

DIGITAL NEWS REPORT

CANADA

2020 DATA : AN OVERVIEW



CENTRE D'ÉTUDES SUR LES MÉDIAS



Canadian Project Team

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About the Digital News Report

The [Digital News Report \(DNR\)](#) is based on an international survey led by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University. It was conducted in 40 countries in 2020 and focuses on practices and perceptions of news by consumers, with a special interest in digital issues. The Canadian component of the survey is supervised by the [Centre d'études sur les médias](#) (CEM).

Methodology

The DNR is produced through an online questionnaire administered by the survey firm YouGov. In Canada, it was distributed to a random sample of 2,002 participants registered with the firm, including 418 francophones. The francophone sample was then completed independently until totalling 1 039 participants. The questionnaire begins with a filter question to exclude respondents who did not consume news in the month preceding the survey. The Canadian data was collected from January 16 to February 25, 2020.

The results are weighted to be representative of Canada's adult population. It should be noted that such a survey is likely to underrepresent those segments of the Canadian population without access to the internet: typically, such people are older, have less formal education and have lower incomes. In 2019, new quotas were established to mitigate the underrepresentation of people with lower levels of education. This factor should be taken into account when the findings are compared with those of previous years.

With financial support from :

Canada 

Québec 

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Context

The Canadian data was collected from January 16 to February 25, 2020, before the major disruptions caused by COVID-19.

In April, the Digital News Report's international team conducted a follow-up survey in six countries — Argentina, Germany, South Korea, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States — whose original data had been compiled in January.

It showed an increase in the consumption of news, which above all benefited television (also identified as their main source of news by a larger proportion of respondents) and online content. Not surprisingly, the use of newspapers in print format fell, with a number of publications simply no longer being distributed.

In these countries, 59% of the respondents also said they trusted news organizations when they sought information about the coronavirus, a proportion similar to that obtained by their national governments.

For more information about this matter, see the international report at www.digitalnewsreport.org.

Canadian highlights 2020

- In the 2020 survey, 65% of Canadian respondents say they are concerned about the truthfulness of news on the internet, an increase of four percentage points from 2019. Internationally, the share of respondents with this concern is 56%.
- For 36% of Canadian respondents, contents on Facebook elicit the most concern about false and misleading information online. Next come contents of news sites and news applications, with 16% of respondents being mostly concerned about them.

As for the origin of false and misleading news online, 31% of Canadians are most concerned about news from the country's politicians, while 17% are most concerned about foreign politicians.

- More than half of Canadian respondents (53%) think the media should prominently report a statement by a politician even if it could be false. That said, a similar proportion of Canadians (54%) think technology platforms have a responsibility to block potentially inaccurate advertisements by politicians.
- Trust in the news is down in Canada, but is still higher than it is internationally; in the 2020 survey, 44% of Canadian respondents say they trust most news most of the time.
- In Canada, 53% of respondents prefer to get news from sources that don't have a particular point of view, and Francophones seem more likely than Anglophones to get news from sources that challenge their point of view.
- One-third of Canadian participants (33%) say they listened to a podcast in the month preceding the survey, up 4 percentage points from 2019. Even so, Canada remains out of step with the complete international sample (41%). Podcasts are especially popular with younger respondents: 53% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 years old listened to at least one podcast during the reference period.

1. Concern about the accuracy of online news

Of the Canadian respondents who took part in the Digital News Report 2020 survey, 65% are concerned about the truthfulness of online news, an increase of 4 percentage points from 2019. In comparison, the increase is only one point for the survey respondents as a whole: this year 56% say they are “concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.”

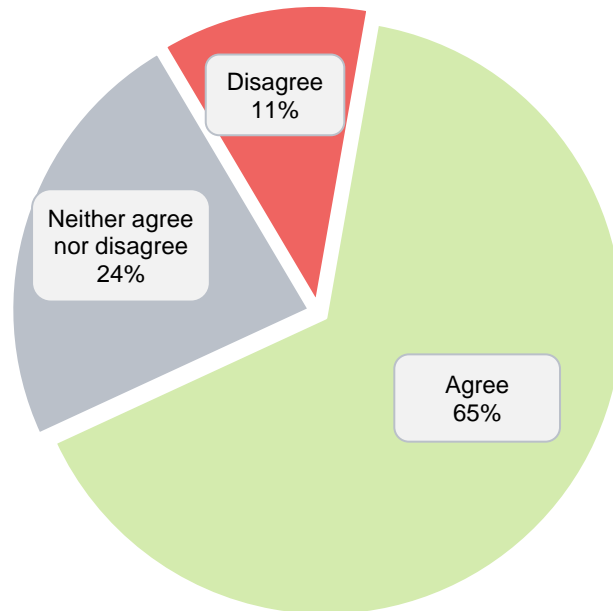


Figure 1. Breakdown of Canadian respondents based on their level of agreement with the statement “Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet”, in percentage.

At 60%, those aged 18 to 24 are slightly less likely than the rest of the Canadian population to be concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet. Similarly, francophones, also at 60%, are less concerned than anglophones, at 67% (Figure 2). In fact, almost one in four anglophone respondents (23%) “strongly agrees” with the statement, whereas the figure is 16% for francophones.

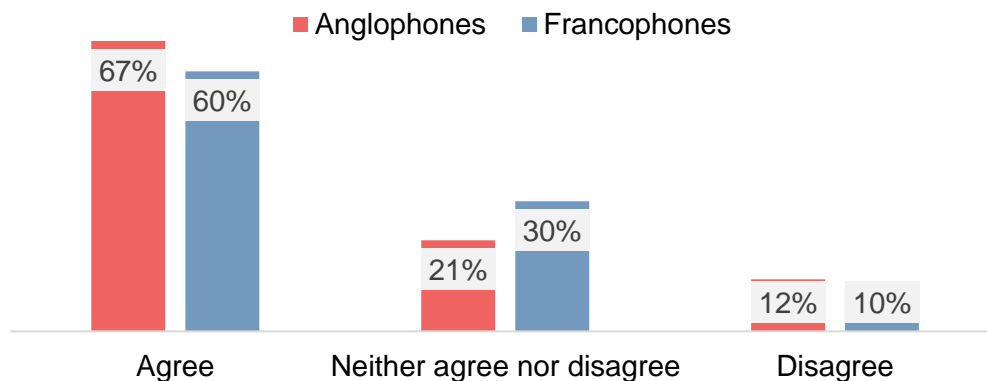


Figure 2. Breakdown of francophones and anglophones based on their level of agreement with the statement “Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet”, in percentage.

This year, the DNR survey looked at whether online information from specific platforms or players is of greater concern. Figure 3, below, shows that 36% of respondents are most concerned about false and misleading information on Facebook, whereas 16% of Canadians surveyed are concerned above all about the content of news websites or apps, and 10% about information from search engines. The findings are similar for anglophones and francophones.

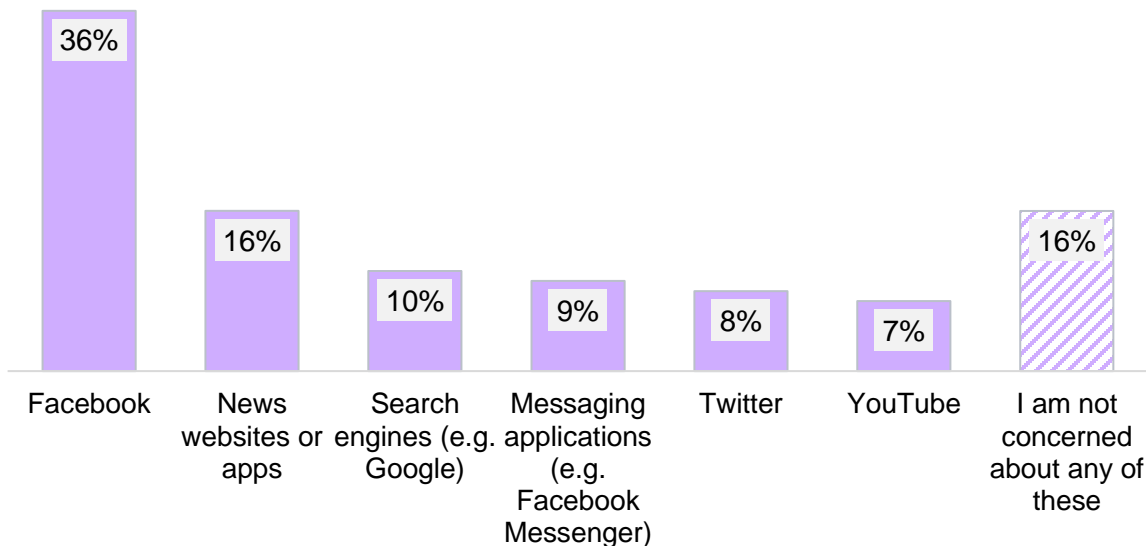


Figure 3. Breakdown of Canadian respondents based on the online news platform they are most concerned about when it comes to false information, in percentage.

Even so, the respondents' perceptions vary somewhat with their age. The youngest (18 to 34) are more likely to say they are concerned above all with news sites or apps (+ 4 points compared with those 35 or older), messaging applications (+ 3 points), and YouTube (+ 3 points). That said, fewer of them are concerned about Facebook content: 31% of the 18-34 group — and only 27% of the 18-24 group — versus 37% for those 35 or older.

As for the sources of false information online, Figure 4 shows that almost one-third of respondents (31%) are especially concerned about information from Canadian politicians, and 17% about foreign politicians. Misleading information from “ordinary people” is fairly frequently deemed the most problematic source for francophones; 22% of respondents in this language group are most concerned about content disseminated by the public, versus 12% of anglophones

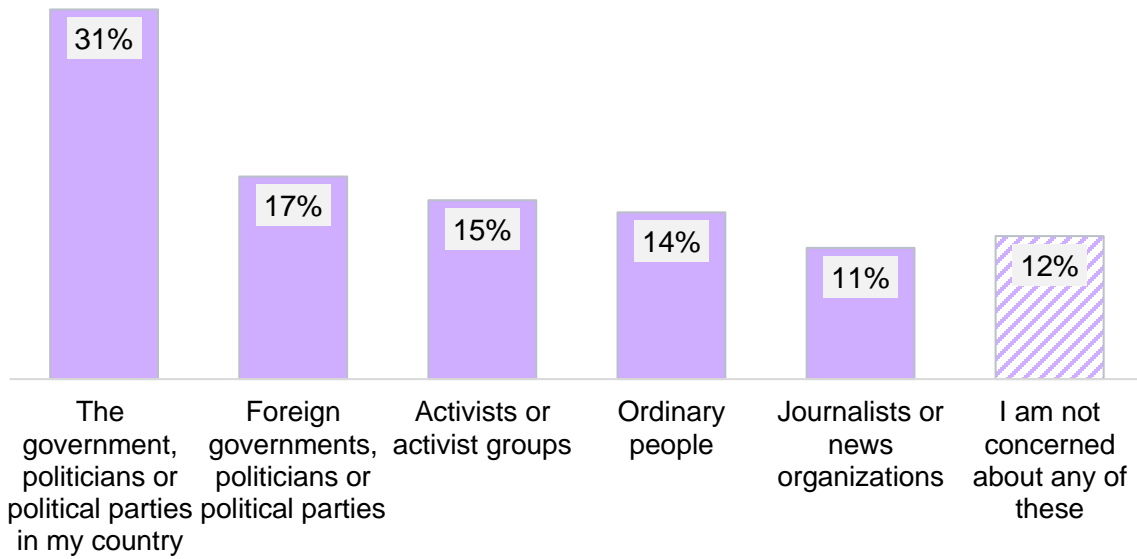


Figure 4. Breakdown of Canadian respondents based on the source they are most concerned about when it comes to false information online, in percentage.

1.1 Management of political misinformation

In light of the above findings, it is interesting to try to gain a better understanding of the public’s expectations of how false and misleading political information should be managed. The 2020 DNR survey considers more specifically the desired role of journalists and technology companies in the fight against misinformation and disinformation. The findings show that Canadian news consumers have significantly different expectations of these two actors. More than half of the respondents (53%) think that the media should prominently report a politician’s statement even if it could be false “because it is important for the public to know what the politician said.” In contrast, slightly more than a quarter of them (23%) think the media should not emphasize such a statement.

<p>53%</p> <p>Report the statement prominently because it is important for the public to know what the politician said</p>	<p>23%</p> <p>Not emphasize the statement because it would give the politician unwarranted attention</p>
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As for digital platforms, such as Facebook and Google, a majority of Canadians think they should regulate the advertisements they carry, with 54% saying that the web giants should block false and misleading political advertisements from their platforms, versus 27% who think that it isn’t up to technology companies to decide what is true.

<p>27%</p> <p>Allow the advertisement because it's not up to technology companies to decide what is true</p>	<p>54%</p> <p>Block the advertisement because technology companies should be responsible for making sure information on their platform is true</p>
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2. Trust in the media and perception of journalism

2.1 Trust in the news

Trust in “most news most of the time” is, at 44%, at its lowest level since Canadian data was first collected for the Digital News Report, in 2016. In fact, trust in all types of news is down from last year, with the exception of news on social media; the share of respondents who said they trust such news stayed at about 20% (Figure 5). The decline is not specific to Canada; rather, it is a general trend seen in all the markets studied. Internationally, the share of respondents who say they trust “most news most of the time” fell from 44% in 2019 to 38% in 2020. Figure 5 also shows that Canadian news consumers still have more trust than respondents elsewhere. The share of Canadians who trust the news exceeds that of the survey respondents by 6 points for both the news as a whole and the news “that they choose to consume.” Even so, fewer of them trust news in social media (- 3 points).

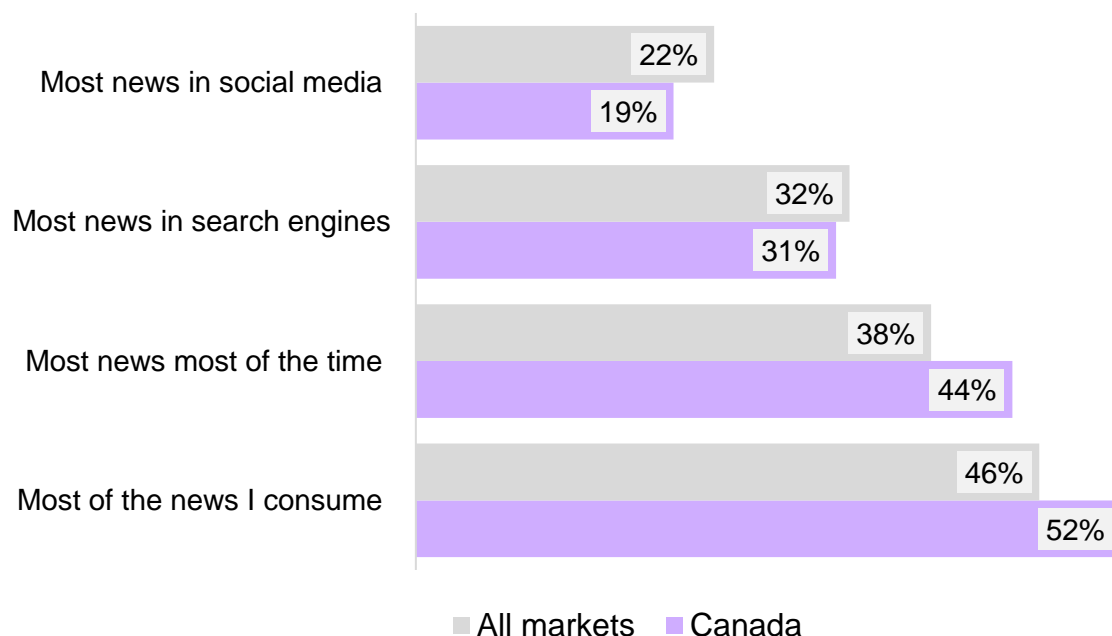


Figure 5. Share of respondents in Canada and all markets who trust different types of news, in percentage.

Francophones have greater trust in all types of news than anglophones: the difference is even greater for news they choose to consume, with 59% of francophones trusting it (+ 7 points). Internationally, only respondents in Finland (69%) and Turkey (61%) have greater trust.

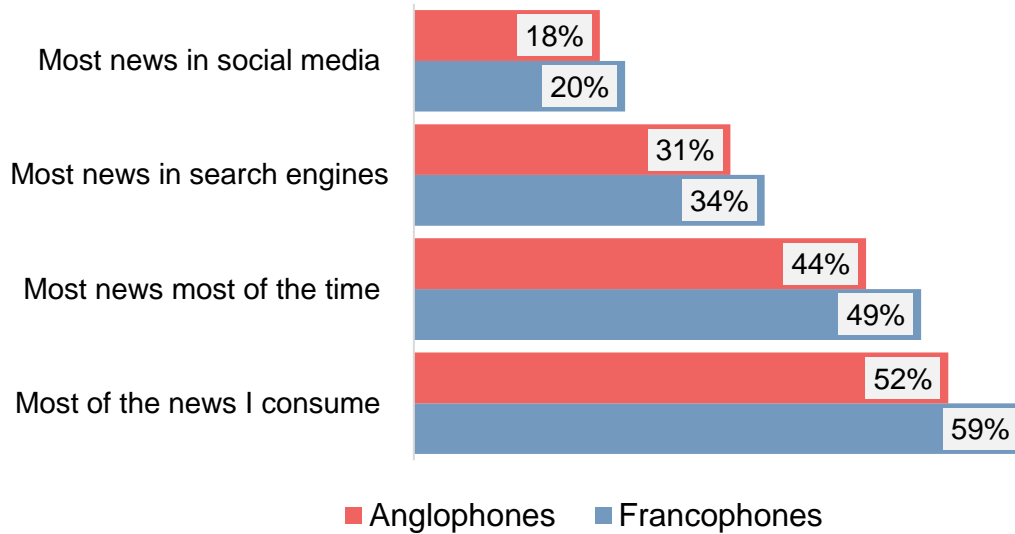


Figure 6. Share of anglophones and francophones who trust different types of news, in percentage.

2.2 Role of opinion in the news

Figure 7 shows that the role of opinion in the news gives rise to diverging views in Canada. Even though the majority of respondents (53%) prefer to get their news from sources that don't have a particular point of view, 17% lean towards news from sources that share their point of view. In contrast, 14% of the Canadians surveyed say they prefer sources that challenge their point of view.

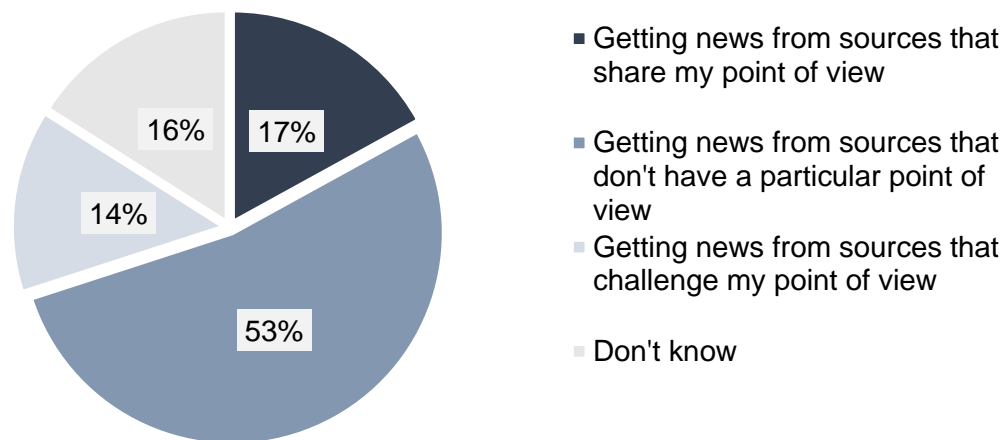


Figure 7. Breakdown of Canadian respondents based on their preferences towards certain types of news, in percentage.

As Figure 8 shows, francophones seem more inclined than anglophones to want to get news from sources that challenge their point of view. For their part, the anglophones surveyed are more likely to seek news that doesn't have a particular point of view (+ 11 points) and they are slightly more likely to prefer news from sources that share their point of view (+ 4 points). Respondents who consider themselves left-wing or right-wing are more likely to seek news from sources that share their point of view. That is the case of 22% of respondents who identify themselves as left-wing and 24% of those who say they are right-wing.

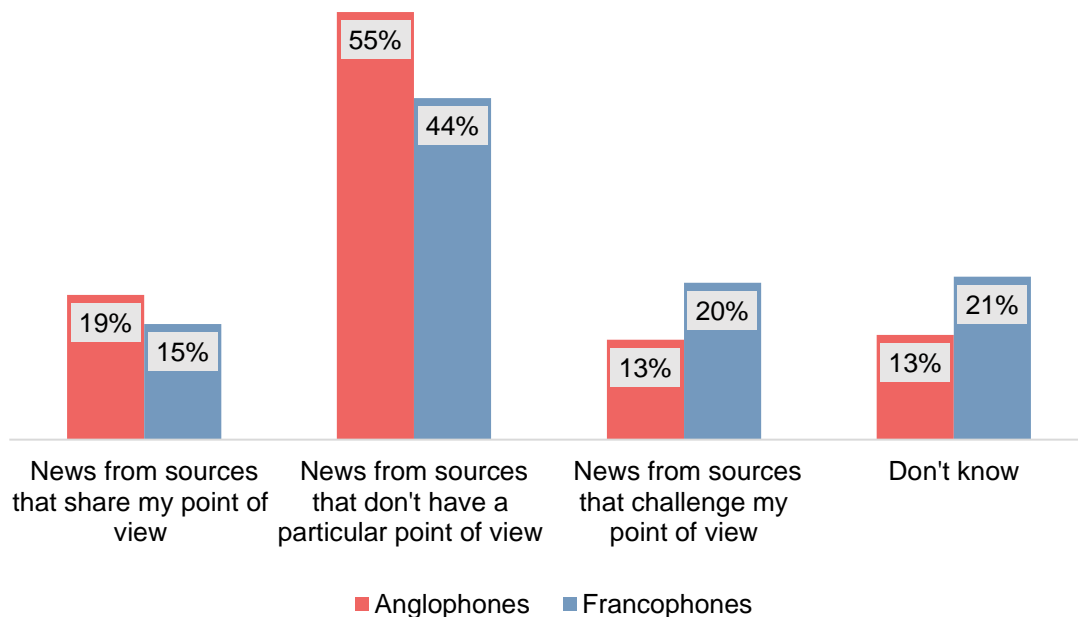


Figure 8. Breakdown of anglophones and francophones based on their preferences towards certain types of news, in percentage.

3. News habits

3.1 News sources and access points

The proportion of respondents who get their news mainly from television has been declining since 2016, as shown by Figure 9. The decline benefits online news sources, namely news sites and apps, social networks, and blogs. As for the use of print newspapers and magazines or radio as main news sources, it has been stable since Canadian data was first collected for the survey.⁴

⁴ Given that this is a survey of consumers of online information, one must assume a favourable bias toward online information in the findings. Conversely, the findings for the so-called traditional media could be slightly underestimated.

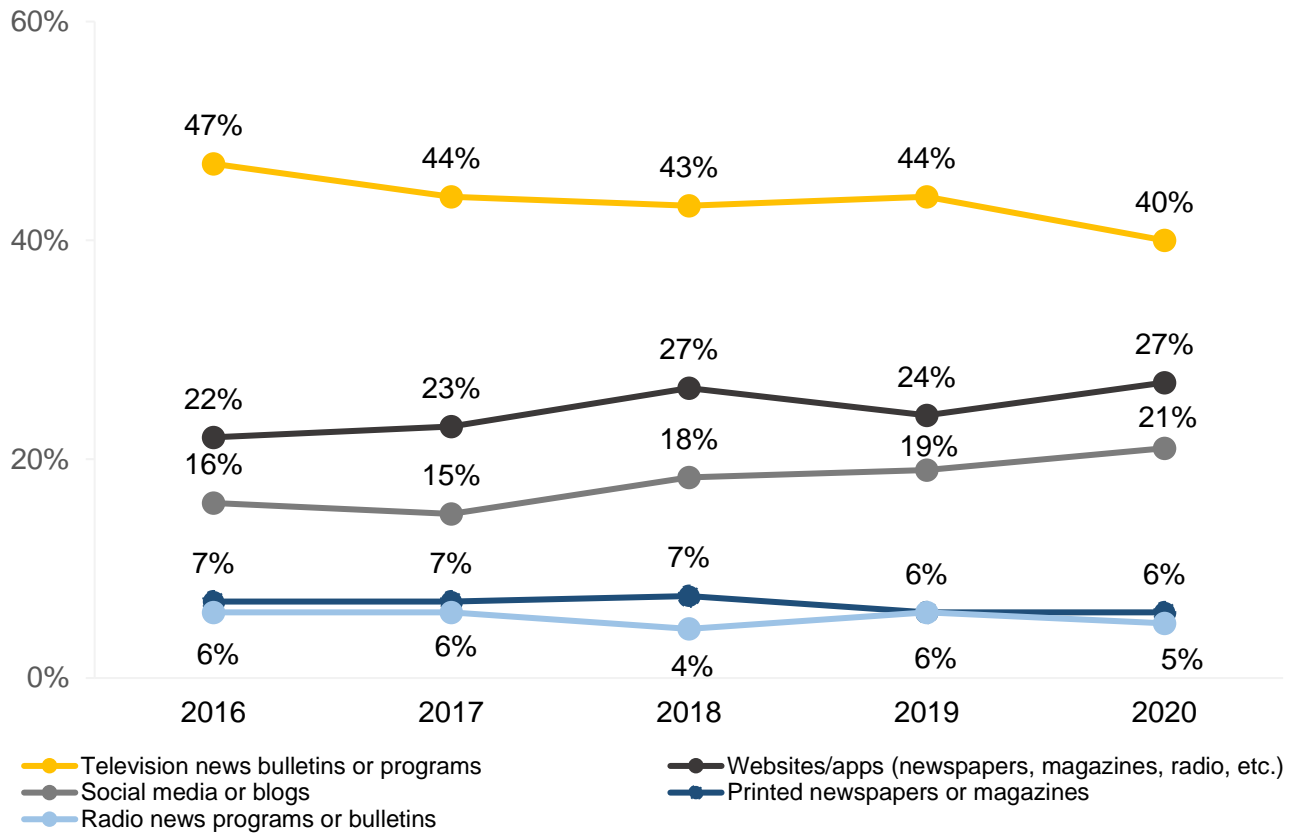


Figure 9. Breakdown of Canadian respondents based on their main news source in the previous week from 2016 to 2020, in percentage.

The 2020 survey found that 40% of Canadian respondents consulted mainly television news in the week preceding the survey, versus 49% for all online news sources. Amongst francophones, television has a larger share: almost half of them (47%) said they used mainly a TV newscast or news channel to obtain news during that period, a proportion that rises to 59% for respondents aged 45 or more. As for anglophones, at 22%, they are more likely (+6 points) to report that they get their news mainly on social media. It should also be noted that 37% of Canadians aged 18 to 34 — and 48% of those aged 18 to 24 — opted mainly for social media in the week before the survey, considerably more than the proportion of older respondents (16% of those 35 or older).

The 2020 DNR survey also inquired about the “main way” in which respondents came across news⁵, online, namely their preferred way of accessing news on the web. Figure 11 shows that three options share almost equally the three-quarters of the respondents who consume online news: news websites or apps⁶ (26%), social media (25%) and search engines (24%). The proportions are similar for both

⁵ Base: all respondents who consumed online news in the week before the survey (n=1779).

⁶ Excluding aggregators.

language groups, even though a slightly larger proportion of francophones use mainly news websites or apps (31%).

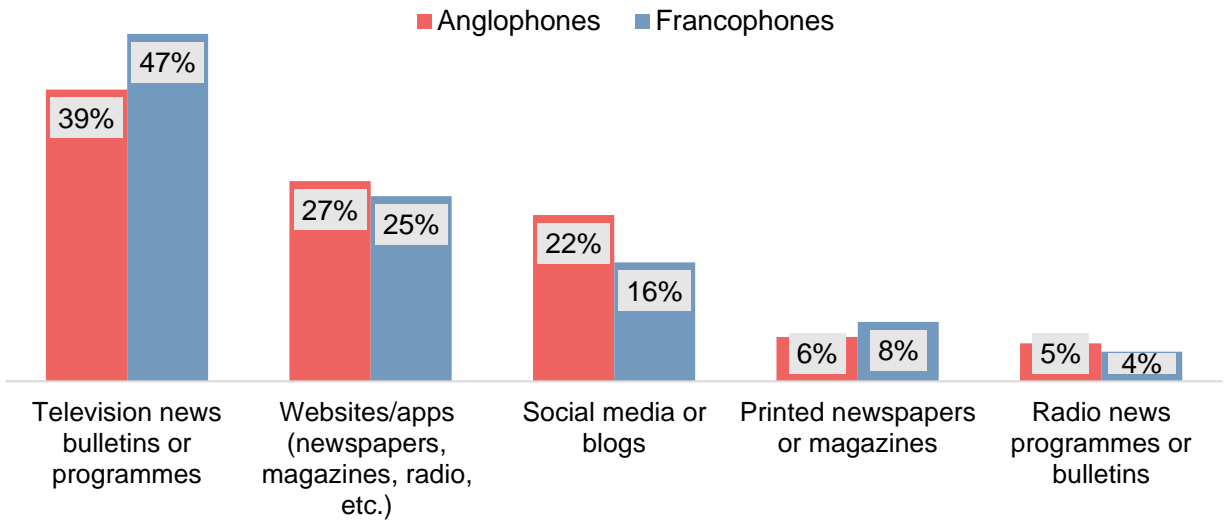


Figure 10. Breakdown of anglophones and francophones based on their main news source in the previous week, in percentage.

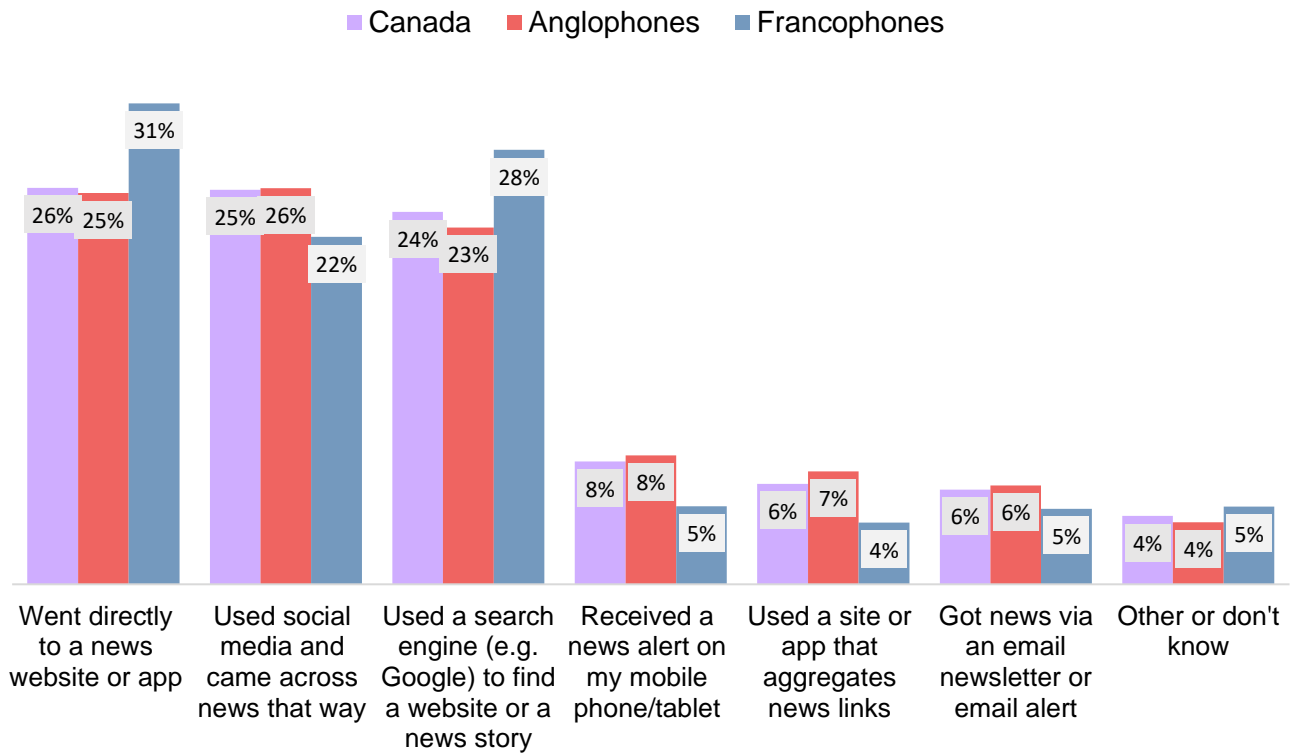


Figure 11. Breakdown of Canadian respondents anglophones and francophones based on their main way of coming across news online in the previous week, in percentage.

3.2 Text and video

Slightly more than half (51%) of the people surveyed, all countries included, say they prefer to read the news on the web. Canadians, however, are equally divided between those who prefer to read the news (41%) and those who prefer to watch the news (41%).

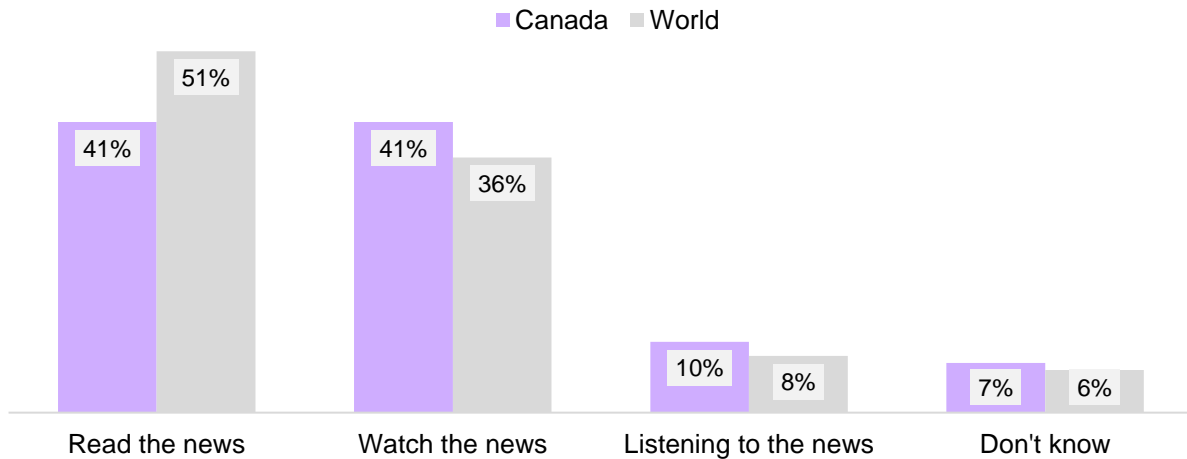


Figure 12. Breakdown of respondents from Canada and all markets based on their preference about news format online, in percentage.

About a third of the Canadian respondents (31%) watched a news-related video such as a short clip or a livestream while they were on a news site in the week before the survey. Slightly more than one in four respondents (27%) said they watched on Facebook, and 24% on YouTube, but 38% of the respondents — and 43% of francophones — said they had not consumed an online news video during the reference period. The proportion is 50% for Canadians aged 65 or over.

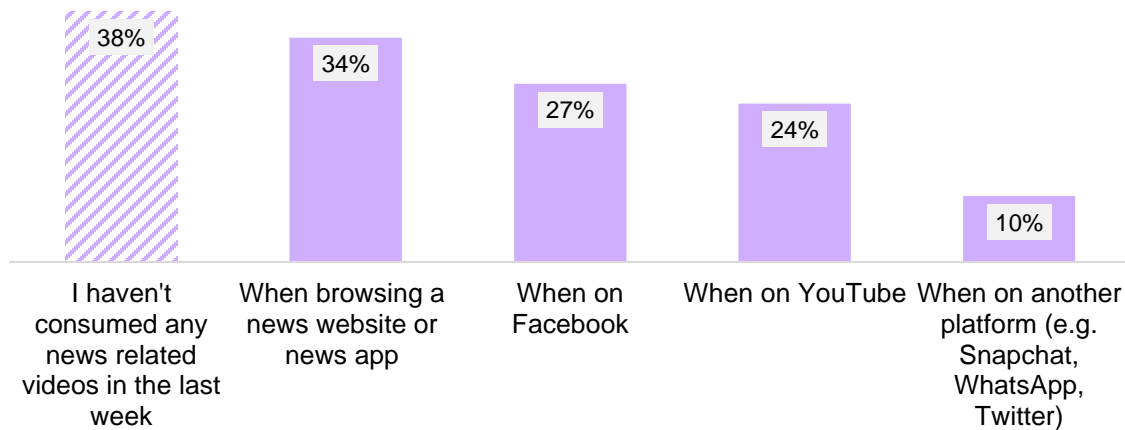


Figure 13. Share of Canadian respondents who watched a news-related video over the last week on various online platforms, in percentage.

3.3 Paying for news

From 2017 to 2019, the proportion of respondents who said they had paid for online news content⁷ or had accessed a paid-for online news service in the year preceding the survey was about 9%. In the 2020 survey 13% of Canadian respondents declared having done so. The proportion is higher for men (16%), for people aged 18 to 34 (16%) and for those identifying as left-wing (24%). The share of respondents who paid for such news content or services in Canada is lower, however, than it is for the international sample (16%).

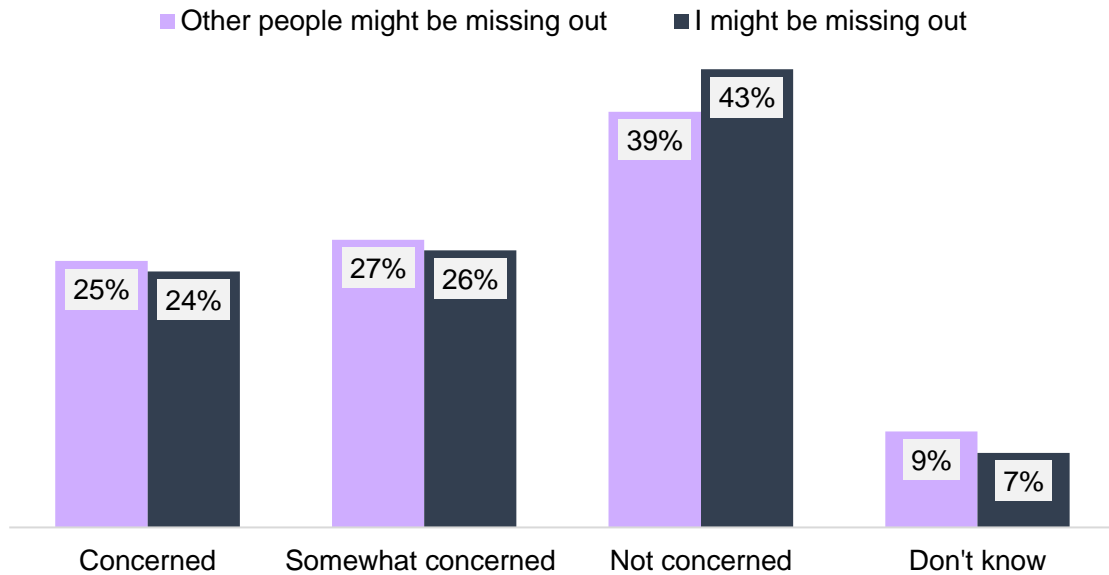


Figure 14. Breakdown of Canadian respondents according to their level of concern towards missing out on online news content they have to pay for and towards other people missing out, in percentage.

The implications of having to pay for access to news does not seem to concern Canadians greatly. Barely a fourth of the respondents say they are concerned about the idea of missing out on news from sources they have to pay for (24%) or about the idea that others might be missing out (25%).

3.4 Podcasts

One-third of Canadian participants (33%) said they had listened to a podcast in the month before the survey. Even though this proportion is up slightly from 2019 (+ 4 points), Canada still diverges from the countries as a group (41%).

Proportionally fewer francophones, at 27%, than anglophones, at 35%, reported having listened to a podcast during the reference period. The difference can be seen for all types of podcasts, with the exception of sports podcasts, which attracted the same proportion (7%) of respondents in both

⁷ For example, a digital subscription, a one-off payment for an article or a payment to access a news app.

language groups. More than half (53%) of those aged 18 to 34 said they had listened to a podcast in the month before the survey, for an increase of 7 percentage points since 2019.

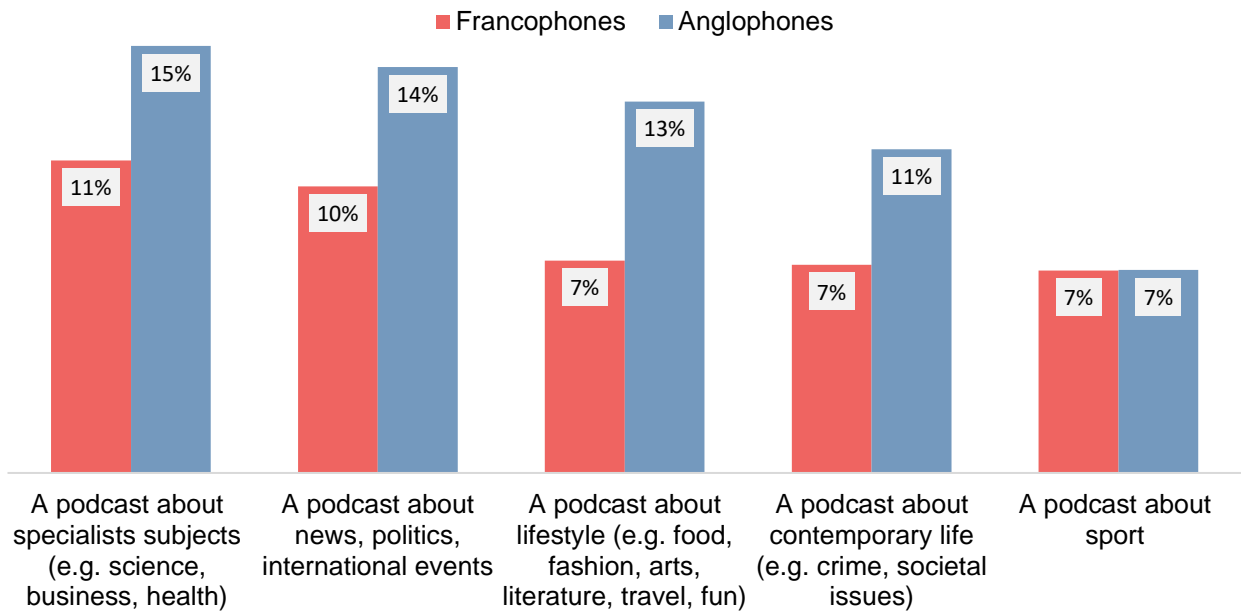


Figure 15. Share of anglophone and francophone podcast listeners who listened to certain types of podcasts in the month preceding the survey, in percentage.

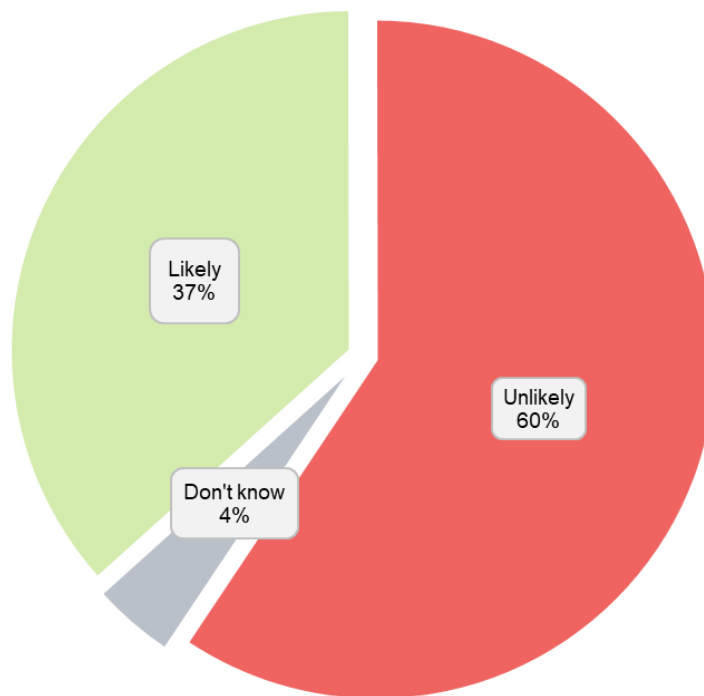


Figure 16. Breakdown of Canadian respondents who listened to a podcast in the month preceding the survey based on their likelihood to pay for a specific podcast they like, in percentage.

Figure 17 shows that the majority of people who listen to podcasts (60%) say they are not likely to pay for this type of content, although 37% would do so. Francophones are still slightly more likely (46%) to pay for a podcast that they like than are anglophones (36%), and the youngest respondents are also more likely to pay than the older ones: almost half (48%) of Canadian consumers of podcasts who are aged 18 to 24 say they would consider paying for them.

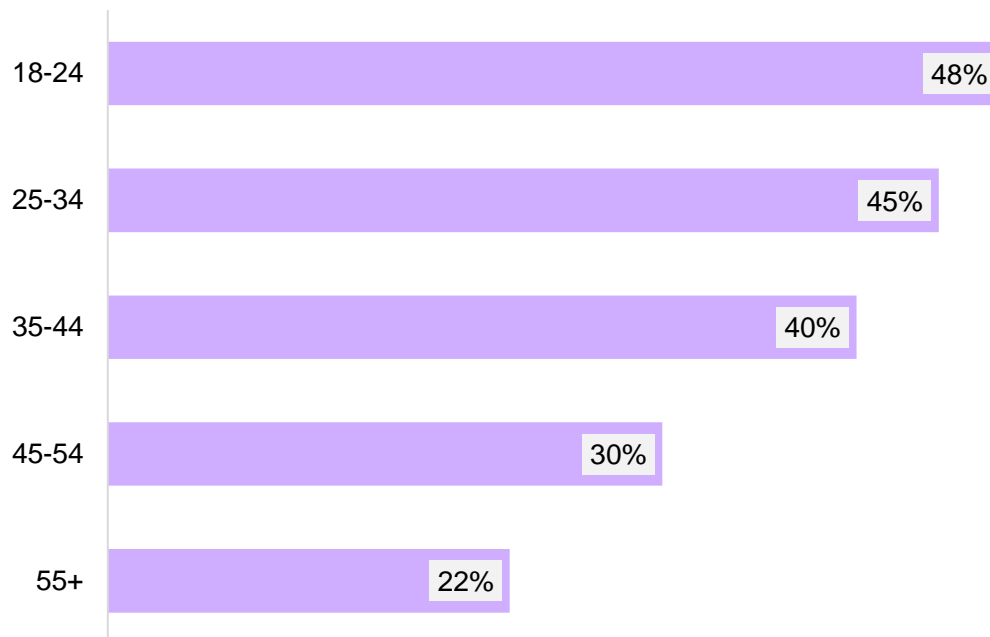


Figure 17. Share of Canadian podcast listeners who would be likely to pay for this type of content by age group, in percentage.

4. Local news: sources and degree of interest

Figure 18 identifies the different sources that the anglophone and francophone respondents used to access local news,⁸ online or offline, in the week before the survey. The local newspaper— whether digital or print — seems most popular with both language groups, with almost half (45%) of respondents saying they consulted it during the reference period. Far more anglophones than francophones said they had consulted other media, such as television (+ 16 points) or radio (+ 10 points), for local news in the week before the survey. Also, more than a quarter (27%) of the anglophones declared having obtained local news from members of their communities, such as neighbours or friends, versus 17% for francophones.

⁸ Local news was defined in the questionnaire as “news from the city or town, municipality or immediate surrounding area that you live in.”

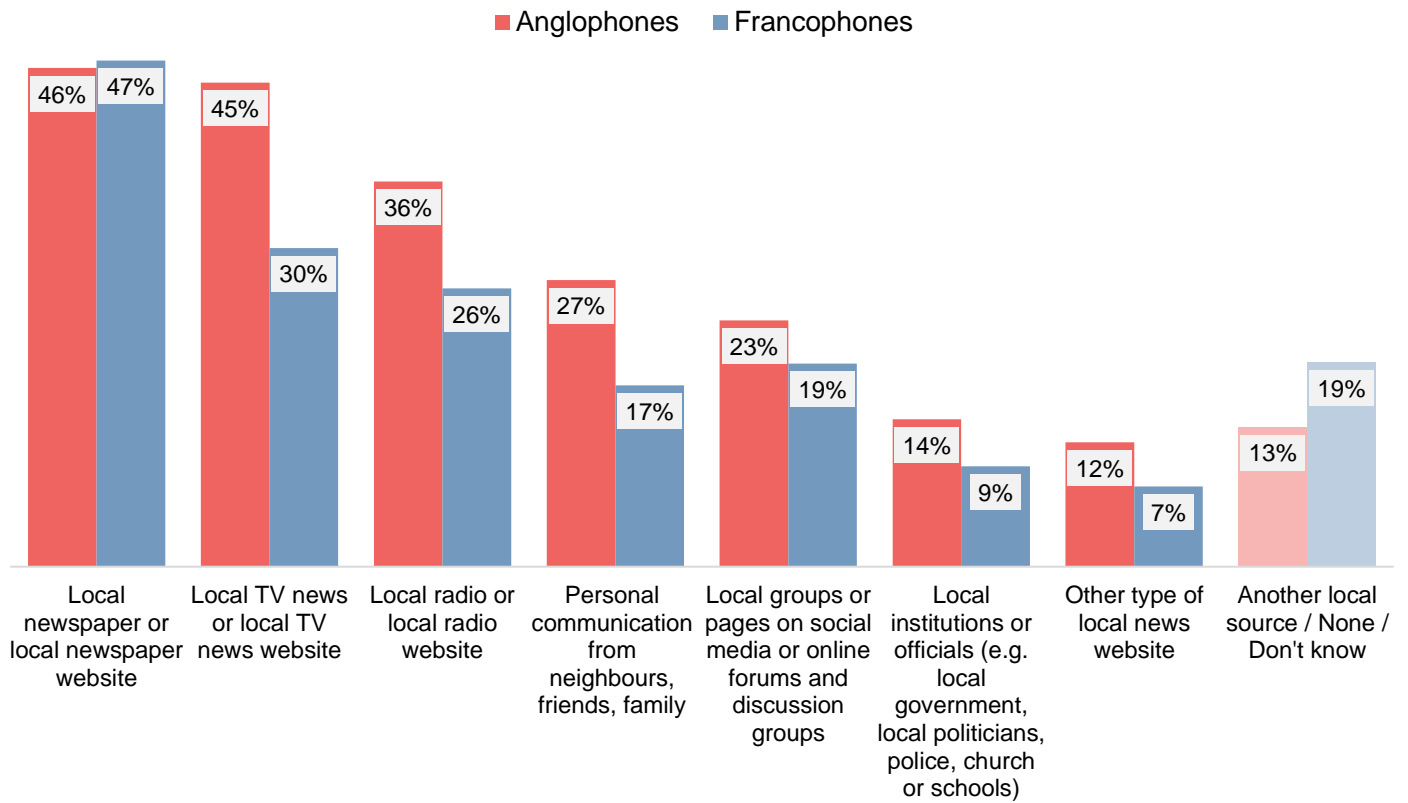


Figure 18. Share of anglophones and francophones who used certain sources of local news in the last week, in percentage.

For the country as a whole, about half of the respondents (48%) declare being interested in local news. Anglophones, who also tend more to rely on diverse sources of local news, are more interested in it than Francophones (52% versus 37%).

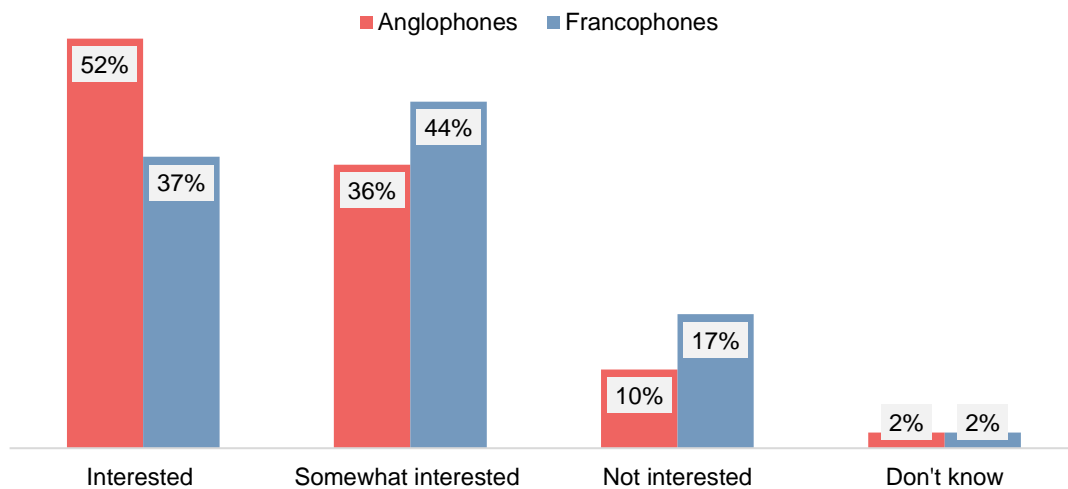


Figure 19. Breakdown of anglophones and francophones based on their level of interest towards local news, in percentage.

As shown by Figure 20, interest in local news increases with age. Moreover, slightly more than a quarter (26%) of those aged 18-24 say they are “not very interested” or “not at all interested” in local news, versus 12% for all the Canadians who took part in the survey.

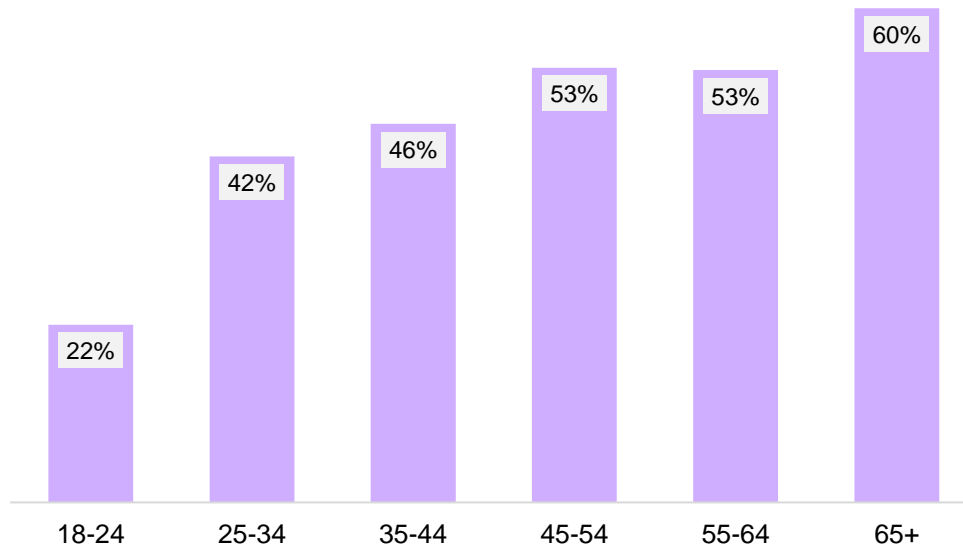


Figure 20. Share of respondents interested to local news by age group, in percentage.

Labels

Concern about the accuracy of online news

Q_FAKE_NEWS_1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement. Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet...

Q_FAKE_NEWS_2020c. Which of the following, if any, are you most concerned about online? Please select one. False or misleading information from : - Facebook, - News websites or apps, - Search engines (e.g. Google), - Messaging applications (e.g. Facebook Messenger), - Twitter, - YouTube, - I am not concerned about any of these

Q_FAKE_NEWS_2020b. Which of the following, if any, are you most concerned about online? Please select one. False or misleading information from - Foreign governments, politicians or political parties - Activists or activist groups - Ordinary people - Journalists or news organizations - I am not concerned about any of these

Management of political misinformation

J1_2020. Thinking about how the news media covers politics, if a politician makes a statement that could be false, which comes closer to your view about what the news media should do? - Report the statement prominently because it is important for the public to know what the politician said, - Not emphasise the statement because it would give the politician unwarranted attention, - Don't know

[J3_2020] Thinking about the responsibility of technology companies like Facebook, Google or Twitter, if a politician or political party takes out an advertisement that could be inaccurate, which comes closer to your view about what technology companies should do? - Allow the advertisement because it's not up to technology companies to decide what is true, - Block the advertisement because technology companies should be responsible for making sure information on their platform is true, - Don't know

Trust in the news

Q6_2016_1. We are now going to ask you about trust in the news. First, we will ask you about how much you trust the news as a whole within your country. Then we will ask you about how much you trust the news that you choose to consume. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: - I think you can trust most news most of the time. - I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time

Q6_2018_2. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. - I think I can trust news in social media most of the time

Role of opinion in the news

Q5c_2013. Thinking about the different kinds of news available to you, do you prefer : - News from sources that share my point of view, - News from sources that don't have a particular point of view, - News from sources that challenge my point of view, - Don't know

News sources and access points

Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news?

Q10a_new2017_rc. Which of these was the ****MAIN**** way in which you came across news in the last week?

Text and video

OPTQ11D_2020. In thinking about your online habits around news and current affairs , which of the following statements applies best to you? Please select one.

Q11_VIDEO_2018a .Thinking about consuming online news video (of any kind) over the last week, which of the following did you do? Please select all that apply.

Paying for news

P3_2020_1. Some news providers now charge money for access to their online news content. How concerned are you, if at all, about the following?: - Other people might be missing out on news from sources that they have to pay for. - I might be missing out on news from sources that I have to pay for.

Podcasts

Q11F_2018. A podcast is an episodic series of digital audio files, which you can download, subscribe or listen to. Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month? Please select all that apply.

POD3a. Some providers are starting to ask for payment to access certain types of podcasts. If asked, how likely or unlikely would you be to pay for a particular podcast that you like?

Local news: sources and degree of interest

L2_2020. Which of the following sources of local news, if any, have you used in the last week, regardless of whether you access them digitally (via their website, social media accounts or an app) or offline? Please select all that apply.

L1_2020. How interested, if at all, would you say you are in local news?