the integration of clear fact checking, corrections and transparency tools within news stories or content.

‘A fact checker on news sites would be good because sometimes early reports may be inaccurate.’
(*Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city*)

‘I try to avoid unconscious bias and fact check across sources.’
(*Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city*)

Enhance accessibility and reduce paywalls

Many participants mention that encountering paywalls discourages them from accessing certain news sources, especially local news that has moved to paid services. As a result, they gravitate towards free content, social media, or public broadcasters like the ABC.

‘I stopped [consuming some news sources] because I didn’t want to pay for it, especially for local news that moved to paid services.’
(*Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city*)

Many advocate for easier, more equitable access to reliable news content, removed or reduced paywalls, especially for essential local and public interest news.

‘I used to access other sites, but many now require subscriptions, so I stopped ... I didn’t want to pay for it, especially for local news that moved to paid services.’
(*Online browsers, Female, age 35–44, WA, Capital city*)

‘Nothing [is stopping me from accessing more news], not really, just anything behind a paywall.’
(*Online browsers, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city*)

A day in the life: online browsers

Segment 2: online browsers – Meet news-cautious Sophie

Sophie is a 28 year-old mid-career professional and a busy mum with a young child, living in the inner suburbs. News is something she dips into throughout her day, scrolling through the ABC News app on her phone while commuting, catching snippets on the car radio, or glancing at headlines that surface on her Instagram feed. She likes the convenience and breadth of digital news, preferring platforms that let her quickly browse a mix of local and international stories, but she's wary of the echo chambers and clickbait that sometimes come with scrolling social media.

Sophie's approach to news is thoughtful but cautious. She likes to stay informed, especially about world events and issues that might come up in conversation at work or with friends. However, she's become increasingly selective about what she consumes. She feels there is a relentless stream of negative or emotionally charged stories, which has led her to set boundaries for her own wellbeing (and for her family). She'll often skip distressing headlines or take breaks from news altogether when it feels overwhelming. Sophie gravitates towards outlets she perceives as impartial, like ABC or SBS and she's not afraid to fact-check stories or compare sources to avoid falling into the trap of bias or misinformation.

Sophie is frustrated by paywalls, especially when local news moves behind a subscription and she's sceptical of outlets with strong political leanings or sensationalist tones. Repetitive coverage and a lack of variety can leave her bored and she's quick to notice when news feels more like opinion than fact. Ultimately, Sophie wants news that's accessible, trustworthy and diverse and that keeps her informed without weighing her down.

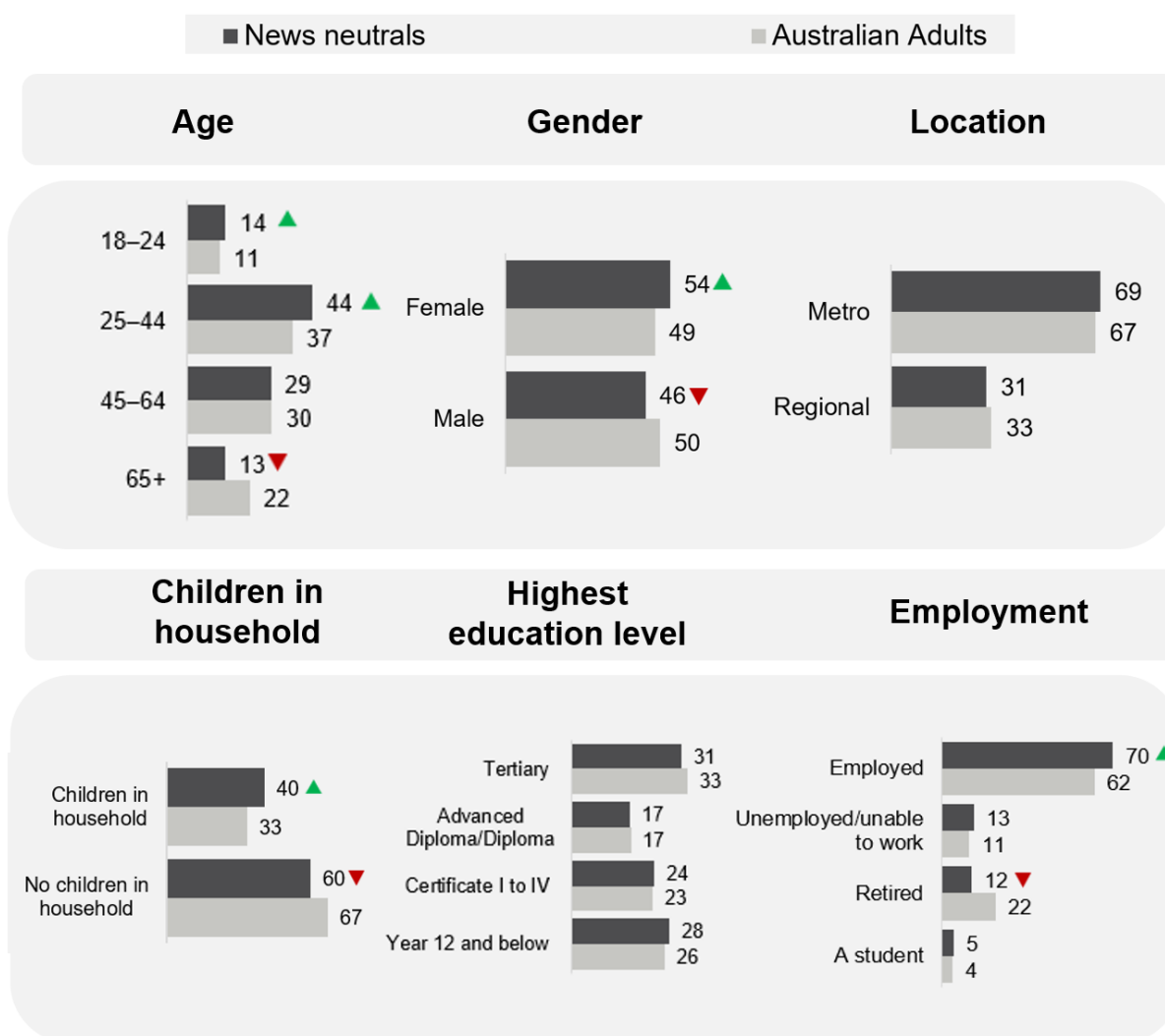
Segment 3: news neutrals

The 'news neutrals' segment makes up 23% of the Australian adult population and they are characterised by low to moderate levels of news consumption (6.5 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total). This segment demonstrates an ambivalent attitude and approach to news. While they are not as disengaged as some other segments, they view news simply as a way to stay up to date. They have other priorities in life, but news is an important tool to stay informed about current events and issues, even if it is sometimes just at a surface level.

Demographic profile

- News neutrals tend to skew younger to middle-aged, with a higher share aged 18–44 (57% vs 48% total).
- They are also more likely to be female (54% vs 49% total) and be employed (70% vs 62% total). While they are more likely than the average Australian adult to have children in the household (40% vs 33% total), the majority of households within the segment do not have children.
- They have a lower share of high-income household compared to the average Australian (21% earning \$150,000 or more annually vs 24% total).
- Their distribution by location, highest education level is broadly similar to that of the Australian adult population.

Figure 13: News neutrals demographic profile



Base: Total sample: news neutrals (n=1,367), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults

Platforms and outlets for news

News neutrals accessed news from a variety of platforms in the past 7 days, although all at lower levels than the total population. Online platforms are the most common, primarily social media (39% vs 43% total), news websites (18% vs 39% total) and search engines (12% vs 25% total). TV also plays a significant role, driven largely by FTA TV (44% vs 51% total), while radio was used by around one-third, mainly traditional AM/FM/DAB+ stations (33% vs 37% total). Print newspapers were accessed by only a small minority (7% vs 15% total). Compared to the average Australian adult, news neutrals accessed fewer sources overall (1.8 vs 2.7 total on average) and were more likely to have not accessed any news in the past week (11% vs 8% total).

Figure 14: Sources of news accessed among news neutrals

		Platforms accessed	Specific platforms
	Online NET	60% ▼	Social media website/app (39%) ▼ Online news website/app (18%) ▼ Online search engine (12%) ▼ Online newsletters (5%) ▼ Online news aggregator/app (4%) ▼
	TV NET	51% ▼	Free-to-air TV (44%) ▼ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (8%) Subscription/Pay TV service (7%)
	Audio NET	36% ▼	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (33%) ▼ Podcast (4%) ▼ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (4%) ▼
	Print	7% ▼	Print newspaper (7%) ▼
			Average # sources accessed: 1.8 ▼

Base: Total sample: news neutrals (n=1,367).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown (<0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused', 11% for 'None' and <0.5% for 'Other'). Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Qualitatively, news neutrals tend to consume news from a mix of sources and rely on different platforms to meet information needs. While digital platforms remain the predominant choice, traditional formats such as TV and radio do hold relevance. Mobile phones are the primary medium for news consumption due to their convenience and constant availability, which enables regular, ongoing access to news and updates throughout the day. News neutrals access news on their mobiles through a mix of dedicated news websites, apps and aggregators (like ABC or Apple News), social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok) and search engines.

Social media is especially prominent for incidental news discovery (for example, while scrolling feeds). Several interview participants mention coming across news on social media platforms like Facebook or Reddit while scrolling, rather than seeking it out intentionally, with social media often serving as a passive or incidental channel for news exposure rather than a primary, intentional source.

'Sometimes if I'm scrolling through Reddit, there might be an article, news article that pops up. Sometimes friends or family would be like, "Oh, did you hear about XYXYZ?"'
(*News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city*)

News neutral participants express a clear scepticism about the reliability of news found on social media. Many participants are wary of clicking on news links in social media feeds due to concerns about scams or hacking. There is a tendency to filter or ignore news on social media, especially if it comes from less reputable sources or if the news is perceived as sensationalist or unreliable.

'I trust the government websites one or only the particular news channel like SBS or something, but not all of them. Because these are trustworthy sites, so you can trust them, but not like whatever is on the social media, you cannot rely on them.'
(*News neutrals, Male, age 35–44, Vic, Capital city*)

'You know, like sometimes you're getting news, for example, on Facebook or something. So it cannot be like 100% correct.'
(*News neutrals, Male, age 35–44, Vic, Capital city*)

News websites, such as ABC News and mainstream commercial outlets are frequently mentioned for headline scanning and quick updates. Some also receive news via push notifications or local community pages on their mobile phones.

'It would mainly just be through my phone. So like I've always got my phone on me. And so I think it's probably just a habit numerous times.'
(*News neutrals, Female, aged 35–44, SA, Capital city*)

'Just on my mobile as it is handy.'
(*News neutrals, Male, aged 35–44, NSW, Rest of state*)

'Now you're more up to date because you've got your phone'
(*News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, SA, Capital city*)

Some news neutrals supplement mobile access with more in-depth reading on computers. TV remains a preferred source often watched in the mornings or evenings as part of daily routines (for example, ABC, SBS, Channels 9 and 7), though it tends to serve as background entertainment, such as while cooking dinner, rather than as a primary focus. However, live

TV news viewing has declined for some due to lifestyle changes such as childcare responsibilities.

‘... if I do see something that I want to read later on, I might go onto the computer and have a proper look if it's a longer article or something like that, but I guess [my] phone's always on me.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

‘I watch the Today Show or the morning show on Channel 7 and just sort of keep up to date with what's going on the news there.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 45–54, Vic, Rest of state)

Radio is valued for real-time updates, especially during travel or daily commutes, though this is often incidental or passive.

News consumption patterns

For news neutrals, qualitative insights show that news consumption patterns are often blended into daily routines, such as morning checks of the headlines on mobile devices, background TV during meal preparation, or radio listening during commutes. Many interview participants describe habitual scrolling through news feeds multiple times a day, though some have reduced their overall news intake due to lifestyle changes or emotional fatigue from negative news. Time constraints, childcare and the rise of streaming services have contributed to decreased traditional TV news viewing. A lot of the time it consists of headline scanning so that they do not miss any big or important news.

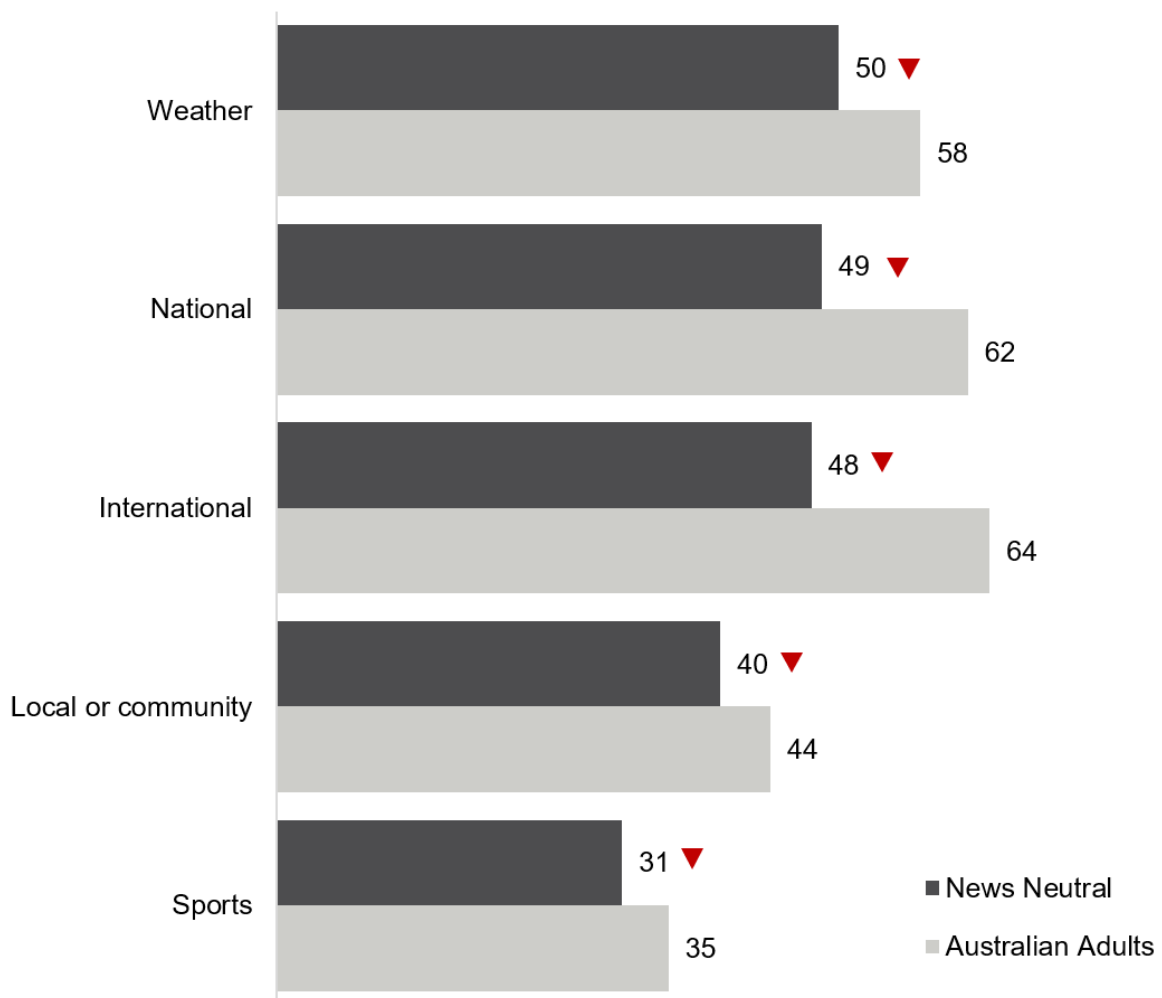
News neutrals commonly consume local, national and international news, with a particular interest in topics such as sports, politics and global events such as conflicts (for example, the war in Gaza and the Russia–Ukraine war, which were ongoing during the research etc.).

‘When I get up in the morning, I put the morning shows on ... and I just sort of have that going in the background and sort of when the news comes on, I sort of keep up to date with what's sort of happening and it's sort of more background noise, but sometimes if something catches my attention, I pay more attention to it. And then I go to work, I sort of read the news thing online that they have. And then when I come home from work and I'm preparing tea or something, I'll have the news on. And yeah, so I'm not full on into it, but just so I'm aware of it.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 45–54, Vic, Rest of state)

News neutrals selected an average of 4.2 news topics they prefer to follow or access, the second lowest of all segments (vs 5.2 total). This is consistent with their lower-than-average interest in a broad range of news topics. The news topic most commonly accessed was weather, followed closely by national and international news. Compared with the average Australian adult, news neutrals engage with all types of news to a lesser extent, except for entertainment, celebrity and feel-good stories, reflecting their overall lower level of news consumption.

Figure 15: Preferred news topics among news neutrals



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: news neutrals (n=1,215), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (<0.5% for 'Other' and 'Refused' and 1% for 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

Over half (59%) of news neutrals reported consuming about the same amount of news as they did last year, with the remainder evenly split between those consuming more or a lot more news (20%) and those consuming less or a lot less news (21%). News neutrals are more likely than the average Australian to reduce their news consumption this year, saying they consume less news (16% vs 13% total), primarily due to the distressing or negative nature of news content (43%), feelings of being overwhelmed or worn out by news (33%) and a declining interest in news (32%).

Qualitatively there were no strong opinions about a marked increase or decrease in news consumption. Instead, participants describe their habits as moderate, stable, or 'average'. The focus is on convenience and staying up to date, rather than actively seeking more or less news over time, with general stability in the volume of news consumed.

'Whatever I'm getting in the news, I'm already getting enough information, so I don't think I'm going to spend more time.'

(News neutrals, Male, age 35–44, Vic, Capital city)

Attitudes and motivations

News neutrals are generally less engaged and more ambivalent towards news than the average Australian adult, with a consistently higher proportion of neutral responses across all news-related statements. They also do not exhibit polarised attitudes towards news; instead, most responses fall within the range of agreement, neutrality or disagreement, with relatively few selecting the extremes of strong agreement or disagreement.

Role and purpose of news

Compared to the average Australian adult, news neutrals are less likely to view news as an integral part of their lives and do not feel compelled to stay constantly up to date. While many express interest in a broad range of topics (59% vs 74% total) and acknowledge the importance of remaining informed (57% vs 72% total), they do not necessarily feel disconnected when going without news for a few days (31% vs 46% total).

Their attitudes towards the role of news in shaping daily conversations or serving as a primary source for understanding current affairs are largely neutral (41% and 40% neither agree nor disagree, respectively). Similarly, they don't rely heavily on friends and family for information (19%) and are less likely than the average adult to actively share news stories with friends and family (36% vs 47% total), suggesting a general pattern of disengagement and passivity in news consumption. This is reinforced by their stronger tendency to believe they do not need to seek out news, expecting instead that important news will reach them without active effort (45% vs 38% total), as well as their comparatively lower interest in a wide range of news topics (59% vs 74%).

Qualitatively, news neutrals see news as a tool to stay informed about current affairs, maintain awareness of local and global events and gauge societal stability. For many, news serves as a 'pulse check' on the world, helping them avoid living in isolation from important developments. Some emphasise the importance of news for making informed decisions, while others treat it as background information or entertainment.

'I guess it's just to keep me up to date with what's going on in the world, I guess. Making sure that we're not going to end up in a war or war's going to get launched or whatever, or the world's not going to fall apart ... just checking on the stability of the rest of the world, I guess.'

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

Accessing and navigating news

News neutrals generally find news easy to access (73% vs 83% total) and feel they have the resources to access it (69% vs 80% total), though to a lesser extent than the total population. Confidence in spotting bias and misinformation in news is moderate and notably lower than the total population (55% vs 67% total). Although over one in five agree (18% vs 15% total) that they do not have time to access news, the substantial proportion of neutral responses (51% vs 23% total) may indicate uncertainty about whether time is a genuine barrier or if they struggle in identifying the underlying reasons for their ambivalence or lower engagement towards news.

Attitudes towards news comprehension are mixed. While 2 in 5 (42% vs 64% total) disagree that news stories are often difficult to understand, neutrality (40%) is equally prominent, indicating uncertainty rather than strong conviction. Confidence in spotting bias and misinformation is evident among over half of the news neutrals (55% vs 67% total), yet this and their general comprehension, remain lower than the total population. Willingness to pay for news content (16%) is also limited, although comparable to the total population.

Negative news

While some acknowledge that news can feel overly negative or distressing (45%) or overwhelming (39%), they are at levels comparable to the total population, though higher proportions of neutrality may suggest passive consumption rather than active avoidance of news.

Quality, diversity, credibility and relevance of news in Australia

Their views on the quality of journalism, professional news production, diversity of perspectives, range of coverage and trustworthiness of mainstream news in Australia tend to be mostly neutral, reflecting a sense of indifference rather than strong positive or negative opinions. News neutrals share the perception that news has become more biased than it used to be (53% vs 57% total) and view it as predominantly clickbait or sensational (53% vs 58% total), although these sentiments are less pronounced compared to the total population. News neutrals are more likely than the average Australian adult to agree that news does not cover issues that matter to them (27% vs 24% total), though the majority remain neutral.

News neutrals generally share similar views in qualitative interviews about the variety of news available in Australia. Most describe the news landscape as broad and accessible, with multiple sources and platforms to choose from. They often mention that if you want a range of perspectives, you can find them by seeking out different outlets or formats.

'I think there's a fair (level of) different varieties, because I know even just from watching the different news channels from 7, 9 and 10 and even ABC, they all have their own styles.'

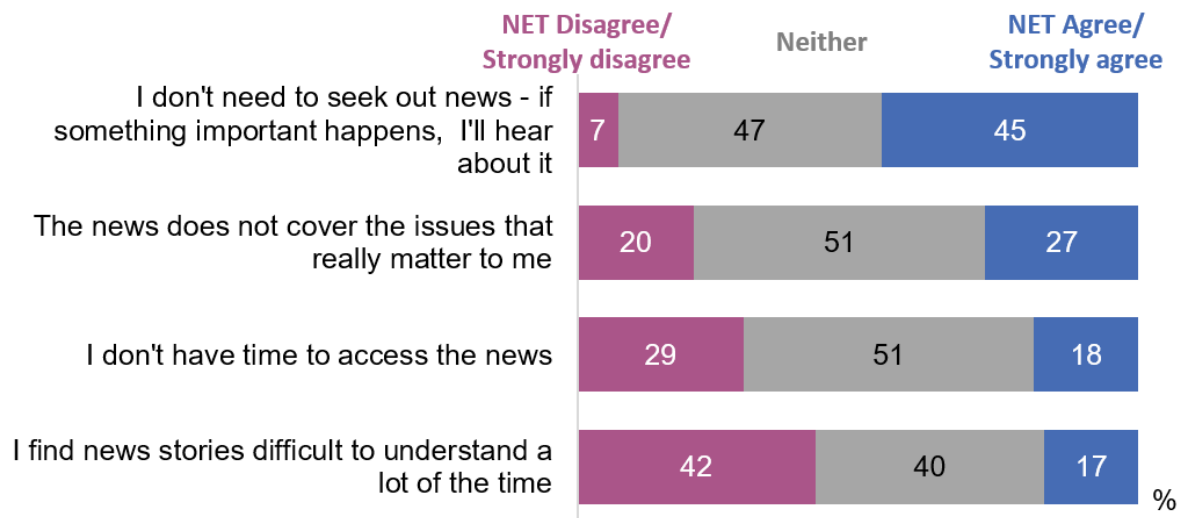
(News neutrals, Female, age 45–54, Vic, Rest of state)

However, some note that while there is a wide selection, much of the mainstream news can feel repetitive or focused on similar topics and a few express frustrations about the dominance of certain stories or the lack of depth in coverage. Others note the limitations around diversity in news:

'I feel like it's pretty limited. I feel like the nightly news bulletin, a lot of that is dedicated to sports, which doesn't necessarily fall into news for me, but I understand that would be good for other people. I think some of the things that get reported on tend to be around the same ... topic. So, I do wonder what else is happening in the rest of the world or in other states that we're not knowing about. Like sometimes there was an earthquake or a flood that's killed a whole bunch of people in the country and you hear about it like months after the fact because there's some other story that is 'quote unquote' sort of more important.'

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

Figure 16: Top news attitudes among news neutrals



Base: Total sample: news neutrals (n=1,367).

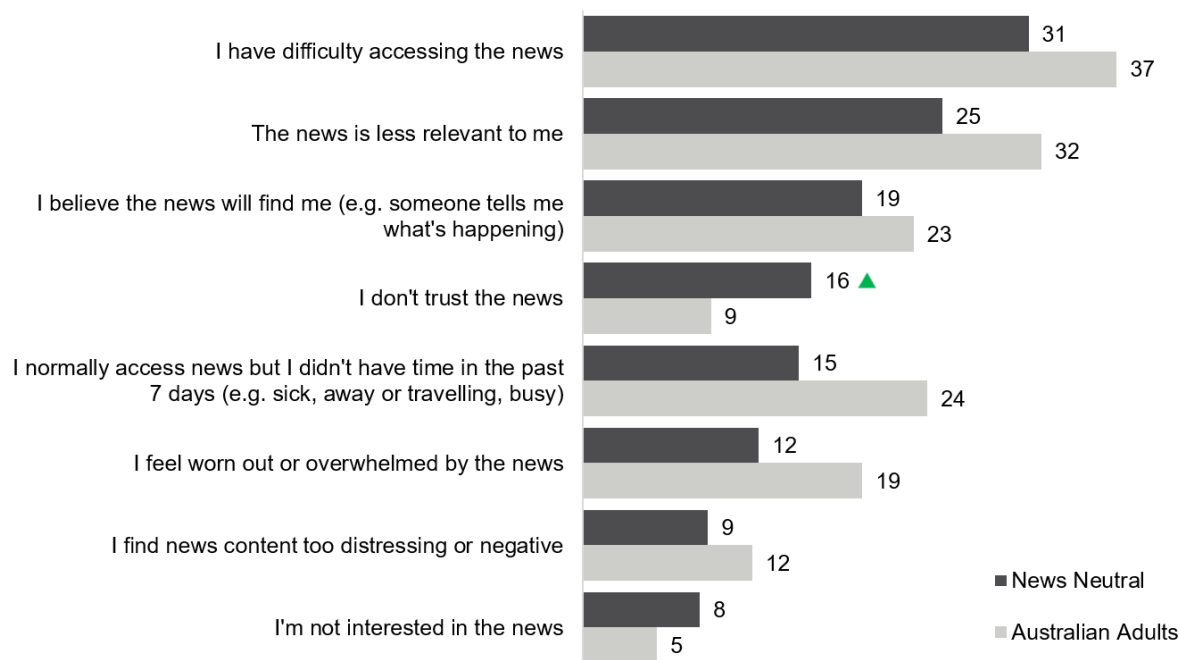
N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 1 to 3% for 'Not applicable', from 0% to <0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart

News barriers and opportunities

One in 10 (11%) news neutrals did not access any news in the past 7 days, notably higher than the average for Australian adults (8%). The most common reason was a lack of interest in news (31%), followed by finding news content too distressing or negative (25%) and feeling worn out by news (19%), although these levels are broadly in line with Australian average. News neutrals are more likely than the average Australian to cite limited time in the 7 days before the survey (16% vs 9% total) as a barrier to accessing news. Common reasons for not accessing news in the 7 days before the survey also reflect areas where news neutrals show significantly higher agreement than the overall Australian adult population, including the belief that important news will reach them without active effort and lack of time to engage with news.

Figure 17: Reasons for not accessing news in the 7 days before the survey among news neutrals



Base: Did not access news in the 7 days before the survey: news neutrals (n=150), Australian Adults (n=452).

N1b. What are the reasons you didn't access news in the past 7 days?

Note: Results for 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (0% for both).

Qualitative themes indicate there are various aspects of news that can limit consumption or provide opportunities to improve news for the news neutrals. These are discussed in more detail below.

Distressing news and opportunities for balance

Several participants express concern about the prevalence of negative, distressing, or graphic news content, particularly violent crime, war coverage and stories involving children. The perceived dominance of 'doom and gloom' stories often results in reduced engagement with news or selective consumption focusing on less distressing content to protect their emotional well-being or to shield children from inappropriate material. Many within this segment have children at home and are mindful of the potential impact such content may have on their children's mental health and wellbeing.

'I don't really like to have the news on with them (children) in the room because they'll tune in and they'll start listening and most of the time I don't find that it's appropriate for them.'

(News neutrals, Female, aged 35–44, SA, Capital city)

‘Since having a child, stuff that you really don't want your kids to see, actually now thinking about it, I stopped putting on the news at dinner time because of all that stuff, like footage from the war in Gaza and footage of the people being bombed and the kids injured and stuff and that was on the dinner time news, which is obviously not appropriate. I don't think it's appropriate for small kids to see, but also, I don't know if it's necessary for adults to see, I think you can still report on a story without having that really graphic distressing footage.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

Several participants suggest including more uplifting or ‘good news’ stories to balance out the negativity and make news less emotionally taxing, noting the dominance of ‘doom and gloom’ and distressing content, especially in TV news.

‘I think just maybe more of a mix of just start with something more positive... it gets a bit depressing with all this looking at it every night.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, SA, Capital city)

Navigating bias/misinformation and the need for transparency

While the majority of news neutrals reported being neutral about trusting mainstream news in the survey, qualitative interviews revealed a relative preference for mainstream news sources such as ABC, *The Guardian* and major TV networks, which are perceived as more trustworthy than other commercial outlets, even though all sources are acknowledged to carry some bias or commercial and political influence. There is awareness of the blurred lines between news and opinion or sponsored content, especially on commercial channels and certain online platforms. Some participants avoid sources perceived as less credible, like tabloid-style outlets (for example, *Daily Mail*), while others appreciate the quick notifications of breaking news from such sources despite their entertainment-focused content.

‘Sometimes with the commercial networks, it's hard to know what the motivation behind the story is. And sometimes I just don't have the brainpower to sit there and think critically about, why is this story being told? What's the angle? So I think I'd prefer the ABC because I feel like they're the most trustworthy. But sort of like I said before, I do think there's a little bit of clickbait and bait and switch sensationalism sort of creeping in. And I don't know whether or not that's because of how the internet is like, if that's more of an internet thing. I haven't really watched much of the nighttime news so I don't know if that is replicated in like the nightly news bulletins ... I think because it is not commercial. ABC is owned by the government, it's the public broadcast. I don't particularly think any of the newspapers are all that reputable, again, because it's sort of commercial interest, but I would rank them quite highly, for the same reason that there seems to be less commercial interest in it.’

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

Many news neutrals express a desire for news to be more objective, with clearer separation between reporting and commercial or political interests. Opportunities to address issues of bias and misinformation include calls for clearer source attribution, better fact checking and more transparency about the motivations behind stories (for example, political or commercial/monetary), so audiences can more easily assess credibility.

'I would make it so that the news was separate from any sort of commercial or political influence or agenda... so that you could be sure that you were getting an impartial objective view, not getting that opinion or influencing kind of coming through.'

(News neutrals, Male, age 35–44, Vic, Capital city)

Reduce sensationalism and clickbait

There is frequent frustration with sensationalist headlines and 'bait and switch' content tactics. Participants would prefer more straightforward, factual reporting that avoids exaggeration or unnecessary drama.

Improve accessibility and reduce paywalls

Some participants note that high-quality journalism is often locked behind paywalls, making it harder to access in-depth or local news. They recommend making trustworthy news more freely available and express frustration with paywalls:

'I believe it has, in general, I found it hard to find a free Australian news site that has stories, news stories that have enough depth.'

(News neutrals, Female, age 35–44, ACT, Capital city)

A day in the life: news neutrals

Segment 3: news neutrals - Meet Emma: The news-aware pragmatist

Meet Emma, a 39 year-old pragmatic news consumer, juggling the everyday demands of parenting, work and life's unpredictable pace. For Emma, news is a practical resource, important for staying connected but never the centrepiece of her day.

Emma's news habits revolve around her mobile phone. She checks headlines – including local updates and global affairs – several times a day, during breakfast, or while waiting at school pickup. Mobile news is her preferred format: it's quick, convenient and tailored to her interests. She'll browse ABC News for its neutrality, dip into commercial sites for variety and occasionally glance at international outlets like *The Guardian*. TV news is reserved for evenings if it fits the family schedule and radio is mostly incidental, picked up during errands or car rides.

Emma is mindful about what she exposes herself and her children to, steering clear of distressing or graphic content, especially stories involving violence or war; she appreciates 'good news' stories to counter this negativity. She's set up screen time limits and app blockers to keep her news consumption in check and she's not afraid to tune out altogether when the headlines get too heavy. Notifications and incidental exposure, like news popping up on social media or overheard on the radio, keep her informed, but she's wary of sensationalism, clickbait and politically biased reporting.

Time constraints and emotional fatigue are her biggest barriers and she's quick to disengage from sources that feel too commercial or agenda-driven. For Emma, news is about staying informed, not overwhelmed. She wants to know what's happening in the world, but she's careful to protect her own wellbeing and her family's, from the emotional toll of the news cycle.

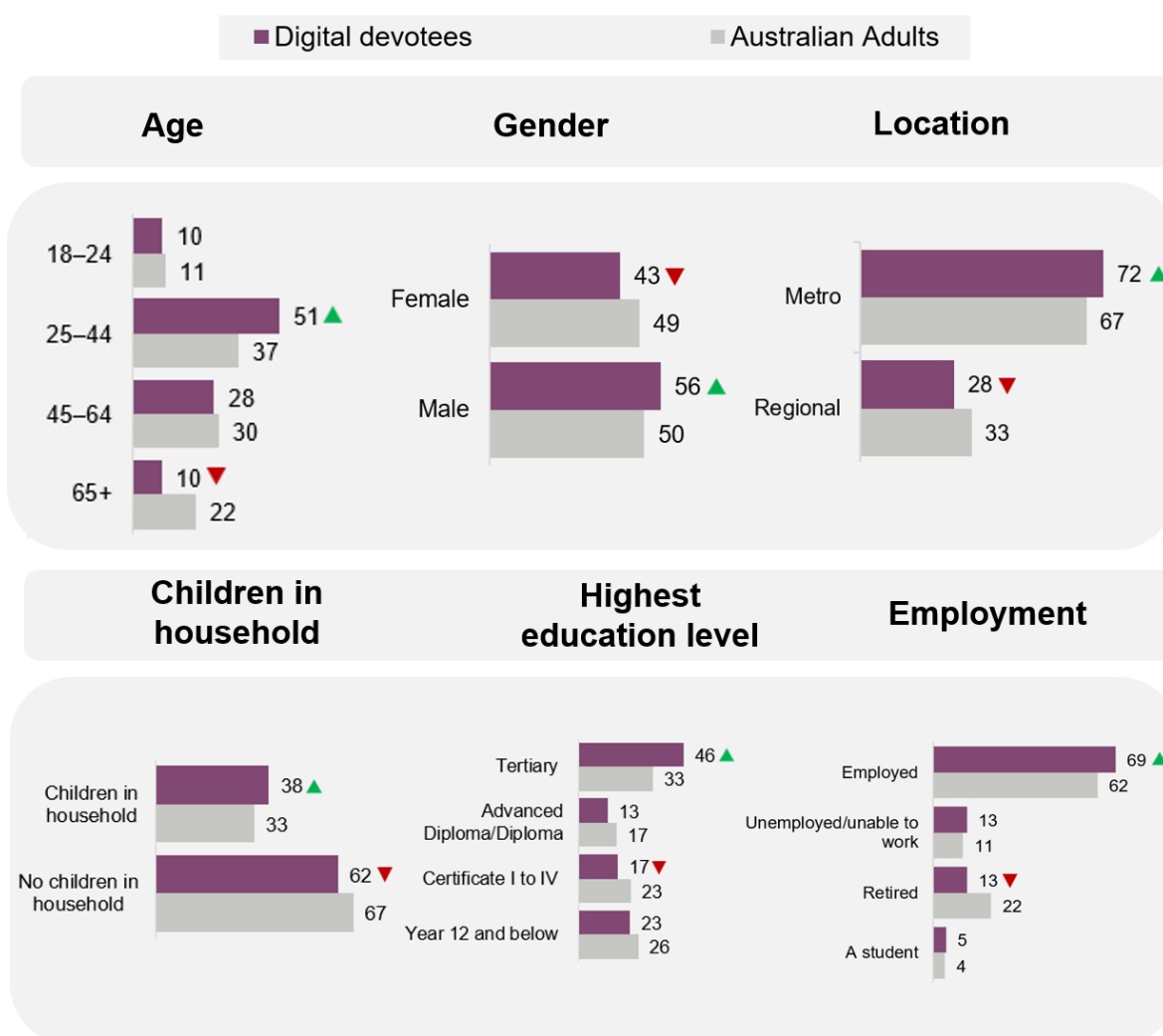
Segment 4: digital devotees

The 'digital devotees' segment makes up 15% of the Australian adult population and demonstrates a moderate level of news engagement, with less time spent accessing news per week than the average Australian (8.4 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total) and a tendency to seek news online. Their consumption tends to be balanced, driven by a low interest in news, a lack of trust in news and not having time to access news in the past 7 days despite normally doing so. They value timely access, breadth of coverage and credible information. While they are more inclined to see the importance of staying up to date with the news than the average Australian, they remain cautious that it may be biased or misinformed.

Demographic profile

- Digital devotees tend to skew younger to middle-aged, with a higher share aged 25–44 (51% vs 37% total).
- They are also more likely to be male (56% vs 50% total), have children in the household (38% vs 33% total), be employed (69% vs 62% total), reside in metropolitan areas (72% vs 67% total) and have received tertiary education (46% vs 33%).
- They also include a higher share of households earning \$150,000 or more annually (34% vs 24% total).

Figure 18: Digital devotees demographic profile



Base: Total sample: digital devotees (n=907), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

Nearly all (97% vs 92% total) digital devotees accessed news in the 7 days before the survey, averaging 2.4 platforms used per person per week, lower than the national average of 2.7.

Online channels were the dominant way in which digital devotees consumers accessed news, with nearly all using online formats in the 7 days (95% NET vs 72% total) before the survey. Their usage was led by news websites (70% vs 39% total), followed by social media (50% vs 43% total), search engines (29% vs 25% total), news aggregators (20% vs 14% total) and online newsletters (17% vs 12% total), all at higher rates than the total population.

While Facebook (47% vs 63% total) remained the most commonly accessed platform among this group for social media, they are less likely than the average Australian to use it for news. However, they show higher-than-average use of Reddit and X.

In contrast, they were far less likely to use traditional formats. Only a quarter accessed news via TV (23% NET vs 56% total), mainly through FTA TV (18% vs 51% total), with a small group using FTA catch-up TV (6% vs 10% total) or pay TV (1% vs 6% total). Similarly, one in 5 accessed news through audio formats (22% NET vs 43% total), with very low usage of AM/FM/DAB+ radio (8% vs 37% total). However, podcast use stood out at double the national rate (14% vs 7% total). A small minority used print newspapers (4% vs 15% total).

Figure 19: Sources of news accessed among digital devotees

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	Online NET	95%▲	Social media website/app (50%) ▲ Online news website/app (70%) ▲ Online search engine (29%) ▲ Online news aggregator/app (20%) ▲ Online newsletters (17%) ▲
	TV NET	23%▼	Free-to-air TV (18%) ▼ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (6%) ▼ Subscription/Pay TV service (1%) ▼
	Audio NET	22%▼	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (8%) ▼ Podcast (14%) ▲ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (3%) ▼
	Print	4%▼	Print newspaper (4%) ▼
			Average # sources accessed: 2.4▼

Base: Total sample: digital devotees (n=907).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown (<0.5% for 'Don't know' and 0% for 'Refused', 3% for 'None' and 1% for 'Other').

Qualitatively, digital devotees use a mix of news websites, social media platforms and report an interest in international sources, independent publications or journalists and community reporting (particularly community radio). Their approach is active, multi-sourced and highly digital, with a strong emphasis on breadth, credibility and engagement with commentary and analysis.

This segment relies heavily on digital outlets for news, including major Australian outlets and international sources. They frequently access news via websites and apps, often multiple times a day, such as via the ABC, *The Guardian*, *The Age*, *The Australian* and news.com.au.

'I would say the primary source of news I get is probably from online. So generally my go-tos are like the ABC or the Guardian and I probably check the news once a day.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

'From the French news, from France, I subscribe to the Age. I'll read news.com.au. That's more lighthearted trash really.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

Social media is a major platform for news discovery and discussion. It is seen as quick and convenient, but it's also approached with caution due to concerns about credibility and negativity. Social media platforms accessed include Reddit, Blue Sky, X (previously Twitter), YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. While Reddit is especially popular for its aggregation and commentary, platforms like Blue Sky and X (previously Twitter) are used to follow individual journalists and breaking stories.

'I use Reddit quite a lot to digest news. So in terms of social media, it's Reddit.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

'I was a big fan of following specific journalists on Twitter and seeing both the articles that they put out, but the articles that they shared. It has recently come back a bit as I've started to use Blue Sky again... I follow specific journalists and see what they share.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

'I get the [news] information from social media, mostly YouTube or TikTok, X and Instagram.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

The need for critical thinking when using social media as a source was important to this segment, though engaging with community commentary was also appealing, partially as a tool for validating personal perspectives.

'I really enjoy the comments, I love the commentary from people... I want to be validated like I want to see people being like, 'yeah, this is frustrating. I can't believe this is happening.' Yeah, I love that about Reddit.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Some also supplement their online news with community radio stations, especially while commuting.

'I listen to community radio. I'm not sure if that's non-traditional. I feel like it in the car. I'll listen to like Triple R or like PBS, which I like... Same with Triple J. I think has pretty good news coverage. Sometimes I listen to like AM radio in the car or if I listen to ABC Radio national.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

There is a strong preference for independent sources and following individual journalists, especially for balanced and in-depth reporting.

'For following individual journalists, it is much the same. I think that also solves a lot of that problem... it lets you know a bit more about the journalist and what they care about and what their values and such are.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

'Mostly try to read various smaller independent sources...I like following independent publications...I think that a lot of large media institutions...have become beholden to their shareholders or their owners or donors.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

News consumption patterns

Digital devotees show a sophisticated approach to navigating the digital news landscape. They are highly engaged with news and overwhelmingly prefer digital formats for their speed and convenience. Digital platforms such as news websites and social media are central, with immediacy and convenience driving habits. News is accessed via smartphone apps, computers and occasionally tablets. Some describe a routine shaped by social media algorithms, with news 'coming to them' via platforms like YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, especially in the evenings or during commutes.

The digital devotees' daily news routine is dynamic and layered, with early-morning updates, regular news check-ins throughout the day and evening deep-dives. Their routines are marked by frequent, intentional check-ins and a preference for immediacy, often across multiple devices and platforms. Many start their day early and immediately check the news online, while others tune in to international broadcasts or financial updates on TV before breakfast and then check for updates online throughout the day. News consumption continues in bursts, often during breaks or between tasks. Some rely on notifications or pop-ups to alert them to breaking stories.

'It's just easier [consuming news online]. I mean, you've always got your computer on now. It's not like you're going to go to the paper shop and buy an actual physical paper. It just turns up you can read it when it's convenient to you. It's just always there.'

'I kind of read a bit when I get up in the morning, I wake up early, I'll put on the finance ... Read the news while it's going on. What's happened with overseas overnight and then throughout the day, check what's going on. And then again at nighttime. So, it's just a constant.'

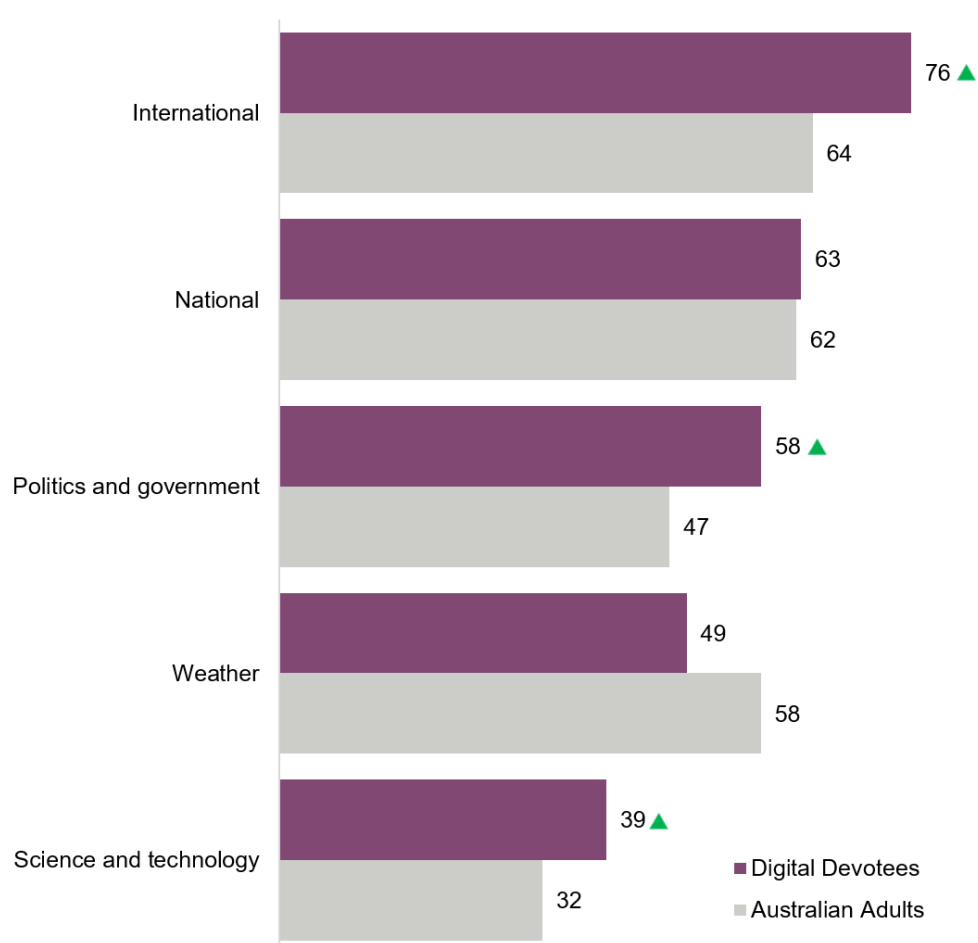
(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

'I do most of my news reading in sort of 2 ways. One is often when I hop in bed and but before I go to sleep, I will read news articles that I have opened throughout the day to read in the evening.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

Digital devotees selected an average of 5.3 news topic they prefer to follow, which is broadly in line with the total population. Compared with the average Australian, they are more likely to follow international news (76% vs 64% total), as well as news about politics and government (58% vs 47% total), science and technology (39% vs 32% total) and the environment and climate (31% vs 26% total). In contrast, they show lower-than-average interest in feel-good stories (17% vs 21% total), sports (30% vs 35% total), local community news (35% vs 44% total) and weather updates (49% vs 58% total).

Figure 20: Preferred news topics among digital devotees



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: digital devotees (n=884), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (<0.5% for 'Other' and 'Don't know', 0% for 'Refused'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

Just over a half (57%) of digital devotees reported consuming the same amount of news as last year, while 3 in 10 (29% vs 22% total) noted an increase in their news consumption, which is notably higher than the average Australian. Fewer consumers in this segment reduced their news consumption compared with the average Australian (14% vs 17%).

Among those who did, the main reasons for lower engagement were feeling overwhelmed by the volume of news (37%), finding news content too distressing (36%) and a declining interest in news (26%), consistent with the top reasons cited across other segments.

Qualitative exploration reflects the reasoning behind increases in consumption for this segment - some describe a shift in their perception of how news affects their lives. Recent global events, regulatory changes and political developments have made news feel more directly relevant, prompting the segment to pay closer attention.

'I believe the news, whether you like it or not, it will directly or indirectly ... affect you. So like geopolitics, then there will be a lot of regulations also ... because of the geopolitical news or because of the news then there will be a change in the regulation, which will affect us indirectly or directly.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

For some, increased news consumption is simply the result of new habits formed over time, especially after living abroad or experiencing major life events.

'I think it started mostly when I lived in France for a long time, so I'd start reading the Australian news a lot and then it became the habit to just read that. And even once I moved back to Australia.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

For digital devotees, news plays an active and central role in daily life. They are more likely than the average Australian to say it is important to stay up to date with what is happening (83% vs 72% total) and to view news as their go-to for understanding current issues (65% vs 58% total). They rely less on friends and family to form opinions (13% vs 17% total) and are more likely to feel out of touch if they go without news for a few days (54% vs 46% total).

News also features strongly in their social interactions. They are more likely than the average Australian to enjoy sharing news stories with friends and family (52% vs 47% total) and to say the news forms the basis of many of their daily conversations (37% vs 33% total).

Qualitatively, news plays a central and multifaceted role in the lives of digital devotees. It is primarily a tool for staying informed and connected with local events and global developments. Many describe news as essential to their daily routine, helping them feel linked to the wider world and enabling them to participate meaningfully in conversations and civic life.

News also serves as a source of knowledge and understanding, shaping opinions, informing decisions and providing context for both personal and professional life.

It gives me knowledge and understanding. I feel like it helps me understand issues and ... as a young person in Australia, you have to be. You have to understand what's going on in the world. I think you can't be ignorant to it anymore. So, I find it really important, you know?'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

News consumption is also tied to personal interests or professional needs such as tracking business developments or political changes that might affect them directly. Others see it as a way to engage in discussion and stay relevant in social situations.

Sometimes news is also a means of relaxation or curiosity, a way to learn about the world, discover new topics, or satisfy a personal habit of information-seeking.

'[News gives] good points of discussion. You know, you can't always say 'how about them Broncos'. I mean, it's pretty dull. So, it's just always good to be informed, to have a different opinion on things.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

Digital devotees show a broader-than-average appetite for news. They are more likely than the total population to say they are interested in a wide range of news topics (82% vs 74% total), even though the number of news topics they prefer to follow is similar to the total population.

Qualitative findings reflect this and digital devotees display strong engagement with news, seeing it as essential for staying informed and connected to the world. They tend to be regular, sometimes even 'addicted' consumers, motivated by a mix of personal interest, a sense of civic responsibility and a desire to understand both local and global events.

'It keeps me up to date, keeps me linked to what's going on in the world, I feel more connected to what's happening. Sometimes too connected in the sense that I do sometimes find myself becoming overwhelmed by what's happening in the world and sometimes I try to switch off, but I'm a little bit addicted to the news, to be honest.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Accessing and navigating news

Digital devotees are confident and proactive in navigating the increasingly digitised news landscape. While their perceived resourcefulness and ease of access is similar to the total population, they feel more confident in spotting bias and misinformation (73% vs 67% total) and are more inclined to consult multiple sources before trusting a story (63% vs 53% total). Only a small group report finding news stories difficult to understand (7% vs 12% total).

Negative news

Two in 5 digital devotees find news too negative or distressing (38%) and a similar proportion often feel overwhelmed by the constant stream of news (39%). These perceptions are broadly in line with the Australian population.

Digital devotees are highly aware of the prevalence of negativity in news and many describe its impact on their news consumption habits and emotional wellbeing. Several participants acknowledge that negative or distressing news is common, especially on social media and platforms like Reddit and that it can be both compelling and overwhelming.

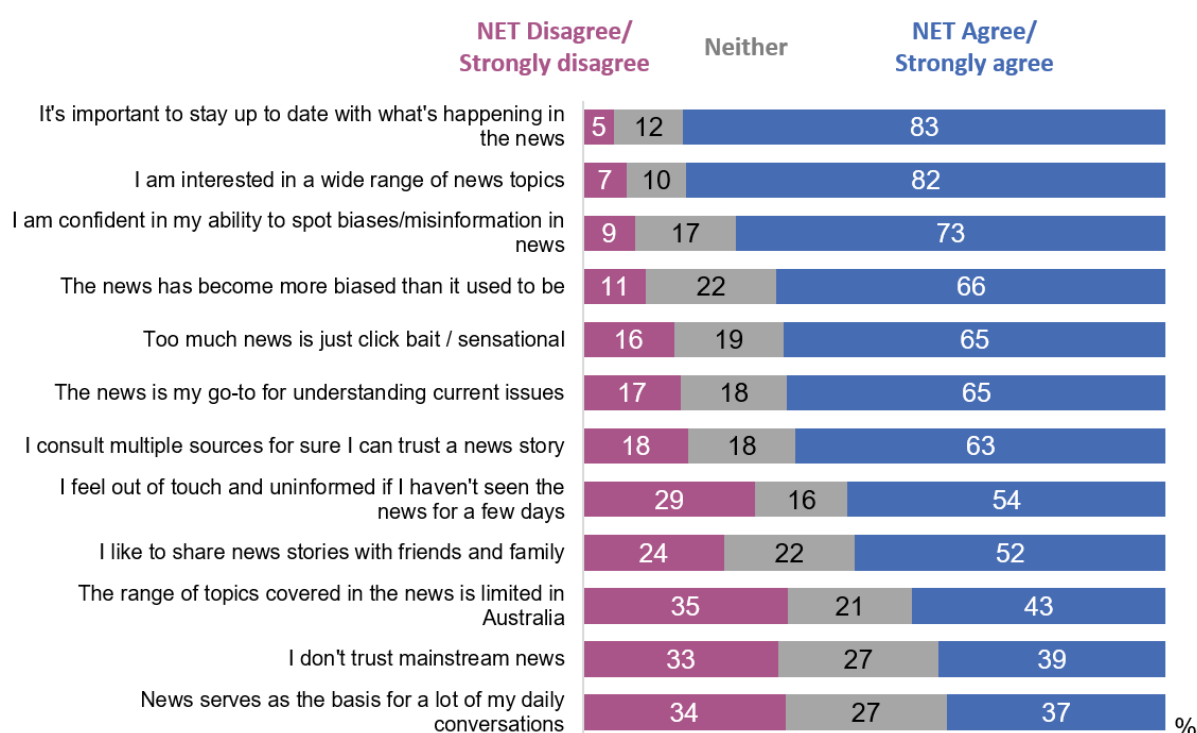
'There's a lot of negative news and I understand that negativity probably gets clicks. I get how that works and I'm definitely stuck before it, you know? ... Definitely makes me sort of more likely to click and have a read, 100%.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

Quality and diversity of news in Australia

On their assessments of news quality and diversity, digital devotees sit close to the total population. Where they stand out is in having a more critical view of breadth and balance. They are more likely to believe the news has become increasingly biased (66% vs 57% total) and clickbait or sensational (65% vs 58% total). They are also more likely to feel that the range of topics covered is limited in Australia (43% vs 36% total), which may be due to their interest in a wide range of topics. Trust in mainstream news is comparatively lower, with more saying they do not trust it (39% vs 29% total) and fewer relying solely on mainstream outlets for their news (34% vs 41% total).

Figure 21: Top news attitudes among digital devotees



Base: Total sample: digital devotees (n=907).

N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from <0.5 to 2% for 'Not applicable', from 0% to <0.5% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

Digital devotees see Australia as having a wide range of news options (especially online) but recognise that traditional media is concentrated among a few major players. They generally find the quality of news to be good, especially from trusted or independent sources, but remain cautious about bias, sensationalism and the influence of commercial interests.

'I think it's pretty reliable. There's definitely some ... platforms that are less reliable in the sense that like there's powerful, powerful players where they're sort of like trying to push an agenda to some degree, I don't think it's as bad as it is like in the [United] States. I think Australia is pretty good in that regard.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

News barriers and opportunities

A small group of digital devotees (3% vs 8% total) did not access any news in the 7 days before the survey.³ Among this group, common reasons include lack of time in the past week before the survey, lack of interest and trust. Qualitatively, this segment reported specific barriers to news access and opportunities for improving news, which have been outlined below.

Scheduling and lack of time

A major barrier for this segment is simply finding the time to engage with news, especially given the volume and frequency of updates online. Many participants mention that while news is always accessible, their ability to consume it is limited by their daily schedules.

The sheer volume of news, especially online and on social media, can be distracting and make it difficult to focus or know what's important. The constant stream of negative or distressing news can also become overwhelming, leading some to intentionally disengage or limit their news intake to protect their mental health or limit the mental load.

Stronger regulation and verification of social media sources

Concerns about the reliability and bias of news sources (especially on social media) make some in this segment hesitant to trust or engage with certain content. This leads to extra effort spent verifying information, which can be a barrier.

'It's constant bombardment ... if it's a newspaper, you can read start to end and that's that, you put it down and leave it. Whereas online, it's an endless news cycle, which is a distraction, I guess.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

To address misinformation and the prevalence of anonymous or unverified accounts on social media, some suggested that Australia could introduce stronger regulations to verify the credibility of online news sources and reduce the spread of online hoaxes.

'It will be good that Australia has a regulation in order to let's say background check this account. Or this media, whether they're actually credible in promoting a statement or in shopping, in news, so that it will reduce the amount of misleading information.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

Increased funding and support for independent, public media

Participants value independent and public broadcasters like the ABC and believe that increased funding and protection of their independence would improve the quality and diversity of news. They see public media as a safeguard against commercial and political pressures.

'I just want the ABC to keep getting funded, I don't want them to lose their funding. Like ... if we have an election in future and someone gets in and the ABC gets defunded, that would be bad for me. I would hate that.'

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, Vic, Capital city)

³ Due to the small sample size, quantitative data for reasons for not accessing news in the past 7 days has not been charted.

Some interviewees believe that grants or other support for small, independent news organisations would foster higher quality, more diverse journalism and reduce the dominance of large media corporations.

‘The government should be empowering and supporting independent, high-quality journalism because I think a better informed populace makes a stronger, better democracy that then does better in all sorts of ways.’

(Digital devotees, Male, age 25–34, NSW, Capital city)

More in-depth and balanced reporting

There is a desire for news that is less sensational and more analytical or balanced. Some participants want more in-depth coverage and less focus on clickbait or superficial stories.

‘There’s no real in-depth reporting. There’s... no analysis at all. Just cheap.’

(Digital devotees, Male, age 35–44, Qld, Capital city)

A day in the life: digital devotees

Segment 4: digital devotees – Meet Tom: The savvy news consumer

Tom is a thirty-something professional, living in suburban Melbourne in a double income, child-free household. His daily rhythm is punctuated by a steady stream of news updates. From the moment he wakes up, he immediately checks his phone for the latest headlines from ABC, *The Guardian* and Reddit. Throughout the day, he dips in and out of news websites, browsing business sections and world news, or catching up on French broadcasts, a habit formed during his time living overseas. He tunes into community radio during his commute home. For Tom, news is both habitual and intentional, a way to stay connected to the world, understand political shifts and keep tabs on issues that might affect his work or personal life.

Tom is a discerning consumer, preferring sources he trusts for their credibility and depth. He’s wary of commercial TV news, which he finds too localised and lacking in analysis and he’s sceptical of sensationalism and clickbait, especially on social media, where anonymous accounts and algorithm-driven feeds can muddy the waters. While he appreciates the immediacy and convenience of digital platforms, he’s careful to cross-check stories, seeking out multiple perspectives and verifying facts when something seems off. He values written news for its clarity and permanence, believing it’s easier to compare and confirm details than with fleeting video or audio snippets.

Despite his high engagement, Tom is mindful of the emotional toll that negative news can take. He admits to feeling overwhelmed at times, especially when global events dominate the headlines and he’s learned to step back when the news cycle becomes too distressing. Still, he believes it’s important to stay informed. Tom’s ideal news landscape would be one where public broadcasters like ABC are well-funded, independent journalism thrives and there’s robust regulation to curb misinformation from unreliable online sources.

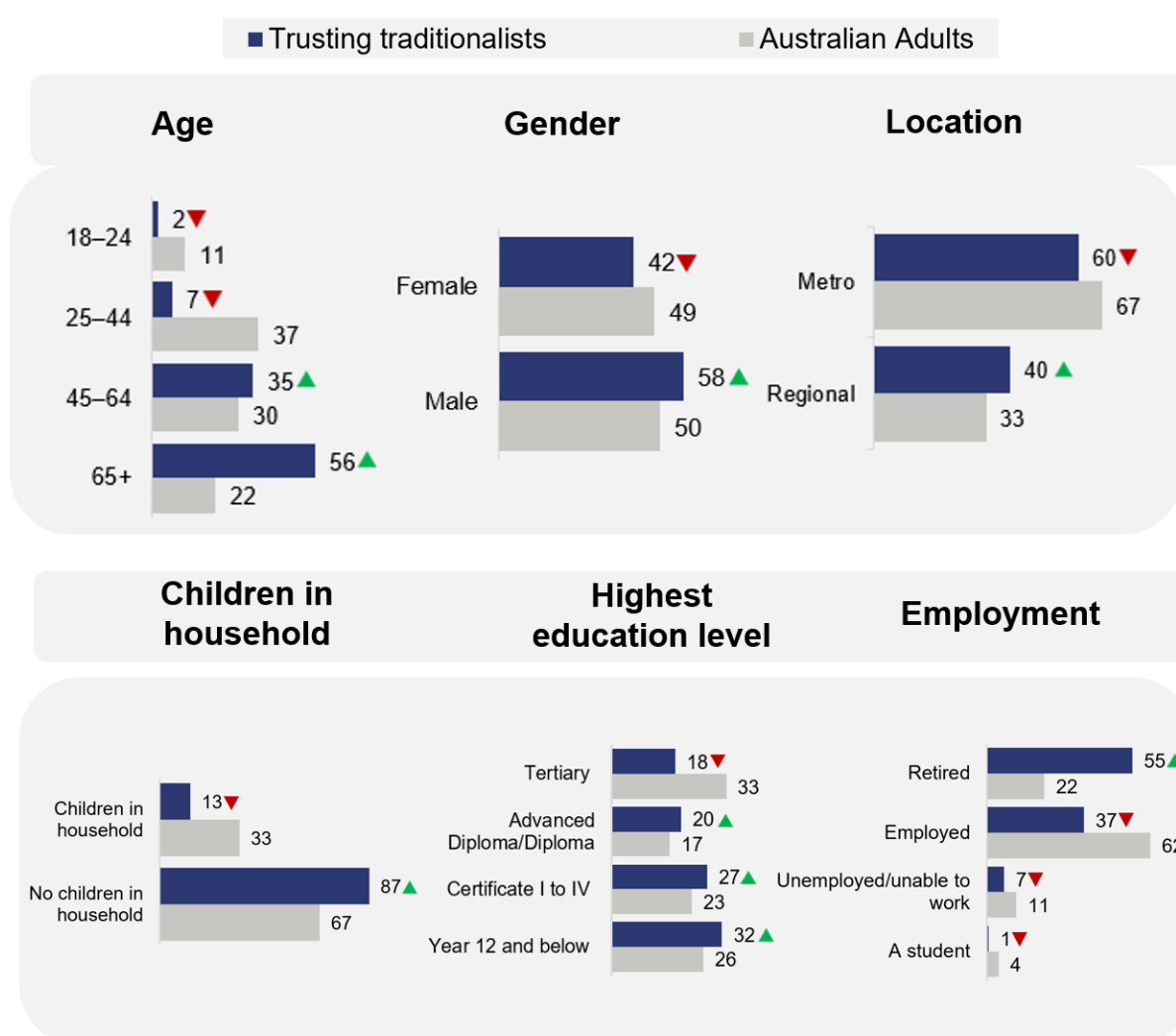
Segment 5: trusting traditionalists

The 'trusting traditionalists' segment makes up 20% of the Australian adult population and consumes a high volume of news (14 hours per week per person on average vs 9.2 total) across a wide range of topics. Trusting traditionalists are a highly routine-driven segment, relying mainly on traditional broadcast media such as FTA TV, supplemented by regular use of radio and print newspapers. For them, news consumption is about maintaining a steady, reliable flow of information that supports their everyday lives and maintaining a stable sense of community and belonging. They show strong trust in mainstream journalism and a broad appetite for information across many topics, supported by high confidence in their ability to access and interpret news.

Demographic profile

- Trusting traditionalists tend to skew to middle-aged and older, with a higher share aged 45-64 (35% vs 30% total) and 65+ (56% vs 22% total).
- They are also more likely to be male (58% vs 50% total), with no children in the household (87% vs 67% total) and live in regional areas (40% vs 33% total).
- They contain the highest proportion of retirees (55% vs 22% total) of any segment and the lowest proportion of those with a tertiary education (18% vs 33% total).
- They include the highest share of lower-income households, with 41% earning \$60,000 or less annually (vs 27% total).

Figure 22: Trusting traditionalists demographic profile



Base: Total sample: trusting traditionalists (n=1,160), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

All trusting traditionalists accessed news in the 7 days before the survey, averaging 2.6 platforms used per person per week, which is broadly in line with the national average.

Trusting traditionalists primarily accessed news through TV in the 7 days before the survey, at far higher rates than any other segment (96% NET vs 56% total). Their TV news consumption is mainly driven by free-to-air broadcasts (96% vs 51% total), with additional use of pay TV (8% vs 6% total), both above the total population. A small group uses FTA catch-up TV (5% vs 10% total), a lower rate than the total population, reflecting a stronger preference for live, traditional TV formats.

This group presented the lowest access to social media for news in the 7 days before the survey of any segment (9%) and well below the total population (43%). Their minimal reliance on social media for news reflects their overall low social media engagement. They have the lowest overall use of social media in the 6 months before the survey (93% vs 98% total), engaging with fewer social platforms than the average Australian (2.7 vs 4.1).

Figure 23: Sources of news accessed among trusting traditionalists

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	TV NET	96%▲	Free-to-air TV (96%) ▲ Subscription/Pay TV service (8%) ▲ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (5%) ▼
	Audio NET	58%▲	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (57%) ▲ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (2%) ▼ Podcast (<0.5%) ▼
	Online NET	45%▼	Online news website/app (25%) ▼ Social media website/app (9%) ▼ Online search engine (8%) ▼ Online news aggregator/app (6%) ▼ Online newsletters (6%) ▼
	Print	38%▲	Print newspaper (38%) ▲
			Average # sources accessed: 2.6

Base: Total sample: trusting traditionalists (n=1,160).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown (0% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused', 0% for 'None' and <0.5% for 'Other').

Qualitative interviews also reinforce their heavy reliance on traditional FTA TV as their primary news source. TV is largely preferred as it integrates easily into daily routines and provides curated, easy-to-digest news that requires minimal cognitive effort to engage with.

'It's just one click away and it's on the times when it's on. Suit me when we're sitting down to have our meal. We'll sit at the table and have our meal and the TV's in that room.'
(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

'Normally TV is preferred. Because then I can kick back and relax watching it. It's just easier. You're not having a brain strain too much for researching stuff and sort of costing more with being online and stuff.'
(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Their preferred news formats also align with their wider viewing habits. Trusting traditionalists watch significantly more TV content overall than the average Australian (91% vs 68% total) and have the lowest share of online video viewing of any segment (56% vs 69% total). They also spend far more time watching FTA TV than other Australians, averaging 13 hours in the 7 days before the survey compared with 5.1 hours nationally, the highest of all segments. The preference for TV over online formats among trusting traditionalists may also reflect long-established media habits more typical of older generations and broader age-related differences in how news and screen content are consumed.

'I know both my daughters who have young families, they will not watch the news on live TV at all. I mean, they're a different generation, of course they don't watch TV at all. They'll get all their news from their phones.'
(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Audio is also a significant part of their news consumption, with 3 in 5 (58% NET vs 43% total) accessing news in an audio format in the 7 days before the survey, which is higher than the total population. This is driven primarily by use of AM/FM/DAB+ radio (57% vs 37% total), which remains their dominant audio source. Other audio platforms show comparatively lower uptake, including radio online (2% vs 6% total) and podcasts (<0.5% vs 7% total). Qualitative data suggests that radio is commonly used as a secondary news platform, although consumption is generally passive in nature, with news typically heard in the background while driving, rather than being intentionally sought out.

'I have the ABC radio on in the car, so if I am in the car and the news comes on, I do hear it, but I rarely intentionally search for it.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Print newspapers also remain an important news source for trusting traditionalists, with usage more than double the total population (38% vs 15% total) and the highest of all segments.

In contrast, trusting traditionalists are the least likely to use online formats for news among all segments, with over 2 in 5 (45% NET vs 72% total) having accessed news via an online format. A quarter (25% vs 39% total) use news websites to access news and one in ten (9% vs 43% total) use social media. A small group use search engines (8% vs 25% total), news aggregators (6% vs 14% total) and online newsletters (6% vs 12% total), which were all lower than the total population.

Qualitative interviews reveal that online news is accessed more selectively, primarily to seek additional detail or follow-up on stories first encountered on TV or radio. Its appeal lies in the flexibility and control it offers, allowing consumers to browse news at any time and from any location and to the depth of information desired.

'[I use] TV mainly. But then if there's stuff that they sort of don't elaborate enough on, then I'll Google to try and find out more information ... Sometimes they don't give you enough information about stuff [on TV]. It outlines stuff and then makes you more curious so that you will go looking online.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'If I can hear something on the radio about something that's occurred, then when I get an opportunity, when I stop or I would have a look at it online and see what it's all about.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

Reflecting their low access rates, participants' exposure to news on social media is largely passive and incidental, with most saying they rarely seek out current affairs on these platforms and do not view them as a reliable source. Some follow professional news accounts (for example, Seven, Nine, WIN, 10), but mainly for occasional updates while scrolling rather than deliberate news consumption.

'I don't follow any influencers...I'd follow the local win news and 10s, sevens and nines ... Things will pop up on like Facebook from news channels ... It comes up on the feed if it's something that's a new news story type thing, if it's something more important type thing that they put on ...'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Their low reliance on social media for news may be linked to their strongly negative views towards news on social media, describing it as sensationalised, inaccurate and sometimes completely fabricated. Several also mentioned that algorithms manipulate what users see, creating an unbalanced and repetitive echo chamber that often bears little resemblance to reality.

'I use Facebook, but you know most of it is sensationalised and I don't know if it's because I looked at one story about the royal family and now I get a feed of them every day and none of it's true ... Most of the news that's available on Facebook is made-up or sensationalised..'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

'[My sister] sent me a text message to ask because I had read on Facebook that the government was going to introduce a curfew for drivers over 17 at 7:00 at night until 7:00 the next morning and I said to her it's not true'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

Public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS are preferred and trusted by nearly all participants from this segment who were interviewed, which they see as more credible, factual and balanced, largely due to the established brand reputation and public funding. Commercial channels such as 7, 9 and 10 are also widely used due to habits, familiarity with presenters and convenient time slots, though often viewed as more sensational, biased and commercially driven.

'It is sensationalised to a certain extent. I think on pay TV to get more people to view it, whereas with the ABC, we pay for that in our taxes. It's paid for by the government. So it tends to be a truer representation of what actually happened ... It certainly does matter that people watch Channel 2 or ABC, but they're not entirely reliant on having X amount of people watch it.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

'Some of the free to air news broadcasts from the commercial channels are a bit lightweight and trivial or biased towards particular things and I like the independence and balanced perspective of multiple local and overseas sources.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'I don't think it's much difference between the actual news presented by channel Nine or 7 or ten. They all had the same stories and they're all getting it from the same sources. So they tend to present it in the same way. So yeah, it's all to do with the actual personalities on the TV itself.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

However, a recurring theme from the interviews is the perception that mainstream TV news is often superficial, providing only headlines with limited depth or context, which in turn prompts consumers to need to consult multiple outlets or search online to piece together the full picture.

'They don't go into depth anymore. For instance, if you talk about any wars overseas, we don't hear much more news about the Ukraine, Russian war that seems to have been forgotten. We hear a little bit more about the Israeli Gaza war, but only when one of them attacks the other one. We're not hearing the humanitarian side of those conflicts and that's something that the news stations out here just cannot cover in the short amount of time that they devote to those stories, they'd rather just tell you 30 seconds about them and then go on and tell you about a dog that was missing or a dog that needs a home or something like that. So, all the stories that I'm hearing on the mainstream TV stations are very superficial. They're just the headlines and they're not delving right down into the storylines.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

News consumption patterns

Trusting traditionalists like to stay informed about local, national and global events, however the specific topics they engage with and the depth of engagement vary based on personal interests and relevance. Some take a generalist approach, keeping up with a broad range of issues at a high level without delving deeply into any single topic. Others gravitate towards areas of long-standing interest, such as politics or sport, alongside their broader current affairs consumption.

Engagement with political news appears more polarised among interview participants. A small minority follow politics closely, often driven by long-standing personal interest or professional backgrounds with a close tie to politics. In contrast, many others are put off by political news, often due to its perceived negativity, bias, or repetitiveness and therefore engage only minimally or actively avoid altogether.

'Just to you know, observe the general landscape, rather than digging in terribly deeply into any one topic or area, very much a generalist view, I should say ... Interested at the high level about broad reaching situations and scenarios. Rarely do I delve into much depth things that are impact quality and type of lifestyle that we have here in Australia or more likely in the area where I live ... I'd say [the amount of news I consume is] reasonably significant, although it's often at a superficial level.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'I generally describe myself as a political tragic. I've worked for the public service for many years and so I particularly am interested in politics, but also worldwide events and news of the day, what's happening overseas. I also read a fair bit about Finance and what's happening in Australia as far as finance is concerned, I often listen to the budget.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

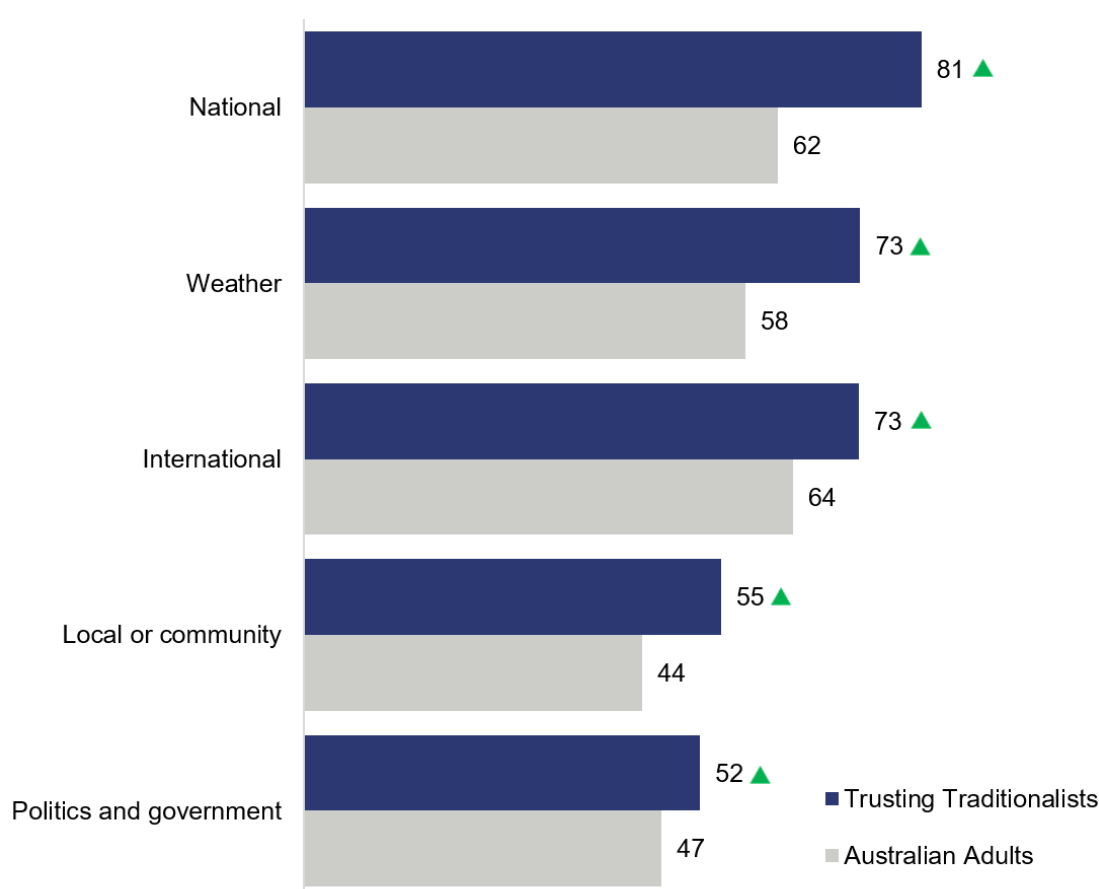
'I guess it just keeps me up to date with what's going on in the world. Politics don't really interest me unless it's election time ... I tend to switch off with any politics that comes on board some American politics. I certainly immediately switch off when I hear anything about that because you know the leader over there at the moment, you know, I'm just not interested in that sort of politics ... The weather is a big factor in the news that I like to keep up to date with and know what's going on there around the country.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Trusting traditionalists follow a wider mix of news topics compared to the average Australian (5.9 topics on average vs 5.2 total).

Their strongest interest is in national news (81% vs 62% total) and they have above-average engagement with weather (73% vs 58% total), international news (73% vs 64%), local or community news (55% vs 44% total), politics and government (52% vs 47% total), sports (45% vs 35% total) and business and financial news (31% vs 26% total). The area where they are less engaged is entertainment and celebrity news, which they access or follow at lower rates than the total population (15% vs 19% total). News preferences appear to vary by location, with those in regional areas more likely to follow local or community news (67% vs 46% of those living in capital cities), while those in capital cities tend to follow sports and business (49% vs 39%) or financial news (36% vs 23%).

Figure 24: Preferred news topics among trusting traditionalists



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: trusting traditionalists (n=1,160), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (<0.5% for 'Other' and 0% for 'Refused' and 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

Trusting traditionalists' news consumption is fairly consistent, with the highest share of any segment reporting that they are consuming about the same amount of news as last year (80% vs 61% total) and far fewer indicating any increase (13% vs 22%) or decrease (7% vs 17%) in the volume they consume. Interview participants' reflections aligned closely with survey results, showing that their overall volume of news consumption has remained largely unchanged from last year. For most, news is firmly entrenched in long-established daily routine and stays relatively consistent over the years.

'We watch channel 7 and sunrise in the morning from 7:00 to 9:00 and then we'll watch the news on Channel 7 often afternoon from 6 to seven ... that hasn't changed over many, many years on.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Among the small group who reduced their news consumption this year, the leading reasons were finding news content too distressing or negative (56%), a declining interest in news (36%) and feeling overwhelmed by news (34%). A few participants reported slight shifts in the types and topics of news consumed due to changes in life circumstances and life stages, but the total amount of news they consume remains high and consistent.

'I never used to watch regional stuff when I was living down in the city, but now I live in regional area. I watch the regional one too to keep updated on everything.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'I'm not terribly interested in local politics, state level. It's more at the national level and the international level. Whereas before [retirement], I had to keep abreast of everything ... I think it's more about what I'm looking at that has changed a little bit. I don't spend a lot of time looking at state level politics or state level news. I'm more interested in the wider picture.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

For trusting traditionalists, news is a core part of daily life and social interactions. They are much more likely than the average Australian to say it is important to stay up to date with what is happening in the news (91% vs 72% total) and to treat news as their main way of understanding current issues (78% vs 58% total) rather than relying on friends and family to form opinions on current issues (6% vs 17% total). They also show a strong emotional reliance on news, with two-thirds saying they feel out of touch and uninformed if they have not seen the news for a few days (66% vs 46% total).

Trusting traditionalists are habitual news consumers who consume news on a daily basis and see it as an important way to stay informed about what's happening locally, nationally and globally. Many rely on news to understand events that may affect their daily lives or communities, while others use it to stay mentally active, informed about politics and connected to broader societal issues.

'Just to keep myself informed of what's happening anywhere around Australia, the world, my area local area. Just knowing what's happening, whether there's centres of being at risk of something happening, like with criminal activity in the area and that sort of stuff ... I prefer to watch it every day'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

News also plays a social role and news stories usually come up organically in conversation. They are more likely than the average Australian to enjoy sharing news stories with friends and family (57% vs 47% total) and to say that news forms the basis of many of their daily conversations (39% vs 33% total).

Similar to survey results, many in this segment mentioned coming across news passively and incidentally through conversations with friends and family members. As older and well-informed members of their households, trusting traditionalists often see themselves as the primary news explainer within the family. One interview participant described being the person others, particularly younger family members who consume less news, turn to for clarification, context or opinions on current issues.

'You know certainly discussions with family and friends about events that are occurring in the world and how they feel about it ... We do discuss it with family and friends, but generally, I'm the one that they come to ask questions about what's happening ... like I said with my daughter, she doesn't watch the news or read newspapers or look it up online. She'll come and ask me, so she gets my opinion out of that.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

Trusting traditionalists are highly engaged news consumers with broad interests. They are more likely than the typical Australian adult to say they are interested in a wide range of news topics (90% vs 74% total), which is reflected in the greater variety of topics they typically follow.

Accessing and navigating news

Trusting traditionalists approach news consumption with greater confidence and capability than the average Australian. They feel well equipped to access the news they want, supported by strong perceptions of ease (93% vs 83% total) and resource availability (87% vs 80% total). They are also more likely than average to believe they can identify bias or misinformation in news with great confidence (73% vs 67% total), reflecting good perceived media literacy in navigating news.

Negative news

Trusting traditionalists are less sensitive to negative or distressing news content than the average Australian and emotional strain is less pronounced for this group. Fewer say they find news too negative or distressing (27% vs 42% total) and they are less likely to feel overwhelmed or worn out by the constant stream of news (22% vs 37% total).

This sentiment was also reflected in qualitative discussions, where participants generally tolerate negative or distressing news and see it as an unavoidable, even necessary, part of staying informed. Although some noted that constant negativity can be emotionally draining, leading them to consciously avoid engaging with negative news in depth or to occasionally disengage in the short term, it did not cause them to avoid news consumption in the long term.

'I'd rather be informed about if there's negative or impacting stuff in case it happens to me, or it can affect me or any of my family members.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'I tend to note the headlines [of negative content] but not focus on them terribly much ... it sort of reinforces an opinion that the world has some awful people in it. I don't see the value. So for certain political related articles, the more you follow particular threads of political discussion, in my view, you're rewarding those threads of discussion by participation and it has an encouragement effect to what I think is actually unacceptable behaviour or attitudes.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

'Well, it does mean that I lessen it if it's all just a bit over the doom and gloom, I'll decrease the amount that I see. I might not watch it for a night or two.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Quality, diversity, credibility and relevance of news in Australia

Trusting traditionalists hold some of the most positive views of Australian professional news across all segments. They are far more likely than the average Australian to rate the quality of Australian professional news sources being high (65% vs 44% total) and to believe that Australia has some of the world's best journalists (56% vs 39% total). They are also less sensitive to bias or sensationalism in news than the average Australian, being less likely to agree that news has become more biased than it used to be (47% vs 57% total) or that it is just clickbait or sensational (38% vs 58% total). While the survey suggests that trusting traditionalists are more likely to believe that Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues (58% vs 38% total), qualitative interviews revealed that many participants also expressed a desire for broader diversity in viewpoints, more multicultural content and greater representation among journalists in mainstream news.

'Even though we're a multicultural nation, we don't get a lot of multicultural news, it's all white Australian news ... We don't hear a lot about Africa and Asia and some Arab sort of news at all. They can source that from their own SBS or whatever it is in their own language if they want to. The whole media presence in Australia is definitely an English white Caucasian sort of target audience. I think even the people that appear on TV, it doesn't represent what the average Australian is now.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

In terms of relevance, although only a small group (7% vs 24% total), the smallest of all segments, agreed that the news does not cover issues that matter to them, this concern also appeared in the qualitative interviews. Participants noted that mainstream news can feel dominated by international stories, while national and especially local issues that affect Australians' daily lives are often under-reported.

'I'll have Melbourne news channels, but they seem to concentrate a lot more on other states ... I prefer to know more about what's happening in the state cause you don't really hear about it. Especially like the crime rates picked up, something chronic in Victoria and all that lately. And you just don't hear about everything that goes on like normally you'll hear about it on Facebook more than you'll hear about it on the news ... Concentrating on what will actually affect Australia ... In half an hour news session you'd probably get 30 to 40% for Australia and then the rest is overseas. Focus more on Australia unless it's like the stuff from overseas is actually going to affect us in a major way ... Some stuff isn't sensationalised enough to project the issues that actually go on. It sorts of just brush over stuff saying about it that people need to be more informed of the stuff that does really go on, that they don't say about.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Their overall trust in the news system is reflected in their consumption habits. They are the most likely of all segments to rely exclusively on mainstream news sources (58% vs 41% total), while only a small group (9% vs 29% total) do not trust mainstream news. Interview narratives reflect this trend, showing that participants generally speak positively about Australian news meeting their needs and place greater trust and reliance on mainstream outlets than commercial ones for their credibility, objectivity and factual reporting.

'I think we've got a very strong and robust media in Australia that presents a balanced sort of view of the news and without being biased. Certain news channels like Sky tend to lean to the right a lot and they can be biased. I'm aware that they're like that, so I won't watch them. Sky News, you see, they're all backed by a media mogul. I find channel 7, 9 and 10 aren't as biased that way. So they're a bit more balanced. And same as the ABC and SBS, they're a bit more balanced and they're not, influenced by a big media mogul.'

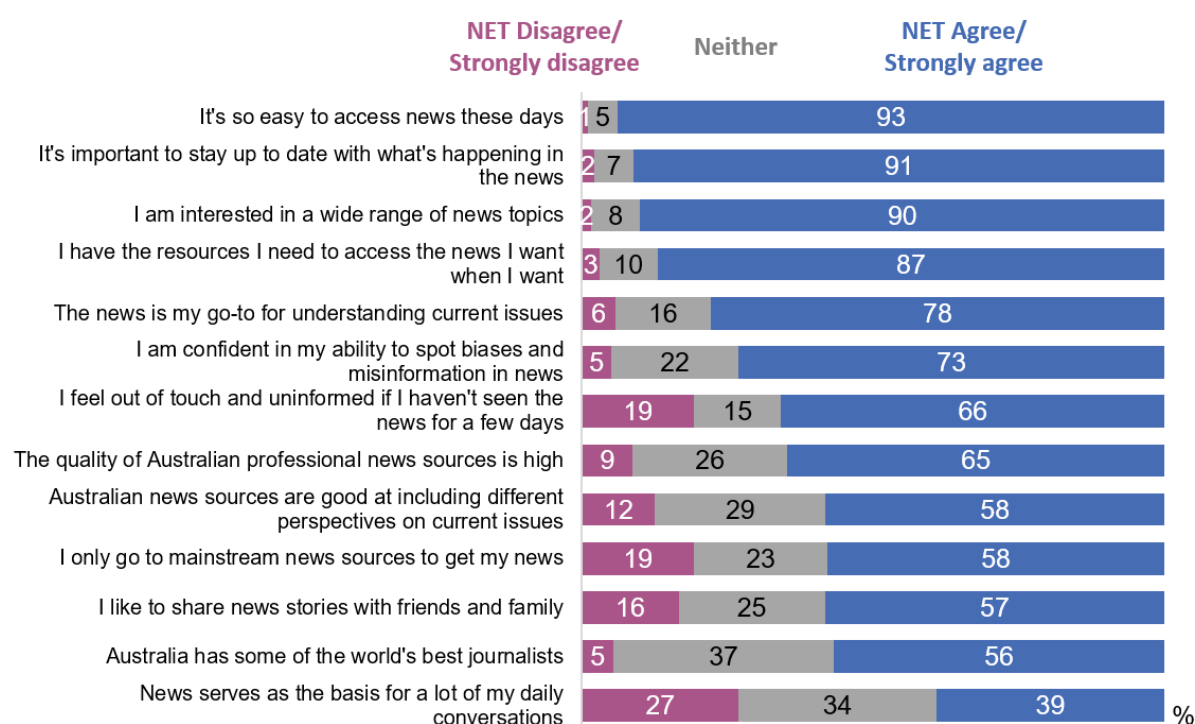
(Trusting traditionalists, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Their reliance on a range of established mainstream outlets likely also contributes to their lower-than-average inclination to consult multiple sources before trusting a news story (43% vs 53% total). Qualitative interviews provide additional context, suggesting that while trust is higher for public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS, many still actively consult multiple outlets to piece together a fuller picture of events. This reflects a broader belief that, in order to form a balanced understanding of reality within a fragmented news landscape, the responsibility ultimately lies with consumers themselves to critically appraise and evaluate information from different sources and perspectives.

'If there's anything I'm doubtful and I'll research more into it before I'll fully believe it. Because different channels, different papers, different sites all have different opinions and the way they present it gives you different sides to it. Then you can get an overall perspective instead of just one way of what you're being told.'

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Figure 25: Top news attitudes among the trusting traditionalists



Base: Total sample: trusting traditionalists (n=1,160).

N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 0 to 4% for 'Not applicable', from 0% to <0.5% for 'Refused' and 0% to 1% for 'Don't know'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

News barriers and opportunities

All trusting traditionalists had accessed at least some news in the 7 days before the survey. Consistent with the survey findings, most interview participants did not report any major barriers to accessing news. However, a number of participants noted ways in which news could be improved for them, which have been outlined below.

More focus on local issues and comprehensive coverage

Several participants want news coverage to prioritise stories that directly affect Australians, rather than focusing heavily on overseas events. They feel that local issues – especially those impacting safety and community – are sometimes under-reported.

‘Concentrating on what will actually affect Australia. Not so much, but you’ll get in in 1/2 an hour news session you’d probably get... probably like 30 to 40% for Australia and then the rest is overseas. ... Focus more on Australia unless it’s like the stuff from overseas is actually going to affect us in a major way.’

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Some expressed frustration that news stories are often incomplete or lack follow-up, leaving audiences uninformed about outcomes or ongoing developments. They want more comprehensive coverage and updates, especially on issues that impact their communities.

‘They don’t always tell you the full story of stuff and then there’ll be something that might happen in Melbourne and think, oh, I’ll have to keep sort of seeing how what happens from whatever’s happened. And then you never hear anything about it again.’

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Greater objectivity and less sensationalism

There is a desire for news that is more factual, less sensationalised and less influenced by commercial or political interests. Some are wary of bias and want news to ‘just present the facts.’

‘I’d like it to be... a lot more objective, unbiased. Just the facts presented... and actual facts as well. ... It’s getting harder to know what is factual and how honest they are.’

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Reduce repetition and ‘saturation’ coverage

Some are frustrated by excessive repetition and saturation of certain stories, especially during breaking news events. They want news outlets to avoid filling airtime with unnecessary or repetitive content.

‘When there is some breaking news... that just went on way, way too long and it was so repetitive... just filling in, finding things to fill it in, fill in with and irrelevant stories and just it was a lot of waste of time. ... It was saturation.’

(Trusting traditionalists, Female, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

A day in the life: trusting traditionalists

Segment 5: trusting traditionalists – Meet Bill: The mainstream loyalist

Bill is in his early seventies, living in a quiet regional town, semi-retired and enjoying a steady, predictable routine. News has been part of Bill's daily life for decades, something he grew up with and continues to rely on to stay connected to what's happening in Australia and around the world. His day starts and ends with FTA TV news: Sunrise or ABC News in the morning and SBS or Channel 7 in the evening. Television is Bill's primary news source because it is convenient, and fits seamlessly into his daily rhythm. It's a habit formed long before the digital era and one that feels comfortable, reliable and easy.

Bill trusts public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS the most, valuing their calm, factual presentation and independence from commercial pressures. He appreciates the familiar presenters, the tone and the straightforward structure of nightly bulletins. While he may flick between different stations out of curiosity or to compare angles, he always returns to the public broadcasters he trusts. By contrast, he is more cautious with commercial TV, feeling that airtime is limited, superficial, sensationalised, with repetitive 'breaking news' framing; He is quick to switch off when coverage becomes overblown or politically combative. Radio, especially local stations and ABC, is a regular companion in the car. Online news is something he uses only for quick checks or extra detail, usually ABC, *The Guardian*, Nine or MSN. Bill avoids social media entirely for general news, seeing it as unreliable, sensational and algorithm-driven. At most, he might come across a Facebook post about updates in local community notice boards, but he never treats it as a trusted source for general news.

While generally satisfied with news in Australia, Bill would like more depth on important national and international issues, stronger local reporting and a broader diversity of perspectives and cultural representation.

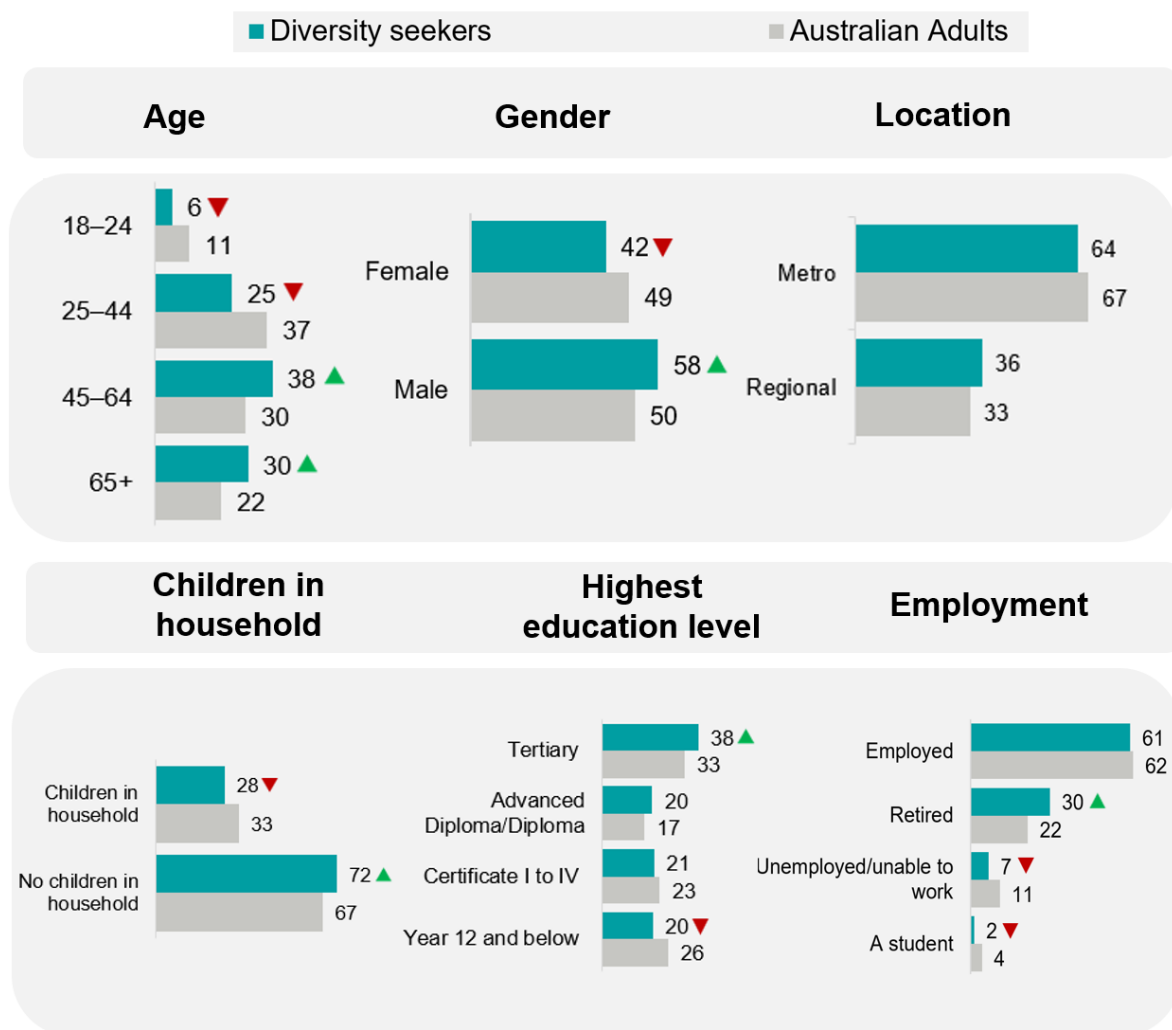
Segment 6: diversity seekers

The 'diversity seeker' segment makes up 10% of the Australian adult population and they consume news at significantly higher volumes than the average Australian (13.9 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total). News plays a central role in their lives, shaping how they stay informed, make sense of current issues and connect socially with others. They show wide-ranging interests and engage deeply across a diverse mix of platforms and topics. They report stronger skills than the average Australian in accessing news, evaluating credibility, spotting bias and verifying information through multiple sources. Despite consuming large volumes of news, they are less affected by negativity or fatigue, demonstrating resilience to the emotional strain that news can sometimes cause.

Demographic profile

- Diversity seekers tend to skew middle-aged and older, with a higher share aged 45-65 (38% vs 30% total) and 65+ (30% vs 22% total) compared to the total.
- They are more likely to be male (58% vs 50% total), have no children in the household (72% vs 67% total), have a tertiary education (38% vs 33% total) and be retired (30% vs 22% total).
- They also include a higher share of high-income households, with 30% earning \$150,000 or more annually (vs 24% total).
- Their distribution by location is broadly similar to that of the Australian adult population.

Figure 26: Diversity seekers demographic profile



Base: Total sample: diversity seekers (n=635), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

All diversity seekers accessed news in the 7 days before the survey, averaging at 5.6 platforms used per person per week (vs 2.7 total). This segment accessed news from the greatest variety of platforms among all segments.

As their name suggests, diversity seekers consume news in high volumes across a broad mix of online and traditional formats. Interviewed participants generally describe themselves as avid news consumers, consuming more news than the average person or people around them. They are highly flexible, multi-platform consumers, often switching between apps and websites, social media, radio, TV and print on convenience and activity, choosing the format that best suits their needs at any given time.

'I have a subscription to an online newspaper. I listen to ABC radio and CNN. If I'm looking for global news or Israel, U.S. news and you see news just when you're [on social media] ... If I'm driving, it's audio because it's doing 2 things at once. If I'm just at home, it'll be reading but if not mobile, it'll be audio. If I feel out of touch because travel does mix up my schedule as far as you know, keeping on top of things because you don't get the same content in other countries. Then it's on the app, which is when I want at whatever time I want.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

'Probably wake up and see what's going on Twitter first and if there's any stories that I need to follow through, I just go through the links. I'll then put the morning free-to-air news on those rubbish morning TV shows, which you have to endure, but just to get the headlines, really. And then later on during the day, I'll go and have a look at Facebook and then evening bulletins. We have a free local paper as well, but it's only a weekly publication which we have delivered.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

Online channels (99% NET vs 72% total) are their strongest source of news. They report the highest usage of news websites (86% vs 39% total) and search engines (60% vs 25% total), along with higher-than-average access through social media (58% vs 43% total), news aggregators (47% vs 14% total) and online newsletters (34% vs 12% total).

Interview participants generally rely on mobile-based digital news, using a mix of websites, apps and both free and paid services, with social media playing a minor or selective role. A key sentiment is that online news offers instant, flexible access, allowing them to dip in and out of news, follow only the stories that interest them and avoid the fixed programming of TV. Participants describe a pattern of active searching, supplemented by incidental exposure through app alerts that draw them into further browsing. The main benefits cited are convenience, portability and the ability to tailor consumption, while downsides include practical frustrations such as small phone screens limiting the reading experience.

'I have news apps on my phone ... I get ABC News alerts on my phone. So, a particular article flashes up on my phone, that's something that I want to read more about and I'll click on it and it takes you to the app and that's when I can waste time because once I'm in the app, after I've read that article, I'll see what else is going on and there'll often be a couple of other stories that I'll read in the app.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

'Because it's instant, I don't have to schedule it. The ABC Listen app has a heap of good little segments that are not very long, which is usually about 15 minutes ... so I don't have to listen to everything, just the things that I'm interested in'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

'I'm happy with digitals, just a little bit more convenient. I can carry it more easily. It doesn't blow around in the wind and it doesn't get wet if it's raining.'

'I've only got an iPhone and the screen's not that big, I don't carry an iPad and I don't take my laptop with me.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Qualitative interviews reveal that participants generally view social media as a supplementary source of news, with engagement being more selective and cautious. The main benefits participants acknowledged are immediacy and convenience, noting that social media can surface updates instantly and provide easy access to first-hand accounts of events.

'I have searched TikTok for the latest, because there tends to be somebody immediately posting about something that's just happened, so it's pretty quick ... It's the immediacy of it. A recent example, the guy I can't remember his name, but he got shot and killed. If you were watching TikTok at the time it literally came up within seconds of that happening.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

However, the drawbacks are substantial and widely acknowledged. While professional news outlets offer services via social media, most participants regard social media as unreliable for factual reporting on current affairs, citing the lack of journalistic standards and quality control. Content is viewed as opinion-driven, easily fabricated and prone to fuelling misinformation and conspiracy theories. For these reasons, some participants deliberately avoid using social media for news and prefer mainstream media on other platforms as a more trustworthy source.

'No social media, I don't use it for news ... Primary sources [meaning mainstream media] are always going to be better than social media. Facebook in particular has so many bloody conspiracy theories.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

TV (93% vs 56% total) is also a key format for diversity seekers, led by free-to-air (85% vs 51% total) viewing, followed by FTA catch-up TV (33% vs 10% total) and subscription TV (10% vs 6% total), all at higher rates than the average Australian.

Interview participants generally maintain strong routines around traditional broadcast news, watching FTA TV such as ABC, SBS, Channel 7, Channel 9 and using ABC iview for on-demand access.

Their audio (85% NET vs 43% total) news consumption is higher than any other segment, primarily through AM/FM/DAB+ radio (77% vs 37% total), with additional use of online radio (18% vs 6% total) and podcasts (18% vs 7% total).

Radio, primarily ABC Radio on AM/FM/DAB+, is often consumed in the car and blends intentional listening with incidental updates. ABC Radio is commonly mentioned and valued for its steady stream of local updates and as a trusted source during emergencies.

'I tend to have ABC Radio news on in the car ... When I turn the ignition on, the radio comes on.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

'We always put the radio on the ABC to hear what the headlines are ... They quite often have updates because it's local content. The ABC is sort of like the go to channel if there's an emergency, so keep an ear on that.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Print newspapers are another important part of their mix, with around 3 in ten (30% vs 15% total) accessing them, which is also well above the total population. Print newspapers are valued by some participants for their depth, local coverage and the ability to revisit and discuss content, offering a more reflective experience compared to fast-paced TV news. Readers appreciate the tactile nature of print and the opportunity to absorb information at their own pace, often using newspapers as a basis for discussion and shared interpretation.

'I think the print papers are still an important source of information and you can actually absorb more because you're reading it. By the time you've watched the news for an hour and you've forgotten what the stories were before because one thing follows the other ends and break and you've forgotten what was on before. Whereas the papers, you can read and review what you've been reading. We might both read it and have a different take on it, so we'll have a chat about it and then whoever's not sure will go back and read it and it's a good way of learning.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

However, print newspaper readership has declined significantly as many have transitioned to digital formats for convenience, ease of fact checking and access to multiple perspectives. The shift away from print is often driven by perceptions of bias and political weaponisation in newspapers, which limit balanced coverage and make verification difficult.

'Once upon a time I just read the newspaper. Now these days I would rarely read the newspaper, but more likely to go and look at items on the Internet and then you can just go to a few different sources to verify. It's just convenience really. Just do a quick fact check for yourself, just going down different lines of what really happened. I used to read the newspaper a lot until I realised just how politically weaponised the paper that I read was and so that was probably a physical barrier to actually stop me from reading the newspaper on a regular basis because it only ever got to one side of the story. You're limited in the fact that you can only go as far as what the story's printed. Whereas you have the Internet to fall back on, you've got various sources that you can follow through with.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

Diversity seekers' tendency to consume news at high volume from a variety of traditional and online formats reflects their broader media habits. In the 7 days before the survey, they watched and listened to nearly all types of content at higher rates than the average Australian. This includes streaming services, FTA TV and user-generated online video, as well as AM/FM/DAB+ radio, podcasts and online radio.

Figure 27: Sources of news accessed among diversity seekers

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	Online NET	99%▲	Online news website/app (86%) ▲ Online search engine (60%) ▲ Social media website/app (58%) ▲ Online news aggregator/app (47%) ▲ Online newsletters (34%) ▲
	TV NET	93%▲	Free-to-air TV (85%) ▲ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (33%) ▲ Subscription/Pay TV service (10%) ▲
	Audio NET	85%▲	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (77%) ▲ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (18%) ▲ Podcast (18%) ▲
	Print	30%▲	Print newspaper (30%) ▲
			Average # sources accessed: 5.6▲

Base: Total sample: diversity seekers (n=635).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused', 'Other' and 'None' not shown (0% for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'None' and <0.5% for 'Other').

Participants place greater trust in public broadcasters such as the ABC and SBS, considering them more balanced and credible than other outlets, despite acknowledging that some bias remains. This trust is often rooted in long-standing brand familiarity and years of consistent viewership. Other mainstream sources, including *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Guardian*, are also regarded as reliable, though perceived as more sensationalised and politically biased than the ABC and SBS. These outlets are typically used to cross-check perspectives and achieve a more balanced understanding.

'I accept ABC News. I value SBS news, I value news supplied by The Guardian. They would be my more reliable sources ... Any sane Australian should never watch Sky News after 6:00 PM. ABC does tend to present some type of stories more than what I feel that they should do as well, so it goes both ways I guess.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

'SBS and ABC are the 2 that I would trust, but the others do a half decent job ... ABC because I think that it's balanced ... It's not always positive or negative to either. It's just a news source that I trust. I grew up in the country where the only channel we had for most of my childhood was ABC, so it's been in my life for a long, long time.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

Participants often turn to different outlets for different types of news, choosing sources based on topic, geographic focus and perspective, recognising that each outlet carries its own political leanings and areas of specialisation.

'I particularly have the Australian to get right wing views and The Age and ABC to get left wing views. because if you don't actually read or understand both views, you can't see the bias.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

'Just depends on what news that I'm looking for. If I'm looking for U.S. news, I'll tend to go to CNN, Australian news, ABC Global Voices or SBS.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

News consumption patterns

Diversity seekers generally consume a broad mix of news topics, including local updates and community issues, national coverage of politics and policy debates and international stories on trade, tariffs, climate change, US politics and current affairs. Some also follow sports and, occasionally, entertainment or celebrity gossip via social media, though this is not really considered 'news'. They typically follow news to stay informed, whether to support work-related decisions, out of personal interest or to fulfill their role as responsible citizens in a democracy.

'I read and listen to a broad range of news articles from domestic to regional to global, so I feel like I'm well-informed what's going on in the world. A lot of the global news is relevant to my business, so understanding what's happening in other countries to do with tariffs and trade. Weather wise, we're farmers, so news about climate change and weather is particularly relevant to our business, as well as stuff that interests me, so it's general topics.'

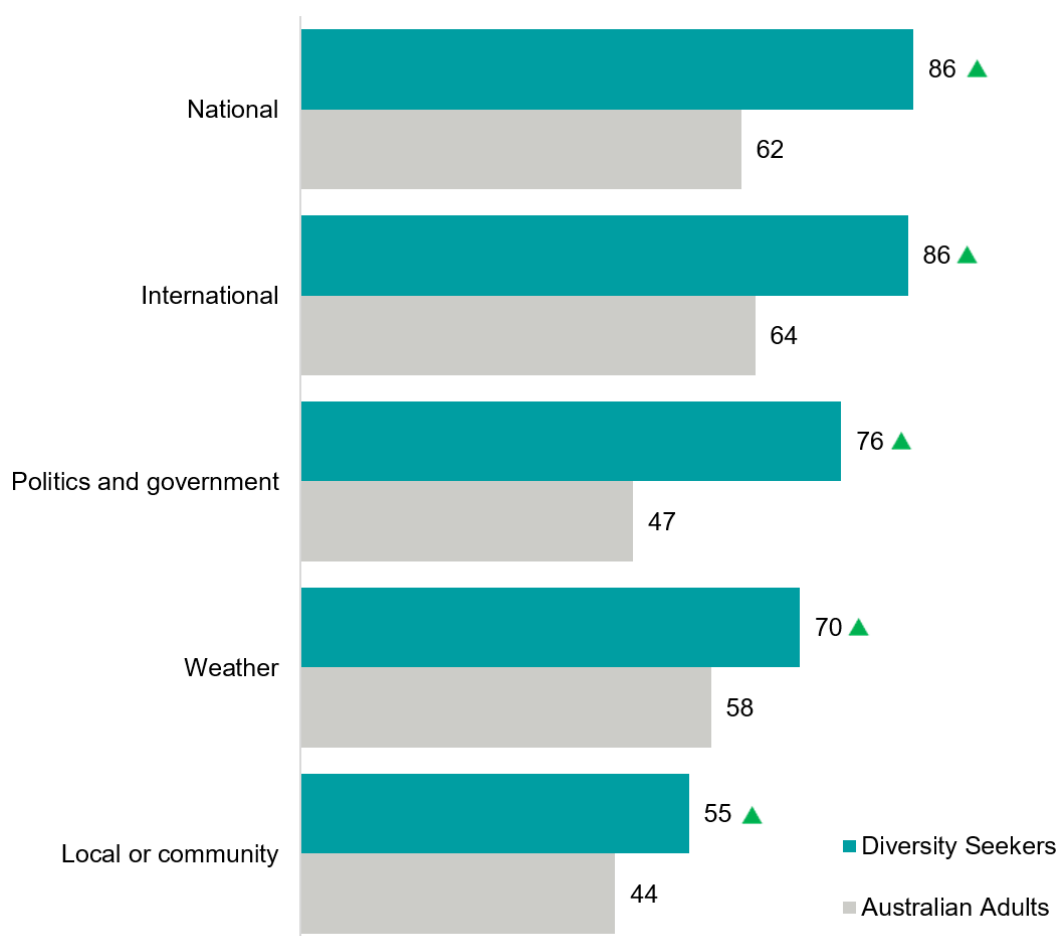
(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

'Not that this is news and it's not a great example, but Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban getting a divorce, I heard it but didn't know whether it's real. So, I looked it up and found enough articles about it to know that it had happened and wasn't fake news. I wouldn't exactly call that news, but that's an example of something must have come up on the [social media] feed and there's so much fake news out there that's not real. I didn't know if it was real or not, so I've double checked and it was.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

Diversity seekers have the widest range of news interests of any segment, selecting an average of 7.2 different topics that they would usually follow, compared with 5.2 nationally. They show above-average interest across nearly all genres, with the exception of feel-good stories and entertainment or celebrity news. Their leading topics of interest are national (86% vs 62% total) and international (86% vs 64% total) news, politics and government (76% vs 47% total) and weather (70% vs 58% total).

Figure 28: Preferred news topics among diversity seekers



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: diversity seekers (n=635), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (<0.5% for 'Other' and 0% for 'Refused' and 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

While over 3 in 5 (63%) diversity seekers said they consumed a similar amount of news as last year, a higher-than-average share reported consuming more or a lot more news this year, with just over a quarter (28% vs 22% total) increasing their usage. For the small group (9%) of people who cut back on news this year, the main drivers were feeling overwhelmed by news (45%), the negative or distressing nature of news (44%) and reduced interest in news (36%).

Qualitatively, diversity seekers generally report consuming more news than the average person, describing themselves as avid or high-level news consumers. For most, this level of engagement has remained consistently high over time. Instances of increased consumption were often linked to work-related needs to keep up to date with news and heightened interest in international news during major global political events.

'I would say an avid consumer of news ... I think it has remained at a fairly higher level than the average person.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

'Increased with Trump. Because he's so outrageous and we export to the US so the tariff situation, obviously trying to make decisions on whether we continue to export when it can change, well, not even 24 hours' notice, 12 hours' notice sometimes. So definitely that's increased the amount of times I've bothered to look at U.S. news ... If I didn't own my own business, possibly I would just ignore the news.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

For diversity seekers, news is central to daily life. They are much more likely than the average Australian to say it is important to stay up to date with what is happening (95% vs 72% total) and to see news as their go-to for understanding current issues (81% vs 58% total).

Interview participants also generally see news as essential for staying up to date with what is happening locally, nationally and globally and to help them form their opinions on politics, policy and community issues. One participant viewed staying informed as a civic duty, crucial for making thoughtful voting decisions and holding governments accountable. They felt that freedom of speech and a healthy democracy rely on citizens engaging with diverse perspectives and keeping up with current events, seeing this level of awareness as a responsibility in a democratic country like Australia.

'It's important to know what's going on around me locally as well as nationally. It helps form my opinions as to what's going on in politics and it keeps me up to date with any local issues that I need to be involved in.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

'I want to be informed. We are, after all, a democracy and in order to give a reasonable vote, it's more important than listening to 10 second, 5 second bytes to actually understand both sides of an argument ... What you get out of politicians and focus groups is just so one-sided and biased you've actually got to listen to both ... We have to have checks and balances on our government and here oppositions can do something. But the news media is critically important to that ... For democracy to work, you have to have a free press, you have to have free expression. You actually have to have informed people.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Diversity seekers are also more likely to feel out of touch and uninformed if they have not accessed news for a few days (68% vs 46% total), indicating a strong sense of dependence on news to stay connected and informed. This sentiment is also reflected in the qualitative interviews, indicating the indispensable role news has in their everyday lives.

'I'm probably a bit hooked. I miss my news if I don't catch up with my news ... I believe I'm probably reasonably worldly because of the news.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

News fulfills a prominent social function for diversity seekers, simultaneously informing and reinforcing social exchange. They are more likely than average to say news forms the basis of many of their daily conversations (52% vs 33% total) and that they enjoy sharing news stories with friends and family (64% vs 47% total).

Diversity seekers show the broadest and deepest levels of interest in news across all segments, with higher-than-average agreement that they are interested in a wide range of topics (92% vs 74% total). This breadth of curiosity also aligns with their high volume of news consumption and the diverse mix of platforms and topics they regularly engage with.

Accessing and navigating news

Diversity seekers demonstrate stronger skills in accessing and critically evaluating news than the average Australian. They are more likely to say that news is very easy to access nowadays (90% vs 83% total) and that they have the resources needed to get the news they want when they want it (88% vs 80% total). Only a small group (5% vs 12% total) often find news stories difficult to understand, which is much lower than the total population.

Interview participants generally demonstrated strong digital and media literacy through their perceived ability to critically assess news stories, cross-check information across multiple sources and their tendency to switch between traditional and online platforms to suit their routines. They describe news as generally easy to understand and feel confident interpreting stories, recognising bias and filtering out exaggeration or sensationalised content they view as not genuinely newsworthy.

Their capability extends beyond access to assessment, demonstrated by higher confidence in spotting bias and misinformation in news (81% vs 67% total) and a greater likelihood to consult multiple sources for fact checking before trusting a news story (73% vs 53% total).

There is a strong sentiment among interview participants that because many news outlets are biased or politically polarised, consumers are compelled to cross-check information across multiple sources to piece together a balanced understanding of events. This habit of critically evaluating everything, whether it comes from reputable outlets or less reliable platforms like social media, was consistent across all participants. Rather than relying on brand reputation or assuming credibility, they question most things they read and compare coverage across different outlets, believing that each source carries some degree of bias. For them, the only way to get closer to the truth is to examine multiple perspectives and synthesise the information themselves.

'I don't trust the Australian without checking it. I don't trust ABC without checking it, but by the time I've actually looked at both, you start to get a bit of an idea of what the truth is more likely to be.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

'I intentionally have subscribed to both the Australian and it wasn't till recently the Sydney Morning Herald and it's now the age because I've moved so that I actually get both views of 2 rather biased papers.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Negative news

Potentially due to the high volume of news consumed, diversity seekers are comparatively resilient to the emotional strain or fatigue that news can generate. They are less likely than the average Australian to find news too negative or distressing (29% vs 42% total).

Among interview participants, negative news does not necessarily reduce their engagement with news; some even feel that confronting content can be important and necessary for drawing attention to serious issues. At the same time, repeated exposure to violent or

antisocial behaviour can lead to a sense of desensitisation, especially when coverage becomes excessive.

'There are children being shot in school every day of the week in the US and nobody is doing anything about that. So maybe it's good that everybody thought how horrific a gunshot wound can look because if they saw that happening to a 6-year-old, maybe they'd do something about their guns.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

'I think it's almost overkill for and people would become desensitised to like the problems in Palestinians and Gaza. What's the world doing and it's depressing to watch.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Although survey findings show that the feeling of overwhelm by volume or constant stream of news is similar to the average Australian, there is clear fatigue around the way news is packaged, particularly the relentless and often unwarranted use of 'breaking news,' which contributes to a sense of overload rather than genuine urgency.

'If you watch Morning News, every story is breaking news, breaking news, breaking news when it's not really breaking news.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

Paying for news

Diversity seekers are more open than the average Australian adult to paying for news, with just over a quarter (27% vs 18% total) agreeing that, where possible, they are willing to pay for news content they want to access.

Among interview participants, paying for news is relatively common but done selectively, typically limited to one or 2 key subscriptions. One participant described a long-standing paid news habit that began decades ago with print subscriptions and later transitioned into digital. Many supplement their limited paid news use with a wide range of freely accessible outlets, where paid content reflects either legacy habits or specific local relevance and free outlets fill the broader information needs.

'It's been a slow evolution in 50 years ... I've always subscribed, probably since the late 60s. I've always subscribed to formal news outlets and paid for it. It has transitioned from being all print to more digital than anything else.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

'The advertiser, because I live in South Australia, so that's our local newspaper. That's the one I've got the subscription for. It is a print paper, but I consume that online. The rest is free, CNN is free, SBS News is free. ABC News is free.'

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

Quality and diversity of news in Australia

Compared with the average Australian, diversity seekers hold more positive views about professional news in Australia. They are more likely to agree that the overall quality of Australian professional news sources is high (55% vs 44% total) and that Australia has some of the world's best journalists (53% vs 39% total).

They also show higher-than-average confidence that Australian news sources are good at including different perspectives on current issues (47% vs 38% total), potentially due to their tendency to access a wide range of news across diverse topics from various sources. At the same time, they are less likely than average to say they do not trust mainstream news (22% vs 29% total).

Qualitative interviews revealed that the perceived limits to news diversity in Australia stem less from a lack of outlets or topic areas and more from how stories are selected, framed and amplified. Participants felt that mainstream coverage is heavily driven by sensationalism, with political conflict, crime, catastrophes and general 'gloom and doom' dominating the cycle and repeating to the point where other important local or nuanced issues become buried or invisible.

They also described a highly polarised media landscape, where outlets lean strongly left or right, narrowing the range of perspectives offered within any single publication. Many believed that editorial decisions, shaped by commercial interests, sponsorship and political agendas, determine which narratives are highlighted and which are sidelined, further reinforcing bias and limiting the breadth of viewpoints that make it to the surface.

'A lot of it is exaggerated and sensationalised. A lot of the stories are conveyed in a way that is causing fear and alarm in the community, or victimising a section of the community by whatever the headline is ... If the headlines are all just sensationalised or speculative, we just turn it off ... The coverage of subjects is all designed to cause anxiety or for people to worry about missing out or things like that, which is probably just not really newsworthy.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

'The media has the editor or someone prioritises stories. They seem to highlight something to take the heat off another story. Donald Trump said something which overrides what's happening with the accountability of Coles and Woolworths for ripping off the primary producers and the customers and the same as the bank making 10 billion a year and people are struggling, so a lot of the big stories are sort of subdued.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

'News media as such has become so polarised. If I only read The Age. I'd think that Australia was totally left wing. If I only read the Australian, I think that Australia was only totally right wing. And the majority of people are actually somewhere between the two'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Participants generally do not see the issue as a lack of available diversity at the market level, but finding it depends on individuals having the knowledge, time and willingness to seek out different sources and look beyond the most prominent headlines.

'I think it's reasonably broad, but not on any one publication, which is again why I intentionally subscribe to both.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

'I think there is a broad range if you're willing to go and look for it. However, if you choose to just listen to the headlines, you're going to get a very bland picture of what's going on in the world.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

‘We have much more balanced news structure than most countries in the world ... If I want rural news, I know how to find it and the same as global news and in-depth stuff ... I think all the news is there. If you want to, you just have to [find it] and it's free. There are a lot of other countries that can't get different perspectives or have to pay for it, so I think we have it pretty good.’

(Diversity seekers, Female, age 55–64, SA, Capital city)

However, participants feel that factual reporting is increasingly compromised, with misinformation widespread and even paid news often biased or skewed, making it difficult to rely on any outlet for clear, fact-based information.

‘The downside of the news is whereas I once found most news sites legitimate and reporting the facts. Nowadays, I can't trust the news anymore. So ... misinformation is probably the biggest downside ... and the major factor in the way that I might have changed the way that I source my information ... Pay to view news can be quality news when they choose to, but the fact that they can just skew a story to suit their own needs is a huge problem. It's a shame because I'd like to see them do it. You could form a basis of opinion just on the facts presented, but unfortunately, the way some news is presented, we don't get that opportunity to do that.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

Diversity seekers are more likely than the average Australian to disagree that they don't trust mainstream news (49% vs 31% total). Similarly, interview participants generally place higher trust in mainstream media than some social media sources, driven by its perceived journalistic standards, editorial oversights for fact checking, thus lower risk of misinformation. However, this trust is not absolute, as respondents remain aware that mainstream outlets can still be biased or sensationalised, so they cross-check stories rather than accept them at face value.

‘I trust the mainstream media much more than I trust anything like Facebook. I don't look at TikTok, because there are some vague journalistic standards.’

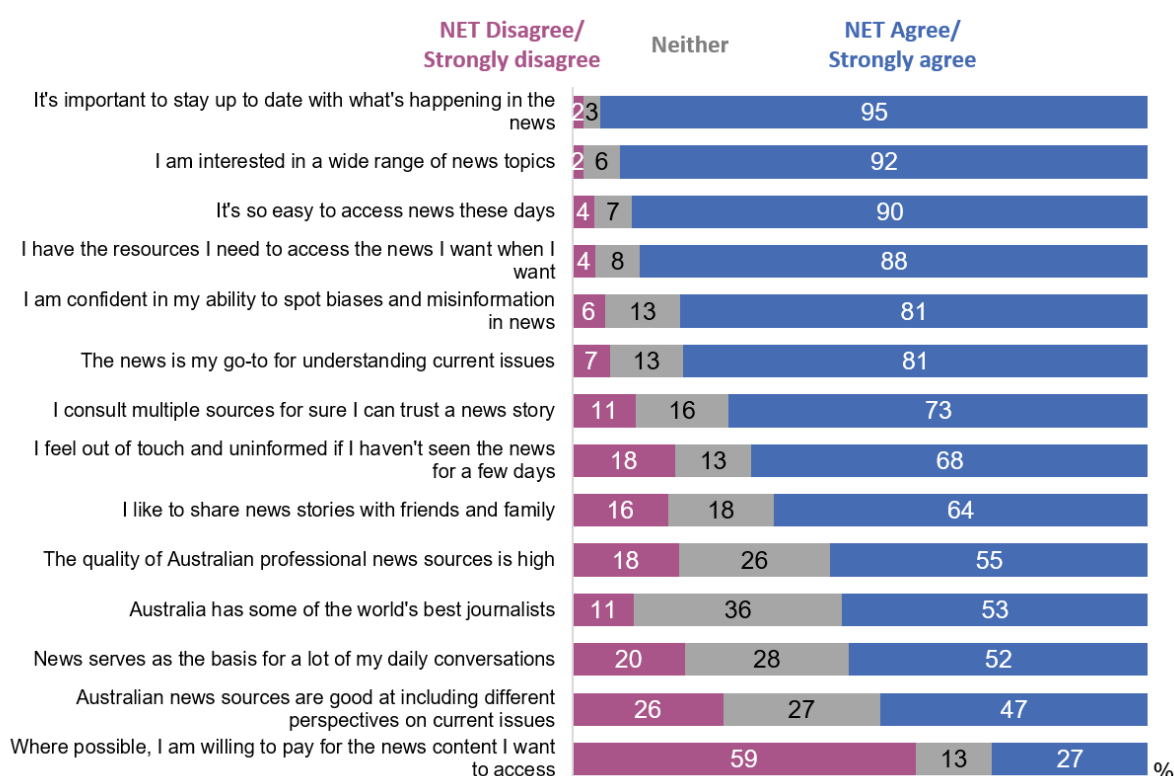
(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

‘Even though some of the presenters sensationalise things, I think it's more accurate than relying on social media, because sometimes I've noticed on social media there might be a story that never makes the national news because it's obviously either artificially generated or it's just general claims.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Despite their broad interests across news topics, most feel the news is relevant to them, with only one in 6 (16% vs 24% total) agreeing that news does not cover the issues that matter to them, much lower than the total population. This may reflect their habit of actively seeking out news that aligns with their personal interests and information needs, more so than diversity in the range of topics covered in the news.

Figure 29: Top news attitudes among diversity seekers



Base: Total sample: diversity seekers (n=635).

N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 0 to 2% for 'Not applicable', 0% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

News barriers and opportunities

All diversity seekers had accessed at least some news in the 7 days before the survey. Consistent with the survey findings, most interview participants reported few barriers to accessing news, reflecting their high levels of engagement and confidence in navigating a wide range of sources. Instead, they focused on how the news experience could be improved, emphasising greater balance and neutrality in reporting, stronger journalistic standards and accountability, while acknowledging that limited time can sometimes constrain deeper engagement. These are outlined in more detail below.

Limited time

Time constraints are a barrier to news, especially for those still working, who feel they cannot devote long stretches of time to follow the news in depth.

'Time. I still work.'

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Greater balance and neutrality in coverage

Growing cynicism towards sensationalised or exaggerated reporting further discourages deeper engagement among diversity seekers, with some choosing to avoid lengthy bulletins or constant coverage, instead relying on headlines or word of mouth to stay informed.

‘Just our attitude to not wanting to waste time. We’re in our 70s, so we’d rather do like mind exercises like games and stuff. Too much on the news are exaggerations ... Just cynical of the way it’s presented ... That’s not to say we’re not interested in getting to know what’s going on, but you generally hear about that in the highlights or just word of mouth. We don’t need to be spending 3 hours a day watching the news.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

Many participants express a desire for news to be more objective, with clearer separation between factual reporting and commercial or political interests. Specifically, they feel mainstream outlets should strive for neutral, fact-based reporting that reflects a broader range of perspectives. Respondents emphasise the importance of an objective, independent ‘fourth estate’ as essential to a healthy democracy. They worry that declining objectivity and increased bias undermine the press’s role in holding power to account.

‘It would be nice if it was more balanced, in the same way as I wish the political parties were more balanced. I’m just wanting to be in the middle and I don’t think either the political parties or the news media actually cater for all us people in the middle.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

‘The fourth estate is critically important. I do think a balanced fourth estate and freedom of the press is critically important to a democracy. If we lose too much objectivity in mainstream media, our democracy loses something. The only reason of having freedom of the press is that it is unbiased.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, NSW, Rest of state)

Stronger journalistic standards and accountability

Diversity seekers also call for stronger, industry-wide enforcement of journalistic standards, including adherence to professional codes of conduct and more consistent application of reporting guidelines. They believe stronger consequences for misinformation or deliberate misrepresentation are needed, as current accountability mechanisms are too weak and allow poor practice to persist.

‘I think I’m just trying to think, what is it? I don’t know who actually runs the communication standards or whatever in Australia, tribunals or whoever it is, but I think standards have to be set. I believe they are set. If they are set, they need to be kept to that standard and if something is not being reported properly or if they are meaningfully being misreported and heavy consequences should come from it. I don’t know if that happens at this stage. I think people can get away with blue murder at the moment and it’s a blight on society, but we’re allowing it to happen.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 55–64, NSW, Rest of state)

‘If the presenters follow the code of ethics for their profession, like respect through their interviewing. I mean a lot of them do, but there’s people that stand out that talk over people, which is very demanding.’

(Diversity seekers, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Rest of state)

A day in the life: diversity seekers

Segment 6: diversity seekers – Meet Peter: A high-consumption, cross-checking news devotee.

Peter is a well-educated professional in his early fifties who lives on the outskirts of the city and spends much of his time traveling for work. A lifelong news enthusiast, Peter starts his mornings with ABC News on his phone or radio, followed by a quick scan of a couple of digital outlets over coffee. Throughout the day, he dips in and out of news updates on his mobile and his evenings typically end with a TV bulletin or a scroll through the latest headlines. For Peter, consuming news is not passive; it is part habit, part responsibility. He actively seeks out news to stay informed about politics, global affairs and local issues.

Digital is his main format due to its convenience and immediacy, allowing him to read in hotel rooms, on the train or between meetings and to follow links, fact-check claims and chase down the original source of a story. He's subscribed to at least one major news outlet and uses apps and newsletters to keep up to date throughout the day. He will still read a local print paper if it lands in the letterbox or pick up a weekend edition for a slower read, but he thinks of print now as an occasional extra, not the backbone of his news consumption. Social media sits on the fringe of his news habits; he might see a link on Facebook or TikTok, but he always verifies it through a credible outlet.

He reads across what he sees as the spectrum: a left-leaning outlet like *The Age* or *The Guardian*, a more conservative voice like *The Australian* or *Herald Sun*, plus ABC and SBS as his baseline. He does not expect any one source to be perfectly neutral, instead, he pieces together his own view by triangulating multiple perspectives.

While Peter feels news in Australia generally meets his needs, he would like to see more balance, less negativity and sensationalism, stronger journalistic standards and more diversity in perspectives.

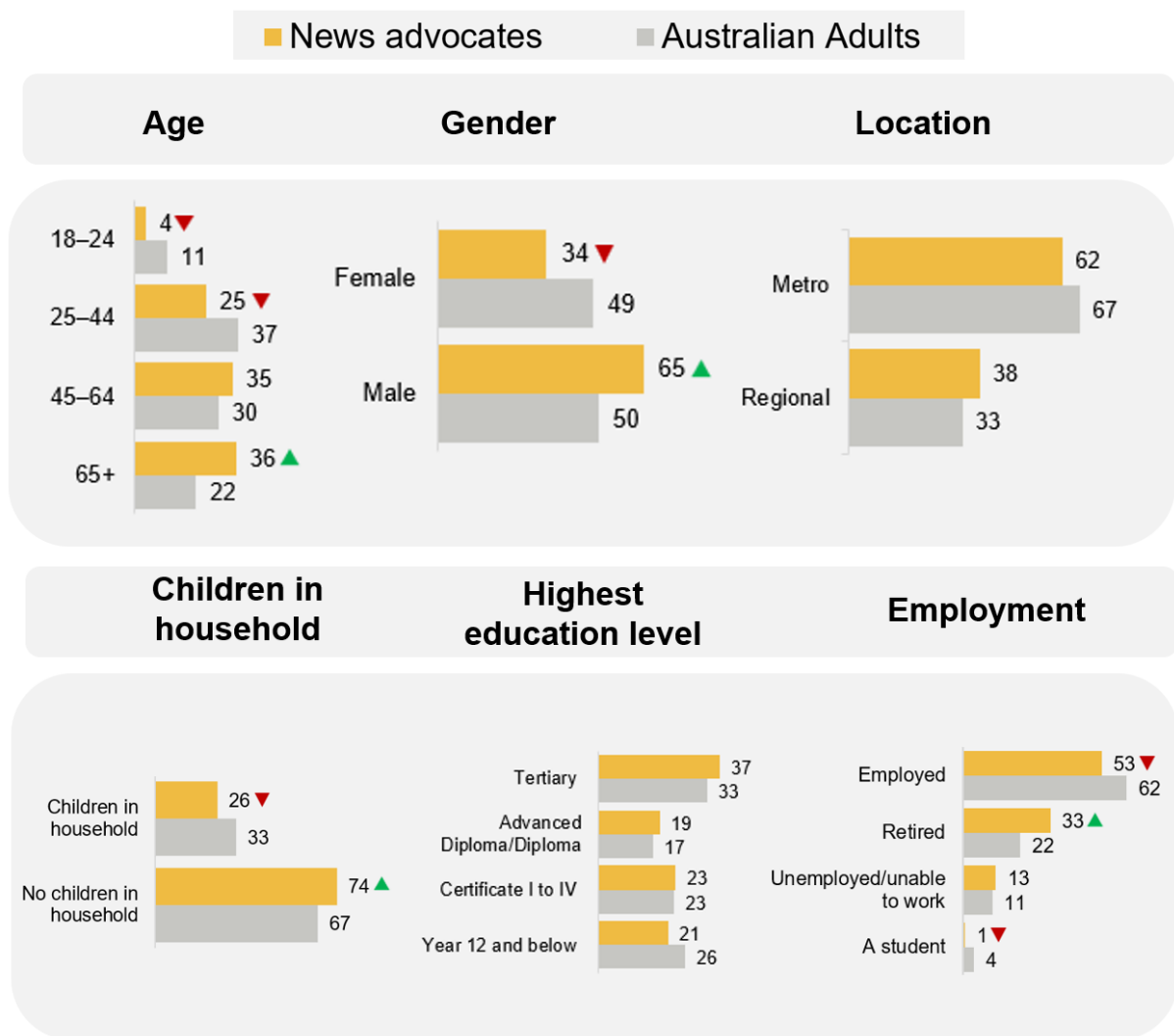
Segment 7: news advocates

The 'news advocate' segment makes up 5% of the Australian adult population and consumes the highest volume of news among all segments (30.2 average hours per week per person vs 9.2 total). This segment consists of the most engaged consumers, relying on news as their primary way of staying informed, connected and socially engaged. They value online news for its timeliness and depth, while traditional formats like TV and newspapers are viewed as surface-level summaries, serving mainly as initial alerts for topics of interest. They follow a wide range of topics, discuss news frequently and show strong skills in accessing, evaluating and cross-checking information. They hold more positive views of Australian journalism than the average adult and are the segment most willing to pay for news.

Demographic profile

- News advocates tend to skew older, with a higher share aged 65+ compared to the total (36% vs 22% total).
- They are also more likely than the average Australian to be male (65% vs 50% total), have no children in the household (74% vs 67% total) and be retired (33% vs 22% total).
- Their distribution by location, highest education level and annual household income is broadly similar to the Australian adult population.

Figure 30: News advocates demographic profile



Base: Total sample: news advocates (n=331), Australian Adults (n=5,990).

Notes: Don't know, refused and unable to establish vary by questions and are not shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Platforms and outlets for news

All news advocates accessed news in the 7 days before the survey, averaging at 4.4 platforms used per person per week (vs 2.7 total), ranking second among segments in terms of the variety of news platforms used.

News advocates accessed news across a broad mix of platforms in the 7 days before the survey, with online channels being the most commonly used (91% NET vs 72% total). Their higher-than-average online news consumption was driven by news websites or apps (59% vs 39% total), search engines (36% vs 25% total) and online newsletters (27% vs 12% total).

Traditional platforms also remained an important part of their news diet. More than 4 in 5 accessed news via television (84% NET vs 56% total), primarily through free-to-air TV (74% vs 51% total), with additional use of FTA catch-up TV (23% vs 10% total). They were also the most likely of all segments to access news via pay TV (21% vs 6% total). Three-quarters accessed news through audio formats (75% NET vs 43% total), driven by AM/FM/DAB+ radio (62% vs 37% total) and radio online (24% vs 6% total), while podcast use was also above average (13% vs 7% total). Around one-third accessed print newspapers (34% vs 15% total), more than double the national average.

Compared with online sources, some interviewees perceived legacy sources as offering delayed summaries of events, noting the inherent time lag between an event occurring, the news being produced and its eventual release. Participants also observed that TV news often delivers only brief or surface-level coverage. As a result, these formats were not commonly relied upon for real-time updates or in-depth information. Despite this, participants often viewed TV and radio as important anchors within their overall news consumption funnel. These formats frequently served as the first point of contact for providing initial awareness of major stories, which then prompted them to seek out additional details and ongoing updates online.

'TV and newspapers are not really, I don't look at that as news. That's more a summary of things that have happened because if people are going to write about it or put a report on TV or journalist is going to write about it, print it on the newspaper. That's already happened. That's a summary of what happened ... I don't get newspapers anymore ... And part of that is because in the territory, it's about a day before you get a newspaper anyway. If I'm typically interested, I'll read it online just to get further details.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

'I don't rely on television to keep up to date with news. I would rely on radio and my mobile feed to keep up to date with the news ... When I first hear news, it will be on the radio if I'm being aware of something that I'm interested in, then I will look up online on ABC or sometimes on SBS online.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

In the 7 days before the survey, news advocates consumed news on social media at similar levels to the average Australian adult (50% vs 43% total), but with higher-than-average access via Facebook (77% vs 63% total), Facebook Messenger (18% vs 9% total), WhatsApp (17% vs 8% total), LinkedIn (10% vs 5% total), Telegram (9% vs 3% total) and Pinterest (6% vs 2% total).

Qualitatively, participants drew a clear distinction between ‘real news’, defined as evidence-based, professionally produced reporting and social media content, which they viewed largely as commentary, speculation or personal opinion rather than journalism. When recalling news encountered on social media, the boundaries of what constitutes ‘news’ often became blurred, with updates mixed up with advertisements and other non-news content. This blurring may reflect the structural nature of social media platforms, which are designed primarily for user-generated communication.

Some also noted that misinformation can spread easily on social media due to the low barrier to publishing, lack of editorial oversight and difficulty verifying information in the absence of cited sources.

‘I certainly don’t expose myself to the social media influencer type trash because it’s ill-informed. To get a detailed report actually costs money and resources and an influencer doesn’t have access to those resources or the evidence. They’re just regurgitating something that they have been told ... If you are not on the ground, if you don’t have eyeballs on the scene, then it’s second hand. And that’s not really news or not really worth of your time. That’s just uninformed opinion. There is no real declaration of the source of information and no declaration of the evidence on which it’s based ... If you look at something on an article on social media, it’s all flashing clips. There’s no questioning of the source of that opinion.’
(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

Figure 31: Sources of news accessed among news advocates

Platforms accessed			Specific platforms
	Online NET	91%▲	Online news website/app (59%) ▲ Social media website/app (50%) Online search engine (36%) ▲ Online newsletters (27%) ▲ Online news aggregator/app (18%)
	TV NET	84%▲	Free-to-air TV (74%) ▲ Free-to-air catch-up/streaming service (23%) ▲ Subscription/Pay TV service (21%) ▲
	Audio NET	75%▲	Radio (AM/FM/DAB+) (62%) ▲ Radio via the internet/app, excluding podcast (24%) ▲ Podcast (13%) ▲
	Print	34%▲	Print newspaper (34%) ▲
			Average # sources accessed: 4.4▲

Base: Total sample: news advocates (n=331).

N1. In the past 7 days, did you access news from any of the following?

Note: Results for ‘Don’t know’, ‘Refused’, ‘Other’ and ‘None’ not shown (0% for ‘Don’t know’, ‘Refused’ and ‘None’ and 1% for ‘Other’).

Interview participants show a clear preference for mainstream and professionally produced news outlets, particularly public broadcasters such as ABC, which are valued for their perceived neutrality, factual reporting and strong editorial standards. Commercial free-to-air channels like Seven, Nine and Ten, along with national online news sites such as *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, are also widely consumed, often out of long-standing habit or to gain additional perspectives. A few supplement with specialised independent outlets such as Al Jazeera or Bloomberg for coverage of global politics, international affairs and finance.

‘That’s why I prefer the national channels as opposed to the commercial channels. I think it seems to get better credibility. Even their so-called newsworthy programs that they have is a bit more sensational and not so much factual.’

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

‘My opinion is that neither of them [ABC or SBS] are really particularly sensationalist. I wouldn’t bother going to a commercial station online. I just consider that SBS and ABC tend to have a fairly balanced view, a more neutral view, more neutral reporting.’

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

‘I mainly source online news by The Age and Sydney Morning Herald ... I’ve always been a subscriber to The Age newspaper for the last 50 years. So, I’m sort of a dedicated The Age reader. I start off the day by reading The Age. So yes, I trust The Age to deliver news that in a way that I like it.’

(News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city)

News consumption patterns

News advocates have a strong preference for local, national and international news, with commonly followed topics including politics and current affairs, sport, finance, business and science. The breadth of topics reflects participants’ desire to stay informed about developments in their communities, across Australia and around the world. Many described themselves as ‘voracious,’ ‘variety,’ or ‘avid’ news seekers. Specific areas of interest often related to participants’ work, educational background or personal interests.

‘I would say I’m a voracious consumer ... I’m involved in international business, both in education and in technology, so what’s happening overseas has implications for me. Politics is a major area of interest for me. [The news] plays a major part in providing me with an overall awareness of what the political and economic environments are.’

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

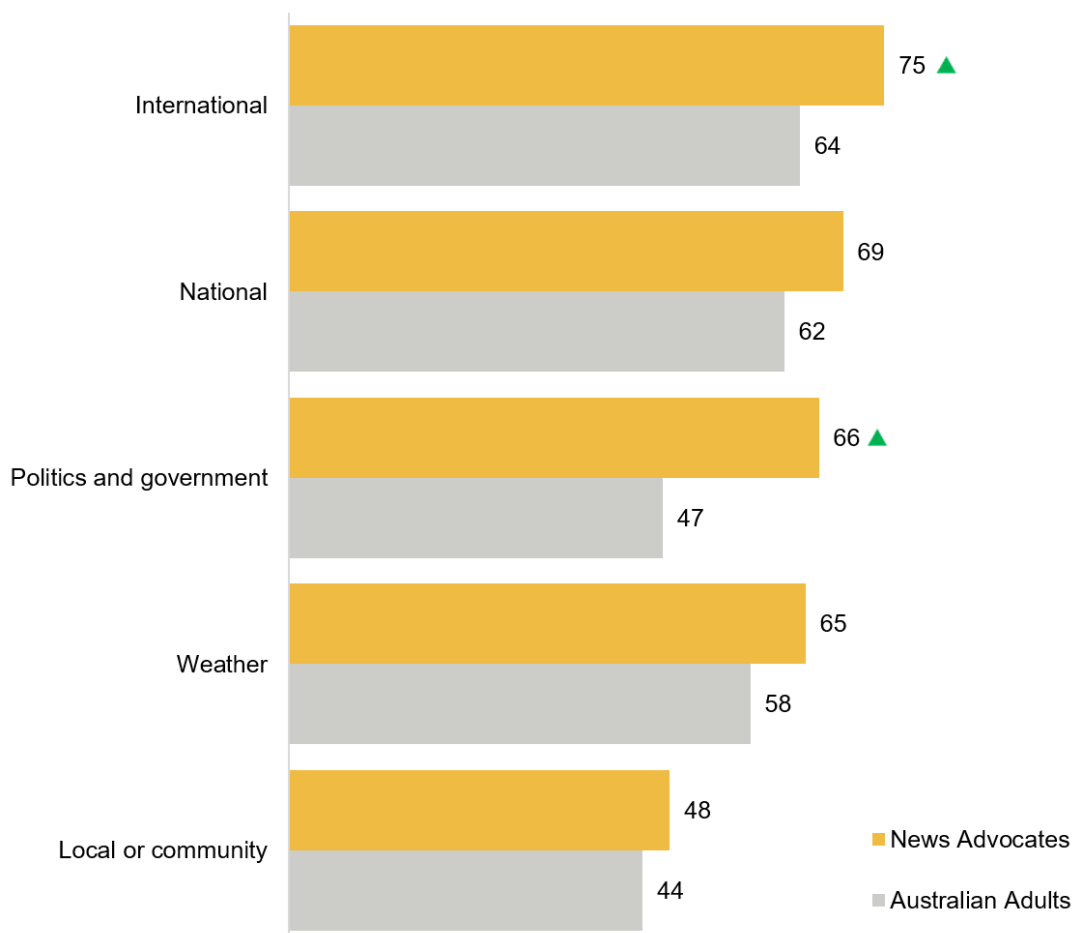
However, participants generally avoided entertainment and celebrity content, which they did not consider to be news. Their definition of news centred on significant events in Australia or globally that could directly or indirectly affect them, their communities or society and that they considered worthy of attention.

‘If it’s something like King Charles and Queen Camilla, then I would skip past that because I don’t really think that is news. That’s just gossip.’

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

Their broad interest in news is reflected in the topics they report being interested in, typically following an average of 6.2 different topics, compared with 5.2 nationally. Compared to the average Australian adult, news advocates were more likely to access international news (75% vs 64% total), political and government news (66% vs 47% total), as well as topics such as sports (46% vs 35% total), business and financial (43% vs 26% total) and health and wellness (38% vs 29% total).

Figure 32: Preferred news topics among news advocates



Base: Accessed news in the past 7 days: news advocates (n=331), Australian Adults (n=5,533).

N1a. Which of the following types of news do you usually prefer to access or follow?

Note: Results for 'Other', 'Don't know' and 'Refused' not shown (<0.5% for 'Other', 0% for 'Refused' and 1% for 'Don't know'). Only the top 5 topics are shown. Green upward arrows indicate results significantly higher than all other Australian adults; red downward arrows indicate results significantly lower than all other Australian adults.

Changes in access

News advocates were the most likely of all segments to have consumed more news at the time of survey than the year before, with 2 in 5 reported having consumed more or a lot more than last year, almost twice as likely than the average Australian adult (40% vs 22% total). Among a small group (5%) whose news consumption has reduced this year, the most common reason was finding news content too distressing or negative.

Most interview participants reported that their level of news consumption has remained consistently high and largely unchanged over the past year, with many perceiving themselves as consuming more news than those around them. This sustained engagement reflects both the importance they place on staying informed and the extent to which news

consumption is embedded in their daily routines. A few noted slight increases, typically due to having more time after retirement or reduced work commitments and one participant described heightened engagement during major events such as elections, global conflicts or significant sporting moments. Notably, while survey results indicate a small minority of news advocates have reduced their news consumption mainly due to distressing content, none of the interview participants reported doing so, instead describing a high level of resilience or having developed effective strategies to manage the emotional impact.

'I'll probably get more news online than I used to. I'm retired now, so I basically can access the news whenever I want to, which wasn't always possible when I was working.'
(*News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city*)

'It's probably remained the same. I probably watched a little bit more when there was an election on for Queensland and for the Australia election. it's the right amount currently ... Probably also major sporting events like Olympics, or major sporting event.'
(*News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city*)

Attitudes and motivations

Role and purpose of news

Nearly all news advocates consider it important to stay up to date with current events (93% vs 72% total) and view news as their primary source for understanding issues (81% vs 58% total), both significantly higher than the average Australian adult. They are also more likely to agree that going without news for a few days makes them feel out of touch or uninformed (66% vs 46% total).

This sentiment was echoed in qualitative interviews, where many participants expressed a strong desire to maintain general awareness of current affairs and stay informed about developments in Australia and globally. A few participants, particularly older retirees, mentioned following news closely out of fear of losing touch with the world, highlighting a unique reliance on news as a way to feel connected to society and those around them among older Australians.

'There's a lot of things happening and I don't want to get out of touch...I want to keep up to date with what's happening around the world.'
(*News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city*)

'I've got interest in what's happening in the world and what's happening in politics. And you know, I'd like to be up to date with what's happening in Australia and around the world.'
(*News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city*)

News tends to integrate into their social interactions, with 7 in 10 (71% vs 47% total) agreeing that they like sharing news stories with friends and family and 3 in 5 (58% vs 33% total) agreeing that news forms the basis of many daily conversations, both to a higher extent than the average Australian adult.

Qualitative interviews reinforced this, with some participants noting that they share news stories with friends and family to spark discussion and compare opinions.

‘News plays a huge role in my life I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but to be honest, it really does. Because I'm genuinely interested and I'm stimulated by, you know, knowing that I'm up to speed and I'm knowledgeable about what's happening, you know, in my community and around the world. And often, you know, discussions I had with others in relation to the news that I come across.’

(News advocates, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

‘Sometimes I will mention something to my partner or my partner will mention something to me, but because we both tend to be looking at the same things, it's more comparing opinions.’

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

News advocates also demonstrate a strong interest in a wide range of news topics (92% vs 74% total), significantly more than the average Australian adult.

This was echoed in qualitative interviews, where all participants mentioned they enjoy keeping up with current affairs, which often span diverse topics. While many consume news across multiple genres, their primary focus tends to align with personal interests and areas of relevance.

Accessing and navigating news

News advocates demonstrate strong skills and resourcefulness in accessing news compared to the average Australian adult. Nine in ten (92% vs 83% total) agree that accessing news is easy these days and that they have the resources they need to access the news they want whenever they want (91% vs 80% total). They are also more likely than the average Australian adult to be confident in their ability to identify bias and misinformation (79% vs 67% total) and tend to consult multiple sources before trusting a story (76% vs 53% total).

Interview participants echoed these findings, noting that news is easier to access now than ever before, largely due to the convenience of the internet, which enables people to stay up to date anytime and anywhere.

‘I mean, there's more access because you have the Internet now ... and you can access news pretty much instantly with Google. The Internet's changed everything, hasn't it? You only used to have one. It would only be the TV or the newspaper or the radio, simple. There's only those 3 or, you know, magazines, whatever.’

(News advocates, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Interview participants expressed greater confidence in identifying bias in topics they know well. Most reported doing due diligence by comparing coverage of the same topic across multiple sources to verify and cross-check narratives. However, this practice is generally limited to topics of personal interest or relevance, as fact checking can be time consuming and cognitively demanding.

'I think I can pick that sort of thing out, particularly if I if I have some extra knowledge on what the topic was ... Because I'd like to feel that I'm well informed on most things that I can pick that out ... I've looked it up and just see if there's something else that that can either substantiate or disagree with what was being said, if it was something that was near and dear to me, yes, definitely. And particularly that when it comes to perhaps medical issues.. For instance, comparing some vitamin products to be able to heal and cure all, you know, you need to be able to make sure that you know the facts are there.'

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

'I watch a number of different channels to get different perspectives on events. Sometimes I'll watch exactly the same event from 4 or 5 different perspectives and sometimes it's hard to work out that they're actually telling the same story.'

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

Paying for news

Notably, news advocates are more likely than any other segment to be willing to pay for the news content they want (37% vs 18% total).

However, in contrast to the survey findings, most interview participants expressed reluctance to pay for news and primarily consume content from free sources. This is likely because the interview participants are primarily retirees with limited disposable income to allocate towards ongoing news subscriptions.

'I don't pay for any extra, like I don't have Sky or anything like that. I don't listen to that news...I prefer to watch news on free-to-air TV because it's just it's there. And I think it's probably pretty up-to-date. I can't see me wanting to pay for news.'

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

'I'm retired. I don't have news subscriptions. I can't. It's like streaming services ... I can't endlessly subscribe.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

As a workaround to paywalled online news, some mentioned reading only the headlines of locked articles and then searching for related coverage on free news sites for further information.

'I read the newspapers online, although I don't have a subscription. I predominantly just read the headlines. I don't pay for any subscriptions. I look at the Herald Sun headlines and The Age headlines and then if there's a particular heading, I suppose, because they only put the one paragraph in. If I feel like I need to know more, I'm interested in more, I can go to the free one, which is news.com.au.'

(News advocates, Male, age 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Quality, diversity and objectivity of news in Australia

News advocates hold a more positive perception of the state of news in Australia compared to the average Australian adult. Three in 5 (59% vs 44% total) agree that Australian professional news sources are high quality, just over a half believe the country has some of the world's best journalists (53% vs 39% total) and half agree that news sources in Australia include different perspectives on current issues (51% vs 38% total). However, given their

broad interest in diverse topics, they are also more likely than the average Australian adult to feel that the range of topics covered in Australian news is limited (44% vs 36% total).

Qualitative interviews reinforced participants' generally positive views of professional mainstream news in Australia, particularly public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS, which were valued for their evidence-based journalism and factual reporting. However, some expressed concern about a broader decline in the quality and diversity of journalism in recent years due to the rise of digital journalism. They noted that increasing pressure to publish quickly, driven by both industry demands and consumer expectations, may encourage news outlets to prioritise speed over accuracy and editorial rigour, potentially contributing to the spread of misinformation.

'Social media has naturally had a devastating effect on journalism itself ... because everything is gotta be instantaneous, we need it now and we need to put it up online. Does that mean they're in so much of a hurry to get something out? But often it's not entirely correct, it's so rushed that they make errors. It's when something happens in the US and these papers and news sites are all very keen to be the first ones to tell you all about it, but often what they're telling you is just what they found out from the sources on the Internet as well. They are in too much of a hurry to get things out. It's like that story on the shooting at the church in America this morning. So how much misinformation came out about that? I don't know, you've got to wait for things to settle down a little bit before exactly you know what's going on. The reporters have got to be first on the spot and telling you, this is what's happening and that's what's happening. And often it's not until you get to the stage where they or actually get a press conference with a with a local policeman or law enforcement., then you get the full idea of what's going on ... '

(News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city)

Related to this is the concern that the lowered barriers to publishing, particularly on social media, have weakened the overall quality of journalism in Australia. Whereas traditional news production once required significant investment, infrastructure and editorial oversight, helping to uphold professional standards, today anyone can publish content online without verification or accountability. This shift is seen as reducing quality, blurring the line between factual reporting and opinion pieces and also contributing to the spread of misinformation (as with the speed of publication).

'Once it costed a lot of money to put forward news or opinions. Nowadays that capital expense is gone ... buy a fancy camera and stick onto the internet and you can see anything you like and the whole world has access to it for nothing. I'm concerned that this means there's no longer a filter, whereas before to put out an opinion required some financial backing to do this. Unfortunately, the financial backing was often commercial financial backing, but at least that was a filter. Now anybody can give an authority version of the news without actually indicating that you are an idiot under the sun. That concerned me.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

Survey results suggest that news advocates expressed similar levels of agreement to the average Australian that news has become more biased over time, with interview participants acknowledging that some degree of bias or agenda exists across all news outlets but can vary by topic and organisation. Many felt that bias and sensationalism are particularly pronounced in political coverage and in commercial or Murdoch-owned media.

'I think the tone is fine until it's a political news story and then it's always not only biased, but sometimes quite negative ... I don't think I've found any news source that just gives me the facts. They are loaded with bias, so Cox is loaded with the right-wing bias and CNN is loaded with left wing bias and Al Jazeera is loaded with Islamic bias and you know you watch the same story on 3 or 4 or 5 different channels and you think probably got a good 360° perspective now. But they're all biased, so you know the truth is probably somewhere right in the middle. And how do I ever ascertain that, I can't.'

(News advocates, Female, 65–74, SA, Capital city)

'There's absolutely biases, depending on which newspaper you read ... When they are trying to report on facts that an event that's happened or a crime or financial things there's not going to be any biases there but when it comes to politics of course... that's where biases come in ... It just depends on what they're reporting ... There's not always a hidden agenda or a particular bias either here or there on everything.'

(News advocates, Male, 55–64, Vic, Rest of state)

Negative news

While a third find news too negative or distressing (33% vs 42% total), this proportion is much lower compared to the total population.

Mirroring the survey results, all participants from qualitative interviews could compartmentalise negative news and none reported the impact of negative news on mental health or volume of news consumed. They are often good at consuming news objectively to reduce the emotional impact through disassociation. Some further noted that negative news such as war and crime, despite the negative and distressing nature, are still news and hence important to consume for a balanced view of current affairs. Given the high volume of news consumed by the news advocates, it is possible that they are less emotionally sensitive to distressing news coverage than others due to regular exposure.

'I'm able to kind of dissociate my emotions from it. My emotions, my mental health side, the psychosocial area. I can dissociate and look at it quite objectively.'

(News Advocates, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

'What I assume is what is happening and I don't let it affect me in any way ... After I've seen it, I don't dwell on anything.'

(News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

'Yes, I would consume the things that are distressing or unpleasant, I would read that because that's needed. It's reality. I read the news to keep abreast of the war, what's happening.'

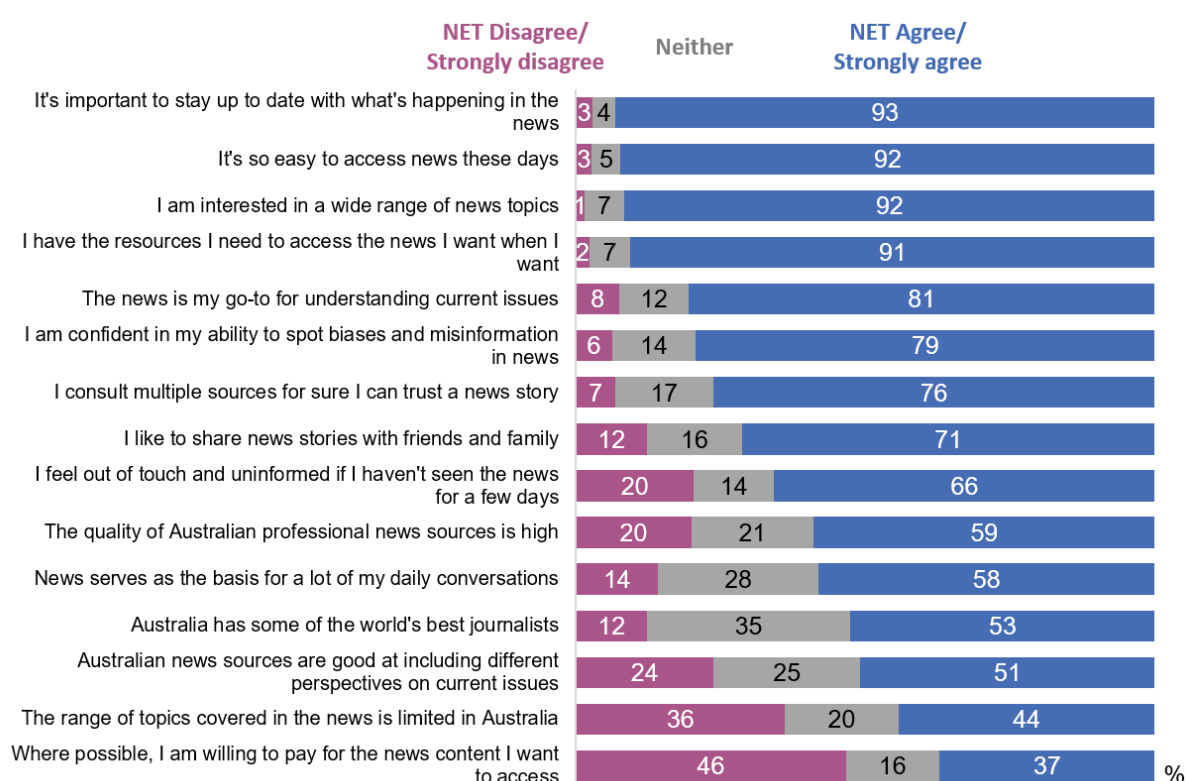
(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

However, participants expressed a desire for news that does not focus exclusively on negativity and called for more positive, uplifting or human-centred stories to balance the negativity prevalent in political coverage.

'Maybe just a little bit more good news. News doesn't have to all be doom and gloom and bad news. There's lots of things that are happening in the world that are good. There are some people out there that are doing amazing things and innovative things. You need to sort of restore human faith a little bit more in some of the news articles. For instance, there was one article on Palestine the other day. I know what is happening there is awful, but then they showed the story of the doctors that were working there and they were doing absolutely amazing things with dreadful circumstances and it did lift you to think that people were still caring. I think there needs to be a little bit more of that kind of reporting with all the doom and gloom, there's always good somewhere or something that can help, not gloss it over, but offset the negativities.'

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, Qld, Capital city)

Figure 33: Top news attitudes among news advocates



Base: Total sample: diversity seekers (n=635).

N9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements...?

Note: Results for 'Don't know', 'Refused' and 'Not applicable' not shown (varied per statement, from 0 to 2% for 'Not applicable', 0% for 'Don't know' and 'Refused'). Only attitudes that were representative of the segment (i.e., where 'NET agree/strongly agree' was significantly higher than all other Australian adults) were charted. Results <1% were not shown in chart.

News barriers and opportunities

All news advocates are habitual and consistent consumers of news who accessed at least some types of news in the 7 days before the survey. Survey results show no apparent barriers to news access for this group; they are motivated to stay informed, are highly skilled at navigating a wide range of media and show strong media literacy. However, qualitative interviews revealed several common themes that can make consuming news challenging in an increasingly digital world.

Paywall

Paywalls were mentioned by some as a potential barrier that limits their ability to compare perspectives and opinions across different online news sites, particularly given that all qualitative participants preferred to access news for free. One participant had explored the limited free articles offered by certain subscription-based outlets (for example, *The Guardian*), but felt the perspectives were broadly similar to the freely available coverage from ABC or SBS and therefore did not feel they were missing out by not subscribing.

'The thing that concerns me is that a lot of the opinions, what I would call valid opinions, are behind paywalls by newspapers like The Australian, which may or may not be balanced, but is behind a pay wall. The Telegraph in Sydney is behind a paywall. The Age in Melbourne is behind a paywall and so I tend not to bother with it If I can get it on ABC ... I have a limited number of views per month [on The Guardian], but it's free. So, if there's an article that I want to see a different opinion on, I would look on it using the Guardian. It's just giving me the same opinion from a slightly different bit of eyes. I don't feel that I'm missing out on anything. I'm not subscribing.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

Nevertheless, participants acknowledged that paywalls could restrict access to content exclusive to subscription-based outlets and, in turn, hinder their ability to cross-check information for a balanced view on issues or compare across multiple sources.

Gaps in local news services

While most participants felt satisfied with the range of national and international news available, many highlighted a decline in local and community-level reporting. The reduction of local coverage in mainstream media, alongside the closure of local newspapers, was seen as diminishing the diversity of local perspectives.

'Because I'm not interested in using something like Facebook, I now miss out on news from my local community. The local paper disappeared when it lost the advertising revenue from real estate. I think many of the local papers around Melbourne mainly existed to advertise home sales and once that moved online, the local papers died. As a result, we lost all the local content that used to be delivered to our letterbox once a week. The national broadsheets aren't going to tell you what's happening in your neighbourhood, so it's just a matter of seeking that sort of news elsewhere ... You can read things online if you're tech-savvy, but I have plenty of friends who aren't. If they still had a local paper, they'd know what was going on. Now they don't have one and they're unaware of what's happening locally and no one seems to care.'

(News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city)

Loss of diversity

Some also pointed to gaps in viewpoint diversity more broadly, attributing this to concentrated media ownership and the repetitive, often sensationalised content prevalent in commercial outlets. They advocated for greater diversity in media ownership to broaden the range of viewpoints and reduce the concentration of influence among major companies such as News Corporation Australia. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of sustained funding for independent public broadcasters such as ABC and SBS to support media plurality.

'I'd like to have something done about the ownership of some of the print and television media by people like Murdock and Stokes. Perth only has one morning newspaper and it's run by Stokes and a lot of the other states have daily news sites purely run by Rupert Murdoch and he's journalists, if you call him that. There should be more diversification as far as I'm concerned and the ABC should maintain their funding. There should be no further cuts to the ABC.'

(News advocates, Male, age 65–74, Vic, Capital city)

Challenges in verifying news and combating misinformation

While comprehension of news is generally not an issue for this high consumption group, many interview participants noted the increasing difficulty of distinguishing facts from assumptions or opinions, particularly on social media, where sources are often not explicitly cited and verification is challenging. This, combined with the cognitively demanding and time-consuming process of cross-checking information, means that validation tends to be reserved for topics of personal interest rather than applied to all information encountered. As a result, gaps in verification may contribute to the unintentional spread of misinformation.

While participants supported minimal government interference in editorial decision-making and news production, a few also recognised the need for stronger regulation of social media platforms to curb the spread of misinformation. Suggestions included encouraging content creators to clearly label their sources to support verification and fact checking.

'It should be quite clearly indicated. So, this is the opinion of the person who's delivering it and this is based on AB and C.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

There is a shared understanding that government or platform-level regulation can only curb misinformation to a limited extent; ultimately, consumers must take responsibility for being informed, critical and discerning in how they evaluate information.

'My only concern is social media. There is no real declaration of the source of information or evidence on which it's based ... If you look at something on an article on social media, it's all flashing clips. There's no questioning of I believe in this, I'm promoting this. There's no questioning of the source of that opinion ... Just because you are on some new digital media, it doesn't remove the necessity to back it up ... The responsibility falls back to the reader. If you see something that looks very good or terrible, check from somewhere else. Is it true or does it sound too good to be true? Because if it sounds too good to be true, that suggests that it's too good to be true. And you can't legislate that.'

(News advocates, Male, age 75+, NT, Capital city)

Participants also expressed a strong desire for more factual, objective reporting and less bias and sensationalism to further strengthen the quality and integrity of Australian journalism.

Suggestions included strengthening journalistic training from early stages, emphasising objectivity, upholding ethical standards and fostering critical thinking skills among emerging journalists.

'I would say maybe the change has to happen back at the universities with training journalists, because the university ... can be pretty biased and present things in a biased way, especially for young journalists coming through. They can have their political minds shaped at the university level and they do away with their ability to critically think and critically question. I think the very root cause would be proper education of journalists.'

(News advocates, Female, age 65–74, SA, Capital city)

A day in the life: news advocates

Segment 7: news advocates – Meet Alan: The daily news deep-diver

Alan is a retired man in his late sixties who has spent most of his adult life closely following the news. For Alan, being well-informed is a lifelong habit that has become even more important after retirement. It's a daily rhythm, a mental exercise and a lens through which he makes sense of and stays connected to the world and his network of family and friends now that he's stepped back from work.

Most mornings, Alan wakes up to ABC Radio before he's even out of bed. Over coffee, he transitions to online news sites, scanning headlines from ABC, SBS, *The Age*, or *The Sydney Morning Herald* and clicking on articles that matter to him; usually politics, global affairs, major national issues and, occasionally, big sporting events. Throughout the day he dips in and out of news websites for updates or deeper analysis. Evenings revolve around TV news: the 6pm bulletin, ABC's 7pm news and often 7.30 or other current affairs programs. He takes time out after dinner each night to discuss the days reporting with his wife, or adult children when they visit.

Alan's relationship with news is shaped by long-standing trust in public broadcasters and quality outlets. ABC and SBS are his anchors, free to access, neutral, factual and less prone to sensationalism than commercial news brands. He will occasionally watch Seven or Nine for variety, but considers them more surface-level, focused on headlines rather than depth. Alan actively avoids news from social media and thinks platforms like Facebook or X are crowded with unverified claims, opinion-driven commentary and low-quality content. The low barrier to publishing worries him and he believes the rise of misinformation places a greater burden on readers to fact-check news on social media and think critically.

Despite consuming a large volume of often distressing news, Alan's learned to compartmentalise and views negative news as an important reflection of reality. What concerns him more is the broader decline in journalism: fewer local newspapers, newsroom cuts and increasing pressure for speed over accuracy. He believes high journalistic standards, media diversity and strong public broadcasters are vital for an informed society.

Conclusion

This research provides an in-depth picture of how Australians navigate an increasingly complex news environment shaped by rapid technological change, shifting audience expectations and growing concerns about misinformation and bias, as well as the spectrum of ways Australians engage with news. While news remains a central part of public life, the ways Australians access, trust and interpret news have become more varied and uneven. The 7 news user groups identified through this segmentation illustrate a broad continuum of engagement, ranging from those who consume news incidentally or sceptically to those who engage deeply and habitually across multiple formats.

The role of social media

Social media now plays a significant role in how news is encountered, particularly for those who prioritise convenience or follow breaking developments reactively. While this provides immediacy and accessibility, it also introduces challenges, including exposure to misinformation, repetition of similar perspectives and emotional overload. These effects are often more pronounced among those who are already disengaged or fatigued by news. At the same time, traditional platforms, particularly FTA TV and radio, continue to anchor the routines of many Australians, especially older audiences, offering familiarity, trust and perceived reliability. For others, digital platforms complement or replace these routines, providing speed, flexibility and, for some, opportunities to compare information across sources.

The challenges of critical news consumption

A key finding is that diverse and critical news consumption is not widespread, but concentrated among a relatively small proportion of the population. Engaging with multiple sources, seeking out different perspectives and verifying information is an active process, requiring time, motivation and a degree of media literacy. These behaviours are therefore not evenly distributed, but are more commonly observed among older Australians and audiences who prioritise news as part of their routines. Many of these individuals developed their news habits in a pre-digital environment, where sources were fewer and more clearly defined.

However, even among these more active consumers, the process of navigating the current news environment can be somewhat challenging. The volume of information, the pace of updates and the range of sources mean that verifying information can be time-consuming and requires focus. As a result, cross-checking is not consistently applied to all content, indicating that even highly engaged audiences face practical limits in their ability to fully interrogate the news they encounter.

Trust and convenience as key drivers

For the majority of Australians, news consumption is shaped less by active choice and more by habit, convenience and time constraints. Many rely on a limited set of familiar sources, especially public broadcasters, which are perceived to be more trustworthy and less biased compared to commercial news outlets. Others, particularly younger Australians and those balancing work and family responsibilities, access news primarily through digital and social media platforms, where content is encountered incidentally and shaped by algorithmic curation.

These differing patterns of engagement have implications for how news is understood and evaluated. For some Australians, passive consumption, combined with limited verification, increases reliance on what is presented rather than what is actively sought. In digital environments, this can result in repeated exposure to similar perspectives, partial information and content shaped by platform algorithms. At the same time, the effort required to assess credibility means that many Australians do not routinely question or validate the information they encounter.

Across the population, the cognitive effort associated with navigating the modern news landscape emerges as a challenge. The need to independently verify information, compare sources and critically assess content does not align well with how most Australians engage with news in practice. Instead, many adopt lower-effort approaches, such as relying on familiar or trusted sources, or consuming news as it is presented to them.

Trust plays a key role in shaping these behaviours. Public broadcasters, in particular, stand out as widely trusted sources that are often relied upon without the need for verification. For many Australians, especially those who are less engaged or time-constrained, this trust effectively substitutes for active validation behaviours. At the same time, broader concerns about misinformation, bias and sensationalism contribute to news fatigue and, in some cases, deliberate avoidance of news content.

Shared expectations and barriers to engagement

Although differences in behaviour are significant across the spectrum, Australians share common expectations of what news should deliver. Many want journalism that is more balanced, contextual and transparent, with clearer separation between fact and opinion. Emotional strain, stemming from distressing, negative or sensational content, remains a major barrier for those who intentionally limit their news exposure. At the same time, audiences across the engagement spectrum express interest in a wider diversity of perspectives, broader topic coverage and stronger representation of community-level issues. Access also remains a concern – paywalls and declining local coverage restrict the ability of some Australians to stay informed, especially when reliable alternatives are limited.

Implications for the future of news consumption

Taken together, these findings highlight a persistent tension for the contemporary news consumer. While Australians value being informed, and, in many cases, feel confident navigating news, the capacity to engage deeply and critically is uneven. Diverse news consumption is not simply a matter of individual choice, but of available time, mental energy and access to trusted and accessible information.

As the information environment continues to evolve, the central challenge for news producers, regulators and policymakers will be supporting a system that is both trustworthy and adaptable to diverse audience needs. Efforts to support an informed public should acknowledge that not all Australians will actively seek out diverse perspectives or routinely verify information. The continued importance of public broadcasters highlights their central role in providing accessible and trusted information, particularly for those who are less able or inclined to navigate a complex media environment. More broadly, the findings point to the need to consider how high-quality, diverse news can be made more accessible through low-effort pathways, recognising that for most Australians, news consumption is shaped less by deliberate choice and more by habit, convenience and trust.

As noted at the outset of this report, Australia's news consumption patterns are evolving. Powerful structural changes, including new technologies, the rise of alternative voices and increasingly dynamic media environment, are shaping and rapidly transforming news consumption. Continued research into news consumption habits, including areas that were beyond the scope of the current research, such as the impact of artificial intelligence and news influencers, is needed to explore new and emerging ways that people are accessing news.

Appendix 1

Table 2: Participant profile of qualitative segmentation interviews

	Sceptical passives	Online browsers	News neutrals	Digital devotees	Trusting traditionalists	Diversity seekers	News Advocates
Age							
18-24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
25-34	2	1	0	3	0	0	0
35-44	0	4	4	2	0	0	0
45-54	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
55-64	0	0	0	0	3	3	1
65-74	0	0	0	0	2	2	3
75+	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Gender							
Women	4	3	3	1	3	1	2
Men	1	2	2	4	2	4	3
Location							
Capital city	3	5	3	5	1	1	4
Rest of state	2	0	2	0	4	4	1
Household income							
Under \$40,000	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
\$40,000 - \$79,999	0	0	2	0	2	1	1
\$80,000 - \$149,999	2	0	2	2	1	3	4
\$150,000 or more	1	5	1	3	1	1	0
Have children in household							
Yes	2	4	4	2	0	0	0
No	3	1	1	3	5	5	5
Highest education							
Year 12 or under	2	0	1	0	0	1	1
Advanced Diploma/Diploma	0	0	1	0	3	1	3

Certificate I to IV	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Graduate Diploma/Bachelor Degree/Postgraduate Degree	3	5	3	5	2	2	1
Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas							
Quintile 1 - Most disadvantage	3	0	1	0	2	0	0
Quintile 2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Quintile 3	1	0	0	2	2	1	1
Quintile 4	0	2	3	3	1	2	1
Quintile 5 - Least disadvantage	1	3	1	0	0	0	3