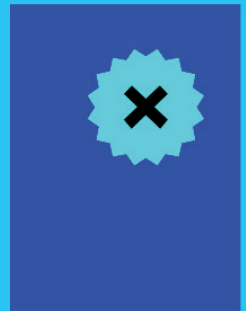
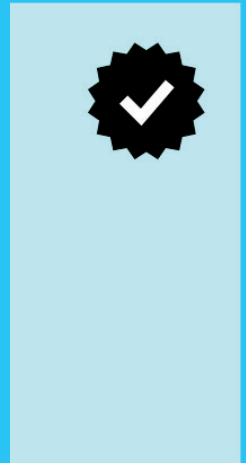
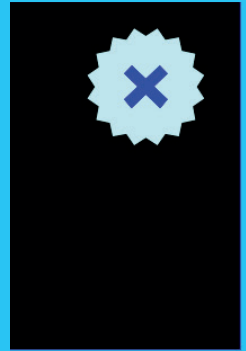


News for the Next Generation

a new study from
NewsBrands Ireland
and Colourtext



Executive Summary

The research reveals that 16–29-year-olds view established news brands as their most trusted sources in a complex media landscape, turning to them for verification, in-depth analysis, and credible reviews that influence their purchasing decisions.

The findings also show how the journey into news matures with age. While the appetite for news is consistent, the pathways to discovery and verification evolve significantly between the ages of 16 and 29.

This research highlights the unique and valuable role that Irish news brands play in the lives of young adults, delivering both editorial credibility and advertising effectiveness.

The 'News for the Next Generation' research study from NewsBrands Ireland and Colourtext challenges prevailing myths about youth news consumption, demonstrating that young Irish people are profoundly engaged with news.



Methodology

NewsBrands Ireland worked with research agency Colourtext to adapt a previous UK study for the Irish market.

The findings are based on a nationally representative quantitative survey of 2,000 Irish people aged 16-29. The survey was conducted over a six-week period from 21st May to 5th July 2025.

The methodology was designed to uncover claimed behaviour alongside actual news awareness, as well as perceptions of journalism, fake news, and advertising in news brand environments.

The survey questionnaire was designed to provide a holistic, 360-degree view of young Irish people's relationship with news. To achieve this, we explored a wide range of themes:

Trust and Verification: In a media landscape characterised by misinformation, we explored the hierarchy of trust. Respondents were asked to rate the trustworthiness of various information sources, including newspaper websites, printed newspapers, TV news, and social media influencers. We also investigated their behaviours and concerns around “fake news” and AI-generated content, specifically asking which sources they would turn to first to verify a story they saw on social media.

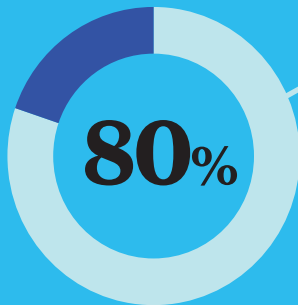
Motivations and Content Preferences: To understand the “why” behind their engagement, the survey probed the key drivers for following news. These ranged from functional needs, like staying updated on current events and local news, to social motivations, such as having information to participate in discussions. We also mapped their content interests across a comprehensive list of news topics, including sport, politics, entertainment, and technology.

Civic and Social Engagement: The research measured the real-world impact of news consumption. We asked how frequently respondents discussed news items with friends and family, and whether exposure to a news report had recently prompted tangible actions, such as looking into a topic in greater depth, signing a petition, or casting a vote in an election. This section also assessed their views on the importance of professional journalism in today's society.

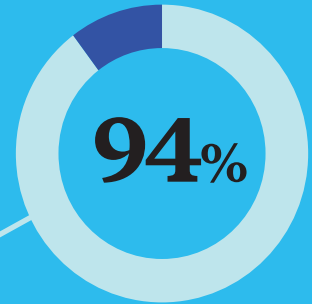
The Commerce Connection: A dedicated section investigated the link between news brand environments and consumer behaviour. It explored how exposure to commercial content (such as product reviews and advertising) within news publications influenced actions along the path to purchase, including researching products, visiting retail websites, and making a final purchase.

Myth busting headlines at a glance:

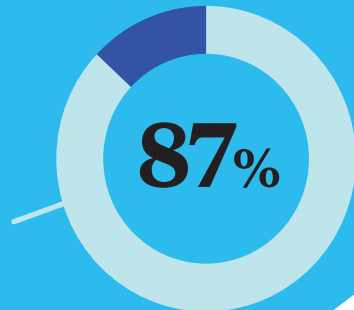
#1 "Young people don't follow news."



80% engage with at least one established Irish news brand every week, 81% could name today's top story unprompted; 94% recognised current headlines from news brands when shown them.



#2 "They only trust influencers."



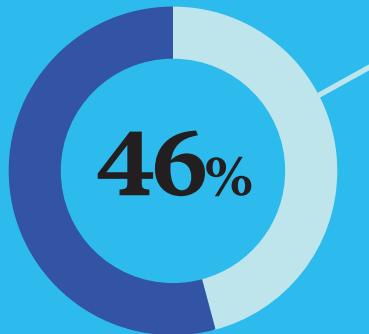
News-brand channels are rated trustworthy by 87% – eclipsing influencers, with trust in established journalism strengthening further with age.

#3 "Advertising in news can't drive action."

Four-in-five took a commerce-related step after exposure to a national news publication; one-in-five bought something.



#4 "They won't care if news leaves social."



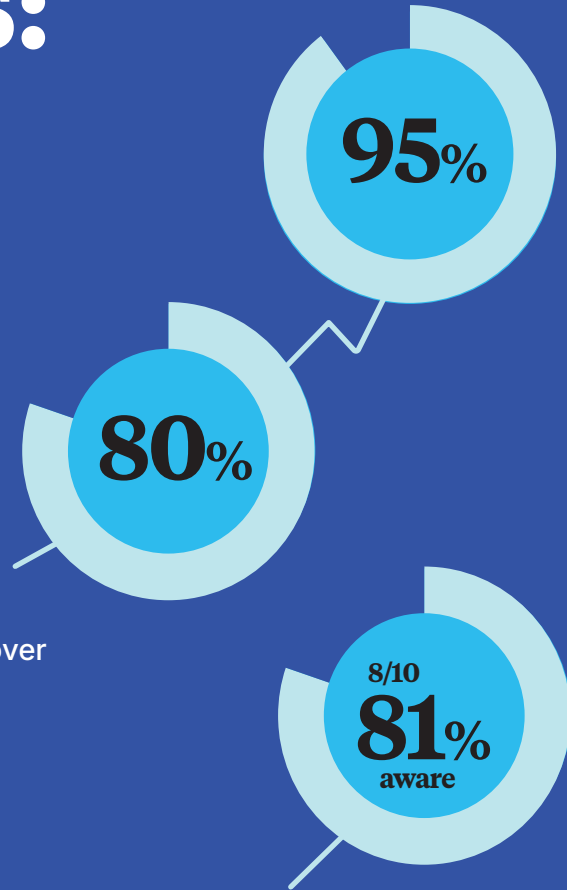
Nearly half (46%) would actively seek their preferred titles' apps or sites if those brands vanished from social for a fortnight, a figure that is higher among the 25-29 age group.

Key Findings:

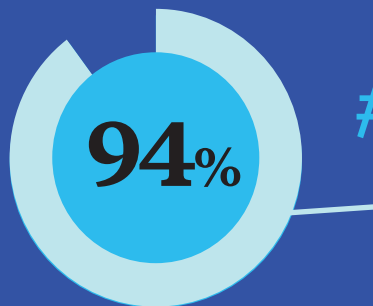
Engagement: news is woven into everyday life

The data shows a generation that is highly connected to current events, primarily through social media, but with news brands playing a critical role on social as a core source of trusted information.

#1 80% of young people engage with Irish news brands at least once per week, rising to 95% over longer periods like a month.



#2 8 out of 10 (81%) in the survey could spontaneously name a major current news story, and 94% were aware of at least one real news headline when prompted. This tells us that everyday news headline awareness is strong regardless of age.



Trust

"Without journalism, people would simply speculate on every little thing and no one would know the truth about various situations and events around the world."

(Male, 16-24, Leinster)

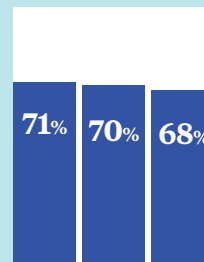
In an era of rampant misinformation, young people place their trust in established journalism. They use news brands to verify stories, feel more confident discussing issues, and are prompted to take real-world actions, from signing petitions to making purchases.

The data shows a generation that is highly connected to current events, primarily through social media, but with news brands playing a critical role on social as a core source of trusted information.



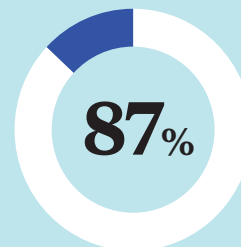
#1

News brands are the most trusted source of information. When asked to rate trustworthiness, newspaper websites (71%), printed newspapers (70%), and TV news broadcasts (68%) are top-tier.



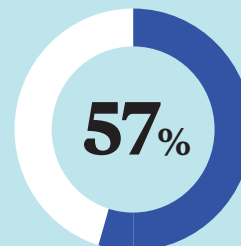
#2

Collectively, 87% of respondents rate established news brand platforms as trustworthy.



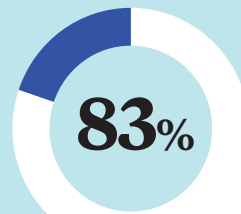
#3

They are the go-to for verification. While 78% are concerned about fake news on social media, a majority (57%) would turn first to established news brands online or in print to verify a story they saw there.



#4

Journalism is seen as vital. A clear majority (61%) agree that journalism is important in today's society, and 83% see investigative journalism that uncovers hidden issues as valuable.



Influence & Action

"Journalism allows people to stay informed, it is a battle with fake news"

(Male, 25-29, Cork)

"We need access to a free press. To make our own critical opinions"

(Female, 25-29, Leinster)

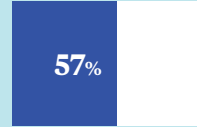
In an era often characterised by concerns over youth apathy and the fragmenting influence of social media, this study reveals a powerful counter-narrative: young Irish people are not passive consumers of information but are actively using trusted news sources to shape their opinions, engage in societal dialogue and take meaningful civic action.

Established news brands play a pivotal role in this process, serving not merely as purveyors of facts, but as essential tools that help young citizens understand their world and their place within it.

Influence & Action



Influence starts early, with 57% identifying their parents as the greatest influence on their news preferences today.



News fuels conversation and action. Exposure to a news report has recently prompted...



24% to look into a topic in greater depth



19% to sign a petition



17% to cast a vote in an election



73% discuss news items every week with friends and family.



This civic engagement strengthens with age. Those in the 25–29 bracket are more likely to discuss national news, engage in community service, and financially support journalism through donations or subscriptions.

The Aura of Legitimacy: How News Brands Enhance Brand Equity

News brands provide a unique and powerful “aura of legitimacy” for advertisers and consumer brands. The trust in the editorial environment is transferred to the commercial content it contains. A positive review, or the presence of an advertisement within a respected news brand, acts as a powerful signal of credibility.

- Exposure on news platforms leads to action. 80% have taken at least one retail-related action (e.g., researching products, visiting retail sites, or purchasing) after exposure to news brand content.



- News brand reviews drive decisions. A majority are more likely to recommend a product positively reviewed in a news brand (53%).



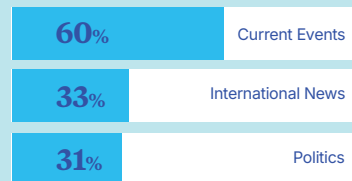
- Advertising and reviews in news brands build brand equity. Nearly half of respondents agree that such content enhances the perception of a product's quality (47%) and signals that a brand is popular and widely recognised (47%).



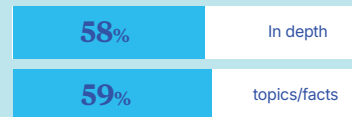
This research busts the myth that young people are a homogenous group interested only in soft news. They have a wide range of interests and turn to journalism for a variety of personal and social needs covering hard news and soft news.

Diverse Needs, Diverse Content

○ To understand the world: The top motivation for following news is staying updated on current events (60%). The most popular news topics for discussion are International News (33%) and Politics (31%), and the most-clicked story in the survey was about civilian deaths in Gaza. As they move through their twenties, interests broaden into topics like national news, technology, and health & medicine.



○ For in-depth analysis and facts: A desire to seek out intriguing topics (59%) and verify facts (59%) are key drivers. Over half (58%) actively seek out in-depth articles beyond the headlines.



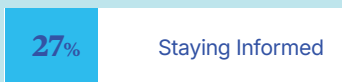
○ For passion points and entertainment: Sport is the most popular news category (31%), rising to 46% amongst young men. Young men are also more likely to cite entertainment and escape from routine as a reason for engaging with news.



○ To connect with their community: The second most popular news motivation is wanting to know what is happening in one's local area (32%).



○ To participate and converse: Staying informed to enable participation in discussions with others is a key motivation for 27% of young people.



Youth Audience: Six Distinct Audience Segments

Our analysis of news headline themes has enabled us to identify six distinct categories of young readers.

The segmentation was based on revealed preferences rather than demographics alone. Instead of asking people to describe themselves, we looked at how they actually engaged with news.

Respondents were shown a set of 37 real news headlines — spanning breaking news, crime, political analysis, investigative journalism, features/lifestyle, interviews, and more — and asked to choose which stories genuinely interested them. This “revealed preference” approach let us go beyond posturing or social signalling to capture what truly resonates.

We then analysed these choices in combination with wider measures of consumption levels, trust, attitudes, motivations, and user needs. By clustering young people based on these behaviours and outlooks, six distinct audience segments emerged. Each group reflects not just how much news they consume, but *why* they consume it, what they look for in journalism, and how news fits into their daily lives.

The result is a set of nuanced, behaviour-driven personas that go far deeper than age, gender, or demographics — providing a powerful map of Ireland’s youth news landscape. Read on to discover the six personas.

NEWSROOM NOMADS



Newsroom Nomads

Our first group is predominantly male and still living at home, this segment is a digitally native, debate-loving, sport-talking cohort who hop seamlessly between TikTok swipes, big-picture geopolitics and broadsheet fact-checks. This interest is matched by an active aversion to celebrity gossip.

They value credibility above all else - 58% would verify a breaking post with an established news brand first and 73% rate printed papers trustworthy. This group are active conversationalists who translate news into daily discussions, online interactions, real- world actions such as voting and community engagement, and purchasing decisions guided by news brands sources.

News they engage with:

"The story about the tariffs that Donald Trump is putting in place"
(Female, 16-24, Dublin)

"The story involving Israel and Palestine as it's very emotional and sticks with me".
(Male, 16-24, Cork)

"Cunha signed for Man United in 62.5m deal"
(Male, 25-29, Leinster)



NewsBrands
Ireland



CHATTY CATHYS



Chatty Cathys

Meet the “Chatty Cathys,” a vibrant segment of young Irish news consumers whose lives blend seamlessly across social media and traditional news platforms. They gravitate toward entertainment, true crime, and celebrity stories. While predominantly young women (57%), this group also includes a notable proportion of men aged 25–29 (22%, well above average).

The Chatty Cathys are highly informed, challenging stereotypes of disconnected youth. However, their interests shy away from conflict-driven or complex topics such as the Israel– Hamas war or economic reporting. Instead, they prefer stories that connect directly with their personal interests and lived experiences. This group’s trust in established news sources, particularly printed newspapers, TV broadcasts, and official news apps, remain robust. This trust extends to their consumption habits, with 95% identifying at least one attribute of national news brands which has shaped past purchasing decisions.

News they engage with:

“The story of Josef Puska is relevant because it informs me of serious issues that happen in our country today”
(Female 16-24, Leinster)

“Donald Trump blabbering as usual - so entertaining but so scary at the same time”
(Female, 24-29, Connacht)

“Katy Perry going to space”
(Female, 16-24, Cork)

THE HOT- TAKERS



Hot-Take Fuelers

Meet the Hot Take Fuelers—a socially confident cohort who drift between entertainment, gaming stories, and sports content. They are the lightest consumers of news but stand out for their preference for podcasts.

Their relationship with news is sporadic and often incidental, driven as much by curiosity or fact checking as by exposure to intriguing topics or diverse perspectives. News typically reaches them passively through social feeds, and when it does spark action, their go-to response is to debate others online.

For this group, news is less a steady source of information and more a tool for banter, provocation, and online disputes. Overall, they represent a blend of typical youth-audience digital behaviours

News they engage with:

"Conor standing for presidential election"
(Male, 16-24 Leinster)

"Ronaldo winning the Nation's League"
(Male 25-29, Munster)

"Someone winning the euro millions"
(Female, 24-29, Dublin)

THE REALITY SCROLLERS



Reality Scrollers

The **Reality Scrollers** sit at the heart of mainstream Ireland. Their news cravings lean toward gritty local stories steeped in crime, tragedy, and social peril, yet they also engage avidly with celebrity gossip and fashion, reflecting a dual appetite for both serious reporting and lighter lifestyle content.

This segment pairs curiosity about the wider world with a sharp awareness of how news shapes daily life. Their regard for established sources is strong with a large majority engaging with news brands weekly, and trust is a defining trait, with overwhelming confidence placed in both print and digital news brand platforms.

Beyond sparking conversation, news brands significantly influence their buying decisions through advertising and unbiased reviews. Far from passive scrollers, the Reality Scrollers view news as education, participation, and a window into human experience.

News they engage with:

"The funeral of the man who was dismembered down the country"
(Female, 16-24, Dublin)

"Stories about all the attacks in Ireland on young females has changed my perspective and added fear to my life as a young woman"
(Female, 25-29, Munster)

"Plane crash in India. I will be checking every plane before we fly on it"
(Female, 16-24, Leinster)

THE ACTIVISTS

The Activists

Meet the Activists – for this cohort, news is oxygen. Educated, progressive, urban, and globally minded, they scroll not just to know, but to act. International crises and social justice stories ignite their passion, and they stand out for both their high awareness of major news events and their ability to confidently identify sources.

While an array of social platforms drives discovery, they also demonstrate strong loyalty to established publishers, regularly engaging with online news sites, apps, and e-papers. This duality—TikTok immediacy combined with trusted brands—defines their habits.

Far from passive consumers, the Activists amplify news through likes, shares, and discussions, while compelling stories frequently spur them into real-world action. Yet their engagement is underpinned by concern with a large number worried about misinformation, deepfakes, and how AI will affect journalism.



News they engage with:

*"The recent crack down on deportation for immigrants in the USA – particularly with J1 visas, as I spent all of last summer in America on a J1"
(Female, 16-24 Leinster)*

*"The situation in Gaza, and between Israel and Iran. I'm very interested in how it will play out and how other governments are reacting."
(Male, 16-24 Leinster)*

*"Anything regarding the housing crisis in Ireland"
(Female, 25-29, Dublin)*

HEADLINE GRAZERS



Headline Grazers

Meet the Headline Grazers – meme-sharing, sports-chatting, and socially driven, they treat news as fuel for laughs, lifestyle tips, and everyday conversation. Their interests lean toward sport, celebrity, and entertainment, while hard news is largely avoided.

They have a relaxed, escapist relationship with news that's wide but relatively shallow, viewing it as a source of entertainment and social currency. Dipping in and out of headlines, they snack on friction-free authenticity—actively seeking celebrity gossip and human-interest stories while steering clear of weightier topics.

Chatty rather than crusading, their top response to news is simply to discuss it offline. They are an audience that engages with media on its own terms, prioritizing entertainment and lifestyle inspiration over heated debate. Friends and family often break stories first, while established news brands remain a key source for trusted verification.

News they engage with:

"The winning €250 million
Cork euro millions ticket"
(Male, 24-29, Connacht)

"Jota, Liverpool star's death"
(Female, 16-24, Leinster)

"The Irish Lions played rugby
against Argentina in a game, I
looked at the match report"
(Female, 16-24, Munster)

Methodology

Who carried out the study, and who was surveyed?

- The 'News for the Next Generation' study was commissioned by NewsBrands Ireland and conducted independently by the research company Colourtext. It is based on a similar award-winning study on youth news engagement conducted by NewsWorks.
- A nationally representative sample of 2,000 young people aged 16–29 across the Republic of Ireland took part. Fieldwork ran online between 21 May and 5 July 2025, with quotas for age and gender to ensure accuracy.
- To complement the quantitative data and add narrative context to the findings, the study incorporated a qualitative phase consisting of eight in-depth video interviews. This approach was designed to move beyond the "what" of the survey data to explore the "why" behind the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of young people in Ireland regarding news and journalism. The goal was to capture the authentic voices of a diverse group of individuals, providing nuanced insights that aren't always apparent within statistical analysis.



How were 'news brands' defined?

Early in the survey, we presented respondents with a list of 30 established Irish news brands to establish a shared definition. From there, we asked how often they engaged with any of these. The findings show that news brand engagement is strong, with nearly 8 in 10 young people first encountering major stories through a news brand.

How was news engagement measured?

We created an innovative Smart-Recall methodology, designed to overcome the common limitations of recall surveys. It combines:



24-hour time-bounded recall – limiting memory errors.



Critical incident recall – anchoring answers to major headlines of the day.



Unprompted and prompted recognition – e.g. 81% could recall a top story unaided; 94% recognised real headlines when shown.



Bias control – normalising “not sure” responses to avoid over-claiming.

This blended approach gives a much truer picture of young people’s actual behaviour.

While the ‘Smart-Recall’ component was crucial for measuring overall engagement with news content, the majority of the survey questionnaire was designed to provide a holistic, 360-degree view of young people’s relationship with news. To achieve this, we explored a wide range of additional themes: Trust and Verification; Motivations and Content Preferences; Civic and Social Engagement; and The Commerce Connection.

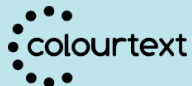
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