

How Quebecers Consume the News

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Contents

List of tables	7
Introduction	9
Part one: Quantitative surveys	
1. Main findings	13
1.1 Time with the news	13
1.2 Media used	14
1.3 Subjects of interest	15
1.4 News knowledge	16
2. Data collection	16
2.1 Regional approach	17
2.2 Weighting	18
3. Measuring the changes that have occurred since 2007	19
4. 2009 context	25
4.1 Popularity of the various media in greater detail	25
4.2 Role of sociodemographic variables	28
5. News categories	31
5.1 Level of relative interest in news categories	31
5.2 Preferred media platform for news in each category	33
5.3 What interests news junkies	40
6. News knowledge	42
6.1 Sociodemographic variables and news knowledge	45
6.2 Media use and news knowledge	47
7. Use of the new media	48
7.1 Subscriptions to e-mail newsletters and interactivity	48
8. Conclusion	50

**Part two: Qualitative study on use
of the new media to follow the news**

9. Main findings.	53
9.1 Television is still the main news source, alone or with other media.	53
9.2 Internet use for personal interests and for social networking and as a complement to other media	54
9.3 Blogs and forums: limited interest and seen less reliable than traditional media.	54
9.4 Limited use of cellular phones, podcasting and satellite radio	55
9.5 Limited use of other technologies for getting the news	55
9.6 What it means to be well informed	55
10. Methodology	55
10.1 Sample.	55
10.2 Data collection: semi-structured interviews	57
11. Internet use	58
11.1 Context of Internet use	59
11.2 Use of the Internet for the news	60
11.2.1 Two user groups	61
11.2.2 Attributes of the Internet as a news source.	63
11.2.3 Internet tools used to follow the news.	65
11.2.4 Search strategies	65
11.3 Blogs and forums	66
11.4 Reliability of news on the Internet: blogs and forums versus traditional media	69
11.5 Other uses of the Internet	72
11.5.1 Facebook	72
11.5.2 Entertainment and practical information.	73
11.6 Other technologies used to follow the news.	73
12. Understanding the changes in media use since 2006.	73
13. Main news sources: a hybrid pattern	77
13.1 First source when an event occurs	79
13.2 Platforms used for additional news.	81
14. Media used as news sources	81
14.1 Newspapers.	82
14.1.1 Paid newspapers	82
14.1.2 Free newspapers	83

14.2 Radio	85
14.3 Television	87
14.4 Magazines	88
14.5 Friends and family as a news source	88
15. The news	90
15.1 Subjects of interest	90
15.2 Being a well-informed person	93
15.2.1 What it means to be well informed	95
15.3 Too much information?	96
16. Conclusion	97
Appendix A	99
Appendix B.	120
Appendix C	121
Appendix D	122
Appendix E.	124

List of tables

Part one: Quantitative surveys

Table 1 – Average time spent each day using the media for news purposes (number of minutes) ¹	20
Table 2 – Average number of minutes of television viewing each day for news purposes according to sociodemographic variables (2007-2009; all respondents)	21
Table 3 – Average number of minutes of new media use each day for news purposes according to sociodemographic variables (2007-2009; all respondents)	22
Table 4 – Breakdown of time spent each day using traditional media and new media in relation to all time spent following the news (% of minutes; 2007, 2009)	24
Table 5 – Estimated use of various media for news purposes (in 2007, in relation to 2005) as a percentage	25
Table 6 – Daily use of various media for news purposes (2009; as a % of the respondents)	26
Table 7 – Average number of minutes of media use each day for news purposes (2009; users of the media concerned)	27
Table 8 – Overall media use according to sociodemographic variables (2009)	29
Table 9 – Index of the level of interest in each news category (2009)	32
Table 10 – Proportion of respondents who select a particular media platform, by news category (2009; % of the respondents) ..	34
Table 11 – Share of respondents using television, by news category (2009)	37
Table 12 – Share of respondents using newspapers, by news category (2009)	38

1. The totals in the tables do not always equal to the sum of the components because of rounding of figures.

Table 13 – Share of respondents using the Internet, by news category (2009)	39
Table 14 – Interest in news categories on the part of news junkies and the disengaged	41
Table 15 – Breakdown of answers to the question: “Do you remember a news report about...?” (% of respondents)	44
Table 16 – Links between the first and the second question on the news (% of answers)	45
Table 17 – Results of news knowledge index according to sociodemographic variables	46
Table 18 – Correlation between media use and news knowledge	47
Table 19 – Internet access and subscription to e-mail newsletters (2009)	49
Table 20 – Have you reacted online to news? (over the past seven days, 2009).	50
 Part two: Qualitative study on use of the new media to follow the news	
Table 1 – Breakdown of sample by sex and age	57
Table 2 – Changes in media use for news purposes, according to platform	74
Table 3 – Main sources of news identified	77
Table 4 –The first sources of information for a news story	80
Table 5 – Interest in local and regional, national and international news.	90
Table 6 – Respondents’ self-assessment according to consumer categories established from quantitative data	93

Introduction

To say that we live in an era offering an overabundance of information platforms and products is undoubtedly a commonplace; even so, it forms the background of this research. Practices that were unknown or just emerging 10 years ago have become habits for many citizens and consumers, such as reading free newspapers, if available, watching all-news channels and surfing the Internet, with new features, such as audio and video news content, as well as blogs. Other options have recently become available, such as the new generation of cellular telephones, MP3 players (the iPod and others), web feeds (RSS) and other software gadgets (widgets).

In a world awash in information, the time people spend with the news does not appear to be on the rise, at least according to data gathered in the United States.¹ It is therefore reasonable to believe that, over all, the use of new media reduces the use of older media.² But to what extent and at what rate? Which media are the losers and which are emerging as the winners?

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1. According to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, Americans spent an average of 66 minutes a day following the news in 2008, or the same amount of time as 12 years earlier (1996), before the advent of the Internet. Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *Audience Segments in a Changing News Environment. Key News Audiences Now Blend Online and Traditional Sources*. Pew Research Center Biennial News Consumption Survey, August 2008, p. 9.
 2. A survey by the Canadian Internet Project shows that Internet users spend less time watching television than non-users. The difference is four hours a week. Charles Zamaria and Fred Fletcher, *Canada Online! The Internet, Media and Emerging Technologies: Uses, Attitudes, Trends and International Comparisons 2007*. Toronto: Canadian Internet Project, 2008, p. 115.

Which groups of the population are especially in flux? Which factors are driving the change in practices the most?³

The media market, which is equally important from the cultural and commercial standpoints, is measured on a regular basis. A large quantity of statistics is produced by survey firms, the media themselves and other sources, such as governments and universities. Some studies give a general picture of media consumption without zeroing in on news consumption. Others provide an extremely detailed picture of consumption by product and media platform, such as BBM and Nielsen for radio and television, NadBank for newspapers and comScore Media Metrix Canada for the Internet. It is impossible, however, to put all these data side by side to obtain an overview of the choices that Quebecers make between the various news products available to them. Most people are quite attached to television, but what share does it represent of the time they spend with the news each day? And what about new media? Are there subjects we tend to look for in newspapers rather than on the Internet? And to what extent do practices vary as a function of age, sex, education and place of residence?

Early in 2007 the Centre d'études sur les médias undertook a multiyear research program with the goal of gaining a better understanding of Quebecers' news habits and learning how they are changing over time. For this initiative, we have drawn inspiration from sources such as the biennial surveys conducted in the United States by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press – surveys showing that each of the traditional media platforms has lost ground since the Internet arrived as a news source. The Pew Research Center has also succeeded in determining how Americans' overall interest in the news is changing.

3. Our colleague André-H. Caron of the Université de Montréal aptly describes the scope of the changes in progress in the media universe: [Translation] «The media now depend on new factors and new technology platforms that are increasingly present in our daily lives; they define new spaces, new collective and private dimensions, new times and new rhythms. Freebie, mobility, spontaneity and availability are the values that compose them and that we must therefore study in greater depth.» André-H. Caron, *Perception de l'importance des traditionnels médias comme source d'information par les internautes québécois*, Centre d'études sur les médias, September 2006, <http://www.cem.ulaval.ca/Observations2006-07/InternautesInformation.pdf>.

It is not enough merely to measure shifts of interest from one medium to another. Consumers' appetite for the news in general may diminish as new entertainment activities lure them away from the news media. Prime examples are video games, live blogs and conversations on social networks.

We conducted our first survey with a representative sample of Francophone Quebecers early in 2007 and a second survey two years later. These surveys have enabled us to determine which media Quebecers use regularly to follow the news and for how long (for each platform and in aggregate). They have also provided information on the respondents' interest in various subjects. By comparing the results of each exercise, we can see how practices have changed in the two-year interval.

Even though such surveys provide information on the changes taking place and the groups driving them, they do not provide an understanding of the causes. To learn more about the factors likely to shape behaviour over time, a more qualitative approach was needed. We therefore met individually with a number of the participants who took part in our quantitative surveys. We focused on heavy users of new technology and we tried to determine what motivates them when they choose and use the media, especially the Internet and the so-called new communication technologies.

This publication presents the findings of all the work we have done since 2007.

Part one

Quantitative surveys

Michel Lemieux*

and

Daniel Giroux**

1. Main findings

1.1 Time with the news

Francophone Quebecers seemed more interested in the news in 2009 than they were two years earlier. On average, they spent 15 minutes more each day staying informed about the subjects that interest them. Daily news consumption in Québec increased from 90 to 105 minutes.¹ The increase involves television and the Internet above all, but newspapers and radio also gained a few minutes.

This heightened interest in the news could be purely situational, owing to the events that were making headlines early in 2009 when we conducted the survey: the inauguration of Barack Obama in the United States; the impact, in Canada, of the

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1. The Pew Research Center has also observed variations of more or less than 10% on the part of Americans, depending on the year.

collapse of the financial markets; and the suspense surrounding the adoption of the federal budget when the country was in the midst of an economic crisis. Of the 19 subjects that we submitted to the respondents, the three for which interest was up significantly in 2009 vis-à-vis 2007 are international politics, business and finance, and Canadian politics.

1.2 Media used

In 2009, about half of Quebecers used new ways of access (the Internet and cellular telephones) to obtain a portion of their news. But such use represented only 16% of the total time they spent with the news. The remainder of the time (84%), people read the print version of a newspaper or a magazine, watched the news on television or listened to it on traditional radio.

Television is by far the most popular medium. In fact, 35% of the time people spend keeping up with the news each day goes to television. It attracts twice as much use as radio and newspapers (paid and free).

Age and occupation are the two socioeconomic variables that affect news consumption the most. People under the age of 35 are significantly less interested in news than the average, whereas people over the age of 45 are more dedicated followers of the news. Business owners, professionals, managers and retirees are above-average, whereas office workers, service employees, people at home or looking for work and students are less interested in the news.

The use of the new media is more pronounced among those under 45 than among older people. This relationship is reversed when it comes to the traditional media, whose popularity increases with age. People aged 45 or more contributed the most to the growth recorded for television from 2007 to 2009. One might have expected the increase for new media during that period to be due to the youngest respondents. It appears, however, that using new media for the news is levelling off among people under 35. Indeed, it was the oldest people who increased their time spent with the news on the Internet. Despite this growth, the oldest Quebecers still spend less time following the news on the Internet than young people do.

1.3 Subjects of interest

In 2009, as well as in 2007, local and regional news generated the most interest among our respondents. Such news is followed, in order of preference, by subjects related to science (break-throughs, health and environment), the weather and Québec politics. In 2007, international politics and Canadian politics came next, with equal popularity, whereas in 2009, international news generated greater interest than the domestic political debate.

As we have already pointed out, the three subjects that rose the most on our respondents' scale of interest between 2007 and 2009 are international news, the Canadian political scene and anything to do with business and finance.

The connection between age and degree of interest in the different categories is very strong. The older the respondents, the stronger their interest in local and regional news, politics (whether Québec, Canadian or international) and business and finance. Conversely, young people are the ones who are most interested in *faits divers*,² books, music and movies.

Education also plays a role. The more educated the respondent, the greater his or her interest in politics (Québec, Canadian and international), business and finance, travel and science. People who are less educated put news about public opinion, *faits divers*, cars, movies and international celebrities at the top of their list.

People do not use the Internet for news on the same subjects as they follow in the print media and on television and radio. The difference is pronounced. Quebecers turn to the Web for practical or recreational information above all. Conversely, the list of subjects that people follow in newspapers includes several subjects concerning democratic life. Political issues (local, Québec, Canadian and international), which are absent from the Internet list, occupy several places in the list of newspaper subjects.

2. There is no precise English equivalent for *faits divers*, which refers to news stories about crime, fires, accidents, unusual occurrences, etc.

1.4 News knowledge

In our 2009 survey, we included questions to determine the respondents' knowledge of the news.

Men obtained better results than women on questions that assessed what they recalled about the stories dominating the news when the survey was conducted. The same is true of the oldest respondents and those with a postsecondary education.

In addition, those who rely more on paid newspapers and weekly newspapers as news sources retained more news than those who rely on the other media, whether television, radio, websites or free newspapers.

2. Data collection

Our objective is to track the same group of about 500 people for several years. This so-called panel approach is often used to track changes in social and cultural practices. For instance, it will let us spot those participants whose habits change the most over time and analyze this subgroup in greater depth (through individual meetings or discussion groups). The great majority of the people we met with in 2007 had also taken part in the 2009 survey. We were obliged to replace a number of people we had lost track of, mainly because one of the companies that recruited the participants destroyed a participant list. The samples were completed with people selected randomly.

The participants³ in the two surveys were representative of Québec's French-speaking community in terms of age, sex and social class. We would like to thank them for their participation and above all for their interest in this exercise.

The questionnaires comprise a large number of questions, and the administration of them took almost 40 minutes each year. A large portion of the questions are too complex to be

3. The masculine is often used in this text to refer to both women and men.

asked on the telephone and require a visual presentation⁴ (for example, two-dimensional tables in which a check mark is placed in a box). Most of the questions also require explanations of the context and the opportunity to obtain clarification on the spot.

Our questionnaires are geared to a description of real behaviour. We wanted to avoid answers influenced by value judgments and social desirability, since certain media platforms are socially valued and considered “in.” The questionnaire used in 2009 is found in Appendix A.

In light of these requirements, we used the method known as the face-to-face questionnaire. In other words:

- People were recruited randomly from the general population at large;
- They came in person to a room where they answered the questions;
- In this way, groups of about 25 people were formed;
- The questions were presented in the form of electronic slides and the answers were written on the reply sheet provided;
- The project co-ordinator explained the precise meaning of each question and gave the respondents the opportunity to ask for clarification; and
- The people received a fee of \$30 to thank them for their participation.

2.1 Regional approach

Ideally, such surveys should include well-distributed samples from each region of Québec, in each type of locality, both rural and urban, with a perfect representation of cultural communities, and so on. It is assumed that all such factors affect behaviour involving the media.

4. The Internet option was eliminated because we were looking for a general sample, and the Internet would have eliminated 20% of the population in one fell swoop. From another standpoint, the Internet is itself a research medium and would have necessarily contaminated the composition of the sample.

With face-to-face interviews, however, it is almost impossible to have enough resources to cover Québec in its entirety. Instead, we developed a specific geographic strategy. In 2009, we selected five areas of Québec (Laval, Montréal, Québec City, Rivière-du-Loup and Victoriaville⁵) as being representative of the province as a whole. Moreover, we decided to limit our surveys to Francophones.

This approach is obviously imperfect, but we believe it is the best in the circumstances if we are to maintain both a complex questionnaire and a random selection of respondents in each area.

In all, 470 people completed our questionnaire in 2009, versus a total of 485 in 2007. With samples of this size, the margin of statistical error is $\pm 4.5\%$, 19 times out of 20.

2.2 Weighting

The data were weighted for each survey according to the respondents' age and sex, as a function of demographic statistics.⁶ We also did a regional weighting on the basis of the following assumptions:

- The respondents from the Island of Montréal represent respondents from the Island of Montréal (24.9% of Québec);
- The respondents from Laval represent respondents from the metropolitan Montréal region (MMR) excluding the Island of Montréal (20.5% of Québec); in the report they are referred to as “suburban Montréal” (SM);
- The respondents from Québec City represent respondents from metropolitan Québec City (9% of Québec); and

5. Victoriaville was added to the 2009 survey, although it was not part of the 2007 survey. To compensate, we decreased the number of respondents from Rivière-du-Loup by the same number.

6. Our samples already reflected a good allocation of age and sex in the population.

- In 2007, the respondents from Rivière-du-Loup and, in 2009, those from Rivière-du-Loup and Victoriaville represent, in equal shares, respondents from the rest of Québec (45.5% of Québec); they are referred to in the report as “the rest of Québec.”

3. Measuring the changes that have occurred since 2007

Francophone Quebecers now spend more time staying informed than they did two years ago.⁷ The increase is an average of 15 minutes a day (**Table 1**). Daily news consumption, including all media, rose from 90 to 105 minutes. The increase involves television and the Internet above all. Television was up by almost 8 minutes. Internet-related sources were up sharply, going from 12.8 minutes in 2007 to 16.7 minutes in 2009 (information/news sites of newspapers and other organizations, radio and television on the Web). Magazines and weeklies saw no significant changes.

7. Eleven of the survey questions were intended to define consumption of the various media. Each question concerned the time that the participants had spent the previous day («yesterday») using a specific media platform to become informed. Because «yesterday» was specified, it was easier for the respondents to provide an accurate estimate of their media use, which, we believe, enhances the reliability of the data collected. For each media platform, the following answers were proposed:

1. No reading, viewing or listening time
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

To obtain the average number of minutes, we used the usual method, which involves giving each answer the median number of minutes for its category. Thus a value of 8 minutes is given to the answer «1 to 15 minutes.» The matching values are, in order, 0 minutes (no reading, viewing or listening time), 8 minutes, 20 minutes, 38 minutes, 63 minutes and 80 minutes. This approach is standard. Appendix B contains the frequency tables prepared from the respondents' answers.

TABLE 1
Average time spent each day using the media for news purposes (number of minutes)

	2007	2009
	Number of minutes	Number of minutes
Newspapers	12.5	15.9
Newspapers on the Internet ¹	4.0	–
Free newspapers ²	2.9	1.7
Radio (news)	14	16.8
Internet radio	1.4	2.0
Television (news)	34.3	41.9
Internet television	0.9	1.7
Internet news	6.5	13
Weeklies	6.9	5.8
Magazines	6.6	6.0
News on cellular or BlackBerry	0.2	0.4
Total	90.2	105.3

1. In 2007, a distinction was made between “Internet newspapers” and the “Internet in general,” whereas in 2009 the two categories were combined under “Internet news.”
2. Free newspapers are available only in Montréal.

When we examine the increase in television viewing in greater detail by comparing the data from the two years according to the sociodemographic variables (**Table 2**), we see that:

- In all regions, the respondents watched more television to become informed in 2009, with the exception of the Québec City region;
- This increase involves the oldest respondents: the largest increases begin with the group aged 45 to 54;
- Even though the increase is noticeable for women, men have increased their television viewing for news purposes even more (from 34.3 minutes in 2007 to 44.4 minutes in 2009); and
- All levels of education are affected, but especially university graduates (from 32.7 minutes in 2007 to 48.5 minutes in 2009).

TABLE 2
Average number of minutes of television viewing each day
for news purposes according to sociodemographic variables
(2007-2009; all respondents)

	2007	2009
<i>Region</i>		
Island of Montréal	32.8	43.8
Metropolitan Montréal	30.6	35.4
Metropolitan Québec City	39.6	36.1
Rest of Québec	35.8	44.6
<i>Age</i>		
16-24	31.1	30.5
25-34	29.8	35.7
35-44	37.1	39.9
45-54	28.4	50.0
55-64	39.3	50.5
65 or more	40.3	46.5
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	34.3	44.4
Female	34.4	39.3
<i>Education</i>		
Secondary	33.1	38.5
College	35.6	41.2
University	32.7	48.5

Regarding the new means of obtaining the news (**Table 3**), we see that:

- The number of minutes that the respondents spent using the new media to obtain the news in 2009 doubled from 2007 in metropolitan Montréal (22.6 versus 10.3);
- The breakdown of data by age shows that this increase starts with the age group from 35 to 44, with the Internet becoming more important in the life of the older respon-

dents (for those 65 or more, for example, the average number of minutes has almost doubled, going from 6.7 in 2007 to 12.2 in 2009);

- The increase is seen only for men; and
- It involves all educational levels.

TABLE 3
Average number of minutes of new media use each day
for news purposes according to sociodemographic variables
(2007-2009; all respondents)

	2007	2009
<i>Region</i>		
Island of Montréal	18.3	17.3
Metropolitan Montréal	10.3	22.6
Metropolitan Québec City	12.7	11.8
Rest of Québec	12.4	16.1
<i>Age</i>		
16-24	20.6	21.3
25-34	20.8	17.3
35-44	14.7	23.3
45-54	10.1	14.9
55-64	8.5	13.3
65 and over	6.7	12.2
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	13.9	20.9
Female	13.1	13.5
<i>Education¹</i>		
High school	9.5	13.9
College	18.1	21.5
University	14.3	17.2

1. The results for “primary” education are not given because of the small number of people concerned.

Table 4 shows the relative importance of each media platform in the news diet of the average Francophone Quebecer and compares the gains and losses for each from 2007 to 2009. The new media stole 3.4% from the traditional media during those two years, but the traditional media are still predominant. Indeed, they garner 84% of the time spent seeking the news. The gain for media associated with the Internet did not take place at the expense of television or paid newspapers, whose shares increased, nor did it come at the expense of radio, whose share was unchanged. Rather, it was weeklies, magazines and free newspapers that lost ground.

The rank occupied by each media platform in the respondents' information habits has not changed since 2007. Television is the medium used most often and to which the most time is dedicated for news purposes. In fact, slightly more than a third of the time spent with the news goes to television. Next come print versions of newspapers (with paid newspapers leading the way) and radio, which each receive about one-sixth of the time. They are followed by information and news sites, with slightly more than one-tenth of the time, then regional and community weeklies, magazines and, coming a distant last, cellular telephones and BlackBerries, which are rarely used for news purposes.

TABLE 4
Breakdown of time spent each day using traditional media
and new media in relation to all time spent following the news
(% of minutes; 2007, 2009)

	2007	2009
<i>Traditional media</i>		
Television (news)	34.1	35.4
Radio (news)	17.0	17.1
Paid newspapers	13.9	14.4
Weeklies (community or regional)	9.4	8.7
Magazines	7.8	6.4
Free newspapers	4.4	2.1
Total traditional media	86.6	84.1
<i>New media</i>		
Information/news sites	11.1 ¹	12.1
Internet television	0.1	1.7
Internet radio	1.3	1.6
News on cellular or BlackBerry	0.1	0.6
Total new media	12.6	16.0
Total	100	100

1. In 2007, a distinction was made between “Internet newspapers” and the “Internet in general.”

In the 2007 survey, the participants had already indicated that their use of specialized television and information websites for news consumption was increasing. In response to the question “Over the past two years, state the media platforms that you use more and those that you use less,” the results presented in Table 5 were obtained.

TABLE 5
Estimated use of various media for news purposes
(in 2007, in relation to 2005) as a percentage

	Do not use	Use more	Use less	No change
Specialized television	16.5	50.0	9.9	23.6
Information/news sites	36.6	44.6	6.2	12.6
Conventional television	0.9	29.0	17.6	52.4
Radio	9.0	28.4	14.7	48.0
Free newspapers	42.1	22.7	11.1	24.0
Weeklies (community or regional)	14.7	17.9	11.5	56.0
Paid newspapers	22.8	17.4	20.0	39.7
Magazines	22.2	13.8	16.5	47.5
Internet television	81.8	12.3	0.9	4.9
Internet radio	80.8	11.0	3.9	4.3
News on cellular or BlackBerry	94.0	0.9	1.3	3.8

4. 2009 context

4.1 Popularity of the various media in greater detail

The importance that Quebecers place on any media source when they look for the news is therefore changing slowly but significantly. The aggregate results we have just presented (tables 1 to 4) are the result of two factors, however: the proportion of the respondents who use one or another of the media platforms (users and non-users) and the time they spend doing so. A source that attracts many people who spend little time using it can obtain an aggregate result similar to that of one used by fewer people who spend more time with it. Both facets are important. We shall look at each by restricting ourselves to our latest survey.

Table 6 shows first that television is part of the daily news habits of almost 95% of the respondents, with radio coming a distant second with 72% and paid newspapers in third place with 60%.

TABLE 6
Daily use of various media for news purposes
(2009; as a % of the respondents)

	Users %	Non-users %
<i>Traditional media</i>		
Television (news)	94.0	6.0
Radio (news)	72.0	28.0
Paid newspapers	59.9	40.1
Weeklies (community or regional)	43.3	56.7
Magazines	33.0	67.0
Free newspapers	12.1	87.9
<i>New media</i>		
Information/news sites	51.3	48.7
Internet television	10.6	89.4
Internet radio	7.7	92.3
News on cellular or BlackBerry	2.6	97.4

Slightly more than half of the respondents consulted an information or news website, which shows that the Internet is carving out an enviable place among news seekers. Even so, in 2009 we find more readers of paper-format newspapers than Web users looking for the latest news. We must point out that newspapers are also present on the Web, and that the data on information and news sites includes people who are partial to on-line newspapers.

It can be seen that 11% of the respondents use Internet television and 8% use Internet radio, which enables them to watch or listen to news programs at their convenience. Cellular phones and BlackBerries are part of the news habits of a very small share of the respondents, namely 3%.

When we look only at the users of a given media platform, excluding the respondents who do not spend even one minute obtaining the news with it, we see several interesting facts (**Table 7**).

TABLE 7
Average number of minutes of media use each day for news purposes (2009; users of the media concerned)

	No. of minutes (users ¹)
<i>Traditional media</i>	
Television (news)	44.6
Paid newspapers	26.6
Radio (news)	23.4
Magazines	18.3
Free newspapers	14.2
Weeklies (community or regional)	13.4
<i>New media</i>	29.6

1. Average number of minutes, based only on the answers from users of the media platform concerned.

Television is of course omnipresent, since the largest number of minutes is dedicated to it, namely 45. Reading a paid newspaper takes up about 27 minutes. As for free newspapers, which are designed to be leafed through in 20 minutes or less, in public places such as the Metro, the average time is 14 minutes. For both types of newspaper, reading newspapers on the Internet is included in new media, a category that also includes the use of other sites that offer news as well as watching television and listening to the radio on the Internet. The users of these new media spend about 30 minutes on them following the news each day. Radio is very close to paid newspapers, with an average of 23 minutes.

4.2 Role of sociodemographic variables

Five sociodemographic variables were cross-referenced to data on time spent keeping up with the news: age, education, region, income and sex. A media frequency index (0 to 18 points) was created to cross-reference the variables.⁸ The main findings are summarized here.

Table 8 shows the impact of sociodemographic variables on overall use of all media platforms, regardless of which one. For each subgroup, an arrow indicates significant deviations from the average. Two arrows indicate that the deviation is far greater.

It can be seen that there is a close relationship between age and interest in the news offered by the media. The respondents up to the age of 34 are far less interested than the average and those aged 55 or more are much more interested. Age is the variable for which we see the greatest variations; interest in the news also increases with education and income, although in this survey the differences are less significant than for age. The same is true of gender: men appeared to be a little more interested than women. Finally, the respondents from Québec City are less interested than the others, whereas the reverse is true for those living outside the major cities.

8. To do so, we assigned a **weight** to each answer obtained to the 11 questions on media use. Here is the number of points assigned for each answer:

- 0 points for the answer "no time";
- 5 points for the answer "1-15 minutes";
- 7 points for the answer "15-25 minutes";
- 9 points for the answer "25-50 minutes";
- 12 points for the answer "50-75 minutes";
- 18 points for the answer "more than 75 minutes."

TABLE 8
Overall media use according to sociodemographic variables
(2009)

Age	
Under 24	↓↓
25-34	↓↓
35-44	=
45-54	↑
55-64	↑↑
65 or over	↑↑

Education	
Primary	↓
Secondary	↓
College	=
University	↑

Region	
Montréal	=
Suburban Montréal	=
Québec	↓
Rest of Québec	↑

Income	
Less than \$55,000	↓
More than \$55,000	↑

The most notable variations in media use, examined one by one, are also seen in conjunction with the **age** variable:

- Reading weeklies is the activity for which the impact of age is strongest: the use index quadruples when we go from people under 24 to people 65 and older.
- The older respondents are more likely to read newspapers: the frequency index doubles when we go from the youngest respondents to the oldest. It should be noted that a real increase in the index starts only with the category aged 45 to 54.
- We see the opposite phenomenon in the case of information/news websites: for those under the age of 24, it is almost double that of people aged 65 or more, and the falloff starts with the category aged 45 to 54. Internet television is also more popular with young people.
- Listening to the radio increases with age, peaking with those aged 45 to 54 and then decreasing slightly.
- Lastly, it is interesting to note that watching television for news purposes generally rises with age and peaks in the 45-to-54 age category.

What impact does **education** have on media use?

- Contrary to what we might have expected, there is almost no variation in newspaper use as a function of education. Nor does this variable have any pronounced impact on the use of television or radio as a news tool.
- This variable does have some impact on the use of news sites, with the most educated respondents having a higher index. Starting with secondary education, the effect is less pronounced, however.

Does living in a major city or outside a city (**geographical region**) have an impact on media use?

- The use of newspapers, websites and television is relatively similar from one place to another.
- Reading weeklies is significantly more frequent outside the major cities.
- Obviously reading free newspapers is an activity concentrated in Montréal.
- Magazines are more popular in suburban Montréal.

The variations in media use as a function of the respondents' **income** and **sex** are not very pronounced, with one exception: Internet radio and Internet television are definitely more popular with the most prosperous respondents.

5. News categories

5.1 Level of relative interest in news categories

Beyond the choices that Quebecers make regarding information vehicles, namely the media they use, what interests them from the news menus that the media offer? The respondents who took part in the survey selected, from a list of 19 categories, the six subjects they found the most interesting and the six they found the least interesting. To reflect the overall level of interest in each category, a synthetic index was created. One point was given to each subject deemed most interesting, one point was subtracted from each subject deemed least interesting and the others received no points. The data are given in **Table 9**.

TABLE 9
Index of the level of interest in each news category(2009)

	2009
Local and regional news	56
Scientific news ¹ (breakthroughs, etc.)	38
Weather	29
Québec politics	23
International politics	18
Faits divers	7
Canadian politics	7
Travel	5
Business and finance	5
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	-2
Québec performers and entertainment	-3
Books and recordings	-9
Sports	-14
Films	-16
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	-22
International celebrities	-31
Public opinion on current events	-38
Cars	-38
Fashion and trends	-47

1. Some respondents added subjects to the list of 19 categories. Environmental matters, which were often cited, are classified in the “scientific news” category.

As the table clearly shows, the main subjects of interest are local and regional news, scientific news, the weather and Québec politics. The less popular categories (those that attract fewer people) are public opinion on current events, cars, and fashion and trends.

Immediate current events, such as those unfolding at the time of the survey, have an undeniable impact on the respondents’ choices. The survey carried out in January 2009 reflects the inauguration of President Barack Obama on January 20 as well

as the economic recession. International politics, as well as business and finance, therefore increased by several notches in relation to 2007 (see details in Appendix C). In contrast, films, as well as Québec performers and entertainment, saw a relative falloff in interest.

5.2 Preferred media platform for news in each category

Where do people turn most often when they want to know about local news, business and finance, and so on?

Table 10 shows the proportions of respondents who, for a specific category, said they use a certain media platform to obtain the news (more than one platform could be selected for each category; the average is 1.6 media per category). The table therefore reads as follows: “21% of the respondents used the radio to learn about what was happening in their city or region, 21% used television, etc.”

The order in which the categories are presented is the same as in **Table 9**, which makes it possible to see at the top of the list those categories that the respondents find most interesting.

It can be seen that the respondents use several sources for local and regional news, the category that generates the most interest. They rely on weeklies (37%), but an equal proportion of respondents cited radio and television (21%) and newspapers (15%). In contrast, almost 70% of the respondents use only two media for scientific news, the second point of interest. Television, with its documentaries and programs such as *Découverte* and *Le code Chastenay*, responds mainly to this interest (49% of the respondents), and the Web, with its research power, was cited by 20% of the respondents. Their habits are very similar for the weather, whereas for Québec politics, the fourth-ranked category, the respondents use the three most popular traditional media: television (50%), newspapers (21%) and radio (18%).

TABLE 10
Proportion of respondents who select a particular media platform, by news category
(2009; % of respondents)

	Radio	TV	News-paper	Weekly	Web	Magazine
Local and regional news	21	21	15	37	5	1
Scientific news ⁶ (breakthroughs, etc.)	4	49	9	1	20	16
Weather	17	52	4	0	26	0
Québec politics	18	50	21	2	8	0
International politics	14	54	16	1	13	3
Faits divers	18	46	18	7	11	1
Canadian politics	14	48	24	1	12	1
Travel	2	21	14	3	39	21
Business and finance	11	42	23	2	17	5
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	3	35	11	2	27	22
Québec performers and entertainment	12	31	15	6	17	20
Books and recordings	14	23	18	5	23	18
Sports	13	49	17	1	16	3
Films	6	31	20	5	30	7

(continued on next page)

TABLE 10
Proportion of respondents who select a particular media platform, by news category
(2009; % of respondents) (con'd)

	Radio	TV	News-paper	Weekly	Web	Magazine
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	0	35	9	3	14	39
International celebrities	6	29	9	2	25	29
Public opinion on current events	26	37	20	4	11	2
Cars	3	27	12	4	29	24
Fashion and trends	2	24	11	2	18	43

Examining these data carefully, we see that people still turn to the traditional media for information on politics, as well as business and finance, in other words those categories that cover major social issues, discussions of ideas and parliamentary proceedings, public affairs (health, education, employment, etc.), the economy and so on, which can be categorized as hard news. By combining the shares of the three most popular traditional media (television, radio and newspapers), we obtain more than 85% for each of the political categories and 76% in the case of business and finance. The Internet therefore still plays only a small role in people's news habits when it comes to politics.

The next three tables give a vivid picture of this phenomenon. Each concerns a media platform taken in isolation, namely television (**Table 11**), newspapers (**Table 12**) and the Internet (**Table 13**). They present the list of categories starting with the one cited most often for the medium in question. The tables therefore show the new purposes for which the three media are mainly used. **Table 11**, for example, reads as follows: 54% of the respondents said they watch television for information on international politics, 52% for information on the weather, etc.

TABLE 11
Share of respondents using television,
by news category (2009)

	%
International politics	54
Weather	52
Québec politics	50
Scientific news	49
Sports	49
Canadian politics	48
Faits divers	46
Business and finance	42
Public opinion on current events	37
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	35
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	35
Québec performers and entertainment	31
Films	31
International celebrities	29
Cars	27
Fashion and trends	24
Books and recordings	23
Travel	21
Local and regional news	21

TABLE 12
Share of respondents using newspapers,
by news category (2009)

Subjects Of Interest	Newspapers
Canadian politics	24
Business and finance	23
Québec politics	21
Public opinion on current events	20
Films	20
Faits divers	18
Books and recordings	18
Sports	17
International politics	16
Events in your city or region	15
Québec performers and entertainment	15
Travel	14
Cars	12
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	11
Fashion and trends	11
Decorating, furnishings, houses	9
International celebrities	9
Scientific news, breakthroughs, etc.	9
Weather	4

TABLE 13
Share of respondents using the Internet,
by news category (2009)

Subjects of interest	Web
Travel	39
Films	30
Cars	29
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	27
Weather	26
International celebrities	25
Books and recordings	23
Scientific news	20
Fashion and trends	18
Business and finance	17
Québec performers and entertainment	17
Sports	16
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	14
International politics	13
Canadian politics	12
Public opinion on current events	11
Faits divers	11
Québec politics	8
Local and regional news	5

We see that the first categories in the tables for television and newspapers correspond roughly to the main components of the traditional definition of the news: politics, business and finance, weather, sports, *faits divers*, public opinion, etc. In other words, a proportionally greater number of people use television for news on these subjects as opposed to the other categories traditionally deemed less important according to the standard concept of the news, such as travel, cars, fashion, decorating,

celebrities, practical subjects, etc. These categories are generally considered soft news.

Table 13 shows that the use of the Internet is very different from that of traditional media: proportionally speaking, more respondents are inclined to use the Internet for soft news rather than hard news. This table is almost the mirror image of tables 11 and 12, and shows the major differences in the logic underlying the use of the two media categories.

5.3 What interests news junkies

Are there connections between a person's interest in a certain news subject and the general level of his news consumption?

To get a clearer picture of news junkies, we created three terciles: we divided the group of respondents into three equal groups on the basis of the average number of minutes they spend with the news each day: the lower tercile (the one-third who spend the least time), the upper tercile (the one-third who spend the most time) and the middle tercile (the one-third between the two extremes).

Table 14 therefore presents, for the upper tercile (the news junkies) and the respondents in the lower tercile (the disengaged), the level of interest in each category, according to an index ranging from -1 to 1. The last column indicates whether the news junkies have the same interest (=), more interest (+) or less interest (-) in a category in relation to the disengaged.

TABLE 14
Interest in news categories on the part
of news junkies and the disengaged

	Junkies	Disengaged	Junkies/ Disengaged
Local and regional news	0.55	0.54	=
International politics	0.43	-0.03	+
Scientific news	0.37	0.43	=
Québec politics	0.36	0.09	+
Business and finance	0.28	-0.13	+
Canadian politics	0.20	-0.05	+
Weather	0.19	0.41	-
Films	0.11	0.14	=
Faits divers	-0.01	0.14	-
Sports	-0.02	-0.14	+
Québec performers and entertainment	-0.07	-0.08	=
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	-0.08	-0.03	=
Travel	-0.09	0.15	-
Books and recordings	-0.18	-0.07	-
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	-0.29	-0.07	-
Cars	-0.31	-0.37	=
Public opinion on current events	-0.41	-0.38	=
International celebrities	-0.45	-0.23	-
Fashion and trends	-0.53	-0.36	-

Current events in the traditional sense is what interests the news junkies the most. Subjects involving politics rank highest, with local and regional news coming first, followed closely by international politics (the popularity of this subject is no doubt related to the ubiquity of Barack Obama in January 2009). Science in general also attracts a degree of interest; it should be noted that everything involving the environment and ecological concerns falls into this category.

As the table clearly shows, those who spend the most time becoming informed do not pay much attention to fashion, international celebrities and so on. In fact, many of them relegate these subjects to the list of the six categories they consider the least interesting. This is also the case for the group that values the news less. These respondents, like the junkies, place priority on local and regional news, as well as scientific news. But they demonstrate less interest in Québec, Canadian and international politics, as well as in business and finance.

To summarize, those who want to keep up with events on the Québec, Canadian and international scenes, as well as business topics, are more dedicated in their news consumption than those whose preferences run to the weather, *faits divers*, travel, recordings and interior decorating.

6. News knowledge

To complete the picture of Quebecers' news habits, the 2009 survey conducted by the Centre d'études sur les médias included a series of questions to assess the respondents' knowledge of current events. Were they aware of certain stories covered by several media? Did they retain accurate information about these news items? What is the impact of the news that receives the most coverage? Does the media outlet where the respondents generally obtain their information have an impact on their news knowledge?

A set of questions on recent current events was therefore given to the respondents in the 20 discussion groups when the meetings were held with them in January 2009.⁹

To each of the groups met on the same day, we presented five news topics. In general, each subject had been covered by at least four media in the 36 hours preceding the meetings (without exception by two electronic media and two print media).

9. The methodology used for this section of the survey is based directly on *Young People and the News*, a study by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy (John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University), published in July 2007 (<http://www.knightfoundation.org/dotAsset/221304.pdf>).

The subjects were varied: one involving international politics; one drawn from Canadian or Québec current events; a Québec news item that was not political (for example, the lockout at the *Journal de Montréal*); a local or regional news item selected according to the location where the meeting took place; and a soft news story (the birth of octuplets in the United States, a hockey game, etc.).¹⁰ For the survey as a whole, 30 current events were selected.

Two questions were asked about each news item (five news items for each discussion group). The first was worded as follows: “Do you remember a news report in recent days about...?” The second question, which was put only to those who remembered the general news item, concerned specific information about the item, and a choice of answers was provided. For example, concerning the labour dispute at the *Journal de Montréal*, the respondents who remembered this piece of news were then asked:

Do you remember whether, during the dispute, the newspaper...?

Answer 1: Is still being published

Answer 2: Is not being published

Answer 3: Is being published on the Internet only (no print version)

We will examine the answers obtained to the first series of questions (“Do you remember a news report in recent days about...?”) for each of the five news categories presented to the respondents (**Table 15**) and then the answers obtained to both the first and the second series of questions (**Table 16**).¹¹

10. The questions on current events as they were put to the respondents are given in section 2 of Appendix A.

11. The detailed results are given in Appendix D.

TABLE 15
Breakdown of answers to the question: “Do you remember a news report about...?” (% of respondents)

	News item no.1 (International politics)	News item no.2 (Canadian or Québec politics)	News item no.3 (Events on the Québec scene)	News item no.4 (Local news)	News item no.5 (Soft news)
Yes	37.3%	35.1%	44.8%	32.7%	32.3%
Yes, but only vaguely	47.1%	32.4%	34.0%	29.6%	31.3%
No	15.6%	32.6%	21.3%	37.7%	36.5%

Table 15 shows clearly that the great majority of the participants had at least heard about these news stories, which had received considerable coverage, and that most of them were aware of current events. The news coverage of an event on the Québec scene is the one that was unequivocally noticed by the largest proportion of respondents, namely 45%. In addition, only 16% of the respondents had not seen, read or heard about the international news item, which concerned the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Curiously enough, it was the local news story that received the largest percentage of negative answers. This result may seem strange since local news is the category selected most often as being of interest from the survey’s list of 19 categories (see **Table 9**). The result for the soft news item is almost the same.

We then took the answers to the first series of questions and combined them with the answers to the second-level questions concerning an important aspect of the news item (**Table 16**).

TABLE 16
Links between the first and second question
on the news (% of answers)

	Number of answers	%
Yes (with a correct answer to the second question)	947	40.2
Yes (but with an incorrect answer to the second question)	762	32.4
No (therefore no answer to the second question)	644	27.4
Total	2,353	100.0

Table 16 shows that, on average, 40% of the people who said they were aware of a news item correctly answer the second question about it. In short, in 40% of the cases, they paid enough attention to the news to be able to remember the specific information given in the choice of answers. In 32% of the cases, they said they had heard about the news but couldn't remember specific information about it.

6.1 Sociodemographic variables and news knowledge

To synthesize the answers collected and to permit cross-referencing with the sociodemographic variables, an index was created from all the answer components obtained.¹²

How does the news knowledge index vary according to region, sex or age? Here, we look at the total score for the five questions put to each person. The following observations were derived from the cross-referencing of the index (total score) with these sociodemographic variables (**Table 17**):

12. The index combines a primary score and a secondary score. The primary score is calculated as follows: 100 points for the answer «yes»; 50 points for the answer «yes, but only the broad outlines»; and no points for the answer «no.» The secondary score corresponds to the percentage of correct answers to questions on the specific aspects of the news. The index consists of the following: the primary score plus the secondary score, with a maximum of 100 points.

- The result for the respondents from Montréal is significantly lower than for the others;
- Men had a slightly higher score than women did;
- The higher the age, the better the knowledge of current events; and
- Those who have at least a college education had a better result than those who have not completed that level.

TABLE 17
Results of the news knowledge index according to sociodemographic variables

<i>Region</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>N</i>
Laval	51.1	89
Island of Montréal	34.5	119
Québec City	50.9	44
Rivière-du-Loup	54.9	109
Victoriaville	53.5	109
Total	48.3	471
<i>Sex</i>		
Men	50.4	232
Women	46.3	238
Total	48.3	471
<i>Age</i>		
Under 24	30.8	70
25-34	38.1	103
35-44	48.1	74
45-54	52.8	91
55-65	62.3	65
65 or over	63.9	67
Total	48.4	470
<i>Education</i>		
Primary	31.3	18
Secondary	45.9	142
College	50.1	165
University	50.8	146
Total	48.3	471

6.2 Media use and news knowledge

Does the selected media platform have an impact on the respondents' ability to answer the questions testing their knowledge of current events? In other words, how does the fact that one stays informed mainly by watching television or instead prefers to read a newspaper or to surf the Internet affect the news knowledge index? To answer that question, two indexes were cross-referenced, namely the media use index¹³ and the news knowledge index.

Table 18 presents the correlation between the two indexes. A strong correlation indicates that a good knowledge of current events is associated with the medium, whereas a negative correlation indicates the opposite.

TABLE 18
Correlation¹⁴ between media use and news knowledge

	Correlation coefficient
Paid newspapers	0.12
Weeklies (community or regional)	0.12
Internet radio	0.03
Magazines	0.01
Television (news)	0.00
Information/news sites	- 0.02
Internet television	- 0.05
Radio (news)	- 0.05
Free newspaper	- 0.15

The strongest correlations are in boldface.

13. Note 11 explains how the use index was created.

14. Pearson correlation coefficient: the closer the coefficient is to the extreme values -1 and 1, the stronger the correlation between the variables. A correlation equal to 0 means that the variables are linearly independent.

Although no correlation coefficient is very pronounced in one direction or another, we see that the two most traditional media, paid newspapers and weekly newspapers, are associated positively with news knowledge. The correlation is nil with respect to television; in other words, there is no association, in either direction, between watching the news on television and the news knowledge index. In the case of free newspapers, there appears to be a negative correlation; in other words, using this medium to follow the news is linked here to a lower news knowledge index. The new media are also on the negative side, but with a very weak correlation coefficient.

7. Use of the new media

With the Internet playing an ever increasing role in our news habits, we shall dedicate one section to a review of certain survey data concerning the Internet specifically. We have seen from the findings already discussed that the popularity of information and news websites is on the rise: in 2009 they attracted an average of four minutes more of the time that the respondents dedicated to the news each day (16.7 minutes versus 12.8 minutes in 2007).

7.1 Subscriptions to e-mail newsletters and interactivity

One of the advantages that the Internet offers for people interested in the news is the opportunity to subscribe, according to one's interests, to newsletters delivered by e-mail. Cyberpresse offers its newsletters, *Canoë*, its many bulletins and Société Radio-Canada, its cyberletters, to name only a few. According to our survey findings, 44% of the respondents receive this type of bulletin, which is double the 2007 figure. In fact, 55% of the Internet users subscribe to at least one newsletter of this kind, which is quite considerable and significantly higher than it was two years ago (about one-third of the Internet users in 2007).

TABLE 19
Internet access and subscription to e-mail newsletters
(2009)

	2009	N %
<i>Internet access</i>		
I have no Internet access	53	11.2
I have Internet access but I never use it	41	8.8
<i>Subscription to e-mail newsletters (for Internet users)</i>		
Yes, 1 or 2 e-mail newsletters	140	29.8
Yes, 3 or more e-mail newsletters	66	14.1
No	170	36.1
Total	470	100.0

In 2007, one-third of the survey respondents had no Internet access or had access but didn't use it, whereas in 2009 only one respondent out of five is in that situation. The Internet is accessible and greatly facilitates relationships between news suppliers and the public. Of course, the letters pages of newspapers and radio call-in shows already enabled the public to respond to commentary and news, but the Internet enables them to do so with immediacy and greater accessibility.

The 2009 survey included the following question: "Over the past seven days, have you RESPONDED on a website to commentary or news, such as by taking part in a blog or submitting your comments?" As **Table 20** shows, 17% of the people who answered this question responded to news content by using the Internet. And when we calculate this proportion in relation to total Internet users, as can be deduced from the data in **Table 18** (in other words by excluding both those who do not have access and those who have access but never use it), the proportion increases to 19%. In brief, almost one-fifth of Internet users have made a comment, expressed an opinion or added information, etc., which appears to be a fairly significant phenomenon.

TABLE 20
Have you reacted online to news?
(over the past seven days, 2009)

	N	%
Yes	72	17.4
No	339	81.9
Don't know	3	0.7
Total	414	100.0
(Not applicable)	(56)	

8. Conclusion

The hype surrounding new media is so intense that it almost seems as if they are supplanting the traditional news media. Our surveys show, however, that we are quite a distance from that point.

One-half of Quebecers use the Internet or cellular telephones for the news on a regular basis («yesterday»). But even more of them are still in the habit of using a media platform that many have already consigned to the graveyard, namely the paper version of the paid newspaper (60%), as well as radio (72%) and television (94% watched television for news purposes «yesterday»). The place occupied by the Internet in Quebecers' media mix is growing but it represents only 17 of the 105 minutes they spend keeping up with the news each day. The television screen still has a considerable lead with an average of 42 minutes a day.

In our obsession with the attractions of the Internet, we have quickly forgotten that the so-called old media also have their strengths. The news can be had at any time of the day or night on RDI, LCN, Argent, RIS and the other all-news channels. As for network television, it provides the news at four crucial times of the day, when many people are available: morning, noon, early evening and late evening. These newscasts, as well as those on the radio, are intended to summarize the most significant events of recent hours – the news it's important to know about. This «ready-made» approach to the news requires only a

modicum of effort by the listener or the viewer. No need to go looking for the news when it is served up on a silver platter. Updates are provided just as frequently on television and radio as they are on the Internet.

Newspapers cannot track events as they unfold but they compensate by offering analysis, background, investigations, commentary and opinion. Their content increasingly tends to complement that of the other media. Some people find that a print version is even more suitable for long texts than is the computer screen. Moreover, one can spot articles of interest just as quickly by leafing through a newspaper as by surfing the Internet. In newspapers, advertising is very much in evidence but it is not intrusive. It is easy to ignore.

The traditional media therefore have strengths that do not have to envy the attributes of the Internet. Moreover, consumer habits do not change overnight, especially in the case of older people, who have their rituals and their comfort zones. What will happen with the younger generations – those who, as is well known, are the most adept at using new media? Young people like the fact that it is free, interactive and available anytime and anywhere. But people under the age of 35 spend only half as much time with the news as the average Quebecer does.

Perhaps, we are also mistaken in opposing «new» media and «old» media. They are not always used for the same purposes or to meet the same needs. According to our surveys, Internet users are looking above all for news that will entertain them (such as celebrity gossip¹⁵), help them purchase a product or choose a vacation destination, and so on. When they want to know what is happening in their neighbourhood or city, or more broadly in the political or business community, they find the print media and traditional radio and television more suitable.

15. In the same vein, seven of the 10 most-consulted news items in 2009 on the site of the newspaper *Le Soleil* concerned the personal lives of public personalities or subjects of a sexual nature. Jean-François Néron, «Nudité, idylle et vedettes en tête de liste,» *Le Soleil*, January 5, 2010, p. 12.

The latter subjects are of interest above all to the oldest respondents, those who are more partial to the traditional media. As young people age, will they develop an interest in hard news, on the Internet or in the traditional media? If they do not, it will be increasingly difficult for the media to find advertising revenues to fund their news coverage. If soft news attracts more revenue, it will be in the media's interest to offer greater coverage, shifting resources away from social, political and economic issues. This situation raises concerns about the quality of democratic debate, which, it has long been held, depends to a great extent on the actions of the media.

There are still many unknowns. That is why we intend to continue assessing the changes under way.

Part two

Qualitative study on use of the new media to follow the news

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9. Main findings¹

9.1 Television is still the main news source, alone or with other media

Generally speaking, television is central to the respondents' news consumption practices, but the Internet comes a close second. The two are very often combined. Indeed, users are

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1. Given the size of the sample and the principles of qualitative representativeness that were applied to form it (mainly the criterion of heavy use of information technology and the Internet), the survey findings do not allow us to distinguish between behaviour and media use according to the respondents' age group, sex or region.

often far from satisfied with a single main news source. More than one-third of the respondents identified a combination of several media as their main news source.

9.2 Internet use for personal interests and for social networking and as a complement to other media

Technology does not increase respondents' interest in the news. Rather, heavy consumers of the news use it to vary their sources, whereas light consumers of news use information and communication technology essentially to entertain themselves, to develop their social networks and to pursue personal interests, rather than to follow the news.

One-third of the respondents (10) use the Internet as a complement to other media.

One-quarter of the respondents (7) use the Internet assiduously for news purposes.

The overwhelming majority of the websites consulted are in Canada or Quebec, even though the Internet does away with geographical borders and provides access to media from around the world.

9.3 Blogs and forums: limited interest and seen less reliable than traditional media

The respondents hold opposing points of view about the interest and reliability of the news found on blogs and forums. Some believe these sources play an important role by democratizing knowledge and disseminating ideas, but the majority of the respondents (19) deplore the low quality of the news available on blogs and forums and say they don't consult any blogs.

9.4 Limited use of cellular phones, podcasting and satellite radio

None of the 17 respondents who have a cellular phone use it to receive news, no respondent has a satellite radio and five respondents use podcasting occasionally.

9.5 Limited use of other technologies for getting the news

Respondents use relatively few of the news tools available. Only two respondents use RSS feeds, while two others prefer alerts on specific subjects, such as those offered by Yahoo and Google. Four respondents subscribe to daily e-mail newsletters issued by the media: RDS, *Canoë*, Reuters, RDI, *Cyberpresse* and *Le Devoir*. One-quarter of the respondents subscribe to various electronic e-mail newsletters that are published by commercial businesses or concern personal interests (music, gardening, etc.).

9.6 What it means to be well informed

Respondents' assessment of the quality of their news knowledge has no direct connection with the extent of their media consumption. Their answers indicate a wide range of perceptions as to what it means to be well informed. Similarly, there is diversity in the amount of information deemed necessary by respondents for someone to qualify as a person who is well informed. Several stated that they keep up with the subjects that interest them.

10. Methodology

10.1 Sample

This qualitative study is a continuation of the first quantitative survey done by the Centre d'études sur les médias in terms of recruiting the participants. We selected respondents from the people who had taken part in the quantitative phase of the project. We held individual interviews with a total of 29 people.

These people were selected at random from a group of participants who had taken part in phase one of the research *Les publics de l'information* (from November 2006 to January 2007). In terms of technology use, the participants were divided at that time into two groups according to a “modernism” index: “high digital modernism” and “low digital modernism.” For this study, we took our sample from the high-digital-modernism group. The sample for this qualitative inquiry therefore includes only people who used information and communication technologies in 2006-2007, which enabled us to gain a better understanding of the news *practices* of heavy users of technology.

In addition, the participants in the 2006-2007 study were divided according to their degree of news consumption, in other words “light news consumption” or “heavy news consumption.” To obtain a picture of the practices of these two types of consumer among those who use new technologies, the sample for the qualitative portion is divided fairly equally between the two groups, with 15 respondents in the first (those with “light news consumption”) and 14 in the second (“heavy news consumption”).

Furthermore, the 29 respondents reflect a certain geographical diversity: 15 were from Montréal and six from its suburbs, and eight were from Québec City. The group from Montréal is larger than originally planned because some of the respondents had changed their place of residence since 2006-2007. The following table shows their breakdown by sex and age.

TABLE 1
Breakdown of sample by sex and age

	Men	Women	Total
Under 24	1	1	2
25 to 34	6	7	13
35 to 44	4	2	6
45 to 54	2	1	3
55 to 64	4	1	5
Total	17	12	29

10.2 Data collection: semi-structured interviews

The 29 interviews were held in a place chosen by the respondents: at home or in a café. The conversations lasted an hour on average. We began each interview by asking the respondent to review the way he had become aware of the news and, therefore, his use of the media and the contribution of friends and family, during the day preceding the meeting. This approach and the flexible interview framework proved to be very useful strategies: they created a relaxed atmosphere and allowed for a fairly complete round-up of the various media used by each respondent. Using a flexible interview structure,² we sought answers to the following questions:

What were their uses of communication technologies – including the Internet – and what share did the news account for?

Which media platform was their main news source?

Which media platform did they turn to first?

Which media platform did they find most interesting and useful and for which type of news?

What, in their opinion, were the pros and cons of the various media?

2. For more details on the content of the discussions, see the interview framework in Appendix E.

More broadly, we also asked them about the importance of the news in their daily lives, as well as their definition of what it means to be a well-informed person.

11. Internet use

[*What do you miss the most if you don't have access to the Internet for 12 hours?*] I feel as if I'm not at home. I feel a bit lost. It's really a small world: I have my messages, I have the world that opens up to me when I'm in front of... [my computer]; I can be everywhere at the same time. (M9)³

It should be noted at the outset that all the participants in our study use the Internet every day. It will be recalled, however, that this was one of the characteristics of our sample, whose members were identified as *heavy consumers of technology* in the first quantitative survey in 2006-2007, whether they use it for the news or not.

Daily use of the Internet is typical of these respondents. They spend several hours a day surfing the Web and they check their e-mail more than once a day. Indeed, half (15) of the respondents say they check their e-mail as soon as they wake up, indicating that such behaviour marks the start of their morning routine. Two of the respondents have more than two different e-mail addresses and only one has no personal e-mail address and uses only his business address.

The technology available at home and at work also increases Internet use. Only one respondent does not have high-speed or intermediate-speed Internet access.

Personal interests and social networking represent a very large portion of Internet use: 12 respondents say that the Internet is above all a tool for communicating with family and friends; they therefore use the Internet very little or not at all to follow the news. In two cases, it has almost replaced the telephone.

3. We identified the respondents with an alphanumeric code: the letter denotes their region (M for Montréal; SM for suburban Montréal and QC for Québec City) and the figure identifies the chronological order in which the interviews took place.

For family, I use the telephone, and for friends, the Internet.
(M6)

All the respondents said they look for practical information on the Internet; they use it to locate a restaurant, plan a trip, find a recipe, fuel their passion for a hobby or determine the best route with tools such as Google Map and MapQuest. The weather is also a subject of interest for the respondents, who consult websites rather than other media, such as television and newspapers.

I don't expect television to give me the weather forecast.
(M18)

11.1 Context of Internet use

The respondents make a clear distinction between their Internet use at work and at home, where entertainment and contacts with friends and family take priority. They all have a computer at home, but not all of them use one at work. We noted, however, that the great majority of the respondents have to use a computer on the job. But using a computer does not necessarily involve the Internet. Moreover, several respondents said that some sites were "blocked" and therefore inaccessible at work.

Cyberpresse, Les Affaires, Ville de Québec, I have access to sites related to my work, but I can't consult a travel agency, I can't even go on MSN, at work. (QC22)

Some find this situation annoying, although they believe it is the employer's prerogative to ensure employees do not spend hours entertaining themselves on the Internet. The availability of one site rather than another therefore becomes a factor in the respondents' interest. One respondent explained that his use of certain sites is due not only to his preferences; it also depends on whether they are accessible at work.

[*Why Radio-Canada instead of another site?*] The Internet used to be blocked at work, but Radio-Canada was one of the sites that worked; so I'd say it's accessibility that counts. We told them it didn't make sense and they unblocked [the other sites]. (QC27)

Conversely, three other respondents believe this practice ensures the credibility and validity of the news they can access at work, because the accessible sites have in a sense received their employer's stamp of approval.

At home and at work, the respondents use their computers to surf the Internet alone, even when they use them mainly to contact friends and family. This situation does not prevent a degree of interaction between members of the same family, as shown by an anecdote recounted by one respondent.

[*Before the baby was born*] My girlfriend and I would sit in the living room with our laptops and, instead of watching television, we'd play on-line poker together, each on our own laptop... We would go on various sites. She would say, go look at such-and-such a site...take a look and tell me what you think. We talked while we played poker. (SM8)

Because the respondents in our sample were by definition especially "wired," they are often important sources of information on Internet use for their friends and family. But those who live with teenagers say their children teach them a great deal about it.

[*The children*] teach us an incredible amount! It's incredible! Because they learn about it at school. And, more than us, they've grown up with it. (QC24)

11.2 Use of the Internet for the news

Twelve respondents said they use the Internet only for communicating with family and friends, but the 17 others use it to follow the news. They can be divided into two distinct groups: those who use the Internet as a complement to other media (10) and those who make assiduous use of the Internet to follow the news (7). This section concerns the main uses of each group.

11.2.1 Two user groups

Most (10) of the respondents who use the Internet for the news consider it a complementary medium. The main sites they consult for news are *Canoë/LCN* and *Cyberpresse*. But even though these sites offer news bulletins and programs directly on line, the respondents do not watch them. One respondent said he had picked up the habit of watching the TVA newscast on line but had stopped because the cost went up considerably:

For a while I watched TVA on line but the price goes up the more bandwidth you use. So, the bill arrives and, instead of costing \$80 a month, the Internet costs you \$150. (M12)

The respondents use the Internet instead for stories and reports they have seen, heard, or read on traditional outlets:

[*Talking about the site of 98.5 FM radio*] All the contributors' items are on the Internet. If I miss one or if there's something really relevant, I can listen to it again. It's worth the trouble... (SM8)

Others say they are in the habit of using the Internet to confirm news published or broadcast by another source.

I often check things I've learned, such as news I've heard a bit about on the radio or on television; I look for more material and information on the Internet. (QC25)

For some, however, a story has to be out of the ordinary:

If a news story really interests me, I might go on the Internet and look for more information about it. But it has to be exceptional; not if there's an accident on Highway 15 and somebody dies. I don't want to see exactly how it happened; I'm not curious enough to go into detail. It really has to be something exceptional, like the planes that flew into the twin towers in New York, now that's what I call out of the ordinary. (SM7)

For these respondents, the Internet is a way of extending their research into a subject that interests them, and such research is more enriching than the use of a traditional media platform.

I go directly to what interests me; I do a search... Often when you're on a page about a news item, there are lots of links, a feature story, a sidebar and all sorts of information on the subject; I find that more dynamic. I find newspapers a bit more boring. (QC23)

The seven respondents in the second user group, who make intensive use of the Internet to follow the news, have developed a large number of search strategies and methods and use different tools. They present two user profiles: members of one group have the news delivered to them, as they would have a newspaper delivered to their front door, whereas the others scour the planet virtually to find the news.

To keep up with current events, the four respondents from the first user profile are partial to tools such as Google News, alerts from Yahoo and LCN and press feeds from media such as the *Gazette* and LCN.

I'm connected to the *Gazette* website at work all day long. I get up-to-the-minute news. So I don't need the paper edition any more. But I don't use the computer at home. (SM5)

I wouldn't go looking for news directly on CNN.com, for example. Google News gives you the latest subjects; you look at them and you get a round-up. (QC27)

Two respondents said they read newspapers only on the Internet, which for them has completely taken over from the paper-format editions.

It's like an electronic extension of a childhood tradition, reading *La Presse* every morning. (M14)

The second cluster of user profiles includes three «news fanatics,» as one of them describes himself. One respondent has built a list of about 20 national and international media that he consults every day.

As for their characteristics, it is striking to see that these three respondents are the only ones who use European and American news sites. Even though the Internet breaks down geographical borders and provides access to media around the world, the other respondents use mainly Canadian and Québec sites. The three news fanatics believe that going directly to the source ensures better knowledge of the news.

I love Google News! I have several sources that I consult every day. (...) After reading all that, I can better form my own judgment. And the media on the Internet also provide sources. They'll say: "We checked here" or "Go there, it's interesting, if you want to know more about this subject." I often take their advice, and I find even more sources. Sometimes I can spend maybe an hour or two hours a day researching one subject. (M18)

You can surf from one newspaper to the next. For example, I can go and look at *Le Monde*, check the headlines and read an article. Then I can go to another newspaper. I can go to the *Washington Post* and read another article there. (M20)

It's more varied to have access to different points of view with different newspapers from around the world. When you watch or listen to the news here, it's local news. Even with international news you get the viewpoint of journalists from here, even if some of them are sent to a foreign country. According to North Americans, for example, the war will be seen in such and such a way. But if you look at a European newspaper, it will be seen in another way. It's important to have variety and different points of view. (QC23)

11.2.2 Attributes of the Internet as a news source

Regardless of the intensity of the respondents' news consumption on the Internet, they agree on the characteristics of this medium. Choice, diversity and speed are the Internet's main attributes according to the respondents. They also appreciate being able to do their own research on the Internet, as eight of them pointed out in comparing it with the traditional media.

I would say it's the choice. In other words the ability to find what I'm looking for and the accessibility of this information. In other words it is a combination of permanent access and the quality of what I can find, which is always there, and available. (M29)

The traditional media impose subjects on you. You have the right to change the channel, but with the Internet I control my choices. (M17)

Maybe it's the fact that on the Internet I can choose the news I want, whereas on television, well, for sure I watch it but ultimately everything goes in one ear. But on the Internet and in newspapers, I can choose the news I want. (QC22)

Lastly, some respondents explained that the Internet allows them to access to the news whenever they want, while enabling them to do several things at the same time.

I listen to the newscast while I check my e-mail, sometimes clicking on news and links, whether it's Reuters or directly on Cyberpresse or sometimes Radio-Canada. (QC27)

Yes, it's easier; you can go and see whatever you want whenever you want. Television is linear. If the news is on at 10:00 p.m., it's on at 10:00 p.m. But if I want to see the news at four o'clock in the morning, I can go and see it on the Internet if I want. (M9)

Sometimes you don't always have time in the evening to watch. Such as when Barack Obama was elected, everyone was glued to the television screen. I like to be able to go back and see the event. I like it when they put reports on the Internet and you can go back and consult them later; it's something I think they should develop even more. (QC23)

11.2.3 Internet tools used to follow the news

One of the salient features of the respondents' Internet habits is that they make relatively little use of the news tools available. Specific questions on the different tools showed that only two respondents use RSS feeds, whereas two others said they use alerts on specific subjects, such as those offered by Yahoo and Google.

Nor do electronic newsletters generate a great deal of interest. Seven respondents regularly receive various newsletters that are issued by commercial companies or concern personal interests (music, gardening, etc.), but only four of them subscribe to daily newsletters issued by the media: RDS, Canoë, Reuters, RDI, Cyberpresse and *Le Devoir*. These newsletters are very much appreciated as a primary source of information on current events and the respondents who use them are very confident that they ensure adequate knowledge of the news. As one respondent explained:

If the news is fairly important, they'll send it to me.
(QC25)

11.2.4 Search strategies

It's no surprise that Google is by far the dominant search engine – as confirmed by other studies – with 24 of the respondents using it as their main search tool. Only one respondent uses another search engine, MetaCrawler, which he considers more efficient.

The sites of Canoë, La Toile du Québec, Cyberpresse, RDI and Yahoo are next in popularity, essentially for more specific searches on the news or for personal searches.

Two respondents not do searches on the Internet, using it only to communicate with family and friends.

The homepages that provide a gateway to the Internet occasionally serve as the first news source. We therefore asked the respondents to state their home page. In some cases, this page provides their first news of the day.

Their homepages are diverse, but three main groups can be distinguished: the first group, consisting of seven respondents, uses Google; the second group, also made up of seven respondents, uses MSN/Sympatico; and the third, consisting of six respondents, opts for traditional media sites: *Canoë*/LCN, *Le Soleil*, *Cyberpresse*, *Le Courrier international* and *Le Devoir*. In the case of the third group, the sources are very important for their knowledge of current events and may even prompt them to do searches on subjects of particular interest.

My home page is the newspaper *Le Soleil*. I look at the major news of the day and if there's anything that interests me, I click on it. It's a way of staying informed. I do that every morning. (QC25)

The respondents also have a high level of confidence in their Internet search methods. They explained that, as a result of experience, habit and occasionally formal education, they have a good understanding of search tools and can use them fairly easily (mainly by means of Google).

It works very well. If I want specific information, usually I can pretty much find it in my first three or four tries because I target my search well, with keywords or an exact expression. I couldn't tell you how I used to search on Google five years ago, but now when I look for something, it doesn't take me long to find it. (QC27)

11.3 Blogs and forums

The respondents hold divided views on the usefulness of blogs and forums for news purposes. Some believe they play an important role by democratizing knowledge and disseminating ideas:

I see them as the indicator of a new phenomenon: people share their knowledge free of charge. Nobody gets paid. With this new phenomenon, people will be less dependent on conventional institutions for learning. As a tool for the acquisition of knowledge, the Internet will compete with conventional institutions. (QC25)

But the majority of the respondents deplore the low quality of the news available on blogs and forums. A large share of the respondents (19) say they never read blogs, while the others (10) do so occasionally, opting mainly for those that cover subjects of special interest to them, such as sports and computers. None of the respondents have their own blog, nor do they plan to launch one in the near future.

In the blogosphere, it's mostly people who just want to have a site easily, people who don't quite know what to say. They even plagiarize. (M18)

Blogs that tend to focus on political issues attract limited interest, with only two respondents saying they consult them occasionally, mainly to take the pulse of the public on such issues.

I consult political blogs to learn about diverging points of view, to find out what people are thinking, to go beyond my own point of view. (M29)

Forums are used more often than blogs, however. A larger number of respondents (16) consult forums on an occasional or a regular basis, for information that meets their interests or needs. It should be noted, however, that 13 of the respondents never use forums.

They're irrelevant... I have better things to do than read the opinions of every Tom, Dick and Harry and start responding to them. (M16)

Among those who frequently use Internet forums, there are two types of user: occasional users and assiduous users. A good portion (nine) of the respondents who use forums consult them on a sporadic basis, usually when they're doing a specific search, such as when planning a trip or trying to solve a technical problem. They don't use them on a regular basis and they often find them only by doing a search on Google.

I use forums when I have a specific question. Let's say, my girlfriend's car has broken down and I need information. Often you can find a post by someone who says, yes, I've had that problem. I find answers. (QC27)

I used them once, before the holidays, in December because we were going on vacation. I wanted to get some details about my trip. I saw that on the Internet there was a site with travel forums, so that time I went on the site. I think it was Voyages.com or something like that. (QC26)

One of my latest searches was for organic baby food for babies from six to nine months. I couldn't find anything on IGA or Heinz about organic products. I didn't know where to look. I typed in «organic baby food» and I came up with all sorts of things but there were no brand names... Then I found a forum where there were mothers who were looking too. In total, there were about 60 people who had discussed organic products for babies. The 12th person gave the name of a baby food brand. So I said to myself, here's one, regardless of whether her comments are true... I wasn't looking for an opinion, I was looking for a brand... I scrolled down to see the posts on the thread. Then I went onto the website of the brand (...) the site was poorly done and it didn't give any suppliers. But eventually I found one! (SM8)

Nevertheless, almost one-quarter (seven) of the respondents regularly consult forums, mainly about subjects of personal interest, such as music, sports, games and computers. Most of them stressed that they rarely post on these forums, preferring to read comments by other users.

Political discussion forums generate very little interest: only two respondents frequent them – the ones who said they read political blogs – but they are critical of the type of discussion that takes place on such forums.

I don't care for forums much because of the methodology. Often, you post, then right away I'll post, after that someone else posts, either agreeing with you or with me. Often it's just a big free-for-all. (M29)

Lastly, one respondent is the moderator of a music forum. He dedicates several hours a week to it and explains his interest in this formula as follows:

It depends on the user community. If I see that the people are intelligent, if they have something to say and want to discuss things, I'll read what they have to say. But if it's just people who are arguing pointlessly, it won't interest me. (SM10)

11.4 Reliability of news on the Internet: blogs and forums versus traditional media

The respondents were also divided on the reliability of news disseminated on blogs and forums. Several pointed out that being well informed involves individual responsibility and that critical detachment is necessary with any media platform.

Everything depends on the degree of importance of a source. I think it's important that my search be precise, that I look for someone relevant. A reliable source I can use to form an opinion and continue on my way. [Being well informed] is a mixture of all that. The answer isn't television or the Internet or newspapers... It's a blend of all sources. (SM8)

I'm not saying they're not credible, but what I mean is you don't have to take it as an absolute. Ultimately it's up to you to figure things out. It's like a huge puzzle. It's a whole bunch of puzzle pieces; it's even pieces that aren't part of the puzzle you're working on. It's all mixed up. It's up to you to sort them all out. It isn't easy. Just because you see something on television doesn't mean it's true. Maybe someone has an interest in saying it and getting people to believe it. You don't know for sure. But anything is possible. I watch but I know very well it's not necessarily true. (QC20)

One-third of the respondents (nine people) believe, however, that traditional media are more credible than forums and blogs. Some believe that the professional practices of journalists working for the traditional media ensure quality news. They added that a diversity of sources contributes to the credibility of the information.

The journalists on TV are more credible than the ones on the Net. They're well-known journalists, whereas on the Internet if it's the same journalists, OK, but when it's someone you don't know at all...well, nope. I see them on television [...] on the Internet, it depends on who's writing, whereas on television you see the guy, you know that he's credible, you know he's good in his field. (M16)

[*Blogs and forums*] I would say are a little less valid; they tend to be personal opinions and not necessarily a reflection of the facts. I find journalists are more obliged to stick to the facts, whereas sites like that are more subjective, depending on the vision of the person who writes the blog. There's a bit of a slant, in one direction or another, so it's a little less valid, and it's less neutral. But for less serious subjects it doesn't really matter. (QC23)

And yet, in the eyes of others, the give and take of the discussions and the free and apparently disinterested contributions of Internet users are one of the elements that contribute to the validity of news on the Internet, especially on forums and blogs.

It's kind of the average citizen... For sure if there's someone who tells you "this is your problem," you can go and check on sites that are little more professional, but it can give you an idea just the same. Because the average citizen can also write on a professional site at the same time. But for sure, when I get that kind of information, I'll be more likely to check it on another source. (QC27)

The validity of the news can depend on the subject covered by blogs and forums. Two respondents said forums are very good sources of information for certain subjects, especially electronic games.

I think when they've got several million viewers on their site each day, I think that's enough to convince me. (M9)

Finally, several respondents cited Wikipedia as a credible source. They insisted on the importance of «self-correction» by Internet users on forums as well as on Wikipedia.

Maybe it's not like a university, but the participants are often specialists in their fields. I've already found that Wikipedia provided more credible information than a televised report on a survey. (QC25)

But what enables the respondents to evaluate and establish this credibility? We asked them about the criteria they use to determine credibility. Their answers include personal knowledge, reputation and verification. Three respondents explained they relied first on the filter of their own knowledge to evaluate the quality of the news on the Internet.

I find that it isn't necessarily quality news because when I evaluate it in relation to my knowledge and it doesn't even match... Even though I'm not an expert, I think it's a good indication that it isn't necessarily worth much. (QC21)

Certain «indicators» help the respondents recognize more credible information: reputation, the design of the site, knowledge of the site or the media platform and the suffix of the Internet address.

I find it's more credible when news comes from a known organization, such as a government site. For example, *.org*, *.qc* and *.ca* are more credible than *.com*. (QC24)

A small number of respondents (two) insisted on the importance of checking information with “real people.” As one respondent explained:

[Given the abundance of information on the current economic crisis] ...I took the trouble of calling an adviser about two weeks ago. I spoke to another one this afternoon. For the real story, you have to go to a real person. (SM10)

11.5 Other uses of the Internet

11.5.1 Facebook

Even though more than half (16) of the group are not on Facebook, the other participants’ interest in this social networking platform is worthy of mention. This subject is one of the few for which the respondents’ age seems to have a significant impact, despite the small size of our sample. Of the 13 respondents who use Facebook, 11 are 25 to 34 years of age (out of the 13 respondents in that age group), one respondent is under 24 (of the two respondents in that age group) and another respondent belongs to the 35-to-44 age group (of the 14 respondents over the age of 34).

Only four of the respondents who use Facebook do so only on an occasional basis (two or three times a week), whereas the nine others use the site regularly, in other words at least once a day.

I do my social thing, chatting with people who are on line. I read my e-mails and messages. (M2)

Over time you get a bit fed up. There’s lots of little applications, little games, little bells and whistles. But over time you get fed up with it. I go there more to gossip. You see photos of everybody. Like, everybody’s there... This one’s got a girlfriend... That one’s single... (QC23)

11.5.2 Entertainment and practical information

Apart from social networking and communication, the other uses of the Internet include entertainment (such as films and hockey pools), financial transactions, buying or selling various items on classified advertising sites or eBay and searches for jobs or soul mates.

11.6 Other technologies used to follow the news

The qualitative survey shows very limited use of other types of technology for news purposes. We asked the respondents about their use of cell phones, podcasting, satellite radio and other technologies that deliver the news. Although the respondents are familiar with these technologies, they are not interested in obtaining them. Even though a large number of the respondents (17) have a cellular telephone, none of them use it to receive news. Two respondents said they had previously used this type of service but had dropped it because of the high cost. Only one respondent said he would be interested in RDS bulletins, but that the high cost had deterred him. Podcasting is also still fairly marginal; five respondents use it occasionally. Lastly, none of the respondents have satellite radio. In addition, two respondents said they liked the screens with short news bulletins in the Montréal Metro.

12. Understanding the changes in media use since 2006

When asked how their use of the media for news purposes had changed, almost half of the respondents (13) said their usual practices had not really changed in relation to the answer given in the survey done two years earlier. These results are consistent with the findings of the quantitative survey conducted in 2009, which are presented in the first part of this publication.

It should be noted that the changes identified by the respondents – with the exception of one case – do not involve an increase in the amount of news consumed (including all media), but rather the use of specific media.

TABLE 2
Changes in media use for news purposes,
according to platform

	All media	Internet	Newspapers	Radio	Television
Increase	1	9	2	–	1
Decrease	1	2	1	2	2
No change	13	–	–	–	–

N.B.: The respondents' self-evaluation could involve more than one media platform; as a result, the total exceeds the total number of interviews.

Table 2 shows that only two respondents noted a change in the *quantity* of news consumed: one respondent said his consumption of the news had in general increased and another said he no longer took any interest in the news.

The others noted changes in their news *sources*. Some media are becoming more popular: not surprisingly, the source whose use has increased the most is the Internet. Nine respondents said their use of the Internet was up – for news purposes but also generally. In addition, two other respondents said they read newspapers more than they did two years earlier.

My habits have changed a great deal over the past two years. It's more important for me to get outside now. For me, information has to be practical above all and intellectually enriching. The Internet gives me that. It's unlimited and accessible. (M3)

Even so, seven respondents said their use of certain media was down: two use the Internet less as a news source, two others listen to the radio for news less, two others said they use television less for news than they did two years earlier and, lastly, one said he read newspapers less.

There are two main reasons for these shifts in media use:

1 – Lifestyle or job changes. In certain cases, entering the job market, retiring, the birth of a baby or a change in the respondent's financial situation has affected their news-consumption habits.

When I moved out on my own, I made do with the Internet and television. For sure, the biggest change was when I finished university and started working. (QC28)

I don't use the Internet as much. I have a family now, a little guy. I don't have time anymore. Sometimes I don't go near my computer at home for a whole month. I go on the Internet instead at work. When I'm home on the weekend I spend more time with my kid and I try to do various activities. (SM11)

[*About a work change*] Now that my time is more limited, I spend more time with my wife and children (...) Before, I could spend three or four hours a day on the Internet, but now if I spend an hour that's a lot. (SM7)

2 – Increased access to the Internet. Whether this is due to improved technology (for example, switching to high-speed Internet) or to an increase in Internet use for other purposes (for example, social networking on sites such as Facebook and the increasing number of e-mail messages), frequent, easy Internet access also leads to greater consumption of information on this media platform.

The computer is definitely taking up more time than before. Before getting the computer, I had a few contacts and I would check my messages once a week. But now I have to do it every day, otherwise they pile up pretty fast. (QC26)

In brief, when we look at the respondents as a group, we see mainly a *shift* of news consumption rather than an overall decrease: use of the Internet to follow the news is growing rapidly, whereas that of the other media is decreasing, albeit slightly. This trend both confirms and alleviates the concerns raised in the literature on this matter: the so-called traditional media are indeed losing ground to the Internet, which is rapidly expanding, but the decrease is not directly proportional and it is not

directly related to greater use of the Internet. Indeed, on an individual scale, the increase in Internet use appears to have led to less radio use for two respondents and less use of paper-version newspapers for one of them, who nevertheless continues to read them on the web. The six other respondents who said they used the Internet more did not say that this increase had led to a decrease in their use of traditional media.

In our sample, newspapers are not placed at a disadvantage by the increasing role of the Internet as a news source. Newspapers continue to have a certain importance, although they rarely constitute the main news source.

Even so, it is important to bear in mind that our study concerns recent changes, since the respondents were asked to comment on changes that have taken place since the first data-collection phase in 2007. Our findings show only that, since 2007, the respondents who have increased their use of the Internet for news purposes have not decreased their use of the other media. The 2009 results do not mean that the increase in Internet use has *never* contributed to the decline in the use of the so-called traditional media. Indeed, it is possible that, when they started using the Internet to follow the news, before 2007, this first shift to the electronic media resulted in a decrease in their use of the other media, although we do not know this. On the other hand, the data collected here show that, if the respondents had initially reduced their use of other media in favour of the Internet, the transfer now seems to be slowing.

13. Main news sources: a hybrid pattern

We asked the respondents to identify their main sources of news. It was difficult for several respondents to limit themselves to one main source, so we allowed multiple answers, which may themselves constitute a trend regarding the way the respondents consume the news. About one-third of the respondents (nine) identified a combination of several media as their main news source. Most often, they combine television and the Internet, sometimes adding radio (four times out of nine). We also see from Table 3 that newspapers are never the single main source of news; in the rare cases in which newspapers are one of the main sources, they are combined with television or the Internet (one respondent in each case).

TABLE 3
Main sources of news identified

	Alone	In combination	Total
Television	8	10	18
Internet	5	10	15
Radio	4	4	8
Newspapers	0	2	2
Friends and family	1	0	1

Television is still the main news source, alone or in combination. In the homes of some respondents, the television is on all day long. But the Internet comes a close second and seems to generate enthusiasm among those who consider it their only main news sources.

I think the Internet may have brought about a revolution. Something extraordinary has happened. It's opened a tremendous number of doors for us. It's a revolution. It's really a revolution for me. It's a window on the world. If I didn't have the Internet, I wouldn't have been able to watch the debates in the United States, since I don't have cable and I wouldn't have got cable, so I wouldn't have seen them. Doing

it on the Internet isn't the same thing as turning on the television, sitting down in front of it and watching it... With the remote, you just go zap and change the channel. On the Internet, you can't do that. (M20)

These two main sources are often used together. Five respondents identified the combination of the Internet and television as their main source of news, depending on the subject.

The Internet gives me information on computers, above all. Well, it's not just that, but it's mainly that. Television gives me the news. I like to watch certain programs and then, for the news, it's television. (M17)

I watch the newscast at noon and sometimes in the evening. But if I want more specific information on subjects that really interest me, the Internet is more effective, for sure. As for the time I spend in front of the TV watching the news compared with the Internet, it's about 50-50. In fact, for the newscast it's an hour or an hour and a half. I can spend at least an hour on the Internet a day, so it's about the same; it's pretty much 50-50 in terms of time but, as for the quantity and quality of the news I can get, for sure I get more from the Internet than I do from a newscast. (QC28)

The radio is occasionally added, with four respondents saying that their main source of news is a combination of the Internet, radio and television. For the same number of respondents, the radio is the single main news source.

Because wherever I am, I can turn it on. You can take it with you. When I'm in the car, I have the radio on; at the office, I have the radio on. I can buy headphones. I use the radio. It's easier. (SM5)

Only two respondents said newspapers were among their main news sources and, as pointed out above, they always combine newspapers with the Internet or with television.

I think when you read a newspaper, it's more current, it's more concrete than watching television. Television is the news, but it's also entertainment. When you read, I think you become more informed, you retain more of what you read than what you hear. (M2)

Lastly, one respondent considers friends and family to be his main news source.

People keep me informed. I don't even need to ask questions; people keep me informed; they come to me. What do you expect: I'm like a magnet! [...] «Have you heard about...?» «Did you hear the news?» So if I know about it, I talk about it; if I don't know about it... «Then tell me about it!» (M19)

Generally speaking, television plays a central role in the respondents' news habits, but the Internet comes a close second. Moreover, the two are often combined. The users are often far from content with a single main news source.

It should be recalled that our sample consists of people who represented high digital modernism in 2006, which contributes to the importance of the Internet in their news habits. The comparison with the results of the quantitative research reported in the first part is striking. In that study, the Internet's share of total news is 16 %. When this media platform is combined with other sources, however, it constitutes the main news source for more than 50% of our respondents. But the importance of television as a main news source is clear in both surveys.

13.1 First source when an event occurs

Main news source does not necessarily mean *first* news source in terms of chronology. When people are asked which media source informs them of an event or a news story, the results differ slightly, although television and the Internet still play a pivotal role.

Table 4 shows that, for a substantial portion of the respondents, various media can act as the first source that informs them of an event, depending on the circumstances. More than one-third of the respondents said that they did not know which was the first source or that it depended on the type of news, since some news was more likely to be transmitted quickly by one outlet than another. Moreover, this finding also reflects the combined use of several sources.

TABLE 4
The first source of information for a news story

Source	Number of respondents
Television	8
Internet	4
Radio	4
Friends and family	2
Don't know or depends on the news subject	11
Total	29

When a media type is cited, we see first that television remains an important platform to “find out” about a news story, especially for respondents who keep their television on all day long. Similarly, those who said the radio is frequently their first source also listen to it constantly.

Similarly, continual Internet use by certain users makes it their first media platform. In this case, the effectiveness of the Internet is based on two factors, which set it apart somewhat from the other media: the first is RSS feeds and alerts sent by such media as Yahoo and Google News; and the second, but to a lesser extent, is the speed of dissemination on blogs, which quickly provide more details and are therefore used to obtain news almost in real time about breaking stories, whereas the major media have difficulty being so effective.

The Internet is faster. When there was a shooting at Ahuntsic College – my girlfriend is a student there –, I went onto Google because the news hadn't been reported on the big sites, such as RDI. I did a search and found a blog where someone was talking about it. It was really up to the minute. (M9)

Some respondents said their first news sources had changed. In some cases, television has taken over from newspapers.

Television has replaced newspapers for me. They used to be a ritual when I arrived at work. But now that I'm retired, I don't read them anymore. I don't buy them anymore. (M17)

13.2 Platforms used for additional news

Once the respondents have learned of a news story (by the means cited above), they use television most often to learn more about it. But, that being said, we found two trends among the respondents who look for more information on a news story. Nine respondents opt for television, mainly Québec's all-news networks (LCN and RDI). Similarly, four respondents also consult the all-news networks, but the Web version.

My impulse would be to go and look on the Internet to see LCN live and RDI live. (QC24)

14. Media used as news sources

The first objective of this research was to study the extent of Internet use in the respondents' media consumption habits. But, as we have already explained, this use occurs within a larger framework, that of all media. We therefore asked the respondents about their consumption of other media: newspapers, radio and television. During the interviews, we tried to determine the processes and motivations behind the choices they had stated in the quantitative survey, such as the role of family and friends in their relationship to the news or the reasons that cause them to choose a certain media source, such as an all-news network, or to listen to radio call-in shows.

14.1 Newspapers

14.1.1 Paid newspapers

We have seen that no respondents cited newspapers as their main news source. Even though three respondents believe that the news is more “serious” in newspapers, they don’t seem to read them regularly and even less to subscribe.

I don’t read them systematically to keep up with the news because what I get on television and what I see on the Internet is more than enough, and there’s overlap. (M29)

In addition, the use of newspapers is strongly influenced by a culture of free news, which affects other media, such as radio, Internet and television. Indeed, the majority of the respondents who say they read the *Journal de Montréal* or *La Presse* do so when they find a free copy in a café or a restaurant.

The study shows that a small proportion of the respondents regularly consult paid newspapers. This finding is very different from the results of the quantitative study, which showed that 59.9% of the respondents are regular users of paid newspapers. The difference may be due to the fact that our sample concentrates on the high-modernism category. Only three respondents subscribe to a newspaper, and a fourth buys a copy of the *Journal de Montréal* every day. The weekend editions with their special sections are more popular; three respondents include them in their routine.

Croissants and *La Presse* on Saturday – it’s my Saturday thing. (M15)

The format of print-version newspapers is off-putting to respondents who are not interested in newspapers (13). They are criticized for being static and lacking interactive features (especially in comparison with the Internet), for not disseminating the news quickly enough and for taking too long to read.

I find they're not dynamic enough. I don't know. I'd rather go on the Internet. I have my main news site, but I have links to other news. I can go here and there, and find what interests me more easily. Sometimes newspapers have lots of articles that don't necessarily interest me, so I often just turn the pages... (QC 23)

I've never been interested in newspapers. They decide what to put in them and they give us that news. Sometimes it's interesting but sometimes it isn't... (M20)

Newspapers are always behind with the news [...] They're a waste of paper and they end up in the recycling bin. If I subscribed, I'd get a subscription to *Courrier international* but I wouldn't have time to read it! (M18)

Of course, the four respondents who are regular newspaper readers do not share these opinions. They appreciate the variety of subjects and even the comfort of a familiar media source.

I've had a newspaper subscription for five years [*Why?*] Well, for sure there are sections you don't find anywhere else, relationship advice, astrology, classified ads... Those are things you don't necessarily find on radio and television... It's really varied. (QC26)

I like the newspaper because you can find what you want and it's not like that with television. Newspapers go further. (QC24)

Maybe it's more comforting because it's more like the way we used to get the news before. Maybe it's because I often read the newspaper while drinking my coffee. (SM10)

14.1.2 Free newspapers

As we have seen, most of the respondents are not interested in paid newspapers enough to assume the cost of them. But what about free newspapers? It seems they have a little more appeal. Only four respondents pay for a paper version of a newspaper, but 13 respondents read free newspapers on a regular or occasional basis. More specifically, nine of them regularly read free newspapers, mainly the ones distributed in the Montréal Metro, and the four others consult them occasionally. The concise

presentation of the news is the attribute cited most often by the readers of free newspapers. It should be noted, however, that free newspapers have not won over 16 of the respondents, who said they never or very rarely consult them. Obviously, the fact that they are not available everywhere affects their ability to attract readers: for example, if a respondent never takes the *Metro*, he will naturally be less exposed to free newspapers. It should be noted, though, that even if the number of free newspapers available varies from one place to another, each of the three regions that the respondents come from has at least one free newspaper.

The free newspapers identified by the respondents can be divided into three main categories: newspapers distributed in and outside the *Metro* (in Montréal and its suburbs); cultural newspapers (*Voir*, *Ici*, *Mirror* and *Hour*); and community and regional weeklies.

The newspapers distributed in the *Metro* are the free newspapers used most often, with 10 respondents (out of a total of 21 respondents who live in the metropolitan region) reading them regularly or occasionally. Apart from the concise presentation of the news, as already stated, the respondents like the practical information they contain, such as recipes and horoscopes, as well as entertainment news. One respondent's use of them caught our attention:

I often take several copies and give them to my colleagues at the office. These newspapers also help me improve my French. (5)

Cultural newspapers (*Voir*, *Ici* and *Mirror*) are consulted by six respondents from Montréal and the suburbs. Half of them say they read them regularly to keep up with cultural news in the city. But none of the respondents from Québec City mentioned the newspaper *Voir*, even though it publishes a Québec City edition each week.

As for local news, it was mainly the residents of Laval who cited a regional weekly, *Courrier de Laval*. The respondents from the Québec City area did not identify a local newspaper as a news source. Three Montréal respondents said they consult their community newspaper because it provides news that the other media don't cover.

It's the only way to learn about the cultural life in my neighbourhood. (M14)

Rummage sales, for example. Only the community newspaper gives you that kind of information. (M16)

14.2 Radio

Two-thirds of the respondents (20) listen to the radio occasionally, regularly or avidly. Their use ranges from five to 10 minutes when they wake up to spending the entire day with the radio on. We also noted strong loyalty to a favourite radio station: most listen to only one radio station and only three respondents said they listened to three or more different radio stations according to their needs. As for the other one-third of the respondents, they listen to the radio rarely or not at all.

I'm not interested in the radio, and the main reason is the dead time... What I mean by dead time is commercials. (M20)

Those who do listen to the radio seem to take two different approaches: their listening is regular and intensive – in other words all day long at work or at home – or they listen almost not at all (with the exception of travelling time). Their radio habits break down as follows: two-thirds (14) listen to the radio only in the car, whereas six say they listen to it all day long, at home and at work.

So I wake up to the radio. I listen to the news in between the music, etc. That's in the morning. And then at the office, all day long at the office, I listen to the radio indirectly. Sometimes there's something that grabs my attention, so I dig a little deeper. (QC23)

The Internet does not yet seem to have affected people's radio habits. Two respondents use the Web to listen to the radio, in one case, for access to radio stations from other countries.

When the respondents talk about the radio they most often seem to raise the matter of opinions about the news. The respondents' positions on this matter are divided. Some respondents believe that the opinions of moderators and listeners on call-in shows are conducive to open-mindedness.

Sometimes, it's useful. I have a certain opinion but when you listen, when you listen to other people's opinions, you lean in another direction... Oh, that's true, maybe they're right. It really opens your mind. (QC26)

For others, however, the opinions heard on the radio are an annoyance that discourages them from listening to certain programs.

[*About the host of a morning radio show*] I find he's too stiff for the morning. He's never in a good mood; he's always angry. I find that's not the news. We no longer get the news, as in "I'm presenting the facts, that's all." There's really a lot of commentary and I find it's a little too extreme. His opinions take precedence, and I find he steamrollers over people who don't share his opinions. (QC22)

Another respondent goes further, believing that the opinions heard on the radio could help explain the «mystery» surrounding the ADQ's electoral success in the Québec City region.

The ADQ did well in Québec City. I think that radio had a really big influence. Every time I turned on the radio in the morning, they were talking about it, they were taking sides. I think it influenced people a lot. Whenever the radio gets behind a party, very often that's the party that will do well in Québec City. (QC28)

14.3 Television

We have seen that watching television is still a deeply ingrained habit. All the respondents said they use television to inform themselves and to entertain themselves. As already stated, eight of them said television was their main news source and most of them (11) turn to it when an event occurs or a story begins to circulate.

The vast majority (26) of the respondents have access to specialized channels by cable or satellite receiver. The entertainment component is important, and the respondents regularly watch sports and other specialized channels, especially French-language channels, such as Série +, Historia and Canal D.

Even so, watching news programs on television is still important. Almost one-third of the respondents (8) regularly watch morning programs (six of them watch *Salut Bonjour* on TVA). Two respondents have the television on all day long.

For the weather, the less important stories, news about public transit, food, the big headlines. It gives me good information for my day. (M13)

Television's persistence in the respondents' news habits is shown especially by the fact that 15, out of 29, continue to watch newscasts every day at the start or the end of the evening. Four of them watch two editions of the newscasts each day. They said their loyalty is due to habit and interest in the news.

Unlike the Internet, the newscasts take me to subjects I wouldn't have clicked on. Because with television I'm not the one who decides. (QC22)

Almost half of the respondents (12) regularly watch Québec's all-news networks. Even though the LCN concept of a news loop appeals to a greater number of respondents, special programs, documentaries and more detailed newscasts on RDI also constitute a good news source in their opinion.

I can see things in greater detail. Sometimes you have interviews with experts and that develops the news more. (QC23)

The wide range of subjects and the international component (especially according to the respondents who watch RDI, SRC and TVA) are cited as television's attributes when it comes to the news.

It should also be noted that some respondents deplore the end of the news programs on TQS, pointing out that it led to a significant loss of regional news. These people are mainly from the Québec City region.

We lost TQS. I used to listen to TQS a lot for regional news. I liked it because I learned a lot about my city. (QC24)

No, the news was about the only thing I watched on TQS, in other words the news from time to time. It was more local; it was more about Québec City. Now I almost never watch it because there isn't much left. (QC23)

14.4 Magazines

A small number of respondents (6) said they consulted magazines on a regular or occasional basis. It should be noted that five of them are women who read above all magazines on entertainment, movies and fashion. These respondents said they especially liked magazines for their light tone, visual appeal and wide range of subjects.

14.5 Friends and family as a news source

We asked the respondents about the role that their friends and family play in helping them *keep up with the news* and shaping their *opinions* on current events.

In response to the first question, several respondents (4) said their friends and family were an important source of information on current events. We have already seen the case of one respondent who considers family and friends to be his *main* news source. Another respondent even goes so far as to say he doesn't think he needs the media because he has a good social network.

It's very important for me. I have a friend I speak to at least once a day. There are days when we don't call each other, but that's rare. There are days when we might call each other up to five times to talk about a news story. (M17)

Two other respondents believe that *they themselves* are a source of information for the people around them.

Even though for the majority the media continue to be the best way of keeping up with current events, some respondents pointed out that certain types of news are transmitted more quickly by friends and family, whether local news from neighbours or international news from family and friends living outside the country.

The media are sometimes faster than friends and family. But for local news the neighbours are more efficient! (SM11)

But friends and family become very important when it comes to forming an opinion on a news story. The great majority of the respondents (21) believe it is through discussions with people close to them that they can consider issues and form an opinion. Some said that they deepen their knowledge of a subject by using the Internet but that discussions with friends, family and colleagues enable them to form an opinion.

It's like a mechanism that can influence your own point of view. It's very important, because I have friends and relatives who often share my intellectual background. We have discussions on just about everything. (M29)

Some respondents, on the other hand, said that the Internet enables them to go directly «to the source» to form an opinion, especially during elections. But this access does not detract from the importance of the media and their friends and family.

[*To follow an election campaign*] Every day, I would go on the Radio-Canada site, above all, then on the parties' sites. (...) Yes, I watched the 10:00 p.m. news on CBC and on Radio-Canada in French. And I had a lot of discussions with a friend. (M15)

Even so, for five respondents, the media constitute an important source when it comes to forming an opinion, albeit to a lesser extent. One respondent said he used radio call-in shows, but for the others the influence stems directly from the treatment of the story or the credibility of the journalists and specialists who give their views in the media.

Sometimes I listen to different news programs, to several different journalists who give their personal opinions. Then, I go more with what reflects my values. (QC23)

15. The news

15.1 Subjects of interest

To gain a better understanding of the way the respondents consume the news, we asked them about their interest in local and regional, national and international news.

TABLE 5
Interest in local and regional, national and international news

	Local and regional news	National news	International news
Strong interest	7	6	8
Weak interest	3	–	7

The respondents diverge the most when it comes to their level of interest in international news. One-third (8) of the respondents believe they have a strong interest in international news, whereas just as many (7) take little or no interest in it.

I like being open to the world. I find these days we're so connected that anything can have an influence on the big countries in the G7 or on companies. A policy or decisions made elsewhere can have impacts on the economy or on politics. I like to be able to discuss that sort of thing. I like being able to talk about it. And if someone talks about it, I

know I can get into a discussion with them and hold my own. (QC23).

Local and regional news also gives rise to diverging degrees of interest, but the respondents are less divided. One respondent out of four said he was interested in this type of news. Only three respondents said they took no interest in local news, which they often equate with *faits divers*.

We should pay less attention to *faits divers*. Like, stories about children who are run over by drunk drivers. I'm starting to get fed up. (QC25)

Six respondents said they found national news interesting, and none openly said they were not interested in it.

Even so, several respondents do not express their interest in the news from the geographic standpoint but according to other criteria. Several respondents said their interest varied according to the importance of the news. The criteria used to determine this importance were not clearly identified, however.

It's the scope of the subject that determines my interest. (M2)

Several respondents explained that a story may attract their attention if they believe it will have an impact on their lives or their work. Others said they considered *faits divers* and unusual or «inspiring» news to be of special interest.

I'm interested in the big international news. But there are also little *faits divers* that I find touching. Such as yesterday, with the people who were saved in the Atlantic Ocean. They were shipwrecked and not all of them were able to get into the lifeboat. A Coast Guard boat was nearby, getting ready to inspect the boat that had gone down. They had enough time to save them. They had been in the water for 15 minutes and would have died. (...) I find that touching, people's small acts of heroism. (QC25)

Second, we tried to determine which subjects are of special interest to them and which hold no interest at all. In contrast to the 2009 quantitative study, which included a questionnaire with a detailed list of subjects, we asked them to tell us spontaneously which subjects interested them. This open question gave rise to different results.

To summarize, the subjects they find extremely interesting are, in order:

Politics: 13

The economy: 12

Arts and culture: 8

Sports: 8

Faits divers: 6

Computers, science and medical breakthroughs: 3

We see first that the respondents are extremely interested in politics and the economy. This finding could be due to the fact that the interviews took place in the fall of 2008 and at the start of 2009 in a context of intense political activity: the federal election, the provincial election and the enthusiasm for U.S. politics that the election of Barack Obama as President of the United States elicited. The global economic crisis no doubt also fuelled their interest in economic matters.

Two respondents simply said they were interested in all subjects.

I'm very interested in international and political news. These are unique and important news, which enables you to understand a situation. But I also think most often it's related to my interest in politics. I like that environment: the political debates, the way things evolve, the way people manage a country and all that. (M29)

Some respondents identified subjects that don't interest them at all. Six of them have no interest in *faits divers*, and five respondents said they were not interested in politics.

15.2 Being a well-informed person

We asked the respondents to assess their level of news knowledge by stating whether they considered themselves well informed, moderately well informed or poorly informed. Our intention was to gain a better understanding of their criteria in terms of quantity of information, then comparing their self-assessment with their media consumption, as defined during the quantitative survey in 2007. In brief, is it necessary to consume a great deal of news to consider oneself well informed?

First, it can be seen that half (15) of the respondents consider themselves well informed, whether or not they are heavy consumers of the news.⁴

TABLE 6
Respondents' self-assessment according to consumer categories established from quantitative data

	Heavy consumers of the news	Light consumers of the news
Well informed	8	7
Moderately well informed	4	6
Poorly informed	2	2

It appears that the respondents' self-assessment of their news knowledge has no direct relationship with their media consumption. Indeed, some of the respondents (7) who make limited use of the media consider themselves well informed, whereas two of the heavy consumers consider themselves poorly informed. These differences may be due to differing opinions as to news quality or different definitions of what it means to be well informed. In certain cases, assiduous use of the media increases the respondents' expectations about their level of knowledge.

4. Our sample comprised 15 people whose consumption was light and 14 whose consumption was heavy, according to the 2006-2007 survey.

I'm moderately well informed but I don't know what I don't know! I'm not interested in every subject. But I do have a good knowledge of current events in general. (QC27)

To explain what they consider a low level of knowledge, several respondents made a point of saying they keep up with the subjects that interest them.

I'm informed about the things that interest me, but for sure I don't keep up with everything... (SM8)

Regardless of the respondent's self-assessment, the main criteria used repeatedly to define the quality of their news knowledge is the ability to hold a conversation about current events.

I'm well informed because I can carry on a conversation with friends. (M1)

I keep up, but I just have an overview... I'm informed, but not super well informed. I couldn't get into a discussion of a subject with my educated friends and give an opinion. I follow the news just for my own enjoyment... (SM7)

According to my own criteria, I'm not necessarily a well-informed person. I couldn't talk about what happened in Québec City or Québec as a whole yesterday, whereas people who watch the news could give a brief summary. (QC21)

It is difficult to measure the main reference criteria with a questionnaire and it is therefore not surprising to see a certain discrepancy between, on the one hand, a respondent's self-assessment based on the *quality* of his news consumption, a quality assessed in terms of the ability to hold a conversation and, on the other hand, its quantitative measurement, namely the *intensity* of his news consumption. It is possible that some respondents spend very little time following the news but do so in such a way that they are able to discuss current events. Conversely, one can watch an all-news network and retain facts without ever feeling equipped to form an opinion for conversation.

15.2.1 *What it means to be well informed*

Someone who's poorly informed will know what's going on right around here, but no more than that. Someone who's fairly well informed will know what's going on in Québec. Someone who's very well informed will know what's happening in Canada. Someone who's very, very well informed will know what's happening in the world. (QC28)

When we asked the respondents to define what it means to be well informed, the criterion based on the ability to hold a conversation was not as clearly predominant as it was in the self-assessment. We asked an open question that elicited as many answers as there were respondents. We were able to determine three main types of definition, however.

The first type is that which is most similar to the criterion of an ability to carry on a conversation (which, as we have seen, the respondents use most often to evaluate themselves). For these respondents (8), a well-informed person puts the news into context and sees connections between stories; such a person serves as a reference for others.

Well, it's someone who doesn't stop at whatever is said, whatever they try to have you believe in the news. It's someone who looks for answers himself. It's someone who comes up with his own ideas. (M9)

I think it's a person who doesn't cultivate voluntary ignorance. In my opinion, a well-informed person is someone who, at the end of the day, can summarize the essence of what is going on around him. Someone who can remember a week later or a month later, "Yes, there was such and such an event that happened during such and such a period." (M29)

In the two other types of definition, the criteria are closer to those used or measured in the quantitative survey. The second type of definition emphasizes a diversity of news sources. According to these respondents (6), a well-informed person uses several different media, including a high proportion of traditional media.

My boyfriend listens to the radio a lot, he watches TV a lot, he often goes on the Internet to look for things and he reads a lot. He loves to read the newspaper... So he's aware of pretty much everything that goes on. (M6)

Lastly, the third definition is based on the amount of time invested. According to five respondents, a well-informed person is someone who dedicates a lot of time to the news.

Being a well-informed person is practically a full-time job. (SM8)

15.3 Too much information?

None of the respondents deplored or rejoiced in an «excess» of news, a subject that occasionally comes up in today's discussions of the news. Even so, a few of them said they sometimes had the impression that they received «more information than necessary.» In their opinion, all the media help create this situation; they cited excessive descriptions in newspaper articles, repetition of stories on all-news networks, radio headlines recurring in loop fashion and, finally, the Internet with its millions of pages on the widest range of subjects.

There's a lot of information we don't need. For example, in the newspapers: "The guy drove his car into the living room, and the wall was blue." The blue detail wasn't necessary. (M17)

We can unconsciously be too informed. When I watch RDI for a whole day, I see countless news stories about things happening here and elsewhere in the world. I'll have access to countless political situations that are sometimes interesting but sometimes not at all. And then there's the *faits divers* and all the social news. Am I interested in knowing that the people at Abitibi-Bowater are on strike? But I know it just the same! Except that it's not news that's important to me. (M29)

16. Conclusion

The main objective of this qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms of how the Internet is used for news purposes. By concentrating on a subsample of 29 people who are especially partial to this platform (whether they follow the news a great deal or just a little), we were able to assess the place that the Internet occupies in their lives.

Our main observation is that, for people who were already “wired” two years ago, increased access to the Internet has not significantly changed the *intensity* of their news consumption although, in certain cases, we see changes in the *way* they obtain the news. Generally speaking, we see two types of profile.

In the first group are those people whose increased use of the Internet results almost solely in a change in their social relationships – since the Internet represents primarily a tool for communicating with friends and family – and their entertainment activities. These people were not initially inclined to follow the news, and their increased use of the Internet does not seem conducive to greater news consumption.

In the second group are those people who were already inclined to follow the news and for whom the Internet is a complementary source of news, adding a new dimension to the *way* they follow the news. This source is highly valued for various reasons, which are both instrumental and substantive. From the instrumental standpoint, the respondents appreciate Internet news because it offers choice and diversity, speed, independence and consumer control over the news. They also appreciate the stability of news on the Internet; they can watch or read reports that they did not pay sufficient attention to the first time or would not otherwise see at all. In this sense the Internet creates a certain news permanence, as newspapers used to do in contrast to the ephemeral, one-off nature of television and radio. All this is part of a general change in our society’s relationship with time, especially among the younger generations.

But, from the substantive viewpoint, the respondents who took part in our qualitative survey also emphasized that the Internet enables them to increase the quality of the news they

take in. It seems that the opportunity to check news received from a media platform, rapidly and at little cost, encourages them to verify the news more often. In this sense, the advent of the Internet may be contributing to a critical spirit and perhaps even a fresh news media literacy.

Appendix A

1. Questionnaire on media consumption

Oral presentation of the survey. Anonymity, confidentiality, fee, etc.

Regions	Laval	1
	Montréal	2
	Québec	3
	Rivière-du-Loup	4
	Victoriaville	5

For the following questions, I'm going to ask you to recall your recent behaviour in terms of the time you spent reading newspapers or magazines, listening to the radio, watching television or using the Internet. Take some time to think about them.

Q1 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

READING ONE OR MORE NEWSPAPERS (in print version excluding free newspapers and excluding reading on the Internet)?

1. Did not spend any time reading a print-version newspaper
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q2 Which newspapers?

1. None
2. *La Presse*
3. *Journal de Montréal*
4. *Le Soleil*
5. *Le Devoir*
6. *The Gazette*
7. *The Globe and Mail*
8. Other _____

Q3 Yesterday, how much time — approximately — did you spend:

READING ONE OR MORE FREE NEWSPAPERS?

1. Did not spend any time reading a free newspaper
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q4 Yesterday, how much time approximately did you spend:

LISTENING TO NEWS OR INFORMATION PROGRAMS
ON THE RADIO

1. No time spent listening to news on the radio
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q5 To follow the news on the radio, which station do you listen to most often?

(No more than two answers)

Answer 1: _____

Answer 2: _____

Q6 Yesterday, how much time – approximately — did you spend:

LISTENING TO NEWS OR INFORMATION PROGRAMS ON INTERNET RADIO?

1. No time spent listening to news on Internet radio
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q7 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

WATCHING NEWS OR INFORMATION PROGRAMS ON TELEVISION?

1. No time spent watching news on television
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q8 Which television station did you watch?

(Up to two answers)

1. Radio-Canada main network
2. Radio-Canada RDI
3. TVA
4. TQS
5. RDS
6. TV5
7. LCN
8. CNN
9. Other: _____

Q9 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

WATCHING NEWS OR INFORMATION PROGRAMS ON INTERNET TELEVISION?

1. No time spent watching news on Internet television
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q10 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

READING A REGIONAL OR COMMUNITY WEEKLY NEWS-PAPER (print version)

1. No time spent reading a weekly newspaper
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q11 Yesterday, how much time — approximately – did you spend:

READING A MAGAZINE FOR NEWS OR INFORMATION (print version)

1. No time spent reading a magazine
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q12 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

READING NEWS OR INFORMATION ON A CELLULAR PHONE OR A BLACKBERRY?

1. No time spent reading news on a cellular phone
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q13 Yesterday, how much time – approximately – did you spend:

ON NEWS OR INFORMATION WEBSITES?

1. No time spent on news websites
2. 1 to 15 minutes
3. 15 to 25 minutes
4. 25 to 50 minutes
5. 50 to 75 minutes
6. More than 75 minutes

Q14 What are the main news sites that you use?

(List up to three sites)

1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

Q15 In the past 24 hours, what are the news or information subjects that INTERESTED YOU THE MOST from what you saw around you? The subjects may include sports, politics, culture, arts, international news, municipal news, scientific developments, etc. (List no more than two subjects.)

1: _____

2: _____

Q16A For the following subjects, place an X beside the SIX that interest you the MOST when you read newspapers and magazines, listen to the radio, watch television or go on the Internet.

1. Events in your city or region
2. International politics
3. Sports
4. Practical subjects (gardening, cooking, health, etc.)
5. Weather
6. Business and finance
7. Public opinion on current events (vox pop, phone-in shows, letters to the editor)
8. Québec performers and entertainment
9. Fashion and trends
10. Québec politics
11. Canadian politics
12. Decorating, furnishings, renovation
13. Travel
14. <i>Faits divers</i>
15. International celebrities
16. Scientific news, breakthroughs, etc.
17. Books and recordings
18. Films
19. Cars

Q16B Now state the SIX subjects that interest you the LEAST

1. Events in your city or region
2. International politics
3. Sports
4. Practical subjects (gardening, cooking, health, etc.)
5. Weather
6. Business and finance
7. Public opinion on current events (vox pop, phone-in shows, letters to the editor)
8. Québec performers and entertainment
9. Fashion and trends
10. Québec politics
11. Canadian politics
12. Decorating, furnishings, renovation
13. Travel
14. <i>Faits divers</i>
15. International celebrities
16. Scientific news, breakthroughs, etc.
17. Books and recordings
18. Films
19. Cars

Q17 For each of the above subjects, indicate the TWO means you generally use to obtain quality information.

1. News or reports on the RADIO
2. News or reports on TELEVISION
3. News or reports in a NEWSPAPER (including a free newspaper)
4. News or reports in a REGIONAL OR COMMUNITY WEEKLY NEWSPAPER
5. News or reports on a WEBSITE (Internet)
6. News or reports in a MAGAZINE

Q18 Over the past two years, state the means that you have used MORE and those that you have used LESS. Put only one X on each line.

MEANS Put one X on each line	NOT AT ALL	MORE	LESS	NO CHANGE
Radio				
Conventional television (Radio-Canada, TVA, TQ, TQS, etc.)				
Specialty television (RDI, LCN, CNN, RDS, TV5, etc.)				
Newspapers (excluding free newspapers)				
News on cellular phone or BlackBerry				
Free newspapers				
Regional or community weeklies				
Websites (Internet)				
News magazines				
Internet television				
Internet radio (live or podcast)				

Q19 If you have access to the Internet, do you subscribe to information bulletins or e-mail newsletters on the Internet?

1. I have no Internet access
2. I have Internet access but I never use it
3. Yes, 1 or 2 e-mail newsletters
4. Yes, 3 or more
5. No

Q20 (For Internet users only)

When you go on the Internet and you open your browser (such as Internet Explorer or Safari), which home page do you currently use? (The home page is the page that appears automatically at the start of your session.)

1. Don't know
2. Apple
3. Canoë
4. Cyberpresse
5. Google
6. MSN (Microsoft)
7. Radio-Canada
8. Other:

Q21 Over the past seven days, have you RESPONDED on a website to commentary or news, such as by taking part in a blog or submitting comments?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

Q22 to Q26: Series of 10 questions on current events (see section 2 of the Appendix)

Q27 Which of the following occupation categories corresponds best to yours? Circle the number corresponding to your situation.

1. Professional, manager
2. Employee, industrial or commercial sector
3. Office worker
4. Service businesses (sales, restaurant, etc.)
5. Full-time student
6. At home and not looking for work
7. Looking for work
8. Retired
9. Self-employed
10. Business owner
11. Other

Q28 What is your annual before-tax household income? Is it...?

1. Less than \$20,000
2. \$20,001 to \$35,000
3. \$35,001 to \$45,000
4. \$45,001 to \$55,000
5. \$55,001 to \$65,000
6. \$65,001 to \$75,000
7. More than \$75,000
8. *DNK/DNA

Q29 What is the highest level of education that you have completed? Is this level...?

1. Primary
2. Secondary
3. College
4. University
5. Not sure

Q30 Which age group do you belong to? Is it... (READ)...?

1. Under 24
2. 25-34
3. 35-44
4. 45-54
5. 55-64
6. 65 or more.....
7. *Refused to answer.....

Q31 Sex Male Female

The personal information we have asked you for will be kept **confidential** and will be used only for our research; it will not give rise to any commercial or other solicitation. It will be used to contact you one year from now to ask you to take part in this research again, on a voluntary, compensated basis.

Your name: _____

Your e-mail address (if any): _____

Your telephone number: _ _ _ _ _ - _ _ _ _ _

2. Questions on current events¹

The correct answers are in boldface. Subquestion 23a was worded incorrectly for the groups from Laval and Montréal. The answers to this subquestion were therefore not used.

Québec City, January 19

Q22

ISRAEL'S DECLARATION OF A CEASEFIRE IN ITS CONFLICT WITH HAMAS IN THE GAZA STRIP.

Q22A

Do you remember how many deaths the conflict has resulted in over the past three weeks?

Answer 1: About 1,000 deaths

Answer 2: About 1,200 deaths

Answer 3: About 2,000 deaths

Q23

FIRST MINISTERS' CONFERENCE (FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL) ON THE ECONOMY.

Q23A

Do you remember why Québec Premier Jean Charest was angry at Canada's Prime Minister, Stephen Harper?

Answer 1: Disappointed with a change to the equalization formula

Answer 2: Disappointed with the size of the 2009 projected federal deficit

Answer 3: Disappointed with the amounts that the federal government plans to spend on infrastructure in Québec

1. This method of presenting news questions is based directly on *Young People and the News*, a report by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, published in July 2007.

Q24

THE FUNERAL OF JEAN PELLETIER, FORMER MAYOR OF QUÉBEC CITY.

Q24A

Which of the former Leaders of the Liberal Party of Canada did not attend the funeral?

Answer 1: Paul Martin

Answer 2: Jean Chrétien

Answer 3: Stéphane Dion

Q25

AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF QUÉBEC AND THE DEMERGED CITIES OF SAINT-AUGUSTIN-DE-DESMANURES AND L'ANCIENNE-LORETTE REGARDING SHARING OF SPENDING AND JURISDICTION.

Q25A

Do you remember whether, under this agreement,...

Answer 1: The demerged cities will receive \$25 million from Québec City for past overpayments

Answer 2: The demerged cities will pay \$7 million more to Québec City

Answer 3: \$7 million will be paid by the Québec government

Q26

THE CANADIAN PREMIER IN QUÉBEC CITY OF *LE DRAGON BLEU*, A PLAY BY ROBERT LEPAGE.

Q26A

Do you remember the country where the play takes place?

Answer 1: Japan

Answer 2: China

Answer 3: South Korea

Laval, January 20

Q22

ISRAEL'S DECLARATION OF A CEASEFIRE IN ITS CONFLICT WITH HAMAS IN THE GAZA STRIP.

Q22A

Do you remember how many deaths the conflict has caused over the past three weeks?

Answer 1: About 1,000 deaths

Answer 2: About 1,200 deaths

Answer 3: About 2,000 deaths

Q23

MONTREAL STREET-GANG CRIME IS DOWN, ACCORDING TO POLICE.

Q23A

Do you remember the reasons that crime is down?

Answer 1: The gangs are fragmented into small groups

Answer 2: The members are finding it difficult to get weapons

Answer 3: The number of young members is down by one-half

Q24

A WOMAN SUES HER FORMER SPOUSE FOR \$50 MILLION AND SEEKS \$56,000 A MONTH IN ALIMONY.

Q24A

Why is the case notable?

Answer 1: It could set a precedent by giving rights to de facto spouses

Answer 2: The former spouse is well known in the arts community

Answer 3: The woman would receive alimony even if she had no children

Q25

A \$380,000 SEPARATION ALLOWANCE FOR HENRI-PAUL ROUSSEAU, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE CAISSE DE DÉPÔT ET PLACEMENT DU QUÉBEC.

Q25A

Do you remember why this news received coverage?

Answer 1: He left of his own accord

Answer 2: He was suspected of committing fraud at the Caisse

Answer 3: He was on sick leave during the last year of his mandate

Q26

BARACK OBAMA CELEBRATED MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY YESTERDAY.

Q26A

Do you remember what he did?

Answer 1: Visited a veterans' hospital

Answer 2: Helped paint a local community centre

Answer 3: Distributed treats to underprivileged children

Montréal, January 21**Q22**

HOSTILITIES HAVE CEASED IN THE GAZA STRIP.

Q22a

Do you remember whether the Israeli army...?

Answer 1: Partially withdrew its troops from Gaza

Answer 2: Completely withdrew its troops

Answer 3: Did not withdraw any troops

Q23

MONTREAL STREET-GANG CRIME IS DOWN, ACCORDING TO POLICE.

Q23A

Do you remember the reasons that crime is down?

Answer 1: The gangs are fragmented into small groups

Answer 2: The members are finding it difficult to get weapons

Answer 3: The number of young members is down by one-half

Q24

THE BANK OF CANADA LOWERED ITS KEY RATE.

Q24A

The rate was lowered to...?

Answer 1: 0.5%

Answer 2: 1%

Answer 3: 2.5%

Q25

THE LAYOFF OF 300 RIO TINTO EMPLOYEES IN QUÉBEC.

Q25A

Do you remember which smelter Rio Tinto announced was closing for good?

Answer 1: The Alma smelter

Answer 2: The Beauharnois smelter

Answer 3: The Bécancour smelter

Q26

A MAJOR PRIZE WILL SOON BE AWARDED TO QUÉBEC FILM-MAKER FERNAND DANSEREAU.

Q26A

Do you remember which award Mr. Dansereau will receive?

Answer 1: The prix Albert-Tessier

Answer 2: The prix Hommage Métro

Answer 3: The Lifetime Achievement Jutra

Québec City, January 27

Q22

THE ANNOUNCEMENT, ON MONDAY, OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JOB LOSSES IN THE UNITED STATES.

Q22A

Do you remember which company announced the most job losses (20,000)?

Answer 1: The heavy equipment manufacturer Caterpillar

Answer 2: The computer manufacturer Hewlett-Packard

Answer 3: The McDonald's fast food chain

Q23

THE TABLING OF THE HARPER GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET.

Q23A

Do you remember whether Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada...?

Answer 1: Announced he would support the budget

Answer 2: Refused to say whether he would support the budget before it was brought down

Answer 3: Said he would refrain from voting against the budget even if he found it completely unsuitable

Q24

THE LABOUR DISPUTE AT THE *JOURNAL DE MONTRÉAL*.

Q24A

Do you remember whether, during the dispute, the newspaper...?

Answer 1: Is still being published

Answer 2: Is not being published

Answer 3: Is being published on the Internet only (no print version)

Q25

THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY QUÉBEC CITY MAYOR RÉGIS LABEAUME OF A PLAN TO COMBAT POVERTY.

Q25A

Do you remember who will be responsible for this matter?

Answer 1: A municipal councillor

Answer 2: A committee of municipal councillors and community stakeholders

Answer 3: The mayor himself

Q26

THE NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE ALL-STAR GAME HELD ON THE WEEKEND.

Q26A

Do you remember who was named the Most Valuable Player?

Answer 1: Vincent Lecavalier

Answer 2: Alexander Ovechkin

Answer 3: Alex Kovalev

Rivière-du-Loup, January 28

Q22

IN THE GAZA STRIP, THE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN BROKEN AFTER 10 DAYS.

Q22A

Do you remember how many deaths the clashes caused?

Answer 1: 2 deaths

Answer 2: 25 deaths

Answer 3: 50 deaths

Q23

THE BUDGET BROUGHT DOWN YESTERDAY BY THE HARPER GOVERNMENT.

Q23A

Do you remember whether the budget...?

Answer 1: Left Québec's equalization payments unchanged

Answer 2: Ensured Canada would return to a deficit

Answer 3: Provided no income tax cuts despite what had been announced

Q24

A MAN, AGED 93, FOUND GUILTY OF SEXUALLY ASSAULTING HIS DAUGHTERS AVOIDS PRISON.

Q24A

Do you remember why the judge rendered this decision?

Answer 1: He considered the health of the accused too fragile

Answer 2: He cited the fact that the assaults had taken place 50 years earlier

Answer 3: He took the accused's profound regret into account

Q25

A PROJECT TO CONTROL BIOGAS FROM THE RIVIÈRE-DU-LOUP LANDFILL SITE.

Q25A

Do you remember how the biogas will be eliminated?

Answer 1: It will be landfilled

Answer 2: It will be burned

Answer 3: It will be liquefied and stored

Q26

THE BIRTH OF OCTUPLETS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Q26A

Do you remember how many of the babies survived?

Answer 1: 6

Answer 2: 7

Answer 3: 8

Victoriaville, January 29**Q22**

IN THE GAZA STRIP, THE CEASEFIRE HAS BEEN BROKEN AFTER 10 DAYS.

Q22A

Do you remember whether...?

Answer 1: Only the Palestinian militants resumed their attacks

Answer 2: Only the Israeli army resumed its attacks

Answer 3: Both sides resumed their attacks

Q23

THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA SUPPORTS THE HARPER GOVERNMENT'S BUDGET.

Q23A

Do you remember whether Michael Ignatieff, the Leader of the federal Liberal Party, said...?

Answer 1: That his support was conditional on the adoption of several changes

Answer 2: That he considered the Harper government to be on probation and still threatened to bring it down

Answer 3: That he would support the government until the fall session of Parliament to avoid an early election

Q24

THE DEATH OF PIERRE ROUX, FORMER MAYOR OF ARTHABASKA AND VICTORIAVILLE.

Q24A

Do you remember what caused his death?

Answer 1: Cancer

Answer 2: Heart problems

Answer 3: A stroke

Q25

THE QUÉBEC GOVERNMENT WILL ASSIST THE PROVINCE'S RECYCLABLE MATERIAL SORTING CENTRES.

Q25A

Do you remember what prompted the government to take this action?

Answer 1: The resale prices for recycled materials have plummeted since the start of the economic crisis

Answer 2: Exports to the United States are now almost impossible because of protectionist measures

Answer 3: New environmental regulations have imposed tremendous restructuring costs

Q26

THE BIRTH OF OCTUPLETS IN THE UNITED STATES.

Q26A

Do you remember how many of the babies survived?

Answer 1: 6

Answer 2: 7

Answer 3: 8

Appendix B

Media consumption in Québec (as a %)

2009	None	1-15 min.	15-25 min.	25-50 min.	50-75 min.	More than 75 min.
Paid newspapers	40.1	19.2	17.2	17.5	3.3	2.8
Newspapers on the Internet*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Free newspapers	87.9	7.6	3.3	1.0	0.1	0
Radio (news)	28.0	33.7	18.6	10.6	5.0	4.1
Internet radio	92.3	4.1	1.1	1.1	0.6	0.8
Television (news)	6.0	11.2	18.8	25.4	18.6	19.6
Internet television	89.4	7.6	1.3	1.0	0.6	0.2
Information/news websites	48.7	23.0	10.7	11.1	2.3	4.2
Community/regional weeklies	56.7	30.3	9.3	3.4	0.4	0
Magazines	67.0	17.3	10.3	3.6	1.3	0.6
News on cellular phone or BlackBerry	97.4	1.4	1.1	0.2	0	0

2007	None	1-15 min.	15-25 min.	25-50 min.	50-75 min.	More than 75 min.
Paid newspapers	39.5	25.0	21.7	10.4	2.5	0.8
Newspapers on the Internet	78.0	13.8	4.0	2.4	1.4	0.4
Free newspapers	80.2	10.9	7.4	1.4	0.1	0
Radio (news)	33.7	36.5	12.0	11.6	3.8	2.4
Internet radio	93.8	3.9	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.5
Television (news)	9.0	10.8	27.1	28.8	13.5	10.7
Internet television	93.8	2.8	3.3	0.1	0	0
News on the Internet	71.1	14.0	7.2	4.9	0.7	2.1
Weeklies	54.8	22.9	19.1	3.0	0	0.2
Magazines	63.4	18.3	13.0	3.3	1.4	0.5
News on cellular phone or BlackBerry	97.9	1.7	0.3	0.1	0	0

* This category, used in 2007, has been replaced by news websites.

Appendix C

Index of the level of interest in each news category (2007, 2009)

	2009	2007
Local and regional news	56	63
Scientific news (breakthroughs, etc.)	38	41
Weather	29	27
Québec politics	23	19
International politics	18	-7
Faits divers	7	15
Canadian politics	7	-6
Travel	5	-6
Business and finance	5	-22
Practical subjects (gardening, health, cooking, etc.)	-2	7
Québec performers and entertainment	-3	11
Books and recordings	-9	-8
Sports	-14	-12
Films	-16	8
Decorating, furnishings, renovation	-22	-13
International celebrities	-31	-27
Public opinion on current events	-38	-18
Cars	-38	-31
Fashion and trends	-47	-34

Appendix D

Detailed results obtained from news questions

Subject	Place*	Primary score	Secondary score	Total score**
		Score out of 100	% of correct answers	Score out of 100
Israel's declaration of a ceasefire in its conflict with Hamas in the Gaza Strip	Q	56	31	42
The First Ministers' Conference (federal and provincial) on the economy	Q	41	31	37
The funeral of former Québec City Mayor Jean Pelletier	Q	50	31	40
An agreement between Québec City and the demerged cities of Saint-Augustin and L'Ancienne-Lorette regarding sharing of spending and jurisdiction	Q	16	12	13
The Canadian Premiere in Québec City of <i>Le Dragon bleu</i> , a play by Robert Lepage	Q	22	19	20
Israel's declaration of a ceasefire in its conflict with Hamas in the Gaza Strip	L	63	48	55
Montréal street-gang crime is down, according to police	L	35	-	35
A woman sues her former spouse for \$50 million and seeks \$56,000 a month in alimony	L	62	62	62
A \$380,000 separation allowance for Henri-Paul Rousseau, former President of the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec	L	59	52	55
Barack Obama celebrated Martin Luther King Day yesterday	L	69	61	65
Hostilities have ended in the Gaza Strip	M	66	31	49
Montréal street-gang crime is down, according to police	M	39	-	39
The Bank of Canada announced it had lowered its key rate	M	52	35	44
The layoff of 300 Rio Tinto employees in Québec	M	52	36	44
A major award will soon be given to Québec filmmaker Fernand Dansereau	M	20	14	17

* Q = Québec City; L = Laval; M = Montréal; R = Rivière-du-Loup and V = Victoriaville. Québec City is given twice because two sessions were held in that location one week apart.

** The score is calculated for each respondent to eight decimals, which created very slight variations in relation to a calculation based on the figures in this table.

Detailed results obtained from news questions (con'd)

Subject	Place*	Primary score	Secondary score	Total score**
		Score out of 100	% of correct answers	Score out of 100
The announcement, on Monday, of tens of thousands of job losses in the United States	Q	73	54	63
The tabling of the Harper government's budget today	Q	76	62	69
A labour dispute at the <i>Journal de Montréal</i>	Q	77	65	71
The announcement by Québec City Mayor Régis Labeaume of a plan to combat poverty	Q	56	43	49
The National Hockey League All Star-Game held on the weekend	Q	69	48	59
In the Gaza Strip, the ceasefire has been broken after 10 days	R	51	17	34
The tabling of the Harper government's budget yesterday	R	75	58	66
A man, aged 93, is found guilty of sexually assaulting his daughters but avoids prison	R	74	61	68
A project to control biogas from the Rivière-du-Loup landfill site	R	57	30	44
The birth of octuplets in the United States	R	65	61	62
In the Gaza Strip, the ceasefire has been broken after 10 days	V	53	23	38
The Liberal Party of Canada's support for the Harper government's budget	V	71	59	65
The death of Pierre Roux, former mayor of Arthabaska and Victoriaville	V	64	60	62
The Québec government will support the province's recyclable material sorting centres	V	50	41	45
The birth of octuplets in the United States	V	55	61	58

* Q = Québec City; L = Laval; M = Montréal; R = Rivière-du-Loup and V = Victoriaville. Québec City is given twice because two sessions were held in that location one week apart.

** The score is calculated for each respondent to eight decimals, which created very slight variations in relation to a calculation based on the figures in this table.

Interview framework

1. Tell me about your day

“You will perhaps remember that, last time, we asked you to tell us about your news consumption with various media the previous day. We’re going to do the same thing today, but without a table, so that you can tell me about more things. I’ll let you give me the details, then we’ll come back and look at certain things. So, tell me about what you did yesterday, trying to remember each time you came in contact with the news, through the media or through people.”

The respondent recounts his day. He emphasizes the news, of course, but to jog his memory (especially in the case of those young people whose schedule tends to be random) he has to relate a bit of everything. (“I took the bus to work.” “Oh, was there a radio playing on the bus?” “No, I don’t know I had my iPod on, but I picked up a newspaper lying on the seat...”)

2. Go back over the media named

a) Typical behaviour?

E.g.: “You read the newspaper at home in the morning and then another one on the bus in the evening... Is that what you typically do? Read the newspaper in the morning?”; “Are there other occasions when you use the [media platform]?”

b) Context (family, friends, etc.)?

E.g.: “When you read the newspaper in the morning, do you do so alone while drinking your coffee?” “On the bus, were you

reading the newspaper over someone's shoulder?" "When you watch the news in the evening, does the whole family join you?", etc.

c) "Do you have the impression that you use these media more often or less often than you did two years ago? What is the reason for the change (access, time, etc.)?"

d) "What do you like about [media platform]?"

Internal distinctions can be made here; the reasons for liking *Le Devoir* do not necessarily apply to the *Journal de Montréal*.

e) "Are there things that you don't like about [media platform]?"

This question can naturally lead to a transition to another type of media platform, for which the sequence of a b c and d can be repeated.

3. Media that were not named

"And [media platform], do you ever use it? Or did you just not use it yesterday?"

If the respondent uses it, repeat the sequence a b c d and e of point 2, adjusting question a to simply ask what the types of occasion (time, place).

If the respondent doesn't use it, an effort is made to find out why, in short what he doesn't like about it or why he doesn't see it as available/accessible or relevant.

4. Special sequence on the Internet (and the new media)

When the matter of the Internet is raised (in 2 or in 3, depending on the answers to point 1), the respondent is asked a subseries of specific questions.

"Using the Internet and other new communication technologies to follow the news is obviously a fairly new phenomenon, so we would like to ask you more questions to gain a better

understanding of how you use them. Then we'll go back to the same questions I asked you about the other media."

"I suppose you don't use the Internet only for the news. What are your main activities on the Internet? [And when?]"

"May I ask what is your home page?"

"And when you're looking for news on the Internet, how do you go about it?"

[*Wait for the answer and if necessary go deeper:*] "To follow the news on the Internet, do you tend mainly to go to pages that offer a set of news, such as newspaper pages or general news sites? [If so, which sites do you use and how often?]" "Do you sometimes use Google to find out more about a specific story you've heard about elsewhere? [If so, how do you select the sites that you consult from among those proposed by Google?]"

"Have you subscribed to RSS feeds?"

Which ones?

"Do you subscribe to e-mail newsletters or alerts on the Internet?"

Which ones?

"Do you read blogs to follow the news? Or do you take part in forums on current events?"

"Do you find such news (coming from ordinary people, on blogs or in forums) more valid or less valid than the more traditional media, such as newspapers, television and radio? Why/how so?" [*Then go back to questions b (context¹), d and e (what he likes or doesn't like) from the main interview framework. If necessary, d and e can be repeated for different types (Google, specialized pages, RSS feeds, bulletins, etc.)*]

"We've talked a lot about the different ways of following the news on the Internet but, in fact, when we talk about new communication technologies, there are other ways. For example, it's

1. At this point the respondent is asked whether he has a computer at home (and what kind of connection), whether he has a laptop, whether he consumes news at the office (presumably during coffee breaks), etc.

possible to receive news directly on a cellular phone. Is this something that you do?"

Depending on the answer, continue with sequence no. 2 if he said yes, or sequence no. 3 if he said no.

"Do you download news podcasts and listen to them on your mp3 player?"

Depending on the answer, continue with sequence no. 2 if he said yes, or sequence no. 3 if he said no.

"Do you have access to a satellite radio receiver?"

Depending on the answer, continue with sequence no. 2 if he said yes, or sequence no. 3, if he said no.

"Are there any other new technological means that you use to follow the news?"

5. More general questions

A) Being well informed

"Do you think you consume a great deal of news?"

"In relation to your friends and family and the people you come in contact with, do you think you are a well-informed person?"

N.B.: The two questions have to be asked separately (unless the respondent answers the second question himself). Consuming the news and being well informed are two different things.

"What does it mean to you to be well informed; what makes a person well informed? And is that the case for you?"

N.B.: At this point we go back to the respondent, because he probably spoke in a more abstract manner (or about someone else) in answering question 5A2. We therefore let him answer 5A2, we ask this (5A3) and we wait for his confirmation (this is a "synthesis/verification" follow-up). This brings us back to him and we go on to 5A4. Obviously, if he spoke only about himself throughout 5A2, this stratagem may not be necessary.

“Which subjects do you find especially interesting?”

“Which main stories/subjects have attracted your attention recently?”

B) Sources of news (networks)

“When something happens, how do you typically find out about it?”

“For example, if there’s a riot in Montréal or an outbreak of listeriosis, how will you hear about it?”

N.B.: It’s necessary to have stories that represent three levels: the national level (Québec events or Canadian events that have an impact on Québec); the international level; and the local scene. The degree of preciseness/reference to specific events also differs: the examples are more real for the national level, to put them in context so that the respondents can concretely reflect on when and how they learned about them. Then we go to more abstract news (for local news, obviously, because we don’t know what their locality is).

EACH TIME THE DISCUSSION REFERS TO SPECIFIC NEWS STORIES: If he says the radio, we’d like to know which station, if he says the newspaper, which one (did he read it or just see the news in a newspaper someone was reading on the Metro?), etc. If he says he learned about it from a person, we want to know who it was (spouse, colleague or friend) and the way he learned about it (in conversation, on a forum, by e-mail, by telephone, etc.). He may also have heard people around him talking about it, so we want to know where (office, Metro, street, Internet forum (which one?), etc.). To obtain precise information, it is useful to have concrete examples, but they have to be important events so that he can recall them.

WHEN THE REFERENCES ARE MORE VAGUE: It is not necessary to know which radio station or which newspaper (we will know from the first part of the interview). But if he learned about the news from people, we’d like to have details about the people he generally hears his news from (colleagues, children, etc.) and the context (by chance or directly informed).

“And if something happens on the international scene, such as an attack against Israel or an election in France, will you know? If so, how will you learn about it?”

“And, on the local level, if a baby is abducted in your neighbourhood or if there’s a fire in a building near you, will you find out about it? And if so, how?”

“Is it important for you to know about this type of thing?”

“What types of events or news do you think it is important to know about? [Riots in Montréal? Listeriosis? An attack in the Middle East? Elections in Europe? An abducted baby? A local fire?]”

“Do you sometimes learn about an event from a person rather than from a media platform?”

